



# Meadowlark

MAY/JUNE 2025

VOL 54 ISSUE 3

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## Peak Migration: What to Expect and How to Observe in our Area

By *Conor Gearin*

“Migratory fallout” is a phrase that birders throw around this time of year. Don’t be alarmed — fallout refers not to radioactive particles but instead to large numbers of migratory birds dropping out of the sky to take shelter from headwinds or storms, pausing their journey north. Fallout events could last an hour or two or several days if the weather remains unfavorable. And while big fallouts are



American Redstart  
by: Larry Frame

best known along the coast where bird migration can be especially spectacular, it’s always possible that a large number of warblers, vireos, and other songbirds could fall from the sky into a city park in Omaha. The trick is being at the right time and place to witness it!

Scientists have gotten much better at predicting bird migration in recent years. Harnessing the power of weather radar, ornithologists can spot concentrations of birds on the move in real time. Then they make predictions about where and when birds will migrate, using GPS tracking data from thousands of individual birds’ journeys to make their forecasts even better. Try exploring the online migration

forecast maps on BirdCast.info, a project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. BirdCast can show you the specific days and nights when the largest numbers of birds will be on the move through our area this spring, making it easier to find them in local parks or right in your neighborhood. *(continued on page 7)*

## Midwest’s top habitat experts headline upcoming programs

Learn how to make your yard a 5-star attraction for wildlife. Join us on **Thursday, May 8**, when the amazing duo, Michelle Foss and Noah Sundberg, present: Native Plants, Pollinators, and YOU! Why native plants are important, and one family’s journey to promote native microhabitat for all.

Plus, tips and tricks for all experience levels and land access — you don’t have to have a yard to help!

Michelle, a former ASO board member, is director of operations at Fontenelle Forest. Noah is a horticulturist with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The all-star lineup continues at our **Thursday, June 12**, meeting: Sustaining Birds, Bugs, Wildlife and Bees with Trees! Rockstar naturalist Justin Evertson will share the wisdom he’s gleaned in more than 35 years with the Nebraska Forest Service and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. Justin is recognized as a leading expert on the trees and shrubs that are critical to support biodiversity and sustainability in our region.

Our programs are free and open to the public. They are held in the private meeting room at DJ’s Dugout, 777 N. 114th St. Please join us for social hour at 6 p.m. Food and drinks are available for purchase. The programs begin at 7 p.m. Register at [Audubon-Omaha.org/calendar-of-events](http://Audubon-Omaha.org/calendar-of-events)

**GREEN CORNER: HOW YOU CAN HELP WILDLIFE AT HOME**  
*Conservation begins at home; each of us can help restore our unique ecosystem.*

### Fun Technology to Enhance Birding

Apps like Merlin Bird ID from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are user-friendly and help bird enthusiasts identify bird species effortlessly. By answering a few questions or using bird photos and sounds, users can receive quick, accurate matches. Gamify it by saving a list of all the birds you’ve seen.

How many can you find!?

### Clean Feeders for Healthy Birds

To clean a bird feeder, empty it completely and discard any old seed. Soak the feeder in a solution of nine parts water to one part bleach for 15 minutes, then scrub with a brush.

Rinse thoroughly and let it dry completely before refilling. Regular cleaning prevents mold and disease.

