



**Native Prairies**  
Association of Texas

2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290  
Austin, TX 78705-5609

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**The Native Prairies Association of Texas**  
**2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290**  
**Austin, TX 78705-5609**

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Please consider including an additional donation with your membership dues. It really helps us out!  
Please check here  to decline listing in a future member's directory.

**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, grants, membership dues, and volunteer efforts.

#### **Consider a Conservation Easement**

Benefits include: Significant tax incentives: estate, income, and capital gains

- management and restoration advice
- conservation of your family and Texas heritage

For more information, contact NPAT by email at [contact@texasprairie.org](mailto:contact@texasprairie.org), call 512-847-7615, or visit [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org).

If you wish to submit articles and photos, contact the editor, Kirsti Harms by email at [editor@texasprairie.org](mailto:editor@texasprairie.org), or mail to 2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290, Austin, Tx 78705-5609. Material appearing in *Texas Prairie News* may not be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission of the editor or the Board of Directors.

From the Executive Director

## Landowner Workshops

**T**HIS YEAR, NPAT will be offering a series of Landowner Workshops. The first in the series is “Tools & Resources for Managing & Conserving Texas Grasslands,” which is scheduled for March 29th at the Angleton Texas AgriLife Extension offices. Our goal is to reach out to owners of existing prairies through a series of programs featuring valuable land management tools and their conservation benefits. We have utilized the data from our “Tall Grass Prairie Survey Project” to determine which counties have the highest number of quality prairie remnants and will target those counties first. Marketing efforts will include neighboring counties as well. This year we will also be offering programs in Lamar and Cooke Counties and will continue the workshops in other counties over the next few years.

There is still some misinformation and distrust amongst landowners about conservation efforts; particularly when it comes to easements. Most do not realize that easements are merely real estate transactions, and as such have negotiable terms. For example, some landowners retain the right to hunt, others continue haying, grazing, and even keep their mineral rights. Additional possibilities include leaving a development zone (for future housing or livestock needs). And while there may be a significant public benefit from scenic open space and water resource management, public access is not required. In fact the land trust is only required to do one annual monitoring visit, which is scheduled at the landowner’s convenience.

Conservation easements also offer landowners sig- (continued on page 2)



### NPAT’s Newest Addition

## The Russell Preserve

By Phillip Quast, Program Director/Outreach Coordinator

**N**PAT IS excited to announce its newest conservation easement, “The Russell Grasslands and Forest Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.” Generously donated by George Russell, this 830-acre gem on the shores of Lake Livingston encompasses a wide variety of ecologically distinct areas. Open prairie and savanna, dense pine and hardwood forest, annually flooded bottomlands, and Catahoula Barrens are all found within the conservation easement. Catahoula Barrens are an ecological system associated with outcrops of tuffaceous sandstone or areas where the sandstone is only covered with a thin layer of soil. These barrens may be extremely xeric during dry months and saturated with water during wet periods. Plants growing here must be adapted to handle these extremes. Very few woody plants tolerate these conditions and the area is

dominated by herbaceous plants. Several rare and unusual forbs are associated with the barrens, including the branched gayfeather (*Liatris cymosa*, a G2S2 plant considered imperiled with 6 to 20 occurrences globally) and yellow stonecrop (*Sedum nuttallianum*).

The grasslands are dominated by little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), silver bluestem (*Andropogon laguroides*), dropseed (*Sporobolus* sp.), and bushy bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*). Six species of gayfeather (*Liatris* sp.), three species of blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium* sp.), and rarities such as the Texas sunnybell (*Schoenolirion wrightii*, a G3S2 plant with less than 100 occurrences globally and less than 20 of those in Texas) found in the grasslands of the preserve demonstrates the vegetative richness and diversity found there. (continued on page 2)

## Landowner Workshops

(Continued from Page 1)

nificant tax benefits. Since estate taxes are one of the primary reasons that family lands are sold and/or divided up, we really want to make sure we deliver this message. We also want to assist landowners by including information about programs and practices which may enhance or support their ongoing land management practices. And, of course, by allowing plenty of time for discussion we will learn a lot as well; hopefully building lasting relationships with these much appreciated stewards of our historic and ecological heritage.

