

October 2003

THE DOCENT NEWS

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Distributed to Volunteers and Supporters of the Oklahoma Chapter of The Nature Conservancy



Tracks in the Tallgrass

- Jerry Wagener

If it seems like I've disappeared it's because I have, essentially. The plan was to be gone June/July and back pretty much all of August/September. Alas, I've also been gone much of Aug/Sept, and now it looks like I'll be gone most of October as well and part of November. So until the roundup and the docent dinner in November I'll disappear again.

I've had several questions about the docent-day roundup on Nov 15th. Here's all you need to know: show up at the visitors center at the appointed time, no reservation needed, family and friends, within reason, are welcome. I'll meet you there and we'll make the always-fun trip to the corrals and the teeming bison.

And speaking of bison, I wrote the following after returning briefly in early August, then had second thoughts about sending it in. So I bounced it off several folks and the enthusiastic response was "of course you should put that in *The Docent News*". So here it is, for whatever it's worth. See

you at the roundup.

Passion on the Prairie

After returning from a record time away from Oklahoma, figuring out where we'd left our house, plowing through mountains of mail, both email and snail mail, and paying a few bills, I checked the TGP docent schedule for August. Maybe I ought to do a shift at the Visitor Center, I thought, before I forget everything.

Horrors, there were several empty days, and several more with only one docent signed up. Where is everybody? Not that I can talk, having just flown the coop for a couple of months. Anyway, I signed up for one of the empty days, a Thursday. Well, half a docent would have been sufficient that day, as there were only 9 visitors.

And Ann didn't have any projects for me to work on. So, with no one to talk with, no visitors, and no project, it looked to be a thumb-twiddling afternoon; after all, one can sweep the porch and water the plants just so many times. Scouting around I spotted two potential fix-up projects, and figured to come prepared next time with the fixin's.

As it happened, two book

shipments arrived that morning, one of which was American Bison: A Natural History, by professor Dale Lott, recommended by two docents (see the April 2003 issue of *The Docent News*). Since I know all about bison (yeah, right) I resisted thumbing through a copy until lunchtime. But while munching on my sandwich I scanned the jacket, forward, preface, table of contents, etc., all pretty ho-hum stuff. But with nothing better to do I started reading part 1, dealing with (ho-hum again) *bison relationships*.

None of that prepared me for what happened next. *Relationships* turned out to be more social-scene vernacular than professorial. The bison sex, and related rut stuff, is graphic and riveting. Do you know how a bull tells precisely when a cow is *ready*? Do you know why that matters? Do you know ... Well probably you do, since you've no doubt read lots of bison books and were paying close attention during all those talks on bison. Guess I haven't and wasn't. Anyway, it turned out to be, between those occasional visitors, an illuminating afternoon.

Part 1 of American Bison is, simultaneously, scholarly, (Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)
authoritative, and a really good read. I can't imagine how the author can maintain that momentum. Guess I'll have to sign up on another empty day, and try to sneak in Part 2 (bison athletics?) between visitors. Alas, those two projects will just have to wait...

Jerry



Science in Action - Andrew Donovan-Shead

Doctor José Arévalo again needed help collecting data at the tornado research site in the southwest corner of the prairie. On Friday, September 5th I found my way back and arrived a little after 0900 hours. One aspect of Cross Timbers is that it hides things. I followed what looked like fresh tire tracks beside the fence-line, walking along the cleared perimeter until I found the ATV José used to transport himself from the headquarters area. All was quiet. I hailed José for a minute or two until I got a response and my bearings, whereupon I struck off into the brush in the general direction of José's voice.

This section of Cross Timbers is typical of the whole; there are thickly wooded areas surrounding glades, individual trees, fallen timber, rocky undulating ground with

seasonal streams. Beyond this there is the open prairie. From a distance, Cross Timbers give impression of a shoreline and land. William Winchester borrowed an apt metaphor from Homer in his book A Very Small Farm when he referred to the prairie as, "the wine-dark sea"; indeed it does appear so, late in the year when it looks its best. Other authors liken the Cross Timbers to an archipelago.

