



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Celebrating ten years of prairie conservation in the Upper Midwest

TPE's 10th ANNIVERSARY BANQUET



There are two events that help to make midwestern winters more endurable (and even enjoyable) for prairie enthusiasts: one is the Jordan Prairie Potluck and the other is the Prairie Enthusiasts' Annual Banquet. Both events can be best described as festive and convivial reunions of a close-knit family. The only differences are to be found in scale and in the preparation required.

TPE's 10th anniversary banquet was expanded this year to offer afternoon presentations. Barbara Glass, Scott Weber and Chris Matson led off with "How to Plant a Prairie" and were followed by John Rutherford and Jim Rachuy who presented "Creating Easements". Mike Mossman and Dick Bautz followed, respectively, with "Birds of the Prairie" and "Small Mammals of the Prairie". Finally, Kathy Morgen treated us to the world premiere of The Prairie Enthusiasts' Slide Program.

Following the evening meal, the Empire-Sauk Chapter presented The Prairie Enthusiasts of the Year award to Jeb and Barb Barzen. Congratulations to Jeb and Barb for this richly deserved award. Excitement heightened as the nearly 250 attendees were introduced to Dr. Hugh Iltis by Kathy Kirk. Gary Eldred presented Dr. Iltis with a plaque from TPE in recognition of more than four decades of commitment to prairie. Dr. Iltis then received some more personal gifts of recognition from acolytes John Ochsner and Rob Baller. The audience was now primed for the highlight of this banquet: Dr. Iltis' presentation entitled "North American Grasslands: Do They Have a Future?" He asked us to consider the role of grasslands in the evolution of the human species and the role of the human species in sustaining a world of biological diversity. No one left the banquet even remotely ignorant of our species' heedless destruction of this planet's biological richness. It should come as no surprise that Dr. Iltis is the first speaker to have received a standing ovation from some very enthusiastic prairie enthusiasts.



GRATIAE VOBIS

The annual banquet is a complex and challenging undertaking, even under the best of circumstances. Fortunately, TPE is not without people who are willing to step forward and volunteer to help shoulder the burden, often on the spur of the moment. It is this spirit of volunteerism that is the mainstay of our organization. Thanks to the many who helped keep things running so smoothly. Special thanks are due to a select few, without whom the banquet simply wouldn't happen: **Rich Henderson**, who kept track of the 139 raffle and auction items from start to finish; **Jaye Maxfield**, who for three months kept track of all reservations for the banquet and presentations and staffed the reservation table for four(!) hours; **Genevra Krahn-Reed**, who staffed the registration table with Jaye and spent another six hours on Sunday morning ensuring that all banquet proceeds were accurately counted and attributed; and **Gary and Gail Adams**, who have, for nearly a decade, produced the beautiful centerpieces of prairie flora.

TPE also wishes to thank **Wisconsin Power and Light** for helping to underwrite the banquet. Finally, TPE thanks you, the membership, for your attendance and for your financial support at the banquet and throughout the year. Thanks to the generosity of numerous businesses and TPE members, nearly \$6,000 was raised for prairie preservation.



Dr. Hugh Iltis Receives Award from TPE

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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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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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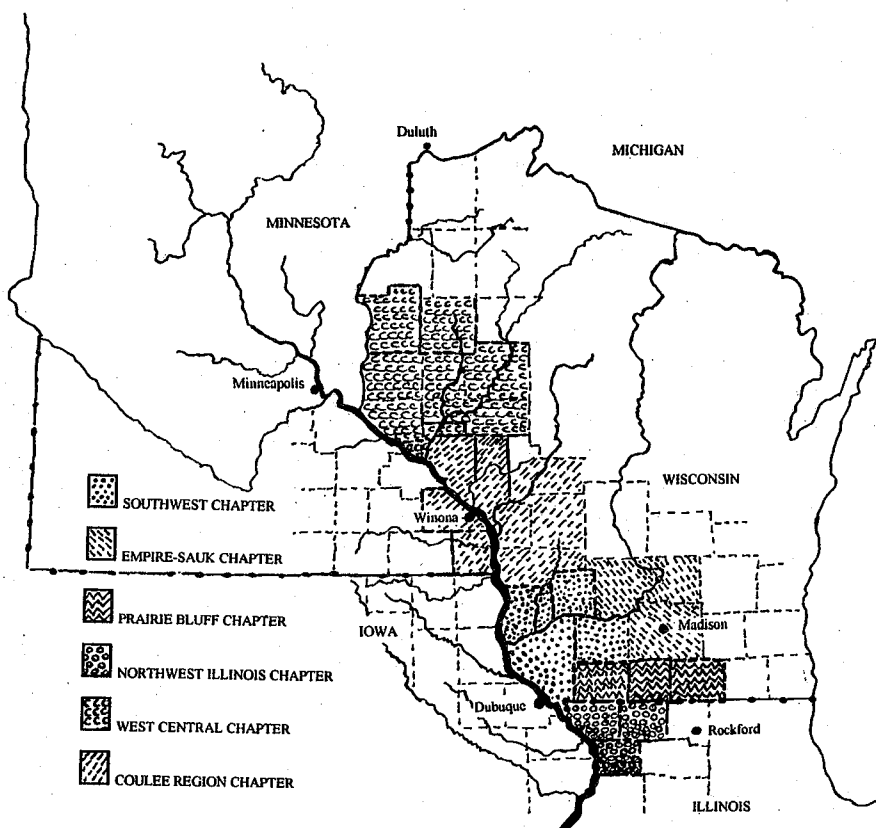
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TPE CHAPTER AREAS



President's Message

The Prairie Enthusiasts has now entered its 10th year of prairie conservation, and what an experience those ten years have been! As president, I've had to learn to do many things for which I didn't have much of an aptitude. I'll be the first to admit I've never felt much of an attraction to public speaking or public relations, but in the name of prairie conservation, I took on some of those challenges and did improve my skills. When we started TPE, neither I nor anyone else had any notion of what would be required to preserve prairie remnants and to educate people about the importance of doing so. It has become a lifetime commitment. From the very beginning, everything has been, and continues to be, done by volunteers, the low profile, persistent, dedicated, caring people who never really get the recognition they truly deserve for their efforts. My words may not be adequate compensation to those valued volunteers, but take my word for it, their work is not going unnoticed: many people are now aware of the value and beauty of our prairies, and without volunteers, this wouldn't be happening.

