



The Fall FOKP General meeting will be **Sunday, September 27**. The format for the meeting has changed this year to provide a safe, educational, and fun experience for all members.

Sunday, September 27th - 4:00 - 6:00 pm:

Hike Butterfly Hill! FOKP members and their families may hike the Butterfly Hill Trail at Konza Prairie headquarters to view and identify major grasses and autumn-blooming wildflowers. The plants will have numbered flags and an identification sheet will be provided. Docents will be stationed at various places along the trail to assist and answer questions.

Process:

Check in at the picnic table outside the stone house at Konza Prairie headquarters when you arrive (call 587-0381 if you need directions). Pick up a checklist of plants you can expect to see along the trail. You'll then be able to stroll Butterfly Hill at your own, personal pace.

While you are at the check-in table, take a moment to **vote for the new FOKP board members**. No one has any opponents, so it's a formality and nice for the members to vote.

Purchase a new 2021 FOKP calendar with gorgeous photos from Konza Prairie!

Plan to follow safety protocols including social distancing and use of masks when needed.

This year there will be no general gathering or meeting.

Information from the President, the KPBS Director and the Education Director will be provided on-line and on-line ballots will be available for those unable to attend on that day.



Research

Education

Conservation



Fall 2020



[Visions of the Flint Hills](#) is our annual art show benefit for FOKP that usually takes place at Buttonwood Art Space in Kansas City. This year's show is still happening, but **all art sales and opening night reception will take place online**.

The show is October 2 - November 21, with a special online reception on

Friday, October 2, 4-5pm CST. More details coming soon, but attendees can look forward to special content from featured artists and our Konza community!

Artwork submissions are being accepted until Aug. 31, 2020, through <https://buttonwood-artspace.com/artist-login.php>. Art sales are split 50/50 between artists and FOKP, so please help us by forwarding this opportunity to any artist you know whose work is influenced by the Flint Hills!



KPBS Director's Report John Blair

Dear Friends of Konza Prairie,

The Kansas summer is in full swing, with hot, humid days and an occasional thunderstorm to cool things down and refresh the prairie! The seasonal progression of wildflowers and their insect pollinators has been spectacular this summer. If you have been hiking the Nature Trail, you may have seen large numbers of monarch butterflies, several species of swallowtail butterflies, and maybe even a regal fritillary or two. You may also have noticed that the trail was repaired quickly following some heavy rains earlier this spring, and it has been kept in great shape since. I'll give a shout out to Joe Gelroth for doing an outstanding job of maintaining the trail, and to our Konza docents and volunteers for helping to keep the trail clean and our visitors informed. I also appreciate the care and respect for the prairie shown by our many visitors that pack out what they bring in and take nothing but photos and memories home!

It has been an unusual and challenging summer for field stations around the country, to say the least, and Konza is no exception. We've had few visits from out-of-state researchers this year and our local scientists and students have had to take additional precautions, but there is still a lot of exciting new research underway at Konza. Two new KSU faculty members, Zak Ratajczak and Allison Louthan, have begun projects on the controls of woody plant encroachment, the population dynamics of forbs (wildflowers), and how bison interact with climate to affect plant communities. We also seeded a new prairie restoration for a long-term study that will improve how prairies are restored and managed on formerly plowed lands. Other new projects started this summer are examining how bison and cattle move microbes around the prairie, how woody plants alter hydrology and carbon cycling in the prairie, shorebird use of bison wallows, and much more! Even with a pandemic, our collective work to better understand and more effectively manage the prairie for future generations continues.

It is not an exaggeration to say that we would not be able to do this without all of you. Your support allows us to continue our mission of research, education, and conservation, even during challenging times. So, on behalf of all of us at the Konza Prairie Biological Station, thank you! We greatly appreciate the support of the FOKP and the greater Manhattan community. As always, please feel free to contact me (jblair@ksu.edu; 785-532-7065) with any questions or concerns about Konza. Stay safe, wear your masks, and be kind to one another.

8th Annual Konquer the Konza

The 8th Annual Konquer the Konza will be run on **Sunday, Sept. 20th and start at 7:30 am.** There is a limit of 300 runners that may chose to run either a 25k or 10k course on the Konza Prairie Nature Trail. Proceeds from this race go to the Konza Environmental Education Program.





