

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 27, NO. 1 SPRING 2014

Grassroots Conservation at Work

To Burn or Not to Burn?

By Deanna Pomije

This seems to be a common question for Prairie Enthusiasts every spring and fall on the many prairie sites we look to burn in our attempt to manage the ever encroaching woody species and enliven the prairie plants. Speaking from my limited experience in burning, many of us pose this question prior to every burn we conduct. We consider all the various parameters: wind speed, direction, relative humidity, temperature, weather conditions, site preparation, volunteer numbers and experience levels. We may not have written this down, but we've considered all these variable and more to ultimately decide weather or not to light the match. We have been conscientious.

It just makes sense to conduct burns judiciously, because no one wants the alternative to happen. We don't want the fire to get out of control and burn outside our



*Arena Bluff Burn (finalist in 2014 TPE Photo Contest)
Photo by Sue Steinmann*

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management area, damage another's property or in the worst-case scenario cause any serious injuries or even death. We all want to enjoy prairies and not for it to become a horrible memory. I think we all understand the seriousness of what could go wrong on a burn.

I know I've experienced first hand the excitement burning creates, as many of you have. It is thrilling to be a part of controlling and watching a burn progress. The anticipation is palpating. No one wants to be the one to call off a burn, for whatever the reason to cancel: conditions aren't just right, not enough volunteers, equipment or site preparation isn't quite enough. But we do call off burns and anyone who's had even basic burn training understands that this can and should happen at times.

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Signs of New Things to Come

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

It is finally beginning to look like spring around us. I have started seeing turkey vultures, robins, and red winged blackbirds this past week. Not like these are anything special, but these are sure signs that there are exciting things coming very soon.



Within The Prairie Enthusiasts this spring brings many exciting new things to share with you. First and foremost, we have closed on the Sylvan Road Conservation Area. This project, which we have been actively fundraising over the past year, was purchased from Iowa County, WI in mid-March. We now have the opportunity to begin management and restoration of the wet prairie, wetlands, and remnant oak savannas on this site. We can't thank everyone enough for their support of this project, including over \$40,000 of donations from TPE members and the members of the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter, particularly Linda Lynch, who led this project to successful completion.

At its March 2nd meeting, the TPE Board approved the Burn Policy. This has been a long time coming, and I think everyone involved knows that this will enable us to continue to burn safely and effectively. The policy will be phased in over the coming year, and we have built in flexibility for our grassroots individuality to still thrive. All chapters who conduct TPE sanctioned burns will need to provide the Land Management Committee with a list of their burn team members, and identify who they would like to be their crew leaders and burn bosses. This enables us to document the training and experience of our volunteers, rather than requiring additional training at this point. We have also included an equipment waiver process, so chapters who largely consist of landowners that help each other burn can continue to do so without using the process for TPE sanctioned burns. The Land Management Committee would very much like your feedback to help improve this policy once we have begun using it over the coming year.

One additional and exciting new project is the new membership database and website program. Late last year we selected a new commercial platform for non-profit organizations provided by Timberlake Membership Software which combines an on-line membership database, email list services, and website content management. We are almost finished migrating our membership information into this new system, and will begin using it shortly. The next phase will be to migrate our website into the new system, enabling many new and exciting ways for more effective communication. I can't thank our *Prairie Promoter* editor Scott Fulton enough for his knowledge, commitment and technical assistance in driving this project forward.

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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 Mar. 14 (Spring issue); May 30 (Summer issue); Aug. 15 (Fall issue); and Dec. 5 (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

Following a very successful conference on March 1, the TPE Board had a full day together on March 2. After our routine Board meeting we spent four hours, including a working lunch, with a facilitator (paid for with help from Gathering Waters Conservancy) looking at the future of our organization. In preparation for the session the facilitator had conducted telephone interviews with all board members to get their views of what works, what does not work and changes that might be made. The focus was trying to determine what the chapters can do best and what the central office can do best.

At the end of the meeting the board elected, by secret ballot, an ad hoc committee of five, to continue the discussion and make recommendations for our future operations. I felt it was critical to get people with a diverse range of opinions as well as from different chapters on the committee to ensure that all views are represented. Without this it could be difficult to gain acceptance for any recommendations the committee makes. I was pleased with the committee that was created. It consists of Jean Clark from Prairie Sands, Dawn Littleton from Prairie Smoke, Henry Panowitsch from Many Rivers, Scott Fulton from Empire Sauk and Jim Rogala from Coulee Region. It is good to see smaller chapters, like Prairie Sands, represented. It is good that there are faces that may be new to you, such as Dawn Littleton, as well as faces with

which you are familiar. Having smaller chapters represented and new faces rising to leadership makes for a healthier organization.

On a happy note, I was at the closing where TPE acquired the 99 acre Sylvan Road Tract in Iowa County on March 13. The property had been owned by Iowa County and acquisition was not easy. The County Board was not always in agreement, local politics were involved and at the last minute a neighboring landowner brought a court action (eventually dismissed) claiming that they, rather than Iowa County, owned a portion of the property. A lot of TPE members spent many hours seeing this through, attending endless board meetings and never giving up hope even when it seemed hopeless. While many were involved, without the dogged determination of Linda Lynch when our prospects looked darkest, I do not think it would have happened. When I called Linda after the closing to tell her that TPE was now really the owner of Sylvan Road, she told me that when she got off the phone she was going to sit down with an adult drink. She really earned at least one.

My favorite comment on the acquisition came from Jesse Bennett, who wrote "As dysfunctional and pathetic as our chapter may sometimes seem, we continue to accomplish things that will matter long after we do. Pretty cool :)" While Jesse may have been a bit hard on the chapter, his comment was good enough that I felt I should share it.

