

Tallgrass Gazette

The Newsletter for Docents and by Docents



Winter 2012

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Calendar of Events

January 29

FOKP Winter Event
3-5 p.m.

February 18

New Docent Orientation
9 a.m.

See Page 2 for more

2012 Docent Committee

Jerry Freeze
Carol Gadbury
Colleen Hampton
Karen Hummel (chair)
Jim Mayhew
Dennis Toll (editor)
Doreen Towne
ex-officio members:
Charlie Given
Valerie Wright
Melissa Urick

Round-'em up Docents

By Colleen Hampton

Rather than being lured, as are the bison, by range cubes thrown from a truck in the fall, Konza Prairie docents were lured to the 14th Annual Docent Roundup on Saturday, January 14, 2012, by the promise of cookies and baked goods, hot drinks, and the camaraderie that is so characteristic of all docent community events. Around 70 docents gathered in the Konza meeting hall for a full morning of events that included an educational talk, quizzes, recognitions, announcements and reminders, and several breaks to renew friendships with other docents.

What do you call a mini bison? "A grasshopper!" according to Dr. Tony Joern, who said he couldn't resist including a little entomological information as a tribute to Valerie Wright, a fellow entomologist. Tony began the morning by giving the featured talk on "Bison Distribution and Movement at Konza Prairie: Sampling, Causes, and Scaling Issues." Tony quickly condensed his long title to "Where do the buffalo roam?" and informed all who were in attendance on the mechanics of bison tracking using the 15 GPS collars that are placed on the matriarchal dominant females in the herd. The collars are turned on each Wednesday, and typically record the GPS information every 20-30 minutes. The collars are then turned off until the following week in order to



Valerie Wright and Karen Hummel keep everyone smiling at the Docent Roundup.

extend the life of the battery. The collected information is then analyzed by Adam Skibbe, Konza Prairie LTER Information Manager, to determine what areas the bison are utilizing on Konza, how the burn treatments affect utilization, and other useful data. According to the data collected to date, as a herd, the bison use nearly 100% of the native grazer area on Konza. On an individual basis, it appears that a particular animal has favorite areas that

Continued page 8 ...

Prairie Patter: Final Observations

So much has come to pass in the last few months, it's hard to remember all the important events and helpful people who have made KEEP possible. Thank you all for volunteering your time. A big thank you to Jim Mayhew, Chod Hedinger and Jerry Freeze for their work cleaning up brush at Hokanson Homestead last year. Jim had fun watching his piles of branches go up in smoke.

Since Annie left for her new job, some willing young folks from the docents-in-training class of 2011 stepped up to help with office duties, taking reservations and finding those among you to fill in as guides. Melissa Urick and Kristen Schweitzer pitched in last summer. As you know Melissa has been able to give a significant amount of time to KEEP.

Well, the big news, I suppose, was my pending retirement. After a search this fall and interviews with several great candidates, Jill Haukos was selected to be the new Environmental Educator. She and I will have a transition period where she will learn all I know in a few months! Jill is a quick learner and will take over rapidly. I will be around to help whenever needed. I am also planning to continue some of the research projects initiated with docents over the last 15 years. For example, the annual plant inventories we have been taking in the restored prairie areas and the phenology data collected since 2001. Announcements will go out through the KEEP office for those of you who wish to join in.

A personal thank you to Steve and Karen Hummel for their foresight in setting up a fund to help



Valerie Wright stands between Melissa Urick, left, and Karen Hummel at the recent Docent Roundup.

KEEP stabilize some financial issues in the future. Karen understands well the problems of running a program on grant funds, which fluctuate from year to year. She started a program in engineering years ago which still exists today. We share the hope that KEEP will continue to educate children and adults about the tallgrass prairie far into the future.

This will be my last Prairie Patter. I will write for TGG from time to time and will certainly enjoy reading it. Thanks to the original docents who set it up, those who kept it going over the years and to the current committee who have done such a great job on this issue!

