

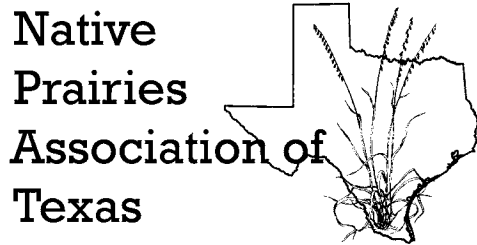
TEXAS PRAIRIE

Journal

Saving Texas Prairies

**NPAT
Receives
Tallgrass Prairie
Grants**

**Tandy Hills:
Prairies & People—
Oil & Gas**



Who We Are and What We Do

Mission

The Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT) is a non-profit land trust dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and appreciation of native prairies, savannas, and other grasslands in Texas. We save Texas prairies.

Less than 1% of the original 20 million acres of Texas' beautiful tallgrass prairie remains, so we must act now to conserve our remaining tallgrass prairie heritage.

Conservation

NPAT protects prairies through acquisition, partnerships, and by accepting donations of conservation easements and property to protect native prairie in perpetuity. Learn more about protecting your prairie in perpetuity and potential tax benefits.

We protect over 1200 acres of native Texas prairie, including over 100 acres of endangered/threatened tallgrass prairie.

Restoration

We restore native prairie on our own land, and promote restoration on other private and public lands to benefit the native plant communities, grassland birds, and other prairie wildlife of Texas. We provide informational resources and advice to assist restoration.

Appreciation

We educate Texans about native prairies, plant communities, grassland birds, and other prairie wildlife. We promote the conservation and restoration of Texas prairies.

Partners and Affiliations

NPAT is affiliated with the following groups:

- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
- Land Trust Alliance
- Native Plant Conservation Campaign
- Native Plant Society of Texas
- Plant Conservation Alliance
- Teaming with Wildlife
- Texas Land Trust Council
- Texas Prairie Coalition

Presidents of the Past

David Diamond, Ph. D.
Arnold Davis (deceased)
Kunda Lee Wicce
Lynn Pace
Dr. Geoffrey Stanford (deceased)
Paul Mezynski, Ph. D.
James Alderson
Eugene Heinemann

Board of Directors 2007-2008

Kunda Lee Wicce, President
2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290
Austin, Tx 78705-5609
kunda_lee_wicce@texasprairie.org

Jim Eidson, Vice President
972-533-8700
jim_eidson@texasprairie.org

Pat Merkord, Secretary
936-827-7973 (m)
pat_merkord@texasprairie.org

Jason Spangler, Treasurer
512-736-4199 (m)
jason_spangler@texasprairie.org

David Croft
david_croft@texasprairie.org

Kirsti Harms
kirsti_harms@texasprairie.org

David Rosen, Ph.D
david_rosen@texasprairie.org

David Todd
david_todd@texasprairie.org

Matt White
matt_white@texasprairie.org

Advisory Board

Dr. Fred Smeins, Scientific Advisor

David Bezanson

Bob Burleson

Clair Burleson

Mickey Burleson

B.F. Hicks

Johnny Johnson

Robert Rasmus

Cover photo courtesy of the
Texas Department of Transportation

NPAT Update

IN THE LAST NPAT election for Board of Directors, the following people were voted onto the Board: David Croft, Jim Eidson, Pat Merkord, John Pickett, Jason Spangler, Matt White and Kunda Wicce. Subsequently John Pickett resigned from the Board, and Kirsti Harms, David Rosen and David Todd were appointed to fill board vacancies.

Welcome new NPAT Board Members!

Thank you for your service. John's past service to NPAT as Board President is greatly appreciated and his presence missed.

Welcome new NPAT Board Advisors

Robert Rasmus (Chicago), Bob and Mickey Bureson (Temple), Clair Bureson (Houston), and Johnny Johnson (North Texas)! Thank you for caring!

Fundraising Committee members

Kunda Wicce and Jason Spangler met February 23rd with Allison Supancic of the Hogg Foundation to discuss foundations and corporations

likely to support tallgrass prairie conservation issues.

The **NPAT Board of Directors** met in January on the 25th, 26th, and 27th at the Annual Conference of the Texas Land Trust Council in Austin and participated

in training seminars on various topics important to running a land trust. The Board of Directors met again on April 14 in Mt. Vernon, and visited with member B.F. Hicks. He and his two brothers led a tour of the 1,000 acre Daphne Prairie which has the largest mima mounds in Texas. The next day they enjoyed field trips to Tridens Prairie near Paris. Tridens is 100 acres of Silveus' Dropseed prairie, a critically imperiled plant community within the Blackland prairie. While in the area, Board members viewed the Smiley-Woodfin Meadow, which is Texas' largest Blackland Prairie remnant, and visited The Nature Conservancy's Clymer Prairie.

Last April 29 the **Property Management and Acquisitions Committee** (PAM) along with interested members monitored NPAT's Falls County conservation easements on the Lehmann and Wieting Prairies and on NPAT's own

Riesel Prairie. On May 5th, there was a field trip to the Quebe Prairie near Brenham. May 12th PAM visited our Simpson Prairie conservation easement near Crawford. April 29th Jan Miller and Jim Varnum led a walk on the New York Avenue Blackland Prairie in Arlington. That same day Suzanne Tuttle, director of the Fort Worth Nature Center led tours of Tandy Hills Prairie. May 5th, Jeff Quayle led a field trip to Dinosaur Valley State Park in Somervell Co. May 12 Property Management and Acquisitions (PAM) Committee member Jason Spangler and Lisa Spangler led a trip to our Simpson Prairie conservation easement in Bosque County and to the nearby Whitney Prairie. June 9 there was a wildflower tour of Bear Creek Ranch, owned by the Dixon Water Foundation. Jim Eidson presented a talk about natural history and ranch manager Robby Tuggle spoke on sustainable grazing.

This past spring and summer NPAT submitted comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on two pipeline projects: Gulf Crossing Pipeline Project and Mid-continent Express Pipeline. Both projects threaten especially rare

Silvaneous Dropseed Prairies in the North Texas globally endangered Blackland Prairie.

Jason Spangler spoke to forty-five Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Travis County Chapter, on March 7 about native plant landscaping and conservation, with an emphasis on tallgrass prairie conservation. In August, Board Member Matt White contacted the new owner of a Lamar County prairie with white *Liatris* to encourage him not to plow under any more of it. October 21st former Board Member Jim Varnum gave a talk to the Arlington UU Church on native prairies in Arlington, habitat conservation and related topics.

On July 28 the Board met on-site with member John Hirschi to tour his 200-acre reconstructed prairie near Wichita Falls. They continued on to the Birdwell and Clark Ranch and the prairielands near Henrietta, where the Board held its Summer meeting. The *(continued on page 2)*

CALL FOR BOARD MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

NPAT needs members willing to serve on the Board of Directors, and we need volunteers to help with prairie restoration and advocacy!

Please contact NPAT via email at info@texasprairie.org or via postal mail if you are interested.

Inside This Issue

A Request for Grassland Soils
Page 3

New Grants For NPAT & Prairies
Page 4

Prairies & People — Oil & Gas
Page 4

Tandy Hills: Impact of Oil & Gas Boom
Page 5

New Conservation Easement Donations
Page 6

Doing Wrong by Lady Bird
Page 7

Saving Texas Prairies
Page 8

Texas Prairie Coalition Update
Page 9

IRA Charitable Deductions
Page 10

The Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture
Page 11

TEXAS PRAIRIE *Journal*

If you wish to submit articles, send to editor@texasprairie.org. We welcome reports, articles, literature reviews, and announcements related to native prairies. Please submit photos via e-mail.

