



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 10, NO.3 FALL 1997

"In wildness is the preservation of the world..." John Muir

DAMP BUT NOT DISCOURAGED

A report on the annual meeting

The Prairie Enthusiasts annual meeting and picnic was held on July 19 at the Lake Wissota State Park. While the weather was rather damp, the spirits of the attendees certainly were not. This year's event was hosted by the West Central Chapter of TPE and by the local chapter of the Wisconsin Woodland Owner's Association. Thanks are due to our gracious hosts for the wonderful food and convivial atmosphere they so kindly provided.

TPE's officers were unanimously re-elected to another term and then received a warm round of applause. Next, Gary Eldred reported on the state of the organization as reflected in the notable accomplishments of each of TPE's chapters in the last 12 months. More thunderous applause. Finally, Alice Mirk gave TPE's annual financial report (see below). Yet more applause followed.

By the time attendees needed to give their hands a rest and to work off all that food it was time to proceed to perhaps the most eagerly anticipated part of the day's activities: the prairie tours, a traditional and integral part of every annual meeting and picnic. One could not end a day on a better note.



EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT ANNUAL 10TH ANNIVERSARY BANQUET SCHEDULED

The Prairie Enthusiasts Tenth Annual Banquet is scheduled for March 14 at the University of Wisconsin campus in Platteville. As we will be celebrating 10 years of prairie conservation, we will work harder than ever to make this event very special, so mark your calendars now! Details will appear in the next issue of *The Prairie Promoter*.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 1996

1/1/96 - 12/31/96

ASSETS	
current assets	<u>78,170.82</u>
fixed assets	<u>55,232.01</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>133,402.83</u>
total liabilities	0
total liabilities and assets	<u>133,402.83</u>
INCOME AND EXPENSES	
total sales	<u>41,172.22</u>
total cost of sales	<u>1,655.17</u>
gross profit	<u>39,517.05</u>
total operating expenses	<u>13,317.89</u>
NET INCOME	<u>26,199.16</u>

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The Prairie Enthusiasts is a grass roots organization of volunteers which is solely committed to the protection, management, and restoration of native prairies and savannas in the upper Midwest. To date, The Prairie Enthusiasts has protected over 380 acres that harbor at least 5 state or federally protected species requisitions, easements, and management agreements. The Prairie Enthusiasts has a stewardship program which provides active management to ensure the ongoing health of protected sites.

The Prairie Enthusiasts are actively involved in planting prairie on it's properties and on other conservation lands and has assisted both public agencies and private groups in these efforts. Thus far, more than 80 acres has been planted with seeds of prairie plants from local sources.

In addition, The Prairie Enthusiasts develop educational materials and provide presentations on prairie and savanna ecology, conservation, and management for both children and adults.

The Prairie Enthusiasts was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1987 as a private nonprofit, tax exempt corporation under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

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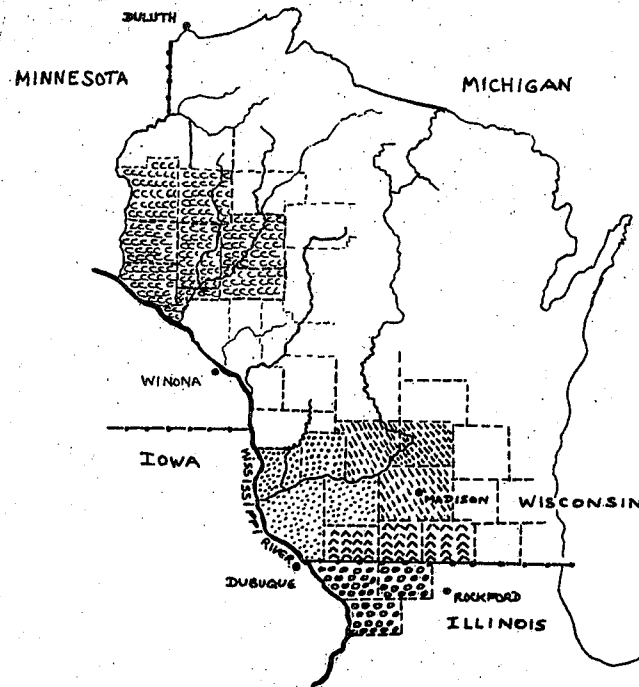
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The *Prairie Promoter* is a quarterly publication of The Prairie Enthusiasts. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission. We welcome submissions of letters, articles, announcements, art work, and photographs which are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Material should be typed. Writers who use computers should include a 3.5 inch disk (MS-Word or WordPerfect) as well as paper copies. Articles and letters may be edited for length or style. Computer disks, art, and photographs will be returned. Deadlines for submission of material are: February 25 (Spring issue); May 25 (Summer issue); August 25 (Fall issue); and November 25 (Winter issue).

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- NORTH WEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER
- WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER

THE PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

The last week of July seems to have been one of the most stimulating I've had in a long time. Usually I spend my weekends pulling weeds, chatting with landowners, collecting seed, cutting brush, or looking at prairies. These activities are more than enough to stimulate me, but four days in the last week of July nearly put me on overload. Monday called for a trip to Decorah, Iowa, with Steve Hubner and Richard Kintoff to attend a field trip and participate in group discussions about restoring pastures with native warm season grasses and forbs in order to increase grazing quality and enhance biodiversity. The pasture plots we visited demonstrated various methods used to plant the native grasses and forbs: some plots were no till planted into sod; some were seeded by hand broadcasting; others were frost seeded (seed was broadcast on about two inches of thawed soil above the frost in spring) and cows were used to press the seed into the soil. All methods resulted in the emergence of prairie seedlings, but after only two growing seasons, it's way too early to come to any definitive conclusions about which method is best. After group and one on one discussions participants visited the famous Hayden Prairie, 240 acres of virgin tallgrass prairie. What a thrill!

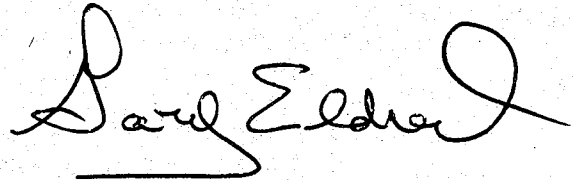
I spent the last three days of the week commuting back and forth from Madison to attend the Fourth Midwest Savanna and Oak Woodlands Conference, an event co-sponsored by The Prairie Enthusiasts. The plenary sessions Wednesday, with a series of six speakers, set the tone for what was to come. They covered subjects such as the glacial impact on the environment of Wisconsin and the pre-European land use practices of the past. The speakers also addressed the need to protect what remains of our last few wild places, and the realities of that mission. Thursday brought several tracks of workshops on a range of subjects connected with oak forests and savannas. Some worked faster than Sominex, while others were really thought provoking. For me, the most stimulating and eagerly awaited times were the breaks, not because of the beer and food served at the Memorial Union, but because of the networking and exchange of ideas that occurred. These spontaneous connections provided ways to find out what other folks were doing in other areas of the midwest. I talked with lots of good people that are committed to prairie and savanna restoration, and they are as determined as The Prairie Enthusiasts to make things happen, and best of all, they want to work together towards that end.

