

The Docent News



Dec. 1998

For Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents

Gift Shop News

from Sue Wheeler

Gift Shop sales for the month of October totaled \$6,510.70! We had no sales on one day and were closed three days for lack of a volunteer. Last year's total for the month was \$4,246.70.

This brings our total sales to date to \$42,009.29, exceeding last year's sales of \$41,875.66 at this time!

Inventory was held on Nov. 15 as planned. John Fisher, volunteer gift shop bookkeeper and docent, is working on the yearend financials for the shop. This information will be available at Docent Reorientation.

OPEN DAYS:

So far, volunteers who have offered to keep the shop open into December, and those respective days are:

Dec. 5: (we need you!)

Dec. 6: (we need you!)

Dec. 12: (we need you!)

Dec. 13: Doris M./Sue W.

Visitation

from George Meyers

There were 1133 visitors who signed the register in October, the lowest October on record, down about 13% from last year.

"Of this total, 42 were visitors from other countries, 302 from other states and 789 from Oklahoma. October visitors came from 36 other states in addition to Oklahoma and 12 other countries.

"Four new countries were added to our list: Iceland, Lebanon, Phillipines and Romania.

"To date, we've had 9317 visitors, 3123 from 49 other states and District of Columbia; 5872 from Oklahoma, 4 from Puerto Rico, and 322 from 44 other countries.

"Visitation is down 15.6% from last year. 61.4 percent are first time visitors.

"Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday were the heaviest visitor days. Mid-day was the most popular time to visit."

Calendar

December

5, 6, 12, 13 Need volunteers!

5 Docent Council, 10am

January

9 Docent Council, 10 am

February

6 Docent Council, 10 am

Wildflower Slides, 1 pm

March

13 Reorientation

20 Docent Training I

27 Docent Training II

28 Trail Guide Training

April

24 Spring Wildflower ID and Wild Hog Creek Hike

WANT LIST

We're look ahead to moving into our new shop in the spring! Don't through IT away! Could we use it in the shop? We'll need: telephone, CD/Cassette player, stools, bar seats, kitchen table and chairs, lamps, small tables, chairs... etc! Ask Sue first!

Prairie News

from Bob Hamilton, TGP

- Roundup is complete! 850 attended, including 115 heifer calves and 110 bull calves (a 79% calving rate at weaning).
- 38 bull calves sold at South Dakota; 14 cows, 16 2-yr old bulls and 23 yearling bulls sold at Salina. Purchased 7 young bulls and 6 heifers at auction with Adopt-A-Bison funds. About 750 remain in the herd, which is grazing in small groups all over summer burns.

Reason Eight to Save the Diversity of Life --

*Because It's There (The
Wonderment Factor)*

Each species is an incredible, unique creation, the result of millions of years of adaptation, each fascinating and with its own lessons to teach. More than any machine, species awe us with their complexity.

Do you have an email address? If you want yours listed with your address next year, please email me at MMcint2415@aol.com.

The Docent News Docent Evaluation

Have you returned your docent evaluation form? If not, another is enclosed with this newsletter.

Please return it to help us evaluate the program and to RECOMMIT for next year.

If you do not return the form, you will receive a letter and a phone call before being dropped from the program.

We want you to return! We hope that you also want to continue your involvement and support of our work at the Prairie! Comments and questions are welcome!

Winter Events

Matted grass retards wind and water erosion, conserves soil moisture and evens temperature extremes.

Deer mice and hispid cotton rats skitter through tunnels in the matted grass and probably reproduce all year. White-footed mice toil on, often nesting among tree branches.

Screech owls sit in roadways at night to catch rodents. They mate for life, and live at the Preserve year-around.

Pocket mice doze in burrows packed with seeds.

Bald eagles arrive in December.

Bison swing their massive heads, clearing snow from grasses. They stomp ice to drink from ponds.

Raccoons snooze in hollow trees or rocky crevices; badgers nap in holes. They come out now and then to eat.

Black-capped chickadees and yellow-shafted flickers stay through the winter and often remain the year around.

Rough-legged hawks, juncos, pine siskins, northern harriers and American tree sparrows winter at the Prairie, go north in the Spring.

A mountain lion is rarely seen.

White-tailed deer are at the peak of the rut in November. Bucks shed their antlers in winter or early spring.

