



THURSDAYS we returned once again to one of our favorite historic sites, the Farmers Valley Cemetery. Above, from left - Paul Siebert set the tone for the morning with his music and history presentation to the whole camp; a camper carefully takes a rubbing from one of the beautiful old stones; dousing is always a favorite activity here, in a session led by cemetery expert Skip Meyer. At left, Jeff leading a lively insect-themed game in the big open area.

SOAR
was founded in 1992 by
Bill Whitney, Doug Monson,
Mike Stewart, Bruce
Ramsour and Ron Haden.
It is an educational
program of
Prairie Plains
RESOURCE INSTITUTE
prairieplains.org

FRIDAYS it was great to return to Bader Park, our favorite River Day site. Just enough water in the river and great weather resulted in two amazing closing days.



Above left, then clockwise - Oh, what a leap! in the Obstacle Course; The Nighthawks (as well as the other 11 groups) had a blast sand-sculpturing their mascots; evaporating a raindrop back into the clouds in the water cycle-themed Raindrop Relay; a temporarily jarred-for-study Plains Killifish was not too keen on the Fish Find, but finds relief during the ceremonial Fish Release (left).



River Day at Aurora Area SOAR Camp - Searching for aquatic creatures in the Platte at Bader Park.

SOAR 2013 *Big Bend Camp* *Flight 17*

June 17-20 & June 24-27

Serving the Buffalo and Kearney
County area and sponsored locally by
Rowe Sanctuary
rowesanctuary.org

From Big Bend SOAR Coordinator Jenny Hultquist:

It was yet another successful summer with both camps filled to the max. The highlights:

- ✿ We had just enough water in the river to run our sessions, and the weather was great.
- ✿ Some new activities for us included: a feather/leaf stamping t-shirt craft, a sensory “ice breaker” session, learning about water quality characteristics, and how to hold dragonflies. We also replaced our infamous nighttime “Amazing Race” with several sessions that really focused our campers more on what happens at dusk and after dark. We learned about stars, took a nature hike, netted insects, did an animal “eye shine” trail, and enjoyed some great storytelling.

✿ We went out on a limb this summer and replaced “Music” with “Nature Theater,” thanks to Rick Brown. At our family night program, the campers performed “She’s Wearing A Dead Bird on Her Head,” which is a story by Kathryn Lasky about how the National Audubon Society was formed. Campers took turns reading lines from the story and singing songs written by Rick and accompanied by him on his accordion. It was absolutely amazing after only two days of practice!

✿ Our guest speakers were awesome: Jeanine Lackey (US. Fish and Wildlife Service) mist-netted birds and campers were thrilled to see her catches up close. Celia McConkey (Nebraska Master Naturalist) taught us a lot about pollinators. Chad Johnson (NPPD) brought a working electrical grid model to explain how electricity works and how wildlife are impacted by power lines and poles. Brad Eifert (Nebraska Game & Parks Commission) helped with seining and dip-netting in the river – no big fish like last summer but still lots to see.

✿ As for our staff, we were sad not having Wendy or Steph with us but we were grateful to have “L-BO” and Heidi help out even more. We also welcomed Anna Nelson (peer leader alum) on board as a supervisor. With heavy hearts, we bid farewell to Gavin Blum -

former camper, peer leader, and teacher who has been involved with SOAR for 16 out of the 17 years of the program. He leaves us for a “real” job as an accountant and we wish him the best of luck!

2013 Big Bend SOAR planning & teaching staff: Jenny Hultquist, Lisa Clapper, Gavin Blum, Lisa Brown-Olsen, Heidi LaClair, Nicole Salisbury, Keanna Leonard and Matthew Jones. For complete coverage of Big Bend SOAR, including list of sponsors and other credits, request a *Big Bend SOAR Journal* from Jenny at rjhultquist@gtmc.net.



A camper uses a jeweler's loupe for close-up examination during sensory training.



Collecting fish during our seining session in the river.

SOAR 2013 Aurora Camp Flight 22

July 8-12 & July 15-19

Serving Hamilton County
& surrounding area

Enjoy more scenes from
SOAR 2013:
Check out the SOAR
scrapbook pages at
prairieplains.org

A combined (all camps) total of 318 area youth experienced SOAR in 2013.



MONDAYS were especially exciting this summer, as we kicked off the program at a first-time site for SOAR - the Tom Sherman Ranch along the Platte near Marquette. We were honored to have Mr. Sherman (top-left photo, front & center) welcome us and share the story of his life on this incredible land that he treasures. We then began with a living history presentation appropriate to our theme of "Trails," with a mid-1800s explorer and artist played by Bill Bolte and Jeff Gustafson (above, left). Campers also toured the 650-acre property via hayrack ride (above), with one memorable stop being a scenic view atop a high bluff (right). They also surveyed the insect population (top, right) and created representations of the vast landscape using pastels (left).



TUESDAYS were classic SOAR science days at Bader Park. From left, then clockwise - Sarah led the "Ecological Interactions Hike," at this moment noting insect-plant interactions on a showy milkweed; stream tables weren't required in the hydrology study as we just used the Platte River; Wet & Wild catches included a big carp; new presenter Bethany Teeters, a UNL School of Natural Resources pollinator specialist/researcher, shared the buzz on pollinators and other insects we happened to net.



For afternoon activity highlights, including Raptor Recovery Nebraska, some cool art projects and more - please check out the SOAR scrapbook pages at prairieplains.org.

We are most grateful to Tom Sherman for allowing us to SOAR on his beautiful land on the Platte.

The B. Keith and Norma F. Heuermann Foundation is a major contributor to SOAR, for which we are sincerely thankful. Please note further acknowledgments, including a list of all staff and guest presenters, on our website (prairieplains.org) on the SOAR page under "More Information."



WEDNESDAYS were wonderful as we SOARed into the night at Griffith Prairie and on the Platte. Above, from left - Hiking through the prairie to the river; Sarah presenting the session on nocturnal insects as the sun sinks low on the western horizon; a cicada temporarily captured that evening was witnessed molting the following morning. At right, new SOAR presenter Mike Fritz, biologist for the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, presented the session on bats - and campers later watched bats flying around catching insects. From far left, the campfire on the river at sunset, with entertainment by storyteller Jeff Gustafson, master of multiple insect voices; and as always, the classic S'more Experience. After the campfire, we hiked back up the hill for an outstanding Sky Watch, with the help of six telescopes. There were especially great views of Saturn and the moon.