Upcoming Events:

- January 29, Sunday, FOKP Winter Event, 3 to 5 p.m. in Konza Meeting Hall
- February 18, Saturday, New Docent Orientation, 9 a.m to noon, Education Center
- February–May, Saturday mornings, Docent Training. Become a Quality Docent by returning for refreshers. The training schedule is on the KEEP web site at <http://keep.konza.ksu.edu/docents/>
- March (date to be announced) Hokanson Homestead Burn Crew, sign up by e-mail or call.
- March 28, Sunday, Hokanson Homestead Spring Workday, 2-4 p.m.
- The gate lock combination has been changed. If you wish the new combo, please call 587-0381.

In the Footsteps of Giants

by Karen Hummel

As your newly elected docent committee chairperson, I enter the role with humility and a sense of responsibility. The docent committee is comprised of representative docents, with the charge of acting in the best interest of the Konza Environmental Education Program, under the direction of the Environmental Educator. Current members are Jerry Freeze, Carol Gadbury, Colleen Hampton, Jim Mayhew, Dennis Toll, Doreen Towne, and ex-officio members Charlie Given, Valerie Wright and Melissa Urick.

My sense of humility in the role stems from following in the footsteps of two Konza legendary figures. For more than half a decade the docent committee has been led by Chod Hedinger. Chod is an essential figure on Konza. He is a consummate mentor, steward of the land, and artist with his photographic skills. In addition, those of us who have helped with the Hokanson workdays have heartily enjoyed the aromatic and tasty pudding cakes from his dutch oven. On early spring mornings, he leads small bands of intrepid birders through the chilly pre-dawn to blinds where they can observe the Greater Prairie Chickens in their annual courtship “booming” dance. Chod’s knowledge of the prairie, its history and its components is impressive, and Konza is fortunate to have his continuing presence.

Before Chod, Earl Allen led the docent committee – yes, another legend. I think of Earl as the Sherlock Holmes of Konza. If there is a previously unknown plant type, an unexplored ravine, a derelict abandoned structure on Konza, Earl will find it. He will remember locations and bloom times of the rare species and gladly lead any of us to the locations so we can share in the joy of the annual discoveries. Indeed, the progression of each plant from emergence in the spring through developing, flowering, seed formation and withering to the structural winter form are all stages worthy of note. Earl, himself, is a treasure on Konza.



Above: Valerie Wright and Chod Hedinger at the docent roundup, while (below) Karen Hummel stands between Valerie and John Briggs.



So, what do I bring to the table? Well, I can bake a pretty good cookie. Other than that, I have a lot of work to do. But as you can see in paragraph one of this article, the docent committee is comprised of exceptionally talented individuals. Together, we should carry on in good order. Thanks in advance for your support and participation in the KEEP docent program.

Meet Konza's New Environmental Educator, Jill Haukos

by Jill Haukos

Let me introduce myself: I'm the new Environmental Educator at Konza. I'm not only new to Konza, but I'm also new to Kansas. I grew up in South Dakota (where I was an avid fan of Laura Ingalls Wilder and all things prairie) and got my B.S. from South Dakota State University in Wildlife and Fisheries Management. I then travelled with my husband to Lubbock, Texas where I got a M.S. in Zoology/Environmental Education at Texas Tech University (TTU). I knew I wanted to specialize in the nascent field of Environmental Education (EE) but TTU didn't have an EE degree or curriculum in 1987, so I got to put my own together. Thanks to an open-minded major professor and accommodating folks at the TTU Museum, I had the opportunity to develop science programs and docent training for educational programs in Lubbock. When I graduated in 1988 there weren't a whole lot of EE jobs to be had in Lubbock so I took a job as a "Pesticide Specialist" at TTU. This job, funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, involved answering questions about the chemical, physical, and toxicological nature of pesticides to people who called our national telephone hotline. I learned a whole lot about the 30,000 different products all considered "pesticides" and I could still probably answer some questions if you have them... One of the good things about being a Pesticide Specialist is that I had the opportunity to learn a facet of ecology that few get to experience – this job was actually a form of very specialized environmental education.

