



# Center for Grassland Studies

203 Keim Hall  
P.O. Box 830953  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Lincoln, NE 68583  
(402) 472-4101  
Email: [grassland@unl.edu](mailto:grassland@unl.edu)  
Website: [grassland.unl.com](http://grassland.unl.com)

Grazing Livestock Systems | PGA Golf Management | Integrated Beef Systems |  
Grassland Ecology and Management

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## Center for Grassland Studies Celebrates 25th Year

by Steven Waller, Interim Director, Center for Grassland Studies

The Center for Grassland Studies is celebrating its Silver Anniversary this year. Silver is a precious metal chosen for the 25th anniversary to commemorate a quarter century of a lasting commitment. From its beginning on July 16, 2004 when the University of Nebraska Board of Regents approved the Center, it has been committed to the stewardship of our grassland resources through an innovative and progressive organizational structure.

The creation of the Center was sponsored by 8 units (Departments of Agronomy, Animal Science, Agricultural Economics, Horticulture, Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife; the School of Biological Sciences, the West Central Research and Extension Center and USDA ARS). It has evolved to encompass all three missions of teaching, research and extension/engagement, including serving as the administrative unit for three undergraduate degree programs and an online graduate certificate, all of which make it unique among centers.

The Center creation was 11 years in the making. Faculty had been discussing the synergies which could be

achieved by providing an organizational platform for those whose research and educational efforts were on some aspects of grassland. Originally, discussions focused on a beef/range systems center in support of making the Institute of Agriculture and Natural

Resources (IANR) a center for excellence for range and forage management. With time and discussions, the concept advanced to a much broader and more inclusive center for grassland studies.

The journey of development formally began with a report of the Agriculture 2001 Committee's Nebraska's Livestock Industry Task Force, which recommended

making IANR a center for excellence for range and forage management. The concept continued to evolve until it was incorporated into the Department of Agronomy CSRS review (November 1991) and received support from the external review team. In January 1992, the Department of Agronomy appointed an interdisciplinary committee to develop a proposal for an 'Interdisciplinary Action Plan for the Establishment of a Center for Grassland Agriculture'. (Continued on Page 2)



## Center for Grassland Studies Policy Advisory Committee

**Keenan Amundsen**, Department of  
Agronomy & Horticulture, UNL

**Tom Bragg**, Department of Biology, UNO

**Craig Derickson**, USDA, Natural  
Resources Conservation Service

**Jim Douglas**, Nebraska Game & Parks  
Commission

**Terry Klopfenstein**, Professor Emeritus,  
Department of Animal Science, UNL

**Rob Mitchell**, USDA, Agricultural  
Research Service

**Brent Plugge**, Nebraska Extension, UNL

**Sabrina Russo**, School of Biological  
Sciences, UNL

**Larry Van Tassel**, Department of  
Agricultural Economics, UNL

**Archie Clutter**, IANR Administration,  
UNL

**David Wedin**, School of Natural  
Resources, UNL

**Dayle Williamson**, Formerly with  
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

The Center for Grassland Studies is a unit within the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It receives guidance from a Policy Advisory Committee and a Citizens Advisory Council.

Note: Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policy of the Center for Grassland Studies, the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, or the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

To simplify technical terminology, trade names of products or equipment sometimes are used. No endorsement of products is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.



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## 25th Anniversary (Continued from Page 1)

The concept was integrated within the IANR planning process and identified as an action plan within the targeted program area of Agricultural and Agribusiness Profitability. The Department of Agronomy interdisciplinary committee requested (July 1993) that an IANR Grassland Studies Task Force be appointed to evaluate clientele needs and opportunities associated with the proposed center.

The Task Force was appointed in August 1993 and submitted a proposal April 21, 1994 to the IANR Vice Chancellor following a feasibility study based on extensive listening sessions with stakeholders (internal and external). It was approved in July of the same year by the Board of Regents.

