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A HALF-ACRE OF PRAIRIE

by Alan Haney, College of Natural Resources, UW-Stevens Point

We gathered in the chilly, pre-dawn gloom. I had not yet met my companions, nor even the guide who drove in a pickup. It was too dark to see their faces. We announced ourselves to the group. To my surprise, all the others had driven in from long distances the night before. They were from Chicago, Green Bay, Milwaukee, and Madison. I had driven a comparatively short 15 miles from Stevens Point.

After milling around for 30 minutes, we climbed back into our vehicles and followed our guide down a perfectly flat county road. Twice we stopped, as our guide directed couples toward distant points off the road. At the third stop, I was told to leave my pickup by the road, and the guide walked with me to the adjacent barbed-wire fence.

"About 200 yards in that direction," he said, pointing vaguely southeast in the dark, "is your blind. If you fail to find it, sit on the ground until it gets light enough to see it."

I climbed through the fence and walked slowly through the dark. I could tell that the uneven ground was covered with short grass. I worried that I might miss the blind.

I soon made out a black box about four feet high and nine feet long. This had to be it. I felt around to the back side where I unlatched a door and pulled it open. Inside I could feel two wobbly benches set end to end. I ducked in, sat on a bench, pulled the door closed and latched it. The peep hole in the door was open, and not having any idea in which direction I should watch, I stayed where I was, trying to ignore the cold. I checked my watch; it was 4:30 a.m.

Nearly an hour passed. The cold was

creeping into my bones, but it was distinctly lighter in the East, the direction I was facing. I stared intently and could make out two dark objects on the ground. One was about 40 feet away, the other a bit closer. I was sure they moved, but I heard nothing. Not even a breath of air was stirring.

A Sandhill Crane called, breaking the silence. Others answered, but all seemed some distance away. I raised my binoculars and focused on the closer, dark object. A cow pie! Likewise the second. Clearly, I was in a pasture field. Maybe my long, cold wait would futility. How disappointing.

No, wait! There was a sound unfamiliar to me. It was a two note moan, like a deep, bass kettle drum. There was another and another. I strained to see them, but nothing moved. The booming now surrounded me. Then a chicken-like cluck and the sound of two cocks fighting clearly came from the opposite blind. I quickly moved to one end of the blind so my silhouette would not be seen in the open peep hole behind me, and very cautiously opened a hole facing the road.

There was a prairie chicken not 20 feet away. To the left, two crouched facing one another, then leaped into the air, their inflated breasts colliding, producing a sound like a football when it is punted. I could make out over a dozen prairie chickens in an area no larger than half an acre.

It was still too dark to distinguish any features on the birds, but as I watched, they all engaged in aggressive behavior toward surrounding birds. Clearly, they were all males. I mapped the 14 territories.

By 6:00 a.m. I could see the striking yellow air sacks on the sides of their breasts and patches on either side of their heads. Action was fast. All cocks continually tested their neighbors. Three birds in the center of the booming ground

were particularly aggressive whereas two were so far on the fringes that they rarely were approached by the more dominant birds. Twice two other cocks flew to the ground, landing briefly, only to be quickly chased from one territory to the next before they departed.

At about the same time the first rays of the sun flashed across the booming ground, a hen appeared from the taller grass to the south. She walked cautiously into the booming ground. As she moved across first one territory and then another, she elicited elaborate courtship displays from the nearby cocks. They boomed, they erected their neck feathers, and inflated their pouches, they stomped their feet, they fluttered into the air, they aggressively pursued adjacent males, and they prostrated themselves in front of the hen. She ignored them.

Another hen arrived, and then another, until six were present. Activity became even livelier. I watched intently, fascinated. An hour went by and I hadn't even noticed the cold.

Then suddenly, a hen crouched and all activity ceased. The hen flew and ten prairie chickens exploded into the air with her. Four cocks remained frozen on the ground. I could see no reason for this behavior, but it was safe bet that a Harrier had flown over.

I waited 15 minutes to be sure the performance was over, then quietly closed the peep hole and stiffly climbed out of the blind. I closed the door, looked around, and thoughtfully made my way back toward my pickup. I was shaking with cold, but my mind was still absorbed with the immensity of the performance I had witnessed. Surely no one could watch the courtship display of the Greater Prairie Chicken, as I just had, and fail to be humbled.

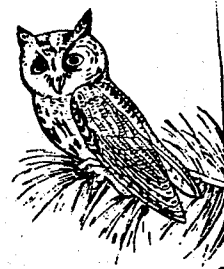
Here was a bird that was totally disdainful of people. A bird of wild, open space, maintained by fire and grazing. With greed and total disregard, we plowed and paved the prairies until the Greater Prairie Chicken was on the verge of extinction. Now, thanks to the efforts of many thousands of caring conservationists, people like me could spend a few hours witnessing one of nature's less common events. The Buena Vista Marsh in Portage

County has several hundred prairie chickens living in restored grasslands, interspersed with pasture and potato fields.

As I watched in awe that morning, I reflected that the Greater Prairie Chicken is a better global citizen than I. They take only what they need to survive, and return it all when they are finished in a form that nourishes the prairie. They appreciate open spaces, as few other species do. They eat insects and seeds, and in turn, feed Great-Horned Owls and Red Foxes. Their niche is well-defined and they are comfortable in it.

