



Wednesdays at Griffith Farm & Prairie & the Platte: Top left & clockwise - At the farm, UNL Extension Educators Darrel Siekman (pictured) and Jim Schneider led the irrigation station & siphon tube setting contest; Steph Miller and Mert Griffith presented the soils session and Skip Meyer showed the campers how to use a number of historic farm tools. At the Platte, Bill Whitney led the river exploration (the ornate box turtle was a great find); National Weather Service presenters Scott Bryant (pictured) and Mike Moritz were the "wild weather" men (here using potatoes and straws in an air pressure demonstration) and Mike Stewart led the skulls session.



Thursdays on the Loup: Gale Larson's property near St. Paul, a new site for SOAR, was amazing! Top left and clockwise: The day began with a welcome and story from our host; he told us about Hans DeVry, who had explored and hunted on the property for many years.



Next, Bill led everyone on a river walk - where SOAR had its first experience with quicksand, the only casualty being Amy Jones's shoe. Other activities included SOAR mascot sand sculptures (Allyson Wilson and her Chorus Frogs featured here), and, because of an abundance of wetlands along the river, one of the richest Wet & Wild sessions on record, including new-to-SOAR finds - freshwater sponge, gold carp and black crappie. Campers also created large, panoramic representations of the Loup River landscape using colored chalk (see the SOAR Scrapbook at prairieplains.org to view the results!) and enjoyed a sensory hike through the cottonwood forest. We are grateful to Gale Larson - and we'll definitely be back!

River Day! (Fridays) on the Platte by Griffith Prairie:

The morning began with a presentation about frogs by U.S. Fish & Wildlife biologist Jeanine Lackey, followed by the River Day fish find, obstacle course, tube races and "Raccoons R Us." To fully appreciate the joy of the day, you really MUST visit our online SOAR Scrapbook page! Again, that's prairieplains.org!



July 15, 2010 - SOAR campers were thrilled with this new site on the Loup River near St. Paul. See inside for details.

Ernest Ochsner

Outdoor Learning at Olson Nature Preserve



Two annual Summer Enrichment programs based at ONP had very successful runs this summer. First was the June 1-3 program for incoming 7th & 8th graders; the camp for new fifth graders was August 10-11.

The 7th- & 8th-grade program included an exploratory hike through the seven ecosystems of the preserve, lessons on nature photography, aquatic insect trapping, a snake study (including seeing a fox snake eat a mouse!), poetry writing, kite flying and a GPS scavenger hunt. An exceptional event was the presentation about historic Chief Logan Fontenelle by Logan Fontenelle (see photo).



Left - ONP became an outdoor classroom for these 7th- & 8th-grade students from Boone Central, Spalding Academy and Albion St. Michael's Schools this June; Right - the students had the rare privilege to hear stories about the famous 19th century chief Logan Fontenelle as told by his great-grandnephew, who shares his name. Fontenelle related three possible versions of the death of his ancestor at the hands of the Sioux in 1855 on or near the Olson Nature Preserve.

Once again the ONP campers were treated to an old-fashioned Dutch oven camp dinner that they helped prepare, under the direction Lonnie Zrust. The 3-day camp culminated with swimming in the Beaver River and enjoying homemade ice cream.

This program is made possible by area teachers/planners Cheri & Mike Blocher, Tom Dickey, Mitch Osborn, Mark Seier and Lonnie Zrust - and by the funding and provisions of The Albion Education

Foundation, Boone Central Schools and Rae Valley Market.

Boone Central and St. Michael's fifth graders in the August camp enjoyed hiking the preserve - sharpening observation skills on an "Unnatural Trail," learning to use GPS instruments, making sand art stones and setting pitfall insect traps. They also created, hid, and then tried to find "camouflage insects" along the trails. As always, the finale was enjoying the cool waters of the Beaver River - using nets to seine for aquatic creatures and testing the currents of the river with water races.

Boone Central teachers that make this program possible are Mitch Osborn, Tom Dickey and Cheryl Sherburne. Funding is from the Albion Education Foundation.



Hiking the hilltop: Exploring ONP by walking the trails through its seven ecosystems is always a favorite activity.



Checking out critters caught in the pitfall traps - mostly beetles, spiders and centipedes. All were released after being observed.

