



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 11, NO.4

Winter 1998

Celebrating eleven years of prairie conservation in the Upper Midwest

11TH ANNUAL BANQUET MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW!

The 11th annual banquet of The Prairie Enthusiasts will be at UW-Platteville on Saturday, March 13. Due to the overwhelmingly positive response of last year's attendees, we will once again be offering an expanded format with workshops throughout the afternoon. In addition, we will be offering a children's workshop from 1pm until 3:30pm for children ages 5 through 10. This workshop will offer a variety of activities and stories related to environmental issues. The workshop is being coordinated by volunteer Gen Krahn-Reed.

There will be four workshops, starting at 1pm. The workshops will be: Grassland Birds and their Management, presented by Dave Sample; Status and Distribution of Prairie Insects and Other Animals of the Chicago Region, presented by Ron Panzer; Plants of the Oak Savanna by Rich Henderson; and, Controlling Exotic Species by Kim Mello and Kelly Kearns. In addition, there will be presentations by chapters on their projects and achievements in the last year. For details on times of the workshops and how to register, please see the enclosed registration form. Space will be limited, particularly for the children's workshop, so register early.

The buffet will offer a choice of vegetarian lasagna or marinated chicken breast. The entrees will be accompanied by parsley whole potatoes, peas and carrots, tossed salad, blueberry or peach cobbler and beverages. The buffet will begin at 5pm. In addition, there will be coffee and snacks offered throughout the afternoon, and a cash bar from 1pm to 5pm.

The banquet will include a raffle and silent auction as usual. There will be no evening speaker this year, so immediately after dinner the raffle and silent auction winners will be announced. We anticipate the evening will end by 8pm.

BANQUET VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to help at the annual banquet on March 13. 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; (6) guest registration (from 12 noon to 4:30pm, please specify time available). Please call Rich Henderson at (608) 845-7065 if you would like to help.

DONATION ITEMS NEEDED

It's time to start thinking about raffle and auction items for the annual 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 11am and noon, March 13. All items must be pre-registered. No last minute walk-ins, please.

The auction and raffle will be coordinated by Rich Henderson. The following individuals will be coordinating raffle and auction items for their chapters:
Coulee Region Chapter: Chris Matson (608) 582-4345
Empire Sauk Chapter: Rich Henderson (608) 845-7065
Prairie Bluff Chapter : Ren Zeller (608) 938-4848
Northwest Illinois Chapter: Grace Storch (815) 777-9691
Southwest Chapter: Sue Linder (608) 375-2668
West Central Chapter: Chuck Bomar (715) 232-8133
TPE general donation: Rich Henderson (608) 845-7065

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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 900 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 have 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.

TPE Board Of Directors
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Prairie Bluff Chapter
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Southwest Wisconsin Chapter
Contact: Gary Eldred, 608-375-5271

West Central Wisconsin Chapter
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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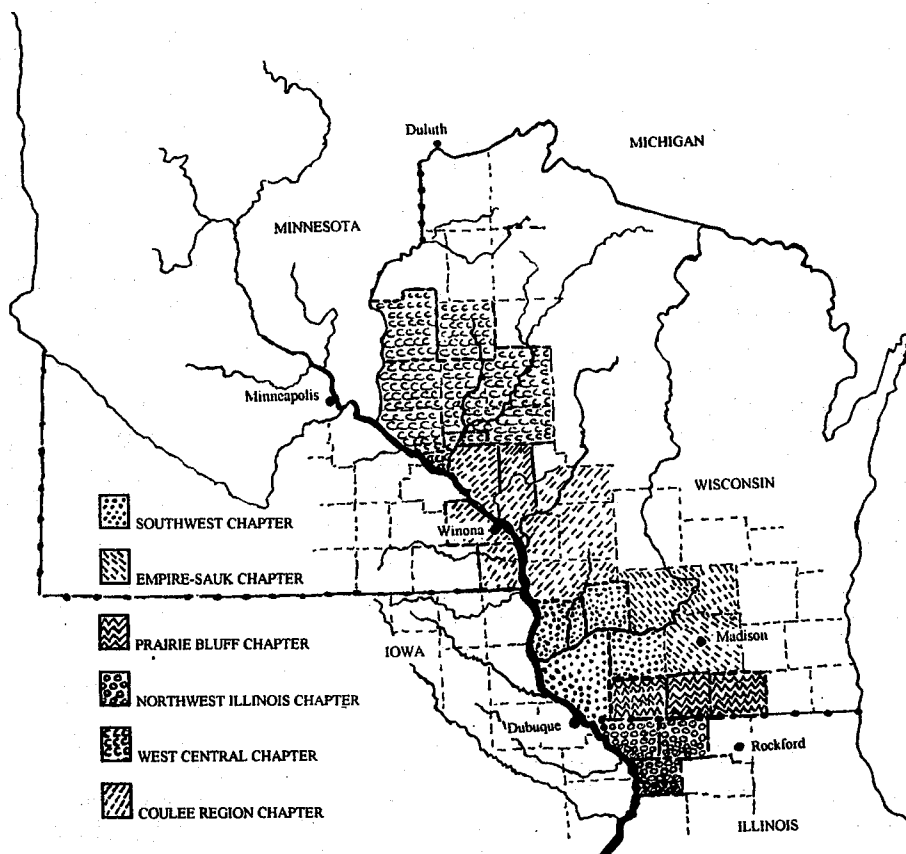
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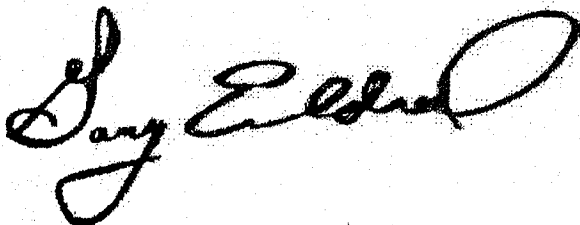


