

August 2003

## THE DOCENT NEWS



Published by the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docent Program

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

### The Last Great Places

- Tim Grogan  
Executive Director,  
Oklahoma Nature  
Conservancy

Welcome to the first edition of our monthly *The Docent News* to be distributed to all 7,000 of the Nature Conservancy's members in Oklahoma. We hope you'll find this newsletter informative and interesting, and invite you send us your e-mail address if you'd like to continue receiving it every month.

At the Oklahoma Conservancy, we are always looking for ways to better accomplish our mission, including communicating with our supporters across the state. Many of you have been asking for more regular and frequent news on Conservancy activities and events here in the state. We believe that this newsletter can meet that need.

The 135 docents at our Tallgrass Prairie Preserve created this outstanding publication, *The Docent News*, to share information on their

many activities at the Tallgrass. They have generously agreed to allow us to expand *The Docent News* with articles on our other preserves and projects in Oklahoma and distribute it to our membership state wide.

Each month, this newsletter will deliver updates on each of our major projects in Oklahoma, as well as more in-depth educational articles on nature topics. In addition, we will use it to publicize upcoming Conservancy events to which members or the public are invited.

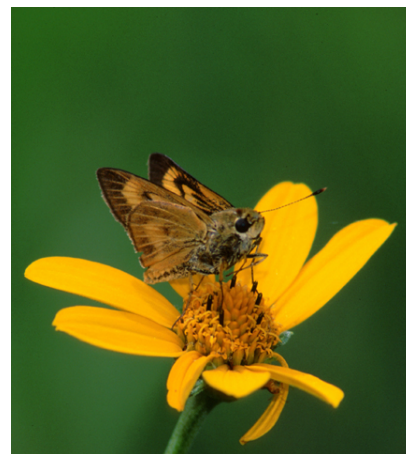
We are mailing this edition to all of our Oklahoma members, but hope to avoid that expense by delivering future copies of the newsletter to you by e-mail. Unfortunately, we do not have current e-mail addresses on file for many of you.

***If you wish to get future issues of this newsletter, please give your e-mail address to Wendy Anasti in our Tulsa office at (918) 585-1117, or [wanastasi@tnc.org](mailto:wanastasi@tnc.org).***

The Oklahoma Nature Conservancy is entering a very exciting and active period. We have several new projects underway, as well as continuing conservation work at our existing preserves. I plan to use this column each month to share details with you on the many achievements and challenges we face in *Saving the Last Great Places*.

In the meantime, thank you for your continuing support. You are appreciated!

Tim



Byssus Skipper 6-28-03

(See page 5 for butterfly information in this issue.)

## Tracks in the Tallgrass

- Jerry Wagener

### To the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve Docents:

The docent response to the extended content and colorful online format of *The Docent News* has been sparse (nine that I've seen), but all have been positive. Some especially like the color, some especially like the updates on the other preserves.

Everything seems to be going so well that the proposed expanded distribution, described in last June's issue of *The Docent News*, will begin with this, the August, issue. Kim has the process well in hand and appears to be thriving in this new environment.

### To other supporters of TNC/OK

*The Docent News* is the monthly newsletter by and for the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve docents. It has served us, currently about 135 strong, for nearly a decade, with updates on all things pertaining to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

From time to time articles on the other preserves and activities of the Oklahoma Chapter of The Nature Conservancy have appeared in *The Docent News*. By making these regular features, *The Docent News* becomes an appropriate vehicle for helping to keep other supporters of the Oklahoma Chapter informed of Chapter activities.

Therefore the Tallgrass Prairie docents, in close coordination with the TNC Oklahoma staff, are pleased to share *The Docent News* with you, beginning with this issue. We hope you find it worthwhile.

### To all

Despite its somewhat more comprehensive nature, I expect *The Docent News* to retain its primary focus on the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and the docent program, with pretty much its current look and feel.

That is not to say that improvements can't be made; please send Kim and/or me any suggestions you might have. In the meantime ... enjoy.




Coral-Hairstreak-KAF 6-26-02

(See Page 5 for more information on butterflies)

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## Oilfield Cleanup a Success

- Dennis Bires

Ten volunteers filled two pickup trucks with trash on our first docent oilfield cleanup day on May 31<sup>st</sup>. The weather was perfect, and, as anticipated, the views were stunning. One group paused at the highest point on the Preserve to take in the almost infinite Tallgrass scenery. At the other extreme, an almost perfectly hidden dickcissel nest, complete with blue eggs, was discovered less than a foot off the ground. And everyone enjoyed fellow trash collector and Preserve Science Director Bob Hamilton's insightful comments and explanations.

The participants were Bridget Barry, Dennis Bires, Rebecca Bush, Joe Dennis, Dave Dolcater, Laura Frossard, Bob Hamilton, Jan Henkle, Van Vives and Jerry Wagener. The day was so productive and enjoyable that another oilfield cleanup is planned for September 27<sup>th</sup> (See the TGP Calendar of Events for details).



**The Oilfield Clean-up Gang**



**Clean-up Volunteers hard at work**



## Interesting Visitors

- Van Vives

Ernest Stolberg, a retired environmental engineer from Baltimore, recently visited the TGP. He looked at my nametag and asked if I was a member of the Nature Conservancy. I answered that I was. "Then you belong to my organization", he answered. He said that he belonged to several nature and environmental organizations, but the Nature Conservancy was special to him. He was elderly and walked with difficulty with the aid of a cane. He said that he knew Jacques Coustou when he was alive and visited him at his Paris office. He was also acquainted with Mrs. Coustou. One could easily see the great respect that he had for them.

