



Land steward Jeff Gustafson spent considerable time in July clearing trees and shrubs to recreate Gjerloff Landing. Located in the northwest corner of Gjerloff Prairie, and accessible by the walking trail that heads north from the Education Center, Gjerloff Landing has a history (dating back to the late 1800s) of community picnics and family fun days on the river - a true outdoor destination. A priority of Prairie Plains has always been to provide places for people to connect with the land. The rejuvenated Gjerloff landing is a work in progress - not quite ready for picnics just yet - but with a little more TLC and some picnic tables, it will again be suitable for a fried chicken lunch and a dip in the Platte.



NEWSLETTER  
July/August 2020



## Eagle Scout Project Gives Hikers a Leg Up (And Over)

Colin Kennedy, a junior at Aurora High School, designed, built and delivered 10 stiles and four benches to Gjerloff Prairie this summer to earn his Eagle Scout commendation. Working with Jeff Gustafson and scoutmaster Aaron Nilson, Colin created the stiles to allow hikers to cross fences without opening gates or ducking under barbed wire. The stiles can be seen at Gjerloff Prairie and Sherman Ranch, and are a welcome addition to the mowed hiking trails. Photo by Erin Kennedy.

## Thanks for Giving Big!

Go Big Give on July 7th was a huge success! 62 donors pitched in to give \$10,949 to support the work of Prairie Plains and to unlock all four videos featuring land steward Jeff Gustafson. It was fun to watch the momentum build on our Facebook page as the videos were shared and the milestones were reached.

**Did you miss the giving or the videos???** Don't despair! Giving can happen anytime on our website - [www.prairieplains.org/join](http://www.prairieplains.org/join). And the videos can be found on our Facebook page (it's public, so you don't have to have a FB account) - [facebook.com/prairieplains/videos](https://facebook.com/prairieplains/videos).





### Progress on the Center!

It's been a busy summer at the Charles L. Whitney Education Center! Top left: Who's THAT guy? Retired executive director Bill Whitney has been working as a contractor doing finish work on the upper level including barn wood wainscot and lots of painting. Top right: The elevator was installed and awaits a bit more electrical work before being inspected. Bottom left: Volunteer Scott Jones built and installed all the walnut kitchen cabinets, moveable kitchen islands and the coffee bar cabinet. THANKS SCOTT! Bottom right: Cale Jones with Mid-Nebraska Land Developers created the driveway to and parking areas around the Center. (Admin. Director Amy Jones is the proud mom of Cale and wife of Scott).

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**The Southern Plains Bumble Bee (*Bombus fraternus*), which is classified as a Tier 1 at-risk Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in Nebraska, has been observed this summer at the Sherman Ranch. Sarah Bailey observed and photographed individual bees at Sherman in June and late July, and in August she conducted a bumble bee survey for the Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas and observed 6 Southern Plains Bumble Bees among many others (at least 3 other species represented). Survey data from this summer taken at Sherman Ranch and Gjerloff Prairie, along with data collected by others around the state, will be reported to the Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas at the end of the season. The data will contribute to scientists' understanding of bumble bee populations throughout Nebraska and help inform decisions regarding habitat needs and best management practices for bumble bee conservation.**