



2025

FALL

NEWSLETTER

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Great Plains Team Retreat in Fargo, ND. Courtesy of Conference Staff

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Fall is upon us with cooler air, shorter days, and the beautiful emergence of fall color. The Western Meadowlark, our state bird in North Dakota, Nebraska, and several neighboring states, is beginning its journey south, a reminder that every season holds both a reflection of what's been accomplished and a vision for what lies ahead.

This summer was one to celebrate. At Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie, young campers explored the wonder of the Platte River, the tallgrass prairie, and the skies overhead—learning not just about birds, but about the deep connections between people and place. In North Dakota at Brigham Sanctuary, our team hosted the inaugural Audubon Adventures Nature Camp over four days, a milestone for our team and an opportunity to reach new audiences. The energy, curiosity, and joy from these campers give us hope for the next generation.

We also achieved ..a major conservation win: through the Conservation Forage Program, we have now restored over 10,000 acres of critical grassland habitat for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. This puts us over halfway toward our ambitious goal of restoring 18,000 acres, thanks to our many partners, landowners, and supporters.

Just as the Western Meadowlark takes flight toward its wintering habitat, we at Audubon Great Plains carry forward the momentum of this summer's successes into the seasons ahead. Thank you for joining our journey!

Kristal Stoner

Vice President Audubon Great Plains



Middle: Audubon Adventures Nature Camp, Spiritwood, North Dakota. Kendall Van Zanten/Audubon

Bottom: Spring Creek Prairie summer camp. Brady Karg/Audubon



COMMUNITY BUILDING

WHAT ALL OF THE BUZZ IS ABOUT

By Kelly Tebben, Senior Coordinator of Outreach

A colorful, flight-friendly mural adorns the windows of the Plains Art Museum along 1st Avenue North in downtown Fargo, North Dakota—windows where urban bird strike injuries and deaths have long been an issue and concern of the museum's staff. This summer, a group of passionate teens and adults are hopeful that through art and advocacy, they will no longer have to worry about the fates of the birds flying nearby because of their latest art installation, "Flight Without Fear".

Over a two-week period during the summer, 16 teens from the community gathered for Buzz Lab Teen Collective at the Plains Art Museum to learn, create, and advocate. The teens learned through activities, presentations, and hands-on engagement. The experience culminated in the teens working collectively as they developed an artistic project and inspiring advocacy materials.

The program leader of Buzz Lab and Plains Art Museum's Community Engagement Manager, Alatera McCann, explains that Buzz Lab "...provides opportunities for students of varied ages and school districts to socialize, learn, and create together."

Senior Coordinator of Outreach with Audubon, Kelly Tebben, participated in Buzz Lab by presenting on "Flight at Night", where students learned about the nighttime activities of birds and insects.

Students investigated the daunting challenges faced by migrating birds across varying landscapes and the actions that anyone can take to protect and advocate for migrating birds: turning out or limiting unnecessary lights at night, applying window-strike deterrents, and supporting natural habitats across all flyways.

The programming culminated in a student-derived artistic collaborative mural, "Flight Without Fear", which explores the threat posed to birds by windows; researchers now estimate that collisions could kill over a billion birds per year in the United States. The mural's dual purpose is to save birds by disrupting the reflections presented in the windows and to engage the public in learning about the importance of bird-safe glass.

The collective explained, "We included the Western Meadowlark, North Dakota's state bird, whose prairie home has been nearly eliminated by our cities and farmlands. The White-Throated Sparrow has the highest death rate from low-rise windows in the country. The background is dotted to break the reflection. Employing bold colors and a powerful composition, this mural is a call to take action to let the beautiful birds that soar through our skies and truly fly without fear."

At the end of the program, many participants shared about Buzz Lab's deep personal impact and their hopes for the message they are working to spread through their reception, public mural, and advocacy materials.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

SPARKING CURIOSITY ACROSS THE GREAT PLAINS

By Amanda Hefner, Kelly Tebben, and Brady Karg; Outreach Staff

ROWE SANCTUARY - NEBRASKA

This summer, the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary welcomed young explorers back to the Platte River Valley for a season of discovery and connection with nature.

Over three weeks, 26 campers in 2nd–5th grade immersed themselves in the rich ecosystems of the wetlands, prairies, and the Platte River. Each day featured engaging, sensory-rich experiences—from birdwatching and nature journaling to exploring the new Wetland Exploration Deck and identifying macroinvertebrates through dip-netting. Campers examined native plants, used sweep nets, and created wildlife track casts and cyanotype prints. The final day brought them to the Platte River to compare species, experiment with building dams, and observe underwater life with snorkels.

