

PRAIRIE PLAINS

QUARTERLY

Volume 3, Number 4: October - December, 2005



CELEBRATING THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE FOR 25 YEARS.

PRAIRIE PLAINS

RESOURCE INSTITUTE

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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 projects: **Ecological Restoration, Prairie Preserves, Education** and the **Platte River Corridor Initiative**.

PPRI Board of Directors: Colleen Babcock (Pres.), Dennis Ferguson, David Meyer (Treas.), Jack Potts, Mike Stewart (Secy.), and Charles L. Whitney, all from Aurora; Steve Rothenberger from Kearney; Carl Roberts from Columbus; Cliff Dill (V.P.) from Lincoln; Dolores Johnson from Schuyler; Mitzi Fox from Albion; Wayne Mollhoff from Ashland. There are presently four permanent staff members: William S. Whitney, Executive Director; Jan Whitney, Education and Publication Director; Mike Bullerman, Restoration Ecologist and Land Steward; and Amy Jones, Development Coordinator and Office Manager.

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 Jeanne Dill

Ernie & Lynda Ochsner with their grandchildren, Nadja and Colin Stamm,
enjoying the pumpkin carving station at the October 15 Harvest Festival
at Lincoln Creek Prairie & Trail.

Other photos by Prairie Plains staff unless indicated otherwise.

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Quarter Four:

Thoughts on Creating Opportunity

Jan Whitney

The photo below - and the story behind it - brought to mind our mission statement, which is : *Maintaining and restoring Nebraska ecosystems - creating opportunities for education, research, stewardship, and community development.*

The eager young fellow, fully outfitted in the gear of a Prairie Plains restoration biologist ready for a seed collecting mission, is Cale Jones, son of our development coordinator Amy Jones and Scott Jones. It was Career Day at the Aurora Elementary School, and all students were encouraged to wear the uniform of a job or career of their choosing.

Cale, being an avid Prairie Plains activity volunteer, didn't have to think twice about that one. He donned the shirt, the cap, the belt hooks and collecting bucket, and brought along a colorful variety of prairie seeds. According to his teacher, he delivered a very impressive presentation about prairie restoration to his second grade class.

We have dubbed Cale "the apprentice," in



Cale Jones as Prairie Plains restoration biologist.

memory of our old friend Norris Alfred, the late editor and publisher of *The Polk Progress*. Norris's weekly musings usually included commentary about the apprentice and assistant apprentice in the old letterpress print shop. They were the very young sons of his assistant, Barb. Norris undoubtedly created unique learning opportunities for his curious little helpers in Polk.

Similarly, we aim to create opportunities of all kinds for youngsters like Cale and Cameron (the assistant apprentice), hundreds of SOAR kids, and people of all ages who care to invest some time and energy into a positive future for the Prairie Plains region. This process is part of each of our four main projects:

The PPRI Network of Campuses - our system of seven land preserves - provides schools and whole communities with opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking, bird watching, and photography; and for education through SOAR, teacher workshops, and summer enrichment programs. Places like the Pearl Harbor Survivors Prairie give people a chance to see an historic prairie landscape, complete with a small herd of bison. The Olson Nature Preserve, the focus of this *PPQ's* Spotlight (see page 11) is a prime example of an outdoor classroom that has provided many opportunities for education, research, stewardship, and community development.

The restoration program offers members and others the chance to learn more about Nebraska's native plants and to participate in wetland and prairie plantings. It has also given agencies, organizations and individuals a way to have small tracts of land restored to native vegetation, saving soil and water and creating the ideal Nebraska landscape and wildlife habitat.

Beginning in 2000 the Platte Corridor Initiative (PCI) has opened up a new dimension of opportunity toward creating a sustainable resource future for the Platte River. The concept behind PCI (developed by Bill Whitney of Prairie Plains and John Heaston of The Nature Conservancy) is to lend assistance in creating and cultivating small-group initiative. This assistance begins with a social dimension - finding out what resource and devel-

opment issues people want to work on together, then facilitating through a process of defining the issue and finally creating workable solutions.

Two examples of successful working groups are PACE (see sidebar on this page) and the Platte PEER Group (People, Education, Environment & Recreation). The Platte PEER Group is a new non-profit organization which grew from a planning facilitation centered on how to manage two county-run parks along the Platte River between Hamilton and Merrick Counties. Both groups are involving people in *their* issues and both relate to social and economic resources of great importance. In fact Bader Park (one of the two parks managed by the PEER Group) ponds were created by gravel mining. Resource sustainability along the Platte River in the future depends on forging a common vision about the river, learning how to work together and understanding how things connect - like parks and mining! It's about information networking, vision and uniting people to work for a preferred future.