I frequently have conversations with TPE members who express their growing interest in prairie conservation, but they often confess that they don't volunteer any of their time to the effort. Well, please don't feel guilty or alone, as most of our membership falls into that category. Many times members don't have the time to help with the myriad of hands-on tasks or activities that need to be done.

As TPE grows, so do our needs. We have increasing needs for people in public relations, fund raising, journalism, computer technology, and much more. We want to hear from anyone who would be willing to volunteer their skills to help prairie conservation. Even if you feel that your skills wouldn't overlap with our needs, we may find a way for you to make a valuable contribution. This year, one of my personal goals is to put together a file of volunteers throughout the organization who are willing to be called upon for their time and talents. I will use the computer data base which includes the interest areas that you checked off when you joined TPE organization, but if you would like to volunteer in other areas, please send me a postcard with the time you are willing to give and the area in which you would like to volunteer. My address is on the back of your newsletter. I am hoping to hear from many of you as our organization continues to grow.

BOOK SALE

An Introduction to the Tallgrass Prairies of the Upper Midwest, the 80 page booklet published by TPE has been reduced in price. You can now purchase the booklet for \$5.00 from your local chapter, or, you can obtain a copy for \$5 (plus \$1.44 for shipping) from TPE, 10052 CTH C, Woodman WI. 53827

BOOK REVIEWS

Review by Rich Henderson

Prairie Conservation: Preserving North America's most Endangered Ecosystem, edited by Samson and Knopf, Island Press, 1996 (339 pages).

This compendium is a good introduction to the North American prairie ecosystem from the shortgrass prairies of the west to the tallgrass prairies of the east. It covers history, ecology, current status, and strategies for conservation. But, unfortunately for those of us in the upper Midwest (and thus, the eastern edge of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem), it has limited usefulness. The book focuses mostly on western prairies. The experience of nearly all the authors and most of the literature cited is weighted heavily toward shortgrass, mixed grass, and the western edge of the tallgrass prairie ecosystems such as is found in the Flint Hills of Kansas or the Sandhills of Nebraska. Authors and research from the eastern two-thirds of the tallgrass region are not well represented.

This is significant to us because the ecology of the prairie ecosystem changes as it goes from east to west due to the variation in the influences of precipitation, grazing, fire, and habitat fragmentation along that gradient. For example, Konza Prairie in the Flint Hills is, on a per square meter basis, more dominated by grass and has only about one-half to two-thirds the plant species diversity of a prairie on similar soils in Wisconsin or Illinois.

However, if the eastern reader keeps in mind that the discussions and ecological summaries may at times have only limited application to the our more eastern prairies, the book is definitely a worthwhile resource, and it is good exposure to the greater North American prairie ecosystem.

Review by Rich Henderson

The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook for Prairies, Savannas, and Woodlands, edited by Packard and Mutel, Island Press, 1997 (463 pages).

This book is a must for anyone contemplating the restoration, recovery, or management of upper Midwest prairie, oak savanna, or oak woodland. The restoration and understanding of these decimated ecosystems is at this time still as much an art as it is a science. This book makes a valiant effort to bring together what is known in science and practice. It taps a wide range of experiences and practical knowledge from many sources ranging from researchers to backyard practitioners. It also provides an introduction to the ecology of these systems. Because there are so many contributors "the book naturally conveys a variety of points of view and even some disagreements -- a fact that reflects not only the state of the art of restoration, but also the ingenuity and sturdy individualism of the current generation of restorationists." Without a doubt this book is the most comprehensive, single source of information and guidance on prairie, savanna, and

woodland restoration available to date. It is an easy to read reference handbook for both the novice and expert. Even the most experienced restorationist will find new and useful facts, ideas, and tips from its pages.

Review by Scott Weber

Obligates and The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook

If you follow the prairie restoration literature, you've no doubt found conflicting reports of what works and what doesn't. It helps to know what the authors' (as well as your own!) definition of "success" is.

I contemplate this while flipping through the new *Tallgrass Restoration Handbook* edited by Steve Packard and Cornelia Mutel. While hailed as the latest word on restoration, it unfortunately contains some old assumptions that should be challenged. One idea is the notion that prairie "obligates", those species usually found on virgin prairie but absent from most plantings, are late successional and do not do well unless added several years after the aggressive pioneer species have settled down. What I argue, based on several plantings over the past fifteen years or so, is that our idea of succession in plantings is biased by seed supplies that are dominated by easy to grow or collect species and are not representative of the seed mix on virgin prairie. If we had a market where money and seed supplies were unlimited, we could design a mix that would achieve "success", defined by high diversity and accuracy, much faster than the successional model would dictate. But realistically, what we get is a streamlined mix with the composition and cost tailored to a specific market, from corporate landscaping to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plantings.

At the twelfth North American Prairie Conference, Peter Schranun presented a paper describing the four stages of a planting, which are echoed in the *Handbook*. Stage one is characterized by annuals and short lived perennials, such as black-eyed susans and foxtail, which last about three years. The planting then proceeds through the intensely competitive, stand establishment phase, to the close-out stage, and finally the long-term adjustment stage. The time frame needed to reach stage four, also known as the leadplant and prairie dropseed stage, is from thirteen to twenty years or more.

While Schranun admits that competition, not lack of germination, accounts for the slow appearance of certain species, the *Handbook* suggests that certain obligates, such as gentians, may not germinate or survive until the pioneers have paved the way, and therefore we should delay adding them to a planting by several years. This is based in part on reports of success scattering seed on existing remnants, and few reports of success on bare soil. But my experience contradicts this. The real culprit is poor seed mixes which rarely mimic the species composition of our remnants.