When the Center was proposed, its mission was to implement focused interdisciplinary research, education and service programs, and activities that emphasize the role of grasslands as a natural resource and enhance the efficiency, profitability and sustainability of grasslands and turf. Strengthening linkages and developing partnerships with groups of common interest was a priority.

While the Center is now 25 years old, the vision and emphasis on inter-disciplinary, inclusive collaborations that span the full spectrum of disciplines and missions is far from outdated. It remains as relevant now as it was in 1994. In fact, the complex challenges that our grasslands face today only serve to reinforce the wisdom in creating the Center for Grassland Studies with such breadth, and depth in diversity. In 25 years, the Center has moved from an organizational outlier to a trend setter as inclusiveness, interdisciplinarity, and team approaches to all missions become the norm in a land-grant university.

## 25 Years Ago in History

- Tonya Harding is stripped of her national figure skating championship title following an attack on her rival Nancy Kerrigan.
- France celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Allied landings (the start of the end of the World War II).
- Netscape Navigator is released and becomes market leader for web browsing.
- The Channel Tunnel (“Chunnel”) opens joining France and England.
- Lisa Marie Presley marries Michael Jackson.
- Cost of living prices: annual income, \$37,070; gallon of gas, \$1.09; movie ticket, \$4.08; cost of new car, \$12,350; loaf of bread, \$1.59; and dozen eggs, \$.86.
- North American Free Trade Agreement is signed into law.

## Alumni Update: Brandon Peterson, NRCS District Conservationist

**Brandon Peterson** grew up on a modest acreage just outside of Thedford, a small Nebraska town and ranching community. He spent many days assisting local ranchers, including a summer he helped with haying. Most of Peterson's family is invested in their own agricultural operations, so he is no stranger to agriculture or working hard.

Peterson decided to pursue a degree in Animal Science at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL), and added the Grazing Livestock Systems (GLS) degree program to his studies between his junior and senior year, "The extra class time was well worth the delay in my graduation," indicates Peterson. Later, while looking for a summer job between his sophomore and junior year of college, Brandon's uncle suggested he speak with a district conservationist at the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Thedford. The subsequent meeting in 1997 began what would prove to be a long and successful career with NRCS for Brandon.

Peterson's work with the NRCS has taken him from a summer intern to soil conservation aid to range management specialist to resource conservationist. In September 2016, Brandon was selected to be the district conservationist in the O'Neill Field Office, which serves



Brandon Peterson, GLS Alumnus and  
NRCS District Conservationist

the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resource District (UENRD) area. Within this role, Brandon oversees the employees, programs and activities that encompass the UENRD area, including the counties of Antelope, Holt, Keya Paha, Brown and Rock.

The most engaging part of his job is helping producers conserve Nebraska's natural resources. "I love being able to meet with producers to understand their issues and help find solutions that will work for them, while also conserving and improving the state's natural resources," Peterson explains.

Looking back on his studies at UNL, Brandon finds he uses every aspect of what he was taught, whether calculating animal unit months or evaluating economical practices to implement on producers' land to achieve their objectives. All the knowledge and experience gained at UNL comes into play in one form or another. "I think the thing that I found most valuable is how the GLS degree program tied together everything that I use daily," Brandon says.

*Brandon, a former Nebraska Army National Guard member (1994—2006), lives in O'Neill with his wife and their three children.*

## PGA Golf Management's December 2018 Graduates

The Center for Grassland Studies would like to congratulate the PGA Golf Management program's most recent graduates. We wish them all the best on their future endeavors, and look forward to seeing them build successful careers within the golf industry.

