THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS

THE PRAIRIE PROMOTER

VOL 15, NO.4 Winter 2002

Grassroots Conservation At Work

Mark Your Calendars! April 5 for Annual Banquet and January 24 and 25 for Annual Conference

Banquet News

It's coming! It's coming! On April 5, when the spring peepers start to poke their heads out of the mud, we'll be leaving our hibernal homes to attend The Annual Banquet. Oh, alright, I exaggerated and the frogs didn't appear in southern Wisconsin this year until April 9. Close enough. The Annual Banquet: a festival of conviviality, with conversation, food, drink and SHOPPING! What more can you ask? But, without your help, there won't be any SHOPPING.. Oh, no! So start lining up your donations for the Silent Auction and Raffle now.

We're asking each chapter to bring or send 20 items to be allocated to either the silent auction or raffle as the chapter desires. We also hope each chapter will consider bringing or sending one especially high value item for a live auction.

Finally, we are hoping each chapter will provide some prairie-related slides for a short slide presentation at the dinner. About five slides comprising a three-minute presentation should provide great viewer satisfaction without getting to the boredom threshold.

If your chapter has not done so, please forward the name of your Silent Auction/Raffle coordinator to Barbara Smith, 2300 West Brennan Road, Argyle, Wisconsin 53504. E-mail: **bljas@mhtc.net**. Phone: 608-543-3637.

Details about the Annual Banquet will be posted at **www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org** as they become available. For those of you who may wonder what happened to the Annual Conference, see below.

Conference News

The Prairie Enthusiasts and the Wisconsin Wetlands Association will join forces next winter to present the 2003 Prairie Wetlands Conference. The conference will be held in LaCrosse on Friday, January 24, and Saturday, January 25. (See registration insert in this issue.)

The purpose of the conference will be to discuss the protection, management and restoration of prairie wetlands-ecotypes such as wet prairie, fen, sedge meadow, ephemeral pond, shallow marsh and prairie pothole. This is an area of grassland ecology that needs more attention. The conference will also provide a great opportunity for Prairie Enthusiasts to work more closely with our good friends at the Wisconsin Wetlands Association **(http://www.wiscwetlands.org/).**

Topics we are considering for the conference include the history of Midwest wetlands, the restoration ecology of prairie wetlands, biotic connections between uplands and lowlands, indicators of ecological integrity and community type in prairie wetlands, conservation planning for the Upper Mississippi River, the Grassland Reserve (GRP) and Wetlands Reserve (WRP) programs and the management of high-use prairie wetlands.

More information on the conference will be posted at **www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org** as it becomes available.

Send your ideas on topics or presenters to Jim Rachuy. His e-mail address is TPE@mwci.net.

IN THIS ISSUE

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 1,417 acres that harbor at least five state or federally protected species through acquisitions, 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.

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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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President's Message

As I mentioned in the last issue of *The Prairie Promoter*, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has been going through some changes recently. These changes stem from efforts to improve upon their success at carrying out their mission of protecting biodiversity worldwide. One of their new strategies is to focus more on increasing the awareness, interest and ability of partners to do good work in protecting biodiversity. For example, TNC is working hard to get nationally recognized prescribed burn training in place locally for all public and private partners to use (see the article in this issue on TPE's prescribed burn policy). When it comes to the fire-dependent ecosystems of prairies, sedge meadows, oak savannas, etc. of the upper Midwest, TNC is considering TPE to be a potential major partner. We are being looked to because we have protection and restoration of these declining and endangered fire-dependant ecosystems at the heart of our mission and a good track record of protection and management.

Another new strategy The Nature Conservancy is pursuing is a focus on fewer but larger projects, for example, Wisconsin's Spring Green Preserve, Lulu Lake Preserve and Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area. The latter is in cooperation with many partners, including TPE (see the "Sites We Save") article on the Everham Easement in this issue). TNC recently purchased 900 acres in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, bringing their ownership within that project area to nearly 1,300 acres, but they are looking to TPE and other partners to protect and manage many of the small scattered prairie remnants within 40,000 acre project area. TPE already has management agreements for, and is doing much restoration and management work on, the Underwood and Nittany Knoll prairies within the project area, and will likely be taking on more sites in the near future. TPE is also providing seed, and will likely provide more in the future, to the prairie plantings being done by all partners in the project area. TNC is also looking toward TPE and other partners to take on management of, and possibly hold title to, the smaller prairie and savanna preserves that they now own and manage elsewhere in Wisconsin and adjoining states (see the article in this issue on the Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie). Then there are all the high quality, but small, prairie and savanna remnants still in need of protection outside of the few major projects. TNC will likely not be moving to protect them. It will be up to conservation partners like state agencies and private land trusts, especially TPE, because we have a land management focus that most other land trusts currently lack.

Are we up to this challenge? I think so, but to do so, we need to grow. We need to grow in both membership and capacity. Any and all ideas you might have to accomplish this growth will be welcome.

Trish Henderson

Buy a Christmas Tree and Save a Prairie!

By Jaye Maxfield

Do you still need to buy a tree for the holidays? Did you know that the Prairie Enthusiasts own a Christmas tree farm? That's right...Ellenboro Prairie, near Lancaster, WI, was (and still is!) a cut-your-own tree farm. You can help restore this tallgrass remnant by buying your Christmas tree there.

Last fall, when the Southwest Chapter purchased the site, TPE and former owners, Grantland Growers, made a deal that benefits both parties. Grantland Growers get to harvest their tree stock for four more years and we get free tree removal from one of the best prairie remnants in southwest Wisconsin – all with no volunteer labor expenditure.

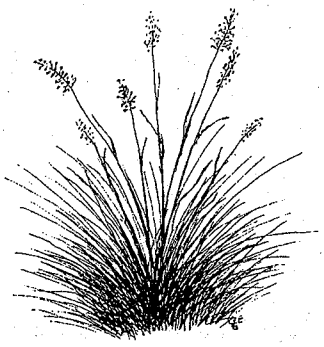
You can help! Buy your Christmas tree from the Grantland Growers at the Ellenboro Prairie. Traditional Christmas tree varieties are available in all sizes. The property is open for Christmas tree cutting every weekend between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Contact Jim Kramer of Grantland Growers directly for more information about trees and prices at 608-723-4769.

By the way, if you don't celebrate Christmas or don't celebrate it with a tree, you can still help. Why not donate the price of a tree towards stewardship activities on the site? Send any donations to Gary Eldred at PO Box 112 Boscobel, WI 53805. Write "stewardship – Ellenboro Prairie" on the memo line.

Buy a gift for future generations – The Ellenboro Prairie!

Everham's Donate Conservation Easement to TPE

In September, The Prairie Enthusiasts accepted a donation of a conservation easement from Bill and Wendy Everham of the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter. The easement covers approximately 70 acres of the Everham's farm in southeast Iowa County, Wisconsin. Please see details in the "Sites We Save" segment of this issue of *The Prairie Promoter*. Their donation was a remarkable and generous commitment to prairie conservation. It is also a statement of confidence in The Prairie Enthusiasts organization and our mission. Thank you Bill and Wendy, for your generous support and commitment to prairie ecosystem conservation.



The Sites We Save: Everham Conservation Easement

By Rich Henderson

Location: Two miles southwest of Hollandale, off of County Hwy U, in southeast Iowa County, Wisconsin (NOTE: This is a private site not open to the public).

Description: The Everham Easement encompasses over 70 acres of former crop and pasture land situated on an open ridge top. This area was part of a large treeless prairie prior to European settlement in 1830. The northern-most 15 to 20 acres of the easement drops off into a wooded draw of walnut and oak. The remainder is open grassland habitat that attracts many species of grassland birds during the breeding season, including bobolinks, upland sandpipers, northern harriers, meadowlarks, dickcissels, Henslow's sparrows and more. In the winter, short-eared owls, juncos and tree sparrows take up residence. The easement land adjoins approximately another 100 acres of ridge top grassland cover, much of it enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. The combined acreage of these properties is providing very significant habitat for grassland bird conservation.

