



# TERN AND PLOVER CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

## AS THE PLOVER TERNS

**Thanks, Volunteers!**

National Volunteer Week April 17-23

Volume 4, Issue 1

Spring 2005

*A Newsletter for and by Volunteers and Partners*

**Greetings!** Who wants to do more bird watching? If you're like me, the answer is a resounding YES!

Starting this spring, the Adopt-A-Colony program will be expanding. The program will not only include our beloved least terns and piping plovers, but also bald eagle

and great blue heron colonies, called "heronries." All of these birds have one thing in common: they depend on the Platte River system (and other water systems) for their habitat.

Why bald eagles and great blue herons? For one, they are very visible, making monitor-

ing easier for young birders. Second, little is known about what happens to either of the bird species during the nesting season. And last, what a great way to enjoy the outdoors! See page 4 for more details on this exciting new addition. Happy Birding!

*Chris Thody—Editor*

### Features

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### Partner Pitch - Nebraska Environmental Trust

*by Neil Watson*

The Nebraska Environmental Trust is unique in America. Combining citizen perspective with the accountability of the State of Nebraska, the Trust is protecting our natural resources for future generations to enjoy.

A beneficiary of the Nebraska Lottery, the Trust receives \$9.7 million of the lottery proceeds annually and distributes these funds through grants to worthwhile natural resource projects across the state. Since its formation by the Nebraska Legislature in 1992, the Trust has supported hundreds of projects that protect habitat, improve water quality and increase recycling across Nebraska.

#### A Legacy of Preservation

The history of the Nebraska Environmental Trust is shaped by our grantees. Their projects illustrate how citizen initiative can improve the way of life for all Nebraskans.

Some examples of projects supported by the Trust include:

- Critical habitat projects: wetland restorations in the Rainwater Basin, Panhandle and the Sandhills; recovery of the endangered Blowout Penstemon; community lakes and aquatic habitat rehabilitation; native prairie restorations; seed drills for conservation plantings.

- Water quality and quantity projects: conversion to center pivot irrigation; implementation of watershed protection areas; studies to determine water usage on the Platte River; "Nebraska - style" urban landscaping; field buffer strips for pollution prevention; agricultural waste management.

- Recycling and solid waste projects: development of recycling collection programs in rural areas; recyclable-materials processing; household hazardous waste disposal.

- Carbon management projects: carbon sequestration research; projects to man-

age carbon levels in agricultural soils; tree planting projects.

#### Preserving Natural Nebraska

Since 1992, the Nebraska Environmental Trust has worked to preserve and protect our natural resources for future generations. A history of successful partnerships and common sense approaches to environmental issues has ensured that every Nebraskan can enjoy our land, air and water for many years to come. To learn more about the Nebraska Environmental Trust, visit our Web site or call the Trust office at 402-471-5409.

Nebraska Environmental Trust  
700 S 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4913  
402-471-5409

[www.environmentaltrust.org](http://www.environmentaltrust.org)

*The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership has received several Nebraska Environmental Trust Grants. Thanks!*

## Regional Coordinator Corner *by Diane Beachly*

The world of water has fascinated me since my childhood days when I would rescue tadpoles from puddles that were drying up. I would then raise buckets full of tadpoles to toadhood. As regional wildlife assistant I am still concerned with diminishing water supplies, especially in the Platte River. The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership works with sand and gravel mines to avoid conflicts between nesting birds and mining operations. We have been very successful in reducing conflicts and some of our predator deterrent methods are proving to increase the

fledgling success rate as well. We have noticed that nesting at sandpits has been less successful or becomes non-existent as the nearby Platte River ceases to flow in the summer. The sandpits will still have plenty of water in their lakes even though the neighboring river is dry. We are collecting data from US Geological Survey river gauge stations that are located along the Platte River to record river flows. We will compare these river flows and the nesting and fledgling success rates of terns and plovers. Both terns and plovers use the river as a food source during

the summer and as a staging area before their fall migration. We hope to document relationships between river flows and least tern and piping plover nesting success. It appears that flowing river water provides foraging and staging areas that may be necessary for successful nesting and fledging even though sand pits with suitable nest sites are available. It's our no-river-food, no-sandpit-nesting hypothesis.

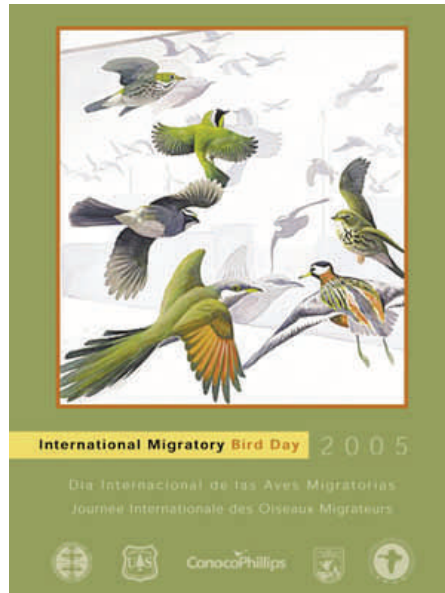
*"If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in Water."* - Loren Eiseley

## Celebrations Galore!

April 10-16, 2005  
Join millions of teachers and students in a week of educational preparation for Earth Day



2005  
Sign up to participate!  
[www.EEweek.org](http://www.EEweek.org)



National Environmental Education Week—April 10-16th  
National Volunteer Week April 17th—April 23rd  
National Wildlife Week April 19th—April 25th  
Earth Day—April 22  
International Migratory Bird Day—May 14th

**National Environmental Education Week**—A week of educational preparation to enhance the education value of Earth Day.  
**National Volunteer Week**—Started in 1974 by a proclamation by Richard M. Nixon establishing an annual celebration of volunteering.

