

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

Grassroots Conservation in Action

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The
Prairie
Enthusiasts



The Little Prairie That Could

Sue Reindollar

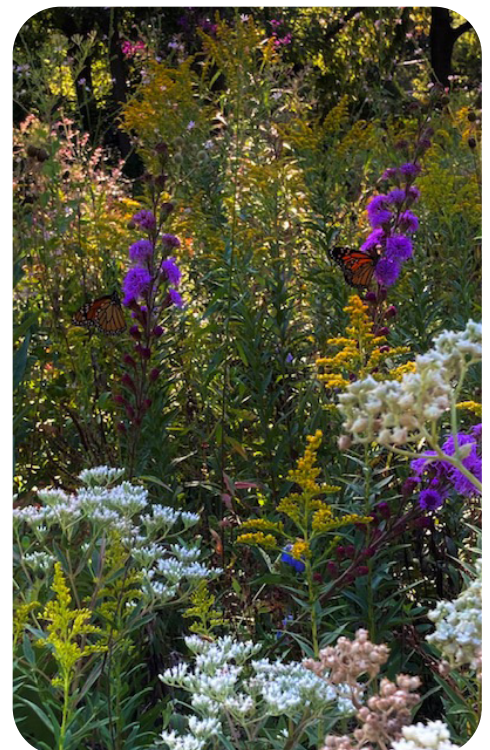
For some period of time, the little prairie at the juncture of the Southwest Bike Path and Odana Road in Madison didn't offer much hope for survival. Its new home was to be located at the staging area located at the far western edge of Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood in Madison. The new rail-to-trail effort in Madison began to take shape along the old Wisconsin and Southern train corridor. That four-mile segment of the rail system, which bordered the full length of the Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood, ran from Camp Randall to beyond the Beltline, hooking up with the Capital City Trail at Allied Drive.

As long as the railroad only had one infrequent run to Brunzell Lumber then all was peaceful. Neighbors happily walked their dogs or just themselves through the cinders, rails, and creosoted wood. Alongside the right-of-way grew vigorous crops of knotweed, ragweed, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and, forever, the brambles full of blackberries which were the favorite destination of both kids and adults. (Therefore, our platted area of Dudgeon-Monroe neighborhood was called Briar Hill.)

But this bucolic scene in the midst of an urban center was soon to change. The closer to the rails - soon to be called the path - that one lived, the more angry and verbal one tended to be. Change frequently isn't comfortable and this was no exception. People imagined every sort of invasion of their privacy. Some residents had

planted and landscaped extensively on the right-of-way and had night sweats and raging dreams about what might happen to their property (which wasn't really their property) if the city discovered their serious indiscretions.

The scene was set between those who wanted a safe and non-polluting corridor to commute by bike to work and those who didn't want the "valued" vegetation bordering the area disturbed. The group also harbored those who didn't want any amenities



Prairies have a way of thriving with care and attention, this trail-side example in Madison is no exception. Photo credit: Sandy Stark

Continued on Page 7

Our Mission

The Prairie Enthusiasts seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration and education. In doing so, we strive to work openly and cooperatively with private landowners and other private and public conservation groups.

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Staff

Executive Director – Debra Behrens
Landowner Services – Dan Carter
Leadership Coordinator – Caleb DeWitt
Operations Coordinator – Khrist Miller
Mission Advancement Assistant – Freddy Ragan

Editorial Volunteers

Coulee Region – Jim Rogala
jrogala58@gmail.com
Empire-Sauk – Cate Harrington
charrington@tnc.org
Glacial Prairie – Alice Mirk
aimirk68@icloud.com
Many Rivers – Deanna Pomije
prairie4moon@gmail.com
Minnesota Driftless – Stephen Winter
wintersl8944@gmail.com
Northwest Illinois – Rickie Rachuy
rr.lonetree@frontier.com
Prairie Bluff – Chris Roberts
chrisandjeri@tds.net
Prairie Sands – Ray Goehring
raygoe@yahoo.com
Southwest Wisconsin – Jack Kussmaul
jack.kussmaul@gmail.com
St. Croix Valley – Evanne Hunt
evanne.hunt@gmail.com

The Prairie Promoter Editor – Caleb DeWitt
cdewitt@theprairieenthusiasts.org
The Prairie Promoter Editorial Assistant – Parker Forsell
pforsell@theprairieenthusiasts.org

Cover photo by Robert Peterson



President's Message – Should We Expand Our Conservation Plan?

Jim Rogala, President

The Prairie Enthusiasts has a Strategic Conservation Plan that has the goal: “to protect and recover endangered fire-dependent native ecosystems of the Upper Midwest and the rare and declining species they support.”

The focus of the plan mirrors The Prairie Enthusiasts emphasis on land protection of remnants, but it recognizes the need for enlarging remnants and building larger landscapes of these ecosystems. This focus is vital for ensuring “the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna, and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest...”, which is our mission. But can we do more?

This past summer I had the pleasure of joining Gary Eldred in touring some The Prairie Enthusiasts-owned properties in our Southwest Chapter. Towards the end of the tour, I asked Gary how many other remnants there were in the area we just traveled through. The answer was not encouraging, as there was not much else in that 100 square mile area. How can we expect to have a functioning ecosystem in The Prairie Enthusiasts’ geographical extent when there are so few remnants in some areas, and most being small? The Strategic Conservation Plan emphasizes “building larger landscapes”, but what about the areas outside those landscapes? What is the fate of these small, scattered remnants? Even if we enlarge them, what components will be lost in the near- or long-term future without connectivity to other remnants?

The Prairie Enthusiasts has long recognized the urgency in saving these fire-dependent ecosystems, and more and more landowners are beginning to see the importance of our mission. Some landowners are fortunate enough to own salvageable pieces of remnants on their land where they can make progress on restoration. Others have land where these ecosystems are absent but can be reconstructed by planting and managing for species of fire-dependent ecosystems. Such efforts are being promoted by agencies and conservation non-profits, largely through a focus on addressing pollinator concerns. Private landowners managing their land for these ecosystems is highly desirable when considering that land protected and managed by governmental agencies and land trusts simply isn’t enough. Never underestimate the power of motivated landowners, as many of The Prairie Enthusiasts members have demonstrated through the results we have achieved.

Can The Prairie Enthusiasts continue to focus on remnant protection and management while also contributing to the private land restoration movement at the same time? I believe we need to embrace these other components of prairie restoration and place more emphasis on our core value of sharing knowledge. The Prairie Enthusiasts’ Landowner Services Coordinator, Dan Carter, has certainly provided valuable information to landowners and we hope to continue to have that service available. Many of us, as volunteers, also share knowledge, either through informal communication or more formal communication such as workshops or field trips. If restoration on private lands continues to grow in popularity, it seems like The Prairie Enthusiasts should assist in assuring that restoration on private lands is done properly.

My vision is that someday prairie enthusiasts driving through the upper Midwest will see a much different landscape than Gary and I saw last July. That can only happen if dedicated landowners are adding more prairies and savannas, expanding greatly on what is currently being protected. After all, I don't think our goal is to simply have "living museums" of fire-dependent ecosystems, but rather healthy and resilient ecosystems that are sustainable. Let's keep working towards that! ■

President's note: The topic of this President's Message is relevant to The Prairie Enthusiasts' current strategy planning process. If we determine that adding elements outside of the current Strategic Conservation Plan is desired, then we need to assure we have the resources to do that effectively.

Executive Director's Message – Celebrating Community

Debra Behrens, Executive Director



The days of sweater weather have returned, but for prairie enthusiasts working on the land from frosty mornings to warm afternoons it really is all about the layers. For some, the coming of winter signals rest. Not so for us! We know the joy of working up a sweat while the heat of our breath forms clouds around us. Working in this season is not just a relief after the long hot summer – you get to experience the feeling of being fully alive in the contrast of a slumbering landscape.

In this season of gratitude, I've been reflecting on the incredible gift it is to be a part of this community. I am grateful for those who have been doing this work for decades, spurred on by their intent to give back to the land. I am grateful for the stories you tell when you gather and for the wisdom I glean from your experience. I am inspired by the sparks of energy created by new members coming to meetings or volunteering at their local sites for the very first time. Our community is created in those moments and soon we find we have our own stories and memories to share. I honor the lasting connections formed with the land you steward, and the relationships forged through our collective effort. I celebrate all you do to contribute to our growing community, and I thank you with my whole heart for

making me a part of it now for two wonderful years.

Soon you'll be receiving a letter from Minnesota Driftless chapter member Angela Smith, sharing her journey to The Prairie Enthusiasts. Her story mirrors what many others have told me and reflects my own experience as well. It features the desire to connect to the land and the utility of a Parsnip Predator. Angela, like so many of us, discovered that in seeking knowledge what we find is a wonderful and gracious community. Our grassroots volunteers are eager to help those who want to learn – never seeming to tire of questions from budding prairie enthusiasts. Along with Angela's letter we have included an invitation for you to honor a mentor or friend. In the

spirit of gratitude, I hope you will use this opportunity to share your appreciation with someone whose kindness and support have been important to you this year.

"Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."-Marcel Proust

The impact of our individual conservation work is amplified because we are a community. We'll be celebrating that this coming year when we gather to learn and connect in person in February for our annual conference. Our Minnesota Driftless chapter will be hosting this year and I hope you'll join us in Minnesota to meet old friends and new face-to-face – at last! I'm looking forward to being with you and to many "aha moments." Please come with your stories and stay for the trivia.

Until then, be well and know how much I appreciate you and the opportunity to do good work alongside you. ■

SAVE THE DATE!

REVERENCE FOR THE LAND

2023 CONFERENCE

REGISTER THIS NOVEMBER!

Reverence for the Land

Friday, February 10

- Prescribed burn school*
- Evening social*

Saturday, February 11

- Conference
- Banquet*

*tickets sold separately

TREASURE ISLAND RESORT & CASINO
5734 STURGEON LAKE RD, WELCH, MINN.

Featured Keynote

The Pollination of Native Plants
by Heather Holm

National Honorary Director of Wild Ones and award-winning author of *Pollinators of Native Plants, Bees, Wasps, and Common Native Bees of the Eastern United States*.



The 2023 conference, *Reverence for the Land*, will celebrate the role you play as a steward of soils, water, plants, animals, and other members of the land community.

As we put together an outstanding 2023 conference program for you, make sure you take in all the details below so you're all ready to join us in Minnesota this upcoming February!