**Derek Carlson** (Lincoln, NE), Assistant Professional at Hillcrest Country Club, Lincoln, NE  
**Austin Dell** (St. Charles, IL), Assistant Professional at Miracle Hills, Omaha, NE  
**Brett Finke** (Deshler, NE), Assistant Professional at The National Golf Club of Kansas City, Parkville, MO  
**Tyler Lawson** (Elkhorn, NE), Assistant Professional at Whistling Straits, Kohler, WI  
**Landan Maassen** (Hershey, NE), Assistant Professional at The Madison Club, LaQuinta, CA  
**Chad Manes** (Beatrice, NE), Assistant Professional at Arbor Links Golf Club, Nebraska City, NE  
**Alphonse Peterson** (Lincoln, NE), Assistant Professional at The Country Club of Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

# The Barta Brothers Ranch: Making a Difference

by Steven Waller, Interim

Director, Center for Grassland Studies



The difference between a good university and a great university can be measured by the passion, vision and generosity of its donors. Clifford and Jimmie Barta were brothers that ranched their entire lives in the eastern Sandhills of Rock and Brown Counties. During their estate planning, they chose to gift their ranch (Barta Brothers Ranch [BBR]) to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Neither had attended the University, but both felt a tie to it like so many Nebraskans. It was very similar to the tie that they enjoyed with the land. They really only asked for two things in gifting the ranch: care for the land and all its creatures as they had cared for it and to have BBR serve as a model ranch for the local community, Nebraska's future ranchers, and generations to come – now and forever.

The Barta Brothers' wisdom, ecological insight and masterful application of what is now referred to as holistic or systems-based management set the example of what could be. They, with the land, became one. And they

chose to entrust their living legacy with the University to share with future generations of Nebraskans and the global community. The BBR is located about 20 miles south of Long Pine in Rock and Brown Counties. The property was acquired from Jimmie and Clifford Barta in 1996 and is about 6,000 acres with over 5,500 acres of upland range. There are roughly 120 acres of contiguous sub-irrigated meadow and over 100 acres of discontinuous sub-irrigated meadow and wetland scattered over the ranch. Facilities on the 35 acre building site consist of a headquarters building with dormitory type living arrangements, a lab building, and large outbuilding.

The Barta Brothers envisioned a model ranch with the facilities and support needed to conduct production-scale research and demonstrations. Educational programs were essential in training students and continuing education for ranchers, conservationists, and representatives of federal and state agencies. Research and demonstrations were to focus on long-term grazing management systems and the biotic and abiotic factors associated with such Sandhills systems.

The BBR is ideally suited for research on grazing as well as ecosystem structure and function in the Sandhills. The rangeland at BBR is in good to excellent condition and is similar to most upland range in the eastern half of the Sandhills. It is an excellent demonstration site for ranchers in this area and is readily accessible by University students and the public. Current research projects honoring the vision of the Barta brothers focus on plant and livestock response to grazing systems include:

- Long term aboveground production of upland rangeland (1999-2018);
- Comparison of upland grazing systems (1999-2008);
- Sandhills biocomplexity: integrating biogeophysical processes across space and time (2003-present);
- What are ecosystem responses to ultrahigh stocking density (mob grazing) on Sandhills meadows (2010-2018); and
- Interacting effects of grazing period length and stocking rate on vegetation and soil responses on Sandhills uplands (2010-2018).

The long-term research needed to address the current and future challenges continues. A new project is proposed to start in 2020 with faculty from the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture and the School of Natural Resources in collaboration with the Nature Conservancy and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. This long-term research will investigate the ecological and agricultural impact of vegetation structure in upland pastures that are conventionally managed. It will add to the rich portfolio of producer workshops, publications, presentations, extension activities, grants, thesis and dissertations that define the impact of the BBR.

The BBR is just beginning its journey to fulfill the vision of Jimmie and Clifford. This is the power of a gift that makes a difference every day in perpetuity. Our prairie heritage is defined by the stewards who have cared for our grasslands, learned from them, and passed the knowledge forward to those who will sustain its future.

