



The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Grassroots Conservation at Work

Membership Meeting: Tours, Future Plans, Socializing

By Scott Seigfreid

On Sunday, July 15, the general membership of TPE gathered for the annual picnic and meeting hosted by the Many Rivers Chapter at the Henry Panowitsch farm site near Good Thunder, Minn.

On Saturday, the Board of Directors gathered for an all-day strategic planning session to build on the future direction of TPE as becoming an accredited Land Trust comes closer to being a reality. This meeting was held in North Mankato and was followed by an evening dinner at the Loose Moose Café.

We started Sunday out with a field trip of the eleven acre Butternut Valley Scientific and Natural Area near Madelia, Minn. This SNA is a prime example of mesic prairie that once blanketed Southern Minnesota. The only thing that saved this piece of prairie is the owner's wife used to like to look at the wildflowers several times throughout the year. The area's history includes minimal haying, never tiled or grazed.

Our second field trip was to the Al & Mary Berner



Photo by Steven Gahm

About 68 people attended the 2012 Member Meeting, hosted by the Many Rivers Chapter at the Henry Panowitsch farm site.

hillside remnant near Good Thunder. This is a steep hillside grade that made farming this piece impossible. It includes the typical mesic prairie species, such as Tuberous Indian Plantain, Compass Plant, and also White Prairie Clover. The Berners have taken the adjoining fields above and below this eight-acre remnant out of production and enrolled them in CRP, and added the remnant to the Minnesota Prairie Bank program. This should allow the remnant to expand itself.

There were 68 people in attendance and, as usual, way too much food. The annual general membership meeting followed lunch, with TPE President Jack Kussmaul giving a rundown of the strategic planning session and also an update on TPE issues. The new Executive Director for TPE, Chris Kirkpatrick, introduced himself to all and explained his vision for TPE. All chapters in attendance gave chapter reports on their activities and the meeting adjourned.

After the meeting, people who were not traveling stayed and socialized and toured Henry's two beautiful planted prairies on the farm site. A good day was had by all.

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Coulee Region 608.435.6203	Don Nelson don094@centurytel.net
Empire-Sauk 608.233.2483	Cate Harrington charrington@tnc.org
Many Rivers 920.373.6196	Donna Pomije pomijelynn@hotmail.com
Glacial Prairie	Alice & Walter Mirk wamcp70@charter.net
Northwest Illinois 815.947.2287	Rickie Rachuy rr.lonetree@frontier.net
Prairie Bluff 608.325.6228	Tom Mitchell tnmitchell@tds.net
Prairie Sands	Shelley Hamel sdhamel@gmail.com
Prairie Smoke	Ruthann Yaeger yegrnaturenut@gmail.com
SW Wisconsin 608.794.2724	Jesse Bennett jesse@driftlesslandstewardship.com
The Prairie Promoter Editor	editor@theprairieenthusiasts.org

Grassroots Conservation at Work

CHRIS KIRKPATRICK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The summer of 2012 has been one of our driest on record, and I hear our members comparing it to the drought of 1986 – the only other time since our incorporation that it has been this dry for so long. This summer, I have also had a chance to see many of the remnant prairies that we have protected and



manage and I am told that the prairies do not look as vibrant and diverse as they normally do. To an extent, they are right; a two food compass plant is not the epitome of The Prairie Enthusiasts. However, I look around at these remnants and still see the diversity present. Even faced with these drought conditions, the prairies still thrive and their resilience truly astounds me. It is this resilience that I have also seen in us, as an organization, and that which transcends each dedicated volunteer putting their energy into managing each and every remnant. I also see the passion and dedication to ensure that our grassroots organization will thrive, no matter what challenges we face.

This summer, we have taken on a challenge – one that starts with taking our shared grassroots-based passion to protect our fire-dependent ecosystems, and think about how we are going to achieve this in perpetuity. Forever is a long time, and our Board of Directors realizes that if we are going to accomplish this, we will need a good plan on how to get there. This summer, we embarked upon a start to this by beginning to develop a three-year strategic plan. In July, the Board drafted a set of goals for this plan. The purpose of these goals is to focus our work on our core areas and to develop ways that we will accomplish this over the next three years.

