

November 2004

THE DOCENT NEWS



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Tallgrass Work Days Report - Dennis Bires

Many thanks to the volunteers who participated in our Prairie Road Crew Day on October 2nd, and the Oilfield Cleanup on October 16th.

For our Oilfield day, we worked at the venerable Pearsonia Field, located on the Bison Loop. A recently burned area revealed numerous very old well sites, long closed in, many without even pumping jacks remaining. What *was* remaining was an 80-year accumulation of bits of rusting metal, oil-saturated lumber, and old rubber hoses, the combined weight of which made our pickup sag on its rear springs.

The discovery well for the Pearsonia Field was drilled around the time of World War I, and most of the drilling there occurred in the 1920s. The bulk of the field is on the neighboring Bass Brothers pasture; only a small portion extends under the Bison Loop on the

Preserve. Oddly, the entire Pearsonia Field (and not just the part on the Preserve) now produces only about ten barrels of oil a day. That's right, ten. But with crude oil bringing over \$50 a barrel, it's worth keeping some of these old wells going.

Several barren brine spill scars dot the Pearsonia Field, many of them decades old. These sites have provided fertile ground for University of Tulsa Professor Kerry Sublette's spill recovery research. On one such brine scar, docent Dave Dolcater showed the Oilfield Cleanup volunteers a deposit of dozens of crinoid stem fossils, all eroded out of the rock they had been deposited in, lying loose on the surface like so many cigarette butts and small coins. Docent Rebecca Bush found a much less common crinoid blossom fossil at the site. Crinoids were actually marine animals, but their structure was similar to a flower on a stem. Look for this item soon among the Visitors Center museum exhibits.

In recent years, the quantity of human-deposited trash

removed from the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve by volunteers, both from the roadsides and well sites, can be measured in the tons. Thanks to everyone who has lifted even a small portion of that weight. This effort is a small but valuable part of restoring a functioning tallgrass prairie ecosystem.



Mark Your Calendar

Docent Recognition Dinner

Saturday, November 6, 2004
at the Hilton Garden Inn at
the Tulsa Airport
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Round-Up

Saturday, November 13, 2004
Meet at the Gift Shop at 2:00

Round-up Docent Day Reminder

Docent Day during the roundup is scheduled for November 13th at 2:00pm. Everyone is to meet at the Visitor Center and must be escorted to the corrals.

The opportunity for the docents to attend the roundup was originally intended to be continuing education and a perk for being a docent. In that spirit, docents are asked to not bring more than one guest. And as always, the docent must accompany the guest.

Remember, the roundup is not open to the public. We must be very careful to ensure the safety of the staff and the bison.



Docent Recognition Dinner 2004

- Monica Murray

You are cordially invited to the 2004 Tallgrass Prairie Docent Recognition Dinner. In recognition of your many hours forwarding the mission of The Nature Conservancy and assisting with the ongoing work at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, you are cordially invited to the annual docent recognition dinner.

NEW LOCATION: This year's dinner will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn - Tulsa Airport 7728 East Virgin Court (Just inside the entrance of the Tulsa Airport). HOTEL PHONE: 838-7028.

The night's festivities include appearances by Tallgrass Prairie and Conservancy staff, buffet dinner, and award presentations.



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