# ON THE HORIZON

## May

### Members Program

Thursday, May 8

**What:** Native Plants, Pollinators, and YOU!

Presented by Michelle Foss and Noah Sundberg

**When:** 6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. program

**Where:** DJ's Dugout meeting room  
777 N. 114th Street, Omaha

**How:** Register at [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org)

**Who:** Members and the public (free)

### Field Trip

Sunday, May 25

**What:** Mindful Birding Retreat with The Naturalist School

**When:** 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Where:** The lodge at Waubonsie State Park

2635 Wa-Shaw-Tee Rd,  
Hamburg, IA 51640

**How:** Register at [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org)

**Who:** Members and the public (free)

## June

### Members Program

Thursday, June 12

**What:** Sustaining Birds, Bugs, Wildlife and Bees with Trees!

Presented by Justin Evertson

**When:** 6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. program

**Where:** DJ's Dugout meeting room  
777 N. 114th Street, Omaha

**How:** Register at [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org)

**Who:** Members and the public (free)

### Field Trip

Saturday, June 21

**What:** Hike at ASO's Cuming City Prairie

Led by Glenn Pollock

**When:** 9-11 a.m.

**Where:** 3 miles northwest of Blair, NE 1/2 mile off Hwy 75 on County Road 14

**How:** Register at [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org)

**Who:** Members and the public (free)

## Field notes from the president *by Anne Maguire*

### WHAT CONNECTS YOU TO AUDUBON SOCIETY OF OMAHA?



The times are changing. Our environment and efforts to protect it are under a dark cloud. Now, more than ever, we need our community of nature lovers to stand together, speak out, take action, and stay focused on meeting the challenges ahead.

On May 4, Audubon Society of Omaha will be changing, too. We will elect five new directors to our 14-person board, replacing directors who have reached their term limits or will be moving out of the area. This change will bring new leadership, talents and enthusiasm at a time it is needed most. I am impressed with our slate of candidates and look forward to working with them to promote environmental awareness and activism.

Although my term as president is ending, I will remain on the board as past president. I hope to see you at our educational programs, field trips, serving on committees, and committing your time at our numerous volunteer opportunities.

Audubon Society of Omaha's mission "aims to inspire others to join us in actively protecting our native ecosystems and restoring nature-friendly environments in the greater Omaha area." I hope you feel inspired to embrace our mission and advocate for our natural world.



The Naturalist School-Jack Phillips

### GET OUT OF TOWN AND INTO THE WILD: UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Join ASO and The Naturalist School for a Mindful Birding Retreat on Sunday, May 25 at Waubonsie State Park near Hamburg, Iowa. The retreat will provide a slow-paced, reflective experience intended to build awareness about birds and to develop your sense of connection, creativity and curiosity about the natural world. Leaders from our cohort,

The Naturalist School, will take you on a journey to discover new and enlightened ways to interact with nature in your own way. From a bank on the lake, under the boughs of a bur oak, or reclining on a grassy hillside, take in the peaceful beauty and sounds surrounding you — and be inspired. (Poetry, art, journaling, song, meditation and other forms of expression may be included.) Look for retreat details at [Audubon-Omaha.org/calendar-of-events](http://Audubon-Omaha.org/calendar-of-events). Registration is limited.

Then on Saturday, June 21, join us for a hike at ASO's Cuming City Prairie north of Blair led by Natural Areas Stewardship chair Glenn Pollock to see the results of our ongoing habitat stewardship efforts there. Cuming City Prairie is a 10-acre preserve surrounding the Cuming City Cemetery that hosts the only known virgin, Loess Hills-type prairie in Nebraska. Recently, ASO removed woody vegetation that had begun to spread in the preserve, creating more opportunities for prairie grasses and wildflowers to thrive.

### ASO BOARD UPDATES

Severe weather warnings did not delay Audubon Society of Omaha's March 4 board meeting. While a winter storm raged outside, we welcomed three board nominees to observe the board in action. We introduced our guests, Sheila Glencer, Mark Harberg and Derek Comba, then tackled the business agenda ... all in the safety of our own homes via Zoom!

Mother Nature was on our side for the March 18 field trip to Cottonwood Creek Preserve. A group of 20 nature lovers enjoyed a beautiful evening in the calm before the storm. Trevor Pellerite led the hikers around the community conservation project that restored a neglected urban space to a flourishing wildlife habitat. Less than 24 hours later, OPPD was challenged with a restoration project of their own — restoring power to more than 100,000 customers in the aftermath of the massive blizzard.



# Creating your Own Native Plant Habitat

by Steve Geddes

Native plants provide a dependable, diverse and plentiful source of food and shelter for birds, butterflies and other pollinators. Birds rely heavily upon them for nesting materials, insects to feed their young, and seeds as a primary food source. We can all help mitigate the loss of native habitat by providing space for wildlife in our yards — and enrich our own lives, too.

