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# The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 21, NO. 4 Winter 2008

*Grassroots Conservation at Work*

## Purple Milkweed at Kalscheur Oak Savanna

By Rich Henderson

While visiting TPE's Kalscheur Oak Savanna (southeastern Iowa Co., WI) this past fall, a milkweed plant with six large seed pods caught my attention. To my surprise, I discovered that it was a very robust purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpuracens*) an attractive species that is listed as Endangered in Wisconsin. I was excited because purple milkweed is not on the list of plants observed at this site.

Purple milkweed lives in a variety of habitats from the full sun of wet-mesic prairies to the light shade of dry upland oak savanna and open oak woodland. I was about to send a report to the WI DNR Natural Heritage Inventory on this 'new' location of a listed species, when I vaguely recalled something about purple milkweeds having been planted at Kalscheur Oak Savanna.

Sure enough, upon checking records I found a note that David Lowe planted seedlings of purple milkweed at the site in 1996. There are no records, however, of any of the plants having been seen since then. Apparently, the plant I saw is the first evidence of survival from those plantings. If anyone knows otherwise, please let me know. I plan to do a thorough search for them next summer, when they are in bloom. I suspect that the burn we conducted last spring stimulated flowering of the plant that I saw.

In 1994, due to the generosity of James Kalscheur, Kalscheur Oak Savanna became TPE's sixth preserve. A flurry of intensive management and restoration work was done by the Southwest Chapter in the 1990's, which included significant tree and brush removal. In 2003, tree and brush removal was completed using funds from a U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service grant. From 2007-2009, a Turkey Stamp Grant has funded a private contractor to assist volunteers in managing ongoing weed and brush management issues. Three years ago, the Empire-Sauk Chapter took the lead on management at the preserve, and efforts are now underway to get a site stewardship committee up and running. A reinvigorated program of weed control, prescribed burns and interseeding has been instigated to accelerate the ongoing recovery of the preserve's prairie, oak savanna and wetland communities. If you wish to get involved, please contact me (608-845-7065 or [tpe.rhenderson@tds.net](mailto:tpe.rhenderson@tds.net)).

Kalscheur Oak Savanna may only be 19 acres in size, but, it has a diversity of community types and substrates: oak savanna, prairie, sedge meadow, perched springs and seeps, and a cold water stream. The soils range from acidic over St. Peter's sandstone to calcareous over fractured dolomite.

So far, 175 native plant species have been found, including a healthy population of the state-threatened prairie or Hill's thistle (*Cirsium hillii*), and now purple milkweed. The state-threatened Bell's vireo has also been observed at this site.

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*TPE was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1987 as a private nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.*

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*The Prairie Promoter is a quarterly publication of The Prairie Enthusiasts. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission. We welcome submissions of articles, announcements, artwork and photographs that are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Mail to local chapter editorial volunteers or e-mail submissions to jesse@nasw.org. Use MS Word and do not format. Letters and articles may be edited for length or style. Computer disks, art, and photographs will be returned. Deadlines for submission of material are March 4 (Spring issue); May 23 (Summer issue); August 22 (Fall issue); and November 28 (Winter issue).*

*If you would prefer to receive electronic notification of the newsletter, please email Victoria at TPE@TDS.net.*

## President's Message

By Evanne Hunt

Did you know it costs approximately \$50,000 a year to run The Prairie Enthusiasts organization? Some of the money comes from membership dues and merchandise sales, but the largest part comes from you – donations in response to the annual appeal.

My vision for The Prairie Enthusiasts is an organization as easily recognized by the public as the Red Cross or The Nature Conservancy. I want to train a legion of site assessors who can provide expertise and consulting to landowners, public agencies, and other conservation organizations. I want to create an internship program with the University of Wisconsin. I want to grow each of our endowment funds to one million dollars.

To do this, TPE needs to become a larger, stronger organization. We need to invest in publicity, education and technology. We need you.

If you have already sent in your annual appeal donation – **Thank You!**

If you have not, it is never too late. Send it now! If you have misplaced your letter, you can download a copy from the website or simply send your check to TPE, PO Box 1148, Madison, WI 53701, with a note indicating it is for the annual appeal.

Thank you for investing in The Prairie Enthusiasts!

## 2009 Prairie Enthusiasts' Banquet and IPAW Conference

Plans are well underway for the 2009 Prairie Enthusiasts' Banquet. The Prairie Enthusiasts is pleased to partner with The Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin (IPAW) for our 2009 Conference and Banquet. Anyone who has an interest in grassland stewardship can't afford to miss these two exciting events!

The conference will present information on combating invasive plants of grasslands in the upper Midwest through on-the-ground initiatives, informed planning and monitoring, and advocacy. Information will be practical and directly applicable to the efforts of grassland managers.

The annual Prairie Enthusiasts all-chapter banquet will be held after the conference. This is your chance to participate in the raffle and silent auction that are important sources of funding for the chapters. This also provides an opportunity to network and meet up with old friends. Members of both organizations are invited and encouraged to attend both events.

The IPAW Conference/TPE Banquet will be held on Saturday, February 21, 2009 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Madison. Doors open at 8:00 a.m. for check-in. Meet with vendors and view silent auction and raffle items prior to the first presentation.

**CONFERENCE** opening presentations start at 8:45 a.m. Fifteen different sessions will be offered throughout the day. The three general topic “tracks” are: Species-Specific Information; Techniques, Equipment, Tools, Control Strategies; and Policy, Funding, Outreach, Prevention Strategies.

**KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS** will be given during lunch. They promise to fascinate conference participants and stimulate further discussion. Steve Bertjens (Southwest Badger RC&D) and Bill Johnson (Alliant Energy) will speak about **Biofuel and Prairie Restoration** and share their visions for a future where trees, brush, invasive plants and native grasses can be harvested from prairies and burned as cellulosic biomass, providing a renewable energy source for the Upper Midwest.

**LODGING:** A block of 20 rooms has been reserved at the Crowne Plaza, 4402 East Washington Avenue, Madison, at a rate of \$109 single/double. To make your room reservation, contact the Crowne Plaza hotel at 608/244-4703 and mention The Prairie Enthusiast block to receive our group rate. The cut off for this guest room rate is Thursday, January 22, 2009. Finding lodging in Madison is notoriously difficult so reserve a room early. Other hotel options will be posted on our web page.

**REGISTRATION:** Registration information was mailed in early November. A link to the online registration form is also available on The Prairie Enthusiasts website home page. You may register online using a credit card. Alternatively, you can download a registration form and mail it with a check. More banquet and conference details will be posted as they develop: [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org) or [www.ipaw.org](http://www.ipaw.org).

If you are not already a member of IPAW or TPE and you join as a **new** member to either organization when you register or attend the conference, your name will be entered in a drawing for an **iPOD Touch**.

## Donations for Annual Raffle/Auction

If you wish to contribute items to your Chapter for the annual raffle/auction fundraiser, please contact your chapter president as soon as possible. All items must be preregistered by February 1.

All money raised goes directly to your chapter account, so bid generously!

## TPE Member Profile:

### Eugene Woehler

*Editor's Note: TPE has quite a few members who have been with us from the beginning. Starting with this issue, each newsletter will profile one of these long-time members to get their insights, remembrances, and advice.*



**Date Became Member:**

1989

**Member Level:**

Blazingstar

**Chapter Affiliation:**

Empire-Sauk

**Home:**

Madison, WI, Dane County

***What is your favorite native plant and why?***

For grasses: Big bluestem and prairie dropseed.  
Forbs: Butterflyweed and smooth penstemon.

***What is/was your profession?***

Wildlife Research Biologist for 36 years with Wisconsin DNR. Retired for 21 years.

***If you could meet someone living or dead, who would it be and why?***

President Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir. Both had a vision and appreciation of the natural resources and were pioneers in that respect.

***What was the last book or movie you enjoyed?***

The books I enjoyed reading were Undaunted Courage and Citizen Soliders, both written by Stephen Ambrose.

***Think back to when you first got involved with TPE. What attracted you? What were your initial excitements and impressions?*** About 30 years ago, Gary Eldred asked me to visit a prairie he, among others, discovered on private land. I was impressed with the property and asked Bill Tans to inventory the plant species. We knew it was a quality prairie and advised the local wildlife manager. That was Muralt Prairie, now a State Natural Area. That was before the concept of TPE became a reality. With the birth of the TPE, I naturally endorsed the fledgling organization.

*Eugene Woehler continued on page 4*

***During your relationship with TPE, can you remember a time that stands out to you as a high point?***

There were several I thought notable. One was the gradual expansion to additional chapters and the incorporation into a non-profit status, which permitted TPE to qualify for [state] Stewardship funding in the acquisition of remnant prairies.

***Share a story about people you know in TPE that you admire—stories of courage, commitment, achievement, cooperation, good work, being a pioneer, etc.***

First, I should qualify my statements because there are others outside of the two chapters with whom I am familiar who are also dedicated and committed to the goals of TPE.

First, Gary Eldred, who pursued his interest in the prairie communities and spent many hours scouting private properties for remnant tracts of prairies, often degraded but still restorable. I recall visiting one property in Grant County that had been planted to red pine, although many prairie species survived in the understory, probably due to the low fertility sandy soil. I believe that property was eventually acquired. Most importantly, he was the guiding light in the origin of the Southwest Prairie Enthusiasts and was responsible for the first logo, a meadowlark on a fence post with trailing barbed wire.

The second person is Rich Henderson who succeeded me after I retired. He has devoted many hours over the past 30+ years managing prairies in TPE ownership and through management agreements with private landowners. As a high school student he was inspired in taxonomy and began the arduous task of restoring a 10-acre parcel on his home property to prairie and oak savanna. His efforts in burning, elimination of exotics and reintroducing species associated with dry-mesic community is a model that illustrates how restoration can be accomplished through perseverance and utilization of appropriate techniques. Over these three decades plus, he dedicates most of his spare time to prairie restoration and educating his associates.

Another group of individuals seldom mentioned these days regarding prairie restoration are the WDNR Wildlife Managers at Crex Meadows in Burnett County. After recognizing that prairie species were present and seeing a small population of prairie chickens, they began a massive management program by burning parts of Crex Meadows that had reverted to woody vegetation either naturally or from intentional planting.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the late John Curtis, Botany Professor at the University of Wisconsin, who, with associates, started the first prairie restoration at the UW Arboretum in the 1930s. I was fortunate to take his class in Plant Ecology 50 years ago. He guided many graduate students in advanced degrees in many aspects of prairie vegetation. His book *Vegetation of Wisconsin* should be mandatory reading for all TPE members.

***What are the two or three most important events, trends, and developments affecting TPE today?***

The continuous spread of industrial, commercial and housing development has destroyed many plant communities and choice agricultural lands. Increasing demands for all types of land has resulted in accelerated prices, thus affecting the ability of resource organizations to acquire choice areas for preservation, including TPE. One notable effort of TPE is to educate the landowners who have prairie remnants on their property to help in the preservation and management of these parcels.

