



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 13, NO.2

Summer 2000

Celebrating twelve years of prairie conservation in the Upper Midwest

Annual Meeting and Picnic Hosted by Coulee Region Chapter

This year the Coulee Region Chapter will host the TPE annual meeting and picnic at Perrot State Park on Sat., July 29, 2000, starting at 11am. Coulee Region Chapter will provide the meat for the picnic. Please bring your own beverage, tableware, and a dish to pass.

Perrot State Park is located 18 miles north of La Crosse near the town of Trempealeau, WI. This park is situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Trempealeau Rivers. It is beautiful, with 500 ft bluffs, effigy mounds, goat prairies, pelicans, fishing, canoeing, hiking, bike trails, great birding, and butterfly watching - and even the brittle prickly pear cactus at the nearby refuge.

The annual meeting and report by the TPE Board of Directors will be held at 11am, followed by the noon picnic. The TPE Board will meet for a regular board meeting in the afternoon, where the annual election of officers will take place. The Coulee Region Chapter will host a guided tour of the prairie in the afternoon for those interested. There's a lot to do, so plan to camp overnight in the park or stay in one of the nearby Trempealeau motels.

We can plan Saturday evening or Sunday morning field trips to TPE member Helen Davis' Tamarack Farm bordering the Tamarack Bog State Natural Area and the neighboring Trempealeau Wildlife Refuge.

Come and join us!

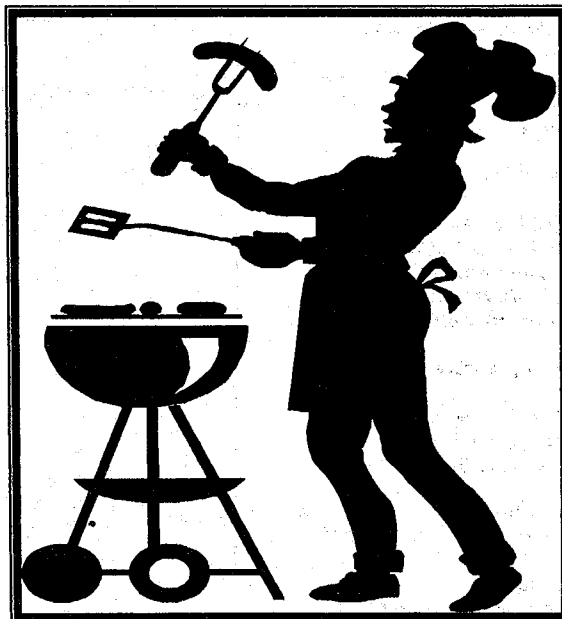
Accommodations:

Perrot Park campsite reservation
888 947 2757

Pleasant Knoll Motel
608 534 6615 or
pkmotel@win.bright.net

River View Motel
608 534 7784 or
rivervw@win.bright.net

Trempealeau Hotel
608 534 6898



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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.

TPE Board Of Directors

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

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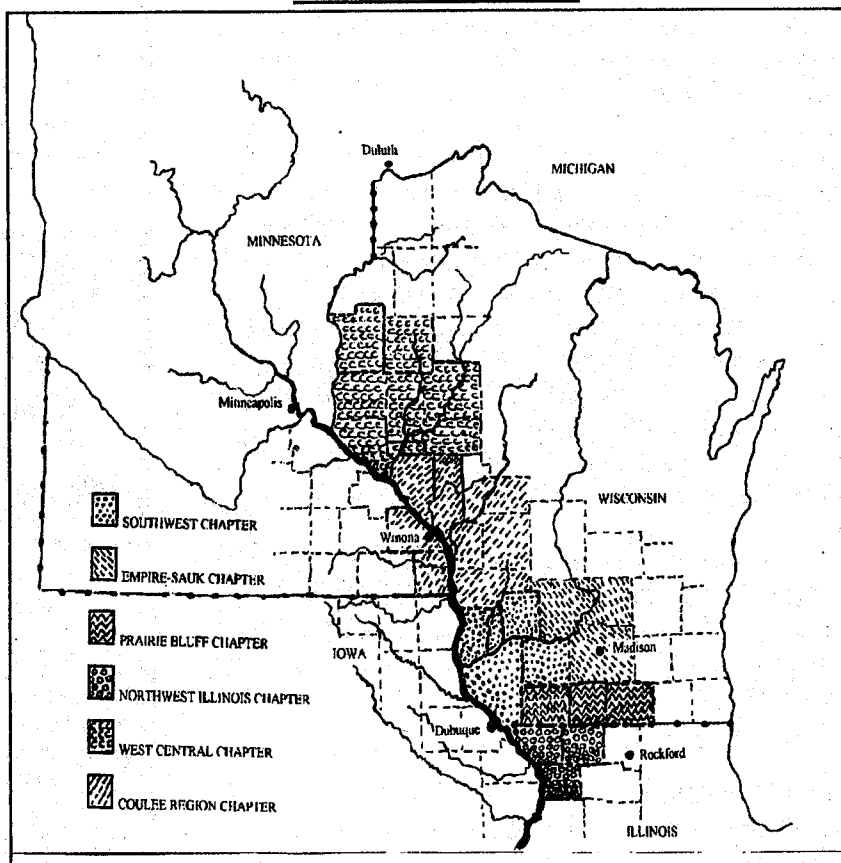
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TPE CHAPTER AREAS



President's Message

The TPE Board of Directors, composed of two representatives from each chapter, had its bimonthly meeting in Black River Falls in May. As meetings go, it was more or less run of the mill: the usual policy debates about changing the wording in this or that bylaw, discussion of changing the officers' terms in office, and on and on. I will readily admit that my ADHD really kicks in after two hours of that stuff! As I made the trip home, I thought about meetings and how boring they can get. I realized it must be just as mundane for the other directors and that got me thinking about how much I admire these dedicated people.

There's Alice Mirk, always ready to give her treasurer's reports and answer any and all questions that come her way, always civil and willing to problem-solve. Next is Kathy Kirk, our secretary. She, too, is ever ready to make things run more smoothly, has our minutes ready and goes the extra mile to make things work. Then, of course, there's Rich Henderson, our vice-president. What a guy! I can't tell you how much of a job we'd have if Rich wasn't here for us and prairies. Often he takes on much more than his fair share and almost never complains! I want to point out that my admiration doesn't end here, but extends to all the TPE board members as well as the active board members at the chapter level. Without these folks, no prairie conservation by TPE would be happening!

