

5th annual Sand Hills Discovery Experience."

July 11-14, 2006

The theme for the 5th annual Conference was "Tapestry of Sand Hills Life".

Featured presenters were:

Rural Electricity in the Sand Hills by Rich Walters, manager of KBR Rural Electric;

Sand Hills Belowground Ecology: Insights from the Barta Brothers' Ranch, Halsey, and sand hills in China; presented by David Wedin, School of Natural Resources UN-L;

Edible Wild Plants by Kay Young –Ethnobiologist and author from Lincoln, Nebraska;

B.E.A.T., a unique and highly acclaimed Ainsworth Schools percussion ensemble under the direction of teacher, Kim Bejot, performed in the learning center after lunch;

Sand Hills Climate; Then and Now by Chris Buttler and Dennis Phillips, Senior Weather Forecasters from the North Platte National Weather Service;

Break-Out Sessions were

Session 1 – Jim Ducey – Sand Hills History – the 1870's- Bull Whacker Days,

Session 2 – Fossil identifications by Paleontologists, Shane Tucker & Mike Voorhies,

and Session 3 – Rick Hamilton – presentation on plants used by Native Americans;

Portrait of a One-Room School by Ainsworth native Carol Lauritzen, director of Teacher Education, Eastern Oregon University. Based on her experiences, Carol will share "a typical school day and year, the humor and the pain of being a student in a one-room school and some insights into the nature of school events that remain in our memories decades after they occur..";

And concluded with entertainment provided by **Otto Rosfeld**, Valentine area cowboy poet, historian, and musician sponsored by the Nebraska Humanities Council.

Tours were provided on July 11 and July 14.

The **Rick Irwin fossil quarry** north of Bassett was once again a popular choice. The wind farm tour provided a very special opportunity to get up close to the **Wind Turbine Farms** South of Ainsworth. The opportunity to interact with nature presented itself on all of the tours. The **Lake Wobig** tour took participants to a unique geologic study area south of Cody, NE. The **Edible Wild Plants tour** brought people directly in contact with the Sand Dunes areas. The **Nature Conservancy** once again showcased the natural environment that they are striving to preserve. The trip to a real one-room school in the **Rock County Historical Park in Bassett** provided a glimpse into school days in a bygone era. In addition, an informative interview was given by Avis Hutton, a retired teacher who taught school in that schoolhouse.

Always striving to pursue their goal of giving comprehensive knowledge about the Sand Hills region, the Sand Hills Discovery Foundation was very pleased with the whole event and the enormously positive responses that they received from participants. A count of all people involved in the event would be over 100 individuals who attended, presented, participated, exhibited, vended and who took part in the behind the scene preparations.

Submitted by Richard Albrecht