More than just a camp, these experiences sparked curiosity, built knowledge, and inspired a lasting appreciation for the natural world. We look forward to growing these programs and continuing to nurture the next generation of environmental stewards.

BRIGHAM SANCTUARY - NORTH DAKOTA

The inaugural year of Audubon Adventures Nature Camp in North Dakota was a resounding success! Campers explored the prairie trails and lakeshore of Audubon's Edward M. Brigham III Wildlife Sanctuary, learning firsthand the important role that plants, insects, and water have in supporting healthy ecosystems and providing quality bird habitat.

The campers, who ranged in age from 6-12, let their creativity soar while discovering the ecological significance of the camp's setting in the Prairie Pothole Region. Campers began their day at the Discovery Table to explore bird-themed curiosities, some of which changed each day to establish the day's learning focus. Through inquiry, activity, and nature play, the campers engaged with a variety of nature experiences, which resulted in gained knowledge, confidence, innovation, and many moments of shared delight.

Each day of camp was different, so campers could join for one day or all four. Campers were empowered to engage in nature-based learning on varied topics. Each camper connected with the natural world and appreciated its beauty when collecting and identifying plants and insects, spotting birds using binoculars, playing games, walking the prairie, and producing art from nature. We are looking forward to welcoming campers to the sanctuary next summer and continue fostering environmental awareness.



Top: Rowe Sanctuary Safari Camp. XXXXX/Audubon.

Bottom: Spring Creek Prairie Summer Camp. Brady Karg/Audubon.