By the time Friday rolled around, my energy levels were due for a recharge. David Lowe and I were scheduled to lead a day long bus tour into the unglaciated region of Southwest Wisconsin, to look at large (1000 acres or more) pastures with scattered burr and white oaks, to try to illustrate how our pre-settlement savanna landscapes might have looked. As our bus, with it's 21 passengers left Madison behind and headed

west, I was not sure I was fully prepared to lead this field trip. As the day progressed and we made one stop after another, discussing the ideas people had, talking about preservation and restoration, and the impact of society's growth on the needs of the native species, I became more confident that we all had a great deal in common. The question of whether the pressure of rural development would destroy any and all hopes of helping native species survive into the future was thoroughly explored. The trip was set up to link the past, present, and future, and one of the most interesting stops was at a previously unexplored ancient rock shelter. David Lowe, who is an archeologist, took the whole bus load of us into the site and we found ancient bones and flint used by Native Americans, that were hundreds, maybe thousands of years old!

Our last stop took us to The Kalscheur Savanna restoration in southeast Iowa County. It felt good to finally get out onto a good quality site and the scene was reminiscent of a children's easter egg hunt as everyone scattered and found the prairie species with cries of "look at this" or "what is this?". What a pleasure to spend time with people so interested and concerned about all our precious native species! I have to say that by the time we arrived back at the Memorial Union, I was pretty well tuckered out, but I did have one more emotional peak. A young woman that had been with us all day came up to me and said, "I really enjoyed the trip. I've been on many trips that have taken me across the same kind of landscape that we saw today, but I promise I will never look at that landscape again in the same way after today. I've learned so much today and I want to thank you and David very much!"

This last week in July was a validation for me that we are all on the right track: grass roots organizations, working together, and connected by our love for the native landscapes of the past, dedicated to preserving them for future generations.



Gary Eldred

FIRE EFFECTS IN PRAIRIE: **SOME CLARIFICATIONS**

by Rich Henderson

Ann Swengel's article, which appeared in the last newsletter, was very interesting and most informative. However, the paragraph on site management deserves comment, particularly the last sentence, which states that "Burning is much more lethal directly to the regals than other
.....*article continued on next page*

managements, and stimulates lush growth of grasses which overtop the violets and nectar plants that regals require."

Yes, burning is capable of stimulating native warm-season prairie grasses to lush growth (actually it is mostly an increase in flowering and thus seed production), but this does not necessarily translate into inferior habitat for regal fritillaries. In fact, the opposite might actually be true in many or most cases. To understand the situation, some background information on the effects of fire on prairie vegetation is in order. The summary that follows is based upon my research, field experience, and understanding of the literature.

First, not all fires affect warm-season prairie grasses in the same way. The degree to which the grasses are stimulated is determined by the timing of the fire, soil/site conditions, and weather. Late-spring burns, for example, stimulate a far greater increase in warm-season grass growth than do early-spring or fall burns. Second, an increase in flowering of warm-season grasses does not necessarily result in a loss or suppression of prairie forbs, especially not the violets and nectar flowers that regal fritillaries require. Just because there are more grass flower stalks obscuring one's vision does not mean there are fewer forb flowers present, or that they are less accessible to regals. Third, many, if not most, prairie forbs are actually stimulated to greater flowering and growth (just like the grasses) by fire, especially early-spring burns. This includes violets and most nectar-producing species important to regals.

There are situations, however, where burning, even early-spring burning, does appear capable of "over" stimulating warm-season grasses to the detriment of many forbs. This tends to happen on sites with heavy disturbance or in the early years of prairie plantings (especially those seeded too heavily with grasses). Early years means any planting less than 30 or 40 years of age. Mature "settled" or original, unplowed prairie sod is far less prone to this problem. Sites with dry, sterile, sandy soils also seem more prone to warm-season grasses dominating with too-frequent burning.

As for fewer regals being found on burned than unburned sites, a couple of points need to be made. First, one has to keep in mind that the "population" levels resulting from the Swengels' survey methods are indices that reflect population levels. They are not actual counts or estimates of populations. Indices are most useful in detecting relative change in a population, not its actual size. Second, it is certainly reasonable to assume that spring fire results in direct mortality of overwintering regal larvae. However, actual death rates have yet to be measured. In other words, we really don't know what percentage are lost on average. Anecdotal information from emergence traps in Minnesota suggests that at least some on-site survival does occur; but no one has yet measured how much. We don't yet

know if survival rates are dependable enough and high enough for consistent on-site recovery. We also don't really know how much dispersal from adjacent areas is occurring. These are questions that need to be answered before definitive statements can be made about regal's response to fire or any other management. In the meantime, the Swengels' index data certainly suggests that caution is in order when using fire.

Another possible contributing factor to low observation index rates of regals in newly burned sites may be the increased flowering and plant growth following burns that was discussed above. Regals may be harder to detect (or flush) in the lush growth of burned, ungrazed prairie. Even if such an observer bias actually exists, it would certainly be unreasonable to assume that it is the primary cause of observed differences between burned and unburned sites; but it would seem reasonable to assume it was accentuating the effects of direct mortality due to fire. At the very least, observation bias due to vegetation structure is something that needs to be considered and possibly accounted for in surveys.

I do not raise these issues to belittle the concern about the effects of fire on regal fritillaries and other rare or restricted prairie insects. I am only trying to point out the complexity of the issues and the need for much more information. It is simply premature at this time to jump to conclusions about best management practices in regard to prairie insects. For the past four years I have had the good fortune to be working with some two dozen cooperators in a six state region on the issue of prairie insect distribution, status, and their response to management. We still have much to do and much to learn, but the information gathered so far **does not** point to clear-cut, consistent, and widespread harm to prairie insects from fire. A loss or reduction due to spring fire seems to actually be the exception rather than the rule.

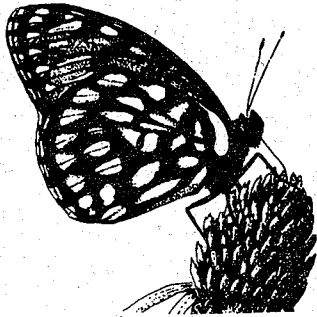
Given the complexities of the issues and the current flux of our knowledge, I'm very reluctant to give specific recommendations about prairie management and insects. What I will offer for consideration follows. First, and most important, in light of our ignorance and the highly fragmented and isolated nature of prairie remnants today, **reasonable** precautions are advised in using fire, mowing, or grazing.

