



# Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership

*A Newsletter for and by Volunteers and Partners*

# As the Plover Terns

## Newsletter Gets a New Look

Hi Everyone!

March roared in like a lion—or in the words of one of our local weather forecasters—a ticked-off lion. And, as the saying goes, March went out like a lamb, with record high temperatures.

Terns and plovers have started their journey back to parts north. They should find some areas along the Platte River much improved compared to the past few years. There have been some great ice jams and high water events, scouring the sandbars and depositing sand, building up the sandbars. In the central Platte area, many sandbars have been mechanically cleared of vegetation. With any luck, we will have nesting least terns and piping plovers on the central Platte once again!

The Partnership is changing and evolving every year. One example is a change to our newsletter. Not only are we introducing a new format, but we're also going online! Our current newsletter, along with past newsletters, can now be found on our website. We anticipate that the current newsletter will be online by April 16th, just in time for National Volunteer Week.

Another change we are making this year is a new volunteer position we are calling the "Volunteer Technician". This position will require more training and responsibility, plus they will receive a stipend! See page 2 for more details.

You can also find other exciting news on page 4. The Partnership is now allowed to accept dona-

tions that will help fund our program. I'll be introducing you to two new partners (on Page 2) that have contributed to that fund.

"You can't keep a good woman down" or in this case "You can't keep a good woman from moving to New Mexico". Renae Held, Program Coordinator for the past 5 years, is moving to the southwest for "greener" pastures. See page three for details.

Also on page 3 I'll introduce to you to new personnel helping out this year, Sarah Rehme and Robin Smith. Additional staff information can be found on page 4.

An exciting story about the record number of bald eagle nests in Nebraska brings this season's newsletter to a close. Enjoy!  
- Chris Thody, Editor

## Renae Heading Southwest

As the song goes.....  
♪ "So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, Goodbye..." ♪

Renae Held, Partnership Program Coordinator for the past five years, is

leaving Nebraska to pursue the position of Assistant Chief of Threatened and Endangered Species with New Mexico Game and Fish. *More about Renae on page 3.*



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### Special points of interest:

- Renae's departure will leave a large void to fill.
- A new position for a willing volunteer is now available, with a small stipend attached.
- Monetary contributions to help maintain the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership are now being accepted through the University Foundation.

## Volunteer Technician Position Opening

The Partnership staff are pleased to announce a new position available called the "Volunteer Technician". The position is still a volunteer position; however, we will be able to include a small daily stipend for mileage and lunch.

**POSITION DESCRIPTION:** This position requires a commitment of two days a week, visiting one or two sand and gravel mines. At the mine, you will be responsible for monitoring the least terns and/or piping plovers that are nesting there. Duties include:

Counting adults, nests, chicks, and eggs; searching for new nests; informing mine personnel of any changes that may occur with the colony (for example, colony abandonment); alerting volunteer coordinator of any problems that may occur;

**REQUIREMENTS:** The person chosen for this position will ideally be a past volunteer with the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership. They should be able to identify least terns and piping plovers and their chicks. Must be

willing to put in 3-4 hours of work two days a week, and must be willing to travel to the Plattsmouth and Louisville areas.

**COMPENSATION:** The Volunteer Technician will be supplied with binoculars, a spotting scope, and tripod for use during the summer. A daily stipend of \$60 will be offered.

**DEADLINE:** If you are interested in the position, please contact Chris Thody, Volunteer Coordinator, at 402-472-8741 by May 11th.



## Volunteer Training

That's right! It's time for our yearly volunteer safety training. There have been some changes, but many things have stayed the same. Like last year, new volunteers will attend the entire session, while returning volunteers are given an abbreviated training session. Additionally this year, our training program has been

approved by the sand and gravel companies, so volunteers should have more access to monitoring inside mine areas.

You will be receiving a postcard in the mail with training dates, times, and places. It will also be posted on our website. You can also call me (Chris) at 402-472-8741 for information. The training will include:

- Background of Partnership
- Sand and gravel mining
- Basic First Aid (not certification)
- Least Tern and Piping Plover biology
- Additional birding opportunities, and
- Monitoring and data collection

Hope to see you soon!