Editor: Kirsti Harms
editor@texasprairie.org
2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290 • Austin,
Tx 78705-5609

Contributing editors:
Jason Spangler, Kunda Lee Wicce

The Native Prairies Association of Texas is supported by volunteers. Material appearing in *The Prairie Dog* may not be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission of the editor or the Board of Directors.

NPAT Update *continued*

Henrietta Prairie region is in the western part of the Cross Timbers and Prairies in Clay and Archer Counties, and is a transition zone between the tallgrass prairie region and the mixed-grass prairies of the Rolling Plains.

October 18 - 21 **NPAT and the Native Plant Society of Texas** met jointly for the **2007 Native Plant Symposium** at Sun City, outside of Georgetown, north of Austin. Board members Jim Eidson and Kunda Wicce conducted a tour in the Marlin area (Falls County) of TNC's Lindhardt Prairie, NPAT's Riesel Prairie, and the Lehman Prairie on which NPAT holds a prairie conservation easement. The annual members' meeting and Board of Directors meeting were held during this symposium. The Board reported to the membership on its fundraising successes and the recent completion of cataloging of prairies in ten counties. Board adopted a Financial/Investments Policy to guide future investment decisions. A financial report was made available to members. If you would like to receive a copy of NPAT's financial report, contact treasurer@texasprairie.org or call 512-772-4741.

Last March 5-6 **Maddin Committee members** Pat Merkord and Kunda Wicce visited Maddin Prairie Preserve outside of Colorado City to survey for birds and add to the Maddin Prairie Plant List. The Maddin Committee met again on site May 4 - 6 to conduct Breeding Bird Surveys; they were joined by member John Grey of Fort Worth. Board Members Pat Merkord, Kirsti Harms and Kunda Wicce visited NPAT's Maddin Prairie a third time this year on Nov. 4 and 5. They saw 47 species of birds and monitored the prairie dog town established by member Jesse Wood and the Wagners of Amarillo.

The Board will meet again in January 26-27 in Marfa for its annual Planning Retreat where the Board will set its 2008 schedule of meetings and field trips, as well as review NPAT's Strategic Plan and take on new assignments for the year. Vice President Jim Eidson is coordinating the logistics of this meeting. In the interim, President Kunda Wicce and Board Member David Croft will draft a Records-Keeping Policy for the board consideration, and PAM Committee Chairman Jason Spangler will work with two prairie owners who wish to donate conservation easements on their prairies before the end of 2007.



Educational Use

OUR TIP OF THE HAT to teacher

Kimberlee Long of All Saints' Episcopal School in Fort Worth for creating a curriculum involving the school's 16 acres of prairie and wetlands for their K through 12 classes. She writes:

"Your Web site is wonderful and informative and contains fabulous information about Texas prairie."



A New Phone Number and Updated Web Site

NPAT HAS A NEW, permanent phone number! Call us at **512-772-4741**.

This number is owned by NPAT and currently goes to a voice mail system that emails those messages to NPAT board members who have volunteered to handle calls to the organization. Once NPAT has staff, this number can be transferred to connect to the staff's location or office, thus avoiding waste of printed materials due to an outdated phone number.

The NPAT web site has been updated with many beautiful photos, including Texas prairie landscape scenes of native grasses and flowers, and people enjoying prairies. Each native prairie protected by NPAT now has an individual page, featuring a slideshow of photos, information on the owners, and native plant and bird species lists. A photo album of native Texas prairies has also been created for the web site.

New prairie information has been added to the web site, and existing information about prairie conservation, restoration, and management has been made easier to find.

A Google custom search box has been added to make information easier to locate.

Check out the updated NPAT web site at **www.texasprairie.org!**

Thanks to Lisa Spangler, Jason Spangler, and Johnny Johnson for contributing new photos to the web site. Thanks to Jason Spangler for making the recent additions and updates, and to Scott Lenharth for taking care of the web site for many years!

And last, you may

have noticed—the former **Prairie Dog** newsletter has a new name, a new editor, and a new look.

Thanks to former editors, Nicole and Pat Merkord—among others—for all their work to keep the "Doggie" going.

Google Grant To Advertise NPAT

NPAT is a recent recipient of the **Google Grant award**. The Google Grants program supports organizations sharing Google's philosophy of community service to help the world in areas such as science and technology, education, global public health, the environment, youth advocacy, and the arts.

Designed for 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, Google Grants is a unique in-kind advertising program harnessing the power of Google AdWords advertising product. Google Grants has awarded AdWords advertising to hundreds of non-profit groups whose missions range from animal welfare to literacy, from supporting homeless children to promoting HIV education.

The grant is in the form of Google AdWords, which appear above and beside relevant search results when a user searches the World Wide Web. For example, when a Google user searches for "prairie" the results page currently displays a small NPAT ad with a title like "Help Save Texas Prairies" and descriptive text like "Learn about Texas' tallgrass prairies and help us save these special places."

The ad links to NPAT's web site, where users can view images of native prairies in bloom, read about prairies, learn about the ecoregions of Texas, and find out how to join or donate to NPAT.

Thank you to Google for supporting Texas prairies and NPAT!

A Request for Grassland Soils

Dear NPAT,

I AM WRITING today to see if anyone with the NPAT would be able to collect some soils from some Texas prairies for a project I am heading up comparing grassland soils across North America. I've had a hard time finding contacts for Texas prairies, especially Blackland prairies.

The broad goals of the project are to better understand the diversity and how grasslands work across North America: for example, going beyond just standard classifications of grasslands such as Palouse prairie or tallgrass. From an applied perspective, the research will help us understand continental-scale patterns of nutrient supply, susceptibility of the grasslands to changes in temperature or nitrogen deposition, and how to conserve plant diversity.

This preliminary project on grassland soils is estimated to incorporate about 200 sites across the US and Canada, with sites from California to Texas, and Ohio to Florida already participating. Participation is pretty simple. Select two points that represent interesting contrasts in your grassland or prairie site. These might be the tops and bottoms of hills, grasslands dominated by perennials and annuals, or sandy soils and clayey soils. At each of the two points on your site, you'll need to dig a hole 20 cm deep and place the soil in a 1-gallon Ziploc bag. Label the bags, fill out a short form that will ask for some basic information, and then take the two bags to the post office. At the post office, ask for a 11" x 8.5" x 5.5" flat rate box, which easily holds 2 gallons, and mail it to us here at Kansas State University. If you'd like us to pay for the postage, let me



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAT MERKORD

know and I'll send along the \$9 in postage (and Ziploc bags if you need those). Don't worry about insulating the box—the soil will be just fine on its trip here to Manhattan, Kansas in October.

When I get the soil, the samples will be used to answer questions that center on understanding the relationships between soil organic matter, microbial communities in the soil, and nutrient availability. In addition to some basic measures like soil pH, soil texture (how sandy the soil is), and some basic patterns of nutrient availability (potential nitrogen mineralization), the first project will be to grow plants in each soil in combination with different nutrients added as an index

of nutrient limitation. This should give us an index of which nutrients limit plant growth at a site. Assays of soil organic matter quality are also planned in order to understand how carbon is stored in the soils and its role in supplying nutrients to plants. Soils not used for these projects will be archived so that other researchers can ask different questions in the future.

Beyond this immediate project, the long-term goal is to set up a national network of grassland monitoring and research—one that might coordinate research on other aspects of grasslands like plants and insects. Not only would contributing soil help to see how your grassland or prairie compares to others in North America, but showing that we can coordinate sample collection across a broad number of sites managed by a diverse group of

organizations will be a good step toward this larger goal.

