

Wachiska Audubon Society's vision: To share the experience and love of nature—that life may sustainably flourish in all its natural diversity

The Babbling Brook

Our 50th Year of Protecting Nature 1973 - 2023

SEPTEMBER 2023

Volume 32 - Issue 9

Wachiska Program and General Meeting — Thursday, September 14, 7:00 p.m., Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street, and also via YouTube link: https://youtube.com/live/TR4gECG4G2E?feature=share

Aldersgate Gardens – A Church's Mission to Serve Birds, Bees, and Our Own Species

by Steven Schafer

or the past eight years, Aldersgate Church at 84th and South streets has been transforming its 1.9 acres of green space into a neighborhood park. The vision for Aldersgate Gardens is an intensively landscaped park with an abundance of plants for wildlife and nature-based playground for children. So far, 122



trees, nearly 800 shrubs, and over 1,500 perennials have been planted. About 75 percent of the original lawn has been eliminated, 700 feet of paths have been installed, and a new playground has been constructed. These numbers will increase each planting season.

Aldersgate Gardens has two rain gardens and a 2,000-square-foot mini-prairie in the swale connecting the rain gardens. The upper rain garden now has a permanent pool of water attracting a variety of wildlife. Eventually, small turtles and frogs will be introduced. As part of our plantings this year, we are implementing a project to demonstrate multiple alternatives to the typical resource-intensive lawns. We will have a dozen examples by this fall. The goal is to be a one-stop shop example for people considering moving from turf grass to a more sustainable option in their yards.

Calendar

September

- Education/Outreach Committee via Zoom, 6:00 p.m.
- 9 Field trip to Fontenelle Wetland, Bellevue, 8:00 a.m. Call Wachiska office for details/directions.
- 11 Conservation Committee via Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
- 14 General Meeting, Aldersgate Gardens Planting for Wildlife, by Steve Schafer, 7:00 p.m. In-person meeting at the Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street, and also live-streamed; no registration needed (see link above)
- 15 Newsletter submission deadline, Wachiska office, 5:00 p.m.

Please visit Aldersgate Gardens and bring a friend or your grandchildren. The gardens are open every day and any time of day. They are easily accessible from Pinedale Avenue, South Street, or the parking lot on 84th Street. Sunday, September 17, is our annual garden party from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. with food, music, and things to do. This year, we are giving away a perennial from Midwest Natives Nursery to the first 150 participants. Everyone is invited. Go to http://aldersgatelinc.org/aldersgate-gardens/ for more information.

Steven Schafer is a retired bureaucrat from the State of Nebraska working in the Governor's Budget Office and moving on to directing information technology projects, developing statewide IT policy, and finally managing the finances of the state's central IT organization. He was part of the deep state that strived to implement the laws and policies of government to serve its citizens. Since retirement, he has split his time between developing Aldersgate Gardens, performing other duties as chair of the Board of Trustees, and volunteering for The Nature Conservancy. He is a long-term volunteer with the Boy Scouts.

The fifth and final wetlands video will be shown following this program for those who care to stay. The 29-minute video on riverine wetlands was produced by Grant Reiner. These diverse systems get their water from snow melt in the Rocky Mountains, ground water from the Ogallala Aquifer and other aquifers, and precipitation from our region's weather. At the heart of this film are the conservation efforts and challenges these wetlands face today, the species that rely on these riverine wetlands, and the people standing up for these amazing places.

Join Wachiska on **Thursday, September 14**, at **7:00 p.m.** at Lincoln's Unitarian Church. This free public in-person talk will also be live-streamed at https://youtube.com/live/TR4gECG4G2E?feature=share. Copy this link into your browser. No registration is needed. The program can also be viewed at a later time. Check Wachiska's website for links to past programs.

Wachiska Audubon Office: 402-486-4846

Email: Office@WachiskaAudubon.org

Executive Director's Message

by Mark Brohman

Wachiska had a few events in late July and August including a tree-cutting task at the prairie just west of Arnold Elementary School, a birding trip to Marsh Wren, a seed collection at Dieken Prairie, and, of course, the annual Tour the Wild Side. I also participated in a few planning meetings for the upcoming Otoe-Missouria annual visit to Lincoln in September.



This month's *Babbling Brook* has our fall birdseed order forms on pages 3-4, so be sure and get your orders in. We offer top-grade Midwest products that don't contain filler seeds. Audubon calendars are back by popular demand; see those descriptions on page 6.

