

Wildflower Walk

Sunday, June 2, 2024 6:30pm-8:30pm

Save the date!

Konza Prairie Wildflower Walk

Sunday, June 2, 2024 6:30pm-8:30pm

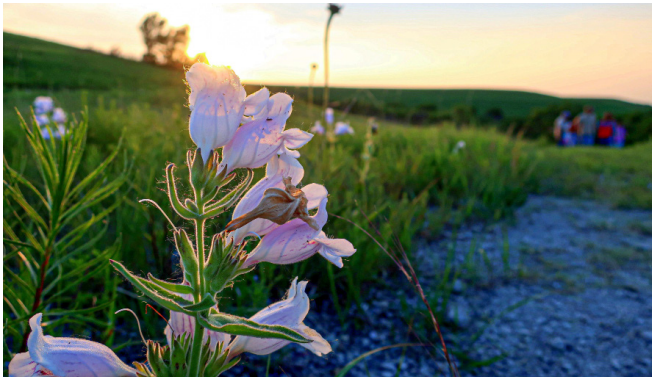
Konza Prairie Biological Station
150 Konza Prairie Ln
Manhattan, KS 66502

Come hike and see the glory of the prairie in full bloom! A guide will lead you through the beautiful 1.5-mile Butterfly Hill trail (easy hike and family-friendly) located at Konza headquarters area, not often open to the public. Join us for this one special night! (More information on page 8)

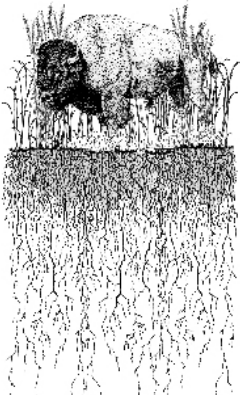


Free to the Friends of Konza Prairie Members as a thank you for your support!

Cobaea penstemon



Butterfly milkweed



Research

Education

Conservation

Spring 2024

FRIENDS OF
KONZA PRAIRIE



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Upcoming Events:

- Saturday, May 4, 10am-5pm: FOKP at the Flint Hills Festival at the Flint Hills Discovery Center
- Thursday, May 30, 5pm-7pm: FOKP Happy Hour at Manhattan Brewing Company
- Sunday, June 2, 6:30pm-8:30pm: FOKP Wildflower Walk at the Stone Barn on Konza Prairie
- Sunday, September 29, 4pm: FOKP Annual Meeting, 5pm Bison BBQ, 6pm Bison Tour meet at the Stone Barn on Konza Prairie
- Friday, October 4, 5pm: Visions of the Flint Hills at Buttonwood Art Studio in Kansas City, MO

& Bluestem

Bison

FOKP President Nellie Hill-Sullins



As Friends of Konza Prairie, we hold immense appreciation for the unique opportunity we have to explore, enjoy, and support the prairie. As a Kansas State faculty member as well as the president of the FOKP Board, I sought an opportunity to weave these roles together to share this appreciation with students.

As such, I am thrilled to share that you will soon see student-created promotional materials for our annual Wildflower Walk event. These materials were designed by talented Kansas State agricultural communications students enrolled in my course, AGCOM 210: Layout and Design Principles, an introductory graphic design and photography class. As part of the course, each student was tasked with creating a flier, sticker, and t-shirt design for one of the Friends of Konza Prairie events. Their designs incorporated colors and graphic elements that conveyed the environmental essence of the Konza Prairie. I appreciate John Blair and Jill Haukos for visiting our class to talk about why the conservation of grasslands is important, in addition to the history and current activities of KPBS and KEEP.

Armed with this knowledge and their understanding of the principles of design, students conquered Adobe Illustrator software to bring their visions to life. You'll be seeing the work of three students, Lindsay Lehman, Mariam Fernandez, and Anna Holthaus, in new Wildflower Walk stickers, t-shirts, and fliers. (see page 9)

Future FOKP events and merchandise will also incorporate student designs created to bring more engagement with FOKP events for the benefit of KPBS and KEEP initiatives. We sincerely appreciate all the students who shared their talents with FOKP.

Here are a few quotes from students that exemplify what this project meant to them:

"I was not previously aware of the research, conservation, and community aspects that all make the Konza Prairie what it is today. Learning about the need to preserve and educate others about the land was eye opening, and I will cherish the Konza even more."

