



The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Grassroots Conservation at Work

How to ID Sedges

by Marci Hess

Sedges often remain a mystery for many of us. This year, the Prairie Bluff chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts had an outing at Abraham's Woods for the purpose of learning how to ID sedges. This morning workshop was led by Nate Gingerich and John Larson.

Sedges are mainly found in moist soil in full sun, although there are also many species that enjoy woodlands and dry bluffs. You'll find them in flower mostly during the months of April, May, and June. Sedges are differentiated from grasses by a number of characteristics, but the simplest one is the stem. A sedge stem is triangular and solid; a grass stem is round and hollow. There are some sedges that are annuals but all of the *Carex* species are perennial. Whether you can ID the sedge or not, the good news is that you are very unlikely to encounter a non-native sedge species.

Some of the important things to take with you when you go out to ID sedges are:



Nate Gingerich explains sedge characteristics to Chris Roberts and Kim Karow with John Ochsner in the background. Photo by Marci Hess

- A 10x loupe
- A good field guide or two
- Know the terminology and structural parts of a sedge. This takes time but it makes working through the dichotomous keys much easier!
- Have a good metric ruler. Many of the IDs are dependent upon an accurate measurement. A millimeter or two can change the ultimate identification.
- Take a plastic bag to keep whatever you collect fresh. When you do take specimens from the field, be sure to take 2-3 leaves and seed heads from the same plant.
- Know the habitat. It helps to know where to look for sedges, and when you collect a portion to ID, make a note of the habitat. Sedges are mainly in moist soil but there are some that grow in woods and on dry, rocky bluffs. Knowing where the sedge is found can narrow down the ID.

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Planning for a Strategic Future

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

In the Spring Prairie Promoter I highlighted the beginning of a new strategic plan and I now wanted to share with you some of the progress to date, which includes drafting a set of goals and core values that I believe resonate with all of us and articulates why we care for the land we all love.



The goals from our plan continue to be important for us to focus on. These include:

- Increase the organizational strength and unity of TPE by increasing the effectiveness of our chapters.
- Become an accredited land trust by 2018.
- Protect properties using the strategic conservation plan and ensure all properties will be cared for in perpetuity.
- Manage remnants and restore properties using best practices determined through science and experience while ensuring TPE cares for these sites in perpetuity.
- Develop a diversity of funding sources to support our conservation and operational needs.
- Significantly increase the number of interactive connections that engage people through our communications, outreach and learning activities.
- Retain current members and acquire new members who bring passion and volunteer support to our mission.

What I find exciting is the core values that are envisioned to be the guiding principles about how we carry out the mission and the strategic plan. These include:

- **Stewardship** Manage our land in a way that considers and respects all life within an ecosystem.
- **Sustainability** Maintain a balance to ensure that the resources of the organization are not overcommitted and balance historic aspects of stewardship with future changes.
- **Collaboration** Be welcoming and open; operate as a team; foster cooperation and mutual respect.
- **Supportive** Provide consistent and adequate support of our chapters, volunteers, central office, and members.
- **Learning** Pursue and provide learning with an open mind by teaching and learning from each other and from the Land; keep up with the scientific research, techniques and best practices.
- **Respect & enthusiasm** Celebrate, honor and respect the diversity of volunteers, staff and donors.

I think these epitomize the work that TPE does through our chapters, volunteers, and members. With an eye to the future, we have a shared vision that inspires all of us to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of the land that we all care so much about.

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President's Message

by Jack Kussmaul

The Land Trust Alliance, an umbrella group supporting land trusts across the nation, has instituted a program to accredit land trusts. Accreditation involves demonstrating the highest standards in governance and land management. It works much like college accreditation. Accreditation means that funders and people considering transferring land or conservation easements can be sure that they are dealing with a group capable of managing gifts in the manner donors would wish.

