



Audubon | NEBRASKA

# 2018/2019 Annual Report





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## Why Audubon Nebraska?

Audubon works tirelessly in Nebraska and throughout the Western Hemisphere to help ensure the future of the planet and the beings that live in it. This incredibly important work needs to continue in order to care for our rivers, streams, grasslands, and more. By working to protect the environment and the places birds need, Audubon engages people with nature and builds a love of our natural world. This translates into hope for the future of birds.

You are the shining beacon of hope that drives our conservation work and helps ensure birds' future.



### *Mission Statement*

Audubon Nebraska protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow.



## Letter from the Director

It takes a village to raise a bird, or at least that's Audubon's philosophy. In a world where habitat is still under siege, where our climate is dramatically changing, and where birds struggle, Audubon understands the power that comes from passionate people.

Over the last year, Nebraska experienced many environmental challenges. We are still reeling from the impacts of the severe, unprecedented flooding in March across much of our state. While some rebuilding has begun, this stimulates some important questions. Will this happen again? What should we be considering for the future with a different climate? What can we do to mitigate increasing global temperatures?

Nationally, grassland birds have declined more than 40% in the last 50 years, and across Nebraska our grasslands continue to decline as cedar trees and other invasive species work their way into our prairies. A cedar forest provides very little cattle forage, nor grassland bird habitat. How can good grassland stewardship be promoted and rewarded?

While these problems seem overwhelming, over the last year I have found a new appreciation for the power of people that Audubon brings to these challenges. Between our two centers, we educated thousands of youth and adults. At Audubon, we recognize that more people, and people from diverse backgrounds need to be engaged in conservation. Through the Plants for Birds program, dozens of kids were empowered to plant native plants. Between both Spring Creek Prairie and Rowe Sanctuary, there are over 300 volunteers that contribute their time and talents to conservation. Audubon is bringing expertise from across the nation and three states together to find balanced solutions for a sustainable Platte River.

The last year has been a rebuilding year for Audubon in Nebraska. Now, we are ready to face the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristal Stoner". The script is fluid and cursive.

Kristal Stoner  
Audubon Nebraska Executive Director

"I feel I am strange to all but the birds of America."

*-John James Audubon*

"The little owls call to each other with tremulous, quavering voices throughout the livelong night, as they sit in the creaking trees."

*-Theodore Roosevelt*

"They are part of a healthy food chain on our planet. They eat everything from insects to fish and larger prey as well as help pollinate the flowers of many plants. Besides the biological reasons, they brighten the lives of people who observe, feed, photograph, and study them."

*-Rosemary Thornton,  
Wachiska Audubon Society  
member*





## Letter from the Chair

Hello members and friends of Audubon.

When I speak to others about Audubon Nebraska, I always mention what sets us apart from other conservation organizations in our state: Audubon has land and invites folks to come experience it.

Whether it is immersing oneself in the tallgrass prairie or the Platte River, Audubon Nebraska provides experiences that last a lifetime. From the historic Oregon Trail Cutoff wagon ruts at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center to the magnificent migration of the Sandhill Cranes at Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, there is a lot to take in. But gorgeous views are not the only highlights of our centers.

The education programs offered at both Spring Creek Prairie and Rowe Sanctuary are important aspects of Audubon Nebraska's work. They help in building the next generation of environmentalists through hands-on learning, unique experiences, and valuable time spent outdoors. Programs like these support forming the connection to the environment and, hopefully, show how to create a better future for birds and people.

I have had the privilege of being involved with this organization for many, many years in multiple capacities. In that time, I have seen changes in procedures, staff, messaging, and so much more. Now, though, we are embarking on a wide-reaching change with Audubon Nebraska of which I have never experienced before. I am truly excited for this adventure in setting a new, bold vision for Audubon's future.

Audubon Nebraska welcomes you, your family, and your friends to join us on this adventure for the future, to celebrate birds in our state, and to help us to preserve them and the habitats they need, today and tomorrow.

Rich Vierk, State Advisory Board Chair, Audubon Nebraska





## Bird-Friendly Communities

Audubon Nebraska protects bird populations in our cities and towns by providing food, shelter, safe passage, and places for birds to raise their young. Communities meet those needs through individual and collective actions—actions that also contribute to more sustainable human societies.



## Climate

Leveraging our climate science, Audubon Nebraska creates far greater demand for change on the climate issue by tapping into people's passion for birds while seeking workable climate solutions for Nebraskans.