President's Message

It seems a long time ago when a prototype of what evolved into The Prairie Enthusiasts was a small, informal, and not very organized group of volunteers. I remember how excited I became as we organized and our membership swelled to 500. That was before two new chapters emerged and our membership increased by more than 200. It's truly gratifying to review the membership rolls and see so many familiar names and to note that members live not only throughout the Upper Midwest, but also throughout the country. I am pleased that we have such broad support, but I am also concerned that, due to geography, there is scant opportunity for some members to become involved in TPE activities, almost all of which happen at the chapter level.

Birds of a feather do flock together: to do controlled burns, to remove woody vegetation, and to collect and plant seed. These chapter activities offer unparalleled opportunities to learn, to share information, and to enjoy one another's company. I know that a number of prairie enthusiasts not affiliated with a chapter are engaged in prairie conservation on private and/or public property. Some work alone, while others work with friends, state or local parks personnel, or nature center staff. If you are one of these individuals, I urge you to consider forming a TPE chapter. You could continue to carry out your prairie and savanna restoration efforts as before, and have *The Prairie Promoter* to communicate with other prairie enthusiasts. In addition, your chapter would have tax exempt status which gives you the ability to solicit tax-deductible contributions. Your chapter would keep 100% of any grants and donations received. You would also receive whatever technical assistance necessary to get started.

Only ten people are required to form a TPE chapter. At the present time, for example, there is a sufficient number of TPE members to form a chapter covering Dodge, Washington, Ozaukee, and Fond du Lac counties in Wisconsin. In addition, there are nearly enough members to form a chapter in Northeastern Illinois. If you live in one of those areas, please use the long winter nights to consider forming a new TPE chapter. Prairies and savannas will certainly benefit, and so will you and your friends. If you have any questions or need further information, write to us at PO Box 112, Boscobel, WI. 53805.



Projects of The Prairie Enthusiasts

By Rich Henderson

This past summer a disturbing comment from one of our members was passed on to me. It was something to the effect "Why should I make a large donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts? They don't do anything." Well to set the record straight, The Prairie Enthusiasts have so far acquired title to 6 preserves (totaling 75 acres). We hold a conservation easement on a 60 acre site, and we are in the process of negotiating conservation easements on another 4 properties that will total between 300 and 500 acres. We hold a 99 year lease on, and manage, 200 acres of sandy oak savanna and prairie in Illinois. We have played critical roles in the protection of at least a dozen high quality prairies that were eventually acquired by other conservation groups. We manage, through agreements, approximately 35 prairie and savanna sites totaling nearly 700 acres (5 sites are publicly owned; 30 are privately owned). We also actively look for, and inventory, prairie and savanna remnants and have active landowner contact programs. The sites we work on are significant natural areas with good quality prairie and savanna remnants and many rare species. Surveys from just the Empire-Sauk and Southwest WI chapters have so far found 14 state endangered or threatened plant and animals species and one Federally threatened plant species, as well as 12 special concern plant and animal species living on our project sites. In short, we are doing a lot. What we seem to not be doing is getting the word out about our activities. Maybe a regular feature in the newsletter, profiling one of our projects in each issue, would be a good way to start.

11th Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop

March 27, 1999

Rock Valley College

Rockford Illinois

After an eight year hiatus, the original Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop is back! Started in 1975 by Doug and Dot Wade, the Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop is an important gathering of prairie enthusiasts from around the middle west.

This year the workshop will honor the life-long contribution of Ray Schulenberg for his work as a teacher and guiding spirit of the prairie movement. Peter Raven of the Missouri Botanic Garden will deliver the keynote address.

Topics for this workshop include: Prairie Ecology, Preservation, Plant and Animal Studies, Endangered Species, and more. For further information, please contact Community Services at 815-654-4290 or Jay Friberg, Rock Valley College, at 815-654-4407.

PE CONTRIBUTING TO LOIS ALMON SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Last year the PE board made a \$500 contribution to the Lois Almon Small Grants Program of the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters. The purpose of this program is to support natural history (including natural area management) research in Wisconsin. Each year roughly 6 grants of up to \$1,000 each are made to university graduate students and other researchers. The PE board hopes to be able to continue contributing between \$500 and \$1,000 each year. Our funds are offered with a stipulation that they go towards prairie and oak savanna ecosystem related work. In return, PE is given a seat on the proposal review committee. PE vice-president Rich Henderson is currently representing our organization on this committee. Other conservation groups regularly contributing funds to the program are The Nature Conservancy, the Citizens' Natural Resources Association, and the WDNR Bureau of Endangered Resources.

