

Volume 31, Issue 1



JANUARY 2018 eNewsletter

**WE CELEBRATE our ACCOMPLISHMENTS of 2017  
and TOAST to NEW BEGINNINGS in 2018!**

*"Here's a toast to the future, a toast to the past, and a toast to our friends, far and near. May the future be pleasant, the past a bright dream; may our friends remain faithful and dear."* Anonymous

**THANK YOU, Prairie Chapters!**  
from Pat Merkord

Our *sincerest thanks* to our prairie chapters for your dedication and support in obtaining funds for Paul Matthews Prairie – it could not have been done without their great efforts!

This project was a galvanizing event for our chapters and members! Many have expressed their senses of accomplishment in having raised the funds and contributing in the effort in many successful ways. Many members expressed satisfaction with this purchase because they felt 'saving prairies' was the main reason they joined NPAT. They were glad to participate in a successful project! Some were already asking what the NEXT PROJECT will be!

We are so grateful for ALL THE CHAPTERS AND MEMBERS' EFFORTS in the fundraising efforts for this project. We want to acknowledge and recognize the excellent jobs they did in support of this project!

Our chapters are growing and are looking forward to 2018! You can read about their end of year celebrations. We are very proud and grateful to all our chapters and their HARD WORK AND DETERMINATION in accomplishing so many goals!

*Pat Merkord,*  
NPAT Executive Director

#### Share our 2017 Holiday Celebrations!

Well-deserved Holiday Celebrations were enjoyed in these prairie communities recognizing their diligence & determination throughout 2017! WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO OUR CHAPTERS!  
[Houston NPAT Chapter](#)'s 2017 Prairie Stampede, 11/29/17;  
[Fort Worth NPAT Chapter](#)'s Christmas Party, 12/11/17, and honored Ms. Evaline Woodrey;  
[Blackland Chapter](#)'s 2nd Annual Christmas Celebration, 12/12/17 @Milo Butterfingers!

#### Mark your Calendars!

**CHAPTERS will 'RING IN THE NEW YEAR"  
with their regularly scheduled meetings,  
BEGINNING TUESDAY, JANUARY 2!**

[\(Details on News & Events\)](#)

-TUESDAY, January 2, 2018 - San Antonio NPAT Chapter (meets 1st Tues. 7-8:30pm)  
"MISSION REACH Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project", San Antonio River Authority.

-WEDNESDAY, January 3, 2018 - CenTex NPAT Chapter (meets 1st Wed 6:30pm)  
Lisa and Jason Spangler will speak on the N. Am. Prairie Conference and their prairie photos!

- MONDAY, January 8, 2018 - Fort Worth NPAT Chapter will hold its 1st MEETING in the NEW LOCATION - OPEN LINK for details [Website](#) (NO LONGER MEETING @ THE YMCA)!

#### All in a Day's Work

Snow was not in the forecast when our Program Director, Phillip Quast, made arrangements to drive to San Jacinto Co. near Huntsville, on Friday, December 8 to conduct his annual Monitoring Survey of the 831-acre **Russell Grasslands and Forest Preserves**! Thank you Phillip!

Russell Grasslands and Forest Preserve Photos by Phillip Quast



**“High Plains Sentinel,  
Prairie dog “towns” survive in North Texas—but barely”**

Article and Photos by Russell A. Graves, [Texas Co-op Power](#) , December 2017



Prairie dogs forage outside their burrows, marked with mounds by entrances.



A burrowing owl and a prairie dog at the edge of a burrow after a snowstorm

It is disheartening while very encouraging to read Mr. Graves' historical account of the 'black-tailed prairie dog', North America's only prairie dog found in Texas.

"The short grasses and burrow systems in prairie dog towns create important habitat that benefits multiple species, including [pronghorn](#) , [burrowing owls](#), [black-footed ferrets](#) , [Sprague's pipit](#) , [horned lark](#) and many more."

Jonah Evans, state mammologist, [Texas Parks & Wildlife Department](#).

These creatures have unique communication skills and often share their burrows with our burrowing owls. (Photo to the left captures negotiations in-progress.)

The article addresses:

'**A Century in Decline**,' documenting how Texas ranchers fought to exterminate them;

'**Anatomy of an Earth Mover**,' describing the weather-proof, interconnected burrows/ "TOWNS" where they safely raise their families;

'**The Future of Prairie Dogs**' - They became less threatened in 2004 when Texas adopted "*The Management Plan*," set a goal of reaching 293,129 acres of occupied prairie dog habitat by the year 2011. "Even though a count is in progress, it is not clear that the habitat goal was reached." (Mr. Graves feels our black-tailed prairie dogs should be on the endangered species list.)

His evaluation: Our Texas black-tailed prairie dog may be unable to return to the '*original prairie range*' due to agribusiness infrastructure and human settlement, but Mr. Graves was encouraged to have observed the *special pockets of rangeland where prairie dogs thrive*: "*The rodent, historically found*



west of the 98<sup>th</sup> meridian, once again occupies pockets of its original range after a century of decline."

Russell Graves made these observations in rural Floyd Co., TX, (NE of Lubbock) where he and his family happily observed a few!

Black-tailed prairie dogs once inhabited 56.8 million acres in Texas.

**" All ecosystems deserve to be saved,  
we can't save them all,  
but what we can, we should! "**  
(This statement was included with a recent generous donation.)

***BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER - Support NPAT***

**EVERY DOLLAR MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**

**When you make a donation to support our Mission,  
you join many other generous people who made the decision to invest in a better world!  
*Thank You for supporting NPAT!***



North Comal Co., December 8, 2017, Photo Pat Rinn

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