



THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN NEBRASKA

Where We Work: Eastern Saline Wetlands

The Salt Creek watershed, a system of meandering streams and saline marshes lying in a broad basin that also contains the city of Lincoln, is the most unusual and threatened natural community in Nebraska. Known as the Eastern Saline Wetlands, the marshes are considered critically imperiled in Nebraska. They provide the only known habitat for the Salt Creek tiger beetle, an endangered species that is one of the rarest insects in the United States.

Despite the large-scale conversion of the Salt Creek basin, its remaining wetlands still provide important resting and feeding sites for shorebirds, ducks, and geese during migration. These include the endangered interior least tern, the threatened bald eagle and piping plover and shorebirds that include the American

golden plover, the long-billed curlew, Hudsonian and marbled godwit, red knot, buff-breasted sandpiper and Wilson's phalarope. The marshes around Lincoln also harbor many unusual plants adapted to the harsh saline conditions. One of these is saltwort, which was recently added to the state's endangered species list.

A major wetland restoration effort has transformed The Nature Conservancy's 277-acre Little Salt Fork Marsh near Raymond into one of the best remaining wetlands in the watershed. This wetland complex has been restored with support from the Cooper Foundation, Kiewit Foundation, Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway Company and individual donors. Little Salt Fork Marsh is an excellent example of how strategic wetland conservation can be integrated with urban growth.

particularly at risk because of rapid suburban development in northern Lancaster County.

The Eastern Saline Wetlands and their surrounding prairies have the potential to provide open space for a growing city, as well as outdoor classrooms and places for people to enjoy nature. They already serve as important research areas for the University of Nebraska. The Conservancy is one of the leading organizations in a partnership of 14 different groups that are working to acquire and conserve additional acreage in the Eastern Saline Wetlands.



Salt meadow (©Chris Helzer)

Once extending over an area estimated to be in excess of 20,000 acres, the saline wetlands today cover less than 4,700 acres. Losses have primarily been due to drainage for agricultural production and urban development. A majority of the remaining wetlands are degraded and face numerous threats related to the expansion of the city of Lincoln. The saline wetlands north of the city are

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