

THE DOCENT NEWS



For Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents November 2002

Round-up Reverie

Andrew Donovan-Shead

By 12:30 the Whiz Bang Cafe was overwhelmed by a hungry herd of middle class urbanites. Whiz Bang's feed stock ran out, forcing staff to improvise.

As suddenly as they came, they went. Outside on the Kiheka Trail: The staccato slamming of doors, the throaty growling from engines of assorted SUVs and trucks.

Meanwhile, back at the Whiz Bang, staff staggered as they got a steady grip on the counter top; wiped brows with the backs of wrists; glanced at one another with wild-eyed surmise.

On the trail north, the acrid smell of dust thrown up by thrumming wheels of the moving herd. At the Visitor Center a pause to water and refresh, then onward to the corrals.

In real-life everything looks so much bigger than it did on *Rawhide*. Around the squeeze shoot....calm, conversational efficiency as the cowboys worked each beast with skilled expertise, two hundred each day. A good team, they made a dangerous and difficult job look easy. At the head were the ear, nose and throat

guys. At the tail, the proctologist. At the side. . . . yes, at the side was Two-gun Tex happily flourishing a matched pair of buntline syringes with barrels a yard long.

Yeooowww ! Aaarrgh! Tex brought back a quivering memory from a time long ago. Back then the squeeze chute were the strong arms of my daddy. Back then it was the same as today, shots in the side.

November is time for the annual round-up and vetting. Nowadays I'm trained to round myself up to the vet, where her small hand doesn't bring quite so many tears to my eyes.

Check the table in the Visitor Center for the pictures -- of the bison that is.

Meanwhile, back at the Ranch with Ann...

While the cowboys are up at the sharp end basking in the admiration of the visitors from the cities and towns, a lot of work is going on back at the ranch, long before the business of chasing bison all over creation begins.

While I was going disguised as a docent this week, Ann Whitehorn came to the Visitor Center and flopped down into a chair. She had just learned that she was to

expect another dozen, or was it thirty-one, to an Indian dinner at the Stucco House.

Ann's round-up begins early September when she starts planning menus. By October she needs to know how many guests to expect so that she can buy enough groceries. Ann usually caters for a dozen extra mouths at each meal. In the kitchen of the bunkhouse, Ann and her helpers prepare and freeze as much food as they can in readiness for roundup.

Today Ann knew that she didn't have enough food to feed everyone in the evening, and it was already three o'clock in the afternoon. Ann has in abundance that American can-do spirit, so she wasn't sitting around for long before she was up and doing again.

After cleaning the bathrooms in the bunkhouse, she jumped into her truck and headed back to Pawhuska leaving a cloud of dust in her wake.

Ann went home to cook enough meat pies and grape dumplings to ensure that everyone would have enough to eat that evening. She said to me: "I sure would hate for anyone to go hungry."



Medicine on the Prairie

- Van Vives

The ice age occurred 20,000 to 25,000 years ago. At that time the Bering Strait was completely frozen over. It was at this time that some people from Asia traveled across the ice to North America. This is thought to be the origin of the Native American population. So these observant and perceptive people had thousands of years to experiment with plants and their medicinal properties. The early pioneers learned about many of the remedies from the Native Americans. A few of the plants found at the TGP are listed below with recorded medicinal properties.

Yarrow: Hot tea made from the leaves was used to stimulate perspiration, to stimulate digestion and tone the stomach. Fresh leaves were used to stop bleeding by stimulating clotting.

Curly Dock: Juice and a poultice of the leaves was used for rashes caused by stinging nettles and poison ivy. The powdered root was used for a laxative, astringent, and antiseptic.

New Jersey Tea: An extract of the leaves and seeds was used to cure ulcerated sore throats, gonorrhea, dysentery, eye trouble in children, and high blood pressure. It served as a stimulant, sedative, expectorant, and astringent.

Golden Alexanders: The Meskwaki tribe used the root to reduce fever. The flower stalks were powdered to produce a snuff used for headaches. The pioneers used it as an anti-syphilitic, a diaphoretic, and an aid for healing wounds.

Prairie Phlox: The Meskwaki tribe used a tea of the leaves for eczema and to purify the blood.

Cream-colored False Indigo: It was used to treat cuts and to reduce fever. The Pawnee pulverized the seeds and mixed the powder with buffalo fat to rub the abdomen as a treatment for colic.

Lead Plant: The Oglala used it in tea form for the treatment of pinworms and eczema. The Omaha used it to treat rheumatism and neuralgia.