For example, if you examine the mixes presented in the *Handbook*, about half of each mix (25 to 50 seeds per square foot) are dominant grasses and aggressive

forbs, such as yellow and purple coneflower, black-eyed susan, and bergamot. Assuming 50% germination, and 50% survival, which is rather low for clean seed, that still allows six plants per square foot that can dominate the entire square foot of space! If planted in the spring, such a mix will inevitably move toward a grass dominated planting with low forb diversity. Annual and biennial weeds, which can and should be mowed, present much less of a problem than perennials, including other natives. High seeding rates may produce more color sooner, but the competition will ensure that only the most competitive species survive. It is far easier to add more bluestem to a three-year-old planting and have success than it is to add gentian seed to the same planting, as the *Handbook* suggests.

If we decided that we wanted a prairie with a dropseed and gentian community and left out or greatly limited the coneflowers and bluestem, we would get flowering dropseed and gentians in four to five years, provided we plant in November and mow the annual and biennial weeds. This certainly applies to mixes of much greater complexity. Nearly all conservative, slow growing prairie species germinate well following stratification and have the potential to reach blooming size from seed in five years or less, even on worn out, eroded ag fields, if the competition is controlled. On a virgin remnant, gentians (you can substitute your favorite obligate here) are just as capable of colonizing disturbed ground as any other species as long as the seed source is present. Gentians can grow in soil that hasn't seen a prairie in decades, or in soil that has been sterilized by burning brush piles. My own record for a downy gentian is 16 months from seed to bloom on a former cornfield.

These species are not usually found outside of virgin prairie because: a) seed sources are declining or lacking; and b) most areas surrounding remnants are kept in a steady state of disturbance which favors pioneers and non-native weeds. In our climate, soil fungi and bacteria quickly colonize old fields (more about this in the future). Plants are obligates solely because we have blocked their paths of migration, both by seed and by pollen. To overcome this, we must actively plant seeds and manage for their survival.

Unfortunately, as the demand for prairie grows, the seed supplies of yellow and purple coneflower, black-eyed susan, and bergamot grow exponentially while the production of our long-lived, conservative species lags far behind. In our culture, where the labors of love are few and a result must be achieved by tomorrow, there is little incentive to grow gentians, wood lilies, and shooting stars for landscape scale restoration, particularly since few people have seen virgin, mesic prairie, or they can't afford it if they have. Our counterfeit prairies have become the model for success. It is far easier and much more profitable to grow purple cornflowers than it is to build up the supply of species that a national market may never demand. Referring to our role in modern agriculture, Wes Jackson calls us "Homo the homogenizer." Unfortunately, the same can be said for many of our prairie plantings. The *Handbook*

not only fails to delve into these issues in any detail, but also fails to provide a blueprint for achieving the best results in the shortest time possible. Without a discussion of seed mixes with respect to markets as well as soil types, the *Handbook* fails to differentiate between what is commercially possible and what is ecologically possible.

Why be concerned? Because we are losing species from our remnant prairies. Some remnants have lost up to 60% of their species over the last fifty years, according to a new report by Mark Leach and Tom Cjivnish. Our remnants are so isolated from each other that populations are becoming inbred and losing vigor. If we don't use our plantings as bridges between remnants with similar species, we will continue to see a decline in diversity in spite of our having "restored" thousands of acres. This is the great untold irony of prairie restoration. As Wes Jackson also noted, when we see the discrepancy between native prairie and what we have after ten years and billions of dollars of CRP plantings (and non CRP plantings as well), we will want to preserve every last remnant of unplowed ground that exists.

Poison Ivy: Nature's Revenge

by David Lowe

I know that the mere mention of this wonderful woody species makes the skin crawl as many of us dredge up nightmarish memories of encounters with this plant from hell! Apparently 40% of people have little or no reaction to the oil of poison ivy, poison sumac, or poison oak. For those lucky people, turn the page and read the next article as this one is not for you but for the rest of us who find ourselves in the unlucky 60%.

Poison ivy is found on a number of prairie remnants that TPE members manage and can be quite a problem. The plant can occur in the form of a small, low growing shrub, or in a long vine which can grow over 50 feet up a host tree and can be five inches in diameter. The vine form can be mistaken for the vine of a virginia creeper, which is not harmful to us pitiful 60%. The virginia creeper leaves turn a beautiful red in the fall, and the shoots that grow out of the vine grow very near the trunk of the host tree. The poison ivy vines have leaves that turn yellow in the fall, and the shoots that grow out of the vine reach out a number of feet away from the trunk of the host tree. If you are going to cut these large vines, cut with the top of your chainsaw bar. This will throw the chips away from you, whereas cutting with the bottom of the bar will pull the chips toward you, and we know the miserable result! An important thing to remember is to be aware of the presence of poison ivy before you perform a burn. I have heard of terrible cases where people have breathed in the poison ivy smoke and landed in the hospital with poison ivy in the lungs (call Dr. Kervorkian!). So stand up wind, or get one of those people who don't need to read this article to take over the burn.

One to two weeks are required to recover from a bad case of poison ivy. This drives the afflicted person nuts along with everyone else around him/her. Except for the lungs, I have had poison ivy and poison oak everywhere (and, I mean literally everywhere). So take Uncle Dave's advice: if there is a chance that you might have touched it with your hands, and you have an itch, don't scratch. Sometimes there can be some humor to all of this suffering. I remember having a birthday party a few years ago when I once again had a bad case of poison ivy. I sat around in shorts drinking beer with friends and family, while my guests were grossed out by the fluid from the open blisters running down my leg and collecting in a puddle on the deck. When the guests turned green and made horrified faces, I directed their attention to my friend Eileen who proudly displayed her three huge blisters that looked like they would explode any minute. The bottom line here is that there are more fun ways to be the life of the party.