**National Wildlife Week**—Started in 1938 by the National Wildlife Federation. It is a celebration of wildlife and wild places and encourages young people and adults to learn about and experience nature.

**International Migratory Bird Day**—Started in 1993; Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Under the direction of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Focuses attention on the journey of migration.

**Earth Day**—Started by Senator Gaylord Nelson on April 20, 1970. It is a national day of observance of environmental problems. Now over 20 million people participate in events annually.

## Where Are They Now??

Let's play catch up! The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership officially started in July, 1999. There have been several staff members through the years, and we would like you to know what they're up to.

Year	Program Coordinator	Volunteer Coordinator	Regional Coordinator	Technicians
1999	Jeff Marcus	none	none	Chad Taylor, Chris Thody
2000	Jeff Marcus	none	none	Carey Grell, Silka Finkbeiner
2001	Jeff Marcus	none	none	Kindra Fox, Chris Thody
2002	Renaë Held	Chris Thody	none	Jennifer Malfait, Dana Manske
2003	Renaë Held	Chris Thody	none	Sam Wilson, Kari Andresen
2004	Renaë Held	Chris Thody	Diane Beachly	Clare Welch, Bryan Kluever
2005	Renaë Held	Chris Thody	Diane Beachly	Clare Welch, Melissa VanderLinden



Jeff Marcus—Piedmont Faunal Diversity Coordinator, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission



Chad Taylor—Wildlife Biologist, Nebraska Game and Parks, Cambridge



Carey Grell (left) - Environmental Analyst Nebraska Game and Parks, Lincoln  
Silka Finkbeiner (right) - Graduate student, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Dana Manske—Pursuing Master's Degree in Education at University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse



Jennifer (Malfait) Swerczek—Pursuing Master's degree in Outdoor Education, Northern Illinois University



Sam Wilson—Nongame Mammal Furbearer Program Manager, Nebraska Game and Parks, Lincoln



Kari Andresen—Assistant to Nongame Bird Program Manager, Nebraska Game and Parks, Lincoln



Kindra Fox—has recently pursued graduate studies at the University of Nebraska-Kearney



Bryan Kluever—in graduate school at the University of Arizona in range and forest resources. His project focuses on lethal and non-lethal affects of carnivores on cattle in eastern Arizona

### Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership Staff 2005



Renaë Held



Diane Beachly



Chris Thody



Clare Welch



Melissa VanderLinden

*Thank you all for being a part of this special Partnership!*



## Change is good! Volunteer Opportunities Expanding *by Chris Thody*

Now more than ever information about the habitat uses of bird species is vital, particularly in the Platte River system. Two species we are interested in expanding our knowledge of are bald eagles and great blue herons. The tern and plover Adopt-a-Colony program will continue, and we are happy to offer additional opportunities for volunteers to enjoy our natural world.

The data collected from this monitoring will fill in missing gaps, and help biologists to better determine habitat needs of these birds.

Bald eagle information that will be collected includes:



Bald eagle eaglets

date nesting begins, approximate date eggs were laid, hatching dates, number of young, number fledged, and date fledged.

At great blue heron rookeries, data collection will include: number of nests, date first nest occupied, number of nests occupied, number of young per nest, fledging date, and the last date nests were occupied.



Great Blue Heron

The main focus of the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership continues

to be the protection of endangered Least Terns and threatened Piping Plovers. Monitoring bald eagles and great blue herons adds new opportunities for volunteers and the information gathered will be used by biologists to determine habitat essentials for these birds.

Training sessions for monitoring least terns, piping plovers, bald eagle nests, and great blue heron rookeries will begin in May and continue through June. Postcards with dates and times will be sent out in 2-3 weeks.

Please contact Chris Thody at 402-472-8741 or [cthody2@unl.edu](mailto:cthody2@unl.edu) for more information.

**Tern Tidbit:** The least tern, smallest of the tern family, can be identified by its white forehead and small size.

**Plover Point:** Plovers lose much of their coloring and look quite different on their wintering grounds than on their nesting grounds.

### STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Renae Held, Program Coordinator  
313 Biochemistry Hall  
P.O. Box 830758  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0758  
Office: (402) 472-8878  
Fax: (402) 472-4915  
Email: [rheld3@unl.edu](mailto:rheld3@unl.edu)

Chris Thody, Volunteer Coordinator  
313 Biochemistry Hall  
P.O. Box 830758  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0758  
Office: (402) 472-8741  
Fax: (402) 472-4915  
Email: [cthody2@unl.edu](mailto:cthody2@unl.edu)

Diane Beachly, Regional Coordinator  
309 Steinhart  
Hastings College  
710 North Turner Avenue  
Hastings, NE 68901  
Office: (402) 463-2406 x 7222  
Email: [DBeachly@Hastings.edu](mailto:DBeachly@Hastings.edu)



**Partners:** Overland Sand and Gravel Company, Western Sand and Gravel Company, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Girl Scouts-Great Plains Council, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Environmental Trust, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Arps Gravel and Concrete, Lyman-Richey Corporation, Mallard Sand and Gravel, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

<http://ternandplover.unl.edu>