

# PLAINS SAFARIS

A CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND CONSERVATION IN THE GREAT PLAINS

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## ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



**Welcome to the Great Plains!** This vast and varied region, stretching from Texas to Manitoba and from the Rocky Mountains to the Missouri River, contains wonderful opportunities to experience landscapes, ecology, and communities of all sorts.

And isn't that why we travel? To experience new things, see new areas, explore other cultures, and to be outside. People have long immersed themselves in nature to observe, smell, touch, and experience the outdoors. Today, many of us lead mostly indoor lives, yet somewhere in our minds, we know that being outside brings many physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. But opportunities to be outside for city dwellers are sometimes limited, and when people do get outside, they tend to use open areas as a kind of natural playground for recreational activities. Pleasurable as these activities are, they can be one-sided, drawing on nature for our benefit.

But as concern for the health of our planet increases, people want their travel to have more meaning. That has spawned a different and fast-growing form of travel with a different flavor – ecotourism. This is travel designed to engage with the environment, contribute to its survival,

and benefit landowners. Admittedly, much of ecotourism's fun is simply the joy of seeing: A wild elephant viewed from 30 feet away is an awesome sight, as is the endless whistles, alarms, and frenetic activity of a prairie dog town. Jane Goodall, on one of her many trips to Nebraska to view a half-million or more Sandhill cranes temporarily gathered along a short stretch of the Platte River, labeled their migration "one of the seven wonders of the natural world." The Great Plains offers an astonishing variety of nature to absorb, experience, and enjoy.

But ecotourism invites us to do more. It puts us in an intimate encounter with nature, encouraging us to learn about the environment and how we can preserve it. Ecotourism stimulates our curiosity about the natural world, it builds our understanding of natural processes, and it helps us develop an appreciation of ourselves as nature's stewards. Most importantly, it offers us who are concerned about the planet's health a way to combine enjoyable pastimes with something more meaningful. Most vacation travel offers amusement, but ecotourism is different. It tends to transform one's consciousness in ways that affect us long after the trip is over, and it also helps sustain the enterprises and organizations who are stewards of natural places.



How does ecotourism promote conservation? If ranchers and other landowners want to attract ecotourists, they will provide protected habitat and sufficient wildlife to create a meaningful environmental experience. Ecotourists arrive and spend money for access, lodging, food, guides, tours, and other services offered by landowners and others in the nearby communities. The cycle is completed when ranchers and landowners see they have an incentive and reap an economic reward for maintaining habitat and protecting the wildlife that attracted the tourists.

Private enterprises aren't the only ecotourism providers – sites run by non-profit organizations, national and state parks, and many other wildlife refuges and conservation areas are all key in educating visitors, protecting wild areas, and instilling a sense of stewardship. These different entities work together because successful ecotourism requires many kinds of models. The goal of this conference is to bring together these various groups to have a conversation about the Great Plains' current ecological status and how nature-based tourism can work in tandem to preserve natural landscapes and build thriving communities. *Plains Safaris* is full of tools for potential ecotourism providers, research on the Plains' current condition, and inspiration for future opportunities.

*Learn more about the Center's ecotourism work at [go.unl.edu/ecotourism](http://go.unl.edu/ecotourism) or [VisitThePrairie.com](http://VisitThePrairie.com). Explore Nebraska's ecotourism offerings at [visitnebraska.com](http://visitnebraska.com). Follow your own route through the Great Plains by visiting one of the region's many designated Scenic Byways.*



# CONFERENCE PARTNERS



The Center for Great Plains Studies is a regional research and teaching program established in 1976 at the University of Nebraska. The mission of the Center is to foster the study of and appreciate for the people, cultures, and natural environment of the Great Plains. A four-campus entity, the Center operates in Lincoln, Neb. This is the Center's 44th annual Great Plains Symposium, an interdisciplinary event that looks at important topics in the region.

## Visit Nebraska

The Nebraska Tourism Commission has a mission to expand Nebraska's dynamic and diverse travel industry, making it more viable by creating awareness, and attracting increased visitors which results in greater tourism revenue and economic gain throughout the state. They host an annual agri/eco tourism conference.



The Heartland Byways Conference is hosted biannually among the states of Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa as a continuing education opportunity for leaders and volunteers of America's Scenic and Historic Byways as designated by the Federal Highway Administration. The conference addresses topics focused on the four core learning areas essential to the success of Scenic and Historic Byways: Byway Organization, Finances, Corridor Management, and Visitor Experiences.

# SUPPORTERS



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Nebraska Wine and Grape Growers Association

# EXHIBITORS

*A big thank you to our table exhibitors. Visit them in Diamond rooms 1 & 6 during the breaks.*

AAA

*American Road Magazine*

Brush Buck Tours

Calamus Outfitters

Center for Rural Affairs

Crane Trust

CTM Media Group

FES Foundation Educational Services

Flint Hills Discovery Center

Grow Nebraska

Hollman Media

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Nebraska Lincoln Historic Byway

North Platte/Lincoln County Visitors Bureau

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Missouri Arboretum, Northwest Missouri State University

Optix Digital Media

Prescription Pyro LLC

PostcardJar.com

Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway

Southern Plains Land Trust

USDA Rural Development

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation & Natural Resources Conservation Service





Photo by Daniel Clausen

# SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

- am/pm Optional pre-conference field trips and workshops: see page 21 for descriptions.
- 
- 12–4 pm **Registration** at Younes Conference Center, 416 W. Talmadge Rd.
- 
- 5:30–7 pm **Reception** at Museum of Nebraska Art, 2401 Central Ave.  
Shuttles available to and from Younes Conference Center entrance. Shuttles will run between the two locations at regular intervals, roughly every 20 minutes.
- 
- 7:30–9 pm **Keynote: Joel Sartore**, *National Geographic* photographer, Ark Project Founder  
Merryman Performing Arts Center, 225 W 22nd St., ticketed event  
Introduction: Charlie Bicak, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, UNK  
Sartore is an award-winning photographer, speaker, author, teacher, conservationist, *National Geographic* fellow, and regular contributor to *National Geographic* magazine. He specializes in documenting endangered species and landscapes around the world. Sartore is also the founder of the Photo Ark, a 25-year documentary project to save species and habitat.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19

YOUNES CONFERENCE CENTER / ROWE SANCTUARY

- 7:30 am **Registration** opens at Younes Conference Center
- 
- 8 am **Welcome** from organizing partners, Banquet room (entrance: Diamond 4)  
Rick Edwards, Director, Center for Great Plains Studies  
Doug Kristensen, Chancellor, University of Nebraska at Kearney  
John Ricks, Executive Director, Nebraska Tourism Commission  
Muriel Clark, Heartland Scenic Byways
- 
- 8:45–10 am **SESSION 1: SEMI-PLenary**
- **Dan Flores**, Historian, author of *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains Safari, American-Style: Shooting Up the Great Plains in the 1800s*  
Diamond 2 & 3 | Moderator: Jeff Wells, UNK  
Flores will lay out the historical beginnings of “ecotourism” on the American Great Plains by surveying the discovery of Plains wildlife by European and American elites like William Drummond Stewart, Sir George Gore, Grand Duke Alexis, and Theodore Roosevelt. These men, and many others who followed their lead, were the first tourists drawn to the American Plains for the same sorts of adventures that drew European elites to Africa. While their experiences likely won’t serve as models for twenty-first century Great Plains ecotourism, what drew them west — a wildlife bounty similar to that afforded by the Serengeti and Masai Mara — is instructive for our time.



- **Martha Kauffman**, Managing Director, World Wildlife Fund's Northern Great Plains Program

*Conservation and the Future of the Great Plains*

Banquet room (entrance: Diamond 4) | Moderator: Michael Farrell, Platte Basin Timelapse

Conservation efforts across the Great Plains are scaling up, but are we prepared to meet the coming challenges posed by climate change, the growing demand for food and energy, and other stressors? This talk will examine the challenges we face, the positive changes that are occurring and the biggest opportunities for conservation of one of the last great grasslands on the planet.

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10 am **Break:** Visit exhibitors in Diamond 1 & 6

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10:30–11:45 am **SESSION 2: CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

- **Michael Forsberg, Michael Farrell, Mary Harner**, Platte Basin Timelapse Project

*A Watershed in Motion: The Platte Basin Timelapse Project*

Diamond 2 & 3 | Moderator: Platte Basin Timelapse team

The Platte Basin Timelapse project is a long-term, multimedia documentary project that seeks to increase understanding about water resources in the Platte River Basin of the central U.S. For seven years, nearly 60 cameras that incorporate innovative technologies have recorded images every daylight hour, capturing change over time from the river's headwaters in the Rocky Mountains through the Great Plains. The project puts one of the world's most appropriated river systems in motion in ways not normally perceivable, with the goal of communicating the complexities of a watershed. More at [www.plattebasintimelapse.com](http://www.plattebasintimelapse.com).

**Michael Forsberg** is an award-winning photographer of Great Plains nature and wildlife, co-founder of the Platte Basin Timelapse project, and a faculty member in IANR at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Michael Farrell** is co-founder of the Platte Basin Timelapse project and assistant professor of practice in agricultural leadership, education & communications at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Mary Harner** is an associate professor of biology at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

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- **James Anderson**, Adventure Travel and Trade Association

*Travel Personality Types*

Diamond 7 | Moderator: Rick Yoder, Nebraska Business Development Center

This presentation builds on an *Outside Magazine* survey about adventure travel motivation and traveler personality traits. A key insight is how traveler motivation has recently changed from extreme adventure to mental health and relaxation.

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- **Sarah Sortum**, Ecotourism Manager and Operator, Calamus Outfitters, Burwell, Neb., Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition consultant, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner.

*Incorporating Birdwatching Into Your Farm/Ranch*

Ruby 6 | Moderator: Tim Burkink, UNK

When the Switzer Ranch decided to add a birdwatching operation to their ranch more than 10 years ago, they had no idea what they were getting into! Sortum will share how the operation has grown, lessons learned, and factors to consider if you are considering a similar venture.



## ■ Bobby Koeplin & Chris Sieverdes

### *Byway Success Stories: Learn About Best Practices Along Our Byways*

Ruby 4 | Moderator: Muriel Clark, Heartland Scenic Byways

This panel of leaders from state and national byways will discuss successes and lessons learned while working with byways. They will also share several examples of best practices.

**Bobby Koeplin** is board vice chair of the National Scenic Byway Foundation.

**Chris Sieverdes** is a National Scenic Byway Foundation board member.

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## ■ Katelyn Ideus, Director of Communications & Public Relations, Rural Futures Institute

### *Create a Bold Story for Rural*

Ruby 5 | Moderator: Starr Lehl, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner

RFI has heard it over and over again—rural communities and organizations need to tell their stories better. Well, let's dig in! In this presentation you'll learn some of the current and future trends in branding and content strategy to maximize your body of work, reach the right people, and create action. Tools will be provided to help you make what you learn doable—even if you're a team of one. Through this work, together we can create a bold voice for rural.

