

THE DOCENT NEWS



For Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents December 2002

Tracks in the Tallgrass

Jerry Wagener

Well, another year is now history for the Tallgrass Prairie docent program. It's been a year of uncertainty and change but, to coin a phrase, all's well that ends well. We kept the visitors center humming; we set new records for volunteer service; we had festive occasions at the roundup and the awards/recognition dinner; we have an outstanding newsletter; we even started a new program (Prairie Tours). Things are running smoothly. Thanks and congratulations are in order for all who made these things happen.

Now, after a short break, we need to begin planning for next year. Two things will be happening soon.

The first is a coordination meeting scheduled for Saturday afternoon, **January 18, 1:00-4:00pm** (yeah, I know, that's pretty soon). A first cut at a draft agenda appears on the following page. **All docents are welcome at this meeting.** We'll be discussing a number of things affecting the nature of the docent program, and I want as much docent input as

possible. The results of this meeting will be published in the February 2003 newsletter.

Hoping for a large turnout, I have reserved the South Room in the Tulsa Garden Center, 2435 S. Peoria Ave. in Tulsa (see map) for the meeting. I hope you can make it.



Second, note that one agenda item for the coordination meeting is the recruitment of new docents. In order to properly plan the recruiting effort, we need to know how many of us are returning for the 2003 season. Naturally I hope for 100%, but of course I know that's unrealistic.

Therefore, would you please let me know **by January 29** if you plan to return next year. I know this was one of the things you responded to on last summer's questionnaire, but given the changes since then I hope you don't mind my asking again. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. By the way, there were 53 responses to last summer's survey, of which 47 said they would be returning, 2 said maybe, 1 said no, and 3 didn't indicate one way or another. Projecting that result to all 125 current docents would suggest that about 110 will be returning; but I've never heard that that sort of calculation is valid, so expect a call from Jean or me if we don't hear from you. (Arrrgghh – could be a lot of calling.)

You can let me know your intentions regarding next year via email (Jerry@Wagener.com) or phone (office: 918.592.3023, home: 918.742.2566, cell: 918.697.6240), or by dropping me a snail-mail note (4310 S. Pittsburg, Tulsa, OK, 74135).

Thanks, and I'm looking forward to working with you in 2003.

Jerry



Tentative Draft Agenda for Jan. 18 Meeting

(a pot pourri of variously suggested items)

- ➔ Docent purpose, policies, guidelines
- ➔ Reorientation topics
- ➔ New Docent recruiting (how many)
- ➔ Prairie Tour Activity overview
- ➔ Prairie work days (e.g. Road Crew)
- ➔ Book Nook contents
- ➔ Trail Guide situation
- ➔ Awards review
- ➔ Summer coordination meeting
- ➔ Open forum (any topic)



Sighting on the Prairie

- Van Vives

I was working in the gift shop the Monday after the bison had been released. A family came in wanting to find out where the bison were. They shopped for a while then left to go to the north turnout. About thirty minutes later they came back to the shop to tell me what they had seen. Breathless with excitement, they said that they saw seven bald eagles eating on a carcass. I found out later that the day before other people had seen nine eagles feasting.



Bird Count Scheduled

- David Turner

The Christmas bird count at the Prairie is scheduled for Saturday, 4 January 2003. Don Wolfe of the Sutton Avian Research Center organizes it again this year. Anyone interested should contact him directly at telephone 918-336-7778 in order to be assigned to a group.

David says that Don is planning several different start times to allow for later arrival of participants from distant parts.

Don't feel as though you need to be expert at bird identification. Doing is learning. David says that less experienced persons will be grouped with experienced birders.

(Editors note: Hopefully you have received your copy of the newsletter in time for the bird count. If not, please accept my apologies as the newsletter was printed later than originally anticipated)



Bison Count

- Bob Hamilton

- ➔ Worked approximately 1,900 bison this fall
- ➔ Will winter over approximately 1,600 animals this year

(Editors note: Bob has been enjoying vacation time over the holidays and will provide us more information in the next issue!)