People, in contrast, take everything they can get, and fight for more. We cover our environment with waste and chemicals that poison life, multiply like flies, and spend fortunes to eliminate anything that shortens our lives. We amuse ourselves with artificial noise, cover ourselves with unnatural scents, stuff ourselves with unwholesome food, and hide in synthetic environments. We have no niche, and too little regard for those species that do.

Why should we work to preserve prairie? In part, because in watching the courtship of the Greater Prairie Chicken, some of us find the real meaning of life. I would not have traded those cold, uncomfortable hours on a Wisconsin prairie, for all the movies I have ever seen.



WEEDS

by © Patricia K. Armstrong, Prairie Sun Consultants, 1989

What is a weed? There are almost as many answers as there are weeds, but here are a few for your consideration:

A weed is an ugly plant. (Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder).

A weed is a vile, noxious plant that causes allergies (ragweed, poison ivy),

paid or scratches (nettles, berry briars, brambles, cat briar, roses, prickly ash), or impedes our travel through an area (tall grass, brambles, dense thickets, tangling vines).

A weed is a plant that kills other plants by feeding on them (mistletoe, dodder), growing over them (wild grape, Virginia creeper, bittersweet), or harboring diseases that infect other plants (gooseberry, juniper).

A weed is a plant without any commercial value.

A weed is any plant growing where you don't want it to grow.

A weed is a wild, uncultivated plant.

A weed is a plant you don't like or don't want.

A weed is the commonest plant, all over the place.

A weed is a plant which decreases the aesthetic or economic value of an area.

All of these definitions are partly true, because what a weed is depends upon the situation and who is doing the judging. Take for example the case of the rare and endangered dwarf white lady slipper, *Cypripedium candidum* growing in a cornfield (a just plowed and planted wet limy springy cornfield). The farmer would, no doubt, consider the orchid a weed and herbicide it out of his cornfield, while the DNR, Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts, and various other wild flower lovers and nature types would consider the corn to be the weed and do all they could to prevent it from destroying the fen and lady slipper.

The Dictionary says a weed is: "an introduced plant growing in ground that is or has been cultivated usually to the detriment of crops or disfigurement of the place--economically useless plants--plants with an unsightly appearance--plants that tend to grow freely and exclude or retard other more valuable plants--plants with exuberant growth and injurious effect--a forb in rangeland."

There's a lot of truth in that. Notice how it places weeds in a context of cultivated ground and mentions that they are introduced. It is a fact that most "real weeds" in our country are not native (evolved in our country) or wild plants. They are aliens or immigrants, brought from Europe and Asia. Although a few were deliberately introduced, most of them came

along accidentally, and many of them in spite of efforts to keep them out.

Native American communities of wild plants like prairies, woodlands, wetlands, and tundras are largely weed-free except to the extent that they have been disturbed. That is, the more they have been abused and disturbed, the more weedy they are. This view of the world of weeds sort of says that all original, native vegetation is natural, and the weeds are the foreigners, the aliens, like European man, starlings, house sparrows, Norway rats, and all those other imported problems that have been inflicted on Nature.

"Detriment, disfigurement, economically useless, unsightly, exclusive, injurious" are all words relating to the opposition of economic endeavors such as farming, ranching, developing, urbanizing (things that use our environment for the sole purpose of making us money). This part of the definition implies that all of nature is weeds. The whole earth is filled with them, trying to resist and fight back against all the "progress of man." What all this means is that before there were people, there were no weeds. Weeds come from man's viewpoint not nature's.

The Bible says that weeds are a curse. They were not a part of God's original creation which He called good. Weeds came as a part of the fall of man from the pristine condition of caretaker and garden enjoyer to farmer and laborer. Now he must work by the sweat of his brow to eat and "Cursed is the ground for they sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field." Genesis 3:17-18.

History supports this view. "True weeds" evolved with man and his agricultural and soil-disturbance activities. They came with him from the cradle of civilization and spread with him as he covered the earth. Hunters and gathers and primitive farmers punching holes for a few corn kernels had no weeds to contend with. Flowers and tillers, earth movers and mound builders had weeds all over the place.

Originally the land was covered with native plants specifically adapted to the conditions of their environment. They competed with each other for necessities

which were in limited supply, like sunlight in the forest or water in the desert. They evolved and worked out patterns and methods that suited them for what they needed to do.

In every ecosystem there were a few plants unsuited to compete with the convergently-evolved masses. Instead they chose a line of evolution which helped them gain a jump on everybody else by getting there first with the most. In floodplains, on wind blowouts, newly turned up mounds, or hollows where trees fell over, after landslides, floods, or fires, in buffalo wallows on gopher mounds, there were always a few species who could jump in and grow right away. They evolved more rapid means of reproducing and growing in order to take advantage of these less-frequently occurring disturbances.

For the most part these early successional plants were annuals whose short life cycle allowed them to evolve rapidly. They were fast growers and prolific seeders whose seeds often remained dormant, though viable, for hundreds of years, waiting for a disturbance to trigger their germination. Many were sensitive to a quick flash of light (hence the old farmer's tale about plowing during the dark of the moon). They were "pioneer" or "bandaid" plants who came in to cover bare soil or breaks in the plant cover.

