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The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Grassroots Conservation at Work

Borah Creek SNA Expansion

By Dani Stolley, Development Director

During the past year, the Southwest Chapter has been working to create a 252-acre wildlife buffer zone on two sides of the current Borah Creek Prairie State Natural Area. The addition would bring the total protected area to slightly less than 400 acres. An area this large would attract and retain a great number of migratory grassland birds—or so we hope!

The project costs \$756,000. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 Funds will pay \$90,000, \$260,000 will come from Wisconsin's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds and another \$260,000 will come from existing TPE stewardship credits. That leaves an outstanding balance of \$100,000-\$150,000.

This buffer zone project is both timely and of vital conservation significance. We currently have matching funds and a potential June 30 closing date and the region in question boasts the state's third largest population of the endangered Prairie Bush Clover. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (WDNR) Land Legacy Report has identified this area as one of statewide and regional conservation significance and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program has deemed the property a great opportunity to protect rare and endangered prairie plant communities as well as migratory grassland birds.

Some of the birds frequenting the site include the Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird, Brown Thrasher, Dickcissel, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bell's Vireo. Surveys have recorded over 500 different plants including Woolly Milkweed, Prairie Indian-Plantain, Hill's Thistle, Wild Quinine, and Prairie Turnip.

Acquisition and restoration of this property would not only provide a large and continuous block of prairie habitat to help maintain viable populations of these

endangered and threatened prairie plants and wildlife, but it would also greatly reduce local storm water runoff, soil erosion, and herbicide drift.

If you are a passionate birder, a Prairie Bush Clover admirer, or just a dedicated prairie enthusiast who'd like to see this important area preserved and protected forever, call or email Dani Stolley, Development Director, to see how you can help. 920.420.4104 or Dani@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org



Borah Creek burning. Photo by Rose Sime.

IN THIS ISSUE

Borah Creek Expansion	Page 1
President's Message	Page 2
Enthusiast Abroad	Page 2
Prairie Faeries	Page 3
Joint Venture Jubilee	Page 4
WDNR Sponsorship	Page 5
Monthly Online Giving	Page 6
Announcements	Page 6
Chapter News	Page 7
New Members	Page 14
Thank you, donors!	Page 14

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President's Message

By Evanne Hunt

Earlier this year, I was reminded how fortunate I am to be surrounded by prairie enthusiasts.

Katherine Chi, a graduate student at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) is researching the reproductive ecology of *Besseyia bullii* (Scrophulariaceae) or "kittentails". In 2010 and again this May, Katherine drove over 400 miles to River Falls to see our populations. Thanks to the kittentail lovers in my chapter, I see these state-threatened plants every spring.

When I talk to people about our endangered prairies and oak savannas, I acknowledge that rain forests get great press, but emphasize that they are not the only valuable, unique and mysterious ecosystems worth saving. The challenge is to get people to care about the things in their own backyard. Katherine's trip reminded me of that.

On your guided field trips this summer, appreciate that individual bird or rare plant. But also take in the entire site. Reflect on how incredibly complex the ecosystem is -- from the fungi in the soil to the towering cupplant. Most people on this planet will never see an intact, native prairie or oak savanna. Not only can you see them every day, but you are instrumental in protecting these sites with your volunteer hours and donations.

This is my last "President's Message". In July, at the annual meeting of the membership in Westfield, WI, I will pass the drip torch to Jack Kussmaul. It has been a great five years and I have enjoyed watching us grow. We've added three new chapters, protected 1,000 more acres and watched our assets grow to nearly \$6,000,000. But, to quote Carolyn Leigh, the best is yet to come.

Enthusiast Abroad

This letter was received in January of 2011. It has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Dear Editor,

I wanted to let you know that I have been using the ideas I got from TPE members Eva and Thomas Wedel when we visited their farm and saw what they had been doing to get the land back to the state before the plow.

When I got back to Turkey, I was full of ideas to put my new knowledge into ground in my country.

Deforestation was my first concern. I tried something never seen before. I tried to get hunters to give back to nature for the first time. After I got hunters to donate for the re-forestation of a mine-stripped area, I turned my focus to my hometown.

We had a small lake and surrounding marshland there with a considerable amount of grassland. We hunted ducks, European quail and woodcock there when I was young. Then things changed for this little wetland habitat. Farmers got the rights for the grassland and it was all cleared: no habitat and no quail.

Next, the local government decided to use this small lake as a place to throw its trash. The marsh was destroyed and the water resources were cut. The wetland began to die: No more ducks.

I started a volunteer group to save the local river and wetlands. We lobbied both the central government and at the local level. We even got support from the European Union's water authorities. They helped us to develop more ideas on how to address the problems of our river: the Meander. The word meander comes from its ancient name: Menderes in Turkish. While the river initiative was our big plan, we had to do something quickly for the little lake.



Photo courtesy of Mehmet Ekizoglu.

I started to tell people I know that we should save this small piece of natural habitat. After years of talking, things started to go well. The local irrigation union agreed to give sufficient water to the lake again and so water came back to the lake. That was a good start.

Then, we got a new mayor for the area who agreed with my plans. He stopped trashing the lake and started cleaning up the wetland.

Next, I began trying to persuade the central government to set the area aside for protection and conservation training.

Recently, I learned that the government authorities agreed with my conservation project. We will take that small lake and surrounding grassland and turn it into a wetlands education place for children. The new mayor also supports this project.

Local hunters are still skeptical about the project as they are going to lose some of their duck and quail

hunting grounds. However, as they already lost it once to development and farming and as there are plenty of other places for them to hunt birds, I'm sure that we will lure them into the project.

I never could have talked people into this project if I hadn't seen the things the Wedels had done on their Wisconsin farm. They both mentored and inspired me to work for future generations. Thank you very much guys... Keep up the good work.

Mehmet Ekizoglu

Look Out for Prairie Faeries

By Dani Stolley, Development Director

I don't know which is more adorable: the thought of a five-year old little girl donating all her birthday money to charity or the vision of twenty five-year-old faeries having an Easter-egg-type "Prairie Faerie Hunt."

Either way, Dorothea Persephone McDougall, aka "Dottie", takes the cake for having the most unique—and thoughtful—fifth birthday party I've ever heard of!

