



# The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

*Grassroots Conservation in Action*

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## Landowner Survey Shows Surprises

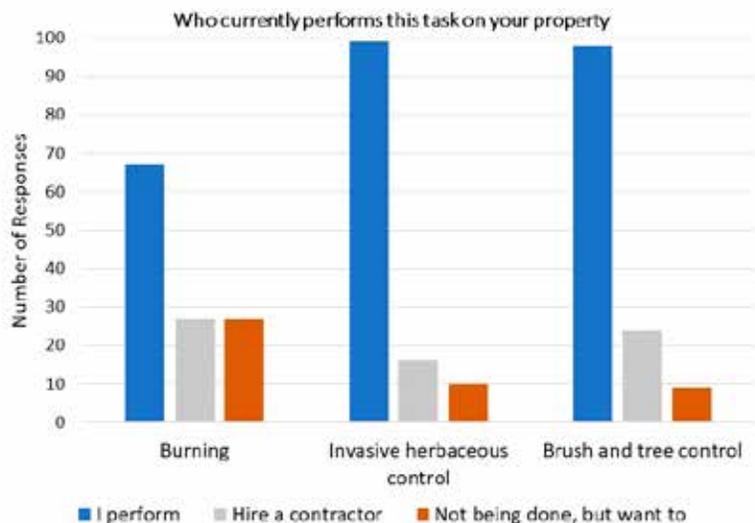
*By Jim Rogala*

A survey of TPE members indicates most landowners prefer to work their own land, value many types of restoration actions and may be willing to pay for some services but definitely not others.

Landowner services is one of the five initiatives identified by TPE through chapter visits by Board President Scott Fulton and Executive Director Chris Kirkpatrick over the last couple years. To gain insight into what members want from Chapter Support staff to meet this objective, an ad hoc committee was formed. The first logical step for the committee was to conduct a survey of landowners and TPE members to better understand landowner needs and plan how TPE can help meet those needs.

The survey went on-line in November 2017, and we had a total of 119 respondents.

Below are some general results of the survey. For this article, I’m only summarizing responses tied to three main aspects of the survey - **who** cur-



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## Our Mission

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

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**Communications Coordinator** - Joe Rising  
**Bookkeeper** - Jerry Pedretti

## Editorial Volunteers

**Chippewa Savannas** - Joe Maurer  
*theprairieenthusiasts.csc@gmail.com*  
**Coulee Region** - Jim Rogala  
*jrogala58@gmail.com*  
**Empire-Sauk** - Cate Harrington  
*charrington@tnc.org*  
**Glacial Prairie** - Alice & Walter Mirk  
*wamcp70@charter.net*  
**Many Rivers** - Deanna Pomije  
*pomijelynn@hotmail.com*  
**Minnesota Driftless** - George Howe  
*howe93@acegroup.cc*  
**Northwest Illinois** - Rickie Rachuy  
*rr.lonetree@frontier.com*  
**Prairie Bluff** - Tom Mitchell  
*tnmitchell@tds.net*  
**Prairie Sands** - Ray Goehring  
*raygoe@yahoo.com*  
**Southwest Wisconsin** - Linda Lynch  
*wondrelfarms@mhtc.net*

**Prairie Promoter Editor** -  
Debra Noell  
*promoter@theprairieenthusiasts.org*

Cover Photo: Jan Ketelle, dedicated volunteer, collects the threatened prairie Indian plantain at Swamp Lovers by Cross Plains, Wisc., on Aug. 18. Seed will be used in the Mounds View fall planting. (Photo by Rob Baller)



## TPE Receives Land Trust Accreditation

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

In August, The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) and The Prairie Enthusiasts Trust (PE Trust) earned national recognition for sound finances, responsible governance, ethical conduct, lasting stewardship, commitment to public trust and conservation excellence. This means all of our hard work toward Grassroots Conservation in Action has been noticed.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded our accreditation status, signifying its confidence that TPE's lands are well protected. After several years of hard work on policies and procedures adhering to the commission's national standards and practices, TPE has demonstrated continuous organizational improvement for the biodiversity and people of the upper Midwest.

TPE provided extensive documentation, which was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation, in order to achieve this distinction. This is crucial. Now that TPE has a solid and sound land protection program, it can commit to long-term legal defense and care for its sites into perpetuity. Consider the potential when in 2018 alone, we intend to protect eight additional sites with about 350 acres of newly acquired properties.

This distinction and commitment has been well received. More and more donors are establishing endowments with TPE. In 2017, we saw a \$250,000 increase in our Land Management Endowment alone. In addition, members are thinking of TPE in their estate plans.

TPE received high marks for our well-managed financial system, which is quite complex given our chapter-oriented structure. Our donors and members can be assured they are working with a land trust that is following national standards for fiscal responsibility.

Here at the Chapter Support office, I'm excited to share this news with you. We work hard every day to carry the mission of TPE forward. This notoriety and recognition shows how our work is paying off and our approach is on target. You are the foundation of TPE, and your support is making a difference. Thank you!



## Welcome New Members

June 16-October 17, 2018

Robert Beck  
Harris Farm  
NatureWorks LLC  
Katie Cramer  
Liz & Paul Erdmann  
Ken Ford  
Prairie Restorations Inc.  
Wil Fryer  
Dean Huisingsh  
Kathryn Jargo & Scott Feraro

Terry & Kathy Lane  
Steve Meiers  
David Olson  
Todd Paddock  
Michael & Debra Reinsbach  
Mike & Kathy Ripp  
Jane A. Smith  
Lynne Strode  
Lucas Tetrick  
Louis & Linda Wagner



## President's Message

Scott Fulton, President

On Sept. 29, more than 30 leadership representatives from our chapters, board and staff met at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve for the first-ever TPE Leadership Retreat. We were pleased that in addition to a good representation of our “long-timers,” the group included many who were new to leadership roles, including younger leaders from several chapters. The program was developed and facilitated with the invaluable help of David Allen and Nancy Moore of Conservation Consultants, who have been working with our Board on this project for over a year under a grant from Gathering Waters (the association of Wisconsin land trusts).

The program started with chapter leaders giving a brief presentation on what success means to them, what stands in their way, and what next steps they would like to see. We then watched a thought-provoking and inspiring TED talk by Simon Sinek on “*Start with Why.*” This led to small-group discussions where we shared why each of us is so passionate about TPE and its mission. Moore briefly summarized the process of vision-led strategic planning, and I presented “*A Financial Portrait of TPE.*”

In the afternoon, we held small-group brainstorming sessions based on a selection from six key strategic questions distilled from the chapter presentations in the morning. Of

great interest to me was that almost every group chose to address the questions about our next generation of members and organization leaders. Everyone at the retreat is looking for new approaches to ensure that our organization continues well into the future, and the new ideas shared by the various groups for reaching out to people of all ages were quite impressive.

The retreat closed with each of us making a personal commitment to do something specific to move TPE forward. My own commitment is to focus on developing and carrying out a comprehensive, vision-led strategic planning process. Because of TPE’s characteristic way of carrying out our mission at the local level, this process needs to begin with each chapter considering its own strategic goals for the next 3-to-5 years. The Leadership Retreat was a wonderful start, and Chris and I will be continuing the discussion with each chapter during our annual visits in the coming months.

Many thanks to the staff, Board and especially the Executive Committee for doing the work to create and hold this event. Based on the very positive response, we hope to do something like this every year or two going forward. Please let me know what you think ([president@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org](mailto:president@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org)).



Scott Fulton, TPE Board President, leads a discussion at the first TPE Leadership Retreat. (Photo by Joe Rising)

rently performs restoration, how much do **landowners value** the access to services, and what is the **willingness to pay** for services. There were many other questions in the survey that were intended to be ancillary information, and I won't touch on those here other than to say there's a lot of diversity in the portraits of the landowners that responded.

The results for the four questions related to **"who currently performs restoration"** highlight how effective and committed we are as landowners. Most landowners perform the vital land management tasks themselves, with only burning being performed less by landowners. Only about 25% or less of landowners hire contractors, with burning and woody species control being most often contracted. The responses of needing additional restoration work illustrates what's not getting done, but perhaps this is an underestimate when considering the complexity of what might drive the responses.

For example, we don't capture the idea that although it's being done, a lot more of it could/should be done. I personally perform all of these tasks on my land and hire contractors to assist, but there is a lot more that could be done. Also, the question of why it is not getting done would be interesting to investigate. Lack of time, health, finances or contractor availability are all potential factors.

The results from the **"value of potential services"** questions were unexpectedly uniform. For the 23 services we asked about, "high" responses only ranged between 35 and 55. Some of the higher valued services include grant management and providing information on non-burn management. Visiting, evaluating, and developing plans for remnants and plantings were generally lower-valued services.

