

DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS

PRAIRIE WINDOW

cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land

Fall 2023 Vol. 33 No. 3

Celebrating Birds of the Winter Prairie

by Lorna Harder, Programming and Volunteer Engagement Committee

Join us in welcoming winter and the holiday season at Prairie Lights, November 24 to 26 and December 1 to 3. The event takes place each evening from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

At this year's Prairie Lights event we are celebrating "Birds of the Winter Prairie". This theme complements Kauffman Museum's upcoming special exhibit, *A Day with the Birds: Community Science and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count*, opening in December in North Newton.

Prairie Lights is a time for family and friends to stroll the dormant prairie grounds edged in twinkling lights; to sip hot chocolate and savor s'mores around the campfire; to enjoy

musical performances and educational programs inside the Pavilion; and to view a wintry display of Kansas birds from the Pavilion patio.

Hot chocolate and cider will once again be available by donation to the local Hesston scouts troop, and s'mores will be available at the campfire. The Visitor Center Gift Shop will feature Kansas artwork and gifts by local artisans. There will also be a "mini-exhibit" from Kauffman Museum.

This year, programs include naturalists from Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Great Plains Nature Center. Children's story time will feature "birdie" readings by area librarians, and talented local musicians

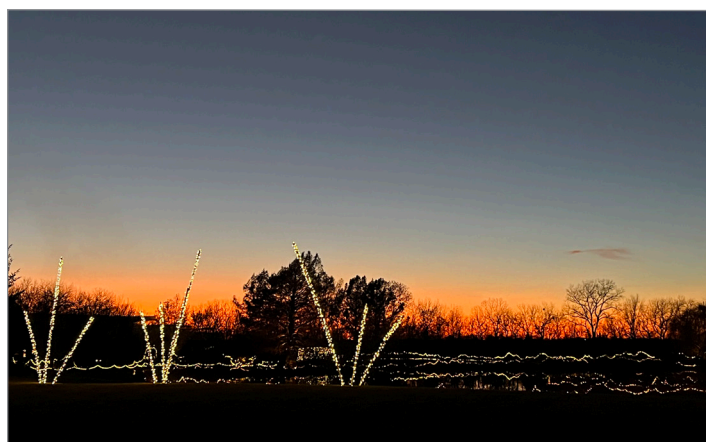
will contribute to the festivities. A full schedule of events will be available on our website in the coming weeks.

Tickets go on sale in November and are available online at dyckarboretum.org/prairie-lights, and in the Arboretum gift shop. Tickets are \$5 per person ages 13 and older. Children 12 and younger can attend free of charge.

Prairie LIGHTS



Photos by Amy Sharp



Left: A crowd gathers on the Prairie Pavilion patio to listen to storytelling and musicmaking at Prairie Lights 2022. Right: Holiday lights begin to shine more brightly as the sun sets over the Dyck Arboretum. Prairie Lights is open 5:30 to 8 p.m. each night of the event.

From the Director's Desk...

by Scott Vogt, Executive Director and Horticulturist



With the Arboretum's 42nd birthday just past on October 10th, I've been thinking about the Arboretum's beginnings in 1981.

The original idea of a public garden in Hesston came from a visit Harold and Elva Mae Dyck made to the Bartlett Arboretum in Belle Plaine. From that experience, Evie's focus turned to creating a garden rooted in her deeply held love for the sweeping hills and open spaces of the prairie.

In 1981, the first tree was planted at the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, with much hope and anticipation. Since that time, the Arboretum has developed into a living prairie museum, affording each visitor a rare opportunity to experience this remarkable and diverse habitat up close and personal.

This next year would have been Evie's 100th birthday. I truly believe she would be amazed at what the Arboretum has become. Today's mission *to cultivate transformative relationships between people and the land* flows from the admiration Evie had for the Kansas landscape. Connecting people to the land is at the heart of all we do. Evie's unique vision of a garden nurturing native plants was ahead of its time and required a leap of faith.

The Dyck Arboretum of the Plains was a gift to the community from Harold and Elva Mae Dyck. Their wishes were to have an institutional partner that could provide stability, while also allowing the Arboretum to develop a unique identity and mission. They linked this personal dream to Hesston College. The Arboretum has become an amenity to Hesston College and an asset to the community.

The original design of the Arboretum sought to represent the feeling of the Kansas landscape and feature many native plants from the prairie. The dense plantings around the periphery and open areas in the center were consciously planned as part of the design, reminding the visitor of the vastness of the plains.

Evie believed strongly in creating a landscape that was natural in appearance, park-like in atmosphere, and designed to engage visitors as they walk the grounds or sit in quiet reflection.

To raise a prairie garden from a wheat field took time, effort and a focus on plants of the Great Plains. As the plantings began to develop and grow, a more concerted effort was made to educate visitors about the attributes of the Kansas landscape. Harold and Evie, along with several board members, traveled to other gardens to glean ideas that could be implemented here.