The fourth project - Education - stands alone as specific program development (e.g. SOAR and SOAR-like activities) but is also an integral part of all projects. Working with people in stewardship and restoration events including plantings, seed collecting, burning, and cedar and sumac attacks, and the exchange of information and understanding that takes place during the facilitated working groups of the Platte Corridor Initiative all include educational components.

We've spent almost 26 years so far creating opportunities. That has taken lots of time, effort, money, equipment and tools. You, our members, have made so much possible with your donations of dollars, equipment, and dollars for equipment. The trucks, trailers, shredders, 4-wheelers, combine, EZ Flows - all crucial to accomplishing our goals - have all been donated or partially financed by our members.

It is now time for the biggest tool ever, one that will dramatically benefit all Prairie Plains programs and boost our capacity to offer more new opportunities. It is the center we are planning to build at Griffith's. It will be a place to meet, to SOAR, to facilitate, to come in out of the rain - or

snow, to teach and learn, to brainstorm, to make music, to share warmth and meals, dreams and schemes. Hold on to that vision, spread the word, and look forward to being there!

■ PLATTE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

PACE Working Group at DC Conference

Bill Whitney of Prairie Plains Resource Institute, John Heaston of The Nature Conservancy's Platte River Project Office, and Carl Roberts of Lyman-Richey Corporation traveled to Washington D.C. to make a presentation at the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association's (NSSGA) Environment, Safety and Health Forum on October 11. The trio discussed PACE (Planning, Aggregates, Community and Environment), a working group comprised of representatives from the sand and gravel industry, conservation organizations, and government resource and planning agencies concerned with the Platte River. The objectives of PACE are to promote cooperative decision-making and effective communication between the various interests on the Platte River, to construct a workable plan for mining which encourages sustainable land use and benefits to people and wildlife, to create a participatory planning process to inform and involve the public, to develop an education and outreach plan for mining and conservation, to create a 25- and 50-year action plan for mining in the Platte Valley, and to produce a guide for self-regulation of the mining industry. The presentation on PACE was well received by representatives of the mining industry across the country, with interest shown by NSSGA officials regarding the potential to export the concept to other regions of the United States.

■ **PRESERVES**

■ **EDUCATION**

Fall Festival / SOAR for All Ages at Lincoln Creek Prairie & Trail

So many times we've been asked, "When are you going to have a SOAR for adults?!" Our first attempt to fill that request took place on October 15 - one gorgeous fall evening - at our Lincoln Creek site. Last year, we set up Aurora's first "Enchanted Trail" there, so we decided to combine that idea with some SOAR activities for all ages. These included presentations by Raptor Recovery Nebraska, a Sky Watch, Indian Games, a Stream Table, and a coyote station - all activities from SOAR '05. Then we threw in some pumpkin carving, some music and s'mores . . . the photos tell the rest of the story!



Jeanne Dill

First things first: Upon arrival at the Lincoln Creek Trail entrance, festival participants picked up a picnic lunch prepared by Fayne Petersen.



Jeanne Dill

The soothing tones of the hammer dulcimer played by Albion musician Paul Hosford created a wonderful atmosphere throughout the evening.



Jeanne Dill

A dozen young SOAR enthusiasts volunteered their time to help with every part of the festival - including Max Andersen, who is hauling one of presenter Eric Volden's props for the coyote station.



Jeanne Dill

Pumpkin carving was a big hit for all ages. Above, Allyson Wilson making the first cut; below, Nadja and Colin Stamm grinning approval of their Nana Lynda Ochsner's design.



Jeanne Dill



Jeanne Dill

Blake DeVries, delighted to pose with his new friends.



Jeanne Dill

Barb Tebbel from Raptor Recovery Nebraska prepares to release one of two recovered red-tailed hawks.

Raptor Recovery Nebraska (RRN) presentations are a tradition at SOAR. RRN is a statewide volunteer network that picks up injured or orphaned raptors and releases those successfully rehabilitated. RRN also presents educational programs on raptors throughout the state. Founded in 1976, it has to date rescued and treated over 5,000 raptors from across Nebraska. Nearly 50% have been released back to the wild, among the highest success rates in the country. Learn more:

raptorrecoveryne.org

?Fall Festival continued:



Bill Snyder

Above, Raptor Recovery Nebraska's Barb Tebbel and Denise Lewis release two red-tailed hawks; below, festival participants watching the just-released birds.



