

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

Docent Newsletter

The Nature Conservancy

May, 1996

DATES TO REMEMBER

*May 11, Workday

*June 1 and 2, TNC annual meeting at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

*June 8, Workday

"This N That" from Mary McIntyre, Education and Outreach Coordinator TNC

Welcome to our twenty-seven (27) new docents. They completed training on April 27! I have enjoyed meeting each of these volunteers and am looking forward to working with them. They will be finishing their training in May with veteran docents who have signed up for May shifts. Our new volunteers come to us from Tulsa (13), Bartlesville (9), Pawhuska (4) and Stillwater (1). There is some interest among this new group in working shifts on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. If any of you are interested in working those days (during the summer months especially) please let Linda Meistrell 918/743-7067 know.

Linda is doing a great job of scheduling. She begins scheduling about four weeks in advance. It would be helpful if you could check your schedule for June right after reading this newsletter, so that you can respond to her call for shift coverage in June. Please return Linda's calls when she checks with you about your availability. Scheduling is a tough, time-consuming job. Let's make that job as easy as possible!

A note about the annual membership meeting.... Oklahoma Field Office staff has spent the last six months making plans for this exciting event on June 1 and 2. Registration fee is \$40 per person, with a \$10 charge per tent for camping on the Preserve (Saturday night only). We will be accepting reservations through April 26 - so please get them in ASAP.

CALL FOR ANNUAL MEETING VOLUNTEERS. We will be working altered shifts for the Annual Meeting. We will be needing three docents to work Saturday, June 1 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and three docents to work 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Also, on Sunday, we will need three docents to work 8 a.m. -12 and three to work 12 to 4 p.m. Sue will be setting up some books for sale out on the breezeway, and one docent each shift will be serving outside with Sue. If you are planning to attend the annual meeting, and work a shift, your registration fee will be waived. This fee is also waived for spouse and family. Charge for spouse and family members will be \$10 each, to cover meals. Please consider volunteering at the Annual Meeting. It should be great fun!

Enjoy the wonderful month of May. See you at the Prairie!

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GIFTSHOP

March sales were good in spite of bad weather---an increase over March 1995!

Please remember to restock the shelves with everything you sell - - - the cup rack, in particular, tends to look abandoned much of the time.

Keep those cards and letters coming as I really appreciate your comments on what merchandise is low and your suggestions for new items.

Sue Wheeler, (918) 743-4272

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Editorial

Welcome to our new docents! We know you will come to love this very precious and incredibly beautiful place.

Why do we so often think of warm sunshine and gentle breezes when we think of Spring? Yet those who have lived for very long in Oklahoma know that we have a lot of gray days with blustery north wind in the springtime. And it was one of those cold mornings, as we tried to keep our hood up with one hand and steady the tripod with the other, while peering through the telescope lens at the bison herd on the hillside. "There are baby bison", I shouted into the wind. "Looks like about twenty of them". Wonderful, wonderful to see! I can't imagine why I was surprised that they jumped and bounced around like any other new calves---I guess I thought they would be frumpy/clumpy/humpy----like their elders.

The same morning, along the newly green edge of a winter burn, we also enjoyed seeing Upland Sandpiper and Lesser Golden Plovers. We had our first 1996 view of the beloved State Scissortail Flycatcher and, as always, wonderful views of the Northern Harrier.

When I hiked the nature trail, I was sure I would see violets blooming, but there were also Prairie Verbena and Ragwort and an abundance of a tiny daisy-like flower that I have yet to identify. Cold and windy as it was, truly, it was Springtime on the Tallgrass Prairie!

We know you will love being there, getting acquainted and sharing with our visitors.

Nyla Bryan Woody, editor

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Please fill out the blanks below and send them to me, so we can share your thoughts on the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve with the other docents:

Name _____ Address _____

Profession: _____ Retired Y ___ N ___ Docent beginning _____

"How I came to love the Prairie" _____

Feel free to write as much as you wish to share.

Couples Note: **each** of you please write something.

