

## PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



Mike Bullerman



Amy Jones

Above - Amy Jones and Sarah Bailey flashing big smiles from atop the greenhouse, enjoying a brief window of opportunity January 27-28 (consecutive days of calm, sunny weather) to shingle the roof. Remaining tasks include siding the exterior, finishing and insulating interior walls and building the benches. This project is funded by a State Wildlife Grant administered by the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, along with matching funds from the local Hamilton Community Foundation.



NEWSLETTER  
January, 2011

### Gerry Steinauer honored at Annual Meeting of Members

The 2011 Charles L. Whitney Award for Outstanding Service to Prairie Plains Resource Institute was presented to Gerry Steinauer by Prairie Plains Executive Director Bill Whitney at the Annual Meeting January 15<sup>th</sup>. See the award presentation address on page 3-4.



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**The Annual Meeting**, held in Aurora on January 15th, was well attended. UNL Extension Educator/Herpetologist Dennis Ferraro's program about Nebraska herpetology was very well received, as was Fayne Petersen's meal featuring local grass-fed beef from Range West (members Luke & Lori Jacobsen, Marquette).

During the brief business meeting, Lindsay Vivian was elected to a second term on the board, and retiring board member Jack Potts was recognized for his six years of service. The 2011 board members are: Steve Winter, president; Randy Ruppert, vice president; Lindsay Vivian, secretary; Bill Snyder, treasurer; David Vetter, Mike Powell, Kelly Kindscher and Bill Saeger.

## New Year's Day, 2011



David Meyer

It was one chilly New Year's Day for the annual hike at Griffith Prairie. Among the hearty souls who took on the challenge were (standing, left to right) Carol Etherton, Mardell Jasnowski, Pat Carlson, Marianne Meyer, Laura Jobman, Mark Jobman and John Jasnowski; in front are Harry Eckerson and Lynda Ochsner (also Apollo and A.J.). Thanks to Harry for taking charge of the event this year, and to [David Meyer](#) for taking the group shot. ↓

**And speaking of the Meyers**, the New Year's Day hike was the last Prairie Plains event that they attended as local members. Throughout most of the life of the organization, the Meyer Family has been actively involved, volunteering their time and promoting and participating in our events. David served on the board of directors for nine years, including two terms as president. He also presented sessions about the history of corn at SOAR. Daughters Sarah and Claire were avid SOAR campers and peer leaders, and Sarah chose Griffith Prairie for her wedding last May.

David and Marianne have now embarked on a new adventure in Indianapolis, Indiana. David, geneticist for Mycogen Seeds in York, Nebraska for many years, is now Traits-Technology and Genetics Global Leader for Dow AgriSciences. Marianne has bid farewell to her longtime position as a registered nurse at Memorial Health Clinic in Aurora and is continuing her medical career in an Indianapolis clinic. We send our best wishes to these Prairie Plains devotees!

Below, from left, Marianne and David seed collecting at Griffith Prairie in June, 2006; David & Marianne teaming up with Mark and Laura Jobman at a 2006 SOAR for All Ages activity; Father-of-the-Bride David at Sarah's wedding at Griffith Prairie on May 30, 2010.



## Bush Island Restoration on the Platte



Sarah Bailey



Sarah Bailey

**January on Bush Island: An immature Bald Eagle soaring over the Platte - and the western edge of the formerly cropped restored area, looking southwest (upstream) into the savanna-like habitat that continues along a channel that has been cleared and planted to wetland and prairie species.**

Bush Island consists of 1000+ acres of privately owned land situated in the midst of the braided streams of the Platte River just northwest of Griffith Prairie, on the Hamilton-Merrick County border. Over the last several years we've had the good fortune to develop a working relationship with the people of Bush Island, LLC, through our common interest in habitat development on the site. Their plans to ↗

Bush Island continued:

convert a nearly 30-year-old, 215-acre irrigated cropped area on the island to natural habitat intersected with our prairie/wetland restoration interests there.

In 2005, Tim Tunnell (Platte River Habitat Partnership) directed a project to clear the thick cedar forest along a narrow, mile-long channel that extends southwest from the former crop field. The project also involved excavating parts of the channel to create better stream flow and wetland habitat. Prairie Plains followed up this work with a wetland/prairie planting in the prepared stream corridor in February, 2006. Then, the south half of the former cropland was planted in May, 2007; the north half in December, 2007.

We are very pleased with how the plantings have progressed; so much so that we plan to open the 20th flight of SOAR this summer with an exploration of the site. Thanks to John Cates and others from Bush Island for making this opportunity possible.



Sarah Bailey

**Seeding right onto the snow is a common practice for Prairie Plains - as long as the ATVs can make it *through* the snow. That was a bit of a challenge this particular January day, working on a Wetland Reserve Program planting in Burt County.**

**Gerry Steinauer**  
**2011 Charles L. Whitney Outstanding Service Award**  
**Presentation address by Bill Whitney**

For many years, Jan and I enjoyed Columbus Day visits from Curt Twedt, exploring our local prairies and having dinner at our place. The meal usually featured Canada lake trout or pike (caught that fall by my dad on his annual Canada fishing trip), and apple pie. It was probably a bit over 20 years ago that Curt brought along a friend and new Game & Parks Commission employee, Gerry Steinauer, the 2011 recipient of the Charles L. Whitney Award for Outstanding Service to Prairie Plains Resource Institute.

