

Farewell to Corey Kudrna

by Margaret Slayton

One of the cornerstones of the Loess Hills chapter is its partnership with Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Holt County.

That partnership was coordinated with longtime wildlife refuge specialist, Corey Kudrna, who transferred to Mingo National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Missouri this past November. He had worked at the refuge for 12 years.

Kudrna said the chapter has played a vital role in completing habitat improvements on the refuge and by providing volunteers for public outreach events.



by Brent Galliant

Corey Kudrna and Tracy Miller at Squaw Creek getting water for the capstone project.

“The Master Naturalists are really a strong, lifting arm of the refuge,” said Kudrna. “They serve by coordinating and keeping us

organized. It has been much more efficient working with this good, strong partner organization which uses email to communicate with everyone quickly and we can work together to get things done.” Kudrna said the chapter has helped at Squaw Creek in many different capacities during his time at the refuge.

A recent project conducted by the new Master Naturalist class with

Continued on p. 2

In this Issue

Farewell	page 1
The Last Walnut	page 3
Prairie Conference	page 4
Annual Report	page 5

Kudrna was the cordgrass planting. Over 300 acres of native cordgrass were planted, making it the largest continuous habitat available for prairie cordgrass in Missouri. The cordgrass is beneficial habitat for resting waterfowl and other birds like pheasants and turkey. It's also important for the massasauga rattlesnake on the refuge, which is federally protected.

During a work day this year, a crew of mostly Master Naturalist members, also planted over 500 butterfly milkweed and scattered swamp milkweed which is necessary for the monarch butterfly migration.

This fall, the chapter volunteered at the Family Day event at two educational booths open to the public -- one on the cordgrass planting and the other on monarch butterflies and wildflowers.

In addition, students from 2nd to 4th grades came to Squaw Creek for an after-school program starting in September for five weeks. Chapter member Charles Bramlage led the program.

For the last 37 years, the refuge has hosted an Eagle Days event for three days in December. The Loess Hills Chapter and the Kansas City Osage Trails Chapter work the booths at the refuge. In December 2014, a record of 5,000 visitors came to the refuge to view hundreds of bald eagles.

“On Friday, Saturday and Sunday,

there's a massive number of hours that are volunteered and many people of all ages from the public that get contacted,” said Kudrna. “When visitors get that personal contact with somebody from the

at Squaw Creek, several wetland unit habitats have been improved and much volunteer work has been done to clear the loess hills to open sunlight to the soil which allows for wildflower growth.



Cory Kudrna directs the Monarch butterfly tagging.

by Ann Thorne

Birds species that have increased in number over the last 10 years are trumpeter swans that now number in the hundreds each year and sandhill cranes. Just this year, the World Bird Sanctuary based in St. Louis released a juvenile sandhill crane at the refuge as part of a larger restoration effort to reintroduce the species into the state.

“Hopefully we've shared enough of our passion for the resource,” said Kudrna. “This is just a cool spot on the migration where the Mississippi Flyway and the Central Flyway

Master Naturalists, it really makes it a lot richer experience especially for the first time visitor. There have been some years that we've had great weather and lots of eagles and sometimes we've had bad weather and folks have showed up in force every time no matter what the conditions are outside.”

He said since he started working

come together. There are so many birds that come through here and hopefully we've shared that passion and other folks will use their skill sets in the future to benefit this area and it will continue to grow.”

The Last Walnut

by MaryJo Ostenberg

Two large black walnut trees (*Juglans nigra*) grace the west side of my house.

The mother tree came first, with plenty of room to spread her limbs out like a huge hug. Knurled, almost arthritic, she will never be a great beauty or a valued lumber tree but her vast space is welcoming just the same. The child, reaching straight up in an attempt to escape her shadow may someday prove an asset for a future resident of this place I call home. My husband Terry wore a path between them as he made his way to the barn each morning and I always watched him from a window. For 30 years every fall walnuts punched down from those trees but not a one hit him. I'm not sure he realized that as he walked with his head down, deep in thought.

Those two friends have provided protection from the hot sun in summer and cold west winds in winter as well as a bounty of those delicious nuts for us and the brave squirrels that manage to elude my dogs. But they have also provided entertainment. Yes, all the birds, and even

the occasional possum, raccoon or feral cat that shelter in these trees are always fun but the real entertainment was the bet my husband

made for years so I started to watch these last survivors and note the characteristics that might explain this. Was it the thickness



MaryJo Ostenberg's large walnut tree.

by MaryJo Ostenberg

and I always made late summer.

