

Conservation Connections

Newsletter of Plateau Restoration from Moab, Utah

WINTER 2015

Service, Science, Education and Exploration since 1995



Taking advantage of a photo opportunity during a Geotour at Arches National Park

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Engaging Youth in Giving Back to the Land

In addition to Alternative Spring Break programs for college students, PRI has been expanding service-learning to include other youth groups at other times of year. This year we hosted ninety high school and college-aged students in conservation volunteer projects. In all, we had 430 participant-days in youth programs and almost 120 adults in educational trips

through our Geotour program.

Most of the service work was done at our long-term riparian restoration project along the Colorado River near Moab. Almost 1000 native shrubs, trees and grasses were planted at Jackson Bottom in the spring and fall, including coyote willows, cottonwoods, New Mexico privet and three-leaf sumac, which were deep-planted 3 to

4 feet deep so their roots are closer to the watertable.

The biggest program we conducted this year was for a group of 33 staff and students from Eastern Mennonite High School from Harrisonburg, VA, and included a three-day Colorado River trip and a Fiery Furnace tour in Arches National Park. The program's theme: "Sustainable Solutions - Engaging the Nation in Conversations Regarding Case Studies in Resource Management" was a perfect fit for our organization. Outstanding instructor-guides, specifically selected for this trip, helped make this a model positive impact program. Aside from lively discussions about issues and solutions, the students helped clean up illegal fire rings along the river and seeded an old roadway with native forbs, shrubs and grasses. They also learned to paddle inflatable kayak in calmer stretches and ride the raging rapids on the swollen Colorado River in the larger boats.



Students from Eastern Mennonite High School exploring "sustainable solutions" during an overnight educational river trip on the Colorado.

20th Anniversary Celebration

We at PRI are proud to have completed our 20th year in operation and to reflect on how much we have accomplished and how many people whose lives we have touched. In lieu of the annual Moab River Rendezvous, we decided to celebrate our anniversary with a field tour of some more recent projects, with a

warehouse party the next day.

During the field tour, we visited our primary project site, Jackson Bottom, and showed off the revegetation successes in this 65-acre degraded riparian area. Another stop along the Colorado River showed results of frill cut herbicide treatment on Russian Olive.



Long-time PRI friends, Jean, Bill and Jerry enjoying a laugh during our 20th Anniversary warehouse party in November



Participants of a field tour learn about our Jackson Bottom riparian restoration activities as part of our 20th Anniversary celebration

Univ. Wisconsin River Falls Students Honor PRI Leaders:

"Our group selected Michael and Tamsin as our Jake Benesh Award recipients because they have committed their life to service. They have a vision for the improvement of the Colorado Plateau and the wildlife that call that area home. Additionally, they work hard as a team to make their agency a welcoming environment to build long lasting relationships and make it a place to learn and grow as a steward of the environment. Overall, Michael and Tamsin and Plateau Restoration as a whole embody the criteria for which the Jake Benmesh Award was created. Our Destination group would like to take this time to thank them for their continued service to Moab and the Colorado Plateau as well as making our spring break memorable and life-changing!"

Cross Partnership

PRI is thrilled to have received a grant this fall from Cross Charitable Foundation to support our project: "Restoring of Wildlife Habitats through Youth Service-Learning". This was to match funds from other sources, such as Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, to restore wildlife habitat at Jackson Bottom along the Colorado River and other locations, while engaging our young people in hands-on restoration.

PRI continues to offer meaningful workplace training in natural resources, while developing critical thinking skills in young people, especially those who are not in a position to join an Americorps program.



Students from Outward Bound School deep-planting cottonwood trees along the Colorado River

Fast Facts—Wildlife

Science doesn't give a damn what you believe.

Moths

There are at least ten times more moth species than butterfly species worldwide. However, the moths are not as familiar to us because most of them are nocturnal. Like their close relatives, the butterflies, moths are essential because they pollinate plants. The sphinx, or hummingbird moth, can often be seen at dusk hovering over four o'clock blossoms in a manner that may fool you into thinking it is a hummingbird.

