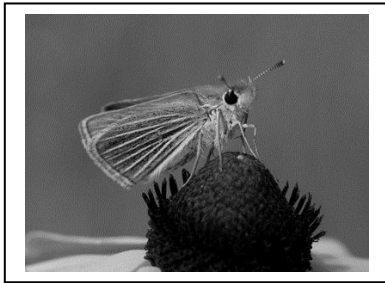


COULEE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

FALL 2011

Chapter President's Message



I subscribe to several listserves. The Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin and the Iowa Native Plants Society are the two I enjoy the most, primarily because people post frequently and the discussions are interesting. There was a recent post to the INPS group that caught my attention. A link to the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* brought up an article about the decline of the Poweshiek skipperling in Iowa.

According to the article, the butterfly is disappearing from many prairie sites within the heart of its range. Out of 26 sites in Iowa that were home to as many as 150 individuals each in 1993 and 1994, the Poweshiek skipperling was only recorded at one of those sites in 2007. As a result, it is a candidate for addition to the endangered species list.

The plight of the Poweshiek skipperling is a sad reminder and a wake up call. Habitat loss and fragmentation, pesticide use, and non-native species have all taken their toll on prairie invertebrates. Small, isolated populations are far more vulnerable to random severe weather events. Inappropriate application of management tools may also be placing some species in peril.

This is why your involvement in TPE is critical. It would be great to see species coming off the list instead of going on the list. There is always a need to do more, which can be overwhelming at times. Where does one start? I am asking each of you to do one extra prairie-promoting action this next year. Just *one*. Here are some examples: If you have never been to a work day, or it's been quite some time, plan to attend one – or even host one; volunteer to staff a TPE display at a local event to spread the word; learn a new butterfly each month during the growing season and then use that knowledge to help others identify them; help create a species list for your prairie or for one of the preserves we help manage; donate to the annual appeal; bake your favorite cookies/bread/pie as a raffle item; bring a friend to a TPE event...there are so many possibilities! Together we can do so much more than any one person alone.

Best Wishes, Jessica

TPE Coulee Chapter Officers and Officials for 2011

Name	Office	Phone	Email
Jessica Bolwahn	President	608-637-3753	Ja4bolwahn@hotmail.com
Jim Rogala	Past President	608-786-1855	jrogala@usgs.gov
Scott Cooper	Secretary	608-785-6983	cooper.scot@uwlax.edu
Ned Gatzke	Treasurer	608-269-2033	cngatzke@centurytel.net
Diane Hanson	Member-at-large	608-637-3735	nosnah@mwt.net
Don Nelson	Newsletter editor	608-435-6203	don094@centurytel.net

Coulee Volunteers on TPE Corporate Board and Committees

Name	Office
Jim Rogala	Corporate Board, Land Management and Education committees

Coulee Chapter Business Items

Next TPE Coulee Chapter Meeting to be held on December 10, 2011

Date: Saturday December 10

Time: 10:00 a. m.

Where: Room 301, Cowley Hall, UW-La Crosse

Directions: www.uwlax.edu/campus-map/index.htm

New Equipment Available for Use with Prescribed Burns

Our chapter has received a donation of firefighting helmets. These are a must for burns within wooded areas. It is also a good idea to wear helmets when participating in prescribed burns on prairies. Let Jim Rogala know if you're interested in borrowing the helmets.

Interseeding at Holland Sand Prairie

By the time you read this, seeds collected over the last two years will have hit the sand at Holland Sand Prairie. The interseeding was restricted to seed collected on-site, and used to enhance an area where a large locust clone was removed. We will continue to collect and redistribute seed over the next few years. Hopefully, we'll see some improvement to the degraded area. Thanks to all those who volunteered to collect seed!

Would You Like Your Coulee Newsletter Sent Electronically?

Please contact Jim Rogala or Don Nelson. The newsletter will be posted on our Chapter website <http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapter/coulee/goatprairie.htm>.

Prairie Education and Outreach

2012 Annual TPE Conference and Banquet

Mark your calendars on Saturday February 25, 2012 for the next TPE Conference and Banquet to be held in Menomonie, WI. Details will be posted on the TPE and Coulee Chapter websites as the information becomes available. The conference offers speakers, presentations, vendors, the ever-popular auction and raffle and the banquet. Most importantly, of course, is the chance to hobnob with your fellow prairie enthusiasts! Hope to see you there!

Review: *Woodlands and Prairies Magazine* by Don Nelson

One of the benefits of attending the TPE Conference is the opportunity to discover the useful products and resources offered by the participating vendors. At the most recent conference, I had the chance to meet Rollie Henkes, the editor and publisher of *Woodlands and Prairies Magazine*. Rollie proved to be a well informed on a wide variety of topics relating to natural landscapes. He also proved to be a highly effective promoter for his magazine! *Woodlands and Prairies* was a new publication to me even though it has been published quarterly since 2004. When Rollie made me a deal I couldn't refuse (throwing in four back issues), I subscribed on the spot.