## Water

Audubon engages and involves the public on issues surrounding water for wildlife, restores habitats along rivers and wetlands, and engages in policy surrounding Nebraska water.



## Working Lands

Audubon collaborates with landowners, land managers, government agencies, and private industry throughout the state and the Central Flyway to improve and expand grassland habitat.

- *Over 100 children from Lincoln Community Learning Centers spent over 20 hours each at Spring Creek Prairie for summer camp activities*
- *Rowe works with Girls Inc. and Native Futures to provide volunteer opportunities for young people interested in conservation careers*



- *Spring Creek planted over 500 native plants at local schools and at Habitat for Humanity homes.*



## Bird-Friendly Communities



Urban areas are increasingly important for birds as populations and our communities expand and habitat shrinks. Audubon Nebraska engages people in improving bird habitat in their area while learning about birds and what they need to survive.

Field trips to Rowe and Spring Creek taught children valuable lessons about birds and the habitats they need through homeschool

programs, field trips, and Spring Creek's Prairie Immersion.

Thousands of people nationwide participated in Let's Go Birding Together, an inclusive program started right here in Nebraska through Audubon's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion initiative. The Audubon Society of Omaha co-hosted a walk at Heron Haven in Omaha. There were walks at Spring Creek Prairie as well.



- *This year, we had more than 25 volunteers participate in Climate Watch, a community science program exploring how North American birds are responding to climate change.*
- *Climate-caused events impacted tourism numbers at Rowe during the crane migration and nearly washed out the spillway at Spring Creek Prairie causing trail closures.*
- *Audubon Nebraska's Executive Director, Kristal Stoner, wrote letters of support to Nebraska representatives about climate legislation and visited with them in Washington, DC.*



## Climate

Audubon Nebraska improves and restores habitat to make it more resilient to climate challenges for the birds that need it, supports policy that seeks to reduce the amount of carbon we release, and empowers people to contribute to science that illuminates how birds are responding to climate change.

As climate-caused issues continue, Audubon focuses on the climate crisis through community

events and presentations sharing how it has affected birds and how it will continue to affect living beings if there is not positive change.

Audubon provides tangible changes for people to make in their home and offers tools for connecting to local decision makers.



- *Audubon partnered with the NE Craft Brewers Guild to host four successful Birds & Brews events in Lincoln and at Spring Creek that brought nearly 200 new visitors.*



- *New Discovery Stations at Rowe will expand river viewing opportunities for diverse audiences.*



## Water



Audubon's focus is to protect the Platte River and wetlands that are vital for birds and for people.

The Kearney Outdoor Learning Area project at Kearney High School focused on creating an educational wetland for students. The project leveraged funding from the EPA and Nebraska Environmental Trust, and engaged many local conservation and community partners.

Audubon provides technical expertise and leadership to the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program to ensure the Platte River is restored and maintained for threatened and endangered species. Because Audubon considers this a national priority, Rowe started partnership work among organizations between three states ensuring collective efforts towards a better future for the Platte River.



- *In 2019 Spring Creek and the Tri County Prescribed Burn Association implemented prescribed fire on 326 acres of privately owned tallgrass prairie and provided 393 hours of volunteer time and training.*
- *Audubon Nebraska joined forces with Audubon Dakota to hire Cody Grewing, a range ecologist bringing the ACR program and regenerative agriculture message to Nebraska with education and outreach with target audiences.*
- *In the last two years, Rowe has converted 115 acres of cropland back to high-diversity, native prairie.*



## Working Lands



Audubon works to improve habitat at Spring Creek Prairie and at Rowe Sanctuary. We work with private landowners to improve habitat on their lands. Audubon centers serve as demonstration sites where we use a multitude of management techniques, grazing, mechanical clearing, and prescribed burning.

To combat the negative effects of grassland degradation, Audubon has developed the

Conservation Ranching program (ACR). This market-based approach offers incentives for good grassland stewardship through a certification label on beef products. For the first time, consumers can contribute to grassland conservation by purchasing beef from Audubon-certified farms and ranches.