"Thank you for participating in this student learning experience. I appreciate the work and dedication you put into the conservation of grasslands and teaching others about it. I especially gained a lot from learning what grasslands are myself. I don't come from the Midwest or an agriculture background so seeing how projects like controlled burning, research and spreading awareness can help restore and protect these important biomes is fantastic. Taking part in this project didn't just teach me how to apply the principle of design, but also made me feel fulfilled as the materials I was creating were for a good cause."

"Being entrusted with the creation of your package materials has not only deepened my understanding of the Konza Prairie but has also underscored the vital role such initiatives play in conservation and education. The prospect of contributing to your program's growth and promoting the unique offerings of Konza is genuinely fulfilling. This experience has opened my eyes to the broader impact one can have through design and communication efforts."



What's a Good Prairie?



It's a simple question – what's a good prairie? Or, said in another way, what good is a prairie? They could have the same answer, or they could have very different answers, it depends on how you're approaching the question.

From my point of view – as an educator and as an appreciator of all things prairie – the answers to each question are very different.

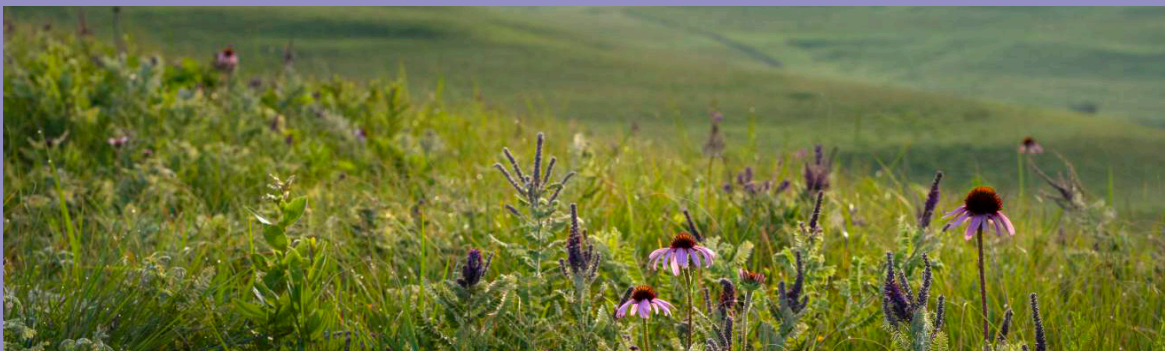
A good prairie is one comprised mainly of grasses and wildflowers/forbs and has relatively few trees or shrubs. It has deep, rich soil. That soil is populated with a myriad of bacteria and fungus, doing their thing of breaking down complex molecules, releasing the simpler and smaller molecular components so they can be reused by other things.

The animals living on the good prairie are prairie animals. They are the grassland birds, like the meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, and the prairie-chicken, species that nest on the ground and are adapted to having miles of open, treeless plain. There are lots of grasshoppers and butterflies, bees and spiders, animals that live amongst the forbs because the grasses have been grazed down by animals like the bison and cattle. Cattle are welcome in my good prairie. Grazers of all types may eat the grasses and thus give the wildflowers a chance to grow and bloom.

Fire happens in my good prairie, preferably every 2-3 years with some time off between burns to give the birds, insects, mammals, and reptiles a break. My good prairie has lots of diversity in plants, animals, and microbes. The intermittent fire keeps the trees and shrubs under control and the grazing animals have plenty of nutritious grass providing them with fuel to put on that weight to keep the bills paid.

The second question, "What good is a prairie?", is far different, at least in my mind, from the first. The "goodness" of the prairie becomes an answer for what the prairie can be to one's soul. Here is where you might find answers to those very deep questions, like the meaning of life, or maybe what your place is in this life. But be warned, the prairie is a place whose very vastness can be disconcerting for those who find comfort in the confines of trees or even mountains. I find the openness to be what I need – the wind and blowing grass what I seek.

