



The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

Igniting Relationships with the Land

Fall 2025

Bison on the Prairie

Reintroducing bison
to Indigenous Lands is
creating resilience and
renewal

Plus

Rare Habitat Protected in
Southeast Wisconsin

Climate Research on the
Prairie

Guidance on Planting Plugs



Rare Sand Barrens Ecosystem Preserved in Southeast Wisconsin

By Reid Bartholomew, Chapter Support Mission Advancement Coordinator

You can now visit one of Southeast Wisconsin's rarest kinds of habitats just outside of Milwaukee. Mukwonago River Oak Barrens, a 61-acre property protected by The Prairie Enthusiasts in June of 2025, features sand barren habitat, an incredible diversity of plant and animal life and access to the pristine Mukwonago River.

Located in Waukesha County, WI, Mukwonago River Oak Barrens supports recovering oak barrens—a rare ecosystem in Southeast Wisconsin. Gradients of moisture and soil chemistry support 313 native vascular

Attendees at the Mukwonago River Oak Barrens protection celebration enjoy a tour led by Dr. Dan Carter. Photo by Helen Holtz.

plant species within a variety of habitats including sedge meadow, moist savanna and oak barrens. The barrens also supports several rare plants and animals. The Mukwonago River, designated as an exceptional water resource, meanders through the southern part of the property and supports diverse communities of fish and aquatic invertebrates.

Pamela Meyer, the previous owner, has been caring for the property for decades, working with her neighbors to support the health of the watershed and

improve the quality of the habitat on the site. Knowing that the land was special, she has been bringing botanists, biologists and ecologists to the property over the years so that she can understand the habitat better.

One of those experts was The Prairie Enthusiasts Ecologist, Dan Carter. When the two walked the property together four years ago, Dan immediately saw what Pamela had—an ecosystem exceedingly rare in the region.

“This piece of habitat has survived where so much has been lost to invasive brush and development—there’s almost nothing else like this in Southeastern Wisconsin,” Dan says.

The Glacial Prairie Chapter began working to restore the site in 2023 with the support and active participation from Pamela. By the time The Prairie Enthusiasts closed on the property in 2025, volunteers had opened up 11 acres of barrens and moist savanna habitat. The Chapter will continue to restore and connect open areas, expanding the area of open savanna habitat adjacent to the Mukwonago River’s wetlands. This process will involve removal of invasive brush and large numbers of planted conifers, prescribed burning and reintroduction of species that may have been present in the past. Work party activities are held on a near-weekly basis.

The Mukwonago River Oak Barrens is open to the public for hiking, nature observation and hunting.

This acquisition was made possible through a bequest by Tom Ganfield, Wisconsin’s Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and many Members of The Prairie Enthusiasts. ■

You can help restore Mukwonago River Oak Barrens by joining an upcoming work party!
See volunteer opportunities on our website at
ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Events-Calendar

Rough blazing star (Liatris aspera) at Mukwonago River Oak Barrens. Photo by Dan Carter.

Spring peeper at Mukwonago River Oak Barrens. Photo by Sarah Barron.



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*Winter view of the experimental
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*Golden Moments 8x10, plein air
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on Brice Prairie, during an outing
of an art group called Drawn
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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: White-throated sparrow at Pleasant Valley Conservancy by Ron Lutz II, Empire-Sauk Chapter Member



The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

President's Message

What Are We Doing Out There?

Jim Rogala, President



The question posed in the title of this message could take us in many directions. In this message, I'll not use it to question what we do because I think we all value the work towards our mission. My focus here is on the uncertainty of knowing the results of our work, the mission work we do toward protecting and restoring the land. I'll further focus on the management side of things.

Let's face it, we don't have all the science needed to guide us through the selection of management actions that will best provide the results we desire. This is nothing unique among restoration work on ecosystems. Ecosystems are inherently complex. Additionally, very few ecosystems are still intact. Some basic processes have been missing for a long period of time (e.g., fire for fire-dependent ecosystems), the size and connectivity have been reduced and non-native species have often become a dominant part of what's left of these ecosystems. So even if we had no constraints on doing research to discover more answers, the answers might be skewed by not having healthy ecosystems to study. Nonetheless, it seems prudent to continue to gather knowledge on the best practices to attain healthy ecosystems.

The Prairie Enthusiasts have begun to include some metrics of habitat integrity in our goals within management plans. Our Ecologist, Dan Carter, has been part of the effort to create coarse level metrics to make assessments, and that is one metric we are using. He is conducting those surveys on some of the sites he visits, but obviously he can't complete those surveys on all our sites. What can you do? If you have some plant identification skills (or are willing to learn), perhaps with training in methodology, you might be able to conduct surveys to help track progress at a site. Those surveys not only benefit the understanding of what is happening on that site, but they begin to build a database over many sites that can provide some valuable information.

The example above is just one opportunity to help further our understanding of the success of our restoration efforts. All kinds of citizen scientist projects can add to scientific surveys and studies. The Land Management

Committee has begun to consider what opportunities The Prairie Enthusiasts might offer. Look for announcements of opportunities for volunteers to contribute to surveys or studies, which might allow us to better answer the question "what are we doing out there?" ■



St. Croix Valley Chapter member, Jay Arneson, taking down a microphone for recording bat echolocation at Alexander Oak Savanna. Information gathered is helping to assess the impact of habitat restoration on bat activity and bat species composition at the site.

Photo by Robert Marquis.

Acting Executive Director's Message

Be Inspired This Season

Jessica Bizub, Acting Executive Director



*Jessica Bizub on a prescribed burn at the UW-Milwaukee at Waukesha Field Station.
Photo by Brad Wilkins*

This year has brought significant change for both The Prairie Enthusiasts and me. In the Spring 2025 issue of The Prairie Promoter, I shared my journey from joining the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program to Glacial Prairie Chapter Volunteer to Operations Director on the Chapter Support team. This fall, I stepped into a new path of serving The Prairie Enthusiasts, Acting Executive Director.

Throughout her five years with The Prairie Enthusiasts, Debra Behrens guided the organization through a pandemic, significant growth, several land protection projects and countless other tasks that have led us to where we are today. I want to thank her for her service to The Prairie Enthusiasts and wish her well in the next phase of her journey.

Since I joined the Chapter Support team in May, I've been absorbing all that I can about the intricacies of the three elements of our mission: land protection, land restoration and education. I've leaned on my experience as an applied researcher with UW-Milwaukee where I provided planning and evaluation services to Milwaukee-area nonprofits and government entities. And over the past few months, I've had the pleasure of getting to know more Prairie Enthusiasts.

It's this community and the habitats that we all care for that, time and time again, have given me a sense of calm, healing and inspiration. When I first connected with the Glacial Prairie Chapter, I had the pleasure of volunteering alongside Walter Mirk and Alan Eppers. I

really enjoyed that I could do something tangible to help the natural environments that had helped me through challenging personal times. It was reciprocal care, and I enjoyed the physical work of removing invasives, building brush piles and lighting prescribed fires. I also enjoyed the camaraderie and easy companionship found with fellow Prairie Enthusiasts.

Now living on the other side of Wisconsin within the Coulee Region Chapter, I still try to lend a hand at work parties—it really is the best therapy. But now I also have the opportunity to give back to the land and this community in a different way. In this new position, I'm looking forward to further serving The Prairie Enthusiasts and connecting with more members.

I truly feel that The Prairie Enthusiasts offers something special. The eagerness of Prairie Enthusiasts to share their knowledge and excitement for the natural world is captivating. Members' dedication to this work has given us some of the best examples of old-growth habitats that we have today. Our unique grassroots structure gives Upper Midwesterners the chance to connect with their local community. And with our members, volunteers and Chapter Support staff working together, we can overcome challenges we face and achieve the goals we set.

Though plants are going dormant and cold is setting in, the work of The Prairie Enthusiasts continues. Volunteer work parties are on our events calendar. The Prairie Enthusiasts Annual Conference is just around the corner, and the organization will be planning for our new fiscal year soon. I invite you to volunteer, make a gift, create art inspired by the places we protect or share your Prairie Enthusiasm with others. No matter how your support looks, you are a valued part of this community. I hope you can connect with your community this season and let the land inspire you. ■

Missed Jessica's journey with The Prairie Enthusiasts?
Learn more about her story at
ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/People_Jessica_Bizub

Readers Write

More Tuna Please!

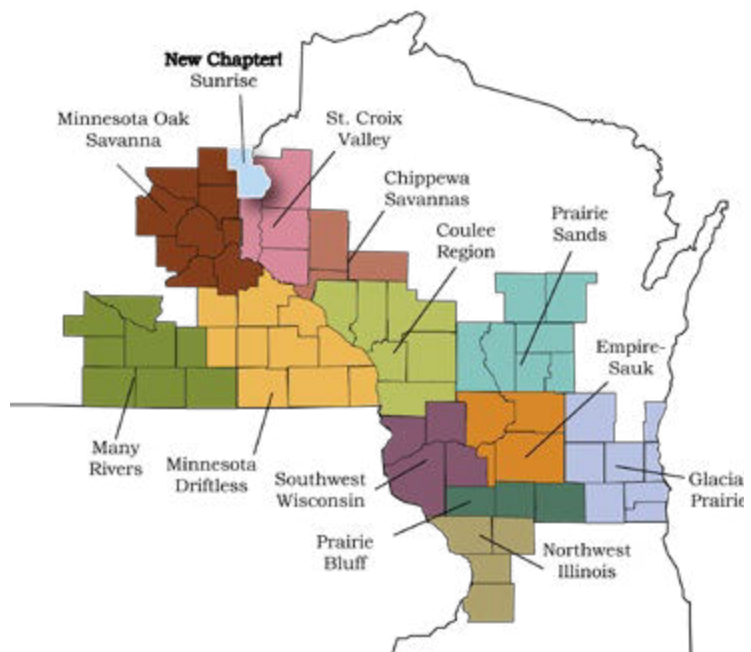
Article and Photo by Mark Steingraeber, Coulee Region Chapter Member

Having fumbled with rolls of flagging tape over the years, professionally as a field biologist and privately as a land owner, the recent [Flagging Tape Dispenser Instructions](#) article by Bob Retko in the Summer 2025 issue of *The Prairie Promoter* drew my immediate attention. This article inspired me to prepare and consume a fair share of tuna salad so that I could begin to prepare several of these handy devices for my use and those of others who help maintain our property.

In so doing, I would like to offer these suggestions: First, place the role of flagging tape on a short piece of 1-inch (inside diameter) PVC pipe (e.g., 1 ¼-inch length for a 1 ¼-inch canister, a 1 ¾-inch length for a 1 ¾-inch canister) to act as a free-spool. Second, lubricate the rubber grommet with a small quantity of silicone grease if you find that the tape does not flow freely out of the canister. Finally, if you are like me and find it handy to carry the tape on you rather than inside a pocket, consider substituting an eye bolt, lock washer and nut combination for the center rivet and hitch pin. This will allow you to attach the canister to a belt loop using a carabiner, making the tape instantly accessible. Happy flagging! ■



Optional materials such as a PVC free-spool, silicone grease, and eye-bolt/carabiner may improve the functionality of your flagging tape dispenser.



A Growing Community

Welcome Sunrise Chapter!

This summer, The Prairie Enthusiasts Board of Directors voted to recognize the formation of a new Chapter. The Sunrise Chapter currently covers Minnesota's Chisago County. Its name comes from the Sunrise River, which weaves through Chisago County and three neighboring counties. As the Chapter grows, they are looking to conduct prescribed burns, landowner education and management assistance, and outreach. We invite any and all interested in connecting with the Chapter to reach out or stay tuned for upcoming events.