In the southwest corner of the easement, 4 acres have been planted to seed orchard plots of 15 different prairie species. Included are two state-threatened species, pale purple coneflower and wild quinine. These orchards were established entirely from seed of native populations in southwest Wisconsin, including all known native wild populations of pale purple coneflower. This is a significant genetic reservoir, for most of those coneflower populations have since been lost! The seed produced by these production beds is being used in prairie plantings within the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) and elsewhere in southwest Wisconsin. The MRPHA project is a cooperative effort of The Nature Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Natural Resources Conservation Service, WI Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, Blue Mounds Project and The Prairie Enthusiasts. This seed is one of TPE's many contributions to the project.

History & Status: In 1995, the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter of TPE, through the efforts of Gary Eldred and Steve Hubner, established prairie seed production beds on the property of Bill and Wendy Everham. This was arranged through a handshake agreement that allowed TPE to establish and maintain beds of prairie plants in return for the right to collect the seed. After the beds were established, David Lowe led the management work, primarily prescribed burns. In September of 2002, the Everhams sold their property. But before they did, they generously donated a perpetual conservation easement to The Prairie Enthusiasts which encompasses approximately 70 acres. On 10 of the acres, which includes the seed orchard, TPE was given the right to establish and maintain prairie and prairie seed production beds, including all rights to the seed produced. On the remaining acreage, TPE was given the right and responsibility to enforce perpetual deed restrictions that prevent development or other alterations to the current state of the property. Shortly after the easement was granted to TPE, the Everham's sold their property to Evan McGlinn and Bradley O'Brien. They too have a strong interest in conservation, and we look forward to working with them on the site's protection, restoration and management.

Needs & Management: The seed orchard is in need of periodic removal of weeds and invading trees and brush, as well as prescribed burns. Approximately 6 acres next to the seed orchard are available for planting to prairie in the future. Once a year, as part of TPE's responsibility, the easement acreage has to be inspected to check for compliance with the deed restrictions.

Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie Now Managed by TPE

By Rich Henderson

In September, The Prairie Enthusiasts entered into a formal 3-year agreement with The Nature Conservancy to take on management of TNC's Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie. This preserve is a dedicated State Natural Area located in western Dane County, Wisconsin. It was purchased by TNC in the late 1980's. The preserve is 17 acres in size, and it supports primarily dry-mesic prairie on moderate to well drained soils. It is an exceptionally rich and diverse prairie that was studied by John T. Curtis and his students for the classic book *Vegetation of Wisconsin* (1959). The Empire-Sauk Chapter is now responsible for the site's management, with Tom and Kathie Brock as site stewards, lead volunteers and major movers behind the management activities at the site.

This is but one more example in a growing partnership between The Prairie Enthusiasts and The Nature Conservancy.

BURSTING WITH HISTORY

By Darryl Enriquez (reprinted with permission of the author and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. This article appeared in that paper on 8-10-2002)

Town of Eagle

Ron Kurowski plucks a Virginia mountain mint from a restored prairie and squeezes the blossom between his fingers, releasing its herbal perfume.

"This is why the Native Americans who were here 150 years ago called it the 'sweet scented land' or Scuppernong," said Kurowski, a park naturalist with the Kettle Moraine State Forest's Southern Unit.

Kurowski is seeing a lot more of what American Indians saw back in that day, and he can barely contain his excitement. Roots and seeds that lay dormant for more than a century under the rich Scuppernong soil have suddenly and unexpectedly come to life northwest of Eagle, especially near Highway N and Wilton Road.

Kurowski and his colleagues have begun resurrecting the prairie as it existed before farm and dairy settlements in what is know as the Scuppernong River Habitat Area. The burning and clearing of nearly 1,500 acres since 1999 have brought a breath of new life to an area of the forest roughly from Ottawa Lake south to Highway 59, Kurowski said.

Like an archeologist uncovering rare artifacts, the pitch of Kurowski's voice rises as he shows off plants long thought extinct in Wisconsin, such as the delicate and wispy eastern prairie fringed orchid and rare flora, including the waxy prairie Indian plantain.

But it's the explosion of a football field sized tract of purple blazing star adjacent to a meadow of tall yellow prairie dock that has floored Kurowski. And the color isn't limited to one area. Behind the historic Goten log cabin on Highway N stands a grove of six foot and taller yellow compass plant, named after its leaves which generally point north and south.

"We didn't know what to expect, but we never expected this," Kurowski said. He thought it could take ten years to restore the prairie.

Marlin Johnson, a retired biology professor and a member of the Waukesha Land Conservancy Group, also can't believe the beauty of the prairie. "The interesting thing is that it comes back with proper management," Johnson said. "It was hidden for so long because people had covered it (with aggressive non-native plants). I hadn't been paying attention to it all. I thought it would take years for it to come back."

Prairie restoration has been in vogue with naturalists for several decades as they've replanted native species in former agricultural lands with slow and limited success. Because land in the Scuppernong generally was not farmed, naturalists postulated that a wealth of native seeds and roots remained unmolested in the soil and could be revived using controlled burns to destroy dense ground cover and by clear cutting shrubs and trees.

Restoration workers also released 200,000 beetles that ate and destroyed a 70-yard long stretch of purple loosestrife, an exotic species that has aggressively invaded wetlands throughout the state.

Within the next ten years, Kurowski would like to see a prairie corridor of 5,000 acres weave through the forest's Southern Unit. That lofty goal would make it the largest natural prairie east of the Mississippi River.

With little state funding for prairie restoration, continued work depends on private and corporate donations. The cost of using a firm to clear cut 30 acres of buckthorn shrubs and box elder trees was $25,000, Kurowski said.

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation contributed $20,000 towards the project last month, and the Kettle Moraine Association donated $2,000 toward the cost of a tree shearer used to clear cut prairie, he said.

How to Help

A fund raising campaign has been launched to continue restoration work on the prairie. Donations should be sent to the Endangered Resources Fund - Kettle Moraine, WI DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison WI 53707-7921.

Gaura, An Overlooked Prairie Flower

By Rich Henderson
Ecologist with WI DNR

Biennial gaura (*Gaura biennis* L.) is a wildflower native to the eastern and central US. It ranges from western North Carolina to Tennessee to Missouri and north to Massachusetts, Quebec, Wisconsin and Iowa. In our region, it was native to the prairies and savannas of Illinois, southern Wisconsin and southeastern Iowa. However, it is often under appreciated and under used in prairie and savanna restorations. This is unfortunate, for gaura is an excellent source of pollen and nectar for many species of bees, wasps and moths. In addition, it has a very attractive floral display, if one catches it at the right time of day. Why, then, is gaura less popular than other prairie flowers? It may have to do with its "weedy" habits, relatively rank growth and habit of flowering primarily at night.

Like its close relative, common evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis* L.), biennial gaura spends its first year of life as an inconspicuous, flattened rosette of leaves. But in its second year, it sends up a tall flower stalk, then it dies, not coming back the following year. I have not been able to find sound documentation as to whether or not *G. biennis* is an obligate biennial (i.e., it *always* blooms in its second year). It may be that some individuals bloom in their first or third year and then die. This question appears to be open, and would make a good research project. But regardless of the number of years it takes for them to bloom, they only bloom once.

This habit of bearing fruit but once (a habit described by the technical term monocarpic) means that biennial gaura is entirely dependent upon reestablishment from seed to maintain itself. For seedlings to do well they require an opening or disturbance such as animal digging (e.g., from badgers, fox, woodchuck, moles, ground squirrels, gophers, etc.), frequent fire or other sources. Thus, biennial gaura is not necessarily restricted to high quality remnants. It occasionally may be found along roadsides, old fields and other places of frequent, heavy disturbance. This semi-weedy habit might lower its value in the eyes of some prairie enthusiasts but it also makes gaura easy to start in plantings. It is prolific in the early years and then gradually declines as the sod matures. However, if the planting has a diverse mix of species, gaura will persist long-term. Its cousin, common evening-primrose, seems to be less persistent. I have been able to maintain a gaura population for 24 years now with the use of frequent fire alone.

When biennial gaura blooms, it puts up a flower stalk that is generally 3 to 6 ft. tall. Under favorable conditions, it can reach as much as 8 ft. Its inflorescence is generally large, and much branched, ranging from 8 to 40 inches long and from 4 to 20 inches wide. Individual gaura plants bloom continuously over a 5 to 6 week period from early to mid August into late September and they produce, on a daily basis, many white, ¾ inch wide flowers with long yellow anthers. Each individual flower only lasts 12 hours or so, but it offers large amounts of nectar to attract quickly pollinators during its brief life. Each day a new batch of flowers open up shortly after sundown. Their fresh, white petals are so brilliant they seem to glow in the moonlight. With the arrival of daylight, the flower display is still spectacular, but by late morning the flowers turn pink and dry up.