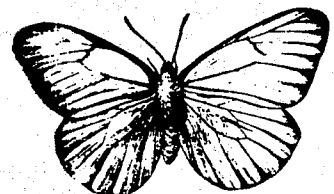
In the United States, ragweed is such a plant. There are several species, each adapted to slightly different forms of disturbance. On moist floodplains, giant ragweed would cover the new soil helping to prevent erosion while slower, long-live perennials began to grow. In buffalo wallows, other smaller ragweed species did the same thing. After a forest fire, fireweed, quaking aspen, and certain species of pines would begin to grow that first year. These are all opportunistic plants capable of taking advantage if given the chance.

In nature, disturbances are usually small if they are frequent. Larger, more catastrophic disturbances like the Yellow fire of 1988, occur only every hundred years or so; therefore evolution in natural settings is relatively slow. Giving these types of plants a chance to hasten their evolution by giving the man-made disturbance after man-made disturbance,

turned them into the aggressive weeds which we have today. This happened in Asia and Europe where man was also evolving and improving his agricultural methods. For many thousands of years man, agriculture, and weeds grew together. In fact some of the weeds are so like the crops they grow with, their seeds cannot be separated by size, shape, weight, or time of maturation. Even today, few native American species of weeds are problems to the gardener or farmer; they have just not had sufficient time to evolve as aggressively as the old world weeds have.

Some of the wonderful adaptations that weeds have come up with include making multitudes of seeds, having seeds that live for hundreds of years before germinating, having high rates of germination, growing rapidly to overtop competing vegetation, or spreading out flat to prevent other plants from growing, having extremely efficient methods of spreading seeds, and even having the ability to produce seed without pollination or fertilization. Just think how all the cut off dandelion flowers turn to seeds on your lawn after you mow. Many weeds also spread vegetatively by stolons or rhizomes, and the cutting or chopping up these parts only serves to make more of them. It seems like with weeds, you just can't win!

Not only are they persistent, they are omnipresent. Where ever people go, they follow. You want to find weeds, where do you go? Out to a virgin prairie or bog? Of course not! You go to a farmer's field, your own garden or lawn, the very place where you are trying the hardest to get rid of them. That's where you'll find them, busily adapting to the new hoe or herbicide, going about their burgeoning way evolving new strategies to cope with our new ways of trying to eliminate them. If we ever do set up housekeeping on the Moon or Mars, you can bet, the first plant to grow there will be a weed!



A PRESETTLEMENT PRAIRIE DESCRIPTION: A TRAVELER'S VIEW

by Gary Felder

In the spring of 1837 a remarkable individual passed through the lead mining region of southwestern Wisconsin. He was an Englishman, an aristocrat by birth, temperament, and ideology. A man whose character was often described as pompous, arrogant, and eccentric by his own contemporaries in the United States. His name was George F. Featherstonbaugh (pronounced Fanshaw).

Mr. Featherstonbaugh was not here by accident. A self-proclaimed "professional scientist" who specialized in Geology and Linguistics, he was hired by the United States Government to undertake a mission to examine and report on the geological formation of the gold regions of the western Carolinas, Georgia, and the lead regions of Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin. This expedition was in two parts and took him two years 1835 to 1837.

Ten years later in London, England, Featherstonbaugh published a book based upon his notes and experiences during the expedition. The book was entitled "A Canoe Voyage up the Minnaya Sotor". Minnaya Sotor is a Sioux Indian name for the headwater of the St. Peter River in Minnesota which begins in the Coteau du Prairie region, also the farthest point he reached.

The book was never popular in the United States mainly because Featherstonbaugh took literary liberty in expounding on his political views against the then popular Jacksonian Democratic attitude prevalent in the States. Plus the fact that he took verbal potshots of a great many people he met, did not make it a bestseller.

Featherstonbaugh experiences in the region began in Galena, Illinois, May 19th, 1837. For three weeks he and a companion by the name of Taylor travelled on horseback through the area of northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin.

His observations concerning the frontier mining towns he visited and his descriptions of the appearances and mannerisms of many of the people he met are quite frankly sarcastic and usually insulting. He had this to say about one community: "a more melancholly and drary

place than this Mineral Point I never expect to see again." This statement was made because his food and lodging were not up to his standards.

Featherstonbaugh's description of General Dodge, the Governor of the territory and the town of his namesake Dodgeville, certainly raised a few eyebrows. You won't find the following description in any local history books:

"This gentleman...was said to be a perfect western character. I had seen him on horseback in the streets of Mineral Point and was struck with the appearance of his accoutrements, having although dressed in plain clothes, immense horse pistols staring out of his holsters. He had been brought up on the frontier, and since manhood had been rather notorious for his desperate feuds with various individuals, many of whom are still surviving, he always went armed, the invariable practice of bloods of his calibre being to fire immediately at any hostile approach.

"On taking leave of his excellency, we passed some diggings with a few miserable huts erected near them dignified with the name of Dodgeville."

Statements like these definitely did not endear him to the general population.

Featherstonbaugh constant criticisms, complaints, and to often boring narrative concerning his struggle in maintaining a "Gentleman's toilet" in the midst of the wilderness were bearable only because he described with equal relish and color his amazement and unbridled genuine awe of the beauty and abundance of the country he was travelling through.

When he left Mineral Point he makes it clear that his destination is Tychoberah (the four lakes region of Madison, Wisconsin): "and to those prairies and lakes whose beauty had been so much extolled to me."

After riding over the prairie for 16 miles they came to the Blue Mounds where they met a solitary miner named Brigham.

