Wednesday, April 18, 2018
Various locations

a.m./p.m. Optional pre-conference field trips, workshops (time frames vary)
12-4 p.m. Registration at Younes Conference Center
5:30-7 p.m. Reception at Museum of Nebraska Art (shuttles available to and from hotel)
7:30-9 p.m. Keynote: Joel Sartore, Merryman Performing Arts Center

Thursday, April 19, 2018
Younes Conference Center, Rowe Sanctuary

7:30 a.m. Registration opens
8 a.m. Welcome from organizing partners
8:45 a.m. Session #1: Ecotourism Past and Present

- Dan Flores, historian, author of American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains Safari, American-Style: Shooting Up the Great Plains in the 1800s
  
  This talk will lay out the historical beginnings of “ecotourism” on the American Great Plains by surveying the discovery of Plains wildlife by European and American elites like William Drummond Stewart, Sir George Gore, Grand Duke Alexis, and Theodore Roosevelt. These men, and many others who followed their lead, were the first tourists drawn to the American Plains for the same sorts of adventures that drew European elites to Africa. While their experiences likely won’t serve as models for 21st Century Great Plains ecotourism, what drew them west — a wildlife bounty similar to that afforded by the Serengeti and Masai Mara — is instructive for our time.

- Martha Kauffman, managing director, World Wildlife Fund’s Northern Great Plains Program
  
  Kauffman manages an area that encompasses five states and some of the least understood terrain in the ‘Lower 48.’ She works with local ranchers, Native American tribes and government agencies to increase protection for the landscape, create economic incentives for conservation, and restore native species including iconic and rare animals such as bison, prairie dogs, and the most endangered mammal in North America, the black-footed ferret.
10 a.m.  Break

10:30 a.m.  Session #2: Concurrent sessions

■ **Michael Forsberg, Michael Farrell, Mary Harner**  
* A Watershed in Motion: The Platte Basin Timelapse Project  

The Platte Basin Timelapse project is a long-term, multimedia documentary project that seeks to increase understanding about water resources in the Platte River Basin of the central United States. For seven years, nearly 60 cameras that incorporate innovative technologies have been recording images every daylight hour, capturing change over time from the river’s headwaters in the Rocky Mountains through the Great Plains. The project puts one of the world’s most appropriated river systems in motion in ways not normally perceivable, with the goal of communicating the complexities of a watershed.


Forsberg is an award-winning photographer of Great Plains nature and wildlife, co-founder of the Platte Basin Timelapse project, and a faculty member in IANR at the University of Nebraska.

Farrell is co-founder of the Platte Basin Timelapse project and assistant professor of practice in agricultural leadership, education & communications at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Harner is an associate professor of biology, University of Nebraska at Kearney.

■ **James Anderson, Adventure Travel and Trade Association**  
* Travel Personality Types

■ **Sarah Sortum, Ecotourism Manager and Operator, Calamus Outfitters, Burwell, Neb., Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition consultant, Nebraska Tourism Commissioner.**  
* Incorporating Birdwatching into Your Farm/Ranch

When the Switzer Ranch decided to add a birdwatching operation to their ranch more than 10 years ago, they had no idea what they were getting into! Sortum will share how the operation has grown, lessons learned, and factors to consider if you are thinking about a similar venture.

■ **Bobby Koepplin & Chris Sieverdes**  
* Scenic Byways Success Stories

Koepplin is board vice chair of the National Scenic Byway Foundation. Sieverdes is a National Scenic Byway Foundation board member.

■ **Katelyn Deus, director of communications & public relations, Rural Futures Institute**  
* Create A Bold Story For Rural

RFI has heard it over and over again—rural communities and organizations need to tell their stories better. Well, let’s dig in! In this presentation you’ll learn some of the current and future trends in branding and content strategy to maximize your body of work, reach the right people, and create action. Tools will be provided to help you make what you learn doable—even if you’re a team of one. Through this work, together we can create a bold voice for rural.

