



The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

Igniting Relationships with the Land

Searching for
Leadplant Flower Moth,
Eliminating Buckthorn,
and more!

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

**Igniting Relationships with
the Land**

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President's Message **Dealing with Dampened Enthusiasm**

Jim Rogala, President

Having enthusiasm for something is a great thing. It generally results in accomplishments and rich rewards not achievable without that enthusiasm. However, sustaining enthusiasm can be difficult. We see examples of this in professional settings, arts, sports, and, of course, in environmental crusades. For Prairie Enthusiasts, the enthusiasm is often tempered by frustrations such as being overwhelmed with the restoration work that needs to be done, failing at the attempts to restore, slow progress in the process of restoration, and the general uncertainty of our contributions to long-term success of our mission.

Some passionate prairie restorationists are fortunate enough to be well grounded in the reality of what they do and go forward unphased by obstacles. Maybe that is just their personality, or maybe they were mentored by Prairie Enthusiasts who taught them to manage their expectations. Other less fortunate souls find themselves letting frustrations eat away at their enthusiasm. How might they cope with this?

Most of my fellow Prairie Enthusiasts seem to have good outlets to help keep things in perspective. I'm amazed at the various talents and interests of other prairie practitioners, and I imagine they use those talents and interests to provide relief from the frustrations of prairie restoration. Others escape from frustrations by spending time with family and friends, or traveling to places that offer solitude or amazement. Some relief can even be attained while being engaged in our mission by simply enjoying each other's company and sharing our interests and getting support when it is needed.

Whatever outlet is used to deal with the frustrations of prairie restoration, we still need to build back any lost enthusiasm. This is easy for most of us because we realize what is at stake: healthy fire-dependent ecosystems in our landscapes. Celebrate your successes; they can give you hope in times of failure. Keep the enthusiasm in The Prairie Enthusiasts! ■

Enthusiasm is sustained for Joe Block, Pat Smith, Debbie Pavick, Becky Fernette, James Haas, Lauren Calvert, Martha and Steve Querin-Schultz, Roger Smith and Becky Ruff—the volunteers that helped clean up the Borah Creek barn. Read more about it on page 31. Photo by Martha Querin-Schultz



Becoming a Prairie Enthusiast

How Outdoor Opportunities Can Begin a Journey

By Dennis Thomson

While walking a prairie path and enjoying the incredible beauty of the surrounding plants, or perhaps while rooting out invasives or collecting seeds, and then wiping sweat off your brow, have you stopped and reflected on why you were here? What were the serendipitous or peculiar pathways that led to you becoming a contributing member of The Prairie Enthusiasts?

Having spent more than seven of my eight plus decades enjoying and fretting about environments on our special "Spaceship Earth," I now find myself more frequently resting and reflecting. And while doing so, I've decided that environmental education is not nearly so simple as learning a technical or homecraft skill. Rather it is part of what makes up a complex component not only in our personal biosystems but also of an organization like The Prairie Enthusiasts.

Environmental education for me was a complicated mix of practical priorities and guidance, a life-long love of the outdoors, personal interest in the complexity, wonder and beauty of diverse world-wide environments, and professional opportunities to study and experience many of those environments. Time spent in atmospheric physics and remote sensing resulted in global science experiences.

As a youngster the botanical interests of my parents, Olive and John Thomson, almost submerged my siblings and me into the biological world around us, whether we liked it or not. We were constantly, informally schooled into becoming conscious of rocks and trees with lichens, forest floors with mosses, insects, animal life in the soil, the nature of native plants and "weeds," trees and their uses in human history, the diversity and uses of garden plants, etc. In short, almost every waking hour included some element of plant, animal, and human life, evolution and death.

Formal elementary and secondary education for the Thomson children was pretty rudimentary, 3-R's in a one room country school and marginal high school preparation, at least in a college-prep sense, for continuing university studies. Perhaps, because I had become saturated with botany, and was fascinated with machinery and electric gadgets, not bioscience but rather physics became my professional passion.

Now, in retrospect I understand how important the study of relatively "simple" physical systems, even modern quantum mechanics, helped me develop a much deeper appreciation for the complexity of non-linear, and seemingly chaotic, ecosystems. Among those, our beloved prairies are a wonderful example.

In spite of the astounding advances in computer hardware and

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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Cover photo of Schurch-Thomson Prairie at dawn by Jim Wilson

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Executive Director's Message

Gratitude for Our Shared Commitment

Debra Behrens, Executive Director



Visiting Dean Huisingsh and his rare seed orchard.
From left: Laura Dufford (Northwest Illinois Chapter),
Debra Behrens and Dean Huisingsh.
Photo by Jay Rutherford (Northwest Illinois Chapter)

Climate change is impacting all life on earth. Our responses to the challenges we face have been slow and inadequate. Our leaders have not done enough, and their actions display a greater concern for politics than preservation of our planet. In the face of this and with a constant bombardment of bad news competing for our attention, it is easy to give in to cynicism and lose hope. Please don't.

We at The Prairie Enthusiasts believe there is a different path. It is a journey that starts with a spark of curiosity, leads to a greater appreciation for the land, and ultimately generates a sense of wonder that inspires us to take action. And these actions matter. Together, we are protecting rare and resilient ecosystems through our collective wisdom, energy, and resources. Whatever your abilities, there is a place for you in our community. We need your help.

Adaptation has generally become accepted as the most sensible approach to living with climate change. But if that means compromising on striving toward the good simply because it is hard, I urge you not to surrender yet. Prairies and oak savannas are already climate adapted. They have evolved over thousands of years and climate variations. Some wonder why, if these systems are so resilient, they are among the most threatened systems on the planet.

We have lost all but an estimated .01% of the once vast prairies of the Upper Midwest to the plow

and continuing development pressures. People are to blame for this loss, but we can also be a source of hope for protecting, rebuilding, and re-establishing these abundant, biodiverse ecosystems that have evolved to depend on human stewardship.

According to the [World Wildlife Fund](#), Indigenous Peoples care for 80% of Earth's biodiversity. The remnant prairies, oak savannas and other fire-dependent ecosystems we cherish in the Upper Midwest are the result of their long relationship with the land. As we reflect on Indigenous Peoples' day, we honor and express deep gratitude for the native nations of our region for their stewardship, their understanding of the natural balance we are all responsible for preserving, and for the gift of prescribed fire to restore the health and diversity that have made the prairie so resilient.

In this season of gratitude, I want you to know how much I appreciate you for being part of The Prairie Enthusiasts community. The countless acts of generosity you have contributed to our work together this year have been a great source of inspiration for me. I have hope with every acre that gets protected. I have hope when a new volunteer shows up ready to learn. And I have hope with each new member who joins us. I hope you are experiencing the deep rewards that come from contributing to the preservation of biodiversity in the place you call home. I wish you peace as you celebrate with loved ones, and joy in the work we'll do together in the coming year. ■



Exploring the Northwest Illinois Chapter's seed processing center. Jim Rachuey and Debra Behrens.
Photo by Debra Behrens



A Rare and Special Place

Story and Photo by Laurie Arzaga

On August 26th, The Prairie Enthusiasts' Coulee Region and Minnesota Driftless chapters, along with landowners Dave Hey and I, co-hosted a hike on the Brownsville Bluff prairie. Over 40 people gathered to enjoy the prairie's late-summer beauty and to learn about the upcoming restoration planned to begin this fall through a partnership with The Prairie Enthusiasts, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and Minnesota Land Trust. Like many remnant prairies, the Brownsville Bluff Prairie has become overgrown with trees, brush and invasive species. The event was the kickoff for the project and an opportunity for hikers to get a "before" picture of the prairie.

Given the large number of people, we had several featured speakers provide in-depth information at various stops along the route up the bluff prairie. At the first stop, hike leader Justin Nooker gave an overview of prairies and why they are important. At the next stop, Eric Ressel, a member of The Prairie Enthusiasts, talked about how the area looked in the past and shared some old photos.

As the hike continued up the increasingly steep bluff, many people found that by stopping often and taking time to breathe in the sights and sounds around them, they were not only able to accomplish something they never thought they could, but they also found amazing things going on right at their feet....like tiny land snails, funny grasses with little mustaches, and mysterious holes in a sandy blowout.

At the next stop, Jacob Hernandez, a private

lands biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provided information about the partnership and the plans for restoration. At our final stop at the top of the bluff, while everyone enjoyed the spectacular view of the Mississippi River valley, Stephen Winter, Minnesota Driftless Chapter Chair, gave a fascinating talk on rattlesnakes. He even inspired a Brownsville community member to sign up to become a volunteer for the Minnesota DNR Rattlesnake Responder program.

The hike concluded with some hikers making their way back down the bluff and others opting for a slow, meandering hike through the forest with a stop at a burial mound that sits at the top of the bluff and overlooks the Mississippi River. We were fortunate to have soil scientist Peter Hartman there to point out a collapsed sinkhole as we walked down the trail past the tall walls of an old quarry.

There is much work to be done, but with this partnership, Dave and I are hopeful that we will be able to restore some of the formerly diverse habitat that is so vital to all the incredible creatures that call the prairie home. Overall, it was a beautiful day on the prairie, spent with people who share our passion for preserving and protecting this rare and special place. ■

Above: Stephen Winter shares information about timber rattlesnakes and their ecology, as well as the Minnesota Timber Rattlesnake Response Program during the Brownsville Bluff Hike. Clouds kept participants cool during this outing.



*Birding is just one way to engage younger people. Juliet Moderow identifying birds with her daughter, Willow. Read more about them on page 22
Photo by Adam Moderow*

software-supporting algorithms, and knowing (e.g., that state-of-the-art weather and climate models) are still far from meeting societal expectations and needs, modeling of even simple ecosystems is likely at least a hundred-fold more difficult. It's about like trying to model weather down to the scales of turbulence. The dynamics of ecosystems are so complex and non-linear that neither observations nor computer resources are anywhere close to meeting scientific interests and societal needs. In fact, in the case of modeling biosystems, it may well be that the best models are nature itself.

Having offered some personal background and perspective, let me now address the point of this essay.

For a half century, my wife Joan (dec.) and I had the opportunity to observe the work and growth of The Prairie Enthusiasts. Sadly, but recognizing reality, we've also experienced the loss of many dedicated members who were instrumental in fertilizing our participation and contributions to the organization. By virtue of geographic realities, our family's participation was primarily from afar. And to no small extent what The Prairie Enthusiasts was doing with our "Nittany Knoll" (now Schurch-Thomson Prairie) was no different than the all-consuming stewardship and conservation activities which we had concurrently in progress on our home farm property in central Pennsylvania.

In that regard our children also experienced a kind of biological submersion and education, albeit from far less knowledgeable parents than mine. By comparison, Erik and Heather's educations in conservation were

accomplished almost by our benign neglect. Fortunately, both got off to a good start with stellar primary and secondary educations in the State College schools. Their high school courses even included opportunities for field work abroad.

Alas, as a consequence of our increasingly urbanized society, fewer young people now can experience nature-connected growth. Instead, it is necessary for us to have established and well-organized programs which can provide experience, educational materials, and opportunities to participate in outdoor activities. Outdoor sports are great but playing on artificial turf surfaces is not connecting to nature. Yes, there are many worthwhile programs through Scouts and 4-H, summer camps, university-associated science camps, etc. But I sense there is still a great need for organizations like The Prairie Enthusiasts to fully engage and support young people who have developing interests and potential in biology, zoology, entomology, ecology, marine and climate science, etc.

