

Audubon purchases 610-acre O'Brien Ranch

Audubon Nebraska Headquarters and Education Center to be located south of Denton

On June 24, Audubon Nebraska announced the purchase of the 610 acre O'Brien Ranch, 15 miles southwest of Lincoln, which will be known as the Audubon Spring Creek Prairie. The society has stepped in to protect the unique parcel, which includes one of the largest remnants of tallgrass prairie in the state and distinct ruts created by wagon traffic on the Oregon Trail. The site will be the headquarters of Audubon Nebraska and a state-of-the-art education center for the public.

Located just south of Denton, the Audubon Spring Creek Prairie includes some of the tallest hills in Lancaster County, making it a place of great scenic beauty, as well as, diverse habitat. In addition to hundreds of acres of rare tallgrass prairie, the site also includes wetlands, springs, ponds, creeks and woods, which provide homes for Nebraska's native wildlife and North America's migratory birds.

The land has important historical significance as well, since wagon ruts from the Nebraska City/Fort Kearney cut off to the Oregon Trail are still clearly visible. According to David Murphy, a senior re-



searcher with the Nebraska State Historical Society, "Ruts of this extent are extremely rare in Southeast Nebraska due to extensive agricultural development. The Spring Creek ruts are the finest found along this route to date." The Historical Society will be a partner in developing historical interpretation on the site.

Native American artifacts have also been found on the property, and for the past century, ranching has been an integral part of the site's history. "All of these factors contribute to a unique opportunity to connect our natural heritage to our historical heritage," said Dave Sands, Executive Director of Audubon Nebraska. "Kathie

O'Brien and her family were stewards of this land for nearly 100 years. She made it possible for Audubon to step in and protect it for future generations to enjoy."

Audubon Nebraska is a state office of the National Audubon Society. The mission of the National Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and earth's biological diversity. There are 3,500 members and six chapters in Nebraska. To learn more about the Spring Creek Prairie and how you can take a role in the conservation of Nebraska's natural resources, call (402) 475-1177. (SE)

Dealing with unwanted guests

Have a lost bat flying around your living quarters? Bats that fly into human living quarters are usually lost youngsters whose primary goal is a safe escape. They often will leave on their own if a window or door to the outside is opened while others are closed. Bats are not aggressive, even if chased, but may bite, if grabbed. As with any wild animal, bats should not be handled with bare hands. An exit can be hastened by catching the bat in flight with a hand net (swung from behind), or when the bat lands, covering it with a coffee can and slipping a piece of cardboard over the opening, and then releasing it outside.

Excluding an entire colony from your house

Bats can be excluded from living quarters by covering chimneys and vents with half-

inch hardware cloth screens, by installing draft guards beneath doors, and by sealing any other possible access routes, especially around screen doors, windows and plumbing. Bats potentially can enter holes as small as 3/4" in diameter or 3/8" by 7/8". They do not chew insulation or otherwise make new holes. Their entries can be plugged with silicone caulking, steel wool or temporarily, even with tape.

If a large bat colony must be evicted from a wall or attic, careful observations should be made at dusk to find entry holes (also sometimes recognizable by stains around used holes or crevices or by droppings beneath). The bats must emerge each summer evening to feed. Once roost entrances have been located, the bats can be excluded, though this should not be

attempted when flightless young may be present (usually June or July). Starved young could create a serious odor problem, not to mention needless cruelty. Most bat species leave in winter, permitting exclusion in their absence. When this is not the case, or when one does not wish to wait for winter, there is a relatively simple exclusion technique using polypropylene bird netting. This inexpensive netting often is used to protect fruit trees from birds and can be obtained in quantity to cover areas of nearly any size. It can be hung during daylight hours above areas where bats emerge, using duct tape or staples. A strip of netting at least two feet wide, hung one to four inches in front of bat exit holes, and extending at least two feet below the lowest exit point (see

continued on page 11

How animals stay cool when it's hot!

Just like people, most animals have a comfortable range of temperatures that they prefer to live in. When temperatures are hot, they find ways to stay cool that are similar to many ways we stay cool. Here are just a few:

- Honeybees: When it's hot, worker bees bring water into the hive and cool it by fanning their wings to evaporate the water droplets. This evaporative

cooling keeps the hive at a comfortable temperature.