The TPE Board voted at the July 19 meeting to take the plunge (and a big plunge it is) and apply for accreditation. This is something that has been in the works for many years. It has been five years since an Accreditation Committee was formed that did some of the groundwork. Other committees, such as Land Protection and Land Management, have worked to move our standards up to the level required by the Accreditation Commission. We have worked with both Gathering Waters and the Land Trust Alliance to get us in the position to apply.

The application is a very time consuming and expensive process. Hundreds of hours of time are required to gather the information and documentation required by the

Commission. The filing fee for us will be \$7,500. It would be a real stretch for our current staff to do it without help. There may be a grant available to hire an intern to do some work. Help from the board is essential. We voted to get our pre-application submitted by the May 2016 deadline and our full application in 2017. The full \$7,500 is due with the application in 2017. Our budget is always tight and another \$7,500 will not come easily. I hope that members who care about this will make some special contributions, much as they do for land acquisitions.

There are about 57 Wisconsin Land Trusts. In the last few years 9 have become accredited and more Wisconsin applications are in the process. Two land trusts in the area where we work, "Mississippi Valley Conservancy and Natural Heritage Land Trust" are among those which have recently become accredited. I hope that by 2018, when our 2017 application will be ruled upon, TPE will be part of that elite group. It can only be good for the organization, both in public perception and setting high standards for all aspects of our organization. Two years ago we were named Wisconsin Land Trust of the Year. Becoming accredited will be an even greater achievement.

Prairie Smoke Chapter Separates from TPE

by Scott Fulton

The Prairie Smoke organization was created in the mid-1990's and joined The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) as a chapter in 2001, covering southeast Minnesota. For some time there has been a growing realization that the missions of the TPE and Prairie Smoke, while similar and complementary, are different enough to have created needless and continuing disagreement over respective goals.

Specifically, TPE's mission is to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie and oak savanna in the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration, and education. TPE has a significant emphasis on remnant protection through conservation easements and land acquisition. The mission of Prairie Smoke is to encourage the restoration, propagation and maintenance of prairies of all sizes, both urban and rural, through education and assistance to public and private landowners and volunteers. Prairie Smoke is focused on the local area of southeast Minnesota, and as a group has had no interest in acquisition of sites.

As a result of these differences, the two groups have decided to separate our respective assets and operations. Prairie Smoke has formed a new non-profit corporation for this purpose. At its meeting in July, the TPE Board formally approved this separation and the transfer of the Prairie Smoke Chapter assets to the new organization. Members of the former Prairie Smoke Chapter of TPE have been offered the option of transferring their membership to the new Prairie Smoke organization, becoming members of both organizations or staying solely with TPE.

The leadership of both organizations are certain that these changes will better enable us to serve our respective missions for private, public and TPE-owned prairies. Both TPE and Prairie Smoke plan to collaborate in areas of mutual benefit centering on promoting prairie conservation, communication, field trips and conferences. TPE continues to have an interest in an organizational presence in southeast Minnesota, and the staff and Board are actively looking at the best ways to accomplish this going forward.

Are Our Prairie Plantings Working?

by Marci Hess & M.J. Hatfield

(Note - This article includes many links to the BugGuide website, which has more details and photos of the insects described. The PDF version of the Promoter available on the TPE website (www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org) will have active links to make it easier to go directly to these pages.)

Prairie restoration of old ag fields or pastureland is becoming a common practice of many landowners. But what is the ultimate goal of these restoration efforts? A pretty flower garden? Ecological function? Biodiversity? Healthy soil? Each person's goal can be different.

“Habitat fragmentation and climate change, together with non-native species and high nutrient levels, can prevent the recovery of historical ecosystems.” (Perring, 4) This makes plantings, restoration, and reconstruction efforts incredibly important. But, how do we know if the plantings are working? On what criteria would one base successful ecosystem functioning?

