



# The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 26, NO. 2 SUMMER 2013

*Grassroots Conservation at Work*

## Bring Back Pollinators

by Deanna Pomije  
(with information gleaned from Eric Mader's presentation )

Eric Mader gave an awe inspiring and well-received keynote presentation on "Can Prairie Conservation Save Pollinators" at our TPE Conference Banquet in March. His presentation was befitting our conference namesake - delving into pollinators' effect on our food production system. Mader is from the Xerces Society, an invertebrate conservation non-profit organization with a focus on pollinator conservation efforts. The Xerces name is derived from what was a beautiful blue butterfly that went extinct due to human activity.

Did you know that 85% of flowering plants rely on pollinators to move their pollen? In agriculture pollinators provide their service to a tune of \$217 billion in the value of crops worldwide. Since the 1960s, the crops requiring pollination has increased over 300%. Many crops such as almonds, melons and apples almost completely rely on pollinators being in their area at just the right time.

*Tricolor bumblebee*  
(*Bombus ternarius*)  
on anise hyssop  
(*Agastache foeniculum*)

*Photo courtesy Eric Mader,  
Xerces Society*



European honeybees are used extensively in agriculture to pollinate high valued crops, especially in California. Many of you have heard of the multiple and complex issues facing honeybee colonies, such as diseases, pests, honey prices and the colony collapse disorder. Mader explained how exorbitantly the cost of renting honeybee colonies has risen.

How can native bees enter into this picture to help alleviate some of these issues affecting honeybees? There are over 4000 species of native bees in North America, adding upwards of \$3 billion to the US economy every year. Mader showed that native bees have many benefits over European bees. Native bees are able to use buzz pollination, collect both pollen and nectar, are active earlier in the growing season and earlier in the day and are active under low temperatures. He cited studies showing native bees can triple the production of cherry tomato production.

*Continued on page 7*

### IN THIS ISSUE

<b>Executive Director's Message</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>President's Message</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>New TPE Communications Coordinator</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>The First Lily</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Propagating Rattlesnake Master</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>TPE Annual Picnic</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Announcements &amp; Chapter News</b>	<b>Pages 7-11</b>
<b>New Members &amp; Donations</b>	<b>Page 11</b>

# Listening to us Grow

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

As I sit here at my new home near Vernon County, WI, I have the pleasure to be nestled around some amazing hill prairies. I sit and work every day listening to the field sparrows, meadowlarks, and bobolinks in the grasslands and it reminds me of the passion we all share for The Prairie Enthusiasts.



It has now been one year since I started as our Executive Director, and I can now reflect on a year's worth of listening that I have been doing. This began with taking the draft goals from TPE's strategic plan out to each chapter, asking for input and feedback from the local level. These visits were invaluable for me as I was able to make connections with chapter leaders and hear what things are most important at the local level. Now that the Board has approved the plan, I have been back out visiting with the chapters again. This time I am listening to hear about each chapter's strengths, issues, and needs, so we may better support each chapter as an organization.

We are starting to address some of the chapters' needs. Our new Communications Coordinator, Katya Leonard will be working to expand our membership program and coordinate our annual appeal, but even more importantly she will be working to provide membership information to the chapters as a staff position. She is picking up from the volunteer work of Victoria Oberle, who has done an amazing job as our Membership Coordinator for the past several years. We can't thank Victoria enough for the excellent job that she has done for TPE. Her work is enabling Katya to take on expanded activities to increase our membership renewal rates, and to communicate with chapters about membership inquiries and questions.

Another area that we are working on is our new Compass Club giving program. The program offers recognition for our members who choose to support us at a higher level. As the mission of TPE is carried out at the local level, a donation to the Compass Club supports the work of each chapter through a direct share of the donation while the remaining portion supports the capacity of The Prairie Enthusiasts as an organization.

Whether is it support for the land we want to protect or manage, the outreach we do to our communities, or the educational opportunities such as our field trips, we are listening to what all our chapters are doing. We are also seeing some amazing results that our chapters are having as well as finding ways to share these success stories and begin a dialogue between chapters in order to facilitate a sharing of information.

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# President's Message

By Jack Kussmaul

Reading my e-mail two days ago I found that the deadline for articles in The Prairie Promoter was May 18. I was in a bit of a panic. The deadline had somehow taken me by surprise. I had not started a message and had no ideas for one.

That all changed last night when I began reading *Postive Participation with Nature: Ecological Restoration in Wisconsin*. The author is Mark Leach, representative for Chippawa Savnnas chapter on the TPE Board. Let me say that I like the look and feel of a traditional book. I had never read an e-book, a book on a computer disc not having the same feel as what I grew up believing a book to be. I approached Mark's book with some trepidation. Any doubts quickly dissolved as I became totally absorbed in the content.

There are color pictures in addition to the text and it is interactive. This means that you can click on some of the pictures and listen to the person featured talk about his or her experiences.

The book is not a how-to manual of natural restoration but does explain a lot about the process. The book spends a great deal of time discussing the Pleasant Valley Preserve, created by Tom and Kathie Brock in Dane County, Wisconsin, now one of TPE's flagship properties. It is an inspiring story of what can be done with sufficient dedication. There are other stories like this one. I must confess that at the time of writing this I have only gotten through the first 45 pages of the 130 in the book.

