

# The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

Grassroots Conservation in Action

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The  
Prairie  
Enthusiasts



## Discovering Allen Creek Fen

By Kim Karow

**Editor's Note:** Kim Karow wrote this piece before she passed away in August 2020. The Prairie Enthusiasts, and the Glacial Prairie chapter, hope to honor Kim's life and legacy by sharing her work.

Allen Creek Fen is part the Allen Creek wetland complex located near Star School Road in the Town of Koshkonong just south of Fort Atkinson. It is an exceptional site for many reasons. More than 200 native plant species are cataloged here, some of them quite rare. Several species-rich plant communities are present, including: calcareous fen of three subtypes, wet-mesic prairie, wet prairie, southern sedge meadow, moist sand prairie, emergent aquatic and oak woodland. This remnant natural area has a diversity of soils that have never been touched by a plow. Springs, seeps and rivulets supply the wetlands with constant water flow as slight undulations of the surface elevation create drier areas. Corresponding soil changes are mirrored by the changes in plant communities.

However, when we moved here, this isn't how I would have described this piece of land to you. I would have said we have rented farm fields and a swamp that Dale, my husband, insisted on for hunting land. I never went out there. My tennis shoes would be soaked, muddy, and I'd be covered in mosquito bites. This place had no purpose other than hunting, but it was sort of nice to see the birds (none of which I could name except the cranes) and the deer. The pretty red dogwood was so attractive in the winter when we had snow. The wetlands were merely beyond the yard but not really on my radar.

In 2003, the DOT began the public engagement process of planning the Highway 12 bypass, and there it was on paper, a highway coming next to the north edge of the property. I was despondent to think I would be having all of that highway noise and development right next to us. I began thinking that if only they knew we had wildlife here, they wouldn't want to put the highway so near.



Kim in the tussocks on Allen Creek Fen.  
(Photo by Alice Mirk)

Continued on Page 4

## 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: Photo by Jerry Newman



## President's Message – What Good is a Prairie?

Scott Fulton, President

For the last several years, I have become more involved in the land protection element of The Prairie Enthusiasts' three part mission (Protection, Management & Education). For most of our members, protecting the precious prairie and savanna remnants that we work so hard to restore is viewed as a vitally important but rather obscure part of what we do as an organization. The details about how this is done can be difficult to understand, and the issues that arise can be very challenging indeed.

The issues start with a fundamental contradiction. At the heart of land protection is the complex, government-run system of land surveys, legal agreements, recorded deeds, and titles which began in the early nineteenth century to provide a continuous "chain of ownership" specifying rights to own parcels of land and a means to legally exchange those ownership rights with others for money. As a land trust, our land protection process utilizes this system to protect natural communities. The fundamental contradiction is that this whole system was employed initially to appropriate the land (largely through violence and deception) from the indigenous human communities who lived there for thousands of years without a concept of land ownership. The practices of indigenous stewardship (through fire and other means) and the natural communities that resulted from this are what we seek to restore. Yet our means for doing this in the modern world is to work the same legal and economic system that enabled widespread degradation of those natural communities in the first place.

Even if we simply accept this status quo as unfortunate history that we cannot change, other challenges abound. All conservation properties are protected through either "fee title" ownership or conservation easements (legal agreements granting The Prairie Enthusiasts or another land trust development and other rights while another party holds actual title to the land and the remaining rights). One requirement for protecting these rights legally is to monitor all our preserves (34 fee title properties and thirteen easements as of this writing) every year. This involves walking the whole site looking for encroachments and improper use, documenting with photos, and creating a detailed written report. The Prairie Enthusiasts organization is unusual in that our annual monitoring is done entirely by 23 dedicated volunteers from across the organization, for whom we are very grateful.

When we find problems (which are not uncommon – there are four ongoing cases at this time), we need to resolve them or risk losing the protection we have painstakingly put in place. Seemingly trivial issues (like a fence discovered on resurvey to be 5 feet over a property line) can become very difficult and complex to resolve, involving multi-party negotiations with The Prairie Enthusiasts, landowners, neighbors, municipalities, and government agencies, all mediated by expensive specialist attorneys.

Our accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance (for which we are starting up the renewal process) has proven to be an invaluable key to protection. Accreditation covers our complex procedures for considering and closing on new preserves, annual monitoring, issue resolution, proper documentation, and a full set of other policies and processes to ensure that we have the financial and administrative capacity to be effective at land protection. This all takes a great deal of Chapter Support staff time, expense, and a lot of hard work on the part of our volunteer monitors, Land Protection Committee and Board, much of which is invisible to other volunteers and members. Land protection, however, is a critical foundation on which our other work stands. ■



# Executive Director's Message: Gratitude for our Prairie Community

Debra Behrens, Executive Director

This is the season of gratitude, and my heart is overflowing. It has been just over a year since I joined The Prairie Enthusiasts, and I catch myself smiling whenever I pause to reflect on this first year together. You trusted a fumbling novice with what is most precious to you: the grassroots organization you nurtured from a fledgling nonprofit to a thriving community. I will always be grateful for this opportunity to contribute to what you have built.

By far my highlight from this first year has been my time with all of you. Before the COVID-19 Delta variant caused us to revise our guidelines for in-person gatherings, I was able to join some of our chapters for meetings and potlucks over the summer. Prairie Bluff treated me to cookies made with prairie plants – what? – delicious! Better still, I strapped on my boots and hiked with you on some of the most beautiful natural places our region has to offer. You have been generous with your wisdom, patient with my learning curve, and kind not to laugh at some of my rookie plant misidentifications.

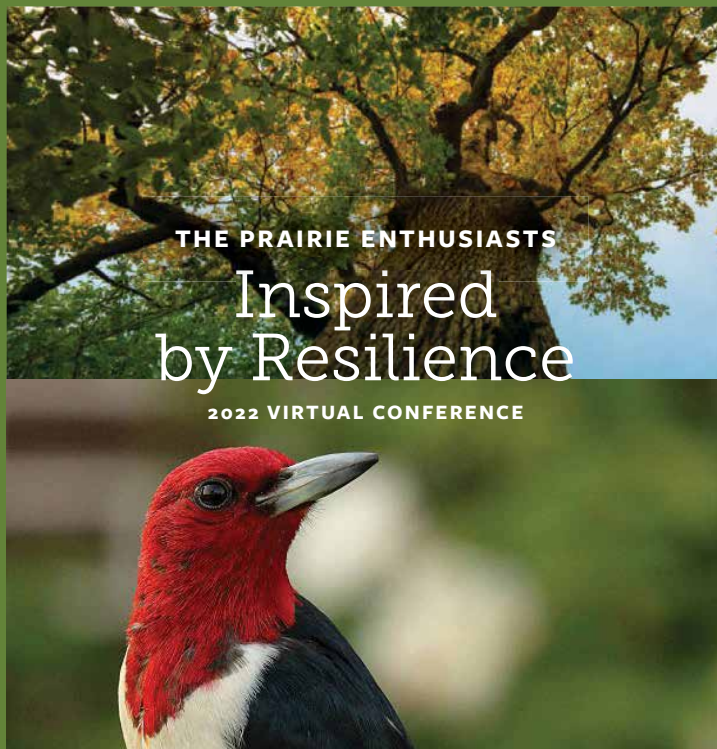
Earlier this fall we invited you to share your ideas and suggestions through our Member Survey, and the response was literally overwhelming. You far surpassed our expectations and very nearly exceeded the physical limits of our post office box! Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback and share your stories. We are reviewing your responses and compiling results to inform the Board's strategy planning, and I know they will be grateful for your involvement.

What a delight to see so many members recognized this year for their unique level of commitment and skill as

conservation stewards. These prairie heroes are a tremendous source of pride and inspiration for us all. They have given body and soul to this work, knowing that the greatest rewards of their efforts would be accrued to future generations. The refrain I hear from our most dedicated prairie enthusiasts is a reminder that what we do today is for the benefit of the land 10 years from now... 100 years from now... possibly thousands of years from now *if* we can continue to inspire others to join us.

That's one of the reasons new member Brooke McEwan's experiences discovering The Prairie Enthusiasts and learning to love the land by giving back made such an impression on me (see p. 23). From a lifetime of experiences in nature, to participation in our first virtual conference, subsequent volunteer service, and mentoring from fellow members, we see how a spark can be lit in someone's heart and how we can contribute to fanning the flames of prairie enthusiasm in others. Brooke's story was featured in our Annual Appeal this year, and I hope it served as a reminder of your own early days of discovery as a budding prairie enthusiast. Your gifts for The Prairie Enthusiasts are the fuel for a growing community of people learning to love and care for the land, and we are truly grateful.

Thank you!



## Save the Date:

Wednesday, February 16 to  
Saturday, February 19, 2022  
Burn School: Tuesday, February 15



### Featured Keynote by Douglas Tallamy

University of Delaware  
Entomology and Wildlife Ecology  
Professor and Author of the

Best-Selling Books, "Nature's Best Hope" and  
"The Nature of Oaks"

Inspired by Resilience will celebrate the role  
you play as a steward of prairies and oak  
savannas. Learn, connect, and be restored by  
the natural beauty of the land. Join us!

REGISTER BEGINNING DECEMBER 2021

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# Discovering Allen Creek Fen

*Continued from cover*

I went to a public meeting and learned that they would be doing an environmental impact study. Surely, they would know we had “wildlife” here and they wouldn’t put the highway through... but the environmental impact crew didn’t come. By 2004, I determined that they wouldn’t come unless they had a reason to. I would probably need to tell them that something was here they would be interested in. I walked out into the horrible mosquito-infested swamp to see if there was anything there that was rare. I could name three plants: prairie dock, gayfeather and black-eyed Susans. That didn’t look rare. I couldn’t name anything else and I was starting to feel resigned about having a highway for a new neighbor.

Dale was leaving to go to town one afternoon in the spring of 2004, and Evan and I were out working in the yard. Dale rolled the window of the car down and called for Evan to get the turtle off the road that was crossing in front of our yard so it wouldn’t get run over. We decided before we let it go that we would try to figure out what it was. It couldn’t be difficult to identify a turtle. How many kinds could there be? We looked online and were pretty sure it was a Blanding’s turtle and the website said it was a threatened species in Wisconsin. We called Dick Wanie, a retired science teacher and wildlife writer contributor to the local newspaper, to come out and take a look and he confirmed the identification. We also took pictures and then released it by the creek.

So now we knew we had something rare and we had to decide whom to call. The website we used was the Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources page. We decided that since the turtle was an endangered resource we should call there first. A person was designated as private landowner coordinator on the staff directory listing. That sounded about right. We contacted Darcy Kind.

I mentioned to her on the phone that we had this turtle and that if it is rare maybe we should be doing something to help it. She made an appointment to come out and we walked through some areas of the wetland (the drier ones) and walked down by the creek. I watched her look around and I watched to see what she was noticing. She was naming plants as she walked and I asked her, “How do you know what they are, when they aren’t blooming?” She started describing square stems, alternate and opposite leaves. I started looking at plants that way too.

At the end of the walk, she seemed really excited about what

she saw. “You have something rare here.” I wasn’t getting it. “You should consider donating your land to The Nature Conservancy. They could help you take care of it and protect it.” I was pretty skeptical about such a proposition, but Darcy continued, suggesting that she would like to have a co-worker come out and take a look too. A few weeks later Darcy returned with Cathy Bleser for another look. Darcy seemed really nice and helpful. No harm in looking, I thought.