Prairie related projects funded this past year were "The Darkling Beetles of Wisconsin: Taxonomy, Natural History, and Distributions" by Jim Dunford and "A Survey of the Arthropod Fauna Associated with Pocket Gophers in Wisconsin" by Kerry Katovich and Nadine Kriska. All three are graduate students at UW-Madison. Other projects were funded on timber rattlesnake demography, Blanchard's cricket frog habitat, distribution and genetics of the state threatened cliff cudweed (*Gnaphalium saxicola*), and ecology of the state threatened plant *Psilocarya scirpodes*.

If you wish to support PE participation in this grants program, send your contribution to PE treasurer Alice Mirk with a note

stipulating that the monies go to the Lois Almon Small Grants Program.



Drawing by Chris Matson

POST-PLANTING WEED CONTROL BY SCOTT WEBER

On August 24, the U W Extension hosted a field day at Arlington to demonstrate various weed control options during the first years of a native grass planting. Several small plots were hand seeded with a mix of mostly big bluestem and Indian grass. The treatments studied were mowing, use of cover crops, and Plateau, an herbicide newly registered for use on native grasses and prairie restorations.

The general conclusion was that at a cost of about \$7.00 per acre, Plateau was "cheap insurance", and cheaper and more reliable than mowing. Sales representatives from American Cyanamid, the maker of Plateau, were on hand to answer questions and promote their product. A few participants noted a "high failure rate" in past plantings and would now require use of Plateau for projects funded with their money.

Originally used for legume crops, Plateau is not toxic to most warm season grasses, legumes, and other species when applied at the recommended rate. It is primarily helpful in controlling

foxtail grass and other annual weeds that compete with native seedlings for light, water, and nutrients.

Unfortunately, few other opinions or options were discussed in detail, and there was little discussion of its drawbacks. One of its major flaws is that it is toxic to some prairie species, including switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*) and dropseed (*Sporobolus*) species, and its toxicity to the majority of prairie species found in Wisconsin has not been published. Not mentioned in the Plateau literature is its effect on silphiums, gentians, spiderwort, butterfly weed, Culver's root, or many other prairie species. You can find however, rates of application for growing cosmos, Shasta daisies, crown vetch, sweet clover, Johnny Jump-ups, and red corn poppies.

The other major problem with Plateau is that it does not control quackgrass, one of the few weeds that actually pose a threat to the long term establishment of prairie. The recommendation was to use Round-Up herbicide prior to planting, but even Round-Up will not eliminate quackgrass, since it rarely kills it with one application and does not effect the seeds already in the soil. In all likelihood, if there has been quackgrass, it will always return unless you plant and manage for other species. The best post-planting control of quackgrass is a combination of fire and mowing.

Certainly foxtail and other annual weeds are important, but they are only a temporary problem, and big bluestem and Indian grass will eventually outcompete them. Few people can identify young grass seedlings, and a new herbicide may look like a good option to those unfamiliar with the life cycle of prairie grasses. After one year's growth, they throw their arms up in disgust at a field of weeds, unable to recognize the young bluestem seedlings that are surely there, patiently sending down roots that

will inevitably eliminate foxtail and other annuals. Impatience has killed more plantings than any other factor.

Mowing, in my opinion, is the best option and probably cheaper than herbicide for most landowners, but few of its merits were discussed. Many landowners do not have the spray equipment necessary to treat large areas. They must rely on a third party, usually the Co-op, to do their spraying, and the Co-op is not going to spray for \$7.00 an acre. They may not agree to do it at all, particularly for an herbicide that they do not use regularly. With any herbicide, timing is important, and you may be last on their list if they must clean out their sprayer. Mowing, however, can be done with a wide variety of equipment, from a sickle mower to brush hog, and one can hire anyone to mow, since the person mowing need not be certified like a pesticide applicator. Mowing is not toxic to any species, it simply tips the balance in favor of some by cutting back others. If done

carefully the first few years of a planting, undesirable weeds can be controlled or eliminated. All my grass plantings were mowed with a 7 foot sickle bar mower I picked up at auction for \$50.00, and it has done an adequate job.

The best use for Plateau is warm season grass plantings with Plateau tolerant forbs. Examples might be monocultures for seed production, or warm season grass pasture with legumes where spraying is easier or cheaper than mowing. But, if your objective is diversity, forget the Plateau and stick with the tried and true mowing, or mowing plus burning. Our quest for diversity and authenticity should be the driving force behind the restoration industry, but instead the industry simplifies or redefines prairie to fit their product. The definition of prairie is written in the landscape of our remnants, and the methods we adopt should reflect that. It is certainly acceptable to plant a few grasses and forbs for landscaping, erosion control, or hay, but just don't call it a prairie.