Silent Auction

Great news! The annual conference silent auction will be back in 2023. This fundraising event helps our chapters with restoration projects. All money raised goes directly to

the donor chapter! Everyone can bid on a variety of great items, such as cookies, jams, honey, artwork, beer and wine.

If you wish to donate to the silent auction, contact your chapter chairperson no later than January 1. Handmade items raise the most money – people like to know who made what. Service items are also very well received – people are always looking for someone to rake clear buckthorn, conduct a prescribed burn, etc.

Items will be available for bidding Saturday until 3:30pm. Winners will be announced and items must be paid for before the banquet.

Photo Contest

Send your submissions to Jerry Newman by email at jerrynewman0200@gmail.com by January 31, 2022.

Enter up to five photos total, one per category. There are five photo categories, which are listed below; judges will pick one winner from each category, conference attendees select grand prize winner from those five. Finalists will be viewed and voted on live at the conference, so submit photos suitable to be framed in 8 x 10. Must be a current member to participate.

Photo Contest Categories:

flora
fauna
seasons
landscape
people

Become a Sponsor or Exhibitor

Build awareness for your business by connecting with your prairie community. If you're interested in sponsoring or exhibiting, contact info@theprairieenthusiasts.org for more details.

QUESTIONS? (608)638-1873 / info@theprairieenthusiasts.org

(Photo credits: Eric Preston, Ron Lutz II, Pat Trochlell, Heather Holm)

Landowner Services Update

Dan Carter, Landowner Services Coordinator

Since the spring of 2020, I've visited over 200 properties in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois to walk and talk with people about identifying fire-dependent communities and constituent species. Traveling throughout The Prairie Enthusiasts' geography and meeting so many people has been a tremendous education in a short period of time, and I've loved it. I am grateful to Scott Fulton, Tom Zagar, and both Alice and Walter Mirk for their roles in getting me shuffled over to The Prairie Enthusiasts back in the spring of 2020. I am also grateful to landowners, volunteers, and my co-workers for their enthusiasm, hospitality, and introduction to a variety of experiences.



Photo by Dan Carter

The sorts of things I like to duck into thickets to look for on property owned by the Cheryl Deininger, Don Maas, and family in Green County, WI. Cowbane (*Oxypolis rigidior*), yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), and Virginia wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) hanging on under buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), bigtooth aspen (*Populus grandidentata*), and Hill's oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*). Flat-topped aster (*Doellingeria umbellata*), two-flowered Cynthia (*Krigia biflora*), marsh thistle (*Cirsium muticum*), Michigan lily (*Lilium michiganense*), Buxbaum's sedge (*Carex buxbaumii*) and an adjacent area of calcareous fen were also present.

In the early days doing landowner visits with The Prairie Enthusiasts, I couldn't help but question whether what I was doing was worthwhile. Even where there are fantastic opportunities to restore or steward remnant prairie and other fire-dependent natural communities, capacity to do the work can be difficult to secure. I can point people towards potential cost-shares for seeds, brush clearing, or



Photo by Dan Carter

Marsh valerian (*Valeriana uliginosa*, WI-Threatened) blooming in the exceptional calcareous fen on the property of Becky Fedak and Pete German in Waukesha County, WI.

invasive species work. Doing those things well can be tough enough, but for naught without regular, frequent fire. I also grappled with the fact that being honest with people about what is needed feels like constantly asking for expensive favors.

However, I've come around to a different view. I'm far enough into this now to see people inspired by opportunities to restore health to their land. People have found ways to manage the barriers to doing the work, and are clearly charting new courses toward restoring their land. Every remaining fragment represents more populations of species, more precious genetic diversity, and more beauty in the world for just that much longer. There will remain challenges that compromise our ability to rebuild our ecology. However, I believe the work is worthwhile even if longer-term success is sporadic.

When resources fall short or where there is no remnant community to save, we can still build community and appreciation for prairie and associated natural communities. The reconstruction of prairie is a process of rebuilding our ties with the land, and it teaches us to better appreciate both what we have lost and what we still can save. Awareness of the deep time represented by the venerable oak buried in forest or the bedraggled stargrass beneath the buckthorn can elicit real heartache, but it can also build resolve, exercise ethics, and make us more conscious of our place. It is worth it, I believe, to go out into the world and point out the land's history, what species are currently there, and what could be managed for in the future.

There is still support for these land conversations. If you would like to make an appointment with Dan to walk and talk with him about your land, contact him at dcarter@theprairieenthusiasts.org to get on his list for the 2023 field season (it's half full as of this writing). Prairie, savanna, oak woodland, sedge meadow, prairie-associated fens, and the unknown are starting points for these land conversations. ■



Photo by Dan Carter

Area of high quality, remnant oak woodland ground layer vegetation with abundant yellow pimpernel (*Taenidia integerrima*) and Carolina vetch (*Vicia caroliniana*) on the Hovell property in Trempealeau County, WI. Many other prairie-oak mosaic species were present on this property.



Photo by Dan Carter

Concerned about not having enough oak? Dirk Denzin is having incredible success restoring woodland in Sheboygan County on fine-textured soils. The site had a lot more shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) than white oak (*Quercus alba*), and most of the trees are young, but there are also remnant populations of several oak woodland species, including pale vetchling (*Lathyrus ochroleucus*), Carolina vetch, broad-leaved panic-grass (*Panicum latifolium*), poke milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*). A few prairie crabapple (*Malus ioensis*) were also present. Dirk has been removing non-oak/hickory hardwoods and brush, and following that work with annual dormant season burning (fall), inter-seeding, and addition of plugs.

Give a Gift That Gives Back to the Prairie

The holidays are just around the corner. Why not give a gift that gives back? Visit our website and click on eStore to make your loved one's holiday a little more special.

The Makutu (derived from the Maori term for a magic that kills) Herbicide Wand is a tool that contains herbicide within a reservoir. It allows a very small, controlled amount of herbicide to go just where you want it, helping you deal with troublesome buckthorn without spraying an entire area. Try our brand-new Heavy-Duty models!



The Parsnip Predator is a gift of love, saving the recipient from backache and muscle soreness by making the parsnip removal a much easier process. And it is a gift to the prairie, as it is one more step in helping minimize the impact of invasives on a prairie near you.

ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

The Little Prairie that Could... *continued from cover*

such as benches or prairie plantings added at all. It was classic Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) philosophy. However, along came the idea that the area might become a healthy, vigorous corridor shared by both commuters and those who wanted it to be a sheltered natural pathway.

What seemed like a good idea—planting prairie at the staging area and seeding with natives the whole four miles on both sides—turned out to be a Herculean undertaking. A group of four became the initial “idea” group and held meeting upon meeting, endlessly planning. There were formidable hurdles, not only how the planting might be done successfully, but how we should navigate all the people issues. Once we passed this rancorous stage, “the little prairie that could” headed towards “the little prairie that can.”

The project began twenty-one years ago and included 11,500 square feet of healthy vigorous prairie plants. The staging area, which was covered with crushed asphalt for the heavy construction trucks, was covered partially with four tons of sand which we hand shoveled into the space. Environmental engineers who were consulted thought that the prairie plants would eventually reach below the asphalt layer and thrive. (Indeed, that is what happened.) Following the sand, mulch and other materials were spread to create a mesic growing area. Meanwhile, at the beginning of that summer of 2001, three hundred twenty plants in starter pots were delivered to my driveway to be cared for the whole summer. The staging area wasn't quite ready for planting, nor were the plants ready to survive the elements without available water in that early stage in their life. It became too hot in my driveway, plus the young seedlings were outgrowing their pots, so they all had to be potted up and moved (all 320 of them) to my shaded back yard.

When it was finally time to plant them into the prairie in early September, I gathered neighbors' liter-and-a-half jugs, and developed

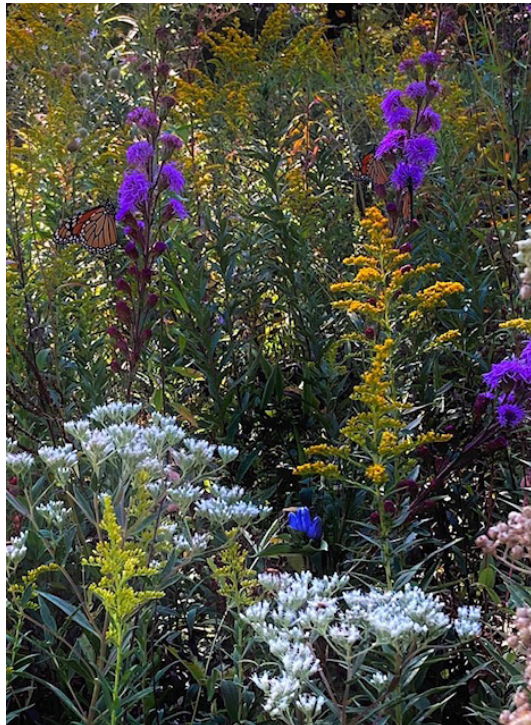
my own unique watering system. Hauling all those jugs full of water from my spigot to the thirsty plants in “the little prairie that finally did it.”

It is hard to believe the challenges that prairie has faced. Once someone chopped a mature Indian Grass in half and stole the other half. A very mature butterfly weed was stolen and also a Sideoats gramma. One time a tornado blew through the prairie and utility trucks drove through and left foot-and-a-half deep ruts and devastation everywhere.

Our idea for the trail corridor and this prairie was to create as much biodiversity and abundance as possible. A companion goal was to plant as many threatened or endangered species among the tried and true, so people could see how rich a prairie could be. It didn't disappoint. There were even several prickly pears at one time thriving up in the sandy area, but the prairie burns ended their lives prematurely.

It never fails, while creeping around digging the invasives, people biking or walking by will stop and admire the area and mention how rewarding it is to walk by the space. Even more dramatic was the show of appreciation when we released 100 monarchs for all ages to gather and see. The monarchs immediately flocked onto the Meadow liatris before they took off for their long journey south.

The worth of prairie plants has been well documented, and after twenty years the idea is finally catching on. More and more people are creating a little patch of prairie plants in their yards along our segment of the path. The insects, birds, and butterflies are everywhere in that little patch of grasses and forbs. “The little prairie that could” is only becoming more abundant as the years go by, leaving more and more people thankful for something special that began with a small group and now includes more participants and admirers each season. ■



The Little Prairie That Could.
Photo credit: Sandy Stark

The Lazy Days of Summer

Bumble Bee Survey

Pam Johnson

I was fortunate to have my French family here in August and they joined us for our weekly Bumble Bee Survey at Wapello Land and Water Reserve in Hanover, Ill. Some things are the same all over the world. For example, the use of yellow flowers under the chin to see if the person likes butter.