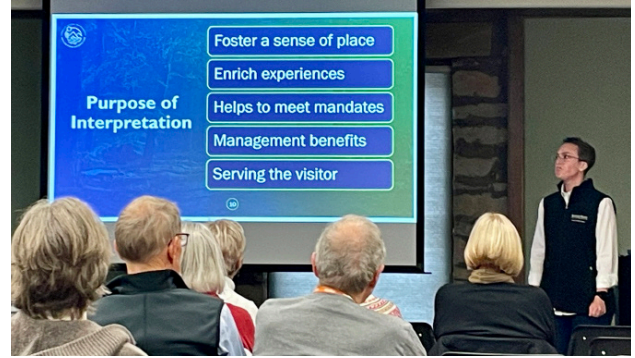
On the prairie I can always see where I'm going, but when I look down and peer closely, there's always something happening beneath my feet that I wouldn't have noticed had I not taken the time to look. This is my good prairie.



2023 Docent Awards Celebration and Keep Year End Report Jill Haukos

The 2023 KEEP Docent Awards celebration was held on February 10th. During this event, the KEEP docents gather to reflect on the previous years' activities and to celebrate the accomplishments of the most active participants.

We traditionally invite a guest speaker and this years' speaker was Dr. Sarah Jackson, KSU Teaching Assistant Professor of Park Mgt. & Conservation, who spoke about the history of interpretation and its role in park management and conservation.



Dr. Sarah Jackson, KSU Park Mgt. & Conservation, gave a presentation on Interpretation

The review of 2023 followed with some of the following statistics of the year for KEEP:

Total # persons visiting through KEEP:	4,519
Students visiting through KEEP:	3,889
Total # activities accomplished in 2023:	127
Total # schools visiting:	28
Total # students participating in hands-on science:	1,284
Total # docents active in 2023:	61
Total # hours donated by docents:	1,421

If we do our jobs right then everyone wins during a school visit – the students, the teachers, and the docents. The kids get a wonderful experience that we hope becomes a lasting memory. The teachers get an opportunity to address specific Next Generation Science Standards with their students in an effective and fun way. The docents have an opportunity to share their love for the prairie with a receptive audience with the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts are appreciated.



Co-docents of the year for 2023
Don Garwood (left), Dave Hodgson (right) with Jill Haukos and Monica Shaffer.



Docent trainee of the year 2023
Kip Lee with Jill Haukos



The 2023 KEEP Docents

Docent Spotlight: *Ken Stafford*

What motivated you to become a Konza Prairie Docent?

I grew up on a cattle ranch/farm/dairy in the deserts of southern Idaho. My life was outdoors. Our place bordered BLM lands so I had hundreds of miles of wide-open spaces to explore and part of each summer I hiked in the Sawtooth Mountains helping maintain hiking trails. Wilderness was in my blood. I moved from Colorado to Manhattan for a position at K-State in August 2010. I mentioned to Mike Haddock that I missed the vast open spaces of public lands available out west, and he told me about the Konza Prairie and that the biannual open house was coming up in September. By a stroke of luck, my wife Kris and I got on a tour bus driven by Chod Hedinger, who told us a great story about the Konza research and teaching. Chod and Mike both spoke about the docent program, and I signed up for the spring 2011 training classes. I had no idea what I was going to do with it, but I needed a place to get out and away from people. I was used to mountains and hundreds of miles of public lands, and the Konza was as close as I could get in Kansas. So, the original reason I took the training was to get the keys to the kingdom and get out in nature.

What has been the best part of being a volunteer at Konza Prairie?

I have learned so much and met so many interesting people. The docents come from incredibly varied backgrounds and each has so much to offer and great stories from their lives. The students bring a cross section of America to the prairie. Even though I grew up on a farm/ranch in the high deserts of southern Idaho, I'd never really paid much attention to the native plants. I found the boundless grass prairies of the Flint Hills to be very beautiful and started to learn about the biology, history, and geology. I had always been interested in geology and history, and those are an integral part of the ecology. Kris and I never had children, and the youngest students I had ever taught were graduate students. I was worried about working with young students, but I found it interesting and even fun. I couldn't say how many hundreds of student activities I've participated in over the past 13 years. I enjoy teaching and learning, and trying to get students to understand the life of a prairie and the environmental changes that affect its health and sustainability.

What brings you the most joy in your life?

