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The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Grassroots Conservation at Work

John & Olive Thomson Internship Endowment Receives Major Gifts

By Rich Henderson

The John and Olive Thomson Internship Endowment is now fully funded and able to support a 12-week student internship position with TPE. In June, Joan and Dennis Schurch Thomson donated \$40,000 and Olive Thomson donated \$40,000 to the endowment. These generous gifts, combined with an anonymous contribution of \$15,000 in April, bring the endowment's holdings to \$100,000. This now enables TPE to start funding, in perpetuity, an annual internship position. The program is planned to begin in 2013.

See Endowment on page 5

Menomonie to Host 2012 TPE Conference and Banquet

By Bill Hogseth

The St. Croix Valley and Chippewa Savannas Chapters have joined forces to host the annual conference on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012 at the UW-Stout campus in Menomonie, Wisc. Please mark your calendars now. The conference is open to the public; anyone interested in conservation should attend!

The conference agenda will feature a variety of experts and professionals presenting topics within three individual tracks. The tracks will run concurrently throughout the day:

Prairie Restoration 101 – Offers an introductory look at the basics of conducting a successful prairie or savanna restoration project.

Technical and Research Topics – Offers presentations on technical matters and research findings related to ecology and restoration.

Wildlife of Prairies and Savannas – The focus of this track will be on the animals that depend upon fire-adapted ecosystems.

The conference will also feature a silent auction/raffle fundraiser, in which participants may bid on donated items ranging from seed mixes, crafts, tools, books and art. The evening events will feature a dinner followed by a banquet speaker. The speaker will be announced in the winter issue of *The Prairie Promoter*.

We hope that conservationists and nature lovers throughout the region will join us for an exciting and fruitful conference.

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EDITORIAL VOLUNTEERS

Coulee Region Chapter 608.435.6203	Don Nelson don094@centurytel.net
Empire Sauk Chapter 608.233.2483	Cate Harrington Charrington@tnc.org
Many Rivers Chapter 920.373.6196	Deanna Pomije
Northwest Illinois Chapter 815.947.2287	Rickie Rachuy jr.TPE@verizon.net
Prairie Bluff Chapter 608.325.6228	Tom Mitchell tmitchell@tds.net
Prairie Sands Chapter	Shelley Hamel sdhamel@maQs.net
Prairie Smoke Chapter 507.867.9229	Andrea Mueller andreailltoparts@msn.com
SW Wisconsin Chapter 608.794.2724	Jesse Bennett jesse@driftlesslandstewardship.com
<i>The Prairie Promoter</i> Editor	Dana Bolwerk editor@theprairieenthusiasts.org

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If you would like to receive electronic notification of the newsletter, please e-mail Victoria Oberle at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

President's Message

JACK KUSSMAUL

In my first message as president, I will take the opportunity to introduce myself and tell you how it was that I became a Prairie Enthusiast.

I grew up on a farm near Mt. Hope, Wisc., graduated from the University of Wisconsin and then from Stanford Law School. After a bit of wandering, I ended up back in Wisconsin, a bit to my surprise. I am now a member of a four-person law firm in Lancaster.

Growing up, I thought of prairies as something that existed in the west. They were of no interest to me. I loved the woods. That is where I wanted to spend my time. My fantasies involved living a hundred years ago in a log cabin in a little clearing.

In 1981, I purchased 97 acres on the lower Wisconsin River, where I have since lived. It is a varied parcel, including low, sandy areas, upland openings and north-facing bluffs. It had not been farmed for many years so was already in the process of returning to nature. My plan was to reverse this trend and, as soon as the fences were in good shape, I was going to develop good pasture for beef cattle. Somehow this never happened and I gradually lost interest in that project.

Friends were telling me I should put in some prairie plants. I probably could not identify 10 flowers (even if we include dandelions) at the time, so I knew little about what I was doing, as is demonstrated by the following: I put in some purple coneflower, having no idea they were not native to this area and not caring. I am now in the process of trying to eradicate them. I put in spiderwort, with no real idea what spiderwort looked like. The next spring when the plants came up and bloomed, I discovered I had set them out in the middle of a large cluster of spiderwort that was already there. I like to think I have come a long way since those early days.

A friend, Dan Wallace, suggested doing some burning. He helped get a volunteer crew together and we burned small prairie areas. I have now been hiring Driftless Land Stewardship, which can conduct much larger burns covering the entire property. I have been scattering seed and getting rid of invasives, including a small pine grove that had been planted by a prior owner of the property. While at first I only worked on the prairie, I have since brought all of the oak woods and savanna areas under management. I have been aided by small grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and WHIP and WLIP grants from the DNR.

See President on page 3

Prairie Sands Hosts Annual Meeting, Field Trips

By Ann Woldt

The Prairie Sands Chapter was pleased to be the host of The Prairie Enthusiasts Annual Meeting and Picnic, held on Sunday, July 17, at the Westfield Pavilion in Westfield, Wisc. Chapter members offered several self-guided tours on Saturday afternoon, a picnic, campfire and overnight camping on Saturday night, and an opportunity for three field trips on Sunday.

Those folks who participated in the late afternoon Saturday picnic and overnight camping enjoyed grilling their dinner over an open fire, and had the opportunity to watch a pair of Sandhill Cranes bring their chick to forage at the edge of Shelley and David Hamel's bog.

Despite the intense heat, more than 50 people participated in the Sunday events, including a continental breakfast for the early birds, an abundant lunch highlighted by Kansas City style barbecue beef sandwiches, and plenty of desserts sufficient to satisfy all the sweet teeth among us. The natural artesian well at the Pavilion was a welcome relief from the heat, allowing folks to keep their water bottles and jugs filled with cold water all day.

