

# THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 10, NO.1

SPRING 1997

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

## TPE's 9th ANNUAL BANQUET

Over 230 prairie enthusiasts gathered at the Dane County Exposition Center on March 1, 1997 to celebrate 9 years of prairie enthusiasm, to renew old acquaintances and to make new friends, to learn more about prairie and savanna conservation, and to raise money to carry this mission forward.

Happy hour found many attendees engaged in conversations about-you guessed it-prairie and savanna restoration. Following dinner, Gary Felder, member of the Prairie Bluff Chapter, electrified the audience by announcing the Green County Conservation League's purchase of Marbleseed Prairie. Only another \$4,000 is needed to complete the deal (see article on p.4)!

By now, the audience was primed. Gary Birch was selected by the Empire-Sauk Chapter as Prairie Enthusiast of the Year for his incredible devotion to oak woodland restoration at Kegonsa State Park. In addition, Gary received an award from the park. Both awards were richly deserved. Don Hagar was the Southwest Chapter's recipient of the Prairie Enthusiast of the Year award. Don has been actively involved in prairie conservation for many years. In addition, he willingly undertook the task of writing descriptive information for each of Gary Eldred's 80 plant illustrations which appear in *An Introduction to the Tallgrass Prairies of the Upper Midwest* (see article this page).

Certainly, one of the evening's highlights was the presentation of Missouri DNR's Ken McCarty. Ken had the audience absolutely enthralled by his presentation about savanna restoration in his home state. Judging by the comments overheard after Ken's presentation, the great state of Missouri could have a golden future in "eco-tourism". Ken is undoubtedly one of the most popular speakers to ever address the assembled horde of prairie enthusiasts. Perhaps there will be a reprise.

The evening concluded with the raffle and auction which raised over \$5,700 for prairie and savanna conservation. Heartfelt thanks are due to all who donated the items which made this possible and to Wisconsin Power and Light Company, which for the second consecutive year, generously underwrote the banquet. Thanks are also due to those who helped sell books and other items, to those who helped with the raffle and auction, and to Jackie Pauly, who is without peer in the sale of raffle tickets. Finally, special thanks are due to Edie Weber, Jim Welsh, and Rich Henderson, whose herculean efforts made the annual event run more smoothly and efficiently than ever.



**SPEAKER KEN McCARTY AT BANQUET**

## TPE OFFERS NEW PUBLICATION

The Prairie Enthusiasts has finally (!) published *An Introduction to the Tallgrass Prairie of the Upper Midwest*. This 80 page booklet 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.

The Prairie Enthusiasts only paid for typesetting and formatting-Wisconsin Power and Light Company absorbed the total printing costs. Thanks to this generosity, TPE can offer copies of the booklet for only \$7.00. Contact your chapter for a copy. General members may obtain copies by sending a check or money order for \$8.44 (to cover shipping) to Alice Mirk, Treas., The Prairie Enthusiasts, 10052 CTH C, Woodman, WI. 53827

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Prairie Enthusiasts is a grass roots organization of volunteers which is solely committed to the protection, management, and restoration of prairie and savanna in the upper Midwest. To date, The Prairie Enthusiasts has protected over 380 acres that harbor at least 5 state or federally endangered or threatened species. In addition, more than 80 acres have been planted with seeds of prairie plants collected from local sources.

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.

*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 articles, announcements, art work, and photographs which are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Articles should be typed. Writers who use computers should include a 3.5 inch disk (MS-Word or WordPerfect) as well as paper copies. Deadlines for submission of material are: February 25 (Spring issue); May 25 (Summer issue); August 25 (Fall issue); and November 25 (Winter issue).

### Board Of Directors

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(serving Barron, Chippewa, Polk, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce, Pepin & St Croix Counties)

Contact: Harvey Halvorsen, 715-684-2914

Editor: Robert Pike, 715-246-5975

There is a sense of urgency abroad in the land these days. I can feel it in the emerging and widespread interest in preserving prairies and savannas and in the growth of organizations devoted to prairie conservation in the states where tallgrass prairie once dominated (e.g., Texas, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, etc.). Many of these states have at least one large scale reconstruction in the works, and although Wisconsin does not, the Wisconsin Chapter of The Nature Conservancy recently launched it's Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna Initiative, an effort which TPE is pledged to support.

I have a personal sense of urgency that I experience whenever I watch the bird feeding areas around my house. Spring is just around the corner as evidenced by the red-bellied woodpeckers starting to display their plumage and the pileated woodpeckers dipping and bowing as they swoop through the cottonwoods in the yard. Spring is a time of hope, yet if I were a bobolink, meadowlark, dickcissel, or any of a long list of other grassland birds, would my future be very bright? If I were any of a hundred prairie plants, would my genetic material have the opportunity to be part of a restoration project?

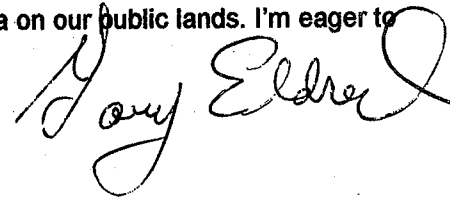
The Prairie Enthusiasts is a relatively small organization, and although this past winter we participated widely in the seminars, lectures, and workshops that helped educate and inform individuals about the desperate need to save prairie and savanna, we know we are barely touching the tip of the iceberg.

