

Hello there! And welcome to another year on the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve where “expect the unexpected” is the motto. It truly is a wet one, as the beaver dam that recently sprung up along the interpretive trail testifies.

Up In Smoke!

Despite all the wet weather this past fall and spring, three controlled burns were achieved. In the fall, 240 acres were burned. This spring, the rotational Grazing Project was burned for the first time since 1994. Cattle were kept off this area last year so that enough fuel could accumulate for a good burn to occur. We would like to thank the surrounding landowners, the local fire TAC crew and staff from our neighbouring preserves in the U.S. for their cooperation and help in making this 2 square mile burn successful and safe.

Cattle on the Moooove

This year, the University of Manitoba Department of Agriculture will be conducting studies on the Grazing Project. Researchers will be comparing weight gain in steers on both native and tame pastures and whether the weight gain is in lean or fat tissue. They will also measure the amount of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane) that the steers produce by fitting each animal with a special harness and collection vessel designed to capture their breath.

Oh, Home on the Range . . .

The cheerful sound of the bobolink will bring a smile to anyone’s face. It is not unlike the bubbling sound of an animated computer. Unfortunately, it is only used by the males during the breeding season - so enjoy it while you can! Male birds are black with a creamy cap and white-striped wings.

Bobolinks are becoming less common because of their specific breeding habitat requirements. They require at least 10 hectares of open grassland, pasture or hayland and do not tolerate trees or shrubs. Their nests are susceptible to cowbird predation making nests close to treed areas particularly vulnerable. In hayfield and pasture situations, early cropping and trampling by cattle result in the destruction of many nests. Considering all of this, we are quite fortunate to have these wonderful little guys around.

A Leafy Buffet

The current outbreak of forest tent caterpillars is straight out of a horror flick. All manner of trees and shrubs are covered with them, the ground literally crawls with them and the sticky silk strands encountered in the bushes conjure up images of a haunted house.

On average, outbreaks like this occur every 10 years and can last 4 or 5 years although 6–16 years may pass between outbreaks. Severely defoliated trees rarely die unless attacked 3 or more years in a row, although they may suffer reduced annual growth and considerable branch and twig mortality. The caterpillars go through 5 moulting periods (instars) over five or six weeks and then form silken cocoons in which they pupate. Moths emerge 10 days later to mate and lay eggs during their 5- to 10-day life span. Eggs are laid on tree branches in clusters of 100-350. The caterpillars fully develop inside the eggs within a month but do not emerge until the leaves begin to unfold in the spring.

International Prairie Days will be held August 10-12. This is your opportunity to see our sister prairie preserves the U.S. Visit Lake Bronson State Park in Minnesota on the 10th, the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve on the 11th and North Dakota's Islandic State Park on the 12th. Learn about conservation efforts south of the border and sample local cuisine. For more information, call the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve at 425-3229.

Upcoming Events

- July 14 & 15 – Gardenton Ukrainian Festival. Come out and enjoy homemade Ukrainian food and traditional music and dance. For more information call 425-3072.
- August 11 – International Prairie Day at the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. Find out what's happening on Canada's largest remnant of tall grass prairie. For more information call 425-3229.

For more information about the cultural history of the Preserve area, visitors may wish to stop by the Gardenton Ukrainian Museum and St. Michael's Church.

Tall Grass Prairie Guided Walks

2:00 pm

Every Sunday in July & August

Meet at the Prairie Shore Trail,

2 miles east of Tolstoi on PR 209

For more information call: 204-425-3229

The Preserve was established to protect and conserve the native species found there.

Please do not pick, dig or collect any of the plants or animals.

Manitoba Tall Grass

Prairie Preserve

Prairie Ponders

Spring 2001