
GHF NEWS



Grassland Heritage Foundation Newsletter

June 2010

June is one of the best months for viewing prairie wildflowers. Join GHF members at these upcoming walks.

Ogg Road Prairie in Shawnee Mission Park

Wednesday, Jun 16th, 2010 6:30pm until dark Lenexa, Kansas

This remnant prairie has a diverse array of plants. Rachel Snyder cataloged plants at this location many years ago. Many work days have been spent removing the encroachment of woody vegetation on this Kansas City Wildlands site. Join Jeff Hansen and Sue Holcomb as we re-survey the area for plant life following deer reduction efforts this past winter. The main entrance to the park is located at 7900 Renner Rd. Follow the main drive in the park until the intersection with Ogg Road. The prairie is located between Ogg Road and the tennis courts. Please RSVP to Sue Holcomb if you plan to attend. 913-449-3621 or sholc2003@yahoo.com

Fourth Biennial Coblentz Prairie Foray

Sunday, Jun 20th, 2010 1:00pm Stull, KS

This glaciated tallgrass prairie offers diverse native plants as well as uncommon birds like Henslow's Sparrows, notable insects like Golden Byssus skippers, and interesting rocks like Sioux Quartzite. This may be the furthest south the glaciers advanced in Kansas, and large pink and red Sioux Quartzite boulders, glacial erratics, can be found in several areas. Among the 270 recorded plant species, we hope to see the federally protected Mead's milkweed, Prairie phlox, Starry Catchfly, Topeka Purple-coneflower, and Tall Cinquefoil! Other plants of interest include the Adder's Tongue Fern --one of the few prairie ferns and Cluster fescue (*Festuca paradoxa*) --a fescue rarely found in Kansas. Kansas Native Plant Society and Grassland Heritage Foundation co-sponsor this event. Co-leaders: Ken Lassman, author of *Wild Douglas County*, Jeff Hansen, KNPS and GHF Board Member and Shirley Braunlich, KNPS Board Member. Coblentz Prairie is part of the Clinton Wildlife area 40-minutes west of Lawrence, KS in west-central Douglas County at the intersection of E 100 Road and North 1150th Road. Park on the access road one-mile west of the intersection, E 1 Rd.

Contact KNPS 785-864-3453



Frank Norman pointing out a plant during the wildflower walk portion of Prairie Appreciation Day at Snyder Prairie May 22. Photo by Angie Babbit.

8th Annual Grant-Bradbury Prairie Jaunt

Thursday, Jun 24th, 2010 6:30pm until dark Topeka, KS

Join the Kansas Native Plant Society (KNPS) and enjoy an evening on Topeka's premiere prairie park. This 80-acre pristine tallgrass prairie contains over 300 plant species. On this tour, you will learn and see the plants and animals of the prairie. Bring a camera because the spring wildflowers will be at their peak. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes. Children are encouraged to come. Jeff Hansen, wildflower expert, will lead the tour. Directions: Take Topeka Blvd south to the University Blvd intersection (stoplight), take a right. Take University west about half a mile - when the road curves south, you are at the driveway to the park gate. There is a small building at the driveway. Contact Jeff if you plant to attend. Jeff Hansen 785-806-6917

Enjoy the prairie while working with Groundhogs at Snyder Prairie



Our prairie maintenance group, led by Frank Norman, works the third Saturday of most months at our own Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, Kansas, just north of Topeka. Summer months involve lots of lopping of woody plants among other activities. Contact Frank Norman at 785-691-9748 or fjnorman@sunflower.com to get on the contact list and be informed of work day activities. Please don't show up without contacting us, as we may need to cancel on a given workday. Upcoming dates are June 19, July 17 and August 21 at 9:30am.

Message from the President

We welcome our new Education and Outreach Coordinator, Kim Bellemere. Kim has been a terrific addition to GHF and she certainly “hit the ground running” as she coordinated the successful Prairie Appreciation Day at Snyder Prairie on May 22nd. This event included a prairie wildflower walk, other educational activities and general enthusiasm for our prairie heritage.

