

## Upcoming Events

### Snyder Prairie Potential Prescribed Burn Dates

December 14, 15, 2024

January 04, 05, 18, 19, 2025

Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, KS

Weather dependent

Be sure to sign up for notification by emailing [grasslandheritage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandheritage@gmail.com)

### GHF Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 25, 2025

9:30am to 12:30 pm Neosho County  
Community College, 900 East Logan Street  
Ottawa, Kansas 66067

### Groundhogs Workdays 2025

Saturday, January 11, Time TBD

Saturday, February 08, Time TBD

Saturday, March 08, Time TBD

Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, KS

Weather dependent! Usually 9:00-9:30 start

### GHF @ Lawrence Bird Alliance

Monday, March 24, 2025

7:00pm at Baker Wetlands Discovery Center

Topic: Native Plants & Birds

### GHF Native Plant Sale

Saturday, May 10, Emporia, Kansas \*\*Tentative

Saturday, May 17, Lawrence, Kansas



## Getting a closer look at the worlds in our prairies

What do you first picture when you think of a tallgrass prairie? Perhaps sprawling plains, a thundering herd of bison, and your favorite plant species in abundance. Chris Helzer, The Nature Conservancy's Director of Science and Stewardship in Nebraska, challenges us to zoom in and get a closer look at what makes our prairies the intricate mosaics that they are.

In November, GHF co-hosted Helzer at the Lawrence Public Library where he shared stories from his photography and "Square Meter Photography Project" on just one square meter of a prairie reconstruction near his home in Aurora, NE.

The project began as a way to capture and share about life in the prairie in 2018. "I think it's really easy to live close to amazing grassland landscapes and not really focus on them or realize what they are," Helzer said in his talk. Since April 2024, he spent 94 days observing and learning from the 319 species he found in his little plot.

"The species count is important, but what's really more interesting to me is the stories that are happening that I get to watch play out in front of me." Helzer described the mysteries, tragedies, and stories of hope waiting in the prairie canopy. Freeloader flies on a hijacking mission for a crab spider's prey, a horde of blister beetles decimating a single plant and disappearing as quickly as they'd come, a tree cricket spreading its wings for the first time.

Paying attention to these stories, Helzer says, can help us better understand and appreciate what makes all of our prairies special. "More than anything else, I just want to encourage you that prairies are really neat. Even if there's no bison or prairie dogs, they're worth going out and spending time with."

As we prepare for this winter of bundling up and spending quality time with our friends and loved ones, take some time to visit with your own prairie friends as well! Whether it's a diverse remnant prairie, a restoration just getting on its feet, or your own native planting, find a spot to sit yourself a while and see what the buzz is about. We have so much to learn from our more than human relatives if we take the time to get on their level.

To read more about Chris Helzer's work, check out his blog, "The Prairie Ecologist," at <https://prairieecologist.com> and his full talk on the Lawrence Public Library's YouTube account.





**Grassland Heritage Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization dedicated to prairie preservation and education.**

**GHF News is published three times a year by Grassland Heritage Foundation.**

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Shawnee Mission, KS 66201**

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### **GHF Officers**

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### **Program Director and Preserve Manager**

**Nicole Stanton-Wilson**

## **A Note from the President**

For the last twelve years, GHF has promoted the use of native plants in our landscapes by hosting Native Plant Sales. We have purchased our plants from Taylor Creek Nursery (formerly Applied Ecological) with the guarantee that these plants are true natives produced from naturally occurring plants in our area.

In the Summer issue of the Missouri Prairie Journal, an article produced by Grow Native! appeared that compared Natives, Cultivars and "Nativars". I have often wondered if plants I buy at nurseries are true native plants and this article has made me more suspicious. I purchased ninebark bushes for my yard and noted in the article that these dark foliage varieties are not as nutritious a host plant as the true native *Physocarpus opulifolius*. I have *Heuchera* plants both native and cultivars. As much as I enjoy the burgundy foliage of the cultivar, I'm forced to consider if it is only pleasing to me and not to pollinators.