In closing, I'd like to thank Chris Matson for the work he did to bring the Coulee Region Chapter to life. Chris recently stepped down as chapter president, but we hope he will stay involved and support his chapter as time permits. Thanks, Chris.



CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

17th North American Prairie Conference

July 17-20, 2000

In Mason City, Iowa at North Iowa Area Community College. Located in north central Iowa; only 120 miles from Prairie du Chien or 170 miles from Dubuque or 210 miles from Madison.

For conference information and registration materials contact Carol Schutte, North Iowa Community College, 500 College Drive, Mason City, Iowa 50401; schutcar@niacc.cc.ia.us. Also visit the web page at www.niacc.com/prairie2000/.

Grassland Restoration and Management Workshop

September 29-30, 2000

South-central Wisconsin landowners will have an excellent opportunity to develop grassland restoration skills at the first Grassland Restoration and Management Workshop, September 29 and 30 in Baraboo.

Organized by the Aldo Leopold Foundation and the Cooperative Extension Service in the UW-Madison's Department of Wildlife Ecology, the workshop will offer two full days of classroom instruction and field exercises. Presentations on soils, vegetation, and wildlife will complement sessions on restoration and management strategies. Field activities will include visits to several private grasslands and a first-hand look at site preparation and management techniques.

Copies of classroom materials and lunch on Friday and Saturday are included in the \$50 workshop fee. The application deadline is July 31.

The workshop fills an important niche, according to Aldo Leopold Foundation Executive Director Buddy Huffaker. "Most workshops are very brief, cursory, and classroom-focused" he explained. "By having the participants for two days, we can include field experiences which

highlight the information from the classroom session."

In addition to practicing restoration on their own properties, workshop participants will be expected to promote these principles to other grassland owners in their community. With effective outreach, the project has the potential to effect thousands of acres of Wisconsin grassland. Ideas and methods for successful outreach will be discussed as part of the workshop.

Landowners with grassland acreage in Sauk, Columbia, Dane, Iowa, Richland, Adams, and Juneau counties are encouraged to apply. Applications are available through the Aldo Leopold Foundation, P.O. Box 77, Baraboo, WI 53913 (phone: 608-355-0279). Applications may also be downloaded via the foundation's web site at www.aldoleopold.org. Attendance will be limited to 30 participants. For more information, contact Rob Nelson at the Aldo Leopold Foundation (608) 355-0279, rob@aldoleopold.org.

Funding for the workshop is provided by the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



The 10th Annual Invertebrate Conference And Call for Papers

November 4, 2000

The 10th Annual Prairie Invertebrate Conference will be held on Saturday, November 4, 2000 at the Riveredge Nature Center, Newburg WI (25 miles north of Milwaukee). This conference is sponsored by Riveredge Nature Center in cooperation with UW-Madison Dept. of Entomology, and WI DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources.

This conference focuses on extending

awareness of prairie-associated species, their taxonomy, natural history, and distribution. The conference is directed towards resource managers, scientists and all who seek to better understand prairie ecosystems. Three formats of presentation will be provided:

Paper sessions: 20 to 30 minute presentations of information on prairie invertebrates such as: research on natural history and biology of prairie invertebrates; taxonomy and evolution of prairie invertebrates; management of prairie landscapes for invertebrate conservation.

Workshops: These sessions would provide hands-on instruction with a particular group of invertebrates, for example, the taxonomy of prairie mollusks, or homoptera.

Poster Sessions: These displays focus on particular research efforts or on the educational efforts of agencies, individuals or groups.

SUBMISSION:

An abstract of the paper, poster, or proposed workshop should be mailed to Rich Henderson by September 1, 2000. Selection will be completed by September 22, and registration will be sent by October 1, 2000.

Send abstracts to: Rich Henderson, DNR Research Center, 1350 Femrite Drive, Monona, WI 53716.

Questions? Contact Andy Larsen at Riveredge 262-375-2715, email andyl@mixcom.com

HOLD YOUR CALENDARS AND HANG ON TO YOUR HATS!

TPE CONFERENCE AND BANQUET 2001

Three conservation-minded groups will spend time in adjoining conferences on March 1, 2 and 3, 2001 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. While our activities will be announced separately to our specific constituencies, we are working together to make it possible for our members to participate in portions of all three events, if they so desire.

"Plants Out Of Place" (the weedy ones) will meet Thursday, March 1 and Friday, March 2 at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC) and the Ramada Inn, Eau Claire. The Prairie Enthusiasts' annual banquet will be

held Friday evening, March 2. Our TPE spring conference, "2001: A Prairie Odyssey," will meet on Saturday, March 3 at UWEC. The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association will meet Saturday, March 3 at the Holiday Inn-Campus in Eau Claire.

"Plants Out Of Place" focuses specifically on invasive, non-native plant species which threaten the survival of indigenous plant and animal species. This conference was initiated by the Northwoods Weed Initiative and is organized by a coalition of groups from around the state. The Northwoods Weed Initiative is a public and private partnership for coordinating invasive plant management in the northern Great Lakes region. Members of this partnership have taken an active role in compiling plant data, supporting control programs, developing and distributing educational materials, and promoting weed management across organizational boundaries.

"Plants Out Of Place" brings landowners, natural resource managers, Indian tribes, researchers, conservation organizations, and interested individuals together from the Upper Great Lakes region. It will share scientific information about invasive plants and establish dialogue toward their control and prevention. On Thursday, March 1, 2001 the focus will be the formation of a Wisconsin State Invasive Plant Council. Educational exhibits, research booths, and commercial vendor exhibits will be open Thursday evening. Friday will have a general conference kick-off session followed by multiple concurrent sessions on invasive species issues.

Friday evening The Prairie Enthusiasts invite all to enjoy our annual spring banquet. Saturday will find us back on campus, with multiple concurrent sessions about many aspects of prairie preservation, restoration and aligned issues. One new feature of Saturday's conference will be a children's program. Deb Konkel has agreed to organize activities of interest to children of various ages. If you have suggestions or are willing to lead an activity, please tell us.

