



The Prairie Pulse



Brice Krohn

Note from the President

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for your ongoing support of the Crane Trust. Crane Trust has been an integral part of my life, and I am honored to continue as President and oversee all aspects of the Trust.

I've dedicated my life to protecting the integrity of natural habitats. I arrived at the Crane Trust in 2012 as a Habitat Manager, where I maintained and managed vehicles, property, prescribed fires, and much of the gritty outdoor work we do. In 2014, I stepped inside as Senior Director and oversaw the Crane Trust's Nature Center and Headquarters' daily operations, where our land and science management occur. I've since performed these responsibilities at elevated levels as Vice President, and most recently, President.

Crane Trust's mission is to protect, enhance and maintain the ecological integrity of the Big Bend Area of the Platte River for migratory birds and wildlife. I share this mission with a dedicated team of staff, researchers, and volunteers. Together, we look forward to enhancing our conservation efforts throughout our mission area. Our South Side Vision protects adjacent land from future development that would impact the lowland tallgrass prairie habitat we spent years restoring. We anticipate performing research and best practices in land management that will expand our efforts and enhance our past actions.

Crane Trust carries out its mission with dedicated resiliency primarily because of your unyielding support. The past few years were uniquely challenging, but we successfully flourished despite the pandemic and other obstacles we faced. We will thrive so long as we face unexpected challenges together. I believe in partnerships that combine all participants' creativity, knowledge, skills, and ideas to advocate for our natural resources. I will continue to bring this philosophy to my work as I adopt the challenges of my newest roles at this terrific organization.

Thank you again for your support and ongoing interest in what we do. Our work would be impossible without you.

With gratitude,



The Importance of Wetland Habitat for Whooping Cranes During Migration

By: Dave Baasch

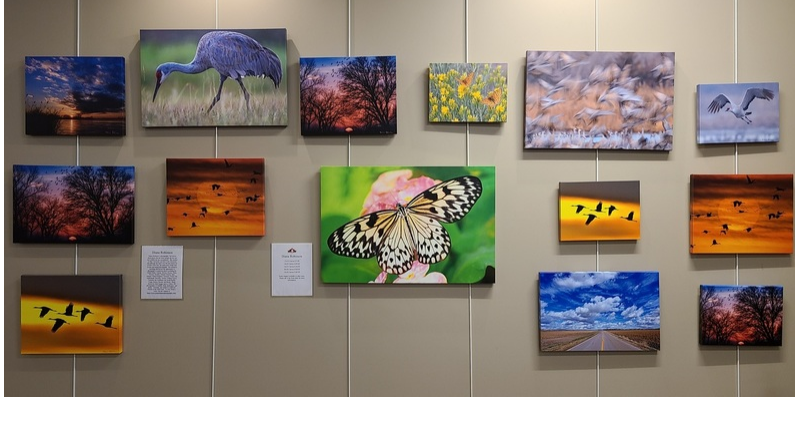
The arrival of fall marks an important time of year for many migratory species including the endangered Whooping Crane. Whooping Cranes, once on the brink of extinction, are a wetland-dependent species. They use river channels, palustrine and lacustrine wetlands, and wet meadows to forage and roost during migration. Every fall during their 2,500 mile journey south to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Whooping Cranes stop several times within the central Great Plains. They spend a night or more resting and foraging to maintain strength and energy to complete their migration within a 2-3 week window of time. While the landscape varies greatly from North Dakota to Texas, one thing that does not change where Whooping Cranes stopover is the presence of wetland habitat.

Historically, wetlands were common throughout the Great Plains. While vital for the recovery of hundreds of wildlife species, including the endangered Whooping Crane, many wetlands have been drained and tilled into farmlands and now are fairly uncommon within the central Great Plains. Wetlands provide important food resources and protection from predators for Whooping Cranes as they migrate across the Great Plains each spring and fall.

Little is currently known about the foods consumed by Whooping Cranes during migration due to their expansive migration corridor, sensitivity to human disturbance, small population size, and protected status under the Endangered Species Act. Through current research, the Crane Trust and its partner organizations are discovering what Whooping Cranes eat during migration.

During the past couple of migration seasons, the Crane Trust has used high-resolution, long-range photography/videography, spotting scopes, and binoculars to document Whooping Crane behavioral activities in central Nebraska. We have gathered hours of video and thousands of photographs which allowed us to identify Whooping Cranes eating several foods including fish, frogs, softshell turtles, and insects.

While in the security of wetlands, Whooping Cranes were witnessed performing important social interactions necessary for healthy pair-bond relationships. While wetlands are limited in abundance and quality throughout central Nebraska, our observations indicate that wetlands provide a valuable habitat for Whooping Cranes to feed, rest, and socialize.



Featured Artist: Diana Robinson

Diana Robinson studied at Ohio University and New York University. Although Diana spent over thirty years based in New York City, she has spent most of her time on the road photographing wildlife, birds, landscapes and nature. Having traveled extensively, Diana has had the opportunity to photograph in many locations throughout the world including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Russia, China, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Italy, Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Austria, Iceland, Kenya, Tanzania, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii and Brazil. Diana's photographs tell stories about places she has been, people she has met and wildlife she has encountered. Diana shoots for Getty Images and is a Nikon 100 photographer. She now lives in southwest Florida on the Gulf Coast. To view Diana's work, visit her website at: <https://www.dianarobinsonphotography.com/>



Volunteer Spotlight:

Ed Meedel

Ed Meedel has volunteered with the Crane Trust for 15 years. He first began volunteering at the visitor center when the Convention and Visitors Bureau occupied the space and continues to come out to meet and welcome guests, guide tours, and help with seasonal maintenance. The Crane Trust is not the only place Ed devotes his time. He also volunteers with the Grand Island Library Board of Directors, the Library Foundation Board of Directors, Fonner Park, the Nebraska State Fair, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, and he serves meals at the Salvation Army.

Ed's favorite thing about volunteering with the Crane Trust is meeting people from different states and throughout the world. He enjoys sharing the story of the Crane Trust and our mission. In addition, he always makes sure guests know we have "bison, not buffalo". Buffalo are native to Africa and Asia where bison are found in North America and Europe and it is bison that the Crane Trust reintroduced to our lands after a 150-year absence from the Platte River Valley. A portion of the herd can be seen from the Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center year-round and Ed enjoys answering questions from guests about the bison and the cranes.

Partners Picnic 2021

At the Crane Trust, our true strength lies in our partnerships. We hosted the 2021 Partners Picnic for those organizations who have helped us move our mission and organization forward. Those that attended include:

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Platte Basin Timelapse

Prairie Plains Institute

Prairie Loft Center

TRL Camera

Thank you to these, and all our partners, who have helped us protect and maintain critical habitat for sandhill cranes, whooping cranes and other migratory birds through sound science, habitat management, community outreach and education.



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