



The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Grassroots Conservation at Work

TPE Chapters Host Successful Prairie Days Events

In September, The Prairie Enthusiasts hosted a series of public outreach events for our first-ever Prairie Days. The overall goal was to educate more of the general public about prairies and oak savannas in general, to increase awareness of TPE, and to give us a chance to “show off” the work that we do on our many sites to our local communities. Each chapter came up with its own ideas for specific local activities, and was fully responsible for implementing them, often in collaboration with other organizations. As you will see from the summaries from each group below, the creativity and diversity in the various offerings was amazing, as was the energy and enthusiasm shown by the volunteers who put on the events.

By all accounts, Prairie Days was an enormous success for everyone involved, and is something we hope to continue in the future. Thanks to all of the dozens and dozens of Prairie Enthusiasts who helped out!



*The youngest Prairie Enthusiast: 3-year-old Aiden is the son of Kaitlin Faessler and grandson of Fred Faessler. All three generations toured the Butenhoff site at the event held by the Prairie Bluff chapter.
Photo by Nick Faessler*

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Chippewa Savannas Chapter

It all started at Simply Dunn in Downsville where the Chippewa Savannas Chapter offered a variety of sessions for The Prairie Days. First, artist Maureen Skroski, offered a Plein Air Art experience for those who wanted to combine their prairie observations with their artistic inclinations. While they did art, John Thomas, certified prescribed burn firefighter, led a session on Prairie Tools and Fire Equipment followed by participants completing a small prairie burn. Kathy Ruggles, former nursery owner and garden consultant, led a walking tour of her native flower gardens while talking about Gardening With Native Plants. After those sessions, participants could join Chase Cummings, Pepin County

Prairie Days Events

Land Conservationist, for a presentation about local Invasive Exotic Plants and Their Control. Or, they could join Pam Maher, TPE Land Steward, for her conversation about Native Plant Seed Collection and Winter Storage. The tastiest option was Cooking With Native Foods by Brett Laidlaw, author of *Trout Caviar: Recipes from a Northern Forgerer*. We enjoyed the results of his cooking demo, which included chicken of the woods, hen of the woods, venison and goose with an incredible berry reduction sauce. Then, a pot luck feast followed while Bill Hogseth talked about the History of Our Local Native Prairies and biologist, Kristine Kruse spoke about her Native Prairie Remnant Study.

The Chippewa Savannas Prairie Days event ended with a trip to the Dunnville prairies where Bill Hogseth, Dr. Mark Leach, and Kristine Kruse led a walk through the prairie while UWEC Professor and entomologist, Dr. Paula Kleintjes-Neff, found insects in the prairie that delighted both young and old.

The day was well received by those who participated and we all greatly appreciated the presenters who volunteered their time and expertise.



*Demonstration of cooking with native foods by Brett Laidlaw.
Photo by Kathy Stahl*



*Tour of the Dunnville prairies led by Bill Hogseth.
Photo by Kathy Stahl*

Empire-Sauk Chapter

Empire-Sauk's Prairie Days event on September 7 was the "2013 Prairie Tour" – a road tour featuring three of our key sites – Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, Pleasant Valley Conservancy and Mounds View Grassland. The events at the first two sites were simple guided tours led by experts Willis Brown, and Tom and Kathie Brock, respectively. At Mounds View, we held a series of activities centered in our large barn there. These included live exhibits on prescribed burns, invasive plants and seed collection/processing, posters on the scientific research at the site, an art exhibit (later with live bluegrass by Scott Weber & Kurt Meine), and workshops on monarch tagging and nature photography. A big highlight for all the visitors was a hayride tour of the large site, led by several naturalist experts.



*Todd Casanova demonstrates seed processing at the Mounds View barn.
Photo by Kathy Henderson*



*Hayride tour of the Mounds View Grassland site.
Photo by Kathy Henderson*

The chapter received sponsorship and much help with advanced publicity from the local Culver's franchise. Visitors were directed to pick up a "tour guide packet" at one of two local Culver's stores, and got free ice cream if they visited all three sites. The tour guide packet included a detailed tour map as well as a copy of *Plants and Animals of the Tallgrass Prairie*, a nature guide for children and adults put together for the event by Scott Fulton based on the wonderful drawings of Gary Eldred. Several other chapters

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used the booklet in their events, and we plan to revise and improve it for general use in the future.

Our many thanks to the 30 or so volunteers, who enthusiastically endured the sweltering day and made the event possible. We had around 100 visitors, most of whom were completely unfamiliar either with prairies in general or with TPE as an organization, but virtually all of whom enjoyed themselves and were awed by what they saw.

Many Rivers Chapter

On Saturday, September 28 we coordinated with the State Park staff and the Harry Meyering Center members to have our own Prairie Day. The Harry Meyering Center is an agency devoted to supporting meaningful lifestyles for individuals with developmental disabilities. This event is becoming somewhat of an annual activity for us. Prairie seed is collected in or near Minneopa State Park and then we gather together to sort and clean the seed. It is usually a beautiful autumnal day experience. However, this year we were blessed with a bit of rain. The state park staff scrambled to collect seed the day before and we were lucky enough to have seed yet from last year to clean. We gathered under a historic wooden shelter in the park itself, near the Minneopa Falls to enjoy nature, each other's company and clean prairie seeds. We were also joined by boy scout troops that true to their spirit; came fully prepared, in complete rain gear. They scattered the cleaned seed on newly burned prairie



*Wagon tour of Hanley Savanna
Photo courtesy John Day*

sites. Despite the rain this was a great event to give a little something back to the park.

Northwest Illinois Chapter

The Northwest Illinois Chapter of TPE combined this year's Prairie Days with the celebration of its own 20th anniversary. The day was clear and sunny with a wonderful, refreshing breeze.

The features of the day were wagon tours of the Hanley Savanna where folks gathered for the festival. Also on the agenda was lunch under a big top tent, a power point presentation illustrating NIPES accomplishments in conservation over 20 years, lectures and lots of socializing.

