

*Restoration-Stewardship*



Above, from top left, clockwise - June 26<sup>th</sup>, Sarah Bailey documenting Griffith Prairie flora; Aug. 5<sup>th</sup>, Jameson, Sarah & Mike inspecting the native prairie of Pawnee Hill near Clarks during a seed-collecting trip; June 18<sup>th</sup>, Pearl Harbor Survivors Prairie northwest of Kearney, where tree work is scheduled for this winter, and July 25<sup>th</sup>, Eastern Tailed-Blue, Griffith Prairie. Below, left - June 14<sup>th</sup>, spiderwort and wild onion for later collecting at Audubon's Fertig Prairie near Schuyler; and, July 1<sup>st</sup>, butterfly milkweed was abundant at Lincoln Creek Prairie, Aurora. We look forward to collecting gallons of pods this fall!



*Charles L. Whitney Education Center*

This summer the Prairie Plains board of directors voted to commit \$250,000 toward the completion of the Charles L. Whitney Education Center. The sources

of this funding include the bequests of Curt Twedt and Robert Gerloff, numerous individual donations and Prairie Plains general fund earned income derived from a very good year of the contract prairie restoration program. The goal is to match this amount a little more than dollar-for-dollar to keep the construction momentum going to completion in 2014 at around the \$1 million target. Contractors for plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling and the emergency fire sprinkler system are lining up, and we expect the work to begin soon.

**Bader Park Walking Tour  
Saturday, September 7th  
9:00 a.m.**

While not occupied with educational summer programs, we're out on the land, tending to land management tasks, plantings, seed collecting - and as always, adding to every preserve's photo archive. We are also continuously working on restoration and stewardship equipment, especially now with the bulk harvest approaching. This involves not only routine maintenance, but also creative modification of equipment aimed at higher efficiency harvesting, transporting and - our most challenging issue - drying grass seed. More on all this coming up in the next *Link!*

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

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PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK

Griffith Prairie stormy sunset, June 14, 2013. Those who gathered for the first "Barn Jam" - an evening for exploring the prairie, sharing food and playing some music - were treated to an ever-changing and spectacular sky show. There have been three more Friday evening Barn Jams since, which have made good use of the screened-in porch at the Education Center.



NEWSLETTER  
Summer, 2013

**What a difference a little rain made in the summer of 2013!** The greener landscape just gave everything a more positive feel this year for all of our traditional annual events - and the new ones, the Youth Naturalist Program and the Friday night Barn Jams. We hope you enjoy these highlights.



*Griffith Prairie Fun Run*

It was cool and overcast on Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, with a few sprinkles - ideal running weather! There were 45 5K runners and six for the 10K, plus 18 walkers. It was a great way to kick off the summer season. **Right, Amy Jones welcomes and instructs the runners.**



**Right, then clockwise - For these two, it's all about the fun; the Braun sisters set a more ambitious pace; Joel Hope leads the 5k runners all the way home. Below - The Fun Run also provides an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful late spring landscape, and this year that included an abundance of wildflowers. In fact, the run is listed on the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's Wildflower Week calendar.**



## Sioux County Ranch Trek

June 8, 2013



Fifteen high plains enthusiasts took part in the ranch tour, enjoying all the various habitats (including the beginnings of the Niobrara River, above) - observing wildlife and flora, learning about the geology of the area, and just enjoying a beautiful day outside in this huge northwestern Nebraska landscape. Attendance grew to the 90s as neighbors and friends joined in for the evening prime rib cookout - also a time for Prairie Plains members and ranchers to learn more about each other. Then, following tradition, there was the sunset hike "up the hill" to the west, where Britt Bailey shot the view from the top (photo, right).



Britt Bailey



## Summer Enrichment Camps at ONP

Twenty-six 6th & 7th graders from Boone Central and Newman Grove Middle Schools and Spalding Academy took part in the annual summer enrichment program, held May 28-30. Camp sessions covered a broad variety of topics in life science, art, language arts, history, outdoor skills and land stewardship. These included Nebraska snakes, a hike through the seven ecosystems of the preserve (and learning about the plants and animals in each habitat), a bird-watching tour, nature photo scavenger hunt, GPS skills, poetry writing with illustrations, Dutch oven cooking, boomerang throwing, kite-flying, pioneer-style corn shelling and grinding, rope-making, Orford Pioneer Cemetery history (with study of gravestones), and even sawing down cedar trees - a prairie land stewardship skill.



Rope-making with Trevor Vandewalle.

The camp also held afternoon sessions at Boone Central School, which included work on a science problem of survival of the fittest, dissection of owl pellets, and a theater workshop.

The 2013 ONP 6th & 7th grade summer enrichment program was organized and taught by area educators Mike &

There were also 26 students in the 5th-grade camp, held August 6-7. These campers, from Boone Central and St. Michael's, also participated in a variety of activities including poetry writing, creating - and later hiding & finding - "camouflage insects," using GPS to find caches, identifying trees, making garden stones and leaf prints, and setting live traps on land and in the river. The traps allowed close observation of spiders, roly-polies and beetles.



Hiking ONP and exploring the Beaver River - favorite activities for all ages!

The 5th-graders also hiked the preserve, learning about all the different ecosystems. And the camp would not be complete without their favorite activity - exploring and playing in the Beaver River, and studying its aquatic life.

Cheryl Sherburne and Mitch Osborn taught the 5th-grade camp again this year.

Funding for both programs was from Boone Central and the Albion Education Foundation. Thanks to Cheri Blocher, Mitch Osborn and Cheryl Sherburne for information and photos.

## Youth Naturalist Program

June 19-20, 2013



Four enthusiastic teens participated in the first ever Youth Naturalist program. The group, led by Sarah Bailey and Jeff Gustafson, explored three different areas along the Platte River in Hamilton and Merrick Counties. The sites included Griffith Prairie, with sessions on ethnobotany and land stewardship, as well as a prairie restoration project planting prairie seedlings; Bader Park, with a birding hike led by Bill Whitney; and the Tom Sherman Ranch, where the history of the area was discussed. At every location, students learned basic naturalist observation skills and the names and natural history of plants on the prairie. The screened-in porch at the Education Center on Griffith Prairie served as a meeting place for the group between activities and for lunch. The overarching goal of the program is to get older students out to enjoy natural areas in Nebraska while also learning valuable naturalist skills and an appreciation for the place where they live. This program will expand, both as the Charles L. Whitney Education Center is completed and as awareness of this one-of-a-kind opportunity for older youth grows. We are excited about how well it fits with our mission and will become a continuation of nature education beyond the SOAR-age years. For more information, contact the Youth Naturalist Program coordinator, Sarah Bailey. Watch for details about the 2014 program this winter in the newsletter and on the website.