Start Planning for 2014 Prairie Days

August 2014 is now officially "The Prairie Enthusiasts' Prairie Days". This event, which we first tried last year, is a chance for us to reach out and show off to our local communities the wonderful prairie and savanna sites we love and the organization we have created to care for them. Although this is an organization-wide effort, each chapter is asked to create and schedule its own unique event, much like those during last year's Prairie Days weekend, for whatever date in August works best for them.

As your plans develop, please let the Prairie Days team know the details - that is, when and what your chapter is planning. A rough description is certainly adequate; you can fill in the details as your date approaches. The Prairie Days committee will create another web page to unify the effort and incorporate information about each event.

August is a busy month with lots of possibilities for partnering with other local activities -- county fairs and community events. Let us know about your great plans and ideas so we can help to inspire each other as the year progresses.

Evanne Hunt for the 2014 Prairie Day committee
Send comments to Evanne at eahunt@pressenter.com

Scenes from 2013 Prairie Days. Photos by Evanne Hunt & John Day
Spring 2014



Parrish Oak Savanna Protected

By Rich Henderson

After 40 years of being on the conservation community's radar as a significant natural area, Parrish Oak Savanna is now permanently protected by TPE. This new preserve, and soon to be State Natural Area, is located in the rugged driftless topography of western Dane County, WI, just north of Blue Mounds. On December 19, 2013 The Prairie Enthusiasts acquired title from the grandchildren of the site's namesakes, Roland and Avis Parrish, who had purchased the parcel in 1965. They knew the site was special and had that reinforced by University of Wisconsin professor Orrie Loucks, with whom they were acquainted.

The preserve is 29 acres in size and has a rich complement of prairie, savanna and oak woodland flora. Approximately 225 vascular plant species have been identified on the property by numerous ecologists. Brian Pruka did his Master's research here (published 1992) investigating how plant species sort themselves out along a canopy/light gradient. The site's thin soils, southerly aspect and lack of intensive historic land use have allowed perpetuation of native prairie and savanna species. The soil and substrate likely slowed canopy closure and retarded understory succession. The site's tree canopy has closed in significantly since 1937 (see aerial photograph), but a full complement of the open savanna species are still present. The site is dominated by a northwest to southeast trending ridge of St. Peter sandstone capped by a thin flat layer of Platteville dolomite.



Aerial photograph of Parrish Oak Savanna, taken July, 1937

Courtesy Rich Henderson

The total change in elevation is 150 feet. The steep southwest-facing slopes include sandstone outcrops and have prairie vegetation with xeric conditions evidenced by prickly pear cactus. The property transitions through oak savanna to oak woodland towards the southwest and northeast. The northeast slope of the ridge is now dominated by early succession oak woodland. Some periodic brush clearing and prescribed burns have been conducted on the site over the past 30 years, but much more intense efforts are needed to bring it back to its full potential. It is TPE's goal, via the Empire-Sauk Chapter, to do just that.

Parrish Savanna represents a significant remnant of threatened oak savanna. Ecologists estimate that less than 1% of Wisconsin's pre-settlement oak savanna community remains today. Uncommon native plant species present at the site include: State threatened pale purple coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) and State Special Concern species, prairie dandelion (*Microseris cuspidata*, aka *Nothocalais cuspidata*), woodland boneset (*Eupatorium sessilifolium*), Richardson's sedge (*Carex richardsonii*), and fame flower (*Talinum regospermum*, aka *Phemeranthus rugospermus*).

Two bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Wisconsin breed on the site: red-headed woodpeckers and field sparrows. Six-lined racerunner lizards have been on the site in the past but have not been looked for in recent years.

The property is at the northern end of an extensive, continuous conservation corridor that connects up with Brigham County Park and Blue Mound State Park to the south. The protected properties include Pleasure Valley Conservancy (209 acres owned by Pat Trochlell and Ken Wade on which TPE and Dane County hold conservation easements), the Richard Kelly Property (158 acres on which Dane County and TPE hold easements) and Rocky Dell Addition (former Johnson property, 80 acres, currently being held by Ken Wade for anticipated permanent protection).

The protection of Parrish Oak Savanna was made possible by grants from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (WDNR), the Dane County Conservation Fund program, a donation from Ken Wade and Pat Trochlell, and a bargain sale donation made by the grandchildren of Roland and Avis Parrish (Kurt Stiemke, Kristen Hardesty and Don Stiemke). We are grateful to Kurt, Kristen and Don for their commitment to seeing this land protected in memory of their grandparents and to the State of Wisconsin and Dane County for their foresight in helping to protect significant natural areas for future generations.



*View from Parrish Oak Savanna facing south toward Blue Mound
Photo by Ken Wade*

Why Does TPE Matter to You?

By Rich Henderson

At a recent retreat of The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors, participants were asked to do an exercise. It was to complete this sentence: “TPE matters to me because I believe” We then all shared our responses. I was struck by the common themes. It was both enlightening and uplifting.

The exercise was an attempt to illustrate what motivates us humans to take action (contribute, join, participate, etc.). It turns out, it is the gut feeling that comes from the emotion-driven, primitive part of the brain that motivates people to action. Hence, the same Latin root, *movere*, to move, being present in both the words “emotion” and “motivate.” Of course, it is hard to put gut feelings into words, as our retreat facilitator pointed out, for that part of the brain does not use or think in words. The exercise did, however, help the Board put our motivations into words as best we could.

