



COULEE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2009

Chapter President's Message

Summer is finally here - and we've had the heat to prove it! Although a little slow to start this year, our prairies are in bloom and TPE, as always, has a great list of hikes scheduled. Attend a hike near, at a favorite place or somewhere down the road you've just never made it to see something completely new.

The TPE annual picnic and meeting is fast approaching, too. The Northwest Illinois chapter will be hosting this year's event in Hanover, IL, on July 19th. It's another opportunity to rub elbows with fellow Prairie Enthusiasts from across the organization.

Our Coulee Region chapter will be having a picnic and hike as well this year. Member Jon Schultz will be hosting the event at his family's farm in Buffalo County where they are in the process of restoring several goat prairie remnants and adjacent woodlands. Please see details inside - I hope you will be able to attend!

As you spend time outdoors enjoying our prairies this summer, please take some time to think about what you would like to see from our TPE chapter - or from the organization as a whole. Are there other activities we should be engaged in? Are there services you would like to see offered? Educational opportunities? Things other chapters are doing we should be doing? Do you know a speaker the rest of the chapter may find interesting? Please consider attending chapter meetings or participating on one of the organization's committees. Email me if you have ideas, suggestions, or concerns. The strength of this organization lies with the membership and is dependent on your involvement. What do you want your TPE to be?

Enjoy the summer!

Jessica

UPCOMING EVENTS

TPE Picnic on July 19th at Hanover, IL. and the Coulee Chapter's Summer Picnic and Hikes on Saturday July 25th near Arcadia, WI.
Please see details in this newsletter!

TPE Coulee Chapter Officers and Officials for 2009

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

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 *Prairie 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
608-435-6203
don094@centurytel.net

Coulee Chapter Business Items

TPE – Coulee Chapter Spring Meeting May 9, 2009 Myrick Hixon EcoPark, La Crosse Meeting Minutes

Present: Jessica Bolwahn, Scott Cooper, Ned Gatzke, Gordy Powell, Jim Rogala, Carmeen Johnston, George Johnston, Don Nelson, Jon Schultz, Kathryn Lammers.

Special Guest: Evanne Hunt, President TPE

1. Meeting called to order at 10:10 am
2. Jessica provided a tour of the nearly finished EcoPark building, and we discussed possibilities for assisting in developing prairie plantings as part of the landscaping.
3. No minutes have been published since our last meeting, so none were approved.
4. The treasurer's report was provided by Ned. There was a discussion on keeping a record of allocated funds to track expenditures.
5. Evanne displayed the Conservation Organization of the Year award received by TPE from the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. Jessica and Jim accompanied Evanne to receive award at the WCC banquet held in La Crosse on May 8th.
6. Evanne fielded questions on a variety of issues brought up by attendees. These included: the treasurer's role in accounting, budget process, new membership notification, and notifying TPE central of non-monetary donations. There were also discussions on development of educational materials, including a photo contest and burn information packets. We discussed what impacts TPE's newly acquired burn insurance policy might have on how we function.
7. A summary of the burn season was provided by those present. Some topics were: keeping grass breaks mowed year round, using evening burns to minimize risk, and we had more discussion on smoke control issues. It was a very dry burn season this year, which left folks scrambling to complete scheduled burns. The season also provided us with a reminder of how much respect we must have for the dry fuels of prairies.
8. We decided to try to get a summer picnic scheduled. Jon Schultz offered up the Schultz farm near Arcadia as a possible site.
9. Jessica again requested potential speakers to have at our winter meetings.
10. Meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.
11. Minutes submitted by Jim Rogala (acting for Scott Cooper)

Join us on Saturday July 25th for a Coulee Region Picnic and Hikes

Are you ready to do some some walking, some eating and some more walking? Join us on Saturday July 25th and we'll make a day of it!