The Sunday morning field trip was a tour of the Hugh Iltis Prairie and Savannah restoration, which is under consideration to be designated a state natural area. The restoration is located at the home of Prairie Sands founders and members, David and Shelley Hamel. This site hosts the federally-endangered Karner Blue butterfly. Since 1989, work has been on-going to increase the caterpillar's host plant Lupine and multiple nectar species. The remaining property includes a tamarack bog with cranberries, sundews and pitcher plants, and oak woods, which provide nesting sites for Red-Headed woodpeckers.

The day ended with two afternoon field trips. One caravan led to Keith Baker's prairie restoration, which has been on-going since 1992. Keith talked about his success and failures regarding a select harvest of white oak in 1989, a 10-year stand of Lupine with new areas in the making, Oak Wilt and his method of dealing with it, and a warm season grass hay and horse pasture.

The second afternoon tour was of Prairiehill Farm, which contains 100 acres of restored and reconstructed prairie, oak-hickory savannah, sedge meadows and emergent wetlands surrounding and containing a glacial drumlin. More than 80 species of endemic savanna plants survived a century of farming, and new discoveries are made each year. Prairie Sands members Laurel and Alan Bennett are restoration ecologists and have owned the land for 30 years.

A special thanks goes to all of our members who worked for more than a year to prepare for the meeting, including: Ray and Dick Goehring, chairs of the picnic planning committee. Also, Shelley and David Hamel,

Karen and Fred Wollenburg, Ralph Woldt, Laurel and Alan Bennet, Cathy and Bill Franks, Kathe and Bill Andresen, Jean Clark, John Schillinglaw, Dani Stolley (audio set-up), Peggy Vorwerk (photographer), and all the members of Prairie Sands who supported these activities with their participation and contributions.



Photo courtesy of Peggy Vorwerk

A few people brave the heat for a field trip during TPE's Annual Meeting and Picnic. Nearly 50 members gathered at the event hosted by the Prairie Sands Chapter.

President

(continued from page 2)

A neighbor and founder of The Prairie Enthusiasts, Walter Mirk, encouraged me to join. Except for volunteering occasional legal services, I really did nothing with the group. But, five years ago, I was approached by Renae Mitchell about joining the Board. After giving it some thought, I decided it was time that I get more deeply involved. I remember Renae telling me it would take about six hours per month. Needless to say, it has not turned out that way. I have no regrets, however, about the time it has taken. It has been a deeply satisfying and meaningful endeavor.

Many of you have similar stories about how you became Prairie Enthusiasts and how it has come to be an important part of your lives. We have the joy of working in the natural world and – more important – we are giving our lives meaning by creating a legacy for future generations.

Search for the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid ...

... and the journey to get there

By Scott Seigfreid

Photos courtesy of Scott Seigfreid

Wednesday, July 20th

5 a.m.: I head out the door to leave on an adventure for five days roaming the prairies of southwestern Minnesota's Rock County in search of the rare and imperiled Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (WPFO). I hop in the car and drive toward Luverne, Minn. Touch The Sky Prairie is located just north of the town and, on Sunday, we will have local Master Naturalist Jeanne Prekker, who is assisting MN DNR Ecologist Nancy Sather with her on-going research on WPFO in Blue Mounds State Park, give us a tour of the park and her plot she is monitoring.

After checking into my motel room in Luverne, I decide to take a drive out to Touch The Sky Prairie so I am sure to be able to lead others to it on Sunday.

Touch The Sky Prairie is a 1000-acre unit, there are 15 WPFO plants and, I am told, six of them are in the road ditch that splits the unit in half. I start driving and, after a very scenic (i.e., very accidental) tour of Rock County, there it is: Touch The Sky National Wildlife Refuge. The road splits the north and south units. Low and behold there they are in the ditch: a group of five Western Prairie Fringed Orchids! I am literally stunned at their beauty and complexity. They are large, two-foot-tall, white and fragrant. I start to understand the need for the protections that are in place for them.

This is just day one of a five-day journey and the quest of the entire trip is in front of my camera lens just five minutes after locating the refuge. Sunset approaches rapidly; time to head for the room and answer e-mails.

Thursday, July 21st

4:30 a.m.: After four hours of sleep, I head up Highway 75 toward Touch The Sky Prairie, coffee in hand and a little Hank Williams on the radio. I ask myself if this is normal behavior or am I completely dysfunctional and ready for the bug house? I reach the refuge in complete darkness and silence and start my half mile walk to the center of the largest tract of land. I want to experience this place coming to life at sunrise. I reach the highest vantage point on the refuge and dig out my camera gear. A



Western Prairie Fringed Orchard at Touch The Sky Prairie near Luverne, Minn..

thunderstorm is looming to the south and there is a great lightning storm off in the distance. The coyotes start their morning symphony; three groups in unison. They stop and the meadowlarks, dickcissel, bobolinks and Savannah sparrows start in. The large orange orb in the east breaks the horizon and I start to shoot pictures through the Big Bluestem. The orchids in this light are stunning. I am in Prairie Nerd Heaven, and can't wait to share the experience with other members.

I head over to Blue Mounds State Park to hike the upper cliffs trail and see what I can find. Sure enough, I see the first orchid poking its head up above the tall grass. Wow! There are 41 total in this group, protected from the heat by the grass surrounding them.