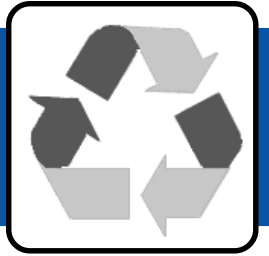
- Tree squirrels: When it is hot, squirrels sit in the shade of their tail. If you observe them closely, you will notice that squirrels aren't very active during the middle of the day.

- Snakes: During the heat of the day, many snakes (and other animals) stay in underground burrows where it is cool. They

are more active during the evening, nighttime or early morning when temperatures are cooler.

- Amphibians like frogs and salamanders burrow into the coolest, wettest mud and aestivate. Aestivation is a dormant condition similar to hibernation, only in the summertime. Snails also become dormant in the summer. (BPO)

Environmental Focus



Household hazardous waste collection

September 12 • 9 a.m to 3 p.m
Pfizer Animal Health, 601 West Cornhusker Highway

Bring household products containing mercury (thermometers), solvents (paints and varnishes), pesticides (weed killers and insecticides) and PCBs (ballasts from fluorescent fixtures). Leave products in their original containers and keep labels intact. For more specific information, contact the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8040. (BPO)

Don't get stung!

Late summer is the season for maximum bee and wasp activity. Yellow jackets, hornets and paper wasps are sensitive to vibrations and can be highly defensive of their nests. People may inadvertently threaten a bee or wasp nest and be attacked. Wasp nests, made of paper, can be located underground in old rodent burrows or above ground hanging from trees or in protected areas. These nests should be avoided. In areas where people frequent, control of wasp nests may be needed.

Social bees, such as honey bees and bumble bees, can be defensive when their nest is threatened, but will not normally attack during normal foraging activities.

During outdoor activities, you may inadvertently threaten a bee or wasp nest. Being aware of flying insects, avoiding nests and remaining calm are your best strategies. To help avoid being stung, the following suggestions may be useful:

- When hiking, wear boots or proper footwear.
- Avoid wearing perfumes, aftershave, suntan lotion or other fragrances. Many bees are attracted to fragrances.
- Wear dull tan or white clothing which is not baggy.
- Standard repellants are not effective against stinging insects.
- When picnicking, keep all food covered except during mealtime. Pay special attention to open soft drink containers and glasses to be sure there are no insects on or in the vessel before you take a drink.
- Do not eat or rest near trash bins. In the late summer, food debris, especially sweet liquids are attractive to these insects.
- If an insect lands on you or your food, do not become alarmed. It is only investigating or foraging. Blow or gently brush the insect away. Swatting or hitting the insect will serve to make it defensive and more likely to sting.
- Scout out the area for nests before you choose that "perfect" spot to picnic or rest.

For information on controlling bees and wasp nests, refer to "Stinging Wasps and Bees", NebGuide 891, available at the Lancaster County Extension Office, 441-7180. (BPO)

Allergic to bee stings?

Bees and wasps are most active in late summer when their colonies have grown to maximum size and members are busily supplying their colony with food before cold temperatures arrive. We encounter these insects regularly—especially if we spend time outdoors.

Nobody likes to be stung by an insect, but less than 5% of the population is truly allergic to a bee sting. Unfortunately, about 90% of us experience some reaction to a bee sting. A person's reaction to stings can be classified into five groups.

- No Reaction. About 10% are immune to stings from birth and do not react to stings; more than 70% of us can develop immunity by repeated stings.
- Mild Reaction. There is pain for a few minutes at the sting site and swelling which subsides in a few hours, followed by itching and heat.
- Local Reaction. There may be an unusual amount of swelling around the sting which may persist for several days.
- Toxic Reaction. This occurs with multiple stings and reactions may include headache, fever, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting, unconsciousness and convulsions.
- Generalized Allergic Reaction. Allergic reaction occurs to parts of the body other than where the person was stung. Reactions may range from slight to serious shock and may include wheez-

continued on page 11