If you are willing to take part, in an email, let me know the following:

- 1) **How many sites are you planning?** Most people will contribute two points at one site, but others had offered to collect soils from more than one site. If you plan to hit more than one site, we should talk.
- 2) **Should we send you postage?** Our budget is somewhat limited on this, so if you can pay for postage, that'll help us support other sites that can't.
- 3) **Will you be able to send soils to us before Nov. 1?** If not, let me know and we'll schedule soils being sent.

If you can help out, I will email more specific instructions and a short form to fill out for each site. It'll ask for specifics on the location like GPS coordinates (if possible). Also, if there are permission forms I need to fill out, let me know and I'll get on that.

If you want more information, let me know and I'll give you a call.

Thanks,

Joseph Craine
Division of Biology
Kansas State University
Manhattan KS 66506-4901
Email: jcraine@ksu.edu

Information Request for Prairies and Savannas

NPAT IS LOOKING for prairie and savanna remnants and restorations throughout Texas, especially in the Blackland Prairie, Coastal Prairie, and Grand Prairie (of the Cross Timbers and Prairies) regions of Texas.

Knowledge of prairie remnants greatly assists us in conservation planning, and helps us identify land owners so we can inquire about their interest in protecting their prairie.

If you know of any existing remnants (even drive-by sightings or just rumors), own a prairie remnant, or are restoring prairie on your land, please contact NPAT via email at info@texasprairie.org or write to 2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290, Austin, Tx 78705-5609.

Prairies & People — Oil & Gas

NPAT President's Message

OVER THE PAST few months oil and gas development and distribution have reared their heads, and it is not a pretty sight.

Last May, as your NPAT President, I wrote a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Washington, D.C. advising that the proposed alignment of the Midcontinent Express Pipeline System through southern Lamar County stay clear of any and all tallgrass prairie and in particular of three exceedingly fine prairies: the Smiley-Woodfin Meadow, the largest remnant of Blackland Prairie, the Tridens Prairie, and Johnny Johnson's prairie, all three of which are unique within the endangered Blackland Prairie in their *Silveus*' Dropseed-Longspike Tridens and *Silveus*' Dropseed-Mead sedge plant communities.

Last August, I wrote another letter in the same capacity to the same federal agency regarding the Gulf Crossing Pipeline Project which had Johnny Johnson's prairie in its alignment.

For several years now, Denton County has been at the center of a gas-well drilling boom. On rural and some urban lands, gas wells are pulling natural gas from the Barnett Shale underneath.

In nearby Tarrant County, Tandy Hills Nature Area, a remarkable city-owned 160 acres of original Fort Worth prairie—according to Don Young, “is the closest thing that Fort Worth has to a Walden Woods... the most botanically diverse tract of land anywhere in the region,”—has been protected from gas drilling, over the last three years, only by vocal citizenry under the aegis of Friends of the Tandy Hills Nature Area (FTHNA).

Mr. Young writes [see letter on facing page] that their goal initially was to protect the park and the surrounding neighborhood from gas drilling. FTHNA quickly realized local ordinances benefited Oil & Gas, leaving other Fort Worth neighborhoods open for gas drilling. Industrial oil and gas sites could be located next to schools and parks as well as any where else. And so, Fort Worth Citizens Against Neighborhood Drilling Ordinance (FWCanDo) was formed. They found the political going steeply uphill, and received much criticism from local politicians and from the industry directly.

Now an adjacent, but privately owned, 55 acre tract of land of equal prairie importance, has been purchased by Chesapeake Energy for gas exploration.

For those who own land and, more specifically, the mineral rights to that land, the boom has been a source of money. However, I have heard from an NPAT member who has oil and gas wells on her land that she has experienced considerable difficulty receiving promised payments, and has recently learned that the wells weren't even metered. The staff at the Railroad Commission (our Texas version of an oil and gas commission) have not proved to be helpful in addressing these problems.

We are learning that gas drilling is not a benign activity and that money—when it comes—comes with many strings attached. We citizens do not have the best environmental and consumer protection laws on our side.

The exception to that experience, is to be found in New Mexico. The Surface Owners Protection Act (SOPA), passed by the New Mexico Legislature and signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson in 2007 strengthens New Mexico law with precedent-setting provisions. This legislation is the brainchild of the Oil & Gas Accountability Project, a program of Earthworks, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the destructive impacts of mineral development, in the U.S. and worldwide.

Oil and gas companies in New Mexico are now required to:

- Notify landowners 30 days before drilling
- Propose a written agreement with a surface owner, and
- Pay for the use of and damage to the land surface.

“This law is the nation's most comprehensive landowners' rights bill in that it requires notification, surface use agreements and compensation,” said Bill Sauble, President of the National Cattle Grower's Association (NMCGA). “This new law gives landowners a powerful tool to negotiate with oil and gas companies, so it should result in less conflict between operators and surface owners.”

In summary, we in Texas are vulnerable

to abuse through laws written more for the oil and gas industry than for protection of people and the land.

Earthworks has a book called *Oil and Gas at Your Door* which you can download FOR FREE at www.earthworksaaction.org/LOGuidechapters.cfm (or \$10 to order a hard copy). Chapter headings include *Oil and Gas Development and Impacts, Legal and Regulatory Issues, Tips for Landowners, Landowner Stories, Sources of Information, and a Glossary of Terms.*

—Kunda Wicce, President

New Grants For NPAT & Prairies

By Jason Spangler

NPAT HAS RECEIVED three grants totaling \$225,000 to allow us to continue our efforts to locate tallgrass prairie remnants in Texas and to work towards their protection!

The Houston Endowment has granted NPAT \$100,000 over two years towards our Tallgrass Prairie Conservation project in the Coastal Prairies including tallgrass prairie county surveys.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has provided two grants towards our program to find imperiled tallgrass prairie remnants. Upland Game Bird Stamp Funds of \$50,000 were granted since game birds such as Bobwhite Quail depend on native prairie and other native grasslands for habitat.

A State Wildlife Grant of \$75,000 was granted since tallgrass prairie surveys support the goals of the State Wildlife Action Plan, including the conservation and restoration of native grassland habitat for grassland birds, the most declining group of birds in North America.

The Land and Water Conservation Plan and the State Wildlife Action Plan prioritize most of Texas' tallgrass prairie regions as top priorities for conservation due to the small amount of native habitat remaining and the number of species of concern in those (continued on page 9)

Tandy Hills: Impact of Oil & Gas Boom

Letter to the Editor

Don Young, Fort Worth

THE BOOM happening in the the Fort Worth-Barnett Shale region is spreading everywhere. It doesn't end at the edge of the shale formation. As part of the Bush Administration policy of energy independence, and prices for hydrocarbons sky high, no land is off limits. I'm hearing from concerned citizens in such places as West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Arkansas and elsewhere with the exact problems we have in Fort Worth.

The industry claims that horizontal drilling means less impact, but I find that to be misleading, at best. For one thing, the new drilling requires unsustainable fresh water use. In rural and remote areas, that means drilling water wells to service drilling needs or hauling it in, via giant tanker trucks, millions of gallons of clean water. This, alone, will have a profound impact.

Even though horizontal drilling requires fewer pad sites than vertical drilling, they are still covering vast regions with a grid of pad sites that create problems for wildlife of all kinds and scar the land, ruining the essence of rural landscapes. You know well how dividing up an area with roads and pad sites degrades and compromises a prairie ecosystem. The continual servicing of the wells (fracing and re-fracing) means delicate landscapes, filled with service vehicles and tanker trucks will be crowding rural roads, perpetually. Compressors and other well site equipment runs 24/7 for years, even decades, spewing smoke and generating noise.