One answer is twofold – is there a variety of plants thriving and are the insects using them? We have been judging our plantings and remnants by the plants, but perhaps it's time to judge them differently - by the insects. We suggest this because insects are the bulk of the herbivores that carry the sun's energy captured by the plants up the trophic levels and are the bulk of the fauna in prairie remnants and restorations. Insects are especially important to birds because they are the main protein source for growing baby chicks. To that end, we'll highlight some of the insects we have found in various plantings; some might be rare or uncommon and some might be widespread. We're hoping some of these are insects familiar to you.

A beetle, *Pachyschelus laevigatus*, whose larvae mine the leaves of Showy Tick Trefoil (*Desmodium canadense*) is known to feed on other *Desmodium* species as well as species of Bushclover (*Lespedeza*), according to BugGuide. Another *Desmodium* feeder is a pretty little moth, *Grapholita fana*.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/27573> (*Pachyschelus laevigatus*, general info)

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/873762> (*Pachyschelus laevigatus*, MJ's larvae)

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/554669> (*Grapholita fana* general info)

Eucosma giganteana (Giant Eucosma) is one of the bird-dropping moths found in our plantings. The caterpillars feed on Cup Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*), then they crawl off the plants to eat on parts of roots, where they complete their development.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/95894> (general info)

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/826510/bgimage>

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/826421>

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/480826>



Giant Eucosma Moth (*Eucosma giganteana*). Photo by Marci Hess

Got Sneezeweed? Then you may see this distinctive black and white weevil, *Smicronyx discoideus*, enjoying it. The coloration makes one wonder if this is a defensive strategy like the bird-dropping moths use. It could be quite effective coupled with their habitat of dropping from the leaves and laying very still when disturbed. You might find this weevil on other species in the Asteraceae family, too.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/242403>

Short-winged Green Grasshopper (*Dichromorpha viridis*) is on Wisconsin's Special Concern list. There is little known about their feeding patterns other than they prefer grasses and typically are found along the edge area where mesic prairie and woodlands meet.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/9031>



Short-winged Green Grasshopper (*Dichromorpha viridis*)

Photo by Marci Hess

Goldenrod Leaf Miners (*Microrhopala vittata*) are a pretty black and red beetle with pockmarks running vertically on their elytra. To protect their eggs they cover them in poo. You'll see the tips of leaves dying due to this "poo". The adults feed on Goldenrods (*Euthamia sp.* and *Solidago sp.*) but they also nibble on Cup-Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) and their larvae mine the leaves.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/546565>

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/896331> (larvae pic)

The Red-legged Spittlebug (*Prosapia ignipectus*) is associated with Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*). The adults and the nymphs feed from the xylem sap of this grass and possibly other grasses. There is little known about the biology of this or other spittlebugs. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory states that "until more is known about the life history of this insect, it should be considered sensitive to fire during all life stages."

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/29980>

An especially happy find was *Antistrophus silphii* in Marci's planted prairie. This is an uncommon gall wasp in the Cynipidae family who uses *Silphium sp.* to create apical galls. They are normally thought to be found on Rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*) but some *Antistrophus* species have been found on Cup Plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*). Information from Dr. Zhiwei Liu at Eastern Illinois University states they could be different species. He also mentioned that the ones found on Cup Plant are more rare than those on Rosinweed. According to Philip Fay and Robert Amenus, these wasps emerge a year after they enter the stem and create the gall; they also highlighted that this wasp is susceptible to extinction on lands managed with annual burns.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/306065>

Some of us are familiar with the weevil that inhabits the *Baptisia* pods - *Trichapion rostrum*. The larvae develop in the seedpods and the adults feed on the leaves.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/287189>

There are a number of things to look for to detect insects besides actually seeing the adult or the larvae. Look for brown spots or holes on leaves, stem, or bud or look for engorged areas where galls might be formed. Sometimes leaves that are rolled together contain insect life.

It's important that we enjoy the common insects and marvel at the rare ones, knowing their classification as rare may be because of lack of information rather than lack of numbers. For many of the insects, little is known about their ecology. Documenting your finds by posting on BugGuide and noting which plant you find them feeding on would put more eyes in the field and help to increase our knowledge base. As more plantings are being done and remnants expanded, it's important to know if these anthropogenic creations are functioning.

