



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN NEBRASKA

Where We Work: Central Platte River

The 80-mile stretch of the Platte River between the small towns of Overton and Chapman and flows by the central Nebraska cities of Grand Island and Kearney is known as the Big Bend Reach. It is the most important migratory bird stopover area along the U.S. portion of the Central Flyway of North America, a pathway used by millions of birds that travel north in the spring to the United States, Canada and Siberia and south in the fall to Central and South America.

This region's river, wet meadows and abundant food supply help sustain millions of migratory birds including some 500,000 sandhill cranes, millions of ducks and geese, whooping cranes, endangered bird species such as the interior least tern and piping plover, and many grassland bird

species. The Big Bend Reach also is home to red fox, jackrabbits, black-tailed prairie dog, tiger salamander, western striped chorus frog, Blanding's turtle, flathead chub and the Plains topminnow.

The Nature Conservancy is working with farmers and many partner organizations – the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, ConAgra Foods Foundation, Peter Kiewit Foundation, Audubon Society, Platte River Whooping Crane Management Trust, Prairie Plains Resource Institute and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln – to protect migratory bird habitat in the area. To date we have worked with our partners to protect more than 14,000 acres in the Big Bend Reach. Native grasslands are being restored on marginally productive cropland.

To the south of Big Bend Reach is the 17-county Rainwater Basin, which once contained 4,000 marshes, only 10 percent of which remain today. In the Rainwater Basin, a coalition of public agencies, private organizations and landowners have formed the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture and are working to protect 10,000 wetland acres and to restore another 15,000 acres.

Platte Habitat Partnership

In 2001, the Conservancy and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission formed the Platte Habitat Partnership. Both organizations contributed funds to hire a grassland manager who works with private landowners along the river on conservation initiatives. We design projects that meet the needs of both the partnership and the landowners, 150 of whom were contacted during the first 18 months of the program. The Partnership is working with farmers and other landowners to transfer stewardship and restoration strategies developed on Conservancy-owned land to privately-owned land.



Contact information

The Nature Conservancy
in Nebraska
1019 Leavenworth Street, Suite 100
Omaha, NE 68102

tel (402) 342-0283
fax (402) 342-0474
email: nebraska@tnc.org

nature.org/nebraska