For many, the high point of the day was a recognition ceremony honoring Jim Rachuy. Jim was a founding member of NIPE and his 20 years of service to conservation have led to the restoration of prairies on hundreds of acres of land, both public and private. Jim's efforts have had a lasting impact on the quality of the land in Northwest Illinois. The



Minneopa Falls Bridge in Minneopa State Park, site of the Many Rivers Chapter Prairie Days event. Photo courtesy Deanna Pomije



Northwest Illinois chapter board dedicates a bench to Jim Rachuy at Hanley Savanna. Photo courtesy John Day

NIPE Board of Directors placed a stone bench, honoring Jim, on the grounds, overlooking the Hanley Savanna.

Prairie Bluff Chapter

Our first Prairie Days on September 8 attracted bicycle riders from Madison and Monroe who joined Prairie Enthusiast Ralph Henry and his son Alex for a ride up the Badger State Trail to the Mile 13 Prairie. In the afternoon three generations of Faesslers and others toured Butenhoff Prairie, where we collected seeds and heard readings from Rudy's Hill, a memoir written by M.C. Elmer (1886-1987) who grew up in Dutch Hollow and whose family once owned the hilltop prairie.

Prairie Sands Chapter

Prairie Sands Chapter counted about 200 attendees at the Prairie Days celebration of Wisconsin's signature landscape. Held at the Coloma Park Pavilion, caravans of cars headed to three different prairies to learn about growing your own 'Pocket Prairie,' increasing hunting habitat in grasslands and woodlots, and surveying the monarch and insect populations in grasslands. Speakers at those respective tours were Neil Diboll of the Prairie Nursery, private landowner and Karner Blue butterfly expert John Shillinglaw accompanied by U. S. Fish & Wildlife's Greg Hamilton, and expert birder Daryl Christensen collaborating with Scott Sauer, entomologist and prairie specialist.

The Lion's Club large, covered pavilion was a perfect venue to display about 50 mason jars full of freshly-picked prairie flowers all identified as to species, handouts about invasives, information about Karner Blue butterflies, TPE membership forms, and participants' literature. CJ Sell demonstrated her wildlife painting skills at an easel; Gary Eldred made arrowheads from chert to a rapt circle of viewers; Neil Diboll gave a noon hour address to a packed pavilion; and Operation Migration volunteers dressed up in Whooping crane camouflage. Children's Prairie Art, sponsored by local county librarians, decorated a wall, poems lined a "poetry



John Shillinglaw describes his decades-long restoration efforts and resulting populations of Karner Blue butterflies. Photo courtesy Shelley Hamel

trail" through pots of live prairie plants, local poets read at an open mic and the Sand Prairie String Band entertained with songs and fiddles during lunch.

Many other organizations participated including Golden Sands Resource and Development Council, the Waushara County Master Gardeners, Operation Migration, Wild Ones, Muirland Bird Club, and Ice Age Trail. The event was guided by a small handful of volunteers who helped publicize with newspaper ads, radio PSAs, press releases, yard signs, and colorful banners.

St. Croix Valley Chapter

Our Prairie Days theme was "prairies are all around us."

In the early morning, we hosted tours of ten small native and restored prairies in Washington (MN), St. Croix (WI), and Pierce (WI) counties. We wanted to show our community that they didn't have to drive 100 miles to see a unique and endangered ecosystem; instead, it was very accessible. In the late morning, we rendezvoused at the Ogburn prairie -- an extraordinary native prairie just outside Hudson, WI. The property owner allowed us to use the barn for displays, demonstrations, and lunch. Visitors were able to



Fresh-cut prairie flower display at Coloma Pavilion Photo courtesy Shelley Hamel



Making paper from iris plants. Photo courtesy Evanne Hunt

see prescribed burn equipment, ask experts about herbicides, talk to restoration professionals, make paper from iris plants, and see a live red-tailed hawk and coral snake.

We had many partners to help -- the Wisconsin DNR, EcoGrow Consulting, Belwin Conservancy, Carpenter Nature Center, Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District, St. Croix Valley Bird Club, River Crest Elementary school, and Houlton Elementary school. At least 26 volunteers and over 70 visitors came and, despite

the oppressive heat and humidity, gave us rave reviews of the event.

Southwest Chapter

The Southwest Chapter celebrated Prairie Days by officially dedicating the Feist Prairie on September 8. This three acre roadside remnant is located southeast of Fennimore, Wisconsin. The chapter had been managing the site under an informal arrangement with Gerald and Patricia Feist for over twenty years. TPE was able to close on the purchase of this property earlier this year.

The event was saddened by the death of Gerald Feist a month before. The family was represented at the dedication, however, by Patricia Feist, all four children and other family members. The property is a fitting memorial to Gerald.

The site was becoming overgrown when the chapter began caring for it. With burning, seeding from local sources and clearing brush it has come back to its original state. With heavy populations of species such as compass plant, leadplant and yellow coneflower it is a colorful sight in late summer.



Future St. Croix Valley Chapter burn crew. Photo courtesy Evanne Hunt

The event was attended by over twenty people including family, TPE members and other interested persons. Gary Eldred, largely responsible for this acquisition, showed before and after pictures and toured the site with attendees. This program was followed by a pot luck meal. We were fortunate to have a cool, cloudy day, a rarity in this hot summer.

The highlight of the event was to be the ceremonial installation of Feist Prairie sign. This proved impossible when Jesse Bennett and Jack Kussmaul tried to dig holes for the posts. They found they were digging in nearly solid rock and were able to go only a few inches into the ground. Jesse, with Jaye Maxfield, returned with cement later and finally got the posts installed and the sign in place after the dedication program. While the sign was not installed during the program, everyone there had a chance to see it. Feist Prairie is an acquisition of which TPE can be proud.

