

PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



Sherman Ranch, Thanksgiving Day, 2018. Photo by Ernest Ochsner.

The Prairie Plains Year: As December rolls around, it's time to reflect back on notable 2018 accomplishments.

Education: It was an exceptional year for all of our regular annual programs and activities, including the New Year's Day hike at Gjerloff Prairie, the fifth run of the Youth Naturalist Program; SOAR's 27th flight; regular public tours of Bader Park, Sherman Ranch and Gjerloff Prairie; Winter Explore days at Bader Park and Sherman Ranch; the Fun Run at Gjerloff Prairie; Sioux County Ranch Trek; Olson Nature Preserve Summer Enrichment and ONP Experience programs in May and August (thanks to a dedicated cadre of Boone County teachers); the Aurora 7th-graders' September field day at Gjerloff Prairie and more education/work days with the Nebraska Christian High School greenhouse class. This year we began a similar partnership with a Boone Central High School class (details in August-



Sarah Bailey instructing Boone Central High School students at Gjerloff Prairie. An increasing number of area schools are scheduling Prairie Plains field days for students to learn more about prairies and ecological restoration.

September *Link*). We hosted more high school and college field days than in prior years as well, where students learned about prairies and ecological restoration. We look forward to a completed Education Center adding substantially to what we can offer these students.

In addition to the above regularly scheduled events, we led a tour of Sherman Ranch as part of the Nebraska Science Festival, and a field trip including Bader Park, Dark Island Trail, Gjerloff Prairie and Sherman Ranch, for "Plains Safaris: a Conference on Tourism and Conservation in the Great Plains." Details about these events appeared in the April *Prairie Plains Link*.

This year we added the first annual "Planets, Perseids & Prairie" - a.k.a. the "star party" - in August at Gjerloff Prairie. There were 70+ people in attendance, who enjoyed wonderful views of the prairie, tours of the Education Center and an excellent presentation (Perseids Primer) by Edgerton Explorit Center's Senior Educator/Mad Scientist Dan Glomski prior to the grand finale sky show.



NEWSLETTER
November 2018

2018 notable accomplishments, continued:

The creation and installation of a Sherman Ranch Trails sign, along with trail markers, was a great improvement for public use of Sherman Ranch, thanks to Ben Olsufka and his Eagle Scout project. Details appeared in the October *Link*.

Ecological Restoration: Mike Bullerman, Restoration Director, reported an outstanding harvest, with 226 species of grasses, sedges and forbs collected. Hand-harvested forbs and minor grasses totaled 3,640 gallons and combine-harvested grass seed yielded 5,740 gallons. That all amounted to 1,000-1,300 acres worth of high diversity seed mix.

We've planted 344 acres, including 23 project sites in 16 counties, with 100 acres still on the slate for this year. We've also provided 85 acres worth of high diversity, local ecotype seed mix to partner organizations for numerous projects in central and eastern Nebraska. Since 1980 we've planted 12,293 acres on 248 project sites in 57 Nebraska counties.

Sarah Bailey kept the greenhouse operation at maximum capacity (and then some) this year, growing seedlings for numerous pollinator habitat plantings all over central and eastern Nebraska. She is working with a Nebraska Game & Parks Commission project to restore habitat in existing prairie landscapes, specifically to increase availability of prairie violets for populations of regal fritillary butterflies. So far she has provided 287 violet seedlings; over 900 are to be grown for 2019 plantings. In addition, over 2,000 seedlings of various species were distributed to several other organizations/projects. Some of these were transplanted into a tree-cleared area of Sherman Ranch and a 2013 restoration at Gjerloff Prairie - thanks to the Nebraska Christian High School greenhouse class and other volunteers. Over 2,500 seedlings will be carried over for 2019 plantings, and more are being planted right now.

Land Stewardship: We have emphasized all year the critical need to combat invasive woody vegetation - especially cedar trees - throughout the Great Plains, and Land Steward Jeff Gustafson has been constantly on task with just that on our properties, on contracted service rangeland sites in Clay County and rainwater basins in York, Hamilton and Seward Counties.

Besides the tree work and fence maintenance at Gjerloff Prairie and Sherman Ranch, prescribed burns were completed at Sherman, Gjerloff, Bader Park and Deep Well State Wildlife Management Area.



Sarah Bailey presented a program for Wachiska Audubon Society members in Lincoln on November 8. She is pictured receiving, on behalf of Prairie Plains, the Edwin & Elvina Lyman Environmental Stewardship Award. THANK YOU, Wachiska Audubon!

Other 2018 notables:

- The January 27 fundraiser held in Lincoln brought in \$10,000 for general operations.
- Mike Bullerman added two drones to his tool box, adding "real time high resolution landscape analyst" to his job title. Refer to the February *Link* for an explanation of what that means - and learn about applications for drone imagery.
- *Prairie Plains Link* continued to be published monthly (well, almost; there was that printer breakdown) in order to keep members and the general public informed of our mission and activities - and also to keep a detailed record of our work for the archives. A new printer has made that a considerably easier task. The newsletters can be found on our website; on the prairieplains.org home page, under "About Us," click "Resources," then "Newsletters."
- Our website was upgraded with an entirely new format. We can now post videos and offer online registration for our events.
- Our greenhouse manager and naturalist-educator Sarah Bailey married Alex Briner on a beautiful September day at Gjerloff Prairie!
- Prairie Plains received two awards in 2018: the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project Award for "leadership and dedication to conserving Nebraska's prairies and biodiversity" (September) and the Edwin & Elvina Lyman Environmental Stewardship Award, presented by the Population and Environment Committee of the Wachiska Audubon Society (November - see photo, left).