We're still working on many details. We're sorting out how to conduct the raffle and silent auction so that more people can participate. We would like the various booths and displays to be easily accessed, too. Depending upon the raffle permit regulations, we may split our fund-raising

activities between the Friday night TPE banquet and the Saturday conference.

We have reserved blocks of sleeping rooms at both the Ramada Inn and the Excel Inn (which is across the street) for you. Both will use "TPE" as the code word for the block of rooms.

We will have many more details in the next Prairie Promoter. We've added a special conference link to our website, so you can check in for updates as they become available. If you want to help organize the Plants out of Place Conference, contact Kelly Kearns, WDNR, at 608-267-5066 or kearns@dnr.state.wi.us. To help with TPE events, contact Chuck Bomar, UW-Stout, at 715-232-2562 or bomar@uwstout.edu. Meanwhile, please block off March 1-2-3, 2001 for having fun in Eau Claire! And stay in touch at: www.prairie.pressenter.com

NEW PUBLICATIONS!

Atlas of Wisconsin Prairie and Savanna Flora

Many of us have been waiting for the promised publication *Atlas of Wisconsin Prairie and Savanna Flora*. This is a truly wonderful publication that gives the geographical location of most documented prairie and savanna species. It is now available, free, from the DNR. Just write for Technical Bulletin 191 and send the request to WI DNR, att. Susanne de Vair, DNR Research Center, 1350 Femrite Drive, Monona, WI 53716

Begin with a Seed

Begin With A Seed is a relatively new publication, offered by the Riveredge Nature Center. This hefty 111 page manual is described as the offspring of Al Heon, one of the Habitat Healers of Riveredge Nature Center. Mr Heon decided that persons interested in propagating prairie plants needed a good comprehensive resource to guide them to success.

Begin with a Seed provides descriptive listings of more than 400 prairie forbs, shrubs, grasses, sedges, rushes, and equisetums. Each entry includes: flower color, height, and flower period; requirements for sun exposure, soil moisture, and special soil types; germination techniques; seed collecting time; special comments; and, illustration references.

In addition, this publication also provides a series of listings of : species which attract birds; species which attract butterflies; species which are shade tolerant; species which are clay-tolerant; species which are reported to be deer resistant; and those which are listed as endangered or threatened in Wisconsin. Features sure to be useful to beginners are the two alphabetized listings of plants by scientific name and by common name and the seed collecting hints.

Quibbles with the publication are few and relatively minor. I would have preferred to have the cultural and site codes immediately precede the descriptive listing. In addition, the size of the publication (and the amount of paper used) could have been substantially reduced if **both** sides of each page had been used. I would also have preferred current taxonomy à la Gleason and Cronquist. Finally, while I applaud the identification of prairie plants not native to Wisconsin, I would like to see a strong statement discouraging the establishment of these species here. Nature has no empty spaces, so let us all plant Wisconsin spaces with Wisconsin species!

Minor quibbles aside, did Mr. Heon succeed in his herculean effort to produce a good, comprehensive resource? Emphatically so! You should **buy this book**. It is available for \$19.95, plus shipping and handling, from The Riveredge Nature Center, 4438 Hawthorne Drive, P.O.Box 26, Newburg, WI 53060.

(Editor's Note).

We have been privileged to receive the first issue of *The Open Country*, one of five hundred copies available. This is an **outstanding** publication which should be of interest to all persons deeply concerned about the fate of the earth's grasslands. We have been granted permission to reprint the following article that will have to be serialized due to its length. In return, we have agreed to print the following announcement.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Biodiversity Conservation Center (Moscow) and Siberian Environmental Center (Novosibirsk) have started publishing a new English-language journal, *The Open Country*. This publication is intended to facilitate a dialogue across the borders among the parties interested in preserving the biodiversity of, and fostering sustainable land

management in, the grassland biome around the globe.

Conceived as a forum for diverse interests, *The Open Country* will feature a broad spectrum of topics relevant to grassland conservation, including environmental history and current news on protected areas; accounts of research and restoration projects; grassland folklore and aesthetics; economic and political issues affecting the well-being of nature; information on endangered species, conservation events and organizations; etc.

The Open Country is distributed free of charge upon request. Articles and news are welcome in any area of grassland conservation. It is important that they deal with questions that may be of interest to the international audience. The language should be comprehensible to the lay reader. Manuscripts exceeding 30,000 characters and spaces (including notes) are not accepted. If articles are to be illustrated with pictures or maps, it is recommended that inquiries concerning suitable graphic formats are made well in advance. Please send your requests, comments, and manuscripts to the managing editor: Julia Kuleshova, Biodiversity Conservation Center, 41 Vavilov Street, Apt.2 Moscow, Russia 117312. Fax +7 (095) 124 71 78, e-mail festuca@bcc.seu.ru

Virgin Lands, Divided by an Ocean **(Notes on the Fate of Steppes in the** **Northern Hemisphere)**

by Alexander Chiilev and Sergei Levykin

The history of land use in the northern hemisphere attests to the parallel assimilation of steppes in Russia and prairies in North America for settled agriculture. Beginning with the practically simultaneous barbaric and chaotic plowing of steppe and prairie land, and also with the destruction of a rarified arboreal growth in these regions, by the turn of the 20th century both countries paved the way for the first world-scale ecological crisis. It was the imminence of that crisis, the keenly felt threat of bringing an irreparable damage to the integrity of pristine grassland communities – that forced Russian scientists to create a new discipline of steppe nature management, pioneered by Vasilii Dokuchaev.

In America, the peak of the ecological crisis caused by the continuous plowing of the prairies was reached in the 1930s. Even people far removed from nature were aware of the dust storms blowing across the Great Plains. In effect, there came about a turning point in the consciousness of Americans concerning their relationship with the prairie lands, and they began a restoration of those areas based on the ideas taken from Russia. Our own case was no better, however: several decades later, heedless of the United States' experience, we attempted an all-out plowing of our virgin grasslands, only to witness, in the 1960s, a home-made ecological crisis, which did not lag behind its American counterpart in terms of scale.