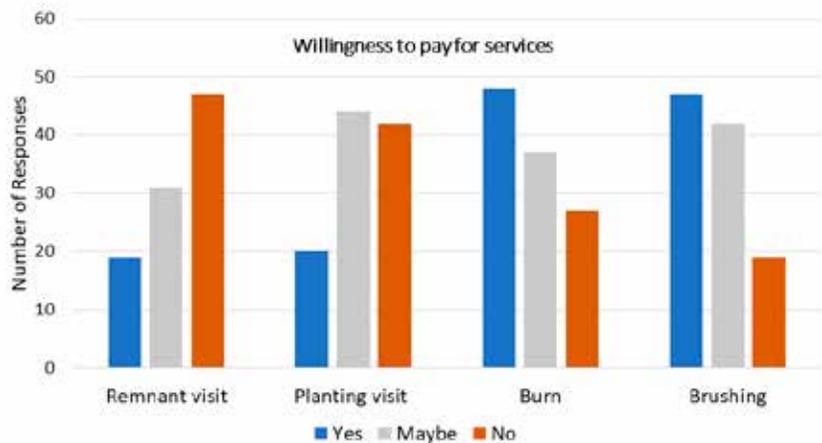
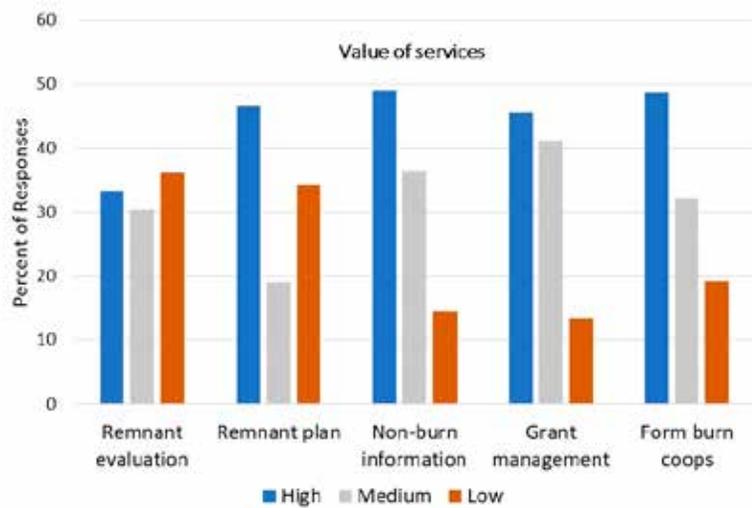
The extreme responses of high or low (lack of "medium" responses) for some remnant-related services is probably an indication of the type of property landowners have. As I mentioned, there were not great differences in the value among services, so keep that in mind when considering the results. Basically, I think most of us value all prairie conservation work.

The eight questions on **"willingness to pay for services"** provided some interesting

results, but again further investigation might be needed. For the most part, respondents aren't willing to pay for services related to visiting and developing a management plan for lands.

In contrast, prescribed burns and brush removal are services that landowners are more willing to pay for. This may again be a function of the value and status of these services, because if visits and plans for lands aren't valued or have already been done, then there would be no interest in paying for those services.

The committee will use these survey results to further understand landowner service needs, and how TPE can better enable chapters in assisting landowners to manage their prairies. Thanks to all who participated in the survey. If you want to provide additional input, feel free to contact me, the ad hoc committee chair, Jim Rogala, at [jrogala58@gmail.com](mailto:jrogala58@gmail.com)



# Nature Needs Us

By David Cordray

Sounds of cars, trucks, horns, sirens, planes and trains disorient me. I feel my other senses shutting down. Stately oaks rise over rich, rare grasses and wildflowers, but my mind cannot correlate what I'm hearing with what I'm seeing. I feel my wife's hand on my back. An American woodcock flushes near us. A red-headed woodpecker flies by – and my fixation on the unnatural noise breaks, allowing two contradictory worlds to blend. Welcome to Somme Preserve, I think, finally ready to immerse myself in this natural wonder.

Part of Cook County's Forest Preserve system, the 410-acre Somme Preserve is located in Northbrook Ill., deep within Chicago's metropolitan area. Hemmed in by interstate, concrete and asphalt, and carved out of a sea of European buckthorn, Somme (pronounced like Tom) Prairie Grove and Somme Woods reveal a couple of Illinois' rarest and highest-quality natural areas.

Our guides, site stewards Stephen Packard and Eriko Kojima, lead six of us through a surreal exploration of natural heritage in the last place anyone would look.

Packard stands under a canopy of healthy oak trees among elm-leaved goldenrod, yellow and purple hyssop, sweet Joe-pye weed and many other species. He takes us back to the 1970s when he and other like-minded individuals convinced forest preserve officials to allow buckthorn removal.

"We feared the neighbors would view our restoration efforts as destroying nature," Packard said. "So we devoted a lot of effort to educating anyone who would listen about the whys and hows of what we were doing."

He recalls a public meeting in the 1980s. The Somme volunteers had just presented a slide show about their restoration work. The room fell uncomfortably silent; the faces in the crowd showing little. All heads turned and looked to the back of the room at one man. "My dad owned that land before the Forest Preserve took it away from him," the man said. "We took good care of our land. When my dad saw what was happening to the Forest Preserve, it just about killed him. You people are doing the right thing!"

A collective sigh passed through the crowd. In the years to follow, the Somme volunteers charged ahead in this new field of restoration ecology. They faced more obstacles, including waves of invasive species, the uncertainties of being a step ahead of science, and a painful restoration moratorium. Nonetheless, the socially diverse and committed group has prevailed to this day.

As Packard heads off to our next destination, I look closer at an unfamiliar plant. It's a distinctive goldenrod, similar to zigzag, but the leaves are more slender. "Blue-stemmed goldenrod," Kojima says, sensing my confusion. Yes, I think, the stem really is blue-gray. A new species for me!



Oak woodland restoration with Stephen Packard (L), his protégé Eriko Kojima and author David Cordray. (Photos by Debra Noell)

Packard stops adjacent to a large patch of woodland sunflowers. Behind him, a backdrop of buckthorn hedgerow obscures a continuous blur of racing cars. He and Kojima share the basic restoration process of buckthorn and invasive species removal, prescribed fire, and annual inter-seeding of hundreds of species of local, hand-collected seeds.

With a wide sweep of his hands, Packard indicates a rich area where no species is dominating, and the plant structure is short and diverse, a sign of intense competition; all niche spaces have been filled.

"But here," Packard adds, pointing to the homogeneous patch of woodland sunflowers that look strikingly out of place from the neighboring plant community's structural and species diversity. "Are these guys thugs? Do we need to be concerned? The dominants used to be buckthorn, then tall goldenrod, and now woodland sunflower? Will plant diversity catch up and tame the woodland sunflower as it did the goldenrod, or will the sunflowers grow in size and swallow plant diversity?"

It's not a question he knows the answer to – but a reminder that practitioners must sometimes move forward with only hunches and opinions, trusting that gradually the facts will be revealed.

Next, we leave the oak woodland and nervously follow a fearless Packard across a four-lane intersection with no crosswalk or pedestrian traffic signals, pass through another buckthorn hedgerow, and enter a savanna. Packard is a fast walker, and I quickly find myself a straggler, distracted by gentians. "Grab the camera; I found a fringed gentian," I say. Soon, we realize, we're surrounded by gentians. In one little swale, we find dozens of fringed, bottle and cream gentians. It's hard to let go of the stunning beauty of a fringed gentian.

Continued on Page 6

We pick up the pace, passing by several of our favorite plants and widely scattered bur and Hill's oak trees, and catch up with the group. Packard reflects that in the beginning, they thought they were restoring prairie, and experts advised the Somme volunteers to cut back all the brush to expand the prairie's size and health. As they cut, they found smothered oak trees and rare species of plants and animals not known to be in prairies. Eventually, they realized, they had uncovered a poorly understood, and even rarer plant community – the oak savanna.

I find myself distracted by a chest-high blazing star next to me. It has hefty flower-heads, much larger than I've seen before, on ascending stalks. My poorly disguised obsession with the plant must have been obvious because both Packard and Kojima blurt out "savanna blazing star" (*Liatris scariosa*). Another first for me.

As we continue through the restored savanna, Packard discusses the management history and how the plant community evolved. At one sunny location, Indian grass used to dominate. Over time, with fire, invasive species control and persistent inter-seeding, it has transformed into a climax community of prairie dropseed, lead plant, sky blue aster, silky aster, wood betony, downy gentian, cream indigo, blazing stars and many other conservative species.

At another location dotted with dozens of caged downy gentians, Packard and Kojima share the long-term battle with whitetail deer and voles. Somme volunteers double-cage gentians and some other rare plants. The outer cage is tall with larger openings to protect from deer, and the shorter, inner cage with smaller openings protects from voles. Deer populations are controlled now, down to approximately 20 per square mile from an original 160 per square mile, Packard said.

After three hours, we say goodbye to new friends, both human and wildlife, and leave an era from long ago. I'm relaxed, buoyed by my visit to Somme, and strengthened by the nature-healing efforts of the Somme volunteers.

Packard is right, I think; nature needs us.

As we enter back into modern-day Chicago, cars, trucks, horns, sirens, planes and trains once demand my attention.

To learn more about Somme Preserve, check out Stephen Packard's blogs at <http://woodsandprairie.blogspot.com/> and <http://vestalgrove.blogspot.com/>

## Packard: A Restoration Pioneer

Stephen Packard, conservationist, author and ecological restoration practitioner began his work in 1977 Chicago and remains one of the most important pioneers in restoration ecology.

