

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 20, NO.2 Summer 2006

Grassroots Conservation at Work

President's Message

Chapter Involvement!! Without it, The Prairie Enthusiast would die on the vine. As you know, the bulk of TPE's on-the-ground conservation work gets accomplished by the local chapters. Because of our strong chapter structure, our attention often becomes so focused locally that we lose track of, or ignore, the central or corporate organization. We may even, from time to time, view central as competition for resources, and even resent that most of the membership dues end up there. We sometimes become so engaged locally, that we run the risk of falling into the old "them verses us" syndrome, like States' rights versus Federal control. I think you get the picture. Or we become complacent and assume that others have Central's needs covered. Well, I'm here to say we all are the others, and it is up to us all to cover those needs!

I wish to take this opportunity to remind all of us that Chapters and Central are both critically important to the accomplishment of our shared conservation mission and, more importantly, they are fully dependant upon each other. Without grassroots work at the Chapter level, Central would become ineffective and lack projects. Without Central, the Chapters would simply cease to exist, for they are not legal entities. Central provides the accounting and required reporting to the IRS and various State offices that allow us to stay in business as a non-profit 501(c)3. It also provides insurance, policies, standards, a newsletter, a Web site, membership management and general administrative framework. Not least, our Executive Director, Renae Mitchell, is guiding us to full accreditation as a professional land trust that donors can remain confident in contributing to. Renae is also working to assist chapters in expanding membership and major donors, pursuing grants for land management and protection, and encouraging chapter projects.

For Central, and thereby the entire organization, to remain strong and grow, it is absolutely critical to have local chapters and individual members fully engaged in cultivating and

identifying potential major donors to help cover the costs of doing business. Membership dues currently cover only one-third of our base functioning and administrative needs. We simply have to reach out to engage and partner with more people who would support what we do when they learn what TPE's mission is and what we are accomplishing. Please give thought to those you know personally, or know of, who may have potential to become major donors to TPE and its conservation mission if they only knew more about us. They may be people who are already "casual" members who have not yet given much thought to major donation. They may be people who know nothing about TPE as of yet. Please share your thoughts and ideas with Renae or me. Invite potential members and donors to the photography exhibit receptions or a field trip. Together we can keep expanding our successes. Thank you.

Rich Henderson

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The Prairie Enthusiasts is a grass roots organization of volunteers which is solely committed to the protection, management and restoration of native prairies and savannas in the Upper Midwest. To date, The Prairie Enthusiasts has protected 1,417 acres that harbor at least five state or federally protected species through

acquisitions, easements and management agreements. The Prairie Enthusiasts has a stewardship program which provides active management to ensure the ongoing health of protected sites.

The Prairie Enthusiasts is actively involved in planting prairie on its properties and on other conservation lands and has assisted both public agencies and private groups in these efforts. Thus far, more than 150 acres have been planted with seeds of prairie plants from local sources.

In addition, The Prairie Enthusiasts develop educational materials and provide presentations on prairie and savanna ecology, conservation and management for both children and adults.

The Prairie Enthusiasts 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.

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The Prairie Promoter is a quarterly publication of The Prairie Enthusiasts. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission. We welcome submissions of letters, articles, announcements, artwork and photographs which are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Material should be typed; electronic submissions are strongly preferred. Writers who use computers can e-mail their submissions to jenkinma@uwplatt.edu using MS word. **Please do not format.** Letters and articles may be edited for length or style. Computer disks, art, and photographs will be returned. Deadlines for submission of material are: February 25 (Spring issue); May 25 (Summer issue); August 25 (Fall issue); and November 25 (Winter issue).

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**A New Editor for
“The Prairie Promoter”**

After many years of dedication and effort, Alice and Walter Mirk have decided to lay down the mantle of responsibility and no longer edit The Prairie Promoter. Upon seeing a request for a new editor in the 2006 Spring issue, I decided that it was a great opportunity for me to do more for TPE than just pay my dues and wish I had more time for restoration work. (Continued on page 11)

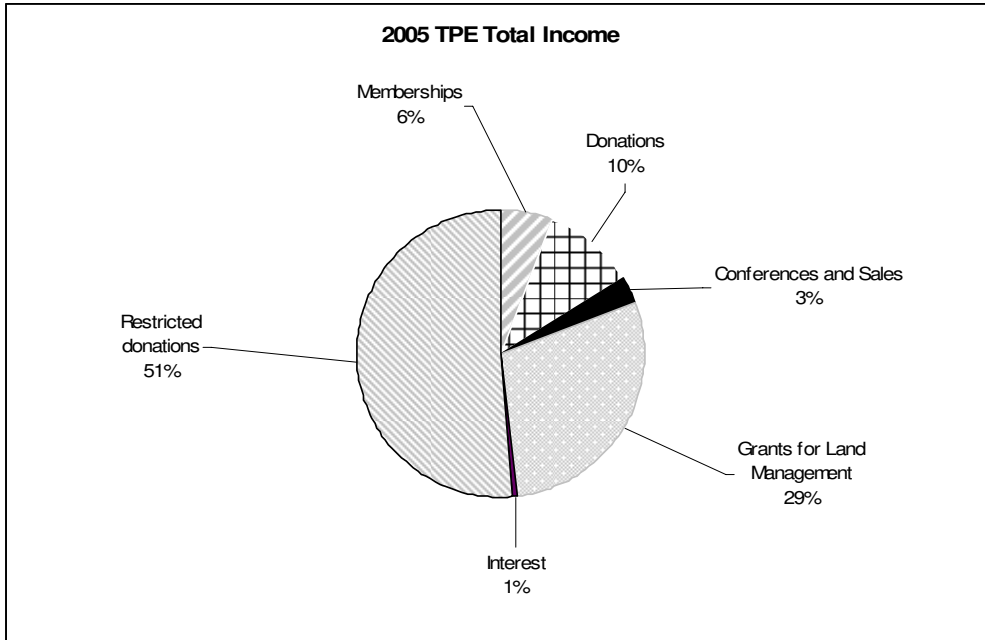
FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