Gumweed: Dakotas used an extract for colic in children; Poncas used it for tuberculosis; Pawnees used it for sores on horses; the early pioneers used it for asthma, bronchitis, skin rash, kidney trouble, pneumonia, and neuralgia.

Bedstraw: An extract was used for easing childbirth, slowing blood flow, increasing urine flow, stimulating appetite, alleviating skin rashes, soothing nerves, and for removing freckles.

Purple Coneflower: The Sioux used a poultice from the roots for snakebite and for the bite of mad dogs and for toothaches. A smoke

treatment was used for headache in humans and for distemper in horses. (One can experience the numbing effect of the plant by chewing a leaf. The lips and tongue become numb.)



Program Coordinator

Jerry Wagener
(918) 742-2566 - home
(918) 592-3023 - work
(918) 697-6240 - cell
Jerry@Wagener.com

Tour Coordinator

Dick Baker
(918) 747-2495
Dbakertul@aol.com

Docent Scheduler

Kara Morgan
(918) 272-9433
morgan1477@aol.com

Newsletter Coordinator

Kim Hagan
(918) 494-8892
kimhagan@sbcglobal.net

New Docent Recruitment

June Endres
(405) 356-9645
ridgetree@worldnet.att.net

New Docent Training

David Turner
(918) 333-7864 - home
(918) 661-4287 - work
drenrut@aol.com

Reorientation and Kickoff

Don Bruner
(580) 237-4199 - home
(580) 213-9217 - work
dbruner@groendyke.com

Docent Awards

Monica Murray
(918) 587-3701 - home
(918) 556-5327 - work
monica.murray@oden-ins.com

More About Plants

Andrew Donovan-Shead

Last month Van Vives described some plants that can be used as a source of food. This month he gives us information on prairie plants that can be used as medicine. Here is a bit more on the same subjects.

Wild edible and medicinal plants tend to be strong tasting, often bitter. Plants cannot escape predators, so they have developed toxins to discourage animals and insects from eating them.

Plants in the nightshade family, such as Horse Nettle that you can see growing through the gravel around the gazebo at the trailhead, concentrate a nerve agent toxic to mammals such as us. The potato is also a nightshade whose leaves are poisonous, as are the unripe green tubers.

Another side to this story is that often the toxins that make the plants strong tasting or dangerous are often beneficial to us who consume them. As you know, radishes can be spicy to the taste as well as promoting flatulence: it is this spiciness that I have heard helps prevent a man's prostate from becoming a problem.

Black tea is another example. Tannin in the tea is what gives the bitter tannic flavor; it is this that acts to settle the stomach and help keep the digestive tract clear of infection. Recent research shows that the flavonoids in tea help to destroy free

radicals of oxygen in the body, a key component of aging.

Animals and insects will seek out certain plants that they have learned possess properties that alleviate discomfort. Our species has long gathered herbs and spices to ease the aches and pains of life. Information about herbal plants was passed down orally from master to apprentice, eventually written down in books. The most widely known book on this subject is Culpepper's *Herbal*.

An accessible book, readily available, is *Tom Brown's Field Guide to Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants* by Tom Brown, Jr. It is published in the Berkeley Nature series. Tom Brown says of his book, "The reason for the format of this book is simple. I was tired of seeing too many technical and rather boring plant books on the market. A student who has finished one of them hardly knows the plant at all, and the information is soon forgotten. I believe that each plant has a marvelous story of its own. I have incorporated these stories into the text to add form and dimension to the discussion of each plant. Now the student can know plants intimately as I do. I want to make the study of plants exciting to the beginner as well as the seasoned herbalist."

On the Tallgrass Prairie we can't gather herbs without running the risk of damaging the place; look

what happened when people thought they could make money gathering the roots of echinacea. (At the preserve we are requested not to take anything we didn't come with and not to leave anything we brought with us!) Also, plant identification must be exact; otherwise you run the risk of poisoning yourself. Some plants are deadly, as the woman who made kebab sticks out of twigs from an oleander plant discovered when she poisoned her children. Another serious concern arises from pollution caused by toxic chemicals; you can eat dandelion leaves and nasturtiums in your salad, but think twice if you apply chemicals to your lawn and flower beds. Pollution is a big problem, even in the wide-open spaces of the Tallgrass Prairie.



Remember....

Docent Recognition Dinner

(For docents who worked three or more shifts)

Saturday, December 7, 2002
Hampton Inn, Sand Springs

RSVP Monica Murray by
December 1, 2002



Visitation Notes

- George Meyers

October 2002 Summary

A total of 688 sign-in visitors came to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in October, 45% less than October 2001 and 11.9% less for the year-to-date. 35 came from other countries, including France and Australia (7 each), Canada and Switzerland (4 each) and Belgium, England and Germany (3 each). This was 83.3% more than October 2001 and 27% ahead for the year-to-date.

