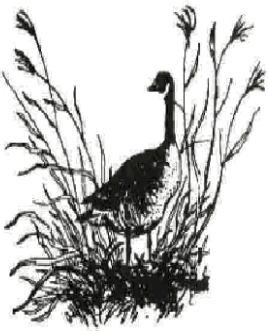


The Tallgrass Journal

Goose Lake Prairie Partners, 5010 N. Jugtown Road, Morris, IL 60450

Volume 8, Issue 4



Tallgrass by Warren K. Olson



The two dragonflies stay 10 feet ahead, as though guiding me along the narrow path; the three of us move toward the marsh. On each side, Prairie plants struggle to reclaim the path from the species that tamed it.

The tallgrass Prairie moves like an ocean, the wind and shadows from the clouds combine to create an illusion, turning the plants into an undulating sea of movement. The grass stands nearly head high; it's thin strands flexible under the weight of nature. The roots of this grass go back 10,000 years and at least 10 feet into the ground. For a thousand decades the tallgrass defined the Prairie until foreign invaders put it under plow. But, before the soil was turned, the tallgrass, the shorter Prairie drop seed, and the Big and Little Blue Stem, covered the rolling hills, supporting a variety of life.

The narrow winding path passes Prairie potholes, depressions left by the glacial retreat. Most of the potholes are filled with boulders and laminated pieces of sandstone. In the spring, nature fills these potholes with water... And the mosquitoes! By mid-summer the potholes are bone-dry, and only the cattails signal their location.

The marsh proves the diversity within the realm, it's dark and brackish water provides a break in the Prairie. Here songbirds and waterfowl rest. On this day, Redwing Blackbirds perch atop swaying reeds, amphibians hide from the heat of day, and two dragonflies guide a walker along a path that leads back in time.

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Mr. Olson of Morris, Illinois is the author of the free verse poem. He wrote about walking Goose Lake Prairie State Park on July 4, 2008. Mr. Olson also authored a book of selected poems titled "Dancing With My Shadow".

Stay informed by checking the website.

<http://gooselakeprairie.org>

Calendar of Events

November 12—Holiday Party

Call the park desk for more information on any of our activities 815-942-2899

Come out to the Visitor's Center November 12th and help us celebrate the season by decorating our Ole' Time Christmas Tree.



From 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Bring homemade ornaments or help us make new ones.

Bring a plate of cookies to share.

Wear Prairie Clothes from the 1800's and join in the fun.

Prairie Partner November Business Meeting will follow the Holiday Party.



Prairie Partners keep the visitor's center open most Saturday & Sundays from March to November.

Prairie Partner meetings are on the third Wednesday of the month unless otherwise listed.

Program meetings are planned as items of interest arise.



The winner of this years Raffle was Fran Fallon of Lockport, Illinois.

Thank you to everyone who entered the Raffle.

Proceeds will go toward the publication of the newsletter *The Tallgrass Journal*.

Hunting Season dates: October 4, 2011—January 15, 2012

Archery hunters are directed to stay away from the trails. The trails are open everyday except during firearms season. During firearms season the park is closed to everyone but hunters. Do not cross the barricades.

Program notes:

The Partners are willing to offer programs for groups, including cub scouts and brownies. If you tell us your idea for a program, we will work with you to develop the idea.

Check our [website](#) for details. Ask to see our [Park Video](#) when you drop in.

Keep the **Prairie Partners Gift Shop** in mind when you visit our center...

Many Nature Books are available, some Jewelry items, Handmade Leather Pouches, Clothing & Hats commemorating the Prairie Park and Hand-woven Rag Rugs, and more...



\$4.00 each

Prairie Day 2011 - We're walking on Sunshine by member Tom Kaluzny

We couldn't have asked for a nicer day. September 17th, 2011 was a glorious sunny day on the Prairie. The Goose Lake Prairie Partners would like to thank **Midwest Generation** for once again sponsoring Prairie Day. Their continued support allows us to provide events like this for you at the Goose Lake State Natural Area. And where would we be without the dedicated park staff? While small in numbers they always give big effort in keeping your park beautiful and ready for your enjoyment.

Activities, demonstrations, and visitors were everywhere both inside and outside of the Gunnar A. Peterson visitor center.

The Traveling American Indian Museum returned with its hands-on approach to learning and was always, a hit with both young and old. Authentic replicas of tools and games were a reminder of just how resourceful American Indians were. Just looking at all the displays, it was truly apparent that the American Indian wasted little from anything they harvested.

The Illinois Raptor Center was outside of the building. The birds they had were just beautiful to see up close. Not just things of beauty, we learned that birds of prey play a big part in keeping our ecosystem in balance.



The first raptor presented was a Red Tailed Hawk by the Illinois Raptor Center speakers on the front lawn of the Visitor's Center.



With Mr. Aiello's help, visitor's make Dream Catchers.