Connect with us at the info below:

Chapter Contact:

Mary Jo Youngbauer
(615) 888-9891

Sunrise@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org ■



Ecologist's 2025 End-of-Field-Season Update

Story and Photos by Dan Carter, Ecologist with The Prairie Enthusiasts

By the time this is published, I will have made around 70 field visits this season, including visits to members' properties, tours, and visits to preserves The Prairie Enthusiasts protects. In previous years, I have had the luck to make some notable new botanical finds. Oddly, this year there were not any of exceptional note.

The real highlights of the past season were repeat visits to landowners that I had visited a few years prior. Restoring land is a slow process, but I was amazed to see just how much progress people have achieved. Stewards' attention to and work on sites is so critical. They are every bit as much a part of the ecosystems we protect, restore and sustain as any other organism or ecological process. When stewards engage in a dialogue with land and work in earnest, so will the ecosystem. I think now more than ever many of us long for the agency, purpose, effect and reciprocity that the land stewardship relationship gives us.

One example is the Hovell's property in Trempealeau County, WI, which supports remnant bluff prairie, oak savanna and oak woodlands. When I first visited in 2022, Bill Hovell led me to three different areas that supported many conservative prairie, savanna and woodland species—prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa*), wood betony (*Pedicularis canadensis*), Carolina vetch (*Vicia caroliniana*) and yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *pubescens*) to name just a few. On a previous visit, one savanna area was barely subsisting and was hanging on around a rock outcropping. Woody vegetation was encroaching from all sides. When I visited again this spring, I could barely recognize the place. It was wide open, and prairie and savanna species were

Within yellow circle: area of savanna vegetation on the Hovell's Property in 2022, with brush and trees closing in from all sides.

Header: 2025 view of savanna and oak woods on the Hovell's property immediately adjacent to the area photographed in 2022.

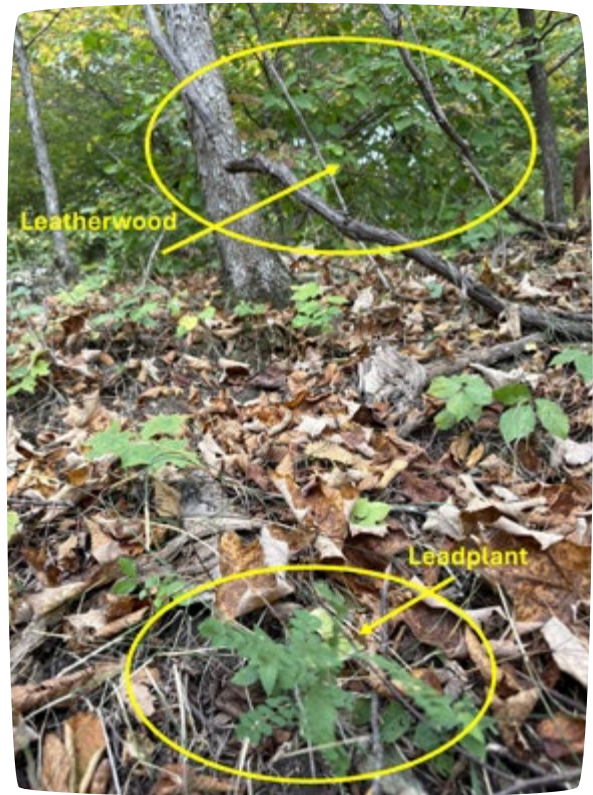
recovering over a much larger area than I had originally appreciated. High-quality oak woodland species like pale vetchling (*Lathyrus ochroleucus*), northern bedstraw (*Galium boreale*), and Maryland black snakeroot (*Sanicula marilandica*) were abundant on the adjacent oak woodland north slope where understory brush and trees had been removed. Understand that this site retained much of its original flora, which is often not the case, but given the chance, it has responded generously to Bill's stewardship.

Change can be difficult for stewards to appreciate. It comes in fits and starts. Seasons and years go by. The work doesn't finish, because *Homo sapiens* is the closest our prairies and savannas come to having a keystone species. Stewards often express concerns with me about things that are out of balance in the present. My feedback is often along the lines of, "This looks good. You've made a lot of progress!"

Very recently I saw something interesting when I visited Xandra and Jody Smith's property in eastern Vernon County. Their property supports remnant sedge meadow, fen and savanna on a steep south slope. In that remnant savanna, we found leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), hoary puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*), purple prairie

clover (*Dalea purpurea*), northern hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum*) and a few other species hanging on under encroaching ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). Right there on that south-facing slope with the leadplant was leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*)! Leatherwood was abundant on the adjacent ridgetop and on the steep upper portion of a nearby north slope. It was almost certainly restricted to steep, moist portions of that north slope in the past. Leatherwood is a very conservative, fire-intolerant and mesophytic shrub (adapted to moderate moisture conditions) that I have never seen colonizing an area that recently supported prairie or open savanna vegetation. The Driftless Area's varied slopes, aspects and soils are supposed to confer inbuilt resilience to climate change. The idea is that as it warms and precipitation becomes more erratic with climate change, more xerophytic vegetation (prairie, oak savanna and oak woods) on south and southwest aspects can expand. But in the absence of fire, what is happening is that mesophytic native vegetation and various invasive species are displacing xerophytic vegetation on those south and west slopes.

Climate change resilience on that landscape and many others depends on the repatriation of fire. Without fire to interact with and reinforce biotic expressions linked to physical gradients on the landscape, the landscape will continue to homogenize and lose that inbuilt resilience. Leatherwood is an exceptional example. With encroaching mesophytic hardwoods I more often see herbaceous plants like pedunculate sedge (*Carex pedunculata*), White Bear Lake sedge (*Carex albursina*) and sharp-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*) moving around or over ridges to co-mingle with the prairie and savanna flora. The good news in this case is that there are still bur oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*) and savanna herbaceous plants hanging on, so there remains a good opportunity to restore some open oak savanna.



Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*) and leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*) together under ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*, evident as leaf litter) encroaching into former open bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) savanna.

This example also serves as a reminder that the original vegetation mapping does not have enough resolution to understand what is happening on the scale of an individual property. The Smith's property falls within a large area mapped to southern mesic forest extending from southern Monroe County all the way south to the Wisconsin River. This area was not a vast primeval forest. Instead, there was proportionately less prairie and savanna and more maple-basswood forest such that mesic hardwoods were notable along portions of the mile-long transects in the original land survey notes, especially where those transects cross north or east slopes. I see this again and again walking properties in this area. South slopes often still support remnants of oak savanna (including prairie elements) or open oak woods.

If you are interested in a property visit in 2026, feel welcome to get in touch (DCarter@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org). In an email, please include some background and location information. Feel free to contact me about prairie, savanna, woodland or sedge meadow matters even if you are not requesting a visit. If I've visited you, but it's been a while, I may be able to make a follow-up visit if my calendar allows. Regardless, I enjoy receiving updates. ■



Maryland black snakeroot (*Sanicula marilandica*) with northern bedstraw (*Galium boreale*) and Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) in oak woodland on the Hovell property.

Rare Plant Success Stories

By Kevin Doyle, Assistant Botanist/Mapping Specialist at Wisconsin DNR

Fortunately, it's not all bad news when it comes to vulnerable plants. Habitat management and valuable work by the DNR's Rare Plant Monitoring Program are big reasons for this. Here are a few examples.

Alert Spurs Action

Habitat management is a necessity for almost all rare plants, perhaps most importantly in the prairies of southern and western Wisconsin. As fire-dependent plant communities, prairies require more management with prescribed burning and removal of invasive species, which enter prairies from nearby roads and trails.

Recently, a local Rare Plant Monitoring Program volunteer, George Riffin—who is a valuable member of the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter—alerted the DNR's Driftless Area Ecologist about the need to clear brush from a series of bluff prairies overlooking the Wisconsin River near Boscobel.

From surveys he'd done on the site, Riffin knew these prairies and the adjacent forest supported numerous rare plants, including the state-endangered hairy wild petunia (*Ruellia humilis*). But the site was languishing due to lack of management.

Riffin's alert prompted DNR Wildlife Management and Natural Heritage Conservation crews to host a work party. Crews systematically removed native and invasive brush so the prairie flora could thrive.

Management Yields Results

Elsewhere in southern and western Wisconsin, a new rare plant pops up seemingly every year in sites that are consistently managed.

Cassville Bluffs State Natural Area, for example, seems to reveal a new-to-us rare plant population as an annual tradition. Near Whitewater, the state threatened Hill's thistle (*Cirsium hillii*) showed up for the first time in 2015 at a savanna that has probably received more habitat management than any other in the region.

This plant is scarce globally and especially rare in southeast Wisconsin, where it hadn't been seen east of Janesville since 1897. It's no coincidence that it happened to reappear at a site where so much management has occurred.

Embracing New Approaches

Sometimes, habitat management isn't what



Prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*).

Photo by Jim Bennett, Southwest Wisconsin Chapter Member.

you might think it is. Prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) is a tall, slender legume found in dry prairies in southwest Wisconsin and is listed as state-endangered and federally threatened.

Research has found that this rare bush clover produces viable seed, but seedlings have a difficult time establishing and growing to adults because the thatch of prairie grasses is often too thick. To address the issue, land managers have mowed and raked to clear space for prairie bush clover to establish.

But researchers also found that low levels of cattle or even bison grazing and frequent prescribed fire are compatible with prairie bush clover recruitment. The DNR has worked with The Nature Conservancy to study this approach in Wisconsin.

Over time, bush clover will be monitored to see how seedlings persist and hopefully grow into mature adults that themselves produce future generations. ■

Note from The Prairie Enthusiasts Ecologist, Dan Carter:

While light grazing may not negatively impact prairie bush clover, grazing in remnant prairies may harm other prairie species and reduce ecological integrity over time. Since the primary impediment to prairie bushclover seedling establishment is excessive thatch, frequent dormant season burning is likely to benefit prairie bushclover with concurrent benefits to the broader ecosystem. Practitioners should always consider collateral damage that might result from any management method deployed.

This article was originally published in the summer 2025 issue of the [Natural Resources Magazine](#).

Management Toolbox

By Jim Rogala, President



The purpose of this regular section of *The Prairie Promoter* is to keep proper management methods fresh in your mind. These short articles will sometimes reference past or future articles that contain details on the selected topic. Others will just be some food for thought. We try to schedule the articles to coincide with when planning for the practice occurs. We encourage others to write or provide ideas for articles. You can send those ideas to me at JRogala@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org.

Mopping and Babysitting Aren't Just Domestic Tasks!

We perform a wide range of tasks as part of our efforts to restore fire-dependent ecosystems. Prescribed burning is a big part of what we do, and the task requires prep work such as writing burn plans, putting in breaks and assembling the crew and equipment needed. For those of us with burn units that contain some woodland components, there's also the sometimes exhausting post-burn task of mop-up and babysitting smokers. Prep work can minimize that effort and make for a safer burn.

Often, the objective is to burn up woody material within the burn unit. This is a reasonable objective during a broadcast burn for small diameter branches, but it takes a long time to consume large logs, especially hardwoods. One option to mitigate dealing with ignited large dead wood is to burn piles of the woody material in winter when there is snow cover. Another option is to remove the large dead wood from the burn unit by dragging it out with equipment. If on steep slopes like we have in

the Coulee Region, bucking up the logs and rolling them downslope out of the unit is an option. For large burn units, getting the unwanted wood out of the burn unit is an unrealistic goal but using the same approaches near the burn breaks can minimize the chances of escapes. This is especially true for dead standing trees that can easily send embers outside the burn unit.

An alternative to consider is timing the burn when large fuels are wet and the other fuels are dry. It is a little difficult to hit the sweet spot if there is heavy leaf litter because it takes a long time for the leaves to dry out. Another approach is to remove the fuel near the dead wood by raking or leaf blowing, especially at the base of standing dead trees. Yet another option is to do interior lighting around the dead trees if the burn plan allows for that. For standing dead trees, this is a little chancy, as I've seen ignition higher in the branches and if that happens near the break, then you may have to fell the tree during or shortly after the burn. It is probably wise to drop all the dead standing trees near the break prior to the burn.