Historical Note

by Tom Mitchell

In a recent issue of this newsletter, we noted the changes proposed to Wisconsin's list of threatened and endangered species. So a pair of curiously contradictory articles in the same column of the May 12th, 1869 issue of the Monroe Sentinel recently drew our attention while researching an unrelated local history item. And it brought to mind the George Santayana (1863-1962) quotation in his essay about progress that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The first article told of a law passed at the last session of the Wisconsin Legislature "making it a penal offense to destroy or kill by any device whatever brown thrushes, blue birds, martins, swallows, wrens, cat birds, larks or any other insect-eating birds anywhere within two miles of any incorporated city or village of this State," seemingly a measure more to protect pre-insecticide agricultural crops than to preserve bird populations. The newspaper urged "sportsmen, boys and others" to take notice.

That was followed by an article that noted "for the past two weeks there has been a pretty lively trade in wild pigeons in Monroe. Several firms in New York and Chicago have men here engaged in catching and packing the birds, and from twelve to fifteen barrels have been shipped daily." Most of the pigeons were caught in nets, but large numbers were shot by village sportsmen. The Sentinel noted that the pigeons are nesting in the Richland timber a few miles southeast of Monroe. "If this be so, there's a good time coming when the squabs shall be large enough to pole." The paper concluded the forests in the vicinity of Monroe are a "favorite resort of the pigeons, and millions of them are slaughtered here every year." Market hunting and habitat loss drove the passenger pigeon into extinction. The last wild bird was shot in 1900 in Ohio by a boy with a BB gun; the last of the species died in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoo.

The Seasons of Change

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director



I think that fall is one of my favorite times of the year. For the prairies, it's the season of the grasses, goldenrods and asters. As they begin to bloom, and go through their fall change of color, I enjoy watching the wind blow like a sea of grasses and flowers. I think my all-time favorite fall activity must be seed picking. To walk amongst the prairies this time of year, collecting the fruits of the year's labor, and collecting these seeds with the intent of new prairies to be planted has always been one of my most enjoyable activities. Even if I come back covered in *Desmodium* seeds, I never mind the extra work picking the seed off my clothes. It reminds me of the amazing diversity and that through my efforts I am helping to ensure the future of these rare plants.

This time of year is also when we see changes as an organization. This past month we hosted our first annual Prairie Days event, which as you can see in this issue was a tremendous success, not only as an outreach event, but also as a way to energize the chapters and volunteers. It shows everyone how they are making a difference by spreading the good news about prairie ecology and its importance on the landscape. It has been amazing to hear how successful this event was and how it has opened the minds of people who didn't know about native prairies. It has also been great to hear from our members who hosted the events and how excited and energized they have gotten from the experience.

This is also the time of stewardship change from prairie tours and seed picking to getting our burn equipment ready and our chainsaws tuned up for more work parties. Our Land Management Committee has been busy working on a new Burn Policy and Chainsaw Safety Policy and Procedure. If you have not seen these new guidelines please contact your chapter Board representative or myself. These are good changes, to ensure we continue to conduct safe burns and work parties, and for most of us these policies are documenting the safe practices that most of us have been following for years.

It will also soon be time for our annual year end appeal, and my hope is that you have found something exciting this past year that has strengthened your connection with The Prairie Enthusiasts. Whether it was a great work party you participated in, an exciting prairie burn, or a tour of an amazing prairie these are the experiences that inspire us to continue to be enthused about prairie conservation and management. It is also these types of experiences that inspire me to help the chapters ensure the perpetuation of the fire dependent communities we are all inspired to conserve.

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TPE was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1987 as a private nonprofit, tax exempt corporation under section [501(c)3] of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible. The Prairie Promoter is a quarterly publication of The Prairie Enthusiasts. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission. We welcome articles, announcements, artwork and photographs relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Mail or e-mail submissions to local chapter editorial volunteers or to The Prairie Promoter editor. Deadlines for submission of material are March 1 (Spring issue); May 17 (Summer issue); Aug. 17 (Fall issue); and Nov. 16 (Winter issue). If you would like to receive electronic notification of the newsletter, please e-mail Joe Rising at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

President's Message

By Jack Kussmaul

One of the goals of the strategic plan that was approved by the board early this year was *We will increase the organizational strength of TPE by enhancing the abilities of our chapters to carry out the mission of the organization.* With this in mind Chris, our executive director, has been making regular visits to chapter meetings to listen to what the chapters feel are their greatest needs. He brought a summary of the needs and concerns of each chapter to the Board Development Committee for follow up and reported them to the full board as well.

The one concern that was expressed by nearly every chapter was difficulty recruiting new members and the fact that it is the same core group that does most of the work for the chapter. Another frequent comment was that chapters would like help with grants. Many thought we could gain by working with other organizations and concern over the proposed burn policy was another common thread. One suggested a speaker's bureau to provide people who could provide information and training to the chapters. These are just a few examples.

In deciding how to move ahead we gave priority to the need to recruit new and active members. This focus was assigned to the Education and Outreach Committee for follow up. Any ideas any of you have would be appreciated. You could forward these to the committee chair, Evanne Hunt, at eahunt@presenter.com. We are probably all aware that there is no magic bullet here. Recruitment and retention of volunteers is a problem common to all non-profits. With all of us coming up with ideas and putting some effort to following through, we should be able to make some headway. The Empire-Sauk Chapter, with the full time Volunteer Coordinator, is tackling the problem in a big way. We hope we can all learn from them what has worked for them and what has not worked.

The Board Development Committee will meet again on October 16. Before the meeting Chris is going to go back through the chapter comments and determine which problems were the greatest and which the least concern to the chapters. We will then set some priorities and begin to tackle these issues. Again, I do not want to promise fast results. But as long as we are committed to working on the issues we should make steady progress.

The strategic plan is directing our focus at this point.

