

# The Docent News



For Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents

January / February 2000

## A Gift Shop News

from Sue Wheeler

The shop was closed only five (5) days in November.

|           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 2,231.70  | November 1998     |
| 6,360.36  | November 1999     |
| 4,128.66  | Increase in Sales |
| 44,240.99 | 1998 Year to Date |
| 58,808.90 | 1999 Year to Date |
| 14,567.91 | Increase in Sales |

## Calendar

### February

- 12 Docent Council Meeting  
10:00 am
- 12 Spring Speakers'  
Training 1:00 pm
- 15 Ponca City Recruitment, 7 pm
- 22 Bartlesville Recruitment, 7 pm
- 23 Tulsa Recruitment, 7 pm

### March

- 11 Docent Reorientation
- 20 Gift Shop Opens

### April

- 1-2 New Docent Training -  
Pawhuska
- 29 New Docent Training  
Preserve
- 30 Trail Guide Training  
Preserve

## Visitation - November

from George Meyers

"We had 922 sign-in visitors in November, up 38.2% from 1998, and a record November to date. 32 foreign visitors were from 10 countries: Finland, Lusoka-Africa, Spain and Sri Lanka as new on our '98 list. 304 were from 39 other states with Texas (51), Missouri (36), Kansas (27), California (14), North Carolina (13) and Ohio (13) heading the list."

"586 Oklahomans visited the Preserve. 100% of foreign visitors were first-timers."

Through November, we've had 10,743 visitors, up 7.6% over 11 months of 1998. The 3,158 other-state visitors is down 6.2% from 1998. But the 437 foreign visitors is up 27% over 1998 and a record to date.

"Visitors appreciate the effort to restore the prairie and understand and are supportive of The Nature Conservancy."

## Recruitment!

Do you have a friend who would make a great docent? Pass their name on to Mary Coley today!

## Tulsa Zoo

### Earth Day - April 22, 2000

April 22, 2000 signifies an important event to all conservation minded individuals. That day will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the first EARTH DAY. To celebrate that important event, the Tulsa Zoo, in conjunction with the MET will host an EARTH DAY 2000 at the Zoo.

The Nature Conservancy will have a booth to display Statewide photos, newsletters and information.

Saturday, April 22, 2000  
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

All volunteers will receive a pass to let you into Mohawk Park and the Zoo for free.

If you would like to work the booth, please call Mary Coley or Belinda Robertson at 585-1117. By February 1<sup>st</sup>, if you can help.

## REORIENTATION SET

Mark your calendars, now for reorientation, March 11 (March 18 snow date) at the Pawhuska Senior Citizen's Center. Watch your mail for the agenda and the RSVP card!



**A Gift Shop News**

from Sue Wheeler

The shop was open only three (3) days in December.

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 42.00            | December 1998       |
| <u>1,334.75</u>  | December 1999       |
| 1,292.75         | Increase Dec. Sales |
| <hr/>            |                     |
| 44,282.99        | 1998 Year to Date   |
| <u>60,143.65</u> | 1999 Year to Date   |
| 15,860.66        | Increase Sales      |

**This n That**

from Mary Coley

Our New State Director, Mary Collins, began work full time on Jan. 3. We are in the middle of goal setting for FY2001 (July 2000 – June 2001) and have begun our budgeting process as well.

By reorientation, we will have news about the gift shop manager position and other items. Stay tuned.

As of Jan. 20, 86 docents have renewed their commitment! That is an excellent return. I am hopeful that all 86 will be ACTIVE.

Last year, nearly 1/3 of our docent force of 105 only worked once or not at all during our docent season. Please follow through with your commitment! Meanwhile, enjoy our brisk winter mornings, and stay well!

Mary Coley

**Visitation - December**

from George Meyers

"We had 395 sign-in visitors in December, up 36.7% from 1998. 25 foreign visitors were from 25 other states with California (27) Texas (24), Missouri (10), Ohio and Washington (9 each) heading the list. 220 Oklahomans signed in. 76% of foreign visitors were first-timers, along with 80% of other staters, and 46.8% of Oklahomans."

16 visitors came Christmas Day, another 50 the day after Christmas.

"For the year, we've had 11,138 visitors, up 8.4% over 1998. The 3,308 other-state visitors is down 4.0% from 1998. But the 462 foreign visitors is up 32.4% over 1998 and a record to date. We had visitors from all 50 states, Guam and 53 other countries."

Some visitors were looking for "Sweet Pea" and "Wildfire". Some were disappointed that the gift shop was not open. One commented "Beautiful land and no concrete."

**You've Got MAIL**

Do you have an email address? If you'd like it included on next year's Docent Roster, drop me an email at [mmcintyre@tnc.org](mailto:mmcintyre@tnc.org). This is my new email address and reaches me at the office. My old email address, [mmcint2415@aol.com](mailto:mmcint2415@aol.com), now reaches me only at home!

**Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Visitation**

from George Meyers

**1994 - 1999**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| 67,157 | U.S. Visitors -<br>50 States &<br>District of Columbia |
| 18     | U.S. Possessions<br>(Guam &<br>Puerto Rico)            |

**67,175 Total U.S. Visitors**

|       |                                   |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| 1,872 | Other Countries<br>(90 Countries) |
|-------|-----------------------------------|

**69,047 Total Visitors**

|        |              |
|--------|--------------|
| 46,623 | Oklahoma     |
| 20,534 | Other States |

**Five Top States**

|       |            |
|-------|------------|
| 2,633 | Texas      |
| 2,265 | Kansas     |
| 1,681 | California |
| 1,209 | Missouri   |
| 1,076 | Arkansas   |

**Five Top Countries**

|     |         |
|-----|---------|
| 360 | England |
| 251 | Germany |
| 160 | Canada  |
| 100 | France  |
| 86  | Japan   |



### Spring Speakers Bureau

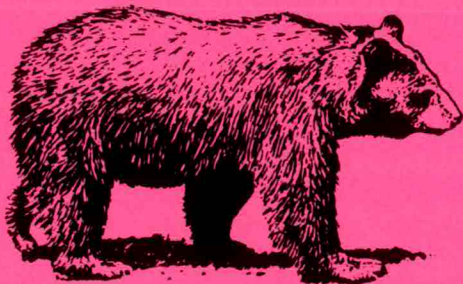
from Mary Coley

In preparation for the Year 2000, we will hold a spring speakers' training on the afternoon of Feb. 12. We will review the statewide slide program, update information and talk about other options for informational programs.

If you know other docents or Conservancy members who are interested in being trained as speakers, please pass their names on to me. We would welcome additional members to our speakers' bureau.

Robyn Stroup will now be serving as Speakers Coordinator. Our thanks to Tom Clark for his help in that capacity for the past 3 years.

Look forward to seeing you on Feb. 12 at 1:00 p.m. at the Tulsa Field Office.



### New Bison Herd

#### Released at Niobrara Valley Preserve

from Nebraska State Newsletter Fall 1999

An old cowboy once said, "You can herd bison ... anywhere *they* want to go!" But, at the Niobrara Valley Preserve on August 21<sup>st</sup>, a herd of 120 heifers stampeded into their new pasture, exactly where we wanted them to go. The "unveiling" of the Preserve's second bison herd provided a conservation event and memories for more than 50 donors who helped contribute funds to acquire the animals. The heifers even stopped for about five minutes at the bottom of the hill, giving expectant photographers an unexpected camera moment.

After the release, the group enjoyed a tour of the new bison corral, which was funded by Harold and Marian Andersen of Omaha. "It has been great to see such support for our efforts to manage native grasslands with native grazers," says Vince Shay, Director of the Nebraska Chapter.

The Preserve's plans for starting a second bison herd began in 1993, and are being fulfilled through gifts from hundreds of donors around the United States. Bison and North American grasslands evolved together. These large herbivores literally shape the grasslands where they roam. Their grazing patterns produce disturbances in the landscape that create an ever-shifting mosaic of plant and invertebrate diversity.

The Preserve's original herd, established in 1985, is pastured on 7,500 acres. The new herd will roam on another 12,000 acres. Combining the ecological benefits of two separate bison herds, the Conservancy will be delivering conservation management to almost 20,000-acres, making this one of the largest efforts in the country to foster the inherent biological diversity of Great Plains grasslands.



## Conservancy Prairie Projects Gaining Momentum

from The ONE Conservancy, November 1999

In October, the conservancy announced a major conservation initiative that will enhance and restore one of America's most characteristic and evocative landscapes: the magnificent prairie ecosystems of the heartland.

In briefings for regional reporters held in Kansas City, Missouri, Conservancy President John Sawhill, joined by Kansas State Director Alan Pollom and Missouri State Director Roger Still, announced the completion of the Conservancy's conservation plans for the Central Tallgrass Prairie and Central Shortgrass Prairie ecoregions, and our intent to invest at least \$68 million in new private funding in the next five years in projects to protect specific ecologically significant sites throughout the Great Plains.

"All too often the focus of national environmental discussion has been on high-profile disputes like those over the old growth forests and rivers of the Pacific Northwest," Sawhill told reporters. "The Great Plains region's population is growing and the population is spreading out and causing more sprawl. There is more urgency to save these last remnants than 10 years ago. If we don't protect them today, they are not going to be there."

Pollom said that the Kansas Chapter will raise \$6 million to finance conservation projects in his state. Of that amount, \$3.5 million will pay back a loan from the national organization that was used in January to buy the 16,800-acre Smoky Valley Ranch in western Kansas. The remaining funds will be used for other conservation efforts in Kansas, including programs in the Flint Hills, Cheyenne bottoms and at the Welda Prairie Preserve.

Still said that the Missouri Chapter will fund projects amounting to \$8 million. Much of this funding will go toward restoration work at the 2,281-acre Dunn Ranch, which is among the best large-scale remnants of tallgrass prairie in the Central Plains. Sawhill also noted that in the landscape around Dunn Ranch and throughout the region the Conservancy will "work with surrounding landowners to preserve some of their biodiversity values, so we can get some fairly large landscapes."

Overall, the Conservancy's conservation projects in the 13 ecoregions of the Great Plains states will involve the cooperation of 12 state chapters. Already, the Conservancy is working to conserve 39 high-priority sites that have been identified as representative of the American heartland "sea of grass."

At one of those sites, the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve near Pawhuska, Oklahoma, Sawhill helped mark the tenth anniversary of the 37,600-acre preserve before a large crowd under a brilliant late October sky. Sawhill said that our work to reintroduce bison and prescribed burning to the ecosystem has gone so well that "we intend to increase the herd's ultimate size to thirty-two hundred animals and also increase the amount of bison range that is burned from 20 percent to 33 percent each year."

Sawhill also noted that the preserves' science and stewardship director Bob Hamilton has observed "encouraging increases in population of prairie nesting birds such as Henslow's sparrows, eastern meadow larks, and grasshopper sparrows because of the increased diversity of cover resulting from bison grazing and prescribed burning." Larry Nichols, Chairman of the Oklahoma board of trustees for the Conservancy added that "What we're doing here is helping to preserve a lot more of the environment that just the land inside our fence line. The knowledge gained here will be applied to conservation projects around the world."