Saving unique and precious bits and pieces of Earth has been appropriately the primary mission of The Prairie Enthusiasts since its founding. And it has been wonderfully successful at doing so. But, we need also to look to the future. The majority of the organization's membership is over 65. However, there are ample opportunities for younger people to get involved, get hands-on learning experiences from experts, and contribute to the sustainability of these precious places. Interested people can attend the many field trips, classes, or work parties that are on the [events calendar](#). Or, contact a chapter directly to see how each person's unique skillset can contribute to the cause.

The Prairie Enthusiasts need a community as diverse as the prairie, and in doing so, the organization can be both stable and resilient. ■

Want to support the next generation through education?

Dennis Thomson has offered a generous match of up to \$25,000 for the Olive and John Thomson Internship Endowment. That means you can double your impact! Use the envelope included and write "Olive and John Thomson Internship Endowment."



Canada Goldenrod

Story and Photos by Vance Baker

I profess to honor and celebrate the generalists of the natural world. We all marvel at the hummingbird of the Ecuadorian rainforest that has evolved its bill to fit the shape of one particular flower, but it is the generalists of the world that hold the future promise of the planet.

The generalists have adapted to and flourished in the urban and suburban landscapes in which humanity has created. Crows, starlings, English sparrows, pigeons, robins, racoons, grey squirrels, opossums, coyote, deer, foxes, rats, mice, carp, cockroaches, mosquitoes; these are the species that will survive and provide the stock for the explosion of evolution that will follow the impending ecological collapse.

Botanically speaking, weeds of course are in this category, having evolved with human agriculture. In the world of the North American prairie, Canada goldenrod is the generalist that seems to be a survivor. With less than 1% of our native prairies left, all prairie species are to be valued. Goldenrod has not only survived the great extinction of the prairie, it has flourished. Leave an agricultural field vacant and non-native grasses and weeds soon take over. Within a few years, goldenrod appears and before too long it will dominate the field.

Solidago canadensis is a prolific and adaptable plant. It grows in dry roadside sites and wet boggy areas. It can be two to four feet tall and even six feet in wetter areas. The flowers that bloom from late July through October have yellow rays and are arranged into small heads on branched pyramidal shaped inflorescences (the arrangement of flowers on a plant). It can spread by its roots or rhizomes and thus forms dense clones. It is grazed by deer as well as cattle and horses. The pollen and nectar is utilized by bees, wasps, flies, beetles and butterflies including the monarch. It is a preferred food of bumblebees and paper wasps.

Early on in my prairie restoration project, Canada goldenrod dominated, occupying 60% or more of the planting. In a futile move, typical of those early days,

I even took to pulling it. Pretty as the August carpet of yellow it was, I still lamented the lack of biodiversity that its dominance entailed.

Slowly over the years however, other species have been moving in and the goldenrod has been slowly losing its grip over my Fairy Prairie. This process took an exponential leap when dodder showed up one summer after a burn. This parasitic plant forms bizarre spider-web-looking tangles of orange filaments that wrap around the stems and weave in and out of the host plants it feeds on. It seems to prefer Canada goldenrod and large clones were killed off. Within a year or two, a more diverse mix of forbs moved in. Smaller infestations have since continued and chip away at the remaining goldenrod.



Cluster of seeds from dodder, a parasitic plant.

This year's drought seems to have delt another blow. In late May, a larvae preferentially attacked the goldenrod. Leaves were covered with the small, half inch long black larvae and 50 to 70% of the foliage was eaten. Although the Goldenrod Leaf Beetle or *Thirrhabda canadensis* has likely been there all along, this year produced a bumper crop, and with a drought soon to follow the defoliation, the Canadian goldenrod took a pretty big hit.



Goldenrod leaves damaged by Goldenrod Leaf Beetle.

The big bluestem decided not to waste the energy on tasseling out and producing seed this year, so the forbs of the prairie are in full view, not the view usually present in August. It's an exciting sight, as the diversity of the area increases. Cream gentian, stiff goldenrod, grey-headed cone flower, rosinweed, compass plant and prairie dock

are flourishing. In September, showy goldenrod and sky-blue aster will take over.

Finishing up my evening stroll lately, I came across a healthy, tall and green stand of Canada goldenrod coming into full bloom. I was so happy to see it, its lushness and profusion of blooms was beautiful. How much more I appreciate this survivor when it has a more proportional slice of the prairie.

I am grateful for the beauty, bounty of food and habitat provided by Canada goldenrod.

I am grateful for Canada goldenrod holding the space of my new prairie until others could arrive and flourish.

I am grateful for Canada goldenrod stepping aside and allowing diversity and the stability it provides, to develop. ■



Gary Birch standing amidst the fruits of his efforts at Lake Kegonsa State Park

Ecologist's 2023 Update

Story and Photos by Dan Carter



This year got off to an inauspicious start when ten thousand years of ecological memory was stripped away by a bulldozer to make way for a shortcut at an airport in Rockford, Illinois. Then there was late snow, then drought under a relentlessly pale midday sun. I felt this year in the pit of my stomach. Still, prairies continue their abundant existence, and people rejoice with them. These are inspiring and radical protests in the

face of awful local, regional, and global challenges. A wise person told me in so many words that the prairie is worth having had and having now, even if not forever. We strive to do what we can do in our time. I am very lucky to see people doing what they can on a regular basis.

By the time this is printed I will have visited between 65 and 70 places with the people that care for them this year. This work was initially made possible with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund, but this season continued with support from our donor community. I am so grateful for the opportunity to support your efforts. My work is a source of inspiration, and I hope these highlights will inspire you too.

One was the dramatically increased expression



of prairie on Tim Welsh's property in Allamakee County, Iowa following burning and continued peeling back of woody vegetation along the edge. I visited last year, but I stopped through again to collect and press a specimen of a sedge that—unbeknownst to me at the time of my first visit—is rare in Iowa (savanna running sedge, *Carex siccata*) but abundant on Tim's prairie.

Another was the bluff prairie of Justin Nooker and Dan Winkler in Fillmore County, Minnesota. They were held up by something to do with an airport badger nuisance, so I had time to climb up to a high rock and take in their hard work and the ebb and flow of time against the bluff and its old growth sod with abundant false toadflax (*Comandra umbellata*), hoary puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*), short green milkweed (*Asclepias viridiflora*), and tuberous Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum plantagineum*).

I visited the property of Lisa and Rodney Wilson in Crawford County, Wisconsin, with Steve Querin-Schultz. It turned out that their little bit of old pasture supported abundant wood betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*), showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*), and sky-blue aster (*Symphyotrichum oolentangiense*). It's nice to tell people that they have a good start already at the outset! Their case also highlights just how important it is to know what you have before you get started.

Gary Birch showed me woodlands at Lake Kegonsa State Park in Dane County, Wisconsin where he has conducted volunteer stewardship for many years. There, yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*) hangs on in special spots where leaf litter and taller vegetation haven't been able to smother it. Wood betony introduced by Gary is beginning to subdue the taller, more degraded

woodland vegetation and restore it to a lower, healthier structure. It's a site where one can begin to imagine what mesic woodlands once were and what their future could be in stark contrast to what most have become after two centuries of neglect or misuse.

The efforts of Jennell and Mark Ballering in Sauk County, Wisconsin offer another glimpse of what's possible in the woods. They have brightened their timber with understory thinning and very frequent fire, and the response is overwhelmingly positive. Theirs is one of very few examples of what brightening and prescribed fire can do in oak woodland and mesic mixed hardwoods alike.

This is just fraction of what I saw that energized, educated, and made me hopeful this past year. If you are interested in a property visit in 2024, feel welcome to get in touch (DCarter@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org). In your email, please include some background and location information. You can contact me with prairie, savanna, woodland, or sedge meadow questions even if you aren't requesting a visit. If I've visited you already, know that I enjoy receiving updates about how things are going, and I can stop by again if my calendar allows. ■

Top Left: Sand milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*) blooming abundantly on Tim Welsh's Prairie

Top Middle: Close-up of restored mesic woodland ground layer vegetation at Lake Kegonsa State Park

Top Right: Tuberous Indian plantain on the prairie of Dan Winkler and Justin Nooker

Paying Attention to the Season During Restoration Work

By Jim Rogala

Prairie restoration land managers, whether landowners or those working on public or protected lands, typically have long lists of management needs. I'm no exception. My list contains many lifetimes of work I could do, so I prioritize tasks and tackle urgent needs first. These are typically long-range plans that span years and even decades. However, there is another component to selecting which task to work on at a shorter time scale: seasons of the year.

I've always had this seasonal aspect of restoration in my mind, but that is not very conducive to sharing it with others. As a member of The Prairie Enthusiasts Education Committee, I proposed doing a simple guide to formalize the seasonal aspect of prairie restoration.

There are many factors that contribute to selecting which time of the year someone might do a specific task. Some examples are:

Plant Physiology

The translocation of materials in plants can vary drastically by season, not only in the rate of movement but also the dominance of some movement over others across seasons. Also, there are times when most of the energy in a plant is above ground, and other times it is below ground.

Preparing for Upcoming Tasks

Some tasks are simply preparing for other tasks. If the work is not done to meet the requirements of performing an upcoming task, then you may have to delay doing something for a year.

Herbicide Efficacy

Herbicides have temperature ranges that are best suited for their effectiveness.

Snow Cover

The presence of snow is a good time for some tasks and not good for others.

Keeping such factors as these in mind, it becomes obvious that performing some restoration work is best done in a particular season. Some examples are:

When cutting and treating trees and brush, consider the optimum season to best translocate the herbicide to the location of action. If it is too cold or too hot, and the translocation is slow. Oil-based herbicides also volatilize at high temperatures.

For non-herbicide methods such as repeated cutting, summer is the preferred time because most of the energy stores are above ground. For clonal species, it is critical to not cut in fall or winter if you are not applying herbicide, as this will promote resprouting from nodes.

Mowing firebreaks in preparation for a spring burn should be done before winter to minimize dry debris on the break.

Brush pile burning is best done in the winter when there is snow on the ground.

The work of the Education Committee, with helpful reviews from our Science Advisory Group, yielded a document titled: *Quick guide to restoration practices: Timeframes and general methods*. The guide has been posted on our blog and is available as a pdf (ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Guide-to-Seasonal-Restoration-Practices). We hope those that are doing restoration find the guide informative and useful in planning seasonal activities. And, as you might notice, there are no seasons with nothing to do! ■

Eliminating Buckthorn Without the Use of Herbicide

Story and Photos by Jon Rigden

Buckthorn is an invasive shrub that has infested many of the forests and bluff prairies of the Upper Midwest, including Hixon Forest in La Crosse where our Coulee Region Chapter has been working to control it. It is known that cutting buckthorn without treating the stump with an herbicide causes it to resprout. It is not known how frequently or how long buckthorn must be cut before it doesn't resprout, or if it is even feasible to kill buckthorn by just repeatedly cutting it. Friends of the Blufflands has partnered with our chapter to help answer this question by sectioning off an area in Hixon Forest with heavy growth of relatively small buckthorn plants and cutting parts of that area at different frequencies. We hope to be able to determine the minimal frequency that young buckthorn needs to be cut to eliminate it without the use of herbicide.