My biggest joy is taking a coddiwomple somewhere in the U.S. I really like exploring. I enjoy helping others and talking about all the facets of the prairie. It's satisfying to see an occasional student suddenly get enthralled and involved with something they just saw on the prairie. The things I've learned on the Konza have opened other opportunities for me. I'm a trail guide and former board member at Maxwell Animal Refuge, I do land reviews for the Kansas Land Trust, I'm a Kansas Master Naturalist and this is my 10th year on the Konza burn crew. All because of my training and volunteer work as a docent. The Konza is certainly my second home. I'm usually on the Konza a few days a week.

What are some of your hobbies and interests?

I like to hike the prairie and learn more about the flora. History and geology are two of my great interests and there is so much to learn here. I like to play golf, and I take a few photographs as I wander.



I am originally from southeast Colorado but moved to Oklahoma City in middle school. After high school, I migrated to Illinois for undergrad, and now have been in Kansas for five years.

I grew up on a regenerative cattle ranch, where we spent most of our time outside – learning, playing, and helping with chores. My parents encouraged us to be curious about the world around us and, as a family, we learned who the plants and animals were who lived around us. We loved fishing, exploring the different habitats, making observations about ecological relationships, and learning more about the world. As a regenerative rancher, my dad emphasized working together with nature to raise livestock instead of fighting against it. We improved soil health, diversified plant communities, supported bird and small mammal communities, and raised good beef, all without the use of hay or pesticides. All of this inspired me to go into ecology where I could study all the cool interactions between biotic and abiotic components of ecosystems. I also still strive to learn more about how grazers impact grassland ecosystems and how livestock might be used as tools for grassland management. My mom always had various field guides and encouraged us to use them. I remember reading through them as a small child – enamored by the cool plants, birds, and animals. She loves to come visit us and help me do field work. She now has a small prairie garden in front of her townhouse in Oklahoma City, which she loves very much!

My faculty advisor at K-State is Zak Ratajczka.

With European colonization came the simultaneous removal of indigenous stewards, fire, and bison from the Great Plains – turning the vast tallgrass prairie into plowed fields and one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. What little prairie remains, like here in the Flint Hills, is no longer grazed by bison, but by cattle. While these two large bovine creatures may seem similar – they both preferentially consume grasses and tend to increase plant diversity in tallgrass prairie because of that – there has long been a debate about whether they are ecologically synonymous. Do cattle effectively replace the ecological role that bison once filled? My research targets one of the big differences between cattle and bison – and that is that bison create wallows, and cattle do not. I am looking at how wallows provide unique habitats for unique plant and microbial communities that we might not see in upland prairie if these wallows didn't exist. We have seen that some wallows which hold water for weeks to months in the spring allow wetland plants (and other organisms like tadpole shrimp and tadpoles) to exist, thus increasing overall plant diversity of our prairie. We are also seeing that they do have different microbial communities (although this is very preliminary).

My favorite thing about Konza - I was already in love with wide open spaces and rolling green hills of the Flint Hills just from driving through on I-35 from Oklahoma to northern Missouri to visit family. But when I visited Konza on a field trip during my undergraduate years, I knew that I wanted to do research in tallgrass prairie, and especially at Konza. I love being out at Konza in spring when the birds are returning, the grass is greening back up after being burned, and the spring ephemerals dot the landscape with their cheery faces. But I also love the deep oranges and rich browns of late fall as things are going back to sleep. I cannot possibly choose one thing about Konza to love! Standing on a hill in Konza and just soaking in the vastness of space and time is something truly special. These hills were shaped over millennia and these prairies were managed by people for thousands of years. And then, if you get down and look closely under the canopy of grasses and goldenrod, there are whole universes – minute mushrooms, buzzing bugs, merry mosses, and sleepy seedlings all going about their lives.

Least favorite this is probably the ticks, and all the woody encroachment. Although I think my absolute least favorite thing is the chiggers – the WORST!

My dream job would be either teaching at a small undergraduate college, like my alma mater, or working for either a government agency or NGO helping manage grasslands. I love teaching and sharing my love of ecology and grasslands with the next generation of scientists.

