

PRAIRIE PLAINS

QUARTERLY

Volume 2, Number 3: July-September, 2004



CELEBRATING THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE FOR 25 YEARS

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PPRI MISSION

**MAINTAINING AND RESTORING NEBRASKA ECOSYSTEMS:
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, RESEARCH, STEWARDSHIP,
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.**

Prairie Plains Resource Institute (PPRI), is an educational land trust incorporated in 1980 as a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization. The mission of PPRI is being carried out through four major efforts: **Ecological Restoration, Prairie Preserves, Education** and the **Platte River Corridor Initiative**.

PPRI is governed by a twelve-member board of directors (soon to expand to fifteen): Colleen Babcock, Ernest Ochsner, David Meyer, Mike Stewart, and Charles L. Whitney, all from Aurora; Steve Rothenberger from Kearney, Cliff Dill and Lana Flagtwet from Lincoln; Dolores Johnson from Schuyler; Mitzi Fox from Albion; Wayne Mollhoff from Ashland, and Scott Seagren from Barrington, IL . There are presently three permanent staff members: William S. Whitney, Executive Director; Jan Whitney, Assistant Director and SOAR Coordinator; and Mike Bullerman, Restoration Cooperative Project Ecologist, and one temporary stewardship technician, Steve Anderson.

Prairie Plains Quarterly (formerly the annual *Prairie Plains Journal*) is a publication of **Prairie Plains Resource Institute (PPRI)**, an educational land trust incorporated in 1980 as a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization. Its pages highlight the activities and accomplishments of PPRI, and may also include poetry, essays, and other writings related to prairie and Great Plains natural history, ecological restoration, resource use and management, and culture.

Contribute to the mission of Prairie Plains Resource Institute by becoming a member.

Members receive seasonal publications and gain opportunities to participate in unique educational, recreational, and volunteer activities in diverse Nebraska landscapes. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Prairie Plains Quarterly credits

Cover photo by Jan Whitney

Wet & Wild at SOAR '04:

Maggie Schneider, Ashlyn Hoegh, Whitney Phelps (Peer Leader), &
Katelyn Shoup at Lake Mary along the Platte.

Other photos by PPRI staff unless indicated otherwise.

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Quarter Three, 2004

The third quarter began in the height of summer with two wonderful weeks of SOAR, and closed with those refreshing crisp fall mornings and the peak of an exceptionally bountiful seed harvest.

A most notable highlight of the quarter was a long-anticipated event:

A New Face at Prairie Plains



Amy Jones

**Development Coordinator & Office Manager
 for PPRI as of September 7, 2004**

The day Amy arrived on the scene was definitely cause for celebration. Reaching the point of need for this position came long ago, but we finally were able to offer it this summer. Then to find someone who fit in so well was . . . well, we're still celebrating! Besides having valuable skills, she's bringing bright new energy to the Prairie Plains team.

Amy earned her business administration degree from Peru State College in 1991. She has been employed in various administrative positions in the financial services industry, and as sales and marketing coordinator at Hamilton Telecommunications in Aurora. Most recently, she was the media coordinator for Idea Bank Marketing in Hastings.

Originally from Auburn, Amy now lives in Aurora with her husband, Scott - who teaches and coaches at Aurora High School - and her two young sons, Cale and Cameron.

Amy's responsibilities at Prairie Plains include marketing and fund-raising coordination, event planning and office management. That's the official job description, but she's already had the opportunity to expand on that in order to become more familiar with the life and history of the organization.

Having no problem breaking out of the confines of the office and her computer, she joined the rest of the staff one day to harvest seed at Ratzlaff Prairie (see page...). Another day she was asked to go fetch her son from day care for a morning hike on the Lincoln Creek trail so that we could bring that experience to our members in this *Quarterly* (see page...).

There will, no doubt, be other such opportunities offered to this, our first development person, but the majority of her time will be spent working to ensure that Prairie Plains will grow and thrive in years to come.

■ PRAIRIE RESTORATION



The seed collecting crew stopped at a 2002 prairie planting on the Bob Kotinek land in Nuckolls County in August. Although it has suffered through a couple years of severe drought it showed promise. Here, bluestem wildrye, black-eyed susan and stiff sunflower are apparent.



California Bend is a U. S. Army Corps of Engineers project to reopen a Missouri River chute (old side channel). PPRI planted an area used to place digging spoil. Here Steve Rothe, Katie Reed and Bill Whitney inspect the first-year planting which had numerous grass seedlings, but showed initial slow development of the forbs.



PPRI was permitted to harvest tall grass on Crane Meadows Nature Center land belonging to the Platte River Trust Whooping Crane Trust. Steve Anderson is riding in the bin with Mert Griffith driving. Right, the harvest is spread out to dry on the quonset floor back at the Griffith land.



Summer intern, Quinn Lewandowski, is standing in PPRI's Frank L. and Lillian Pokorny Prairie in Colfax County. Summer rains ensured a large grass seed crop.



Rainwater Basin Wetland Stewardship Award goes to Doug & Kami Brinkerhoff



Above, Doug & Kami Brinkerhoff and their 70-acre wetland preserve in Clay County. Below, Sept. 20, U.S. Representative Tom Osborne presents the award, sponsored by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture. The pristine qualities of this wetland were noted a few years ago by PPRI director Bill Whitney, which led to consultation with the Brinkerhoffs. The couple has taken several steps to preserve and maintain their wetland, including some planting and prescribed burning with assistance from PPRI. They and others are enjoying the benefits, including over 330 species of birds that visit the area throughout the year.



