



**Defending wildlife and habitat  
through:**

**Advocacy  
Conservation  
Education**

## News & Updates: December 2023

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[Visit our website](#)

## Year in Review

I can't believe everything that we have accomplished this year for wildlife. Below are some highlights.



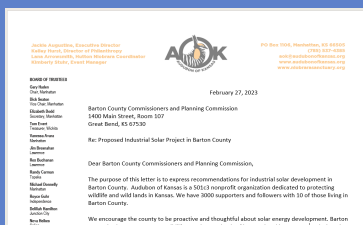
AOK tripled its full time staff from one to three! Executive Director Jackie Augustine is joined by Amy Kucera as our Sanctuaries Manager and Ellen Johnson Mosley as our Director of Philanthropy.



AOK continues to support endangered Whooping Cranes through litigation to ensure Quivira National Wildlife Refuge has the water it needs to provide critical stopover habitat.



AOK provided 67 backpacks with binoculars and field guides to 48 libraries in 25 counties.



AOK has provided written and oral testimony six times

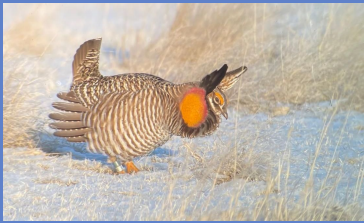


AOK removed invasive cedar and elm on 155 acres at Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife



Over 400 people interacted with

encouraging proper siting of wind, solar, and transmission developments in areas with the least impact on wildlife habitat.



AOK Executive Director Jackie Augustine talked about the dire need for conservation of prairie-chickens in 8 media interviews.

Sanctuary and 30 acres at Achterberg Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm



AOK, Burroughs Audubon of Greater Kansas City, and Johnson County Master Naturalists provided talks to over 450 people at libraries to support the Nature Adventurepack program.

AOK through public presentations and field events (like the insect walk pictured).



A record number of people attended Kansas Lek Treks Prairie-Chicken Festival (130) and our Celebration of Cranes (50).



AOK vehicles were driven over 31,000 miles to support advocacy, conservation, and education All Over Kansas (and Nebraska).



Over 1000 species of plants and animals have been documented at AOK's 3 sanctuaries.





chicken and grassland biologist from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is also the author of *Great Plains Birds*.

New this year: We will have options for people with mobility challenges to participate.

**The festival attracts around 130 people from all over the United States, and registration fills quickly. Some events have already reached capacity. Register today for the best selection of events.**



[Visit the Kansas Lek Treks Website](#)

## AOK welcomes a new Director of Philanthropy: Ellen Johnson Mosley

It is with great enthusiasm that we introduce Ellen Johnson Mosley as our new Director of Philanthropy and Event Manager! In her previous role as Director of Development at Great Plains Nature Center, Ellen oversaw corporate and foundation relations, major gifts, grant writing, and annual fund development. She previously coordinated educational events and youth orchestra concerts at the Wichita Symphony. Ellen also serves as a Lecturer in Wichita State University's Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs, teaching the Fundraising and Financial Management for Nonprofit Organizations to M.P.A. students. Ellen looks forward to meeting all of you!



Kelley Hurst was our former Director of Philanthropy, and we thank her for dedication to AOK. She worked many hours above and beyond what was expected. She created a giving campaigns that resonated with donors, cleaned up our donor database, personalized our thank you's, spearheaded our event registration processes, initiated this monthly emailed newsletter, and so much more. Although she is stepping back from work at AOK, you will probably still see her around lending a hand whenever needed. Kelley will be continuing her studies at the University of Kansas centering around Kenyan women- their work and family lives.

Welcome Ellen

Thank Kelley

## A Nature Enthusiast is never bored - even in winter



Many people are reluctant to go for a walk in nature during winter for many reasons. Perhaps they are not fond of the cold. Perhaps they know that many animals are dormant. However, winter is a great time to go for a nature hike (just like any other season!).

Some things are easier to see in winter than in other seasons. For example, the large stick nests of Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks are easier to see without the leaves hiding them from view. If the nest is mostly leaves, that is a squirrel nest. In prairies, seed pods are easily seen and come in a variety of shapes. If you do not see any animals, you can often find evidence that they are there, such as with footprints in the mud or snow. Although most insects are dormant, you can find galls - places where a parasitic insect once lived or is living currently. Cut one open to see what is living inside - but do not cut more than one. Woodpeckers love opening galls in winter to eat the contents.