## Partnership Welcomes New Partners

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership would like to welcome two new partners to our growing family. The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District and the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District.

Both of these NRDs have contributed a monetary donation to a fund that has been established through the University of Nebraska Foundation. To learn more about how to

donate funds to help the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership continue in its mission, please see page 4, "Donations being accepted".

WELCOME!



## Hellos and Goodbyes

### So Long, From Renae

I write this note with a mix of excitement and sadness. This past week I accepted a position with New Mexico Game and Fish as the Assistant Chief for the Non-game and Endangered Species Program in Santa Fe and will be leaving my position as Coordinator of the Partnership in April. It has been a great experience and I have had lots of enjoyment (both professional and personal) working with the partners, volunteers, and other colleagues.

We've had a lot to be proud of in just those last five years as a Partnership. To name a few, we added a Regional Wildlife Assistant to the program (Diane Beachly) who has expanded our work to the Loup and Central Platte river areas; we completed an educational poster, educators' packet and CD with song (I'm the backup "plover chick" singer) for middle-schoolers across the range of the birds; and we have diversified our funding sources by adding

several gravel companies and Natural Resource Districts as funders.

It has been a pleasure working with all of you and I hope I can continue to keep in touch during the future, my new email is renae.held AT state.nm.us (substitute @ for AT). To the next five years of the Partnership, may it be even better than the last.

Sincerely,

Renae J. Held



### Welcome Back, Robin!

Robin Smith has returned to the Partnership for another field season. She also worked as a Research Technician for us in 2006.

Robin received a Bachelors of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife and a minor in Anthropology/Archaeology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2005. She is looking forward to attending

graduate school in the future to study either gray wolves or ancient civilizations.

Her duties for the Partnership include monitoring colonies, putting up predator fences and exclosures, and putting up mylar flagging. This season she has the added responsibility of working closely with sand and gravel mine personnel to

help avoid any conflicts that may arise between nesting birds and mine operations.

Robin also enjoys horses, hiking, running, and many outdoor activities. She has lived in Utah, California, New Mexico, Minnesota, and Nebraska.



### New Technician Helps with Partnership

Sarah Rehme is the new Conservation Technician in the Non-game Bird Program at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. She started in January of this year and will be leaving in September 2007. Sarah received her Bachelors of Science in Biology from Concordia University in Seward, NE, in 2006. Last summer she

worked for the US Geological Survey in Wyoming and has been an avid birder her whole life. As a conservation technician, she helps Joel Jorgensen (Non-game Bird Manager) by creating and maintaining Access databases on endangered and threatened Nebraska birds such as the Bald Eagle and Whooping Crane. She has

also created an Access database for the data collected by the Tern and Plover Partnership. She will participate in the June census of the Platte River, and will be assisting our technician, Robin Smith, with monitoring nests at some of the Lower Platte sand and gravel mines.





## Contributions Assist Partnership Funding

Since 1999, the Partnership has been almost entirely grant-funded. These grants have helped to establish a unique group of participants who work together to help least terns and piping plovers. As belts have been tightened at the state, federal, and nonprofit sectors in the past few years; grants are getting more difficult to secure. Therefore the Partnership has found it necessary to solicit other non-traditional funding sources. Lower Platte South NRD, Papio-

Missouri NRD, Lyman-Richey Corporation, and NebCo have made generous contributions to the Partnership this year. We will also be receiving personnel time assistance from Arps Sand and Gravel and Lyman-Richey Corporation. A portion of this funding is being funneled through the recently founded "Tern and Plover Excellence Fund". We would like to welcome all of our current funders and thank them for their assistance.

Would you like to support conservation of terns and piping plovers? The new fund has been established at the University of Nebraska Foundation for the benefit and support of tern and plover conservation. Conservation activities will be coordinated through UNL's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Please contact Ann Bruntz at 402-458-1176, 800-432-3216 or [abruntz@nufoundation.org](mailto:abruntz@nufoundation.org) for more information or to make a gift.

