

The Nature Conservancy

Oklahoma Chapter

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Docent NEWSSSSSSS

July 1995

Calf Count

114 bison calves were born at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve this spring which brings our herd to just over 450 animals.

Management Plan Update

There were several facets to the first phase of the Conservancy's management plan: securing property and funding for the core preserve, conducting baseline research, reintroducing fire and bison -- the forces under which the prairie evolved -- while building better relationships within the community.

We started with just under 30,000 acres and now have almost 37,000 including leased property. Scientists are up to 500 identified plant species and counting on the baseline research. We have completed two years of rotational burning and held our first round-up. This spring produced the first calf crop conceived on the preserve. The Conservancy has built strong ties in the community by voluntarily paying almost \$20,000 in property taxes, hiring and buying locally, working with the Osage tribe and some of the independent oil producers to drill seven new wells on the preserve, and helping control wildfires and setting controlled burns on our neighbors' land.

Although work will continue in these areas, it is time to move into the next phase. A great deal of research is needed to understand what Mother Nature knew intuitively. Funding from the A. H. Mellon Foundation is helping the Conservancy better understand the dynamics of grassland, fire and grazing. A three-year study is being conducted on Conservancy properties, including Cross Ranch, the Konza Prairie, Niobrara and Tallgrass Prairie Preserves. Research plots are set in the cattle units, the bison unit and ungrazed areas. Studies are conducted on plants, birds and insects. The Sutton Avian Research Center is in the third year of researching neo-tropical migrant birds. Brian Coppage is researching bison behavior and contrasting that to how we thought they would behave. This involves countless hours of observing the animals' behavior, along with extensive testing of fecal and plant samples.

All the parts are in place. The research is helping the Conservancy manage chaos, the natural order of things. For example, this year we adjusted both the number of acres burned and the burn pattern in the cattle grazing unit. No doubt that will shift again at other points. Have you noticed the difference in broadleaf plants this year? The bison/fire/weather interaction has already resulted in changed plant composition. The same plants are there, yet the numbers vary. We are starting to see the higher successional species in greater numbers. If you had hiked the nature trail in early '92 and stood at the number 1 position, which marks an area that had previously been heavily disturbed, you would have seen mostly broom weed. This spring the area was covered with daisy fleabane.



Remember, the Conservancy is restoring the evolutionary forces under which the prairie evolved before naturally occurring fires were suppressed and bison were nearly extirpated. It will be fun to see the changes and to realize the cause and effect of each behavior.

Preserve Visitation

Today I received June's visitation statistics from George Meyers. A total of 1700 visitors signed the Preserve's guest register in June. That number is up 11.2% over the same time last year. On the whole, visitation is up 15.7% over 1994. June set an all-time record for gift shop gross sales--\$5000+. Congratulations!

Restroom

Profits from the Docent gift shop are being used to build a ladies restroom (a 3-holer) and install an air conditioner in the docent office. Sue has done an excellent job of stocking the shop with desirable merchandise. Perhaps you have noticed that the book selection is building a reputation for quality.

You can see that the time you donate profits the preserve in many different ways--both tangible and intangible. Because there are no payroll costs associated with the gift shop, prices can be competitive with stores in town while the program earns money to invest in the preserve. On behalf of The Nature Conservancy and our visitors, thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Before leaving this subject, let me say that there is no longer hot water in the docent restroom. That water line which, was fed from the main house, ruptured and we have no immediate plans to replace it. Hot water is still available in the public restroom.

Tick Notice

Our unusually mild winter and wet spring has produced a bumper crop of ticks. Encourage our visitors to take appropriate precautions. Recommend insect repellent and suggest that they always check themselves for ticks after visiting the preserve.

Training

Several of you have expressed an interest in leading nature trail hikes. To that end the folks from Oxley Nature Center in Tulsa will be working with Harvey and Dick to offer a training session at the preserve Saturday, August 26 from 9:30 to 12:30. Oxley's leaders are recognized as being among the best in this region. They also do training for the Tulsa Zoo Docents. Topics will include: the art of keeping participants interested, as well as how to interpret nature. Attending the session would be worthwhile even if you do not want to lead tours. For those do, we are planning to offer interpretive hikes in September and October. These will be announced in ample time for hikers sign up on a first come/first serve basis.