The dust and air pollution will unquestionably increase dramatically, partly due to the crisscrossed gravel roads in every direction. Impervious gravel pad sites of 3-5 acres each will increase erosion. Pad sites also have bright light sources, illuminating wide open spaces that should be dark. Then we have the issue of disposal wells that have to be drilled to dispose of the saltwater and toxic waste products from drilling, including radioactive material. There are increasing reports of these wells poisoning aquifers and even catching fire. In some cases, the toxic materials are simply dumped, illegally, wherever they can get away with it. Even if it had the will, the Railroad Commission cannot come close to investigating all this activity.

And then there are the pipelines, feeder lines, etc. In essence, the drillers seem to want it all. No places are sacred or truly protected, anymore, urban or rural. There are no rural places left untouched in the Barnett Shale region. The essence of what a wilderness or rural experience once was, only a few years ago, has been lost.

The Nature Conservancy recently opened an office in Fort Worth to focus on land west of here, looking for ways to protect prairie. I attended their recent forum titled, "Energy by Design" with a panel representing the Prairie, Landowners, Energy Producers, Water, and a Mediator (lawyer). I found the event to be frustrating and troubling. The panelists, for the most part, defended the industry. The mood of the discussion was grim. The producer controlled the discussion, using the forum as a bully pulpit to defend his industry. The Landowner claimed that gas drilling allowed his family to keep the land, rather than sell it to developers. I found that to be a sad tradeoff considering what I know about gas drilling. They all referred to the drilling as "short term", but most experts say that means up to 100 years. How much damage can they do in 100 years? TNC acknowledges that this is new territory for them. They are not used to dealing with an industry with so much destructive power.

These people are much different than say, housing developers. Compromises tend to be more distasteful than usual.

The question becomes: Can gas drilling and prairie preservation co-exist without widespread destruction of habitat? All signs I am seeing say, NO. Our situation becomes a constant battle to preserve a little here and there with new and uncomfortable compromises.

I'm not a negativist or a quitter by nature. Living in Fort Worth has hardened me as I watch the daily destruction of my hometown and surrounding rural lands. We recently found out that a 30 acre private tract on the eastern border of Tandy Hills has been leased for gas drilling. That means our little 800 species jewel is surrounded on all sides, and they are just getting started.

I never stop looking for a ray of hope. Awareness is paramount. The more people who learn about this issue the better chance we have to save some prairie.

To get involved protecting Tandy Hills, contact Don Young at donyoungglass@earthlink.net, write to FWCanDo, P.O. Box 470041, Fort Worth, TX 76147, or visit www.fwcando.org.

For more information on Tandy Hills Park visit <http://fortworthprairiefest.org/about.htm>.

.....

"What makes Tandy Hills so special is the preservation of native wildflowers and grasses. Biologists say that this little slice of land is still very much as it was in presettlement times. I find that to be something of a miracle! A report by the Fort Worth Nature Center notes that the the quality of the prairie grasses covering these hills in an undisturbed state, are the best in Tarrant County, even better than the Nature Center. Another miracle!

The real eye candy of the park, however, is the wildflowers. Several hundred species strong and still growing. Again, according to experts at the Nature Center, "Tandy Hills is THE best spot for native wildflowers in Fort Worth." Rare and beautiful plants with lyrical names like Purple Paintbrush, White Winecup, Trout Lily, Compass Plant, Stork's Bill and Bluebell dot these flowering hills. There are large masses of Engleman's Sage, very rare in this region. There are even several varieties of orchids. And with three varieties of milkweed, the park is a major fueling station and rest stop for the Monarch butterflies during their annual migration."

—Excerpt from a letter written by Don Young to the *Star-Telegram*

New Conservation Easement Donations

Senate version of the Farm Bill would make the provisions permanent

IN 2006 Congress passed the Pension Protection Act of 2006 that, among other provisions, includes bold new tax incentives for land conservation easement donations. The changes – effective until December 31, 2007 – were signed into law by President Bush on August 17, 2006. This new law presents a limited-time opportunity for landowners who may be considering making a donation for conservation purposes.

[Update: The Senate version of the Farm Bill would make the provisions permanent. The Land Trust Alliance worked hard towards this goal, and we hope the bill created by the House/Senate conference will contain the provision. For more info, visit: www.wumple.com/?p=90.]

These new benefits will help protect your land and rural livelihood forever.

If you or your client own land with important natural or historic resources, donating a voluntary conservation agreement can be one of the smartest ways to conserve the land you love, protect America's natural heritage, maintain your private property rights and realize significant federal tax benefits.

These new incentives are the boldest change to conservation tax law in two decades. They allow modest income landowners, like working family farmers and ranchers, to deduct much more than they could under the old rules, bringing increased fairness to the tax code. While the new provisions are set to expire in December of 2007, the coalition behind these incentives is working to make them permanent. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee they will be available in 2008 or beyond. Now is the time to consider using them in your personal tax and estate planning.

Among the changes, the new law:

1. Raises the deduction a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their adjusted gross income in any year to 50%;
2. Allows qualifying farmer, ranchers and forest landowners to deduct up to 100% of their taxable income (e.g., pay no federal income tax); and
3. Extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a conservation easement from 5 to 15 years.

How does it work?

Before the rule change, it was very difficult for someone with limited income to donate a conservation easement because of the way the federal tax code was structured. The new rules allow more moderate-income landowners to participate directly in land conservation, especially farmers whose income may be very limited compared to the increasing value of their property. Take the following hypothetical example:

PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA SPANGLER



Mr. Brown owns 50 acres of land with environmental conservation value that he wants to protect forever. Mr. Brown's annual taxable income is \$100,000. He wants to donate his property's development rights to a land trust through a conservation easement. The donation is valued at \$70 1/20,000.

Under the Old Law

Mr. Brown is only allowed to deduct 30% of his taxable income and only has 6 years total to use up the deduction:

Total value of the gift = \$70 1/20,000

Mr. Brown's annual tax deduction = \$30,000 (30% of his \$100,000 taxable income)

Eligible time period = 6 years (year of the gift + 5-year carry-forward)

Tax deduction claimed = \$180,000 (\$30,000/year x 6 years).

Tax deduction lost = \$520,000 (\$70 1/20,000 value - \$180,000 deduction)

Based on these numbers, Mr. Brown's financial consultant advises him against donating the development rights and the property is ultimately sold for a new subdivision.

Under the New Law

Mr. Brown is allowed to deduct 50% of his taxable income and has 16 years to use up the deduction:

Total value of gift = \$70 1/20,000

Mr. Brown's annual tax deduction = \$50,000 (50% of his \$100,000 taxable income)

Eligible time period = 16 years (year of the gift + 15-year carry-forward)

Tax deduction claimed = \$70 1/20,000 (\$50,000/year over first 14 years).

Tax deduction lost = \$0 (\$70 1/20,000 value - \$70 1/20,000 deduction)

Based on these numbers, Mr. Brown's financial consultant advises him to donate the development rights and the property is conserved forever.

And it could get even better ... If Mr. Brown were a family farmer or rancher and wanted to preserve his farm, his deduction would increase from 50% to 100% of his annual taxable income!

Is a conservation easement right for you or your client?

