



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Winter 1999

Celebrating twelve years of prairie conservation in the Upper Midwest

12th Annual TPE Banquet

March 18, 2000

(Something new this way comes)

Mark your calendar. The 12th Annual TPE Prairie Banquet & Mini Conference is scheduled for Saturday, March 18, 2000 at the Dane County Expo. Center in Madison, WI. In a bold and exciting experiment, we are joining forces with the WI Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the UW-Madison Arboretum, and the Madison Chapter of The Wild Ones to hold a joint gathering of 10th Annual Native Landscaping Conference, 11th Annual Stewardship Meeting of the WI Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and 12th Annual Prairie Enthusiasts Banquet/Raffle/Auction and Workshops. The combined attendance could be as much as 600 or more! Along with our traditional TPE banquet dinner and raffle/auction, there will be a key note presentation by Canadian author Lorraine Johnson (well known promoter of native landscaping), and 20 presentations on prairie animals and ecology, plantings and restorations, prairie management, native landscaping, wetland restoration, and more. Look for details and registration forms in your mail in late January. Participants will be able to register for all or part of the day.

Raffle/Auction Donations (Feb. 29 deadline)

Please consider donating items or services to our annual raffle and silent auction. This is a major fundraiser for our organization. All donations must be pre-registered by February 29. To register items, contact the appropriate donation coordinator below (i.e., where you wish the proceeds of your donation to go).

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608-375-5271

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Northwest IL Chapter	Grace Storch
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West Central WI Chapter	Chuck Bomar
715-232-8133	
Coulee Region Chapter	Chris Matson
608-582-4345	
Empire-Sauk Chapter	Rich Henderson
608-845-7065	

Banquet Volunteers Needed

As always, volunteers are much needed at the banquet to help with such things as registering people, selling raffle tickets, organizing raffle/auction items, drawing raffle tickets, raffle ticket redemption, helping speakers, etc. If you wish to help, please contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065). All help is much appreciated, but all volunteers must contact Rich prior to March 15th. No last minute walk-in help, please. It causes too much confusion and often leads to mistakes. Please offer your help ahead of time, so that planning goes smoothly.

Displays and Chapter Sales at the Banquet

There will be space at the banquet for each chapter, if they so choose, to have a sales table, but they must be pre-registered to reserve a spot. There will also be room for chapter or prairie related displays, but space and tables must be reserved. To register space for displays or sales, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065) by March 1st.

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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 1,000 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 150 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.

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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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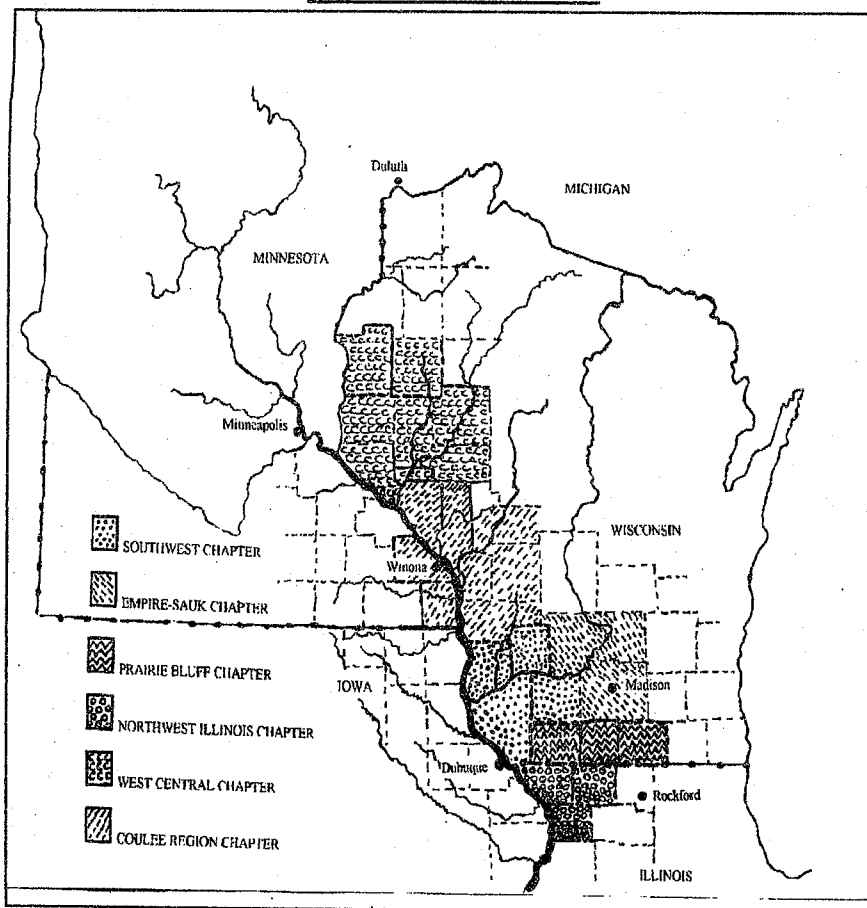
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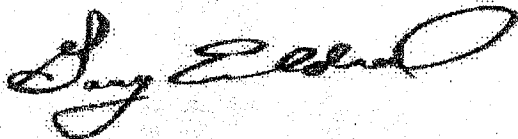


President's Message

As the last days of the millennium slip by, I find myself both reflecting on the past achievements of TPE and looking into the next century and contemplating where we will be going. On looking back, I am truly amazed and tremendously proud of what we as a united group of conservation-minded people have done: we have located, inventoried, and documented hundreds of here-to-for unknown prairie remnants; we have educated many hundreds, if not thousands, of people about the value of prairies, how to care for them, how to restore them, and how to recognize them; we have purchased upwards of 100 acres for protection and have protected many hundreds of acres through conservation easements and management agreements with private landowners; and we have worked with public agencies and private landowners to plant hundreds of acres back to prairie.

TPE has filled a gap in providing information and education about prairies that few, if any, government agencies can provide. Although it's very satisfying to reflect on our accomplishments, it's clear to me that it's most important to look ahead, to think about the long-term welfare of the prairie remnants for which we are stewards. How can we be sure these places will be there for your grandchildren and great grandchildren? How can we get people involved in fundraising, recruiting new members, and actually carrying out the stewardship activities to save our native prairie and savanna species? We as a non-profit conservation organization have reached a plateau. We have simply stretched our volunteer resources to the limits. If we are to expand our membership base and raise significant monies for land acquisition and stewardship, we simply must hire a person who can provide the needed time and energy to write grants, solicit donations, and implement membership drives. The \$200 Blazing Star annual membership level has one purpose: to fund an executive director who will focus on expanding our membership and raising needed funds. Please consider renewing your membership, when the time comes, at the Blazing Star level.

As TPE grows and evolves, we must not lose sight of our "grass roots" foundation. Please feel free to give us feedback at any time, it is important to us. You can contact us either by e-mail at aimtpe@iuno.com or regular mail at P.O. Box 12, Boscobel WI. 53805.



Call to action for Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area Feasibility Study

by Larry Lynch

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources proposes to recognize the Lower Chippewa River region as a "State Natural Area." A year-long feasibility study currently underway will conclude in June 1999. The project is seen as "a cooperative effort of government, private organizations, and citizens to help maintain or increase the area's native plant communities and rare species along with their habitats."

The study area includes parts of Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, and Buffalo counties. It covers the Chippewa River corridor from Eau Claire to Lake Pepin, the Red Cedar River corridor from Menomonie to the Chippewa (including the entire Red Cedar Trail), and the "Hillside Prairie Area" of northwest Buffalo County and adjacent eastern Pepin County. It includes several current DNR properties, including the Tiffany, Dunnville, and Big Swamp Wildlife Areas and the Ninemile Island, Chippewa Island, Thompson Lake, and Golden Valley Bluff State Natural Areas.

Wisconsin has had a State Natural Area Program since 1951, the first program of its kind in the nation. According to a DNR newsletter, State Natural Areas are:

"tracts of land or water harboring natural features which have escaped most human disturbance and which represent the diversity of Wisconsin's native landscape. They contain outstanding examples of native biotic communities and are often the last refuges in the state for rare and endangered species of plants and animals. Natural areas may also include exceptional geological and archeological features."