Whether you are tiptoeing into planting native perennials by mixing them cautiously into an existing non-natives flower bed or starting from scratch in that orphaned blank space staring at you from your backyard, it can be daunting to choose those first native plants for your new adventure.

Most of us living out here on the Plains have at least a portion of our yards that receives a minimum of six hours of full sunlight each day. And most Plains native plants, including the varieties listed below, require that kind of sun exposure to thrive (although there are natives that thrive in shady or mixed habitats, a discussion for another time.) The following “beginner” plants are adaptable, not overly aggressive, and readily available, with the added bonus that they are all strikingly beautiful:

- **Purple Coneflower:** pinkish/purple blooms attract an array of pollinators, including monarchs, swallowtails and many more. Birds feed upon the dried seed heads year-round.
- **Wild Bergamot:** pale bluish/

purple tubular flowers are frequented by many butterfly and bee species and hummingbirds. It's a busy place!

- **Swamp Milkweed:** pale pink clusters of crown shaped flowers attract a diversity of pollinators including the Monarch butterfly, which feeds upon the nectar and whose larvae feed upon its leaves. Likes to have its feet wet, but will thrive in average soil conditions.
- **Butterfly Milkweed:** a bright orange dome-shaped plant that, like the Swamp Milkweed, attracts many pollinators, including the Monarch. Prefers a dry hillside, but thrives anywhere once established. Does not like to be relocated once mature.
- **Coreopsis-‘Lance-leaf,’ or ‘Prairie Tickseed,’ or both:** although these are two different varieties, I love them both. Their golden to pale yellow flowers form compact domes of daisy-like blooms, which create a pollinator paradise, always buzzing.

I should note that if you buy seedlings in two-inch pots or any plants not already in bloom, they will spend their first year in the ground establishing roots and will likely not bloom until the following year. If you buy plants from big box stores or nurseries, just be sure that they are natives. I do not recommend throwing down seed for beginners. My own native habitat plot began

with the above plant varieties in a 10'x10' space. After four years, I have expanded the space to 10'x20', including 20 plant varieties, some of which are native grasses. Okay, I will admit that I may have a native plant addiction problem.

There are many options for acquiring the plants that I have listed including the following:

- Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, [plantnebraska.org](http://plantnebraska.org)
- Midwest Natives, [midwestnativesnursery.com](http://midwestnativesnursery.com)
- Mulhalls Garden Center
- Lanoha Nurseries
- Green Bellevue, free plants at Bellevue farmers market

...and many other vendors and giveaways as the planting season unfolds.



Monarch on Swamp Milkweed  
by: Steve Geddes



# Student Art Show Engages 11 New Schools and Hundreds of Students

by Virginia Stauffer

Hundreds of students from Omaha and beyond shared bird-inspired artwork at ASO's 2025 Student Art Show. With generous grant support from the National Audubon Society's Audubon in Action program, which aims to strengthen local conservation communities, ASO broadened outreach efforts and received submissions from 769 students, increasing from 640 last year. Submissions came from 38 schools, along with individual entries. Eleven schools that had not previously contributed sent in artwork, including two schools in Council Bluffs and one in Plattsmouth. The most distant entry came from Wynot, Neb. More volunteers than ever helped make this a fun and successful event for everyone.

During the awards ceremony, held in Creighton University's Harper Center auditorium, an incredible diversity of bird species depicted in all kinds of imaginative ways graced the Harper Center atrium. From familiar Blue Jays and Western Meadowlarks to strikingly colorful birds from all around the world, students showed off their skills and creativity in a variety of media and styles. Winners of excellence and merit awards received ribbons and prizes — art supplies and books about birds. The Audubon in Action Grant enabled ASO to upgrade prizes to include colorful kid-size binoculars and spotting scopes, pocket guidebooks, and string backpacks for older students, providing young people with the basic tools of birding and thanking them for sharing their art with us.

Shown here are the winners of Best in Show — a small representation of the entries. Best in Show winners received gift cards for Blick Art Materials.