I noticed the very first year that there were two or three walnuts that hung on long after all the other walnuts hit the ground; and there was one walnut that was the last to let go. I've kept a na-

ture journal for years so I started to watch these last survivors and note the characteristics that might explain this. Was it the thickness of the branch, the location, the size of the walnut or just luck?

The second year I asked my husband to pick his choice for the last walnut and gave him my guess. He won that year. I took notes. The second year he won again. I took notes. He never won again. He even accused me of knocking down his walnut but never seriously. You see with careful observation the characteristics that helped that last walnut hang on became more obvious.

There was no bet this past fall but I still chose my candidate and watched that nut closely and took notes.

Finally that last walnut succumbed to a bright overnight freeze and with very little fanfare dropped to the frost covered

ground early one morning. It was clear and perfectly still. I walked out in my robe with coffee in hand, picked it up, got dressed and carried it out to the woods to plant in the soft forest soil. This one is a keeper just like all the other last walnuts.

Prairie Day

by Gerry Crawford



by Gerry Crawford

The participants in Prairie Day took a tour of the grounds where Dr. Morton narrated what they saw on the grounds of the prairie.

The Missouri Prairie Foundation held their 2015 annual Prairie Day event at Dr. Wayne Morton's restored prairie near Cole Camp, Mo., the weekend of Oct 9-11. The event was organized by the Hi Lonesome Chapter of Missouri



by Gerry Crawford

One of the flowers the participants saw was Closed Gentian.

Master Naturalists from the Lake of the Ozarks area along with other partners such as: MU Ext. Svc; MDC; MO Native Plant Society and others.

Saturday events included: prairie walks; prairie hayrides; bird banding; nature exhibits; star gazing; and more. As in the past Randy of MPF provided all the amenities for the wine and cheese tasting extravaganza under the big tent.

One of the prairie highlights was the opportunity to be shuttled from Cole Camp to the "Good Night Henry" prairie; and be led on a prairie walk narrated by the amazing Donnie Nichols of the Hi Lonesome

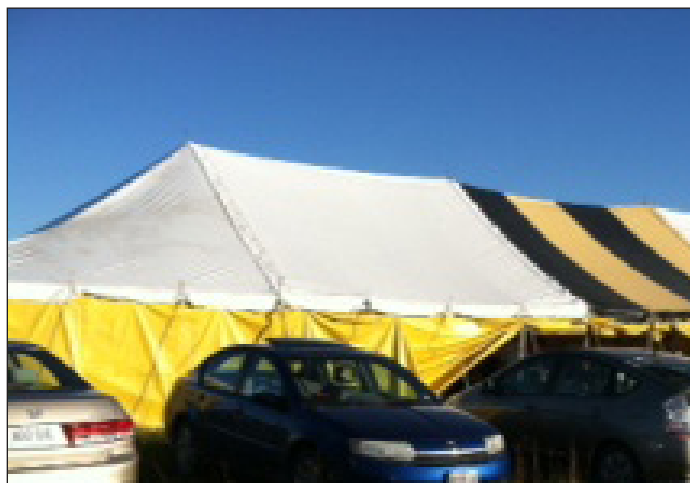
MMN chapter. As always Donnie educates on many topics from the flora and fauna, to the historical aspects of our native prairies, with always points of human interest which often have an emotional and moving message to conclude his presentation.

There was also a prairie hayride narrated by Dr. Morton which included recognition of many individual prairie plant specimens. One of the most remarkable of these specimens was the "Closed Gentian" which are relatively rare on most of the existing restored prairies of Missouri.

Eric Fuemmeler presented an informative program, under the tent, on the native plains Indians' dependence upon the bison; and had many authentic items to illustrate how completely the Indians uti-

lized the bison in support of their everyday lives. He also described how the Indians' way of life was forever altered by the indiscriminate killing of the bison in the late 1800's by white market hunters, a sad episode in the settling of the western plains.

There were multiple exhibits, under the tent and outside, of many other prairie related topics such as invasives, ecology, and skills such as flint chipping and atlatl demos. The event overall was outstanding just as you expect; and is worth making the trip to see,



by Gerry Crawford

The tent is the center of activities. It is where the exhibits are located. Animal skins, native plants, invasives, and Indian artifacts were there along with wine-tasting and snacks.

especially when the weather is as spectacular as it was this year.

The town of Cole Camp adds an extra dimension of fall fun with it's annual "Oktoberfest" activities, from a small parade with participants dressed in traditional German attire, to the "Beergarten"; and food and crafts; steam engine displays; and all the local shops to stroll and browse in a friendly Ozark atmosphere. It's just a great event for young and old.