Drawing by Chris Matson

Experience Exchange

Late spring burning of reed canarygrass - further testimony

By Rich Henderson

Right on Chris! For the past 20 plus years I have been trying various techniques to suppress reed canarygrass on a site where it has thoroughly taken over a sedge meadow and wet prairie badly degraded by grazing. My experience with late May to early June burns has been the same as Chris'. I have found such burns to be very effective in suppressing reed canary and releasing native plants. Unfortunately, one year after a single burn things seem to be back to the way they were. However, after 8 years of annual burning, alternating late spring with early spring fire (there is not enough fuel after the first burn to carry late spring fire again in the second year), I have observed substantial, sustained progress. Native species are establishing and spreading. In adjacent unburned areas there is still no sign of the natives. Annual early spring (early to mid April) burning for twenty-two years on an adjacent area has also resulted in native species emergence and establishment, but at a much slower rate. There are likely four reasons for fire's positive effect on these degraded sites: 1) direct damage to the reed canary, 2) warmer soil through litter removal, 3) more sunlight for seedling establishment through litter removal, and 4) accumulative loss of nitrogen (N) through litter combustion. Loss of N is likely the primary reason for the eventual sustained increase in the natives. Many researchers believe that reed canarygrass' dominance in low areas is due in part to high levels of available N. I have also found late spring and early summer mowing to have very positive effects. I'm currently experimenting with combinations of burning, mowing, and inter-seeding native species, and I'm cautiously optimistic that the site's original 99.9% reed canary cover will eventually be replaced by native sedge meadow and wet prairie species. (Note: The soil on this site is 3-5" of organic material overlying mineral soil. Results on deep organic soils may be different.)

GIVE GENEROUSLY THIS SEASON

To date, The Prairie Enthusiasts has protected over 900 acres of prairie and savanna through acquisition, conservation easements, and management agreements. If current projects are successful, the total acres protected could double in the next two years! However, there are some dark clouds on the horizon. First, land prices have doubled in many areas where the fraction of 1% of original prairie and savanna remains. Second, rural development continues to expand onto prairie and savanna remnants and lands that would be suitable for prairie and savanna reconstruction. Third, as we expand our efforts to protect more prairie and savanna remnants, we continue to call upon the same small group of volunteers to carry out needed stewardship activities. It appears inevitable that we will need to hire staff for this essential work. This will require a substantial increase in our endowment funds in order to generate sufficient income to ensure that needed management will continue well into the future.



We realize that some prairie enthusiasts may have busy schedules and simply cannot find the time to become actively involved in stewardship activities; still others live too far away from the sites we are managing. This is a very good time of year to consider a tax-deductible contribution to TPE's endowment fund or to your chapter's land acquisition fund. Give generously so that the prairie and savanna ecosystems can survive and flourish in the next millennium.

OUR FUTURE.....THIS.....OR

Stock Gifts and Other Planned Giving

Often, we wish we could contribute more financially to our favorite charities, but we just don't seem to have enough available cash. Take heart, there are alternatives to cash donations that may also have great tax advantages for you. If you like what The Prairie Enthusiasts is doing and you have stock that has grown appreciatively in recent years, consider donating some of that stock directly to TPE. This way you can avoid the capital gains taxes and write off the full value of the stock as a tax-deductible donation (check with your tax or financial advisor to see how this approach in giving would work for you). Donating land may have similar advantages as well. Donations can be either land with natural area value and thus retained by TPE as a nature preserve, or they may be lands with little or no natural area value that TPE would then sell for cash. Cash that will then be used to purchase or manage prairies and savannas. Also, don't forget The Prairie Enthusiasts in your will. After all, we are a growing organization that is in it for the long haul.



.....THIS?

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

MEETINGS

- Wed., Jan. 6 Chapter board meeting at 7pm at TNC office, 633 West Main, Madison
- Mon., Mar. 15 Chapter board meeting at 7pm at TNC office, 633 West Main, Madison.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

EVENTS

- Sat., Feb. 6 Special Program on Prairie Gardening at the Monroe Public Library, Second floor, 925 16th Ave, Monroe from 1-3pm. Free admission, includes refreshments.

MEETINGS

- Tues., Jan. 5 Prairie Bluff Chapter meeting, Turner Hall Ratskellar, Monroe, at 7:00pm.
- Tues., Feb. 2 Prairie Bluff Chapter meeting, Chalet Landhaus Inn, 878 Highway 69, New Glarus at 7pm.
- Tues., Mar. 2 Prairie Bluff Chapter Meeting at Bank of Brodhead, 806 East Exchange St. (east across from square) Brodhead, at 7pm.

- Sun., Feb. 21 Chapter meeting at the home of David Lowe, 205 E. Merrimac St, Dodgeville at 1pm.
- Sun., Mar. 21 Chapter meeting at home of Sue Linder, 505 Airport Rd., Boscobel at 1pm.

