

THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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"We create landscapes according to our morality, humanity and culture, and these landscapes then determine our fate."

Grassland restoration public's private concern

Perhaps Wisconsin's quietest plight during the past 150 years was the loss of its prairies, and the plants, birds and animals they supported.

What irony. Many folks today kneel in remorse over every resprouting stump of a late tree. How many feel the same loss for prairie plants such as Black-Eyed Susans, Purple Coneflower, or Big Blue Stem?

This, even though the state's native grasslands have given society much more than the forest soils. For example, most of the state's top agricultural lands were once prairies, not forests.

Before settlement, southern Wisconsin supported about three million acres of prairie. In addition, about 10 million acres were covered by oak savannas, which are grasslands with scattered or clustered stands of white or burr oaks.

Today, about one-tenth of 1 percent of such lands remain. That equates to about 43 square feet for every acre, or roughly the size of a bedroom closet.

Maybe that's why a group of prairie promoters believes prairies and oak savannas are Wisconsin's most threatened ecosystems. This group, called The Prairie Enthusiasts, is based in Boscobel. The group wants to ensure that grasses and wildflowers native to Wisconsin—not Western states—be planted in prairie restoration areas. These sites include nature centers, arboretums, railroad right-of-ways, and state parks and wildlife management areas.

Restoring native grasslands is a priority for state wildlife managers. These habitats are home to many species of plants and insects, not to mention birds such as Meadow Larks, Bobolinks and Song Sparrows.

Members of The Prairie Enthusiasts think the best way to produce

native grasses and wildflowers is for the Dept. of Natural Resources and Dept. of Transportation to support a state-run seed farm. They believe the state could keep seed costs affordable while ensuring no non-native seeds contaminate restoration sites.

They're skeptical private companies can produce native seeds profitably. Further, they fear non-native seeds would be too easily substituted for native strains, because even botanists have difficulty detecting the differences.

Private seed growers, however, oppose a state-run seed farm. They view it as unfair competition, and charge that they—if given a chance—could provide all the necessary native seed at competitive prices. They also contend seed stocks will remain pure. After all, in business, the more valuable their seed, the more carefully they guard its source.

The disagreement has been heard during the past year by just about everyone from DNR staffers to legislators to Gov. Thompson's top aides.

In these budget-cutting times, it's easy to guess the outcome: The state has shelved its Prairie Seed Farm concept, and it recently accepted bids from about 10 private companies and individuals to produce native seed. The DNR expects to award the contracts this month.

Chuck Pils, director of the DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources, is confident the private sector can deliver.

"In the long run, involving the private sector will create better situations and prices for everyone," Pils said. "I don't think there's much danger in this. We're trying to get our people to phase in and use native grasses and forbs. Our wildlife managers have been planting

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Annual meeting and picnic

This year The Prairie Enthusiasts' annual meeting and potluck picnic are being hosted by the South Central Chapter (SCC). The event is scheduled for Sunday, July 16 at Governor Nelson State Park on the northwest shore of Lake Mendota in Dane County. Come enjoy the day with other enthusiasts and see what the SCC is up to. Bring a dish to pass, your own table service, beverage of choice and walking shoes. Grilled meat and good company will be provided. The main attraction at Gov. Nelson (aside from Lake Mendota) is a large-scale prairie/savanna/oak woodland restoration underway that was instigated and is still being aided by The Prairie Enthusiasts. A vehicle admission sticker is required to enter the park. A chance to tour local prairie remnants will be available in the afternoon. In addition, a morning tour of the Sugar River Oak Savanna will also be available for interested early birds.

Schedule of events: 9:30-10:30, Sugar River Oak Savanna tour; 11:00, annual meeting and election of officers; 11:30, potluck picnic; 12:30, hike of the prairie and woodland restorations at Gov. Nelson; 2:30, depart by carpool to visit Westport Drumlin (a state natural area) and Koltes Prairie (a SCC cooperative project with private landowners), both 5.5 miles NE of Gov. Nelson.

Directions: From U.S. Hwy. 12 in Middleton, take Co. Hwy. M east 4.2 miles to Borchers Beach Rd., turn right and go ¼ mile to picnic area. Parking is on the left and the picnic area is on the right.

CONCERN

(continued from page 1)

Switchgrass from Kansas and Nebraska because it's been cheaper than native strains, which have been in short supply. With competition between private growers, the supply should increase and the price decrease for native grasses."

At this point, both sides hope Pils is right. Either way, times beats on, and if the private sector fails, the plight of the prairies will have only been hastened.

—Patrick Durkin, Waupaca,
Editor of Deer and Deer Hunting magazine

President's message

Rural development has become a point of heated contention in numerous townships during the last few years. Some people openly welcome expensive rural homes and escalating land values, mistakenly believing that such development will increase the tax base while reducing individual property taxes. Others realize that this kind of development will force farmers off the land and will often lead to the destruction of what may well be critical wildlife habitat. Local governments either can't cope with development pressures or they fail to see many problems associated with unfettered development.

As a person who loves wild things and undeveloped places, I am both saddened and alarmed at the ever increasing rate at which they're being destroyed. Every time I travel from Boscobel to my home town of Albany, I see another woodlot lost to development or another rocky hilltop scarred by a new lane leading to someone's dream home. I could write volumes about the negative aspects of rural development, but I'd like to address specific reasons why we should be concerned as prairie enthusiasts.

First, some prairie remnants are being physically destroyed by development. Who knows how many will be destroyed without ever being recognized as biological rarities? Who knows how many would have been saved even if they were recognized as worthy of protection? How many threatened or endangered plants, insects, birds and other animals will be destroyed as these fragments of the pre-settlement landscape are know-

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ingly or unknowingly rubbed out?

Another result of rural development is the rapid inflation of land values. Here in Southwest Wisconsin, we've been able to purchase remnants primarily because their unsuitability for agriculture has translated into low fair market value. However, as development encroaches upon the area, land that was formerly perceived as unsuitable for agriculture is suddenly seen as desirable for residential development and its value can skyrocket from as low as \$450 per acre to as high as \$20,000 an acre! This kind of inflation may well price prairie remnants beyond our financial reach and thus, our protection. Finally, rural development may well have a significant impact on the high quality prairie remnants already owned and managed by a number of TPE chapters. It's likely that a number of these remnants

may be surrounded by residential development in the not too distant future. Will they become the centerpieces of small community parks? Will we need to ring them with chain link fence to keep ATVs, dogs, cats, hikers, plant thieves, mountain bikes and the like from causing irreversible damage?

Will the new neighbors restrain their uses of lawn pesticides so that no harm will come to the stranded

(See **PRESIDENT**, page 3, col. 1)



PRESIDENT (continued from page 2)

species living next to them? Will they come charging across their carefully manicured lawns with loppers and saws in hand to join us on Saturday morning work parties?

In the light of the foregoing concerns we are left with a number of questions which we need to answer: Are the prairie remnants that face the onslaught of development really worth saving? Should the intense effort required to manage and restore these imperiled remnants continue or should our efforts be focused elsewhere? Can we raise the money needed to preserve remnants in the face of rapidly inflating land values? Are we, as individuals, willing to increase our commitment of time and money to preserve these islands of diversity? These are a mere sample of questions we should be asking. Be warned that the answers will not come easily. Perhaps we should list these and other questions on paper and take them with us to a cherished remnant, sit among the rare plants and then consider the long term fate of that community! In fact, I sincerely urge you to do so! After pondering these questions, I'd like you to share your thoughts with other prairie enthusiasts by either writing to me or to the editor of The Prairie Promoter. Our newsletter can and should be a forum for the views of all of its readers.

—Gary Eldred



Partnerships in conservation and redefining "small"

Recently, the DNR Bureau of Forestry has allowed non-profit groups, including The Prairie Enthusiasts, to purchase fire equipment through them at wholesale cost, resulting in considerable savings. By working together with other organizations interested in maintaining our natural heritage, we can accomplish much more than each individual group could do alone. Partnerships such as this one with the Bureau of Forestry increase our collective ability to accomplish our mission, as we share information and expertise on inventory and management. Organizations like the DNR and The Nature Conservancy have similar goals for protecting land, but do it on different scales than TPE. The grassroots nature of our group allows us to work much more easily with private rural landowners who own prairie remnants totaling only a few acres. Our group fills this niche.