Over the years, as our understanding of prairie ecosystems has grown, our grounds have reflected that growth. Kansas landscapes are made up of a couple thousand species of native plants. In the Arboretum, plant collections and displays continue to be added and updated to introduce more people to prairie plants.

The Arboretum has grown as an organization in numerous ways as well. This growth has resulted in significant contributions to local, state, and national areas of recreation, horticulture and environmental education.

Staff present classes throughout the state and region about the benefits of utilizing native plants in the landscape. Plant sale fundraisers allow people to choose wildflowers, grasses, trees and shrubs for their own gardens. The Arboretum has been at the forefront of changing horticulture practices especially with its focus on promoting the use of native plants of the Great Plains.

We invite you in the coming year to celebrate with us and continue to build this garden that Evie and Harold created over forty years ago from a dream.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Vogt".



Evie Dyck views the new Arboretum Visitor and Education Center in September of 1999.

2024 WINTER LECTURE SERIES

Stimulate your intellect and expand your horizons through our Winter Lecture Series in January, February and March. Featured topics for this coming series are a Great Plains History of Fire, Bison Ecology, and Prairie Pollinators. One lecture will be remote and the other two in person. Lectures begin at 7:00, followed by a time for questions. The event will end by 8:30 p.m. Cost: \$5 per person. *Photos by Brad Guhr*



Prairie Fire: A Great Plains History

*Tuesday, January 30 (via Zoom)
with Dr. Julie Courtwright*

Join historian, author and teacher Julie Courtwright as she discusses the role of fire – human-caused and natural – in shaping the Great Plains and the lives of its residents. Using newspaper accounts, diary entries and pop culture artifacts, Courtwright explores how fire has benefitted and sometimes terrorized humans. She'll give special attention to prairie fires in Central Kansas. Courtwright grew up in the Flint Hills of Kansas. She's an associate professor of history at Iowa State University.



Give Me A Home Where the Buffalo Roam

*Tuesday, February 27 (in person)
with George LeRoux*

Over 60 million American bison once roamed between the Rocky and Appalachian Mountains in North America. They were a keystone species of the prairie, essential to its natural and cultural history. Their foraging and wallowing behaviors once helped foster a diverse prairie landscape for both plants and animals. Wildlife naturalist, George LeRoux, owner of Flint Hills Prairie Bison Reserve and Audubon of Kansas Board Member, will discuss the bison life cycle, ecology, behavior, and history in the Great Plains.



What Do Kansas Prairie Pollinators Need to Make It?

*Tuesday, March 26 (in person)
with Shelly Wiggam*

Let's talk about the birds and the bees - and the bats and the ants. Shelly Wiggam is the new state coordinator for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Kansas and was recently the manager of The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Stewardship Initiative. Her PhD research investigated how both insect pollinators and plants responded to different rangeland management practices in the Flint Hills and beyond.

Leprechaun Run 2024 - Get Ready to Run/Walk/Bike 81!

Are you ready for a new fitness goal? For our 12th Go Green Leprechaun Run, we are adding a new challenge to get you moving more in 2024. Our annual 2-mile/10K Go Green Leprechaun Run event will take place Saturday, March 16.

In the month preceding (Feb 16 to Mar 16), we challenge you to log an additional distance (run, walk, or bike - your choice!) to kick-start your 2024 fitness goals and get you in peak shape to Go Green on March 16!



Photo by Larry Bartel

We think 81 is a nice target number. Dyck Arboretum of the Plains was founded in 1981 and Hesston is located on Highway 81. Eighty-one kilometers in 30 days amounts to 2.7 km/day (equal to 1.7 miles/day and 12 miles per week).

Perhaps you want to set your sights higher and make it 81 miles. Approximately 6,100 walking steps/day would help you meet that challenge. If you can get into 10K running shape by February, running three 10Ks (6.2 miles each) per week would about get you there. We will have more details on our website soon. Plan to READY, SET, GO 81 in the new year - you can do it!



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NOW AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE: NATIVE PLANT SCHOOL

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we've offered online Native Plant School classes for a nominal fee. We are excited to announce that we have published a selection of those classes on YouTube for all to enjoy! Stay tuned to our emails for more information, and if you haven't already, **SUBSCRIBE** to our YouTube channel to receive notifications when new videos are made public!



Staff

Scott Vogt, Executive Director/Horticulturist
Brad Guhr, Education/Prairie Restoration/
Concert Series Coordinator
Janelle Flory Schrock, Public Engagement
Coordinator
Katie Schmidt, Horticulturist/ Grounds Manager

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Established by Harold and Elva Mae Dyck, the
Dyck Arboretum of the Plains operates under the
auspices of