■ **PRAIRIE PRESERVES**

New Purchase Adds Acres to Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch in Sioux County

In August Prairie Plains purchased 600 acres of pasture land along the Niobrara River in Sioux County. Funds for this land purchase were acquired with a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust which receives funding from the Nebraska Lottery. The property, surrounded on three sides by PPRI's Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch was a section of school land. In the early days of Nebraska settlement, sections 16 and 36 of every township were held by the state and used as revenue sources for public schools. Most school lands have been sold in eastern Nebraska, but in the western counties many are still under state ownership and are managed by the Nebraska State Board of Educational Lands and Funds. Most of these lands are still used for cattle grazing.

Derrick and Jackie Keim, who have a ranch the Guadalcanal Ranch, bought this particular school section a few years ago, which eliminated the need to bid for a lease every few years, and secured its long-term use. In 2003 they decided to sell it to PPRI if funding could be secured.

The land rises gradually northeastward from the Niobrara River until it meets the system of rocky outcrops and buttes. Because of its location at the center of the ranch it is very important in the workings of the ranch. It is also a valuable ecological resource containing habitat for such creatures as long-billed curlews, rock wrens, bobcats and much more. It will be maintained as part of the working ranch.

Preserve Spotlight: Lincoln Creek

Here begins the "Spotlight" series on PPRI Preserves. The logical place to start is the site of our first prairie preservation and prairie restoration work - the 16-acre wayside area along Lincoln creek bordering the east side of Aurora, Nebraska. This was where many of the seminal ideas about creating an organization took shape - ideas about outdoor education, multiple use greenways along Nebraska creeks, prairie restoration and local educational preserves.



Above, PPRI's first prescribed burn was on a 6-acre prairie remnant along Lincoln Creek in 1981. Note the early technology - 5-gallon buckets of water and gunny sacks. Below, aerial view of the burned prairie remnant and the 1980 creek oxbow restoration site.

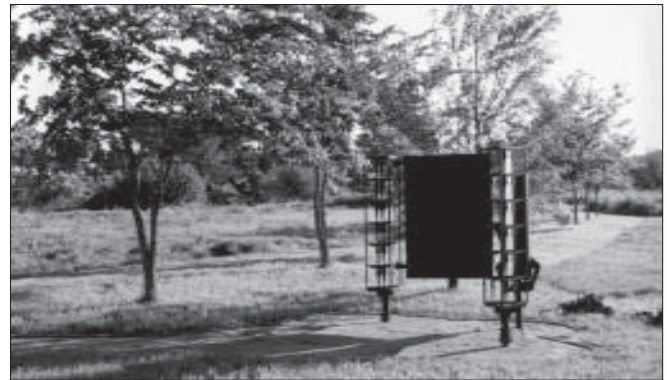


In 1983 Wilma Aalborg donated the six-acre tract of native prairie to PPRI, creating the first of the organization's preserves. The City of Aurora agreed to lease the remaining acres to PPRI at minimal cost. In the early 1990s we began to create the limestone trail which would ultimately link our area with The Leadership Center across the highway north and Streeter Park to the west.

Right, two-year-old Erin Whitney enjoyed exploring the flowery results of the early plantings - especially the blue indigo or "rattlepod." Below, the PPRI entrance to the Lincoln Creek Parkway Trail as it now appears.



Our first pickup, a 1969 Ford dubbed "Old Green" served PPRI well from 1980-1995.



Above, Mike Herman borrowed Gale and Roger Christenson's tractor and earth mover to scrape brome sod off of a prairie planting site in 1983.



Ribbon-cutting ceremony, Sept. 18, 2004, celebrating the long-anticipated completion of the Lincoln Creek Parkway bridge. Doing the honors were, l-r, Upper Big Blue NRD representatives Ken Regier and Jay Bittner, Aurora mayor Marlin Seeman, The Leadership Center rep and Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Foundation President Ivan Soper, and Aurora City Administrator Mike Bair. Looking on in the left background are PPRI members Mardell Jasnowski, Gloria Eckerson, Cliff Dill, and Harry Eckerson.

■ PRAIRIE PRESERVES

One bright September morning Amy Jones, Jan Whitney, Amy's 3-year-old son Cameron, and his friend, Kaylie Eberle, took a stroll down the Lincoln Creek Parkway trail. Their experience is recorded here for your enjoyment.



1. Taking off down the trail. The former Aalborg place is in the background.



Soft & silky milkweed seeds.



6. Exploring the south edge of the prairie, along the creek oxbow.



2. Look closely and what do you see?



3. Pretty pitcher sage and bumble bees . . .



4. and a big hungry black & yellow garden spider.



7. Everything is so tall, especially this mullein spike.



8. Kaylie is delighted with all the colors, smells, and textures of the prairie, including the fluffy false boneset.



9. Moving on out of the prairie . . .



10. toward the Highway 34 bridge.



