



THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 14, NO.4 Winter 2001

Dedicated to the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest

Watch your Mailbox!

Watch your mailbox in January for the announcement and registration forms.

The Annual TPE conference and banquet will be held on March 8-9, 2002 at the Cartwright Center on the UW-LA Crosse campus in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Highlights of the conference include a workshop track for children, keynote speaker, Dr. Curt Meine and an archeological field trip to Trempealeau State Park. (See below).

Archeological Field Trip

As previously announced, next Spring's annual conference will feature a special field trip. A limited number of registrants will be afforded an opportunity to travel to Perrot State Park with Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt, Associate Director, Contract's Director and Regional Archaeologist at the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center. Mr. Boszhardt, who received degrees in Anthropology from the University of Wisconsin- Madison, has worked for the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center since its inception in 1982. He has directed numerous surveys and excavations in the unglaciated Driftless Area and Upper Mississippi River Valley. He has published nearly 30 articles on a wide range of regional archaeology topics. His most recent research interests include rock art of this region. Participants can look forward to learning much about this region's rich history from Ernie. At the park they will visit a nature center which contains an exhibit which summarizes past research on mounds located in the park and includes a replica of a rock art site. A short hike will then allow participants to view remaining Indian Mounds and a small cave/ rock shelter first hand. Attendance will be limited, so plan to register early!

All registrants will have an opportunity to visit the Mississippi Valley Archaeological Center which is located on the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse campus just a few short steps from the conference itself. There they will be able to view numerous artifacts and to speak with knowledgeable staff. The Center will be open on March 9th between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M.

Representatives of Coulee Region Chapter look forward to seeing you at next year's conference!

Auction and Raffle Information

This is a big fund raiser for The Prairie Enthusiasts. It is each member's opportunity to contribute towards prairie and savanna conservation and it occurs only once a year. If you have a contribution of your own or a business lead for donations (gift certificates or merchandise), contact the appropriate chapter donation coordinator listed below. The deadline for registering auction/raffle items with coordinators is February 9, 2002. All contributions must be delivered to the donation coordinators prior to the banquet day. All items must be pre-registered. The auction/raffle is being coordinated by Kathy Aaker and Diane Hanson, Coulee Region Chapter. The following individuals should be contacted for their chapters:

Coulee Region Chapter - Kathy Aaker (608)637-6507
Empire Sauk Chapter - Rich Henderson (608)845-7065
Northwest Illinois Chapter - Jim Rachuy (815)947-2287
Prairie Bluff Chapter - Nick Faessler (608) 897-4993 (e-mail-faessler@wekz.net)
Southwest Wisconsin Chapter - Gary Eldred (608)375-5271
West Central Wisconsin Chapter - Shawn Schottler (652)433-5953

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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 2,000 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 its 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, artwork, and photographs which are relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Material should be typed. Writers who use computers can e-mail their submissions to aimtpe@mwt.net using MS word or text files. **Please do not format.** Letters and articles 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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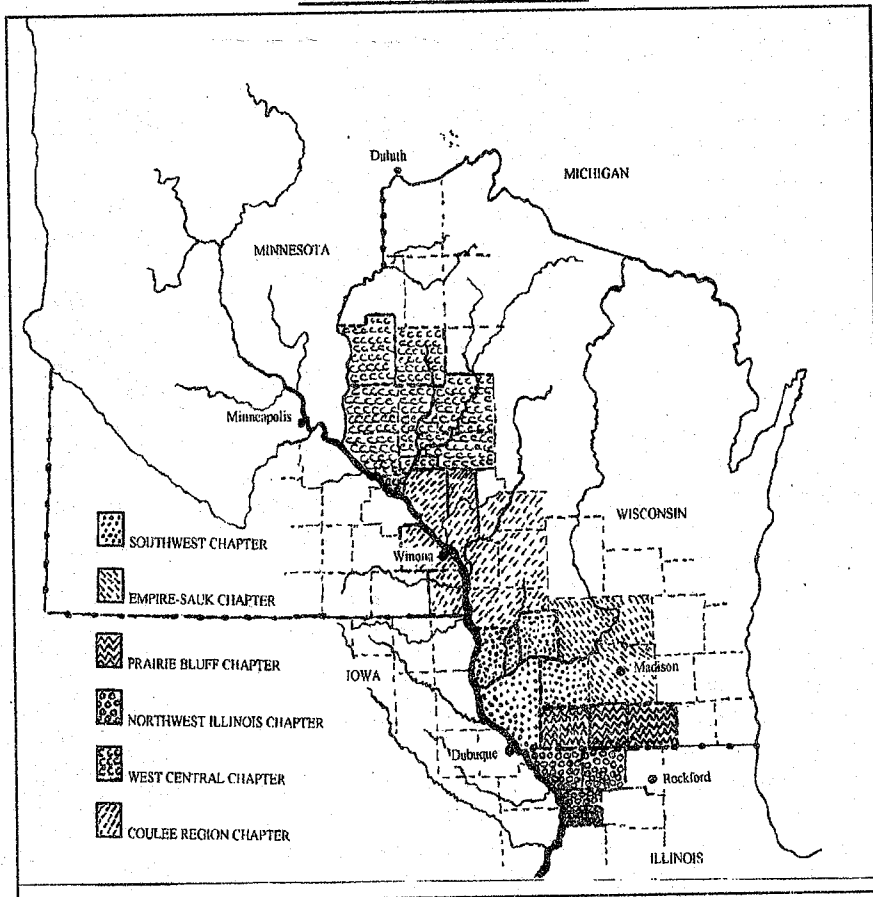
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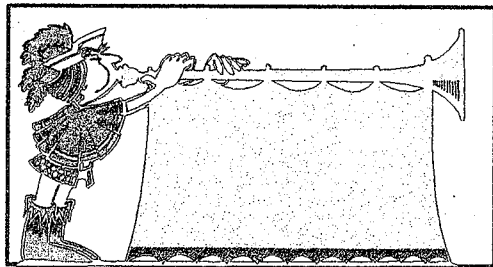
President's Message