(Overlooking Elderberry Prairie) by Renae Mitchell

Seeing the Baptisia and Penstemon blooming and hearing the birds singing outside my window are one of the perks of being able to work at home. Since TPE does not yet have a central office, I work from my home office and out of my car. I arrange meetings at coffee shops or other people's offices. I

obtain more donations towards operations and endowments for the future. With our new investment policy we will plan to grow our income from interest for future funding as well.

TPE also had a very good distribution of expenses, showing our emphasis on land management and protection (with combined costs of almost \$335,000 last year). Obviously, there have been more administrative expenses since I was hired to be the Executive Director but we've also had to pay more for accounting, auditing, liability insurance etc. in general, as the organization and its assets have grown.



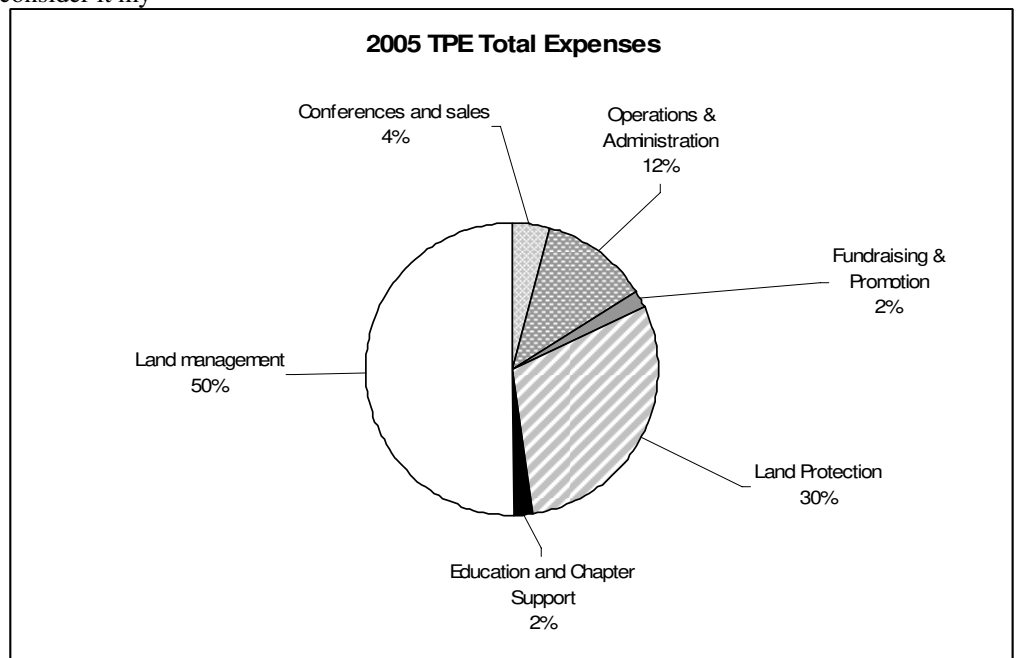
The pie charts and figures are for the entire organization. Now that we have had a complete year-long cycle of expenses to analyze, we know the annual operating budget for TPE Central is about \$100,000. Of that, the director's salary and insurance stipend, payroll taxes and expenses make up about \$42,000. About \$58,000 is for required insurance, licensing and dues, accounting and auditing, teleconference board meetings and other meeting expenses, office equipment and supplies, membership mailings, promotions and publications etc. Memberships currently bring in less than \$20,000 to Central. Our Annual Fund brought in \$10,000 last fall, Grants brought in about \$2,000 for administration but most grant funds go

am usually able to stay at member's homes when I am traveling to keep expenses down. Currently, TPE does not reimburse me for the use of my home office, monthly internet service, or my telephone or electric but I consider it my donation to the organization.

Thankfully, our members think of me when they have items to spare. Anne Griffiths sent a phone card which makes it easier to maintain contact as I travel. Mary Zimmerman provided a box of computer paper which is useful for many drafts and notes. I've mentioned other wish list donors in past newsletters as well. Every little bit counts!

As this income chart from the first draft of our annual report indicates, overall as an organization we had a good variety of income sources last year. The donations category represents mainly contributions restricted to land protection and management which, of course, is our main focus. However, we also need to

projects. Individual donations and bequests that were not restricted to certain equipment, land protection or management were less than \$6,000. Special events like the conference mainly just pay for themselves and provide a



means for chapters to raise small amounts through the auction and raffle. Members who are willing to receive their membership materials electronically can help us save on mailing and printing expenses (see article in this newsletter).

