

The Nature Conservancy

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

Docent Newsletter - - - - August, 1996



THIS 'N THAT - from Mary McIntyre, Education and Outreach Coordinator

Summer greetings! Thank you all for participating in our new scheduling procedure! It appears to be working well! I would appreciate any feedback from you about this system. If you need to make scheduling changes, you may phone them into the office or drop us a note. More information about scheduling is included in a brief article on that a little later on.

Planning for the coming year is now underway. I will be meeting with Harvey in early August to complete this process. Any input from you about the program is welcome. You may send it to me at the Conservancy address. I cannot stress how important it is for you to let me know how you are feeling about your involvement, including comments on improving procedures. All input is considered and discussed. Changes are always possible!

As mentioned in last month's letter, planning includes expansion of the docent program to include trail guides. Any of you who are interested in participating as a trail guide please contact me at the office. We will have a meeting in late August. Oxley Nature Center conducts fall training in September, and Donna Horton has agreed to let several of us participate in part of their training as preparation for work at the preserve! Several dates are open, both during the week and on weekends. At this point, my thoughts are that trail guides would be scheduled to conduct trail hikes with groups who have notified us and requested a trail guide. We may consider having these guides assigned to a Saturday or Sunday as well, at a designated time. We will probably work in pairs. Our first efforts at this will be experimental, so please bear with us while we get the kinks worked out. Again, your suggestions, based on your experiences, are needed!

Hope to see each of you soon!

Hearts & Flowers to Bartlesville docent, Loretta Vives, who has broken her arm.

SCHEDULING

August, September, October and November calendars are included in this mailing! There are only a few gaps to be filled in August! Thank you!!

I've also returned the September calendar so that you can see where we are needing help. As much as we can, we will continue to open the gift shop seven days a week!! Weekend coverage remains a priority, but we have many visitors throughout the week on into the fall. If we have enough people to work through each week, we will remain open. The docent season ends in November. We will schedule shifts through November 17.

To add a shift in August or September, please CALL the office and speak to Mary or the receptionist/administrative assistant. Messages may also be left on voice mail at Ext. 22.

Your October and November calendars should be returned with your first, second and third preferences marked. We fill in the calendar as we receive your sheets, and so far have encountered only one instance of someone not being able to work at their desired time, but they only gave us one option. We are happy to accommodate your scheduling needs with as much advance notice as possible! The Tulsa office number is 585-1117.

If you have signed up for a day, and are the only docent scheduled, we will keep you updated about who your partner will be. If a partner is not found, your shift will be cancelled. Although you may be comfortable with working alone, we believe that for safety's sake our docents should always work in pairs.

RESIGNATION

Linda Meistrell's resignation from the docent program, effective immediately, has been received. Linda has contributed a lot of time to the Docent Program over the past three years, and her work has been appreciated. We wish her good luck with her work and new pursuits.

GROWING UP ON THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

She is a most poised and gracious young lady of twelve years and she has lived half of her life on the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve! She is **Billie Jean**, the daughter of foreman, Kenny and wife Royce Shieldnight at the Preserve.

When I first met her last spring, I asked her how she liked living on the Preserve. Frankly, I was unprepared for her answer. "I love it", she said, with an enthusiasm that was so genuine. From my previous experience with girls her age, I expected her to feel rather isolated from her friends and school activities, out that far from town, on a gravel road. Not only does she love living there, but she told me that her friends love visiting her there. This was verified on Heritage Day, when I talked with her again and met her friend and schoolmate, Shanna Sharon Frances, of Pawhuska. "I really am glad to be a friend of Billie

Jean and be able to come out here," she said.

Billie Jean loves science in school and plans to be involved in vocal music as she starts sixth grade this fall. And with a maturity beyond her years, she expresses her love of the creeks and wildflowers, the bright stars without intrusion of city lights. She loves the hills in the snow. "I feel lucky to be here and see this in the making - - amazing to be here. It is a privilege." she told me.

Not only does she have a wonderful appreciation of nature, but she had goals for her life, worthy goals for her future. She says she has been riding horses since she was four and in the immediate future, she and Dad will be training her horse for Barrel Racing competition. Her horse, Blue, is five years old and Billie Jean hopes to be ready to compete by the 1997 season.

She also has a long term goal. "She wants my job." Kenny told me. That is true. Billie Jean dreams of one day being "the First Female Foreman at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve." And I know you all join me in wishing this terrific young woman well in obtaining of her goals. I am proud to know her. Nyla Bryan Woody, Editor 6/96

News from The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve from Harvey Payne and Bob Hamilton

The Prairie is in need of soaking rains! Recent cool spells and light rain have helped, but more rain is needed. Because of the dry year, there have been fewer wildflowers and decreased grass production.

The cowboys are almost finished with the construction of this year's additional pens.

As of June 27, there were 151 new bison calves. The bison are together in one herd most of the time, including the bulls. The rutting season has begun! The herd is utilizing the new range area which was added in May. They are getting fat, and look great in their summer coats.

One five-year old bison bull was killed by lightning in June. This animal is being reprocessed naturally.

In addition to construction of bison pens, the cowboys are hard at work shipping cattle out, and also finishing fencing work on additional bison acres.

A special thanks from the Tallgrass Prairie Staff to docents for all your hard work!

2081 VISITORS, A RECORD MONTH AT TGP!!

George Meyers reports that June was a Record month with 2081 visitors signed in. 640 were from 42 other states, including Washington D. C. and 28 from eleven foreign countries. North Dakota and Delaware are still not represented. During the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Chapter of The Nature Conservancy on June 1 and 2, 91 and 147 visitors signed in. On Heritage Day, June 15, there were 87 signed in visitors.

Year to date, 6331 visitors from 48 states and 28 countries have signed in, an increase of 8.4% above 1995.

George also writes that many visitors commented on the "friendly, informative and great docents" .

RECORD MONTH IN THE GIFT SHOP TOO!!

We sold over \$9,000 worth of merchandise and a big **Thanks** to all who balanced the cash box, wrote tickets and stocked the shelves. Thanks also, to Nune Richards and Doris Mayfield for creating our "new look". They cleaned, re-arranged, hammered, took apart and put together! They made new signs and generally 'spruced up the place.'

NOTE: A question has been raised about the charge for Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife materials: There is no charge for the free ones, like the Bird List of Osage County. Others, we have to purchase from them.

Editors Note: You may find it helpful to familiarize yourselves with the nature guidebooks, etc. That book about the American Buffalo, for instance, has such a good map of the rivers in the western half of America and is an excellent resource for teachers. I sold three of those in two days.

EDITORIAL-----

A tip of the Hat to each and all of you!! The self scheduling is really working well and it is so efficient this way. I had the privilege of opening the mail at the Conservancy office the first week in July and it was just great to be able to fill twenty three docent days for August before a single telephone call was made. Super Neat, Peoples!!

Nyla Bryan Woody, Editor

EDITORIAL

And Hats off to the Conservancy Staff as well. I think we mostly agree that the Vision of The Nature Conservancy is a Vision that we want to be a part of. We love, not only out TGP, but we value other places that The Nature Conservancy protects. I have had the privilege this summer of working for a few weeks in the office in Tulsa, getting to know the professional staff. The workload is daunting! They have a huge responsibility, not only in administration, but in fundraising as well-----yet they routinely take time to make us, as docents, feel appreciated. Thank you, Staff, for all that you do! NBW