I did jump ahead, however, to read the chapter about TPE. I found it a very insightful discussion of the history of the organization and the growing pains experienced in going from a very small, local organization to a tri-state land trust.

I was quite taken by the book and am looking forward to reading the chapters I have not yet gotten to. I believe that the book would be a great read for any of our members and recommend it highly. To order the book, go to [www.economoebooks.com](http://www.economoebooks.com) or purchase it at the annual picnic on July 21 (see article on page 6).

## TPE Hires Communications Coordinator



We're pleased to announce that Katya Leonard has joined The Prairie Enthusiasts staff as Communications Coordinator. Her responsibilities focus on managing TPE's Membership Program and coordinating communications between TPE's eleven chapters as well as with the general public. Katya remarked, "I'm deeply honored to be part of

such a dynamic environmental organization whose work and efforts are geared towards increasing biodiversity and restoration of native habitats. I look forward to getting to interact and work with such an enthusiastic, dedicated group of volunteers and members."

Katya has a solid background in communication and outreach including written publications, press releases, environmental curriculum, grants, and reports and has significant experience in the nonprofit sector. As an undergraduate, she double-majored in Horticulture as well as Reclamation, Environment, and Conservation as they both supported her passion for working with plants and her strong beliefs in conservation of our resources and ecological diversity. Currently, she is pursuing a graduate degree in creative writing. With her schooling, she intends to continue to develop her skills in using writing as a communication tool to promote environmental sustainability and literacy.

Katya is native to the Driftless region and currently resides in Gays Mills, WI, with her daughter, Anya. Please join us in welcoming Katya to The Prairie Enthusiasts!

## New Compass Club Program

In years past we have relied largely on memberships and year end appeals as our main ways to support TPE. Now, we have combined these options into one program for those who are able to pool their gifts and increase their overall yearly support. The Compass Club will recognize those who give \$1,000+ on an annual basis and will offer flexibility in how people can donate and be recognized for their gifts.

Once you are enrolled in the Compass Club program, you decide how and when you would like contribute to The Prairie Enthusiasts for the upcoming year, and we'll work with you to honor your requests. Donations can be spread throughout the year, paid in regular installments, or made in a lump sum at year's end or your membership renewal date.

Another important part of the Compass Club is to recognize the participants through TPE events and publications, highlighting the unique facets that each

participant brings to The Prairie Enthusiasts. In addition, TPE will host a special event for members of the Compass Club. You can elect to not participate in any or all of the recognition and even remain anonymous.

Compass Club contributions will continue to support the work of TPE and its chapters by sharing the donation in the same way as regular memberships. Your donations enable us to carry out our mission to ensure the perpetuation of prairies, oak savannas, and associated ecosystems through land protection & management, education, and outreach.

For more information about the program, please visit our website at [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org) for more information on the Compass Club program, and to download a flyer about the program. You can also contact Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director at (815) 541-3494 or [ExecutiveDirector@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org](mailto:ExecutiveDirector@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org).

# The First Prairie Lily

By Rich Henderson

Last June, the interns at TPE's Mounds View Grassland found a lone prairie (wood) lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) in bloom. This was likely the first prairie lily seen at this site in more than 100 years. It is also a sign of hope for the future of our prairie heritage.

Unlike some of the more resilient native prairie and savanna plants of southern Wisconsin, prairie lilies seem to be readily eliminated by continuous livestock grazing. As it happened, most of our surviving remnant prairies that managed to escape the plow in Wisconsin did not manage to escape the cow. Consequently, the prairie lily is now rather uncommon in the wild, at least in the former prairie and savanna areas of western and southern Wisconsin.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the best remaining prairies to be found in Wisconsin were surveyed by J.T. Curtis and his students (see *The Vegetation of Wisconsin* [1959]). They found prairie lily on all prairie types from wet to dry, but only on 4-10% of the sites they surveyed within those prairie types. In pre-settlement times, I suspect the occurrence would have been 100% at those same locations. However, by the mid 1900s the majority of even our most intact remaining prairies had been exposed to prolonged livestock grazing at some point and likely lost their lily populations.

On the Curtis sites where lilies were present, the surveyors found on average 200 lilies per acre on dry-mesic sites and 275 per acre on mesic sites. I suspect this was far below the average of what was on those sites 100 years earlier. High quality prairie remnants with little or no apparent grazing history, like TPE's Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie and other rare patches, have average lily densities closer to 5,200 plants/acre. Data collected at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie in 1989 revealed 5,700 plants/acre in areas of the preserve where lilies were present. I can think of no reason why most of the original prairies of southwest Wisconsin, at least the dry-mesic and mesic ones, did not also have densities of prairie lilies approaching these levels.

Where did the lone lily at Mounds View Grassland come from? The answer is seed planted by volunteers eight years earlier. For many years, every square yard of the remnant sod at the Mounds View Grassland preserve was scoured by botanists conducting surveys and small armies of volunteers controlling weeds and removing trees and brush. Not one lily was found until now. We made a conscious effort to bring the species back to the preserve in accordance with the site's management plan to reintroduce lost species. We were confident that prairie lilies had been present at one time as there is a healthy population on a small, high quality remnant only 3 miles away. Using Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie and the nearby remnant as models, the goal for Mounds View was to have thousands of lilies per acre.