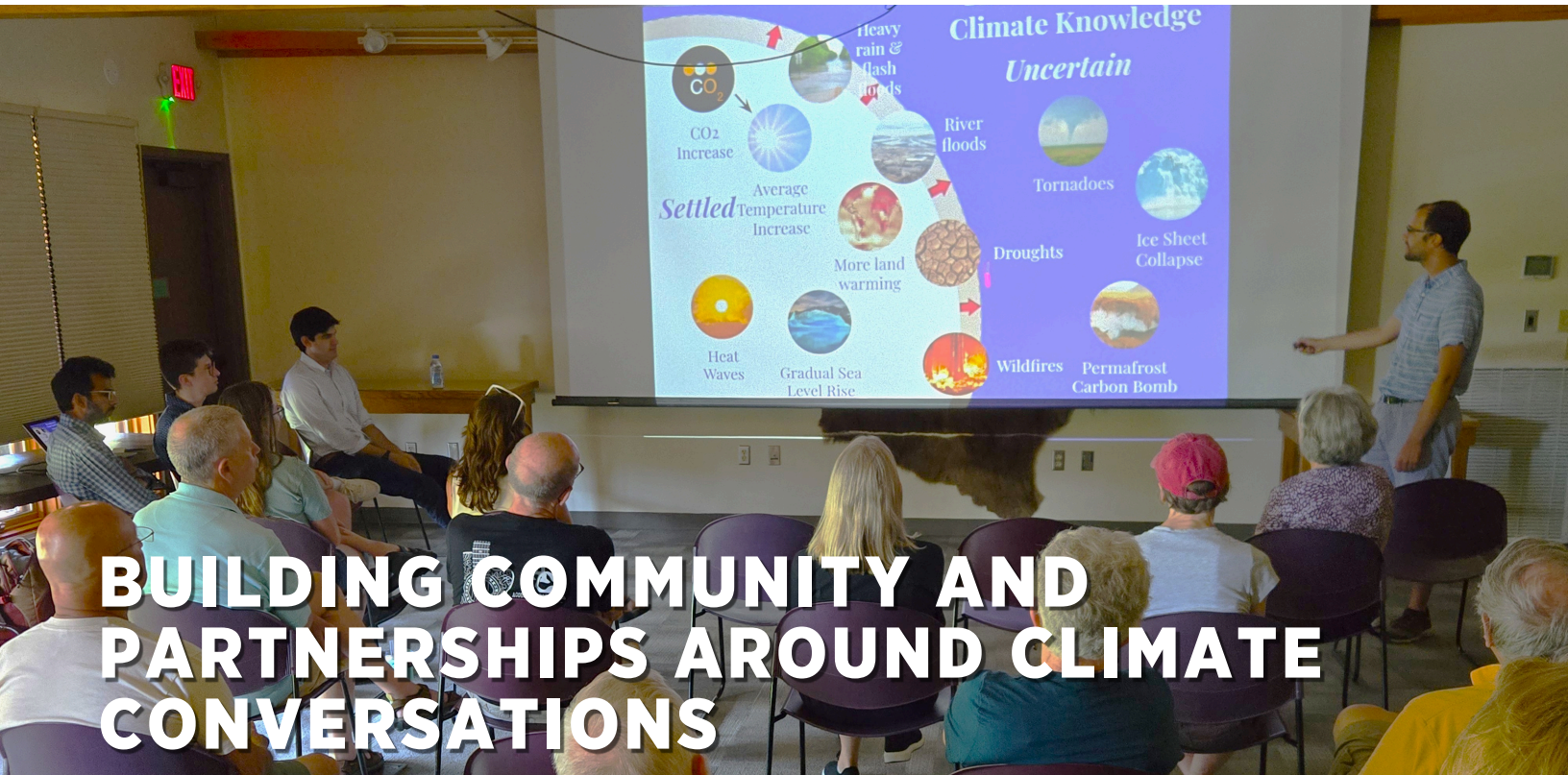
SPRING CREEK PRAIRIE - NEBRASKA

This summer, our nature camps were buzzing with energy, curiosity, and plenty of muddy shoes! From exploring the tallgrass prairie to discovering the wonders of wildlife up close, campers dove headfirst into hands-on adventures that sparked learning and built lasting memories. We're thrilled to share that all four weeks were full of laughter, discovery, and that special kind of summer magic only nature can provide.

We partner with the Lincoln Community Learning Centers to offer the camps to students from participating elementary schools. Ages can range from 1st – 5th grade and many of the campers return year after year.

Our camps start with a simple question, “What makes a bird a bird?” and build from there, immersing students in the tallgrass prairie and exploring how birds connect to and support the ecosystem. Campers step into the role of conservationists: sweeping for insects, surveying for birds, helping manage invasive plants, and, of course, enjoying plenty of bird-themed games!

Our goal is to ensure that underserved communities have the chance to experience a nature-based summer camp and discover that spark that connects them to their local ecosystems.



BUILDING COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS AROUND CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS

By Jason St. Sauver, Senior Manager, Education

Conversations around our changing climate and its effects on birds, habitat, and people can be a very large, daunting, and sometimes depressing task. But over the past year, Spring Creek Prairie (SCP) staff have found a few creative ways to keep these conversations positive, engage community and new audiences, and strengthen and build local partnerships with its Climate & Culture Conversations program.

At the end of summer 2024, SCP created its second in the series of Climate & Culture Conversations, this one entitled Climate & Culture: BIRDS & WORDS. Nebraska State Poet Matt Mason collaborated on the words portion of the event, providing poetry-writing prompts to inspire the attendees to write honestly and creatively about their experiences with climate.

TAKING ACTION FOR CLIMATE!

The idea is simple. Here's our approach. Let's have conversations about the climate!

- Include a writing or art prompt
- Review up-to-date science data from climate scientists
- View quotes from local youth about how they are being affected by climatic changes.

With this approach, the programs have flourished with interest, discussion, and positive outlooks on understanding!

The event also hosted local scientists, writers, and birders to discuss some larger climate issues in a panel discussion with the attendees, all moderated by SCP's Jason "the Birdnerd." The event was in partnership with the City of Lincoln's Parks & Recreation Department and held at Pioneers Park Nature Center (PPNC), a longtime collaborator on environmental education.

Following up on the success of the above event, PPNC and SCP partnered again in the summer of 2025, this time inviting a group of climate scientists from Climate Up Close to come and present. These scientists from NOAA, Harvard, Princeton, & Cornell tour the country providing the most up-to-date information on our changing climate and dispelling any myths with an engaging presentation, and then take questions and provide time for open discussion with the audience. The topic was so popular, the Lincoln area booked the group for three other conversations over the last weekend in June of 2025 at local churches and an astronomy center.

These positive and powerful conversations have been a wonderful way for SCP to be a part of the community conversation around climate, actions for birds, habitat, and people, and to continue to build new and strengthen existing partnerships. We look forward to building on this momentum over the next year.