Emerging from a thicket, I sighted José in the offing and waded out to meet him. He handed me the clipboard, told me what to do, then we got busy. I recorded the details identified by José in each quadrat. José estimated how much each quadrat is covered by oak and non-oak species, how much coverage by grass, by forbs, by rock, and by woody debris. We moved on to the standing timber and saplings, each one tagged by a unique number; we recorded the position in the quadrat and species of each tree. Also, we identified any damage and direction of the wind that caused the damage, or whether the damage existed before the tornado. We recorded this data on forms pre-printed for the purpose.

Eventually, we finished work in the transect, rolled up the tapes, then laid them out in the next section. And so it went until about three in the afternoon when I felt I needed to return to Tulsa. I helped José lay out the final

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transects for work that would take him through the remains of the day then took my leave.

While working I noticed lots of spiders and other insects, heard birds and the rhythm of the woodland. I saw life and death. In one quadrat there is a large and rotting trunk of a fallen tree, across which I had to lay the transecting tape. As I worked, I noticed a spider's web, in the middle of which there sat a black and yellow argiope. Careful not to damage the web, I finished laying the tape. When I went back to look at the spider, I saw that one of the many crickets on the ground had jumped and got caught in the corner of the web. The argiope had retreated to the opposite side until she was sure that her catch could be managed, whereupon she walked briskly across her web to deal with the prey. I saw clearly into the eyes of the cricket as it hung helpless. I am not sure how many spinnerets an argiope has, but it looked like two rapidly ejecting silk that the spider deftly cast over the cricket. Whithin about five seconds the spider had that cricket bagged and tagged. With her catch secure the spider returned to the center of her web. The cricket made one or two futile attempts to break free from it's tomb.

Later on in the afternoon, I visited the spider to see what was happening. She had

moved the silk sack containing the cricket to the center of the web, where she sat motionless with her head down sucking the cricket dry.

Here in this small corner of the preserve, in the lee of a rotting trunk, the great cycle of Life and Death played out before my eyes. A cricket died to give life to a spider, just as smaller things died to give life to the cricket, as the spider will no doubt die to give life to something else. And so everything in the world depends on everything else. We depend on everything to give us life and a healthy environment in which to live. Life depends on Death.

Corrections to last month's Science in Action:

The author's intention was to discuss "quadrats" not "quadrants"; a quadrat is a rectangular plot used for ecological or population studies, whereas a quadrant is an arc of 90 degrees that is one quarter of a circle.

Larvae of the Rattlesnake Master Borer Moth eat into the roots of the plant commonly known as Rattlesnake Master (Eryngium yuccifolium). The extra comma gave us Rattlesnakes and Master Borer Moths instead of a single entity.

Andrew informs us that Dr Palmer has now revised his estimate of the number of trees damaged or killed by the tornado from 200 to 500.



Letter to the Editor
- Betty B Turner
TGP Docent

This week we had visitors from SE Oklahoma near Broken Bow. They asked if any cucumber trees have been found on the Cucumber Creek Preserve (I didn't realize that there was such a tree). Can you find out and let us know? Maybe the TNC Director for that preserve could include the information in their next article for the Newsletter.

I enjoyed Andrew's article about Jose's project with the trees in the tornado path. David (Turner) and I were able to assist Jose one full, hot day. It was interesting. I'm pleased that the docents who are interested have the opportunity to participate in some of the scientific studies. Thanks ,

Betty B. Turner

Betty,
Here is some information on the cucumber tree. Now, has anyone seen one on the preserve?