Dale went out with Darcy and Cathy on their tour and he remarked, “They looked like two kids in a candy store,” when he told me about the adventure later that day. Their enthusiasm was infectious, but what is it they were so excited about? Cathy told Dale that there was a lot of swamp thistle on the site and that Susan Borkin of the Milwaukee Public Museum happened to be in Madison. “She specializes in the study of the swamp metalmark butterfly which is an endangered species.” Cathy explained. The thistle is the host plant for the butterfly. “A good thistle?” I was thinking.

Two days later Susan Borkin came out to take a look during the day and called Dale later. “I didn’t see any feeding signs of the butterfly, but you have more swamp thistle than our best site where the butterfly lives now.” She suggested that if we were to put the land into a permanent conservation easement and restore it that she would be interested in using the site for a butterfly reintroduction.

Darcy followed up a few weeks later with a suggestion that we apply for funding a restoration with a WHIP grant (Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program). She began describing the area using words like sedge meadow and wet prairie. I remember asking her how it could be more than one? If it is a meadow, how can it be a prairie and a fen too? Is it a meadow or a fen? What is a fen? I don’t remember getting clarification, but I’m sure it’s not from lack of effort on Darcy’s part. I was full of questions all the time and must have been quite a pest. As overworked as she was, she continued patiently answering questions or sending me to other places to find my answers. She also said she would like to have her boss, Mark Martin, come out for a look around.

Darcy assisted with the grant paperwork and we found it necessary to list plants and animals that were rare as rare things generate points. More points mean a greater chance of being funded. Dale suggested we start keeping a list of the plant names that Darcy was sending. Turns out that in 1986 and 1987, Jim Zimmerman had visited the property months before we purchased it. Zimmerman had also generated a list and DNR had a copy. We merged the two lists and began actively managing the plant list.

Darcy, Mark Martin, and Gary and Penny Shackelford came out for a tour with Dale in the fall. Lots of plants were being cataloged and Mark started making predictions about what plants we might see after restoration work began. He explained that the increasingly dense canopy of trees and shrubs were taking away essential light from the rare plants at ground level. If nothing is done to reverse their decreasing access to light the rare plants would die and become displaced by the shrub/forest layer.

If we were to start actively managing the land by removing woody vegetation and using fire to keep woody vegetation suppressed the prairie would come back. The restoration process was time-critical: the degree of success would be greatly influenced by the speed of the activity. Some areas were so densely forested there might not be anything left in spots. The



*Sample of wet mesic prairie vegetation.*



longer we wait, the bigger those dead spots would be.

Mark also said that the area was quite rare, a diamond in the rough that just needed some work to be restored. “It’s all there,” he said. “Plants that are hanging on, plants that are dormant in the soil, and seeds waiting for optimal conditions to sprout in the seed bank. It just needs some work.” He suggested that the state might be interested in offering a permanent conservation easement and technical assistance through the State Natural Areas program.

The WHIP grant was awarded in the fall of 2004. Dale and I were going for walks frequently to see what we could find and photographing plants and doing lots of reading. I bought a pair of rubber boots. We now had “work” to do. We had a new purpose for engaging in this landscape. We were going to name all the parts and work on this plant list. We were going to be actively managing the land, but the grant would bring a contractor in to do most of that. We would just be assisting and learning, I naively thought.

In January of 2005, Ron Martin from Midwest Prairies brought out his new Rayco forestry mower. Amazing. In two and a half days all the brush in the wetland parcel was down, but I couldn’t see how anything was going to grow there. Now the entire ground was covered with the mulch leftover from brushing. Ron assured us that it would need some time and a few fire seasons to recover.

Spring of 2005 came with our first fire season at the end of March. The burn went well, with about half of the area burned. A few weeks later it began to green up. I was excited about what we might see. We were out all the time. I decided that since all the natural resources people seem to be using the scientific plant names that I would need to learn them, too.

Summer of 2005 was a great season. Lots of walking, lots of learning, lots of visitors, but I started noticing lots of buckthorn, dogwood and willow coming back too. I felt a little frustrated. When I saw the forestry mower tear those plants to shreds and we burned them all up two months later, why weren’t they dead? It was the hard lesson of resprouts. These plants were not going down without a fight and they had lots of energy stored in their roots.

The winter of 2005 we started using a gas-powered brush cutter with a saw blade on the woody vegetation and treating the stumps with herbicide at every opportunity. And here I am on spring break in 2008 spending my week off cutting brush with my bigger gas-powered brush cutter and treating it with herbicide.

I’ve learned there are four seasons in the prairie: the brush killing season (winter); the invasive killing season (spring, summer and fall); the monitoring season (spring, summer and fall); and the seed collection season (summer, fall). Notice mosquito season isn’t on the list anymore.

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**This isn’t going to be some work;  
it’s going to be the rest of my life.**

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So, what’s the reason for the big changes in our activities in only a few years? Education. Each time someone would visit, I would ask, “How do you know that?” They would explain how they engage in their visual perception and knowledge of the landscape. They taught me how to see it and how to learn about it, but they also modeled their spiritual/emotional connection



*Mesic prairie at Allen Creek Fen.*

with the landscape. I felt the responsibility to care more about my own land than my visitors, and they were showing a passionate connection to it. I was learning how science informs perception.

My favorite story, though, is about when Quentin Carpenter from UW-Madison came out for a prairie visit. We were walking for a while as he was patiently answering all of my questions. He came to a spot and said, “Shhh. This is a low-to-the-ground place.” He bent down, almost crawling to explore. He could see that this was a place to look carefully for small, subtle plants that need the most careful of observers to appreciate. I wanted to be the person that knew this landscape well enough to understand low-to-the-ground places.

That one line perhaps best describes a way of engaging in this landscape; slow, quiet, meaningful participation that takes the white noise out of the interaction. White noise is the mind spinning and trying to make sense of what it has no prior knowledge of, or experience with which to connect. When you can stop and call a plant, an animal or an insect by its name, surely, you have shown the capacity to appreciate it. Once you appreciate it, you will find the motivation to provide stewardship for its continued existence.

There is still a great deal of work left to be done. We continue working on the species list. We used to call it the plant list, but now we are monitoring for butterflies and dragonflies. We would like to begin undertaking the work of monitoring for reptiles and amphibians. The oak woodland needs a great deal of work to replant and the fields north of the creek are showing promise as we begin to include those areas in our surveys. Restoration planning is beginning to take on the scope of the whole farm and the wish that it continues beyond our property edges.

We still do not have a conservation easement in place, but we clearly understand that restoration and active management will need to continue in perpetuity. Like raising a child, we are preparing the natural area to go on without us by planning carefully and documenting the work, the objectives and the vision. The greatest threat to the site now is perhaps the hydrologic system that involves off site recharge areas. My thanks to the great research that is being done by scientists and natural resource technicians/specialists to help well-meaning landowners like Dale and me be able to bring private lands back to their former glory with some measure of competence. ■

# Lifetime Conservation Award Recognizes Mark and Sue Foote-Martin

By Karen Solverson



*Mark and Sue Foote-Martin at Goose Pond.*

Sitting in a small office with Mark and Sue Foote-Martin surrounded by shelves of books, one might not notice the significance of what those books represent at first glance. Row after row of journals line the shelves, filled with the entire history of the properties entrusted to their care. From bird sightings, to lists of people who have visited or helped on the property, to plant lists and rare species documentation, to observations about changes from year to year, these journals dating back more than 40 years tell a love story of the land that even Thoreau would not have been able to put down.

Lifelong conservationists, and members of The Prairie Enthusiats, Mark and Sue each have a long history of protecting the land and working to ensure a healthier future for every plant, animal and person in Wisconsin. Together they have worked to preserve 2,700 acres across south-central Wisconsin for Madison Audubon Society, and for 42 years, they have been resident managers at Madison Audubon's Goose Pond Sanctuary. Coordinating countless volunteer efforts, they have inspired generations of citizen scientists and continue to make a difference every day. Thus, it was no surprise to anyone who knows this conservation power couple to learn that Gathering Waters had presented the couple with the 2021 Harold

"Bud" Jordahl Lifetime Achievement Award for their conservation efforts.

Both raised by parents who valued conservation, they grew up exposed to nature, fishing, birding and hunting. Early in her career, Sue worked as an Education Coordinator at the MacKenzie Environmental Education Center, and later joined the DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources as a Conservation Biologist. "What I love most about the prairie is the diversity," she said in a recent interview. "There are so many life-giving properties in a prairie that are like pieces of the puzzle, and we need all of them. I also love the history of the prairie and how that affected the people who lived on it. With the onset of COVID-19, in spite of how bad that has been, I'm really inspired to see that people are finally seeing the importance of nature in their lives."

After a Youth Conservation Corps camp sparked his interest in conservation, Mark followed his passion and became a Wildlife Research Technician with the DNR in 1971 and stayed with the agency for 40 years, later becoming a Conservation Biologist. "Not everyone has the advantage of having an adult who can mentor them. Having a mentor at the conservation camp completely changed the course of my life. I hope anyone who has the chance will find a way to mentor







# Awards Given to Two Members at the Bridging the Gap for Butterflies Event

By Karen Solverson

Two of our members recently received awards at the Bridging the Gap for Butterflies event put on by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pheasants Forever this summer.

**John Shillinglaw** has been an active supporter of The Prairie Enthusiasts and our Prairie Sands Chapter for years, and was presented with the Legacy Conservation Achievement Award for 2021 presented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pheasants Forever. His Mekan Prairie and Savanna is under a conservation trust, and it includes over 230 acres of restored prairie and savanna along the priority Mekan River Watershed. John has been instrumental in the Karner blue butterfly recovery effort, and in creating habitat for many of the most endangered grassland bird species as well as other wildlife.



*John Shillinglaw among the lupine at Mekan Prairie.  
(photo by Susan Shillinglaw)*



*John (in orange cap) leading a tour of Mekan Prairie for Prairie Days.*



*Ken Erickson installing a sign for Wild Rose School Forest.  
(photo by Brendan Woodall)*



*Ken Erickson collects seeds during an event for The Prairie Enthusiasts.*

Prairie Sands member **Ken Erickson** has been a conservationist for nearly four years. Not only does he manage his own 57-acre property for the endangered Karner blue butterfly, but he has also helped U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Pheasants Forever with multiple other habitat projects. He has assisted with constructing and installing a sign for the Wild Rose School Forest, seed collecting wild lupine for future projects, and providing his time and tractor on the Town of Rose prairie restoration project. He also helped organize the Bridging the Gap for Butterflies event. While he is not doing any of these tasks you can find him on tractor forums advocating for prairie restoration. Overall, well-deserving of the 2021 Volunteer of Conservation Award! ■



# Natural Heritage Award Honors the Late Kim Karow

The W-DNR's Natural Heritage Conservation Program recently recognized the late Kim Karow for her contribution to the State Natural Areas Program through her devotion to Allen Creek Wetlands. Kim had a constant quest to learn more about and care for the natural world around her, and a special love for sedges. Dale Karow was presented with a plaque that featured a drawing by Gary Eldred of Pale Indian-plantain (*Arnoglossum plantagineum*) which is just one of the unique plants found within the Allen Creek complex.