POLICY LEADERSHIP

WELCOME TRACI BRUCKNER

By Amanda Booher, Communications Manager



Courtesy of Traci Bruckner



Northern Cardinal. Jorja Feldman/Audubon Photography Awards

Our Audubon Great Plains team is thrilled to welcome Traci Bruckner as our Senior Policy Manager, a newly added position. Traci brings over two decades of experience in public policy, government relations, and philanthropic engagement. She has a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and Sociology from Wayne State College.

Based in Wayne, Nebraska, Traci has experience advancing impactful policy initiatives at both the state and federal levels. Her work has spanned across sustainable agriculture and food systems, rural economic development, and behavioral health access in rural communities. Most recently, she served as Chief Policy Officer for the Western Landowners Alliance (WLA), where she led policy strategies to support working lands, sustain native species, and connected landscapes across the West. Prior to WLA, Traci was with Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders, a philanthropic affinity group where she provided strategic leadership and direction for funder engagement and collaboration around federal agriculture, conservation and food policy.

Traci's ability to build strong relationships with policymakers, stakeholders, media, and philanthropic leaders is matched by her deep commitment to equity, rural communities, and environmental stewardship. She has served on numerous national advisory boards, including the USDA's Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers.

In her new role, Traci will lead Audubon Great Plains' policy strategy to support bird habitat, healthy ecosystems, and resilient rural communities across North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

FAVORITE BIRD

Traci has a deep love for the outdoors and a special fondness for two birds in particular: Northern Cardinals and Ospreys. Cardinals because of their color and how tough they are in winter, and Ospreys because they choose their mate based on the location and quality of the nest, which is pretty smart.



Juli Bosmoe, Working Lands Programs Manager at CFP site. Courtesy of Juli Bosmoe



THE CONSERVATION FORAGE PROGRAM RESTORES 10,000 ACRES

By Amanda Booher, Communications Manager

The Conservation Forage Program (CFP) has successfully restored over 10,000 acres of grassland in North Dakota, marking a significant milestone in its effort to bring back critical bird grassland habitat. With a goal of restoring 18,000 acres the program is now over halfway to completion.

The North Dakota CFP works with the state's producers and landowners to establish grasslands on marginal cropland back to native grasses and forbs, improving soil health while creating essential nesting and foraging habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife. By providing support through financial and technical assistance to landowners, CFP aims to accelerate grassland restoration and improve overall soil health across the state. These grassland acres benefit the landowner and livestock, as well as grassland birds and native wildlife while protecting North Dakota's air and water quality for future generations.

"We recently purchased the land and knew that it needed to put back to grass for it to be productive again. We actively ranch, and the program offered by your organization was the best option for our operation to get cattle back on the land. We are very excited to see how quickly we can build the soil quality."

— Davis and Amber Kinn, Landowners.

"I lost my passion for farming and sitting for long hours in a tractor. We made the decision to seed our last cropland back to grass so we could manage the land with rotational grazing our livestock and lower inputs. With farming and haying of warm season cover crops, we were not seeing the hoof action and nutrient cycling needed. Adding native grass and cattle will help us to fill that missing piece and continue to improve our land management. We have had a great experience working with the program, and we wouldn't be able to complete these projects in a timely manner without the availability of financial assistance."

—Lance Gartner, Landowner

The program's success is rooted in voluntary enrollment and cost-share assistance. As the effort continues toward the 18,000-acre goal, more landowners are encouraged to participate and be part of a legacy of land stewardship in North Dakota.

Launched in the spring of 2021, the success of CFP is financially supported by the North Dakota Industrial Commission Outdoor Heritage Fund, CORTEVA, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Special thank you to project partner support from US Fish and Wildlife Services, North Dakota Game and Fish, Delta Waterfowl, the North Dakota Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Natural Resource Conservation Service, the North Dakota Natural Resource Trust, and the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts.



HABITAT CONSERVATION

ON NEBRASKA'S PLATTE RIVER, A MIGRATORY BIRD OASIS IS CAUGHT UP IN A WATER RIGHTS FIGHT

By Jessica Leber, Audubon Magazine Deputy Editor

On the central Platte River in Nebraska, every water drop has a purpose. Some generate electricity, irrigate farms, or meet demands downstream. Others ensure that Whooping Cranes have the habitat the Endangered Species Act requires. Often there aren't enough drops to fulfill all legal water rights in the heavily managed river valley.