A gentleman from Washington, D. C. visited the gift shop. He asked if there were any wild horses in the area. I assumed he was

referring to the wild horse adoption program and told him about the ones near Woolaroc and east Bartlesville. He is retired from government work and was an inspector for the wild horse program for many years. One account he told was of a very mean and dangerous horse in the program. It was decided that the horse should be put down. The news got out and several groups of concerned people protested the decision. One family offered to take the horse in hopes of training the horse for their young daughter. He investigated the situation and it was obvious to him that the horse was mean and dangerous. His decision to deny adoption was met with much negative publicity, but he felt that it was the right decision.

NOTE: If anyone has had interesting visitors on their shift please pass the information on to me.



**Diana Fritillary JTN 6-28-03**

(See page 5 for butterfly related information)

## What's Blooming? - Van Vives

### Snow-on-the-Mountain:

Although not as abundant as in some years, is in full bloom. It has a milky sap, although it is not a member of the milkweed family, but of the spurge family. The plant is poisonous to livestock. It tends to accumulate selenium where that element is present in the soil. The milky sap produces inflammation of the skin. So strong is the irritation that it was used in Texas to brand cattle.



Snow-on-the-Mountain

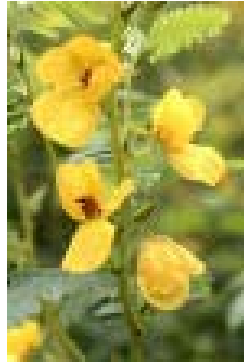
**Flowering Spurge:** This plant is poisonous to livestock, but seldom eaten. The milky sap can cause skin irritation. The fruit is a broad capsule which breaks open with enough force to send seeds a considerable distance.



Flowering Spurge

**Partridge Pea:** Usually found in disturbed areas. The

leaflets fold together when handled like Sensitive Briar.



Partridge Pea

**Is it Rosin Weed or Gum Weed?** The easiest way to tell the difference is to look at the bracts at the base of the yellow flower head. Rosin Weed has broad, leaf-like green bracts, while the Gum Weed has green, spiny-toothed bracts.



Gum Weed



Rosin Weed

**Prairie Dodder:** Prominent now with its orange color. It is a stringy vine-like plant with no apparent leaves. It

is a parasitic plant that covers other plants and gets its nourishment from them. It produces very small white flowers.



Prairie Dodder

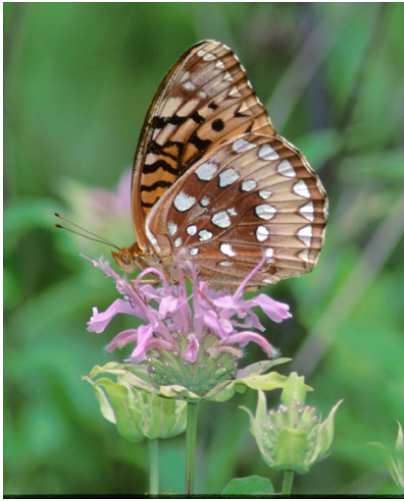
Other flowers in bloom are the Iron Plant, Buffalo Bur, Sun Flowers, Golden Rod, and Thistle. The Broom Weed is just starting to bloom.



## Son-of-a-Gun Stew - Van Vives

If you have read your Docent Manual you should be familiar with Son-of-a-Gun Stew, Mr. Chapman's favorite dish. It is made with brains, heart, liver, and sweetbreads, with a generous amount of chili powder. The choice cuts of meat were usually sent to the Chapman and Barnard homes in Tulsa. When Keenan Barnard recently visited the TGP I asked him if he had ever eaten the stew when he worked at the ranch. He said he had eaten it many times. Once you get used to it, it tastes very much like our regular chili. After a hard day working the cattle or mending fences, something like Son-of-a-Gun Stew was a pleasantly anticipated repast.





Great Spangled Fritillary JTN  
6-28-03

## Butterfly Count Update

- John Fisher

Every year since 1975 butterfly enthusiasts have gathered during the months of June and July to count butterflies all over the U.S. and Canada. Originally coordinated by the Xerces Society these annual censuses are now sponsored by NABA, the North American Butterfly Association. This year's counts were the 11<sup>th</sup> for the Tallgrass Prairie (TGP), the 8<sup>th</sup> for Pontotoc Ridge, the 3<sup>rd</sup> for Nickel, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Keystone Ancient Forest. In addition to participating in these four counts from the beginning, Walter Gerard has been the leader and compiler the last four years.

The first count of the year was at Pontotoc Ridge on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Besides the butterflies a few of us got to see a couple of nice Western Diamond-Backs, *Crotalus atrox*. The final count was 905 individuals

from 52 species. Special sightings were a freshly emerged Great Purple Hairstreak that John Nelson found, two Queens (a southern relative of the Monarch), some early Gulf Fritillaries, 83 Arogos Skippers, and Dion Skipper that was a Pontotoc County first record.

The following Tuesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, we went to the Keystone Preserve. Numbers were lower than last year with only 185 individuals and 27 species. We did manage to find one Funereal Duskywing, which was a preserve first record, and two Coral Hairstreaks. We also found one dead 'Olive' Juniper Hairstreak that wasn't included in the count list, and saw or heard six Scarlet Tanagers.

The morning of June 21<sup>st</sup> found us at the TGP. The count started slowly due to the clouds and heavy rain that morning but soon we began to see butterflies everywhere. At the end of the day we had tallied 743 individuals comprising 42 species. Not the highest count for the TGP, but not the lowest either.

The highlight of the day was getting to see a couple of Regal Fritillaries up close. These were somewhat water logged from the rain and we were able to approach much closer than usual. Pearl Crescents were the most numerous at 202 individuals. Other notables were 7 Regal

Fritillaries, a Great Spangled Fritillary (first seen on the TGP during last year's Field Trip Day), 86 Monarchs, 19 Arogos Skippers, and a Southern Broken-Dash (a TGP first record).