11. Under the bridge -Echo!



12. Then, just along the bend, a couple of huge old cottonwoods keeping their feet wet right next to the creek.



13. Watching the ripples from sticks & pebbles.



14. Heading toward the new bridge, an encounter with a worm on the trail.



15. The new bridge.



16. Pebbles make a bigger splash from the bridge.



17. Entering The Leadership Center's west prairie, planted in 1992-95 by PPRI.



18. Checking out the little "pea pods" of Canada milkvetch.



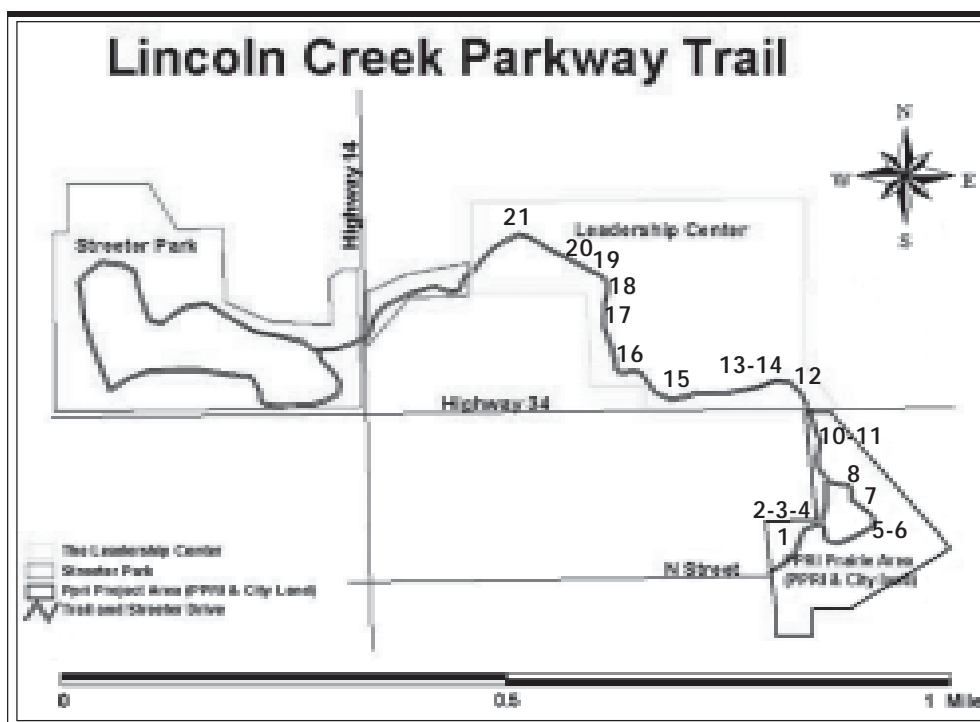
19. This cedar tree was loaded with waxy blue berries.



20. Out of the prairie, into the woods.



21. The little bridge exiting The Leadership Center beckons us on to Streeter Park - on another day.



■ PRAIRIE PRESERVES

Prairie Plains Board of Directors Fall Tour

The PPRI Board of Directors met on a beautiful fall weekend, September 18-19, in Aurora. A tour of preserves began with the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Lincoln Creek Parkway bridge, and continued on to the Pokorny Prairie in Colfax County and Olson Nature Preserve in Boone County. The following day the group enjoyed a sunny Sunday morning hike at the Griffith Prairie.



Above, Jeanne Dill enjoys the morning light on the Griffith Prairie, taking advantage of many photo ops. Below, the dry Platte River bed bordering the north side of the preserve. Photo courtesy Cliff Dill.



Left, Amy Jones, Scott Seagren, and Bill Whitney stroll through the tall grass of the Pokorny Prairie. Right, the group was joined by founding board member Curt Twedt. Photos courtesy Cliff Dill.



Above, sign fashioned by Boone Central shop students greets the tour group; upper right, Mitzi Fox playing familiar role as tour leader through ONP; right, bumblebee on New England aster. Photos courtesy Cliff & Jeanne Dill.



A tiny ring-necked snake is the focus of attention. Pictured l-r, Scott Seagren, Colleen Babcock, Ernie Ochsner, Jeanne Dill. The snake was discovered and photographed during the Griffith Prairie hike by Cliff Dill.

■ PRAIRIE PRESERVES

Griffith Prairie site for Range Tour

Thanks to planning efforts by Alane Nelson, District Conservationist at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Osceola, PPRI's Griffith land was the site of a range tour in September. The group witnessed the effects of recent tree cutting and prescribed burning on the prairie, and discussed the various aspects of burning and grazing on bluff prairies. PPRI and its partners will try to duplicate this activity in the future on the Griffith land as well as other sites along the Platte.

■ PLATTE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

Working Groups Active

Working groups under the Platte Corridor Initiative banner are progressing. PACE (Planning, Aggregates, Community and Environment) submitted grants for creating a gravel mine and restoration demonstration project near the Alda Interstate-80 Exit 305. PACE and Caarl Roberts of Lyman-Richey Corporation hosted staff from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality for a tour of a mining and wetland creation project near Ashland.

The Platte PEER Group, a new non-profit entity managing Bader Memorial Park and Tooley Park between Chapman and Marquette, has been working on a comprehensive plan for Bader Park with assistance from Mary Hanson of the National Park Service. They have also planned a pasture restoration project to remove cedar trees and improve the prairie condition. This project is receiving technical and funding assistance from Laurel Badura at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Kirk Schroeder of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Bush Island L.L.C. members, PPRI, Nature Conservancy and Nebraska Game and Parks representatives met at Jerry Robertshaw's home to discuss plans for restoring the Bush Island cropland to high diversity prairie. This project is moving forward with grant requests and assistance from the Platte Habitat Partnership.

