

THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL. 2, NO. 4

WINTER 1989

Prairie education continues!!

On November 10, I went to Bloomington Schools to give a presentation on prairies to the first through fourth grade. We divided into two groups, first and second grade, and third and fourth grade. I don't know who had the best time, myself or the kids! The teachers were extremely cooperative, covering the subject before I arrived and following through afterwards. I showed our prairie video and was delighted to see recognition on the faces of the children as the familiar forbs appeared on the screen.

The absorption rate of the kids was amazing! The questions after the video were intelligent and focused. Those kids couldn't wait to tell me about all those little corners of their family farms that harbored the last vestiges of tall grass prairie in Grant County. I heard about the sandy corners with Prairie Smoke blooming in the summer sun. I heard about the size the cup plants got in the fence rows of the corn fields and I heard about families recognizing precious prairie remnants on ridge tops and shallow valleys that are being preserved, generation to generation.

I came away with hope for the future generations—and it confirmed my belief that education is one of the most important goals of the S.W.P.E. Without educating future generations about the prairie ecosystem and the importance of that eco-

Disabled citizens seed collection for S.W.P.E.

Breaking new ground is something S.W.P.E. has never been afraid of, and once again we are spreading the word in unusual ways. Mr. Ed Shields, one of our S.W.P.E. members, contacted Gary Eldred. Ed is a prairie enthusiast who works for Richland County Social Services, providing community services for the disabled individuals of that county. Ed had the brilliant idea that his clients would enjoy seed collecting as an outdoor activity and he explored this idea with Gary. Although these clients are not able to be competitively employed and have some difficulty focusing on tasks and concentrating for long periods of time, Ed was sure that his clients could contribute something to the cause.

Ed and Gary put their heads together and came up with two sites that were accessible and the seed easily recognizable. Ed took half the group to collect big blue stem seed along the highway east of Muscoda, and then took the other half of the group to a site south of Muscoda to collect Wild Rye.

The volunteers were enthusiastic and two

(See SEED, pg. 2, col. 2)

system in the context of environmental awareness, all of our current efforts in S.W.P.E. are to no avail.

—Alice Mirk

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The holiday season is upon us once again and as we all know it's a time to be thankful, and reflect on the true meaning of joy and happiness.

Traditionally it's the season to spend time with family and loved ones, a season for love and giving.

Every once in a while when I hear that phrase about giving, it gets me to thinking about other interpretations of giving. I have to ask myself if the people I work with within the S.W.P.E. realize just how much they are giving, not during the holidays, but on those days, when after working all day, they take off and go to one of the prairie remnants we manage and cut brush, string wire and drive fence posts in a frenzied effort to get the site fenced before the cattle get on it.

I wonder if on some of those early spring days when everyone is poised and ready at a moment's notice to rush off to burn a site at just the right moment, do they realize just what they are giving and that ultimately what they are giving now, their time, money, commitment and dedication, will help leave something to people on their way here, from far in the future. People, who by our present moral standards, have every right to experience, understand, love and cherish the beauty, diversity, serenity and joy that nature can give to each of us who wish to explore its treasures!

I also find myself wondering, if after all the seed picking trips, brush cutting parties, the sometimes grueling meetings, putting newsletters together, field trips, etc., etc., etc., my fellow members realize the impact they are making on an unborn generation.

To answer, I have to sound off with a strong and resounding yes. After all, what else but such a strong belief and deep commitment could keep the dedication running so strong. To all of the people I've worked with since the beginning, I want to give a heartfelt thank you. We've got a lot of challenges ahead, but by pulling together for the future I know we, along with the support of our members, can leave a natural heritage future generations will cherish!

Happy Holidays!

Gary Eldred, President

I would also like to send out a special thank

SEED (Continued from Page 1)

minutes of training was enough to get them launched up the bank and stripping every seed within their reach!

This idea spread into Crawford County and a group of disabled clients who receive services from Crawford Co. Human Services collected seed under the supervision of Gary Slieh. This particular group collected seed on the Woodman Lake Prairie and the average weight of seed collected by each client was 2½ pounds!!

The enthusiasm engendered by these volunteers, most of whom had never heard of prairies prior to this activity, was heart-warming. Time and attention makes most plants and people thrive and this event proved no exception.

—Gary Eldred



Ed Shields demonstrating the finer points of seed collecting to some of his volunteers.

you to Pam Smith. Pam has donated many hours to the cause by doing various typing projects. Pam, your willingness to help us is highly valued and very much appreciated. Thank you, Pam.