The Prairie Enthusiasts are at a critical transition point. We have good momentum going with over 400 acres of important new land donations on the horizon. We'll be hosting some celebrations of the land donations as they occur. New people are being exposed to our message through all the publicity surrounding our traveling photography exhibit and forums. We have a new website design thanks to our talented webmaster Evanne Hunt. Our new brochures are available for any one to use for recruiting new members. Consider dropping some off at your local nature center! Your willingness to invite potential new members and donors to participate in our field trips and events is essential to building more support. Please send us their names and contact info so we can cultivate new energy, resources and enthusiasm.

In total, we are about \$60,000 short of meeting our basic operating needs at this time. I am applying for capacity-building grants and approaching some potential major donors. The board is looking for TPE members willing to serve on a fund-raising committee and to nominate for the offices of President and Vice President. Surely among our membership there are qualified candidates that could put their energy behind this for a few of years. Please let us know who you are or if you know of others you could nominate - we'll take it from there.

As Rich explains in his President's message, there is no TPE without the central entity which provides the legal, financial and administrative support to the chapters. Please help us solidify and grow the organization by sending me your ideas and suggestions or speaking with your board representative about fund-raising opportunities. I can be reached by email at tpedirector@idcnet.com or by phone anytime between 8 am and 8 pm Monday through Saturday at 262-473-2956.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW TPE WEBSITE IS ONLINE!!

www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

A big hand to **Evanne Hunt** for her hard work redesigning and updating The Prairie Enthusiasts website! She has incorporated the new logo and brochure graphics and colors and included new topic areas such as "From the Desk of the Executive Director", "Newsletter", and "Merchandise". Less-used topics were removed.

Contact Evanne at eahunt@presenter.com with your comments and suggestions. TPE is very interested in posting pictures from your work parties and field trips, merchandise



The new TPE Website homepage! Check it out online!

your chapter would like to sell, and websites to which we should link. Evanne is also interested in helping you keep your chapter pages up-to-date. Posting your meeting and event dates is an excellent way to keep your chapter members informed.

Newsletter and Field Trip Flyer Now Available Electronically!

If you would like to help The Prairie Enthusiasts save money on mailing and printing costs for The Prairie Promoter and our field trip flyers please let our membership coordinator, Victoria Oberle, know by emailing her at TPE@TDS.net. Give her your email address and let her know you would like to receive notification when The Prairie Promoter and Field Trip flyer are posted on the updated website. It is a good way to be reminded to look for all the new info and ideas coming your way through our publications and our new website. Thanks!

Gift Memberships Available

If you would like to present someone with a gift membership to The Prairie Enthusiasts for any occasion please just send a note with the information to our membership coordinator Victoria Oberle at PO Box 620556, Middleton, WI 53562-0556. We will be happy to mail them a special letter explaining the gift along with a sticker, a copy of the Prairie Promoter and our field trip flier.

Revised Ways of Giving to TPE

Our Board has approved a new investment policy and we have recently started a brokerage account for accepting stock options. We are also improving our system of acknowledgments and fund accounting so your tax deduction information will be promptly available.

In addition to accepting traditional monetary gifts, The Prairie Enthusiasts can also accept gifts of stock, real estate, easements, equipment and planned gifts through estate planning. Gifts of stock are an excellent way to make a

charitable gift without suffering the burden of capital gain taxes. Planned giving enables you to see the legacy of conservation embodied in The Prairie Enthusiasts organization as it continues into the future.

Please contact Renae Mitchell, Executive Director at 262-473-2956 or tpedirector@idcnet.com with any questions or to make arrangements. Thank you!

TPE Awarded Private Stewardship Grants for 2006

The Prairie Enthusiasts are happy to announce we have been awarded \$174,500 in two U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Private Stewardship Grants for Federal fiscal year 2006. We are also a partner in a third grant awarded to the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust. The projects are in Minnesota and Wisconsin and involve three TPE chapters. The goals of the projects are to recover degraded remnant prairie and savanna habitat on private land through tree and brush removal, invasive weed control, planting, and prescribed burns for the benefit of rare and declining species.

The Private Stewardship Grant program provides grants or other assistance on a competitive basis to individuals and groups engaged in private conservation efforts that benefit species listed, or proposed, as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act, candidate species, or other at-risk species on private lands within the United States.

TPE will receive \$99,500 for the Southeast Minnesota Prairie and Savanna Restoration Project. This cooperative effort is being headed up by the Prairie Smoke Chapter and will be focusing on 4 priority remnant areas.

TPE will receive \$75,000 for the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) Prairie Restoration Project (WI). This is also a cooperative effort, and is being headed up by the Empire-Sauk Chapter. It will be focusing on 11 remnant patches and buffer lands within the MRPHA. The MRPHA is a landscape scale prairie/grassland habitat conservation project with many cooperating partners including The Nature Conservancy, Driftless Area Land Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Private Lands Program, WI DNR, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, Blue Mounds Project, and Southwest Badger RC & D.

Kinnickinnic River Land Trust will receive \$40,000 for the Kinnickinnic River Canyon Prairie and Savanna Project (WI). The St. Croix Valley Chapter of TPE will be a partner in planning, overseeing, and assisting the management work. The project will span seven land ownerships.

