

# THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 10, NO.2

SUMMER 1997

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

## TPE ANNUAL MEETING

The Prairie Enthusiasts will hold its annual meeting on July 19 at Lake Wissota State Park near Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The meeting is scheduled for 12:00 p.m. (Riverview Shelter) followed by a picnic. This year's meeting will be hosted by the West Central Chapter of TPE, who will supply animal protein. Members should bring their own table service, a dish to pass, and beverages.

The park is located on 6,300 acre Lake Wissota and offers: 11 miles of scenic trails which edge the shoreline; fishing, swimming, waterskiing, canoeing, and boating; and, three dry-mesic prairies totaling about 120 acres. Bring hiking shoes to wander through these prairies which were restored about 25 years ago and bring your swimsuit to splash around in the lake!

If you wish to spend the weekend at the park, call 715-382-4574 to reserve your campsite **now** (\$10/night for residents, \$12 for nonresidents). You will need a state park sticker to enter the park: \$5/ day or \$18/year for residents; \$7/day \$25/year for nonresidents.

The following nearby accommodations are also available:

Best Western Midway           1-800-528-1234  
2851 Hendrickson Drive       715-835-2242  
Eau Claire, WI                 \$55-\$82/ night  
  (children under 18, free)

Best Western White  
House                           1-800-528-1234  
1828 South Hastings Way       715-832-8356  
Eau Claire, WI                 \$50-\$60/night  
  (children under 12, free)

Comfort Inn                    1-800-221-2222  
3117 Craig Rd                 715-833-9798  
Eau Claire, WI                 \$41-\$79/night  
  (children under 18, free)

Pleasant House Inn B&B       715-382-4401  
16649 96th Ave                \$79-\$129/night  
Chippewa Falls, WI

Apple Tree Inn B&B           1-800-347-9598  
6700 Highway 53 South        715-836-9599  
Eau Claire, WI                 \$60-\$125/night

**Directions:** I 94 to Eau Claire, exit Highway 53 North. Follow Highway 53 through Chippewa Falls and turn **right** (East) on County S to County O. Turn **right** (East). Follow County O to Lake Wissota State Park. For more information contact Chuck Bomar at 715-232-8133.

## ACTION ALERT!

### TIMBER RATTLESNAKE PROTECTION

by Gary Casper

We need your help in preventing the disappearance of one of the most spectacular wildlife species in Wisconsin. The Timber Rattlesnake has figured prominently in Wisconsin lore and natural history, and is one of the few top predators still hanging on in our state. Since historic times, populations of timber rattlesnakes in Wisconsin have been reduced by 1 to 2 orders of magnitude. This means that the effort required to find 100 snakes in the past now produces only 1 to 10 individuals. Many dens have been hunted out, and most remaining dens may no longer support viable populations. This drastic population reduction is not unique to Wisconsin, but has occurred range-wide. Most states and provinces have already listed the Timber Rattlesnake as a threatened or endangered species. **What is unique about Wisconsin is the opposition protection is facing, and the present lack of protection for this animal.**

In September, 1996 the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) was formally petitioned to list the timber rattlesnake as a threatened species, based on a consensus of expert opinion and documentation of drastic population declines. The WDNR subsequently proposed listing and a public comment period was held in March, 1997. At that time state representative DuWayne Johnsrud (R-Eastman) organized a petition drive to collect signatures opposing protection. Mr. Johnsrud chairs the State Assembly Natural Resources Committee, and in response to the timber rattlesnake issue was quoted in the Wisconsin State Journal (March 23, 1997) thusly: *"We've been working very hard to make them extinct."* It appears that Mr. Johnsrud simply does not believe the species is in decline, despite the unanimous consensus among the biologists that this is the case. There is also a significant number of Mr. Johnsrud's constituents who apparently hate and fear snakes. At the public hearings, these persons claimed to have large numbers of timber rattlesnakes on their properties, and related their irrational fear of these animals. These voters are being represented by Mr. Johnsrud. WDNR is following up on their claims this summer, and their results will be presented to the Natural Resources Board during the next step in the listing process in late summer.

.....article continued on page 3

# 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).

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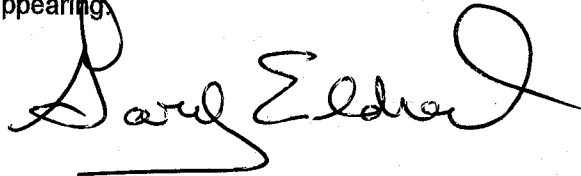
Editor: Robert Pike, 715-246-5975

A couple of weeks ago, renowned biologist Edward O. Wilson spoke to members of The Nature Conservancy at Kennedy Manor in Madison. I regret that I did not get to hear Mr. Wilson; but I did read about his presentation in *The Wisconsin State Journal*. He spoke about the diversity of life on planet earth and how precious it is. He informed the audience that one could spend an entire lifetime studying a stump! Of bacteria, he observed, "Nobody has any idea how many species there are."

He spoke of tropical rainforest destruction, noting that an area about half the size of Florida is destroyed every year! "Why should we care?" Wilson asked, and answered, "simply because these are our fellow species, our companions on this planet that is spinning in black space." Wilson noted that there have been five great extinctions on earth and he believes that we are the sixth!

He observed that sometime in the next century we will probably get human populations under control and added, "We should try to carry as much life with us as we can through this bottleneck." Therefore, we must do what we can to save creation and not push life off the face of the earth.

Edward O. Wilson's remarks are worth serious consideration. Those of you who have been members of TPE for any length of time know that Wilson's philosophy of the sanctity of life in its multitudinous and diverse forms is one that we hold very near to our hearts. The bottom line is our strong belief that we are caring for and passing on something of immeasurable wealth to future generations. The willingness to give time, money and support to prairie conservation and management is the very essence of TPE. Without your support, we would not exist. And if we did not exist, the remaining bits and pieces of the Upper Midwest's prairie and savanna would have scant chance of survival. Please consider giving as much of your time and money as possible. Our prairie and savanna remnants are rapidly disappearing.



Gary Eldred

## FOR SALE

TPE has published an 80 page booklet entitled *An Introduction to the Tallgrass Prairies of the Upper Midwest*. It 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.

Since Wisconsin Power and Light generously paid all printing costs, TPE can offer copies of the booklet for \$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**

As a result of Mr. Johnsrud's efforts, the public comment period ended with essentially equal pro vs con protection comments. However, nearly all votes against protection were on a single petition, while nearly all comments supporting protection were individual letters. Despite the end of the public comment period, Mr. Johnsrud continues to circulate petitions, and promises to hold more public hearings if the listing proposal passes the Natural Resources Board and goes before the state legislature, where he chairs the Natural Resources Committee. We believe Mr. Johnsrud will do everything he can, utilizing the power and resources of his public office, to deny protection to this animal.

