



 Audubon | NEBRASKA

2021/2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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Land management is so difficult because it takes a long time to learn how the land will respond to different management techniques. Every single piece of land is different - scale, underlying conditions, objectives - documenting those change through time is so important.

*- Amanda Hegg, Audubon
Conservation Program Associate*

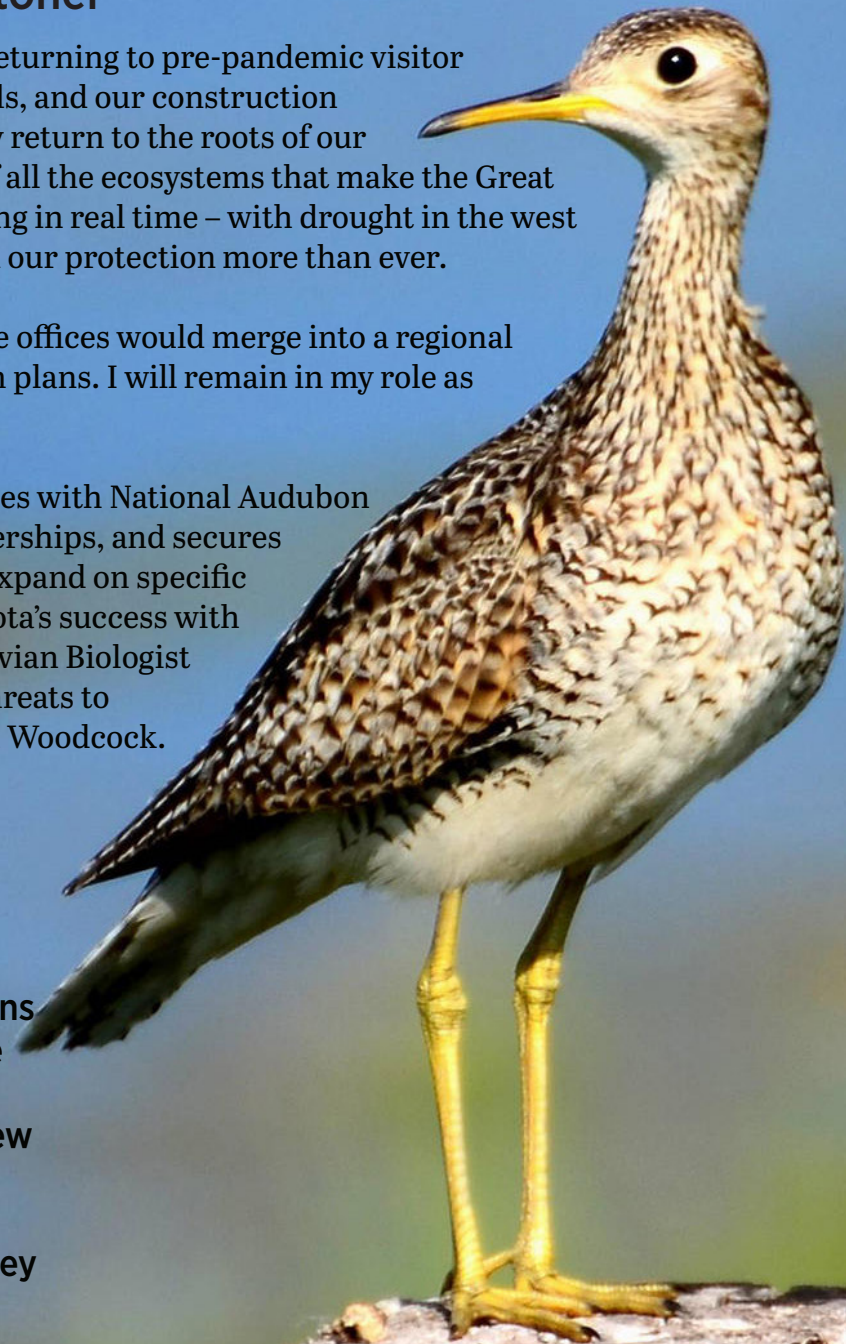
Letter from the Executive Director, Kristal Stoner

This year has been one of returning to our roots. We are finally returning to pre-pandemic visitor capacity, our education programs are back to pre-pandemic levels, and our construction investments are beginning to see returns. Finally, we continually return to the roots of our conservation efforts: protecting the delicate interconnectivity of all the ecosystems that make the Great Plains region so vital for birds. As we see our environment shifting in real time – with drought in the west and powerful storms in the north – birds and other wildlife need our protection more than ever.