Now, how does one get enough prairie lily seed to plant 500 acres to end up with an average of 1 plant per square yard, especially in light of the species rarity in southwest Wisconsin? The few surviving remnant populations are

too small to provide the needed seed. Our solution was to establish seed orchards to mass produce seeds from tended nursery plants. Therefore, in 2004, volunteers collected starter seed from four native populations in the region. Most of this seed went into the talented hands of Muffy Barrett who produced seedlings that we planted into production beds. However, some of the seed was also placed into plantings done in the fall of 2004 at Mounds View Grassland. One of those areas was the spot (former cropland) where the interns found a blooming plant in 2012. It took eight growing seasons for this first flower to appear from that seed. Obviously bringing lilies back is going to take some time.

Thanks to the constant weeding and tending of the lily beds by dedicated volunteers such as Rumi O'Brien, Jan Ketelle, Todd Casanova, Kathy Henderson and others (also interns on occasion), we are starting to have success. After four years, most of the tended lilies began to produce seed. A few actually bloomed in their third year but did not set seed. We now hand-pollinate to maximize seed set. In 2008, we produced only 0.1 ounce of seed. But this has steadily increased each year to where we produced 1.6 ounces in 2012. Each year the lilies get bigger and produce more seed pods per plant. In the past couple years, we have also planted many more seedlings in the seed orchards and are waiting patiently for those plants to come on line. We hope to be producing a half pound or more of seed per year in the near future. The first lilies planted in the seed orchard are now large enough that we may start dividing their bulbs to accelerate the process. Lily seeds from the seed orchard are being planted at Mounds View Grassland (this includes Schurch-Thomson Prairie, Shea Prairie and A to Z), Erbe Grassland and other TPE preserves.

I may not live to see what 500 acres of prairie lilies (2.5 million plants) look like at Mounds View, but I'm confident that my children will see it. Who knows, someday there may actually be answers to questions such as what did a thousand acres of prairie lily look like?

P.S. We have also started mass production of Michigan or Turk's-cap lily (*Lilium michiganense*) seed in the orchards, producing 2.5 ounces of local source seed last year, and we anticipate doubling that amount in 2013. This seed is being planted into the wet and wet-mesic areas of Mounds View Grassland and other TPE projects in the area.



*Lilium philadelphicum*  
photo by Richard Oberle

# Propagating Remnant Populations of Rattlesnake Master

by Jim Nelson

Could a poet be enraptured with a wild flower called Rattlesnake Master?

Could a story teller be interested in the “rescue” of these novel shaped remnants from era of expansive Minnesota prairies?

This plant’s name sounds more like a rock band. *Eryngium yuccifolium* is a long lived, low maintenance native perennial that seems to do well on a wide range of wet or dry soils. This plant is prized for its striking shape that adds texture to plantings. Larger plants can be a unique focal point in your garden. The plant is a host for some butterflies such as the Swallowtail.

Native Rattlesnake Master are best known for the yucca-like basal leaves that are bluish green and can be up to 3 feet long and 1 1/2 inches wide. The leaves are thick and parallel veined and have soft prickles spaced far apart along the edges. The leaf bases clasp the single, erect stem.

Flower heads are at the tip of the stem. Each of nearly spherical whitish flower head is from 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter and is made up of many small flowers. Whitish bracts stick out sharply from the flowers, which gives the flower head a rough, prickly feel and appearance. The heads have a honey-like odor and are in bloom primarily in July and August.

This plant was plentiful in the historic prairie of Minnesota. Interestingly the most northern natural occurrence was nearby our family farm in Dakota County. This population was noted in the 1994 County Biological Survey. The survey documented this small population (about 50 mature plants) scattered on three private properties but were imperiled by agriculture activities and invasive plants.

A few years ago we engaged the nearby owners, mapped the locations of plants and with permission gathered seeds. Preparing and propagating the seeds was quite simple. Separate the seeds from chaff with small screens, place them in damp sand in the refrigerator for about 30-60 days. In the spring plant them in shallow seed trays. Water sparingly but continuously. By late summer they were ready to be transplanted. We had a very high success rate. Like many native plants, you don’t have tall strong specimens until the second and third years.

We gathered, propagated and planted for couple of years and distributed them widely on our 28-acre planting to ensure their survival. Later we supplied a local native plant nursery (Kinnikinnic Native Plants, River Falls, WI) with our seeds and were content for them to raise “our plants”. This freed us from the nursery tasks and allowed us to spend more time planting and pursuing other imperiled plant species.

This “species of special concern” has now has a broader and more secure presence in our area than it did 30 years ago. There are more than 300 plants on our restored prairie remnant. Newly propagated plants have also been returned to neighboring properties and a goodly number have been sold by the plant nursery.

Summer 2013



*Rattlesnake Master (Eryngium yuccifolium)*  
Photo by Jim Nelson

Many vital conservation activities can be performed by amateurs on private lands with only a modest amount of training. The key ingredients are curiosity, willingness to be proactive and collaborate and always a bit of patience.