Botanical Name: Magnolia cuminata

Common Name: Cucumber Tree

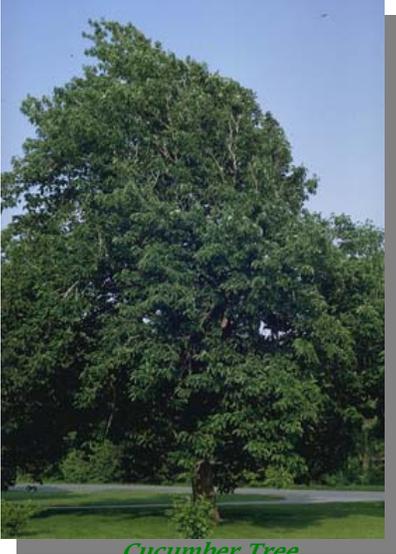
Height/Width: 50 to 80' in height and width.

Form: Pyramidal in youth, open and rounded when mature.

Range: Zone (3)4 to 8

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Cucumber Tree

Bark: Dark brown, divided into narrow scaly forking ridges.

Twigs: Thick, brown or gray, becoming glabrous.

Buds: Large, especially the end bud, oblong, soft-hairy.

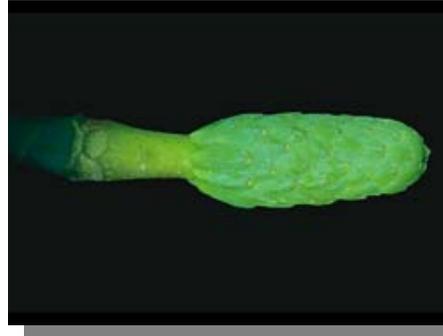
Leaves: Alternate, elliptical to ovate, 12-25 cm (5-10 in) long and 7.5-15 cm (3-6 in) wide, entire, acuminate, green and glabrous above, pale green and usually soft-hairy below.



Cucumber Tree leaves

Flowers: Single at ends of twigs, bell-shaped, 6-9 cm (2.4-3.5 in) wide, with 6 greenish-yellow or yellow petals, Spring bloom

Fruits: Conelike, oblong, 6-7.5 cm (2.4-3 in) long, composed of numerous follicles that split open in the late Summer to release two seeds.



Cucumber Tree Fruit

Distribution: Found in scattered locations throughout the Appalachians, Ozarks, and Ouachitas.

Habitat: Moist upland oak-hickory forests. In the Ouachitas, it is usually found only on the upper north slopes of the highest mountains.



Distribution in Oklahoma

Comment: Although the fruits are bitter, they are said to have been used in the past to flavor whiskey. *Magnolia* honors the French botanist and horticulturist Pierre Magnol; *acuminata* refers to the long-pointed leaf tips.



Ancient Crosstimbers

- Andrew Donovan-Shead

When I first arrived in Oklahoma I noticed the rocky outcrops, escarpments, and dry rugged terrain covered by what I thought of as scrub oak. It is characteristic of this part of the country, a broken landscape of rusty colored sandstone, supporting a stunted tenacious growth of oak between which prairie grasses and flowers grow. It is a landscape that steals one's affection by stealth. It is inimitable. For me its essence speaks most in the autumn, winter, and spring months with a surpassing beauty contained in the rust rocks, the brown dried grasses tinged by purples and golds, the gnarled trees defiant with dried leaves still clinging to the branches; all this under a cloudless sky of the palest, purest blue; added to this a dry wind rustling the grass, whispering through the branches and few remaining leaves. Walking in such woods is a spiritual delight with the occasional glimpse of deer only visible when they gallop away, the sound of woodland songbirds such as the chickadee mostly, tufted titmouse, and others; there are squirrels busy on the ground amongst the litter and in the trees above.

When I lived at 76th & Yale in Tulsa, I was at the frontier of
(Continued on page 5)

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the expansion southwards to the river, south of 71st street was cross-timbers woodland. I was attracted to the Ridgepark Apartment complex because it was utterly unlike other developments that scrape the ground bare to make way for the most soul destroying dwellings imaginable. My apartment was built among the post and blackjack oaks overlooking through the trees a small flood control pond used by duck and other creatures.

Clearance of the land is usually done by bulldozer and the piles of brush burned. A lot of woodland ends its days in the ricks and cords of hardwood timber delivered to hearths in winter. I have recognized this wood as I have thrown another log on the Yule blaze. It has never looked like much, just scrub trees.