My son-in-law is an entomologist who works on honeybee research for INRA, the French government's agricultural division. He was able to help us with the identification of male versus female bumble bees (BB) by looking at the abdomen for the stinger on the females.

This is the third year of our survey. We found a number of Rusty Patch BB last year but none so far this year. The Rusty Patch is listed on the federal endangered species list and the only bumblebee on the list. Our project adds to information on presence and environmental factors that affect the Rusty Patch's decline. The summer might be lazy for us but not for the bumblebees. They seemed quite frantic to find pollen this year with the heavy rains and extreme weather.

We have gone out once a week from the end of May to the middle of September. The majority of the BBs are found from mid-August to mid-September. As the floral composition changes, so do the bees' foraging habits. In the spring, we found them on Penstemon and Baptisia. In summer, they cluster on Rattlesnake Master, Monarda and Partridge Pea. Each species has its favorites, probably dependent on their tongue length. In each year of the survey the Brown-belted, Eastern, Black, and Gold BBs were the most plentiful.

Although this is the last year of our official survey for USFWS, it is my hope that the interest in native pollinators will continue in the county. On May 27th Jessica Carryer invited a group from Nahant Marsh Education Center (from Davenport, Iowa) to Wapello. They have been doing surveys of Nahant Marsh and wanted to see our prairie and how we did our surveys. The prairie was just starting to pop because of the cold spring but we did see a number of BB on Black Raspberry bushes.



*Eastern bumblebee exploring a Gentian.
Photo by Pam Johnson*

NIPE (Northern Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts) held a BB survey on Aug 6th at Hanley Savanna. The reason for their survey was to educate the public on bumble bees and to encourage the public to plant native species for pollinators. They learned to identify characteristics of the different species of BB, to spot the difference between male and females, and the life cycle of bumble bees. They also wanted to see which BB species were found on Hanley prairie. There are 11 species currently listed on BeeSpotter for Illinois. We found the Common Eastern and the Black & Gold BB on Monarda. Listening, looking and smelling the prairie and observing the insects and birds that call the prairie home is part of the experience.

It is my hope that other prairies will be explored in the county and more will appreciate and protect the world of the pollinators. ■



*Bumble bee survey at Wapello prairie.
Photo by Jessica Carryer.*

Buckthorn Update

By Jon Rigden

Buckthorn is an invasive shrub that was brought from Europe in the early 1800's and is now widespread in the upper Midwest. It has aggressively taken over much of the understory of our forests, invaded many of our prairies, and it is well-known to many of us who have worked to eliminate it. There are two non-native buckthorn species, common and glossy. Both species are managed in the same way and the following is a refresher meant to point out some less well-known information about buckthorn.

Many do not know that there is a native buckthorn that grows through much of Wisconsin called alder-leaf buckthorn, *Rhamnus alnifolia*. The most distinguishing factor is that it usually grows only 3-4 feet high versus 20-25 feet for common and glossy buckthorn.

There is a new biological management option for buckthorn called LALCIDE CHONDRO that could potentially replace some of the use of herbicides in the future. It's a paste containing the naturally occurring fungus *Chondrostereum purpureum*, which has been developed by a Canadian company, BioForest (<https://bioforest.ca/en/canada/product-details/lalcide-chondro/>) The fungus is already present in the local environment of the upper Midwest. It has to be applied to a fresh wound, such as a cut stump, to be effective and therefore it is felt that it is very unlikely to affect other plants that are in the immediate area and do not have wounds or injury. The product must be used within 90 days of manufacture, must be refrigerated until used, and is a one-time application within 15-30 minutes to a freshly cut stump or girdled stem. It is best done from mid-June to mid-July and takes up to two years to be fully effective. It comes in one liter squeeze bottle containers that cost approximately \$75. It is estimated that about 80 liters are needed to treat one hectare (2.471 acres) of landscape typically invaded by buckthorn. It is available in Canada, but not yet in the United States. The benefits over herbicide are that it is a biologic solution using a naturally occurring fungus that may have less potential risk to the ecosystem and environment. Note that it does not translocate to surrounding nearby buckthorn and so untreated seedlings and plants from the seed bank will still have to be dealt with in the future.

Many have noticed that bare soil often occurs under thickets of buckthorn. The condition is felt to be due to buckthorn altering the chemistry of the soil—increasing the pH, nitrogen, and carbon. The altered chemistry can accelerate the decomposition of leaf litter leading to a crash in the rich community of arthropods that normally inhabit this layer, and in turn, further degradation of the ecosystem. Buckthorn also liberates an allelopathic substance called emodin that can inhibit the growth and development of neighboring native plants and has also been shown to be harmful to birds that consume the berries and more recently found to be harmful to amphibians such as the chorus frog.

One management technique that is mentioned in passing in some of the management guidelines is mowing. It is usually described as an ineffective method because the buckthorn rapidly resprouts into many stems and is then



Photo of buckthorn resprouts when stump isn't treated.
Photo credit: Tom Brock

more difficult to manage. Repeated mowing, however, is less often described. I wonder if there has been much experience with eradicating small buckthorn in a forest by repeated mowing and at what interval this would have to take place to be effective? Repeated mowing could possibly be a way to manage some areas infested with small buckthorns, while waiting for grasses to grow and provide fuel for prescribed burning to control the very small seedlings that grow from the seed bank.

The final point is a personal observation. Glossy buckthorn has been browsed heavily on the remnant prairies near La Crosse, WI. Glossy buckthorn seems to be found more often than common buckthorn on the open prairie. On recent work days cutting and treating glossy buckthorn, I have noticed that most of the stems have been browsed at about 1-3 feet from the ground. I assume this is deer browse. Most references say that deer do not browse on buckthorn to any significant degree. I wonder if others have noticed this as well. ■

Resources

Buckthorn ID and Control Information
(<https://polk.extension.wisc.edu/files/2011/01/A3924-02-Buckthorn-control-and-ID.pdf>).

BioForest – LALCIDE CHONDRO
(<https://bioforest.ca/en/canada/product-details/lalcide-chondro/>)

YouTube video - LALCIDE CHONDRO
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mofQVFmcHpEhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mofQVFmcHpE>)

Book Reviews



Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney

Reviewed by Chuck Wemstrom

The theme for the fall issue of the Prairie Promoter is in part abundance, the beauty of the land. And of course, one of our goals is not only to protect that beauty but to expand it. Recently I ran across an old favorite that fits our mission of spreading beauty.

I'd like to recommend a children's book (Say what? Yes I know.), *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney, who also drew the pictures.

It's for children but you'll enjoy it—no, you'll love it. And if like me, you buy a copy for a grandchild, you'll end up buying another copy to keep for yourself.

The illustrations are award-winning. They are simply beautiful. You'll want the book for the pictures. The story is short and to the point. Miss Rumphius' grandfather gives her a task: "You must do something to make the world beautiful."

Late in life, she discovers Lupines. She's hooked. She orders five bushels of seeds. All summer, everywhere she went, her pockets were full of seed. She broadcast seeds everywhere. The following spring there were beautiful Lupines everywhere.

We all have our favorite flower. One of mine is woodland sunflowers. Perhaps like Miss Rumphius, this fall I'll spread some seed along Loran Road and Indian Trail.

But in the meantime, I'll buy two or three copies of the book for my young friends. ■

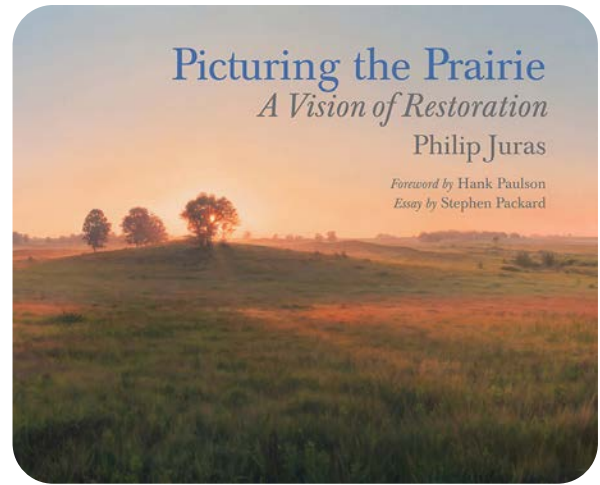
Picturing the Prairie

Reviewed by Chuck Wemstrom

Philip Juras in his beautiful book, *Picturing the Prairie: A Vision of Restoration*, helps us realize the beauty of our home.

He wants to share the paintings with his readers. He wants to describe what was involved in creating each individual scene, and at the same time be honest and maintain the integrity of each landscape.

He has to decide: Is the foreground the focal point of



this particular painting or perhaps the horizon? Of course, the sky is never just an afterthought; it too is an important part of every picture. Like Monet, he ends up painting some landscapes more than once, capturing the changing seasons, because the prairie is transformed as the individual plants sprout, grow, bloom and form seed heads for next year. He has finished seven paintings of Doug's Knob in the Nachusa Grassland from May to December. They're all lovely.

And the prairie is different, depending on the time of day.

He has to decide which plants to highlight and which two or three varieties to show, complimenting each other in his painting just as they do in real life. For me it was all an exercise in learning to see.

He explains, without being overly scientific, the different types of prairie soils and how they affect the vegetation. And he describes the process involved in doing a restoration.

He shares with the reader his excitement when he is introduced to a prairie remnant. He connects the land with the Indigenous people who cared for the land before European settlement. He sees our prairie work as healing the land and helping us reconnect with the land and our history.

He includes two maps showing points of interest in Illinois, including the sites he has visited. Some of the sites he has visited more than once, traveling from the East Coast to the Midwest.

All the sites he visited in the Midwest are in Illinois. Reading about them made me want to visit more than Nachusa Grasslands, which is famous, and Hanover Bluff Nature Preserve. I have never visited any of the other sites. And after reading about Nachusa and seeing his paintings, I'm ready to go back.

As one of many who have fled metro Chicago for the rural Midwest and a more natural environment, I have to confess that I never knew of the successful restoration work going on in and around Chicago.

But the book is really all about the paintings.