Rattlesnake Master is an interesting plant that suffers with a poor name that suggests a mythic antidote for a rattlesnake bite. We should give it more fitting name that celebrates its striking shape in our grassland heritage, e.g. prairie pride.

Kartesz, J.T., *The Biota of North America Program (BONAP)*. 2011. North American Plant Atlas. Chapel Hill, N.C.



*Showy Ladyslippers*  
2013 Photo Contest Finalist by Randy Schindle

# TPE Annual Meeting and Picnic

by Evanne Hunt

## Save the Date - July 21, 2013

The St. Croix Valley chapter is excited to host TPE's annual picnic, board meeting, and general membership meeting this year. Journey to west central Wisconsin and the lovely city of River Falls. The Kinnikinnick River, one of the best trout streams in Wisconsin, carves through this area amidst scenic bluff lands, woodlands, farmland, and some very special oak savannas and prairies.

### Destination: Glen Park, River Falls, WI

Glen Park is our home base for meetings and lunch. This 40-acre city park has large shade trees, a swinging bridge across the Kinnikinnick River, trails, playground, ball fields and a small swimming pool. We'll have a picnic shelter with open sides and picnic tables. There are restrooms at the park. ([www.rfcity.org/parks\\_parks.asp](http://www.rfcity.org/parks_parks.asp))

### Schedule:

- 8:00 Morning Field Trip  
(choice of 2-hr or 3-hr trip)
- 10:00 Board Meeting
- 12:00 Potluck Lunch – St. Croix Valley chapter will provide brats, hamburgers, condiments, beverages, plates, silverware and paper products. Please bring a dish to pass.
- 1:00 General Membership Meeting
- 2:00 Afternoon Field Trip
- 4:00 Field Trip Ends

### What to bring and wear:

Please bring a lawn chair (some picnic tables are available), potluck food item, water bottle, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent. Dress for the weather. If you're hiking, wear hiking shoes and preferably long pants.

### Directions to Glen Park:

Glen Falls is located at 355 West Park Street, River Falls, WI.

From Interstate 94, three miles east of the Minnesota border, take Exit 3 (Highway 35) south about 6.5 to 7 miles to River Falls. Exit onto North Main Street and drive south through River Falls for about 2 miles. Watch for the stoplight on East Cascade Street. Continue south two blocks beyond Cascade and turn right onto West Park Street. Go 2 blocks to the park. Make your way to the shelter on the east side of the park.

## Morning Field Trip – Foster's Hill

Come explore Foster's Hill Prairie along the Kinnikinnick River. This prairie savanna complex includes an old cemetery and offers great diversity of habitat and plant species. Dry prairies on the steep slopes give way to oak savanna and to mesic prairie. In this continuum, plant species such as silky prairie clover and hairy grama grass thrive within a short walk of wild geranium and angelica.

Several state-listed threatened, endangered, or species of special concern have been reported on the site. The core of this site is the 35-acre Foster Conservation Area, owned by the City of River Falls. Ten small private prairie remnants extend along the river from there. TPE has managed most of this as a contiguous unit since 1999.

We'll meet at Glen Park and caravan to the site. Plan on hiking one to two miles on uneven terrain, including one descent. Agile hikers will want to scramble some of the slopes. Check the TPE website for updates. We're hoping to arrange for a canoe ferry across the river so we can end right at Glen Park. We're also looking at an option for a shorter trip to visit only the cemetery.

## Afternoon Tour - Alexander Prairie & Savanna

The hardcore will want to stay for the afternoon field trip to the 35-acre Alexander Prairie and Savanna. This is a privately owned site that TPE has been managing for several years. Through brush cutting and burns, we've let enough light into the savanna for species such as kittentails and giant yellow hyssop to flourish. On steep slopes, classic dry prairie species such as prairie larkspur and needlegrass thrive. Further down the slopes, mesic prairie species take over. We'll hike about 1.5 miles, including going up and down a hillside. Directions will be handed out at the picnic.

## Coming Early?

Check out Kinni Creek Lodge ([www.kinnicreek.com](http://www.kinnicreek.com)) for fly fishing, kayaking, or lodging. The Chamber of Commerce provides tourist information at [www.rfchamber.com](http://www.rfchamber.com). There are additional hotels in Hudson, WI on I94.



Map of downtown River Falls to Glen Park

## Bring Back Pollinators (continued from page 1)

I enjoyed Mader's example of the Alkali ground-nesting bees from the Dakotas. These bees have become so important to the alfalfa growers in the area that they fence off and protect the bare ground where they nest. However, native bees are sadly also on the decline.

The more I learn, the more I realize that there never seems to be a saving grace clear answer to any of our complex problems we face. The best any one of us can do is our small part in helping towards the solution, while not making the problem any worse than it is. As we go about our business in restoring and preserving prairie habitat it is always a good thing to consider the results of our actions. Burning and herbicide use can be acutely beneficial in our habitat work, but let us not forget the potential negative impact we are having on the other living creatures in the prairie. Mader suggested that by only burning a third of our prairie at a time we can help ensure that the subset of native insects and other creatures that happen to be sensitive to fire are able to maintain their populations. It always amazes me how rarely I encounter snakes in my everyday life, but when I visit an aged prairie, snakes routinely surprise me underfoot. It is a precious thing what our prairies hold, and I believe most of us as Prairie Enthusiasts do our best and tread lightly.