"It started with our first child," says Dottie's mom, Julie. "As a family, we wanted to create a tradition, a birthday tradition whereby we didn't end up with a bunch of unnecessary 'stuff.' So now all the children have a donate birthday when they turn five."

Dottie's older brother was interested in coral reefs, so on his fifth birthday the family had a reef themed party and guests donated to the Coral Reef Alliance. According to her mother, Dottie's interest in spring wildflowers, faeries and prairies may have stemmed from watching nature fantasy and cartoons like Fantasia—or, it might just have something to do with her name.

In Greek mythology, Persephone is the daughter of Zeus and the harvest goddess Demeter. She's called variously the goddess of spring, harvest, vegetation and innocence. She is also known as the Queen of the Underworld, in memory of her abduction by Hades to become his bride.

According to the myth, Persephone's abduction and subsequent escape personify the withdrawal of vegetation into the earth after harvest and its subsequent shooting forth in spring. She is linked to the changing seasons and to the seeds and fruits of the fields.

Whatever the origin of Dottie's interest, The Prairie Enthusiasts are eternally grateful for her desire to help the prairie faeries plant spring wildflowers, and of course, for all the wonderful gifts made to TPE during Dottie's birthday party!

Thanks again Dotty and Julie, and thanks to all your prairie faerie helpers!

Joint Venture at Jubilee College State Park

By James Alwill, Northern Illinois Chapter

Last fall marked the culmination of a cooperative prairie restoration at Jubilee College State Park. The project involved growing, transporting and planting 3500 prairie plants in gallon pots into a highly visible hillside at the park. The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Lake Land College and Brimfield High School worked together to make this project happen.

The project started when 5000 prairie plugs (2" x 4") were shipped from a local prairie nursery to the Illinois River Correctional Center (IRCC) in Canton IL in early May of 2010. Under the direction of IDOC Horticulture Instructor, Ms. Vicky Herman, and Education Division Head Tom Zaborac, Lake Land College students potted the 5000 plugs, labeled the pots, and organized the finished product into large bread trays. Each tray held 16 gallon pots. The trays were placed on the asphalt drives that led to the IRCC class room garage doors and the plants were cared for by the Lake Land College students.

After three and a half months of weeding, watering, and fertilizing, the plants were stacked up in the bread trays, loaded onto a 53 foot IDOC semi trailer and hauled 55 miles to Jubilee College State Park, 15 miles west of Peoria, IL. Six highway maintainers and three IDNR staff unloaded 312 bread trays into a shaded area north of the JCSP office. IDOT HM's Shawn Andrews, Buddy Robinson, Larry Meinders, Mark Brand, Robert Thomas and Mike Baker helped unload the semi.

Tom Elmendorf from IDOT D-2 (Dixon) came and picked up 1500 of the gallon pots to plant at their rest areas. They used a large passenger van with the seats taken out and a 3 ton dump truck with a tarp.

Tom Hintz, Jubilee College and Rock Island State Park Superintendent (IDNR), had the park personal mow down the brome grass (Pat Hanley) and use Roundup on the resprouting turf (Grant McCauley) to prepare the Pump House hill prairie site. The hill rises between two large fields (Quail Meadows Fields) recently converted to mesic prairie adjacent to the main entrance road of the park.

The plants, still in bread trays, were loaded onto a 21 foot utility trailer (Mark Hahn) and driven 2000 feet to the new planting site. Shallow trenches (6" wide by 6" deep) were installed 7 ft on center (guided by Doug Franks-Prairie Dawg volunteer) for the new potted prairie plants. The area in between the rows was seeded with oats and prairie seed and will be mowed down once a month during the 2011 growing season.



Prairie Dawg volunteer Doug Franks installs shallow trenches for prairie plantings. Photo courtesy of James Alwill.

The gallon plants were first set out along the trenches and then planted by Brimfield Biology class under the guidance/leadership of their Biology teacher, Ms Kathy Krostal. The class planted the East and SW sections of the hillside. The Brimfield HS Cheerleaders squad (who needed community service hours) also assisted in the planting the NW section of the hill on several after school and weekend sessions. Once all the plants were installed, the rows were inspected for complete soil backfill and all voids were filled in with the trench overburden. All the bare spots in between the rows were overseeded with spring oats and prairie seed that were lightly disked in by a garden type disc pulled behind a 4-wheeler. All the empty pots and trays were collected and sent back to the IRCC to be reused in the 2011 season. Rains came soon after the completion and nicely watered the plantings.

The Prairie plantings at the Jubilee College State Park Pump House Prairie was a successful project due to all the preparation, coordination, and behind the scenes work performed by IDOC, IDNR, IDOT, Prairie Dawg volunteer, and the Brimfield HS students. Total costs included the \$10,000 given by IDOT Central office to purchase the soil, pots, plants, and fertilizer to produce the 5000 gallon prairie plants at IRCC. Retail value of the

plants was \$60,000. All labor was provided by the Lake Land College students, state workers under normal pay rate, and Brimfield HS students performing community service and class time. We look forward to our next planting project.

WDNR Sponsors Invasive Species Control

By Craig Annen

This article was part of TPEs deliverables package with the AIS grant.

The 276-acre A to Z Farm property is a subunit of The Prairie Enthusiasts' 530-acre Mounds View Grassland preserve (Iowa Co., WI) which is one of three core conservation areas within the 50,000-acre Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA), both of which are of regional importance to Wisconsin's prairie heritage. MRPHA is of regional importance to Wisconsin prairie heritage conservation. The A to Z property is bisected by a shallow valley with the permanent Williams-Barneveld Creek flowing through the valley bottom. Approximately ten acres of the valley bottom supports a diverse community of native sedge and riparian wet meadow vegetation that is relatively free of invasive plant species. This meadow provides habitat for nineteen at-risk species, with several additional at-risk species inhabiting the surrounding landscape, and is important to the overall ecological stability of the Mounds View Grassland Complex because it serves as a moist habitat refuge during drought years. Additionally, the wet meadow at A to Z provides both wetland habitat and a wetland-to-upland transitional gradient to the generally-dry MRPHA landscape.