Year End

Plans are underway for a spectacular year-end "thank you" event for our docents. Insofar as possible keep your calendar flexible for the last few weekends in October. We will announce the time and date in the next newsletter after everything has been finalized.

Alternate Routes

In the event you have not discovered it, highway 11 in Skiatook floods when we have a heavy rainstorm. On those days, it is best to take the Cimarron Turnpike (highways 64/51/412) through Sand Springs to the highway 99 exit at Cleveland. From there head north through Hominy and Wynona, picking up the familiar road south of Pawhuska.

On my last trip to the Preserve, I discovered a new route from Tulsa which I liked. Take highway 75 past the highway 20 exit approximately 2.5 miles, to 156 Street North. Besides the 156 Street North sign, there is also a historical marker sign at that intersection. Turn west and the road will eventually intersect with highway 11 north of Skiatook. Although there is a sharp turn near the end, the road is good and allows you to avoid the construction in Skiatook.

Docent Duty

If you are scheduled to work and cannot, remember that it is your responsibility to find a replacement. After you have tried all alternatives, please call Dick Baker or Sue Wheeler to notify them rather than just not showing up. It happened that the preserve was not staffed or short staffed on more than one day this summer. This is especially troublesome when tour groups were expecting a docent to be present.

Greeting Visitors

First impressions are always important and we want to make visitors feel that we're glad they're here. Suggested greetings might include:

"Welcome to the Tallgrass Prairie. Is this your first visit to the preserve? How did you learn about the preserve?," etc. Give them sufficient time to stretch and get their bearings then orient them. Point out the restrooms and the gift shop; suggest that perhaps they might like to look at the bunkhouse interior through the windows. Spontaneous conversation is always best, of course, but you should be able to acquaint them with The Nature Conservancy and its mission. Explain that the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve is owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy or suggest that they read this information on the bulletin board. Incidentally, we recommend the bulletin board as a good source of information for our docents as well.

Nashville Bound

The Conservancy has offered me a promotion and although it is not easy to leave the Tallgrass or you, I cannot afford to pass the opportunity. On Friday, July 14, the moving van and I are heading to Nashville where I will become Director of Development for The Nature Conservancy's Tennessee Chapter. It has been my privilege to work with you and I hope you will stop by our office if you are when you are in Tennessee. There will always be a special place in my heart for what we have done here. It is good work!

One thing that has made the transition easier is knowing that the docent program will remain strong. Dick Baker and Sue Wheeler have agreed to lead the program on an interim basis until a new Volunteer/Community Outreach Coordinator is hired.

Marty

July 28, 1995

Dear Docents:

It has only been two weeks since you received Marty's last letter but, in attempting to keep our communications flowing, usually at the first of each month, here is your PRAIRIE NEWS.

NAMES IN THE NEWS

- Ted Holsomback, Volunteer Workday Crew Leader and longtime active Prairie person, is recovering from a "mild" heart attack suffered in early July. I've heard "mild" heart attacks and "minor" surgeries defined as "those incurred by others"...Ted said it wasn't any fun. We're looking forward to having the (now) smoke free and (more) svelte Ted (and Jan) back with us soon.
- Mark Andrews (during July) developed one of the tick spread diseases that are discussed in the attached article. His disease type is yet to be determined by the CDC in Atlanta. Per Faye, she and Mark had picked approximately 50 ticks from the two of them, while walking the short trail. Interestingly, on July 1, I took five friends to the Prairie and walked the short trail. At the trail head, a visitor advised that she had picked at least 25 huge ticks from her shoes and she had not yet walked the trail. Our group had washed with Irish Spring, rubbed on Skin-so-soft and sprayed with OFF. We were a messy group, but zero ticks!
- Marty Marina finally got moved on July 15. She is an extremely resourceful, energetic, results oriented lady and was a real advocate for the Prairie Docents/Volunteers, having accomplished a lot in our behalf. State Director, Brita Cantrell has had many applications for the new Community Outreach/Education Coordinator and is currently conducting interviews.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Enclosed are your August/September Docent duty calendars, thanks to Judy Roberts. Please confirm (for yourself) that your schedule is as agreed to.
- Other scheduled events to be noted are:

August 19	Ben Johnson Day
August 26	Trail Training (see below)
September 9	Volunteer Workday
October 14	Volunteer Workday
November 11	Volunteer Workday

MISCELLANEOUS

- The Docent office Air-conditioner was installed on July 12th.
- The new ladies restroom was completed in July. (These two projects were funded by our Gift Shop profits. Thanks to all!)