Trees of the Cross Timbers, interspersed by savannah, are very slow growing in a harsh drought environment. Some of the oldest examples have been dated at five and six hundred years old. Typical is the oak tree of about fifteen inches in diameter that can be two to three hundred years old. A good place to see this kind of tree is Turkey Mountain on the west side of the Arkansas River in Tulsa, some of these trees look ancient. There is one to the side of the trail overlooking the river that looks like an Ent from Middle Earth.



Scenic view of Crosstimbers at TGP

Luckily, the importance of the Cross Timbers is now recognized in the formation of the Ancient Cross Timbers Consortium for Research, Education, and Conservation. The center of this activity is at the University of Arkansas, lead by Dr David Stahl. Here is the consortium statement of purpose copied from the web-site at <http://www.uark.edu/misc/xtimber/>

"The Cross Timbers and Post Oak Savanna form the frontier between the eastern deciduous forest and the grasslands of the southern Great Plains. This great ecotone appears to preserve more uncorrupted ancient forest than any other biogeographic province in the eastern United States, and offers an exceptional opportunity for environmental research, education, and conservation. These rugged old-growth woodlands were not commercially important, but have high ecological integrity and preserve vital components of our eroding biodiversity. They form a key link in the oak archipelago

that extends from Central America into southeastern Canada, and provide essential habitat for many species, including neotropical migratory birds. The Ancient Cross Timbers Consortium has been established to unite educational institutions, government agencies, conservation organizations, and individuals around the research, educational, and conservation opportunities presented by the extensive old-growth forest remnants in this ecosystem. The Consortium has organized a unique network of cooperative research natural areas in ancient Cross Timbers remnants extending across 700 miles from southeastern Kansas to southern Texas. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) joins universities in Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas with The Nature Conservancy and other federal, state, municipal, and private agencies in this consortium devoted to understanding and sustaining the natural environmental dynamics of this native ecosystem."

So, it looks like the Cross Timbers are important, but it is being eroded by development as you will have noticed in the urban sprawl south of Tulsa, and in the developments around the lakes as at Eufaula. The Nature Conservancy recently took over management of the ancient woodland preserve
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 fifteen miles west of Tulsa. On the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve there are tracts of Cross Timbers, one of which is the wind damaged area being studied by Dr Michael Palmer and Professor José Arévalo. These woods are dynamic places. Licked by fire and drenched by rain they have survived through the centuries and can teach us about our past, present, and future environments.

Cross Timbers were known as an iron-bound forest, but they will fall before the pressure of human population. The woods are home to a wide variety of species and provide recreation and educational opportunities to humans. A walk in the woods is a fine thing to do, as you can see on any holiday weekend on Turkey Mountain. But, if we don't watch out it will be gone before we know it. In the next issue I have more to say about Cross Timbers, which are better known in Texas than they are in Oklahoma.



Crosstimbers in the distance at TGP



Visitation Notes - George Meyers

672 visitors signed in during September, a decrease of 29% from September 2002. Our number of visitors is way down. Visitation is down 20% for the year-to-date compared to 2002. There were 204 visitors from 37 other states (down 30% from last September) with California (21), Kansas (20), Missouri (16), Florida (13), Texas (11) and Ohio (10) leading the list of visitor states. 28 visitors came from seven other countries (down 61% from last September) with England (13), Australia (6) and Canada, Holland, Italy and Sweden (2 each) completing the list. 440 Oklahomans visited the preserve in September 2003.

Saturdays and Sundays had more visitors, as 50% of the month's visitors came on those days. An additional 34% came on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 66% of the visitors came between 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. with an additional 16% after 3:30. 96% of the foreign visitors were first timers, along with 74% of other state visitors, and 59% of Oklahomans. Overall, 50% of the visitors were first timers.