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

The Karows initiated the formation of the Friends of Allen Creek Watershed (FACW) in December 2005 to work as a community of citizen scientists to increase and gather local knowledge of the only exceptional resource water in Jefferson County. FACW received a WDNR River Planning Grant to conduct a baseline study of the watershed, resulting in incredible scientific knowledge and a stronger community dedication to the protection and understanding of local natural resources.

The Karows have continuously cooperated and assisted with experts to complete research throughout the watershed in the fields of geology, botany, water chemistry, aquatic macroinvertebrates, fisheries biology, and entomology. This research, monitoring and observation has encouraged and guided land management and helped to nurture their land ethic. They worked diligently on restoration and management and learned by doing, but also asked the advice of restoration ecologists to ensure a thorough approach to management. They have shared their property through numerous field trips with The Prairie Enthusiasts, Wisconsin Wetlands Association and the Natural Resources Foundation.

They have received cost-share from federal and state programs to assist with restoration and management. In their 2009 WDNR Landowner Incentive Program application Kim noted, "A future vision of this property is one that includes ongoing commitment to active land management, instituting scheduled monitoring protocols, using the site as a refuge for rare species, outreach opportunities and education through field trips and research, and a desire for a permanent conservation easement."

In 2010, the Karows partnered with DNR and NRCS to protect their land with conservation easements. Land management continues and the land and Kim's spirit continue to inspire. ■

# Converting Mullen to Medicine

By Jim Vonderharr

On one potentially hot day in July, my wife Kathryn and I decided to "harvest" the Mullen from our approximately 15 acres of restored prairie near Mankato, Minnesota. We've been doing this for several years, so the task this year seemed not so daunting. Our typical harvest consisted of pulling the Mullen and either leaving them lying in the prairie to dry or collecting them and hauling them to our local community composite site.

This year was different. We had met Megan Schnitker, (Many War Bonnets Woman), a self-described Indigenous Traditional Herbalist of Lakota heritage. While Kathryn and I "harvested," Megan and her husband Ethan reduced the "harvest" to four piles: roots, leaves, flower pods and naked stems.

Megan grew up in Milks Camp, a rural community in South Dakota, next to the Rosebud Reservation in a traditional Lakota culture. Schnitker started learning about plants and their uses when she was only around four or five, learning much of the information from her uncle. She and her cousins often spent hours outside every day on their grandma's farm during the summer, and her uncle would share about how to use different plants they found.

While Schnitker first started out making products just for her own family, she decided to start offering them to others in the Mankato community, and Lakota Made was born. Through her small business, she sells soaps, lotions, salves, dish soap, tonics, shampoo bars, sunscreen, lip balm, honey and teas. In only a few years, Lakota Made has become her family's main source of income as her products become more and more popular.

The Mullen roots are used to make a tincture that is used for pain relief, particularly back pain. Leaves serve multiple purposes. They are dried and used to be steeped as a tea that is effective against upper respiratory discomfort. Using them as a smudge to produce smoke that is then inhaled also is an effective treatment. Lakota ceremonial tobacco cannot be grown in Minnesota, so the dried Mullen leaves are mixed with other native plants to make an acceptable substitute. A gel is extracted from the seed pods that when mixed with honey is an effective cough suppressant. I was left with the stems which I am allowing to dry out and use in making native bee houses. We will work with Megan in the future to identify more plants in our prairie that could find use in some of her other medicinals.

You can learn more and shop her product line at [lakotamade.com](http://lakotamade.com). ■

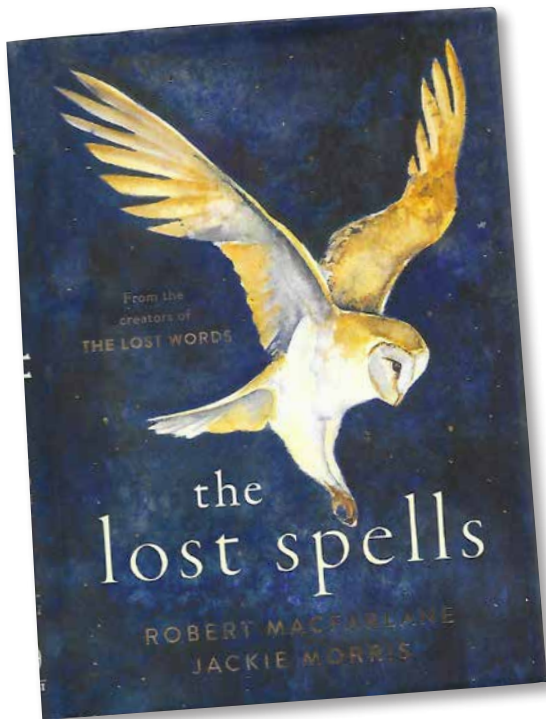


Megan Schnitker (Many War Bonnets Woman), owner of Lakota Made (Photo from [lakotamade.com](http://lakotamade.com))

# Book Reviews – Holiday Book Ideas

By Chuck Wemstrom

The holidays will be here before we know it. It's time to get the Christmas list together and start shopping.

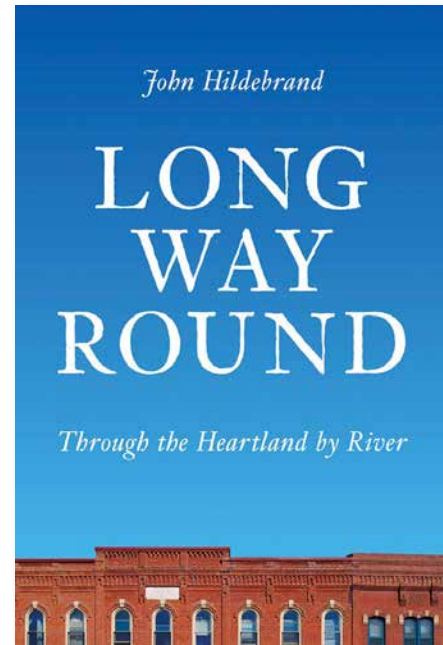


My first recommendation, and a must, is "*The Lost Spells*" by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris. They also wrote *Lost Words*, which I reviewed last year. The main difference is that the first book is a coffee table size book. This is a smaller book, but just as delightful.

Jackie's striking paintings of animals, insects, landscapes, and birds are incredibly beautiful. The settings are enchanting, sometimes realistic and sometimes fanciful. One of the most striking paintings shows an owl's talons the very second it grabs an unsuspecting wren. The paintings are worth the price of the book all by themselves.

Macfarlane's acrostics are whimsical, sometimes silly and always thought-provoking. Sometimes, he uses the old names, such as "jackdaw" for a crow. To fully enjoy the book one needs an English dictionary, not an American English dictionary.

At the end, the book has a 64 picture/word glossary and they suggest you play a little game. Go back and find all 64 illustrations and then match the picture in the book with the name and picture in the glossary. It's simply a way to tell you that there's more enjoyment in this book than a simple quick read, or a glance at each of the pictures as you turn the pages. They are so right. Read and re-read, enjoy and then reread again. And then when you think you're ready, try reading the poems out loud, alone, or with a friend or a child. Another fun activity.



A second recommendation is "*Long Way Round: Through the Heartland by River*." Many of you who live in northern Wisconsin probably know at least one of these eight rivers and have been on them before. Take a few minutes, either as a frequent traveler or not, and travel with John Hildebrand as he makes a giant loop on the rivers of northern Wisconsin. You'll love every moment.

The book's great strength is Hildebrand. He would be absolutely wonderful to travel with. As you travel with him on the rivers, his story-telling ability, his interest in everything about the river from the current, the flood waters, the sandbars, to the fish and the birds, will captivate your every moment.

One of the first things I liked about the book is Hildebrand's modesty. He's a lifelong canoeist, but he never brags about his exploits or prowess. He has a friend find him just the right canoe and motor. A couple of times he gets in trouble and his friend has to come and help him. Other times he gets to a town and has a local mechanic fix the motor or even the boat itself.

He loves to camp, but if he can't find a spot and a little town has an old downtown hotel, he loves to check in and stay a night or two and explore the town. All the people he meets on his journey are as interesting as the natural wonders he describes on his voyage. In one bar, he encounters a racist who still could not imagine a Black man being president. However, the rest of the people he meets are wonderful.

Hildebrand is interested in everything. He describes the people who live in the small towns as either leavers, stayers or returners. He thinks that the future of small towns lies with returners or a new batch of immigrants – similar to the European influx at the end of the 19th century.

He also thinks that tourism is already part of the answer. He gives Boscobel as an example of river tourists contributing to the town's economy. He's also honest. Sometimes he doesn't recognize a bird, plant or tree. He uses his app or even waits until he gets home to do an accurate ID. He doesn't fake it.

Being on the water all summer gives him a different perspective. Not having spent a lot of time on a river myself, I found his book a learning experience. But I'm sure an experienced canoeist will also appreciate the book. ■



## Softening

By Kathleen Ernst

From *Balancing: Poems of the Female Immigrant  
Experience in the Upper Midwest, 1830-1930*

Beth and Daniel were raised with right angles: New England's town squares, pragmatism, rows of beans and okra seeds plumbed with string; sober churches, picket fences, frugality, cedar shakes row upon row. Two centuries ago, their ancestors unpacked on American soil, stoic and stern, good Yankee stock.

When they moved west, Beth packed with care: butcher knives, butter churns, practicality; woolen socks, casks of cornmeal and flour, common sense; quilts with bindings mitred sharp and square. No room in the oaken chests for Mother's vase, sentiment, best Sunday bonnet stitched of black silk.

They made their new home on the prairie, a rippling river of grass, swells and swales. Daniel unpacked methodically: gleaming ax, leather gloves, scouring plow; seed corn, firm goals, portable forge. Beth unpacked too, brisk and determined: chopping block, egg beater, resolve; lye soap, lanterns, neat-labeled packets of seeds.

But lupines bloomed past the garden plot plumbed with string. Sandhill cranes chortled primeval; upland sandpipers whistled among pinwheels of prairie phlox, violet and pink. As summer unspooled Beth sometimes left off her scrubbing, her mending, her stewing. Hanging out sheets, the sun and scent gave her pause.

Then a rain-damp dawn revealed daisies and butterfly milkweed blurring toward the horizon. The meadowlarks called her name. After Daniel left to break and scour, Beth let herself be beckoned, to embrace whorls of wild roses, tumbling clouds, shimmering dragonflies, a world gone ripe and round.

[www.kathleenernst.com](http://www.kathleenernst.com)



# Managing for Insects Field Trip at Crow-Hassan Park Reserve

By John Moriarty, Senior Manager of Wildlife at Three Rivers Park District

Several weeks ago, Angela Grill and I, from the Three Rivers Park District Wildlife Section, led a field trip for the Metro Conservation Network to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve to discuss how we manage their prairie to support insects, as well as other wildlife. Crow-Hassan Park Reserve is in northwest Hennepin County, about 30 miles northwest of downtown Minneapolis. The Park is 2,600 acres in size and includes a 1,200-acre prairie management zone. This zone includes over 850 acres of planted prairie, some of which is over 50 years old, with a mixture wetlands and fire managed woodlands.

