

# The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

*Grassroots Conservation in Action*

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## **Meet TPE's New Executive Director**

*By Debra Behrens*

*Debra Behrens started as Executive Director on October 19. Visit TPE's blog to watch the video that accompanies this article.*

**I**t started as a wish. As a child visiting my grandparents in rural Minnesota, I fell in love with the vast prairie skies and the steady hum of insects on summer nights. Only later did I realize that this place filled with wonder had long since lost the complex beauty that once thrived there. This growing awareness gave me a sense of responsibility to do what I could to heal the land. But finding an answer to the question of what I can do has been a 20-year journey.

The actual seed of an idea wasn't formed until I met my husband. We quickly realized that we shared the same dream: to become stewards of the land. Through the early years of our marriage, we nurtured our seed along until we were able to afford a small homestead near Viroqua.

We thought we had achieved our goal, but as part-time residents we weren't making much progress. And it was becoming harder and harder to leave the beauty and tranquility of our rural home to return to the city for work. We resolved to make it our permanent home and spent the next year rearranging our lives so this could happen.

I first discovered TPE while researching what to do about our problem with wild parsnip. I followed your progress through the years with interest. When the Landowner Services program was announced earlier this year, we reached out to Dan immediately for advice on the projects we were finally ready to undertake.

Then I saw your job posting for an Executive Director, and my heart skipped a beat. Here it was: my ideal job! The more I learned, the more I became convinced that my 20-year career in nonprofit development,



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## Our Mission

The Prairie Enthusiasts seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna, and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration, and education. In doing so, we strive to work openly and cooperatively with private landowners and other private and public conservation groups.

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On the Cover: Prairie gentians at Schurch-Thomson Prairie (Photo by Rob Baller)



## President's Message – Letter to My Successor

Scott Fulton, President

Dear Debra,

As I write this, you are just a few weeks away from becoming the new Executive Director of The Prairie Enthusiasts. First: congratulations and best wishes from everyone at TPE for success in your new job! As you know, I am a longtime member and volunteer and have served as Acting Executive Director for the last seven months. To get you off to the best possible start, I wanted to share some of what I've learned in this role and my thoughts on TPE's Chapter Support staff.

As you've already seen, some of the hallmarks of TPE are the strong passion, deep knowledge, and hard work of the members of our community. In recent years, we have become more effective at outreach and communication to the public. As a result, we've seen not only growth in membership, but also an increase in the diversity of our community on many levels. This includes many who are new to what we do and who are not (yet) as deeply committed. While that may create some discomfort for us "old-timers" as our culture gradually shifts, in the end embracing this increased diversity will be essential for our survival.

The same passion, knowledge, hard work, and diversity are reflected in TPE's staff. All of them are good at what they do, and they all care deeply about both their own work and TPE's mission. That said, we've had a lot of change on the staff during my tenure. Everyone is either new to TPE or taking on significantly different roles and responsibilities. One of your first challenges will be to provide the focused leadership needed for them to become the most effective individual contributors and working team they can be.

Part of this challenge will be to manage priorities for the staff. TPE's mission is broad, and there are many ways for each of us to carry it out. As with most organizations, there are always far more great ideas than resources. There is often strong disagreement and/or a lack of understanding of what is the highest priority or even possible. It will be one of your most important responsibilities to see that we do make those hard choices, communicate them to the organization, and stick with them.

One way to address this is to always listen to as many voices as possible before, during, and after making decisions. It's amazing what you'll hear and how many thoughtful people we have! I would also urge you to be patient, especially when trying to reach alignment. Our work on the land has a very long time horizon, and our development as a human community often seems to reflect that.

Finally, always remember that TPE is grassroots at its core. Our mission is primarily carried out through the work of individual volunteer members and supporters using the resources, organization, and infrastructure provided by our chapters, central leadership, and donors — all of which are supported by our staff. It's often difficult to work together successfully this way, but we deeply believe that this is the source of our unique strength and potential to endure. After my brief experience at the helm of TPE, I am convinced now more than ever that what we do is very important in the world. We have a bright future ahead of us!

Sincerely,  
Scott



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# Editor's Notes – A Return to Story

Grace Vosen, Editor

**M**y TPE story begins five years ago on the county highway leading to Schurch-Thomson Prairie near Blue Mounds, Wis. I was a little lost — surely the site couldn't be that far out of town! But I found my way, arriving just a few minutes late to my first day as an Empire-Sauk Chapter intern. I overcame my embarrassment to spend the next six weeks working on prairies full-time.

As a natural resources major, I needed hands-on experience in my field. It didn't have to be TPE. In fact, I'd never heard of the group until my roommate showed me their internship announcement. But my time with them in 2015, the summer before my senior year, was my first exposure to the work of restoring prairies. Because I enjoyed those first weeks, and at the encouragement of my crew leader, I continued to attend chapter events that year. I started to become part of this welcoming community.

Everyone in TPE has a story to tell. From backyard pollinator gardens to 500-acre preserves, from amusing

moments to sagas that unfold over decades, stories are everywhere in our organization.

They're waiting to be shared even — or perhaps especially — in this time of isolation. And as author Curt Meine noted during our virtual picnic in July, a "return to story" can be a means of re-connecting people to the land around them. I hope to bring us closer to that noble goal in my position as editor. I look forward to making connections across chapters and finding our common story.

I'm also a member of Chapter Support staff, which means I'm here as a resource for you. I hope you'll share your thoughts on effective communication and your creative ways of reaching out to new audiences. It's my job to listen. Let's tell our stories.



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## Meet TPE's New Executive Director ... continued from Cover

combined with my values and my connection to this mission, were a match.

You have built a strong organization, and you have the ability to grow. Some of the most rewarding work I've done involved helping nonprofits through the next phase in their organizational growth. I've developed an entrepreneurial approach to solving problems, focusing collective energy, and building momentum. Together, we'll pursue strategies that improve our overall health and viability so that what we leave for those coming after us is a thriving organization.

It all starts with having clear goals. We'll need to work together to define what we want for our future. This is a

grassroots organization, with all the beauty and messiness that entails. We won't always agree, but we need to be willing to trust one another and commit to pursuing our strategic goals together.

There is much to learn. In the coming weeks and months, I'll be reaching out to gather your stories, ideas, and advice. But please feel free to share your suggestions at any time. There will be challenges ahead, and we'll be prepared to meet them through the strength of our commitment — not just to our mission, but to one another.

Debra can be reached by phone at our TPE office (608-638-1873 ext. 1) or by email ([executivedirector@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:executivedirector@theprairieenthusiasts.org)).

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## Membership Reminders

By Grace Vosen

**E**very issue of *The Prairie Promoter* includes a reminder about your TPE membership status. Look on the back cover, above your address, for your membership expiration date. If it's time to renew, detach and mail the included form or renew online at [theprairieenthusiasts.org/renew](http://theprairieenthusiasts.org/renew). (Note that the "Little Bluestem" membership level is now \$35, as recommended by TPE's Fundraising Committee.)

If your membership has expired, the words "Your TPE Membership Has Expired!" will be printed in red text on the back cover. You won't receive any more issues of *The Prairie Promoter* until you renew.

TPE members and contacts who have email addresses should also receive our monthly eNews. If you haven't been getting the eNews in your inbox, we may have an old email address on file. Contact your chapter's membership coordinator or Chapter Support staff to update your records. If your information is correct and you're still not getting the eNews, first check your spam folder. If the eNews isn't there, you may need to talk to your Internet service provider about your email account. Contact Jerry at [bookkeeper@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:bookkeeper@theprairieenthusiasts.org) for further suggestions or assistance.

# 2020 Landowner Services Wrap-up

By Dan Carter, Landowner Services Coordinator

For each of us in our own way, it's been a tough year. We've shelved the activities we love, seen less of the people we care most about, and suffered loss. The future seems more uncertain and the world less recognizable. That's why getting out and visiting landowners this season has been such a privilege. The wild has never been a more important sanctuary. Each visit has been a reminder that there are people out there with whom we share values, who are doing what they can to carry forward our natural and cultural heritage. The successes are moving, and the challenges are sobering. We have community in the prairie. And there is room for that community to grow.