Next was the launch of the summer student education/hands-on learning programs at the Lawrence Library on May 29th. This will be followed by a special “Day on the Prairie” for Big Brothers and Big Sisters and the young people they work with at Guess Prairie on June 12th. I truly am grateful for all who have volunteered to help that day: Rex Powell, GHF board member and retired Lawrence teacher will bring his fantastic microscope which can be linked to a laptop computer so kids can see micro-critters on the screen. Stan Roth, retired Lawrence biology teacher, will talk about snakes of the prairie, and Bill Busby, Kansas Biological Survey staff member, will share his expertise about prairie history with the kids and the “bigs”. We look forward to having a great time and the prairie should be in prime bloom.

During our March board meeting, I believe a crucial decision was made to invest some of GHF’s assets in a three-year management plan for Snyder Prairie. Previously GHF relied solely on volunteer “Groundhogs” for these tasks. And while volunteers are always needed and welcomed, it became evident that GHF was losing ground to invasive species and that we needed to practice what we advocate – active management using a variety of proven strategies for prairie restoration. In addition to an overall manager, contracts will be made between GHF and Jackson County residents who will assist with spraying *Sericea lespedeza*, cutting hedge trees, and continued mowing and burning so that eventually the prairie areas will be in good enough condition to be hayed.

If you are interested in helping fund either of these efforts, please make a notation on your check that the donation is for either education or prairie management. THANK YOU! Joyce Wolf Contact Joyce at 785-887-6019 or rjjawolf@sunflower.com

Introducing Kim Bellemere

Kim Bellemere has been very busy in her first weeks as GHF education coordinator. She has been planning all the summer Rolling Prairie Learning Labs as well as our other community outreach programs. (See page 5.) She was extra busy working on details for our Prairie Appreciation Day at Snyder Prairie in May.

Kim’s recent professional experience has been focused on administration and organizational management as well as grant writing and funding research. In these positions she facilitated both large and small working groups, coordinated educational activities with volunteers and employees, and established educational programs for both adults and children.

She also recently founded and currently facilitates the all volunteer Eco-Parents Interest Group through the Lawrence Sustainability Network, a group focused on educating themselves and the public about sustainability and environmental issues important to families. As the group facilitator it is her responsibility to plan and coordinate educational activities and volunteer projects as well as oversee the development of PR materials and promotional activities. We consider ourselves lucky to have Kim working with Grassland Heritage!

The 22nd North American Prairie Conference will be held at the University of Northern Iowa from August 1-5, 2010. In keeping with the conference theme “Restoring a National Treasure,” there will be various opportunities to observe prairie restorations and reconstructions in the Cedar Falls area. www.napc2010.org

www.grasslandheritage.org

A major overhaul of our web site is being undertaken. Are you knowledgeable about prairies or the flora and fauna that live there, and like to write? We’re working on content right now. Contact Andrea Repinsky, adheron@yahoo.com to volunteer your services.

Grassland Heritage Foundation

The Grassland Heritage Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 membership organization dedicated to prairie preservation and education.

GHF News is published quarterly by
Grassland Heritage Foundation.
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Prairie Happenings

My Favorite Prairie Plant by GHF board members

I can't say I like any one plant more than another. What I do like however, is that depending upon the time of the year, there are always new plants in bloom for me to enjoy. I like the fact that in our prairie garden at home it seems that about every 2 to 3 weeks some new plant is starting to bud. It is fun to watch each budding plant grow and flower but then find a new plant just starting to show some color. Steve Holcomb

My favorite plant of the prairie changes weekly as I see different things blooming throughout the season and visiting different prairies. But my current favorite is Ohio spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*). Another name for the plant is cow slobber. The sap is mucilaginous like cow slobber. When I do wildflower walks, I love to break off a stem of spiderwort and show everyone the mucus like sap. Spiderworts are monocots like grasses. Note the grass-like leaves, and the 3 petals (signs of a monocot). The flowers are edible and can be used in salads or just eat them in the garden. The greens are also edible in early spring although I've never tried them. Spiderworts have even been used to detect radiation as their blue stamen hairs will change to pink when exposed to radiation. Each flower lasts but one day, which makes sense when you find out that spiderwort is a member of the day flower family of plants. It's mostly found in the eastern third of Kansas, but what I find interesting is it's not commonly found in the glaciated region of Kansas, but when you go the Osage Cuestas and the Flint Hills it is commonly found. The glaciated Coblentz prairie of Douglas County has no Ohio spiderwort, but does have bracted spiderwort (*T. bracteata*), but go south of the Wakarusa River into the Osage Cuestas and Ohio spiderwort is abundant. Want to be able to tell Ohio spiderwort from bracted spiderwort? Look at the sepals (the green leaf-like flower structures that are under the petals). Ohio spiderwort has no hairs on the sepals while bracted spiderwort has spreading hairs. I sell this plant at the Saturday Lawrence Farmers market as well as the Monday Topeka Library Farmers Market. Jeff Hansen