The difficulties we face in this state of emergency are staggering: the cost of purchasing land, reconstruction, and management are enormous; finding good candidate areas for preservation and restoration where there is a willing seller is difficult. These problems often test our resolve.

One of the major, but generally unrecognized, problems is that many professional managers of state lands have no knowledge about prairies and savannas and cannot identify the remnants in their care. A statewide inventory of publicly owned land needs to be done and a management plan formulated.

Our responsibility is two-fold: we need to make politically strong efforts to ensure that public agencies have adequate funding for restoration and management; and we must be willing to share our expertise and knowledge with the professional managers who are the stewards of these lands.

With the combined effort of individual prairie enthusiasts and other prairie conservation organizations we can make the difference between survival of these ecosystems and their slow lingering death as the millenium comes to a close. Let us use *The Prairie Promoter* as a forum for ideas that will help preserve the best in prairie/savanna on our public lands. I'm eager to hear from you on this topic.



Gary Eldred

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND MIDWEST PRAIRIE CONFERENCE

Madison, Wisconsin September 18-20, 1970

Send \$15.00 (includes shipping and handling) to:

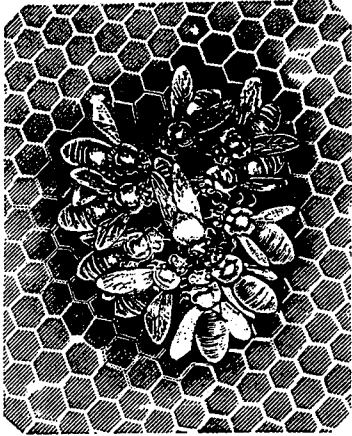
Elizabeth H. Zimmerman

2114 Van Hise Ave.

Madison, WI 53705

## THE PLIGHT (OR FLIGHT) OF THE HONEYBEES

by Rickie Rachuy



Our Honeybees are in trouble! Perhaps you have already heard, but besides the ever increasing destruction of habitat that seems to affect so many of our species, including our native wild honeybees, the domesticated bees that pollinate many of our crops and make our table honey are being decimated by two kinds of mites.

The most destructive of these is the varroa mite, a parasite no larger than a sesame seed. Possibly introduced from South America with some smuggled honeybee queens, these tiny invaders have infested and decimated honeybees across North America.

Like a tick ingesting human blood, varroa mites feed off the bee's bloodlike hemolymph. Ferried back to the hive, the mites seek out honeycomb cells and feed on the eggs and pupae there.

Several biological strategies are in the works, including the development of bees that groom to rid each other of the mites. Such a bee might be selectively bred from the naturally occurring "hygienic" honeybees already living. Another option is to breed a strain of bees that show a natural resistance to the varroa mites. Honeybees from eastern Russia, that seem to have a genetic resistance to varroa mites, are being imported this summer for quarantine and study for possible use by U.S. beekeepers. These methods could minimize or eliminate the use of chemical controls, to which varroa mites are already showing resistance.

All of this will take time, and many beekeepers have already lost up to 80% of their colonies in one winter. Fewer bees mean less honey and higher prices in a whole range of products that depend on honey's sweetening power. But the biggest impact will be to crops that depend on bees for pollination. Our agricultural infrastructure rests upon a foundation built by modern bee keeping, and if that foundation crumbles, the consequences will be devastating and wide reaching.

## Grandma Was Right!

by David Lowe

Anyone who undertakes the difficult task of brush clearing soon realizes the painful potential for cuts, slivers, and other assorted blood-letting situations that bring out the "best" of our vocabularies. Working in the profession of prairie restoration gives me many opportunities to enjoy these moments, while expanding

my word power! Hydrogen peroxide along with a sterile bandage quickly hastens the recovery of most minor cuts and abrasions. A clean, sharp needle and tweezers will usually remove slivers that are near the surface of the skin, but what about the pieces of wood that are more deeply embedded, which can range in size from something as small as a hair to the size of half a Lincoln Log?

One of the "joys" of working on the Kalscheur Savanna restoration is the removal of hundreds of hawthorn bushes with their ice pick shaped spines that can reach three inches in length. Two of the nice characteristics of this wonderful plant are: 1) when you crawl under it and cut it, the bush usually falls on you; and 2) after these spines have plunged themselves into your assorted body parts, they usually break off leaving the remainder deeply embedded in your flesh (hence the onset of some non-conventional vocabulary).

The problem with this type of bodily intrusion is that the sliver is too deep for tweezers and too painful to dig out with a needle. Another problem is that if you can stand the needle pain, you usually can't see what you are after as blood fills the hole when you poke at it. One solution is to wait a few days for the wound to fester and squeeze it right out. Unfortunately, this does not work with more deeply embedded slivers.

After working with the "gang" at Kalscheur's this last summer, one of those hawthorn spines sunk deeply in my forearm near my elbow and I could not dig it out. Not being able to afford an expensive doctor bill after matriculating this year, I tried the fester technique (which did not work). At this point, my wife Diane told me to try the remedy of her Grandma Reimers of Ogden, Iowa. Diane instructed me to take a small piece of bread with some oleo (or butter), chew it into a pulp, and then put it on a Band Aid and place it over the sliver, leaving it to soak overnight. I must admit that I felt pretty stupid slapping a spit-soaked wad of bread on my wound to wear overnight, but my loving wife swore this remedy would work.

