

# PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



Amy Jones

**On the horizon at Griffith Prairie: Charles L. Whitney Education Center, as viewed looking southeast.**



Sarah Bailey



Sarah Bailey

## A Giant Leap Forward for the Education Center

Thanks to a bequest from the estate of our Prairie Plains co-founder, Curt Twedt, the next phase of construction has commenced. The critical structural challenges of completing the rest of the floor, opening up the roof on three sides of the barn and framing the dormers have been met. This has created headroom for the east and west classrooms and the north meeting room, while also defining internal walled spaces and window openings. It is now possible to walk upstairs, see the individual rooms and appreciate the high vaulted ceiling of the "Great Room." Its cathedral ceiling will retain the rustic rafters, braces and inside roofing view of the original barn.

The next step is to finish the new corrugated steel roof covering. This will include building an insulated cap over the highest part, slightly elevated above the rest of the roof. Old steel roofing will be recycled as siding on the upper level walls.

We are presently raising another \$26,000 in order to install the windows, rather than boarding up window openings over winter. With windows, roof and steel siding done, the building will be nearly complete on the outside and weather resistant. We are presently searching for vertical barn siding to recycle for the lower level and entrance.

The next phase is septic system and plumbing, wiring, insulation and heating/air installation. We are proceeding as best we can with fundraising and construction, one step at a time.

**From above, left - construction progress on north (left) and west sides; view from the northeast corner of the building; scene looking southwest.**



Amy Jones



**NEWSLETTER  
September, 2011**



Jeff Gustafson



Sarah Bailey



Jeff Gustafson

**Restoration Update:** We are now intensely occupied with harvesting by hand and more recently, by combine. Seed maturation of many native species was delayed by a week to ten days this year due to cool temperatures of spring and early summer, as well as cool nights and rains in August. We dodged a bullet when a September frost danger did not materialize, when undeveloped grass seed was vulnerable. So for the next few weeks, it's all about seeds!

Above, clockwise - Sarah hand-harvesting deer vetch from a Hamilton County site along the Platte; Mike & Sarah seeding wetland acres near Ashland; combine harvest at Deep Well WMA (Wildlife Management Area) southeast of Aurora - planted in 2000-2001 by Prairie Plains.

**School Field Days:** Aurora Public Schools held two field days at Griffith Prairie in September, one for fifth graders and one for seventh. Sessions for the younger students included art & writing, insects/spiders, botany, GPS, Platte River (aquatic netting) and hydropower. The seventh graders' "Hamilton County History Day" topics were botany, leaf pounding (art project), old-time baseball, prairie hike, prairie literature and insects/spiders.



Amy Jones

From left - "Where are we?" was how the fifth graders' Platte River sessions began; the next part included an inventory of river life, a.k.a. "herding fish."

An exceptional find that day was this wolf spider, a bonus for Chris Helzer's insect & spider sessions. Thanks to Chris for sharing this photo.



Jan Whitney



Chris Helzer

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

Link Editor & Layout  
Jan Whitney

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**Beautiful Bader Park:**

A few highlights of the September tour were wild plums, a kingfisher (very occupied with fishing), dragonflies and migrating monarch butterflies. Photos by Sarah Bailey.



**NEXT BADER PARK TOUR:**  
Saturday, October 15th, 9:00 a.m.



**THANK YOU to:**

- Bill & Shirley Snyder for donating a John Deere lawn tractor;
- Jack, Mickey and Steve Winter for hosting the September board meeting;
- Rudy van den Boogaart for tree work on Lincoln Creek;
- Britt & Barb Bailey for seed collecting;
- and belated thanks to Gerhard Assenmacher for SOAR support.