Not too many comments, but here are some. "Love the snakes", "Lots of wildlife", "Thanks for your work", "Wonderful therapy", "A personal moving experience for me", "Oklahoma beauty

abounds", "Sunrise at the preserve!", "God's country", "Rough roads – no buffalo", followed by "35 buffalo, nice trails! Thanks", "Good for our souls", "Amazing vistas", "A wonderful tribute of nature". And of course the usual comments of "Beautiful", "Great", and "Wonderful".



GIFT SHOP SALES SUMMARY

\$ 5,378.52 September 2002
 \$ 3,572.03 September 2003

\$45,411.96 Year-to-date
 2002

\$35,812.41 Year-to-date
 2003

< \$9,599.55 > Year-to-date
 decrease in
 sales

Mark Your Calendar with these Important Dates!

Tree (Trans)Planting November 15, 2003

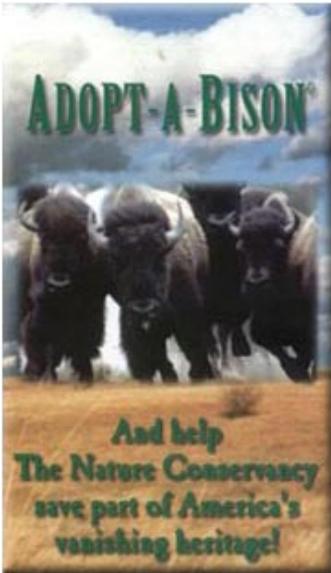
Meet at the headquarters at 10:00
 Contact: [Dennis Bires](#),
 (918) 341-3908

2003 Round-Up November 15, 2003

Meet at the headquarters at 1:00
 Contact: [Jerry Wagener](#),
 (918) 341-3908

Docent Recognition Dinner November 22, 2003

Hampton Inn, Sand Springs
 Contact: [Monica Murray](#)
 (918) 587-3701



And Help Restore an Ecosystem!

- Re-printed from www.nature.org/adoptabison

As settlers turned to the prairie into the nation's breadbasket, an entire ecosystem that supported hundreds of plants and animals disappeared. And it could have been gone forever, if it weren't for The Nature Conservancy and its 38,000 acre Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Osage County, Oklahoma. Here you can journey back in time and experience the prairie as our ancestors did with 8 foot tall grasses, breathtaking wildflower displays, and roaming bison. The bison are one of the primal forces on which the success of this entire venture depends.

The prairie depends on climate, fire, and bison to survive. The fire which The

Nature Conservancy manages through controlled burns prevents tress and brush from overwhelming the prairie and removes dead vegetation, allowing new plants to sprout.

The bison, eating 95% grass and loving the new grass shoots, follow the burns and leave the wildflowers alone so that the prairie becomes a shifting patchwork of new growth grasses and areas thick with wildflowers and other broadleaf plants. These wildflower and old grass areas build a fuel load that burns thoroughly and the pattern of new grass and bison begins again.



But while nature provides the 30 to 50 pounds of forage a bison consumes each day, there are many other bison-related expenses the Conservancy must cover to ensure that the tallgrass prairie is not just a legend, but a reality.

Adopt a bison and help keep the legend alive...

The prairie depends on the bison. The bison depend on us. And we depend on you.

Adopt a Bison for only \$40.00 a year, and help us to restore

this precious legacy, so that it will be here for our children and their children and their great-great grandchildren.

Three ways to Adopt:

1. **On-line adoption form found at**
www.nature.org/adoptabison
2. **Phone (918) 585-1117**
3. **Pick up a Adopt-A-Bison brochure at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and mail the enclosed form with your tax deductible \$40.00 check.**

Your tax deductible adoption contribution will be used to help:

- ☆ *Track the herd and research its role in sustaining the prairie*
- ☆ *Secure the "wide-open spaces" with perimeter fencing that can stand up to a one-ton charge.*
- ☆ *Make sure the herd remains disease-free*
- ☆ *Maintain the genetic balance of the herd*
- ☆ *Purchase additional bison*

With your adoption,...