***Share a story of a time when you felt TPE was really successful in serving people or a community—an example of a TPE contribution (large or small) that makes you proud?***

I think the gradual expansion from a local group to eight chapters in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois is a significant achievement. Through the efforts of these individuals, the many small parcels are preserved for the present and hopefully will be managed by generations to come.

***If you could develop or transform TPE, what would you do to heighten its overall effectiveness, health and vitality?***

I believe The Prairie Enthusiasts is not a household name with the general public. We could do more by presenting an illustrated program on prairies to groups like garden clubs, church groups, school groups, and business associations. I think we ought to explore the possibilities of financial assistance from huge foundations, such as the Ted Turner Foundation. We should also be in contact with the conservation writers in our respective state newspapers to spread the word. Our local Ron Seely with the Wisconsin State Journal has written numerous articles in depth on conservation issues and I'm sure there are others who would be willing to do likewise.

## Tools and Techniques: Volunteers Trained on Use of ATVs

By Rich Henderson

On October 26, two Dane County Sheriff's officers helped train 21 TPE and TNC prescribed burn volunteers on the safe use and operation of 4-wheel ATVs. These were not typical ATVs, but rather vehicles equipped with gear for conducting prescribed burns. TPE hosted the training at its Schurch-Thomson Prairie preserve in eastern Iowa County, Wisconsin.

ATVs loaded down with a hose reel, engine pump, and 35 gallons of water are more of a challenge to operate than the average ATV. They take some time getting used to handling. Thus, trainees were given ample time to become comfortable with operating such equipment, and they were checked out individually by the instructors. By the end of the day, all were deemed capable of safely operating ATVs on prescribed burns on a variety of terrains and conditions. We are very grateful to the Dane County Sheriff's Department and deputies Bill McGawyn and Matt Beyer for helping us out.

Undergoing such training is now a requirement before volunteers may operate ATVs on prescribed burns conducted by both TPE and TNC. If you missed out, there are plans for another training session next year, and periodically thereafter.

*From left to right, Prairie Bluffers John Ochsner, Nick Faessler, and Peg Bredesen pay their respects to the Green's Prairie Cemetery in spring 2008.*



## Legal Challenge Threatens Green's Prairie Cemetery

By Tom Mitchell and Rob Baller,  
Prairie Bluff Chapter

One of the prairies we manage is Green's Prairie Cemetery, about eight miles west of New Glarus in far northwestern Green County, Wisconsin. The one-acre cemetery is a place of respected graves and an equally respected mesic to dry-mesic fragment of the former 5,000-acre York Prairie.

The land was first deeded to Green County on April 28, 1847. A second parcel, mostly road right-of-way, was deeded to the Town of York on May 19, 1866. The cemetery was known as the York Prairie Cemetery until 1926, when it was renamed Green's Prairie Cemetery in honor of William C. Green, a prominent settler in the area. Because it is close to the tiny crossroads with houses called Postville, it is sometimes called Postville Cemetery.

The first burial was in 1836, followed by some 139 more until about 1900. The last was in 1922 when an unknown vagrant was interred in an unmarked grave. A listing of headstone inscriptions by Mrs. John M. Irvin for the Green County Genealogical Society in 1969 reported there were 102 remaining markers, many in poor shape (worn, broken, parts missing, off the base). Seven of the interred were war veterans, including Civil War casualty George B. Thomas, killed May 5, 1863 at Fredericksburg, Virginia. There is also a marker for Josiah La Follette, father of Fighting Bob La Follette (who grew up in Argyle and later was Dane County District Attorney, Wisconsin).

*Green's Prairie Cemetery continued on page 6*

Governor, U.S. Senator, and candidate for the Presidency under the Progressive Party.) Josiah La Follette was buried in 1856; his remains were later removed to Madison.

A Cemetery Association was organized 161 years ago in April, 1847, to care for the (then Town of York) common burial ground, as this was before country churches and their cemeteries became common. During the 1920s, J.W. Stewart began burning the cemetery. A fence was put up to keep out the cows, and a history of the cemetery was published. For years another member of the Cemetery Association, Pete Ott, lived across the road and conducted spring burns. Then 16 years ago, John Ochsner volunteered the services of a new group, The Prairie Enthusiasts. He teamed up with the remaining association member, Lyle Clausterman, to continue the burns. We last burned in April, 2008. This work is labor-intensive because we rake grass from the stones to minimize heat shock, burn slowly, and sometimes place metal shrouds over the markers for the same purpose.

We had considered the spring burns compatible with the main visitation to the cemetery, the Memorial Day flag tributes to war veterans. But in May 2008, twenty-seven citizens signed a petition citing Wisconsin Statute 157.115 "Abandonment of Cemeteries" asking the Circuit Court to "take over ownership and properly care for [the cemetery because it] has not been mowed or trimmed and there are weeds growing throughout."

This legal challenge prompted the Prairie Bluff Chapter to approach and reorganize the cemetery association (which was down to one member). We met with Town of York supervisors to reaffirm that our plan was acceptable. We received an affidavit from a WDNR biologist who noted that "some of the perennial native plants in the cemetery may derive from rootstocks that date back many centuries." We held a workday with parents and children from the Town of York to remove non-native trees and brush.

Some of our best advocates were long-time TPE members. One chapter member in the Town of York, also a veteran, has been an important liaison with the petitioners. Another member, a Green County attorney, greatly aided us at the hearing on September 17, 2008, and introduced our star witness, John Ochsner. It was John who revisited Aldo Leopold's lament to silphiums before the court, and explained that the cemetery has not been abandoned.