In order to keep the retreat moving along, we were not given a lot of time to come up with our responses, so I was not fully satisfied with mine and have since been giving them more thought. I wish to share with you what I have come to believe is my primary motivation for being involved with TPE and its mission. I do this in hopes that you too will give thought to your motives and attempt to complete for yourself the sentence “TPE matters to me because I believe”

I have had the good fortune, through experience and education, to be given some inkling of what the landscapes of the upper Midwest must have looked like when the first non-native peoples arrived more than 200 years ago. The diversity of life was likely stunning. Some of the first Europeans described it as an endless wildflower garden with a pleasing mix of scattered trees and meadows. Personally, I feel somewhat deprived, even resentful, that our forbearers did not have the foresight to set aside some large areas, even just a few square miles here and there, so that future generations could have the opportunity to see and experience what they saw.

There is some solace in the small, vestigial remnants of sedge meadows, fens, prairies, savannas and open oak woodlands that have miraculously survived, albeit in limited numbers and mostly by chance. Also, most of the original species of that landscape have managed to hang on. The bad news is that the remnants, where not protected and actively managed, are still being steadily lost, and many of the species are now threatened or in serious decline. Personally, I feel obligated to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to make an effort to ensure that what I have experienced will be there for those who follow. I do not want to let future generations down by not saving what is still left. I believe they deserve the chance to experience and enjoy what I have seen and enjoyed.

I also believe future generations deserve the opportunity to experience the vistas and awe of the original landscape of 200 years ago. Through experience and education, I’m able to imagine what it must have been like, but how does one convey or share that with others? Thus, I’m also motivated, in addition to protecting the last remnants, to start landscape-scale restorations, which will someday provide that experience to future generations. I certainly wish such projects had been started 50 or more years ago, so I would not have to rely so heavily on my imagination today.

I guess my motivation comes down to a desire to share with people what I’ve had the good fortune to experience and come to understand about the original prairie and savannas of our region and the great diversity of life they supported. TPE matters to me because I believe everyone, now and into the future, deserves that opportunity.

*Burr Oak Scene
by Gary Eldred*



Sylvan Road Protected

By Linda Lynch

We have finally closed on the Sylvan Road Conservation Area property and it is now protected for real. We were able to purchase the property with help from WI DNR’s Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, the North American Wetland Conservation Association (NAWCA), the Dutton Foundation, The Conservation Fund, and generous donations from individuals. A big thank you for your moral and financial support. It made the difference between our success and failure.

The next step is to assess and prioritize the needs of the property. The NAWCA grant has some money for restoration and we have applied for Wild Turkey Federation and USFWS grants to help with savanna restoration and fencing. With all this snow, it may be a while before it is dry enough to actually begin work, but it will be an exciting spring just the same. Thank you again to all who worked on this project for for your support of this special site!

Nurturing Pollinators: A Prairie Management Priority

By Jim Nelson

The vitality of our pollinators can be a force multiplier to strengthen our prairie preserves and adjacent agriculture fields. A recent study by Emory University researcher Berry Brosi and UCal ecologist Heather Briggs finds that removing a single species of bumblebees has a swift and clear impact: “desirable flowering plants produce significantly fewer seeds”. As landowners and not professional biologists, our family has enjoyed learning more about the powerful contribution of pollinators, especially bumblebees. We appreciate more their role in the regeneration and resilience of our prairie landscape and the productivity of our organic vegetable gardens.

Globally, bees are the most important pollinators. They have co-evolved with their floral resources. For millions of years, an annual life sustaining drama has unfolded. As the spring sun warms the earth, a queen bee slowly emerges after months of hibernation in protective underground chambers. She is alone in this chilly world; the rest of the family from the previous season has perished. The queen has mated the previous fall and carries with her the nascent future colony as fertilized but undeveloped eggs. As the queen slowly emerges, it will be imperative that she be able to locate and provision a suitable nest with nectar and pollen from early blooming plants. As a land manager, I am assuring that the emerging bees find available sources of early season forage i.e. locally appropriate flowering native plants. Pollen provides protein to complete the queen’s ovary development so that she can begin laying eggs.

A suitable nest may be pre-existing, such as an abandoned rodent hole a man-made structure, a clump of grass or brush pile. Research seems to suggest one very limiting factor for bumblebee success is lack of suitable undisturbed sites. Ground-nesting solitary bees need access to sunny, well-drained patches of bare ground. Suitable sites can be developed either by manually clearing vegetation from a small area or by creating a sand pit. For the latter, dig down one to two feet in an open, well-drained spot and fill with a sandy loam mix. Be sure to keep this area relatively free of vegetation. Keeping some portion of your flower bed free of mulch by exposing soil is a quick and easy way to provide habitat for ground-nesting bees.

Once the nest site is established, the queen will gather soft nesting material, often fine grasses. With her body she fashions a cavity in the center of the nest. From her body the queen extrudes thin strands of wax that she will form into a honey cup. This structure will become a focal point in the nursery for developing bees. During this hectic period, the queen is continually foraging for food, while tending her brood. She must continually keep them warm especially during the chilly spring nights.

It takes approximately three weeks for a young bee to develop. The first young workers are helped out

of the cocoons by their mother. They will continue to take nourishment from the honey pot until they forage for themselves. Once an early generation of bees has matured they can assist their mother in foraging for food and brooding the young. This frees the queen to focus on laying eggs. Once the early development of the bee family has been achieved the numbers in the family can rapidly multiply. Family building provides willing workers to devote themselves to seeking food and indirectly providing critical pollination service to the flowering plant community that includes many food resources.

Famed ecologist Bernd Heinrich provides an elegant scientific summary describing how plants depend on a robust population of pollinators and vice versa. While the plants are dependent on adequate level of visits by pollinating bees (or other pollinators), the bee family requires continuous nourishment. This typically requires a season long progression of nectar rich blooming plants. As land managers we must discern how we can orchestrate the various rhythms to enhance the natural cycles, assuring that the mutual needs of the plants and the pollinators can be adequately matched. Heather Holm’s just-released book provides beautifully illustrated practical advice for our area.

