



# THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 10, NO.4

WINTER 1997

*Celebrating ten years of prairie conservation in the Upper Midwest*

## 10th Anniversary Banquet

TPE's 10th Anniversary Banquet is scheduled for March 14, 1998. TPE's Board of Directors has selected the University of Wisconsin- Platteville as the site of the banquet. The student center at UW-P has been remodeled and is arguably the most attractive and comfortable venue we have ever had for this event.

Since the occasion is also marking TPE's 10th year of prairie and savanna conservation in the upper Midwest, the format for the event will depart significantly from that of past banquets. Registration will begin at 12:30p.m. A cash bar and complimentary snacks will be available throughout the afternoon. From 1:00p.m. to 4:00p.m. a series of panel discussions and brief lectures will be offered on the following topics: How to Plant a Prairie; Conservation Easements; Prairie Birds; and, Small Mammals of the Prairie. **As space is limited, early pre-registration is the best guarantee that you will be able to participate.** Individual TPE chapters will offer presentations about their achievements and current projects concurrently with the aforementioned discussions and lectures.

Social hour begins at 4:00p.m. and dinner is scheduled for 5:30p.m. The buffet meal offers the following main course selections: marinated chicken breasts and pepper steak (**vegetarian lasagna will be available only to those people who preregister and specify this item**). The buffet will include parsley potatoes, corn O'Brien, tossed salad, ice cream roll, and beverage. The cost of the buffet will be \$12 for members and \$15 for non-members.

At 6:30p.m. there will be a final call for raffle tickets and silent auction bids for over 150 items. At 6:45p.m. TPE will honor Dr Hugh Iltis, a TPE life member and one of the pioneers of conservation biology. Dr. Hugh Iltis never fails to be interesting, informed, and challenging in his views. We can expect the evening to end with a flourish!

**Once again, space is limited, and the best way to ensure your opportunity to participate is to pre-register early. See the form on page for details.**

Overnight lodging is available at the following locations:

Super 8 Motel	800-800-8000	\$47 per night (couple)
	608-348-8800	
Best Western	800-528-1234	\$65 per night( couple)
	608-348-2301	
Mound View Inn	608-348-9518	\$45 per night(couple)

## Banquet Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to help at the Prairie Banquet on March 14. Tasks and positions for which people are needed include: (1) audio/visual equipment assistance (assist speakers); (2) clerks for raffle ticket redemption and auction item payment; (3) raffle ticket drawing and computer entry of winning numbers; (4) raffle ticket sales; (5) raffle/auction item layout and organization; and (6) guest registration. Call Rich Henderson 608-845-7065.

## Donation Items Needed for 10th Annual Banquet

**Raffle and Auction** It's time to start thinking about raffle and auction items for the Prairie Banquet. If you have something you would like to contribute or if you have ideas or leads about businesses that might be interested in contributing (gift certificates or merchandise), contact the appropriate donation coordinator listed below. Remember that the banquet is one of our greatest fund raising opportunities for prairie and savanna conservation and that it occurs only once a year. Don't wait! The absolute deadline for having items registered with the coordinators is March 3. Donated items must be delivered to the donation coordinators prior to the banquet day or be brought to the banquet facility between 12 noon and 1:00 pm, March 14. **All items must be preregistered:** no last minute walk-ins, please.

**GENERAL:** Rich Henderson 608-845-7065

## CHAPTERS

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

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

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

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

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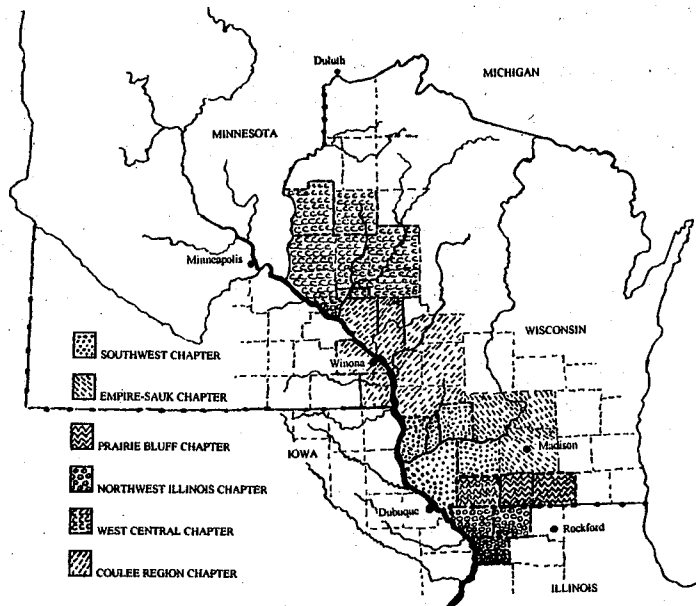
Contact: Harvey Halvorsen, 715-684-2914

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

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**TPE CHAPTER AREAS**



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southwest Wisconsin Chapter<br>Grant, Crawford, Richland & Iowa Counties                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Empire-Sauk Chapter<br>Sauk, Columbia & Dane Counties  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Coulee Region Chapter<br>LaCrosse, Buffalo, Vernon, Trempealeau,<br>Monroe, Jackson, Winona & Houston Counties | <input type="checkbox"/> West Central Wisconsin Chapter<br>Barron, Chippewa, Polk, Dunn,<br>Eau Claire, Pierce, Pepin, St. Croix Counties |

# President's Message

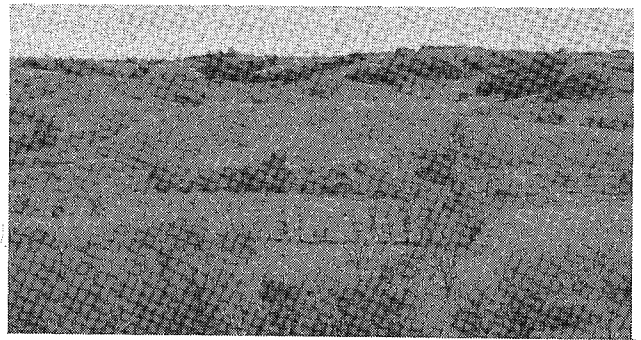
TNC's **BROKEN KETTLE PRESERVE**

I breathed a sigh of relief and sensed the tension leaving my body as I exited Interstate 80 and turned south across the central Iowa landscape. I checked the map and saw my destination, the Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge, was about 15 miles ahead. The refuge boasts a 5000 acre tallgrass prairie restoration and interpretive center (which is the best I've ever seen) and was the site of the Missouri Prairie Foundation's (MPF) 1997 annual meeting. I looked forward to a nice weekend getaway, as well as opportunities to see the new refuge, and meet some of my fellow MPF members. I also wanted to begin developing a closer relationship between The Prairie Enthusiasts and other prairie conservation organizations, such as the MPF, whose 20 years of prairie conservation has earned my deepest respect.

The field trip was led by refuge personnel and we looked at hundreds of acres of newly planted prairie. The plantings have a good start, but it will be many years before a prairie starts to emerge. After the field trip we took a tour of the seed production facilities which appear to have a first rate production capability (something which would be the envy of Wisconsin DNR property managers).

The evening meal provided many opportunities for networking. I disseminated information about TPE and was both surprised and gratified to learn that many MPF members were already aware of our existence and accomplishments. Later, a fellow by the name of Glenn Pollock introduced himself and told me he was the President of The Iowa Prairie Network (IPN). What a nice guy Glenn turned out to be! We shared a very enjoyable evening talking about prairies and their conservation.

After a morning meeting of the MPF board, I said my goodbyes and told Glenn I'd see him at IPN's annual meeting later that month. IPN's annual meeting was held at the Broken Kettle Grasslands in the Loess Hills of northwest Iowa. Here again was an opportunity to develop a closer relationship with another prairie organization. The Nature Conservancy's Broken Kettle Preserve is a magnificent place and I truly enjoyed the field trips. After a day of hiking and stimulating conversation, the IPN provided a great evening meal and a speaker who held everyone's attention. As usual, when one leaves such gatherings it is with the warmth of new friends and the feeling that prairie conservation is advancing on a bigger scale than one previously thought. It's very reassuring that so many people have such a passion for the prairie and are willing to work so hard and long to ensure it's survival for future generations. My hat is off to all of you!