Joe Rising New TPE Communications Coordinator



We are pleased to announce that Joe Rising has joined The Prairie Enthusiasts staff as Communications Coordinator. Joe comes to us with a strong background in non-profit support and environmental commitment. Joe grew up near St. Cloud, Minnesota, where he learned to deeply appreciate the wonders of

the natural world. Much of his youth was spent living in an oak savanna surrounded by seemingly endless prairie. Soon he found the prairie had been transformed into a monoculture. As he learned about the effects of industrial agriculture, Joe looked for a land ethic and became a conservationist.

Joe's search brought him to study Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Gary Snyder and E. O. Wilson, among others, who inspired him to go on to earn degrees in anthropology, psychology and law. Joe then moved to the St. Croix River Valley where he worked with local governments on land-use planning and criminal justice issues. Joe is proud to have helped shape several controversial utility corridors that crossed the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Communication has always been an integral part of Joe's work. He has written professionally and as a volunteer for numerous publications.

Joe's wife, Kay Fandel, has a degree in wildlife biology and has worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Polk County Land Conservation Department and the National Park Service. She has helped to restore and manage native landscapes including prairies and savannas. Kay currently works in the Farmers and Marketing Department at Organic Valley. Joe and Kay live in Viroqua with their three daughters who have been raised in a close relationship with nature.

Joe says he is glad to work for The Prairie Enthusiasts because it is a thriving organization with a great land ethic. He is also impressed by the caring and committed membership that just won't stop - even in perpetuity! Joe looks forward to helping keep the lines of communication open and productive. Feel free to contact him with your membership program and chapter questions, concerns and suggestions!

Joe likes to write haiku (a Japanese poetry form) for recreation and provides us with this inspiration about TPE seed collecting:

Autumn prairies bloom,
With the seeds of tomorrow,
Sharing gifts for life!

Please join us in welcoming Joe to The Prairie Enthusiasts!

Nuturing Prairie Pollinators

By Jim Nelson

Can we “make a difference” in the challenge of fewer plant pollinators?

Like many prairie landowners we believe that pollinators are a key to the health and vigor of our prairie landscape. While many plants (especially grasses) can “get by” through self- or wind-pollination, the majority of prairie forbs rely on pollinating insects to transfer pollen from one plant to another to insure abundance of flower seed and plant regeneration. As much as one third of fruit and vegetable crops depend on pollinators, and traditional pollinators such as European honey bees have had serious declines in recent years. For these reasons, it has become more important to nurture and promote native bees for prairie health and vitality of fruit and vegetable crops. The term “nurture” connotes a broader perspective to the landscape surrounding our Dakota County Minnesota remnant/restored prairie, engaging a greater community of people, taking a longer term multi-season perspective and a willingness for systematic experimentation with intentional actions to promote pollination.

To nurture our native pollinators (especially bees) I invited Sarah Foltz Jordan of the Xerces Society to prepare a Pollinator Conservation Activity Plan. While doing the field work for that plan I also invited Heather Holm, author of Restoring the Landscape with Native Plants online blog to “brainstorm” improvements to my prairie. I commend the publications of the Xerces Society and the Restoring the Landscape blog for authoritative and useful information. While the final plan will contain specific recommendations based on my soil type, existing vegetation, and adjacent agricultural context; the following are some general discussion items.



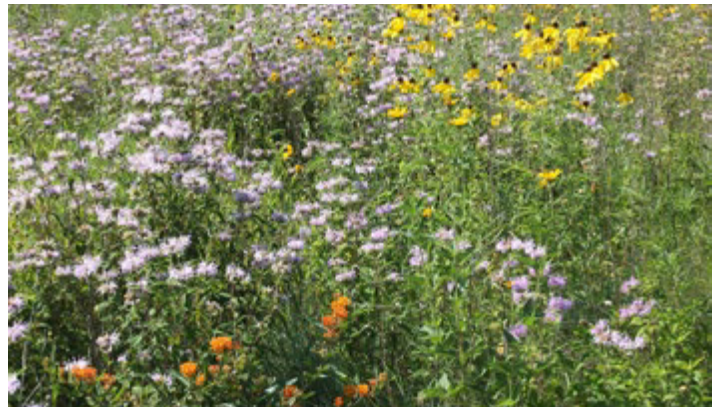
Heather Holm (left), Sarah Foltz Jordan (center), and Jim Nelson (right), inspecting native pollinators on lead plant.

Photo courtesy Jim Nelson.

More Native Plants, More Blooms, More Density and More Continuity

Native plants (not cultivars) are most likely to have sufficient store of pollen (protein) and nectar (carbohydrates) to sustain native bees. According to historic studies of vegetative composition, our prairie has far too many (wind pollinated) grasses, so we utilized lists of native bee favorites from the DNR, the Xerces Society and other sources.

After a plant inventory, we discovered that we had many good foundation forbs such as Bee Balm (*Monarda fistulosa*) and Milkweed (*Asclepia tuberosa* and *A. syriaca*), but were generally lacking in other bee favorites such as Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*), and native thistles (e.g., *Cirsium discolor*). In addition, our prairie is somewhat deficient on early season blooming plants. We will augment our small population of Golden Alexander’s (*Zizia aptera*) and select another variety of Penstemon to assure that we have more quantity and variety of flowering plants when bees are first emerging from hibernation. Also, we will definitely begin adding some spring-blooming flowering shrubs like Dogwood (*Cornus spp.*). We seem to have an abundance of plants blooming mid-summer. Since our late season is also a little sparse, we will add Gentians (*Gentiana spp.*), Aster sp., and possibly increase our numbers of Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*). In the future we will strive to actually have many flowers with overlapping blooms times, providing bees with a continuity of food resources throughout the season. We will continue to plant forbs in large patches and massed swirls to allow bees more efficient access the blooming plants.