Thanks to the volunteers who helped us organize artwork, judge submissions, and put on the largest event on ASO's calendar. Most of all, thanks to the students, teachers, and parents who made the art happen. We love seeing your artwork and hope to see more in 2026!



Cora S. Kindergarden,  
Best in Show Recycled K-4



Charlotte S. 4th Grade,  
Meadowlark Award



Ryan C. 6th Grade, Best in  
Show Graphic Design 5-8

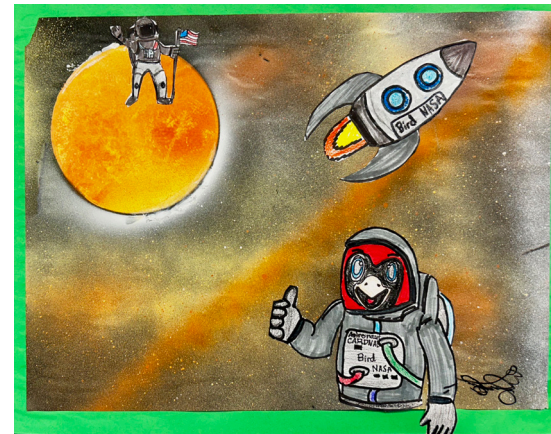


Sophia S. 11th Grade,  
Best in Show Realism 9-12

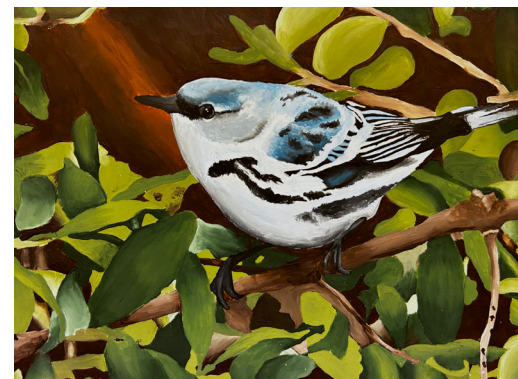
## Congratulations 2025



Gideon Z. 1st Grade,  
Best in Show Graphic Design K-4



Andrew J. 5th Grade,  
Best in Show Cartooning 5-8



Kiersten H. 8th Grade,  
Best in Show Realism 5-8



# 5 Student Art Show Best in Show Winners



Norah G. 2nd Grade,  
Best in Show Realism K-4



Elaina B. 4th Grade,  
Best in Show Recycled K-4



Emma K. 4th Grade,  
Best in Show Cartooning K-4



Alexandra J. 8th Grade,  
Best in Show Graphic Design 5-8



Thomas B. 5th Grade,  
Best in Show Recycled 5-8



Enzo G. 6th Grade,  
Best in Show Realism 5-8



Jupiter S. 11th Grade,  
Best in Show Realism 9-12



Anna S. 11th Grade,  
Best in Show Realism 9-12



Lorelai K. 12th Grade,  
Best in Show Graphic Design 9-12



# The real costs of continued coal burning in North Omaha

*By Dan Murphy*

Burning mad. That's one way to describe the loose coalition of North Omaha residents and environmental activists concerned about the Omaha Public Power District's decision to continue burning coal at its 1950s-vintage North Omaha Station through the end of calendar 2026. When it burns coal, OPPD's North Omaha Station emits toxic nitrogen oxide and sulfur oxide, which are linked to various respiratory problems. Not surprisingly, North Omaha community members, 68 percent of whom are people of color, suffer rates of asthma that are among America's highest.

OPPD's original plan was to convert two coal-burning units at its North Omaha Station to run on cleaner-burning natural gas by 2023. The objective? To reduce pollution while satisfying peak power demands in Omaha and the 13 counties the utility serves. At the same time, OPPD was exploring the development of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

However, converting the North Omaha Station to natural gas hinged on bringing the new Standing Bear Lake and Turtle Creek natural gas production stations online. That meant gaining approval from both the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) — the transmission organization overseeing power grid operations in OPPD's region — and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. When utilities transition from coal power to other energy sources, federal rules require them to prove that they will

be able to maintain a reliable energy supply to customers. In 2022, so many new project studies were in the (literal) pipeline that a national interconnection study backlog forced a delay. OPPD's board postponed the conversion of its North Omaha coal-burning units to the end of 2026.

