Re-connecting Kansas School Children with the Prairie

THE PROBLEM – Each successive generation of children is becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world around them.

THE SOLUTION – Reverse this trend by getting kids outside and in touch with their natural surroundings. Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston is trying to be part of this solution by offering teachers award-winning environmental education through the Kansas Earth Partnership for Schools (EPS) Program. Teachers learn how to restore prairie gardens on school grounds. By providing students with fun, hands-on, project-based curriculum activities, they can teach them lessons about the natural and cultural history of the Kansas prairie and instill a sense of place. While focusing on science and ecology, native habitat gardening also incorporates mathematics, history, language arts, art, and music.

BACKGROUND – The University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum started EPS 25 years ago and has reached more than 200 schools in Wisconsin while developing an extensive teaching curriculum. In 2006, they decided to take the successful EPS Program nationwide and chose the Dyck Arboretum as one of five regional facilitating centers to expand EPS across the country. A handful of K-12 teachers and Dyck Arboretum staff and board members became trained that summer as EPS facilitators, and Dyck Arboretum has been teaching EPS to Kansas teachers ever since.

PROGRESS TO DATE – Over the last ten years, 225 teachers from 68 Kansas K-12 schools have reached over 30,000 students with the teachings of EPS. Teachers regularly remark that EPS provides them with some of — CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
Re-connecting – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the best professional development they have ever experienced, and it enhances their fun in teaching. Students learn about the prairie and its plant species, get dirty planting them on school grounds, enjoy the wildlife attracted to them, learn the ways in which biodiversity and natural systems are important to us, and become better educated citizens that will be the environmental decision-makers of the future.

Learn how to participate in the June 5-9, 2017 Summer EPS Institute at dyckarboretum.org.

TECH NOTES

If you are wondering how to get kids out on the prairie, check out the Events listing on our website. All of our events are open to the public and kids are welcome. Just visit our website and click on Events in the left column. — MICKEY DELFELDER
President’s Message | PHYLLIS SCHERICH

On March 22-23, I experienced the Anderson Creek fire. It was a perfect set-up for a wildfire: lots of “fodder,” high temperatures, and high winds gusting up to 60 mph that kept changing direction. A single spark was all that was needed. We were blessed on the ranch; no one was hurt, no buildings or equipment burnt, and no cows were lost (they somehow knew to go to the areas where they had been fed and the grass was short and greening up). However, we had about 80% of the 17,000 acres burned, and we lost a LOT of fence and thousands of eastern red cedar trees! I express my sincere gratitude to the firefighters and other volunteers and for the donations of hay, etc. during this time.

The real story, however, is the recovery. A few days after the fire we had four inches of wet snow with no wind, followed several days later with a 4 1/2” rain, then another nice rain a week or so later. IF it had been scheduled, the moisture could not have come at a better time. The new grasses and forbs were just getting started. The fire, the nutrients put into the ground by the ash, the rain, and the moderately warm temperatures accelerated their growth. Shortly, the ranch was covered in a carpet of green, and then the wildflowers began to explode. Never have we seen so many and such robust wildflowers, forbs, and grasses! Another 3 1/2” of rain fell on June 17 that will continue to aid the recovering prairie. It will be worth your effort to visit this area of Kansas to see this amazing recovery in the coming months and years.

My husband, Dee, and I retired from the Merrill Ranch after 40 years of managing it, and moved permanently to McPherson on June 19. We miss being able to walk out our front or back door to view the spectacular native prairie. We are planning to make the special effort to discover new areas near here, and as we travel, to observe lovely wildflowers and native plant habitats.

By the way, remember to watch for more information about the upcoming Annual Wildflower Weekend in Ft. Scott. Save the date, September 16-18, and make plans to attend!
Kansas Native Plant Society members had a special opportunity on the weekend of June 18 and 19. We were invited to join the celebration of the National Park Service’s centennial AND the 20th anniversary of the Tallgrass Prairie at the special event, “Prairie Pollinators: Wildflowers and Butterflies.” On Saturday and Sunday, guests enjoyed both wildflower walks with knowledgeable KNPS guides and a variety of plant-related activities in the barn.