GENERAL CALENDAR

- Sun., Jan. 10 TPE Board meeting at 1pm, Dodgeville.
- Sat., Feb. 6 Annual Jordan Prairie Potluck, at the home of John Ochsner, rural Albany. See Prairie Bluff Chapter news for details.
- Fri., Feb. 19 Garden Expo, in Madison at Coliseum.
- Sun., -21
- Sat., Mar. 13 TPE annual banquet at UW-Platteville, see first article of this newsletter for details.
- Sat., Mar. 13 TPE Board meeting at 9am, UW-Platteville, at banquet location.
- Sat., Mar. 20 Native Landscaping Conference, at Memorial Union, Madison, 9am to 4:15pm. See article below.
- Sat., Mar. 27 11th Northern Illinois Workshop, Rock Valley College, Rockford, Illinois. See article on page 3.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

EVENTS

- Sun., Jan., 3 Work party at Heather's Prairie, 10am to noon.
- Thurs. Jan. 14 Work party Kalscheurs' Savanna, 10am until noon.
- Sat., Jan. 16 Work party at Vale from 10am to noon.
- Sat., Jan. 23 Work Party at Bush Clover Prairie, 10am to noon.
- Wed., Jan. 27 Work party at Kalscheurs' Savanna, 10am to noon.
- Sat., Feb. 6 Work party at Vale, from noon to 2pm.
- Sat., Feb. 13 Work party at Bush Clover prairie, 10am to noon.
- Sun., Mar. 7 Work party at Heather's Prairie, 10am to noon.

note: For directions or further information regarding any of the work parties listed above, see Southwest Chapter news.

MEETINGS

- Sun., Jan. 17 Chapter meeting at Sue Linder home, 505 Airport Rd, Boscobel at 1pm.

1999 Native Landscaping Conference

The UW-Madison Arboretum and Wild Ones (Madison Chapter) are co-hosting the Native Landscaping Conference on Saturday, March 20, 9am to 4:15pm at the Memorial Union on the University Campus. This year's keynote speaker is Neil Diboll, Ecologist and President of Prairie Nursery, with an honorary guest appearance by Lorrie Otto, native landscape activist and founder of the Wild Ones.

This year there will be concurrent sessions grouped into four themes: restoration for beginners; management; ecosystems; and, special interests. A variety of speakers will present and/or participate in panel discussions. For registration information on this conference, call 608-263-7888. The cost is \$22.00 (Member of Friend of the Arboretum \$20.00)

EMPIRE-SAUKE CHAPTER

Garden Expo Volunteers

We need volunteers to staff our display at the Garden Expo in Madison, February 19-21st. Time slots (of two-to-four hours each) are available on Friday (19th) from 4-8 p.m., Saturday (20th) from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Sunday (21st) from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Call Rich Henderson if you would like to volunteer (608-845-7065).

Managing all that land

Our growing success in securing recognition and protection for prairie and oak savanna remnants is bringing us new and exciting challenges (see article "Projects of The Prairie Enthusiasts"). You might be wondering how our chapter is going to manage and restore all that land? We currently are managing over 100 acres of prairie and oak savanna, and that amount may be doubling in the next year or two. The task at hand is large, but it can be done if everyone is willing to chip in and contribute time, cash, equipment, or supplies. Please consider making donations to our stewardship endowment, or to the purchase of specific land management items and supplies that we need to get the job done. Donations may be in the form of cash, stocks, trade lands, etc. or actual tools, equipment, and supplies. Contributing time at work parties should not be overlooked either. Some items that we are in immediate need of are: a walk-behind brush cutter, long-handled pruners, NOMEX fire suits, hardhats, communication radios (for doing burns), a portable pump and hoses, herbicides of various types, and a slip on unit (water tank and pump for fire control) for a pickup truck. Please contact chapter Treasurer, Jim Welsh (608-355- 1987), or Stewardship Committee Chair, Paul West (608-280-8576) about making donations.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Monroe Native Serves as Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks

BY JOHN OCHSNER

Donald Barry, son of Kay and George Barry, charter members of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts, now the Prairie Bluff Chapter of TPE, was confirmed by the United States Senate in June for the position of Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

Don graduated from Monroe High School in 1967, the University of Wisconsin in 1971, and the University of Wisconsin law school in 1974. He was one of ten law school graduates to take part in the Department of the Interior Honors program. The following year he was offered a position with The Fish and Wildlife Service where he remained for ten years,

serving as the chief attorney for the last five years. From 1985 to 1991 he served as counsel on the staff of the House of Representatives Merchant Marine and Fisheries committee. He then held a position with the World Wildlife Fund as vice president for the US Land and Wildlife program. The Clinton Administration invited him to return to the Department of the Interior as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife under George Frampton. After Frampton's retirement he served as acting Assistant Secretary until his recent confirmation. George and Kay attended his Senate confirmation hearings and also his ceremonial swearing in by Secretary Babbitt, and the reception that followed. Don credits his early exposure to the outdoors by his parents as the reason for his interest in environmental issues and his current career. His family took annual canoe trips to the Boundary Waters and the Quetico, and encouraged him to join the Boy Scouts, where he became an Eagle Scout, and served on the staff of Canyon Camp in Illinois for nine summers. In the Monroe Times, Don is quoted as being satisfied with the work he has done for the environment in the last quarter century. He said that because Americans are concerned for wildlife and the environment, he feels he is doing important work.

Jordan Prairie Potluck

The annual Jordan Prairie Potluck will be held on Saturday, February 6, at the home of John Ochsner at 6pm. Bring a dish to pass and slides or photos of your 1998 prairie activities. For further information and directions to his rural Albany home, call John at 608-862-3816.