I have become more adept at avoiding poison ivy and the effect it has on me. I am more aware of the plant when I am doing my prairie restoration work, and I quickly scrub with cold water if I think that I might have come in contact with it. I still may suffer from a reaction but it seems to be a much milder case if I wash quickly. For me, the most torturous aspects of the reaction are not the blisters and the fluid, but the itching. I remember my parents yelling at me to stop scratching. That was about as successful as trying to train your cat to just pet the little birdies. At this stage of the itching frenzy, a normally sane person is perfectly willing to take a wire brush and forcibly remove any and all offending flesh, and I know that you know what I mean. This frenzy can lead to a week of little or no sleep and can drive a person to desperate measures. Through the years, I have tried them all, from the conventional over-the-counter salves and ointments to other unconventional home remedies such as bleach or urine. Well, needless to say, none of these methods provided any relief and left me with dabbed on pink splotches or just sitting there feeling stupid while continuing to scratch myself to exhaustion.

In the event of a severe reaction, your doctor can provide help. For one of my worst cases, I received an injection of Prednisone which started drying up the blisters within hours. The bad news is that Prednisone is a steroid which can be harmful to the body and is only for the occasional extreme case. There is good news, however. A few years ago I stumbled onto a means to stop the itch that works every time for me. I get into the shower, turn on the hot water, and put the parts with the poison ivy into the very hot water. It sounds crazy, but it works. You need to hold your flesh in the hot water for as long as you can stand it, which is about four to five seconds. This is not long enough to scald your skin, but it is indeed hot. You will have the sensation of the pleasure/pain that you feel when you scratch your poison ivy blisters with your fingernails. As soon as I turn off the water, the itching is gone, and for about four hours I don't even feel as if I have a reaction to poison

ivy. Sometimes I wake up scratching in the middle of the night and I jump into the shower for another dose. In three minutes I am back in bed and asleep. I have had some people suggest that by applying hot water, (and opening up the skin pores), I might be spreading the blisters, but this doesn't seem to be the case. All I know is that I then can live with myself (and others with me).

So next time you find yourself in one of those all too familiar scratching frenzies, you might forego the desperate measures and try the hot water. Just remember that it has to be very hot, and don't burn yourself. Good Luck!

THE EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE

Some Questions and Answers from TPE member Wayne Pauly

Question:

What species have you seen survive in restorations where reed canary takes over?

A: I've noticed that *Silphium perfoliatum* (cup plant) does reasonably well. Others I've noticed include *Helianthus grosseserratus* (big toothed sunflower), *Napaea dioica* (glade mallow), and *Rudbeckia laciniata* (green-headed coneflower). Survivors tend to grow very tall and have sturdy stems that resist being bent over and smothered by the biomass of reed canary.

Dealing with other aggressors

- Smooth Sumac

My limited experience indicates that if cut twice during the growing season for two years, the population declines significantly.

- Canada goldenrod

Canada goldenrod is a real problem on small sites and is best controlled by pulling on garden- size sites, and with mowing on larger sites. Time of mowing needs more observations, but late July to early August seems to work well.

Canada goldenrod populations exploded over dozens of acres of prairie plantings this past year (1997). Only time will tell if the goldenrod populations will decline naturally as happens with rigid leaf goldenrod, or if there will be a serious negative impact on other forbs. In garden plantings, most other forbs decline and disappear when Canada goldenrod increases unchecked.

- Indian grass and big bluestem

In a prairie planting on the north face of a drumlin, Indian grass kept out the reed canary which dominates all other parts of the hillside. There is reasonable diversity of forbs in the Indian grass, whereas reed canary choked out all forbs where no Indian grass was included in the mix.

Big bluestem still dominates on a 20 year old restoration, but is beginning to show some decline (the

site is more patchy in appearance). Annual burning definitely reduced the dominance of forbs: more forbs were visible in areas burned on a three to five year schedule.

Another observation

Guerdon Coombs is doing a small experiment for me. He is treating honeysuckle at three, six, and nine day delays after cutting to see the effect. The 50% round-up solution seems to be effective in each case. This is good news for those of us who must find time to do follow up herbiciding after volunteers are out cutting. Guerdon is repeating the "experiment" with spring, summer, and winter trials. Russ Hefty is thinking of repeating the observations on Buckthorn. Another volunteer may want to look into the validity of the observation that buckthorn is resistant to spring roundup treatments.

Other questions I have

How viable are the seeds produced by cut and resprouted parsnip?

Are the seeds of late cut parsnip viable?

How long do parsnip seeds remain viable in soil (4 years)?

Does cutting really have an effect on small patches of reed canary when it is flowering? Mineral vs organic soil?

Does fire or mowing kill seedlings of box elder, buckthorn, green ash, cottonwood, etc. and if so, at what age seedling does it stop working?

Editor's Note:

If anyone has answers or observations to the above or burning questions about other prairie restoration issues, write to: The Prairie Promoter Experience Exchange, 10052 CTH C, Woodman, WI 53827



GRASSLAND BIRDS OF THE MIDWEST

Madison Audubon Society, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and UW-Extension coordinated an eight state effort involving 17 partners and prepared a beautiful poster of 26 grassland birds. The background photo features Madison Audubon Society's Goose Pond Sanctuary.

If you would like a poster contact Madison Audubon Society at 222 S. Hamilton St., Suite 1, Madison, WI 53703.

Wisconsin's Breeding Bird Atlas Project

by Mark and Sue Martin

We are participating in the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas Project which is a multi-year effort to locate and document the breeding birds in the state. The project is a cooperative effort involving the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology, the Department of Natural Resources, and many conservation organizations. 1998 is the fourth year of this five year project.

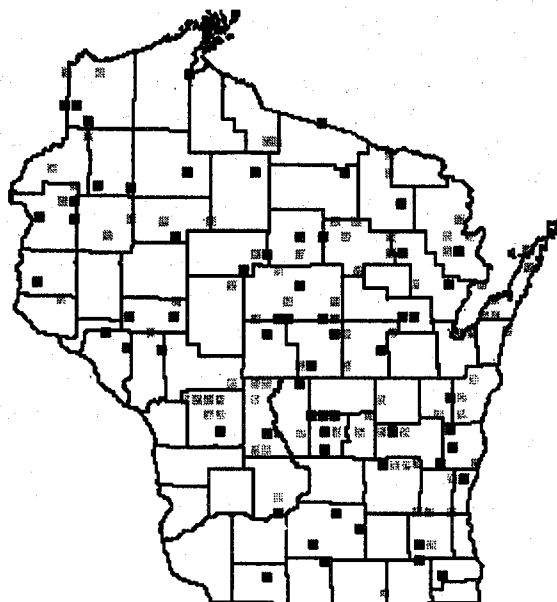
The Atlas will have many uses including providing baseline data for monitoring future changes in populations, documenting species diversity, and providing comparisons with historical data. The Atlas will also be used to prepare range maps.