From 2004 onward, small pioneer populations of reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*) were observed along the Williams-Barneveld Creek and wet meadow by Rich Henderson, Pat Trochell, and other members of TPE. In 2007, Rich Henderson contacted Craig Annen of Integrated Restorations, LLC and asked him to design a plan of action to deal with these species before they could spread and apply for grant funding to assist with control costs. In March of 2008, TPE was awarded a three-year DNR Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Early Detection and Rapid Response Grant for the time period 2008 through 2010. The total awarded amount was \$13,332.77, of which \$10,000 came from WDNR, with the remaining balance contributed by matching labor from TPE volunteers. AIS grants are designed to assist in a local partnership with eligible applicants (including qualified non-profit organizations such as TPE) to control aquatic invasive species in Wisconsin's lakes, rivers, streams, and

wetlands. The state provides funding for up to 75% of the project costs and requires public access to sites where control measures are being implemented. Financing for the AIS Grant Program is derived from a portion of Wisconsin's excise tax on motor boat fuel.

The overall goal for this project was to protect the biological integrity of the A to Z property by preventing pioneer populations of reed canarygrass and watercress from reproducing and expanding beyond their initial distributions. At the onset of the project, reed canarygrass was limited in distribution to small clones scattered throughout the wet meadow and watercress was concentrated within the eastern portions of the creek. Once a perennial invasive species becomes well-established, it becomes substantially more difficult (and expensive) to control. Management activities consisted of 1) treatment of existing populations, 2) scouting for additional seedlings and immature plants, 3) removal of debris dams within the Williams-Barneveld Creek, and 4) local seed collecting and interseeding. Indigenous Restorations, LLC, a local contractor with expertise in stream restoration and rehabilitation, was hired by Integrated Restorations to assist with watercress control and debris dam removal for this project.

In terms of the overall project goal of checking the spread of these invasive species, this project was very successful, at least in the short term. Contractors managed to temporarily remove the watercress population from the waters of the Williams-Barneveld Creek and eradicate all reed canarygrass clones occurring within the A to Z wet meadow. More importantly, the open niche spaces created by invasive species control efforts were quickly recolonized by desirable wet meadow vegetation. Additionally, a pickerel frog (*Rana palustris*--listed as Special Concern in WI) was observed along the Williams-Barneveld Creek by contractors and TPE interns in 2009, and a record of this sighting was submitted to the WDNR Natural Heritage Inventory. Unfortunately, reed canarygrass and watercress are continually attempting to establish themselves at the A to Z property via propagule influx from the adjacent surrounding landscape, from existing on-site propagule banks, and from propagules brought to the site lodged in the fur and feathers of wildlife and waterfowl that utilize this site, and this site will have to be continually monitored for new satellite populations. However, the efforts of contractors and TPE staff and volunteers, supported by funding from the WDNR, have limited the distribution and abundance of these species to a minimal level that can be more easily handled in the future.

An additional \$20,000 in AIS funding has also recently been awarded to TPE to assist with additional populations of reed canarygrass, hybrid cattail, and watercress control within the Mounds View Grassland Complex for the funding period 2011 through 2013.

Monthly Online Giving Adds Up

Quiz time: what can you do with \$10?

Buy 2 gallons of gas?

Order a fast-food meal?

Pick up a six-pack of micro-brewed beer?

...OR...

...make a donation to your favorite non-profit!

Online monthly giving is a fairly new way for folks to have a tangible impact on TPE's mission and vision without hurting their monthly or annual budget. In fact, several hundred people giving a small amount every month can generate a steady, year-round cash flow (Although we still love those calendar-year-end gifts!)

If 100 TPE members (less than 10 percent of our membership) gave just \$10 a month via automatic, online giving, TPE could raise \$12,000 in just one year—enough to cover the costs of printing and mailing all four quarterly issues of the Prairie Promoter, our two field trip fliers, and several other communications.

The combined \$10 monthly donations from 200 members would generate \$24,000—enough to cover a year's worth of accounting, gift processing, tax and financial fees and services.

If half of our membership gave just \$10/month, TPE could raise \$66,000—and just think of what we could do with \$66,000 a year!

A wise man once said, "The excellence of a gift lies in its appropriateness rather than its value."

If \$10 a month (\$120 per year) seems appropriate to you, then join me today as an online donor at:

<http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/donate.htm>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin Event

Save the date: 18 June, 2011

Join IPAW on Saturday, June 18, in celebrating a decade of stewardship. The festivities run from 9 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. at Swamplovers Foundation in Cross Plains, WI. Highlights include field workshops; invasive species mapping with Mark Renz from the UW Extension; control and herbicide information with Craig Annen from Integrated Restorations, LLC; tours of Swamplovers Foundation and a free lunch!

Swamplovers is a 433-acre property 15 miles west of Madison. The preserve harbors diverse communities, including remnant prairie, oak savanna, oak woodland and hardwood forest. The valley floor is bisected by a tributary stream of Black Earth Creek and is filled with extensive wetlands, natural springs and scattered ponds.

Come and experience the beauty of Swamplovers and celebrate IPAW's successful first 10 years!!

Visit www.ipaw.org for more information and to register.



TPE Annual Picnic and Meeting

Save the date: 16-17 July, 2011

This summer, the Prairie Sands Chapter will host TPE's annual picnic, board meeting, and general membership meeting in Westfield, WI. This central sands location is convenient to many attractions and field trips.

Saturday, July 16—self-guided options include:

Prairie Nursery, 10 minutes from Westfield. This local business has been serving the prairie public for many years. A demonstration garden and retail store are described here: <http://www.prairienursery.com/store/>

John Muir Memorial Park/State Natural Area, 30 minutes from Westfield. Plant communities here include a rich fen, sedge meadow, open bog, northern wet forest dominated by tamarack, southern dry forest, oak opening, and wet-mesic prairie. A trail guide about plant communities in the park is available at: http://marquette.iceagetrail.org/shop/marquette.iceagetrailalliance.info/files/1277319628_marquette_muir_park_guide.pdf. Other information: <http://www.tn.buffalo.wi.gov/community/muirpark.asp>

Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, about 45 minutes from Westfield, offers all comers 44,000 acres of remarkable diversity and a look at resident Whooping cranes. Stop at the Refuge Office which is open until 4 p.m. on Saturday for orientation, or find maps and info at their site: <http://www.fws.gov/Remidwest/necedah/>

Saturday night campfire (weather permitting) and/or tent camping under the oaks at David and Shelley Hamel's, about 15 minutes from Westfield. Bring your own camp food and marshmallows to roast over the cobblestone campfire ring at the bog and spin tales about

the (prescribed) fire that got away and other scary ghost stories. And if you want to come early Saturday (anytime after noon) to set up a tent, make arrangements with Hamels ahead of time: 608-296-2866 or sdhamel@maQs.net. Campfire will be burning good at 6:30p.m. and everyone is welcome.