I was unsure early on how much interest there would be in the Landowner Services program, but the work picked up quickly. Between late May and mid-October, I visited 66 properties belonging to private landowners in three states and in every chapter's domain. My goal was 50!

Visit content was extremely varied. Some landowners are considering new prairie plantings; others are restoring (or considering restoring) existing prairies, oak savannas, oak woodlands, sedge meadows, or fens. Many properties have yielded new discoveries, both good and bad. For just about everyone, though, invasive alien species and aggressive native species are burdens. Getting enough fire on the land is also an obstacle.

This summer, I shared some of my early travels on TPE's blog. (Early Highlights from the Landowner Services Program) There have been more since that time than I have room to share, but here are a few highlights from various corners of TPE.

In mid-July, I visited Kurt Peters and Elizabeth Hopp-Peters at their property in far western Green County, Wis.



*It may look nondescript, but this hairy pinweed from the Peters property is among the rarest native plants in Wisconsin. The only other known occurrence in the state is in Iowa County. (Photo by Dan Carter)*

The main focus of that visit was the ongoing conversion of a sandy old field into prairie and the restoration of some black oak woodland and savanna. As I walked the perimeter of the old field, an interesting plant caught my attention between the path and the woodland edge. It turned out to be hairy pinweed, a special concern species with only one other known occurrence in the state. Historically, the adjacent woodland had been an open savanna or barrens. The hairy pinweed presumably happened to



*Hairy meadow-parsnip fruiting in bur oak woodland on the Gaard property west of New Ulm, Minn. (Photo by Dan Carter)*

have been among the species that managed to colonize the edge of the old field before the savanna canopy closed and brush moved in. Other remnant vegetation included goat's-rue, narrow-leaved pinweed, bird's-foot violet, and hoary frostweed.

In September, I visited Barb and Dan Le Duc, who have a somewhat similar property in Eau Claire County, Wis. They're also working to augment the diversity of a sandy old field next to a Hill's oak woodland. The old field had been colonized by many interesting native species including fork-tip three-awn grass, narrow-leaved pinweed, hoary frostweed, Great Plains sand sedge, and rock spikemoss.

In late July I went to Brad Gaard's property near New Ulm, Minn. The main foci of the visit were some existing and planned conservation plantings, but the highlight for me was a small bluff-top bur oak woodland above the Cottonwood



*Great Plains lady's-tress orchids typically flower in late September and have corolla lips flushed with yellow (variable), with lateral sepals spreading and curving upward. They are leafless when flowering, and have bracts that usually overlap on the upper stem. We saw several dozen on the Karow property. (Photo by Dan Carter)*





*I visited Laurel and Alan Bennett's property on a lovely day in late August. They have successfully controlled reed canary grass in lower areas using Craig Annen's systems approach, which in this case involved grass-selective herbicide and burning. (Photo by Dan Carter)*

River. There, an abundance of hairy meadow-parsnip (state special concern) grew at its northern range limit at the top of the bluff. The woodland also supported some particularly nice grass species, including black-seeded ricegrass and long-awned wood grass (farther southwest than any documented occurrences in the state).

Among my last several visits was the Dale and Kim Karow property near Fort Atkinson, Wis., well-known for its exceptional remnant prairie, calcareous fen, and sedge meadow communities. (Kim Karow's legacy of stewardship is documented in this issue of the Promoter by Alice Mirk.) As I walked the site with Walter Mirk and Dale, there were four kinds of gentian blooming: greater fringed, lesser fringed, stiff, and bottle. Abundant Great Plains lady's-tress orchids were also in flower. Despite being a well-botanized property, the site offered up several new finds including new county records of Greene's rush and large path rush, both firsts for me.

Other photos are from Laurel and Alan Bennett's property in Marquette County, Wis. and the Brian and Sheila Schils property in Pierce County, Wis.

My schedule for next year is already about one-third filled. If you're considering a new project or simply want to walk and talk about your property, contact me soon to schedule a visit ([landowners@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:landowners@theprairieenthusiasts.org)). In your initial email, include a little bit of background and location information for your site. Also, if you have success stories dealing with common problems like brambles, Canada or tall goldenrod, warm-season grass dominance, and the many varieties of invasive species, accounts of your successes would be welcome. Published science informs a lot of restoration and management, but anecdotes are where much of our collective knowledge resides.

Take care this fall and winter, get outside, and kill as much invasive woody vegetation as possible.



*In late September I visited Brian and Sheila Schils. We were joined by Abby Mueller, intern with the St. Croix Valley Chapter. The Schils' bur oak woodland has been impeccably prepared for seeding by cutting and treating buckthorn throughout. (Photo by Dan Carter)*



# Restoration in the Time of COVID-19

By Shelley Hamel

Some time ago, we tackled a big sumac clone of approximately twenty acres by mowing three years in succession. We would mow once when the sumac was in full foliage and then a few weeks later when it started to re-sprout. Our goal was to reduce sumac cover in this part of the prairie, which was one of the more productive areas for our Karner blue butterfly restoration efforts.

Lupine for the caterpillars and nectaring forbs for the butterflies started making headway within the less vigorous sumac clone. But a certain two-acre section wasn't cooperating. We planned an ambitious effort to play hardball this year and nuke it after the second mowing, just as the plants had a crown of small resprouting leaflets. We would spot-spray each and every single resprout with 4% Garlon 4/water. It was going to be a fine opportunity to have a work party reunion with our eager chapter members who have helped us before with big projects.

And then COVID-19 came. We decided to wait until next year. There was absolutely no way David and I alone could spray each and every plant.

But when TPE announced organizational COVID-19 guidelines for work parties, we decided to give it a go. At the time, the guidelines allowed no more than ten people and required social distancing and contact tracing. So we explained our plan in a chapter email: we'd create eight 10-foot-wide lanes demarcated with twine the whole length of the field. (That's 6,300 feet of twine!) People could keep track of what they'd sprayed right up to their lines on either side, and not wander into someone else's lane. We'd stagger starts to keep everyone 14 feet apart at a minimum. We'd have a work party boss who would make sure everyone was keeping apart and that all sprayers worked and were refilled. David loves to be boss, so he was Boss.

We set to work with a tentative event date of Sept. 1. Even though we didn't know how many folks could help out, we still had to order 10 Solo sprayers with extendable wands (which were back-ordered because of high demand for sprayers), the triclopyr, the adjuvant, the red dye, and the twine for lanes. And we needed resprouts. No resprouts, no party. By Aug. 23, we had five volunteers, the Solo sprayers, the



*The intrepid Ray Goehring staying between the lines.  
(Photo by Shelley Hamel)*

herbicide, and all eight lanes laid out — but the resprouts were looking iffy after a period of drought.

Then it rained, and resprouts came (see photo). But the forecast for Sept. 1 didn't look great. On Aug. 29, we saw that the weather for the next day was going to be perfect. An urgent email went out to the five volunteers. Could they drop everything and come on short notice? Two saw the email in time, and they showed up the next morning dressed to kill... sumac.

A good time was had by all, and all got to keep their Solo sprayers! We finished six lanes during the work party and the other two later that day. Next spring, we'll see how it worked: is the sumac we treated really, really dead or not? Because that's how it goes in prairie restoration, COVID or no COVID.



*Typical sumac resprout. (Photo by David Hamel)*



*Steve Bohachek and the Boss. (Photo by Shelley Hamel)*

# Attack Agastache!

By Jean Weedman, Kettle Moraine Chapter of Wild Ones

In late July, I found out that my *Agastache foeniculum* — sometimes called lavender, blue, or anise hyssop — was actually Korean mint or Korean anise hyssop, *A. rugosa*, and not the Wisconsin native. Korean mint is a look-alike that is used by herbalists.

Though both plants draw in bees and some butterflies, the look-alike is an aggressive reseeder. I've seen this happen in the gardens near my house. The species bullies smaller plants and claims the territory for its offspring. Luckily, I did not plant this in my prairies!