- The new Preserve Area Map (including this year's Bison Pasture expansion) was put in the breezeway bulletin board on July 14th. Familiarize yourself with it, so that you can explain it to your visitors.
- The Oklahoma Field Office (downtown Tulsa) has moved from 320 S. Boston to 23 West 4th St, Suite 200. Phone number remains the same (918-585-1117).
- New Prairie Preserve Brochures with updated map and text, will be available at the Preserve soon. After becoming familiar with them, take 2-3 to hand out to others (at work, church, little league, etc.) interested in the Prairie. Along that line, please pass on to us names of any contacts you have who might be interested in becoming Docents or Volunteers. Your REFERRALS are our best source of new recruits. Also, bring them to the scheduled work days in September, October and November. That has been the first exposure for many of our current Docents. During our Fall '95 workdays we will be painting the Bison working pens and will need lots of hands.
- As Marty mentioned in her last newsletter, we have some frequently requested and long awaited DOCENT TRAINING scheduled for Saturday, August 26. Lynda Fritts from the Oxley Nature Center, assisted by Harvey Payne will instruct us on how to lead interpretive Nature Trail Hikes. The training will start at the Barnard House at 9:30 a.m. (sharp) and conclude on the trail around 1:00 p.m. Bring your lunch and outdoor gear (as always) and join us. Enrollment is limited. So, please call in your reservation to the office at 918-585-1117 by August 11, we will arrange car pooling list. Lynda promises that there will be fun and surprises and you will learn without realizing it (so it won't hurt). She sounds very enjoyable...and is ready for us.
- We are in the process of creating alliances with more groups at the Prairie. A student/faculty group from Tulsa University will join us on August 24 to engage in the fine arts of painting corrals and buildings. The administration at Oklahoma Baptist University (at Shawnee) wants their faculty/students to develop an ongoing relationship at the Prairie. Why? Their school mascot is the Bison and their campus was built on the site of some buffalo wallows. Would some of you Docents please help explain to these acamedicians how Bison make Buffalo wallows? Let others know what is going on at the Prairie, so that we might also involve them.

When serving on Docent Days, please:

- Fill out a yellow, numbered sales slip for each customer and mail to Sue, restock the merchandise (from storage cabinet/office), and turn off the air-conditioner prior to leaving.
Water the (small) trees and flowers as needed.

Did you notice that:

- Our Spring wild flowers came in mid July this year? Mother Nature did a great job...on her schedule.
- A pair of swallows nested on the porch ceiling next to Mr. Barnard's room and raised a nest full of babies?

See you at the Prairie!


Dick

3. Sprinkling sulphur powder, usually available at Farm Supply and War surplus stores, inside your clothing in tight spots, like waist band and boot tops.
4. Frequently used are the commercial aerosol sprays, available at drug, sporting goods and outdoor departments - like Off, Deep Woods, Muskol, etc. Due to recently identified medical problems, these products, which seem to be quite effective, need to be used with CAUTION. The higher the DEET content, as displayed on the container, the greater the caution. DEET content can vary from 20% to 100%. 20% DEET sprays probably aren't very effective, while 100% would zap an armadillo. So, somewhere in between would work fine. These sprays should probably not be used on children (except for low DEET), direct to your skin (OK on clothing), more than twice a day and definitely not into eyes or mouth. If improperly applied, the sprays can produce a rash, throat irritation or in extreme cases - central nervous system problems. Again, these products are effective but do warrant your precautions.
5. Clothing washed in Permanone (developed for the armed forces), are said to repel well. For \$5-6 worth of this product (available from farm and surplus stores) you are said to get enough for 3 clothes washings.
6. By wearing light colored, cover up clothes (long sleeve shirt, long pants and hat) you or your companion can easily see the large ticks and deflect them before they get to your skin.

The preventative measures in 1-5 above, obviously employ the tactic of helping you to smell strong enough to encourage these smallest members of the ecosystem to dine elsewhere. However, your previous level of social acceptability will be restored by your next bath/shower.

Any/all preventative alternatives mentioned above must be used prior to encountering ticks. It seems that some people are just not bothered by ticks - while others literally attract them. So, your level of attention to them will vary accordingly.

