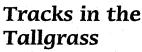
## THE DOCENT NEWS

For Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents

May 2003



- Jerry Wagener

Those of us at the March 1st reorientation heard details from Harvey Payne and Bob Hamiton about the Flint Hills Initiative. This involves patch burning experiments with cattle grazing on the preserve with a goal of helping Flint Hills ranchers raise cattle in a more ecofriendly way. One consequence of these experiments is that some of the projected bison pasture will instead be devoted to these cattle studies.

Dick Baker has subsequently asked if this indicates a philosophical change on the part of The Nature Conservancy in general, or the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in particular. Dick wonders if this somehow changes what we docents tell visitors about goals and objectives.

Bob Hamilton has responded to Dick's question, and the two of them have agreed for this question-answer combination to appear in *The Docent News.* So here it is, in their words:

Dick's question:
We have been told for 10 years that the mission of TNC is to preserve endangered plant and

animal species, in their natural habitat, by protecting land and water, and the goal at TGP is to recreate a functioning Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem. How many gazillion times have we heard and repeated those two axioms? I understood those two statements to define our PHILOSOPHY, GOAL(S) AND MISSION.

Now, the big thing seems to be Patch Burn, with emphasis on what it could ultimately do to benefit the cattle industry. To facilitate the P-B Experiment the ultimate Bison herd size (and the Preserve acreage and staff time dedicated to them) will be reduced by 19%, the acreage to be burned each year will be increased by 54%. I'm sure that this apparent change in P/G/M will drive other procedural changes that I feel the Docents need to understand. if we are to intelligently "extend the outreach of the staff".

I am not against change, in general, or P-B, in particular. But, feel that I need to understand more about how we got from there to here.

Bob's response:

The recent cattle-bison changes at the Tallgrass are a direct result of TNC's

(Continued on page 2)

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Workday Coordinator Dennis Bires (918) 341-3908 - home dennisbires@lycos.com (Continued from page 1) evolution over the past 5-10 years. TNC's mission has not changed but the Conservancy's vision of conservation success is now defined through ecological planning, resulting in identification of a portfolio of sites warranting protection. As we expected, the entire 4 million acre Flint Hills of Oklahoma and Kansas has emerged as a high priority portfolio site. TNC's goal is no longer just to have the stand-alone Tallarass Prairie Preserve; now we will be working to build partnerships with other landowners to protect the entire Flint Hills. Although of significant size, the TGP is a relatively small tail on the much larger Flint Hills dog. Our challenge is how to get the tail to wag the dog. Let me explain.

First, some ecological theory. Habitat heterogeneity (variability) is recognized as the foundation for biological diversity. Ecologists recognize that Great Plains grassland ecosystems evolved with an interaction between grazers and fire, resulting in a shifting patch mosaic (heterogeneity) that maintained biological diversity. These ecological principals are what drove the development of the preserve's fire-bison management plan, the largest and most progressive effort in North American to maintain biological diversity in a tallarass prairie landscape.

In contrast to the preserve, much of the Flint Hills is

under a grazing and fire regime that produces a homogeneous landscape with low habitat diversity. The combination of widespread annual spring burning (estimated at > 80% per year) and intensive early season grazing is the concern. Repeated for decades, the result is a less diverse plant and wildlife community, and is one of the suspected causes of the long-term decline of many grassland bird species, including the Greater Prairie Chicken. The Conservancy's ecoregional planning process has identified burning and grazing practices as two of the primary ecological threats to biodiversity in the Flint Hills.

Although our fire-bison model has tremendous biodiversity value, it is not very exportable to the private ranching community that controls the Flint Hills. This is where our cattle patch burn efforts come in to play. Researchers at OSU have taken elements of our fire-bison regime and are working to plug them into cattle grazing models to make cattle more biodiversity friendly (see Fuhlendorf and Engle's paper in Bioscience). The pay-off could be tremendous: our conservation efforts could be leveraged to impact the entire Flint Hills as well as other Great Plains grasslands.

In summary, I see two overlapping future objectives for the Tallgrass. The bulk of the preserve will still be dedicated to our original core preserve fire-bison

regime, with lessons learned influencing research in our experiment station pastures where we hope to generate and export *greener* cattle production ideas. Conservation in the Flint Hills means dealing with cattle; and changes in agriculture are brought about by information (research) and demonstration. By dedicating more of the preserve to long-term cattle research, we hope to influence conservation on a much larger landscape. With the right ideas and partnerships, maybe we can teach our ol' Flint Hills dog some new tricks. Now if I could just teach my dogs to quit running off....

