



This Bader Park site, right by the Chapman Bridge, is a favorite stop for viewing the Platte. The 7:00 a.m. hike on Saturday, April 28, was one of the best on record for watching migratory waterfowl.



NEWSLETTER
April, 2018

Plains Safaris Conference

We (Bill and Jan Whitney) attended **Plains Safaris: a Conference on Tourism and Conservation in the Great Plains**, held in Kearney April 18-20. The event was sponsored by the Center for Great Plains Studies, Nebraska Tourism Commission and Heartland Scenic Byways.

What was especially enjoyable about this conference that paired tourism with conservation was being part of a spirited group of business people, community leaders, conservationists, outdoor recreation enthusiasts and artists praising the natural history, beauty and diversity of the Great Plains landscape, as well as its historic and cultural attributes. The concept that *you can't care about something you don't know about* is driving widespread efforts to bring people to the region to discover and learn.

There are really two kinds of ecotourism – one for the out-of-area visitors, and one for members of the local/regional community. Most of what Prairie Plains does relates to where we call home. It is a community-based approach to conservation of native prairies and waterways that includes ecological restoration, land stewardship, educational programs and recreation that fits with our conservation goals. Education is critical; if there are informed and motivated people scattered across the Great Plains, there will be progress in the conservation of nature, agricultural stewardship and rural community life. Much of our prosperity depends on the how we see and act upon the land where we live.

There are plenty of people curious about the region who want some classic Great Plains experiences. So it behooves us to work for our own quality of life, diversify our local economies in the process and become more aware and attached to where we live, as we will then have better quality experiences to offer outside guests. →

The Plains Safaris field trip hosted by Prairie Plains included (below, left) a hike on the river trail at Bader Park and another (right) on the Dark Island Trail, crossing the Platte. The other stops were at Gjerloff Prairie & Farm, and a quick glimpse of Sherman Ranch. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented any further exploration there.





Conference group touring the Education Center.

Prairie Plains Field Trip: We led a group of 18 conference attendees from Kearney east along Lincoln Highway (U.S. 30) to the Platte River Lone Tree Corridor sites of Bader Park, Gjerloff Prairie, Sherman Ranch and Dark Island Trail. Unfortunately, the wind gusts were around 40 mph and temperature under 40 degrees, but the participants were real troopers and didn't let the weather dampen their enthusiasm. While at Bader Park we were able to hike downwind of the forest to enjoy birding along the Platte - highlighted by sightings of great egrets and white pelicans. Then, at Gjerloff Prairie & Farm, we visited the greenhouse and seed barn for presentations by Sarah Bailey and Mike Bullerman. This stop also included a tour of the Charles L. Whitney Education Center in progress. Sherman Ranch was less accessible due to muddy roads, so we kept that visit short, then headed to Central

City's Dark Island Trail for a walk across the Bader Bridge trestle over the Platte (with the wind at our backs). All these experiences led to stimulating discussions on the bus, as people from many states shared thoughts and asked questions.

The future: The potential of similar guided outings in the future is bright, as Lone Tree Corridor trails and open space areas continue to develop and the Education Center is completed. If a diverse group of people can be that enthused on a trip with limited facilities and awful weather, imagine the response when everything is user friendly and the weather *isn't* awful! For those of us in the regional network of organizations and businesses, including Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon, Calamus Outfitters near Burwell, Big Blue Ranch in Pawnee County and many more, there is a bright future of sharing - and educating about - the unique natural qualities of the Great Plains.



March 12, 2016, Dark Island Trail: Dale Carlson (right) and Bill Whitney stop to chat by Dale & Pat's daughter's family bench on the bridge over the Platte. Much of the plank work on the railroad trestle bridge was done by Dale in 2011-12.

Dale Carlson - a tribute by Bill Whitney

Last month we had to bid a painful farewell to our friend, Dale Carlson, who passed away suddenly on Sunday, March 18. I could not help but think of the phrase "salt of the earth" in describing Dale. It is from the Gospel of Matthew, and is a metaphorical comparison to the importance and value of salt in the ancient world. A person said to be worth his salt was deemed worthy and dependable. Furthermore, it came to refer to one who was the best or most valued part of society. Today's common usage also includes descriptors such as decent and unpretentious. Dale was all of these things.