Recruiting Time Is Here Again

- June Endres

Starting in February, we plan to have some recruiting get-togethers around the state to let others know more about the Tallgrass Prairie and ask them to join us in our support of the Preserve. Right now the plan is to have receptions in Bartlesville, Pawhuska, two (maybe) in Tulsa and the surrounding environs and possibly Stillwater/Ponca City. We have also discussed trying to tap into some of the much smaller communities in the Northeast quadrant of OK.

Are you willing to help at any of these sessions or would you like to host one? Right now it looks like there should be at least one a week in February and possibly into early March. No dates are set yet so it's still open for your convenience.

Please contact June Endres at 405-356-9645 or at ridgetree@worldnet.att.net with your ideas, suggestions and/or your commitment to help. We need as many of you as possible to give us breadth of interests and talents to share with potential newcomers.

We all love the Tallgrass Prairie and it is an important part of each of our lives. It means something different to each of us as it will to those newcomers who choose to join us. Let's build on this great group.



**Guided Tours
of the Tallgrass
Prairie Preserve
and Surroundings
- Dick Baker**

SEE.....

- ➔ The Bison Herd of 2000 Head (and growing)
- ➔ The Flowers and Grasses (hundreds of seasonal varieties)
- ➔ The Wildlife and Birds (both native and migratory)
- ➔ The Headquarters Buildings of the legendary Chapman-Barnard ranches (built in 1920 and restored in 1990)

EXPERIENCE.....

- ➔ The History and culture of the Osage (and surroundings), as defined by the oil industry, cattle ranching, and the Osage tribe
- ➔ The Expansive Prairie (38,600 acres in the preserve and onto the horizon)
- ➔ The Goals of The Nature Conservancy at the Preserve

All tours originate in Tulsa, are seasonal, and are by reservation only. Tour seasons are mid-April to late-June and mid-September to late-October.

Transportation can be either a 46-passenger commercial bus, a 14-passenger van or a

6-passenger GMC Yukon. Tour dates and costs are contingent upon the availability and selection of the transportation.

For further information contact Dick Baker at (918) 747-2495.



TNC membership clarification

- Jerry Wagener

As you may know, there have been significant changes in the way The Nature Conservancy handles its membership program. To avoid some of the past confusion of being a member of the State Chapter and/or of the World Wide Office, and to free up the state chapter's time in order to focus more on conservation efforts, memberships in the state chapters have been eliminated. The WorldWide Office is now managing all TNC memberships (called "One Conservancy" memberships).

However, if you want your membership contribution to stay in Oklahoma or be designated toward a particular preserve or program, please indicate this on your check or letter and mail it to the Tulsa office. The Conservancy will honor all donor wishes, and any funds that are designated by the donor for a particular program or project will be so allocated. For example, the Adopt-A-Bison adoptions are "directed

donations", with the adoption funds allocated to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.



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

Did You Know That....

- Van Vives

The starling and gray catbird have learned to mimic a cell phone ringing.

A mocking bird can reproduce the sound of an alarm clock.

Fish that live more than 800 meters under the ocean don't have eyes.

The Australian lyrebird can copy its foe, the chainsaw.

Habitat destruction, species endangerment and extinction may soon exceed all previous mass extinctions.

United States weather is the most active in the world and its getting worse.

All of life on Earth orients itself to the Earth's magnetic field, similar to the way in which cells in an organism align in relation to the central nervous system, and is affected by and affects the magnetic field.

Bats are the only mammals that can fly.

The largest bat has almost a 6-foot wing span.

The smallest bat weighs less than a penny.

Bats have only one baby a year.

The average chocolate bar has 8 insect legs in it.

It is impossible to sneeze with your eyes open.

Intelligent people have more zinc in their hair.

The poison-arrow frog has enough poison to kill 2,200 people.

A duck's quack doesn't echo, and no one knows why.

The average human eats eight spiders in their lifetime, at night.

Wearing an earphone for just an hour will increase the bacteria in your ear by 700 times.



Web Page Enhancement

- Jerry Wagener

The Tallgrass Prairie Volunteers page (http://oklahomanature.org/OK/tallgrass_volunteers.html) has been revised on the TNC website,

It now includes a link for the (new) Docent Calendar of Events. Details are provided such as agenda items for the new docent on-site training, addresses for meetings and contact information.