When the pesticide hotline job moved to Oregon in 1995 my husband and I decided to stay in Lubbock.



This required me to get a new job, and this time I re-shaped myself into a biology professor, teaching Zoology, Botany, and College Biology to students (mostly freshman/non-majors) at a local community college. I now had the opportunity to present the world of science to people who had absolutely no interest in the field. This was a huge challenge and I embraced it. One of my favorite things is to take a complex concept and make it easy to understand - teaching freshman college students gave me plenty of opportunities to practice. If you have any desire to understand the intimate workings of aerobic cellular respiration or photosynthesis, then I'm your go-to gal.

Along the way I continued to pursue my true love – Environmental Education, but in volunteer capacities. Whenever my daughter (Katie, now 21 years old and a KSU senior in Animal Science/Pre-vet) had an outdoor hiking field trip, I was the parent anxious to lead the pack. When she became active in 4-H, I became a club manager and loved leading nature hikes. I was very active in the local Audubon club, serving as president, secretary, newsletter editor, and conservation chair in different years. I can identify just about any bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, tree, shrub, or grass – on the Southern High Plains of Texas. I'm learning the Kansas species as fast as I can!

I'm honored to be the new Environmental Educator at Konza. I am anxious to not only become more familiar with Konza but also with you – the docents. Please feel free to share your knowledge and experience with me, I'll be grateful to you. I look forward to meeting everyone.


Valerie Wright Legacy Fund

by John Briggs

The purpose of this fund is to honor Valerie Wright and provide financial assistance to the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) at Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS). This fund is established with \$2,000 from Steve and Karen Hummel. This fund is considered to be an open-ended account, meaning additional contributions may be made in the future by family and friends. Steve and Karen Hummel have agreed to match up to \$3,000 more in a challenge grant toward this fund. If the match does not meet the required \$6,250 minimum to establish an expendable fund by July 1, 2012, then the funds will be transferred to the KEEP Fund. Thus, I am convinced that we can meet this challenge and create this fund to honor Valerie. In addition, I hope that over time, we can raise over \$25,000 and turn this fund into a endowed Foundation account associated with KPBS and KEEP.



These funds will be used to advance and enrich the KEEP program at the discretion of the Director of the Konza Prairie, in consultation with the KPBS Environmental Educator. Some examples include but are not limited to, travel funds for special conferences, computer replacement(s), matching funds for appropriate grants, etc. I envision that most of the time the KPBS Environmental Educator would



**Friends of Konza Prairie
"Cure for Cabin Fever"
Sunday, January 29, 2012
3-5 p.m. in the Barn
(Konza Prairie Meeting Hall)**

Honoring Valerie Wright

If you would like to contribute a memory of, or wishes for Valerie - the person responsible for the KEEP program as we know it today - please send it to cinraney@k-state.edu, or mail handwritten or typed messages to Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd, Olsburg, KS 66520 - by Jan. 16, 2012.

Soup and Bread Feast - Art work of Konza
RSVP for soup - by Jan. 23 - 785-587-0441
VOLUNTEERS for set-up and clean-up are needed,
call Ann Murphy 539-2056 or
email murphyap66@yahoo.com

suggest to the KPBS Director that with some additional funds an opportunity is available that would advance and enrich the KEEP program; an ideal use of the VALERIE WRIGHT LEGACY FUND.

Below are methods of contributing to this fund.

1) You can contribute using the on-line KSU Foundation site at <https://one.found.ksu.edu>; select "Give to K-State" from the left-side column, then choose the "Make a New Gift" option, and then make sure you note that you want the gift to go to the Valerie Wright Legacy Fund (KSU Foundation number is F40760)

2) You can send checks directly to KSU Foundation; 2323 Anderson Ave. Ste. 500, Manhattan, KS 66502-2911. Be sure to write on the check either the fund number (F40760) or send a note stating you want it to be designated to the Valerie Wright Legacy Fund.

If you have any questions feel free to call the KEEP office at 785-587-0381; thanks in advance for your support!

