



**Wachiska**  
Audubon Society

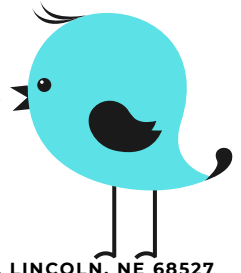
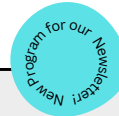
TEL 402.486.4846 WEB WACHISKAUDUBON.ORG EMAIL OFFICE@WACHISKAUDUBON.ORG ADDRESS 3100 N 112<sup>TH</sup> STREET, LINCOLN, NE 68527

# The Babbling Brook

JULY 2026  
VOL. 35-NO. 7

Our 53rd Year of Protecting Nature 1973 -2026

Wachiska Speaker Series and General Meeting  
Thursday, July 9, 7:00 PM  
Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street, Lincoln, NE  
Live Stream:<https://youtube.com/live/0xODCrwYwzQ?feature=share>



## TOBIN BROWN'S BIG YEAR



In 2023 Tobin Brown got into birding, followed shortly by bird and wildlife photography, and it consumed most of his free time. In 2025 he set out to do a Nebraska Big Year, and Tobin Brown set a new state record.

Come hear about Tobin Brown's journey, the Nebraska Big Year and where his adventures took him!

Join us in person for Tobin Brown's presentation: Thursday, July 9, 7:00 PM, Unitarian Church, 6300 A St.

Or live stream:

<https://youtube.com/live/0xODCrwYwzQ?feature=share>

### JULY CALENDAR

- 6 Education Committee: 6PM/ZOOM
- 9 General Meeting/Speaker Series: 7PM UU
- 13 Conservation Committee: 6:30PM/ZOOM
- 19 Volunteer Day: 10AM-Noon/ Prairie Pines
- 21 Board Dinner: 5:30 PM/Prairie Pines

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE by Mark Brohman



A lot has happened over the past few weeks. We had a great **Comedy in the Pines!** More than 220 tickets sold, with 179 attendees enjoying a beautiful evening in the pines. It featured three comedians, music, information tables from Wachiska, Friends of Wilderness and Prairie Pines Partners, along with food from Pepe's Bistro. Thank you to our Volunteer Crew who helped with set-up! We'll have **Sunday Morning in the Pines** (*Acoustic music · Coffee · Nature trails*) on the Wachiska Stage this summer and **October 11th is Music in the Pines**, a concert with Lloyd McCarter and the Honky-Tonk Revival. *Rain date, Oct. 18th.*

We had a great turnout for **Tour the Wild Side**. Five sites around Lincoln were featured, showcasing exceptional native plants and pollinator habitat. Ross Scott, chair of our Conservation Committee, hosted a prairie open house at Wildcat Creek–Ernie Rousek Prairie. Guests enjoyed bird and plant walks while butterfly milkweed and other blooming forbs added plenty of color. Bobolinks, regal fritillary butterflies, an Indigo Bunting and narrowleaf milkweed were among the highlights.

Last month we welcomed two wonderful speakers, Dr. Gabriel Rivera and Jennifer Blankenship, whose bird photography presentations were fabulous. This month, **Tobin Brown will present his "Nebraska Big Year" on July 9th, so don't miss it.**

We want to thank everyone who contributed to Wachiska during **Give to Lincoln Day**. Lincoln saw more than 28,000 donors contribute over \$11 million to local nonprofits. Wachiska received support from 127 donors totaling \$46,912.28. This is our largest fundraiser of the year, and we are deeply grateful for your support.

We also have **a new resident at Prairie Pines—a peacock!** Neighbors had reported sightings, and recently a male peacock has been seen roaming the grounds, often accompanied by a hen turkey. So if you visit Prairie Pines and spot a peacock, you are not imagining things. We've also seen at least two clutches of young turkeys on-site this season.

Finally, we're planning our monthly **VOLUNTEER DAY at Prairie Pines on Sunday, July 19th from 10 a.m. to noon.** If interested in helping, please call or text 402-525-1504.

