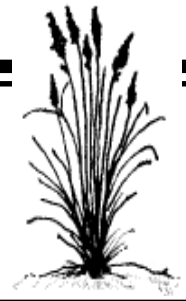

GHF NEWS



Grassland Heritage Foundation Newsletter

May 2007

Wildflower Walks

The best way to appreciate prairie is up close—join us on these wildflower events

Wednesday, June 20, 7:00pm Grant-Bradbury Prairie in Topeka. This will be the 5th annual outing led by Jeff Hansen, Kansas Native Plant Society president and Grassland Heritage Foundation board member. This 80-acre Topeka park boasts nearly 300 plant species. 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 brick building at the driveway. email@KSNPS.org or (785) 864-3453

Saturday, June 23, 9:00am Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, Kansas. Take this opportunity to get to know GHF's prairie.

Frank Norman (left) who leads our Groundhog's property maintenance group will discuss our efforts at management and the effects on the size and quality of prairie versus wooded areas. He'll identify and inform us about the plants we encounter. The joint walk with KNPS will last until it gets too warm, maybe 11:30. Snyder Prairie is about 15 miles north of Topeka on Hwy 75. To get to the site, drive east on 158th Road at Mayetta and go about 3 miles to U Road, and then go south approximately another half-mile and park along the roadside next to the Hug's driveway. Make sure not to block their driveway or any potential movement of large vehicles in and out. Contact the GHF office with questions, email@grasslandheritage.org or (913) 262-3506.



Frank Norman taking a break

Groundhogs

The third Saturday of each month, dedicated volunteers meet out at Snyder Prairie to contribute their labor to improving the prairie. Chores vary from burning, both prairie and cedar trees, to planting seeds and sometimes plants. We cut trees, lop sumac and dogwood, dig thistle, and collect seeds. Volunteers of all kinds can participate. Contact our chief Groundhog, Frank Norman if you'd like to be included in his email reminders. We suggest double-checking with Frank if the weather is questionable, and be sure to let him know to expect you, in case of cancellation. Email him by Friday morning at frank.norman@appliedeco.com or call his cell phone at (816) 830-6030. Upcoming Dates: June 16, July 21, August 18 at 9:00am Directions to Snyder, see June 23rd walk.

For other prairie events, see page 6.



National Pollinator Week, June 24-30, 2007



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This week has been designated by the U.S. Senate and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help publicize the vulnerability of pollinators and to call on the public to create pollinator-friendly habitats in their own landscapes. The US Postal Service will be issuing four pollinator stamps. Professor Chip Taylor, GHF board member, head of Monarch Watch and on the steering committee of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, has enlisted the services of artist Stan Herd to replicate one of the stamps, the Southern dogface butterfly, using only plants and other natural materials in a one acre display. The installation will be executed near Pendleton's Country Market, a family farm off Kansas Highway 10 between Olathe and Lawrence. The resulting evanescent image will be viewed aerially for a brief few weeks. Flyovers originating from an airport three miles away are planned. See www.pollinator.org.

Message from the President

Prairie plantings can look dramatically different from year to year. One year, it's all black-eyed susans, and the next year, half sunflowers. So it goes with GHF. Faces may change over time, but our commitment to prairie preservation and education is rooted 8 feet deep. This spring, I sprouted up to take a turn at President of GHF. Sue Holcomb, our outgoing President, is an inspiration for her energetic leadership and devotion to the prairie. GHF thanks Sue for her accomplishments as President over the past four years, and we are thankful for her ongoing, critical contributions. New board members Angie Babbit, Steve Holcomb, and Joyce Wolf bring healthy diversity this year, and new support from members and volunteers ensures a productive growing season.