This is a small list of those that excited us. There are many more insects utilizing our plantings – too many to list here! What ones have you found? Which ones intrigue you?

References:

Fay, Philip A. and Robert J. Samenus, Jr. 1993. Gall Wasp Mortality in a Spring Tallgrass Prairie Fire. *Entomological Society of America (22):6, 1333-1337.*

Perring, Michael P., Rachel J. Standish, Richard J. Hobbs. 2013. *Incorporating novelty and novel ecosystems into restoration planning and practice in the 21st century.* *Ecological Processes 2:18-25.*

Zito, Joe, personal communication with Dr. Liu, December 22, 2011.

How to ID Sedges, continued from Page 1

Once we worked through a few IDs using the dichotomous keys, we found there are a few specific areas that need to be a focus. Here's the list of some of the key elements that need attention.

- Basal leaf sheath – what color is it? Green or brown/purple? This is often better determined in the field than on a specimen removed from the field.
- Back side of leaf sheath – look for distinctive veining
- Top of front side of leaf sheath (summit of leaf sheath- look at shape and texture. Is it firm, flimsy, clear, green, spotted, etc? Does it end in a concave, convex, or straight line?
- Spike shape and configuration. Particularly try to determine how male and female flowers are arranged- are they on separate spikelets or are they combined in the same spikelets, and if combined, which are on top and which are below?

- Stigma numbers and shape
- Habitat and location – it helps to know what county or part of a state the sedge is found
- Plant growth – is it clumping or not?

A few very useful resources on sedges include:

- *Field Guide to Wisconsin Sedges* by Andrew Hipp
- *Spring Flora of Wisconsin* by Norman Fassett
- *Sedges: Carex* by Robert Mohlenbrock
- *Sedges; Cyperus to Scleria* by Robert Mohlenbrock
- *Woodland Carex of the Upper Midwest* by Linda Curtis

Of Surveys, Monitoring & Science

Editor's Note - One of the articles in the last issue of the *Prairie Promoter* caused some concern for Rich Henderson, a member of the Empire Sauk Chapter as well as a scientist with the Wisconsin DNR. Here is a note from the author of the original article:

"Rich and I spoke about my article, and he brings up some very valid points. We are working on a follow-up article with some more empirical data to clarify. I welcome the input and am glad the scientific conversation is flowing!"

Elizabeth Goepfinger, Wisconsin DNR

*by Rich Henderson,
Research Ecologist, WI DNR Bureau of Science Services*

In the last *Prairie Promoter* (Vol. 28, No. 2, Spring 2015), there was an article by Bong State Recreation Area naturalist Beth Goepfinger titled "Monitoring & Management – A Sensible Pairing." The article's message of finding what species are present on a site in order to inform and guide management decisions is certainly a good one and one worth periodically reminding managers about. I applaud the effort. However, a couple of conclusions drawn in the article caught my attention because they were not well supported by the information presented. I thought this would be a good opportunity to address the issue of surveys, monitoring and science (more precisely research), and the confusion or misunderstanding about these concepts that can arise and sometimes lead to unfounded or erroneous conclusions.

First, some definitions. *Surveys* are generally a simple list of the species that are found to be present on a site. Sometimes they are quantitative in nature, making an attempt to include estimations of the relative abundance of each species. These quantifications can range from rough subjective estimates, using terms such as abundant, dominant, few or rare, to actual estimates based on subsample counts.



*Jonah Westrich - Home away from home
(Finalist in 2015 TPE Photo Contest)*

Monitoring is the next step up from surveying. Monitoring uses a highly standardized quantitative survey method that is done in the same way each time. It is used to detect population change over time.