The harmful socio-economical and ecological consequences of the crisis caused by a massive replacement of pristine grasslands by plowed fields are still looming over our lives. The United States borrowed from us the scientific foundations for a rational use of steppe lands, which helped them build an advanced agriculture and secured their leadership on the international food market. We, however, adopted the American scenario of plowing immense areas at a fiendish pace, and brought upon ourselves not only an ecological disaster, but also a growing dependence upon the other nations' exports of agricultural goods.

Let us take a closer look at the history of these events. The colonization of the American prairies was an epitome of humans' reckless and rapacious interference with nature. On the other hand, the subsequent history of American agriculture clearly illustrated how the implementation, on the scale of the whole country, of timely and decisive measures based on the principles of rational land use, helped amend the grave consequences of that interference in a short amount of time.

The settlement of the Great Plains was of great importance for the development of the country and the shaping of the American nation. Their appropriation for agricultural purposes went through several stages. At the first stage of this process, the pioneers destroyed more than 100 million head of bison and pronghorn, and invaded the Plains Indians, taking their lands and forcing them out to reservations. The colonization was accelerated by the building of the trans-continental

railroad, which allowed for a large-scale development of settled agriculture in the prairies.

The next period (1880-1911) witnessed a massive cultivation of the long-grass prairies (situated in the areas with the annual precipitation ranging from 600 to 700 millimeters per one square meter. It was at this stage that the American farmers created the famous Wheat and Corn Belts, allowing for their country to become a world leader in the production of agricultural goods.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 forced the price of grain to skyrocket. The necessity of feeding their fellow soldiers as well as the armies of the Alliance triggered the American farmers to start an extensive cultivation of short-grass prairies situated in drier areas. By turning as much as 40 million acres (16 million hectares) of these lands into plowed fields, the United States ruined the ecological balance in the prairies, engendering a devastating drought. The scanty grass cover of the overworked pastures was downed to the soil surface, the deep plowing destroyed the structure of the soil under crops.

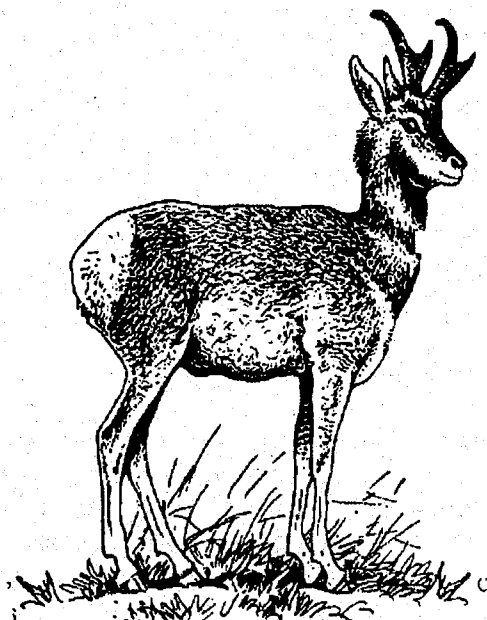
As a result of all this in 1934-5 the Great Plains suffered a series of violent dust storms unprecedented in the country's history. The central states were even called the "Dust Bowl." Lots of farmers were ruined and fled to the east of the country, joining the army of unemployed and unfortunate people. The environmental disaster affected 90 million acres (36 million hectares) of land, most of which became unsuitable for agriculture. The resulting economic damages amounted to many millions of dollars.

Such a devastating disaster led to a revolution in the consciousness of Americans. The country launched a special campaign for the reparation of the soil and the nature of the prairies in general. The linchpin of that campaign was the nation-wide program of restoring grass cover on erosion-prone lands and creating protective forest belts around fields. Eventually, the Americans remediated their short-grass prairies with the help of phytomeliorative technologies, and came to use them in such ways that seem sound from the economical as well as ecological viewpoints. Nowadays, the short-grass prairies (analogous to

our dry steppes) are used mainly as rangelands, supporting about 25 million head of cattle. The young cattle are brought in from the eastern states, where there are few spring and summer pastures, and graze in the rangelands till deep into fall. In October, the animals, well-fed by natural pastures, are driven back to the east country, where they are slaughtered, and their meat is stored in large freezers, which eliminates the expensive yearly redevelopment of the soil and preparation of hay and fodder for the winter, saving the biota of the prairies.

A clear testimony to the recent revivification of the prairies is an impressive recovery of the American bison, which once was on the verge of extinction. Thanks to special protective measures, the creation of national parks, and the restoration of pastures, its population has reached 100 thousand head, most of them owned by the farmers and living on their lands. This allows for the most efficient use of the feeding capacity of pastures. Besides, today a few thousand wild bison again roam the short-grass prairies of the far west of the United States, following the pathways of their ancestors in search of pastures.

(continued next issue).



Pronghorn
Antilocapra americana

A SPECIAL THANKYOU

by Carla Wright

Every day I walk next to the tall grasses that have taken over the CRP fields here since being planted to native warm season grasses in 1996. Some of these fields are adjacent to Indian Lake County Park, and one, a real favorite, is along the top of the 70 plus acre hill that makes up most of this farm. There are small remnant prairies all over this hilly land, so my goal is to erase the fence-lines that defined cropped or grazed areas, and meld these once-farmed fields with the adjacent prairie remnants. It is a beautiful place and I feel fortunate to live here. Some days I feel especially fortunate when I hear the calls of pileated woodpeckers foraging in the adjacent woodlands, the clear calls of the many songbirds that have returned, or the conversations of the sandhill cranes as they fly high overhead surveying the land around Indian Lake.

This year I share a very special joy with this land and its broader community of Prairie Enthusiasts. Over this past winter, the goat prairie I fondly call my "South Point" has been cleared of more than 50 red cedars, countless honeysuckle, and a more than adequate representation of buckthorn. Scott Sauer was the leader who organized four weekend work parties accomplishing a quite remarkable transformation of this site. Other volunteers included: Jim and Rose Sime, Rich Henderson, Earl Milbaugh, Willis Brown, Darcy Kind, Grant Howard, Darin Burleigh, Tom Wise, Don Ferber, Jerry Goth, Gary Gates, and Mike Solomon.