Ratzlaff and Griffith Preserves Serve as Outdoor Classrooms for Central Community College

Biology Instructor and PPRI member Clark Haberman from Central Community College in Hastings reports that CCC students have been using the Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve and Griffith's Prairie for Botany and Ecology classes. The goal is to make the students aware of the native prairies in the south-central part of Nebraska. The classes also use the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie near Red Cloud and a prairie remnant near Holstein.



**CCC Ecology
students in out-
door laboratory.**



Destination for Artists

The Art Farm is situated in the heart of rural America, near Marquette, Nebraska - surrounded by cornfields and other agricultural

landscapes. It also has the Platte River and associated environs, including PPRI's Griffith Prairie, right in its back yard. Artists from all over the world have been attracted to this setting as inspiration for their work.

Art Farm's Artist Residency Program, offered from June 1 to November 1 in 8-12 week blocks, provides artists time to experiment with new ideas or projects while working and living in a rural environment. Resident artists are granted accommodations and studio space to pursue their work in exchange for 12 hours labor per week in renovation and maintenance of Art Farm's buildings and grounds.

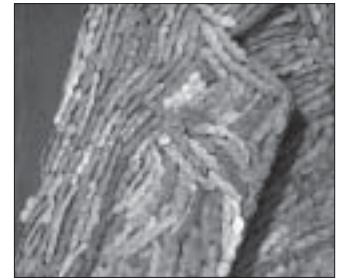
Two of the most recent resident artists are Jeroen van de Ven from Amsterdam, Holland, and Beili Liu from China (now residing in Michigan), who began their 10-week residencies in July.

Jeroen is a sculptor and photographer, trained at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. He enjoys working in rural areas and exploring the contrasts between the city



Artist Jeroen van de Ven appreciated the photogenic qualities of the prairie.

Detail of Sticky Seed Suit by Jeroen van de Ven.



and the countryside. He also is interested in working with seeds and crops as sculptural material.

Connecting with the prairies, and working with PPRI's Mike Bullerman, Jeroen created a remarkable piece combining these interests. When he discovered Canada tickclover, with its unsurpassed stick-to-your-clothes quality, he set to work, spending many hours seed collecting and sticking, resulting in his *Sticky Seed Suit* which Art Farm co-director Janet Williams describes as "a poetic transformation, marrying his city suit to rural Nebraska."

Beili Liu chose, as one of her projects, a recreation of her parents' home during China's cultural revolution - a 6' x 12' hut. The adobe walls were created, one brick at a time, from on-site clay, sand, and straw. Although techniques for the hut originated in China, the final product looks right at home on the Nebraska prairie.

*For more on these artists and Art Farm:
www.artfarmnebraska.org*



Sticky Seed Suit by Jeroen van de Ven.



"The little house stands on the prairie" with Beili Liu.

■ **EDUCATION**

Summer Orientation About Rivers

Scenes from soar '04 - Aurora Camp

Mondays at Tooley Park



Eric Volden introducing the animal tracks activity.



Lindsay Squires and her "Rocky Mountain Toads" exploring the riverbank during the A-Z Scavenger Hunt.



Left, "S" is for Snails, as Alli Christie and Sam Wiarda discover while A-Z Scavenging. Right, Story time on the dry Platte Riverbed.



Amanda Clark and her "Monarchs" getting into the Frog Game.



Ellie Cervený (left) and Lauren Simonsen (right) enjoying the challenge of building bird nests while their peer leader, Sarah Hammond, supervises.



Tuesdays at Lake Mary



Our beloved Skipper, Bud Pence, has been hosting SOAR at Lake Mary all these years. Below, a better view of his craft, used as our limnology boat.



Left, SOAR veteran Matt Haden presented the limnology session this year. Below left, Chase Carey trying out the digital camera. Below, Shaina Schulz experimenting with solar energy in "Earth Cycles."



Above, seasoned fisherman Charles Whitney supervises Mitchell McClellan's casting technique. Below, SOAR '04 master angler Tanner Hannappel and his largemouth bass, along with instructor Marlin Seeman and peer leader Amanda Van Pelt.



Above, Campers Canoe! This one handled smoothly by, l-r, Joel Hope, Marcy Jacobsen and J. D. Keim. Below, Wet & Wild.

Wednesdays at Ratzlaff Prairie and Farmers Valley



We visited the the Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve on our way to the cemetery. Besides just enjoying and exploring, we were searching for various types of seeds.



Bruce Ramsour's original melodramas are something we look forward to - a great way to present a little local history. Pictured here, l-r, is the cast for the orange hat group, peer leaders Amanda Clark, Laura Whitney, Melanie Stewart (veteran peer leader), Jeanette George, and assistant Sally Leach.



Heartland Community School teacher and Farmers Valley Cemetery historian Suzanne Ratzlaff shared some of the stories she has gathered interviewing family members of people buried here.



Above, Skip Meyer, well versed in cemetery history, interpreted many of the symbols on the old grave-stones.

Indirect and unusual methods were employed to measure the circumference and height of some of the cemetery's trees - the oldest trees in the county.



Below, Krystah Hanson discovers Skip's dowsing rods really do work! The rods are used to locate unmarked graves.



Thursdays at B. K. Heuermann's and Griffith Farm & Prairie



An Ag Day first for SOAR: Local agricultural entrepreneur, B. K. Heuermann, gives us a tour of his popcorn plant.