Superlatives of the Lower Chippewa

Bragging rights for the lower Chippewa River study area are truly startling, including:

- The largest contiguous floodplain forest (over 250,000 acres) in the upper Midwest;
- Over 25% of the remaining prairie and oak savanna remnants in the state, amounting to over 2,000 acres;
- more rare (threatened or endangered) species (122)

than any other part of Wisconsin; more than Door County (101), the Apostle Islands (91), or the Lower Wisconsin River (67).

- 70% of all Wisconsin fish species;
- 66% of all Wisconsin bird species;
- 50% of all Wisconsin plant species.

Examples of rare species in the study area:

- **Plants:** brittle prickly pear; prairie bush clover;
- **Insects:** Pecatonica River mayfly (only found in 3 places in the world); St. Croix snaketail (newly identified dragonfly species);
- **Birds:** red-shouldered hawk; Acadian flycatcher; yellow-crowned night heron; and cerulean, hooded, and Kentucky warblers;
- **Fish:** paddlefish; crystal darter;
- **Reptiles:** Blanding's turtle.

Preliminary Goals for the LCRSNA

Five preliminary goals for the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area (LCRSNA) have been proposed:

- Provide protection and management for native plant and animal communities, or geological and archeological sites of statewide significance;
- Provide appropriate protection and management for rare plant and animal species;
- Provide areas for educational and scientific research;
- Provide hunting, fishing, and non-vehicular recreational opportunities as secondary benefits where compatible;
- Develop and use partnerships to explore additional land protection and management opportunities.

The Five Alternatives

Currently, five alternative scenarios are being considered for the proposed Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area:

1. Take no further action, but retain existing DNR properties in the area.
2. Adopt the current study area boundaries for the LCRSNA, which amount to 250,000 acres; possibly set an acquisition goal for new publicly owned land at 15,000 acres beyond current DNR holdings.
3. Reduce the size of the study area by excluding the Eau Claire County portion of the Chippewa River corridor, the Hillside Prairie Area, and eastern Pepin county.
4. Expand the study area to 320,000 acres but keep the acquisition goal for new land at 15,000 acres.
5. Expand the study area to 320,000 acres and expand the acquisition goal for new land to 27,000 additional acres.

UW-Stout-UW-Eau Claire Joint Project

One highly promising initiative is a joint venture being developed by the Biology departments at UW-Stout (Chuck Bomar) and UW-Eau Claire (Paula Kleintjes). They have submitted a grant proposal with the following objectives:

1. Conduct an ecological assessment of the lower Chippewa River watershed.
2. Use the information collected to assist with the development of a long-term conservation and management plan that will conserve the multiple biological resources of the watershed and meet future education, research, recreational, and resource needs.

Good decision-making will require adequate knowledge of the composition and distribution of the organisms and communities as well as knowledge of the ecological processes required to maintain the landscape's natural integrity. Biological inventories will be conducted of native species of flora and fauna currently present.

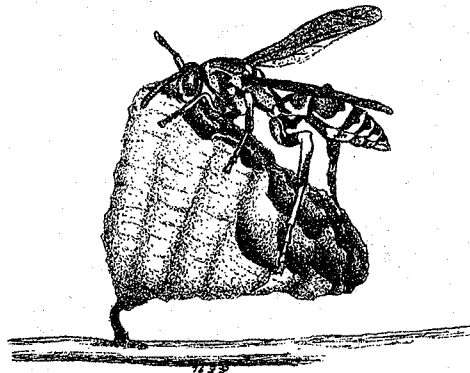
What you can do

It is urgent that everyone interested in the successful outcome of the feasibility study make their voices heard. Chuck Bomar, president of the Prairie Enthusiasts of West-Central Wisconsin, urges you to write a letter of support to your local newspaper and to contact Mike Ries of the DNR in Eau Claire with your comments. Mike is the LCRSNA project leader.

Deadline for this letter is January 10, 2000. He and others have been giving informative slide presentations on the project at a series of open houses, hearings, and community meetings. The DNR also publishes a project newsletter called *Lower Chippewa River News*, which Mike will gladly subscribe you to. Here's how to contact him:

Mike Ries, Landscape Architect
Wis. Dept. of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 4001
Eau Claire, WI 54702-4001
(715) 839-3743

email: riesm@dnr.state.wi.us



NATIONAL GRASSLANDS MANAGEMENT PLANS COMMENTS NEEDED BY JANUARY 12, 2000

This summer, the U.S. Forest Service released new management plans for National Grasslands covering 2,866,900 acres in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Nebraska. The Grasslands are home to sensitive fish, wildlife, and rare plants. They are the last remnant of grasslands that covered millions of acres on the Great Plains.

Livestock grazing has degraded Northern Plains grasslands over the past decades, prompting Forest Service officials to propose to reduce grazing use by 10-15% overall, and up to 30-40% in heavily impacted areas in the new plans. Local and state grazing associations are protesting the changes and pressuring Forest Service planners to reverse course.

Conservationists comments are needed to counter the livestock industry's pressure to support the Service's decision to reduce grazing. Comments should be sent to: Northern Great Plains Planning Team, 125 N. Main, Shadron, NE 69337, 308/432-0300, fax 308/432-0309 or e-mail to: ngpmail/r2_nebraska@fs.fed.us by January 12, 2000.

Specifically, activists can request any or all of the following in their comments as suggested by Jonathan Proctor, Predator Conservation Alliance:

- U.S. Forest Service should manage for a full complement of native species on all National Grasslands, with priority given to sensitive species including the swift fox, mountain plover, black-footed ferret, ferruginous hawk -- and the sage grouse where present.
- One-third of the National Grasslands should be rested from livestock grazing annually.
- Oil and gas development should be prohibited where it is incompatible with other uses.
- Management should give priority to restoring prairie dog towns until they occupy at least ten percent of the National Grassland system. Highly endangered black-footed ferrets should be reintroduced wherever feasible, and reintroduction sites should be as large as possible.
- All remaining roadless areas should be proposed for wilderness designation (only 574,000 roadless acres remain in the entire National Grassland system).

For more information contact Mark Salvo, Grasslands Advocate, Grasslands & Deserts Program, American Lands Alliance, 503/978-1054, FAX 503/978-1757, mark@sagegrouse.org

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Keeping Restorations in Perspective

By Rich Henderson

The planting of prairie vegetation, commonly called "restoration" (even though planting is a far more accurate description of the activity), has captured the imagination of many, and thus has become very popular. It is considered a very constructive environmental activity by many. These plantings are indeed good for a variety of reasons. However, we should all take care to keep them in perspective so that the actual remnants that we are trying emulate are not forgotten and lost in our enthusiasm for doing and enjoying the "restorations."

"Restorations" (plantings on formerly tilled cropland) can contribute greatly to prairie conservation. They can be of great value to grassland birds when done on a large enough scale. They can provide critical buffering to prairie remnants, or aid and accelerate their expansion. They can provide critically needed habitat for mesic (deep soil) prairie specialists. They can be excellent means by which to educate and involve children and adults in prairie awareness and eventually prairie conservation, but we must be diligent about keeping people moving along the continuum from caring about and contributing to a "restoration" to caring about and managing a remnant. To do otherwise, we run the risk of people, or at least the general public, beginning to think that "restorations" are equivalent to remnants. If that occurs, they may begin to think "why worry about losing little remnants here and there when we can just go out and plant a bigger and better prairie somewhere else?"

"Restorations," even the best ones, fall far short of high quality remnants, even many degraded remnants, when it comes to flora diversity and vegetation composition, soil organisms and structure, and invertebrate diversity, especially the prairie specialist species. Prairie remnants as small as 100 square feet in size can still hold some prairie specialist insects and certainly many plant species. There are many pieces of the prairie puzzle we have not yet learned how to reinsert into restorations. But even if we overcome this technical problem and are fortunate enough to get all of the species established on a site, it may very well take a couple hundred years for the full complexity and interactions of the system to redevelop into something approaching a remnant. It simply takes a long time for many slow and conservative species to

rebuild their populations, and to sort things out among themselves. There are many anecdotal observations of some prairie plant species taking many decades to move just a few feet on their own accord. Keep in mind that many, if not most, of the remnants in our region are likely five to six thousand years old (that's what I call mature prairie sod). It seems unreasonable to assume that such things can be completely rebuilt in as little as 50 to 100 years. Aside from the species found on remnants, they also store within them what remains of the genetic diversity of individual species. To capture this diversity, we would likely have to collect seed of a given species from a wide range of remnants, which is something that does not happen with most prairie plantings. Lastly, remnants hold the only surviving blueprints of the species composition of the original prairie, and each remnant holds a little bit different piece of the blueprint. Thus, with each remnant that we lose, we lose a little piece of the information on how to rebuild the system.