From this point on I am going to let his own words describe what he saw as I cannot equalize it.

"Pursuing our journey, at one p.m. we passed the military road leading to Fort Winnebago and Navarino, and soon afterwards got into one of the most exquisitely beautiful regions I have ever seen in any

part of the world. The prairie had hitherto been distinguished by a regular rolling surface, here changed its characters, and took the form of ridges somewhat elevated, which frequently resolved themselves into masses of gracefully-rounded hills, separated by gentle depressions, that occasionally became deepened valleys. In these, some of the heads of stream called Sugar River, a tributary of Rock River, took their rise. In whatever direction our eyes were turned, the most pleasing irregularities of surface presented themselves. But that which crowned the perfection of the view, and imparted an indescribable charm to the whose scene from knoll where we stood to the most distant point where the alternate hills and vales blended with the horizon, was the inimitable grace with which the picturesque clumps of trees, that sometimes enlarged themselves into woods, embellished this rural landscape from the hand of Nature.

"Here a thick grove hanging upon the slope of a hill, distinguished by its symmetry from its numerous companions, impended over the amenity of the valley beneath; whilst, further on, a more robust line of dense foliage betrayed the ample volume of some pellucid stream whence it was nourished. Turn where we would, every object within the ample range concurred to cherish and to establish more indelibly the pleasing impression caused by the whole; whilst the softness of these attractions contrasted here and there so strikingly with the noble rock escarpments peering out from the bluffs, that Nature might be said to speak to you in a voice that must be listened to, and to tell you that she here surpassed the most polished efforts of English park scenery, the most difficult of all her achievements. American will justly boast of this unrivalled spectacle when it becomes known, for certainly it is formed of elements that no magic could enable all Europe to bring together upon so great a scale."

This statement from a man who travelled extensively in Europe and most of the eastern United States and certainly saw many incredible scenic sights.

I have read accounts of the pre-settlement prairie landscape many times before but never described in fashion quite

like this. The description had a subtle impact on my emotions. A combination of sorrow, resentment, and resignation in the fact that Featherstonbaugh is describing as one of the most beautiful sights he has ever seen where I live. How I would love to experience the emotions generated by the sudden impact of a vision of uninterrupted pristine prairie wilderness the way Featherstonbaugh saw it.

North American still has majestic mountains, the Tetons, Yellowstone Park, Grand Canyon, the Great Lakes, and the eastern Forests but we will never see the "swelling ocean of grass exploding at random with a brilliance of color".

I guess we're always going to have to rely on written accounts such as Featherstonbaugh's to stir our imagination as to what once was.

If Featherstonbaugh was here now I would thank him for those two paragraphs. I would also recommend that he find a good Public Relations Manager.



Drawing by Mary Luther

**ILLINOIS ENDANGERED PLANT
WISCONSIN THREATENED PLANT**

White Lady's-slipper
Cypripedium candidum

Whether in plants or animals, when Nature puts on a show there's usually an ulterior motive. When a flower is as ornately designed as the White Lady's-

slipper, it is not for beauty's sake alone. The plant grows in sung clumps of 30 to 60 leaf-wrapped flower stem, about eight to 14 inches tall, from a branched underground mainstem or "rhizome." The characteristic Lady's-slipper moccasin is white and waxy, sometimes called the flower "lip". Petals and sepals form a yellow-green, ray-like bonnet around the lip. The motive behind all this beauty is pollination. The fragrant, showy lip attracts insects, but allows only small bees (six to seven millimeters long) and an occasional beetle or wasp to enter the lip passage. Once inside, the curved, smooth lip walls prevent the bee from going out the way it got in. Not only that, the beautiful blossom that enticed the bee lack nectar or any other food and it takes five to 15 minutes for the insect to crawl free of the blossom. The exit route is marked by purple lines and stiff hairs on the inner lip walls and windows at the back of the lip. Along the way, the bees get smeared with sticky, green pollen which it will carry to the next alluring blossom. Mission accomplished! Botanists refer to this pollination scam as "attracting by deceit."

At the turn of the century, wagon-loads of White Lady's-slippers were hauled to Milwaukee and Chicago markets and sold in bouquets for pennies. The White Lady's-slipper is native to southern Wisconsin's organic-rich, wet meadows, calcareous fens, and alkaline, black-soil prairies. It is also reported from acidic, wet tamarack bogs! Seeds can remain dormant in the earth for years before germinating. It may take three years beyond that for the first leaf to appear, and another 10 to flower. Full sun is essential to growth, and in the past, shrubs were kept at bay by natural fires.

A 1931 observer in Columbia County recorded an open, wet meadow with more than 7,000 orchids, 2,000 of them White Lady's-slippers. Today many former growing places have been converted to human uses. 31 populations currently known extant in Wisconsin. Many are small, others number in the hundreds. 10 populations are protected in State Natural Areas with several others occurring on state-owned land. White Lady's-slipper is rare throughout its range in midwestern and

northeastern North America. It is the only vascular plant protected by the Ontario Endangered Species Act, and was once a candidate for federal protection in the United States. UW-Madison Botanist Hugh Iltis points out that the species is highly sensitive, but once was common and grew in huge colonies. He says, "In the one-sided contest for tenure of the rich prairies, humans...have been 'winning' over Lady's-slippers for a long time...And from now on, there will be no more, unless in sober deliberation we decided that future generations should have a chance to behold a White Lady's-slipper." (Wisconsin's Endangered Flora, WDNR, pages 29-30).