Because gaura is not in bloom when most people are out and about, it tends to go unappreciated by people as a flower. Not so among the insects. Many pollinators are drawn to its prodigious nectar source, especially night flying moths. A great many species of moths of varying sizes and shapes are drawn to this banquet. Come daylight, the moths give way to an equally great abundance and diversity of bees and wasps. This phenomenon has given rise to gaura's other common name, bee-blossom.

One species of moth, the clouded crimson flower-moth (*Schinia gaurae*), is so focused upon the genus *Gaura*, that its larvae feed only upon the flowers and fruit of gaura. This moth is found in northern Illinois and places further west and south, but it has not yet been reported from Wisconsin (Ferge and Balogh, 2000). It is a relatively uncommon species, and would be a great find in Wisconsin. So, if you are in southern Wisconsin, be on the lookout for its caterpillars in late August, feeding upon the flowers and fruits of gaura. But, be aware that another flower-moth, the primrose flower-moth (*Schinia florida*), also lives on gaura species, as well as species of evening-primrose. *S. florida* is more common than *S. gaurae* and is found throughout our area. Two species of sphinx moths (*Proserpinus gaurae* and *P. jaunita*) also live only on gaura or evening-primrose plants, but they are only known from areas west and south of our region.

If you have biennial gaura in your prairie or know of populations nearby, consider making a midnight visit in late summer with a small light, or during a full moon, to experience the moth activity associated with this plant. At the very least, get out there in early morning to enjoy the blossoms and bee activity of first daylight. If your prairie or savanna planting does not have biennial gaura, and you are within its natural range, consider introducing it, but please refrain from planting it outside its natural range (For a discussion as to why that is important, see Vol. 14 No.4 of *The Prairie Promoter*). Gaura may get a little tall at times, but I think you will grow to appreciate the biological diversity it will bring to your restoration or planting.

In Wisconsin, biennial gaura is considered native to an area from southwest Grant County to northeast

Iowa County through Dane County to Walworth County and areas south from there (Cochrane and Iltis, 2000). It seems to be especially common in Green and Rock Counties. A few populations have been found farther north in Wisconsin, but they are considered adventive (i.e., arrived there after European settlement). Biennial gaura is native across Illinois and the southeastern quarter of Iowa. In Iowa it is considered native south of a line running west from Dubuque (Horton 2002). It has been collected once each in Hennepin, Ramsey and Houston Counties of southeast Minnesota, but like the more northern locations in Wisconsin, these appear to be adventive populations along railroad tracks and a village river landing on the Mississippi (Cholewa, 2002).

In the University of Wisconsin Plant Ecology Lab studies of Wisconsin prairies in the 1940s and 50s, biennial gaura was only found in a low percentage of the sites; 2%, 3%, and 4% of the dry-mesic, mesic and wet-mesic prairies respectively (Henderson, 1998). But this statistic is based on statewide summaries. When only sites located within the natural range of gaura are summarized, the percentages rise to 4 to 8 %. But this still may be underestimating the occurrence of gaura in original prairies of southwest and south central Wisconsin. Most data from that part of the state came from Curtis (1959), and he excluded from his study all sites with obvious signs of disturbance, including fire. Had his study sites been regularly burned (remember the importance of disturbance to guara), I suspect that the occurrence of biennial gaura might have been 2 to 3 times higher than what he found, or as much as 12 to 24 % of the dry-mesic to wet-mesic sites within its range of distribution. It is likely that biennial gaura, although not a dominant species, was an important part of the more southern prairies and savannas of our region (i.e., WI, MN, IA and IL).

(**NOTE**: Two other species of *Gaura* are occasionally found in our area as well, but this far north and east they are considered non-native adventives. One is long-flower gaura [*G. longiflora*]. This species was once thought to be a variety of biennial gaura, but is now considered a separate species that is likely ancestral to *G. biennis*. It is a species of the southern Great Plains with a natural range that appears to reach into the southwest corner of Iowa, and maybe southern Illinois, but no farther east or north. The other species is scarlet gaura [*G. coccinea*]. This is a western species with its natural range reaching into the western edges of Iowa and Minnesota.)

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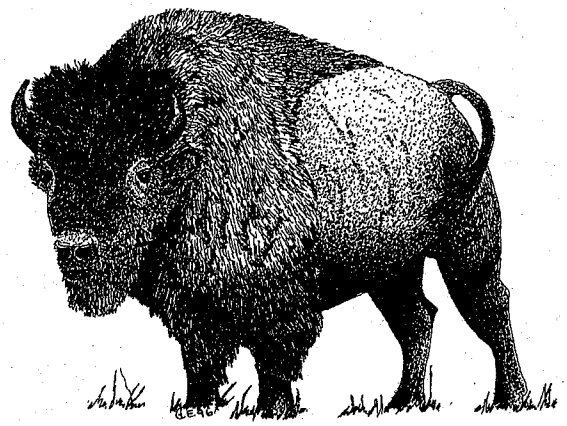


The Bradley Method for Control of Invasive Plants

By Thomas D. Brock, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison
(1227 Dartmouth Rd., Madison, WI 53705 email: tdbrock@facstaff.wisc.edu)
(Reprinted from *Plants Out of Place*: The Newsletter of the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin, Inc.)

An interesting approach to the control of invasive plants in natural habitats is the Bradley Method, first developed in Australia by the late Joan Bradley and her sister Eileen. Outside of Australia, it has apparently only been used in California, but it should be applicable to most parts of the world.

The Bradley method is first of all a strategy for, or even a "philosophy" of, long-term control of invasive plants. There are three basic principles of the Bradley Method:

1) **Always begin control work in undisturbed natural areas, and then work out toward areas more heavily infested with invasives**.

According to the Bradleys, if native plants are given a chance they will recover the ground that has been taken from them by invasive plants. The principal here is to start in areas where the native plants are thriving and gradually clear into the more heavily invaded areas. Non-natives do not invade readily into areas where the native plants are already well established. If one clears invasives in the worst areas first, this may not only be ineffective, it may be harmful. Removing non-natives in such areas exposes bare ground, tipping the balance in favor of the weeds. On the other hand, weeding a little at a time within and adjacent to good stands of native plants, then moving outward toward the most invaded areas, gives the natives a chance to move in and thrive.

2) **While removing invasive plants, try to keep from disturbing the environment any more than necessary.**

Large numbers of invasive plant seeds rain down on natural areas. If the ground is opened, these seeds can thrive. Undisturbed native soil, with its natural mulch, is resistant to invasion by non-native plants.

3) **Do not over-clear**

Leave the natural area as undisturbed as possible. If a large team of workers is available, people should spread out and weed small amounts in many places, rather than having the entire crew work in one place. The total area cleared of invasives will be as large, but regeneration by native plants will be greater.

The Bradley method emphasizes that removing invasive plants from a natural area involves two different kinds of time, *working time* and *waiting time*. Patience is not only a virtue; it is essential.

The Bradley plan of approach

1) Start with areas where native plants are dominant. Invasive plants may be scattered throughout, singly or in small groups. The risk of over-clearing here is nil, so this is the place to start. After clearing all the invasives, return once or twice a year and remove any that were missed, or which have colonized by seed.

2) After the least disturbed areas are cleared of non-natives, move into areas more heavily invaded, where there is some native undergrowth. Choose an area of substantial native plant growth, where native plants are pushing up against a mixture of invasive plants and natives. Remove non-natives in a strip about 10 feet across, then stop and give the natives time to move into the weeded areas. As the natives take hold, extend the strip along the boundary.

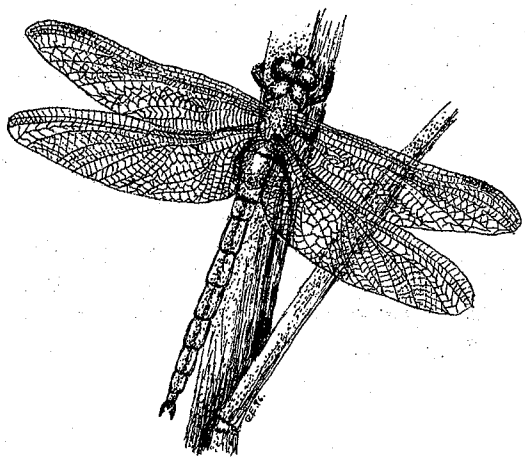
3) Maintain the advantage already gained. It is important to resist the temptation to clear more deeply into the heavily invaded areas before regenerating natives have become established. Invasive plant seeds will continue to germinate in newly cleared areas, so they should be removed as soon as possible. This is more important than starting to clear new areas.