Korean mint looks like native hyssop, and pollinators love it. So what's the problem? "We have tons of ecologically invasive species that pollinators nonetheless like," explained Dan Carter, Landowner Services Coordinator for TPE. But, he warns, "Korean anise hyssop hybridizes with native anise hyssop, so Korean anise hyssop's presence on the landscape actually threatens the continued existence of the native species just as oriental bittersweet threatens American bittersweet and white mulberry threatens red mulberry."

Apparently, this problem has existed for some time in the landscape and nursery growers' industry. "It appears that the confusion between *A. foeniculum* and *A. rugosa* is not an isolated one and is throughout the nursery trade," Prairie Nursery's Neil Diboll said. "We became aware of this issue in 2018." Diboll credits the "Three Problem Species" webpage listed below with helping to raise awareness.

Prairie Moon Nursery stopped their sales around 2017, according to its president and part-owner Bill Carter. "All of the native plant and seed producers that I know of in the Upper Midwest are now fully aware of the past problem," he added. Agrecol has also indicated that they now have a correct local seed source for their *Agastache foeniculum*.

Dan Carter expressed that once Korean mint becomes established, it's a constant battle to pull the species and its hybrids. Some ecologists have stopped recommending that the native species be bought for planting, lest the purchased plants turn out to be non-native or hybrids.

It seems that the mistake has been corrected within the native plant nursery business. It's great that the problem is



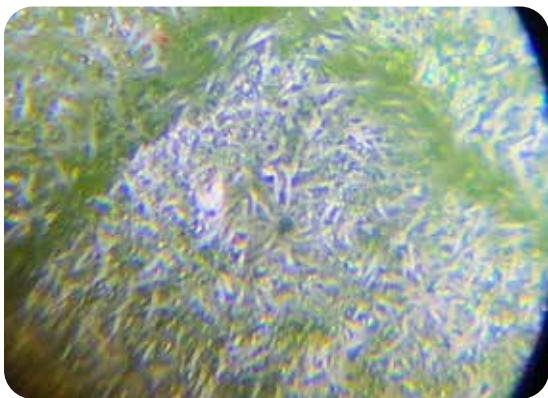
The two plants look very similar at first glance! The native species is on the right. (Photo by Jean Weedman)

now known. Still, Bill Carter explains that "exact species identification is not of great importance to some major generalist plant producers." This look-alike has to go!

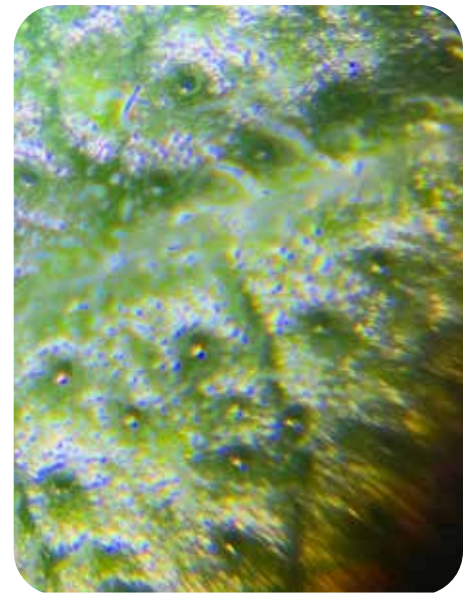
Back in July, I just couldn't believe my plants were the wrong species. But even now, as I hunt around the Internet, I'm finding pictures of Korean mint being incorrectly labeled as the native plant. Many reputable sites are still misidentifying the species. The following site presents good information; it convinced me after I got a microscope to see the back of the leaves clearly.

[https://bigriverbigwoods.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ThreeProblemSpecies\\_v3.pdf](https://bigriverbigwoods.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ThreeProblemSpecies_v3.pdf)

Be your own botanist and check your *Agastache* plants. You care enough to plant natives, so you'll want to know if you have an aggressive look-alike hiding in your plantings. Dan Carter concluded, "I think eradicating it would be the prudent and responsible thing to do." Thanks, Dan!



Under magnification, the native *Agastache foeniculum* has lots of small hairs on the back of the leaf, making it appear whiter.



The non-native *Agastache rugosa* has fewer hairs and has small indentations (areoles).



# Free Prairie Curriculum Ready for Use

By Grace Vosen

How do children learn to care for the land? Often, it's time spent outside with a family member that first makes them curious about nature. But teachers also have the power to spark curiosity. Walter Mirk of TPE's Glacial Prairie Chapter has created a resource to bring the prairie into the classroom.

Walter's presentation contains 400 slides of information and photos. It covers topics within prairie ecology, from soil organisms to birds and from the Miocene to European settlement. While it was created for teachers in Wisconsin, the program can be tailored to any audience. The best part? It's available for free to schools, nonprofits, and public agencies.

Such a resource is a tangible way to combat what author Richard Louv has called "nature deficit disorder". Walter's project was inspired by the students at Mayville Middle School in southeastern Wisconsin. A retired licensed clinical social worker, Walter has volunteered at MMS since 2015. He started by giving presentations about prairie in the school's fifth-grade classes. Year after year, the kids were attentive and asked thoughtful questions, leading Walter to describe them as "the toughest audience I ever had."

Walter and his wife Alice also helped to nurse the school's 3/4-acre prairie planting back to health. They worked with a Fish & Wildlife Service biologist stationed at nearby Horicon Marsh to obtain prairie plants, then spent a whole day planting the seedlings alongside 89 fifth-graders. Although the work was hard, Walter remembers, the kids were "outstanding" and had a keen interest in nature. Their excitement spurred him to build a prairie curriculum.

The core of his presentation was a PowerPoint created by fellow TPE member Rob Baller. Walter says he kept finding more resources to add until the slides practically wrote themselves. He used the opportunity to learn more about topics that interested him, such as the arthropod life of the prairie. "And the more I read," he says, "the more I became excited about what I was learning and thought of the inquisitive and enthusiastic fifth grade learners at MMS."



*A sampling of slides in Walter Mirk's prairie curriculum.  
(Photo by Grace Vosen)*

He's also learning from experts who review the project. As he puts finishing touches on the Wisconsin program, Walter is working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to create a presentation for that state. This will be challenging, he explains, because the DNR's extensive ecological data will need to be translated for an audience of beginners. Not to be deterred, Walter is moving ahead on the project and also plans to write curricula for Illinois and Iowa.

Walter has copyrighted his work, which means that users can't change slide content or profit from the resource. However, teachers are free to remove slides to suit their classes. It's not just for children, either; Walter envisions the chapters of TPE using this curriculum for outreach events. **To get a copy of the PowerPoint**, email Walter at [wamcp70@icloud.com](mailto:wamcp70@icloud.com).

Walter is also looking for TPE photographers to feature in the slides. If you have a collection of prairie-related photos, first email the above address for a list of needed images. Submit your photos by December 31.



*Mayville Middle School students water their prairie and themselves. (Photo by Walter Mirk)*



# A Tale of Two Goats

By Jon Rigden

The two goats were nervous, aware of being slowly hemmed in by the tall sea of green marching assiduously in from all sides. Named Zoerb and Lookout, the goats had formerly roamed free, groomed and kept healthy by friendly fire, wandering ungulates, and a few passing shepherds. But of late, they were alone and vulnerable. Fire and hooves were absent, and shepherds had gone missing — giving the sea of brush the opportunity to methodically squeeze the goats from all directions. And so it went until one day when the goats had the good fortune of being adopted by a new shepherd called Friends of the Blufflands. With some nurturing care, assisted by TPE, the goats have begun to recover and thrive!

Goat prairies, that is. Yes, goat or bluff prairies are disappearing fast in the Driftless Area as an army of trees and brush invades. And as the prairie goes, so go the plants that are restricted to its habitat and the invertebrates that call it home. Friends of the Blufflands is a nonprofit in the La Crosse area that is trying to save two of those prairies. In 2019, management plans were formulated for the “goats” and work began. And a lot of work it has been!

The first objective was to deal with two clonal species, sumac and aspen, using the double-cut method to avoid the use of herbicide as much as possible. We did this on July 1 and August 1 for the last two years on Zoerb, and this year on Lookout. It has shown great success. Next, we had to deal with black locust surrounding the prairies. Trees up to a foot in diameter that rimmed the prairie were girdled twice with chainsaws, then an herbicide mix of triclopyr and aminopyralid was used in the lower cut with excellent results. But, as anticipated, the clone sent up multiple new sprouts. We're

cutting and treating these as they appear.