Research is even more rigorous in its methods. It is designed to detect correlations between population level changes and variables such as habitat type, soils, weather, management activity, etc. But more important, research strives to tease out cause-and-effect, not just correlation. Research attempts to control for other variables that the population may be responding to so that one is reasonably certain that the variable remaining is the actual cause of the population change. Finding a correlation does not automatically equal a cause-and-effect relationship. Further work is needed to get to that conclusion.

Getting back to the article, it appears that what took place at Bong Recreation Area was a *survey* (possibly quantitative to at least some degree, given the comment about the Silphium borer moth population being large), but apparently not actual *monitoring* of populations over time. Certainly there was no research involved. Two specific conclusions made in the article may or may not be correct. The first is that Bong has exceptional moth diversity. The second is that having burned on a 5-to-7-year rotation, rather than the originally planned three-year rotation in the past, resulted in more moth species being present. Unfortunately, there simply is no evidence from the site to support or refute either of these conclusions.

The fact that Bong has been found to have 25% of the moth species found in the state may or may not have any significant meaning. The finding may have more to do with surveyor Steve Bransky's exceptionally intense survey work than anything exceptional about Bong. It is well documented that the more time and effort put into looking for insects species, the more you find. Until the same survey effort is put into other sites in the state of the same size and habitat type complexity, we will not know how exceptional, mediocre, or even subpar Bong may be for moth diversity. Even if Bong is exceptional, we do not know the cause. It may have to do with habitat diversity independent of management regime. It may have to do with burning on a 5-to-7-year rotation rather than a 3-year rotation, or it may not. We do not know. There was no comparison of 5-to-7-year versus 3-year burn rotations at the site. Maybe if the site had been burned on the 3-year rotation rather than the 5-7 years, the moth diversity would have been the same or even higher due to greater native plant diversity resulting from more fire. Until such research is done, we simply do not know the answer.

It is well-documented that some remnant-dependent insects are sensitive to fire, and thus, it is prudent not to burn all of a remnant patch at one time. Also, keeping some plant diversity, like an occasional hawthorn, on site can be good depending upon the conservation trade-offs involved. I'm simply urging caution about assuming what information is or is not significant and whether or not there are actual cause-and-effect relationships.

Banded Meadowlark at Schurch-Thomson

By Eric Preston

On April 22 I was photographing birds at the Schurch-Thomson unit of TPE's Mounds View Grassland in eastern Iowa County, Wisconsin. An Eastern Meadowlark landed on an old fence post and started singing his heart out. I was able to make a few photographs of him and later I noticed he had bands on his legs.

I sent an inquiry to friends at the Wisconsin DNR and they forwarded the photos to Kevin Ellison, who used to band grassland birds in Wisconsin and now works in Montana for the World Wildlife Fund. Based on the color coding of the bands he was able to determine when and where it was banded. He wrote the following:

"The meadowlark just turned 7 as far as we know, though it was banded as an adult, so it is at least 8. It was banded 21 April 2008. If it were to be seen next year, it'd be a record oldest meadowlark! Funny thing about the current record – it was banded in Pennsylvania 1926 but shot in North Carolina in 1935."

The Schurch-Thomson Prairie meadowlark was within a few hundred yards of where it was banded when I photographed it seven years later.



Photo by Eric Preston



2008 banding site

The moderate temperatures and frequent gentle rain we have had so far this summer in the Upper Midwest have been wonderful for our prairies and oak savannas. Here are a few highlights from TPE sites.



The wet-mesic valley bottom at TPE's Sugar River Savanna in Verona, WI showed a remarkable display of flowers, plant diversity & composition structure. Photo by Rich Henderson



Unfortunately it has also been a bumper year for invasives. The Empire Sauk intern crew bagged this impressive parsnip at TPE's Mounds View Grassland in Brigham, WI. Photo by Rob Baller

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fire Training Class Offered by Chippewa Savannas Chapter

A formal S-219 (Firing Operations – Blended) training course will be held October 23-25, 2015 at Simply Dunn, 6 miles south of Menomonie, WI. The course will introduce the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Boss (FIRB), outlines duties of other personnel who may engage in fire operations, and discusses and illustrates common firing devices and techniques. The classroom portion will be held in a 19th century renovated octagonal schoolhouse. If there is good weather a prescribed burn will be conducted on a 20 acre prairie restoration between two oxbow ponds.