Why are our efforts on these "small" remnants so worthwhile? Of the more than 2,000,000 acres of prairie existing in Wisconsin at the time of settlement, less than 1% remain. Prairies have more plant species listed as endangered, threatened or special concern than any other natural community in Wisconsin. We need to protect what remains today, before it is lost to development or brush. Preserving the remnants protects our natural heritage and provides places for education and research.

We need to put the issue of "small" into perspective. Despite 150 years of isolation, many of our small remnants still contain as many as 80 plant species, sometimes including midwest endemics of national concern like Prairie Bush Clover and Hill's Thistle. We know about plant species richness; we don't know much about other

species groups. For instance, insect inventory work has been limited to a few groups. New species of Leafhoppers, a fairly well-studied group, are being discovered here in Wisconsin. In addition, preliminary research on Leafhoppers suggests that many of our small remnants are as rich in Leafhoppers as the larger ones. Many prairie-restricted plants and animals are on the northern limit of their ranges and may have unique genetic makeup that allows them to survive.

Maintaining our remnants provides both a blueprint and a seed source for our restorations. Aggregations of prairie remnants can decrease the severity of genetic insularization—especially if species can disperse between prairie patches—and become core areas for large-scale grassland restoration projects.

All these reasons define why we work to protect the "small" remnants. Our work complements that of our larger conservation partners. By working together we can accomplish great goals, if we remember to dream big. Imagine this . . . big, open, grass bending beneath the weight of the breeze, extending to every horizon.

—Paul West

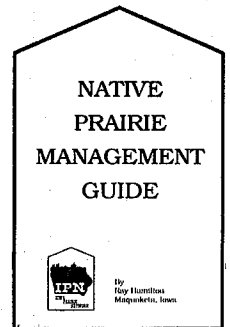
Native Prairie Management Guide

The recent publication of a general guide to prairie management is a welcome addition to the inventory of prairie literature. Written by Dr. Ray Hamilton of Maquoketa, IA, the Native Prairie Management Guide is a compactly written 10-page booklet that provides common sense up-to-date recommendations on the management of remnant prairies.

In addition to an 11-item list of general management guidelines, Hamilton includes good, specific information on management techniques such as fire, grazing, mowing and haying along with suggestions for controlling woody vegetation and alien weeds. Hamilton briefly discusses biological control agents and devotes a full page to herbicide use. He also comments on the ethics and intricacies of introducing native species to a site. A nine-item list of suggestions under the heading Adjacent Land Management is also included. Probably the most important aspect of Dr. Hamilton's guide is its emphasis on the biological fragility of each prairie remnant and the inherent necessity for careful, well-planned management on a site by site basis. Hamilton also emphasizes the importance of detailed plant and animal inventorying, in addition to long-term recorded observations of these species' response to various management techniques.

This informative booklet should be a part of every prairie enthusiast's library. The cost of the Native Prairie Management Guide is \$1.00, and is available from:

The Iowa Prairie Network
P.O. Box 516
Mason City, IA 50402-0516



—John Ochsner

... And the answer is?

During a recent period of semiconsciousness, I asked myself, "Where is Nature?" Not that I had lost Her, mind you—I can recognize the real thing when I see it. No, the question was more like: "Where should Nature be?" or "Where will Nature be?" My answer was, "I have no idea!"

As prairie enthusiasts we say we are dedicated to the "protection and restoration" of the land. That commitment raises a lot of difficult questions that we need to discuss at length and design answers for. As a first step, I would like to hear what you think. Please fill in the following questionnaire and return it to:

Jim Rachuy
11219 E. Stockton Rd.
Stockton, IL 61085

I will collate your responses and report back in the next newsletter. If you choose not to participate, please include an explanation of why (think about it!)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Why is it important for there to be natural areas? Rank the following (1=most important reason).

- _____ without nature there is crime and poverty
- _____ all life forms are valuable and necessary
- _____ nature is esthetically pleasing
- _____ without nature there is no future
- _____ nature improves the quality of my life

Why is it important for there to be artificial areas? Rank the following (1=most important reason).

- _____ it is God's will that Men rule the Earth
- _____ humans can't survive without civilization
- _____ cultural diversity is as important as biodiversity
- _____ to ensure that the weak, as well as the strong, survive,
- _____ western civilization is superior to primitive tribal societies
- _____ because I like to watch television

What percentage of the landscape should be kept in a substantially natural condition? _____ %

Who should own the natural areas? Rank the following (1=best owner)

- _____ state government
- _____ international environmental organizations
- _____ federal government
- _____ local environmental organizations
- _____ private citizens

What should be the average size of a natural area? _____ acres

Where should the natural areas be located? Rank the following (1=best location).

- _____ along artificial corridors, like interstate highways
- _____ surrounding large metropolitan areas
- _____ along natural corridors, like rivers
- _____ in rural areas, intermixed with farms and villages
- _____ as far from civilization as possible

Who should manage the natural areas? Rank the following (1=best manager)

- _____ state government
- _____ international environmental organizations
- _____ federal government
- _____ local environmental organizations
- _____ private citizens

What should be the maximum size of a substantially artificial area? _____ square miles

Which types of areas should be protected first? Rank the following (1=first choice).

- _____ prairies _____ forest
- _____ savannas _____ shrublands
- _____ wetlands _____ lakes and streams

What should be the average distance between four-lane, limited access freeways? _____ miles

Which types of areas should be restored first? Rank the following (1=first choice).

- _____ public land
- _____ low quality agricultural land
- _____ part of my land
- _____ city slums
- _____ land adjacent to existing natural areas

What percentage of the land should be held in a soil bank to ensure adequate food production far into the future? _____ % (p)

How long should a field be kept in the soil bank? _____ years (n)

How long can a field be farmed before retired? _____ years (f)

(Note: the relation between your last three answers is roughly $p=n/(n+f)$)

How should space for natural areas be acquired? Rank the following (1=best way)

- _____ conservation easement
- _____ long-term lease
- _____ management contract
- _____ public condemnation
- _____ purchase agreement

How many acres do you and your family own? _____ acres

What percentage of the land that you and your family own should be kept in a substantially natural condition? _____ %

What portion of the land that you and your family own is kept in a substantially natural condition? _____ acres

What portion of the natural areas should be forest?
_____ same as now _____ same as 100 years ago
_____ same as 50 years ago _____ same as 200 years ago

By when should society have answers to the above questions? _____ A.D.

By when will society have answers to the above questions? _____ A.D.



Aglinis aspera - Rough Purple Aglinis

Aglinis aspera

Aglinis aspera, alternatively known as *Gerardia aspera*, is commonly called Rough Purple Aglinis and False Foxglove. I have been able to find very little information about this plant—most of my reference works don't even list it! Although it is reported to occur in Grant and Iowa counties in Wisconsin, I've never been fortunate enough to see it.

A. aspera is an annual found on dry prairies from Indiana to North Dakota, south to Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas. It is one of 45 species of *Aglinis* found in the Americas and one of 23 species which occur in the United States.

A. aspera is one to two feet tall with many upward angling branches which give it a bush look. The very narrow, sharp-tipped and opposite leaves are one to one and one-half inches long with their edges rolled under. The upper surface of the leaves and the stem are covered with short stiff hairs which make the plant feel rough to the touch. Stalks rising from the leaf axils bear large, single bell-shaped flowers which are up to one inch long. These showy pink or red-violet blossoms usually appear between August and October.

A. aspera can be easily confused with *A. purpurea*, which is commonly called Large Purple Aglinis. However, the latter plant is distinguished from the former primarily by its slightly larger flowers borne on a shorter stalk and its preference for a more moist habitat.

—Gary Adams

How sweet it isn't!

Sweet Clover was introduced into North America from Asia in the 1660's. The English colonists used Yellow Sweet Clover, *Mellilotus officinalis* (L.) Pallas, to produce medicine, flavoring and honey—hence its scientific name, which in Greek means "honey plant."