One of the most important parts of this plan is sharing these goals and getting feedback from those who are at the core of The Prairie Enthusiasts: our chapters and their dedicated volunteers. This fall, these draft goals are being circulated to the chapters and the Board is asking for your feedback and input into developing the goals for this plan. At the same time, I am also seeking to attend your Chapter meetings, not only to hear your thoughts on the draft goals, but to also get to know more of you face to face. I want to see the sites that you are so passionate about and hear about your plans for the future. I am listening so we can craft a shared vision for a resilient organization dedicated to the perpetuation and recovery of prairies and oak savannas. Please share with us your vision for the future of Grassroots Conservation at Work.

TPE was incorporated in Wisconsin in 1987 as a private nonprofit, tax exempt corporation under section [501(c)3] of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible. The Prairie Promoter is a quarterly publication of The Prairie Enthusiasts. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without permission. We welcome articles, announcements, artwork and photographs relevant to prairie and savanna ecosystems. Mail or e-mail submissions to local chapter editorial volunteers or to The Prairie Promoter editor. Copy any text into the body of the e-mail. Send photos (.jpeg or .bmp) as attachments. Letters and articles may be edited for length or style. Computer disks, art, and photographs will be returned. Deadlines for submission of material are March 2 (Spring issue); May 18 (Summer issue); Aug. 17 (Fall issue); and Nov. 16 (Winter issue). If you would like to receive electronic notification of the newsletter, please e-mail Victoria Oberle at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

President's Message: Weathering Transitions

By Jack Kussmaul

Our new executive director, Chris Kirkpatrick, introduced himself in the summer edition of The Prairie Promoter. Hiring Chris represents a step forward for TPE. We now have someone on board who can handle all routine business of the organization, leaving the board to set policy, deal with long-term strategies and the big picture matters.

While Chris represents a step forward for TPE, we must thank Carol Winge for her five years as business manager. Carol played a major role in bringing the organization to where we are today. She joined us with a background in environmental organizations and brought years of organizational experience to TPE, as she was much more than just a business manager. In many respects, she filled the role of an executive director. She had ideas to bring to the table to help move us forward and was an advocate for these ideas.

Carol attended every board and every committee meeting and kept the minutes. With as many as three evening committee meetings in one week, it was a daunting task. She felt it was her duty to do so, however. Because she is the one who was at every meeting, she is the one person in the organization that knew what was taking place at every level. She felt that it was critical to have at least one person in this position.

Because Carol knew what was going on at every level, she kept us all honest. More than once, I had some inspiration and was about to go off in what seemed to me to be a great direction. I would then get the message from Carol, "Don't you remember, Jack . . ." followed by her

pointing out that two meetings ago, the board had just made the decision to go in the opposite direction, or that the by-laws did not permit me to carry out my great idea. While I never enjoyed getting these embarrassing reminders, they saved me from error more than once.

Carol was hired as a 28-hour per week employee and she was paid on that basis. I saw her monthly timesheets, however, and if there was ever a month where this is all the time she put in, it was a rarity. There were times, especially at conference time, when her weekly hours greatly exceeded even a 40 hour week. Carol did not watch the clock on these things. She did whatever was necessary to finish the task at hand.

At the conference in February, the Many Rivers Chapter had a farewell gift for Carol. I explained that the central organization did not have a gift at that time, in part because we would never be able to get our act together without Carol's assistance to accomplish this. This was proved when we had a luncheon for Carol in July. We had a plaque made thanking Carol for her services. While the plaque was completed without Carol there to help us, we could not quite pull off the presentation; we failed to get the plaque to the luncheon. Our intentions were the best ... we just needed Carol to help us carry them out.

On the bright side, it is wonderful to see, already, how smoothly the transition from her to Chris is going. With his help, we can look forward to a bright future for TPE. We will miss Carol enormously and wish her every happiness in her well-deserved retirement. And we welcome Chris, and look forward to the future of TPE under his leadership and vision.



