



Crane Trust Mission & History

FIND US

CRANE TRUST NATURE & VISITOR CENTER

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Wood River, NE 68883
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CRANE TRUST HEADQUARTERS

6611 W. Whooping Crane Drive
Wood River, NE 68883

www.cranetrust.org

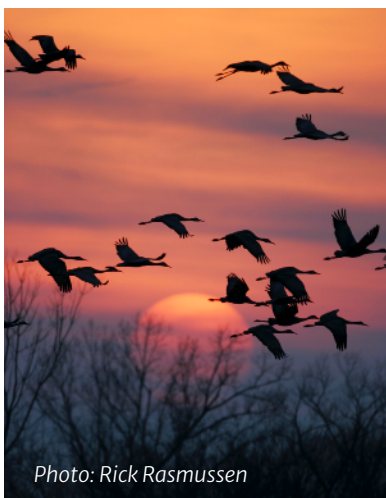


Photo: Rick Rasmussen



Our Mission

Through land management, scientific research, and education, our mission is to protect and maintain the physical, hydrological and biological integrity of the Big Bend area of the Platte River so that it continues to function as a life support system for whooping cranes, sandhill cranes and other migratory bird species.

A Legacy Born of Conflict, Cooperation, and Conservation

The Crane Trust was established in 1978 as result of a court-approved settlement over the construction of Grayrocks Dam on a tributary of the Platte River, more than 400 miles upriver in Wyoming. The settlement stands as a testament to the good that can come when differing interests come together to find a lasting solution to complex issues.

The driving interests in the settlement were powerful and far-reaching:

- power generation
- water for irrigation
- recreation resources
- municipalities and industry
- conservation of critical habitat for the endangered whooping crane and countless other species that depend on the Platte River for their survival

Power, Water, and Conservation Interests Come Together

Out of concern for the impact on irrigation and wildlife downstream in the Central Platte Valley, the State of Nebraska and the National Wildlife Federation objected to construction of the Grayrocks Dam. In the end, the three parties came to resolution.

Outcomes:

- Satisfied requirements of the Endangered Species Act
- Created a manifest for developing surface water in the region
- Missouri Basin Power Project completed construction of Grayrocks Dam
- Established the Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust

Income from the original endowment financed land acquisition and conservation easements in the Big Bend region of the Platte River. A portion of the endowment helps support habitat management, restoration projects, scientific studies, and partnership projects. The Crane Trust is governed by three trustees, one appointed by each of the respective parties.

Crane Trust Nature & Visitor Center is a Gateway for the Community

The Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust (Crane Trust) headquarters were established on Whooping Crane Drive. The site encompasses over 5,000 contiguous riverfront acres, offices, classrooms, cottages, and Crane Trust land management facilities.

In January 2012, the Crane Trust acquired the assets of the Nebraska Nature & Visitor Center at I-80 Exit 305. The Nature and Visitor Center serves as an important gateway for community outreach and education to build awareness, understanding and support for the Crane Trust and its mission.

MORE 

Fulfilling the Crane Trust Mission

Leadership in Science & Research

The Crane Trust is a center for scientific discovery and outreach for the protection and maintenance of critical habitat for cranes and other migratory species along the Platte River. Our scientific team seeks to understand how conservation practices such as habitat restoration and prescribed burning affect habitat for migratory birds, including the federally endangered whooping crane.

The Crane Trust has established sites where surveys are conducted to monitor resident & migratory birds, small mammals, and vegetation. Findings allow the Trust to study effects of prescribed burns, bison and cattle grazing, and other factors over decades of change. With these insights, Trust staff can recommend management plans across the Plains region, benefitting threatened or endangered species such as the piping plover, least tern, northern long-eared bat, and whooping crane.



Management of Critical Habitat



The Trust protects and maintains nearly 10,000 acres of lowland tall grass prairie and wet meadows along the central Platte River, either through direct ownership or through conservation easements.

The Crane Trust strives to recreate the natural influences that have shaped these habitats for millennia, including wildfires, bison grazing, and river dynamics. In 2015, we acquired a genetically important bison herd. These animals roam on 1,200 acres of Crane Trust property, reclaiming a keystone role in the prairie ecosystem.

Fires and grazing are conducted in a rotational regime to allow certain areas to rest, thus creating a mosaic of habitats in different stages. To mimic the physical actions of high river flows, the Trust mechanically clears vegetation from riverine islands and banks to create vital roosting and nesting habitats. The Trust also restores prairie habitats and manages invasive vegetation to promote plant diversity on our properties.

Outreach & Education

The Crane Trust serves as a resource center for the public, other conservation groups, and academic partners. We host scientists and students eager to study cranes, migratory birds, wetlands, native prairie, and progressive land management practices.

At our Nature & Visitor Center, the Crane Trust annually welcomes more than 45,000 tourists, students, and outdoor enthusiasts of all ages. Many participate in education programs offered at the Center and in classrooms and schoolyards throughout the community.



Your Support

Crane Trust is an independent nonprofit organization that depends on your generous support to protect and preserve critical habitat for the endangered whooping cranes, sandhill cranes, and countless other species sharing fragile river and prairie ecosystems. Friends like you ensure that we can continue the work of our important mission. To become a member or to donate, visit our website at cranetrust.org/support. Thank you for your interest in and support of the Crane Trust!