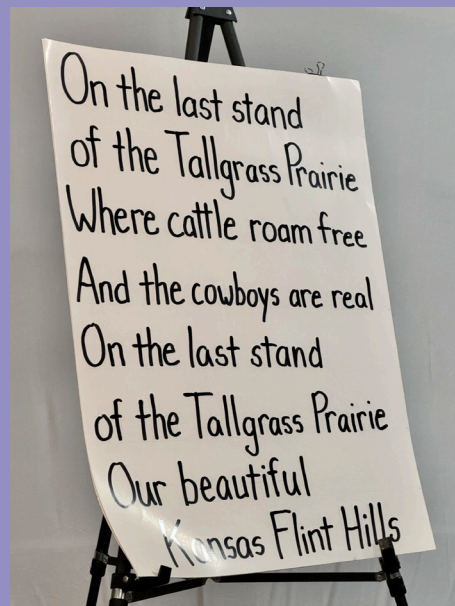
When not in class or doing research I like taking photos of cute plants and beautiful landscapes, traveling with my husband, painting native plants, and being outdoors.



Soup & Song Report

If you think back to long ago January, we received quite a bit of snow that kept us from accessing the Stone Barn where we usually host Soup & Song. We appreciate the Ashland Community Center for accommodating us on short notice.

More than 90 people gathered in the historic schoolhouse and filled it with a buzz of warm friendship and community. The event opened with a KEEP report from Jill Haukos. Next, Derrick Doty, musician, historian, and Humanities Kansas Speaker, taught us about the rich history of Kansas music through storytelling and song. Tallgrass Express (Annie Wilson, Carl Reed, and Derrick Doty) sang us through a supper sampler of the more than 27 soups that filled every inch of table space and every electrical outlet available in the community center. We appreciate all those who were able to join us for this annual celebration of the Konza Prairie.





Wildflower Walk

Mariam Fernandez

Friends of the Konza Prairie merchandise will be for sale. This year, Nellie Hill-Sullins' K-State Agriculture Communications class developed Wildflower Walk themed t-shirts and stickers to be sold at the event. In addition, FOKP will be selling Mike Haddock's Wildflowers and Grasses of Kansas: A Field Guide, Revised and Expanded Edition. Just in time for the wildflowers! All proceeds benefit Friends of Konza Prairie.

Join the fun searching for wildflowers. Download the free iNaturalist phone app and share your observations with the Konza Prairie Wildflower Walk 2024 Project. www.inaturalist.org/projects/konza-prairie-wildflower-walk-2024

Share the Walk with friends. <https://keep.konza.k-state.edu/fokp> or www.facebook.com/FriendsofKonzaPrairieKonza



Anna Holthaus



Mariam Fernandez



FRIENDS OF KONZA PRAIRIE
Lindsay Lehman

Join us at the Konza Prairie Biological Station for the

WILD FLOWER WALK

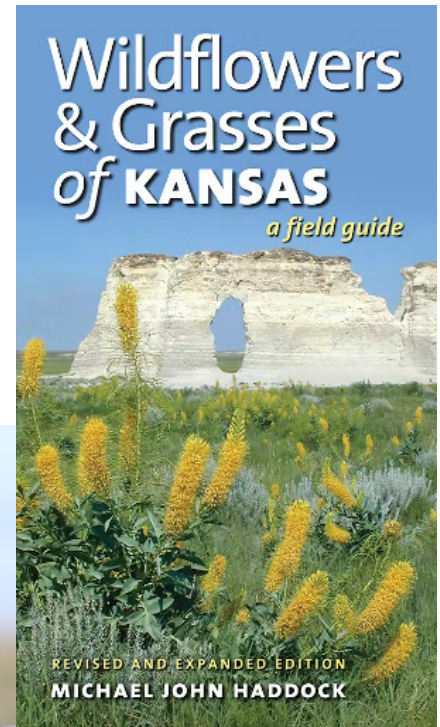
Sunday, June 2nd at 6:30pm

A guide will lead you on a beautiful, easy 1.5 mile hike on Butterfly Hill Trail, not often open to the public, to see the Konza Prairie at peak wildflower bloom

FRIENDS OF KONZA PRAIRIE

\$10/person or free for FOKP members
For more information visit keep.konza.k-state.edu/fokp or call (785) 557-0351