## National Volunteer Week April 16



### Hail to the Volunteers!

National Volunteer Week was April 15-21, 2007.

We'd like to take this opportunity to give our most sincere thanks for the awesome job that all of you do.

**Thank you!!**

### What's a Volunteer?

There is a job to be done, could be lots of fun. Just give us a call, and we'll have a ball. You must have a big heart. It's always a help to be sorta smart.

The money is rare, but the rewards are big in compare.

*"We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give."*

— Winston Churchill

## Record Number of Bald Eagle Nests in 2006

LINCOLN, Neb. - The number of active bald eagle nests in Nebraska increased to a record 45 in 2006, up from 37 in 2005, according to Joel Jorgensen, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's nongame bird program manager.

The actual number of active nests is probably slightly higher. "One or two nests were not monitored, and there are probably one or two nests that have not been discovered," Jorgensen said.

Bald eagles bred historically in Nebraska, but were no longer breeding by the turn of the 20th Century. The number of breeding pairs has increased steadily since the first successful modern nesting near Valley in Douglas County in 1991.

The recovery of the bald eagle is one of the great success stories of wildlife conservation. The species currently is listed as "threatened" by both federal and state governments. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service however is currently considering delisting the species because bald eagle numbers have in-

creased dramatically over the past several decades throughout much of North America. In 1963 there were an estimated 417 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states; and by 1997 that number had jumped to 7,066. The bald eagle would remain protected by several statutes, however.

Perhaps the only downside to the species recovery is the challenge that comes with monitoring more and more nests. "The increase continues at such a rate it is difficult to keep track of the known nests and to find persons with the time to make observations," Jorgensen said. Bald eagle nest monitoring is carried out by personnel from Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, other cooperating agencies, and several volunteers.

Monitoring efforts, as well as other Commission programs focused on bald eagles and other nongame wildlife are supported by the Nongame and Endangered Species "checkoff" Fund. Tax payers are reminded to look for the peregrine falcon symbol near the bottom of their state tax form in order to make a contribution when completing their state income tax.





# About the Partnership

## Mission Statement

*The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership (Partnership) studies and protects endangered Least Terns, threatened Piping Plovers and other birds within the Platte River system, Nebraska, in a manner that minimizes conflicts with private industry, and educates and involves local communities in this effort.*

**History:** The Partnership was initiated in 1999 to utilize a proactive approach to prevent/resolve conflicts between nesting birds and mine operations. It was initiated by Jeanine Lackey and Ron Johnson from University of Nebraska Extension, and John Dinan of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, to address these challenges. The approach of the Partnership is to work with all interested parties to find sensible proactive approaches to protecting terns, plovers, and other components of the Platte River ecosystem, while ensuring that business are not unnecessarily delayed.

## Program Activities

- Protect colonies from predation and human disturbance using electric fences, enclosure cages, and signage.
- Create strong working relationships between gravel mining companies, conservation organizations, and the public.
- Head off and mitigate conflicts between nesting birds and business and landowner activities, using bird deterrents and attractants.
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of conservation issues by participating in events that educate thousands of people about terns and plovers and Partnership activities.
- Involve students through our "Job Shadowing" program.
- Monitor efforts with community based "Adopt-a-Colony" volunteer program.
- Produce publications such as the poster "A Tale of Two Birds" and companion educator's packet/CD with original song, biannual newsletter, brochures fact sheets, and others.

## Program Impacts by the Numbers

43—Number of conflicts resolved since 1999.

60—Number of Volunteers per year.



130—The number of extra piping plovers estimated to have been produced because of implemented management techniques.



430—The number of extra least terns estimated to have been produced because of implemented management techniques.

ZERO—The number of fines to participating industry partners since 1999.

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## Partners



*Arps Gravel and Concrete, Girl Scouts-Great Plains Council, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, Lyman-Richey Corporation, Mallard Sand and Gravel Company, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nongame Conservation Fund, Overland Sand and Gravel Company, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Western Sand and Gravel.*