Spotlight on new Docent Joe Mosier

by Melissa Urick

Joe Mosier is a 2011 graduate of the Konza Prairie Docent Program. He jumped right into his new docent role and has lead 21 different groups on Konza so far!

What motivated you to become a Konza Prairie docent?

Being retired, I missed working with the public. I also had my daughter and girlfriend to motivate me into volunteering. The year before I walked on as a trainee I called Annie Baker to learn more about the Docent Program. In trying to find a volunteer position, I made several calls in an effort to connect with a Continuing Education program.

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

Opening up children's minds to the wonders of Mother Nature has been the best part of being a Konza Prairie Docent. Interacting with outstanding teachers, Valerie, Annie, Earl, Melissa, Chod, and many others has also been great. The Docent Class of 2011 possesses many folks from all walks of life and I have become good friends with some of them. I am greatly looking forward to 2012 at Konza Prairie!

Briefly describe your "life story."



Joe brings a passion for teaching to his Konza duties.

I was born in 1939 in Hamilton County, Ohio. My brother and I grew up in Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Kansas. Both of my parents were graduates of the University of Iowa. My mother was a homemaker and my father was in radio broadcasting and a farm director, manager, and owner. I grew up with a father who shared his passion of "The Great Outdoors." My brother and I grew up hunting, fishing, and trapping all over the Midwest and the Rocky Mountains as a result.

I graduated the University of Kansas (KU) in 1962 with a BA degree in Ancient History. I also minored in Archeology, Geology, and Entomology. I worked as a counselor and resident director at KU and completed two years of Army ROTC before serving Active Duty during the Vietnam War. After my military service, I held positions as store manager with Montgomery Ward, house painter, U-Haul manager, Levi Strauss

stocking supervisor, and Territory sales manager.

At the age of 54, I went to work as a correction officer for the State of Texas. This was a tough job, however, I found it very rewarding. I tried to make a difference in the lives of the men and women as many come from broken homes, etc. They called me the Professor.

Now that I am a docent with Konza Prairie I hope to make a positive difference in the lives of the children and adults who visit this place.

What are some of your hobbies & interests?

My greatest passion is being in nature and experiencing it. I am an avid avocational archeologist searching for signs of Man's past. I also enjoy reading (mostly non-fiction) and collecting stamps, fossils, bottles, etc.

What brings you the most joy in your life?

I love exposing others, especially the younger generation, to nature and evolution. I also enjoy attending relic shows throughout the year and occasionally writing human interest stories for Indian Artifact Magazine. Spending time with family and friends in Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico is also very important to me.

Konza Art




The Tall Grass Prairie and Me
By Keegan Taylor, Grade 6

The prairie and me
In it I can see
A grasshopper
Hopping towards me.

In the tall grass so near
With my ear I hear
The meadowlark so clear.

Through the tall grass I walk
And hear the turkeys talk
I feel the bluestem grass
As I quietly pass.
The prairie and me!



The story behind this project is: The year 2011 marked the 15th anniversary of the Konza Environmental Education Program, and also the 15th anniversary of the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art at KSU. To honor these joint celebrations, the Beach Senior Educator Kathryn Schlagek worked with USD 383 Gifted Program educator Terry Healy and Konza Environmental Educator Valerie Wright to bring K-12 school groups to Konza for educational outings, and have the children create artworks inspired by their time on the prairie. The "KEEPing the Prairie" activity and writing about "The Tallgrass Prairie and Me" resulted in 177 artworks, poems and essays. On Sunday December 11th from 2 to 4 p.m. there was a reception with punch and cookies from Ray's Apple Market at the Beach Museum to celebrate the artwork and KEEP. The works were displayed at Konza for the recent Docent Roundup, and will be on display for the Friends of Konza Prairie Winter Event at the Konza Meeting Hall on January 29, 3 - 5 pm.

Docents Rounded Up for Review, Education, and Fun

... Continued from page 1

they continue to return to periodically. The general tendencies are that bison prefer areas that have a flatter terrain, and that have a higher protein content, as evidenced by the physiological changes in the grasses following a recent burn.