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## ■ Literary Ecotourism: Cather, Eiseley, Stegner, and Others

### *Paper session*

Diamond 8 | Moderator: Ashley Olson, Willa Cather Foundation

**Emily Rau**, *'Legends and stories nestled like birds in its branches': The Changing Ecology of the Great Plains*, University of Nebraska, Willa Cather Archive, abstract pg. 25

**Tracy Tucker**, *Ecotourism and Catherland*, Willa Cather Foundation, abstract pg. 27

**Tom Lynch**, *Eiseley's Nebraska and Ecotourism*, University of Nebraska, English, abstract pg. 23

**Susan Naramore Maher**, *Eastend, Saskatchewan and Literary Pilgrimage: Cypress Hills Ecotourism in the 21st Century*, University of Minnesota Duluth, abstract pg. 23

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NOON

**Luncheon: Nils Odendaal**, CEO, NamibRand Nature Reserve, southern Namibia, Africa

### *NamibRand: An Ecotourism Model*

Banquet room (entrance: Diamond 4) | Introduction: Katie Nieland, Center for Great Plains Studies

The NamibRand Nature Reserve is one of Africa's largest privately owned conservation areas, and its story is one of hardship redirected into a shining example for the world. After droughts in the 1980s, ranches in this arid grasslands were failing. NamibRand founder Albi Bruckner started buying contiguous farms and created a connected landscape where animals could graze freely. They tore down 1,000 miles of interior fences, reintroduced animals that had been forced out of the area, and set up low-environmental-impact ecotourism spots. NamibRand is able to employ three times as many people and earn more money than the former ranching operations on the same land. Odendaal will speak on how NamibRand and its neighbors created an ecotourism and conservation hot spot and how it operates today.

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1:45–3 pm

## SESSION 3: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

### ■ **Dena Beck**, Rural Enterprise Assistance Program Senior Project Leader & South Central Loan Specialist, Center for Rural Affairs

#### *Rural Assistance*

Ruby 6 | Moderator: Jason Combs, UNK

How small businesses can work with regional organizations, obtain loans, and get technical assistance.

## ■ Ecotourism Strategies Panel

### *At the Intersection of Conservation, Tourism, and Land Use*

Diamond 3 | Moderator: Chuck Braithwaite, Center for Great Plains Studies

How do we work to conserve the Great Plains? How can we mix tourism with business? What role does public land have to play? Panelists who represent four distinct models at the intersection of conservation, tourism, and land use will speak about their perspective on the region's current status and what it could be in the future. All four represent currently used models in the Great Plains: philanthropic, for-profit business, public land, and nonprofit. Panelists:

**Ellen and Lars Anderson**, American Prairie Reserve, Montana

**Billie Kay Bodie**, Big Blue Ranch, Nebraska

**Kristal Stoner**, Nebraska Game and Parks

**Tim Dwyer**, Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument, Montana

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## ■ Sharon Strouse & Chris Sieverdes

### *Show Me the Money: Byway Partnerships*

Diamond 8 | Moderator: Sarah Focke, Heartland Scenic Byways

This presentation focuses on partnership examples of fundraising, nonprofit grants, and private donations along State and National Byways. Learn about the results of a three-year, joint membership and annual donor campaign called the Heritage Partnership for five community nonprofits.

**Sharon Strouse** is the board chair of the National Scenic Byway Foundation.

**Chris Sieverdes** is a National Scenic Byway Foundation board member.

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## ■ T.J. Walker, Nebraska Game & Parks Biologist

### *Improving Your Land for Wildlife*

Diamond 7 | Bryce Arens, Nebraska Tourism Commission

There are many programs, partnerships, and resource professionals available across the state to help improve land for wildlife. From grasslands to woodlands to streams and wetlands, you will learn what programs are available, how they work, and who to talk to for advice. Whether your interests include game species, non-game, pollinators, or just habitat, there's something for everyone in this presentation.

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## ■ Ecotourism and Recreation

### *Paper session*

Ruby 4 | Moderator: Deb Loeske, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner

**Theresa Jedd**, *Drought-resilient Outdoor Recreation in Nebraska*, University of Nebraska, School of Natural Resources, abstract pg. 22

**Neha Shah**, *Sustainability in Tourism and Recreation*, Pittsboro-Silver City (North Carolina) Convention and Visitors Bureau, abstract pg. 27

**Jeff Rawlinson**, *Creating Capacity for New Hunter Development in Nebraska*, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, abstract pg. 25

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## ■ Adam Lackner, Brush Buck Tours Founder, Wyoming

### *Tricks to Staffing Your Business to Replace Yourself*

Diamond 2 | Moderator: Tracy Tucker, Willa Cather Foundation

Within the guiding business, like many operations, an important goal is to make sure the business can function with and without the leader. This session is about hiring the right people, effective training, and management techniques.

## ■ International Ecotourism Experiences

### *Paper session*

Ruby 5 | Moderator: Jake Friefeld, Center for Great Plains Studies

**Lisa Pennisi and John Carroll**, *What Can African Nations Teach Us about Ecotourism Development in the Great Plains?* University of Nebraska, School of Natural Resources, abstract pg. 24

**Qwynne Lackey**, *Lessons Learned: Applying Guiding Strategies Taught in Southern Africa to the Great Plains*, University of Utah, abstract pg. 23

**Brett Chloupek**, *Chernobyl as a Prototype for Geopolitical Ecotourism*, Northwest Missouri State University, abstract pg. 22

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3 pm Break: Visit exhibitors in Diamond 1 & 6

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## 3:30–4:45 pm SESSION 4: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

### ■ **Joel Jorgensen**, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Program Manager

#### *Understanding the Similarities and Differences Between Birders and Birdwatchers*

Ruby 6 | Moderator: Sarah Sortum, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner

Birdwatching is a popular pastime and the motivations and goals of individuals that engage in the activity are variable and wide-ranging. This talk explores the similarities and differences between individuals that seek different things from finding, observing, and experiencing birds. A better understanding of the similarities and differences between birders and birdwatchers may help individuals understand and market to different segments of this broader group.

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### ■ **Rebekka Herrera-Schlichting**, Vision Maker Media, & **Daniel Clausen**, Great Plains Graduate Fellow, English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

#### *An African Ecotourism Experience*

Ruby 5 | Moderator: Chris Steinke, UNK

#### *African Ecotourism Models for Native America*

Through her travel blog, [namibianecotourism.wordpress.com](http://namibianecotourism.wordpress.com), Herrera-Schlichting traced the CGPS's excursion in Namibia. She explores the similarities between Namibian and American tribes and the potential on American Indian reservations for successful ecotourism as practiced in Namibia.

#### *Out of Africa and the Romance of Ecotourism*

In African ecotourism, the book and film *Out of Africa* are a recurring touchstone. Almost every travel article and much of the marketing material about African tourism references the 30-year-old film. What makes this film so powerful? How do modern ecotourism providers like NamibRand use the look of the film for post-colonial and environmental purposes? Answering these questions can help ecotourism providers tap the romance of the Great Plains region.

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### ■ **Chuck Cooper & Ben Dumas**, Crane Trust

#### *Identifying an Untapped Market*

Diamond 3 | Moderator: Shawn Kaskie, UNK

Hear how the Crane Trust identified and cultivated a new ecotourism market by offering a unique perspective on crane viewing. Just over five years from its creation, the Crane Trust's VIP experience has grown beyond solely crane viewing and now draws guests from throughout the world. Learn how thinking outside the box and taking risks can have an impact on fundraising and highlighting the work of your organization.

**Chuck Cooper** is President and CEO of Crane Trust.

**Ben Dumas** is Fund Development Manager of Crane Trust.

■ **Bobby Koeplin & Chris Sieverdes**, National Scenic Byway

*Big Dreams, Big Results: Financing and Your Byway Organization*

Diamond 8 | Moderator: Muriel Clark, Heartland Scenic Byways

How effective partnerships and pooling of resources with public service and private sector organizations can enhance grant income to benefit a region with significant byways.

**Bobby Koeplin**, Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway

**Chris Sieverdes**, National Scenic Byway Foundation board member

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■ **Erin Pirro**, Certified Agricultural Consultant, Farm Credit East

*Pricing Your Stay*

Diamond 7 | Moderator: Erin Wirth, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Most business owners want to offer a ‘good’ price, but does that mean good for you or good for your customers? We’ll explore several different strategies for pricing the experience you offer, with an eye to the true costs, the value provided, and the marketplace. Pricing is part art and part science, and I’ll share some tools to help you make these decisions with confidence.

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■ **Dipra Jha**, Director of Global Engagement, Hospitality, Restaurant & Tourism Management, University of Nebraska

*Engaging Visitors through Experience Design*

Diamond 2 | Moderator: Deb Loeske, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner

With more and more visitors expecting authentic and personalized experiences, hospitality providers need to embrace an experience economy model and stage memories that will last a lifetime. Using case studies and real-life examples, this session will help participants discover ways to transform customers into passionate advocates. Learn concepts such as the economic distinctions model, catch up on global trends in tourism and hospitality, and come away with ideas on how to use experience design for creating sustainable win-win.

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■ **Ethics, Philanthropy, and Ecotourism**

*Paper session*

Ruby 4 | Erin Lenz, Nebraska Tourism Commission

**Nicole Rosmarino**, *The South Needs to Catch Up: Private Lands Conservation in the Southern Plains*, Southern Plains Lands Trust, abstract pg. 26

**Robert Ritson**, *Corporate Social Responsibility as a Framework for Better Ecotourism*, University of Nebraska at Kearney, abstract pg. 25

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4:45 pm Free time until reception.

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5:30–8 pm **Reception** at Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

Network and enjoy cocktails and heavy appetizers. Shuttles are available at regular intervals to and from the Younes Conference Center, roughly every 30 minutes, starting at 5:30 p.m.





FRIDAY, APRIL 20

YOUNES CONFERENCE CENTER

8 am Coffee and continental refreshments, Diamond 1 & 6

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8:30–9:45 am **SESSION 5: SEMI PLENARY SESSIONS**

- **Okwa Sarefo**, founder of Wild Expeditions Safaris, Botswana, Africa

*Botswana Nature Tourism*

Diamond 2 & 3 | Moderator: John Carroll, UNL

Wild Expeditions Safaris was founded by Sarefo with the dream of sharing the magic of Botswana with similar-minded travelers, and explorers, and simultaneously contributing to nature conservation and cultural heritage. Born and raised in the Okavango Region, he has 21 years of guiding experience.

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- **Richard Reading**, Director of Research and Conservation, Butterfly Pavilion, Colorado

*American Bison: Keystone Species of the Ecology and Ecotourism of the Great Plains*

Banquet room (entrance: Diamond 4) | Moderator: Peter Longo, UNK

American bison play a key role in shaping the ecology of the Great Plains. As the national mammal of the United States and one of the most iconic species of North America, they also represent a key driver of ecological-based tourism in the region. This talk will focus on how bison function as a keystone species that can help restore the ecology of the Great Plains, while providing ecotourism opportunities.

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- **Larkin Powell**, professor of Conservation Biology and Animal Ecology at the School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln & Kelly Powell

*Putting the ‘Eco’ in Ecotourism: Guidelines for Maximizing Guest Experience*

Diamond 7 | Moderator: Tori Donovan, Center for Great Plains Studies Graduate Fellow

What makes an ecotourism lodge different from a motel? What puts the “eco” in ecotourism? We will discuss insights to these questions gained from experiences at ecotourism destinations in the Great Plains and Namibia. We use an approach that assesses a guest experience via: facilities, food, activities, guest care, and environmental awareness. Our research suggests that ecotourism sites will benefit from several implementable ideas. The guidelines we present paint a progressive, modern image of ecotourism as an activity designed to meet economic, social, and environmental goals in our region.

Kelly Powell has served as a lecturer at UNL for wildlife management courses.

Larkin Powell is Professor of Conservation Biology in the School of Natural Resources at UNL.

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9:45 am **Break:** Visit exhibitors in Diamond 1 & 6

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10:15–  
11:30 am **SESSION 6: CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

- **James Anderson**, Adventure Travel and Trade Association

*Soft Adventure*

Diamond 7 | Moderator: Bryce Arens, Nebraska Tourism Commission

In 2006, the number one outdoor activity for adventure travelers was rock climbing, and in 2016 it was hiking. Learn about how travel interests are changing over time as the idea of adventure travel spreads and the concept of soft adventure gains ground.