Three Rivers manages the prairie for a variety of wildlife and has always been aware of the needs of insects long before the current pollinator era. We continue to increase the diversity and density of forbs in the prairie by regular overseeding and strategic planting of potted plants. Our prairies start flowering in early spring with willows, pasque flowers, and wood betony (a very important nectar source for queen bumblebees) and end in October with asters, goldenrods and gentians.



Unit 9 at Crow-Hassan in August. (Photo by John Pennoyer)

On the prairie, we have over 50 burn units, ranging from 5 to 80 acres, which are on a four to five year burn cycle. Adjacent burn units are not burned in the same year. This provides a mosaic of burns that allows for easy recolonization from adjacent unburned sites.

Unique factors to this park, such as soil type and topography, are helpful to insect diversity. Crow-Hassan is located on a small glacial sandplain that allows many ground nesting insects, especially

bees and tiger beetles, numerous areas to nest. The prairie also has a rolling topography that provides denser vegetation in the more mesic swales. Many of the butterflies like roosting in the denser, taller vegetation.

We have begun to manage for and introduce some of the prairie butterflies. This requires the need to think of plants as more than nectar sources. The larval insects feed on a variety of leaves, stems and roots. Some of the insects require specific plants for their larva.

Regal Fritillaries are a large prairie butterfly whose caterpillar only feeds on violets. Many planted prairies do not contain violets, so the Regals cannot become established.

We wanted to have Regals on our prairie and before we introduced them to the site, we wanted to make sure they had enough baby food. We had planted violets in the 1990s, but they were not widespread. We purchased and planted 10,000, four inch potted violets on the prairie over three years before introducing the butterflies. Crow-Hassan is located over 100 miles from the nearest population large enough to allow some collecting. We caught and released 24 gravid female Regals in August of 2017 and had over 1,000 butterflies on our counts just two years later.

We also introduced Leonard skippers into the prairie. They have the opposite plant relationship.



Got Monarchs? Monarch resting on Meadow Blazingstar. (Photo by John Pennoyer)



Regal Fritillary on rough Blazingstar. (Photo by John Moriarty)

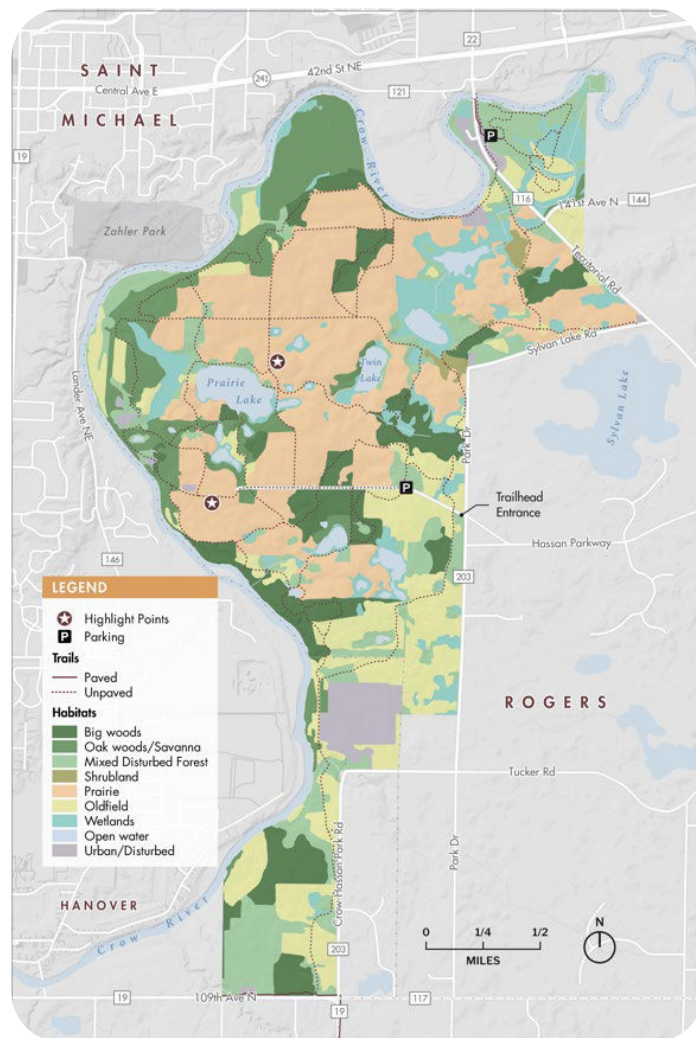


Managing for Insects field trip at Crow-Hassan Park Reserve...  
continued from Page 12

The caterpillars feed on a variety of native grasses, but the adults feed mainly on blazingstar. We have a good density of blazingstars in our prairies, so we caught twenty pairs of Leonard's from a remnant prairie approximately 30 miles north of Crow-Hassan. When we released them, they began nectaring on the blazingstar. We have not been able to locate any of them since that first year. Not all initial introductions go as planned.

The take home points for insect management are similar to good prairie management in general:

- Make your prairie as diverse as possible.
- Make your prairie as large as possible.
- Set up your burn program to allow for several burn units, which allows for numerous unburned areas for greater success with insect populations.
- Extend the burn interval if possible.
- Provide the proper food plants for all the life stages.
- Hope you have sandy soils and a range of topography. ■



Moriarty, 2018. "Field Guide to the Natural World of the Twin Cities." University of Minnesota Press

## Give a Gift That Gives Back to the Prairie

The holidays are just around the corner. Why not give a gift that gives back? Visit our website and click on eStore to make your loved one's holiday a little more special.

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[www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/estore](http://www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/estore)

# How many TPE sites have you visited?

By Jim Rogala

One of the advantages of serving on the TPE Board of Directors is that I get to see all the TPE land protection projects that come up for approval. However, seeing protection project proposals that contain descriptions and maps falls far short of experiencing these sites in person. I've visited some of the 38 TPE-owned properties at our annual picnics, but only a small fraction. I decided to increase that percentage this summer.

I do a lot of traveling from the La Crosse area to southeastern Wisconsin. This provides me a chance to stop and visit sites that are convenient stops on my trips. I visited two sites on June 5. I first stopped at Hauser Road Prairie and was greeted by a Dickcissel as I got out of my car. Later I ran across site-steward Randy Hoffman working in a far corner of the property. We had a nice chat about the site, and I was off to finish my visit and travel to my next stop at Smith-Reiner Drumlin Prairies. I was not as fortunate in coming across a site-steward there, but a lovely informative kiosk was much appreciated. I walked both ridgetops and enjoyed the many dry prairie species and imagined the spectacular bloom that would be there later in the summer.



there are signs of its potential.

9:00 Schluckbier Sand Prairie – Saw many plants typical of sand prairies, especially early blooming species that were already done flowering, but also saw work being done to restore wetter lowlands on the property.

10:20 Foxglove Savanna – Some rather ambitious work is starting to pay off in transforming a dense canopy to a more open savanna looking property.

11:40 Swenson Bluff – First came across some expansion work at the bottom of the slope before ascending into a very nice hill prairie of decent size that had a good mix of hill prairie plant species.

12:50 Rattlesnake Ridge – An impressive ridgetop remnant with a good mix of species, including rattlesnake master for which the site is named. The prairie is being actively expanded downslope.

2:10 Parrish Oak Savanna – Along with the surrounding lands that are actively managed, this site has an extensive open understory throughout, along with some prairie in open canopy.

3:20 Erbe Grassland – The vast openness of this site was impressive, and most of the plantings are maturing nicely.

4:30 Sugar River Savanna – I finally got to see what annual burning with inter-seeding over a long time-period on a small, topographically diverse site can yield.

I made some progress on my site visit list, but I have to admit it was a grueling day (temperature got to over 80 degrees!). As of today, the number of sites I've now visited is up to 16, not even half. Hopefully I find the opportunity to visit more before winter sets in, but will try to visit as many as I can next year too.

To learn more about TPE-owned properties, visit the website at: [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/sites](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/sites). Maybe you will be inspired to visit some of these properties that we work so hard to protect and manage. ■



My next day of visits was on July 17, the day before the TPE Picnic. And when I say day, I mean a full day! I planned to visit eight sites, allowing an hour at each site. After seeing the value in having the site-steward present at Hauser Road Prairie earlier in the summer, I decided to invite the site-stewards for all eight sites. To my delight, all but one could join me. I also invited some TPE leadership folks to join me and got one taker. Scott Fulton joined me for most of the day.

I obviously can't report on all eight (actually turned out to be nine) visits, but I'll provide a quick note for each:

8:00 Gasser Sand Barren – A small site, but had some nice plants, especially in the open sandy area where I stumbled on fame-flower.

8:30 Moely Sand Prairie – This was an unplanned trip to this TPE-eased property that is surrounded by development. Scott described the ton of work that has been done, and



# Seek – A Great Tool for Beginning Botanists

By Scott Fulton

As I can attest from personal experience, one of the major challenges facing a beginning botanist is getting a good starting point to identify plants in the field. When you barely know an orchid from an aster, even getting a lead on where to look in the field guide can make the difference between enthusiasm and major frustration. In the past several years, I have found a smartphone app called Seek to be an invaluable aid in growing my plant ID skills to a level that botanizing has become both fun and satisfying.

Seek is a stand-alone app developed by iNaturalist, LLC (a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society). While iNaturalist itself is a complex, web-based platform for recording naturalist observations of all kinds and sharing them with a citizen scientist community, Seek is designed with the much simpler goal of making geolocated photo records of personal observations and trying to provide a suggested species identification while in the field. Seek is a relatively simple smartphone app which does not use an internet connection. You can download the Seek app for free from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

To use Seek, you simply open the app and click on the camera button, which then activates your smartphone camera to “look” at the observed individual(s) in the camera’s field of view. While it is doing so, the algorithms in Seek attempt to identify, starting at higher taxonomic levels and in many cases getting down to a species. When Seek reaches the species level, you can record the observation, which snaps the picture and adds it to your list. Once observations are recorded, you can open up page to get more information about the species you have identified, including a map of where other iNaturalist users have observed it.



As you might expect, Seek does not work perfectly and has some significant limitations. It seems to work much better on plants than insects, in part because it is very difficult to get a closeup picture of an insect sitting still long enough for an ID. I have gotten it to work on reptiles and amphibians.

Seek cannot identify some genera or families down to the species level because critical field marks may not be observable from a camera view. Asters, sunflowers, and grasses seem to be particularly problematic. Some species seem to be just plain missing – I tried several times to get Seek to ID what were unmistakably glade mallow (*Napaea dioica*) in full flower, and it called them no further than a “Dicot”. Some fraction of the time Seek also is incorrect, for example making clear

identifications in Wisconsin of species that are not found east of the Rocky Mountains. In these cases, however, I have observed that the genus is almost always correct, so you have a very good starting point for an accurate identification.

Despite (and to some extent because of) these limitations, I have found Seek to be extremely helpful in building my plant ID skills. I have learned to always check the Seek observations I make when I get home in the guidebooks and online (and have a good picture on my phone as a reference). This practice has served very well to reinforce my learning. I have also found more and more that I can use Seek to confirm (or deny) educated guesses I make about field identifications, which reinforces learning further. In all, I would highly recommend this app to any beginning botanist. ■

# 2021 Landowner Services Wrap-up

By Dan Carter

Kurt Vonnegut said, “We are here on Earth to fart around, and don’t let anybody tell you different.”