## Fire Effects in Prairie: Further Comments

by Andrew H. Williams

In the last *Prairie Promoter*, Rich Henderson responded to an Ann Swengel article in a yet earlier issue. The context was fire. Ann's research has yielded some exciting new information which should give those of us swinging a drip torch reason to reconsider the extent to which we apply fire to prairie remnants. She is by no means the only person alarmed by the current rates at which fire is applied to prairie remnants. Perhaps a few readers are unaware that Ann and Rich have been at the center of this debate for several years, and that for many of us who are involved, the frustration and heat generated through the volatile mixing of love for our vanishing prairies with vigorous research effort have been a challenge to endure.

The concluding paragraph of Rich's article begins: "Lastly, fire was not only a part of the eastern tallgrass prairie, it was the reason it was here at all. This is something that plant ecologists have been in agreement upon for 50 years." Stand back a moment; consider this closely. Rich is stating that plant ecologists have held, for 50 years, one concept of how our Midwestern prairies came into being. They looked back in time to describe a landscape scale ecosystem that once was here. But how should we look forward? How should we manage the tiny remnants of this once vast ecosystem? Though studying the past and studying plants are certainly helpful, Ann's faunal research, my own, and others', cause us to question the validity of the concept, the model, the paradigm, bequeathed to us by those old botanists. We have been repeatedly saying over several years that we have found the old botanists' model inadequate to explain our data. This should prompt others to rethink the model, but the data and ideas presented by those of us rattling the bars of conventional wisdom have been vigorously resisted by the old guard, as Rich's statement clearly shows.

One of my favorite quotations, alas one I cannot attribute to its author, is, "The greatest block to learning is knowledge." The local prairie establishment of DNR, TNC, and academics at University of Wisconsin and its arboretum, as well as people at analogous agencies in

neighboring states, seem unable to overcome their knowledge of the paramount importance of fire in prairie. Though I believe fire is important in prairie, other influences, notably grazing, must be involved as indicated by our data. The vigorous use of fire in the management of prairie remnants has alarmed people in my acquaintance who study insects, mammals, birds, reptiles, and even plants, so it's time to reconsider that old botanists' model!

A good first step is to moderate the extent to which we apply fire, as well as any other management practice, at any one time, thereby spreading the risk inherent in anything we do over both time and space, as Rich suggests. We can purposefully manage different remnants in different ways, varying the application frequency and extent of the various tools we use. Regardless of how we decide to manage prairie remnants, we will make more progress if we think -with the basic building blocks of understanding rather than depend without reservation upon the models of our predecessors. We will learn more if we work harder to see without prejudice, to design research without the constraints of preconceived ideas, and to keep our minds open to the observations of others whether they confirm or challenge what we already "know".

### **Fire Effects in Prairie: A Reply**

by Rich Henderson

I must admit that I am surprised by Andrew Williams' wide ranging response to my article. So much so, that I was uncertain as to whether I should even reply. However, since he does raise several important issues, and places me at the center of one of them, I feel obligated to respond. I also believe his blanket criticism of nearly all professional ecologists and prairie managers of the upper Midwest deserves a response as well.

The first, and I assume primary, concern that Andrew raises is that "the current rates at which fire is applied to prairie remnants" may be harmful to their flora and fauna. Unfortunately, this concern as stated is too vague for any meaningful discussion. The rates at which fire is currently being applied to prairie remnants varies greatly. The frequency ranges from not at all to almost annually. The portion burned ranges from 10 percent to 100 percent. The real issues about the use of fire are: (1) how often, how much, and what part of a specific site gets burned; (2) how intense the fires are; (3) what time of year the fires occur; and (4) how isolated the site is from other remnants. These are the specifics that can be debated.

Unfortunately, this concern as expressed by Andrew is all too typical of how the recent "debates" regarding prairie management seem to proceed. I have been witness to most of the discussion, which has been bogged down in a tangle of multiple, often general, issues. If the mounting rhetoric and animosity that the general issue of prairie management has been generating in recent years is to be reduced and progress

made at resolving disagreements, I believe the specific issues need to be teased apart, clearly defined, and separately addressed. The following is my attempt to do that and, at the same time, provide a response to Andrew's article.

#### Issue 1- The origin of the eastern tallgrass prairie

I'm not the best source for the history of this issue, but it is my understanding that well over 50 years ago there was still an active debate in the scientific community about the origin of our Midwestern prairie and savanna. If I recall correctly, there were several competing explanations which included fire, climate, soils, disease, herbivores, and even tree girdling by Native Americans. Eventually the fire model, with a climate precursor (i.e., that the climate had to be warm enough and dry enough to allow fire to exist, but yet wet enough to provide enough fuel), won out. It was accepted because it was the best at explaining the evidence at hand. However, acceptance of the fire model apparently did not come easily. The Smoky the Bear campaign had already been on its way for over 25 years: there was resistance to the idea of fire being something positive.

Contrary to Andrew's assertion, the fire explanation has stood the test of time and is still very relevant today. In fact, it has actually gained strength over the years as more evidence, such as sediment core and tree-ring fire-scar data, has come forward. I'm not certain what evidence Andrew is referring to that is causing him, the Swengels, and unspecified others to "question the validity of the concept." What I think he is referring to is the evidence that some native prairie species experience a decline in the first year or two after a fire. Some of this evidence has come to light in recent years as Andrew states, but much has been around for the past 20 or more years. There is even one prairie insect study from the 1930's. This information, however, does nothing to challenge the basic precept that fire was the primary cause for there having been so much eastern tallgrass prairie, savanna, and oak woodland. What such evidence does suggest is that it is unlikely that every acre burned every year.

Andrew also seems to imply that our plans for the future should be of greater concern than our understanding of the past. I disagree. I think the two are linked, and thus of equal importance. I suspect that to downplay the relevance of the past to the present will only compromise the future. Andrew admits that looking to the past can be helpful, but he seems to have some reservations that I don't have. I believe that good forward thinking depends upon good understanding of the past.

My position, however, does not imply that we should take what happened in the past and try to apply it directly to the present. I think everyone is aware that things have changed too much for this to work. The real issue is whether there is agreement on the idea that understanding of the past is the first step in natural area management, and that applying what we learn from the past to the present (and future) is the second.

## Issue 2 - The role of large herbivores

There is no question that bison and elk played a role in eastern tallgrass prairie. The real issue is how much of a role. Were they the critical factor in the creation and maintenance of the eastern prairies and savanna? This is exceedingly unlikely. There is too much evidence pointing to fire as the primary cause of prairies and savannas, but bison and elk may have played important roles in the maintenance or suppression of certain species. For example, there is some reason to believe that elk may have played an important role in aspen suppression or that bison may have kept forb diversity high in some areas.

However, before grazing can be brought into the mainstream of eastern tallgrass prairie management there are many questions that need to be addressed. For example, how abundant were bison and elk in the eastern prairies before European diseases reduced the hunting pressure from Native Americans? Are there species of eastern prairie plants or animals dependent upon the disturbances that bison or elk provided? To what degree can domestic livestock mimic the effects of native grazers? What effects do domestic livestock grazing have on prairie plants, insects, birds, etc.?

Grazing as a management tool is an area of research that clearly needs to be explored and efforts are underway to do so. The Nature Conservancy is currently taking advantage of new prairie-pasture acquisitions to begin exploring some of these questions and joint TNC and UW-Madison research proposals have been submitted to potential funding sources.

## Issue 3 - Effects of fire on prairie plants

Extensive research has been done on this subject, but there is still much to learn. The timing, frequency, and intensity of the fires are very important factors in determining the effects, but it is safe to say that the effects are generally positive, if not critical, to the well being of prairie vegetation.

## Issue 4 - The effects of fire on prairie fauna

A fair amount of research has been done on the effects of fire on prairie birds and small mammals. In both situations there are a group of species that prefer, or do best, on recently burned sites, a group that does best on sites one or two years after it has been burned, and a group that prefers sites that have gone two or more years without fire. Because mammals and birds are not tied to native vegetation, they are often a lesser concern in remnant (at least small site) management. This is not the case for invertebrates, however.