These grants require 10% in match. Volunteer hours qualify, so if you are near any of these projects, please consider helping out on work parties. Every hour you put in will

generate another 7 or 8 hours of contract labor. Look for details on these projects in future newsletters.



(Image courtesy of USFWS)

Annual TPE Picnic and Meeting of the Membership, July 15 & 16, 2006

Important Update!!!!!! TPE

2006 Summer Picnic and Annual Meeting Camping July 15th & Meeting July 16th Wyalusing State Park

Contrary to the previous press release, **this year's annual picnic will be held at Wyalusing State Park.** This year's picnic, sponsored by the Southwest Wisconsin chapter, will consist of a weekend's worth of food, drink, ecology and culture. The festivities officially begin at 5PM on Saturday.

Located at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, Wyalusing is one of those places that cannot be described in a simple press release. Whether you are a small child, a twentysomething or a senior citizen; a casual tourist or an ecological professional; a cultural anthropologist or a beach bum; Wyalusing is an awesome place.

At 5PM we will have the grills fired up at the Peterson Shelter (in the State Park). This will be an informal picnic so bring your own snacks, drinks and "grill-ables" (there is a concession stand for those who are lazy). The Peterson Shelter is surrounded by the best views in the Midwest (we can argue from Point Lookout if you wish), managed Brush Prairie / Oak Woodland, and hiking trails that explore river bluffs, caves and Wyalusing Walnut Forest State Natural Area.

At 7PM we will car pool / caravan to Gasner Hollow State Natural Area for a hike (difficult terrain, for those with mobility concerns we can suggest numerous alternate destinations). Gasner Hollow SNA is a large river bluff preserve undergoing the transformation from post-Eurosettlement woodland to extremely rich brush prairie / Savanna. It was burned this spring so floristically it should be jawdropping.

At 10PM we will converge upon the Lawrence L Huser Astronomy Center (located in the State Park. The Starsplitters

of Wyalusing, the local astronomy club, has invited us for an evening astronomy program. And you thought that nature was over at dusk.

Sunday morning will be left open for people to enjoy as they wish. Whether hiking terrestrially or from a rented canoe/kayak, the bird watching; botanizing; fishing or sightseeing is superb. A short car ride leads to breakfast, shopping, museums or beaches. Plan to make plans or relax with no plans.

At 10AM we will reconvene at the Peterson Shelter for our annual meeting of the membership. Come with comments, suggestions, questions and stories for group discussion.

At 12Noon the Southwest Chapter will be serving up a traditional Mississippi River fish fry featuring locally and sustainably harvested catfish. Bring a dish to pass, plates, utensils and your favorite beverage. After lunch, plan for another hike or, if it's hot, a swim!

Check www.theprairieenthusiasts.org for maps which are soon to be available. Contact Jesse Bennett at jesse@driftlesslandstewardship.com or (608)794-2724 if you have questions.

CONFERENCES

20th North American Prairie Conference 2006

The University of Nebraska at Kearney will be hosting the 20th North American Prairie Conference in July. Go to <http://www.napc2006.org/index.html> for details.

The registration form is up and available, and more information will be available soon.

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NO BIRD LEFT BEHIND: Bird interactions with tall structures and how to reduce the risk

Plan now to attend the Upper Midwest Audubon Conference at Ho-Chunk Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, **Friday – Sunday, Oct. 13-15, 2006**. In the tradition of last year's first annual Midwest Audubon Conference held in Illinois, the Wisconsin Audubon Council will host this year's event. Cosponsors include WBCI, WI DNR, and others.

On Friday, October 13, the Wisconsin Audubon Council will partner with the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, WIDNR, and others to bring you the latest information on

how to reduce risks to migrating birds.

The purpose of the "No Bird Left Behind" conference is

- To create awareness and increase knowledge of the problems migratory birds face from tall structures such as buildings, transmission towers, and wind energy generators
- To gain understanding of the restrictions on owners/operators of these structures
- To bring interested parties together to discuss the problems
- To open lines of communication and foster cooperation to help alleviate the problems

Keynote speaker Noel Cutright will discuss the many threats that migratory birds face, especially from tall structures. Three breakout tracks will focus on buildings, communication towers, and wind energy. For each track, Session 1 will be the industry perspective, Session 2 will be the wildlife perspective, and Session 3 will be a facilitated discussion on finding common ground. After a light dinner, organizers are planning a special talk on migration and technology.

The conference continues Saturday and Sunday, October 14-15, with workshops and field trips focused on citizen science, birds and birding, habitat issues, and more. The Saturday evening banquet speaker will be Jim Fitzpatrick, speaking on his experiences with the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. All are welcome to attend one or more days.