We had 195 visitors from 35 other states, down 31.5% from October 2001 and down 10.8% for the year. The top states represented were Missouri (23), Arkansas and Texas (15 each), Colorado, California and Kansas (12 each). 458 Oklahomans signed in during the month.

100% of the foreign visitors were first-timers, along with 91% of other state visitors and 45.9% of Oklahomans, for a total of 61.2% first-timers overall.

October visitation was heaviest on Sunday, with an average of 41 visitors per day. Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday averaged 21 to 25 per day. An average of 8 and 15 visitors came on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively. 43% came between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m., 25% between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., 15% visited between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m., and another 15% came between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. Peak days hosted 67,

54, 51, 46 and 39 visitors. Eight days had more than 30 visitors. There were no days without visitors signing in!

Some of the visitor comments were: "Keep it clean, come see South Africa" from a South African; "Thank you TNC for this priceless habitat"; "Thanks for saving a piece of prairie"; "A wonderful place"; "Very tall grass"; "Saw several hundred bison today!"; "Thank you, thank you, thank you for keeping this safe"; "Awesome" outnumbered "Great" and "Wonderful".



The Osage - Original TGP Caretakers

- Van Vives

I believe that as docents we have an obligation to learn as much about the Osage people as possible. Our messages to visitors should include something about the original caretakers of the Tallgrass Prairie. Let's look at a little of the early Osage history.

The Osages are one of the Dhegiha Siouan tribes, a linguistic grouping of peoples that also includes the Omahas, Kaws, Poncas, and Quapaws.

The Osage tribe first encountered Europeans in 1673. The Osage villages were located along the Osage River in southwestern Missouri. They lived in villages of mat-covered

wigwams along rivers and streams. They depended upon horticulture and foraging. Women grew corn, beans, and squash; men hunted bison, elk, deer, and small game. Depending upon the season, they collected roots, berries, fruit, nuts, and tubers. The most important foods were water lily roots and persimmons. It was not until the eighteenth century, after they acquired horses, that the Osage began making long summer and fall treks to the Great Plains in search of bison.

Contact with the Europeans brought great strife to the plains tribes. Diseases such as malaria, smallpox, measles, and cholera swept the region during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Osages, located away from the major rivers, such as the Missouri, Mississippi, and Ohio, were better able to maintain their population and actually prospered during the first century of European contact. They became the most powerful tribe in what was then Spanish Louisiana.

European settlers eventually evicted most of the tribes from their territories, the richest farmlands of North America, and pushed them west onto the plains.

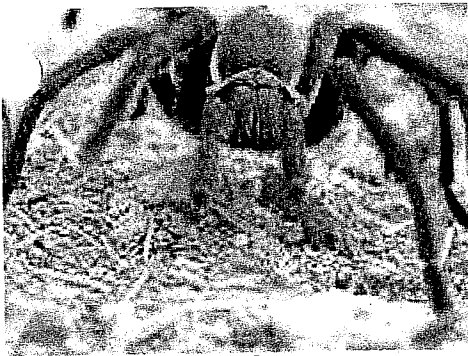
(Material obtained from the book The Osage and the Invisible World - From the Works of Francis La Flesche, edited by Garrick A. Bailey)



About Tarantulas - Van Vives

I have talked about tarantula sightings, but I did not include information about this interesting spider. So here it is.

Tarantulas have eight closely grouped eyes; the large middle pair is circular with three eyes on each side. Each leg has two claws at the tip and a tuft of hair underneath. Although they have venom that is used to kill prey, there are no tarantulas in the world that are considered dangerously poisonous to humans.



Tarantula

Fall is the time that we usually see tarantulas crossing country roads. Did you know that they are the male of the species and are 5 to 12 years old already? They have lived in burrows for up to 12 years or until mature. The cooler temperatures and shorter days induce the stirring of romantic ideas in the male. He finally comes out of the burrow and goes searching for that perfect girl tarantula. Many perils await the newly emerged

male, not the least of which is the female herself.