The next morning I arose and peeled off the Band Aid to see the big sliver still lodged in my arm. But to my surprise, as soon as I touched the sliver with the needle, it popped right out. Diane said that smaller slivers usually pop out during the night and are found in the Band Aid. If the larger slivers do not come out the next morning, a second night of the remedy might be needed. So the next time you find yourself in my predicament, try Grandma Reimers' remedy; it works. Grandma was right!

Editors note: Alice's Scottish grandmother, Grandma Lane, had a similar cure for splinters, using bread soaked in hot milk rather than spit!

## NEW PE DISPLAY

A new Prairie Enthusiasts display was unveiled at WHA TV's annual Garden Expo on February 15 and 16. Thank you to volunteers Edie Weber, Kay Bongers, Marty Grell, Jackie Bettinger, and Rebecca Christoffel  
*article continued on next page*

for staffing the booth and answering questions from thousands of visitors. Prairie Enthusiast volunteers Scott Weber and Rich Henderson also gave slide presentations about prairie conservation during the two day event.

## MARBLESEED PRAIRIE



Marbleseed Prairie is a 40 acre pasture in section 3 of York Township, Green County, Wisconsin. After more than 150 years of settlement this pasture still retains many of the characteristic prairie grasses and flowers that once covered so much of southern Wisconsin. This prairie pasture survives today largely because of its' thin rocky soils which protected it from the deep tillage that has erased

nearly all of the 250 million acres of deepsoil tallgrass prairie that once covered the central United States and parts of Canada.

This site is of special conservation interest because, as its name implies, it is home to a very rare prairie/savanna plant called marbleseed (*Onosmodium molle*). In addition to marbleseed and other now rare prairie plants, this parcel provides habitat for a number of declining ground nesting birds such as horned lark, savanna sparrow, boblink, and upland sandpiper.

The increasing loss of Green County's few remaining prairie sites to rural sprawl gives special importance to this project. If you are interested in supporting the purchase of this prairie by the Green County Conservation League, please send your pledge to:

**Gary Felder, Treasurer**  
**Green County Conservation League**  
**2334 16th Ave.**  
**Monroe, WI 53566.**  
**(608-329-7042)**

## THE PRAIRIE INSECT AND SPIDER INVENTORY

by Andrew H. Williams

Unknown to many members, the Prairie Insect and Spider Inventory of the Southwest Chapter has now been running for five years. Just what is it and why do we invest in this project?

Many people appreciate that knowledge of the plants living on a site is a valuable tool in understanding the whole community. And many of us take pleasure in our knowledge of plants and the greater familiarity with each site that this affords us. It's logical to extend this botanical inventory to include the animals present on

these sites--to conduct biotic inventory. Indeed, biotic research is one aspect of, and justification for, conservation. But it is vastly more difficult to study animals than plants.

Many of us can identify plants in the field, and those few that can stump us we can collect, press, and puzzle over at home with the help of books. If this fails, we can take the specimen to the Wisconsin State Herbarium at UW-Madison where experts can almost always identify the plant, provided we bring enough parts to them. But because insects are so much more diverse, often microscopically small, and much less known to science, the simple process we employ in plant study balloons in complexity.

Only a tiny proportion of insects can be identified in the field, which necessitates killing the animal and curating the specimen to study in the lab, and often to send it to one of the experts who has agreed to volunteer time and talent to our project. These experts focus on particular groups of animals, such as bees or wasps. The specimens must be sorted into groups appropriate for each expert, if indeed such an expert is now alive and /or has agreed to help us. Specimens are then shipped all over North America. These experts are a vanishing breed, underfunded, and increasingly busy, so it may take months or even years for them to identify our material and send it back to us. Sometimes experts right here at U.W. Madison can identify particular specimens and often they do so rather quickly.

The books that make plant identification relatively easy generally do not exist for insects. Often one must search for the appropriate literature so one can then try to interpret the technical writing adequately to allow identification of the insect. Illustrations may be poor, few, or none.

The objectives of this research are to collect, curate, and identify as narrowly as possible insects and spiders for Thomas Wet Prairie and Bush Clover Prairie (both managed by TPE-SW) and the collection and management of ecological data pertaining to each individual specimen. Essentially all the specimens are deposited into the Insect Research Collection at UW-Madison where they continue to be available for scientific inquiry. Also important is communication of our discoveries through publication and by sharing data with other researchers. These data are freely available to others.

Collecting is focused on adult organisms of sufficient size or distinction that I think someone, somewhere, will be willing and able to identify them to species. Insects casually flying by are of less interest than those engaged in some activity. I want to know what animals are using what plants or preying on what other animals, not simply what animals are present on these sites. Some immatures are reared to adulthood so the larval and nymphal food plants of these insects can be learned.

Collecting is slow. Not all animals encountered are  
*article continued on next page*

pursued. Of those observed a rather large number escape collection because of the time spent watching what they are doing. Recording data pertinent to each animal is time consuming. Each animal is given a number when it is collected, a number that stays with it forever, appearing on the insect labels with the museum specimen, the file cards on which the data are initially organized, and on each computer record in our data base. Merel Black developed our data base, which allows these data to be sorted by various criteria--site, date, time of day, animal taxa (Order, Family, Genus, Species), plant taxa (Family, Genus, Species), etc. This data base is an essential tool in this research.