The final count for the year was at the Nickel Preserve on June 28<sup>th</sup>. A total of 1,067 individuals from 51 species were seen. 528 Eastern Tailed-Blues, most of which were seen around *Chris's Pond* behind the HQ building, were the most numerous. Special sightings included a Luna Moth, 2 Coral Hairstreaks (a Cherokee County first record), 2 Diana Fritillaries, and an Arogos Skipper.

By the time you read this I hope to have a list of butterfly species found on these preserves posted to the Oklahoma Chapter website. I have also started a discussion list for sharing information about butterflies found in and around Oklahoma. If you're interested in butterflies please consider joining us.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/okleps>



Red-Banded Hairstreak KDA 6-03



## Sod Houses - Van Vives

When the pioneers moved to the prairies of the west many were faced with a housing dilemma. There was a scarcity of trees and to import lumber was financially impossible. They saw some of the Native Americans, notably the Osage, Pawnee, and Hidatsa, making homes out of sod blocks and they adapted the method for their own use. Settlers were sometimes referred to as *Sodbusters*.



*Women Settlers and Their Sod House (From a glass plate negative made by Solomon D. Butcher, Nebraska State Historical Society)*

To build a sod house one needs grass that has densely packed roots. Buffalo grass, big and little blue stem, wiregrass, prairie cord grass, Indian grass, and wheat grass were ideal for this purpose.

Originally the process was to cut sod bricks using a spade, which a difficult and laborious task. In the mid-1880s, a plow was invented that improved the process tremendously. It was called a *breaking or grasshopper* plow and cut the sod into strips one

foot wide and four inches thick. A sod house required about an acre of sod.



*Pioneer Family and Sod House (Ibid.)*

Sod slabs were usually one foot wide and two or three feet long. The sod was usually laid with the grass side down. The bricks were placed alternately lengthwise and crosswise to increase the strength of the wall. Sod houses generally consisted of one room with divisions made by hanging blankets. If windows were desired, they were made of a wood frame with wood pegs driven into the sod wall. Roofs were made of thatch, or sod held up by poles. Common materials used for roofs were poles of cedar or cottonwood, rafters of willow, cedar, or other wood, brush from wild plum and chokecherry, prairie grass atop the brush and sod over the prairie grass.

The *soddie* had some beneficial aspects. It provided excellent insulation so that it was easy to keep warm in the winter and cool in summer. Also it served as an effective haven during those prairie wild fires. It was not unusual for the

settlers to take in the cattle, horses, and pets during the threat of wild fires.

The negative aspects were perhaps obvious. The floor was usually dirt, the ceiling was constantly leaking muddy water during the torrential rains and snakes, mice, and bugs were everyday co inhabitants. It was common for the woman of the house to have a canopy over the cook stove to prevent the above from falling into the stew.

Oklahoma has a Sod House Museum in Aline, west of Enid. Its purpose is to preserve and exhibit an original sod house built in 1894 by Marshal McCullyl. If you want to *experience* life in a sod house, there is the Minor Family Sod House, Bed and Breakfast, at Brewster, Kansas.

Part of a song of pioneer times goes:

"Soon we landed in Nebraska where they had much land to spare,  
But most ever since we've been here, we've been mad enough to swear,  
First we built a 'sod house' and we tried to raise some trees,  
But the land was full of Coyotes and our sod house full of fleas."

Sources:

- A. [www.nebraskastudies.org](http://www.nebraskastudies.org)
- B. [http://newton.dep.anl.gov/na\\_tbltn/600-699/nb620/htm](http://newton.dep.anl.gov/na_tbltn/600-699/nb620/htm)
- C. Museum of Westward Expansion
- D. <http://nebraskahistory.org>



## Visitation Notes - George Meyers

832 visitors signed in during July, a decrease of 21.3% from July 2002. The downward trend in visitation continues. Visitation is down 19.5% for the year-to-date when compared to 2002. Three were 353 visitors from 35 other states, with Texas (56), California (42), Kansas and Missouri (31) each, and Illinois (25) heading the list. Ten visitors came from five other countries with Germany and Italy with (3) each, France (2), and Australia and Switzerland (1) each. 469 Oklahomans visited the preserve in July.

This month Saturday and Sunday had more visitors, as 38% of the week's visitors came on those days and visitation was relatively even Monday through Friday. 95% of the visitors came between 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. with 57% between 9:30 and 3:30. 30% of the month's visitors came over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend. 90% of the foreign visitors were first timers, along with 75% of other state visitors and 46% of Oklahomans.

Visitors comments included: "Most beautiful place in Oklahoma", "Bravo", "Beautiful and different from Oregon", "Need to return in October when grass is higher", "Real goods", "Put a transmitter on buffalo", "Wonder spot on planet", "Planned this for several years", "Great job. Member since '96", "Very nice

volunteers", "Beautiful, vast & breathtaking!", "A treasure", "We saw a cougar!!!". This month "Beautiful" and "Great" ran a dead heat with "Interesting", "Wonderful", and "Awesome" way behind in the comment derby.



## THE OUTLAWS - Jenk Jones Part VI of a VI Part Series

Indian Territory, often called The Nations in reference to the Five Civilized Tribes that inhabited it, was a lawless place during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the dislocating influence of the Civil War. Outlaws such as Jesse and Frank James, the Younger Brothers, Ned Christie, Cherokee Bill, Rufus Buck and the much-overrated Belle Starr were but a fraction of the criminals who populated Indian Territory. Judge Isaac (Hanging Judge) Parker employed some 200 marshals to track them down; a quarter to a third of his lawmen died in the process.

