



CRANE RIVER CHRONICLES

IAIN NICOLSON  Audubon
CENTER AT ROWE SANCTUARY

Fall 2009

Giving up is not an option

By Bill Taddicken, Director

Not too long ago, while discussing the Platte River and all the water and invasive species issues with a gentleman from Kearney I was asked, "How do you go on with all these problems and not just give up? It seems insurmountable." I must say I was completely speechless for a few seconds as I pondered that question. All the problems and challenges that the river and our environment face flashed through my mind in a few short seconds.



At this time, 70% of the water in the river is used before it ever gets to Rowe Sanctuary and hundreds of thousands of acres of once prime habitat is degraded to the point that many species that rely on the

Platte River cannot use it. The regulation of water flows has caused the once wide shallow braided river to become narrow and deep over large stretches with former mile wide channels becoming overgrown with trees. Invasive species such as phragmites and purple loosestrife have taken advantage of low water levels and have choked off many miles of channel so water cannot flow freely. On top of this, 90% of our tallgrass prairies are gone that so many of our grassland birds rely upon for survival.

As I checked off all the problems, I was also mentally checking off what Audubon and others are doing to correct the problems. Our work with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program to create a management plan for the river works towards a lot of the water issues. Audubon's continuing fight against invasive vegetation through the Platte Valley Weed Management Area has resulted in thousands of acres of phragmites being treated and removal has begun to open the channels up for water flows. Audubon's Spring Creek Prairie has been able to protect more than 2,000 acres of tallgrass prairie in eastern Nebraska.

Ultimately, my response was that giving up was just not an option. If people do not continue to do all they can to protect and improve our natural world, what will we leave future generations?

On that note, I want to thank all of our supporters and partners for all they do to continue this work to protect our natural treasures. Without everyone's generous support all these issues could become insurmountable. All of you give me the strength to work harder and the faith that we can overcome and provide a fabulous world for the future.

Bill Taddicken

Sanctuary/Center News

Even though this is the 'Fall' edition of our newsletter, we wanted to revisit an event that was held here at Rowe this past summer. On the evening of August 21st, the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center's Stewardship Board held a fundraiser to support the work being done by Rowe Sanctuary for the Platte River and its wildlife.

Approximately 120 people attended the event on what turned out to be a simply gorgeous evening beside the river. Barbecue pork was served for the meal, along with all of the fixins', followed by a live auction of a few pieces of art and a hot-air balloon ride, which was interspersed with live entertainment. Nearly \$6,800 was raised and we would like to give a big THANK YOU to all who were involved with making this a very successful event! (continued on page 3)



Online Newsletter - To receive an email reminder when the online newsletter is posted to the web site, contact kskaggs@audubon.org.

Conservation News - Wetland restoration completed

The wetland restoration project on Rowe Sanctuary's newest property has been completed. This piece of land includes nearly 400 acres of wet meadow and an old channel of the river that has been cut off from the main channel for more than 70 years. This former channel had become silted in and covered with cedar trees and other woody vegetation. Because of these conditions the water flowed only periodically and the trees had decreased the diversity of the area to a solid stand of cedars. It was decided by our conservation committee that a project was needed to restore the wetland aspects of this area.

In the spring of 2009 Rowe Sanctuary received a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund to complete this much needed restoration. The first step was to remove the trees and unwanted woody vegetation. A contractor was hired and 30 acres of trees were removed from the wetland area and another 40 acres of small cedars were removed from the wet meadow portion of the property. It was decided to leave some of the older cottonwood trees to encourage cranes to fly over a set of power lines on the property.

Conservation committee members and several volunteers then marked the excavation lines for the wetland restoration. The excavation was designed to recreate the natural contours of the old channel and create a slough of varied depth that would expose water in parts of it all year. To do this we excavated an average of 18 inches of sediment to go below the ground water table. The excavation was completed in the fall of 2009 and the slough functions wonderfully.

The last step is the reseeded of the excavation area. The area was planted with a high diversity seed mix obtained locally and now nature will have to take its course to complete the planting restoration. The area will now serve a wide variety of species of birds and animals where before it was limited to just a few.

This would not have been possible without the help of all of our individual supporters, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy, the Platte River Recovery Program and many others. As always, these projects require partnerships to make them possible. Thank you to all of our supporters.



Aerial view of our newest wetland restoration

Nature Notes - Out of sight, out of mind (Part two)

By Kent Skaggs, Office Manager

In a previous newsletter article titled 'Out of sight, out of mind', I talked about some of the little creatures that we're oblivious to, mainly because of their size. There are some larger critters however, that fall into the same category.

One example is the Bobcat. I've been fortunate enough to see this North American cat five times over the years, with three of those sightings right here at Rowe Sanctuary. When telling others of a sighting, the usual response is "I've never seen one". For an animal that is the size of a midsize dog, it might seem unusual to go seemingly unseen.