On the main floor of the barn, an area was arranged for speakers and their audiences. On both days, there was a series of expert speakers, focusing on the relationship between plants and their pollinators. Along with other KNPS volunteers, members Cindy Ford demonstrated making dyes from plants and Matthew Richter painted a “portrait” of a wildflower each day. A highlight for KNPS this year was an area reserved for children’s activities. They could play “Prairie Bingo” or work on being a “Plant Detective” with an exercise in learning how to identify plants. Also, every visitor got a KNPS button to wear and take home as a reminder of the event. There were 370 people who attended the two-day festivities.

Even from a distance, you could see the groups of KNPS members and guests walking with their leader, then stopping, learning about the plants and moving on. Two plants in particular that caught everyone’s attention were our KNPS icon, purple coneflower (Echinacea angustifolia) and the bright orange butterfly milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa). Some of the groups included children. It was very pleasing to see how well-behaved the young people were, and how interested they were in learning about the plants. Some of them are working to become full-fledged “Plant Detectives.”

I would like to thank all the KNPS volunteers who helped celebrate our “Kansas National Treasure,” Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, on June 18-19 with a Plant/Pollinator Weekend. Every KNPS event is one big party and this was no exception. What a lot of fun and a great group to work with! I also want to thank the National Park Service personnel at Tallgrass Prairie Preserve for inviting us to join their celebration. They generously provided all KNPS photocopies of coloring pages, plant detective sheets, laminating pouches, laminator, and colorful KNPS metal pin buttons to share with event visitors at no cost to KNPS. I heard so many nice things from all of our KNPS volunteers about their experiences during those two days, and, of course, the positive responses of the visitors to what we had to share made it all worthwhile!
Another wet spring in southwest Kansas made for a great time botanizing during this year’s late spring board meeting in Garden City. The weekend started off with a visit to a small shortgrass prairie and playa lakes complex owned by Kansas State University in Finney County. The playas were still dry despite the recent rain, but several interesting playa species were present including Short-ray Prairie Coneflower and Spotted Evening Primrose. Over three dozen species were observed during the visit to this location. When the playas fill up later in the season there is sure to be more action.

On Saturday afternoon, the group visited the Sandsage Bison Range and Wildlife Area and experienced an uncommon sandsage prairie show. Many species were in bloom and dense stands of Western Spotted Beebalm and Blanketflower carpeted the sandy hills. Several other showy species were blooming including Engelmann’s Daisy, Prairie Larkspur and glowing patches of Purple Poppy Mallow.

On Sunday, a small group explored the upland prairie on the bluffs overlooking Horsethief Reservoir. The timing of this visit was perfect as many showy species were in bloom. Lemon Paintbrush, White Milkwort, Hopi Tea, Stiff stem Flax, Echinacea, and many others dotted the scenic view over the lake. This location is definitely a hidden gem in the western Kansas landscape and highly recommended to visitors to the area.

Overall, the weekend was a great opportunity to show how western Kansas can really light up when the rainfall is right. Blooms continue to peak through summer during moist years like this. If you have not experienced western Kansas prairie, this year is the year to visit!

The Lilies

Hunting them, a man must sweat, bear the whine of a mosquito in his ear, grow thirsty, tired, despair perhaps of ever finding them, walk a long way. He must give himself over to chance, for they live beyond prediction. He must give himself over to patience, for they live beyond will. He must be led along the hill as by a prayer. If he finds them anywhere, he will find a few, paired on their stalks, at ease in the air as souls in bliss. I found them here at first without hunting, by grace, as all beauties are first found. I have hunted and not found them here. Found, unfound, they breathe their light into the mind, year after year.

Go East KNPS Members and Friends!

Kansas Native Plant Society’s 38th Annual Wildflower Weekend (AWW), the biggest event of the year for KNPS, is in the works for September 16-18 at and around Ft. Scott, Kansas. Don’t miss out! If you have not been to one yet, get ready! A weekend full of meeting like-minded people, botanizing forays onto prairies and into the woods (yes, we have woods in Kansas), and participation in the annual general meeting with all of its fun activities: photo contests, silent auction, awards, and informative speakers. Oh, My!

“Conservation: Personal and Beyond” is the theme for this fall and it is hoped the weekend will be inspirational and educational with tours highlighting conservation efforts developed by both ordinary individuals like you and me, and by our governments: county, state, and national.

AWW starts at noon on Friday, September 16th with the fall board meeting at the Fort Scott National Historic Site Grand Hall to be followed by an introduction and tour of the Fort’s prairie construction efforts. Everyone is welcome to the meeting and tour. Almost 30 years has been put into the Fort prairie of three acres and its results are fascinating. After dining we will visit a private prairie reconstruction effort, and in a relaxed atmosphere, will learn how a husband-wife-son team took efforts to make a few back acres into a prairie haven.

