

...continued from front page

sustainable approach to the management of human and natural resources of the prairies and plains . . . furthermore, To provide a center where persons of mutual interest in the natural history, horticulture, agriculture, human culture, sociology and the development and welfare of the plains may exchange ideas . . . These purposes resonate as well, or even better than they did 30 years ago. There is a serious need for interdisciplinary education on the land in the Great Plains. Our plan is to create an intern and residency program at the Center. Participants will come from all over the world to learn about Great Plains grasslands, water, ecological restoration, rural communities, agriculture and nature in various student and longer-term resident capacities. The Center campus will eventually include modest lodging and meeting space for perhaps a dozen students and residents. All learners will partake in substantial stewardship and restoration activities, receive curriculum instruction and work on independent studies. This campus on the farmyard on the prairie on the Platte will essentially become a "farm school," meaning a place of both land work and schooling. The learning environment will be enriched with visiting scholars, community discussion forums, how-to workshops and fine arts. Students will assist with all other educational activities at the Center, such as SOAR, and leave their experience as teachers in their own right.

Thus we now stand at a precipice, ready to make a great leap. The next era of Prairie Plains will include everything we do now (hopefully even better) and on a grander scale as we strive to restore diverse prairies and wetlands along our rivers and streams. The addition of bright and energetic young thinkers and doers through an intern and residency program will expand all boundaries, and help us involve many more people in our exciting work.

APPROACHING EVENTS:

Saturday, Dec. 12th

Winter Bird Count Hike at Bader Park

9:00 a.m.; Meet at PPRI office (13th & L) in Aurora at 8:30 for carpooling. Refreshments following at Bader house.

Friday, January 1st

Annual New Year's Day Hike at Griffith Prairie

1:00 p.m. Meet at PPRI office at 12:30 for carpooling.

Saturday, January 16th

Annual Meeting of Members

Bremer Center, 16th (Hwy 14) & L in Aurora.
8:30 a.m. coffee-social; meeting convenes at 9:00 a.m.
Catered lunch at 12:00 p.m.; RSVP to 402-694-5535 or
amyppri@hamilton.net by January 13th. \$15 payable to PPRI.

Saturday, January 23rd

Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration Kickoff & Fundraiser

UNL East Campus Union, 5:00-9:00 p.m.
All-Nebraska meal featuring bison and local produce;
Auction directed by Dick Turpin, live music, and presentation by National Geographic photographer Jim Richardson (jimrichardsonphotography.com)
Tickets are \$40 per person;
Contact amyppri@hamilton.net or 402-694-5535 before January 19th.

Prairie Plains Link

is a publication of



-An educational land trust incorporated in 1980 as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization based in Aurora, NE.

MISSION:

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

Link Editor & Layout

Jan Whitney

Photos by Prairie Plains staff members unless noted otherwise.

Learn more and
BECOME A MEMBER at
www.prairieplains.org

THANK YOU

- to Paul Hosford & family, Pastor Larry Sydow, Dr. Tony Kusek, Secretary of State John Gale, the Albion Area Arts Council and ONP Stewards for all the work and support that once again made the ONP Enchanted Evening a successful event;

- to Miles Wynn (and helpers) for the building and installation of the new information kiosk at ONP; and

- to all members for your generous support in 2009!

Happy Holidays!

Prairie plains Link



It was a beautiful morning for the Bader Park hike on Saturday, Nov. 7th. Participants are shown in the north prairie restoration area along the Wood River. Next event: **Annual Winter Bird Hike on Saturday, Dec. 12, 9:00 a.m.** followed by refreshments in the Bader house.

newsletter
of



November, 2009

From Director Bill Whitney: A Request, a Reflection and a Leap

2009 is almost behind us, so it's time to make our annual year-end request. Briefly: Please consider a year-end tax-deductible donation to Prairie Plains. Your gifts, above and beyond your generous membership contributions, will help us end the year stronger than ever and vault us into the next 30+ years of "Celebrating the Land and its People" with confidence.

The past year has been eventful and satisfying in many ways. The staff has been fully occupied with the annual routines of prairie restoration and stewardship, educational activities such as SOAR, restoration tours and public hikes on the land. Last spring we planted nearly 700 acres of land to high diversity prairie, setting a new record. Planting was followed by record-setting harvests of prairie and wetland seeds from well over 150 native plant species. A huge boost in our ability to have such a successful year in the field was the purchase of a new truck and trailer. What a difference that has made as we cover a large part of the state for planting, harvesting and stewardship tasks!

Perhaps best of all, we will begin 2010 with no debt - and with your generous contributions, good luck in securing a few more restoration contracts, and a successful fund-raising event next month (see "Approaching Events" on back page) we'll be lined up for another banner year. Already we have received preliminary word on receipt of a State Wildlife Grant to construct a greenhouse at the Griffith farmstead and to hire an intern to be used for propagating native plants for restoration sites. Not a bad way to start the new year!

Prairie Plains will arrive at the 30-year mark on April 29, 2010. There is something to be said for persevering all these years, seemingly squeezing success from thin air at times. Our history has tended to make us rather deliberate and careful about change. However, there is risk in being too conservative and doing the same thing every year, particularly when the world is constantly in flux. It's time for some innovative change and growth.

Of primary concern is the issue of succession. I have been at the helm for all 30 years. We need new executive leadership. I will not step out - just move over, and become part of a leadership team, passing on my experiences and helping the new person(s) learn about the Institute's core principles, mission, projects and organizational management. In a few short years this person will assume the director's management, fundraising and planning duties. My mission, in addition to working with the new director, will be to complete the Charles L. Whitney Education Center and to develop its educational programming.

