

Horton Grove Prairie Restoration Begins with Prescribed Burn

Horton Grove Nature Preserve will become TLC's fifth public nature preserve later this year. This preserve boasts a rich history and a variety of habitats, including a native prairie.

Nestled beside Historic Stagville in the northeast corner of Durham County, the name for Horton Grove comes from William Horton and his family, yeoman farmers who settled there on 320 acres in the mid-1700s.

The land later became part of the Stagville Plantation, the largest plantation complex in the state with 30,000 acres and more than 900 slaves. Part of that history has been preserved at Historic Stagville, a North Carolina State Historic Site encompassing 71 acres and numerous buildings, including the 18th century Bennehan House, slave quarters and a timber frame barn built prior to the Civil War.

The rich history of Horton Grove extends earlier than this, though. Before European settlers moved to the Piedmont, the landscape was dotted with open savannas. These grassy expanses were created by wildfires and by fires set by Native Americans to clear land for planting. Prairie plants and animals thrived in this environment. When European settlers arrived, they cultivated the prairies, and by the mid- to late-1800s cool season fescues had taken over much of the prairie lands. At the close of the 20th century, very few remnants of Piedmont prairies remained.

In early February, under the supervision of



PEOPLE & NATURE



CLEAN WATER



WILDLIFE HABITAT

a certified "burn boss," 25 acres of native prairie were burned as the first step to restore a small slice of this critical habitat. Prescribed burns release seeds, reduce competition and add nutrients that benefit these species.

"Historically fire played an important role in the evolution of the plants that inhabit the native grasslands of the Piedmont," said John Ann Shearer of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "Now we use controlled burns to mimic natural fires to stimulate native grasses while minimizing woody vegetation. Once the native grassland at Horton Grove is established using fire and other techniques, it will provide habitat for many species of wildlife, including loggerhead shrike, prairie warbler, and grasshopper sparrow."

Following the burn, native plants will be reintroduced to this land by collecting seeds throughout the region and planting them at the site.

TLC is also working to create a much needed early-successional habitat and restoring the oak-hickory forest.

The trail system at Horton Grove will focus on providing recreational and educational experiences to discover the property's history and natural systems. Phase I, consisting of 3-4 miles of trail and the 25-acre prairie restoration, will be completed in 2012. Future phases, consisting of



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A glimpse of the future: Prairie at TLC's Temple Flat Rock in Wake County, 13 months after a controlled burn on March 18, 2010.

trails through the rest of the property and connections to Historic Stagville, will be completed in the next few years.

If you are interested in volunteering to help forge these new trails, sign up for our Trail Crew at tinyurl.com/7awxu8l.

To find out more about Horton Grove and the prescribed burn, visit tinyurl.com/hortongrove.

Let's talk about Land Ethics!

Join us at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment on Thursday, March 22, 7-8:30 p.m. for **A Contemporary Land Ethic Conversation:** A discussion of how land ethics and stewardship are applied in today's conservation community.

Find out more at tinyurl.com/landethics



Upcoming Events...

For information about our upcoming events, go to www.TriangleLand.org

Johnston Mill History Tour

March 3

Birding at Horton Grove

April 1

Hike at Reimer Nature Preserve

April 14

Swift Creek Bluffs Wildflower Hike

April 15

Learning Outside/

Irvin Nature Preserve Open House

April 15

Flower Hill Rhodo Ramble

April 28

Children's Hike at Horton Grove

May 6

Green Jamboree

May 19

Give every year.

Be a local conservation champion every day.

Annual Funds gifts make it possible for TLC to continue protecting our green spaces, farms and waterways as the only local conservation group working across all six counties of the Triangle. You are part of our success, allowing TLC to use those unrestricted dollars where they are most needed and empowering our staff with the resources to support our mission.

Give today.

www.triangleland.org/donate

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Other Highlights...

TLC ends 2011 by conserving nearly 200 acres in Wake and Johnston Counties

TLC ended 2011 by protecting nearly 200 acres with conservation easements, providing our community with wildlife habitat and local farms and food, and safeguarding clean water. John W. Narron donated conservation easements on two Johnston County farms that have been in his family for generations. Caroline MacNair Carl donated a conservation easement on her Steep Hill Creek Bottomlands in Wake County. Her donation protects 24 acres of floodplain forest and over one mile of Steep Hill Creek and unnamed tributaries that feed into Swift Creek and Lake Benson. Learn more on our website at tinyurl.com/855s644.



Steep Hill Creek Bottomlands

You got challenged – and delivered.

Thank you to our generous donors who helped TLC surpass our New Year Giving Challenge that ended Feb. 3. An anonymous donor matched dollar for dollar the first \$5,000 in contributions received during that time.

TLC extends our thanks to those who made Annual Fund gifts and to the anonymous donor whose gift doubled the value of those contributions. You have made a meaningful difference in protecting our local farms and waterways; natural areas for native plants and animals, and places for people to explore and connect with nature.

Give yourself some TLC with Aveda Earth Month

Earth Month – or Earth Season as we often call it – arrives next month. TLC will partner with the Aveda Institute Chapel Hill for the sixth-straight year on the campaign that has raised more than \$129,000 to benefit clean water projects across the Triangle. And this year's Earth Month campaign will offer plenty of opportunities for you to get involved. Stay connected with our new website, E-News, blog and Facebook page for a complete schedule of events.



Get Ready for a Summer of Fun!

Learning Outside (formerly Irvin Learning Farm) will be hosting another fun-filled summer of camp opportunities for children at Triangle Land Conservancy's Irvin Nature Preserve. For summer 2012, 10 weeks of camp will be offered, June 11 – August 24, (no session the week of July 4th, July 2 – 6). Youngsters can enroll for either half-day (8:00 – 12:00) or for full-day attendance (8:00 – 3:00). Each week will focus on a different theme in addition to providing ongoing opportunities to work in the Learning Garden, to care for the farm animals and to explore the woods, pasture, creek and ponds. To find out more, visit www.learn-outside.com or contact Wendy Banning, wendy@learn-outside.com.



TLC Nature Preserves: There's an app for that!

TLC has partnered with GPTrex, a North Carolina-based company, to produce a free interpretive trail guide for visitors available for download on GPS-enabled iPhones and iPad mobile devices. Find out more on our website: tinyurl.com/74kofca

Have you been to triangleland.org lately?

We've completely re-designed our site, making it easier to find out the latest happenings at TLC. It is also easier to find volunteer opportunities and events and outings. Check it out today!