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Final Thoughts as Editor-in-Chief

Greetings GPNSS members! I write this editorial during a time of reflection as Editor-in-Chief of *The Prairie Naturalist (TPN)*, and during unprecedented times as the global COVID-19 pandemic continues. In full disclosure, I do not have a particular topic for this editorial, other than to offer a few final thoughts as my time serving the Great Plains Natural Science Society and *TPN*.

First, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to everyone who has helped me during the past 11 years. Giving the appropriate thanks to these people would take pages, and perhaps volumes, but you probably aren't interested in reading volumes. Instead, perhaps you can humor me while I give thanks to those most deserving. During my earlier years as EIC, Troy Grovenburg and Brandi Felts were warriors among us for their dedicated service as assistant and newsletter editors, who had significant roles in actually running *TPN*. They handled countless inquiries from dealing with authors and GPNSS members, handling membership renewals, getting manuscripts to production, preparation of the quarterly newsletter...you get the point. During the latter half of my tenure, my former advisor (Dr. Jonathan Jenks) assumed the role as acting assistant editor, whose efforts were instrumental during transition years for *TPN*. Without their effort, the timely publication of *TPN* surely would have been compromised. I considered their collective efforts a series of ongoing personal favors, of which I will likely never be able to properly return.

I was very fortunate to have an excellent pool of Associate Editors stay on during my transition to EIC. Since then, I had another group of Associate Editors agree to serve when I asked them, and collectively, all of these individuals did an outstanding job. I know from years of service as an Associate Editor, it is often a thankless job, and once that requires developing a "thick skin" in short order. I have tremendous respect for the Associate Editors who served during my tenure, because they are the work horses of the peer-review process and in doing so, shouldered an important task and devoted themselves to doing it well. Lastly, and before I welcome incoming Editor-in-Chief Jane Austin, I would be remiss without thanking the authors and co-authors of the hundreds of manuscripts that I handled during my tenure. You are a passionate bunch and your dedication to research throughout the Great Plains is admirable. Part of being EIC requires difficult conversations with authors, and addressing their concerns is something that I have always prioritized. From day one, I felt it important to handle author

complaints and concerns professionally, and in as timely of a manner as I was able. At times, conversations often slipped through the cracks in the daily chaos of our busy schedules, and sometimes required making decisions unpopular with authors. Nevertheless, authors responded to my decisions professionally and respectfully, and for that I am forever grateful. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to interact with all of you, and thank you for the opportunities to learn more from you than you have from me.

Finally, I want to share with you several parting thoughts during my tenure as EIC, that I now find myself reflecting on more frequently than the earlier years of service to the *TPN*. I hope that some of you devote some time self-reflecting on whether they also apply to you. First, there can be no doubt that I am a workaholic who has juggled excessive responsibility (like service to professional journals) for decades. If I run out of things to do, then I will find an excuse to create more work for myself. Like all of you, I have little spare time, and my personal and professional obligations are indeed daunting. For too many years now I have allowed my passion, or perhaps more appropriately my obsession, for work to be more of a priority than more important things in my life, such as family and friends. The drive to be successful, publish manuscripts, secure external grant funding, and mentor graduate students consumed me to the point of leaving little spare time. Regrettably, so many of us can relate to this character flaw. Rather than lament over how hectic our lives are, and how we have little time to enjoy what is really important, perhaps we all should reflect on how thankful we should be for the lives and professions we enjoy. Since my decision to transition out of my professional service to the various journals I have served for the better part of 20 years, I have given pensive thought to the things I am truly thankful for in the chaos of my day-to-day obligations. To be sure, I am thankful for my kids, because at the end of the day, they don't care how bad your day was, or how much work you need to get done. They simply want your attention, and being a positive role model in their lives will leave you a better person. Simply stated, few people will care how many papers you published, how many graduate students you mentored, or how much grant money you received during your career. Rather, your measure as a person will be assessed by your friends and family, and how you have positively affected them. Lastly, I am thankful for the many rewarding and positive experiences that I have been able to pursue in my journey through the wildlife profession. Yeah, many of the pressures we face may be self-incurred,

but we are still a fortunate group of professionals to be able to conduct the work we do. Take the time to appreciate the positive things in your lives, because doing so will provide perspective and relieve stress that too often affect our day-to-day lives.

In this Issue—Once again, this issue of *TPN* contains a wide range of topics that reflects the breadth of work being conducted across the Great Plains. Several articles detail natural history, disease ecology, and geographic distribution of terrestrial vertebrates across the northern Great Plains. Another article investigates factors limiting reintroduced fish populations in central Great Plains streams. This issue also includes a several book reviews, ranging from grasslands and climate change, to Great Plains birds, to birds of prey of eastern North America, to natural history and habitats of woodcock. There is a range of information available to professionals and outdoor enthusiasts across the Great Plains.

In closing, I hope you will continue to support *TPN*, incoming Editor-in-Chief Jane Austin, and the editorial staff responsible for ensuring its publication. I look forward to seeing you sometime in the future. Until that time, I wish you all continued good health to you and your families, and a safe and productive field season!

—Christopher N. Jacques
Editor-in-Chief