Fortunately for us, and the prairie remnant, the court was sympathetic. In his summation, Judge James R. Beer noted that "someday we'll all be pushing up compass plants." He signed a Findings of Fact dated October 3,

2008, "that the cemetery has not been abandoned and has been properly managed, and that the current management plan achieves a proper balance between respect for the individuals and veterans who are buried in the cemetery and the preservation of what is one of a few remaining remnants of an original tallgrass prairie in the State of Wisconsin."

The Green's Prairie Cemetery's rich black soils yield a mesic and dry-mesic plant composition, featuring plants like Indian grass, big bluestem, switchgrass, needle grass, compass plant, rosinweed, rattlesnake master, lead plant, sunflowers, gentians, and the state-listed wild quinine. During a visit in August, the cemetery displayed thousands of flowering spurge blossoms. You can find Green's Prairie Cemetery on Postville Road, north of York Town Hall, between County Highways A and H.

## **Erbe Grassland: A Clear Horizon!**

By Amy Staffen, TPE Restoration Manager

The Empire-Sauk Chapter is excited to announce the completion of tree removal at its 63-acre Erbe Grassland in western Dane County, Wisconsin. Visitors (especially avian) can now enjoy an uninterrupted view of the horizon and the Blue Mounds nearby. This preserve consists of former pasture, degraded original prairie sod, and active cropland planted mostly to hay and small grains. Given this site's conservation significance as a protected grassland within the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, one of the first management priorities was to remove two stands of walnuts (three acres total), as well as cherries, box elders, honeysuckle, buckthorn and hawthorn scattered across five acres. The trees and shrubs were removed using funding from the WDNR's Pheasant Stamp and Landowner Incentive Programs and from the Wildlife Conservation Society.

One large task for this project involved cutting about 50 gnarly hawthorns, along with the significant amounts of honeysuckle and buckthorn growing underneath them. This was done by a professional restoration crew, BioLogic (Fitchburg, WI). Hawthorns present several challenges: they quickly render dull chainsaw chains, and they are tremendously heavy and thorny to transport to a burn pile. To remediate the former, the trees were cut and left on the ground, stumps were treated, and the logger used a grapple to transport these to the burn piles while he was processing other slash. Connors Logging (Argle, WI) was hired to cut the walnuts (thought to have been planted by a CCC Crew in 1935), and to sell them at the local mill. Non-merchantable lumber was purchased by the

logger for firewood. All proceeds were deducted from the cost for logging. The job was completed when the logger piled and burned all logging slash. As overseer of this project, I was very pleased with the excellent work products of the professional restoration and logging contractors!

Erbe Grassland adjoins the property of Eddie & Cheryl Goplin, with whom TPE has a 10-year management agreement. The Goplin land supports state-endangered regal fritillary butterflies that we expect to see moving into Erbe Grassland now that woody barriers have been removed. The Goplin property also provides 100 acres of significant habitat for many grassland birds such as eastern meadowlark, dickcissel, bobolink, Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, upland sandpiper and pheasant. With the removal of trees and brush, Erbe Grassland's 63 acres will provide even more habitat for area-sensitive grassland birds. To serve diverse bird habitat needs, one large, dense patch of hawthorns was left uncut for the state-threatened Bell's vireo, and several scattered hawthorns were left for shrikes.

Future restoration activities will include planting eight acres of cropland to prairie this fall, and seeding the logged areas with prairie plants in 2009. Stop out and enjoy the ongoing transformation of this grassland some time!



*Erbe Grassland 2008, before and after logging*

## Biofuels for Water Quality

Using native prairie grasses for energy and to purify water

*The following article is published with permission of Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve <http://www.cedarcreek.umn.edu/>. Cedar Creek is a large ecological research site in central Minnesota. Much of their research is conducted on prairie plants.*

### Growing Biofuels

Current biofuels research focuses on using plants to produce fuel to power our vehicles, heat our homes and raise our food. These plants generally fall into two categories: those that are used for food, and those that are not. The former, usually monocultures such as corn and soybeans, require added water and fertilizers. In addition, using food plants for fuels can result in higher food prices and clearing the land to make the fields removes valuable animal habitat. Plants not used for food, such as mixed prairie, grow with little or no added water or fertilizers, are not used as a food source for humans and provide habitat for animals (see Box 1).

### The Purpose of this Study

While current biofuel production from corn and soybeans provides some relief from reliance on fossil fuels, it requires annual replanting, the use of fertile soils that could be used for growing food, and large inputs of pesticides and fertilizers. These fertilizers are often made from animal manure because it is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus. It also contains excreted antibiotics and endocrine disrupters given to the animals to either cure or prevent disease. These "agrochemicals" leach from farm fields into groundwater, where their presence causes problems for ecosystems and for humans. Extra nitrogen leads to eutrophication (excessive growth of algae in ponds and other waterways), antibiotics in the environment may lead to resistant bacteria strains, and endocrine disrupters affect the hormone balance of aquatic life (for example, fish populations exposed to these chemicals can have a higher percentage of female fish, or males with female attributes.)

The Biofuels for Water Quality study compares the biofuel production potential between three common plant communities; native prairie, corn and hay, and investigates the effects of these communities on agrochemical leaching.

*Water Quality continued on page 8*

## What Plants Give to an Ecosystem

Plants provide valuable services to an ecosystem. They remove carbon dioxide from the air and exchange it for oxygen. Root systems stabilize the soil and provide habitat for an enormous microbial community. Roots also absorb water and at the same time, can remove many surface soil impurities before they leach into the groundwater.

## Prairie vs. Monocultures

Not all plants provide the same level of ecosystem services. Take a look at Figure 1. Which could remove the most carbon dioxide from the air, the monoculture or prairie? What do you notice about the root systems in a mixed prairie and a monoculture? Which would stabilize the soil and best prevent erosion? Which would most likely absorb the most water and soil contaminants? And last, which root system might support the healthier microbial community?