Several weeks ago I received a call from Andrea Mueller from the Rochester, Minnesota area, asking about establishing a new chapter of TPE there. Her enthusiasm came through in our phone conversations, so when I got a call last week about a meeting being scheduled to discuss the topic, I said I'd be happy to attend and answer questions. The meeting took place on Monday, November 19, at Quarry Hills Nature Center with over twenty people in attendance. I was very encouraged. During the two and a half hour meeting I was asked many questions. How does TPE work, how do the chapters function in relationship to the main board? What about funding? What kinds of projects can we do? How do we organize? By the end of the meeting a couple of points were very clear to me. There is much frustration out there about the extreme difficulty in stopping the destruction of the prairie and savanna areas in southeast Minnesota. And second, there is a strong feeling that state agencies are overwhelmed and not able to protect native plants and habitats in the face of rapid rural development.

In spite of the fact that some of the comments reflected a very concerned and fearful view of the future, there was a single strong and consistent feeling throughout the entire group that reflected their deep and long term commitment to preserving prairies and savannas. Many have loved prairies and savannas for most of their adult lives and are committed to saving these places. I hope that all of us within TPE will provide support, encouragement and information to nurture the formation of this proposed new chapter by these deeply committed individuals. We wish them luck and will be there for them.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Prairie Songs Concert

The Festival Choir of Madison, a professional-level independent chamber chorus based in Madison, is

presenting an entire concert on the theme of PRAIRIES at 7:30pm, on February 23, 2002, at Madison Area Technical College's Mitby Theater. The concert will include: The world premiere of 5 songs on the theme of prairies, collectively titled "Prairie Songs" commissioned by the Choir from St. Paul composer Stephen Paulus. Each song is set to a poem about the prairies (the five songs are titled: Grass, The Mowing, The Sound of Silence, Sorrow Song and Prairie Snow.); other music about the prairies, or invoking the mood of the prairies, including two songs with the Madison Children's Choir; a conversation hour with the composer before the concert (6:30pm, free to the public, also held at MATC); a few selected poems and readings about the prairies interspersed between some of the songs (in fact, if you know of good poems by Wisconsin poets or Native American poets that would fit the bill, I'd love to hear about them); and slides of the prairies shown at the opening of the concert.

There will be informational tables in the concert lobby where various prairie-loving groups can hand out brochures. The Prairie Enthusiasts will have some table space. A limited-edition etching of prairie plants and flowers done by a fine local botanical artist, Elisabeth de Boor will be available for sale. The design of the etching will be used on the cover of the program and is also available on t-shirts. The design is extremely detailed and delicate.

Tickets will be available at the door for \$15 (general admission) or \$12 for seniors or students. Advance tickets (\$12 general admission; \$10 seniors or students) will be available by calling the Choir office at 608 238-8030, or can be purchased in the month before the concert at four outlets in Madison: Sam Goody's at Hilldale; Orange Tree Imports; Ward Brodt Music Mall; and Legacy House Imports, Gift Shop and Tea Room (on the east side, on Lien road). A SPECIAL PRICE IS AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS: call the Choir number (608) 238-8030 and identify yourself as a member of TPE, and you can purchase an advance ticket for \$8.

Some further information about the choir, in case you need it: the group was founded in 1972 and was conducted for many years by the late David Lewis Crosby. Our current music director, Eric Townell, is in his 9th year with the Choir. During his tenure we have established a regular four-concert series in Madison, have toured throughout the state (and in Europe), commissioned our first works, recorded two CDs (and will record a third featuring the Prairie Songs) and performed four times on the acclaimed live chamber music series on Wisconsin Public Radio, "Sunday Afternoon Live from the Elvehjem." The Choir presently has 54 singers, drawn from a wide geographic area.

If you have questions or comments, I'd be happy to respond. You can reach me by contacting: Helen Bee, Executive Director, Festival Choir, at 608 238-8030.

Prairie Management Workshop

The West-Central Chapter is planning a prairie management workshop for the non-professional this spring. This workshop will be geared not only to persons that are managing remnant prairies, but also to those that have planted a prairie restoration and want to know - Now what do I do? There will be sessions on preparing a management plan, managing invasive species, protection strategies and the how-to's of specific techniques such as: grazing, burning and more.

WHEN: Saturday, March 23, 2002

WHERE: University of Wisconsin-Stout

If you would like more information, please e-mail konked@dnr.state.wi.us and we will send details of the event to you.

Deb Konkel
Aquatic Plant Specialist
Department of Natural Resources
West Central Region - Eau Claire
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Future North American Prairie Conferences

The 2002 North American Prairie Conference will take place June 23-27 in Kirksville, Missouri. This is in NE Missouri just over a four hour drive from SW Wisconsin. The web site for details is www.napc2002.org. A mailing announcement will be out in mid-winter.

The following conference (2004) will be in Madison, Wisconsin. TPE is a co-sponsor of this conference.

Looking for a Field Trip Coordinator

We are still seeking someone to take over the privilege of coordinating and producing TPE's field trip flier which comes out twice a year. Here is your chance to get involved. Contact Rich Henderson, (608) 845-7065.

New Articles and Books

NWF Report

The National Wildlife Federation has just produced a new report: "*The American Prairie: going, going, gone?*" which vividly documents the decline and loss of our nation's native prairies and their wildlife. This is a broad overview piece which we hope prairie and wildlife enthusiasts will use to educate policy makers at the local, state and national levels about the pressing need for prairie conservation. In particular, we hope this report will be helpful in talking to your lawmakers and

others about the importance of CRP and of establishing a grasslands reserve program.