Far less is known about the effects of fire on prairie invertebrates. As pointed out in my original article, this an area of very active research. At this point in time it appears there are species that increase, those that remain unchanged, and those that decline with fire. Important considerations for invertebrates are their (1) restrictedness to prairie remnants, (2) on site survival of fire (i.e., do they have to recolonize from unburned areas?), and (3) recovery rates after fire. As with plants, the timing and intensity of the fires are also very

important factors in determining the effects on invertebrates.

The amount of research on the effects of fire on reptiles and amphibians is small. As with other taxa, it appears that the seasonal timing and intensity of the fires are very important factors. What little evidence there is suggests that reptile and amphibian populations do alright with fire, but mortality can occur.

## Issue 5 - Effects of mowing or haying on prairie plants, insects, birds, etc.

Relatively little is known about the effects of mowing or haying. Some preliminary studies found it to be different than fire, but, as with fire, the seasonal timing of treatments seems to be very important. For the full potential of mowing as a management tool to be realized, much more research will be needed. One drawback to mowing is that most sites are not accessible to, or safe for, the equipment. Another drawback is the potential for introducing weed seeds from contaminated equipment.

## Issue 6 - Prairie management in today's changed landscape

In his second paragraph, Andrew brought up a very good point about the difference between the past and present condition of the prairie landscape. Clearly, we can not rely solely upon the ecological processes of the past to maintain the prairie remnants of today. Hence, the common use of cutting, mowing, and herbicides in prairie management today. These are all points that my original article stated very clearly. The last point of the article, and the one Andrew took the most exception with, was not meant to imply that alternative managements have no usefulness. What I was trying to point out is that a prairie managed entirely without fire runs the risk of eventually becoming something other than prairie. If we have to make that tradeoff in some cases for endangered species, so be it, but we need to recognize that a tradeoff is most likely being made.

## Issue 7 - Entrenchment of the old guard

Given our incomplete knowledge of fire effects (and other management techniques), it seems reasonable, as Andrew points out, to spread the risk by relying less on fire and increasing the use of other management techniques such as grazing, mowing, cutting, herbiciding, etc. It also seems reasonable to vary the application of all these techniques in space and time. However, in contrast to Andrew's assertions, I doubt that these points have gone unconsidered by the "prairie establishment," as is evident by their long standing use of most of the techniques.

I first became involved with prairie management in the mid 1970's. At that time discussion about these issues had already been ongoing for sometime. By the late 70's, concern was being expressed within the "prairie establishment" about fire's effect on prairie invertebrates. By the early 80's, it was becoming common practice to divide sites into burn units out of concern for invertebrates. In fact, the concern had risen so high that for the past seven years, hundreds of

thousands of dollars have been spent by The Nature Conservancy, universities, and government agencies in the upper Midwest on the subject of prairie insects and their response to fire.

What Andrew failed to point out about the cautious, spread-the-risk, approach is that it has a potential downside if it is pursued too aggressively. Applying techniques for the sake of diversification without having much knowledge of the consequences is just as likely to increase risk as it is to spread it out. At this time it is simply premature to advocate the widespread use of some techniques, such as summer burning, growing season mowing, or livestock grazing. We have too poor a knowledge of what the benefits or harm might be from such management practices to start their regular use. However, there is no doubt that research in these areas is warranted and efforts are under way to garner the dollars to do so.

I think it is fair to ask the "prairie establishment" why more research has not been done on alternative management. However, to assume the answer is simply "old school" entrenchment or prejudice against new ideas is grossly unfair. I suspect the answer is more complicated than that. First, we need to remember that research is very expensive; that research dollars are very hard to come by; and that to do research often means diverting money away from acquisition and management. Thus, decisions to divert money into research are not taken lightly. **Second, there is the question of how strong the case is that fire is incompatible with some prairie species and thus the need to explore alternative management. It is this latter issue that is really at the heart of the whole debate raised in Andrew's article. Critics clearly contend that there is already adequate evidence for an immediate change in management, let alone enough to justify doing serious research. Members of the "prairie establishment" are clearly less certain of the current evidence and are thus more cautious or conservative in their approach.**

There is one final consideration that Andrew did not touch upon, but one that may prove to be the most controversial in the end. That is the issue of costs per acre of the various management techniques. This is a very practical consideration. As we divide sites in to more and more burn units and move towards greater use of alternative techniques that inevitably cost more than simply frequently burning entire sites (or large units), the number of acres that we can maintain for the same amount of dollars becomes more and more reduced. If it turns out that a subset of prairie species requires alternative or more varied management to survive in the highly fragmented landscape of today (which is likely the case), I'm confident that the "prairie establishment" will come through and provide what is needed. The real question will be how much to do it? How much potential prairie acreage will we be giving up in doing so? How much conservation value is there in having many small tracts (or large units of 100 or 1,000

acres) that are burned frequently and in their entirety because it is cheaper to do it that way? Is it worth having that additional acreage on the landscape if true prairie species area missing from it? These are going to be the tough questions.

For example, in Wisconsin alone, there are still hundreds, maybe even a thousand, unmanaged prairie remnants representing thousands of acres, but they are giving way to tree and shrub invasion at ever accelerating rates. The time left for saving or recovering these areas is very short. This "emergency" situation begs the question of whether it is a better conservation strategy to carefully manage some of them or take the same resources and maintain more of them with less careful use of fire and little or no use of alternatives. One compromise might be to take the careful approach on the more important or critical sites and the less careful approach on the least important sites. Such a dual strategy might keep the most options open into the future. Maybe by then our understanding of the prairie ecosystem and its management will be greatly improved.

#### Issue 8 - Politics

In recent years, I have encountered nearly a dozen articles and presentations focused more on trying to sway the public's (at least the conservation minded public's) opinion about prairie management, than on presenting data objectively for consideration. I am also aware of letters written to top agency administrators asking for changes to be made in management practices. I assume such actions are being driven by frustration and impatience with the slow movement of the "prairie establishment," but I fear they only run the risk of moving the debate from the scientific to the political arena. Just such a thing has recently happened with oak woodland management in the Chicago region, where political opposition to tree cutting, herbiciding, and use of fire has stopped oak woodland restoration projects. I think we can all agree that having decisions being made in the public arena (which inevitably brings in politicians) would be unfortunate for our prairies. To avoid this, we need to keep the debate within the scientific arena. Thus, it is imperative to us all to keep our articles and presentations focused on data collection, data analysis, and objective reviews of the literature. If the data is good and the interpretation sound, change will eventually come. It always has.

Obviously there are tough choices ahead for prairie managers. The best we as prairie enthusiasts can do is to: (1) keep gathering data; (2) give critical thought to the evidence; (3) remain open to new ideas; and (4) keep the discussions focused on the science and practicality of the issues. Those of us concerned about prairie and savanna conservation are such a small minority that we cannot afford to become divided into opposing camps.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I agree! This precludes further debate in these pages. Editor

## THE RENAISSANCE WOMAN OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

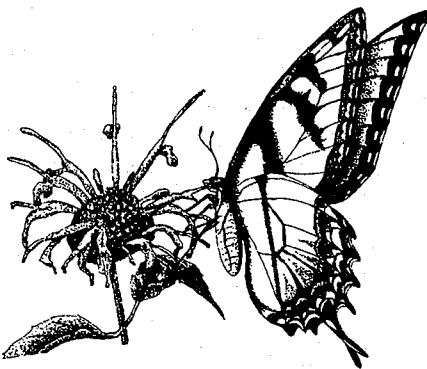
by Alice Mirk

Adah is 93 years old, yet somehow it is the least important fact about Adah as you spend time talking with her about life and what is important to her. Frail is not a word easily associated with a woman who breaks with ease into German and a smattering of other foreign tongues as she communicates her enthusiasm for life, native plants, prairies, and her thirst for more information about everything. She describes herself as shy, and in fact did not want me to write a story about her, as she sees herself as a catalyst and promoter rather than a doer of deeds. Adah is, in fact, a doer on a grand scale. She is unremitting in her promotion of our organization and the unwary traveler may come by to say "hi", and leave as a member of TPE with a book on how to plant a prairie tucked under the arm.