■ **Literary Ecotourism: Cather, Eiseley, Stegner, and Others**

Emily Rau, “‘Legends and stories nestled like birds in its branches’: The Changing Ecology of the Great Plains,” University of Nebraska, Willa Cather Archive

Tracy Tucker, “Ecotourism and Catherland,” Willa Cather Foundation

Tom Lynch, “Eiseley’s Nebraska and Ecotourism,” University of Nebraska, English

Susan Naramore Maher, “Eastend, Saskatchewan and Literary Pilgrimage: Cypress Hills Ecotourism in the 21st Century,” University of Minnesota Duluth
Luncheon

Nils Odendaal, CEO, NamibRand Nature Reserve, southern Namibia

The NamibRand Nature Reserve is one of Africa’s largest privately owned conservation areas and its story is one of hardship redirected into a shining example for the world. After droughts in the 1980s, ranches in this arid landscape were failing. NamibRand founder Albi Bruckner started buying contiguous farms and created a connected landscape where animals could graze freely. They tore down 1,000 miles of interior fences, reintroduced animals who had once left the area, and set up low-environmental-impact ecotourism spots. NamibRand is able to employ three times as many people and earn more money than the former ranching operations on the same land. NamibRand and its neighbors formed the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Landscape Association to further spread their impact.

1:45 p.m.

Session #3: Concurrent sessions

Ecotourism Strategies Panel

At the Intersection of Conservation, Tourism, and Land Use

How do we work to conserve the Great Plains? How can we mix in tourism? What role does public land have to play? Panelists who represent four distinct models at the intersection of conservation, tourism, and land use will speak about their perspective on where the region is now and what it could be. All four represent currently used models in the Great Plains: philanthropic, for-profit business, public land, and nonprofit. Panelists:

Ellen and Lars Anderson, American Prairie Reserve
Billie Kay Bodie, Big Blue Ranch, Nebraska
Kristal Stoner, Nebraska Game and Parks
Tim Dwyer, Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument, Montana

Sharon Strouse & Chris Sieverdes

Show Me the Money: Byway Partnerships

Success stories of the Amish Country Byway ‘Heritage Partnership’ and the Ohio Byway Links nonprofit. Strouse is the board chair of the National Scenic Byway Foundation. Sieverdes is a National Scenic Byway Foundation board member.

Dena Beck, Rural Enterprise Assistance Program senior project leader & south central loan specialist, Center for Rural Affairs

Rural Assistance

Beck’s job includes meeting with regional organizations, making loans, and providing technical assistance to small businesses — from consignment stores, to restaurants, grocery stores, and many more.

T.J. Walker, Nebraska Game and Parks biologist

Land Management to Promote Wildlife Conservation

Ecotourism and Recreation

Theresa Jedd, “Drought-resilient Outdoor Recreation in Nebraska,” University of Nebraska, SNR
Jeff Rawlinson, “Creating Capacity for New Hunter Development in Nebraska,” Nebraska Game & Parks Commission

International Ecotourism Experiences

Lisa Pennisi and John Carroll, “What can African Nations Teach Us about Ecotourism Development in the Great Plains?” University of Nebraska, School of Natural Resources
Qwynne Lackey, “Lessons Learned: Applying Guiding Strategies Taught in Southern Africa to the Great Plains,” University of Utah
3 p.m.  Break

3:30 p.m.  Session #4: Concurrent sessions

- **Adam Lackner, Brush Buck Tours Founder, Wyoming**
  
  *Group Tours*

  Lackner spent five years in the U.S. Marine Corps before heading for seasonal guiding positions in Alaska, Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Arizona, Mexico, and now Wyoming. “Being where the mountains are big keeps the complaints small!”