This report and accompanying state-by-state fact sheets are available in a downloadable format on our website at:

http://www.nwf.org/grasslands/americanprairie_release.html. Requests for hardcopies can be made by

contacting Rick Bachand at bachand@nwf.org.

Submitted by Catherine Johnson

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New Publication Available

Amphibians of Wisconsin. Rebecca Christofel, Robert Hay and Michelle Wolfgram. 2001. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Endangered Resources. 44 pages.

This Publication, like the recent *Snakes of Wisconsin*, is a welcome addition to one's collection of field guides. It provides useful information about general biology, breeding behaviors, skin characteristics and purposes, feeding, defense, regenerative abilities and over-wintering strategies. Global amphibian declines, the value of amphibians and malformations are discussed in a succinct manner. Information is also presented about the status of Wisconsin's amphibians, ways individuals can help amphibians and regulations regarding their collection, killing and possession.

Seven species of salamanders and twelve species of frogs are described in terms of appearance and habitat preference. If the descriptions and highly useful key leave one in any doubt about the correct identification of any species, the superb photographs should increase one's confidence.

As an aside, I was shocked and saddened to learn that Blanchard's cricket frog is endangered and that its range has diminished to a significant degree. When I was growing up in what was once rural Waukesha County, they were a very common sight along the margins of a small, shallow pond which was tucked away in a remote corner of our farm. It appears they can no longer be found within a three-hour drive of that location! The photograph in this publication is the first time I have seen this diminutive frog in 31 years even though I live within its current range.

To obtain your copy, write a check for \$4.00 payable to Endangered Resources Program, and write Herps Education Account on the memo line. Checks should be mailed to Bureau of Endangered Resources, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI. 53707.

MESSAGE FROM RUSSIA

On September 10, the fall issue of *The Prairie Promoter* was delivered to our printer. Two days later we received the following e-mail from our dear friends, Julia and Anton, who are involved in the conservation and preservation of the Russian grasslands. They edit *The Open Country*, an outstanding journal of grassland conservation. Their message is for all of us.

Dear Alice and Walter,

We have been shocked to hear of a terrible tragedy in your country. Although we have never met, we do think of you as our good friends, and we would like to tell you we are deeply grateful for the encouragement you have given to our work and ourselves. It is the labor of people like you that helps keep the embers of love of life in the hearts of those who know you. How sad we have to say this in such circumstances. Hope you, your family and friends are all safe. Our hearts go out to you.

Julia Kuleshova and Anton Struchkov

editors, *The Open Country*

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The Prairie Enthusiasts Mission Statement

The mission of The Prairie Enthusiasts has long been loosely stated in our brochure, but until recently we did not have a formal mission statement. At the September 2001 meeting, the TPE board adopted an official mission statement for the organization as follows:

"We seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration and education. In doing so, we strive to work openly and cooperatively with private landowners and other private and public conservation groups."

TPE is a Land Trust and More

By Rich Henderson, Vice-President.

The Prairie Enthusiasts is involved in promotion, understanding and appreciation of prairie, oak savanna and related threatened and declining ecosystems, and we often facilitate the protection of sites by other conservation groups. Because we are involved in these

types of activities, people tend to forget, or are unaware, that TPE is also a land trust. Thus, I wish to remind readers that TPE is first and foremost a land trust in the business of protecting natural areas. In other words, we try to protect remnant natural areas through acquisition of title or conservation easements. We currently hold title to eight nature preserves and easements on two private sites. Secondly, we also assist private landowners in the management and recovery of their prairies, savannas, etc. through both formal and informal agreements. Lastly, we attempt to educate landowners and the general public about the tenuous status and management needs of these disturbance-dependant ecosystems. (See our mission statement above).

As a land trust, TPE seeks to protect sites through conservation easements or acquisition of title. This is done through purchases, donations or some combination thereof. At the time of protection, we also strive to establish a permanent endowment trust fund for each site. The annual earnings of this trust are restricted, and can only be used for management/restoration of designated sites. We also strive to establish legal defense funds for the conservation easements.

Conservation easements come with a potential downside. They can become a financial liability to the easement holder. They are highly vulnerable to legal challenges, especially as time passes. Therefore, TPE must be ready with the necessary financial resources to defend the ones we hold, or risk losing them. Problems are most likely to occur as properties change hands in the future. New owners sometimes take exception to the restrictions that have been put on their land in the past and they have been known to challenge them in court, or simply to ignore them. This in turn forces the holder of the easement to take the landowner to court. Up front, conservation easements are easier to do and far less expensive than purchase of title, but they run the risk of being more expensive and less secure in the long term. They also require baseline documentation of the site conditions at the start of the easement and then annual monitoring thereafter.

TPE does not target all natural area types. Our mission restricts us to sites supporting rare and declining ecosystems that are generally dependent upon fire and related disturbance. Primarily this includes sedge meadows, prairies, oak savannas and oak woodlands. In other words, we focus on sites that require active management to maintain good health. We also put highest priority on sites with the most intact native plant and animal communities and the greatest potential for recovery. The presence of endangered/threatened species also comes into consideration.

I hope this review of what TPE is and does is helpful to understanding what we are all about.

Ban Those Suckers

by Mary Lee Croatt

Experiential learning isn't all that it is cracked up to be. Our mistake has more than doubled our work. It is a difficult way to learn, but our lesson will be remembered forever.

Deciduous trees were marching into an opening below a rock bluff on our steep prairie. So five years ago we paid for work to have these young trees removed. The result was grand. We now had a beautiful limestone outcropping over a steep hillside of newly emerging grasses.