Some associates are shooting star (*Dodecatheon meadia*), horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), yellow star grass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), small fringed gentian (*Gentiana procera*), Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), and common valerian (*Valeriana ciliata*).



LYME DISEASE

by Jim Davidson, M.D., Rheumatologist, The Monroe Clinic

For people who enjoy the outdoors, Lyme Disease (now more properly known as Lyme Borreliosis), can be a source of consternation or downright fear.

Lyme Borreliosis is the most common arthropod transmitted disease in the United States. It has been described as originating in at least 34 states, although most commonly in Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

The disease is a bacterial infection

transmitted by the bite of the deer (bear) tick (*Ixodes dammini*). This tick is extremely small about the size of the head of a pin. The bacterium, *Borrelia burgdoferi*, has a predilection for infecting a person's skin, joints or central nervous system. It begins after an infected tick feeds and transmits its infection to a human host.

Early symptoms include a characteristic rash, usually extremely red and in the shape of a target with rings. It typically clears centrally first, and may be accompanied by similar lesions far removed from the bite sight. Flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, nausea, muscle and joint achiness are common within the first month. Antibiotic treatment at this stage is generally curative. Unfortunately many people don't receive treatment at this stage because they don't know they've been bitten or they don't develop the characteristic rash.

The disease may progress weeks or months later into a second stage with heart or nervous system involvement. Heart involvement occurs in 8% of those infected and is manifested by abnormalities of the heart's electrical conduction. Symptoms may include palpitation or loss of consciousness. Nervous system involvement may include Bell's Palsy (facial muscle weakness), band like pain or numbness, severe fatigue or headache. At this disease stage, intravenous antibiotics are usually required.

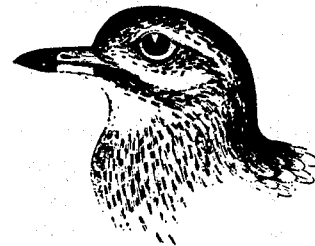
Stage three Lyme Borreliosis occurs months to years after the bite and involves arthritic and/or severe neurologic problems. Intravenous antibiotics again may be required, but relapses after treatment are common and retreatment may be necessary.

The key to controlling Lyme Borreliosis lies not in its treatment, but in its Prevention! in order to prevent the disease, it is important to understand the life cycle of the tick which transmits it. *Ixodes dammini* has a 2 year life cycle. In the spring, the female tick lays her eggs which hatch into larvae. Larvae (as small as period at the end of the sentence) feed on white footed mice, infecting them. Larvae survive into fall where they may infect human hosts. Those larvae which survive winter become nymphs the following

spring. These nymphs feed voraciously in the summer of the second year on mice, man, and nearly any other carbon dioxide exhaling creature which happens by. In the fall the nymph becomes an adult feeds and mates on deer where it winters prior to beginning the cycle again with egg laying next spring.

Therefore, by understanding the major feeding times of the tick prevention may be accomplished. The only effective preventative tools are:

- 1) PROTECTIVE CLOTHING: long-sleeved shirt and long pants tucked into socks;
- 2) TICK REPELLANT: containing DEET or PERMETHRIN (Figure 1), and avoiding high risk areas during high feeding cycles (Figure 2) when venturing into endemic areas. In addition to the above, removal of ticks as soon as found may decrease the numbers of *Borrelia* transmitted. Therefore,
- 3) CAREFUL BODY SEARCHES: may also help prevent the disease. Any individual who develop the typical rash, flu-like symptoms, neurological or arthritic symptoms, after exposure in a Lyme endemic region of the United States should seek physician referral for the possibility of Lyme Borreliosis.



I COULD HAVE HAD A PRAIRIE

by Howard Bright

During the fall of 1987, I was employed as a Soil Conservationist in Winneshiek County, Iowa. Winneshiek County had already signed up 30,000+ acres into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) but like the rest of the state, 99% of the sign-ups were planting introduced grasses and legumes. Why weren't more people choosing

to plant native grasses? It was fairly obvious, the landowners were simply not given the option! SCS personnel, in general, do not have a working knowledge of native plants therefore, only brief mention is made to landowners during sign-ups. Lets's fact it, if you are an average farmer signing up for CRP, are you going to plant what SCS recommends the most or not? What SCS recommends the most is brome and alfalfa, not trees, not prairies grasses.

Personally, I think this was a golden opportunity to get several hundred thousand acres of prairie grasses back on the landscape throughout the midwest.

Finally in the fall of 1987, we did something very simple. We established a sign-up period for CRP but we were going to stress a native grass mix consisting of the big 5, big bluestem, Indiangrass, side-oats grama, little bluestem, and switchgrass. We showed the farmers actual plants seeds and slides of prairie grasses and wildflowers and talked about the lost heritage of the prairie

Remarkable, 25% of the landowners signed up for the natives. Over 1,000 acres were put to prairie grasses in just one sign-up.

It is obvious then that lots of people do care about our prairie heritage and it really only takes a little time and explanation for them to get excited. Several landowners even wanted to plant wildflower with their prairie grasses and they did.

Another interesting endeavor was undertaken. We decided that it would be nice if landowners had access to the use of a native grass drill. In a few short weeks enough funds were solicited and donated to purchase two new native grass drills and a trailer. A farmer was hired to ride herd over the drill and see that each planting was done properly.