In short, it is safe to say that remnants hold the key to the recovery of the prairie ecosystem with the species, genetic diversity, and blueprints they hold. Thus, for the next couple hundred years at least, the conservation value of one acre of high quality remnant is likely worth between 100 and 1,000 acres of "restored" prairie. In fact, some remnants with prairie specialist invertebrates or some conservative plants have no "restoration" equivalent, and will not do so until we learn how to restore the specialist invertebrates and conservative plants. For the most part, even badly degraded remnants have a significant head start in accruing conservation value over "restorations" done on former cropland. In fact, recovery of degraded remnants should be considered the true restorations. All others attempts, at least as they are typically done now, should be considered just plantings.

Restorations are good, worthwhile projects, but lets us not lose sight of the importance and, for now at least, the irreplaceable nature of remnants, even small ones.

PRESERVE FOCUS

This is the first in a series of articles that will highlight the prairie and savanna remnants that The Prairie Enthusiasts have worked so hard for so long to restore and protect!

THE VALE PRAIRIE

By Gary Eldred

THE SITE'S HISTORY:

The remnant was first located in the mid 1970's. Back then there was no such thing as The Prairie Enthusiasts. There was just a small bunch of guys who

loved prairies and liked to burn them, then drink beer and talk about preserving remnants. The Vale Prairie was managed for about five years, then left to its own until 1992, when the Southwest Chapter purchased the 4.5 acre remnant and 11.5 acre buffer for a total of 16 acres. That was truly a fine purchase.

In the winter of 1993, TPE volunteers and Wisconsin Conservation Corps crews cut and stump treated all woody vegetation on the site. The site was named the Vale Prairie after the owners, Harold and Crescent Vale, who were in favor of its protection and restoration.

SITE'S PRESENT STATUS:

After eight years of work, the area is recovering nicely. Part of the restoration plan involved replanting an area of 1.5 acres in the southwest corner of the property because smooth brome had completely taken over. Our plan was to spray it with Roundup, collect seed, and replant. The spraying was done, and several months later, to our complete amazement, most of the regrowth was of prairie plants, apparently released to grow when the brome was killed! It was decided that the buffer areas would serve as a sort of genetic refuge for disappearing species from within Green County. Two species that have been nearly extirpated in Green County are Wild Quinine and Pale Purple Coneflower, so seed was collected from one coneflower site and three quinine sites and sown there. We now have a healthy and growing population of these plants.

In addition, part of the restoration plan involved expanding the remnant size, but only by using seed from the remnant. To date, a strip 30 feet by 400 feet has been restored on the south edge, and another area on the west end, measuring 45 feet by 100 feet, also has been restored. Areas that were heavily shaded by dense trees and brush have been mowed annually with a sickle bar mower. These areas are difficult to work with due to the fact that birds used the trees as perches for years, and as we all know, where there are birds there are bird droppings, usually laced with seeds of everything except prairie plants! Once the shady trees are gone, these seeds grow like crazy. Presently the remnant is surround by old hayfields dominated by orchard grass. It does serve as a grassland habitat for some bird species, but our hopes are to plant these areas to prairie as well.

THE SITE'S LOCATION:

The Vale Prairie is located in Green County, WI, in Mount Pleasant Township, Section 23, NE¼ of SW¼. From Albany go west on Mineral Point Rd. to Purinton Rd.; continue west to Schneeberger Rd., turn right (north) and go about 4/10 of a mile, turn left (west) on a farm lane that runs along a nice brushy fence row. The site is located atop a rolling open hilltop overlooking the Sugar River valley, where once lush wet prairie/sedge meadow lands are now converted to highly valuable

corn fields.

SITE QUALITY:

The Vale Prairie has over 70 species of native prairie plants, some of which are endangered, threatened and of special concern here in Wisconsin. This remnant is also home to the federally threatened prairie bush clover, a very rare plant found only in the upper Midwest! The state endangered pink milkwort is also found here. This remnant is the only protected site in the state where this plant has been found as of 1999. Other outstanding qualities of the site are its prairie smoke and its shooting star displays.

SITE NEEDS:

Many more years of brush eradication will be needed as well as the removal of a stand of leafy spurge. Continued seed collection for buffer area planting is also needed. We do not allow seed collecting for commercial or private use, nor is any plant digging allowed. In the last several years we have experienced seed theft and plant digging! Both of these illegal activities can seriously damage this fragile site. Our policy is to prosecute anyone engaged in these activities! As you have read, there is lots of tender loving care needed for this special place. Our hopes are you will visit it, love it, and give some time to help in its recovery.

Mycorrhizal Fungi: Missing Link or Red Herring?

By Scott Weber

Lately there has been a surge of articles and advertisements claiming that mycorrhizal fungi are the missing ingredients necessary for successful restoration and that lack of mycorrhizal inoculant is the reason why our plantings lack the diversity of our remnants or fail. On the surface, this makes sense since most plants have some relationship with soil fungi. A notable exception are some of our food crops and weeds that have become dependent on a diet of fertilizer. Studies in California show graphic photos of treated and untreated test plots. The plantings with inoculant look better.

The mycorrhizal theory, however, shows the good and bad of science. Recognizing the importance of fungi is good; extrapolating results from the specific to the general without comparative study is bad. The California studies I've read are pretty convincing, but I don't think they apply to restoration in the Midwest, at least not to the extent that some authors have claimed. There are many reasons for the failure of some species to do well in plantings, including the socio-economic limitations of prairie restoration such as cost, impatience, lack of public knowledge about the true

composition of our remnants, and the inability to concoct seed mixes that emulate them. Add competition, weather, planting date, variable seed quality, inbreeding depression, etc., and the task of studying the effects of one variable is made very difficult because it is nearly impossible to eliminate the others. The result is a theory that makes sense, has some experimental validity, is repeated often, but is applied without eliminating other possibilities. The mycorrhizal theory is, in many instances, a red herring leading us away from more obvious but harder to deal with problems.

For example, a recent article in *The Prairie Reader*, "Underground Mysteries: Mycorrhizal Fungi and the Healing of Prairierth", by Adele Kleine, lists, on the basis of research at Fermilab, *Gentiana andrewsii*, *Lilium philadelphicum*, *Asclepias* spp., and *Amorpha canescens* as species that need fungi because they don't often thrive in plantings. My experience, however, is that none of these species needs inoculant to grow and bloom successfully, even on worn out, eroded agricultural fields. Their success or failure is dependent on the prevailing weather and, most importantly, competition. Most prairie species, including so called "obligates", are able to colonize nutrient poor soil and are not dependent on "prairierth" for establishment. All the prairie species listed in Kleine's article, even the lead plant, can be grown successfully without inoculant and will mature quickly if competition is controlled, even in soil that has not been in prairie for decades.

The problem with extrapolating results from Fermilab is that the effect of seed mix and resulting competition is overlooked. What has evolved is a theory of restoration ecology based on one method without comparison with other seed mixes and planting dates. For example, in Robert Betz's recent paper, "Two Decades of Prairie Restoration at Fermilab" in the *Fifteenth North American Prairie Conference Proceedings*, the current method of planting is to plant, at a rate of 30 pounds per acre, uncleaned seed (harvested by combine) in early June. The first planting in 1974 was planted at a rate of 41 pounds per acre of hand collected seed. From these plantings we have the "matrix theory" which states that early successional, aggressive forbs and grasses are necessary to pave the way for the "prairie obligates", those species not usually found outside of our remnant prairies, like *Lilium philadelphicum* and *Gentiana puberula*. And now, with the mycologists jumping on board, we cannot have them unless we have the fungi, overlooking the fact that the seeding rate is not only unquantifiable (impossible without clean seed), but also dominated by species selected by the method of harvest and planted at a time of year which favors warm season grasses. If we planted a seed mix which mimicked the seed output of our remnants, and planted in the fall when most seed is scattered in the wild, we would draw different conclusions about the ecology and succession of our prairie plantings.