My favorite prairie plant to grow is *Baptisia australis*, or False Indigo. (right) I have four different plants and I've found that it takes a couple of years for them to grow to full height and bloom, but when they do they are spectacular. They do best in full sun. The bright blue blooms stay on the plant for several weeks to be replaced by very dark brown/black seed pods that when



shaken make a gentle rattling sound. Although they do self seed, I have not found them to be invasive.

Coming in a very close second favorite plant is *Rudbeckia hirta*, or Black Eyed Susan. One of many yellow flowers found in native gardens, this one makes up for somewhat ordinary by its longevity in the bloom time. It seems like it lasts for months on end. I started with just three tiny plants and now they cover an area about 4' x 4'. If I deadheaded them, which I don't, spreading probably would not be a problem, but I like to divide them for use in other places in our gardens. Joyce Wolf

My Favorite Plant – The Beardtongues (*Penstemon*)

I encountered my first *Penstemon* as a teenager – two plants of shell-leaf beardtongue (*P. grandiflorus*) perched atop a limestone bluff overlooking the Cedar River in northeast Iowa. I was fascinated by its fleshy leaves and large lavender flowers, each bearing a sterile stamen (called a staminode), from which the genus gets its scientific and common names. That meeting led me study the 22 Great Plains species in graduate school and to seek out beardtongues beyond the Great Plains. In my travels I've seen more than half of the approximately 270 species in the genus in Canada, the continental U.S., and Mexico. *Penstemon*, a member of the plantain family (*Plantaginaceae*), is endemic in North and Central America, with many narrow endemics in the Rocky



Mountains, Intermountain Region, and Sierra Nevada and Cascade ranges of the western U.S. Many beardtongues are distinguished by subtle morphological differences, which make accurate species determinations a challenge. Beardtongues exhibit a wide range of floral morphology related to the bees, wasps, moths, and birds that pollinate them. Some species grow in a single valley or range of mountains. I've also studied herbarium specimens of all of the species as I write descriptions and keys for the 240 species in North America north of Mexico for the Flora of North America project. I've grown many of the fleshy-leaved species related to *P. grandiflorus*, as well as an assortment of other species. Plants tend to be short-lived, and most require well-drained soils. The prairie species do well in the garden, especially *P. cobaea* (pictured above), *P. digitalis*, *P. grandiflorus*, and *P. tubaeiflorus*. Some of the white-flowered species are prolific seed-producers and quickly will colonize bare ground in the garden if given a chance. I'll be on the hunt again this year for new beardtongues, hoping to see new species of this amazing American genus. Craig Freeman

A few years ago, I planted a couple of common milkweeds in my front yard near the mailbox, and I've been pleased with the results. As you might expect, this Kansas native has thrived where I planted it, enduring a wide variety of hot, cold, wet, and dry weather. The milkweeds tenacity has proved a happy contrast with my very sad lawn, which never looked good and now fares much worse since being converted into the neighborhood soccer pitch. In addition to merely surviving, the weed's dusky purple flowers look nice when they bloom in June and they

have attracted some butterflies to the yard, although I have not yet had any caterpillars survive until the chrysalis stage. Perhaps my favorite feature, however, is the way the milkweed has spread. Every spring, I find a couple of new stalks sprouting up three or four feet away from the main cluster. Usually, these new stalks appear someplace inconvenient, but some trial and error efforts have taught me how to dig them up, grow them in a pot for a year, and then transplant. Now I have milkweeds growing several places throughout my yard that are offspring of my original planting.