An occasional snowy owl visits, probably because the lemming population has crashed up north. Coyotes howl from sunset to sunrise in late February. It's the height of the mating season.

Historically, red and gray wolves may once have prowled the Prairie, along with black and grizzly bears, ringtails, elk and river otters. Sadly, none have been sighted in a long, long time!

TALL GRASS PRAIRIE PRESERVE -- 1998 SIGN IN VISITATION

SUMMARY -- DECEMBER, 1998

We had 289 sign-in visitors in December, down 30.7% from December, '97. 5 were visitors from other countries, 81 from other states and 203 from Oklahoma.

Arkansas led with 10 visitors, followed by California with 9, Ohio and Oregon with 8 each and Louisiana and Texas with 6 each. From other countries, Namibia with 2 and Sweden with 3 visitors accounted for all of the foreign visitors. December visitors came from 22 other states in addition to Oklahoma.

As anticipated, 1998 had the lowest number of sign-in visitors we have had since we started keeping records in 1994. Year to date, we have had 10273 visitors, 3447 from 49 other states and District of Columbia, 6473 from Oklahoma, 4 from Puerto Rico, and 349 from 48 other countries. 60.3% of our visitors were first timers. Total visitation is down 14.5% from last year.

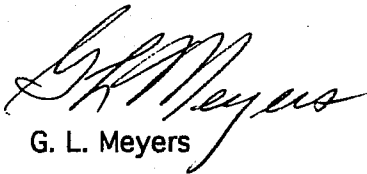
Saturday and Sunday were the heaviest visitor days. Mid-day was the most popular time to visit. Some visitor comments indicated disappointment that the Gift shop wasn't open.

For the five year period, 1994 thru 1998, the source of visitors were:

Total Visitors	57,884
Visitors from other states	17,209
Visitors from U.S. possessions	18
Visitors from Oklahoma	39,257
Visitors from other countries	1,410

Of the 1410 foreign visitors, almost half (700) came England, Germany, Canada, France and Japan. The next 7 countries, Australia, Switzerland, Norway, Ireland, Mexico, Russia and Sweden. contributed 255 more, to a total of 955. Of the 76 countries represented, these 12 contributed 67.7% of our foreign visitors.

On to the millenium! We look forward to 1999!



G. L. Meyers

1-3-99 GLM

TALL GRASS PRAIRIE PRESERVE -- 1998 SIGN-IN VISITATION

TOTAL VISITORS TO TGPP BY MONTH

	BY MONTH						CUMULATIVE					
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	% CHG '98/'97	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	% CHG '98/'97
JAN	260	282	216	291	317	8.9	260	282	216	291	317	8.9
FEB	280	420	325	288	340	18.1	540	700	541	579	657	13.6
MAR	569	668	705	912	609	-33.2	1109	1368	1246	1491	1266	-15.1
APR	951	1167	1100	1055	1178	11.7	2060	2535	2346	2546	2444	-4.0
MAY	1456	1602	1904	1922	1456	-24.2	3515	4139	4250	4468	3900	-13.1
JUNE	1529	1700	2081	1879	1258	-33.0	5045	5839	6331	6347	5158	-18.7
JULY	1565	1485	1362	1299	1182	-9.0	6610	7324	7693	7646	6340	-17.1
AUG	1045	1598	1030	1055	960	-9.0	7655	8922	8723	8701	7300	-16.1
SEPT	1010	992	1197	1031	884	-14.3	8665	9914	9920	9732	8184	-15.9
OCT	1117	1588	1416	1304	1133	-13.1	9782	11502	11336	11036	9317	-15.6
NOV	672	770	530	577	667	15.6	10454	12272	11866	11613	9984	-14.0
DEC	338	262	399	417	289	-30.7	10792	12534	12265	12030	10273	-14.5
TOTAL	10792	12534	12265	12030	10273							

