

DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS PRAIRIE WINDOW

cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land

Spring 2024 Vol. 34 No. 1

Kauffman Museum and Arboretum Host Spring Symposium on Birds and Birding

by Lorna Harder, Programming and Volunteer Engagement Committee Member

The Arboretum and the Kauffman Museum, North Newton, are collaborating to host a half-day spring symposium on Saturday, March 2. Entitled “Murmurations & Exaltations: Birds and Birding in a Changing World,” the event will be held in the Arboretum’s Prairie Pavilion.

Cost of registration is \$25 for non-members, and \$20 for both Dyck Arboretum and Kauffman Museum members. Additional information and online registration is available at www.kauffmanmuseum.org/murmur.

The day will begin with Kauffman Museum’s “First Saturday Bird Walk” with Gregg Friesen at 7:30 am, and will be held at the Arboretum. The bird walk is open to the general public as well as symposium registrants.

The symposium officially opens at 8:00 am with a “Spark Bird Breakfast” in the Arboretum education center. Opening remarks by Brad Guhr and Lorna Harder will follow in the Pavilion at 9:00 am.

As keynote speaker, Chuck Otte, retired Geary County extension agent

and well known Kansas birder, will present “The State of Kansas Birds.” At 10:00 am, Dr. Jean Woods, assistant professor of biology at Bethel College, North Newton, will present “Museum Bird Specimens: Studying the Past to Save Birds.” Dr. Jackie Augustine, executive director of Audubon of Kansas (AOK) will give the final presentation at 11:00 am, “Are Birders Replacing Hunters?” which addresses conservation funding and the growing hobby of birdwatching. Katie Schmidt, Arboretum horticulturist will briefly introduce “Native Plant Birding Bundles,” exclusively available to symposium attendees at the Arboretum’s spring FloraKansas Native Plant Days.

“Murmurations & Exaltations” coincides with the unveiling of Kauffman Museum’s Special Exhibit, “A Day with the Birds: Community Science and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.” It is one of a number of events scheduled this spring to both raise awareness of the sharp decline of North American bird populations and to inspire and encourage participation in community science projects. These projects continue to inform and improve bird conservation efforts across North America.

Additional information is available at www.kauffmanmuseum.org/exhibitions/travelingexhibits/bird-count-exhibit/



Paved Path for the Prairie Window Project

by Brad Guhr, Prairie Restoration Specialist and Education Coordinator

Our Prairie Window Project prairie reconstruction just became a whole lot more accessible.

Thanks to a donor from our past prairie landowner network, Dyck Arboretum paved a half mile of new path in our reconstructed prairie. Over the last 15 years, this path consisted of loose gravel, which created uneven footing and was subject to regular weed encroachment - silver sneakers, wheelchairs, rollerblades and bikes be damned. But since the concrete dried in December, this smooth, wide surface has brought an influx of people strolling, zooming, and rolling through the dormant prairie.

Arboretum visitors are mostly familiar with the 13 acres of gardens north of the hedgerow, which serve as the backdrop for our Visitor Center and Prairie Pavilion. These areas feature alcoves of trees and shrubs, a pond, mowed lawn, and display gardens.

The Prairie Window Project, however, is meant to give visitors a feel for the treeless prairie, the native landscape that has been the identity of Kansas for the last 10,000

years. Approximately 2/3 or 10 of our 15 acres south of the hedgerow features diverse, re-constructed prairie.

The Prairie Window Project began to take shape from 2005 to 2010 when Arboretum staff and volunteers converted an alfalfa field to newly planted prairie. Earth moving turned the flat terrain into two spacious, flowing mounds somewhat indicative of the Flint Hills or Smoky Hills of Kansas.

With the cooperation of a landowner network, we collected seed from nearby remnant prairies, cleaned and assembled diverse seed mixes, and planted 130 species of local ecotype grasses, wildflowers, sedges, and shrubs.

The young prairie, like its gravel path, was weedy, rough around the edges, and a bit unsightly for the first decade and more. Today, the established prairie with its increasing biological diversity and handsome new path help the Prairie Window Project feel more grown up.