In the course of this inventory, several species have been found in Wisconsin for the first time. And new information about several insects has led to three scientific papers, two more of which are in the pipeline. It's very exciting to discover something and to share the discovery; publishing is an adult expression of what children often say, "Look what I found!" But in scientific publishing one announces something that has never before been announced, knowledge new to the world.

Since 1992, when I initiated this research, until late 1996, I was a graduate student at UW-Madison. Dan Young of the Entomology Department was my graduate advisor and without his support this inventory would not have been possible. One needs lab space, supplies such as vials, alcohol, etc., access to microscopes, access to museum specimens that have been reliably identified, access to libraries and to interlibrary loan, use of computers to manage these data and to facilitate correspondence by both e-mail and snail mail. Perhaps most essential is the association with the entomology department of a large university, which gives our project credibility among entomologists. Despite my completing my masters program, Dan is eager to continue to support this research which allows this work to move ahead.

Now that my primary agenda is no longer my thesis research, I can make this Prairie Insect and Spider Inventory my primary focus. For five years I've done this on a part-time basis, supported by funds donated by TPE-SW and interested individuals as well as by small grants secured through the central board of TPE, the Citizens Natural History Museums Council, the Lois Almon Small Grants Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partnership for Wildlife Grant Program with Wisconsin DNR, and TNC's Small Grant Program in Conservation Biology (now defunct). I am now beginning the process of grant writing to support 1997's research. This long-term research could productively run on for many years, but it can only move forward to the extent funds can be raised.

Though other prairie insect research is now being pursued in Wisconsin, the methods employed are such that less information and tremendous numbers of specimens are generated. My slow method of observation and hand-collection results in maximum information and many fewer specimens being collected. I take pride in minimizing the death-dealing that is integral to this research, and in the conception underlying this research: I am collecting information, vouchered by specimens, rather than concentrating on collecting specimens. Also, this is the only inventory in Wisconsin that is focused on particular sites over many years, which will lead toward more complete faunal lists for these two sites than will be generated elsewhere.

Your continued membership in TPE helps support this work. If you'd care to make a tax deductible donation specifically toward this project, please send a check made out to TPE-SW (memo: for bug research) to me (A.H. Williams, PO Box 1646, Madison, WI 53701, 284-1731). (Ten percent of your gift will support the activities of the TPE Central Board). I'll send you the 1997 Annual Report after the next field season.

Though the tangible fruits of my work are fewer when others accompany me in the field, I am eager to introduce you to the interesting world of prairie insects and spiders, and to the complexities of this research. If you care to join me in the field next summer or fall, write to me and we'll arrange to do this (participants must be at least 15 years old, please). So that you can be an active participant, rather than a spectator, I can accommodate only one or two people at a time. This is hot, slow, tiring, and fascinating work. You are one of the owners of these two prairie remnants, and I'd be happy to show you some of the plants and animals living there and thereby, perhaps, to increase your satisfaction in conserving these priceless prairie remnants. We'll pull a few weeds too.

## MIDWEST OAK SAVANNA AND WOODLAND CONFERENCE

Oak savanna and woodland conservation and ecology will be explored on July 30 through August 2, 1997 during a conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. A day-long plenary session will synthesize current knowledge on restoration of Midwest oak savanna/woodland systems. The plenary session will be followed by a day of concurrent paper sessions aimed at scientists, managers, landowners, recreationists, and the general public. One or two-day field trips to savannas and barrens in Wisconsin will follow the conference. For paper/poster submission provide: (1) title of abstract; (2) name of author(s), affiliation(s), address(es), telephone number(s), and e-mail(s) in requested format; (3) abstract (<300 words); and, (4) < 1-page bibliographic sketch of presenter. Indicate preference for poster or oral presentation and for subject section. Send information as e-mail attachment or on a 3.5" diskette in MS Word, WordPerfect<6.0 versions or ASCII format for IBM compatible by **March 31, 1997 to: Nancy Braker, Director of Science and Stewardship, The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Chapter, 633 West Main St. Madison WI 53703 nbraker@tnc.org**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER EVENTS

- Wed., May 14 Field trip, Black Earth Prairie, 5:30pm.  
(See pg.7)
- Sat., May 24 Field trip, Mazomanie Bluff, 8:30am. (See pg.7)
- Sun., Jun. 8 Field trip, Steenbock Tract, 3pm. (See pg.7)

### WORK PARTIES

- Sat., Apr. 12 Work party, Koltes Prairie, 9:30-noon. Brush cutting, planting seed, trash pick up. Leader: Paul West, 608-271-0504.
- Tue., Jun. 24 Work party Koltes Prairie 5:30pm-7:30pm. Pull wild parsnip and sweet clover. Bring shovels, loppers, scythes, and wear gloves, long shirt, and long pants. Leader: Paul West, 608-271-0504. (Directions to Koltes: Meet on Bong Rd., one half mile east of Hwy. 113 between Madison and Waunakee.)

### MEETINGS

- Tues., May 6 Board Meeting. Bluestem Farm, Baraboo. 608-356-0179
- Tues., Jul. 8 Chapter Annual Meeting. Indian Lake Co. Park (Hwy. 19 west of U.S. 12). Potluck 6pm., meeting at 6:30pm.

### PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER EVENTS

- Sat., Apr. 12 Pasque Flower hike at Muralt Prairie. 1:00pm at Hwy 39 parking lot. 608-862-3816
- Sat., May 10 Hike at Abraham's Woods. Meet at Oliver Rd entrance, 1:00pm. 608-862-3816

### WORK PARTY

- Sat., Jun. 21 Honey Creek Park, 9:00am. Wild parsnip pulling.

### MEETINGS

- Tues., Apr. 15 Chapter meeting. Turner Hall Rathskellar, Monroe, 7:00pm.
- Tues., May 20 Chapter meeting. Marshall Bluff Bowhunter's Clubhouse, 7:00pm. Optional Kittenail hike and potluck supper at 6pm.
- Tues., Jun. 17 Chapter meeting. Honey Creek Park shelterhouse, Monroe. 7:00pm.

### SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

#### WORK PARTIES

- Sat., Apr. 12 Kalscheur Savanna, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., Apr. 26 Vale Prairie, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., May 10 Bush Clover Prairie, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., May 24 Vale Prairie, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., Jun. 7 Bush Clover Prairie, 10:00am 608-375-5271
- Sat., Jun 21 Vale Prairie, 10:00am 608-375-5271

- Sat., Jun 29 Kalscheur Savanna, 10:00am. 608-375-5271

### MEETINGS

- Sun., Apr. 20 Annual Chapter Meeting, Boscobel Library (clubroom basement). 1:00pm, election of Directors. Regular meeting and potluck to follow.
- Sun., May 18 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Sue Linder residence
- Sun., Jun. 15 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Sue Linder residence

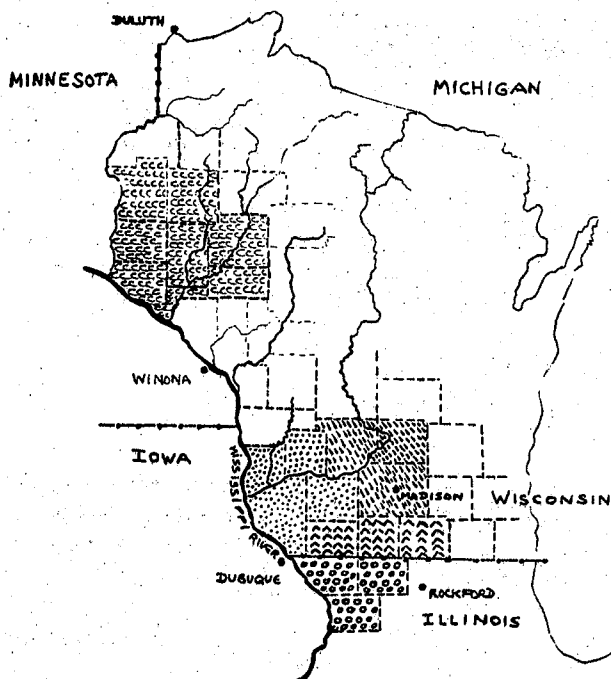
### GENERAL CALENDAR

#### CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS & PROGRAMS

- FOX VALLEY AREA CHAPTER WILD ONES
- Thur., Apr. 10 Burn Workshop. Led by Dave Neu, DNR. 7:00pm at Evergreen Retirement Community. Nonmembers \$3.
- To become a member, just send \$20 per household payable to "Wild Ones" c/o Sue Forbes, Treas. Box 2103, Appleton, WI 54913.

- Thur. Jun. 5 "From Tundra to Tropics: A Global Tour of Our Natural Resources". Olbrich Gardens, 6:30pm. (see pg 7)
- Jul. 30-Aug. 2 Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Conference, UW Madison. (see pg. 5)

## CHAPTER NEWS



- SOUTH WEST CHAPTER
- EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER
- PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER
- NORTH WEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER
- WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER

## EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

### Field Trips Planned

Black Earth Prairie Wednesday, May 14 at 5:30pm.

A tour of this Nature Conservancy preserve in western Dane County will be led by Rich Henderson. The purpose will be to botanize and enjoy the rich display of spring wildflowers found on this diverse dry-mesic remnant. Contact Rich (608-845-7065) for directions.

Mazomanie Bluff Saturday, May 24 at 8:30am.

A tour of this 10 acre plus, village-owned bluff prairie will be led by Rich Henderson. The purpose will be to inventory and explore this prairie and consider Empire-Sauk Chapter's interest in assisting in it's management. Contact Rich (608-845-7065) for directions.

Steenbock Tract Sunday, June 8 at 3pm.

This 60 acre tract of moderate quality dry prairie and woodland is being considered for transfer from the Nature Conservancy to The Prairie Enthusiasts for care and management. This field trip, led by Rich Henderson, will focus on exploring the site and considering management needs. Contact Rich (608-845-7065) for directions.

### Nominations Sought for Empire-Sauk Officers

Nominations are being sought for Chapter president and secretary. These are two year terms. Elections will be made by the general membership at the upcoming annual meeting on July 8th.

### Thanks

The Empire-Sauk Chapter extends sincere thanks to the Downs family of Verona for donating a much needed 10 drawer cabinet.

