



Defending wildlife and habitat through:

**Advocacy
Conservation
Education**

News & Updates: September 2022

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[Visit our website](#)

AOK gives wildlife a voice concerning siting and regulation of industrial solar

In the absence of statewide regulations regarding the siting of industrial solar and wind energy, siting is regulated at the county level. Audubon of Kansas testified recently at a Planning and Zoning meeting in Pottawatomie County. This county, located in the Flint Hills, contains some of the best remnant tallgrass prairie in the state. It is also home to the Greater Prairie-Chicken, an upland game bird that has experienced a 30% drop in population size in Kansas since 2015.



Audubon of Kansas' position on industrial solar is much like its position on industrial wind: These sources of energy are important for reducing emissions linked to global climate change, BUT they needed to be sited in previously disturbed areas and not in the remaining prairie. We refer County Commissioners and zoning committees to The Nature Conservancy's [Site Renewables Right website](#) which provides detailed maps of areas with sensitive species (prairie-chicken, Bald Eagle) and habitats (remnant, unplowed prairie).

We commend Pottawatomie County for thinking critically about zoning regulations regarding industrial solar before a conditional use permit has been submitted. In their planning documents, they specifically state the following environmental goals: 1) solar farms should improve the environment health of the project area and 2) solar farms should not be detrimental to the health of soil, plant, and animal ecosystems following

construction. In our testimony, we reminded the Pottawatomie County Planning and Zoning Commission that placing industrial solar on remnant prairie would be contrary to the stated environmental goals. Additionally, we recommended that industrial solar installations include wildlife corridors through and around them; that fencing around the facility be permeable to wildlife like turtles, raccoons, and birds; that plantings under the panels be native plants; and that environmental monitoring should be conducted post-installation to identify and mediate wildlife conflicts.

If you find out about solar, wind, or other development projects in your area, please notify Jackie Augustine, AOK's Executive Director. We would love to work with your community to determine how development can be balanced with wildlife needs.

Photo Above Right: Greater Prairie-Chicken by JK Augustine

[Click here to see the Site Renewables Right website](#)

[Contact Jackie with your development concerns](#)

Sanctuary Updates



MOTUS Tower installed at Hutton

Audubon of Kansas was excited to welcome the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and Olberding Tree Service to Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary this week. The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies received a grant to deploy towers throughout the Great Plains and we are honored to host one of them.

We repurposed a nearly 100 year old, nonfunctional windmill into a state-of-the-art MOTUS tower. These towers allow scientists to track the movements of individual birds. Before the development of MOTUS towers, satellite transmitters had to be used to track the long-distance movement of individual birds. The disadvantage of satellite transmitters is that they are large and heavy; the smallest bird that can be tracked with a satellite transmitter is a Lesser Prairie-Chicken (which weighs 1.75 pounds). Because the MOTUS transmitters are small, they can be placed on small birds like sparrows. Each individual bird has a unique signal that is picked up by the MOTUS tower when the bird comes within a few miles of the transmitter. The transmitter relays that information via wifi or cellular signals to a database.

The MOTUS tower has already detected 10 different individuals, all of them Swainson's Thrushes. This indicates that Hutton is an important stopover site for migrating songbirds. One Swainson's Thrush was tagged in western Montana on September 19. It stayed at the place of capture for four days, presumably eating like crazy as it prepared for the next leg of its journey. It was last detected at the place of capture around 2:30am on September 24. The next next three detections

were all on the same day, September 24: 4:30am at another site in western Montana, 4pm at Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary in Nebraska, and 10:30pm in Missouri (route shown below). That thrush traveled 1227 miles in 20 hours! That's an average speed of 60mph! It would take us 23 hours to drive that route in a car.

Photos above show before and after the MOTUS tower installation.

Fun Fact! MOTUS is not an acronym, but the Latin word for 'movement'



[Learn more about MOTUS](#)

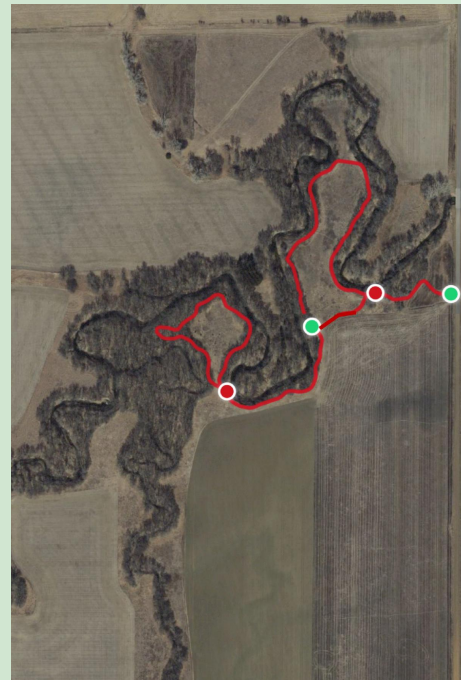
[See a table with all bird detections at Hutton](#)

