

WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS, LTD.

VOL. I NO. V

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1989

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

These are the present directors.

Fred Faessler - President
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John Ochsner - Secretary
Kay Barry - Treasurer
Marie Brown - Newsletter Editor
Ray Amiel
Steve Apfelbaum
Robert Baller
Bill Bauman
Jacqueline Krause
Kathleen Sulzer

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Fred Faessler

At the December Board of Directors meeting a motion was made to amend Article VI, Section 2. The current bylaws calls for 1 year terms for the Directors. This involves the change below:

Number and Term. The number of directors shall be 11. The directors shall be elected at the annual meeting and each director shall be elected to serve a 3-year term with 3 (three) directors elected the first year, 4 (four) directors the second year, and 4 (four) directors the third year. Four (4) directors shall be elected to a 2-year term and 4 (four) directors to a 1-year term the first year.

E V E N T S

ANNUAL MEETING

On March 4, 1989, the 1st Annual Meeting will be held at the Monticello House in Monticello, WI. The restaurant is located on Main Street and was formerly called The Casino.

Our speaker will be Professor Hugh Iltis of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Professor Iltis is well known speaker and botanist. He has helped many people understand our native plants through his lively talks.

The evening will be fun packed and very enjoyable for the layperson just learning about prairie as well as for our experts.

Also featured at the general meeting will be Dean Roosa, Iowa DNR Ecologist and co-author of the new book Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie. Mr. Roosa and possibly co-author Sy Runkel will be on hand to autograph this book for friends and prairie enthusiasts alike.

Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie is a paperback field guide with over 100 color photographs, descriptions, and natural histories of prairie flowers and grasses, and will be available for purchase (\$19.95) at the meeting.

See the enclosed flyer for further details.

We look forward to seeing you at the Monticello House.

PRESCRIBED BURNING WORKSHOP

On March 18 and 19, 1989, we are sponsoring our 3rd Annual Prescribed Burning Workshop at the Ramada Inn, 3431 Milton Ave, Janesville, WI. This workshop will be led by Dr. Andi Koonce of the U.S. Forest Service Fire Lab, CA. She has led the workshop the last 2 years and has done and excellent job.

The workshop is designed to help us plan, conduct and control prescribed burns in the most safe, effective, and efficient

manner.

Please see the enclosed flyer on the workshop and if you plan on attending please return the registration form. If you have further questions, feel free to call Fred Faessler at 608/897-8547 during the day or 608/325-9374 evenings. We look forward to seeing you at the workshop.

PLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP

April 8, 1989, WPE is sponsoring a wildflower propagation workshop at the UW-Horticulture Department in Madison. This workshop will be led by Dr. Dennis Stimart who has been involved in numerous research projects and in the design of large-scale programs for commercial plant propagation. There will be much to learn and to ask questions about.

Plan on spending a fun day learning about plant propagation and meeting other people interested in growing wildflowers.

A flyer is enclosed for registration. If you have questions, call Steve Apfelbaum at 608/897-8547.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS PRAIRIE WORKSHOP

The Ninth Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop will be held on April 1, 1989, at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL. This workshop is sponsored by the North Branch Prairie Project, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and Northeastern Illinois University. Activities include a series of workshops led by Chicago-region ecologists and other experts who will cover a variety of topics, ranging from endangered birds and rare orchids to general introductions to the prairie.

Keynote address will be given by Michael Scott, Northern Rockies Regional Director of the Wilderness Society. His topic will be "Fire in Yellowstone: A Lesson in Politics and Ecology".

Closing address will be given by Dr. Robert Betz, professor of biology at Northeastern Illinois University.

For more information and registration write to The North Branch Prairie Project, 33 Cottonwood Rd., Northbrook, IL 60062.

PERSPECTIVES

OCCASIONAL FIRES AID FOREST LIFE

by Duncan Pledger, December 20, 1988, Janesville Gazette, Outdoors

As I have mentioned in previous columns, fire can be an important part of nature. Whether it is a simple grass fire which burns off brush and thus keeps native prairie flora from being choked out, or a major forest fire, periodic burns are a part of the way nature manages things.