- **John Janovy**, Professor Emeritus, Biology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

*Africa Notes: Reflections of an Ecotourist*

Ruby 3 | Moderator: Vernon Volpe, UNK

This presentation addresses two questions: (1) How is a “trip of a lifetime” integrated into your previous life experiences? And (2) how does that same adventure shape your thinking and world view afterwards? The book, *Africa Notes*, answers these questions with material from Botswana and Tanzania. The answers, however, could easily be a model for promotion of ecotourism anywhere in the world if the destination has been a lifelong dream for the tourist.

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- **Erin Pirro**, Certified Agricultural Consultant, Farm Credit East

*A Money-Making Formula*

Ruby 5 | Moderator: Erin Wirth, Nebraska Tourism Commission

When you’re thinking about adding new activities or attractions, one of the scariest parts is figuring out what it will cost and how you’ll recover that cost. Pirro will help you develop the tools for analyzing the money-making capacity of new business ideas. The system is easily teachable to staff and volunteers to help make a daunting task more doable.

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- **Susan Jurasz**, Sea Ranch, Oregon

*What Does It Take to Design and Implement a Scenic Byway Interpretive Experience?*

Diamond 8 | Moderator: Sarah Focke, Heartland Scenic Byways

A nuts and bolts approach on developing an interpretive plan, site- and topic-appropriate exhibit design, and create interpretive stops along a scenic byway. How do you determine the exhibit locations? How many sites do you need to make the experience cohesive? How many sites is too many? Discover the importance of wayfinding as Jurasz explains how to create a cohesive, but not predictable, design.

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- **The O’Pioneers!**

*National Heritage Area Panel, abstract pg. 27*

Diamond 2 & 3 | Moderator: Kim Wilson, UNL

Rural communities have experienced declining jobs, populations, incomes, and quality of life amenities. Economic health and vitality around the region depends on ways to diversify its economy. A comprehensive approach to tourism including cultural, heritage, agricultural, and ecotourism is an innovative income-generating strategy that builds on a community’s assets, diversifies the economy, attracts new business, and sustains success. Panelists will speak on the heritage tourism market and how their sites are taking advantage of key demographics and travel patterns of heritage tourists.

**Ashley Olson**, Executive Director, The Willa Cather Foundation

**Joe Black**, Executive Director, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer

**Mark Engler**, Superintendent, Homestead National Monument of America

**Kim Wilson**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Professor of Landscape Architecture and RFI Fellow

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- **Ann & Steve Teget**, Postcard Jar Writers

*Social Media Basics for Tourism*

Ruby 6 | Moderator: Erin Lenz, Nebraska Tourism Commission

Learn how to make your tourist destination shine on social media! Travel influencers and bloggers Steve and Ann Teget of PostcardJar.com will cover basics like choosing the right social media platforms for your business and building your company’s profile on Google Maps. They’ll also demonstrate how to create eye-catching social media graphics that will help bring attention to your destination. This enthusiastic couple from rural Nebraska will use their blogging experiences to show you how to create an authentic voice, generate more followers, and increase your social media engagement.

## ■ A Whole Picture: Animals, Plants, People

### *Paper session*

Ruby 4 | *Moderator: Matt Whitaker, Center for Great Plains Studies Graduate Fellow*

**Caleb Roberts**, *Subcontinental Ecological Regime Shifts in the Great Plains Biome*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, abstract pg. 26

**Ronnie O'Brien**, *Tourism and Agriculture Help the Pawnee Nation*, Central Community College, Hastings, Nebraska, abstract pg. 24

**Caroline Clare**, *Cather Country: The Potential of Literary Tourism for Rural Communities*, Arizona State University, abstract pg. 22

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NOON

**Luncheon: Dean Jacobs**, Author, Photographer, Traveler

### *7 Wonders - 7 Lessons: Reasons to Have Hope*

Banquet room (entrance: Diamond 4) | *Introduction: Roger Jasnoch, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner*

These wonders and the hope they instill reboot our connection to creating community and our role in it. Hope empowers and inspires each of us to find our role in creating a healthy and engaged community or in our case a vibrant Nebraska. A native Nebraskan, Jacobs left the security of corporate America to travel with a goal of sharing his stories with the hope of changing his audiences' perspective about people and cultures in the world, while helping them remember their own dreams.

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1:30–2:45 pm **SESSION 7: CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

■ **Doug Killeen**, Vice President, Outdoor Products Underwriting, Philadelphia Insurance Companies & **Shane Ideus**, Executive Vice President and Risk Consultant, Unico Group

### *Insurance: The Agent/Risk Consultant and the Insurer/Underwriter*

Ruby 5 | *Moderator: Erin Lenz, Nebraska Tourism Commission*

A discussion of the insurance process beginning with the selection of a risk consultant as well as the insurance company. Representatives from both and an insurance agent and insurance company will discuss their roles in the insurance-purchasing process for ecotourism providers. They will each offer tips and suggestions for navigating this process and what factors to consider when selecting an insurance agent and company.

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■ **Reed Robinson**, (Sicangu/Lakota) Manager, Tribal Relations & Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office

### *Tribal Relationships and National Parks*

Diamond 2 | *Moderator: Chuck Braithwaite, Center for Great Plains Studies*

Robinson will speak on the National Park Service perspective on cooperation and collaboration as well as the agency's new century of commitment to deep and solemn respect and understanding of the original environmentalists—federally recognized tribes, tribal organizations, and Indigenous communities.

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■ **Bree Dority**, Associate Professor of Finance, University of Nebraska at Kearney

### *The Economic Impact of the Annual Crane Migration on Central Nebraska*

Ruby 6 | *Moderator: Bryce Arens, Nebraska Tourism Commission*

Dority, along with Eric Thompson (UNL), Shawn Kaskie (UNK), and Lisa Tschauner (UNK), studied the 2017 Sandhill crane migration and its impacts on Central Nebraska's economy. They found more than \$14 million in impact along with jobs and tax revenue. Dig into the research with Dority, who has conducted studies on community revitalization, school consolidation, and other topics of relevance to rural Nebraska communities. See abstract pg. 22.



## ■ Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition Panel

### *Adventure, Education, and Tourism*

Diamond 3 | Moderator: Daniel Clausen, Center for Great Plains Studies Graduate Fellow

Ecotourism operators have hands-on experience with the land, business, and customers that give them insights into ecotourism across the Plains. They're educators, experience creators, guides, storytellers, and stewards of the environment. This panel will discuss their experiences with visitors, what they've found works (and doesn't work), and how they view the future of Great Plains ecotourism. All the panelists are members of the Center for Great Plains Studies' Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition, a grouping of 30+ organizations and businesses who engage in or support nature tourism in the region.

Casey Cagle, Prairie Earth Tours, Kansas

Bill Whitney, Prairie Plains Resource Institute

Vince Asta, Ponderosa Cyclery

Bill Taddicken, Rowe Sanctuary

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## ■ Campus Ecotourism

### *Paper session*

Ruby 4 | Moderator: Mic Rhode, UNK

Regina Robbins, *Campus-based Ecotourism*, University of Nebraska Omaha, abstract pg. 26

Michael Maddison, *Identifying Outdoor Classroom Sites in the Missouri Arboretum*, Northwest Missouri State University, abstract pg. 23

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## ■ Steve Maly, Maly Marketing

### *Byways Marketing Stories*

Diamond 7 | Moderator: Tricia Beem, Heartland Scenic Byways

Stories. They are what is passed down generation to generation and what you hold onto and remember. It is also why you remember certain pieces of information and forget other pieces—because of the stories that surround it. So what story does your byway tell? During this presentation we will dig into how you can discover a story that not only encourages people to take your byway but to stop along the way as well. We will also discuss how these stories tie into each community and how each community can leverage that story for an economic benefit. From video to photos to print ads to social media, we will detail a plan on how to share your unique story with passionate travelers.

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## ■ Adam Lackner, Brush Buck Tours Founder, Wyoming

### *Building Your Business For Scaling and Distribution to Succeed*

Diamond 8 | Moderator: Jeanna Stavis, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner

Lackner has built a business from a single white suburban to a company that guides more than 10,000 people across the globe. Lackner has a bag of business tricks to help other business owners navigate the everyday struggles of entrepreneurship.

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2:45 pm

**Break:** Visit exhibitors in Diamond 1 & 6

- **Art Provost**, Director of Corporate Security, The Foundation for Educational Services

*The Internet of Things (IoT) and How to Limit Exposure in an Increasingly Online World*

Ruby 4 | *Chuck Rowling, UNK*

Everyone is increasingly vulnerable to electronic attacks as digitized data proliferates across all sectors of the economy. Ensuring that employees handling data, whether it means sensors, cameras, POS devices, or even daily email understands their role in protecting data and preventing breaches needs to be a priority in today's world. This session addresses easy steps you can take to limit your exposure to the risk of data loss.

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- **Luke Jordan**, First Great Plains Trail Thru-Hiker

*Hiking the Great Plains Trail*

Diamond 8 | *Moderator: Roger Davis, UNK*

Jordan, Minnesota native and graduate of St. Cloud State University with a degree in Natural Resources, is involved with several trail organizations, including participating in the Partnership for the National Trail System's (PNTS) Trail Apprentice Program and the North Country Trail. In 2016 he became the first thru-hiker of the Great Plains Trail, hiking nearly 2,100 miles from Texas to Canada in 85 days. He's here to share his story and help establish the Great Plains Trail as America's next great adventure.

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- **Anthony Schutz**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Law & **Andy Pollock**, Rembolt Ludtke Law

*Liability for Rural Landowners and Legislative Update*

Ruby 6 | *Moderator: Starr Lehl, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner*

This talk will give an overview of the Nebraska Agritourism Promotion Act, discuss examples demonstrating activities the Act protects and others it might not, and will field questions from the audience about agritourism and the law in Nebraska.

**Anthony Schutz** is an associate professor of law and a nationally-recognized authority on the subjects of agricultural, environmental, and natural resources law.

**Andy Pollock** practices primarily in government relations. He is a registered lobbyist before the Nebraska Legislature, representing a diverse array of clients.

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- **Byways Blogger Panel**

*Travel Writing and Blogging the Byways*

Diamond 2 | *Moderator: Muriel Clark, Heartland Scenic Byways*

Learn tips about writers and travelers from enthusiastic Great Plains travel bloggers.

**Melody Pittman**: Wherever I May Roam

**Megan Bannister**: Freelance writer and travel blogger based in Des Moines, Iowa. Her blog, *Olio in Iowa*, focuses on offbeat destinations, roadside attractions, and "world's largest" things.

**Sara Broers**: Iowa travel and social media enthusiast. Follow her travel adventures at *TravelWithSara* and through social media. She is the co-founder of Midwest Travel Bloggers.

**Lisa Trudell**: The Trudells are Nebraska residents who travel in search of new experiences and undiscovered treasures. Lisa worked in the travel industry for more than 16 years for a hotel company and as a travel agent. She has co-created the community Midwest Travel Bloggers, which connects travel writers and tourism professionals to promote the Midwest.

**Tim Trudell**: Writer, editor, and photographer for the Trudell's travel blog, *The Walking Tourists*. He has an e-book available titled *The Walking Tourists Guide to Nebraska Attractions beyond Omaha and Lincoln*, and their book, *100 Things to Do in Omaha Before You Die*, was released this month.