I'm still trying to pick my favorite. They're all so wonderful. One minute it's Cave Creel Glade Preserve in Johnson County, Illinois. Juras captures the sky and the sun hidden by the trees, but shining brightly on the open slope. But I turn a page or two and it's definitely Shoe Factory Road Woods in Cook County. No wait, now I'm positive. It's back

to Oak Island, Nachusa. The prairie's in the foreground, and then your eye moves up the ridge to the trees and looks more closely at a small herd of buffalo. And the sky! Every painting, every sky, reminds me that I must remember to look up.

Near the end there are a dozen or more paintings of prairie burns. Breathtaking. Then there is one more prairie fire, Night Fire on the Grand Prairie of Illinois. The actual painting, 36x60, must be awesome.

Seeds

By Nichole Good of *Generation Native Plants*

When the air is golden and the leaves are crunchy, I pull on my boots and start tromping. Off trail, no direction. Like swimming into sunlit seagrass. Every so often I come across a reedy stalk with a dried seed head on top; a husky old flower. My body warms from the center, as if in recognition of an old friend; a reminder of the sensations of summer. I pocket some seeds to bring home; the rest I spread on the ground.

Playing the role of wind or bird's beak, breaking apart the seeds' housing and setting them free: I am part of the process of this flora's reproduction. Releasing potential, spreading good. The rest of the work is theirs.

A seed: a packet of energy, potential, and possibility that will synergize with the sun, rain, and soil to produce new life. Then, a sprout: a brave new being who will translate DNA, transform energy, and build itself. Finally, a plant: an ancestor to native people and animals, and now to me. It will build soil, feed into the web of life, and reclaim the land from colonialism.

My jars of seeds – dried, labelled, often peeked at – hold the original miracle inside of them. Lovely inert beings

Juras suggests ordering the book from: <https://www.philipjuras.com/publications/picturing-the-prairie/> or philip@philipjuras.com.

Juras is a painter and author of several books. Get this book to start. Read it, leave it out on your coffee table on the top of the stack and read it again, or just look at one or two pictures and then be sure to reread the accompanying info. ■



Seeds dried and labeled. Photo by Nichole Good.

– fuzzy, husked, earth-shaded. Packed with a gathering energy, they are fully enabled to do this work.

Seeds make the earth a richer place. When I spread seeds, I invest in the future.

Seeds leave their environment in better shape than they found it. When I spread seeds, I do the same, for once.

When I spread seeds, I am folded into generations of life, on into deep and distant time. ■

Turkeyfoot

By Robin Chapman, from *Abundance*, 2009, Cider Press

Swollen purple joints, blue stems gone stiff
And red, lifting high above the goldenrod
Three or four scaly toes, blue and wine-rust,

From which spill, one after another, pairs
Of small yellow and purple
Wind-chiming flowers, or the dust

Of their pollen, falling like music
Through the rolling layers
Of prairie grass; or the soft fuzz

That comes after, like foam,
And floats away; or what's left,
Thin gold hairs that held the bells

In the waving seed-feet, the moving sky,
The windy, watery, body of light–
Small, late blooms on an inland sea. ■



The characteristic "turkeyfoot" of the big bluestem. Photo by Moua Yang

Picture Perfect Prairies

While summer blooms, and beautiful butterflies are among the more spectacular results of our efforts, we know that prairie restoration is a year-round job. Here are some photogenic highlights shared by your prairie enthusiast community. ■



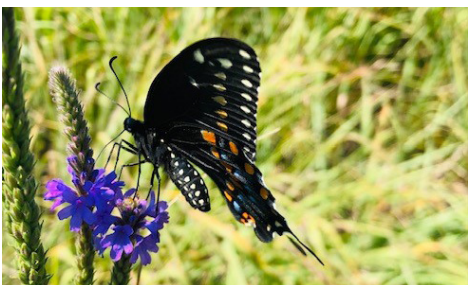
Photo credit: Andy Sleger



Dragonfly. Photo credit: Tim Fenske



Photo credit: Anna Motivans



Swallowtail. Photo credit: Pete Matejcek



Photo credit: Andy Sleger



Forbs in bloom aren't the only source of technicolor magic in the field!
Photo credit: Betsy Haynes

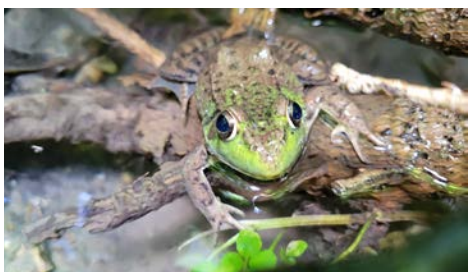


Photo credit: Andy Sleger



Clethodim once-treated prairie.
Photo credit: James Alwill



Snowy Orchids on Swenson Prairie near Arena, WI. Photo credit: Eric Volden



Yellow Lady Slippers on Swenson Prairie near Arena, WI. Photo credit: Eric Volden



Photo credit: Blossom Ramos



Child with flower. Photo credit: Patti Schevers



Schurch-Thomson in July 2022 Photo credit: Tim Fenske



Photo of Anna Motivans on her family's prairie parcel which she started over 25 years ago with the help of The Prairie Enthusiasts! Photo credit: Anna Motivans



Photo credit: Blossom Ramos



Wood Lily and Prairie Rose taken at Schurch-Thompson. Photo credit: Lydia Martin





Learning from the Story of The Savannas

Jean Pengra

Ottawa Bluffs Nature Preserve. Photo courtesy of Jean Pengra

This summer, I completed survey work at several of the beautiful oak savannas in Minnesota. The work was for a master's project alongside Dr. Matthew Kaproth at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Our surveys reported a large range in plant biodiversity among different sites, as well as within them — likely responding to the fine-scale environmental complexity of savannas.

Coming into the field season, my academic background gave me a strong appreciation for this ecological complexity. Savannas are a mosaic-like landscape of prairie and woodland, with flecks of sun and shade, patches of dry or wet soils, and an extremely diverse understory community to match. Featuring frequent fire and other disturbances, the savannas are hard-to-define and constantly changing by design. Their ecology is fascinating. But it wasn't until I learned about the history of the savannas that I felt a strong sense of personal connection to them.

Before U.S. settler-colonialism spread to the Midwest, our oak savannas were maintained through a combination of spreading prairie fires and herbivory — both of which were assisted by the land management practices of the Indigenous Peoples of the northern Great Plains. However, due to modern land use, fire suppression, and the near extinction of the American Bison, oak savannas have become one of the most threatened ecosystem types in the U.S. Over the course of fewer than 200 years, these savannas were reduced from an estimated 10-13 million hectares to about 0.1% of their former range. It's hard not to feel a sense of mourning at such a drastic change.

But the story of the savannas leaves us with an important lesson: humans are an integral part of the landscape. Now and always, we have played a direct role in



Researcher Jean Pengra collecting biodiversity surveys on a (rather steep!) hillside at the Ottawa Bluffs Nature Preserve near St. Peter, MN.
Photo courtesy of Jean Pengra

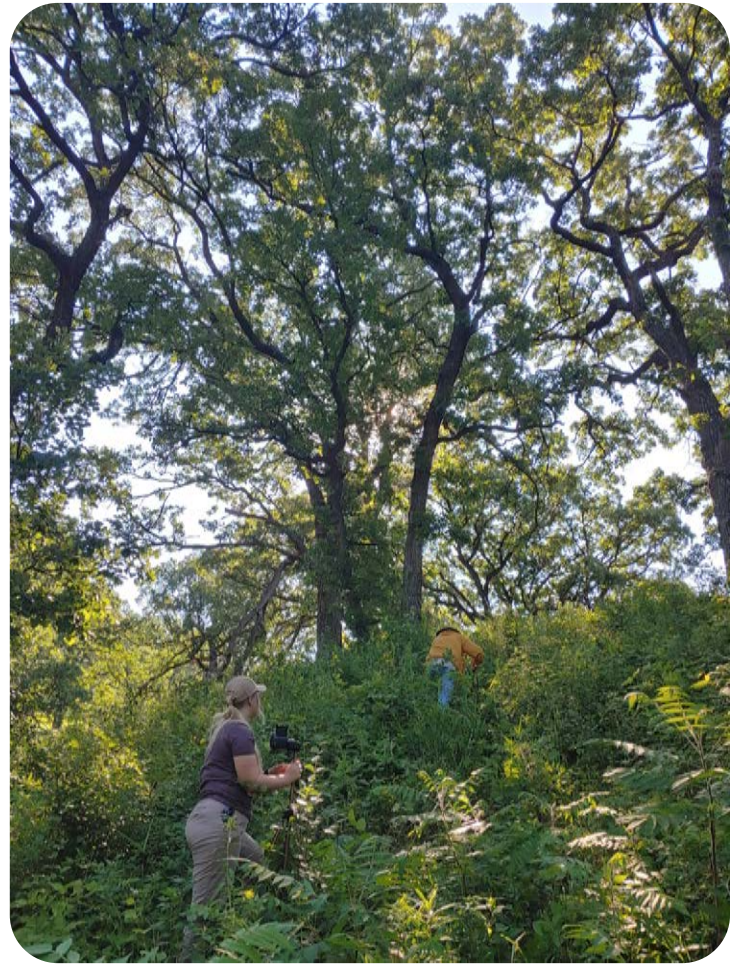
the establishment of the environment around us. We are not separate from nature, but a key part of its formation and wellbeing. As a keystone species of the savanna, abandoning our role in its management leaves a hole much like the extinction of an important species. I hope we can use the history of the savannas to better understand the role we play in the natural world.

Savannas show us that conservation is not just an attempt to hold on to the vestiges of biodiversity, but a continuation of hundreds of years of evolution on a landscape scale.

Exposure to quickly changing environments like savannas could be an extremely useful tool in community education on environmental change. Not only do they showcase the importance and volatility of human interaction with the environment, but these savannas have been nearly wiped out and there is a clear story as to how and why. Let them be an active lesson in how humanity shapes the environment – a lesson more and more important to learn as climate change impacts the world for generations to come. ■

Works Cited

1. Nuzzo, V. A. 1986. Extent and Status of Midwest Oak Savanna: Presettlement and 1985. *Natural Areas Journal* 6: 6–36.



Researcher Jean Pengra (right) and assistant Jenna Eklund (left) collecting canopy cover data from the Ottawa Bluffs Nature Preserve near St. Peter, MN. Photo courtesy of Jean Pengra



Rapids Lake Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Photo courtesy of Jean Pengra

Prairie Habitat Helps Birds in Decline

Tom Zagar

While pulling off Kelsey Drive in Muskego to the prairie reconstruction, a bird flushed and landed into the colorful vegetation that had been Rx burned earlier this spring. There was telltale evidence (or more literally, tell tail—with its white outer margins) that it was an Eastern Meadowlark! Soon after I was joined by fellow enthusiast Jessica Bizub and credentialed raptor bird bander Bill Stout. Bill grabbed his camera and snapped some photos of another meadowlark before we embarked on the purpose of our visit. Last year we placed six nesting boxes sized for screech owls or kestrels at various conservation sites in Muskego, but this was the first box to have a target species take residence—American kestrels! Today was the day to band the young based on a photo taken 3 weeks earlier of the adorable newly-hatched birds. Three girls and two boys were weighed and fitted with aluminum leg bands before being returned to the nest.