## Cattle-Bison Summary Original Revised

Target Cattle Grazed Area (acres)	3,100	10,100
Target Year-Round Bison Unit	30,400	24,800
Target Bison Herd with calves	3,200	2,600
Target Bison Herd overwinter	2,100	1,950

#### JLW note:

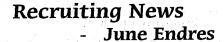
The Fuhlendorf/Engle paper is on our website, in the library-section. Also, in Bob's response he did not address Dick's claim of a 54% burning increase. Bob indicates that the burning rate (1/3 per year) has not changed. They are exchanging notes on that now.

I will be out of town June and July. Therefore you will no doubt be delighted to hear that you won't have to put up with my column for those two months. Enjoy the cool summer months, and I'll be back for the hot ones.



# Preserve Update - Bob Hamilton

- Twister on the Tallarass. On the evening of May 8 a tornado crossed the south end of the preserve. Passing from southwest to northeast, it crossed the Hubble and Leahy pastures, going between the residences of our staff Kevin Chouteau and Dwight Christian. The only damage was to the crosstimbers where it entered the preserve and four separate stretches of internal and boundary fence. It also downed the high-voltage line east of Kevin's house by snapping or pulling up 4 sets of poles. Kevin, Dwight and Perry Collins all got a good look at the 1/4 - 1/2 mile wide funnel as they retreated to their storm cellars. This was the same twister that demolished a ranch residence owned by Frederick Drummond west of Pawhuska on H60.
- Boundary fencing on east side continues to move along, with 3.5 miles of fence now completed by our staff and a contractor.
- Recent good rains (4" in first 2 weeks of May) should push the grass and give a good June wildflower show.
- Foundation footings being poured for new Research Station.



First, thanks to each of you who helped in the recruiting meetings held in February. Through our plan and your assistance, we located over 40 volunteers, most of whom attended Docent Training classes on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in Pawhuska. This is a group of very neat people and we're sure you'll enjoy working with them this summer.

It is important to mention all of the TGP docents that helped. This included Barbara Bates, Dennis Bires, John Boxall, Art Browning, Marilyn Clarke, Charlotte Evans, John Fisher, Nancy Irby, Pat Jaynes, Jenk Jones, Stuart Marshall, Monica Murray, Betty and David Turner, Van Vives and Jerry Wagener. True to form, Ann Whitehorn was there with us at the Pawhuska get together. Each of you gave your time and effort to come with us rain, snow, ice or whatever and added to the picture we could present to newcomers about the diversification of talents and interests of the group.

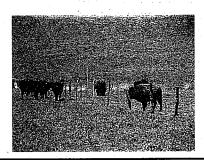
In addition, many thanks to Public Television Station OETA, Public Radio Stations KWGS in Tulsa and KCSC in Edmond, The Tulsa World, The Daily Oklahoman, Pawhuska Journal Capital, Bartlesville Enterprise Examiner, Ponca City Daily News, and Edmund Sun for allowing us space or time in their media outlets. We could not do it without them, nor without the input of

Grant Gerondale of the Tulsa office of TNC who helped us locate the media contacts.

The Tulsa, Bartlesville, Pawhuska, Ponca City and Edmond Public Libraries all allowed us to use their facilities without cost and a couple even gave us keys of our own to get in and out. We'd never make it without their VCR players, tables, warm rooms and safe environments for our nighttime visitors.

Sometimes it feels like these recruiting meetings just happen, but it takes a lot of people and cooperation to help us get together with people who want to be part of the TGP experience. It is worth the effort to maintain our stature as a group of committed, interested Volunteers in Preservation.

It has been suggested that we continue to find all of the interested people we can during the summer and, perhaps, have a group ready in the early spring next year with training set for late fall or early winter this year. I'd appreciate hearing your opinions on this. Please email me at Ridgetree@worldnet.att.net or call me at (405) 356-9645 with your thoughts.





# Docent Opportunity - Timothy Grogan

As one of the Nature Conservancy's volunteers, we have promised to make you aware of opportunities to participate in activities at the Conservancy's preserves. One such opportunity is coming up in June:

What: Annual Butterfly

Count

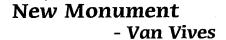
Where: Pontotoc Ridge
Preserve (south of Ada)
When: June 14th, 10 - 4
Who: The North American
Butterfly Association's
Walter Gerard will lead the
count

I believe Pontotoc Ridge is the hidden jewel of the Conservancy's Oklahoma preserves, with flora ranging from prairie bluestem, to arid hilltop cacti, to forested valleys, and fauna from rattlesnakes to cave anthropoids.