One problem is that many of the mycorrhizal studies have come from arid regions in California and the Southwest. Studies at Fermilab show that mycorrhizae colonize recently tilled land quickly, but the species are not necessarily those found on remnants. However, lack of inoculant hasn't deterred our planting "conservative" species or hindered their successful germination and subsequent flowering and seed production, leading me to believe that appropriate fungi are readily available or their need is overstated. In our experience, controlling competition, whether done mechanically or by virtue of nutrient poor soil, is the most important factor. The tendency is to distrust Mother Nature to do the job, while forgetting or downplaying our own shortcomings. If the species Betz and others listed were impossible to grow, I would bite the mycorrhizal magic bullet, but most are not. What we need are seed sources and patience.

Ecotype Matters

By Muffy Barrett

Plants vary genetically across their ranges; prairie smoke from Pennsylvania is slightly different from prairie smoke growing in Wisconsin, which in turn is different from prairie smoke growing in Nebraska. Over the broad scale, it is easy to understand these differences. Nebraska is drier and hotter than Wisconsin, and the barrens where prairie smoke grows in Pennsylvania have very different soils from the soils of the Midwest prairie. On the smaller scale this is harder to grasp. Eau Claire is much like Madison in terms of climate, and certainly some of the soils are similar between the two places. Why then shouldn't plants from the two places be interchangeable? Most plants that will grow near Madison will also grow well near Eau Claire. Why worry about keeping plantings local? Populations change over time, and there has been a good stretch of time since a Sauk County plant was pollinated directly by an Eau Claire plant; there has been time for the plants to change slightly. Neither one is necessarily better adapted, but they may be slightly different. A species has a better chance of survival if it retains most of its diverse gene pool, and the best way to ensure the preservation of the entire gene pool is to preserve whatever we have where we have it. Mixing many different genetic types together and planting all of them may seem like a good idea, but chances are that a few types will dominate because of chance rather than any other factor, so the local types may be lost. If only local ecotypes are planted, chances are that those plants will grow and survive. So, if you want to do your restoration or remnant enhancement as well as it can be done, use local seeds. If you can't get enough seeds locally to blanket your land, then consider turning those seeds that you do have into seedlings, and planting them. Seeds can go much further under cultivation than they do in broadcast plantings.

Training on Conservation Easement Monitoring

Nancy Braker of The Nature Conservancy will be providing training to TPE volunteers on how to document and monitor conservation easements so as to keep them legally binding over time. The workshop will be held on Saturday, January 29, 2000 in the Tomah area. If you wish to attend, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065) to register. Registration deadline is January 15. Space is limited. There is no fee to TPE members.

Unveiling All the Consequences: Introduced Plants May Be Causing Hidden Trouble

(An article from the *Ecological Society of America*)

Researchers have long debated the consequences of introducing non-native species into ecosystems. Recently, these debates have centered upon the effects of invasive exotics, and dramatic pictures of grasslands filled with leafy spurge, water pipes clogged by zebra mussels, and forest trees killed by kudzu vines have fostered the public's understanding of the issue. But now, two Canadian scientists are suggesting that even the introduction of some less aggressive species may have far-reaching negative repercussions.

Janice Christian and Scott Wilson studied crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) to test a controversial hypothesis: that the consequences of introducing exotic species can extend far beyond the simple displacement of native plants and animals. Their work, published in the October issue of the journal *Ecology*, suggests that crested wheatgrass has precipitated a decline in soil quality and may have increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Crested wheatgrass (sometimes called fairway wheatgrass) has wrested the soil from native grasses on much of the northern Great Plains, but its conquest has seemed relatively harmless to the larger environment. The grass was originally brought to the Americas from Siberia during the drought-filled years of the Dust Bowl, when farms were failing and the local prairie grass was producing scant fodder for cattle. Farmers discovered that the wheatgrass was hardy, produced good hay, resisted drought and overgrazing, and had a long growing season. It was so successful that ranchers and government agencies still continue to spread it (and several close relatives) enthusiastically from the Great Basin to the Northern Plains. It currently blankets 25 million acres of prairie in North America.

To determine how crested wheatgrass effects the prairie ecosystem, Christian and Wilson compared

hundreds of samples of grass and soil from Canada's Grasslands National Park in southwestern Saskatchewan. The park is a mosaic of undisturbed prairie and 50-year-old fields of the introduced wheatgrass.

After diligently cleaning, weighing and analyzing their samples, the scientists found that the soil beneath crested wheatgrass contained significantly less nutrients and organic matter than the soil under native prairie. They attribute this to the growth strategy of the different grasses. The wheatgrass devotes most of its energy to producing aboveground shoots, while maintaining only a meager root system. Conversely, the native grasses do not grow as tall, but instead develop an extensive network of roots. Previous studies have shown that roots play a more important role than do shoots in enriching the ground with nutrients and organic matter.

One of the interesting implications of the study is that the conversion of native prairie to wheatgrass may have eliminated an important storage area for atmospheric carbon. The researchers reason that if native prairie grasses put more nutrients into the soil and plant tissue, they are effectively tying up carbon that would otherwise be in the atmosphere. When carbon is in the atmosphere, it takes the form of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.

"Our results suggest that soils re-vegetated with native grasses would be a much more effective sink for carbon," says Wilson. He and Christian calculate that in the long run, the introduction of wheatgrass may have left 480 million tons of carbon in the atmosphere, which could have been stored beneath rich native prairie. This atmospheric carbon might be contributing to the greenhouse effect.

To put the figure in perspective, 480 million tons is approximately the same as one month of fossil fuel burning by the entire globe. And crested wheatgrass is only one species; no-one knows yet how other introduced species might compound the effect.

Ecology is a peer-reviewed journal published eight times a year by the Ecological Society of America (ESA). Copies of the above article are available free of charge to the press through the Society's Public Affairs Office. Founded in 1915, the Ecological Society of America (ESA) is a scientific, non-profit, organization with over 7000 members. Through ESA reports, journals, membership research, and expert testimony to Congress, ESA seeks to promote the responsible application of ecological data and principles to the solution of environmental problems. For more information about the Society and its activities, access ESA's web site at

: <http://esa.sdsc.edu>.

***The Time Before History: 5 Million Years of Human Impact* by Colin Tudge. 1996.**

A Book Review by Rob Baller

Waiter Mirk let me read this book. The inside cover of *The Time Before History* carries no credentials for author Colin Tudge. I do not know who he is. But whatever his credentials are - professor, researcher, ice cream salesman - he sure has done his homework.

The Time Before History is a kind of documentary on human evolution and its effects on the natural environment - and also the reverse - the natural environment's evolution, and its effects on humanity. Tudge covers the history of the world in 366 pages or less, and makes it almost readable for the layman. The book begins with a medley portrayal of global events - plate tectonics, climatic changes, evolution, and migration. These are physical and biological forces that shape the ever-changing, dynamic earth. This seemingly preliminary background takes up the first quarter of the book.

By the middle chapters Tudge is describing our fellow creatures, not only the contemporary ones, but also the fantastic paleo-animals, the great and small creatures of previous geologic episodes. By this time we have begun to suspect this guy may be a paleozoologist. We learn about the alternative mammals (marsupials), edentates (tree sloths, armadillos, and ant eaters), ungulates (hooved animals), proboscideans (elephants and mammoths), tanks (rhinos, pigs, and a huge number of extinct relatives), and the evolutionary concepts of convergence (separate lines of evolution forming similar traits or species) and ecomorph (the upper and lower limitations of size due to the laws of physics). It is here that Tudge takes up the primates and the hominids, and begins the discussion of early humanity.

Theories describing early human impacts on the natural environment are not new. Paul Martin, in his work *Keepers of the Game*, was an exponent of the Pleistocene Overkill hypothesis, a theory which explained early North American faunal extinctions. *Keepers of the Game* portrayed an aboriginal humanity crossing the Beringia land bridge during the last ice age, and descending from Siberia into North America to encounter the mega fauna, the big mammals such as the mammoth and the saber-tooth tiger, the giant sloth and the giant beaver. These large creatures, and many others, are unaccustomed to the new and lethal early-human team predators, and are shortly hunted to extinction.