But even overburdened rivers sometimes see seasonal floods or heavy rains, and water managers outside the Platte basin are seeking a share when that happens: They propose to divert water from the river during flush times and pipe some "excess" south to the Republican River basin, where the flow could help farmers irrigate crops and fulfill Nebraska's obligations under a water-sharing deal with Kansas. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources is now weighing the plan.

Conservationists acknowledge both rivers are overtaxed, but argue that taking water from one basin to supply another is a misguided idea that sets an alarming precedent in the state. At least 70 percent of the volume that once historically flowed through the region is already diverted before reaching Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, which lies along an 80-mile stretch of river habitat where more than a million migrating Sandhill Cranes rest and refuel. "What we're trying to hold on to is the last 30 percent," says Melissa Mosier, Platte River program manager for Audubon Great Plains. "Any amount of water that comes out of that is a pretty big deal."

While periodic surges don't legally fall within a complicated system of Platte River water rights, experts say they play a key role in sustaining the hydrology and ecology that migratory birds have relied upon for millennia. "Those high flows are important because that's how the system historically functioned," says Abraham Kanz, conservation research director for the Crane Trust.



Melissa Mosier, Audubon Platte River program manager, in North Platte, Nebraska. Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon

These influxes recharge wet meadows where cranes forage and refill underground aquifers that people rely upon. What's more, by shifting around sediment and scouring away tree seedlings, large water pulses also help maintain the wide, braided channels and sandbars that birds use to roost or nest.

In public comments last year, conservationists opposed to the idea were joined by local tourism offices and several natural resource and public power districts that rely on the Platte. Even the state of Kansas objected, fearing the spread of invasive carp. Project supporters in the Republican River basin, however, argued the diversion would make use of water that otherwise wouldn't benefit Nebraskans. To Mosier, it's this narrow vision of water as a commodity that keeps the central Platte ecosystem—which attracts thousands of spring visitors and where Rowe Sanctuary recently marked its 50th anniversary—just "hanging on." After big floods, Kanz has seen how a streamflow surge can help struggling habitat. "These sites can recover, and we have proof you can bring them back," he says.



WESTERN MEADOWLARK: THE BIRD OF MANY STATES



By Paige Anspach, Rowe Sanctuary Seasonal Conservation Technician

Western Meadowlarks are grassland residents at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary. Their scientific name is (*Sturnella neglecta*), which was assigned by John James Audubon. Audubon gave this name to the Western Meadowlark as he believed this starling-like (*Sturnella*) species was often disregarded (*neglecta*) by early explorers and settlers venturing out west. This member of the blackbird family is the state bird of Nebraska, along with Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, and Wyoming. The Northern Cardinal is the only species to be the state bird of more states than the Western Meadowlark, possessing the title in seven states rather than six.

Western Meadowlarks are stocky in figure, around 7-10 inches long, and are often distinguished by the black "V" on their yellow breast. The outer tail feathers are white and most obvious during takeoff and landing. Western Meadowlarks possess a rounded wing shape along with a rounded, short, and square-tipped tail shape. They look almost indistinguishable from Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), but the instinctive call of the Western Meadowlark serves as a marker between the species.

During the mating season, the song of males often fills the air. Their songs are often described as gurgling with flute-like noises that descend in scale.

Female Western Meadowlark. Montoya Whiteman/Audubon Photography Awards

This contrasts with the Eastern Meadowlark's song, which is a simpler series of plaintive whistles.

Western Meadowlarks can be found as year-round residents in most of the central and western portions of the United States. Their breeding range spans north into southern portions of Canada, and wintering grounds are throughout the northern half of Mexico. In the central portion of the United States, their range overlaps with the Eastern Meadowlark. Although they are found together, mixed species pairs are rare; in instances where few mates are available, they can produce fertile offspring, but few eggs hatch in controlled experiments. Open grasslands, meadows, prairies, deserts, savannas, and agricultural fields serve as habitat for Western Meadowlarks, while areas that are wooded or have heavy shrub concentrations are often avoided.

Diet varies based on season. In the winter and spring months, grains are a staple of their diet. Harsh winters have been associated with the birds eating roadkill carcasses. In the summer breeding season, when resources are available, insects are a main component of their diet. Western Meadowlarks use the "gaping" feeding behavior as they insert their beak into the soil and pry it open to reach seeds and insects like beetles, ants, and cutworms. If available, they occasionally consume eggs from other grassland bird species. Their fall diet often consists of weed seeds.