On Saturday the 17th, the general meeting begins bright and early with rolls and coffee at the Ellis Fine Arts Center on the campus of Fort Scott Community College. Do bring items for the silent auction, if you can, as all proceeds will go to worthwhile KNPS efforts. Plus, this is a wonderful way to get to know each other a bit better and even to compete with those that see the auction as some kind of “sports” event. All I can say is, “Someone please better bring one of those giant green books on Kansas wildflowers. I am saving my money!”

The morning’s program also includes giving out the annual recognition awards and hearing from our Mary A. Bancroft Memorial Scholarship recipients. The annual KNPS photo contest presentation and awards round out the morning’s program activities. Competition is stiff and plentiful, but that certainly adds to the excitement!

This year’s guest speaker, Betsy Betros of Lenexa, Kansas, “… loves to garden … but not for the typical reason.” Betros says, “I LOVE bugs … so I garden to attract all sorts of insects.” The result of this obsession, she says, was the publication of her first book in 2008 titled A Photographic Field Guide to the Butterflies of the Kansas City Region. She lives in western Lenexa on two acres of woods and three acres of remnant tallgrass prairie where she continues to feed her passions for nature and insects. Her lifelong enthusiasm for butterflies and nature has yet to ebb, and is sure to be catching!

Tour schedules for Saturday and Sunday are still being finalized, but will likely include visits to the following sites.

**MARAIS DES CYGNES WILDLIFE AREA:** with its rare bottomland hardwood forests, upland oak-hickory forests, prairies, wetlands, and rivers plays host to many special wildlife species including Mead’s milkweed.

**DINGUS NATURAL AREA:** this site includes old growth oak-hickory forest and the local name for the north-facing slope leading down to Little Sugar Creek is Fern Hill. The lush understory population of ferns here includes the rare and unusual purple cliff brake. Woodland wildflowers found here include trilliums, bloodroot, jack-in-the-pulpits and Dutchman’s breeches. There are no trails or roads leading into the site, so it takes some effort to explore the area.

**MINE CREEK BATTLEFIELD:** this prairie is a sacred place having been the site of the largest cavalry battle west of the
Go east to Fort Scott!

Mississippi River. A portion of the battlefield is being preserved by the state of Kansas and a 1.5 mile interpretive trail along Mine Creek is now in place.

BOURBON COUNTY FISHING LAKES #1 AND #2 (the locals call them Elm Creek Lake and Elsmore Lake, respectively): are aged to perfection and located in the forest-prairie mosaic of the Osage Cuestas to offer great wildlife viewing. Wolfpen Creek’s woodlands, and shrubs along the hillsides provide cover and food for a variety of mammals and birds. Both lakes have a long history of use by the public including WPA (Works Progress Administration) work projects.

PRIVATE PROPERTIES & FAMILY TREASURES: There is this piece of land with a story and I hope I get to share it with you all. All I can say is, “I love happy endings!”

Later this summer, a full description of the weekend’s activities, directions to meeting and outing sites, motel and restaurant information, and reservation forms will be postal mailed to KNPS members and will also be found online at the KNPS website. Each AWW brings new plants to discover and new exciting adventures to experience. If you have never attended an AWW, please consider coming this year. This is your invitation. Come and join us! We look forward to welcoming everyone to Fort Scott in September.

A Great Weekend Get Away – The 2014 AWW
— CYNTHIA ABBOTT

For several years I was thinking about going to this annual event, but something always got in the way. One year we were in Winfield going to the Walnut Valley Music Festival. Another year we were on a trip to England and Norway. Yet another year I was taking an adopted dog down to our daughter in Florida.

“Where did you go last weekend? Why did it take you so long to make it?” you ask. “It sounds like you were doing LOTS of traveling already, so that can’t have been the problem.”

“From the Annual Wildflower Weekend of the Kansas Native Plant Society,” I answer. The AWW, as many people seem to call it. As to why it took me so long to make it a priority to attend, I cannot give you a rational answer. All I can say is that I am glad I finally went.

Each year the KNPS Annual Wildflower Weekend is held in a different location within Kansas, but it is usually on the same weekend, the third weekend in September. No matter where the AWW is held, the weekend seems to hold lots of tromping around through impressive prairie sites full of not-so-common native wildflowers and grasses, as well as a lot of camaraderie with other souls who value the chance to spend time out tromping around and looking at plants, too.