White Sweet Clover, *Mellilotus alba* Medikus, was introduced into North America much later. By the 1900's it was in wide use for the production of forage for cattle and horses. Farmers discovered, however, that this plant produces the chemical colchicine, which prevents the clotting of blood. Cattle and especially horses are susceptible to fatal internal bleeding if they eat too much. Today, the use of Sweet Clover in hay has all but been abandoned.

Neither species seems to have presented much of a problem until the 1940's. Today, both have successfully adapted to the local environment and are displacing native prairie and savanna plants. White Sweet Clover, in particular, has become an invasive weed in all but 50 states.

Sweet Clover is a biennial forb with alternate, trifoliate leaves. It begins growth early in the spring and flowers in its second season from late May through September. After setting seed, the plant dies. Sweet Clover can be distinguished from other legumes by the following combination of traits:

- stem erect, 2-6 feet tall, often #2, with a taproot
- leaflets #3, irregularly serrulate, flat
- flower small, deciduous, in axillary racemes
- fruit straight, not curved, with 1-2 seeds

You should never kill any plant that you cannot positively identify. If necessary, consult an expert or appropriate textbooks. For example, you would not want to kill a colony of Prairie Clover (*Dalea Lucanus*), an uncommon native legume of similar habitat.

There is no known method for controlling Sweet Clover in large natural areas. On smaller or less sensitive sites, it has been effectively controlled by the following means:

• **hand pulling** when the ground is moist (so the forked root remains intact) can be effective. The best time is late fall or early spring (when the bright green leaves are easily spotted). Fall weeding is less stressful to native vegetation.

• **cutting** stems close to the ground with a scythe is effective if done after the leaves on the lower stems have died and before seeds form. If your timing is right, the plants will not resprout.

• **herbicides** can be useful in degraded areas. In the spring following a fall burn, hand spray individual plants with 1% Dicamba (2, 4-D) before native vegetation emerges. (Caution: 2, 4-D will kill any broadleaf plant it contacts.) To reduce vapor drift, always buy the amine formulation, not the ester formulation.

• **prescribed burns** in two-year cycles are most effective. The first year, burn in April. The second year, burn in May. The April burn scarifies seed, stimulating them to germinate. The May burn kills the plants before they can reproduce. Problems may arise if the burns are patchy. Leave two years without a burn between treatments.

Whatever method of control is chosen, repeated application will be required. At a minimum, try to prevent the production of seed. Sweet Clover seed can remain viable in the soil for up to 30 years.

—Jim Rachuy

A slinky problem

Crown Vetch (*Coronilla varia* L.) was introduced into North America by the Soil Conservation Service from the Mediterranean in the 1950's. It was touted as an erosion control plant for highway embankments and was distributed to land owners by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Crown Vetch is a perfect example of how a society can become addicted to a plant. Its habit of climbing over and smothering out other plants is now widely understood to increase erosion on the type of site where it was used. Nonetheless, it took 35 years for the various state departments of transportation and conservation to remove it from their seeding mixes.

Crown Vetch, also known as Hive-Vine or Axseed, is an invasive weed. It readily escapes from roadside plantings into dry, sunny areas such as sand barrens, old fields, rocky pastures and hill prairies. It can spread rapidly by its poisonous seed and by 10 foot underground rhizomes. A single plant can cover 100 square feet of soil in four years.

Crown Vetch is a perennial, trailing herb with odd-pinnate compound leaves. It begins growth early in the spring and

blooms from late May through August. It can be distinguished from other legumes by the following combination of traits:

- stems 2-6 feet long, naked, forming large clumps
- leaflets #11-25, entire, naked
- flowers pink, in dense heads on long peduncles
- fruit linear, 4-angled, transversely jointed into 6-8 parts.

You should never kill any plant that you cannot positively identify. If necessary, consult an expert or appropriate textbooks. For example, you would not want to kill a colony of Milk Vetch (*Astragalus canadensis* L.) an uncommon, native species of similar habitats.

There is no known method for controlling Crown Vetch in natural areas. On less sensitive sites, it has been partially controlled by the following means:

•**prescribed burns.** For prairies, savannas and roadways, a late spring burn can be an effective control. The burn should be repeated for several years in a row, until the soil is depleted of vetch seed. Low intensity fires that leave unburned patches will not be effective.

•**cutting and mowing.** Where fire must be avoided, repeated late spring cutting has shown some success. If seed production has begun, remove the stems from the site and burn. Hand pulling may disturb the soil and create an environment more favorable for Crown Vetch.

•**chemical treatment** At the present time, herbicides appear to be the most effective means of control. 1. Spot application of 1-2% glyphosate (the trade name is Roundup) in the spring with a hand sprayer can be used to control large colonies in non-sensitive areas. Rodeo, rather than Roundup, should be used near aquatic sites and wetlands. (Caution: glyphosate will kill any plant it contacts.) If the site is also burned the previous fall, the plants will be easier to find and spray. 2. The herbicide Clopyralid (trade name Transline) may be preferable to glyphosate. Its selective action only on composites, legumes and smartweeds could reduce the impact of spraying on nontarget species. More research is needed.

Whatever method of control is chosen, repeated application will be required. At a minimum, try to prevent the production of seed. At this time, the best strategy is to locate the plants early and begin treatment immediately. —Jim Rachuy

To have and to hold . . .

What is a conservation easement?

A conservation easement is a legal agreement a property owner makes to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on his or her property. Each such agreement is uniquely tailored to the resources of a particular property and to the interests of an individual owner.

To understand the easement concept, think of owning land as holding a set of rights. These may include, for example, the right to construct buildings, to plow the ground, to restrict access or to harvest timber. A landowner may sell or give away the whole set or just one or two of these rights. To give away certain rights while retaining others, a property owner grants an easement to an appropriate third party, such as a conservation or historic preservation organization.

Easements are given different names, according to the type of resource they protect. Easements used to preserve farm land are called agricultural easements. Likewise, there are scenic and conservation easements. Another name for an easement is a deed restriction. Whatever they are called, the concept is the same.

An easement runs with the land. The original and all future owners are bound by its restrictions. The easement is recorded by the county so that all future owners and lenders will learn about the restrictions when they obtain title reports.

Why create an easement?

People grant conservation easements to protect their land or buildings from inappropriate development. By granting an easement, the owner can be assured that the resource values of his or her property will be protected in perpetuity, no matter who owns the land in the future. Granting an easement can also have financial benefits.

What property can be protected?

Any property with significant conservation or historic resources can be protected by an easement. This generally includes:

- agricultural areas such as farms or timberlands
- natural areas such as prairies, wetlands or forests
- geological areas such as lakes or caves
- scenic areas such as beaches or bluffs
- historic areas such as old buildings or archeological sites

Are there drawbacks?

A conservation easement, like a marriage, is an irrevocable act and should not be entered into lightly. Indeed, some fear that conservation easements can "place the dead hand of the past upon future generations." True enough. If our children's children choose not to protect natural areas or to preserve historic buildings, they will have to find a way to change our decisions. On the other hand, if we fail to protect these resources today, future generations may be denied all choice with respect to them.

Who can create an easement?

Any owner of property with conservation or historic resources may grant an easement. If the property belongs to more than one person, all owners must consent. If the property is mortgaged, the owner must obtain an agreement from the lender to subordinate its interests to those of the easement holder.

If an easement donor wishes to claim tax benefits for the gift, he or she must donate or sell it for less than fair market value to a conservation or historic preservation organization that qualifies as a public charity under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c) 3. Not all organizations meet this criterion.

How restrictive is an easement?

An easement restricts development only to the degree

(See **EASEMENT**, page 8, col. 1)

that is necessary to protect the resources of the property. Sometimes this means a total ban on construction, sometimes it doesn't. It depends upon the owner's goals and the resources involved.

For example, if the goal is to preserve a pristine natural area it may make sense to prohibit all construction. On the other hand, if the goal is to protect farm land, an easement may restrict subdivision and commercial development while allowing structures and activities that are compatible with an agricultural operation. Even the most restrictive easements typically permit landowners to continue with their traditional use of the land.

What about public access?