- ☆ *Certificate of adoption*
- ☆ *Prairie Thunder newsletter*
- ☆ *Gift message card*
- ☆ *...and more...*



TNC Oklahoma Chapter Preserve Updates

The Last Great Places

**- Tim Grogan
Executive Director,
Oklahoma Nature
Conservancy**

As I write this on a beautiful fall day, I can't help but wish I was out at one of our preserves walking the trails rather than here in the office. But I'll be spending this weekend in the Ozarks at our stunning Nickel Preserve, and I invite each of you to come out to the preserves over the next few weeks as the autumn color peaks.

I have just returned from the Nature Conservancy's annual meeting in Costa Rica with renewed energy, excitement, and hope for the work TNC is doing. From Bolivia to China, from reefs to rain forest, your Conservancy is thinking big, and acting big. We are truly making a difference for this planet like no other group can. I invite you to visit our global website at www.nature.org to see some of many projects on which we are working.

And we continue to step up the pace of our conservation work right here in Oklahoma. Work continues on the new Research Center at the

Tallgrass Prairie Preserve as we prepare for the annual bison round-up. Work on a new Crosstimbers Ecoregional Plan is on schedule to guide our work at Pontotoc Ridge and elsewhere. Our Nickel Preserve staff have just received a major grant to do conservation work on the Army National Guard Camp Gruber. And we are in final contract negotiations to close on the acquisition of our newest preserve at Four Canyons in Western Oklahoma.

To support our ever-growing work, we have made several additions to our Oklahoma staff. Please join me in welcoming Larry Levesque to our Nickel Preserve conservation staff and Kristie Bushman to our Oklahoma City philanthropy staff.

Finally, for those birders among you, and even those who aren't, I'd like to recommend a book. If you only ever read one book on birds, this is it. [Living on the Wind](#) by Scott Weidensaul is an extremely personal, readable story of the remarkable bird world. It's writing is a unique cross between poetry and natural science. I had the pleasure of meeting Scott, and found his passion for birds and nature

in general to be real, and contagious.

Thank you for your continuing support in helping us in *Saving the Last Great Places*.

Tim



Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

**- Bob Hamilton
Dir. of Stewardship**

Bison

Construction of new boundary fence now stands at 6 miles with 2 1/2 miles left to go. This new fence will allow for the addition of 7,000 acres to the bison unit this fall.

Noxious and Invasive Plants

Spot-spraying of the noxious weed sericea lespedeza continues, now totaling 1,000 man-hours to sweep across 6,400 acres since June. It is a labor-intensive effort to systematically work across the prairie on ATVs pulling our spot-spray units.

Research Station

The exterior of the building is essentially done, with the steel roof and stone wall veneer in place. Work on the interior is now accelerating with the framing of walls.



Nickel Preserve - Chris Wilson Preserve Director

Bringing Back the Chinquapin

The Ozark Chinquapin (*Castanea pumila* var *ozarkensis*) is a small tree in the chestnut family that was once widespread throughout the Ozarks. The little nut produced in large spiny clusters is involved in Ozark folklore, but nowadays it is just too rare to find. Sadly, the chestnut blight has devastated populations of this species, just as it did its cousin the American Chestnut. Where individual trees still occur, stems are top-killed after just a few years of growth, creating a multi-trunked shrub that never achieves its natural growth form.

Nickel Preserve staff are helping to restore this important tree to its historic place in Ozark woodlands. Dr. Sandra Anagnostakis with the University of Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station is working to develop a blight-resistant Ozark Chinquapin. Preserve staff recently collected more than a thousand nuts to send off for propagation.

Dr. Anagnostakis seeks to achieve blight-resistance through genetic crossing with blight-resistant individuals developed from the Chinese Chestnut. The first cross will be between the strongest

Ozark Chinquapin seedlings from the Nickel Preserve and the most blight-resistant American/Chinese chestnut hybrids from the American Chestnut Foundation. These seedlings will be backcrossed to an Ozark Chinquapin. Resulting seedlings showing DNA markers of blight resistance will be then be crossed. In each successive generation, only seedlings showing resistance are backcrossed to Ozark Chinquapins until its characters and resistance are all that remain. The desired result is expected to emerge in 3 to 4 generations. A generation is about 7 years, so we may have viable blight-resistant Ozark Chinquapins in 20 to 30 years.