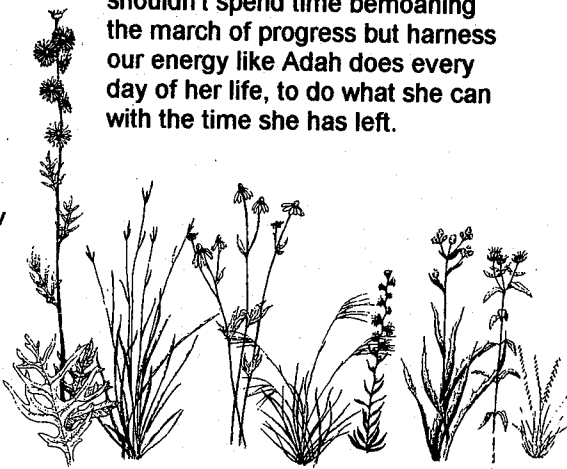
Adah has "done" the tour of Europe in the grand tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and yet talks with affection of her father, a Lutheran minister, whose simple values still color her life. Her house is a reflection of who she is, a lover of music and opera, art and poetry. The play of light on the eclectic art works scattered throughout her house is testimony to her love of all things beautiful, and you have the feeling that if you once sat down to drink it all in it you would be lost forever, a victim of the utter charm of it all.

But it is her garden which is the most magical of all. Although small in size, it is a fascinating arrangement of narrow meandering paths, bursts of color and form which assails the senses and pulls the eye this way and that. It is truly a labor of love and one of the most comprehensive native flower gardens I have ever seen. It surrounds the house on almost three sides like a jeweled tiara, and each window in the

blooming season has some fresh gem to offer the eye. It is truly Adah's labor of love, and has been two decades in the making. Each year, the lawn loses a little more, (it is about the size of a pocket handkerchief now,) and the native plant species list expands. Everyone who visits, sooner or later, winter or summer, ends up in Adah's garden.



Adah came to prairies late in life, but she has made up for this lateness by the sheer enthusiasm and commitment she shows for the wildness that is a prairie. Sitting in her bright and sunny kitchen, talking plants and sipping wine, it occurred to me that we could all learn something from my friend Adah, with her thirst for learning and her optimistic embrace of the present and the future that has characterized her for almost a century. As we witness the loss of the prairie ecosystem on a daily basis, maybe we shouldn't spend time bemoaning the march of progress but harness our energy like Adah does every day of her life, to do what she can with the time she has left.



## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS WITH A DIFFERENCE

by Alice Mirk

The employees of West Bend Mutual Insurance Company have all the usual benefits we have come to expect from our employers in this day and age, and in addition they have one benefit which is truly unique: sole rights to a prairie of their very own!

It all started when the Company built new headquarters on 120 acres on the edge of West Bend in a location which offered the typical gently rolling contours of the Kettle Moraine landscape. John "Rocky" Detric, the President of the Company, wanted a landscape which would fit the natural contours of the land, not the artificial "set piece" of the cultivated landscape with perfectly trimmed shrubs and manicured lawns. In 1991 Neil Diboll of Prairie Nursery was contracted to plant 60 acres to prairie. The rest, as they say, is history. Marvin Wolf is the Landscape Director for West Bend Mutual. He was hired because of his experience in planting another prairie on the grounds of a local retirement complex. Marv muses that in his 25 years as a landscape architect, he appears to have come full circle with his career. He started off by "taming" the wildness and promoting the stiff and highly regulated arrangements of the typically "landscaped" site, and now he is coaxing the wildness back into the land, growing grasses and forbs without regard to tall, short, color, or form, but yet cohesively forming a perfect backdrop for the headquarters building in the center. As we followed Marv along the various paths through his prairie it was obvious that he took great pride in his ongoing restoration efforts. And they are impressive. He has only one other person to manage this large planting (plus a summer helper) so he is experimenting with mowing and spraying to control weeds and brush. He talks excitedly of the

"next step" - an oak savanna restoration with memorial trees planted in honor of retired Directors of the Company. As we rounded a wetland and came full circle to a patio area where the associates can sit outside and eat their lunch while overlooking both the wetland and the tallgrass prairie swaying on the hill a short distance away, I realized there were some distinct advantages to working for the West Bend Mutual Insurance Company.

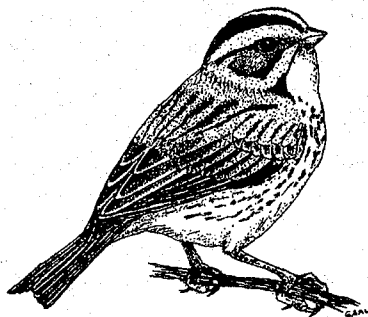
We applaud John Dedrick's vision and Marv Wolf's dedication to recreating and maintaining a natural landscape on such an impressive scale.

Postscript: West Bend Mutual Prairie is not open to the general public, only to associates and their families. If you are interested in a group tour, contact Marv Wolf at (414)338-5145. The company is a member of The Prairie Enthusiasts.

#### PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASM IS ALIVE AND WELL IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

by Walter Mirk

I have often bemoaned the fact that TPE has no chapters in southeast Wisconsin, despite the fact that 40 (!) TPE members reside there. It seems that the increasingly urbanized landscape and commensurately skyrocketing land prices are overwhelming obstacles to grass roots efforts to preserve and restore prairies and savannas in that region. It comes as no surprise that such prairie conservation as occurs does so under the auspices of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and a handful of nature centers.



One sunny September day in Washington County altered my heretofore gloomy perception of prairie conservation in the area. TPE member Bob Stodola took Alice and me to the headquarters of the West Bend Mutual Life Insurance Company and introduced us to Marv Wolf, who took us on a tour of the company's 60 acre prairie planting (see article on page 7).

My adrenalin began to surge! Bob then led us on a tour of a four acre prairie planting at Lac Lawrann. Bob and other volunteers, in cooperation with the West Bend Parks Department, have created a little jewel here! Finally, Bob took us on a tour of yet another prairie planting at the Cedar Lake Home Campus. Bob, Marv and a group of volunteers also planted this parcel, and it is simply too exquisite for words. I was impressed both by the setting and the quality of the planting (i.e., a good balance of grasses and forbs and an impressive diversity of species).

What impressed me most on this day were the levels of commitment and enthusiasm manifested in individuals such as Marv Wolf and Bob Stodola. They have achieved noteworthy results about which, in my opinion, they are much too modest. Thanks Marv and Bob, for a memorable day and a truly uplifting set of experiences!

#### New CRP program for planting prairie

Private lands enrolled (new or renewal) in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can now be planted to prairie! The new program will pay for half the costs of planting prairie on CRP lands. The only limitation is that the amount paid by the program to establish the cover can not exceed half the value of the land. Land owners wishing to plant prairie will also receive extra points (i.e., be given

higher priority) in the enrollment process. To qualify as a prairie planting, a minimum of 15 native prairie species will have to be seeded. There is no upper limit on the number of species. If you have CRP eligible land that you want to plant to prairie, here is your chance to have half of it paid for. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), or Land Conservation District (LCD) office for details. Some of the field offices may not yet be fully up to speed on this new CRP option, so you may have to be persistent.

#### New federal program for planting and managing prairie and savanna on private land !

A brand new Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is now in place to assist private landowners in establishing or improving wildlife habitat on their land. Enrollment priority is being given to rare plant communities (habitats). This means prairie and oak savanna (and also maybe white oak woodland). The program will cost share for either the improvement of degraded remnants or the planting of former cropland. The only catch is that the site had to be prairie or oak savanna at the time of settlement. If you want to restore either habitat, the cost share is 75% of the restoration costs. The maximum payment is \$10,000. There is no minimum acreage. Contracts are for 10 years. No public access is required. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) office for details. This is a great opportunity for prairie and savanna conservation! Let's make the most of it.