Landowners who create conservation easements can, generally, make their own decision about whether to open their property to the public. An owner may choose to convey limited access rights, for example, to allow fishing or hiking. However, if an income tax deduction is to be claimed and the easement is for recreational or educational purposes, then public access is required.

What are the holder's duties?

The grantee organization is responsible for enforcing the restrictions of the easement. To do this, the grantee monitors the property on a regular basis, visiting the site at least once a year. The grantee typically maintains written records of these visits.

If a visit reveals that the easement has been violated, the grantee has the legal right and duty to require the owner to correct the violation and restore the property to its prior condition. For example, if a fence was constructed in the wrong place, the fence would need to be removed, at the owner's expense.

What about income taxes?

The donation of a conservation easement is tax-deductible charitable gift, provided that the easement is perpetual and is donated "exclusively for conservation purposes" to a qualified conservation organization. Internal Revenue Code 170(h) generally defines "conservation purposes" to include the following:

- protection of relatively natural habitats for wildlife or plants
- preservation of historically important areas or buildings
- preservation of areas for public education or outdoor recreation
- preservation of open space, including farm and timber lands

To determine the value of the easement donation, the property is appraised at its fair market value with and without the easement restrictions. The difference between the two appraisals is the tax deductible value of the easement.

What about estate taxes?

Heirs to tracts of land, such as farms and ranches, can face monumental estate taxes. Even if they wish to maintain the property in its present condition, federal estate tax is levied, not on the value of the property for its present use, but on its "fair market value," usually the amount a developer or speculator would pay. The resulting estate tax can be so high that the next generation must sell the property in order to pay the taxes.

A conservation easement can reduce estate taxes by reducing the "value" of a property. For example, if the owner has restricted the property by a conservation easement before his or her death, the property must be valued in the estate at its restricted value. Thus the value of the estate will be less and will be subject to a lower tax.

Even if a property owner does not want to restrict the property during his or her lifetime, the owner can still specify in his or her will that a charitable gift of a conservation easement be made to a qualifying organization upon the owner's death. In this case, the value of the easement gift will be deducted from the estate, reducing the value upon which the estate taxes are levied.

What about property taxes?

Property tax assessment is typically based on the property's market value, which reflects its development potential. If a conservation easement restricts the development potential of the property, it made reduce the level of assessment and thus the level of the tax.

The actual reduction, if any, depends on many factors. State law and the personal attitudes of local officials may influence or determine the decision to award property tax relief to easement grantors.

Who has created conservation easements?

Nationwide, concerned landowners have created easements on more than two million acres of land. Together, they share a desire to permanently protect and enhance the natural, scenic and cultural resources of their communities. We cannot know what the future will bring. We can only try to make the best decisions we can for the future of our society.

—Editor's note: If you would like more information about conservation easements, call Jim Rachuy at 815-948-2287.

A conversion experience or how we saw the light

In 1987, for economic reasons, my wife Eva and I decided to put our cropland into the CRP. Forty-five areas were in corn and had to be seeded down. The county had helpfully prepared a pamphlet describing various grass and legume mixtures for this purpose.

I looked through the pages and an entry labeled *Switchgrass* caught my eye. The idea of using a native grass instead of a European one appealed to us, so I followed it up. (It was particularly attractive as the county was going to supply the seed cheaply.)

Early in 1988, I contacted the county offices to arrange for the seed. They said commercial dealers had complained their business was being undercut. Therefore they could not supply us and we would have to obtain seed from the dealer of our choice.

Interestingly, this was a most fortunate turn of events, for now I began to do some research.

It all started when we had the happy thought that it might be fun to plant a smattering of other prairie grasses in with the *Switchgrass*. So I called a friend who is an amateur prairie naturalist to ask his advice.

He said that a pure stand of *Switchgrass* is wonderful if you are a bird, as the grass would grow so thickly and aggressively that foxes could not get through it to hunt them. My responsive thought was, "If foxes can't get through it, neither can we." My friend went on to say that *Switchgrass* seldom made up more than 5% of a natural prairie. He then gave me ideas about Big and Little Bluestem, Indian Grass and Side Oats

(See **LIGHT**, page 9, col. 1)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(After each work party announcement is a reference word. Please check individual stories for more information about other events.)

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

- Saturday, July 1** Work party at Kalscheur Prairie, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Girdling aspen. Bring your own lunch and beverage (KALSCHEUR)
- Saturday, July 15** SW Chapter work party at Vale Prairie, 10 a.m. (see VALE)
- Sunday, July 30** SW Chapter work party at Bush Clover Prairie, 9:00 a.m. (see BUSH CLOVER)
- Sunday, Aug. 6** Work party at Kalscheur Prairie, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Girdling aspen. Bring your own lunch and beverage (KALSCHEUR)
- Saturday, Aug. 19** SW Chapter work party at Vale Prairie, 10 a.m. (see VALE)
- Sunday, Aug. 20** SW chapter meeting, Linder residence, 1:00 p.m., 375-2668
- Saturday, Aug. 26** Work party at Kalscheur Prairie, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Girdling aspen. Bring your own lunch and beverage (KALSCHEUR)
- Saturday, Sept. 2** SW Chapter work party at Vale Prairie, 10 a.m. (see VALE)
- Sunday, Sept. 17** SW chapter meeting, Mirk residence, 1:00 p.m., 988-4760

SOUTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

- Thursday, June 29** SC inventory party, 2:00 p.m., Southwest Co. Call Paul West for details, 233-5804
- Tuesday, July 11** SC work party at Koltes for parsnip and sweet clover, 5:30 p.m., bring shovel and wear long-sleeved shirt (KOLTES)
- Tuesday, July 18** SC annual general membership meeting, 5:30 p.m., Rich Henderson residence (see story page 15)
- Saturday, July 22** SC railroad parties inventoried by bicycle, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (see story, page 15)
- Tuesday, July 25** SC work party at Koltes for sumac cutting and insect collecting, 5:30 p.m., bring loppers (KOLTES)
- Tues., July 25** Marshall Prairie tour (see story, page 15)
- Sat., Aug. 5** Prairie Jubilee (see story, page 16)
- Thursday, Aug. 10** Sugar River Oak Savanna Tour, 5:30 p.m., (see story, page 15)
- Saturday, Aug. 26** SC inventory party and picnic, 9:30 a.m., Northern Sauk Co. roadside remnants, (see story, page 15)
- Sept. ?** Date to be announced. SC work party at Mt. Pleasant for brush cutting, call Jerry Dalen, 527-5807 in early Sept. for details (MT. PLEASANT)
- Tuesday, Sept. 5** SC chapter board meeting, Rich Henderson home, 7 p.m.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

- Saturday, July 29** Briggs Wetland dedication and fundraiser, 10:30 a.m. at site (see story, pages 13-14)
- Tuesday, Aug. 15** PBC chapter meeting at Honey Creek shelter house, Monroe, 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, Aug. 20** Tour of Lafayette Co. prairie remnants led by Steve Hubner. Meet at Dick's parking lot in Darlington, 2 p.m., 608-776-4146
- Tuesday, Sept. 19** PB chapter meeting at Turner Hall, Rathskeller, Monroe, 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, Sept. 24** Record tree tour of Madison (see story, page 12)

GENERAL

- Saturday, July 16** TPE annual meeting and potluck picnic (see story, page 1)

BUSH CLOVER

Drive north from Lancaster on Hwy. 61. Go left on Co. K. About 4 miles up Co. K, go left on Badger Rd. Follow Badger Rd. around one curve and prairie is on right.

VALE

Drive to Albany. Rt. 59 crosses Sugar River. One or two blocks w. of Sugar River, go right on Sugar River Hwy. Go one block. Left onto Mineral. Follow Mineral for .1 mile to North Taylor. Go straight on Purington Rd. for 3.7 miles. Right on Schneeberger for .2 miles. Go left on farm lane w/trees on left and cropland on right. Farm lane swings right behind row of trees—park on left after this corner.

KOLTES

Meet on Bong Road, ½ mile east of Hwy. 113 between Madison and Waunakee. Leader: Paul West, 233-5807.