Typical resprouting after cutting.

A 400-square-foot study plot was chosen for its uniformity of buckthorn growth. The buckthorn was about waist to shoulder high with the diameter of stems mostly about half to three-quarter inch or smaller. This area was cut close to the ground on June 16 with a handheld brush cutter. The cut stems were gathered and removed from the area, then a second pass was made with the brush cutter to assure that all the stems were cut. The plot was marked off and divided into four sections, each measuring 10 by 10 feet. These sections go up the slope from bottom to top. The four sections were cut at four different frequencies (every two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, and eight weeks). A border was also cut around this 400-square-foot plot. The nearby uncut buckthorn was used as a control. Subsequent cuttings were done

from that date until the first hard frost, which occurred on October 25, 2022. It is recognized that new seedlings from the seed bank would appear and must be taken into consideration.

Sections one, two, and three that were cut at two, four, and six-week intervals (three to four times in the period), respectively, had similar growth the next spring with only some minimal regrowth of buckthorn. Section 4 had significantly more regrowth both in the number and height of the plants. It appears that repeatedly cutting small diameter common buckthorn approximately every 3 to 6 weeks starting in mid-June until the first hard frost might be an effective strategy to eliminate most of the buckthorn and be left with very few stems and a much more easily managed population the next year. Of note, the cuttings were done very close to the ground such that almost no leaves were left on any of the plants that had regrown. This might be difficult to replicate in a larger and/or rocky area. This method is also labor intensive.

More details on this study can be found in a blog post at (ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Eliminating-Buckthorn-Without-the-Use-of-Herbicide) ■



Study plot illustrating the sections to be cut at different frequencies.



Save the Bats!

By Jessica Bizub, Alice Mirk and Chris and Nancy Gloe

In late July, the Glacial Prairie Chapter had a unique opportunity to use our brush-clearing skills to help bats. At a significant hibernaculum in Dodge County, bats were experiencing difficulty swarming without predation as the brush was forcing them to swarm lower and in a more condensed mass. The site consists of an abandoned mine owned by UW-Milwaukee, which has documented four of the eight species of bats in Wisconsin (little brown, big brown, eastern pipistrelles, and northern long-eared bats) hibernating onsite, all state-threatened. Their populations have declined since the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome in bats was first detected there in 2015, which can cause bat mortality up to 95% in sites where it is detected. The brush was accelerating the fungus' spread by forcing the bats into smaller spaces. Volunteers expertly cleared the brush and trees obscuring the hibernaculum entries, putting our skills to good use beyond the prairie.

The night prior, a group of volunteers working at the bat site were generously hosted by the Sullivans, local prairie enthusiasts, at their lovely retreat home set on an 18-acre prairie. After a delicious dinner and inspiring walk through the property, a tornado warning interrupted a friendly pool table tournament, providing an exciting lightning and wind show before bed. Everyone survived, and the severe weather only helped us bond more.

In appreciation for our chapter's brush clearing services, our DNR volunteer coordinator arranged for a field trip later where we could meet the bats and those who study them, scheduled for dusk in late August. Chris and Nancy Gloe were able to attend, and they provided the following account:

The scientists on site included DNR staff, researchers from UW-Milwaukee and Virginia Tech

Bat cave workcrew proudly posing with the newly brush-free mine entrance. Photo by Alison Reinthoffer

and students. When we arrived, the researchers had just finished setting up their tent, tables and equipment, were donning their Tyvek suits and rubber gloves, and setting up mist nets near a couple of the mine entrances. The precautions were primarily for the safety of the bats, but also for the researchers.

As night settled on August 28, the bats came swirling en masse from their daytime roosting areas in a behavior known as "swarming." They sometimes appeared as shadows in the near-darkness but, more often, we heard the flurry of little wings and felt air currents as they used their echolocation to dart around us in pursuit of an insect meal.

The researchers worked as a team. We watched as the bats were removed from the nets and put in brown paper bags. They were then weighed, measured, tagged, micro chipped (PIT tagged) and released. By the time we left, about an hour and a half later (perhaps halfway through the operation), approximately forty little brown and eastern pipistrelles bats had been "processed" in this way.

It was an incredible experience that we'll never forget, and it was only possible because of our involvement in The Prairie Enthusiasts! ■



Little brown bat protesting being tagged.

Photo by Chris Gloe

Coming to Nature

Celebrating Volunteer Stories

By Tom Hunt

"Palm warblers overhead," Noel said matter-of-factly craning his neck. We paused to listen and to take in the dappled light along the path. After a moment, he told me a story of an early childhood memory. Much to the delight of his mother, he remembered recognizing a warbler's song as she bathed him in a dishpan at the kitchen sink. His parents were naturalists and caretakers of a state park in southern Ohio. It's no wonder he became a world-class ornithologist and lifelong champion of conservation. One could say he came to conservation almost by birthright.

Like Noel, my earliest memories were of nature. As a feral child I tramped with my dog among the forests, fields, and streams where Tennessee borders North Carolina and Georgia. That experience imbued a love of nature into the marrow of my being. Hunting and fishing later shaped a nascent sense of conservation. Meeting through books Aldo Leopold, E. O. Wilson, Abraham Maslow and so many others during my university studies informed a more nuanced understanding of conservation. The sheepskin molded the clay, but at the heart of the firing I've remained that towheaded Huck Finn of deep Appalachia.

One recent wintery morning, thirty-some hearty souls gathered at the railroad bridge that crosses Whitford Creek, aka WBIC 911900, a small Class I trout stream. The Whitford has more to its story to be sure, but that is for another time. Among the intrepid volunteers were professionals and practitioners, retirees and students, anglers, and conservationists of varying stripes, a cross-section of our cultural milieu. In common we loved nature and were committed to conservation. Why else would you show up for the heavy work of dragging and stacking brush in these harsh conditions? I wondered what memorable experiences, personal epiphanies, or influential people might account for such commitment in that day's group of conservation volunteers. Without question everyone there was sure to have a compelling "coming to nature" story.

Conservation in this story is a big tent inclusive concept espoused by the likes of Muir, Leopold, Hugh Hammond Bennett, Teddy Roosevelt, FDR, Lovelock/Margulis, George Perkins Marsh, Arthur Carhart, Capability Brown and so many more. It also includes

principles and practices ranging from prescribed fire, stream restoration, steady state economics, National Wilderness Policies, land ethics, the beauty of the wild, and beyond.

To paraphrase Leopold, there are two things that interest me. One is the relationship of people to the land and the other is the relationship of people to one another. The first involves the land ethic in which people are merely members of the community rather than possessing dominion over the land. The second addresses the nexus of the natural and humanistic sciences. In support, E.O. Wilson considers the interdependence of natural and social sciences the bedrock of the human condition. We humans are a communal lot that come together naturally in nature to compete and cooperate. We organize, create safe and secure places to improve survivorship, abide by the division of labor, place a premium on social intelligence, and create alliances for mutual benefit. We are almost eusocial, like ants, except that most of us are averse to universal and perpetual caste systems.

Another story. Gene, a retired executive, ardent volunteer, and advocate and leader for community involvement showed up in my office a while back looking for help restoring prairie, woodlands, and wetlands on his family farm. After getting to know him I asked about his secret for raising funds and generating enthusiasm. Gene said, "It's no secret; people want to contribute however they can. They're motivated by projects they relate to, that mean something to them. Often, they need only be asked."

Volunteers show up to activities for myriad reasons. Personal fulfillment is a strong motivator. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory suggests that personal wellbeing increases as life priorities are met. Some of us pursue meaning and purpose in life through the kinds of volunteer activities we choose. We enjoy socializing in a safe friendly environment, gaining a sense of accomplishment, doing some good, exercising mind and body, nurturing a sense of wonder, acting out of obligation, religious beliefs, happenstance, expanding interests and knowledge, artistic expression, and—those brownies. Maslow might suggest that in each situation our personal drivers may vary. For example, at any given time, the need for connectedness with our community rises in importance. Whereas at another time, a deep

sense of altruism might predominate; and, at other times, it may be the physiological fact that something needs doing—nothing more, nothing less.

Our Prairie Enthusiasts community takes pride in knowing the autecology and synecology of every plant and animal species within the realm, but how well do we know our individual members and volunteers? All volunteers are not donors, and all donors are not volunteers. Both contribute, some treasure, some time, or both.

Workforce development is challenging in any organization and especially so in a grassroots organization such as The Prairie Enthusiasts which depends substantially on volunteerism. Certainly, a laissez faire approach to managing volunteers can work, but at scale, effectiveness and efficiency become important. Quantifying capacity, matching skills, interests and reliability, mentoring, training, tracking certifications, all help with work planning, budgeting, and even qualifying for grant applications, donations, and other leveraging opportunities. The adage, “be efficient with things, be effective with people” applies. Learning volunteer stories and what motivates them is important to an organization like this.

During my first summer as Sylvan’s land steward, I was happy to reconnect with a volunteer, Steve Hubner, who had joined Jerry Newman for a photoshoot. Years before, Steve had worked with the county revegetating a mine site. I happened to be at that same place researching biotic enrichment strategies on drastically disturbed sites to see whether we could tilt the successional trajectory in favor of native species. While Jerry photographed the foot slope of a sandstone palisade, Steve and I identified a couple of native species to add to the Sylvan site inventory, a dwarf dandelion, and a *Campanula*. Throughout that summer, I’d occasionally see Steve stop his truck along Sylvan Road where he’d train his binoculars on colorful drifts of Joe-pye-weed that painted the sedge meadow in shades of purple. He was likely on his way to or from The Prairie Enthusiasts’ nearby native plant nursery where he was a regular volunteer. As it turns out, Steve was a founding member of the Prairie Bluff Chapter and had been managing prairie remnants since the early days.

Steve had worked hard dragging and stacking brush during that wintery workday on the Whitford. Shortly after the workday, I caught up with him in the wet mesic prairie west of the old bridge where an emerging basal rosette had caught his attention. He shot off an image, asking Rich for confirmation of his hunch. Sure enough, *Saxifraga pensylvanica*, a conservative

obligate wetland species that was already on our list. Soon a single scape would thrust above the meadow’s sedges bearing a panicle with unremarkable flowers pollinated by little bees, wasps, flies, and beetles too. It was a particularly good year for Saxifrage; random individuals were unusually common on the wetter side of the ecotone between the wet prairie and the toe slope of a steep sandstone hill.

Steve was curious about investigations of surface and groundwater at Sylvan; whether we intended to adjust, maintain, and monitor water levels. Pleasantly surprised by his interest in water, I described ongoing wetland water level monitoring by the Wisconsin DNR. The present road, old railroad grade, and historic drainage ditches influenced the hydrology of Sylvan. More recent investigations are intended to identify options to correct soil water levels and to reconnect the floodway and stream system. Viable options would ensure a stable water level in the high-quality south sedge meadow to the extent seasonal variability and weather patterns can be controlled. North of the railroad grade is a different situation. There, a portion of the sedge meadow needs restoration once the soil water level is corrected, and the floodway is reconnected. Various options such as ditch plugs or stop logs could help correct water levels whereas stream bank reduction paired with reconstructed meander channels could help reconnect the floodway.

