

Tammy VerCauteren

Executive Director

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Growing up in Michigan, Tammy earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife management from Michigan State University and a master's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where she studied Sandhill Cranes on private land along the Platte River of Nebraska. She began working for Bird Conservancy (then Colorado Bird Observatory) in 1999, first as a specialist in GIS and landowner outreach for the Prairie Partners program, then as the Program's Coordinator and Outreach Director. She has served as Executive Director since 2008. Tammy is the North American Bird Conservation Initiative Human Dimensions Subcommittee Chair and Nongovernmental Organization Representative for the Executive Council, as well as Co-Chair of the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture and past Chair of the Playa Lakes Joint Venture Board. She is a member of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency President's Task Force for Southern Wings. She also serves on the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership and is on the Steering Committee for the Collaborative of the Scientific Cultural Facilities District.

Tammy believes it is relationships with people that will make a positive difference for conservation now and in the future. She enjoys collaboration, innovation and working with different partners to encourage proactive voluntary bird conservation efforts. Realizing many people have lost their connection to the land, nature and wildlife, she wants to help rebuild those connections for the health of people, wildlife and our communities.

Key takeaways

Birds inspire wonder and curiosity and are a natural hook to the outdoors because they are readily accessible.

The health of bird populations are indicative of our environmental sustainability.

Healthy populations of birds require people to be aware, connected and motivated to help conserve them.

We only love what we know, we only know what we are taught.

Bird populations are in steep decline with grassland birds experiencing the greatest losses. Only 18% of Americans have any knowledge of grasslands. More than half of people reported having little or no knowledge of grasslands.

Grasslands have a long history that includes being stewarded by Indigenous Peoples and later to include ranchers all of whom are connected to the land through various processes including fire, grazing regimes and harvesting native seeds. As we become more urban, most people have lost that connection and knowledge.

Our proposed Wildlife Rehabilitation, Nature and Education Center will help restore lost connections to the land, share knowledge about stewardship, and foster conservation activities across the community.

Our proposed location in the northeast part of the former Hughes Stadium property blends with the urban environment and creates a transition to this natural landscape serving as a gateway for the community.

This property has a long-term human impact that will require land restoration activities to address compact soils, invasive species and overall land degradation. This site also is an opportunity for the community to get their hands into the soil and contribute to a more functional grassland system.

The collaboration of Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Rocky Mountain Raptor Program and supporting partner Audubon Rockies will integrate our expertise and allow us to provide more profound experiences and connections with nature for the community further inspiring future educators, scientists, conservationists and land stewards.