Jeanne Dill



Bill Snyder

Hiking the Lincoln Creek Trail to visit the various SOAR For All Ages stations.



Bill Snyder

Above, Denise Lewis with one of RRN's education owls; below, Indian games directed by Bruce Ramsour.



Jeanne Dill



Bill Snyder

Stream table presentation by Extension Educator Andrew Christiansen.



Jeanne Dill

Time for S'mores!



Jeanne Dill

Our Man-in-the-Moon Dennis Andrews - shown unmasked below - provided SOARers of all ages a great look at a nearly full moon.



Jeanne Dill



Jeanne Dill

And so begins another great Prairie Plains tradition. The 2006 Fall Festival is October 14 - so mark those calendars now!

■ **RESTORATION**

The Fall Harvest



Another Prairie Plains apprentice, Cy Bullerman, poses as seed harvester while his dad stops to document this sand lovegrass on a county road north-east of Central City.



Left and below, Mike Bullerman recording species and volume in mixes, Bill Whitney adding another species to the mountain of forb seed; Mike heading out on the ATV for more seeds.



Mert Griffith and Mike Bullerman harvesting at Pokorny Prairie.



■ PRAIRIE PRESERVES

■ EDUCATION

Preserve Spotlight:



Courtesy of Mitzi Fox

Grant and Berenice Olson,
circa 1930.

The Olson Nature Preserve (ONP), located in Boone County between Albion and Petersburg, joined the growing Prairie Plains "network of campuses" in March, 1995. Although we have covered many aspects of ONP in past issues of the *Journal* and *Quarterly*, it is worthwhile to revisit it all for this Preserve Spotlight.

Each preserve has its own unique history regarding how it came to Prairie Plains; none more fascinating than ONP. It all goes back to a most interesting pair: Grant J. Olson (1898-1978) and Berenice Swanson Olson (1898-1992). The couple, married in

1924, began purchasing land northwest of Albion in the thirties, when land was easily acquired. Eventually they accumulated 1,285 acres and 800 head of cattle.

The Olsons were private, conservative, intelligent, hard working, no-nonsense people. They had no children. Impressions of the pair are recorded in the "Grant Olson Memorial Set-aside: a Feasibility Study of the Development Potential of a Natural Resource Laboratory in Boone County," a.k.a. "Feasibility Study" by Norman Smith. From Jim Wolf, who knew Grant most of his life:

They had very few social activities. Their primary, almost sole focus was on their farm and cattle. Grant was a good farmer and businessman. He especially liked cattle and was an excellent caretaker and feedlot operator . . . His wife supported him in everything he wanted to do and seemed to enjoy it as much as he did . . . I think a word that describes Grant well is "spare." There was no spare flesh on his frame. He ate sparingly. He spoke sparingly with as few carefully chosen words as possible and with very precise diction and pronunciation . . . Perhaps as a result of the Depression and drought experiences, he was extremely frugal. He husbanded his resources to the utmost. In later years he mellowed. He and Berenice took some nice trips. He

became concerned about how best to leave his estate. He sincerely wanted to leave his money for constructive purposes, a goal I believe his will accomplished.

The Olsons' will named four entities as recipients of the bulk of their considerable estate, including cash and real estate: The Mid-America Council of the Boy Scouts of America and the Prairie Hills Girl Scout Council of Nebraska – due to Grant's long-term interest in scouting; the Public School District of Albion, Nebraska to provide vocational education and training loans to high school graduates in five counties; and Immanuel, Inc. of Omaha to provide loans for student nurses. Grant had been very pleased with the care that Berenice received at Immanuel Hospital for a hip fracture.

Prior to the beneficiaries' decision to sell the land, Norman Smith, retired teacher from Albion, spearheaded an effort to have a portion of the land set aside for educational, preservation, and historical purposes for future generations. He was joined in his efforts by a number of set-aside supporters from Albion and Petersburg. Norm directed the extensive "Feasibility Study" prepared for the four beneficiaries that was published in May, 1994. This remarkable document includes information about the Olsons, the land resource, the history, and the process of finding a suitable institution to hold the land. Its purpose was to conduct research and demonstrate that this property was indeed a unique historical and natural site worthy of being set aside as an

outdoor classroom, serving the Olsons' intent to do something for the education of youth as stated in their will.

