



IAIN NICOLSON Audubon CENTER AT ROWE SANCTUARY

Crane River **CHRONICLES**

SUMMER 2017



It is with a heavy heart and deep sadness that I am sharing that our beloved colleague and friend, Marian Langan, Executive Director of Audubon Nebraska has succumbed to the illness that has consumed her life for the last few months.

Marian's legacy at Audubon will live on far into the future. Beginning her career as the Statewide Education Director, her passion for education and conservation led her to move Audubon Nebraska's education programs to engage people in a personal way with nature. These individual experiences create connections to our natural world and create a will to take action to protect it. Her vision and leadership created the conservation education direction that Audubon continues to follow in Nebraska with great success. Through these efforts thousands of children have learned about tallgrass prairie, wetlands, the Platte River, all the birds and other animals that depend on them, and much more.

Marian continued her Audubon journey by taking on the role of Director of the newly formed Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. As Director, she led the efforts to build the visitor center as a destination for people to connect to nature and our disappearing tallgrass prairie. Her guidance and passion has created a celebrated destination in southeast Nebraska and enabled Audubon to protect, restore, and expand the tallgrass prairie habitat near Lincoln and throughout eastern Nebraska.

Marian's final position with Audubon was as Executive Director of Audubon Nebraska. Her skills and leadership have moved this organization to have increased impact both locally and nationally. Her tireless work on conservation issues related to energy, water, grassland protection, and more have ensured that the protection of our natural treasures are supported far into the future. Beyond our state borders, Marian provided leadership and guidance to Audubon's hemispheric approach to protect birds across their migration routes in the Central Flyway.

As shared by Audubon CEO David Yarnold, "Marian was kind and thoughtful and she brought those wonderful qualities to her leadership at Audubon. She cared deeply about the Nebraska state office and her centers and was proud to call herself an Auduboner. She introduced me to Sandhill Cranes six years ago and she always delighted in seeing newcomers' jaws drop when they saw that spectacle. We will miss her tremendously."

Marian had a love for learning and was skilled at bringing people together around a common vision. She shaped the Audubon program in Nebraska into a model it is today. The staff, volunteers, supporters, and members of Audubon will forever be grateful for her impact.

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**Condolences may be sent
by mail to her daughter:**

Corinne Kolm
3811 X Street
Lincoln, NE 68503

In lieu of flowers,
you can make a donation online
to a fund in tribute of Marian's vision
([https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/
3e10z5262kKDH8e5blmDyA2](https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/3e10z5262kKDH8e5blmDyA2))
for Rowe Sanctuary,
Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center,
the Audubon Nebraska program,
and the initiatives that she was instrumental
in advancing to what they are today.

2017 CRANE SEASON



2017 Crane Season a Huge Success

From March 4-April 9, our volunteers guided over 120 crane viewing tours helping nearly 5,000 visitors experience the crane migration from our viewing blinds. This effort included 115 volunteers that donated hours or days or weeks to help us execute programming for the more than 23,000 visitors from 51 countries and all 50 states that came to experience the spring migration. In addition to crane to viewing tours, Crane Behavior Basics classes and the Habitat Tours were a huge hit. Through these programs, more than 700 people learned about Rowe Sanctuary, the Sandhill Cranes, and the issues facing the Platte River.

Included in the efforts this spring, school programs facilitated by 53 volunteers and staff engaged over 500 children and teachers enabling them to make their own discoveries in nature. These hands-on activities invite students to think and reason on their own about our natural world.



Photo by Rowe Staff



Photo by Rowe Staff

Crane Carnival

Crane Carnival led by over 70 volunteers engaged 350 kids and their families in many activities throughout the day. The Carnival had special guests: Heather Henson and Ibex puppetry with their amazing crane and bison puppets. (Picture of Bison Puppet and kids)

Rowe Sanctuary's success during crane season relies on a dedicated group of volunteers, donors and sponsors. Without support from all of these sources, it would be impossible to engage so many people in Rowe Sanctuary's Mission: to conserve and restore the Platte River ecosystem, focusing on cranes, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Volunteers

Crane Season, January –April, 2017, Volunteers recorded over 6,973 hours. These hours are valued at over \$155,000 that can be used as match for future grants.