VISITORS FROM STATES OTHER THAN OKLAHOMA

JAN	26	52	38	68	85	25	26	53	38	68	85	25
FEB	27	63	97	75	44	-41.3	53	115	135	143	129	-9.8
MAR	75	193	229	270	204	-24.4	128	308	364	413	333	-19.4
APR	180	320	259	333	438	31.5	308	628	623	746	771	3.4
MAY	306	408	516	526	403	-23.4	614	1036	1139	1272	1174	-7.7
JUNE	386	553	640	720	480	-33.3	1000	1589	1779	1992	1654	-17.0
JULY	459	554	480	488	496	1.6	1459	2143	2259	2480	2150	-13.3
AUG	337	358	335	395	338	-14.4	1796	2501	2594	2875	2488	-13.5
SEPT	276	288	374	348	333	-4.3	2072	2789	2968	3223	2821	-12.5
OCT	239	372	410	336	302	-10.1	2311	3159	3378	3559	3123	-12.3
NOV	233	220	172	203	243	19.7	2544	3379	3550	3762	3366	-10.5
DEC	132	96	165	134	81	-39.6	2676	3475	3715	3896	3447	-13.5
TOTAL	2676	3475	3715	3896	3447							

VISITORS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

JAN	6	2	4	20	14	-30	6	2	4	20	14	-30
FEB	5	3	3	6	4	-33.3	11	5	7	26	18	-30.8
MAR	17	21	12	59	17	-71.2	28	26	19	85	35	-70.6
APR	9	27	31	51	44	-13.7	37	53	50	136	79	-41.9
MAY	17	18	34	46	72	56.5	54	71	84	182	151	-17.0
JUNE	33	45	28	54	39	-27.8	87	116	112	236	190	-19.5
JULY	16	20	24	41	28	-31.7	103	136	136	277	218	-21.3
AUG	22	20	20	30	39	30.0	125	156	156	307	257	-16.3
SEPT	11	18	29	24	23	-4.3	136	174	185	331	280	-15.4
OCT	23	22	21	41	42	2.4	159	196	206	372	322	-13.4
NOV	33	33	7	12	22	83.3	192	229	213	384	344	-10.4
DEC	14	14	4	11	5	-54.5	206	243	217	395	349	-11.6
TOTAL	206	243	217	395	349							

Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Gift Shop
Profit & Loss Statement
Twelve Months Ending November 30, 1998

Gross Receipts *		\$ 44,240.99
less: Sales Taxes Collected		2,271.85
Gross Sales		\$ 41,969.14
Beginning Inventory	\$ 4,569.32	
Purchases	29,368.87	
Transportation	14.02	
Freight In	893.59	
Damaged goods	34.80	
Cost of Goods Available for Sale	\$ 34,880.60	
less: Ending Inventory		11,413.13
Cost of Goods Sold		23,467.47
Net Sales		\$ 18,501.67
Miscellaneous Income		
Interest **		113.53
Total Revenue		\$ 18,615.20
Sales & Office Expense		
Display Materials	\$ 15.00	
Volunteer Office Materials	15.09	
Telephone	150.70	
Postage	182.22	
Office Supplies	358.14	
Returned Checks	52.00	
Wire Transfer Fees	90.00	
Credit Card Service Fees	448.84	
Display Fixtures	89.46	
Credit Card Machine Purchase	475.00	
		1,876.45
Net Profit from Operations		\$ 16,738.75

* Includes internal TNC usage for fund raising activities
** Includes \$38.62 from 12-31-97 not recorded on 1997 P&L Stmt

Tallgrass Prairie Gift Shop

Book Inventory Shortage - 1998

Title	Qty	Cost
Amphibians of Oklahoma	3	\$ 12.00
Attracting Birds	1	1.00
Caterpillars, Bugs, & Butterflies	1	5.97
Cherokee Feast of Days, II	1	6.24
Cooking for Camp & Trail	1	7.20
Environmental Gardener	1	4.77
Field Guide to Cows	1	7.05
Going Native	1	5.97
Graining the Mare	1	7.48
Green Snake Ceremony	1	5.67
Heart of the Trail	1	4.47
How to Die in the Outdoors	1	5.97
Indian America	1	11.37
Indian Way	1	5.97
Landscaping for Wildlife	1	7.17
Natural Lawn & Alternatives	1	4.77
Now That the Buffalo's Gone	1	10.80
Oklahoma Video	1	16.00
Osage Life & Legends	1	5.37
Osage Children of Middle Waters	1	15.93
Peterson First Guide to the Butterflies	1	6.50
Poisonous Plants of Central U.S.A.	1	9.57
Reptiles of Oklahoma	1	4.00
Saving Nature's Legacy	1	14.97
Seeing the White Buffalo	2	10.00
Sharing Nature with Children	1	4.77
Skulls & Bones	1	11.97
Soft Child	1	9.50
Stories From Under the Sky	1	5.97
Sundown	1	8.51
Tales of the Teepee	1	4.80
Talking to the Moon	1	7.38
Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers, Field Guide	1	9.97
Taste of the Territory	1	10.23
Teaching Kids to Love the Earth	1	8.97
Track of the Coyote	1	8.23
Vanishing American	1	8.97
When Buffalo Ran	1	5.10
Where Buffalo Roam	4	3.60
Wild About Birds	1	11.97
Wynoma	1	5.97
Total	47	\$ 322.12

Approximately how often did you serve as a Docent during our eight month season?