*Visit one of our prairies and enjoy Mother Nature's canvas of summer colors.*

### PRAIRIE PINES PARTNERS JULY 25 EVENT:

Nature Rendezvous: 9-1PM *A day of exploration Learn about wildlife, insects, mushrooms, trees and more!*

# THE TRUMPETER SWAN

Guest Writer: Sharon Denise Scott



Public domain photo. U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

In the amazing catalogue of living birds that fill the earth, no other animals arouse our interest quite so much. To date, more than 9,000 species of birds inhabit the world. Their colors, songs, and conspicuous presence combine to make birds ideal subjects for aesthetic appreciation. In all of my writing on land birds, I appreciate the effect they have on the earth's ecological and environmental health. Most importantly, I appreciate species that help maintain aquatic ecosystems and water quality. Waterfowl and wetland birds are among the most graceful and ecologically important birds in North America. These birds bring life to the rivers, lakes, and marshes where they migrate and thrive.

Swans are graceful and resplendent birds, and the Trumpeter Swan Society identifies three species of swans in North America: Trumpeter, Tundra, and Mute. The largest of the three is the Trumpeter Swan, which can weigh more than 25 pounds. The Tundra Swan is smaller, and Meriwether Lewis referred to them as "Whistling Swans" because of the distinctive sound produced by their wings. The Mute Swan, a remarkably beautiful species native to Europe, became widely recognized through "The Ugly Duckling," the fairy tale written by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) stands out for its serene, effortless beauty and lives primarily in freshwater marshes and rivers. The Trumpeter Swan Society acknowledges that wetlands are crucial ecosystems for these graceful birds and among the most threatened due to pollution, climate change, and development.

The beautiful Sandhills of Nebraska contain pristine habitat where earth and sky seem to merge into one. It is an ideal place to view the shallow, spring-fed lakes where Trumpeter Swans thrive among the region's numerous aquifers. Water is essential to all living things, and wetlands play an important role in filtering contaminants from water supplies. Healthy aquatic ecosystems serve as natural filtration systems, removing excess pollutants and nutrients while maintaining water quality. Swans thrive in lentic, or slow-moving, waters such as lakes, ponds, and rivers.

Trumpeter Swans are also natural water filters. Using their flat bills equipped with lamellae, they scoop vegetation from the water. The serrated edges of their bills strain out aquatic plants, insects, and small fish while allowing water to pass through. These gorgeous birds rely entirely on wetland ecosystems for foraging and maintain a lifelong relationship with water. They cannot thrive where water quality has deteriorated, making habitat degradation a major threat to their survival.

Because of the Trumpeter Swan's dazzling white plumage, consisting of nearly 35,000 feathers, the species was heavily hunted in the 1600s by market and feather collectors who used the feathers in women's fashion. By the early 20th century, the birds were nearing extinction. Thanks to conservation efforts, however, the Trumpeter Swan has recovered and now stands as an environmental success story.

Trumpeter Swans thrive throughout much of the western United States. They prefer ice-free coastal waters in the Pacific Northwest. Populations have increased in the Rocky Mountains and remain stable within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, although numbers in Yellowstone National Park have declined since the early 1960s. In 2023, Yellowstone reported 23 resident swans and five breeding pairs. The beautiful prairies of the Nebraska Sandhills host Trumpeter Swans during the summer months, while in winter the birds are commonly seen along open aquifer-fed streams. Overall, the Sandhills lakes provide an ideal migratory habitat with an abundance of shallow water and aquatic vegetation.