More details, including complete registration information, will be available soon at www.madisonaudubon.org

"State Endangered Plant Found at a Nature Conservancy Prairie"

By Bob Wernerehl

On May 19th of 2005, the rarely seen Prairie dunewort (*Botrychium campestre*) was found at Thomson Prairie on the Dane and Iowa County border in Wisconsin. It was found on a lovely evening walk sponsored by The Prairie Enthusiasts and the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA). Thomson prairie was purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1991 with funds in part for a memorial to Douglas Thomson, son of emeritus botany professor John Thomson. The walk was to hear and view grassland bird species and was led by an excellent DNR ornithologist David Sample and Kristin Westad, director of the MRPHA. As we walked west into the prairie we were entertained by bobolinks, eastern meadowlarks, savanna sparrows and grasshopper sparrows. We strained our ears for upland sandpiper but didn't hear any,

perhaps a bit early. As we walked we stopped on occasion to listen and to talk about the prairie and the plants around us. Prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*) was in bloom along with wood betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*) and prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*). It must have caught her eye as she looked down at the ground. My background is in botany, and I knew Kristin to be an experienced botanist, so I could tell she spotted something. I looked at the tip of her boot and there was something small and oddly yellow green. Kristin said “what is that?” Then she said, “It’s a *Botrychium*.” And I said “by God, it is indeed,” as I immediately got down on my hands and knees to get a better look. There, to our amazement, was this tiny little fern, no more than 2 inches high, and it was almost mature; its spore-bearing parts not quite ripe but fully formed. We wondered what species it might be.



Photo by Bob Wernerehl

I began taking photos as fast as I could in the dimming light. Having searched for a number of rare *Botrychiums* in this subgenus (the moonworts) all of the previous summer in the Ottawa and Chippewa National Forests, I knew it could be quite rare, or it might be common, but that we’d have to get as much detail as possible in order to identify a member of this very difficult genus.

I found some flagging to mark the exact spot and began looking around a bit. I found one more about 20 feet away,

not as well defined and poorly formed. I suggested it could be campestre, but we left it at that and walked on. I returned in nine days and it was still there and still the same size although it was obviously soon going to whither and disappear in the summer heat.

Long afterwards, after many emails to other botanists and some authorities on this subgenus around the Midwest, we collectively decided it was indeed the state’s second known location for prairie dunewort. This was a surprising find given that Thomson Prairie has been long preserved and well visited by many botanists and ecologists.

Thomson prairie lies on hard, calcium and magnesium rich dolomite bedrock. The site was unplowed but had been grazed at one time. The prairie remnant needed considerable attention to begin to restore it to its former glory. However, it is far ahead of any prairie reconstruction or recreation.

Prairie dunewort is listed as Endangered in Wisconsin and Threatened in Michigan. Before this find, only one site was known for this species in Wisconsin, and that location was found 20 years previously in dunes along Lake Michigan, one of its typical habitats around the Great Lakes and the reason for this common name. The species was only described in 1982, when it was found simultaneously in Iowa and in Michigan during early summer surveys. It closely resembles a few other moonworts, but these do not share the habitat or phenology. Dunewort occurs from Michigan to Oregon and Washington and although never common anywhere, it is mostly likely to be found in the Dakotas than anywhere else. In Iowa, the species was first found in the far western area known as the loess hills, coincidentally an area with similar topography and soils to Wisconsin’s Driftless area. In 1994 and 1995, Jeff Nekola conducted a survey of 42 glades in Iowa’s northeast, and found prairie moonwort in 12 sites in 10 counties.

Oddly, 2005 appeared to be a good year for this species, as Jaye Maxfield (member of the southwest Chapter) found it twice on snake surveys in southeast Minnesota. Gary Fewless, curator of the Herbarium at UWGB, found two more locations in Wisconsin, both near the Lake Michigan shore.

Moonworts are very small and apparently conduct only a small amount of photosynthesis every year. A large portion of the plant population is underground at any one time. They may be associated strongly with mycorrhizal fungi, or they may have a gametophyte stage just under the soil surface that is able to conduct photosynthesis and gain a little energy every year, forming the fruiting sporophyte only rarely. As such, they are in position to tell us something about the inner workings of the ecosystem, the hidden parts that are getting little attention from biologists. *(Continued on page 8)*

“State Endangered Plant Found at a Nature Conservancy Prairie”

(Continued from page 7)

The moral of the story? We still have much to learn about these prairie sods and true prairie ecosystems. Our knowledge is limited as to what species are present on even the most studied and visited prairie remnants. There are likely many obscure plants, insects, other invertebrates, and various soil organisms yet to be found on even small patches of remnant sod. We need to protect as many of the remnants as we can while there is still time, and not limit ourselves to only the largest sites, highest quality sites, or sites with known rare species. When managing remnants back to health, we can expect unusual critters such as this intriguing and mysterious dunewort to keep popping up.

For more about Thomson Prairie see:

<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/wisconsin/preserves/art33.html>

For more on prairie dunewort see the website of the Michigan Natural Features Inventory

http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/abstracts/botany/Botrychium_campestre.pdf

For other references see: Johnson-Groh and Riedel 2002, Nekola and Schlicht 1996

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Johnson-Groh C., C. Riedel, L. Schoessler, and K. Skogen. 2002. Belowground distribution and abundance of *Botrychium gametophytes* and juvenile sporophytes. *American Fern Journal* 92:80-92.

Nekola J. C., D. W. Schlicht. 1996. Distribution of *Botrychium campestre* in Northeastern Iowa. *American Fern Journal* 86:119-123.

“Elderberry Prairie for fun, food and fuel?”