This summer we announced that the Nebraska and Dakotas state offices would merge into a regional office to streamline strategies and develop cohesive conservation plans. I will remain in my role as Executive Director for the Audubon Great Plains regional office.

We have developed a strategic plan that aligns state-level priorities with National Audubon Society's conservation strategies, builds on local and state partnerships, and secures funding to expand our programs reach. Our team has grown to expand on specific projects, hiring Bill Sellers, Range Ecologist, to build on the Dakota's success with Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative. We also welcomed Avian Biologist Stephen Brenner, who is researching the changing ranges and threats to Nebraska birds such as the Thick-billed Longspur and American Woodcock.

The Great Plains are known for great waterfowl migrations and iconic bird species like the Sandhill Cranes. They are also home to grassland birds that desperately need our help to conserve the prairies they call home. With the new regional office, our growing wingspan throughout the region will only strengthen Audubon's influence, impact and ability to advocate for birds and the environment they need – for decades to come.



Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

- Cody Wagner and Amanda Hegg have released the first phase of a biological monitoring plan and long-term habitat management plan to help guide management decisions based on the needs of Rowe Sanctuary's priority bird species. This plan documents the unique geography and ecology at Rowe; lists wildlife, vegetation, and soil types; and provides a history of conservation efforts, methods, and results. It also identifies short-term (next three-five years) and long-term (more than 5 years) goals.
- Target species identified in the plan include 12 grassland species, such as the Bobolink, Swainson's Hawk, and Northern Harrier; four riparian species, including Bell's Vireo; and four Platte River species, including Piping Plover and Least Tern.
- Rowe Sanctuary staff member Amanda Hegg and partners at the Crane Trust published a study on mitigating crane collisions with power lines in the *Journal of Avian Conservation & Ecology*.
- We engaged over 2,000 students in 36 field trips and 2 summer camps, and collectively organized 37 public programs and events.



**Crane tour reservations open
on Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.**

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

- Our new Habitat Building is now open! The building will serve as a multi-purpose space for planning and equipment storage. Within its 2,400 square feet there is work space to allow staff or volunteers to work on burn plans, habitat projects, or research, as well as to hold small meetings; a bathroom for staff and volunteers; and a room to safely store fuel and pesticides. This is the culmination of a long-term partnership with the Tri County Prescribed Burn Association, with additional funding provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Acklie Charitable Trust.
- The SCP Visitor's Center was updated with accessibility improvements including automatic door openers, light sensors, and enhanced interior lighting. More improvements are planned for next year.
- In October, the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project recognized Jason "the Birdnerd" St. Sauver with the Natural Legacy Education Award.
- Over 1,200 fourth graders participated in Prairie Immersion field trips this fall and more than 3,000 students participated in educational programming overall this year.

Audubon Strategic Priorities

The National Audubon Society maximizes our conservation results by focusing on five key strategies critical for birds, recognizing migratory patterns and the interconnectedness of habitats across the Western Hemisphere. By protecting birds, we're also safeguarding the Western hemisphere's great natural heritage for future generations, preserving our shared quality of life and fostering a healthier environment for us all. In the Great Plains, our work and programs fit within this hemisphere-wide strategy, but over the past year we have prioritized Bird-Friendly Communities, Water, and Working Lands.



Bird-Friendly Communities

Most Americans live in cities or suburbs, and people can play a critical role in fostering healthy wildlife populations and communities. Rural regions have an outsized opportunity to contribute. As the leading voice for birds, Audubon birders make daily lifestyle choices that add up to real conservation impact.



Water

Audubon's Water initiative focuses on landscapes where both water quantity and water quality are paramount to birds' survival. Affecting public water policies is one key aspect of our work, but policy alone won't be enough to address these challenging issues. Our Platte River Initiative spans Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska's own central basin.



Working Lands

Best management practices on ranches, farms, and forests hold the key to survival for more than 150 species of threatened grassland and forest birds. We work with private landowners and regional stakeholders to meet the needs of wildlife and people.



Climate

Audubon is responding to shifting environmental changes with an innovative combination of strategies, from advancing policies that reduce carbon emissions and promote responsible locations of green energy, to leading adaptive land management practices that mitigate the effects of climate change.



Coasts

Coastal areas are a magnet for birds and people alike. Unfortunately, overfishing, development, and sea level rise put 60% of coastal birds at risk.