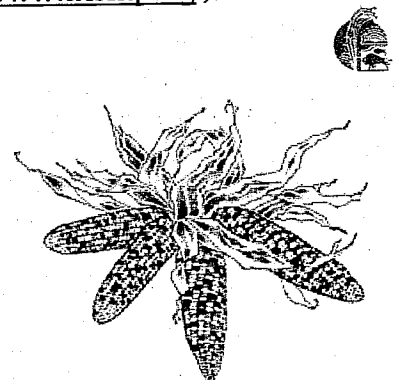
During this time the female is sitting in her burrow near the surface, waiting to feel the vibrations of a passerby. If the vibrations feel like that of a small animal such as a cricket or another spider, she rushes out and grabs the unsuspecting prey as she sinks her fangs into it. So how does the male tarantula escape this fate when he has only romance on his mind? Well, sometimes he doesn't! When a male tarantula approaches the burrow of a female, he first tastes the silk that lies around the entrance. If he detects a mature female in residence, he responds by drumming on the surface with his legs. The drumming is to let the female know that he is interested in mating--and would rather not be mistaken for a meal by the larger and always hungry female.

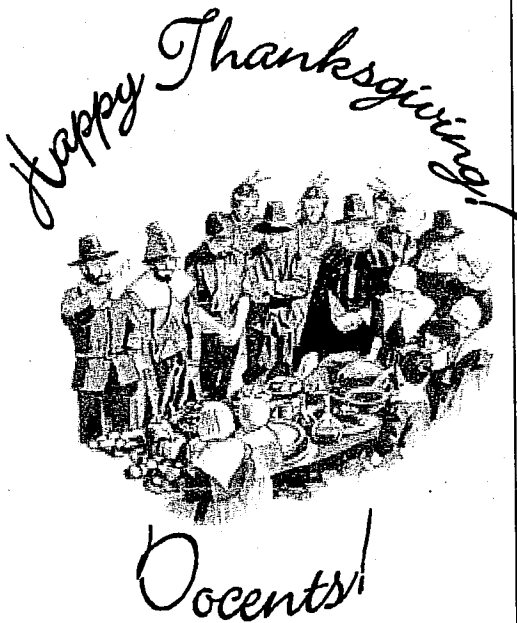
When a female emerges, he continues to drum as he approaches her. If she's receptive, she will rise up the front end of her body and allow him to grab her fangs with the hook-like projections on his forelegs. He then transfers his sperm to her.

Now, that was the easy part. He must release her fangs, disengage himself, and make a hasty retreat before she can overpower him and make him a meal. Adult males, however, die before winter arrives (mated or not).

The male tarantula must also be alert for other predators, such as wasps, owls, skunks, and foxes. His most effective defense against a predator is to quickly use his hind legs to kick some of the hairs off of his abdomen. The hairs dislodge easily and are light enough to float into contact with the nose and eyes of the approaching predator. On contact the hairs produce a burning sensation. This line of defense works well against mammals and birds, but not against a wasp called the Tarantula Wasp, which is much smaller than the spider. When the wasp finds a tarantula, it lands and approaches the spider. The spider assumes a defensive posture, raising the front legs and baring the lethal-looking fangs. This posture allows the wasp to quickly dart in and sting the spider in a soft spot where the legs join the body. The sting immediately paralyzes the tarantula and it is dragged to the wasps burrow.

(This information was obtained from the website www.enature.com. Further information can be obtained at the site for the American Tarantula Society at www.atshq.org)





Sightings on the Prairie

- Van Vives

There are still some fall colors on the prairie, especially along the creek. One can see a few trees with bright yellow leaves.

There was a flock of 13 wild turkeys running along the 4220 road. A sight to behold!

Five deer were seen near the gift shop and another two near the creek bridge.

A Northern Harrier was spotted at the first turnout and an eagle sitting on a tree was reported.

Someone wrote the following in our *Sightings Book*: "Heavy droplets on back/heads of bison - gives an ethereal halo effect - quite mystical."



Web Scheduling A Success

- Kim Hagan

The web-based docent-scheduling calendar is up and running, up to date and accurate! Kara Morgan worked closely with Jerry and Jean Wagener to transfer the software and learn the protocol to manage the on-line scheduling process.

Everything is working fine now. Kara is usually able to update the calendar every day - every other day at the most.

To use the web scheduler, go to Tallgrass Prairie web site's volunteer page @ http://oklahomanature.org/OK/tallgrass_volunteers.html. (See Figure 1.) Select the month you wish to work from the bottom of the page and you will be taken directly to that month's

scheduling calendar. (See Figure 2., next page) Right below the calendar you will see a sign-up box. Simply insert your name and the date you wish to work. There is even a space for a short message or to designate your shift as a trail guide (docent is the default). When you are done, press the send button and message will automatically be sent to Kara. She will send you a reply confirmation by the next day.