I first became involved with GHF sometime since the last ice age, as a high school student and Groundhogs volunteer. I was in Steve Case's naturalist class while he managed The Prairie Center for GHF, and I became a friend of the family of Brad Williamson, a fellow Olathe biology teacher and prairie advocate. The highlight of my high school years was time spent at The Prairie Center, wading through the creek, munching wild strawberries, watching stars, and learning native plants. The Williamsons and Steve Case are among my most influential teachers, and I am grateful to them for helping me discover the prairie, as well as looking the other way while I ignored most of the rules at The Prairie Center. Also, I am grateful to GHF for protecting The Prairie Center and making it all possible. We can preserve the same potential for discovery and inspiration for another generation of prairie advocates, with your support for GHF's preservation and education programs.

Andrea Repinsky adheron@yahoo.com

Meet the new board members. *Joyce Wolf* joined us in October. She has amazing experience in environmental organizations. She was a part of the founding of the Kansas Land Trust and the Kaw Valley Heritage Alliance and remains actively involved with the Audubon Society.

Steve Holcomb has been a long-time volunteer with GHF as a Groundhog. He's agreed to take on writing checks and working with Keven Bachkora on our books.

Angie Babbit joined us this past fall, her education and experience are a great addition to the board. She has also agreed to take on organizing the Rolling Prairie Learning Labs and will be the Volunteer Coordinator funded by our grant. Read about her on page 5.

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. The GHF Office is located at 5460 Buena Vista, Roeland Park, KS. (913)262-3506

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Officers

President: Andrea Repinsky
Vice-President: Rex Powell
Secretary: Sue Holcomb
Treasurer: Kevin Bachkora
Asst Treasurers: Steve Holcomb
Ann Simpson



Board members after the 2007 Annual Meeting, from left, Andrea Repinsky, Joyce Wolf, Tom Hammer, Sue Holcomb, Doug Martin, Steve Holcomb, Gary Tegmeier, Craig Freeman, and Angie Babbit.

Members not present: Jeff Hansen, Chip Taylor, Pete Cuppage, Mike Campbell, and Rex Powell

January 26, 2007 Unitarian Fellowship
Lawrence, Kansas



Grassland Heritage held a winter party to celebrate prairie and kick off our Douglas County Prairie Project. Dr. Kelly Kindscher (above) of the Kansas Biological Survey and prairie plant expert, spoke at the event about the importance of preserving prairie environments in general and the prairie we're hoping to buy in particular. Rex Powell (right) shared his son's slides of the prairie and his dreams for this project. We had a great turnout and a lot of fun on this frigid winter evening. Thank you to all who attended and to those who donated toward the project. Over \$700 was raised that evening, and nearly \$30,000 since we began accepting donations for this goal. Thanks also to the new members we gained that evening.



We'd like to thank the sponsors of this event for the food and drink they provided; Freestate Brewery, Checkers, Muncher's Bakery, Hy-Vee, Wheatfields Bakery, Cork & Barrel Wine & Spirits, and to Kyle Gerstner, for the use of his beautiful photograph for the invitations. Thanks for the hard work of the committee for the party, Rebecca Clayton, Angie Babbit, Rex Powell, Joyce Wolf, and Amy Carlson. The food and libations were wonderful!



Prairie Happenings

Digitalis or Tubaeiflorus?

Sue Holcomb

I thought I had figured out a lot of the early summer wildflowers, until this weekend. The bright pink prairie phlox was a cinch to identify. The prairie parsley I'd studied up on last May for the newsletter. But all those tall spikes of white flowers! It was fairly easy to narrow most of them down to the genus



Penstemon cobaea

Penstemon; opposite leaves, tubes opening up to two lobes above and three below, and the five stamens of the name, four fertile and one sterile with its' bearded tongue. Differentiating between the species was not quite so easy. Out at the Prairie Center, we found one plant with large flowers, so P. grandiflorus seemed possible. But, the books convinced me that we were too far east and the pictures matched P. cobaea much better.

Then came the really frustrating two, P. digitalis, smooth beardtongue, and P. tubaeiflorus, tube penstemon, are both in my home rain garden, but even with specimens at hand it took me several

attempts to tell them apart. Once I found the right characteristics, it was much easier. Tube penstemon has a slender tube shaped flower, hence the name.