During the course of all this, we wrote news articles and talked over the radio promoting the seeding of county road ditches to natives. Soon we met with the Board of Supervisors and presented a plan to them for inventorying, managing, and planting their roadsides to prairie grasses. They were very interested and agreed to hire someone to do an inventory.

I guess the point of all these events and reporting them to you is to let you know that we can impact people and thus the

land if we only take the time and get a little excited about our lost prairie heritage.

Iowa "an earth ocean", "a sea of waving grass", the journals of early settlers described Iowa this way. Iowa still has a certain beauty but the awesome beauty of the prairie has been lost. 28 million acres of native grasses and flowers were plowed. Corn and soybeans now thrive where big bluestem, indiangrass, compass plant, gayfeathers and hundreds of well adapted plants thrived. Now, only a few hundred acres of native prairie remain in Iowa.

Soon, some those steep hillsides that have been farmed for generations will once again be "a sea of waving grasses" as the Iowa prairie returns.



Drawing by Mary Luther

GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING PRAIRIE SEED

by © Patricia K. Armstrong, Prairie Sun Consultants, 1989

Collecting prairie seed (or any other type of wild plant seed) is an education, and helpful way to propagate and spread wild species. It is a lot of fun too, but must be done correctly in order to help species survive. Careless collectors can do a lot of damage, both physically to the plants and politically to the cause of conservation. The following guidelines are offered to help you become a caring and careful seed collector. They apply to the collecting of any type of wild plant be it tree, shrub, flower, grass or fern.

(1) OBTAIN PERMISSION

Remember, all land is owned by someone. Taking anything from land that does not

belong to you is stealing. How would you feel if you had worked very hard and spent a lot of money to grow some rare wild flower and someone came in and dug them up or took all their seed before you could enjoy them? Nature Preserves, Parks, and the like are preserved to protect the plants in them so they will be saved for everybody to enjoy. Permission from the owner, whether public or private, should be obtained before you go collecting. A good idea is the join some conservation group like the Nature Conservancy or the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts. That way you can be sure that things are done properly.

(2) ALWAYS BE CAREFUL

Our first concern in collecting seeds is saving and protecting plants. We are not doing this to make a buck or enhance our own personal prestige. We are doing it because we care about prairie, or woodland, or wetlands and we want to help save vanishing species and their habitats. Therefore we must always guard against damage to the places where we collect.

Stick to paths if at all possible. Do not pull up plants or break off living parts. Avoid trampling and never walk into a collecting site or take seeds when it is raining. Never take all the seeds from an area either. Leave some seeds on each plant if at all possible. Certainly leave at least 40% of the seeds in an area for natural reproduction to occur.

(3) KNOW THE PLANTS

Part of the fun is learning about the plants. Know how to recognize the plants when they have died and gone to seed. Know when the seeds are ripe and collect them only at the right time. You may have to mark the plant in some way to be able to locate it again weeks or months later when everything looks different.

(4) COLLECT AT THE RIGHT TIME

If you collect before the seeds are ripe you will accomplish nothing except to hasten the disappearance or extinction of a species. Most prairie seeds require several months to mature. When seeds are ready to be harvest, they will come off easily. You do not have to break the plant to get them. Seeds should be dry to

prevent mold while storing, so never collect seeds in the rain.

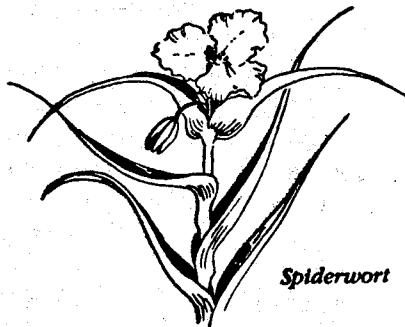
(5) LABEL PROPERLY

Seeds from different species or even from the same species from different sites should not be mixed together unless you are told to do so. It is very important to know what species you are collecting and where it came from. We are interested in local genotypes and want to use them in specific ways so this information is necessary. Each bag of seed should be labeled with the date, species collected, exact location, and name (and phone number) of the collector. Use Latin names rather than common names for the plants if at all possible.

(6) BAG AND STORE PROPERLY

The best thing to collect and store seed in is paper bags. They come in all sizes to accommodate different amounts of seed. Important information can be written on them. They do not cause static electricity or mold or moisture problems like plastic bags do. Paper envelopes can be used for very small amounts. Seeds should be stored in a cool, dry place until they are ready to be planted.

A shorter form of these guidelines can be obtained for 35 cents postage paid from the author: Patricia K. Armstrong, Prairie Sun Consultants, 612 Staunton Road, Naperville, IL 60565



FIRST ANNUAL WPE MEETING

by John Ochsner

The First Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts was held Saturday evening, March 4th, at the Monticello House in Monticello, WI. In

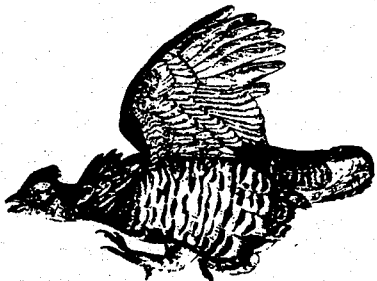
spite of a two day ice storm, over sixty people attended.