Crown vetch was also present in small amounts, mostly on the edges of the prairies, and has been dealt with by pulling any flowering plants and judiciously using clopyralid.

The next task was to form a buffer around the prairie to keep the trees and brush, especially buckthorn, at bay and away from the pristine central prairie. Thanks to local volunteer groups, a first buffer has been accomplished and a second buffer is being formed with good success. Eventually, we hope that the first buffer will increase in diversity from the seed bank as well as from seeds that blow in and seeds we collect on the mature prairie.

The central intact prairie is treated with great care. We stay off of it as much as possible during the growing season to avoid trampling. We carefully select experienced groups to cut and treat trees and brush that have taken root. This work takes place mostly in the late fall and winter months. There is still lots of work to do, but we're making good progress. Eventually, fire will be used, but not until the clonal species are close to being eradicated because of concern that they will be stimulated by fire. A controlled burn on Zoerb is anticipated for the spring of 2021.

Slowly and with considerable effort, the goats are regaining health. Like any adoption, the work will never truly be done; ongoing management will be necessary far into the future. But the joy of watching the prairies mature and grow will be well worth the effort. Those interested in participating in their transformation can contact [jonathanrigden@me.com](mailto:jonathanrigden@me.com). And the next time you're driving up Bliss Road on Grandad Bluff, look to your left and give the two goats a salute by bellowing out a loud baaaaa!



The two “goats”. (Photo by Pat Wilson)



# Purple Milkweed Mystery

By Rob Baller

I observed my first purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*, endangered in Wis.) a decade ago. It was blooming at Fair Meadows State Natural Area (SNA) in Rock County, a site owned and admirably managed by TPE members Gary and Penny Shackelford. In their dry-mesic open oak woods, it was growing near plenty of common milkweed (*A. syriaca*). The two species look similar, and the literature says there is no way to distinguish them by vegetative characteristics alone. Flowers are required. Or are they?

At Fair Meadows, I seized the opportunity to examine this first purple milkweed for clues. I gently bent the stem as the trees parted and a shaft of light landed on the plant. A chorus of angels sang, and I observed extremely fine, silver-white hairs aligned in rows lengthwise down the stem. Seconds later, the light faded and the hairs went away.

I have surveyed innumerable common milkweed plants ever since, and I find they reliably distribute their tiny white hairs more or less evenly about the stem (creating an almost imperceptible fuzz).

This summer, I finally had the opportunity to check one more purple milkweed. It was at Pleasant Valley Conservancy



Purple milkweed at Pleasant Valley Conservancy. (Photo by Rob Baller)

SNA in Iowa County, Wis., owned and admirably managed by TPE members Tom and Kathie Brock. I now bravely announce to the world that purple milkweed number two also had rank-and-file hair lines on the stem. However, Kathie said she has looked others over in the past at my suggestion. She did not find the trait consistent. Observers, please stare at your purple milkweeds, and let me know what you find by emailing [robertballer@outlook.com](mailto:robertballer@outlook.com).



Stem of common milkweed, showing a consistent fuzz.  
(Photo by Rob Baller)



Stem of purple milkweed, showing the rows of hairs.  
(Photo by Rob Baller)



# Book Review – On Trails

By Chuck Wemstrom

From beginning to end, there's a lot in "On Trails: An Exploration" by Robert Moor that members of TPE will find fascinating. It's so rich, so wonderful, so overflowing with fascinating ideas and remarkable people that I have to take my time and then go back and reread. It will be a long time before I can say I finished this book.

Moor's six chapters are based on the idea that trails connect and we would be lost without them. But trails don't just connect us to places we want to go; they also connect us to each other and to the land. And they can be a metaphor for the paths we follow in life. Although they may constrict our freedom, trails guide and support us. They're indispensable.

Moor talks about ancient trails, ant trails (fascinating), and the trails made by Native Americans, which Europeans later used to explore North America. The most interesting chapter to me is the one on the Appalachian Trail. Moor gives a brief history of the trail: the idea behind it, how it was actually built and funded, and how it is maintained primarily by volunteers even today.

The Appalachian Trail, as we all know, is a great success. What I didn't know is that it continues into Canada and ends in Newfoundland. The goal is to continue to Scotland and then to Morocco. The "AT" can inspire us to dream big.

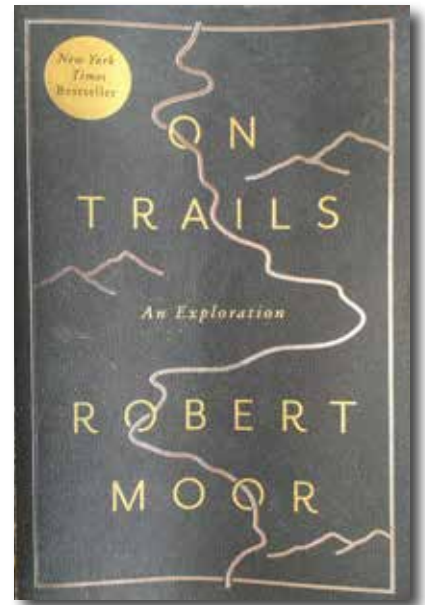
The book is also Moor's story of his personal five-month hike from Georgia to Maine. Moor writes about the people he met on the trail, including a 60-plus-year-old Cherokee man who almost gave up but finished the hike after his friends rallied to his aid. (Something about giving him peanut butter.)

The 35-page epilogue is outstanding. As in much of the book, Moor tells the story of a perpetual hiker, the Nimblewill Nomad AKA M.J. Eberhart. Eberhart has spent years hiking tens of thousands of miles. Moor uses Eberhart's story to explore all the ideas that were generated when the two hikers met.

When Moor isn't out hiking, he's learning via the internet. He explores subjects from Vachel Lindsay to the Peace Pilgrim to the environmentalist William Cronon, who wrote a significant essay on the meaning of wilderness. He quotes Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the ninth-century Chinese poet Hanshan, as well as the 21st-century American poet Gary Snyder. Snyder said, "A person with a clear heart and open mind can experience the wilderness anywhere on earth."

Finally, Moor explores "wisdom", a word that he says modern philosophers consider outdated and obsolete. Moor, I think, successfully redeems the concept.

He contends that if we pay attention as we journey on our path in life, we will gain wisdom along with age and experience. We will learn how to live with ourselves and with our fellow humans, rediscovering our natural place in the world.



Cover of "On Trails".



On the trail: a group of Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation birders hike at the Mississippi River Palisades. (Photo by Chuck Wemstrom)

# Prairie Promoter Remembered – Kim Karow

By Alice Mirk

It is with sadness that we in the Glacial Prairie Chapter say goodbye to our friend Kim Karow.

On the morning of August 8, Dale Karow called to inform me that his beloved wife of nearly 35 years peacefully passed away during the night.

My husband and I were privileged to know Kim as a very dear friend. But she also was an outstanding teacher, an incredible artist, and an amazing botanist. She had a special passion for wet and wet-mesic prairies, sedge meadows, and especially for sedges — the word even appeared on her car's license plates. Kim was the definition of an “enthusiast” in her love of family and friends and in her dedication to her career and interests. She also was possessed of a magnanimous nature. It should come as no surprise that she was loved and respected by many, including people who lived some distance from her home in rural Fort Atkinson, Wis.

Kim and Dale lived on 60 acres of land they purchased in 1987, the year TPE was formed! The land is part of Allen Creek State Natural Area (SNA), and their part of it is the most precious jewel in the crown of this tract.

Their restoration of a 12-acre remnant prairie began with a call to the Department of Natural Resources when Kim and Dale saw a Blanding's turtle on the road that fronts their land. Darcy Kind of the DNR subsequently visited and recognized a piece of original prairie.

Kim, always a person to do things correctly, took a field course in botany at UW-Stevens Point. She followed up with a field course in identifying sedges at Chiwaukee Prairie SNA and frequently consulted the UW-Madison Herbarium, always referring to Ted Cochrane with genuine reverence. Kim ultimately became known as the “Queen of Sedges.” All of her acquired knowledge was put to good use: Kim and Dale's restoration of the remnant began in 2005 and the results are stunning. It is important to note that Dale fully shared Kim's passion, vision, and lots of hard work reconstructing additional acres of prairie.