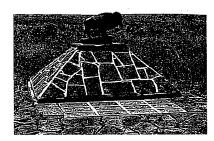
It is also recognized as one of the premier butterfly habitats in the nation, with over 85 species present.

Please contact Wendy Anasti at (918) 585-1117 or wanasti@tnc.org if you'd like to attend for details and directions.

Editor's Note: There are two butterfly counts you can participate in this June: Pontotoc Ridge Preserve and TGP. See the calendar of events for details.



If you have not walked on the trail this year, you are in for a surprise. At the junction of the long and short trail you will find a beautiful new monument honoring the founders of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Atop a pyramid of native stone is a bronze statue of a bison, with engraved granite stones at the base of the pyramid. Each stone honors one of the founding members.



The inscription on the base of the statue reads, "A Gift to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve From the Board of Governors of the Nature Conservancy on the occasion of the Return of the Bison to Their Habitat. Oct. 18, 1993"

The persons honored are:
Leonard J. Eaton —
Founding Member
Dr. Jerry Crockett —
Founding Member
Frederick Drummond —
Founding Member
Dr. Rainey Williams —
Founding Member
Robert E. "Bill" Lorton —
Founder's Member
J. Larry Nichols —
Founder's Council
George J. Records —
Founding Member

W. G. "Bill" Kerr –
Founding Member
Frank A. McPherson –
Founding Member
John Kilpatrick –
Founding Member
Joseph H. Williams –
Founding Chairman
C. J. "Pete" Silas –
Founding Member

### Gift Shop Sales Summary

April 2002 April 2003 Increase in Sales
Year-to-date 2002
Year-to-date 2003
Year-to-date decrease in sales



## Mark Your Calendar with These Important Dates!

**Oil Field Cleanup Work Day** *May 31*<sup>st</sup> 10a.m. – 3 p.m. Preserve Headquarters

Annual Butterfly Count June 21st, 9:30 a.m. TGP Preserve Headquarters

Annual Butterfly Count June 14th, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Pontotoc Ridge Preserve

For more information visit the on-line calendar of events @ www.oklahomanature.org/OK/tallgrass volunteers.html

### Visitation Notes - George Myers

808 visitors signed in during April, an increase of 11.5% over April 2002. This is a welcome reversal of the visitation trend. However visitation is still down 20% for the year—to—date, so we have some way to go to get back on an upward trend.

There were 229 visitors from 34 other states, with Kansas (29), Texas (27), Colorado (18), Indiana (14) and Illinois, Maine, and Minnesota (13) each heading the list. 22 visitors came from 6 other countries, England (10), Germany (4), China (3), Australia and Switzerland (2) each, and Belgium (1). 557 Oklahomans visited.

The weekends and Tuesday were the popular days to visit and 88.6% of the visitors came between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. 73% of the foreign visitors were first timers, along with 70% of other state visitors, and only 42% of Oklahomans. It is interesting that more Oklahomans are coming back for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> time.

Visitor's comments were interesting. "Saw the babies", "Bison, deer and coyotes", "Love seeing where the buffalo roam", "Worked here 10 years ago, helping TNC", "God's gift", "Great experiment, thanks for your patience", "Buffalo are such loveable things", "Thank you for food for my soul", "Amazing, bison are friendly" (???), some Georgia members of TNC "Identified turtle

shells", an Englishman commented "Big", and a couple from Illinois, "Which way to the nearest Starbucks?".



# What's Blooming? - Van Vives

Thanks to the rain we have had this spring the prairie is greening and blooming splendidly. The list below is somewhat in accordance to abundance (most to least).

Milkweed Scurfy Pea Yarrow **Showy Evening Primrose** Prairie Larkspur Daisy Fleabane Yellow Sweet Clover Spiderwort Prairie Verbina Coreopsis **Nightshade Prairie Parsely** Blackberry Wild Petunia Purple Coneflower Violet Wood Sorrel

Although not in bloom yet, there are several vines of Pitcher's Clematis on each side of the trail about half way between the trail head and the first step going up the west path. About three years ago there was only one vine. The flowers will be purple bell-shaped flowers that tend to hang downward. They should bloom in two or three weeks.



# Photo Album Available to Enlighten Visitors - Andrew Donovan Shead

The next time you are docent at the Visitor Center you will find a few new pictures of the Tallgrass Prairie in the photo album on the table. I have found this collection useful when talking to visitors.