When compared to a monoculture of corn or soybeans, an active mixed prairie has the following advantages:

- Working prairies have large, dense root systems providing greater opportunity for agrochemical uptake.
- Working prairies are actively growing and taking up soil water for the entire growing season, thereby increasing the amount of water that can enter the soil and be scrubbed of agrochemicals.
- Working prairies increase soil carbon content which slows the movement of water and dissolved contaminants.
- Working prairies host a healthy microbial community which potentially improves chances for utilizing excess nutrients and to biodegrade organic agrochemicals.

Figure 1: A monoculture vs a mixed prairie Harvesting prairie grasses.



When combined with the biofuel potential, it is clear that mixed prairie offers a two-for-one benefit over monocultures; the latter may possess high biofuels potential, but fall behind in ecosystem services provided.

### Box 1. What is prairie biofuel?

Prairie biofuel is fuel derived from prairie vegetation. After establishing prairie fields from seed, the above-ground vegetation can be harvested each year and combusted at a power plant to release the energy inside the plants. The roots will remain behind and new plants will grow back the following year without additional seed input. This low-maintenance energy source is capable of producing up to 400 kW of raw energy per square kilometer.

## The Study

The research at CCESR involves 35 9m x 9m plots of nitrogen poor soil, each planted with either corn, hay (typically *Bromus* species) or mixed prairie composed of an average of eight native species. Each plot contains a well reaching into the water table. Each plot received a study treatment; some were sprayed with antibiotics, some with endocrine disrupters, and others with nitrogen fertilizer. Wells are checked on a regular basis to determine how quickly the test substances move through the soil.

This new study is in the initial phases of data analysis but preliminary results appear to suggest that mixed prairie does restrict movement of agrochemicals through the soil (Figure 2). Past research shows corn, potatoes and carrots take up agrochemicals and store them in the roots and leaves, the parts that humans eat. Instead of applying the manure to food crops, the manure could be applied to a perennial mixed prairie landscape which would filter the agrochemicals. After harvesting for biofuel, the antibiotics and endocrine disrupters would be destroyed when the grasses were burned.

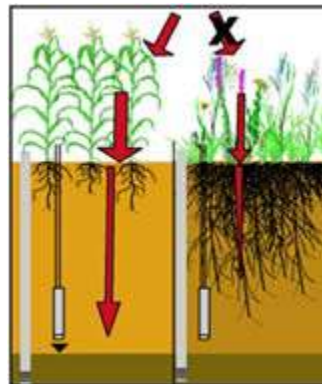


Figure 2: The fate and transport of land-applied substances is different in monocultures and mixed prairie.

Cedar Creek Ecosystem  
Science Reserve  
2660 Fawn Lake Drive NE  
East Bethel, MN 55005-9718  
Phone: 763-434-5131  
[www.cedarcreek.umn.edu](http://www.cedarcreek.umn.edu)

The Biofuels for Water Quality project is funded, in part, by the Legislative Citizen Committee on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) and the United States Geologic Survey (USGS).

*Editor's Note: Learn more about prairie and biofuels at the IPAW Conference on February 21, 2009 (page 2).*



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Conference to be Held in Ohio in 2009

By Cate Harrington

The Green Ribbon Initiative of the Oak Openings Region of northwest Ohio is pleased to announce the Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Conference for July 29 to August 1, 2009. The last such conference was held in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1997.

The Oak Openings Region of northwest Ohio has extensive oak savanna habitat, extending in a band southwest of Toledo. The area is home to more state-listed plant and animal species than any other area of Ohio. This globally distinct ecosystem has been designated by The Nature Conservancy as “one of the 200 Last Great Places on Earth.” The Conservancy’s Kitty Todd Preserve is located in this region.

Sadly, this habitat is disappearing as natural areas within the region are being destroyed by urban sprawl. Of the 84,000 acres in the Oak Openings Region, ecologists have identified 6,000 acres of high-quality green space running like a ribbon through the area.

The Green Ribbon Initiative is a grassroots effort to save the Oak Openings Region—a natural community as rare and significant as the rainforest. The aim is to protect this habitat by creating a biological and recreational corridor of preserved land—a “green ribbon” of natural beauty, rare plant and animal species and quality recreation opportunities stretching across northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan.

There are currently more than 30 research projects in the oak openings. The Metroparks of the Toledo area has held an annual oak openings research conference for five years. We are at the eastern edge of the traditional oak savanna of the Midwest. However, the unique habitat and species of this ecosystem provide a unique educational opportunity for all areas of the Midwest where the oak savanna ecosystem exists.

This conference will be multi-track with a call for papers on academic research and presentations on stewardship. Organizers also plan a track for teachers and community conservation groups.

Field trips locally and regionally will be planned. We are especially interested in including trips to oak savanna in southern Ontario. The conference location at Lourdes College in Sylvania, Ohio, is actually in the historical oak openings. The metro area of Toledo offers numerous lodging opportunities.

Visit the Green Ribbon Initiative web site at [www.oakopen.org](http://www.oakopen.org).

## COULEE REGION CHAPTER

Please check chapter newsletter for announcements.

### The Coulee Region Chapter Mixes It Up With Woodland Owners

The CRC participated in the “Forestry Field Days” workshop at Norskedalen near Coon Valley in early October. The two days of seminars and demonstrations were sponsored by many regional resource agencies and organizations. Patrick Dayton of the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council invited TPE to the workshop for an opportunity to inform landowners of potential hill prairies nestled within their woodland. We had our Hill Prairie poster on display, and Hill Prairie and TPE brochures available for distribution. The workshop was also a good chance to visit with natural resource partners that work closely with many landowners in the Coulee Region. Ned Gatzke, Greg Nessler, and Jim Rogala volunteered their time to staff the display.