Trail opens to the public at Achterberg

At a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 26, Audubon of Kansas unveiled a new hiking trail at Achterberg Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm near Lincoln, Kansas. The trailhead located on 170th Ave., 0.5 miles north of the intersection with E Iron Dr. in Lincoln County.

Trail Highlights

The one-mile trail consists of two loops. The first loop passes ruins from a former homestead including a chicken coop and foundations for a house and milkhouse. The trail then circles a re-established prairie while weaving through a wooded riparian forest. Hikers will enjoy excellent views of horseshoe bends in Bullfoot Creek as it cuts its way across the property. The second loop circles another prairie restoration, but also enters a more extensive wooded area where Bullfoot and Horse Creeks meet. The area abounds in wildflowers, insects, birds, deer, and other wildlife, including Bobwhite quail, a favorite bird of the sanctuary's namesake, Connie Achterberg.



Trail Establishment

The Connie Achterberg Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm was established in 2014 when it was donated to AOK. On September 11, 2022, volunteers from AOK, Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever Women on the Wing, and Sterling College established the hiking trail. The Kansas Trails Council provided expertise and equipment through its 'Trail in a Box' program. Fallen trees, woody brush, and grasses had to be removed to establish the trail.

We thank Kris at Live Lincoln County for helping advertise the trail and for taking photos during the ribbon cutting.



Help AOK make a difference



**AOK Nature
Adventurepacks:**

**Helping Kansans
“check out”
Birds and Butterflies**

Turn Hikes into Adventures!

AOK's binocular backpack initiative is now 'Nature Adventurepacks'! AOK wants to put an Adventurepack into every library in Kansas - so that Kansans can “check out” animals and insects close to home. Our nature

Adventurepacks have binoculars for kids and adults, identification guides for local birds and butterflies and local county nature hot spot maps. Click below to help us bring Adventurepacks to every Kansas library!

Give
now!



How AOK can be a part of your legacy:

AOK Presents Estate Planning with The Trust Company, Oct 24 in Lawrence

Please join Audubon of Kansas and The Trust Company as they present "The 10 Myths of Estate Planning" and answer key estate planning questions.

The Trust Company will be represented by Mark Knackendoffel, Founder, and Jason Walker, Senior VP and Trust Officer, Lawrence office.



When: Monday, Oct 24, 4:30-6:30pm

Where: Baker University Wetlands Discovery Center
1365 N 1250 Rd
Lawrence, KS

Presentations will be followed by Q&A and Refreshments

[RSVP](#) by Friday, Oct 21

Questions? Contact:
Kelley Hurst
Director of Philanthropy
khurst@audubonofkansas.org
785-917-0400

Click here to RSVP by Friday, October
21

Upcoming AOK Events

Hutton Field Day Sunday, October 2 1-4pm



Did you know that there is a 5000 acre wildlife sanctuary near Bassett, Nebraska? The property is generally not open to the public, but it will be open for a FREE guided tour on Sunday, Oct 2.

The Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary is a 5,000-acre ranch and wildlife sanctuary located along the Niobrara National Scenic River. It consists of spectacular scenery, including upland prairie, steep canyons, woodlands, and high bluffs that overlook meadows, marshes, and riparian forest along the Niobrara River, which forms the sanctuary's northern boundary. Many species call the sanctuary home including greater prairie-chicken, sharp-tailed grouse, bobcat, porcupine, box turtles and countless native insects, wildflowers, and grasses.

Schedule

1-2pm gather at the Hutton House and tour the museum which includes Harold's books and Native American artifact collection and Lucille's paintings
2pm carpool tour of the property
4-4:30pm return to the Hutton House

Directions to the Hutton House:

42.713228, -99.422205

88923 453rd Ave, Bassett, NE 68714

NOTE: Google maps will not get you to the right location. Apple maps does seem to work.

