



# FROM THE TRAILS

OF THE PIONEERS PARK NATURE CENTER

JANUARY - APRIL 2014

## AN ANNIVERSARY TO REMEMBER

Looking back on last year's 50th Anniversary, it is safe to say it was a wonderful success. There were fantastic special events, improvements to the prairie and new relationships forged. During the fall we held the second Beer, Brats & Bison, which again brought out lots of great people to enjoy a fun social evening. The bison were relocated to the pasture by the pond so that they could attend the event, and the elk were moved to the bison pasture. They will probably stay at their new locations until spring.

The first annual Prairie Run was held in November and had over 125 participants. It was a great opportunity for people to see another area of the Nature Center prairie that is usually not open to the public. The uneven trail and hilly northern section of the prairie were a challenge for many participants. However, the lovely weather and views made the run beautiful and comfortable.

In 2013 it was discovered that previous efforts to control leafy spurge are paying off. There were much smaller areas of the invasive spurge on the prairie and we are hopeful that restoration efforts will continue to improve the diversity of our prairie habitat. Prairie restoration involves several management practices including prescribed burns, limited herbicide application, cutting and digging out plants by hand and grazing. A partnership with local cattle ranchers has made it possible for cow/calf pairs to be grazed on sections of the prairie in the spring and summer months in an effort to control invasive cool season grasses like brome.

Jerry Smithers deserves a big "Thank You!" for his support and volunteer efforts with the Nature Center. Jerry is a Nebraska Master Naturalist that has been sharing his experience in marketing and business to improve the planning and implementing of events and fund raising efforts at the Nature Center. He has challenged us to think and plan in new ways. We still have more to learn and do but Jerry is helping us to move forward as the Nature Center continues to grow and serve the Lincoln community.

Thank you everyone who helped us celebrate our 50th Anniversary! We are thrilled to embark on another 50 years of wildlife and habitat preservation, environmental education and community involvement.



A section of the prairie that was burned and had cows grazing on the cool season grass.

### RUN FOR THE BRIDGES

March 15th, 2014

All races start at 8:00 a.m.

The Run for the Bridges is a fundraiser to replace the bridges in Wilderness Park. Because of partnerships with the city and Great Plains Trails Network, the north bridge connecting the Pioneers Boulevard and Old Cheney sections of the park are scheduled to be built by December 2014.

The Run for the Bridges offers a marathon, 1/2 marathon and 10K distance, and 1.8 mile kids run on the trails of Wilderness Park. Registration and detailed information can be found at [getmeregistered.com](http://getmeregistered.com)

Let's build bridges together!

Register before March 7th for a free t-shirt.

### PIONEERS PARK NATURE CENTER

**Admission:** Donation \$3/person \$5/family \$10/group

**Location:** 3201 S. Coddington (west end of  
Pioneers Park) Lincoln, NE 68522

**Hours:** Monday - Saturday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday: Noon - 5:00 p.m.

Chet Ager Building is open on Weekends only  
thru March 10.

**Phone:** 402.441.7895

**E-mail:** [naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Website:** [parks.lincoln.ne.gov/naturecenter](http://parks.lincoln.ne.gov/naturecenter)

**Mailing Address:** 2740 A Street, Lincoln, NE 68502

## PROGRAMS FOR EVERYONE

### Author Storybook Reading

Thursday, Jan 2 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Prairie Building \$3/person

Come listen to a reading of "Have You Seen Mary?" by Gretna author and NEBRASKAland Magazine editor Jeff Kurrus. The book, beautifully photographed by Lincoln photographer Michael Forsberg, is a wonderful story about Sandhill Cranes in Nebraska. Following the reading, Kurrus will share a slide show of his work as a nature writer and photographer. There will also be hands-on activities for kids.

### Winter Hike

Saturday, January 11 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.  
Prairie Building \$5 Suggested Donation

Go on a guided hike to look for birds, animals and their tracks. After our brisk walk we will enjoy some hot cocoa!

### Winter Poetry

Sunday, January 26 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.  
Prairie Building \$5 Suggested Donation

Nebraska Poet Laureate, Twyla Hansen, will be joining us as we spend the afternoon over looking the pond sharing poetry. Read your own, a piece that you love or just come to listen. This is an opportunity to enjoy the written word.

### Night Hike

Saturday, February 8 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Prairie Building \$7/person

Take a walk under the brilliant stars of the winter sky as we listen to hear the sounds of nocturnal animals around us. After the hike we will warm up with hot cocoa. This is recommended for ages 6 and up. [Register by January 31.](#)

### Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 15 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.  
Prairie Building \$5 Suggested Donation

Bundle up and join us for a 9:00 a.m. winter bird walk. Then meet with other birders at the Chet Ager Building for hot mulled cider and a snack as we count the visitors at our bird garden. That data will be submitted to the biologists at the Cornell University Bird Lab for the 16th Annual Great Bird Count. The Wild Bird Habitat Stores will be on hand to discuss how you can attract birds to your backyard. Please call 402-441-7895 if you plan to attend the bird walk.