Directions to Hamels via Pioneer Park in Westfield: To get to Pioneer Park, take exit 113 off I-39. Turn west at end of ramp (either coming from north or south); turn right at McDonalds (N. Pioneer Park Road) and continue past Pioneer Park on the right. Turn right (north) at next stop sign (County CH/County M). Go past Westfield High School and watch for the surprise left turn that County M makes. Turn left (west). Stay on County M until 4th Avenue (not 4th Drive which is the street before 4th Avenue). Turn right on 4th Avenue and go north. After you cross Deerborn Avenue, be on the lookout for fire # N8973 on the left. If you reach the 'tee' at 4th Road, you just passed us on the left. Log house, log shop behind evergreens. Park in driveway.

All other lodging in Marquette County: <http://www.marquettenow.com/lodging.php>

Sunday, July 17

Location: The Chuckwagon Pavilion in Pioneer Park, Westfield WI:

To get to Pioneer Park, take the Westfield exit 113 off I-39. Turn west at end of ramp (either coming from north or south); turn right at McDonalds (N. Pioneer Park Road) and continue until you see Pioneer Park on the right and the large, covered pavilion.

9:00 a.m. Coffee, juice, complimentary continental breakfast at Chuckwagon Pavilion in Pioneer Park.

9:30 a.m.: Tour group leaves Chuckwagon Pavilion for Hamel property tour of the "Hugh Iltis Prairie and Savanna" restoration. This site hosts the federally-endangered Karner Blue butterfly. Work to increase the caterpillar's host plant, lupine, and multiple nectaring species has been ongoing since 1989. Survey monitoring indicates impressive success in these efforts.

Eighty acres of this 110-acre property are permanently enrolled in the USDA Grassland Reserve Program that restricts many kinds of development. Dry sand prairie and incipient jack pine barrens are a stark contrast to the fertile soils of southwest Wisconsin. The remaining property includes a tamarack bog with cranberries, sundews, and pitcher plants and oak woods which provide nesting sites for red-headed woodpeckers. The property has been considered for state natural area designation, a process still underway. The walk begins at 10a.m. and continues until 11:45 a.m., in time to drive back to the Westfield Pavilion for picnic lunch.

10:00 a.m.: TPE Board Meeting at Westfield Pavilion

12:00 noon: Picnic lunch at Pavilion. As has been customary in the past, the Prairie Sands chapter will provide a main dish for lunch and asks that participants bring side dishes to share and plates/cups/utensils for personal use.

1:00 p.m.: TPE Member meeting, at Pavilion

2:15 p.m. Tour Option 1: Tour group leaves Pavilion to tour Keith Baker's prairie restoration that is ongoing since 1992. Keith will talk about some of the successes and failures regarding a select harvest of white oak in 1989, a ten year stand of lupine with new areas in the making, oak wilt and his method of dealing with it, and a warm season grass hay and horse pasture. This is an 80-acre site with a good deal of walking, although parts of the property are accessible by small car. Keith also is willing to demonstrate his Forestry Mulcher, a monster machine that turns big trees into tiny chips in no time.

2:15 p.m. Tour Option 2: Tour group leaves Pavilion to tour Prairiehill Farm: 100 acres of restored and reconstructed prairie, oak-hickory savanna, sedge meadows, and emergent wetlands surrounding and containing a glacial drumlin. Over 80 species of endemic savanna plants survived a century of farming and new discoveries are made each year. Restoration ecologists, Laurel and Alan Bennett, who have owned and managed Prairiehill Farm for 30 years, will lead this walk. Participants will see large burr oaks that pre-date settlement; see how restored prairie vegetation is responding to active management; and learn about successful and unsuccessful restoration techniques.

Contact information for the weekend event: Ann Woldt, annralph@centurytel.net

Newsletter Editor Needed

Volunteer needed to produce this newsletter. Must be detail oriented; comfortable using email, Microsoft Word, pdf conversion software, and online file transfer technology; and happy to work with a team of copyeditors and organizational leaders. Responsibilities include soliciting and editing articles and announcements, page layout, electronic delivery to the printer, and reviewing proofs prior to printing. If you are interested, please contact Carol Winge (carolwinge@yahoo.com) or Jack Kussmaul (millvilleand@mail.tds.net).

CHIPPEWA SAVANNAS CHAPTER

Chapter Update

By Bill Hogseth

The Prairie Enthusiasts-Chippewa Savannas Chapter has partnered with Beaver Creek Reserve to monitor threatened and declining bird species that use prairie and savanna habitats in the Lower Chippewa River Region. The project has trained citizen volunteers to conduct field surveys within prairies and savannas throughout the Chippewa Valley.

In 2010, Chippewa Savannas Chapter launched the monitoring project by conducting over 30 individual surveys in southern Dunn County; specifically, the Dunnville Wildlife Area (owned and managed by the DNR) and the Tyrone Property (owned by Xcel Energy). Citizen monitors discovered populations of many rare and declining species including the Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, and lark sparrow. A full report was compiled and delivered to property managers within the DNR and Xcel Energy.

The Lower Chippewa River was recently designated an Important Bird Area in recognition of its outstanding habitat resources for priority bird species. TPE's bird monitoring program fills an important role in identifying the location of priority species to allow strategic habitat management of IBA properties. The Lower Chippewa River area contains 25% of the total acreage of remaining remnant prairies and savannas in Wisconsin, the largest concentration in the state.

Due to last year's success, the monitoring project will be continued.