In light of this heavy handed opposition from the chair of our State Assembly Natural Resources Committee, we are continuing to circulate petitions to show public support. **We need many thousands of signatures to counteract the efforts of Mr. Johnsrud's office.** Petitions are available from Gary S. Casper, 800 W Wells St, Milwaukee, WI 53233. (414) 278-2766. FAX (414)278-6100. Email gsc@csd.uwm.edu

## **TIMBER RATTLESNAKE INFORMATION**

### **Historic Occurrence**

Timber Rattlesnakes occurred in 29 states at the time of settlement. Anecdotal accounts indicate that within appropriate habitat, this species was extremely abundant, like most pre-settlement animal populations.

### **Current Status in the United States**

Today, the Timber Rattlesnake has been extirpated from Maine and Rhode Island and is considered rare to imperiled in another 15 states. It is protected as an endangered species in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Vermont, and Virginia; as a threatened species in Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New York, and Texas; as a protected species in Maryland and Kansas; and is protected from take in Oklahoma and Pennsylvania. The timber rattlesnake is currently listed as a species of special concern in Wisconsin. It is also under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for possible protection under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

### **Reasons for Current Status**

The Timber Rattlesnake has experienced the most dramatic declines in the states that represent the northern portion of its range, such as Wisconsin. In many of these states, appropriate habitat was limited (historically) and this habitat has experienced significant alteration from human development.

The Timber Rattlesnake has also suffered a great deal from human persecution, apparently spurred on by a perceived threat they pose to people and livestock. Fear of snakes is widespread in our society, learned at an early age from folklore and adult attitudes towards snakes, as well as from persistent negative images of snakes in religion and the entertainment industry.

History is filled with stories of rattlesnake dens being dynamited or filled with concrete. Literally tens if not hundreds of thousands of rattlesnakes have been killed in numerous states for bounties (fees paid to eliminate or control undesirable species). Wisconsin has its own history of bounty hunting. Fortunately, the rattlesnake bounty ended in 1973, at which time the Massasauga Rattlesnake, Wisconsin's only other venomous snake, was added to the state's endangered species list.

### **Status in Wisconsin**

Today, the Timber Rattlesnake still occupies most of its historical range in the state but it has experienced a tremendous reduction in both the number of active hibernation sites (dens) and in the number of individual snakes. Most population surveys show this species to be hanging on in very low numbers, far below levels that will support a population over time. However, range-wide surveys of population numbers have never been conducted. To do so would cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars and perhaps ten years to accomplish. The vast majority of herpetologists (those who study amphibians and reptiles) in Wisconsin and Minnesota believe that the Timber Rattlesnake is facing future endangerment if actions are not taken to protect it now.

Timber Rattlesnakes continue to decline today due to continued habitat loss, particularly of critical den sites, and from harvest by sport or commercial hunters. Timber Rattlesnakes parts, including rattles, freeze-dried heads, meat, and skin fashioned into hat bands, belts, and boots are sold in both U.S. and foreign markets.

### **Life History**

There are several aspects of the Timber Rattlesnake's life history that make it especially vulnerable to over-harvest, and which make recovery from over-harvest difficult. They are:

- Females take 9-11 years to mature in Wisconsin, hence populations require long recovery periods;
- Females breed only every 3-4 years, further reducing recovery potential;
- Females may only breed 3-5 times in their lifetimes, limiting the number of offspring produced;
- The minimum viable population size is estimated at 30-40 individuals with approximately 8-12 reproductive age females present. Dens with this many individuals are already very rare in Wisconsin;
- The segment of the population most susceptible to harvest by snake hunters is gravid (pregnant) females, which stay at the den sites throughout the summer and remain more exposed and vulnerable as they incubate their developing young. This biased harvest leaves populations with skewed sex ratios, strongly favoring males and inhibiting future reproduction;

.....*article continued on next page*

- Juvenile rattlesnakes experience high mortality rates, limiting recruitment of adults into the population;
- Adults have few natural enemies, and cannot recover efficiently from human persecution. Adult mortality rates must remain extremely low to maintain populations over generations.

In Wisconsin, herpetologists believe that most Timber Rattlesnake populations are already below viable levels (<25 individuals) and that the few remaining viable populations will not remain that way if hunting and habitat destruction of dens continues.

**What is Known About Rattlesnake Bites In Wisconsin**

Reports of rattlesnake bites have been documented and recorded since 1982. We have only anecdotal history of snake bites prior to this date. Only one human death has ever been recorded in the State of Wisconsin from a rattlesnake bite. From 1982-96 there have been a total of 4 Timber Rattlesnake bites in the state. This equates to 1 bite every 3.5 years.

**Putting Rattlesnake Bites in Perspective**

How does 1 bite every 3.5 years compare with other animal related deaths and injuries? In Wisconsin, the number of people that die from deer/car collisions ranges from 0-7 per year for the same period, 1982-96, or 2.2 deaths per year. Only one death has ever been attributed to a Timber rattlesnake in the state's history. The number of deer/car injuries recorded from 1982-95 ranged from 324 in 1982 to 693 in 1996. The number of cat and dog bites reported annually in La Crosse County alone from 1984-95 ranged from 145-252 per year. Comparing these figures to 1 rattlesnake bite every 3.5 years demonstrates the comparatively negligible threat Timber Rattlesnakes truly pose to humans.

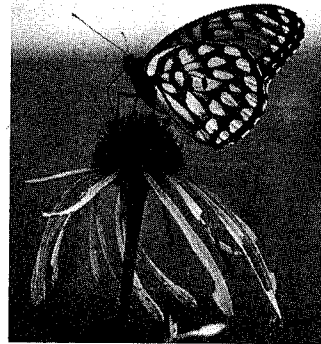
**The Issue of Protection**

There is plenty of information, both nationally and in Wisconsin, to justify protecting this over-exploited and persecuted species. The issue is no longer whether we should protect it, but how best to do it for the benefit of all. We are proposing two options: a) to list it as a Protected Wild Animal, or b) to list it as a threatened species. Both options will eliminate hunting of the Timber rattlesnake which will afford some level of protection. Listing this snake as a Threatened Species will go a step beyond this level by providing some protection of essential habitat (especially den sites). The opinion of herpetologists is that protection of vital habitat is the best and surest way to prevent this species from becoming endangered in the near future.



**MEET YOUR PRAIRIE BUTTERFLIES  
REGAL FRITILLARY**

by Ann Swengel



As I now write in anticipation of spring, the regal fritillaries I saw in frenetic activity last August have died, their eggs already hatched and the young caterpillars, as yet unfed, tucked snugly in shelter from raking winds and biting cold. When the first warm days rouse the prairie plants to growth, the caterpillars will awaken as well and begin

feeding on their exclusive diet of violets. In early summer, when you read this, their metamorphosis into regal fritillary adults will be complete.

In so many ways, regals are the perfect subject for butterfly watching. Among the most distinctive, not to mention lovely, butterflies, the regal is prominent, about the size of a monarch or slightly smaller. Easily identified, the regal is the only fritillary (or other large butterfly, for that matter) with striking contrast between the dark background of the hind wings and the brilliant orange front wings on the above (dorsal) side. The hind wing underside presents another striking contrast between glistening white spots and a darker background that is somewhat variable, perhaps only a dull rust color, depending on individual and lighting.