Tips for a wonderful nature adventure:

1. Check the weather. Pick a day that has abundant sun and light winds. A calm 25-degree day can feel more comfortable than a windy 35-degree day.
2. Dress for the weather. Don't forget your winter hat, scarf, and gloves. If it is below freezing, consider wearing snow pants or rain pants over your pants; or wear long underwear or pajama bottoms under your pants.
3. Bring a pair of binoculars or a magnifying glass. They can enhance your appreciation for what you see. If you don't have binoculars, check out a pair through our [Nature Adventurepack](#) program.
4. Photograph, write down, or draw what you see. The process of writing or drawing helps you examine, appreciate, and remember the finer details of what you see. If it is too cold to do this in the field, do it immediately upon returning to a warmer place. If photography is more your style, upload your sightings on [iNaturalist](#).



Photos:

Upper right: A Red-tailed Hawk nest at Achterberg Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm.

Upper left: Seeds of Maryland Senna (*Senna marilandica*) at Mount Mitchell Heritage Prairie, Wamego, KS.

Middle left: Wood chips from a beaver at Achterberg Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm, Lincoln, KS.

Lower left: Oak Rough Bulletgall wasp (*Disholcaspis quercusmamma*) at Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary, Bassett, NE.

**Philanthropy Corner:**  
Support wildlife in the Great Plains by including AOK in your year-end giving

As 2023 comes to a close, join with Audubon of Kansas to protect vital habitats for native wildlife and migrating species in our region. Prairies are one of the fastest-



disappearing ecosystems in the world. Your year-end donation strengthens AOK's advocacy efforts and sanctuary initiatives, ensuring our conservation efforts build a brighter future for birds to thrive. Your generosity makes this possible.

Photo: Sharp-tailed Grouse at Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary. They are looking for people who will help them thrive...



[Donate now](#)

## Chapter Spotlight: Join Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society on Jan 13 to walk and pick up trash at their Michel-Ross Preserve in Manhattan



Several Audubon chapters in Kansas manage their own preserves. Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society (NFHAS) manages multiple properties including the Michel-Ross Audubon Preserve. It is 26 acres of wonderful forest with surprising rock outcroppings. Tucked between two residential areas, this little corner of nature offers surprising diversity in the city of Manhattan.

On Saturday, January 13, NFHAS will host a walk and trash pick up at the sanctuary. As the preserve is a little difficult to find, they will meet at 8am at Sojourner Truth Park (626 S 10th St, Manhattan, KS 66502) and carpool to the preserve. For more information, contact NFHAS President, Patricia Yeager, at 785-776-9593.

Photo: Tiffany Lawless provided this photo to the [All Trails website](#)

[Visit Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society's webpage](#)

[Watch a video journal of a father/daughter hike on the trail](#)

## AOK shares favorite birding spots!

### Quivira Disc Golf Course in Marquette

310 Harold Street  
Marquette, KS 67464  
38.556635, -97.829789

I was helping out with the Kanopolis

Christmas Bird Count, and was assigned a section south of the lake. I drove back roads all day looking for hawks and other birds, stopping at little cemeteries and river crossings looking for woodland birds. Toward the end of the day, I found a disc golf course on the east side of Marquette. It wove its way through a forested area and looked like the perfect place to end my day. There was a main trail, but also disc golf lanes jutting through the woods. It was easy to travel wherever I heard birds chirping. Then, I came across this cute covered bridge tucked into a corner of the property. But the best part was the birds! I didn't



expect to get any new species after having been birding all morning, but a flock of Cedar Waxwings landed in a fruit tree with a Hairy Woodpecker was squeaking in a tree nearby. The highlight was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker hanging out with chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches. It was great to stretch my legs and add three species to the Christmas Bird Count list before heading home.

## Contact AOK!

Jackie Augustine - Executive Director - General Questions, Programs, Sanctuaries Management [jackie@audubonofkansas.org](mailto:jackie@audubonofkansas.org)

Ellen Johnson Mosley - Director of Philanthropy - Estate Planning, Endowments, Grants, Events, Outreach [ellen@audubonofkansas.org](mailto:ellen@audubonofkansas.org)

Amy Kucera - Sanctuaries Coordinator - Questions about AOK sanctuaries and habitat management [amy@audubonofkansas.org](mailto:amy@audubonofkansas.org)

Lana Arrowsmith - Hutton Niobrara Coordinator - Hutton Sanctuary Management & Reservations [lanamicheel@gmail.com](mailto:lanamicheel@gmail.com)

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