



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Lafayette inventory complete

Lafayette County road right of way inventory has been completed. By late August all but 50 miles of town and county roads were driven over by S.W.P.E. members in their pursuit of prairie forbs and grasses.

The finds were somewhat disappointing. There were eight sites of wild quinine, four with only one plant, one site with about 30 plants, one site with about 25 plants, and finally, two cemetery sites; one with over 200 plants and one with approximately 100 plants.

Other finds included a site with a small population of about 10 Hill's Thistle. Both Hill's Thistle and Wild Quinine are threatened species in Wisconsin. (Note: As of September 1989 Hill's Thistle was reclassified to endangered).

A special discovery was a huge Burr Oak that was close to a state record—measuring in at around 15 feet, 4 inches in circumference!! Also recorded on the main map were the locations and forb inventory of over 65 more prairie seed collection sites. All we need now is the people power to collect it.

Lafayette County has very intensive agricultural practices in many of its townships, and consequently almost 100% of the nature grassland species have been lost. Almost all of the sites found are subject to annual mowing and spraying. An example of overkill in this direction was the

experience of one of the teams who were doing inventory on two consecutive Saturdays. The first Saturday, a site was located with about 30 Wild Quinine plants, many being mowed off to a distance of about 8 feet back from the road edge. It was the hope of the team that the remaining plants were safe for the rest of the year. Imagine their chagrin when a week later they returned to the area and found the site had been sprayed with a broad leaf herbicide.

When the S.W.P.E. inventoried Grant County in 1987, many sites were found that had Pale Purple Coneflower, and we hoped to find some sites in Lafayette County. However, not a single plant was found. The sites within the three prairie cemeteries had suffered severely from mowing and spraying, and of the four other sites only one was high quality with Wild Quinine and Hill's Thistle on it.

An interesting sidelight to the inventory story was the day a team stopped at a local farm to ask permission to look at an interesting remnant that they had spotted from the road. The owner gave permission and added that a couple of men from the University of Wisconsin had already looked at it at one point and had informed her that the site contained some rare plants. The remnant was in a fairly isolated spot in

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Lafayette County, and it seemed somewhat unusual that anyone else would spot it in the general run of things.

In a coincidental and casual check of our mailing list at S.W.P.E. it was found that one of the men who had done this earlier inventory was on our mailing list. That man is Richard Barloga of Hales Corners! Richard, we would like to hear from you and fill us in on the story behind the inventory you did at the prairie remnant on Co. Hwy. "G" west of Argyle.

By the end of the inventory, S.W.P.E. teams had logged about 2,350 miles, but the list of threatened or endangered plant sites is heartbreakingly small. The teams had hopes of finding many more, but the intensive agriculture where corn planting in many cases was to the edge of the road had obviously destroyed a great many of the right of way hedgerows.

All of the information collected on threatened and endangered plants and their locations was documented and copies sent to Thomas Meyer, of the Bureau of Endangered Resources Dept. of Natural Resources. Mr. Meyer will enter it into the state computer for permanent referral. This information will be used whenever roads, telephone lines, underground cables and various other types of development are planned, and an environmental impact statement is required by the state. Mr. Meyer encourages S.W.P.E. to keep up the good work!

—Gary Eldred

Fall hike and seed gathering

The special events committee has scheduled a fall seed picking event and hike over the Thomas Wet Prairie to species spot on Saturday, October 14.

The tentative schedule is to meet at the Muscoda Rail Depot at 10:00 a.m.; tour and lecture at the Thomas Wet Prairie until noon. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy by the Wisconsin River, and then seed gathering for the cause will be in the afternoon. Give a call to President Eldred's answering machine at (608) 375-5271 to let us know if you are interested. Kids welcome.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well, it's that time of the season again. Seed picking time, that is, and although it may not seem like it, some very important things hinge on the seed we collect.

First and most important is the money raised by seed sales goes into our prairie remnant acquisition projects—these are our first priority!

Second is that seed gathering brings together a group of people who are willing and able to contribute their time and effort to something they believe in very deeply. Each one of these dedicated people have been touched by the prairie spirit in a deep and personal way.

Third, but by no means a small part of seed collecting, is the camaraderie of the event. Often times a picnic lunch is produced from someone's back seat, a few cold beers or sodas from an ice chest and a cool sunny road bank or grassy hillside are all that's needed to start ideas and comments flowing on the state of prairies, or the state of the planet and beyond.

In conclusion I'd like to confess that sometimes finding the energy to go on yet another seed picking foray is difficult, but by the time I get home with a few pounds of seed and a ton of good feelings and fond memories, it turns out to be well worth it.

—Gary Eldred



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 16** Fall hike and seed gathering meet at Muscoda Depot, 10:00 a.m.
- Nov. 16** Regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. Boscobel Bowl. & Rec. Ctr.

Fun at Yellowstone

Mother Nature cooperated in July to give us a beautiful day to have our first annual "get to know you" picnic.

The S.W.P.E. sponsored a picnic at a prairie restoration site at Yellowstone Lake Park in Lafayette County, and invited all members and non-members to get together and talk prairie.

A special invitation was extended to members of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts of Green County.

About 23 people accepted our offer, and I'm sure no one was disappointed. We looked over the prairie restoration sites that S.W.P.E. members collected seed for and planted in the spring of 1987. It was really exciting to see all the prairie species doing so well and knowing that it will only get better with time and management.

It's really pleasant to spend a summer afternoon with so many people who share a common interest and are so enthusiastic about prairies and their preservation.

Plans are that this will be an annual event to watch the steady growth of this prairie restoration. Hopefully, our own group will grow at the same rate and with equal vigor. See you next year, folks!