We have learned that the large tract of land adjacent to Nine-Mile Prairie that conservation groups were hoping to acquire or purchase a conservation easement on is now listed with a real estate company for \$30,000/acre. We haven't given up hope, but this dramatic increase in price hurts the chances of this property being saved from development.

You have probably seen recently in the news that the new \$335M, 1,500-bed state prison is being proposed to be built at 112th and Adams Street east of Lincoln. This is *right across the street from Prairie Pines Nature Preserve*, the oldest conservation easement in Nebraska. Walt and Virginia Bagley donated this 145 acres to the University of Nebraska Foundation in 1992 to "be protected forever." If the new prison is built at this site, it will have huge impacts on Prairie Pines, including possible land being taken for road improvements.

Chimney Swift Towers

by Mark Brohman

Bluebirds Across Nebraska (BAN) has a new project, and they are looking for partners. BAN is installing chimney swift towers in Eastern Nebraska. So far, they have installed one at Ponca State Park and two



at Schramm Park Recreation Area. Now they are working with Lincoln's Parks and Recreation Department to place several towers around Lincoln.

Chimney swifts spend their time flying when they aren't nesting or roosting overnight. They do not have the ability to perch like most birds. With declining numbers of chimneys available across the U.S., swift numbers have dropped sharply. BAN is determined

to help in the recovery efforts by erecting structures that mimic chimneys and provide a roosting and nesting environment.

The towers are 15 feet tall with 2.5 inches of metal on the corners for extra support from the base to the top. Waterproof barnwood salvaged from a barn is used on the exterior. There is triple-wall construction with vertical one-inch by four-inch grooved plywood on the interior for the swifts to cling to.

BAN is seeking partners to help in their efforts to erect structures and educational signage. A donation of \$4,000 pays for a tower, sign, installation, and plaque featuring your name(s) or a business on the tower. A dedication ceremony will commemorate your contribution. Smaller donations of any size are welcome, and your name will appear in the BAN newsletter as a contributor. Wild Bird Habitat Stores is underwriting a tower to be placed on UNL's East Campus.

Donations can be mailed to Bluebirds Across Nebraska, P.O. Box 67157, Lincoln NE 68506-7157. For more information, contact Steve Eno at 402-783-3011 or Sandy Seibert at 402-334-8691.

Unseen and Underfoot: The Hidden Diversity of the Plains



A unique photography exhibit featuring both above-ground and below-ground beauty and

diversity of our Nebraska prairies and plains will be featured August 31 through September 30 at the WallSpace-LNK Gallery, 1624 South 17th Street. Gallery hours are 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday with extended hours to 8:00 p.m. on First Friday (September 1).

Wachiska member Dr. Tom Powers is a nematologist at UNL. His lab samples soil from various sites, often prairies, to collect nematodes—microscopic worms present in all habitats on the planet. They are the most abundant multi-cellular animals on Earth but are overlooked and under-appreciated due to their small size and subterranean habitat. This exhibit seeks to change that by showcasing the variety, strangeness, and beauty of these below-ground creatures and pairs them with images of the above-ground prairie community.

There are eight selected prairie sites and one unique locality featured in the exhibit. Those around Lincoln are Pioneers Park, the Lancaster County Prairie Corridor, Nine-Mile Prairie west of Lincoln Airpark, and Spring Creek Prairie near Denton. Other prairies sampled are Wachiska's Knott Prairie near Yutan, Willa Cather Prairie in Red Cloud, Switzer Ranch near Calamus Reservoir, Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the Alkaline Lakes in the western Nebraska Sandhills. The non-Nebraska site is the McMurdo Dry Valleys of Antarctica.