This year Greg told me to go. I politely scuffed my feet a little, feeling quite guilty at leaving him home alone to take care of the homestead for two days while I went out to “play,” ... then I shoved the guilt down, made my reservations, and skedaddled.

I am so glad I did. I had a great time, and I had a chance to see some beautiful sights and sites. Most exciting of all, I reconvened with a couple friends from many years ago, had a chance to meet two friends I have previously known only through blogging, and became acquainted with several other folks who are new friends in the making. The most hopeful part is that all of us share a passion for plants and animals and wild spaces — and learning about the web of which they are all a part.

That year’s AWW was based in Pratt, home of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism. Not surprisingly, our first field trip was to the KDWPT Museum and to the pollinator garden right beside it. In the southeast corner of town. The Pratt Master Gardeners have done a superb job of putting together a beautiful and interesting pollinator and native wildflower display garden, complete with a gorgeous pool, for which they received a well deserved award from KNPS.

During the course of the weekend, we explored five different prairie sites – three in the Red Hills south of Pratt and two sand prairies east of Pratt. The last site also included a section of the Ninnescah River, so we were able to do a little riparian scouting as well. Almost all of the sites were on private land that had been graciously opened up to us to explore, so I do not want to be too specific about the locations.

I have no idea what the official plant list (i.e. total species count) for the weekend was because I was doing some landscape grazing, some insect hunting, some photography teaching, and a lot of chatting ... besides looking for flowers and grasses, of course.

Broad-leaf milkweed (Asclepias latifolia) really captured my attention ... maybe because it was SO green and lush looking in an otherwise scorched looking landscape. The leaves almost looked like cabbage! The remnants of the pods were actually rather small and cute; they were found under and between the leaves, rather than at the top of the plant. This is one that I want to try to find for our garden. USDA Plant Profiles does show Sedgwick County as part of this plant’s range.

A last extra punch for the weekend was getting to hear Iralee Barnard speak about grass identification (an area in which I am sadly lacking) and then to be able to purchase her new book, Field Guide to the Common Grasses of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. It is a great help, and after reading it, I already feel more confident in my ability to tackle a few of the more obscure grasslike plants that I am seeing around our Prairie at home, Patchwork Prairie.

Will I return for another AWW? Absolutely! It was an AWWsome chance to become active in a human community of interesting and fun plant nerds! It was also an AWWsome chance to roam around and learn about plants in natural areas that are normally unavailable for “regular folks” to explore. What was there not to like?

Excerpted with the author’s permission from http://gaigarden.blogspot.com/.
2nd Sunday Hikes at Clinton State Park. We will take a 2-hour hike each month on the 2nd Sunday each month. Meet at the State Park Office at 1pm. Each month we will hopefully get to see some of the plants and wildlife in that area of the park. You are welcome to bring leashed pets and children 5 and up.

More information and updates: www.facebook.com/ClintonStatePark trudyrubick@yahoo.com or (785) 842-8562

Annual Long Lips Farm Garden & Mothing Party, 7pm. 90% of insects, including the Lepidoptera, are highly host-plant specific so focusing on native plants will foster an incredible diversity of moths that will be drawn to mercury vapor lights after sundown. Enjoy this lush garden and a pot-luck dinner with friends, and then watch the insect party after dark. Bring a dish to pass, your adult beverages and lawn chairs. And swim suits if you wish to dip in the lake. Address: 27995 Plum Creek Rd. Paola, KS. Directions: 1 block south of K-68 in northwest Miami County, most GPS mapping sources are wrong! Contact: Lenora Larson lenora.longlips@gmail.com or (913) 284-3360

Grassland Heritage Foundation Groundhogs. Volunteer prairie maintenance and preservation projects, third Saturday each month except Dec. [www.grasslandheritage.org]. Wear appropriate clothing. No special skills or tools needed. For details, please contact Frank Norman fjnorman@sunflower.com (785) 691-9748 (cell).
MEMBERSHIP NEWS