A number of organizations were contacted with respect to possible ownership and management of the land, including the Nebraska Historical Society, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Fontenelle Forest Association, The Nature Conservancy, and The Land Trust Alliance. During the course of this search, Donna Smith, Norm's wife, came across a newspaper clipping she had saved – one of Tom Allen's *Omaha World-Herald* columns circa 1982 about an Aurora couple, their yard full of prairie plants, and an organization they had just started. Donna wondered if they



Norm Smith addressing crowd at the dedication of the bridge and Preserve on June 17, 2000.

were still around. A phone call was made. On March 17, 1993, Bill Whitney and then board member Orvin Bontrager met with Norm and toured the proposed set-aside area with a group of local Olson land enthusiasts. The two Aurorans were impressed, to say the least. The process of transforming a proposed set-aside into the Olson Nature Preserve shifted into high gear.

The four beneficiaries unanimously agreed to the set-aside and everything else fell into place. Two conditions required by Prairie Plains were met: that there would be established an active, responsible group of local people who could be relied upon to do the maintenance and development work required; and that an endowment fund be established for maintenance and development of the site in accordance with the Institute's purposes. At the same time, while the

Institute would assume ownership of the land, the local group with intense interest in the preserve - and that had put forth so much effort to ensure that it *would* be preserved - would still retain a degree of autonomy.

ONP consists of 77 acres owned by Prairie Plains, with an additional 35 acres leased from Niewohner Farms – a total of 112 acres of prime educational preserve. It lies at the easternmost tip of the Sandhills and includes more than a half-mile stretch of Beaver Creek, a perennial spring-fed stream that forms the geological boundary between the Sandhills and the rolling loess hardlands to the east. Besides the Beaver, ONP's natural assets include a cottonwood grove (eagle roosting site), wetlands, lowland and Sandhills prairie, oak forest covering an extensive east-facing escarpment, and a sandy blowout and gully area.



The sign marking the ONP entrance is a steel plasma-torched silhouette created by Craig Sallach and Lee Daniels, under the supervision of Dave Olson, Boone Central agriculture instructor. The logo, which also appears on ONP publications and T-shirts, was created by 1998 logo contest winner Jordan Bonge (below) when she was a sixth grader.



Courtesy of Jordy Bonge

Adding to ONP's natural features is its scenic beauty – especially the big landscapes as viewed from the hilltop. Looking east it's Beaver Creek and the surrounding agricultural lands. Turn around and you take in the open vista of the Nebraska Sandhills.

The historical landscape is just as captivating. Looking down over the creek, it's not hard to visualize the tragic story of Logan Fontenelle, or White Horse, a chief of the Omaha people. In 1855, during a severe drought and food shortage, an Omaha tribe including White Horse traveled southwest to hunt for elk and buffalo along Beaver Creek. It was near or on ONP that White Horse was ambushed and killed by a Sioux war party that was hunting the same area.

Prairie Plains is responsible for maintaining and improving the ecological condition of ONP. Toward that end, we have conducted two prescribed burns, in 1998 and 2002. Burning has improved the prairie areas by keeping bluegrass, smooth brome and woody species in check and by stimulating the growth of warm season native grasses. There have also been work days devoted to musk thistle and weed tree removal.

ONP is a valuable seed source for Prairie Plains. We collect several Sandhills species there as well as wetland plants sweetflag, swamp milkweed and bur reed. Collecting seed at ONP is a pleasant pastime that, during summer months, includes the bonus of interacting with Summer Research students.

Once this acreage of Olson estate became the Olson Nature Preserve, the people now known as the ONP Stewards went right to work. The original group included Ted and Ramona Thieman and Carol Eischied from Petersburg; Norm Smith, Mitzi Fox, Mitch Osborn and Dick Ronnenkamp from Albion; Mark Seier from Newman Grove, Brenda Siems from Elgin and Bill

text continued on page 17



Norman Smith receiving the 2004 Charles L. Whitney Award for Outstanding Service to PPRI for his work on ONP. With Norm is his wife and co-worker, Donna. Presenting the honor are Prairie Plains Directors Bill and Jan Whitney. Norm, who directed the "Olson Set-Aside Feasibility Study," has also served on the Prairie Plains Board of Directors.



Mitch Osborn, Boone Central secondary biology teacher, has blazed trails at ONP in more ways than one. He has initiated, directed and taught in several successful programs, including Summer Research for area high school students.



Science teacher Mark Seier has kept Newman Grove Schools involved with ONP. He has team directed Summer Research and many other activities at the Preserve. Here, he's teaching at SOAR '05.

