



Winter Edition

December 2025

Upcoming Events

Groundhogs Workdays

Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, KS
Weather dependent
See Page 8 for dates
Sign up for email updates at
ghlandmanagement@gmail.com

Board and Volunteer Chili Dinner

Sunday, January 11, 2026
2pm to 5pm
Sue & Steve Holcomb's
RSVP or info
sholc20003@yahoo.com

GHF Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 17, 2026
9:00am to noon Neosho CCC, 900
East Logan St, Ottawa, Kansas 66067

Talk by Stan Herd

Saturday, February 21, 2026
2pm Lawrence Public Library

IN THIS ISSUE

P. 2 President's Letter
P. 3 KU class volunteers
P. 3 Koziol talk
P. 4 5th Graders Plant a Prairie
P. 4 Hammer Park Sustaining Prairie
P. 5 Scholarship article Dung Beetles
P. 6 Members



Save the Date!

February 21, 2026 Talk by Stan Herd "An Artist's Life"

Artist Stan Herd will be giving a public talk in the afternoon of February 21, 2026 at 2:00pm at the Lawrence Public Library. Stan's talk—entitled "An Artist's Life"—is part of Grassland Heritage Foundation's "Prairie Presentations" series. Stan is well known for his use of plants, rocks, and soil to create landscape-scale works of art. As a native Kansan, he has a deep interest in the tallgrass prairie.



Native Plant Sale

Saturday, May 16, 2026 The 14th Annual Spring Native Plant Sale, Trinity Episcopal Church, 1011 Vermont Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Join GHF from 10:00am to 1:00pm for our sale of native wildflowers and grasses. Members will receive information about pre-ordering at reduced prices. If you want first pick of plants, be sure to join!

Annual Report in Brief

This past fiscal year was a period of transition, with the responsibility of compiling the annual report shifting in priority due to changes in the Program Manager role. To gain a comprehensive understanding of our recent activities, we recommend reviewing the last three newsletters, which provide detailed reporting. Below is a brief summary highlighting our key achievements and financial overview for the year.

- Held six official Board Meetings to guide organizational direction and governance.
- Maintained stewardship of three properties, ensuring their ongoing care and preservation.
- Organized and participated in numerous workdays at our prairies, as well as at Black-Jack Battlefield and Prairie Park in Lawrence, supporting hands-on conservation efforts.

(Continued on page 7)



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

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Editors: Sue Holcomb, Helen Alexander

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Brent Mortenson, Atchison
Andrea Repinsky, Lawrence
Sandy Sanders, Lawrence
Megan Withiam, Lawrence
Chip Taylor, *Emeritus*, Lawrence

Program Director
Kathy Denning
Preserve Manager
Nicole Stanton-Wilson

A Note from the President

The truth of the matter is that I don't like to do yard work. Honestly, I don't like to do work out in the prairie either, but I can make it palatable by reminding myself that prairie restoration is for the greater good and a lasting contribution to society. Plus, prairie work mostly doesn't overlap with hockey season, so there is limited danger of my missing any important games when I'm out spraying teasel. Yard work doesn't have the same redeeming value for me. It just feels tedious. Luckily, I have learned in recent years of a great new excuse to put off at least some of the yard work for a while.

It turns out that yards with a little bit of a mess are much better for insects, especially over the winter when the clutter provides needed shelter from the cold and snow. Fallen leaves are more than just a nuisance to rake off the lawn or clean out of the flower bed. They also represent an important habitat used by dozens of insect species to survive the winter. Even a partial list of the bugs that benefit is staggering – fireflies, walking sticks, pillbugs, wooly bears, great spangled fritillaries, luna moths and bucketloads of beetles all overwinter in some form among leaf litter. As you might suspect, many of these critters use leaf litter as a place to stash eggs or larvae. The decaying foliage provides thermal insulation and also traps moisture that protects the eggs from desiccation. However, some adult insects also hide out among the litter. The easiest of these adults to spot are mourning cloak butterflies. These are the dark purple butterflies with a yellow stripe along the hindwing that are often among the first big insects you see in early spring. They can emerge in such an advanced state because they overwinter in their adult form tucked deep into leaf piles.