Second, practices such mowing, haying, herbiciding, and domestic livestock grazing have the potential to be very useful management tools, but one should not forget that the eastern tallgrass prairie ecosystem of North America did not develop or evolve with these influences. What they did evolve with was large, free roaming ungulates (in recent millennia, bison and elk west of the Mississippi River and mostly elk east of the Mississippi) and frequent fire. Both of these influences were affected by the native peoples.

.....(article continued on next page)

Grazing was reduced through hunting and fire was increased through deliberate ignition.

Lastly, fire was not only a part of the eastern tallgrass prairie, it was the reason it was here at all. This is something that plant ecologists have been in agreement upon for 50 years. The effects of fire seem to be so integrally important to prairie vegetation, that without its use, it is very unlikely that we would be able to maintain or restore prairie plant communities like those which were present here in the Upper Midwest for the five to six thousand years leading up to European settlement.



INSECTS AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE PRAIRIE

by Dwight Barry,

The original prairie once extended over thousands of square miles in the interior of North America before the advent of agricultural and urban development. Relic prairies now exist as islands in a sea of human activity. This fragmentation of the prairie has severely curtailed the movement and flow of organisms across the landscape.

One of the significant breakthroughs in ecological science over the past few decades is the discovery that habitat fragmentation is one of the largest threats to biodiversity and evolution.

When habitats are fragmented and separated, many organisms are unable to disperse across a landscape to find suitable habitats, and the gene flow between different populations of the same organism is disrupted.

When an isolated population is small or extremely dependent on a particular resource, the disruption in the gene flow leads to "inbreeding depression". This means that the genetic adaptations that allow an organism to live and thrive in a given environment are gradually mutated or lost due to extensive inbreeding.

Without the genetic basis for survival, the population within the isolated prairie fragment goes extinct, a process termed "local extinction". When this occurs in all of the populations of the species, "global extinction" occurs, and the species is gone forever.

Prairie-dependent insect species are often very limited in their ability to disperse, although some of them can maintain viable populations in areas as small as five acres.

Because insects go through a process of development that often requires different food sources-

such as leafy green parts as a juvenile and the flower nectar as an adult- the best habitat is a mosaic of vegetation, where patches of different kinds and mixes of native forbs and grasses are spread out over a large area.

Habitats tend to shift in both composition and position in the landscape over a period of time. When dry years lead to poor food availability in some areas, insects in a diverse mosaic of habitats will not be greatly affected. But without a diversity of food resources, insect populations in isolated unvaried habitat fragments can quickly plummet.

It is not unusual for butterfly or leafhopper populations to undergo large population fluctuations from one year to the next, which makes them very susceptible to extinction. Managing to provide a diversity of native habitats within a prairie fragment is essential to protect its insect populations and maintain its biological diversity.

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The Grasshoppers of Wisconsin (Orthoptera:Acrididae)!

Part II: Profiling the subfamilies
by Chuck Bomar (West Central Chapter)

The Spur-Throated Grasshoppers

Over 300 species of this group exist in the US, with probably about 50 species in Wisconsin. Most species from this subfamily belong to the genus *Melanoplus*. This subfamily is very diverse, displaying a wide range of behaviors. Members of the *Melanoplus* genus are often considered to be agricultural pests in many western states, and are estimated to consume millions of dollars of range forage each year. Many members of this genus have "outbreak" potential, where massive swarms of locusts devastate the masses in biblical proportions. An example of these swarms was recorded in the 1870's, where a single swarm of *Melanoplus spretus* was estimated to be nearly a mile high, and covered an area the size of Colorado. While this species was once extremely abundant and devastating in the western states, it is now extinct due to the conversion of their primary breeding habitat to agriculture.

Species of this group which may be observed in Wisconsin include specialist feeders like the snakeweed grasshopper, *Hesperotettix viridis*, that utilizes a select few plants such as snakeweed (*Gutierrezia* sp.) and ragweed (*Ambrosia* sp.) to generalist feeders like the migratory grasshopper, *M. sanguinipes*, which has been recorded feeding on numerous species of grasses and forbs (article continued on next page)

Perhaps the most common grasshopper in Wisconsin is the redlegged grasshopper, *Melanoplus femurrubrum* (fig. 1). It has a continental distribution, being collected in every state in the US (except Hawaii) as well as Canada and Mexico. I often collect this species in highly disturbed sites and newly restored prairies. It has a voracious appetite and consumes a wide range of food sources including many species of composites, legumes, and grasses. This species is often associated with crop damage and garden infestations. Adults of this species are usually about one inch long and can be recognized by the presence of a spur between their front legs, red tibia (equivalent to the human shin) on their hind leg, and bright yellow underside. Under optimal conditions females will lay numerous egg pods, producing over 300 eggs in a summer. Adults can be observed from July to September.

The Band-Winged Grasshoppers

The band-winged grasshopper belong to the subfamily Oedipodinae, with over 170 species occurring in the US, with approximately 25-30 species in Wisconsin. Members of this subfamily are found commonly along graveled roadsides and dry prairies, and can be easily recognized by the presence of brightly colored hind wings. The wings are generally visible upon take off and during flight. The hind wings are usually colored yellow, orange, or red (a few species are blue, black, or clear), with a terminal black band on the outer margin. When not in flight, these grasshoppers are usually very cryptic, and sometimes very difficult to separate from their background. Males produce a wide variety of mating stridulations and mating flights to attract females.

Perhaps one of the more common banded wing grasshoppers is the Carolina locust, *Dissosteira carolina*. Sometimes referred to as "the road duster", this species has a continental distribution and is commonly found in late summer in association with dusty gravelly road sides, railroad tracks, or other dry disturbed sites. It can be recognized by its unique black hind wings with a yellow outer margin. Males have been observed hovering in-flight over patches of bare ground. Adults are generally unicolored, or nearly so, usually strongly camouflaged with local soil types, ranging from gray to brown to red. Adults will feed on a wide variety of plants, ranging from *Bromus* grasses to Russian thistle, plants commonly associated with roadsides and ditches. Adults can be observed from July to September

The Slant-Faced Grasshoppers

This group of grasshoppers fits into two sub-families, the Acridinae and the Gomphocerinae. While there are over 120 species of these two subfamilies in North America, this is the least diverse complex of the three groups in Wisconsin, with probably 15-20 species present. They are truly the "shoppers" since they are almost exclusively grass feeders. They can be found in

a variety of habitats, but most species will generally specialize in one prairie type or another.

The Gomphocerinae can be separated from the Acridinae on the presence of sound making apparatus. The Gomphocerinae have a comb-like structure on the inner femur (equivalent to the human thigh) of the hind leg. This structure is dragged across the outer wing to make a buzzing or scraping noise. These noises serve as a form of acoustic communication to define territory or attract mates.

