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Above: Killdeer chicks in a nest at Lake Mac. Photo by Brandy Williams. Below: Lydia Lobmeyer with recently completed trail re-marking signs in Alligator canyon. Photo by Sarah Springer.

CEDAR POINT TIMES

The Newsletter of Cedar Point Biological Station (CPBS)
School of Biological Sciences
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

In this issue

Cedar Point Works **Works**!

Each summer, on the idyllic banks of Lake Ogallala, students come to Cedar Point Biological Station to work, study, and re-connect with the outdoors. But with rising educational costs, the financial barrier to attending Cedar Point has gone up too. The Cedar Point Works program lowers that barrier by providing free room and board and a part-time job to students wishing to take classes or conduct research at the station. The demand for our program is growing rapidly. This past summer, we had 17 Cedar Point Works students – about our largest crew ever! They did everything you can imagine. They worked in the kitchen, muscled landscaping and trail-work, cleaned and organized, and participated in teaching and research. It's safe to say that a large part of our ongoing success stems from the hard work and diverse talents of our Cedar Point Works crews.

We estimate the cost of just hosting Cedar Point Works students is about $70,000 per year. You can help us keep this program vibrant and strong for the coming years by contributing to our CPW Works! crowd-funding drive. You can go directly to our page following this link here, or scan the QR code to the right using your phone. We aim to cover the full annual cost of hosting these students by building a fund that will sustain this program well into the future. Our Cedar Point Works funding drive will fun October 1st through December 31st. See you out there. --John P. DeLong

Cedar Point Biological Station

A week around the Nebraska Sandhills

On July 27, 10 students and I set out on a seven-night clockwise loop around the Nebraska Sandhills. The course, entitled the Sandhills Biodiversity Loop, took an on-the-ground look at the causes and consequences of biodiversity (basically, how many species there are) on one of the world's most unique grasslands. We visited bison and cattle operations (see photos above and to right), old west towns, Fort Robinson, The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Preserve, and canoed down the Middle Loup river. It was a 24/7 adventure.

One of the biggest topics was grazing, and how herbivores like bison and cattle can be used to simultaneously maintain prairie diversity and sustain the ranching economy. Rather than being in conflict, the strong ecological thinking guiding ranching practices at the Turner and Wilson ranches generated a healthy and beautiful prairie that includes people.

Our visit to The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara preserve highlighted the role of fire in the prairies and the impact of springs on driving local climates and biodiversity in places with a lot of climate variation.

Thanks to all of our gracious hosts and Susan Langsley, who helped support the class through her Langsley Adventure Fund!--John P. DeLong

Top: A bison herd on the Turner Blue Creek Ranch slowly approaches the class. Middle right: Faiza Hafeez and Angela Brierly assist with cattle herding by ATV on the Wilson Flying Diamond Ranch. Bottom right: The class after a visit with ranch manager Jaclyn Wilson. Present are, from left to right: Sarah Beres, Alec Rollins, Jaclyn Wilson, Francis Biagioli, Qingqing Yang, Faiza Hafeez, Jace Miler, Jane Jewell (top), Angela Brierly, Sydney Honaker, Dinelka Thilakarathne, and John P. DeLong.

Cedar Point is supported by grants and donations. If you would like to support CPBS, please consider donating to one of our funds.

From Cedar Point to Graduate School: Nick Kowal

Nick first came to Cedar Point in 2019 for Dennis Ferraro's field herpetology course (see Cedar Point Times issue 4, 2022). In the beginning, Nick worked on skink surveys, but he then set his sites on an interesting problem of speciation in short-horned lizards in western Nebraska, an area that just might contain the edge of previously undistinguished kinds of lizards.

Nick has been back every year since 2021, taking classes, TA'ing for field herpetology, and working on an ever-expanding set of Cedar Point Works projects. These jobs include cooking, landscaping, emergency pipe repairs, tree removal, cabin maintenance, and helping to renovate the Roy Bailey Bridge of Theseus. Now, with so much experience and knowledge about station logistics, he is often the point person for visitors or workshops. At this point, Nick has been around Cedar Point doing so many different things that some folks jokingly call him the "interim station director" when Jon Garbisch is off site.

This fall, Nick entered the graduate program at UNL's School of Biological Sciences in Dr. Emily Moore's lab (link to Emily's lab website). Nick doesn't know yet how short-horned lizards will figure into his dissertation. For the moment he is taking the time to think about the bigger picture of what his research is about. Regardless, the short-horned lizard work will continue. Nick has worked on surveying this species for six seasons and is even permitted to relocate lizards where they are at risk from development in their habitat, providing direct conservation support for the species.