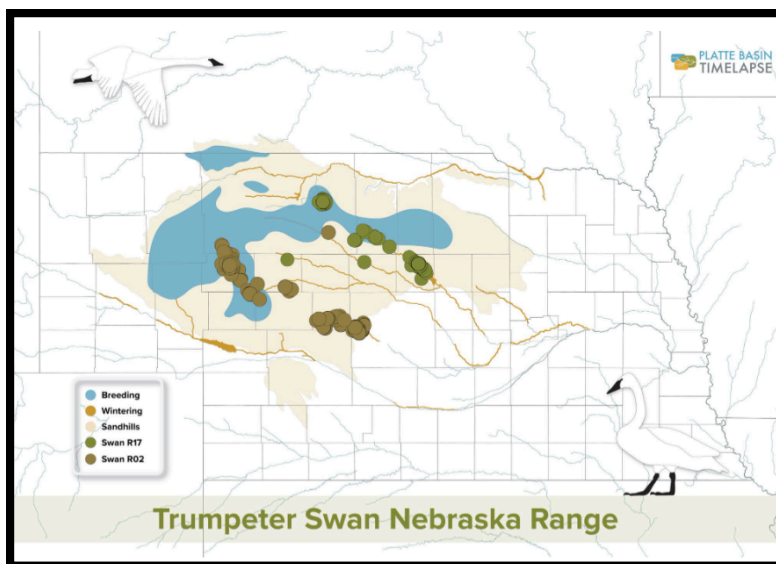


Photo by Dennis Boitnott

Whether you are a Nebraskan or a traveler seeking refuge from the constant movement and noise of modern life, retreat to the rich agricultural landscapes of Nebraska's Sandhills lakes. Take in the serene setting and the ambient sound of water flowing through rivers and marshes. Watch the rhythmic movement of the Sandhills lakes and look for the elegant Trumpeter Swan gliding effortlessly across the water, buoyed by tiny pockets of air beneath its feathers.

*I would like to thank Renee Wilson, Senior Communications Coordinator for Audubon Florida, for her expertise and support throughout the writing of this manuscript. ~Sharon D. Scott*