LIFETIME MEMBERS AS OF 6/11/16

Earl Allen – Manhattan
Susan Appel – Leawood
Robert G. Jr. & Martha Barnhardt – Bucklin
Susan Blackford – Manhattan
William Bradley – Overland Park
Edith M. Bronson – Topeka
Fred & Nancy Coombs – Holton
Donna Cooper – Hays
Cowley County Conservation District – Winfield
Barbara Davis – Wichita
Joyce Davis – Dodge City
Mickey Delfelder – Topeka
Phillip Eastep – Cherryvale
Sally Haines – Lawrence
Harriet & Joe Harris – Wichita
R. Clay Harvey – Topeka
JK Enterprises LLC – Andover
Kelly Kindscher – Lawrence
Elizabeth Leech – Mercer Island, WA
Lusk Family Foundation – Wichita
Douglas R. May – Lawrence
Carol McDowell – Topeka
Roxie McGee – Lawrence
Carol Morgan – Topeka

($500 MEMBERSHIP LEVEL—ONE TIME PAYMENT)

Marjorie F. Neely – Chanute
Ken O’Dell – Paola
Dan & Brenda Pace – Hutchinson
Carl Paulie – St. Paul
Cynthia & Ron Pedersen – Mound City, MO
Chad Phillips – Soldier
Prairie Place Designs – Sabetha
Bob & Doris Sherrick – Peculiar, MO
Jason & Lisa Spangler – Austin, TX
Margy Stewart & Ron Young – Junction City
Lisa Stickler – Bucyrus
Ray Woods – Independence

CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS AS OF 6/11/16

Cynthia Abbott – Clearwater
Al Alsopac – Manhattan
Dolores Baker – Fredonia
Shirley Braunlich & Peggy Robinson – Lawrence
Kit Carlsen – Lawrence
Sheldon & Virginia Cohen – Topeka
Pete Ferrell – Beaumont
Craig & Jane Freeman – Lawrence
Dale Funk – Omaha, NE
Earl Allen – Manhattan
Susan Appel – Leawood
Robert G. Jr. & Martha Barnhardt – Bucklin
Susan Blackford – Manhattan
William Bradley – Overland Park
Edith M. Bronson – Topeka
Fred & Nancy Coombs – Holton
Donna Cooper – Hays
Cowley County Conservation District – Winfield
Barbara Davis – Wichita
Joyce Davis – Dodge City
Mickey Delfelder – Topeka

(DALE & JACKIE GOETZ – OVERLAND PARK)

Nancy Goulden – Manhattan
Susan & George Gurely – Baldwin City
Edna Hamer – Shawnee Mission
Jeff Hansen – Topeka
Joe Holland – Iowa City, IA
John Kenney – Leawood
Myron Leinwetter – Rossville
Mary McKenney – Wichita

Prairie Pride Plants – Wichita
PJ Quell – Merriam
Catherine Reed – Lawrence
Susan Reimer – McPherson
Marjorie Snyder – Winfield
Eddie & Savilla Stagg – Wichita
Doug Wirtz – Vacaville, CA
Ron & Joyce Wolf – Lecompton
Valerie Wright – Manhattan

NEW MEMBERS FROM 3/9/16 TO 6/11/16

ARSI – Andover
Taylor Bevan – Sedgwick
Anna Campbell-Fischer – Cunningham
Brooke Curry – Overland Park
Jim Earnest – Leawood
Connor Eastman – Wichita
Cody Frye – El Dorado
Taylor Hampton – Wichita
Karen Harvey – Lawrence
JK Rental Enterprises LLC – Andover
Paula Matile – Elmdale
Mary Lou McKenzie – Salina
Robert Middleton – Kansas City, MO
Megan Neff – Wichita
Corey Patten – Augusta
Sidney Patten – Augusta

Angela Rabin – Overland Park
Tamara Riedle – Pratt
Carolina Rivera – Wichita
Kimberly Sain – Lawrence
Nichole Salas – Wichita
Julie Thackston – Easton
Sabina Uprety – Wichita

MEMBERSHIP REGIONS

Kansas Native Plant Appreciation Month

June 2016 was Kansas Native Plant Appreciation Month. Each year, KNPS makes a formal appeal to the Governor for this proclamation. This opportunity promotes greater appreciation for the diversity, value, and beauty of Kansas’ native plants and their habitats. This is the 10th year for this proclamation to be issued!
Native Coffeetrees in Kansas

- KEN O’DELL

On our farm in East central Kansas, we have a large, naturally planted wooded area with many black walnuts, ash, black locust, hackberry, box elder, and a colony of naturally planted Kentucky Coffeetrees. One large dominant Coffeetree has sprouted and reseeded over the years and now we have several Coffeetrees from six feet tall up to 60 feet tall.

