



Photos shown at center

By Sharon Corcoran

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If you've always thought of Kansas as a flat land with nothing to look at, *National Geographic* photographer Jim Richardson wants to prove you wrong. Some of his best evidence is displayed at the Carnegie Arts Center this month.

Richardson's photos of the Kansas Flint Hills, many of which appear in the April 2007 edition of the magazine, will be displayed at the center through Sunday, May 25.

A Kansas native and Lindsborg resident, Richardson took photos for the 22-page feature section "The Flint Hills: A Kansas Treasure." The exhibit includes 32 large-scale photographs.

The rolling hills, carpeted with lush emerald-green grass, fire snaking across the prairie, smoke clouds billowing over the burned ground, fireflies flitting over an alfalfa field, spiderwort blossoms, primrose, prairie chickens, "amber waves of grain," red sumac leaves, even the Milky Way sparkling in the night sky, were all captured in glimpses of divine beauty by Richardson's camera.

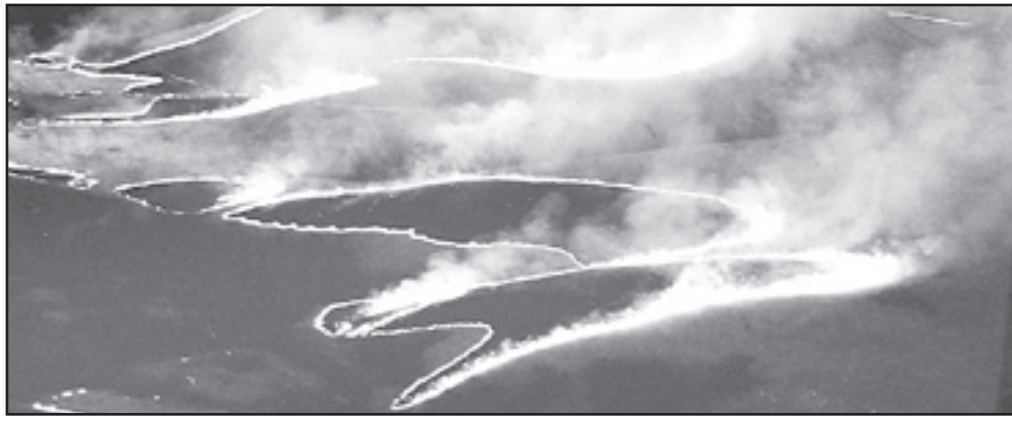
"I come from Kansas, so I've always known that my state suffers from an inferiority complex," Richardson says in his notes on the magazine's web site (ngm.nationalgeographic.com). "I went out determined that the Flint Hills ... wouldn't be playing second fiddle to other, more famous American landscapes in the pages of *National Geographic*. So this story was a mission of sorts."

He provides a bird's eye view of the hills and a man's eye view of birds.

"Having the luxury to do aerial photography ... was the high point of this assignment," he said, "from a professional as well as a personal point of view."

He said the hills were difficult to photograph on the ground, that what he saw with his eye simply wasn't captured by the camera. But once he got up in the air, he could see the contours of the hills, the soft, rolling tops, jutting edges of the valleys and "waves" of grass.

Richardson nearly lost his telephoto lens in the soot while shooting the fires and came face to face with a prairie chicken at the "booming grounds" where they mate. He said he gave the bird a slap on the rear to get it out of his way. And he learned the value of fire in maintaining the grasslands.



Sam Goalden (top), a freshman at Goodland High School, found that "Under the Milky Way," one of 32 large-scale photographs by *National Geographic* photographer Jim Richardson at the Carnegie Arts Center, is taller than her arm span as she looked at the exhibit Saturday. Goalden said she was looking for an example of Romanticism to help with an essay on the subject for art class. Another photo (above) shows a fire snaking across the prairie during spring burns in the Kansas Flint Hills.

Photos by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

Each spring, he said, the ranchers burn off the winter overburden of dried grass to make way for new spring growth. If they don't do this, he said, the prairie could turn to forest.

"Without human intervention," wrote Verlyn Klinkenborg in the article that accompanies Richardson's photos, "the Flint Hills would burn more randomly than they do now, creating a broader range of habitats than frequent burns allow."

But without the burns, he said, trees would take over the grasslands.

Seen from the air, Richardson said, the fires were beautiful, but on the ground, they were real and potentially dangerous.