On the farm, more on corn: Mycogen geneticist, David Meyer, had lots to share on corn science, history and lore. Here, he prepares corn meal for Johnny cakes, which were delicious!



Exploring the Platte River bluffs of Griffith Prairie,Quinton Derr, and were delighted to spot this good-sized garter snake.



Left, Andrew Christiansen's "Irrigation Station" included some irrigation history - such as how to set siphon tubes. We found this to be quite a challenge, but lots of fun. Below, Griffith Farm resident, Maggie, enjoys a cool drink from a successfully set tube.



Left, shovels, trowels, sand and muscle - This Nebraska Rivers Sculpture is Week One's attempt at creating Nebraska and her rivers in the dry Platte riverbed. The goal was to carve out all the



major rivers deep enough so that they all had water. We ran out of time, however, as there was a lot more digging involved than we'd imagined! Right, Brenton Regier finally finds water, over a foot down.



Fridays at Bader Park: Platte River Marathon

Almost miraculously, there was some water!



Eric Volden begins the morning's activities with "Fun with Frogs."



Just happy to be here!
Clare Jasnowski



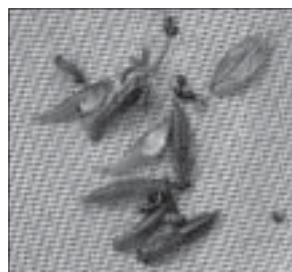
Alex Brechbill racing through the obstacle course.



Raindrop Relay. Above, "Ready, set, RAIN!" and Ellie Cerveny takes off. Below, J. D. Keim evaporating all the way back into the clouds.



Fish Find. Above, one of the best finds was this longnose gar. Below, detail of net catch . . . and not everything found was a fish!



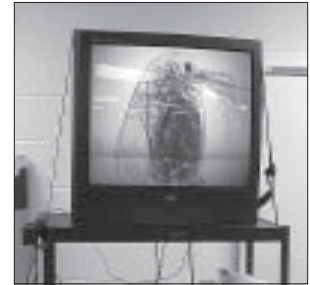
A sampling of SOAR afternoons:



Our first visit to L'eglise Art Center in Aurora, under the direction of Carolyn Albracht.



Eager to get on with the show - the Microbe Show.



During the limnology session it was noted that lake samples at certain depths had a pinkish tinge. The cause was discovered in the lab - an abundance of *Daphnia*, a microscopic crustacean. Left, peer Leader Destiny Shipman brings things into focus for her campers.



Making paper. Jana Wasem assists, l-r, Blayke Johnson, Anna English, and Kylie Brokenrope.

Right, a seed classification activity.



Leaf prints: Collected leaves are inked with a roller, then arranged on our own handmade papers, and run through an old proof press.



Cycling back to SOAR

Part of the plan of our "life cycle" theme was to "recycle" a few SOAR veterans to visit and assist. At the same time, we couldn't help but note what a family affair SOAR has become. To date, ten SOAR campers - six of those thus far also being peer leaders - are children of SOAR staff members. Peer Leader veterans Matt Haden, Melanie Stewart, Melissa Ramsour, and Erin Whitney all made appearances at SOAR '04 - as did Jamie Hope, Brad Bangs, and Ella Eckerson. These last three *seem* like family, for all the time they've put into SOAR!



Matt Haden has been camper, peer leader, and now instructor, serving this summer as professor of limnology. His assistant is his brother Dan, veteran SOAR camper and future peer leader.

Mike & Melanie Stewart at SOAR '04. Melanie, who began peer leading in Year One - 1992 - accepted the invitation to return this summer.



Erin Whitney visited one day to assist SOAR camper Julia Sullivan, filling in for Julia's helper, Sally Leach.



Melissa Ramsour also made a comeback, caught in the background here assisting with our paper-making session.



Laura Whitney has dashed through seven years of SOAR so far, and is still on active duty.



Brad Bangs, center, was an early starter, beginning his lengthy peer leading career in 1993. This time he returned to teach the canoe session. With Brad are two more who came back to serve - hard-core SOAR vets Jamie Hope and Ella Eckerson.



And more on the way: Above, Amy Wilson and daughter Allyson; below, Lori Brechbill with son Alex. It was the first year to SOAR for Allyson & Alex.



SOAR 'O4 planning, teaching & administrative staff:
Amy Wilson, Ron Haden, Bruce Ramsour & Mike Stewart - Aurora Public Schools; Bill & Jan Whitney - Prairie Plains Resource Institute (PPRI); Andrew Christiansen - Hamilton County Extension Educator.

Staff assistants: Quinn Lewandowski (PPRI Summer Intern), Dan Haden.

Peer leaders: Amanda Van Pelt, Ryan Ousey, Jayme Krejdl, Jordan Jensen, Gina Andersen, Marcy Jacobsen, Timothy Pawley, Whitney Phelps, Amy Jobman, Lindsay Squires, MaryLou Andrews, Katie Hansen, Jana Wasem, Sarah Hammond, Mitch Hansen, Destiny Shipman, Eric Hunnicutt, Alli Christie, Laura Whitney, Amanda Clark, Jeanette George, Levi Anderson, Crystal Moellenberndt, Claire Meyer.

SOAR veteran volunteer presenters & assistants: Matt Haden, Brad Bangs, Ella Eckerson, Melanie Stewart, Melissa Ramsour, Jamie Hope, Erin Whitney.

