

# The Docent News



For Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents

March 2000

## This 'N That

from Mary Coley

Each year, when the time rolls around for docents to recommit for another year of helping at the prairie, I feel a mixture of joy and sadness. I'm glad as the commitments to return come in, and sad about those who don't respond. As the weeks drag on, and docents still don't respond, questions come to mind. What is going on in the lives of our docent friends? Has family or other obligations kept them from responding? Are they upset at something related to their work at the prairie? Are they angry at the program? As with anything in our lives, it is better to KNOW for sure than to just wonder.. why? At least in knowing why, there is closure.

I am glad to tell you all that this year we have 86 returning docents. It is with sadness that we tell the 18 who declined, "good-bye".

As we start this new season (open day for the visitors center is March 19!!!), I want to assure you that even though 86 seems like a lot, and we are having a successful recruitment season, **EVERY ONE of you is NEEDED!** Increased numbers will allow us to be open more days, and provide more services on site. You are all **NEEDED!**

Even with 104 docents last year – there were several days when no volunteers were available to open the shop. Even with 104 docents last year, there were several days **EACH MONTH** that docents worked alone because a partner was not available. Even though we had over thirty people trained as trail guides, only five worked regular weekend shifts.

There is a cycle that will create success at the prairie: **MORE ACTIVE DOCENTS = MORE HOURS OPEN AT THE VISITORS CENTER = MORE VISITORS REACHED = MORE HAPPY VISITORS = MORE UNDERSTANDING AMONG VISITORS = MORE SUPPORTERS FOR THE PRESERVE and THE NATURE CONSERVANCY = MORE ACTIVE DOCENTS!**

An additional benefit of more active docents and more open hours is increased sales. As you know, those sales fund the preserve work. They go right back into the facility, publications, the bison herd and stewardship activities. The more money we raise the more work we can do!

Never think for a moment that you are not needed as a tallgrass prairie preserve docent or trail guide. If you make yourself available, we can use your help! Your suggestions, and concerns, are wanted! Contact Mary Coley at 585-1117, or get in touch with Harvey Payne at the Pawhuska office, 918/287-4803!

**Gift Shop News**

from Sue Wheeler

Date	Amount	Comment
12/05/98	120.75	
12/08/98	16.55	Special sale – shop not open
12/11/98	21.00	Special sale – shop not open
01/14/99	96.00	Stewardship – internal transfer :JE 75575
02/03/99	35.00	Special sale – shop not open
02/10/99	92.00	Special sale – shop not open
03/16/99	1,235.52	Catalog sales
03/29/99	48.00	Fundraising – internal transfer JE 75580
03/31/99	11.08	Catalog sales
03/31/99	2,350.25	March sales
04/30/99	4,713.00	April sales
05/31/99	6,595.16	May sales
06/30/99	9,444.83	June sales
07/31/99	7,045.50	July sales
08/31/99	4,396.75	August sales
09/30/99	5,275.50	September sales
10/27/99	123.00	Development – internal transfer JE 52632
10/31/99	11,187.75	October sales
11/30/99	6,360.36	November sales
12/31/99	1,334.75	December sales
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 60,502.75</b>	

**Recruitment Successes**

As we go to press today, we have had 26 new applicants to serve as docents! With the Tulsa recruitment yet to happen, and at least 40 applications still floating, not returned, we will have potentially the largest docent training class since 1994! This expansion will allow us to expand! Your ideas for ways that we can successfully do that are needed. Call Mary Coley at 585-1117, or email her at [mmcintyre@tnc.org](mailto:mmcintyre@tnc.org) (work email).

**Calendar****March**

- 11 Docent Reorientation  
(18<sup>th</sup> Bad Weather Back-up)
- 19 Gift Shop Opens

**April**

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

**May**

- 6 Spring Wildflower  
Training (am)
- 6 Waterfall Hike (pm)

**Calendars included!**

Our scheduling process begins **NOW!** Check the enclosed calendars for March, April and May. Then, check your home calendar for days you are available. Then contact Barbara Bates by phone, email or US mail to let her know when you can work.

Barbara Bates – 918-298-7019, [bbates@webzone.net](mailto:bbates@webzone.net) or 5632 E. 113<sup>th</sup> St. Tulsa, OK 74137. Please provide alternative dates whenever possible, in case of conflicts. You will be notified by postcard one week prior to your shift.