A landowner should always get professional financial planning and legal advice before making such a major donation. Here is what you need to know and consider:

- A voluntary conservation agreement, also known as a conservation easement, is a legal agreement between a landowner and a nonprofit land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect important conservation values. It allows you to continue to own and use your land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs.
- When you enter into a voluntary conservation agreement with a land trust, you give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, you might give up the right to subdivide your land or build additional houses, while retaining the full right to grow crops. Future owners will be bound by the agreement's terms. The land trust which holds title to the easement is responsible for *(continued on page 9)*

Doing Wrong by Lady Bird

By Lisa Falkenberg

IN THE FALL of 1965, as the weeds of political opposition threatened to strangle Lady Bird Johnson's Highway Beautification Act in Congress, her husband issued a stern warning.

"You know I love that woman and she wants that Highway Beautification Act," President Johnson told staff and Cabinet members. "By God, we're going to get it for her."

And he did, with the help of Lady Bird, who did her share of lobbying and cajoling, the likes of which Washington had never seen from a first lady.

But their struggle to cleanse the highways of mushrooming billboards and as many as 16,000 junkyards resulted in a weak law that would become more anemic in the decades that followed.

Unfinished Dream

As we reflect on the accomplishments of Lady Bird Johnson's life — her dedication to native plants and wildflowers, the face-lift for our nation's capital and the green movement she planted long before being green was cool — we should consider the part of her vision that was never fully realized: the beautification of our highways.

Lady Bird Johnson's goal was novel in the 1960s: make sure big Burma-Shave signs and graveyards of old cars don't mask the fruited plains and purple mountain majesties along our young interstate highways.

Her campaign hit roadblocks at every turn. The powerful billboard lobby wanted less regulation, while roadside councils and garden clubs wanted more, and Congress didn't want to anger big campaign contributors in the billboard industry.

To push the act through, the president twisted arms and threatened pet projects. Lady Bird Johnson participated in high-level legislative strategy meetings and directly lobbied Congress members, all the while redefining the traditional supporting role of a first lady.

The final compromise was largely written by a powerful outdoor advertising lobbyist, with the help of Johnson aide Bill Moyers, who lacked expertise in the highly technical subject, according to Lewis L. Gould, a history professor at the University of Texas at Austin who wrote *Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady*.

The act allowed billboards in commercial and industrial areas and guaranteed compensation to billboard owners whose non-conforming signs were slated for removal.

We Are Still Crawling

"It does not represent what we need," the president said in his signing speech. "But it is a first step, and there will be other steps. For though we must crawl before we walk, we are going to walk."

But more than 40 years later, it appears we are still crawling. Billboard lobbyists have succeeded in further watering down protections to the point that some say the act favors billboards over beautification.

Today, more than 450,000 billboards stand along our nation's highways up from an estimated 350,000 in 1965, according to Scenic America (www.scenic.org), a national organization that fights roadway blight. About 35,000 of those billboards are in Texas, with about 550 new billboard permits issued by the state each year, according to Scenic Texas.

More than 70,000 signs across the country don't conform with federal, state or local laws. Most are either too big, too close together or obstruct views along scenic roads. Though the 1965 act called for their removal, Congress never appropriated enough money to buy them out.

Changes made to the law in the 1970s prohibited state and local governments from removing billboards without paying owners cash compensation, which many couldn't afford.

In recent years the \$5 billion outdoor advertising industry has sought to dilute Lady Bird's law further. Lobbyists have pushed congressional amendments that could allow nonconforming billboards destroyed in natural disasters to be rebuilt.

In the most perverse violation of the spirit of Lady Bird's law, the industry has long advocated cutting down trees that interfere with billboard viewing. Florida has passed a law prohibiting tree planting within a 500-foot "viewing zone" of freeway billboards.

Gould, the professor, said the former first lady did all she could to pass the strongest act possible in 1965. She continued, decades later, to lobby unsuccessfully for stronger measures.

But it seemed regard for Lady Bird Johnson was one thing. Economic interests were another.

"We can take down billboards," Gould said. "We can increase the land and water conservation. We can do a whole lot of environmental things she advocated. But those would be hard."

Johnson would have been touched by the outpouring of love and respect that followed her passing last week. But the environmentalist in her may have found it a bit lacking.

"I think she would have said to us, 'Well, OK, that's fine. But now, why don't you do something?'" Gould said.

That's where we're still coming up short.

© 2007 Houston Chronicle. *Reprinted with permission from Houston Chronicle.*

Our Only Environmental First Lady

In Memoriam

Claudia Baines Johnson

December 22, 1912 - July 11, 2007

That the Johnson Administration was the most active in conservation since the time of Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt is largely due to Mrs. Johnson.

Among the major legislative initiatives were the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program and many additions to the National Park system, a total of 200 laws relevant to the environment.

The President thanked his wife for her dedication on July 26, 1968, after signing the Department of the Interior Appropriations Bill. He presented her with 50 pens used to sign some 50 laws relating to conservation and beautification and a plaque that read: "To Lady Bird, who has inspired me and millions of Americans to try to preserve our land and beautify our nation. With love from Lyndon."

She is missed.

For more information, visit www.ladybirdjohnsontribute.org/biography.htm.

Saving Texas Prairies

The Mission of the Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT)

By Jason Spangler

TEXAS IS A PRAIRIE STATE: from the tallgrass prairies of the Blackland Prairies, Coastal Prairies, and Cross Timbers and Prairies, the native savannas of the Hill Country/Edwards Plateau, the mixed grass prairies of the Rolling Plains, the short-grass prairies of the High Plains, and the desert grasslands of the Trans-Pecos, the diversity and beauty of Texas' prairies are incredible and breathtaking.

As part of the strategic planning for the organization, the board of directors has determined that NPAT's mission to save Texas' prairies requires resources beyond the organization's current means. Therefore the board has undertaken a fundraising effort to raise the funds required to execute our mission to save Texas' prairies.

NPAT needs your help to accomplish our shared goals of native prairie conservation, restoration, and appreciation. We must raise funds from private donors and foundations to carry out our mission, hire staff, monitor prairie conservation easements, manage owned native prairies, purchase prairie conservation easements and prairie land, and perform outreach to the public.

Please consider NPAT in your charitable giving and estate planning. You can help save Texas prairies in many ways, such as volunteering your time, supporting our programs, donating conservation easements on native prairie land, and giving towards NPAT programs or an endowment to support staff and programs. If you know of foundations or individuals who may be willing to help save Texas prairies, please talk with them about these natural treasures of Texas and ask for their help.

We can make a difference if we work together to save Texas' incredible prairies. We hope you will join us.

The Need to Save Texas' Prairies

Texas' prairies need our help now, the tallgrass prairies most of all.

Conservationists rank most of Texas' tallgrass prairie plant communities as critically imperiled or imperiled, the highest conservation rankings that exist. WWF ranks Texas Blackland Prairie as

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON SPANGLER



critically endangered. To save these rich native plant communities, we must protect prairie remnants and restore prairie where it once existed.

It is estimated that less than 1% of Texas' beautiful tallgrass prairies remain, and losses to plowing and development continue. Most of the fastest growing areas of the state fall within the tallgrass prairie regions of Texas. We must act now to save these special places for current and future generations.

To preserve Texas history and experience what the early Texans saw, we must save Texas prairie. To provide wildlife habitat for prairie species like grassland birds (the most declining group of birds in North America) we must save and restore our prairies. To continue Texas hunting traditions, to stop the decline of upland game bird populations, including bobwhite quail we must save and restore prairie.

Recent studies have found that tallgrass prairie plantings are the best source of biofuels while simultaneously providing prairie wildlife habitat and sequestering carbon in the ground, thus helping us reverse global warming. A recent study found that planting tallgrass prairie on the country's marginal farmland that is already not productive could provide most of our fuel needs while preserving the best farmland for food production. To promote prairie biofuel plantings in Texas and ensure a supply of locally adapted native prairie seed, we must save Texas prairie.