Gary

1989 seed collection summary

With the good growing season last summer, many of the prairie species had excellent seed production, and it was a good year to put extra effort into collecting, but that wasn't the case and volunteer collecting activities were less than anticipated.

Even so, over 125 lbs. of uncleaned seed were collected on several group outings and many individual trips.

One trip to a prairie in Green County in September got the S.W.P.E. 19 lbs. of Side Oats, plus lesser amounts of several other species. Six members from Grant and Crawford Counties went along and two members from Dane County joined us there. The group collected for several hours, then took a field trip to see the rest of the prairie as well as talk prairie.

A second trip took S.W.P.E. members Bill Brandt, Gail and Gary Adams and Gary Eldred to a remote Christmas tree plantation in NW Grant County, where we spent several hours collecting Compass Plant seed. We had a very good day and collected 14 pounds of seed heads!

The third planned trip was announced in our last newsletter and despite a very nice day the response was quite poor. S.W.P.E. members who participated were Ron Grasshoff, Lodi, Gary and Gail Adams, Soldiers Grove, Gary Eldred, Boscobel. Others who had time to give to the prairie cause were Ed Shields, Richland Center and Steve Hubner, Darlington.

The group met in Muscoda and took a field trip to the Thomas Wet Prairie southwest of town. After the field trip and sandwiches washed down with homemade apple cider brought by Ed, we headed east of Muscoda to collect Indian Grass, of which we managed to collect six pounds.

After we finished for the day we all went to Ed's farm in Richland Co. to look at some prairie remnants on his place. It turned out to be a long day, but it was also very stimulating.

I would also like to add that we do have some seed from 1988 that we will sell at a very reduced rate. This seed was collected for a project in southern Grant Co. but the project was never completed, so we have surplus seed on hand. We have about 26 lbs. of prairie forbs and grasses. Some of it



Collecting Indian grass seed, l. to r., Gary Adams, Soldiers Grove, Ron Grashoff, Lodi, Steve Hubner, Darlington, Ed Shields, Richland Center and Bill Brandt, Fennimore.



Members traveling to Green Co. to collect seed were, l. to r., Ruth Bauer, Boscobel, Rose Sime, Madison, George and Suzanne Brown, Boscobel, Gail Adams, Soldiers Grove, Jim Sime, Madison, Gary Adams, Soldiers Grove.

is pure clean seed, but most is mixed with some stalks, other flower parts or seed heads.

We are asking \$6 per pound (more for the pure clean seed). Here is a partial list of species: Little Blue S., Big Blue S., Prairie Dock, Oxeye, N.J. Tea, Prairie Buttercup, Rose, Downey Gentian, Culvers Root, P.P. Clover, False Bonset, Bergomot, Rough Blazing S., Prairie Violet, Yellow Cone F., Western Sunflower, Cup Plant, Rattlesnake Master, Rosin Weed, Flowering Spurge, Pasque Flower, Indian Paint Brush, Green Headed Cone F., Iron Weed, Silky Aster, Wood Betoney, Plum Root, Panicum, Needle Grass and a couple pounds of mixed species.

Notes from the field

It is a long-standing tradition to reflect upon the year as it draws to a close and to make appropriate resolutions for the coming year. The first part of this annual exercise is potentially painful and may explain why the liberal consumption of spirits is, for some, another year-end tradition.

Who can forget that in 1989 we witnessed the tragedy of 10.9 million gallons of crude oil spilling into previously unspoiled Alaskan waters? While most of us remember the incident, it seems that we have forgotten the **lesson**, if indeed we have learned one at all.

Here in Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Kennecott mine near Ladysmith, WI, suggests that even in the worst case, we needn't be too alarmed about any serious environmental threat to the Flambeau River and the surrounding area. The EIS even supplies all the necessary mathematical calculations and projections to lend "scientific" support to this contention. Like the citizens of Alaska, we are being assured that disaster is virtually impossible and that, in any event, damage can be minimized. The calculations and projections presented in the EIS ignore the question of why **any** risk to the environment ought to be tolerated. But of course, that question can't be reduced to a mathematical equation.