It also includes a link to the Volunteer Contact page that includes names, phone numbers and e-mail links for key docent volunteer positions.

Every effort will be made to keep this information up-to-date. Why not check it out today?



Gift Shop Sales Summary

\$6,810.43 October 2001
3,719.68 October 2002
<3,090.75> Decrease in sales

\$7,141.10 November 2001
4,569.57 November 2002
<2,571.53> Decrease in sales

\$2,024.55 December 2001
425.27 December 2002
<1,599.28> Decrease in sales

Year End Totals

\$63,139.96 2001
54,126.48 2002
< 9,013.48> Decrease in sales

Mark your Calendar with these important dates!

January 18 (Saturday)
Docent Coordination Meeting, Tulsa Garden Center

March 1 (Saturday)
Reorientation, Pawhuska (tentative)

March 2 Visitor Center reopens, TGP Preserve

April 5 & 6 New Docent Training, Pawhuska

April 12 New Docent Training, Visitors Center

Visitation Notes - George Myers

November 2002

A total of 517 sign-in visitors came to the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in November 2002, 35% less than November 2001 and 13.5% less for the year-to-date.

Sixteen came from six other countries, including Germany (6), England (3), Australia, Finland and Poland (2) and Italy (1). Foreign visitors were down 23.8% from November 2001 but 24% ahead for the year-to-date.

We had 164 visitors from 29 other states, down 22.6% from November 2001 and down 11.6% for the year. The top states represented were Kansas (28), Texas (11), Arkansas and Florida (11), and Missouri (9). 337 Oklahomans signed in during the month.

62.5% of the foreign visitors were first-timers along with 67.7% of other state visitors and 43.6% of Oklahomans, for a total of 51.8% first-timers overall.

November visitation was heaviest on Saturday and Sunday, with an average of 33 visitors per day. In fact, 70% of weekly visitors came on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. 39% came between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m., 28% between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., with 22% between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. We had 63, 57, 46 and 33 visitors on peak days with six days over 30 visitors. There were two

blank days and one day with one visitor. We were not over run with visitors in November. It looks like we won't break the 10,000-visitor level for the year.

Some of the visitor comments were: "Adopted Hickory. Neat place", "Great trip, great guide", "Beautiful", "Wild", "Vastness of area is overwhelming", "Refreshing beauty", "Worth the trip", and "Love it every time". There were numerous comments "Where are the bison?"



Osage Cosmology - Van Vives

The Osage people, from early times, considered knowledge to be necessary to human survival. They believed that knowledge could only come through observation and perception, but they also believed that humans would never come to a complete understanding of the cosmos.

Individual observation was not enough, so they would gather together to exchange ideas concerning the action of the sun, moon, and stars. Sky and earth are the two main divisions of the cosmos. Life is conceived in the sky and descends to earth to take material form. Thus, they called the sky father and the earth mother.

Humans and all living things existed on the surface of the earth, the space between sky

and earth. They called this space *ho'-e-ga*, or *snare of life*. The Osages further recognized that the earth portion of the cosmos was divided into land and water, each containing certain forms of life.

Unending cycles appeared everywhere. There was birth, maturity, old age, and death; there was the birth of light and darkness in the sky and it seemed to proceed from east to west. So the Osage began to describe the four major divisions of the universe as sky and earth, and day and night.

The Osage understanding of the cosmos continued to develop. The direction of the sky was up, and formed the symbolic *left side* of the universe. The sky was a masculine force that for some reason was associated with the number six. The direction of the earth was down and formed the symbolic *right side* of the universe. The earth was a feminine force that for some reason was associated with the number seven. The light of day was associated with the east, the direction of the sunrise, and with red, the color of the rising sun. The night and the moon were seen as the most powerful forces of death. Night was associated with the west, the direction of the setting sun, and with black, the color of the night. The cycle of day and night repeated itself as the sun traveled from east to west across the surface of the earth.

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In Review:

UP: Sky, right, six, male

DOWN: Earth, land, water, left, seven, female

EAST: Day, sun, life, birth, red, male

WEST: Night, moon, destruction, death, black, female

(Information for this article was gathered from *The Osage and the Invisible World, From the Works of Francis La Flesche*, edited by Garrick A. Bailey)



Suggestions for Discussion

- Andrew Donovan-Shead

This being the last newsletter for this season, I offer a couple of ideas for your consideration.