Public Attention to Native Prairies Increasing

In addition to increased public attention toward prairie biofuel, water quality and carbon sequestration benefits, wildlife habitat, and Texas history, there is growing concern for saving our natural treasures in the face of increasing population growth. As one of our rare and beautiful natural wonders, native prairies deserve a special focus when preserving Texas' natural history.

Landscaping with native prairie plants can also be a large part of the solution to water availability. By planting native prairie plants instead traditional lawns, we can increase water available for drinking and other uses, by reducing landscape and lawn water usage; increase water quality by removing a major source of pollution from pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers used in wasteful landscapes; decrease air pollution by reducing the use of dirty gas lawn mowers and leaf blowers; and help solve global warming by saving massive amounts of energy and reducing the resulting pollution that water treatment requires.

How We Can Save Texas Prairies

Several years ago the board undertook strategic planning to determine NPAT's needs in order to more effectively carry out its mission to save Texas prairies, and how those needs could be met.

The highest priority in the strategic plan is the hiring of staff, since the need for prairie conservation requires much more time than a volunteer board and other volunteers can provide.

During the board's current fundraising efforts, we determined that NPAT needs an Executive Director to execute NPAT's goal to save Texas prairies and a Development Director to work with donors and foundations to raise the funds needed to protect prairies and conduct NPAT's programs.

The Executive Director and Develop-

ment Director would meet and build relationships with prairie landowners, promote prairie conservation, restoration, and conservation easements, manage a prairie county survey program, negotiate donations and purchases of prairie conservation easements and land, find and build relationships with donors, manage a conservation buyer program for people who want to buy and protect prairies, work with foundations and apply for grants, investigate new programs to save and restore prairies (such as funding prairie restoration through sale of carbon emissions offsets), and build an endowment to have secure funding for staff and support prairie programs in future.

The board has begun fundraising efforts and is applying for foundation grants to begin executing the strategic plan and get NPAT off ground by funding staff for several years. The board is also applying for grants to complete the tallgrass prairie county surveys and has received three grants to date (see story on page 6).

Conclusion

NPAT's mission requires resources beyond the organization's current means. We need your help to accomplish our shared goals of native prairie conservation, restoration, and appreciation.

Please consider NPAT in your volunteer efforts, charitable giving, and estate planning. We can make a difference if we work together to save Texas' incredible prairies. We hope you will join us.

New Grants *continued from page 4*

regions. A goal of the State Wildlife Action Plans is to help species of concern before they become endangered.

These grant writing efforts were undertaken by the Board of Directors to execute the strategic plan for the organization.

At the time this article was written, prairie surveys of ten additional counties have been completed with these funds and surveys of two more counties are in progress. More tallgrass prairie counties will be surveyed with the additional funds.

NPAT will continue to apply for additional grants from several sources to complete the tallgrass prairie county surveys in all tallgrass prairie regions of Texas.

Thank you to the Houston Endowment and Texas Parks and Wildlife for supporting Texas prairies and NPAT!

Texas Prairie Coalition Update

By Jason Spangler

The first meeting of the Texas Prairie Coalition, which NPAT has played a key role in organizing, took place on June 14th at the Lake Lewisville Environmental Learning Center, which hosted the meeting.

The Texas Prairie Coalition (TPC) is a informal group of conservation organizations, land trusts, government agencies, and individuals interested in furthering native Texas prairie conservation, restoration, and education. Over 30 people attended the first meeting.

One of the TPC's main goals is to increase communication and cooperation among these parties to help increase our effectiveness and efficiency in helping the native prairies of our state.

Topics at this first meeting included the tallgrass prairie county surveys, prairie conservation efforts by several groups, and how to increase native prairie awareness and advocacy among the general public.

Thanks to David Bezanson, Jason Spangler, and Susan Armstrong for organizing the meeting, and Ken Steigmann for arranging the meeting place!

The next meeting of the Texas Prairie Coalition was held on November 29th at Bear Creek Ranch near Aledo, TX. Thanks to the Dixon Water Foundation for hosting this meeting. Bear Creek Ranch is a 1700-acre ranch containing deep-soiled tallgrass prairie, limestone glades, and stream-side forest.

Conservation Easements *continued from page 6*

making sure the terms of the agreement are followed.

- Voluntary conservation agreements vary widely. An agreement to protect rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, for example, while one on a farm would encourage continued farming and might allow the building of additional agricultural structures. An agreement may apply to just a portion of the property and need not require public access.

- A conservation donation requires not only a willing donor, but a qualified conservation organization to accept the donation. That organization needs to be able to show that the donation closely fits its particular charitable mission. A land trust will not accept a donation that does not fit its mission and purposes.

- A voluntary conservation agreement can help a landowner pass land on, intact, to the next generation. By limiting the land's development potential, the agreement lowers its market value, which in turn lowers estate tax. Whether the agreement is donated during life or by will, it can make a critical difference in the heirs' ability to keep the land intact.

- If a conservation agreement benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value

with the agreement and its value without the agreement.

- To qualify as a charitable donation, a conservation agreement must be permanent.

Estate Tax Benefits

Tax, financial and estate planners should be aware that the donation of a conservation easement can lower heirs' estate taxes on land in several ways. First, the easement value is excluded from the taxable value of the estate under section 2055(f) of the Internal Revenue Code. Second, section 2031(c) of the code provides an additional benefit to easement donors, which can further reduce the taxable value of an estate by up to \$500,000. And finally, section 2031(c) provides heirs the opportunity to make a post-mortem donation of a conservation easement to take advantage of the above-listed provisions, if state law allows for such a donation.

For a landowner's packet of information regarding conservation approaches available to landowners, contact Carolyn Vogel, Executive Director of the Texas Land Trust Council, at 512-236-0655, Texas Land Trust Council, 1305 San Antonio Street, Austin, TX 78701, or email at cvogel@texaslandtrusts.org.

Conservation Easements: A Guide For Texas Landowners (pdf version), is available at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/private/conservation_easements/.

IRA Charitable Deductions

New Provision Can Benefit Land Trusts

THE PENSION Protection Act of 2006 includes a new, limited-time opportunity for IRA donors who may be considering making a charitable contribution to a land trust or other charitable organization. A little known section of this federal bill called House Resolution 4 gives expanded tax incentives for conservation easement donations from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and offers a rare tax break to invest in a land trust's good work.

Specifically, if you or someone you know is 70½ years of age or older, the new law permits them to make direct contributions from their individual retirement account to a charitable organization of your choice — up to \$100,000 per year in 2006 and 2007.

These charitable contributions can satisfy an IRA's required yearly minimum distribution and will be excluded from federal taxable income!

One essential detail: the IRA plan administrator must issue the check directly to the charity. And because the contribution is not taxable income, you cannot claim an additional charitable deduction. However, examples show that gifting funds directly from your IRA is one of the most tax beneficial means of charitable giving.

Consult your plan administrator and/or your tax advisors for more information about this provision of the Pension Protection Act of 2006. You can also find more information on the Land Trust Alliance's Tax Planning Fact sheet at www.lta.org/publicpolicy/factsheet_tax_planning.htm

We hope you will be able to take advantage of this special opportunity. Your gift will greatly impact the protection of the natural places we need and love. Please consider the Land Trust Alliance and your local land trust with your generous contributions."

Give More for Less: For 2006 and 2007 only, Americans over age 70½ will no longer pay federal income tax on individual retirement account (IRA) funds, if they are given directly to qualified charities, such as land trusts — up to \$100,000 per person, per year.