Lindsay Lehman



Ground plum

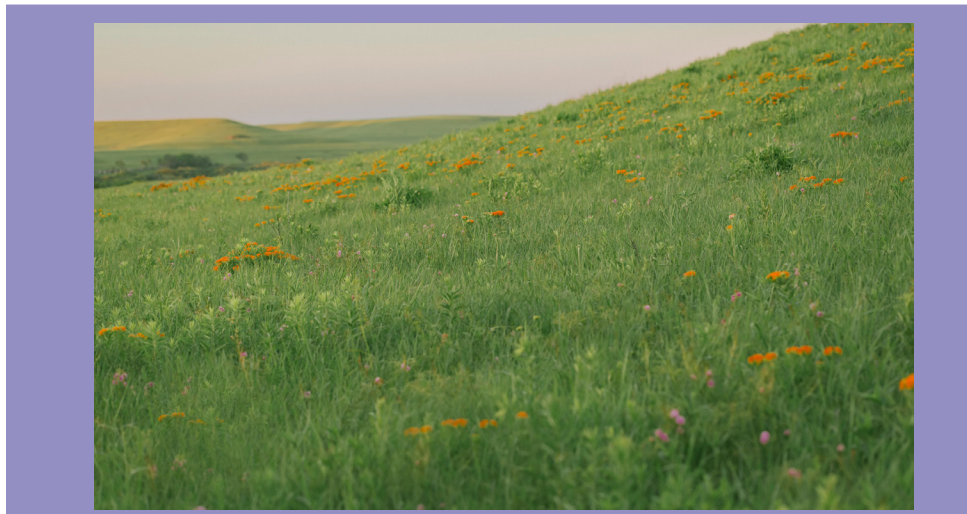


Join Us for Prairie People Happy Hour!

Calling all prairie enthusiasts and Friends of Konza Prairie supporters! We're thrilled to invite you to a special happy hour at Manhattan Brewing Company on **Thursday, May 30th, from 5-7 PM.**

Come mingle with fellow prairie people, enjoy live music, and check out our latest merchandise. We'll kick off with a brief welcome and introduction to celebrate our community's commitment to this landscape and the educational initiatives at Konza Prairie Biological Station.

Don't miss out on this chance to connect with others who are just as passionate about hiking, exploring, and preserving the prairie—and passing these passions on to our youth. Let's raise a glass to the prairie and all the adventures it holds. We look forward to seeing you there! Feel free to drop in anytime during this happy hour for prairie people.



The KPBS Staff:

Director John Blair, Ph.D.
Assistant Director Eva Horne, Ph.D.
Administrative Asst. Barb Van Slyke
KPBS Project/Site Manager Patrick O'Neal
Director of Education Jill Haukos
Assistant Environmental Educator Monica Shaffer

The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promote the interests of Konza Prairie Biological Station as they pertain to its mission of Research, Education and Conservation. Membership in FOKP is open to all individuals, groups and businesses that share an interest in the common goal of supporting the Konza Prairie Biological Station.

For FOKP membership and general information, call 785-587-0441, or visit the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) website at: <http://keep.konza.ksu.edu>

The FOKP Executive Board:

President Nellie Hill-Sullins (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2025)
Treasurer Heather Culwell (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2025)
Secretary Mike Haddock (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)
Historian Joe Gelroth

The FOKP board members:

Susan Adams (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2024)
Brian McCornack (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2025)
Mollie Wold (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2025)
Sarah Jackson (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)
Ryan Klataske (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)
Bob Lewis (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)
Amy Meng (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)

Ex-officio and Honorary members

The Nature Conservancy- Ben Postlethwaith
KPBS Director- John Blair
Director of Education- Jill Haukos
KSU Foundation- Trevor Jueneman
Historian- Joe Gelroth
Honorary Board Members- Stormy Kennedy and Valerie Wright

Friends of Konza Prairie
Kansas State University
Division of Biology,
116 Ackert Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506-4901
785-587-0441
#308

FRIENDS OF
KONZA PRAIRIE



MISSION

Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS) is a native tallgrass prairie preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University and operated as a research station by the Division of Biology. The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promotes the interests of KPBS as they pertain to its mission of research, education and conservation.

FOKP Members

This list designates **NEW** and **RENEWING** members who have joined since the last newsletter.