—Dalmara Bayne, ED, NPAT

The March 29 Landowner Workshop will be held at the Texas Agrilife Extension office in Angleton. It includes speakers in the morning, lunch and an afternoon field trip to Nash Prairie. RSVP required. For more information contact phillip\_quast@texasprairie.org or call 512-751-9265.

## The Russell Preserve

(Continued from Page 1)

The preserve is also home to many threatened species of wildlife including Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*). The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) has also been historically documented on the Russell easement.

In addition to the wide variety of flora and fauna found here, the Russell Grassland and Forest Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary also connects several other conservation easements and otherwise conserved lands owned by George Russell to create a significant, contiguous habitat for plants and animals in a region of Texas that is otherwise under heavy pressure from residential and commercial development. Learn more about the Russell Grassland and Forest Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary and other grasslands in Texas protected by NPAT at [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org).



At one point, a dump truck had to be freed from the soft soil. Read on for more!

## Tales from the Houston Chapter Prairie Mound Rescue

By Noreen Hoard, President HNPAT

**D**AY 1: Sunday November 27 turned into a busy and exciting day for me. It started off with about a dozen prairie enthusiasts seed collecting at a high quality prairie remnant in Deer Park at 10:00 a.m. From there we visited two nearby sites. At the first site, we found the rare and threatened (though not federally protected) *Rayjacksonia aurea* and Texas windmill grass (*Chloris texensis*). The second site, scheduled to be bulldozed and developed was a seed and plant harvesting site. Finally, we followed up on a property lead from Jerry Caraviotis. Jerry had just read Lisa Gray's *Houston Chronicle* article, *The Prairie Hunters Find a Pristine Example* [Nov. 20].

It had already been a long day on the prairie; the group had now dwindled to four who forged ahead. At this new site, we discovered three sizeable pimple mounds with the many treasures one expects to see on a prairie remnant.

Keep in mind that it was Sunday around 4:00 p.m. A contractor with heavy equipment was on site. Lan Shen spoke with

the contractor (referred to as Mr. B). Initially, Mr. B. was a little hesitant about our eagerness to save the prairie plants and the pimple mounds. He feared that we would find an endangered species and that would shut down his operation, slowing the progress of the housing development. Mr. B indicated that the mounds would be bulldozed the following day. After some persuasion, Mr. B agreed to let us to dig up a few plants right then. Little did he know that this group travelled with shovels, pots, and bags for spontaneous rescues. Now we were three, working until dark. After fast and furious digging, we loaded our vehicles to the brim and called it a day. Having not eaten lunch, we found a restaurant, and shared stories about our rescue before heading home. Talk about being in the right place at the right time! How fortunate to be able to save valuable native plants from a remnant of our vanishing natural heritage, a diverse and rich ecosystem—the Gulf Coast Prairie!

By the time we got home and unloaded our vehicles it was 9:00 p.m. That night,

Lan emailed fellow prairie enthusiasts about digging possibilities on Monday—ahead of the bulldozers and backhoes as they leveled the pimple mounds.

**DAY 2: Monday November 28.** On site that day were Lan Shen, Linda Ripert, Tom Solomon, Lisa Gray, Kelly Walker and Jerry Caraviotis. Once again, Lan talked with Mr. B, who realized that we weren't going to chain ourselves to the grasses to stop his project, and he admitted that the leveling of the pimple mounds would actually take place about a week later. Lan was then able to secure a buyer for the pimple mound.