Bus drivers & assistants: Lori Brechbill, Carolyn Albracht

SOAR 'O4 T-shirt design: Nial Spencer

Guest presenters: Eric Volden (tracks, frogs); Carolyn Albracht (art); Marlin Seenman & Charles Whitney (fishing); Suzanne Ratzlaff & Skip Meyer (cemetery history); B. K. Heuermann (popcorn); David Meyer (corn).

SOAR (Summer Orientation About Rivers) is a nature day camp where children learn about Nebraska rivers and other natural areas. The curriculum is interdisciplinary, including activities in science, math, history, agriculture, art and language arts. SOAR was established in 1992 as a project of Prairie Plains Resource Institute, an educational land trust based in Aurora, Nebraska. There are presently two programs: the Aurora Camp (pilot program, held in July; and the Big Bend Camp, based in Minden and Rowe Sanctuary (Gibbon), held in June.

Grateful acknowledgment is given the following foundations, agencies, organizations, businesses and individuals whose financial contributions have made the SOAR '04 program possible:

The Bernard K. and Norma F. Heuermann Foundation; Cox Children's Fund (Hamilton Community Foundation); Principal Financial Group Foundation; Upper Big Blue Natural Resource District; Angels Among Us; Aurora Lions Club; Aurora Rotary Club; The Optimist Club of Aurora; Laureate Nu; Aurora Super Foods; CF Industries; Cornerstone Bank; Easy Lawn; Espressions; First National Bank of Marquette; Grain Place Foods, Inc.; Hamilton Co. Farm Bureau; Hamilton Telephone Co.; Heritage Bank; The Iams Company; International Sensor Systems; Leach Insurance Center (Jason D. Johnson Memorial Scholarship); Nebraska Energy; Pinnacle Bank; Sullivan Companion Animal Clinic; Thomas Realty; Tots Learning Center; Whitney, Newman, Mersch & Otto; Marvin A. Bichel; Clifford Dill; Mr. & Mrs. J. Joe Ford; Leland Gartrell, in memory of Vesta Jean Hubbell; Dr. & Mrs. Mark Jobman; Dot Quiring; Gerry Steinauer; Mr. & Mrs. Vern Stewart; Curtis M. Twedt; and all members of Prairie Plains Resource Institute.

Special thanks to our guest presenters and volunteer helpers; B. K. Heuermann Popcorn; Gene (Mert) & Gwen Griffith; and to Sally Leach, assistant for Julia Sullivan.



There was scarcely a break in activity at ONP this quarter. Boone Central and other area schools are making the most of this model outdoor classroom. Two most notable events were the continuing Summer Research Class and the ONP Science Adventure for fifth graders.

Summer Research

Thirteen high school and college students participated in the summer research class with instructors Mitch Osborn and Mark Seier. Projects included a continuation of the studies of oak trees, ornate box turtles, and water quality and flow. Funding came from Albion Education Foundation, Educational Service Unit 7, and Boone Central and Newman Grove Schools.



Caging an oak tree and recording GPS data. The tree's height, canopy width, and number of leaves are documented before caging; another similar sized tree is marked without a cage nearby to compare browsing effect on the oaks.

One prominent feature of ONP is the 80-100-year-old oak forest covering the steep, east-facing escarpment. The purpose of the oak study is to determine why there are so few young oak trees. One hypothesis is that various creatures at ONP are eating them. Another deals with the amount of sunlight that the trees get. Students have been testing their hypotheses and monitoring young oaks at ONP since 2002.

The purpose of the Ornate Box Turtle study, started in 2003, is to collect baseline data about the movement, range, growth, and general behavior of the turtles on the preserve. Turtles are tracked using radio telemetry equipment. Transmitters, glued to the turtles' shells, send out signals that are picked up by hand-held antennas. The antenna receiver then beeps; the closer the turtle, the louder the beep.

Students tracked turtles ten times over the summer. Each day they marked locations with a Global Positioning System (GPS), and made observations on the temperature, weather, and activity of each found turtle. Back in the classroom, GPS data was imported onto computers where it could be more accurately analyzed and studied.



Getting warmer . . . Craig Bygland locating a turtle.



ONP turtle telemetry attracts media: reporter Julie Blum and photographer Todd Stepanek dropped in on the turtle trackers and published an article in the July 21, 2004 *Columbus Telegram*. Students are Dori Porter, Andrea Kruse, and Kate Kusek; teacher Mark Seier is on the right.



Science is extra fun when you're working with such photogenic subjects.

The ONP water study involves students determining a water quality index and a flow rate for the Beaver River. Data collected is compared from year to year.

The ONP Summer Research Class continues to keep detailed records of each year's discoveries. We plan to include some of these on the PPRI web site (prairieplains.org).

ONP Science Adventure

2004 marked the sixth year for this educational adventure for elementary students. Thirty-five fifth graders from Boone Central, St. Michael's and St. John's participated in the event, held Aug. 9-10, just before school started.

Goals for the program were to develop a sense of ownership, appreciation, and responsibility for ONP; promote integration of math and science with other disciplines; and to get students excited about learning and prepared to return to school. To meet these goals, students participated in several activities that were designed to be fun and educational. These included Un-natural Trail, How Much Water?, Trapping (insects, spiders, etc.), Sand Castings, Camouflage Insect Models, Water Races, Water Critters, and Poetry Writing.