Back in 1980 we created intentionally broad organizational purposes which articulated the creation of a Center where people could learn about the Great Plains: *To foster and promote an interdisciplinary and*

continued on back page...



ONP Student Spotlight: Dori Porter

Insects Are My Life! is the title of a popular children's book by Megan McDonald – and the claim of its precocious main character. Dori Porter - Albion, Nebraska native and Boone Central graduate - can relate. She has always been "extremely interested in biology and nature," and ONP has allowed her to study her favorite organisms in depth.

Dori became familiar with ONP in junior high at Summer Enrichment Camp. She then participated in the Summer Research program in high school. Dori explains that "with the help of Mr. Mitch Osborn [Boone Central] and Mr. Mark Seier [Newman Grove] I learned what it meant to conduct research and the importance of field based learning. My experiences at ONP have been invaluable. I felt as though I had a 'jump start' when I entered college because most of my peers had not been able to have experiences in outdoor education. It brings a whole new level of learning that you can't get in a classroom or from a book."

In high school Dori became involved with UNL's Bumble Boosters program that included ONP as a collection site. That sparked her interest in bees, pollination biology and conservation. She now works with wild bees in pursuing her Master's Degree at UNL.

Her interest in science education drew Dori into helping with ONP Summer Enrichment throughout high school and with both Enrichment and Summer Research programs during college. She has also been an entomology presenter at SOAR – covering aquatic insects one year, butterflies another, and most recently, native bees.

Dori recently used ONP as a research site for her Master's project involving the species distribution of the bee family Megachilidae, and is also collecting data on the diversity of bees on the preserve. She plans to complete her M.S. degree in the next year, and is looking to pursue a Ph.D. in entomology studying wild bees and pollination biology. Her ultimate goal is to work as a research scientist because very little is known about most groups or species of bees. She is also thinking of teaching at a college or university in order to spread her passion and "maybe spark interest in other budding scientists."



While at Boone Central, Dori took part in ONP Summer Research projects, including the ornate box turtle study involving "turtle telemetry."



UNL graduate research: Using a vacuum to collect insect samples from native wildflowers. Dori then studies the samples and identifies beneficial insects including pollinators, predators, and parasitoids.



Photos by Dori: Left, bee in the family Halictidae (sweat bees). Right, an unidentified native bee. Dori enjoys photographing her research subjects and has created an album of her favorite shots entitled "The Bee's Knees!" which she exhibited during the SOAR '09 "Beautiful Nebraska" art show.

ONP & Scouts: A Great Team

Grant and Berenice Olson clearly intended the Boy and Girl Scouts to benefit from the gift of land that we now know as the Olson Nature Preserve. It has been gratifying to see this come to pass - especially since ONP has also benefited so much from the Scouts!

As reported in *Prairie Plains Quarterly*, Oct.-Dec., 2005, the Prairie Hills Girl Scouts, under the direction of Joann Ward, purchased the 20' x 30' steel picnic shelter for the preserve. It was designed and fabricated by Sentinel Building Systems and erected with assistance from Sentinel's Mike Schutte - along with area Boy and Girl Scouts and ONP Stewards in October, 2004.

In addition, five Eagle Scout projects benefiting ONP have been completed: trail development by Drew Bonge; cedar tree removal by Jareth Kaup; steel benches by Bill Kusek; rocking in the area under the picnic shelter by Brad Christo; and most recently, the addition of an attractive wooden kiosk built by Miles Wynn.

Miles, son of Todd and Amber Wynn, is a Boone Central High School senior and a member of Boy Scout Troup #155. He has been working on the kiosk since May, 2008. The structure, which will be used to display information about ONP, required 240 hours of labor to build. With the help of fellow Scouts, family and other ONP enthusiasts, it was installed on Nov. 7th near the west end of the bridge leading into the preserve.



Kiosk erectors showing off a job well done: front, left-right - Angela and Lori Hosford, Dale Bonge and Todd Wynn; back row - Paul and William Hosford, Alec Wynn, Drew Bonge and Curtis Thompson. On top is Miles Wynn, the Eagle Scout kiosk builder. Photo by Amber Wynn.

This photo and poem by Boone Central junior Justine Simons is an example of work inspired by ONP environs during language arts teacher Cheri Blocher's annual class outing to the preserve.

Annual Enchanted Evening



Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale was the featured speaker at the annual ONP Enchanted Evening October 3rd. He appeared as "Cactus Jack" in his program, "O Pioneers!" in which he shared stories from Nebraska's past and visions for the state's future. The event, sponsored by the Albion Area Arts Council and organized and emceed by Paul Hosford, also included trail walks, a campfire, music by Pastor Larry Sydow, and viewing of Saturn through Dr. Tony Kusek's telescope.

FEAR

Not long ago she was but a one.
Those beneath the ground too shy to surface,
But her day came, as well as it will for the
beaded yellow.
She sprouts unnoticed to a sea of wilted elders.
It was she yet alive as the others
droned the song of fate.
With leaves still green, she's given the choice.
Will October skies devour her laced gold
like the earth enfolds warmth?
Or will she set out to face the race of winter?
It's but a question of time as rolling clouds
thunder *doumm* over the Prairie.
It's been so long, her decision nothing more
than a memory.
She braces her frantic composure, never
will it falter.
Unlike so many,
She overcame the fear of nonconformity.
With many winters ahead,
It's no longer will she live,
But that she is living.

Justine Simons