If mop-up is required, it is probably the least favorite of all the tasks related to burning. Volunteers should know if this is part of what they are expected to assist with, and sometimes a call for volunteers is needed just for mop-up. However, the task can be made easier with some well thought out strategies and prep work. ■

Khris Miller and Kysh Lindell removing brush from a burn unit at Marowski Bluff Prairie. Photo by Sarah Barron.





The Prairie Enthusiasts



Biodiversity from the Ground Up

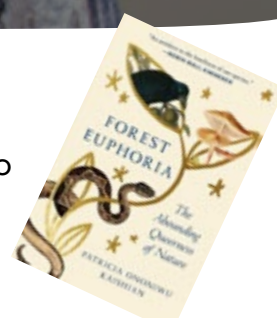
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Standard: \$80

Burn School:
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Header Images from left to right: Chipmunk by Catherine McKenzie, Beetle by Sarah Barron, Savanna Sparrow by Eric Preston.

Considerations for Planting Plugs and Other Vegetative Material

Article and Photos by Dan Carter, *The Prairie Enthusiasts Ecologist*

People ask me about plugs¹ from time to time, and I hear a lot of comments about them, so I'll lay out my considerations related to the use of plugs and other vegetative plant material (roots, rhizomes, bulbs, etc.)² in restoration and reconstruction projects. Seed is the most important means of establishing appropriate species on a site, but I personally supplement seeding with plugs and dormant roots often. Maybe I'm impatient, but I believe they can be worthwhile under the circumstances listed below:

- The species is particularly important to establish in the focal ecosystem and seed availability is limited, seed harvest is challenging or reliability of establishment from seed is low. Native violets (*Viola* spp.) often fit that description. Violets can be established from seed, but using some of that precious seed to produce plugs may result in more violets establishing sooner.
- You are trying to rescue genetics from a small, unprotected population or amplify a small population on a site you are restoring. In these cases, you'll only be harvesting small amounts of seed, so producing plugs may ultimately result in more established plants.
- The species is a "matrix"³ species that also spreads vegetatively by rhizomes, stolons or adventitious shoots from spreading roots. This is especially true

for those matrix species for which seed availability is limited. Some examples are wild strawberries (*Fragaria virginiana* and *F. vesca*), northern bedstraw (*Galium boreale*), Mead's sedge (*Carex meadii*) and many other long-rhizomatous sedges, sweet grass (*Hierochloa odorata*) and grove sandwort (*Moehringia lateriflora*). Other matrix species may be worthwhile to establish from plugs or to augment seeding—even if seed is more available. These include stiff sunflower (*Helianthus pauciflorus*), western sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*), Plains grass-leaved goldenrod (*Euthamia gymnospermoides*), prairie coreopsis (*Coreopsis palmata*), roses (*Rosa arkansana* and *R. caroliniana*), etc. Common matrix grasses like side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*) are usually easy to establish from seed, so plugs are unnecessary.

- It's a small-scale, residential project. In such projects, plugs for most species are a better choice than seeds. It's easier to tell between weeds and desirable plants with plugs, and the planting will establish and look good much sooner.

There are drawbacks. First, plugs often need to be watered after their initial planting. This is especially true for plugs that are available or ready to plant in late spring. Sometimes I feel like the atmosphere knows I've planted plugs, so it decides not to send rain for weeks after planting. The best times to plant plugs are early spring and early autumn and when the soil is moist. However, plugs planted in early spring need to be pre-hardened against cool weather. Dormant roots, bulbs, corms or rhizomes from plants grown in propagation beds are easier because they are acclimated to the season and can be planted any time in the dormant season when the soil is workable. If I plant anything between April 1 and October 1, I assume that rain will fail. I mark the plants with flags, and plant only an amount I know I will have time to water as often as twice a week. If there is consistent soil moisture, plants will generally be well-established and need no special care after four to six weeks.

Many animals are adept at finding soil disturbances or added moisture associated with planting plugs and other vegetative material, and they often will uproot transplants to cache nuts/seeds or dig for insects



Poke milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*) in September after being planted as a plug in May in a shady area of savanna. Plugs were propagated in this case, because only a very limited amount seed with local genetics was available.

or worms. I've even seen a video of a tiger salamander digging up freshly planted plugs on the prairie! Sometimes deer eat the tops off, and if the plugs aren't yet rooting into the surrounding soil, they get pulled out in the process. In my experience, within a given year there tend to be particular areas where many plugs are dug up and other areas where none are dug up. One could try to fortify plants with small cages, but I'm more inclined to accept the losses and try again another time.

Planting vegetative material generally limits the amount of genetic diversity going into the site. This is especially true when roots/rhizomes of clonal species are planted, which were obtained from only one or a few clones. However, while there is more genetic diversity among seeds broadcast into a site, if seed establishment is low, the result won't necessarily be the establishment of a population with more genetic diversity. For species that rely largely on clonal spread (e.g., Mead's sedge), patches that establish can persist almost indefinitely despite limited genetic variation. When we harvest seed from these clonal species on remnant prairies where they've woven themselves through almost the entire site, we often don't know if we are harvesting seed from one, a few or many genetic individuals unless there are conspicuous trait differences between patches or unless we do genetic testing. In such cases it is probably best to obtain material originating from at least a few sites or well dispersed parts of a single site.

*Location where a stiff aster (*Ionactis linariifolia*) plug was planted and the top was eaten off. I was still watering it, because the crown and roots of the plant were still in the ground.*



*Sweetgrass (*Hierochloa odorata*) in September after being planted as a plug in moist, sandy savanna in May. It has already spread out by rhizomes several inches in all directions.*

Plugs can be expensive, whether you buy them from a commercial source or produce them yourself. In the latter case, you'll need a good medium for starting seeds and growing small plants, appropriate pots/flats, good artificial lighting, fertilizer and time. Vegetative material transplanted directly from outdoor propagation beds to sites is probably the easiest and generally less costly. However, it is best to remove soil and rinse roots being moved between sites, given the risk of spreading invasive species like jumping worms (*Amyntas spp.*) or unwanted plants, and even that won't completely alleviate that risk. Don't move plant material grown in soil where jumping worms are already known to occur. Finally, the most critical thing to do when you are in the process of planting plugs is to brush away some of the potting medium at the base of the shoot/top of the roots so that you can replace it with a thin layer of the soil from the site where you are planting the plug. Otherwise, moisture will wick from plug's potting medium directly to the atmosphere and the plug will dry out very quickly. When the plug is planted in the ground, you should not be able to see the potting medium. ■

See Dan's references on our blog at
ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Blog

The Prairie in Four Voices

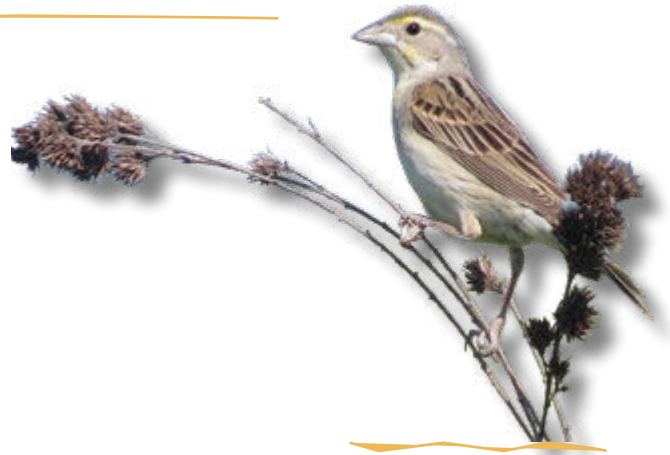
Poems by Jack Sytsma and Kim Sytsma



Eastern shooting star (*Pirula meadia*) at a remnant cemetery prairie. Photo by Jack Sytsma.

Spring

Beneath thawing soil, the plants return,
green fists unclench, the grasses yearn.
Prairie smoke drifts, its tendrils high,
like breath released into the sky.
The dickcissel pours golden sound,
its voice a thread the air has found.
Each stem inclines, each leaf takes flight,
toward the season's widening light.
Among the seedlings, still and true,
our hearts are taught to start anew.
For life waits silent, sealed in gloom,
until it breaks in sudden bloom.



A dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) on prairie plant stalks. Photo by SK Winnicki.

Sometimes a remnant prairie can be found in an untamed setting, like a cemetery that is centuries old. In spring, the prairie erupts with color: shooting stars, columbine and prairie smoke unfurl in vivid display. An early red admiral butterfly appears, dancing over the prairie like a flying flower. The air is filled with the faint hum of bees and the sweet scent of wildflowers mingling with the earthy aroma of new growth. A beautiful flash of a returning bluebird flying over blooming golden Alexanders announces that spring has returned.



Summer

Tallgrass rises, fierce and fast,
a kingdom rooted, built to last.
A daring meadowlark lifts its psalm,
the air made heavy, thick with calm.
Wildflowers flaring, a bright flame,
prairie together, yet none the same.
In summer's heart the prairie gives,
its golden wealth in all that lives.
In all this giving, we are shown,
abundance thrives when left alone.
To walk this wealth is to confess,
the land's relentless tenderness.

Hoary Vervain (*Verbena stricta*) in the summer prairie
Photo by Claire Utzman.



Sunset over the tallgrass prairie. Photo by Haley Sytsma.

A summer hike through a short grass prairie on a mountainside can be a picturesque sight. Bees are buzzing from lupines to hoary puccoons, while a broad-tailed hummingbird darts to a paintbrush bloom. As the trail goes upward, little bluestem and sideoats grama sway in the gentle breeze. Overhead, the beautiful blue sky may showcase a golden eagle soaring above. The gentle rustle of grass, the constant trill of insects and the distant call of birds fill the air, grounding you in the heart of summer.



Pronghorn (Antilocapra americana) grazing at a mixed grass prairie. Photo by Kim Sytsma.

Welcome to fall on the mixed-grass prairie, where short and tall grasses mingle in vast, open spaces. Burrowing owls prepare to depart from their prairie dog neighbors. Blue sky asters and radiant goldenrod are showcasing their season-ending colors and resilient prickly pear cacti now have produced pinkish-red fruit. The peculiar seedheads of blue grama and other grasses unveil themselves, offering vital food for birds and grazers like pronghorn and bison.

A burrowing owl (Athene cunicularia) in the prairie. Photo by Logan Anderson.

Autumn

Now grasses glow in russet fire,
a quiet blaze that won't expire.
Seedheads scatter, wind-borne sparks,
falling softly on the amber park.
Above, the wings of geese resound,
their echoes bless the open ground.
Each step we take through brittle gold
reminds us all of what we hold.
The prairie whispers soft release,
a letting go that yields to peace.
Even in fading, time bestows
a deeper wealth the season knows.





Bison (Bison bison) in the winter snow. Photo by Kelly Jacobs.