But this wasn't enough change for the southwest end of this farm. On Saturday March 4th, Scott, Rich, Willis, and Jerry returned, and along with Wayne Pauly, Paul Mechler, Ted Cochrane, Dan Wallace, Jerry Bartelt, and Colleen Reinke they ran a successful burn over the goat prairie, half of the hilltop CRP field, and much of the surrounding wooded land that slopes west.

The first time I walked to the South Point after all the clearing, I was startled. Gradually I got used to it, and now it always brings on a smile. The fire was hot, fast, and nearly smokeless--really exciting and a sight I will long remember!

I am so grateful for all the help because this year I could only help by saying thank you's to

everyone (which I did by providing soups, sandwiches, and cookies to the hard-working and dedicated Prairie Enthusiasts after each work effort).

It will be interesting to see how many pasque flowers emerge on that South Point this year, and fascinating to watch as the results are fully revealed during this year's growing season.

LOCAL LANDOWNER HELPS RARE PLANT COMMUNITY WITH FIRE

by Greg Nessler

Near Readstown there is a rare breed of landowner, rare because few landowners recognize the importance of their part in saving imperiled native plant communities. Ernest Kramer, a local area firefighter, owns approximately two acres of remnant tallgrass prairie located on a dry, stoney, south-facing bluff.

These steep, open rocky areas were often referred to as "goat prairies" years ago, as only goats would be agile enough to graze there. Most of our current pastures and croplands were once blanketed with a rich array of native grasses and wildflowers. The prairies that were not plowed or grazed soon became overgrown with thickets which shaded out these sun dependent areas. The last holdouts of prairie in our area took refuge in these dry inhospitable "goat prairies".

Our area actually contains many of these small hill prairies, which can be best spotted in the fall when the grass clumps turn a wonderful burnt-orange color. Every year these open areas are encroached upon by the surrounding forests. The first trees to invade are usually red cedar, but some culprits can be exotics like honeysuckles, buckthorns or a host of alien weeds. Without our assistance, these small prairies would disappear into history along with our chance to enjoy them. Most people are surprised to learn that before our area was settled, many of the hills surrounding us were more open and grassy like Mr. Kramer's remnant prairie, allowing beautiful views of the rock formations and hilly terrain.

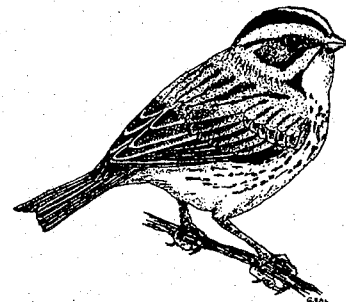
Two important factors were taken from the prairie when Europeans settled the Midwest. The first was the hunting off of large grazing, and browsing animals, such as bison and elk. These animals helped keep the area open with their constant browsing of the small trees and shrubs. Second, and by far the most important factor, was

the prevention of grass fires.

Running grass fires were the main factor in setting back or killing off woody plants and revitalizing tired grasslands. The prairie plants would be able to survive the fast fires, which would sweep through the area in the fall or spring when the plant's living parts are safely dormant underground. With the arrival of spring the blackened ground, warmed by the sun, came alive with the bright green shoots of new grasses and flowers. Historically these wildfires were either set by "dry lightening" strikes or by the Native Americans, who often intentionally set grass fires to drive herds of game, fight wars, or to clear trails of underbrush. The settlers however, had an innate fear of wildfire and viewed it solely as a force that destroyed.

Fortunately there is a growing movement in the Midwest by dedicated individuals and landowners like Mr. Kramer to revive the prairie, and where possible, to help it expand and thrive. People from all walks of life are attempting to save the few small areas of prairie left, and also replant many abandoned croplands with attractive, soil building native prairie plants.

1 Editor's Note: Most of the large herbivores had already all but disappeared east of the Mississippi River by 1800, due to hunting pressure from native peoples. The Native Americans had previously been pushed to the eastern shores of the Mississippi by invading Europeans and were concentrated in greater numbers than had been the case prior to European invasion.



BURNS HELP PUT PRAIRIES HOT ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

(Reproduced with permission from the La Crosse Tribune 4/17/00).
by Anastasia Mercer

An environmental group that is dedicated to preserving the prairie and savanna ecosystems that once dominated much of the landscape in the

upper Midwest conducted a controlled burn earlier this month in Genoa, WI.

The Prairie Enthusiasts are trained to manage controlled burns through a Nature Conservancy sponsored program. Controlled burns are one of the most effective techniques used to re-establish prairie ecosystems because they promote growth and seed germination in prairie plant species and destroy non-native plants.

The burn took place at a 40 acre site owned by Dairy Land Power Cooperative. Cooperative employees developed the prairie at the Genoa power plant's former ash disposal site in 1994, and almost 60 species of native prairie plants are flourishing there. The Prairie Enthusiasts got involved with the project in 1996.

Prairies and savannas were once vast grassy landscapes that covered millions of acres in the Midwest. Today, less than 1% of the original prairie remains.

THE REMNANTS WE SAVE BRIGGS WETLAND

by Rob Baller

Location: On the west side of Brosteum Rd in the town of Beloit, Rock County, Wisconsin.

Description and Quality: Briggs Wetland is 24 acres of wet prairie, sedge meadow, and tilled land. This remnant is home to 234 native vascular plant species, as well as 16 species of frogs, numerous species of insects, birds, and mammals. There are also at least 14 species of aquatic insects (i.e., caddis flies, may flies, beetles, etc.) which inhabit the artesian stream. The incredible diversity of life forms and the pristine artesian spring make this remnant very special indeed.

History and Status: Jason W. Briggs, a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints is recorded as the first Euroamerican owner of a land parcel in Rock County. On November 18, 1851, while praying for guidance on the prairie near the spring, Briggs is alleged to have had a "divine revelation". He sold the land in 1854 and 149 years later, Rob Baller, president of the Prairie Bluff Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts, was contacted by a local real estate agent. The agent informed Rob of

plans to sell the remnant. Rob approached the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) about purchasing the remnant, but the agency declined due to the small size of the property. As The Prairie Enthusiasts initially lacked the funds to purchase the property, Rob contacted the Natural Land Institute (NLI) in Rockford, Illinois. NLI ultimately purchased the property and the Prairie Bluff Chapter raised enough funds to purchase the Briggs Wetland from NLI in December of 1996.