I am fortunate to be a professional farter-arounder, having stumbled by happenstance into doing what I enjoy – seeing a little bit of the beauty that is still out there and meeting with and learning from other people who can imagine or sense the potential of abused, neglected, or otherwise unseen land.

Last year I visited 66 properties. As of this writing in early September, I’ve visited another 66, with several remaining in queue before this season comes to an end in October. Sixteen of these landowners have prairie remnants of one type or another ranging in size from a few hundred square feet to tens of acres. Many more have remnant sedge meadows, fens, oak savannas, or oak woodlands with significant components of their herbaceous plant communities remaining. Looking back over the year, there is much worth mentioning, yet only a fraction of which will fit in this space.

One of my April visits was to David Kiefer’s property on Spring Valley Road in Dane County. His property is mostly sedge meadow, and my impression was that it would be the focus of the visit. When I pulled up, the remnant hill prairie across the road was obvious, and that was where we went. Nice new species we found or identified during that visit included Richardson’s sedge (*Carex richardsonii*), parasol sedge (*Carex umbellata*), and pale blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium album*, WI special concern).

In May, I visited Mike Everson in Vernon County, whose property supports a little jewel of dry-mesic prairie along and above a rocky outcrop. Wood betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*), bastard toadflax (*Comandra umbellata*), hoary puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*), prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa*), Robin’s plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*), and yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), were abundant. Pasque flower (*Pulsatilla patens*), Mead’s sedge (*Carex meadii*), Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega*), and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) were also there.



Veiny pea (*Lathyrus venosus*) in the Gatzke prairie. (Photo by Dan Carter)

In June, I visited Chris Hughes’ wet-mesic to wet prairie (approximately 21 acres) near the Minnesota River between New Ulm and Mankato. There were parts of that prairie where the white lady’s slipper orchids (*Cypripedium candidum*, MN special concern) were so dense that it was difficult to avoid walking on them. The white lady’s slippers were past flowering, but it was still the

most impressive display of that species I’ve seen. Tuberous Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum plantagineum*, MN threatened), Sullivant’s milkweed (*Asclepias sullivantii*, MN threatened), prairie blazingstar (*Liatris pycnostachya*), Buxbaum’s sedge (*Carex buxbaumii*), running marsh sedge (*Carex sartwellii*), and Crawe’s sedge (*Carex crawei*) abundant, and it was my first encounter with false golden ragwort (*Packera pseud aurea*). After walking around the prairie, Chris carved up a watermelon, and we talked about the prairie and its management.

I crammed a lot of visits into June, because it’s a prime time to be in the field. The Gatzke remnant dry-mesic prairie and oak woodland (Coulee Region), the Sulzer remnant mesic prairie (Prairie Bluff), both John Click’s and the Hamels’ remnant barrens (Empire-Sauk and Prairie Sands respectively), the Franks’ prairie planting with bastard toadflax and wood betony were established from seed (Prairie Sands), Pam Meyer’s sand prairie (Glacial Prairie), and the St. Croix Valley landscape on the Horst Rechelbacher Trust Property were



Hairy puccoon (*Lithospermum carolinense*) at the Meyer sand prairie. (Photo by Dan Carter)

among other highlights.

It was obvious when I had reached Jack Kussmaul’s property along Highway C in Grant County. It was July, and the dense forest wall along the road opened abruptly into a beautiful woodland with abundant Culver’s root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*) and purple Joe-Pye weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*). Like the Pleasant Valley Conservancy, Jack’s property exemplifies what frequent fire, brush work, and tree thinning can do in the Driftless Area. Much of Jack’s prairie is planted, but there is a remnant of sand prairie on old, stabilized dunes where clasping-leaf milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*) was fruiting rather abundantly. His efforts have also uncovered purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*, WI endangered) elsewhere. Jack showed me an area formerly in planted pines that he had tamed with frequent mowing. That is something to consider for those areas that have become brushy, brambly, and weedy messes following pine harvest, woody encroachment of savanna pastures, and clear-cuts in oak woodlands (avoid clear-cuts!).



In early August, I joined Jim Schultz to see his very successful planted prairie in Waupaca County. Among many things, he has established wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*), Sullivant's milkweed, and meadow blazingstar. Much of his success results from investing in a diverse seed mix. The thing I found most exciting, however, had nothing to do with prairie. It was a large leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*) population in the wood lot, which in turn supported the leatherwood specialist leaf mining moth (*Leucanthiza dircella*). I almost universally talk about the importance of burning wherever landowners take me, but I did not recommend burning in the vicinity of leatherwood!



The Heberlein prairie. (Photo by Dan Carter)

In late August, I walked the Heberlein property near Viroqua with Mark Heberlein and his brother Greg. Most notable was a remnant hill prairie with cylindric and rough blazingstars (*Liatris cylindracea* and *L. aspera*), hoary and fringed puccoons (*Lithospermum canescens* and *L. incisum*), beach wormwood (*Artemisia campestris*), western sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*), Pasque flower, prairie dropseed, hairy grama (*Bouteloua hirsuta*), and Leiberg's panic grass (*Dicanthelium leibergii*), which graded into oak woodland with abundant yellow pimpernel (*Taenidia integerrima*) and broad-leaved panic-grass (*Dichanthelium latifolium*). That same week, Tom and Eva Wedel showed me their property near Argyle. Many species occur on their property that aren't otherwise documented in Lafayette County. I collected a specimen of narrow-leaved pinweed (*Lechea tenuifolia*), but more exciting was the discovery of slender bush-clover (*Lespedeza virginica*, WI threatened) in an area of sandy oak savanna/woodland in the vicinity of a weathering sandstone outcrop.

In early September, slender bush clover jumped out at me again on Don Nelson's property in Monroe County. I bent down to point out poverty oatgrass (*Danthonia spicata*) as an important grass in many oak woodlands, and slender bush clover was right in front of my face—two encounters with a rare plant I'd never come across before in the span of one week!



Low prairie-sedge meadow complex at the Wedel Property. (Photo by Dan Carter)

The work of restoring and maintaining fire-dependent communities is not without challenges. I encountered relatively new invasive species like Grecian foxglove (*Digitalis lanata*) in St. Croix County, WI; Amur cork tree (*Phellodendron amurense*) in Dane County, WI; and spiked sedge (*Carex spicata*) in Jefferson County, WI. Many landowners have problems that are directly or indirectly attributable to a lack of capacity for or obstacles to frequent prescribed burning, and these are often difficult to address adequately with resources



Slender bush-clover at the Nelson property. (Photo by Dan Carter)

that presently exist. Many landowners also wonder how their gains might be maintained once they can no longer provide stewardship. It's the rare exception that I have good answers for these concerns. They merit our broader consideration, because there is still much that is irreplaceable on the landscape, the future of which will depend on finding solutions.

My schedule for next year is within ten to fifteen visits of being filled as of early September. Contact me soon if you would like to schedule a visit ([dcarter@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:dcarter@theprairieenthusiasts.org)). I'm presently funded for visits through next field season. The following year is uncertain, but I will keep a list once 2022 fills up. In an email, please include some background and location information for your site. Also feel free to contact me, even if you aren't requesting a visit. If I've visited you already, know that I enjoy receiving updates about how things are going. ■



# Blue Sky Botany – Goldenrods

By RS Baller

**Editor's Note:** This article has been updated with corrections to the print edition of *The Prairie Promoter*.

The goldenrods swim in a giant, baffling taxonomic pool of asters, sunflowers, Pye-weeds, and thistles (the Asteraceae). The goldenrod's tiny, sun-emitting, yellow-orange flowers grow amassed into marvelous "inflorescences" that appear to the uninitiated as single large blooms, whose forms are variously described as feather dusters, candles, or flattops. They are beloved by late summer insects, especially bees, and people with bee binoculars. Identification practice makes perfect.

There are too many goldenrods for one article; I present here a few that I have photos for. I will labor on the rest with apologies for my slovenliness. The plants here are presented more or less as they bloom in the field from mid to late August. I hope to present September goldenrods in another article.

## Early goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*)

Mid-August. Knee high on a tall person. Forming colonies whose flowering stalks are spaced closely enough so that one bent over will immediately touch another. Inflorescence a wide-open feather duster, spreading all directions, often slightly leaning and asymmetric. Stems and leaves totally smooth. Leaves tending to be similar size on the stem, but in fact reducing upwards. Mesic to dry prairie.



## Elm-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago ulmifolia*)

Late August-Early Sep. Waist high. Inflorescence like a fireworks display, shooting slender wands of gold in several directions, often from upper leaf axils, the flowers born on the upper rim of the curve of those slender wands. Lower leaves broad and toothed like elm leaves. Mesic to dry, prefers light shade, oak savanna.



## Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)

Late August. Waist high or more. Forming dense colonies, sometimes covering whole fields. Inflorescence a flower duster whose overall outline is an asymmetric pyramid, leaning or arching to one side. Stems and leaves finely hairy, mostly toward the top of the plant. Mesic, open, sunny fields, prairie. Widespread volunteer; never planted on purpose.



## Missouri goldenrod (*Solidago missouriensis*)

Late August. Knee high. Forming colonies, whose blooming stalks are scattered too widely to touch each other, with many, non-flowering green stalks in between, giving the impression it's just not a good year for blooming. Inflorescence a feather duster, typically but not guaranteed narrower than *S. juncea*. Stems and leaves totally smooth. Leaves largest at the base, clearly reducing upwards. Dry prairie, often sand.