Campaigns encouraging people to keep leaves in at least some parts of their yards have actually been around for a while. *Leave the Leaves* by the Xerces Society is the one I know best, and it's a message I've seen echoed elsewhere. Lately, the Xerces Society has also added a second plea to *Save the Stems*. This means not cutting down old flower stalks until springtime. Many native bees, whose populations are in a worrisome decline, rely on old stems throughout the year and especially in the winter. If possible, the recommendation is to leave as many of your old flower stalks as possible up and fully intact throughout the winter to provide cold winter habitat. Then, in spring cut the tops off the old stems at heights between 8 and 24 inches. Bees enter the stems through the open tops to lay their eggs.

In the end, the general lesson seems to be that nature is inherently messy, so that the messier you can make your yard the better it will be for wildlife. Naturally, how much mess you can tolerate will depend both on your own tastes and those of your neighbors. But if you can leave even a little bit of a mess, you will really help out native insects and save yourself a little labor to boot.

Mike Campbell shamsoup@yahoo.com



The winter look isn't the showiest, but it is best for the insects who overwinter in the "dead" material.

The Holcomb's
raingarden



University of Kansas class partners with GHF

This fall, Dr. Peggy Schultz (professor) and Reb Bryant (KU grad student and GHF board member) taught a unique course on tallgrass prairie restoration. To help students get “hands-on” experience, each student was required to spend 15 hours doing prairie-related work with a community non-profit organization. We were delighted that several students chose to volunteer with GHF.

Simon Parr and Olivia Oliva worked at GHF’s Snyder Prairie,



controlling the spread of rough-leaved dogwood by careful and targeted herbicide application. Although a native, dogwood stands can



become very dense, crowding out prairie plants. Students also collected native grass and wildflower seeds that will be used to increase plant diversity in recently disturbed areas at Snyder Prairie. Simon shared that the seed collection experience helped him gain new insights. For example, he began to understand “how seeds are collected and what proportion of seeds should be collected depending on a species’ population size and rarity.” GHF Preserve Manager, Nicole Stanton-Wilson appreciated both the students’ labor and their attitudes. She noted: “Simon and Olivia both demonstrated immense concern for the environmental challenges that we currently face, yet they have such excitement for the future and a belief in our collective ability to face and overcome at least some of these challenges. Hope and optimism were the true gifts I received from them.”

Another student, Quinn Franken, worked at BlackJack Nature Park. This park, near Baldwin City, is a significant Civil War site. The area also has a wonderful tallgrass prairie remnant and a prairie restoration that GHF has worked on in the past. Mike Campbell, GHF president,



helped Quinn learn how to cut and herbicide sumac and locust. Quinn commented: “This was my first time working on a restoration site, so I enjoyed being able to see the progress I was making and be out in nature. This experience showed me the amount of effort needed to upkeep restorations and the importance of community involvement in assuring restorations’ success.”

Nyah Noronha volunteered with Roxie McGee, GHF board member, at the Little Prairie Community Garden in Lawrence.

She spent time at this native plant demonstration garden, which included planting, watering, weeding, mulching, and collecting seeds. Nyah shared: “It was rewarding to contribute to both the health of the garden and the foundation’s mission of teaching the community about sustainable prairie gardening.”

Thanks so much to Peggy, Reb, and the KU class.



Fungi and Soil Health Liz Koziol

On Sunday, November 16, GHF hosted Dr. Liz Koziol at the Baker Wetlands Discovery Center, as part of our Prairie Presentations speaker series. Her talk, titled “Underground Allies: How Microbes Build the Prairie and Improve Soil Health” provided a glimpse into the fascinating interactions between plant roots and soil fungi that occur below our feet, but that many of us never consider. Dr. Koziol is an Assistant Research Professor at the Kansas Biological Survey & Center for Ecological Research. She is also the founder of *Mycobloom*, a company that sells mycorrhizal fungal spores that can be added to soil to promote the health of native plants.