- **Joel Jorgensen, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Program Manager**
  
  *Birders*

- **Rebekka Herrera-Schlicting & Daniel Clausen, former and current Great Plains Graduate Fellows**
  
  *Out of Africa and the Romance of Ecotourism*

  Clausen: In African Eco-tourism, the book and film Out of Africa are a recurring touchstone. Almost every travel article and much of the marketing material about African tourism references the 30-year-old film. What makes this film so powerful? How do modern Ecotourism providers like NamibRand use the look of the film for post-colonial and environmental purposes? Answering these questions can help ecotourism providers tap the romance of the Great Plains region.

- **Chuck Cooper, president and CEO & Ben Dumas, fund development manager, Crane Trust**
  
  *Identifying an Untapped Market*

  Hear how the Crane Trust identified and cultivated an untapped ecotourism market by offering a unique perspective on crane viewing. Just over 5 years from it's creation, the Crane Trust’s VIP experience has grown beyond solely crane viewing and draws guests from throughout the world. Learn how thinking outside the box, and taking risks, can have an impact on fundraising and highlighting the work of your organization or group.

- **Bobby Koepplin & Chris Sieverdes**
  
  *Big Dreams, Big Results: Financing and Your Byway Organization*

  Koepplin, Valley City, ND, serves as chairperson for the Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway. He has been involved with Byways for more than 20 years, is a founding member of the National Scenic Byway Foundation, and has served as a Byway PEER Advisor. Bobby has leveraged funds and led the completion of over $2.4 million of Byway projects including: 41 interpretive sites, 10 map-panel kiosks, numerous visitor amenities, marketing materials, and completion of Corridor Management Plans. Sieverdes is a National Scenic Byway Foundation board member.

- **Erin Pirro, Certified Agricultural Consultant, Farm Credit East**
  
  *Pricing Your Stay*

  Most business owners want to offer a ‘good’ price, but does that mean good for you or good for your customers? We’ll explore several different strategies for pricing the experience you offer, with an eye to the true costs, the value provided, and the marketplace. Pricing is part art and part science, and I’ll share some tools to help you make these decisions with confidence.

- **Dipra Jha, director of Global Engagement, Hospitality, Restaurant & Tourism Management, University of Nebraska**
  
  *Engaging Visitors through Experience Design*

  With more and more visitors expecting authentic and personalized experiences, hospitality providers need to embrace an experience economy model and stage memories that will last a lifetime. Using case studies and real-life examples, this session will help participants discover ways to transform customers
into passionate advocates. Learn concepts such as the economic distinctions model, catch up on global trends in tourism and hospitality, and come away with ideas how to use experience design for creating sustainable win-win.

**Ethics, Philanthropy, and Ecotourism**


Robert Ritson, “Corporate Social Responsibility as a Framework for Better Ecotourism,” UNK

4:45 p.m. Free time until reception at Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary (shuttles available).

6-8 p.m. Reception at Rowe Sanctuary

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**Friday, April 20, 2018**

*Younes Conference Center*

8 a.m. Breakfast

8:45 a.m. Session #5: Ecotourism Across the Globe

- **Okwa Sarefo, founder of Wild Expeditions Safaris, Botswana, Africa**
  *Botswana Nature Tourism*

  Sarefo shares his experiences of ecotourism and conservation in Botswana, including the challenges his country faces and his part in the future of ecotourism through his successful business and work as a professional field guide. There has been much in the way of global conservation achievement, but there are more challenges ahead.

- **Richard Reading, director of research and conservation, Butterfly Pavilion, Colorado**
  *American Bison: Keystone Species of the Ecology and Ecotourism of the Great Plains*

  American bison play a key role in shaping the ecology of the Great Plains. As the national mammal of the United States and one of the most iconic species of North America, they also represent a key driver of ecological-based tourism in the region. This talk will focus on how bison function as a keystone species that can help restore the ecology of the Great Plains, while providing ecotourism opportunities.