The objective is to confirm nesting (nests, broods, adults feeding young) from as many species as possible, throughout the state. Surveys to confirm breeding are being done in priority and speciality areas. Random (casual) observations from throughout the state are also needed and are very important.

We invite you to participate in this project. It is difficult to locate and confirm nesting of many species, especially grassland birds. For more information contact WSO-Atlas, Bettie Hamman, Director, 5188 Bittersweet Lane, Oshkosh, WI 54901. Phone 920-233-1973. Web site is <http://wso.uwgb.edu/wbba.htm>.

Distribution maps for selected species indicating the topographic map quadrangles where Breeding Bird Atlas Project has recorded confirmed or probable breeding.

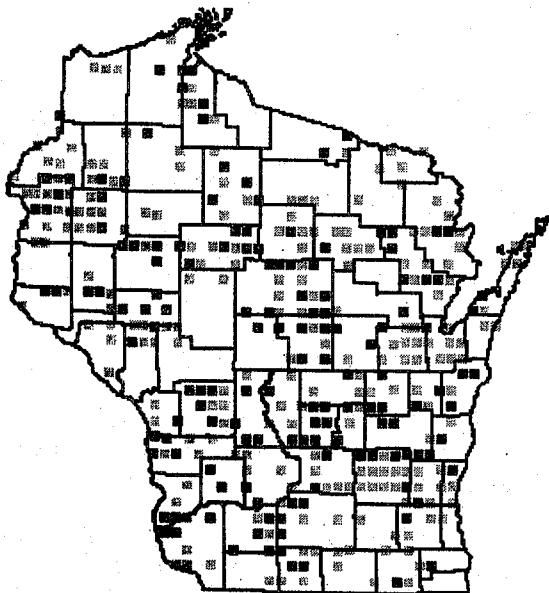
Northern Harrier



Breeding Status

- Confirmed
- Probable

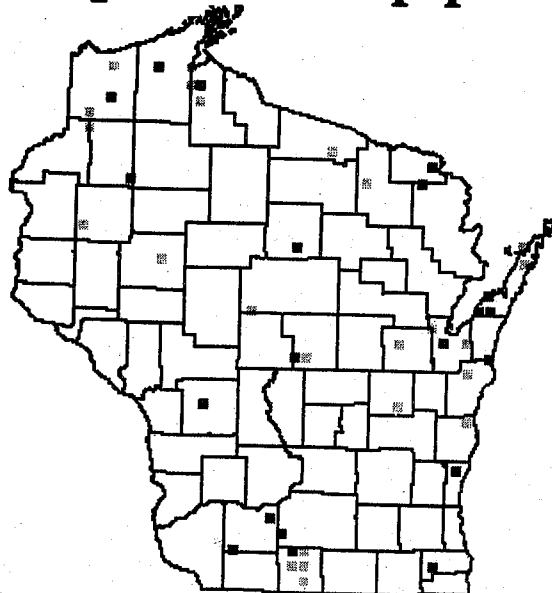
Bobolink



Breeding Status

- Confirmed
- Probable

Upland Sandpiper



Breeding Status

- Confirmed
- Probable

Teaming With Wildlife Legislation Update

If you recall, Teaming With Wildlife is a national legislative proposal to raise funds for non-game species and habitats, outdoor recreation opportunities, and environmental education through a user's fee on outdoor recreational equipment and supplies (see *Prairie Promoter*, Summer 1996, Vol. 9, No. 2). This legislation is still alive, and support is on the rise, but there is still opposition from some companies and legislators. Those opposed want to hear of support directly from their customers and constituents before they will get behind the legislation. One company that is on the fence is K-Mart Corporation, 3100 W. Big Beaver Rd., Troy, Michigan 48084. Let them know what you think. Also, let your US Congressmen know that you are willing to pay the estimated extra \$5 to \$10 a year for a program that will raise an estimated \$350 million a year nationally to be given to the states (Wisconsin would receive an estimated \$6.8 million a year) for non-game conservation work..

Prairie Enthusiasts and the Internet

by Evanne Hunt (West Central Chapter) and John Mecikalski (Empire Sauk Chapter)

Prairie Enthusiasts have many ways to communicate: chapter meetings, *The Prairie Promoter*, and banquets. Internet newsgroups and mailing lists offer another opportunity for people interested, nay, enthusiastic, about prairies to exchange ideas, suggestions, and concerns. If you have e-mail, you can participate in the discussion.

Internet mailing lists work just like your e-mail system. Computer software, called a "majordomo" accepts your e-mail message and re-mails the message to everyone on a list. These lists can contain hundreds of thousands of names. There are tens of thousands of different internet lists covering every conceivable topic, including the infamous "sex" lists to more mundane lists, such as "grasshoppers".

Mallorn Computer Services (<http://www.mallorn.com>) in Urbana, IL manages an internet mailing list devoted to prairies. This list is not well used - in January 1998, only five messages were posted to the list. This is very low, some mailing lists receive five messages an hour. We would like everyone in The Prairie Enthusiasts with an e-mail address to subscribe to this prairie discussion list. You can do this in one of two ways:

1. Go the Mallorn web site (<http://www.mallorn.com/lists/prairie>) and enter your e-mail address in the form provided;
2. Or, send an e-mail to "majordomo@mallorn.com". In the body of the message enter "subscribe prairie".

When you have a question or comment about any aspect of prairies, send an e-mail message to "prairie@mallorn.com". The computer software takes your message, puts it in the archive for later reference, and re-mails your message to everyone on the list --

including you! If someone on the list has a solution to your problem or a rebuttal to your comment, they send an e-mail message to the same address, and the process begins again. Mallorn archives, or stores, all messages posted to the list. You can search this archive from the Mallorn web site (<http://www.mallorn.com/lists/prairie>). You can also read the archived messages (they are stored by month) to see what kinds of questions are appropriate.