Continuing my hike I check the rock outcroppings and vernal pools on top of them. I see these very small delicate blue flowers that intrigue me and I spend some time making sure that I have photos of most of them. (I would later find out that I have found a group of some of the rarest plants in the state: the Mud Plantain (*Heteranthera limosa*) has only been viewed in bloom by a handful of botanists).

See WFPO on page 5

WFPO

(continued from page 4)



A Mud Plantain (*Heteranthera limosa*) in Blue Mounds State Park near Luverne, Minn.

Saturday, July 23rd

8 a.m.: The rest of the group arrived last night and we start our day at the refuge. It is very hot and windy, so we move across the road into the south portion of the refuge, which has a waterfall on the Beaver River. We arrive at the falls area, which is like an oasis in the midst of the tallgrass prairie we just walked through. We enjoy the cool shade along the river and converse as the children have fun and explore their new surroundings. We work our way back to the parking lot and share an ice cold watermelon among the 13 of us. What a way to end a fantastic morning on the prairie.

Tonight, we meet to explore the upper Blue Mounds Cliff Trail. We hike up to the group of orchids I came across earlier on Thursday; we can see that the intense heat is taking its toll. Emily Hutchins finds the Fame Flowers that open about 4 p.m. each evening and bloom through the night. As the sun starts to set, we take in the beauty of the prairie from the highest elevation in the park. Did somebody mention ice cream?



Molly Tranel points out White Prairie Clover to Canaan Selvy at Touch The Sky Prairie.

Sunday, July 24th

8 a.m.: We meet Jeanne at her sample area for monitoring the orchids in Blue Mounds State Park. She explains the research and how air temp, humidity and ground temp are monitored in the plot at specific locations. Specific orchid's heights are measured weekly and the data recorded for Nancy Sather's study on the WFPO, which she has been conducting for 25 years. There is also a plant camera on one orchid. The camera takes four photos daily and, at some point, these will be posted on the internet so that we can watch the life of a WFPO unfold from start to finish. As of that day, there were 311 orchids in the plot that Jeanne has been monitoring. The group fans out and searches for new plants that may have slipped under the radar. We find several and Jeanne documents them with the GPS. The large group of 41 orchids I had found earlier in the week is documented and added to the study; Nancy's job is to figure out how they arrived at that location.

The heat of the day takes its toll. It is noon and time to pack up. On the drive home, I reflect on the past five days: the wealth of information I have absorbed; the new friendships and camaraderie. The experience was so fulfilling. It is the journey itself not the destination that is so important. See you next year at the Blue Mounds.

Endowment

(continued from page 1)

The purpose of the fund is to provide opportunities for college students, via internships, to gain practical education and experience in natural area conservation, management and restoration. The fund was started in 2009 with donations to TPE in memory of emeritus professor of botany, Dr. John W. Thomson. The TPE board thought that such an endowment would be a fitting memorial to Dr. Thomson who felt so strongly about environmental education and conservation of natural areas, and the Thomson family agreed. See the Spring 2009 issue of *The Prairie Promoter* (Vol. 22, No. 1).

We are most pleased and grateful that John's wife Olive and their son Dennis and daughter-in-law Joan have made this endowment a reality. The TPE board has officially changed the name of the fund to the John and Olive Thomson Internship Endowment in honor of their lifelong commitment to environmental education and the conservation of natural areas.

TPE would like to expand this endowment, or create parallel funds, to support additional internships. If providing for such education opportunities interests you, please consider TPE in your planned giving.

Along The Trail with Bob Lee

By James Rogala

For those of you prairie enthusiasts who have never met Bob Lee, it certainly was not due to the lack of opportunity. Bob has hosted nine or more prairie walks along the La Crosse River Trail out of Rockland each of the last 20 years (that's about 200 hikes!). The hikes along the bike trail have served as a learning ground for those of us with a desire to learn more about what once was. Even an unsuspecting passerby on a bike ride, some without a clue as to what a prairie is, would join the hike as they got caught up in the story Bob had to tell.

Bob had the good fortune of linking to the natural world at a young age. There was much opportunity to connect to nature while growing up in the 1930s in a rural coulee in La Crosse County. In those days, the walk to school along a country road, or the hike through the unfenced hillsides, provided all the opportunity a boy needed. Bob would commonly encounter such animals as rattlesnakes and bobwhite, both of which are rarely found in the region today. He also found interest in the plants of the region, including the many prairie and savanna species that were still dominant in the slowly changing oak openings of the coulees. Those, too, have traversed the gradient from common to uncommon, as young oaks began to establish and create a canopy of now marketable timber.

An interest in the natural world grew within Bob and he connected with local botanists to visit natural areas in the coulee region and beyond. While living in Rockland, he scoured the edges of the old railroad bed for plant species and identified more than 350 species in the portion that is now a state natural area. In 1991, Bob began to share that interest by leading prairie hikes and writing a weekly column titled "Along the Trail" for local newspapers. The tales Bob would tell during his prairie walks would often deviate from the subject of prairies themselves, as did the subjects of his column. In 2009, he wrote the book "Tales from the Ice-Free Zone" – a compilation of 20 years of short articles.

As with the prairies that Bob so fondly cares for, Bob himself is succumbing to Father Time at the age of 80. Due to health issues, this year marks the first time in 20 years that he did not host his formal walks.



Photo courtesy of James Rogala

A local legend, Bob Lee, shares his love for prairies with the next generation of enthusiasts.

The good news is that Bob was able to join us for the first of a couple hikes that TPE has scheduled along the bike trail this summer. There is still much information to extract from Bob before he no longer mentors us, with the added bonus of hearing Bob's entertaining tales of life in the coulee region as we stroll "along the trail".



