

Our Grassroots are Growing! Four new chapters revive interest in native Texas prairies

NATIVE PRAIRIES Association of Texas (NPAT) has been growing by leaps and bounds since this spring when members interested in forming a new **CentEx** chapter got together for field trips and workshops, and explored the possibility of a new chapter for the organization. This group met for the first time in late July. They are off to a positive start with the goal of restoring and maintaining the Granger Lake Blackland Prairie gene bank. This site was created years ago with an agreement between Texas Parks and Wildlife, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and NPAT to create a living repository for blackland prairie plants to help preserve the genetic diversity that has been mostly lost. The CentEx group is considering other conservation and restoration projects in the north Austin and Georgetown area. The new chapter will cover members from approximately 10 surrounding counties.

The **Fort Worth Chapter of Native Prairies Association of Texas** has already held three meetings. A whopping 60 people came to the second meeting! Potential members proposed an ambitious agenda for the year with proposals to lead field trips to local prairies, conduct prairie plant rescues, provide urban pocket prairie certification with signs for yards and public projects, and produce demo pocket prairie sites. They have adopted October as **Prairie Month** and are planning a series of activities to educate the public on the nature and value of prairies. This will include a field trip to Tandy Hills Natural Area and a day-long workshop on “How to Identify a Native Prairie Remnant” at BRIT on October 11. This will present identification of grass



NPAT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Pat Merkord has been spearheading the chapter drive.

and forb remnant prairie indicator species. There will be other prairie activities throughout the month of October. At chapter meetings, the group plans to highlight local prairies to introduce members to the prairies of the Fort Worth area. This chapter includes a 14 county region including Tarrant county and counties to the north, west and south. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, currently at 8700 Chapin Road, Fort Worth.

The **Dallas chapter** held its first meeting in July at the Bath House Cultural Center to a

standing-room-only crowd. They adopted a suite of counties to cover, so now Dallas and Tarrant, and their surrounding counties offer a local chapter for the NPAT members (continued on page 2)

SAVE THE DATE!



Join the Native Prairies Association of Texas for
Our Fall Celebration of Prairies!

Saturday November 8
Taylor Mustang Creek Country Club

New Chapters

(continued from page 1)

in these counties. The Dallas chapter decided to change their chapter name to the **Blackland Chapter of the Native Prairies Association of Texas**. They are currently meeting at either the Bath House or St Johns Episcopal School on the first Tuesday of each month but may change their date and place to better accommodate the membership.

“As I have attended these newly formed chapter meetings, I have been amazed and impressed with the great enthusiasm and interest expressed by these new prairie enthusiasts.”

—Pat Merkord, NPAT Executive Director

At the first meeting, 16 people signed up to be on the steering committee to guide this new group to becoming a powerhouse chapter for prairie conservation. There are a few pocket prairies in the Dallas area, and this chapter will be leading the way to make sure these prairies are left for future generations. One focus will be the pocket prairies around White Rock Lake, but their vision for the future is not limited and they will work to partner with the city to enhance and protect our valuable prairie heritage.

The fourth potential chapter has not held its first meeting, but already is involved in planning meetings to represent the **South Austin** corridor and surrounding counties including Hays, southern Travis County and Bastrop, as well as others to be determined. The momentum for this chapter actually began several years ago with efforts to save a tract of Edwards Plateau savannah (a type of grassland) in the Travis Country subdivision. NPAT continues to work with this group and they are eager to form their own chapter. Stay tuned for updates.

Congratulations to all the new chapters and members on forming and dedicating efforts to expanding and protecting our native prairies and educating the public about them.



Spooky Halloween on the Prairie by the Cemetery

Presented by the Houston Chapter Native Prairies Association of Texas

October 23 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Lawther - Deer Park Prairie Preserve, 1222 E. Purdue Lane, Deer Park, Texas

Ghosts and goblins (friends of NPAT all!) are invited for:

A night of creepy critter snacks and chocolates, even the vampires could not resist, while viewing the bone collection!

Prairie-themed Halloween costume contest featuring stealthy Indians, long lost pioneers, ghosts of the Texas revolution, outlaws and strange denizens of the prairie world (shrews, bats, owls, coyotes, snakes, fireflies, earwigs and many more!) Costumes must have a prairie theme or connection. Come in a costume

or dressed as you are. Prizes will be awarded to winners.

A presentation on haunted prairie cemeteries, prairie ghosts, ghost towns and some of the strange and weird creatures of the prairie will follow with a ghostly night walk across the prairie to the edge of the cemetery and back (hopefully!) while looking for night time creatures and telling ghostly tales.

Wear walking shoes, bring plenty of insect repellent and a flashlight or headlamp for the walk across the prairie on our mowed trail in the evening. Parking is available at the church down the street or in front of the house.

October is Prairie Month!

Fall is a great time to get out on the prairie! For the latest on chapter activities and events, go to **texasprairie.org** and click on the Chapters link. NPAT and our chapters are also on Facebook, for regular updates, follow us!

HNPAT and CPP's **Prairie Power Series** continues: October 6 to November 15 is **Prairie Month**. For more information on events, visit prairiepartner.org. **Prairie Heritage Festival** is Novem-

ber 1 at Seabourne Creek Nature Park in Rosenberg. www.coastalprairie.org

The **NPSOT Fall Symposium** will be held in Texarkana October 16-18. One of the field trips will include NPAT's Mary Talbot Prairie. For more information and to register, go to npsot.org.