When you look into its behavior, it becomes clearer as to why we don't see this beautiful feline more often. Besides having a marvelously camouflaged fur coat that helps them blend in to their surroundings, Bobcats are largely solitary and are territorial as well. They are also active at times (dawn and dusk) when we typically aren't outdoors, reducing our chances of catching a glimpse of one even further.

Another mammal that falls into this category where I live is the Red Fox. Having a red coat of fur should make this canine easier to see, but unfortunately it shares some of the same behaviors the Bobcat exhibits, including when it is active. I've had one good look at an adult when one happened to walk by the north windows of the center a few win-

ters ago. With a blanket of snow on the ground and bright sunshine lighting it up that day, the image of that fox has been permanently etched into my memory banks.

Somewhat easier to see than his cousin the fox, the coyote is another animal that can go relatively unnoticed, depending on where you live. Coyotes will however tell you they are around by vocalizing with one another, primarily after sunset. I always enjoy hearing coyotes conversing with each other.

There are plenty of other species that can be added to this list. Raccoons, opossums, badgers and skunks are others we know are around, but don't get to see doing what they do naturally very often. Unfortunately, we are often reminded of these species as we see their lifeless remains along roadways.

So if you are fortunate enough to live in an area that provides an opportunity to try and see some of these cool critters, by all means, get out and look for them. And if you do see one, count your self lucky and enjoy the moment.

Back to the coyote for a second. Did you know that coyotes used to be diurnal instead of nocturnal? Did you know that elk used to roam the plains and not the mountains? Why the change? Man. I'll save that discussion for another time. ;)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Calendar of Events

At Rowe Sanctuary

First Sundays at Rowe

Formerly known as Nature Night, this monthly opportunity for nature exploration will be held on the first Sunday of every month at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center. To find out more, just click on 'First Sundays at Rowe' on the home page of our web site or give us a call at 308-468-5282.

Big Bend Audubon Society's monthly meeting schedule

Big Bend is our local Audubon Chapter and there monthly meetings are open to the public. Programs are scheduled the day of meetings and are free of charge. For questions about the programs or meetings, please contact Grant Newbold at 308-830-3070.

Upcoming meeting dates are January 17, February 21 and April 18, with programs to be announced. Please check Rowe's 'Calendar of Events' page on our web site for program information.

National Events

The 110th Christmas Bird Count

December 14 - January 5

The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running Citizen Science event in the world and the information gathered helps scientists learn more about how birds are doing in North America and beyond. For more information, visit www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 12 - 15, 2010

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this event is a great opportunity for families, students and people of all ages to learn about birds in their backyards and parks, while providing valuable data for bird conservation. For more information, visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.

News (continued from page 1)

Another event that took place this summer was Rowe Sanctuary's first BioBlitz. Thanks to support from Toyota through the TogetherGreen program, Rowe Sanctuary staff and volunteers teamed up with professors and students from the University of Nebraska at Kearney to survey plant and animal communities on the sanctuary. The survey was conducted during a 24 hour period that started at 1 p.m. on September 18th and wrapped up on the 19th.



Identifying the subjects.....

In total, 43 individuals helped to identify plants, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, birds and insects. Supper and breakfast were provided for the hard working participants and they enjoyed very pleasant weather conditions during the 24 hour session. We plan on posting the results on our web site in the near future.



.....and recording the data.

Rowe Sanctuary's Wish List

ConservationProgram

- 4X4 Gator All Terrain Vehicle
- New Lap top computer
- GPS unit
- 12 Fireproof coveralls for the volunteer burn crew
- Annual river clearing - \$20,000

EducationProgram

- 2 Seines
- 20 Kick nets
- 1 Proscope (digital microscope)
- 2 Flow meters
- 5 Field microscopes
- 2 Water quality monitoring field kits
- 2 Anemometer
- 10 Digital meat thermometers
- 10 GPS units

Miscellaneous Items

- New color printer
- Golf cart
- Carpeting for the ConAgra Discovery Room
- 2 pair of stereo speakers for the Ron & Carol Cope Viewing Hall

Rowe Sanctuary's Ultimate Wish List

- **\$5 Million Endowment**
- **Volunteer Housing for 20**
- **ADA accessible trail system**
- **Solar panels for visitor center**

Rowe Sanctuary/Iain Nicolson Audubon Center Donors

Rowe Sanctuary would like to thank everyone who has supported our work on behalf of cranes and other wildlife that depend on the Platte River and its associated ecosystems.