Steve and I meandered through the overwintered stalks of rattlesnake master. He paused and volunteered a story. As a Peace Corps volunteer, he lived in Cameroon, West Africa for four years during the early 1970s. He was trained in fisheries and aquaculture. Using simple engineering designs, he helped grow the local capacity to produce fish. Monks, a vernacular term for water level adjustment structures, were located on the deep end of ponds near an earthen dam. These simple ponds captured the plentiful rainfall and attendant runoff. The monks, designed for water level management, impounded or released water depending on the cycle of fish production. He loved the work and the people. He said the decision to return home was difficult. But The Prairie Enthusiasts have been beneficiaries of his choice to come back and help protect, restore, and manage the grasslands in our area.

Noel too worked to protect grassland habitat. The breeding bird atlas project helped quantify the distribution and abundance of birds, critical for policy and management decisions. His work, along with that of others, documented the plummeting population of the grassland songbird guild and further illuminated

the necessity of preserving and restoring one of the most imperiled ecosystems worldwide - grasslands. Measure to manage is the nexus of theorists and practitioners, a mantra for nature enthusiasts everywhere.

Larry Meiller's WPR bird conservation radio shows just aren't the same since Noel died. Noel Jefferson Cutright's legacy continues by virtue of his decorated leadership for promoting citizen science, encouragement of community volunteers, and a web of memories spun in nature. There is a green burial site where the songbirds sing just north of Sylvan and a few miles east of my place. I think of him every time the warblers move through. And Steve will be happy to know that a recent bird survey at that revegetated mine site included several breeding pairs of Henslow's sparrows. Hmmm, maybe there is something to that line in the Field of Dreams movie, "Build it and they will come."

Volunteers dedicated to the conservation of our Upper Midwestern grassland ecosystems are the fabric of our community. Their ideas, knowledge, commitment, experience, and time knit The Prairie Enthusiasts' mission together. Every single person has a compelling "coming to nature" story to tell. ■



A Prairie and Life

Poem and Photo by Patricia Kemmerick

A prairie and life
Change with each season
Fall like death
Brings an end
Remnants of plants
Remain in beautiful displays
Of earthy dried stalks of
Blooms and grasses that once were
Much like memories cherished
Stored in heart and mind
Winter months set in
Snow covers layer by layer
Giving time to rest
To reminisce of time before
Springtime comes
Showers run deep
Tears always do
Bringing growth
Healing too
Summertime shows
A prairie in full array
Wildflowers and grasses galore
Butterflies, bees and more
A sight to behold
Feelings of gratitude
For life fully lived



We All Have Mentors

Story and Photos by Scott Weber

We all have mentors in nearly everything we do, and restoration ecology is no exception. My mentor, Konrad Liegel, is a person you probably don't know, but he had a profound influence on prairie restoration and reconstruction in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. He and I were both students of the late Dr. Paul Jensen who taught ecology, evolution, and field biology at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Paul convinced the college to buy McKnight Prairie, one of the best remnant prairies in western Goodhue County, to serve both as an ecology laboratory and a seed source for restoration projects. Konrad, a student from Plain, Wisconsin, wrote a thesis, "A Guide to the Carleton Arboretum Restoration Project," a fairly comprehensive work. He, along with other enthusiastic students, began restoring a brome grass field, Hillside Prairie, with a combination of seed plots, seedling transplants, and a sod transplant experiment with the UW Arboretum's Curtis and Greene prairies as models.

I was introduced to the prairie project in the spring of 1979 by volunteering for a burn. Back then, we had no burn permit, no official burn plan, and no equipment other than matches, rakes, water jugs, and wet burlap to use as fire swatters, but we did have a general notion of backfires and head-fires and which one to light first. By summer of 1979, the project consisted of two seed plots, 1978 and 1979 spring plantings about an acre a piece, plus the sod transplant area of much smaller size. Konrad graduated in spring of 1978, as did many of the student volunteers, so we were very dependent on the help of Dr. Jensen and Konrad's thesis. I also checked out *The North American Prairie*, by Dr. John Weaver, and tried to use that to identify the grasses in the new prairie, not realizing

Konrad collecting seed for the International Crane Foundation at Muralt Bluff prairie, fall of 1980.

that most of it was still brome grass. That is a revelation that most of us have had at some point: virtually all of the vegetation on our roadsides and farmland is not native to North America. Suddenly every prairie remnant, from McKnight to the big bluestem along the railroad right of way, was precious.

A geology professor, Dr. Ed Buchwald, became the first Arboretum Director and began hiring two to three students in the summer as Arboretum assistants in 1978, and I jumped at the opportunity to work in the Arboretum with my coworker, Dick Mertens, for the summer of 1979. We repaired the trail network from the erosion caused by runoff from the fields the college rented out but also pulled parsnip in the postage stamp prairie remnants, collected seeds for future plantings, watered transplants, and did other maintenance. As far as prairie restoration went, we were greenhorns. By spring of 1980, I was the "burn boss," having completed only one other burn in my life, and no one else was primed to take over the project, so I needed some guidance. Dr. Jensen helped us identify plants and locate seed sources, but none of us had much experience starting a prairie from scratch, so I went in search of Konrad. I needed some education from the guy who wrote the book.

Konrad returned to Wisconsin after graduation to work for the Aldo Leopold Reserve (now Aldo Leopold Foundation) to construct a pre-European settlement vegetation map of the reserve. He also worked at the nearby International Crane Foundation (ICF) planting the first seed plots on ICF's newly purchased farm. Konrad's friend, Charlie Luthin, convinced ICF to include habitat

restoration as part of their conservation message, and Charlie planted ICF's first prairie at their old site closer to Baraboo. A crane disease outbreak at their first site accelerated ICF's need for a new home, and the new site was a great opportunity to do some major restoration of prairie, oak savanna, and wetlands. Our Carleton Natural History Club visited ICF in March 1980, and I asked Konrad if I could be his intern for fall of 1980.

I took the summer of 1980 off from the Arboretum job at Carleton, backpacking with my roommate in the Grand Tetons and North Cascades, and arrived at ICF in mid- August. Konrad assigned me the task of completing the herbarium collection for the site, helping his summer intern, Shelly, finish mapping the oak woodland, writing a guide to prairie seed germination and storage, and, most importantly, collecting and cleaning seed for both a fall 1980 and spring 1981 planting. Konrad kept me very busy!

Back then fall plantings were very experimental and rarely done, so Konrad was taking a big chance, especially since future funding and dedication was never guaranteed. Then, as now, speed matters, and warm season grasses and black-eyed Susans come fast in a spring planting. Fall of 1980 was a wet season, and we harvested a bumper crop of prairie dropseed and many other species from Avoca Prairie, Muralt Bluff, Spring Green and Lone Rock remnants, the UW Arboretum, and wherever else we could find seed. Fortunately, being a non-profit, we had access to seed sources normally off limits to private individuals. If we had known then what we know now, the entire five acres should have been planted in the fall, not just the one-acre plot. The dropseed and most forbs, including the gentian seed collected at Avoca, have done very well there, whereas the spring planting became dominated by tall grass. In retrospect, we wasted a lot of good dropseed and forb seed by planting most of it in the spring.

I returned to Carleton and worked in the Arboretum again in the summer of 1981 with my co-worker, Sue Peterson. Armed with all the knowledge that Konrad bestowed upon us, we not only did trail repair but also sampled the 1978 and 1979 seed plots, learning that brome grass percentage will decrease with fire and competition. We collected seed for another hillside planting, and, based on Konrad's example at ICF, turned our attention to oak savanna. Saving all the savanna oaks suddenly became a top priority. Converting crop land to prairie before government programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and government cost-sharing was difficult since the college needed the

rental income, so Sue and I were free to hack away at the buckthorn and non-oak species in an opening Dr. Jensen's students had studied and managed. That oak opening was the epicenter of the savanna project. Many thanks to Ed for letting us do that at the expense of some trail work.

We completed another seeding, about 1.5 acres, on Hillside Prairie and tilled up another acre or so to prepare for another. We contracted all the tillage work to local farmer, Palmer Fossum. Unfortunately, we didn't have the results from the ICF fall planting, so we planted in spring. There are leadplants and other nice forbs still present after 40 years, but few, if any, dropseed or gentians in those plantings. Eventually the Arboretum Director became a full- time position with several students hired each year, but I'm not sure if Carleton would have as extensive a project as it has now without the vision and commitment of students like Konrad and professors like Paul and Ed. They deserve credit for getting the project going before the college could make a major financial investment.

Konrad also worked on other projects in Sauk County, especially the prairie along Highway 12 in front of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant as a member of the Sauk County Natural Beauty Council (SCNBC), part of a nationwide highway beautification program started by Lady Bird Johnson. After I graduated from Carleton, I worked for the Aldo Leopold Reserve, ICF, the Wisconsin Conservation Corp, and volunteered for the SCNBC board. I was either working for Konrad or following his footsteps. I learned almost every important lesson in prairie reconstruction then: the importance of good seed sources, the diversity of fall plantings, how quickly prairie species establish in nutrient poor soil, and the importance of record keeping. Konrad was also very humble; he knew that each of us is just a temporary link in a long chain of human interactions with our environment. We all have to pass the torch and move on at some point.

Unfortunately for prairies and ecological restoration, Konrad left his job with ICF to go to law school at Cornell and, soon after, moved to Seattle with his sweetheart, Karen, to gain experience in environmental law, and our paths diverged. Conservation has one of the highest education- to- pay ratios of any occupation, so law was probably the best career choice for Konrad, but not a field that I was suited for. I wanted to spend my time out on the prairie collecting seeds forever! ■



Skinner Prairie

By Tom Mitchell

Skinner Prairie was a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts by Jim and Karen Freymiller in 2018. Since then, with support from our donors, the Prairie Bluff Chapter volunteers have been actively managing the 12.10 acre site by removing non-natives, conducting prescribed fires and converting old fields to planted prairie.

Our restoration efforts got a boost with donations from the estates of Robert and Kathryn Richardson, chapter members and natives of Monroe who had a cottage on Skinner Creek a few miles away. A "Seeds for Skinner" fund has been established—a project now in its third year—and we hosted Bob and Kate's sisters, children, grandchildren and in-laws for a tour of Skinner Prairie to see our restorations on a crisp March day after Robert's funeral.

The separate parcels of remnant prairie that we call Big Skinner and Little Skinner are connected by a 50-foot wide access lane—former cropland and pasture dominated by brome grass and weeds. We started to prepare this half-acre "buffer" planting in the summer of 2021 by boom spraying the existing vegetation, and then sowing our seeds onto bare ground in early winter. We purchased local eco-type seeds from area nurseries, selecting 30 species from the plant list for Skinner Prairie. We augmented the seeding with species that we collected from our sites, eight of them within five miles of Skinner.