4) Be very cautious when moving into the worst areas. However ugly an area of solid invasive plants may look, do not start clearing it until the native vegetation has been brought right up to its border.

Although Joan and Eileen Bradley were trained as chemists, their method makes very little use of herbicides. "We regenerate [native vegetation] by using methods that give us the most effective kill of weeds and the most bountiful growth of natives; that is, by skilful manual weeding. This can be laborious, and we are often asked, especially when we are having to spend a long time extracting a big weed 'Why don't you poison it?' We prefer not to use poisons if we can avoid it, and we certainly condemn their indiscriminate use."

Their reasoning is that herbicides are not truly selective, may have detrimental effects on the environment and do not always work. However, they do admit that for some invasive plants, or for some areas, herbicides may be necessary. However, their hand weeding technique is perfectly safe, highly effective and reliable. It does require one trait that we do not always have or want to use: staying power.

Details of the Bradley method, including many practical suggestions for weeding, have been published: **Bradley, Joan. 1997**. *Bringing back the bush: The Bradley method of bush regeneration.* Lansdowne Publishing Pty. Ltd. 18 Argyle Street , The Rocks, New South Wales, Australia. I obtained my copy of this book from Books of Nature, P.O. Box 345, Lindfield NSW 2070, Australia. **http://www.booksofnature.com**



Yank A Weed

By Mary Lee Croatt

Sometimes it takes an aerial view to get the big picture. I was seated on a flight high above the earth. Steve Kessler, a wildlife biologist with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service was my partner in conversation. I could tell that he had a devout love of nature. I told him that I wrote about my experiences as a land restorationist for The Prairie Enthusiasts and Wild Ones. I explained that I wrote to share my hobby with my family and friends, who don't necessarily understand this passion of mine.

Steve posed, "Well, how do you inspire others to care about our native plants?" So I pondered why the average person should care about invasive plants? How will garlic mustard and purple loosestrife have an impact on their lives?

This question brought to mind my neighbor, Judy, who has a natural garden in the front yard of her urban home. She proudly pointed to her lone garlic mustard plant. "Isn't that the prettiest flower!", she exclaimed with delight. I was appalled. Pretty? Sure, one alone was pretty. She did not realize that garlic mustard invaded our Milwaukee woods and parks, shading out beautiful native plants such as trillium, bloodroot, May-apple, Jacob's ladder, wild ginger, spring beauty, hepatica and meadow-rue. Instead of diversity, there now is a carpet of one plant, garlic mustard ad infinitum. The other spring plants are gone.

It took a repeat contact from me with an educational pamphlet on garlic mustard to convince her of its danger. She reluctantly plucked it out. Had she not, she would later rue that decision. Garlic mustard's power to overtake her garden would become a lifelong relentless battle. Her other plants would be out-competed.

Purple loosestrife is a wetland invader. Another acquaintance told me she was so enraptured at the sight of a purple landscape, that she actually transplanted purple loosestrife into a wetland meadow behind her home. She had to kiss goodbye her marsh marigolds, skunk cabbage and other wetland plants.

How sad. In losing those plants we also lose a habitat for our native insects and amphibians, and thus, our familiar insects, birds and mammals. Lose a habitat and you will lose multiple forms of life.

When rip rapping stream banks along the west fork of the Kickapoo River, the Department of Natural Resources and our local sportmen's club planted reed canary grass to control erosion. In theory it worked. In practice, it is a bane to our native Wisconsin wildlife. It crowded out native plants. In its wake, a thick mat formed. This new monoculture does not support our native wildlife.

Crown Vetch was also introduced to our landscape by the DNR and the Department of Transportation for the same reason: erosion control. Like a cancer, I eradicate its malignancy, only to have multiple eruptions along the perimeter in subsequent years. It takes constant vigilance to control. Otherwise, it too, will become a monoculture crowding out our plant diversity.

So how will garlic mustard, purple loosestrife, reed canary grass and other weeds have an impact on your lives? They will do irreparable damage if left unchecked. Why care? Because your grandchildren will not be able to experience the beauty you have experienced in the wondrous variety of plant life.

So, please, friends, give a yank! Remove invasive species. Save our natural landscapes, thus saving our animal kingdom and please consider financially supporting environmental groups that do this labor intensive work for you and future generations. We are not doing this for fun!

Learn About Invasive Plants

If you would like to learn and communicate with others about invasive plants, you may wish to try the invasive plant list server of the Invasive Plant Association of WI (IPAW).

The IPAW list server.

IPAW operates a discussion forum on Yahoo. This can be reached by going to http://www.yahoogroups.com and do a search for "IPAW". You can then access messages. To post messages, you need to be a member of the group, which you can join free. You will be given instructions on how to register for the group. You will find messages from members or guests about current problems on invasive plants in Wisconsin. You may read any of the current messages or the archive of previous messages. You may also send queries to the group. You may unsubscribe to the list server at any time by following the instructions provided.

Overview of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Wisconsin

By Derek Johnson
Director of Habitat Protection
Wisconsin Chapter, The Nature Conservancy

Agricultural landowners in Wisconsin, along with many rivers, streams and grassland species should all be celebrating this time of year. Why? Because November marks the one year anniversary of the creation of the highly popular and much needed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in the State of Wisconsin. For the prairie and grassland enthusiast, the CREP program represents a significant opportunity to restore thousands of acres of habitat on private lands. Closely related to the well-known Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), CREP can be considered "high octane" CRP because it offers more landowners more money and provides a permanent easement option to eligible landowners. As with most federal programs, there is a confusing amount of detail associated with the CREP program and all of its nuances. Interested landowners are well advised to call your local Farm Service Agency representative for more information. I hope that this overview will provide some insight into the program's mechanics and benefits for conservation.

How the Program Works:

CREP is a federal/state/local partnership that fuses $200 million of federal funds with $40 million of state matching funds to provide cost-share payments and incentives to eligible landowners in 51 counties for the purposes of improving water quality, protecting soil quality, and restoring grassland habitat for grassland birds.

It is a voluntary program for eligible Wisconsin landowners. When enrolling in the program, landowners agree to remove environmentally sensitive lands from agricultural production by planting native grasses, trees and other vegetation for 15-year periods or through a perpetual conservation easement. Landowners have several conservation practice options from which to choose when deciding what type of cover to plant. However, there are certain rules that apply which can dictate what cover can be established on certain lands. For example, any landowner who wishes to enroll pasture lands is forced to enroll in the forest riparian buffer conservation practice, which requires that landowners plant trees. Obviously, in southern Wisconsin this can be counter-productive to the goal of establishing native prairie habitat. (Supposedly, this requirement was eliminated in the newly reauthorized national Farm Bill. However, local and state USDA agents have not seen these rule changes yet.)

Other conservation practice options include planting native grasses, grasses already established, restoration of rare and declining habitat, introduced grasses and legumes and others. Local Natural Resource Conservation Service staff can assist landowners in determining appropriate plantings.

Eligibility:

The CREP program is currently available in parts or all of 51 counties across Wisconsin, stretching in a horseshoe shaped pattern from southern Door County down towards Milwaukee, to the west across the southern part of the state, and up towards the Twin Cities along the western edge of the state. Parts of Marathon, Wood, Clark, and Taylor counties in the central part of the state are also eligible.

The goal of the CREP program in Wisconsin is to enroll a total of 100,000 acres. It is intentionally designed to be a riparian buffer program aimed at reducing the sediment and phosphorus runoff that impairs many Wisconsin waters. To meet this goal, the program is only eligible for croplands classified as "highly erodible" and for those lands that have been cropped 2 out of the last 5 crop years. Furthermore, only lands within 150 feet of an eligible stream or water body can be enrolled. Marginal pasture lands are eligible as well, but again, eligible land is limited to 150 foot riparian buffers.