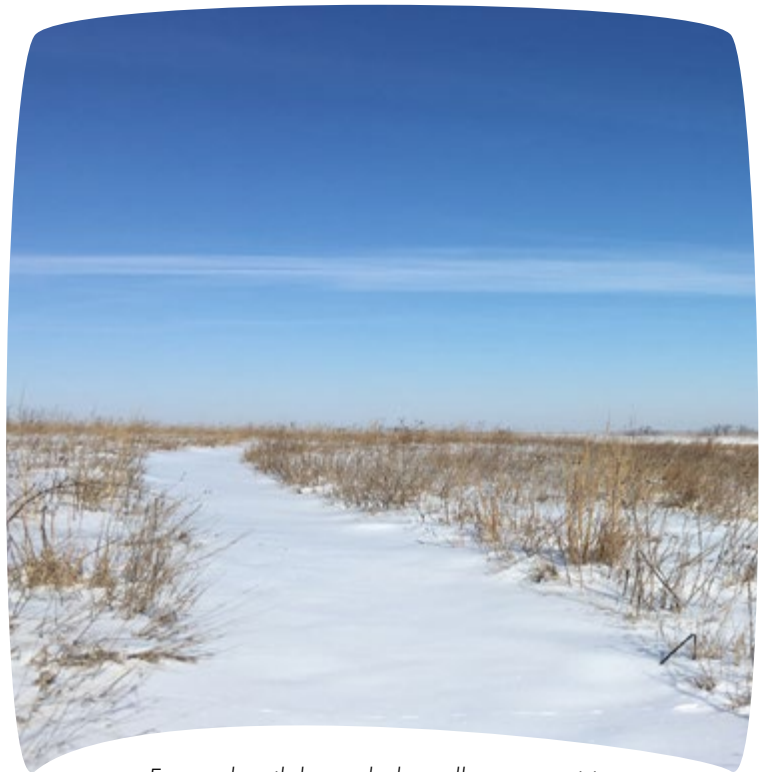
Winter

Snow inscribes its silver lines,
 a script of rest the earth designs.
 Above, the prairie seems asleep,
 its golden stems in silence deep.
 Beneath the frost, the roots still thrive,
 hidden networks quietly alive.
 Silence lingers—vast, profound,
 a patient hymn without a sound.
 Roots clasp deep in frozen night,
 dreaming the touch of returning light.
 So we are asked to walk with care,
 to breathe the stillness of the air.
 For winter holds, in hush and breath,
 a secret life beneath its death.

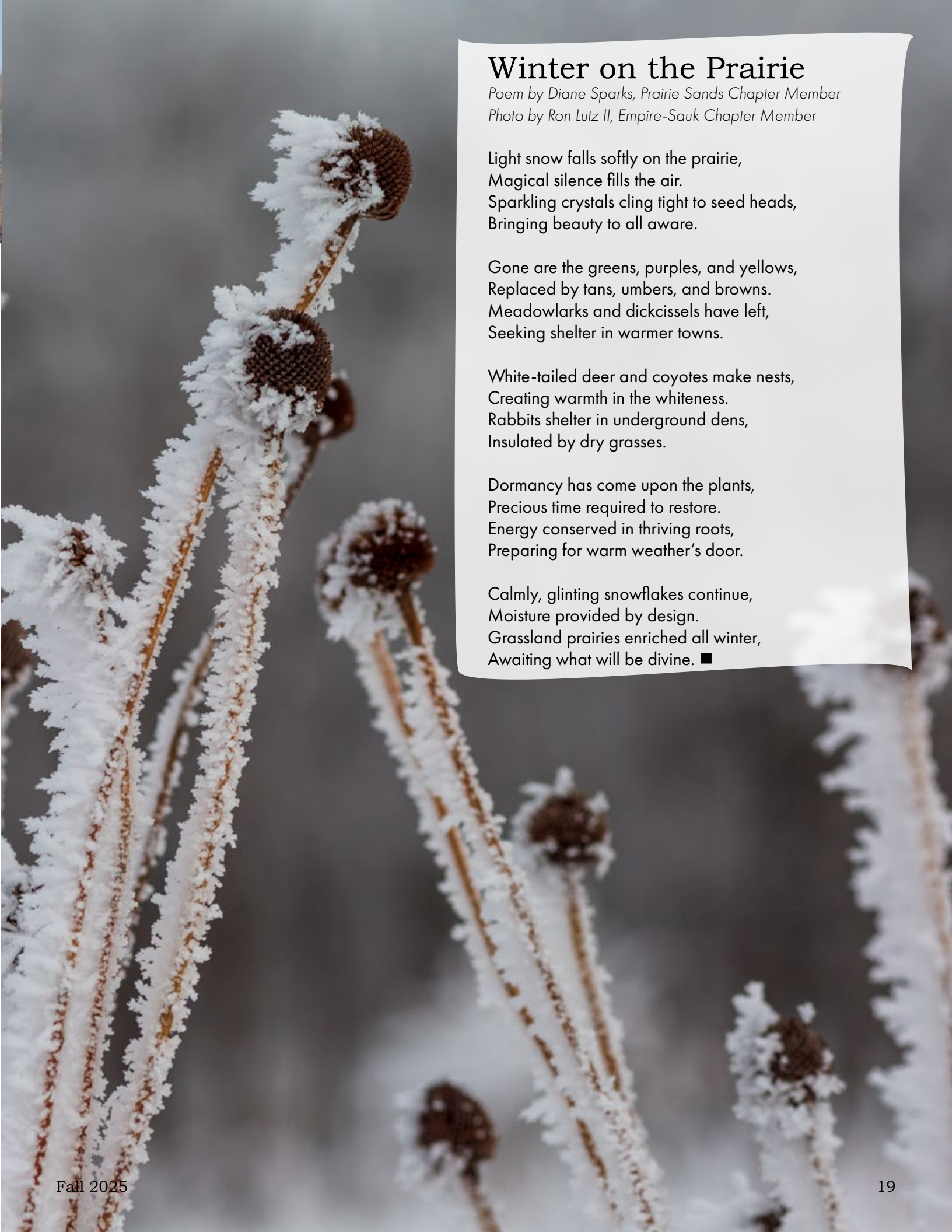
Conclusion

Through spring's first bloom and summer's gold,
 through autumn's fire and winter's cold,
 the prairie breathes, its heart unseen,
 a living thread, both fierce and serene.
 Each season etches on the land,
 its story written by nature's hand.
 Birdsong, breeze, and bison tread,
 while roots below keep life widespread.
 Time flows in cycles, soft and grand,
 a quiet covenant across the land.
 So walk the prairie, pause and hear
 the whispered pulse of every year.
 For life endures in sun and snow,
 in grass, in bloom, in all that grow. ■

A tallgrass prairie in the wintertime may appear lonely and desolate, but in truth it can be quite peaceful and beautiful especially when adorned with fresh winter snow. The seedheads of cone flowers, round headed bush clover, and empty milkweed pods can add distinctive textures and images. "The Big Four" grasses... big bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass, and little bluestem were once reaching for the sky now bend gently under the weight of snow and wind. Flocks of juncos gather in groups to feed from fallen seeds before scattering again. And just before dusk, short-eared owls call to one another in the distance. The matriarch of the prairie, the bison, stands amongst the dry grasses and forbs—steadfast against the winter weather, its rugged fur dusted with snow.



*Frosted trail through the tallgrass prairie.
 Photo by Kelly Jacobs.*



Winter on the Prairie

Poem by Diane Sparks, Prairie Sands Chapter Member

Photo by Ron Lutz II, Empire-Sauk Chapter Member

Light snow falls softly on the prairie,
Magical silence fills the air.
Sparkling crystals cling tight to seed heads,
Bringing beauty to all aware.

Gone are the greens, purples, and yellows,
Replaced by tans, umbers, and browns.
Meadowlarks and dickcissels have left,
Seeking shelter in warmer towns.

White-tailed deer and coyotes make nests,
Creating warmth in the whiteness.
Rabbits shelter in underground dens,
Insulated by dry grasses.

Dormancy has come upon the plants,
Precious time required to restore.
Energy conserved in thriving roots,
Preparing for warm weather's door.

Calmly, glinting snowflakes continue,
Moisture provided by design.
Grassland prairies enriched all winter,
Awaiting what will be divine. ■



The Return of Our Relatives A Story of Reintroducing Bison to SMSC Tribal Lands

Story by Erin E. Belanger and Photos by Jake Miller

In the fall of 2023, a moment of deep cultural and ecological significance unfolded for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC), as the tribe welcomed home a small herd of bison. These magnificent beasts—considered relatives by the Dakota people and known as *pte*, *taṭaṅka*, and many other names—have long been absent from this Minnesota tribal homeland. Their return marked the culmination of years of thoughtful planning, environmental study and a heartfelt desire to restore the bonds severed by colonization.

The herd, or *pteoptaye*, a gift from the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate in South Dakota, now roams 165 acres of SMSC tribal land near County Road 83 and Eagle Creek Boulevard in Shakopee. The reintroduction of bison is much more than a conservation effort; it is a spiritual and cultural homecoming, reestablishing a vital connection between the Dakota people and their lands.

"The relationship between the Dakota and bison goes back eons—long before the last ice age," former SMSC Bison Herd Coordinator Richard Milda explained. "Despite their massive size, bison embody a peaceful and spiritual presence." Milda recalled the experience of watching them at sunrise, observing their natural rhythms

and feeling a deep connection. "They embody our traditions and way of life; it's certainly a spiritual thing. Spirituality isn't an Indian thing—it's a human thing," Milda said.

Sam Crofut, SMSC member and bison herd technician, has also experienced this spiritual component, noting the sense of peace he has felt when around the bison. "Their presence grounds me—and it happens every time I visit them," Crofut said.

History of a Shared Resilience

The return of the bison is steeped in historical significance. For the Dakota people, bison were central to survival, providing food, medicine, clothing and tools. The relationship was one of reciprocity, with the Dakota respecting and honoring the bison for their many gifts.

Colonization, however, violently disrupted this exchange of balance and harmony. The near extermination of the bison in the 19th century echoed the displacement and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples. The Dakota people were separated from their lands and their traditional way of life, and the bison were pushed to the brink of extinction.

"The story of the bison mirrors the story of Dakota peoples in many ways, and both are resilient," said former SMSC Chairman Keith B. Anderson. "Our tribe has restored and revitalized its relationship with our plant relatives over the decades, and we now have the knowledge to revitalize our relationship with our relative the bison. Reintroducing bison to our homelands will allow us to bring back traditional ceremonies and food and medicine important to our people."

Reviving the Prairie

The journey to bring the bison home was always a deliberate and collaborative process. The SMSC conducted extensive surveys to understand how reintroducing bison would affect the ecosystem, studying plant life, pollinators, birds, herptiles, small mammals and insects in the area. Their findings were promising: the bison prairie provided a refuge for grassland and migrating bird species, contributing to a healthier ecosystem and a holistic understanding of the prairie's biodiversity.

This ongoing monitoring reflects the SMSC's commitment to ecological stewardship. Natural Resources staff anticipated the bison would have a transformative effect on the prairie habitat, much as they did historically. "Their grazing patterns create diverse plant structures, which enriches the soil and benefits a wide range of species and promotes the health of the prairie," stated Ferin Davis Anderson, SMSC manager of natural resources.

The bison's return is a vital part of the SMSC's broader mission to restore prairie ecosystems. Over the past 20 years, the tribe has successfully restored more than 1,000 acres of prairie, reviving a landscape that was once a defining feature of Scott County. In North America, prairies are endangered ecosystems, which has contributed to a decline in biodiversity and ecological health. By reintroducing bison, a keystone species, the SMSC is breathing new life into these lands.

Cultural Revival

Beyond ecological benefits, the return of the bison is a profound cultural milestone for the Community. Many

of the Dakota people's traditions and ceremonies have been interrupted for generations due to the decimation of the bison population. These ceremonies honor the bison as relatives and are integral to the culture and spiritual practices of the Dakota people, offering opportunities for traditional foods and medicines.

The reintroduction of bison is just one part of the SMSC's vision for a sustainable future. It reflects a deep respect for the interconnectedness of all life and a commitment to restoring harmony and balance to the land. The tribe's efforts are a powerful example of how Indigenous knowledge and practices can guide modern conservation.