Thanks to Cheri Blocher and Mitch Osborn for reporting on these ONP Summer Enrichment programs and providing the photos!



Big Bend campers made their own T-shirts!

SOAR 2010 Big Bend Camp Flight 14

Serving the Buffalo and
Kearney County Area
and sponsored locally by
Rowe Sanctuary
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Big Bend SOAR Coordinator Jenny Hultquist reports ten of Big Bend's top news items:

1. We took on our largest number of campers ever (150 between the two camps!).
2. We added two more peer leaders for each week to help with the extra campers.
3. We saw the most water in the river we've ever seen!
4. Because of #3 we became masters at "winging" our planned schedule and making site adjustments.
5. We did a really cool t-shirt craft (see photo).
6. For once we didn't have any severe weather during our Wednesday night camp-in.
7. We played a new and improved version of the "Amazing Race" with lots of extra volunteer help and even added an awards ceremony!



Have net, will catch . . . lots of aquatic critters in the backwaters of Rowe Sanctuary!

8. We were thrilled to have Mason Bushnell (former peer leader) "graduate" to a staff position and we greatly appreciated his help.
9. During the second week, a peer group found a red-bellied snake! A rare find and a first for our camp!
10. We had some fantastic speakers: Miranda Kegley and Keith Nielsen talked about bees, Letty Reichart and Gary Lingle mist-netted birds, Chad Johnson from NPPD did a session on wind power, Dan Fogell & Dennis Ferraro brought lots of reptiles and amphibians for us to see, CPNRD ran a GPS course for us, Mike Moritz from the National Weather Service awed us with his presentation on extreme Nebraska weather, and Brad Eifert helped us seine and identify fish.

Overall, camp went very well and we're already looking forward to next year!

Big Bend SOAR Planning, Teaching & Administrative Staff: Jenny Hultquist (Coordinator), Lisa Clapper, Judy Niemack, Wendy Hargens, Stephanie Kahle, Mason Bushnell, Nicole Salisbury, Keanna Leonard & Tony Docherty

Thanks to Jenny for this report and photos. For complete coverage of Big Bend SOAR, including list of sponsors and other credits, request a *Big Bend SOAR Journal* from Jenny at rjhultquist@gtmc.net.



Jesse Mintken from the Central Platte NRD assisting campers with GPS instruments.

SOAR 2010 Aurora Camp Flight 19

Serving Hamilton County
& surrounding area
See more SOAR scenes at
prairieplains.org

It was wonderful - again! Both weeks were filled to capacity, and the weather cooperated . . . most of the time. A major highlight was a new site on the Loup River - hosted by owner Gale Larson (note front page top shot photo by Ernie Ochsner).

These photos are just tiny samples of each day's field sessions. Our afternoons also had great things going on, including an outstanding living history presentation by Cherrie Clarke; some "sound science" with Paul & Lori Hosford; the amazing art project - rainsticks - including the Family Night performance; paper-making and plant prints. So please visit prairieplains.org to see more of SOAR in the scrapbook pages!



SOAR 2010: Stop . . . Look . . . Listen!



Mondays at Lake Mary: Super SOAR Scramble including canoeing, boat tour (thanks to host & skipper Bud Pence), textures, scents, Lake Mary history, dragonflies, berries & fruits, clouds, bird songs, colors & insect musicians - followed by fishing, aquatic netting & a game, "Soundoff!"



Tuesdays at Bader Park:

The sessions were paper quilt patches, insect netting, prairie chat & recording sounds of nature. Along the way: a nest of turkey eggs in the prairie (above, left); a meadow vole (left) spotted right by our picnic table, moving - one by one - her seven tiny young away from the SOAR commotion.



SOAR 2010 - Aurora Camp Flight 19 - Gratefully acknowledging our 2010 financial contributors and other supporters:

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Other contributors: The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District, and everyone who purchased items from the peer leaders during our spring fund-raiser.

Special thanks to: Ashtyne Nachtigal, our T-shirt designer; our many wonderful presenters and volunteer helpers; Bud & Mary Ann Pence, our Lake Mary hosts; Gale Larson, our St. Paul site host,

*Blue indicates Prairie Plains members.