Colin Tudge goes well beyond this. He begins literally at the start of human evolution, and traces our footsteps from our probable origins. Upright posture, speech, tool use, cognition, social structure, the interplay between different proto-human species, the migrations out of Africa - all these are linked and bound

into a time-lapse motion picture documenting the rise of us. At the same time Tudge describes how the global forces of weather and changing habitat may have conspired to shape these developments, so that we piece together a very large picture of how we came to be, and what long extinct creatures we may have buried in the past.

By presenting his case in this way, beginning with the basic processes of the earth and proceeding through the formative stages of humanity, Tudge seems less a trial lawyer determined to convict humanity and more a scientist in search of the truth. Whether he has presented all the truth I am not qualified to say. Tudge seems not to *want* to find that humanity has driven so many of the world's creatures to extinction, it is just that the evidence tends to point that way. Toward the later chapters he discusses the counter-arguments of those who disagree with his view, and leaves the final decision to the reader.

The book's style is conversational, as though Tudge were talking to a friend, a friend who is very well educated in literature or philosophy. These friends, it appears, like to ramble. His habit of using arcane words kept me reaching for my dictionary. There is no question of Tudge's erudition; he seems to contain so much knowledge that one might suspect he has 3 or 4 people inside of him. The result is that *The Time Before History* sometimes reminds one of the scene in the biographical film *Amadeus*, in which the King says to Mozart, after a performance, ...*"Your music has too many notes...it strains the royal ear...can't you just remove a few?"*

Colin Tudge sees history through vast time scales and is likewise interested in discussing the preservation of humanity and the environment as it might occur during the next century, and beyond. His final chapter is titled: *"The Next Million Years"*.

Tudge rifles through the familiar problems: agricultural impacts, world population growth, public apathy, and my favorite, consumption: *"...we must of course acknowledge that the growth of human numbers, is only half of the equation. The other half is to place a ceiling on human acquisitiveness...., a well-regulated, well-planned nuclear family in Los Angeles, with Mom, Pop, and two kids, consumes about twice as much as the average Bangladeshi village."*

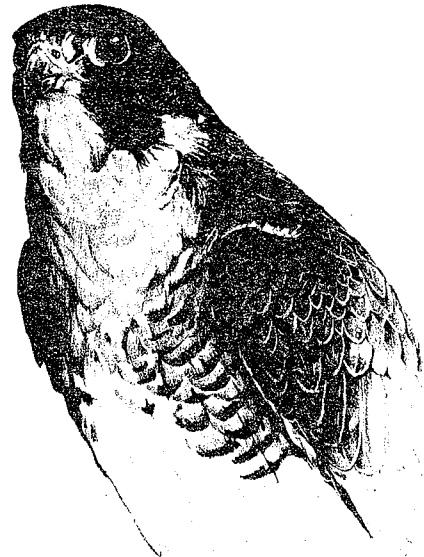
Perhaps the reason I have a little trouble with Mr. Tudge towards the end of the book is that after all his superb mind-expanding in-depth eco-history, he offers some good comments toward making a better future (creating very large reserves, adopting a philosophy of "minimum regret") followed by rather customary, and conventional, wisdom: *"In the short term - the next five hundred to a thousand years. - there seems to me to be two overwhelming economic desiderata [one of those Tudge words...desiderata ...something wanted and needed, desired]... "There is the overwhelming and urgent need to integrate*

conservation into the concept of development. "... and a page later... "the notion of sustainability requires new kinds of economies: economics that can broadly be called "green."

To me this is mediocre and stale advice after a book of profound insight. Our cratered landscape, the tainted air, the straight rivers; we know our economic behavior could be a little more green. Certainly there is truth in what Tudge says, and he says quite a bit more than I have so briefly credited to him. I just wish a person with his vision would state directly that when we dwell so heavily on modifying our economic conventions, we are by definition resuming our habit of searching for new ways of exploiting things and finding new things to exploit, rather than recognizing and letting go of exploitation as a pillar of our social behavior.

(This last evangelical paragraph is my privilege for writing this book review.)

Thank you, Walter Mirk, for lending me this book. I enjoyed it, and learned a lot. I recommend it for all those who are serious about knowing humanity better, and who have the time to look up big words. Let me know if you find out who Colin Tudge is.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER		
MEETINGS		
Mon.,	Jan. 3	Chapter board meeting, 7pm, Nature Conservancy Office, 633 W. Main, Madison.
Tues.,	Mar. 7	Chapter board meeting, 7pm, Rich Henderson's house, 2845 Timber Lane, Verona. 608-845-7065
EVENTS		
Sun.,	Dec. 19	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Thur.,	Dec. 30	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Sun.,	Jan. 16	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Sat.,	Jan. 22	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Sat.,	Jan. 29	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Sat.,	Feb. 19	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Sat.,	Feb. 26	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
Sat.,	Mar. 4	Red cedar removal work party at Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see below).
NOTE: Red cedar removal at Mazomanie School Section Bluff 9am to 1pm, but only if there is adequate snow on the ground. For details, call Rich Henderson at 845-7065		
PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER		
MEETINGS		
Tues.,	Jan. 11	Chapter meeting and program at 7pm, Lincoln School Multi-purpose Room, 2700 13 th Ave, Monroe. See chapter news for details of program.
Tues.,	Feb. 1	Chapter meeting 7pm at Turner Hall Ratskeller, 1217 17 th Avenue, Monroe. Program following meeting.
Tues.,	Mar. 7	Chapter meeting at 7pm, at Brodhead Courtesy Room, 806 East Exchange St, Brodhead.
SOUTHWEST CHAPTER		
MEETINGS		
Sun.,	Dec. 19	Chapter meeting at home of Sue Linder, 505 Airport Rd., Boscobel at 1pm.

Sun.,	Jan. 16	Chapter meeting at home of Sue Linder, 505 Airport Rd., Boscobel at 1pm.
Sun.,	Feb. 20	Chapter meeting at home of Sue Linder, 505 Airport Rd., Boscobel at 1pm.
EVENTS		
Sat.,	Jan. 8	Heather's Prairie, 10am.
Sun.,	Jan. 9	Kalscheur's Savanna at 10am.
Sat.,	Jan. 22	Bush Clover Prairie at 10am.
Sun.,	Jan. 30	Vale Prairie at 10am.
Sat.,	Feb. 5	Heather's Prairie at 10am.
Sun.,	Feb. 13	Kalscheur's Savanna at 10am.
Sat.,	Feb. 19	Bush Clover Prairie at 10am.
Sat.,	Feb. 26	Vale Prairie at 10am.
Sat.,	Mar. 11	Kalscheur's Savanna at 10am.
Sat.,	Mar. 25	Bush Clover Prairie at 10am.
Directions to Vale: from Hwy 69, turn east onto Hwy 39. At Purinton Rd turn east. Proceed to Schneeburger Rd and turn north 0.2 miles, take the farm lane west (trees are on the south side of lane and crop land is on north side). For information call Gary Eldred at 608-375-5271. Directions to Heather's Prairie: From Fennimore, take Hwy 18 west to Pine Rd. Turn left (east) on Graham Rd., then south on Mt Ridge Rd. to fire number 12109. For information call Gary Adams at 608-624-5797. Directions to Bush Clover Prairie: Take Hwy 61 north at 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. For information, Gary Eldred at 608-375-5271. Directions to Kalscheur's Savanna: From Hollandale (SW Iowa Co.) go south from Hwy 39 on Co. Rd. K about 2 miles. Site is on left (east) side of road. Look for parked cars along road. For information call David Lowe at 608-935-9586.		
GENERAL CALENDAR		
Sat.,	Jan. 8	TPE Board meeting at 1pm at Unified Counseling Services, Dodgeville.
Sat.,	Jan. 22	Wild Ones conference Oshkosh WI. Call 920-233-4853 for details
Sat.,	Mar. 18	TPE board meeting at 9:30pm at banquet location, Madison.
Sat.,	Mar. 18	TPE combined banquet and mini-conference. See front page article.

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

Brush Mower Fund Update

Thanks to generous contributors, we are nearly half way to our fund raising goal. So far \$875 in contributions have come in (see list of donors). The total cost, with shipping, comes to \$2,145. This great start has allowed us to order the mower now and thus take advantage of off-season discounts. The early order does put us in debt, but one that can easily be paid off if our chapter membership were to contribute just \$5 each. Thanks to the following people for their generous donations: Wayne Pauly, Jon Traver, Laureen and Ron Thorstad, Meagan Yost, Kathy and Rich Henderson, Noll Valley Homeowners Association, and others.