You can watch a recording of the talk on our website, www.grasslandheritage.org. The video also features a brief introduction to the tallgrass prairie ecosystem by GHF board member Dr. Helen Alexander.

Helping 5th graders plant a prairie

Fifth graders at Limestone Community School in Lawrence are busy planning a prairie restoration at their school. Their teacher, Monica Funk, has shown great leadership behind the scenes—this is a “project-based learning” semester program where students are tasked with researching about prairies and making the plans.

This exciting project showcases how many community volunteers, and many conservation nonprofits, can work together to help promote prairie plantings. Sandy Sanders, a board member with GHF and Lawrence Bird Alliance (LBA), first met with Monica as part of LBA’s “Learning About Nature Project.” This 20-year-old project has resulted in thousands of kindergarten through 7th grade students visiting natural areas. Sandy recruited help from GHF board member Helen Alexander, who met with Monica and Sandy to think through the project and led a tour of the prairie restoration at Free State High School. Courtney Masterson, *below*, director of the Native Lands Restoration Collaborative (and former GHF board member), is advising on



the nitty-gritty of restoration planning including helping students collect seeds at local prairies and details of site preparation. Local naturalist Ken Lassman took the students on a walk at the remnant prairie at Prairie Park.

The new prairie site is now under a black plastic tarp to kill off lawn grasses and seeds—students will sow prairie seeds next spring. Can’t wait to see how this site will develop.



Scavenger Hunt in Clearwater, Kansas funded by Sustaining Prairies Grant



Hammers Prairie Park and Nature Center in Clearwater, Kansas sponsored a scavenger hunt to familiarize participants with native grasses planted at the park. Using money from the Sustaining Prairies Fund they held this activity in conjunction with the town’s fall festival. Money was used for equipment rental, water, and supplies. Stations were erected near identifiable stands of grasses and cards were used to mark grasses as they were found. A small prize was given for completing the activity. There were plans to leave the stations available for a month after the event.

Above Participants at a station in the park

Below Cards used for the hunt

Native Grass Scavenger Hunt Hammers Prairie Park & Nature Center – Clearwater, Kansas				
Big Bluestem	Little Bluestem	Indiangrass	Sideoats Grama	Blackwell Switchgrass

Funded by: Grassland Heritage Foundation, Sustaining Prairies Fund Grant

Join the Lordi-Markers in supporting the Sustaining Prairies Fund! Your contribution goes back into the community. Check that line on the form on page 7.

The Combined Roles of Temperature and Diet in Dung Beetle Development

Grassland Heritage Foundation provided partial funding of this project through the **Rachel Snyder Memorial Scholarship**

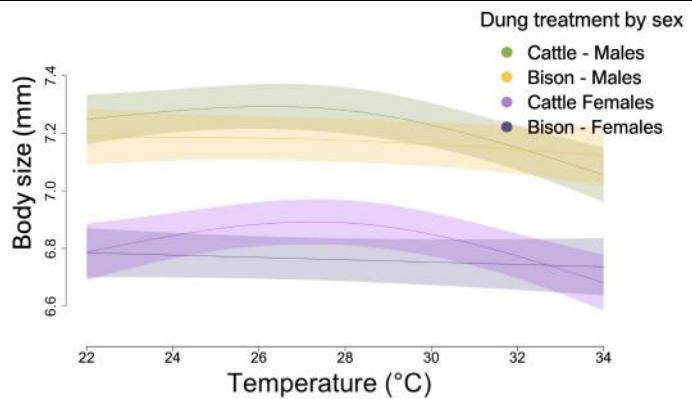
Bison were once the dominant herbivores shaping the tallgrass prairie. After European settlement, cattle took their place across much of the Great Plains. At the same time, like many regions, our prairies are warming as temperatures rise. As part of my MS research at Wichita State University in Mary Liz Jameson's lab, I set out to understand how shifts from bison to cattle and a warming climate might affect an important but often overlooked partner in grassland health: dung beetles.