The Osage had more than its share of troublemakers. The **Doolins** and **Daltons** were among the more famous gangs than roamed northern Oklahoma, along with their female lookouts **Cattle Annie and Little Britches** (who also were bootleggers and horse thieves). **Bob Dalton** once was Osage chief of police, and he and brother Grat, another of the four outlaws who were

killed in the Coffeyville twin bank robbery in 1892, once were federal district marshals. Another Dalton brother, Deputy Marshal Frank, was killed in the line of duty. Among other notable names that became part of the lore of lawlessness:

**The Reign of Terror:** The most serious outbreak of crime in Oklahoma history was the so-called Reign of Terror at the height of the Osage oil boom during the 1920s. Beginning in 1921, at least two dozen Osages were murdered by gunfire, stabbing, poisoning or explosives, but the number may have greatly exceeded that as there were many other Osage deaths that occurred under suspicious circumstances. During the boom, oil royalty and lease money that went through the tribe to individual head right owners made the Osages the richest people per capita in the world. The head rights that topped out at more than \$12,000 in a single year would have a buying power today of several hundred thousand dollars. Since a family often had more than one head right, the amount of money involved was stupendous. Wild spending was a trait of people suddenly rich. One woman in a single day spent more than \$40,000 for clothing, jewelry, furnishings and land in Florida. Automobile agencies sold expensive cars to Indians who had discovered an aversion to walking; Osage County reportedly had the largest number of Pierce Arrow autos in the nation. An Osage historian wrote, "Grand pianos often stood

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out on the lawns year around; priceless china and silverware sat on shelves while the Indians ate with their fingers. . . . expensive vases were used to keep vegetables in or as corn bins." With this kind of money acting as a lure, human coyotes soon surfaced.

**William K. Hale:** An Osage County rancher and banker, was the ringleader of a scheme to gain control of head rights by murder or insuring Osages with himself as beneficiary and then having them killed. He, his nephew **Earnest Burkhardt** and a cowhand named **John Ramsey** were sentenced to prison in 1926 after a long legal struggle, but others may have been involved. It was one of the first big cases of the fledgling FBI. A state investigator named Luther Bishop was a key to cracking the case; he was murdered in his Oklahoma City home in December 1926 and the crime was never solved.

**Al Spencer:** Perhaps the leading robber in the area over a period of years, he and **Frank Nash** led a gang that pulled off the last train robbery in Oklahoma in 1923 near Okesa. A month later a posse killed Spencer. So great was his fame that an estimated 15,000 people came to see his body. Nash was later killed in the famous Kansas City massacre in which he and four lawmen were machine-gunned to death. Pretty Boy Floyd may, or may not, have been involved in the attack that was aimed either at freeing Nash, who was under arrest, or silencing him.

**Henry Wells:** Another well-known outlaw, who missed the Okesa holdup because his horse went lame, he had a hideout in the hills of the eastern Osage. He became a friend of Frank Phillips; it is said that Wells and his friends deposited their money with Phillips' bank and that the bank never had a problem with robbers. Wells once tipped off Phillips that Pretty Boy Floyd was in town looking to kidnap a member of Phillips' family. Wells was a regular at Phillips' Cow Thieves and Outlaws reunion at Woolaroc, and Phillips once hired his gang to hold up a stagecoach full of Eastern financiers en route to Woolaroc (Wells returned the goods).

**Henry Starr:** A nephew (by marriage) to Belle Starr and a noted bank robber in his own right, he was the first person to draw a loan from the Phillips' new bank in Bartlesville. The loan, with interest, was repaid on time. Starr eventually was killed in an Arkansas bank robbery.

**Henry Grammer:** One of the most intriguing characters, he was a world-champion rodeo performer from the Chapman-Barnard Ranch who had appeared before crowned heads in Europe and crowds in Madison Square Garden. But he also was known locally as *King of the Bootleggers* and may have had links to other crimes. A crack shot, his gun had many notches on it. While serving a federal term he was released momentarily to judge a rodeo in Fort Worth, then returned to

prison unaccompanied. He died in a 1926 auto wreck in which the car apparently had been tampered with and he may have been shot beforehand. When he died, he had more than \$10,000 in cash in his pockets, hardly normal wallet contents in the 1920s.

**The Martin Brothers:** Will and Sam Martin were wanted in five states for murder, robbery and assorted other peccadillos. They were killed in a shootout at Wooster Mound, about five miles south of Pawhuska, by a small posse led by legendary lawman Wiley Haines. There is a marker on the east side of Oklahoma 99.

**The Wild Man of the Osage:** When he was killed, 16 human skulls and piles of bones were found in his cave.

**Ed Lockhart:** One of the Osage's bad men who, while serving a 20-year sentence, was given a 90-day leave from the state pen by the infamous Gov. Jack Walton, who specialized in turning felons loose. Lockhart immediately went on another crime spree. He was killed by a sheriff's posse in the hills of southeastern Osage County after taking a lawman hostage.

**Dick Gregg:** A longtime robber called "The Phantom of the Osage Hills," he was killed by an officer in a 1929 shootout after Gregg had slain the lawman's partner. He was the last major outlaw from the oil-boom days.

**Mullendore Murder:** E.C. Mullendore III was a descendant of the famed Mullendore ranching family that had been in

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the Osage for decades. His slaying in September 1970 at his Cross Bell Ranch home remains the most famous officially unsolved killing in the county.

**Whizbang:** The oil boom towns of the Osage were rowdy and often violent. The most infamous was the community best known as Whizbang, although the Post Office officially called it DeNoya. Located near Shidler, Whizbang was a wide-open place where slayings were common and it was said a woman wasn't safe on the street after dark. The bank was robbed twice. One longtime oilfield worker said, "A man that flashed a roll wouldn't likely be eating his breakfast with the boys next morning."