Exactly what are we getting? We have ordered the largest and most durable model of DR Brush Mower available. It is a self-propelled, walk-behind machine, with a 15 HP engine and a 26" brush blade. It easily chops up shrubs and young trees up to 1" in diameter.

Why are we getting it? It will be used to cut temporary fire breaks, invasive non-native plants like sweet clover and common parsnip, and woody species such as sumac, dogwood, prickly ash, blackberries, etc. on the 545 acres, (spread over 16 sites) that our chapter manages. This machine will allow one volunteer to do the work of 10 or 20, and it can go into spots and over terrain that tractor mowers can't.

Please pitch in, send donations to Chapter Treasurer Jim Welsh at S5685 Old Lake Road, Baraboo, WI, 53913. Let him know that your contribution is for the brush mower fund.

Fall Burn Season a Success

Unusually warm and dry weather made for very hot and effective burns this fall. Four burns were completed with the help of two dozen volunteers. The burns included approximately three acres of old brome field at the Underwood site (in preparation for a fall prairie seeding), forty acres of oak woodland at the Pleasant Valley Conservancy (Brocks), and 2 one-acre sites owned by cooperators with our Blufflands Project along the Lower Wisconsin River. Thank you to all participants.

Productive Fall Seeding

Numerous PE volunteers helped to plant prairie in November. The plantings were done on buffer lands at the Koltes and Underwood Prairies (4 acres total), expansions of the Gov. Nelson State Park and the St. Benedicts Center prairie restorations (20 acres total), a Blufflands Project seeding along the Lower Wisconsin River (10 acres), and a 13 acre seeding at Devil's Lake State Park. They also helped out with the Madison Audubon seedings at Goose Pond. Thank you to all participants. We are making a difference.

Fall Brush Clearing

Four brush clearing events took place in November. They were held at the PE managed sites of Mazomanie School Section Bluff, Underwood Prairie, Koltes Prairie, and Noll Valley Savanna Park. Cutting and herbicide treating of sumac, plum, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and prickly ash were the primary objectives of this much-needed work. As a result, very nice areas of prairie were opened up. Thank you to Paul West, Kay Bongers, Guerdon Coombs, the Hendersons (Rich, Kathy, Ian, & Sara), and the 10 students from the UW-Madison Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society who helped at Underwood Prairie. If you are disappointed in having missed these opportunities to help, take heart, there are plenty of opportunities to clear red cedar and other brush this winter at the picturesque Mazomanie School Section Bluff (see work party schedule).

Thousands of Dollars Worth of Seed Collected

By Rich Henderson

Fourteen seed collection events were held this past fall at the Koltes and Westport Drumlin Prairie area and at the Underwood Prairie. We had exceptionally beautiful weather for seed collecting this year, and thus much seed was collected. Those of you who did not make it out to one of these events missed out on a most enjoyable and relaxing outdoor experience. There is no better way to learn to identify and come to understand prairie plant associations than to collect seed on such diverse and interesting remnants as we were on. Twelve PE volunteers and an enthusiastic group of UW-Madison students from the Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society were fortunate enough to make it out to enjoy the weather and scenery (4 people even came twice). With their help, several thousand dollars worth of seed were collected for plantings near the Koltes and Underwood remnants. Thank you to PE volunteers Wayne Pauly, Liesle Pfeifer, Gail Stewart, Kristin Westad, Kathy & Tom Brock, Julie Hayward, Don D'Alessio, Merel Black, Craig Annen, Andrea H., who's last name I did not write down and then promptly forgot (my apologizes), and the UW-Madison students.

Diverse Field Trips Enjoyed by Many

By Rich Henderson

Attendance at last summer's 11 field trips was spotty, but still good overall. The numbers ranged from one to 35 participants per trip. The small numbers on some of the trips made for enjoyable and easy communication with the trip leaders. Highlights of the trips included vigorous hikes up steep slopes, spectacular bluff top views, and striking displays of butterflies, including many close encounters with regal fritillary butterflies, which are rare and very showy prairie specialists. Participants were frequently finding rare and endangered plants and a seemingly endless array of more common prairie, savanna, and even open

oak woodland species. Some of the sites had been burned the previous spring or fall and thus had outstanding displays of flowers and in some cases, such as Avoca Prairie, towering prairie grasses. The seemingly endless Avoca Prairie was a waving sea of flowering big bluestem and indiangrass with a prairie gentian or bottle gentian at almost every step. The same tract of the Hogback Prairie Area, Koltes Prairie, Westport Drumlin, and Faville Prairie had phenomenal post-fire flower displays. It was fascinating to see how much savanna and light-demanding open-oak woodland vegetation has reemerged in the oak woods of Rush Creek State Natural Area just 5 years after burning.

We would like to continue these field trips for the benefit and enjoyment of our membership, but we need your help and suggestions. What preserves or types of sites would you like to see? Do you prefer weekday evening or weekend trips? What type of knowledge about the site would you like the trip leaders to have? Do you have suggestions for trip leaders? Are you willing to lead, or at least co-lead, a trip? Please contact our chapter's trip organizer, Mark Martin (635-4160) with your thoughts.

NORTHWEST IL. CHAPTER

News on DAP

The Driftless Area Partnership (DAP) is a coalition of organizations, agencies, and individuals in the driftless area of northwest Illinois. The Partnership and its members work to protect and restore the natural, agricultural, and cultural resources of the area by:

- Providing technical assistance and funding for local conservation projects;
- Supporting cooperative, area-wide land use planning; and
- Promoting public education and involvement in conservation issues.

Issues of primary concern to DAP members include:

- Rural sprawl and loss of open space;
- Ground and surface water pollution;
- Fragmentation of wildlife habitat;
- Degradation of natural areas;
- Soil erosion and depletion; and
- Unsustainable land management practices.

Since the DAP was formed in April of 1997, its members have received 15 conservation grants totaling \$345,000. These funds have supported projects concerned with:

- Environmental education & land use planning;
- Outdoor recreation & historic preservation;
- Ecological restoration & natural area management;
- Stream bank protection & best management practices; and
- Environmental research and natural resource inventory.

Most recently, Illinois Governor George Ryan announced \$3.8 million in Conservation 2000 grants for FY2000. Five of these, about \$170,000, were for the Driftless Area.

The JoDaviess County Natural Area Guardians received funding for a proposal entitled "Roadside Vegetation Inventory, Education, and Management." This project will develop a roadside inventory to identify areas of native plant communities worthy of protection through special management practices. The project will include educating landowners and others on the value of native grasses and wildflowers. For more information on this project, contact Barbara Rutherford.

The Gramercy Park Foundation received funding for a proposal entitled "Gramercy Park Interpretive and Habitat Project". The Foundation is building an interpretive center, overlook platform, and trails for the general public at Gramercy Park in East Dubuque. The grant provides for the restoration and preservation of historical structures within the park. Contact Bob O'Brien at 815-747-3095.

Mr. Tom Arnold of Elizabeth received funding for a proposal entitled "Watershed Protection Through Managed Rotational Grazing." This project will develop a rotational grazing system, utilizing mobile paddocks and water delivery systems, as an alternative to allowing livestock to use rivers and streams while grazing in rural Jo Daviess County. The grant will provide for installation of riparian buffer strips and use of stream bank stabilization to reduce soil erosion into the Apple River.

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts received funding for a proposal entitled "Galena River Ecological Survey." The Prairie Enthusiasts will inventory the natural resources, including native fauna and flora, of the Galena River watershed in Illinois. After the study, they will develop protection and restoration recommendations for the river and publish their findings. For more information, contact Jim Rachuy at 815-777-9525.

The JoDaviess Soil & Water Conservation District received funding for a proposal entitled "Streambank Stabilization/Plum River Watershed Greenway Plan." The grant will provide a 75% cost share program for landowners agreeing to stream bank stabilization projects. Two-thirds of the available funds will be allocated to the Muddy Plum and North Fork segments of the Plum River in Jo Daviess County. For more information, contact the SWCD at 815-858-2229.

The largest single grant was received last year by the Mount Carroll School District to build an outdoor environmental classroom.