Southwest Wisconsin Chapter Acquisition Efforts

Projects in Grant, Iowa Counties total 350 acres

By Linda Lynch

The Southwest Wisconsin Chapter is working on two acquisitions: one in Grant County and one in Iowa County.

The Grant County project is an acquisition of 252 acres bordering the existing Borah Creek Prairie on three sides, which would buffer the current Borah Creek Prairie's prairie habitat, provide additional habitat for associated prairie wildlife and provide for possible expansion of prairie bush clover habitat. Borah Creek SNA contains the third-largest prairie bush clover population and the largest amount of existing and potential prairie bush clover habitat in Wisconsin. Protection of the Borah Creek Prairie is a specific Priority 2 Task of the federal Prairie Bush Clover Recovery Plan and the acquisition of buffer land is an important part of this protection.

This property is within the Fennimore Area Prairie Project (FAPP). The FAPP is predominantly open grassland and agricultural landscape approximately 2,100 acres in size and is within the Grant and Rattlesnake Rivers and the Southwest Savanna Eco region. It is identified as an area of state and regional conservation significance through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Land Legacy Report and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

There are at least two adjoining farms (approximately 140 acres total) where the owners are interested in eventually having their land preserved in a manner similar to the Borah Creek Prairie. Of these 140 acres, there are approximately 40 acres that contain substantial prairie bush clover population, possibly equal to the population on Borah Creek Prairie.

The Iowa County project is an acquisition of 99 acres along Sylvan Road that contains oak woods, wet prairie and riparian scrub/young forest. The oak woods have mature white oaks, red oak, basswood, poplar and box elder. The oak wood areas are highly restorable; the natural community structure and more than 30 native species are still present.

The wet prairie consists of wet mesic prairie, wet prairie and sedge meadow. This area is the gem of this parcel and contains a number of species rarely found in Wisconsin, including Prairie Indian plantain, a threatened species. The wet prairie areas contain more than 50 native species. Wet prairie systems are rare in Wisconsin's driftless area and the wet prairie present on the Sylvan Road property is ecologically significant. The areas within this wet prairie community that are of the highest quality are those that have been spared heavy grazing.

The riparian scrub/young forest areas will require more intensive management to restore them to a more native state. There are a few native species hanging on in these areas, but invasive species such as prickly ash, multiflora rose, reed canary grass, aspen and box elder have established themselves.

The Sylvan Road project lies within the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area, an area that stands out for its distinct combination of resources, exceptional populations of grassland birds, scattered remnants

of original prairie sod, concentration of rare plants and animals, and spring-fed streams. The DNR has conducted a review of the various areas within the property and determined the entire project area is of natural area quality.



Koltes Prairie Protection and Management

By Rich Henderson

Background photo: Westport Drumlin by Rich Henderson



Photo by Scott Sauer

Karen Agee walks through rattlesnake master at Koltes Prairie in Dane County, Wisc., near Waunakee.

In late 2010, the Koltes Prairies, located east of Waunakee, Wisc. (Dane County), were acquired by the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT). This was accomplished through a partnership with the Wisconsin DNR Natural Areas and Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Programs, the Dane County Conservation Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Prairie Enthusiasts. In this acquisition, NHLT purchased 100 acres from the Koltes family, which included approximately seven acres of high-quality prairie remnant ranging from dry to mesic habitats. Nearly 100 species of prairie plants are present in these remnants, including large populations of conservative species, such as rattlesnake master (see picture), white prairie clover and prairie gentian. Also present are populations of two state-threatened species: hill's (i.e. prairie thistle) and red-tailed leafhopper. The latter only lives on prairie dropseed grass.

The Koltes remnants were discovered by local prairie enthusiasts in the late 1970s. They approached the Koltes family and obtained permission to care for the site at a modest level. When the Empire-Sauk Chapter of TPE was formed in 1991, TPE entered into a more formal management agreement with the owners, and began intense management and restoration of the remnants that has continued to the present.

The investment has paid off and TPE is most pleased – and grateful to all partners – that the remnants are now permanently protected and that our 20 years of work were not in vain. The protection was accomplished thanks to the hard work of Jim Welsh and staff at the NHLT, and grants from the WDNR, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grants Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program to benefit federally listed species, and the Dane County Conservation Fund.

The Koltes acquisition abuts the 14-acre Westport Drumlin Prairie Unit of the Empire Prairies State Natural Area, which is owned by the DNR. This is a high-quality remnant of drumlin prairie of great conservation significance (see picture). It supports the largest population in Wisconsin of the federally-threatened prairie bushclover (approximately 1,400 plants). In the past two years, NHLT has also acquired two other parcels surrounding the state natural area for a total of 203 acres, including the Koltes parcel. Their plan is to eventually transfer all the land (mostly active cropland) to the DNR. Once done, the state natural area will be 217 acres in size and in need of restoring the cropland back to its original prairie cover. That is where TPE has a continuing role to play.

TPE is negotiating with the DNR to eventually take a lead role in the restoration and management of the entire Westport Drumlin State Natural Area. We are developing a management plan for the preserve, in partnership with the DNR Natural Areas Program and NHLT.

