

# On the Land



**Burned out:** Due to unusual spring weather conditions this was the longest burn season with fewest burns on record. It came to a close at the Frank L. and Lillian Pokorny Memorial Prairie in Colfax County on May 17.



One more link in the chain of progress toward our goal of an Education Center: Well drilling on May 25.



The big land project for April, May and June is fencing in 80 acres of the northwest corner of Griffith Prairie in preparation for grazing. Staff and volunteers have spent hours on the four-strand barbed wire fence. Members & staff pictured are above, Dale Carlson, Cale Jones and Bill Whitney; and below, Jerry Jacobs (blue hat) and Jim Barr (red hat). Jim also ran electric fencing around the Center (Barn) to exclude cattle from that area.



## Third Annual Festival at Griffith Prairie

...didn't happen! It was yet another victim of exceptionally turbulent and unpredictable weather. Please stay tuned for news of an alternative event. Thanks to everyone that looked forward to the Festival as much as we did for their understanding and generosity.



### Spring Plantings 2007

Yanney Park in Kearney	17 ac
Bush Island adjacent to Griffith Prairie	115 ac
Ponca State Park, Dixon Co.	50 ac
Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co.	32 ac



The anticipation is growing day by day and both camps - Big Bend in Minden and Kearney in June and Aurora in July - are filling quickly.

In Aurora we'll be SOARING to a theme of "Stories" and look forward to hearing some Native American tales from a favorite SOAR presenter, Matthew "Sitting Bear" Jones - and from Sibby LeBeau, who will appear for the first time at the camp.

We'll also be delving into stories about the Platte, the weather, our agricultural heritage, and the story of reptiles with new presenter David Nieves (see reptilesupclose.com).

We're also excited to bring on board another new presenter originally from Aurora, Liza Tredway, who will work with SOAR campers on creative (and dramatic) ways to tell a story.

Altogether there are over 25 different activities planned, including natural and physical science, history, art, language arts, agriculture - and just plain having fun. And it's not just kids having the fun anymore - Be sure to check out SOAR FOR ALL AGES!



Neal and Izen Ratzlaff at the 2005 Prairie Plains Annual Meeting of Members.

## A Fond Farewell

Longtime Prairie Plains member Izen Ratzlaff died on May 29 at the age of 69, ending a lengthy struggle with cancer. Neal and Izen donated the Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve to Prairie Plains in 1989; their son, Mark, created the architectural model of the Prairie Plains Education Center.

Izen was a nurse, an artist, a mother, and an especially bright person with many interests. She is best remembered by her family and many friends as a class act; a woman of remarkable courage and perseverance.



More to be excited about: Prairie Plains member Don Reeves has offered SOAR access to this beautiful property as a new outdoor classroom. The site, rich in natural and cultural history, is a mile and a half square, located in eastern Howard County along Rock Creek.



Fred will be looking for you at SOAR for All Ages on June 30th. Turn page for more info!



**THANKS!**



A great big Thank You to our apprentice, 9-year-old Cale Jones, and his dad, Scott, for many hours of mowing at Lincoln Creek over the last several weeks. Learn more about the apprentice at [prairieplains.org](http://prairieplains.org) in the blog section (Amy's & Jan's).

Thank you to:  
 -Espressions for the great coffee at our open house April 27th;  
 -Jim Barr for fencing services including setting up a section of electric fence around the Center (Barn) at Griffith Prairie;  
 -Additional dedicated fencing volunteers Steve Anderson, Colleen Babcock, Dale & Pat Carlson, Cliff Dill, Jerry Jacobs, Cale & Scott Jones, Jerry Jacobs and Chuck Whitney.



Just for fun . . . We've dubbed this structure located along Highway 14 south of Central City the "Smiley Barn."

**Approaching Events**

**Saturday, June 16**  
**Bader Park Natural Area Hike**  
 9:00 a.m.

**Saturday, June 30**  
**SOAR FOR ALL AGES**  
**Flight 2**

It's Mom & Dad's turn to SOAR! Enjoy a morning at Griffith Prairie with a taste of SOAR activities including a pair of entertaining storytellers; some farm history with Skip Meyer, and "Raccoons R Us!" on the Platte. Details including registration form can be found at [prairieplains.org](http://prairieplains.org) or just give Jan a call: 402-694-5535 or [janppri@hamilton.net](mailto:janppri@hamilton.net)

**Big Bend SOAR:**  
 Kearney June 18-21  
 Minden June 25-28  
 More info:

**SOAR Aurora**  
 July 9-13 & July 16-20  
 More info: [prairieplains.org](http://prairieplains.org)

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monthly newsletter of



May, 2007

**Sandy Creek Students Explore Bader Park Natural Area**

Every May a small flock of energetic third graders migrates north-west some 45 miles from their school in Clay County to spend a morning at Bader Park. This year's group was exceptionally delightful, so happy to be outside on a beautiful spring day, May 9th.

Highlights of our morning included a hands-on study of an ornate box turtle (affectionately named Fred), spotted and rescued from the middle of the road to Bader the day before; newly arrived Bobolinks with their unique, chattering song; Tree Swallows catching insects; horsetail, or "puzzleweed," as the youngsters like to call it; the delicate Yellow Stargrass; and a great view of the Platte - with water this time!

Thanks to Jeanette Shaw and others at Sandy Creek for keeping this program going, and to these exuberant third graders for a wonderful day.

Late May brought blossoms galore to our preserves. Mike Bullerman has documented these at Griffith Prairie.



Shell-leaf penstemon  
*(Penstemon grandiflorus)*



Ragwort (with native bee)  
*(Senecio plattensis)*



Prairie violet  
*(Viola pedatifida)*



Field pussytoes  
*(Antennaria neglecta)*



Catching - and releasing - Rocky Mountain toads is always on this field day agenda.



Fred found a new home, with a little help from his friends.

