

The Nature Conservancy

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE



Docent Newsletter - - - -

June 1997

This n' That - Mary McIntyre, Education and Outreach Coordinator

Welcome to Summer 1997! Our program keeps growing and the people keep coming to see the Prairie! What a great group of docents we have this year! Call or come visit the Tulsa office any time. Your suggestions and comments are always welcome.

Tours of the Headquarters Building - Last year we added an opportunity for visitors to enter the headquarters building with access limited to the dining room ONLY. Please follow this rule and don't allow visitors to go into the living room, kitchen or bedrooms. Apparently some kids have been jumping on the beds! Thanks for your cooperation!

Nature Exhibit Room - Doris Mayfield has been doing an excellent job pulling things together for the new Nature Exhibit Room, just across the hall from the gift shop. Our target date to open is JUNE 1!! You may unlock and open the door to this room when the gift shop is open. Exhibits will include bones, feathers, nests, the BIG FOUR grass display and herbarium specimens. NOTE: Please DON'T move the grass outside anymore! We are risking breaking off the grasses. This display should stay in the room. Thanks!

Bob has asked that you please remember to check the supply of brochures in the visitor sign-in box outside the gift shop. There are extra brochures located in the docent office.

About thirty of us crammed into the living room at the headquarters to hear Mary Barnard Lawrence on May 17! What fun it was to hear Mary reminisce about growing up and working at the ranch. A dozen or so stayed on into the afternoon to learn more about spring wildflowers with Bob Hamilton. It was a great day!

Stay tuned for more training opportunities and fun get-togethers this summer! Meanwhile, enjoy this beautiful late spring weather!

WORKDAY - JUNE 7 -

YES - we still do Prairie Workdays!! Our Spring/summer workday has been set for Saturday, June 7 from 9:30 until 3:30. Meet at the headquarters building by 9:15 and join a work party. We will be collecting trash, maintaining and cleaning up the trail, and getting ready for Heritage Day/Cowboy Reunion the following Saturday (June 14). Come dressed to work, bring trash bags, work gloves, water, your lunch, sunscreen, bug repellent, clipping tools, etc. Your help is needed! Jane Holsomback will be leading this workday, and may be recruiting others to help with small groups. Give her a call at 918/669-7089 if you would like to help with a group.

Visitation - George Meyers

During April, 1055 visitors signed in at Preserve Headquarters. 333 were from states other than Oklahoma (35 different ones plus Guam!); 51 were from 11 other countries. These numbers bring our year-to-date totals up to 2546 visitors, up 8.5 percent from last year. Of the 668 Oklahoma visitors, 40.7 percent of them checked the column indicating they were at the Preserve for the first time. Saturdays and Sundays continue to be the most popular days, with most visitors arriving between 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. (George wants all docents to continue to encourage visitors to sign the register!)

Gift Shop Report - Sue Wheeler

Will you miss me when I'm gone? It's a question of who comes to carry me off first -- the postoffice because of incorrect postage on the envelopes or the bank because they are not receiving TWO copies of the deposit slips. Remember -- the envelopes require at least 32 cents. There is a postage scale on the desk, and anything over an ounce is an additional 23 cents per ounce. The bank wants TWO copies of the deposit slip -- both the white and the yellow. Amen!

That said, April was kind of a disappointing month because there were six days when we weren't even open. People either forgot, cancelled so late there was no time to find a substitute, or left early even though the weather was good. Unfortunately, we don't always know when tour busses are going to show up. Remember, docents are responsible for finding their own substitutes.

Many thanks to Alan Beckert and his buddy Bob for moving two pickup loads of furniture to Doris Mayfield's garage after it was donated. Doris was responsible for arranging this donation of much-needed storage cabinets for the gift shop as well as for the new Nature Exhibit Room. Kenny and Kevin came down from Pawhuska with their horse trailer and took it all back to the prairie and unloaded it while Doris and Phyllis Conally spent a marathon day arranging and cleaning the docent office. We have never been so organized or looked so good, and these six folks deserve a big round of applause. THANK YOU!

Trail Guide Program - School group trail guides have been busy this month! We have led Wednesday tours for school groups from Cleveland (100 kids), Bowring (39 kids), and Bartlesville (40 kids). A group from Glenpool will be coming on June 11. A few guides have worked on Saturdays. Saturday tours have not yet been promoted because we don't have a full calendar of workers. If you know of a family, or group of visitors who plans to come on a Saturday and would like a tour guide, please encourage them to call the Tulsa office to make arrangements. We will NOT offer any guided trail experiences during July and August.