For such an ambitious restoration project to be successful, we will be reaching out beyond TPE members to work with partner groups and individuals to build a robust and active land management committee and, more importantly, an active corps of volunteers focused on this project. If you have interest in serving on a management committee or being a part of the volunteer stewards group, please contact Rich Henderson (608.845.7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net). Seeing Westport Drumlin and the Koltes prairies connected and surrounded by prairie would be an amazing sight to behold. Let's make it happen!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Indian Lake Trail Run: Run to Restore

Save the date: 15 October 2011

The Friends of Indian Lake are hosting the Indian Lake Trail Runs on Saturday, Oct. 15, 2011, at Indian Lake County Park located north of Cross Plains, Wisc. Participants can choose either the 6k or 12k runs, which start at 9 a.m. A 1k Kids' Fun Run will kick-off the day at 8:30 a.m. Proceeds from the 2010 race benefited prairie restoration within the park, as well as trail maintenance (Dane County Parks also provided matching funds to the race proceeds). All finishers will receive a medal in addition to age group awards.

Registration and additional race information can be found online at www.FriendsofIndianLake.org. Fees are \$25 for the 6k and 12k runs through Sept. 15 and \$30 from Sept. 16 through Oct. 10. Race day registration is NOT available. Not ready to run? Volunteers are always needed!

Indian Lake County Park is located on the edge of southwest Wisconsin's driftless area, north of Cross Plains. The address is: 8183 Hwy 19 Cross Plains WI 53528. Friends of Indian Lake County Park is a non-profit 501©(3) charitable organization.

Are You Mechanically Inclined?

The Empire-Sauk Chapter is looking for a volunteer or two to be in charge of the maintenance and repair of field equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, drip torches, water backpack cans, backpack herbicide sprayers, hand tools, brush-cutters, chainsaws, mowers, tractors, a truck, ATVs, propane torches, fire-pump units and seeders. The workshop at the Schurch-Thomson barn is ready to be used for equipment maintenance and repair. The barn is where most equipment is stored when not in active use, however, maintenance work may certainly be done at other locations.

If you wish to help, please contact Rich Henderson (608.845.7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

CHIPPEWA SAVANNAS CHAPTER

No report submitted.

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

Coulee Region Volunteers Spread the Word on Prairies

Jessica Bolwahn, Jim Rogala and Jayne Collins recently took the time to engage in outreach activities to promote prairie conservation at several events. Jessica and Jim participated in Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) events for the Bad Axe Chapter and Chippewa Valley Chapter. Jayne participated in a state bike trail event.

The WWOA Bad Axe Annual Chapter picnic was July 9 in Muscoda at the Victoria Park right next to the beautiful Wisconsin River. Thirty-six members and guests celebrated the forests and prairies of the Driftless Area. In the afternoon, Jessica provided a brief history of the Driftless Area prairies, and explained how native prairies can complement a forest owner's use of their land and significantly expand habitat variety and diversity. She described some of The Prairie Enthusiasts area projects and the educational benefits available to members. Jessica also co-led a walking tour through the nearby Muscoda prairie.

On July 16, the WWOA Chippewa Valley Chapter picnic/field-day was held near Black River Falls. After a rain delay, Jim co-led a prairie hike at a WWOA landowner's property. The property had landscaping with prairie species (the owner previously owned a plant nursery), a recent prairie planting and scattered prairie species that had survived various land uses over many years. The property was a good example of the persistence of prairie plants in the sandy soils of that part of Wisconsin. The woodland folks on the hike were not all naïve about prairies and most seemed receptive to the idea that there is more to a property than just trees.

Jayne had the TPE display up at the "Grand Opening of the Trails" in Sparta, sponsored by the Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce. The display acted as a backdrop for a talk by Bob Lee about the value of preserving prairie remnants, during which Bob noted TPE is an organization that focuses on prairie preservation. He was presented a plaque at the event to acknowledge his volunteer efforts in leading prairie walks on the trail.

Please check the chapter newsletter for additional announcements.

EMPIRE – SAUK CHAPTER

\$10,000 Challenge Grant for Tractor Purchase

We are pleased to announce that the Empire-Sauk Chapter has been given a \$10,000 challenge grant for the purpose of acquiring a tractor! To earn this grant, we need to match it with another \$9,000 in donations.

Why do we need another tractor at the cost of \$19,000? This summer it became very evident that the chapter is in desperate need of a second tractor, especially one with more capability, to adequately take care of the 700 acres of TPE preserve land that the chapter is responsible for managing. Our current tractor has served us well, but it can no longer do it all. There are peak weed control periods when a second tractor is needed to keep up with the mowing, and there are certain mowing jobs that require more power than our current 55 HP tractor can muster. We also need a tractor with 4-wheel drive to safely negotiate the rough topography of our preserves. The current tractor's 2-wheel drive is not sufficient.



Photo by Eric Preston

The tractor we found is a used 86 HP Case IH with 4-wheel drive. It will be used mostly at the Mounds View Grassland and Erbe Grassland but can be taken to other sites

when needed. If you are interested in helping us match the \$10,000 challenge grant, please contact chapter president Rich Henderson at 608.845.7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net. Or, you can submit donations to The Prairie Enthusiasts Attn: Tractor Challenge Grant, P.O. Box 1148, Madison, WI 53701.

Chapter Receives Citizen-Based Monitoring Grant

The Empire-Sauk Chapter has been awarded a \$3,520 grant from the Wisconsin DNR Citizen-Based Monitoring Partnership Program. The purpose of the project is to hire someone to develop a practical method of estimating violet numbers across large acreages. That person will then recruit and train volunteers to periodically conduct surveys. These surveys will be done on lands TPE manages in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area of western Dane and eastern Iowa counties.