There are two areas in the state where landowners have extra incentives to participate in the CREP program. The CREP agreement designates two "grassland areas" that are aimed to protect water quality but also restore grassland habitat for migratory grassland songbirds. In these special grassland areas, landowners can enroll up to 1000 feet of riparian buffer on eligible croplands. These special grassland areas are located in the Buena Vista Prairie Chicken Area (parts of Marathon, Taylor, Wood and Clark counties) and in the Military Ridge-Blue Mounds Area (parts of Iowa, Dane, Green and Lafayette counties). Out of the total goal of 100,000 acres, the program has established that 15,000 total acres will be enrolled in these special grassland areas (10,000 acres in the Military Ridge-Blue Mounds area and 5,000 acres in the prairie chicken area).

Financial Incentives:

Without getting into the details, there is a host of various payments that eligible landowners can receive through the CREP program for implementing conservation practices including: annual rental payments for 15 years (based on rental rates for soil types); annual federal incentive payment from 35%-60% of annual rental payment; annual maintenance payment of between $5-$10 per acre per year; federal signing bonus of $140-$150 per acre; state up-front signing bonus of 1.5 times the annual rental rate for 15 year contracts (12 times the annual rental rate for perpetual easements); and possibly up to 110% of the cost of

installing the practice. Obviously, the program has strong incentives for landowners to practice good conservation on their land.

Conservation Results Progress Report:

In its first year of existence in Wisconsin, the CREP program has experienced tremendous demand from private landowners. To date, over 33,000 acres across the state have been enrolled into the program. In the Military Ridge-Blue Mounds grassland area, 8,000 acres out of the 10,000-acre goal have been enrolled in the program. In most cases this means that landowners have submitted applications to be enrolled but have not yet signed an approved contract or planted much cover on the ground. Currently, there are not enough staff to process all of the requests for the program and the backlog has caused delay in completing the transactions. Other conservation groups, such as Pheasants Forever, have supplied staff to assist with implementation of the program. While the support and demand for the program is very encouraging, agency staff need more help in processing applications and conducting site visits. I hope as demand grows for prairie and grassland restorations, so will the available pool of experts and contractors that can turn CREP applications into suitable habitat.

There is a lot more one can learn about the CREP program. If you are interested in receiving more information, please call your local FSA, NRCS or Land Conservation Department office.

Burn Policy of The Prairie Enthusiasts

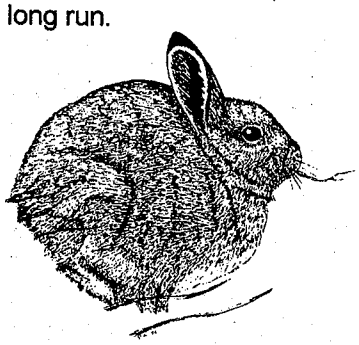
By Rich Henderson

In April of 2001, The Prairie Enthusiasts adopted a policy on safety procedures for conducting prescribed burns. All burns conducted as a TPE activity must follow these procedures. It has come to my attention that this policy may not have been adequately distributed to all volunteers who lead or organize TPE burns. If you are in charge of doing TPE burns, whether brush piles or broadcast burns, and do not have a copy of these procedures, please contact you chapter's representative to the TPE board. Every board member has a copy of the policy in his or her handbook.

Although TPE burns are planned and led by people with a great deal of experience in conducting prescribed burns, and most volunteers helping on the burns are experienced burners, there is currently no requirement for all participants in TPE burns to have formal training. Nor is there a requirement that all participants wear protective Nomex suits. Because we are growing as an organization and safety and liability concerns regarding prescribed burns have been increasing across the country, TPE may very well be adopting such requirements in the future, possibly as early as spring 2004. We have already been moving in that direction for years now with many of our volunteers already wearing Nomex and having formal burn training. We just may have to start moving a little faster to that end.

Plans and discussions are underway among state DNRs, The Nature Conservancy and various smaller land trusts to get training programs in place that meet national standards, and are yet fully relevant to our region. Currently such training does not exist, but I hope something will be in place in the next year or two. Nancy Braker of the Wisconsin Chapter of TNC is very involved with this training issue. We greatly appreciate TNC's efforts.

I hope all chapters will be giving our prescribed burn policy some thought over the next year or so. I recommend that chapters begin planning to acquire Nomex suits, or at least be recommending to volunteers that they acquire their own personal Nomex, and begin giving thought to getting volunteers trained once the training programs are in place. It is possible that all of us will have to go through the training, regardless of past experience, to meet the insurance requirements. I realize this will be a change and inconvenience for us individually and as an organization, and it may dissuade participation by some volunteers. But, I think it will be for the best in the long run.



TPE Mottos

Last May, The Prairie Enthusiasts adopted three mottos for use on TPE brochures, fliers, letterheads, promotional materials, etc. You may have already noticed them in use. They are:

"Grassroots Conservation at Work"

"Maintaining our Prairie Heritage"

"Preserving and Protecting our Prairie Heritage"

Three were chosen to provide for flexibility in use. What do you think? Any comments or suggestions you may have about these mottos would be appreciated. Contact your chapter representatives.

Extremes of the Upper Midwestern Prairie--Dakota to Michiana

By Chris Matson

During my long absence from TPE activities during 2001, I was fortunate enough to glimpse our prairie past and future in South Dakota and Michiana, the border lands of Michigan and Indiana. I saw amazing and disturbing things in both places, but am quite heartened by efforts some make to thwart the seemingly inevitable demise of our beloved native grassland ecosystem.

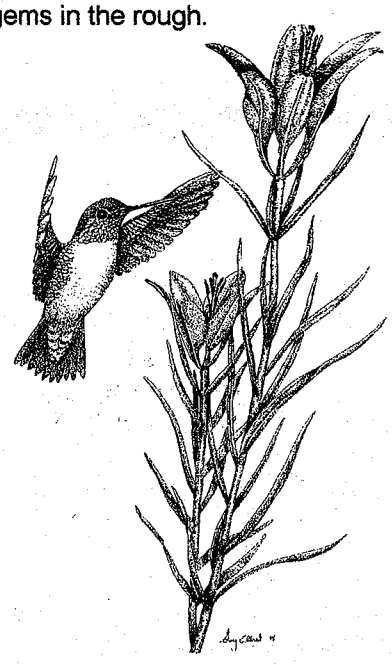
The growing season dawned in South Dakota at the Clear Lake Preserve, a joint venture of Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy, located in extreme east-central South Dakota. This region, called the prairie Coteau, is a rivers and lakes region which drains into the Red River along the MN/SD border. It is moderately hilly, reminiscent of lands north of Madison or around Westby and Viroqua. It is true tallgrass prairie country, harboring short eared owls, upland sandpipers, greater prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse and vast numbers of waterbirds. The greater regional landscape was about 90 percent unbroken tallgrass prairie, although most was heavily grazed by beef cattle. Minus a wolf-elk/bison interaction, this is otherwise as wild a place we could ask for as a tallgrass ecosystem, while contributing to the present version of the local economy. The preserve is managed by Pete Bauman, the program manager, Clint Miller, the eastern South Dakota ecoregional planner and their crew, consisting of an assistant site manager and three seasonal workers.

So there I was in prairie paradise. Wow, what wind--and bitter, wet, skin-drenching weather the early spring brought our prescribed burn crew. Once the weather cooperated, we experienced wonderful interactions with animals during burns. Large gatherings of Swainson's hawks took advantage of the fires, which were driving rodents from their favorite morning cover. Prairie chickens fluttered away to safe, unburned grounds. Coyotes dodged our efforts to follow, and snipes greeted our every pre-burn morning. In all, the crew burned over 1900 acres last spring, which sounds like a lot, but is a mere flyspeck on that local landscape.

Summer called me to work in Indiana, where some very nice people showed me that the restoration spirit is alive and well in a landscape needing attention. Jon Dittmar, a supervisor for an engineering firm, is busy clearing exotics along a now-defunct railroad right-of-*way which is a friend's property. Together we botanized and found rattlesnake master, spiderwort, puccoon,* golden alexander, prairie dock, purple vetch, Bicknell's sedge, the "usual grasses" and a host of other interesting prairie species.