# Dynamic Duo at Spring Creek Prairie

Bill and Diane Edwards have been longtime friends of Spring Creek Prairie. They are a great team on hayrack style wagon rides for school groups and during events such as our recent fall festival. Bill drives the tractor while Diane gives color commentary; educating and sharing lesser known secrets about the prairie, such as the location of badger holes and exceptionally tall or otherwise unique vegetation. Ever the handyman, Bill helps with carpentry projects around the building such as repairing sagging doors. He also makes items from scratch, like the cold-frame greenhouse boxes he made this spring. All this while also assisting with the Spring Creek Prairie Conservation Committee.

Both regularly help during prescribed burns and cutting invasive woody species out of the prairie. They have even been known to show up out of the blue, because they saw that something needed attention. Enjoying the outdoors and nature certainly helps, but they also aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. When the habitat staff at Spring Creek is stretched thin and need an extra hand, we know that we can count on Bill and Diane to answer the call.



## Volunteering for Audubon Nebraska

Our work at Spring Creek Prairie and Rowe Sanctuary would not be possible without our amazing, dedicated volunteers. The volunteer duties are ever-changing but usually include helping with school field trips, land management work, special events, gardening, administrative tasks, and so much more.

To learn more about volunteering at Spring Creek Prairie, email [scp@audubon.org](mailto:scp@audubon.org) or call (402) 797-2301. To be a Rowe Sanctuary volunteer, email [rowesanctuary@audubon.org](mailto:rowesanctuary@audubon.org) or call (308) 468-5282.





# Growing Up as a Rowe Sanctuary Volunteer

Keppy LaClair of Kearney, Nebraska, first visited Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary when she was six years old. After that, she would frequently accompany her mother to volunteer, offering as much help as she could.

As she got older, she assisted with Rowe Adventures Family Programs, monitored the bluebird trail, collected native seeds, and worked at special events. She's even a member of Rowe Sanctuary's fire crew where she participates in prescribed burns.

"It's so much fun to watch the visitors take in the beauty of the cranes waking up from the river in the morning and then returning in the evening," said Keppy.

Keppy's true passion, though, is working with children. "Peer leading is an amazing job because I get to help kids explore nature and come out of their shells," she says. "That's part of the reason I am going into outdoor education. I love helping kids figure out how to stretch their own boundaries."

Everyone at Rowe Sanctuary knows wherever she goes and whatever she does, Keppy will succeed. Her passion and determination as a volunteer at Rowe and in the pursuit of her dreams is an inspiration to everyone.



## We Love Our Volunteers!



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# Donor Spotlight: The Wingfield Family

Spring 2019 brought bad weather and even worse roads to much of Nebraska. When the impact of extreme weather, flooding, and road closures devastated Rowe Sanctuary's crane tourism business, Audubon donors stepped up and filled the financial gap.

Supporters from across the state and around the country responded to the call for support, aided by the offer of two challenge grants to Rowe Sanctuary. One of those challenge gifts was offered by the Wingfield family of Kansas and Colorado.

Greg Wingfield once served as the habitat manager for Rowe Sanctuary and he and his wife, Dena, visited on one of the rare days in March 2019 when the road was actually open. "After witnessing the impact the severe weather and road damage was having on visitation, we knew we wanted to do something to help," Wingfield shared. His sister, Deb Wingfield, was volunteering at Rowe that crane season like she has for many years. She was experiencing firsthand the challenges the weather was creating for visitors, volunteers, and staff. Together with their parents, the Wingfield family made a generous gift that in turn encouraged the generosity of many more people.



Deb, Dena, and Greg Wingfield

Together, our amazing network of supporters are creating a positive future for birds like the Sandhill Cranes. Each and every day, their generous gifts are making an impact for birds and the places they need.