Notes from the Prairie - Bob Hamilton, Dir. of Science and Stewardship

As of May 13, 130 bison calves had been born! (We are expecting about 200). The first calf was born on April 12. The bison are primarily grazing on patches which were burned in the summer or fall of last year, or early this spring. Since late April, when the new calves began coming, the cows and younger animals are in two to three big groups, with the older bulls still in "bachelor" groups.

The bison's winter coats are actively being shed! Most animals are about one-half

"shed" at this point.

There was a wildfire on April 19 (second new docent training day!) which burned about ten acres before being extinguished by staff. The origin was unknown, but most likely arson.

Sutton Avian Research Center began a new three year Prairie chicken radio-tracking project this spring. They will track collared birds for 24-hours/day all year long. NOTE: We had so many people interested in seeing the Prairie Chickens this year. Several Conservancy staff members led groups to see the chickens. General visitors should NOT be encouraged to go to the leks without a guide. This requires traveling off the main roads, and may disrupt the Sutton project. Please don't tell visitors where to go to see the chickens!

The cowboys are starting construction of a second "trap", a small 160-acre pasture on the west side of the bison corrals. The trap will be used to hold the herd when working them in the fall. The trap fence is made of heavy-duty woven fence wire with pipe posts. This King Ranch woven wire weighs 293 lbs per roll!

There has been slightly below average rainfall so far this year, but the prairie is lush and growing. Things are growing better than last year! Wildflowers are really starting to bloom. Some that are frequently seen include wild indigo, spiderworts, larkspur, and green antelope horn milkweed.

An adult badger has made a home in the northwest corner of the bison unit. Five to seven have been seen on burn patches. A Texas-horned lizard and Massasaugua (rattlesnake) were seen on a county road recently.

Help is needed on June 7 for a Prairie Work Day in preparation for June 14 - which is Heritage Day/Cowboy Reunion. Work will include roadside clean-up and trail maintenance. Hope to see you there!

Our new summer stewardship intern started at the Preserve on May 19. Randy Miller just graduated with a B.S. in Agronomy from OSU.

Scheduling - Shirley Miller

Don't forget to check the enclosed calendars. Look for open days in June, July and August, then return your calendars to me, Shirley, at the address at the top of the page. If you sign up now for a June date, I will try to confirm it with you. Please mark your calendar!

Early summer is a high visitation time! Please remember your shift, and stay later than 4 p.m. if there are visitors. We don't always know when tour busses will be coming, so please try to work your entire shift, or find someone to fill in if you must leave early!

Reading List on the Osage Tribe -

Returning docents know that Geoffrey Standing Bear was a speaker at our Docent Reorientation in early March. Geoffrey is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Oklahoma TNC Chapter. Interest was high and he had so many questions from the audience after his talk that he offered to put together a reading list of information available on the Osage Tribe. His list is on the next page, as well as his address. Please take a minute to drop a note to Geoffrey and thank him for the time and effort it took to put this list together for us! Wonderful resources!

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- Burns, Louis F., 1984b. *Osage Indian customs and myths*. Fallbrook, California: Ciga Press.
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- Burns, Louis F., 1989. *A history of the Osage people*. Fallbrook, California: Ciga Press.
- Callahan, Alica Ann, 1990. *The Osage ceremonial dance I'n-Lon-Schka*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.
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- Fitzgerald, Sister Mary Paul, S.C.L. [1939] 1985. *Beacon on the plains*. Leavenworth, Kansas: The St. Mary College, 1939. Reprinted 1985, St. Paul, Kansas: Osage Mission Historical Society.
- Graves, William White, n.d. *History of Neosho County*. 2 vols. St. Paul, Kansas: W.W. Graves.
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- Matthews, John Joseph, 1932. *Wah' Kon-Tah: The Osage and the white man's road*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Matthews, John Joseph, (1934, 1987) 1988. *Sundown*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Matthews, John Joseph, (1945) 1981. *Talking to the moon*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
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- McAuliffe, Dennis, Jr., 1994. *The deaths of Sybil Bolton: an American history*. New York: Times Books (div. of Random House).
- McDermott, John Francis, 1940. *Tixier's travels on the Osage praries*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Miles, Ray, 1988. 'Give Us our Catholic Priests': The Osage Plea for Freedom of Religion"; in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, vol. 65 (Spring 1988).
- Rollings, Willard H., 1992, *The Osage: an ethnological study of hegemony on the prairie-plains*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press.
- Swan, Daniel Charles, 1992. *West moon-east moon: an ethnohistory of the peyote religion among the Osage Indians, 1898-1930*. Pd.D. dissertation, Norman, University of Oklahoma, 1990. Ann Arbor Michigan: U.M.I. Dissertation Services.
- Wilson, Terry P., 1985. *The underground reservation: Osage oil*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Wilson, Terry P., 1988. *The Osage*. Indians of North America series. New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House.