There are two major challenges to prairie conservation in the Michiana region. First, there is a lack of organization in efforts to conserve small remnants. The region is just starting to put together a few groups involved with open space. If we look back to my acquaintance, Jon, he is doing the thing he is compelled to do regardless of protection, knowing that protection without management to rid the site of weeds such as poison hemlock and Sassafrass would be protection of an empty cause. He is a rare exception to the rule.

The second challenge is competition for lands with conservation value and with high market value, or those in "bad neighborhoods". There are some great parcels of land in Lake Station, IN and in the greater Gary area, but they have become dumping grounds for organized crime and thrive in the sex/drug industry. It is amazing that parcels of remmant duneland, restorable oak savanna and open woodland exist scattered in the countryside from Hammond to Valparaiso and east to Elkhart. This being said, the land for sale in this region is escalating in price and scarcity, while succumbing to degradation and division. The land trust movement has just been born there, while Chicagoland's shadow has been looming for decades, waiting for the time to swell over these gems in the rough.



In the east-west extremes within the tallgrass region of the Upper Midwest, there is one certainty--we are losing acreage to our two foes in this struggle—non-management of the prairie community and conversion of lands to irreversible uses. In Michiana there is a sense *of urgency by the conservation and open space* community. In Dakota there is a sense of slumber, except for a few who seem to be raising the spark to the grassland and the communities which reap benefits from the region's grasslands.

The prairie past is alive in biological terms--South Dakota has a significant chance to conserve large blocks of native grassland acreage. The prairie past is alive socially as well--residents continue to view prairie as a commodity rather than a community to belong to--and that is the great threat to their economy and ecology. I saw several large farms which were grazed down to dirty putting greens.

The prairie future is evident in Michiana. For, if we do nothing to conserve and enhance small remnant,s we shall lose our final connection to the evolutionary landscape and will become enslaved to urban pursuits and cycles rather than those with the meaning found in a deeper ecology.

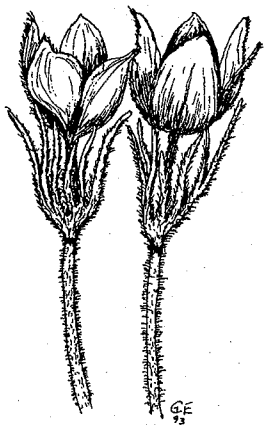
There is hope beyond hopelessness, as each of us has the ability to prevent small losses to the prairie, to expand, restore and maintain remnants, and to influence policy which affects the land use which ultimately controls whether we can have prairie and people living, one with the other.

We seem to have at least some time in the prairie Coteau, as the land is agricultural, waterfowl production land through federal programs, and a small amount of public and nonprofit holdings. We could help prairie if we could set up a network in the area through concerned citizens in groups such as Sioux Falls, SD, Audubon and Sierra Clubs, focusing on forming a local land trust to gather funds toward acquisition, enhancing and connecting managed and protected lands. As a proponent of this cause, I propose we form an inter-chapter committee to work on this project, as we are talking about hundreds of thousands of acres of prairie, and it is in all chapters' interests to accomplish some organizing soon.

We have almost no time in the Michiana region, and I fear there remains around 20-40 years before there is nothing to protect beyond ditch/roadside /sidewalk crack grasslands. I already know some of the persons concerned with Michiana conservation and hope to keep you updated, since this area will require careful planning by local people with specialized information.

Looking at the prairie past and future gives us a glimpse of the same in our cherished Coulee Region. The past indifference lingers as we witness the near-certain loss to development of four of the best sand prairie remnants in La Crosse and Trempealeau counties. Inaction and a lack of good information at the right time has allowed us to lose the opportunity to work with the landowners when a chance for conservation was available. The future offers about 20 years to protect any sand prairie in our area including scraps of less than an acre. However, time seems to be giving us a break in the chance to save goat prairies. While development along the Mississippi river is moving at breakneck speed, many goat prairies in more rural areas are merely idle. Although this bodes poorly for their future management, it gives us a more comfortable time window to find funds and begin our endeavor to purchase some of these properties as natural areas for science, biodiversity and limited public use.

The time to act in the interest of management is ASAP. I ask each member of TPE to gather their friends (conservationists and not) to donate as much as possible to fund the first chapter stewardship manager position for the Coulee Region Chapter. Following the March banquet in La Crosse, we have built some great momentum to move forward in active conservation. Before we move into the realm of chapter parcel ownership, we need to arrange for the professional stewardship of what our members are presently struggling to manage. Without this professional to organize events and equipment, find seasonal work crew help, and do outreach, fundraising and exotic species management, we cannot move forward to a day when we actually purchase land in the chapter while keeping up with the continued "prairie extension services" for which we have become known --helping landowners become good stewards of their grasslands, as members of the community, not as overlords. While we will find some sites which require quick property acquisition, we will not be ready for this until we are ready to handle present responsibilities. In the meantime, wish for goodwill among prairie landowners--the future of prairie depends on it.



What Is Natural?

(This is part two of Rich Henderson's response to an area historian who wrote to him regarding two issues: whether we should let nature take its course; and what is natural. Part one was printed in the previous issue of *The Prairie Promoter*. Ed.)

Let's address the issue of what is natural. Personally, I believe we humans are currently in a transitional state of being, at once both a part of nature and apart from nature. The checks that once kept our numbers down and our distribution limited and thus our actions a part of nature, checks such as predators, food

limitations, diseases and lack of fur coats, have been overcome by our mental abilities. This has separated us from nature. Yet, we are still dependent upon Mother Earth for life, and we are still vulnerable to at least some diseases, thus we are not yet fully free from nature. We seem to be in awkward teenage phase of our development. For the sake of discussion, let's assume that humans, at least human actions, are not part of nature. Thus, for an ecosystem to be considered natural, it should be free of human intervention.

Based on this premise of naturalness, I would have to contend that there has not been a fully natural terrestrial ecosystem in the Upper Midwest for the past 9 or 10 thousand years. But even if the mixed-hardwood climax forest system of 8 or 9 thousand years ago were considered natural, its modern version that is now slowly taking over the unused lands of southern WI, and the Midwest in general, has little if any chance of developing into the original. Too many changes triggered by human actions have occurred for this to happen, e.g.,habitat fragmentation and the arrival of non-native plants and diseases. But even if it were possible to achieve, it is very unlikely that the model of 8 or 9 thousand years ago was a fully natural system. The loss of large prehistoric mammals to human hunting pressure, such as mammoth and ancient bison in the previous millennium or two, likely altered those forests, causing gradual declines in diversity (i.e., loss of the more light-demanding species). In fact, most of the plants of our modern oak forests, oak savannas and even a significant portion of the eastern prairie flora came from those early eastern forest ecosystems. The early forests were likely kept diverse by the actions of large mammals. With their disappearance, disturbance-dependant plants apparently found refuge in the newly emerging, fire-derived oak woodlands/forests, savannas and prairies of the east. Many of these species are now absent from the modern climax mixed-hardwood forests. The bottom line is that the climax mixed-hardwood forests of modern times are likely only shadows of their ancestral forerunners in terms of species diversity. In fact, our modern versions may have relatively little in common with what were the predominant climax forest types of eastern North America prior to human contact.

Now, does this diminished naturalness imply that modern climax mixed-hardwood forests are less worthy of conservation? No, of course not. They support many species not found in other habitat types. They have a significant place in our natural heritage, even in southern WI. To view them, however, as the only true natural state of most upland sites of the Midwest and thus the model toward which most, if not all, natural sites should be managed, I think would be a mistake leading to the eventual extinction of many species.

When it comes to natural areas, human intervention should be kept to a minimum. But, if we are to retain the diversity of life with which we were so blessed here in WI, we are forced into the position of having take careful and measured action. I know this is an unsettling thought. It certainly is to me. But, because of our past interventions, it is a burden we must bear. To dodge the responsibility will only result in even more loss and damage to nature.