From Newport,

- Go north on Hwy 137 about 7 miles from Hwy 20
- Turn left (west) on 888th Rd, a gravel road. There is a small sign for Willowdale Cemetery
- Proceed ~5 miles on 888th Rd. You will reach a stop sign with 4 mailboxes on the corner.
- Turn right (north) on 453rd Ave
- The house is approximately 1.5 miles on your left

From Bassett,

- Go north on Hwy 7 about 5 miles from Hwy 20
- When Hwy 7 takes a turn to the west, take a right (east) onto 885th Rd, a gravel road.
- Follow 885th as it turns north, then east again, then turns north becoming 453rd Ave
- The house is approximately 4 miles north of the northward turn on your left

The entrance has an old mailbox on the left and an old wagon in the grass to the right of the driveway.

Contact Jackie with questions by [email](#) or phone 785-537-4385

AOK to host a Burn School at Achterberg Registration Due Oct 12

Connie Achterberg Prescribed Fire Workshop

October 14 2022, 8AM Start

Audubon of Kansas Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm, Lincoln, Kansas

Sponsored by: Kansas Prescribed Fire Council, NRCS-KS, Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition, Kansas Department Wildlife & Parks, Kansas Forest Service, Great Plains Fire Science Exchange, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, and Partners for Fish and Wildlife-KS

Hands-on Fire Experience



1. Multiple Burns that all Participants can participate on in multiple Fire Line positions.
2. Use of various types of Equipment on the Fire Line.
3. Burn Plan discussion before each Burn.

1

Expert Presentations



1. Fire Behavior, Fire Weather & Smoke Management.
2. Fire Breaks, Fuel Loads & Fuel Types.
3. Crews, Equipment & Burn Plans.
4. Considering Public Perceptions when conducting Rx Fires.

2

Neighborhood Burning



1. Introduction and perks of Rancher Burning Groups: neighbors-helping-neighbors; shared equipment; more hands and shared experience on burns.

3

Thank you to Audubon of Kansas for hosting this workshop & providing burn sites and equipment.



Are you interested in learning more about Conducting Prescribed Fires on the Land you Manage?

Then come meet us for a one-day Prescribed Fire Workshop where you will conduct burns with experienced Grassland Prescribed Fire crew leaders and hear Fire experts present on Grassland Burning.

COST: FREE but registration required

Includes Lunch and a Prescribed Fire Manual to take home.

Registration DUE:, October 12, 2022

Registration Limited to 20 Participants

Registration and Questions:

ksprescribedfirecouncil@gmail.com or 785.477.6592

Instructors: Kristin Kloft, Jess Crockford, Jayson Prentice, Dennis Carlson, Tony Ifland, Eric Wiens, Shelly Wiggam, and Lincoln County PBA

[Click here for Registration and Questions for the Prescribed Fire Workshop](#)

AOK met with Audubon Great Plains and Nebraska Chapters



Representatives from AOK, [Audubon Nebraska](#), [Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center](#), and the two Audubon chapters in Nebraska ([Wachiska](#) and [Omaha](#)) met on Tuesday, September 27. Executive Director, Jackie Augustine, and Board Member, Bruce Kennedy, represented AOK. We discussed opportunities to collaborate to make a bigger impact, especially on federal legislative issues.

Unlike Audubon of Kansas, Audubon Nebraska is a regional office of the National Audubon Society. Audubon of Kansas is completely independent from National Audubon. This allows us to focus on issues in Kansas and the Great Plains, and act quickly when wildlife is threatened.

AOK shares favorite walks, hikes and birding spots!



Rock City

Experience the unique geology at Rock City near Minneapolis, in north-central Kansas. The circular rocks are concretions - rock that was deposited in layers around a pebble, shell, bone, or fossil. Concretions are generally harder than the rock around it. The softer rock wears away, leaving the concretion to stand alone.

This area is a great place for kids. You can climb on the concretions, or get a map and try to locate all the concretions with interesting names like 'donut hole', 'lips', and 'shipwreck'.

The cost is only \$3/person and \$0.50/child.

Address:
1051 Ivy Rd, Minneapolis, KS

Learn more about Rock City

Learn more about concretions in
Kansas

Contact AOK!

Jackie Augustine - Executive Director - General Questions, Programs, Sanctuaries
Management jackie@audubonofkansas.org

Kelley Hurst - Director of Philanthropy - Endowments, Grants, Events, Outreach
khurst@audubonofkansas.org

Lana Arrowsmith - Hutton Niobrara Coordinator - Hutton Sanctuary Management &
Reservations lanamicheel@gmail.com

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