## Visitation

from George Meyers

"We had 229 sign-in visitors in January, up 6.5% from January 1999. 3 foreign visitors were from Canada and Germany: 58 visited from 14 other states with Kansas (13), Missouri (8), Florida and Texas (6) each and New Jersey (5) heading the list of states. 168 Oklahomans signed in. All of the foreign visitors were first-timers, along with 62% from other states, and 47.6% of Oklahomans."

"More visitors came on Saturday, (37.7%) followed by Sunday (21.8%) and Thursday (14.0%). 64% of visitors came between 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. with another 27.5% coming after 3:30 p.m. There were no visitors on four days."

Comments were favorable. "Great", "Beautiful", "It is good to see this habitat being preserved." Several were excited about seeing the bison and other wildlife. A number were very disappointed that the gift shop was not open. The single negative comment was that one sourpuss commented "Seen better". All in all, a good start for the year."

## Prairie News

By Bob Hamilton

- The cowboys are mostly working on fences to prepare for the arrival of cattle.
- The bison are scattered into many herds.
- We have seen a lot of coyotes.
- Winter bird visitors are still on the prairie. And a fair amount of ducks are present also.
- We need volunteers to help clean up the litter along the roadside. This is becoming a real problem.

## Anniversary Poster

Remember to point out the **new poster** to visitors. Every penny from the sale (\$10) of this poster goes back to the Preserve! It would be a super addition to any home's décor.

It may also be purchased at the Tulsa Office for \$10, or ordered by mail for \$15.

Our Poster is now available to teachers free! More details later.

Got a question for HARVEY PAYNE? Reach him at 918/287-4803, or by email at [tallgrass@mmind.net](mailto:tallgrass@mmind.net).

## Tulsa Zoo

### We Need Help on: 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 April 1<sup>st</sup>, if you can help.

**Reorientation**

The agenda for our Reorientation Training for returning docents is part of this mailing! All docents are encouraged to attend this opportunity to receive updates on the bison, the land, the Nature Conservancy and the preserve. Bring your notebooks, as many handouts will be available. Coffee and doughnuts at 8:30 p.m. for early birds. The speakers will start at 9 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Afternoon lectures and tours will provide more chances for you to increase your knowledge!

The Location is the Pawhuska Senior Citizens Center, just off Main, one block west of the First National Bank at Grandview and Main, behind the police station. In the event of a snow or ice storm on the day of training, we have built in a Bad Weather Day. Reorientation will happen just as planned, on March 18 instead!!! Should it be necessary to activate the bad weather plan, those who have returned their RSVP card will be notified on Friday afternoon or evening!!!!

Please return the enclosed RSVP card so that food and supplies will be available for everyone. Door prizes will be given!! Scheduling opportunity for all! See you then!

**Spring Events**

Ranchers burn their pastures. The fires, like those caused by lightning, turn the matted dead grasses into fertile ashes and delectable, celery-green growth; open the sod to sunlight; promote lateral shoots; kill non-native species and clear space for animal plants, bird nests and rodents.

Spring azure butterflies appear even before plum buds open.

Lovestruck greater prairie chickens, one of the Preserve's most common birds, gather at hilltop leks to dance and boom at dawn from April to mid-May.

Coyotes, foxes and bobcats patrol prairie chicken leks.

Spring rains percolate through limestone, dam up above layers of impermeable shale, and flow out in seeps and springs.

Cinnamon-colored bison babies frolic. Adults are shedding.

Owls, hawks and snakes search for new-born evening bats.

Common nighthawks lay mottled eggs on barren rocks. Mourning doves and upland sandpipers nest in grasses.

Nine-banded armadillo babies (quadruplicates!) are born.

Redbud trees and ground-level flowers bloom in blues, whites and yellows -- edible onions, strawberries and plums; bluets, anemones, field pussytoes, johnny jumpup, phlox and milk vetch.

Delicate white-tailed deer babies -- twins that weigh four to seven pounds each -- are born in May.

Butterfly and moth larva eat leaves, fruits and flowers, lichens, dry leaves and wood, or bore into plants and trees.

Henslow's sparrows call "tsi-lick" from unburned grass plots.

Bison hooves cut the banks of streams and ponds, trampling sedges, duckweeds and water ferns, and scattering frogs, garter snakes, dragonflies, butterflies, mosquitoes and the occasional opossum.

Cattle can get hit by lightning. Cowboys on horseback warily watch the clouds.

Eastern meadowlarks, dickcissels, grasshopper sparrows and other prairie songbirds teach their babies to fly during June.

Western Massasauga rattlers, timber rattlers and copperheads sunbathe.