The climax mixed-hardwood ecosystem has a bright future here in WI, both in the north and the south. It is on the increase, and it needs relatively little help compared to the fire-dependent ecosystems. No matter how hard The Prairie Enthusiasts, The Nature Conservancy, the DNR Natural Areas program and others may try, it is unlikely that we will ever have an overrepresentation of oak forests/woodlands, oak savannas, sedge meadows and prairies to the detriment of the climax mixed-hardwood ecosystem. We will be very lucky to hang on to, or recover, just 2-5 % of the original 1830s-acreage of these fire-derived ecosystems.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND CHAPTER NEWS

COULEE REGION CHAPTER		
MEETINGS		
Sat.	Jan. 4	Chapter meeting at 10am, at U.W. La Crosse, Room 340, Cartwright Center. Topic: Invasive plants; speaker is Kim Mallow, a wildlife biologist.
Sat.	Mar. 1	Chapter meeting at 10am at UW La Crosse, room and topic to be announced. Also election of secretary and treasurer.
EVENTS		
Sun.	Jan. 10	Winter pot-luck at 1pm at the home of Phil and Kathy Aacker, S6110A Sidie Hollow Rd. Viroqua, WI. Call for directions at 608-637-6507
Fri. & Sat.	Jan. 24 & 25	Volunteer participation at the WI Wetlands Conference in LaCrosse at the Radisson Center, call Barb Christie at 608-634-2110 to share your time.
PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER		
MEETINGS		
Tue.	Jan 7	Chapter meeting at Turner Hall Rathskeller 1217 17th Avenue at 7pm..
Tue.	Feb.4	Chapter meeting at Marshall Bluff Club House, N7326 Marshall Bluff Road, Monticello at 7pm.
Tue.	Mar. 4	Chapter meeting at the Bank of Brodhead (community room) 806 E. Exchange Street, Brodhead at 7pm.
GENERAL EVENTS		
The Prairie Enthusiasts & Wisconsin Wetlands Association Conference. January 24 & 25, 2003		

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

Tour of Restoration Provides Insights

by Chris Matson

On a beautiful autumn day Greg and Laura Nessler invited the membership to tour their reconstructed prairies and woodland restorations. Greg and Laura have put a lot of time and effort into the restoration process over a number of years, with impressive results.

We began with Greg giving us an overview of his land and business in prairie restorations. As we progressed uphill from the home and yard, we entered plantings in different stages. We noted cup plants and native bunchgrasses. Then Greg and Laura took us to their woods, starting in an area where open grown white oaks had been cleared around. We noted lots of bottlebrush grass, silky wild rye and a sedge in the section Ovales. Everywhere we looked, spent flowers of whorled loosestrife and savanna bedstraw (*Galium circaezans*) appeared. Greg told us that he has found that Turk's cap lilies have appeared in this open woodland. We took a peek at the last remains of the heart leaved skullcaps (*Scutellaria ovata*) in the area as we moved toward the prairie plantings.

The Nessler's prairie plantings happened over several years, and began as simple grass mixes with a few forbs. As time progressed, they evolved into complex mixes with an excellent assemblage of highly conservative forbs mixed with diverse grasses at a lower seed rate. All the Nessler's upper fields were interseeded, using their Ford 8N tractor and a dragtooth for site preparation.

We walked into a field which was just chock full of stiff gentian, grey, stiff and showy goldenrods, various asters and the spent remains of numerous other prairie flowers which grace these fabulous attempts at prairie restoration.

Greg attributes this success to good fortune, hard work in early years on weed control and a good deal of patience.

The tourists to the Nessler plantings and restoration woodlands gained good insights into one couple's attempt to heal a worn out land; so can you by touring the properties of our fellow Prairie Enthusiasts.

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

A Very Successful Fall for Work Parties - Thank you Volunteers

Participation in Empire-Sauk Chapter work parties continues to climb! Excellent progress in restoration and management continues to be made. For the September through November period 60 people put in 406 hours. This is a 115% increase in hours and a 150% increase in the number of people participating over the same period last year, which in itself was a successful fall for work party accomplishments. Thank to all participants for making this happen.

Thirty people helped with seed collecting, seed cleaning and seed planting (148 hours). Work was done at Vale Prairie, Smith/Egre Drumlins, the Ripp Prairies, Underwood and Nittany Knoll Prairie Complex, Koltes Prairie, Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, Goodman Campus Savanna and The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area. Leading participants were Rich Henderson, Tanis Cuff, Don and Marge Shere, Earl Milhbauer, Scott Sauer and Susan Slapnick.
Forty-nine people helped with tree and brush removal (258 hours). Work was done at Vale Prairie, Smith/Egre Drumlins, the Ripp Prairies, Koltes Prairie, Underwood and Nittany Knoll Prairie Complex and Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie. Leading participants were Rich Henderson, Scott Sauer, Jan Ketelle, Richard Oberle, Victoria Dulaney, Roger Mayer and Gary Gates.
Much needed and appreciated help at these work parties also came form Karen Agee, Shelly Armstrong, Sally Bauer, Tom and Kathy Brock, Willis Brown, Ted Cochrane, Reed Cockrell, Dennis Connor, Kevin Doyle, Jim Elleson, Shirley Ellis, Adrian Flygt, Scott Fulton, Sharon Gaskill, Eric Goplin, Greg Hamilton, Pat Handrick, Kathy Henderson, Carol Holman, Nate Hurst, Brandi Johnson, Laura Kearney, Darcy Kind, Sarah Knox, Jim Lesnika, Jeff Lorch, John and Nick Mecikalski, Paul Michler, Dave Mindel, Lynett Neitzel, Steve Richter, Jerry Simmons, Glen Smith, Michael Smith, Nick Stevenson, Thea Thompson, Peter Van Beek, Clifford Voegili, Kristin Westad, Erin Wilichowski, Jolene Willert, Laura Witzling, Chelsey Young, Kathy Youngs and Libby Zimmerman. Thank you one and all.

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. Contact Rich Henderson (Empire -Sauk Chapter donation coordinator) by February 1, 2003 with your donations, 845-7065.

Winter Work Parties

Winter work parties, primarily to clear red cedar trees off of prairie remnants and burn brush piles from the fall work parties, have been scheduled for December, January and February. Most work will be at Walking Iron County Park, Mazomanie (School Section) Bluff and the Underwood & Nittany Knoll Prairie Complex. Check your winter work party flier or the Empire-Sauk Chapter page of the TPE web site (ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org) for details.

More Donated Items to Empire-Sauk Chapter

Thank you to Carol Campshure for donating a used DR 5 hp mower/trimmer this fall. It quickly was put to use cutting firebreaks.

Thank you to Ron Smith for donating a weed wrench, which is very helpful in pulling out unwanted shrubs and small trees by their roots.

Thank you to Richard Oberle for the mid-summer donation of a brand new drip torch, backpack water pump and Nomex suit with TPE embroidered on it. They were put to use this fall and will get a real workout come spring.

Chapter Board Meeting.

The next Chapter Board Meeting will be Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2003 at the TNC office, 633 W. Main St., Madison. All members are welcome.

Field Trip Ideas & Leaders.

We are looking for field trip ideas & leaders for our Spring and Early Summer flier. This flier will cover field trips between April 10 - July 10. If you would like to lead a tour, or have a suggestion for a tour location, please contact Rich Henderson. Our deadline for collecting information is March 10.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

Habitat Selection Study

Field work has been completed for The Prairie Enthusiasts' Habitat Selection Study. The purpose for this research is to determine how better to manage fallow land for the benefit of grasslands birds. Thirty-four project sites were visited many times throughout the spring and summer by teams of birders, recording bird sightings and nesting behavior and recording plant composition and structure by ecologists.

These sites included all kinds of grasslands including old field, pasture, brome seeding, switch grass seeding, prairie restoration and prairie remnant. The data analysis, relating grassland bird behavior to habitat characteristics, will be completed this fall. A final report should be available in late 2002.

Hanover Bluffs Grant

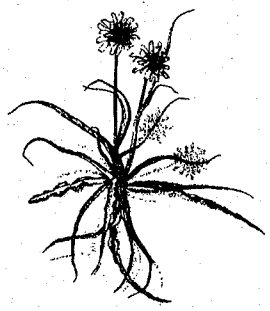
The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts has received a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation to write a conservation plan for the Hanover Bluffs area of southwestern JoDaviess County. The grant also calls for restoring 60 acres of prairie, negotiating a management agreement with the Illinois DNR and participating in comprehensive planning for the Upper Mississippi.

This work will require close coordination with our partners, including the area's private landowners, Friends of the Depot, Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges, Natural Area Guardians, The Nature Conservancy, Natural Land Institute, Illinois DNR and the Fish & Wildlife Service. The work should be completed in three years.