People with a Passion for ONP



Left, Mitzi Fox, tireless ambassador for ONP and Prairie Plains, also serves on the Board. Mitzi has devoted countless hours as an ONP tour guide, presenter and steward. Right, science teacher Carol Eischeid led Petersburg Schools' (now part of Boone Central) use of ONP. She supervised the production of the ONP Newsletter, and has directed and taught in several programs including Summer Research and ESU7 AgSci Environment Day.

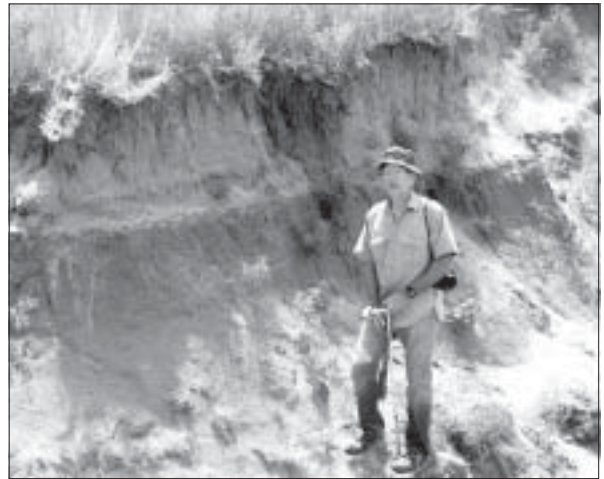


Courtesy of Ted Thieman

Ted and Ramona Thieman from Petersburg can always be found at ONP when there's work to be done. Their ONP resumé includes installing the entry gate, erecting the sign, photography, fencing and de-fencing, mowing, access road improvement supervision, mowing, shelter building, mowing, hauling water, Porta-John project directing, and . . . did we mention mowing?



Quentin Mortensen (1922-2002), involved in the scouting program for many years, was an early champion of ONP. He is shown below at the June 17, 2000 dedication. His sons started a fund in his name for the benefit of the Preserve.



Wayne Mollhoff has served as geology presenter for several ONP events. A Prairie Plains board member, Wayne also has "an inordinate fondness for birds." Check out the May, 2004 issue of *Nebraskaland*.

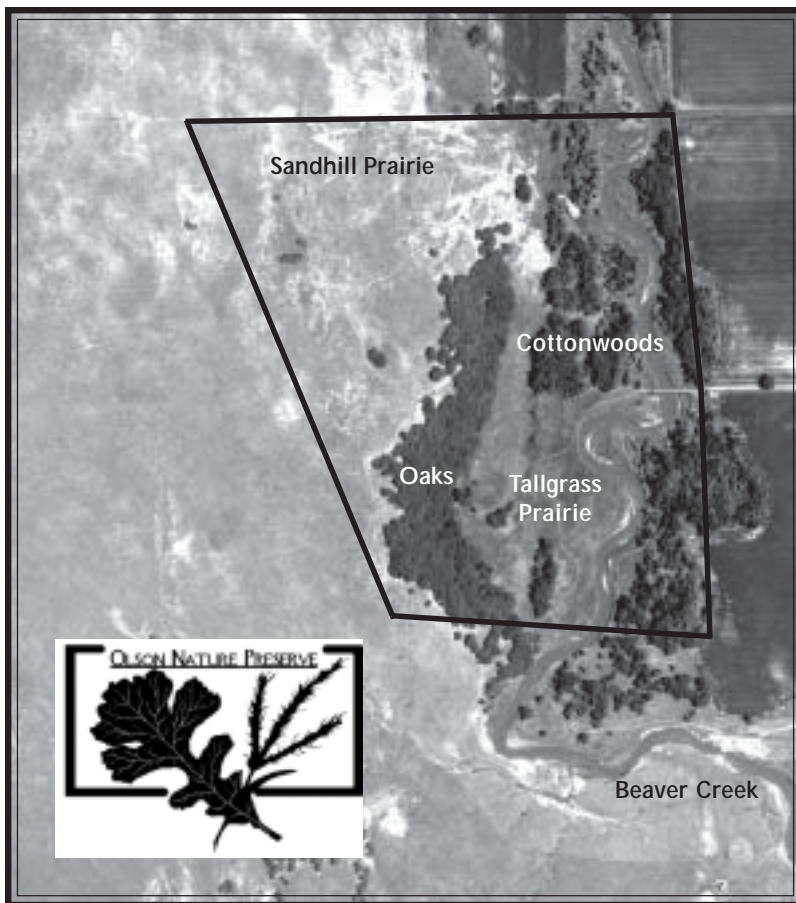
There are many others who have been dedicated ONP stewards and teachers. Although we regret the inability to do justice to all of them, we celebrate the fact that we have such a problem!