Some visitors took what they learned from the talk by Illinois Raptors and headed over to the Bird Tracks and Sounds activity. There you could hear various bird calls and see what track the birds leave. Our younger visitors were able to create their own book of bird tracks to take home. The stamps were of bird tracks you can find on the prairie. Some recognized birds from what they had learned earlier at the Raptor tent. It was wonderful to see what they had learned and remembered — that's why we're here.

The kid's craft activity project was a big hit again this year. There was a choice of three different wood kits: a windmill, covered wagon or farm tractor. Partners were there to help when needed. Our talented visitors assembled their projects at the park and took them home to paint.

Scheduled wagon rides on the trails with an interpreter throughout the day were always full. The prairie is an ever changing thing of beauty throughout the year. It seemed to be showing off its late summer colors for all to see.

Inside the visitor center author Jannifer Powelson signed copies and talked about her book, "Rachel and Sammy Visit the Prairie." Later in the afternoon she had a presentation on her book in the auditorium. The second book in the series "Rachel and Sammy Visit the Forest" was also available: these books are a wonderful way to introduce nature to young minds.



Mr. DiNaso's turtle was the favorite of many of the young visitor's.

The Traveling World of Reptiles is another returning favorite. Dave DiNaso brought many new animals as well as some we've seen before. Some like Chiquita; a 150 pound Burmese python, seem to get bigger every year. Who would have ever thought learning could be so fun and entertaining?

Who doesn't like magic? The Great Mistini was there to again amaze everyone with tricks and illusions. Having caught the magic bug in the 5th grade,



The last prairie rides of the season were conducted by member Judi Jackson.

(Continued on page 6)

5th Annual Nature Photo Contest/Exhibit

Nature Photo Contest Winners Announced

The winners of the annual Goose Lake Prairie Nature Photo Contest were on display August 20-21 in the Visitor's Center.

Peggy Hanna of Godley Illinois won the coveted Best of Show Award, as well as Best Color Print, with her entry entitled "Flight of the Barred Owl".

Gerald LeVault of Morris was judged to have submitted the Best Black and White Print with his entry "Tree in Winter Whiteout".

Peggy Hanna of Godley Illinois also received the Prairie Partners' Pick Award for her entry "Cockfight".

The People's Choice Award, as determined by balloting of the numerous visitors to the exhibit over the weekend, was awarded to Don Blecha of Coal City for his entry "Fighting Foxes".

The amateur photo contest is held every August at the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area on Pine Bluff Road at Jugtown Road in eastern Grundy County. It is orchestrated by the volunteer organization Goose Lake Prairie Partners, with a great deal of assistance from the Morris Camera Club and park staff. Photo entries are to depict the flora, fauna, and natural environment in the state of Illinois. See the website for rules. We had a disqualify great photos this year.

One hundred fifty-seven entries were submitted on Sunday August 14 at the Goose

Lake Prairie Visitors Center on Jugtown Road. The majority of participants were from Grundy and Will counties, although some entries were received from as far away as Chicago.

Judging was held Friday evening by a panel of experts assembled by the Morris Camera Club.

Winners were announced Saturday morning, and all of the photos were on display at the Visitors Center through the weekend. "We are excited by the response to the contest this year", said Goose Lake Partners' President Susie Johnson. "Not only were the one hundred and fifty seven entries the most we have received in the five-year history of the competition, but the quality of the entries was outstanding."

The response by the public was also very positive, as the visitor count at the Center was up 75% over a normal August weekend. Most of our visitors were amazed at the professional quality produced by our local amateur photographers.

Judges were:

Curtis Larsen - Member of Photo Society of Sandwich & Streator Pictorial Camera Club. Marseilles, IL

Wes Steward - Member of the Photo Society of Sandwich. Yorkville, IL.

Bruce Van Pelt - Member of the Photo Society of Sandwich. Sandwich, IL.

Go on line to <http://gooselakeprairie.org> and check out the rest of the winners of this contest.

—Click on the Nature Photo Contest link on the left hand side of the home page.



Prairie Day 2011 - We're walking on Sunshine (Continued from page 3)

The Great Mistini will keep you wondering how did he do that? Next year I am determined to figure out just how the Wishy Washy Washing Machine Popcorn Box trick works, but probably not.

Scales and Tales returned with some old friends. The little pig once again worked the crowd like a pro leaving a trail of laughter. Speaking of laughter, the chinchilla hat was really funny, it seemed happy to sit on our young guest's head. Towards the end of the show an owl flying across the room twice was both beautiful and amazing.

The Illinois Conservation Police were there with their mobile display of Illinois animals and educational information.



Illinois Conservation Police Van is a big hit at Prairie Day.

The younger visitors liked seeing and touching the native animals there on display.

The Prairie Partner food tent was busy all day serving brats, hot dogs and buffalo burgers as well as chips, cookies and drinks. Grill masters, Bill and Kim have become a great addition to our food shop. Many visitors stopped at the Prairie Partner Gift shop as well.

The final measurement of an event's success is in our visitors. This year was our biggest attendance ever recorded (320) and for that we truly thank each and every one of you that joined us.