## ■ Working With Farmers, Private Landowners, and Other Stakeholders

### *Paper session*

Ruby 5 | Moderator: Cory Willard, Center for Great Plains Studies Graduate Fellow

Lisa Pennisi, *A Collaborative Method for Enhancing Education and Tourism in the Great Plains*, UNL, abstract pg. 24

Larkin Powell, *Keys to the Trade: Reflections on Sustainability and Economic Opportunity from Namibian Livestock Farmers Engaged in Ecotourism*, UNL, abstract pg. 25

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## ■ Larry Borowsky, Interpretive Writer

### *DIY Digital Storytelling Toolkit*

Diamond 3 | Moderator: Mark Engler, Homestead National Monument of America

The Great Plains are awash in compelling stories, but small organizations often lack the time, money and expertise to tell their stories well. The “DIY Digital Storytelling Toolkit” will introduce storytelling strategies and digital tools that can help you get professional-quality results on your own — without a big budget or extensive technical expertise.

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## ■ Lars Anderson & Ellen Anderson, Reserve Assistants, American Prairie Reserve

### *Building a 21st Century Park*

Diamond 7 | Moderator: John Bauer, UNK

American Prairie Reserve is a nonprofit working to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States; a project *National Geographic* called “one of the most ambitious conservation projects in American history.” Join two members of the Reserve team to hear some of the history of the project, and learn about some of the strategies—including recreation and tourism—being used to advance the mission.

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4:30 pm

**Closing reception**, Banquet room (entrance: Diamond 4)

Networking time with cocktails and light appetizers.



# RESOURCES

**Additional Byway information:** National Scenic Byway Foundation - [www.nsbfoundation.com](http://www.nsbfoundation.com)

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## Visit Nebraska

*The Nebraska Tourism Commission offers many services to the tourism industry.*

### Ecotourism, Agritourism, and Group Travel Assistance:

The Nebraska Tourism Commission has staff that specialize in these areas of travel. They keep up with industry trends and are a resource to current and prospective Nebraska destinations. These staff members offer services such as site visits, marketing assistance, and one on one consulting.

**Karen Kollars - Agritourism Consultant**  
308-249-3220 or [Karen.kollars@nebraska.gov](mailto:Karen.kollars@nebraska.gov)

**Alex Duryea - Ecotourism Consultant**  
402-471-3797 or [alexander.duryea@nebraska.gov](mailto:alexander.duryea@nebraska.gov)

**Micheal Collins - Group Travel**  
402-471-3795 or [micheal.collins@nebraska.gov](mailto:micheal.collins@nebraska.gov)

### Grants:

Communities and organizations hosting national or international-caliber events can apply for eligible activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1.) National or international broadcasting promotions of an event
- 2.) Marketing efforts of events with the intention to draw national or international visitors (such as music/film/art festivals, large scale sporting events, etc.)
- 3.) Production and placement of mass media advertising directed outside of Nebraska including magazine, newspaper, radio, television, or website development/online promotions for an event
- 4.) Community and regional promotional ventures/efforts to secure event bids (Nebraska must be confirmed as the event host location prior to submitting grant application)

Successful applicants will utilize creative marketing strategies to generally promote, encourage and attract visitors to the state, focusing on the use of media sources to promote their event on a nationwide or international scale and, in turn, gain national and international press coverage of their event and Nebraska.

For more about our grants, contact our grant administrator (402-471-3774) or email [heather.hogue@nebraska.gov](mailto:heather.hogue@nebraska.gov)

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Twitter: @GreatPlains

Facebook: /VisitThePrairie

Instagram: @UNLGreatPlains

Become a member (free):

Email [cgps@unl.edu](mailto:cgps@unl.edu)

**The Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition** is a group committed to promoting environmental conservation and building thriving communities through nature-based tourism in the Great Plains. The Coalition includes both non-profit and for-profit members and is organized by the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska.

The Coalition works to:

- Connect nature-based entrepreneurs with one another, creating opportunities for collaboration, learning and cooperation.
- Market the region to ecotourists in the United States and beyond through advertising campaigns, a set of posters, and [VisitThePrairie.com](http://VisitThePrairie.com).
- Share information about ecotourism with participating members and the public through a newsletter, website, social media, and small conferences.
- Undertake or commission studies and research on ecotourism-related topics of substantial interest to members and ecotourists.
- Engage in other activities to promote ecotourism in the Great Plains.

# ABOUT THE FIELD TRIPS

## **Crane Trust Fat Biking Tour**

An excursion on comfortable “fat-tire” bikes that can tackle even the toughest terrain. View stretches of the historic Platte River, venture over untilled prairie, and journey to places where a vehicle can’t reach. Part of Crane Trust’s new excursions. *CraneTrust.org*

## **Green Business Workshop with the Nebraska Business Development Center**

Rick Yoder from UNO’s NBDC has consulted for the Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition on creating a set of sustainability guidelines for businesses as well as marketing techniques for telling a green business story. *unomaha.edu/nebraska-business-development-center*

## **Crane Trust Bison Tour**

The Crane Trust is home to the largest genetically-pure herd of bison in the state of Nebraska. The bison at the Crane Trust not only provide a great ecotourism opportunity for guests but, more importantly, are a vital piece to restoring and maintaining thousands of acres of historic prairie ecosystems. *CraneTrust.org*

## **Photo Safari with Michael Farrell**

Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the co-founder of Platte Basin Timelapse. Michael is a forty-three year veteran in public broadcasting. Forty-one of those years have been spent in production and management in Nebraska and the Great Plains.

## **Agritourism Progressive Meal**

This unique agritourism experience visits Kinkaider Brewery in Broken Bow, Mac’s Creek Winery in Lexington, and Thunderhead Brewery in Kearney.

*kinkaiderbrewing.com/*

*http://www.macscreekwines.com/*

*https://www.thunderheadbrewing.com/*

## **Guided Tour of Old Father Prairie**

Master Naturalists Heidi LaClair and Deb Mowry lead a guided tour of Oldfather Prairie via a two-mile loop on the northeastern edge of Cottonmill Park in Kearney.

## **Harlan County Lake Prairie Dog Tour**

Watch prairie dogs at play and songbird singing near Harlan County Reservoir with guide Keanna Leonard.

## **Biking the Kearney Hike/Bike Trail**

Bike from Yanney Park to the Kearney Archway for a 45-minute guided tour of this museum dedicated to Nebraska’s role in westward expansion. Special thanks to Crane Trust for the biking equipment. *archway.org/*

## **Incorporating Stargazing into Nature Tourism Workshop**

Nebraska Star Party’s John Johnson shares information on how ecotourism businesses and nonprofits can add stargazing activities to their offerings. Visit the UNK planetarium to learn about star identification. *http://www.nebraskastarparty.org/unk.edu/academics/physics/unk-planetarium/*

## **Prairie Plains Walking Tour**

Bill Whitney of Prairie Plains Resource Institute guides visitors to some of central Nebraska’s most gorgeous locations, including Bader Park, Gjerloff Prairie, and Sherman Ranch while learning the history of Lincoln Highway (U.S. 30), the transcontinental railroad, and Lone Tree (now called Central City) and their recent re-discovery of native son, Wright Morris. *www.prairieplains.org/*

## **Kayak Gallagher Canyon**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Outdoor Adventures Program leads a kayak trip through the beautiful Gallagher Canyon State Recreation Area. *https://crec.unl.edu/outdoor*

# ABSTRACTS

## **Chernobyl as a Prototype for Geopolitical Ecotourism**

*Brett Chloupek, Assistant Professor of Geography, Northwest Missouri State University*

The term “ecotourism” typically conjures images of journeys into unspoiled natural environments attractive to tourists for their beauty. Another aspect of ecotourism is that natural sites are often curated in ways that communicate political messages—usually about conservation, development, etc. However, another kind of emerging ecotourism is starkly different. In 2002, Ukrainian tour operators began to take the first “ecotourists” into the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, which is an approximately 1,000 square mile area that was established after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The Chernobyl site today is curated in a way that communicates a clear geopolitical message regarding Cold War history and the role of the Soviet Union and Russia in the disaster. Through an examination of tour company materials as well as through a visit to the Chernobyl disaster site, this paper examines the role of tourism in ecological disaster sites and considers Chernobyl as a prototype for geopolitically-driven ecological disaster tourism.

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## **Cather Country: The Potential of Literary Tourism for Rural Communities**

*Caroline Clare, English PhD Candidate, Arizona State University*

In cultivating Plains conservation via tourism, perhaps the first challenge is persuading outsiders to consider places like Nebraska as tourist sites. Toward this end I propose an area largely uncharted: literary tourism and Willa Cather. Canonized as “the” Nebraska author and as a Plains emblem, Cather appeals to multiple sectors of potential Plains tourists. I argue for conservation tourism to join hands with Cather tourism, thereby building on Cather’s appeal to these tourist groups. To realize this potential, I conceptualize “Cather country” beyond specialized sites in her hometowns of Lincoln and Red Cloud to all rural Plains communities, including private landowners and local businesses. By situating Cather this way, I demonstrate how rural communities sharing Cather’s Plains heritage can nurture hospitable pride in their locales and offer a lived, interactive tourism that is true to the spirit of her works. For example, Cather readers might consider a tour of her Red Cloud house meaningful – or they might find that buying kolaches at the Verdigre Bakery hours north is equally meaningful. Like “Shakespeare country” or “Austen country” models in other landscapes, Plains communities would benefit from tourists’ business as tourists encounter local hospitality. The result of this Cather-country tourism is that both tourists and residents are motivated to conserve the Plains’ rural communities.

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## **The Economic Impact of the Annual Crane Migration on Central Nebraska**

*Bree Dority, Associate Professor, University of Nebraska at Kearney*

We estimate the annual economic and tax revenue impact of the 2017 Sandhill Crane Migration on Central Nebraska. We estimate that 46,500 crane visitors can be accounted for in Central Nebraska during the 2017 Migration, and of these, 93% are non-Central Nebraska crane visitors. We find that the economic and tax revenue impacts of the crane organizations and visitors make a significant contribution to the Central Nebraska economy. Audubon’s Rowe Sanctuary and Crane Trust Nature & Visitor Center had a total economic impact of \$3.72 million and 46 full-time equivalent jobs on the Central Nebraska economy. Non-Central Nebraska crane visitor had a total economic impact of \$10.58 million and 136 jobs. Together, the overall economic impact of the Annual Crane Migration on Central Nebraska was \$14.30 million in 2017, supporting 182 year-round equivalent jobs. Moreover, given economic activity is taxed by local government, we estimate that this economic impact generates \$379,000 per year in local property, sales, and lodging tax revenue.

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## **Middle of the Country, But Not Middle of the Pack: Drought-Resilient Outdoor Recreation in Nebraska**

*Theresa Jedd, Environmental Policy Specialist, National Drought Mitigation Center, UNL School of Natural Resources*

Drought, and a subsequent decline in ecologically available water, can detrimentally affect outdoor activities. Some sports and pastimes require adequate rain, snow, river flows, habitat, or lake levels (e.g. skiing, fishing, wildlife viewing, and boating), while other hobbies may not (e.g. climbing, cycling and hiking). Nationally, recreational activities come and go with popular culture and trends related to new equipment (e.g. pack rafts, rollerblades, or paddle boards). Since some of these

activities are more or less dependent on water availability, adaptation is largely a product of local initiatives. However, a common denominator is that many outdoor activities take place on public lands. Nationally, over half of all local state park visitors report that they go to state parks to exercise (Mowen et al 2016). Since physical activity is a recognized dimension of a healthy lifestyle, Nebraska's parks are a resource for outdoor enjoyment and general fitness. Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we examine key trends in national activity rates and types and public health. We conclude with recommendations for public and private lands that consider water-wise practices that encourage overall health, fitness, and recreational enjoyment to inform recreational resilience in Nebraska under various climates.