Still, the butterfly watcher must be careful when identifying regals. Most similar is the Aphrodite fritillary, especially the alcestis subspecies that inhabits northern tallgrass prairie but is much less featured in the field guides than the more widespread aphrodite subspecies that also occurs here. The alcestis Aphrodite has a rich dark red background on the hind wing underside, but regardless of subspecies, the Aphrodite's hind wing above is bright orange, not black. Even monarchs backlit in flight can give a first impression of regal coloring, since the shadowed hind wing underside can seem to contrast darkly against the bright orange above. Some other butterflies of medium size may also have rather dark wings contrasting with bright orange front wings on the above side. Question marks and unusually dark American painted ladies have momentarily fooled me.

Regals, particularly males, are accustomed to active lifestyles up in the air where you can more easily notice them, although they may streak past you rapidly. To sex them, take special note of two areas on the wing. One is the outer of two rows of spots paralleling the margin of the hind wing above. These are orange in the male (but can fade!) and white in the female. The other .....*article continued on next page*

is the front wing tip. It has a narrow black margin of even width in the males, while in females the black widens into a triangular shape and encompasses a few white spots. This feature is much more distinctive above than below.

On the other hand, regals pose a serious challenge to the butterfly photographer. They roost well hidden in the prairie vegetation, emerge early to bask, warm up quickly, flush easily, and fly often and far. Seek individuals feeding on nectar, since they may be so engrossed as to be less likely to fly or notice your approach. Of the thousands of nectar visits I've noted, the vast majority were to pink or purple flowers, with thistles, (native or alien) especially prized in the northern Midwest.

Alas, the biggest challenge for the butterfly watcher is not identifying or tracking regal fritillaries, but rather



finding a population in the first place. It is in tallgrass prairie that this butterfly occurs in the widest range of soil moisture types (but preferring upland dry prairie), also tolerating a fair amount of habitat degradation, and apparently reaches its highest abundance, although that's not the easiest thing to evaluate, as this is the most destroyed of our prairie types. In Wisconsin where the species is highly endangered, regals are now apparently restricted to a few prairie patches in the southwestern quarter. Further west, in Minnesota and Missouri, thriving populations can still be found - if you know exactly where to find that 1% of remaining tallgrass prairie. Some mixed-grass prairies in central Nebraska also produce outstanding regal densities, as reported in the 4th of July Butterfly Count (published by the North American Butterfly Association, 4 Delaware Rd, Morristown NJ 07960), but the species is more restricted to wetter prairie types there. Only occasional in the short grass region, regals barely reach westward as far as eastern Colorado.

Regals do occur east of prairie too - or did, anyway. In Connecticut, for example, Charles Remington related to me that he kept track of over a dozen populations dependably resident in wet meadows until the late 1960s

- early 70s. Since then, a regional extinction wave has swept westward to Michigan, so that only one major population is now known east of Illinois, at a military installation in Pennsylvania.

This behooves us Wisconsinites to appreciate the fragility of our regal populations. Just because they're here now doesn't mean they'll still be around tomorrow. The longer I study butterflies, the more I appreciate the importance of consistently suitable habitat in consistently large enough patches, year in, year out, year after year. Unlike many midwestern butterflies I've analyzed, regals show this area effect on the scale of the individual site. That is, larger sites have relatively denser populations than smaller ones. But many butterflies, including the regal, show an area effect on a larger scale too - what I think of as clusters of sites. In other words, a particular prairie is much more likely to support regals if the site is in a county with a number of other suitable prairies occupied by the butterfly, as compared to an equivalent prairie in isolation in another county. This "cluster effect" suggests that the regal's area sensitivity includes a rather large landscape scale.

Site management also strongly affects regal distribution and abundance. In our butterfly surveys at over 100 prairies in six states since 1988, my husband Scott and I have consistently found that prairies in fire management support fewer and smaller regal populations than comparable prairies similar in vegetation type, quality, and size in the same region that are managed with light grazing or rotational haying (mowed no more than once per year). Again, this pattern is strong in the 4th of July Butterfly Count, too. Burning is much more lethal directly to the regals than the other managements, and stimulates lush growth of grasses which overtop the violets and nectar flowers that regals require.

As I anticipate this summer's field season, I feel a sad sense of foreboding. On the grand scale of prairie's former expanse, current regal habitats are tiny fragile wisps of isolated patches in an inhospitable context of plowed fields, woodlots, and urbanization. I hope my study populations have more of a future ahead of them than the many others that have declined and disappeared over the past decades. But after more than 14,000 observations of this species around the Midwest, most of all I marvel at the regals' magnificence. This butterfly is a complex animal complete with characteristic behaviors embodied in a four-inch wingspan of electric orange, velvet black, and shiny white. This characteristic butterfly of the tallgrass prairie is truly regal.



#### ERRATA

In the last issue Andrew William's grant donations were reported incorrectly. Grant support was received from : The Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin, and the UW-Madison Natural History Museums Council. We apologise for any confusion.

# The Grasshoppers of Wisconsin (Orthoptera:Acrididae)!

## Part I: The basics of Grasshopper Identification Chuck Bomar

Grasshoppers, grasshoppers, everywhere. It seems that everyone has a story about grasshoppers, but in reality most people know very little about them. Most people can provide a variety of anecdotal information..”back in ‘88 there were more grasshoppers than we could shake a stick at” or “..remember that scene in the Exorcist?” Moreover, I knew that this was an article that needed to be written when Alice said “you mean there’s more than one kind?”

Grasshoppers belong to the Order of insects called the Orthoptera. The term Orthoptera refers to the straight wings (from the Greek ortho=straight, ptera=winged) found on these insects.

The basic life cycle of the grasshopper is as follows: Adult females lay eggs in “pods”, and depending on the species, females will lay or bury multiple pods that may contain between 5-150 eggs each. Eggs hatch in the spring, nymphs (pre-adult) are usually present from May-early July, Adults are present from late June to early October. There are a few species which overwinter as nymphs and are adults in May and June. Grasshoppers exhibit incomplete metamorphosis; in layman’s terms this means nymphs look similar to adults throughout their life stages. The opposite of this is complete metamorphosis, as seen in butterflies and beetles, where the transformation from larvae (caterpillars) to pupae to adult represents three drastically different appearances.

Very little information is available on Wisconsin grasshoppers, and as we know, we are losing valuable information on species every day. The Wisconsin Natural Heritage Program (WNHP)- Bureau of Endangered Resources (BER) has listed 6 species of grasshoppers as Species of Special Concern. (Table 1). Being a species of special concern could mean that the species is at the edge of its range, or that it lives in an isolated habitat that is being threatened. What it ultimately means is that more research is needed to better understand the ecological parameters that each of these species require.

Kathy Kirk (WDNR-BER/ Prairie Bluff Chapter) and I are interested in completing the task of cataloging the grasshoppers found in Wisconsin. This process will include intensive field sampling, museum work, and sifting through keys before we have our initial product completed. Because of the complexity of surveying the entire state, any enthusiasts that are interested in helping out should contact Chuck Bomar, Department of Biology, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751 (715-232-2562, e-mail:bomarc@uwstout.edu) or Kathy Kirk, 701 12th Ave., New Glarus, WI 53574 (608-527-2686).