### Geology Day

Sunday, March 9 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
Chet Ager Building \$5 Suggested Donation

Learn about fossils, minerals, rocks and gemstones through displays and demonstrations by the members of the Lincoln Gem and Mineral Club. They can also help you identify your own specimens during this drop-in program.

## NATURE FUN DAY

Saturday, April 26

This will be a family event hosted by the Friends of Pioneers Park Nature Center. Details are still being determined. Please contact the Nature Center after February 1st to learn more.



*Parks are at the center of a community's character; they reflect and strengthen the sense of place and identity that makes cities fit places for people.*

*- Conservation Foundation*

## PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

### Animal Theater & Winter Play

Saturday, February 1 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  
Prairie Building \$3/person

Celebrate Groundhog's Day with the animals! Come see a show about wildlife at the Nature Center. Then head outside for some fun winter games. Dress for the weather.

### Nature Explorers Camp

Monday-Friday March 10-14 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Prairie Building \$170

Looking for fun and adventure for your spring break? Spend it at the Nature Center. Children ages 6 - 13 will play games, explore, build magic places, make friends and have a great time during spring break. Campers will get outside everyday to investigate the natural world around them. Extended hours are available from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at no extra charge.

### Hand in Hand: Spring Song

Mondays, March 17, 24 & 31, April 7, 14, 21 & 28, May 5  
10:00 - 11:30 a.m. \$65/child/8 week session  
Prairie Building Goldenrod Classroom

Together you and your child will discover the wonders of spring through walks, games and stories. Please dress for the weather, we will be exploring outside for a portion of each class. A snack will be provided. Ages 2 ½-3 ½ year olds and accompanying adult. This class is designed for one-on-one time, please leave younger siblings at home. Register by March 6.

**BIRTHDAY PARTIES:** Choose the theme that will make for an exciting birthday celebration. Available from 10-12 on Saturdays and 2-4 on Saturdays and Sundays. We provide the space, program, a favor bag for each child and a special gift for the guest of honor. Available facilities: [Birthday House](#), \$75 for up to 10 children and 3 adults; \$7 each additional child, maximum of 15 children [Auditorium](#), \$100 for up to 10 children and 5 adults; \$7 each additional child, \$3 each additional adult

## NATURE CENTER PRESCHOOL

### PRESCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

January 21, Tuesday 10:00-11:00 a.m. or 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Inclement Weather Date: January 28, Tuesday

The Nature Center preschool and pre-kindergarten programs are for children ages 3 – 5 years old. You are invited to attend an open house to see the classrooms and meet with our director.

### PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION

2014-2015 school year registration begins February 1, 2014.

## PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

### Sandhill Crane Trip

Thursday, March 20

Noon - 11:00 p.m.

\$75/person (\$25 for blind reservation is non-refundable)

Experience one of our planet's most spectacular wildlife migrations. Visit the Nebraska Nature and Visitor Center, travel rural roads to see the cranes foraging and dancing in the fields, then watch and listen to them return to the Platte River at sunset from a Rowe Sanctuary blind. The fee includes van transportation, dinner and blind costs. Must have the ability to walk uneven trails in low light with a guide. Registration and payment required by February 21 for blind reservations.



View from Beer, Brats and Bison.

## FRIENDS OF PPNC

### Annual Meeting for Members

Saturday, January 25

9:30 a.m. - Noon

All members of the Friends of Pioneers Park Nature Center are welcome to attend this meeting. Dave Titterington, owner of Wildbird Habitat Stores, will give a guest speech.

### Beer, Brats & Bison Recap

On a lovely evening in September 130 people visited the Nature Center for an evening of dining, socializing and a night hike. The event was a great success and raised over \$3,300 for scholarships to preschool and camp programs. Look for information on Beer, Brats & Bees scheduled for June 20, 2014!

### Nature Fun Day

This family friendly and free event will be taking place April 26, 2014. Details are still being planned, more information will be available in February.

## Have you noticed the Pioneers Park Nature Center elk change throughout the year?

That's because those elk are male or bulls and they grow very large antlers every year. Each of those antlers can weigh 40 pounds! Every summer the length of the daylight triggers hormones in the elk which cause the antlers to grow. When the antlers start growing they are made of cartilage and covered in velvet. However by the end of summer the antlers harden to bone and the velvet falls off or is rubbed off. During the fall the bulls are looking to impress female elk or cows and their massive antlers indicate that they can find lots of food, defend themselves from predators and are basically a good mate. Finally by early spring the antlers fall off.

