

Take A Field Trip To Audubon Spring Creek Prairie

Before Nebraska was settled and farmers planted crops, it was mostly covered by prairie. The tallgrass prairie was the landscape that greeted the pioneers in eastern Nebraska, but today less than two percent remains.

In an effort to preserve a piece of native tallgrass prairie and inspire appreciation of our prairie heritage, the Audubon Society purchased the 610-acre O'Brien ranch south of

Denton in 1998. The Wachiska Audubon Society purchased 16 acres of adjoining land in 2000, enlarging the site to 626 acres. Audubon Spring Creek Prairie is a rare place today — more than 500 acres of grassland never felt the bite of a plow.

Native flora and fauna thrive amid the beauty of pristine prairie vistas, offering visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience Nebraska's tallgrass prairie. The plant checklist includes more than 350 species. Bird watchers can experience an abundance of bird species — more than 170 species have been documented at Audubon Spring Creek Prairie.

Spring Creek Prairie features five miles of hiking trails, more than 400 acres of native tallgrass prairie, a stream, six ponds, wetlands, springs and a mature burr oak forest. The topography is hilly. The soils are glacial till



with large amounts of sand.

You may also see deer, coyotes, badgers, pocket gophers, beaver, snapping turtles, yellow-bellied racers and other animals.

Audubon Spring Creek Prairie is also special because the Nebraska City-Fort Kearny Cutoff to the Oregon Trail Audubon ran right through the prairie and 140-year-old trail ruts are visible. These trail ruts — imprints of the passage west of freight wagons, oxen and bullwhackers — were officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in July 2002. The wagon ruts are among the oldest (1860 to 1864) of the major alignments of the Trail. The Spring Creek Prairie Trail Ruts are the longest contiguous sequence of ruts still in existence.

Spring Creek Prairie is located three miles south of

Denton, 15 minutes southwest of Lincoln. From Lincoln, take 'O' Street (Highway 6) west out of town to Emerald. At the flashing light, turn south and travel 5 miles to Denton. Follow the road through town as it turns west and comes to SW 98th St.

Spring weekend hours are Sundays, April 27–June 29, 1–8 p.m. This is in addition to regular weekday hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Upcoming Family Programs at Spring Creek Prairie:

- April 26 — John James Audubon Birthday Party & Birdwalk
- June 7 — Firefly Picnic
- July 19 — Spring Creek Prairie Butterfly Count

For more information on educational programs, volunteer opportunities or making a contribution to support these programs, call Marian Langan at 797-2301. (BPO)

Summary of 2002 Nebraska West Nile Virus Surveillance Results

Last summer, Nebraskans were asked to report dead birds to local health authorities. Nebraska Health and Human Services System collected and tested 866 birds for West Nile Virus. Of the birds collected, 511 tested positive. Seventy-two counties in Nebraska reported at least one positive dead bird.

Fifty-four species of birds were tested, with 27 different species testing positive for West Nile Virus. The surveillance focused on two groups of birds: Corvids (crows, blue jays and magpies) and Raptors (hawks, owls, and falcons). Corvids represented 67% of the total birds tested in the study and 78% of the positive results. Raptors made up 19% of the total birds tested and 17% of the positive results.

HORSES: There were 1,100 documented West Nile Virus cases of equines representing 92 of Nebraska's 93 counties. This total ranked Nebraska third among all states behind Texas and Illinois.

HUMANS: A total of 174 human West Nile Virus cases were reported, including eight fatalities, ranking Nebraska

eighth highest of all states. Most people infected with the West Nile Virus will not show any symptoms, approximately 30% may develop "flu-like" symptoms, or, more rarely, an infection of the central nervous systems. In the Nebraska cases, 44 people were diagnosed with meningitis and 44 diagnosed with encephalitis. Five of the eight deaths were related to encephalitis and three related to meningitis. Eighty-six of the total cases showed viral symptoms, 67 people diagnosed, were diagnosed with West Nile fever (flu-like symptoms). The remaining 19 of the 86 viral syndrome cases showed positive test results but had less serious symptoms.