ROWE ADVENTURES



Rowe Sanctuary is excited to introduce the "Rowe Adventure Pass."

Families can sign up for this free punch card at any of our upcoming "Rowe Adventures" events. Participants will have their card punched for every Rowe Adventures program they attend. If a family gets five punches by January 2018, they will receive a free crane viewing trip for four people on our crane viewing family night during the 2018 Sandhill Crane viewing season.

June 28 - Safari Family Night

July 8 - Firefly Picnic - The Firefly Picnic is a naturally good time for all ages! Bring a snack picnic and experience the sunset on the Platte River. Then spend a relaxing evening investigating fireflies and other nighttime insects. You will also get the chance to help with a citizen science project about fireflies and record data for a real scientific study!

August 19 - River Exploration - In celebration of the upcoming solar eclipse, families are invited to come explore the Platte River habitat and the critters that call it home. If water levels permit we will spend most of the time in the river.

September 16 – Wetlands - Dive in to learn more about the creatures that call the water their home. We will be exploring a wetland habitat and the animals that live there to discover what makes them special.

October 14 - Reptiles

October 28 - Owl Prowl/Coyote Howl

November 18 - Falling into Winter

December 16 - Snug as a Bug

Visit rowe.audubon.org/events for program details.



Photo by Rowe Staff

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary is more than just cranes. You can experience local wildlife in their natural habitat year round. To highlight some of the critters at Rowe, every month Rowe Sanctuary offers the Rowe Adventures family program. Each month will focus on a different nature-based theme, such as birds, reptiles, butterflies, river habitat, and pollinators. Program details will be posted on the Rowe Sanctuary website, rowe.audubon.org, and on Rowe's Facebook page.

SCHOOLS DISCOVER CRANES AND HABITAT

The Crane Scene Investigation school program was a huge success this year. The program has been re-imagined to be more open-ended and inquiry driven. Students explored activities such as investigating cornfields to see why cranes use them during the day, playing a predator/prey game to learn why cranes roost in the river at night, and dissecting cow pies to discover their importance in a crane's diet. At the end of each program, students were polled as to which activity was their favorite and cow pie dissection won every time. One student made the comment, "I thought cow poop would be gross, but there was so much inside to look at. I loved it!" Many teachers who participated this year had been coming for years, and the feedback on the changes were overwhelmingly positive. One teacher stated "I love how hands-on and interactive it was- they were having fun AND learning the entire time!" Another teacher said that two weeks after the event "The kids STILL are talking about our experience and connecting it to what we're learning." This kind of connection will begin to foster the conservation ethic that is so important to protecting our natural world in the future.



Photo by Rowe Staff



Photo by Rowe Staff

Wet meadows: An endangered ecosystem

Wet meadows are exactly what their name implies...grasslands with waterlogged soil near the surface and seasonal or intermittent standing water. In the Platte River valley, water levels in the Platte River directly influence the groundwater level in adjacent wet meadows and are responsible for the unique plant and animal communities that they support.

The abundance of sub-surface moisture in the Central Platte Valley allows for the westward extension of an eastern tallgrass plant community into a mixed-grass region that sees significantly less precipitation. We, in turn, see the westernmost extent of many tallgrass birds such as Henslow's Sparrow at places like Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary. In addition to their importance as standalone grasslands, along with active open river channel and riparian wetlands, wet meadows meet critical habitat needs for Sandhill Cranes, Whooping Cranes, and dozens of other migrating water birds.

Unfortunately, a significant percentage of wet meadow habitat (55%) has been lost in the Central Platte Valley due to agricultural conversions, development, and hydrologic changes. The remaining wet meadows and native grasslands are often of diminished quality or insufficient size leaving only about 10 percent as functioning habitat for many at-risk species. When considered in the context of tallgrass prairie, the numbers are even more alarming. Today less than 4% of the 170 million acres of historic North American tallgrass prairie remains.

Rowe Sanctuary protects nearly 2,000 acres of remnant and restored wet meadows and native grasslands, including one of the largest contiguous wet meadows remaining on the Platte. We manage these grasslands with a variety of activities promoting diversity, and annually monitor the response to those activities by target grassland bird species. Audubon also works with conservation partners to protect Platte River flows critical to meadow hydrology.