Following the guest speaker, a new face for KEEP, Jill Haukos, was introduced to the group as the newly selected Environmental Educator as Valerie phases in her retirement during 2012. In addition, Valerie was honored with the announcement of the "Valerie Wright Legacy Fund" that was set up through the KSU Foundation, as a way to fund some KEEP activities and equipment in the future.

Throughout the morning, docents were queried on their knowledge of Konza Prairie. They were asked to recall the location of a photo shoot in "Where in the World on Konza", the name of a "face" (human and

non-human) that flashed across a laptop screen, a computerized wildflower quiz, a "What in the World is this?" quiz, and a map quiz showing eleven locations on Konza that docents should know the name and/or importance of. Before the morning activities began, and during the breaks, docents wandered through the KEEP 15th Anniversary Invitational Exhibition of Art and Writing and answered questions such as "How many children drew bison?" or "How many different kinds of insects are pictured?" These works of art and creativity were produced by students who responded to the theme "The Tallgrass Prairie and Me." Many prizes were handed out to docents who supplied the correct answers to the questions on these quizzes and fact-finding missions.

And while the bison can only hope that their fall roundup could be completed in three hours, Konza Docents concluded their annual roundup with new and reviewed information, renewed friendships, and possibly some great prizes to take home for their efforts!



Docents filled the Konza meeting hall and answered questions about the children's artwork.





Quality Docents Recognized

Our experienced docents are extremely valuable to us. Konza research results, site rules and general information change over the years. Learning about the tallgrass prairie is a life-long experience. At Docent Roundup each year we recognize those docents who return for refreshers and keep their knowledge of Konza Prairie up to date. To become a Quality Docent you must attend two docent training sessions of your choice and participate in two in-service trainings and a field activity. It's easy to do. Every year you can be recognized in this program.

For 2011 there were 14 Quality Docents, including four new members: Mike Butler, Jerry Freeze, Jim Mayhew and Dennis Toll. The ten others are Earl Allen, Nancy Calhoun, Carol Gadbury, Nancy Goulden, Colleen Hampton, Chod Hedinger, Karen Hummel, Sue Hunt, Sue Smith and Doreen Towne.

Since 2006 when the program began, Earl Allen and Chod Hedinger have qualified every year (6 times). Charlie Given, Nancy Goulden, Karen Hummel and Larry Loomis have qualified 5 times; Diane Barker, Nancy Calhoun, Gordon Cunningham and Jim Morrill 4 times. Congratulations to all!



Flint Hills Discovery Center to Open in April

The opening of Kansas' next major tourism attraction, the Flint Hills Discovery Center has been set for April 14, 2012. Planning is underway for public festivities that underscore the importance of this much-anticipated cultural institution in Manhattan's downtown redevelopment district.

"This project is stunning evidence of what can be accomplished when the public and private sectors collaboratively work together," said Ron Fehr, city manager. "The Flint Hills Discovery Center is a key component to Manhattan's successful downtown redevelopment and the award of \$50 million in STAR bonds from the State of Kansas. We are proud to have created this great place of both learning and fun. It will support all of our efforts to preserve the Flint Hills and promote tourism within our state."

A detailed schedule of events will be forthcoming. Opening day will include a ribbon cutting, remarks by local and state dignitaries, and the public's first look at the facility. Dedication of the adjoining Blue Earth Plaza also will take place on April 14.

"Construction of the 35,000-square-foot facility began in July 2009 with a promise to inspire and educate visitors to the uniqueness and importance of the Flint Hills of Kansas and the Osage Hills of Oklahoma," said Bob Workman, director of the Flint Hills Discovery Center.

"It's fantastic to be planning our opening. Our visitors are the reason for this project, and on April 14 we will come alive as everyone sees and enjoys all that the Discovery Center has to offer," Workman said. Through dynamic interactive exhibits visitors will have an opportunity to explore the science and cultural history of the last stand of tallgrass prairie in North America – one of the world's most endangered ecosystems. The building is nearly complete and installation of exhibits is in progress.