Packard, 75, initiated the North Branch Restoration Project in '77, and it became a world model of volunteer stewardship. He served as Director of Science and Stewardship for the Illinois Nature Conservancy (1983-1999) and was founding director of Audubon Chicago Region (1999-2014). He taught at Northwestern University (2008-2013), and has worked to develop the practice and popular understanding of ecological restoration and biodiversity conservation.

"Quality develops slowly in the restoration of an ecosystem," Packard said recently. "In the field of restoration ecology, we are learning quickly, and yet we're very early in the development of 'ecosystem medicine.' Given global climate change, there's urgency to learn what we can as fast as we can."

Packard initiated and helped to plan and implement many of Illinois' larger ecological restoration projects, including Nachusa Grasslands (4,000 acres), Bartel Grassland (750 acres), Orland Grassland (960 acres) and the restorations of Poplar Creek, Deer Grove and Spring Creek forest preserves.

He has extensive experience in the restoration of prairies and oak woodlands. His work on oak ecosystems in particular has led to new insights that have clarified ideas about the composition and dynamics of these formerly vanishing rare communities. Some have referred to this work as the "rediscovery" of these ecosystems.

"As Frank Egler said: 'The ecosystem is more complicated than we think - and more complicated than we can think,'" Packard stated recently. "We'll never fully understand it. But we can learn to foster ecosystem health just as we learn to foster human health, even though there will always be more to learn."

Some of his publications include: "*Just a few oddball species: restoration and the rediscovery of the tallgrass savanna*," (*Restoration & Management Notes* 6(1), 1988); "*Restoring oak ecosystems*," (*Restoration & Management Notes*, 11(1), 1993); "*Restoring the herb layer in a degraded bur oak 'closed' savanna*," (with John Balaban in *Proceedings of the North American Conference of Savannas and Barrens*, Illinois State University, 1994); "*Successional restoration:*

*Thinking like a prairie*," (*Restoration & Management Notes*, 12 (1) 1994); "*Tallgrass Restoration Handbook: for prairies, savannas and woodlands*," (with Cornelia Mutel, 1997); "*Restoration, volunteers and the human community*," (in *Routledge Handbook of Ecological and Environmental Restoration*, 2017.)

Packard has lectured widely on restoration, including "*Restoring prairie woodlands*," London, England 1991; "*Successional restoration*," North American Prairie Conference, Windsor,

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**“Quality develops slowly in the restoration of an ecosystem,”  
“In the field of restoration ecology, we are learning quickly, and yet we’re very early in the development of ‘ecosystem medicine.’”**

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*Blue-stemmed goldenrod*

Ontario, 1992; “*Restoring land and spirit*,” The Thoreau Society, Concord, Mass., 1992; “*Herb layer data trends as guides to oak woodland management*,” Illinois State University, 2009; “*The history and future of nature*,” (The Prairie Enthusiasts – 25th Anniversary Conference, Menomonie, Wisc., 2012), and gave the keynote for the “*Grassland Restoration Network workshop*,” Nachusa Grasslands, 2014.

Packard’s work has been featured in many books, most notably “*Miracle Under the Oaks*” by New York Times science writer William K. Stevens (Pocket Books) and “*In service of the wild*,” by Stephanie Mills (Beacon Press). His work has also been featured in a wide variety of professional periodicals including Science and BioScience, and in various popular media including Time, Newsweek, New York Times, and Smithsonian Magazine. TV coverage has included Scientific American Frontiers, the New Explorers (CBS), The NewsHour (PBS), and many others.

Blogs and TED talks include <http://vestalgrove.blogspot.com> (nature and events); <http://woodsandprairie.blogspot.com> (more technical posts – ecology, conservation, land management) and TED talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RICTPEFbRh8>.

~ Debra Noell



*Savanna blazing star*



*Fringed gentian*

# “Wilding” - Book Review

## This English term for prairie restoration may make you rethink everything

By Chuck Wemstrom

**W**ilding, by Isabella Tree, is the story of how she and her husband, Charles Burrell, took their 3,500-acre farm out of crop and dairy production and turned it into a wood pasture in Sussex, about 40 miles from London. She describes their former farm as a money-losing proposition on marginal farm ground and mentions that farmers in the United Kingdom (UK), European Union (EU), Australia and the US have faced similar economic problems.

The book should encourage Prairie Enthusiasts to revisit their ideas on restoration and how “wilding” can play a major role in protecting our environment.

At first, the couple were going to follow the standard model for prairie restoration -- prepare the ground, plant native prairie seed, wait a year or two, start picking seed for the next site, burn the prairie, and fight to keep invasives and non-natives out.

This proved to be too expensive, labor intensive and time-consuming for the rewilding of 3,500 acres.

They visited projects in the Netherlands where people were doing what the author hoped to do. Although the Dutch were doing wilding for flood control, Tree and Burrell thought it could work on their farm. They sold their animals, most of their farm equipment, and turned the buildings into incubator offices.

According to Wikipedia, “The ultimate goal of rewilding efforts is to create ecosystems requiring passive management...the successful reintroduction of keystone species creates a self-regulatory and self-sustaining stable ecosystem.”

They chose not to fight invasives, not to conduct prairie burns, but to let the land heal by itself. They fenced in the property and introduced Konik ponies, longhorn cattle, red deer and Tamworth pigs to mimic the grazing of wild boar and horses, and extinct aurochs. In her book, Tree asks: “What is a non-native plant?” and answers that no one really knows or in her opinion, cares.

The couple is happy with the results. The animals keep the vegetation in check, and the land has diverse and growing numbers of insects, birds and small mammals.

But they’re realists. On the cover of the book is a beautiful painting of a turtle dove. Although the number

of nesting pairs on their farm increases every year, they realize the dove is doomed. Although 3,500 acres seems huge, it’s a mere trifle compared to the dove’s travels across southern Europe, the Mediterranean and half of Africa. The turtle dove faces overwhelming environmental hazards.

Tree talks about wilding, but she also makes the environmental connections. She describes how their project is part of the big picture, something that folks sometimes fail to

do when they are so focused on the “gather seed, plant, burn and then repeat” method. For conservation groups in the US, wilding as described by Tree would free us up to think bigger and connect our restoration projects to the entire landscape. Tree talks at length about the project, the birds, including the nightingale, and the positive effects on the environment and on people’s individual health, as well as the possible mitigation of climate change.

The favorable press the book has received reports that wilding is spreading not only in the UK, but in the EU as well. And Wikipedia lists successful projects closer to home.

Maybe you’re going to say, “Yes. . .but.” One of Tree’s great strengths is that she is a professional writer, and she’s anticipated our questions and has already answered them.

The couple do receive some government and non-profit funding, but they have a safari business and a small specialty butcher shop that sells meat from their own wild animals. The safaris are from half-day to long weekend trips to the farm. They are a wonderful mix of environmental education and an opportunity for Londoners to reconnect with nature. There are docent-guided and self-guided tours and activities. See <https://www.kneppsafaris.co.uk/>

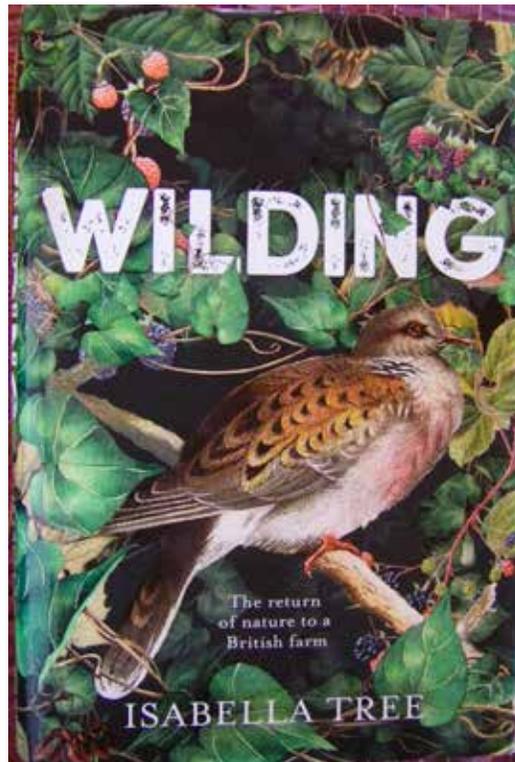


Reviewer Chuck Wemstrom

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**They chose not to fight invasives, not to conduct prairie burns, but to let the land heal by itself.**

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Wilding book cover

# 'Mending the Earth in Milwaukee' – Book Review

By Dr. Robyn Ceurvorst

“**M**ending the Earth in Milwaukee” by Ney Tait Fraser showcases unconventional lawn management approaches to promote native plants instead of turf grass.

The author was inspired by Lorrie Otto, a pioneer in native landscaping who also convinced the state of Wisconsin - through a long battle - to ban DDT. Otto was inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in 1999 and died in 2010.

Fraser’s 180-page book with large photographs is a very fitting, practical text for any student, teacher, adult learner, future professional, landowner, conservationist or prairie enthusiast.

The book offers 180 glossy pages of information and large photographs focused on biodiversity management themes for yards. Fraser conducted extensive site visits, interviews and research to culminate comprehensive stories of the landscape and owner history, as well as species’ names and roles each has in an alternative yard.

She combines this information with valuable practical land management approaches for land owners. The center of the book, pages 112 -141, focus on the life and outdoor classroom work of Otto.