The Nelson Family Farm (www.nelsonfamilyfarm.org) in Dakota County, MN has become a “sweet spot” not only for native bees but also bee enthusiasts. Regular cohorts of enthusiasts have been visiting our prairie to appreciate the serendipity and subtle interdependence of pollinator and plant. Land managers are partnering with each other to learn and share experiences about how we can optimize that beautiful life regeneration cycle. Look for an Open House as part of the Prairie Enthusiasts summer field trip schedule.

Berry J. Brosi & Heather Briggs *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 1307438110 June 2013

Bernd Heinrich *Bumblebee Economics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Heather Holm. *Pollinators of Native Plants*. Minnetonka, MN: Pollination Press, 2014

Brown-belted bumblebee
(*Bombus griseocolis*)

Photo courtesy
Jim Nelson



Revisiting the John Curtis Dataset: The Importance of Keeping Records & Burning Prairies

By Amy Alstad

Many Prairie Enthusiasts are familiar with the work of John T. Curtis, whose career-capping book, *The Vegetation of Wisconsin*, documents the plant communities of Wisconsin with impressive detail and insight. Among the many stands of native vegetation that Curtis and his colleagues documented in the 1940s and 1950s were more than 200 prairie remnants. These records offer an unusual opportunity to document how the remnants have changed in the intervening decades, and what factors affect these changes.



During the summers of 2012 and 2013, I resurveyed 63 Curtis remnants using the same sampling methods employed by Curtis and his crew more than 60 years ago. Forty-seven of the sites that I visited were also surveyed by Mark Leach in 1987 and 1988.

One of the key lessons that I've learned from this project is the importance of keeping good records. While the Curtis records represent a rare and very valuable set of baseline data, the information isn't perfect. Many of the 200 sites couldn't be resurveyed due to lack of sufficient detail on the location of the site, preventing me from being confident I had relocated the right spot. The files on other sites contained handwritten notes with directions to "... omit these sites from analysis – incomplete data." Finally, Curtis occasionally took some shortcuts with his plant IDs. Some tricky groups of plants, such as *Rubus* (raspberries and blackberries), were lumped together at the genus level, while other tough-to-identify plants, such as the sedges, are almost entirely absent from the dataset.

Despite these issues, the Curtis dataset provides an opportunity to document how prairies change over time. Many of the sites have declined severely in quality over the past 60 years. Native prairie species have disappeared from many sites, and have been rapidly replaced with woody or exotic species. In some sites, more than 60% of all the species present are now exotics. Sites that are small, or on wet soil, or haven't been frequently burned are more likely to be heavily degraded.

However, there is reason for optimism. Several of the sites I've surveyed have maintained a nearly full complement of their prairie species since the Curtis survey,

and have resisted invasions of woody or invasive species. In some cases, rare prairie species appear to have colonized sites. For example, Curtis and his team didn't report finding the federally listed species prairie bush-clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) at Westport Drumlin prairie during their June 30th visit in 1947. However, prairie bush-clover was present when I surveyed this summer. Of course, we'll never know whether Curtis et al. simply overlooked this species, or if this was truly an instance of colonization.

The prairie remnants that have remained in good condition are usually large sites that have been consistently burned for the past several decades. Many of these high quality sites will be familiar to this audience; Black Earth Rettenmund, Scuppernong, Brady's Bluff, Oliver, and Muir Park today represent some of the best quality Curtis sites. These records confirm that management activities such as frequent prescribed fire, exotics management, and seeding adjacent parcels with prairie seeds are effective tools for preserving prairie condition. Interestingly, sites that had been burned infrequently (fewer than 6 times in 60 years) were more similar to sites that hadn't been burned at all than they were to sites that had been burned frequently (7 or more burns in 60 years). This suggests that there may be a minimum fire frequency threshold below which fire isn't effective in preventing the decline of native prairie plants.

These preliminary findings about the impacts of fire are based on information I have gathered from interviews with land stewards. Many thanks to those individuals who have already contributed their time and assistance in compiling these records. The dedication of professional and citizen stewards to prairie conservation has been tremendously valuable to this research endeavor. If you or someone you know has records on fire or other management activities for a Wisconsin prairie remnant that may have been a Curtis site, I would love to talk with you and add your information to this dataset. Please contact me at aalstad@wisc.edu.



Drachenburg Prairie Photo by Amy Alstad

2014 TPE Annual Conference and Banquet

By Scott Fulton

The Prairie Enthusiasts' Annual Conference and All Chapter Banquet was held this year on March 1 at the Country Springs Resort in Pewaukee, WI, near Milwaukee. The event was organized by conference chairs Alice and Walter Mirk and the Glacial Prairie Chapter and was co-sponsored by the Wild Ones. The theme this year was "Gardens of the Prairie: Rediscovering Sustainability".

Conference

Following a welcome from TPE President Jack Kussmaul, the conference began with an interesting talk by Dr. Mark Leach of the Chippewa Savannas chapter entitled "The Evolutionary Significance of The Wild Ones, The Prairie Enthusiasts and Other Mutants", which explored the origins and future of grassroots environmentalism.

The conference then broke into three subject tracks focusing on Landscaping, Restoration and Prairie Fauna. The talks were very wide ranging in subject, including designing urban gardens with native plants for birds and butterflies, seed harvesting/processing and seed mix design, site assessment, legal aspects of long-term protection, fungi, birds, bugs and reptiles of the prairies and even natural prairie burials.