Perhaps the most common species of this group in Wisconsin is the marsh meadow grasshopper, *Chorthippus curtipennis*. It has a very broad distribution, from the tundra of Alaska to the Appalachia Mountains of Virginia and North Carolina. Locally it is found in a variety of habitat types, but is generally located in wet to mesic prairie sites. It feeds most commonly on big bluestem, little bluestem, and *Carex* sedges, but also feeds on a variety of other grasses. These small, slender grasshoppers can be recognized by their yellow underside, reduced wings, and black knees. Females are larger than males (almost 1" long) and tan or pale grey. Males are shorter (about .5" long) and usually bright green. Males produce a buzzing sound by stroking its rear legs that sounds like "zzt-zzt-zzt" to attract nearby females. Adults can be observed from July to September.

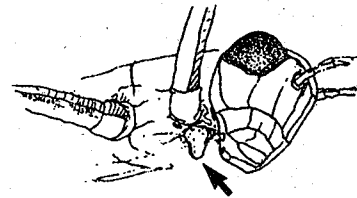


Figure 1. Spurred throat of *Melanoplus femurrubrum*

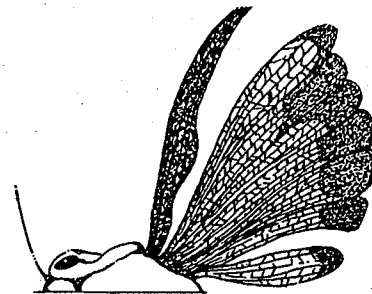


Figure 2. Banded wing of *Arphia pseudonietana*

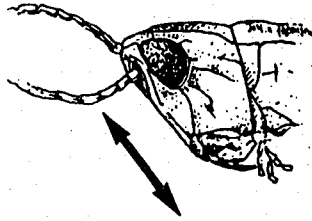
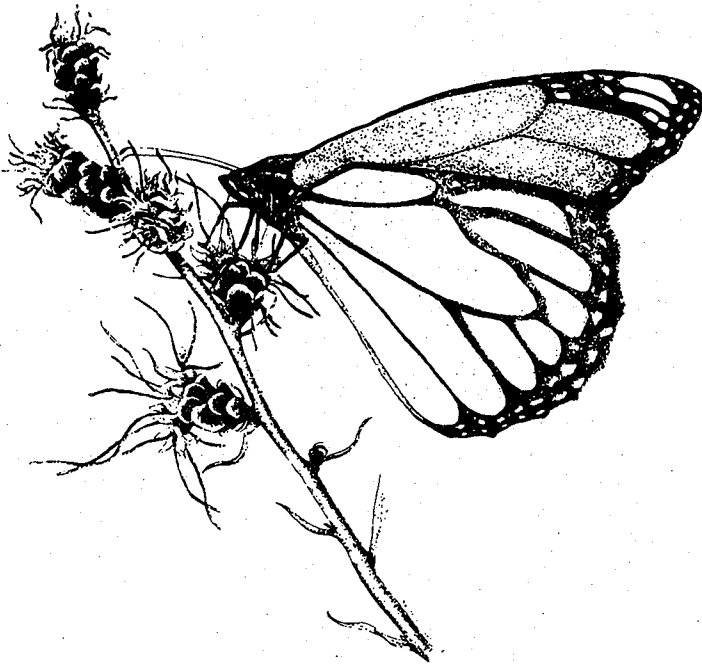


Figure 3. Slanted face of *Orphulella speciosa*

ROUGH BLAZING STAR

Liatris aspera

Sunflower family (*Asteracia*)



DESCRIPTION

Purple flower heads with 15 to 30 tiny flowers per head are arranged alternately along the upper portion of the stem. Stems are unbranched with numerous alternate, narrow, linear leaves. The mature seed is enclosed in an achene with a parachute of fine hairs. This turns the heads into fuzzy puff balls at seeding time. This plant grows to a height of 1½' to 4' and blooms in mid-August through September. It is found in dry to dry-mesic prairies, especially on sandy soils in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois. Harvest seeds in October. Plant

seeds in the fall, or stratify for 30 days prior to spring planting.

ONE BY ONE THE HOUSES CAME AND THEN THE PRAIRIE WAS GONE!

(Or, Life upon the Prairie, Chicago Style)

by Kay Barry

Time: 1923-1927

Place: Chicago south side, 84th St, East of Stony Island Avenue.

Our house was the third in the block. There was one house in the block to the north and one house in the block to the east. We could almost see the second house from the Stony Island street car line at 93rd Street. Between, there was one full city block that remained untouched for four years. This was our favorite place to play. It was full of beautiful flowers. We didn't know the names of the flowers so we made up our own- purple spikes (*Liatris* Spp.?), snotweed (spiderwort), phlox (probably downy).

In recollection, there were short grasses but we were much more impressed by the flowers. My mother and several of her friends were into painting dried "weeds" and one of the items that they collected each fall were the dried leaves of the prairie dock. The streets and sidewalks were in place and the gas street lamps with the nightly rounds of the lamplighter were there, waiting for people, and they came. Our beautiful prairie was gone by 1927.

My childhood memories came back to me in the early 1970's when I first saw the "purple spikes" again, in bloom along Highway 53 north of Chippewa Falls. And now, I have come full circle, back to my prairie roots.

(Editor's Note: Kay Barry is a long time Monroe resident and prairie enthusiast. She arrived in Monroe in 1948 with her husband George, who had just finished his medical residency in Ann Arbor, Michigan. They were married in 1942. Kay and George have long been, and continue to be, advocates of prairie preservation and restoration.

As a member of the Monroe Parks Committee, Kay initiated the planting of the Honey Creek Park prairie restoration. Kay has also played a central role in the management of the Monroe Airport prairie remnant and the Lincoln Grade School prairie restoration.) Kay and George received the Prairie Enthusiast of the Year Award in 1996.

SKY DANCE

by Nancy Freehafer

The brushpiles were burning down to orange coals. We had been cutting brush to reopen an old prairie, but today was different from other restoration workdays, more like a festival. A huge potluck supper was laid out near the parking area. Children chased each other under (article continued on next page) sunset clouds and into the darkening woods. Parents called them back to put on their coats and to toast

sunset clouds and into the darkening woods. Parents called them back to put on their coats and to toast hotdogs. Some people sat on folding chairs near the glowing coals to stay warm in the April chill. The field, with its spots of fire, had the look of an ancient druidic rite. But we weren't a pagan cult, just a group of people—some from the neighborhood, others from downtown Chicago—who had heard about a prairie workday that would end with the mating flight of the woodcock. And now we were waiting.

Ever since I first read Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, I had waited to see this "sky dance" of the woodcock. Two other cold nights in two other places my husband T.T. and I had waited for the woodcock, but in vain. Would we see it this time?