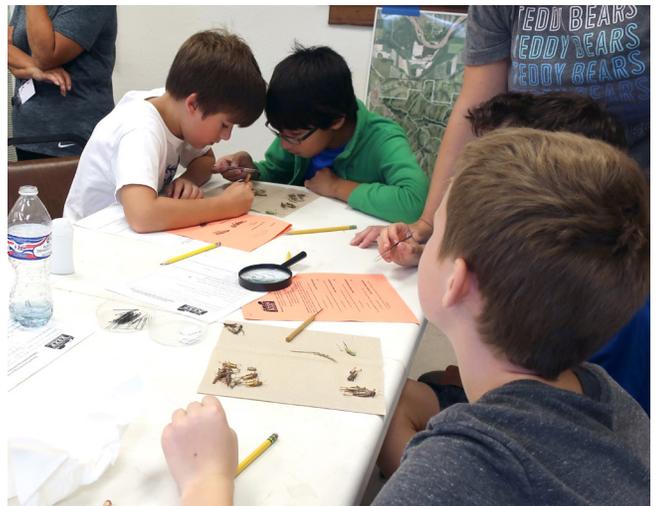
A Time for Critical Thinking

What an interesting time we're living in now! It is truly a historic period and we have the honor to both experience and witness it.

Before moving to Kansas and coming to Konza Prairie I had a previous life and career in Texas working for a large community college where I taught Zoology, Botany and Majors Biology I and II for 15 years. I saw, first-hand, what students knew and didn't know when they first entered the classroom. When I began my teaching career, I made the mistake of assuming that college students had a certain proficiency in the most basic concepts. For example, I thought they knew that oxygen, hydrogen, carbon and nitrogen are elements and, therefore, unable to be broken down. Nope, most students didn't know that. They certainly didn't know the cellular difference between plants and animals. They didn't know that bacteria are made up of cells and have certain requirements for living. They didn't know that viral particles are non-living and therefore, less restricted in what they need to maintain activity (they don't maintain "life" because they're not alive). I always over-estimated what my students actually knew.

My point in this long list is that I now understand – after teaching several thousand students and seeing what they know and don't know – that many members of the general public have a very poor understanding of biology. We're seeing this first-hand with the response to COVID-19 – with the confusion about the various facets of the virus, personal cleanliness, and the need to wear a mask. It all comes down to basic understanding of what the needs are for a specific viral particle to maintain activity. In short, we're seeing not only a lack of general understanding of biology but also a lack of critical thinking skills.

It appears that Konza Prairie will not be able to host any field trips this autumn, and in light of the absence of our primary customer we at KEEP need to reconsider how we present our information. We will be constructing new online activities that not only present information – data on research from Konza Prairie scientists – but also questions about the data that require critical thinking.



Critical thinking = the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment.

Skills needed for critical thinking: observation, analysis, interpretation, reflection, evaluation, inference, explanation, problem solving, and decision making.

We have some work to do. Thank you for supporting the Friends of Konza Prairie, we appreciate all you do to help support the work that we have to do.

Goodbye & Good Luck to Hallie Hatfield **KEEP Environmental Educator**

Hallie Hatfield joined KEEP as an Assistant Environmental Educator in August of 2013 and came armed with her certificate to teach secondary education in earth sciences and experience in teaching middle schoolers. Hallie was new to the world of the biological sciences and was eager to learn all about it.

Fast forward seven years, thousands of students, hundreds of teachers, and many new docents later. Hallie knows all of the wildflowers and most of the grasses. She still has only a tolerance for small mammals (not including the mouse that jumped at her from the garbage can) and tells me that she's "learning to appreciate" birds. She was my right hand and an amazing colleague and friend for all of these seven years but has found a new path that is very exciting for her. Hallie will be the librarian at the West Elementary School in Wamego, KS. Concurrently, she'll be working on her Master of Library Science degree remotely from Emporia State. Hallie will be full-time, have a huge office, and an assistant of her own. What a step up!