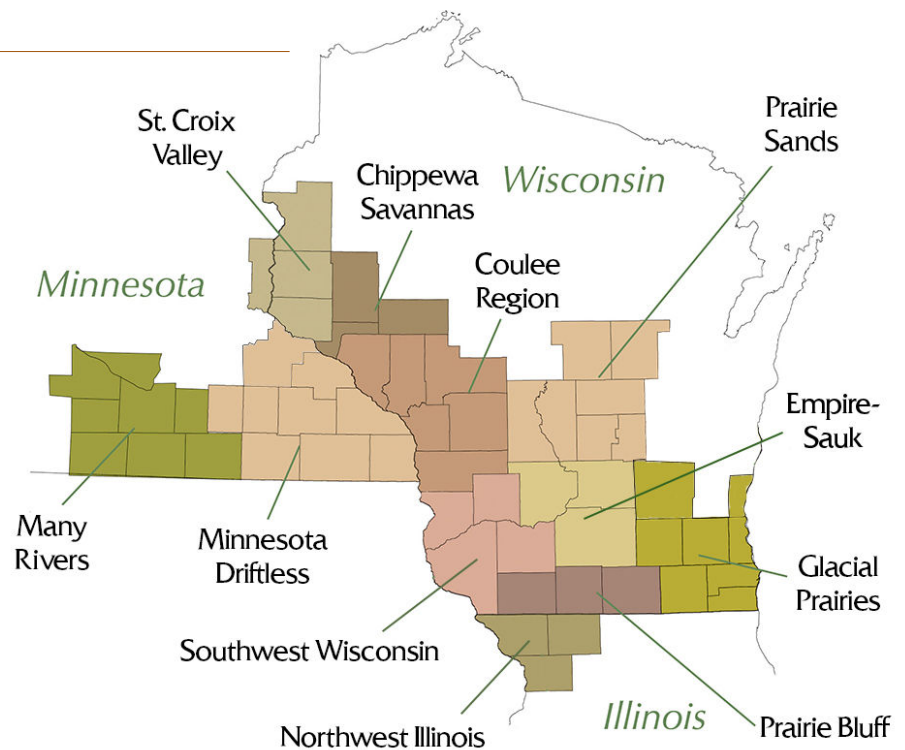
## Zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*)

Late August. Waist high. Inflorescences are presented in elegant marble-sized globs emerging from the upper-stem leaf axils, giving the stem and blooms a subtle zigzag appearance, which I find difficult to perceive. Lower leaves oval, toothed, with petioles tapering or 'winged' to the stalk. Mesic to dry, shady places, oak savanna. ■





# Chapter Updates



## Coulee Region

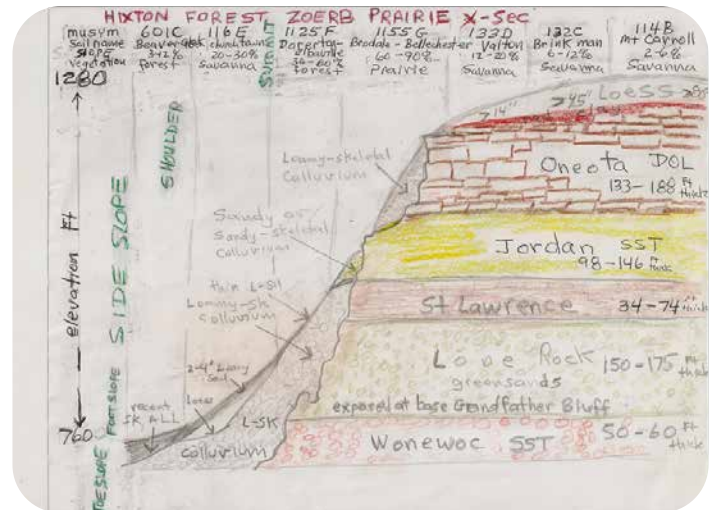
### A Couple of Journeys through Millions of Years

Jon Rigden and Jim Rogala

Note from authors: Jon's contribution to this article is parts extracted/modified from a blog post he wrote after the Zoerb Prairie hike. The full post can be found at [www.friendsoftheblufflands.org/post/a-journey-of-millions-of-years](http://www.friendsoftheblufflands.org/post/a-journey-of-millions-of-years).

On Saturday, June 12, some intrepid time traveling adventurers went on a journey of millions of years. Along the way they passed Loess, Oneota, Jordan, Lone Rock, and then reached their destination at Wonewoc. Hopefully many of you recognize these names as geologic formations of the Upper Midwest and know something about the journey we took. The purpose of the trip was to learn about the soils and geology of bluff prairies. We chose Zoerb Prairie in La Crosse as the one to study. Peter Hartman, a retired soils scientist from the USDA, led the trip.

The loess forms the top layer on our bluffs. It can be up to 3-4 feet deep on the very top and was blown in by winds after the last glacial period ended about 12,000 years ago. By the time we got to Zoerb Prairie itself, the very top of the prairie is a hard rock called dolostone, the Oneota formation. This rock is very resistant to erosion and forms the caps on all of the bluffs surrounding La Crosse. Dolostone is like limestone, but it formed in magnesium carbonate rich seas and has magnesium incorporated into its chemical structure. Without this protective rock, most of the surrounding bluffs would have eroded away by now. Then onto the prairie itself and, like most undisturbed prairies, the soil was in much better shape with the rich black top soil being at least 10 inches deep. We proceeded down the prairie, hoping we might find evidence of the Jordan sandstone layer. On Zoerb, it was entirely covered by loamy-skeletal colluvium, a mixture of dolostone rocks and loess from the top. Further downslope we saw a very distinct cliff edge at the base of the prairie, this layer being the St. Lawrence formation. Next was the Lone Rock formation which is a sandstone layer known



Peter Hartman's drawing of the geology of Zoerb Prairie.

for its green hues from glauconite. Last was the Wonewoc sandstone layer seen as light brown sandy deposits at the base of the prairie.

We then climbed back to the top of the prairie again admiring the many beautiful prairie plants growing there and having a better understanding of the different layers and soils on which they thrive. In some cases, plants are associated with the soils that are derived from the geologic formations. The trip was very enjoyable and didn't seem to last much time at all - way less than millions of years!

For an encore performance, Peter accepted the offer to look at soils and geology at the Rogala Prairies near Rockland, some 15 miles from Zoerb Prairie. As with most travels through time, we anticipated having a slightly different experience. Some pre-hike research and email exchanges suggested that would be the case, with likely differences even among the three bluff prairies on the single property. That is indeed what we found on our September 6 hike.



The first bluff prairie we visited had a distinct band of sand derived from the Jordan formation near the top. We saw species associated with sand prairies there, including hairy puccoon. As we got closer to the top, we began talking about sublayers in these formations as we saw the sandy outcroppings of the upper level of the Jordan formation. Once reaching the very top, we saw evidence of a thin, less than 10 feet, layer of Dolostone from the Oneota. The second bluff prairie we visited had somewhat similar stratification, but not nearly the extensive sandy band we found on the first. At the top of the third bluff prairie, we found good prairie soils of depth greater than 10 inches, which was not found in the first two. This one also had more exposed rock on its steeper slopes. More lichen crust over the open soils was also noted. We ran out of daylight (and energy), so didn't go downslope to look at the sandy band that was farther downslope than on the first prairie, but there is also hairy puccoon on that sandy band.

By no means are the study of soils and geology exact sciences, but we certainly furthered our understanding of geologic formations and soils of the bluff prairies we visited. Thinking in terms of millions of years puts a whole new perspective on our TPE mission!



Peter digging prairie soil at Rogala Prairies.

## Coulee Region Grim Reapers Club

Jim Rogala and Connie Weedman

I first considered adding a scythe to my tool shed when Connie Weedman showed off her scythe at the 2019 picnic. Someone made the comment that the Grim Reaper was

coming as she approached the group. I was intrigued. I enjoy mowing unwanted plants on my prairies, so what better way then as a Grim Reaper. Connie provides the following on her experience with scythes.

Scythes have long been used to cut grain for harvest, mow grass, and cut unwanted brush around desired plants. About 10 years ago I was looking for a way to control berry brush and sumac at my home near Sparta, where I have a few acres oak savannah that I am trying to improve. I did not want to have to resort to a gas machine or chemicals.



Connie demonstrating her technique.

My first scythe was a vintage, old American style scythe that was gifted to me. I found it more suitable for someone the size of Paul Bunyon, not someone 5'3"! I could only last 5-10 minutes when using that. A computer revealed good information about the use and history of scythes and what is out there to purchase. Given that there are few options for quality scythes in the US, it was easy to narrow my search to scythes made by the Scythe Supply in Perry, Maine. They carry a "European" style scythe, with high quality, yet lightweight blades, and ash snaths. They have various papers and videos on their website that I found helpful in learning about which blade would be best for my use, how to use it and maintain it. I ordered a 26" grass blade and it is efficient and sturdy enough to cut the brush I typically target.



Scythes are custom made to fit the user: Connie's is shorter.



*The advantages of using a scythe are that there is no gasoline engine to feed and maintain, no other chemicals are required, it is very portable, it provides a relaxing workout, it is quiet, and you can separate the plant you want to cut from the plant to leave without bending over. It is necessary to keep it sharp, however, as a dull blade takes much more effort, and you are more likely to damage your blade.*

Connie had me sold with the description of a quiet and relaxing experience. I also bought a scythe from Scythe Supply, but I went with a brush blade because I imagined using it on some tougher brush. This is my first year using it and so far, I've used it mostly on brambles and Canada goldenrod. I find I can really work the blade around desired species and then use a swift motion to sever off the stems of surrounding plants. I'm sure I will become more proficient as I use it more.

If traveling in the Coulee Region and you spot one of us approaching with a scythe, fear not for the harvest of your soul, but rather be assured that the Coulee Region Grim Reapers are mowing unwanted prairie weeds and brush!



*Jim making "hay" on some Canada goldenrod.*

## Empire-Sauk

Scott Sauer and Eric Preston and Kim Kreitinger

In August of 2018, TPE acquired 17 acres of hill prairie and the adjacent woodlands from Paul and Judy Swenson of Arena, WI. The prairie came in two separate pieces – Swenson Hill Prairie, the larger of the two, and the western portion of what is known as Shooting Star Prairie, which was shared with a neighbor. The neighboring property had long been on the conservation community's radar. Site visits by Jim Sime and Andrew Williams in the 1990s found a population of the small, annual Pale False Foxglove (*Agalinis skinneriana*), a Wisconsin Endangered Species, numbering in the "thousands" according to Jim. Other inventory occurrences placed the property high on the protection list.

I made a casual inquiry to Jim, who, along with his wife, Rose, are friends of the owners, about the property in December, 2019. The owners expressed some interest in selling the land as a preserve, and TPE wrote a letter of



*Mellum Road East*



*Mellum Road North*

formal interest in April 2020, just as pandemic restrictions started coming into order.

Our negotiations with the owners fell through in October, and they informed us they were selling to an "Arena neighbor." The buyer promptly divided the property into two parcels, installed a driveway, and put it on the market. Rumors of done deals abounded, but none seemed to stick. At the end of winter, the land was still for sale.

On March 8, I watched over a prescribed burn conducted by Quercus Land Stewardship Services on the larger Swenson remnant. From the heights of Swenson Prairie, I looked across the valley at the neighboring land, still half-buried in snow, and saw how beautiful it was. I also intimately knew its diversity and promise. I couldn't conceive of a house across the fence from Shooting Star Prairie. The property exemplified TPE's protection mission.

The next day was the Empire-Sauk Chapter Zoom meeting, and I lamented the state of affairs. Besides finding an immediate conservation buyer, the group seemed resigned to losing the land. Funny thing is, I don't recall asking that this property be part of the meeting discussion. Rumors of a new land sale floated about. Willis Brown sent







*Shooting Star*



*Agalinis Skinneriana*



*Hoary Puccoon*



*Bird's-foot Violet*

out notes from the meeting that Friday evening to the Chapter membership highlighting the property and the situation.

I was in near grief, and then that Sunday afternoon I got a phone call from Eric Preston that turned that emotion right around.

Eric Preston and Kim Kreitingner had recently been discussing the possibility of moving to the country. The 38-acre parcel contained two high quality prairie remnants, and the opportunity to protect this ecologically valuable parcel intrigued them. Upon hearing about the land for sale on a Friday, they contacted the sellers and met them for a tour on Sunday. Eric and Kim were struck by the expansive views, bucolic setting and ecological integrity of the site.

The sellers informed them that they were expecting an offer on the parcel containing the remnants on Tuesday, but they would accept the first offer that was asking price. Eric and Kim decided within 24 hours that they wanted to make an offer, and thankfully their offer was accepted. They closed on the property on May 3, 2021, and have already secured federal funding to begin restoration work.