The \$24.5 million project anchors the second phase of Manhattan's downtown redevelopment. Key players in the development of this project were the 2004 Attractions Committee that created the concept and a Steering Committee of local community leaders and a Technical Committee of content specialists. Their efforts were supported by a team of architects, exhibit and audio/visual designers, and fabricators and contractors.

The Flint Hills Discovery Center contains permanent and temporary exhibits, classrooms, meeting rooms, a store, and beautiful outdoor terraces and landscaping. It will be open 363 days a year and serve as the visitor information center for Manhattan and the surrounding Flint Hills region.



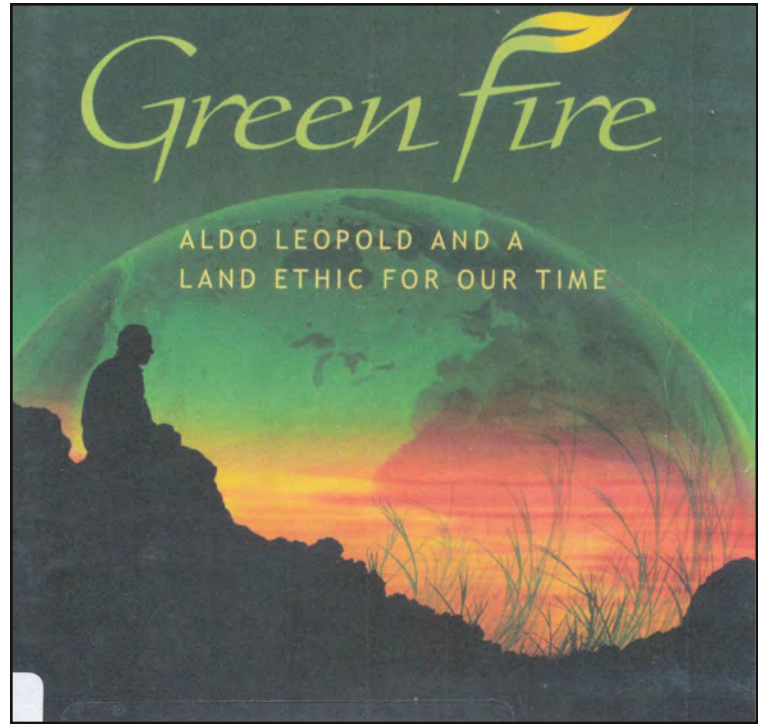
Discover Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic

Many Konza docents will recognize the name Aldo Leopold as the author of *A Sand County Almanac*, an iconic and inspiring work widely viewed as one of the foundation pieces of modern environmentalism and the conservation movement. Most will also recognize Leopold as the pioneer thinker in creating a "land ethic" that seeks to preserve a healthy landscape through understanding and nurturing all the environmental elements of that land. This was in contrast to the view of the industrial age that saw the land only as a collection of resources to be used by man.

Some may also know that early in life Leopold, who was born in 1887, worked for the U.S. Forest Service in the New Mexico and Arizona. There, among other duties, he worked to manage game species on public lands in an effort to improve the lot of hunters.

His experiences in working within this intrepid landscape began to shape new ideas and understanding within the young Leopold. He writes, for example, in *A Sand County Almanac*, of killing a wolf as part of his early efforts to reduce predators, so hunters would have a larger deer population. In the chapter, "Thinking like a Mountain," Leopold famously writes, "We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes -- something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."

Leopold learned, or began to grasp, the relationship of predators and prey was important to the health of the landscape. No wolves meant too many deer grazing and a loss of forage. From this, Leopold began an odyssey of thought that led him and



his family to a "shack" on a sand farm in Wisconsin, where he developed and fine-tuned his ideas on land ethic and conservation.

For those who want to know more of this odyssey, the Aldo Leopold Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service have created a documentary on the life and thought of Aldo Leopold, entitled "Green Fire."

This 73 minute documentary can be found at the Manhattan Public Library, Hale Library, and in the Education Center at Konza Prairie.