Fraser’s book proves extremely useful for upper Midwest land owners in urban, suburban or even rural settings who need immediate, straightforward techniques to prairie restoration at their doorstep.

Some of these techniques include planning for biodiversity, overcoming challenges, identifying best management approaches for lifestyle/yard situation, appropriate plant selection, crafting educational signage, introducing water management/rainwater collection, encouraging edible plants and promoting beneficial insect populations.

Ceurvorst is Assistant Professor of Recreation, Parks & Leisure Services, Natural Resource Management at the Minnesota State University-Mankato, and a member of TPE’s Many Rivers chapter.



Lorrie Otto in her sand prairie, which she created using the sand sandwich method described in the book “Mending the Earth in Milwaukee,” by NeyTait Fraser. Below, Otto stands with the author, Ney Tait Fraser. (Photos courtesy of Fraser)



# Swenson Prairie Protected

By Scott Sauer

On Aug. 30, both TPE and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) achieved a long-term goal - the acquisition and permanent protection of two prairie remnants of distinction from Paul and Judy Swenson of Arena, Wisc.

Situated in the lower Mill Creek valley and along County Highway H south of Arena, Iowa County, the two remnants are part of a larger collection of much-studied natural areas. The sites have gone by various names; the St. John's Complex (named after the nearby Catholic Church), Swenson Hill Prairie (the larger of the two) and Shooting Star Prairie, which is shared by a neighbor. The remnants have been the focus of protection efforts since the early 1990s when TNC was the lead, and TPE was still a small organization.

At least one site within the larger complex was part of John Curtis' inventory of natural areas in the 1950s.

The remnants have a high and evenly distributed diversity of classic dry prairie plants. In spring, there is a flush of

ephemeral plants like yellow-star grass and violet wood sorrel, and in mid-summer, a huge show of leadplant, prairie coreopsis and butterfly weed.

Among the rarer plants found on the two sites are Hill's thistle and pomme-de-prairie (*Psoralea esculenta*). The sites are also known for harboring rare insects, especially the state endangered leafhopper (*Attenuipyga vanduzeei*).



*Great spangle fritillary*

*Banded hairstreak on a butterfly plant at the Swenson property.*



*Swenson Hill Prairie in 2014*

TPE has been active on these sites since 2002 when US Fish & Wildlife Service funding helped clear both sites of encroaching brush, especially eastern red cedar. At least four TPE field trips have visited the sites since then. Volunteer crews have applied infrequent fire to the larger of the two remnants to control returning brush, but there's still much work to be done. Now that TPE owns the prairies in fee title, the stewardship work can pick up pace once again.

Funding for this acquisition was made possible by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. TPE Executive Director Chris Kirkpatrick coordinated the deal and made sure all the pieces were in their proper place.

Special thanks to the Swensons who have always shown an interest in the natural areas of their dairy farm, for allowing TPE access over the years, and for patience in the acquisition process. A big thank you also goes to Amy Staffen and Scott Sauer in maintaining ties with the Swensons through the past decades and for keeping the project alive.



*Amy Staffen walks the newly acquired TPE prairie (Photos courtesy Scott Sauer)*

# Announcements:

## Celebrate Gary Eldred's Prairie Art

Many of you are probably familiar with Gary Eldred and his artwork. He helped found TPE, is a current member of the Southwest chapter, and he's allowed TPE to use his pen and ink sketches in newsletters and as raffle items for decades.

In fact, the meadowlark in our logo was drawn by Gary.

But you might be surprised to know his work has never been shown in public. Not in a library, or coffee shop, let alone in an art gallery. But thanks to Ron Endres, TPE member and very active ecologist on many fronts, a show is opening in January.



Rose Malliw drawing by Gary Eldre

“Last year at the annual TPE conference, Gary submitted this set of 23 drawings as a silent auction item,” Ron said. “This was the first time I, as a member of the Empire-Sauk chapter, saw this complete set and was taken with the collection.”

The two talked at the conference. When Ron learned Gary's background and the genesis of his artwork, he thought of Holy Wisdom (HW) monastery in Middleton, Wisc., as the perfect place to showcase his art. HW has 130 acres of reconstructed prairie and savanna, and a beautiful art gallery.

So, Ron purchased Gary's artwork, donated the proceeds to TPE, framed all the pieces, and worked with HW and its director Greg Armstrong to coordinate food, publicity and logistics for the opening. The collection of these 23 pieces will become part of HW's permanent collection and will be on display in subsequent years. At this time, there are no

plans to sell any prints at the art show. It's purely a celebration of Gary's art.

Opening reception will be 5-7 p.m. Jan. 11, 2019, at the Holy Wisdom Art Gallery, 4200 County Road M, Middleton, with beer, wine, other beverages and light appetizers. The event is open to the public, and all members of TPE are invited. Other conservation groups will receive invites. His pieces will be on display through the end of February, with gallery hours Mon-Fri from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., and Sundays from 9 -11:30 a.m. Contact [rolson@benedictinewomen.org](mailto:rolson@benedictinewomen.org) for more info.

## County Award for Hesses

Jim and Marci Hess were awarded the Lafayette County Wildlife Habitat Development award for 2018 by the Lafayette County Land Conservation Department.

The Hess's have been working to restore their 50 acres to native ecosystems since 2005. Their land includes woods, prairies and oak savannas - a nice variety of necessary habitats. The goal of their work is to create habitat for the many critters (birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles and mammals) needing this type of landscape to survive, Marci said.

Over the years, they have documented 18 threatened and endangered (T&E) plant species, 18 T&E birds, one reptile, one amphibian, and a handful of T&E insects, including a federally endangered bumble bee and numerous uncommon ones.

In addition to their TPE involvement, Jim serves on the Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited board and as its Conservation Chair. Marci serves on the Southwest Badger Resource, Conservation & Development board.



Marbledseed drawing by Gary Eldre

# What does Chapter Support do for Us?

By Alice Mirk

I hear this many times from chapter members all over the organization. Viroqua and the work that goes on there is fairly remote to most of us, and sometimes our only contact is the e-news landing in our in-boxes or reports from the Board President and Executive Director in The Prairie Promoter.

While beautifully done, the newsletter reports from Chapter Support staff can't even begin to illustrate the work needed to sustain a large and busy land trust

Most of us have been guilty at some point or another of thinking "the staff in Viroqua" are something apart from the real work of TPE. Acquiring and caring for land is very important to all of us, and most of the work performed by the TPE Chapter Support staff is invisible to most of us unless we are directly involved in an acquisition of a property or development of an easement. For each of these tasks alone, there are hundreds of hours of meetings and phone calls, and pounds of paperwork.

I admit that I know the work being done in Viroqua better than most. I'm Treasurer of TPE and chair of the Glacial Prairie chapter. I also happen to be one of the founding members of TPE. So, I felt compelled to write about what our hard-working staff actually do, and share a vision I have for our future as an organization that can benefit all of us, the places we save and those places yet to be saved.

The work of TPE Chapter Support staff can be roughly divided into eight categories – three directly working on our core mission (land protection, land management and education) and five providing "infrastructure" to support the operation of the organization as a whole (communications, membership administration, fundraising, finances and "other.") The figure shows the breakdown of the staff's time among these categories.

To do all of this work, we have one full time Executive Director (Chris Kirkpatrick), a part-time communications person (Joe Rising) for 25 hours a week and a part-time bookkeeper (Jerry Pedretti) for 15 hours a week. That's 80 hours a week to run a land trust with 11 local chapters, approximately 1,200 members, owning about 2,000 acres, holding easements on nearly 1,000 acres, and maintaining endowments for land protection, management, monitoring and legal defense!

The categories of Land Protection, Land Management and Education represent the work of the staff directly supporting the three-part mission of TPE. Land protection is a major and rapidly growing

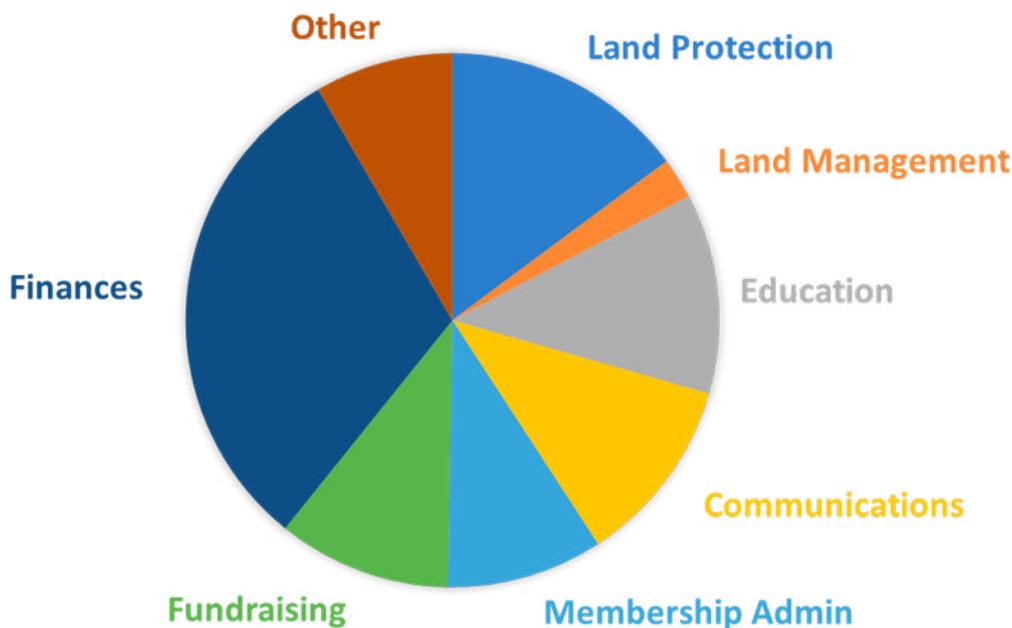
task for our Executive Director, with all the steps involved in the negotiation and purchase of land, acquisition of easements, and all the related fundraising and paperwork. Once we have the mechanisms in place for land protection, the ED provides annual monitoring, which requires interface with

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**Currently we react to public contact. If they contact us, we get back to them, but TPE staff simply don't have the resources to reach out to the general public to either promote our land trust, or to promote the saving of our endangered ecosystems.**

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## Allocation of TPE Staff Time



every chapter that manages a piece of land or is responsible for an easement. This ensures we meet our responsibilities as a land trust for those annual reports. Land Management is a relatively small part of the staff's time because that is the primary focus and responsibility of the chapters. The role of the staff in Education is primarily centered on organizing and running the TPE annual conference – a major and time-consuming annual task.