By Renae Prell-Mitchell, Whitewater, WI

Nationally, the United States has not followed the path to sustainability very well but locally some of us are still trying. Here are a few examples of alternative farming practices that we are trying on our organic farm to combine prairie restoration, agro-ecology and sustainability for fun, food and fuel. One of the first things we did when we bought our farm, Elderberry Acres, nine years ago was to plant 15 acres of prairie in riparian buffer zones. We've let other areas grow naturally with some prairie species and are currently restoring several acres of formerly pastured oak savanna. Economically, we depend on making an income from the farm so we strive to find ways to combine our efforts. Our main farm income is from our 60 member organic community supported agriculture (CSA) that provides about 100 varieties of vegetables, herbs, honey and poultry products to our customers from May

through October. When customers come to the farm to learn about where their food is grown. I hike them through our gardens, prairies, tree lines, wetlands, savanna and woods while explaining our agro-ecological approach to combining nature and farming.

We have seen the benefits of the prairies as our populations of insect-eating birds, beneficial insects and reptile and amphibian allies have grown. Unfortunately, we've also seen some damage as a result of the rabbits and voles which the tall grass provides cover for! Overall though, the biodiversity adds immeasurably to the health of our land. It helps isolate us from the pesticides and possibly GMO-contaminated pollens of surrounding conventional farms. It gives plenty of nectar for our colonies of bees which pollinate the crops and produce honey. It protects our soils and the water quality of our spring-fed creek, where we collect water cress for salads. It gives us much joy and even bouquets to sell at the farmers market.

I have written in the past about how we have been experimenting with various ways to use goats, sheep and pastured poultry (geese, ducks and chickens) in rotation in our prairie areas to control brush and lightly graze at certain times of the year. The USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) does not allow grazing in the prairies except at times of drought when the livestock is desperate for pasture, which was the case for part of the summer last year but other portions of the land that have naturalized or are being restored, are our main focus for this experiment. Our border collie helps herd the animals and we only introduce livestock for short periods of time when we can act as shepherds. Goats are wonderful browsers and it is easy to watch the improvement of areas where they've been. Sheep are more questionable as they graze low to the ground and it is hard to tell what they are eating. The geese do a surprisingly good job of cleaning up pliant and other broadleaf weeds and improving the grass sod. They will also do a decent job on reed canary grass in the early spring if they are confined to those problem areas with no other choice. We would like to try Highland Cattle or Bison, but the fencing costs to make sure they'd stay out of our vegetable gardens could be outrageously expensive! Speaking of expense, as the human, ecological and monetary price of nonrenewable oil rises, we are increasingly looking to convert to biodiesel and/or ethanol. We heat with wood now and would like to grow our own tractor fuel.

One of The Prairie Enthusiasts members, Bill Hunt, of Elizabeth, Illinois and I have recently been discussing the possibility of using a matrix of prairie species as an alternative fuel source. Bill has been researching this with experts like Wes Jackson and others around the country. Jim Rachuy of the Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts has been working with Bill and his land manager, Gerry Kopf, to grow out many

(Continued on page 9)

“Elderberry Prairie for fun, food and fuel?”

(Continued from page 8)

of the rare local genotype prairie species that NIPE wanted to include in their restorations of Hanley Savanna and other localities. Bill wants TPE and others to encourage the USDA to reconsider some of its rules about CRP and encourage more planting of native species instead of brome and other agricultural grasses. He converted their CRP contracts to CP2 native grasses/forbs this year. Besides the USDA, other state and federal agencies could also be encouraged to look at native species for cellulosic ethanol production rather than the inefficient and expensive proposals for corn-based ethanol. Gerry believes it is likely that farmers may also expect some carbon credits for conversion from annual crop to perennials.

Bill recently provided me with some interesting articles from *Science* (Ragauskas et al. *Science*, 27 January 2006, pg 484 and Farrel et al. *Science*, 27 January 2006, pg. 506) exploring the progress made in developing enzymatic processes for conversion of biomass to practical renewable fuels and the benefit of using sources other than corn, to help prevent greenhouse gas emissions. As you might imagine however, there are also schemes afoot to profit from genetically modified species and large monocrop practices that fit the agri-business model better as President Bush alluded to with his mention of switchgrass in the 2006 State of the Union speech. According to K.P. Vogel,* , H.G. Jung, R.B. Mitchell, J.F.S. Lamb in a USDA bulletin, *Perennial Herbaceous Biomass Energy Crops: Potential and Status*,

“Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA-ARS), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and cooperating Universities have been investigating the feasibility of using perennial forages (herbaceous biomass) for energy production. The most promising species include switchgrass, a native prairie grass, and alfalfa, a nitrogen-fixing legume. Using technology that is under continual improvement, it is feasible to break down the cellulose, hemicellulose, and pectin of these biomass species into simple sugars that can be converted into ethanol or other fermentation products. These species can produce high biomass yields on lands with high erosion potential such as the land currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program that is not suitable for grain crop production, as well as be incorporated into annual row crop rotations. Existing switchgrass and alfalfa cultivars can produce over 5 over 400 gal/acre (3750 L/ha). At a price of \$40/US ton (\$18/Mg), the feedstock cost of ethanol from biomass would be about \$0.50 gallon (\$0.13/L). Research is in progress to improve biomass yield and genetically modify feedstock composition to enhance conversion to ethanol.”

(Continued on page 10)

TPE Traveling Photography Exhibit Making the Rounds

The Eagle Ridge Resort ballroom was a beautiful venue for the reception held by the Northwestern Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts. Hundreds of people from Chicago, Iowa and other areas saw the exhibit throughout the month of May. Some of the comments in the book proved our theory that the show would open people's eyes to the beauty and diversity of prairies.