Come join other walkers, runners and bikers to enjoy experiencing the prairie through the seasons.



Left: Approximately 2,800 linear feet of new 10'-wide concrete path has been added to the Prairie Window Project (in orange) Above: Preferred Builders began paving the network of paths during August and finished up in late December.

Bus Trip to Kansas Wetland Education Center and The Big Well at Greensburg

by Scott Vogt, Executive Director and Horticulturist

Join Arboretum staff and board members for another “Visit a Favorite Place” bus trip, this time to the Kansas Wetland Education Center (KWEC), and to The Big Well Museum and other sites in Greensburg. The trip will take place on Saturday, May 4. We will depart in a charter bus from the Arboretum at 7 am and return by 6 pm.

Kansans live in one of the most important spots in the country for migrating birds. Our first stop, the Kansas Wetland Education Center (KWEC) near Great Bend, provides visitors a unique natural experience since it overlooks Cheyenne Bottoms; the largest inland marsh in the United States and a Ramsar designated “Wetland of International Importance”. In fact, 96% of North American migrating shorebirds pass through Cheyenne Bottoms.

KWEC has walk-through state-of-the-art exhibits that tell the story of Cheyenne Bottoms from its ancient geological formation to the management challenges of the future. Discover the magnificence of these wetlands and the animals and plants living there. If road conditions are

favorable, we will be able to tour some of the pools with Curtis Wolf, site manager for KWEC.

The second stop on our trip will be The Big Well Museum. Following lunch in Greensburg, we will descend into the 109-foot deep and 32-foot diameter well completed in 1888. This marvel of engineering originally served as the town’s water supply. Explore the Museum, where exhibits showcase Greensburg’s rich history, recount the 2007 tornado, and highlight the town’s commitment to sustainability. The Big Well Museum is also home to the “World’s Largest Pallasite Meteorite”, a captivating celestial wonder. This rare meteorite, with its unique blend of olivine crystals and metal, adds an intriguing cosmic dimension to this Greensburg attraction. Join us for a journey through time and space at The Big Well Museum. While in Greensburg, we will also walk a block to the Kiowa County Historical Museum and Soda Fountain.

Cost of registration is \$75 for Arboretum members and \$85 for non-members. Cost of food is not included.

Summer Music Nights

@ DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS

THURSDAY, MAY 23

KILOMETER 81

THURSDAY, JUNE 6

HEARTS 4 HIM

THURSDAY, JUNE 20

THE SASSANACHS



FREE TO THE PUBLIC
DONATIONS WELCOME

BRING YOUR OWN LAWN CHAIR
BRING YOUR OWN PICNIC

WATER & LEMONADE PROVIDED

MUSIC BEGINS 7:00 PM

177 W HICKORY
HESSTON, KS





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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 27 @ 7 pm. WINTER LECTURE SERIES w/ George LeRoux - Give Me a Home Where the Buffalo Roam

March 2 @ 8 am SPRING SYMPOSIUM on Birds & Birding

March 16 @ 9 am LEPRECHAUN RUN/WALK 2Mi & 10K

March 17 @ 4 pm PRAIRIE WINDOW CONCERT SERIES
The Arcadian Wild

March 23, 8:30 am to 5 pm, and March 24, 12 to 5 pm
HARVEY COUNTY HOME AND GARDEN SHOW

March 26 @ 7 pm WINTER LECTURE SERIES w/ Shelly Wiggam - What Do Prairie Pollinators Need to Make It?

April 21 @ 4 pm PRAIRIE WINDOW CONCERT SERIES
The Brother Brothers

April 25, 8 am - 7 pm Member Day
FLORAKANSAS NATIVE PLANT DAYS

April 26 to 29 Public Days
FLORAKANSAS NATIVE PLANT DAYS

SUMMER MUSIC NIGHTS - Thursdays 7 to 8:30 pm
Save the dates for the evenings of May 23, June 6 & 20!

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 in 1981, the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains operates under the auspices of