Perhaps the most important people involved with ONP are the young students who have become avid researchers, tour guides, and presenters. ONP is making a lasting impact on their lives. Below left, Dori Porter (center front), now a UNL entomology student, and (left) Andrea Kruse conducted tours during one of the ESU7 AgSci Environment Days. Dori also assisted with aquatic insect studies at SOAR '05. Below right, Shane Osborn (front) and Calvin Frey were two of a dozen Summer Research students from Boone Central and Newman Grove that presented the Turtle Telemetry sessions at SOAR '05.





Beaver Creek is a perennial spring-fed stream originating in the Sandhills south of Bassett. At ONP it is the boundary between Sandhills and the harder loess hills to the east.



At the north end of ONP's sandhills is a deep eroded gully. Above, in 1995; below, the upper reach of the gully in 2001 rapidly healing in with prairie growth.



Left, swamp milkweed in the oxbow wetland near the north boundary of ONP. Right, rank lowland cordgrass along Beaver Creek.



Whitney representing Prairie Plains. The Stewards organized maintenance and development activities, group tours and workshops for scout leaders, teachers, and other community leaders. In these past eleven years they have planned and overseen major improvements including the entry gate and sign, access road work, shelter and bridge.

It didn't take long for teachers from area schools to take advantage of the outdoor learning opportunities made possible by ONP. School administrators including recently retired



Josh Bernt is one of many Summer Research students who have benefitted from ONP Summer Research, a program which has given students the opportunity to participate in real and meaningful math and science research.

Superintendent of Boone Central Schools Dick Stephens have also been supportive of school involvement. Mr. Stephens was instrumental in the establishment of the Preserve, and facilitated the funding of school activities there. The Albion Education Foundation, through which Olson funds for students are directed, has been generous in supporting school activities at ONP.

The first official program developed for ONP was the annual Junior High Summer Enrichment camp that began in 1996. It was made

possible by a grant written by the late Duane Backstrom, then Albion secondary principal. It was funded by the East Central Nebraska

Math & Science Coalition and was first taught by Cheri Blocher (language arts), Randy Howell (art), Pat Cleveland (science) and Lonnie Zrust (social studies). Others have come on board in the years since - including Mitch Osborn and Mike Blocher.

Mitch Osborn developed and directs, with Mark Seier, the annual Summer Research Program for area high school students. The first phase of the program



Lonnie Zrust, now retired Boone Central social studies teacher, has been a presenter for many events at ONP. We especially enjoy his pioneer cookery!



ONP weather station created in 1998 by Pat Cleveland's science class in Albion. Weather measurements were transmitted to receivers mounted outside Mr. Cleveland's classroom.



Courtesy of Trina Simons

Teachers Trina Simons and Ginger Bygland and students from Boone County District 57 & 60 thoroughly enjoyed their first visit to ONP on September 30, 2005.

began in 1997 and focused on the inventory of ONP flora. To date, over 350 specimens of plants have been collected, identified, photographed and archived. A duplicate of each specimen has been donated to Chadron State College for permanent storage in their herbarium. Summer Research has continued every year since, and has included studies in GPS technology to map various ecosystems of the preserve; a Beaver Creek fish inventory; bioanalysis of wetlands; stream chemistry; small mammal inventory and distribution; a bumble bee study that was part of a UNL Nebraska Bumble Boosters project; and the ongoing oak grove and water quality studies and Ornate Box Turtle study including the use of telemetry equipment.

The Summer Enrichment and Summer Research programs set an early example for many other teachers and schools that followed suit, establishing regular outdoor education events. There is an ongoing day camp for 5th graders, the ONP Science Adventure, involving several schools and taught by Mitch Osborn, Tom Dickey and Cheryl Sherburne. There is a spring and fall Boone Central sophomore chemistry & English project taught by Cheri Blocher and Mary Christensen. ONP is also one of the sites used for the annual spring AgSci Environment Day, directed by Carol Eischied and Mitch Osborn.

Subjects covered by all these programs have included dozens of activities in science, math, language arts, history and art; Global Positioning System (GPS) training; a Digital Entrepreneurship workshop incorporating nature photography, software training, layout and design and business skills; and

even a course in journalism: the "ONP Newsletter" was first produced in 1995 in Petersburg, under the direction of Carol Eischied and her environmental

science class. It was published by Lisa Carder's journalism students and distributed by Prairie Plains. Two issues, spring and fall, were published each year through 2000.