At the time we didn't know that we needed to paint the freshly cut stumps with herbicide. Thus, over the years each stump became surrounded with 15 to 25 suckers 1" to 3" in diameter. The area became a thick brushland. This past autumn we spent a couple hours at a time cutting suckers. Lloyd used the chainsaw on thicker stems. I alternated between using the bow saw and loppers. This was slow work. We only decimated a fraction of the area to be cleared. This time we knew better. Immediately I painted the cut surface with a sponge brush full of herbicide which I tinted with food coloring. That way I could then see where I had applied my poison.

A day before we were to leave the property, I suggested that the conditions were perfect for a burn. In my mind I was picturing the flat land of our plantings in the valley as our burn site. Lloyd argued that the uphill brushland would be a better burn site. It could possibly decimate some suckers as well as the encroaching raspberries and prickly ash. Logically it made sense to me, but my lazy body groaned at the prospect of working uphill and downhill.

We hiked up the steep incline with rakes and spent a long time raking a firebreak free of fuel. The rock outcroppings were the upper border. A winding deer path was the lower border. We raked the steep hillside to connect the two.

We phoned the sheriff and visited our immediate neighbors to inform them of our intention to burn. Finally at 3:00 in the afternoon we were ready with 2 flappers, a water pack and extra jugs of water that we lugged up the steep embankment. We took into consideration the wind direction and were cautious in setting our fire against the wind. Lloyd started the fire along the corner of the upper border. I dragged the fire from that point down the hill.

There was a lot of fuel: dried pineneedles, oak and maple leaves. The fire took off and was a constant very hot inferno. Within the area were large trees: oak and 35 year old Norway pines that were planted by the Boy Scouts. It wasn't until a pine trunk started burning upwards that we realized this could be dangerous. Thank God, years ago we had cut off the lower

branches of these pines. Many of these limbs lay close to the base of the tree trunks. Oops, maybe I had better scramble and pull away these branches and piled up needles from these pine trunks. Move I did, and quickly. It was an aerobic exercise as I went from tree to tree.

This was a November burn. By 5:00 in the evening it was turning dark. Soon it was night and the fire line rolled diagonally down the hill like a long ocean wave. Sparks flew upwards in a spiraling circle of smoke. Now and then a pine trunk dribbled with pitch would burn upward along the trunk and then burn out at six to eight feet. Red embers pulsated long after the flames left. In the distance a group of coyotes wailed in the pitch black night while nearby sparks popped and hissed and sizzled. It was an awesome experience. My legs and back were hurting. Once started, there is no turning back or leaving until the burn is complete and the fire is out.

Four hours later we gingerly hiked in the dark, bumping into prairie anthills and getting snagged by berry canes. My muscles were spasming with every step downhill. I thought: "This is not fun. I am getting too old for this craziness. I retired to work this hard? I must be insane". A warm bath and good night's sleep soothed my muscles and mind. The next day we hiked up to view our burn site. It was totally blackened. I hope the burn will set back the suckers on the old stumps. Time will tell. I sure hate learning the hard way. We did congratulate ourselves on our good work. Surely we had burned at least six acres. Lloyd thought it was more like two to three acres. Greg Nessler, fellow Prairie Enthusiast, stopped by to see what we had done. He agreed that this was a good burn on a good acre. My question is this: doesn't land on an incline count for more acreage?



After the Inferno

The Remnants We Save

Ellenboro Prairie

By Gary Eldred

Location

Grant County Wisconsin, section 8, Ellenboro Township, five miles east of Lancaster.

Description

The forty-five acre Ellenboro Prairie is located on a low ridge with a dry mesic quality and somewhat sandy soil. About two-thirds of the site has a southern aspect and one-third a northern aspect.

History & Status

The site was located by TPE SWC members in 1987 while doing a county-wide inventory. Several trips back to the site resulted in a list of over 55 species, including such rarities as cream gentian, wild quinine and tall nut rush. Several years later a trained botanist from the DNR visited the site to evaluate the quinine population. His comment was "there are probably 10,000 or more plants here!" A purely biased guess is that this may be the largest single population of this Wisconsin threatened species.

Over the last 14 years several attempts to purchase the site have been made but not until 2000 was any interest shown in selling. Jaye Maxfield, a dedicated and persistent member of the SWC, was asked by the chapter to help with the project. Meetings were set up with the owners, Grantland Growers, and they expressed an interest in selling. After nearly a year's effort by Jaye, including paper work, phone calls, filling out forms, back tracking and resubmitting forms and agreements for the sale, closing finally took place on November 13, 2001!

Needs & Management

Although portions of the site are high quality prairie, others are not. Much of the northern aspect is covered with briars and brush of many kinds. The west ridge has been claimed by a grove of black oak and I'm sure they won't leave of their own free will. Many christmas trees are still on the site but will be removed by "cut your own tree buyers". Fire has been a missing element for generations and will be reintroduced this spring. There is a small area that has been taken over by crown vetch and removing it will be a high priority also. We will be looking for funding from as many sources as possible to hire restoration work and will of course seek the ever-critical volunteers to help. This is the biggest project SWC has ever taken on and we will need help for many years to come!

Natural Range Limits: Don't Worry, Be Happy?

By Rich Henderson

With the rise in the popularity of restoring prairie has come an increase in the incidence of prairie species being planted outside of their natural or original ranges. This is often done unknowingly, but not always. Some well meaning people have become so enchanted with prairie that they readily plant prairie species outside their natural ranges, and even plant prairie in areas where it was not present in the past. An attitude of "don't worry, be happy" seems to have been adopted by some.

Why worry about this issue? Isn't prairie an endangered

ecosystem that can use all the help it can get? Yes, it is endangered, and it certainly needs the help, but the wrong help may prove just as bad as no help at all. Thus, those of us concerned about prairie conservation should be concerned about the issue of planting species outside their natural range, and take it seriously rather than dismissing it as something only "purists" worry about. When your goal is to restore prairie, you should make every effort to avoid planting species outside their natural range, and, where feasible, we should all try to correct mistakes made in the past, at least the more blatant ones.