First, there will be a pre-picnic hike at Perrot State Park at 10:00 am when Chapter member Andrea Benco will lead us an easy hike of a prairie remnant. See the field trip flier for details. State park vehicle admission stickers are required. Meet Andrea at the Nature Center at Perrot State Park just northwest of Trempealeau, WI.

Then at 1:00 pm, it's on to the main event with a picnic and hike at the Schultz Farm near Arcadia. Jon Schultz will host a picnic and lead us on a hike on his family's 400 acre farm. Jon has singlehandedly worked on restoring seven hill prairies and adjoining savanna. After the picnic, Jon will show us his progress and discuss management techniques he has used. The hike will start at two adjoining hill prairies on an established trail near the farmhouse. Folks with less time or stamina can head back after visiting those prairies, while others can continue on to the other five hill prairies that are at various stages of restoration.

For the picnic, please bring tableware, beverages, and a dish to pass. There is a pond and so feel free to bring your poles.

If you're attending the Perrot Park hike, drive West through Park and then...

Continue on W Prairie Rd	1.0 mi
Turn left at W Prairie Rd	2.8 mi
Turn left at St Rd 35 / 54	0.3 mi
Turn right at County Rd G	5.4 mi
Continue on Leo Kulas Rd	1.4 mi
Turn right at County Rd J	1.2 mi
Turn right at County Rd JJ	0.7 mi
Continue on Kukowski Ln	0.3 mi

The farm is the second and final home on the Lane, drive to the end of the blacktop and go up the gravel driveway. If you coming from the Lacrosse or Winona, travel along St Rd 54/35 until you turn north on County Rd G. The Address is N23277 Kukowski Lane Arcadia, WI. 54612. If you are having trouble finding the farm, please call 608 539-5876.

Please reply to Jon Schultz (608 397-7865) or Jim Rogala (608 786-1855 or therogues@charter.net) if you plan to attend.

Can You Help Fight Invasives at Elk Creek?

Jessica Bolwahn is looking for some folks to help with spraying the Reed Canarygrass at the Elk Creek site near Viola. Jessica and Amy Staffen completed a good chunk of the work earlier this spring. Jessica can meet with a work party during an evening to review what needs to be done. Jessica reports that the site is looking better. Previous mowing and the herbicide work on the thickest RCG areas has made a big difference. Jessica will also need volunteers in the future to help with other invasive control at Elk Creek.

Please call Jessica at 608 386-0327 if you are able to help.

Prairie Education and Outreach

Holland Sand Prairie Hike Received Media Coverage

A *La Crosse Tribune* staff writer and photographer were among those attending the June 13th hike at the Holland Sand Prairie near Holmen. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy co-sponsored the TPE hike that was led by Jim Rogala. Despite the short deadline (that afternoon) and the inability to follow-up on specifics (Jim left town right after the hike), the article provides information that might spark interest in preserving and managing prairies in the Coulee Region. The article can be viewed at <http://www.lacrossetribune.com/articles/2009/06/14/news/z02prairie14.txt>.

Take a Hike: Summer Field Trips in the Coulee Region

July 11 (Saturday)	10:00 am	<u>Butterflies on the Prairie, Buffalo County</u>
July 19 (Sunday)	1:30 pm	<u>La Crosse River State Trail's Rockland Prairie</u>
July 25 (Saturday)	10:00 am	<u>Perrot State Park Prairies, Trempealeau County</u>
Aug. 9 (Sunday)	1:30 pm	<u>La Crosse River State Trail's Rockland Prairie</u>
Aug. 30 (Sunday)	1:30 pm	<u>La Crosse River State Trail's Rockland Prairie</u>

Please check the TPE flier for more details on these and other field trips.