The woodcock is a stocky, quail-sized bird, about eleven inches long with a long bill and bulging eyes. For a few weeks every spring the males display, trying to impress prospective mates. Leopold notes that they like to have open areas, possibly because "the woodcock's legs are short, and his struttings cannot be executed to advantage in dense grass or weeds." Our newly expanded prairie seemed like a good place for this performance, and we had been assured that several woodcocks would display here sometime after sunset. It was getting dark, and some of us began to move away from the noise and the light of the fires listening for a buzzy "beep....beep...beep," that, we had been told, meant that the woodcock was on hand and preparing to fly.

There it was—sounding very much like the sound of the nighthawk as it flies over our Logan Square neighborhood on summer nights. Vainly we strained our eyes in the direction of the noise, but the ground was already dark, so we could only imagine the cocky bird strutting around the field.

Then suddenly, up went something; it could have been a thrown stone, but it was the woodcock, on a direct slant, its body clear against the lightly overcast sky. Up, and then high over our heads it spiraled, a tiny speck, until it was out of sight in the clouds. Now we could only follow the chattering, twittering sound. Bird researchers say that this noise is created by the fluttering wings. Can music created by wings be called a cry or song? However it was created, the sound was thrilling, like nothing I had ever heard before.

The ecstatic sound broke into softer, open tones, like a musical equivalent of butterfly wings. Was this the sound of the woodcock's fall back to earth? Others in our group saw him fall. "There he is!" they cried, pointing, but I missed his descent. I just remembered Leopold's description, "Without warning, he tumbles like a crippled plane, giving voice in a soft liquid warble that a March bluebird might envy." Then I waited for the "beep..beep...beep" that signaled that the woodcock was ready to fly up again.

I don't know how long we stood there. The woodcock flew up again, again, and again. But we saw less and less as the darkness set in, relying more on the now familiar sounds to follow the bird's flight.

After this night, T.T. and I told friends about our quest to see the woodcock, but they didn't seem interested. What is so special about seeing a bird fly up into the sky? What indeed? Is it that we see something of ourselves in the bird? Woodcocks are generally very shy; even though they are not small, they are well camouflaged and stay quiet, so they are hardly ever seen. Once a year this bird shakes off his shyness. He announces his intentions, and then in a tremendous expenditure of energy, hurtles his chubby body into the sky over and over, night after night, for several weeks! Who knows what this display means to him! Of course it has to do with mating, but does it mean anything else?

As humans we can only interpret things according to our experience. For me, this glorious all-out attempt seems like a kind of self-transcendence. Watching the woodcock made me imagine a composer making a breakthrough from the sadness and boredom of everyday life into the glory of a sublime melody. Or, as a woman, I thought about the fact that only the male woodcock flies up, and I imagined myself as a female woodcock, standing by, admiring and marveling at her prospective mate's performance, yet anticipating the sadness and self-doubt that would undoubtedly follow his flight of ecstasy.

This kind of thinking seems a little silly, and I didn't really think all these things when I was watching. Rather, I was thrilled to see the sky dance, thrilled that I had learned to identify the sounds of the woodcock's display. T.T. and I now possess an esoteric knowledge. We know the ritual, how to listen for the beeps and how to look for the rising bird. And, in fact, after this night, we were able to hear and even see the woodcock at least twice the same month, in different places. We also felt proud that our work restoring the prairie had expanded the woodcock's mating grounds.

What's called early spring in this part of the country requires imagination. The ground is still brown, the trees look lifeless. For us, however, from now on, when April comes, we'll have something to look forward to. We'll be out in the prairies at sunset waiting for the woodcock's sky dance!

(Reprinted with permission from *Seeding the Snow*. See page 10 for details and subscription information)

BY THE TIME I GOT TO WOODSTOCK.....

by John Ochsner

On a recent foray through the wilds of northern Illinois (official state motto: *Where's Mine?*¹) I passed through the sleepy hamlet of Woodstock in McHenry County. As I left the city limits I began thinking about a white oak-shagbark hickory savanna remnant not far from the town that I have visited from time to time over the years. On my first visit to this site with friends six years ago, the understory was packed with a dazzling array of
(*article continued on next page*)

¹ with apologies to our numerous Illinois members!JO

blooming columbine covered about an acre. The patch emitted a reddish glow amid the streams of sunlight that filtered silently through the white oak-shagbark canopy. As I approached the turnoff to the site, I contemplated taking a brief detour to visit this unique place. Unfortunately, it had been divvied up into building sites and most of the parcels had been built on in recent years. As I made the turn at the intersection, I was beset with the usual dark forebodings that seem to plague all prairie enthusiasts these days as they approach a favorite haunt. Is it still there? Has it been entirely ruined? Would the small undeveloped portions of savanna be vandalized with new houses like the rest of the site?

A wide range of possibilities and mostly improbable scenarios danced in my brain as I approached the site. Would all the houses be gone, surgically removed and dropped gently on vacant building lots in town? Or maybe a rich eccentric savannaphile had purchased all of the houses and gently bulldozed them into an adjacent county!

Much to my dismay, the large area of columbine had been covered with fill and was now sporting a brand new ranch house. Across the access road, however, remained a small parcel of undisturbed savanna. The shooting stars were just finishing blooming. In the past, this area was usually mowed before midsummer at the behest of adjacent homeowners to keep down mosquitoes. These hardy pioneers appeared to be relentless in their obsession to keep their savanna homesites mowed and manicured. Can't let those shooting stars take over the yard!

As I walked among the stately oaks and hickories on the remaining undeveloped parcel, I came upon a small hand-lettered FOR SALE sign. The sign was barely visible from the access road. A Chicago area code and phone number was scrawled at the bottom of the sign. A followup call revealed that the parcel was still, in fact, for sale. The asking price for this 1.4 acre parcel of Illinois botanical history was \$63,000. That comes out to \$45,000 an acre. What a deal! This bit of news quickly deflated any thoughts of organizing a "Save the Savanna" project. Who would buy land for preservation at this prohibitive price, even if it is a one-of-a-kind piece of Illinois history?

This quandry reflects the dilemma that faces conservation groups everywhere. How are we to preserve our little bits of remaining prairie, woodlands, and savanna (not to mention farmland) against the current overwhelming combination of rising population and economic growth? It seems that as the Dow Jones Average soars out of sight, so do the prospects of local natural area preservation. How much is enough? Maybe everyone in the country will be a millionaire someday, but at what cost to the birds, butterflies, forests, and prairies?

THE WALK

We walked with measured steps
up the steepness,
picking our way
through the budding richness
of a prairie spring.