The reasons for paying attention to range limits are varied. First and foremost is that the plant

associations within native prairie remnants are often quite different across the geographic range of prairie in the Upper Midwest. Distances of only 10 miles can result in prairies, even those on similar soils and soil moisture regimes, having different species associations. This is the consequence of range limits. In Wisconsin alone there are 48 prairie species that are not naturally found across the entire prairie/savanna region of southern and western Wisconsin. This is approximately 15% of the state's total prairie flora. The causes behind these range limits are not well known, but are likely varied, ranging from varying rates of spread since the last glaciation, to variances in climate, disease, insect pests or large herbivores, to

competition from other plant species, to regional differences in soil and substrate.

Whatever the reason behind them, these range limits give local "flavor" to prairies across the Midwest. This local variation contributes to the diversity of the prairie ecosystem across its entire range. Thus to fully conserve the prairie ecosystem, we should be striving to conserve this local variation.

The second reason for paying attention to range limits is one of aesthetics. Personally, I would find it rather boring to have all prairie plantings across the Midwest composed of the same species. No matter where you go you would be seeing the same species over and over again. This homogenization is analogous to the loss of local human cultures to a ubiquitous cosmopolitan culture where every city starts to look the same.

Third, planting species into wild settings outside their natural range runs the risk of eventually fouling up scientific inquiry and understanding by producing a type of biological pollution, if you will. Future investigations into ranges of species, what they are, what determines them, how they change over time, will be compromised. We still have much to learn about the prairie ecosystem and its plants. Widespread planting of species across the landscape into new regions is going to hamper our ability to discern what is natural or introduced and thus compromise or understanding of the species. In the case of rare species this confusion may even hamper the protection efforts of natural wild populations.

Fourth, it leads to misinformation. Every restoration is an educational tool. Including species in them not natural to the local area misleads or misinforms the general public and the novice student of the prairie ecosystem.

Now, it is certainly true that ranges are not stationary in time. Think of the movement of plants into this region after the last glacier. Therefore, what was the range limit of a plant in 1850 might not have been its limit in 2000 had European settlers not moved in and disrupted things. This concept is sometimes used as justification for not worrying about moving a species 20, 50, even 100 miles outside its known range, as long as the climate and soils are conducive to its growth and reproduction. However, I consider this to be a weak justification that is both highly speculative and rather illogical. For example, why would a plant species with dispersal and reproductive abilities that would allow it to expand its population front 50-100 miles within 100-150 years not already have done so while it had the opportunity in the previous several thousand years? Conversely, if its reproductive and dispersal abilities are so low that it only made it, say, half way across the prairie regions of Wisconsin after 6,000 years of opportunity, why should we assume it would have moved 50-100 miles, or even 10 miles, in the past 150 years had European settlers not intervened? The point is that the ranges of most prairie plants have had 6,000 years to stabilize in southern and western Wisconsin, and even longer in Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. Those that had not yet stabilized by 1850 are likely so slow in their dispersal that another 150 years would not have been enough time for them to move more than a few thousand feet, let alone tens of miles.

Another criticism leveled at concerns about range limits is that data is so spotty that we really don't know where the range limits of many species actually occur. This is true for some species. However, I don't believe this should be used as an excuse to plant these species anywhere

without careful consideration. Instead, we should be looking harder for natural populations so we can more accurately map their ranges. However, we need to be careful in assessing the new populations that we find to be reasonably certain that they are indeed natural and not adventive or planted.

I hope we all give careful thought to what species we choose to use (and their genetic sources for that matter) in our prairie planting and restoration efforts. This is especially true for "wild" locations that might pass for natural remnants 50 to 100 years into the future. But we should also be careful even in our backyard plantings. Backyard plants have been known to escape to the wild, and well-meaning people may move seed off site to use locally elsewhere, with or without our knowledge, thinking the planting is representative of local prairie heritage.

Information on range limits can be found in:

- 1) Plant Species Composition of Wisconsin Prairies: An aid to selecting species for plantings and restorations based upon University of Wisconsin-Madison plant ecology laboratory data. 1998 (second edition). Technical Bulletin 188. WI Department of Natural Resources. 58 pp.
- 2) Atlas of the Wisconsin Prairie and Savanna Flora. 2000. Technical Bulletin 191. WI Department of Natural Resources. 226 pp.
- 3) UW-Madison Herbarium website <http://wiscinfo.doit.wisc.edu/herbarium> has various distribution maps covering WI and a link to a USDA website that has maps for Iowa and Illinois.
- 4) Vascular Plants of Minnesota: A checklist and atlas. 1992. Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis. 306 pp.
- 5) Plants of the Chicago Region. 1974 (second edition). The Morton Arboretum. Lisle, Illinois. 922 pp.

RESTORATION PERSPECTIVES

Centuries-Old Benedictine Tradition Guides Prairie Restoration

by Neal Smith

On a hilltop north of Lake Mendota is the home of the Sisters of Saint Benedict. Formally known as the Monastery of Saint Benedict Center, this place is deeply rooted in a 1,500-year-old tradition of stewardship of the land. Just like anyone else's home, the monastery must be cared for and preserved for future generations. It must also be true to the Benedictine tradition and values of those who preceded today's members.

Benedict of Nursia wrote a rule (a guide) for living a balanced life. The *Rule* emphasizes that what we have is gift from God, and we are to care for these gifts and use them for the benefit of society—today and into the future.



St Benedict Center Prairie

The Monastery of Saint Benedict Center has been gifted with a special piece of creation that is a critical part of the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed. Over 400 acres of land drain into and through the parcel. It is contiguous to Governor Nelson State Park, and it forms a significant part of the green belt north of Madison. The pressures of development are on its doorstep.