Many cultivars are bred for traits such as fuller blooms or specific colors. These often produce little or no pollen or nectar for our native insects. Many years of co-evolution have led to dependent relationships between some species of plants and insects. Tinkering with the traits may have pollinators visiting plants that will provide no benefit to them. Birds are dependent on these insects for their own survival.

Grow Native! Shares this information on their website <https://grownative.org/learn/natives-cultivars-and-nativars/> Check it out and watch for the signs of nativars.

**Join GHF at our native plants sales next May to purchase genuine native plants.**

*Last year we reached out early and asked members to let us know if they were interested in ordering large quantities of any particular species. This helped us fine tune our order to ensure we had enough of these plants. If you're interested in particular items, please let us know early, as we submit our order in January.*

*Ratibida columnifera*, a short-lived perennial is on my shopping list.

**On a totally different note**, I'm going to make my pitch for more involvement from our members in the operations side of the organization. Many of you are faithful at coming to work days and events, but we need more people involved in planning. If you have time to get even a little more involved, it would be a great help.

*The Holcombs* are hosting a Chili Lunch/Dinner at their home on Sunday, January 5, at 2:00pm. Board members current and past will join us with their families. If you are interested in getting more involved and would like to spend time with us as a group, this is a great opportunity to get to know us on a more casual basis. We can talk to you about committee work and board involvement. Just contact me and I'll send you all the details.

Sue Holcomb sholc2003@yahoo.com



### **Call for Volunteers**

Do you enjoy writing short essays or informational pieces about prairies or native plants? We would love to invite you, our members, to contribute material to be published in our triannual newsletters.

We are also looking for individuals that have experience and interest in assisting with the layout and editing of our newsletters.

If any of these opportunities pique your interest, **please email us with your interests and questions at [grasslandheritage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandheritage@gmail.com).**



## Annual Report Fiscal Year Ending 8/31/24

### Prairie Education & Outreach

GHF's prairie education and outreach activities are made possible by the generous support of our members, donors, and people like you. These financial contributions in combination with funds received through grants and proceeds from GHF's Native Plants sale, GHF has provided the following opportunities to the public this past year:

- National Prairie Day work day and celebration at Prairie Park, highlighting the Bison Box, an educational display of the various parts of the Bison that were and continue to be used by Indigenous peoples of North America. Did you know that several groups use the bladder specifically to hold porcupine quills?! The thick tissue of the bladder wall is one of the few materials that quills do not puncture. Amazing!



Program Director Nicole and board member Laird Ingham at Prairie Day

- Three Native Plant Sales, one taking place in Emporia followed by our largest sale of the year in Lawrence in May, and a smaller sale at Cottin's Hardware Farmer's Market in September. In total, GHF sold 7,500 plants in 2024, helping to bring native plants back into our landscapes.

**Save the Date for the Annual Native Plant Sale in Lawrence on May 17, 2025.**



Our Spring 2024 plant sale at Trinity Episcopal Church

- GHF co-sponsored talks with the Kansas Biological Survey & Center for Ecological Research and the Lawrence Public Library in November focused on prairie management and appreciation by Chris Helzer, Director of Science and Stewardship for The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska. In total, approximately 150 individuals attended the two talks, one at KU and one at the library. In addition, Chris was extremely generous with his time and sharing his insights, experiences and ideas with folks from GHF and KU. He even took time to visit Snyder Prairie and offer his impressions and suggestions for stewarding our prairie. If you have not already, please check out his blog at [www.prairieecologist.com](http://www.prairieecologist.com) and his books, *The Ecology and Management of Prairies in the Central United States* and *Hidden Prairie: Photographing Life in One Square Meter*.