QUESTIONS REGARDING MEMBERSHIP SHOULD BE SENT TO friendsofkonza@gmail.com

Student

Josh Brewer & Ania Payne
Karan Krna
Anna Magill

Little Bluestem—Individual
Annie Baker
Carl & Janice Briggs
Larry Campbell
Patrick Dattore
Ron Fowles & Barbara Walter
Pam & Alan Hunt
Liz Jackson
Ryan & Rachel Klataske
Claudia Luthi
Daniel Morgan
Cynthia Rhodes & Brian Martin

Little Bluestem—Family

Leslie Alford & Jim Hood
Lynette Allen
Brian Ball & Joy Swallow
Connie & Charles Busch
Jan Butin
Charlie & Pat Grimwood
Richard L. & Margaret M.
Hartman, CDR, USNR (Ret)
Dave & Jill Haukos
Cole & Sarah Hawver
Nellie Hill-Sullins
Louis & Amy Meng
Loren & Jaime Minnich
Joe & Trisha Moore
Karen Penner & Marc Johnson
Paul Post & Kay Kelly
Dan & Bev Rogers
Marcia & Tim Rozell
Lucas Shivers
Katie Starzec
Elizabeth Ward
Alec & Jessica Wold

Big Bluestem

Diane Barker
Tom & Jody Boeding
Jerry Dees & Deborah Murray
Marguerite & Neal Fleming

Amanda P Gaulke
Patrick & Susan Gormely
Lisa J. Grossman
Gary & Carolyn Haden
Dan & Susie Higgins
Tom Hulbert & Nancy Scheer
Aubrey Krug
Kip Lee
Karen & John McCulloh
Bill Pallett
Dr. Diane & Mr. Gail Post
Wally Post & Diane McClenny-Post
Martha & Dick Seaton
Bob & Elaine Shannon
Joan C. Strickler
Tom & Kristie Taylor
Jim & Beth Turtle
Jeff & Patti Watson
Larry G. & Ruth E. Williams

Flint Hills

Lyle & Chris Butler
James & Susan Copeland
Jan Davis
Walter Dodds & Dolly Gudder
Marty & Sharon Gurtz
Joan & Joe Haeefe
Haines Family LLC
Gary & Cindy Jeffrey
Phil Jeffries
Julia Jilek
Michael & Linda Jones
Pat & Mary Pat Petrie
Alan & Joan Smith
Kelly Yarbrough & Jeff Sackrider

Prairie Chicken

Kary Bloom
Preston & Diana Chapel
Forrest Chumley & Barbara Valent
Steve Hulbert Family
Mark Hulbert &
Megan Kennelly & Kris Silver
Bob Lewis
Kay Russell
David & Jennifer Saab
Jean Shackelford

Bison

Pat & Kelly Landes
Holly Serk & Thomas Einck
Ken & Kris Stafford
Caroline Thorington

Tall Grass

Jim Koelliker & Carole Ann Harbers
Paula & David Ripple

Community Memberships

Sara Mercedes Abraham
Stephanie Barber
Lenlibeth Bonano
Irene Booth
Leo Bryce
Larry Burns
Romario Calderon Pastran
Jonathan Carlson
Goldie Carr-Davis
Dillon Carter
Jason Caulkins
Leah Chambers
Brittany Clemons
Nathan Collins
Fausto Coloma
Karen Cryderman
Jonathon Dalles
Elena Davis
Erika Davis
David Dixon
Ivy Fink
Kirsten Flory
Fredrick Francis
Lexanni Franz
Ashley Green
Michael Hannah
Cole Hawver
Jonquez Haynes
John Henry
Felipe Hernandez Blandon
Derek Hobling
Wade Hoffman
Shiela Huffman
Chris Hunter
Luke Johnson
Bonnie Kerns

Christopher Larsen
Mary Leer
Isabelle Linn
Donald Little
Scott Lloyd
Myles Loewen
Michael Machell
Michael Marks
Jerry Martin
Roger McDowell
Zachary Mcfatridge
Casey Murphy
Blakely Murray
Gloria Myles
Devon Ohr
Vanessa Ordonez
Maggie Osborne
Aubyn Patrick
Joshua Pugh
Sasha Riddle
Steven Roach
Gary Romero
Christopher Roys
Jauney Smith
Deborah Smith
Aaron Sotkovski
Dannececia Stano
Patricia Symonds
Katherine Tessendorf
Keara Thomas
Bryceson Tolle
Noah Tuscan
Paul Tuten
Kassandra Villavicencio
Joshua Westerfield
Colby White