Why monitor violets? Because various violet species are the only host plants that the caterpillar of the state-endangered regal fritillary butterfly will eat. The adult butterfly also requires large open areas free of trees and tall brush and lots of flowers for nectaring. Therefore, large prairies with sufficient numbers of violets are critical habitat for the regal fritillary butterfly. To successfully manage these habitat areas for healthy populations of regal fritillaries, we need to know where the violets (prairie, birds-foot, marsh and common wood violet) are located and in what densities across habitats ranging from wet to dry settings and, more importantly, how the violets respond to management, such as burning, mowing and grazing. To accomplish this, periodic monitoring of violet numbers by volunteers is crucial.

Seed Collecting Help Needed

The Empire-Sauk Chapter plans to plant 65 acres to prairie this fall/winter at the Mounds View Grassland and at other sites. We're looking for help this fall to collect the needed seed. Eric Preston, the Empire-Sauk Chapter coordinator for seed collecting efforts, will be matching volunteers with collecting needs. Groups also welcome!

Major seed collecting areas this fall will be at Underwood, Schurch-Thomson and Shea prairies and nearby sites south of Blue Mounds, at Rettenmund Black Earth Prairie and Pleasant Valley Conservancy and in northern Dane and southern Columbia counties for the Westport Drumlin (incl. Koltjes Prairie) State Natural Area.

If you wish to be on the contact list to help with seed collecting, please contact Ann Calhoun (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org). We are also looking for people to lead seed collecting parties at specific sites. If interested, contact Eric Preston (608.257.1513 or ericw.preston@gmail.com).

Seed Cleaning Help Needed

Help is needed this fall with seed cleaning and processing. Last year, we processed 750 pounds of seed from more than 150 species, and we will likely do that much or more this year. Most of the work this year will be done at the Schurch-Thomson Prairie barn (south of Blue Mounds) and Pleasant Valley Conservancy (south of Black Earth).

If you wish to be on the contact lists to help with these activities, please contact Ann Calhoun (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org). If you wish to help lead and direct seed cleaning at the Schurch-Thomson barn, contact Rich Henderson (608.845.7065 or tpe.rhenderson@tds.net).

Fall Work Party Plans

This fall, the Empire-Sauk Chapter will continue its work to restore prairie remnants. Volunteers are needed at a dozen sites to clear trees and brush. We have grants to help with the work, but these grants require match of in-kind volunteer time to earn the grant money. So, for every hour of volunteer time that you put in, we receive several hours of paid contract labor. This fall and winter, we will be working at the Underwood, Shea, A to Z and Schurch-Thomson prairies south of Blue Mounds; Ripp Prairies north of Waunakee; Mazomanie Bluff, Schluckebier Prairie west of Prairie du Sac; Rettenmund Black Earth Prairie, Walking Iron County Park near Mazomanie, Kalscheur Savanna south of Hollandale; and Smith Drumlin Prairies near Cambridge. Be on the lookout for fliers, e-mails and other notifications of work parties. Bring friends. Fall/winter work parties are fun with refreshments (such as home-made cookies) and crisp weather, and are a good source of outdoor winter exercise. You always leave with a sense of accomplishment after clearing trees and brush.

If you wish to help with work on these sites, but are uncertain whether you are on the e-mail or phone notification lists, please contact Ann Calhoun (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org).

GLACIAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER

Log-on to:

<http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapter/glacial/glacialprairie.htm> for upcoming events by the Glacial Prairie Chapter

MANY RIVERS CHAPTER

Busy Summer for Many Rivers Chapter

The summer has flown by for Many Rivers Chapter Members! Below is a glimpse of what we've been up to:

June 20th: Completed our Master Naturalist program, which the chapter sponsored. The program is a cooperative effort between the MN DNR and the University of Minnesota Extension office to help citizens further their knowledge of Minnesota ecosystems. Designed as a three-part series, this portion was the Big Woods & Big Rivers segment. Next year, we will sponsor the Prairies and Potholes session.

June 25th: We hosted our second-annual picnic at the Schindle family property on the scenic Le Suer River with 24 people in attendance. Although the weather did not cooperate very well, the show went on. We started with a tour of the Kutz Prairie site in the morning, had a little lunch and a brief meeting, and then toured member Bruce

Levos' prairie planting. Bruce has converted an old pure stand of Switch Grass CRP to a very diversified prairie by interseeding after burns with new species. We then finished the day as the sun finally came out walking the Schindle family prairie and woodland.

Our cooperative project with the City of Mankato at Rasmussen Woods Park to plant a prairie is underway. We have made several herbicide applications and performed a mid-season controlled burn to remove the trash off of the site. We hope to plant this fall if our Reed Canary Grass is under control.

Also, the restoration at Jim and Kathryn Vonderharr's property is underway. The areas of Smooth Brome have been sprayed and seed collecting has started to restore the tallgrass prairie that once was there. As this property is in the Kasota Prairie area, there are some existing remnants from which we can collect nearby. We look forward to seeing this six acres back to what it once was.

New members Gerald and Janet Peichel hosted the group on a tour of their eight-acre goat prairie remnant that overlooks the Minnesota River valley near Fort Ridgley State Park. It is a very nice remnant that is mostly intact. We welcome them to the organization and look forward to working with them.



Photo courtesy of Scott Seigfreid

Many Rivers members Jerry Peichel and Vice Chair Deanna Pomije overlook the Peichel goat prairie on the Minnesota River valley bluff near Fort Ridgley.

Many of our chapter members have been involved in helping with citizen science on collecting snake sightings for MN DNR Herpetologist Carol Hall. Carol thought that the Blue Racers in the Kasota area of Blue Earth County were possibly gone, but we have found five, along with eight Fox Snakes for her County Biological Survey. We hope to help her trap and PIT tag Racers this fall as they congregate near den sites.

