

November Docent News

November 29, 1995

Dear Docents,

I hope you all had a happy Thanksgiving and are ready to enjoy the Christmas season. The holiday month always passes so quickly!

FINAL DOCENT DAY FOR 1995

The final Docent Day on the Prairie for the 1995 season was Nov. 12. Sue Wheeler and Anne Johnson worked that day, which was quiet with few visitors.

GIFT SHOP NEWS

October sales brought in \$4,440.50 in cash receipts for the shop - our biggest month ever! The shop was only open for five days in November with \$430.50 in sales. Due to the amazing wintry weather on the evening of Nov. 10, the gift shop was not open on Saturday, Nov. 11. According to Sue's figures, gross sales, year to date, as of Nov. 12, were \$27,834.26!! The gross sale figure for 1994 was \$21,189.89!! This money was used for the new Ladies restroom at the headquarters.

During their shift on Nov. 12, Sue and Anne accomplished the annual inventory of gift shop merchandise. Remaining inventory was small. There were a lot of sales in the fall months!

DOCENT COUNCIL

Fifteen docents have offered to serve as organizers of our Tallgrass Prairie Docent program. The first meeting for the group will be December 2 in Tulsa. We will be discussing "job descriptions" for council positions, which will be filled by the end of the meeting. Goals for 1996 will be the final item on the meeting agenda. This meeting is open to all interested docents. Call 585-1117 for more information!

UPDATE ON The Docent News

The Docent News will soon have a new appearance! This newsletter has been a product of the Tulsa Field Office with input from various volunteers and staff. Because of the new position of Newsletter Editor on the Docent Council, some of the responsibility for this monthly letter will shift. Nyla Woody has volunteered for that position, and will be assuming control for the December issue. The Docent News will continue to update you on all upcoming activities for the docents. It will also feature a special page of information from Harvey Payne and Bob Hamilton - "Prairie Happenings." This will include workday information, "cowboy" focus, bison updates, research projects and information on what's happening with the plants and animals in the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. This information can be shared with friends and visitors both on and off the prairie. Read on for this month's "Prairie Happenings...."

BISON ROUNDUP APOLOGY

Some individual docents have expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of information provided about this year's bison roundup. I have responded with a formal apology to them, and would like to extend that apology to all docents. The information should have been included in the October Docent News. I firmly believe that you should all be aware of events at the Preserve. This oversight was not intentional. Hopefully, the addition of "Prairie Happenings" to the Docent News will assure that something similar will not happen again.

Quoting from my letter to them, dated Nov. 14, 1995, "This oversight could be partially explained by the fact that there was no prepublicity about the event. This was intentional. The bison are wild animals, and do not enjoy being rounded up and corralled. As a result, the risk of injury is high. We were concerned about media and casual onlookers being present at this event for those reasons. Therefore only staff members were aware of the actual dates. On Oct. 31, a Board member who had expressed an interest, a few media representatives and some office staff were present."

Please accept my apology for the lack of information about this event. Harvey Payne and I have discussed the possibility of providing a viewing opportunity for those docents who wish to see the inoculation/branding procedure. You'll be hearing more about this later.

"PRAIRIE HAPPENINGS" -

News from Bob Hamilton, director of Science and Stewardship, Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

BISON CORRAL PAINTING PROJECT - About 1900 feet of pen, or 50 percent, has been painted with primer so far this year. This painting project will continue through 1996, with the remainder of the corral to be primed, and then the entire corral to be painted with a top coat! Estimated man hours on the project so far - 275 hours! 81 volunteer workers have participated!

SPRING WORK PROJECTS - Bob says that spring work projects will include the continuation of the bison corral painting, painting buildings at the headquarters, moving old interior cattle fencing and maintenance of nature trail.

BISON ROUNDUP INFORMATION - During the recent roundup, 439 bison were corralled and treated. These included 56 bulls, 264 cows and 119 calves. Fourteen people worked the roundup. Bob says that roundup went smoothly, and that workers were grateful for great weather!!

Shortly after the event, seven more bison were added to our herd. Three bull calves (about six months old) were donated by the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, and were picked up Nov. 14, 1995. Four yearling bulls were traded from TNC's Niobrara Preserve in Nebraska. The animals were exchanged at the Kansas Buffalo Association's Sixth Annual sale at Salina, KS. in early November.

RESEARCH UPDATES - Dr. Michael Palmer, OSU, reports that his Tallgrass Prairie plant inventory has now catalogued over 600 species of plants on the Preserve!

WINTER COWBOY WORK - This winter, staff cowboys will be completing detail work at the bison corrals, building the roof over the working alley and working on gate latches. Depending on weather, some work days for volunteers may be scheduled to do some more bison corral painting.

ON THE PRAIRIE - Tidbits about what's happening biologically on the Preserve: The deer are in rut. Bison group size is decreasing as winter approaches. (According to information from Jim Shaw and Bryan Coppedge, OSU, bison group size at the Preserve in 1993-1994 varied widely by season - as small as 23 in winter and up to 128 during the summer). The bald eagles have arrived!

Bob says that all prairie plants have senesced (that means they are dead and coppery brown in color) due to the killing frosts.

A FINAL NOTE FROM BOB - Thank you to all volunteers for all the help!
AND FROM HARVEY - Our docents make a very significant contribution to the Preserve, not only with financial returns from the gift shop, but in their giving of themselves and their time to this program. Thanks!!

(If you have suggestions for additional information you would like included in this section of information, please let Mary McIntyre know. Any comments are welcome!)

FINAL NOTE:

Happy holidays to you from the staff at the Oklahoma Field Office in Tulsa. We appreciate your dedication to the Conservancy's mission, and are so grateful for the time you have chosen to give to conservation efforts in Oklahoma at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Best wishes to you and yours in the coming year!



Mary McIntyre