How it works: Retroactive to January 1, 2006 and by December 31, 2006, you can make a gift of up to \$100,000 by

transferring IRA assets directly to the chosen charity. Between January 1 and December 31, 2007, you may transfer an additional \$100,000. You will not receive an additional charitable deduction because the distribution is not taxable.

Some Restrictions Apply. Such transfers cannot be used for donor-advised funds or private foundations. You can use these funds to establish a permanent endowment to benefit the charity of your choice.

Is this Right for Me? If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, you may want to consider taking advantage of this short-term opportunity. The Land Trust Alliance recommends that you consult estate planning professionals and your tax advisors.

- Are you older than 70½ and are you planning to leave a charitable legacy through your estate plan?
- Have you designated your favorite charity as beneficiary of retirement assets?
- Do your retirement savings exceed your expected needs?
- Are you subject to a charitable deduction limitation because you give more than 50 percent of your income to charity?
- Do you take the minimum distributions from your IRA only because you must?
- Do taking greater distributions from your retirement plans affect the amount of your Social Security benefits that are taxed?
- Do you have adjusted gross income above \$150,500 (\$75,250 for married filing separately), which causes a phase-out of itemized deductions and exemptions?

Want to learn more?

For more information about the conservation tax incentive, conservation easements, or land trusts, visit the links provide or contact the Land Trust Alliance at policy@lta.org or your local land trust. Visit our Find a Land Trust resource to locate a land trust near you.

For more information about the IRA Charitable Deduction, contact your estate planning professional, tax advisor or the Council on Foundations, www.cof.org.

*From the Land Trust Alliance web site.
For more information visit www.lta.org.*

Life Members

Leonard Anderson
Jim Apken
Col. Delbert M. Bassett
Jim Bayliss
Lisa Bellows
Keith Benson
Catherine Brown
Sam & Joan Carruthers
Mark B. Chapin
Correne L. Dragoo
Ray & Nancy Drews
Rosetta & Prentiss Fatherree
Marian Fleming
Hugh B. Garnett
Katherine Hall
Marcia Hermann
Edith Hoytt
David Huffman
Clint Josey
Scott & Donna Lenharth
Alfred E. Maddin
Evelyn Merz
Paul and Virginia Mezynski
Katie Northrup
Bob O'Kennon
Lynn & Twyla Pace
Mary Thorpe Parker
Kirk & Judy Pate
Loueen Peters Recer
Barrett W. Pierce
Georgia Prakash
Charles & Jessie Price
Bob & Annette Rasmus
Christine Rawlinson
Randy Reddemann
Doyle & Paula Roberts
Brian Rowe
Judith Sear
Vince & Elizabeth Shouba
Nancy C. Smith
Charles R. Snakard
Jason & Lisa Spangler
Mr. & Mrs. C.J. Thomsen
M. Jeannine Tinsley
Stephan & Suzanne Tuttle
James H. Vance
Don W. Verser
Kunda Lee Wicce
Nelson L. Wieting
Michael Williams
Rita Wolke
Rusty Yates

Book Review

By Roger Q. Jake Landers,
Extension Specialist Emeritus

Reprinted from the *Native Plant Society of Texas Newsletter*, Vol. 25, No 3.

FOR THOSE who find grasses challenging to identify, yet so appealing as to study them, the second volume has arrived to replace *Hitchcock's Manual of Grasses* that has served us well for 75 years. **Flora of North America: North of Mexico Volume 24, Magnoliophyta: Commelinidae (in part): Poaceae, part I** describes grasses of North America, north of Mexico, with exquisite line drawings, distribution maps, ecological characteristics and keys to identifications. It is 8¾" by 11½" inches and 911 pages. It's a tome, as my students used to say.

The book has been assembled by the Grass Phylogeny Group of the Flora North America Project comprised of 13 individuals with editors Mary E. Barkworth, Kathleen M. Capels, Sandy Long, Laurel K. Anderton, and Michale B. Piepl. Illustrators are Cindy Talot Rohe, Linda Ann Vorobik, Sandy Long, Annaliese Miller, Bee F. Gunn and Christine Roberts.

Volume 24 covers the BEP Clad (*Bambusoideae*, *Ehrharioideae*, and *Pooideae*) containing familiar genera including *Bambusa*, *Oryza*, *Melica*, *Stipa*, *Bromus*, *Elymus*, *Poa*, *Agrostis*, *Avena* and many others. Volume 25 was published first so that the key and table of contents in the volume could correctly refer to its page locations.

If you haven't kept up with grass taxonomy in a while, be prepared for some unfamiliar names: *Nasella* for some of the *Stipas*, *Amelichloa*, for other *Stipas*, *Achnatherum* for some of the others, *Leymus*, *Pascopyrum*, *Pseudoroegneria*, for wildryes and wheatgrasses, and many more. Keeping up with the changes may keep you young. That's my only hope.

Volume 24 is dedicated to "the two giants on whose shoulders we stand, Albert Spear Hitchcock and Mary Agnes Chase." An historical introduction by M.T. Steiber gives a fascinating review of the lives and works of Hitchcock and Chase.

Flora of North America: North of Mexico Volume 24 is published by Oxford University Press, Inc., 198 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. It can be found on Shop.com and Amazon.com.

The Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture

A NEWLY FORMED Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture (OPJV) has formed to join forces with other conservation organizations in an effort to improve and increase habitat for beleaguered birds in those regions. The Oaks and Prairies covers two bird conservation regions—the Edwards Plateau of Central Texas and the Oaks and Prairies of Texas and Oklahoma.

Altered habitat conditions are resulting in declining numbers of important birds. Populations of once common birds such as the Northern Bobwhite have not only diminished, but are experiencing local extirpations. Fire suppression and fire fuel reduction via livestock grazing have lessened fire frequency resulting in accelerated development of shrub and tree species creating inhospitable landscapes for certain avian species. Most of the grassland habitat within the Post Oak Savannah Ecoregion has been converted to crop production or planted Bermuda grass. The end result of this process has been a decline in habitat for savannah and grassland-associated birds. Our ability to impact these drivers on a large scale, defines and will continue to define the extent to which we can be successful in managing avian-habitat resources in today's world. However, management at the landscape scale is an exceedingly difficult task to which no one conservation entity is ideally suited and requires the combined efforts of a diverse group of natural resources partners.

A Joint Venture is regional, self-directed partnership of government and non-governmental organizations, corporations and individuals that works across administrative boundaries to deliver science-based avian conservation. JVs are organized on the biological foundation of Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) and raise money for these activities. JVs are not regulatory, and are led by a Management Board made up of partner representatives.

The OPJV offers a partner-based framework for developing, implementing, and testing landscape-scale management

strategies for improving avian habitat conditions. Bringing a wide range of partner organizations to the table is key to this process. In fact, Joint Ventures is a collection of partners working towards common goals in a structured fashion. The Concept Plan is based on conversations with conservationists throughout the region. It will be followed by an Implementation Plan that outlines specific goals and objectives, and the mechanisms for making them happen. When completed the Implementation Plan will be submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for review, and with their approval, the OPJV will become a federally recognized, and federally funded Joint Venture.

Ultimately the success of this Joint Venture hinges on the participation of conservation partners. There are a number of avenues for involvement with the OPJV including cooperation in implementing specific projects, working with technical teams to develop management plans and research proposals, or membership on the Management Board. The next step will be an initial OPJV meeting which will focus on organization, commitment, partner roles and responsibilities and development of the Implementation Plan. We value interest and input into this process and ask that you consider what role your organization might plan in this collaborative effort to shape the future of avian habitat conservation in the Edwards Plateau and Oaks and Prairies regions.