Several training sessions have taken place to teach volunteers to use their eyes and ears to locate and identify species while they are in the field. Experienced monitors are acting as mentors to assist beginning monitors with survey protocols and bird identification.

Because grassland birds are often hidden on the ground, volunteers are trained to use the unique songs and calls of each as an identification tool. Every bird sings a unique song that can be used to identify them. Volunteers may then use binoculars to visually confirm the bird species. Once identified, volunteers will record the species, where it was found, and what type of habitat it was observed in.

Grassland bird populations, which require prairie and savanna habitats during the nesting season, were once common in Wisconsin. In the last several decades, these birds have experienced dramatic losses. In Wisconsin, breeding bird surveys indicate that, over the course of nearly 50 years, 77% of grassland bird species declined significantly, 23% were stable, and none showed an increase. These losses are due primarily to habitat

alteration and the fragmentation of large grassland landscapes.

This year's project is made possible by generous funding from individual TPE members, Xcel Energy, and the Chippewa Valley Sierra Club.

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

Please check chapter newsletter for announcements.

Member Profile:

George and Carmeen Johnston

This profile first appeared in the Coulee Region Chapter Newsletter and is reprinted with permission.

George Johnston grew up in central Illinois in the heart of the self-proclaimed Prairie State. The reality, of course, is that less than 1/10 of one percent of Illinois' tall grass prairie remains. As a boy, George's personal experience with "prairie" was limited to hunting pheasants among the few prairie plants surviving along a railroad right-of-way. A college field trip to see prairie chickens on a restored prairie clearly illustrated to George what had been lost.



George and Carmeen came to La Crosse in the 1970s when George took a job as a biologist at Dairyland Power. Twenty years later, a magazine article and a public television program helped George rediscover prairies. The article pointed him to The Prairie Enthusiasts and to Prairie Restorations in Minnesota. The outcome was a fifty-acre prairie restoration on a reclaimed ash dumpsite at Dairyland's Genoa power plant. Later, George joined other enthusiasts as a charter member of TPE's Coulee Chapter.

Today, George and Carmeen are engaged in developing prairies on their property on St Mary's Ridge just south of Norwalk. The Johnston's have used prescribed burns to release prairie plants on abandoned pastures and on wooded hillsides. They have also used restorations to incorporate prairie plants into former cropland. The Johnston's efforts have been rewarded with

the reemergence of a range of prairie grasses including prairie drop seed and sideoats grama and quality forbs from downy gentian to wood betony. The Johnstons credit Greg Nessler, another Coulee Chapter charter member and owner of Red Buffalo Prairie Restorations, with providing the professional expertise and muscle power to move their prairie projects forward.

George has been an officer in the local chapter and, with Carmeen, served most recently as members of the Fundraising and Endowment Committee. The Johnstons demonstrate that prairies can inspire a high level of enthusiasm in those committed to the future of prairies and savannahs in the Upper Midwest.

EMPIRE – SAUK CHAPTER

Interns at Mounds View Grassland & Pleasant Valley Conservancy

By Rich Henderson

This summer, student interns will once again be helping on TPE sites managed by the Empire-Sauk Chapter and the Savanna Oak Foundation. This is our 5th season of hosting interns. Karen Bednar, a recent grad from UW-Madison and past intern, will be supervising two interns full time at Mounds View Grassland and other TPE projects in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (located on the Dane and Iowa County line). The interns are Andrew Cory, a senior at UW-Platteville, and Brent Belken, a junior at UW-Madison. On Mondays, Karen's crew will be joined by the Prairie Partner's Intern crew of five students. In addition to Mounds View Grassland, this crew, administered by Madison Audubon, will also be working at Madison Audubon's Goose Pond sanctuary, UW-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve, Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Pleasant Valley Conservancy (a joint project of Savanna Oak Foundation and TPE), and occasionally at TPE's Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie. The Prairie Partner crew members are all from UW-Madison. They include Trent Kuczynski, Nick LaBonte, Emily Ruebl, Ashton Miertz, and Melissa Flores.

Karen Bednar was an enthusiastic intern with TPE last year. She enjoyed it so much that she wanted to come back to lead interns (see article by Karen in *The Prairie Promoter*, Vol. 23, No. 3, page 6). Although the interns work hard at routine land management tasks, we also strive to provide them with a variety of activities and information about the ecology and conservation significance of our preserves.

If you would like to periodically work alongside the interns and share your experience and knowledge with them, contact Rich Henderson (845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Chapter Elections

Nominations are being sought to fill the positions of chapter chair and chapter secretary. These are two-year terms. The elections will be held at the annual meeting of the chapter membership on the evening of Tuesday, July 12 (see chapter picnic for details). We hope you are able to attend the meeting and help us fill these positions.

Chapter Picnic and Annual Meeting of the Membership

Save the Date: 12 July 2011

Mark your calendars for the evening of Tuesday, July 12. The Empire-Sauk Chapter will hold our Annual Potluck Picnic and Meeting of the Membership at Festge County Park in Dane County. Following the meal, and a brief meeting and report of the Chapter's activities, we will take a look at the park's prairie and woodland remnants and the restoration work being done there.

Please don't miss the gathering. It will be a great opportunity to meet & talk with like minded people, and learn what our chapter is working on.

6:00 p.m. - Pot-luck picnic

6:45 p.m. - Brief meeting, review highlights of past year, answer questions, elect chapter president and secretary.

7:15 p.m. - Visit the park's prairie and woodland remnants.

Bring: a dish to pass, eating utensils, and hiking shoes.

Directions: Festge Co Park, Shelter #1, 4894 Scherbel Rd, Cross Plains. The park road is off of Hwy 14, one mile west of Cross Plains.

Burn Season Results

Although good burn days were few and far between this spring, the Empire-Sauk Chapter still completed 70% of our planned burns. As a result of the unusual spring weather, two burns were shut down due to heavy smoke and poor smoke dispersal. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, multiple burn bosses, and mechanized equipment, we still completed 44 burns on 18 properties for a total of 390 acres. This was accomplished by 67 volunteers putting in 913 hours.