The articles in the each quarterly magazine are organized around a single theme or topic. For example, the focus of the Summer 2011 issue was insects. My previous issues looked at savannahs, land conservancies, and prairie restoration. The articles are informative, useful and richly illustrated with art and photography. As *Woodlands and Prairies* is a regional magazine, it maintains a focus on Midwestern landowners and their efforts to manage their woods and prairies. I frequently find articles that speak to my interests and needs. It's also been fun to see acquaintances from TPE and the Kickapoo Wood Cooperative featured in the magazine's articles.



Woodlands and Prairies' icon, Mrs. Woods, in Her Insect Collecting Garb

The *Woodlands and Prairies* website (www.mrswoodsmagazine.com) includes information on subscribing to the magazine (where you can also get Rollie's free back issues deal) as well as additional resources that should appeal to all of us who care about our woods and prairies.

Fall Burn on Vernon County Hill Prairie By Paul Hayes

Hill prairie burns can be tricky and so I wanted to get it right when my neighbors, Lloyd and Mary Lee Croatt, asked me to help plan for a November burn on several segments of their native hill prairie. We met a few days before the burn date to scout the sites. My notes from burn school indicated that the slope would be a key factor. A 25% slope can pull fire uphill against the wind and will accelerate fire if wind and slope agree. We printed out Google Earth images of the burn unit and noted the variance in slope; we also recognized aspect, fuel load, location of utilities and areas in the shade of an adjacent woodlot. Meanwhile, our Amish friend helped to mow and clear firebreaks using the TPE leaf blower. Over the next few days Lloyd recruited a crew and rounded up more TPE equipment.



Reviewing the Burn Plan

The weather forecast for the burn date looked too windy and so we moved the burn up a day and set the start time for 1:00. We went over the ignition plan with the crew of nine: a good mix of first-timers and experienced old-timers. The first burn was about a quarter acre and had a low fuel load of goldenrod, raspberry, and sumac with some Indian grass mixed in. The slope and wind were in the same direction so we back burned a ten-yard wide firebreak and set small head fire strips working downhill. The site's cool season grasses were still green and that made for thick smoke. Mary Lee had some success combating the smoke with swimmers goggles. At one point, the adjacent wood lot pulled the head fire across wind but Ned Gatzke was there to put it out as it jumped the firebreak.



Ned at the Ready

The second burn was to be about two acres on the crown of the hill. The wind had picked up and, after a crew consultation, we postponed that unit until later in the day. We then moved on to a half-acre savannah area. A rock outcrop just above the burn area looked like it could be a tricky obstacle and so we posted water and flapper on both sides above the outcrop. The wind had diminished by the time we finished with the savannah. We returned to the crown of hill and started a back burn on the top and flanks of the site. We worked downhill in ten-yard strips. The fire on the open slope roared but we were able to keep it under control. With the favorable wind and a heavier fuel load, we were able to accomplish more in the last half hour than the previous three hours! Clean up included checking on some brush piles and a few hollow trees for any lingering fire. Tired and smoky, we enjoyed the soup and hospitality that awaited us at the bottom of the hill.



The Crew

From left to right: Don Hazlett from Viola, Migs Percy from Reedsburg, Paul Hayes from Bloomingdale, Noel Adams from Milwaukee, Tom Lukins from Avalanche/ Nature's Nook Retreat, John Lucas from Avalanche, Mary Lee & Lloyd Croatt from Avalanche, Ned Gatzke from Sparta.

Information about Prairies and Oak Savannas

Rockroses: Taxonomy 101 for Plants of the Coulee Goat Prairies by Jim Rogala

There are two species of the *Helianthemum* (rockrose) genus that can be found on our hill prairies. Another common name for these two is frostweed, which is perhaps a better name considering the dissimilarity of this genus to roses.



The name frostweed derives from morning moisture that exudes from the stem giving it a frosty look. Another interesting trait of these two is that they have both self-pollinating and cross-pollinating “flowers.” The cross-pollinating flowers are yellow with five petals and develop in June or July. The flowers are about an inch in diameter. The many small self-pollinating capsules are found along the leaf axils.

The plant, as with many dry prairie species, tends to be prostrate and, therefore, seldom attains a height equal to the spread of its many branches. The flowering structure itself differs slightly between the two species. The sepals are all the same size in long-branch frostweed (*H. canadense*) and two sepals are shorter in hoary frostweed (*H. bicknelli*). An easier method of identification is to look at the arrangement of the flowers. *H. canadense* has solitary flowers with lateral branches that extend beyond the flower. *H. bicknelli* has a terminal flower cluster at the end of the branches that hold up to ten flowers. *H. canadense* flowers several weeks earlier than *H. bicknelli*, unfortunately, the showy little petals on both of these species are short lived. So, more likely than not, you’ll identify these plants by the many clusters of seed capsules that line the stems. Look for these capsules yet this fall and into the winter on the hill prairies you visit.

Taxonomy 101 for Plants of the Coulee Goat Prairies articles are now on our webpage <http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapter/coulee/goatprairie.htm>.

Reminder: Keeping Up with Your TPE Dues

To find out if you are current on your TPE dues, just check the mail label on our latest *Prairie Promoter* newsletter. Checking your “dues date” will help you keep up with your membership and make sure you don’t miss a single issue of *Promoter* or the Coulee Chapter newsletter.