2012 Member Meeting

Henry Panowitsch Farm Site
Good Thunder, Minn.



photos by Steven Gahm

Conservation Organizations Sign MOU to Collaborate on Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

By Scott Seigfreid

On July 31, 2012, a coalition of conservation groups and agencies gathered at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together for the benefit of the prairie landscapes, under the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. Signatories on the MOU included representatives from: Minnesota DNR, Ducks Unlimited, Audubon Minnesota, Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources, Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The document outlines a 25-year strategy to protect Minnesota's remaining 235,000 acres of native prairie; restore and conserve grasslands and wetlands; connect and buffer prairies and wetlands; and enhance prairies and grasslands through prescribed burns and livestock grazing.

"It's vitally important that we leverage our individual resources and protect and restore the state's prairies, grasslands and wetland complexes," DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr said. "Not only are these landscapes important to wildlife and clean water, but they can provide economic opportunities for local livestock producers and landowners through grazing and haying."

Remaining native prairies in Minnesota cover approximately one percent of their former range. Many species of fish and wildlife – including game and non-game species – depend upon native prairie grasslands and associated wetlands for their survival. The Plan recognizes the opportunity to fund prairie protection, enhancement and restoration through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, passed by voters in 2008. It also acknowledges the importance of conservation groups, government agencies and agriculture producers strategically working together to conserve prairies.

The Plan emphasizes the importance of large prairie, grassland and wetland complexes, and connecting corridors. These complexes are the most viable means of maintaining



Photo by Scott Seigfreid

MN DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr speaks during the signing ceremony of the MOU for the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.

native plants and wildlife that depend upon grasslands, and providing recreational opportunities for hunters, wildlife watchers, prairie enthusiasts, and others. Corridors and patches scattered across the landscape are important to promoting animal migrations.

Implementing the Plan will help fulfill other DNR goals and plans, such as the Long Range Plan for the Pheasant in Minnesota and the Long Range Duck Recovery Plan.

"We have lost 99 percent of our original grasslands, and could lose most of the CRP in the next few years," Landwehr said. "It is imperative – for wildlife, fish, water quality, and the human quality of life – to restore remnants of this native heritage. This plan lays out a scientific, collaborative, and workable solution."

To review the Minnesota Prairie Plan, go to the DNR website at:

http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/mcbs/mn_prairie_conservation_plan.pdf

TPE Members Attend North American Prairie Conference

By Thomas D. Brock

"Celebrating Our Prairie Heritage" was the theme of the 2012 North American Prairie Conference (NAPC), hosted at the University of Manitoba (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada), Aug. 6 to 10. Seminars and events centered on the mission of, "Explore where we have been, our current state of knowledge and where we should be heading...". About 200 people were in attendance.

This was the second time that the NAPC was held in Canada, and the first time in western Canada. The Canadians

have done extensive work in restoration ecology and have a number of organizations involved in acquisition, protection, and long-term management. Those active in the Manitoba area include: The Nature Conservancy of Canada, Critical Wildlife Habitat Program, Manitoba Natural Resources, Manitoba Naturalists Society, Manitoba Association of Plant Biologists, Manitoba Tall-Grass Prairie Preserve, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, Canadian Wildlife Service, Wildlife Habitat Canada, and World Wildlife Fund.

See NAPC on page 6

Three TPE Land Acquisitions Total 137 Acres

All made possible, in part, by WI DNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund

Mirk Property, 23 acres

By Jack Kussmaul

The Prairie Enthusiasts completed the purchase of the Walter and Alice Mirk property in the Town of Millville, Grant County, Wis., on July 19.

The acquisition was a successful ending to a process that lasted almost three years and, throughout the process, the Mirks endured many frustrations. The original request for a zoning change to make the purchase possible was rejected, so efforts were required to have this ruling changed. The project was to be funded with Wisconsin's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds. When the project was within a couple of weeks of final approval, a change in the state administration took place, which led to a change of application procedures, meaning the whole application process had to completely start over. However, the Mirks, who were among the founders of TPE, persevered and their goal of protection in perpetuity has been accomplished.

The 23-acre parcel contains original and restored oak woods, oak savanna and prairie. A remnant prairie is located at the top of a steep climb up the wooded hillside. If it ever suffered disturbance, it was prior to the memory of anyone now living. The property will be known as Double Oak Savanna. This is based on a large, double oak on the property that was first noted in original survey notes dated 1832. At the time, it was 30 inches in circumference, meaning it has likely stood watch over the property for more than 200 years. The double oak still remains, large and healthy.