We encourage you not to be intimidated. The people on this list are prairie enthusiasts (lower case) just like you -- eager to discuss methods of eradicating buckthorn or just waxing poetic on the beauty of little bluestem glistening in the sunlight. In addition to other Prairie Enthusiasts, individuals such as Glenn Pollock from the Iowa Prairie Network also subscribe to the list. The opportunity exists for a network of people across the Midwest devoted to the preservation of our prairies. Subscribe today!



Prairie Restoration as an Agent of Personal Transformation: What It Can Do for You

By Susan Connell-Magee

About a year-and-a-half ago, I was home alone with our two dogs and one cat when the phone rang. I jumped up to answer it and found myself telling the pets "I'll get it!"

Yipes! Perhaps I'd been spending a little too much time nesting. Maybe it was time to get out more, spend a little more time with my own species, such as it is. Not willing to make a big commitment, I considered various volunteer opportunities and decided to volunteer as a gallery assistant at the State Historical Museum.

Making the leap from solitude to swarms of dozens (or dozens of swarms) of grade school kids, in frenzied, field-trip frame of mind, some with small rubber hatchets and tomahawks from the gift shop, all with energy, many with distinctly ungallery-like loud voices, and often accompanied by extremely easy-going chaperones, turned out to be too much for me, but I'd recommend it to you if you like that sort of thing.

In the meantime, I walked our two springer spaniels at my favorite park, Governor Nelson. I saw those little explanatory signs up around the woodland restorations and thought about calling to inquire about volunteering, but never got around to it. I did keep noticing how much better the park was looking, both in the woodland and prairie restorations.

At the end of July this past summer, the UW Arboretum, UW College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, The Prairie Enthusiasts, and a whole brigade of other outfits put on the Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland Conference here in Madison. I attended as a "stupid layperson" (as my husband, the lawyer, terms everyone not in his profession), and as part-owner of our family's lakeside farm in north-central Iowa, whose woods and wetlands will never be developed because we deeded the development rights to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Unfortunately, the farm has been the victim of two-lined chestnut borer, bad advice, and our ignorance in the past. Since my own ignorance was the only one of these variables I could do anything about, I went to the conference to begin learning about woodland restoration and management from people with first-hand experience.

The first day was great. I learned a context in which to view restoration ecology. Unfortunately, after the first day, we had to choose our own concurrent sessions, and I must have chosen poorly, because, at their close, I was still a member in good standing of the ignorantsia. (Ignorancia? Ignorencia? Whatever, you get it.)

However, the field trip on Friday more than compensated for this. It was hard to choose a field trip, there were so many interesting ones (if it had been possible, I would have gone on three of them), but I decided to go on one that featured nearby restorations, thinking that maybe one of them would appeal to me as volunteer work for my own first-hand restoration experience.

The "Dane County Oak Savanna & Woodland Restorations" tour was led by Rich Henderson, Russ Hefty, and Dan Weidert. We toured Madison's Owen Conservation Park, Rich Henderson's Sugar River Oak Savanna, Olson Oak Woods State Natural Area in the Madison School Forest, and Governor Nelson State Park. I came away with a clear idea of what is possible to accomplish in prairie and woodland restoration: going from degraded, limited-species farm fields and buckthorn-and-honeysuckle-infested woodlands to the glorious colors and the variety of species that restored prairies and woodlands offer. Transformation! This was something of which I wanted to be a part. Since

Governor Nelson Park was closest, I decided that would be where I'd volunteer.



When fall rolled around, ranger Dan Weidert sent a calendar of seed collecting times and places, and by September 20, I was out collecting bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*). Between then and November 8, when we seeded the nine acres that had been herbicided then burned to kill the brome grass, I had the pleasure of being out in three prairies in the area: the park's prairie on the shores of Lake Mendota, Greene Prairie at the Arboretum, and Koltes Prairie. The last two are outside-the-park sites that permit collecting for the park. The off-park collecting was my favorite because there were many fewer volunteers so we didn't have the same locust-like effect as we moved through the dry grasses and forbs and because, as an old restoration and a remnant, they are more complex and interesting than a new restoration. Two of my all-time favorite fall evenings were spent seed collecting. One warm October evening near sunset at Koltes, we were collecting on the hillside when I looked up to see four sandhill cranes winging their way toward Cherokee Marsh. The high, thin clouds provided a wispy background of light blues and pale pinks beyond the cranes' dark outlines. Later, on a colder, crisper, clearer day at Greene Prairie, we collected little bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*) until the setting sun burnished it red. Then, as dusk fell, we walked back through the Grady Tract woods, the white moon rising full in the deepening blue sky. If I wasn't hooked before, that did it, so I also volunteered at Madison Audubon's Goose Pond prairie for three Saturday afternoons, usually after a morning of collecting at the park. In time, I went from doing things such as collecting asters without seedheads (oops) to collecting, accurately, eight species in a day,

four or five at a time. By the end I felt I knew about two dozen prairie plants pretty well, by their common names if not always their scientific names.

One of the benefits of getting involved was the people I met this fall, people who really love the prairies and woodlands. Todd Shumate's comment on why he spends so much time volunteering at Governor Nelson and at the Arboretum was that "this feeds my soul." The Three Grad Student Women and One Younger Man of the Whorled Milkweed were so much fun to spend time with that the two hours we sat cleaning milkweed seed together on the hard, cold floor of the unheated Wakanda building passed unbelievably quickly. Katie Sullivan's enthusiasm and lively sense of humor were matched by Debbie Weitzel and Mike Dem's long-term involvement at the park and the huge energy boost their Middleton High students give the whole project. Jay Stampen was always a pleasure to work with, as was Guerdon Coombs. Ranger Weidert is such a wonderful seed-collecting fanatic, putting in hours and hours of personal time toward prairie restoration, that I'm considering leasing him my motto: *Why do when you can overdo?* When we finished seeding the prairie, I joined The Prairie Enthusiasts, began volunteering at the Arboretum, learned to use a chainsaw, and got certified as a pesticide applicator in order to continue with woodland restoration volunteer work. Look out work parties!