- **Larkin Powell, Professor of Conservation Biology and Animal Ecology at the School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska, and Kelly Powell**
  *Putting the 'Eco' in Ecotourism: Guidelines for Maximizing Guest Experience*

  What makes an ecotourism lodge different from a motel? What puts the “eco” in ecotourism? We will discuss insights to these questions gained from experiences at ecotourism destinations in the Great Plains and Namibia. We use an approach that assesses a guest experience by the following categories: facilities, food, activities, guest care, and environmental awareness. Our research suggests that ecotourism sites will benefit from several implementable ideas. The guidelines we present paint a progressive, modern image of ecotourism as an activity designed to meet economic, social, and environmental goals in our region.

  Kelly Powell has served as a lecturer at UNL for wildlife management courses.

9:45 a.m. Break
10:15 a.m.  **Session #6: Concurrent sessions**

- **John Janovy**, professor emeritus, biology, University of Nebraska  
  *Africa Notes: Reflections of an Ecotourist*  
  This presentation addresses two questions: (1) How is a “trip of a lifetime” integrated into your previous life experiences? And (2) how does that same adventure shape your thinking and world view afterwards? The book, *Africa Notes*, answers these questions with material from Botswana and Tanzania. The answers, however, could easily be a model for promotion of ecotourism anywhere in the world if the destination has been a lifelong dream for the tourist.

- **James Anderson**, Adventure Travel and Trade Association  
  *Soft Adventure*  

- **Erin Pirro**, Certified Agricultural Consultant, Farm Credit East  
  *A Money-Making Formula*  
  When you’re thinking about adding new activity or attraction, one of the scariest parts is figuring out what it will cost and how you’ll recover that cost. But if you build a system for figuring that out, you’ll have a tool you can use each time a new idea pops up. Even better, you can teach the system so your staff or family can do the figuring when they come up with a new idea! And from there, you can figure what it will take to break even, making a daunting task seem a lot more doable.

- **Susan Jurasz**, Sea Ranch, Oregon  
  *Signage and Wayfinding*  
  Sea Reach specializes in interpretative signage and developing interpretative messaging, wayfinding, and Visitor Center development.

- **The O’Pioneers! National Heritage Area**  
  *Panel*  
  Rural communities have experienced declining jobs, populations, incomes, and quality of life amenities. Economic health and vitality around the region depends on ways to diversify its economy. A comprehensive approach to tourism including cultural, heritage, agricultural, and ecotourism is an innovative income-generating strategy that builds on a community’s assets, diversifies the economy, attracts new business, and sustains success. Panelists will speak on the heritage tourism market and how their sites are taking advantage of key demographics and travel patterns of heritage tourists.  
  Ashley Olson, Executive Director, The Willa Cather Foundation  
  Joe Black, Executive Director, Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer  
  Mark Engler, Superintendent, Homestead National Monument of America  
  Kim Wilson, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Professor of Landscape Architecture and RFI Fellow

- **Birds, Seeds, and Words**  
  Caleb Roberts, “Subcontinental Ecological Regime Shifts in the Great Plains biome,” University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
  Ronnie O’Brien, “Tourism and Agriculture Help the Pawnee Nation,” Central Community College, Hastings, Nebraska  
  Caroline Clare, “Cather Country: The Potential of Literary Tourism for Rural Communities,” Arizona State University

- **Ann & Steve Teget**  
  *Social Media Basics for Tourism*  
  Learn how to make your tourist destination shine on social media! Travel influencers and bloggers Steve and Ann Teget of PostcardJar.com will cover basics like choosing the right social media platforms for your business and building your company’s profile on Google Maps. They’ll also demonstrate how to create eye-catching social media graphics that will help bring attention to your destination. This enthusi-
numero astico couple from rural Nebraska will use their blogging experiences to show you how to create an authentic voice, generate more followers, and increase your social media engagement.

11:45 a.m. Luncheon
Dean Jacobs, Author, Photographer, and Traveler

7 Wonders - 7 Lessons: Reasons to have Hope reboots our connection to creating community and our role in it. It empowers and inspires each of us to find our role in creating a healthy and engaged community or in our case a vibrant Nebraska.

