

# TEXAS PRAIRIE

FROM THE NATIVE PRAIRIES ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS

## News

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### Executive Director's Report

## Holistic Conservation

**N**PAT'S PRIMARY MISSION is clearly the **conservation of native grasslands**, but both our motivation and methodology must be holistic if we are to achieve optimal results. A **holistic approach** emphasizes the functional relationship between the parts of a system with the clear understanding that humans are not outside this relationship. Therefore, while acquisition, protection and restoration remain primary organizational goals; **outreach and education are equally important** because they provide both incentives and the means for accomplishing the former.

Few Texans recognize what a prairie is, much less why they should care about preserving this diminishing ecosystem. While history classes teach us much about our cultural heritage, they do little to educate students about the predominant grassland ecosystem with its rich soils that provided the basis for early Texas agriculture. Nor is the importance of holistic land practices that sustain this rich heritage stressed, as family farms and ranches disappear largely due to the pressures of unsustainable land practices, development and taxes. This omission is not only critical for an accurate understanding of our cultural and natural heritage, but for our future as well.

Native grasses enhance both water quality and quantity, they stabilize climate through carbon sequestering, and are home to many declining species; including pollinators necessary for crop production. Therefore, the conservation of prairies should not be viewed as a luxury; something we promote when funds are available, but as a staple—critical to our present and future well being. This holistic view is often absent from planning



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH RANWELL

**How many NPAT:ers does it take to put up a bluebird box? With teamwork and perseverance these volunteers managed to install four boxes during the Maddin Prairie Preserve work days in January. Also accomplished: native grasses and forbs were seeded in around the new building and the creek camping areas.**

## Matching Funds

### Help us reach our goal!

**NPAT IS THE RECIPIENT of a \$32,000 matching grant from the Meadows Foundation** this year. To date we have received \$9,025 in cash contributions and \$12,100 in pledges. This leaves us \$11,000 short. We need to receive these funds or pledges by **May of 2010** in order to receive the much needed funds.

In addition to the normal duties affiliated with land trusts, NPAT has been conducting prairie remnant surveys in 94 counties. This data will help many organizations to better prioritize acquisitions and create more effective conservation planning. We need these funds in order to continue normal operations and complete the survey project. We sincerely appreciate your choosing to be part of the solution by helping us to conserve our natural heritage for all Texans.

To donate, visit [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org) or use the form on the back of this newsletter. **We need your help to make this important match!**

models, which are primarily developed and implemented within a linear-immediate gain paradigm; much to our heirs' detriment. For in the end such models are not sustainable and future generations will not only pay the price for our short sightedness, but also inherit a faulty

model of the world that perpetuates such poor choices.

Given the urgency of the state of our grasslands, acquisition must remain a priority, but outreach programs that educate Texan's about their importance is an equally important conservation strategy.

To that end, you will see more educational field trips and articles this year, and we are sponsoring regionally specific restoration workshops for professionals—the end goal being concise protocols designed to give landowners the tools they need for optimal results. So as you can see, we are not only adopting a holistic view, but holistic methodology as well. For in the end, not only are humans part of the ecosystem, but their impact upon that system cannot be denied. To be successful, we must stop preaching to the choir and reach out to as many people and parts of the system as possible. Our goal is to take conservation mainstream through both engagement and education; facilitating active participation in conserving our natural heritage. This we hope will help to ensure a healthy sustainable future for all Texans.

—Dalmar Bayne



PHOTO COURTESY OF USA SPANGLER

Volunteers Leslie Bush and Farrah Farley picked up trash at the Brodie Wild work day.

## PRAIRIE *Events*

### Native Grasslands and Birds Field Trip

Lead by **Jim Giocomo**, American Bird Conservancy and **Susan Tuttle**, Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge

**Saturday, April 3**, 8 a.m. to noon  
Fort Worth Nature and Science Center

For more information contact Daniel Dietz at 512-731-2517 or [ddietz101@yahoo.com](mailto:ddietz101@yahoo.com)

### Grass Identification Workshop

With **Tom Watson**, retired university botanist and master naturalist

**Saturday, April 24**, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Just west of Buda

Limited to 15 participants and you must pre-register by April 17. For more information and to register, contact Daniel Dietz at 512-731-2517 or [ddietz101@yahoo.com](mailto:ddietz101@yahoo.com)

This class will help you identify the more common grasses of the Hill Country.

### Prairie Fest

**Saturday, April 24**, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
Tandy Hills Natural Area  
3400 View Street, Fort Worth

## Keeping Brodie Wild Clean (and Wild)

**BRUSH CUTTING AND TRASH COLLECTION** was the order of the day on March 13th as volunteers from NPAT, the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT), Capital Area Master Naturalists, and the neighborhood participated in a work day at Brodie Wild in south Austin.

The site is a four-acre water quality protection property owned by the City of Austin, with good populations of Indiangrass, little bluestem, sideoats grama, and many other native savannah plants. The city partners with NPAT and NPSOT on the management of Brodie Wild, with the groups leading volunteer days and field trips to teach people about native plants and how they can improve water quality and quantity. **A plant walk is planned for Sunday April 11 at 9 a.m.** For more information, go to <http://brodiewild.org>.

An outdoor festival to celebrate our connection to the natural world. For more information, go to [www.tandyhills.org/prairiefest.htm](http://www.tandyhills.org/prairiefest.htm).