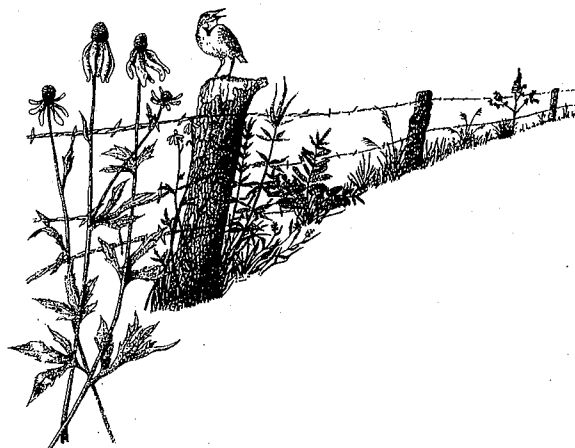
He paused and waved an arm
at the hillside,
laden with cascades
of cream baptisa,
french vanilla sculptures
like fancy wedding cakes,
decorated with puccoon
and blue eyed grass.



"This", he said, "is the face of God".

I understood anew, with the same clarity
as the song of the dicksissel overhead,
the complexity of this man
and this remnant prairie.
Both facing their uncertain futures,
transients,
viscerally connected
to their end.

Alice Mirk 6/6/97



PRAIRIE AND SAVANNA RELATED PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

An Introduction to the Tallgrass Prairies of the Upper Midwest

This booklet by TPE offers an overview of the history and ecology of the prairie, illustrations of and descriptive information about prairie flora and fauna, general information about management, and step by step instructions about how to plant a prairie of one's own.

Copies of the booklet are \$7.00. Contact your local chapter representative for a copy. General members may obtain copies by sending a check or money order for \$8.44 (to cover shipping) to: **Alice Mirk, Treasurer, The Prairie Enthusiasts, 10052 CTH C, Woodman, WI 53827**

The Prairie Primer

The University of Wisconsin Extension has republished *The Prairie Primer*. This booklet tells the prairie's story from the Ice Age beginnings to its settlement by European immigrants. Whether you are a beginning or an experienced gardener, you'll appreciate the step-by-step instructions for planting, landscaping and managing your own prairie plot. It includes more than 50 illustrations and is in a spiral bound format for ease of use in the field. Cost is \$5.00 per book, shipping is \$2.50, WI residents add 5.5% sales tax. The book is available from: Cooperative Extension Publications, 630 W. Mifflin St., Room 170, Madison WI. 53703 or call 608-262-3346 or fax 608-265-8052.

SEEDING THE SNOW: A WOMAN'S JOURNAL ABOUT THE MIDWEST LANDSCAPE

In 1994, a group of Chicago women--members of the North Branch Prairie Project-- camped out at Nachusa Grasslands, a 1,000 acre tallgrass prairie in western Illinois. We harvested seeds; we talked about ecological restoration and about the role of women in the restoration movement. After this weekend, we kept meeting at potluck suppers, and we started reading each other's writing. After three years, the result was *Seeding the Snow, a Journal of Women's Writing and Artwork that Celebrates the Midwest Landscape*.

We produced the first issue of *Seeding the Snow* during the height of a controversy in Cook County over ecological restoration, and some of our experiences during this struggle are reflected in the first issue. But the intended scope of the journal is larger, as its subtitle states.

We are eager to reach out to people (not just women, although the artists and writers are women) all over the Midwest. We are eager to receive creative writing and artwork. A yearly subscription for two issues is \$10. Please send subscriptions and inquiries to: *Seeding The Snow*, 2534 N St. Louis, Chicago IL 60647-1206.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR!

August 15, 1997
Big Patch, WI

Dear Editor:

I was amused and amazed to read Assembly Majority Leader Scott Jensen describe Wisconsin's Republican party as the true "progressive" party. Bob LaFollette was a Republican and a true progressive. He created what was once one of the cleanest civil service systems in the country and would be aghast to learn that his party advanced the cause of political patronage by making the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) an appointee of the governor. He would be appalled to learn that WDNR district directors would be appointed by a political appointee (the WDNR Secretary).

Bob LaFollette would not be alone in his dismay and disgust. The late Governor Warren Knowles, one of the two most principled and able governors who served this state since LaFollette's day, was also a true progressive who would not have countenanced any law which forbids local government bodies from enacting ordinances which impose greater restrictions on the use of pesticides than those in state statutes (whether all the noise about Republicans being the champions of local control?). Warren Knowles was also a true conservationist and would have supported, rather than opposed, recycling and the Officer of Public Intervenor. He would also have brought pressure to bear upon the Assembly leadership to remove DuWayne Johnsrud as Chair of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

If one views the politicians on the right side of the aisle of Wisconsin's Assembly as a galaxy of dim bulbs, then Duh-Wayne "Shoot It If It Moves" Johnsrud must be a black hole. Representative Johnsrud would approve of the exterminating the increasingly rare timber rattlesnake, has brought back crow hunting, and now wants to initiate hunting of sandhill cranes. Not only does he call the cranes "pests" because the mere 10,000 that visit the state cause some crop damage, but he also believes shooting them would be great sport. Let's hope he doesn't learn about bald eagle attacks on small pigs in Iowa (it seems some of these raptors acquired a taste for pork as a result of hog farmers dumping porcine carcasses in the fields during the winter). The way things are headed, it is only a matter of time before Representative Johnsrud will declare war on any grasses over one foot high because they harbor pests! There go the prairies!

He never misses an opportunity to play to the yokel gallery, and in a pathetic attempt to emulate former Senator Proxmire, he has issued "Uff Da" awards. I recall one of these bestowed on the WDNR for spending money on research directed toward making crossing a highway safer for hapless turtles. Well Duh-Wayne is no Bill Proxmire! ..(continued on back page)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER EVENTS

- Sat., Sep. 27 Seed collecting, 10a.m. - 1p.m.
Gov. Nelson
- Sat., Sep. 27 Seed collecting, Underwood Prairie.
Contact John Mecikalski for time and
location 608/849-9136
- Mon., Sep. 29 Seed collecting 5p.m.-dark **Curtis**
- Tue., Sep. 30 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Koltes.**
- Wed., Oct. 1 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Fri., Oct. 3 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Greene.**
- Sat., Oct. 4 Seed collecting 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Mon., Oct. 6 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Koltes.**
- Tue., Oct. 7 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Curtis.**
- Wed., Oct. 8 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Fri., Oct. 10 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Greene.**
- Sat., Oct. 11 Seed collecting 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Mon., Oct. 13 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Greene.**
- Wed., Oct. 15 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Thur., Oct. 16 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Koltes.**
- Sat., Oct. 18 Brush cutting at **Koltes** 9:30 a.m. Noon
Bring handtools, chainsaws, and safety
equipment. Leader: Paul West
608/271-0504.
- Sat., Oct. 18 Seed collecting 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Mon., Oct. 20 Seed collecting 5 p.m. - dark, **Greene.**
- Sat., Oct. 25 Seed collecting 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Sat., Nov. 1 Seed collecting 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Mon., Nov. 3 Seed cleaning 5 p.m. - 8 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Tues., Nov. 4 Seed cleaning 5 p.m. - 8 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Wed., Nov. 5 Seed cleaning 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Thur., Nov. 6 Seed cleaning 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Fri., Nov. 7 Seed cleaning 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Sat., Nov. 8 Prairie seeding 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., **Gov.
Nelson.**
- Sat., Nov. 15 (ALTERNATE) Prairie seeding 10 a.m. -
1 p.m., **Gov. Nelson.**
- Sat. Dec. 13 Brush cutting at **Koltes** 9:30 a.m. Noon.
Bring handtools, chainsaws, and safety
equipment. Leader: Paul West 608/
271-0504.