At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the FIRB for planning, execution, safety, coordination, and evaluation of an ignition operation on a wildland or prescribed fire.
- Describe the characteristics, applications, safety and availability of the various firing devices a FIRB has at their disposal.
- Given a wildland or prescribed scenario, prepare a burn plan and briefing that contains desired fire behavior, firing techniques, required resources, coordination, safety and risk management factors, and communication, to meet specific objectives.

The course will be taught by Ken Terrill of Incident Management Specialist, LLC. It includes 2 hours online and 18-22 hours instructor-led training. The S290 Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior course is a prerequisite. Information on costs and actual class times will be available soon from Ken (608-358-0453, ken.terrill@yahoo.com).

Please contact Kathy Ruggles (715-664-8368, kathyaruggles@gmail.com) with any questions.

Save the Date! 2016 TPE Annual Conference & Banquet

The 2016 annual TPE Conference & Banquet will be held at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, WI on Saturday, February 20, 2016. The event will be hosted by the Empire Sauk Chapter and is being planned by Scott Fulton, Karen Agee, Willis Brown and Kathy & Rich Henderson, with the tremendous assistance of Executive Director Chris Kirpatrick and the rest of the TPE staff.

More details on the event and registration information will be given in the next Prairie Promoter. Please contact Scott Fulton (scottfulton@gmail.com) if you have any questions or suggestions.

We look forward to seeing you there!

CHAPTER NEWS

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

Burn Season Report

by Rich Henderson

Between a late spring and rain events interspersed by excessively dry air masses, we had yet another in a series of less than stellar spring burn seasons. It was probably the least productive to date. But all was not lost. The Empire-Sauk Chapter still managed to complete 65% of the planned burns on 40% of the planned acres. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, multiple burn bosses, and mechanized equipment, we completed 44 burns on 11 properties for a total of 254 acres. This was accomplished by 60 volunteers putting in nearly 1,000 hours.

Thank you to all. You are helping keep our prairie, savanna, and oak woodland heritage alive and well. Special thanks to those of you who generously let us use your trucks for towing and hauling pumper units and trailers.



Photo by Karen Agee

Annual Picnic

By Willis Brown

The chapter annual picnic was held July 20 at the Berry township community center and attended by 27 people. Chapter members were able to meet the summer interns.

Rich Henderson went over the year's achievements including the addition of 190 acres Thomas Tract near Barneveld and an easement on the Moely Sand Prairie just outside Sauk City. The chapter plans to close on two more properties by the end of the summer. Between 30 and 40 acres of land were planted to prairie. Some woolly milkweed was spotted at a TPE site. The Mounds View site and barn also hosted the second Prairie Days, part of WI Science Fair, a Winter Solstice bonfire and a reception for members of the Compass Club. Elections were held for chapter officers. Congratulations to Karen Agee, Rich Henderson and Willis Brown as the newly elected chair, vice chair and secretary respectively. After the business meeting members toured the planted prairie at the township center.



Empire Sauk members tour the Berry Township community prairie planting at the annual chapter picnic. Photo by Dennis Graham

Star Gazing Event

by Karen Agee

On May 18 a group of prairie enthusiasts gathered at Schurch-Thomson Prairie as the sun set and the sky darkened to view the night sky. Even though rainstorms threatened throughout the day, we took a chance and were rewarded with beautiful sunlit clouds as the sun set. Our first sighting was Venus, the Evening Star, between shreds of clouds in the western sky, soon joined by Jupiter, and the stars Castor and Pollux. We were able to see Jupiter's moons, and as it became darker, the rings of Saturn. We saw the orange star Arcturus and pondered that the light we saw had been traveling for 37 years. Near Jupiter and Venus was the open star cluster known as the Beehive. We had only a two-hour window of clear skies, but it was just enough!