Thank you to the many volunteers who help keep our prairie and savanna heritage alive and well. A special thank you to the Brocks, Hendersons, Connors, and Oberles for once again sharing their trucks as pack horses for the pumper units and towing trailers.

Chapter Receives Donated Equipment & Tools

Last fall, a variety of hand tools were donated to the chapter from Gerry Clausen and Ted Cochrane. These are being put to use in the workshop at the Schurch-Thomson barn. This spring, Rider Sporn generously donated a Kestrel weather meter. It came in very handy on our prescribed burns and is much appreciated. Thank you Gerry, Ted, and Rider for supporting our conservation mission.

Summer Help Needed with Land Stewardship

As always, help is needed through the summer to collect seed; cut or pull sweet clover, parsnip, knapweed, and other weeds; tend the seed orchards; and other miscellaneous tasks. This summer, we will be working at Underwood Prairie, Schurch-Thomson Prairie, Shea Prairie, the Ripp Prairies, Kalscheur Savanna, 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 Karen at 608-219-2495 or volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

Are You Mechanically Inclined?

Empire-Sauk Chapter is looking for a volunteer or two to be in charge of the maintenance and repair of field equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, drip torches, water backpack cans, backpack herbicide sprayers, hand tools, brush-cutters, chainsaws, mowers, tractors, a truck, ATVs, propane torches, fire-pump units, and seeders. The workshop at the Schurch-Thomson barn is ready to be used for equipment maintenance and repair. The barn is where most equipment will likely be stored when not in active use, however, maintenance work may certainly be done at other locations. If you wish to help, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Stream Monitoring & Planning at Mounds View

Thanks to the initiative and effort of hydrologist and TPE member, Dave Marshall, the stream that originates in the A to Z unit and passes through the Schurch-Thomson unit of Mounds View Grassland Preserve is being monitored and evaluated for possible restoration and re-establishment of a brook trout

population. Dave helped TPE secure a WI DNR River Planning grant to collect baseline water quality, stream flow, and biotic data, and he is generously directing the project as a volunteer. The work began in July of last year, with help of several volunteers, and will continue through this season. Student intern Gretchen Gantz from the UW-Madison department of Limnology is assisting Dave this spring and summer with the surveys and monitoring work, along with volunteers. Using these data, Gretchen will write a restoration plan for the stream.

The baseline data will help in developing a plan for the stream and surrounding vegetation and will also allow us to document improvements in the water quality and biota over time as the restorations move forward. We have already learned that the temperature of the stream remains very cold throughout the summer months with a daily mean around 55 degrees F, making it a good candidate for brook trout re-introduction.

Thank you, donors

A big thank you goes out to the following individuals that donated items to the TPE Raffle/Auction that was held at the TPE Conference and Banquet, Saturday, February 26, 2011:

Scott & Cary Reich, Eric Preston, Ron Endres, John Exo, Denny Connor, Ann Calhoun, Karen Agee, Susan Kenney & Gerry Clausen, Ted Cochrane, Ann Thering, Rich & Kathy Henderson, Kate Fitzmier (Eagle Optics), Karen Agee, Lois Komai, Earl Muhlbauer, Michler & Brown, LLC, and Pattie Haack.

We once again had an excellent collection of paintings, books, photographs, gift baskets, quilts, vacation accommodations, posters, work days, to name a few. Consistent with history, once again the Raffle/Auction was a huge success and TPE raised \$4,669.00.

GLACIAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER

Chapter News

Wow! A new chapter in a new part of Wisconsin: Most members don't know what to expect, the chapter leadership has never worked together before, and nobody else knows we're here. How do you do it all at once?

The executive committee met less than a month after we became an official chapter. Skype connected us across six counties, but it took a full week to get the chapter leadership connected. Our first topics of discussion included documenting expenses, tracking volunteer hours, distribution of meeting minutes, website presentation, and planning work parties. Many thanks to Jim Rogala for his website support!

It's a good thing that we can borrow off of other organizations to begin making a difference and begin to be seen. We expect to attend one field trip a month offered by other chapters of TPE, but we also want to be noticed within our own region. Several of us are actively participating as members of The Prairie Enthusiasts in programs sponsored by WDNR, SEWISC, UW-Extension, and Chiwaukee Prairie. We had an information booth at a farmer's market in our region over Memorial Day weekend which was fun and may bring in some new members. Membership is built one person at a time. It's a slow process but we're getting started.

This cold, rainy, windy spring has made it difficult to get out into the field; but, we expect all that to change very soon. Our members are reporting Starry False Solomon Seal, Wood Bettony, Shooting Stars, Golden Alexander, False Toadflax, Pussytoes, and Hoary Puccoon!

MANY RIVERS CHAPTER

Many Rivers Wraps Up Its Burn Season

By Scott Seigfreid

Mother Nature dealt us a tough hand to play this spring burn season here in South Central Minnesota. It seemed like every time I looked at a book of matches the sky would open up and dump another inch of rain on us.

Our Chapter had thirteen properties on our burn list this spring and our expectations were high for being relatively new at organizing these events. The group email system seemed to work very well for quick cancellation notices, of which I sent many in the last 6 weeks.



Many Rivers members tending the fire front at the Kvittek Family Farm near Mankato May 6th 2011 (L to R) Linda Engstrom, Cooper Dalluge (Henry's Grandson) Henry Panowitsch, and Jon Kutz. Photo by Scott Seigfreid.

We managed to come close to our goal by taking advantage of opportune weather windows during the work week and whenever possible. Some of our members even used vacation time to come help with the burns which shows their dedication to the cause. Had we burned only on the weekend, not much would have been completed.

We decided early on to prioritize our burn list with remnants first, prairie plantings second and CRP only if we had time at the end. All told, the chapter burned 188 acres on 11 properties and volunteered 375 hours. For as wet as the spring was, I am tickled to be able to tell you that.

I am not sure how one measures success at this job, but I can tell you that there was no loss of life, no injuries and no dwellings or vehicles were consumed by fire. This is a good thing in my eyes. We hope to see the fruits of our efforts later this summer as forbs that haven't seen sunlight in years capitalize on their new lease on life.