MT. PLEASANT

From Belleville, go west on STH 69/92 for 3 miles. Continue northwest on STH 92 for 2.5 miles to the junction with CTH A. Go west (left) on CTH A 1 mile to the junction with CTH U. Go south on CTH U for ¼ mile to Bowers Road. The site is on the east side of Bowers Road ¼ mile beyond the junction with CTH U. Leader: Jerry Dalen, 527-5807.

KALSCHEUR

From Hollandale (SW Iowa Co.) go south from Hwy. 39 on Co. Rd. K about 2 miles south. Site is on left (east) side of road. Look for parked cars along road.

LIGHT (continued from page 8)

Gramma, all of which he recommended. He also gave me the names and phone numbers of two other people to call.

This started a chain reaction, as I kept being referred to other individuals. I talked to county conservation people, seed companies, private individuals and the head of the

prairie restoration project at Fermilab.

Here, in no particular order, are some of the things I learned:

- prairie grass seed is very expensive.
- as seedlings, it will not compete with quackgrass. You have to get rid of the quack first.

(See LIGHT, page 10, col. 1)

it does not have to be hand weeded. (At Fermilab, one field they planted grew a fine crop of velvet leaf. They did nothing. They next year they had healthy grasses.)

it takes time to spread.

Little Blue, Side Oats Grama and Indian Grass are bunch grasses. Big Blue and Switch form sods.

grasses are not the only components of a prairie.

I spoke to many people on what percentages of grass varieties we should plant. As could be expected, I got many answers. We did settle quickly on 5% for Switchgrass, though not having ever seen any of the candidates, we were the blind leading the blind.

So I began looking for seed. I checked in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota. I didn't want to go farther afield as I wanted to get somewhat local genotypes (see how much I'd learned already?).

There was none available. The past year's crop of seed was small and had all been sold. It was a blessing, actually, as 1988 was a very dry year.

The next year, 1989, I started looking for seed early. We had gone over our finances and with the accompanying costs of field preparation, we were limited on funds. I checked every seed dealer within 200 miles. The best price by far was offered by a nursery in Iowa. I ordered from them.

In my talking and reading I had found that forbs are also a very important component of the prairie flora. Having gone this far in trying to recreate a prairie, I did not want to disregard them in our efforts.

If I thought grass seed was expensive, imagine my shock when I found these seeds ran from 70 to 450 dollars a pound! And the recommended seeding rate was 6-8 pounds per acre!!

I carefully chose among all the desirable possibilities and selected about 15, which I ordered by the eighth and quarter ounce. The total forb bill was \$204.00, and constituted not quite a double handful.

The field that was selected to be prairie is 18.4 acres. About four acres of it are low enough to be normally damp. We hired it mowed, sprayed it with Roundup and two weeks later we planted! It was mid-May.

The seed had arrived in April—large bulky bags. The seeds were fluffy and clumped together. I had immediate qualms about how it would go through the planter, as it had not been de-bearded. We had rented a planter from the county with small feed tubes for the grass seed and large ones for the oat cover crop. I somewhat solved our clumping problem by mixing the oats with the grass seed to thin it out, and we fed it all through the large tubes. It worked, but a two-hour planting job stretched to six.

By then it was 4 p.m., I was tired, I had a two-hour drive home (I should mention we are flatlanders from Illinois) and I still had the forbs to plant. Visions of the proper way was to do this flooded my consciousness. I then walked over an acre of ground, flinging them indiscriminately.

The summer of 1989 turned out to be the second year of drought. The oats came up, but never went to seed.

Picture, if you will, mature, capable, supposedly intelligent people crawling through a field of weeds on their hands and knees, peering down a line of sickly oats, gently parting the crabgrass as if looking for lost treasures. Not having the foggiest notion of what these lost treasures

looked like added a bit of drama to the scene. (Eva kept reminding me why the picture look so bleak. She had said many times during the preparation for planting that, when the time came, we must have an orchestra off to one side with three maidens in diaphanous gowns dancing over the field to give the seeds the proper mood. She and two of her friends were waiting in the wings to perform this service but, alas, I had not come up with the musicians.)

We did find a few strange grasses (very few) and put our hope in them.

The next spring, after luring up some friends, we did as recommended and burned the field, mostly foxtail, but it was satisfying. We all enjoyed the day immensely and dubbed ourselves "Pyroecologists." We were hooked.

So, the next time you hear someone say, "Switchgrass? What's that?," treat them gently. They may be future Prairie Enthusiasts.

Epilogue

As with all true fairy tales, this one continues past the end of the story.

We spent most of the summer of 1990 looking for grasses and trying to identify them. It was not too difficult to pick out what was a prairie grass (narrow leaf blades and the bluish green color) but it was almost impossible for us to tell what kind it was. Indian Grass was the exception, thanks to the gunsight shaped fold of the leaf at its stem connection.

The nicest surprise was in August, when some Big Bluestem began to go to seed. We had not expected any until the third year. As the season progressed, seed stalks of all five varieties appeared.

Despite our pleasure at seeing the grasses, there was also disappointment at the thinness of the stand. In some areas of poorer soil, almost no seeding was visible. In some places we found a scattering of small plants that looked as if they had only sprouted that year. In the best

areas it would still be considered thin if it had been oats we were growing. In the two damp areas (approximately 4 acres) we found one Big Blue plant.

Of the forbs we planted, we found two small Compass Plant sprouts plus a lot of Yellow Coneflower.

In the spring of 1992, we burned again. Some areas had enough tinder to burn quite nicely. The grasses grew well that summer, with some larger clumps. In the southwest corner where the previous year we saw only weeds, grasses were growing.

The mature grasses had in places become thick enough to touch. Of the originally planted forbs, Pale Purple and Yellow Coneflowers, Canada Tick Trefoil and Large Flowered Beardtongue bloomed. We found five Compass Plants (one with three leaves) and two Prairie Dock.

A three and one-half acre low lying section sprouted a thick crop of red clover the second year. In subsequent years it was replaced by thick, tall weeds. In July of 1992 I bushhugged a circular path through it for access. The weeds did not return, but in early October, walking the mowed path, we found many clumps of prairie grass that had grown with the lack of shade.

In 1993 Eva delighted us by spotting several Rattlesnake Masters blooming. We also had 10-15 Compass Plants and as many Prairie Dock.

In 1994 we burned again in early April. I began to un-

(See LIGHT, page 11, col. 1)



derstand the stories my grandmother told us of living in a sod house on the Kansas prairie and being swept over by a prairie fire. "It sounded like a freight train coming," she said. Our flames reached 15-20 feet high and crackled as if all the woods were ablaze. Whatever it sounded like, it ended up growing better than ever. We ended the year 1994 with some Big Blue 9½ feet tall, and Little Blue up to five feet. We also found blooming one each of Lance Leaved Coreopsis, Stiff Coreopsis and Purple Prairie Clover. I had forgotten we'd planted them.

We have observed an interesting phenomenon—which ever grass is blooming, it seems that that is the most abundant of what you have—except Switchgrass. Switch is always identifiable. If we were able to do it over, I would plant no more than 1% Switch.

We now understand our naturalist friend's comment that Switchgrass is quite aggressive. One area is pure sand. The ragweed grows only six to eight inches there. Four Switch seeds sprouted in it. After five years, each of those seedlings has spread to a solid column five feet tall and 18 inches in diameter.

So, the next time you hear someone say, "Switchgrass? What's that?," steer them toward the Bluestems.

—Thomas Wedel

Tales from the city: of mice and men

I'm a city boy through and through, having grown up in "a great place on a great lake." All the more reason why I had great expectations that my prairie restoration project near Ferryville would forge many new relations with God's creatures, both great and small. Most unexpected, however, was that the most intimate of these relationships would be with the House Mouse, *Mus musculus* and the Deer Mouse, *Peromyscus maniculatus*, I suppose in looking back I'd say this union began that first winter when I was still cleaning seeds by hand. Word regarding the piles of seeds I was cleaning on my living room floor must have gotten out. The ensuing feast brought out a bold side of these city mice.