Dung beetles help return nutrients to the soil, and larger beetles can move more dung underground. That means anything that affects their growth could influence how well they support prairie soils. Although diet and temperature are each known to independently have effects on the size of dung beetles, we aimed to test how these two factors interact to shape development.

We bred the dung beetle *Digitonthophagus gazella* in cattle and bison dung across seven different temperatures. Beetles were given either cattle or bison dung, after which females packed 'brood balls' of dung and laid an egg in each. Brood balls serve as a developing larva's entire food source until it emerges as an adult, after which it stops growing. Each brood ball and developing beetle within (bison = 183, cattle = 277), were randomly assigned to be put in one of seven environmental growth chambers set to 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32 and 34 °C. Once adult beetles emerged from the brood balls, body size was measured.

Beetles fed different kinds of dung during development exhibited different responses to temperature. For beetles reared in bison dung, body size did not change across temperatures. However, those reared in cattle dung emerged as larger beetles at intermediate (26-30°C) temperatures than those at colder (22-24°C) or warmer (32-34°C) temperatures. This effect of diet was consistent between male and female beetles. This suggests that dung beetles with access to cattle dung will emerge at smaller adult body sizes with further increases in



temperature. Regardless of the dung treatment, higher temperatures were associated with faster development, suggesting that dung beetles will emerge earlier in the season as temperatures increase.

The interactive effects of diet quality and temperature on dung beetle development demonstrate that responses to one factor are not always fixed and can vary with changes in another. To accurately predict how organisms will respond to changing climates, it is essential to evaluate how thermal responses are altered by other factors such as diet quality.

The generous support of the Rachel Snyder Scholarship allowed me to purchase the supplies needed for my breeding experiments, and the foundation laid by this project helped launch the next steps in my career. I graduated from Wichita State University with my MS degree in 2024. Since then, I have continued to study beetles as a research intern in Taiwan at Academia Sinica and have begun a PhD at the University of Montana, where I study the evolution of beetle weapons. I am grateful to the Grassland Heritage Foundation for their support of my research and their advocacy for grassland ecosystems.

Max Proctor



Max Proctor (taken from the University of Montana website)

Your contribution can be designated for the Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship Fund. Help us help more student researchers.