After the dinner a brief business meeting was held. An amendment to the bylaws was passed providing for rotating three year memberships for WPE directors. Other new business included a voice approval by the general membership of the nominating committee's nominees for directors.

Following the business meeting a slide show and talk was presented by U.W.-Madison botany professor, Dr. Hugh H. Iltis. Dr. Iltis briefly described his childhood in his native Caechoslovakia before giving a brief overview of his botanical activities in the U.S. and Central and South America. Dr. Iltis then went on to the main topic of his presentation - a six week plant collecting expedition in Siberia.

Comprised of three American botanists and three Russian botanists, the expedition collected plants in the Lake Baikal-Sayan Mountain region of Siberia. The last leg of the trip included the grassland steppe area near Novosibirsk. The slide show included many beautiful and interesting plants, many which looked somewhat familiar being cousins of our own prairie flora.

Dr. Iltis concluded his talk by emphasizing the threat that world overpopulation poses to native plant and animal populations globally.



BOOK SALES AID PRESERVATION

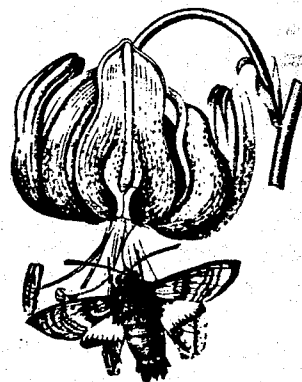
A growing list of books and maps is now available from WPE. Proceeds from the sales of these items will be put toward the purchase and preservation of prairie or other native plant and animal communities. Some of the books available are:

WILDFLOWERS OF THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE by

Dean Roosa and Sy Runkel, Iowa State University Press, 1989. The arrival of this recently published prairie plant guide is good news for prairie buffs everywhere. The book is packed with lots of information on many of the lesser known prairie forbs as well as the more "popular" species. The book contains full color photos of each forb and adds greatly to an appreciation of prairie forb diversity and folklore. \$18.95 plus tax.

RUDY'S HILL by Dr. Manuel C. Elmer, 1987. This autobiography by Green County native Dr. Manuel C. Elmer recalls the adventures and everyday routines of growing up in rural Wisconsin in the 1890's. Of special interest are Dr. Elmer's recollections of visits to the nearby Rudy's Hill prairie where his encounters with prairie geology, geography, plants, and animals (including wolves) were to have a lasting influence on his life. Dr. Elmer passed away April 1, 1988 at the age of 101. \$20.00 tax included.

WILDLIFE RECIPES by George Bachay. Gazette Printing Co., 1985. This homespun collection of wild game recipes is a must for anyone with a bent toward a hunting/gathering lifestyle! During his career as a Wisconsin game warden and later as an outdoor writer for the Janesville Gazette, Bachay has compiled a wide array of unique wild plant and game recipes ranging from catfish steaks to blackbird pie. Bachay's illustrations dot the book for added interest. An especially tasty carp recipe from China is included on page 59. \$8.95 plus tax.



PERSPECTIVES

EXXON DOES IT AGAIN

by John Ochsner

The recent announcement in an Exxon Oil Co. Memo that the cleanup of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on the Alaskan coast will not be continued after September 15th is just the latest display of the company's ignorance of and arrogance toward the environment and the American Public. I suspect that the corporate leaders of Exxon viewed the oil spill from the beginning as a public relations problem and a financial irritant (Exxon's 1988 sales totaled \$88 billion) rather than the environmental disaster that it really was. The financial bottom line was of course the company's major concern from the beginning. Exxon's corporate philosophy could be compared to that of hotel chain baroness Leona Helmsley who reputedly once remarked to an employee that "only the little people pay taxes."

Well, unless the American People and Federal Government hold Exxon's feet to the fire it looks like the Alaskan coastline will remain covered with oil until the "little people" (That's you and me fellow munchkins) will be required to pay for it in a federally funded cleanup.

It will probably take a considerable amount of badgering and threat of legal action to make Exxon at least finish the gross cleanup (tarballs, etc.) which is less than one-third done at this point (July 27). There will still be a considerable amount of oil buried on Alaskan beaches due to wave action.

What can we as citizens do to help curb Exxon's outlaw behavior? We can:

- 1) boycott Exxon products and try to reduce our overall gasoline consumption.
- 2) write or call senators, representatives, federally appointed officials, even President Bush!
- 3) Write or call Exxon Chairman L.G. Raul whose address and phone number are conveniently printed below!

L.G. Raul
Chairman of the Board
Exxon Oil Company
1251 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY
212/333-1000

Don't let them get away with it!



TRESPASS AND LIABILITY LAW AWARENESS EMPHASIZED

In the quest to locate the remaining pockets of prairie dotting the Midwest landscape WPE members should always keep in mind the legal rights and sensitivities of landowners whose property contains or may hold the prospect of continuing a native plant/animal community. The establishment of good landowner/prairie enthusiast relations is essential if these remaining privately held areas are to be preserved and managed.

The following summation of pertinent statutes pertaining to trespass and liability law by Lowell Klessig of the Department of Agricultural Journalism provides some helpful guidelines.

TRESPASS TO LAND (Sec. 943.13)

CULTIVATED OR FENCED LAND: Anyone who enters enclosed or cultivated land to hunt, fish, or gather products of the soil (berries, firewood, etc.) without permission is trespassing. Anyone who enters enclosed or cultivated land with a vehicle without permission is also trespassing. These actions constitute trespass even if the land is not posted.