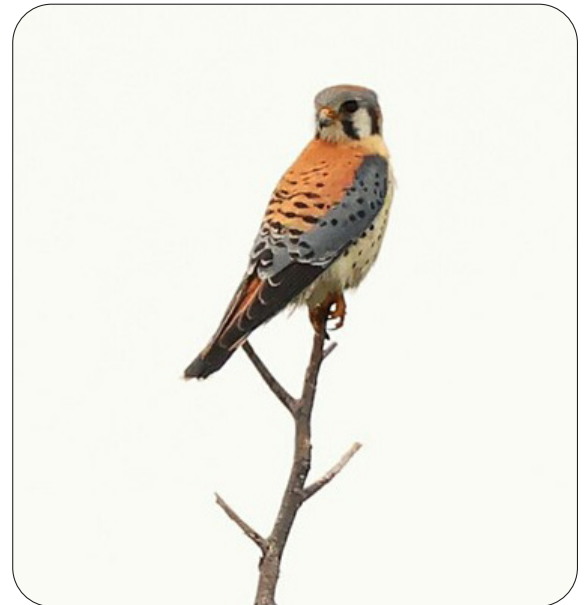
The nine-acre Kelsey Dr. conservation site is within a more rural portion of the “City” of Muskego and has one of the higher quality prairie reconstructions within this ever-growing suburban community. It was a wondrous day witnessing the iconic Prairie Enthusiasts bird and the successful breeding of kestrels that have also been in recent decline. The presence of these vulnerable grassland birds at this reconstruction gives affirmation to our green space preservation and land restoration efforts! ■



Eastern Meadowlark. Photo credit: Ric Renz, retired Muskego Police Chief



Jessica Bizub holds a kestrel awaiting banding. Photo credit: Tom Zagar



Male kestrel. Photo credit: Ric Renz, retired Muskego Police Chief



Female kestrel incubating eggs in May. Photo credit: Tom Zagar



Newly hatched kestrels on June 13. Photo credit: Tom Zagar



Bill Stout banding a young kestrel. Photo credit: Tom Zagar

Upcoming Events

Many Rivers

Brush Removal Work Sessions at Ottawa Bluffs Nature Preserve

Saturdays, November 12, December 3, and December 17 • 10am – 3pm

Ottawa Bluffs, Ottawa Rd, Le Sueur, MN 56058
(Google Maps: rb.gy/xjuqk4)

Please bring a lunch, plenty of beverage, appropriate (sturdy) foot wear, and work gloves. Leather gloves work best for brush work. Dress in layers with an eye toward the weather. Rain, snow, or shine, we will be out there. If for some reason there is a cancellation, it will be announced through the Many Rivers chapter email list.

Go to rb.gy/cmpo1f for more information on Ottawa Bluffs, including how to get there. If you're coming from LeSueur, take County 36 south to Co. 23 to the preserve. Look for the preserve sign and vehicles parked along the side of the highway.

Questions? Email Bill Ramsden at ottawabluffs@gmail.com.

Prairie Sands

Annual Holiday Seed Exchange

Saturday, December 3 • High Noon
Ethel Everhard Library - Community Room -
117 E, 3rd Street, Westfield

Finally! We're renewing an old tradition: Prairie Seed Exchange and FREE Lunch. It's been a long time, so plan on joining us:

- Subway Catering (ordering details in November) – Prairie Sands picks up the tab!
- Seed exchange: time to collect and exchange seeds with other members
- Meet the Chapter – new members and old faces
- Your Stewardship management tales about successes and failures

Save the Date!

The 2023 North American Prairie Conference, presented by the Tallgrass Prairie Center in Iowa, will be held in Des Moines, Iowa, June 25-29, 2023. More info here: rb.gy/jrsjsi

Visit our online calendar for the latest events · ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

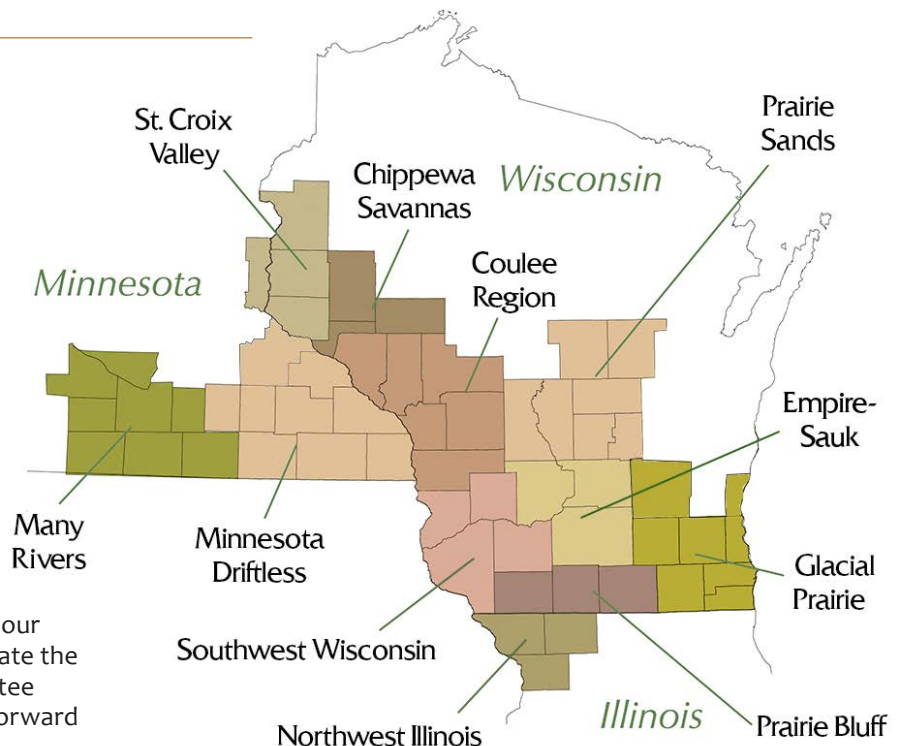
Chapter Updates

Chippewa Savannas

Keith Gilland

After a busy winter of getting native seed on the ground and a highly successful spring burn season, we hope the Chippewa Savannas Chapter (CSC) members got a chance to relax in the beauty of our chapter project sites this summer. We greatly appreciate the membership's patience as our new executive committee settles into their roles, and we are excitedly looking forward to a fun and productive fall.

Joe Maurer and Mark Leach introduced Keith Gilland, Julia Chapman, and Katie Hahn to the Seymour Prairie site in Eau Claire, and everyone is over the moon with the future possibilities for the site. Given the abundance of lupine there, we hope to continue developing the area into suitable Karner blue butterfly habitat. Check it out this fall if you haven't spent any time out there!



As the leadplant and little bluestem work on their march toward seeding and the shrubs look toward shutting down for the year, keep an eye out for chapter emails announcing work days at Dobbs Landing for seed collection, woody control, and fire break maintenance. But most importantly, get out and enjoy our prairies in this beautiful fall weather!



A beautiful field of lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) in the dog training area at Seymour Prairie. Photo credit: Joe Maurer

Coulee Region

Small mammal survey at Holland Sand Prairie

Jonathan Rigden

The Coulee Region Chapter (CRC) of The Prairie Enthusiasts recently teamed up with Friends of the Blufflands (FBL) in the La Crosse area to do a survey of small mammals living on Holland Sand Prairie (HSP). HSP is a 61-acre river terrace sand prairie located in La Crosse County that is a State Natural Area owned by the Town of Holland, protected by a conservation easement by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, and managed, in part, by the CRC. We were most interested in learning if the prairie vole, *Microtus ochrogaster*, a species of Special Concern in Wisconsin, is living on the prairie.



A meadow vole found at a different location. Photo courtesy of the Coulee Region chapter.

Voles are distinguished from mice by their smaller eyes and ears, shorter tails, stockier bodies, and a more rounded, blunted nose. There are four species of voles in Wisconsin. The most common, by far, is the meadow vole (*M.*

pennsylvanicus). The prairie vole is much less common and is most often found on dry and sandy remnant native prairies or barrens. It is most reliably distinguished from the meadow vole by the number of bumps or tubercles on the bottom of the feet. Prairie voles have 5 tubercles, meadow voles 6.



Tubercles on the bottom of a foot of a meadow vole- 6 vs 5 for the prairie vole. Photo courtesy of the Coulee Region chapter.

The woodland vole (*M. pinetorum*), a rare vole found in forests and orchards, and the red backed vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*), also somewhat uncommon and found in mixed conifer-hardwood forests of northern Wisconsin, make up the remaining two vole species. In 2021 Rich Staffen, conservation biologist of the DNR, reported prairie voles inhabiting new locations on some of the remnant native prairies in southwestern Wisconsin. The CRC and FBL contacted Rich in December 2021 about surveying HSP for the prairie vole. He was enthusiastic and agreed to provide expert help to get us started. He recommended doing the survey in late August or early September when these critters are at peak numbers.

Also of interest was which mice were living on HSP. The prairie deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii*), a species of Special Concern, and the western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*) an uncommon species, were of particular interest.

On 8/30/22, Rich met us on HSP and discussed how to do the survey and provided information about how to identify the different voles and mice that could be caught. He also provided 50 small Sherman traps. These were placed every 10 meters along a 500 meter transect, baited with peanut butter and oats, and left open for the night. The next morning Rich returned and met with a group from CRC and FBL to help us learn how to remove the mammals from the cages and do the measurements that are needed for identification. After that, Rich left and we were on our own. The next three nights and mornings we repeated this process, opening and baiting the traps at about 5:00 pm, returning the next morning to check each trap, then closing it for the day.

Here are the results of our survey:

Day 1: 7 Prairie deer mice

Day 2: 12 Prairie deer mice, 1 western harvest mouse, 1 meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*)

Day 3: 17 Prairie deer mice

Day 4: 17 Prairie deer mice, 1 western harvest mice,
1 white footed mouse (*Peromyscus leuopus*)



First day placing the traps along a transect with Rich Staffen holding the box. Photo courtesy of the Coulee Region chapter.