Communications and outreach is a category that we have not yet begun to develop beyond Facebook, web pages and e-news due to lack of capacity. There is so much that could be done if TPE staff had the resources and so many links that could be made with the general public. We know this because of the Facebook responses we do get and the hundreds of emails our director has to answer from the general public every month. Currently we react to public contact. If they contact us, we get back to them, but TPE staff simply don't have the resources to reach out to the general public to either promote our land trust, or to promote the saving of our endangered ecosystems. We haven't even started to develop outreach to schools, university ecology clubs, biology departments, libraries, gardening clubs and other community groups because we lack the resources.

Membership administration means keeping track of our members and the many people who contact us, making sure members renew annually and informing the chapters on all of this. This is another important area where we could be much more effective if we had the time and staff capacity.

Fundraising is a simple word for a very complex series of tasks in an intensely competitive environment. The larger chapters do an excellent job of raising funds for individual tracts of land. Everyone loves to give to these projects, and local chapters know who the players are. An appeal to the membership-at-large to save land also works well because our members respond to saving beautiful prairie and savanna sites. Raising funds for office space, equipment and TPE staff is not very sexy. No one particularly wants to donate to those things when there are prairies to be saved!

Members and the general public alike don't make the link between saving prairies and all the work behind the scenes. The annual appeal letter fund raiser in December is what keeps the TPE staff from closing its doors, but every year, it

gets tighter as expenses rise and more individuals specifically donate their funds for chapter land acquisition.

Finances involve keeping careful track of all the money that comes in and is spent by the organization, reporting those transactions to the Board and Chapters, insuring that our financial records are fully audited each year and reporting them to the IRS. This is a vital function for any non-profit organization, and as Treasurer, I can say that it's something TPE does exceptionally well.

Lastly, there is the "Other" category. The TPE staff supports the Board and all the Board committees in their important work, manages the office in Viroqua and performs other administrative functions with a tiny fraction of their available time.

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**Raising funds for office space, equipment and TPE staff is not very sexy. No one particularly wants to donate to those things when there are prairies to be saved!**

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### **Which brings me to the vision!**

- What if TPE staff had the resources to provide chapters with up-to-date contact, volunteer and membership information at any time, and could give the smaller chapters technical assistance in how to recruit and retain new volunteers and members?
- What if TPE staff had the resources to help chapters contact potential major donors beyond individual givers, and expand to manufacturing, commerce and businesses in each chapter area to ask for donations?
- What if chapters had technical assistance and help to contact major foundations and to develop presentations to be given in a variety of venues to appeal to potential donors and to raise more grant funding?
- What if we could identify the talented people we have in each chapter and have a central directory of go-to people for information, and develop a library of accurate, up-to-date information on prairie restoration and management on line?
- What if we developed a speakers' forum to tap into?

So many "what ifs," so many directions we could grow if we had more infrastructure to help us. It's time to move into the next phase of our development as a land trust. We are now accredited, and in 2017 had a total operating income of over \$613,000. And, there still are prairies out there to be saved!

# 32nd Annual Conference & Banquet



**Saturday, March 2, 2019**

**Off-Broadway Banquet Center  
Menomonie, Wisconsin**

**Hosted by the Chippewa Savannas &  
St. Croix Valley chapters**

## Join us for our annual celebration of prairies and savannas

The conference will offer presentations on grassland sparrows, sedges and rare plants found in our area. And what conference would be complete without a session on managing invasive plants! Stay for The Prairie Enthusiasts annual all-chapter banquet after the conference. The entire day enables you to network and meet up with old friends.

Doors to the conference open at 8 a.m. when you can check-in at the registration desk. Enjoy a continental breakfast while you review your conference materials.

## Highlights include:

- Keynote address by Dr. Susan Galatowitsch, Professor & Department Head, Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology at the University of Minnesota, explores how organizational resilience affects restoration progress and outcomes.
- Kevin Doyle, Botanist with the WI-DNR, shows us the unique flora of the Western Prairie Ecological Landscape, and the northern portion of the Western Coulees and Ridges Ecological Landscape (also known as the “Driftless Region.”)
- After the banquet, Dr. Shawn Schottler, Senior Scientist for the St. Croix Watershed Research Station-Science Museum of Minnesota, presents “Good Plants, Bad Plants and You.” This presentation offers new and maybe slightly warped perspectives on how we view plants, and how they do or do not meet our conservation objectives - such as creating habitat for pollinators.

## Directions to Conference & Friday Social

From I-94, take exit 41 to Menomonie. Continue south on WI-25S/N. Broadway St. Turn right – immediately past the McDonald’s – into the Shops Off Broadway lot (1501 N. Broadway St.)

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# Conference schedule

8:00 am	Registration and continental breakfast
8:30	Welcome
8:45 – 9:45	Keynote address - Dr. Susan Galatowitsch, Professor & Department Head, Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology at the University of Minnesota <i>“Moving forward and bouncing back: Why organizational resilience matters to restoration”</i>
9:45 – 10:00	Break
10:00 – 11:00	Concurrent sessions (see list below) Three presentations run concurrently. Themes include conservation & management, flora & fauna, and fun!
11:00 – 11:15	Break
11:15 – 12:15	Concurrent sessions (see list below) Three presentations run concurrently. Themes are the same as the morning sessions.
12:30 – 2:00	Lunch TPE overview by Scott Fulton; chapter introductions by Joe Rising and Evanne Hunt.
2:00 – 3:00	Concurrent sessions (see list below) Three presentations run concurrently. Themes are the same as the morning sessions.
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 4:15	Concurrent sessions (see list below) Three presentations run concurrently. Themes are the same as the morning sessions.
4:00 – 5:30	Auction and raffle close Social hour, cash bar
5:30 – 6:30	Dinner banquet
6:30 – 7:30	After dinner presentation – Shawn Schottler, Senior Scientist at the St. Croix Watershed Research Station-Science Museum of Minnesota. Marine-on-St. Croix Minn. <i>“Good Plants, Bad Plants and You”</i>
7:30 – 8:00	Awards, social hour

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## Concurrent sessions

- *“Water Quality and Habitat Trends: Making Good Long-term Decisions?”*  
(Presenter: Shawn Schottler, Senior Scientist, St. Croix Watershed Research Station-Science Museum of Minnesota.)
- *“Wisconsin Prairie Conservation Plan”* (Presenter: Bridget Olson, US Fish & Wildlife)
- *“Climate Change & Prairie Grasses”* (Presenter: Dr. Tali Lee, UW-EC)
- *“Managing Invasive Species”* (Presenter: Kelly Kerns, 4Control)
- *“Creating Art on Prairies”* (Panel with Gary Eldred, Joe Maurer)
- *“Intergenerational Conversation”* (Panel led by Gary Eldred)
- *“Wild Food from Prairie Landscapes”* (Presenter: Sam Thayer)
- *“FUN! Volunteering with TPE”* (Panel)
- *“Sedge Identification”*
- *“Finding and Identifying Amphibians”* (Presenter: Andrew Badje, WI DNR)
- *“The Rare Plants of Wisconsin’s Western Prairie and Upper Driftless Area”* (Presenter: Kevin Dole, DNR)
- *“Sparrows of Prairie Ecosystems”* (Presenter: Brian Collins)

## TPE Photo Contest

A major highlight of every TPE annual conference is the Photo Contest. Photos can be submitted by anyone of anything related to prairies and savannas. The finalists will be selected by the conference host chapters, and the winners are determined by a vote of the conference participants. All finalists receive the framed print of their photo used at the conference, and the winning photograph will be used on the cover of our next annual report. Please send your photo files by email before Friday, Feb. 8, 2019 to Joe Rising at TPE@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org. Please contact Joe at (608) 638-1873 with any questions.



2018 contest winner- Randy Schindle  
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee  
on Anise Hyssop

## Pre-Conference Social Gathering

On Friday, March 1 from 5:30-8:30 p.m., we gather at the Stout Ale House (1501 N. Broadway St, Menomonie.) to welcome all conference attendees and guests. There will be a cash bar and a limited menu from which you can order dinner.