The Science Adventure was once again supported by the Albion Education Foundation, and planned and taught by Mitch Osborn, Tom Dickey, and Cheryl Sherburne.



Getting ready for a favorite activity, water races.



High tech treasure hunt. Given the coordinates, students searched for the cache using small handheld GPS units.



Enjoying the Beaver River while heading for Mr. Osborn's "Water Critters."



Creating botanical T-shirts - leaf pounding.



One wild camouflage insect creation.



Trying to FIND hidden wild camouflaged insects.

Maria Glidden was pleased with her plaster sand casting.



AUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2003

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2003

Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash	\$ 25,719
Investments	13,664
Accounts receivable	27,025
Prepaid insurance	4,318
Total current assets	70,726
Property and Equipment	
Land	1,172,137
Buildings	45,233
Land management equipment	162,054
Vehicles and trailers	30,251
Office equipment	41,831
Total property and equipment	1,451,506
Less accumulated depreciation	113,645
Net property and equipment	1,337,861
	\$ 1,408,587
Liabilities and net assets	
Current liabilities	
Current installments of long-term debt	\$ 108,000
Accounts payable	37
Accrued interest payable	8,100
Other current liabilities	1,270
Total current liabilities	117,407
Long-term debt, excluding current installments	108,000
Total liabilities	225,407
Net assets	
Unrestricted	592,681
Temporarily restricted	590,499
Total net assets	1,183,180
	\$ 1,408,587

Changes in unrestricted net assets:	
Unrestricted revenues and gains	
Contributions	\$ 29,317
Farm revenue	31,868
Investment income	2,382
Gain on disposition of assets	1,490
Miscellaneous	1,470
Total unrestricted revenues and gains	66,527
Net assets released from restriction	415,151
Total unrestricted revenues, gains and support	481,678
Expenses	
Program services	267,487
General administration	40,942
Development and fundraising	5,207
Total expenses	313,636
Increase in unrestricted net assets	168,042
Changes in temporarily restricted net assets	
Restricted contributions	299,792
Net assets released from restriction	(415,151)
Decrease in temporarily restricted net assets	(115,359)
Increase in net assets	52,683
Net assets at beginning of year	1,130,497
Net assets at end of year	1,183,180

Year-end financial reports will be published in the first
Prairie Plains Quarterly issue each year from now on.

December 2004 and January 2005 Events:

**BADER MEMORIAL PARK NATURAL AREA
& GRIFFITH PRAIRIE HIKE**

December 18, 9:00 a.m. Christmas Bird Count

To be followed by a soup bar lunch at Espressions in Aurora.
Hike begins at Bader Park 3 miles south of Chapman.

NEW YEAR'S DAY HIKE AT GRIFFITH PRAIRIE

Meet at 1:00 p.m. at PPRI Office
1307 L Street in Aurora

**Prairie Plains Resource Institute's
2005 ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS**

Saturday, January 8, 2005
Bremer Community Center
16th (Hwy 14) & L Street, Aurora, Nebraska
8:30 a.m. social; meeting at 9:00 a.m.; Lunch 11:45;

PROGRAM AT 1:00 P.M.

PHOTOGRAPHER MICHAEL FORSBERG
Reception and Book Signing 2:00 p.m.

Catered lunch: Call 402-694-5535 or email
amyppri@hamilton.net by Jan. 3 to be included in lunch count;
cost is \$10.00 payable to PPRI.

GIFTS AND PROGRAM SUPPORTS

Prairie Plains Resource Institute (PPRI) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt Nebraska conservation land trust corporation. Your Support is necessary in carrying out PPRI's operations and mission goals. The Institute can assist in planning your contributions for your benefit. Contributions may have potential income, capital gain, estate, and gift tax advantages, and can even be structured to provide income for yourself and others. Donors may also direct the use of their gifts to specific PPRI projects.

GIFTS OF SUPPORT CAN BE MADE IN MANY WAYS INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

OUTRIGHT GIFTS Cash, real property, personal property, or securities. Gifts may be accepted in any amount at any time. Gifts of appreciated property may also be advantageous to the donor.

TESTAMENTARY GIFTS Created by bequests contained in your last will or codicil. Bequests may be absolute or conditional or may provide some financial security for a surviving beneficiary.

INTERVIVOUS TRUSTS AS GIFTS

LIFE ESTATE RESERVATION

LIFE INSURANCE GIFTS Many forms are available to benefit a donor.

CONTACT: PRAIRIE PLAINS RESOURCE INSTITUTE
William S. Whitney, Executive Director
1307 L Street Aurora, NE 68818-2126
402-694-5535 ppri@hamilton.net

PPRI Wish List Update

THANK YOU TO CURT TWEDT FOR
CONTRIBUTING A COPY OF THE
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE GREAT PLAINS,
EDITED BY DAVID WISHART

STILL WISHING FOR:

laptop computer for field use (at
least a Pentium 3/ Windows 98, 3.5"
floppy drive, CD drive, serial port)
heavy duty mower for farmyard
picnic tables
chainsaw sharpener
steel and wooden posts
4-wheeler ATV (large preferred)
Skidsteer (i.e., Bobcat)

The PPRI "Network of Campuses"

Sioux County Ranch

Guadalupe Memorial Prairie

4944 acres needle and thread/blackroot sedge northern high plains grassland with meadows, buttes and the Niobrara River headwaters.