The prairie deer mouse (PDM) and western harvest mouse (WHM) were difficult to tell apart short of examining the teeth, with the teeth being grooved in the WHM and without grooves in the PDM. We found for us, at our level of training, that the size, bicolored vs not bicolored tail, and belly or other fur color were not reliable distinguishing factors. We did not look at the teeth of every mouse until the last day, so some of the ones classified as PDM, especially on Day 3, could have been WHM. The one WHM on Day 2 was identified retrospectively with a review of photos of the teeth that were taken from some of the mice.

Similar measurements were taken of the total body length, hindfoot, and ear.



Weighing a mouse. Photo courtesy of the Coulee Region chapter.

The teeth proved to be the best distinguishing factor to tell a PDM from a WHM:



The teeth of the PDM without grooves.



Grooved teeth of the WHM.

Photos courtesy of the Coulee Region chapter.

We were somewhat disappointed not to find voles on HSP, especially the prairie vole. Perhaps a survey done on a different transect of the prairie would find voles or other mice.

This was a fun and interesting activity. The CRC and FBL plan to do similar surveys on other remnant prairies next year. Maybe the elusive prairie vole will show up in 2023!



A happy mouse being released. Photo courtesy of the Coulee Region chapter.

Coulee Region Chapter Updates

Justin Nooker

This summer, the Coulee Region Chapter hosted a number of field trips including Geology of the Blufflands, Rush Creek SNA hike, Holland Sand Prairie hike, and a Prairie Smackdown event where three TPE members shared trials, tribulations, successes, and lessons learned of work on their properties. Coulee Region tabled and presented at a few events including a Pollinator Party hosted at Justin Trails Resort and the City of LaCrosse's Bluff Bash. A team of La Crosse locals also initiated a small mammal trapping study which you may find interesting to read about in this edition of the Promotor. Be sure to keep an eye on the Events Calendar on the TPE website as well as our Facebook group, The Prairie Enthusiasts – Coulee Region Chapter, for fall and winter work parties and events!

Project Manager Needed – Reclaiming Historic Wagon Trails

Rich Henderson

On the Schurch-Thomson Prairie unit of Mounds View Grassland (5 miles south of Blue Mounds) there is an old wagon trail lane leading down a draw to the original homestead established in the late 1850s. There is also a spur off the lane, established circa 1900, leading up to the current homestead area. The lanes are overgrown and mostly hidden, passing through a wooded area that is scheduled to be restored to oak savanna/woodland. Our plans are to clear these lanes of trees and brush and use them as visitor hiking trails. One will lead to the original homestead area with what remains of building foundations and a hand-dug well, where interpretive signs will be placed. The other will come up out of the valley to the current barn and parking lot area.

We are seeking a volunteer to coordinate and direct this trail project. If you are interested, please contact Rich Henderson (tpe.rhenderson@tds.net). The tasks of this position are to:

- 1) Solicit volunteers (especially chainsaw operators and helping hands to move material) through work party announcements distributed by various means. Help and guidance will be provided.
- 2) The goal of the work will be to clear and pile the woody material and then burn the piles once there is sufficient snow to do so.
- 3) Lead/direct the work parties. A checklist of items to have on hand and guidance on how to lead work parties and topics to cover with the attendees will be provided.
- 4) Work with the preserve's site steward in locating and marking the old lanes and to reserve and access equipment.

Empire-Sauk Annual Picnic

Willis Brown

On a sunny day in mid-July about 30 members of the Empire Sauk chapter gathered at Agaski (short for *Agalinis skinneriana* or pale false foxglove) prairie for the annual chapter picnic. This property was purchased in 2021 by TPE members Eric Preston and Kim Kettinger and contained an overgrown prairie remnant. *Agalinis skinneriana* is a state endangered plant common there. Participants were able to see all the work done by volunteers and contractors this past winter. After the potluck Rich Henderson was reelected chapter vice-chair and Kathy Henderson reelected chapter treasurer. Following the business side of things we took a tour of Agaski prairie and then the adjacent Swenson prairie, purchased by TPE in 2018, led by Scott Sauer, the site steward. A long-term goal is to have contiguous prairie for these two remnants.



Empire Sauk picnic. Photo credit: Amy Dubruiel

Hanley Celebration

In early June around 100 people gathered at the barn at Mounds View Grassland to celebrate the successful fundraising campaign for the Hanley Property. (See *Prairie Promoter*, Spring 2022.) Among the attendees were TPE staff from Viroqua, members of the fundraising cabinet for the campaign, along with members of Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, WI-DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the summer interns. The 260 acre Hanley property is now part of TPE's largest contiguous parcel of over 840 acres.

Shillinglaw Prairie Hike

Robert Baller

It was 90 degrees F and high humidity for the field day. Two dozen faithful joined the John Shillinglaw Mekan Prairie Interpretive Hike, on remote Czech Rd. somewhere in central Wisconsin near Wautoma. The mid-day outing and partly-shaded sack lunch were organized and well-watered by outreach coordinator Becky Wadleigh and executive director Chris Radford of the North Central Conservancy Trust, an agency operating out of the Stevens Point area to protect land through easements in 8 counties in central Wisconsin.

John Shillinglaw is a retired physician, noted for protecting and returning important acreages of land in central Wisconsin to a natural state. His ongoing restorations have been the subject of *The Prairie Enthusiasts'* admiration and tours for years. He has been described as a true man of the Leopold tradition. Mr. Shillinglaw was unfortunately not present due to a schedule conflict.

Attendees at this slow-motion botanical hike were educated by the retired University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point botany professor Dr. Bob Freckmann, a nationally-recognized teacher, grass authority, and prodigious curator at the herbarium (along with Dr. Frank Bowers) during his tenure from 1968-2001. Dr. Freckmann is currently updating information on the grasses of North America; his unassuming nature and wry wit seemed the same as the days when I studied plant taxonomy in his class in the 1980s; he suggests we not discount octogenarians.

During the excursion, The Prairie Enthusiasts educator Pat Trochlell, who has botanically inventoried some of Mr. Shillinglaw's nearby wetlands, presented Dr. Freckmann with an uncommon wetland grass she had collected near Argyle, WI, a *Glyceria* species to identify. He promised to analyze the specimen and reply by email, with what will likely be a new species record for Lafayette County.

Many thanks to John Shillinglaw, the Conservancy Trust, and erudite professor Freckmann for their fine work and most enjoyable summer tour.



Dr. Freckmann poses with a Shillinglaw prairie admirer and compass plant. Photo credit: Rob Baller

September Willow Field Trip

Rob Baller and Pat Trochlell

The Botanical Club of Wisconsin provided a workshop for identifying willows on Saturday, September 10, 2022. The afternoon foray was held at the Ottawa Lake Recreation Area in the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest in Southeast Wisconsin. Its was led by The Prairie Enthusiasts' Landowner Services Coordinator, Dan Carter. About 20 botanically advanced enthusiasts—herbarium employees, biologists, professional land restorationists—practiced identifying numerous tree-form and shrub-form willows. Willows flower in early spring, and no fruits were present; all identification was by stem and leaf traits. Attendees followed the erudite Mr. Carter through a spectacular wetland and wet prairie complex, often pausing to refer to each other and to field guides for the proper identity of some arcane sedge, or to photograph sublime greater fringed gentians (*Gentianopsis crinita*) or perhaps a sweet-smelling Great Plains lady's-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes magnicamporum*). Weather was superb. The impending rains held off at the west, and the State Forest enjoyed 80° F with mild winds under partly sunny skies. Thank you, Dan Carter, for an enjoyable and information-packed afternoon.



Dan Carter (center) instructs on willow identification. Photo credit: Rob Baller



A crowd of botanists is eager for more willows. Photo credit: Rob Baller



Botanists Steve Eggers (L) Ted Cochrane (hand open) and Pat Trochlell (R) pause for sedges. Photo credit: Rob Baller

Glacial Prairie

Chapter Picnic

Tom Zagar

Glacial Prairie held its annual picnic at Muskego's Bluhm Park, which was chosen in part because it has one of the largest oak woodlands (former oak savanna) in the community. On this beautiful sunny day we held a short chapter meeting, then feasted on brats, burgers, salads, veggies, tasty dessert treats and, of course, beer. The plan was to then walk the oak woodland, but the group instead opted for a tour of Badertscher Preserve across town where several chapter members had volunteered in the past few years. There we observed prairie reconstructions and the oak woodland/savanna restoration that The Prairie Enthusiasts members Dan Carter, Michaela Rosenthal, Alison Reinhofer, Eric Manges, and Walter Mirk helped burn earlier in the year. We then walked to the fen that persists in the bottom of an area mined for gravel almost 50 years ago. Fen specialists thriving here include Grass of Parnassus, Shrubby Cinquefoil, Kalm's Lobelia, Riddell's Goldenrod, Ohio Goldenrod, Winged Loosestrife, Prairie Loosestrife and Marsh Blazing Star. The group traversed over a rocky moraine to walk over tussocks and woody stumps in the 5-acre "sedge fen" which was laboriously cleared of glossy buckthorn last winter. A diversity of rejuvenating wetland plants that had previously been suppressed by shade were observed, including a non-blooming orchid postulated to be small yellow lady's slipper. The sedge fen transitions to the base of a wooded drumlin where we saw several remnant prairie-savanna plants. Many thanks to all who attended the picnic and to the The Prairie Enthusiasts volunteers who have assisted in putting the plant communities at Badertscher Preserve on a positive trajectory, which you can read about here: <https://bit.ly/TPEGPC>

Chapter Work Parties

- June 18 Dick Bautz led a tour and work party at Genesee Oak Opening and Fen. After viewing the 15-acre oak savanna, we girdled aspen and walnut trees in the fen.
- Upcoming- Seed collection at Genesee Oak Opening and Fen SNA, Lulu Lake SNA, and Benedict Prairie



Exploring the Sedge Fen at Badertscher Preserve.

Photo credit: Tom Zagar



Fringed gentian. Photo credit: Pat Trochlell



Right Photo - Great Plains lady's-tresses orchid in mowed lawn as fatigued botanists walk by. Photo credit: Rob Baller

Many Rivers

Jim Vonderharr

Our annual meeting was held on Sept. 30, 5-8 pm at Jakes Pizza near the U of MN-Mankato campus. Elections were held.