### Bringing the Prairie back to Prairie Park

Together with our grant partners Native Lands Restoration Collaborative, Haskell Indian Nations University, Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE), and the City of Lawrence, GHF is pleased to announce that the Prairie has indeed returned to Prairie Park! With generous funds granted by the Douglas County Heritage Conservation Council and over two years, GHF and its partners accomplished the following:

- 3 acres of prairie and 2 acres of woodland at Prairie Park in Lawrence, KS have been restored to primarily native vegetation. In total, community volunteers gave over 800 hours of labor to remove invasive woody plants, such as Callery pears (*Pyrus calleryana*) and bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) and reintroduced over 70 species of native prairie wildflowers, grasses and sedges through planting and seed additions.
- Permanent signage educating the public about ecological restoration through this particular project is under development and will be installed this winter.
- 3 student interns from Haskell Indian Nations University were trained by NLRC staff in ecological restoration and community education practices, including prescribed burning.



- KACEE has developed and deployed a Prairie Ecology eCourse to teach educators across the state of Kansas how to employ an age-appropriate curricula on prairie ecology in their classrooms. No state-wide curriculum on prairie ecology existed in Kansas prior to this development.
- GHF will continue to host work days, with one in the spring and one in the fall, to support ongoing invasive species management at the restoration site.

## Land Management

GHF's stewardship activities are made possible by the generous support of our members, donors, and people like you. With financial contributions from members, funds made available through NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and countless hours of volunteer labor, GHF has accomplished the following stewardship highlights in 2024:

- Contractors and volunteers searched for and spot-treated invasive plants, including sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*), bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*), rough-leaved dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*) and cut-leaf teasel (*Dipsacus laciniatus*) at Snyder, Rolund-Wagner, and Leadplant Prairies. Invasive eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) have also been removed from these properties by volunteers.



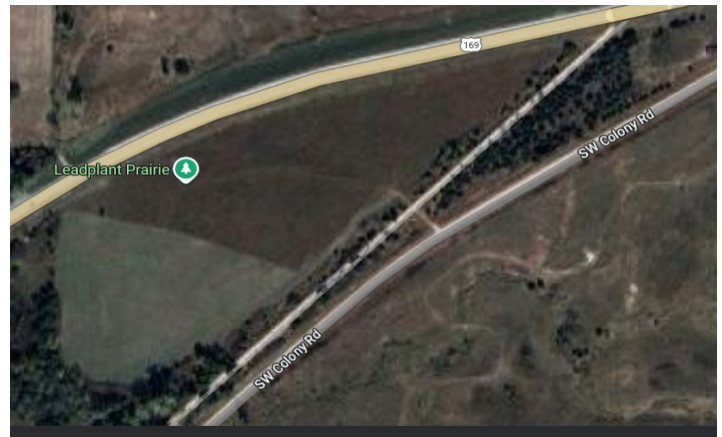
- Prescribed burns were conducted on approximately 20 acres of grassland at Snyder Prairie, with fire allowed to creep into the forested adjacent areas.



Want to participate in prairie burns like this one at Snyder? Sign up at <https://forms.gle/E6ScvFZQD7e5QQtL8>

- Under the NRCS EQIP contract to increase Monarch butterfly habitat, an additional 5 acres of restored grassland were planted with a mixture of milkweed species. To date, a total of 12 acres has been planted with this mixture at Snyder Prairie under this contract.
- Approximately 1/3 of Leadplant was hayed this summer, controlling woodies but keeping some variety of habitat in the remnant prairie. An estimated 15 acres of remnant and restored prairie were hayed at Snyder, helping to control the spread of invasive sericea lespedeza while providing habitat heterogeneity for grassland birds, insects and other animals.