Our formula for a successful planting has four elements: site preparation, adequate and appropriate seed, weed control, and over-seeding (endlessly). The Skinner planting came up in the spring of 2022 full of weeds—a dense succession of first-year biennials: wild parsnip, musk thistle, yellow and white sweet clover and wild carrot—that we mowed three times last summer to remove excessive shade that can inhibit germination and early growth. We did more mowing this summer, keeping these weeds from setting seed, and by fall some native seedlings including vervain, nodding onion, black-eyed Susan and side oats grama have grown to the flowering stage.

We will interseed/overseed again this fall, tapping

Skinner Prairie after a prescribed burn.

Photo credit Rob Baller

into our "Seeds for Skinner" fund to buy the hard-to-collect species, for example, the violets, yellow star grass, blue-eyed grass and violet wood sorrel. We purchase bulk seed like little bluestem to spread over large areas where we're trying to replace brome grass with native species. Future target areas include both ends of Little Skinner, below the old fence-line at Big Skinner, and the edges of the draws that we are opening up by removing buckthorn and honeysuckle. A larger seeding project will be a grassy waterway in a drainage that flows into Argus School branch, then Bushnell Creek and Skinner Creek.

With its history of grazing (horses and cows until 1946), an under-story of raspberries, thorny shrubs and small trees developed under taller trees in the shady draws of the hillsides at Skinner where we've thinned out the elm and mulberry. We protect the Iowa crab apples and hawthorns from fire, so that they bloom every spring and produce apples and haws in the fall.

Skinner Prairie includes a portion of Skinner Diggings, an early lead mining operation in Green County. The pits—5 to 10 feet deep and up to 20 feet across—are still visible on the landscape, now rimmed with Pasqueflower and prairie dropseed. Hard dolomites and limestones are the rocks at the surface at Skinner,



Group inspecting the prairie. Photo by Nick Faessler

where seams of lead were dug out with pick and shovel as early as 1827 by John B. Skinner (1790-1858), an Ohioan who followed the rush to the lead mining region of Michigan Territory. One historian lists him on an 1828 census as among the eight miners here, two at Skinner Diggings and six at Sugar River Diggings, which were the only two settlements in the county before the Black Hawk War.

The first wagon road in Green County is shown on a



Image from the 1832 surveyor's map showing Skinner's "diggings."

map drawn by Deputy Surveyor George Harrison in May 1832 as running from DeMunn's trading post to Skinner Diggings to Hamilton's Diggings and Galena ("diggings" refers to a mine that's been excavated). The exterior survey of the 16 townships in what would become Green County was conducted by John Mullett; the interior lines were run by Harrison. Their maps and notebooks describe the pre-settlement landscape, and document "diggings" near the corner of sections 2,3,10,11, the present site of Skinner Prairie.

The chapter has a long history with Skinner Prairie that pre-dates its permanent protection. Gary Felder wrote an impassioned plea for protection as development threatened the once 40-acre prairie in December 1988 for the newsletter of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts: "It is not very often that an individual is fortunate enough to find a natural area that satisfies the interests of two hobbies. In my case local pre-settlement and early pioneer history coupled with the search for and enjoyment of Green County's remnant prairie sites. Skinner Prairie fits these criteria like no other site in Green County." Gary Felder is an original member of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts, a grass-roots organization that formed in 1987, then merged with other groups to form The Prairie Enthusiasts. Gary has written many articles about Skinner Diggings and Skinner Prairie. Thirty-five years after he wrote those words, we echo his sentiments. ■



*Triumphant burn crew posing after a prescribed burn at Skinner Prairie.
Photo credit Rob Baller*



*Prairie enthusiasm starting early! Jack stands holding a garter snake during a prescribed burn at Skinner Prairie.
Photo credit Rob Baller*

Moths, Caterpillars and Restoration of Remnants

By Robert J. Marquis

The goal of The Prairie Enthusiasts is to preserve and restore prairies and savannas in the Upper Midwest. By this we mean the protection of the entire ecosystem, not only the plants but also the animals and microbes and all their intricate interactions with those plants and each other. It has long been feared that conservation efforts might result in “empty forests” (or in our case, “empty prairies”) in which the landscape appears to be intact but close-up, many if not all the once known animal inhabitants are missing. A major challenge is to document the effects of prairie and savanna management on the animal participants and their place in prairie food webs.

The St. Croix Valley chapter in conjunction with Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) has managed a small remnant prairie (15 acres) for 18 years. This prairie, known as the Blueberry Hill Prairie, lies on the western bluff (Minnesota side) of the St.

Croix River, just opposite Hudson, Wisconsin. Beginning in 2013, volunteers of the chapter began to convert 11 acres of adjacent agricultural land into prairie. In 2023, the chapter initiated efforts to document the interactions between insects and plants that occur in the Blueberry Hill Prairie.

One particular interaction of interest is that between leadplant (*Amorpha canescens* (Fabaceae)) and the Leadplant Flower Moth (*Schinia lucens* (Noctuidae)) (Swengel and Swengel 2006). The Leadplant Flower Moth occurs from western Michigan to eastern Montana, south to Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, and then again in Florida and South Carolina in the East, and in California and Arizona in the West. On July 6, 2023, Christopher Smith of Minnesota DOT and Wayne Huhnke, a member of The Prairie Enthusiasts and steward of Blueberry Hill Prairie, searched the local population of leadplant on the prairie remnant for the Leadplant Flower Moth. After searching over 500 plants, they found a single moth, which they photographed (Fig. 1). Surveys of lead plant at the Rocky Branch Prairie and the Foster Cemetery Conservation Area, both in the City of River Falls, Wisconsin, revealed no adults this year. The moth is bright mottled pink (Hess and Hatfield 2015, Henderson 2017), and therefore not easily missed.

The Leadplant Flower Moth is endangered in Michigan (Michigan DNR 2023) and Indiana (Indiana DNR 2023), of special concern in Minnesota (Minnesota DNR 2023), and of greatest conservation need in Wisconsin (Wisconsin DNR 2023a). It is highly specialized in habitat, food plant, and phenology, and it is this combination of characteristics that makes



Fig. 1: *Schinia lucens* adult on leadplant, Blueberry Hill Prairie. Photo by Christopher Smith.



it vulnerable. In the Upper Midwest, it is found only on prairie, caterpillars feed only on leadplant, and then only on the flowers and developing fruits of the plant. This lifestyle forces it into a very narrow time window of activity. In the Upper Midwest, we might suspect that caterpillars of this species could also survive and mature on fruits of *Amorpha fruticosa* (indigo bush), given that even highly specialized species often can feed on more than one member of the same plant genus. But there are no feeding records for *A. fruticosa* (Robinson et al. 2002), perhaps because that plant in Wisconsin and Minnesota grows in moist woodlands, along streams, and in floodplains. The moth does occur outside of the range of *A. canescens*, meaning that it must feed on additional host plant species.



Fig. 2: Black light setup before sunset (left) and after in the dark (right). Photos by R. Marquis

After finding the moth adult, the chapter held its first black-lighting event at Blueberry Hill Prairie on July 25, 2023 (Fig. 2). One goal was to attract more adults of this species to get a better sense of the population size. *Schinia lucens* adults are attracted to ultraviolet lights, establishing that they do fly at night (The Lepidopterist's Society 1983, 1984). The other goal of black lighting was to more broadly survey the moth species that occur at that prairie.

No Leadplant Flower

Moths came to the lights that night, perhaps because it was past the flying date of adults. Using a beating sheet placed under lead plants, however, and gently shaking the plants, we were able to find two caterpillars suspected to be of the species. We reared one to a late instar, photographed it (Fig. 3), and then returned it to Blueberry Hill Prairie. The photos match those published online (identification by J. Sorgaard, pers. comm.). The caterpillar ate only developing fruits even though stems and leaves of leadplant were made available. At this



Fig. 3: Late instar caterpillar of *Schinia lucens*, collected on leadplant at Blueberry Hill Prairie. Photo by R. Marquis

time, seven other species of Lepidoptera are known to feed on leadplant parts (Hess and Hatfield 2015, R. Henderson, pers. comm.). None of them are sufficiently similar enough to confuse them with members of the genus *Schinia*.

Given the decimation of North American prairie, it is not surprising to learn that six of eight species of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) listed as endangered or threatened in Wisconsin are prairie and savanna species (Wisconsin DRN 2023b), and all nine endangered or threatened Lepidoptera species in Minnesota are of prairie or savanna (Minnesota DNR 2023). A twelve-year survey of prairie and savanna sites in the Chicago area never or rarely encountered 44% of the insect species that are considered prairie/savanna specialists for the region (Panzer et al. 2010). All is not without hope, however. Even small prairie remnants, if of high quality, are not "empty," as they can harbor prairie specialists (Panzer et al. 2010). In addition, restoration of prairie can be effective in augmenting species diversity and abundance. In Iowa, restored prairie begins to approach remnant prairies in moth diversity after seven years (Summerville et al. 2007). Restoration of prairie in Wisconsin, resulting in increased abundance of leadplant and the leadplant flower moth, further suggests that management can be an effective tool to recovering interactions (Henderson 2017). We will continue to monitor the status of *Schinia lucens* at Blueberry Hill Prairie, and at the other sites managed by the St. Croix Valley Chapter. ■

Read this story on our website's blog to see Robert's citations about the Leadplant Flower Moth.



The Prairie Enthusiasts

SAVE THE DATE!

2024 Virtual Conference

Wednesday February 7 through Saturday February 10

This year, we're exploring the history and science of prairies. This virtual conference will have sessions for all prairie and savanna knowledge-levels. Whether you're a beginner with prairies, or a deep-rooted Prairie Enthusiast, there will be something for everyone! Session details and registration will be available in December.

Opening Keynote



Jed Meunier

Jed Meunier is an ecologist and research scientist within the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry. His research interests center on understanding how forces of climate and disturbance drive ecological change and how we can in turn manage for resilient systems. His

dissertation research was on fire ecology in northern Mexico investigating spatial and temporal aspects of fire in relation to climate and land-use over several centuries. Jed received his M.S. in the Wildlife Ecology Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Department his great-grandfather, Aldo Leopold, started in 1933, where he studied the effects of hunting on declining American woodcock populations. Jed considers himself lucky to spend his time asking questions and through applied research to assist in the management of Wisconsin's many treasures.

Featured Keynote



Justin Thomas

Justin is the Science Director for NatureCITE and the Director of the Institute of Botanical Training. In both positions he conducts ecological and taxonomic research and instructs plant identification and ecological workshops. He holds a M.S. degree in Botany from Miami University and a B.S. degree in Biology from

the University of Missouri, and has twenty-five years of professional experience as a systems/process ecologist and a plant taxonomist. Justin also teaches Plant Biology and Vegetation of the Ozarks classes at Missouri University of Science and Technology, is the co-author of the Ecological Checklist of the Missouri Flora, holds a research associateship at Missouri Botanical Garden, is considered a leading authority on the genus *Dichanthelium* (rosette grasses; second largest genus of vascular plants in eastern North America), and serves as a scientific advisor to several conservation organizations.

Questions

(608) 676-0985 or Info@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org



Mélusine: Birds of Many Feathers

Written by Geraldine V. Oades-Sese, Ph.D.