Other moths common to Utah, and their active periods are:

- White Tiger Moth— Day
- White-line Sphinx— Day
- Glover's Silk Moth— Night
- Polyphemus Moth— Night
- Underwing Moth— Night & Day
- Yucca Moth— Night and Day

Be sure to go "moth watching" with a flashlight on summer evenings!

Utah native plants that attract moths include:

- Evening primrose/*Oenothera*
- Mock Orange/*Philadelphus*
- Phlox/Phlox
- Yucca/Yucca *baccata* & *elata*
- Moonflower

Monarch Butterfly

Habitat loss and the destruction of native plant species have been responsible for the rapid decline of the Monarch Butterfly, the most recognized butterfly in North America. To help protect these majestic insects simply plant a garden full of milkweed and nectar plants that can serve as rest stops for adults and as nurseries for their eggs.

Candid Quotes

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in"

Unknown

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the universe".

John Muir

"Sometimes you find yourself in the middle of nowhere; and sometimes in the middle of nowhere you find yourself"

Unknown

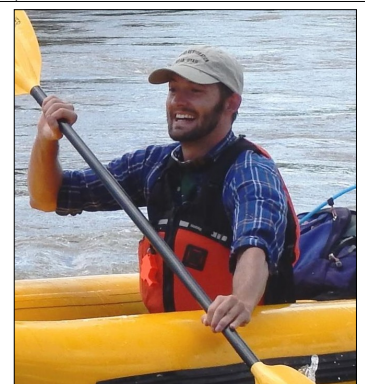
Conservation Intern

John Aldridge was our Conservation Marketing and Field Intern for a couple of months his summer. This was funded through the Leif Johnson Memorial Fund, with donations from friends of our former Vice-President. Here's a bit about John, in his words:

"My passion for the environment began when I was a young child. My siblings and I explored the creeks and meadows near our backyard with such freedom. We pretended we were rabbits, salamanders, and birds. Through meaningful play, I developed a sense of place and the skills necessary to empathize

with wildlife and the natural world. It took some time, but I soon realized that my career pathway was in the field of natural resources." Prior to joining PRI, John worked with Student Conservation Association and AmeriCorps. While at PRI, he continued online studies in natural resources at Oregon State Univ., studying plants and water policy.

John brought his sense of play into our youth programs, contributed to revegetation projects, helped with our website and more. He also wrote several enlightening essays and blogs; a sample on beavers is on the next page.



Intern, John Aldridge, in the supervisory duckie on a PRI high school river trip in June.

Learning from Beavers

Excerpts from an essay by John Aldridge – Conservation Marketing and Field Intern, July, 2015

“Tell me a story,” said Autumn, my youngest niece whose eyes have become glossed over with sleepiness as the sun has set. The decision to entertain Autumn’s young mind with a story is driven by purpose. I find comfort in knowing that in the simple act of storytelling, I am subtly guiding her in the development of a holistic environmental worldview. I can sense warmth powerfully ignite within her eyes and heart. She loves animals. And I want nothing more than to inspire this beautiful sleepy child to someday advocate on behalf of all living things.

I begin to tell a silly and light-hearted tale of an industrious beaver and his persistent efforts to establish a small pond in the stream near her home. I expressively share how beavers have tails which they can use as a stool or chair to balance and rest while working into a tree trunk. An Ojibwa legend describes how a tree fell on the beaver, giving him a flattened tail. The Creator said to the beaver, “a beaver is

not liked for his tail but for his kindness and wisdom.” With a greater sense of self-acceptance, the beaver learns to be proud of his tail’s perceived imperfections.

Their webbed feet, their extra transparent eye-lid, and even their oily-coated fur all aid in the beaver’s success in a watery world. The physical and behavioral adaptations of this creature are perfect examples of how an organism’s strengths are perfectly suited to the niche with which said organism will fill. With an inner responsibility and sure-footed work ethic, the beaver creates his ideal habitat while promoting more-complex ecosystems for the greater good. In practice, the beaver’s efforts promote vegetative complexity and biodiversity.

We can learn a lot from non-human things, such as the beaver. Not just as children – the focus for the majority of environmental education endeavors – but as adults as well.