Much work is being done on our prairie education front. We continue to communicate on what to expect and how to manage our school prairie planting in New Ulm. Two new schools have requested assistance in planting their own prairies. Will be seeking volunteers to assist.

We have a very exciting field trip outing set up for Sept. 20th with 300 biology high school students. They are planning to tour Minneopa State Park and learn more about prairie and bison, up close and personal. Many great presenters are lined up to share their experiences with the students. They include some of our Many River's members as well as DNR staff.

We're preparing for a few fall burns this upcoming season. Dan Carter visited mid-Sept. to view four of our member's prairie sites. Work continues on three previously planted public prairies: the Rasmussen Park in Mankato, the Traverse de Sioux Treaty Site in St. Peter and the Klossner Cemetery. Brush maintenance work continues while seeking out burning capabilities.

Northwest Illinois

Jim Rachuy named Prairie Enthusiast of the Year

In late April, Jim received notification of this honor from The Prairie Enthusiasts President Scott Fulton, with the following message:

Hi Jim, I am very pleased to let you know that The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors has selected you as the recipient of the 2022 Prairie Enthusiast of the Year award. In my opinion this is a very long overdue honor, given your involvement with TPE from its very beginnings and your incredible and highly innovative work over many years on conservation. On behalf of all of us in the organization, I would like to extend our sincerest congratulations!

On July 17, about 70 people watched as Scott presented the commemorating plaque to Jim at The Prairie Enthusiasts Annual Picnic, hosted by NIPE at Hanley Savanna. Here we see Jim holding the plaque, with Scott standing behind him. Jim has worked tirelessly over the past 40 or so years to help found both TPE and NIPE and to contribute to their expertise and growth. Congratulations, Jim!



Jim Rachuy accepting Prairie Enthusiast of the year award.
Photo credit: Marilyn Anderson

Out on the Prairie

NIPE staff member Jeni Pearce agreed to steward Hanley Savanna this summer, especially scoping out weeds such as parsnip, mullein, burdock, and sweet clover. Thank you, Jeni! Looking ahead, NIPE is looking into managing woody vegetation in late fall/winter.

Currently, volunteers are needed to help pick prairie seed. If you are not on the seed pick volunteer list (or want to be removed from that list), please contact Laura Dufford at lauradufford@gmail.com.

Seed Coordinator's Report

Barb Siekowski

Almost 40 species have been collected to date from the field and the Lonetree rare plant gardens. The season ahead looks promising for good seed harvests due to decent rains so far. Early July's collection of Ohio Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*) brought in robust seedheads compared to last year's small and shriveled yield. The benefits of adequate moisture are especially apparent for wetland species; there is a notable difference compared to last year's drought-stressed plants, with greater bloom and seed production.

Lonetree Goings On

Rickie Rachuy reports that seed picking has commenced in both rare native plant gardens. To date we have picked *Aquilegia canadensis*, *Dichanthelium scribnerianum* and *Sisyrinchium campestre* from the west garden and *Camassia scilloides*, *Carex sprengelii*, *Heuchera richardsonii*, and *Sisyrinchium albidum* from the east garden.

Earlier in the growing season, Rickie was able to start one plant from the *Rosa carolina* seed after a long, complicated propagation procedure. The start was added to the existing rose plants (which came bare root from the wild) in the west garden. She also managed to keep the only *Clematis occidentalis* plant produced from seed (started Feb. 1, 2020) alive over the winter and has planted it into the east garden. Two plants of *Clematis pitcheri* (started from cuttings April 2021) went dormant over the winter and do not show signs of growth to date.

Karen Reed continues to be an excellent addition to the NIPE team, helping keep the weeds under control in both gardens, among other tasks. Thank you, Karen!

Rare Native Plants Garden Tour

On Saturday, June 25, participants braved the weather for both tours of NIPE's Rare Native Prairie Plants gardens at Lonetree Farm. Each tour began in the shelter of a covered porch until thunderstorms and heavy rain passed through. Jim Rachuy,



Identifying plants in the East garden.
Photo credit: Vicky Wegner

Rickie Rachuy, and Barb Siekowski educated everyone on the history of the gardens, the research behind the plants, efforts to propagate the plants and collect seed, and the ongoing goal to plant sustainable populations of the plants in protected areas in Jo Daviess County. When the storms ended, everyone toured both gardens.

Bumblebee Blitz

The heat and humidity on August 6 could not discourage intrepid bumblebee searchers at NIPE's Bumblebee Blitz at Hanley Savanna!



Pam explaining to a larger group. Photo credit: Laura Dufford

After a presentation by Pam Johnson (in blue shirt), participants searched for bumblebees, identification charts in hand. Successful findings included common eastern and black and gold bumblebees. Honey bees and bumblebee mimics were also spotted.



Chuck Edwards scouting for bees. Photo credit: Laura Dufford



*Chuck Edwards & Bee on Monarda Blossom.
Photo credit: Laura Dufford*

Prairie Bluff

Green's Prairie Cemetery Improvements

Tom Mitchell

Prairie Bluff Chapter is using a donation from the estate of Gerald and Barbara Larson for two improvements at Green's Prairie Cemetery. We have assisted the cemetery association in a flag-pole project, and we have pledged funds to install a new gate at the pioneer graveyard located in the Town of York.

A new, wider gate in the iron fence around the cemetery will be installed that will allow Pechmann Memorials of Madison to enter with equipment to re-set tombstones that were knocked over by vandals in recent years.

Our chapter has a long association with this one-acre, tallgrass cemetery where land management includes an annual spring fire prior to a Memorial Day celebration that honors the veterans of the War of 1812, Black Hawk War and Civil War whose headstones can be found there. United States flags from these historical periods are flown there atop tall flag poles from sun-up and sun-down on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Veteran's Day.

We thank Todd Larson, executor of his parents' estate, for this generous donation.



Annual spring burn. Photo credit: Jerry Newman



Signs at Green's Prairie.

Crew member Chris Roberts holds up the prairie turnip that yielded 58 seeds from four pods when Ralph Henry, who collected the plant, took it carefully apart. *Pediomelum esculentum* is found on dry prairies in nine counties, a plant of Special Concern in Wisconsin, C-8, that we survey each summer at two of our sites. Monitoring plants, along with insects, birds and weeds, are all land management tasks performed by summer crews for Prairie Bluff Chapter. Photo Credit: Ralph Henry



Gathering at Green's Prairie.



The seeds will be returned to the prairie from which they originated to establish new populations. Photo credit: Ralph Henry

Prairie Sands

Ray Goehring

Winners of Ken Erickson's photo contest were announced

1st Place: Kathy Rincon American Painted Lady atop Lance-leaved Coreopsis. **Prize:** Donation of \$35 in Kathy's name to The Prairie Enthusiasts.



American Painted Lady atop Coreopsis.
Photo by Kathy Rincon

2nd Place: Keri Otte Lead plant with bee. **Prize:** 1/2 oz wild lupine seeds



Lead Plant with Bee.
Photo by Keri Otte

Prairie Sands Chapter Members Neil Diboll and Benjamin Grady spoke on August 18 for the Ripon Historical Society. Neil Diboll, owner of Prairie Nursery, talked about the history of America's prairie ecosystem, pre-settlement importance, near destruction and revival, and Benjamin Grady, Assistant Professor of Biology for Ripon College spoke about the importance of Ripon College's 130 acre prairie.

Ben Grady has also spent this summer conducting pollinator studies in four of the Prairie Sands Chapter region prairies.

More Awards!

Prairie Sands Chapter member, Dick Hansen, and his brother Skip have gotten an award by the Wisconsin Invasive Species Council for work they have been doing with Golden Sands RC & D's Central Wisconsin Invasives Partnership.

Congratulations and thanks for the much needed work.



Dick Hansen on the Prairie. Photo provided by Dick Hansen

"The Hansen Family: Raymond 'Skip' and Richard 'Dick' Hansen have worked with Golden Sands RC&D on invasive species and lake projects. Dick has worked with the Central Wisconsin Invasives Partnership to promote invasive species education. Skip has worked on the Eurasian Water Milfoil Dive Team. The family has worked on diverse projects and raised Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol beetles, treated upland invasive species and conducted prescribed burns."

Source: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/60516>.

Southwest Wisconsin

Iris Drive Preserve

Jack Kussmaul

A support group is being created to assist with work at the Iris Drive Preserve. Iris Drive is located just south of Gays Mills. Our chapter has been managing this property for over ten years. It is becoming an example of what a restoration should be like, but, of course, there is always more work to be done. New chapter members Bob Retko and Kay Wienke have made this site a focus of their efforts. They are creating a support group to share their interest in the site and to help with maintenance and restoration. This may appeal particularly to those who live in the area. There are no specific obligations in joining the group, but occasional help will be welcome. Those interested may contact Bob Retko at retko2001@yahoo.com.

Privately owned site tours

The chapter has engaged in all of the usual work activities on our sites. In addition, we held tours on four privately owned sites this summer.

Our first tour was led by Peggy Timmerman on the 200 acres she and her husband, Mark, own near Gotham. All on the tour were impressed with the work the Timmermans have been able to accomplish on particularly rugged terrain. They have goat prairie, oak woodland and oak savanna. Of particular interest was a conical burial mound that, with permission from the Ho-Chunk Nation, they have protected and maintained. Despite the threat of thunderstorms, 20 people turned out for this tour. We stayed dry until the last 10 minutes, when we found ourselves hiking down the hill in pouring rain. This in no way dampened the spirits of this hardy group.

The next tour was in conjunction with our annual picnic on July 9. This was held on the Debbie Pavick and Joe Block property near Hillsboro. Prior to the picnic we toured the restoration that has been ongoing for the last 16 years. It includes prairie, oak woodland and oak savanna. The massive spreading oaks in the savanna area were particularly striking.

The last tours were on two adjacent sites on July 23. We started at the 70-acre parcel of Ross Shrago and Susan Eisele near Gays Mills. This property contains a variety of environments, but the focus of work has been on 15 acres along Knapp Creek. In the past, attempts to farm it have failed because it is too wet. Ross and Susan are now working

to turn it into sedge meadow. They discussed dealing with its many problems, including reed canary grass and Canada goldenrod.

We walked from there to the Harriet Behar and Aaron Brin restoration. They have a wonderful road bank restoration planted in 2011 with seed from Prairie Moon. It has been maintained by burning. We also visited their flat 6-acre restoration. Of particular interest was their explanation of how they have done everything by natural methods and without the use of herbicides.