November scenes from the Hubbell Farm in Clay County, where we have been working most of the year clearing cedar and locust trees - thanks to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). From left, cottonwoods/native rangeland fall scenery; piles of cedars being cleared from upland range; purple poppy mallow plants that were exposed on an eroding bank of the Little Blue River. The long (and edible) taproots enable this hearty native plant - which in the summertime displays beautiful, fragrant blooms - to tolerate drought. Jan recalls purple poppy mallow and buffalograss thriving in the large front yard of the farmstead years ago!

Prairie Plains Resource Institute is approaching the end of its foundation-building era. Our 40th year begins on April 29, 2019.

Thus far we have acquired beautiful and diverse land preserves, restored over 12,000 acres of prairie and served the public, especially youth, with a variety of memorable experiences along the Platte River and in other Nebraska landscapes. We have documented a rich history, much of which is online (<http://www.prairieplains.org/about/resources/prairie-plains-newsletters.html>), that chronicles our accomplishments as well as many of the people with whom we have worked over these many years.

The completion of the Education Center will mark the beginning of a new era of expanding outreach and program development, with an emphasis on the most important conservation issues in the Great Plains. In the coming year we will be concentrating on raising the funds to complete the Center; the final projects include the formal south entry patio, elevator, upstairs restroom tiling, floors and finish. We will be needing contributions and contacts who would be interested in seeing the building and learning more about our mission.

We have built a solid foundation, thanks to the support of members and friends over the years, and we'll need that more than ever as we go through this major transition. As usual, it's the time of year for our appeal for general support in the form of a year-end gift or membership renewal. Also, if you need to make a qualified IRA distribution please consider Prairie Plains!

As past board member Dolores Johnson pointed out, unrestricted general fund gifts are the highest form of giving because they convey trust in our judgment to use the money wisely. These are the funds which balance the operating budget so we can pay the bills and the top-notch staff we have!

Thanks so much for your generous support!

Below - What November looks like at Prairie Plains restoration headquarters as we prepare for the 2019 season: seed processing, mixing, and a freshly cleaned and organized greenhouse!



Announcing
Prairie Plains Resource Institute's
2019 Annual Meeting of Members
Saturday, January 19, 2019
Marquette Community Center
302 Marquis Avenue, Marquette, NE
1:00-3:00 p.m.
Refreshments served following the meeting.

Please watch newsletters and social media for additions and changes:

Prairie Plains 2019 Calendar of Events

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| JANUARY | 1 - New Year's Day Hike at Gjerloff Prairie, 1 p.m.
19 - Annual Meeting of Members, 1-3 p.m.,
Marquette Community Center |
| FEBRUARY | 23 - Bader Park Tour, 7 a.m. |
| MARCH | 2 - Sherman Ranch Hike, 7 a.m.
9 - Bader Park Tour, & a.m. |
| APRIL | 27 - Bader Park Tour, 7 a.m. |
| MAY | 4 - Bader Park Tour, 7 a.m.
18 - Gjerloff Prairie Hike, 9 a.m. |
| JUNE | 1 - Prairie Plains Fun Run at Gjerloff Prairie, 9 a.m.
8 - Sioux County Ranch Trek
15 - Bader Park Tour, 9 a.m.
17-21 - Youth Naturalist Program |
| JULY | Weeks of July 8 and 15 - SOAR |
| SEPTEMBER | 7 - Bader Park Tour, 9 a.m. |
| OCTOBER | 12 - Bader Park Tour, 9 a.m. |
| NOVEMBER | 9 - Bader Park Tour, 9 a.m. |
| DECEMBER | 7 - Winter Bird Hike at Bader Park, 9:00 a.m. |

2020

- January 1 - New Year's Day Hike at Gjerloff Prairie, 1 p.m.
 January 18 - Annual Meeting of Members

PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK
 is a publication of



**Preserving, restoring and maintaining
 Nebraska native prairies -
 Creating opportunities for education,
 research, stewardship and place-
 based community development.**

Prairie Plains Resource Institute is an educational land trust incorporated in 1980 as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization based in Aurora, Nebraska.

Board of Directors:

- Tom Emerton (Cairo)
- Dwayne Braun (St. Joseph, MO)
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- Carol Bodeen (Maxwell)
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- Amy Jones, Admin. Director
- Mike Bullerman, Restoration Director and GIS Specialist
- Sarah Bailey, Greenhouse Manager, Youth Naturalist Program Director and Restoration Assistant
- Jeff Gustafson, Land Steward and Restoration Assistant
- Jan Whitney, Publications Editor and SOAR Coordinator

**Learn more and
 become a member:**

www.prairieplains.org
 (and follow us on Facebook,
 Instagram and Twitter!)

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Prairie Plains on social media:

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 Instagram and Twitter!**

Approaching Events:

Bader Park Winter Bird Hike -
Saturday, Dec. 8, 9 a.m.

Includes holiday brunch!

New Year's Day Hike at Gjerloff
Prairie - 1 p.m.

Annual Meeting of Members -
Saturday, Jan. 19 in Marquette

**Are you a member? Prairie Plains depends on the contributions of its members to fulfill its mission!
 Please sign up or renew your membership today on our website:
<http://www.prairieplains.org/get-involved/become-a-member.html>**