This is not to imply that Dale was angelic, and I'm sure he could have shared a story or two from his life to support this fact. The thing I appreciated most was his ability to be simultaneously humorous and serious about

things. His acute observations about people and events were especially useful when relating stories about colorful characters known over a lifetime. Knowing his own mind as he did, Dale was never afraid to speak it. This trait garnered him respect in my eyes for being forthright and straight-up honest.

Dale loved the land, rural life, horses and livestock, many friends and family, and Bader Park, where he spent the past dozen years helping his wife, Pat (Bader Park Director), with all its substantial developments. He was a major force in the completion of the Dark Island Trail, and a friend of Prairie Plains. We are all feeling the sting of his absence as we gather for coffee in the Bader House following our morning hikes there. Dale Carlson - one of a kind - unforgettable.



April 9: "Leading Locally" students, with Sarah Bailey as guide, toured the greenhouse, seed barn and Education Center and hiked on Gjerloff Prairie, learning about prairie restoration as well as native prairies and their management. This group, from Merrick County high schools, is comprised of sophomores and juniors that are leaders in their classes. Thanks to Andrea Green from the Merrick Foundation for providing these photos.



Included in "greenhouse show" - healthy root development in container grown spiderwort (*Tradescantia bracteata*) - in its second year.



 **SOAR 2018: FLIGHT 27**

Week One: July 9-12
Week Two: July 16-19

For students presently in grades 3-6. Registration underway! Download and print form OR just register online:
<http://www.prairieplains.org/education/soar.html>

A Big THANK YOU to our land stewardship volunteers:

For assistance with prescribed burns - Cliff Dill, Mike Stewart, Gerry Steinauer, Craig Shaffer and Steve Vrana. We are always grateful for extra hands when working with fire!

For ongoing maintenance of Pearl Harbor Survivors Preserve - Terry and Susan Wilner. The Wilners have contributed many labor hours controlling invasive woody vegetation and maintaining fences on this Buffalo County prairie. Their efforts are most appreciated!



The April 21 walking tour of Sherman Ranch - one of many Nebraska Science Festival events - brought out a modest number of walkers due to (again) not so great weather. But it turned out to be a wonderful outing, with rain holding off until the end. Here, participants are walking through a recently burned area; an ongoing "cedar attack" site is in the background.

We were especially honored to have long-time members and generous supporters Barry and Mary Lou Burke from Lexington, Massachusetts at the event. They were so pleased to be able to see the land they'd read about and supported - and we were happy to point out their names on the Sherman Ranch donor sign!

Approaching Events

Saturday, May 19 - 9:00 a.m.:

Guided hike at Gjerloff Prairie

Enjoy a leisurely walk through the prairie, with beautiful views of recently burned areas and early spring wildflowers. This is also a perfect opportunity to check out all the progress on the Education Center!

Saturday, June 2 - 9:00 a.m.

Annual Fun Run/Walk at Gjerloff Prairie



Both 5K & 10K runs begin at 9:00, with walkers following a few minutes later. Arrive at 8:30 to check in. The \$20 fee includes a t-shirt; please register by May 23 to get your shirt the day of the race. Further details and entry form are on website www.prairieplains.org. Questions: amyppri@hamilton.net

Saturday, June 9

12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m.

Sioux County Ranch Trek

Here's your chance to experience the beautiful high plains landscape of Guadalcanal Memorial Prairie Ranch - including the headwaters of the Niobrara River - and other Nebraska Panhandle attractions. We meet for lunch at the Longhorn Bar in Harrison at noon, then tour the ranch, ending with an evening cookout. Details: janppri@hamilton.net 402-694-5535 / 402-631-9366

Land Stewardship



As hard as it's been to find suitable days for burning, we've managed a few. This one is at Deep Well State Wildlife Management Area. Below, Jeff Gustafson on task building fence at Sherman Ranch. Elsewhere, behind the scenes, Mike Bullerman has been planting more prairies!



Hope for spring: The appearance of early bloomers pussytoes (*Antennaria neglecta*) - the male flower in this case - and wind-flower (*Anemone caroliniana*) on our prairies give some assurance that winter is indeed coming to an end.



PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK

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**Preserving, restoring and maintaining
Nebraska native prairies -
Creating opportunities for education,
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