



COULEE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2006

Chapter President's Message

I'm extremely happy to again get a newsletter out to our chapter members. Although the *TPE Promoter* contains great information on TPE as a whole, this chapter newsletter provides an opportunity for more of a local slant. One of the agenda items for our next meeting will be to discuss what we want this newsletter to be. The responses to the simple questionnaire on the newsletter and its distribution illustrated that our chapter values the newsletter as is, but we can always make improvements. The request to better the newsletter came to me from our new newsletter editor. I think that it is a great illustration of the advantage in having as many members involved in some aspect of chapter activities as possible. Having a few volunteers (or arm-twisted individuals) controlling all of our chapter activities limits the opportunity for accomplishments.

Over the next year, we will be planning the 2008 TPE conference/banquet. The 2006 event organized by the Prairie Smoke Chapter was a huge success, largely due to the large and active conference committee that their chapter formed. We hope to rival their success, and will be starting work soon. Please consider volunteering in some capacity. This is a great opportunity "to educate the public through presentations and publications about our prairie and savanna heritage," which is one of TPE's three goals.

Jim

Mark Your Calendars for These Upcoming Events

- Our next Chapter Meeting will be held on Saturday January 13, 2007 at 10:00 am in Room 301 in Cowley Hall on the campus of UW – LaCrosse.
- Our Annual Winter Potluck will be held on Sunday February 17, 2007 starting at 1:00 pm at Don & Carol Nelson's near Wilton.

Check inside the newsletter for more details...

TPE Coulee Chapter Officers and Officials for 2007

Name	Office	Phone	Email
Jim Rogala	President	608-786-1855	jrogala@usgs.gov
Jessica Bolwahn	Vice President	608-637-3753	Ja4bolwahn@hotmail.com
Barb Christie	Past President	608-634-2110	edbarbc@webtv.net
George Johnston	Secretary	608-823-6098	ctr66098@centurytel.net
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 coordinator	608-625-4069	jeanstr@frontiernet.net

Looking Ahead to Important Chapter Events

Coulee Chapter Winter Meeting – January 13, 2007

The meeting will open with a presentation by Meredith Thomsen (Meredith's presentation title has not yet been determined). Following Meredith's presentation, these topics will be discussed:

- Scheduling spring work parties,
- Determining the chapter's management objectives,
- Reviewing the chapter's newsletter,
- Looking at our strategic planning process, and
- Transferring chapter funds to TPE central.

Your input is crucial to the success of our chapter and we hope to see you at the meeting!

Coulee Chapter Winter Potluck – February 18, 2007

Shake off those "winter blahs" by attending our annual Winter Potluck to be held at Don and Carol Nelson's on Sunday February 18, 2007 beginning at 1:00pm.

The Nelson's live at 26241 Midway Avenue outside of Wilton. Turn east on Midway just opposite of the Wilton cemetery (the cemetery is located on the south edge of Wilton along WI 131). Then drive east on Midway for 3.5 miles to the Nelson's.

Cold cuts, cheeses and assorted beverages (beer, wine, cider, coffee, etc) will be provided. Dishes and utensils will also be available. Please, bring along something to share.

Please RSVP to the Nelson's by phone (608-435-6203) or email (don094@centurytel.net) if you are planning to attend the potluck.

Coulee Chapter Field Trips for 2007

It's not too early to start thinking about sponsoring a field trip in 2007. Field trips might include a visit to a planting site, remnants on your own land (or other privately owned land), or to remnants on publicly owned lands. You do not need to be an expert in prairie ecology to host a hike. Field trips provide a great way to learn about prairies through conversations with other prairie enthusiasts. If you need assistance leading a hike, or have any questions, please contact Jim Rogala (608-786-1855). A call for spring/early summer field trips for the TPE flyer usually comes out in March.

Coulee Chapter to Host TPE's 2007 Summer Picnic and 2008 Conference

The Coulee Region Chapter will host the 2007 TPE Summer Picnic (tentatively scheduled for the Holland Sand Prairie). Our chapter will also host the Annual TPE Conference and Banquet in 2008. Please start to think about how you may be able to assist us in making these important TPE events successful.

Coulee Chapter Business Items

Minutes of September 2006 Chapter Board meeting

A Coulee Region Chapter Board meeting was held via email starting on September 29, 2006. CRC President Jim Rogala provided five items for attention by the Board (the items are in italics). A summary of the responses from the Board members is inserted after the items. Action taken by the Board is shown in bold print. Five of the six Board members provided input.

1. Donation to Damian Vraniak's non-profit. He has submitted expenses (totaling \$134, w/printouts provided) relating to the presentation he made during the Prairie Photo Exhibit. Damian had suggested that we could decide on an appropriate "fee" as well. After talking with him, I offered a donation to his organization that works with children to do roadside prairie plantings. The work is out of our region, but nonetheless, I feel we could financially support his work. The question is: "What amount?" I suggest a \$100-\$200 gift would be appropriate, but I'm not opposed to larger amounts.