Educating our Children

One of the important activities we have lost in the recent changes made by The Nature Conservancy is our ability to show our children why nature is important to our collective well being. Our children are the ones who will decide whether or not to pave over the last great places, or to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In their ignorance our children won't care because they will have no appreciation or understanding of why biodiversity and wild places are important. By impoverishing our children we fail in our duty to them and to the environment we

bequeath to their generation.

Working with children is exhausting yet can be an extremely rewarding experience for the spirits of all concerned. I volunteered to be a Trail Guide. My last outing was with the Ponca City Home Schoolers who were a delight to escort. I think we should reinstate our school tours program. Perhaps these tours could be an extension of the guided tours currently on offer.

Taste the Prairie

We have seen the prairie's coat of many colors and know that it is so because the bison eat an exclusive diet of grass, leaving the flowers to bloom. I wonder if we can offer another aspect of the prairie to public awareness that has the potential to be far reaching.

The Visitor Center is located in the center of the preserve, pretty much. Bison are excluded from this area. It is sheltered in the bottomland of Sand Creek. Water is readily available in the vicinity. It is a good place to locate bee hives and collect honey with the characteristic flavor of the Tallgrass Prairie, honey that can be sold in the gift shop and, if successful, farther afield.

Though I once worked in a honey packing plant, what I know about apiculture is insignificant. I imagine two possible outlines that might be feasible ways to taste the prairie.

1) The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve could lease the

opportunity to a commercial producer of honey, in much the same way that cattle leases are managed. A stipulation of the lease should be that only honey wholly from the Tallgrass Prairie be allowed to bear the Prairie label.

2) Prairie honey production could be a by-product of a scientific experiment. Bees provide minute coverage of a large area. Surely bees would be useful for scientific monitoring of the health of the prairie ecosystem -- through detailed analysis of the health of hives and individual bees, coupled with biochemical and microscopic analysis of the honey. In this scenario, the scientific enterprise would involve university researchers from a number of different departments such as those directly concerned with research into apiculture, basic beekeeping mechanics, the bioscience of *Apis Mellifera*, and the role played by bees in community ecology. An end result of this inter-disciplinary enterprise would be the production and sale of honey -- Taste the Prairie; a sweet deal, maybe.



Osage, Children of the Middle Water

- Nicholas DelGrosso

Part I of a III Part Series

Osage County and the Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve are linked forever with the Osage People. As docents at the preserve we should strive to learn about the past stewards of the land. Visitors are interested in the Conservancy's efforts to restore the area's tallgrass ecology but they are also interested in the history of the people who lived on this land and still have an effect on its use. So who are the Osages and where did they come from? This article is a small effort to explore these questions.

Most authorities feel that the Osage Indians originally came from the Ohio River Region. Generally speaking, as Europeans displaced eastern Indian tribes along the eastern seaboard, they in turn displaced tribes to their west. This is a variation on Turner's Frontier Hypothesis. Initially, contact with the early European traders and settlers brought advantages and disadvantages. Those tribes who came into contact with the Europeans, and survived the experience, were introduced to and acquired metalcraft and firearms. The acquisition of these new technologies disrupted traditional native power structures and made the tribe that controlled these technologies a powerful force when confronting their more

primitive neighbors. From the very first contact with Europeans, the Osage appeared to understand this dynamic and attempted to use it to their political advantage.

The first recorded notes about the Osage people are observed in Marquette's journals. He originally encounters them in 1673 on the Osage River in present day Vernon County, Missouri. At this time their settled territory appears to have encompassed southwestern Missouri, northwestern Arkansas, southeastern Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma. Their hunting boundaries were more extensive, going from the Platt River in the North to the Red River in the South and from the Mississippi River to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Early explorers describe the Osage as living in permanent village sites in the woodlands of their territory. The Osage called themselves Ni-U-Ko'n-Ska. This name is truly descriptive because it means *Children of the middle waters*. There appears to have been two main bands; the Grande and the Petite. The Great (Grande) Osage lived on the Osage River and the Little (Petite) Osage lived along the Missouri River. At the time of the French contact there were five riverine villages, with each village numbering between 1000 to 2000 inhabitants. Each family had a lodge built from native woodland materials (i.e., cattail reed

mats and hickory poles). The lodge was typically 30-40 feet in length and was the center of family life. Inside the lodge were important ritual objects and other valuables, which were hung from the rafters or stored in benches.