Thus the transformation of the latest Prairie Enthusiast. These days, I still talk to the pets, but I no longer expect them to answer--at least, not the phone.

Hope to meet you out volunteering in the woods or the weeds one of these days. Perhaps you'll enjoy it, too!

To the Prairie Enthusiast by Alice D'Alessio

Given a choice
of granite columns, bronze
statues -- the hewn and carved
and polished monuments to
man's misjudgments, names
of those who died for someone else's cause --
you prefer the prairie.

Wilderness invades you, paces your
uncertain heart with steady thrubbing.

Disoriented in crowds, you
forget where you are, walk into
strange doorways, wince at
the howls, the clatter
forget to say hello.

The pampered pansies
at the public tombs
offend you. You conjure drifts
of tallgrass swaying
in unrehearsed ballet, in perfect
synchrony, like schools of fish
and flocks of pelicans, dancing
October homage, spilling
their tiny packets of rebirth.
You walk across the bodies of the dying
soft-footed, hearing whispered
voices of those who came before
knowing, as sure as sun and rain
they will return; while pillars crumble.

Editor's Note: Alice D'Alessio and her husband Laird Marshall are members of the SW chapter, and own land near Ridgeway in Iowa County. It has recently been designated as a DNR Natural Area. They are happy to have anyone drop by to see their pine relic, and in the fall, their spectacular bottle and fringed gentians in their wet prairie and downies on their dry prairie.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER EVENTS

- Sun., May. 17 Spring Green Preserve field trip,
1:00pm. See chapter news.
- Wed., May. 20 Sugar River Oak Savanna field trip,
5:30pm. See chapter news.
- Tue., Jun. 16 Mazomanie School Section Bluff
field trip, 6:30pm. See chapter news.

MEETINGS

- Tue., May 5 Board meeting, 7:00 p.m.,
International Crane Foundation,
Baraboo
- Tue., Jul. 14 Empire-Sauk Annual Meeting,
6:00p.m., Natural Bridge State Park,
County Hwy C, East of Leland, Sauk
Co. Potluck dinner followed by
meeting and hike.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

MEETINGS

EVENTS

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER EVENTS

- Sun., Apr. 12 Work party at Bush Clover Prairie,
10:00am. to noon.
- Sun., Apr. 26 Work party at Heather's Prairie
(Neuroth's), 10:00am. to noon.
- Sat., May 23 Work party at Kalscheurs savanna,
10:00am. to noon..
- Sat., Jun. 6 Work party at Bush Clover prairie,
10:00am. to noon.
- Sun., Jun. 14 Work party at Vale prairie, 10:00am.
to noon..
- Sat., Jun. 27 Work party at Heather's prairie,
10:00am. to noon.

note: all above work parties are dependent
on weather conditions.. For
questions regarding weather
decisions, or for more information on
unscheduled work parties, call Gary
Eldred at 608-375-5271.

MEETINGS

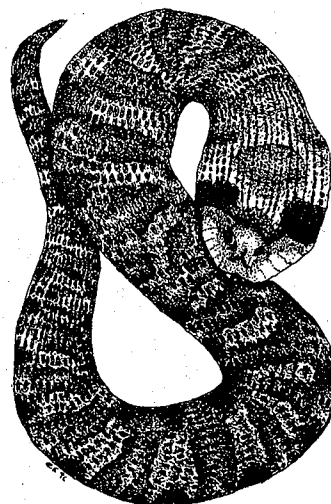
- Sun. Apr. 19 Board Meeting, Gary Eldred's house,
Boscobel, 1:00pm
- Sun. May 17 Board Meeting, Sue Linder's house,
Boscobel, 1:00pm.

- Sun. Jun. 21 Board Meeting, Sue Linder's house,
Boscobel, 1:00pm.

GENERAL EVENTS

All of the events listed below are organized by the
Madison Audubon Society. For more information call
608-255-BIRD

- Sat. Apr. 18 Faville Grove Natural Area, Lake
Mills. David Musof and Roger
Packard.
- Sat. May 9 Birding at Spring Green Preserve
with Greg Geller and Becky Able.
- Sat. Jun. 13 Barneveld Botany and Birds by
Bicycle with Steve Richter.
- Thur. Jun. 18 American Family Grassland Birds,
Madison, with Tony Kalenic.
- Sat., Jun. 20 Badger Ordinance Tour with Richard
Beilfuss.



Empire Sauk Chapter

Thank you, Wild Birds Unlimited

The Empire-Sauk Chapter is most grateful to Dan and Margie Hamilton and Wild Birds Unlimited (716 S. Whitney Way, Madison) for their donation of \$1,000 towards our management of prairie remnants in Dane County. The donation is a result of their fall bird seed sales promotion. It will be added to our chapter's land stewardship endowment, the annual earnings from which are used to pay student interns and for equipment and supplies used in the restoration and care of prairie and savanna remnants that we manage.

Field Trips Planned

Tour: Spring Green Preserve, Sunday May 17, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Rich Henderson will lead a tour of The Nature Conservancy's 480 acre bluff prairie at Spring Green. Rich will visit the east and west units and discuss various management activities. The west unit is not open for public visitation. From the intersection of US Hwy 14 and State Hwy 23 near Spring Green, travel north on Hwy 23 for .5 mile to intersection with Jones Road; travel east on Jones Road for .75 mile to preserve; turn onto a dirt access road marked Angelo Lane, just past driveway with fire number E51196A. Questions? Call Rich at 608-845-7065.

Tour: Sugar River Oak Savanna, Wednesday, May 20, at 5:30pm.

Rich Henderson will lead a tour of the nine acre Sugar River Oak Savanna that is being restored with frequent burning. Meet on Hwy PD at the Oak Savanna sign just west of Timber Lane. The site is about 3 miles west of PD and M.

Tour: Mazomanie School Section Bluff, Tuesday, June 16, at 6:30pm.