## How You Can Help

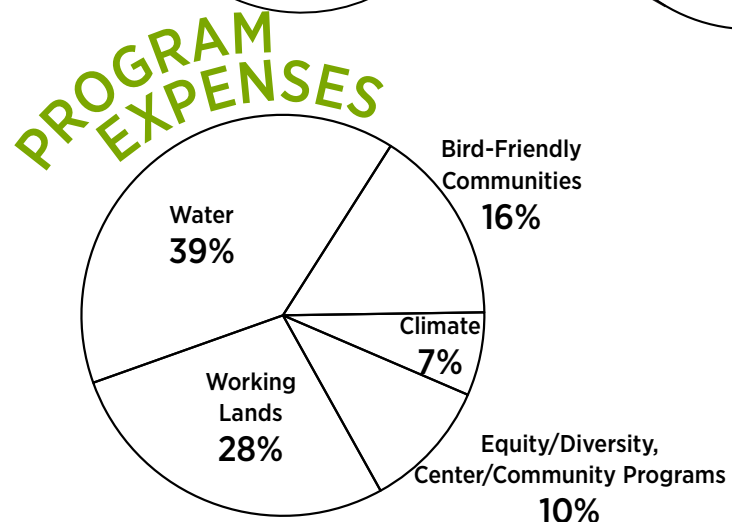
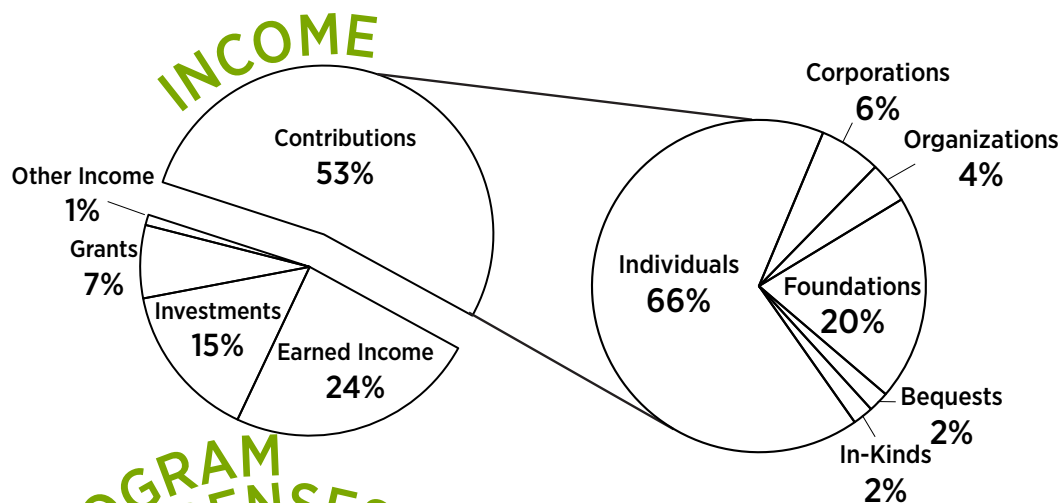
***Make a Cash or Online Donation at [ne.audubon.org](https://ne.audubon.org)*** - Money order or check donations can be mailed to the centers directly or you can donate online.

***Volunteer*** - Call, email or stop in to either center for info on how to become a volunteer.

***Contribute to Science*** - Audubon offers opportunities to get involved in community science projects. Read more at [audubon.org/science](https://audubon.org/science).

***Sign up for our eNews*** - By signing up for our ENews, you will receive opportunities for advocacy throughout the state in addition to bird-related news.





## Income

Contributions.....	\$961,073
Earned Income .....	\$441,170
Investments.....	\$262,963
Grants & Other Income.....	\$141,049
<b>Total Revenue.....</b>	<b>\$1,806,255</b>

## Expenses

Strategic Priorities.....	\$1,095,069
Equity/Diversity, Center/Community Programs.....	\$127,896
General and Administrative.....	\$293,840
Fundraising and Membership.....	\$289,450
<b>Total Expenses.....</b>	<b>\$1,806,255</b>





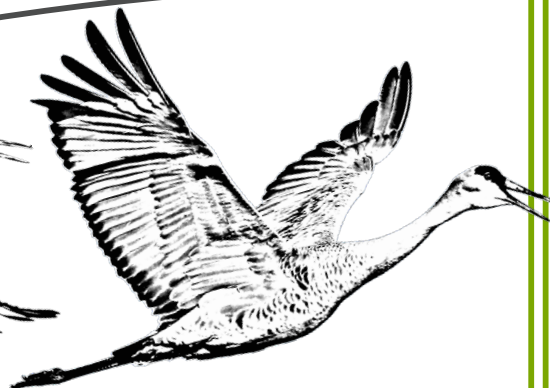
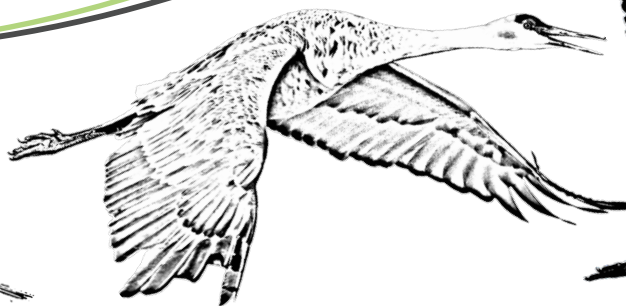
# Audubon | NEBRASKA