Seed Collection Volunteers

Prospective seed collecting volunteers should be aware that seed collecting is taking place at Eldred Prairie every Wednesday from now on until November. This is being orchestrated by George Riggin. All seed collected in the good prairie area will be seeded in areas at Eldred that are now in the early restoration process. If you are interested, we suggest that you contact George at gfriggin@yahoo.com or (608) 444-0181. You are welcome to just show up, but contacting George in advance may be a good idea just to make sure that collecting hasn't for some reason been canceled that week. We appreciate all of those who have been helping with this so far. These ongoing efforts are making a huge difference at Eldred.



Aaron Brin and Ross Shrago 7-23-2022. Private site tours near Gays Mills. Photo credit: Jack Kussmaul



Eldred Prairie seed collecting 8-2022. L-R Ross Shrager, George Riggan, Bob Retko and Margaret Sprague. Photo credit: Jack Kussmaul



Private site tour Timmerman property in Lone Rock 6-11-2022.
Photo credit: Steve Querin-Schultz

St. Croix Valley

Chapter receives a major donation!

Evanne Hunt

The St. Croix Valley chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts received a \$3,000 donation from the Washington County Star Trail Association (<https://www.startrail.org/>) on August 22.



Star Trail Donation. Photo Credit: Greg Korman

The donation was facilitated by Alex Asp, a recent UW-River Falls graduate with a degree in Conservation and Environmental Planning. One of his classes was Prairie Restoration and Fire Ecology. The class provided the opportunity to work with Mike Miller, one of our chapter members, collecting and cleaning prairie forb seeds.

Alex is also a former employee of the Star Trail. He wrote to us, "I have tasked myself with finding new places to donate the money we bring in from charitable gambling. I feel there are other places where the money we take in could make a bigger impact."

Adeline Carroll, Scott Loux, Alex Asp, and Lou Smothers from Star Trail delivered the check to Evanne Hunt and Harvey Halvorsen from The Prairie Enthusiasts at our Blueberry Hill site south of Bayport, MN.

The money will be used for continued stewardship of this rare prairie remnant.



Kay Wienke at Iris Drive Prairie 8-2022. Photo credit: Bob Retko

Field trip to Cedar Creek (July 10, 2022)

We met at the Lindeman Center of Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve about 10:00 am where we met our leader, Katrina Freund. Katrina was an intern at Cedar Creek and made an excellent presentation at the “Lunch with a Scientist” series at Cedar Creek about the “Women of Cedar Creek.” She has an extensive knowledge of the workings and history of the place going back many years.



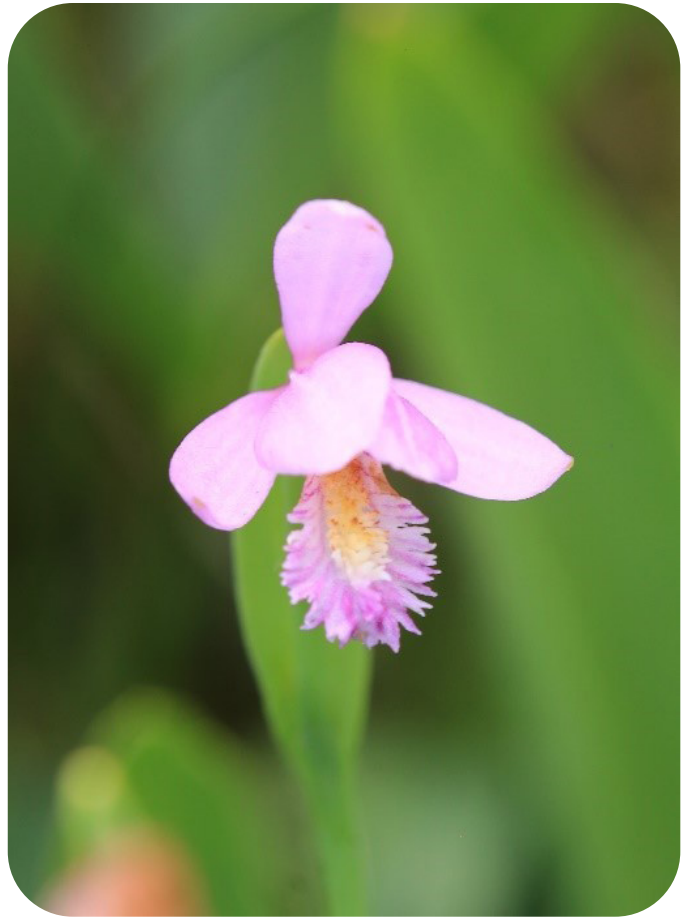
Cedar Creek field trip participants. Photo credit: John Arthur

Our first destination was Cedar Bog Lake, about a mile walk from Lindeman Center through a prairie and a white cedar swamp.



Rose Pogonia. Photo Credit: John Arthur

We took a short drive to Beckman Lake, another bog. Rose Pogonia (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*), Pitcher Plant and other bog species were visible.



Pitcher Plant. Photo Credit: John Arthur



Bog Lake. Photo credit: John Arthur

We visited Big-bio and Bio-CoN. Big-bio is a long-term experiment in bio-diversity with over 300 9-meter by 9-meter plots planted with various native plant species and subjected to various stress factors, such as heat lamps and rain shelters. Bio-CoN is an experiment where test plots are subject to an elevated CO₂ level, heat lamps, and rain shelters to determine possible climate change effects. Both of these long-term experiments have been going on since the 1990s (more information at <https://www.cedarcreek.umn.edu/LTER>).

We toured an open field that was an experiment in itself –determining how long it takes for an ag field to return to a native ecosystem. After many years, the question remains unanswered. Walking around the burn unit (burned two out of three years), we heard about the prescribed burns that have been taking place at Cedar Creek since the 1960s and saw the results when we arrived at the intersection of three burn units where one unit was burned two out of three years, another was burned one out of three years, and the third was not burned at all. The difference was obvious.

Seed collecting fun!

As of press time, we have collected blue-eyed grass, lupine, prairie phlox, heartleaf golden Alexander, monarda, and flowering spurge! The seed will be redistributed this winter on our remnants as we remove buckthorn and cedar trees.



Photo Credit: Wayne Huhnke



Photo Credit: Wayne Huhnke

Chapter Picnic (August 7)

Our annual chapter picnic was held in the Town of River Falls Town Hall. After a great meal of burgers, brats, cheeses, salads, and several desserts, Mike Miller led a small group to tour Alexander oak savanna.



Photo Credit: Greg Korman



They will take me home
the spirits,
the thunders and wind,
They will take me home.

Excerpt from unattributed Native
American song recorded in the Bureau
of American Ethnology bulletins

Prairie Enthusiasts Remembered

Memorial gifts dedicated between June 7 and October 19, 2022

In memory of

Lois M. Brick

Remembered by Ed Brick

Susan Connell-Magee

Remembered by Kevin Magee

Caroljean Coventree

Remembered by

Karen J. Gunderson

Kandy L. Hixson

Evanne Hunt

Carol Keyes-Ferrer

Cynthia Launer

Andrea Lubov

Marilyn Mesh

Walter Mirk

Ellis S. Nolley

Deborah Parker

Peggy Seifirt

Town of Gilman -

Pierce County, Wisconsin

Nolan Everson

Remembered by Michael Everson

Mike Kierski

Remembered by Ron Grasshoff

Leo Kirsch

Remembered by Hal Kantrud

Richard and Doris Krueger

Remembered by Barbara Krueger

Bruce Luecke

Remembered by Susan Freiss

Steve Terwilliger

Remembered by Ellen Terwilliger

Caroljean Coventree

Kathy Stahl

Our Chippewa Savannas Chapter and the whole of TPE lost one of our most passionate enthusiasts. Caroljean Coventree died August 6th. We knew Caroljean as our former Chapter Chair and most recently our Chapter Vice Chair and our Chapter's Representative to The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors. Yet, she was so much more.

There were several Caroljeans all wrapped into the one. She was the direct and analytical lawyer who knew persistence, the value of policy and standing up for what she thought was right. She was the compassionate and responsive member of many named and informal communities and groups. Several elders knew her steady comfort as did friends who experienced her keen awareness and perception of others. Caroljean was the constant student, studying new ideas, the depths of complex concepts, and others' reactions even when they weren't always comfortable for her. Caroljean knew and lived delight. She loved her prairie and her friends, got true pleasure from moments some of us take for granted, and actively pursued what she valued.

Caroljean took all of her work with TPE seriously and even at the last asked for any donations to go to The Prairie Enthusiasts. The many Caroljeans wrapped into the one we knew gave us a priceless legacy.



Caroljean Coventree always enjoyed the beauty of a prairie in full bloom. She will be greatly missed by our chapter, and we thank her for all that she contributed to our efforts. Her spirit will live on in the fields of blooms that she loved so much. Photo credit: Kathy Stahl



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membership with a gift of any amount today, or make
a secure gift online at ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

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Welcome, New Members!

June 27 - October 19, 2022

Coulee Region

William Agger
Bella N. Anderson
Claire DeCoster
Scott Giraud and Joey
Esterline

Empire-Sauk

Allison Ban-Herr
Susan Freiss
Callie Godiska
Kevin Michaels
Sven F. Midelfort
Bethney Pickhardt
Elizabeth Pilon
Wesley Stefonek
Morgan Volbrecht

Glacial Prairie

Susan Besson
Evelyn Dell
Aaron Feggestad
Steve and Trudy Sirkis

Many Rivers

Kally Goschke

Minnesota Driftless

Bill Cliby
Robin DeVinney
Ross Haroldson
Matthieu Lynch
Peggy Seifert

Prairie Bluff

Ethan Dahlberg
Ali LaPointe
Jennifer Riemer

Prairie Sands

Charles Brownstein

Southwest Wisconsin

Laura Dornak
Barbara Jenkin
Mike & Janet Molitor
Larry Nelson
Bill and Donna Richter
Jessica Spayde
Gini Waddick

St. Croix Valley

Edward Dike
Joseph Fusilier
Karen J. Gunderson
Sarah Hall and Dave
Fehringer
Denise Kaye

Unaffiliated

Lisa Albrecht
David P. Bowes
Paul Erdmann
Christopher Hughes
Kandy and Walter Hixson
Carol Keyes-Ferrer
Cynthia Launer
Catherine and Todd
McKenzie
Marilyn Mesh
Deborah Parker
Riva and Ellis Nolley
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Thank you for your continued support! Use the enclosed envelope to renew your membership anytime with a gift of any amount or give securely online at ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

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