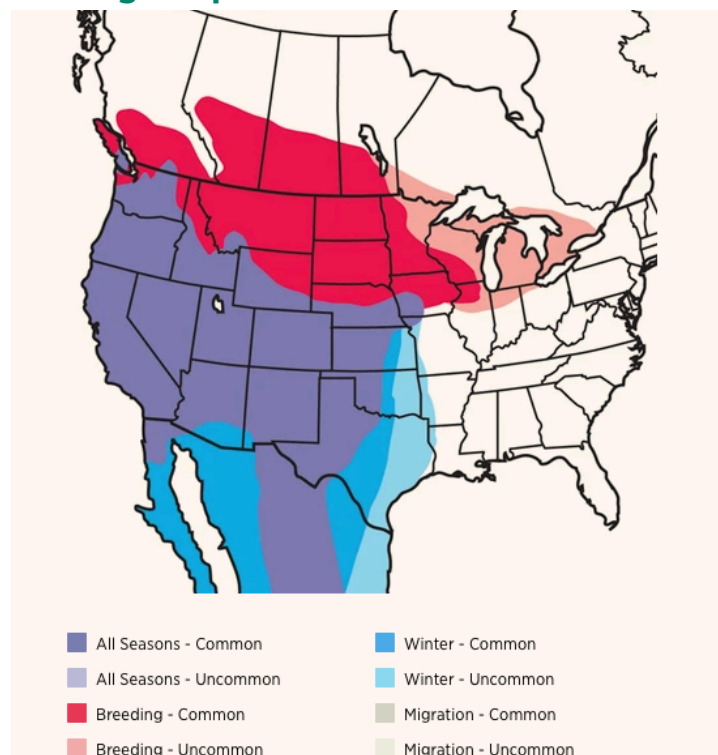


During the breeding season, males defend a territory, and a successful male will often have 1-2 mates each season. Female Western Meadowlarks select a nest site on the ground, often using an impression that is already present, like a hoof print or natural dip in the landscape. Nests are well camouflaged and constructed with grass that is woven into nearby vegetation. It can take upwards of 6-8 days for the female to build the first nest of the season with a cup size of 4-5 inches in width and 2-3 inches deep.

One to two broods are produced each year with 5-6 eggs in each clutch on average. The eggs are white with spotting of brown, rust, and lavender. The incubation period ranges from 13-16 days with a nesting period of 10-12 days. Although males are not involved with the nest building or incubation, they are observed to assist with food supply to the chicks following hatching and nest defense from predators.

Western Meadowlarks are listed in the Least Concern category of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List with a population size of 100,000,000. But, the population has decreased by about 40 percent in the last 50 years, averaging about 0.9% a year, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Their decline can be attributed to human-related causes, including the use of pesticides, fire suppression, and habitat loss. Though in decline, through continued efforts, it is our hope that your fence posts be filled with the songs of the Western Meadowlarks for years to come!

Range Map



Western Meadowlark Habitat

Grasslands, cultivated fields and pastures, meadows, prairies. Breeds mostly in natural grasslands, abandoned weedy fields, rangeland, also sometimes on cultivated land. In the Midwest, seems to prefer shorter grass and drier fields than the sites chosen by Eastern Meadowlark. In winter, often in stubble fields and other farmland.

Western Meadowlark. Gail Jackson/Audubon Photography Awards





COMMUNITY BUILDING

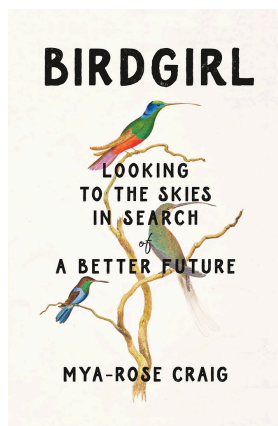
THE EDIB BOOK CLUB: CONNECTING LITERATURE AND CONSERVATION

In 2024, the Audubon Great Plains Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) team started a book club program that has flourished into an exciting learning opportunity for Audubon staff and our greater community. The idea for the program materialized when multiple members of the EDIB team demonstrated interest in reading the same books around themes of conservation, identity, culture, and – of course – birds.

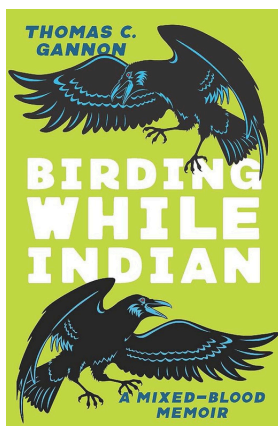
Join the club!