Mike Campbell

One of my favorite prairie plants that I have much success with is the purple coneflower. (Most likely this is a cultivar of *Echinacea purpurea* rather than *E. pallida* commonly found in eastern Kansas.) It is very drought resistant and has blooms that last for a long time. A plant that I would avoid planting in a home garden is the spiderwort. I have a colony that was planted many years ago and is spreading out of control. In the prairie, it appears one plant at a time and it is beautiful. But in my yard, it has become an invasive weed that I wish had never been allowed in. Brad Guess

Like Jeff I tend to love whatever is in bloom. Right now I'd vote for Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa*. The bright orange flowers are the typical, complex milkweed shape. This is one flower that is easy to spot from a distance and even while driving down the highway. Often in the prairie it will be blooming along with Pale purple coneflower, the pink blossoms making a beautiful contrast to the brilliant orange.

Sue Holcomb



Summer Education and Outreach Programs

Exciting things are happening with the Rolling Prairie Learning lab this summer! The RPLL activities got off to a splashing start May 29th at the Lawrence Public Library's Summer Reading Program Kick-off. The reading program theme for this year is "Make a Splash at the Library" so we are hard at work developing educational materials that focus on water and it's role in the development of the prairies. Among the activities kids can participate in are weaving and painting with prairie grass, creating their own "watershed", and investigating prairie stream invertebrates up close and personal. We are also lucky enough to have two new banners to display that show the actual size of a Little Bluestem plant and root system. They were painted by artist Judy Bellemere and the root system painting alone is almost 6 ft tall! In addition to the reading program kickoff event on May 29th, the

RPLL will also be at the library on June 28th for the Kidsapalooza 5 and 6 year old group and on July 21st for the Waverunngers, the 7-11 age group. Any children in those categories are welcome to attend.

We will also have the opportunity this summer to work with two new groups. On June 12th GHF is hosting a prairie walk and educational activities at Guess Prairie for matches and children on the waiting list with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Douglas County. This will be a fun, engaging day on the prairie where "littles" and their big brothers and sisters can learn about the prairie ecosystem with GHF staff and volunteers. Among the activities planned are a sensory scavenger hunt/walk, a demonstration about prairie reptiles and amphibians, an interactive display on prairie birds, and a microscopic examination of the flora and fauna in the area. We're looking forward to a great event and the possibility to work with BBBS/DC again in the future.

We are so excited to be able to provide RPLL activities this summer for the first time to children in the Boys and Girls Club summer program. We'll be at the Cordley Elementary site on July 12th and at the Deerfield program on July 26th. It's going to be fun to work with these new groups and be able to share information about prairie preservation with a large number of children.

As always, we are looking for volunteers who could help with any of these events. If you are interested, please contact Kim Bellemere at 784-840-8104 or via email at grasslandheritage@gmail.com

Thank you to returning members since the last newsletter: Dick & Ellie Dawson, Jeff Hansen

Welcome new member Tamara Wallace

Special Gifts

Mrs. Jack Walker in honor of Sue Holcomb

Lawrence Give Back Program---Be sure to sign up for a card and designate GHF!

Daughters of the American Revolution as an honorarium for a presentation by Frank Norman

For the Snyder Scholarship Fund: Ozark Wilderness Waterways Club

For Prairie Management: Craig & Jane Freeman, Steve & Sue Holcomb

Thank you!

Craig Freeman for hosting the May board meeting

All the members who brought refreshments to the Prairie Appreciation Day

Kevin Bachkora for his accounting services

Applied Ecological Services for about 200 plants of Little Bluestem and Eastern Star Sedge for us to give away at the Earth Day festival in April.

Judy Bellemere for painting banners for our education outreach - one of prairie grass and another of the Little Blue stem root system.

All the burn participants, particularly Ron Wolf for mowing and Frank for leading

We depend on your memberships!

If the date above your label is more than a year ago, or you've never given, please help us by sending your donation today. **Send to** Grassland Heritage Foundation, PO Box 394, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201.