- Once a month Once every six weeks More than once per month
 Every other month Other 6 x 1

Was that frequency: about right too much not enough

Do you intend to serve as a Docent during the 1999 season? Yes No

- If yes, would you prefer to:
- work a regular scheduled shift (i.e. 2nd Wed., etc.)
 - schedule your own shifts by using return calendars
 - be telephoned when needed

If you desire to commit to a regular shift, what is your preferred day?

- DAY: _____ WEEK OF MONTH: _____
- Sunday First week
 - Monday Second week
 - Tuesday Third week
 - Wednesday Fourth week
 - Thursday Fifth week
 - Friday
 - Saturday

Would you like to serve as a Trail Guide during 1999? Yes No

If yes, do you prefer weekdays weekends

Are you interested in serving on the Docent Council for 1998? Yes No

If yes, please indicate which positions you are interested in:

- activities coordinator
- recruitment coordinator
- training coordinator
- Pawhuska liaison
- nature exhibit coord.
- scheduling assistant
- trail guide coordinator
- historian
- visitor records
- gift shop bookkeeper
- gift shop manager or asst. mgr.
- workday supervisor
- newsletter/communications editor
- speakers bureau coordinator
- at-large member
- other _____

Yes, I will participate in the TGP Docent Program from March - November 1999.

NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

MEMORANDUM

TO: Brita Cantrell, Harvey Payne, Chris Wilson

CC: Al Steuter, Richard Egelhoff, Jeff Comstock, Greg Wingfield, Rob McKim

FROM: Bob Hamilton

DATE: December 31, 1998

SUBJECT: Tallgrass Bison Program Annual Report - 1998

The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve bison program has completed another year of activity. The following narrative will touch on major program areas and provide a summary of the 1998 activities. Attached you will find several additional documents:

- Bison Sale Income
- Bison Herd Assets (# head and values)
- Male and Female Bison Herd Structure (age and source)

Herd Growth/Productivity

The Christina Adams Bison Herd has now been on the TGP for five years. With the introduction of 300 head in the fall of 1993, we projected a 10 year build-up period to reach our herd goal of 2100 head (in summer) on 32,000 acres. Our bison herd expansion is on schedule to reach that goal within another 5-6 years. In 1998, the herd of 860 (including calves) occupied a total of 8784 ac: 7867 ac in the year-round fire-bison unit plus 917 ac in fall-only holding pastures and traps. In early 1999, the year-round unit will be expanded by 2,504 acres to 10,371 ac with the addition of the 107 pasture. Future annual additions will be in the 3,000-4,000 acre range.

Reproductive success continues to be good. Calving success (# calves alive @ fall weaning ÷ # mature cows) for summer '98 was 79%, slightly lower than the 81% and 80% of the previous two years. Overall calving success percentage may rise as we gradually cull down our older cows: 15 of 26 cull age cows (12.5-16.5 yrs. old) were not pregnant this fall (58% open).

Range Condition

The light stocking rate in the fire-bison unit continues to provide ample forage for the herd year-round, even during drought years such as 1996 and the summer of '98. This was the fifth year of conducting spring, summer and fall prescribed burns in the unit. There continues to be a strong fire-bison interaction, with intensive grazing of recent burn patches during the growing season. The resulting landscape patch mosaic provides a diverse array of wildlife habitats and plant assemblages.