## Raffle & Silent Auction

Bid on and buy raffle tickets for a variety of great items, such as cookies, jams, honey, artwork, beer and wine. The raffle and silent auction benefit the local chapter. If you wish to donate to the raffle and silent auction, contact your chapter chairperson no later than Feb. 1.

## Sponsors and Exhibitors

Visit our sponsor and exhibitor displays featuring information about plants, land management and more. The Prairie Enthusiasts will have a table where you can purchase tote bags, t-shirts, hats, books and other items. Cash, checks and credit cards accepted.

## Lodging:

There are a number of hotels within blocks of the venue for the conference and Friday night social.

Hotel	Rates	Phone	Website
Super 8 by Wyndham (3 blocks from conference)	\$95	(715) 235-8889	wyndhamhotels.com/super-8
Best Western Plus (0.4 miles from conference)	\$125	(715) 235-5664 or 1-800-780-7234	bestwestern.com
AmericInn by Wyndham (0.5 miles from conference)	\$101	(715) 235-4800	wyndhamhotels.com/ americinn
Hampton Inn & Suites (0.6 miles from conference)	\$117	(715) 231-3030	hamptoninn3.hilton.com
Cobblestone Inn & Suites (1.8 miles from conference)	\$110	(715) 233-0211 or 1-888-693-8262	staycobblestone.com
Quality Inn & Suites (5.4 miles from conference)	\$99	(715) 233-1500	choicehotels.com
Oaklawn Inn	\$134	(715) 235-6155	oaklawninn.com
AirBnB			airbnb.com

# Registration

**Conference fee includes:**

- Continental breakfast
- Lunch
- Snack (morning and afternoon)

**Banquet fee includes:**

- Dinner (select your choice below)

Register online with a credit card at:

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

Or, complete this form and mail with your check payable to “The Prairie Enthusiasts” to the address below.

**Walk-in registration fee is \$80**



PO Box 824  
Viroqua, WI 54665  
[www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org](http://www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org)

Attendee names: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

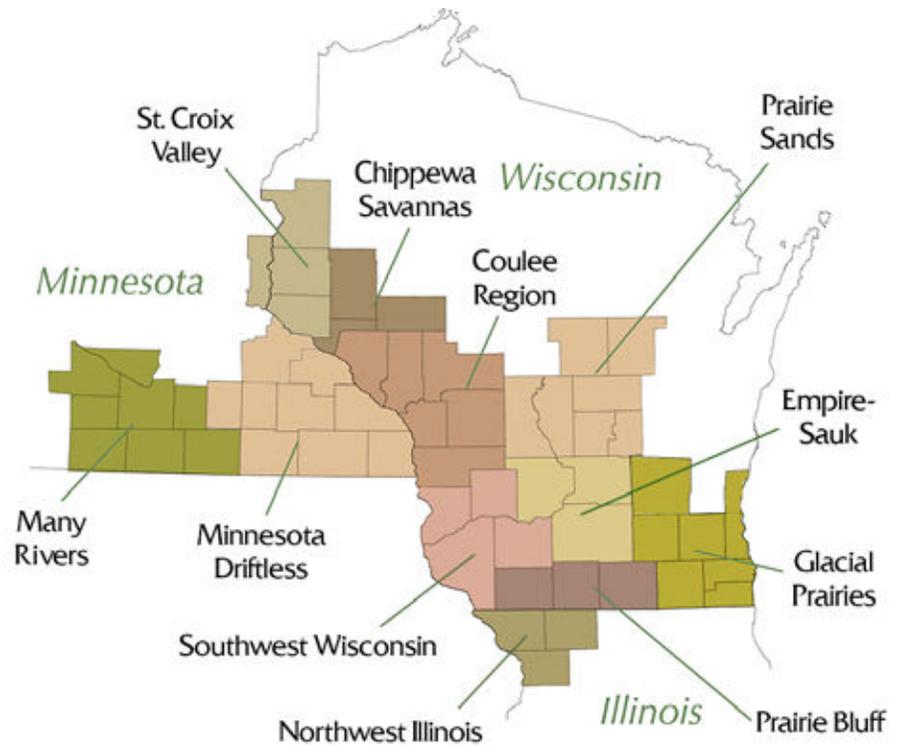
Conference	No.	Cost	Total
Member (before Feb. 17)		x \$70 =	
Member (after Feb. 17)		x \$80 =	
Student*		x \$25 =	
Banquet	Initials		
<b>Chicken Kiev</b> Breast of chicken hand-stuffed with garlic butter and wild rice blend		x \$25 =	
<b>Stuffed Iowa pork chop</b> Boneless Iowa pork chop stuffed with Andouille sausage and cranberry stuffing		X \$25 =	
<b>Tasty tofu, red quinoa &amp; vegetables</b> (vegan and gluten free)		X \$25 =	
*Includes 1-year TPE membership		Total	

To help us assign the right-sized rooms to the sessions, please select five sessions you are likely to attend:

- Water Quality and Habitat Trends: Making Good Long-term Decisions
- Wisconsin Prairie Conservation Plan
- Climate Change & Prairie Grasses
- Managing Invasive Species
- Creating Art on Prairies
- Intergenerational Conversation
- Wild Food from Prairie Landscapes
- Volunteering with TPE (panel)
- Sedge Identification
- Finding and Identifying Amphibians
- Rare Plants of Wisconsin’s Western Prairie and Upper Driftless Area



# Chapter Updates



## Coulee Region

### TPE Partners with Others for NFWF Grant

Jim Rogala

The Coulee Region chapter is again a partner in a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant thanks to work by the grant's author, Bill Kiser of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Kiser continues to look for opportunities to raise funds for prairie restoration in western Wisconsin.

Kiser successfully obtained an NFWF grant in 2016, and this 2018 grant continues that work. The project's title is: "Wisconsin Driftless Area Monarch Butterfly Initiative." Work funded includes completing field surveys for pollinators, along with restoring and enhancing habitat in Wisconsin's Driftless Region in support of monarch butterflies, rusty patched bumble bees and other pollinators.

The project will provide baseline data about pollinators, improve pollinator habitat on public and private lands, and enhance technical support for landowners.

The teamwork focuses on habitat improvement of 750 acres on both private lands and designated State Natural Areas spanning 10 counties in Wisconsin's Driftless Region. Projects will consist of the following:

- 1) Restoration of degraded remnant bluff prairie habitat,
- 2) Restoration through converting monotypic grasslands or agricultural fields to native plants, and

- 3) Enhancement of existing habitat through inter-seeding, prescribed burning and invasive species control.

If you have a project that you feel might fit the objectives of this grant, contact Kiser at: [william\\_kiser@fws.gov](mailto:william_kiser@fws.gov). Planting projects need to be a minimum of five acres, and degraded bluff prairie projects need to be a minimum of one half acre.

We expect an additional outcome of this initiative to be continued growth of our partnership, which will build capacity for more monarch conservation. The partnership includes governmental agencies at many levels: FWS (Partners for Fish and Wildlife), WI-DNR (State Natural Areas Program, Landowner Incentive Program, and Bureau of Natural Heritage), Trempealeau County, Buffalo County, and the City of La Crosse. TPE joins the Mississippi Valley Conservancy as one of two non-governmental organizations in the partnership.

By receiving NFWF funding, we more than double our acreage goals from the 2016 grant, with work on both private and public land to be completed by 2021. The grant was one of only seven awarded this year through the Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund. Read more about the 2018 grants at: [www.nfwf.org/monarch/Documents/2018grantslate.pdf](http://www.nfwf.org/monarch/Documents/2018grantslate.pdf)

# Chippewa Savannas

Joe Maurer & Caroljean Coventree

## New Easement

This summer, TPE Chippewa Savannas has been working diligently with Karen and Martin Voss to create a conservation easement for their property four miles south of Eau Claire, Wisc. The 78 acres include variable habitat with forest, wetland meadow, dry mesic prairie, prairie savanna, and even a prairie remnant.

Species of concern on this property include pickerel frogs, Blanding's turtles, and the common goldeneye duck. We are very excited about this project and plan to close on the easement in December.

## Prairie Days a Success

On Oct. 7, we celebrated our annual "Prairie Days" at Simply Dunn in Downsville, Wisc. Joe Maurer opened with a short talk on his prairie-inspired art and later led a drawing workshop. Maurer inspired us to consider the possibility of a corridor of protected property from our Seymour project over to the Beaver Creek Reserve.

Speakers also included chapter scientist Mark Leach and Southwest Chapter member Gary Eldred who discussed "Population Dynamics" - a big picture look at restoration and conservation. Denny Johnson presented a fascinating talk on native bees of Wisconsin, and Amy Delyea Petska led a hands-on children's workshop making balls of native pollinator seed and seed ornaments. Big fun.



Amy Delyea Petska led a children's workshop on the creation of "seed bombs," which are actually balls of native pollinator seed.

## Monarch Butterfly Monitoring Project

Our Land Manager Kathy Stahl has worked on a monarch monitoring project at Dobbs, another of the properties we manage. After a couple of intense years of management, we are beginning to see some results at Dobbs. Tree removal, inter-seeding and spotted knapweed removal have revealed the glimmer of beauty to come.