SOUTHWEST WI CHAPTER

Southwest Chapter Winter Work Parties

Vale Prairie. This Green County remnant was purchased in 1992 and the 12 ½ acre buffer zone surrounding the 3 ½ acre remnant is being gradually returned to prairie. We have scheduled two work parties to remove the woody vegetation: January 16, from 10am to noon; and February 6, from 12pm to 2pm. Of course, volunteers are welcome to stay longer! Bring a lunch and we'll provide the beverages. If in doubt about weather or site conditions, (i.e., low temperatures or deep snow), call Gary Eldred at 608-375-5271. Directions: From Hwy 69, turn east onto Hwy 39. At Purinton Rd turn east. Proceed to Schneeberger Rd and turn north 0.2 miles, take the farm lane west (trees are on south side of lane, and crop land is on north side).

Kalscheur Savanna. This 20 acre Iowa County remnant was donated to TPE in 1994. Much work has been done to decrease the canopy on the wooded portion of the site. We have scheduled two work parties to remove woody vegetation: January 14 and January 27, from

10am to noon. Bring your own lunch and we will provide the beverages. If in doubt about weather or site conditions, call David Lowe at 608-935-9586.

Directions: from Hollandale Co. Rd K south about 2 miles from Hwy 39. Site is on left, (east side of road). Look for parked cars along road.

Bush Clover Prairie. This three acre Grant County remnant was purchased in 1989. Although it is the smallest property we own, it is home to wild quinine, Hill's thistle, marbleseed, pale purple coneflower, and prairie bush clover. We have scheduled two work parties to remove woody vegetation: January 23 and February 13, from 10am to noon. Bring a lunch and we'll provide the beverages. If in doubt about site or weather conditions, call Walter Mirk at 608-988-4760.

Directions: take Hwy 61 north of Lancaster, and turn left on Co. Rd K. Proceed about four miles and turn left (west) on Badger Rd. Go around curve and prairie is on the right.

Heather's Prairie. Heather's Prairie is a 15 to 20 acre prairie pasture in Grant County. The Southwest Chapter has a management agreement with the owners and has intensified its efforts to restore the site in recent years. Two work parties are scheduled to remove woody vegetation: January 3 and March 7, from 10am to noon. Bring lunch and we'll provide the beverages. If in doubt about site or weather conditions, call Gary Adams at 608-624-5797.

Directions: from Fennimore, take Hwy 18 west to Pine Rd. Turn left (east) on Graham Rd., then right (south) on Mt. Ridge Rd. to fire number 12109.

WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER

Education: A Necessary Element

Rank these activities, from most important to least important:

- ☐ Preserve native prairies
- ☐ Restore prairie ecosystems
- ☐ Educate the public about prairies
- ☐ Manage existing prairies

Did you rank Education as #1?

I would. But many TPE members would not.

The mission statement of the West Central Chapter reads

"Dedicated to the inventory, promotion, restoration, and protection of natural prairies in West Central Wisconsin".

You won't find education of the public or TPE members in that statement. Nevertheless, for our chapter, 1998 will be remembered as the "Education Year".

1998: The Education Year

We started 1998 with the *Prairie Primer* series -- a series of four evening presentations on birds, plants, insects, and mammals that inhabit the prairie

ecosystem. It was gratifying to see 20-30 people attend each presentation.

Concluding the series was the *Restoration Workshop*, an all-day event with presentations, lectures, discussions, and a chance to share ideas and projects with other prairie enthusiasts. Over 150 people from Minnesota and Wisconsin participated, several driving over 150 miles for the event.

Our chapter also hosted a booth at county fairs, Heritage Days, sportsman events, Farm/City Days, and Farm Progress Days.

A Lot of Work; and for What?

All of these events required hundreds of hours, grant money to fund the activities, sleepless nights, and nagging doubts -- if we are there, will anyone come? But they did -- not in droves, but certainly a steady stream.

Why do we expend so much energy -- energy that could well be used to cut buckthorn and pull spotted knapweed -- to answer questions from the public? Because we sometimes hear comments like this:

"Don't you know how very, very, very dangerous this is? You people should be REQUIRED by law to cut the grass back to the ground every year! A grass fire could easily burn down my house!"

We must educate the public about the rarity of a native prairie; explain how the ecosystem reduces soil erosion and minimizes flood potential; help people appreciate the medicinal treasures in the plants, and understand the conservation habitat it provides.

If we don't get the public to see the inherent beauty and usefulness of a prairie, we will forever be fighting city hall, town ordinances, developers, the DNR, and the Wisconsin DOT every time we want to save a prairie remnant.

Education: The Panacea?

How much easier would it be if everyone in Wisconsin knew what a prairie ecosystem was?

How much easier would it be if everyone in Wisconsin knew three or four plants that were native to their area?

How much easier would it be if everyone in Wisconsin knew two economic uses for prairies and two environmental services the prairies provide?

I am not naive. If everyone in Wisconsin knew that a managed prairie is no more likely to burn down their house than a stand of dry alfalfa, they still might not embrace the prairie mantra.

But I have personally experienced the ease with which someone can restore a single, tiny acre to prairie. I received only encouragement, questions, and compliments from my neighbors. They had already been educated by someone to appreciate the value of the native grasses and flowers to the meadowlarks, bluebirds, and butterflies.