As a reminder, the Hill Prairie poster and brochures are available for use by any chapter. Contact Jim Rogala by email at [therogues@charter.net](mailto:therogues@charter.net) or by phone at (608) 786-1855 for more information.

## EMPIRE – SAUK CHAPTER

### Seed Collecting and Cleaning in 2008

The Empire-Sauk chapter had another extremely successful season of seed collecting and cleaning in 2008. We also started to get our seed processing facility at the Schurch-Thomson Prairie barn at least partly up and running.

On October 11, some 16 people attended a training session to see how the hammer mill and fanning mills work. Thanks go to Richard Oberle and Scott Weber for getting the equipment in shape, and for providing instruction.

Volunteers and interns collected 400 pounds of clean seed in 2008. We are very appreciative of the 39 volunteers who put in well over 400 hours of seed collecting and processing. We also thank Tom and Kathie Brock for heading up the seed collection and processing at Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie and Pleasant Valley Conservancy. Outstanding seed collectors and cleaners this year included Erik Goplin, Todd Casanova, Rich and

*Empire-Sauk Chapter continued on page 10*

Kathy Henderson, Jim and Rumi O'Brien, Richard Oberle, Jan Ketelle, Ed Goplin, and Peter Thomford.



Volunteers learn how to use seed cleaning equipment.



Just a fraction of the seed harvest, drying in kiddie pools!

Our chapter collected and processed well over \$100,000 worth of seed in 2008! Approximately \$104,000 worth of seed (106 species, and 400 pounds) was collected for the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area projects (including Mounds View Grassland complex, Goplin Grassland, Erbe Grassland, and TNC preserves) and Kalscheur Savanna. In addition, seed was collected from and for Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie and Pleasant Valley Conservancy that was worth many additional thousands of dollars.



Collected seed hanging to dry in the barn.

Seed orchards continue proving their worth. In 2008, over half of the seed collected, by weight, came from three TPE seed orchards. The Underwood Orchard produced an estimated \$15,770 worth of seed (57 pounds). The seed orchard run by Erik Goplin produced an estimated \$30,970 worth of seed (112 pounds). The Hollandale Orchard (established by the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter) produced an estimated \$9,370 worth of seed (53 pounds). In addition, Joyce Powers let TPE collect 18 pounds of seed (estimated value of \$3,800) from her former seed production beds.

## NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

No information submitted.

## PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

No information submitted.

## PRAIRIE SANDS CHAPTER

### Discovery Prairie on the Mecan

By Tiffany Lodholz

The Prairie Sands Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts has been exploring and restoring a ten-acre sand prairie at a site on the Mecan River in northeast Marquette County. "Discovery Prairie on the Mecan" is located at the Mecan River Discovery Center adjacent to an old CCC camp built in the 1940s. The Mecan River Discovery Center contains planted prairie with some remnant prairie embedded in it, woods, and a complex of old buildings that have been used in the past as a summer camp. Paul Sammerdyke, Wildlife Biologist for Waushara and Marquette Counties, lives on the property and has been helping our chapter inventory, manage, and learn about restoration at the WDNR-owned property.

Restoring the Discovery Prairie on the Mecan to its pre-settlement glory will be an ongoing project of the Prairie Sands Chapter. Members of our chapter are working on managing the invasive species such as spotted knapweed and white pine. Several work parties have removed hundreds of white pines that were encroaching on the prairie. Spotted knapweed was destroyed using targeted chemical controls which were carefully administered to reduce the impact on the native plants. In addition the WDNR plans to do a burn in 2009.

Chapter members have also completed two inventories of the native and non-native species at the prairie using TPE's inventory protocol. Approximately 70 species of grasses and forbs have been identified so far. Chapter members were happy to discover that the prairie has a lot of lupine and its associated butterfly, the federally-endangered Karner Blue.

In addition to managing invasives and inventorying species, the group plans to collect native seed from local sources and re-seed the Discovery Prairie to add variety and diversity. Chapter members will also help to spread the seed that is already there.

The Chapter has been discussing the feasibility of using the existing buildings on the property for a meeting space because it is centrally located in our wide, seven-county geographic area. The state does not have a budget for maintaining the buildings at the Center, and they need a group (or groups) to take on the responsibility of updating and maintaining it. The state will most likely demolish the buildings and turn the site into a State Wildlife Area, or possibly a State Fisheries Area if they are not able to find a group to take this on. In the meantime we are testing a conference calling system for our meetings so that members who find it difficult,

expensive and energy-intensive to attend can participate in our meetings.

For more information about the Discovery Prairie on the Mecan or the Prairie Sands Chapter, please contact either Karen Wollenburg [wolenbrg@palacenet.net](mailto:wolenbrg@palacenet.net) or visit our website at [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapters](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapters).



## ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER

### Winter Work Parties

Wayne Hunhnke will lead work parties every other Saturday at Alexander, Foster, Blueberry Hill, and Rocky Branch prairies this winter. We will cut, stack, and burn brush and trees.

If you received an email or postcard for the December 20 work party, you are on the list. If you did not, contact Wayne [715-425-7605 (home), 715-222-6910 (cell), or [whunhnke@dishup.us](mailto:whunhnke@dishup.us)] to get on the list.

Come for the fresh air, hot dogs, and mulled wine!

## SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

### UW-Platteville Reclamation Club Volunteers for Southwest Chapter

By Tiffany Thompson

After spending my summer working on easements and remnant prairies as an intern for TPE, I have gained a deeper understanding of why prairies are so important to the area and why they need to be protected. Throughout the summer I was able to see how diverse these habitats are, as they change in appearance and beauty from week to week, and I gained appreciation and awe for these beautiful places.

Since the summer, I have gone back to school at UW-Platteville (UWP) and now only remember those sweet warm days in the sun. However, my desire to conserve prairies has led me to a new mission of getting more young people involved with prairie conservation work. At the annual summer picnic, I met Jim and Rose Sime, who schemed with me on how to get UWP students out working. As the Vice President of the Reclamation Club this semester, I have been working to organize students to attend work parties for the Southwest Chapter.

In September, students Erica Briggs (also a summer 2008 TPE intern), Luke Dahlberg, Jon Immel, Kayla Kemp and I attended a work party at Eldred Prairie, and we all were amazed! The goal for that day was to remove trees along a fence line and burn brush piles. We young students gazed in awe as Jesse Bennett, Gary Eldred, Jeff Huebschman, Don Hagar and others sawed trees down left and right. So much work was done that day, I think it left students surprised at how much a small group of people can achieve when they work together.

In October, only two students, Erica Briggs and I, attended the seed collection party. The others missed out on Jim Sime's expertise of plant identification. We learned identification of prairie plants, adaptations of the compass plant to survive in the extreme sunlight, and much more.

In November, students Erica Briggs, Travis Buckley, Luke Dahlberg, Alexandra Handlos, Jon Immel, James Shannon, Alex Start and I were again in awe of the work being done. One brush pile was described by a student as the "hugest burn pile I have ever seen in my life!"

Even more recently, Richard Henderson visited UWP as a guest lecturer. The event was very well-attended, and the talk motivated students to get outside and learn. Students walked away from the lecture realizing the

importance of getting involved and visiting natural places to learn the keys to restoration. Experience at work parties along with visiting prairie remnants teaches us what the natural areas are composed of and how they should look and be maintained.

The experiences with TPE over the fall semester have taught the students the value of hard work and sparked questions among students. Some have questioned why trees are cut down and have since learned of the history of prairies and oak savanna. The work parties have also inspired an interest among students in taking chainsaw safety and prescribed burn courses.



*Huge burn pile*



*Rose Sime and UWP students*

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined since August 28, 2008.

Richard Bend, Afton, MN  
Deirdre Birmingham, Mineral Point, WI  
Jean Clark, Hancock, WI  
Jeff Duchene, Preston, MN  
Jack Fritz, Mount Carroll, IL  
Elizabeth Gasca, Hudson, WI  
Donald & Heidi Hankley, Blanchardville, WI  
James & Linda Ivy, Oronoco, MN  
Mike Kennedy, Cannon Falls, MN  
Karsten Lagally, Madison, WI  
Amanda Larsen, Lancaster, WI  
Joe Lineweaver, Hudson, WI  
Mandy Little, Menomonie, WI

Randy & Janice Mcgrath, Janesville, WI  
Allan Mussehl, Neshkoro, WI  
Kathryn Padorr & Raymond Roberts, Madison, WI  
Kirk Payne, Rochester, MN  
Gordon Prejean, Middleton, WI  
Jeff Ralston, Neenah, WI  
Kristen Rohde, Mazomanie, WI  
Gary Schlosstein, Alma, WI  
Alice Sieczkowski, Park Ridge, IL  
Rex Sohn, Madison, WI  
Thomas & Patti Swanson, Hartland, WI  
Todd Tessmer, Saint Paul, MN  
Mary Lou Underwood, Mount Horeb, WI

## BUMP-UP CAMPAIGN

Thank you to everyone who BUMPED UP their membership to a higher level during this same period! Our goal for this three-year campaign is to move 150 of our individual or family members to the Shooting Star Level. As you consider your membership renewal in the coming year, please help us to reach our goal.

### to Individual

---

Lars Higdon

### to Family

---

Bill & Mary Bailey  
Bonnie Garrity  
David Lucey  
John McKay  
Kim Mogen

Richard & Shirley Newsome  
Mary Kay O'Brien  
James Rasmussen  
Ron Reynolds  
Dave Sample

Ron Schwartzlow  
Jerome E. Simmons  
Wayne Sutter  
Robert & Susan Wallen

### to Shooting Star

---

Karen & John Albright  
Craig & Jean Anderson  
Sandy Bennett  
Chuck & Julie Bomar  
Michael Dearing  
Richard & Betty Delong

Glenda Denniston  
Deborah Frosch  
John Mariani  
Bruce & Ruth Marion  
Ron Martin  
John Mecikalski

Harry J. O'Leary  
Jerry & Lisbeth Quebe  
Sam Skemp  
Vlad & Bonnie Sokolov  
Phil & Mary Wegmann  
Telle Zoller

### to Blazing Star

---

Armund Bartz  
Todd Casanova  
Dick Dana  
Patrick Handrick  
Michael Osterholm

Debra Pavick  
Paul & Linda Rode  
Peter Van Beek  
Richard & Susan Weigel  
Eugene Woehler

## THANK YOU, DONORS!

We thank everyone who made a donation to the 2008 Annual Appeal and all those who made gifts throughout the year. These gifts above and beyond membership dues are truly generous and appreciated. (Donations received after December 3, 2008, will be recognized in the next issue.)