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### **Lessons Learned: Applying Guiding Strategies Taught in Southern Africa to the Great Plains**

*Qwynne Lackey, PhD Student, University of Utah*

Guides are an essential part of an ecotourism operation and have a strong influence on the success of the operation. Competent ecotourism guides facilitate a positive and memorable experience while acting as good stewards of local natural and cultural resources. Guides can increase their competency by completing training and certification programs; however, temporal, spatial, and financial barriers make it difficult for some guides to attend training. The purpose of this presentation is to share lessons learned during a qualitative case study of a reputable guide training program based in southern Africa. Key themes resulting from this evaluation emphasize guiding techniques and strategies that guides can apply in the Great Plains ecotourism industry. Lessons include how to approach the guiding profession from a philosophical standpoint, how to involve the guests fully during a tour using experiential learning, and how to design tours in a way that facilitate connection to nature and transformation within guests. The training provider's advice on how guides can balance environmental responsibility with tourist demands and market forces will also be shared during the presentation.

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### **Eiseley's Nebraska and Ecotourism**

*Tom Lynch, Professor of English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Loren Eiseley is an internationally known nature writer whose work engages especially with paleontology, since he was a professional anthropologist, but also with wider issues of the human place in the natural world. Raised in Lincoln, a graduate of the University of Nebraska, much of his writing relates to his time spent on paleontological excursions with Morrill Hall's South Party in the early 1930s. These writings paint a vivid and exotic portrait of western Nebraska, especially the Wildcat Hills region. Eiseley's writing was instrumental in the creation of the Fossil Freeway tourism network in western Nebraska and adjacent areas of South Dakota. In order to make the locations relevant to Eiseley's work better known, and as a spur to ecotourism, I have been developing (with Emily Rau and Ariana Brocius) an "Eiseley's Nebraska" interactive map, funded by the Loren Eiseley Society and Humanities Nebraska, that will be hosted by the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities. In this talk I will discuss some of the potential for Eiseley-related ecotourism and show the "Eiseley's Nebraska" site as an example of possibilities for directing attention to Eiseley-related places.

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### **Identifying Outdoor Classroom Sites in the Missouri Arboretum**

*Michael Maddison, student at Northwest Missouri State University*

Ecotourism is a great way for people to enjoy the natural environment. The Missouri Arboretum is a natural ecotourism sight as it is conveniently on the campus of Northwest Missouri State University that already has a natural learning environment making it a great learning environment for everyone. We use Geographic Information Systems to select ideal sites for an outdoor learning environment in the Missouri Arboretum. The analysis considers existing space at the Missouri Arboretum as well as best practices in outdoor classroom construction to locate candidates for outdoor classrooms on the Northwest Missouri State University campus.

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### **Eastend, Saskatchewan and Literary Pilgrimage: Cypress Hills Ecotourism in the 21st Century**

*Susan Naramore Maher, Dean, College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota Duluth*

This presentation focuses on Canadian writers—Wallace Stegner, Sharon Butala, Don Gayton, and Candace Savage—and literary contributions that have framed a corner of southwestern Saskatchewan: the high plains and rising Cypress Hills around the small town of Eastend. Reflecting on recent pilgrimage studies, I will posit Eastend as a vital site of literary and ecological encounter and thus a growing destination for ecotourism. Many layers from the Jurassic through settler colonial-

ism animate the story of Eastend. Heavily farmed wheat fields and the constant pumping of oil rigs proclaim the industrial repurposing of the plains landscape in modern times. Eastend is suspect terrane, with intertwining and contesting layers of story. Not surprisingly, these Eastend writers engage around environmental challenges to the grasslands and the Cypress Hills—in the ecological and social matrices of place. Their writings have shaped the expectations and experiences of literary pilgrims who travel to Eastend explicitly to explore firsthand the materiality and sacrality of the plains and hills. These dimensional realities—the sacred and profane, the human and natural—draw increasing numbers of visitors to Eastend. The landscape lessons made visible in the writings of Stegner and others inform and burnish the ecotourist's pilgrimage on the high plains, a journey that is overtly literary, affective, and emotionally complex.

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### **Tourism and Agriculture Help the Pawnee Nation**

*Ronnie O'Brien, Hospitality Management Instructor, Central Community College, Hastings campus*

After learning about the near extinction of all sacred Pawnee corn varieties, O'Brien began to recruit gardeners in Nebraska to grow the rare seeds in their native soil and climate. All crops grown by the Nebraska gardeners are returned to the Pawnee Nation. For seven years tribal members slowly came forward with rare seed varieties as their trust in the Nebraska gardeners grew. Native American programming and gardens at the Archway produced significant exposure to the seed project, which officially became the Pawnee Seed Preservation Project. Magazine and newspaper articles drew national and international attention, which helped to grow the number of gardeners across the state. Tourism and agriculture worked together to help the Pawnee Nation rebuild ties to their homeland and the people of Central Nebraska. Today, nine varieties of sacred corn have been returned for the Pawnee Nation and the project continues to grow since finding its new home at Central Community College.

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### **What Can African Nations Teach Us About Ecotourism Development in the Great Plains?**

*Lisa Pennisi, Associate Professor of Practice, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Ecotourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.” (TIES, 1990). Consumptive nature-based tourism (hunting and fishing) is often not considered true ecotourism due to the impact on wildlife. However, both forms of wildlife tourism, consumptive and non-consumptive (viewing) can enhance conservation or deplete it. Consumptive tourism can be less impactful than non-consumptive wildlife watching in terms of infrastructure and other ecological impacts. Consumptive tourism may also be more feasible and profitable in rural areas where the lack of infrastructure and abilities to host large numbers of tourists make hunting tourism more economically viable, accessible and profitable. Additionally, both consumptive and non-consumptive ecotourism can co-exist, supplementing sustainability and profitability to local communities while minimizing ecological impacts. A number of African nations enhance their economies with wildlife-based ecotourism, using different ecotourism “models.” Some models successfully provide for both consumptive and non-consumptive ecotourism in the same areas. In this paper, we will compare and contrast the various models for wildlife ecotourism and outline the benefits and costs of hunting and viewing tourism in five south African countries: Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. We hope this leads to the development of sustainable models that work in various situations, including areas of the Great Plains.

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### **A Collaborative Method for Enhancing Education and Tourism in the Great Plains**

*Lisa Pennisi, Associate Professor of Practice, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Economic stresses on small farmers and ranchers has resulted in selling of family farms, a loss of agricultural related jobs, a lack of income to keep younger generations involved in the family farm, and an out-migration due to a lack of jobs (Gartner, 2005). These, and other, factors have contributed to rural population decline (Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006). Ecotourism has great potential to help local businesses in rural areas. Ecotourists are interested in local cultures, local foods and supporting local businesses. However, rural tourism providers and small communities often lack tourism knowledge such as tourism marketing, writing business plans and developing visitor services. Potential ecotourism operators also need help in understanding visitor needs and preferences both for marketing and for visitor satisfaction. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, an innovative ecotourism course was taught with the goal of assisting small communities develop tourism assessments and development plans. Students completed a community tourism assessment for Ashland, Neb. We believe this collaboration model can provide others with much needed tourism development assistance. It is our hope that showcasing this model will help other communities, businesses and educational institutions adopt and utilize the model.



## **Keys to the Trade: Reflections on Sustainability and Economic Opportunity from Namibian Livestock Farmers Engaged in Ecotourism**

*Larkin Powell, Professor, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Ecotourism entrepreneurs throughout the world depend on the landscape, wildlife, and other natural resources for their business operation. We interviewed private livestock farmers in Namibia to establish frameworks used to ensure the sustainable use of the natural resources upon which their business depends. We used a qualitative survey to gain information regarding the history and structure of their operation, facility development, and natural resource use. We will discuss themes that emerged, including the use of ecotourism activities to diversify farm-based economic ventures and ameliorate risk during droughts and conservative use of limited natural resources. Surprisingly, Namibian ecotourism operators did not see wildlife as a key resource; rather, they focused on the benefits to be gained from capturing the spirit of unique landscapes during ecotourism ventures. Ecotourism in Namibia is embedded in the agricultural community and has created substantial economic opportunity in rural Namibia. Similar rural development opportunities exist in the United States, which provides potential for application of the frameworks we provide to ecotourism in the Great Plains.

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## **Creating Capacity for New Hunter Development in Nebraska**

*Jeff Rawlinson, Assistant Division Administrator, Communications, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has been a national leader in developing new and innovative methods for recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters in Nebraska. The Commission and its many partners are breaking new ground in developing pathways for Nebraskans in developing their own hunting skills, knowledge, and abilities. These efforts have included shooting range development working with partners across the state, education programming, marketing, and partnership development.

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## **“Legends and stories nestled like birds in its branches”: The Changing Ecology of the Great Plains**

*Emily Rau, Graduate Student, English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

September 21, 2018, marks the centennial of the publication of Willa Cather's most famous novel, *My Ántonia*. As part of a series of events funded by Humanities Nebraska, the Willa Cather Archive, in partnership with the Willa Cather Foundation and the Iain Nicholson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, will organize two ecotourism events focused on Cather's novel and the complex ecosystem of the Great Plains. These events will take place during the sandhill crane migration. At each event, we will view the sandhill cranes on the Platte River at sunrise in Rowe Sanctuary's blinds, accompanied by educational programming about the migration. We will then travel to Red Cloud for tours of Cather-related sites in town, including Cather's childhood home and the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, which is part of the Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition and consists of 612 acres of native prairie. Throughout the events we will use *My Ántonia* as the entry point for engaging in a deep exploration of the space at the center of Cather's novel and Nebraska. We are offering the trip twice, as both a part of the Crane Festival and a separate event open to the public, in order to test effectiveness. This paper will report the results of these two events, including successes and potential revisions for future collaborations.

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## **Corporate Social Responsibility as a Framework for Better Ecotourism**

*Robert Ritson & Nate Bickford, University of Nebraska at Kearney*

Major biophysical, economic, and political changes during the past two decades has grown business opportunities, such as tourism. More specifically with a focus on sustainability of resources the industry of ecotourism has emerged, and it has become the fastest growing area within tourism. Ecotourism is a travel experience that embraces environmental conservation and the sustainment of local resources and culture. Ecotourism and related businesses must practice ethical behavior to obtain both government and social permission to conduct and carry out their operations. Government and community acceptance, or gaining a social license to operate (SLO) is key, as being accepted as a part of the community is not a formal agreement or document, but an ongoing negotiation, practices, and acts of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Sustaining the local and traditional resources and lands, becomes a key factor as decisions regarding tourism developments. Thus the need for responsible businesses with a sustainability focus. Thus, the need for practices of CSR and SLO in ecotourism is undeniable. Understanding that businesses hold responsibility and play a role in society, the environment, and the life of the locals is very important.

## **Campus-Based Ecotourism: A Case Study Exploring Ecotourism, a Service-Learning Course Focused on the Development of an Indigenous Garden at the University of Nebraska at Omaha**

*Regina Robbins, Assistant Professor in Sociology & Anthropology and Native American Studies, UNO*

The Great Plains are home to great Native plants used for food and medicine, great culture and lifeways that depend on these plants and great stories that help us teach and learn how to nurture and care for all that grows here. The Plains also have many college campuses, communities with open spaces, parks and gardens. Campus visitors/tourists lack an understanding of indigenous cultural landscapes and have stereotyped notions of Native peoples and places. In an effort to address this, the University of Nebraska at Omaha Native American Studies program collaborated with the service-learning academy to develop a community-based academic course aimed to support the development and maintenance of a campus-based indigenous garden. This case study explains how the development of an indigenous garden served to protect and promote Native life ways. In this case, the indigenous garden became the focus of a special topics course that cultivated ecotourism. This paper explains how, through engaged teaching and learning, campus and local community members created a point of destination. This paper will present the ways in which visitors and campus-community alike engaged with the indigenous gardens and united to promote ecotourism by raising awareness of local Native cultures to tourists, enhancing the cultural integrity of the local people, creating volunteering opportunities and promoting health and wellness.