Proactive Steps to Enhance Nesting Success

Perhaps the most difficult challenge in nurturing pollinators involves nesting sites. Different species have different nesting requirements. Nests of ground nesting bees occur mostly in bare or sparsely vegetated patches of soil in well drained areas. Wood and cavity nesting bees will often nest in beetle tunnels or hollow stems of some plants. Bumble bee nests can be found in a variety of habitats, including abandoned holes of rodents, under rock piles, and in the hollow spaces under bunchgrasses. With a spirit of curiosity, we are trying many different approaches to increase pollinator nesting habitat. We attempted to attract Bumble Bees with a self-constructed 2 chamber buried box with a ¾ inch pipe opening to the surface. Placement, orientation and timing, distance from forage is all variables that we are studying. Also for bumble bees, we will monitor our rock piles for activity and leave plenty of native bunchgrass patches undisturbed for bumble

bee nesting habitat. For cavity-nesting bees, rather than rely on artificial nesting boxes, we were persuaded that the most fundamental nesting strategy was to preserve natural habitat. We girdled some invasive trees to create snags and created piles of field stone, mixed brush, and pithy plant stems to provide a variety of cavities that are dry, dark and attractive to bees. Several of our native plant species have stems with hollow or pithy centers that are well-suited for this purpose, including rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), lead plant (*Amorpha canescens*), and compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*). For ground nesting bees, we may experiment with creating designated areas of undisturbed bare ground in parts of the property that have good drainage (either naturally, or because sand has been hauled in). Overall, the keys to promoting native bee nesting success seem to be: (1) protect natural nesting sites from disturbance and (2) where necessary provide structures that match bee preferences.



Bumblebee nesting box (l) and natural nesting location (r).
Photos courtesy Jim Nelson

Mowing and Burning Maintenance: Zones and Intervals

Once we established pollinators as a priority, certain land management approaches seemed more sensible. We believe that prescribed burning has often been useful to remove thatch and jump start the growing season. However, burning tends to favor warm season grasses. While the grasses are beautiful and often support forbs, they can shade out and in some cases out compete some of the more useful forbs. Burning on a whole plot basis can destroy an entire generation of insects and other life. Mowing combined with modest litter removal (using a flexible harrow) can allow forbs greater access to sun light. Mowing maintenance has many advantages. It can be accomplished by a single person on a flexible schedule with less need for advance preparation compared to burning. Currently the removed litter is being composted for gardening uses. On our farm we have decided to expand the interval between burns to about 4-5 years (rather than 2-3) and rely more on mowing. Our mowing is “rough” and leaves a mosaic of small patches of un-mowed areas. We will divide our 28 acres into about 3 non-contiguous zones. These changes involved significantly more work, but we hope the more intensive management will produce blooming plants attractive to pollinators. A robust insect community is also attractive to many graceful songbirds and other wild life.

Protecting Pollinator Health: “Bee” Careful

There are many precautionary proverbs with the thought that it is better to take care that a problem does not happen than have to solve the problem afterwards. Many modern farm chemicals are effective for eliminating noxious weeds and pests, but extremely detrimental to native pollinators. While there may be situations where chemicals are required, we continuously try to educate ourselves to identify alternatives and minimize chemical impacts by applying them properly under optimum conditions. Our farm is a commercial farm and we are surrounded by neighboring farms that rely on chemicals throughout the growing season. While we have significant grass buffers greater than 40 feet, we will evaluate in the coming year the possibility of creating some hedgerows to preclude pesticide drift to some of our most vulnerable areas. In particular, we are concerned about the drift of neonicotinoid insecticides, since these chemicals are known to be very toxic to bees, and their use in corn production is common-place. To minimize the possible detrimental effects of farm chemicals, we have formally requested our neighbors to use cautions with chemicals near our fields. We have also posted some “Do Not Spray” awareness signs at our field boundaries. An important step is an annual neighborhood “Open Houses” to showcase our prairie activities and build support for protecting our prairie and its varied life forms. When people understand our objectives they can harmonize their agricultural activities to complement our pollinator goals.



While the declining number of pollinators is a challenge to Nature and our food supplies, meaningful progress can be achieved. Working together, private landowners can address this issue through following pollinator friendly guidelines; sharing knowledge gained and intentionally nurturing their native pollinators with thoughtful actions.

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Update on Stream & Wetland Restoration at Shea Prairie

Story & photos by Rich Henderson

In 2013, just one year after the stream and wetland restoration work was completed at the Shea Prairie unit of TPE's Mounds View Grassland, the marsh and wetland vegetation is really taking off and is becoming well established in the standing water and saturated soil areas (see photos), including mats of young sedges. I was pleasantly surprised to find swamp lousewort (*Pedicularis lanceolata*), a species of sedge meadow, fen, calcareous wet prairie, blooming in its first year!

The water areas were absolutely teeming with tadpoles this summer. Several species of dragonflies were patrolling and breeding over the water. Teal, mallards, and Canada geese also made use of the new wetlands.



Seedlings in the drier soils, upland prairie species, are present (good things are coming), but they did not get very big or very abundant in their first year. Lack of rain in the second half of the summer did not help. These seedlings are taking their time, as most prairie species do, putting down deep roots for the long haul, before developing much vegetation above ground. It will take several more years before the uplands start to look like native prairie once again, and many decades before they even approximate the original ecosystem. For the vegetation to become indistinguishable from the original plant communities that graced this valley 170 years ago, it may take 100 years or more. But in the meantime, it will certainly provide one with the feel, color, and diversity of what original prairie was like. It will also be providing critical habitat for a wide range of grassland and wetland dependent animals.

Driftless Land Stewardship Goat Herd Used for Brush Control in Middleton

Article and photo by Matt Geiger, Middleton Times-Tribute

[Editor's Note - This newspaper article was sent in by Rose Sime of the Southwest Chapter. Pheasant Branch Conservancy is a large non-TPE preserve in the city of Middleton, WI which includes prairie and oak savanna.]

Those who frequent the Pheasant Branch Conservancy are used to seeing an array of flora and fauna as they travel the preserve's meandering paths. But earlier this summer they encountered something entirely new: goats.

A herd of 82 animals came and went as part of the City of Middleton Public Lands and Forestry Department's plan to manage invasive brush in Bock Forest. This approach, called prescribed grazing, harnessed the goats' appetite for brush to help reduce invasive species populations.