## MEDICAL ALERT

from Jerry Niefoff

Soil Scientist with Idaho Panhandle National Forest

(This message was sent out via an e-mail on the internet and picked up by Kelly Kearns at the Bureau of Endangered Resources)

About five years ago I had spent most of a mid-July day pulling knapweed with my bare hands. I had broken the skin on my little finger and the adjacent ring finger of my right hand. I also suspect that in pulling the knapweed, that I broke knapweed stems and got sap directly into my tissues through the broken skin. I noticed that the injured sites in the joints of these two fingers were slow to heal and I always seemed to have pain in them. About 6 months later, I started to develop a lump in my little finger, so I decided to see a family doctor. He aspirated the lump and figured it was a cyst. He said it was in a bad location (lots of nerves and tendons), and if it continued to bother me I was supposed to see a hand surgeon and have it removed. About six months after my initial doctor's visit, the finger got worse so I went to see a hand surgeon. He operated and called the lump a very aggressive benign tumor. A month or two after the first surgery, it came back and it was worse, so they operated again. After the second surgery, the tumor really started to spread towards the hand, so they removed the little finger. Shortly after the removal of the little finger I started to get tumors in my ring finger. This time I went to the cancer center at the University of Washington. After several surgeries on the ring finger, they ended up removing it also.

Each tumor occurred in the tendon sheath, and they could never get it all until they removed the entire finger. They cannot treat the tumors I had with chemo or radiation, only physical removal. The doctor at the University of Washington said that there is a compound in knapweed that is cancer-causing, that this compound was isolated in Russian knapweed, and probably occurs in spotted and diffuse knapweed also.

It has been two and a half years since my last surgery and no problems have occurred in my other fingers at this point. If someone else can avoid what happened to me, I will be very pleased.

### New feature for the Prairie Promoter

by Rich Henderson

We are giving a new feature a try in the newsletter. It is tentatively titled The Experience Exchange (we are open to suggestions on the title). If the response is good, it will become a regular feature. Its purpose is to promote the exchange of practical information and experience in the restoration and management of prairie and oak savanna. The proposed format would allow readers to pose questions to other readers and readers to report their observations and experiences for others to try for themselves. The feature will most likely have three parts: (1) questions from readers; (2) reader responses to previously run questions and observations; and (3) unsolicited observations/experiences from readers that may be of practical use to others. Here are some examples to get the ball rolling:

#### **Questions**

(What has been your experience with these topics?)

- 1) What are effective methods for controlling smooth sumac?
- 2) Is Canada goldenrod an impediment to prairie plantings? If so, how do you control it?

#### **Observations**

Topic - Keeping warm-season grasses from becoming too abundant in restorations, especially big and little bluestem (Indiangrass tends to fade out on its own).

Experience - I have had good luck keeping these grasses in check, and increasing forb diversity, by using Helianthus laetiflorus (showy sunflower), H. occidentalis (western sunflower), and Pedicularis canadensis (wood-betony). Of the three, wood-betony seems to be the best, or at least the fastest, at invading and weakening existing dense sod of big and little bluestem. The sunflowers seem to be most effective at preventing dense sod from developing in the first place, but I've observed them to slowly invade existing sod as well. The sunflowers are well known for using chemical warfare against their neighbors and the wood betony is thought to be semi-parasitic on the roots of grasses/sedges. Other techniques I've found to be effective in keeping the bluestems in line are: (1) planting the forbs and cool-season grasses a year or two before introducing the bluestems; (2) seeding the bluestems at very low rates; and (3) avoiding late-spring burns. Burning late in the spring tends to favor warm-season grasses at the expense of many other species. I have not found early-spring or late-fall burning to have the same effect, except on very droughty sites. In fact, early-spring and late-fall burning greatly stimulates the flowering and establishment of most forb species. What has been your experience with the dominant warm-season grasses?

## Prairies Are Not Limited to This Region

by Chris Matson

When I attended college in Arizona, I would hike in the mountains of the Prescott National Forest. Like other national forests, the emphasis on timber production is a high priority in the Prescott. So are wilderness values. The difference between the wilderness and the timber economy areas are obvious. The Prescott contains a half dozen designated wilderness areas, one of which is a ten minute drive from downtown Prescott to the trailhead. On many trips to this area, I would bring too little water, and crawl out of the forest to my car, panting. On one of these dry trips, I walked through a burned area. I was new to the state, so I was not aware of severely degraded condition of grasslands in the Southwest until I began to look into the matter for some coursework.

Believe it or not, the midwestern grasslands are not the only grasslands facing sure calamity from fire suppression. Once abundant range has succumbed to manzanita, cacti, creosote, chapparal, mesquite, and monoculture ponderosa pine, a species which evolved in its own savanna plant community, and is most easily destroyed through canopy fire (most common in plantings and overstocked production areas). Ponderosa pine is replaced, following long term fire suppression, by even aged silver fir, alligator juniper, single leaf pinyon, or a chapparal vegetation.<sup>2</sup>

Chapparal as rangeland is perhaps the most erosion-inducing vegetation there is. In the Prescott, silt barriers in washes among the chapparal regularly pile to the top with sediment in only a year or two. These barriers are around four feet tall and hundreds of feet wide, and are meant to control the erosion which constitutes pulverized granite of various particle sizes. And as Arizona washes into the Salt and Colorado rivers, the loss of grassland continues.

Why are these grasslands losing out? The grasslands of the Southwest burned frequently, the chapparal burned infrequently. Fire suppression has allowed the chapparal to grow anywhere it can get a foothold. Eventually the woody plants shade out the grasses, and then heavy grazing is a knockout punch. About two thirds of the lower elevation Prescott National Forest was grazed in locations near the wilderness area I would visit. The woody plants and erosion (although beautiful looking) were dominant in these stocked areas. The burned area in the wilderness was like a prairie restoration - there were some pockets of woody growth, but the dominant vegetation was grassy - and beautiful ponderosa pines were thriving free of woody brush competition. These grassland and pine savannas are a dwindling part of the Arizona heritage, which, as Prairie Enthusiasts, we are responsible to appreciate, to observe, to enjoy, and to protect. Someday, when the upper Midwest has an extensive network of TPE chapters, we ought to work for desert grasslands, before they too disappear into a brushy, eroded oblivion - the enthusiasm for our prairies is only as limited as we perceive it to be.

## PE Web Page

by John Mecikalski

The Prairie Enthusiasts is pleased to announce The Prairie Enthusiasts' home page. Recent communications between the Empire Sauk and West Central chapters revealed that two semi-completed web pages were in existence as of late summer. Coordination between John Mecikalski of the ES chapter and Evanne Hunt of the WC chapter will result in the completion of a web page appropriate for the entire PE organization.

The page, still under construction at this writing, will be introduced by general prairie and Prairie Enthusiast information, with links to other chapter home pages (see note below), other prairie organizations across the Great Plains and the Midwest as well as useful information on prairie restoration, volunteer efforts, and eventually access to the *Prairie Promoter* on-line. The URL for the PE web page is: <http://www.prairie.pressenter.com>

We plan to have much of the page completed by late winter or spring. In addition, we plan to have much of the upcoming chapter news and events (work parties, progress reports, prairie burn schedules etc.) available via the web pages. We are also considering the possibility of restricted access pages which may help facilitate prairie remnant management and protection as information vital to identifying and saving important tracts (species lists, current land owners, contact status, etc.) would be available in a timely and efficient manner. Surely we don't plan to eliminate paper newsletters, phone trees, and postcard mailings, but clearly the world wide web offers The Prairie Enthusiasts an exciting opportunity to advertise our efforts and increase awareness of prairies in general.

For those with ready access to the web, a quick "surf" reveals the presence of other midwestern prairie organizations, including The Missouri Prairie Foundation (<http://www.moprairie.com>), the Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois (<http://www.prairienet.org/gpf/homepage.html>), and the Iowa Prairie Network (<http://www.netins.net/showcase/bluestem/ipnapp.htm>) [see also [pralink.htm](http://www.prairienet.org/gpf/homepage.html) at this same address for a page of links to other prairie groups]. Someday soon, The Prairie Enthusiasts homepage will be linked into these sites as well, hence the idea of a "web" of homepages. For those members who may be interested in offering their services for this effort, or those from the other TPE chapters who would be interested in building a web page for their chapter, please contact **John Mecikalski at 608-849-8358** or **Evanne Hunt at 715-381-1291** for information.