Illustrated by Franchesca Guerrero

Review by Juliet Moderow



I am currently a board member and education chair of the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society in Freeport, Illinois. For many years, it has always been my goal to share the wonderful world of birds with people of all ages. It is also important to me to make sure birding is inclusive to all people. As a woman of color and a daughter of immigrant parents, I'm not quite the image of a typical birder. However, thanks to many organizations increasing their inclusivity in the birding community, we are now able to see the birding world become more diverse and welcoming!

I am also mother of a bird-loving five-year old daughter who can already identify around 20 birds by their sounds and appearance. She also enjoys reading, so it is important to me that the books that she reads can show the diverse world that she lives in. In addition, she is biracial

and learns some of her grandparents' first language (Konkani) every time she visits with them. I try to ensure that my daughter is always reminded of where she came from and is accepting of others around her.

This is why I wanted to share a review of this amazing children's book. This story captures the joy of a young birder named Mélusine who is on an adventure to discover a mysterious bird with a song that she does not recognize. What makes this book different from most children's books about birds is that it not only teaches children about the diversity of birds, but it also shows the diversity of people as well.

We first meet Mélusine as she wakes up excited to start her day with a birding adventure. She looks out the window and says hello to a vocalizing red-bellied Woodpecker, tapping and "churring" on a tree trunk. She then embarks downstairs and greets her mother in Tagalog, which is one of the languages spoken in the Philippines. It is here that you begin to notice how unique and special this book is. We not only learn about the birds and their songs and calls, but we also learn about many languages around the world. Throughout the book, you will see Mélusine explore her surroundings and meet a variety of birds around her as she tries to identify her mysterious bird that she recently heard. Along the way, she also interacts with the people around her using different greetings in various languages including Hindi, French, Haitian Creole, Australian, Polish, Swedish, Afrikaans, Japanese, Spanish, and Chinese. All of the phrases are translated in parentheses within the story, but also provided in a language glossary at the end of the book. The book creatively reveals any bird vocalization and any multicultural phrase in a different color so it stands out.

The illustrations by Franchesca Guerrero are quite splendid as well. It shows the beautiful colors of the world in both birds and people. I look back at some of the books I had as a child and wish I had books like these. I am thankful that my daughter will be able to see herself in this book as a young birder like Mélusine.

My favorite part of the book features Mélusine walking through a marketplace filled with a variety of people and bird species. Within the story you will read, "Like her feathered friends, people come in many different colors, sizes, and shapes—and with different abilities," which really captures what the book is all about. It is a lovely page illustrating the beauty of the world around us. Another great part of the book is that Mélusine keeps a life list, which is a fun way to keep children engaged in the birding hobby. There is also a section about the birds featured in the story, with their descriptions, fun facts, and QR codes to hear song recordings from the Macaulay Library.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as our family does. This would make a great gift to any young birder. In fact, there is more to come in the Mélusine series as she explores more of the planet for more birding adventures!

This book is ideal for children ages 4 to 8. The author also has developed a special section on her website for a Mélusine Birding Club and provides resources for parents and teachers.

You can find the paperback and hardcover editions available through <https://kiddiewinkspublishing.com/> via Shopify. ■

Chapter Updates

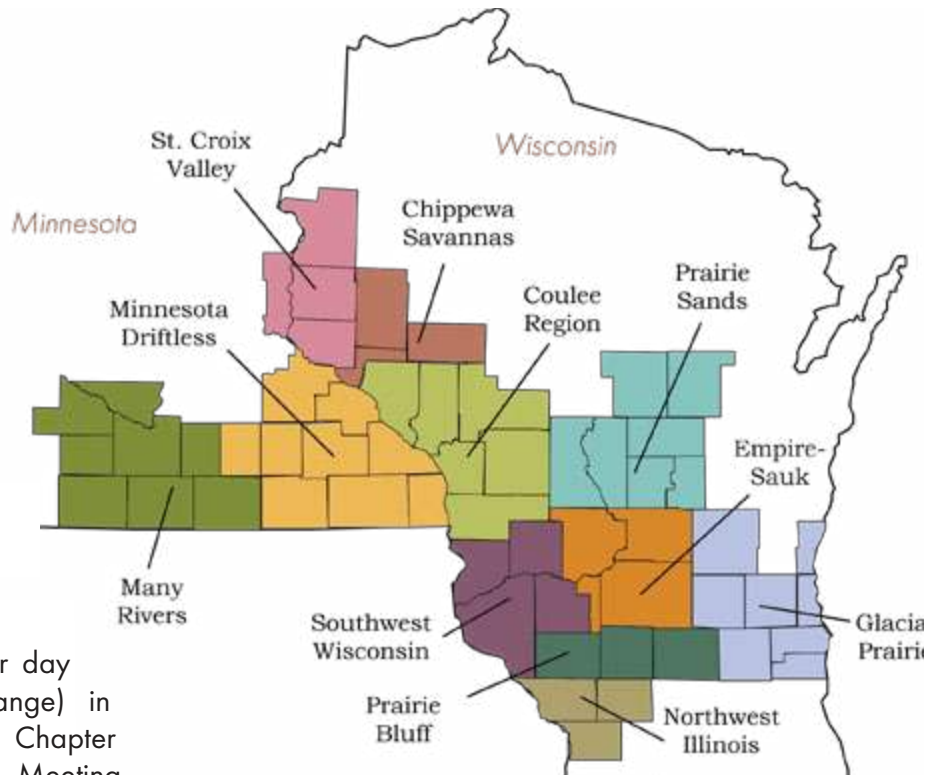
Many Rivers Hosts The Prairie Enthusiasts Annual Meeting & Picnic

By Jim Vanderharr

July 16 was a beautiful summer day (although smokey, thanks climate change) in Southern Minnesota. The Many Rivers Chapter hosted The Prairie Enthusiasts Annual Meeting and Picnic. The venue was the Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter Minnesota. The day's agenda included two tours, a pulled pork lunch (with pot luck contributions) and a short business session. Eight of the eleven chapters were represented and presented highlights of their activities. President, Jim Rogala relayed reports from the chapters that could not attend.

Charles Farrow, an MSU-Mankato student, gave a short presentation outlining the potential use of drone technology in the management of prairies. He then gathered participants outside to demonstrate his drone and took aerial photos of the group.

An unofficial and unaudited head count was 57



participants; approximately 40 people took part in the tours.

The Gustavus Adolphus Arboretum was established in 1973 on 125 acres of farmland adjacent to the campus in St. Peter. In addition to the 70 acres of restored prairie, the arboretum also showcases the other biomes native to Minnesota.

Bison were introduced to Minneopa State Park in the early 2000's. 325 acres of the park were fenced and are now home to between 30 and 40 animals (considered maximum carrying capacity). The current herd is over 35—include 13 new newborns from this spring. This

*Picnic attendees explore Kasota Prairie SNA.
Photo by Sarah Barron*



herd is recognized as almost 100% genetically pure, meaning no cross breeding with cattle. The males from this year's crop will be culled and sent to other similar projects throughout the state and region. This will prevent inbreeding and encourage genetic diversity. You are not guaranteed to see them as you drive through their range as they are sometimes occupying not-so-visible spaces in their environment. The "Bison Gods" were with us on picnic day and our group of enthusiasts got a good look.

The Kasota Prairie SNA is a 45-acre site situated on an extensive rock terrace 70 feet above the Minnesota River Valley between Mankato and St. Peter. The Kasota Prairie is named for its view, the word kasota from the Dakota language meaning "a cleared place." This important prairie site is now part of a large prairie complex on adjacent lands and has been part of a long, contentious and litigious battle with the Unimin Corporation that had plans to strip the prairie and mine the silica sand below it for petroleum frac extraction. Unimin is now in bankruptcy, so the future of the surrounding acreage is in limbo.

The gathering adjourned midafternoon and was deemed a success. We're grateful to all who joined us, and for all those who helped make this event a success!

Empire-Sauk

Annual Picnic Highlights

By Willis Brown

Members of the Empire-Sauk Chapter gathered at Pleasure Valley Conservancy on July 23rd for the chapter annual picnic. Pleasure Valley is a 215-acre property owned and managed by members Ken Wade and Pat Trochlell of which 207 acres are in a conservation



*View of Blue Mounds from Parrish Savanna.
Photo by Ken Wade*

easement held by The Prairie Enthusiasts. The property contains oak savanna, wetlands, restored prairie and woodlands. It is adjacent to the 43-acre Parrish Oak Savanna State Natural Area, which is itself adjacent to the 4.2-acre Wilken restored prairie, both owned by The Prairie Enthusiasts. After the potluck, a brief meeting was held where Willis Brown and Amy Dubruiel were re-elected chapter chair and secretary respectively. Immediately following the meeting, about 30 or so attendees either hiked directly up Parrish Oak Savanna or meandered through Pleasure Valley Conservancy before climbing the slope up Parrish Oak Savanna for a view of Blue Mounds State Park at sunset. Thanks to Ken and Pat for hosting this great event! ■



*Giordano Management committee.
Photo by Robert Baller*

New Land Management Committee Formed

By Robert Baller

A new Empire-Sauk Chapter land management committee has formed for the newly-acquired 40-acre Giordano Oak Barrens and Sand Prairie in Columbia County. The site is near Lake Wisconsin, north of Lodi, east of Poynette. It is not open to the public due to the occurrence of rare species. The committee met Saturday August 19 to eat Mooseburgers at the local tavern and post property markers, assess the site's management needs, begin formulating a management plan, and evaluating what allowed uses of the preserve might be appropriate. Giordano preserve is sandy, partly prairie, partly wooded. Volunteers interested in the committee or in helping with management are welcome to contact Rich Henderson at tpe.rhenderson@tds.net. ■



Coulee Region

Chapter Update

By Justin Nooker

Coulee Region Chapter had a handful of field trips hosted by landowners this summer. These included a Botanical Foray documenting Monroe County plants, a Butterflies and Other Insects hike at Prairie Haven, a tour of the Brownsville Bluff Prairie (see the earlier article by Laurie Arzaga on page 5), a hike at Rogala Prairies, and a field trip at the Holland Sand Prairie. As announced in our e-News, our chapter is planning to have weekly workdays, with some collaborative workdays with Friends of the Blufflands this fall. The chapter is also planning to host a prescribed fire burn school. Look for these future events in our e-News, on our chapter Facebook page, or on the website's [Events Calendar](#). ■

A Successful Summer of Snipping Sumac Sprouts

By Jim Rogala

Many of the prairies in the Coulee Region can become dominated by sumac clones. Although sumac is a valuable native shrub, it can shade out other plants in prairies. Our chapter has been controlling sumac using a non-herbicide method of double-cutting (info on the method on our blog: [Herbicide-Free Land Management: Double-Cutting Clonal Trees](#)). Cutting all the stems in the clone twice a year (~July 1 and August 1) for a few years offers long-term control of the clone. I used this method years ago at my property and now work with other chapter members to address sumac problems on lands we help manage.