—Gary Eldred



Rough Blazing Star: *Liatris Aspera*

This is in the daisy family. Tufted rose-purple flower heads supported by scaly bracts. There are 18 species in our area; they often hybridize. The Rough Blazing Star has outflaring broadly rounded floral bracts with crisply curled margins. Florets are 25 to 40 per head. Six to 30 inches in height. It is found in sandy soil and dry open places. North Dakota to Ohio and south. Blooms August to September.

Phone tree

From time to time, spontaneous, unexplained and occasionally impromptu prairie gatherings happen. If you would like to be part of our phone tree to participate in these short notice field trips, seed gathering, brush cutting events, etc., call Ruth Bauer at (608) 375-5460 after 5 p.m. and on weekends. We will be glad to hear from you.

Mailing list review

The time has come for all non-members receiving **The Prairie Promoter** to join our growing membership. We will be updating our mailing list in November, so hurry and send your membership now. Don't hesitate another minute!

Notes from the field

It can be so easy to indulge in cynicism, particularly when it comes to the state of our environment. I often suspected that many members of S.W.P.E. have channeled their anger at the unconscionable losses in our environment into concrete activities such as seed picking, fencing prairies, brush cutting and the like.

When former governor Earl spoke at the Thomas Wet Prairie dedication ceremony on June 17, he began by addressing the fragility of our environment, citing such global catastrophes as the Chernobyl disaster, the Exxon oil spill in Alaska and the ongoing wholesale destruction of tropical rain forests. He suggested that these immense problems lead us to think in terms of immense and complex solutions. Those very familiar feelings of cynicism and anger born of frustration began to engulf me in huge waves.

Suddenly, however, former gov. Earl suggested that the solutions to complex environmental problems come down to the individual. He elaborated on this point by suggesting that individual action is the most direct path to effective change and cited just a small number of specific things that individuals can do, such as recycling and not purchasing pressurized spray cans, non-recyclables and other "disposables."

Two things immediately struck me. First of all, we do have choices and by virtue of exercising them, we have **power** to effect change. Second, our choices are quite limited. We can choose to further our own comfort, convenience, wants and desires, or choose to make environmental integrity our foremost concern (the path least taken). How often, for example, will we purchase a car primarily on the basis of fuel economy, even though we know that internal combustion engines are a major cause of global warming? Should we then indulge in the luxury of righteous indignation when the secretary of transportation states his belief that environmental concerns should not be allowed to impede development that is "needed" in Wisconsin?

Earl warned that while we have accomplished something worthwhile by preserving the Thomas Wet Prairie **now**, we must be careful to maintain constant



vigilance to ensure the gains we have made this year are not offset by losses ten years hence. He closed by wishing that our efforts will become infectious and serve as an example to many others.

I will close, dear friends, by suggesting that constant vigilance must be diligently exercised on a very personal basis and that in this manner we will set a fitting example for many others to follow.

—Walter Mirk

Eat your local alien

This month's recipe is for Purslane, alias *Portulaca Oleracea*. Habitat, wouldn't you know, is vacant lots, waste sites and probably your average prairie restoration site if you're not careful.

This is an annual herb, lying almost flat on the ground and forming mats to one square foot with smooth fleshy stems which are shiny and often reddish purple. Flowers are single or few clustered at tips of branches, with five yellow petals.

Fruits are capsules containing red to black seeds. Harvest the young leafy tips and larger stems and serve raw in a tossed salad. In a casserole you can chop cooked shoots, stir in one beaten egg and crushed crackers or stale bread, enough to make a slightly wet mix. Add seasoning and bake in a moderate oven until "set."

This plant matures June through September. Go get it folks, don't let those aliens go to seed!!

—Alice Mirk

Dedication a success

On Saturday, June 17, 1989, a group of 40 prairie enthusiasts gathered to celebrate the dedication of the Thomas Wet Prairie. This site was purchased by S.W.P.E. in the spring of 1988. People from Dane, Green, Lafayette, Grant and Richland Counties were represented and treated to an invigorating speech by former governor Tony Earl.

The site had been burned prior to the dedication and was in early summer finery to celebrate its first birthday. It felt good to stand on the sunny slope across from this fine remnant and hear former governor Earl praise the group for its grass roots involvement, and reminding us gently not to rest on our laurels but to remain ever vigilant to the environmental quality of our lives.

A fine meal was laid on at the McGregor Blackberry Hill Nature Preserve, supplemented by pot-luck dishes from various members. Sitting at the picnic tables and talking prairie talk over endless plates of food was a delightful break for members



more accustomed to spending Saturdays cutting brush and collecting seed.

A sincere thank you should be extended to the McGregors at this point for donating their time, organizing the meal and allowing us to invade Blackberry Nature Preserve for the day. A sincere thank you to Michael Riddet for donating the print of a cardinal with frame to present to Tony Earl. Finally, a great big thank you to all members for attending this milestone event.

—Alice Mirk

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____
Home Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Occupation _____
Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

\$10 INDIVIDUAL \$15 FAMILY \$20 CONTRIBUTOR \$100 LIFE \$400 CORPORATE MEMBERS

*Memberships run from April 1 to April 1

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO S.W.P.E. AND RETURN TO: **SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS**
Alice Mirk
10052 Co. Hwy. C
Woodman, WI 53827

PLEASE CHECK ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS IN WHICH YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP S.W.P.E.:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seed Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in group visits to prairie sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing newsletter articles | <input type="checkbox"/> Help contact and solicit donations for S.W.P.E. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restoration projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Other areas _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member of S.W.P.E. board | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with contacting members through mail or by phone | |

Please elaborate

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS (S.W.P.E.)
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