Prior to the mid-1800s, much of the Middleton area was oak savanna, oak woodland, prairie and wetland.

Naturally occurring fires and blazes set by Native Americans kept the "understory" open. The open area allowed a diverse community of grasses and wildflowers to flourish.

Today, two species of invasive brush - buckthorn and honeysuckle - are shading out the understory vegetation and reducing plant diversity and the habitat value of the woodland. According to Middleton Public Lands manager Penni Klein, by eating the brush the goats helped to restore the native plant community and wildlife habitat. The goats are a smoke-free, solar-powered, quiet alternative to prescribed burning and brush mowing, she pointed out.

The goats were brought to the conservancy by Driftless Land Stewardship, LLC, a Wisconsin-based company offering prescribed grazing and other land management services. They removed invasive brush from nearly 10 acres of oak woodland. They were contained by a solar-powered electric fence, which kept them in and predators such as coyotes out.

Jesse Bennett, co-owner of Driftless Land Stewardship, said the experiment was a success. While the goats completed the task of devouring countless invasive plants, they also did something else that he believes might have been equally important. “There were several approaches the city could have used to handle the problem in this area,” he said. “But Penni Klein really wanted to do something that would be educational in addition to getting rid of the invasives. I think there’s no doubt that was accomplished.”

Just as with the use of fire, goats are only a temporary solution, as invasive plants will return again and again without follow-up by the city. Bennett said he usually uses his goats in more rural areas. “When I was driving into the City of Middleton hauling a trailer full of goats it did seem a little weird for a second,” he said with a chuckle. “But in the end it worked exactly as planned.”

“I initiated this process knowing this is for Bock Forest and it’s a community forest and we can teach this as a sustainable method for land management that others can learn from,” said Klein, “and experience in hopes that they choose [the] same [method] if available as a tool for management in the future.”

Klein said the goats illustrate the “various ways we manage the lands and [the] techniques we can employ.”



Roundup at the Searles Creek Corral

By Nick Faessler

After more than ten years in production, the Parsnip Predator gets branded. Not like a brand name, but actually branded like calves in a fall roundup. The old labels were not very durable and tended to disappear after several years’ use. A custom branding iron was commissioned to be able to apply our name and to identify the tool. The hot brand method insures the name stays with the tool forever.

A balmy May morning brought all the cowgirls and cowboys to the roundup at the Searles Creek Corral to apply a hot iron to the corralled predators. The custom-made branding iron was heated in a charcoal fire and applied to the handle to permanently identify the tool. The branding iron was heated with the aid of an air blast to super heat it hot enough to singe the wooden handle.



Prairie Bluff Predator branding crew -Tom Mitchell, Jenny Mitchell, Mary Zimmerman, Nick Faessler, Steve Huebner, Jeri Johnson :and Fred Faessler



Parsnip Predator being branded (l) and the final product (r)

The crew worked diligently for over two hours branding nearly one hundred Predators. An efficient assembly line of fire master, shovel handler, roper, brand master and timer worked to brand all in the herd. Everyone had a chance to participate and many took turns wielding the hot iron.

Since there was a lot of hot charcoal left from the branding, some nice steaks landed on the grill. When all were finished the crew devoured a tasty potluck meal. All reveled in a job well done until the next year’s roundup.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prairie Enthusiasts On the Air & Online

The Prairie Enthusiasts have appeared in various media outlets recently, which you can check out online.

One is a documentary film entitled *Mysteries of the Driftless*, which was released recently. Produced for the PBS television series “Untamed Science”, this film was sponsored by a number of regional conservation groups, including TPE. It includes appearances by three members of the Coulee Region chapter - Armund Bartz, Abbie Church, and Jim Theler. You can view the film at www.untamedscience.com/mysteries-driftless-zone. It will also be appearing soon on many local PBS stations.

Also, in conjunction with the Wisconsin Science Festival, Rich Henderson made an appearance on September 26 on Wisconsin Public Radio’s Larry Meiller Show. Rich spoke and answered questions about prairie restoration and management and the scientific research on prairies being conducted at TPE’s Mounds View Grassland. Talks on the research were presented at the Mounds View barn on September 28 as part of the Science Festival. You can hear an archive of Rich’s appearance online at www.wpr.org/programs/archives/the-larry-meiller-show. Scroll down to the September 26th show.



2013 TPE Photo Contest Finalist -
Two Butterflies on Pasture Thistle by Gayle Edlin

CHAPTER NEWS

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

Tom Brock Honored

by Kathy Henderson

Tom Brock, a long-time member, volunteer, and supporter of The Prairie Enthusiasts, was on Capitol Hill Sept. 19 to receive the Golden Goose Award. The award is aimed at celebrating “seemingly obscure studies that have led to major breakthroughs and resulted in significant societal impact.” It is given for federally-funded research that has led to “demonstrable, significant human and economic benefits.”

Almost 40 years ago, Brock, then a professor at Indiana University, and Hudson Freeze, an undergraduate student working with Brock at Mushroom Spring in the Lower Geyser Basin of Yellowstone, found something that by any measure validates investments in basic science, the undirected search for new knowledge. Brock’s discovery set the stage for the branch of science that studies life in extreme environments and, most tangibly, yielded an enzyme that is central to the technology for amplifying DNA — revolutionizing everything from medical diagnostics to criminal forensics.

We would like to recognize and congratulate Tom not only for his work in microbiology but for all he has done for TPE. The countless hours of weeding, collecting,

burning, committees, presentations, blogging, website development, and much more have made Tom invaluable to the organization.

Much of the information here was reprinted from ‘The University of Wisconsin News’ dated September 17, 2013. Tom and Kathie were featured in the photo below, taken in the savanna at Pleasant Valley Conservancy. The article was on the homepage of the UW-Madison website for several days.