I will be eternally grateful to whomever that was.

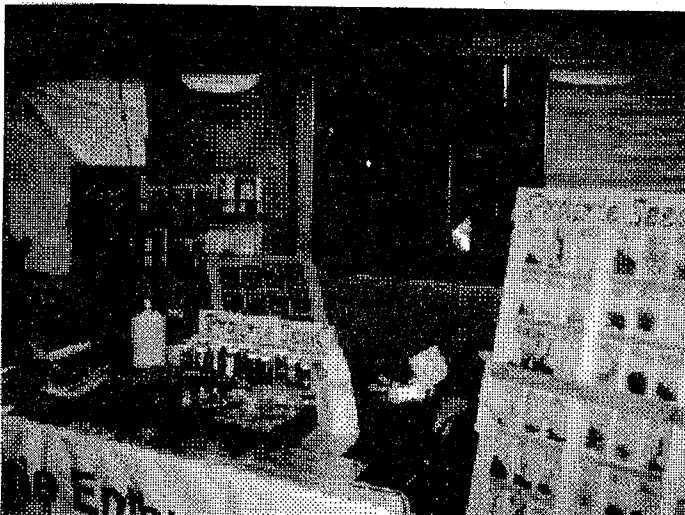


Carol Benish and Tom Ziegeweid answer questions from the public

FARM PROGRESS DAYS

The 1998 Wisconsin Farm Progress Days were held in Dunn County September 22 - 24. The site, located on the outskirts of Menomonie, included Rusk Prairie Farms and Priceland Jerseys. As in past years, approximately 100,000 people visited the event. The theme of this year's event was "Diversity for the Next Century" and included presentations, demonstrations, and over 600 exhibitors.

One of the exhibitors was the West Central Chapter -- giving guided tours of our restored one acre prairie plot and answering questions from our booth in the Conservation tent.



Chapter table in the Conservation Booth

The prairie restoration was located at the Rusk Feed Mill, mid-way between Rusk Prairie Farms and Priceland Jerseys. The site was restored with the help of the DNR, the UW-Eau Claire, and the UW-Stout.. The Chapter received a \$400 grant from the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, a \$350 donation of plants from Prairie Nursery, and advisory assistance from George Hild and Associates.

Anyone who has done restoration appreciates the work that went into turning a railroad siding into a showpiece in less than 2 years! The restoration was a huge undertaking that was successfully completed only through the combined efforts of our members and corporate/community partnerships. The project was financially expensive and labor-intensive. Jim Faust (FPD Executive Secretary and TPE member) organized the effort and Chapter vice-president, Chuck Bomar, ran the individual projects.



Tom Ziegeweid led several tours of the restoration plot.

1995: The Beginning

Harvey Halvorsen (West Central Chapter President) and Jim Faust started work with the FPD committee in the Fall of 1995. Harvey strongly lobbied for a site in an area with better soil, but those areas were not available until the 1998 growing season. The road siding was selected because it was available immediately. The grasses would need at least two years of growth to present the display we wanted.

1996: Work Starts

A great deal of hard work went into returning this railroad side to its former glory. It started in November with a DNR crew that removed concrete rubble, cleared the brush, and made a drainage path. In the Spring of 1997, a seed bed was prepared. Harvey used a Brillion seeder to plant 40 pounds of grass seed and 5 pounds of flower seed. Bob Hanson (DNR and TPE member) did the dragging. Bob and a

whole crew of TPE members raked, hand-planted, broke up dirt clods, and removed trash from the site.

1998: Mad Dash to Completion

In the Spring of 1998, 1000 transplants from Prairie Nursery and George Hild and Associates were planted in a massive effort by TPE members and students from the University of Wisconsin classes of Paula Kleintjes and Chuck Bomar.

Wood chips, donated by American Materials and Asplundt, were spread down the middle of the restoration by a DNR crew. Harvey and DNR wildlife technician, Phil Olsen, created the beautiful wooden sign that still graces the site.

September, 1998: Showtime!

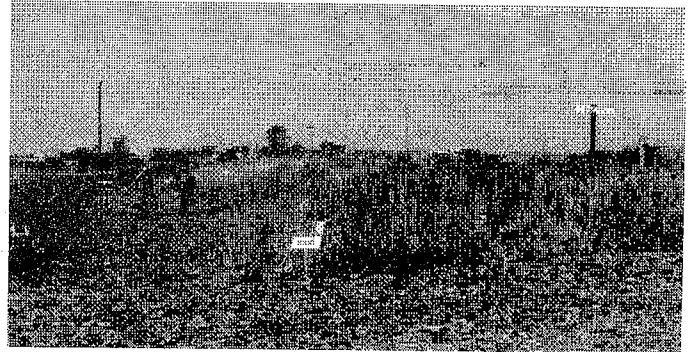
Despite the drought this summer, the seeds and transplants did remarkably well. By late September, the Indian grass was in full bloom. Most of the flowers were gone, but specimens of Maximillian sunflower, milkweed, and one lone Black-Eyed Susan provided color. Chapter President Harvey Halvorsen prepared educational displays and placed them at selected spots. Tom Ziegeweid was our anchor at our tent all three days. He was there to set up, lead tours, and close shop. Many chapter members helped staff our booth or conduct prairie tours.