PRAIRIE HERITAGE CHAPTER

West Central Chapter Name Change

The West Central Chapter of TPE has become the Prairie Heritage Chapter. The name change was necessitated by the addition of St. Louis County MN, to the chapter.

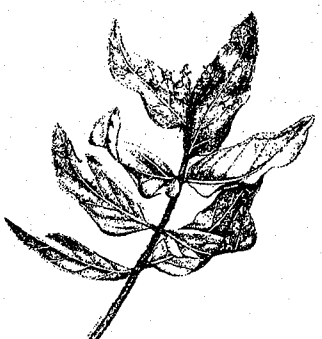


SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

The Southwest Chapter over the years has had an ever diminishing board of directors. We once had a thirteen member board that gradually shrank to five. Many officers and directors have served for at least several years; some have served since the foundation of the Southwest Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts. With an increasing responsibility for managing an increasing number of properties accompanying a decrease in people willing to organize operations, we were in a desperate situation.

We made an unprecedented effort to recruit new members for the board of directors with the following goals in mind: replacing the current directors and officers; re-examining the chapter's goals and objectives and the means to achieve them; and reinvigorating the chapter's stewardship mission.

We are very fortunate that George Couch, Jesse Bennett, Jaye Maxfield, Kristin Westad, Barb Glass and Ugo Camerini have responded to our call for help. We will continue to invite other chapter members to become involved in providing leadership and anticipate that our annual meeting in April will produce a much needed and welcome "sea change". Stay tuned.



THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

PREFERED CHAPTER AFFILIATION (please check one)

- ☐ **General** (member at large)
- ☐ **Coulee Region Chapter**
  Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, Vernon (WI) Houston, Winona (MN).
- ☐ **Empire-Sauk Chapter**
  Columbia, Dane and Sauk
- ☐ **Northwest Illinois Chapter**
  Carroll, Jo Davies and Stephenson
- ☐ **Prairie Bluff Chapter**
  Green, Lafayette and Rock
- ☐ **Prairie Smoke Chapter (SE MN)**
  Fillmore, Dodge,Mower,Olmsted, Steele, and Wabasha.
- ☐ **Southeast Wisconsin Chapter (pending)**
  Dodge, Jefferson, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha
- ☐ **Southwest Wisconsin Chapter**
  Crawford, Grant, Iowa and Richland
- ☐ **Prairie Heritage Chapter**
  Barron, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix (WI) and Washington (MN)
- ☐ **Winnebagoland Chapter (EC WI)**
  Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Outagamie, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago.

Membership Level

- ☐ $10 Student
- ☐ $20 Individual
- ☐ $30 Family
- ☐ $75 Sustaining
- ☐ $200 Blazing Star
- ☐ $1,000 Individual Life

☐Seed Collecting/Planting
☐Stewardship (Brush Cutting/Burning)
☐Staffing Displays/Speakers Bureau
☐Fund Raising/Grant Writing
☐Social Activities (banquet/picnics)
☐Newsletters/Articles

Can we provide your name to other Prairie Enthusiasts in your area? Y / N
Can we prvoide your name to other conservation organizations? Y / N

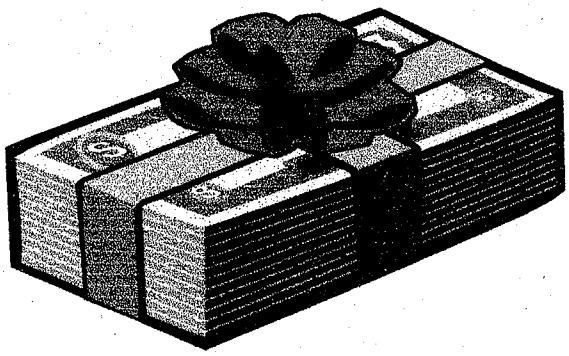
I wish to help with (please check off):

☐Plant/Animal Inventories
☐Landowner Contacts
☐Field Trips
☐Educational materials

Mail and Make Check Payable to: The Prairie Enthusiasts, PO Box 112, Boscobel, WI 53805

WAYS OF GIVING TO TPE

In addition to accepting traditional monetary gifts, The Prairie Enthusiasts can also accept gifts of stock, real estate, easements, equipment and planned gifts through estate planning. Gifts of stock are an excellent way to make a charitable gift without suffering the burden of capital gain taxes, and planned giving enables you to see the legacy of conservation embodied in The Prairie Enthusiasts organization continue into the future. Please contact your local Chapter representatives or Treasurer Kathy Henderson (608-845-7065) for details and to make arrangements.



THE PRAIRIE ENTHUSIASTS
PO BOX 112
BOSCOBEL WI 53805
www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org

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ALICE & WALTER MIRK
10052 COUNTY HWY C
WOODMAN, WI 53827

PRECIOUS TOOLS

By Mary Lee Croatt

Of all the tools, my most basic, readily available and valuable in my work are my hands. They handle the shovel and rake. They squeeze the handles of the loppers and hand cutters. They scratch the earth. They light the match for a burn. They pull the weed. They whack the brush. They twist dried seed heads off plants. It is a blessing to have functioning, pain free hands.

I habitually wear work gloves. They protect my hands from the sun's scorching rays, my skin from injury, cuts and scratches. I have a glove wardrobe: a cloth/leather pair for general work, a textured rubber palmed and knit cloth pair for digging in the damp soil and pulling dried seeds from plants and a heavy duty rubberized long pair for working with herbicides to protect my body from poison. I routinely wear them through sweltering July's heat and January's bitter coldness. Even with the most conscientious gloving, my skin gets chapped and rough from Wisconsin's winter. I also have had deep cracks along the side of my nails that hurt!

I hit upon a secret shared by a manicurist. This is it: soak you hands in a dishpan of warm baking soda solution resting on a towel on you lap for 15 minutes while visiting or watching TV. Gently rub the dead skin off your hands. Dry them. Then take a nickel sized dab of glycerin and an equal part of water. Mix together in your palm. Then spread over your hands, under your nails, and around your cuticles. Reapply the glycerin/water mixture several times a day. Sometimes it will feel sticky. Hang in there! It is worth it to get the smoothest, softest hands you ever had.

You may need to daily soak your hands, depending how bad you skin is. Also, do not undo your efforts by forgetting to wear gloves for work, for outdoor cold or washing dishes. Detergent is drying and irritating to your skin and will sabotage your efforts.

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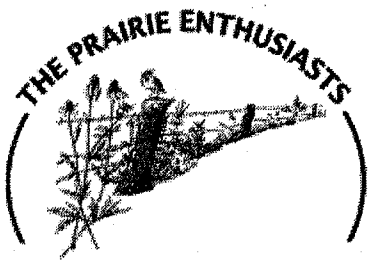
The Prairie Enthusiasts and Wisconsin Wetlands Association

Present

The 8th Annual Wetlands Science Forum

January 24-25, 2003

Radisson Hotel, LaCrosse, WI



Discounts for Members & Early Registration!

TPE Contact: Jim Rachuy
E-mail: tpe@mwci.net
Phone: 815-947-2695

For Room Reservations call The Radisson Hotel
800-333-3333
or
608-784-6680

A Two Day Event on Wetlands and Uplands Interaction, Restoration & Management Featuring:

Mike Mossman, Wisconsin DNR, on the history of prairie wetlands and public perceptions of them.

Tim Searchinger, Environmental Defense, on the value and function of prairie wetlands & funds for restoring them.

Don Reed, South East Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, with an overview of prairie wetland ecology.

✂

Prairie Wetlands Forum Registration Form

Name _____
Please print

Address _____

_____

Phone or e-mail _____

☐ Please Mail Check to:
Wisconsin Wetlands Association
222 S. Hamilton #1
Madison, WI 53703
After Jan. 13, 2003, fees increase by $5
Register Today!

Sign up for:	# of persons	Price
☐ Friday **and** Saturday TPE member Fee	_____	x $40.00
☐ Friday **or** Saturday TPE member Fee	_____	x $20.00
☐ Friday **and** Saturday Guest Fee	_____	x $60.00
☐ Friday **or** Saturday Guest Fee	_____	x $30.00
☐ Friday **and** Saturday Seniors/Student Fee	_____	x $30.00
☐ Friday **or** Saturday Seniors/Students Fee	_____	x $15.00
☐ I/We plan **to attend** the Friday evening Banquet	_____	x $15.00

Total enclosed: _____