Grant Olson's desire to have the Boy and Girl Scouts involved with the land has not been neglected. Scouts have participated as students and explorers *and* they have contributed significantly to the stewardship and development of the preserve. The Prairie Hills Girl Scouts, under the direction of Joann Ward, purchased the picnic shelter for



Sentinel picnic shelter purchased for ONP by the Prairie Hills Girl Scouts.



Fire-suited Bill Whitney crossing Beaver Creek with mower on April 20, 1998 - before there was a bridge. It was the first burn of the prairie at ONP to discourage invasive bluegrass, brome, and shrub seedlings.



Steel benches built by Eagle Scout Bill Kusek.

ONP. The 20' x 30' steel shelter was designed and fabricated by Sentinel Building systems, and was erected with generous assistance from Sentinel's Mike Schutte in October, 2004. Many volunteers were on hand for the event, including Boy and Girl Scouts, Boone Central students and ONP Stewards.

Four Eagle Scout projects have been completed, including trail development by Drew Bonge, cedar tree removal by Jareth Kaup, steel benches by Bill Kusek and rocking in the area under the shelter by Brad Christo.

Use and enjoyment of ONP has not been limited to scouts and students. People of various ages and backgrounds have worked for the betterment of the preserve - mowing trails, eradicating musk thistles and making major



Bridge construction, October, 1999. The bridge made the best parts of ONP readily accessible. It was made possible by the Albion Education Foundation, with funds from the Olson estate.



The ONP bridge is literally a gateway for discovering the diversity and beauty of the preserve.

improvements including the shelter and bridge. ONP has been a destination for School at the Center, Boone County Health Center's "Walk with the Docs," the Nebraska Writing Project Rural Institute and a Nebraska Statewide Arboretum tour. A long-anticipated "Enchanted Trail" event for all ages brought 325 people to ONP on October 16, 2004. And SOAR finally made it to ONP for two wonderful days just last summer.

Prairie Plains celebrates "the land and its people." This connection is one of the most remarkable accomplishments of ONP. A growing association of teachers, school administrators, students, scouts, bird watchers and others have emerged who study, hike, write about, take care of and love this little stretch of land handed down by Grant and Berenice Olson. The coming together of people from various walks of life through a common interest in this land is impressive and encouraging. It began with Norm Smith and his small band of supporters. Now there's an entire orchestra! Although Prairie Plains is the official owner of the property, ONP truly belongs to everyone who shares in the boundless vision of its future.

■ PRAIRIE PRESERVES

■ EDUCATION

Annual Bader Park December Bird Hike



Above, the Platte River in winter - a crispness of ice, blue water and blue sky. Below, hikers Jerry Jacobs, Colleen Babcock, Virginia White and Bill Whitney listening for bird sounds. Right, Cale Jones and Bill Whitney testing the ice thickness (carefully!). Below right, a still-fluffy seed head of goldenrod.



2006 Calendar of Events

Bader Park Natural Area Tours

Tours begin at Bader Park, 3 miles south of Chapman, NE

- February 25**(with breakfast following), and **March 4**, at 7:00 a.m.
- April 29 (with breakfast following) at 6:00 a.m., **May 6** at 7:00 a.m.
- June 17, September 10, October 21** at 9:00 a.m.-
- December 16**, Winter Bird Hike at 9:00 a.m. followed by lunch in Aurora-

Volunteer Opportunities

- February 11** – Cedar Attack at Griffith Prairie with meal following-
- March 25** - ONP Cedar Attack-
- April 8** – Prescribed burn at Bader Park, wind conditions permitting-
- April 22** – Volunteer prairie planting-
- July 29** – Sumac Attack at Ratzlaff Prairie-
- Dates TBA** – Prairie seed collecting-

Sioux County Ranch Weekend

June 9-11

SOAR in Aurora

Week One: **July 10-14**, Week Two: **July 17-21**

Big Bend SOAR

Kearney: **June 19-22**, Minden: **June 26-29**

More Red Letter Dates

- April 28** – Prairie Plains Open House at the office in Aurora-
- May 26** – Annual Festival at Griffith Prairie –
- June 3** - Wildflower Week ONP activity
- June 23-25** – A'Ror'N Days Hikes at Lincoln Creek and Griffith Prairie-
- July 1** – SOAR for All Ages – ½ day at Griffith Prairie-
- July 8** - Boone County Chatauqua Family Day at ONP-
- September 10** – FAMFest Hike at Griffith Prairie-
- October 14** – Fall Festival with Enchanted Trail/Cookout at Lincoln Creek-

July 23-26 - North American Prairie Conference

TBA Pearl Harbor Survivors evening picnic/reception, **July 24**,

- July 25** - conference field trip possibilities include PPRI's Griffith Prairie and Farm, Lincoln Creek, Ratzlaff Prairie and ONP preserves on Tuesday-
- after July 26** - TBA, a possible post-conference bus excursion through the sandhills to PPRI's Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch in Sioux County-

2007

January 1, Annual New Year's Day Hike on Griffith Prairie, 1:00 p.m.