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## **Subcontinental Ecological Regime Shifts in the Great Plains Biome**

*Caleb Roberts, graduate student, Agronomy & Horticulture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

In an era of rapid global change, novelty, surprise and uncertainty are the rule. The detection of subcontinental ecological regimes (configurations of ecological systems with processes and feedbacks that confer dynamic structure) and how they shift in response to global change drivers (e.g., climate change, woody plant invasion of grasslands, land use change) has become a top priority for ecology and conservation groups. Here, we identify spatial regimes in avian community data and track their movements over 46 years (1970 – 2015) in the North American Great Plains biome. We demonstrate an eminent biome-level regime shift in the Great Plains and how tracking spatial regimes provides spatially and temporally explicit estimates of vulnerability to ecological change. Managing for or attempting to restore a given location to the historic regime after the historic regime has moved past or collapsed is effectively managing for the “ghost of regimes past” and will become increasingly difficult and costly due to the mismatch between the scale of management versus the scale of the regime forcing via positive feedbacks. In the case of the Great Plains, we show that assuming the continued flow of desired grassland-centered ecosystem services (e.g., livestock grazing, grassland biodiversity, grassland-oriented ecotourism) can be maintained by site-scale management is unlikely to produce meaningful or lasting results.

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## **The South Needs to Catch Up: Private Lands Conservation in the Southern Plains**

*Nicole Rosmarino, Executive Director, Southern Plains Land Trust*

The southern Great Plains is a biodiversity hotspot that is under-represented in land protection efforts, and wildlife refuges are few. There are significant challenges to conservation in this region due to the scarcity of public land and the lack of conservation funding. We discuss a case study of the Southern Plains Land Trust’s (SPLT’s) efforts to create shortgrass prairie preserves in southeastern Colorado. We present creative strategies that have successfully been employed to create large prairie preserves on private land. SPLT’s model is to adopt strategies that foster ecological restoration and wildlife preservation and provide additional income streams, and to share this information with landowners and other non-profit organizations committed to bringing back the diverse wildlife of the Great Plains. Private philanthropy, program-related investments and conservation financing, carbon offsets, developer mitigation, and tax credits are all part of diverse approach for ambitious efforts to protect grassland and the wildlife within. The result will help diversify and improve local economies that currently struggle with stagnation and high levels of poverty.



## **Sustainability in Tourism and Recreation: Where Travelers and Residents Meet**

*Neha Shah, Pittsboro-Silver City CVB*

How do we balance keeping recreation parks for residents but expanding when it's a major asset for visitors? Sustainability while welcoming anyone to enjoy a public place, accommodating different interests and long-term planning are important for the future wellness, health, and benefit to all visitors. Defining, while sharing, stewardship is important and can impact guests' experience. Chatham County is a case study in which its town and county assets are of varied interest for visitors and residents and special events like annual qualifying marathons. We'll explore how Chatham County manages to promote but protect its green assets.

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## **Ecotourism and Catherland**

*Tracy Tucker, Education Director & Certified Archivist, Willa Cather Foundation*

Since the 1950s, the Willa Cather Foundation has actively engaged in ecotourism—thirty years before Héctor Ceballos-Lascuráin coined the term. The Foundation's early use of ecotourism was borne of necessity—for years, the built and natural environments of Webster County comprised the majority of assets we might use to interpret Cather's work. Though today we have many more options at our disposal, the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie and the "country sites" of Webster County remain some of our most powerful interpretive tools. This paper will examine the nature/culture intersections of Cather's Nebraska novels and the ways they create a unique literary tourism destination.

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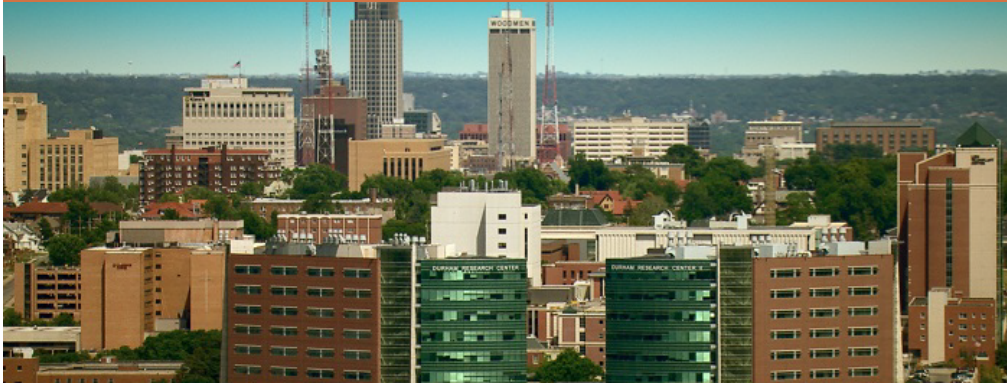
## **The O Pioneers! National Heritage Area**

*Kim Wilson, Professor, Landscape Architecture Program, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Heritage tourism is an opportunity for rural communities to reverse declining jobs, populations, incomes, and quality of life amenities. We discuss a comprehensive approach to tourism including, cultural, heritage, agricultural and ecotourism to build on a community's assets, diversify its economy, and attract new business. Red Cloud is the home to a world class cultural asset as the childhood home of novelist Willa Cather and the setting for many of her works. While significant cultural heritage tourism development exists, Red Cloud, in partnership with a larger regional strategy including more than 130 cultural assets, has a greater potential where smart and aggressive investment in tourism could significantly increase the economic and cultural impact on the region. Heritage tourists take 50% longer trips, travel longer distances and in larger groups, spend nearly 2.5 times more than other travelers per overnight stay, are likely to earn higher incomes, and are more likely to hold postgraduate degrees.



# 2019 GREAT PLAINS SYMPOSIUM



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## A Symposium on American Indian Health

This conference will bring together biomedical scientists, academics, and physicians along with community members whose cultural traditions are too often ignored or minimized by health practitioners. Advocates and elders will have their voices added to the discussions to help ensure that the end results will benefit those whose health and wellness are paramount. Specific topics will include fetal alcohol effect and syndrome, socio-cultural determinants of health, diabetes, eldercare, youth risk and protective factors, behavioral health including the suicide epidemic, telemedicine, and cancer health disparities.

Significant and lasting change can only happen when **people who represent these communities** successfully enter the biomedical research and clinical areas. This conference is intended to bridge this gap between academics, scientists, physicians, and the communities impacted by these issues.

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## SPEAKER BIOS

**James Anderson**, *Adventure Travel and Trade Association*

Anderson is a tourism marketer specializing in adventure and sustainable travel. He has worked on social media campaigns, search marketing, marketing channel development, and general communications for consumers and partners.

**Lars Anderson**, *Reserve Assistant, American Prairie Reserve*

Anderson's responsibilities include general maintenance and habitat restoration on the Reserve. Before joining APR, he was the interim manager at the University of Nebraska's Barta Brothers Ranch. He is originally from Chappell, Neb., and received his education from UNL earning an MS in Agronomy specializing in Range and Forage Science and BS degrees in Rangeland Ecosystems and Fisheries & Wildlife.

**Ellen Anderson**, *Reserve Assistant, American Prairie Reserve*

Anderson is focused on habitat restoration at APR. Before joining the Reserve team, Ellen was a graduate research assistant at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is originally from St. John, WA, and earned a BS from Washington State University in Natural Resource Sciences, minoring in Rangeland Ecology and Management. She graduated from UNL in December 2016 with an MS in Agronomy, specializing in Range and Forage Sciences.

**Vince Asta**, *Ponderosa Cyclery*

Asta is an avid cyclist that has a deep appreciation for Nebraska and the beauty that lies within. Two-track, trail... he's always looking for the most adventurous route to experience our public lands. When not exploring the Great Plains (the high plains in particular), he's running a bike shop named after Nebraska's native pine, the mighty Ponderosa.

**Megan Bannister**, *Olio in Iowa*

A freelance writer and travel blogger based in Des Moines, Iowa, Bannister's blog, Olio in Iowa, focuses on offbeat destinations, roadside attractions, and "world's largest" things.

**Dena Beck**, *REAP Senior Project Leader & South Central Loan Specialist, Center for Rural Affairs*

Much of Beck's time is spent on the road, meeting with regional organizations, making loans and providing technical assistance to small businesses — from consignment stores, to restaurants, grocery stores, and many more.

**Joe Black**, *Executive Director, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer*

The mission of Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer is to preserve and portray the inspiring era of the pioneer town builders who created the first communities in Nebraska.

**Billie Kay Bodie**, *Big Blue Ranch*

Big Blue Ranch & Lodge offers a great escape to a beautiful cedar log lodge on a working cattle ranch in the tall grass prairie, rolling hills, and woodlands of southeast Nebraska. Relaxing suites with stone fireplaces overlook a 20-acre scenic fishing lake and beautiful evening sunsets. Photograph wildlife, watch the Greater Prairie Chicken dance, stargaze, relax, hike, take out a boat or go hunting. The ranch is just southeast of Lincoln. [www.bigblueranch.com](http://www.bigblueranch.com).

**Larry Borowsky**, *interpretive writer*

Borowsky is an award-winning interpretive writer. He has developed digital stories, interpretive text and interactive media for nature centers and heritage tourism sites across the U.S. Borowsky is the former editor of Colorado's Official State Tourism Guide.

**Sara Broers**, *co-founder of Midwest Travel Bloggers, owner of Social Connections, co-owner of Home Grown Social Media*  
Broers is a travel and social media enthusiast that resides in North Iowa. You can follow her travel adventures on her blog at [TravelWithSara](http://TravelWithSara) and through social media.

**Casey Cagle**, *Prairie Earth Tours*

Owner of Kansas tour company, Prairie Earth Tours, Cagle has worked for numerous tour companies that led tours all over the U.S., across Canada, and in the Australian outback. With Prairie Earth Tours, Cagle strives to deliver authentic experiences that showcase culture and landscape.

**John Carroll**, *Director, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Prior to coming to UNL, Carroll was a professor at the University of Georgia and at California University of Pennsylvania. He has also served as a research scientist at the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust. He holds a PhD in biology from the University of North Dakota, where he specialized in the ecology and management of game birds.

**Brett Chloupek**, *Humanities & Social Sciences, Northwest Missouri State University*

Chloupek is an Assistant Professor of Geography in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Northwest Missouri State University.

**Caroline Clare**, *English, Arizona State University*

Clare is a second-year PhD candidate in English Literature at Arizona State University. Her specialization is nineteenth and twentieth century American literature, particularly immigration literature of the Great Plains and the psychological effects of the Plains landscape as portrayed in fiction.

**Daniel Clausen**, *English PhD candidate, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Great Plains Graduate Fellow Captain*  
Clausen traveled to Namibia for the Center for Great Plains Studies along with Katie Nieland and Rebekka Schlichting to learn about ecotourism initiatives first hand. His scholarship focuses on the portrayal of farmers in nineteenth-century American literature, and how those narratives still influence land-use decisions today.