What? That's right. Karl Baumgartner with Coastal Prairie Master Naturalists purchased a dump truck load of a pimple mound that was to be hand selected by Lan and transported to Seabourne Creek Park in Rosenberg for their prairie installation. In addition, Mr. B was asked to donate a pickup load of the pimple mound soil for the Harris County Gulf Coast Master Naturalists' Plant Propagation Program. This would be used for Phase 2 of Project Blazingstar's savannah prairie at Bayou Parklands in Hermann Park. Anyone who knows Lan knows that her little Toyota can hold more prairie items: plants, pots, tools, and bags of top soil, than any full-sized vehicle. However, even Lan knew that it would be impossible to fit a truck load of a prairie pimple mound in her car. Lan had to find someone with a pickup. Eventually she contacted me that night to inquire if I could get off work the next day to help rescue a pimple mound.

**DAY 3: Tuesday November 29.** That morning at work I had some explaining to do when requesting the rest of the day off to rescue a pimple mound. My boss and co-workers got an education, a good laugh, and were relieved when I described a pimple mound rescue. They heard the word pimple and had visions of something unrelated to a prairie and could not understand why I would want to rescue one. I was able to get the rest of the day off.

On site that day, Lan and I were joined by Susan Conaty, Jim Manley, and Cheryl Sedivec. This rescue was a sight to behold from first scoop to last and it was NOT without incident! As the dump truck attempted to drive off the prairie with its

tons of precious cargo, it got stuck in the soft soil up to its front bumper. A bulldozer with a heavy chain was called to the rescue. Finally, the dump truck was pulled free, drove off the prairie and headed for Seabourne Creek Park.

Then it was time to load my red F150 Ford pickup with the pimple mound soil designated for the plant propagation facility. I had never carried a heavy load in my truck and was rather nervous. As soon as my truck was loaded, the workers announced that they were leaving for lunch. After seeing the big dump truck get stuck, I immediately said, "Oh no, you can't leave until I drive off the prairie. What if I get stuck? I'll need you guys to pull me out." They laughed and assured me that I would not get stuck. They were right.

With the soil loaded in the bed of the truck and the rescued prairie plants "planted" on top, we drove from Deer Park to Hermann Park with prairie plants blowing in the wind. I'm sure we were a sight to behold! It was a traveling prairie. Lan and I arrived at the park after 3:00 p.m. and faced the daunting task of unloading the pimple mound soil from the bed of my pickup. Lan made a few phone calls and was able to recruit Diane Kerr to help us unload the soil at the plant propagation site.

It would have been ideal to rescue a pimple mound intact and place it directly on a prairie restoration site. Nevertheless, we did the next best thing: we rescued as much top soil from the pimple mound as possible to be used directly at Seabourne Creek Park, and indirectly at Bayou Parklands plant propagation site to aid in growing-out and bumping-up plants for future prairie installations. In three days we accomplished a lot on behalf of prairies and that was not the end. In the days that followed, other prairie enthusiasts made the journey from Houston to Deer Park to continue the prairie salvage until the heavy equipment was ready to roll over the natural beauty that would be lost—only to become a memory to those that took part in the rescue.

Who would have ever thought that we would be able to add this to our resumes: Pimple Mound Rescuer!

For more pictures from this rescue, go to [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org).

## Who's Who in 2012

**NPAT WOULD LIKE** to introduce our new board members and officers. New to the board are **Jason Billick** and **Mike Roller**. Jason is an associate attorney at the Law Office of Kleinhans Gruber, P.L.L.C. in Austin, and Mike is a real estate broker/owner at RE/MAX Realty West in the Fulshear-Katy area. **Jason Singhurst**, botanist/plant ecologist at Texas Parks and Wildlife in Austin, has rejoined the board after a year hiatus. We are very excited to have these talented folks in our service!

**Pat Merkord** and **Kirsti Harms** will stay on as President and Vice President. **Cheryl Sedivec** has generously agreed to become Treasurer. And **Jason Billick** will serve as Secretary of NPAT. The President-elect position remains vacant.

Board members **Aron Flanders**, **Kathleen Darling** and **Daniel Scognamiglio** stepped down at the end of this year. We thank all of them for their time and service to Texas prairies!

### Board of Directors 2012

**Pat Merkord, President**

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