

The June 4th Griffith Prairie Fun Run/Walk really was a fun event for all ages, including 3-year-old Lucy Gustafson, who enjoyed creating her own course of exploration. This part of the prairie was burned on May 2nd.





The 5K/10K Fun Run/Walk

was a blast for the 26 runners and 21 walkers that braved the bluffs. The weather was great, the scenery delightful, and the course challenging, to say the least!

From above left:

The Fun Run began and ended at the barn (Education Center); Amy Jones explains the route; lineup of runners at beginning of run and a group of walkers enjoying the slower pace and the contrasting environments of burned and unburned prairie, high bluffs and lowlands along the Platte.



One Sizzlin' Summer!

It's been a warm one, all right - but all's well. Please enjoy the images highlighting the Prairie Plains summer - and re-visit this issue in January, when you'll really appreciate it! Also enjoy the thought that you, as a member, are helping to bring about all these opportunities for people of all ages to connect with the land. It is our mission to continue to develop, expand and diversify these land and people connections - and we are thankful to have that opportunity.











Sioux County Ranch Trek June 10-12, 2011

A record number of Prairie Plains members and friends attended this annual western Nebraska Panhandle event. Forty-two took part in the Saturday ranch tour, including the pre-tour paleontology presentation at Agate Fossil Beds National Monument. This introduction was given by Dr. Robert Hunt, UNL paleontologist and professor emeritus, whose research has focused on the rich mammalian fossil record preserved in Cenozoic nonmarine sediments of the central Great Plains and adjacent Rocky Mountain basins. Dr. Hunt and his colleagues, Ellen Stepleton and Rob Skolnick, continued the presentation during the ranch tour, at the fossil bed (Harper Quarry), which has been a UNL study site for over 30 years.

Saturday evening our numbers grew to around 100, as the barbeque skills of Charlie Skavdahl are well known! A few of us then continued the tradition of the hike up the hills at sunset, a final bonus to one beautiful day.

From top right, then counter-clockwise: the wheel sculpture fashioned by ranch donor Howard Juhl is at the entrance to the Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie (a similar structure marks the Pearl Harbor Survivors Prairie near Riverdale); ranch tour scenery (Lambert's Locoweed, Oxytropis lambertii, in the foreground); a group of happy ranch trekkers; exploring the fossil bed (a UNL study site) with guidance from Ellen Stepleton; and, also at the fossil bed, Robert Hunt, UNL paleontologist who shared his expertise before and during the tour.









Left, one of many rugged landscapes on the ranch enjoyed during the Saturday morning tour. Right, the storm cell northeast of the ranch Saturday evening, June 11th. Fortunately for the Ranch Trek barbeque crowd, it was moving east.

Charles L. Whitney Education Center Construction Progress



Thanks to a beguest from Prairie Plains founder and longtime board member, Curt Twedt, we have commenced with the next phase of construction. Joists and flooring have been completed on the upper level, giving easy working access for roof modifications. The photo shows the dormer on the west side (without window openings cut), which will create headroom for a small classroom. A similar dormer on the east side will create a larger classroom with sinks for lab work. The north will be more complex, involving raising of the roof to make a large conference room. The next step will be steel roofing and siding the upper level walls. With more fundraising we will complete the exterior of the Center, including installation of all doors and windows. We are searching for another barn in order to salvage vertical barn siding for the entry on the south and the lower level around the east and north foundation.

Introducing Jeff Gustafson



Jeff was hired June 1st to serve as Land Steward. He comes to us with considerable experience working on the land, a Hamilton County native who grew up on a farm on the Platte River bluffs about ten miles upstream from Griffith Prairie. He holds a degree in history from UNL, and has special interest in local history and community development aspects of our mission. His job includes prescribed burning, grazing management, woody vegetation control, restoration field work, involving people with our land preserves and many other tasks. He will be a key player in the development of the "Ribbons of Prairie" Initiative.

Day to Day on the Land









Monitoring the land, planting and harvesting goes on throughout the summer. Above and down: Leadplant (Amorpha canescens) and Purple Coneflower (Echinacea angustifolia) will yield an abundant harvest this year; Jeff Gustafson, Bill Whitney, Sarah Bailey, Amy and **Cale Jones - plus volunteer Erin** Whitney - planting greenhousegrown seedlings into a Corps of **Engineers wetland mitigation** area near Ashland; Jeff planting at the same site; Jeff on a stewardship and seed collection mission at Pearl Harbor **Survivors Prairie near Riverdale;** Sarah and Jeff collecting seed from rushes in the median of Highway 281 north of Grand Island.



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Maintaining and restoring Nebraska ecosystems – Creating opportunities for education, research, stewardship and community development.

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Next Bader Park Tour: Saturday, Sept. 10th 9:00 a.m.

THANK YOU to

- Scott & Cale Jones and Mert Griffith for land stewardship assistance;
- Tony Curtis for seed harvest;
- Lindsay Vivian, Steve Winter, Mike Powell, Bill & Shirley Snyder, Craig Ratzlaff and Cale Jones for assistance with the Fun Run;
- Britt Bailey for photography service at the Fun Run;
- Robert Hunt & associates and the staff at Agate Fossil Beds National Monument for paleontology presentations during the Ranch Trek;
- Scott & Caitlin Schaefer, our Ranch Trek hosts

and

- Charlie Skavdahl, the Master of Barbeque at the ranch.