**Chuck Cooper**, *Crane Trust President/CEO*  
Cooper, a lifelong Nebraskan, grew up in Hartington worked on farms in his youth. He graduated from Wayne State College in Wayne, Neb. These experiences created a passion for Nebraska and the prairie that the Crane Trust works to protect and maintain. He joined the Crane Trust as President/CEO in September 2010 after more than 16 years of successfully managing non-profits in Nebraska.

**Bree Dority**, *Associate Professor of Finance and Associate Dean of the College of Business & Technology, University of Nebraska at Kearney*  
Dority has done extensive work on issues that directly affect the stakeholders of UNK and Nebraskans. She has conducted economic impact, labor availability, and community revitalization studies, and has published research on school consolidation and tobacco free laws, topics of particular relevance to rural Nebraska communities.

**Ben Dumas**, *Crane Trust Fund Development Manager*  
Originally from Denver, Colo., Dumas moved to Nebraska in 2009 to attend Hastings College where he received degrees in Peace, Justice, and Social Change, and Religion. After graduation, he ran a successful non-profit in Hastings. A love for outdoor activities and an enthusiasm for the Crane Trust mission brought him to join the staff in 2016.

**Tim Dwyer**, *Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument*  
A Montana native, Dwyer holds the public lands of Montana close to his heart. His previous work as a Regional Director for the Montana Conservation Corps gave him the pleasure of 14 years of giving back to the state and providing youth opportunity to experience the outdoors.

**Mark Engler**, *Superintendent, Homestead National Monument of America*  
Engler is a career National Park Service employee. At the monument he worked to establish the Homestead Heritage Center, saw the monument's boundary increase, lead the commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Homestead Act, and helped lead partnerships leading to the digitizing of 30 million Homestead Land-Entry Case File Records.

**Michael Farrell**, *Co-Founder, Platte Basin Timelapse project*  
Currently Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the co-founder of Platte Basin Timelapse. Farrell is a 43-year veteran in public broadcasting. Forty-one of those years have been spent in production

and management in Nebraska and the Great Plains. Farrell works to share his experience with the next generation of storytellers, and he has led the establishment of a student internship program at NET.

**Dan Flores**, *historian, author of American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains*  
Flores is the 2017 Stubbendieck Great Plains Distinguished Book Prize Winner for *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains*. He is a writer and historian who specializes in environmental and cultural history of the American West. Before his retirement, Flores held the A.B. Hammond Chair in Western History at the University of Montana. He is also the author of *Coyote America*, winner of the Sigurd F. Olson Nature Writing Award.

**Michael Forsberg**, *conservation photographer, co-founder of Platte Basin Timelapse*  
Forsberg is an award-winning photographer of Great Plains nature and wildlife, co-founder of the Platte Basin Timelapse project, and a faculty member in IANR at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Mary Harner**, *Associate Professor of Biology, University of Nebraska at Kearney*  
Harner studies how rivers interact with landscapes over time, and she works to exchange knowledge about connections between human and natural systems. Her collaborative research spans several large river systems, such as the Platte River and its tributaries in the Sandhills of Nebraska, and includes educational projects to share concepts about science and natural resources with students and the public.

**Rebekka Herrera-Schlichting**, *Assistant Director, Vision Maker Media, former Great Plains Graduate Fellow*  
Herrera-Schlichting is a member of the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska. As the assistant director of Vision Maker Media, her mission is to empower Native people to share their stories through film on public television.

**Katelyn Ideus**, *Director of Communications & Public Relations, Rural Futures Institute, University of Nebraska*  
Branding and content strategist, Ideus evolves and delivers the Institute's brand through seven social media platforms, two weekly productions, a monthly newsletter, and multiple content campaigns. Her experience includes personal branding, health care communications, and educational programming as well as online education marketing.

**Shane Ideus**, *Executive Vice President, Risk Consultant Unico Group*  
Ideus is a Risk Consultant with Unico Group in Lincoln, Neb. A native of Filley, Neb., he graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 2003 with a BA in Business Administration. He began his insurance career in 2003 and spent six years working for insurance carriers. He has been a Risk Consultant with Unico since 2009.

**Dean Jacobs**, *Photographer, author, traveler*

Since 2001 Jacobs has traversed across the globe exploring over 58 countries on a low budget adventure, propelled by a desire to understand the world we share. A native Nebraskan, Jacobs left the security of corporate America to travel with a goal of sharing his stories with the hope of changing his audiences' perspective about people and cultures in the world, while helping them remember their own dreams.

**John Janovy**, *Professor Emeritus, Biology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Janovy, University of Nebraska Varner Professor Emeritus, has published over 100 scientific papers, 11 trade books by major publishers, and the leading textbook in his discipline. He's the author of *Africa Notes: Reflections of an Ecotourist*.

**Theresa Jedd**, *Environmental Policy Specialist, National Drought Mitigation Center, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Jedd received a PhD in political science from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, and her research seeks to understand vulnerability and adaptation in outdoor recreation under a variety of climate and weather conditions. She is assisted by Drought Policy Intern, Lauren Uhlig (UNL SNR/UNMC).

**Dipra Jha**, *Assistant Professor of Practice, Director of Global Engagement for the Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Jha is recognized as a global expert in tourism and luxury hospitality and does collaborative work with communities, private sector organizations, and government entities. Within Nebraska, Jha has worked with Nebraska City Tourism & Commerce, Nebraska Association of Bed & Breakfast, the City of Grand Island and the Center for Rural Affairs, among others. His international collaborations include Tourism Authority of Thailand, Dubai-based Jumeirah Group, and luxury hospitality brand Oberoi Hotels.

**Luke Jordan**, *First Thru-Hiker of the Great Plains Trail*

Jordan grew up on a farm in central Minnesota and graduated from St. Cloud State University with a degree in Natural Resources. He's been involved with several trail organizations, including participating in the Partnership for the National Trail System's (PNTS) Trail Apprentice Program. In 2016 he attempted the first thru-hike of the Great Plains Trail and again succeeded, hiking from Texas to Canada.

**Joel Jorgensen**, *Nebraska Game and Parks*

Jorgensen has had a lifelong interest in birds. He has been employed as the Nongame Bird Program Manager with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for 12 years and is the president of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union.

**Susan Jurasz**, Sea Ranch, OR

Jurasz founded Sea Reach, Ltd. in 1980 and has been overseeing, designing, and planning interpretive projects ever since. Over the years, she has performed just about every task at Sea Reach, including research and writing, illustration, photography, design, and even fabrication in order to see projects through to completion.

**Martha Kauffman**, *Managing Director, World Wildlife Fund, Northern Great Plains Program*

Kauffman manages an area that encompasses five states and some of the least understood terrain in the 'Lower 48.' She works with local ranchers, Native American tribes and government agencies to increase protection for the landscape, create economic incentives for conservation, and restore native species including iconic and rare animals such as bison, prairie dogs, and the most endangered mammal in North America, the black-footed ferret. Kauffman is also a co-founder of the Montana Outdoor Science School, a non-profit that teaches K-12 youth about natural sciences.

**Doug Killeen**, *Vice President, Outdoor Products Underwriting, Philadelphia Insurance Companies, Colo.*

Killeen has 25 years of underwriting experience dealing with contractual requirements and risk management based programs. Philadelphia Insurance is a niche oriented property and casualty insurer that specializes in several recreation, wilderness, and conservation programs.

**Bobby Koepplin**, *Board Vice Chair, National Scenic Byway Foundation*

Koepplin, Valley City, ND, serves as chairperson for the Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway. He has been involved with Byways for over 20 years, is a founding member of the National Scenic Byway Foundation, and has served as a Byway PEER Advisor. Koepplin has leveraged funds and led the completion of over \$2.4 million of Byway projects including 41 interpretive sites, ten map panel kiosks, and numerous visitor amenities.

**Qwynne Lackey**, *Parks, Recreation & Tourism, University of Utah*

Lackey is a PhD student in the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism program at the University of Utah. She previously graduated with her Masters in Natural Resources Science with an emphasis in Human Dimensions at UNL. Her thesis work involved exploration of ecotourism guide and interpretation training programs.

**Adam Lackner**, *Brush Buck Tours, WY*

After serving 4 years in the United States Marine Corps, Lackner pursued a career in guiding outdoor enthusiasts. He's helped build a business that guides over 10,000 people in wildlife destinations such as Wyoming, Alaska, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.



**Tom Lynch**, *Professor & Chair of the Undergraduate Program and Curriculum Committee, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Lynch's areas of interest are cross-cultural ecocriticism and place-conscious literary studies, with an emphasis on bioregionalism. The places whose literature my research focuses on are the American West and the Australian Outback, that is, arid lands that have come under the sway of English-speaking settler colonialism. He also serves as the editor of *Western American Literature*.

**Susan Naramore Maher**, *Dean and Professor of English College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota Duluth*  
Maher is author of *Deep Map Country: Literary Cartography of the Great Plains* (2014) and of numerous articles and book chapters on Great Plains topics. Currently dean of the College of Liberal Arts and professor of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth, she is Fellow Emerita of the Center for Great Plains Studies, past president of the Willa Cather Foundation, and recent co-president of the Western Literature Association.

**Michael Maddison**, *Northwest Missouri State University*  
Maddison is a student at Northwest Missouri State University studying Geographic Information Systems.

**Steve Maly**, *Maly Marketing*  
Maly is the Founder and Chief Activist of Maly Marketing. He has an extensive background in marketing, media production, and helping other people make gobs of money. A firm believer in the power of education has led to an emphasis on education-based marketing. He has worked with clients in over 42 different industries and governmental clients all over the US.

**Ronnie O'Brien**, *Central Community College*  
In 2003 O'Brien began working with Deb Echo-Hawk of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma and manages the Pawnee Seed Preservation Project in Nebraska. In 2009 she organized the return of 150 Pawnee tribal members to Kearney, Neb., for an official homecoming celebration, and in the next three years organized the return of the Arikara, Otoe-Missouria and Southern Ponca tribes for similar celebrations. Her leadership in working with tribes helped The Archway earn the Chief Standing Bear Award in 2010.

**Nils Odendaal**, *CEO, NamibRand Nature Reserve*  
Odendaal is a native Namibian and has been involved in conservation for more than 20 years. He first worked for Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation in north-western Namibia focusing on community-based natural resource management. He has been involved with the NamibRand Nature Reserve for the past 13 years. First as the Reserve's control warden and later as CEO. He is also one of the founders of the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Landscape Association.

**Ashley Olson**, *Executive Director, Willa Cather Foundation*  
Olson has been a member of the Willa Cather Foundation staff since 2008 and has served as the organization's Executive Director since 2014. She oversees management and operation of the nation's largest collection of nationally designated historic sites dedicated to an American author.

**Lisa Pennisi**, *Natural Resources Specialist, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*  
Pennisi is an Associate Professor of practice at UNL. Her focus is human dimensions of natural resource management, including ecotourism, environmental education and conservation behavior.

**Erin Pirro**, *Farm Business Consultant, Farm Credit East*  
Pirro has been helping farmers large and small make their businesses run better since 2001. As a Certified Agricultural Consultant for Farm Credit East with a background in agricultural economics, Her focus is on benchmarking and profitability improvement.

**Melody Pittman**, *Wherever I May Roam*  
Pittman and her daughter, Taylor Pittman Hardy, are multigenerational travel writers and influencers from Florida who write about luxury travel, culture, and food with a side of smart spending.

**Andy Pollock**, *Rembolt Ludtke Law*  
A partner with the firm, Pollock practices primarily in government relations. He is a registered lobbyist before the Nebraska Legislature, representing a diverse array of clients. He also represents clients before state agencies, assisting with both regulatory matters and procurement. The former Executive Director of the state's Public Service Commission, he has a thorough knowledge of state government.