Our guide was John Heasley of Driftless Stargazing LLC who shared his telescope, enthusiasm and knowledge with us. John invites folks to connect on Facebook to find out whenever there is something amazing happening in the skies, or pick up a copy of Voice of the River Valley to read his monthly column, Driftless Dark Skies.

Watch for upcoming TPE sky events! Plans are afoot for late night viewing of the Perseid meteor showers August 11–16 and a September 27 gathering to view the full lunar eclipse (the "Blood Moon"), which is also this year's Harvest Moon.



The Empire Sauk summer intern crew completed a very busy and successful season's work on TPE sites, led by supervisor Rob Baller. L to R - Jasmine Wyant, Keith Phelps, Grace Vosen, Isaac Bailey, Natalya Walker and Shala Brehm Photo by Rob Baller

Help Needed with Land Management

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, Kalscheur Savanna, Koltas Prairies, Smith-Reiner Drumlin, Mazomanie Bluff, Schluckebier Sand Prairie, Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, Pleasant Valley Conservancy and other sites. If you wish to be on the Chapter contact list to help with these activities, please contact us at volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

Summer 2015



Photo by Mary Kay Baum

GLACIAL PRAIRIES CHAPTER

by Alice Mirk

Things are busy in Southeastern Wisconsin. Late spring began with contacting potential landowners in the area who would be interested in a special pot of Federal Fish and Wildlife Service funding funneled through The Prairie Enthusiasts to promote Monarch Butterfly habitat. There was a flurry of meetings and site inspections, and our chapter will have three sites that will work. Everyone is really excited, and the site preparation for two of the sites has already begun.

Chapter members continue to work in stewardship roles with the DNR and with other sites that are needing help with preservation and protection. We also continue our role as educators and we are currently working with two schools, Mayville Middle School in Dodge County and Frank Elementary in Racine to teach prairie ecology in tandem with a group of dedicated teachers. We are in the process of forming an education committee of retired educators in our chapter, to help with this project.

We had several changes to make at our annual meeting in July. We appointed a stewardship committee led by Drew Ballantyne and Jennie Elkins was appointed as membership coordinator. These changes were necessary as we grow. Stewardship activities occur in the chapter three times a month, usually on the weekend and people within the chapter have geographical choices. This requires a level of coordination we have not needed before. We hope with the stewardship committee that all our members find something that appeals to them.

In August we have planned a two day tour of southwest Wisconsin with chapter members, visiting some of the iconic area prairies such as Avoca, Spring Green Preserve and Muralt Bluff among others. Stay posted for photos and travelog of that trip in the next *Prairie Promoter*.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

by Tom Mitchell

The chapter is happy to announce that we've met our fundraising goal for Avon Ridge, thanks to the generosity of Prairie Enthusiasts everywhere. We received donations from 66 individuals or couples, 35 of whom were members of Prairie Bluff Chapter. Donations came in from Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona. Thank you to all who donated.

Next step for Avon Ridge is to improve our access, which is a 66-foot wide lane from Beloit-Newark Road, south to the one-acre ridge-top dry remnant prairie that overlooks the valley of Sugar River in the Town of Avon in Rock County. The property includes about 11 acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Weeds and seeds have been our focus during the spring and early summer. We have treated small patches of spotted knapweed and leafy spurge; more prevalent pests are sweet clovers, wild parsnip and wild carrot. We are collecting seed for fall planting projects that include a cooperative effort at the DNR's Stauffacher Prairie.