The Osage were described as a warlike people due to the ferocity with which they guarded their land. They were quick studies and soon learned the importance of their European friends. The French in turn viewed the Osage as the most important Indian Nation of the lower Missouri River. Peaceful relations with the Osages were necessary to further French strategy in North America; the linking of Canada and Louisiana while containing the English settlements east of the Allegheny and the Appalachian Mountains. The French traders and explorers were interested in the fur trade. The Osages acted as middlemen, obtaining furs from their neighbors and trading them to the French for firearms, thus securing their new power position. The Osages exploited this position of power and it gave them an advantage in their conflicts with other tribes. Early explorers and French traders married into the tribe eventually altering Osage social structures and giving the Osage new perspectives in dealing with the Europeans.

George Catlin's 1832 description of the typical Osage Indian was very

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impressive. He said that they were the tallest men in North America. The typical man was not less than six feet tall. The Osage shaved their heads with the exception of a scalp lock. They cut and slit their ears and suspended wampum and tinsel ornaments from them. Their shoulders, arms and chests were generally naked and painted in picturesque ways, with silver bands on their wrists and rings on their fingers. They generally wore trade blankets, which by this time were replacing buffalo robes as wearing apparel.

Like other woodland tribes, agriculture was an important part of life for the Osage family. The Osages planted crops of maize, pumpkins, beans, squash and gourds. There was a distinct division of labor, with women engaging in agriculture and the gathering of wild nuts, persimmons, pawpaws and roots. Osage men hunted deer, bear, elk, wild turkey and other small game. The men also engaged in trade, trapping and warfare. The Osage left their villages twice a year in the summer and fall to hunt bison on the plains.

Cooking was done in shell tempered pottery. After contact with Europeans, durable metal goods became commonplace. Meals were served in wooden bowls and eaten with spoons and knives.

After the Louisiana Purchase Americans replaced the

French. Thomas Jefferson recognized the Osage position of power in the middle of the continent. In his instructions to Meriwether Lewis, he wanted Lewis to offer the Osage Chief a free trip to Washington to meet the new father and be impressed by the power and population of the Americans. In 1804 Pierre Chouteau and 22 Osages went to Washington to meet Jefferson. They were not impressed with the new policies of trying to treat each tribe equally in matters of trade. These new American trade policies undermined the Osages' position as middlemen. This became more evident in 1808 when William Clark built a fort or trading post in Osage Territory in Missouri. This was the beginning of the constriction of Osage power and traditional Osage lands. Clark negotiated an adverse treaty with the Osages, which ceded huge chunks of Missouri lands to the United States. By 1825 the United States had moved the tribe forcibly to a small area of what is now Kansas.

By the time George Catlin met the Osage people in the 1830s, they had been repeatedly moved and their lands reduced. Their numbers were reduced by small pox on two or three different occasions and the Konzas had seceded from them and reduced their strength. In 20 years the policies of the United States severely reduced the Osages position of power and influence in the mid-continent. They were also

reduced in size by European diseases and incessant wars with the Pawnees and Comanches. The Osages seemed to be on the path to self-destruction. They had a difficult time understanding the new power structure after the French sold Louisiana to the United States and they were cut out of trade interactions with other tribes. To survive they had to come to grips with the realities of the new world they lived in.

In the next installment we will explore how the Osage turned these unfortunate circumstances around and rebuilt their influence.



Docent Recognition Dinner a Success!

Thanks go out to Monica Murray for truly making this year's Docent Recognition Diner a wonderful affair. Many awards were given out, setting new records for shifts worked. When Andrew Donovan-Shead was called to the podium to receive his service award, he stated that he hadn't received one since he wore short pants. In case you need help visualizing Andrew in short pants.....