The American Chestnut Foundation has been working for many years to bring back the American Chestnut, once a dominant giant of the eastern forests. They now have 7/8 and 15/16 American Chestnuts near seed-bearing age that have demonstrated good resistance when challenged directly with the blight fungus. These trees will bear blight-resistant nuts from which the chestnut forests of the future will grow.

We can now envision a day when the woodlands of the Ozarks will once again harbor good numbers of Chinquapins. Perhaps the next generation will understand what the old-timers mean when they talk

(Continued on page 10)

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(Continued from page 9) about eating handfuls of roasted Chinquapins. We may never know its full ecological role, but we'll have the satisfaction of knowing that one small piece of the system is back in place.



Ozark Chinquapin



Pontotoc Ridge Preserve

- **Jim Erwin
Manager**

Here at Pontotoc Ridge Preserve the leaves are beginning to change color and fall to the ground. This year we have a good crop of acorns and pecans, which are also falling to the ground, and the deer are picking them up as fast as they can. The deer have been waiting for this event all summer. This is the best time of year for the deer, and now the fawns are big enough to make it on their own. We have also noticed the wild turkeys banding together in large groups in preparation for the coming cold months.

The ADA trail at Pontotoc should be complete by Friday

October 24th. We are looking forward to its' dedication on November the 8th.

We are still about 12 inches of rain below last year, but have been getting enough to let the fall wildflowers bloom. And we have noticed lots of butterflies on the move. We are also lucky enough to have a Monarch layover spot here at Pontotoc. Some years we have thousands spend a few days in a small one-acre spot on the preserve. I have no idea why they pick this spot, but they are always gone after a day or two.

Cucumber Creek Preserve

At Cucumber Creek Preserve the bears are fattening up on persimmons right now. Don't ask me how I know! We met with the Le Flore county game warden and he is going to help with our hunting problems and help keep illegal camps off the property. While we were there we saw lots of Diana Fritillaries and Great Spangled Fritillaries, and some others I could not identify. We saw only one Zebra Swallowtail. We had a beautiful day driving our four wheelers in and out of the clouds.



Western Oklahoma

Green varmints – Eastern Redcedar

Many wildlife conservation groups and natural resource agencies consider Eastern Redcedar, the common



cedar or evergreen tree found over much of the state, the number one natural resource concern in Oklahoma.

Historically, Eastern Redcedar occurred only along rocky outcrops, stream valleys, and other areas protected from wildfire. Small seedlings are very susceptible to damage from burning; as such, the periodic fires that swept through Oklahoma prior to settlement kept the trees in check. However, since the early 1900s, wildfires have been actively suppressed, leading to a substantial increase in Eastern Redcedar in many areas of the state.

The invasion of Eastern Redcedar into native plant communities causes significant changes to habitat structure, and may dramatically reduce the wildlife value of such areas. Left untreated, the trees form dense thickets that shade out other plants and prevent the movement of wildlife and livestock. As few as three trees per acre will displace obligate grassland birds; more substantial infestations seriously degrade habitat for deer, turkey, quail, and many
 (Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10) other animals. While some birds and small mammals eat the berries, the forage value of Eastern Redcedar is very low, and it provides far less nutrition than the shrubs and native grasses it displaces.

Eastern Redcedar is expanding at an alarming rate. Surveys completed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service indicate that between 1985 and 1994, the area occupied by Eastern Redcedar expanded approximately 79% to cover over 6 million acres of

Oklahoma rangeland, an increase of over 700 acres per day! It is estimated that by the year 2013, Eastern Redcedar will have invaded 12.6 million acres in Oklahoma, almost 30% of the land area of the state.

Efforts are underway by a number of conservation groups to address this growing threat. The careful application of prescribed fire is the most effective and economical way to control Eastern Redcedar, though in many cases mechanical

removal is necessary. Aside from the active fire management of Conservancy-owned property, the Oklahoma Chapter is working to assist private land managers with prescribed burning and cedar control near the Tallgrass Prairie and Pontotoc Ridge Preserves, and is leading an effort to clear cedars from endangered bird habitat in western Oklahoma's Salt Creek Canyon.