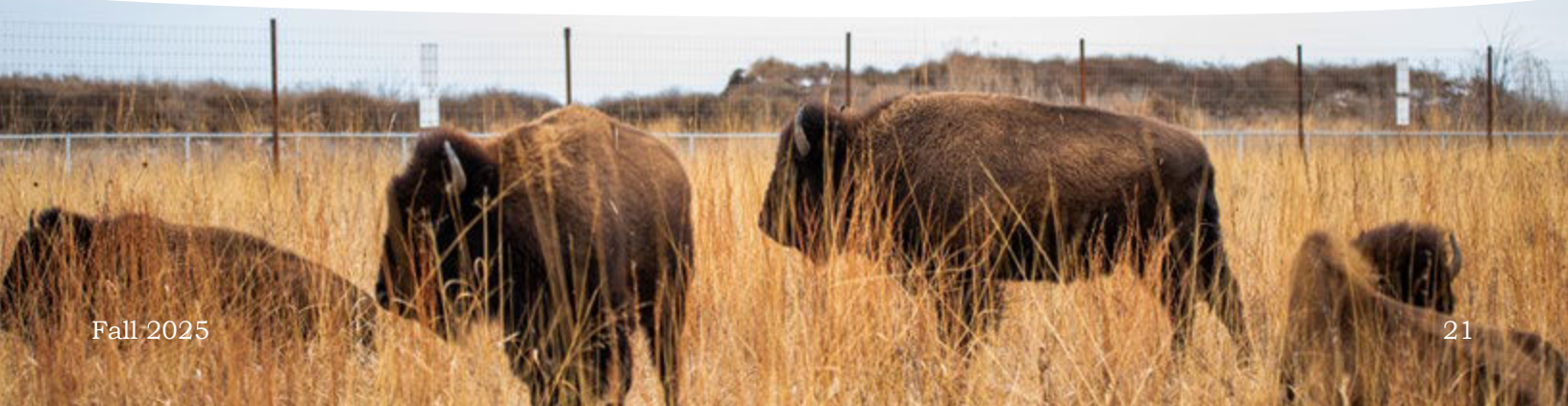
The Circle of Renewal

As the bison roam once again, their presence is a powerful symbol. Their homecoming binds traditions, stories and relationships, a living testament to resilience and renewal. As the herd thrives, so too does the prairie, and with it, the cultural and spiritual traditions of the Dakota people. This initiative honors the past and creates a legacy for future generations—a reminder that the relationship between humans and the natural world is one of mutual care and respect.

"They're home, and they're very comfortable," Crofut said. "The bison are curious animals, gentle giants, and we are grateful they are back." Crofut added, "We are bison people. And now they need our help. We go out there every day, rain or shine, at dusk and when the sun rises, and we check on them."

It's a reminder that in repairing our relationship with the land, we also restore something within ourselves. In the end, the return of the bison is about more than just ecology or heritage—it's about coming full circle. It's about recognizing the land, creatures and people all as relatives, bound together in a shared journey of resilience and renewal. ■

This article was published with support from Alliant Energy. It was originally published in the [winter 2025 issue of Wičōškan](#), the Magazine of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.





Student Researchers and Local Stewards Team Up to Study How Management Shapes Restored Prairies Under Changing Winters

By Katherine Charton, Empire-Sauk Chapter Member

On a winter morning at The Prairie Enthusiasts' Mounds View Grassland, the prairie is quiet but alive. Beneath the snow, small mammals race through hidden tunnels, their paths winding between dormant stems. Just below the soil surface, the buds of prairie perennials wait patiently for the thaw, storing energy for the first warm day of spring. Overhead, a hawk scans the whitened landscape while the wind combs through last season's seedheads. And in the distance, the scrape of shovels cuts through the stillness as bundled-up students push snow into neat piles or clear it away entirely from flag-marked plots. Few humans venture into the prairie at this time of year, but these students are maintaining an experiment unlike any other in the region—an effort to understand how a changing winter is reshaping prairies across the Midwest.

The project began in 2016 as a collaboration between university research ecologists and local land stewards to test how winter snow cover interacts with the type and timing of managed disturbance. It's a question that weighs on the minds of practitioners across the region who are working to restore the prairies that once stretched unbroken across the landscape. "Disturbance through fire, mowing and other means defines prairie management," explains Ellen Damschen, Professor of Integrative Biology at the UW-Madison and principal investigator of the project. "Those actions are essential to restoring and maintaining prairie ecosystems. But a key question for stewards is whether they might amplify—or

Former undergraduate researchers Sam August and Benji Jackson survey plant community composition in summer within the long-term experimental plots at Mounds View Grassland. Photo by Michelle Homann.

help offset—the stresses of a changing winter."

In the Midwest, climate change is advancing fastest in the cold months, and once-reliable snow cover is becoming less certain. Snow acts as an insulating blanket, buffering roots and buds from the full force of winter cold. Without that protection, soils can freeze more deeply and cycle between freezing and thawing more often, increasing plant exposure to potentially damaging conditions. Restoration must be planned with this future in mind. "The prairies being planted today will grow under a different climate than the one that shaped them over their evolutionary history, especially in winter," says Damschen. "Given the likelihood that we'll continue to lose insulation in the form of snow, we wanted to know whether burning or mowing before winter would alter the insulation provided by plant litter."

The idea to test this interaction at Mounds View Grassland took root through conversations between Damschen, then-postdoctoral research associate Laura Ladwig, then-doctoral student Jon Henn and Rich Henderson, longtime Empire-Sauk Chapter Board Representative and Mounds View Grassland site steward for The Prairie Enthusiasts. Together they envisioned a living experiment that could serve both science and restoration. Henn and Henderson worked closely to map

out 32 200-m² plots across two prairie restorations at the site. Henderson coordinated management schedules so that experimental spring burns, fall burns and fall mowing could proceed without disrupting ongoing stewardship, while fire crews from The Prairie Enthusiasts and the local land management company Adaptive Restoration provided the expertise and labor to carry out the treatments.

The research team, initially led by Henn, also manipulated snow in 192 4m² subplots nested within the larger disturbance plots. Using cross-country skis, snowshoes and shovels, student crews trekked to Mounds View Grassland after each snowfall of four inches or more, removing snow from some plots, adding it to others or leaving it untouched. Maintained now for nearly a decade, this experimental design has allowed researchers to explore how management and insulation interact—to see whether, for instance, removing litter before winter exposes plants to deeper frost in low-snow conditions, or whether keeping litter through the winter offers protection and benefits the plant community.

As the project matured, a new generation of researchers stepped in to continue the work. I joined the Damschen Lab as a graduate student in 2019 and inherited the project from Henn, expanding its scope to explore how plant functional traits—characteristics of plants such as stress tolerance and resource acquisition abilities—might predict which species persist or colonize under different combinations of managed disturbance and snow cover. In 2022, Michelle Homann, a current PhD candidate, joined to lead new rounds of data collection and focus on how the treatments influence early spring thaw and seedling emergence. Christopher Warneke, a postdoctoral research associate, took on the role of data manager, ensuring the consistency and quality of thousands of data points gathered each year. Early funding from the Joint Fire Science Program and the National Science Foundation helped launch the work, while continued support from the U.S. Geological Survey Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center has sustained the experiment over time, allowing for a rare, long-term assessment of ecological change. At every stage, the project's continuity has depended on collaboration between graduate students, faculty mentors, practitioners, stewards, funders and the dozens of undergraduate assistants who have kept the experiment alive.

I recently led the publication of a peer-reviewed manuscript summarizing results from seven years of data and exploring how plant traits influence community

outcomes. We found that fall burns and reduced snow both led to colder minimum winter soil temperatures, with the coldest conditions occurring when the two treatments were combined. That's likely because prescribed fire removes insulation in the form of litter before plants have a chance to regrow and replenish it, while the snow removal prevents accumulation of snow that would otherwise buffer the soil from the coldest temperatures.

Surprisingly, however, only the management treatments—not the snow manipulations—have produced measurable effects on the composition of species that make-up the plant community so far. We found that both spring and fall burns have resulted in greater increases in species richness than in unmanaged plots, with fall mowing falling somewhere in between, a pattern that aligns with what many practitioners already observe. Despite clear shifts in winter soil conditions and measurable effects on individual species performance, including early life stages, we've seen no evidence that altered snow depth is changing the overall composition of these prairie communities. This resilience may stem from the evolutionary history of the species themselves. Most prairie plants are long-lived perennials adapted to disturbance. The same deep roots and underground buds that allow them to survive fire may also protect them from freeze stress.

Digging deeper into the data, subtler patterns have emerged in support of this idea. In young restorations like those at Mounds View Grassland, we typically expect colonization by fast-growing, resource-acquisitive plants.

Former graduate student Jon Henn, who helped originate the experiment, joins The Prairie Enthusiasts' prescribed fire crew to apply a burn treatment at Mounds View Grassland. Photo by Laura Ladwig.





But in the coldest plots—those that were burned in the fall and had snow removed—we found more recruitment of stress-tolerant, slower-growing plants. Among those are wholeleaf rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*), wild quinine (*Parthenium integrifolium*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), white heath aster (*Symphyotrichum ericoides*) and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)—plants with tough, nutrient-poor leaves and high tolerance to cold, the botanical hallmarks of endurance.

For now, these restored prairie plant communities appear to be holding steady through the loss of winter snow, but subtle or delayed effects may yet emerge as small shifts—like those seen in colonization trends—accumulate over time. And because the experiment has unfolded during an era of warming winters, it has, in a sense, been running within its own real-world test of change, complicating what the data can reveal. Moreover, the prairies at Mounds View Grassland are still relatively young restorations and don't yet have the species richness and ecological complexity of remnant prairies, so results may differ in those long-established systems.

In my view, a conservative approach would be to continue keeping litter down through burns to make space for new seedlings, but where possible, those burns should occur in the spring to help soften the potential impacts of warming winters. At the same time, we can't take disturbance for granted. Fire is essential for maintaining the diversity and function of prairie plant communities, but climate change is shifting weather windows, and practitioners have to stay flexible to burn safely and effectively. In some years, that may mean more fall burning simply to ensure fire remains on the landscape at all.

The lessons from this research extend beyond its scientific findings. The experiment demonstrates how restored prairies can double as living laboratories—

Former undergraduate researcher Gus Brunette shovels snow onto snow addition subplots at Mounds View Grassland following a large snowfall event, part of the team's effort to mimic changing snow conditions. Photo by Katherine Charton.

places where research questions meet the realities of management. Such work depends on trust and shared learning, where researchers rely on practitioners for on-the-ground expertise and historical context, and practitioners rely on researchers to interpret patterns that can inform future stewardship. At Mounds View Grassland, that collaboration has been ongoing for nearly a decade, spanning three generations of graduate students. Season after season, it reminds us that resilience grows from persistence—from tending the land through uncertainty and trusting that, like the prairie itself, our efforts will endure. ■

For more information about this research, please see the associated academic papers published in [Ecosphere](#) (2022) and [American Journal of Botany](#) (2025). The research team thanks the continued support of their collaborators and funders, including The Prairie Enthusiasts, Adaptive Restoration, The Nature Conservancy, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the National Science Foundation, the Joint Fire Science Program and the U.S. Geological Survey Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center.

To read more about this research, visit our blog at ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Blog

A Prairie Song

November Days

Song by Scott Toutant, Prairie Sands Chapter Member

Photo of Mounds View Grassland by Ron Lutz II, Empire-Sauk Member

Intro

D C G D standard tuning capo 3rd fret

Verse 1

D C
Brown and golden fields, underneath my feet
G D
Harvest moon apple cider so sweet

Verse 2

D
Flocks of blackbirds flying high
C
White-tail deer me oh my
G D
November winds blowing in my face

Chorus

A
So grab your sweater bundle up
Em
Pour a little cocoa in your cup
G D
Put another log in the fireplace

Repeat Verse 1

Outro

D slide down to 8th fret walk back up to 3rd fret D ■



Artist's Connection to the Prairie

Story and Artwork by Colleen Shore

As a painter I love the chance to go onsite to paint the prairies. In the world of art we call it plein air painting—when we paint outside in the moment from what we see. It's a French term that dates back to the time of the Impressionist Movement, coinciding with the invention of the paint tube, allowing greater ease for artists to take their oils with them out into nature.