“Walk the Talk”

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary is midway through a 2-year project focusing on wet meadow and native grassland enhancement and restoration. To date, the work focusing on integrating new core habitat at the heart of the protected complex has included removing above-ground powerlines transecting the wet meadow and paralleling one of the largest Sandhill Crane roosts in the world, installing new infrastructure for managed grazing, and developing a crane viewing vehicle pull-off and pedestrian area where visitors can take in extensive views of one of the largest contiguous wet meadows remaining on the Platte and learn about its management through interpretive signage.

Up next is tree removal and the restoration of seventy-five acres of cropland back to native grassland. Funding for this project was provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust with additional support from state and local partners.

EPA Grant Project - Update

Progress continues to be made on the educational wetland Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary is coordinating the development of for Kearney High School. KHS students officially named the project area the Kearney Outdoor Learning Area (KOLA), and KHS marketing students have created logos for signs and social media promotion of the site. Social media accounts have been created on Twitter and Facebook under the same name.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust notified project leaders of a grant award of \$50,518 to be used for the construction of the wetland. This grant allows the project to move forward with construction and restoration of the wetland itself. The project design team, with input from US Fish and Wildlife Service and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, is developing the design for the educational wetland. The partnership plans to create a demonstration site with a high biodiversity of native species that will give a window to what pre-settlement Central Nebraska offered.

A major measurement key of success of the KOLA and for informing management decisions will be consistent biological surveys done on the site. The first step has been taken for these continuing surveys with a Bio Blitz that was held on Earth Day this April. Local experts in bird, fish, reptile and amphibian, invertebrate, and plant identification led surveys with KPS students and members of the general public to catalog the species already present on site. This information will be critical as a baseline to measure against when we begin monitoring the improvement of the site after initial restoration activities. Our hope is to continue these Bio Blitzes in the future, not only to provide an opportunity for the general public to interact with the site and with wildlife professionals, but also to open eyes about the great diversity of life present if one only looks carefully.



Photo by Rowe Staff



Photo by Rowe Staff

2017 Cranes of Rowe Sanctuary Photo Contest

Results are pending for Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary's Second Annual Cranes of Rowe Sanctuary Photography Contest. Photographers who stayed in Rowe's overnight blinds and/or visited the morning/evening photography blinds during the 2017 Crane Season were eligible to enter. Winning photographs will be featured in our 2018 Cranes of Rowe Sanctuary Calendar. There were a total of 106 entries for this year's contest. A select panel of judges will select 13 winning images. Winners will be announced July 14.



Photo by Rowe Staff

Ft. Kearny Outdoor Expo

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary participated in the Ft. Kearny Outdoor Expo School days and Family Day at Ft. Kearny State Recreation Area April 11-13. Habitat and Outreach Program Assistant Cody Wagner ran Focus on Birds educational sessions to teach 3rd through 6th graders how to use binoculars and bird ID guides. He was assisted by volunteers Fred Diedrichsen and Heidi LaClair for the school days. Cody also operated a booth on the Expo's Saturday Family day to promote volunteering, Flying Higher and Safari Camps, in addition to teaching kids that stopped by the booth about native animals found in Central Nebraska. Volunteers Carl Wolfe and Rae Ellen Syverson assisted with the booth as well during the Family Day.

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Thank you to our Corporate Sponsors and their invaluable support of the conservation work at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary!

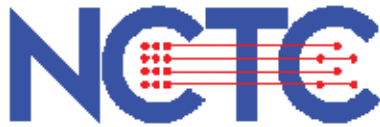
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AUDUBON'S NEBRASKA CRANE FESTIVAL

The 2017 Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival, was a huge success with the largest attendance in recent years. As a matter of fact, we had to close registration in early March when we filled the banquet room.

Attendees from across the country interacted with a wide range of environmental speakers, took part in incredible birding trips, and best of all experienced the world's largest gathering of Sandhill Cranes.

National and local speakers presented on a variety of wildlife and conservation topics. This year we were able to feature Jane Alexander, Tony award-winning actress and author of "Wild Things, Wild Places" as our Saturday Speaker.