The first **Central Texas Nature Fest** is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on October 18 at the Bend of the River at 7915 South General Bruce Drive in Temple.

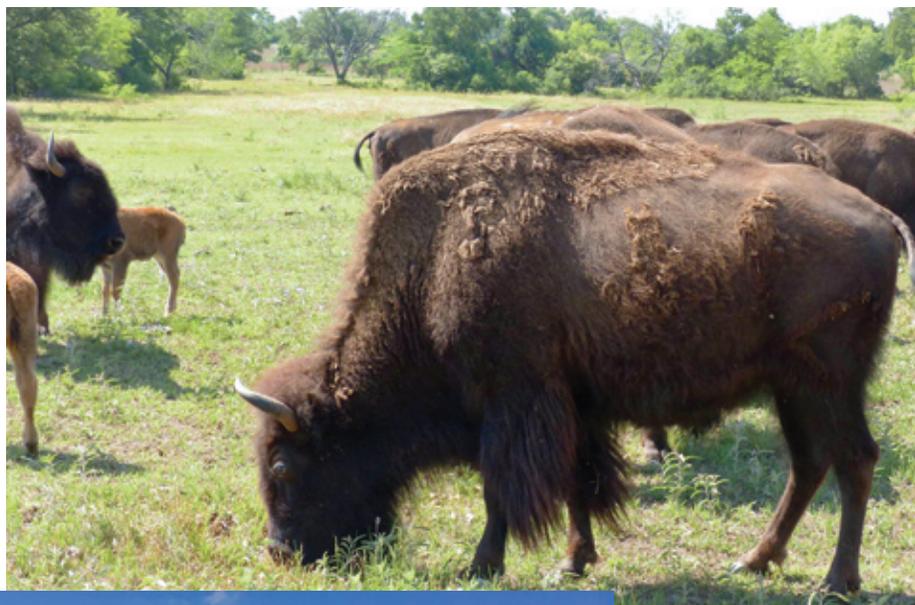
The State of the Prairie

Our 2014 conference was a huge success!

THE 5TH ANNUAL State of the Prairie Conference was held in late May at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden in the “Queen of the Prairie” city. The Conference was presented by the Native Prairies Association of Texas and the Coastal Prairie Partnership. More than 175 attendees participated in three days of presentations and field trips related to prairie conservation, restoration and education. The theme of the conference was “Prairies in a Changing World.” A variety of organizations from Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana were represented as speakers, supporters and attendees—all with the common goal of restoring and conserving vanishing native prairies.

Presentations and field trips provided experiences and information to private landowners, restorationists, biologists, landscape professionals, educators and individuals working to conserve and rebuild prairies. Topics included Restoration after Energy Production, Bison Ecology, Prescribed Fire Coalitions, Prairie Teaching, Prairie Bird Conservation, Pollinator Management, Seed Selection for Restoration, Social Media and Saving Prairies, Conservation Easements, Prairie Mapping Inventories, Management of Remnant Blackland Prairies, Invasive Woody Species Management, Benefits of Prairie Habitat Restoration to Sportsmen, Wildlife and Citizens and Grassland Bird Conservation.

The keynote speakers included Fort Worth’s own Tony Burgess, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Texas Christian University. By popular demand, Dr. Burgess was invited to Texas from his retirement in Alaska to regale listeners with tales of “Prairies for the People”—stories with a mix of humor, challenges for the future and a view of the past. The second keynote speaker was Dr. Matt Wagner, PhD, Deputy Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department who provided a hearten-



The bison at Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge made an appearance for field trip participants. Tandy Hills Natural Area was another popular field trip.



ing update on regional efforts to conserve prairies. Matt White was the guest speaker at the dinner. The author of *Prairie Time* lyrically described North Texas prairies from an appreciative perspective.

Participating institutional and business supporters included Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Gulf Coast Prairie Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge, Oklahoma State University, Native American Seed, Natural Resources Conservation Services, The Nature Conservancy, Texas A&M Forest Service, University of Texas at Arlington, The Samuel Roberts Noble

LLELA (Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Area), South Texas Natives, National Wildlife Federation, and Connemara Conservancy.

A post conference survey of participants ranked the presenters and their overall experience at 4.4 out of 5, and the most enjoyed experiences were the field trips to local native prairie sites.

Thanks to the many volunteers who helped make this conference one of the best yet. It couldn’t be done without you.

NPAT and CPP are looking at dates and locations for the next conference. Current plans are to return to the Houston area. *Stay tuned!*



Native Prairies
Association of Texas

415 N. Guadalupe St. PMB 385
San Marcos, TX 78666

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Or fill out this form and mail a check to:

The Native Prairies Association of Texas
415 N. Guadalupe St. PMB 385
San Marcos, TX 78666

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By joining our email subscriber list you'll get the latest news and events.
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MAKE A DIFFERENCE for current and future generations in the preservation of Texas' natural heritage, while enjoying outings and volunteer activities with fellow prairie enthusiasts. Be a part of the solution for the many challenges facing this great American landscape.

We depend on the support of our members to help us conserve Texas prairies. Programs are supported by gifts, contributions, bequests, grants, membership dues, and volunteer efforts.

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For more information, email us at contact@texasprairie.org, call 512-772-4741, or visit www.texasprairie.org.