Email brady.karg@audubon.org for more information about the Audubon Great Plains EDIB Book Club. We hope to see you at our next meeting!

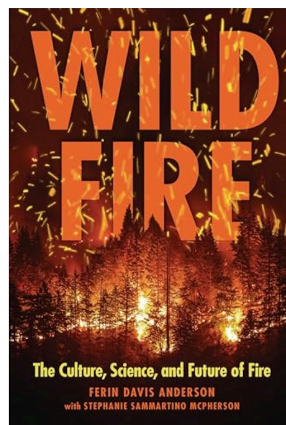
THE EDIB BOOK CLUB HAS FEATURED THE FOLLOWING NOVELS:



Birdgirl
by Mya-Rose Craig



*Birding While Indian:
A Mixed-Blood Memoir*
by Thomas C. Gannon



*Wildfire: The Culture, Science, and
Future of Fire*
by Ferin Davis Anderson with
Stephanie Sammartino
McPherson



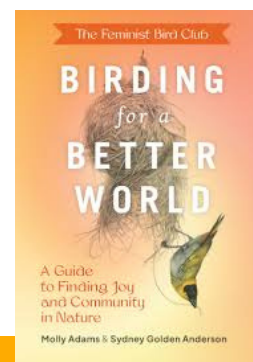
Fresh Banana Leaves
by Jessica Hernandez

Authors Thomas Gannon and Ferin Davis Anderson joined our meetings for discussion, providing further insight into the inspiration for their novels. Gannon recited excerpts from his novel and shared experiences about his favorite local birding locations. Ferin Davis Anderson detailed the difference between prescribed fire and cultural fire, explaining how cultural fire centers around indigenous community and involves people of all ages, while prescribed fire organizes those who participate in a more hierarchical structure and serves a sole purpose of burning acres.

Book club participants are not required to read our selections. Everyone can engage in thoughtful discussion to listen and learn from one another. All are welcome to join. Our next book, “Birding for a Better World: A Guide to Finding Joy in Nature” by Sydney Golden Anderson and Molly Adams, explores the connection between equity, environmental justice, and birding. As we all know, birding is for everybody and can help us better understand connections to the planet and our society.

NEXT UP:

Birding for a Better World
by Molly Adams and
Sydney Golden Anderson



**COMMUNITY BUILDING**

NDSU Birding Club at Rowe Sanctuary/Courtesy of Jacob Meier

A SANDHILL CRANE SPRING BREAK

By Jacob Meier, NDSU Birding College Chapter President

In March 2025, a group of graduate and undergraduate students from North Dakota State University, including several members of the NDSU Birding Club, made the trek from North Dakota to Nebraska to view the world's largest congregation of Sandhill Cranes. Rowe Sanctuary is a 3,000-acre property along the Platte River in central Nebraska. This stretch of river is wide and shallow, and contains many open sandbars that cranes use to rest along their migration journey. Cranes disperse and forage in agricultural fields during the day, then return to the river in mass numbers at sunset. Over a million cranes pass through during each migration season!

The group's first stop was at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center, a newly renovated visitor center complete with educational displays, classrooms, and a beautiful view of the Platte River. Here, the group observed several species of waterfowl and shorebirds. The surrounding trails and viewing platforms provided excellent views of not only spring migrants, but also late winter birds like the American Tree Sparrow.

The highlight of the trip, without a doubt, was the crane viewing. Audubon provides visitors with the opportunity to see giant flocks of Sandhill Cranes as they land to roost for the night.

The process included checking in at the visitor center, a demonstration by the volunteers of the sanctuary, and finally walking out to the blinds.

Each viewing blind is equipped with a huge window, seating area, and a warming room for those that don't want to face the cold wind for three hours. After arriving to the blind, the volunteer guide gave a brief reminder of the rules to maximize safety and comfort for both the observers and the birds.

After around 30 minutes, the first group of cranes came in from the northeast. It was remarkable to see such a large congregation. This flock of well over a hundred cranes, however, was just the beginning. As minutes turned into hours, seemingly endless amounts of Sandhills poured in and landed on the sandbars in the middle of the river. Those brave enough to try to count estimated that the group saw over 70,000 cranes that night. The rest of us simply stood in silent awe of the confluence of birds before us. As if the sight of thousands of crane silhouettes in the sunset wasn't enough, their deafening chorus echoed through the prairie.