Over the last 3 years, we've gotten sumac under control at Rogala Prairies, Zoerb Prairie and Lookout Prairie in the La Crosse blufflands, and several clones at

Marcie O'Connor explains management techniques and history of Prairie Haven during the Butterflies and Other Insects of Prairie Haven field trip. One hi-lite of the trip was an Edward's Hairstreak butterfly.
Photo by Justin Nooker

Holland Sand Prairie. This summer, we either continued or started sumac cutting at Mathy Bluff Prairie, Stry Prairie and Juniper Prairie in the La Crosse blufflands, a bluff prairie by Ferryville, and several new clones at Holland Sand Prairie. The Friends of the Blufflands organization have helped us at several of the La Crosse blufflands sites. Although the task requires working in hot summer conditions and often on steep slopes, it is rewarding to see the progress made in removing the sumac canopy over the prairie species at these sites. Thanks to all of those that helped get the work done over the 12 days it took to complete it. ■

Prairie Bluff

Chapter Update

By Rebecca Gilman and Charles Harmon

A good way to convey the activities of the Prairie Bluff Chapter through spring and summer of 2023 is simply to provide an overview of the prescribed burns and organized group workdays in which our members participated.

This year, the spring burn season stretched from late March to the middle of May. During that period, the Prairie Bluff Chapter conducted no fewer than twenty prescribed fires. Chapter members brought the rejuvenating use of flame to prairie ecosystems belonging to private property owners, as well as to publicly-owned natural areas such as York Prairie State Natural Area and Yellowstone Savannah State Natural Area.



*Burn crew for Butenhoff Prairie prescribed fire.
Photo credit Jerry Newman*

Most of the spring fire, however, was laid to properties managed by the Prairie Bluff Chapter itself. Portions of Meinert Prairie, Vale Prairie, Muralt Bluff, and Iltis Savanna (adjoining Muralt Bluff)—as well as other properties cared for by our chapter—received the benefit of a prescribed burn. As always, the burst of growth and color during the summer months gave a lot of gratification to everyone involved in the work. It also benefited people who simply visited the properties, and who were dazzled by the wild growth and profusion of color that fire always brings out in a prairie.

Chapter volunteers—led by Tom Mitchell, Chris Roberts, Fred Faessler, Nick Faessler, Steve Hubner, John Ocshner, Jerry Newman, Ralph Henry, Todd Argall, Kevin Kawula, John Meland, Harvey Klassy, and other Prairie Bluff stalwarts—prepared for each of these fires for days, weeks, and months beforehand. They mowed firebreaks, cleared brush, cut down trees, wrote fire plans, and notified local fire departments of our activities. Before that, as an ongoing project, many of these same members spent hours in the chapter shop ensuring that all the necessary equipment for the most dramatic part of prairie work—fire!—was ready to go. Drip torches, water pumps, trusty high-mileage pickup trucks, and equally trusty flappers, yard rakes, and other hand tools, were checked over and, if necessary, repaired, to make sure that they were ready to go for another year's excitement.

On May 17, spring fire season came to an end. Then it was time for the less dramatic but equally satisfying work—weed eradication, brush cutting, and seed gathering—of the warmer months. Work paused on July 4, for a convivial and fun chapter picnic, held at the home of Nick and Linda Faessler on the Wisconsin/Illinois line.

As summer draws toward fall, chapter leaders are already planning for the fall fire season. Chapter volunteers are now mowing fire breaks—using walk-behind mowers to ensure a lower and more flame-resistant cut—chopping down shrubs and clearing weedy areas. The Prairie Bluff Chapter schedules its fall burns during the dormant season. This usually happens around October 3 in southern Wisconsin. To ensure refugia for the insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals that call our properties home, we burn no more than one third of each remnant prairie in any year. We also cleave to a schedule that brings fire to a property only once every three to five years.

For the fall of 2023, the chapter is planning to burn portions of Skinner, Butenhoff, Vale, Avon Ridge, Meinert, and Muralt Bluff Prairies, as well as parts of Iltis Savannah. As the year of prairie work goes by, each season brings with it the satisfaction of staying in tune with the sublime rhythms of the natural world. All those who share in this work can draw solace from the fact that they are fighting for the survival of ecosystems that, in their complexity, innate value, and beauty, deserve to endure for eons. ■

Outreach Highlight

By Jerry Newman

On May 3rd, Chris Roberts and Jerry Newman presented to 131 fifth-grade students at the Spring Youth Conservation Day in Monroe. We discussed our local historical prairie heritage, what is left of it, and how we care for it. The weather was fantastic, and the kids were excited to learn more about the land near them. ■

Glacial Prairies

By Jessica Bizub and Alice Mirk



A gleeful Alice (left) points to Jessica just before the leadership transition. Photo by Alison Reinhofer

Developing the Next Generation of Leaders

Our chapter has been intentionally mentoring new leadership over the past year. Alice Mirk, longtime chapter chair, generously guided Jessica Bizub for one year before she officially was voted in as chair in July. During that year, Jessica benefitted from sharing responsibilities with Alice, as well as many informal meetings over Indian food to learn about the chapter's history and status of our numerous projects. At the chapter annual picnic on July 30, Alice officially retired from her chair role and was honored with well-deserved words of appreciation and gifts. Additionally, other chapter members are stepping up to help with administrative tasks, such as Brooke McEwen, who brings a keen eye to our communications.

We are also mentoring new work party coordinators, including Alison Reinhofer. Walter Mirk, Dick Bautz and Alan Eppers have for many years warmly greeted volunteers and trained them in conservation tools and techniques. Our hope is to identify and mentor additional work party coordinators to assure continuity of stewardship, develop the next generation of conservation leaders, and share the workload to make our efforts more sustainable, especially as opportunities to care for the land expand. New volunteers are always welcome to contribute in ways that inspire them! ■



Tom Ganfield's plaque. Photo by Jessica Bizub

Bluff Creek Work Day and Memorial for Tom Ganfield

Tom Ganfield, a loyal volunteer with the Wisconsin DNR State Natural Areas (SNA) and Prairie Enthusiasts who passed in 2022, was honored during a work day at Bluff Creek SNA. After filling several bags with white sweet-clover and treating phragmites with the "glove of death," volunteers indulged in a tailgate lunch at Rice Lake Hill Prairie, where a plaque was dedicated to honor Tom's commitment to protecting and caring for natural areas. Attendees included Tom's brother David and David's wife Jeanne. Thanks to Ginny Coburn for lunch and for helping organize the event! ■

Collaborating with a Purpose

With over 130 nature-focused nonprofits in the Milwaukee metro area alone, it can be hard to catch the attention of the public in Southeastern Wisconsin. We've been partnering with others to expand our reach and develop relationships that are mutually beneficial, and we want to highlight some collaborations here.

We enjoy a fruitful partnership with Jared Urban and the Wisconsin DNR's SNA volunteers, working on exceptional sites in the Southern Kettle Moraine area. Many of our most active and committed stewardship volunteers have joined The Prairie Enthusiasts through this connection.

Our annual picnic was hosted by Charles Heide in conjunction with an open house on his property and included attendees from UW-Parkside, the Racine Watershed Protection Committee, and Round Lake High School in Illinois. Chapter members benefited from learning about innovative approaches to private land stewardship, and native plant lovers unfamiliar with our

organization enjoyed meeting fellow enthusiasts.

The UWM at Waukesha Field Station (Teresa Schuller), Urban Ecology Center (Michaela Rosenthal), and City of Muskego (Tom Zagar) have been excellent partners in providing stewardship training opportunities. The Field Station hosted a prescribed fire crew training in the spring, and the Urban Ecology Center hosted another training in September. The City of Muskego diligently conducts prescribed burning on its conservation properties, helping crew members gain valuable experience.

Many thanks to our partners who help us achieve our shared mission of healthy native ecosystems! (Apologies to anyone we forgot—rest assured it was merely a regrettable lapse in memory at the time of writing this and not intentional!) ■

Prairie Sands

Chapter Update

By Matt Dettlaff

After several years serving as the Prairie Sands communication liaison, Ray Goehring will be stepping away from the administrative role with our chapter to finally take some well-deserved time to enjoy the fruits of her prairie labor of love. Ray will continue to be an active member of the Prairie Sands chapter and looks forward to continuing to contribute to our group's overall success. We want to thank Ray for all the hard work over the years in facilitating our communication efforts both within the chapter and with the larger Prairie Enthusiasts group.

I have agreed to step into the communication role to hopefully keep up the great progress that Ray has achieved. So, I suppose I should introduce myself. My wife and I purchased a 37 acre hobby farm in the Springville township of Adams County, Wisconsin, in 2015 after living for 16 years down in Charlotte, North Carolina. After a few years of harvesting our hayfield for my wife's 2.5 equines (0.5 = a miniature horse), it became apparent some areas were simply not very productive due to the sandy soil conditions. And from that frustration and disappointing agricultural accomplishments, the inspiration to try establishing prairie plots was born. I joined The Prairie Enthusiasts in 2021 and have found the information, inspiration and sometimes perspiration (during habitat workdays) very satisfying. I am glad I have found a way to give back to this wonderful group. I look forward to working more closely with our fearless

leader, David Hamel, and the administration team of Jen and Jay Mulder. You can reach me at matt.dettlaff@gmail.com for any Prairie Sands communication items.

As for other chapter news, we are continuing work to develop an on-line chapter forum to share news along with tips and tricks for establishing and maintaining quality prairie habitat. Marc Johnson has been instrumental in getting things set up thus far and we continue to "beta test" the site. Hopefully once we get everything set up and running smoothly, we can extend the concept to other chapters.

Speaking of establishing prairie habitat, we are thankful to Scott Toutant and Dan Carter for sharing their plans, suggestions and experience of transforming old pasture to prairie with our group. The information shared sparked a lot of dialog within the Prairie Sands chapter and seems to have inspired a few more folks to try the transformation process. Stay tuned for more habitat workday opportunities announced for this fall and next spring.

On another administrative note, we are still looking for a Prairie Sands chapter Facebook administrator. If you are proficient with this platform and want to contribute to our communication cause, please let me know.

Until next time, hope you are able to enjoy the fruits of your own prairie labors of love. ■



*Thanks to Ray Goehring for her many years of facilitating communication for the Prairie Sands Chapter.
Photo by Richard Goehring*



Southwest Wisconsin

Chapter Update

By Jack Kussmaul

Congratulations to the 2023 Prairie Enthusiasts Southwest Chapter scholarship winner, Olivia Poad. A recent graduate of Mineral Point High School, Olivia will be attending UW-Eau Claire this fall majoring in Environmental Science and Ecology. She stated in her application that she wants to help protect the environment and promote sustainability. Olivia is excited to begin her college classes and discover new things and learn to help the environment. We wish Olivia all the best of luck at UW-Eau Claire and are happy that we are able to help her financially with her studies.

We are grateful to Linda Lynch for including us in her estate plan. In August, we received just under \$30,000 to be added to our land management trust.

The Southwest Chapter continued its tradition of holding tours of private sites this summer. Attendance at these is always good, as people have the opportunity to observe and learn from what others are doing. We had tours of three sites this season. On June 23, we did a tour of the Marty and Mary Grell property near Lone Rock. This property has been undergoing restoration for twenty-five years with spectacular results. On July 22,

*Mary and Marty Grell hosted a prairie tour on their property June 24 near Lone Rock, WI.
Photo by Steve Querin-Schultz*

we visited two properties in the Mt. Sterling area. The first was a ridgetop site being restored by Loren Wagner and Nancy Slavik. The second provided contrast, being a wetter lowland prairie established by Nancy Northern and the late Al Slavick.