But that danger is short-lived. Within days, one of the picture captions says, the black earth shows green again, as new shoots grow from roots unscathed by the flames. Within weeks, showy evening primroses spread their petals, joining a wildflower pageant 650 species strong.

The primroses are joined by purple spiderwort blossoms, but slow down, the caption says, they are only one inch wide and close to the ground and last only one day.

The Flint Hills extend from near the Nebraska border south into Oklahoma. The heart of the region is bordered by I-70 on the north, I-35 and K-177 on the east and K-15 on the west. A national scenic byway runs for 48 miles from Council Grove to Cassoday.

Within the hills are two nature preserves, the Konza Prairie Preserve and the Tallgrass Prairie

National Preserve.

The national preserve is a public and private partnership within the National Park System, the web site says, with all but 34 acres of the nearly 10,800-acre preserve owned by the Nature Conservancy, a private nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting important lands and waters around the world.

The 8,600-acre Konza Prairie, owned by the conservancy and Kansas State University, is operated as a field research station by Kansas State University's Division of Biology.

Explorer Zebulon Pike named the area in 1806 for the cobbles of flint-like chert that glistened through the tall prairie grasses. In this nearly treeless region, the big bluestem grass nourished by the minerals in the limestone grew so tall that the early explorers wrote of having to stand up in the saddle to get their bearings. The grass drew large herds of buffalo that native hunters followed.

In the mid 1800s, cattle replaced the buffalo as homesteaders replaced the natives.

The traveling exhibit is sponsored by *National Geographic Magazine* and the Kansas Division of Travel and Tourism. In Goodland, it is being sponsored by Joan and Royal Reid.

The arts center is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday through Monday at 120 W. 12th.

correction

A front-page story in Tuesday's *Goodland Star-News*, "County at-large voting bill passes," incorrectly reported that the state Legislature had passed the Sherman County at-large voting bill. That did not happen. The Legislature replaced the language in the bill and removed all reference to the Sherman County commissioner elections before passage. The state website still showed the original language. This was a

reporting error, partly due to the incorrect language on the state site.

☆☆☆☆

The *Goodland Star-News* will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Zoning rules topic for city

By Tom Betz

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The city Planning Commission may decide a question about whether homes in commercial zones may be replaced under zoning rules at a hearing at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the City Administration Building.

The City Commission referred the question to the planning group after the April 7 meeting, when commissioners recommended the planning commission consider modifying commercial zoning rules to allow a house in a commercial zone to be replaced.

At the center of the question is a home owned by Shelly and Brandon Terry at 1624 Texas. Steve Criswell, city building inspector, said under the existing ordinance, a house can be expanded or repaired if it is damaged, but not replaced. He said the owners want to move in another manufactured home.

"It would be a nonconforming use," Criswell said.

"Can we change the ordinance?" asked Commissioner John Garcia.

"The easiest would be to rezone," Criswell said, "but there are people in the area with commercial buildings. This is not an isolated thing in town. There are several places where houses exist in commercial zones."

Commissioner Dave Daniels asked how the commercial zone was determined.

Criswell said the commercial zone was established along 17th Street, and over the years, a number of commercial buildings have been built along the thoroughfare.

"The theory is that the houses get to continue until they are no longer usable and then the space has to revert to commercial," Criswell said.

Commissioners asked Brandon if the current house is on a founda-

tion. He said it is on runners, but a new one would have to be on a foundation.

Criswell said if the City Commission wants something done, the planning group will have to hold a hearing. He said the panel would want some direction from the commissioners.

"I would be in favor of changing it," Garcia said. "As I drive down 17th, I don't see commercial development. I think these people are trying to fix this property up, and I would be in favor of telling the planning commission we want to find a way to get this done."

"I am not sure it is messed up," Criswell replied. "I think if the area is to develop commercially, you don't want those homes stuck in there."

Mayor Rick Billinger, the only commission member who was in office when the comprehensive plan was updated 10 years ago, said it was sort of up to the commission at that time.

"We made the decision," he said. "We wanted to make it all commercial, and that sounded like a good idea at that time."

Criswell said the theory was that if the city was to develop more commercial area away from Main that 17th would be the place. He added there are homes on the south side of 17th, though that area is zoned industrial.

"We have a planning commission," Commissioners Annette Fairbanks said. "Let them bring us a recommendation."

Garcia said his recommendation would be to amend the ordinance dealing with houses in commercial zones so an existing residential structure could be replaced. Criswell said he would take that language to the planning hearing.

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