Nyla Bryan Woody
2212 S. Ironwood Ave.
Broken Arrow
OK 74012-7653

**"Notes from the Prairie" from Harvey Payne, Preserve Director
and Bob Hamilton, Director of Science and Stewardship**

As of April 18, seven prescribed burns had been conducted on 11,100 acres of the Preserve. There have been five wildfires which burned about 2,500 Preserve acres. The TGP cowboys have assisted neighbors on four wildfires in April. One of these fires, on April 11, burned 30,000 acres in Osage County.

The bison unit increased to 6,340 acres when bison were given access to an additional, 770 acres on February 28. More acreage will be added by June 1st. Bison are found all over the bison unit, and are starting to use the burned areas more as the green growth returns. 400 head overwintered on the Preserve. The bison are still found in scattered groups of cows and calves, with most bulls still segregated. Occasional cows can be found scattered away from the group when giving birth. Forty-eight (48) calves have been born as of April 24. The bison are starting to shed their winter coats and are growing their summer coats of hair.

Dr. Dave Engle and graduate student Scott Crockett, OSU, came to the Preserve to sample during the 4/16 controlled burn in the bison unit. Windy conditions and low humidity resulted in fire rates of spread of one mile in less than 15 minutes and 16 foot flame lengths.

The cowboys have been doing a lot of controlled burning and working on fencing. Painting of the bison corral was advanced on March 29 when a group of 21 came out from the University of Tulsa. March and April public workdays only brought in an average of seven volunteers each! Volunteer hours to date on the corral painting total around 380 hours.

Recent rains have really made a difference in color at the preserve. Early Spring flowers are up, redbuds and plums are in bloom. The oaks are budding and new things are popping out every day! (Watch out, hay fever sufferers!)

NOTICE FROM TGP STAFF: Be on the lookout for plant diggers. In early April, intern Sandy Stevens caught two men in the bison unit digging up purple coneflower roots. Remember, NO plant collecting is allowed on the preserve. Please immediately notify staff if you see any suspicious activities.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF TGP TO BEGIN MAY 1996

The Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma and the Sutton Avian Research Center are collaborating on an economic impact survey to be conducted on the TGP beginning in May. Many of us think that the TGP is having a positive impact on the economy of Pawhuska and Osage County, but evidence is anecdotal rather than factual. Collecting data to help determine amounts of money spent in the area is the focus of the economic impact survey. Questions on the survey range from asking why the visitor has come to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve to how much money they spent on gas and/or food during their visit.

The surveys will be housed in the same box as the registration book in the bunkhouse area. A sign will be posted at the site asking visitors to take time to fill out the survey and return it to the drop box nearby. We also ask docents at the gift shop to ask visitors to fill out the survey because it will be helpful to TNC to know the answers to these questions.

Dave Dolcater will be collecting the surveys and recording the data for later use. For more information, contact Dave at 742-1470, or Keven Colbert at 405/598-2435.

May 1996

April 1996
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 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27
 28 29 30

June 1996
 S M T W T F S
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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| | | | 1 George & Vera Meyers | 2 | 3 David Turner | 4 Jo Brooks |
| 5 Dorothy Buck | 6 | 7 | 8 David Dolcater | 9 Barbara Strahm | 10 Joan Fuller | 11 Betty Shook & Lea Washer |
| 12 Judy Robert & Marilyn Fugate <i>Mother's Day</i> | 13 | 14 | 15 Liz and Al Medley | 16 | 17 Charlie Moomaw & Stuart Marshall | 18 Carol Fames <i>Armed Forces Day</i> |
| 19 Marilyn Keefer | 20 | 21 | 22 Bob & Mary Reeves | 23 | 24 Randy & Nyla Woody | 25 Betty & David Turner |
| 26 Sherry Beeker Cheryl Kilpatrick | 27 Linda Weistrell Karen Harris <i>Memorial Day Observed</i> | 28 | 29 Dean & Mary Ellen Johnston | 30 <i>Memorial Day</i> | 31 Iris McPherson | |