Maintaining natural areas near crop fields, Mader demonstrated, can have a direct influence on pollination. This helps to ensure the native bees survival in providing a food source before and after the crops have bloomed and matured. In the absence of honeybees, it has been shown that farming is more profitable with 30% of the land maintained in natural areas. Maintaining natural areas in an agricultural

setting can also provide habitat for other beneficial insects that in turn provide biological control of crop pests, saving on pesticide use. Mader cited 24 studies showing landscape complexity enhanced natural beneficial insect populations in 74% of the cases. Examples of conservation practices that utilize native plants were shown such as filter strips, hedgerows, field border, living snow fences and grazing. He mentioned that a filter strip only 1-2 yards wide can reduce *E. coli* contamination by 99%. Anywhere we can improve diversity is always a win/win situation.

The speech ended with some very thought-provoking take home messages. Mader presented a 1950 Soil Conservation Service publication promoting conservation practices whose focus was to increase on-farm pollinators by protecting the land from grazing and burning. This is not a new message, but it's importance is worth reiterating with each new generation. He shared another historical note given in 1938 by entomologist, Dr. Edith Patch, who predicted that by the year 2000, "Entomologists will be as much or more concerned with the conservation and preservation of beneficial insect life as they are now with the destruction of injurious insects." I look at the Xerces Society as one of our most crucial partners in promoting prairie conservation. It's a mutually beneficial relationship just as native bees are to pollinating our native prairie flowers. The Xerces Society website ([www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)) has a number of great publications from aiding in pollinator habitat development to building pollinator homes in your own backyard. They also have a national pollinator habitat registry with their 'Bring Back Pollinator Campaign'.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Prairie Days September 7 & 8

By *Evanne Hunt*

The TPE Education & Outreach Committee is planning the first annual "Prairie Days" for September 7 and/or 8, depending on the chapter.

Prairie Days is being organized by TPE members across three states in 11 chapters for their local communities. The event is both regional and local all at once. While each chapter will create their own, unique, schedule and programming, the message will be the same: To share our passion of native prairies and savannas, while also demonstrating their ecological value within our region.

Jean Clark (Prairie Sands) said planning Prairie Days had an, "immediate energizing effect ... and then this amazing synergistic synchronicity of attracting like-minded folks focusing in on a specific event. It feels sort of like an explosion of enthusiasm!"

Prairie Days is an opportunity for TPE members to share the results of our effort and raise awareness of the

beauty and vulnerability of native prairies and savannas in the Upper Midwest.

Kathy Stahl (Chippewa Savanna chapter) says, "We plan a work day at Duscham Prairie with stations the participants can rotate through. The stations will include an artist's station where they can do some sketching, a loppers station where people can remove unwanted vegetation with an explanation of why, a station for plant identification, etc."

As of this newsletter deadline, Chippewa Savanna, Coulee, Empire-Sauk, Northwest Illinois, Prairie Bluff, Prairie Sands, Southwest, and St. Croix chapters have events planned. Check with your chapter leaders to see how you can help.

"On Prairie Day we want to show our community the magic of the prairie. We hope that by experiencing a prairie, people will fall in love with it and be moved to help preserve and protect these special places," Ginny Gaynor (St. Croix Valley).

Contact Evanne Hunt, Mary Goehring or Dana Bolwerk with questions.

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

**A Late and Short Burn Season**

*by Rich Henderson*

A very late arriving spring made for another condensed burn season. Our normal 5-6 week season, peaking in early to mid April, was telescoped down into a 3-week period in mid to late April. Even so, the Empire-Sauk Chapter still managed to get done most of what we had planned to burn; we got to 95% of the sites, burning 87% of the units and 70% of the acres scheduled. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, multiple burn bosses, and mechanized equipment, we completed 60 burns on 21 properties for a total of 524 acres. This was accomplished by 67 volunteers putting in 939 hours.

Thank you to all the volunteers helping keep our prairie, savanna, and oak woodland heritage alive and well. Special thanks to the Brocks, the Hendersons, Denny Connor, Nate Fayram, and Richard Oberle for generously letting their trucks be used for pumper units, for towing trailers, or both.

**Summer Interns**

This summer, student interns will once again be helping on TPE sites managed by the Empire-Sauk Chapter and the Savanna Oak Foundation for 12 weeks starting May 28. This is our 7th season of hosting interns. We will have one crew splitting their time among the Schurch-Thomson, Shea and A to Z units of the Mounds View Grassland Preserve, Pleasant Valley Conservancy, Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, Erbe Grassland, Powell Prairie, Kalscheur Savanna, and possibly a couple other locations. Support for the interns comes from the Savanna Oak Foundation (Tom & Kathie Brock), TPE land management endowments, donations, and agricultural rental and CRP payments on our larger preserves.