In 1995, the sisters developed a master plan for the 130 acres that comprise Saint Benedict Center. An underlying premise of the plan is the sisters' desire to provide a place where people can come and experience God in creation. The sisters decided to restore the land to its presettlement condition so that they and their guests can have this experience.

The master plan called for the return of 50 acres of farmland to mesic prairie. It also included the restoration of a 10,000-year-old glacial lake on the property and the creation of a critically-needed detention basin to control runoff headed for Lake Mendota. Prairie Enthusiasts' members Sue and Mark Martin, Rich Henderson and Dan Weidert offered valuable insights as they served on our prairie planning committee.

Work on the new detention basin began in 1996. The basin was completed with the help of many partners and the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed staff. At capacity, it can hold 10.5 acre-feet of water. The restoration activities have had a substantial environmental impact on the area. The detention area has eliminated downstream siltation and chemical runoff from 200 acres of land which previously had been a major problem for the Borchers Beach Road area.

Perhaps the greatest environmental impact comes from the prairie. Water runoff to the detention area has reduced significantly. This can only be attributed to the capturing of the water by the prairie itself. This impact will continue to increase as the prairie matures.

Each year, beginning in 1996, 10 to 20 acres of prairie have been restored. The majority of the seeds have been hand collected by hundreds of volunteers. Over 60 different native forbs and grasses are seeded annually. To date, 80 acres have been restored. Trails have been developed through the prairie. One can truly experience the gift of creation in this prairie where plants bloom from early spring until late fall and where the grasses sway and are taller than an adult.



A Volunteer on a St Benedict Workday

Nancy Schlimgen, another Prairie Enthusiast, has volunteered countless hours in the Saint Benedict

Center prairie. She has directed numerous seed collection events and inspired volunteers of all ages to care for creation. At their recent Partnership Celebration, Sisters of Saint Benedict of Madison and the Benedictine Life Foundation honored Nancy with their *Environmental Stewardship Award 2001* in recognition of her deep and ongoing commitment to environmental restoration.

The restoration of Lost Lake, the 10,000 year-old glacial lake, took three years and was completed in 2000. Non-native trees were removed from the shoreline. The lake, not much more than a silted in, two-foot-deep mud hole, was restored to near its original nine-acre surface with a depth of 15 feet in the center. Eighty-five thousand cubic yards of silt were removed (a big dump truck load is about 10 cubic yards.)

Restoration of Lost Lake has greatly increased the lake's capacity to handle runoff in its drainage basin (about 200 acres). The Lost Lake restoration was a catalyst for the Town of Westport to re-do the drainage ways through the Fox Bluff Subdivision which greatly reduced erosion there.

The people who come to Saint Benedict Center are truly impacted by marvels of creation! Fish (bullheads) returned to Lost Lake after an absence of many years. A pair of great blue heron chose the lake as their new home. Hundreds of geese and ducks visit again as they migrate south. The great horned owl, fox, deer and other wildlife seem to show their appreciation.

It's hard to believe that all this work has been completed in the past six years. Saint Benedict Center is now a place where anyone can come and experience the gift of God's magnificent creation as it was before the advent of migrating settlers. Thousands share this gift every year. Hundreds lend a hand in caring for it. Each person has the opportunity to experience his or her God at Saint Benedict Center.

Creation is life giving—and we don't just mean for the plants and animals. Saint Benedict Center has a new vitality, and the restoration activities have led to many new "family" friends. This place has become a model and learning tool for many.

For two years, the Wisconsin Conservation Corps (WCC) had a crew at Saint Benedict Center. This program teaches life and employment skills to otherwise unemployed youth and helps them resume or further their education—with creation as a critical teacher.

In 1998, Sisters of Saint Benedict of Madison, along with The Prairie Enthusiasts, the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation and Madison Audubon Society formed the Environmental Internship Coalition of South-Central Wisconsin. The coalition hires college students during the summer to provide hands-on experience in managing environmental restoration projects.

In addition, students from pre-school through graduate school are making Saint Benedict Center a

resource for study. Boy and Girl Scouts visit to learn and to work.

Where do we go from here? That's the question we've been working on. A group of people just completed a new master plan that looks forward 10 years into the future. Some of the issues we researched include:

- finding new ways to invite people to experience the gift of creation;
- making the experience accessible to all;
- modeling the restoration work as an educational resource to our neighbors and the broader community;
- encouraging restoration on adjacent parcels;
- restoring areas of oak savanna and additional prairie;
- serving as a catalyst and seed source for others doing restoration work—whether as part of their yard at home or a major restoration effort.

The monastery is home to the sisters. A little larger than the average home, the monastery has the same things going on as your home. Each day is made up of eating and sleeping, working and playing, praying and studying. Guests are invited to visit and experience the gifts of this home. One special gift is creation as it once was. At the monastery, we invite you to visit and experience this sacred space.



Admiring the Results

Saint Benedict Center is located at 4200 County Highway M on the north side of Lake Mendota. To learn more about our environmental stewardship activities and programs, call 608-836-1631, ext. 115 or visit www.sbccenter.org where a site map is included.

Neal Smith, a member of The Prairie Enthusiasts, has been employed by the Sisters of Saint Benedict for the past 15 years. He currently serves as executive director of administration, and he oversees all environmental restoration activities at the center.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Sat.,	Jan. 5	Chapter board meeting at 10am, at the La Crosse main library, 800 Main St. Topic will be legal issue concerns for The Prairie Enthusiasts. Short business meeting will follow.
Sat.,	Mar. 2	Chapter board meeting at 10am, at the La Crosse library, 800 Main St. Topic to be announced, business meeting to follow.