The scientific name for this tree is *Gymnocladus dioica*. This comes from the Greek words, gymnos (naked) and clados (branch). Dioica is for the male and female flowers which are on separate trees. Kentucky Coffeetree is the only member of the genus *Gymnocladus* native to North America.

Kentucky Coffeetrees are native in the eastern half of Kansas and most of eastern United States. Driving in the winter time from Paola, Kansas going west on Highways 68 and 56 to Council Grove and then going north on 177 to Manhattan, I see a few Kentucky Coffeetrees as they are easy to spot with the large five inch long banana-size brown seed pods hanging by the hundreds high up in the leafless trees.

The fruit is high in saponins and is used as soap. The saponins are more toxic to fish than to other animals. Hunting tribes traditionally put large quantities of the beans in streams and lakes to stupefy or kill fish. Due to the tree’s toxic plant parts such as the leaves and raw seeds, there is little wildlife usage as a source of food. The leaves have been used as a fly poison.

Although a member of the legume family (*Fabaceae*), Kentucky Coffeetree is not a nitrogen “fixer.” It is a medium to large, native deciduous tree reaching heights of 50 to 70 feet. In open areas, the tree produces an open, rounded crown, but in native woods it grows tall and is thinly branched.

The alternate, bipinnately compound leaves are the largest of any native species, measuring up to three feet in length and about half as wide. Leaves emerge late in the spring with a striking pink-bronze color, turning to a dark bluish-green in summer. Fall color is often a golden yellow, but the leaves drop early.

The greenish-white, mostly dioecious flowers appear in May and June after the leaves, and are borne in terminal clusters. The fruit is a flat, thick, woody legume that ripens in mid-autumn and usually persists unopened on the tree until late winter or early spring. The dark brown seed pods usually contain up to seven or eight dark brown seeds separated by a mass of sticky, greenish-brown pulp.

Some cultivars are available in the nursery trade including selections that are predominately male that produce no fruit. South Park on Massachusetts Street in Lawrence, Kansas has a giant Kentucky Coffeetree standing near the street. It is obviously a female tree as the ground is cluttered in the late winter and early spring with the brown dried fruit of the tree.

The seed has been very easy for me to gather, clean, store in the fridge, and germinate in the spring time. I soak the seed in water for about 24 hours and then plant in potting soil and transplant either to a container or to the ground. I save the cleaned seed in the fridge at about 30 degrees and carry over unused seed from year to year. We offer this seed at our KNPS seed planting classes.
Lawrence author George Frazier celebrates the wilderness he finds in Kansas, lyrically linking the present with the past in his new book *The Last Wild Places of Kansas: Journeys Into Hidden Landscapes*, published by The University Press of Kansas.

*The Last Wild Places of Kansas* reads virtually as smoothly as song lyrics, interconnecting personal and historical anecdotes with vivid descriptions and occasional wry wit about some of the remaining natural wonders in our state. He shares his own compelling adventures in seeking out special locales and uncommon wildlife and links this with historical context from Native American and early explorers’ experiences. The wilderness described in the book includes both public lands and many private properties because, Frazier notes, ninety-eight percent of Kansas land is private property.

George Frazier offers encouragement to build relationships with private land owners, venture out to make your own discoveries and build a stronger connection to our wild lands.

It is clear this book is partially influenced by William Least Heat-Moon’s eloquent and compassionate travel writing with engaging stories for perspective. Interwoven recent and past moments provide a heightened perspective of place.

Frazier writes: “I’d found the stories of two Shawnee traditionalists, two wild springs, two mysteries lurking somewhere in the backyard of my childhood. Had I stumbled onto a lost fossil record of wild Kansas? If two Shawnee [Indian] traditionalists from the 1800s knew these places—loved these places—and if, as I believed, the traditionalists sought out wild landmarks with spiritual gravitas—the kind that are rediscovered century after century by careful students of the land—then this might be a rare chance to experience a living history, an electrifying sense of place where past and future collide in deep time.”

This quote resonates with me and feels a bit like magical realism. Furthermore, reading Frazier’s story is a surreal experience for me because I can relate to it personally. Like the author, I grew up in suburban, highly-developed, Johnson County. The nearest open land was not so wild; it served primarily as our neighborhood waterworks, water supply infrastructure, and secondarily as a park with mowed grass and a playground. Watching episodes of “Little House on the Prairie” on TV as a kid I started wondering about remaining wilderness near my home, but it was many years later when I finally discovered the small prairie within Shawnee Mission Park – only a few miles from the place where I grew up.

