



Greater Prairie-Chicken in the foreground with a Lesser Prairie-Chicken in the background at a territorial boundary. Photo by Jim McCormac.

KANSAS ‘LEK TREKS’ PRAIRIE-CHICKEN FESTIVAL

Audubon of Kansas will hold its first annual ‘Lek Treks’ Kansas Prairie-Chicken Festival April 7-10 in Hays, KS. The highlight of the festival will be viewing of both Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens. Nate Swick, Host of the American Birding Podcast, will be our speaker at the banquet Saturday evening. The festival will also include trips to Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, and The Nature Conservancy’s Smoky Valley Ranch. All attendees will get access to behind-the-scenes tours of Sternberg Museum.

The reasons for hosting this festival are numerous. First, holding festivals like ‘Lek Treks’ and ‘Celebration of Cranes’ aligns with AOK’s environmental education mission and our strategic plan to “support opportunities for the public to have positive interactions with nature.” Secondly, the potential listing of Lesser Prairie-Chickens is bringing negative attention to this species, and this festival would provide some positive attention where Lesser Prairie-Chicken populations are stable. Thirdly, the Prairie-Chicken Festival in Oklahoma and the Kansas Birding Festival will

be discontinued, so there is ‘space’ for another birding festival in Kansas. Lastly, the opportunity to view both Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens in one trip, and possibly in one morning, is something unique to Kansas. We are advertising nationally so we expect that the festival will attract people from outside Kansas to view the unique mating behaviors of Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens.

In order to make this event a success, we will need volunteers to staff the registration station and to drive vans. If you are interested in helping out, contact Jackie at jackie@audubonofkansas.org or call 785-537-4385. If you would like to attend as a participant, get updates by signing up on our website (select ‘Prairie-Chicken Festival’ under ‘Upcoming Events’ in the lower right-hand corner of our website). You can also visit KansasLekTreks.org for more information.