Activities will be headquartered out of the Schurch-Thomson Barn and directed by Clinton Nienhaus from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (with assistance from the Mounds View Grassland Land Management Committee). Clinton was an enthusiastic intern at Mounds View last summer, and is most pleased to be coming back as a restoration ecologist and intern supervisor. The crew's work out of Pleasant Valley Conservancy will be directed by Tom & Kathie Brock and Amanda Budyak.

There will be five interns this summer. They are Kyle Alvis, a biology grad from UW-Platteville, Austin Pethan, a senior in wildlife ecology at UW-Madison, Jocelyn Tschaikovsky, a biology & environmental studies grad from UW-Madison, Laura Brusson, a senior in biology & environmental studies at UW-Madison, and Kurt Hacker, a wildlife ecology grad from UW-Stevens Point (and a hardworking intern with us last year).

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

**Seed Collection Bag Project**

*by Karen Agee*

Prairie Phlox seed is very small and difficult to collect. Several years ago Eric Goplin devised a bag to put over the plant to capture the seed as it ripens and falls from the plant. He enlisted Rumi O'Brien to make a bunch of bags which have been in use for several seasons. The request went out this winter for another 50 bags to use in the seed orchard at Schurch-Thomson Prairie.

The bags are made from mosquito netting. The mesh is fine enough to capture the seed, and still allows sunlight, rain and airflow to reach the plant. A bag is placed over a phlox plant after the flowers have been pollinated and tied around the stem. The plant is then tilted over, and the sealed end of the bag pinned to the ground. If all goes as planned, the seeds fall into the bag as they ripen.

On a beautiful spring day in early April, Marcia Finger, Irene Wren, Susan Agee, Rumi O'Brien, Karen Agee and Jackie Pauly gathered in Marcia's sewing studio to make the requested seed collection bags. The 50 additional bags were more than we could produce in one afternoon, so Jackie and Marcia completed the order from their respective homes over the following several weeks.

"This will greatly enhance our ability to collect hard-to-get and expensive Prairie Phlox seed, something that is integral to our restoration efforts," said Eric Preston, the chapter seed coordinator. The chapter board greatly appreciates the team's work and the resulting seed bags!



*Prairie Phlox (Phlox pilosa). Photo courtesy Rich Henderson  
Eric Preston & the product; seed bag; Rumi O'Brien and Marcia Finger  
at the work party. Photos by Karen Agee*



## Chapter Picnic & Meeting July 17 at Schurch-Thomson Prairie

Mark your calendars for the evening of July 17 (Wednesday). The Empire-Sauk Chapter will be holding its Annual Potluck Picnic and Meeting of the Membership at the Schurch-Thomson Prairie (Mounds View Grassland) headquarters located 5 miles south of Blue Mounds. Attending the gather will be guests from the St Croix Valley and Chippewa Savanna chapters of TPE, who will be down this way touring prairies in southern WI for a few days.

Following the meal there will be a brief meeting with a report of the Chapter's activities and elections for chapter chair and chapter secretary. Nominations are being sought to fill these positions for two-year terms.

Following the meeting, there will be opportunities to hike various parts of the preserve's 570 acres of remnants and restorations of prairie, wetlands, and cold water streams. This is a great landscape for a full suite of grassland birds and rare prairie-restricted insects, such as the regal fritillary butterfly. Bird activity will have dropped off by mid-July, but the regals will still be about, although evening may not be the best time to find them.

Please don't miss the gathering. It will be a great opportunity to talk with like-minded people, learn about chapter projects, and see one of TPE's flagship preserves.

**Date:** July 17 (Wednesday evening)

6:00 - Pot-luck picnic

6:45 - Brief meeting, highlights of past year, answer questions, chapter elections.

7:15 - Hike the preserve.

**Bring:** A dish to pass (including enough for our visiting guests), eating utensils, and hiking shoes.

**Directions:** From the intersection of US Hwy 18-151 and County F (south of Blue Mounds in western Dane County), take F approximately 5 miles south. Turn right onto Reilly Drive, and proceed to parking lot and kiosks at the end of the road (past the barn). (Note: A half mile down F from 18-151, pay close attention to the road signs, for F turns to the right & the straight ahead road is County Z. Stay on F.

## NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

by John Day

After last year's drought conditions, the spring of 2013 was cold and wet. Seemingly, winter would be unending. Even now, trees and bushes have not yet become fully leafed. Only within the last two weeks have Bloodroot, Dutchman's Breeches and a few other flowers begun to appear along the side of roads on wooded areas.

In spite of the cool weather and rain, the Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPE) conducted thirteen prairie burns. We're in the process of formulating our schedule for autumn burns. Even now, those prairies burned have begun to turn green as new plants spring to life.

Summer 2013

NIPE is looking at the possibility of acquiring a large parcel of existing prairie that is within the boundaries of the former U.S. Army Depot at Savanna, Illinois, now known as Lost Mound. We have been paying a small fee for the privilege of picking seed on this site for a number of years. At present we're exploring our options with regard this land acquisition. All of us at NIPE believe that the purchase of this property falls within the objectives of our mission.