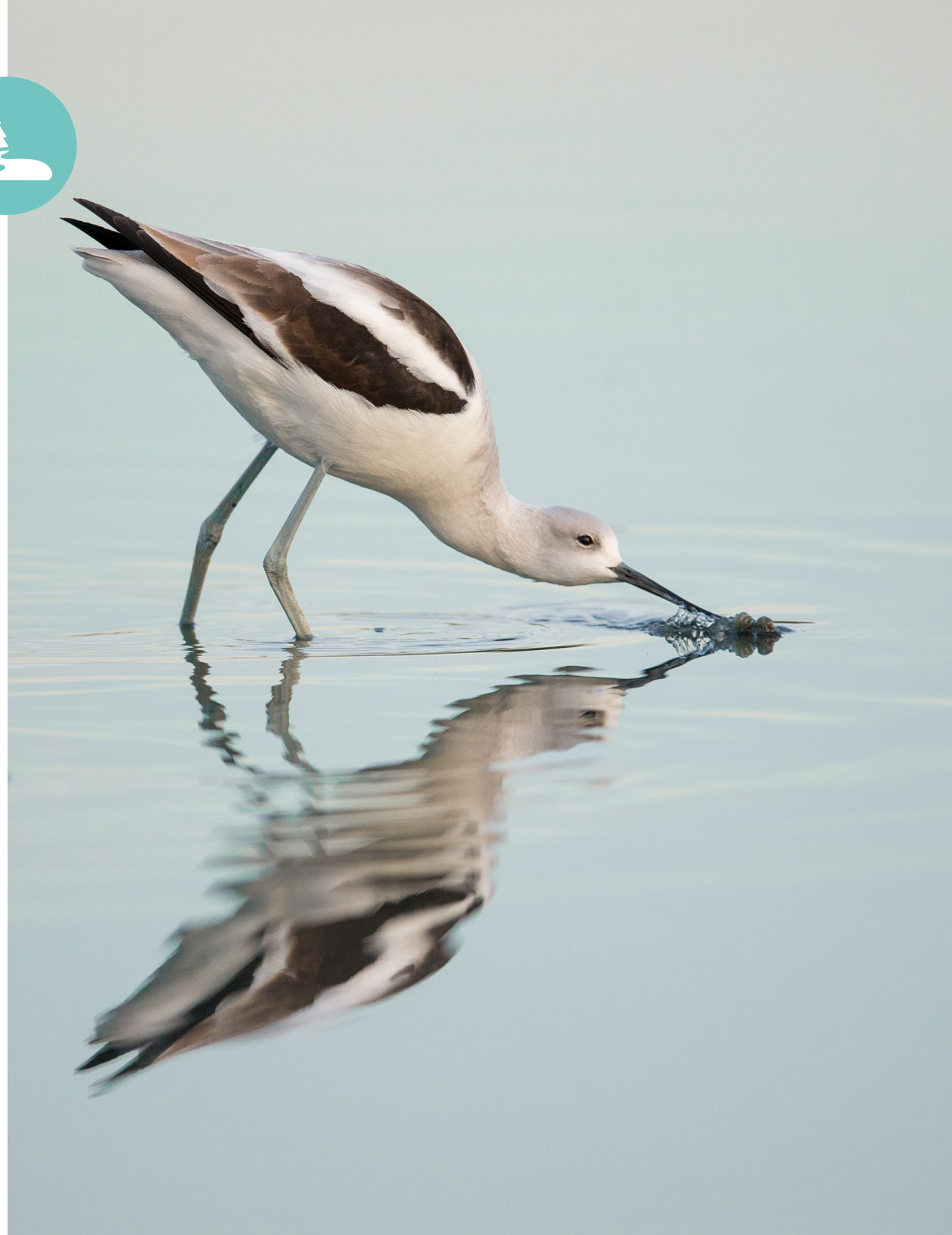
Bird-Friendly Communities

- The Big B.A.D. Birdhouse Project – a collaboration with the American Institute of Architects Lincoln – was a public arts and crafts project that provided creative habitat for birds around the city of Lincoln while celebrating architecture and design in daily life. The project finished with a special fundraising event to support ongoing STEM programming for the Lincoln Community Learning Centers at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center.
- This year, more than 2,000 people engaged in Audubon Bird-friendly Communities programs and events, such as Plants for Birds gardening projects, the Big B.A.D. Birdhouse project, and community science programs like the Big Sit.
- Rowe Sanctuary installed 450 native plants on the playgrounds of two local elementary schools.