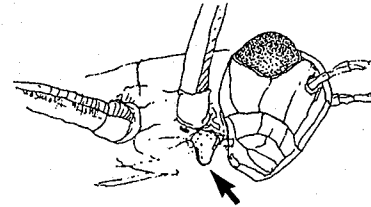
### Identification

The Acrididae, or short-horned grasshoppers represent what most people would consider the common

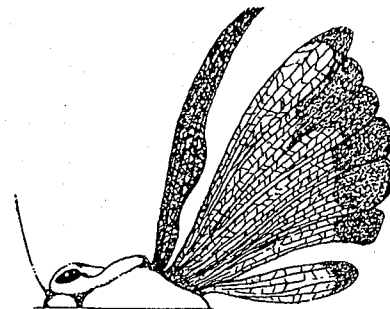
grasshopper. There are approximately 600 or so species found in the U.S., and I estimate that there are 85-95 species which probably exist in Wisconsin. This represents a relatively high level of diversity, considering there are only 71 species of mammals in Wisconsin.

This family can be better organized taxonomically by dividing them into three subgroups:

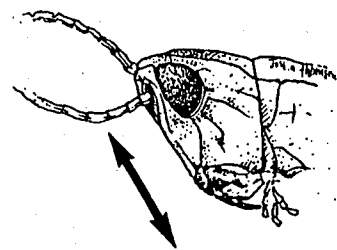
- 1a Presence of a distinct spine between front legs (figure 1).....**Spur-throated grasshopper**
- 1b Absence of a distinct spine between the legs



- 2a Hind wings are brightly colored with a distinct black band on the outer margin (figure 2)  
.....**Band-winged grasshopper**



- 2b Hind wings are not brightly colored, head when viewed from side appears slanted. The degree of the slant will vary between species: (figure 3)  
.....**Slant-faced grasshopper**



**Table 1 Wisconsin grasshoppers on the WNHP-BER Species of Special Concern List**

Blue-legged grasshopper	<i>Melanoplus flavidus</i>
Sand locust	<i>Psinidia fenistralis</i>
Lake Huron Locust	<i>Trimerotropis huroniana</i>
Mermira grasshopper	<i>Mermira bivittata</i>
Spotted wing grasshopper	<i>Orphulella pelidna</i>
Striped sedge grasshopper	<i>Stethophyma lineata</i>

# DOING THE RIGHT THING

John Oschner

In recent years an encouraging trend in landownership and management has become increasingly common. The trend involves the purchase of small hardscrabble farmsteads by prairie preservation minded individuals. I have had the pleasure of being able to work with a number of these right-minded individuals on their restoration projects. These landowners all seem to share a like-minded devotion to preserving not only their historic farm buildings, but they've also shown a keen interest in managing and expanding any resident prairie and savanna remnants that survive on their land. They want to "do the right thing".

In a time when so many small farmsteads are being subdivided to accomodate rural homesites, it is encouraging to see a small but increasing number of people resisting the trend toward the urbanization of our rural areas. Granted, not everyone has the wherewithal to purchase such significantly sized parcels of land but this is a trend that should be strongly encouraged. It is a land ethic that looks at land as the base of a healthy plant, animal, and human ecology rather than a speculative commodity to be subdivided. It is an ethic that follows in the footsteps of Aldo Leopold's Sand County farm.

I have had the thought that it would be beneficial for these prairie landowners to connect with each other directly. I have observed that although some of these individuals live within close proximity of one another, they sometimes are not aware of each other's presence. Perhaps it is time for these individuals to form some sort of Prairie Homestead Network. Such a network would allow these landowners to compare notes in addition to providing an information clearinghouse for dealing with the challenges of farmstead sized prairie and savanna restoration.

At a time when urban and rural sprawl are mindlessly steamrolling so many parts of the country, this small trend gives one hope for saving at least some small elements of our prairie past.

## Midwest Oak Savanna Conference

### Aided by Prairie Enthusiasts

The Prairie Enthusiasts are proud to be co-sponsors of the 3rd Midwest Oak Savanna Conference being held this summer, July 30-Aug 1 at the U-W Madison. (See calendar of events.) In addition to PE members helping in organizing and running the conference, PE managed sites will be hosting several conference field trips. The sites include Kalscheur Oak Savanna, Sugar River Oak Savanna, Noll Valley Savanna and the Cassell Savanna site along the Lower Wisconsin River.

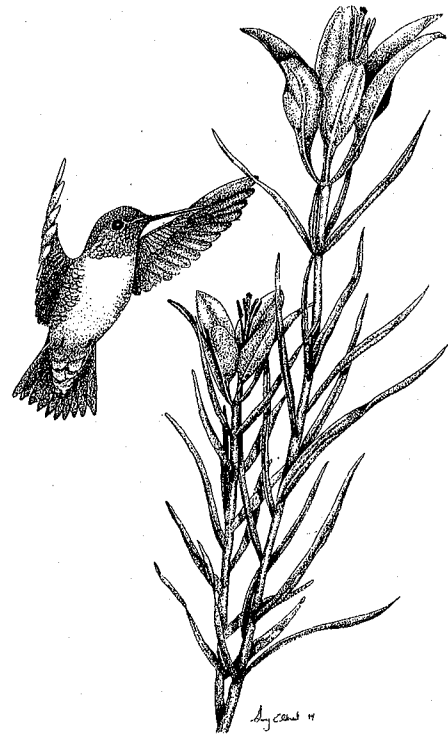
Volunteers are needed to staff the Memorial Union Booth for The Prairie Enthusiasts on May 30-31. Staff members from TPE **will not be required to pay**

**registration for the conference.** If you are interested in staffing the TPE booth, contact Rich Henderson at 608-845-7065 for details.

## WOOD LILY

### *Lilium philadelphicum*

Prairie Lily, Orange Cup. Lily family (*Liliaceae*)



## DESCRIPTION

One to three large, vivid orange flowers stand upright. Most other lilies have nodding flowers. The flower has three orange petal-like sepals, three petals the same color and shape as the sepals, six conspicuous stamens and a three-lobed stigma. Lower parts of the inner surface of the "petals" are spotted with purple. Stems grow from a bulb. Lanceolate sessile leaves are opposite or in whorls of three to six. Seeds are in dry, three-celled capsules where double rows of them are tightly packed in each cell. This plant grows to a height of one to three feet and blooms in mid-June to mid-August. It is occasional in dry to dry-mesic prairies and savannas in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and the northern half of Illinois. Harvest seeds in September and October. Plant seeds 3 to 4 inches deep in the fall for spring germination.

# RAPTOR RAPTURE

Susanne Ripple

It was Thursday and Bob Anderson had not eaten in more than a day. He had spent all of Wednesday observing a peregrine falcon which had taken over a nest box at a Northern States Power facility along the Upper Mississippi River. Anderson had been called by an excited NSP biologist that morning. Bob cooked himself breakfast while describing the glory of watching the peregrine at a nesting site his project had placed.