Often a group of visitors will arrive, only staying for a few minutes. I've always suspected that many persons are like my Mum who I brought out to see the prairie a few years ago. She did see bison the few that were there at the time. Eventually, she exclaimed, "There's nothing out here!" this in a tone that suggested I had practiced upon her credulity. "Exactly," I replied, "it's prairie."

Most visitors see the panorama and the horizon, which can engender a frisson of fear if one is not used to wide open space. I've felt something like it on looking up into the vault of the sky while standing on a high point of land where the peripheral references disappear, a dizziness until I look down again to regain my perspective.

What visitors see is from their car with the windows rolled up and the radio on. By the time they get to the Visitor Center they want to know where the bison are, where's the tall grass, and (Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5) where are the flowers? I use this as an opportunity to get them inside where I can show them the samples of grass in the Nature Room. If they haven't seen bison, I pull out the photo album and show them the pictures. If they have seen bison, I show them the album anyway, so that they can see some of the flowers that appear at different times on the prairie, or show them the visible signs on the surface of ants at work down below. And, most important, that the prairie is vibrantly alive anywhere you care to stand and look down around your feet.

Most people are not going to take a walk, so I encourage departing visitors to stop at one of the scenic turnouts, switch off the car, get out, be quiet and listen, look, and feel. If they do just that, the prairie will give them something to take home, not necessarily chiggers.

In April I was on duty with Steve Forsythe who has just completed his Docent Training. He passed his final exam, by the way. Steve is retired from the US Fish & Wildlife Service and from the Nature Conservancy office in Tulsa. When I am alone at the shop I only have time for a brisk walk around the Study Trail before opening for business. Last month I met Steve and left him in charge while I walked back and up onto the Prairie Earth Trail.

What a brilliant morning it was, with a stiff breeze out of the south. So much was going on all around up and down to keep me busy with binoculars and camera. Digital photography is one of the modern wonders that puts pictures within reach of the desultory amateur that were once reserved to professionals, pictures of unparalleled sharpness and clarity. Now digital cameras have resolution enough to permit dramatic enlargement, as you will see in some of the pictures of bison and insects I the album. Ability to focus to within a few inches produces the arresting close-up pictures of the flowers. Spot metering ensures correct exposure for the subjects.

On the prairie things happen quickly. Only when I got home did I see the fine details of the iridescent beetle and notice that the scat appeared to be full of undigested wing cases, legs, and other chitinous parts of insects. I wonder what animal made these deposits? I don't know, but it could be a possum because the scat is about the right size and possums include insects in their diet. They are not fussy about what they eat.

Digital pictures are a good way to bring the prairie to visitors, though it is no substitute for actually walking around.



#### History of Osage County

Part III of a VI Part Series
- Jenk Jones

#### THE OSAGE INDIANS

Like many American Indian tribes, the Osages moved great distances over the period of centuries. From the Plains originally (the states of Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa and the Dakotas are named for subtribes of the Osage), they drifted well east of the Mississippi River before ultimately returning to America's midlands. By the time Europeans began to enter the mid-continent, the Osages generally held sway over lands between the Missouri and Arkansas rivers north and south and to the Mississippi on the east, from which location came the term by which they were known, People of the Middle Waters. Many Osages moved into Oklahoma in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to get involved in fur trading with French traders, including the Chouteaus, in the Three Forks area near Muskogee. Union Mission, the first established in Oklahoma, was started in 1821 to serve the tribe. The first school, begun the same year. was for French and Osage children. Osages had bloody fights with the Cherokees when the latter moved to Oklahoma from the Southeastern United States, and also with Plains tribes. In 1833 the Osages attacked a Kiowa village northwest of present-day Lawton at a spot that became known as Cutthroat Gap

(Continued on page

(Continued from page 6)
because the Osages decapitated
their victims and stuck their
heads in cooking pots.