During lunch, Chris Kirkpatrick presented an overview of the organization and our plans for 2014. Then Jennifer Picard, an anthropologist, gave a fascinating talk entitled "More Than Maize: Cultivation of Native Plants and Changing Lifeways in Prehistoric Wisconsin", which looked at how studying plant use has helped us to understand more about our local ancient native cultures.

The conference concluded with a well-attended and lively presentation and discussion on the new TPE Burn Policy, presented by the Land Management Committee.



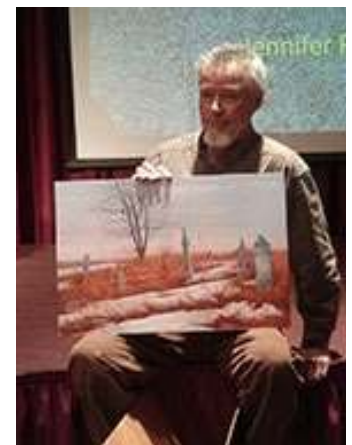
Dr. Paul Zedler Photo by Evanne Hunt

Banquet

A highlight of the banquet was the presentation of a number of awards to volunteers of the year from various chapters. Jeannie Kant of the St. Croix Valley Chapter was named the TPE Prairie Enthusiast of the Year for her long service to both the chapter and the organization, and particularly for her work over the last 6 years in singlehandedly reorganizing and operating the shipment of merchandise ordered on the TPE website.



Photo by Evanne Hunt



Tom Mitchell,
Prairie Bluff Chapter
Volunteer of the Year.

Photo by Evanne Hunt

The after dinner speaker was Dr. Paul Zedler, a botanist and conservation biologist who is the principal investigator of the Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna Fire Science Information Consortium. His talk, "Prairie Enthusiasm and the Plight of Nature in the Psychozoic Era", focused on human effects on the landscape and the disappearance of the "wild".

Photo Contest

The annual TPE photo contest this year included sixty-three photos submitted by twenty-three entrants that captured many of the wonders of prairie life. Initial judging was done by two artists, one a professional photographer, according to a carefully developed rubric, resulting in the selection of five semi-finalists. Attendees at the annual conference voted to determine the final winner, which was a photograph by Gary Shackelford entitled *Spider Web on Yellow Coneflower*. This photo will be used as the cover shot for the 2013 TPE Annual Report.

The other semi-finalists were

- Fredrick Blank & Jan Winter - *Monarch of the Prairie*
- Jonah Westrich - *Ancient River Valley*
- Randy Schindle - *September Pearl Crescent*
- Sue Steinmann - *Arena Bluff Burn*

Thanks to all who participated in the Photo Contest!

Raffle and Auction

A much-anticipated feature of each annual conference is the raffle and silent auction. This year the event brought in a total of \$3,514, including \$1,911 from the 52 silent auction items generated and \$1,603 from the 92 raffle items. As usual, all of the money goes to the chapter which brought the item.

The big winner this year was Kathy Henderson (Empire-Sauk chapter) whose “pail of chocolate chocolate-chip cookies” generated a whopping \$75! [*Editor’s note – They were fantastic!*]

Many thanks to all of the presenters for both their time and their willingness to share their expertise and experience. Thanks also to our sponsors whose support, generosity and loyalty are a key part of our conservation community. And most of all, thank you to all of the volunteers, both from TPE and Sustain Jefferson who worked many hours to make the conference and banquet a big success!

Many Thanks to Our Conference Sponsors!



Conference Co-Sponsor - Wild Ones

*Donna Van Buecken, Executive Director
Wild Ones Natural Landscapers*

Chances are if you have been involved for some time with habitat restoration projects you may also have planted native plants around your home. Have you ever had to explain to friends or family why your landscape doesn't look like a typical American home landscape dominated by lawn and a few arborvitae trimmed to within an inch of life? Or better yet, did you encourage them to try “bringing nature home” too? Explaining and promoting sustainable landscaping and native plants – this is where Wild Ones comes in.

Wild Ones: no, we're NOT a motorcycle gang. Despite our rather whimsical name, we are very serious about our mission. We are a national non-profit based in Appleton, Wisconsin that promotes landscaping with native plants through public education and advocacy. We serve as a resource for private individuals, schools, and commercial property owners, as they move toward sustainable choices in land use, and for community decision makers in the redefinition of current guidelines and ordinances that affect our landscapes.

Wild Ones now has individual and business members in 46 states, Washington DC and Canada. Some members join to receive *The Wild Ones Journal*, our informative regularly published newsletter enjoyed by professionals and amateurs alike. Others join to support the cause and help us advocate for a more sustainable approach to landscaping. Members who live in areas with local Wild Ones chapters enjoy gathering together to learn from each other and featured speakers, exchange native plants or seeds, host local conferences and other public education events, or to organize plant rescues on construction sites.

Believing that the education of the next generation can be a powerful force, members have volunteered with schools in the creation of outdoor classrooms, using native plants. Our Seeds for Education program has granted thousands of dollars to schools and public facilities toward the purchase of native plants for educational gardens.

While members of TPE may often work on large restoration projects in rural areas, Wild Ones members typically work to improve wildlife habitat one yard or small public site at a time. Can it make a difference? We think so. Americans maintain some 40 million acres of land as lawn. If even just one tenth of that area were converted to locally-appropriate native plants the contribution to habitat restoration could be substantial.

For more information on the *Journal*, chapters, benefits of Wild Ones membership and much more go to www.wildones.org.

The Wild Ones mission of preserving biodiversity through preserving and restoring native plants communities meshes comfortably with that of The Prairie Enthusiasts. We look forward to sharing information and ideas with TPE and offer congratulations on a very successful annual meeting.

