



Join Us for a *Konza Prairie Weekend!*

May 29

Prairie People Happy Hour

June 1

Wildflower Walk



BISON & BLUESTEM

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SAVE THE DATE

Saturday April 12, 10am: K-State Interpretive Walks
meet at the Nature Trail Visitors Pavilion
Saturday May 3, 10am-4pm: FOKP at the Flint Hills
Festival at the Flint Hills Discovery Center
Thursday May 29, 5pm-7pm: Prairie People Happy
Hour at Manhattan Brewing Company
Sunday June 1 - 6:30pm-8:30pm - FOKP Wildflower
Walk at the Konza Prairie Stone Barn

Wildflower Walk

Come see the glory of the prairie in full bloom!

Wildflower Walk

Sunday June 1

6:30pm-8:30pm

**150 Konza Prairie Lane
Manhattan, KS 66502**

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

Stroll the beautiful 1.5 mile Butterfly Hill
trail (family-friendly) located at Konza
headquarters area, not often open to the
public. Trained Docents will be stationed on
the path to show you all the interesting life
on the prairie.

Join us for this one special night!

For more, go to:
<https://keep.konza.k-state.edu/fokp/>





Spring is in the air! And so is the smell of smoke from prescribed fires that maintain healthy tallgrass prairie ecosystems and the biodiversity and ecosystem services they provide. Those of us who live in the Flint Hills know the importance of fire in creating and maintaining these grasslands, but visitors and newcomers often wonder why land managers and conservationists in the Flint Hills burn. The short answer is that prairies are a fire-dependent ecosystem. Prairie plants and animals evolved with, and are adapted to, frequent fires. These grasslands produce large amounts of dead plant material (detritus) that burns easily. In the absence of fire, this detritus accumulates and alters the light, energy, and nutrient environment of prairie plants. Fire removes the detritus and promotes the growth and flowering of grasses and wildflowers. That increases the quantity and quality of resources for grazers and pollinators. It also improves habitat quality for grassland-dependent birds and small mammals. Fire has another important effect – it prevents the growth of shrubs and trees that take over the prairie when fires are suppressed, a phenomenon called ‘woody encroachment’. Woody encroachment in grasslands results in the loss of grassland biodiversity and has economic impacts for ranchers. Research at Konza Prairie shows that woody encroachment also impacts the hydrologic cycle and water resources. Over 30 years of data on plant cover, groundwater levels, and streamflow clearly show that woody plant encroachment increases water loss and reduces recharge of stream water, decreasing streamflow and increasing the drying of intermittent streams in the Flint Hills. This was highlighted in a recent presentation to the Kansas House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee by Konza LTER PI Jesse Nippert. It is worth noting that the research needed to document the long-term impacts of environmental changes like this would not be possible without federal funding for research at places like the Konza Prairie Biological Station.

If you hike the Konza Prairie Nature Trail this spring, you will notice a redesigned trailhead and new Visitors Pavilion. The pavilion was designed and constructed by KPBS staff with support from several sponsors and donors. Educational signage and finishing touches will be added this spring. I hope that you enjoy the new pavilion, and I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual Wildflower Walk in June. As always, please feel free to contact me (jblair@ksu.edu; 785-532-7065) with any questions or concerns about KPBS or to find out how you can support our long-term goals.





FOKP President's Message

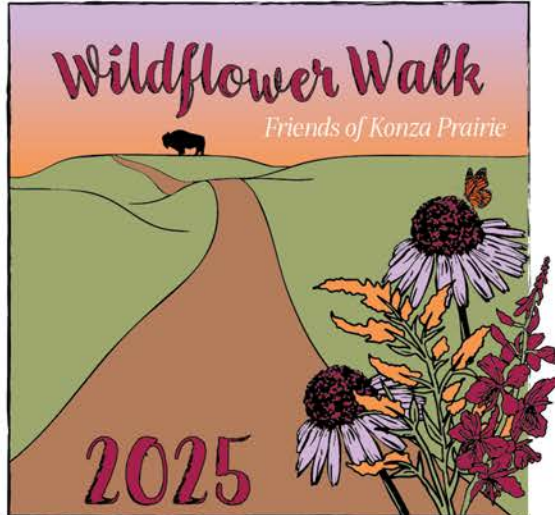
Nellie Hill-Sullins

As a member of the Kansas State University faculty and president of the Friends of Konza Prairie Board, I've enjoyed creating a unique opportunity to bridge my roles and further share the deep appreciation all FOKP members have for this remarkable prairie landscape.