1:30 p.m. Session #7: Concurrent sessions

Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition Panel
Adventure, Education, and Tourism

Ecotourism operators have hands-on experience with the land, business, and customers that give them insights into ecotourism across the Plains. They’re educators, experience creators, guides, storytellers, and stewards of the environment. This panel will discuss their experiences with visitors, what they’ve found works (and doesn’t work), and how they view the future of Great Plains ecotourism. All the panelists are members of the Center for Great Plains Studies’ Great Plains Ecotourism Coalition, a grouping of 30+ organizations and businesses who do or support nature tourism in the region.

Panelists:
Casey Cagle, Prairie Earth Tours, Kansas
Bill Whitney, Prairie Plains Resource Institute
Vince Asta, Ponderosa Cyclery
Bill Taddicken, Rowe Sanctuary

Reed Robinson (SiCangu/Lakota), Manager, Tribal Relations & Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office

Tribal Relationships and National Parks

Robinson’s office works to ensure agency policies and actions respect tribal sovereignty and serve to build vital intercultural partnerships.

Bree Dority, Associate Professor of Finance, University of Nebraska at Kearney

The Economic Impact of the Annual Crane Migration on Central Nebraska

Dority, along with Eric Thompson (UNL), Shawn Kaskie (UNK), and Lisa Tschauner (UNK), studied the 2017 Sandhill crane migration and its impacts on Central Nebraska’s economy. They found more than $14 million in impact along with jobs and tax revenue. Dig into the numbers with Dority, who has conducted studies on community revitalization, school consolidation, and other topics of relevance to rural Nebraska communities.

Campus Ecotourism

Regina Robbins, “Campus-based Ecotourism,” University of Nebraska Omaha
Michael Maddison, “Identifying Outdoor Classroom Sites in the Missouri Arboretum,” Northwest Missouri State University
Steve Maly, Maly Marketing

Byway Stories

Stories. They are what is passed down generation to generation and what you hold onto and remember. It is also why you remember certain pieces of information and forget other pieces because of the stories that surround it. So what story does your byway tell? During this presentation we will dig deep into how you can discover a story that not only en-courages people to take your byway but to stop along the way as well. We will also discuss how these stories can tie into each community and how each community can leverage to that story for an economic benefit. From video to photos to print ads to social media, we will detail out a plan on how to share your unique story with passionate travelers.

Adam Lackner, Brush Buck Tours Founder, Wyoming

Guiding

Lackner spent five years in the U.S. Marine Corps before heading for seasonal guiding positions in Alaska, Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Arizona, Mexico, and now Wyoming.

2:45 p.m. Break

3:15 p.m. Session #8: Concurrent sessions

Dan Kunzman, Vice President, The Foundation for Educational Services

Community Branding


Thru-Hiking the Great Plains Trail

Jordan, Minnesota native and graduate of St. Cloud State University with a degree in Natural Resources, is involved with several trail organizations, including participating in the Partnership for the National Trail System's (PNTS) Trail Apprentice Program and the North Country Trail. In 2016 he became the first thru-hiker of the Great Plains Trail, hiking nearly 2,100 miles from Texas to Canada in 85 days. He's here to share his story and help to establish the Great Plains Trail as America's next great adventure.

Anthony Schutz, University of Nebraska Law & Andy Pollack, Rembolt Ludtke Law

Liability and Legislative Update

Schutz, an associate professor of law and Nebraska native, is a nationally-recognized authority on the often-intertwined subjects of agricultural, environmental, and natural resources law and of state and local government.

Pollack practices primarily in government relations. He is a registered lobbyist before the Nebraska Legislature, representing a diverse array of clients. He also represents clients before state agencies, assisting with both regulatory matters and procurement. The former executive director of the state's Public Service Commission, Andy has a thorough knowledge of state government.