We had gathered quotes from authors and many TPE members and incorporated them into the labels and narrative, so the exhibit is much more than just photos! Go to www.theprairieenthusiasts.org for a copy of the narrative, info on the artists and associated events. We hope to see you and your friends at the exhibit and receptions! Your purchases of posters and photos will benefit the artists, the TPE educational exhibit and the chapter's receptions. Thanks for your support!

The Prairie Enthusiast's Photography Exhibit Receptions & Forums in Wisconsin:

June 17 - July 6 UW-Arboretum- Madison

Reception June 22 6:30pm, Forum 7-9 pm

Prairie Perspectives featuring Curt Meine, Richard Henderson, and Carla Wright. A free forum exploring the historical, cultural, and ecological interactions of people and the Midwest's native prairie and savannas. Forum speakers representing the arts, humanities, sciences, and conservation will share their perspectives on our prairie heritage and on current efforts to protect, restore, and manage these endangered communities. Audience members will be encouraged to share their own perspectives on the past, present, and future of the prairie landscape.

July 13 - July 30 Monroe Art Center, Monroe, WI

Reception July 14, 6:00 pm

August 24 - Sept. 11 The Pump House, La Crosse, WI

Reception August 24, 6:00 pm ***Presentation*** following featuring Armund Bartz, DNR conservation biologist. He was a big hit at the TPE conference!

Sept. 13 - Sept. 25 Kickapoo Valley Reserve, La Farge, WI

September 16 Reception 6:00 pm ***Presentation*** following featuring Damian Vraniak - Waubishmaa'ngan, Native American author of "Prairie Relations: Books 1, Signs and Seasons of Flowering Plants on the Prairie and Savanna"

Sept 29 - Oct 29 Phipps Center for the Arts, Hudson, WI

September 29 Reception 6:00 pm Program TBA

Nov. 6 - Nov. 22 UW-Platteville's Nohr Art Gallery, Platteville, WI

November 9 Reception time TBA

Elderberry Prairie for fun, food and fuel?

(Continued from page 9.)

TPE member Bill Hunt and I would rather see a better mix of species native to each local area that would also provide many other ecological services by better mimicking original prairie. Native prairie has intrinsic and ecological value without needing to be justified by human-based values such as fuel production but if things are moving in this direction perhaps TPE can have a voice in the debate. What do you think? Please reply with an article or letter to the Prairie Promoter!

THE CHAPTER SECTION IS FOR EVERYONE. PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR CHAPTER NEWS TO THE EDITOR, EVEN IF IT DUPLICATES WHAT IS IN YOUR CHAPTER NEWSLETTER. OTHER TPE MEMBERS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT EACH CHAPTER IS DOING!

EMPIRE – SAUK CHAPTER

Annual Chapter Picnic & Meeting of the Membership

The annual meeting and potluck picnic of the Empire-Sauk Chapter will be held **Wednesday, July 12, 2006 at Fair Meadows State Natural Area**. This is a private preserve owned by TPE members Penny & Gary Shackelford. It is located just a couple miles into Rock County on the south side of Lake Koshkonong. Look for further details about the preserve and directions in a flier arriving by mail in late June. Bring a dish to share and your own plates and utensils. Soda will be provided.

The picnic supper will start at **6:00 PM** followed by a very short business meeting and then hiking the Shackelford's diverse preserve of wetlands, woodlands, and prairie. We encourage all members to attend. The brief meeting will entail a quick review of the past year's accomplishments and election of the chapter treasurer.

Put Your Green Thumb to Work for Prairie Conservation

If you have a green thumb and would like to put it to work for prairie conservation, here are two opportunities:

1) Help is needed in planting, weeding, and mulching the seed production beds at the TPE seed orchard at Underwood Prairie (south of Blue Mounds). The orchard now has 45 species and is nearly full. Another 6-8 species are planned. Eventually,

more than 50 species characteristic of deep soil mesic and wet prairie will be established and producing local source seed. For the most part, the beds will be of species not readily available from local remnants and roadside populations. The starter plants are grown from seed that TPE volunteers have collected from local native populations. The seeds produced by this orchard go to both TPE restoration plantings and those of our partners in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) project (see the Spring 2004 issue [Vol. 17, No. 1] of The Prairie Promoter for details on the MRPHA project).

2) There is a need for volunteers to establish, maintain, and harvest seed from potted and garden-tended plants of prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*), yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrhincium campestre*), and violet wood-sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*). These seed production plants may be maintained in the convenience of your own yard or garden. The starter seed will come from the greater MRPHA, and the seeds they produce will go into prairie restorations and habitat expansion in the MRPHA. Collecting seed from these small, early-blooming prairie species in the wild is tedious work for the small quantities of seed one gets. We anticipate that tending plants in pots or garden settings will greatly increase seed production per plant and allow for greater ease of seed collection. We are especially interested in producing large quantities of prairie violet seed, in order to increase regal fritillary butterfly habitat. Regals are now a rare prairie-specialist butterfly that is still present in the MRPHA. They require large expanses of treeless habitat with ample violets for the larvae and mid-summer flowers for the adults. Prairie restorations rich with summer flowers and violets will be very important to its long-term survival. Contact Rich Henderson (845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Recent Donations to Empire-Sauk Chapter

The following donations were made to the Empire-Sauk Chapter during January through April. These are donations above and beyond membership dues.