Olson Nature Preserve

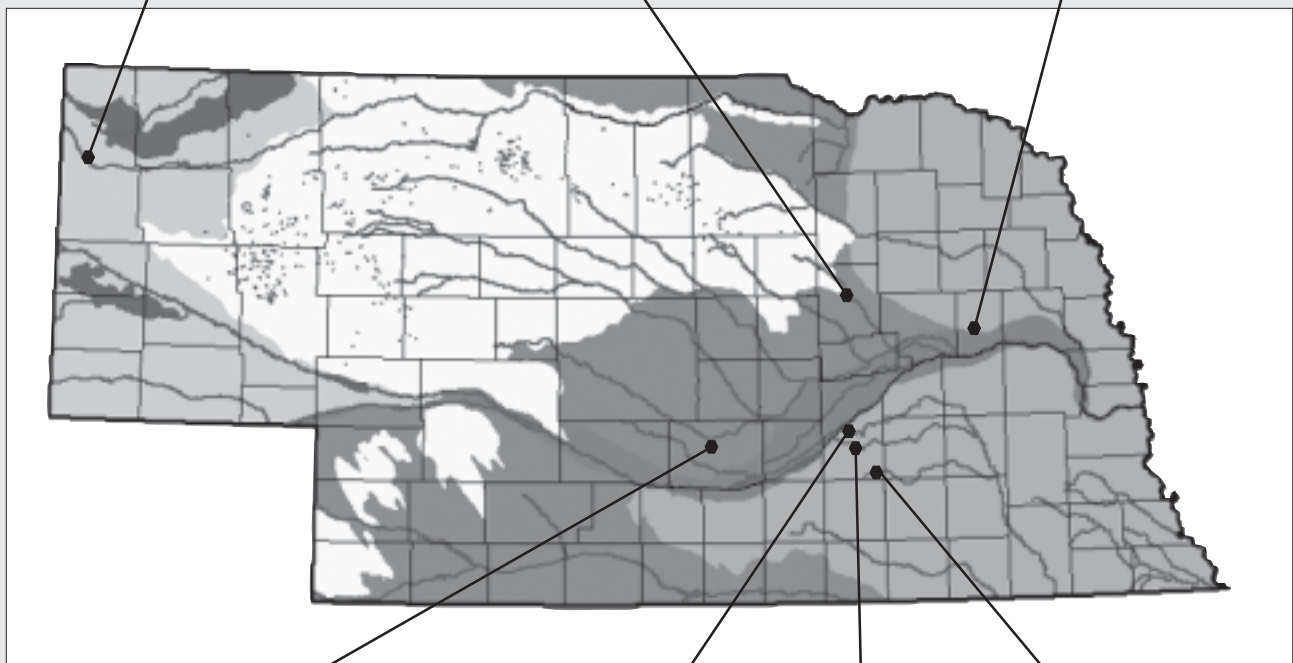
Boone County

112 acres of sandhills, tallgrass prairie, wetlands, and oak forest along Beaver Creek.

Frank L. and Lillian Pokorny Memorial Prairie

Colfax County

20 acres of virgin tallgrass prairie and a 20-acre restoration planted in 2003.



Pearl Harbor Survivors Preserve

Buffalo County

150 acres of Central Nebraska Loess Hills mixed grass prairie, including a 1983 prairie restoration, and farmland.

Griffith Prairie and Farm

Hamilton County

390 acres of scenic Platte River Bluffs prairie, farmland, and farmstead. Site of future PPRI center.

Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve

Hamilton County

30 acres of virgin tallgrass prairie and a 10 acre restoration planted in 2001.

Lincoln Creek Prairie and Trail

Hamilton County

16 acres of tallgrass prairie and prairie restorations planted in the 1980s; including the Lincoln Creek hiking trail.

PPRI's Four Major Project Efforts:



Prairie Restoration

PPRI has been a pioneer of high-diversity prairie and wetland restoration since 1980. Restorations harbor both an abundance and diversity of plant and animal life, and are also a sustainable agricultural resource.



Prairie Preserves

PPRI presently owns seven prairie preserves, totaling more than 5800 acres, a solid foundation on which to build an ever-expanding "network of campuses." See the inside back cover for more details.



Education/SOAR.

All PPRI properties and many of its restoration projects are educational sites suitable for lifelong learning.

SOAR - The program which best exemplifies PPRI's educational efforts is SOAR (Summer Orientation About Rivers), an annual nature day camp for elementary school children.

PPRI sites offer educational and work opportunities in many aspects of natural and cultural resources.



Platte River Corridor Initiative

The goal of the Platte River Corridor Initiative is to establish a conservation process founded on public participation and local initiative. Its aims include:

- ◆ Establishing local citizen working groups to deal with their unique resource issues.
- ◆ Planning for long term resource sustainability.
- ◆ Educating citizens about the Platte's ecosystem.
- ◆ Restoring and protecting the Platte Valley's native prairies.

Contribute to the mission of Prairie Plains Resource Institute by becoming a member. Members receive the *Prairie Plains Quarterly* and gain opportunities to participate in unique educational, recreational, and volunteer activities in diverse Nebraska landscapes. PPRI is a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Membership Categories are:

\$25-34 Bluestem
\$35-49 Goldenrod
\$50-99 Bobolink

\$100-499 Prairie Falcon
\$500-999 Bison
\$1000+ Golden Eagle

PRAIRIE PLAINS

RESOURCE INSTITUTE

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