Our spring burn season began March 31st at St. Patrick's Catholic Church cemetery in Albany and ended May 19th at Vale Prairie, where for the second year we targeted brome grass in a planting. These two late spring burns have weakened the non-native grass and allowed more native plants to prosper. Our crews led 15 prescribed burns during the spring season. We burned smaller units to target weeds and brush at Butenhoff Prairie, Vale Prairie, Iltis Savanna and Muralt Bluff Prairie. We conducted a demonstration burn at Barry Prairie at Honeycreek Park for fifth and sixth graders at Green County Conservation Day, and John Ochsner led his annual spring burn at Green's Prairie Cemetery.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

See our website www.nipes.org for chapter news.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period April 23 – July 31, 2015.

James Sulzer, Sussex, WI
Denise Gander, Sussex, WI
Susan Daggett, New Richmond, WI
James & Julie Galkowski, Rochester, MN
Tania Alich, Freeport, IL
Tamara Dean, Viola, WI
Zach Kastern, Delavan, WI
Dale Johnson, Portage, WI

David & Kathy Adam, Franklin, WI
Roberta Herschleb, Madison, WI
Kent Gallaway, Greenville, WI
Michelle Bonness, Pewaukee, WI
Marianne Tornatore, San Clemente, CA
Serena Schaefer-Erickson, Edgerton, WI
Paul Kilburn, Arvada, CO
David Caithamer, Spooner, WI

Gary Kleppe, Monroe, WI
Laurie Broome, Cumberland, WI
Steve Lobeck, West Salem, WI
Nancy Kirchstein, Middleton, WI
Paul & Kathy Fredrickson, New Richmond, WI
John & Kathy King, Monroe, WI
Keith & Lynne Valiquette, Holmen, WI
Dale & Mary Erickson, Cedarburg, WI

THANK YOU DONORS

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period April 23 – July 31, 2015.
These gifts above and beyond membership dues and the annual appeal are truly generous and appreciated.

\$5000 or more

Dennis & Joan Thomson
To the Schurch-Thomson Endowment Fund

Maggie Jones & David Linton

For Avon Ridge:
Jerry Martin
Charles & Chris Wellington

\$1000 - \$4999

Bill & Ginny Nelson
In Memory of Ruby Hannon
Karen Agee & Scott Fulton
Jack Kussmaul
Susan & Jim Cargill

Nick & Linda Faessler
Gerd & Ursula Muehllehner
To the Empire Sauk Chapter:
Candace Peterson
Ken Wade & Pat Trochlell

For Avon Ridge:
Nick & Linda Faessler
Susan Lehnhardt & Steve Apfelbaum
Mario & Amelia Rojas
Marilyn Workman
Anonymous

\$500 - \$999

Jim & Diane Rogala
Kimberly Kreitinger & Eric Preston
In honor of Kathie & Tom Brock
David & Michelle Markquart
To the Chippewa Savannas Chapter

For Avon Ridge:
Tom & Jenny Mitchell
Steve Hubner & Mary Zimmerman
Mary & Jim Vieregg
John Ochsner

Jackie & Wayne Pauly
Fred Faessler
Frank Grenzow
Chris Roberts
Anonymous

\$100 - \$499

Richard Oberle
Alice & Walter Mirk
Greg Hottman & Melanie Tavera
In honor of Eddie & Cheryl Goplin
Ray & Rodonna Amiel
In memory of Charles Adams
Linda Lynch
In memory of Gail Adams
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For Avon Ridge:
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Ralph Henry
Karen Agee & Scott Fulton
George Vernon
Dennis & Nancy Connor
Stan Oxenreider
Robert Laeser
Rebecca Gilman & Charles Harmon
Martha Christensen
John & Barb Rutherford

Chuck Bauer & Chuck Beckwith
William H. Holland
Shelley & Mike Muranyi
Patricia Ryan
Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts
Keith Rodli & Katharine Grant
Jonathon Wilde
James & Suzanne Larson
Glenn Burgmeier
Doris Rusch
David Lucey
Darrin O'Brien

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Questions? E-mail Joe Rising (Communications Coordinator) at TPE@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org
or call us at 608-638-1873. Thank you.

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