The walk back from the blind was filled with hushed chatter marveling at the experience. Many photos and videos were taken, but none could even come close to the novelty and splendor of being there.



MINDFUL BIRDING IN MONTREAL

By Amanda Booher, Communications Manager

During my time at Audubon as a communications professional without a background in ornithology, I have felt insecure in my ability to identify bird species. But, then I learned about mindful birding, where species identification wasn't the priority. Instead, observation of surroundings, being present with one's thoughts, and noticing how birds and wildlife connect with their natural surroundings.

After my first mindful birding experience in Estes Park in 2023, I began to lead my own mindful birding experiences and was privileged to lead the Mindful Birding Field Trip in Montreal, Canada, during the Audubon Leadership Conference.

It was our first full day of the conference, our attendees loaded on a bus, and we were off to L'Angrignon Park. Excitement and nerves came over me. Here I was with birders from all over the hemisphere, at a beautiful location with trees and a pond as the backdrop, ready to experience mindful birding. We formed a circle for introductions, each participant sharing a meaningful nature moment as we welcomed one another to the space. Our group had individuals from all over the United States, Indigenous Community members who served in various conservation roles, and attendees from South America and different parts of Canada. The diversity in the circle was immediately evident, with every shared story reflecting unique cultural perspectives, ecosystems, and connections to the natural world.

The setting was in a green-adorned park with scattered trees, shrubs, and wetlands. A tern greeted us, and excitement was building. Then we sat and observed. Participants were guided to look in the distance for movement in the sky, in the middle ground for a possible flutter mixed within the leaves, and to look closely and get curious to the ground and plants around them. We paused. We were present. We heard laughter of children from a field trip nearby and calls from birds letting us know they were there. And just when we were completing our sit spot and regathering, we were gifted with the takeoff of a Great Blue Heron that only some had previously noticed from their sit spot. The joy was contagious, and we gathered to share what we noticed, a common theme was shared in seeing bumble bees digging in pollen.

Many shared that this was the calmest and best they had felt in months. The practice was complete and in shared unity, we connected and created a space of calm and further appreciation of our natural surroundings, and I continue to be in awe of what mindful birding can bring.



**To learn more about
mindful birding visit:**

www.themindfulbirdingnetwork.com

Who We Are

Kristal Stoner, Executive Director
Amanda Booher, Communications Manager
Juli Bosmoe, Working Lands Program Manager
Adam Brendemuhl, Range Ecologist
Stephen Brenner, Avian Biologist
Traci Bruckner, Senior Policy Manager
Maggie Figura, Range Ecologist
Lizzy Gilbert, Senior Director of Development
Chelsea Heck, Prospect Engagement Manager
Cat Henning, Development Manager
Sam Kiley, Leadership Giving Director
Charli Kohler, Range Ecologist
Lindsey Lee, Operations Manager
Thomas Leicester, Range Ecologist
Josh Lefers, Conservation Director
Melissa Mosier, Program Manager, Platte River Initiative
Kelly Tebben, Senior Outreach Coordinator

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

Marcos Stoltzfus, Center Director
Katie Adam, Operations Manager
Paige Anspach, Conservation Program Technician
Kass Goentzel, Facilities Assistant
Amanda Hefner, Education and Outreach Manager
Amanda Hegg, Senior Conservation Associate
Katie Moore, Volunteer Coordinator
Anne Troyer, Senior Outreach Coordinator
Cody Wagner, Conservation Program Manager

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Meghan Sittler, Director
Matt Harvey, Project Assistant
Ed Hubbs, Habitat and Private Lands Manager
Brady Karg, Senior Education Coordinator
Wyatt Koehler, Senior Habitat Coordinator
Kevin Poague, Operations Manager
Amy Plettner, Caretaker
Jason "The Birdnerd" St. Sauver, Senior Education Manager

Get Involved

Make a Cash or Online Donation

Gifts can be mailed to a state office or center. You can donate online at:
www.greatplains.audubon.org | Support Our Work

Contributions made to Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie stay at those sites.

Volunteer

There are opportunities to volunteer with us and/or Audubon Chapters! Find details at:
www.greatplains.audubon.org/volunteer

Where We Are

Audubon Great Plains - Nebraska State Office

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Audubon Great Plains - Dakotas State Office

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(701) 298-3373

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

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Chapters

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