



COULEE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2008

Chapter President's Message

I can't believe that it's the end of another month - we'll be into the holidays in the blink of an eye. And once again, we are moving into the organization's annual appeal time. This is the time to look back on all that has been accomplished and thank all of you members, donors, and volunteers for your generous support of TPE this past year. It is also the time to look ahead to the future needs of the organization. I know that the economic climate is currently turbulent at best, and I personally would rather ask for an hour of your time and not a dollar from your pocket, but TPE cannot accomplish all its goals with brush cutting and burning alone.

The organization as a whole really does a phenomenal job of leveraging, in sense stretching, dollars from donations and memberships to the greatest extent possible. Whether it's an additional gift at the end of this year, a membership that's been "bumped up", or becoming more involved with the organization as a volunteer or committee member, please continue your support for TPE and the preservation of our natural heritage. Thank you!

Jessica

REMEMBER!!

The Coulee Chapter's Late Fall Members Meeting will be held Saturday November 1st at 301 Cowley Hall at UW-L. Meeting begins as 10:00 am. Please see inside for more details.

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
Jean Stramel	Membership	608-625-4069	jeanstr@mwt.net

Coulee Volunteers on TPE Corporate Board and Committees

Name	Office
Jim Rogala	Corporate Board
Carmeen Johnston	Fundraising and Endowment committee
George Johnston	Fundraising and Endowment committee
Jim Rogala	Land Management committee

Coulee Chapter Business Items

TPE – Coulee Chapter Fall Meeting September 20, 2008 Decorah Mound near Galesville Meeting Minutes

Members present: Armund Bartz, Jessica Bolwahn, Andrea Benco, Mike Benco, Jayne Collins, Ned Gatzke, Gordon Powell, Jim Rogala and Jon Schultz.

President Bolwahn opened the meeting at 10:10 am.

Accept minutes:

Jim Rogala moved that the minutes from May 31, 2008 meeting be accepted; Andrea Benco seconded the motion.

Treasurer's update:

Ned Gatzke, Coulee Region Chapter treasurer, reported on a meeting with the TPE treasurers from other chapters and the central treasurer. The treasurers discussed the importance of providing sufficient documentation with all submitted acquisition vouchers. Also that TPE has a tax exempt number to be used for purchases that would apply a tax. Ned also talked about the contractor information that is needed to set up 1099s prior to any billing.

Ned requested that our chapter develop a better way for him to keep track of approved spending. It was resolved that a contact person be established for each item that is approved. This individual should be able to answer Ned's questions about those expenses. Currently, the only outstanding approved spending item is the Kiosk for the Holland Sand Prairie. Jessica will be the contact for that budget item.

Old Business:

Burn and Chemical Use Workshops: Jessica Bolwahn reported that more information on these workshops will be provided at the November members meeting.

Holland Sand Prairie Kiosk: The Friends of Holland Sand Prairie have decided not to move forward with the previous design. A new design and budget will be developed. The CRC offer to contribute \$500 towards the project with a new design is still valid.

New Business:

Display at Workshop at Norskedalen: Our chapter has been asked to participate as an exhibitor at a woodlot owners workshop/field day. Jessica asked for volunteers to staff our hill prairie display at the workshop. Jim Rogala will send out an email request for volunteers.

Developing a prairie showcase along the La Crosse River State Bike Trail: Jayne Collins (State Trail Ranger and TPE member) presented ideas for our chapter's consideration. Specifically, Jayne is looking to enhance the kiosk area at the Rockland site. Opportunities include enhancing species composition and removal of exotics in the small area adjacent to the kiosk, and adding informational materials to the kiosk/trail area. All these activities could be done in coordination with scout/school groups when possible. There are also opportunities at other towns along the trail where a small prairie area might be managed. The attendees at the meeting agreed we are interested in such a partnership, and Jim Rogala offered to research the possible components of such a project. Jim and Jayne will have a project proposal to present at the November meeting.

