



# COULEE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010

## Editor's Message

Looking out over the frozen tundra it's hard to believe that spring will come...ever.

However, if you'll take a look at our newsletter, you'll see that the signs of spring are already apparent for the far-sighted Prairie Enthusiast!

Our first chapter meeting of the new year is set for Saturday January 16<sup>th</sup>. What a great opportunity to shake off that Cabin Fever and hobnob with your fellow enthusiasts. One of the agenda items is developing a list of our projected burns. What says "Spring" more than the flames and smoke of a prairie burn?

Then there's our annual conference set for Monroe on Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup>. Our conference is a great way to kick off the new prairie year (ever in the middle of snow storm like last years)! Come and listen to others share their experiences and don't neglect to contribute your own hard won knowledge. I know that for me the conference provides the motivation I need to start my planning for the upcoming growing season.

Finally, read Jim's article on the lovely and delicate harebell. What better spring tonic can there be then to contemplate harebells nodding in a light summer breeze? Ahhhh.

Hoping to see you soon and don't forget to **THINK SPRING!**

*Don*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Coulee Region Chapter Meeting Saturday January 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in Room 301 in Cowley Hall, UW-L.**
- **Annual TPE Conference and Banquet Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup> at Ludlow Mansion in Monroe, Wisconsin.**

### **TPE Coulee Chapter Officers and Officials for 2009**

Name	Office	Phone	Email
Jessica Bolwahn	President	608-637-3753	<a href="mailto:Ja4_bolwahn@hotmail.com">Ja4_bolwahn@hotmail.com</a>
Jim Rogala	Past President	608-786-1855	<a href="mailto:jrogala@usgs.gov">jrogala@usgs.gov</a>
Scott Cooper	Secretary	608-785-6983	<a href="mailto:cooper.scot@uwlax.edu">cooper.scot@uwlax.edu</a>
Ned Gatzke	Treasurer	608-269-2033	<a href="mailto:cngatzke@centurytel.net">cngatzke@centurytel.net</a>
Diane Hanson	Member-at-large	608-637-3735	<a href="mailto:nosnah@mwt.net">nosnah@mwt.net</a>
Don Nelson	Newsletter editor	608-435-6203	<a href="mailto:don094@centurytel.net">don094@centurytel.net</a>
Jean Stramel	Membership	608-625-4069	<a href="mailto:jeanstr@mwt.net">jeanstr@mwt.net</a>

### **Coulee Volunteers on TPE Corporate Board and Committees**

Name	Office
Jim Rogala	Corporate Board
Jim Rogala	Land Management committee

### **Coulee Chapter Business Items**

#### **TPE – Coulee Chapter Fall Meeting October 11, 2009 at Decorah Mound**

Members Present: Jessica Bolwahn, Scott Cooper, Jim Rogala, Scott Cooper, Andrea Benco, Greg Nessler

1. Meeting called to order at 10:10 a.m.
2. Jim summarized the TPE Board Meeting. Formal minutes for the meeting are on the TPE website.
3. Greg Nessler described a two acre restored prairie in Reedsburg that may be available for TPE to purchase.
4. Upcoming workdays will be held at the Becker/Miller Tract and the Holland Sand Prairie were previewed.
5. Equipment for possible purchase by the Chapter was discussed. Jessica will bring a proposal to include items and prices to the next meeting.
6. Means for increasing Chapter membership were also discussed.

7. Next chapter meeting will be announced at a future date. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

**TPE – Coulee Chapter Late Fall Meeting November 7, 2009 at U. W. La Crosse**

Members Present: Jessica Bolwahn, Jim Rogala, Scott Cooper, Andrea Benco, Mike Benco, Peg Zappen, George Johnston, Pat Caffrey

1. Scott Cooper gave a talk on the 13-lined ground squirrel entitled “Why Hibernation is Cool.”
2. The TPE Annual Conference and Banquet will be held on Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup> in Monroe, Wisconsin. The Chapter will be soliciting items for the Silent Auction.
3. The Chapter is considering equipment purchases as our budget request is due to TPE Central in January. The following items are on our wish list...  
backpack herbicide sprayers, water bladders, gas powered leaf blower, Nomex suits, herbicide, loppers, chaps and headgear for brush cutting, brush saw and radios with batteries.

The Chapter is also looking at restoration grants for equipment costs up to \$10,000.

4. We will be conducting a poll to see if you members would be more likely to attend Chapter meetings if they were held on a weeknight rather than on Saturdays.
5. The TPE Coulee Chapter is now on Facebook.
6. The next Chapter meeting will be announced at a future date. There will also be a request for work party proposals.
7. Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 p. m.

### **Next Chapter Meeting to be Held on January 16, 2010**

Please join us for our next meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in Room 301 at Cowley Hall on the UW-L campus.

Our meeting will open with a presentation by TPE Coulee Chapter member Armund Bartz entitled *Kansas Tallgrass; Twenty-two Years of Ecological Observations*. Armund's topics will include fire and fire ecology, plant and animal population shifts, and herbicide use in the tallgrass prairies of central Kansas. While Kansas is certainly different from Wisconsin, some of Armund's insights and observations can be applied to Wisconsin prairies and savannas.

Among the agenda items will be the continuation of our discussion on a possible TPE burn policy. We will also develop a list of winter workdays and spring burn dates. In addition, we are also hoping that TPE's new Development Director, Dani Stolley, will be able to join us (see the latest *Prairie Promoter* for more information on Dani).

### **Prairie Education and Outreach**

#### **Annual TPE Conference and Banquet to be hosted by Prairie Bluff Chapter**

Saturday, February 27, 2010 will be the date and the historic Ludlow Mansion in Monroe will be the place for this year's conference and banquet. This year's conference title is Our Past & Our Prairies with a special emphasis on TPE's origin and history. Of course, there will many other presentations on topics of interest to prairie enthusiasts. The banquet will begin at 6:00 p.m. and ecologist Steven Apfelbaum will be featured as the after dinner speaker.

In addition to our traditional raffle, auction, sales, vendor and chapter displays, this year's conference will feature our first TPE Photo Contest. Full details on the contest can be found on the TPE website.

For complete information on the coming conference and banquet, see the insert in the most recent *Prairie Promoter* (Winter 2009).

## **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 Bellflower**

The harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) is commonly found on hill prairies in our region. Its obvious bell-shaped blue flowers leave little doubt that it has the right to belong in the bellflower family. The delicate flowers are less than an inch long, and are supported on thin stems. The plant has narrow leaves up to two inches in length. After seeing the linear leaves of a flowering specimen, a closer look at the scientific name most certainly evokes a question regarding the selection of the species name. Rotundifolia means round leaf, which is certainly not what I described. As it turns out, the round leaves are the basal leaves, which may have already died back by the time the plant is flowering.

Harebells bloom over most of the summer. The long blooming period provides ample opportunity to find a highly visible flowering specimen on a summer hike. After the flowering period, however, the slenderness of the stems and leaves and its modest height (up to one and a half feet) make the plant a challenge to find. The light brown seed capsules may catch your eye in fall, but not like the bright blue flowers of summer. Add harebell to the list of species to look for next summer on a hill prairie in the Coulee region.



#### **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.

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

Don Nelson, Coulee Chapter Newsletter Editor

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