Peter van Beek	\$35	unrestricted
Dale Beske	\$40	unrestricted
Gerry & Jeanie Briggs	\$10	unrestricted
Laura Brown	\$35	unrestricted
Willis Brown	\$60	unrestricted
CUNA Mutual Group Foundation – Dollars for Doers (P. Handrick) Prog.	\$500	land management equipment
John & Karen Exo	\$50	unrestricted
Pat Handrick	\$50	land management
Dave Marshall & Wendy Weisensel	\$300	land management
John & Olive Thomson	\$100	land management

Thank you, donors. Your contributions help to locate, protect, and care for the remnant prairies, sedge meadows, savannas, and open oak woodlands of our area.

Election of Chapter Treasurer to be Held

Nominations are being sought to fill the chapter officer position of Treasurer. This is a two-year term. The election will be held at the annual meeting of the chapter membership on the evening of Wednesday, July 12 (see chapter picnic for details). Please attend the meeting if you can to help us fill this position.

Safe & Successful Burn Season

This spring, the Blufflands Project (a joint project of TPE Empire-Sauk and the Aldo Leopold Foundation) accomplished 25 burns on 16 properties totaling 300 acres with the help of many volunteers. The rest of the Chapter completed another 33 burns on 17 properties for a total of 215 acres. These latter burns were accomplished with the help of both e-mail and phone notices made by volunteer coordinator Kathy Cartwright and the participation of 70 burn volunteers! Volunteers logged 363 person-burn events (over 900 hours).

In addition, the Empire-Sauk Chapter assisted with equipment and some volunteers on another 6 burns totaling 79 acres. We assisted Dane County Parks, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, West Middleton Elementary, Prairie Home Estates, and two private landowners. The total effort of all chapter activities combined this spring came to 594 acres burned! A special thank you to the Brocks, Hendersons, and Oberles for generously letting their trucks be used once again as "pack horses" for the pumper units.

Thank you to all of the many volunteers out there. You're helping keep our prairie, savanna, and oak woodland heritage alive and well.

Butterfly and Moth Surveyors Needed

Volunteers skilled in butterfly and moth identification are needed to conduct general Lepidoptera inventory surveys at the Schurch-Thomson Prairie, Underwood Prairie, Shea Prairie, and A to Z Preserve (collectively now called Mounds View Grassland) located 4.5 miles south of Blue Mounds. The Empire-Sauk Chapter has ambitious plans for restoring prairie and oak savanna habitat to this 500-acre area. Before the work proceeds much further, we would like to have baseline data as to what Lep species make use of the area. This information will help guide our restoration planning and gauge its success. If you have skills needed for such surveys, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 evenings).

Summer Help Needed with Land Stewardship to Match Grant Dollars

As always, help is needed through the summer to collect seed and to cut or pull sweet clover, parsnip, and knapweed. But this summer we do have a US Fish & Wildlife Service Private Land Stewardship grant plus a State Wildlife Grant that both require match in in-kind volunteer time to earn the grant money. So, every hour of volunteer time that you put in generates from 3-9 hours of paid contract labor for control of weeds, trees, and brush on our project sites. This summer, we

will be working at Underwood & Schurch-Thomson Prairies, Ripp Prairies, Koltjes Prairies, Smith/Egre Drumlins, Mazomanie Bluff, Schluckebier Prairie, Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, and other sites. If you wish to be on the contact lists to help with these activities, please contact our chapter volunteer coordinator, Kathy Cartwright (839-5148 or kcartwright@charterinternet.net).

A New Editor for "The Prairie Promoter"

(Continued from page 2)

My name is Mary Jenkins Penn and I am a TPE member from the Southwest Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts. I got interested in TPE when my husband and I decided to return some 10 acres of old cow pasture back to prairie/ savanna in eastern Grant County. Until I moved to Wisconsin 5 years ago, I was ignorant of what a prairie was. But after getting my hands into the clayey soil, I knew I was at the beginning of a lifelong interest and pursuit.

With the opportunity of becoming editor for this newsletter, I hope this will not only be an excellent way to contribute to TPE, but also something that fits nicely into my work schedule: I work as a technical writer. I only hope that I can fulfill the newsletter's potential as well as Alice and Walter were able to do for so many years.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER MEETINGS		
Wed.	July 12	Annual Chapter Picnic & Meeting of the Membership at Fire Meadows State Natural Area
SOUTHWEST CHAPTER MEETINGS		
Sat. & Sun.	July 15 & 16	2006 Summer Picnic and Annual Meeting Wyalusing State Park
Sun.	Aug. 20	Chapter board meeting at Montfort Community building 4pm. All members are welcome.
WORK PARTIES		
Sun.	July 2	Heather's Prairie
Sun.	Aug. 6	Heather's Prairie (cutting Multiflora Rose, Sumac, etc.)
Sun.	Sept. 3	Heather's Prairie
Sun.	Sept. 3	Heather's Prairie
For details on Heather's Prairie contact Gary Adams at 608-624-5791.		

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PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE
**2006 Summer Picnic
Camping July 15th &
Wyalusing State Park**
See inside for details



PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS
**and Annual Meeting
Meeting July 16th**