We'll miss Hallie very much and I don't expect to fill her position until 2021 – when we have the potential of actually hosting students on site. Best wishes to Hallie Hatfield, we are so grateful for all you have given to the education program at Konza Prairie and we wish you nothing but the best in the future.



Docent Spotlight: Steve Paige

Hallie Hatfield



Konza is a magnet for anyone that has an appreciation of the Flint Hills. In my younger years, I had many opportunities to explore the hills and creek beds in the open rangelands south of Council Grove. My affinity for the outdoors led me to obtain a biology degree from Washburn University. For my first job, I was an entomologist at the KDHE. I later obtained a Master of Public Administration Degree and was fortunate to direct several public health programs, including environmental health. Retiring after 38 years with KDHE, I attended a KEEP docent information session by Dr. Wright and was hooked.

1. What motivated you to become a Konza Prairie docent?

I am a life-long learner and KEEP provided the opportunity to continue learning in my area of education and work experience, with the added benefit of passing my knowledge to Konza visitors. The students coming to Konza have a unique experience, and I wanted to contribute to their experiences in a meaningful way.

2. What are some of your hobbies & interests?

My interests have far exceeded my hobbies. I like to do a lot of different things, but I do not collect anything. Interests over the years have included wood carving, boating (both fast and slow), sailboat racing, hunting, motorcycle touring, hiking anywhere, and reading mostly nonfiction. I guess I have a hobby of collecting memories.

3. What has been the best part of being a volunteer at Konza Prairie?

The best part of being a docent is being surrounded by a group of excited children. Butterfly Hill with third graders. Boys, "Don't throw rocks." One little girl held my hand when we were walking. Everyone in Docent Steve's groups learned the name of a rock, a tree, and a poisonous plant.

The stream chemistry activity I enjoyed and hoped my students took home an understanding of how various components of an ecosystem are interrelated, and how easily our environment can be influenced by various man-made and natural occurrences.

It is rewarding to me to see students discover the intricacies and beauty of the microscope world during the macro-invert lab activity.

Wearing my green vest, I used to hike the Nature Trail counterclockwise. One day, I spoke with 82 hikers and held an impromptu, "The Prairie as an Ecosystem," presentation with a group of home schoolers.

A visit to Konza was never complete without conversations with other docents, researchers, and staff.

4. What brings you the most joy in your life?

I am fortunate to have Jackie, my wife, that shares my interests, and three grown children and four grandsons. CoVid-19 has interrupted many things that brings me joy, everyone is finding ways to accommodate. For those that do not know, I was diagnosed with ALS in January 2019. I can no longer hike Butterfly Hill, but have a host of memories.

2021 Konza Calendar

FOKP Calendars will soon be available for \$15!
Pick up your copy at Flint Hills Discovery Center,
Clafin Books and at any FOKP event.



Brian McCornack

I have been a Professor of Entomology since 2008 and have served as the interim department head for Entomology at Kansas State University for nearly two years. I was recently appointed to the permanent position in early August and am excited to lead a diverse, creative, collaborative, and kind group of people! As a faculty member, my primary interests have been the development of ecological, as well as economical, management strategies for arthropods at a landscape scale. It is so important that we understand that no field is an island—interactions between natural landscapes are imperative to the successful production of our food supply. I am lucky that my job has taken me all over the world—I have walked through some amazing landscapes in my travels. Nothing, and I mean nothing, compares to the beauty of the Konza Prairie!

For the past eight years, I have been the director of the Summer Soybean Science Institute, a three-week program that helps teachers implement inquiry instruction into their classrooms. I also lead the Teacher Mentorship program, a year-long effort to help K-State graduates develop the skills to bring inquiry-based methods to schools and districts in Kansas. I am excited to see how I can apply my skills in mobile technology and digital delivery and my passion for education as a serving board member for the FOKP. I consider this a great honor, and I look forward to helping others find the unmatched beauty of the prairie.