The lighter colored hayed area at Leadplant Prairie is evident on Google maps



- We sponsored an additional work day at BlackJack Battlefield and Nature park in November 2023 to continue the efforts that were started with the previous DCHCC grant. Since Baldwin City is taking over management of the site, we are planning to offer our services for more work days next year.
- Volunteers care for two small parcels in Lawrence at the cemetery and at Little Prairie Garden. Check out the Summer 2024 News for more about those plantings.
- GHF is joining other local groups in a Native Seed Network

## Outreach

Grassland Heritage continues to host a web site as we have done since the late 90's. You can learn about Prairies and about GHF. Our events are publicized along with our educational efforts. Recently, an environmental group for girls associated with <https://www.friendsotwater.org> found our site while doing research on native plants and pollinators. They sent us a nice thank you email for all the information and an additional resource to include on our page. It's so great to inspire the next generation!

We currently share info on Facebook and Instagram and plan to join Bluesky .

## Scholarships

Grassland Heritage sponsors the *Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship* for Kansas graduate students doing research on prairie topics. Last year we awarded \$5000 to six students. The *Sustaining Prairies Fund* is a recent program started to assist groups with publicly available prairie plantings to continue to maintain the site and use it for education. This last year we only had two applicants and awarded them both grants.

**Be sure to check out both of these programs on our website!**

## GHF 2023 Fiscal Year Income and Expenses (9/1/23-8/31/24)

We had income of over \$71,000 from donations, interest, the prairie plant sale, and contributions to special funds. Thank you to large contributors Dennis & Susan Lordi Marker for the Sustaining Prairie and Education Funds and to Jay Chatham for money for the Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship. We show 185 active members with contributions since the beginning of the last fiscal year to today.

Our expenses include \$12,500 for the plant sale, \$6,500 in scholarships, \$16,000 paid for expenses for the Prairie Park grant, \$7,000 for management costs, \$3,400 in property taxes and insurance, \$6,300 in "office expenses" which include newsletters, postage, storage facility fees, new copies of the Native Plant Gardening Guide, web site expenses, and professional services and state fees. Our contractor expenses for Education were about \$12,000.

GHF continues to be in good financial shape thanks to generous supporters and conservative management of our funds.

### *GHF Donors 8/31/23 to 11/20/24*

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*Thank you to those who have set up automatic annual renewals!*



## The effects of grazing management on plant-pollinator networks and bee nesting habitat

Emma Greenlee

I am a Master's student at Kansas State University, and I am passionate about prairie plants, pollinators, and management! My research focuses on how grazing management influences pollinator habitat in prairies, with a focus on bee foraging and nesting habitat. I was a recipient of the Grassland Heritage Foundation's Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship, which helped make my first season of fieldwork possible. I'm here to share some updates on my project after my first field season.

Pollinators are critical in supporting prairie wildflowers and maintaining biodiverse, healthy prairie ecosystems. Today, prairies in the US are greatly reduced from their historic range and continue to be threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, so how we manage the prairies that remain is critical for the persistence of pollinators and the plants that rely on them.

Little is known about how prairie management shapes habitat for pollinators, and my project aims to investigate how grazing management influences nesting and foraging habitat for a very important group of pollinators, native bees. I am investigating this question at sites in the tall- and shortgrass prairie (Konza Prairie in KS; American Prairie and Fort Belknap in MT), and in 2024 I conducted the first of two seasons of fieldwork for my project. At all my sites, I'm comparing plant-pollinator networks and bee nesting rates in areas under different grazing regimes—at Konza, comparing bison, cattle, and ungrazed sites, and in Montana, comparing bison, cattle, prairie dog, and ungrazed sites.

To investigate bee foraging habitat, I collected data on plant-pollinator networks for each of my treatments. Fieldwork for this goal involved searching for and collecting pollinators off of flowers in the prairie, and recording the interactions between different flowering plants and pollinator species that we observed. With this information, we can both compare the richness and abundance of pollinator species foraging in different grazing treatments, and compare the structure of the plant-

pollinator interaction networks we observed in each treatment. How these networks of plant-pollinator interactions are structured may impact the resilience of the plant and pollinator communities to stressors like climate change and habitat fragmentation.