To learn more about elk go to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's website [www.rmef.org](http://www.rmef.org)

## SPECIALLY FOR SCOUTS

### SCOUT HIKES

One hour naturalist-led hikes are available.

Fee: \$3/scout/minimum 10. Arrange 2 weeks in advance.

### BADGEWORK

The Nature Center rotates scheduled badges and try-its. Upon request, staff will work with leaders for other badge programming with the following fee schedule:

2 hours or less: \$7/scout/minimum 10

2.5-3 hours: \$10/scout/minimum 10

### JUNIOR NATURALIST SERIES

Sundays

1:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Prairie Building

Fee: \$15/scout

This series of programs is targeted at Brownies but all levels of Girl Scouts are welcome to attend. Fee includes instructor, supplies, snacks and recognition. Come dressed for the weather, we'll be outside for at least part of the time! Register through the Girl Scouts at [girlscoutsnebraska.org](http://girlscoutsnebraska.org) at least two weeks before the program.

Jan 19 Sensing Snakes: The Nature Center is home to many snakes found in Nebraska. Discover how the snakes are adapted for life here and meet a couple up close!

Feb 16 Myth Busters: Do toads really give you warts? How much wood can a woodchuck, chuck? Learn the answers to these and other myths and stories about local animals.

Mar 16 More Than Just Feathers: Go on a scavenger hunt for migratory birds making their way through the Nature Center. Learn what kinds of animals are active now and what we can do to help them survive.

### NATURALIST ACTIVITY BADGE FOR WEBELOS

May 3, Saturday

9:30 a.m. - Noon

Prairie Building

\$10/scout

Learn to identify the poisonous plants and animals of our area, search for animals of our region, investigate food chains, bird flyways and the importance of wetlands! Complete activities 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 with the help of Nature Center staff. Register by April 30.

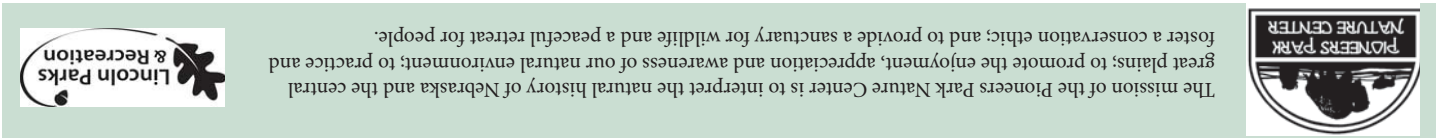


# Pioneers Park Nature Center

Lincoln Parks & Recreation  
 2740 "A" Street  
 Lincoln, NE 68502

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| <p><b>THANK YOU</b></p> <p><b>DONATIONS</b></p> <p>Starcraft Chapter 307 OES<br/>         Doris Cole<br/>         Carol &amp; Steve Andersen<br/>         Spooktacular<br/>         Russ's Market, Coddington St.<br/>         HyVee, 51st &amp; O<br/>         Walmart, North 27th<br/>         Sandhills Publishing<br/>         Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center<br/>         Prairie Run<br/>         Whole Foods Market<br/>         Mama Cade<br/>         The Running Co<br/>         Scheel's<br/>         Indigo Bridge Books<br/>         Meadowlark Coffee &amp; Espresso<br/>         Lower Platte South NRD<br/>         Beer, Brats &amp; Bison<br/>         Blue Blood Brewery<br/>         Kathie Putensen<br/>         Glacial Till Vineyard<br/>         Leon's Food Mart</p> | <p><b>VOLUNTEERS</b></p> <p>Prairie Run<br/>         Rosina Paolini<br/>         Bob Pewthers<br/>         Matt Pewthers<br/>         Molly Bass<br/>         Sue Dobson<br/>         Jane Holt &amp; daughter<br/>         Bob Furman<br/>         American Red Cross<br/>         Todd Hoffman<br/>         Tracy Murray<br/>         Joeth Zucco<br/>         Amy Gordon<br/>         Deb Buck<br/>         Marilyn Tabor<br/>         Eagle Scout Projects<br/>         Preston Cuddy - Children's Play House<br/>         Jack Brewer - Vulture Shelter Boxes</p> | <p>Spooktacular<br/>         Zoe Ten<br/>         Jesse Hansen<br/>         Emily Cashmere<br/>         Sue Stanoszek<br/>         Jordan Miller<br/>         Grace Barry<br/>         Diana Lear<br/>         Paul Gebers<br/>         Stephanie Lin<br/>         Kate Boone<br/>         Justin Gibson<br/>         Merrill Crandall<br/>         Bill Smith<br/>         Patti Boehner<br/>         Judy Carver<br/>         Stephanie Dean<br/>         Trevin Erickson<br/>         Kara Foster<br/>         Becky Seth<br/>         Jay Squires<br/>         Sue Guild<br/>         Rob Simon<br/>         Susan Simon</p> |
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