Jerrold Westfahl

My family (Amy, Eden, Cade, Isaac) and I have lived in Manhattan for 15 years. Service to area causes is one of our priorities. I look at service on the FOKP board as one way to extend the thread started by my ancestors in western Chase County in the 1850s and by Amy's family's continuing Morris County ranching legacy. My prior service includes the Kansas Ag and Rural Leadership board and helping with the American Royal's education programs in Kansas City. I'm looking forward to learning much, building relationships and the occasional lifting and carrying responsibilities with FOKP.



The KPBS Staff:

Director John Blair, Ph.D.
Assistant Director Eva Horne, Ph.D.
Administrative Asst. Barb Van Slyke
Director of Education Jill Haukos
KPBS Project Manager Jim Larkins
KPBS Burn Coordinator Patrick O'Neal
Environmental Educator

The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promote the interests of Konza Prairie Biological Station as they pertain to its mission of Research, Education and Conservation. Membership in FOKP is open to all individuals, groups and businesses that share an interest in the common goal of supporting the Konza Prairie Biological Station.

For FOKP membership and general information, call 785-587-0441, or visit the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) website at: friendsofkonza@gmail.com Also, see the back of this issue for a membership form.

The FOKP Executive Board:

President Kelly Yarbrough
Treasurer Noah Busch
Historian Joe Gelroth

The FOKP board members:

Pam Blackmore, 1st term replacement, 2020
Noah Busch, 1st term, 2020 Treasurer,
Executive/Finance Committee
Ken Stafford, 2nd term, 2020
Josh Brewer, 1st term, 2021
Kelly Yarbrough 1st term, 2021,
Executive/Finance Chair, ex-officio on all others
Brian McCornack, 1st term replacement, 2021
Lucas Shivers, 2nd term, 2021
Marcia Rozelle, 1st term, 2022,
Membership Chair
Jim Koelliker, 1st term, 2022,
Executive, Nominating
Jeff Watson, 1st term, 2022,
Programs Chair
Jerrold Westfahl, (nominated for 2021), 2023

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MISSION

Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS) is a native tallgrass prairie preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University and operated as a research station by the Division of Biology. The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promotes the interests of KPBS as they pertain to its mission of research, education and conservation.

Bison & Bluestem is published by the Friends of Konza Prairie

New and Renewing FOKP Members

Thank you all for your support of the Friends of Konza Prairie!

Members who have newly joined or renewed their membership since the last issue of the Bison & Bluestem include:

Student

Brian Hazlett
Keith Phillips

Little Bluestem

Theresa Albrecht
Diane Barker
Scott Bean
Kathleen Bower
Stephen Bridenstine
Peggy Coleman
Kenneth & Margaret Conrow
Tony Crawford
David & Connie Farmer
Jack & Peggy Flouer
Mary Galligan & Allan Foster
Eric Gustafson
Colleen & Kent Hampton
Dan & Carolyn Harden
Steve Henry
Beverly Holdren
Gary & Cindy Jeffrey
Susan Johnson
Tim & Sharon Keane
James & Jodi Lemley
Brenda McCrady
Gary Mignano
Yvonne Norby
Larry & Barbara O'Neill
Beth Pine
Paul Rosell
Gladys Treichel
Adam Wallenfang
Tom & Ronnie Whalen
Capstone Development Group LLC

Big Bluestem

Rachel & Daniel Andresen
Vicki Clegg & Bert Biles
Kui Yang & John Blocher
Richard Boydston
Elizabeth Dodd
Hank & Eileen Ernst
Marty & Sharon Gurtz
Damien & Jane Hebert
Julia Jilek
Stacy & Lowell Kohlmeier
Jay & Doris Merrill
Lois Merriman
Gary Mignano
Dennis & Monika Riordan
Barbara Roberts
Bob & Mary Shoop
Tom & Barb Van Slyke
Mary & John Weigel
Sue White
Bayer Construction Co., Inc.

Flint Hills

Rosemary Burroughs
John & Retta Kramer
Brian & Heather McCornack
Brian & Stephanie Peterson
Jay Wight

Prairie Chicken

Barbara Valent & Forrest Chumley
Bruce & Lia Lowrie
Janice & Leland Reitz
Twin River Agronomics Inc.

Bison

Bill Baack
Mike & Connie Butler
Robert Connell
Phil Howe