To investigate bee nesting habitat, I used emergence traps to capture bees emerging from their under-

ground nests. Emergence traps are small, 60x60x60-cm traps that look like miniature tents with an open base and a collection jar at the top. About 80% of bee species nest underground, making this an important facet of bees' habitat needs to understand. I also collected data on habitat characteristics including floral resource richness and abundance, vegetation structure, bare ground cover, and soil bulk density. I am comparing the richness and abundance of bees nesting in different grazing treatments, and will investigate whether bees' nesting preferences are associated with any of the other habitat variables I measured.

Following the field season, I've been able to make preliminary

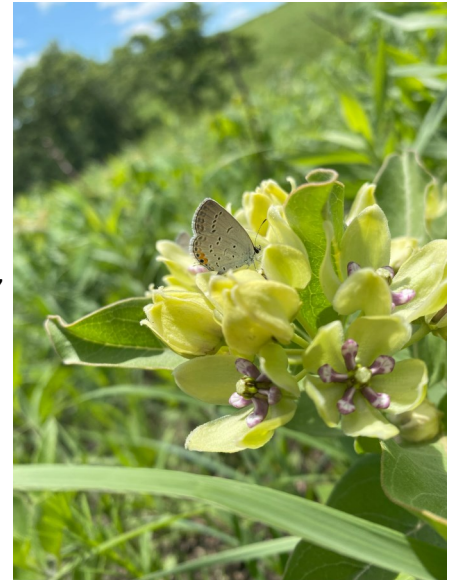


identifications of my bees and conduct some preliminary data analysis. My findings suggest that in general, grazed sites tend to support more pollinators than ungrazed sites, whether the grazers in question are cattle or bison. This may be related to the higher abundance of flowering plant species and flowers overall that I observed in grazed sites compared to ungrazed sites—it makes sense that

pollinators would spend their time where there is more food available! It also makes sense that there are more floral resources in grazed sites, as grazers prefer to eat grasses, which gives wildflowers a boost. I will continue analyzing my data this winter to try and identify if any other habitat factors like vegetation structure and soil characteristics seem to contribute to this trend, and to see if the webs of plant-pollinator interactions differ among grazing treatments as well. I will also be conducting one more season of data collection next summer to see what more I can learn! A huge thank you again to GHF for supporting my research!

Emma Greenlee

egreenlee@ksu.edu



## We depend on your contributions!

Please help GHF protect prairie by sending your donation today.

The date of your last contribution is printed above your name on the mailing label.

Contribute online or send this form to: Grassland Heritage Foundation, PO Box 394, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201

Membership Categories: \_\_\_\$20 Friend \_\_\_\$35 Family \_\_\_\$50 Steward \_\_\_\$100 Sustaining \_\_\_\$250 Conserver  
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Your contribution will support prairie conservation in the general fund unless you designate your donation for:

\_\_\_\_ Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship Fund

\_\_\_\_ Prairie Protection

\_\_\_\_ Education Programs

\_\_\_\_ Prairie Management

You can also send  
membership renewals and  
donations to GHF online at  
[www.grasslandheritage.org](http://www.grasslandheritage.org)

## Thank you

To all of the volunteers that volunteered their time, and stuck through the heat of the "Fall" Native Plant Sale in September! A giant thank you to Ann Davin, Sue Holcomb, Steve Holcomb, Carol Schmitt, and Ken Tillery for making the sale possible!

To the Groundhogs & Board Members who volunteered their Saturday mornings to tour Snyder Prairie, spray invasive sericea lespedeza, and remove eastern red cedars at Snyder Prairie: Helen Alexander, Mike Campbell, Laird Ingham, and Brent Mortensen.

To Mike Campbell for the attention, time and dedication he has given to steward Leadplant Prairie.

To the dedicated volunteers who joined GHF and Native Lands Restoration Collaborate for yet another work day at Prairie Park this October. Their time, energy and attention is indeed Bringing the Prairie Back to Prairie Park!