(The following gifts were received between July 1 and September 30, 2009)

Organizational Support

\$5,000 and above

Island Foundation

\$75-\$500

Boulder County Audubon Society
Tri-Basin Natural Resources District
Wal-Mart Foundation
Wells Fargo

Individuals

\$500 and above

James & Kathleen McKenzie

\$100-\$499

Jon & Leslie Abegglen
Jerry Kenny & Bridget Barron
Timothy & Tricia Dunlevy
Robert & Susan Elmore
Jo-Ann Garavaglia
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Jeff & Linda Jacobsen
Fiona Jucker
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\$50-\$99

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The support and recognition of all our donors is extremely important to us. We apologize if a donor has been inadvertently left off this list. Please let us know of any missing names so corrections can be made in the next issue.

Become a fan of
Rowe Sanctuary on
facebook!

Another great way to
stay in touch with us
throughout the year!

The Braided River Society

The Braided River Society recognizes generous individual donors whose annual support of \$500 or more sustains our mission to preserve Platte River ecosystems for cranes and other wildlife. We hope you consider joining them, making possible the education and conservation work at Rowe Sanctuary that will help develop a culture of conservation committed to the future of this treasured natural resource.

Members as of September 30, 2009

Whooping Crane

\$10,000-\$24,999

Margery Nicolson

Sandhill Crane

\$5,000-\$9,999

James & Kathleen McKenzie

Paul & Vicki Williams

Bald Eagle

\$2,500-\$4,999

Margot Griswold

Charlotte Griswold-Tergis

Duncan & Janice McGregor

Piping Plover

\$1,000-\$2,499

Jon & Leslie Abegglen

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Marian Brown

Linda Brown

LeRoy & Kate Ellison

Nancy & Larry Forsberg

Kay Horner

John & Jannie Lobel

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Katheryn Russi

Lee & Delphine Sanks

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Emma Jane Wilder

Meadowlark

\$500-\$999

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Dan & Carol Lindstrom

Dean & Trudy Plautz

Bill & Jeanne Ross

Kirk & Jennifer Summers

Kirby Zicafoose

Education - Something new for you crane lovers

By Keanna Leonard, Education Director

Writing a book is no easy task as I found out over the past year. It all started way back during last year's Festival of the Cranes near Socorro, New Mexico.

Paul Tebbel, Robert Kruidenier, Rowe's Volunteer Coordinator Tony Docherty and I had just finished up our fourth six-hour long Crane Behavior workshop in as many days. I was, to put it mildly, exhausted. For some odd reason that is when I get crazy ideas...like writing a book about cranes. The not so crazy thing is I knew exactly who I wanted to work with on the project.

I found Caryl McHarney, an award winning artist, Rowe volunteer and dear friend from New Mexico, in the festival's Art Tent at Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. I began to describe my fatigued-induced idea to Caryl just hoping that she wouldn't think I had lost my mind. Fortunately, she didn't think I had gone completely crazy.

As we sat there and talked, we discussed our passion for the cranes, her love of sketching them and our desire to introduce as many people as possible to these incredible birds. We knew there were good scholarly books people could glean for information about cranes, but the information was not easily accessible to the general public.

The idea was for the two of us to create a book with just enough good facts and trivia to spark in the novice crane watcher an appreciation of these fascinating birds. At the same time we wanted the book to give those long time crane watchers more insight into the behaviors they were seeing.

My task was to write the text. Caryl set to work to bring those words to life with her art. After many revisions, mainly in my writing and months of emails, runs to the post offices and telephone calls, the book is now done and for sale here in the nature store.

Need a sneak preview of the book? Here is the opening paragraph:

"Cranes with their complex, human-like social behaviors have long pulled on our heart strings. Because of this emotional connection, many cultures throughout history have given these tall, beautiful birds human attributes. Though cranes are part of our own culture, most of us do not know a lot about them. Our mission for this book is to introduce you to these captivating birds. Welcome to the Private Lives of Sandhill Cranes."

Oh, yes! The name of the book is *The Private Lives of Sandhill Cranes*. Caryl and I hope that the book brings all who read it a new appreciation for these ancient birds. The added benefit to buying our book is that you help Rowe in our conservation and education work. Thank you in advance for your support.

May the cranes touch your lives as they have touched ours....Keanna



CRANE RIVER CHRONICLES

Rowe Sanctuary
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CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE



100% Post Consumer Waste

The mission of Rowe Sanctuary is to preserve Platte River ecosystems for cranes and other wildlife through conservation and education.



Please send me information on how to name Rowe Sanctuary in my will or retirement plan.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Please mail to the address above or email us at kskaggs@audubon.org. Thank you!

You can now make donations online through our website at www.rowsanctuary.org!

General Information

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary
44450 Elm Island Road
Gibbon, NE 68840
Phone: 308-468-5282
www.rowsanctuary.org

Open Monday - Friday 9 - 5; Sunday 1 - 4
Open 7 days a week during crane season

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Stewardship Board Members:

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