Penstemon digitalis



Digitalis is more like a bell or the shape of a foxglove, the genus Digitalis. Also, the faint stripes, almost like a landing strip into the pollen, are absent from tubaeiflorus. The books told me that P. digitalis has a more branched inflorescence, while tubaeiflorus is a straight spike. I also found more toothed leaves on the

digitalis. To complicate matters, I also have "Red Huskers" growing in my yard. This cultivar of P. digitalis has a beautiful reddish tint to the foliage.

The other tall spike flower we observed had a more distinctive look. Prairie larkspur, Delphinium carolinianum subsp virescens, has a very pronounced curved spur on one petal. The leaves are also palmate and not the simple shape of penstemons. So, for now, when I see a tall white spike, I've got a good chance of identifying it, until the next wave of plants come into bloom.



Prairie Larkspur

One important thing I learned was the necessity of a magnifier. Some of the best traits of plants are not easily seen at first glance. You really should have a look at penstemon stamens.

Native red cedars endangering prairie ecosystem

We at GHF spend a lot of time cutting down cedars that shade the prairie and eliminate competition. It looks like they are more of a problem than we imagined.

Terry Bidwell, an Oklahoma State University researcher is warning Kansans about the dangers of letting Eastern red cedars continue their spread. The habit of the tree is to take up more than their share of water. The evergreen canopy can stop 65 percent of a rainfall from reaching the topsoil and aquifer. And cedar root systems often stretch twice as far as a tree's broad drip line. On range lands they soak up ponds and springs. Their shallow roots and widespread canopy lead to sparse vegetation beneath.

Even though these are Kansas' only native evergreen, modern fire suppression and the deliberate planting of cedars for windbreaks and wildlife habitat has led to a population explosion. With many parts of the state already suffering from water shortages, the moisture lost to cedars makes an appreciable difference. Wildlife also suffers from their spread. The lesser prairie chicken prefers wide open spaces and in Oklahoma, increase in cedars has led to a decrease in quail populations.

But it's easy to fix. If cedars are burned while they're small the fire is generally fatal. Larger trees cut below the lowest living branch won't grow back. If you want your chance to kill some cedars, join our Groundhogs group on the 3rd Saturdays of each month.

As reported in the Wichita Eagle in February and picked up by the Associated Press

Left, Penstemon tubaeiflorus, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada*. Vol. 3: 185.

Welcome new members since the last newsletter:

Aaron & Bonnie Blosser, Barbara Brewer, Adrian Delnevo, Marie Alice L'Heureux, Sandy Mitchell, Jay & Marcia Newton, Bill & Ruth Remmers, John & Valerie Roper, Stan & Janet Roth, John & Patricia Solbach, and Myrtle Walker.

Thanks to members returning after more than a year

lapse: Cathy Bylinowski, Jim & Susan Calvet, Ronald Daly, Evelyn Davis, Sarah Dean, Rick & Diane Deitz, Jim Donovan Family, Charles Downing & Carol Fields, David F. Dvorak, Jr, Kent & Beth Foerster, Carole Hunter, Elaine M. Hyde, Fred Markham, Mike, Pam & Lia Miller, William Pilchard, Dwight Platt, Sandra Siebert, Jerry Sipe, Margaret Thomas, Gary Weisenberger, Brad & Carol Williamson, and Paul Willis.

Special recognition for gifts

In memory of Donald Brewer by Barbara Brewer

In memory of Larry Wagner by David Wagner

In memory of Larry Wagner by Martha Wagner

In honor of Carolyn Churchill by Stephen Churchill, MD

In honor of Sue and Steve Holcomb by Sue's mother, Myrtle Walker

Chip and Toni Taylor made a gift to the scholarship fund

Westar Energy Foundation made a gift in honor of Melvin

Depperschmidt volunteering 100 hours

Gary Tegtmeier and other anonymous donors made gifts to the prairie preservation fund