Annual Report

Loess Hills Chapter

by MaryJo Ostenberg

By the Numbers

- Spring class of 2015 – 19 class members, 19 graduated, 11 interns achieved initial certification and of those new members 4 went on to recertify for 2015.
- Total number of active Chapter members – 46
- Total Chapter hours – Service 3266 Advance Training 765
- Total number of active members that have recertified for 2015 – 21
- Number of volunteers that have conducted 20 hours or less of volunteer service - 11
- Number of volunteers that have earned 4 or less advanced training hours – 7
- Loess Hills Chapter members participated in events this year with public attendance estimated at 12,800.
- This year 1 volunteer reached milestone 250 service hours, 3 volunteers achieved the 500 hours service milestone and 2 volunteers achieved the 1000



by Brent Galliard

Class members of the 2015 class get switchgrass out of the truck.

hours service milestone.

Our dearly beloved chapter president, Shannon Holcomb achieved a lifetime

service hour's total of 2524 service hours before he passed away in early May.

Program Highlights

Wings over Weston

Volunteers participated in the 10th annual Wings over Weston birding event. Approximately 4,000 visitors had a chance to build birdhouses, obtain hummingbird feeders and learn how to care for them along with nature stories and face painting thanks to Loess Hills volunteers.



by Ann Thorne

Bob Spurgat helps a child build a birdhouse.

Insectorama

Volunteers assisted Missouri Department of Conservation agents with all things INSECTS at the NW Missouri Conservation Office in St. Joseph this year. Two hundred and fifty attended, many of them children. This is always a fun event. It's not often you get to hold a tarantula or taste ants!

Prairie Days

In June volunteers helped Dunn Ranch with The Nature Conservancy and the Missouri Department of Conservation host the 1st annual Prairie Days at Dunn Ranch and Pawnee Prairie CA. A few of the festivities included birding and native plant hikes, small mammal trapping and release, bison and prairie chicken viewings and video presentations.



by Brent Galliard

Participants riding around the prairie.

About 200 attended this event.

Little Tarkio Prairie

Members helped cut out sumac on Little Tarkio Prairie CA, home to the White Fringed Prairie Orchid. on the refuge. White Nursery milkweed propagation program.

Seed Collections

Members assisted Dunn Ranch

with seed collections. As a bonus volunteers were treated to a private close up viewing of the bison on the refuge. Volunteers paid several visits to Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge to collect seeds and members collected milkweed seeds throughout the year for the George White Nursery milkweed propagation program.

Recycling for Nature

This was another first for our Chapter. After listening to a presentation by MDC representative T.J. Peacher on the importance of recycling and the connections between individual behavior and environment stewardship approximately 110 students from high schools across our area broke into small groups led by Loess Hills Missouri Master Naturalist volunteers on a tour of reclaimed native grasses and wildflower plantings surrounding Mozingo Lake near Maryville, Mo. Members reinforced examples of simple behavior that can contribute to protecting the water shed and the safe, public water source for Maryville and nearby communities as well as help protect fish and wildlife in the lake areas. This event was sponsored in part by our new partner, Northwest Missouri Solid Waste Management.

Family Day at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge

On Family Day at Squaw Creek class graduates wrapped up their

capstone project by manning educational stations at 3 locations on class graduates wrapped up their capstone project by manning educational stations at three locations on the auto tour route. Volunteers talked with visitors about their efforts on the refuge to restore 300 acres of former crop land to new wetland prairie, including planting 1200 cord grass plugs and collecting seeds. Additionally over 100 milkweed plants were distributed to visitors and volunteers provided educational material on Monarch and pollinator habitat restoration programs. An estimated 200 visitors stopped to view the stations and talk with our newest Missouri Master Naturalists.

Envirothon

Along with Missouri Department of Conservation and Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge agents Loess Hills chapter volunteers helped conduct Envirothon, an annual environmentally themed academic competition organized by the National Conservation Foundation for high school aged students. Sixty students participated. Eagle Days at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge Several volunteers participated in this great 3 day event. It is estimated the refuge hosted 4,000 visitors on Saturday and Sunday along with 850 students on Friday.

Eagle Days at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Several volunteers participated in this great 3 day event. It is estimated the refuge hosted 4,000 visitors on Saturday and Sunday along with 850 students on **Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge after School Program**

Loess Hills volunteers conducted after school nature programs at the refuge on a weekly basis during October. These programs were very popular with the students attending. We hope to expand these programs in 2016.



2015 Loess Hills Master Naturalists at Squaw Creek for Family Day.

Officers of Loess Hills Chapter 2016

President

MaryJo Ostenberg

Vice President

Bob Spurgat

Secretary

Janet Mason

Treasurer

Tom Aldrich

Newsletter Editor & Design

Ann Thorne

Logo (on front)

Laurel Defreece