My first encounter took the form of being awakened one night as one of the diners fell into an open box of Shake and Bake he came across on the way to the living room. My ambivalence, which you will see is an integral part of this affair, caused me to take pity on my friend. I set him free by throwing him off my third floor deck into the yard below. I could tell by the timbre of the "thump" that he never cleared the first floor deck and he was a goner. The first of many twinges of guilt soon followed.

Similar encounters ensued. They were heard struggling to get out of a wastebasket, found floating and bloated in a pan of dishwater, and seed grazing on the carpet as I cleaned seeds to a blasting stereo. It became clear I was being invaded.

"Enough is enough" I cried and I purchased some live traps (a noble, politically and cosmically correct solution). Not so P.C., however, was forgetting to check the traps and subjecting my friends to a long and agonizing death by dehydration and starvation.

Out on the prairie, where a tepee is my abode, the encounters took a myriad of forms. I watched as they pushed through the leaf litter while I sat on the commode on cold spring mornings. They gnawed through plastic lids of containers filled with bird seed. They nested in the bluebird houses. They nested in a chest for my bedding after

squeezing through a just-large-enough keyhole. They nested in folded captain's chairs. There also seemed to be an endless degree of activity at night as the air was filled with that now familiar gnawing sound. I must add, they also became experts at eating the peanut butter out of the traps and waltzing away unscathed. I'd make the traps more and more sensitive until I'd catch my own fingers five times for every one attempt at catching them. A temporary reprieve from this onslaught occurred one summer when a large black and white feline named Holstein lived in the tepee. During her tenancy the nighttime gnawing was replaced by a crunching sound. My rather high-brow friend from Manhattan, Donna, clarified both the origins of this new sound and Holstein's two-pound weight gain one morning as she watched Holstein having breakfast. "No, it is not a toy mouse," I replied to her pathetically quivering inquiry.

My ambivalence caused swings from loving acceptance to maniacal genocidal frenzies. Visiting friends from the city usually turned the tide in the latter direction. Perhaps I was embarrassed when their numbers betrayed my fondness and I found it necessary to prove that I had not degenerated into becoming a "mice lover."

One such moment was after poor Doug spent a harrowing night as mice ran back and forth across his pillow feasting on some nearby soup I was fond of buying because of its ecologically friendly (and easily chewed) paper packaging. Mr. Yuck was the solution and I peppered the tepee with poison morsels and went home feeling smug . . . and guilty. I returned the following month to find all of the tainted ambrosia gone and until I put my wading boots on the following morning, thought I had turned the tide. It wasn't corpses that filled my boots as originally feared, but rather piles of the poison pellets. Preparing for winter or a diabolical retaliation? I'll never know. Taking the incident as a karmic warning, I once again decided to live in peace.

The following spring, my first family raised in the tepee matured and their familiarity with the surroundings caused exceptional boldness. They peeped out from behind the stove as I made coffee, ran around the space between the inner liner and outer canvas as if it was a racetrack, and of course, there were the endless "pellets." These droppings caused the absurd sight of me, in a tepee, with a dustbuster vacuuming my countertops. I accepted my tenants with a degree of annoyance until Tony from Manhattan visited. After a brief orientation to tepee living, I left him alone with plans to rejoin him four days later. His enthusiasm lasted until nightfall, when a sea of bulging brown eyes started peering out at him. He grabbed his bags, raced across the field, forded the stream and slept in his car only to return to Milwaukee in the a.m.

He did return four days later and we did spend a week-end together . . . sort of. He braved a driving rain that night in a small pup tent. I slumbered in the tepee dry and comfortable. The sound of snapping, as the jaws of death took their toll, broke the sound of the storm every two hours. Over the next two days I wiped out all six of the rugrats and the folks as well. Tony stayed in the pup tent, I in the tepee smug . . . and guilty.

Probably the most tragic story of all involved Bob and his snake, Ted, that he found one evening in the woodpile. The following day as I was cleaning out my hardware drawers, I came upon a nest of mice and proceeded to put the whole family into a coffee tin for Ted to feast on when he returned to Chicago. At least this solution seemed part of the natural order of things. Bob, not a morning person, changed their fate when he took pity on their cold

(See MICE, page 12, col. 1)

MICE (continued from page 11)

tin home the next morning and placed it on the wood stove for a "second" to warm up. Perhaps had he had his coffee, he wouldn't have forgotten them. Having seen "Never Cry Wolf," a film about a naturalist who lived on mice in order to prove his theory that a large carnivore, the wolf, did the same, I was tempted to make fritters out of their crispy corpses, but it was too gruesome of a scene to proceed with this plan.

This spring, as I drove my jeep back to the city to give it some good highway time after a long inactive winter, I turned on the heat only to have the cab fill with a fine dust and the unmistakably pungent aroma of an old excrement filled mouse nest. It took two weeks of road time for that odor to fade way.

Mice . . .

Can't live with them . . . can't live without them.

—V. Baker

In memoriam

The Prairie Enthusiasts has received a donation from the staff of the International Crane Foundation. The donation was made on behalf of Jeb Barzen and family, in loving memory of John C. Barzen, caring father and lifetime prairie enthusiast.

Record tree tour of Madison

A record tree tour of Madison will take place Sunday, Sept. 24. Cosponsored by the Prairie Bluff and South Central Chapters, the tour will include not only state record trees but trees of local historic interest. For further information contact John Ochsner at 608-862-3816 or Mark Martin at 608-635-4160.

Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Ecosystem Conference

You are cordially invited to attend the Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Ecosystem Conference to be held Sept. 27-29, 1995 at the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield, Missouri.

Oak savanna ecosystems are endangered throughout their native midwestern range; many agencies, organizations and individuals across the midwest are involved with research, management and other efforts concerning them. A Midwest Oak Ecosystems Recovery Plan is presently being finalized by The Nature Conservancy, Region 5 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the University of Wisconsin. This conference will serve to launch the recovery plan.

This conference will focus professional and public attention on Midwestern oak savannas and woodlands to help direct state and national planning efforts. We seek to share information among managers, researchers, administrators and interested publics about oak savannas and woodlands; clarify definitions and management concepts and explore potential contributions to the National Recovery Plan. Concurrent sessions are planned on the topics of "Role of Fire in Oak Savanna/Woodland Ecosystems," "Management of Oak Savanna/Woodland Ecosystems" and "Monitoring of Oak Savanna/Woodland Ecosystems."

Statement of Income for the Period 1/1/94 to 12/31/94

INCOME	AMOUNT	%
Sales (Seed)	\$ 5,963.30	16.3
Contributions	19,980.28	54.7
Memberships	6,142.00	16.8
Investment/Interest	1,114.53	3.1
Sales (Miscellaneous)	966.75	2.7
Banquet Proceeds	2,121.00	5.8
Other Incomes	240.00	0.7
TOTALS	\$36,527.86	100

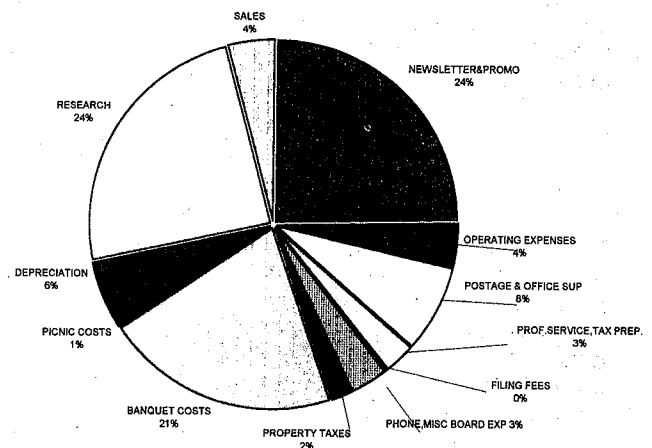
EXPENSES	AMOUNT	%
Newsletter and Promo	\$2,381.97	6.5
Operating Expenses	370.44	1.0
Postage and Office Supplies	774.44	2.1
Pro. Service (Tax, Prepet.)	267.50	0.7
Filing Fees	14.00	0
Phone, Misc. Board Exp.	334.35	0.9
Property Taxes	175.26	0.5
Banquet costs	2,023.13	5.5
Picnic Costs	49.01	0.1
Depreciation	542.00	1.5
TOTAL	\$6,936.38	