TNC Oklahoma Chapter Calendar

By reservation

Through late October

Contact Dick Baker for reservations and more information (918) 747-2495

Tallgrass Prairie Guided Tours

Enjoy the wide open spaces [Tallgrass Prairie Preserve!](#) All tours originate in Tulsa and are conducted by an experienced guide.



SEE...

THE BISON HERD

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

November 8

For further information call (918) 585-1117



Seed Harvest

at the Nickel Preserve
 Come join in the seed-harvest fun.
 Bring your lunch.

Short/Mixed Grass Ecoregions Description

As awareness of conservation issues in the Great Plains continues to increase, the Oklahoma Chapter is working to expand its conservation efforts in the Central Mixed-Grass, Central Shortgrass, and Southern Shortgrass Prairie ecoregions of western Oklahoma.

In recent years, many scientists have asserted that North America's grassland ecoregions are among the most threatened in the world. A majority of the native prairies and shrublands of western Oklahoma have been cultivated, with only a small percentage remaining in large, untilled parcels. Habitat fragmentation and subsequent land use changes in the past century have led to marked declines in native plant communities and prairie wildlife; many species common prior to European settlement are now threatened with extinction. For example, grassland birds (including western Oklahoma's Lesser Prairie Chicken) have shown steeper, more consistent, and more geographically widespread declines over the past 30 years than any other group of vertebrate species in North America.

Chapter staff are working through the Conservancy's ecoregional planning process to identify remaining intact prairie areas and to plan our

work in protecting priority sites. The end result of this effort will be a *portfolio* of sites for the ecoregions of western Oklahoma; a map of areas of biodiversity significance.

Concurrent with assessment activities, the Conservancy has begun implementing protection strategies aimed at the conservation of the region's important conservation elements. Given the number of sites in need of protection, we will work to employ a wide range of tools to secure a future for the diversity of life in the area.

The Oklahoma Chapter has made the acquisition of a western Oklahoma preserve a priority for FY 03/04. This provides an unprecedented opportunity for the Conservancy to become a stakeholder in the region, and to achieve the same level of conservation success that the organization has enjoyed to date in eastern Oklahoma.

The Conservancy is also working with state/federal agencies and private landowners to implement conservation activities on private lands in western Oklahoma. In 2001, the Oklahoma Chapter began an innovative partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to lead habitat restoration efforts for the federally endangered Black-capped vireo on private lands in Blaine County. Through this project, the Conservancy has secured over \$40,000 in federal funding for

cooperative work with ranchers on practices aimed at the recovery of this imperiled bird.



Autumn Scenes...



Bison grazing at the TGP



TGP Sumac in fall blaze



TGP Road

Docent Schedule

Oct 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>
Nicholas Delgrosso	Betty Turner David Turner	Larry Hicks Rose Whitekiller	Kim Hagan Pat Jaynes	Loretta Vives Van Vives	June Endres Suzy Harris

Nov 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<u>1</u>
						Beverly Atteberry Scott Morgan
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>
Jenk Jones, Jr. TG	Maureen Forsythe Steve Forsythe Rose Whitekiller	Dean Johnston Mary Ellen Johnston	Don Baird Larry Myers	Irene Ward	Irene Ward	Mary Bernd Don Bruner TG
<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>
Susan Albert	Art Browning TG Pat Jaynes	Jo Brooks	Dave Dolcater Neil Garrison	Irene Ward	Irene Ward	Jim Deming John Fisher TG
<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>
Jim Deming	Loretta Vives Van Vives Rose Whitekiller	Jean Wagener Jerry Wagener	Jenk Jones, Jr. TG Marilyn Keefer	Bill Rinehart		Mary Bernd Van Vives TG
<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>
					June Endres	
<u>30</u>						
Nicholas Delgrosso						