One of the highlights of my fire season as the ring leader and organizer of this group was to watch these fires bring out the primal instincts in all of us. Members that would not ordinarily come to a group function will show up for a controlled burn. They end up working much harder than they ever anticipated and enjoy what they are doing and who they are working with. You meet people you have never seen before and leave with new respect and friendships. Fire is a fantastic tool not only in land management but also in the social process of being a Prairie Enthusiast.

Winter burn on May 2, 2011 at Many Rivers members Gary & Jean Rathman's Prairie near Comfrey, MN. (L to R) Jim Lynch, Henry Panowitsch, Mary & Nick Kunz. Photo by Scott Seigfreid



NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

Chapter news can be found at: www.nipes.org

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Chapter News

Prairie Bluff Chapter conducted burns from Blue Mounds to Beloit this spring, including 13 prescribed fires on 100 total acres involving 33 of our members and friends. We likely spent as much time on firebreaks as we did putting fire on the ground at wetlands, woodlands, savanna, prairie and plantings, but the preparation led to another successful (and uneventful) season. We combined the improved firebreaks with some boundary work at Iltis, Vale, Butenhoff and Briggs, where we expect new signs soon.

We were also able to put together crews on weekdays when fair winds and dry weather interrupted an otherwise wet and cool April with conditions within our prescriptions. Burn plans were prepared; four different members were burn bosses; Nick Faessler was chief mechanic; Mike Davis, Dan Gartzke and Tracey Schwalbe completed basic crew training.

Our spring burn at Meinert's Prairie has produced another bump in the plant list after a mid-May inventory with longtime Prairie Enthusiast George Johnson,

John Ochsner again led the burn at Green's Prairie Cemetery, where we joined Bill and Eloise Kuenzi and Paul Lokken of the cemetery association, burning off last year's growth to afford maximum access to the pioneer's graves for the Memorial Day Civil War remembrance. John has perfected the art of backfire, while the crew shuttles metal shields ahead of the fire to protect the headstones.

The burn season was the transition away from brushfires of winter and early spring. Our best workday of that season was at Iltis with Fred Faessler on tractor and the AES volunteers with chainsaws whose help cleared out a large locust clone. Among our many burnpiles at Iltis brome field was the slash of 20 big cedars taken off Muralt Bluff. The cedar logs were hauled off by Charles Ramsayer to his saw mill.

The chapter led four well-attended field trips during the early season, including one at a new site, Ten Eyck's woods, a steep, rich woodland along the Sugar River near Brodhead. Nate Gingerich, Paul Roemer and Fred Faessler promised a showy mix of spring ephemerals after last fall's burn, and their tour drew a mix of young and not-so-young hikers who went down the bluff to see the skunk cabbage, then out to the point overlooking the river, with tour leaders pointing out an understory gallery of seldom-seen forbs in a mostly weed-free ecosystem above an apple orchard.

Shooting stars opened up for a tour at Sulzer Prairie, where Hans and Kathleen again took a wagonload of us back to their family prairie. Touring with

landowners and their families is always interesting since they grew up with these special places. Brothers and sisters told of changes over time, historical events, and shared their stories: a runaway wagon ride down the hill at Ten Eyck, and the tallgrass prairie with their pet names for its unusual rock ledges, wood betony, ferns, and running colonies of prairie willow at Sulzer.

Our Monday crew of Tom Mitchell, Peg Bredeson, Mike Davis, Bill Walz, Russ Whitacre, Ron Schwartzlow, and John Ochsner joined work parties at Lawrence Prairie, Stauffacher Prairie, and Oliver Prairie with crews led by UW-Arboretum's Mike Hansen and DNR's Matt Zine and Jared Urban. We have productive and rewarding partnerships at these and other places in Green, Rock, and Lafayette Counties, putting local volunteers on local natural areas for the routine restoration tasks of weeds, brush, and fire.



Gary Eldred, John Ochsner, and Chuck Bauer (L to R) relax at Hoesley Prairie in Green Co. WI after a Pasque Flower search led by Tom Mitchell and Nick Faessler on April 3, 2011. Photo by Nick Faessler.

PRAIRIE SANDS CHAPTER

No information submitted

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

No information submitted

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

No information submitted

Chapter News

In late May, Bill Ramsden and Doreen Lynch hosted a chapter tour of their native oak savanna and prairie restoration. The results of the chapter's fall 2010 burn were evident in strong spring growth. The group included Barb & Harold Bend, Joan & Andy Ulrich, Valerie Kubal, Adam and Chris Smerud, and Evanne Hunt.

The chapter donated \$100 in native plants for the Hudson Artful Rain Garden Project. The project is a celebration of the St. Croix Watershed and its mission is to inform, inspire, and encourage people to install rain gardens. The project kicks off on June 16. Check the website for details. <http://artfulraingarden.net/>

Kittentail Research at Alexander Oak Savanna

Katherine Chi, a graduate student at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), is doing research at Alexander oak savanna and at the Foster Conservation Area. In 2010, she conducted surveys to study the reproductive ecology of the rare plant species, *Besseyia bullii* (Scrophulariaceae).

Her reading of the occurrence records for this plant in Wisconsin showed it last recorded at Alexander's in 1985. However, with Wayne Huhnke's help, she was able to study several populations on Dick and Joan Alexander's property as well as the Foster Conservation Area.

Katherine returned in May to survey and collect more fruit specimens.



Finalist from TPE 2011 Photo Contest: Twin Spiderwort by Tori Graham, Glacial Prairie Chapter.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people joined TPE in the period March 1, 2011 - May 31, 2011.

Sonia Borg, Marine on Saint Croix, MN
Stephen Brasch, Dousman, WI
Robert Chalsma, Holmen, WI
Andy Chikowski, Blair, WI
Jerry Dahlen, New Glarus, WI
Charles Draper, Mankato, MN
Jennie Elkins, Oconomowoc, WI
Tom Evans, Chicago, IL
John Gourdoux, Genesee Depot, WI
Gordon & Geralyn Grieshaber, Mineral Point, WI
Shalise Keating, Lanesboro, MN
Dag Knudsen, Lake City, MN
Valerie Kubal, Stillwater, MN
John & Mary Kay Lammers, Mukwonago, WI

Nancy McGill, Middleton, WI
Walter Mirk, Watertown, WI
Thomas Neujahr, Madison, WI
Dick Nienow, Mankato, MN
Judy Peters, Bonduel, WI
Maureen Rowe, Fitchburg, WI
Greg Ruskell, Chatfield, MN
Michael Scheder, La Farge, WI
Rebecca Schorr, River Falls, WI
Michael Sheedy, Rochester, MN
Jim Shurts, Madison, WI
Bess Tsaouse, North Mankato, MN
Thomas & Jean Weedman, Mukwonago, WI

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

The following gift memberships were given in the period March 1, 2011 - May 31, 2011.