July 23/24: The chapter hosted a field trip to Blue Mounds State Park and Touch The Sky National Wildlife

Refuge near Luverne, Minn. Thirteen members were in attendance in search of the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. *Editor's Note: Check out Scott's story on pages 4 & 5 for more details on this exciting trip.

Aug. 13th: Members Gary & Jean Rathman hosted 14 members on a tour of their prairie near Comfrey, Minn. The Rathmans play host to many groups throughout the summer to share their great conservation efforts, which are to be commended. This is the place I always recommend people to see if they think they want to plant a prairie. I have never lost a sale, the possibilities are endless.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER



JIM RACHUY

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts announce the retirement of long-time Executive Director Jim Rachuy.

Jim Rachuy has been described as the Wizard – as in “The Wizard of Oz” – never in the forefront, but pulling all the strings to make things happen. And so it was, and continues to be. Many in the NIPE chapter had no idea how many projects he has spear-headed, been involved in, pushed, nudged and generally managed over the last 20 years until he was asked to provide a list.

Where to begin? Perhaps you knew that he started the NIPE chapter in 1993 – still the only TPE representative in Illinois. But did you know that he was the founder of the Driftless Area Partnership? And co-founder of the JoDaviess County (JDC) Natural Area Guardians, The Friends of the Depot and Friends of the Waukarusa?

He also found time to sit on the boards of the U.S. Rt. 20 Advisory Committee, the JoCarroll Local Redevelopment Authority, the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuges, the U.S. Army Smart Team and the Lost Mound Action Team. He started the

JoDaviess Prescribed Burn School, designed and oversaw a county-wide prairie and savanna remnant survey and conducted a formal review of the proposed Route 20 freeway Environmental Impact Statement.

Probably his greatest achievements were the many prairie restorations and land acquisitions he made happen in JDC over the last 20 years. From clambering in ditches to glean the seeds of native plants came the beginnings of 410 acres of restoration; from his knowledge of the local terrain came 225 acres of land protection and an additional 4,750 conservation acres now owned by government agencies. From self-taught restoration and conservation practices came the jewel in the crown: 190 acres of continuing restoration (or reconstruction, if you prefer) at Hanley Savanna, adjacent to the 13,500 acre Lost Mound Wildlife Refuge and the 362 acre Hanover Bluffs Nature Preserve.

Jim has been an inspiration and mentor to many local landowners; a teacher and friend to those who care to learn about our vanished grasslands. He restored and donated a 65-acre easement on his farm to The Prairie Enthusiasts and continues to run his Grassroots Conservation consulting business. He also designed, and continues to manage, the NIPE website at www.nipes.org.

Thank you for your years of dedication to native habitats, Jim.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Summer of the Lily

It was the summer of the lily for the Prairie Bluff Chapter as native plants delighted our members – especially those with cameras – with displays of showy blossoms of both wood lily and Turk's-cap lily.

Lilium philadelphicum, commonly called prairie or orange-cup or wood lily, is found on three of the prairies we manage. At Oliver Prairie, we counted 55 flowers on dozens of plants (this is the second growing season after a burn). A plant list dated 1959 did not include wood lily. Iltis and Cochran describe it as “infrequent ... rare or scattered mostly on mesic prairie, swales or wooded bluffs.” The only county record at the herbarium was a specimen found June 10, 1958, by E.W. Fell “SE of Monticello along Milwaukee RR in Sugar River bottom.”

Lilium michiganense, aka Michigan lily or Turk's-cap lily, made an unexpected appearance in a roadside ditch in Decatur Township, where hundreds of plants in two populations flowered during June and July. This plant is usually found in wetter habitats. The roadside was burned in the spring by John Ochsner, Bill Walz, Rob Baller and Nick Faessler. Since it had been years since it was seen there, the result was dramatic and, of course, confirms the benefits of fire. Iltis & Cochran call it

Michigan lily, but warn that “the common name Turk’s-cap lily is best reserved for the eastern *Lilium superbum*.” The herbarium record for Green County is July 15, 1973, by M. Rice, along the CMSP&P right-of-way in Albany.

Probably our biggest accomplishment of the summer was the burying of the dump at Iltis Savanna by a local contractor. Credit for completing the 11-year project mostly goes to Nick Faessler. Next step is managing whatever comes up while we gather local ecotypes of little bluestem, sideoats grama and dropseed – the most common grasses surrounding the site.

Finally, a field trip to Meinert’s prairie on the Fourth of July was a treat, with the landowners along for the walk through the marvelously-diverse prairie that had been burned in the spring.

PRAIRIE SANDS CHAPTER

No report submitted.

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

No report submitted.

ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER



Photo courtesy of Evanne Hunt

Blueberry Hill, a native remnant south of Bayport, Minn., overlooks the St. Croix River. Liatris and leadplant are the dominate forbs.

Part 3: Late October will bring TPE members and the Bayport community together to seed a prairie. The old cornfield across the road from Blueberry Hill will have been prepped and everyone will help hand-broadcast with local ecotype seed.

Barb Bend, Ginny Gaynor and Burt Levy have planned a three-part prairie planting event. This event is for our new members and an effort to draw new people into the chapter.

Part 1: A visit to Blueberry Hill, on Aug. 25. On this native remnant, loaded with liatris and leadplant, we explained what it takes to manage a prairie.

Part 2: A presentation at the Bayport library on Sept. 8, will feature local prairies that have been restored or replanted. Burt will explain how to establish a prairie planting on sites from 10 sq. ft. to more than 10 acres.

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Work Days Scheduled

The Southwest Wisconsin Chapter has scheduled two work days in September. All are welcome!

