

PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



Ninth Annual Prairie Plains Fun Run, June 1: It was a most fitting way to kick off our summer programs. Fifty participants ran, hiked or strolled the course; a gentler pace allowed time to enjoy the wildflowers along the way. Above - Dylan Grundman and Megan O'Neill from Lincoln captured the spirit of the event with their big smiles and a thumbs up while cruising the prairie bluffs overlooking the Platte. Below, right - Repeat Fun Runners, helpers and T-shirt models Maira Phillips and Ava Bullerman.



NEWSLETTER
June-July, 2019

Weather or Not

It's always the most challenging (and exciting) time of year with our annual programs (Fun Run, Ranch Trek, Youth Naturalist Program and SOAR) - along with the start of a new harvesting and stewardship cycle. This year the weather has had a greater-than-usual effect on all of our work. The cool, wet (and flooding) spring delayed plantings as well as the harvest schedule. According to Restoration Director Mike Bullerman, it has also had an impact on seed production in a number of species.

Fortunately, the Fun Run and Sioux County Ranch Trek were blessed with decent weather; however, the Youth Naturalist Program and SOAR made us masters of Plan B (and C) to stay afloat. Check out the YNP/SOAR insert to see how we *did* manage to pull it all off!



Sioux County Ranch Trek 2019

A small but enthusiastic group gathered for the annual high plains event on Saturday, June 8. The Ranch Trek offers the opportunity for participants to experience the Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie—the Prairie Plains Sioux County Ranch/ Preserve southwest of Harrison, Nebraska. Its 5,000 acres include

rugged, beautiful high plains prairie as well as the headwaters of the Niobrara River.

Making the trip this year for the first time were Brian Martin and Cynthia Rhodes from Hesston, Kansas, as well as Lee (Education Center architect) and Susan Schriever from Panama, Nebraska. Veteran trekkers present were Nancy Haag from Chadron, Prairie Plains Board President Carol Bodeen from North Platte and Prairie Plains staffers Sarah Bailey and Jeff Gustafson (along with first-time trekkers Lucy and Milo) and Bill and Jan Whitney. (continued on next page)

Following lunch at the Longhorn in Harrison, the group departed for the ranch for the tour led by Prairie Plains staff and rancher Scott Schaefer. Most years a cookout follows the tour, but this time, due to major renovation activity at the ranch house, we dined at our place of lodging, the Harrison House Hotel. That was made possible by our gracious hotel hostess and chef, Sydney Meidell. Our thanks to Sydney for being so accommodating!

Scenes from the ranch tour:



First stop on the tour.



Niobrara River headwaters.



Resident rancher Scott Schaefer along with his grassland management team.



“This ranch rocks!” according to Lucy Gustafson, Graycyn and Weston Schaefer and Milo and Jeff Gustafson.



Ranch florals: narrowleaf penstemon (*Penstemon angustifolius*), gumbo lily (*Oenothera caespitosa*), downy paintbrush (*Castilleja sessiliflora*) and purple pincushion cactus (*Coryphantha vivipara*).

We are planning for the Sioux County Ranch Trek to evolve into a more substantial event, involving more people and activities in years to come. This will be made possible in part by the construction of a modest building that would serve as gathering place, lab-classroom and bunkhouse. This year we (staff and rancher Scott Schaefer) chose what we thought would be an excellent site for such a structure. Stay tuned for further developments!

Charles L. Whitney Education Center Update

As reported in May, the hickory floor on the main level was completed; now work is in progress on the stairs. Vlcek Gardens, based in Chapman, began construction of the three-tiered south entry patio in mid-July. We hope to have photos of the nearly-completed patio in the next newsletter.