- All of the Board members agreed to a donation up to \$200.
- **Action: Ned Gatzke, chapter treasurer, will send a check for \$200 to Damian's non-profit organization.**

2. At the last Central TPE Board meeting, we had a discussion about getting more funds to support the activities of our Central personnel (executive director, bookkeepers, tax auditors). Two methods were suggested. The first was splitting membership dues between the chapter and Central. We decided against that approach. The other idea was providing a contribution from chapter funds to Central. The Empire-Sauk chapter has already made a sizable donation (over \$10,000) to Central. I'm strongly in favor of this second approach. While I'm open to suggestions, but I will suggest a donation in the range of \$2,000 to \$5,000 be transferred to Central. It should be noted that there is now a Central committee that will address fund raising in the future, but for now, we need a quick bail out at the Central level.

- All Board members agreed to a donation, but several had concerns about the loss of these funds for our chapter's future land management activities. Generally, a transfer of \$3500 to \$5000 was suggested.
- **Action: At our next membership meeting, we will propose a \$5,000 transfer of CRC funds to Central.**

3. *Ned Gatzke suggested that we donate a print (or two) to the Mississippi Valley Conservancy for the silent auction at their upcoming banquet. I'm in favor of this, and ask board members if they also support this donation. There is no real cost, as the chapter had these images and printing donated.*

- All agreed to the donation
- **Action: We donated two prints to MVC for their auction.**

4. *I'd like to suggest we split the chapter president and Central Board member into two separate positions filled by two people. I talked to Evanne Hunt, TPE President, about this, and she agrees it is the best approach. The positions are evolving into a somewhat different jobs, as the Board will act more like a board in most organizations (not as technical in nature). I would prefer (actually forced to) to stay on as president until March 2008, but we'd have to come up with a new person for the Board. It's not a time-consuming job, but it requires people skills and it has more of an organizational emphasis. What are your thoughts, and do you have any suggestions for a member that may function well in such a position?*

- All agreed that a split of duties would be good. A couple Board members suggest that the Chapter Vice President could act as the board member in preparation for the position of President.
- **Action: This item will be discussed further at the membership meeting.**

5. *The Nature Conservancy has again asked me about our intent concerning Decorah and Sacia (if we take Sacia on; I still haven't made a visit). They are transferring ownership of several properties to other TPE chapters, and are interested in doing the same with Decorah and Sacia. Keep in mind that TPE Central handles all legal dealings such as this (that's one reason we need to financially support Central). However, I think we need to be more serious about some management activities. I've had several members from the Galesville area express interest in working on these properties, so it seems like a great project in that area. Any thoughts?*

- Most were in favor, but all expressed concerns regarding our ability to perform the needed stewardship activities. Several responses suggesting that we start contracting this type of work out to avoid any associated problems.
- **Action: This item will be discussed further at the membership meeting.**

Let Us Hear from You!

Do you have information that may be of interest to other chapter members? We would be glad to share your news items, helpful tips or prairie experiences. Just forward those to me by mail or email. We all look forward to hearing from you!!

Don Nelson, Coulee Chapter Newsletter Editor

608-435-6203

don094@centurytel.net

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.

As I've been selecting taxa for these little write-ups, I've mostly selected the showier species that we all seem to enjoy the most. However, for the forbs that I've discussed to thrive a good base of native grasses is required. The prairie grasses provide competition for prairie invaders and, for some forbs, a physical support for their delicate stems. There are far fewer species of native grasses than native forbs found on prairies, but the grasses typically are more prevalent on prairies. Most prairie grasses are bunch grasses (as opposed to sods), and being such provides space for forbs to take root between the grasses.

On goat prairies, although within the tall grass prairie region, we find shorter grasses. The two most common are Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Side-oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*). Little Bluestem has a unique enough bluish color that it can be identified without the presence of flower/seed structures. The seeds of both Little Bluestem and Side-oats Grama are distinctive enough that positive identification is quite easy. Little Bluestem often holds fluffy bearded seeds into the winter. Side-oats is appropriately named, as the oat-like seed are arranged on the side of the seed stalk. Another of the grama grasses is commonly found on goat prairies, but it takes a little looking to find. Hairy Grama (*Bouteloua hirsuta*) is a petite little grass with the seeds arranged tightly in a single row on a slightly angled end of the seed stalk. This arrangement leads to the use of another common name, "mustache grass".

Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) is another short grass that can be common on goat prairies. It is perhaps the ultimate bunch grass, as its densely bunched fine leaves fall over adjacent soil. The last of the short grasses I'll mention here is Prairie Satin-grass (*Muhlenbergia cuspidata*). This grass is less upright than most other grasses, and often its indistinct features go unnoticed on goat prairies. Other grasses on a goat prairie include some of the panic grasses (*Panicum spp.*) and some tall grasses such as Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Porcupine grass (*Stipa spartea*), and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), but typically the tall grasses are less dominant on goat prairies. The dominance of shorter grasses is a very important feature relating to the many shade-intolerant forbs that we find on goat prairies.