Students in my AGCOM 210: Layout and Design Principles course have created compelling promotional materials that capture the essence of Konza Prairie. This introductory graphic design and photography class challenged students to develop creative materials for FOKP events, including flyers, stickers, and t-shirt designs.

The project was enriched by guest presentations from Jill Haukos and John Blair, who provided invaluable insights into tallgrass prairie ecology, the Kansas Prairie Biological Station (KPBS), and the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP). Armed with this knowledge and their design skills, students used Adobe Illustrator to transform their understanding into vibrant visual communication materials.

This collaboration represents more than just design, it's an opportunity to engage new audiences and foster a deeper connection with the prairie's significance. You are likely to see more student designs incorporated into future event promotions and merchandise, highlighting FOKP mission efforts and student creative talent. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the students who have shared their artistic vision in support of our aims. *(continued page 5)*



Peri Andras



Brooke Rogers



Margot Stewart

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

"This experience provided a hands-on experience and real-life application of the lessons we learned in class. Prior to this event package, I had only been to Konza Prairie once, so I enjoyed learning more about it through the presentations that we were given. I didn't realize the size or the amount of research that happens at Konza. I was particularly interested in the differences that bison have on the prairie in comparison to cattle." - Jenna Gengler



I want to thank Friends of Konza Prairie for this opportunity to expand my graphic design skills, learn about the Konza Prairie, and begin my experience using Adobe Illustrator. I am very grateful to Jill Haukos and John Blair for taking the time to come visit our class and tell us all about the wonderful happenings just outside of Manhattan. I wouldn't have known about the Konza Prairie, the research projects being done there, the bison herd, and the fun educational events you all help put on without this assignment. I found the information about Katharine Ordway buying and donating the prairie to the Nature Conservancy very interesting. Grand acts of philanthropy like that aren't common and I believe what she did was quite a blessing to the land despite her never setting foot on the Konza Prairie. Without her giant act of kindness, the prairie wouldn't be as it is today, and I wouldn't have been able to learn about such a unique place while growing in my graphic design skills. Once more, thank you so much for your time, your love of the land, and your consideration of my event package." - Camryn DeVore



"Getting to learn about all the events that Friends of Konza Prairie puts on was so much fun, and I hope to make it out sometime this year! I enjoyed learning about the history of the Konza, as well as the tallgrass prairies. My favorite part might have been when Jill and John talked about the bison, their calves, and the beauty they bring to the Konza! As someone who started out with very little design experience, I can confidently say I am walking away with valuable knowledge and this project will be assisting me this summer as I take on an internship opportunity in Montana." - Kelcy Bergstrom

Tallgrass Prairie - Adult Education

It's been an idea that has rattled around in my head for several years – offering a class on the tallgrass prairie to adults only. Docent training is already attracting a lot of people who care about the prairie and wish to know more. Some of those people have time during the day to volunteer with KEEP, but some don't. It seemed logical to give those people – the ones who want to know more but can't volunteer right now – an option other than docent training. Thus was born the class "Tallgrass Prairie" for the adult learner (I need a better title, but that will come later).

The class filled quickly, to the point that I have a pretty good list of people who are waiting for another class. I decided there should be 2 days – with each day consisting of 2 sets of information (2 PowerPoints each day) with an outdoor hike after. There was a lot of information presented and in hindsight, the class may have been improved with more discussion amongst the class and less lecture from me. The attendees of the first class represented a diverse background – there were artists, land managers, master gardeners, and prairie aficionados. There was even a past student of Lloyd Hulbert's in the class.





What was clear was the connection among all the participants: a desire to learn more about their ecosystem.

With that in mind, here's what I thought folks needed to know:

- What is prairie? Where are prairies located, and why are they there? What is the composition of a prairie?
- Why is life on a prairie so difficult? What is the primary limiting factor to survival on the prairie?
- Why is prairie in peril right now? What is the role of climate change in this story?
- What is the role of fire?
- What is the role of grazing?
- Why are grasses uniquely capable of life in a prairie?
- What is the physiology of a grass?
- What are the C3 grasses? What are the C4 grasses? How are they identified? When do they appear phenologically?
- How do grasses differ from forbs? How do they differ from trees and shrubs?
- What is the role of geology in the presence of the tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills?
- What is limestone, shale, and flint/chert? What is Sioux quartzite? What do each of these rocks look like?
- The flow of Kings Creek is declining. Why?
- What is the Konza Prairie Biological Station? Who owns it? Who operates it? How is it managed? Who are the people who manage it? Who are the people doing research here?
- What's the connection between the biological station and the public Nature Trail?