<sup>2</sup> Chapparal, for you "easterners", is a vegetation of woody shrubs and low growing cacti which inhabits mineral based soils, has little to no litter, and covers bare, decomposed rock.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### COULEE REGION CHAPTER

#### EVENTS

- Sat., Jan. 24 Workday at Motivans savanna, 10:00am. Bring loppers, gloves, handsaws, marshmallows.
- Sat., Jan. 31 Workday at Aaker property 10:00am. Bring loppers, handsaws, chainsaws.
- Sat., Feb. 7 Workday at Christie's "Hill", 1:00pm. Bring loppers, handsaws, gloves. Sandwiches planned!

#### MEETINGS

- Sun., Jan. 18 1:00pm at Christie's "Hill" cabin.
- Sun., Feb. 15 1:00pm location to be announced. Contact Chris Matson 608-788-0971

### EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

#### MEETINGS

- Wed., Jan. 7 Board meeting, 7:00pm. The Nature Conservancy, 633 West Main St, Madison.
- Tues., Mar. 3 Board meeting, 7:00pm. Gov. Nelson State Park Garage, Middleton.

### NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

#### MEETINGS

- Sat., Jan. 10 1:00pm., at Lone Tree Farm in Stockton

### PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

#### EVENTS

- Sat., Feb. 7 Jordan Prairie Pot-Luck at John Ochsner residence at 6:00pm. Bring a dish to pass and slides or photos of your '97 prairie activities. 608-862-3816

#### MEETINGS

- Mon., Jan. 5 Monroe Public Library board room at 7:00pm.
- Mon., Feb. 2 Monroe Public Library Board room at 7:00pm.
- Mon., Mar. 2 Turner Hall Rathskeller, Monroe, at 7:00pm. Election of chapter officers.

### SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

#### EVENTS

- Sat., Jan. 3 Work party at Bush Clover Prairie, 10:00am. to noon. Brush cutting and fence repair.
- Sat., Jan. 17 Work party at Heather's Prairie (Neuroth's), 10:00am. to noon. Brush cutting and burning.
- Sat., Jan. 31 Work party at Kalscheurs savanna, 10:00am. to noon. Brush cutting.
- Sun., Feb. 15 Work party at Vale prairie, 10:00am. to noon. Brush cutting and burning.
- Sat., Mar. 7 Work party at Bush Clover prairie, 10:00am. to noon. Brush cutting and burning.
- Sun., Mar. 15 Work party at Vale prairie, 10:00am. to noon. Brush cutting.

**note:** all above work parties are dependent on weather conditions. In addition to scheduled events, there will be numerous unscheduled work parties on the Murault South Prairie. For questions regarding weather decisions, or for more information on unscheduled work parties, call Gary Eldred at 608-375-5271.

### GENERAL EVENTS

- Sun., Jan. 11 TPE Board meeting, 1:00pm. DNR headquarters, Dodgeville.
- Sun., Mar. 8 TPE Board meeting, 1:00pm. DNR headquarters, Dodgeville.
- Sat., Jan. 31 Towards Harmony With Nature, a conference organized by The Wild Ones, to be held at the Oshkosh Convention Center. For questions and information call 920-233-4853
- Sat., Mar. 14 **The Prairie Enthusiasts 10th Anniversary Celebration. See page one for details, and inside back page for registration form.**

## Coulee Region Chapter News

### New Chapter Formed!

by Chris Matson

On September 13, eight prairie lovers gathered to become The Prairie Enthusiasts' newest chapter, the Coulee Region Chapter (CRC). Not present were several other new members who shared their optimism on paper.

The group elected interim officers and gave the go-ahead for the president to develop proposed chapter guidelines.

CRC also decided to support activities of the Mississippi River Conservancy, a new land trust in the LaCrosse region which will be actively acquiring properties of biological significance in the Coulee area.

CRC decided that the main goal for 1998 is to acquire or otherwise protect a 30 acre preserve of a top quality sand prairie, located in northern LaCrosse county. A 1999 goal is to protect additional acreage, with current targets including a 600 acre parcel of sand prairie and oak savanna with scattered, intact remnants surrounded by degraded remnants and old fields.

If you own land or live in Buffalo, Jackson, LaCrosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, Vernon, (WI); or,

Houston or Winona (MN) counties, we serve your area. We are looking into easements for protecting your prairie or savanna, your open wetland, or your oak woodland. Contact us if you need help, want to join and volunteer, or if you know of any places with rare species in your area. Call Chris Matson (LaCrosse County) at 608-788-0971; Greg Nessler (Vernon County) at 608-627-1376; Helen Davis (Winona, Buffalo, and Trempealeau Counties) at 507-454-6176; or Ken Kailing (Houston County) at 507-894-4940 for more information.

### **Second Chapter Meeting Exciting!**

In October, a dozen members gathered to enjoy one of the finest private restorations in Vernon County. The Mary Lee and Lloyd Croatt wildlife project, located between Avalanche and Bloomingdale, Wisconsin is a promising example of landowner stewardship. A total of 76 acres containing numerous plant communities including intact dry and dry mesic prairie, degraded oak savanna, cut-over (but healing) maple-basswood-hemlock forest, first growth red oak woodland, oxbow pond wetland, and mesic prairie restorations make this ridge-to-stream-to-ridgetop continuous natural vegetation a rarity. The owners express a desire to permanently protect the majority of the 76 acres. The possibilities for demonstrating landowner, private enterprise, and government conservation cooperation become readily apparent. This parcel has been managed by the owners with the help of Prairie Enthusiasts, WDNR, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The group toured the project and examined some quite successful, but not-so-scientific attempts to restore remnant prairie under 30 year old red pines. The group also created a mapping committee, which was filled quickly with eager members. The mapping committee will map as much present native vegetation of the Bad Axe River and west fork of the Kickapoo River watersheds as possible. The membership of the CRC has a high stake in these areas as they represent over half the membership's recreational/residential properties.

Other mapping areas include the upper and lower Sand Creek watersheds in northern LaCrosse County, and the lands between Middle Ridge and Bangor, only a small distance from the Coulee Experimental Forest. Each of these target areas is the site of great possibilities, either due to size of the area and its remoteness, or the existence of specialized plant communities. Although CRC is only a fledgling chapter, we are ready to aid other groups to find sites worth acquisition. And, if you are ready to help us, we will meet our goal of protecting a critical site for several state listed species, located in the lower Sand Creek area. For more details on how you can help, write to Chris Matson at W5585 C.T.H. MM #207, La Crosse, WI 54601 or call 608-788-0971. Your help will save Hill's thistles, loggerhead shrike habitat, rare silky prairie clover, and a fine place to wander.

## **Empire Sauk Chapter**

### **Garden Expo Volunteers Needed**

We need volunteers to staff our new display at the Garden Expo, Dane County Exposition Center in Madison, February 21 and 22, 1998. Volunteers will receive a free pass to the show. Volunteers are needed for 2-4 hour shifts, from 9am to 5pm Saturday, February 21, and 10am to 5pm, Sunday, February 22. Call Rich Henderson at 845-7065 if you can volunteer.

### **E-Mail for Volunteers**

As a means of expediting communication within the ESC, the volunteer coordinator (John Mecikalski) wishes to gather e-mail addresses from those members interested in volunteering for work party and prescribed burn activities. Notification of such events will then be given via e-mail. This has several benefits, including saving postage and being able to notify many people very quickly. This can be especially important when an activity cannot be planned well in advance, as is often the case with prescribed burns. Regular mailing of seasonal work party schedules, seed picking events, and other activities will continue for those members without e-mail access.

If you have an e-mail address and wish to be notified of upcoming work parties, burn events, etc., send it via e-mail to John Mecikalski at: johnm@ssec.wisc.edu. Thank you.

### **Another Seeding Season Passed**

by Dan Weidert

Thanks to all who helped collect, clean, and seed during the past seeding season. With the help of a few Prairie Enthusiasts and many other volunteers, we were able to seed an additional 10 acres with over 60 species of prairie grasses and forbs at Governor Nelson State Park on November 8. The park now contains over 140 acres of prairie, oak savanna, and oak woodland restorations in various stages of development.

In addition to the Governor Nelson project, the ESC assisted the St. Benedict Center in planting 15 acres of prairie. That project will eventually contain about 50 acres of prairie to complement the restorations at Governor Nelson across the highway. Especially encouraging this year were the additions of a few new people who took it upon themselves to become active in these restoration efforts. Every year I get the feeling there are more of you out there who would like to get involved as well....I wish you would. These projects are becoming prime examples of what The Prairie Enthusiasts are striving toward... large-scale prairie and oak savanna restorations accomplished by the hard work of a dedicated "grass-roots" organization. These efforts are great opportunities for all of us to make a huge difference to the future landscape... as Prairie Enthusiasts, it would be a shame if these opportunities

pass any of us by. Please join us at the next work party or field trip.