Frazier said: “I think many of us have this experience of one day just ‘waking up’ to where we are. I’ve seen it time and again. For lots of folks it requires picking up and moving someplace else. When I first discovered the prairie, and learned how to ID rattlesnake master, I felt like I’d moved to a different country. All of a sudden there was this new mythical place all around me, this tie we had back to a lost time. I wanted to write the book for others who felt this.”

Wilderness throughout Kansas is explored in this book from a hidden spring in the center of Kansas City, Kansas and ancient pecan trees at Fort Leavenworth in the northeast to the expansive western Cimarron Grasslands and the transcendent Red Hills of south central Kansas.

*The Last Wild Places of Kansas* includes many adventures and optimistic searches for uncommon wildlife like northern river otters and southern flying squirrels. And while these animals may be hidden, discoveries are still possible – even nearby. George and his daughter Chloe successfully tracked and documented the return of northern river otters to the Haskell-Baker Wetlands just north of the Wakarusa River in Lawrence. Although flying squirrels have remained hidden, hope remains.

Other inspiring authors for Frazier include thought-provoking environmental advocates and lyrical storytellers who invoke a strong sense of place and commune with nature like Gary Snyder, Aldo Leopold, Paul Gruchow, Annie Dillard, Rick Bass, and Edward Abbey.

George Frazier is a software architect and writer living in Lawrence with his wife and daughter. This is his first book; his writing is also published in “Wild Earth,” “Canoe & Kayak,” and many other magazines and journals.

The Last Wild Places of Kansas and more books about nature and the environment by Lawrence authors are available at public libraries around the state.

– Shirley Braunlich is a Readers Services Assistant at Lawrence Public Library.
Lenora Larson is past member of the KNPS Board of Directors. She has given us permission to reprint her popular “Basics of Butterfly Gardening” series. Thank you, Lenora!

Many flower gardeners aspire to attract butterflies, but may be disappointed with only an occasional migrating Monarch. Like all wildlife, butterflies have specific needs that must be met. Experienced butterfly gardeners frequently review the habitat basics.

For instance, is there sufficient sunlight? As a garden matures, it progresses from full-sun and nectar-rich flowers to shade and hostas as the trees grow into a dense canopy. Butterflies are cold-blooded and must have a sunny garden to kick-start their metabolisms. Additionally, nectar-rich flowers usually grow in full sun. Does your garden have excessive winds that buffet the delicate aviator? A windbreak will provide welcome respite. Flat rocks for basking and a puddling area complete the site requirements.

Don’t Poison Your Butterflies!

Occasionally a beginning gardener comes to me, “Lenora, I have a beautiful sunny garden with lots of flowers but no butterflies. What’s wrong?” Almost always the ‘wrong’ is liberal use of insecticides. Most gardeners view insects as the enemy to be killed without mercy. Some are shocked to learn that butterflies are insects! But they are, so you cannot indiscriminately spray insecticides. You will have to hand pick and squash the bad bugs, but it is worth it. I repeat myself, NO INSECTICIDES.

Nectar Sources

Adult butterflies and many gardeners share a mutual goal: colorful flowers. From early spring to fall’s hard freeze, butterflies need nectar-rich flowers to fuel their short life of love. (Most adult butterflies live only two weeks and their sole purpose is to mate and lay eggs). But be cautious about the new hybrid flowers that are bred for humongous size and amazing colors. Breeders may have sacrificed fertility and even brag that the flowers do not require dead-heading. Sterile blossoms often have no nectar and are as useless as plastic flowers to the butterflies. Return to your grandmother’s garden for the old-fashioned, open-pollinated favorites. While these flowers may not be as dramatic, they have the great advantage of self-seeding. I do not re-plant annuals after the first year in a new bed. I absolutely hate to plant so in my gardens; all plants must take responsibility for their own futures as hardy perennials or self-sowing annuals.

