

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

March, 1996, Docent Newsletter
The Nature Conservancy

WINTER VISITORS

Today is a beautiful sunny day and it seems that springtime must be just around the corner. So soon we forget that just days ago, the wind chill was in the single digits. It is on days like these that the Red-Tailed hawks soar high above prairie and circle for a long time. They are seen two together now, a sure sign of coming spring, since they are nesting by late March. And the Northern Harriers glide and tilt buoyantly, low over the brown grasses of the winter prairie. But numbers of visitors to the prairie reflect the cold winds and gray days of January. George Meyers reports that there were ten days in January without a single registered visitor.

Still, for all the cold, we had 216 visitors in January, 38 from sixteen other states. There were four guests from Tanzania, East Africa. And that isn't all, an interesting comment from Mary Moncravie Fulterhoff: "I am one of the 229 Allottees (Osage) and am *proud* to see what we have done." "This lady", notes George, "has to be at least 90!" Makes one glad to be a part of it all.

BISON IN WINTER

Harvey Payne reports that the cowboy crew moved to a new fencing project, a bison addition of about 1200 acres. He was asked if the staff break the ice in winter and reports that bison drink from running springs or break the ice and that there are twelve older bulls together and that groups of cows and calves are generally in groups of from 10 to 30 members.

"*THIS and THAT*" from Mary---

Greetings from the Oklahoma Field Office. We are racing into Spring! This has been a busy month, with six volunteer/docent recruitment events as well as many other statewide projects underway.

Docent Reorientation is set for **March 9 in Pawhuska**. By now you should have received a letter with an RSVP for that event. If you have not yet responded, please let us know if you will be in attendance. Call (918) 585-1117. It will be an informative and fun day and we have our fingers crossed for good weather.

Interesting things are in store for The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, including new trails and eventually a new interpretive center/gift shop site more accessible to Pawhuska. More details will be provided to you as soon as they are known. We will all be waiting and anticipating this news!

I hope that each of you has checked your calendar for the next nine months and began to consider what time you would like to spend on the Prairie. Let Linda Meistrell (918) 743-7067 know your shift preferences. As much as possible, we will try to accommodate those who prefer to set a regular day each month. However, in order to allow all our still-in-the-work force volunteers to participate, it may sometimes be necessary to alternate regular shifts on Saturdays and Sundays. Please be **understanding and flexible about this**. We want as many docents as possible to be able

to enjoy the Prairie experience, and it is frustrating for some to be unable to volunteer on the only days they are available. Make your preferences known and we will do our best to accommodate all of you! We appreciate your time!!

I'm looking forward to March 9, making new acquaintances and renewing existing ones. See you there. by Mary McIntyre, Education and Outreach Coordinator, TNC

PRAIRIE EARTH TRAIL

Harvey reports plans to establish a "Prairie Earth Trail" at the southern end of the Preserve within the next three years.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU----Docent, Carolyn Mathews, Glenpool

For one not accustomed to the seeming chaos and noise of middle school at the end of the day, it seemed wild. Handsome young people in colorful sweat shirts and sweaters, and the ever present blue and gray Dallas Cowboys jackets gathered in noisy groups, banged their lockers as they gathered their books and began to leave the building. But the library was quiet and organized, with educational posters on the walls and shelves and stacks of glossy books. Chairs and tables formed areas for students to gather and study.

It was the day before Valentines Day and Carolyn Mathews is the lady who presides over all this at Glenpool Middle School. She was wearing a bright red silk blouse with big gold heart shaped button covers down the front. And her enthusiasm is truly contagious as she showed me the projects she has in various stages of completion. She opened a folder of poetry written by fourth and fifth grade students to be submitted with the schools entry in an Oklahoma Department of Education contest

to name a sculpture which will feature 46 bronze Canada Geese, each with a seven to eight-foot wingspan. The sculpture will be located at Lake Murray.

Carolyn has a wonderful appreciation for nature, and has had since girlhood. Not only does she love the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, but she spent the summer of 1995 at Kansas State University in Manhattan, on a research team on the Konza Prairie. She is excited about our upcoming season at TGP, and she will spend two more weeks this summer on the Konza Prairie.

Carolyn is a native Oklahoman, growing up in Ponca City but she also spent several years teaching on Indian Reservations in Ft Hall, Idaho; Umatilla, Oregon; Yankton, South Dakota and the Osage Nation, Pawhuska, Ok. She has two sons, one daughter and three grandchildren. She is happy that her young grandchildren are also great lovers of nature.

HOW ABOUT A DOCENT TRIP TO PRAIRIE STATE PARK NEAR JOPLIN, MO.

Activities Coordinators, Iris McPherson, Carolyn Mathews and Marilyn Fugate are working to develop plans for docent happenings which will allow us more time to get to know one another and perhaps be educational as well. The above mentioned park has been suggested as a possibly pleasant outing for the group. Reportedly there is a nice visitor's center there. More information will follow. In the mean time, please contact Iris if you have any suggestions. Her home phone is (405) 547-2949 and office is (405) 744-7860 or e-mail at uccxilmaokway.okstate.edu.

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