Stahl leads workdays at Dobbs on a regular basis, and Maurer has led members on work parties at our third site, Seymour. We've been collecting seeds this fall, which we will use in reseeded efforts.



Hogback Prairie painting by TPE member and editorial liaison Joe Maurer

## Join Us at this Year's TPE Conference

Caroljean Coventree, Delyea Petska and Evanne Hunt, chair of St. Croix Valley chapter, have been organizing this winter's TPE conference, which we will host with the St. Croix Valley Chapter. See details and registration for the March 2 event in Menomonie, Wisc., at Page 17 of this newsletter.

And as always, we want to thank Delyea Petska for maintaining our Facebook page. Visit us there, check out our happenings and join our passion for saving prairies!



Vivian Osborne, age 7, shows off her seed creations at the chapter's Prairie Days.

# Empire-Sauk

Rob Baller

About two dozen people gathered at the little-developed Cross Plains State Park on a sunny Saturday morning on Sept. 8. The 750-acre park is a conglomerate of federal, state and county-owned lands located about three miles southeast of Cross Plains, Wisc. The park is managed in part by the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Co-pilots for the field hike were TPE president Scott Fulton and UW-Madison Geology & Geophysics Emeritus Professor David Mikelson.

Guests were led through a beautifully planted prairie oak savanna with bluff top views and a sampling of mosquitoes. After the open field with savanna edge, we arrived at the dramatic Wilkie Gorge, a deep, heavily mapled drainage channel carved by the melting of the last glacier thousands of years ago. Also of geological interest were the frequent glacial erratics submerged across the prairie and woodland grounds, which suddenly disappeared about half way through the hike, signaling the definitive end of prehistoric glacial travel.



At a fall event, Gary Birch, site steward at Smith-Reiner Drumlin prairie, posed for this shot with one of his nemesis plants – sweet clover. (Photo by Amy Dubruiel)



Visitors to the maple woods (leader Mikelson, center) discuss the virtues of rocks and mushrooms. (Photo by Rob Baller)



A young girl directs the field trip from on board her dad with band leader Diane Hills in front. (Photo by Rob Baller)



Leaders David Mikelson (with map) and Scott Fulton (right) address the interested hikers. (Photo by Rob Baller)

# Many Rivers

By Robyn Ceurvorst

Our chapter celebrated accomplishments, set strategies for the future, and recognized our limitations to avoid losing sleep, at our annual picnic Sept. 15 at Brad Gaard's prairie near New Ulm, Minn.

Accomplishments this year included sightings of a scissor-tailed flycatcher, rusty patched bumble bees and dickcissels.

We recognize we allowed the Treaty Site Prairie to go too long without mowing. It's overgrown with weeds, some up to 9 feet tall. The immediate correction was hiring local farmer Tim Enz to bale the site, and the long-term plan is to develop a regular mowing schedule to avoid this challenge in the future.

## Northwest Illinois

### Grassland Restoration Network Conference

Ed Strenski

This year, the Grassland Restoration Network conference was held at Fermilab in Batavia, Ill. Prairie restoration efforts began in 1974 under the leadership of Dr. Robert Betz of Northeastern Illinois University. Over the years, new areas were planted and by 1984 a decade of restoration had taken place there.

Four of our NIPE members attended the two-day event, and I came away with the following observations:

- The importance of saving natural areas before urban sprawl consumes it all.
- Networking creates contacts that may pay off for NIPE. We were amazed at how many younger attendees were at the event.

Our collaborative plan, typical of many TPE chapters, includes one member donating equipment to mow, another storing it in his barn, someone else who has a truck and trailer to move it, and we have a sign-up sheet for volunteers to mow next year.

We're collecting spiderwort and phlox seed at the Klossner Cemetery and other sites to inter-seed the Treaty prairie this fall.

For planning next year, we will have an annual meeting at the Loose Moose, sometime in late January or early February. Stay tuned for details later this year.

- Investing in the training of our staff by sending them to conferences will pay dividends in the long run.
- TPE's presence at these conferences doesn't hurt either.

We saw a lot of sweet clover and thistles in each of the prairies we visited. Some of the prairies were drilled in 1985 with early successional species; then over-seeded with more conservative species in the following years. These prairies were heavy in the early successional species that took hold even though they were focusing on spring forbs in the inter-seeding.

Fermilab is experimenting with wood betony to control grasses. The areas I saw with the wood betony had set the larger grasses back. There were a few folks who thought the big grass in prairies would diminish over time due to fungi in the soil.

Marsh betony is being used to control reed canary grass. At \$8 an ounce, it makes for an inexpensive experiment. Dodder, a parasitic plant, is also being tried to control Canada goldenrod; apparently it works best if seeded after a burn.



Grasslands Restoration Project conference attendees gather on a sunny fall afternoon. (Photo by Becky Janopoulos)

Grassland birds are in steady decline, per the conference speakers, and they have an 80% loss due to predation. Predation is more prevalent where there are edges. Dr. Brian J. Wilsey, Professor of Ecology at Iowa State University, gave a great talk. Here are few of my takeaways:

- Dr. Leanne Martin's research was used in his presentation. (She is currently doing research for our chapter.)
- No one knows what effect climate change with increased temperatures, CO2 levels, and precipitation will have on prairies.
- Having as much diversity as possible should help decrease the impact of climate change on prairie restorations.
- Grass-heavy prairies have negative impact on species diversity. He's documented species drop as prairies become more grass dominated.
- Just knocking down prairie grass helps create diversity. Mowing also helps.
- Wilsey has a new book out: "The Biology of Grasslands"
- A survey of prairie restorations showed no difference if seed was fall broadcast or spring drilled.
- This survey also showed that mowing the first 2 years made a positive impact on prairie diversity.

## Boots on the Ground

By Zoe Pearce

In a prairie, not too far away from you, you may see them. They are the dedicated conservationists of Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPE), the only Illinois chapter of TPE.

They work at TPE sites Hanley Savanna and Elmoville Prairie, with help from other organizations such as Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and Galena Area Land Enthusiasts, and with private owners. They work to restore and maintain healthy prairies across the Driftless Zone of Illinois. The list of restoration activities includes removal of invasive and non-native plant species, prairie burns, seed collection and oak savanna restoration.

They fulfill NIPE's moto: "Boots on the Ground Conservation."

NIPE's boot print can be seen in many prairies open to the public such as Gateway Park, Horseshoe Mound and Casper Bluffs in Galena, Wapello Land and Water Reserve, and Hanley Savanna in Hanover, and most recently, Gramercy Park in East Dubuque. Over the course of this year, NIPE will have worked on more than 50 prairies in the area, both private and public lands. Collectively, 367 acres

of land will be weeded, burned, seeded, cleared of trees and harvested for seeds.

Grants, internships and research projects help NIPE put its boots more places than just on the ground. In May, NIPE received an 18-month grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation for its restoration of Hanley Savanna. Hanley is home to many ecosystems that NIPE has been responsible for rehabilitating. The grant helps NIPE to further facilitate restoration and management efforts there, while also building public relations and knowledge of the prairie.

I'm completing an internship this summer to help build these important relations and extend NIPE's outreach through social media outlets.

Two NIPE-sponsored research projects are currently in progress. Dr. Leanne Martin is cataloging plants at Hanley Savanna to help determine where prairie restoration efforts have been most successful. Noah Haskin is studying how relative amounts of plant-fungal interactions compare across remnant and restored prairie sites. The data collected will help understand how fungal communities change in the years following agricultural disturbance and subsequent prairie restoration.

However, NIPE is more than an organization, more than a job, more than a grant, more than research, more than an internship. NIPE is more than prairie restoration. The people that make up NIPE are a family, including the many volunteers who give their time and energy for seed collecting, bird and other wildlife monitoring, and education. We welcome anyone into our family and our prairie who is willing to help and learn with us. To become a part of the NIPE family, contact us at [info@nipen.org](mailto:info@nipen.org). We look forward to seeing you in the prairie.



Boots on the ground group L-R: Noah Haskin, Ed Strenski and Jeni Pearce. (Photo by Zoe Pearce)

# Prairie Bluff

Tom Mitchell

Any day now, TPE should close the deal to protect lands at Meinert Prairie and Skinner Prairie -- both decades-long interests of the Prairie Bluff chapter.

In the early days of prairie enthusiasm, Nick Faessler was looking for pasque flowers when he found them on a patch of ground divided by a steep ravine, west of his home farm on the Wisconsin-Illinois state line. At about the same time Gary Felder was seeing thousands of pasque flowers on a hillside north of Monroe, once known as Skinner Diggings, an early lead mining site.

Faessler was just learning about prairies, and this unfarmed, unplowed ground in Stephenson County, Ill., had shooting stars, puccoon and violets, along with cedars and brush. He contacted the owner Richard Meinert, and he got permission to initiate land management, burning either side of the ravine, battling sweet clover, wild parsnip and poison ivy, leading field trips every July. He invited the Illinois Natural History Survey to add this site to its list of Prairie State remnants.

As the Meinerts looked at retirement from farming, Faessler looked for permanent protection – a gift of 6.4 acres – with a buffer as it turned out. Thanks to Faessler as well as Richard and Joanne Meinert.