## But that's not the whole story

Demand for energy in Omaha has exploded since the city, state and OPPD collaborated to attract mega data centers and their high-tech jobs to the Metro. Initially, fly-over Omaha wasn't even on the radar of tech giants Meta and Google. Then, OPPD marketed an irresistible package of special rates, relatively inexpensive land and a motivated work force. It worked, and Google and Meta moved quickly. Former Nebraska Governor and current United States Senator Pete Ricketts credited OPPD's efforts as the "linchpin" of a successful campaign to bring Silicon Valley to a silicon prairie.

Data centers require massive amounts of power to drive the creation and application of artificial intelligence (AI). So much energy, in fact, that, if OPPD were to shut off the North Omaha Station's two coal-burning generators now, it could crash the entire area's electricity system.

And Nebraska is not alone. The Washington Post reports that similar scenarios are playing out in Georgia, Utah and Wisconsin and notes that "The Nebraska story reveals in detail how the race by giant technology companies to gain the advantage in AI is conflicting with climate goals and potentially harming public health."

## Power to the people?

Communities affected by these power grabs often feel powerless. According to Post reporting, tech companies rationalize the continued use of coal-fired plants to power data centers by purchasing clean energy elsewhere on regional power grids. The power grid

serving the Omaha region spans 14 states, from Louisiana to Montana, and some analysts believe that many of the green projects now under way would have occurred regardless of the tech giants' power needs.

Following orders issued by President Donald J. Trump, new Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin — a former House member from New York with virtually no regulatory experience — "is expected to work to erase rules to fight climate change and chemical pollution, while shutting down programs designed to help poor and minority communities that are disproportionately affected by pollution," reports Coral Davenport in *The New York Times*. Administrator Zeldin has contended that existing environmental regulations have "unfairly targeted coal-fired power plants."

In a KMTV special report, Global Center for Climate Justice Advocate and North Omaha resident Anthony Rogers-Wright cited the community's decades-long effort to make the neighborhood a safe place to live and work. "These people are nothing but sacrificial lambs" for "out-of-town and out-of-state mega corporations like Mega and Google," he emphasized. And, in this new, increasingly laissez-faire regulatory climate, Rogers-Wright worries that the utility could once again push back its deadline for shutting down its coal-burning generators.

To make your voice heard, contact the OPPD board and your state and Congressional representatives.

## Information for this story was gathered from:

The Washington Post; The Nebraska Examiner; KMTV 3 News Now Omaha; Outlets, the customer newsletter of the Omaha Public Power District; and *The New York Times*.



Nashville Warbler  
by: Phil Swanson



Blackpoll Warbler  
by: Phil Swanson

## Peak Migration: What to Expect and How to Observe in our Area

*Continued from page 1*

It can even tell you when individual species are most likely to be here in high numbers.

Knowing when peak bird migration happens also helps you know when to turn the lights out at night to reduce the risk of birds colliding with buildings. Both low-rise and high-rise buildings contribute to light pollution that confuses birds using the stars and moon to navigate. Shutting off or reducing the amount of light, especially exterior lights and interior lights on top floors, helps make sure that birds can make it through the Metro area safely. See the National Audubon Society's Lights Out program for more details.

Birds colliding with windows is the No.2 reason for human-caused bird mortality (next to outdoor cat predation at No.1.) In North America, up to a billion birds die in window collisions every year. However, there are ways we can all help, such as turning off lights during migration and applying decals to windows that make them more visible to birds. Chicago's McCormick Place Convention Center, which became infamous for causing the deaths of over 1,000 birds in one night in 2023, has reduced bird collisions by 95% after adding small white decals to its large windows facing Lake Michigan. Anyone can follow this excellent example and prevent bird collisions at homes and businesses. Birds are making incredible journeys of thousands of miles right now — and we have a role to play in helping them on their way so they can create the next generation this summer.