TBA Work party at Mt. Pleasant Savanna and
Nittany Knoll. Postcards will be sent to Empire-
Sauk **volunteers**, or contact Paul West 608/271-0504.
Gov. Nelson: Governor Nelson State Park. Meet at
the park office on Hwy. M and Oncken Road (3 miles
north of Middleton).

Curtis: UW Arboretum Curtis Prairie. Meet at the
McKay Center parking lot east of Seminole Highway
(one-half mile north of the Beltline).

Koltes: Koltes Prairie. Meet along Bong Road one-half
mile east of Hwy. 1 1 3 between Madison and
Waunakee.

MEETINGS

- Tues., Nov. 4 Empire-Sauk Chapter Board meeting,
7:00 p.m., The Nature Conservancy,
611 West Main Street, Madison

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER EVENTS

- Sat., Nov. 15 Marbleseed Prairie Workday, 9a.m. call
608/862-3816

MEETINGS

- Tues., Oct. 21 Chapter meeting. Marshall Bluff
Bowhunters Clubhouse, 7:00pm.
- Tues., Nov. 18 Chapter meeting. Marshall Bluff
Bowhunters Clubhouse, 7:00pm.
- Tues., Dec. 16 Chapter meeting at Marshall Bluff
Bowhunters Clubhouse, 7:00 p.m. The
meeting will be followed by a Christmas
potluck supper.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER WORK PARTIES

- Sun., Sep. 7 Bush Clover, brush cutting, seed
collecting, 10:00am. 608-375- 5271
- Sun., Sep. 14 Kalscheur Savanna, seed collecting,
brush cutting, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., Oct. 11 Vale Prairie, seed collecting, brush
cutting, 10:00am. 608-375- 5271
- Sun., Oct. 26 Bush Clover Prairie, seed collecting,
brush cutting, 10:00am. 608-375-5271

MEETINGS

- Sun., Oct. 19 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Mirk
residence
- Sun., Nov. 16 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Eldred
residence
- Sun., Dec. 21 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Linder
residence

CHAPTER NEWS



EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN!

You remember it.... the air is crisp, the leaves are falling, the cheese heads are cheering, and I'm begging for your help. Yes, it's prairie seed collecting, cleaning, and seeding time! As our organization grows, so do the tasks at hand. In addition to adding another 10 - 15 acres to our 55 acres of prairie restoration at Gov. Nelson State Park, we are also helping to collect seed for a 10 acre restoration at St. Benedict Center. The scheduled dates, times, and locations for seed collecting, cleaning, and prairie seeding are listed in the CALENDAR OF EVENTS section. Wear hiking boots and layered clothing. Anything more than a light sprinkle cancels collecting.

Call.... for a different meeting spot if you will be late for collecting; or, if you have seed you would like to donate; or, if you would like to collect on your own time; or, to sign-up to help with seed cleaning and the prairie seeding; or, on the seeding date if weather threatens. A free lunch will be provided after the prairie seeding.

This time of year is a great time to experience the prairies that we all love. These work days are great opportunities to share with others the sense of community and accomplishment that we get from our restoration efforts. This time of year also affords me the opportunity to get on this soapbox to try to lure more of you out for these great experiences.... I just hate to be having such a great time without you! Hope to see you all on the prairies this fall.... you won't regret it!!! -Dan Weidert: 608-233-5658H or 831-3005W or prairenm@execpc.com

SUPPORT LOCAL PRAIRIE MANAGEMENT WITH BIRD SEED PURCHASE

Wild Birds Unlimited (726 S, Whitney Way, Madison) is contributing 10% of all their October birdseed sales to the Empire-Sauk Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts and The Nature Conservancy. The minimum contribution will be \$2,000. The money will be used entirely for the care and management of prairie remnants in Dane County, including the Koltes and Koch Prairies in northern Dane County, Rettenmund-Black Earth Prairie, Thousands Rock Point Prairies near Blue Mounds, School Section Bluff Prairie in Mazomanie, and Mt. Pleasant Savanna

in sw Dane County. The donation will be applied to equipment and supplies needed for shrub and tree removal, weed control, prescribed burns, fencing, and posting. Please show your appreciation, and help these prairies get back to good health by buying your fall birdseed from Wild Birds Unlimited in October.

Rich Henderson

Good Turnout for Annual Meeting & Picnic

Nearly 30 people attended the Empire-Sauk Chapter's annual meeting and potluck picnic at Indian Lake County Park on July 8th. The park's small shelter was cozy, the view of the lake was great, and the food was excellent. The wind was a bit brisk and cool, but it kept the mosquitoes away. Rich Henderson and Charlotte Hallam were unanimously re-elected as chapter president and secretary, respectively. After the meeting, the group toured a knoll with bur oak savanna and the historic chapel atop the ridge. More adventurous members of the group were also treated to a hidden prairie opening known to very few people. Some bush whacking was required to get there, but the high quality and diversity of the prairie made the effort most worthwhile.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

Mead's Milkweed Update

The spring issue of *The Prairie Promoter* contained a short article in the SW Chapter news about our attempts to re-establish the Mead's milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*) on one of our prairie remnants here in southwest Wisconsin. Mead's milkweed was last seen in Wisconsin in the late 1800's in Grant County, so it seemed appropriate to attempt it's re-establishment here.

In the spring of 1996, eight small seedlings were planted on a prairie remnant owned by The Prairie Enthusiasts. Seed was furnished by the Morton Arboretum and seedlings were propagated by Little Bluestem Farm at Baraboo. All eight seedlings seemed to thrive, but by late summer they all turned black and appeared to die! In the summer issue of *The Prairie Promoter* we reported that one of the eight had survived, but between then and mid-summer, six more seedlings emerged!

There is no way to know if or when they will flower or if the appropriate pollinators exist on this site. All in all, Mead's milkweed faces a long and uncertain journey, but it does have a start.

Woolly Milkweed Comeback - Almost!

It had been a long day when I pointed my car toward the midafternoon sun with the intention of heading home. David Lowe and I had spent a warm muggy morning planting pale purple coneflower

seedlings in the southwest corner of The Vale Prairie in Green County, a two hour journey from my Boscobel residence.