Felder was a member of the Green County Conservation League in Monroe. He hunted and roamed the county, first encountering Skinner Prairie in the spring of 1987. He wrote about it in an early edition (December 1988) of this newsletter, enthusiastic about the combination of his interests in local mining history and natural history. Felder catalogued all the grasses, forbs, birds, mammals and butterflies that

he found at Skinner Prairie among the old mining pits and rock piles, including rarities like prairie turnip, Indian plantain, green milkweed, small skullcap, badgers and the upland plover.

He tried to protect 40 acres, writing letters and making phone calls. He could not interest WI-DNR, The Nature Conservancy or the Natural Lands Institute. It was a contentious issue for the now integrated Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts, since at the same time, Vale Prairie was available, and the Southwest Wisconsin chapter had funds to buy that parcel.

Meanwhile, a developer got a hold of the other property, divided the 80 acres, including Skinner Prairie, into three lots. Years later Jim Freymiller built a house on the north end of the middle piece. One day, Felder knocked on his door and asked: “Do you know what you have behind your house?” Felder took Freymiller back to the north-facing hillside, and showed him some of the rare native plants. As a pheasant hunter who trained bird dogs, Freymiller could appreciate the uniqueness of the native grassland, and he and his wife, Karen, reveled in the songs of meadowlarks on the prairie each summer.

Nowadays Freymiller is a regular member of the chapter’s Monday work crew, fire crew, and he is the expeditor for shipping our Parsnip Predators. Like the Meinerts, the Freymillers are donating their 12 acres of prairie lands to TPE. Faessler recently remembered that prairie enthusiasts first burned Meinert Prairie and Skinner Prairie on the same spring day in 1991, and nearly three decades later, we are close to permanent protection for both sites – a lesson in patience and perseverance.



Nick Faessler, Gary Eldred and Richard Meinert gather behind compass plants at Meinert Prairie. (photo by Jerry Newman)

## Prairie Sands

Ray Goehring

For Prairie Sands, it was a busy summer and fall of prairie tours, meeting new chapter members and connecting with kindred spirits. Many of us traveled great distances for the thrill of exploring new territory and sharing restoration experiences.

In August, we toured James and Ruth Schultz's Clintonville Prairie, and in September, we joined North Central Conservancy Trust at chapter member John Shillinglaw's 200-plus acres in celebration of Land Trust Days. Shillinglaw again extended a public invitation in October to not only tour his property but to work and learn some of the techniques of savanna restoration. Thanks!

And while we're thanking him, we also want to commend him for attending the September TPE Leadership Conference Retreat representing the Prairie Sands chapter.

Several of our members participated in Prescription Burn Training on Oct. 27-28 at Fred and Karen Wollenburg's prairie in Dalton, Wisc. Jeb Barzen of Privatelandconservation.org once again was the instructor.

Plans are in progress for our annual Holiday Party and Seed Exchange on Dec. 4 at More Healthy Foods Cafe in Montello. Details are still being worked out so keep an eye out in your emails or the TPE website for more details. Or email Ray at [raygoe@yahoo.com](mailto:raygoe@yahoo.com) for updates.



*Group photo of James and Ruth Schultz Prairie Tour in August.  
(Photo by Ray Goehring)*

Designer pizzas will be purchased by the chapter, and everyone should bring their own beverages. At the Holiday Party we will talk about plans to have the chapter purchase a portable microphone to be used during prairie tours and event plans for next year's chapter activities. There may also be a short presentation about iNaturalist—an online listing of natural sites in Wisconsin. Again, check your email, Facebook, TPE website or email Ray for more details.



*Savanna tour and workday at Mecan Prairie and Savanna on Oct 13.  
(Photo by Ray Goehring)*

# St. Croix Valley

## Alexander Oak Savanna Acquisition

Evanne Hunt

Dick and Joan Alexander sold their native oak savanna (43 acres) to TPE on July 19. We got together Aug. 12 to celebrate. TPE president Scott Fulton and TPE executive director Chris Kirkpatrick headlined the event and explained what this means to TPE.

The Alexander oak savanna is home to state- or federal-threatened species of kittentails and prairie turnip. Most exciting, Alex Bouthilet, a trained rare plant monitor, documented the state endangered ground plum (*Astragalus crassicaarpus*), which had not been seen in 28 years on the site. Alexander hosts one of the largest populations in the state.

The purchase was accomplished using Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program funds and a generous donation by the Alexanders.

The chapter has been working on the site for more than 15 years clearing invasive trees and brush. It's exciting to know this savanna will be protected forever. Please join us Dec. 15 at the site to celebrate the Solstice by cutting and burning brush. Hot dogs, wine and beer will be served at noon.

## UW-River Falls Students Collect Seed for TPE

Again this year, Dr. Eric Sanden and his Prairie Restoration class collected seed at Alexander Oak s Savanna, the Foster Conservation Area and Blueberry Hill.

The students do a wonderful job -- collecting many pounds of forb seeds. The seed will be cleaned and redistributed at those sites this winter. We typically hand broadcast the seed onto cleared areas after removing the buckthorn.



L-R Chris Kirkpatrick, executive director; Scott Fulton, board president, and property donors Dick & Joan Alexander at the August celebration. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)



Celebration of the Alexander Oak Savanna acquisition by TPE. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)



UW-Fall River students gather seeds at one of TPE's newest properties, Alexander Oak Savanna. (Photos by Alex Bouthilet)

# Southwest Wisconsin

By Jack Kussmaul

Our chapter has had a busy summer, and three volunteers merit special recognition for their work.

The first is Walter Mirk. He is one of the founders of TPE and, with his wife Alice, donated the Double Oak Savanna together with an endowment. Though Mirk now lives distant from Double Oak, he still spends hundreds of hours working on the site. He travels from Watertown on a regular basis and stays in the area so he can work several days in a row. Thanks to his efforts, Double Oak continues to become better and better.

The second is Steve Querin-Schultz. He's relatively new to the chapter but has already made a mark. The back of the Eldred Prairie was rapidly growing up to brush and thicket. Burning the last two years helped but didn't really solve the problem. Querin-Schultz volunteered his bobcat with a rotary blade in front to attack the thicket. He has made great progress and expects to have the entire back hillside finished before winter.



Steve Querin-Schultz on his Bobcat. (Photo by Martha Querin-Schultz)

The third is Gary Eldred. He has been leading work parties every Thursday morning to continue the restoration on Iris Drive, helping turn it into one of our prime properties. There are many others in the chapter who deserve recognition, but in this message, we wanted to focus on these three.



Iris Drive crew burning with Gays Mills Fire Department. L-R Jeff Valley, Gary Adams and Gary Eldred, along with volunteers from the fire department. (Photo by Steve Querin-Schultz)



Fiest Prairie work party on Jan. 20. L-R front: Gary Eldred and Jan Ketelle. L-R back: Roger Smith, Gary Adams and George Rigglin. (Photo by Jack Kussmaul)

The annual picnic was held Aug. 11, a beautiful evening in Eldred's back yard. There was discussion of a tour of a site or two, but the group found itself enjoying the food, drink and conversation too much to want to leave the back yard and tour. It was the sign of a successful event.

Early this year, the chapter received a \$24,000 gift to be used to start an endowment for the chapter. This was quickly followed by another gift of \$5,000 bringing the total up to \$29,000. On Sept. 12, a group gathered at the Roger and Pat Smith home to process 170 letters seeking additional contributions to bring the endowment up to \$50,000 by the end of the year.

To anyone reading this, we would love to have your gift by year end. You may send your check to the TPE office at PO Box 824, Viroqua, WI 54665. Include a note indicating the gift is for the Southwest Wisconsin chapter endowment. I cannot emphasize how critical this endowment is to ensure we will be able to manage our properties into perpetuity. Thank you!



Burn at Thomas Wet Prairie. L-R Kristin Westad, Roger Smith, Rose Sime, George Rigglin, Bob Costanza and Jim Sime. (Photo by Steve Querin-Schultz)

# Thank You Donors

We thank the following who donated to TPE between June 16 - October 17, 2018. These gifts include those from our annual appeal, are beyond membership dues and are truly generous and appreciated.

## \$1000 or more

Richard & Joan Alexander  
For Alexander Savanna & the St Croix  
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Bruce Duemler

To Prairie Bluff Chapter

Ronald Ellis

Ellis Conservation Easement Trust

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In honor of Walter Mirk

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Southwest Wisconsin

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in memory of Shirla Meinert

Tom & Yolanda Lobacz

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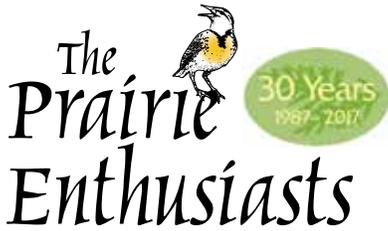
To Empire Sauk Chapter

Chuck & Pat Wemstrom

Hanley Savanna Fundraiser

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Please consider The Prairie Enthusiasts in your will or estate plans. If you've already done so, please let us know, so we can thank you personally for ensuring future generations will have access to prairies and savannas. For more information please contact Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director at 608-638-1873 or [executivedirector@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:executivedirector@theprairieenthusiasts.org).



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**Questions?** E-mail Joe Rising (Communications Coordinator) at [TPE@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org](mailto:TPE@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org)  
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**Thank you!**

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**The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:**

- \$25+ Little Bluestem
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