*The Queen of Sedges reviews her subjects!*  
(Photo by Alice Mirk)

Two of the many memorable things about Kim were her undaunted enthusiasm and her smile. One of the best times we had was when a small group of us made a “Grand Tour” of some of the prairies along the Lower Wisconsin River in August 2015. Kim was a highly enjoyable companion on these hikes that occurred

## Donations to TPE in Kim's Memory

Willis Brown  
Darice and David Brumm  
Carol Clavey  
Jason Daley  
Yvonne Eckstein  
Thomas Ganfield  
Ardys and Eric Hathaway  
Lars Higdon  
Elvira Kau  
Karra Killoy  
Bruce and Elsa Meyer  
Alice and Walter Mirk

Don and Kathy Nelson  
Justin Nooker  
Pamela Platt  
From the Baltimore County Office of Information  
Penny & Gary Shackelford  
Mary Wallace  
Ann Wilmot  
Mary Galvin Wilson  
Amanda Zdale  
From her Janesville Art Educator friends: Suzanne,  
Amanda, Jo, Maryanne, Gee Gee, Mindy, Sue,  
Karen, Jim, Cindy, and Mandy



over the course of 2 days, and she was always in a teaching mode in which her enthusiasm became contagious. (Speaking of enthusiasm, Dale made most of the hikes on crutches!) On the second and last day of the hikes, in the tall and dense vegetation of a prairie, Kim's unerring eye spotted a tiny four-inch plant that she quickly identified as *Scutellaria parvula* var. *parvula*, a state endangered species.

Kim also shared her expertise in sedges with interns at Faville Prairie SNA for eight-plus years. She was always willing to share her knowledge with all who asked.

A visit to the Karow prairie was never complete without a gathering of prairie enthusiasts under the copse of tall, open-grown oak trees near the house. There, the talk would be rich with future plans and reminiscences of the work accomplished to date. Among the people who gathered there, Kim will be forever remembered as the gracious Queen of Sedges with a heart as big as the prairie.



L to R: Michelle Bonness, Shane Morris, Dale Karow, Walter Mirk, and Kim Karow.  
(Photo by Alice Mirk)

## Botanists Share Memories of Kim

Although plants and animals are at the heart of our organization, people play an indispensable part. Among them are the vital workhorses who engage directly with nature and are profoundly concerned for the preservation of native habitats. Kim became one of these. An artist and teacher who was captivated by native plants, she gravitated to botany by learning to identify plants at home. She then joined TPE after realizing that the wet conditions on parts of their land near the Allen Creek Wetlands were like those of some natural landscape regimes. Embracing life and the promise of happiness at a job well done, she and her husband Dale indulged her interests by successfully restoring their own lowland prairie.

Kim was gracious when hosting visitors and loved to see them enthuse over the special species on the Karows' glorious property (sedges were among her own plant addictions). Kim's death is a sad loss for our community and to all who knew her, for she was not only a naturalist, educator, and conservationist but also a kind soul.

Ted Cochrane

I will remember Kim as a mentor and someone whose joy, enthusiasm, love of nature, and devoted stewardship of her own fabulous prairie remnant lit up her personality and spread to those around her. She was an inspiration to her fellow prairie enthusiasts. Kim was instrumental in bringing people together, building coalitions that achieved the recognition and protection of exceptional natural areas. Her influence spread out in ripples from the Allen Creek Watershed to the conservation community across Wisconsin. She delighted in the wonders of the wild spaces and remnant landscapes she worked so hard to protect. Now it's up to us to carry on her work.

Josh Sulman

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# New State Moth Reported at Hugh Iltis Prairie

By Shelley Hamel

**A**t the TPE Annual Banquet hosted by our Prairie Sands Chapter in 2015, one of the keynote addresses was a talk on moths by Marcie O'Connor. I was inspired by Marcie's talk to learn more about local moths. I used her website to learn how to set up a white sheet, lit by UV lights, that would attract them and give me a chance to identify them. I've been doing it ever since, learning while I go — which is a struggle because everything about moths is brand-new to me, including Latin names.

Nevertheless, in late August I got a nice email from Les Ferge, a leading authority on the moths of Wisconsin. Ferge keeps a list of all Wisconsin moths sorted by county. Sometimes we find a moth that hasn't been reported in Marquette County, and Les adds it to his master list. In his email that day, Les informed me that we had a prairie-specific moth that hadn't been reported anywhere in the state.

Now that we've reported it, here's some info about the prairie bird-dropping moth from BugGuide. The moth is "considered a good indicator species for a healthy prairie". In Ohio, the moth is listed as a "species of concern."

Moral of the story: there's hope for old cornfields (this was a cornfield in 1980) repopulated by seeds in the soil seed bank, particularly legumes, and by seeds we collected on the property. Plant it and they will come! Plus, it's a good feeling to be a tiny part of citizen science.



*Prairie bird-dropping moth: an apt name. (Photo by Shelley Hamel)*

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## Horsing Around at Mounds View Grasslands

Read more about this exciting project in a blog post on TPE's website.



*The Empire-Sauk Chapter is advancing savanna restoration at Mounds View through a timber harvest. Adaptive Restoration conducted the harvest with help from draft horses Rosebud and Duchess, shown here. (Photo by Eric Preston)*



# Mark your calendar now for the 2021 TPE Online Conference “Inspired by Fire”

**February 24 – 27, 2021**



We have all experienced extraordinary changes and challenges in the past year – truly a “trial by fire”. Yet as we know, fire is the key to the amazing diversity and resilience of prairies and savannas.

In response to the pandemic, our 2021 TPE Conference will be held online. This format brings a unique opportunity for everyone across TPE to participate. We will learn from our expert researchers, dedicated practitioners, and gifted artists. We’ll also meet current and future organization leaders. Join us as we celebrate our achievements together and look forward to what’s coming next.

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## Program Session Themes

- Prairie ecology for all experience levels
- Science and research
- Restoration practice for landowners and volunteers
- Leading TPE into the future
- Artists’ perspectives

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## Opening Keynote Speaker – Chris Helzer

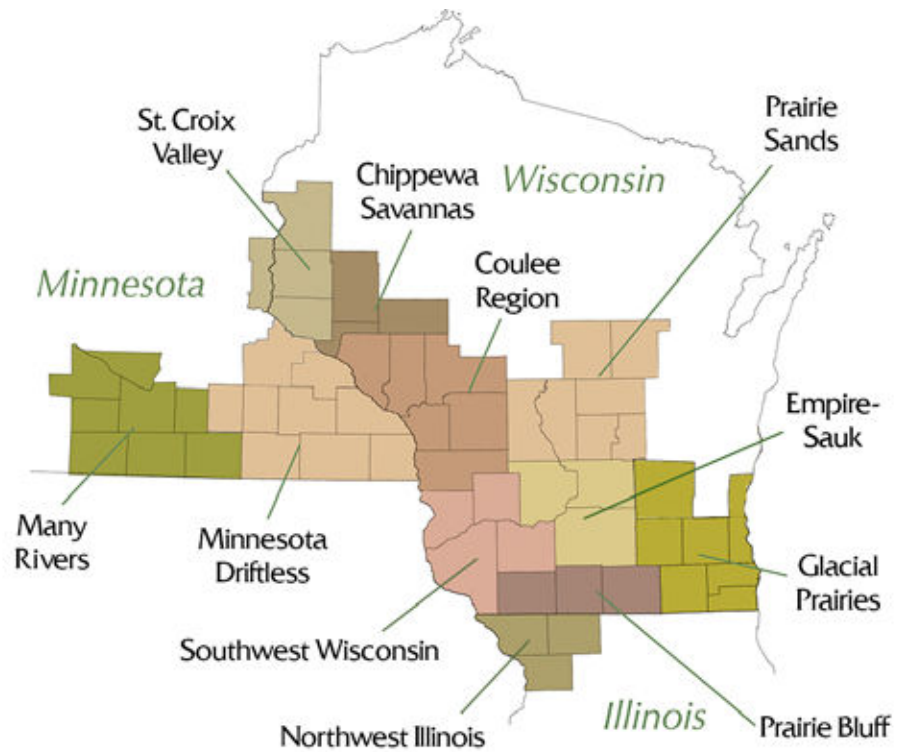
Chris Helzer is The Nature Conservancy’s Director of Science in Nebraska, where he evaluates and captures lessons from the Conservancy’s land management and restoration work and shares those lessons with other land managers. He also works to raise awareness about the value of prairies and prairie conservation through photography, writing, and presentations. He is the author of two books published by the University of Iowa Press – “The Ecology and Management of Prairies in the Central United States” and “Hidden Prairie: Photographing Life in One Square Meter”.