We led a field trip on August 15 and found hundreds of blooming *Agalinis skinneriana*. Jim and Rose Sime were there. It was really gratifying to have Jim see these flowers blooming 30 years after he discovered this site. We've found

leadplant, cream baptisia, hoary puccoon, lots of dwarf liatris, and many other prairie plants.

Restoration work has begun under a USFWS grant, and we plan to have many work parties this winter to remove cedars and other invasive plants from the original prairie.

## Annual Winter Solstice Bonfire

Willis Brown

This year the Empire-Sauk Chapter of TPE will hold their Winter Solstice Bonfire on Tuesday, December 21 starting at 6 pm. The fire will be at the Mounds View property near the barn. Please follow any COVID-19 protocols. Only bring food for personal consumption.

## Glacial Prairie

Alice Mirk

The Glacial Prairie Chapter continues to keep busy with small work groups every Saturday. We work on protected land and have two volunteer communities working on WDNR SNAs one Saturday a month. Now that Fall is here, we are back in full swing with our work days and they have been well-attended. We are so grateful we can still meet in spite of another COVID-19 surge and we are grateful as well to Michelle Bonness and Shane Morris for lending us their oversized patio for outdoor chapter meetings.

At the chapter meeting in September, we planned our budget for 2022 and had planning discussions on several issues. We would like to pursue acquiring two conservation easements and have set the ball rolling with the two companies that currently own the land. We know that this is a long process and our first foray into working with private companies, but we have confidence that there is a great deal of experience within The Prairie Enthusiasts ranks to help us out as we work on these two parcels.

We also discussed the future of the Karow Preserve. We continue to work on this gem with owner Dale Karow, helping him plan for a secure future for the site. Since the death of his wife Kim, Dale has been talking with the chapter about selling the land (about 57 acres) to an owner



*Liatris cylindracea*



who will continue to preserve and work on it as they did for many years (See the essay by the late Kim Karow about her discovery of the land and her awakening to what it really was!). We will continue to help Dale as we explore the possible purchase of this outstanding property.

We are planning some fall burns, weather permitting. We need to burn parts of the Karow Preserve and parts of the Willowbrook Conservancy and we will be in touch with chapter members as the date of these burns move up the work schedule. It seems we are never short of people wanting to burn, so stay tuned to our chapter eNews for the burn announcements!

## An Invitation to Know and Love Our Landscapes

Brooke McEwen

Walter Mirk is pointing out baubles of angelica. We take another step along the path, rub mountain mint between our fingers and breathe its sweetness. A few steps more and sideoats gramma, with its chain of dangles, is slipping through our hands. Walter teaches John and me to find and to name monkey flower. Ooo! Ooo! Ahh! Ahh! Such beauty excites us so much we hardly believe him when he says this clearing was all buckthorn, and because we need to see to believe, we walk under the arc of an oak, toward the edge of an opening, and here it is: the remaining buckthorn. It is like stepping into a scribble.

We are on the grounds of Willowbrook Conservancy for our chapter's annual meeting. Our hosts Michelle Bonness



*Glacial Prairie annual meeting.*

and Shane Morris are serving brats and rearranging chairs so that everyone has a seat on the patio. By the time we finish our tour, plates are loaded with the dishes everyone brought to pass: watermelon, pasta salads, chips and guac. Alice Mirk asks our chapter where to begin work this fall, and I am already eager to trade my backpacking gear for a brush cutter, to get on with the buckthorn, when Michelle says she doesn't want to take a workday because she has not had the chance to steward other places. I take a bite of my brat, dumbstruck.

Perhaps an ask for stewardship is an invitation; an invitation, a kind of salve for the anthropocene-addled souls, tap dancing on keyboards, writing elegies for places that still, in spite of their transformations, remain. Property owners



*Freeing the bur oak: Oak choked with buckthorn.  
(By Alison Reinhoffer)*

who extend this invitation are stewarding possibility and imagination as much as the land itself. It is a gift. To conjure savanna from thickets requires a vision of the mind when all the eye can see is shadow. It is a talent Michelle and Shane and many members of The Prairie Enthusiasts like them possess. It's a form of hospitality. Prairie hospitality. To take a work day. Or two or ten. We will trade elbow grease for your reception of angelica, monkey flower, and these two strangers as guests.

John and I are city folk. Many weeknights for many years we have followed the sidewalk to where it ends at a bluff overlooking the lake. Eight years have passed since the bluff was stabilized with a mat of grasses, sedges, and forbs. Now it is thistle, thistle, and thistle. Some spires of pigweed



*Freeing the bur oak: Sunlight on the lower branches at last  
(By Alison Reinhoffer)*





*Prairie white fringed orchid (Platanthera leucophaea) is a rare plant found on the Karow property. (By Justin Meissen)*

here and there. There's limited staff, small budgets, and enthusiasm for a project's completion, which usually fizzles with its maintenance. But what if sustaining this everlasting work—as well as the professionals and property owners who dedicate themselves to it—is a matter of rallying more hands to care for more places?

Thanks to the patience

of ecologists, citizen scientists, and prairie enthusiasts, I feel the urge to uproot dame's rocket along the Oak Leaf Trail, and the non-native cultivars at the garden center are significantly less appealing than they used to be. Learning to see clearly is unenchanted and reenchanting at the same time. To know and care for these places is like learning a language. You cannot do it alone. You need a conversation partner who is fluent, and that happens to be Tom Zagar while I grab dessert at the annual meeting. He is telling John and me where to find shrubby cinquefoil when I brandish a photo of a scraggly bush growing in our backyard. What he actually means is where to find it, like, in the splinters of wild in southeastern Wisconsin. He doesn't laugh at me. Not even once.

This mutual giving and receiving of elbow grease and vision, knowledge and experience, cartons of eggs and cookies and zucchini thrust into one another's arm before leaving leaves me dumbstruck still. I had once pictured zebras when I thought of savannas, if I thought of them at all, and now I cannot imagine unseeing lead plant. Swamp milkweed. Monkey flower! The sunny beak of a bluebird fledgling, a wriggle of white split from a gall.

Did you ever think there was still so much abundance, so much generosity? Look no further than The Prairie Enthusiasts members, professionals and volunteer stewards, giving their time, resources, and knowledge toward restoration projects that benefit us all. Property owners undertaking such endeavors extend our sightlines, fine tune our seeing, and adjust the quality of our attention. They teach us to think in terms of generations, concentric circles, and compass plants. That what it actually means to recreate is to re-create.

A few weeks after the meeting John and I are walking in the rainlight and a harmony of prairie color. John's Aunt Clare

and Uncle Dave, our guests from Minneapolis, are visiting Kettle Moraine for the first time. "What's that?" Uncle Dave asks, hoping for something exotic, and it is. "Reed canary grass," I tell them and yank out a clump. No doubt it's still there, alive and kicking. But even a year ago, I wouldn't have been comfortable touching it, let alone naming it. It is like not knowing what to call a rumbling stomach, or that there is solution. There are more people who would bring a dish to pass if they knew how.

John's uncle disappears behind the sweep of big bluestem. "We could be in another country!" he exclaims. But we're not.

What a splendid invitation to know and love our own landscapes. What a gift to find otherworldly hospitality without ever leaving home.

## Many Rivers

Steven Gahm

Taking advantage of the temporary lull in the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Many Rivers Prairie Enthusiasts did get together for a picnic this summer. Michelle and Brad Gaard hosted. After a business meeting and lunch, picnickers toured the blooms and bees.

Droughty conditions prevailed this summer, and with wet prairies all but gone, the rivers have run low. Yet even at low flow, they remain quite beautiful, such as the LeSueur River pictured below reflecting autumn color.



*Fall reflections in the LeSueur River (Photo by Denise Friesen)*

It has been a fairly quiet summer for our Chapter. We did have a successful picnic before the new "pandemic rules" forced cancellation of future meetings.

On July 10th, 24 members met at Brad and Michelle's beautiful site outside of New Ulm for our annual picnic. Weather was cool and threatening rain, so we were able to take advantage of Brad's impeccably clean shop for our gathering. In addition to good food and conversation, we managed to sneak in a Chapter meeting, electing officers and getting reports from several committees. Other in person meetings have obviously been canceled.

Summer in southwest Minnesota was exceptionally dry. It has resulted in very short prairie grasses and subdued colors. It seems yellows and orange have handled the



dryness the best.

It started raining in early September and now the under growths in our prairies are very green, not conducive to fall burning. As I write this on October 15th, we have not had a frost. We'll see if we get one soon and if it will improve our chances for fall burning.

Henry Panowitsch and Jim Vonderharr continue to tend the New Ulm School districts "teaching" prairie projects. Success has been mixed, but we are forever optimistic.



## Minnesota Driftless

*Stephen Winter*

The Minnesota Driftless chapter had a busy spring and summer that included a number of field trips. In May, a large group of people, young and old, participated in a field trip at Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area in Houston County. A spring field trip at Mound Prairie SNA, led by naturalist and prairie restorationist Scott Leddy, has become an annual spring event for the chapter. In June, field trip participants converged on Prairie Creek Wildlife Management Area, which spans Rice and Goodhue Counties, to find grassland birds. This field trip was led by Craig Koester, who helped create the site from a portion of his family's farm in 2013. Assisting Craig was Gerry Hoekstra and Kevin Smith, two area birders with exceptional bird ID skills who are very familiar with the



birds of Prairie Creek WMA. The group had excellent views of several species of grassland birds: grasshopper sparrow, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, and dickcissel. Some of the discussions enjoyed that morning revolved around the conservation threats facing dickcissels on their South American wintering grounds, and the way many grassland birds employ a flight song to attract mates and advertise the boundaries of their breeding territory. More than 20 species of birds were spotted in a relatively short period of time during the field trip.

Also in June, the chapter co-hosted, along with Healthy Lake Winona and the Pleasant Valley Pollinator Corridor (PVPC), a field tour of multiple sites that are part of the





Pleasant Valley Pollinator Corridor – Lawns to Legumes Demonstration Neighborhood grant program. The PVPC is an initiative to build an interconnected network of pollinator habitats in suburban and rural areas lying within the Pleasant Valley of Winona County. With this initiative, residential sites representing Lawns to Legumes habitat plantings are working in synergy with native plant roadside plantings and restored bluff prairies to create a landscape benefitting pollinators and other species that use or require prairie habitats. The MD TPE is a supporter of the PVPC and will provide in-kind volunteer services helping with the restoration and management of up to three bluff prairies in the corridor, and up to two educational field trips.

The chapter's final field trip of the season, in July, was especially valuable for people interested in prairie restoration plantings that are done on retired cropland. Glenn Heins hosted us at his property near St. Charles, in Winona County, and we explored his prairie restoration multiple high diversity prairie plantings of various ages and at different stages of establishment. Glenn and the field trip participants enjoyed talking about planting methods and post-planting management. Some of Glenn's plantings were burned earlier in the spring so participants got to see contrasts between burned and unburned areas.

As an added bonus, everyone who attended the field trip at Glenn's property took home a free copy of the brand new *Prairies of Minnesota Landowner Handbook*, a 178-page book published by the Minnesota DNR, which is both a reference and workbook for landowners who want to manage, restore, and protect prairies. A PDF of this handbook can be downloaded at Minnesota's DNR website: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairierestoration/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairierestoration/index.html).