Needs and Management: Although much of the invasive and exotic European buckthorn has been removed, an acre of it remains. The remnant has been subjected to prescribed burns in April, 1995; in March, 1996; and in April, 2000. The removal of exotic species (primarily European buckthorn), periodic prescribed burns, and purchasing of adjacent property when and if parcels become available will remain on the management agenda well into the future.

SOUND BYTES

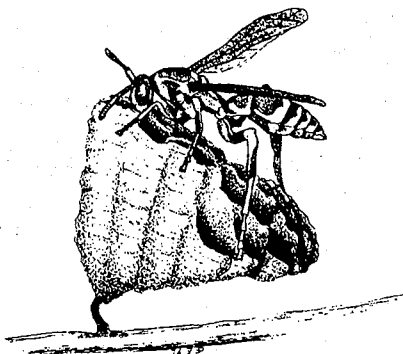
by Jim Rachuy

"PRECIOUS HERITAGE"

A new study released by The Nature Conservancy is the most complete inventory of US plants and animals to date. It reveals the US as one of the most ecologically diverse countries in the world, including twice the biodiversity previously estimated. According to the latest tabulation, the US is home to over 200,000 species or about 10 percent of all life forms on Earth.

The study also finds a third of the nation's species at risk of extinction, with over 500 plants and animals already extinct or "missing." With 60% of the nation's landscape severely altered by human activity, the study concludes the single greatest threat to many species is loss of habitat. For more information see:

<http://www.tnc.org/frames/index.html?/success/index.html#3>. To order "Precious Heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the United States" go to:
<http://www.oup-usa.org/>.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Sat.,	Aug. 5	Chapter meeting at 10am at La Crosse main public library. Guest speaker will be Armund Bartz.
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EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Wed.,	July 12	Annual meeting and picnic, 5:30pm at Marion Park, near Mazomanie. See chapter news for details and directions.
Tues.,	Sep. 5	Chapter board meeting at Hiram Smith Hall, UW-Madison at 7pm.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

EVENTS

Sat.,	Jun. 17	Work party at Honey Creek Park, 4 th Avenue West, Monroe, starting at 9am. For more information, contact Kay at 608-325-6147.
Tues.,	Sep. 5	Hike at Muralt Prairie at 6pm. Meet at the County F (STH39) parking lot. There will be no chapter meeting this month.

MEETINGS

Tues.,	July 11	Chapter meeting at Honey Creek Park, 4 th Avenue West, Monroe at 7pm. Bring a sack lunch and enjoy the prairie.
Tues.,	Aug. 1	Chapter meeting at Montesian Gardens, at the junction with Highway 69 and 400 West Coates Avenue, Monticello at 7pm.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Sun.,	Aug. 20	Chapter meeting at 1pm. Location to be announced, call Gary Eldred at 375-5271 for details.
Sun.,	Sep. 17	Chapter meeting at 1pm. Location to be announced, call Gary Eldred at 375-5271 for details.

EVENTS

Sat.,	Jun. 24	Work party at Bush Clover Prairie, starting at 10am.
Sun.,	Jun. 25	Field trip to view prairies at Eldred and Sime properties. Meet at Dick's Parking lot in downtown Boscobel at 10am. It is located on W. Oak Street, west of the 4-way stop on Wisconsin Ave.
Sat.,	Jul. 1	Work party at Heather's Prairie starting at 10am.
Sun.,	Jul. 9	Work party and tour at the Vale Prairie and Iltis Savanna starting at 10am. Meet at the Vale Prairie, see

directions below this calendar.

Sat.,	Jul 15	Work party at Kalscheurs Savanna at 10am.
Sat.,	Aug. 5	Work party at Heather's Prairie starting at 10am.
Thu.,	Aug. 10	Work party at Kalscheurs Savanna starting at 10am.
Sun.,	Aug 20	Work party at Kalscheurs Savanna starting at 10am.
Sat.,	Aug. 26	Work party at Bush Clover Prairie starting at 10am.
Sat.,	Sep. 2	Work party at Heather's Prairie starting at 10am.
Sat.,	Sep. 9	Work party at Heather's Prairie starting 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.,	Jul. 29	TPE annual picnic and TPE board meeting, Perrot State Park, Trempealeau, WI. See front page article for details.
Mon. thru Thurs.	Jul 17-20	North American Prairie Conference, see announcement in general section of this newsletter for details.
Fri. & Sat.	Sep. 29-30	Grassland Restoration and Management workshop in Baraboo. See announcement in the general section of this newsletter for details.

Coulee Region Prairie Enthusiasts Spring 2000 events Accomplished

March 4 at Avalanche/ Readstown

Trash from recent utility work was piled and burned on the Lloyd and Mary Lee Croatt property in the early afternoon. The Readstown Fire Department helped chapter members burn several acres of prairie on the Sue and Russell Pope property in the late afternoon.

March 11 at Avalanche

Nine members helped brush the Barb and Ed Christie property. No burning was allowed due to a fire ban.

March 25 at Steuben

Three coulee region chapter members and a southwest chapter member removed encroaching brush and trees on a nearby goat prairie at the TNC's "Hogback" preserve.

April 1 at La Crosse

Burned the Motivan Prairie.

April 8 at Genoa

Coulee Region Prairie Enthusiasts performed a controlled burn on the prairie site adjacent to Dairyland Power Cooperative's Genoa #3 Station. This is the second time in three years this prairie has been burned by The Prairie Enthusiasts.

April 15 at Avalanche

Approximately 5 acres of steep hillside prairie was burned on the Lloyd and Mary Lee Croatt property.

Three hours of life on a prairie. April 15, 2000.

by Mary Lee Croatt

A burn doesn't just happen. In the cold of January I wrote to our county supervisor requesting a burn permit for the season. I included a little note to update him on our progress in prairie restoration. I even include a stamped, self-addressed envelope to make the job easier for him.

Our new vice president of the Coulee region chapter of Prairie Enthusiasts is Barbara Christie. She put her calendar and telephone to work to align a schedule of work parties and volunteers for spring burns and brush work. We were all then able to plan ahead for our property and one another's projects when she mailed us the schedule. She included directions to each property, telephone numbers, and suggested tools

to bring.