The Vanishing Present: A Book Review submitted by Don Nelson

The Vanishing Present: Wisconsin's Changing Lands, Waters, and Wildlife (2008) Edited by Donald M. Waller and Thomas P. Rooney

The view from this mound surpasses description! An ocean of prairie surrounds the gazer, whose vision is not limited to less than thirty or forty miles: the great sea of verdure is interspersed with delightfully varying undulations like the vast waves of the ocean and every here and there are spots of wood, large groves, extensive ranges of timber, small groups of trees, as if planted by the hand of art, for ornamenting this splendid scene. William Rudolf Smith, 1838

I have to confess that I was less than enthusiastic when my friend, Ben Johnston, recommended one of his grad school textbooks as a “Good read.” In my experience, the notion that a textbook could be a “good read” was oxymoronic. Well, Ben was right and I was wrong. The Vanishing Present is not only a good read, it's an important book for anyone with a serious interest in Wisconsin's natural environment.

The book is a collection of articles organized around Wisconsin's natural communities and the history, and outcomes, of human interaction with those communities. Specifically, the articles describe the status of the lands, waters, plants, and animals of Wisconsin at various points of human intrusion onto the landscape. The reader learns that Wisconsin has been a “managed” by human for 13,000 years. From woodland peoples to suburbanites, each group has changed the “natural” world (consciously and unconsciously) in ways that reverberate down the years.

While several articles consider prairies, savannahs and their respective ecosystems, the broad scope of the book helps the reader understand that human activities have, and will continue, to impact all of Wisconsin's natural communities. As the editors suggest, “if (after reading the book) you are more aware of and interested in Wisconsin species and habitats and how they have changed, this book has been a success.”

The articles are authored by many of the best scientific minds currently studying and writing about Wisconsin plants, animals and habitats. While the authors are researchers and academics, the articles are succinct and accessible to the lay reader. The articles are well referenced for those interested in digging deep into any of the topics covered.

The Vanishing Present (ISBN 978-0-226-87171-4) is published by the University of Chicago Press and is available through Amazon.com for about \$35.

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.

The Prairie Tick-Trefoils

Many of us are familiar with the tick-trefoils, and have discovered the seeds attached to our clothing (or the dog's fur) after a hike in woodlands or prairies. As with many closely related plants in a single genus, the various tick-trefoils (*Desmodium sp.*) have somewhat distinct associations with different plant communities. The commonalities are that they are all legumes, with hard seeds contained in pods and leaves with three leaflets. They have typical pea style flowers, being pinkish to purplish in color.

First, let's talk of the two prairie desmodiums. These two differ from the more woodland species in that they have smaller leaves and narrower multi-lobed seedpods.

The most common on dry sites such as our hill prairies is the Illinois tick-trefoil (*Desmodium illinoense*). This species has lance-like leaves that are one inch wide and three inches long. It tends to be more upright and slightly taller (sometimes taller than five feet) than most tick-trefoils. The inch-long flowers are terminal on the stalks, although some branching may occur. This species has many flowers over the course of mid- to late-summer, but only a few are open at any one time. The seedpods, holding up to five seeds, are indented on both sides of the pod.

The second prairie Desmodium is the Showy tick trefoil (*D. canadense*). As the name implies, the flowers are showier in this species, with most flowers blooming at the same time on many branches containing flowers. The leaves are a little smaller, and more pointed toward the ends. The seedpods are flattened on one side, and slightly curved. This species is more commonly associated with mesic to wet prairies, but may be found on some hill prairies.

The common woodland species include the pointed (*D. glutinosum*) and naked tick-trefoil (*D. nudiflorum*). These species have fewer, larger leaves and larger flatter seedpods containing 2-4 seeds. The naked tick-trefoil gets its name from the leafless flowering stalk that originates from the base of the plant and is separate from the vegetative stalk. Although most likely to be found in the plant communities I've listed them with, don't be surprised to find the woodland species on the edges of prairies, and certainly they are no stranger to savannas.

Look for tick-trefoil flowers in July and August on hill prairies and adjacent woods. The seedpods persist into late fall, and can be used to find and identify these species while out on a hike. You may even be able to identify the presence of tick-trefoils without actually seeing the plant, as the sticky seedpods may be discovered long after your hike is done!