*Fiscal Year Breakdown*

**73** events hosted - **13,630** people in attendance



**40 Acres**  
of cropland restored  
to prairie



Audubon Nebraska manages

**3,650**  
acres of bird habitat



attended education programs

**330**  
active  
volunteers  
**7,700**  
hours  
donated

[www.ne.audubon.org](http://www.ne.audubon.org)





# Audubon

## National Audubon Society

225 Varick St, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10014

(212) 979-3000

[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)



## Audubon | NEBRASKA

10665 Bedford Avenue, Suite 202, Omaha, NE 68134

(531) 867-3128

[nebraska@audubon.org](mailto:nebraska@audubon.org)

[www.ne.audubon.org](http://www.ne.audubon.org)

## Directory

### Audubon Centers

#### Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

44450 Elm Island Rd, Gibbon, NE 68440

(308) 468-5282

[rowesanctuary@audubon.org](mailto:rowesanctuary@audubon.org)

[www.rowe.audubon.org](http://www.rowe.audubon.org)

#### Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

11700 SW 100 St, Denton, NE 68339

(402) 797-2301

[scp@audubon.org](mailto:scp@audubon.org)

[www.springcreek.audubon.org](http://www.springcreek.audubon.org)

### Audubon Chapters

#### Audubon Society of Omaha

PO Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103

(402) 445-4138

Nebraska Bird Line (402) 721-5487

[www.audubon-omaha.org](http://www.audubon-omaha.org)

#### Wachiska Audubon Society

4547 Calvert St, Suite 10, Lincoln, NE 68506

(402) 486-4846

[office@wachiskaaudubon.org](mailto:office@wachiskaaudubon.org)

[www.wachiskaaudubon.org](http://www.wachiskaaudubon.org)

#### Wildcat Audubon Society

170188 Spring Creek Road, Mitchell, NE 69357

[www.wyoneb.net/-delara/WildcatAudubon](http://www.wyoneb.net/-delara/WildcatAudubon)

# Boards and Staff

## Staff Based at the State Office

Kristal Stoner  
*Executive Director*  
Autumn Taddicken  
*Director of Development*  
Allison Christenson  
*Communications Coordinator*

## Staff Based at Rowe Sanctuary

Bill Taddicken <i>Director</i>	Soncey Kondrotis <i>Office Manager</i>
Andrew Pierson <i>Director of Conservation</i>	Wendy Horine <i>Volunteer Coordinator</i>
Beka Yates <i>Education Manager</i>	Cody Wagner <i>Habitat Manager</i>
Anne Winkel <i>Crane Festival Coordinator and Outreach Assistant</i>	

## Staff Based at Spring Creek

Meghan Sittler <i>Director</i>	Ed Hubbs <i>Habitat Program Manager</i>
Jason St. Sauver <i>Director of Education and Outreach</i>	Amy Plettner <i>Caretaker</i>
Kevin Poague <i>Operations Manager</i>	

## Audubon Nebraska Board

Rich Vierk – Chair	Dan Lindstrom
Trixie Schmidt	Lisa Smith
Mary Daugherty	Denton Weichman
Mike Forsberg	Tala Awada