Whew! We had a busy two days and, from what I heard, participants enjoyed it. I expect to offer this class once a year during Spring Break. Let me know if you're interested in participating.

See you on the prairie! - Jill

Docent Awards for 2024

It's no secret that the volunteer docents form the backbone of the Konza Environmental Education Program. We simply could not do our programming without this core group of amazing people!

With that in mind, every year we celebrate those individuals who spent the most time with us sharing their knowledge and passion for the prairie with visiting school groups.



Those docents with the highest number of hours donated to KEEP in 2024 were (in alphabetical order):

Earl Allen, Mary Breneman, Buz Bruzina, Miriam Edelman, Don Garwood, Mike Haddock, Chris Herald, Dave Hodgson, Kathy Hurd, Mike Jones, Susan Kamphaus, Jim Koelliker, Retta Kramer, Kip Lee, Dick Oberst, Terry Olson, Jeff Petersen, Sandy Richard, Gerry Snyder, Jen Spearie, Jacquie Staats, Ken Stafford, Stacy Stewart, Jeff Watson, Patti Watson, Mollie Wold and Sue Ann Wright

Special thanks and awards went to:



Keeper of the Phenology List: Jacquie Staats



2024 Docent Trainee of the Year: Mike Haddock



New Master Docent: Susan Kamphaus



2024 Docent of the Year: Dave Hodgson

Konza Prairie Teacher of the Year: Rachel Schwartzbeck – Seaman Middle School 7th Grade



Additionally

- Organizers of the weekly docent hike: Retta Kramer & Terry Olson
- Dogwood control on the Nature Trail & Butterfly Hill: Bharat Ratra & Don Garwood
- Docents active on FOKP board: Conni Briggs, Kathy Hurd, Amy Meng, Amber Myers, Mollie Wold & Mike Haddock
- 2024 New Docents: Susan Hazelbaker, Taylor Apsley, Chris Shoults, Conni Briggs & Mike Haddock



We had a wonderful program from Joe Carpenter and Barb Downey, who own and manage the Downey Ranch, located south of Wamego in Wabaunsee County. They spoke on the vital importance of fire and grazing in the management and maintenance of the prairie. Our thanks to them for sharing their knowledge and experience with us.

New docent training began on March 24th, and we'll have a new group of people to introduce to you soon. Our gratitude goes out to all the people who enable KEEP to function: the docents, donors, staff of KPBS, researchers at KPBS, and everyone who plays some sort of role in our program. It simply could not happen without all of you! Thank you all.

Docent Spotlight

Sue Ann Wright

What motivated you to become a Konza Prairie Docent?

The desire to learn more about the prairie that I love to roam, so that I could share with others.

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

Learn, learn, learn!

--About the prairie and KPBS.

--About the people involved, staff and fellow docents--their backgrounds, knowledge, stories, and motivation to serve.

--About the school children of today--the changes since I was involved over 20 years ago!



What brings you the most joy in your life?

Experiencing God's creation, both natural and man made, with family and friends; watching birds and wildlife from our deck; being greeted home by Labradors.

What are some of your hobbies and interests?

Staying active with walks, bikes, swims, pickleball, grandchildren, and travel.

Food--exploring, preparing, raising.

Books/Music--church choir.

Where are you from?

I am originally from Ciudad del Este, Paraguay. I studied at the Universidad Privada del Este, in my hometown, and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science. In 2021, I moved to Columbus, Ohio, to earn a Master's degree at The Ohio State University on a Fulbright fellowship. After obtaining my M.S. degree, I moved to the University of Kansas for my doctoral program.

What university are you attending and who is your major advisor?

I am a doctoral student at the University of Kansas in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. My advisor is Dr. Sara Baer, director of the Kansas Biological Survey & Center for Ecological Research.

What inspired you to enter this field of study?

During my last few years in high school, I started to have an intense fascination with natural environments, especially forests and the biodiversity they harbored. I was particularly fond of wild animals and plants. Paraguay has always been characterized by having diverse terrestrial ecosystems, including extremely humid and densely vegetated forests, but they were not well explored and studied at that time. Later, serious environmental problems, including wildfires, made me pay special attention to how these natural systems were affected and how they could be restored over time. Because of these issues, I gradually began to consider environmental science as a major in college. Through the years and in college, I started to focus on the restoration of terrestrial ecosystems post-disturbance and decided to pursue graduate school to expand on foreseen knowledge gaps.

Was there someone in your life who shared your love of nature or influenced you?