**Jose Alvarado:** His true name was Bert Bryant, is part of the local lore. A man who worked both sides of the law, he was involved in several controversial shootings while serving as a lawman in Whizbang. On one occasion, Advarado had a fight with a lawman from Shidler over a woman. The other officer shot the woman dead and hit Alvarado in the chest and broke both his legs with bullets. Alvarado shot his foe four times in the body. As the "Ghost Towns of Oklahoma" relates, "The two men were taken to the same hospital; they recovered, forgot the woman and became good friends. Such was a day in the life of Whizbang."

**Pistol Hill** between Whizbang and Shidler was an especially dangerous place. Outlaws would emerge from roadside brush as autos slowed for the steep climb

and rob motorists. Bridges also could be bad, with armed men suddenly blocking both ends and trapping drivers in between. Nor did holdup men spare oil rigs; many working crews were held up and relieved of money, watches and rings. In retaliation, workers at one rig surprised would-be robbers and hanged them from the well's walking beam. The sheriff asked no questions.

The colorful little collection of mayhem entitled "Tragedies of the Osage Hills" has chapter titles that reflect those days: "They Shoot Each Other," "An All-Around Bad Man," "Crime of a Brute," "Makes His Last Stand," "A Gruesome Tragedy" and "Human Gore Again Flows in the Osage Hills."

We return now to the aforementioned **Elmer McCurdy**. He was a mess near the end of his life, an alcoholic suffering from silicosis and tuberculosis. After leaving the Army, he switched to crime, being arrested for possession of burglary tools and involved in at least one train robbery and a bank burglary. He had learned something about explosives while in the Army (his instructor was a first lieutenant named Douglas MacArthur), but he forgot that when the Army blew something up it *really* wanted it destroyed. McCurdy tended to overuse explosives; in one instance his blast fused \$4,000 worth of silver coins to the walls of the safe. His take in crime was always a pittance. In 1911, three bandits held up a Katy

train near the old outlaw stronghold of Okesa. They hit the wrong train. The haul they expected was on the next train, which was carrying \$400,000 in cash for payment to the Osages; the outlaws got only a few dollars from passengers on the train they robbed. McCurdy had been one of four men in the gang considered responsible; whether he was one of the three robbers who actually took part is uncertain. But a posse tracked him to a ranch near the Kansas border and killed him in a shootout. His body was taken to a Pawhuska undertaker's parlor, where it resided in a front window for months waiting for a friend or relative to claim it. No one did. Eventually the funeral home dressed him in the clothes he was wearing when shot, put a rifle in his hands and stood him in a corner. Some say it charged a nickel apiece to view the body; at any rate thousands reportedly came to see it, as entertainment opportunities were limited in Pawhuska at the time. Elmer was full of arsenic, a common mortuary tool then that served as a fine preservative.

After five years two men showed up and said he was their brother and they wanted to take him back to California for burial. Elmer was released to them. Shortly thereafter he appeared in West Texas as a leading attraction at a traveling carnival. For years he crisscrossed the country as a major draw, appearing in 40 states under names that kept changing so the yokels would shell out again when the show

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 returned to a town. The body was used as a prop in film and TV, waxed and put in a museum and later painted so as to glow in the dark in a Long Beach amusement park, where he dangled from a noose. Now shrunken and mummified, McCurdy was simply called *the dummy*. People had forgotten, if they ever knew, that this was a real body.

One day, while filming an episode of "The Six Million Dollar Man" at the amusement park, a workman moved McCurdy. An arm fell off, and a bone was exposed. The Los Angeles coroner's office now had what was unmistakably a corpse with, upon closer examination, an old gunshot wound. In newspaper terminology, they didn't know who, what, when, where, why or how. A nationwide hunt for information eventually centered on McCurdy, thanks to contemporary newspaper accounts of the shootout and photos taken of the corpse after death. Meanwhile the news had leaked of the discovered body and all that the body had accomplished, at least for its owners, after McCurdy's death. It became an international story and McCurdy's fame soared. The amusement park, seeing dollars in his new notoriety, wanted him back.

But so did Oklahoma, to give him a proper burial. Led by citizens from Guthrie, Oklahoma provided conclusive evidence that this was indeed the elusive Elmer. A judge allowed his return to Oklahoma, provided no

further circus would be made of the body. In April 1977, in a glass-drawn hearse preceded by lawmen, politicians and historians, Elmer was taken to the city cemetery in Guthrie and buried, next to a much more famous owl hoot, Bill Doolin. McCurdy still has allure for tourists, and his graveside often has been used for murder mystery weekends.

McCurdy is but one example of the wonderful stories associated with The Osage. Almost any name of town or individual listed above is worthy of detailed information to intrigue anyone.

If the Tallgrass with its land, animals, birds and vegetation is the cake we offer visitors, stories of the people and places of The Osage are certainly its frosting.