This year's field trips included daily visits to the river blinds for up-close views of the cranes roosting on the Platte River, Prairie grouse tours to Calamus Outfitters and trips to other birding hotspots in Central Nebraska.

Mark your calendar for next year's festival, March 22-25. We hope for another sell-out crowd!



Photo by Rowe Staff

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information on upcoming events call (308) 468-5282 or visit rowe.audubon.org and click Rowe Events.

Rowe Adventures

JULY 8 - Firefly Picnic

AUGUST 19 - River Exploration

SEPTEMBER 16 - Wetlands

SEPTEMBER 30 - River Runs Through It

OCTOBER 14 - Reptiles

OCTOBER 28 - Owl Prowl/Coyote Howl

NOVEMBER 18 - Falling into Winter

DECEMBER 16 - Snug as a Bug

2018 Crane Season Reservation System Open

JANUARY 2, 2018 - Reservations can be made on-line at reservations.rowsanctuary.org or by calling (308) 468-5282. More information available at Rowe.Audubon.org.

Crane Viewing Tours

MARCH 3 – APRIL 9, 2018

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival 2018

MARCH 22 – 25, 2018 - More information available at NE.Audubon.org

CONTACT US

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary
44450 Elm Island Road
Gibbon, NE 68840-4019

If you would like to receive *Crane River Chronicles* electronically, email rowsanctuary@audubon.org or call (308) 568-5282.

Looking for a Place to Host an Event?

Remember Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary when planning business meetings, retreats, or parties. (308) 468-5282 for information and rates.

PHONE: (308) 468-5282

EMAIL: rowsanctuary@audubon.org

WEBSITE: rowe.audubon.org

FACEBOOK: [audubonsrowesanctuary](https://www.facebook.com/audubonsrowesanctuary)

TWITTER: [rowsanctuary](https://twitter.com/rowsanctuary)

CRANE CAM: rowe.audubon.org/crane-cam

Crane River
CHRONICLES

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CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

*Crane Cam - To watch the river, please
go to <http://rowe.audubon.org/crane-cam>.*

*The mission of Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary is
to conserve and restore the Platte River ecosystem, focusing on cranes, other wildlife, and their
habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.*



100% POST CONSUMER WASTE


IAIN NICOLSON Audubon
CENTER AT ROWE SANCTUARY

44450 Elm Island Road
Gibbon, NE 68840
Phone: (308) 468-5282
rowe.audubon.org

Open Monday - Friday 9 - 5; Sunday 1 - 4
Open 7 days a week Feb. 15 - April 15

Bill Taddicken - Director
Andrew Pierson - Director of Conservation
Sonceyrae Kondrotis - Office Manager
Anne Winkel - Community Outreach Coordinator
Cody Wagner - Habitat & Outreach Program Assistant
Beka Yates - Education Director
Sharon Ingram - Nature Store Manager/Buyer
Autumn Taddicken - Project Manager

Audubon Nebraska

Bill Taddicken - Interim Director
Cindy Houlden - Donor Relations Coordinator
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THANK YOU TO:

Lawrence Burman for donating a Trail Cam
*Julie Morsman Schroeder for donating
money to purchase a Drone*
*Lyle White for donating money to purchase
the Mesh Aquatic Dip Nets*
*Jim Meyers for the donation of Bionculars
and Chain Saw Chaps*

Rowe Wish List

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- (40) 5X 60mm Magnifier Pocket Folding Magnifying Glass Loupes - \$5 each
- (40) Private Eye Loupe-on-a-Lanyard - \$5 each
- (10) Telescoping Inspection Mirrors - \$9 each
- (6) Two-way Bug Viewers - \$10 each
- Electric Pencil Sharpener (good quality) - \$20
- (6) Binoculars for public use - \$150 each
- (2) 40" Flat-screen TVs for display use - \$300 each

HABITAT PROGRAMS

- SP1 Professional Backpack Sprayer, 4-Gallon - \$150
- 3-point Post Hole Digger - \$800
- (3) Trail Cams - \$200 each



Thanks to all of you who have liked us on Facebook. Be sure to check out our page to see what's happening throughout the year.