Wachiska Audubon Fall 2023 Birdseed Sale Order Form

	Audubon Society Southeast Nobrasks	Bag Size	Bag Code	Pri	ce Each	Quantity	Total Cost
		ALL PRICES INCLUDE SALES TAX					
FEED MIXES	Standard Audubon Mix	40 lb bag	ST40	\$	49.00		\$
	Classic Audubon Mix	20 lb bag	CL20	\$	34.00		\$
		40 lb bag	CL40	\$	50.00		\$
2	Attraction Audubon Mix	35 lb bag	AT35	\$	67.00		\$
	Woodpecker Gourmet	20 lb bag	WO20	\$	45.00		\$
	Bushy Tail Treat	20 lb bag	BT20	\$	38.00		\$
	Millet, White (98%)	50 lb bag	MI50	\$	48.00		\$
	Peanuts, shelled rejects	20 lb bag	PR20	\$	40.00		\$
(0	Safflower Seed	20 lb bag	SA20	\$	40.00		\$
\tilde{c}		50 lb bag	SA50	\$	92.00		\$
SEEDS	Safflower Seed, Nutra Saff	20 lb bag		\$	40.00		\$
SE	Sunflower Hearts, coarse	20 lb bag	HC20	\$	55.00		\$
		50 lb bag	HC50	\$	110.00		\$
	Sunflower Hearts, fine	20 lb bag	HF20	\$	57.00		\$
	Sunflower Seed, black oil	25 lb bag	SB25	\$	32.00		\$
SUET	High Energy Treat, 11.75 oz. cake		EN-C	\$	2.00		\$
S A	Berry Treat, 11 oz. cake		BT-C	\$	2.00		\$
	Total number of bags and cost (All prices INCLUDE sales tax)						\$
	Tax Deductible Donation to support Wachiska's education & conservation activities Total Enclosed. Make check payable to Wachiska Audubon Society.						\$
							\$

Name (Print)	Email address	Phone Number (required)

Mailing Address

This form and your check must be postmarked by Wednesday, October 4, 2023

Mail to: Wachiska Audubon Society Birdseed Sale - 4547 Calvert St, Suite 10,

Lincoln NE 68506-5643

ORDER PICK UP DATES - MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

PLEASE—Plan to pick up your order during one of these times
Friday, October 13
Saturday, October 14
3:00 -6:00 p.m.
9:00 -11:00 a.m.

Note: stay in car; we will bring the seed to you.

Pick up location: 14th & Arapahoe streets (between Van Dorn & Hwy 2)

Are you interested in volunteering for the birdseed pick up

Yes (check box)

Wachiska Audubon Fall 2023 Birdseed Sale & Fundraiser

Wachiska's Birdseed Sales are an important part of our fundraising and offer you a great deal on birdseed! Our prices are very competitive. The great majority of Wachiska's budget for education and conservation programs comes from donations and fundraising, and our twice-a-year birdseed sales are two of our major fundraisers. If you feed birds regularly, or want to give it a try, please buy from Wachiska. Our new convenient pick up location in SW Lincoln makes it easier than ever to get your birdseed. We depend on your purchases, and so do our feathered friends! Thank you!

FEED MIXES

Standard Audubon Mix – white millet, sunflower seed, cracked corn, peanuts, oat groats

Classic Audubon Mix – sunflower seed and hearts, white millet, cracked corn, safflower seed, peanuts, oat groats

Attraction Audubon Mix –sunflower seed and hearts, safflower seed, peanuts, raisins, protein pellets

Woodpecker Gourmet – 75% nuts (almonds, peanuts, walnuts), pumpkin seed, corn, black oil sunflower seed and hearts, safflower seed

Bushy Tail Treat – peanuts, sunflower seed, whole corn, raisins, pumpkin seed, feed pellets. Treat your favorite backyard squirrels and keep them away from the bird feeders!

SUET CAKES

High Energy Treat – sunflower seeds, millet, cracked corn; enjoyed by most wild birds

NEW! Berry Treat - a wonderful winter treat

SEEDS

White Millet (98%) – popular with cardinals, mourning doves, house finches, juncos, sparrows

Peanuts (shelled) – attractive for woodpeckers and blue jays

Safflower Seed – good for house finches, chickadees, cardinals, wood peckers – NOT FAVORED by squirrels and grackles.

Nutra Saff Seed is without the hard, outer shell.

Sunflower Hearts – highly prized by birds and leave less mess—use coarse hearts for feeders with large openings that might allow fine hearts to drop out

Black Oil Sunflower Seed – favored by most seedeating birds; high oil content for more energy

Additional copies of this flyer and the order form are available on our website:

www.WachiskaAudubon.org.

ORDER PICK UP DATES - MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!

Pick up site is: N.W. Corner of 14th & Arapahoe Street (between Van Dorn & Hwy 2) in Lincoln.

Look for Signs

Reminder: stay in your car; we will bring the seed to you.

Friday, October 13 Saturday, October 14 3:00 -6:00 p.m. 9:00-11:00 a.m.

PLEASE—Plan to pick up your order during one of these times.