Water



- Vision for an Ecologically Sound Platte River (VESPR) – led by Audubon’s Platte River Manager Melissa Mosier – published a 50-year strategic plan for restoring the Platte River Basin: *A Long-Term Vision for an Ecologically Sound Platte River*. The working group of ten organizational partners identified dozens of priority species, including the Interior Least Tern, the threatened Piping Plover, and the endangered Whooping Crane.
- As part of our Platte River Initiative, Audubon provides leadership and partnership with the Platte River Recovery and Implementation Program (PRRIP) which implements restoration in accordance with the three-state compact for the Platte River.
- In October, the Nebraska Water Center hosted the Platte River Basin Conference and 3rd Playa Research Symposium, in partnership with Audubon Nebraska and the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, and Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute.
- Avian Biologist Stephen Brenner published research on secretive marsh birds – such as the Virginia Rail, Least Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, and Sora – in the Rainwater Basin and Sandhills in the journal *Wetlands*.





Working Lands

- A new grant partnership with Nebraska Game and Parks – called Enhancing Prairie Grouse habitat in western Nebraska – is focused on Eastern Red Cedar and woody invasive encroachment in grassland habitats. Working with private landowners, Audubon helps determine methods for removal, such as prescribed fire, mechanical removal, and specialized herbicides, as well as how to prevent seeding.
- A new cost-sharing program in partnership with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission offers private landowners help with an otherwise huge financial burden to limit the spread of Eastern Red Cedar and other invasive plants.
- Range Ecologist Bill Sellers is working with Audubon Conservation Ranching managers in other regions to develop a long-term plan for expanding the certification process to Nebraska ranchers.
- Spring Creek Prairie hosted two landowner workshops to find cooperative efforts to maintain and improve the working landscape of the Denton Hills for future generations. Participants discussed their concerns and challenges, as well as what they have learned about natural resource and agricultural management.

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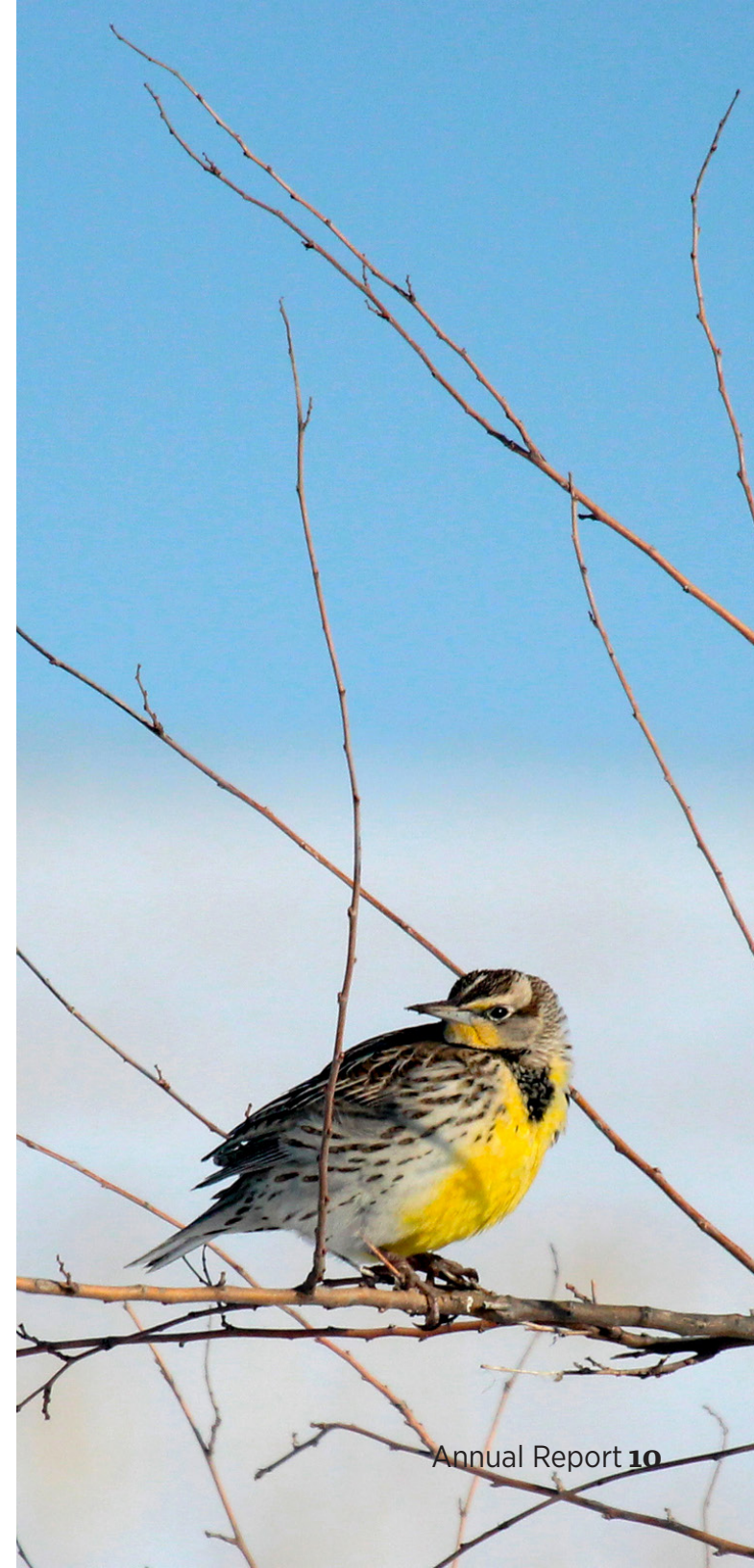
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2022