Our Members from September 1, 2024 to Present

Ted Abel	Jane Drury	Carol & Dave Kyner	Cynthia Rhodes
Helen Alexander	Valerie Eakes-Kann	Marie Alice L'Heureux	Courtney Masterson & Ryan Riedel
Jenny Archibald	Annabelle Eason	Katy Lange	Julie Roberts
Ang Babbit	Georgann Eglinski	Brendy Latare	Mary Roberts
Andi Back	Melissa Eichman	Shaheen Latif	Regina Rohlfs
Sara Baer	Julie Elfving	Myron Leinwetter	Janet Roth
Marlene Bailey	Meredith Falkenstien	Dennis & Susan Lordi Marker	Tyson Russell
Debra Baker	Kasey Fickel	Margie Lundy	Fred & Jenna Sack
Lisa Ball	Carol Fields	Carol Lunn	Ann Sagan
Judi Barkema	John Flavin	Malika Lyon	Byril Sanders
Mary Barnes	Anne Fluker	David Marker	Carol Schmitt
Ashly Basgall	Beth Foerster	Barbara Mason & Ron Christ	Julie Schwarting
Emily Blodgett-Panos	Karen & Carl Folsom	Tom & Terri Matches	Barbara Schwering
Ann Marie Boncella	Jennifer Forth	Douglas May	Stephen & Cynthia Seirer
Janet Bouley & John Robertson	Anne Fowler	Roxie & John McGee	Micah Seybold
Marla Brandon	Christina Gallick	Sally McGee	Emily Shepherd
Gary & Millie Brooks	Leslie Gerstenkorn	Kay McKenny	Sharon Joseph & Kevin Siek
Stan Brower	Tracey Graham	Katherine McMillan	Ann Simpson
Kurt Brown	Renee Grandiflora	Michele McNulty	Gary Sims
Marie Grace Brown	Kendra Harnden	Mark & Ronda Meyer	Nancy Sirico
Patricia Brown	Becky Harpstrite	Florence & Robert Middleton	Sarah Smarsh
Denise Brubaker	Mary Haskin	Steven & Crystal Miles	Debbe Smith
Kaywin & Regina Bryant	Susan Hazlett	Elizabeth Miller & Lindy Eakin	John & Patricia Solbach
Dava Buhrlie	Hazlett Henderson	Melody Miller	Susan Stahl
James Burbage	Terri Herman	Darla Mitchell	Nicole Stanton-Wilson
Judy Burch	Edie Higgins	Carol Morgan	Mandy Stark Culbertson
Bob Burns	Stephen Hight	Wayne Morton	Hope Steinle
Bill & Ann Busby	Todd Hindman	Tom & Jamie Krehbiel Mulder	Joe Stellwagon
Jan Butin	Sally Hoffsommer-Brecheisen	Kenneth & Gayle Nicolay	Ruth Stepien
Mike & Julie Campbell	Jessie Hogan	Renee Nixon	Al & Linda Storms
Angela Candela	Steve & Sue Holcomb	Stan & Sandy Nolind	Anthony Taylor
Daren Carlisle	Thad Holcombe	Kelly Overstreet	Judith & Rodney Taylor
Steve Case & Deborah Garnett	Elisabeth Hooper	Melissa Parsons	Chip & Toni Taylor
Lisa Castle	Donna Horn	Bitsey Patton	Clint Thrasher
Jay Chatham	Marie Hunter	Cynthia Pederson	Jay Van Blaricum
Christine Chulick	Laird & Carol Ingham	Jacob Penner	Silke von Esenwein
Barbara Clark	Earl & Susan Iversen	Ricky J Peterson	David Wagner
Keith Coleman	Cameron Johnson	Chad Phillips	Maggie Wagner
Jane Cotitta	Jonathan Jones	Susan Phillips	Ozark Wilderness Waterways Club
Julia & John Cotter	Jana Jorn	Alexis Powell	Christina Hauck & Margaret Wheeler
Bruce & Lucy Cutler	Pat & Ned Kehde	Mary Powell	Jack & Cindy Wlliams
Jim & Ann Davin	Sally Kennett	Kellee Pratt	Kathy Witherspoon
Jennifer Delisle	Joan Kenny	Will Pyles	Pat Wittry
Kathy & Patrick Denning	Jill Kleinberg	Durand Reiber	Kevin Wray, Wray Roofing, Inc
Kali Deno	Jessica Kleoppel	Shannon Reid	Christine Yoder
Lori Disney	Mary Kowalski	Cathy Reinhardt	James Young
Karen Dove	Tad & Margaret Kramar	Andrea Repinsky	

Thank you for these special gifts

Welcome New Members: *Cameron Johnson, Katherine McMillan, Melody Miller*

Returning Members After Lapse: *Jane Cotitta, Thad Holcombe, Joan Kenny*

Education Fund: *Melissa Eichman, Kasey Fickel, Steve & Sue Holcomb, Earl & Susan Iversen*

Prairie Management Fund: *Kelly Overstreet*

Prairie Protection Fund: *Jane Cotitta, Carol & Dave Kyner, Katherine McMillan*

Match for Sustaining Prairies Fund: *Byril Sanders*

Memory of Rachel Snyder: *Ozark Wilderness Waterways Club*

In Honor of Marie Grace Brown to recognize her love of prairies and grasslands: *Kurt Brown*

A special thank you to **Jay Chatham** for a generous gift to the Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship Fund enabling us to grant awards to graduate researchers.