Tom & Kathie Brock at Pleasant Valley Conservancy.
Photo by Jeff Miller/UW-Madison

Another Good Intern Crew

By Rich Henderson

For the 6th year in a row now, the Empire-Sauk Chapter has been fortunate enough to host a summer intern crew. This year, we had a crew of 5 interns and a crew leader for 12 weeks. The crew was headed up by Clinton Nienhaus, a grad of St. Mary's University of Minnesota and former intern. The interns were Kyle Alvis, a recent grad from UW-Platteville majoring in biology, Austin Pethan, a senior in wildlife ecology at UW-Madison, Jocelyn Tschaikovsky, a recent grad from UW-Madison majoring in biology and environmental studies, Laura Brusson, a senior in biology and environmental studies at UW-Madison, and Kurt Hacker, a recent grad from UW-Stevens Point majoring in wildlife ecology.

The interns worked under the auspices of Savanna Oak Foundation for about 1 ½ days each week. Work was carried out at Pleasant Valley Conservancy and Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, both State Natural Areas owned and/or eased by TPE. Amanda Budyak, Land Manager at Pleasant Valley, supervised the interns at these two sites.

The rest of the time, the crew worked primarily at the 570-acre Mounds View Grassland Preserve; the barn at the Schurch-Thomson Prairie unit of the preserve was their headquarters. However, they also put in some time at Erbe Grassland, Kalscheur Savanna, Powell Prairie, and Mazomanie Bluff. With assistance from volunteers, the crew cleared these preserves of parsnip, sweetclover, knapweed, hedge parsley, and miscellaneous other invasive weeds. They also collected prairie seed, maintained the seed orchards, and helped with rare plant, vegetation, and breeding bird monitoring. A couple highlights of their summer were collecting 9 lbs of needle-grass seed and finding a new population of the Federally Threatened prairie bushclover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*). The newly discovered population had at least 100 plants!

The crew accomplished a great deal and hopefully learned much about prairie conservation and management. We hope everyone found their internships to be a worthwhile summer experience. We appreciate their hard work in sometimes trying outdoor conditions.



2013 Intern Crew. Left to right, Amanda Budyak (Land Manager at Pleasant Valley), Kurt Hacker, Kyle Alvis, Clinton Nienhaus (crew leader), Jocelyn Tschaikovsky, Austin Pethan, and Kathie Brock (site steward/owner at Pleasant Valley along with Tom Brock). Missing is Laura Brusson. Photo by Tom Brock.

Fall 2013

Seed Collecting & Cleaning Help Needed

The Empire-Sauk Chapter plans to plant prairie seed across at least 98 acres this fall/winter at the Mounds View Grassland, Erbe Grassland, Smith-Reiner Drumlin Prairie, and other locations. Thus we could use all the help we can get this fall to collect the needed seed, both individuals working on their own or in organized groups. Major seed collecting areas this fall will be at Underwood, Schurch-Thomson, and Shea Prairies and nearby sites south of Blue Mounds, and at Rettenmund Black Earth Prairie and Pleasant Valley Conservancy. Also new this year, we will be collecting in eastern Dane County and western Jefferson County.

Help is also needed this fall with seed cleaning and processing. Last year we processed 500 pounds of seed from over 130 species, and we will likely be doing that much again this year. Most of the work this year will be done at the Schurch-Thomson Prairie barn (south of Blue Mounds) and Pleasant Valley Conservancy (south of Black Earth). If you wish to be on the contact lists to help with these activities, please contact Diane Hills (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org or 608-239-4699).

Fall Work Party Plans

This fall, the Empire-Sauk Chapter will need volunteers on many sites to clear trees and brush. We have grants to help with the work, but these require match of in-kind volunteer time to earn the grant money - for every hour of volunteer time that you put in we receive several hours of paid contract labor. This fall and winter, we will be working at the Mounds View Grassland complex south of Blue Mounds, Erbe Grassland near Mt. Horeb, Ripp & Koltjes Prairies near Waunakee, Mazomanie Bluff, Schluckebier & Moely Sand Prairies west of Prairie du Sac, Rettenmund Black Earth Prairie, Kalscheur Savanna south of Hollandale, and Smith-Reiner Drumlin Prairie near Cambridge. Be on the lookout for fliers, e-mails, and other notifications. Bring friends. Fall/winter work parties are fun with refreshments (such as home-made cookies) and crisp weather, and are a good source of outdoor winter exercise. You always leave with a sense of accomplishment after clearing trees and brush.

If you wish to help with work on these sites, and you are uncertain as to whether or not you are on the e-mail or phone notification lists, please contact Diane Hills (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org or 608-239-4699).

Are You Mechanically Inclined?

Empire-Sauk Chapter is still looking for a volunteer or two to be in charge of the maintenance and repair of field equipment, including drip torches, backpack cans, herbicide sprayers, hand tools, brush-cutters, chainsaws, mowers, tractors, a truck, ATVs, propane torches, pump units, and seeders. The workshop at the Schurch-Thomson barn is setup for maintenance and repair and is where most equipment is stored. However, maintenance work may certainly be done at other locations. If you wish to help, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

MANY RIVERS CHAPTER

By Deanna Pomije

Our Many River's Chapter is in full bloom. We've filled all our core staff positions with the following generous volunteers:

Chair: Deanna Pomije (507) 600-9900

Vice-Chair: Jim Lynch

Treasurer: Naoko Meyer

Secretary: Susan Chambers

TPE Board Member: Henry Panowitsch

We also have an active core group that has been working around the prairies of the Mankato area over the summer. Some of the projects we've been enjoying working on together include:

Kutz Prairie (just west of Mankato up along the bluff terraces of the MN River) is a 20-acre remnant prairie that we started providing TLC to back in 2010 with the start of our chapter. It has come a long way in just three years' time with a lot of brush control, burning and seed gathering for re-dispersal. We are starting to see the fruit of our labors with amazing prairie plants popping up in different spots continuously. There is still a journey ahead of us, before the site is fully restored to prairie, but we are enjoying the trip.