As for his time at Cedar Point, well, as long as he works on short-horned lizards in western Nebraska, he'll be a presence around Cedar Point. Despite all the things he's done there, Nick tries to keep it simple when talking about his time at the station: "Where else can you work where lizards are running by you all day?". Good question!--JPD

Top right: Nick Kowal measures a young short-horned lizard. Photo by Olivia DaRugna. Middle right: Nick and Jon Garbisch hunted down a mid-winter leak in the water main near Killifish cabin. There was some digging involved. Bottom right: The underside of the Bridge of Theseus renovations. Nick helped Roy Bailey replace boards with locally milled red cedar. Bottom left: Nick collaborating with Desiree Rousseau on a burrowing beetle dig-up decomposition presentation for the Young Nebraska Scientists. Photo by Eva Trejis .

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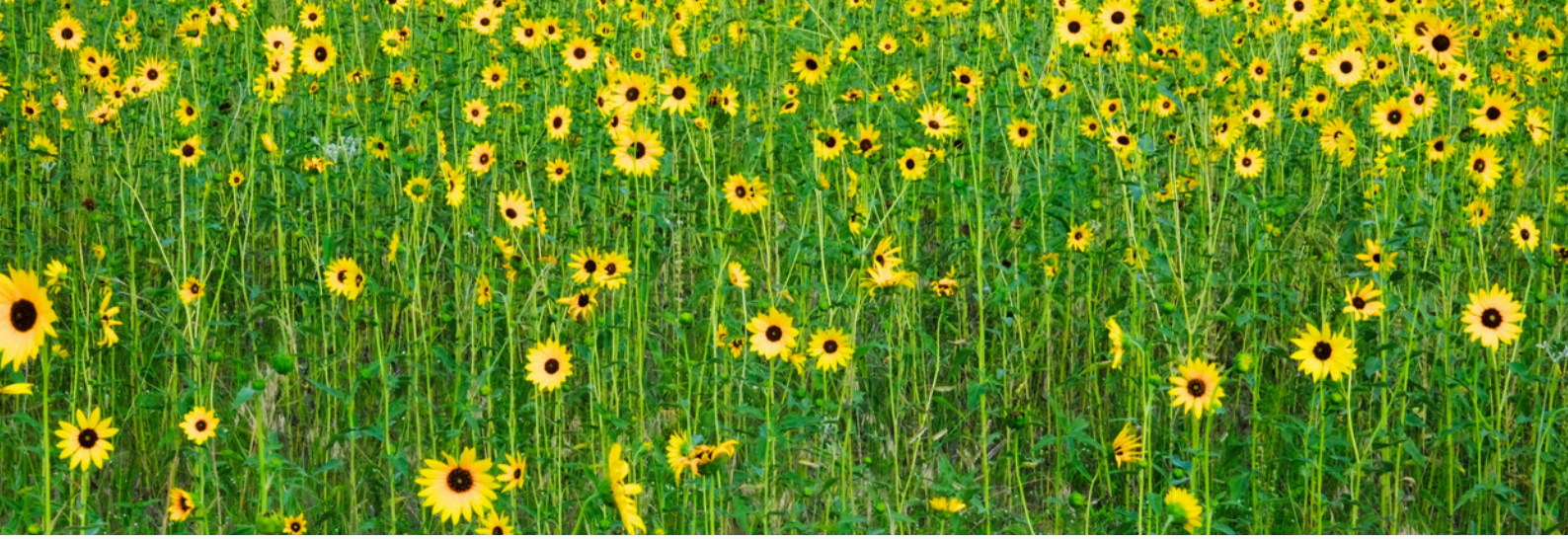

A field of common sunflowers at The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Preserve, during a visit by the Sandhills Biodiversity Loop class. Photo by John P. DeLong.

About the Station

Cedar Point Biological Station is a site for research and experiential learning located along the banks of Lake Ogallala in western Nebraska. CPBS is surrounded by a wide range of habitats, ponds and lakes, and landscape features such as box canyons, making it an ideal place to learn about and interact with nature. CPBS is operated by the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. The station provides unparalleled experiential learning in the high plains through a wide range of courses and partnerships with the School of Natural Resources; the School of Art, Art History, and Design; the College of Architecture; the Department of Hospitality, Tourism, and Restaurant Management; and the School of Global Integrative Studies at UNL.

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Art @ Cedar Point

Scientist-artists have long been a part of the Cedar Point community. Really from the beginning. The importance of art to the sciences cannot be overstated. Science is - after all - a creative endeavor, so exercising that part of the brain is crucial. The science-art connection flows through our whole history, from John Janovy Jr. to Allison Johnson. A major force along the way was the eminent ornithologist Paul Johnsgard. This signed original pen-and-ink drawing of a Blue-winged Teal resides in Gainesforth. Check it out next time you are out.

Cedar Point Works is supported by grants and donations. If you would like to support experiential learning at CPBS, please consider donating to one of our student-oriented funds.