Why Be There?

The goal of the project was education -- providing the public with an opportunity to see a small slice of prairie.

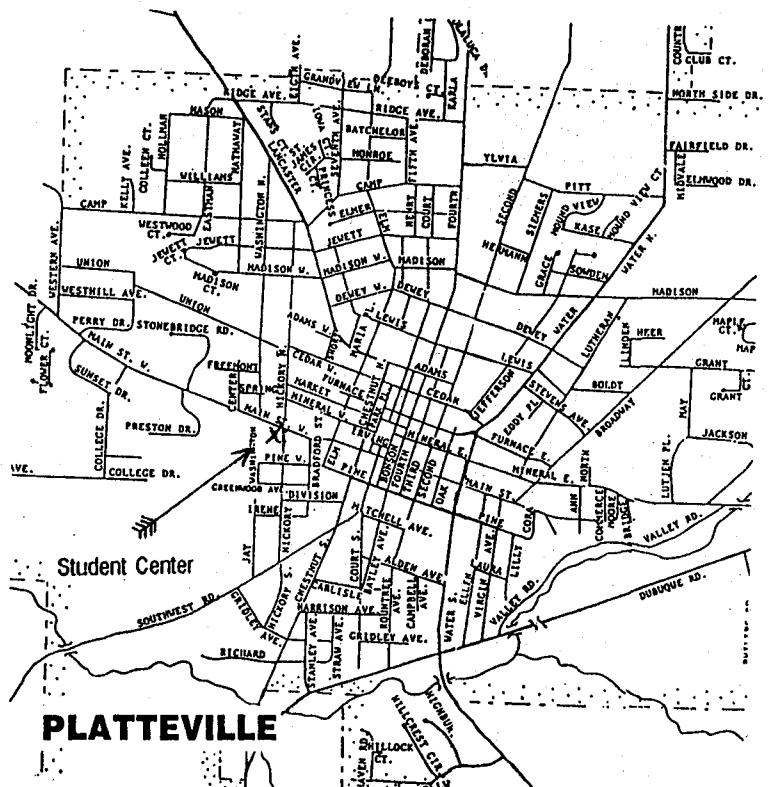
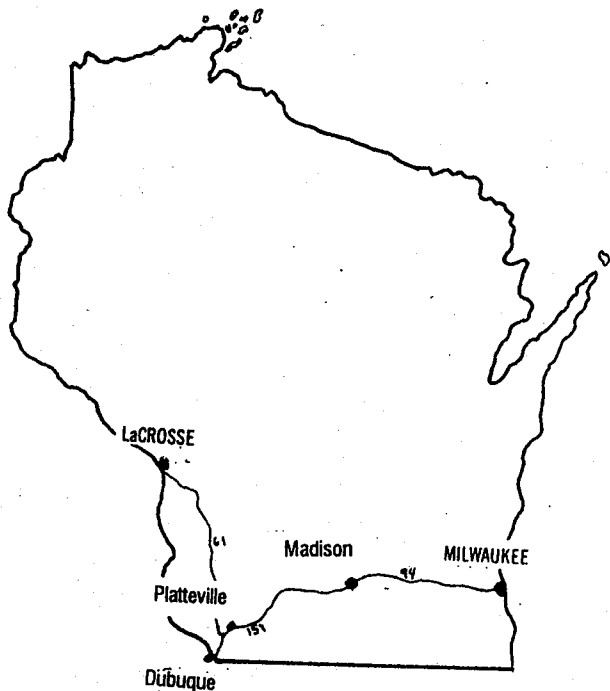
The event was a success. We were able to share our goal to protect one of the rarest ecosystems on the planet with people from throughout the region. We gained three new members. We brought in over \$500 in sales of prairie books and other merchandise. And the prairie plot made headlines in the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram and the Dunn County News.

Well done, everyone!



Rusk Prairie Restoration

DIRECTIONS TO UW-PLATTEVILLE



DNR Technical Bulletin Reprinted

DNR Technical Bulletin number 188, entitled "***Plant Species of Wisconsin Prairies: An Aid to Selecting Species for Plantings and Restorations***", has been reprinted. It is available free of charge by contacting The Department of Natural Resources Research Center, 1350 Fernside Drive, Monona WI. 53716. Phone: 608-221-6320, or FAX: 608-221-6353.

NOTICE OF INCREASE IN TPE DUES

Alice Mirk, Treasurer and Membership Coordinator

If you were really eagle eyed and read this newsletter from cover to cover, you will have noticed that there is an increase in membership dues on the membership application form in the insert of this issue. We appreciate your dues tremendously, and now is a good time to remind everyone that a single membership for \$20 is still a bargain when compared with most of the membership dues for other environmental organizations. We are still relatively young, and with a membership of a little over 700, relatively small. We take great pride in the fact that we are still an organization with no paid staff. Many folks give of their time and energy to keep TPE humming along, and our costs for education, restoration, and preservation keep rising. So when you write that check in 1999, remember that 100% of your dues goes towards the vision we have held fast to for over a decade. As we approach 2000, let's make the next decade count for prairies and savannas!

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