The Conference Committee is busy working to finalize the program and arrangements. If you have ideas or would like to help, please contact Diane Hills, Outreach & Development Coordinator ([outreach@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:outreach@theprairieenthusiasts.org)). To see more detailed information and register for the conference, visit:

[theprairieenthusiasts.org/conference](https://theprairieenthusiasts.org/conference)

# Chapter Updates



## Chippewa Savannas

Caroljean Coventree

This summer, the Alliance of Dunn County Conservation and Sports Clubs received a \$20,000 Wildlife Habitat Incentive (WHIP) grant for restoration work at its Dobbs Landing site. Thanks to Kathy Stahl for her work on getting this grant. Our chapter is one of sixteen members of the Alliance, and we do the bulk of the land management on this 180-acre recreation area. We continue to focus our efforts on tree and shrub removal, firebreak installation, and reseeding. Volunteers also pulled and sprayed spotted knapweed from the oxbow region this summer and fall — special thanks to Eleanor Wolfe and Joan Hoy for their help. We hope to conduct a burn in a woody area this spring with help from our contractor.

We've had trouble with vandalism at Dobbs and would be interested in hearing how other chapters have dealt with site vandalism.

Pam Maher has taken charge at Seymour Prairie with the help of Joe Maurer. Pam has designed signage to direct folks away from sensitive areas of the property and is ordering seeds for a spring planting.

This winter, we plan to hold some educational Zoom events, including one on the history of Dobbs Landing and our stewardship there. Join our Facebook group for more information (search for "Chippewa Savannas Prairie Enthusiasts"). You can also find notices and information about work parties at Dobbs and Seymour in this group or on our Facebook page.

Many thanks to Matt Wysocki for continuing to manage our eblasts and communications. We are also blessed with wonderful board members and volunteers. Thanks to everyone. Do come and take a walk this season at Dobbs or Seymour!

For more information about our work, contact Caroljean at theprairieenthusiasts.csc@gmail.com or 715-698-2609.



UW-Stout student Ramiah Willier collects prairie dropseed with Brandon Burch at Dobbs Landing. Ramiah's botany professor, Keith Gilland, has been working with students at Dobbs. (Photo by Caroljean Coventree)



John Thomas and Kathy Ruggles prepare to collect seeds at Dobbs Landing. (Photo by Caroljean Coventree)



# Coulee Region

## Field Trips in the Coulee Region

Justin Nooker

I hope everyone in TPE is staying happy and healthy this year. To round out the summer, the Coulee Region Chapter tried to break the stagnancy of staying at home by hosting a few field trips — following pertinent COVID rules, of course!

At the beginning of fall, members met at the La Crosse River Trail in Rockland, Wis. to explore a diverse remnant prairie that was small but long. One of my favorite aspects of this natural area is the diversity retained across classifications, from mesic to dry and woodland to prairie. Guests on this field trip enjoyed attempting aster identification and witnessed some prairie gentian, bottle gentian, and prairie flameflower all while biking. Okay, not while biking: we stopped to take in the plants and bumblebees and to talk shop. We also saw one of the season's last snowy campion flowers.

After this bike ride, Jim Rogala hosted an evening field trip at his Rogala Prairies. This was an awesome opportunity for us to learn about management practices that Jim has undertaken on his property. The highlight of this trip (for me) was the sighting of a federally endangered rusty-patched bumblebee, which was trying to stay warm after the rain, on Jim's property for the first time. For other ambitious guests, the highlight may have been scratching at the soil looking for bluff prairie snails. After reaching the summit of the bluff prairie, the group was able to see a largely undeveloped view of unglaciated coulees and ridges.

Another chance for a great view was had at Eagle Rock Savanna, which overlooks the Kickapoo River. Silky aster, aromatic aster, and various goldenrods were in full display by this time. Owners Ben Bonkamp and Kerstyn Perrett purchased the property about a year ago and have been ambitiously restoring the property full speed ahead! Ben and Kerstyn's efforts have already revealed a handful of conservative species. On this field trip, some attendees had their eyes peeled for the northern flower moth (NFM). Researchers are looking for more information on the NFM, which



Pausing for plant ID during the LaCrosse River trail bike field trip. (Photo by Jim Rogala)



Social distancing, bluff prairie style. (Photo by Jim Rogala)

has only been documented on five bluff prairies in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, the NFM never showed, but the search continues. Eagle Rock — which is aptly named, as visitors can attest to — has once again become a sanctuary for many species.

## Seed Collecting in the Coulee Region

Jim Rogala

Our chapter has been collecting seed at the Holland Sand Prairie near Holmen, Wis. for many years now. We interseed these annual collections into degraded areas of the 61-acre property. We've been fortunate to have the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (conservation easement holder for the property) arrange student and non-student volunteer groups to aid in our efforts. This year was no exception.

Our members began helping the DNR collect prairie seed on State Natural Areas (SNAs) last year. The need for locally sourced seed requires a lot of seed collection from these high-quality remnants for nearby plantings. Several members joined the SNA crew in September to collect grass seed for the newly exposed east-facing slope at Hogback Prairie SNA.

We've started another seed collection effort at Hixon Forest in La Crosse. Jon Rigden, the site steward for Zoerb Prairie, has been aggressively leading the clearing of buffer areas around the existing open remnant (see Jon's article elsewhere in this issue). Now that we have most of the invasive species under control, we're seeding those areas with seed collected from the site. We'll continue to do this for many years.

If you want to help with or learn more about these projects, contact Jim Rogala ([jrogala58@gmail.com](mailto:jrogala58@gmail.com)).



Some intrepid Coulee Region seed collectors. (Photo by Justin Nooker)

## Empire-Sauk

### Thanks to the Intern Crew!

Doug Steege

This summer marks the seventh year that our chapter has employed a summer intern crew to support important restoration activities. The interns work on chapter-owned properties as well as two easement properties owned by TPE members who help pay for the crew. They take on a full-time, 12-week commitment to physical work made even more challenging this summer by the need for social distancing. As a result of their labor, our prairies are kept healthy and a variety of invasive species kept under control.

Target species this year included garlic mustard, wild parsnip, white and yellow sweet-clover, spotted knapweed, Japanese hedge-parsley, reed canary grass, and cattails. The crew is also involved in seed collection, which helps reestablish diverse prairie communities in lower-quality management units.

The 2020 intern crew members were Luke DeBiasio (UW-Madison, majoring in Conservation Biology); Hugh Gabriel (Macalester College, majoring in Environmental Studies); Brittany Hahn (UW-Madison, majoring in Biology and Environmental Studies); Allison Sniff (UW-Madison, majoring in Wildlife Ecology); and Joseph Sokol (UW-Madison, majoring in Conservation Biology). Calla Olson (UW-Madison, Ph.D. candidate in the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies) joined us as the crew leader.

Our sites have benefited greatly from the hard work of this and previous intern crews. Seven years ago, one of the ridgetop remnant prairies at West Dane Conservancy had a severe spotted knapweed infestation. Knapweed was the dominant species in some areas. In the years since, the intern crews have virtually eliminated the knapweed and thus preserved the native grass and forb species there. At another site, the crew discovered a large population of fringed orchids while searching for Japanese hedge-parsley.

We want to thank the crew members for coming out five days a week to learn and work on the prairie. Best of luck to you as you pursue your educational and vocational goals!