### Gift Shop Sales Summary

\$7,107.98	July 2002
\$ 6,399.12	July 2003
\$35,977.71	Year-to-date 2002
<u>\$28,643.83</u>	Year-to-date 2003
< <b>\$7,333.88</b> >	Year-to-date decrease in sales



### Butterfly Count information found on page 5



Yellowmess 01



Southern Broken-Dash  
KAF 5-19-03



"Olive" Juniper Hairstreak  
KAF 6-26-02

## Tallgrass Prairie Docent Calendar of Events

<p><b>September 27, 2003</b></p> <p>meet at the preserve headquarters at 10:00 bring a lunch plan to quit by 3:00</p> <p>for more information, contact <a href="mailto:Dennis.Bires@tnc.org">Dennis Bires</a>, 918.341.3908</p>	<p><b>Second Oilfield Cleanup Day</b></p> <p>We had so much fun the first time, back in May, we thought we'd do it again. And besides we managed to spruce up only about a quarter of the preserve's pumpers the first time around. Bring some old clothes and gloves - maybe we can knock off another quarter of those pumpers.</p>	
<p><b>October 11, 2003</b></p> <p>meet at the preserve headquarters at 9:30</p> <p>for more information, contact <a href="mailto:Dennis.Bires@tnc.org">Dennis Bires</a>, 918.341.3908</p>	<p><b>Prairie Road Crew Finale for 2003</b></p> <p>This is the third and last Road Crew outing scheduled for 2003. Let's cleanup anything the adopt-a-mile parents might have missed and get the roads ready for the winter accumulation. The next Road Crew outing will be scheduled in late February or early March, to tackle that winter accumulation. We should be done by 12:30 - how about lunch then at Bad Brad's?</p>	 <p>the May 5 road crew</p>
<p><b>November 15, 2003</b></p> <p>meet at the preserve headquarters at 10:00 should be finished by noon</p> <p>for more information, contact <a href="mailto:Dennis.Bires@tnc.org">Dennis Bires</a>, 918.341.3908</p>	<p><b>Tree (Trans)Planting</b></p> <p>See that empty space in the ranch house courtyard? The old-timers remember when a grand old Hackberry tree graced that space; relative newcomers have seen only the void (stump circled in red). We'll transplant a couple of Burr Oak tress from the banks of Sand Creek (Dennis and Bob Hamilton have a couple spotted) on either side of the stump. Bring gloves and work clothes (tools will be supplied).</p> 	



## TNC Oklahoma Chapter Preserve Updates

### Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

- Bob Hamilton

Six prescribed burns were conducted from July 28<sup>th</sup> to August 6<sup>th</sup>, totaling about 1,800 acres. Three burns were in the bison unit and three in the cattle patch-burn pastures. The intense smoke (lots of green grass in the fuel-base) and heat on these summer burns are very hard on our burn crew; it was 101 degrees when we started the July 28<sup>th</sup> afternoon burn. It gets very toasty in those Nomex fire-proof jump suits! The good news: only one more summer burn of about 100 acres is left to do!

Our Ranch Hands have now completed the construction on three new pens on the north side of the bison corrals. This now gives us five pens that are each one to five acres adjacent to the main working core of the corrals. These pens will be used to hold bison that are awaiting further handling or are being held for sale or trade. Getting bison away from all the central corral action and into a low-density setting is critical in lowering their stress levels, thus improving bison (and human) safety.

After completion of the new bison pens, our crew went right back to boundary fencing on the preserve east side. After completion of another ½ mile of fence in mid-August, the total now stands at 5.5 miles completed since February, with 3 miles left to go. This new boundary fence is needed to expand the bison unit by an additional 7,000 acres after this fall's roundup. The all-steel fence being constructed is a 6ft tall, 7-strand barbed wire fence with double-braced pipe corners and in-line t posts. All pipe posts are set at least 4 ½ ft in the ground in concrete, often requiring a special rock-auger to drill through layers of thick sandstone and limestone.

Our systematic search-and-destroy effort continues with the noxious weed sericea lespedeza. For the months of June and July, our 3-4 man spot-spray crew put in a total of 660 man-hours to sweep across 5,100 acres.

Construction is progressing well on the new 6,500 square foot Tallgrass Prairie Ecological Research Station. All of the exterior walls are fully framed and getting their exterior sheathing, and the roof is entirely decked. The

all-steel building looks good and stout!

After a nice wet May (6.15") and June (8.04"), July turned hot and dry (.80").



### Pontotoc Ridge Preserve

- Jim Erwin

Here at Pontotoc Ridge Preserve we have been busy putting in burn lines in preparation for a fall burn. At Cucumber Creek Preserve, Ellen Tejan has begun an inventory on the aquatic species and Kathy Hollenbeck is waiting on a signed agreement between the Conservancy and U.S. Forest Service to conduct a prescribed burn on the preserve. At Boehler Seeps Preserve the water holes are becoming fewer and farther between, and the predators are quick to take advantage of the easy pickings. At Pontotoc, Cucumber, and Boehler the same scenario is taking place. Because of the lack of rainfall, all things that depend on this water are either in peril, or are enjoying the bounty of easy prey.

I've seen on T.V. the lions that are drawn to these

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(Continued from page 12)  
 remaining water holes and think how similar that is to what is taking place on a lot of our preserves this time of year. At Pontotoc we have bobcats guarding the water holes waiting on unsuspecting fawns or a bird that must land in the open to get a drink that may be his last. And at Cucumber and Boehler the same group of predators, cottonmouths snakes, raccoons, cranes, bobcats, and other predators are having their best of times with the aquatic species, except at Cucumber you have to add bears to the mix. These water holes mean life or death for many species in more ways than one.



## Western Oklahoma - Chris Hise

**Green Varmints – Salt Cedar**  
 Salt Cedar, also known as Tamarisk or *Tamarack*, is a shrub or small tree found along the major river systems of the arid southwest and southern Great Plains. Introduced from Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an ornamental tree, it quickly escaped cultivation and became naturalized over large areas of the U.S. Salt cedar has proven to be an aggressive invader, crowding out native vegetation and developing dense thickets with little value for wildlife. The plant is classified as a *phreatophyte* for its ability to consume vast quantities of water and is

often blamed for reducing stream flows and drying shallow springs. Salt cedar is so named for its ability to thrive in saline environments and concentrate salt in its leaves.