COST OF RESEARCH AND SALES

Research	\$2,317.53	6.4
Sales	411.03	1.1
TOTAL	\$9,664.94	

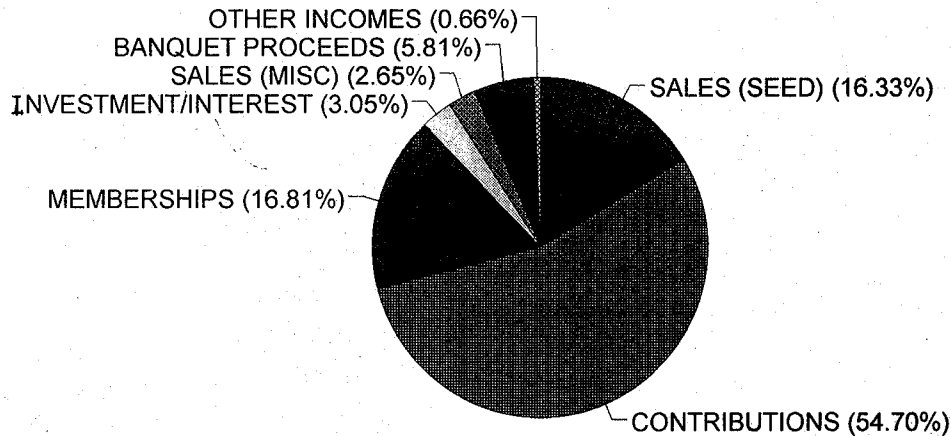
NET INCOME \$26,862.92

THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS EXPENSES, 1994



THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS

INCOME 1994



CHAPTER NEWS

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Chronicle of the Briggs Wetland, Chapter 6

According to the latest figures from The Prairie Enthusiasts treasury department, the Prairie Bluff Chapter succeeded in raising \$1,000 at the 1995 annual banquet. Another \$500 was kindly donated by Julie Hayward and Don D'Alessio of Rock Co., for which the honorable Prairie Bluff secretary, John Ochsner and his trusty band of volunteer pyro-technicians burned the couple's prairie remnant to the ground in mid-April. The dedicated purpose of these sizable funds has not been officially determined by the all-powerful participants of the regular board meetings, but we may anticipate a fair share, maybe most of the moola, will be used to buy the Briggs Wetland from the Natural Land Institute.

Readers will recall that the Natural Land Institute of Rockford, IL bought the 24-acre Briggs parcel from the Church of Latter Day Saints in 1994. The total price was \$30,000. \$19,100 of this cost will be covered by stewardship funds from the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources. The Prairie Bluff Chapter will raise the balance of \$11,000 and purchase the wetland from NLI. Our bank account currently holds \$5,000 dedicated for Briggs; the SW Chapter has generously bequeathed another \$1,000 to assist us; \$1,500 is hopefully added from the banquet; now chip in another donation from Brad Paulson, an energetic young man who contributed to the Briggs fund in return for a splendid raging prairie savanna fire on his farm, conducted by the hands of the PB pyro-technicians, this



Left to right, John Larson, John Ochsner, Nick Huber, Gary Felder, Nick Faessler, Fred Faessler, Rob Baller (front).

time led by Fredrick "one match" Faessler, in April 1995. This brings our total Briggs payoff revenue to almost \$8,000 and leaves us \$3,000 to raise.

So much for the financial condition. In the field we have some very significant events to report.

On Sunday, April 23, seven stalwart volunteers converged on the dry and combustible Briggs for reasons which every prairie enthusiast knows. For the keeping of good records, their names were: Robert Baller, Fred Faessler, Nick Faessler, Gary Felder, Nick Huber, John Larson and John Ochsner. Under hazy white skies and a 10-20 mph S-SW breeze, the first Briggs match was lit and within an hour the marsh was ash. Chronicler Rob Baller scaled a nearby cottonwood tree (*Populus*



deltoides) to photograph the historic, glorious blaze, once the perimeter was secured, that is. A small tour and visual inspection of the charred hummocks afterwards revealed several baby rabbits, alive, apparently well and cowering in the crystal clear stream, and one elusive rail, probably a migrating Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*), small and bowling pin shaped, first standing erect among the sedges and then bending forward and scampering mouse-like to escape the prying eyes of his incendiary visitors. We also noticed the first brilliant yellow marsh marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) blooming defiantly in an unburned reservoir of Green Bluejoint Grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*). In many places we found shoots of abundant edible Valerian (*Valeriana edulis*). A sly Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*) tumbled through the air and landed in a puff of ash, apparently indifferent to his comical piloting and confident about his plumage, which, like that of the dark Virginia Rail, seemed ideally camouflaged to fit the newly burned field.

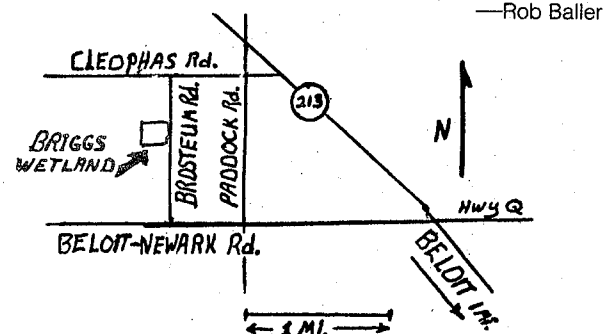
We are pleased to report that one month later, the wetland was alive and erupting profusely with sedges, marigolds and edible Valerians. The tree and shrub kill was impressive, and Warblers and Dickey Birds of all kinds could, for the first time, be seen gracing the field. American toads (*Bufo americana*) and Spring Peepers (*Rana sp.*) sang monastic hymns of praise, each in their own way. The spring rains had given ample rejuvenation for the little artisan [sic] pond and the bottom of the spring was observed boiling with sand and minerals levitated by the force of seeping holy water.

In legal matters, we may announce that the land trade with the Potters has been completed. Darrel and Jan Potter, our neighbors to the north, now own about 4 acres of the tilled upland, earlier part of Briggs. A surveyor has marked the field with wooden lath stakes to show the boundary. The Potters are preparing this land to grow hay for their cows. Part of the field may be used as pasture, and the Potters may wish to erect a pole barn for their livestock in that area. A conservation easement was attached to the land to prevent the construction of any structure with a permanent foundation. NLI has retained first right of refusal, should the Potters decide to sell. A buffer strip next to the wetland, officially part of Briggs, will be planted with hay, which the Potters may cut for the

next five years as compensation for the hay they purchased during 1994, when Brian Reilly of NLI was negotiating their trade and the Potters willingly withheld their cows from the marsh they owned. NLI now owns four more acres of marsh, and will keep 2-3 acres of the Briggs tilled upland, with some road frontage, which was not included in the transaction.

It is appropriate to conclude this chapter of the Chronicle by launching into a campaign for our summer gathering and fund raiser at Briggs Wetland. The goal of course is to show off the marsh and raise bucks for the final payoff. The gala will be held on Saturday, July 29 at 10:30 a.m., timed to coincide with the supernova of Magenta Fay Feathers (*Liatrix pycnostachya*), anticipated because of the burn. Refreshments and good cheer will be provided by volunteers of the Enthusiasts. Respectful tours will be conducted into the marsh by knowledgeable prairie docents, or, by clever prairie docents who can make up real-sounding facts on the spur of the moment. Parking will, unfortunately, be difficult, as the only space available is the antitank ditch along the road, so please park with care. This fiesta promises to be one of the finer events of the season! Unless it rains in a big way. Please join us, and bring your philanthropic checkbooks, as we will be demanding contributions.

The marsh is located on the west side of Brosteum Rd., in the Town of Beloit, Rock County. Foreigners may take State Hwy. 213 to Co. Hwy. A (Beloit Newark Rd.), which shoots out of the NW side of Beloit. Follow Co. Q west a few miles, passing Paddock Rd. The next road is Brosteum, turn right (north). Brosteum is one mile long, and Briggs is 2/3's of the way on the left (west).