I have always been fortunate to be surrounded by people who have always inspired me to embrace nature. My parents and professors/teachers always inculcated me to participate in events and join volunteer activities related to the environment.

What is your research topic at Konza Prairie and how does it fit into the broader science picture?

My research focuses on soil carbon accumulation in native and developing prairies. Specifically, I am investigating how different direct and indirect ecological drivers (i.e., plant communities, planting-year climate, grazing, fire frequencies, and topography) can influence carbon accumulation in soil systems. I am closely working with my advisor Dr. Sara Baer, who was responsible for the establishment of the Sequential Restoration Plots (SRP) at Konza. This sequential approach provides us with the opportunity to study how different sequences installed during wet and dry years can have direct and indirect effects on soil carbon. In addition, one of my research chapters focuses on carbon stock changes in native prairies, which will include several watersheds at Konza with different fire frequencies and the presence/absence of bison. Having this unique opportunity to do research at Konza, where I can have access to varied experimental sites, is a gold mine for an early career researcher like me.

What is your favorite thing about Konza?

I have so many favorite things about Konza--the amazing scenery during the sunset, the vast biodiversity of plants and animals, the research opportunities, and the warmth and friendliness of the people who work and care for Konza. One thing that will stick with me was the first time I saw a bison at Konza.

(continued on page 11)





In Paraguay, we have no bison, so seeing the bison up close at Konza was exciting. In fact, every time we go to do fieldwork at Konza, my lab colleagues and I never miss the opportunity to drive through the watersheds to see the bison. If I am honest, I think I have more photos of bison and plants from Konza than my family and friends - those of you who have visited Konza will surely understand!

What is your least favorite thing about Konza?

The heat! I come from a country with a subtropical climate and am therefore used to the insanely warm and humid climate of Paraguay. However, the heat in Konza is something I was not expecting at all. However, there is nothing that a nice hat, plenty of water, and sunscreen cannot take care of!

What would be your dream job?

My dream job is to conduct research in different terrestrial ecosystems in South and Central America. I would love to join

a group of researchers and conduct studies in the Amazon and Cerrado in Brazil, Patagonia in Argentina, the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador, and, of course, the Chaco in Paraguay.

What do you like to do when you're not in class or doing your research?

When I am not busy doing things for my research and teaching, I like to read books. I like fantasy, science fiction, and horror books. I am currently reading (slowly) "It" by Stephen King and "The Secret in Their Eyes" by Eduardo Sacheri. I also enjoy putting on my headphones and going for a run/walk. I am an avid movie watcher and usually like to watch movies that are nominated for the Oscars. (Unpopular opinion: *Barbie* was better than *Oppenheimer*.) Anyways, I like to bake, but to be honest, I am not very good at it, but I enjoy trying it.



Soup and Song Report

In January 2025, a passionate group of prairie enthusiasts gathered at Konza Prairie Biological Station for what turned out to be an unforgettable Soup & Song event! The night was filled with an incredible variety of soups, and the welcoming atmosphere inspired everyone to dive into meaningful conversations over steaming bowls of deliciousness. What a special evening it was!



Dr. Daniel Wildcat, professor at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, was our guest speaker and shared powerful insights on the importance of indigenous knowledge in inspiring priceless relationships with the land and addressing environmental challenges, sparking thoughtful discussions that carried on throughout the night. Music from Kaw Creek, featuring Dr. Alice Boyle and Robert Rosenberg, beautifully filled the space, with their songs reflecting the spirit of the tallgrass prairie. It was a true celebration of the prairie and the amazing community that cares for it. We are so grateful to everyone who joined us and we cannot wait to share more memorable moments together in the future!





@FriendsofKonzaPrairie



@friends_of_konza_prairie



A big THANK YOU to **Crystal Ly** for designing our new Bison and Bluestem Newsletter!

The KPBS Staff:

Director John Blair, Ph.D.

Assistant Director Eva Horne, Ph.D.