Spring migration is ephemeral, mysterious, and magical. For a brief time, species rarely seen become possible again. As much as your schedule allows, it's worth trying to see and hear what you can.

## Winter Bird Seed Sale Raises Funds for ASO Activities

Thanks to the customers who ordered 23,250 pounds of bird seed during our Winter Bird Seed Sale in February! ASO netted \$9,400 to support education efforts, including the Student Art Contest and conservation activities at our prairies on Bennington Road in northwest Omaha and the Cuming City Cemetery.

Thanks also to the volunteers who helped by unloading the truck, greeting customers, filling and loading orders, delivering seed, and/or bringing food: Bennett Amdor, Ruth Bentzinger, Roger Carroll, Mark Cave, Jim Commers, Dorian Dunham, Conor Gearin, Michelle Foss, Mark Harberg, Marilou Jasnoch, Ann King, Joey Lynch, Anne & Jim Maguire, P.J. McDonnell, Andrew Miller, Greg Prorok, Josh Sheldon, Sarah Shepherd, Katy Simmons, Melissa Sitze and Noah Sundberg.

The September newsletter will have information about the second of our semiannual sales. Pickup dates will be October 18 and 19.

## Resources & Info:

### How to join/renew/update

Join or renew your membership online at [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org) and select "Get Involved." Save paper and avoid confusion. Your membership with National Audubon automatically makes you a member of Audubon Society of Omaha.

### Change of address?

Please call National Audubon toll-free at 1-844-428-3826, or send an email to [audubon@emailcustomerservice.com](mailto:audubon@emailcustomerservice.com)

### Stay Connected

Join our email list at [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org) under "Get Involved."

### Bequests & gifts

A bequest to Audubon Society of Omaha is a gift to those who will succeed us and secure our natural heritage. Want to honor a loved one and help ASO's local conservation and education efforts? You can make a donation anytime at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) OR you can mail your check along with the name and address of the person to be notified to:

Audubon Society of Omaha  
P.O. Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103

### We want you – to volunteer

Have you ever been told you're a leader? Or do you want to be a leader? How about leading a birding field trip to the destination of your choice? Please contact us Sarah Shepherd at [sshepherd@audubonomaha.org](mailto:sshepherd@audubonomaha.org) and let us know you're interested in getting involved with your local Audubon chapter.

### Take action

Big things are happening, so communicate with your elected officials. Go to [Audubon-Omaha.org](http://Audubon-Omaha.org) for links to contact info.

### Injured bird?

Raptors: Call 866-888-7261 to speak to a Raptor Conservation Alliance volunteer. Non-raptor: Call Nebraska Wildlife Rehab at 402-234-2473.



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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

# the Meadowlark

MAY/JUNE 2025  
VOL 54 ISSUE 3

Artwork by  
Kiersten H. 8th Grade

The Audubon Society of Omaha is dedicated to the active promotion of environmental awareness to our community through education, conservation, and enjoyment of our natural heritage, especially birds.

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Instagram.

#### ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Anne Maguire  
Past President: Christine Prescott  
1st Vice President: Conor Gearin  
2nd Vice President: Bennett Amdor  
Treasurer: Melissa Sitze  
Secretary: Virginia Stauffer

#### ELECTED DIRECTORS

Amy Campagna  
Roger Carroll  
Kyle Finley  
Betty Fullerton  
Trevor Pellerite  
Sarah Prescott  
Katy Simmons  
Open position

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#### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

DEIB: Bennett Amdor  
Education/Field Trips: Amy Campagna  
Finance: Melissa Sitze  
Fundraising and Bird Seed Sale:  
Elizabeth and John Fullerton  
Legislative Affairs: Trevor Pellerite  
Marketing and Outreach: Conor Gearin  
Membership: Duane & Kathy Schwery  
Natural Areas Stewardship:  
Kayla Johnson & Glenn Pollock  
Nominating: Bennett Amdor  
Program: Anne Maguire  
Student Art Contest: Virginia Stauffer  
ASO Administrator: Sarah Shepherd  
Executive Director, Audubon Great Plains:  
Kristal Stoner