L to R: Crew members Brittany Hahn, Allison Sniff, Andy Sleger (land manager for TPE), Joe Sokol, Hugh Gabriel, and Luke DeBiasio. Calla Olson not pictured. (Photo by Eric Grycan)

## Glacial Prairie

Alice Mirk

There's an ancient curse that goes something like, "may you live in interesting times." That about sums up the activities, or lack thereof, of the Glacial Prairie Chapter in 2020.

We had scheduled a spring burn at UW-Milwaukee's Waukesha field station and planned on our usual late-winter-early-spring activities. We managed to squeeze in several work parties in January and February before the lockdown. A few of us still worked on Adelman-Schwartz Preserve after that, staying in our family "pods".

During the lockdown, we managed to get an agreement signed and sealed with UW-Milwaukee for chapter members to work on Benedict Prairie in Kenosha County. Chapter member Walter Mirk finished the Wisconsin curriculum on prairies and oak savannas. Our chapter members kept in touch with one another via email, phone, and Zoom.

Now we're getting back to "normal", scheduling work parties in small geographic areas with small communities of member-volunteers. We have a group for Benedict Prairie, the Waukesha County State Natural Areas, and private protected land. We're also working on developing a community for Jefferson County to work on Shining Oaks Preserve as well as a Walworth County community for sites such as Adam Birding Conservancy, Adelman & Schwartz Preserve, and perhaps more. During these work days, we keep the proper distance apart and wear masks where social distancing is not possible (in accordance with TPE policies).

We held our annual chapter meeting outdoors at Willowbrook Conservancy with a catered picnic. It was followed by a tour of the wonderful oak savanna restoration that Michelle Bonness and Shane Morris have been working on tirelessly. What used to be a buckthorn desert is now a vibrant and diverse oak savanna.

We plan on working two Saturdays a month on these sites, plus some midweek work parties for those of us who are retired. We hope you'll join us for these fun mornings! We usually work from nine until noon, and of course you're free to come and go within that time frame! For the latest schedule of events, email me at [aimirk68@icloud.com](mailto:aimirk68@icloud.com).



Alex Paral, Michelle Bonness, and "Prairie Bob" Ahrenhoerster look over the oak savanna restored by Bob and Michelle. (Photo by Tom Zagar)



# Minnesota Driftless

Stephen Winter

Like so many of our fellow TPE chapters, the Minnesota Driftless Chapter found its activities somewhat curtailed over the spring and summer because of COVID-19. But although a field trip in the Rochester area had to be cancelled, we did get to host two other trips (with limited group sizes). On one of these trips, a herpetologist led participants in discovering several reptiles that are characteristic of bluff prairies. This includes timber rattlesnakes! The other trip was an exploration of the Rushford Sand Barrens.

COVID-19 also affected our chapter's prescribed burns in the spring. Normally, we advertise our burns widely and anyone who's interested is invited to observe (or assist if they have the proper training or experience). This year, we kept crew sizes to a minimum. In spite of this, the important work still got done and done safely. The smaller crews were composed of people with a great amount of experience. A video of one of our burns can be found at the link below.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was the very productive work day at Prairie Crossing Park in Rochester on September 12. Chapter members are assisting the City of Rochester in restoring oak savanna at the park. This work day was devoted to piling buckthorn and other brush that members of Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa had



*Gabe Erickson takes part in a limited-crew prescribed burn on a private property. (Photo by Stephen Winter)*

cut and treated. Angela Smith and Jeff Feece wrote an article about this project for TPE's blog in October. Our chapter plans to keep assisting with this project, and anyone who is interested in helping can contact Angela at [smithang1@gmail.com](mailto:smithang1@gmail.com).

Link to burn video: <https://www.facebook.com/stephen.winter.395/videos/10159445357873709>



*Volunteers pose after the workday at Prairie Crossing Park. (Photo by Stephen Winter)*



# Northwest Illinois

Leanne Martin

To stay up-to-date on NIPE's activities throughout the year, visit our chapter webpage: [theprairieenthusiasts.org/northwest\\_illinois](http://theprairieenthusiasts.org/northwest_illinois)

## Hanley Savanna Survey

During the 2018 and 2019 field seasons, I conducted field surveys of plant species biodiversity at Hanley Savanna. Hanley has been under restoration management since 2003 and comprises restored prairie and savanna habitats as well as some woodlands. My goal was to understand how successful the restoration seedings were, as well as how diverse all habitat types were.

Overall, my surveys revealed that Hanley Savanna is incredibly diverse. I positively identified nearly 400 species during the two-year survey period. Of these, 85% were native and 15% were non-native. I observed just over 300 species in the prairie restoration units, and approximately 220 species in the savannas and woodlands. The species diversity of the prairie restorations rivaled that of other tallgrass prairie remnants from Texas to Minnesota that I sampled for previous research. This indicates that the restorations at Hanley Savanna are providing high levels of biodiversity comparable to prairie remnants.

Up to 67% (range 15-67% across all survey units) of species that were seeded were observed in the field, but large percentages of species (34-60% for prairie restorations; 65-98% for savannas and woodlands) were also observed in the field that were never seeded into the restorations. The large percentages of species that were seeded and observed indicate that restoration as conducted by NIPE is an important tool for increasing diversity in highly degraded and low-diversity sites. For example, spe-



*Leanne takes a selfie on the prairie.*



*West Savanna with hairy mountain mint and yellow and purple coneflowers.  
(Photo by John Arndt and Barb Wiesen)*

cies such as goat's-rue, wild lupine, and Carolina puccoon are thriving in formerly degraded areas that would never house populations unless seeding took place.

However, the large percentages of species that were observed but not seeded (including species such as nodding pogonia or three-birds orchid and hairy mountain mint) indicate that the conservation and management of a diversity of high-quality habitat types, even without adding seed, could be a very important tool for increasing biodiversity — and thus the overall conservation value and future restoration potential — of northwest Illinois.



## Prairie Sands

Ray Goehring

In spite of COVID, members of the Prairie Sands Chapter have been busy in their prairies. Several of our members have had site visits from Dan Carter, TPE's Landowner Services Coordinator. They have given impressive reviews of Dan's considerable knowledge and the helpful management plans he provided.

Shelley and David Hamel held a successful workday in August to control sumac encroachment using the new TPE COVID-19 guidelines (see article by Shelley elsewhere in this issue).

Fall also brought our chapter's annual prescription burn training classes. Jeb Barzen from Private Lands Conservation led two training sessions with partner Rob Nurre. Each session included both classroom and field components. Students received training in the ecology, behavior, and effects of fire in the upper Midwest. Both beginner and leader trainings were held. Because of social distancing concerns, Jeb and his co-instructors limited the number of students and held class outdoors. Thanks to chapter members Karen and Fred Wollenburg and Laurel and Alan Bennett for allowing parts of the burn school to be held on their Marquette County properties.

There will be no Annual Holiday Party and Seed Exchange this year, but we'll be putting together a 2021 Field Trip and Work Party calendar in January. If you'd like to give a tour of your favorite prairie or hold a work day, please contact Ray at raygoe@yahoo.com.



Prescribed burn training in the Central Sands. (Photo by Tom Lynn)

## Southwest Wisconsin

Jack Kussmaul

All of the social activities planned for the year, including educational programs and tours of private sites, have been put off for a year due to COVID-19. Work on our sites continues, however.

Walter Mirk continues to make the trek out from Watertown to improve and expand Double Oak Savanna. Progress is slower since he lost his co-worker, David Lowe, to firefighting duty in the west.

Gary Eldred and Gary Adams have changed their focus from Iris Drive to the Heather's Prairie portion of Borah Creek. With help from other volunteers, they are making major progress in getting invasives such as sumac and multiflora rose under control.

Linda Lynch continues to take responsibility for managing Sylvan Road.

Eldred Prairie was the benefit of a week-long gala work party in September (a gala work party is defined as one that features a portable toilet on-site.) Woody growth has been encroaching on this prairie for years and a major attack was warranted. We mowed the front slope twice this season and the back slope once. From September 13 through September 19, a crew worked every day but one spot-spraying the resprouts. The first day brought an unheard-of 12 volunteers, so we progressed more rapidly than expected.