Director of Education Jill Haukos

Assistant Environmental Educator Monica Shaffer

KPBS Project/Site Manager Patrick O'Neal

Administrative Assistant Barb Van Slyke

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- 0381, 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)

President-elect Sarah Jackson (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)

Treasurer Conni Briggs (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2027)

Secretary Mike Haddock (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2026)

The FOKP board members:

Conni Briggs (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2027)

Heather Culwell (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2025)

Nellie Hill-Sullins (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2025)

Mollie Wold (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2025)

Mike Haddock (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2026)

Sarah Jackson (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2026)

Ryan Klataske (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2026)

Brian McCornack (3 yr. term (2nd) expiring Dec 2026)

Amy Meng (3 yr. term expiring Dec. 2026)

Amber Myers (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2027)

Jessy Wilkes (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2027)

Kathy Hund (3-yr term expiring Dec. 2027)

Ex-officio and Honorary members

John Blair Director, Konza Prairie Biological Station Jill Haukos Director, Konza Environmental Education Program Patrick O'Neal, Konza Prairie Biological Station Site Mgr., Dir. of Parking Joe Gelroth, Historian Stormy Kennedy and Dr. Valerie Wright Honorary Board Members The Nature Conservancy, Open KSU Foundation, Open

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



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

Meredith Fry
Justin Hawkins
Eleanor Smith

Little Bluestem—Individual

Renee Grandiflora
Richard L. Hartman, CDR,
USN (Ret)
Jay Jeffrey
Claudia Luthi
Maci Murillo
Cynthia Rhodes & Brian
Martin
Kyle Schroeder
Cindy Vadakin
Jessica Wilkes

Little Bluestem—Family

Fredrick Betzen
Stephen Bridenstine
John & Rita Cassida
Kelly & Bert Coleman
Christy Crenshaw
Julie Goldner
Lisa Grossman
Dave & Jill Haukos
Cole & Sarah Hawver
Sara & Derek Hillard
Nellie Hill-Sullins & Daniel
Sullins
Gary & Cindy Jeffrey

Bruce & Brigitte Kidder
Ron & Carol Klataske
Tom & Andrea Krauss
Donna & Nick Krueger
Chance Lee & Tracey
Bamberger
Glen Lierly
Allie Lousch
Deborah Martin
Mary & Taylor McFall
Deborah Murray
Maureen & Jan Olewnik
Dawn Opitz-White
Paul Post & Kay Kelly
Wally Post & Diane
McClenny-Post
Ruth & Glenn Rodden
Patrick Schaub & Debra
Rodenbaugh Schaub
Timothy Schuler Family
Martha & Dick Seaton
The Shaffer Family
Brad & Susie Shaw
Gina Taylor
Jim & Stacey Warner
Erin Wiersma
Ryan Wilson & Kristen
Hoffman

Big Bluestem

Martha Blackman
Tom & Jody Boeding

Mike & Dru Clarke
Dan Dieter
Walter Dodds & Dolly
Gudder
Marguerite & Neal Fleming
Scott & Donna Goltry
Patrick & Susan Gormely
Charlie & Pat Grimwood
Mike & Toni Haddock
Gary & Carolyn Haden
Dan & Susie Higgins
Tom Hulbert & Nancy
Scheer
Kail & Becky Katzenmeier
Kip Lee
Bill Pallett
Frances Pieters
Dr. Diane & Mr. Gail Post
Alesia Rocchia
Don & Judi Schultz
Phyllis & Warren Slocombe
Alan & Joan Smith
Jim & Beth Turtle
Dee & Kimberly Warren
Larry G. & Ruth E. Williams
Fred & Judy Works

Flint Hills

Lyle & Chris Butler
Thyra Davis
Dan & Latane Donelin
Marty & Sharon Gurtz

Joan & Joe Haefele
Haines Family LLC
Steve Hulbert Family
Michael & Linda Jones
John Laffoon
Valerie Wright

Prairie Chicken

Terry & Ginny Arthur
John & Sarah Blair
Preston & Diana Chapel
Dr. Anne Francis
Mark Hulbert &
Phil Jeffries
Julia Jilek
Bob Lewis
Karen McCulloh
Jay & Doris Merrill
Pat & Mary Pat Petrie
Kay Russell
David & Jennifer Saab
Jean Shackelford

Bison

Brian Ball & Joy Swallow
Shawna Bronson
Jan Davis
Ashton Hess
Pat & Kelly Landes
Ginny & Jeff Petersen
Ken & Kris Stafford

Tallgrass

Mike & Connie Butler
Marlis Dagg
Jim Koelliker & Carole Ann
Harbers
Jacque Staats & Dick Oberst

Community Memberships

Ashley Amayo
Matthew Bolduc
Brandon Bullock
Lawrence Burnham
Deva Crane
Jaye Diaz
Tammy Fisher
Hope Foltz
Jeffrey Hamm
Annette Heilman
Karyan Jones
Kristen Martinez
Alonso Martinez-Salas
Michelle Owens
Jeannine Saladino
Alejandra Salas
Sara Voldrich
William White
Rece Wilson
Brian Woodworth