For more information go to [www.snr.unl.edu/aboutus/where/fieldsites/bartabrothersranch.aspx](http://www.snr.unl.edu/aboutus/where/fieldsites/bartabrothersranch.aspx)

## Stock Seed Farms Invests in Students



Michaela Cunningham visits Stock Seed Farms

**Michaela Cunningham** is a junior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy. Michaela is also the recipient of the Stock Seed Farms—Dr. Newell Scholarship, which commemorates the life and long-time career of Dr. Laurence C. Newell, former grass breeder with the USDA Agricultural Service at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

A requirement of the scholarship is to visit Stock Seed Farms in Murdock, Nebraska at least twice during the academic year in which the scholarship is used, which is exactly what Michaela did. **Mike Fritz**, general manager at Stock Seed Farms, provided a tour in which Michaela was able to see firsthand seed cleaning, mixing, storage facilities as well as the nearby fields in production.

“I am just getting my feet wet in the grass seed business myself, so this scholarship gave me a great opportunity to witness harvest in action. I picked up a few tips from the experts that will help me next fall when I will be harvesting my crop of seed,” stated Michaela.

Michaela continued, “Mike Fritz has been super helpful in getting me started with my own grass seed production operation. I know if I ever have a question or concern, I can shoot him an email and he will give me his best answer based on his own experiences. He is very humble individual and wants me to be successful. I truly thank Stock Seed Farms for their generosity and investment in me though their time and resources.”

## Dean's List Fall 2018

The Center for Grassland Studies congratulates the following students for making the Fall 2018 Dean's List. *Grazing Livestock Systems*: **Kate Krebs** (Monticello, WI); **Katie Steffen** (Beatrice, NE); **Colten Bergt** (Amherst, NE); and **Morgan Rice** (Mullen, NE). *PGA Golf Management*: **Brett Finke** (Deshler, NE); **Baily Hort** (Scottsbluff, NE); **Billy Rhiley** (Lincoln, NE); **Nicolaus Walther** (Lebanon, OR); **Arihant Mittal** (Jaipur, India); **Zachery Morley** (Pleasant Dale, NE); **Derek Carlson** (Lincoln, NE); **Joseph Sherman** (St. Charles, IL); and **Nicolaus Latcham** (Waukee, IA).

## America's Grassland Conference: August 20-22



The 2019 America's Grassland Conference is August 20-22 in Bismarck, North Dakota. The conference will focus on transboundary grassland conservation, conservation on working lands, and restoration of grasslands. Grassland professionals from varied backgrounds will come together to engage on the latest topics around North America's amazing grasslands. The conference is co-hosted by the National Wildlife Federation, North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition, and North Dakota State University. Detailed information about the conference may be found at [www.nwf.org/grasslandsconference](http://www.nwf.org/grasslandsconference)

## Student Spotlight: Alexa Johnson by IANR News, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Alexa Johnson

**Hometown:** Sutton, NE

**Major:** Animal Science, Grazing Livestock Systems and Beef Industry

**Anticipated Date of Graduation:** May 2019

**Why did you decide to come to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln?**

I really liked the majors that are offered and that it is a land-grant university.

**What is your favorite thing about the University of Nebraska–Lincoln?**

The people I get to work with in the Animal Science Ruminant Nutrition Lab and always seeing someone I know.

**How has diversity and inclusive excellence played a role in your CASNR experience?**

My eyes have been opened to opportunities I never knew were possible.

**What is your favorite class you have taken so far and why?**

I really enjoyed taking nutrition. With working in the lab I was learning about the analysis that is used to find the nutritional value of different forage resources and after taking nutrition I have been able to connect some dots about the analysis and purpose behind feeding the forages.

**What are your plans post-graduation?**

Currently I am looking into graduate school.

**What's life like outside of school?**

Busy! I work each week in the lab which keeps me busy along with having a skincare business. When I am not working I enjoy hanging out with friends, watching Netflix and Lincoln nightlife.