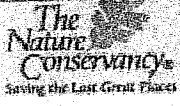
If you cannot access the web site to schedule a shift, you can still e-mail Kara at morgan1477@aol.com or phone her at (918) 272-9433 with your docent dates and she'll get your name on the calendar.

This is a terrific benefit for all of the docents. Three cheers for Kara! Hip, Hip, Hooray!

The screenshot shows the website's header with 'The Nature Conservancy' logo and 'Tallgrass Prairie Volunteers' title. Below the header is a paragraph of text: 'Approximately 150 individuals, of all ages and backgrounds, volunteer to help at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, including managing the visitors center during open hours, serving as trail guides, painting bison corral fences, and sprucing up the preserve roads. Trained volunteers are called "docents". Contact Mary Coley at the Tulsa Office, 918.293.2922, for information about becoming a Tallgrass Prairie Preserve volunteer, or complete and submit the Volunteer Information form.' Below this text is a photograph of several people sitting at a table, with the caption 'enjoying a break during docent training'. At the bottom of the screenshot is a navigation menu for the 'Tallgrass Prairie Docent Schedule for 2002' with links for March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December.

Figure 1. http://oklahomanature.org/OK/tallgrass_volunteers.html .

Home | Calendar | Signups | Contact Us | About Us | Privacy Policy | Site Map



Tallgrass Prairie Docent Schedule for December 2002

TNC > Oklahoma > Tallgrass Prairie > Volunteers

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 * * * TG *	2 * * * * TG *	3 * Kim Hagan * * * TG *	4 * * * * TG *	5 * * * * TG *	6 * * * * TG *	7 * Mary Cumming Carol Redford TG * * * * TG *
8 * * * * TG *	9 * Pat Jaynes * * * TG *	10 * * * * TG *	11 * * * * TG *	12 * * * * TG *	13 * Irene Ward * * * TG *	14 * Irene Ward * * * TG Don Bruner
15 * Jo Brooks Nicholas DelGrosso TG * * * * TG *	16 * Loretta Vives Van Vives * * * TG *	17 * * * * TG *	18 * * * * TG *	19 * * * * TG *	20 * June Endres * * * TG *	21 * * * * TG John Fisher
22 * * * * TG *	23 * * * * TG *	24 * * * * TG *	25 * * * * TG *	26 * * * * TG *	27 * * * * TG *	28 * * * * TG Van Vives
29 * * * * TG *	30 * * * * TG *	31 * * * * TG *				

Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec

December Signups

<p>Your Name <input type="text"/></p> <p>December <input type="text"/></p> <p><input type="button" value="preview"/></p>	<p>option: <input type="text"/></p> <p>comment? <input type="text"/></p>
--	--

To signup for an December date enter your name and select the date - then click "Send". (You can review your data, before sending it, by clicking the **preview** button before the Send button.)

If you wish, you may select (from the "options:" pull-down menu) **trail guide** to sign up as a trail guide or **remove** to remove a previously scheduled date.

Clicking the "Send" button will send the confirmed request by email, as well as any **comment** you might have included; you will receive email confirmation when your submission has been received. Also, every attempt will be made to respond timely to comments, as may be appropriate.

Please note that the online calendar is not automatically updated, because that would entail (the equivalent of) a password system; the human coordinator system continues for the time being. Though most requests will be received and incorporated by the next day, it could, depending on coordinator availability, take up to several days for your request to show up on the calendar.

Thank you for your patience, and thanks especially for your help at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

Figure 2. On-Line Scheduling Calendar with directions

DECEMBER 2002

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3 <i>Kim Hagan</i>	4	5	6	7 <i>Carol Redford Mary Cumming</i>
8	9 <i>Pat Jaynes</i>	10	11	12	13 <i>Irene Ward</i>	14 <i>TG Don Bruner Irene Ward</i>
15 <i>Nicholas DelGrosso Jo Brooks</i>	16 <i>Loretta Vives Van Vives</i>	17	18	19	20 <i>June Endres</i>	21 <i>TG John Fisher</i>
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 <i>TG Van Vives</i>
29	30	31				

To schedule, contact: Kara Morgan
9203 N. 161st E. Ave.
Owasso OK 74055

Phone: 918-272-9433
(Leave your name and phone number on the answering machine)
E-Mail: morgan1477@aol.com

Weekends call - Ann Whitehorn 918-287-4238
Shift Hours: 10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.
(Stay until 5 if you can)

Or use the on-line scheduler on the web site at http://oklahomanature.org/OK/tallgrass_volunteers.html