Still, some people are having a hard time believing that this is true in all instances. The case in point is the huge burn which devastated a large portion of Yellowstone Park last summer. When the fire initially broke out, it was allowed to burn, as is consistent with the park's policy of letting nature take its course. When things got out of control, however, this policy was questioned by a lot of people.

Although William Mott, director of the National Park Service who made the initial decision to let the fire go has been second-guessed by a lot of people, environmental leaders still back his decision. They feel that more long-term good comes from letting things burn than rushing in with firefighters immediately. They also point out that last summer's conflagration occurred when conditions were tinder-dry. Even then, things might not have gotten out of hand had it not been for some exceptionally bad luck with subsequent wind and weather conditions.

Another reason that people were surprised and angry that the fire was not put out shortly after it started is that for many years the term "forest fire" has been associated with great destruction and ruination. When our forbears came to this country from Europe this idea was already ingrained deeply in their minds. In the old country, where wooded land is limited, every tree was preserved if possible. The image of fire being a ravisher was reinforced further during the latter part of the 18th century when the terrible Peshtigo fire followed on the heels of the Great Chicago Fire.

During the past 20 years, though, researchers have changed their attitudes toward fire. Like the weather and the seasons, they have concluded that wildfire belongs in the scheme of things. A study done in the Boundary Water Canoe Area has

shown that periodic fires improve moisture conditions in the soil, help release nutrients locked in dead wood, and stimulate abundant new growth which provides both food and cover for many forms of wildlife.

Fires also keep a forest in a perpetual state of evolution. Without it, certain species of trees and plants would eventually die off and be replaced with a "climax" forest. Large trees then would shade out the understory and thus eliminate the habitat for many species of birds and animals. When burns occur, though, they set the evolutionary clock back a half-century, or so, allowing transitional trees like the aspen and birch to continue to grow in that area.

Then, too, fires have been occurring with regularity long before white man (and his aversion to them) arrived in the New World. When a study was done at the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, it was discovered that no less than nine major fires occurred there during the last 2 1/2 centuries.

The concept of forest fires as a helpful phenomenon is new enough so that many state and federal agencies are still formulating policies on it. In some instances, fires caused by humans are extinguished sooner than those caused by natural causes. Other agencies also set burn limits, which designate just how large an area will be allowed to burn before the firefighters are called in.

Still, it may be hard to convince the folks who like to vacation at Yellowstone that the "let burn" policy is the best in all cases.

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 _____

WISCONSIN THREATENED PLANT

Pale Purple Coneflower Echinacea pallida

This plant is sometimes confused with the more common Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea), an introduced plant to Wisconsin sometimes found in gardens. The leaves of Echinacea pallida are six inches long and an inch wide at most, while E. purpurea has much broader leaves. E. pallida is very bristly-haired in texture and gets its genus name from a Greek word meaning "hedge hog." Starting as a woody taproot, pale purple coneflower grows a yard tall, with pale to deep purple, droopy ray flowers. Found from Montana to Wisconsin, and south to Texas, Louisiana and Georgia, it is a native of both deep, black soil, mesic prairies and of dry, gravelly prairies. First discovered in Wisconsin near Madison in 1855, it hasn't been seen there again since 1935 except for some transplanted specimens that grow in the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. Madison is at the northern end of E. pallida's range; southward from there it is found occasionally; in Illinois it is not considered threatened or endangered. There are records from the 1970's and 1980's on remnant prairies of some railroad corridors in Grant, Dane, Green, and Rock counties. (Wisconsin's Endangered Flora, WDNR, Page 26)

The earliest record that the Bureau of Endangered Resources has for pale purple coneflower is 1885. It has since been seen 1894 on the same site. Rob Baller, of WPE and RCC, has found many sites in Rock County for this threatened plant. Professor John Harrington and Steve Glass of Madison recently found the largest population in the state, also in Rock County.

This plant, a member of the sunflower family, is often found in association with lead plant (Amorpha canescens), purple prairie clover (Petalostemum purpureum), rattlesnake master (Eryngium yuccifolium), flowering spurge (Euphorbia corollata), big bluestem grass (Andropogon gerardi), and prairie cinquefoil (Potentilla arguta).

Any WPE member that finds this plant should submit records on site location and population to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Endangered Resources, Madison, WI.

**WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS, LTD
PRESENTS
1ST ANNUAL MEETING**

DATE: MARCH 4, 1989

WHERE: THE MONTICELLO HOUSE, MONTICELLO, WISCONSIN

COST: \$12.50 IN ADVANCE (BY FEBRUARY 22, 1989)

SPEAKER: Professor Hugh Iltis of the UW-Madison Botany Department will be the featured speaker. As Director of the UW-Herbarium, Professor Iltis has collected plant materials extensively in various parts of the world. In 1979, Professor Iltis participated in a Soviet-American Exchange sponsored by the New York Botanical Garden and the Russian Academy of Sciences. With two other American botanists, Iltis collected plants in the Sayan Mountain region of southern Siberia. Professor Iltis' presentation will also feature slides of the Novosibirsk region near Lake Baikal (the deepest lake in the world at 5000 feet) in addition to slides of Wisconsin prairie taken over the past 30 years.

AGENDA: 6:00 pm Social hour
7:00 pm Dinner (served family style)
8:00 pm A short business meeting
8:15 pm Professor Iltis' presentation

RESERVATION FORM

Reservations must be received by February 22.

Make checks payable to Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts, Ltd., N673 Mill Road, Juda, WI 53550.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

**WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS, LTD
PRESENTS 3RD ANNUAL
PRESCRIBED BURNING WORKSHOP**

DATE: MARCH 18-19, 1989

WHERE: RAMADA INN, 3431 MILTON AVE., JANESVILLE, WI 53545

COST: \$40.00 IN ADVANCE (BY MARCH 8, 1989)
(INCLUDES 2-DAY WORKSHOP, LUNCH, 1 YEAR MEMBERSHIP)
\$45.00 AT THE DOOR

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Andrea Koonce, "Andi", is with the U.S. Forest Service Fire Lab in Riverside, California. She was the Director of UW-SP's Fire Science Center. She began her career with fire protection in an Oregon Parks system in 1973. Since then, she has participated in over 100 prescribed burns and wildfires. Her specialities are teaching and training in fire science, and research in fire ecology and effects.

PURPOSE: To enable prairie enthusiasts to plan, to conduct, and to control prescribed burns safely, efficiently, and effectively.

PROGRAM: Saturday, March 18, 1989
7:30 am - Welcome and late registration
8:00 am - Classroom session
12:00 am - Lunch
1:00 pm - Classroom session
3:00 pm - Field practicum
5:00 pm - Adjourn for evening activities

Sunday, March 19, 1989

Put your freshly honed skills to use. Join some old friends and new colleagues to restore and maintain a prairie habitat.

WHAT TO BRING: Loose fitting field clothes
heavy cotton pants
long-sleeved shirt in natural fibers
comfortable field boots
large cotton handkerchief
work gloves and a hat

WHAT YOU'LL RECEIVE: training materials hands on experience
individual guidance practice on an actual burn

FORMAT: Classroom Session:

The initial training is formal but the style is casual. We'll discuss the purpose for prescribing fire in natural habitats, and examine the practical skills and organization necessary to conduct fires on different sites.

Field Session:

You'll practice use of drip torches, weather observations, and fire behavior monitoring. You'll practice using the tools - physical and mental - needed to conduct and evaluate burns.

**WISCONSIN PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS, LTD.
SPONSORS
WILDFLOWER PROPAGATION WORKSHOP**

DATE: SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 1989

WHERE: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Horticulture Department
1575 Linden Drive, Room 108, Madison, Wisconsin

COST: \$35.00 in advance. \$40.00 at the door.

INSTRUCTOR: Dennis Stimart, PhD., of the Horticulture Department, UW-Madison.

TIME: 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

PURPOSE: Dr. Stimart will present basic techniques for the propagation of plants using seeds and cuttings, for successful cultivation of native wild plants. He will also discuss ways in which to select the most effective propagation method for different plant families and genera.

WHAT TO BRING: Bring your own lunch, notebook, questions.

WHAT YOU'LL RECEIVE: Basic techniques
Bibliographic information
List of supply needs
A better understanding of how our plant communities grow and thrive.

REGISTRATION FORM:

Please send your check for \$35.00 (by March 31) payable to Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts, Ltd., N673 Mill Road, Juda, WI 53550. The cost will be \$40.00 on the day of the workshop.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Purple Coneflower
by Victoria Nuzzo



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