January 13, 2007 – Annual Membership Meeting

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

Quarter 4 Thank-yous

Mert Griffith for many hours of
combining seed
Platte River Trust for allowing us to harvest
seed on their land
Tim Carlson / Aurora COOP for three old
tractor wheels for use as fire rings
Jim Senn for one fanning mill
Joel Hansen for seed collecting - 19 spe-
cies, 10 acres worth
Jeff Hohn for 5 gallons of leadplant seed

PPRI Wish List Update

laptop computer for field use (at least a
Pentium 3/ Windows 98, 3.5" floppy
drive, CD drive, serial port)
picnic tables
chainsaw sharpener
steel and wooden posts
Utility ATV (Mule, Ranger or Gator)
Skid steer (i.e., Bobcat)
Good farmyard tractor with loader,
grapple and 3-point hitch with PTO
Pickup truck

- PPRIs Properties - A Network of Campuses

Sioux County Ranch

Guadalupe Memorial Prairie

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

Olson Nature Preserve

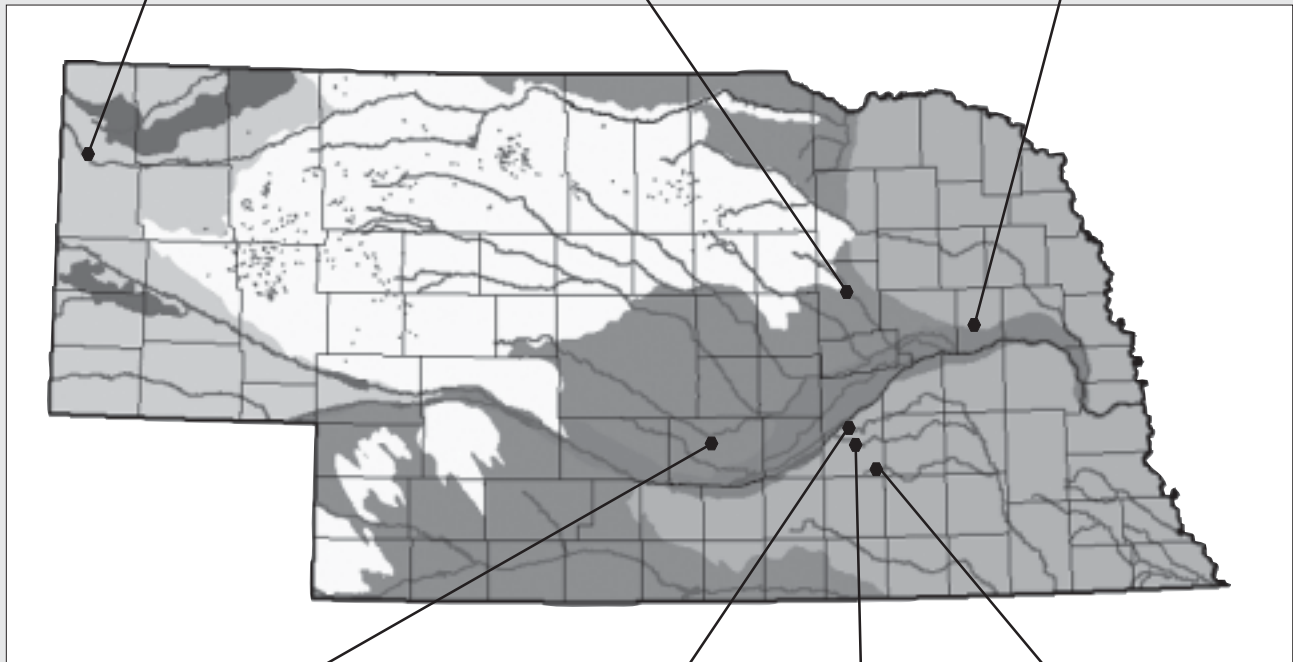
Boone County

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 Project Areas:



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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Non-profit Org.

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