Membership in the Partnership and eligibility for grants is open to all persons living in the Driftless Area. The Partnership has also published the five-volume Driftless Area Assessment. This technical report contains much of what is presently known about the

geology, hydrology, archaeology and ecology of the Driftless area. The set also includes an executive summary (edited by our own Sarah Jean Gray), replete with color maps, photographs, and interesting facts. For example, did you know that although the Driftless Area comprises only 1.7% of Illinois, it contains 42% of the state's native flora?

Currently, the Partnership is undergoing a strategic planning process aimed at creating a Driftless Area Resource Management Plan. This document will in time include a Greenway Plan for each sub-watershed in the area, a Site Management Plan for each of the region's principal natural areas, and a detailed analysis of where the problems are and how they can be solved.

The DAP is also investigating the possibility of establishing an environmental information clearing-house for the Driftless Area and creating a subcommittee to advise local units of government on natural resource issues.

In the future, DAP will have the opportunity to expand its capabilities. Dr. Brian Anderson, C2000 Coordinator for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), said at the recent Ecosystems Partnership Conference at Lake Shelbyville that he anticipates block grant funding for the partnerships within the next five years, as well as money for full-time partnership staff. As an experiment, one "Partnership Coordinator" position is actually being funded this year. These additional resources will not come without a commensurate improvement in local capabilities. For example, direct funding will require the DAP to become a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, to begin raising local funds, and to develop a formal infrastructure.

More significantly, these resources will be contingent on improved cooperation between the area's environmental groups. Indeed, without a substantial coming together of these groups, this opportunity for actually confronting the ecological problems of the area will not be realized.

For more information about the Partnership, or assistance in designing a grant for your project, call Jim Rachuy at 815-777-9525, Dick Pouzar at 815-777-8157, or write to: Driftless Area Partnership, 512 South West St, Galena, IL 61036. Or visit the C2000 website at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/c2000/manage/partner.htm>.

Display Board Purchased

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts have purchased a new display board. The new board has a large banner, is velcro ready, and is designed to roll up for storage. Now all we need is a digital camera to create lots of colorful prairie pictures. Call Rickie Rachuy if you have photos to contribute.

Public Benefit Conveyance Planned

This month the Illinois DNR will submit a Public Benefit Conveyance (PBC) for the Prairie Enthusiasts' Stewardship Park project at the former Savanna Army Depot. Getting the paperwork submitted to the National Park Service is a good step forward, but actual conveyance will not occur any time soon. The Army, USEPA, and F&W Service are still hotly contesting how to solve the UXO (unexploded ordinance) problem at the base. Although we picked seed at the site this fall, access will remain very limited until the liability problem can be resolved.

Bumper Seed Crop

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts picked 120 pounds of native prairie seed this fall worth approximately \$25,000. In all, fifty-three different species were collected. The seed was used to sow 5 acres of new prairie at LoneTree Farm, to overseed 15 acres of previous restorations, and to reseed degraded patches on two prairie remnants. By next year, we should have the new combine and hammer mill ready to process even more seed.

Grant Application

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts have released a request for proposal (RFP) for an ecological assessment of the Galena River. A \$26,000 DAP grant will be used to pay for the study. A contract will be awarded sometime this winter so that work can begin early next spring. Call Jim Rachuy if you have any ideas or suggestions.

Burn School Scheduled

The 8th Annual burn school is scheduled for March 25, 2000. As always, this is an opportunity for members to receive burn team training, to try out the new equipment (next year we'll have a mobile, motorized water source), and to schedule a burn for your own property. For further information call Randy Downing.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

"A DIFFERENT SIBERIA"

Tuesday, January 11, 2000, 7:00 P.M.
Lincoln School Multi-Purpose Room
2700 13th Avenue
Monroe, WI

By Donna Bahler

The Prairie Bluff Chapter extends an invitation to all Prairie Enthusiasts and friends to attend a unique program about Siberia. Mr. Clyde Sukanen, a school principal, traveled to Siberia's far east as part of a trip sponsored by the International Crane Foundation.

His program dispels the myth that Siberia is only a frozen tundra where communists sent political prisoners. Sukanen says it is a beautiful expanse where

Siberian tigers roam and cranes come and go at will. He will explain Russia's delineated 'steppes' or climate regions using a powerpoint program which shows the wide variety of land, plants, birds, and other animals in a 14,000 acre park and an 80,000 acre camp. The Muraviouka Park was created when Japan donated the money to buy land for preservation.

Where Sukanen traveled is still a communist influenced area so few American citizens have been allowed to visit there.

When he talks Sukanen always comes back to the fact that Siberia's people are willing to share their kindness and knowledge with us.

Please join the Prairie Bluff Chapter on January 11 to learn about Siberia.

Nygren Wetland

By Rob Baller

Faithful prairie enthusiasts may recall the non-profit agent, the Natural Land Institute, of Rockford Illinois. NLI purchased 24 acres along Brosteum Road in Rock County in 1994, a parcel to be known forever as Briggs Wetland. The Prairie Bluff Chapter purchased the coveted Briggs Wetland from NLI in 1996, and it is now one of our finer holdings.

The Natural Land Institute has recently embarked on a conservation purchase of 700 acres just west of Rockton, Illinois. The project will be known as Nygren Wetland, named after its chief benefactors, Carl and Myrna Nygren.

The site is a huge swirl of heavily farmed bottom lands laying in the triple confluence of the Rock River (flowing from the north), Raccoon Creek (from the northwest), and the Pecatonica River (from the west). Most of region has been ditched and drained into varying degrees of submission, but the low fields are littered with unworkable fallow wet pockets and the shining croissants of former oxbows. A remnant of a former creek bed harbors scraps of the original wetland, and tufts of savanna oak trees dot the upland margins. Most of the bottoms can go under water at any time.

The property will be restored to something approximating a natural condition and will be maintained that way in perpetuity. Funds for the project are being derived, in part, through a combination of national and state programs. Private donations will be necessary to finish the acquisition and begin the restoration.

A volunteer science advisory team has been formed to guide the recovery. A professional ecological firm may be hired later, but at present NLI has its hands full raising money to finish the massive purchase.

The voluminous Nygren Wetland is marked by an NLI sign on the south side of Rockton Road just west of the Rock River in Winnebago County. Visitors are welcome. Please call the NLI office first (815 / 964 - 6666). Hats off to NLI for this ambitious project!

Raccoon Bottoms

By Rob Baller

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is considering a program to restore the Raccoon Creek in Rock County to a pre-settlement cold water fishery. Raccoon Creek is presently fed by several good quality tributaries in Rock County, which unite into a single channel just before diving across the state line and into Nygren Wetland. One of those tributaries is our sparkling, effervescent, denture-cleaning, holy-water-containing, spring brook of Briggs Wetland.

The DNR will be holding meetings with the locals to discuss the project. Cost sharing programs will be available for improving land-use practices in the watershed. The DNR may conduct a shocking fish inventory to determine the piscine content of the creek. The stream will be assessed with an eye towards establishing a self-sustaining native trout population. Currently there are no trout in Raccoon Creek. Manipulating the stream for trout will mean removing all beaver, whose dams create pools of warmer water.

Anyone interested in learning more can contact DNR Erosion Control Specialist Nancy Lannert at the Janesville Service Center (608 / 754 - 6617, ext. 118). A public information meeting will be held by the Rock County Conservationists in the near future, time and date to be announced.

Town of Benight

By Rob Baller

The Town of Beloit Board of Supervisors is planning to construct a 24-house subdivision on 20 acres along the west bank of the Rock River north of Beloit. The subdivision is known as Heron Bay. The plan is termed "Moron Bay" by the local detractors.

In 1990, the Town slated 55 acres of the land for a 10-unit subdivision, but local activists, attorneys, and the WI DNR defeated the plan. The 55-acre parcel was referred to then as the Walters Road Prairie. In 1995, the DNR compromised with the Town and split the land, buying 35 acres for a State Natural Area and leaving the rest for development.

When the Town announced its Heron Bay subdivision in early 1999, the plat called for 36 "upscale" houses (no one ever plans "downscale" houses), including 5 bordering the State Natural Area and 4 cutting through an oak savanna remnant by the river. Local activists again pummeled the Town, this time without help from the DNR, and were able to reduce the number of houses to 24, and compel the Town to propose a conservation easement on the savanna by the river.