## Northwest Illinois Chapter

### NIPes Make New Year Plans!

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPes) have a number of ambitious, far-ranging projects slated for 1998 and beyond!

#### 1. A Prairie Restoration and Monument to Significant Conservationists

In November, the LRA (Local Redevelopment Authority) gave NIPE the green light for a 200 acre prairie restoration and interpretation trail at the Savanna Army Depot (SAD). SAD is a 13,000 acre army installation (in the process of being decommissioned) that includes significant natural areas such as sand prairie and blowouts, sand savanna, river dune open slope, and forest habitats, home to more than 33 threatened and endangered species. The area includes Primm's Pond, a 12-acre intermittent wetland and adjoins 87 acres selected by "Friends of the Depot" (a conservation organization formed for the purpose of saving valuable SAD habitat) to develop birding and hiking trails and a Welcome/Interpretation Center. Both groups are requesting a Public Benefit Conveyance under which the land will be transferred through the National Park Service to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), which will hold title for the two local groups. Surrounding acres of the Depot are slated for U.S. Fish and Wildlife (9,500 acres), the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (500 acres), and economic development (3,200 acres).

#### 2. A Partnership to Benefit the Ecosystem

In June, 1997, the resource-rich northwest corner of the state (most of Jo Daviess and part of Carroll counties) was officially recognized by the state as the seventeenth area partnership in IDNR's Ecosystems Program. Dubbed the Driftless Area Partnership (DAP) by its Council membership, this coalition of organizations, agencies, and individuals has as its mission to protect and restore the natural and agricultural resources of this unique area.

In applying for partnership status, Council President Jim Rachuy described the area:

- Natural Areas covering 31,000 acres;
- seven watersheds, including 22.4 miles of biologically significant stream habitats;
- two regionally significant macrosites;
- four Nature Preserves and 109 Natural Heritage occurrences, including at least 32 endangered or threatened species and many endemic or preglacial plants and animals;
- 100% of the Wisconsin Driftless Division of Illinois with its unique physiographic features;
- rare habitat including perched sand prairie, oak-hickory savanna;
- sand dunes and blowouts, tall grass prairie, seep springs and algific slopes; and

- extensive habitat including 72,000 acres of grassland, 42,000 acres of upland forest, 38,000 acres of cropland, and 26,000 acres of open water. With little more than a month to organize and submit grant proposals, the various interest groups represented by the DAP membership crafted ten solid proposals, including:

- Apple River Canyon Ecological Survey and a hill prairie restoration project;
- a native prairie restoration;
- a streambank erosion inventory project and a filter strip riparian buffer project;
- Pasture/Prairie Renovation and Climatic Impact studies;
- classification and evaluation of prairies and woodlands;
- a series of land & resource symposia & video project; and,
- habitat preservation through landowner contact. Proposals that will receive grants for the coming fiscal year are due any day.

### NIPes Make Prairies

NIPes made prairies at three different sites this fall. Five additional acres were seeded at the Lone Tree Farm Conservation Easement held by The Prairie Enthusiasts; five acres were seeded on private property in rural Stockton and ten acres of private property were seeded in rural Schapville. Two hundred and fifty pounds of seeds were collected by NIPE members and an additional 100 pounds of grass seed was donated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for these projects. Thanks to all of our hard-working members for making this possible.

## Southwest Wisconsin Chapter

### Murault Prairie-South Restoration

Last winter several Prairie Enthusiasts began a restoration of the high quality 13 acre Murault Prairie-South. The effort it would take to remove the trees and brush was initially daunting. However, by the spring of 1997, David Lowe, Gary Adams, Gary Eldred, and Steve Hubner worked eight days and cleared several acres. During the summer of 1997, the Green County Parks and Recreation committee toured the site and committed money to help with its restoration. First on the wish list was a new sickle bar mower needed to mow the resprouting of dogwood, sumac, and wild plum.

This coming winter (weather permitting), an undaunted crew will again assault the trees and brush on this precious site. Any and all help in aiding the recovery of Muraults-South would be sincerely appreciated. Please call Gary Eldred at (608) 375-5271 or David Lowe at (608) 935-9586.

## West Central WI Chapter News

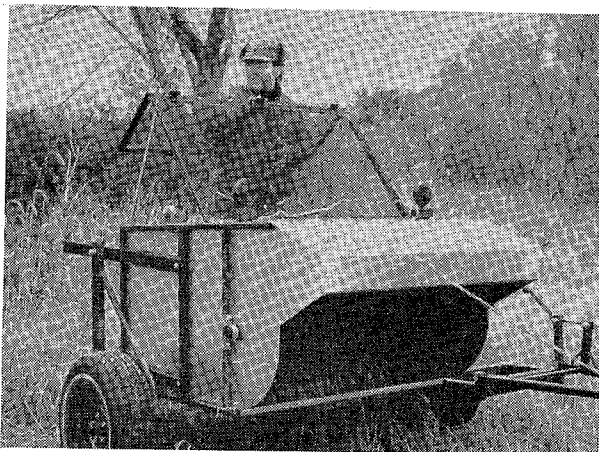
### Group Gathers to Ogle Prairie Stripper

By Evanne Hunt

The October 23rd meeting of the West Central Chapter gave us the opportunity to see a native prairie seed stripper in action. This machine was designed and manufactured in Canada by Prairie Habitats specifically to address the difficulties in harvesting native prairie seed. It was purchased by the Wisconsin DNR and cost \$6400, delivered. Half of the money came from pheasant stamp proceeds and half from the New Richmond U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service through a cost share grant. The seed stripper is completely self-contained and requires no additional tractor or hydraulics. The unit can be pulled with a small pickup, small tractor, ATV, horses, or a dedicated group of Prairie Enthusiasts! Fortunately, Bob Hanson brought his ATV for our demonstration (whew!).

The seed stripper was used first on the Ogburn prairie when Harvey Halvorsen, Troy Meacham, and Bob Hanson harvested approximately 30 acres of little bluestem. That harvest took 4 to 5 hours and produced 120 bulk pounds of seed. October 23rd was the second time the seed stripper was used. Our demonstration at the Al Jontz Canada wild rye planting in River Falls produced 45 pounds of bulk seed in 90 minutes. Harvey does not yet have a "flower picking rate". This must wait until a large forb planting is located.

The versatility of the machine (brushes moving upward or downward), the RPMs, height range, angle of the brushes, combined with ground speed and the wind direction, are all factors that determine efficient seed harvesting. One important goal is to gather as little chaff as possible. Harvey expects to rent out the seed stripper to trained individuals. Unfortunately, rental will be limited to areas between Hudson and Eau Claire. Payment may be considered in either money or seed exchange (a damage deposit will be required). Check with Harvey, if you have an interesting project, he might accommodate your request. Prairie Habitats of Argyle, Manitoba can be contacted by mail (PO Box 1, Argyle, Manitoba, Canada, R0C 0B0) or by telephone 204-467-9371. Besides the large pull unit, they have a hand-operated picker. If you would like to rent the machine, or see it in action, or just have questions, contact Harvey Halvorsen at 715-684-2914.



The prairie stripper in it's glory!

### Educational Series Offered

By Evanne Hunt

The Education Committee of the West Central Chapter has created an exciting program agenda for 1998. Following the theme of "A Prairie Primer", a lecture or workshop dedicated to a specific aspect of the prairie ecosystem is offered each month. The lectures and workshops supplement great meeting agendas. These events are open to all members of the Prairie Enthusiasts and to members of the general community. Since the lectures, workshops, and meetings are held on different days, you can attend all events.

This program is still in the early stages of planning. Tentative topics so far are: *An Introduction to Prairies; Planting a Prairie; Nature's Butterfly Garden;* and, at one of the meetings, a burn school will be held.