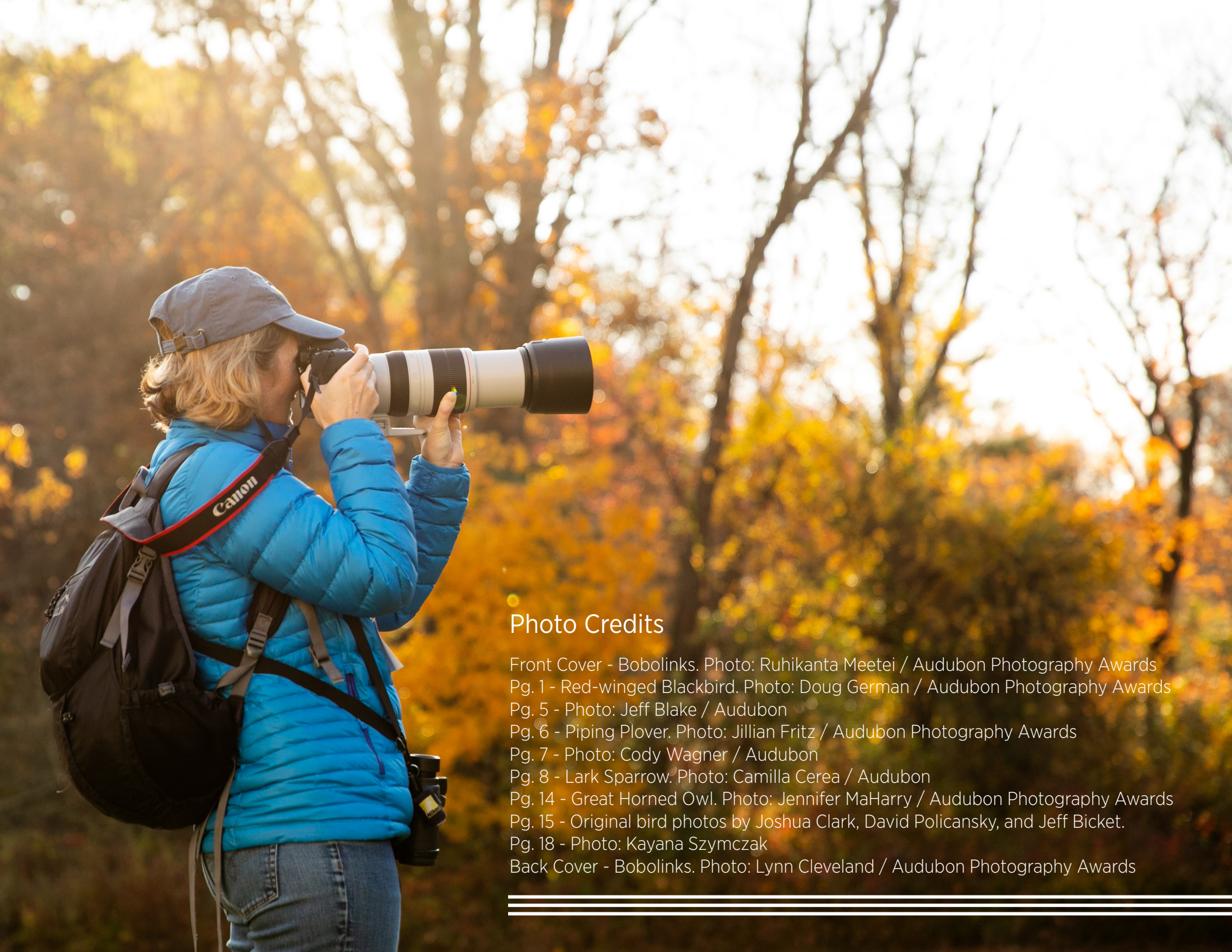
## Rowe Sanctuary Board

Stan Dart - Chair	Ben Hirschfeld
Leslie Abegglen	Carol Lindstrom
Kate Benzel	Steve Martindale
Ed Berglund	Brian Moody
Pamela Bergmann	Heidi Nerverve
Jacy Dunham	Jonathan Nikkila
Dudley Friskopp	Greg Williams

## Spring Creek Prairie Board

Jeff Jewell - Chair	John Becker
Brianne Bayer	Jon Heineman
Judy Carter	Joyce Foster
Sue Kirkpatrick	Austin Klingenberg
Liz Lange	Greta Leach
Marilyn Moore	Jane Stricker
Chris Sommerich	





## Photo Credits

Front Cover - Bobolinks. Photo: Ruhikanta Meetei / Audubon Photography Awards  
Pg. 1 - Red-winged Blackbird. Photo: Doug German / Audubon Photography Awards  
Pg. 5 - Photo: Jeff Blake / Audubon  
Pg. 6 - Piping Plover. Photo: Jillian Fritz / Audubon Photography Awards  
Pg. 7 - Photo: Cody Wagner / Audubon  
Pg. 8 - Lark Sparrow. Photo: Camilla Cerea / Audubon  
Pg. 14 - Great Horned Owl. Photo: Jennifer MaHarry / Audubon Photography Awards  
Pg. 15 - Original bird photos by Joshua Clark, David Policansky, and Jeff Bicket.  
Pg. 18 - Photo: Kayana Szymczak  
Back Cover - Bobolinks. Photo: Lynn Cleveland / Audubon Photography Awards

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