**Naturalist Sharon D. Scott was born in Thomas County, Georgia. She enjoys swimming, birding, and canoeing.**

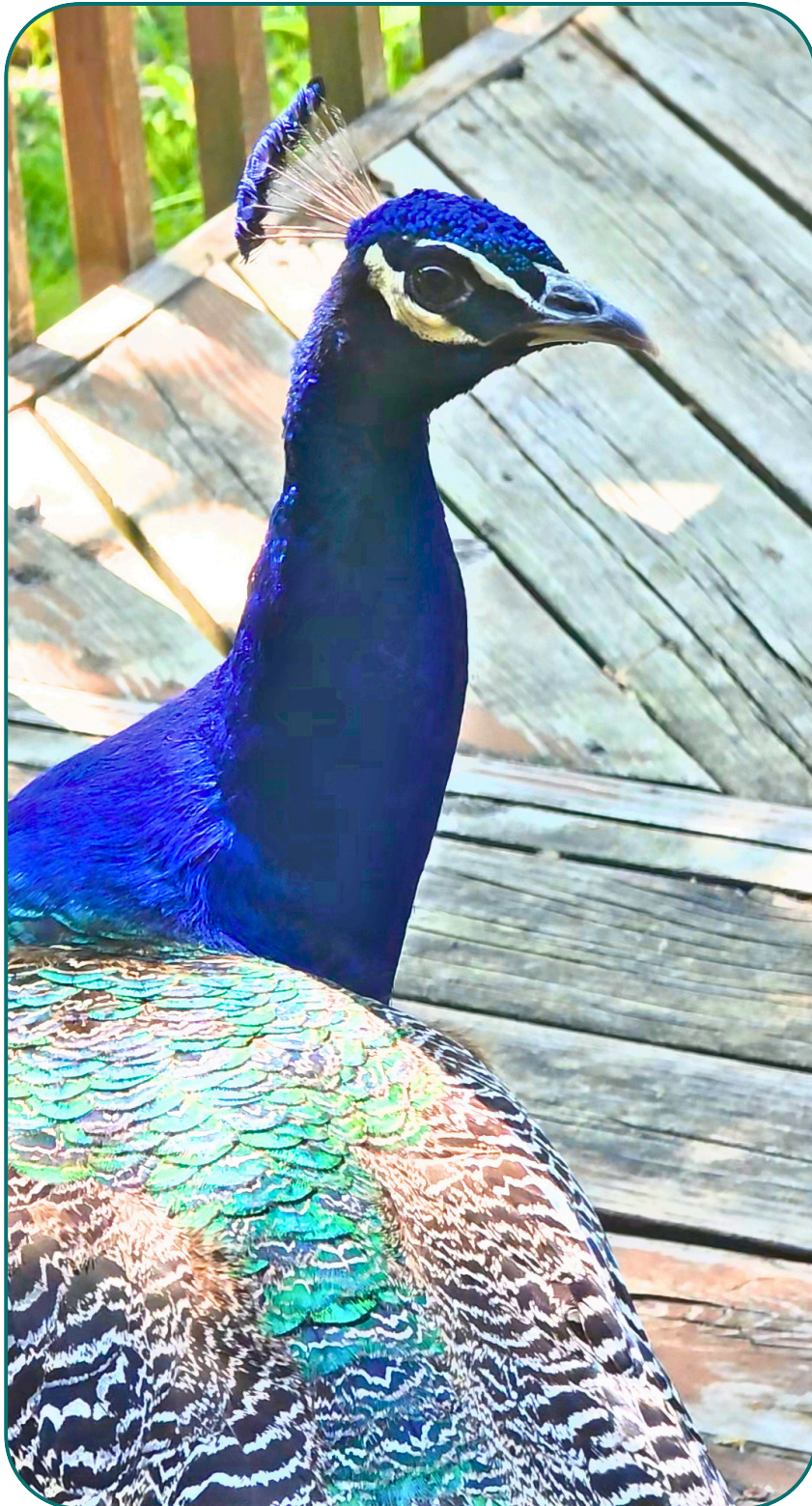


Platte Basin Timelapse. Map by Mariah Lundgren

Works Consulted Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Trumpeter\\_Swan/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Trumpeter_Swan/sounds)  
 s Yellowstone National Park  
<https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/trumpeter-swan.htm>  
 Nebraska Birding Guide  
<https://birdtrail.outdoornebraska.gov/notable-birds/trumpeter-swan/> The Trumpeter Swan Society  
<https://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/swan-information/habitat/wetlands.html> Wye Marsh  
<https://www.wyemarsh.com/trumpeter-swans> U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Duck Stamps  
<https://www.fws.gov/service/duck-stamps>



## IN OTHER NEWS...



**'BLUEY' THE PEACOCK.**  
Wachiska Audubon's new surprise resident at  
Prairie Pines Nature Preserve.  
PHOTO by WJ Bantam



**'BLUEY' THE PEACOCK**  
sees himself in the window.

As I write this, Bluey the Peacock is sitting on the railing of the deck watching the other birds and taking in the view.

In other news, the overflow pond at the windmill was recently upgraded and a new liner was installed by volunteers. Be sure and check it out on your next trip to Prairie Pines!

We hosted two OLLI classes at Prairie Pines last month. The participants loved Prairie Pines, and several had never been here and vowed to return soon with family and friends.

We're planning a seed collection event or two this summer and fall at various prairies.

# ANNUAL BIRDATHON 2026

Here are bird species found by our Wachiska volunteer birdwatchers during the Annual Birdathon 2026!

All participants deserve our thanks! Here are a few people who put in extra work during this time: Larry Einemann, Jeff Meyer, Todd Paddock, Pete Maslowski, Linda Sullivan, Ruth Stearns and Ross Scott. Some sites our birdwatchers visited were: Wilderness Park, Holmes Lake, Capitol Beach Lake, Conestoga Lake, Yankee Hill WMA, Pawnee Lake, Branched Oak Lake, Platte River State Park, and Wilderness Park.

Canada Goose  
Gadwall  
Northern Shoveler  
Wild Turkey  
Great Blue Heron  
Bald Eagle  
Sora  
Killdeer  
Hudsonian Godwit  
Least Sandpiper  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Long-billed Dowitcher  
Rock Pigeon  
Barred Owl  
Belted Kingfisher  
Downy Woodpecker  
American Kestrel  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Yellow-throated Vireo  
Blue Jay  
Tree Swallow  
Cliff Swallow  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Eastern Bluebird  
Gray Catbird  
Cedar Waxwing  
Black-and-white Warbler  
American Redstart  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Field Sparrow  
Lincoln's Sparrow  
Northern Cardinal  
Dickcissel  
Western Meadowlark  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
House Finch  
Eared Grebe  
Cackling Goose  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Whimbrel  
Red-necked Phalarope  
Least Tern  
Willow Flycatcher  
Northern Mockingbird  
Nashville Warbler  
Magnolia Warbler  
Connecticut Warbler  
Wilson's Warbler  
White-throated Sparrow

Wood Duck  
Mallard  
Lesser Scaup  
Pied-billed Grebe  
White-faced Ibis  
Cooper's Hawk  
American Coot  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Sanderling  
White-rumped Sandpiper  
Dunlin  
Ring-billed Gull  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
Chimney Swift  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Least Flycatcher  
Western Kingbird  
Warbling Vireo  
American Crow  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
House Wren  
Wood Thrush  
Brown Thrasher  
Louisiana Waterthrush  
Tennessee Warbler  
Yellow Warbler  
Eastern Towhee  
Savannah Sparrow  
Harris's Sparrow  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
Orchard Oriole  
American Goldfinch  
Great Egret  
Osprey  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Buff-breasted Sandpiper  
Franklin's Gull  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
Tufted Titmouse  
Philadelphia Vireo  
Northern Parula  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Mourning Warbler  
Blue Grosbeak  
Bobolink