It takes great observation skills, a practiced hand and a tolerance for nature's creatures and unpredictable weather—not to mention patience as the sun changes the play of shadows without notice.

What attracts me to paint the prairie are the textures and motion of the grasses, the variety of tones of color and the unexpected insect or bird that lands right in front of you. Plein air painting makes me a better painter and increases my appreciation of the natural world.

Featured are a few paintings featuring Brice Prairie—some plein air, some from my studio. Thank you for viewing.

View more at cshoreartwork.blogspot.com. ■



Header: *Golden Moments, In Situ*, (latin for in the place of origin). Often plein air painters take a photo of artwork to reference the location where the work was done, which may be a requirement of some plein air competitions.

Above image: *Brice Prairie Walk* 5x7, studio painting.

Right: *Burr Oaks Return* 8x10, studio painting.





Volunteer Spotlight Gary Eldred

By Kay Wienke, Southwest Wisconsin Chapter Board Representative

Gary Eldred is the volunteer every organization yearns to have in their membership. He has spent 50 years of his life dedicated to prairie restoration and The Prairie Enthusiasts. He was instrumental in the discovery of the organization's first prairie (Muralt Bluff Prairie), participated in the first burn there in 1975 and several since. He is also credited with helping to find and acquire several other prairies for the organization. To discover prairie remnants, Gary has conducted surveys in over a dozen Wisconsin counties and three counties in Iowa.

His service on the ground is legendary. He served as site steward for several prairies at one time, conducting weekly work parties with an experienced group of volunteers. He served as President of the early Southwest Prairie Enthusiasts for its first five years. When the group became The Prairie Enthusiasts in 1993, he served as the organization's President for 10 years. He continues to serve as Emeritus on the The Prairie Enthusiasts Board and regularly attends the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter meetings, presentations and workdays.

His artwork is an accurate, beautiful representation of nature and prairie species. In 1989, his drawing of a meadowlark on a fence became the organizational logo and continues to this day. Historically his art was sold at Chapter banquets to raise funds for the work of the organization.

All this work and dedication to prairies resulted in Gary Eldred being inducted into the [Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame](#) in 2021. Thomas Hunt, Southwest Wisconsin Chapter Member, describes him as "a renaissance man—artist, writer, scientist, organizer and leader."

Gary Eldred standing by a boundary sign with the meadowlark illustration he created. Photo by Tim Eisele.

Gary indicates that when he had a job, it was to support his habit of discovering and preserving prairies. He has spent more hours than can be counted dedicated to prairies and The Prairie Enthusiasts. Gary Eldred is the example we can all strive to become! Thank you, Gary, for your lifelong service! ■



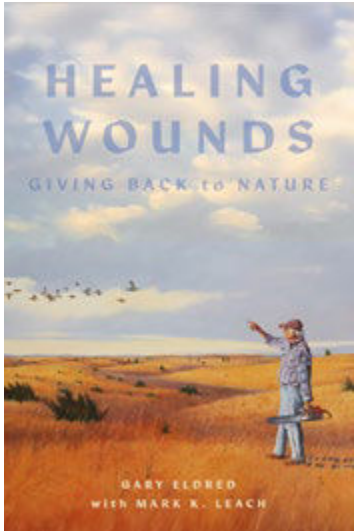
Gary with Kay Wienke and Bob Retko looking at baptisia at Borah Creek. Photo by Steve Querin-Schultz.

Book Review

Healing Wounds: Giving Back to Nature

Written by Gary Eldred with Mark Leach

Reviewed by Grace Vosen



When I joined The Prairie Enthusiasts in 2015, I sensed that there were already decades of history (and countless hours of volunteer work) preceding my involvement. In the book of prairie enthusiasm, I had found an organization with many Chapters, both chronological and geographical.

Indeed, this era of The Prairie Enthusiasts doesn't show up until chapter nine of Gary Eldred's autobiography, *Healing Wounds: Giving Back to Nature*.

Written by Eldred with Mark Leach, this book is a testament to the variety of people, places and projects that took root and established The Prairie Enthusiasts as we know it today. Rather than being a collection of explanatory stories, it's a universal tale of how one person's life can be changed by finding a higher cause. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to help heal the natural world.

With a simple repeated chorus of "Wow!," Eldred describes how he developed his keen sense of wonder. The early chapters of the book focus on the difficulties Eldred faced throughout his life—the wounds referenced in the book's title. But as he gets to know the prairies of southern Wisconsin through a series of kind mentors, Eldred begins to see a path to healing these wounds. The way he chooses to accomplish this, in turn, is to heal the same ecosystems that inspired him.

Eldred is a true original. Another recurring theme in the book is his lack of a college education; Eldred has learned everything he knows about prairies outside of a classroom. He calls on readers to use their education for good instead of stubbornly clinging to traditions and egos. "We can pretend business as usual will get us through any environmental crisis," Eldred writes. "Or we can put our passion, energy and brains into effectively healing our social and ecological wounds."

Subsequent chapters describe the conservationists and landowners Eldred has worked with, the places he has helped protect, the formation and early years of The Prairie Enthusiasts, and the various creative outlets he has enjoyed. I had the pleasure of covering Eldred's art opening at Holy Wisdom Monastery and sneaking a peek at the originals of his pen-and-ink drawings (see the [April 2019 issue of The Prairie Promoter](#)).

As Eldred shares the ups and downs of his life with readers, I am struck by how mindful he is of his actions. He understands why he does things a certain way, and he acknowledges the times when he could have done things differently. He also makes sure to give the same compassionate consideration to others. It's a reminder that Aldo Leopold's land ethic comprises how people relate to one another as well as to the natural world.

The book also offers hope for people dealing with their own wounds and struggles. Eldred has achieved the protection and restoration of numerous prairies, but he admits he had no idea which of these initiatives would succeed. He advocates for efforts that involve everyone. "There needs to be grassroots organizations that fight for what's necessary to ensure what's wild is not destroyed. We cannot sit on our thumbs waiting for governments or the big non-profits to save the wild... We need nothing less than a new paradigm for our relationship with nature." Anyone could help heal the land and find themselves healed in the process. ■

*Grace Vosen is a conservation educator and a former editor of "The Prairie Promoter."
She lives in Spring Green, Wisconsin.*

The Prairie Trail Beckons

Poem by Kristi Jones

Photo by RS Baller

Come and hike, come and explore
The prairie's trail beckons me in all four seasons
A winding path of gravel, just begging me to walk on it and see what lies within
I start my trek eagerly, wondering what surprises will greet me

Spring prairie means a vast expanse of pale green, with baby rabbits scampering everywhere
Summer prairie brings an abundance of coneflowers, Joe Pye weed, milkweed, and tall grasses
Adult rabbits and a flock of wild turkeys rule the roost
Fall prairie sports yellow ragweed, the mortal enemy of anyone with allergies or asthma.
The resident animals start preparing for colder weather
Winter prairie boasts brown stems and their flower seedheads sticking up above the coating of white snow on the ground

This prairie is beautiful and busy all year 'round
A precious preserved park in the city
A peaceful paradise for insects, birds, and other creatures
A place that welcomes humans of all ages
Come and hike, come and explore ■

Check Out All Events on Our Website!

Chapter work parties and events are a great way to learn about the habitats near you, connect with your community and feel a sense of accomplishment while stewarding the land. No matter your experience, all are encouraged to attend!

Find a full list of our events on our website at

ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org/Events



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Chapter Updates

Minnesota Driftless

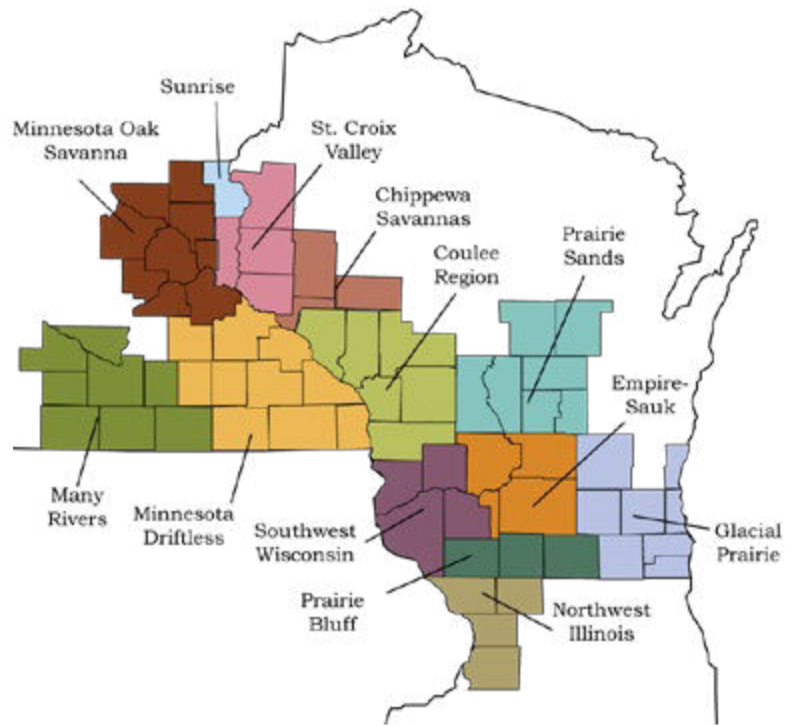
Update and Photos by Jeff Lightfoot

Like many communities in the Driftless Region, the community of Red Wing, Minnesota, is home to numerous bluffs, ravines and dry bluff prairies. Many people are familiar with He Mni Can, also known as Barn Bluff, and He Mni Can Sun-Ka-Ku, also known as Sorins Bluff, both of which tower over downtown Red Wing. Lesser known but equally unique is the bluff known locally as Raccoon Hill.

Beginning in the 1990s, The City of Red Wing, along with the primary landowner of Raccoon Hill at that time, and neighbors worked together to acquire grant funding which, along with a donation of property by the landowner, was used to create what is now known as the Billings Tomfor Conservation Area (BTCA). With the help of the Minnesota Land Trust, a permanent conservation easement was placed on the property.

The Red Wing School District currently owns most of the south facing slopes of the BTCA where excellent examples of dry bedrock bluff prairie as well as degraded oak savanna can be found. Several trails bisect the BTCA and there are several scenic vistas of the neighborhoods and river valley. Several Species of Greatest Conservation Need and species that are listed as state Special Concern or Threatened have been documented at the site. Additionally, iNaturalist contains a record of American chestnut being observed at the BTCA. Over the years, several prescribed burns have been completed as well as invasive species control work. However, for approximately the past 10 years the habitat needs of the site have been greater than the resources available for the work, and much of the site is now threatened by encroaching invasive species.

During the spring of 2025, members of the Minnesota Driftless Chapter worked closely with staff in The Prairie Enthusiasts Chapter Support Office to write and submit a grant proposal to the Minnesota DNR Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) program for prairie and savanna restoration work at the BTCA. The grant proposal was awarded, and work began in July using Conservation Corp Minnesota Crews who cut



and herbicide treated invasive species from the dry bluff prairie. Work has now shifted to The Prairie Enthusiasts volunteers as well as volunteers from The Red Wing Friends of The Buff, a non-profit that relies on volunteer efforts to maintain trails, conserve habitat and host educational events on He Mni Can, He Mni Can Sun-Ka-Ku and the BCTA. Using CPL funds, a contract with a private vendor has been awarded and additional restoration work should commence in the fall of 2025 with a completion date set for 2026. ■



Volunteer work crew at Red Wing.