In August, the chapter held its annual summer meeting, potluck, and hike at the Wiscoy Valley Community Land Cooperative in Winona County. During the meeting, elections were held for the chapter Board of Directors positions of Chair and Secretary. Steve Winter was re-elected to serve another two-year term as Chair and Michelle Cochran was re-elected to serve another two-year term as Secretary. The other chapter board positions are held by Kevin O'Brien (Vice-Chair) and Peter Hartman (Treasurer), those positions will be up for election in 2022.

Anyone who is interested in the Minnesota Driftless

chapter, or has questions about the chapter, is welcome to contact Stephen Winter ([wintersl8944@gmail.com](mailto:wintersl8944@gmail.com); 402-310-5460).

## Northwest Illinois



### A Lesson in Patience

*Rickie Rachuy*

By now you know that our chapter has two rare plant gardens in which we raise plants (over 117 species) that have been mostly extirpated in Northwest Illinois. If we are successful, we collect the seed and introduce these rare species into suitable habitat in the Illinois Driftless Area.

It's a satisfying, if sometimes frustrating, occupation. Some things grow like gangbusters, others not so much. We've been trying to grow *Gentianella quinquefolia* from wild-harvested seed for three years and thought we had finally been successful this spring. But alas, in the end those seedlings turned out to be weeds. Oddly, several plants of the real thing popped up in another bed where it was seeded 4 years ago, and we had long stopped looking for it!



*Gentianella quinquefolia*



## Native Pollinators Presentation

Susan Lipnick



One made it, the other didn't, July 2021

Now, I am babying along one *Clematis occidentalis* plant that I started from seed in February of 2020. The seed came from Prairie Moon (with a proviso that it can be difficult to germinate) and was stratified in damp sand for 90 days in the 'fridge. It was then sown into sterile soil and kept under grow lights for two months.

At the end of May, after showing no growth whatsoever, the 20 pots were placed on the screened porch and watered regularly. The flat of pots stayed on the porch all winter and in spring 2021 I started watering again. At some point in May a few tiny seedlings appeared. One turned out to be a weed, but two held promise. I nursed them along and although one didn't make it, after several repottings the other has turned into a healthy plant. Now I must keep this plant alive through another winter before finally planting it out next spring. Wish me luck.



*Clematis occidentalis*, September 2021



Some attendees trying to determine a species of native bumblebee. (Photo by Susan Lipnick)

On June 27, biologist Bev Paulan treated Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts members and guests to the presentation "Native Plants Need Native Pollinators" at The Prairie Enthusiasts Hanley Savanna in rural Hanover, Illinois. The event, originally scheduled for late June 2020 but postponed because of COVID-19, was well worth the wait.



Biologist Bev Paulan, presenter. (Photo by Susan Lipnick)

Topics included the following:

- Some history as to how native plants and native pollinators have adapted to each other and how the decline of one is contributing to the decline of the other in various areas of the world;
- The kinds of local native plant pollinators, which include bumblebees, wasps, flies, butterflies, moths, beetles, and birds. In other areas, bats and people are important pollinators;
- The needs of local native pollinators, including specific food and water sources, appropriate nesting sites, and overwintering sites;
- The dangers certain retail plants present to native pollinators, including cultivars or hybrids of native plants, nonnative plants, pesticides bred into GMO-modified plants;
- Problems resulting from efforts to boost populations of the non-native honey bee; and



- Efforts home gardeners and prairie enthusiasts alike can take to boost populations of native plants. Bev also provided a list of “superfood” native forbs as well as the top five native tree species that support 90% of our local butterflies and moths. You can find this triptych of useful information on NIPE’s Facebook page, July 1, 2021 post.

After the presentation, attendees took the opportunity to ask questions and explored the prairies, trying to identify native pollinators on native plants.

## Prairie Sands

### Prairie Sands Chapter Members Receive Awards and Invasive Species Workshops

Mary Ray Goehring

Prairie Sands Chapter wants to congratulate two chapter members, John Shillinglaw and Ken Erickson, for the awards they recently received from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and their Partners for Wildlife program and Pheasants Forever. **See page 5 story for more details.**

Many of our chapter members partnered with Golden Sand RC & D to hold Invasive Species Workshops in the Central Sands region. On September 11th, Rob Baller from The Prairie Enthusiasts and Asa Plonsky from Golden Sands gave a workshop presentation on prairie invasive species identification and management at the Oxford prairie of Prairie Sands Chapter members, Dale and Beth Johnson. After the lecture and lunch there was a tour of the Johnson property and field demonstrations on control and eradication techniques.

On October 2nd there was a forest invasive species management workshop at John Muir Park. The event was hosted by Central Wisconsin Invasive Species Partnership. Thank you to Chapter Member Fred Wollenburg and Chris Schaefer for representing the Prairie Sands Chapter at the event and, Chris, for helping send press releases. Special thanks to chapter member David Hamel for coordinating both of these events with Asa Plonsky from Golden Sands and the Central Wisconsin Invasive Species Partnership.



Central Wisconsin Invasive Species Partnership workshop at Prairie Sands member, Dale and Beth Johnson's Oxford property.

## Southwest Wisconsin

Twenty-four people cheerfully battled heat and mosquitoes to take part in our Land Trust Days event, a tour of four private restoration sites in Crawford and Richland Counties, on September 11.

We began at the Jim Dworschack property near Soldiers Grove. After viewing his collection of antique Nash automobiles, we hiked up his hillside to view the work he is doing to establish oak savanna and prairie. Next was the Gary Adams property, also near Soldiers Grove. We picnicked there and enjoyed being hauled up the hill seated on straw bales on two trailers. Gary's property has two main components, ridge top planted to CRP specifications and ridge top planted to what Gary deems most appropriate for the site. The latter has more variety. From there the group drove to the Gotham area to see the adjoining properties of Phil Jennings and Mike Nee. These two landowners have worked cooperatively to do a uniform restoration across their two properties. Phil has a mature planted prairie on his site and Mike a planted prairie that is still more of a work in progress. Their biggest project, however, is a major effort at clearing trees off steep, south facing bluffs. When the clearing and ground preparation is completed, the slopes we will developed into prairie and savanna. It was a full day for everyone, and the opportunity to see a variety of sites and approaches to restoration.

After much delay, our chapter is pleased to have received generous grants from the Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Fund that will enable us to accelerate work being done at our Sylvan Road and Eldred sites. We look forward to seeing what we can accomplish with these grants.



### Annual Picnic & Membership Meeting

Jack Kussmaul

On a perfect late summer day, Saturday, September 18, the chapter held its annual picnic and membership meeting. It was held at the Jack Kussmaul property on the Lower Wisconsin River. The day began with a tour of his





## St. Croix Valley

Evanne Hunt

### Chapter Picnic

The chapter picnic was held on Sunday, August 15, at Freedom Park in Prescott. Twenty-three people enjoyed brats, burgers, and loads of fruit and salads. A great time was had by all!



St. Croix Valley Chapter Picnic

restored prairie, savanna and woodland. We moved on to a potluck picnic and the membership meeting.

Two new board members were elected at the meeting. Bob Costanza is a naturalist by training and works at the Eagle Valley Preserve near Cassville. He has been one of the most active participants in TPE work parties in recent years. The other was Debbie Pavick. Debbie is from Chicago but owns land, with Joe Block, in Richland County and on which they have been doing serious restoration work for many years. We look forward to visiting the property.



New board members Bob Costanza and Debbie Pavick



While we gained two new board members, we were sorry to lose another, Jaye Maxfield. Jaye has served on the board for 19 years and has been an active volunteer for most of those years. Always a source of scientific knowledge as well as good cheer, we will miss her greatly.

### Blueberry Hill Prairie Update

Finally! The chapter was informed August 17 that the Minnesota Department of Transportation finalized the Highway Sponsorship Plan (HSP) license for Blueberry Hill prairie just south of Bayport, MN. This license is valid for five years.

The HSP enables the chapter to manage Blueberry Hill as a native prairie remnant to expand pollinator habitat and maintain a conservancy for ground nesting species.

There were additional delays while MnDOT decided whether we needed a permit for a celebration (food, beer, a crowd of people). We also have to wait our turn until the



Highway Department can install a sponsor acknowledgment sign on Highway 95.

Therefore, we decided to delay a celebration event until next spring. By that time the sponsorship sign will be installed and a parking area will be created north of the prairie.

In the meantime, join us this winter when we clear cedar and boxelder trees from a recently discovered area loaded with prairie plants. This degraded prairie will provide an even better view of the St. Croix River.

## Seed Picking

Chapter members and UW-River Falls students collected prairie seed on September 7, 14, 21, and 28. The seed collected will be distributed on areas cleared this winter of buckthorn and cedar. Some will be saved for our new restoration adjoining Alexander oak savanna. This old corn field borders a creek that will be a perfect wet mesic prairie.

Seed collectors targeted Joe-Pye weed, White wild indigo, Cream wild indigo, Leadplant, Flowering spurge, White Prairie Clover, and cool season grasses.



UW-River Falls students seed picking (photo by Mike Miller)



UW-River Falls students seed picking (photo by Evanne Hunt)

## Work Parties!

We have scheduled winter work days for every other Saturday, October through December. We typically work from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm, but come for one or two hours or however long you can help. Whatever time you can volunteer is appreciated! We cut and burn buckthorn and non-native trees to open the canopy over prairie plants. We take a break about noon to roast hot dogs! Join us! Check the chapter web page for locations.



UW-River Falls student Caitlin Golle (photo by Evanne Hunt)







# Welcome New Members!

June 14-October 14

## Chippewa Savannas

Douglas Owens-Pike  
Jay and Jennifer  
Olson-Goude  
Joe Kirst  
Marissa and Westley  
Hart  
Scott and Diane  
Fredrick

## Coulee Region

Aaron, Anna, Hank,  
Nora, Greta, and  
Annika Olson  
James and Sue Kell  
Jill Andersen  
Kathy Tate-Bradish  
and Bob Bradish  
Ronald Schwarz and  
Laura Moberly  
Sara Martinez &  
Matthew Urch  
Todd and Karen  
Rathbun

## Empire-Sauk

Alfred Matano  
Alyssa Brickl  
Andy Ringquist  
Brenda and Richard  
Hamel  
Chris, Rowan, and  
Sage Gibson  
Darla Patterson  
David Mittlesteadt

Dee Dee Zwettler

Denny Behr

Diane Farsetta

Diane Thelander

family

Don Marx

Erich Schmidtke

Erik and Corina

Anderson

Evelyn Williams

Jenn Simons

Kevin Jacobson

Maggie Milcarek

Margaret McGlone

Mitchell Groenhof

Rae McCormick

Richard and

Margaret Hannah

Richard Pantalone

and Eunice Hardy

Sarah Kraszewski

and Brendon

Panke

shel ohare

Stephen Lyrene

Taylor Drogemuller

Ted Robinson-

Meyers

Wyverns Trove

## Glacial Prairie

Carolyn Campeaux

Emily and

Christopher Goetz

Erin McKeon Ricchio

Julia & Todd Loehr

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### Questions?

E-mail Caleb DeWitt at [cdewitt@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:cdewitt@theprairieenthusiasts.org)

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