**Larkin Powell**, *Professor of Conservation Biology, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*  
Powell and his wife Kelly, who has served as an instructor at UNL for wildlife management courses, lived in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2009 during a Fulbright Scholar experience. They served as co-leaders of the UNL study tour in Namibia during 2017, and they traveled extensively in Namibia to interview private landowners about their experience in ecotourism operations on livestock farms.

**Jeff Rawlinson**, *Nebraska Game and Parks*  
Rawlinson is the Education Manager in the Communications Division with Game and Parks where he has worked for 15 years. He oversees the Hunter Education, Boater Education, Hunter Outreach and Shooting Range Development. He holds a BS and MS from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**Emily Rau**, *English graduate student, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Great Plains Graduate Fellow*  
Rau is a doctoral student in the English Department and a

Graduate Fellow in the Center for Great Plains Studies at UNL. She works full-time in the library as the Assistant Editor of the Willa Cather Archive, and also serves as an editorial assistant for Western American Literature.

**Richard Reading**, *Director of Research and Conservation, Butterfly Pavilion, Colo.*

Reading is the Director for Research and Conservation at Butterfly Pavilion and the Executive Director of the non-profit Coalition for International Conservation. He also serves as an Adjunct Professor in Biology at the University of Denver. He has worked primarily on grassland ecosystems on six continents, with a focus on the Great Plains of North America, the steppes of Mongolia, the savannahs of Botswana, and the Altiplano of Peru. His work focuses on developing pragmatic, effective, and interdisciplinary approaches to the conservation of wildlife and protected areas through research, capacity development, and working with local communities.

**Robert Ritson**, *Biology, University of Nebraska at Kearney*  
Ritson is a graduate student at the Department of Biology at UNK researching spatial ecology. His masters thesis is “Spatial Ecology of Bison in the Great Plains of North America.”

**Regina Robbins**, *Assistant Professor of Sociology & Native American Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha*  
Robbins earned her PhD in Preventive and Societal Medicine from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, with a graduate minor in Native American Studies from UNO. Robbins is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and serves the Center for Great Plains Studies on the Board of Governors and the OPS NICE program on the Native American Achievement Council. Her research includes various community-based participatory studies that open dialogue around contemporary Native American issues to develop initiatives that help build and sustain education, public health, and the arts in Indian country.

**Caleb Roberts**, *graduate student, Agronomy & Horticulture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Great Plains Graduate Fellow*  
Roberts is a PhD student majoring in Applied Ecology in the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture at UNL. His work centers on landscape and community ecology, particularly regarding ecological resilience, vulnerability, and disturbance ecology.

**Reed Robinson**, *(Sicangu/Lakota), Manager, Tribal Relations & Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office*

Robinson's office works to ensure agency policies and actions respect tribal sovereignty and serve to build vital intercultural partnerships.

**Nicole Rosmarino**, *Southern Plains Land Trust*  
Rosmarino, PhD, helped found the Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT) in 1998 and has served as its Executive

Director since 2011. In her work for SPLT, she is striving to create large shortgrass prairie wildlife refuges that emulate the “American Serengeti” that once occurred in the Great Plains. Thus far, SPLT has protected more than 18,000 acres in southeast Colorado, a biodiversity hotspot.

**Okwa Sarefo**, *founder, Wild Expeditions Safaris*

Sarefo is the creator of Wild Expectations Safaris, a small adventure touring and guiding company. Sarefo has been guiding in Botswana for the last 18 years. Over the last four years he ventured into training other guides. The company exhibits a friendly and forward-thinking attitude that recognizes the need to shift with ever-changing customer needs. His philosophy is to emphasize an exclusive experience with a small number of people to view nature on foot or the silent mokoro (canoe).

**Joel Sartore**, *Plains Safaris Keynote*

Sartore is an award-winning photographer, speaker, author, teacher, conservationist, National Geographic fellow, and regular contributor to National Geographic magazine. He specializes in documenting endangered species and landscapes around the world. He is the founder of the Photo Ark, a 25-year documentary project to save species and habitat. In addition to National Geographic, Joel contributes to Audubon, Geo, the New York Times, and Smithsonian. He has several books, including Photo Ark: A World Worth Saving, RARE: Portraits of America's Endangered Species, and Photographing Your Family. He and his work have been the subject of many national broadcasts, including National Geographic's Explorer, NBC Nightly News, NPR's Weekend Edition and Fresh Air with Terry Gross, and the Today Show. He is also a contributor on CBS Sunday Morning and a lecturer for the Great Courses series.

**Anthony Schutz**, *Professor of Law, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Schutz, a Nebraska native, is a nationally-recognized authority on the often-intertwined subjects of agricultural, environmental, and natural resources law and of state and local government. He is the author of the Rural Landowner Liability for Recreational Activities in Nebraska guide, produced by the Center for Great Plains Studies.

**Neha Shah**, *Pittsboro-Silver City, NC, Convention and Visitors Bureau*

Shah is an award-winning marketing professional and travel writer. She has been with the Pittsboro-Siler City CVB for almost two decades, as a one-person organization. She has presented on rural entrepreneurship, social media, agritourism, recreation, and culinary marketing, and more. Shah earned a BS in Business Administration and an MS in Tourism from the University of Florida.

**Chris Sieverdes**, *Board Member, National Scenic Byway Foundation*

Sieverdes serves as an Amish Country Byway Leader. He is chair of Ohio DOT Scenic Byway Advisory Committee and secretary of Ohio Byway Links, Inc., a coalition of 27 state and America's Byways. He is Professor Emeritus at Clemson University where he specialized in leadership and community development.

**Sarah Sortum**, *Ecotourism manager and operator, Calamus Outfitters, Burwell, Neb. & Nebraska Tourism Commissioner*  
Sarah (Switzer) Sortum grew up on the family ranch in Loup County, Neb. She and her husband, Mark, returned to Nebraska in 2006 and count it a blessing to be able to raise their two boys on the home place. Currently, she works for both the Switzer Ranch and Calamus Outfitters, owns and operates Sandhills Safari Jeep Tours, serves as a consultant for the Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition, and is a Nebraska State Tourism Commissioner.

**Kristal Stoner**, *Nebraska Game and Parks*  
As the Wildlife Diversity Program Manager at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Stoner oversees implementation of the Nebraska State Wildlife Action Plan with the mission to conserve declining and at-risk species while keeping common species common. She also oversees the watchable wildlife grants program which strives to create more opportunities for wildlife viewing and education by empowering local communities and organizations.

**Sharon Strouse**, *Board Chair, National Scenic Byway Foundation*  
Strouse serves as a board member of the National Scenic Byway Foundation, Ohio Byway Links, and 4-H Camp Ohio. She is a life member of the National Association of Interpreters and Professor Emeritus at The Ohio State University.

**Bill Taddicken**, *Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary*  
Taddicken leads and oversees all Rowe Sanctuary programs on the 2,400-acre sanctuary and has worked extensively on conservation of the Platte River for Sandhill Cranes, whooping cranes, and other wildlife. Previous positions included Assistant Director and Director of Conservation. He has a BS in wildlife biology.

**Anne and Steve Teget**, *PostcardJar.com*  
Rural Nebraskans Steve and Ann Teget are writers, speakers, and co-founders of the midlife travel blog, PostcardJar.com. They work with destinations and CVBs to tell authentic stories of midlife travel that connect and engage followers of their blog. Follow them on social media @postcardjar.

**Lisa Trudell**, *The Walking Tourists*  
Trudell worked in the travel industry for over 16 years, initially for a hotel company and later as a travel agent. She has co-created the community Midwest Travel Bloggers,

which connects travel writers and tourism professionals to promote the Midwest.

**Tim Trudell**, *The Walking Tourists*  
Tim Trudell is the writer, editor and photographer of the couple, covering fabulous places, people, and events. He has an e-book available titled *The Walking Tourists Guide to Nebraska Attractions beyond Omaha and Lincoln*, and the Trudell's book, *100 Things to Do in Omaha Before You Die*, was released April 15, 2018.

**Tracy Tucker**, *Education Director & Archivist, Willa Cather Foundation*  
Tucker joined the staff of the Willa Cather Foundation in 2012 as education director. A certified archivist, Tucker oversees the WCF collection and presents regularly on topics related to Cather, Great Plains literature, and the physical and cultural landscape. She is an Affiliate Fellow of the Center for Great Plains Studies.

**T.J. Walker**, *Nebraska Game and Parks biologist*  
The mission of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is stewardship of the state's fish, wildlife, park, and outdoor recreation resources in the best long-term interests of the people and those resources.

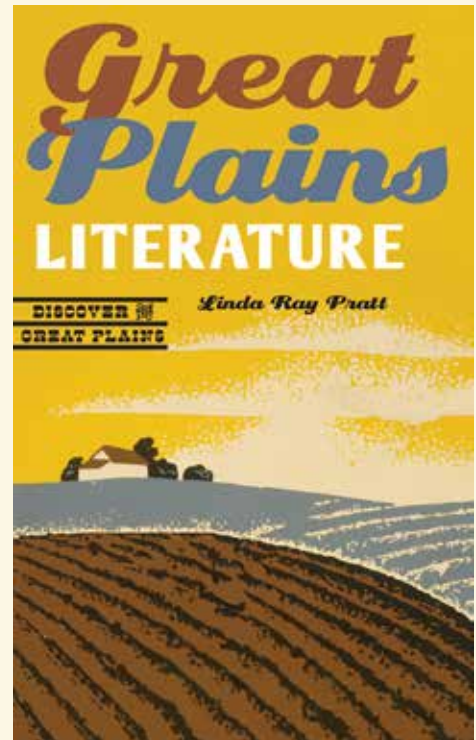
**Bill Whitney**, *Executive Director, Prairie Plains Resource Institute*  
With a BS in biology from Nebraska Wesleyan University and an MS in limnology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Whitney's goal is making the landscape of his youth available for science, education, and recreation. He saw opportunity in improving small parcels of local land by working them back to native prairie and making them accessible to anyone interested. Whitney and his wife Jan received the Nebraska Wildlife Federation 2006 Conservationist of the Year Award.

**Kim Wilson**, *Professor of Landscape Architecture and RFI Fellow, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*  
Wilson's professional experience focuses on site design and planning for urban waterfronts, light rail transit corridors and other infrastructure projects, large land holdings and parks, and open spaces. She also has been involved in the preparation of campus master plans, urban districts, and environmentally sensitive ecosystems.



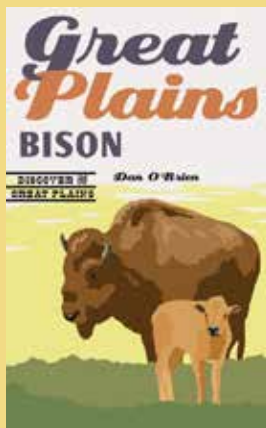
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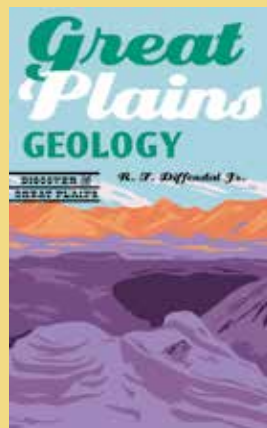


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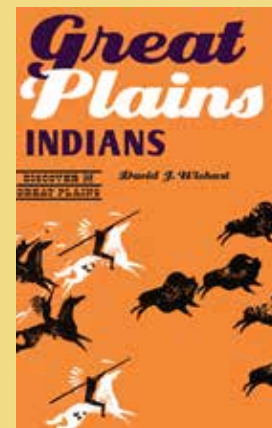
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