The lectures and workshops are co-sponsored by the Western Wisconsin Prairie Project and are held at Camp St. Croix in Hudson. The chapter meetings are held in Baldwin and Menomonie. For more information, or to confirm the date and location of each event, check our web site (<http://www.prairie.presenter.com>) or call Ginny Gaynor, Education Chair, at 715-246-2746.

<http://www.prairie.presenter.com>

By Evanne Hunt

Our web site debuted on the internet in March of this year. Its purpose is to spread the vision of prairie preservation to the entire world. The site includes topics such as:

**What's New** – this section on the main page lists new events, meeting minutes, and points to articles on the internet about prairies.

**Links to Other Prairie Sites** – there are actually a lot of web sites with prairie information. This page provides links to some of the best.

**Who We Are** –our vision, our goals, and how we got started. This page also has a map of Wisconsin and a list of all The Prairie Enthusiast Chapters.

**Prairie Tales and Prairie Tips** – our members have stories to tell about their experiences in restoring and maintaining prairies. This page has both humorous and serious accounts.

**Flora and Fauna of the Prairie** – Larry Lynch created an excellent table describing the flora, fauna, and insects found on wet, mesic, and dry prairies.

**Books We Recommend** – when we read an interesting book, we want to tell others about it.

**Talk To Us** – this page provides visitors an avenue to ask questions by e-mail.

**Calendar of Events** – this page lists the date, time, location, and subject of all our meetings.

Currently, the web site lists only West Central Chapter events. However, John Mecikalski of the Empire-Sauk Chapter has also created a web site. (See page 10) Together, we hope to create an even better site.

**THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:**

**The Prairie Enthusiasts**

**10052 CTH C**

**Woodman, WI 53821**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**SELECT CHAPTER OR GENERAL MEMBERSHIP:**

**Coulee Region Chapter**

LaCrosse, Buffalo, Vernon, Trempealeau,  
Monroe, Jackson, Winona & Huston  
Counties

**Empire Sauk Chapter**

Sauk, Columbia & Dane Counties.

**Northwest Illinois Chapter**

JoDaviess, Carroll & Stephenson Counties

**General Membership**

outside chapter areas

**Southwest Wisconsin Chapter**

Grant, Crawford, Richland & Iowa  
Counties

**Prairie Bluff Chapter**

Green, Rock & Lafayette Counties

**West Central Wisconsin Chapter**

Barron, Chippewa, Polk, EauClaire,  
Dunn, Pepin, Pierce & StCroix Counties

**Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**AREAS OF INTEREST**

- Site Inventories
- Organizing/Leading Field trips
- Developing Educational Materials
- Seed Collecting/Planting
- Planning Social Activities (banquet, picnics)
- Fund Raising/Grant Writing
- Stewardship (Burning, Brush Cutting)
- Speaker's Bureau

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

**MEMBERSHIP LEVEL**

\$10 STUDENT

\$15 INDIVIDUAL

\$25 FAMILY

\$25 CONTRIBUTOR

\$50 SUSTAINING

\$200 IND.LIFE

Can we provide your name and address to:

Other environmental organizations Y N

Other Prairie Enthusiasts in your area Y N

**BANQUET REGISTRATION FORM**

**March 14, 1998**

**UW-Platteville Student Center**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# of Reservations @ \$12 (for members) \_\_\_\_\_

# of Reservations @ \$15 (non-members) \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate meal choice below:

# for general buffet \_\_\_\_\_

# for Vegetarian Lasagna \_\_\_\_\_

**Send Registration to:**

**TPE - Att: BANQUET**

**10052 CTH C**

**Woodman WI 53827**

We will need to plan for room sizes for the workshops ahead of time, please indicate which workshops you and others in your reservation will be attending during the afternoon sessions. Seating will be limited, be sure to reserve yours ahead of time!

I will be attending the following workshops:

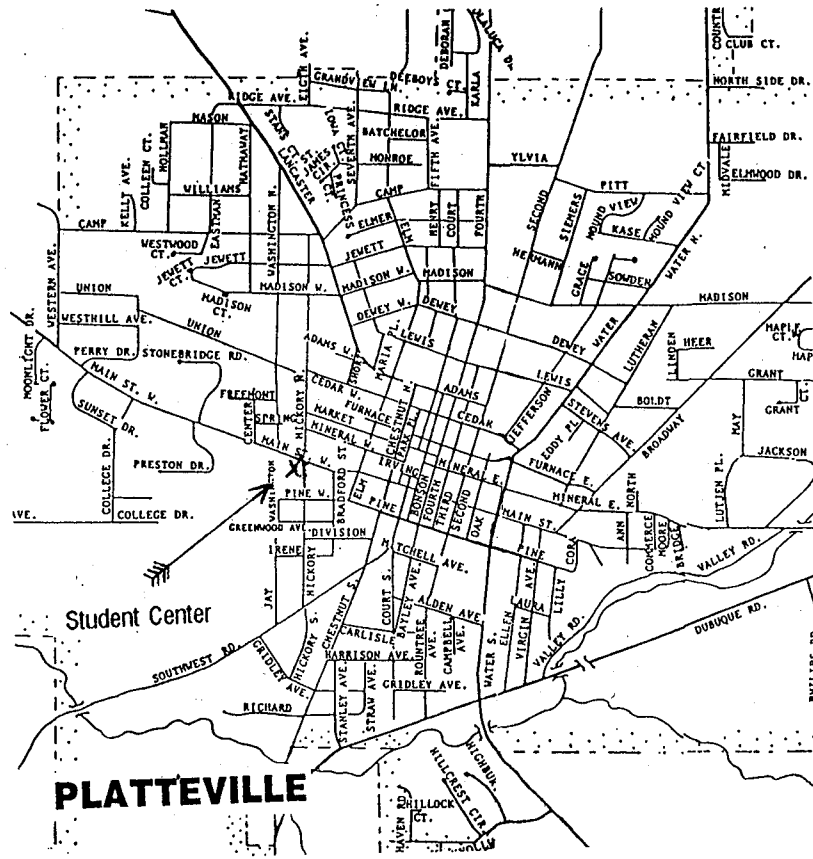
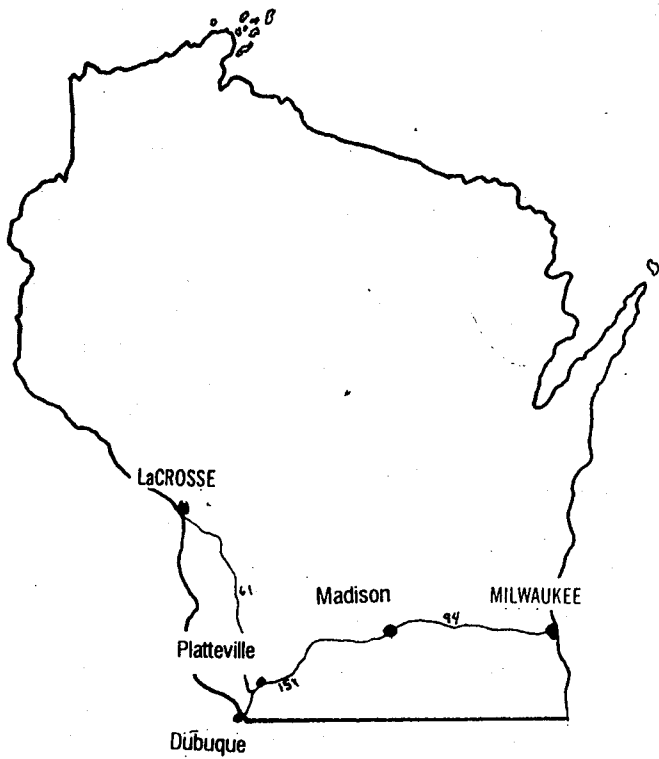
1:00 PM How to Plant a Prairie # \_\_\_\_\_

2:00PM Creating Conservation Easements # \_\_\_\_\_

3:00PM Birds of the Prairie # \_\_\_\_\_

3:30PM Small Mammals of the Prairie # \_\_\_\_\_

The concurrent chapter presentations beginning at 1:00pm # \_\_\_\_\_



**Directions to Platteville**

**Directions to Student Center**

**THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS**  
**GARY ELDRED**  
**4192 SLEEPY HOLLOW RD**  
**BOSCOBEL WI 53805**

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