Significant events have been happening at the chapter board level. First, we welcomed a new member to the board at our July meeting. He is Shaun Murphy-Lopez, from the Richland Center area, who has a background in developing bicycle, pedestrian, and trail plans.

Of equal importance is a change in our governing structure. Activities have been coordinated at the board level, with the board meeting only every two months. To keep things moving more efficiently, we approved a committee system, with the committees working on projects between meetings. So far this has been a resounding success.

The Barn Committee is in charge of upgrading the barn at Borah Creek, with the goal of making it a site of choice for events. The members of the committee are Martha Querin-Schultz, Chair, Roger Smith, Becky Fernette and Shaun Murphy-Lopez. They started immediately by inspecting the barn, doing basic repair

and getting estimates from contractors. On the hot day of September 2, a crew of 10 assembled to clean and continue repairs. By the time this article is published a great deal will have been done to have it ready for the chapter picnic and snake workshop.

This leads us to the events committee, consisting of Debbie Pavick, Chair, Lynette Dornak and Martha Querin-Schultz. They are busy preparing for the Chapter Picnic that was on September 17 and the Snake Workshop on October 7, and are looking ahead to future chapter activities. Other committees include the Burn Committee, charged with prioritizing burns and ensuring that sites are ready, and the Land Management Committee, charged with coordinating management activities with site stewards. Already in existence was the Scholarship Committee, which has been functioning well.

A big thank you to Steve Querin-Schultz, who came up with the committee idea. We are off and running. ■

Right: Some members of the Borah Creek Barn Committee assess the work that needs to be done. Photo by Martha Querin-Schultz

Bottom: Shirley Northern property near Soldiers Grove WI July 22. Photo by Jack Kussmaul



St. Croix Valley

By Evanne Hunt

UW-River Falls Student Scholarship

Remember to make a donation to the UW-River Falls Scholarship and Awards Program in our chapter's name. Send a check or donate on The Prairie Enthusiasts [website](#). Indicate your donation is for the "SCV Scholarship Fund." The bookkeeper will ensure that it is a restricted donation to the scholarship. Please make your donations before December 1.

Inspired by the Southwest Wisconsin chapter, our chapter created a \$1,000 scholarship at UW-River Falls. This scholarship supports a student majoring in Conservation and Environmental Planning, with a Restoration Management emphasis. ■

Insect Safaris

Bob Marquis led 15 people through the Alexander Oak Savanna searching for Lepidoptera on June 24, July 19 and August 19. Our goal is to add to the known list of the butterfly species that occur in the site. The explorers documented 24 different species. Nothing rare, but several have never been reported in the county. In the coming years, we expect the list to grow.

Bob also led 12 people on a blacklight event at Blueberry Hill Prairie on July 25. The black lights and sheet attracted many moths. Our goal is to build a list of

moth species that occur in the prairie remnant and nearby established prairie. Read the separate article, "Of Moths, Caterpillars, and Restoration of Prairie Remnants" by Robert Marquis on page 20. ■

City & Sustainability Sampler

The chapter had a table at the River Falls 2023 City & Sustainability Sampler on September 6. Thank you to Prescott Bergh, Ginny Yingling, and Evanne Hunt for staffing the table.

The event was an opportunity for local businesses and organizations to showcase their products, services, and volunteer opportunities as part of a sustainable and healthy community. We made great contact with many students. ■

Fall Prescribed Burns

We hope to burn Alexander Oak Savanna later this fall. If you have not burned with The Prairie Enthusiasts before, contact Evanne to ensure you are on the crew list. We also have five or six landowners who want help burning their prairies. We should be able to give our crew members plenty of experience this fall. ■

Chapter Picnic

Our annual chapter potluck picnic was held August 27. The Town of River Falls graciously allowed us to use the building for our event. Organizers Marti Piepgras, Dick Seebach, and Evanne Hunt, did a wonderful job with set up and take down. After a great meal of ham, vegetarian lasagna, cheeses, salads, and several desserts, Alex Bouthilet led a group tour of Alexander Oak Savanna. ■



Bob Marquis examining an insect at Alexander Oak Savanna. Photo by Linda Meyers



Attendees of the St. Croix Valley Chapter Picnic. Photo by Evanne Hunt

James Schultz

After “The Persistence of Memory” by Salvador Dali

Remembered by The Prairie Sands Chapter

Every year you sent
a new calendar of photos—
proof of light in colors
absorbed, reflected

spiral-bound time machines
captured by you
where time folds
flows
stands still.

Sheep pasture to prairie
present into pre-settlement past
becoming the future.

The lens of your camera
pollinating the story
of a place, a homestead
continuing

sheared, carted, spun
knit, crocheted, woven

into the very fabric of a family
where sweatered children tending sheep
become grandchildren chasing butterflies

a multi-colored almanac
of love and attention.

Still here, traveling lightyears
of your insight—
this proof of life.



Photos by James Schultz from his Weed Eden calendar.



Prairie Enthusiasts Remembered
*Memorial gifts dedicated between
May 25, 2023 and September 17, 2023*

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*

James Schultz

December 1, 1948 – May 26, 2023

Rememberance by The Prairie Sands Chapter



With great sadness the Prairie Sands Chapter mourns the May 26th loss of its member James Schultz.

James was an active and creative Prairie Enthusiast and a retired biology teacher, hobby photographer, good friend to all, loving husband, father and grandfather.

James and wife, Ruth Ann, hosted a chapter prairie tour of their former sheep ranch converted to prairie in 2018.

Although fighting medical issues, he stayed actively involved in prairie restoration and continued to teach giving presentations to other native plant groups like his local Wild Ones chapter.

Every year he donated copies of his annual photograph calendar of Weed Eden Prairie to The Prairie Enthusiasts' silent auction. He also published a photo book about the badgers living in his Carpentersville prairie titled, A Badger Family Story.

In his own words:

View each thing

As a gift and it will

Become one

James never let anything slow down his will to contribute to the greater good.

His obituary can be found at:

<https://www.eberhardtstevenson.com/> ■

Chris Mann

April 21, 1975 – July 18, 2023

By Tom Zagar



*Chris collecting seed at
a railroad right-of-way.
Photo by Eric
Tarman-Ramcheck*

Chris Mann had a calling in life to restore native plant communities. He heard it clearly, and he answered it! After graduating from UW Stevens Point, Chris interned with Waukesha County Land Conservancy and began working for others in the field of environmental restoration. He volunteered with The Nature Conservancy, and was one of the founding members of the Glacial Prairie Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts. He made a living doing what he loved, eventually, establishing a

small company called Kettle Moraine Land Stewards. What an appropriate name! Chris was surely a great land steward but quite modest about his own abilities—giving reverence to other experts and practitioners in the field of prairie, savanna, and woodland restoration. Chris put many acres of southeastern Wisconsin land on a positive ecological trajectory. What a great legacy! I will miss you my friend, but will think of you when walking the lands that you restored, and promise to advocate for their continued stewardship. ■

Thomas Ganfield

March 23, 1962 - August 13, 2022

What He Meant to Others

The Ganfield Family



The Ganfield family's favorite photo of Tom in nature. Tom at Glacier National Park, MT. Photo credit unknown

I am becoming aware daily of what my dear departed younger brother, Thomas Ganfield, meant to others in his community where he lived and volunteered.

We have now, literally, walked in his shoes where he enjoyed life to the fullest: in forest, field, and water. Outdoors was his "happy place."

This year we were fortunate to have been invited to volunteer alongside his colleagues at a couple of events that also happened to be Tom's favorites. Not only do we now understand what he did during his "volunteer"

time, but also, we have heard heartwarming stories of how he impacted others during these outings.

The stories are legion regarding his love for, and knowledge of, the land and how this was communicated to his "friends of the prairie" and the impact this had upon others. We heard from these friends his exacting scientific manner of identifying and describing plants (after all, he had a master's degree in environmental engineering), his enthusiasm in tackling a restoration project or other tasks of the day, and his patient tutoring of newcomers to the field and then leading them on to discover new areas that required mindful stewardship of this wonderful earth.

Tom's patience and teaching spirit might best be summed up when my son, Peter, commented: "I'll never forget road trips with Tom, asking him a dozen questions while we drove through the mountains. He was always so patient with me—the best enviro teacher I ever had!" From Tom's family to anybody reading this, we hope that you can live life the way he did: "Do all that you can, with what you have, in the time you have, in the place you are." We are so thankful for The Prairie Enthusiasts' giving us the opportunity to participate firsthand in an activity that he so loved.

Thank you. ■

In memory of

Ed Brick

Remembered by Ellen Fisher

CarolJean Coventree

Remembered by Tamara Walsky

Chris Mann

Remembered by Jessica Bizub

Patricia O'Hare

Remembered by Shel Ohare

Gustav Pausz

Remembered by Deb Pausz

Joyce Powers

Remembered by

Joan Bergman

Mary Ann Dewey

Jenny Elmer

Teresa Johnson

Janice Ketelle

Karen Laurence

Joanne Morey

Tracy Morland

James Robertson

Deb Uebersetzig

Lynn VanDrie

Renee Weber

Barbara Smith

Remembered by College of Micronesia-FSM

Galen Smith

Remembered by Jae Adams



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Welcome, New Members!

May 25, 2023 to September 17, 2023

Chippewa Savannas

Jim Bechly
Karen Bechly
Carole & Wayne Halberg
Robert Meier
Sharon Meier
Doug & Betty Skapyak
Harold Tiffany

Coulee Region

Janice Albers
Marsha Bateman
Will Ault Brinker
Jaden Gallardo
Dave Hey
Luke Saunders

Empire-Sauk

Lisa Barry
Griffin Bray
Glee Brechler
Ellen Fisher
Cid Freitag
Ben LaCloche
Karen Lenocho
Kafryn Lieder

Theresa Magennis
Susan Millar
Joanne Morey
Michael Mossman
Jason Schisler
Nancy Schubert
Marguerite Schutten
Pam Sprecher-Galka
Graham Steinhauer
Kaitlyn Tatro
Deb Uebersetzg
Gloria Welniak
Timothy Wolff
Mary Zimmerman

Glacial Prairie

Dennis Connell
Zachary Garrity
Austin Lynn
Kailyn Palomares
Heidi Schlehein
Renee Weber
Ronald Zastrow

Many Rivers

Amelia Labuszewski

Minnesota Driftless

Loretta Mogan
Breanna Wheeler

Northwest Illinois

Karen Arauz-Reed
Carol & Jim Mantey
Denis & Eric Mathewson
George McPhillips
Sandra Principe
Anthony Vorwald

Prairie Bluff

Joey Lentz
Merrilee Pickett

Southwest Wisconsin

Jane Holzhauer
Daniel Meyer

St. Croix Valley

Robert Marquis & Carol Kelly
Susan Strand-Penman

Unaffiliated

Amy Ball
Joan Bergman
Lori Biederman & David Peterson
Ronald Boudouris
Peter Dargatz
Mary & Tom Dewey
David Flink
Teresa Johnson
Jennifer Kahn
Karen Laurence
Anna Lisa Lawton
Theresa McGrattan
Sarah Mckenzie
Shawn Monaghan
Barb & Eliot Protsch
James Robertson
Tamara Walsky
Eileen Williams
Lynn & Gerrit VanDrie
Andrew Voss