1989 also bore witness to the ongoing wholesale destruction of the tropical rain forests of the "third world." Alarm continued to be expressed not only about extinction of species that will result from this destruction, but also about the contribution of rain forest obliteration of global warming. Yet the massive destruction of **this** nation's virgin forests (less than 5% remain) continues unabated. And despite the hue and cry about global warming, the "pro-environment" Bush administration recently refused to enter into an agreement with other nations to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

One may be inclined to wonder if the human species is not rushing headlong toward self-destruction. If so, we must be so perverse that we have lost the very instinct for preserving our species. To make matters

even worse, we appear willing to drag the entire planet with us on our (literally) dead-end course.

What propels us, willy-nilly, toward self annihilation? Is it simply a matter of human greed and selfishness? Certainly, there is abundant evidence for an affirmative answer. After all, were it not for the blind pursuit of profit, oil spills wouldn't happen and a mine along the beautiful Flambeau River would be out of the question. Were it not for selfishness, our nation would have agreed to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions in cooperation with other nations and would have been as equally concerned about the preservation of North America's virgin forests as about the rain forests in the far-away tropics.

It seems, however, that to explain our species perversely self-destructive behaviors as merely the result of greed and selfishness is perhaps too simplistic and too easy. I would suggest that the planet's staggering environmental problems and our stubborn refusal to take meaningful corrective action are rooted in specieism, that set of beliefs and practices that seek to establish homo sapiens at the top of an imaginary, artificially constructed hierarchy of living things (all things on the planet are living).

Specieism shares many common elements and characteristics with racism, classism, sexism, etc. In terms of discriminatory criteria, we have universalized our peculiar concept of reason and projected its absence onto the rest of creation to justify our hierarchal "superiority." This superiority in turn justifies our institutionalized oppression and exploitation of all creation. Those of us who romanticize nature are just as guilty of specieism as those who view nature as a hostile force to be subdued and controlled.

That selfishness and greed are the children of specieism was made wonderfully clear this past summer by the Secretary of the Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation (DOT). As some readers may know, Madison's belt-line highway was "improved" and approximately 20 acres of wetland were allowed to be destroyed, contingent upon being "replaced" by 20 acres of newly created wetland. A study was com-

missioned to evaluate the success of the wetland replacement effort and the results of the study indicated that the effort was far from a resounding success. The DOT secretary's response? He boldly stated that environmental concerns ought not to impede the state's need for economic development. Nothing startles a cynic more than a fellow human's honesty, so you can imagine my surprise at the stated position of a member of Governor Thompson's cabinet.

Just what does all of this spilled ink have to do with prairies and the S.W.P.E.? First of all, S.W.P.E. members provide some reason for optimism. The S.W.P.E. has members from Colorado to New York to Texas. Some of these folk may never see a prairie remnant in Southwest Wisconsin, yet they see the inherent value in S.W.P.E.'s goals of native grassland preservation, restoration and related education. Letters and notes sent by S.W.P.E. members along with their dues and donations demonstrate concern for the integrity of the planet, as well as for native grassland ecosystems. Most, if not all, S.W.P.E. members are committing time and money to numerous environmentally-oriented concerns and activities. One of our life members even "tithes" her earnings for the environment. Obviously, S.W.P.E. members are not only unselfish, but they also have the courage to "swim against the tide." It is a privilege to be among their number.

Secondly, the goals of the S.W.P.E., particularly in view of the fact that they are being aggressively pursued, are another cause for optimism. The preservation of living things, a community of living things for its own sake demonstrates beyond doubt that the S.W.P.E. is moving in the right direction. Restoration is the logical partner of preservation in efforts to stem the seemingly endless tide of environmental destruction. Perhaps we may even dare to hope that these tides might be reversed. Ultimately, education will be the key to dismantling the machinery of institutionalized specieism.

As the vast majority of humankind make and break their resolutions for the new year with equal fervor, let us recommit ourselves to the resolve that we have demonstrated, both individually and collectively,

Hank's classic list

Welcome to the premiere edition of my new column for the S.W.P.E. newsletter. I feel that the members of the S.W.P.E. and the readers of our newsletters could benefit from an introduction to and availability to information of selected titles of merit dealing with all aspects of the prairie movement. For this issue, I would like to offer two titles which are on my all-time favorite list, and I feel deserve a place on any enthusiast's bookshelf.