Bob Anderson has been captive breeding and then releasing peregrine falcons for the past 12 years. He has worked 16 hour days for months on end - a virtual one man show - to restore the falcon to reasonable numbers in the natural world. Recently he actually put an organizational name and structure to his many years of work - The Raptor Resource Project. It's a strong likelihood that Bob Anderson has missed numerous meals during his dedicated pursuit to keep the peregrine falcon from extinction.

Bob's message to the human world is that one may have a profound effect on environmental degradation, if the person believes and commits for the long haul. Anderson started as a lover of falcons, a falconer, who thought he would never see peregrine falcons in the wild. They had all but disappeared by the mid-1960's, primarily because of effects of DDT on reproduction.

In the 1970's, just after the falcon was officially placed on the list of endangered species, and DDT was banned, a falconer from Cornell University began efforts to captive breed, then release the birds to the wild.

Eventually, Bob got heavily involved in this effort. After 4-plus years searching for a pure peregrine pair of the midwestern species, he began breeding and releasing birds in their traditional habitat: the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries. After some deeply felt losses of chicks and eggs, probably from predation, he and other volunteers working to save the falcon began placing nest boxes on man-made structures in cities.

Presently there are nesting pairs of peregrines successfully producing offspring in most major midwestern cities.

While this is a great feat of will, Bob Anderson is not at rest. For him, the heart of the matter is that none of these falcons have ever left the man made world for what was originally the peregrine's natural habitat.

Bob says that evidence indicates that chicks born and raised in man-made areas will imprint, and thus return to nest in similar areas. He believes that the only way to get the peregrines living in natural habitat is to release chicks in those places.

Anderson believes so strongly in his project that he left a home near the Twin Cities this year, and moved his 6 breeding pairs to a farm near Decorah Iowa. The project does conservation, research and education, and it is expensive. Quail for falcon feed alone costs about a thousand dollars a year. Bob supports the project by selling chicks to restoration organizations, and through

donations. Because of the move to Decorah, and the negative effect this has had on the sensitive birds' ability to reproduce, the funding is down. Hopefully that is not really why Bob has not eaten for a day, though after observing his dedication, one could imagine him forgoing food for the sake of the peregrine's restoration.

When Anderson first started working to breed peregrines, he worked full time for the 3M Corporation. He eventually sold a lake home and moved to an old farm house near the Twin Cities, to have the space and quiet necessary for the peregrines' reproductive success. He has spent all his savings to continue the effort. He even resigned after 17 years with 3M, when the raptors needed more of his time.

Bob Anderson works to restore peregrines to healthy populations, against the odds. He does not allow the overwhelming task to stop him. In that way he is much like the Prairie Enthusiasts, who dedicate hours and hours and years to a very steep climb. What would Bob Anderson say about that? Just keep climbing.

If you would like to know more about the Raptor Resource Project, what you can do to help, or if you would like to send a donation, write Bob Anderson, Raptor Resource Project, 2580 - 310th St, Ridgeway, Iowa 52165. phone 319/382-6300 email: [rrp@salamander.com](mailto:rrp@salamander.com)



## PRAIRIE RESTORATION TOUR

The Blue Mounds Project is planning a summer tour of prairie restorations. The highlight of this trip will be a visit to the International Crane Foundation (ICF).

ICF has been restoring prairie on their property for ten years. They have planted several small prairies over a period of years, both in the spring and the fall. The result is a huge restoration experiment that can be seen first hand!

The tour group will learn how ICF did their restorations and what worked best. The visit will include ICF's three year old oak savanna restoration. And, of course, a look at the cranes. This is one of the few places in the world (perhaps the only one) where you can see all nine of the world's species of cranes in one place.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

#### EVENTS

- Wed., Aug. 20 Field trip, Noll Valley Savanna Park, 5:30pm (See pg.10)
- Sat., Aug. 23 Field trip, Koltes Prairie, 10:30am.-noon  
Leader: Paul West 608-271-0504(See directions below)
- Thu., Sep. 18 Nature walk and seed collecting at Underwood Prairie. Leader:Rich Henderson 845-7065 (See pg. 10)

#### WORK PARTIES

- Tue., Jun. 24 Work party, Koltes Prairie, 5:30-7:30pm. Pull wild parsnip and sweet clover. Bring shovels, loppers, scythes and wear gloves long shirt, and long pants. Leader: Paul West, 608-271-0504.
- Sat., Jul. 19 Work party, Koltes Prairie, 9:30a.m.-noon. Cut wild parsnip. Bring shovels and wear long sleeve shirt, long pants and gloves. Leader: Paul West 608-271-0504 (See directions below)
- Sat., Sep. 13 Community work party at St. Benedict prairie restoration, including seed collecting at Gov. Nelson State Park. Contact Nancy Schlimgen for details at 849-5519.
- Sat., Sep. 27 Seed collecting at Underwood Prairie (see pg. 10) or contact John Mecikalski 608-849-8358.

#### MEETINGS

- Tues., Jul. 8 Chapter Annual Meeting Farm, Indian Lake County Park (Hwy. 19 west of U.S.12). Potluck 6:00p.m., meeting at 6:30.
- Tues., Nov. 4 Board meeting, The Nature Conservancy, West Main Street, Madison 7:00p.m.

Directions to Koltes Prairie: Meet on Bong Rd, one-half mile east of Highway 113 between Madison and Waunakee

### PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

#### MEETINGS

- Tues., Jul. 15 Chapter meeting. Turner Hall Rathskellar, Monroe, 7:00pm.
- Tues., Aug. 19 Chapter meeting. Turner Hall Rathskellar, Monroe, 7:00pm.
- Tues., Sep. 16 Chapter meeting. Turner Hall Rathskellar, Monroe. 7:00pm.

### SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

#### WORK PARTIES

- Sat., Jul. 12 Kalscheur Savanna, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., Jul. 26 Vale Prairie, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sun., Aug. 10 Kalscheur Savanna, 10:00am. 608-375-5271
- Sat., Aug. 30 Bush Clover Prairie, 10:00am. 608-375-5271

#### MEETINGS

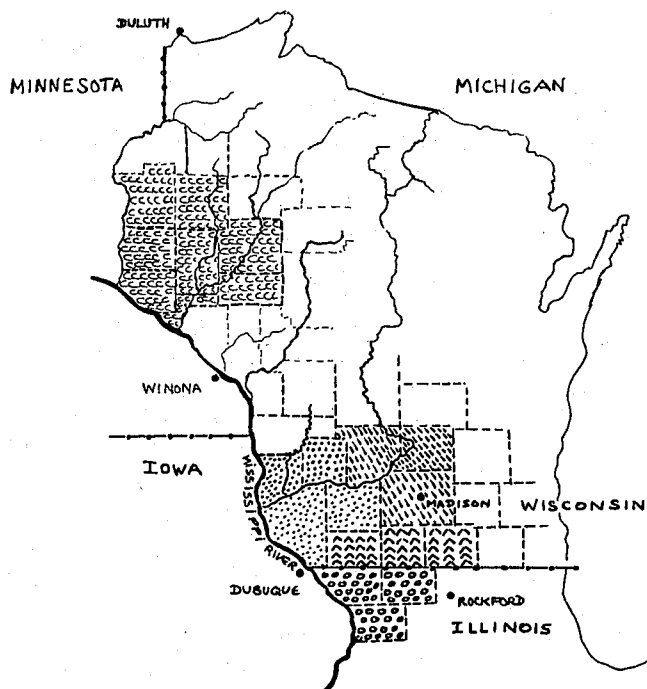
- Sun., Aug. 17 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Sue Linder residence
- Sun., Sep. 21 Chapter meeting, 1:00pm. Sue Linder residence