Center Dedications

- ◆ Curt Twedt (1934-2009), Prairie Plains co-founder and longtime board member and friend, will be remembered with the dedication of the screened porch and lower patio. Nothing honors Curt's modest and genuine manner more than a pleasant place to sit with friends over food and coffee!
- ◆ The Great Room—the area under the high raftered ceiling of the Sands barn—is dedicated to the memory of Mitzi Fox (1934-2013), one of our first members, board member, Olson Nature Preserve volunteer and collector of good books and ideas. Mitzi would appreciate the discussions, musical events and art displays to come in this wonderful space.
- ◆ For their recent generous contribution, Mike and Diane Stewart have naming rights for the larger classroom and lab. Mike has been a steadfast member of the SOAR staff for 28 years (still contributing his expertise after retirement from 44 years of classroom teaching in life sciences), and was a Prairie Plains board member and secretary. Mike and Diane's daughter, Melanie, has donated high quality microscopes to the Center, recycled from University of Nebraska Medical Center where she is presently the Sustainability Manager.
- ◆ The Myrl and Bessie Mather Foundation generously contributed to the north deck and will be recognized for this gift. The deck provides visual access to a beautiful, pastoral landscape, and a pleasant place to gather. It also creates shady patio space below. The deck connects to the adjacent hill and fire ring site, with more wonderful views of the Platte River Valley.
- ◆ We are in the process of creating a dedication of the Conference Room in memory of Norris Alfred (1913-1995), early Prairie Plains board member, editor/publisher of the last letterpress newspaper in Nebraska, the Polk Progress (1955-1989, with one two-year break in the 1960s), 1980 Pulitzer Prize nominee and friend. Norris was a forthright, small town rural advocate who influenced the early developmental thinking process of Prairie Plains. The Education Center will house a collection of his writings, passed on to us by the late Naomi Brill, another loyal supporter, board member and friend. At this point we have received contributions of \$11,000 toward a goal of \$20,000. All Norris Alfred fans are hereby invited to contribute!
- ◆ We are seeking three contributions of at least \$50,000 each, or one donor of \$150,000, who will receive naming rights for the formal south main entry patio. Visitors will be able to enjoy a peaceful vista and sunny south exposure on the patio, an excellent meeting place for small groups.
- ◆ Finally, the smaller classroom naming dedication is available for a \$15,000 contribution.

The Home Stretch

The fundraising goal for completing the Center is \$250,000.

The big ticket items remaining are the entry/fire access road and parking area, and the elevator.

Finishing details include kitchen and restrooms fixtures, cabinets, appliances and all electrical details, furnishings including tables, chairs, and audiovisual and lab equipment. We also plan to construct an information kiosk outside of the Center displaying basic orientation information about Prairie Plains, Gjerloff Prairie and the Education Center.

The Lasting Benefits

The Charles L. Whitney Education Center opens up a new universe of possibilities for Prairie Plains and Central Nebraska. Many lives will be touched by the programs and events to be held, taking advantage of all that the incredible Platte Corridor properties—Gjerloff Prairie and Sherman Ranch—have to offer.

June-July Thank-yous (YNP and SOAR listed separately) go to:

Fun Run Organizer Amy Jones's faithful assistants (and parents), Bill and Shirley Snyder; our Sioux County Ranch hosts, the Scott & Caitlin Schaefer Family; Scott Jones for all that mowing; Cale Jones and Keenan Smith for moving the new SOAR supplies shed to the Gjerloff farmyard, and to a quartet of Coach Scott Jones's football players—Kellen Peterson, Brady Collingham, Jamison Herzberg and Drew Knust—for cleanup work at Lincoln Creek.



June 10: A Women in Beekeeping group gathered for a tour of Gjerloff Prairie with special interest in observing wildflowers, plant communities and pollinators. The group, led by Sarah Bailey, also toured the seed barn and greenhouse and discussed our high diversity, local ecotype prairie restoration process. Women in Beekeeping is part of a beekeeping training and certification program partnership between UNL and the Center for Rural Affairs.



June 27: Students from all over the U.S. participating in UNL's Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) this summer toured Gjerloff Prairie, the seed barn and greenhouse. Sarah Bailey led the tour and discussions about insect life in relation to prairie habitat—the group had a special interest in beneficial insects—as well as prairie natural history, plant communities and management.



June 27: A small group of Lone Tree Corridor Working Group members met at the Education Center to revive discussions about potential conservation, education and recreation programming in the Lone Tree Corridor of the Platte. The stretch of river in focus is between Grand Island and Clarks, especially the Platte and Wood River zone between State Fair Park and Bader Park.

Pictured are Prairie Plains Director Bill Whitney, recently retired Merrick Foundation Director Chuck Griffith, Platte PEER Group (People, Education, Environment, Recreation) Director Tiffany Hartford and Platte PEER group board member and Bader Park volunteer Karen Benner. Also in attendance: Fonner Park CEO Chris Kotulak and Jan Whitney.



June 25-27: Aurora High School junior Sydney Dyer completed a mini-internship shadowing Sarah Bailey and harvesting seed. Thanks for your help, Sydney!

Meanwhile, in the background: Land Steward Jeff Gustafson completed contract work with the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, clearing invasive trees at Tamora Basin. And, as always, continued the work of eliminating invasive trees and thistles at Sherman Ranch.

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-
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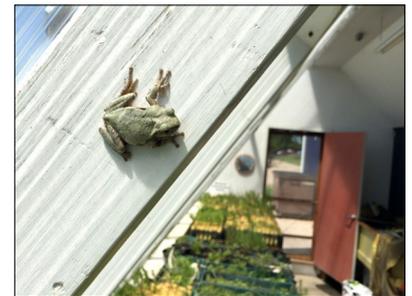
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Resident greenhouse spy.

Bader Park Hike
Saturday, September 7

9:00 a.m.