The seedlings, all 140 of them, represent one of only a couple of populations (and perhaps the last one) of this species in Green County. Due to lack of care, this roadside population is declining and the SW Chapter is taking steps to preserve it's genetics on our protected site nearby.

After the planting job, Dave and I drove a mile or so south to visit the Muralt Prairie South. Last winter, Dave, Gary Adams, Steve Hubner, and I spent eight days there, cutting down trees and brush in an effort to reverse 80 years of woody invasion on this very high quality remnant. By the way things looked, our efforts are being well rewarded. We had also done some limited burning there this spring, and the results are spectacular. As we strolled over the area and discussed our management strategies for the future, it was clear to see that eradicating the black cherry, elm, walnut, and hackberry would not be our biggest challenge. Much of the open prairie had been invaded by what I consider to be our toughest adversaries: sumac, wild plum, and grey dogwood. I call these the "big three" in our prairie management problems.

After this visit, Dave headed north to Bameveld and I traveled west toward Argyle and Yellowstone State Park. I wanted to stop there and see how SWC's 1987 prairie planting was doing. Park personnel had burned it last spring and I was anxious to see the results. When I crested the hill upon which the planting is situated, I could scarcely believe my eyes! The beauty of this little two acre planting has to be seen to be appreciated, and I'm very proud to have been part of its creation. I had one more stop to make on my route home (at least that's what I thought): the Kalscheur Savanna south of Hollandale. The SW Chapter has been working on this site for over two years and some very nice things are starting to happen there. Muffy Barrett at Little Bluestem Farm had propagated purple milkweed and wood lily seedlings for us and we've planted a couple of hundred purple milkweeds and 150 wood lilies on the site. Due to the degraded nature of some areas, we feel comfortable introducing these species. The area will act as a genetic refuge for these species which haven't previously occurred on this site prior to our introducing them.

I didn't spend too much time at the Kalscheur Savanna, as it had been a long day and I wanted to get home, another 55 miles to the west. As I cruised the ridgetops that Highway 39 follows between Hollandale and Mineral Point, I realized I had one more "quick" stop to make. The site is a 15 acre degraded prairie pasture that had been burned for a second year in a row. Much of the area has no prairie plants at all, but four dry, rocky, thin soiled knobs are home to a limited but nice variety of native species, including the very rare woolly milkweed (*Asclepias lanuginosa*). A single plant had bloomed and produced one pod with seven infertile seeds last year after we had burned. As I approached the rocky knob, I searched anxiously for the sight of the

rare plant and there it was, blooming in all of it's four inch tall glory! Now the question was, are there any more, or just this one? After a 45 minute search, I became totally euphoric, counting 18 blooming plants, one with two stalks with blooms and another with three stalks, each of which sported a full blooming umbel! Unbelievable!

The remaining miles home seemed to take no time at all, my thoughts focused on the idea of lots of fertile seed being produced and seedlings of the rare plant growing strong and numerous. Two weeks later, the reason for the rarity of this plant was made painfully clear to me: not one single plant had been pollinated and therefore, not one single pod was forming! Now there is no chance of producing any seedlings to help perpetuate this fragile, diminutive species of our vanishing prairie. Maybe next year?

WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER

WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER GET AWARD

On July 27, 1997, The West Central Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts was the recipient of the 1997 Good Neighbor Award which is given by the Lake Association to acknowledge and honor local citizens or groups who demonstrate concern and take an active role in improving our environment and waters. Since 1992, two awards have been given annually. Sharing the 1997 award with the West Central Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts was State Senator Alice Clausing.

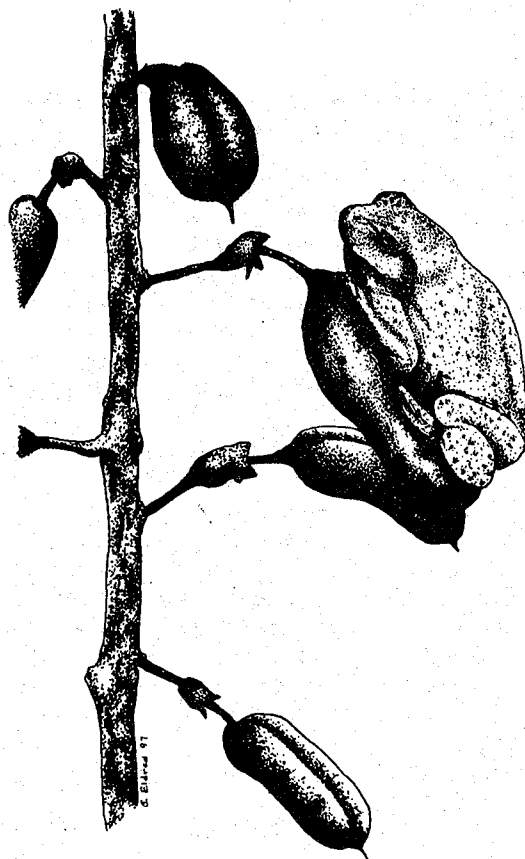
The award was in recognition of the West Central Chapter's collaboration with the Friend's of the Red Cedar Trail in planting an educational demonstration site at the Red Cedar Depot and their prairie planting in preparation for the 1998 Farm Progress Days.



Luanne Prochnow of the Lake Association Board presents award to WCC member Tom Richards, of Menomonie, WI

He's more like Gordy Roseliep. I suggest that he submit to a blindfolded taste test of sandhill cranes and crows! But I've an award for him - he's the first recipient of the James G. Watt Moral Dwarf Award. Congratulations are in order for all he's done to earn this richly deserved award.

Ivy T. Radicans



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

- Southwest Chapter**
Serving Grant, Crawford, Richland & Iowa Counties
- Northwest Illinois Chapter**
Serving Jo Daviess, Carroll & Stephenson Counties
- West Central Chapter** - Serving Barron, Chippewa, Polk, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce, Pepin, St. Croix Counties
- General Membership** (outside of chapter areas)
- Empire-Sauk Chapter**
Serving Sauk, Columbia & Dane Counties
- Prairie Bluff Chapter**
Serving Green, Rock & Lafayette Counties

DONATION: \$ _____

- \$10 STUDENT
- \$50 SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP
- \$15 INDIVIDUAL
- \$200 INDIVIDUAL LIFE
- \$25 CONTRIBUTOR

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

The Prairie Enthusiasts
 c/o Alice Mirk
 10052 County Hwy. C
 Woodman, WI 53827
 608-988-4760

Can we provide your name and address to:
 YES _____ NO _____

Other environmental organizations _____
 Other Prairie Enthusiasts in your area _____

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:

Gary Eldred
 4192 Sleepy Hollow Tr.
 Boscobel, WI 53805