BY THE NUMBERS

3,847 birds identified on **210** surveys in Western Nebraska

3,000+ students

participated in educational programming at Spring Creek Prairie, including

1,200+ fourth graders in the Prairie Immersion program



2,000 people

engaged in offsite Bird-friendly
Communities programs and events

of **45 different species** and **59 butterfly
species** counted during summer bird

surveys at Rowe Sanctuary
and Spring Creek Prairie

1,781 birds



1,000+ visitors

came to Spring Creek Prairie with
the Nebraska Passport Program

More than 550 acres of prairie were
restored with prescribed burns,
including restorative work on private
land aided by Rowe and SPC staff

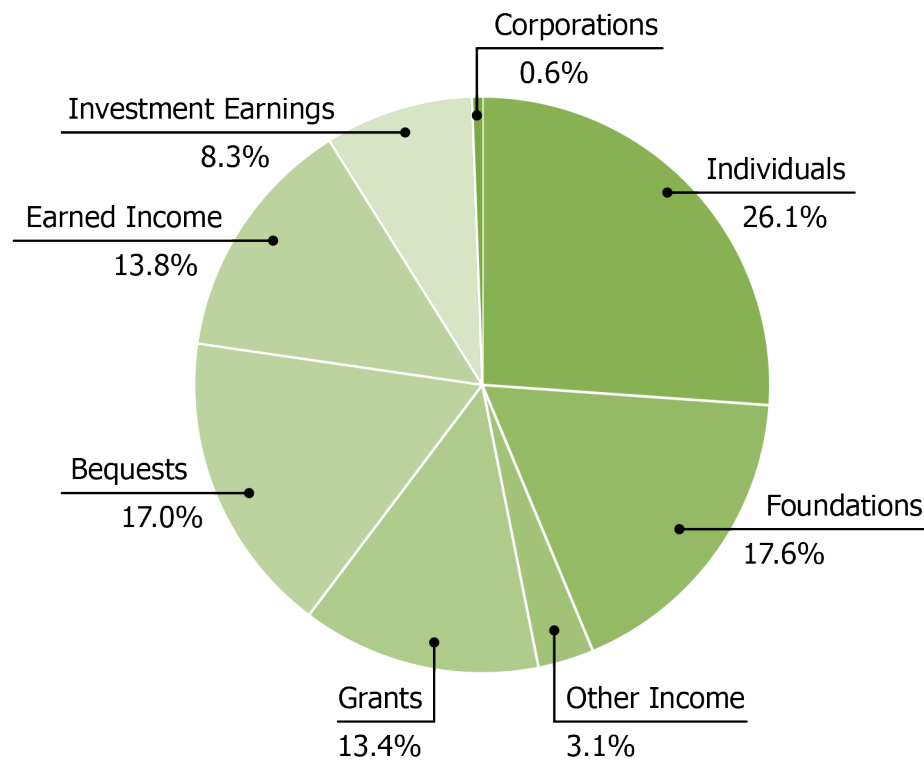


Seed from **72 native plant species** collected and
prepared for prairie restoration at Rowe Sanctuary