But a legal case soon to come before LaFayette County Judge Johnston may affect the Town Board's progress. Town residents Belle Zyla and Marvin Prothero have teamed up with the Green Rock Audubon Society to hire Joseph Cincotta, a Milwaukee environmental attorney specializing in land-use law.

Together they are suing the Town Board because the Town is behaving as both a governmental review agency and as a private applicant, by granting itself permission to build this subdivision. The lawsuit acknowledges that Wisconsin Statutes allow towns to build sewer lines, roads, industrial parks, and housing for the elderly or the poor. But the suit claims the Town of Beloit has exceeded its statutory authority by behaving as a private, for-profit developer by building housing for the rich. To our knowledge this legal challenge has not been tried before.

The case will be heard in the county courthouse in Darlington, WI. on Monday, December 20, 1999, at 11 AM. It is open to the public. Anyone wishing to contribute to this suit is urged to contact Robert Baller (608 / 368-0901). Legal battles are not cheap, and the Town is firmly committed to its poor behavior. Win or loose, the struggle will go on, as there are other avenues for either side to continue.

SOUTHWEST WI CHAPTER

Seed Orchard Update

Plans have been moving ahead with the SW chapter's prairie seed orchards at Hollandale and Lancaster. The Hollandale orchard has just completed its 4th growing season with a bumper crop of bergemot harvested this year. The other six or seven species planted there look great. A year ago this fall David Lowe burned the site and it made all the difference. The Lancaster site is also starting to show signs of tremendous seed production. Ten acres were planted in 1997 and another 16 acres were planted in 1998. This fall our first crop of yellow coneflower was combined and several pounds of seed were produced. Nearly all of the one-acre plots representing 19 species have well-established stands of plants. All of the plots were planted with a single forb species and that now presents us with a problem; weeds! We knew that we would have lots of weed problems but planned on using fire as a maintenance tool. Unfortunately, weeds produce little fuel and have a fairly fire resistant stalk. Our current plan is to over-seed the plots with little bluestem and northern drop seed for two reasons: to provide fuel for burning and to out-compete the weeds. Thanks to generous donors, we have a Truax drill to put in the grass seed, so that won't be too big of a job. We are slowly getting closer to our goal of having enough seed to make donations to projects in the public interest.

Display Board

Where, oh where, has our little board gone? As I get older, it seems my ability to remember things gets poorer. That observation is verified when I look around my house and spot notes all over the place, reminding me of things I need to do, places I need to be, or people I need to contact. Speaking of people I need to contact.... If you are or know of the person who

borrowed the display board of the Southwest Chapter a couple of years ago, please let me know so we can have it back. Call me at 608-375-5271 and I will make arrangements to pick it up. Thanks!

SWC needs Banquet donations

The annual TPE banquet will occur in March 2000, and the SWC is in need of your donations. If you wish to make a donation this year, contact Gary Eldred at 608-375-5271 and let him know what it will be. Your support is greatly appreciated and needed. Thank You!

SOUTHEAST WI CHAPTER (pending)

Getting organized

Our season of the growing prairie has ended for the year. Soon (perhaps?) the prairies will be deep with snow, undermined with a labyrinth of field mouse tunnels and dens. The snow may be overlaid with ski tracks. After the snow melts, thoughts will once again be focused on prairies springing to life. This will coincide with the Southeast Wisconsin Chapter springing to action. We continue to look for ideas, volunteers to host events, and new members. Ideas for the spring schedule are shaping up as follows:

1. We need to spread word about the upcoming events. Publicity is a big job, but becomes more manageable when broken into smaller segments. Do we have any Prairie Enthusiast members who know people or are willing to be a contact person for one or more publicity opportunities such as any of Southeast Wisconsin's:
 - a. colleges and universities, especially those with botany and biology departments;
 - b. radio stations;
 - c. local newspapers, including the weekly fliers;
 - d. local grocery and library bulletin boards.
2. Activities are probably the best way to attract membership, but we do have another avenue available: a web site. Is anyone interested in setting up and maintaining a web site for our chapter?
3. In March, 2000 we are planning to have a program, probably on a Saturday, about starting a prairie.
4. We hope to follow that program with a monthly prairie walk through the same place led by a prairie person willing to share his or her observations and plant identification experience. Does anyone have leads for finding such a person?

Enjoy the winter season. Your next newsletter will be out early next year to inform you of the time and

date of the next meeting. We hope to see you there!

If you have any ideas or contacts, please call Jim Dworschack 414-628-4656

WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER

President's Column

By Chuck Bomar

Here we are, about to enter the new millennium with a new sense of commitment to the prairies that we love. Part of the commitment comes from working on a common site, sweating, and pulling weeds together. This is what makes a group, a "group."

Many of you that I have talked to have a "fear of doing" something on the prairie, since it might not be the right thing to do. Caution is always a good thing, and learning to do the right things when restoring prairies is why many of you have participated in various workshops that our chapter has provided. What we really need to be concerned about now, however, is the "fear of not doing." If we don't get more active on our prairies immediately, the few good remnants that are left will be gone forever. It is time that we continue our learning

process "in the trenches," on prairie sites.

At our last chapter board meeting, we discussed the future of our chapter. Ultimately we concluded that our future is up to YOU. The activity levels of the general membership will spell the success or failure of our chapter. We pondered various ways to increase our activity, and decided on the following approach:

Each zone (east, central, and west) should nominate a remnant worthy of adoption. Adoption may include ownership if the possibility exists. The remnant should have a "higher profile" and preferably be on public land, but we don't want to exclude a piece of private land that fits our criteria.

Site nominations should be sent to your regional representatives by phone, e-mail, or letter.



THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ County _____ Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Address _____ Business _____

Title/Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

SELECT CHAPTER OR GENERAL MEMBERSHIP:

☐ **Coulee Region Chapter**
Buffalo, , Houston , Jackson, LaCrosse,
Monroe, Trempealeau, Vernon, &
Winona Counties

☐ **Empire Sauk Chapter**
Columbia, Dane & Sauk Counties.

☐ **Northwest Illinois Chapter**
Carroll, JoDaviss & Stephenson Counties

☐ **Prairie Bluff Chapter**
Green, Lafayette & Rock Counties
Can we provide your name and address to
Other environmental organizations Y / N
Other Prairie Enthusiasts in your area
Y / N

☐ **Southeast WI Chapter (pending)**
Dodge, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, Kenosha,
Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan,
Walworth, Washington, & Waukesha
Counties.

☐ **Southwest WI Chapter**
Crawford, Grant, Iowa & Richland Co.

☐ **West Central WI Chapter**
Barron, Chippewa, Dunn , Eau Claire,
Pepin, Pierce Polk & St Croix Counties

☐ **General Membership**
outside chapter areas

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

The Prairie Enthusiasts
PO Box 112
Boscobel, WI 53805

I Will Help With:

- ☐ Site Inventories
- ☐ Organizing/Leading Field Trips
- ☐ Developing Educational Materials
- ☐ Seed Collecting/Planting
- ☐ Planning Social Activities (banquet, picnics)
- ☐ Fund Raising/Grant Writing
- ☐ Stewardship (Burning, Brush Cutting)
- ☐ Communications (newsletter, articles)

12/3/1999

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

☐ \$250 ANNUAL CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

☐ \$10 STUDENT

☐ \$20 INDIVIDUAL

☐ \$30 CONTRIBUTOR

☐ \$75 SUSTAINING

☐ \$200 BLAZING

NEW!

STAR MEMBER

☐ Donation

\$ _____

☐ \$30 FAMILY

☐ \$500 IND.LIFE

THANK YOU

THE PRAIRIES
By William Cullen Bryant (circa 1882)

These are the gardens of the Desert, these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name -
The Prairies. I behold them from the first,
And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! They stretch,
In airy undulations, far away,

As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
And motionless forever. -Motionless? -
No - they are all unchained again. The clouds
Sweep over with their shadows, and, beneath,
The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye:
Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase
The sunny ridges. Breezes of the South!
Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,
And pass the prairie-hawk that, poised on high,
Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not - ye have played
Among the palms of Mexico and vines
Of Texas, and have crisped the limpid brooks
That from the fountains of Sonora glide
Into the calm Pacific - have ye fanned
A nobler or a lovelier scene than this?



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