Dan Winkler (left) alongside Caledonia High School students working at Brownsville Bluff Prairie. Photo by Laurie Arzaga.

Coulee Region

By Dan Winkler, Jon Rigden and Jim Rogala

Prairie School-Brownsville Bluff Student Research Field Trip

The 9th grade Earth and Environmental Science classes (taught by Jessie Emerson, Tori Burmester and Dan Winkler) at Caledonia High School went to the Brownsville Bluff Prairie, co-owned by Dave Hey and Laurie Arzaga. Laurie joined us on the trip and explained how the prairie has changed over the years due to a lack of fire on the landscape and the painstaking efforts they take to manage invasive species. Earlier in the week students brainstormed questions that could be answered through research at the prairie. Some examples include identifying if there is a correlation between the size of rocks and number of insects present under the rock; the number of flower stalks on goldenrod in the prairie versus in the forest; and examining the diversity of grasses in the burned versus unburned areas of the prairie. Students will be analyzing their data and giving presentations in the fall.

Laurie's comment about the field trip: "As soon as we stepped onto the prairie, I noticed a change in the students. They went from being quiet and reserved to excited, curious and engaged. No cell phones or social media—just kids having fun wandering through the tall grasses, climbing on rocks, finding cool caterpillars and

blister beetles, watching hawks soar above and learning to connect with the natural world. The prairie worked her magic!"

Chapter Leadership Transition

We're excited to announce that Melinda Knutson has assumed the role of Chair for the Coulee Region Chapter, succeeding Justin Nooker, who has provided outstanding leadership over the past three years. We deeply appreciate Justin's dedication and the tremendous work he's done during his tenure. Fortunately, he plans to remain actively involved with the Chapter—especially in leading prescribed burns. Please join us in welcoming Melinda to her new role and thanking Justin for his continued commitment!

In other leadership changes, long-time Chapter leader George Johnston stepped down, and Hannah St. Aubin joined the Chapter Board. Hannah provides this introduction:

I'm grateful to be serving on the Coulee Region Chapter Board! I reside in Tomah, WI and assist with maintenance and prescribed burns on prairies in the La Crosse area. I graduated with a degree in natural resources and environmental sciences and currently work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. I look forward to learning more about the ins and outs of prairie stewardship as a Board Member!

Grant Award to Support Bluff Prairie Restoration Planning

We are pleased to share that The Prairie Enthusiasts' grant application to the Paul E. Stry Foundation was



UW-La Crosse Conservation Biology Students at Stry Prairie. Photo by Laurie Arzaga.

successful. This funding will support Dan Carter in developing detailed management plans in 2026 for three bluff prairies—Mathy, Juniper, and Vista—currently being restored by Friends of the Blufflands in collaboration with the Coulee Region Chapter. A second grant application is planned for submission to the Stry Foundation to support management planning for three additional bluff prairies in 2027. These efforts are vital steps in ensuring the long-term ecological health and stewardship of our region's unique bluff prairie ecosystems.

Workdays Enhanced by UW-La Crosse Conservation Biology Students

Our collaborative workdays with Friends of the Blufflands got a boost when UW-La Crosse's Dr. Jaspreet Kaur added a hands-on portion of her Conservation Biology class. Each student in the class was required to spend two days working with us at Holland Sand Prairie and bluff prairies in Hixon Forest. To provide background on prairies and prepare them for their workdays, Pat Wilson and Jim Rogala gave presentations to the class. Time spent with the students was rewarding for those mentoring them and hopefully they enjoyed their time learning about prairie ecosystems and stewarding the land. ■



Half-black bumble bee visiting bee balm (*Menarda fistulosa*). Photo by Ben Grady.



Attendees enjoy the Prairie Sands Chapter Pollinator Picnic. Photo by Matt Dettlaff.

Prairie Sands

By Matt Dettlaff

Greetings from the Sand Country!

The major event for the Prairie Sands Chapter this summer was our 2nd Annual Pollinator Picnic held at John Muir Park near Montello on July 26. Thanks to our own resident Professor, Dr. Ben Grady, we learned a lot about the various native bumble bees in our area. By the end of the lesson, even I was able to identify a few of the species we saw during our tour. (And yes, the common eastern lived up to its name). Upon completing the circuit of trails at the park, we gathered for a sack lunch and conversation ranging from prairie passions to the best local dives for lunching.

Dr. Dan Carter also visited the region a couple times to evaluate a few stewardship opportunities and provide guidance to some of our Prairie Sands Chapter members on their habitat improvement projects. The Chapter is excited to dive into the work once the plans are lined out for those sites. Though not directly related to prairie restoration, the sandstone outcropping at one of the sites included fossilized ripples that recorded the ebbs and flows of the geological history in the area. Talk about writing your story in stone!

Earlier this year, I had requested that Chapter members submit their ideas and creations related to their interpretation of The Prairie Enthusiasts mission. Our Diane Sparks provided a poignant poem related to the approaching cold season that perhaps reminds us that prairies are still beautiful and relevant even when the colors fade and snow blankets the landscape. It also reminds us that it may take a winter's rest to be refreshed and ready for the resilient exuberance of spring. ■



Dainty Sulfur (*Nathalis iole*) at Rocky Branch Prairie.
Photo by Robert Marquis.

St. Croix Valley

Update by Evanne Hunt

Getting the Word Out

The Chapter was invited to many events this summer and fall. Not only were they great opportunities to meet the public, it was also recognition by other like-minded organizations that we are a force!

Attending these events was a lot of work and would not have been possible without the help of Jay and Karen Arneson, Joe Fusilier, Ginny Gaynor, Kim Gearin, Tim Halvorson, Karli Keegan, Becky Kleager, Peter Leete, Tom LeMay, Buck Malick, Mike Miller, Ed Parsonage and Marti Piepgras! Thank you all!

- River Falls Earth Fest (Apr 26)
- St. Croix Valley Bird Club Wings of Spring Migration Festival (May 10)
- Belwin Conservancy Bison Release (May 17)
- Tropical Wings reception (May 23)
- Carpenter Nature Center Art Fair (Aug 23)
- UW-River Falls Involvement Fair (Sep 2)
- Community Care Fest (Sept 7)
- Spirit of the St. Croix River Festival (Sept 27/28)
- Kinnickinnic River Land Trust Nature Night (Oct 4)



St. Croix Valley work party volunteer. Photo by Evanne Hunt.

Another Successful Butterfly and Moth Survey

Robert Marquis, noted botanist, led three groups to Alexander Oak Savanna to search for butterflies and moths. Information gathered on these walks will be used to assess the impact of habitat restoration efforts at the site.

This year they added a new species to the list: the Delaware Skipper (*Anatrytone logan*). Bob also photographed a Dainty Sulfur (*Nathalis iole*), at Rocky Branch Prairie and Savanna. This is both the first sighting of this species for Pierce County, WI, and the first photographic record of this species from Pierce County. Very exciting!

Bob posts the group's results on WisconsinButterflies.org/butterfly/counties/pierce.

Picnic 2025

On August 24 the Chapter gathered at the Town of River Falls town hall for our yearly get-together. The turnout this year included 25 members who showed up for food and a tour of Alexander Oak Savanna.

Join a Work Party!

We have a robust schedule of invasive management planned for the winter. Each of our sites (Alexander Oak Savanna, Rocky Branch Prairie and Savanna, Foster Cemetery, etc.) now have site managers. Every work event is really a party with beverages, hot dogs and a bonfire. Singing optional! We welcome you to join us. ■



Children learn about prairie plants at the Spirit of St. Croix River Festival. Photo by Evanne Hunt.

Moely Prairie Adds 12 New Educational Signs Thanks to Community Support

Visitors to Moely Prairie this summer will notice something new along the walking paths—12 freshly installed educational signs highlighting even more of the native plants that make this 23.5-acre remnant prairie so special.

This project was made possible through a Good Ideas Grant from the Sauk County Extension Education, Arts, and Culture Committee, which expanded upon a similar 2021 project that introduced the first set of signs. Those original 12 signs received such enthusiastic feedback from the community that The Prairie Enthusiasts and I applied again to double the collection.

What makes this new round of signs especially meaningful is the community partnership behind them. Logan McIntyre, a recent graduate of Sauk Prairie High School, built all the metal posts during an independent study class and as part of his role as a teaching assistant in the school's metals program. Logan, described by his teachers as being a highly talented Tech Ed student, is currently attending Southwest Tech to pursue a career as a lineman. His craftsmanship ensures these signs will stand sturdy for years to come.

The placards themselves feature photographs I've taken on Moely Prairie, transformed into weather-resistant displays by Alpha Graphics of Middleton. Together, these elements create a walking tour where visitors can learn about prairie plants, their role in the ecosystem and the ongoing efforts to restore and protect this rare landscape.

We are deeply grateful to Sauk County Extension, the Sauk Prairie High School metals program, Alpha Graphics and to everyone who continues to support the restoration and education work happening at Moely Prairie.

Next time you're out for a walk, take a moment to stop at the signs—they are reminders not only of the beauty of prairie plants, but also of the power of community partnerships to bring a project to life. ■



The 12 new prairie plant identification signs.



Spotted beebalm (Monarda punctata) sign within Moely Prairie.



Missouri goldenrod (Solidago missouriensis) sign within Moely Prairie.

Southwest Wisconsin

Update and Photos by Becky Fernette

Chapter Update

It was a busy summer for the prairie folk in the Southwest Chapter! We hosted prairie tours at Iris Drive Prairie near Gays Mills, at Jack Kusssmaul's in Woodman and Marjie Bennett's near Bagley. We had a fantastic turnout at all three tours, which was made more special with ice cream at Jack's and dark chocolate cake at Marjie's. Who knew these tours could be so (ful)filling?!

A group of nature lovers from West Dundee, Illinois visited our Chapter in late July. Although the first day was steamy, they persevered and toured Iris Drive, Borah Creek and Feist Prairies on the first day. The weather shifted to a rainy drizzle, but they enjoyed learning about Sylvan Road Conservation Area with Site Steward, Tom Hunt. One of the attendees is relocating to Richland Center and plans to join our Chapter—a win-win! We also hosted the Grant County Master Gardeners and Friends at Eldred Prairie.

Stephen Winter taught the applied unit of Burn School in July at Oakwood Nature Park in Fennimore. Nine future crew members attended and gained the skills needed to confidently participate in prescribed burns. Thank you to the Minnesota Driftless Chapter for encouraging Steve to offer this training to other Chapters.

Steve Querin-Shultz and I released 210 root-boring weevils (*Cyphocleonus achates*) on an acre at

Borah Creek Prairie to munch on spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*). Kristin Westad live-trapped nine crayfish at Thomas Wet Prairie and determined that they are native devil crayfish (*Lacunicambarus diogenes*). A crew of inmates from Prairie du Chien assisted with wild parsnip eradication. Thank you to Jack Kusssmaul for developing this relationship with the Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution staff.

Work continues on the barn at our Borah Creek site. Mark Leonhart, James Haas, Roger Smith, Mike Fernette I rehabbed the kitchen area to create a cleaner space for serving food and beverages. The next step is to enclose the exterior walls to reduce dust and varmint infestation. Our efforts to find a contractor to repair the foundation have been unsuccessful so far, but we're confident we will find the right person soon.

Chapter members met on September 14 for our annual meeting and gathering. Several folks viewed the area that was forestry mowed last year and saw the hillside purpled with rough blazing stars (*Liatris aspera*). Yours truly gave an overview of our accomplishments—which were many—and our plans for the coming year. Some highlights include: welcomed Leo Gander, first child of members Tim and Sarah, updated list of approved prescribed burn participants and burn equipment and held our first area meet-up at Kay Wienke and Bob Retko's Hillsboro property to build connections between members in northern Richland and Southeast Vernon Counties. Thank you to Kay and Bob for hosting this inaugural event!