Financials

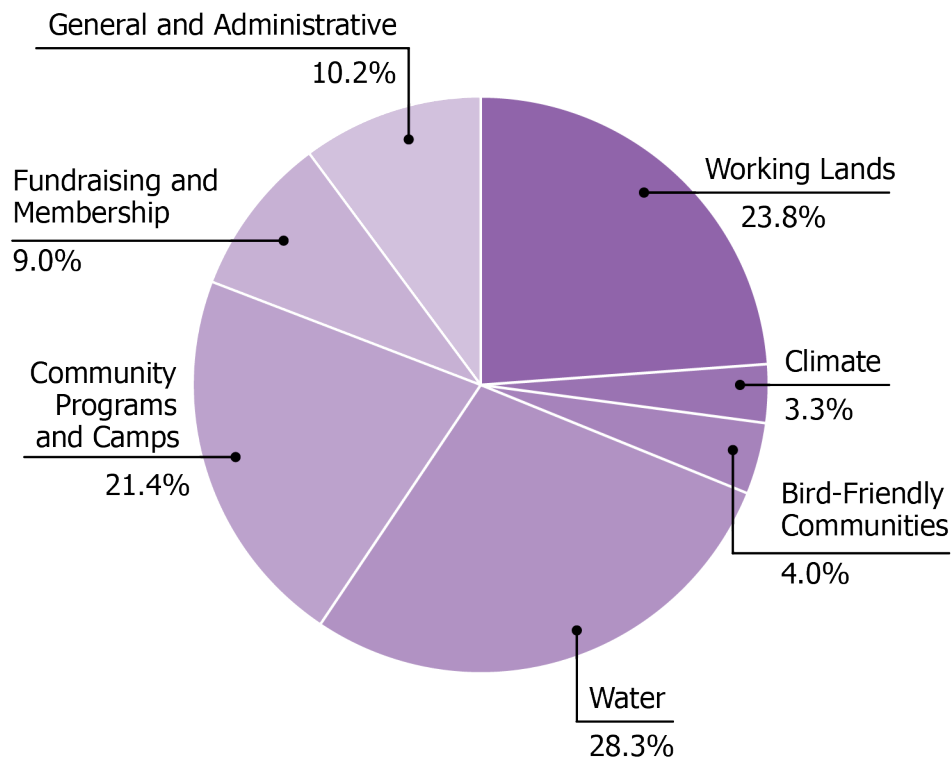
Revenue by Source



Revenue

Contributions, Grants & Bequests	\$	1,818,004
Earned Income	\$	448,174
Investment Earnings	\$	270,710
Other Revenue	\$	121,127
Total	\$	2,658,015

Conservation Expenses



Conservation Expenses

Strategic Priorities		
Working Lands	\$	633,825
Climate	\$	87,032
Bird Friendly Communities	\$	106,797
Water	\$	751,339
Community Programs and Camps	\$	569,354
Fundraising and Membership	\$	239,760
General and Administrative	\$	269,913
Total	\$	2,658,015

Who We Are & Where We Are

Nebraska State Office - Omaha

Kristal Stoner, Executive Director
Lizzy Gilbert, Director of Development
Melissa Amarawardana, Communications Manager
Melissa Mosier, Program Manager, Platte River Initiative
Stephen Brenner, Avian Biologist
Bill Sellers, NE Range Ecologist
Cat Henning, Development Associate

Rowe Sanctuary

Bill Taddicken, Director
Soncey Kondrotis, Operations Manager
Beka Yates, Education Manager
Cody Wagner, Conservation Program Manager
Anne Winkel, Senior Outreach Coordinator
Catherine Worley, Senior Coordinator
Amanda Hegg, Conservation Program Associate

Spring Creek Prairie

Meghan Sittler, Director
Kevin Poague, Operations Manager
Jason St. Sauver, Senior Education Manager
Ed Hubbs, Habitat & Private Lands Manager
Cacey Wilken, Conservation Field Technician
Matt Harvey, Project Assistant

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11700 SW 100 St, Denton, NE 68339
(402) 797-2301
email: scp@audubon.org
www.springcreek.audubon.org

This adorable Rock Wren was spotted at Spring Creek Prairie in the fall - for the first time in over a decade!

Audubon Nebraska depends on the generous donations of conservationists like you!



Donate Today!

Checks and Money Orders can be mailed directly to the centers or in the enclosed envelope.

Local Chapters

Audubon Society of Omaha

PO Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103

(402) 445-4138

www.audubon-omaha.org

UNO Audubon Student Conservation Chapter

<https://www.facebook.com/UNOAudubon>

Wachiska Audubon Society

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