Along certain reaches of the Red, Canadian, and Cimarron rivers in western Oklahoma, salt cedar is now the most commonly encountered woody plant. Unfortunately, control efforts have proven difficult. Mechanical removal, repeated burning, and/or multiple applications of herbicide are often required to eliminate this exotic weed.



## The Nickel Preserve Chris Wilson

**A Source of Breeding Birds**  
 Intact forest blocks in the Ozarks and Ouachitas are critical to the health of many breeding bird species. These areas are not degraded by the *edge effects* (increased nest predation and parasitism) created by fragmentation. The optimal habitat allows many species to produce a surplus of young. These healthy populations are considered to be a *source*, providing an abundance of individuals for the many surrounding *sink* habitats of the Midwest. Habitat loss and fragmentation have resulted in a dearth of intact forest blocks throughout that region.

The size and intactness of the  
 (Continued on page 14)

## TNC Preserve Contacts

### Tulsa Office

State Director

Tim Grogan

(981) 293-2929

Director of Operations

Eileen Jobin

(918) 293-2920

Director of Philanthropy

Deirdre McArdle

(918) 293-2912

Director of Environ.  
 Affairs

Grant Gerondale

(918) 293-2922

### Oklahoma City Office

(405) 858-8557

Assoc. Dir. of

Philanthropy

Kevin Virgillio

Land Protection Specialist

Chris Hise

### Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

(918) 287-4803

Preserve Director

Harvey Paine

Director of Stewardship

Bob Hamilton

### J.T. Nickel Family Nature & Wildlife Preserve

(918) 456-7601

Preserve Director

Chris Wilson

### Pontotoc Ridge Preserve

(580) 777-2224

Manager

Jim Erwin

(Continued from page 13)

15,000-acre Nickel Preserve make it an optimal area for many forest and woodland breeding birds. The preserve is the largest privately owned conservation area in the entire Ozarks ecoregion, making it immune from the road building and resource extraction activities that occur on public lands such as national forests. The Conservancy has complete control to manage the area solely for biodiversity, thus controlling human uses, restoring fire regimes and excluding invasive species.

Several interior forest birds have suffered population declines in recent years. Some are known to be *area-sensitive*, requiring large blocks of forest to successfully breed and raise their young. The Kentucky warbler, worm-eating warbler, scarlet tanager and ovenbird, each considered to be area-sensitive, occur in good numbers on the preserve.

A number of species occurring in open woodlands and savannas have undergone declines due to habitat loss and degradation from fire exclusion. The eastern wood pewee, northern bobwhite, and summer tanager prefer open woodlands. The orchard oriole, prairie warbler, blue-winged warbler, and field sparrow prefer savannas and shrub lands. Each of these occur at the Nickel Preserve, and they likely constitute source populations for surrounding areas.




While small woodlots can provide important wildlife habitat, there is just no substitute for large blocks of intact forest and woodland. For a suite of breeding birds, places like the Nickel Preserve will become increasingly important. A good *source* is getting harder to find.

### Nickel Preserve Seed Harvest Days

Volunteers are again needed to help gather wildflower seed for the savanna restoration project at the preserve. Seed collection requires no special training or skills. Staff will give brief instructions for new volunteers upon their arrival. It involves little more than plucking seed heads and dropping them in containers. You'll be an expert in no time.

Bring a lunch and snacks as needed. We'll provide canned drinks and bottled water. Long pants and cloth gloves (we've got some) are recommended, and wear a belt to hold the containers. We'll meet at 9:00 at the Nickel Preserve Office at the entrance to Sawmill Hollow. We'll work till lunch, then continue till around 2. You need not stay for the entire period.

Harvest Days for 2003 are the following Saturdays:

-  September 20<sup>th</sup>
-  October 4<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>
-  November 8<sup>th</sup>



## Calendar of Events

### Tallgrass Prairie Guided Tours by reservation

Mid-September to late-October

Contact Dick Baker for reservations and more information (918.747.2495). Enjoy the wide open spaces of the Oklahoma prairie at the [Tallgrass Prairie Preserve](#)! All tours originate in Tulsa and are conducted by an experienced guide.

### SEE.....

**THE BISON HERD OF 2000** (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)

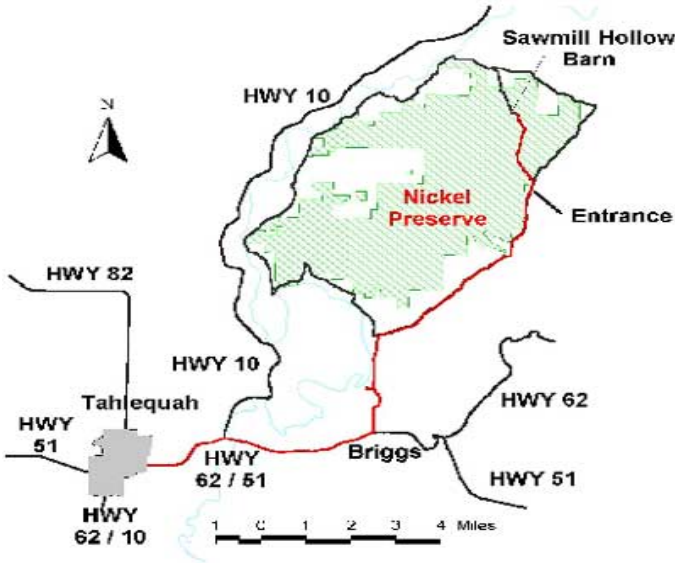
**THE GOALS** of The Nature Conservancy at the Preserve