#### GENERAL CALENDAR

#### CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS & PROGRAMS

- Fri., Sep. 8 TPE Board Mtg. DNR Office Dodgeville 6:00p.m.
- Jul. 30-Aug.2 Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Conference, UW Madison. For registration information call (608) 263-1672; for information on the program, call The Nature Conservancy at (608) 251-8140
- Sat., Aug. 9 TNC Tour Mammals of the Prairie (see pg.10)
- Sat., Aug.16 Hogback Tour (see pg.10)
- Sat., Sep.13 Restoration Field Day (see pg.10)

## CHAPTER NEWS



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

## **EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER**

### **Empire-Sauk Chapter's Annual Meeting and Picnic**

The annual meeting and potluck picnic of the Empire-Sauk Chapter will be held Tuesday, July 8, at Indian Lake County Park (off Hwy 19 in NW Dane County). Potluck dinner and meeting at 6p.m. Bring a dish to pass, plus your own eating utensils. drinks will be provided. Officers up for election are president and secretary. The meeting will be very short. A tour of the prairie and savanna remnants at Indian Lake will follow the meeting. Please try to attend.

### **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.

### **Restoration Planned for St. Benedict Center**

The Benedictine Life Foundation of Madison has begun a 50 acre prairie/wetland restoration at the St. Benedict Center, which is located along Hwy. M on the NW side of Lake Mendota. The Empire-Sauk Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts has become a cooperater in this project along with several other organizations. Our contribution to the effort will include advice (much has already been provided by members Mark and Sue Martin, Dan Weidert, Nancy Schlimgen and Rich Henderson), seed, and "field assistance" from volunteers (you, our membership).

About 10 acres a year of cropland are scheduled for planting to prairie over the next 4 to 5 years. In addition, a 5 acre oak woodlot is being considered for woodland restoration. The St. Benedict restoration will complement the 380 acres of prairie, savanna, and woodland restoration on-going at Gov. Nelson State Park, which lies immediately to the NE across Hwy. M.

If you have interest in in becoming involved with this exciting restoration (which has great public exposure potential for our cause) over the next few years, contact our chapter's volunteer coordinator for the Saint Benedict project, Nancy Schlimgen (849-5519). If you have seed that you would be willing to donate to the restoration, contact our chapter's restoration chair, Dan Weidert (233-5658)

### **Wildlife Ecology Club Underwood Prairie Management**

How does one provide interactions with local environmental professionals and hands-on experience in prairie restoration and management from a classroom setting? This is a question the Wildlife Ecology Club at UW-Madison tackled last fall when they undertook the management of Underwood Prairie, a privately owned prairie remnant in Iowa County.

With the joint goal of education and conservation, the club has already had a fall work party and made valuable contacts like Rich Henderson and Paul West. Being a student project with most people having little background in prairie management, a

partnership with The Prairie Enthusiast's Empire-Sauk Chapter has been formed through Rich and Paul to ensure a high standard of management. The prairie itself can be divided into three areas: a fairly well preserved patch at the south end, a small woodlot in the middle, and another patch of prairie on the other side with sumac, black cherry, and prickly ash encroaching on it. This summer, plant and animal surveys will be done along with seed collections, which will continue into the fall when a burn and work parties are planned. Some dates for activities are listed in the calendar of events. The club welcomes help in any of our summer or school year activities. Please contact Jim Giese at 608-257-9136 for more information.

### **Noll Valley Savanna Park Field Trip**

Rich Henderson will lead an evening field trip at this 5 acre Town of Middleton Park that is being slowly restored to oak savanna by Prairie Enthusiast volunteers with the use of fire, seeding, cutting, and herbicides. Although badly degraded by over grazing in the past, the site is showing good signs of recovery. Exceptionally large open-grown white and red oak trees are the site's crowning glory. We will also visit an adjacent oak woods on Ice Age Trail property that was burned for the first time this last spring. If time allows, we will also visit another community park at Noll Valley which was seeded to prairie 6 years ago. Meet at the savanna park which is located on the east side of Noll Valley Road at its highest point (at a deep road cut). Noll Valley Road is off of Timber Lane, 1.5 miles south of County S or 2 miles north of County PD. Call Rich Henderson if you need directions at 608-845-7065.

### **Landowner Grassland and Wetland Restoration Field Day September 13, 1997**

A field day is being held at Goose Pond Sanctuary located near Arlington in Columbia County, for rural landowners interested in restoring wetlands and grasslands for wildlife on their property. Grassland restoration will focus on planting prairie grasses and wildflowers.

Topics include: field demonstrations, site selection, seed selection and collecting, planting, and management.

This event is sponsored by the DNR, Madison Audubon Society, Pheasants Forever, The Prairie Enthusiasts, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

Preregistration is required. Contact Mark or Sue Martin, Goose Pond Sanctuary, W7468 Prairie Lane, Arlington, WI 53911, or phone 608-634-4160 for a registration form.

### **Tour: Mammals of the Prairie August 9, 1997, 9:00am to noon**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Madison Audubon Society are conducting a field trip to Dane County's Black Earth Prairie State Natural Area with the focus on small mammals of the prairie. TNC is inventorying small mammals on their grassland preserves and this will be a chance to observe a few  
.....*article continued on next page*

mammals close up. The trip will be lead by Nicky Anthony, Dick Bautz, and Elizabeth Spencer. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the intersection of Fesenfeld Road and Cty. Hwy. F. From Black Earth, travel west on Cty. Hwy. KP for 1 mile, then south on Cty. Hwy. F for .25 mile to Fesenfeld Road. Contact the Nature Conservancy at 608-251-8140 for more information.

Tour of the Hogback August 16, 10:00a.m.-1:00p.m.  
The Nature Conservancy and The Prairie Enthusiasts are sponsoring a field trip to the Hogback, a new prairie preservation project, in Crawford County. The Hogback is a steep ridge that supports more than 100 acres of dry prairie along with a diversity of plants and wildlife. We will hike up a moderately steep hill. Bring a lunch and come prepared for warm, sunny weather. The trip will be led by Mark Martin and Paul West. Meet at the interesection of State Hwys. 179 and 131 near the village of Steuben at 10:00a.m. Contact The Nature Conservancy at 608-251-8140 for more information.