On the morning of the burn, we telephoned the sheriff's department to notify them of a "supervised, prescribed burn". This time, instead of arguing, they told us to phone them after it was accomplished. I felt some anxiety before our Prairie Enthusiast volunteers joined us. What if the fire gets out of control? Would it impact our neighbors' property...and their good will? Just where could the glitches be? I had to talk to my spouse to allay my fears. Just verbalizing relieved tension for both of us before we started.

Lloyd drove the brush cutter up the prairie bluff to define the border to be burned. It is important to burn only a section of prairie, so as not to kill all the valuable invertebrates (insects) that are a necessary component of the prairie community. After the area regenerates, the insects can move back from surrounding unburned sections.

At noon members filtered in driving red vehicles. Is there a connection here? Fire engine red? Barb Christie had members sign release forms to protect us legally in case of injury on the property. Susan & Russell Pope, George & Carmine Johnston, Tom Erb & Cici Caron came two by two. George had the most experience, so we asked him to be the leader in coordinating the work party on both sides of the bluff.

We all were dressed with long pants, long sleeves, leather work boots, and leather work gloves. I had forgotten to wear a hat as protection against flying sparks. The wise among us wore kerchiefs around our necks to pull up like a bandit over the mouth and nose against smoke inhalation, as needed. We carried drinking water to hydrate us during the work.

We all trudged up the steep embankment carrying our equipment to hopefully control the cleansing flame. This included a couple of hard tined rakes for scratching the thatch from the mowed path. I carried a child's rake that somehow works great for spreading flames. There were at least four flappers, which look like truck mudflaps on long wooden pole handles. The strongest man carried a heavy water pack on his back. This is like a large plastic water jug with a pump handle that sprays water through a hose and wand to douse flames that extend beyond where they should go. It also wets areas beforehand to protect from burning. In addition, it is used at the end of a burn to put out small flames.

George divided us into two groups and instructed us to burn a fire break around the edge of the prairie section and against the wind. The prairie gods smiled upon us. Conditions were unlike the day before with 80 degree heat, making it too hot to work, and high winds, making it too dangerous for controlling fire. The day, April 15, 2000, was cloudy, cool, 40 degrees with a mild wind. It was perfect for the job at hand. It had been a dry spring. This section of land was last burned four years ago. It was covered with dry vegetation.

The land owner lit the match. Whoosh! Once ignited the fire expanded into a life of its' own. After the fire margin was burned, we lit a headfire using the wind to power the fire. A wave of flames rolled over the land and created a black blanket. As it lit bottom branches of pine trees, it crackled loudly. In some spots the fire would flare up to 10-20 feet. One could hear the dry wood and vegetation explode in loud snaps and cracks. White smoke rose upward like incense. I had the job of spreading the fire with my child's rake by lifting burning grasses to new spots. Sometimes the heat was so intense I had to turn my face away and back off. My face was beet red from the heat. I'll remember to bring a hat next time.

The smoke attracted the attention of our neighbor, Lee, who worriedly scaled the slope when he saw the smoke. Oops. I had forgotten to knock on his door to let him know what we were doing today. Another neighbor and his young son bicycled over to watch the excitement. I made sure to introduce him to our work party and explained why we did things the way we did. We're hoping he will introduce natural plantings in his front yard out there in the country. Greg Nessler joined us too. He just couldn't stay away from a burn!

By 3:00 P.M., the deed was done. We had burned approximately 4-5 acres, all on a steep incline. We gathered at the base of the bluff and watched the fire burn out. We expressed our gratefulness, as we could never do this safely alone. We gathered in our shed, congratulating one another, and especially George for his debut as crew chief. CiCi had brought us deviled eggs to replenish our energy. We munched on apples and pretzels, swilling soda to wet our parched throats. As we worked, three fly fishermen who were casting in the trout stream below us watched. They joined our group later to share the experience of their viewpoint. Before heading home, we walked

over the land to check for smoldering coals. We doused them with water. We took our smokey clothing into the garage for airing.

It was satisfying to report another safe and successful burn to our sheriff. Our muscles ached from this hard labor, our small gift of gratitude to be stewards of this precious prairie.

EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

Brush mower fund still making progress but needs help. We are 66% of the way to our goal of \$2,145. Thank you to the following contributors: Wayne Pauly, Jon & Peggy Traver, Lauren & Ron Thorstad, Meagan Yost, Kathy & Rich Henderson, Noll Valley Home Owners Association, Vilas Neighborhood Association, Jim Welsh, Guerdon & Jeanette Coombs, Susan Slapnick, John & Carmen Wagner, Gary Werner, Craig Annen, Dan and Deb Weidert, Tom and Kathy Brock, Janet Battista, Chuck Bauer, Randall Berndt, and Tracey Terrazas

Just \$4 a piece from the rest of the chapter membership would finish the job. Please send your donation to the Prairie Enthusiasts c/o Jim Welsh, S5685 Old Lake Road, Baraboo, WI 53913.

Spring burn season once again a success.

The Empire-Sauk chapter had a very productive spring burn season. With the help of 40 volunteers, staff person Steve Swenson, and project supervisor volunteer Jeb Barzen, the Blufflands Project (see spring newsletter) accomplished 16 burns totaling 350 acres. The rest of the chapter's efforts completed another 24 burns totaling 193 acres. These latter burns were led primarily by Rich Henderson, and were accomplished with the help of 60 volunteers participating in 152 person/burn events. Thank you to all who helped on the burns and on the phone. One of the burns was a cooperative effort at Walking Iron County Park with Wayne Pauly and Dane County Parks volunteers. We also helped Verona Area High School and West Middleton Elementary School burn their prairie restorations.

If the weather cooperates there will be opportunities to help with burns this fall. The list of spring burn volunteers will be used for the fall burns.

Chapter Annual Membership Meeting and Picnic.