—Rob Baller

SOUTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

SC Chapter annual general membership meeting

The annual meeting and potluck picnic of the SC Chapter will be held on Tuesday, July 18 at 5:30 p.m. at Rich and Kathy Henderson's, 2845 Timber Lane (about 4 miles northwest of Verona). From the intersection of Co. Hwys. M and PD, 2 miles north of Verona, take PD west 3 miles to Timber Lane. Turn right onto Timber Lane and then immediately left into driveway (the brick house). The meeting will take place over dinner and will be followed by a chance to tour the savanna restoration. Bring a dish to pass. Officers up for election are president, secretary and treasurer. The meeting will be short. Please try to attend.

Nominations for SCC officers

Nominations are sought for SC Chapter positions of president, secretary and treasurer. The president and secretary positions are for two-year terms. The treasurer election is to fill a vacancy for one year. Elections will be made by the general membership at the upcoming annual meeting on July 18 (don't confuse this with the overall Prairie Enthusiasts annual meeting of July 16). Don't be shy, here's a chance to become more involved.

Railroad prairies by bike

Sandy, river valley railroad prairies and steep, southwest-facing bluff prairies will be featured on this inventory trip along the Wisconsin River. We will travel to each prairie by bicycle, so bring your bike. Our route will be on flat, lightly-traveled roads near Spring Green and last for 10 to 15 miles. Our walking pace on the prairies will be slow while we create a plant checklist and appreciate the wildflowers and diversity of insect life. Another highlight will be a stop at the A&W Restaurant (you can get lunch there, or bring your own to enjoy with the root beer). This trip is jointly sponsored by the Madison Audubon Society and The Prairie Enthusiasts. Trip leaders are John Harrington and Steve Richter. We will meet at The Nature Conservancy's Spring Green Preserve. Directions: From the junction of Hwys. 14 and 23 on the north side of Spring Green, go .5 miles north on Hwy. 23 to Jones Road. Head east (right) on Jones Road for one mile to a dirt lane marked by the sign "Angelos Lane" and fire number E5196A. A car pool will leave Nakoma Plaza in Madison at 8:00 p.m. Call Steve Richter at 608-233-5209 (evenings) if you have questions.

Northern Sauk County inventory party and picnic

We will inventory remnants along Coonsbluff Rd. and Hogsback Rd. Bring a sack lunch for a picnic when we finish. Meet at Scott Weber's home, S5920 Lehman Rd., near Baraboo, 356-0179.

Inventory activities

The SC Chapter Inventory Committee is seeking volunteers to help us inventory prairie remnants this summer. In addition to the inventory parties listed in the newsletter calendar, we will visit several additional remnants throughout the summer. Call John Harrington, 233-2483 or Steve Richter, 251-8140 if you would like to be notified of these activities. The committee is also seeking volunteers to help update the SC Chapter computer database and to identify and contact property owners who may have prairie remnants on their land. If you know of remnants in Dane, Sauk or Columbia counties that ought to be investigated, call us!

Sugar River Oak Savanna Tour

On Thursday, Aug. 10 at 5:30 p.m. Rich Henderson will give a midsummer tour of his nine-acre savanna restoration. Meet at the Oak Savanna sign along Co. Hwy. PD just west of Timber Lane. The site is about three miles west of the intersection of PD and M north of Verona. Call Rich at 845-7065 if you need more information.

Marshall Prairie tour

On Tuesday, July 25 there will be a tour of a natural area and nearby restored prairie near Marshall. The five-acre natural area contains over 250 native species including many prairie species. Nearby is a 16-acre restored prairie that was planted in 1988 and 1989. We will meet at Charles Langer Nature Park at 6:30 p.m. for the tour, or you can bring a picnic lunch and meet at 5:30 p.m. To find the park, take Hwy. 73 north from the Village of Marshall and turn west (right) on Canal Road, which is about .5 mile north of the railroad tracks. The park is on your right about one mile west on Canal Road. Call Mark or Sue Martin for more information at 608-635-4160.

Volunteers needed!

We are seeking volunteers willing to get more involved with the SC Chapter. We need people to head up the development committee, take charge of volunteer coordination, make landowner contacts, organize a speakers' bureau, develop displays and other educational materials, adopt prairie remnants, lead tours, conduct site inventories, and help in many other ways. Contact Rich Henderson, 845-7065, 2845 Timber Lane, Verona, WI 53593.

Recycling for prairies

The Prairie Enthusiasts now have a donation account at Madison Recycling Center, 2330 Fish Hatchery Road. You can now make a donation of your payments for aluminum, plastic, paper, etc. you bring in for recycling by simply asking the bursar to credit the amount to The Prairie Enthusiasts.

Prairie Jubilee August 5

Madison Audubon Society, UW Experimental Farms and the UW Arboretum are sponsoring Prairie Jubilee at Madison Audubon's Goose Pond Sanctuary and at the UW Arlington Experimental Farms on Saturday, Aug. 5.

There will be a wide variety of tours focusing on different aspects of the prairie and on sustainable agriculture practices. There will also be activities for kids. Evelyn Howell, UW Dept. of Landscape Architecture, will teach a morning seminar on landscaping your yard using prairie species. This seminar requires preregistration. There will also be nurseries present and some will be selling potted prairie plants.

For an informational brochure, write the Madison Audubon Society at 222 South Hamilton, Suite 1, Madison 53703, or call 255-BIRD.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

The last year has seen much accomplished on two of the Southwest Chapter's prairie remnants, Bush Clover Prairie and Vale Prairie. On the Bush Clover site, many changes are taking place as conditions improve for the

prairie plant species living there. With the wooded areas removed and sunlight once again reaching the ground, long dormant or suppressed plants are making a comeback. Even in the open prairie areas, many species are increasing dramatically. Where once only a couple of Wild Quinine grew, now there are a dozen or more. Back in 1989, we could only find about a half a dozen False Cream Indigo. Their numbers have nearly doubled. The same increases are taking place with nearly all species, although a couple seem to be down a bit in numbers. Those include Hill's Thistle and Marbleseed. Although we do watch these species, it's not uncommon for some populations to rise and fall and rise again over long periods of time.

Things are also improving on the Vale site in Green County, although not as rapidly, mainly because restoration is only starting its third year. The seeded areas in the buffer zone are starting to show some progress and the prairie remnant itself is looking better all the time. I wouldn't be surprised to see new species show up from time to time, as often happens in these unique places.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find a list of work parties for these places and others. I hope this is the summer you will make the commitment to get involved with these places. It will be worth your time, even if it's only **one** work party a year.

Hope to see you there!

—Gary Eldred

EDITORIAL POLICY

(Approved by The Prairie Enthusiasts' Board July 18, 1993)

1. Articles of general interest must be relevant to prairie/savanna ecosystems. Material received will be prioritized as follows: original material; essays, art, (poetry, photography, drawings); reprinted material.
2. Securing reprint rights is the responsibility of the individual who submits the material.
3. The calendar of events will be limited to items relevant to prairie/savanna ecosystems.
4. Deadlines for submission of material are as follows:
March 1 - Spring Issue June 1 - Summer Issue September 1 - Fall Issue December 1 - Winter Issue
5. Publication dates: April 1 - Spring Issue July 1 - Summer Issue October 1 - Fall Issue January 1 - Winter Issue

THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS

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PLEASE CHECK CHAPTER YOU WISH TO JOIN, OR GENERAL MEMBERSHIP:

- Southwest Chapter
Serving Grant, Crawford, Richland & Iowa Counties
- North West Illinois Chapter
Serving Jo Daviess, Carroll & Stephenson Counties
- South Central Chapter
Serving Sauk, Columbia & Dane Counties
- Prairie Bluff
Serving Green, Rock & Lafayette Counties
- General Membership (outside of chapter areas)

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

- \$15 INDIVIDUAL
- \$25 CONTRIBUTOR

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We provide your name and address to:

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PLEASE CHECK AREAS OF INTEREST:

- Writing newsletter articles
- Organize field trips
- Grant writing
- Seed collection
- Prairie information - specify: _____
- Develop educational material
- Plan social activities (banquet, picnic, etc.)
- Fund raiser
- Restoration projects
- Site management activities (burning, brush cutting, etc.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



For further information, contact:

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