

The Nature Conservancy

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

Docent Newsletter - - - -



October 1996

This 'N That from Mary McIntyre, Education and Outreach Coordinator

Greetings from the Oklahoma Field Office - As usual, fall is a busy time. I hope that all of you are enjoying the beautiful weather and the beauty around you!

Exciting things are in store for the Docent Program and the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Six of us have attended training at Oxley Nature Center this month in preparation for designing our own trail guide program. We will experiment with a few school groups this fall, and then enlist your help/participation next spring as we plan for the coming year!

The road up to the south border of the preserve has been "paved". Now that the gravel has settled, this is a much cleaner, safer surface -- although you should still watch your speed on those sneaky curves!

At the "T" where the pavement stops and the Tallgrass Preserve sign is visible, will be the site of our new "education center!" As you are stopped at the "T", look slightly to the right before the landscape dips to the Creek. This is the prospective site, with the new nature trail to be located off to the north and east, running along the Creek at some points. We are projecting that this new Center, which will house the Gift Shop, Educational Exhibits and a small auditorium, may be a reality within three years! The new trail is expected to be ready within two years.

Thank you all for your work this past year! We have another two months to go before the season is complete. We have staffed the preserve for more hours and assisted more visitors than ever before. Much thanks!!

Bison Roundup

The bison roundup is nearly here! Note that this is NOT a public event. This is a very frightening and potentially dangerous event for the bison, and also a stressful event for cowboys! Anything can happen, which is why visitors are discouraged. The event will happen sometime in late October or early November over a period of several days.

Veterinarian schedules and weather will determine the exact timing. It is suggested that if you would like to attend, the later part of the roundup would be the best time. Please call the office in late October to see when Tulsa staff will be at the Preserve who could accompany you to the corral and answer questions. Safety for both bison and people is our biggest concern!

Tallgrass Prairie News

- from Harvey Payne, Director and Bob Hamilton, Director of Science and Stewardship.

Update on the Bison Corral - the finishing touches have been made on the hydraulic sorting gates in front of the squeeze shoots! More catwalk has been added to the east side. Currently, the cowboys are finishing the addition of two more pens on the north side.

The bison can be found grazing throughout the bison unit. They are beginning to break from the large herd into smaller groups. Physically, they are at their fittest - fat, sleek and beginning to grow their winter coats. A final count on the number of baby bison born this year will not be available until after the roundup, but estimates number 150-160.

Research projects currently involve Sericea lespedeza, an exotic, noxious weed on the preserve. Spraying is underway, as well as studies of the effects of summer burns on this plant.

The Preserve is still behind in total annual rainfall amounts, although they have experienced some good September rains. Birds can be seen migrating as are monarch butterflies! Asters, especially goldenrod, are blooming. Other fall flowers which are numerous include Broom weed, Pitcher's sage and gayfeather (Liatris spp).

A note from Harvey Payne --- "Congratulations, Docents, on the best year yet!!!"

DOCENT APPRECIATION DINNER, OCT. 12 - Reservations Required!

- Iris McPherson, Docent Activities Coordinator

The annual Docent Appreciation Dinner will take place Oct. 12 at the Prairie Flower in the Mercantile Building located at 6th and Kihekah in Pawhuska. We will gather at 6:00 p.m., and dinner will be served at 6:30. You will find the decor at the Prairie Flower interesting, a mix of antiques and other interesting items. It should be a pleasant evening of visiting with other docents you may not get to see very often and enjoying a good meal served in an elegant manner. There will be awards presented, after which we will stroll down to the Constantine Theater for a program. A member of the Constantine Arts Council will present a program about the theater. Mark your calendars and be sure to make your reservations by October 2nd by calling Connie at (918) 585-1117. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Staff NOTE: Please return your RSVP card indicating what your choice of menu for the dinner will be. (If you have misplaced your RSVP card, call Connie at the Tulsa office, 585-1117.) Reservations cannot be accepted after October 2.

Notice: Only money from gift shop purchases should be deposited with the daily bank deposit! This deposit goes directly to the home office. Any donations to The Nature Conservancy, membership applications or enrollment in the Adopt-A-Bison program should be placed in the donation box near the guest register to be appropriately handled. Thanks!

Visitation - George Meyers - Visitation Records

Total visitors for August were 1030, a drop of 35.5% from August 1995 and a 24.4 percent drop from July 1996. 335 visitors arrived from 38 states other than Oklahoma. Twenty visitors came from 11 foreign countries, equalling the statistic from 1995 for this month.

The totals for the year, as of the end of August, were as follows:

8723 total visitors (down 2.2% from last year);

2594 visitors from other states (up 3.7% over last year);

156 foreign visitors (same as last year)

We hope the decrease in visitation was due to the hot weather, and that things will pick up during the fall --- George Meyers

ANNUAL SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP! During the month of November, all docents and staff of The Oklahoma Nature Conservancy will receive a 20 percent discount on all purchases at the Gift Shop. This includes commission art work. Please write a yellow ticket as usual and sign your name on it!

SCHEDULING Information - Please check both sides of the accompanying calendar for the dates for which you have signed up in October and November. Many dates are still empty, or contain only one name. Please call the office at 585-1117 to add your name to the calendar. Those with dates showing only their name should check with the field office a few days before their shift to determine if they have a partner. We will staff the preserve through November 20 only, due to unpredictable weather and holidays after that date.

????????????? What is the Docent Council?????????????

Some of the 1996 docents have raised this question. The Docent Council is made up of voluntary members who help the field office manage the Docent Program (coordinating training, recruitment, events, workdays, speakers, etc.) Council members meet two or three times during the winter for planning purposes. Members have job descriptions for the positions noted in the questionnaire, and perform that job over the course of the year. Council job duties are performed in addition to volunteering for shifts at the Preserve. If you are interested in participating in the council, contact Mary McIntyre at 918-585-1117.

HOPE TO SEE YOU OCTOBER 12 at the Docent Appreciation Dinner!!!!