In the treaties forced by the federal government in 1818 and 1825, the Osages gave up their Indian Territory holdings for land in southern Kansas. At that time the Cherokee Outlet was established in northernmost Indian Territory. The Outlet ran west from a present-day Tulsa-Bartlesville line to the 100th meridian, where it met the Texas Panhandle. It was 58 by 226 miles (more than 13,000 square miles) and allowed the Cherokees to hunt on the plains, especially for buffalo. [Note: the term Cherokee Strip often is mistakenly used to refer to The Outlet. The Cherokee Strip actually was a 2½-mile north-to-south strip along the 37th Parallel (Oklahoma-Kansas border) that corrected an earlier surveying error and added the land in question to Kansas.l

Like most dealings with the government, the one involving the Osages and Kansas wouldn't last. The Osages had warriors on both sides during the Civil War (Bigheart, for instance, was a Union lieutenant; the Little Osage band favored the North, the Greater Osages the South). After the war the government ignored Osage service to the North and punished the tribe for its Southern connections by taking away part of its lands (as it did with the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory). There was increased pressure on the remaining Osage holdings in Kansas as whites demanded the lands be opened

to settlement. White hunters were depleting the game upon which the Indians depended. Meanwhile the Cherokees were having trouble with The Outlet. The areat cattle trails crossed it and the animals grazed it hard. Would-be homesteaders wanted the land. Timber thieves stripped it of what good wood there was. Land was needed for other displaced Indian tribes. And the government ruled many of the Cherokees' grazing leases with white ranchers were illegal, depriving the tribe of that revenue.

So those old enemies, the Osages and Cherokees, struck a deal. The Osages, having sold their Kansas lands in 1870 to the government for a tidy profit (at \$1.25 an acre), bought nearly 1.5 million acres in the eastern end of the Cherokee Outlet. That became the Osage Nation, or Osage County, we know today. The price: 70 cents an acre, which subsequent events proved to be one of the world's great real-estate steals. The Osages in turn sold 102,000 acres to their Kaw cousins, land east of the Arkansas River in Kay County adjoining the Osage. Tribes including the Ponca, Tonkawa, Otoe-Missouri and Pawnee obtained other parts of the old Outlet, and the Cherokees sold the remainder to the federal government.

Most of the Osages moved to their new home in 1871 and 1872. They were fortunate in two ways: the new land cost less than the land they sold in Kansas, so they received enough interest income (from 5 percent on the surplus deposited in the U.S. Treasury) to meet tribesmen's basic needs, and they began to lease out parts of

the county to cattle ranchers, providing another source of income. But they had problems as well. Perhaps half of the tribe died due to smallpox, cholera, TB and other diseases plus shortages in medicine and clothing. Hunger also took its toll, as by 1875 the buffalo largely had been eliminated on the Southern Plains.

The first Osage agency was located at Silver Lake south of Bartlesville until it was discovered that was east of the 96<sup>th</sup> Meridian, hence on Cherokee land. The agency was moved to Pawhuska, Indian tribes soon encountered the Dawes Act, which was designed to break up tribally held lands and put property in the hands of individual Indians. This would both weaken tribal structure and allow "surplus" lands to be made available for settlers. The Osages and the Five Civilized Tribes were supposed to be exempt from the Dawes Act because they held patented title to their land, but pressure was applied and the tribes eventually caved in. The Osages were the last to do so. when the government said it would allot the land itself if the tribe did not cooperate.

By the time (1906) the Osages agreed to divide the land, there were more mixed-bloods than full-bloods, and the former were more willing to walk the white man's path. Each Osage on the tribal rolls received a series of allotments totaling slightly more than a square mile. Of that, one 160-acre plot was designated a homestead and could not be taxed. Indians often were shortchanged or cheated in the process of

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)
passing lands on to others, and
guardians appointed
particularly to run the affairs
of full-bloods, who were
considered less competent to
handle their money, often
ripped off their charges. Banks
hit them with high interest and
doctors and merchants
overcharged them. Alcoholism
also took its toll among the
Osages.

Nonetheless, the tribe had its assets. It continued to receive money from interest on the money it banked from the Kansas lands it had sold as well as from cattle leases. The Osages were alone among Indians in retaining the subsurface mineral rights for the tribe rather than

individuals. The Osage Allotment Act of 1906 was established to determine tribal members and allot them headrights; the total for the tribe was 2,229. These headrights included children born before July 1, 1907. Those born afterward could become members of the tribe but did not have headrights in their own right: they could only get them through inheritance or marriage. This demarcation would assume immense proportions later when the Osages would become, per capita, the richest people in the world.

The Osages certainly have provided Oklahoma with colorful names. The tribe has

three primary bands: Dwellers Upon the Hilltop at Gray Horse, Dwellers in the Uand Forest around Hominy and Dwellers in the Thorny Thicket centered at Pawhuska. Names of prominent leaders within the nation included Bacon Rind, Lookout, Black Dog, Red Eagle and Strike Axe.

#### Jun 2003

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Aug 2003

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Nicholas Delgrosso				Bill Rinehart	June Endres	
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