Lastly, we're pleased to announce that we have two new site stewards: Ross Shrago at Eldred Prairie near Lancaster and James Haas at Double Oak Savanna in Millville. Thank you to Jack Kusssmaul and Walter Mirk for your many years of devoted stewardship. Stay tuned as we excitedly anticipate the acquisition of our ninth site! Whew! ■



Devil's crayfish trapped and released at Thomas Wet Prairie.
Photo by Kristin Westad.



Left: New Site Steward of Eldred Prairie, Ross Shrago.
Right: New Site Steward of Double Oak Savanna, James Haas



Chapter members gather at Kasota Prairie to search for the tiny blooming Pasqueflower (*Anemone patens*) in Le Sueur County, Minnesota.

Many Rivers

Update by Rich Perrine. Photos by Addie Theis Paradis

Getting Members Into the Prairie

At our holiday gathering at the start of 2025, members of the Many Rivers Chapter made a list of things that they wanted to see for the new year. Field trips or prairie outings were listed several times. Jason Anderson and his wife Michelle, new members of The Prairie Enthusiasts and residents of the Mankato region, stepped up to lead monthly prairie hikes. On the last Monday of the month during the growing season we gathered at a variety of public spaces with prairie systems. The goal was to host an informal gathering to get members and non-members into the prairie throughout the year.

Beginning in March, a group of around 15 individuals, all layered up, ventured out into the spring chill to see Pasqueflowers (*Anemone patens*) blooming on the terraced landscape of the restored portion of the Kasota Prairie. It was amazing to see the excitement of the group about spending the evening in the prairie. From there our group gathered at the Gustavus Arboretum, Sakatah Lake State Park, Swan Lake WMA, Benson Park and Ottawa Bluffs throughout the growing season. While the owners of the land differed—private college land open to the public, Minnesota DNR land, North Mankato City land and land owned by The Nature Conservancy—these sites all shared something in common: public prairie places. Our Chapter cannot thank Jason and Michelle enough for the effort of planning and leading these events! Planning for next year's monthly hikes has already begun. Many Rivers members stay tuned for updates on upcoming outings!

Collaborative Field Trip:

Many Rivers & Minnesota Oak Savanna Chapters had their first ever combined field trip at

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) at the Hočokata ȩi cultural center at the start of October. This gathering place functions for community members as a place to learn and share history, culture and language. For the public, there is an incredible exhibit that enriches the understanding of visitors about the Dakota history, culture and people.

Ferin Davis Anderson and Michael Kurtz, staff members at SMSC led us through the exhibit and their restored prairies around the cultural center. Ferin presented on how reciprocal restoration fosters cultural revitalization, particularly for the SMSC community. She stated that there is such a need to bring spaces back for the community to reconnect with land. Ecological restoration is deeply connected to cultural and spiritual restoration. The tribe initially started with 250 acres and today own over 6,400 acres. Out of that total land, over 1,000 acres have been restored to prairie or other fire-dependent habitats. This makes SMSC one of the largest groups in the Twin Cities metro to manage that amount of prairie that isn't a state or federal entity.

In the early 2000s the tribe had reintroduced fire back to the landscape, allowing an important disturbance of the prairie to occur. In addition to fire, in the fall of 2023, the tribe welcomed back their relative, ȩatanka, or bison. This small herd is just one piece of restoring prairie ecology back into equilibrium on the landscape. Former SMSC Chairman Keith Anderson said, "Reintroducing bison to our homelands will allow us to bring back traditional ceremonies and food and medicine important to our people."

Ferin has presented at previous conferences with The Prairie Enthusiasts, and now with the Twin Cities-based Minnesota Oak Savanna Chapter. Future collaborative efforts are potentially in the works. With the capped number of visitors on this field trip, another trip may be planned again for next year. ■



Jason Anderson and Brian O'Brien hike across an old tailing pile from an abandoned gravel mine. Nicollet County, Minnesota.



Prairie Enthusiasm at the Chapter's Launch Celebration, attended by nearly 100 visitors. Photo by Debra Behrens.

Minnesota Oak Savanna

Update by Greg Heberlein and Regina Flanagan

Our Chapter Lifts Off

Our new Chapter hit the ground running! On August 16, the Launch Celebration at the Richardson Nature Center in Bloomington drew nearly 100 enthusiastic attendees. The Twin Cities has numerous environmental organizations and the purpose of the event was to introduce the Chapter, highlighting The Prairie Enthusiasts' unique mission, and network to encourage people to join us.

Attendees experienced an engaging afternoon including a series of 15-minute "lightning" talks; two prairie walks (three were planned but the bees weren't flying during the overcast afternoon, so the Pollinator Walk became a talk); and the short film *Landscape Stories, Helen Allison Savanna*. We learned from Sara Nelson about Dakota County Park's efforts to launch a local seed sharing network. John Moriarty talked about prairie management in the Three Rivers Park District. Elaine Evans from the University of Minnesota's Bee Lab spoke and Jim Proctor gave an impassioned presentation about the role of volunteers at Minneapolis Parks's Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. The launch was meant as a drop-in event with many choices for activities and engagement, but most of the attendees stayed all afternoon.

Nearly 30 Chapter members participated in a seed collection event on September 10 at the Crow Hassan Park Reserve. Wildlife Supervisor Angela Grill directed volunteers who harvested a variety of native seeds on their expansive prairie restoration that has been lovingly tended for nearly 50 years. The seeds will be

used for future restoration efforts across the Three Rivers Park District's parks. We hope to arrange a visit to the District's impressive propagation program next spring. Thanks to Anthony Pini for setting this up.

We joined several Chapters for events during October. In partnership with the Many Rivers Chapter on October 3, we had a field trip to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's prairie restoration. (see pg. 37 Many Rivers Update). Thanks to Addeline Theis Paradis for coordinating this rich experience.

On October 4, several Chapter members joined the St. Croix Valley Chapter on a site visit to the Bakken property in Afton, Minnesota—a lovely 40 acres of fire-adapted oak woodland. That Chapter is exploring obtaining the easement and managing the property with fire, selective thinning of native fire-intolerant trees and shrubs and removing non-natives. They are interested in recruiting help from our Chapter for their stewardship efforts.

We hosted authors Gary Eldred and Mark Leach on October 16 for a book signing event at Saint Paul's Lake Monster Brewing to celebrate the publication of *Healing Wounds: Giving Back to Nature*. Driving home to Wisconsin after the event, Mark relates that, "Gary talked about his anxiety over going to the "Big City" and talking with people who might not know anything about the outdoors. He then talked about (and has repeated since) that your event was a highlight of his life!" We enjoyed meeting Gary and were energized by his heartfelt passion for prairies and enlightened by his story about the founding of The Prairie Enthusiasts. ■

Crow Hassan Prairie seed collection event attracted nearly 30 Chapter members. Photo by Anthony Pini.





Prairie Enthusiasts Remembered

*Memorial gifts dedicated between
June 4, 2025 and October 10, 2025*

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

*Excerpt from unattributed Indigenous
Peoples song recorded in the Bureau
of American Ethnology bulletins.*

Photo by Jesse Bates.

In memory of:

Dawn Smith Avery

Remembered by Glenn Smith

Will A. Brandt

Remembered by George Brandt

Edith Brown

Remembered by David Mudgett

Susan Connell-Magee

Remembered by Kevin Magee

Sharon Dunwoody

Remembered by Stephen Glass

Walter Fredricks

Remembered by Melissa McDowell

Dor and Bill Gilbert

Remembered by Anonymous

Russell Hefty

Remembered by

Jo Ann Aebly

Anonymous

Jan Axelson

Judy Olson

Guy Williams

Yuki Huston

Remembered by Aaron Suiter

Victor Illichmann

Remembered by Carol Illichmann

Norma Keller

Remembered by Karen Wagner-Hotz

Helen O'Connor

Remembered by Kim Tollers

Marsha Gilman Rea

Remembered by

Jan Friedman & John Kramer

Kathleen Janasz

David McAlister

Susan McAlister

Pamela Perchik

Laura & Billy Perry

Anne & Byron Vandenberg

Bob Russell

Remembered by Virginia Russell

Larry Sheaffer

Remembered by Stan Seavey

John Shillinglaw

Remembered by Marion

Michael Skelley

Remembered by Meg & Todd Goldthwaite

Keith Solimar

Remembered by Cathy Olyphant

Keith Symon

Remembered by Douglas Lloyd

Harold and Crescent Vale

Remembered by Elaine Vale & David Silver



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Welcome, New Members!

June 4, 2025 to October 10, 2025

Chippewa Savannas

Steve Hawkins
Bruce & Terry Siebold

Coulee Region

Bill Brooke
Nine Dodge
Frank Dravis
Theresa & Greg Kopish
Diane Martinek
Mary Monsoor
Jennifer Sorenson

Empire-Sauk

Jo Ann Aebly
Reid Bartholomew
Mark Bradley
Mark & Kris Corey
KJ Hansmann
Elizabeth Haynes
Troy Hess
Tibi Light
Christopher Muir
Brenda Ness
Judy Olson
Aaron Suiter
Mark Thomas
Guy & Karen Williams

Glacial Prairie

Marlene Carey
Rob Dummert
Linda Frank
Delene Hanson
Kathryn Harrington
Mark McClish
Allison Romero
Julene Smith
Paige Weimer

Many Rivers

Craig Christenson
Josh Mann
Brittany Smith
Jody & Kevin Swanson

Minnesota Driftless

Dayna Burtness
William Perkins
Gary Wilson

Minnesota Oak Savanna

Jeanine Brattebo
Emily Caouette
Grandara Carlton
Ben Cooper
Shawna Dees
Marianne Ewig
Skylar Farb
Robert Gadon
Kathleen Gavin
Patricia Graham
Gay Greiter
Michelle Hajder
John Harkness
Bonnie Christopherson Harper-Lore
Robert Johnson
Stephen Kemp
Nina Lagenfeld
James MacKinnon
Peg Mahon
Allie Matney
Sara McGlynn
Julia Ockuly
Hoang Pham
Brad & Diane Pierson
Colleen Puent
Stephen Rossiter
Pamela Sherlock
Collin Van Ryn
Anna Windels

Northwest Illinois

Daniel F. Chambers
Cynthia Germata
Sue Tranel

Prairie Bluff

Andrew Hendrickson
Kristine Marion
Kathy Monson

Prairie Sands

Wil Hargrave
Chris Hunt

Southwest Wisconsin

Shirley Audetat
Melodie Betts
Carol Catlin
Carol Coonrod
Jennifer Day-Nelson
Terry Haller
Bradley Lancaster
Dan McGraw
Nancy Mergen
Todd Powell
Tom & Mary Schrader
Steve Stepien
Barb & Dean Tucker

St. Croix Valley

Steve Bekemeyer
Petra Brokken
Virginia Drath
Gary Freiberg
Daniel Goldberg
Nancy Hershfield
Mark Johnson
Tom LeMay
Eric Nooker
Peter Winarski

Sunrise

Joyce Anastasi
Theresa & Joseph Arnold
Patricia Berglund
Julie Hendrickson
Shawn Kadlec
Cindy Klatt
Duane & Debby Lee
Bryan Lueth
Martha Reuter & Jolene Nelson
Mary Kay Ripp
Mary Jo Youngbauer

Unaffiliated

James Anderson
Chris Carey
Jan Friedman & John Kramer
Meg Goldthwaite
Kathleen Janasz
Kimberly Kelly
Jeremy King
David McAlister
Melissa McDowell
David Mitchell
Pamela Perchik
Laura & Billy Perry
Billy Reiter-Marolf
Ian Roberts
Homer Trecartin
Anne & Byron Vandenberg
Gordon Ward