Orders that are not picked up cause a lot of extra work for our volunteers whose help we greatly appreciate! If it is totally impossible for you to pick up your seed, please email Arlys at **office@wachiskaaudubon.org** to make alternate pick up arrangements.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to assist, please contact Jeffrey Meyer, 402/483-2757.

Fall Birdseed Sale this Month – Live On-line and Mail-in Orders

by Cathy Shaner, Birdseed Sale Coordinator

Plan to order your fall birdseed from Wachiska by October 4. Check Wachiska's website at https://www.wachiskaaudubon.org for ordering information, order form, seed descriptions, mailing deadline, and pick up dates. This event is a major fundraiser for Wachiska and began 35 years ago for our feathered friends.

On-line orders are live September 1 and continue through October 4. Printed mail-in orders must be postmarked by October 4 (see forms on pages 3-4).

Pick up dates are Friday and Saturday, October 13 - 14. If you can help on these dates, please contact Jeff Meyer at 402-483-2757 or the Wachiska office at 402-486-4846.

Tour the Wild Side Started Out Soggy

by Mark Brohman

Wachiska's third annual Tour the Wild Side began with heavy rain and wind July 29th, but by noon the clouds lifted, and it turned out to be a nice afternoon. Tours included one commercial site (Assurity), one public site (Union Plaza), and five private homes. Wachiska wants to thank the homeowners (Altmans, Dawsons, Gilbert, Malloy-Tanners, and Suttons).

A big thank you to our sponsors: U-Stop, Union Bank and Trust, Wild Bird Habitat Stores, Great Plains Nursery, LES Pollinator Program, and Runza. We also want to thank those contributing door prizes: Doug Tallamy, Benjamin Vogt, Raptor Conservation Alliance, Hub Café, Nebraska Nursery, and Urban Trails Gardens.

Cookies Anyone?

In order to continue the long-time tradition of having cookies with conversation, several donors will be needed for the remainder of this year—September, October, and November. Contact Arlys or Mark in the office if you can provide treats or have suggestions. Thanks to all.

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center Upcoming Programs

Third Tuesday Bird Outing

Tuesday, September 19 – 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

HOOT 'N' HOWL FEST

Saturday, October 7 – 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

More information on these and other programs can be found on our website, https://springcreek.audubon.org/events. Questions to 402-797-2301; scp@audubon.org.

Wachiska Board Nominations Open for the 2024 Term

by Theresa Pella, President

There are two officer positions, Secretary and Treasurer, and up to five director-at-large positions that membership will elect during the November annual meeting. The term for all positions is two years which begin January 1, 2024. Eligible candidates must be a National Audubon Society member or Wachiska Friend (or both). An important side note is that if a candidate is nominated by others, it is with the candidate's consent.

Nominating committee members Andrea Faas, Carol Hinkle, and Theresa Pella, in consultation with the executive director, will recommend a slate of candidates to the Board prior to the November meeting. Nominations for both Board and director positions can be made by September 30, 2023. If you'd like to nominate yourself or someone else, please email me at pella t@yahoo.com.

Wachiska's 50th Anniversary – Birds, Prairies, and People

by Theresa Pella, President

Wachiska's 50th anniversary celebration will take place on **Sunday, December 3**. A 1:00 p.m. luncheon will honor chapter leaders and partners followed by a presentation by Doug Tallamy at 4:00 p.m., both at UNL's Innovation Campus. *Online registration will open in early October via Wachiska's website*. Detailed information will be included at that time. Both events will be open to members, Friends, and the public, but attendees must register for each or both events.

Tallamy is an author, entomologist, ecologist, and conservationist. To become familiar with his work, go to https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-poor-proles-almanac/id1523042499?i=1000621330604.

To keep the cost of the <u>luncheon</u> reasonable (\$40/person) and to bring <u>Tallamy's talk</u> to the event at no cost to attendees, planning group members April Stevenson, Ann Briggs, Mark Brohman, and Theresa Pella have been working with potential sponsors. If you'd like to become a sponsor or know of an organization or individual that may want to be part of this special event, contact any of the above.

Many thanks to the sponsors to date: Wild Bird Habitat Store, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Marilyn McNabb, Stock Seed Farms, Midwest Natives Nursery, Aldersgate Gardens, the Unitarian Church's Green Sanctuary Committee, Joel Sartore, and the LES Pollinator Program.