Gerry had recently been hired as the Heritage Program botanist for Game & Parks, a position he still holds today. Every once in a while after that we would see each other at various meetings or while helping on a TNC burn at Rulo or similar activity out on the land somewhere between the central Platte and the Missouri River. I knew Gerry as one of the few native flora experts in the state, and that he was also interested in prairie and wetland management and high diversity prairie restoration. In 1999 we had begun to expand our planting activities into the Rainwater Basin, and a market price structure and demand were slowly emerging. One day in the summer of 1999 he showed up at our house and I recall a discussion in the back yard about expanding our tallgrass restoration to a wider area, including Game & Parks lands, through a Nebraska Environmental Trust grant. Later, we expanded the discussion on a field trip in the Raymond area. Gerry went on to write a three-year, \$242,000 grant proposal and to line up grant partners. Our goal then was to plant 150 acres per year at a number of locations in eastern Nebraska. In February, 2000 we received notice that the proposal was accepted. Gerry made arrangements with Game & Parks to move his office to Aurora and help with the project. At the same time, we hired Mike Bullerman as director of our restoration program. Being out of Lincoln, Gerry would be closer to much of his statewide work as well as wildlife areas where he aimed to remove non-native wildlife species in his spare time – i.e., pheasants.

Little did we know at the time how much this project would affect Prairie Plains. We planted the acres required by the grant, developed a restoration field crew and the infrastructure for seed harvesting, processing and storage – much of which was housed at TNC's property near Wood River. Capacity really began to change when we were able to acquire the Griffith property and its large farm buildings, and in 2002 a combine from Mycogen, thanks to our then-president David Meyer. Gerry kept digging up new planting opportunities – with payment - and as we transitioned out of the grant period in 2002 we had work coming from other state wildlife programs, TNC's Platte Habitat Partnership with Tim Tunnell, CRP and WRP projects through NRCS, the Army Corps of Engineers, NRDs and others – still going on and growing today. Through Gerry and the combined efforts within an existing partner working →

model which is perhaps unique to Nebraska, a lot of high diversity work is still happening today. We all work to perpetuate the high diversity restoration process within the professional conservation community, introducing many new players from the various agencies and NGOs, and making the restoration pie grow. But I would have to say that Gerry's role is special because he knows so many people and many of the program details. For example, as both hunter and plant enthusiast he crosses the boundaries between the hunting and wild-life advocates, flower and biodiversity people as well as landowners. His "lone botanist in the wilderness" advocacy for native plant communities over the years has paid off and many more people are interested. It certainly has been good for Prairie Plains, helping to provide a revenue stream that allows us to thrive. Our ecological restoration program is the foundation for SOAR, our preserves - everything we do. We would not be in this position today without Gerry's help over the last ten years.

Did I mention that Gerry is an accomplished photographer and writer? He wrote *A Guide to Prairie and Wetland Restoration in Eastern Nebraska*, which was another project goal for the NET grant. He wrote and photographed for a story on Jan and me and Prairie Plains for *NebraskaLand*, and a piece on restoration. His dog, Callie, was pictured in Mike's harvest bucket in one issue. He still writes at least an article a year and they are always excellent.

Gerry was largely responsible for one of our most successful events ever – the fundraiser dinner and auction held a year ago. He took charge of the major detail work for the location, the meal and auction. He essentially showed us the way to do it; it was an excellent foundation for similar events to come.

Later on in June Gerry also led a team of botanists from the University of Kansas Native Medicinal Plant Research Program (directed by Prairie Plains board member Kelly Kindscher) in the sampling of wet meadow vegetation at our Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch, including a census of the rare Ute lady's tresses orchid. This baseline study should help us manage the resource better in the future.

Beyond all of this, Gerry is an avid gardener, an excellent cook and a good friend. Thank you, Gerry; on behalf of the members, friends and board of Prairie Plains I am happy to present to you this most well-deserved award.

### Tallgrass Prairie Seminar

Prairie Plains director Bill Whitney presented at the Seventh Annual Tallgrass Prairie Management Seminar on January 20. The seminar is held at Southeast Community College and sponsored by the Tallgrass Prairie Partnership Office, a joint Northern Prairies Land Trust and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission venture directed by Kent Pfeiffer. It is typically a good place for local landowners and wildlife management specialists to present and discuss issues relevant to southeast Nebraska prairie. This year's seminar was less focused on grazing, however there will be an August workshop concentrating on burning and grazing systems. For more information contact Kent Pfeiffer at 402-228-0276 or 402-806-1716.

**EarlyBird Tours at Bader Park**  
**Saturdays, February 26<sup>th</sup> and March 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**7:00 a.m.**

We're all smiles come mealtime at the annual meeting. Chéz Fayne's on the left, with Jeanne Dill (Cliff Dill in background).



Amy Jones

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**MISSION:**

**Maintaining and restoring Nebraska ecosystems - Creating opportunities for education, research, stewardship and community development.**

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### THANK YOU

to:

- Harry Eckerson for taking charge of the New Year's Day Hike;
- Wenda & Harry Eckerson (Espressions) for providing great coffee at the annual meeting;
- Lonnie Elliot & Tyler Janke for planting assistance; and
- Jim Senn for snow moving at Griffith Farm.