Butterflies and bees would vote for the Butterfly Bush, Buddleia davidii, as their favorite nectar source. I agree; however, a word of caution: the species does self-seed and may be invasive. Native plants are always the safest choices, so check with your local native plant resources. The North American Butterfly Association’s (NABA) website, www.naba.org has extensive lists of recommended native nectar and caterpillar plants for the states in the Ozark region.*

Feeding the Children

But the real key to butterfly gardening is feeding the caterpillars. (YES, you may call them caterpillars. That is the correct term for Lepidoptera babies, and much more loveable than “larvae”.) If you offer only flowers, you are merely a fly-by diner for transient butterflies. True butterfly
gardeners focus on establishing resident breeding populations. Unlike adult butterflies’ cosmopolitan tastes for nectar from many different kinds of flowers, most caterpillars have very specific food requirements. For instance, our native Paw Paw tree, Asimina triloba, provides the only edible leaves for the Zebra Swallowtail caterpillar. No Paw-Paws, no Zebras.

For Monarch butterflies, the essential caterpillar food plants are the milkweeds. We are in the process of losing the dramatic mass Monarch fall migration to Mexico because of the eradication of the milkweeds so necessary for the spring and summer generational migrations north to Canada. Butterfly gardeners should aggressively replace the milkweeds lost to urban sprawl and modern agricultural practices. The Tropical Milkweed, Asclepias curassavica, is not only the favorite of the caterpillars; it wows garden visitors with spectacular red and yellow flowers from May to October. Information and certification as a Monarch Waystation are available at www.monarchwatch.com

You choose your resident butterflies by choosing your caterpillar food plants. For example, in hopes of attracting the luminous blue and black Pipevine Swallowtails, I planted native pipevines, Aristolochia tomentosa. Several years elapsed before a pregnant female found my vines, but now Pipevine Swallowtails are my most common butterfly with dozens in the air every day from April to October. And planting Spicebushes, Lindera benzoin, has guaranteed flocks of shimmering Spicebush Swallowtails every summer. The Black Swallowtail caterpillars are more flexible and will eat most members of the carrot family, including parsley, dill and fennel. Do not kill those large striped caterpillars, you will be murdering butterflies! Just grow enough parsley for everybody.

Summary

Meeting the needs of butterflies has many rewards, including enjoying their beauty, more pollinators for our gardens, and making the earth a better and safer place for all wildlife and humans.

*NOTE: NABA is in the process of updating their guides and converting them to regional butterfly gardening guides that will emphasize the use of regionally native butterfly garden plants. The new, updated butterfly gardening guides are posted on their map, noted with a blue button, as they become available. –Editors

BIOGRAPHY: A little about your guest author Lenora Larson

Lenora Larson is a Marais des Cygnes Extension Master Gardener and member of local chapters of both the Idalia Butterfly Society and Kansas Native Plant Society. She maintains a two acre NABA (North American Butterfly Association) certified garden in the English Estate landscape style on her 27 acre property, Long Lips Farm, in rural Paola, Kansas. The garden is also certified as Monarch Waystation #875, a Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation, and as a Pollinator Garden by the Xerces Society. She is on a mission to demonstrate to other gardeners that you do not have to compromise on beauty and function when you invite wildlife to share your garden.

Lenora is a proud “science geek” with a degree in microbiology from Michigan State University, a career in molecular biology and a life-long interest in wildlife, especially the creepy and crawlly. Her passion for butterflies began as penance when her husband caught her killing the “Parsley Worms” on her dill. She writes the Caterpillar Food Plant section for the national Butterfly Gardener magazine and contributes a monthly “About Butterflies” column to the Kansas City Gardener magazine.

A frequent presenter to gardening and community groups, Lenora channels her inner butterfly to combine science and entertainment. She may be contacted at lenora.longlips@gmail.com.

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**FEATURED PLANT**

**White False Indigo**

— LORRAINE KAUFMAN

I first saw it one summer years ago: a bush perched on the side of a small rocky, prairie draw on our farm, blooming with white, pea-like blossoms that had attracted an admiring crowd of bumblebees, butterflies, moths, caterpillars, and the hungriest of other pollinators. Its flowers formed tall, erect racemes, three to four feet high that stood out dramatically above the surrounding grasses. For whatever reason, I did not see it again for years until I found it in fall in a remote area of our farm. Now the flowers had morphed into black, inflated seed pods 1-¾ inches long formed into clusters that provided excellent background for other nearby late-blooming perennials. This perennial bush is long-lived with few enemies other than indigo weevils that snack on the seeds inside the pods. The long spikes of large black seed pods remain attached to the bush’s naked stems through winter and add interest to any flower arrangement. Collect seed when the pods are hardened and the dried seeds inside rattle when shaken. See if you can add this spectacular native plant to your own garden!

— LORNA HARDER ILLUSTRATION
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