Sept. 15th at Eldred Prairie to collect seed. Contact Jesse Bennett at 608.996.2135 for more information.

Sept. 24th at Borah Creek from noon to 3 p.m. Members will work on fire breaks and collect seed. Contact Linda Lynch at 608.924.1637 for more information.

Members Gather for Chapter Picnic



Photo submitted by Rose Sime

The weather was warm for the SW Wisconsin Chapter Picnic on July 24, but that didn’t stop about 25 attendees – and one great dog – from assembling under a couple of portable “tents” at Eldred Prairie. Amid the great food, stories were shared of success and disappointment regarding the management of prairies, among other topics.

Jesse Bennett and Jaye Maxfield led the group on a tour of the prairie and Jesse shared the history of the site throughout our 10 years of ownership. Just 11 years ago, the 45-acre site was still a Christmas tree farm. Today, we are delighted to see the rare Wild Quinine, Cream Gentian, Tall Nut Rush, as well as many other gorgeous prairie forbs and grasses. These plants are found on the southern slope of the site where much work has been done to remove brush and the Christmas trees since it was first purchased. On the northern slope, where much larger trees were removed in 2010, we learned that there are large batches of shooting stars emerging as well as other species that have remained dormant for years.

Two of our younger participants enjoyed collecting various insects. It was a delightful day and all were thrilled with the work that has transformed this site to let the beautiful remnant show its glory.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE in the period June 1 through Aug. 17, 2011.

Anthony Albang, Mankato, MN
Mary Kay Baum, Dodgeville, WI
Douglas Buege, Madison, WI
Steve Cowan, Black Earth, WI
Richard Graef, Evanston, IL
Jim Grant, New Glarus, WI
Gayle Kleppe & Beau Wold, Eleva, WI
Adam & Kristin Locketz, Woodbury, MN
Josh Mayer, Madison, WI

Derek Nelson, New Ulm, MN
Gerald & Janet Peichel, Fairfax, MN
Tim Pulis, Mankato, MN
Jennifer Selvey, Mankato, MN
Daniel Sonnenberg, Oxford, WI
Rob TenEyck & Annie Berssenbrugge, Brodhead, WI
Alan Wagner, Fennimore, WI
Linda Webster, Woodbury, MN

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

To:

Gary Felder
Fran Hanson
Gayle Kleppe & Beau Wold
Adam & Kristin Locketz

From:

Nick & Linda Faessler
Jim & Kathy Vonderharr
Jane Edson
Linda Webster

THANK YOU, DONORS!

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period June 1 through Aug. 17, 2011. These gifts above and beyond membership dues are truly generous and appreciated.

\$5000 or more _____

Anonymous, Purchase of tractor for Empire-Sauk Chapter
Dennis & Joan Thomson, *Olive & John Thomson Internship Endowment*
Olive Thomson, *Olive & John Thomson Internship Endowment*

\$1000 - \$5000 _____

Jeff Ralston
Barbara L. Smith

\$500 - \$999 _____

Scott Fulton & Karen Agee, *in support of Empire-Sauk Volunteer Coordinator*
Aari Roberts, *in memory of Bernard Roberts*

\$100 - \$499

Jae Adams & Jon Sundby
Vance Baker
Cuna Mutual Group Foundation, *Dollars for Doers Grant*
– Patrick Handrick
Cuna Mutual Group Foundation, *Dollars for Doers Grant*
– Richard Oberle
Sharon Foster
Donald Hagar
Rich & Kathy Henderson, *Purchase of tractor for*
Empire-Sauk Chapter

Kettle Moraine Hardwoods, *in memory of Bernard*
Roberts
Arthur & Margaret Krapfl, *in memory of Bernard Roberts*
Lois Kvitek & Mary Barnett
Jackie & Wayne Pauly, *Purchase of tractor for*
Empire-Sauk Chapter
Scott Sauer, *in honor of Rumi O'Brien*
Jim & Judy Schwarzmeier
Marilyn & Marc Thwaites
Neil & Ellen Wenberg

Under \$100

In memory of Bernard Roberts:

Bruce & Gail Aboudara
Marian Delaney
Harland & Alice Ehmen
Becky Krapfl
Robert & Beatrice Krueger
Ruth Nishioka
Carla Rae Oestreich
John & Debra Oswald
Bill & Rosy Richter
Kristi Ryan
Rueben & Miriam Sauer
Elizabeth Shult & Martina Modjeski
James & Diane Strege
Gary & Diane Sveback
Jim & Darris Wasmund

Pam Armstrong
Thomas Boos II & Amanda Schwoegler
Jim Elleson
Sharla Hanson
Ralph Henry
Chuck & Diane Kernler, *in honor of Paul Gruchow*
Curt Meine
Richard & Joanne Meinert
Mound Vue Garden Club
Marcia & Mike O'Connor
Henry Panowitsch
Janice Runge
John & Fawn Shillinglaw
Dani Stolley
Kathleen Sulzer
Glenn Teschendorf & Mary Anne Derheimer
Roger Williams
David Lovell & Irene Wren
Paul & Joy Zedler



Finalist from TPE 2011 Photo Contest:
Yellow on Yellow by
Jo-Ann Lynch, Many Rivers Chapter

**The Prairie Enthusiasts
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If your membership has expired, tear off this back page, note changes below, and send in your check today!

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
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\$5,000 Bur Oak Benefactor, \$1,000 Monarch, \$500 Compass Plant, \$200 Blazing Star
\$65 Pasque Flower, \$40 Big Blue Stem, \$25 Little Blue Stem, \$15 Student

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