Blue-winged Teal  
Ruddy Duck  
Northern Bob-white  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Turkey Vulture  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Semipalmated Plover  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Baird's Sandpiper  
Stilt Sandpiper  
Black Tern  
Mourning Dove  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Eastern Phoebe  
Eastern Kingbird  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Purple Martin  
Bank Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
American Robin  
European Starling  
Northern Waterthrush  
Kentucky Warbler  
Blackpoll Warbler  
Chipping Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Summer Tanager  
Indigo Bunting  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Great-tailed Grackle  
Baltimore Oriole  
House Sparrow  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
Mississippi Kite  
Virginia Rail  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Forster's Tern  
Eastern Wood-Pewee  
Carolina Wren  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Chestnut-sided Warbler  
Bay-breasted Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Scarlet Tanager

Hmm...I don't see  
'peacock'  
on this list..



# WATER WOES IN NEBRASKA

by Chuck Francis

Professor Emeritus, Agronomy & Horticulture, UNL; Visiting Professor of Agroecology, NMBU, Norway

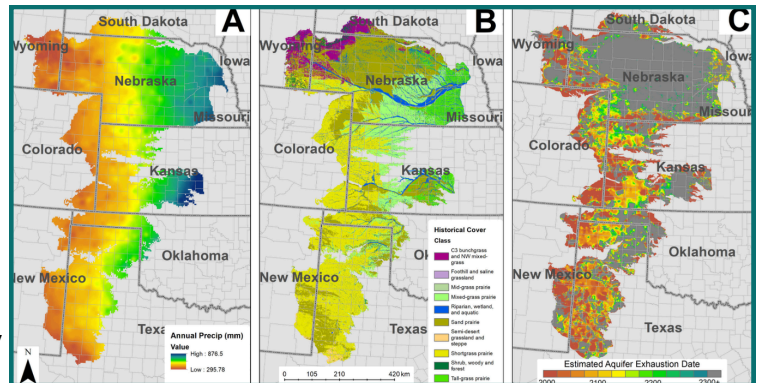
Water will be short this summer in Nebraska! Although this is a recurring theme for us, our warning this year comes earlier and the recurring shortage appears to be more critical. Whether this is due to changing climate or a result of long-term cycles is less important to most people than the immediate challenge. Let's explore the options for citizens of Lincoln, and spend energy on that rather than trying to fix the blame. We also need to focus on strategies other than a short-term fix with an expensive canal in southwest Nebraska.

First, we have to accept that water scarcity and climate change are real. There is no future for us nor wisdom in hoping otherwise. Given the reality of global warming, we need to adjust our activities and expectations to fit this change. The importance of a green monoculture lawn will be wishful thinking in the long-term future. Why not opt for a new cultivar of buffalo grass developed by Keenan Amundsen of the Agronomy & Horticulture Department at UNL? Granted this would still be a monoculture, but new varieties are less thirsty in our dry climate.

An even better solution would be to follow our model applied at home, just mowing whatever

happens to grow in our diverse mix of native and exotic green plants that seem to thrive in our yard. As long as we mow regularly and don't cut the grass very short each week ... leaving 3-4 inches and not cutting more than 1/3 of the plants' height ... the neighbors are satisfied and we can sleep well at night.

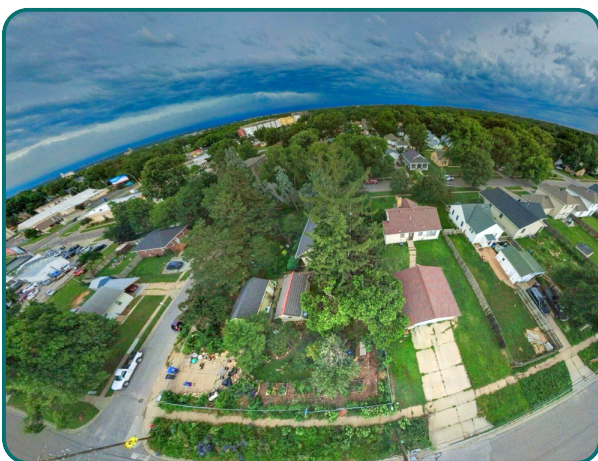
Yet there are more creative alternatives that save labor, use water efficiently, and can still be attractive. Why not convert as much lawn area as possible to planting native perennials? These are adapted to the vagaries of Nebraska weather, are resilient to climate change and take advantage of sporadic rainfall, and emulate the biodiverse native Midwest prairie that European invaders plowed to plant wheat. These lands and agriculture evolved to monocultures of corn and soybean which require more water, chemical, and fertilizer inputs than a mix of adapted plant species that prospered in our area before we decided to plant houses ... and lawns .