Our annual meeting and potluck picnic will take place on Wednesday evening July 12 at Marion Lake Park in Mazomanie. We will meet at the park's shelter for a potluck meal at 5:30 p.m. followed by a brief annual meeting and then a tour of the School Section (Mazomanie) Bluff to see the great progress made and challenges ahead in the recovery of this prairie and savanna bluff. The meeting will consist primarily of three elections: chapter vice-president, chapter treasurer, and chapter representative to The Prairie Enthusiasts main board. Bring a dish to pass and your own plates and utensils. (Marion Lake is located along County Hwy KP about ½ mile south of US 14 on the southeast edge of Mazomanie).

Nominations Sought. Nominations are being sought for chapter vice-president and treasurer, as well as chapter representative on The Prairie Enthusiasts main board. These are two-year terms. Elections will be held at the general meeting of the membership on July 12. Contact Rich Henderson, 608-845-7065.

Field Trip Ideas? If you have ideas for field trip destinations, topics, leaders (including yourself), contact our chapter's field trip coordinator Mark Martin (608-635-4160). Trips can be weekend days or weekday evenings. They can be near or far. What do you wish to see?

SOUTHWEST WI CHAPTER

Ittis Savanna Acquisition

Like the parents of a newborn baby, the SW Chapter is bustin' out at the seams to show off the newest addition to its list of protected prairie and savanna remnants! The Ittis Savanna purchase was completed in December of 1999, and will be a very important addition to the already protected 60-acre Muralt bluff prairie, home to many rare species, including the regal fritillary butterfly, Hill's thistle, and one flowered cancer root.

With the 22 acre Ittis addition, we will be restoring savanna habitat directly connected to open dry mesic prairie, providing a critical link for the species that need to move from one habitat to the other as called for by their life cycles.

There will be many years of work ahead to restore the savanna, although as recently as 1965, aerial photos show the bluff top as very open with lots of prairie vegetation and large-open grown burr and white oaks scattered throughout the area. There will be countless saplings, shade tolerant shrubby species, and larger trees to be cut and removed. In addition, a small area was used as a farm dump, so there will be tons of scrap metal, cans, bottles, tires and such to be cleaned up and removed. Other important work that will need to be done will be planting an old 4-acre field back to prairie. This is important because the field directly borders the Muralt Prairie and we feel expanding the prairie acreage is critical.

Although the amount of work and time required at Ittis Savanna seems a bit overwhelming, let's celebrate! The SW Chapter is going to host a "savanna shower," like a baby shower, but no baby gifts, please! We will hike the site, and marvel at the 200-year-old oaks, discuss the management needs and options, make species lists, and walk on the Muralt Prairie to get a feel of how the two sites blend together as a habitat. This will be an excellent opportunity to learn firsthand from some of Wisconsin's most knowledgeable and experienced prairie/savanna experts. Don't miss the opportunity.

To write this article without recognizing Jeanette Muralt for her willingness to sell the site for preservation would be a terrible disservice to a very good person. Jeanette had many opportunities to sell the property for development or other purposes, but felt it was more important to pass on a piece of our natural heritage for future generations. It was a pleasure to work with Jeanette and a credit to her for what she has done. Thank you, Jeanette Muralt!

"And now, for the rest of the story," as Paul Harvey would say. Along with the deep satisfaction that comes with preserving this remnant comes the lingering worry about raising the money to replenish our funds, funds that will allow us to purchase another rare site in the future. Our chapter spent \$34,000, and now we need to call on you, our dedicated membership, to help us with your tax-deductible donations. Without your financial support, we will not be able to undertake projects like the Ittis Savanna.

Donations Needed

In March of 2000, the Wisconsin State Journal printed an article which in part stated that

scientists predict that by the end of the twenty-first century (2,100) we will have lost 50% of all earth's diversity if we continue our current behavior practices. Stop and think about that for a minute: one-half of all species! Now think about this: your great-grandchildren will see that happen. If there is longevity in your genes, it's possible your grandchildren or even your children will see that happen! Now think about this: you can help prevent that starting right now, right here in the upper Midwest. Every site the Prairie Enthusiasts manages is full of rare floral and faunal species. If it's native to prairie or savanna, it's in serious trouble!

Nearly all the sites we own have state and/or federally threatened or endangered species which depend on us for their survival. Like they say on public radio, if you support what we are doing, then now is the time to support us with your donations. We do get limited help from sources such as the Stewardship Fund, but not nearly enough to regain the cost of the property, or pay for equipment and labor to manage these rare places. As an example, let's look at the Illis Savanna. If someone donated the \$34,000 cost of purchase, what costs would be incurred in the future? Thousands of dollars would be needed for management of the Illis savanna if it were not for

volunteer labor. That does not even count the cost of materials needed such as fencing, gates, and materials for lane maintenance. Please consider donating your labor or your money to preserve these gems for future generations.

FREE PRAIRIE SEED!

Yes, that's right, free prairie seed! The SW Chapter's seed orchards are starting to be productive, and a limited number of forbs are producing good amounts of seed. If you're interested, read on. To provide an incentive for people to show up for work parties, we have decided to try a new idea. Here is what we will do: we will give you free seed for every work party you attend. We will need your help in working out the amounts to be given away. We will keep track of the hours donated and at harvest time, determine how much "seed time" our volunteers have accumulated depending on the value and availability of species from our orchard.

If you are interested in this great deal, give Gary Eldred a call at 608-375-5271. This offer is good only for attendance at work parties that the SW Chapter sponsors.

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, JoDaviess & 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

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

☐ \$250 ANNUAL CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

☐ \$10 STUDENT

☐ \$20 INDIVIDUAL

☐ \$30 CONTRIBUTOR

☐ \$75 SUSTAINING

☐ **\$200 BLAZING**

NEW!

STAR MEMBER

☐ **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

THANK YOU

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Savanna Gift

Alice Mirk

Secret, hidden in the lush sedges
Of early summer,
Lay the fawn.
Newly born, blinking
In the light of early evening
It lay on our savanna,
Curled in the spiderwort
and golden alexanders.

We stood, silent, watching,
Suspended in time,
Then slowly turned and retraced steps.

We thought about the toil, the sweat,
The ache of savanna restoration.
Always just the two of us,
Cutting, dragging, burning and planting.
It was a three acre winter –
An endless vista of trees to cut
Shrubs to clear.

The cycle is now complete,
As too few cycles are.
The fawn is testimony
To our savanna birth.