### Wild Spirits 2003

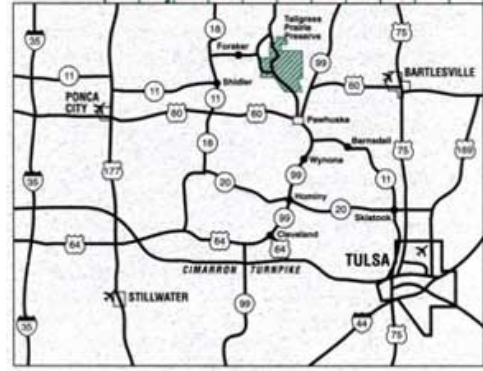
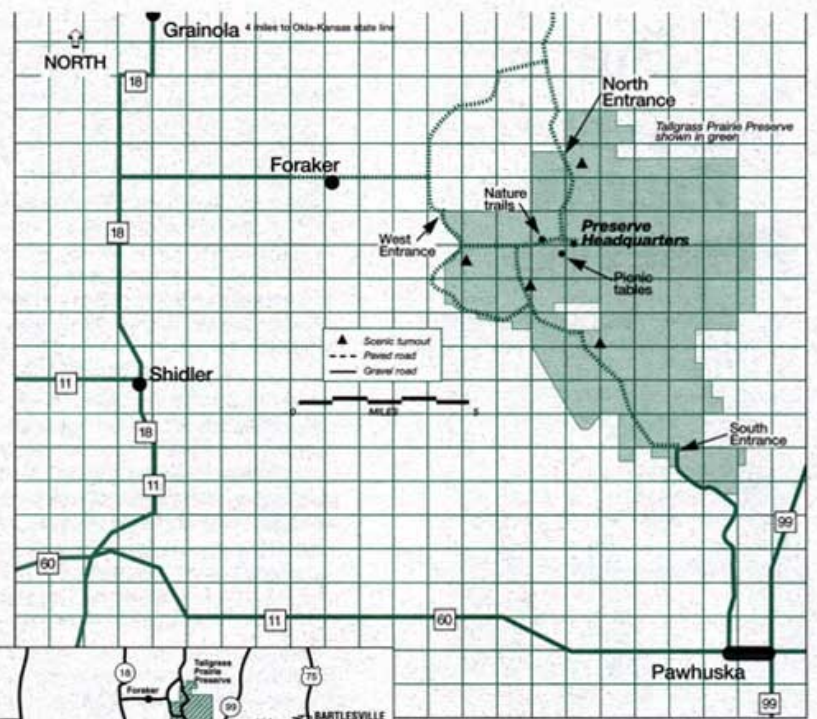
**October 3 2003** at Coles Garden, 1415 NE 63rd St. (across from Cowboy Hall of Fame) in Oklahoma City! for further information and reservations, call 405.858.8557

A casual event offering the opportunity to sample domestic and international beers, ales and wine from outstanding microbreweries, as well as signature dishes from Oklahoma City's finest restaurants.

**TNC Oklahoma Preserve Maps**



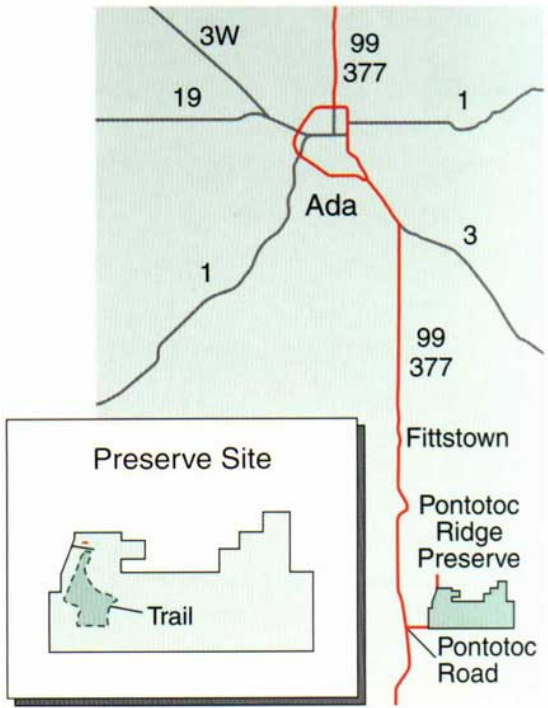
**Nickel Preserve**



TO ACCESS THE PRESERVE from Pawhuska, drive north on Kihekah from where it intersects Highway 60 in downtown Pawhuska (at the corner with the triangle-shaped building). Tallgrass Prairie Preserve signs will direct you from this point to the Headquarters.

**Tallgrass Prairie Preserve**  
 P.O.Box 458 • Pawhuska, OK 74056  
 (918) 287-4803

**Tallgrass Prairie Preserve**



**Pontotoc Ridge Preserve**

**September 2003**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	Barbara Bates Doris Mayfield		Stuart Marshall	Betty Turner David Turner		Beverly Atteberry Van Vives TG
<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>
Leslie Brucks		Kim Hagan	Dave Dolcater	Deana Brewster Dennis Brewster Phillip Winslow	Jenk Jones, Jr. TG	Don Bruner TG
<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>
	Loretta Vives Van Vives		Marilyn Keefer	Don Baird Larry Myers		Phyllis Connally John Fisher TG
<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>
	Maureen Forsythe	Neil Garrison		Bill Rinehart	June Endres Jenk Jones, Jr. TG	Jo Brooks Jan Reynolds Jane Thomas
<u>28</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u>				
Nicholas Delgrosso	Betty Turner David Turner					

**Oct 2003**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
			Jenk Jones, Jr. TG	Deana Brewster Dennis Brewster		Beverly Atteberry
<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
			Dave Dolcater			Don Bruner TG
<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>
			Marilyn Keefer		Jenk Jones, Jr. TG	John Fisher TG