Most of the groundwater used in Nebraska comes from the High Plains Aquifer, referred to locally as the Ogallala Aquifer. The aquifer spans eight central U.S. states from South Dakota to Texas, and approximately 90% of Nebraska lies atop it.

Lastly, consider a vegetable garden that could use less city water than a bluegrass lawn if available rainfall is collected in barrels fed by downspouts and later applied to well-mulched garden soils. There are multiple advantages to growing part of your weekly food needs, including replacing produce that travels an average of 1300 miles to reach our local supermarkets. We currently import 90% of the food we eat in Lincoln, food that comes from out of state, and much could be grown here.

Visit a farmers market from May to October and be amazed at what is available! Then we learn that up to 40% of the commercial food we produce is wasted in the system due to purchase in bulk, allowing it to rot in the fridge, and then sending organic garbage to the landfill. We can do better than this, and saving water can become an essential part of our 'Good Life' in Nebraska.



ORCHARD STREET POCKET PRAIRIE  
Lincoln, Nebraska.  
Photo by Orchard Street Pocket Prairie.

## Public Officials

### **President Donald Trump**

1600 Pennsylvania Av NW, Washington DC 20500-0001  
Comment line: 202-456-1111  
Phone: 202-456-1414 Fax: 202-456-2461  
E-mail at website: <http://whitehouse.gov/contact>

### **Senator Deb Fischer**

1248 O St Ste 1111, Lincoln NE 68508  
Lincoln phone: 402-441-4600 Fax: 402-476-8753  
Wash. DC phone: 202-224-6551 Fax: 202-228-0012  
E-mail at website: <http://fischer.senate.gov>

### **Senator Pete Ricketts**

1248 O St Ste 1000, Lincoln NE 68508  
Lincoln phone: 402-476-1400 Fax: 402-476-0605  
Wash. DC phone: 202-224-4224 Fax: 202-224-5213  
E-mail at website: <http://ricketts.senate.gov>

### **Congressman Mike Flood (1st District)**

301 S 13<sup>th</sup> St Ste 100, Lincoln NE 68508  
Lincoln phone: 402-438-1598  
Wash. DC phone: 202-225-4806 Fax: 202-225-5686  
E-mail at website: <http://flood.house.gov>

### **Congressman Don Bacon (2nd District)**

13906 Gold Cir Ste 101, Omaha NE 68144  
Omaha phone: 888-221-7452  
Wash. DC phone: 202-225-4155 Fax: 202-226-5452  
E-mail at website: <https://bacon.house.gov>

### **Congressman Adrian Smith (3rd District)**

416 Valley View Dr Ste 600, Scottsbluff NE 69361  
Scottsbluff phone: 308-633-6333 Fax: 308-633-6335  
Wash. DC phone: 202-225-6435 Fax: 202-225-0207  
E-mail at website: <http://adriansmith.house.gov>

### **Capitol Hill Switchboard**

888-436-8427 or 202-224-3121

### **Governor Jim Pillen**

Capitol Bldg  
PO Box 94848, Lincoln NE 68509-4848  
Phone: 402-471-2244 Fax: 402-471-6031  
E-mail at website: <http://governor.nebraska.gov>

### **State Senator \_\_\_\_\_**

District \_\_\_ State Capitol  
PO Box 94604  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

### **State Capitol Switchboard**

402-471-2311

### **Lancaster County Commissioners**

County-City Bldg  
555 S 10<sup>th</sup> St Rm 110, Lincoln NE 68508  
Phone: 402-441-7447 Fax: 402-441-6301  
E-mail: [commish@lancaster.ne.gov](mailto:commish@lancaster.ne.gov)

### **Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird**

County-City Bldg  
555 S 10th St Rm 301, Lincoln NE 68508-2828  
Phone: 402-441-7511 Fax: 402-441-7120  
E-mail: [mayor@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:mayor@lincoln.ne.gov)

### **Lincoln City Council**

402-441-7515  
E-mail: [councilpacket@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:councilpacket@lincoln.ne.gov)

### **Lincoln Journal Star**

Letters to the editor  
21<sup>st</sup> and N St, Lincoln NE 68508  
E-mail: [oped@journalstar.com](mailto:oped@journalstar.com)

## **Join now! Become a Friend of Wachiska Audubon Society!**

This local chapter membership provides you with voting privileges and access to all our events, programs, and committees, plus 100 percent of your membership donation goes directly to the Wachiska chapter. In addition, Friend members receive our monthly newsletter, The Babbling Brook, in their choice of print or electronic form.