On June 22, 2013 NIPE will be holding its annual opening meeting at Hanley – Savanna, one of our premiere properties. We will also be observing NIPE's twentieth anniversary. There will be prairie tours, and other festivities

Please let us know if you would like to join us on June 22nd. We can be contacted at [nipe7@yahoo.com](mailto:nipe7@yahoo.com).

## PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

by Tom Mitchell

Another unusual spring burn season has come to an end for Prairie Bluff Chapter. Last year all our prescribed fires were done in March. This year we used snow banks for firebreaks in early April! Rain and snow halted all activities mid-month, but we managed to get in 10 burns on 101 acres of prairie, savanna, oak woodlands and plantings.

We burned off 20 acres of Skinner Prairie, a historic site north of Monroe where the lead diggings date from the late 1820s. We put fire on the ground for the sixth consecutive spring at Iltis Savanna, where our burn regime has drastically reduced the garlic mustard population.

And we worked with the Green's Prairie Cemetery Association to burn around the headstones in preparation for another Memorial Day celebration of the cemetery's war veterans. Our volunteer steward there, David Green, has published a splendid book of genealogical research of all 52 families with ancestors buried in the settlers' graveyard. He also discovered a third veteran of the War of 1812 who is interred at GPC, Robert Peebles, and obtained a new headstone from the U.S. Veteran's Administration.

Our man in Lafayette County, Steve Hubner, is working with Mark Leach to publish an e-book about Dower Prairie, a gem that Steve discovered, protected, and has managed (with his family) for many years. The book includes a narrative of how he found a few prairie plants in a pasture while hunting, contacted the land-owner to fence off a few acres, and began to burn the patch to see what would happen. The result is one of southern Wisconsin's richest, most colorful remnant prairies, which Steve has documented with photos taken in all seasons.

Bill Walz, a Prairie Bluffer from Rock County, has been named Volunteer Steward of the Year for 2012 by the State Natural Areas (SNA) program. Bill volunteers at Kessler Railroad Prairie and the Rock River Prairie under an initiative by DNR's Jared Urban to find local stewardship for natural areas. Bill has also been Steward of the Year at Nygren Wetlands, a Natural Lands Institute (NLI) project near Rockton, Illinois.

At Magnolia Bluff steward Kevin Kawula has counted 533 plants in his third annual Kitten's Tail Survey at this State Natural Area and Rock County Park. On a May tour with Don Waller, the John T. Curtis Professor of Botany at UW-Madison, the challenges of protecting a state-threatened plant in a popular county park were evident as boys in tuxedos and girls in prom dresses promenaded through the picnic area near the Kitten's Tail population.



*Professor Don Waller (right) and a student photograph Kitten's Tails at Magnolia Bluff.*

*Photo courtesy Tom Mitchell*

This spring forb, called "a very special, presumably post-glacially evolved, endemic on or near the moraines and outwashes of the Wisconsin ice advances" by Cochrane & Iltis, occurs only in seven Midwestern states, where it is either endangered, threatened, or extirpated. Chapter president Chris Roberts and octogenarian Don Moore also regularly volunteer with Kevin at Magnolia Bluff.

## ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER

*by Evanne Hunt*

### Chapter Secretary Needed

Thank you to Jeannie Kant for serving as chapter secretary for the past few years! She did a wonderful job keeping us on schedule and focused. Jeannie will be hard to replace, but we need to do so.

The secretary's duties are to 1) keep the minutes of all meetings, 2) see that all notices are dully given, 3) be custodian of the chapter's records, and 4) in general perform all the duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the chapter chair.

If you are interested, please contact Evanne at [eahunt@presenter.com](mailto:eahunt@presenter.com) or 715-381-1291.

### Field Trip to Standing Cedars

**Title of Tour:** The subtle and the obvious: Standing Cedars Comparative Plantings (Polk Co., WI)

**Date:** Thursday, July 18 at 6:00 pm

**Question:** What happens when you plant identical seed mixes at different times of the year with different site prep?

**Answer:** They grow into different types of prairies. Some differences are subtle, some are obvious. Come see both.

**Difficulty:** Easy; trail is flat and well maintained.

**Leader Contact Info:** Shawn Schottler and Troy Meacham. [schottler@smm.org](mailto:schottler@smm.org), 651-433-5953

### Volunteers Needed for TPE Annual Picnic

Our chapter is hosting the 2013 TPE All-Chapter Picnic and Annual Meeting (see article). We're looking for volunteers from our chapter to assist at the event. The following help is needed:

11:00-12:00 one more person needed to grill;

11:00-12:00 two people to set up food and potluck items

1:00-1:30 two people to clean-up after lunch.

If you can help, please contact Ginny Gaynor at 715 246-2746, [wayneandgin@frontiernet.net](mailto:wayneandgin@frontiernet.net).

## SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

*by Linda Lynch*

### Chapter Land Acquisition Efforts

The Southwest Wisconsin Chapter has acquired two properties in Grant County. First, an additional 43 acres has been added to the existing Borah Creek Prairie. This acquisition will provide a buffer for the current Borah Creek Prairie's prairie habitat, provide additional habitat for associated wildlife, and provide for possible expansion of prairie bush clover habitat. Borah Creek SNA contains the third largest prairie bush clover population and the largest amount of existing and potential prairie bush clover habitat in Wisconsin. Protection of the Borah Creek Prairie is a specific Priority 2 Task of the federal Prairie Bush Clover Recovery Plan and the acquisition of buffer land is an important part of this protection. This acquisition was completed through grants from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund and USFWS Section 6 bush clover protection monies.