To Burn or Not to Burn *continued from Page 1*

Of course I'm leading up to discussing the recently enacted TPE burn policy and the trepidation many have felt in implementing this policy. This policy has been in the works for a number of years, and there has been an enormous amount of time, energy and thought involved in creating and refining it. A grand thank you goes out to those individuals involved in formulating this policy. It is also understood that this policy is an ever-evolving organism that will change as needed over time, just as we as an organization evolve.

I for one am in favor of seeing this policy implemented. Yes, it was probably only a matter of time before the insurance industry enforced something like this onto us. However, you need to look past some of the unwelcomed details of the policy and focus on the larger picture. One of these is that we are just trying to be more accountable and responsible for our actions when we burn. As I said before, the actions needed to comply with the burn policy are things we mostly have been doing all along. If the extra paperwork involved aggravates you, maybe try to find another overlooked member of your chapter that may be

able to assist. Let's do what we can do to be the responsible people that I know we are.

This policy is not meant to be implemented overnight, but we need to be progressing toward compliance with a goal in mind. I believe this first year as a minimum they are looking for us to use a common 'Go/No-Go Burn Checklist' and to determine and document the experience of each chapter's burn volunteers, crew leaders and bosses.

If I've learned one important lesson in my life, it would be that by following policy you'll be protected. I understand there may be some limitation with some of our chapters in funding for safety equipment and volunteer hours in complying with the paperwork. Look at it another way. We are providing a good example for the next generation of prairie enthusiasts. Many of us have grandchildren; some of who may have even been part of a burn party. Look at all we've done as an organization; surely we can overcome this challenge and thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Have a happy and safe burn season!

Book Review

Equipment Review

Review & photo by Evanne Hunt

In December, I purchased a "Fire Hose Bucket Seat Apron" from Duluth Trading Company (www.duluthtrading.com). I saw this as a replacement for the poorly fitting beach towel I usually put on my car seat after a work day or burn. Typically, my clothes are dirty, smelly, and burr-covered. I want to protect my car seat and ensure I don't show up for work on Monday with soot on my good clothes.

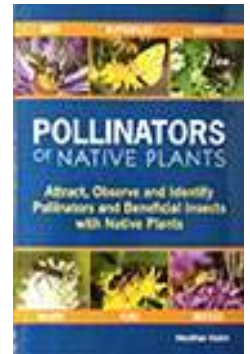
The "apron" has a hood that slips over the headrest to hold the piece in place. The back is covered with a rubber gripping material to keep it from sliding off the seat. The water-repellant coating ensures any snow I have on my pants does not soak through. I've been using the apron for almost three months and could not be happier with it. It slips on and off easily and stows nicely in my trunk. I have no doubt the heavy material will last for many years.



The apron lists on the company website for about \$50. I bought mine on sale at the store in Bloomington, MN for \$45. Duluth Trading's main store is in Mt Horeb, WI and there is another store in Port Washington.

By Scott Fulton

In connection with his article on pollinators in this issue of the *Promoter*, Jim Nelson sent me a copy of the brand-new *Pollinators of Native Plants* by Heather Holm. This unique book begins with a basic description of the biology of flowers and pollination, the different types of insect pollinators and issues in pollinator conservation. The target audience appears to be "citizen scientists", and I found the technical level detailed enough to be absorbing but very comprehensible to a non-expert.



The bulk of the book is an unusual combined field guide to native plants and insects. There is a one-page botanical description of the each plant, followed by one or more pages showing the complex community of insects that live on the plant and on each other. The plants are grouped into major habitats (prairie, woodland edge and wetland edge), and, while the guide is not comprehensive, it does cover the most common and interesting plants and insects in these communities. The book concludes with a variety of fascinating appendices and charts, plus a very useful visual index to the insects.

The photography is astounding, particularly the pictures showing how each of the insects and plants interact. Reading it has profoundly deepened my appreciation for the beauty and complexity of these amazing habitats, and I will never think about insects the same way again. I recommend this book highly to fellow prairie enthusiasts.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prairie Video Project

A new project is afoot to produce a video showing Prairie Enthusiast members caring for prairies and savannas and sharing our passion for the beauty, mystery and fascinating science of these special habitats.

The spark for this project came from a chance meeting between Karen Agee (Empire-Sauk) and Joe Maurer, producer of the new series *Around the Farm Table* shown on Wisconsin Public Television (<http://aroundthefarmtable.com>). Joe is also a TPE member, and he and his friend Bill Hogseth (both from Chippewa Savannas) have been talking about such a film for some time. After several discussions with Karen and her husband Scott Fulton, Joe came to the TPE Annual Conference this year to meet more people from around the organization. Recently, Joe, Karen and Scott

met with Kathy Stahl and Dr. Mark Leach (from Chippewa Savannas) to plan the project in more detail.

As currently envisioned, the end product would be a 1 hour video suitable for airing on public television as well as a series of short videos. In addition to sharing the prairies and savannas we love with a broader audience, we want the film to convey to the viewer that they themselves can become involved and make a difference.

The film team is putting together a proposal to share with TPE Education & Outreach Committee and then with the Board. The team will then work to plan the film, obtain funding, shoot and edit the program, and to distribute it.

If you have ideas for stories, etc. to include in the program, or are eager to be a part of the film team, contact Karen Agee (karenagee@charter.net).

CHAPTER NEWS

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

Coulee Region completed its second annual burning refresher course at our March meeting. The overview allows for exchange of new issues, while reviewing standard use of equipment and burning techniques. The course is based around a PowerPoint presentation listing equipment and components of conducting a burn. We hope to have that presentation posted to our chapter webpage soon, and will notify chapter members when it is available.