Complete removal of ticks, before they are totally imbedded, is important. Specifically directed heat, alcohol, gasoline, sprays (above), might help back them out of skin. Don't leave part imbedded. Use fingers or tweezers to remove. Inspect "sensitive" areas of your body. Wash bitten areas with antiseptic. Also, wash your hands with soap after dispelling ticks. Contact your medical service immediately, if you suspect a problem.



Dick Baker

July 28, 1995

THE ECOSYSTEM BITES BACK

or

It's Tick Time in Oklahoma

We always have ticks in Oklahoma. Their numbers (and types) vary with location, season, weather, animal populations, etc... but, they are always with us. Obviously, ticks are most noticeable in the wet and hot months/years. So, for your awareness/information, this is a compilation of tick data, gathered from various sources over the last several years.

Tick Types.

In Oklahoma, we have at least four types of ticks - the Dog, Deer, Wood and Lonestar varieties. Some are as small as the dot on the i - others can be as large as a 1/4" in diameter - even before eating on a blood source. They seek blood from humans/mammals.

Disease Carriers.

All ticks are annoying. Some carry and can transmit diseases...either Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Lyme Disease or Ehrlichiosis (This is so new that it has not yet received a colloquialized name).

Symptoms.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever has been around for many years and can produce a rash on hands and feet, high fever, head and muscle ache, chills and fatigue. This fever can be fatal, if untreated.

Lyme Disease has been known for 10-15 years. It is carried and can be spread by the tiny Deer Tick. Being somewhat difficult to identify, Lymes is often called the "Great Pretender". Its symptoms are a red rash, which can move around the body (4-20 days after being bitten), a distinctive quarter size red bulls eye, and flu like symptoms. If untreated, Lyme Disease can result in meningitis, Bell's palsy (facial paralysis), arthritis, or mental deterioration.

Ehrlichiosis has been identified this year in thirty states, including Oklahoma. Most of its symptoms are like Lymes. Unfortunately, it does not produce the classic Bull's Eye so, it is harder to identify. Doctors are said to successfully treat both Lymes and Ehrlichiosis with the same drug, Doxycycline.

But, as always, PREVENTION is better than treatment. There are various preventatives available - each having its own advocates/detractors. Some alternatives are:

1. Begin bathing with Irish Spring Soap, which is available at most stores, for a day or so prior to exposure.
2. Apply Avon's Skin So Soft oil, which is available only from Avon Salespersons, to your skin.

AUGUST

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 David Turner Dorothy Buck	3	4 Sue Wheeler Karen Harris	5 Lee Spence Marilyn Loveall Nicki Merritt
6 Pinki & Ralph Tolson	7	8	9 Marilyn Keefer Dave Dolcater	10	11 Kendall Smith Donna Jones	12 Barbara & Don Sweeney
13 Dean & Mary Johnston	14	15	16 Floyd & Virginia Phariss	17	18 Jo Brooks Carol Eames	19 Eleanore Bodenhamer Jo Brooks BEN JOHNSON DAYS
20 Renee & Gary Weyl	21	22	23 Mary & Bob Reeves Callie & Bennie Heinz	24 TU FROSH WORKDAY	25 Stu Marshall Duane Lester Iris McPherson	26 Anne Johnson Iris McPherson Duane Lester DOCENTS INTERPRETIVE TRAINING
27 Terra Sterne William Mosier	28	29	30 Al & Liz Medley	31		

SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Bill Johnson Liz Medley	2 Lee Spence Marilyn Loveall Nicki Merritt
3 Jo Brooks Bill Dinger	4 Marilyn Fugate Linda Meistrell LABOR DAY	5	6 Marilyn Keefer Dave Dolcater	7	8 Carol Eames David Turner	9 Kristen Howald Sue Wheeler
10 Dorothy Buck Vera & George Meyers	11	12	13 Mary & Dean Johnston	14	15 Terra Sterne Duane Lester	16 Anne Johnson Iris McPherson
17 Harold Murnan Cheryl Kilpatrick	18	19	20 Al & Liz Medley	21	22 Barbara Strahm Dick Baker	23 Barbara & Don Sweeney
24 Barbara Marashi Karen Harris	25	26	27 Mary & Bob Reeves Callie & Bennie Heinz	28	29 Joan Fuller Anne Johnson	30 Marci & Mark Hendricks