The Borah Creek property is within the Fennimore Area Prairie Project (FAPP). The FAPP is predominantly an open grassland and agricultural landscape approximately 2,100 acres in size and is within the Grant and Rattlesnake Rivers and the Southwest Savanna eco-region. It is identified as an area of statewide and regional conservation significance through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Land Legacy Report and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

The second property in Grant County is the Feist Prairie. Feist Prairie is a small roadside remnant (~ 3 acres) located in the upper reaches of the Platte River Watershed. Historically, the surrounding landscape, located near the largely treeless Military Ridge and Boice Prairies but within the rugged dissected valleys of the Platte River drainage, was classic Oak Savanna.

Feist Prairie is a prime example of the region's pre-urosettlement prairie/savanna natural community. It retains a large number of native plant species as well as rare insects such as the prairie beetle, *Chauliognathus pensylvanicus*, and the robber fly, *Promachus vertebratus*.

The site is close to other TPE properties with significant populations of native species - Bush Clover Prairie, Borah Creek SNA and Eldred Prairie SNA. Seeds collected from these remnants are important to preserving local genotypes. Seed from the rare *Echinacea pallid* sourced from Bush Clover Prairie has been established at Feist in an effort to preserve the genetics of this imperiled species. Feist Prairie was acquired using Southwest Wisconsin Chapter funds and will hopefully be accepted as match for the Sylvan Road Conservation Area project.

## SW Wisconsin Chapter Seeking Birders

The SW Wisconsin Chapter is seeking volunteers to help with a bird survey at the Sylvan Road Conservation Area. Over the years, information has been gathered about plant species that exist on the property, but little data is available about the bird species present. The Sylvan Road property lies within the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area, an area that stands out for its exceptional populations of grassland birds. Information on species present, especially for those species of concern, will be valuable in refining our land management plan as well as seeking funding assistance for acquisition. Interested birders should contact Linda Lynch at 608-924-1637.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period March 13 – May 18, 2013

Dennis & Kathleen Blaser, Brodhead, WI	Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin, Madison, WI	Laurie Polacek, Kenosha, WI
Patti Drager, Neshkoro, WI		Mary & Tom Rondeau, Blue River, WI
Eddie & Cheryl Goplin, Blue Mounds, WI	Andy Leith, Weyauwega, WI	Jane Schley, Eau Claire, WI
Daria Hutchinson, Eau Claire, WI	Lisa Luetmer, Rochester, MN	Steven Querin-Schultz, Cottage Grove, WI
Peter Hovda, Grand Meadow, MN	Howard & Lynne Markus, Woodbury, MN	Beverly Stelljes, Fall Creek, WI
Boyd Kramer, Mapleton, MN	Barbara McCabe, Middleton, WI	

## GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

<b>To:</b> Claire Bender, Rochester, MN	<b>From:</b> Suzanne Ramthun
Gary Felder, Monroe, WI	Nick & Linda Faessler
Noah Haskins, Elizabeth, IL	NIPE Chapter

## THANK YOU DONORS

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period March 13 – May 18, 2013. These gifts above and beyond membership dues and the annual appeal are truly generous and appreciated.

### \$1000 or more

Kimberly Kreitinger & Eric Preston	Scott Fulton & Karen Agee	Peggy & Jon Traver ( <i>for Sylvan Road</i> )
Michler and Brown, LLC (Willis Brown)	( <i>From the Agilent Technologies Foundation</i> )	Jeff Ralston ( <i>for Kalscheur Savanna bridge</i> )
Patrick Handrick ( <i>for Kalscheur Savanna bridge</i> )		

### \$500 - \$999

Rural Advantage (Fairmont, MN)

### \$100 - \$499

Jack Kussmaul	Richard Oberle	Ralph Henry
Kristin Westad ( <i>for Sylvan Road</i> )	Kevin Kawula	Chippewa Valley Group Sierra Club
Gregory & Cynthia Graif	Mary Eastwood	& Eleanor Wolf
Jim & Marci Hess	Chris Roberts	Jon Rigden
Patrick Handrick	Frank Grenzow	Thomas C. Hunt ( <i>for Sylvan Road</i> )

### Under \$100

Sustain Jefferson, Inc.	Jean Hoffman	Elise Van Ginkel ( <i>for Sylvan Road</i> )
Nick & Mary Kunz	Larry, Lucas & Adam Clark	Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin
Robert Weihrouch & Pattie Haack	Harvey Halvorsen ( <i>for Sylvan Road</i> )	Mary Brown ( <i>in honor of Pamela Ann Brown</i> )
( <i>for Sylvan Road</i> )	Evanne Hunt	Pat & Glenn Tabor
Carter Johnson	Randy Palmer	M.J. Hatfield

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Questions? E-mail Katya Leonard (Communications Coordinator) at [TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org](mailto:TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org).

Thank you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:**

- |   |  |
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