### Over \$10,000

---

James & Rumi O'Brien

### \$1000 - \$5000

---

Anonymous donation (*in honor of Jan Ketelle's birthday*)

Anonymous donation

Kathie & Tom Brock

Ronald Endres

Gail & Willi Van Haren

### \$500 - \$999

---

Lori Lins

Kevin Magee (*in memory of Susan Connell-Magee*)

Richard & Victoria Oberle

Scott & Cary Reich

Peter Thomford

Michael & Mary Ann Wolkomir

### \$100 - \$499

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Craig Annen

Jack & Holly Bartholmai

Chuck Bauer

Harold & Barbara Bend

Tom & Marjie Bennett (*in honor of Jesse Bennett & Jaye Maxfield; in honor of Walter & Alice Mirk*)

William & Helen Birkemeier

Thomas Boos II & Amanda Schwoegler (*in memory of Naomi Staffen*)

Willis Brown

Coleen Burns (*in memory of Grace Kussmaul*)

Todd Casanova

Margaret & Florian Chollet (*in memory of Dr. Douglas Thomson*)

Barbara & Ted Cochrane

David Cordray & Debra Noell

Robert & Ann De Mars

Diane Derouen & Glenn Chambliss

John & Karin Exo

Mike & Yvonne Fort (*in honor of Marlin Johnson*)

Paul Francuch

William & Cathy Franks

Kathleen Gallick

Tom & Kristi Gildersleeve

Anne E. Griffiths

Rich & Kathy Henderson

William H. Holland (*in honor of Reeve Lambert*)

Hugh Iltis & Sharyn Wisniewski

Susan Kenney (*in memory of Larry Many Hats*)

Richard & Sally Keyel

Darcy Kind

Jack Kussmaul

David Ladd

Christine Lassa & Gary Konkol

Robert & Lynne Lorenzen

Earl Mihlbauer

Mike Miller & Susan Goode

Randy Nyboer

Dan & Judy Peterson

Tim & Sally Plum

Dennis Presser

Paul Radtke & Susan Westrick Radtke

Ron Reynolds

Jim & Diane Rogala

Glenn Smith (*in memory of Phyllis Reiner Smith*)

Mark Smith

Ron & Paulette Smith

Donald & Mary Stirling

Chester & Donna Thomas

Michael Vahldieck & Julie Horner

Gary Werner & Melanie Lord (*in memory of J.J. & Pat Werner & Martin Hanson*)

Richard & Susan Weigel

Bill & Jayne Wisler

Laurie Yahr & Rich Kahl

Under \$100

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Karen & John Albright  
Deane & Edith Arny (*in memory of Jack Mitchell*)  
David & Sarah Aslakson  
Jack & Carolyn Bates  
Steve Bohachek  
Margaret Z. Bredeson  
Martha Christensen  
Sue Clapp  
Betsy D'Angelo (*in memory of Cara D'Angelo*)  
Jim Elleson  
Hildy Feen  
Galena Territory Association  
Sue & Tom Gorski  
Harvey Halvorsen (*in memory of Larry Halvorsen*)  
Connie Hardacre  
Judy & Alan Hoffman  
Steve Hubner & Mary Zimmerman  
Tim Jacobson (*in memory of Phil Sander*)  
Dorothy Jeffries  
Mark Jeffries  
Don & Barbara Johnson  
Hal Kantrud  
Laura Kearney  
Richard King  
Ann Kroncke  
Ruth & Thomas Little  
Everett Mclean  
Abbie Meyer  
Anna Motivans  
Bill & Ginny Nelson  
Tim Nixon

Christopher Noll  
Marcia & Mike O'Connor  
Kirk Payne  
Mary Kay Puntillo  
Diane Rains & Stuart Janis  
Ann Ramminger & Bob Wernerehl  
Ruth & Dave Reilly  
Keith Relyea & Jeanne Kant  
Steve Richter (*in honor of Jan Ketelle, Amy Staffen & Rich Henderson*)  
Mary Rosenthal  
Daniel Schicker  
Gary Schlosstein  
Marge & Donald Shere  
Hugh & John Simon  
Vlad & Bonnie Sokolov  
Kevin & Maria Spaight  
Ed & Karin Strenski  
Sunset Garden Club Land management  
Wayne Sutter  
Marylouise & Keith Symon  
Glenn Teschendorf & Mary Anne Derheimer  
Claudia Vlisides  
Peg Wallace  
Robert & Susan Wallen (*in memory of Thor & Catherine Wallen*)  
James Welsh  
Tim & Jackie West  
Laurie Wilson  
Ralph & Ann Woldt

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Carol Benish is one of the founding members of the St. Croix Valley Chapter. Retired, she lives in Hudson with her husband, Bob.

Carol has more interests than time! There is hardly an organization in Hudson in which she has not been active. Fortunately, The Prairie Enthusiasts caught her eye!

Physical limitations prevent Carol from participating in work parties, but she is nonetheless a vital member of the chapter. For many years she staffed the chapter booth at civic affairs, history days, and environmental events throughout St. Croix and Pierce counties. Using her contacts, she enabled the TPE photography exhibit to be held at the prestigious Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson. She also ran the “chapter store” – raising thousands of dollars for our chapter by selling cookie cutters, puppets, books, notecards – you name it!

Currently, Carol represents our chapter on the Fundraising and Endowment Committee and is our chapter treasurer. In 2009, she will manage the raffle and auction at the conference and annual Banquet in Madison.

Carol, thanks for being a leader in our chapter!

*THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS*  
**PO BOX 1148**  
**MADISON WI 53701**  
**www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org**

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**\$100 Shooting Star (recommended level); \$500 Compass Plant, \$200 Blazing Star,  
\$40 Family, \$25 Individual, \$15 Student  
\$1,000 Monarch, \$5,000 Bur Oak Benefactor**

Please send form and check to:

**The Prairie Enthusiasts, PO Box 1148, Madison, WI 53701-1148**