## Orval “Lynn” Myers: 1950 - 2019

The Center for Grassland Studies would like to recognize the passing of a long time participant and contributor to the Nebraska Grazing Conference, **Lynn Myers**. Lynn worked to advance the many organizations with which he was involved. He traveled extensively across the state and nation to speak about range management, grazing, conservation, and ranch transition, all passions of Lynn's.



Lynn Myers

## PGA Golf Management Alumnus and Staff Receive Awards

by Dann Husmann, PGA, Director, PGA Golf Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Nathan Kalin**, PGA, will receive the 2018 Nebraska Section PGA Golf Professional of the Year Award, at the Nebraska Section PGA Spring Meeting, March 11, at Hillcrest Country Club in Lincoln, NE. This is the Nebraska Section's highest honor to be bestowed on a PGA member. Kalin is a 2007 graduate of the PGA Golf Management program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), and is Director of Golf at Fremont Golf Club in Fremont, NE. Nathan is the President of the Nebraska Section of the PGA and is a member of the PGA of America.

After graduation, Kalin joined Champions Run in Omaha, NE, eventually rising to PGA Head Golf Professional at the facility. During his tenure at Champions Run, Nathan significantly grew event participation and increased merchandise sales. The Fremont Golf Club has also seen major growth under Nathan's leadership.

The Nebraska Section has also benefited due to Nathan's efforts. Nathan played a significant role in lowering the apprentice suspension rate to one of the lowest in the country; formed "TEAM Golf," which serves nearly 550 youth ages 7 to 13 across the Section; helped form PGA REACH Nebraska, the philanthropic arm of the PGA Professionals; and created the 1st Annual Wingman Scramble, an event raising \$40,000 for the Folds of Honor Foundation to provide scholarships to children of military men and women serving our country.



Nathan Kalin



Scott Holly

**Scott Holly**, PGA, PGA Golf Management Internship Coordinator at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will receive the 2018 Horton Smith Award at the March 11 Nebraska Section PGA Spring Meeting. The Horton Smith Award recognizes PGA golf professionals who display a strong desire for lifelong education to include outstanding and continuing contributions to professional education. Holly also won the award in 2012 and 2007.

The Mission Inn Resort & Club in Howey-in-the-Hills, FL was the setting for the January 19 ceremony at which **Nick Muller**, PGA, received the 2018 PGA Merchandiser of the Year for Private Facilities Award. Nick is a 2007 graduate of the PGA Golf Management program at UNL, the Director of Golf at the Country Club of Lincoln (Nebraska), and member of the PGA Nebraska Section's Board of Directors.

Under Nick's direction the Country Club of Lincoln has seen increased revenue in the junior clinic, overall tournament play, and ladies' apparel sales, thanks to turnkey fashion shows. His creative merchandising strategies, combined with his ability to engage customers through various platforms, has been instrumental to his success.

Muller gives back by mentoring through merchandising/service seminars to students in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's PGA Golf Management, and the Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management programs. Additionally, Nick has hired many program graduates as assistant professionals at the Country Club of Lincoln, as well as providing internships for students.



Nick Muller

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## Dennis Brink Retires after UNL Career Spanning 40 Years

**Dennis Brink**, Coordinator of Undergraduate Teaching and Advisement, and Kermit Wagner Distinguished Professor in Animal Science, concluded a career in the Department of Animal Science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln at the end of February.

In addition to teaching, Brink was involved in several professional societies and served on many committees during his time at the university. He earned numerous awards and honors, contributed to research, and authored publications that advance areas of animal science and teaching. Dennis also served in an administrative role for the Grazing Livestock Systems Faculty Coordinating Committee since its inception.

**Dr. Martin A. Massengale**, former Director of the Center for Grassland Studies, indicated, “Dr. Brink was one of our most devoted professors and teachers who was willing to spend the time and effort to effectively advise and work with students. He believed strongly in the value of multidisciplinary degrees, a diverse background, and internships in preparing students for their future careers. Upon his retirement he will surely be missed, especially by faculty and students who had the good fortune to interact with him.”



Dr. Dennis Brink