**THANK YOU VOLUNTEER BURNERS!**

In spite of some uncooperative weather, our chapter had a very successful burn season this past spring. We conducted prescribed burns at six sites (65 acres) in Dane County and 9 sites (119 acres) in Sauk County. The Sauk County work was led by Jeb Barzen and the Dane County work was led by Rich Henderson. Nearly all the burns were on savanna and oak woodland sites. Thank you volunteers:

- |                |                 |                       |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Troy Anderson  | Tom Fosdal      | Trish Roberts         |
| John Ashley    | Brad Guhr       | Scott Sauer           |
| Pete Baker     | Kathy Henderson | Steve Swenson         |
| Barb Barzen    | Brian Hotz      | Joshua Sulman         |
| Jerry Bartlet  | Buddy Huffaker  | Richard Vankonigsveld |
| John Barnes    | Marcie Huffaker | Darcy Veach           |
| Muffy Barrett  | Amber Isenring  | Scott Weber           |
| Willis Brown   | Becky Isenring  | Marianne Wellington   |
| Kathy Bruner   | Jeff Isenring   | Paul West             |
| Ervin Bruner   | Ann Kleckner    | Bob Wernerehl         |
| Jerry Dahlen   | Charlie Luthin  | Joe Wiedenhold        |
| Olivier Dupuis | Matt Millen     | Kate Winter           |
| Haidy Ear      | Curt Meine      | Keith Wipperforth     |
| Dave Erickson  | Rob Nelson      | Brock Woods           |

Your help makes it possible.

**WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED SUPPORT ES CHAPTER**  
Wild Birds Unlimited (716 S. Whitney Way, Madison) will be contributing 10% of all their birdseed sales for the month of October 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 prairie and savanna stewardship in Dane County.

**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER**

**NIPES Join Driftless Area Partnership**  
The Ecosystems Program (an Illinois Conservation 2000 program) is a voluntary program of groups of

individuals, both public and private that is administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. It calls for the creation of coalitions to identify and prioritize proposals for local conservation projects. Each coalition works within a specific resource rich area of the state. The Ecosystems Program provides the coalitions with technical assistance and funding.

So far this year, 60 projects have been funded in Illinois (for \$1,650,00) including projects to:

- create a Geographic Information System resource database for an area (\$70,000)
- increase wildlife habitat on small rural properties (\$65,200)
- assist farmers in no-till techniques (\$50,100)
- create an outdoor environmental learning center (\$4,500)
- test a bid-in process (like CRP) for easements \$85,000)
- equip two prescribed burn teams (\$50,000)

On April 17, fourteen people representing 13 local organizations met in Elizabeth IL. to hear Meg Bushnell describe Governor Edgar's Conservation 2000 program. After hearing her presentation, all in attendance decided to adopt the name **Driftless Area Partnership (DAP)** and to work generally within the driftless area of northwest Illinois.

The group also drafted a letter to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requesting recognition as a Local Partnership Council (LCP). With Recognition, DAP will receive:

- a \$10,000 initial planning grant to hire a facilitator (a consultant to assist DAP in establishing collaborative methods, goals, and objectives)
- a Geographic Information System (we will be on a waiting list for the hardware, but the software and data should be available soon)
- a new IDNR publication, *The Driftless Area Resource Assessment*, which will catalog current knowledge about the natural and socio-economic resources of our area (this will take some time)
- technical assistance from IDNR to extend the knowledge, and
- the responsibility to solicit and prioritize ideas for local conservation projects and make funding recommendations to IDNR

A response to the letter is expected before the end of May. In the meantime, we have scheduled two meetings to work on project proposals. The initial DAP membership is expected to grow as other groups who have expressed interest in joining DAP hold their spring meetings.

**THE PROPOSAL**

The NIPES proposes to aquire from the US Army Corps of Engineers certain portions of the former Savanna Army Ordinance Depot which contain significant natural resources and which do not lend themselves to traditional economic development.

.....article continued on next page

In particular, we would propose to lease and subsequently purchase the land around and containing the wetlands known as Primm's Pond, a parcel of approximately 120 acres in the northeast quarter of section 19, Hanover Township, JoDaviess County and the land northwest of Primm's Pond and east of Q Road, a parcel of approximately 80 acres in section 18, Hanover Township, JoDaviess County.

Our purpose in acquiring the land would be to maintain it in a natural state and manage it as a park. More specifically, The Prairie Enthusiast's objectives in creating a park would be to: protect and restore its natural resources, provide a natural amenity for the public and honor naturalists from the upper Mississippi region.

The proposed parkland contains a wide range of physical environments ranging from open, shallow water pond to upland, dry sand prairie. Between these extremes there lay areas of marsh, meadow, wet sand prairie and mesic tall grass prairie.

As of August 1996, the IDNR has documented the presence of 37 species of threatened or endangered plants and animals living in the immediate vicinity. Listed species known to inhabit the park site (which has not been surveyed ) include: Blanding's Turtle - Federal Candidate; Great Egret - Illinois Threatened; Pied-billed Grebe - Illinois Endangered.

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts feel that the creation of a park at the former Savanna Army Ordinance Depot will significantly contribute to the redevelopment of the area. Indeed, the creation of Stewardship Park will foster the development of the surrounding property and lead to the betterment of both man and environment. Specifically, the park would provide: outdoor recreational opportunities, natural resource protection and restoration, environmental education facilities and a unique environmental attraction.

## SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

### Update on the Prairie Seed Planter

Work is continuing at our seed orchard near Lancaster, Wisconsin. Last winter Steve Hubner, David Lowe, Sue Linder and Gary Eldred met during a blizzard and hashed out our seed collecting list for our 1997 planting season. We are hoping to plant another 10 acres this fall. We plan to purchase a Truax seed drill to use in the seed orchard establishment. Given our long term goal to plant about 100 acres, a seed drill is going to be essential.

Once we start harvesting seed from the orchard, the planter will be used to plant that seed in prairie re-establishment projects here in southwest Wisconsin. The drill will cost about \$12,000, and so far we have raised about \$6,395. We sure could use your help with

this project. If you can help, please send your tax deductible donations to The Truax Drill c/o Gary Eldred 4192 Sleepy Hollow, Boscobel, WI 53805.

### Meads Milkweed Restoration

The Meads milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*) is listed as a Federally Threatened Species and was last seen in Wisconsin in the late 1800's near Lancaster, Wisconsin. Last year, with the help of the Morton Arboretum and Bluestem Farms, the Southwest Chapter attempted to reintroduce this imperiled species on a prairie remnant which TPE owns. In early summer, eight seedlings were planted on the site. They were carefully monitored all summer and did well, but as fall arrived, all the plants died back. As we anxiously watched this spring, there seems to be only one survivor. Although this is sad news, at least one did survive and efforts will be made to continue planting seedlings (again with the help of the Morton Arboretum and Bluestem Farms) until we have a healthy population on the site. As we have learned over the years, there are often setbacks, but persistence can afford rich rewards. We will certainly keep at it.

## PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

### Spring Burn Report

Prairie Bluff Chapter's Spring '97 burn season turned out to be quite successful. In addition to several small burns conducted in York township and our yearly requisite burn activities at Monroe's Honey Creek Park and Lincoln School restorations, the PBC burn crew carried out several larger scale burns on privately owned remnants.

On Saturday, April 26, we burned portions of several remnant areas at the Jerry and Barb Larson homestead in northern Green County. The following day, another successful burn was carried out at the Hayward-D'Alessio ranch near Mt. Horeb. (see Photo on page 13) Brian Bader was Burn Boss. In the following days several more grateful prairie parcels were given the gift of fire to round out the precribed burn season.

This spring's burn season was not only ecologically successful, but also financially successful thanks to generous donations from the Larsons and the Hayward-D'Allesios. On behalf of my fellow Prairie Bluffers, I would like to thank these concientious prairie stewards for their generosity and their dedication to the prairies and savannas they've chosen to protect and restore.



**Burn Boss Brian Bader (on the right) with his stalwart burn crew at the Hayward-D'Alessio site**



## **WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER**

### **REFLECTIONS ON A COMMUNITY PROJECT** **Robert Pike**

The duty of a writer is to observe and inform based on a non-biased opinion, but with all the negativism that spews forth from Washington and other parts of the country as to how the government should or should not operate, it is truly an uplifting feeling when one watches how government, citizen volunteers, and organizations come together for a common cause. On April 19th., I participated and observed how members of The Prairie Enthusiasts West Central Chapter, DNR, and local residents turned out to prepare and plant a prairie restoration site.

The site is owned by Tom Kenyon, who also owns and operates Rusk Feed and Farm Supply. The coming event is Farm Progress Days which is to be held September of 1998 and is located about 4 miles east of Menomonie. For those unfamiliar with Farm Progress Days, it is an annual event held at different locations each year and is well attended by many groups concerned about and interested in agriculture. To have a site selected for such an event is an honor in itself.

The area which had been awarded our attention is directly in front of the entrance to the event area. It is

1.5 acres of what once was the town dump, railroad siding, and abandoned property. The site is compressed between a main road on the south, and CNW mainline railroad tracks to the north. One of the main concerns was that it needed to be properly drained due to runoff from a parking lot at the east end, and a gentle slope to the west which served as a catch basin.

When I first went to the location in March 1996 to do a site plan, it had been completely overrun by sprouting trees which had been cut down several years earlier. It also contained telephone poles that had been cut down 18 inches above the ground, and slabs of cement which were once foundations for RR buildings. Every weed and scrub tree you can imagine had settled there and all were fighting to take over the lot. In short, a naturalist's nightmare.

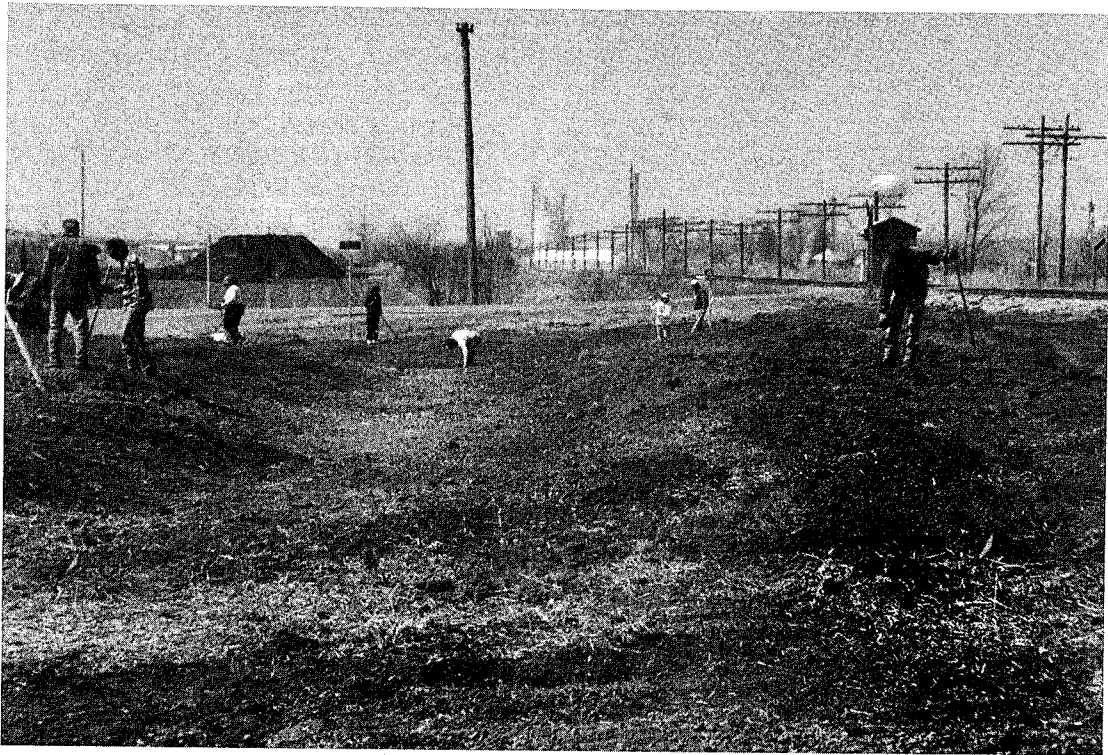
Several ideas were drawn up for what could be done on the site. Meetings were held between the property owners, DNR, and members of The Prairie Enthusiasts. Cost considerations were the sticking points in most discussions, and at times it appeared as if our noble intentions would go the way as all others do when government and private ideals are thrust together. It took a great deal of consensus building and persuasion to get all interested parties to sign off on a final plan. For those of you who haven't experienced this process, all I can say is there really is a God. In October of 1996, DNR dozers began the grading and site stripping of all the unwanted trees and weeds. Later, a mulch and temporary seeding was done by the Dunn County Land Conservation Department.

This April, and the traditional spring renewal, brought out more volunteers from the town of Rusk, Prairie Enthusiasts, and DNR to finish seeding the site. Additional grading with a strong back and iron rake had to be done to prevent soil erosion and make the bed ready to receive the many varieties of grasses and forbs. Stumps had to be removed, and any scrap metal left by the dozers had to be pulled out and hauled away. After the site was prepared, the seed was planted with a Brillion seeder and by hand.

The mixture of grasses included: big bluestem, side oats grama, Canadian wild rye, switch grass, little bluestem, and Indian grass. We selected the following forbs: pale purple coneflower, stiff goldenrod, evening primrose, wild bergomot, black-eyed Susan, and others. Once established, these prairie grasses and forbs will make a lustrous improvement to a once shabby lump of land.

I have often heard it said that government and private interests can never make anything work right and perhaps at some levels that is true. But I have witnessed, at least at the local level, that there is a definite interest in improving our communities, that people are people no matter what title they carry, and that collectively, we can make a difference for the better.

(See picture on back page)



**West Central Chapter crew defying the proverb that you can't make a silk purse  
out of a sow's ear!!**

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