### Burleson Prairie Plant Identification Walk

Lead by **Jason Singhurst**, Texas Parks and Wildlife botanist and ecologist  
**Saturday, May 1**, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
Belton area

For more information contact Daniel Dietz at 512-731-2517 or [ddietz101@yahoo.com](mailto:ddietz101@yahoo.com)

### Riesel Prairie Work Day

**Saturday, May 8**  
Falls County near Marlin

Check out what's coming up after the winter burn. The rain date is May 15. For more information contact James Alderson at 254-721-6842 or [jsaco1@yahoo.com](mailto:jsaco1@yahoo.com).

### Breeding Bird Survey and Open Preserve Day

**Saturday May 22**, 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
Maddin Prairie Preserve,  
Colorado City

NPAT's largest preserve will be open for birding, hiking and exploring. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kirsti Harms at 512-296-9160 or [kirstiharms@att.net](mailto:kirstiharms@att.net).

### North American Prairie Conference

**August 1–5, 2010**  
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The conference theme is "Restoring a National Treasure." For more information go to [www.northamericanprairieconference.org](http://www.northamericanprairieconference.org) or call 319.273.7957.

For more details on NPAT events, go to [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org)

## Pastures for Upland Birds

**T**EXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE Department, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Native Prairies Association of Texas are working on a cooperative agreement to give Texas landowners the opportunity to restore native grasslands on introduced grass dominated properties. As one of the greatest threats to wildlife today, introduced grass pastures have claimed millions of acres of habitat throughout Texas. Ground nesting birds such as wild turkey and bobwhite quail have particularly suffered from the loss of our valuable native grasslands to “tame” varieties of turf grasses such as Bermudagrass. Also, the majority of introduced grasses require expensive annual fertilization, normally 60-100 pounds, to maintain productivity. Conversely, properly managed native grasses do not require annual fertilization because they are adapted to Texas’ climate and soils. Furthermore, native grasses used for forage provide high protein levels, similar to or higher than non native grasses, required for livestock and hay production. An additional benefit is the high drought tolerance exhibited by native grasses. All of these factors make native grasses a sustainable part of Texas’ rangeland.

The **Pastures for Upland Birds program** assists landowners within the Post Oak Savannah, Blackland Prairie, and Cross Timbers ecoregions with native prairie restoration by providing funds and technical guidance. This program converts areas dominated by introduced grasses, such as Bermudagrass, Johnsongrass, Bahiagrass, or Old World bluestems to native grasses and forbs. Common native grasses include yellow Indiangrass, little bluestem, big bluestem, and switchgrass. Landowner cooperators are provided herbicide to reduce introduced grasses, use of a native grass seed drill to plant the area, and potentially reimbursement for native seed costs at up to \$80 per acre. You would be swinging at BBs in the dark with a clothes hanger if you tried to find better incentives than these. Landowners are provided technical guidance throughout the restoration process.

This program works well for landowners

whose goals include habitat improvement for quail, turkey, migratory songbirds, white-tailed deer, pollinators, Texas horned lizard, other nongame wildlife, wildlife tax valuation, forage production, or preserving Texas’ native prairie legacy. The broader public benefits from native prairie restoration through improved water quality, groundwater recharge, carbon

sequestration, erosion control, outdoor education and recreational opportunities.

Landowners can participate by contacting their local Texas Parks & Wildlife Department biologist to set up a site visit. If you are interested, contact Aron Flanders, Native Prairies Board of Directors, at 903-945-2129 or [aron.flanders@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:aron.flanders@tpwd.state.tx.us).



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES ALDERSON

Indian plantain and Eastern gamagrass showing signs of growth on March 4, two weeks after Riesel Prairie, NPAT’s remnant tallgrass prairie in Falls County was burned.

## Management Burn of Riesel Prairie

**N**ATIVE PRAIRIES Association of Texas members were “practicing what they preach” when they carried out a **management burn of Riesel Prairie** on February 18, 2010. Glenn Merkord, Daniel Dietz, and James Alderson made up the fire crew. Walter Mezynski, son of Paul and Virginia Mezynski, who donated the five-acre prairie to NPAT, was on hand to take photographs. Grandson Russell Mezynski was also on hand with a tractor and sprayer, just in case. Paul and Virginia watched the event from Walter’s pickup parked on Falls County Road 149.

Riesel Prairie, one of only a handful of tallgrass prairie remnants from the vast Blackland Prairies has fallen victim to neglect during recent years. Numerous cedar elm and Texas sugarberry (hackberry) seedlings have become fully established. Wild plums and Southern dewberries have increased well beyond proper densities.

NPAT’s objectives for the burn were to control the woody invaders, reduce the canopy of dewberries and plums, and remove some of the excess litter that has been allowed to build up in the absence of fire, grazing and cutting for hay.

—James Alderson



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# To Help Save Texas Prairies

## Join the Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT)

To join online, visit [www.texasprairie.org](http://www.texasprairie.org) and go to the Support Us page.  
Or fill out this form and mail a check to:

The Native Prairies Association of Texas  
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Membership Categories:  \$1,500 Family Lifetime  \$1,000 Lifetime  
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 New  Renewal  \$5000 Adopt-an-Acre  
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I'm interested in prairies because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I'd like more information about: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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 512-772-4741, 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.