The first Nebraska case was reported Aug. 4, 2002. Cases rose until the week of Sept. 8, when there were 39 cases. The last case of the year was reported Oct. 15.

Of the 174 human cases, 98 were males and 76 were females. The age of patients ranged from one to 93 years old — the average age was 52.5. The virus was most common with patients between 30-44

years of age, but over half of the cases involved patients between 30 and 60 years old. Of the eight fatal cases, six were males, two were females—the average age was 69. The youngest fatality was 19 years old—the youngest West Nile-related death in the country. Forty-eight counties reported at least one case and Hall County had 21 cases, the highest in Nebraska. Lancaster and Scotts Bluff counties both reported two deaths. Buffalo, Clay, Lincoln and nearby Saline County reported one death each.

RESOURCES: West Nile Virus is here to stay. Make sure you protect yourself and your family from mosquito pests. Read the entire 2002 Nebraska West Nile Virus Surveillance Results, visit links to maps illustrating the disease in Nebraska and nationwide, find mosquito control information for your family (including information on repellents) and for horse owners online at lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/Fly.htm. If you don't have access to the Internet, resources are also available from the extension office. (SC)

Environmental Focus



Termite Control Workshop May 22



"Everything Homeowners Need to Know about Termites and Termite Control" will be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road on Thursday, May 22 from 6:30–9:30 p.m. Barb Ogg, Dennis Ferraro and Clyde Ogg will discuss all aspects of termite biology and management. The goal of this workshop is to help consumers make better decisions about termite control. Cost: \$20. (BPO)

1st Annual Walk for the Birds

1 & 3 Mile Family Wellness Walk

Saturday, May 24th
Pioneers Park Nature Center



Registration by May 12th is \$10 per person (includes an International Migratory Bird Day T-shirt, a "Walk for the Birds" bird guide and other fun bird related items). Late registration after May 12th is \$12.

For more information and registration form, visit online at lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/Articles/birdwatch.htm

Join in the International Migratory Bird Day Celebration after the "Walk for Birds"

Household Hazardous Waste Collections for 2003

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| Friday, May 16 | Hickman
Second and Main Streets
3–6 p.m. |
| Saturday, May 17 | Pfizer Inc.
601 West Cornhusker Highway
9 a.m.–3 p.m.
<i>Includes Latex Paint Exchange*</i> |
| Friday, June 20 | Union College , Parking lot
52 and Cooper Streets
3–7 p.m. |
| Saturday, June 21 | Nebraska Wesleyan University
56 and Huntington Streets
9 a.m.–3 p.m. |
| Friday, Aug. 15 | Emerald , TBA |
| Saturday Aug. 16 | Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Dept.
3140 N Street
9 a.m.–3 p.m. |
| Saturday, Oct. 11 | Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Dept.
3140 N Street
9 a.m.–3 p.m. |
| Saturday, Nov. 8 | State Fair Park, 4-H Youth Complex
9 a.m.–3 p.m. |

Items you can bring for disposal:
 • Heavy metals: items containing mercury such as thermometers and thermostats.
 • Solvents: mineral spirits, turpentine, paint strippers and thinners, oil-based paints, varnishes, stains, polishes and waxes.
 • Pesticides: weed killers, garden sprays, wood preservatives, roach powder, rat poisons. You may also bring EPA banned products, like DDT, chlordane, 2,4,5-T, pentachlorophenol, silvex, PCP and Dursban.
 • PCB's: Ballasts from old fluorescent fixtures and capacitors from old appliances including radios, motors and televisions.
 * Latex Paint Exchange only occurs on May 17. Only good, usable latex paint is accepted. Bring only containers that are at least half full.

Leave products in their original container and keep the label intact. Open, leaking or rusted containers should be placed in a clear plastic bag during transport. Do not mix chemicals. Do not bring medicines, explosives or ammunition, fertilizers, used oil, general household trash, antifreeze or batteries.

For more specific information, call the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at **441-8040**