There is an opportunity for Coulee Region members to participate in a Citizen's Science effort this spring and summer. Armund Bartz presented the opportunity at our January meeting, where he introduced us to five species of butterflies and moths that he'd like to have us look for on the prairies we visit. We hope to post his presentation on our chapter webpage to use as a guide for identification. If you want more info, feel free to contact Jim Rogala (therogues@charter.net).

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

Empire-Sauk Volunteers of the Year

The Empire-Sauk Chapter is pleased to recognize Scott Fulton and Karen Agee as Chapter Volunteers of the Year. Scott and Karen are longtime members and staunch supporters of TPE and its conservation mission. They have been active volunteers since 2002, especially with prescribed burns, brush and invasive control, seed collecting/processing, assisting chapter administration and accounting, and hosting chapter meetings. But recently, they have greatly increased their involvement and contributions of time.

Karen previously served as Chapter treasurer and on the TPE Board as Secretary. She is now heading up the chapter's education and outreach efforts and provides direction and oversight to our volunteer coordinator Diane Hills. Both Karen and Scott played major roles in making the chapter's Prairie Days event last summer a great success.

Scott is currently serving on the Education & Outreach Committee and recently became a TPE Board member at large. He compiles the chapter volunteer hours and is one of the volunteers conducting regal fritillary butterfly surveys at Mounds View Grassland. Scott also serves as editor of *The Prairie Promoter* and is playing the lead role in implementing the new web-based system for communication and outreach within and outside TPE, which will be gradually rolled out over the coming year.

The chapter recognized Scott and Karen at the TPE banquet in Pewaukee, Wisconsin, on March 1, where we presented them with a framed photo in appreciation of their contributions. The photo is of one of the prairie plantings at Mounds View Grassland, where they volunteer much time, and is from the gallery of another TPE volunteer and past Volunteer of the Year recipient, Eric Preston. Congratulations, Scott and Karen. You are very much appreciated.

Rich Henderson, Scott Fulton & Karen Agee Photo by Diane Hills



Collectors of Specialty Seed Needed

Our chapter is looking for volunteers to collect specialty seed. The primary objectives of the prairie and savanna plantings being done on TPE preserves managed by the chapter is to buffer and expand remnants of original ecosystems and to provide critical habitat for rare and declining species. The ultimate goals of these projects are to create “scientific” restorations that have species composition and structure similar to the original. Most prairie species are relatively easy to collect or produce in seed orchards in mass quantities and restorations tend to be replete with such species.

It is those hard to come by species that are generally lacking, or underrepresented, in most prairie plantings, including those on our preserves. The chapter now has hundreds of acres of plantings, and if we are to reach our goal of restoring the original prairies, we need to significantly increase collection of these species. They tend to be species that bloom early in the year, and thus ripen in late spring or early summer when we are distracted with work on controlling invasive species and other management. It is also very tedious and time-consuming to find and collect their seeds in large quantities.

We have a great need for volunteers willing and able to focus on these hard to collect species in Dane, Columbia, Iowa, Sauk and Jefferson counties. If interested in taking on this important work, please contact volunteer coordinator Diane Hills at volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org or 608-239-4699. Training and guidance will be provided.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Photo courtesy
Tom Mitchell



Prairie Bluff Chapter thanks David and Sarah Aslakson for their generous donation of a Ford F-150 truck, which we will use as a second burn truck on our prescribed fires and as a more reliable general work truck. The like-new 2002 model is a V-8 with 4-wheel drive, a supercab, good tires and a tonneau cover. We promised the Aslaksons that the truck would spend its second life off-road.

We also thank all the members who donated items for the silent auction and raffle -- important fund-raisers for the chapter -- at the 2014 annual TPE Conference & Banquet held March 1 at Pewaukee and hosted by the new Glacial Prairie Chapter: Sarah Aslakson, Rob Baller, Chuck Bauer, Mike Davis, Tina Duemler, Linda Faessler, Dan Gartzke & Tracey Schwalbe, Ralph Henry, Marci & Jim Hess,

Steve Hubner & Mary Zimmerman, John Ochsner, Cory Ritterbusch, Linda Uttech and Chuck Wellington.

Our second annual TPE fire crew refresher course was attended by 21 chapter members on March 8 at Nick's shop. We covered lessons learned from the 2013 fire season; collected the physical fitness and liability waivers; learned about aspects of fire weather forecasts; reviewed all our fire equipment; and explained how the TPE's new burn policy will effect our fire operations. Instructors included Chris Roberts, Nick Faessler, Fred Faessler, Steve Hubner, Rob Baller, Aaron Kubichka, John Ochsner and Tom Mitchell.

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

Prairie Smoke Contributing to Master Plan for Rochester Park Restoration

Prairie Smoke Chapter Board members actively work with many local community partners to help restore and maintain many remnant prairie areas as well as to create prairie patches for storm water management in and outside the City of Rochester. Prairie Smoke's biggest project for 2014 is a long-term master plan for a 37 acre city park that is sacred to Dakota Indians. It includes remnant prairie, savanna, and oak openings as well as recent limestone alvars.

The chapter's community partners in this project include Zumbro Valley Audubon Society, Rochester's Park and Recreation Department, the Native American Center of SE Minnesota, Greater Rochester Area Dakota Supporters and the Friends of Indian Heights Park neighborhood association. The goals are to address the long-term Natural Resources restoration and maintenance:

1. Restore & maintain the natural history & heritage of the park.
2. Create a peaceful place where nature and our natural heritage are honored.
3. Provide the visitor a pleasant experience while visiting the park.