Adopting an MVC property: TPE has in the past offered to manage a prairie on one of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC) properties. MVC has selected their Juniper Partners preserve (south-end of La Crosse) as a potential site. Abbie Meyer (MVC employee and TPE member) will present information on the site at our November meeting. Discussion on an agreement will follow.

Jim Rogala moved that the meeting be adjourned, Gordy Powell seconded. Meeting Adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Jim Rogala

Decorah Mound Workday

Following the September chapter meeting on the porch of the land's donor, Mrs. Harlen Hunter, several members of our chapter (see photo) headed up Decorah Mound to cut brush and take some of the larger trees off the prairie portion of the hillside. Burned in the spring of 2007, it was still fairly obvious where the burn unit had been located - the understory of the lower slope was clear of underbrush and many dead stems of top-killed shrubs remained above the prairie vegetation at the top. However, there was still plenty of work waiting for us. It's amazing what just a few extra hands will do - in the few hours we spent on site, we were able to clear out a good corner of the prairie. Decorah Mound is located south of Galesville, just off of Hwy 54. The Nature Conservancy currently holds title to the property, but our chapter has been handling its stewardship since 2003. Jim Rogala is the site steward. (An overhead view of the site can be found at

<http://maps.live.com/default.aspx?v=2&FORM=LMLTCP&cp=rbcyb57cqtz5&style=o&lvl=1&tilt=90&dir=0&alt=1000&scene=26016469&phx=0&phy=0&phscl=1&encType=1>)



Decorah Mound workday participants from left to right: Jon Schultz, Armund Bartz, Jim Rogala, Jayne Collins, Gordy Powell, Andrea Benco and Mike Benco (photo by Jessica Bolwahn).

Coulee Chapter Fall Meeting – November 1, 2008

The next meeting of the Coulee Chapter will be Saturday November 1st at 10 am in room 301 Cowley Hall on the campus of UW La Crosse. We will discuss the possibility of adopting a portion of the state trail adjacent to the Rockland Prairie State Natural area and the Junipers Partners property in the La Crosse Blufflands. Updates on future training opportunities will also be provided. Please bring ideas for fall and winter workdays so we can put together a schedule. If you have items you would like included on the agenda, please contact Jessica Bolwahn at (608) 637-3753 or ja4_bolwahn@hotmail.com. *Your participation is crucial to TPE and our chapter. Hope to see you at the meeting!*

The Coulee Region Chapter Mixes It Up with Woodland Owners

The CRC participated in the “Forestry Field-days” workshop at Norskedalen near Coon Valley in early October. The two days of seminars and demonstrations was sponsored by many regional resource agencies and organizations. Patrick Dayton of the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council invited TPE to the workshop for an opportunity to inform landowners of potential hill prairies nestled within their woodland. We had our Hill Prairie poster on display, and Hill Prairie and TPE brochures available for distribution. The workshop was also a good chance to visit and revisit with natural resource partners that work closely with many landowners in the Coulee Region. Ned Gatzke, Greg Nessler, and Jim Rogala volunteered their time to staff the display. As a reminder, the Hill Prairie poster and brochures are available for use by any chapter. Contact Jim Rogala by email at therogues@charter.net or by phone at (608) 786-1855 for more information.

The Prairie Practitioner

Dealing with Invasives – Leaving the Herbicides at Home by Jim Rogala

In our last newsletter, Don Nelson challenged us to share highlights of “low tech” approaches for dealing with invasive plants in our prairies. For me, low tech approaches partly translates into mechanical control methods as opposed to chemical treatment of invasives. I’ll give three examples of successes using mechanical control, and hope others add their experiences in “The Prairie Practitioner” write-ups in future newsletters.

The first success was simply blind luck. I had an old sumac clone at the edge of an open area where I walked from one remnant to another. While ducking under the sumac branches, I’d see a seed stalk or two of side-oats grama some years. One summer about 5 years ago, I decide to remove the sumac and see what else was lingering under this canopy. I thought I’d have a real battle, as I anticipated that I would need to continue cutting resprouts for years following the initial cut (I’m herbicide phobic and didn’t treat the stumps). Much to my surprise, there was no resprouting. Apparently the combination of the older age of the clone and the timing of the cut resulted in that pleasant surprise. An additional pleasantry was the appearance of prairie plants such as prairie violet, ladies tresses, whorled milkwort, and grooved flax where once sumac had made their continued existence uncertain.