The Mirks have worked on restoring the parcel to its original state for more than 25 years. This has involved thinning the understory, burning and pulling, spraying and cutting invasive species. They feel that they could not have accomplished this restoration without the help of friends who volunteered their assistance, including Jonah and Brian Curley, Devaen Randall and Brian Knepper.

The site is home to a number of rare species, including Purple Milkweed, Prairie Indian Plantain, Jeweled Shooting Star, Pickerel Frog and Prairie Ring-Necked Snake.

The sale price of the property was \$72,000 and, after costs, there were net proceeds in excess of \$69,000 payable to the Mirks. They immediately donated the entire amount back to TPE: \$9,000 for needs within the next two years, including burning; \$60,000 will be set aside as an endowment to ensure perpetual protection. This will make Double Oak Savanna one of TPE's better endowed properties. All of us at TPE, and the public which will have use of the property for hunting, hiking and other recreational purposes, owe deep gratitude to Alice and Walter for their generosity.

Next year, after a controlled burn has been conducted and other work completed, a dedication ceremony will be held and tours of the property will be conducted. This newest TPE property will be managed by the Southwest Chapter.

Erbe Grassland, 36 acres

By Rich Henderson

In May, with a grant from the WI DNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, TPE purchased 36 acres from Jason Ihm to add to the Erbe Grassland Preserve. The preserve, located in western Dane County (Wis.), is now 99 acres. The original parcel provides critical habitat for a full range of grassland birds, from Upland Sandpipers and Northern Harriers to Henslow and Grasshopper Sparrows and every species in between. It also supports the endangered Regal Fritillary Butterfly and uncommon prairie plants such as Marbleseed and Prairie Turnip, and has a large spring that is the start of a cold-water stream.

Erbe Grassland is a significant part of one of the top five core grassland conservation areas within the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA). The MRPHA has been identified by the WI DNR and other conservation groups as affording the best opportunity in the state to manage for upland prairie/grassland dependant biodiversity on a landscape scale. The MRPHA is also a priority area within the DNR's Southwest Grassland and Stream Conservation Area.

The new addition has original prairie and supports the state endangered Bell's vireo. However, most of its prairie sod is over run with invading trees and brush. The management plan is to remove this woody growth, except for the few large bur oaks that are present and some key thickets of plum and prickly ash, which Bell's vireos require. Once that takes place, we are anticipating that grassland birds and regal fritillaries will quickly move in. There are also a few acres of crop fields that will eventually be planted to prairie. Much work lies ahead, but this is an important addition to the Erbe Grassland Preserve, which, in turn, is an important piece of a critical area for the conservation of prairie biodiversity in Wisconsin. As an organization, we are making a difference.

Pleasure Valley Conservancy, 78 acres

By Rich Henderson

In June, with a grant from the WI DNR Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and a bargain sale by the owners, TPE purchased a conservation easement on 78 acres from Ken Wade and Pat Trochlell. This adds to an existing, adjacent conservation easement held by TPE on land owned by Ken and Pat for a total of 209 acres of diverse habitat permanently protected and referred to as Pleasure Valley Conservancy. Look for an article in the next *Prairie Promoter* on the conservation significance of these eased lands and the larger conservation project taking shape there, and spear-headed by the efforts of Ken and Pat.

NAPC

continued from page 4

The North American tall grass prairie is located in northern Manitoba. Noted species that reach the limits of their ranges there include: Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Prairie Dropseed, New England Aster and Culver's Root. Among the endangered species found there is the world's largest population of the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. The tall grass prairie habitat also supports 18 other protected species.

Participants were able to join field trips to prairies outside – and within – the City of Winnipeg, and enjoy a banquet in downtown Winnipeg at the Manitoba Museum. Some of the field trip sites included: Carberry Sandhills Prairie, Grosse Isle Prairie and the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve.

Keynote presentations at the program were: Sharon Butala, *Old Man on His Back: A Private History*; Candace Savage, *North of the Border Up Canada Way*; David Young, *Must We then Condemn the Beaver*; Wes Jackson, *The Prairie as a Measure for a Sustainable Green Revolution*;

David Daniels, *Strength of Mother Earth's Children, The Standing Medicine People*. Naturalists and photographers, Donna Danyluk and Ian Ward, also gave a multimedia presentation as the conference opening, entitled, *Tall Grass Seasons*.