The Rasmussen Woods prairie restoration site is a newer project of ours - a large public park located in the heart of Mankato in a large valley surrounded by woods and residential Mankato. A few members started the 3-acre prairie restoration project with intensive site preparation and seeded the prairie site a year ago. We have been assisting with workdays on the site, working to control and enhance the planting. We continue to be encouraged when we see new prairie species coming through every week, amongst the array of weeds, as you can imagine with a newly restored prairie in rich soils.

This fall yet we are looking to conduct a few prairie burns. If you think you may be interested in joining in, please contact any of our board members and we'll include you in our burn contact list. With burns dependent so much on the weather there isn't always much notice prior to the burn. Please contact us; everyone should experience a prairie burn at least once, even if only to watch.



Steve Gahm & Charles Draper on weed patrol at Rasmussen woods.
Photo courtesy Deanna Pomije

From time to time we are also helping each other out on each of our own little prairie jewels and learning from one another, getting together to share prairie ideas and experiences. We are working on a few ideas to further organize our chapter through forming a few committees. One committee to gather information on all the prairie sites we have together as a group to help coordinate our future work days and field trips. Another committee to meet and discuss our chapter's burning policies, equipment, training and protocol. We are always looking for new volunteer to assist on any of the above projects; or come up with your own idea and we'll see, if together we can make it happen. Stay tuned for further prairie educational experiences over this coming winter.



Prairie tour after the annual Many Rivers Chapter summer picnic.
Photo courtesy Deanna Pomije

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

by Tom Mitchell

The Prairie Enthusiasts, thanks to efforts of the Prairie Bluff Chapter, is now the owner of Muralt Bluff Prairie and nearby Muralt South as a result of a motion passed unanimously by the Green County Board of Supervisors at its September 10 meeting. The county purchased these parcels in 1976 and 1982 thanks to the vision and efforts of Gary Eldred, John Ochsner, Jonathan Wilde and others who sought protection for 75 acres of rich, remnant prairie.

Muralt Bluff will remain a state natural area, open to the public, but it will be managed by the Prairie Bluff Chapter under a plan approved by the WI DNR Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. This is the fifth TPE-won preserve managed by the chapter.

Thanks to the efforts of chapter members Bill Kuenzi and Dan Gartzke it was announced at the September meeting of the Green's Prairie Cemetery Association that the Town of York will join TPE and GPCA is funding a joint effort to reset headstones at the pioneer graveyard. And special thanks to Dave Green for his efforts to stop the spread of day lilies and for his genealogical research into the families of those buried there.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period May 19 – August 31, 2013

Greg Hottman & Melanie Tavera, Oregon, WI	Keith & Sally Schnese, Wild Rose, WI	Patricia Tremaine, River Falls, WI
Janice Froelich & Bob Novy, Verona, WI	Jill Barland, Eau Claire, WI	Matthew Jahnke, Duluth, MN
Rebecca Gilman, Argyle, WI	Bonnie O'Leske, Manitowoc, WI	
Mark Stopyro, Mantorville, MN	Paul & Teresa Kvittek, Eagle Lake, MN	

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

To: Rose Brothers, Madison, WI

From: Scott Fulton & Karen Agee

THANK YOU DONORS

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period May 19 – August 31, 2013. These gifts above and beyond membership dues and the annual appeal are truly generous and appreciated.

\$1000 or more

The Estate of Kenneth W Wood	Anonymous	Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
Barbara & Brad Glass (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)	Anonymous (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)	Scott Fulton & Karen Agee (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)
Jack Kussmaul (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)	Pat Trochlell & Ken Wade	
Linda Lynch (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)	Scott & Cary Reich	

\$500 - \$999

Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Inc.

\$100 - \$499

Richard Oberle	Jack Kussmaul	Jan Lavacek & Carole Sullivan
Shirlee Enter	Charles Wellington	Mark Maidak
Ann Kalvig	John Ochsner	Nancy Winter
Christine Kotulski	Janice Froelich & Bob Novy	Jim & Diane Rogala (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)
Laurie Yahr & Rich Kahl	Chris Hughes	

Under \$100

Laura Brierre	Ray & Rodonna Amiel	Butch Kaempfer
Ralph & Ann Woldt	Chris St. Clair	Frank Grenzow
Cynthia & Loren Bagley	Frank Grenzow	Tom Evans
Nick & Linda Faessler	Jim & Marci Hess	Douglas Buege
Howard Garves	William & Eloise Kuenzi	Pure Prairie Seed
Jane Edson (<i>for Sylvan Road</i>)	Mike Perry	Shawn Schottler
Karen Lawrence	Martin Steitz	Driftless Land Stewardship
Deanna Pomije	Barbara Meyer	



COMPASS CLUB

The following are members of the Compass Club, who give \$1000+ to TPE on an annual basis.

Kathie & Tom Brock	Jeff & Erin Huebschman	Bill Ramsden & Doreen Lynch
Stephen & Susan Carpenter	Kimberly Kreitinger & Eric Preston	Paul & Linda Rode
Scott Fulton & Karen Agee	Jack Kussmaul	Peggy & Jon Traver
Gary & Pam Gates	Richard Oberle	Gail & Willi Van Haren
Barbara & Brad Glass	Jeff Ralston	Anonymous

We would like to give a special thanks to Driftless Land Stewardship, LLC and especially the co-owners Jesse Bennett & Jaye Maxfield for their donation of thousands of dollars of management labor and technical help to the Southwest Chapter over a period of many years.

www.driftlesslandstewardship.com



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Did you know you can renew online? Visit: **www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org**

Or, mail a check and the form below to:

The Prairie Enthusiasts, P.O. Box 1148, Madison, WI 53701-1148

Questions? E-mail Joe Rising (Communications Coordinator) at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

Thank you.

Name: _____

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E-mail: _____

The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Blazing Star |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Little Bluestem | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Compass Plant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Big Bluestem | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Monarch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$65 Pasque | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000+ Bur Oak Benefactor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Shooting Star | |