### Adopted Prairie Makes Progress

by Rich Henderson

On a beautiful February day, the last of the black cherry and prickly ash were cleared from the Pollow Prairie. This tiny 0.25 acre dry-mesic to mesic prairie, sitting in a cornfield near Verona, is enrolled in the Empire-Sauk Chapter's adopt-a-prairie program (also called the orphan remnant program). This is a program in which an interested PE member approaches an owner of a neglected remnant and asks permission to manage the site. If the owner agrees, the volunteer enrolls the site in the program and takes on the management responsibilities.

Four years ago I began working on the Pollow Prairie with the occasional help of my family: Kathy, Ian and Sara. The site was badly overgrown with trees and shrubs and had some wild parsnip invasion. Now, finally, the shrubs and parsnip are under control, the trees are gone, a buffer strip around the remnant has been seeded to prairie (bringing the total managed area to a staggering 0.5 acres), and the site receives regular burning.

Pollow Prairie is small, but well worth the effort. It harbors 60 native plant species, including large

populations of yellow pimpernel, shooting star, and prairie gentian. In the future this site will be used as an educational tool and seed source for the Verona Area School District. Seeds from the site have already been used for restoration work at Governor Nelson State Park.

Aside from the obvious benefits of educational opportunities and conservation of genetic diversity, I've learned that taking the time to salvage small remnants like Pollow Prairie can provide more personal rewards as well. As I pulled into the site to take care of those last two trees, perched on a boundary post at the edge of the prairie, seemingly awaiting my arrival, was a harrier (marsh hawk). He watched me for a few moments and then took off in slow, graceful flight low over the ground. His attitude seemed to be an indignant "Well, it's about time you finished the job!"

### Global Talk at Olbrich Gardens

The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College will offer a program "From Tundra to Tropics: A Global Tour of Our Natural Resources" by Terry Daulton on June 5, at 6:30pm at Olbrich Gardens in Madison.

## PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

### Chronicle of the Briggs Wetland- Friday the Thirteenth!

by R.S. Baller

On Friday December the 13th, 1996, Prairie Bluffer President Rob Baller rolled downward through Beloit into the southern portion of the former great Rock Prairie, now mostly Illinois gravel pits, highways and subdivisions, in that decreasing order of dominance, towards the metropolitan congestion known as Rockford, Illinois. After penetrating the screaming suburbia he found the 1900 era historic house at 320 S. Third Street in downtown Rockford, owned and operated by the Natural Land Institute. Inside he met Mr. Tod Cagnoni, the new and capable land preservationist who inherited Brian Reilly's duties since Brian moved to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources several months ago. With pen in hand, and check in wallet, the appropriate papers were signed, the certified check for \$8,000.00 was handed over, and the emissaries closed the Deal on Briggs Wetland. Briggs is now owned by The Prairie Enthusiasts! Total cost to the Enthusiasts: \$14,000 for 24 acres, plus \$116.00 for title insurance, transfer, and registering of the deed (this latter number is one-half the transfer costs: NLI picked up the other half). Salubrious congratulations and thanks to everyone involved with the acquisition of Briggs! Your efforts have paid off!

The Natural Land Institute will continue to acquire or otherwise protect the surrounding marshlands when possible. The acquisitions may eventually add up to almost 200 acres. Twenty-eight acres known as the Anderson tract, kitty corner to and north of Briggs, have already been purchased and are being offered for

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resale to the Bill Hallstrum-Green-Rock Audubon Society

In early February 1997, Tod Cagnoni notified Rob Baller that Alvera and Curtis Gilbertson, the retired and extremely friendly farmers immediately south of Briggs, have offered their land for sale to NLI! My preliminary estimates, based on aerial photos and a little field work, suggest the 31 acre property contains about 15 acres of tilled field, about 12 acres of Briggs-quality marsh, a ranch style farm house with big yard, storage shed, and garden, and a tightly mowed but still functioning shallow artesian spring behind the residential area. The Gilbertsons would like to sell their 31 acres as a unit.

If NLI purchases the farm they will probably look to sell the buildings at some future date. The Department of Natural Resources Stewardship grant should pick up half the appraised value of the upland and marsh that is conserved.

The wetland complex is truly being united now and needs an ecumenical name. The title *Briggs Wetland* will remain affixed to our 24 acres as that was the agreement made by Brian Reilly with the Reorganized Church of the Latter Day Saints, who sold the tract to NLI. But Church patriarch Jason Briggs did not possess the whole creek bottom; we can call the rest of the complex whatever we want. The East Fork of Racoon Creek is the tributary that runs through it; why not call it: *Raccoon Bottoms*?

Toward this end (pun intended), I have decided to pursue the production of new fund-raising T-shirts. I am currently working with Mauro Magellan, the Monroe area artist/wizard who made our beautiful Briggs Wetland Turk's cap lily t-shirts. The new shirt will feature an appropriate image of a raccoon, with the words "I support Raccoon Bottoms" on it. The back of the shirt may portray a rear view. I haven't decided yet. All proceeds from these shirts will go towards the costs of the Gilbertson marsh.

Perhaps after our next meeting, the Prairie Bluff Chapter will join in this effort. With some arm twisting they may even choose to purchase the Gilbertson marshland from NLI. (Hah). It is my hope that in the future we will all revel in how we love to see *Raccoon Bottoms*, and we will teach our children it is important to keep *Raccoon Bottoms* clean.

## SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

### The Kalscheur Savanna Restoration

by David Lowe

This article is chiefly about the Kalscheur Savanna, but first I would like to digress for a bit and introduce myself to those who don't know me and explain how I fit into the project.

My name is David Lowe, and I live with my wife Diane, north of Barneveld, Wisconsin. I am an archaeologist who has branched off into the profession of prairie restoration. You might have heard of my latest project to date, the oak savanna restoration on the DNR

property containing the battle site of Wisconsin Heights. This area is the location near Sauk City where some warriors, under the Sac Indian, Black Hawk, fought a brilliant delaying action against the Illinois Militia on July 21, 1832, near the end of the Black Hawk War.

In the fall of 1996, Gary Eldred contacted me to see if I would be interested in removing unwanted trees from the Kalscheur Savanna. My landlord has a saw mill which we run part-time, and this provided an opportunity to process the trees into lumber. In January, 1996, I felled around 150 trees from two small ravines on the property, and with the help of TPE member Ron Nieman (and his tractor with a three-point log skidder), skidded all of the downed trees into two landing areas before the spring thaw. I am pleased to mention that there were absolutely no signs of log skidding damage to the savanna. The only way to avoid this type of damage is to remove the logs when the savanna is protected by frozen ground.

Black cherry, slippery elm, and basswood, along with a little walnut, paper birch, and aspen, were removed from the savanna. Throughout the spring and summer, a number of TPE volunteers helped me cut up all of the wood that was not going to the saw mill. Most of the wood removed from the savanna became firewood which at this time remains on the site and amounts to roughly 30 cords. Hopefully, we will sell the wood this year to raise money for the Southwest Chapter. I had one truckload of logs removed in December, and I hope to get the remaining load removed by the end of winter.

Over the summer and fall months, I spent a number of days at the savanna, and it became my home away from home. Due to this on-site presence, I became the steward by default. Many days were spent clearing brush consisting of black cherry, hawthorn, hazelnut, gooseberry, multiflora rose, and blackberry. The remaining stands of aspen were girdled. TPE members collected the seed of various dry prairie species and some wet prairie species. In the fall, Gary Eldred and I burned most of the wet prairie and a portion of the dry prairie that was not burned last spring. Collected seed was hand distributed over the burn areas and in the savanna areas that I had hand cleared.

Last summer, I planted 150 purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*) seedlings, which Gary Eldred mentioned in the fall issue of *The Prairie Promoter*. Most of the milkweed seedlings seem to have survived, except for a small group planted on a knoll that had a thin sandy soil over a shallow sandstone bedrock.

Now I would like to change directions and speak of prairie management techniques. If any of you have undertaken the difficult task of prairie restoration, you quickly realized that it can be a real pain. Nothing is worse than spending long, hard hours clearing non-native species from a prairie remnant, just to see them growing back with a vengeance a few months later. Unfortunately, most of what is removed from a prairie re-sprout at a later date. There are some

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publications that deal with some of these issues, but I think there is still much to be learned. So, in upcoming issues of *The Prairie Promoter*, I will write of the successes and failures of various management techniques that we have used. Hopefully, this will allow those of you involved in prairie management to avoid mistakes. I would appreciate any critical comments of the material I am presenting now and in the future - a phone call, letter, or written response in this newsletter. Since this is an ongoing learning experience for me, I would welcome feedback or corrections to the data and expected errors that will undoubtedly accompany experiments in management techniques.

We have been treating the cut stumps/stems of the non-native species with Garlon #4, and that seems to be working quite well. TPE members had treated blackberry canes in early winter but this, however, was ineffective. I suspect that Garlon #4 treatment on certain species will kill the root system, no matter what the season. Other species might only be susceptible during certain months of the year when vascular movements of fluids within the plant are high. Since Garlon #4 does not have carry-over (which makes it desirable for prairie application), the chemical might not work if there is not kill within a few days of application. I applied Garlon #4 to the cut stumps of the plant species that I removed from the prairie, and there seems to be a high kill rate. I will wait until the next growing season to see if this is indeed the case. At that time, I will let you know what species were killed and the time of year in which the application was carried out. So stay tuned.....

I would like to thank Gary Eldred, Ron Nieman, Steve Hubner, Jan Ketelle, Judy Lovaas, Gary and Gail Adams, Sue Linder, Mary Sobota, Rich Henderson, Bill James, Jaye Maxfield and her parents, Jesse Bennet, Bob Kubicek, and anyone else I forgot to mention. These volunteers have graciously provided much needed labor for maintaining Kalscheur Savanna. An amazing amount of work has been completed this past year, which shows how much can be accomplished with volunteers if they put their minds and backs into it. (I urge each of you to donate at least one day a year to your chapter's work parties). You should all feel proud of these results, and I invite anyone and everyone to come sometime and appreciate this wonderful place. I have met some very nice people while working on this prairie, and I look forward to seeing you all at the banquet and on some work parties this coming year. I would also like to thank my wife (who is an English major) for editing my articles. I know it may come as a shock that I may have less than perfect punctuation and spelling, but I guess the cat is out of the bag. Oh, by the way Gary, since the Packers are now WORLD CHAMPS and the season is unfortunately over, I will be available for Sunday work parties.

### **Seed Orchard Update**

by Gary Eldred

The Truax No Till Drill Fund (TNTDF) is moving along, with members showing support for the project.