My second story involved a bit more persistence on my part. I made the mistake of letting some Queen Ann’s Lace (QAL) build up over a couple of years in a planting. The location of the initial infestation was quite obvious from the shape of the showy plumes of QAL. I decided that if I didn’t want this plume of plumes to advance, I had better do something about it. I decided to simply lop off the QAL plants just below the surface before the flowers matured (or pulled them out as soil conditions and my back permitted). I would do this many times during the summer, thus letting few plants go to seed. This year, some 3 years later, I was down to less than two dozen plants to be tended to.

There will always be a source for a new infestation, but by diligently removing QAL before they go to seed, I hope to avoid a similar intense effort in the future.

My last example of a success is girdling a young clone of aspen. Girdling is done by removal of the outer bark without disturbing the inner bark, thus slowly starving the roots. While I was confident in using this technique on older clones, I wasn’t sure what success I’d have with a younger clone. In addition, the clone included “stems” on the neighboring property, and I didn’t get permission to girdle those. The result was mixed, as there was a little resprouting, but certainly far less than would have resulted from simply cutting the clone. Likely, I think this illustrates the importance of girdling the whole clone, rather than being a function of the age of the clone. I’ve got a few more recently girdled clones that will provide more anecdotal evidence for my assessment of the method.

Information about Prairies and Oak Savannas

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

NOTE: This short narrative is provided to introduce you to some species likely found in bloom in specific settings or time frames. These narratives do not include taxonomic details on how to identify these plants, but may point you in the right direction. There are several excellent field guides and taxonomic texts for those interested in a more complete description of the species discussed below - J. R.

Yellow False Foxgloves

While writing of the purple false foxgloves (*Agalinis*) in the last newsletter, I promised to cover the yellow ones “another time.” While the topic is fresh in my mind, I’ll briefly cover the two yellow false foxgloves of *Aureolaria* genus. These two species are additional examples of plants associated with the prairie edge or woodland openings, and not specifically prairies. The fact that they are partially parasitic on oaks provides some evidence of this fact.

I’ll start with the clammy false foxglove (*Aureolaria pedicularia*), as that is the one that I’ve just recently found on my property. It is not that the species is inconspicuous, as it is a fairly large plant of over 3 feet tall with large showy yellow large flowers over an inch long. The flowers have the typical foxglove tubular shape, so it can’t be confused with any species not in the *Aureolaria* genus. The leaves are fern-like, as suggested by the other common name for this species (Fern-leaved yellow false foxglove). Even before flowering, the plant size with the distinct leaf shape provides enough for identification. These are annual plants, which, as I’ve mentioned before, can vary greatly in density across years. Perhaps that is why it evaded my detection for so many years.



I’m not very familiar with the other species in this genus. The large-flowered yellow false foxglove (*Aureolaria grandiflora*) is similar to the clammy false foxglove, but lacks the fern-shaped leaves. This one can even be larger in size (up to 5 feet), and can have larger flowers (thus the common name). From the species range within Wisconsin as determined by herbarium records, this species would be more likely found on southern Wisconsin goat prairie species and less likely found as far north as the Coulee Region Chapter boundaries.

Take a poke around in oak openings during August to look for the yellow flowers and delicate fern-shaped leaves of the clammy false foxglove. If they are there, they’ll provide a worthwhile show.

Having Trouble Remembering Your TPE Dues?

All you have to do is check the mail label on our latest *Prairie Promoter* newsletter. This new feature will help you keep current with your membership and make sure you don’t miss an issue of *Promoter* or the Coulee Chapter newsletter.

Contact us with your items for our newsletter. We want to hear from you!!

Don Nelson, Coulee Chapter Newsletter Editor

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