EVENTS

Fri.,	Mar. 8	TPE banquet, UW La Crosse, Cartwright Center. 6-10pm.
		For other Coulee Region Chapter work parties, check www.homestead.com/couleeprairie .

EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Thu.,	Jan. 10	Chapter meeting at home of Willis Brown, 5110 Odana Rd, Madison at 7pm. Call 608-278-9308 for directions.
Tue.,	Apr. 26	Chapter meeting at Sauk City. Location TBA. Call 608-278-9308 for directions.

EVENTS

Sat.,	Dec. 29	Work party at Walking Iron Co. Park, Mazomanie. Contact Kay Bongers at 608-767-3576 for details.
Sun.,	Jan. 6	Work party at Mazomanie Bluff. Contact Rich Henderson for details at 608-845-7065
Sat.,	Jan. 12	Work party at Steenbock Bluff, NW of Lodi. Contact Scott Sauer for details at 608-273-0904.
Sat.,	Jan. 19	Work party at Walking Iron Co. Park, Mazomanie. Contact Kay Bongers at 608-767-3576 for details.
Sat.,	Jan. 26	Work party at Mazomanie Bluff. Contact Rich Henderson for details at 608-845-7065
Sat. & Sun.,	Feb. 2-3	Work party at Indian Lake County Park, NW of Cross Plains. Contact Scott Sauer for details at 608-273-0904.
Sat.,	Feb. 9	Work party at Steenbock Bluff, NW of Lodi. Contact Scott Sauer for details at 608-273-0904.
Sun.,	Feb. 17	Work party at Mazomanie Bluff. Contact Rich Henderson for details at 608-845-7065

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Sun.,	Jan. 20	Chapter meeting at 1pm at the home of Don Hagar, 25553 Fiddlers Green Rd., Richland Center. Call for directions, 608-647-6628.
Sun.,	Feb. 17	Chapter meeting at 1pm at the home of Gary Eldred, 4192 Sleepy Hollow Rd., Boscobel, WI 53805. Call for directions, 608-375-5271.

EVENTS

Sat.,	Jan. 5	Work party at Vale Prairie. Call Gary Eldred for details at 608-375-5271.
Sun.,	Jan. 13	Work party at Heather's Prairie. Call Gary Adams for details at 608-624-5797.
Sun.,	Jan. 27	Work party at Bush Clover Prairie. Call Gary Eldred for details at 608-375-5271
Sat.,	Feb. 2	Work party at Vale Prairie. Call Gary Eldred for details at 608-375-5271.
Sun.,	Feb. 10	Work party at Heather's Prairie. Call Gary Adams for details at 608-624-5797.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

MEETINGS

Tues.	Jan. 8	Chapter meeting at the Turner Hall Rathskeller, 1217 17 th Ave., Monroe, 7pm.
Tues.	Feb. 5	Chapter meeting at Marshall Bluff Clubhouse, N7326 Marshall Bluff Rd., Monticello at 7pm.
Tues.	Mar. 5	Chapter meeting at the Bank of Brodhead, 806 East Exchange, Brodhead at 7pm.
Sat.,	Feb. 9	Jordan Prairie Potluck, see general calendar.

GENERAL CALENDAR

Sat.,	Feb. 9	Jordan Prairie Potluck at the home of John Ochsner, W2763 State Hwy. 59, Monroe. Starting at 6pm. Call 608-862-3816 for details.
Sat.,	Mar. 8	TPE Banquet, UW-La Crosse, Cartwright Center, 6-10pm. Flyer will be mailed to all members in January.
Sat.,	Mar. 9	TPE conference, auction/raffle, field trip. UW-La Crosse, Cartwright Center, 8am -3:30pm.
Sat.,	Mar. 9	TPE Board Meeting 8:30am, UW-La Crosse, Cartwright Center, Room 257.

EMPIRE SAUK CHAPTER

Thank You Work Party Volunteers

The participation in work parties throughout the summer and fall was outstanding. Forty-one volunteers put in 324 hours cutting and pulling weeds, collecting seed and clearing trees and brush at 10 sites from June through November. Thanks to all participants for making it happen. Thirteen people helped with seed collecting (45 hours). The leading participants were Tanis Cuff, Pat Handrick, Etas Carria and Josh Sulman. Nineteen people helped with parsnip and sweet clover control (134 hours). The leading participants were Rich & Kathy Henderson, Kay Bongers, Meagan Yost and Jan Ketelle. Twenty-three people helped with tree and brush removal (145 hours). The leading participants were Rich Henderson, Scott Sauer, Richard Oberle, Victoria Dulorey, Earl Muhlbauer and Ted Cochrane.

Raffle/Auction Donations Needed

It is once again time for lining up donated items and services for the annual raffle and silent auction fundraiser held during the Annual Prairie Enthusiasts Banquet and Prairie Workshop. Contact Rich Henderson (Empire -Sauk Chapter donation coordinator) by February 4, 2002 with your donations. Call 845-7065.

Winter Work Parties

Winter work parties, primarily to remove red cedar trees from prairie remnants, have been scheduled for the places and dates listed on the calendar of events. Please contact the person listed for details.

Habitat Partnering Opportunities in Columbia County

There are opportunities for habitat management partnering and networking between TPE members who are Columbia County landowners and land managers and the Columbia County Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Examples of possible activities with which PF can be involved: native grass plantings, native grass-forb mixture plantings, networking to find local labor and equipment to perform field work associated with planting establishment; guidance in finding government cost-share dollars or other assistance for restoration of degraded remnants (brush removal, prescribed burns, etc.); finding more people who are interested in receiving burn training and conducting burns. Priorities: PF wants to improve pheasant habitat, which means as much native grass cover as possible within large 800 acre to small 1-3 acre parcels for wildlife food plots. This is a great opportunity for two private organizations to help each other manage Columbia County prairie remnants, do more plantings, increase grassland quantity and

quality and possibly increase their projects' eligibility for government assistance as well as promote overall improvement of wildlife habitat.