Meet Angie Babbit

I am happy to be working for GHF as the new Volunteer Coordinator. I joined GHF after seeing Rex Powell and Andrea Repinsky give a talk at the Unitarian Fellowship. I have been interested in preserving native prairies since I conducted a butterfly study at the Rockefeller Native Prairie as part of my undergraduate research at KU. It is important to me that I have a tangible role in preserving and restoring prairie ecosystems, and I immediately realized that getting involved with GHF was one way I could do that. I have had varied experiences in the environmental sciences including working as an Environmental Toxicology lab technician, and Environmental Technician with KDHE, Bald Eagle observer and I have a master of science in Environmental Biology. I spend a great deal of my free time working on creative endeavors. I'm an amateur photographer, painter and printmaker. I have two children, ages 3 and 6, who share the same birthday in September. My husband and I returned to Lawrence because we consider it home, and we are constantly counting our blessings. I look forward to working for GHF. Look for me at the Rolling Prairie Learning Labs this summer!



Angie helped out with the burn this spring.

Thanks to burn volunteers Front row: Angie Babbit, Rex Powell, Andrea Repinsky, Ann Simpson & Sue Holcomb, Back row: Gary Tegtmeier, Frank Norman, Mary Kowalski, Melvin Depperschmidt, Steve Holcomb, Jason Dremsa, and Brian Roh.



It was a difficult year working with the weather, but we did get the central area and some downed tree piles burned. Our second try day was way too windy to even attempt to light a match.

The Rolling Prairie Learning Lab is scheduled to be at the Lawrence Public Library and the Community Mercantile on the following dates:

June 16: Community Mercantile

July 7: Library -Get a clue about Nature: Where have all the Prairies gone?

July 14: Community Mercantile

Aug 18: Library - Wild detectives

Watch for details!

Thank you

Rich Kaufman for his years of service on the GHF Board

Craig Freeman for hosting the Annual Meeting at the Biological Survey and providing refreshments

Kevin Bachkora for accounting

Edna Hamera, Julie Rehm, Steve & Sue Holcomb for volunteering at the Shawnee Mission East Earthfair

Angie Babbit, Andrea Repinsky, & Rex Powell for volunteering at the Lawrence Earth Day activities

Community Mercantile in Lawrence for meeting space

Rebecca Clayton we're sorry to lose you!

Grassland Heritage Foundation
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CALENDAR 2007

June 9 & 10, 10:00am to 4pm, Wildflower Weekend at the Tallgrass National Prairie Preserve 2 miles north of Strong City, Kansas on Highway 177. Enjoy wildflower and medicinal plant hikes, Kansas Native Plant Society education programs, prairie bus tours, special speakers, nature trails, and more. Learn how to make paper from grasses and wildflowers, dye natural fibers, and have fun with many other educational activities. Contact: Park Rangers 620-273-8494.

June 10, 7:00 pm: Friends of Konza Prairie Annual Wildflower Walk lead by Valerie Wright, and Konza docents. There is a charge of \$5 for those who are not Friends of Konza Prairie members. Telephone reservations are due June 5, (785) 587-0441. www.ksu.edu/konza/keep.

June 20, 7:00pm Wildflower Walk Grant-Bradbury Prairie in Topeka, page 1.

June 23, 9:00am Wildflower Walk Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, Kansas, page 1.

July 13-14: Iowa Prairie Conference at Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa. www.ipc2007.com

Wildflower Hikes led by park naturalists at **Missouri Prairie State Park** Natural Area the first Saturday of each month, **June 2, July 7, August 4, and September 1.** www.mostateparks.com 128 NW 150th Lane, Mindenmines, MO 417-843-6711

Groundhogs Prairie Maintenance, Snyder Prairie, 3rd Saturday of each month, 9:00am, page 1.

Douglas County Prairie Project Meetings, 7:00pm 1st Wednesday of each month in Lawrence. Contact Andrea at adheron@yahoo.com or call the office 913-262-3506 for details.

GHF Board Meetings, 2nd Wednesday of June, August, and October, 7:00pm in Lawrence.

Don't forget, you can pay your dues or make a contribution online at www.grasslandheritage.org using your credit card.