The seeder fund has to date received three donations: one for \$20; one for \$200; and one for \$2,000. Steve Hubner, David Lowe and I want to thank the donors for their generosity. Now that we're past the holidays and the energy of spring is filling our spirits, it's our hope that the seeder contributions will increase and the Southwest Chapter's dream of large scale seed production will be one step closer to reality. At this time, we have a goal of planting another 10 acres in the fall. Our committee will be discussing which species we will plant and how much seed we'll need. If there is anyone who would be willing to help with collecting seed for the orchard, please call David Lowe (608-924-3705), Steve Hubner (608-776-4146), or Gary Eldred (608-375-5271). If you are interested, we will send detailed information to you. Thanks for your support!

### **Work Party Report**

by Gary Eldred

The Southwest Chapter's work party program had a more difficult time than in other years this past winter. For some of our diehard volunteers, (judging by their phone calls), their hearts were in the right place but sub-zero temperatures and snow storms kept most of us close to home. Two work parties at the Kalscheur Savanna did result in a lot of cut brush piled and burned and a very aggressive work party at Murault-South has made a long overdue major hole in the invading woods there.

Elsewhere in *The Prairie Promoter*, you will find a list of upcoming work parties. Several chapters offer their members the opportunity to get involved at a hands-on level on our prairie remnants. Actively restoring health to these rare places is a very spiritually rewarding process. We hope that in the upcoming season, you and your family will decide to get involved. See you at a work party!

## **WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER**

### **New Internet Address**

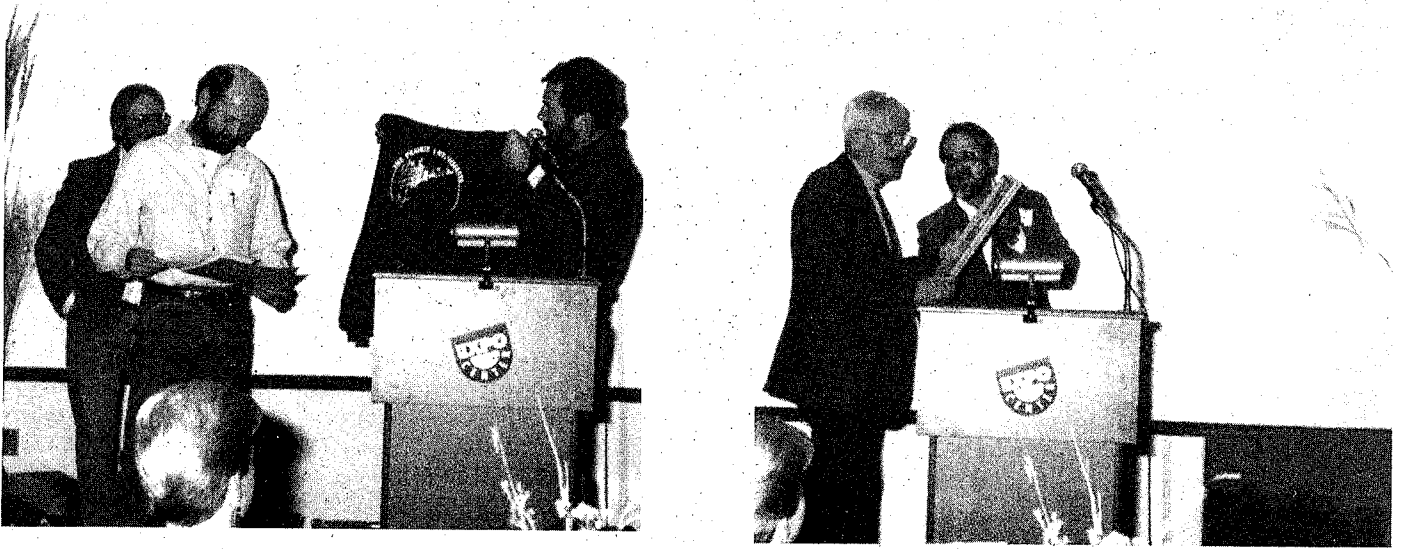
The West Central Chapter now offers a page on the world wide web. Contact bomarc @ UWSTOUT.EDU

### **Donation Received**

The St Croix County Sportsman's Alliance contributed \$250 to the West Central Chapter in December. This money will be used to continue the chapter's membership drive and to develop educational material for the chapter region.

### **Current Projects**

West Central Chapter is currently involved in three projects: a prairie demonstration in Rusk County for the 1998 Farm Progress Days event; and two interpretive prairie plantings, one at the Red Cedar State Trail in Menominee, the other at the visitor station at the Willow River State Park in Hudson. For more information contact Harvey Halvorsen at 715-684-2914.



**Banquet, 1997.** Left: Rich Henderson (right) presents Empire-Sauk Chapter's Prairie Enthusiast of Year Award to Gary Birch. Right: Gary Eldred (right) presents Southwest Chapter's Enthusiast of the Year Award to Don Hagar. See Banquet story, cover.

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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 JoDaviss, Carroll & Stephenson Counties
- West Central Chapter** - Serving Barron, Chippewa, Polk, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pierce, Pepin, St. Croix Counties
- General Membership** (outside of chapter areas)       **DONATION:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:**

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

**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:

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