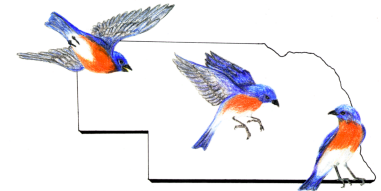


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Great Plains Sandhill Crane and Bluebird Festival Nebraska's Largest Birding Festival Returns This March!

Bluebirds Across Nebraska (BAN) members and guests gather each spring for a Statewide Bluebird Conference as they await the return of bluebirds to the thousands of nest boxes along hundreds of trails. This spring, for the second time in BAN's fifteen year history, the conference has been turned into a festival. A four day event where bluebirders, conservationists, bird lovers, and all nature enthusiasts can gather together in Central Nebraska and share one of the world's greatest natural spectacles - the annual spring migration of the Sandhill Cranes.



Each March and April, Nebraska features the world's largest concentration of Sandhill Cranes when more than 500,000 cranes converge with ten million ducks and geese in the Platte River Valley as they make their journey north. Fossil records indicate cranes have gathered in Nebraska for more than nine million years. The Platte Valley provides a perfect stopping point, with farmlands and wet meadows offering an abundance of food to generate the energy necessary to continue on to their northern breeding grounds with many going as far as Siberia.

In 2003 Bluebirds Across Nebraska hosted a festival along with the North American Bluebird Society in the Central Platte River Valley. Birders from across the United States and Canada converged on Kearney Nebraska, proving to be one of the largest birding festivals ever assembled in Nebraska. This year's festival in Kearney, March 6 - 9, promises to be even bigger and more exciting.

Highlights of the Great Plains Sandhill Crane and Bluebird Festival include birding trips to view Sandhill Cranes, Prairie Chicken Leks, numerous waterfowl in Nebraska's Rainwater Basin and prairie dog towns where burrowing owls and ferruginous hawks may be seen. There will also be a cultural journey through local attractions in and near Kearney. A variety of birding workshops will be offered. On Saturday, March 8th, guest speakers will provide presentations on bluebirds, cranes, and much more. Julie Zickfoose, Bill Thompson III, Kevin Berner, Al Batt, Keith Radel, Keanna Leonard, and Ron Cisar make up the informative and talented slate of speakers. For more details about this exciting festival and to reserve your place at the event visit Bluebirds Across Nebraska at www.bbne.org, or write for information to Bluebirds Across Nebraska, P.O. Box 61757, Lincoln, NE 68506, (402) 334-8691.

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