Byways Blogger Panel

Learn tips from enthusiastic Great Plains travelers/travel bloggers.

Melody Pittman: Wherever I May Roam

Megan Bannister: Freelance writer and travel blogger based in Des Moines, Iowa. Her blog, Olio in Iowa, focuses on offbeat destinations, roadside attractions, and “world’s largest” things.

Sara Broers: Iowa travel and social media enthusiast. Follow her travel adventures at TravelWithSara and through social media. She is the co-founder of Midwest Travel Bloggers.

Lisa Trudell: The Trudells are Nebraska residents who travel in search of new experiences and undiscovered treasures. Lisa worked in the travel industry for more than 16 years for a hotel company and as a travel agent. She has co-created the community Midwest Travel Bloggers, which connects travel writers and tourism professionals to promote the Midwest.

**Working with Farmers, Private Land Owners, and Other Stake Holders**


Larkin Powell, “Keys to the Trade: Reflections on Sustainability and Economic Opportunity from Namibian Livestock Farmers Engaged in Ecotourism,” UNL


**Larry Borowsky, interpretive writer**

*Storytelling Tools and Strategies*

Borowsky has more than 20 years experience developing interpretive text and interactive media for museums and historic sites. He has also worked with several of Colorado’s scenic and historic byways and is the former editor of Colorado’s official state tourism guide.

**Lars and Ellen Anderson, Reserve Assistants, American Prairie Reserve**

*Building a 21st Century Park*

American Prairie Reserve is a nonprofit that is working to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States; a project National Geographic called “one of the most ambitious conservation projects in American history.” Join two members of the Reserve team to hear some of the history of the project, and learn about some of the strategies—including recreation and tourism— that are being used to advance the mission.

4:30 p.m. Closing reception
11:45 a.m.  Break

5:30-7 p.m. Reception at Museum of Nebraska Art (shuttles available to and from hotel)

Conducted studies on community revitalization, school consolidation, and other topics of relevance to Reed Robinson (Sicangu/Lakota), Manager, Tribal Relations & Indian Affairs, National Park

Found works (and doesn't work), and how they view the future of Great Plains ecotourism. All the stewards of the environment.

This panel will discuss their experiences with visitors, what they've tips and suggestions for navigating this process and what factors to consider when selecting an

7 Wonders - 7 Lessons:

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Building a 21st Century Park

and is the former editor of Colorado's official state tourism guide.

Olugbenga Kehinde Sonubi, "Evaluating Agritourism Development Prospects in Osun State, Nigeria, "

Working with Farmers, Private Land Owners, and Other Stake Holders

Tim Trudell: Writer, editor, and photographer for the Trudell's travel blog,

Community Branding

and is involved with several trail organizations, including participating in the Partnership for the National

Success stories of the Amish Country Byway ‘Heritage Partnership’ and the Ohio Byway Links non-profit.

How do we work to conserve the Great Plains? How can we mix in tourism? What role does public land

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Surveying the discovery of Plains wildlife by European and American elites like William Drummond

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Strouse is the board chair of the National Scenic Byway Foundation. Sieverdes is a National Scenic

2:45 p.m. Break

10 a.m.  Break

Bass Pro Shops

Megan Bannister: Freelance writer and travel blogger based in Des Moines, Iowa. Her blog,

Legislature, representing a diverse array of clients. He also represents clients before state agencies,

o/ten-intertwined subjects of agricultural, environmental, and natural resources law and of state and

Community Branding

so/et Adventure

Africa Notes

Africa Notes: Reflections of an Ecotourist

John Janovy, professor emeritus, biology, University of Nebraska

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Dipra Jha, director of Global Engagement, Hospitality, Restaurant & Tourism Management,

the true costs, the value provided, and the marketplace. Pricing is part art and part science, and I'll share

Most business owners want to offer a 'good' price, but does that mean good for you or good for your

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