For more information on partnering contact: Scott Hohn, President of Columbia County Chapter of Pheasants Forever 608-429-4041 sthohn@network2010.net or contact Tanis Cuff, TPE member, 608-712-9344 tanistanis@hotmail.com

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

Mineral Point By-Pass Planted

On November 15, 2001, members of TPE's Southwest Chapter and the Uplands Garden Club (Dodgeville and Mineral Point groups) met in Mineral Point to make plans on how, when and where the 12 of us would plant 135 lbs of prairie seed on the still under construction Mineral Point by-pass.

The seed came from several sources: the SWC Hollandale and Lancaster seed orchards (collected by both chapter and garden club members); the DOT, through the efforts of Dick Stark who had seed from a previous project; from large donations of seed from chapter member Bill Brandt of Fennimore; and from Gary Eldred and Steve Hubner.

Rex Ramsay donated his time to help prepare the seed for planting and DNR nursery manager Joe Van Dehay was kind enough to allow us to use a hammer mill at the Wilson Nursery in Boscobel to process the seed.

In spite of light rain, red mud, confusion and bulldozers, some soil preparation not being done, rocks thumping under our cars, and prairie planting neophytes, the day went well. Susan Lampert Smith and Joe Jackson arrived about 10am to do a story for *The Wisconsin State Journal*, and between the two of them the stories and photos were first class. Thanks Sue and Joe! By about noon, most of the planting was done on the areas we had previously selected and most volunteers had to leave. About four of us stayed to plant the remaining 20 gallons of seed and then called it a day, a good day. The problem still remains as to how the seeding will be maintained until the prairie plants become established and take over. That will be another chapter news story in the future!

Raffle and Auction Items Needed

It's that time of year again, when we have to start thinking about our donations for the TPE raffle and auction in the Spring. This year, the SWC coordinator for the raffle and auction items is Gary Eldred. If you have items you would like to donate to TPE, contact Gary at (608) 375-5271 by February 4, 2002.

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

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

☐ \$250 ANNUAL CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

☐ \$10 STUDENT

☐ \$20 INDIVIDUAL

☐ \$30 CONTRIBUTOR

☐ \$75 SUSTAINING

☐ Donation

\$ _____

☐ \$30 FAMILY

☐ \$500 IND.LIFE

☐ 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)

☐ \$200 BLAZING

12/3/1999

STAR MEMBER

THANK YOU

WEST CENTRAL CHAPTER

Harvest Time-Let's Make a Deal!

During the month of October, a handful of TPE members from St. Croix County collected seed for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) project. USFWS manages several Waterfowl Production Areas in the region and needed local ecotype seed for a prairie planting. They had good stands of native grasses on one of their sites but didn't have enough staff time for collecting. Spotted knapweed and other weeds made collecting by machine undesirable.

At the same time, TPE members Ginny Gaynor and Wayne Federer wanted a good source of local seed to enhance and extend prairie remnants on their property. So they struck a deal. Ginny and Wayne received a permit to collect seed at the site with a small group of volunteers, provided the group gave half of all they collected to USFWS. TPE members from our western region were happy to help, and thrilled to keep half of all they collected to sow on their own remnants and planted prairies.

For information about how you might participate next year, contact Ginny or Wayne at (715) 246-2746 or ginnygaynor@presenter.com.

Prairies of the Lower Chippewa Natural Area

By Deb Konkel

The morning of September 8 did not look promising, weather-wise, but on that Saturday

morning, the small group of Prairie Enthusiasts that turned out for the field trip was rewarded.

Randy Hoffman, Bureau of Endangered Resources, led us to two unique prairie sites just to give us an idea of the prairie resources in the Lower Chippewa Area. The first was a hill prairie on private land. We had to do some climbing up the steep hill, but Randy pointed out many unique species on the way. Each step up was like a treasure hunt, possibly revealing other species. Just looking at how well the prairie grasses and wild flowers covered this hill was worth the climb. At the top of the hill, we were shown oak savanna species; ever see wild coffee? There were also examples of the ongoing management by the DNR to preserve this hilltop savanna. The view was spectacular from the top.

After a break for lunch, we visited a sand prairie on an ancient sand terrace of the Chippewa River. Walking was easy to this state owned site because the roads are level with the top of the terraces. Randy pointed out species found on dry sand prairie. From this site we looked out on the Chippewa Valley and a couple of oxbow lakes that were naturally cut off from the Chippewa River.

Our party ended in the early afternoon without ever getting wet!

THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS
PO BOX 112
BOSCOBEL WI 53805
www.prairie.pressenter.com

A Non-Profit
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6/6/66
ALICE & WALTER MIRK
10052 COUNTY HWY C
WOODMAN, WI 53827

Notice for Chapter Membership Coordinators

Dear TPE chapter membership coordinators:

It's come to the attention of some members of The Prairie Enthusiasts board that the flow of information between chapter membership coordinators and the central corporate coordinator doesn't always go as smoothly as hoped. A few examples of this are maintaining Blazingstar membership designations, and how these members should be re-contacted, and the type of form used when enrolling new members. Russ Pope and I volunteered to serve on an ad hoc committee for identifying communication and data problems for both the chapter and corporate coordinators, and to standardize data and data-sharing. Russ and I will contact you with further information in the future. For the time being, we would like you to help us by giving us your feedback on the process, and your understanding of what your responsibilities are for your chapter versus the responsibilities of the central coordinator. We're simply in the identification process right now, and will eventually produce a uniform standard for data and data sharing.

Scott Sauer
Empire Sauk Chapter

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