POSTING: A trespasser or potential trespasser can be given verbal or written notice to refrain from using a specific property. More commonly however, the notice is posted.

Signs must be at least 11 inches square and posted in two conspicuous places on each 40 acres of land. Each sign must contain the owner's or occupant's name and indicate if the person is the owner or occupant. Posting can prohibit all activities on the land (No Trespassing), or prohibit certain activities (No Hunting), or require permission (No Hunting Without Permission). Hunting and fishing may not

WPE MEETING

SEPTEMBER 21, 1989

7:30 p.m.

VFW HALL

1428 17th STREET, MONROE, WI

be prohibited on lands enrolled under the Forest Crop Law.

LIABILITY (Sec. 895.52)

The 1984 revision of the Wisconsin Liability Law is designed to encourage landowners to open their land for public recreation without fear of lawsuits resulting from injuries to such recreationsits. under the new law, landowners do not have a duty to keep the property safe for recreational activities, to inspect the property, or to warn recreationists of unsafe conditions.

This special limitation on liability does not apply to commercial enterprises or to landowners who annuall receive more than \$500 worth of compensation for recreational use of their land. Nor does it apply to guests expressly and individually invited for a specific occasion. Because of these exclusions, liability insurance is still recommended; especially if you occasionally invite guests to use your property.

FOREST FIRE AND FOREST PEST CONTROL (Sec. 26.11-.99)

Chapter 26 of the Wisconsin Statutes authorizes the DNR to establish fire protection procedures. During parts of the year, a landowner must obtain a burning permit before igniting an open fire. Local fire wardens issue permits.

Anyone who starts a fire is responsible for the cost of suppressing the fire, for damages the fire causes, and for a fine. Fines range from \$500 for merely leaving the scene without totally extinguishing the fire, to \$1000 for allowing a fire to escape or for using fire to drive game, to \$10000 plus imprisonment for intentionanlly setting a fire on someone else's land.

For more information write to Agricultural Bulletins, Room 245, 30 N. Murray St., Madison, WI 53715 for a complete reprint of the article from Country Acres: A Guide to Buying and Managing Rural Property by Lowell L. Klessig. There is a cost for this reprint but it is far cheaper than the fines mentioned.

Dr. Brent Haglund, former director of the Wisconsin Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, is now working with the Sand County Foundation at the Aldo Leopold Memorial Reserve. Brent brings his knowledge and experience of land management and preservation for all those interested in saving and maintaining those wild lands. Brent has innovative approaches to dealing with complex ecological and political issues.

Brent will be speaking on "Strategy of Natural Area Preservation."

Come and hear about ways to help preserve our remaining natural areas.

MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in joining WPE and receiving the newsletter please fill out the form below and send to WPE, N673 Mill Road, Juda, WI 53550.

Membership dues for one year are: Individual \$5.00; Family \$7.50; and Corporate \$10.00.

If you are receiving the newsletter and are not interested in joining our group, please let us know so that we may take your name off of the mailing list.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

Amount paid _____

BULK RATE
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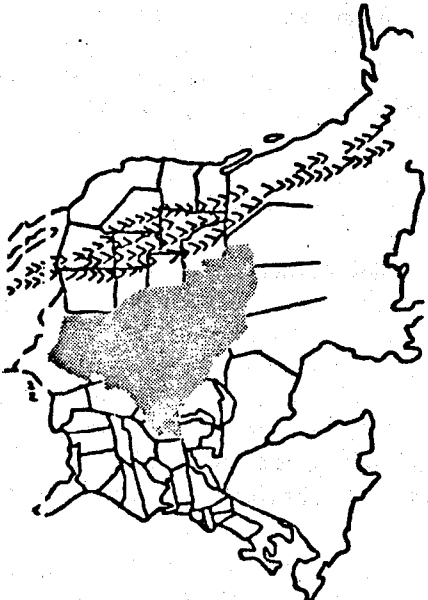
Walter & Alice Mirk
 RR 2
 Woodman WI 53827

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

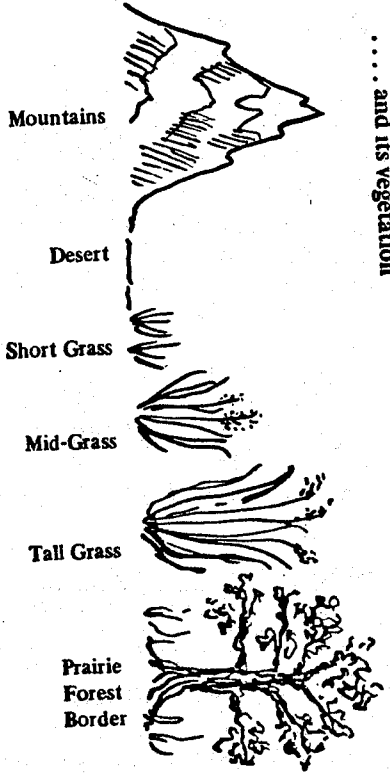
WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS, LTD.
 N673 Mill Road
 Juda, WI 53550

The North American Prairie

It occupies that part of our continent between the forest and the desert, between rain and drought. It was once continuous from Indiana to the Rockies, in lands where corn and cows have taken its place.



. . . . and its vegetation



* from "Prairie Primer"