2024 Audubon Calendar Collection

























Featuring detailed, full-color photographs accompanied by expert text, Audubon Calendars provide a daily infusion of birds and nature. Each purchase supports the National Audubon Society's Mission to protect birds and their homes.

NOTE: Ordering deadline for 2024 calendars is October 4, 2023.

PRICING: ALL PRICES INCLUDE TAX AND SHIPPING. #1--#4--#6--#11 marked \$16.99 sell for \$18.00. #2--#3 marked \$22.99 sell for \$24.00. #5--#7--#8--#9 marked \$15.99 sell for \$17.00. #10--#12 marked \$8.99 sell for \$10.00.

NO EXTRA CALENDARS WILL BE AVAILABLE, so place your orders now.

Check the Wachiska website to view these beautiful calendars in color at www.wachiskaaudubon.org.

Call or email the Wachiska office by October 4 to order. Phone 402-486-4846 or email office@wachiskaaudubon.org.

All orders will come to the Wachiska office for pickup in Mid-November.

You will be notified via email or phone. Payment will be due when calendars are picked up.

Thank you very much for your support in this fundraiser for Wachiska Audubon.

Public Officials

President Joe Biden

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

139 Russell Senate Office Building Washington D.C. 20510 Wash. DC phone: 202-224-4224 Fax: 202-224-5213 E-mail at website: http://ricketts.senate.gov

Congressman Mike Flood

301 S 13th St Ste 100, Lincoln NE 68508 (1st District) 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 10th St Rm 110, Lincoln NE 68508 Phone: 402-441-7447 Fax: 402-441-6301 E-mail: 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: <u>mayor@lincoln.ne.gov</u>

Lincoln City Council

402-441-7515 E-mail: councilpacket@lincoln.ne.gov

Lincoln Journal Star

Letters to the editor, 21st and N St, Lincoln NE 68508 E-mail: <u>oped@journalstar.com</u>

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)

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

Wachiska Audubon Society Attention: Membership Committee 4547 Calvert St Ste 10 Lincoln NE 68506-5643



American Goldfinches

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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Lincoln NE 68506-5643



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In the Past Half Century

by Arlys Reitan

Wachiska's 50th anniversary year is scurrying by. This issue of *The Babbling Brook* is jam-packed with news, fall birdseed sale, 2024 Audubon calendars, and lots of events always happening during the busiest time on the prairie. Thus, this column will be very short this month.

The photo gallery reminds us of the project in May 1993 when several Wachiska members joined others up on the Niobrara River to erect a wooden foot bridge over a low, wet area at Smith Falls State Park near Sparks, Nebraska. It became known as "Wachiska Crossing" and stood for several years. However, this spring, members checked it out and could no longer find the foot bridge nor the sign. Progress and deterioration take their toll over time.

WACHISKA AUDUBON LEADERS - 2023

Executive Director	. Mark Brohman
Office Administrator	. Arlys Reitan

OFFICERS

President	*Theresa Pella
Vice President	*Andrea Faas
Secretary	*April Stevenson
Treasurer	*Dylan Aufdenkamp

STANDING COMMITTEES/POSITIONS

STANDING COMMITTEES/FOSTTIONS				
Director at Large	. *Dakota Altman			
Director at Large	. *Ann Briggs			
Director at Large	. *Doug Campbell			
Director at Large	. *Ethan Freese			
Director at Large	. *Stu Luttich			
Director at Large	. *Mercy Manzanares			
Director at Large	. *Kris Powers			
Conservation	. *Ross Scott			
Education/Outreach	. *Tim Knott			

*Denotes voting Board member

For contact information of officers and committee chairs, call the Wachiska office at 402-486-4846.

Mission Statement of the Wachiska Audubon Society

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.

Wachiska Audubon Society 4547 Calvert St Ste 10 Lincoln NE 68506-5643

402-486-4846 office@WachiskaAudubon.org www.WachiskaAudubon.org



If you missed a monthly program or want to view one again, Wachiska Audubon's monthly programs are available on YouTube via the homepage at www.WachiskaAudubon.org.



Wachiska is participating with Give Nebraska. Through a payroll deduction system, your donations will be automatically withdrawn from your paycheck. There are 75 nonprofit agencies that are beneficiaries, and more than 100 worksites participate. You can give a little bit each paycheck, and your contributions can add up. Your donations through Give Nebraska are tax deductible. Check with your employer to see if they are part of Give Nebraska.

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**.