Rachel Walsh at Eldred Prairie. (Photo by Jack Kussmaul)



Eldred Prairie “gala” work crew. (Photo by Steve Querin-Schultz)

In addition to hitting woody growth such as sumac, oak sprouts, blackberries, and honeysuckle, we also went after leafy spurge, parsnip, and crown vetch. A week after the completion of the first round, a group of four returned to hit everything we missed initially. Major thanks to the 15 volunteers who participated at one time or another during the week. You made a huge difference!

A big thank-you goes out to Mike Nee as well. Mike is a botanist who spent most of his career with the New York Botanical Garden doing field work with plants in Bolivia. Because of COVID restrictions, he’s no longer traveling and is instead studying the plants at Eldred Prairie. His inventory includes extensive details about each species. It will continue to grow as he revisits the property. On work parties, Mike is regularly interrupted by the rest of the group with questions about what we’re seeing. The chapter is fortunate to have Mike’s involvement.



The work crew moves out. (Photo by Jenny Allen)

## St. Croix Valley

Evanne Hunt

### Meet Our Chapter Intern

Our fall chapter intern, Abby Mueller, attends UW-River Falls. She started August 31 and will work through December 21.

Abby tells us she’s been busy: "Since interning with TPE, I’ve learned a lot about the day-to-day details of prairie restoration. I’ve been out in the field picking seed and learning about the different species of plants — desirable natives and undesirable invasive plants. I’ve also learned how to clean seed using the hammermill, fanning mill and manual methods... I’m looking forward to learning more! I’m especially hoping we’ll be able to go out and burn this fall."

### Seed Collecting

Thank you to all the volunteers who came out to collect prairie seed this summer and fall: Abby Holden, Abby Mueller, Adam Gage, Alex Bouthilet, Ann Gage, Brian Schils, Carainy, Colby, Doug Lassen, Eileen Juarez, Evanne Hunt, Gina Troka, Ginny Gaynor, Gladi Sippel, Harvey Halvorsen, James Beix, Jenna Hines, Jeremiah Walters, Jerry Peterson, John Arthur, John Sippel, Kari Pollard, Katharine Grant, Katie Niec, Kendall Chergrosky, Kolby Beehler, Mike Miller, Myron



Abby Mueller.



Mortell, Natasha Rayne, Nathan Grosse, Norma Rudesill, Paige Getting, Pamela Deerwood, Peter Rayne, Prescott Bergh, Quinn Huhnke, Rob McManus, Ruth Hilfiker, Sandy Taufener, Tim Halvorson, Tim Hanson, Tracy Larson, Valerie Kubal, and Wayne Huhnke.

We'll save the seed until 2022, when we'll hand-broadcast it onto the agricultural field at Alexander Oak Savanna. You'll get a chance to help with that process as well!

## Blueberry Hill Update

The chapter has submitted an application to the Minn. Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to enroll Blueberry Hill into the Highway Sponsorship Program. (This is different from Adopt-a-Highway, which is a trash cleanup program.) The Highway Sponsorship Program supports MnDOT's commitment to "maximizing the health of people, the environment, and our economy." Acceptance into this program would enable TPE to continue our 15-year run of managing the remnant prairie and the restoration at Blueberry Hill.

Highway Sponsorship Licenses are typically three to five years in duration, but may be up to 10 years. If they accept our application, MnDOT will install a sign along Highway 95 with the TPE name and logo. First, our application must be reviewed by several departments (vegetation management, prescribed fire management, ecologist, etc.). The process is expected to take three to four months.

In the meantime, the West Lakeland town board has written to the county supporting our attempt to protect the prairie. They asked the county to take ownership of the property from MnDOT. While it's not the permanent protection we want for the prairie remnant, the Highway Sponsorship License process gives us time to partner with county government.



*Volunteers collecting seed. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)*



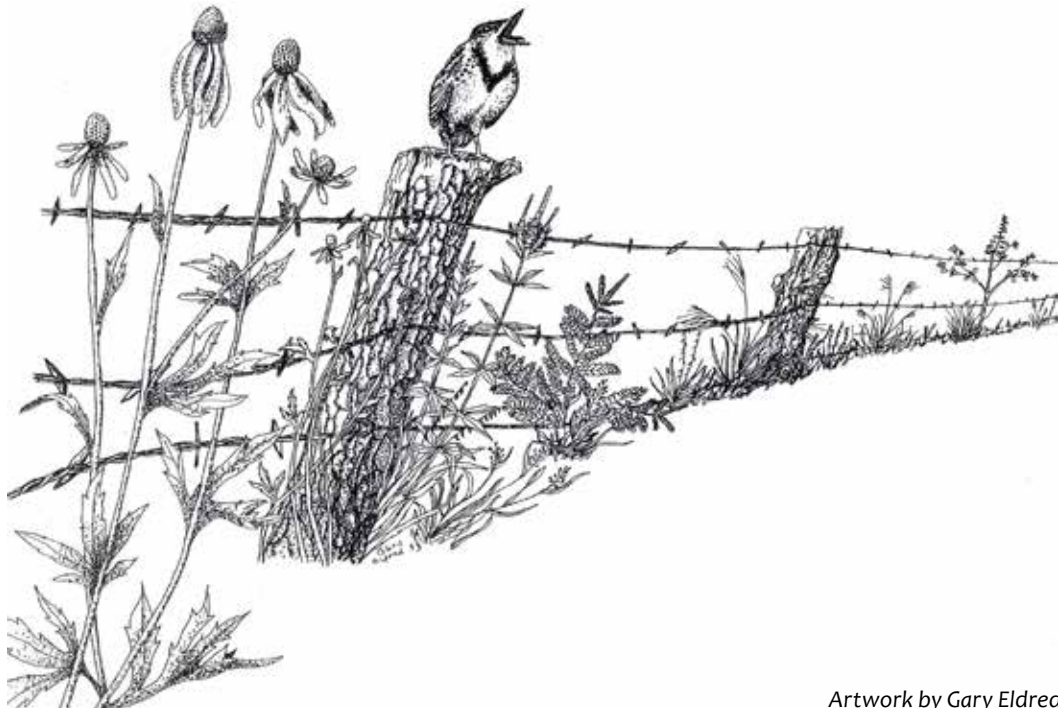
*The crew at Blueberry Hill in July. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)*

# Welcome New Members

June 22 - October 5

Greg and Molly Aleckson  
Brett and Evelyn Anderson  
Missy Anderson  
Nancy Anderson  
Nathaniel Bartlett and Lisa Woodson  
Karen Bednar  
Pastor Rita Capezzi and Jeff Lowry  
Jenny Carney and Cathy Halley  
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Mary and Chuck Edwards  
Colm Fitzmaurice  
Ann, Ryan, Ashley and Adam Gage  
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Charles Heidenreich  
Andrea Hoerr  
Sarah Hole & Eileen Mershart  
Ken Jonas  
Lilian Kelly  
Hank Kuehling and Jan O'Neill  
Bob and Sally Lambert  
Tracy and Scott Larson  
David Liboff  
Peter Matejcek and Family  
Sheila Maybanks  
Elizabeth McBride  
Kevin McKown and Nancy Fuller  
Crystal Cave; Eric McMaster  
Susan Maia McNamara  
Teresa Midthun

John Moriarty  
Abby Mueller  
Elaine Mustari  
Kathryn Nauth  
Doreen Olson  
Kelly Osborn  
Don Osmund  
Keri, Mark, Sam and Alice Otte  
Elisabeth Phillips  
Irene Piersma  
Marsha and Robert Rea  
Alison Reinhofer  
Mace and Stacy Roberts  
Gwendolyn Rouse  
Teresa Schueller  
Molly and Greg Silver  
Gladi and John Sippel  
Kevin Sparks  
Daniel Stapleton  
Megan Stelljes  
Ben Strand  
Kim Trameri  
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Charles Vannette  
Loren Wagner  
Jeremiah Walters  
John Watson  
Robyn Weis  
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Dan Winkler



Artwork by Gary Eldred



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We thank the following who donated to TPE between June 22 - October 5.  
These gifts are truly generous and appreciated.

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in memory of Al Slovik for all  
his work at Iris Drive  
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in honor of Jan Ketelle  
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