

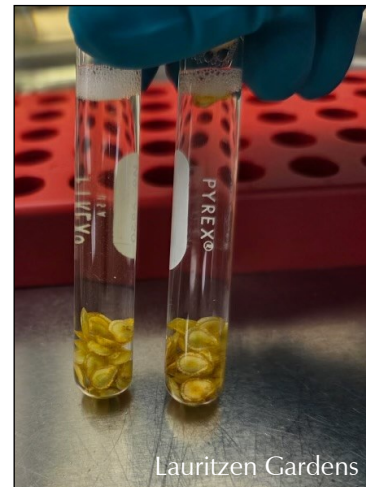


Time Flies When You're Having Fun

In May Restoration Director Mike Bullerman celebrated **25 years** with Prairie Plains. Mike has refined our high-diversity, local-ecotype prairie restoration process to merge the power of GIS technology with the intense manual labor required for harvesting native seed, creating a premium product backed by outstanding customer service. Conservation/Education Director Sarah Bailey has been with us for **15 years** in August. Hired as an intern to develop our newly-built greenhouse, Sarah has exceeded expectations. She has an insatiable appetite for learning about the natural world and an amazing ability to share her enthusiasm with people of all ages. She spends countless hours observing and considering how to improve our preserves, our restoration program and our educational outreach. As a team in the field, Mike & Sarah create an ecological powerhouse. They're also very adept at animal rescue and finding the best places to eat in rural Nebraska. Thanks guys!

We're SO Close!

We only have \$25,000 left to raise to meet our \$250,000 fundraising goal to build a new greenhouse, solidify our summer intern program and update prairie restoration equipment. If you or someone you know would be interested in helping us complete this important challenge, please reach out to Amy Jones at amyppri@hamilton.net. And if you've already given, THANK YOU!!! Strengthening restoration strengthens the entire organization and positions us for future growth. We truly couldn't do it without all of you.



We have the coolest friends

Allison Butterfield and Katharine Hogan, lead members of the conservation team at Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, and pictured above with our own Sarah Bailey, located and tagged woolly milkweed (*Asclepias lanuginosa*) at Gjerloff Prairie this spring and collected leaf tissue samples for possible lab propagation. Woolly milkweed often fails to produce any seeds, so the team was surprised and excited when Sarah reported a viable pod growing on one of the tagged plants (middle photo). Waiting patiently until the time was right, Sarah collected the pod and delivered it to the Lauritzen crew so they could perform an embryo extraction to give each of the 54 viable seeds the best chance for growth, with the goal of helping restore native populations that are currently declining. (Seeds are pictured in two test tubes above-right.) It's always rewarding to share the magic of Gjerloff Prairie with others, especially conservation partners that are equally focused on preserving Nebraska's rich botanical heritage.

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We SOARed!!!!

What an amazing summer! We packed a ton of learning into a few months, including Summer Orientation About Rivers (SOAR) held in July for 3rd through 6th graders. Pictured above l to r: Fish Find on River Day provided a great look at Platte River fish and invertebrates; Aquatic netting in the wetlands at Bader Park; Insects at Gjerloff Prairie. Below l to r: Making hard tack with Bill & Shirley Snyder as part of a week-long lesson about the science of breadmaking; Stones and Stories at Farmers Valley Cemetery led by Suzanne Ratzlaff; River Day! (Need we say more?); We were proud to have Sarah Springer, our 2024 summer intern, back to present about Nebraska reptiles and amphibians to the group! See the complete SOAR photo album and other great summer photos on our Facebook page.



NEWSLETTER
Summer Education 2025



IT'S A PARTY! ON THE PRAIRIE!!

Please join us **Saturday, September 27, 2025**

at the Charles L. Whitney Education Center at Gjerloff Prairie - 2206 N M Road, Marquette, NE

5 pm - 9 pm

Enjoy strolling on the prairie, live music, a food truck, drinks and local brews by Prairie Pride Brewing Co.

Scan the QR code below to purchase Prairie Plains merch and view and bid on online auction items.

Online and silent auction items will be displayed at the party.



(You should totally be there.)

Youth Naturalist Program (YNP) - June 9-12



YNP was created in 2013 to provide a SOAR-like experience for middle school campers. The group is smaller (12 campers this year) and offers an excellent opportunity to gain valuable knowledge about Nebraska ecosystems and participate in outdoor recreation activities such as kayaking. Photos clockwise from top left: Wetland ecology at Bader Park resulted in lots of good finds; Amphipod (tiny freshwater crustacean) under the scope; A male red shiner exhibiting breeding colors; Campers visited the Crane Trust and learned about its bison herd and their important role in grassland ecosystems; Abe Kanz, Director of Conservation Research at Crane Trust observed insects and other invertebrates with campers after flipping bison patties; Ian Huebert, owner of Service Press in Henderson, instructed campers on using ink and various techniques to print pressed plants onto homemade paper; Kellie Hayden, lead raptor bander at Hitchcock Nature Center, captured and banded a yellow warbler at Gjerloff Prairie as part of her ornithology presentation; Campers learned kayak safety and best practices from Breann Sweeney before setting out on the Platte River for a float from Gjerloff Prairie to Stranberg Park near Central City.

Story Time at the Creek

Friday mornings in June and July kids and their families met at the Lincoln Creek Prairie and Trail to enjoy a book with a nature theme, followed by a hike and activity. This year retired reading teacher, grandma and Prairie Plains member, Shirley Snyder, read the books and organized the activities. Pictured below from left to right: The first book was about earthworms! After learning fun facts about worms, everyone got a cup of soil with a live worm in it to examine and observe; And made a worm to take home; A book about rocks of all types inspired the coloring of some pet rocks; The final book was about sandhill cranes. They can have 6 foot wingspans! Story Time has been a great way to involve young families in the mission of Prairie Plains. Thanks to Shirley for a wonderful summer, and for introducing the next generation of SOAR campers to Lincoln Creek Prairie and Trail!



Young Nebraska Ecologists (YNE) - June 16-19



YNE is offered to 9-12 graders and takes SOAR and YNP concepts to a more advanced level of learning. The group stayed close to home at Gjerloff Prairie on Day 1, but then traveled to The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve (NVP) near Johnstown, Nebraska, for the remainder of the week. Photos clockwise from top left: Insect netting at Gjerloff Prairie; Aquatic netting and exploration at Smith Falls State Park; Bird watching with Jen Corman, Coordinating Wildlife Biologist with Nebraska Game & Parks; A short backpacking trip is a key component of YNE. Kim Helzer led the backpacking trip, sharing her passion and knowledge with campers. They learned to efficiently pack a backpack, navigate in the backcountry, set up camp and cook a meal; The campsite overlooked the beautiful Niobrara River valley; Students enjoyed a bison ecology tour from NVP Program Manager David Crites.

A New Summer Tradition

The Christmas Bird Count is a census of birds, performed annually by volunteer birdwatchers to provide population data for use in science, especially conservation biology, though many people participate for recreation. With that in mind, and because she is really into flies, Conservation/Education Director Sarah Bailey organized the 4th of July Fly Count. The event occurred on July 5th at Gjerloff Prairie in a BioBlitz/community science-style format to take a closer look at fly diversity on the prairie. Participants used insect nets and cameras to collect fly data and utilized iNaturalist to document their finds. Fly diversity in native prairie ecosystems is astounding and they serve critically important roles as pollinators, predators, decomposers and parasitoids. Understanding more about these incredible insects is one of the first steps in conserving biodiversity and the ecosystems they depend on. Sound fun? Mark your calendar for July 4th(ish) 2026!



Chris Helzer

Britt Bailey