### Friends of Wachiska (local membership)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Individual/Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$35 Family Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Black-capped Chickadee Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Northern Cardinal Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 Western Meadowlark Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 Bald Eagle Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 Peregrine Falcon Friend

Select the level of support that is right for you and make your check payable to Wachiska Audubon Society. All funds will remain with our local chapter and are tax deductible. Mail to:


Wachiska Audubon Society  
Attention: Membership Committee  
3100 N 112th Street Lincoln, NE 68527

\_\_\_\_\_ **I prefer to receive my newsletter by email.**

Please note: If you are already a member of National Audubon Society (NAS) you automatically become a member of Wachiska, but not a Wachiska Friend member. Only Wachiska Friends receive the printed newsletter each month. If you wish to join NAS or receive Audubon magazine, please contact the National Audubon Society directly.

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**REMEMBERING WACHISKA'S HISTORY**

Wachiska means "stream" or "creek" in the languages of indigenous people of eastern Nebraska, the Omaha and Ponca.

The environmental stewardship efforts of the Wachiska Audubon Society take place on the past, present, and future homelands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Otoe-Missouria, and Omaha Peoples, as well as those of the relocated Ho-Chunk, Sac and Fox, and Ioway. We humbly join our efforts with theirs in honoring and stewarding this land of prairies, rivers, and streams.



**Wachiska Audubon Society**

3100 N 112<sup>th</sup> Street

Lincoln, NE 68527

office@WachiskaAudubon.org

www.WachiskaAudubon.org

**WACHISKA AUDUBON LEADERS - 2026**

Executive Director ..... Mark Brohman  
Office Administrator..... WJ Bantam

**OFFICERS**

President ..... \*Theresa Pella  
Vice President ..... \*Ann Briggs  
Secretary ..... \*April Stevenson  
Treasurer/Finance ..... \*Carol Bodeen

**STANDING COMMITTEES/POSITIONS**

Director at Large ..... \*Dakota Altman  
Director at Large ..... \*Andrea Faas  
Director at Large ..... \*Al Davis  
Director at Large ..... \*Ethan Freese  
Director at Large ..... \*Nancy Bare  
Director at Large ..... \*Tom Lynch  
Director at Large ..... \*Roxanne Smith  
Director at Large ..... \*Alyx Knight  
Conservation ..... \*Ross Scott  
Education/Outreach ..... \*Tim Knott  
Membership ..... Linda Brown

\*Denotes voting Board member

Wachiska Audubon Society's financial records are available for examination in the office.

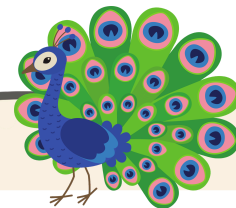
**A GIFT TO THE FUTURE:** A bequest to *Wachiska Audubon Society* is a gift to future generations, enabling our natural heritage to continue. For wills, trusts, and gifts, our legal name is **Wachiska Audubon Society**. Our Federal Tax ID number is **51-0229888**.

**DONATIONS:** To make a simple donation and support our work, **VENMO** us @*Wachiska-Audubon* or **SCAN CODE** here:



**STAY CURRENT! Follow WACHISKA AUDUBON on FACEBOOK.**

If you missed a monthly program or want to view again, Wachiska Audubon's programs are available on YouTube via the homepage at: [www.WachiskaAudubon.org](http://www.WachiskaAudubon.org).



**WACHISKA'S VOLUNTEER DAY**

Prairie Pines Nature Preserve

Sunday, July 19th

10AM-NOON

Snacks & water provided!



**Mission Statement of Wachiska Audubon**

The mission of the Wachiska Audubon Society is to bring people together to preserve and restore tallgrass prairies and other natural ecosystems, promote birding, support native wildlife, provide nature education, and advocate for the sustainability of our natural community.