Compiled from a letter dated May 7, 2007 and from "Oaks & Prairies Joint Venture: A Vision for Regional Bird Management"

For more information, download a pdf booklet from http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_w7000_1220.pdf

[Editor's Note: NPAT is a partner in the Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture.]

Field Trips & Events

Check www.texasprairie.org for an up-to-date listing of events or subscribe to the NPAT Email Announce list (more information on back page) to receive current announcements from NPAT. Contact Jason Spangler, jason_spangler@texasprairie.org or 512-736-4199, for more information.

January 26-27 NPAT Board retreat with tentative plans for the Davis Mountains.

February 21-23 Texas Land Trust Council conference for volunteers, staff and board members of Texas land trusts meeting here in Austin at the Austin Marriott South. for more information go to www.texaslandtrustcouncil.org/news/items/stateconf08/about/. On-Line registration beginning Dec. 10.

Some future field trips being planned:

Meador Prairie near Saint Jo, in the Grand Prairie (either Cross Timbers and Prairies or Blackland Prairie, depending on the authority).

Nash Prairie in West Columbia contains a 350-acre high-quality coastal prairie remnant.

Stay tuned—more details to come.

COME VISIT THE

NPAT Store

Shop the NPAT Store

online to help raise funds
for the conservation and
restoration of Texas Prairies!

Memberships • Clothing

Hats • Mugs

Totebags • Books

Visit [www.texasprairie.org/
Store/Store.shtml](http://www.texasprairie.org/Store/Store.shtml)

Prairie Conservation Easements & Land Holdings of NPAT

Maddin Prairie Preserve

This 1,114-acre property, located in Mitchell County near Colorado City, lies in the Rolling Plains region of Texas and was donated in 1996 by Alfred Maddin. A major prairie restoration project to mixed grass prairie is in progress on this property, and NPAT is seeking volunteers interested in participating in native prairie restoration.

Simpson Prairie

Located in McLennan County near Crawford, Simpson Prairie is a terrific 50 acre Grand Prairie remnant in the Lampasas Cut Plains portion of the Cross Timbers and Prairies. Owned and restored by Mike Williams, who purchased the property and sold a conservation easement to NPAT at a generous price.

Riesel Prairie

A beautiful five-acre tallgrass prairie remnant generously donated to the NPAT by Dr. Paul and Virginia Mezynski. This property, located in Falls County, lies in the heartland of the endangered Blackland Prairie.

Peters Prairie

This four-acre Blackland Prairie remnant in Collin County was purchased from Loueen Peters at a generous price.

Falls County Conservation Easements: Lehmann Prairie, Wieting Prairie, and Drews Prairie

NPAT holds conservation easements on three remnant Blackland Prairie sites totaling 32 acres in Falls County. These tallgrass prairie remnants were hayfields of German farmers that protected the native grasses and plants for their superior quality hay.

Tanglewood Prairie

This excellent 31-acre Post Oak Savanna remnant in Lee County is a partnership between the Natural Area Preservation Association (NAPA) and NPAT. NAPA purchased the remnant with a grant from the Magnolia Charitable Trust, with a conservation easement held by NPAT.

Prairie Projects

Granger Lake Gene Bank/Prairie Restoration at Granger Lake in Williamson County, in partnership with the Army Corp of Engineers and the Native Plant Society of Texas Brodie Wild: 4 acre savanna remnant/restoration in Austin/Travis County, in partnership with the City of Austin Water Utility - Wildland Conservation Division and the Austin chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas

The Prairie Dog Back Issues Available Online

Past issues of *The Prairie Dog*, the newsletter of the Native Prairies Association of Texas, are available online at: www.texasprairie.org/newsletter/

Some past newsletters may have articles removed if online distribution was not permitted by the author. A PDF reader such as Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view the newsletters, and can be downloaded via a link on the newsletter web page.

For web page information or problems e-mail: Scott.Lenharth@texasprairie.org

Ad Price List

Full Page	\$100
Half Page	\$50
1/3 Page	\$25
1/6 Page	\$15

For more information contact:
editor@texasprairie.org

Thank you!

Donate to NPAT to help protect Texas prairies. Many employers will match donations, so check with your employer to make your donation go farther!

To Our Donors!

Thank you for your generous support of Texas Prairies and NPAT in 2007.

\$50,000+

Houston Endowment
Texas Parks and Wildlife
Department

\$25,000 - \$50,000

Jason and Lisa Spangler
Electronic Arts, Inc.

\$5,000 - \$10,000

TCEQ SEP Program
International Business Machines

\$1,000 - \$5,000

Charles Snakard
Sear Family Foundation

\$100 - \$999

Native Plant Society of Texas –
Houston Chapter

Up to \$100

Mary Ellen Evans
Walt and Kathy Henderson
B Jaramillo
Lucy McCorkle
Kunda Lee Wicce
Daughters of the Republic
of Texas
Native Plant Society of Texas

To New and Renewed Members in 2007!

New Lifetime Members are in bold

Larry Allain
Thomas & Dianne Allen
Lynnette J. Alley
James & Sue Anderson
Susan Armstrong
Susan Basslon
Karen Bick
Clair Burlison
John Carpenter
William R. Carr
Julia Coleman
Deborah Copeland
David Croft
Henry Darley
Derrell Dixon
Jim Eidson
Evan & Mary Ellen Evans
Penny Fanning
Toni Fransen
Richard Freiheit
Julia M. Garrett
Frances Green
Donna Hagar
Katherine Hall
Walt & Kathy Henderson
Dennis Herbert
Dagmar Higgins
Tracy Holmes
David Hopf
Bill Hopkins
Jana Jackson
B. Jaramillo
KM Antiques
Kingfisher Fine Art & Music

Merita Knapp
Felicia Kongable
Dr. Larry Lawler
Grace Liggett
Deborah and Gene Luhn
Shirley D. Lusk
Brandt Mannchen
Jerry Mayfield
Lucy & Joseph McCorkle
Patricia Mielnick
John & Joanne Millican
Paul M. Montgomery
Marc Pastorek
Jamie Perez
Jean Phillips
Agnes C. Plutino
Kim Quimby
Randy Reddemann
Carol Rittiman
Cecil Rives
Wallace Roark
Doye and Paula Roberts
Kilian Roever
Lori Siegelman
Nancy Smith
Pat & Jo Spencer
Pat Spillman
Kenneth Steigman
Walter Stewart
Judith Telford
Robert Theimer
Jim & Stephanie Varnum
Thomas Wright

Native Prairies Association of Texas

2002 - A Guadalupe St. PMB 290

Austin, TX 78705-5609

www.texasprairie.org

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 3367
AUSTIN TX

To Help Save Texas Prairies

join the Native Prairies Association of Texas (NPAT)

To join online, visit www.texasprairie.org and go to the Join & Donate page.

Or fill out this form and mail a check to:

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

Membership Categories: New Renewal
 \$350 Life \$35 Group \$30 Family \$20 Individual \$10 Student

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home/Office Phone: _____

Email: _____

I'm interested in prairies because: _____

I'd like more information about: _____

Life Memberships benefit the NPAT Endowment Fund. 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.

Stay in touch with the NPAT Email Announcement List

This is a moderated, low traffic email list for announcements of NPAT field trips, conferences, meetings, and volunteer activities.

Other opportunities to help protect prairies will also be emailed to this list.

To subscribe:

- send an email to NPAT-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com,
- or go to the NPAT web page at www.texasprairie.org and submit your email address to receive future field trip and conference announcements,
- or include your email address on your next membership renewal form.