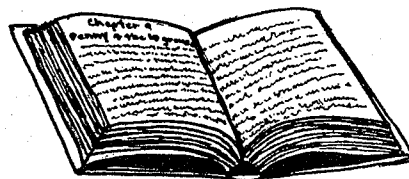
The first, **The Prairie**, by J.E. Weaver and T.J. Fitzpatrick, is a reprint of an 186-page article that originally appeared in the journal, **Ecological Monographs**. Secondly, **North American Prairie**, also by J.E. Weaver, is a 348-page book, long out of print, but still available. (Ordering information will follow below).

What I have found most appealing about these two publications is the manner in which the subject of prairie ecology is approached. J.E. Weaver was one of the pre-eminent pioneering prairie ecologists of the first half of the century. His observations of individual species, their culture, ecology and habit both singly and in the context of their larger plant communities are presented in a manner that is highly readable without becoming overly encumbered as is often the case with some of the more contemporary literature. Both the serious amateur ecologist and the lay reader will find a good deal of interesting and relevant information. Both of these books can be obtained by writing to:

Prairie/Plains Resource Institute
1307 L Street
Aurora, Nebraska 68818

The price for **The Prairie** is \$6 postpaid. A copy of **North American Prairie** will cost you \$18, postpaid. I give both publications four stars. Also nice people at Prairie/Plains.

—Hank Maslich



for the past three years of S.W.P.E.'s existence.

—Walter Mirk



ECHINACEA PALLIDA: PALE PURPLE CONE FLOWER

Echinacea: From the Greek meaning "sea-urchin" or "hedge-hog" for the sharp spiny chaff in the center, and **Pallida:** meaning "pale." This attractive plant is found ranging from Nebraska to Michigan and south. It is found in dry open woods and prairies and blooms from late May to early July. It grows 2 to 3 ft. tall and has lanceolate leaves, which are parallel leaved and without teeth. The blossom has 15 to 20 spreading or drooping pale purple petal like rays about 1½" to 3" long. The entire flower can be as much as 3½" across.

Grant application near completion

A grant request from S.W.P.E. has been in the works for some time now. The grant, when completed, will provide funding for land purchase and maintenance, including staff and equipment. Gary Eldred, Alice and Walter Mirk worked on the grant request throughout the summer. The next step is to get it professionally typed and then proof-read by individuals who have had expertise in the grant writing area.

We are requesting suggestions at this time regarding where to send this grant request. If you know the name of a corporation or an individual that would support our cause, please contact Gary Eldred or Alice Mirk at the address on the back of this newsletter. Onward and upward!!

—Alice Mirk

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December	Selling prairie seed
January 16	Regular meeting, 7:30 Boscobel Bowl. & Rec. Ctr.
March 20	Regular meeting, 7:30 Boscobel Bowl. & Rec. Ctr.
April 7	Annual meeting (Watch for flyer)
Late April	Planned burns on Kruel, Fiest and White Prairies
May 15	Regular meeting, 7:30 Boscobel Bowl. & Rec. Ctr.

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 | |

Help with contacting members through mail or by phone

Please elaborate

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

S.W.P.E. T-shirts available

We are currently taking orders for silk screened T-shirts and sweatshirts in light blue and tan, all sizes available upon request.

A 7-inch S.W.P.E. logo will be centered on the front of the shirts.

Please submit orders and money by Jan. 15, for delivery by Feb. 15.

Name _____

Address _____

Color: Tan Blue Size _____

T-Shirt (50/50) Long-Sleeved Sweatshirt

Cost of T-Shirt..... \$ 9.99

Cost of Sweatshirt..... \$14.99

(Including Shipping and Handling)



Send to:
Alice Mirk
10052 County Hwy. C
Woodman, WI 53827

S.W.P.E. members

Board Members

President: Gary Eldred

Vice-President: Ruth Bierwirth

Secretary: Gail Adams

Treasurer: Alice Mirk

Directors:

Hank Maslich

George Brown III

Steve Curley

Ruth Bauer

Gary Adams

Suzanne Brown

William Brandt

New Members

Odell Solem

Barbara Glass

Anthony Earl

Dick Nickolai

Lifetime Members

George Brown III

Suzanne Brown

Jonathan Wilde

Peg Stiles (New)

Walter Mirk

John Ochsner

Susan Kuczynski

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

c/o GARY ELDRED
1492 Sleepy Hollow Trail
Boscobel, WI 53805

A Non-Profit
Organization
THIRD CLASS
BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 10
Boscobel, WI 53805

*****3-DIGIT 546
37 0/0/0 16 31
Gary and Gail Adams
Route 2
Box 63
Soldiers Grove, WI 54655