Herd Management

The annual roundup and herd working went very smoothly. Roundup out of the 7867 ac fire-bison unit into the 722 ac Spring Trap (fall holding pasture) was done on October 19 using six ATVs. It took about 6 hours to conduct 4 sweeps to gather the herd. One cow died of heat exhaustion after a long chase through the nature trail pasture (got in by swimming a water-gap). Bill Stokely, Tulsa, volunteered the use of his helicopter the next day to look for strays - one older bull was found and gathered. More ATVs and/or more use of helicopters is likely to be necessary as the fire-bison unit expands. On October 26 the herd was pushed out of the Spring Trap into the 50 ac Trap next to the corrals. The primary herd working in the corrals was October 28-30. A total of 849 head were processed and weighed. Keeper animals were given our traditional health treatments (vaccinated for several bovine diseases, internal/external parasite control); heifer calves were brucellosis vaccinated with RB51 vaccine. The corral working crew consisted of 5 hired hands, 5 TNC staff, and 2 TNC staff keeping records/computer operations.

The corral system worked very smoothly. However, the herd is getting large enough to where we will soon have insufficient space to both hold seller/sort animals and work the herd at the same time. In 1999, 3-4 holding pens of 1-2 ac each will be added as well as another 40-60 acre holding trap.

The public relations/fundraising utility of the herd working continues to grow. Approximately 90 staff, donors, docents and media were fed lunch on October 28. Roping off catwalks and sensitive areas, and having staff chaperones, worked well to control visitors at the corral.

Upgrades to the bison herd records tracking system performed well. A new Pentium-level laptop computer with Word-based software proved to be very fast and user-friendly. The only problem was a minor system failure (file restoration procedure error problem since diagnosed) that caused the loss of 22 animals records. Due to the impending industry phase-out of the 2X transponders we had been using, we replaced all 2X "pig tag" eartags with new 1X pig tags (349), and tagged all keeper calves and purchased bison with new 1X pig tags (204). Next fall, older bison (≥ 4.5 yrs old) that have the original 2X subcutaneous transponder implants will likely be tagged with new 1X pig tags. The transponder individual I.D. and computer record-keeping program will only become more valuable as the herd number grows; it greatly speeds the identification of each individual bison, thus minimizing the time the animal is constrained in the squeeze chute. Sweeping the transponder with the scanner is also much safer to staff as compared to reading Bangs tags. Kay Krebbs and Kim Shannon did a wonderful job of running the new system in a rapid-fire, high pressure atmosphere.

Grass-fed Bison Research

The TNC-ND State University study "Performance, nutritional composition and palatability of grass-finished bison" was initiated in fall '97 with the retention of bull calves for the study. In May '98, study animals were exchanged between study sites (Ordway Prairie, SD); Niobrara Valley Preserve, NE; Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, OK). A preliminary group of grass-fed 2.5 year bulls was slaughtered in December, while the larger study group of 75 bulls will come out next fall.

Bison Sales/Purchases

A total of 100 surplus bison were sold for \$93,586.20 (see attached list). Marketing avenues included sale at the November 17 Kansas Buffalo Association consignment auction at Salina, KS, sealed bid sale, marketing by directly contacting other producers, and slaughter sale of several study bulls. Prices for bulls (meat-class animals) was slightly softer this year, while breeding stock female prices continue to rise. A total of 331 surplus bison have been sold over the last five years for a total of \$277,730.

A total of 13 bison were purchased for genetic additions to our herd: six heifer calves and five yearling bulls from the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, Valentine, NE, and two 2 year bulls at the Kansas Buffalo Association auction that had originated from the National Bison Range, MT. Total cost was \$23,900 which will be covered by income from the Adopt-a-Bison program.

After sales of surplus bison and additions of purchased bison, the 98-99 overwintering herd numbers about 760 head. Estimated value of the herd is \$1.7 million (see attachment). See the attached Male and Female Bison Herd Structure spreadsheets for age and genetic source of the herd. Projected 1999 calf crop should be about 250, giving us 1,010 head next summer.

Fall 1998 Bison Herd Assets

Sex/Age (as of Nov. '98)	Number	Est. Value Per Head	Total Estimated Value
Breeding Bulls	28	1,000	28,000
Cows	269	3,000	807,000
Bulls 2.5 yr	22	900	19,800
Heifers 2.5 yr	68	2,700	183,600
Bulls 1.5 yr	44	700	30,800
Heifers 1.5 yr	137	2,500	342,500
Bull Calves	70	600	42,000
Heifer Calves	121	2,200	266,200
TOTALS	759		\$1,719,900

Value of herd animals based on fall 1998 actual sale prices of surplus bison sold at the TGP and regional bison auctions.

Number of head shown is resident herd left on preserve after fall 1998 roundup, sale of surplus bison, and purchase of additional animals.