Kay Bongers will lead a tour of the Mazomanie Bluff Prairie that is rich in early history, with many historical references made to the bluff and its "luxuriant prairie". Its beacon guided planes in the 30's and 40's and the 100 year old water reservoir is still in use. Few restoration efforts have 100 year old photographs to guide them. White camass, prairie turnip, and ladies tresses are a few of the prairie plants waiting to be rescued from crown vetch and red cedars.

Turn south on Craemer Street at the base of the bluff by the log cabin antique shop. Park along the street. Questions? Call Kay Bongers at 608-767-3576.

Southwest Wisconsin Chapter

New Seed Drill Arrives!

SWC's new Truax drill arrived last fall, four weeks too late to plant the 10 acres by which we had planned to expand our seed orchard. We again had to plant the acres by hand.

The drill will be pressed into service this year, planting many acres of native grasses and forbs in Iowa and Lafayette counties. The \$11,500 price tag took a big bite out of our operating funds but thanks to the generosity of 11 members who donated or pledged funds, we have received \$5,195 to replenish our account. (If you would like to make a donation towards the drill, or have not yet sent in your pledged amount we would be very happy to accept it any time now!)

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your donations. It has long been a dream of the SW Chapter to have it's own seed drill to create a large scale seed orchard that will enable prairie restoration on public lands. We will now be able to plant prairie for years to come!

West Central WI Chapter News

Educational Series Proceeds

Prairie Primer Lecture #1

The West Central WI chapter inaugurated its education series on January 15 with "Getting to Know and Love the Prairie Grasslands".

Our lecturer, Lisa Mueller of the Nature Conservancy of Minnesota, greeted a crowd of 51 people at Camp St. Croix in Hudson, WI. Lisa has a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Minnesota and a Master of Science degree in Environmental Science and Applied Ecology from Indiana University. Lisa currently works for the Nature Conservancy of Minnesota as a Land Protection Specialist. Her work involves meeting with owners of land with high biodiversity significance throughout Minnesota and eastern South Dakota. She discusses protection strategies including acquisition, conservation easements, management agreements, voluntary registry, and gifts of land with the landowners.

For the "Getting to Know and Love the Prairie Grasslands" lecture, Lisa described the major forces that have shaped the prairie grasslands over the centuries. Using slides, she showed the changes that have occurred to the prairie as a result of the exclusion of bison, elk, and fire.

Eight people joined the Prairie Enthusiasts after the lecture, including one life-time membership.

The lecture was repeated in Eau Claire at the Beaver Creek Reserve on January 17 for 25 people.

Prairie Primer Lecture #2

The second lecture, "Plants of the Prairie", was given by Deborah Konkel on February 12.

Deb received her masters degree at the University of Wisconsin- LaCrosse. Her studies focused on plants in general and on prairie vegetation in particular. For her thesis she compared the vegetation of three types of prairies in Southwestern Wisconsin. Today Deb is an Aquatic Plant Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in Eau Claire. Although she inventories aquatic plants in lakes during work hours, she still roams prairies in her free time.

This lecture was also held at Camp St. Croix in Hudson and drew 65 people. The lecture was moved from the "Prairie Room" to the cozy "Lodge" because we anticipated a larger crowd. This was an excellent choice -- the crackling fire and rustic chairs were a perfect match for Deb's colorful slides. Using the theme of spring, summer, and fall, Deb showed the audience the succession of prairie grasses and forbs that emerge, flower, and seed during the season.

Five people joined The Prairie Enthusiasts and one current member upgraded to a family membership. The lecture was repeated in Eau Claire at the Beaver Creek Reserve on February 21.

Burn School

Harvey Halvorsen, President of the West Central Chapter, is coordinating a burn school for chapter members and members of the Western Wisconsin Prairie Project (WWPP). The class will meet two Saturdays, with the first classroom training on April 4 and the follow-up field training on April 25 (eastern area) and on May 2 (western area).

In preparation, Harvey presented an overview of prescribed burning at the January 22 chapter meeting at the Baldwin Community Center. Harvey described how "prescribed burning" differs from a typical grass fire and showed a short video from the Missouri Conservation Corps on how to conduct a prescribed burn.

Through lecture and slides, the group learned why prairies need fire to thrive, how a rotational burning is necessary to protect insects, and how fire effects different plants. A total of 23 people (the usual cadre of chapter members, plus five new members and their families) attended the lecture.

THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ County _____
Phone _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____
Zip _____

SELECT CHAPTER OR GENERAL MEMBERSHIP:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Coulee Region Chapter
LaCrosse, Buffalo, Vernon, Trempealeau,
Monroe, Jackson, Winona & Huston
Counties | ☐ Southwest Wisconsin Chapter
Grant, Crawford, Richland & Iowa
Counties |
| ☐ Empire Sank Chapter
Sauk, Columbia & Dane Counties. | ☐ Prairie Bluff Chapter
Green, Rock & Lafayette Counties |
| ☐ Northwest Illinois Chapter
JoDaviess, Carroll & Stephenson Counties | ☐ West Central Wisconsin Chapter
Barron, Chippewa, Polk, EauClaire,
Dunn, Pepin, Pierce & StCroix Counties |
| ☐ General Membership
outside chapter areas | ☐ Donation \$ _____ |

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ☐ \$10 STUDENT | ☐ \$15 INDIVIDUAL | ☐ \$25 FAMILY |
| ☐ \$25 CONTRIBUTOR | ☐ \$50 SUSTAINING | ☐ \$200 IND.LIFE |

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

The Prairie Enthusiasts
10052 CTH C
Woodman, WI 53827

AREAS OF INTEREST

- ☐ SITE INVENTORIES
- ☐ ORGANIZING/LEADING FIELD TRIPS
- ☐ DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS
- ☐ SEED COLLECTING/PLANTING
- ☐ PLANNING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
- ☐ FUND RAISING/GRANT WRITING
- ☐ STEWARDSHIP (BURNING, BRUSH CUTTING)
- ☐ SPEAKER'S BUREAU

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Can we provide your name and address to:
Other environmental organizations Y N
Other Prairie Enthusiasts? Y N



Dr. Ittis and Acolytes

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