Linda's Bird Game is very educational.

Plan on joining us again next year for the 28th Annual Cabin Festival on June 2, 2012. Our 15th Annual Prairie Day will be on September 15, 2012. Other programs occur throughout the year. Please visit Gooselakeprairie.org for details on upcoming events and other valuable information about GLPSNA.

Junior Prairie Partners' Lend A Hand On Weekends In The Visitor's Center

The Prairie Partners are excited to have new members this year. Thanks to the hard work of the new Recruitment Chair, a very conscious effort has been made to draw in new members.

Dawn Niner joined the Prairie Partners in the Spring of the year. Dawn immediately became very active, helping the partners plant the new young plants in the butterfly barn, cleaning the Cragg Cabin for Cabin Festival and volunteering to be Chairman of the November Holiday Party.

Becky Sipple joined shortly after Cabin Festival. Ethel & Bill Neese joined during the summer and have become weekend workers in the visitor's Center after being trained by Art Rohr.

Then two mothers said their daughters wanted to volunteer at the park and so they have joined so their daughters can become Junior members.

Recruitment Chairman Chuck Johnson is still looking for new members. If you are interested in helping with events at the prairie call him. His number is 815-942-3722.

Shown below is Darlynn (left) as she prepares a cover for the new Butterfly display booklet. This is Darlynn's second day at the center.

Kaitlyn (right) is making her first rug on the park loom. This was Kaitlyn's first day at the center.



Park Happenings

- The work on the photo blind is almost complete... Partners have ordered a new bench to be installed in the photo blind so photographers can sit as they wait for the birds to move closer to the blind. We remind the visitors to help us maintain this new addition to the State Park.



- Please close the windows and door when you leave.
- What you take in with you, you must take out.

President Susie Johnson says, "The Prairie Partners are pleased to provide a new photo blind to park visitors. With donations from the Brenda J. Kaluzny memorial fund, the Partners have been able to add a bench on the trail to the cabin, burr oak trees in the Picnic Grove near the kids play area, and now, the Photo Blind. Many photographers and birdwatchers visit the park and we hope they will enjoy the new blind."

Gifts To The Park Are Tax Deductible.

Goose Lake Prairie Partners are looking for a few new items to add to the visitors center as well as the park itself. If you or your organization is looking for a special project why not consider the following items:

- 1.) Choose a park trail and monitor it to keep it pristinely clean for our visitors.
- 2.) Volunteer to work the Visitor Center Desk during the weekend to help keep

the center open. Normally the Center is only open on weekends and only if volunteers work the center.

3.) Consider purchasing an item for the park. At the current time our "Want List" includes:

- New mounted bird or mammal species.
- Park benches to strategically place around the park on various trails.
- New folding chairs for our events.
- New folding tables with plastic tops
- Fund a mural for the Auditorium

If you are looking for an interesting program for your club or group, why not consider a Nature Program? Call the Park Desk for more information.

- Purchase a chain saw art piece to sit in Bird Corner.

Tax deductible gifts are recognized with a "certificate of gift" which can be used for tax deductions.

Call 815-942-2899 for information.

Park Contacts:

Joe Giacone, Site Superintendent
Char McDade, Office Coordinator
Susie Johnson, PP President
Bev Mansfield, Vice-President
Becky Sipple, Secretary
Jackie Martin, Treasurer & Purchasing Agent
Norma Hedges, Gift Shop Chairman
Jo Fleming, Historian
Tom Kaluzny, Board Member
Chuck Johnson, Recruitment Chairman

The Mission of the Goose Lake Prairie Partners

The mission of the Prairie Partners is to help the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area in the following ways.

- To understand, maintain and attract the public to the park by producing various festivals, educational events, and displays centered around early life on the prairie and on the natural environment of the park.
- To provide assistance and funds as needed by the park and its staff for equipment, supplies and other items for improvement and maintenance.

Monetary or Time Donations Are Always Welcome.

Text in this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors of the articles and not the responsibility of the Park or the Prairie Partners.

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We are on the Web.
<http://gooselakeprairie.org>



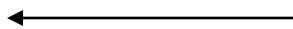
**Take Only Memories.
Leave Only Footprints.
Thank You Very Kindly.**



The fields at the prairie are awash with yellow. This photo taken early in September is of the pond near Pine Bluff road on the east side of the park. **Tall Goldenrod** and **Blue Stem Grass** are displayed pre-dominately in the foreground of this



photo. The best place to view the expanse of color is on our observation deck at the visitor's center.



The Prairie Dock Sunflower plant grows upwards to 6 or 8 feet tall. The large leaf vegetation with a tall, leafless, blooming stem makes the plant very easy to identify. This particular clump was spotted near the Cragg cabin compound. It is also a feature in the flag pole garden.

Hunting season runs from Oct 4 to January 15. Trails remain open except during gun hunting dates. See our website for dates the park is closed. <http://gooselakeprairie.org>