To:

Dan Roemer
Justin Trewartha

From:

Paul Roemer
MaryTrewartha

THANK YOU, DONORS!

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period March 1, 2011 - May 31, 2011. These gifts above and beyond membership dues are truly generous and appreciated.

\$5000 or more _____

Anonymous, *John Thomson Memorial Fund*

\$1000 - \$5000 _____

Chippewa Valley Group Sierra Club, *Chippewa Savannas Chapter Grasslands Bird Project*
Jeff & Erin Huebschman
Xcel Energy & Northern States Power Co., *Chippewa Savannas Chapter Grasslands Bird Project*

\$500 - \$999 _____

Todd Casanova, *BD Associates Matching Gifts Program*
Jim & Mary Danforth, *in honor of Eric Preston & Kim Kreitinger*
Paul & Carol Jacobsen

Max & Shelley Lagally
Gerd Muehllehner, *in memory of my parents, Kurt & Toni Schlinke*

\$100 - \$499

Charlotte Adelman, *in honor of Dr. Evelyn Pease Tyner*
Chuck Bauer, *in honor of Gary Eldred*
Coleen Burns, *in memory of Rud & Grace Kussmaul*
Doug & Sherry Caves, *Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund*
Jeanne Eloranta, *in memory of Pat Hitchcock*
John & Cate Harrington, *in memory of Emily H. Earley*
Ruth Hartman, *in honor of Scott Seigfreid*

Pamela Heaney
Marci & Jim Hess
Madonna & Murray Hostetter, *Chippewa Savannas Chapter Grasslands Bird Project*
Paul & Carol Jacobsen, *in honor of Calvin DeWitt*
Jack Kussmaul, *in honor of Dan Wallace & Gretel Dentine*
Loren & Caroline Lloyd
Jim & Jo-Ann Lynch
Dorothea McDougall, *in honor of her 5th Birthday*

Michael & Sondra Mihelbergel
Richard & Victoria Oberle
Jackie & Wayne Pauly, *Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund*
Debra Pavick, *in honor of Sheila O'Neill & Jeff Wyse*
Jim & Rose Sime
Michael Vahldieck & Julie Horner, *Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund*
Daniel Wallace, *in memory of Hugh D. Wallace*
Marilyn Workman, *in honor of Tom Mitchell & Jean Blum*

Under \$100

Craig & Jean Anderson, *in honor of Jim MacMahon, teacher*
Donna Antonie
George Barry, *in memory of Kay Barry*
Carol & Bob Benish, *in memory of Eric Reiter*
Laura Brown & Mark Shahan
Margaret & Florian Chollet, *in memory of Dr. John Thomson & Dr. Douglas Thomson*
Kathryn Dejak, *in memory of Steve Hilgenberg*
Joel & Sandy Dunnette
Roald Evensen & Pamela Thurow
Paul Francuch
Richard & Pamela German
Marsha & Mark Gorman
Harvey Halvorsen, *in memory of Dorothy F. Stencel*

John & Rita Hoffmann, *in memory of Mother of Neil O'Shea*
John Huffaker & Charlene Torchia
Marilyn Klinkner
William Kuenzi, *in honor of Gary Felder*
Nick & Mary Kunz
Karsten Lagally, *in memory of my grandfather, Todd Meserow*
David & Mary Murn
Carl Nelson, *in honor of The Leaders & Volunteers*
Laura & Greg Nessler
Louis & Bonnie Pody
Premier Cooperative
David Raney
Dorothy Raney
Scott & Cary Reich, *in memory of Emily Earley*

Ron Reynolds
James & Lora Ring
Mike & Roxanne Schlasner
Thomas & Bonnie Sherman, *in memory of John Thomson*
Susan Slapnick, *in memory of Mother Earth*
Glenn Smith, *in memory of Phyllis Reiner-Smith Drumlin Prairie*
Dani Stolley, *in honor of Borah Creek*
Karen & Mike Syverson, *SD Prairies*
Pat & Glenn Tabor
Glenn Teschendorf & Mary Anne Derheimer
Benjamin & Sarah Timp, *in honor of Mother Earth*
Barbara Voelker
Eleanor Wolf

PRAIRIE LEGACY

The following is a list of enthusiasts—that TPE is aware of—who have committed to making a planned gift to The Prairie Enthusiasts, Inc. If you'd like to become a Prairie Legacy Society member, call or email Development Director, Dani Stolley, today! Dani@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org. 920.420.4104.

Karen Agee & Scott Fulton
Gary Eldred
Wayne Federer & Ginny Gaynor
Gerry Goth
Richard & Kathy Henderson
Jan Ketelle
Jack Kussmaul
Linda Lynch
Mike Miller & Susan Goode

Tom & Jenny Mitchell
James & Rumi O'Brien
Richard & Victoria Oberle
Scott & Cary Reich
Susan Slapnick (*the newest member of our Prairie Legacy Circle of donors*)
Dani Stolley
Jon & Peggy Travers
Beth Whitaker

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Please note your membership renewal date is printed above your address. If you feel the renewal date is in error, help us keep our records accurate by emailing Victoria Oberle, membership coordinator at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org. Thank you.

If your membership has expired, tear off this back page, note changes below, and send in your check today!

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____

The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:
\$100 Shooting Star (recommended level)
\$5,000 Bur Oak Benefactor, \$1,000 Monarch,
\$500 Compass Plant, \$200 Blazing Star, \$65 Pasque Flower,
\$40 Big Blue Stem, \$25 Little Blue Stem, \$15 Student

Please send form and check to:
The Prairie Enthusiasts, P.O. Box 1148, Madison, WI 53701-1148