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Rachel Snyder Scholarship Fund

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Education programs

Prairie Management

Other Places to Visit Prairie

Missouri's Prairie State Park holds wildflower hikes on the first Saturday of every month from June to August at 10 a.m. To participate, please join the group at the visitor center. Other interpretive programs are planned, contact them for additional info, 417-843-6711. This park is home to a bison herd. Prairie State Park is located 110 miles south of Kansas City; travel time is around two and one-half hours. Travel south on U.S. Hwy. 71 to the Hwy. 160 (Lamar exit) and turn right/west onto Hwy. 160. Continue about 16 miles to Route NN and turn right/north to proceed one mile to Central Road (gravel surface). Turn left/west onto Central Road and continue for three miles before turning right/north onto 150th Lane. Proceed about 1.3 miles to the park's visitor center. Prairie State Park, 128 NW 150th Lane, Mindenmines, MO 64769 Missouri also lists 15 prairies on their Missouri Department of Conservation Areas list.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Cottonwood Falls, KS 66845 Call 620-273-8494 for information. Or visit the web site and print off a full schedule at <http://www.nps.gov/tapr/planyourvisit/upload/scheduleofEvents10CMYKFinal.pdf>. The preserve has daily activities and special events. We are happy to report that the first bison calf to be born at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve since the 1800's arrived on Mother's Day this year. It joins the 13 other bison re-introduced last fall.

Konza Prairie, Manhattan, Kansas. Visit some areas any time, but don't miss the Biennial Visitors' Day, Saturday, September 25, 2010 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Konza Prairie Biological Station is an 8,600-acre native tallgrass prairie preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University, and operated as a field research station by the K-State Division of Biology. Konza Prairie is dedicated to a three-fold mission of long-term ecological research, education, and prairie conservation. Visitors' Day is presented biennially in even years. Visitors' Day activities grant guided access to restricted areas of the field research station, such as to see the bison herd or hikes within the trail system. View live animal displays and research exhibits and learn about tallgrass prairie conservation and management. Konza Prairie researchers, docents, and staff provide visitors information about Konza Prairie research, history of the site, Flint Hills geology, tallgrass prairie flora and fauna, and other natural history. Konza Prairie Biological Station, Manhattan, Kansas 785-587-0441 <http://kpbs.konza.ksu.edu>

Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, Osage County, Oklahoma. This Nature Conservancy property has a free roaming bison herd of about 2,500. It is open dawn to dusk, with a visitor's center open 10am to 4pm from March to November. Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, Pawhuska, Oklahoma 74056 918-287-4803

Jerry Smith Park Prairie, an original prairie remnant within the limits of Kansas City owned by Kansas City Parks and Recreation is dedicating a new interpretive hiking trail on June 5. The trailhead is located at the south entrance of Jerry Smith Park, off of 139th Street, just west of Prospect. Entrance is signed.

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Report on Two Spring Burns held at Snyder Prairie

Saturday, April 3's prairie burn on the western side of Snyder Prairie (bordering U Road) went without a hitch. Most, if not all the litter, was removed and the fire even crept into the woods to the NE. Fun was had by all including Craig and Jane Freeman, Melvin Depperschmidt, Mickey Delfelder, Angie Babbit, Mike and Sam Campbell, Allen Casey, Brad Guess, Gary Tegtmeier, myself, and Gus. I appreciate everyone's help and the Freeman's food and drink afterwards. Expect to work a bit harder at the next burn. Enjoy the weather—the redbuds are about to burst open.

The prescribed burns of Management Unit 2 located on the east side of the property went well on Saturday, April 17th. Weather was sunny with slight winds from the east to southeast (and north). A 1.5-inch rainfall the previous day kept creeping fires in check. Attendees included Sue and Steve Holcomb, Melvin Depperschmidt, Gary Tegtmeier, Mike Campbell, Ted Abel, Brian Roh, Wayne Rhodus, and Frank Norman. Everyone worked hard when needed and their efforts are very much appreciated. Both tracts of land burned well with a good dieback of woody shrubs and non-native cool season grasses. There were challenges with the swirling winds and thick smoke and we had to hustle to complete the black line before a backfire-turned-headfire beat us to the last corner of the northern tract of land. Nevertheless, fun (and grueling work) was had by all on Earth Day and I am sure most of the oldsters felt their efforts the next day. Frank Norman



Frank checking that the fire is out, while Gus hangs out in the unburned grass

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