To Douglas County for their financial contributions through the Heritage Conservation Council to fund the work that has been accomplished to Bring the Prairie Back to Prairie Park.

To Native Lands Restoration Collaborative and Courtney and Ryan in particular for all of their work, support and dedication to Bringing the Prairie Back to Prairie Park.

To all of the partners involved with the Prairie Park restoration project for supporting the work and contributing to the success of the project: The City of Lawrence, Haskell Indian Nations University, Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education.

To Kevin Bachkora for continued help with our accounting

To Chris Helzer for sharing his wonderfully informative and inspiring (not to mention funny!) talks this November, as well as for the time, attention and ideas he so willingly shared with Grassland Heritage.

To Sara Baer and the Kansas Biological Survey & Center for Ecological Research and the Lawrence Public Library, especially Terese Winters, for their coordination and support in hosting Chris Helzer for two public talks in Lawrence.

To Helen Alexander for leading GHF's participation and time with Chris.

## Special Donations since the Summer News

**Welcome to new members:** *Patricia Brown, Dava Buhrlé (gift membership by Mary Powell), Kasey Fickel, Renee Nixon, Kelly Overstreet, Rebecca Power, Ann Shanklin, Jack and Cindy Williams*

**In Memory of Rex Powell** *Cathy Reinhardt*

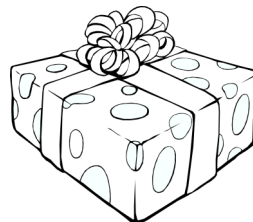
**In Memory of Karen Williams** *Jack and Cindy Williams*

**Prairie Management Fund** *Kelly Overstreet*

**Prairie Protection Fund** *Patricia Brown, Kasey Fickel, Renee Nixon*

**Education Fund** *Jack & Cindy Williams*

**Gaylord Atkinson Scholarship Fund** *Jay Chatham*



*Do you know someone that you think would be interested in GHF? Give a gift membership! Just be sure in your comments that we know that is the purpose and we'll take care of the rest.*

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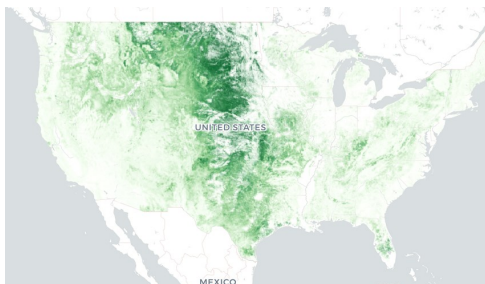
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## **Act Now to Support North American Grasslands!**

On October 8, a bipartisan bill was introduced in Congress that calls for a council on grasslands to help stem the loss of this habitat every year. It would work by providing voluntary technical and financial assistance that will increase the protection and restoration of our continent's most imperiled ecosystem, while contributing to climate resilience, ranching livelihoods, and wildlife abundance. It was introduced by Rep. Nancy Mace R-SC and co-sponsored by one of our Kansas Congressional delegates, Sharice Davids. It has been referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Agriculture. GHF has signed on our support.



The National Wildlife Federation Action Fund is helping to promote public action. <https://actforgrasslands.org/> is a web site with more information and links to contact Congress and support this effort.

An interactive Map for Grasslands was co-created by the Center for Conservation Media at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the coalition members of Act for Grasslands. See it at <https://www.mapforgrasslands.org/>. It demonstrates the loss of this habitat and species affected.

## **Groundhogs**

Join a group of dedicated volunteers to take a stand against woody encroachment and help improve the quality of the prairie at GHF's Snyder Prairie outside of Mayetta, Kansas, about 20 miles north of Topeka. Groundhogs meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of most months at Snyder. See page 1 for specific dates. *If you are interested in learning more or think you might like to participate, sign-up for the email list by contacting [grasslandheritage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandheritage@gmail.com) to receive more information.*

**Don't miss an event or announcement!**

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Or Sign up for Notifications on the web site