Thank you to **Dennis & Susan Lordi Marker** whose donations fund the Sustaining Prairie Grants

We depend on your contributions! Please help GHF protect prairie by sending your donation today. The date of your last contribution is printed above your name on the mailing label. Send this form to: Grassland Heritage Foundation, PO Box 394, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201

Membership Categories: \$20 Friend \$35 Family \$50 Steward \$100 Sustaining \$250 Conserver
 \$500 Patron \$1000 Benefactor \$5000 Founder \$15 Student/Retiree

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Contact me about volunteering

Gift in *honor* or *memory* of (mark which) _____

Your contribution will support prairie conservation in the general fund unless you designate your donation for:

- Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship
- Prairie Protection
- Education Programs
- Prairie Management
- Match for Sustaining Prairies

You can also send membership renewals and donations to GHF online at www.grasslandheritage.org

(Continued from page 1 Annual Report)

Successfully completed work under one Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grant, with the final government payment received.

Sponsored one major program event during the year, enhancing outreach and engagement. Program manager held several other educational activities.

Conducted three plant sales, which contributed to both fundraising and community involvement.

Awarded six scholarships to support conservation and research activities.

Granted seven Sustaining Prairie Grants, furthering management and educational use of prairie plantings

Financial Overview

Fund	Income	Expenses
General Fund	\$55,892	\$23,235
Education Fund	\$1,335	\$12,367
Scholarship Fund	\$21,530	\$11,850
Prairie Maintenance	\$5,578	\$21,915
Prairie Protection	\$739	\$0
Total	\$85074	\$69367

Funds from grants we received went through Prairie Maintenance. Scholarship Funds are being held for future years. The Program Director is paid through the Education Fund with transfers from the General Fund.

Thank you

To *Helen Alexander*, for her efforts in organizing and advertising this Fall's Prairie Presentations event, and for her excellent introductory speech about the tallgrass prairie ecosystem.

To *Liz Koziol*, for sharing her work on soil mycorrhizal fungi with Grassland Heritage and the broader community in her talk this November

To all the participants in Groundhogs who cut and treated dogwood stumps, sprayed sericea, and collected seeds, and all the other jobs of prairie maintenance: *Laird Ingham, Brent Mortensen, Chris Carter, David Carter, Lauren Stachew, Olivia Howgill, Ann Davin, Jay Van Blaricum, Benjamin Morales*

To the volunteers who assisted at the fall plant sale, *Ann Davin, Helen Alexander, Roxie McGee, Laird Ingham, Jennifer Delisle, Sue & Steve Holcomb*. Thank you to *Cottins* for hosting us.

To *Kevin Bachkora* for continued accounting assistance

If we don't have an email address for you and you want to be notified of events, please go to the web site www.grasslandheritage.org and under the Contact GHF tab, Sign up for Emails.

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Enjoy your newsletter in full color on our website: www.grasslandheritage.org.



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Groundhogs is our prairie maintenance group that contributes physical labor of all sorts from cutting woodies, spraying invasives, collecting seeds, and everyone's favorite, controlled burns, at our *Snyder Prairie near Mayetta, Kansas*.

Contact Nicole Stanton-Wilson if you're interested and she'll add you to the email list. ghlandmanagement@gmail.com
2026 Tentative Dates are January 10, February 14, & March 14.

Potential burn dates Weather dependent
Sat/Sun Dec 13/14, Jan 03/04, Jan 10/11



September Groundhogs at Snyder Prairie with Down Gentian, a fairly rare plant

Scholarships and Grants

Grassland Heritage sponsors the *Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship* for students doing research on prairie topics. Graduate student projects will be given priority. Last year we awarded \$5000 to six students. Deadline is February 28.

The *Sustaining Prairies Fund* is a recent program started to assist schools and other groups with prairie plantings that are open to the public. Our funds can be used for site maintenance or to increase the educational value of the planting. Deadlines will be January 30 and again July 30.

Be sure to check our website www.grasslandheritage.org for updates on all these programs!

Want to see this newsletter in color? Check it out on the web or watch for an email.