This long term master plan is being supported by a two year consultation grant with the National Park Service's Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. The plan will be finalized and approved after several public hearings this summer. Stay tuned for project news at www.nps.gov/nrc/programs/rtca/whatwedo/projects/MN.pdf (#6), and <http://foih.org>

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

Please visit the chapter website at www.nipes.org for news and information about our chapter.

ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER

St. Croix Chapter Partners with Grassland Groups

In 2013, the St. Croix Valley Chapter met with other conservation groups in our area to discuss how we could work together to be more effective in protecting and enhancing grasslands in our area. With that meeting, the Conservation Action Partnership (CAP) was launched.

CAP is group of organizations in west central Wisconsin that share a common goal of having more grassland, and more grassland types, on the landscape. For TPE that of course means prairie grasslands. For many of our partners, it's broader and includes non-native grazing or pasture lands.

Twelve local groups and two government agencies are participating so far. In addition to our TPE chapter, the DNR, and USFWS, the groups include three local land trusts, two birding groups, Pheasants Forever, St. Croix River Association, a sportsman group, a grazing operation, and Friends groups that support our local state park and our local USFWS Wetland Management District.

Our partnership is in the beginning stages of planning and is still refining its statement of purpose and goals. We are committed to being an action-oriented group, with a strong focus on educating the community and providing leadership and support to reach our general goal of more grassland on the landscape.

Bluebird Expert Gives Talk

Lowell Peterson, a Bluebird Recovery Association of Wisconsin (BRAW) board member and the BRAW coordinator for the St. Croix River Valley, gave a talk to chapter members on February 26. In addition to bluebirds, Lowell talked about the habitats of all cavity-nesting birds, such as chickadees, tree swallows, wrens, nuthatches and owls.



Photo courtesy Evanne Hunt

2013 ANNUAL APPEAL

The Prairie Enthusiasts had another successful Annual Appeal in 2013, raising over \$32,000 to support the work of the organization. Our sincerest thanks to the following donors who contributed:

Jae Adams & Jon Sundby
Deborah Allan & Larry Wackett
Craig & Jean Anderson
David & Sarah Aslakson
Peggy Audley
Aaron & Charlene Avery
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Denise Friesen & Steven Gahm
*In celebration of the marriage of
Susan Chambers & Henry Panowitsch*
Tom Gianoli
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David Haskin & Mary Michal
M.J. Hatfield
Pamela Heaney
Craig & Pam Heilman
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Ralph Henry
Judy & Alan Hoffman

Marci & Jim Hess
In honor of Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
 William H. Holland
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In honor of Olive Thomson
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 Keith Rodli & Katharine Grant
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*In memory of Mary Leach,
 mother of TPE member Mark Leach*
 David & Sandra Stanfield

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 Doug Steege & Kris Euclide
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 Winterland Nursery Inc.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period December 1, 2013 – March 14, 2014

Dan Barron, La Crosse, WI	Bridget Rathman, Baraboo, WI	Jean Adler & Rich Woolworth, Monticello, WI
Thomas Goetzman, West Salem, WI	Don Waller, Madison, WI	Barbara Meyer, Argyle, WI
Ku-le Region Forestry, La Crosse, WI	Jonah Westrich, Madison, WI	Peg Sheaffer, Brodhead, WI
Tony Abate, Arlington, WI	Brady Frederick, Eagle, WI	Randy Arnold, Minnetonka, MN
Allan Bogue, Madison, WI	Gail Sklba, Whitefish Bay, WI	Gerard Goering, Red Wing, MN
Dan Buckland, Cross Plains, WI	Bob & Laura White, Jefferson, WI	Tom Henderson, Stillwater, MN
Mary Ann Feist, Madison, WI	Kent Benson, Rockford, IL	Leslie Pilgrim, Mendota Hts, MN
Tim Fenske, Middleton, WI	Shirley Nelson, Galena, IL	Paul Ronsheim, Barneveld, WI
Wayne Haskins, Mount Horeb, WI	Anita Sands, Glen Ellyn, IL	Maggie Steele, Barneveld, WI
Tim Phelps, Madison, WI	Robert Zelm, Galena, IL	Deborah Manke, Black Earth, WI

THANK YOU DONORS

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period December 1, 2013 – March 14, 2014.
These gifts above and beyond membership dues and the annual appeal are truly generous and appreciated.

\$1000 or more

Dennis & Joan Thomson
*for the Olive & John Thomson
Internship Endowment*

Scott Fulton & Karen Agee
*for the Empire Sauk Chapter
Education & Outreach Committee*

For Sylvan Road:
Stephen & Susan Carpenter
Jim & Rose Sime

\$500 - \$999

Evanne Hunt

Jim & Diane Rogala

Todd Casanova (*for Sylvan Road*)

\$100 - \$499

Henry Panowitsch
Olive Thomson
Laura Brown & Mark Shahan

For Sylvan Road:
Jim & Diane Rogala
Merel Black

Under \$100

For Sylvan Road:
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Bill & Ginny Nelson
Steve Richter & Laura Cominetti
Scott Sauer

Marcia Ukura & Robert Matthews
Peter Van Beek
Paul Francuch
John Heywood
Richard Magyar

General Donations:
Tom & Susan Howe
Ann Kleckner
Jesse Decker



COMPASS CLUB

The following are members of the Compass Club, who give \$1000+ to support the overall TPE organization on an annual basis.
These members donated a total of \$66,710 in 2013.

Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
Kathie & Tom Brock
Stephen & Susan Carpenter
Dennis & Nancy Connor
Ronald Endres
Nick & Linda Faessler
Patrick & Madeleine Fleming
Scott Fulton & Karen Agee
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Peter Thomford
Dennis & Joan Thomson
Peggy & Jon Traver
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Ken Wade & Pat Trochlell
Eugene Woehler

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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: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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 | |