The ways in which the beaver is

viewed all too frequently signs its fate. Clouded mindsets and skewed perceptions blind us from the importance of the beaver and its natural right to exist. Instead of recognizing its value, we objectify it—labeling the beaver as a river pest, a nuisance, a fur-trader’s bounty, or an environmental obstacle that prevents the passage of a new pipeline.

More can be done to recognize the beaver as family, an equal, and to ensure its rights of habitat, survival, fulfillment of its niche within an ecosystem, and a stress-free life. Do we not share the same world?

It would be beneficial for mankind to become aware of the beaver’s majesty and ecological role, for the wisdom that it has to offer may be used in our own lives, technology, and environmental practices. In learning and sharing the stories which nature has to offer, we reconnect with the natural world and ourselves.

Fast Facts about Bees

Most of us have seen the importance of bees as plant pollinators but are you aware that at least 800 different native bee species exist in Utah? The following native plants produce abundant nectar for these beneficial insects:

Penstemon/*Penstemon species*

Chokecherry/*Prunus virginiana*

Western Sand Cherry/*Prunus besseyi*

Silver Buffaloberry/*Shepherdia argentea*

Cliffrose/*Cowania mexicana*

Bitterbrush/*Purshia tridentata*

Woods Rose/*Rosa woodsii*

New Mexico Privet/*Forestiera neomexicana*

Non-native to our region, but another good choice is Honeysuckle/*Lonicera species*



Beaver harvesting willows on the San Juan River

Tribute to Jim Thuesan

We say farewell to a long-time friend and former neighbor, Jim Thuesan, who, in October this year finally succumbed to cancer he had been battling. Jim was such a fun-loving, funny and friendly character, who went out of his way to help PRI and other members of the Moab community. He even donated the chairs on which so many hundreds of our students and visitors to our facility have rested their weary rear-ends.

Jim contributed so much to Moab in many ways. He gave his time tirelessly

to events that benefited locals and visitors alike, including the Moab Folk Festival, Light Parade, and July Fourth Parade. He entertained us with his Red Rock ‘n’ Blues show on KZMU. Even through his illness, he remained positive and up-beat.

Our deepest sympathies go to his wife, JoDee, and family. Jim, we will sorely miss you.

Right: Jim Thuesan (on the nose) rides the waves with JoDee, PRI President Michael, and Onyx in Westwater Canyon



THANKS... for all your help!!!

Jennifer Speers

Bill Topper

Cross Charitable Fnd.

Herm Hoops

Brad and Cindy Moore

Dave Cooley

Howard McPherson

Deanne Wood

Stuart & Lauren Kingsbery

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Landing Pad



Moonflower (*Datura wrightii*) was abundant this year in parts of Jackson Bottom, especially near the Colorado River.

A member of the potato family, this perennial forb has the largest flowers in the region. Pollinated by moths, beetles and wasps, the fragrant white flowers open at dusk and close early in the morning. Leaves and flowers contain toxins that can be lethal if consumed.

Plateau Restoration, Inc.

A 501(c)(3) tax exempt non profit organization

Mission

To protect and restore native habitats of the Colorado Plateau through hands on education, landscape restoration, revegetation and research.

How we accomplish our mission

Plateau Restoration was founded in 1995 to enlighten, inspire and involve the public in the long-term care of landscapes of the Colorado Plateau through service and science-based learning adventures. We focus on building a connection with nature, and encouraging the spread of the message to make the choir bigger.

We raise funds through memberships, donations, grants and services we provide. Members of the public can learn more about the natural and cultural history of the area while helping support our mission by signing up for a Volunteer Vacation or a Geotour (land and/or river-based education program). We also provide natural resource education to the broader community through workshops.

You can help by joining the organization, by sharing in an adventure or by sharing the word.

To learn more about Plateau Restoration, become a supporter or join one of our programs please visit our website

www.plateaurestoration.org, or contact us:

P.O. Box 1363, Moab UT 84532;

info@plateaurestoration.org

435-259-7733 / 1-866-202-1847