There were three days of oral presentations with papers on the following topics: Rangeland and Grazing Ecology, Fire Ecology, Conservation, Prairie Education and Outreach, Wildlife, Prairie Restoration, Orchids, Agroecology, Prairie Management, Multimedia Prairie, Rangeland, and Historical Perspectives. In addition to the oral presentations, there were also 21 poster presentations. An important part of any prairie conference is the opportunity to talk with other participants. A special treat was the chance to share procedures and techniques with Canadians, who have developed unique approaches to some of our common problems. A disappointment was how few members of The Prairie Enthusiasts were in attendance. You missed a great meeting!

For more information on the conference, go online to <http://www.napc2012.org>.

1987: A Big First Year for The Prairie Enthusiasts

By Tom Mitchell

(Note: This is the third of a four-part historical glimpse at the first year of The Prairie Enthusiasts)

Aug. 8, 1987: More than 500 prairie enthusiasts spent an afternoon at the Nachusa Grassland, a recent acquisition of the Illinois office of The Nature Conservancy. Located about an hour southeast of Monroe (Wis.), the area contains prairie, savanna, clear streams and rock outcrops. Speakers at a dinner picnic included renowned ecologist Dr. Robert Betz, representatives from The Nature Conservancy, and the mayor of Dixon, who explained the history of the Nachusa area. The event focused on informing visitors about Nachusa Grassland through discussion and hikes led by regional ecologists.

Aug. 22, 1987: The directors of the Green County Conservation League met at the VFW Club in Monroe to elect officers and plan the annual meeting, to be at Bluff View Park. Also discussed at the meeting was the purchase of land: The discussion moved from the parcel of land north of Albany (termed "too high priced") to "Rudy's Hill" prairie, owned by Harrison Butenhoff. Seven months later, on March 25, 1988, the officers of the GCCL signed the papers for the purchase of Butenhoff Prairie. The purchase price was \$6,000 for 19 acres of remnant prairie property from Mr. and Mrs. Harrison (Boots) Butenhoff. The land will be officially known as Butenhoff's Prairie, but is also known as "Rudy's Hill", due to a recently published book (*Rudy's Hill* by M.C. Elmer, 1987).

The discovery of this prairie was made by Gary Eldred who, as the tree-planter for the DNR, was asked by Boots to look at a hilltop he owned to see if it would be

a candidate for the tree-planting program. Eldred was the original prairie enthusiast, so he recognized the plants and grasses of a dry prairie: Pasque Flower, Puccoon, Hill's Thistle, Cream Wild Indigo, tuberous Indian Plantain, Side Oats Grama and little bluestem are specialties here, with silky aster, sky blue aster, and showy goldenrod. He advised Boots that he had something special – remnant prairie – and advocated for the purchase of this grassland by the Green County Conservation League, which featured upland sandpipers and regal fritillaries.

Oct. 22, 1987: A general meeting is held of the Rock County Conservationists, a new group formed to provide a forum of exchange of ideas and interests in all aspects of environmental concern. Several field trips to view endangered plant species proved a great success this summer and more are planned. RCC has located four hot spots of native prairie in Rock County, including populations of four endangered species. Please contact Richard Newsome or Robert Baller to join. The group has decided on a trademark and logo design of the woodcock – a game bird of savannas and grasslands, the original landscape of Rock County – and a favorite bird of Aldo Leopold, whose 100th birthday anniversary coincides with the formation of the Rock County Conservationists, the RCC.

Sources: Newsletters of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts Ltd; The First 65 Years ... 1929-1994 The Green County Conservation League by Wes Pellett, 1995; Rudy's Hill by M.C. Elmer, 1987, Monroe Evening Times and other newspaper articles and photos.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Photo by Justin Nooker

2012 intern crew on weed pile at Mounds View. (l to r) Natalie Haynes, Clinton Nienhaus, Kurt Hacker, and Justin Nooker.

Outstanding Intern Crew at Mounds View Grassland

TPE was blessed this summer with a hard-working intern crew at Mounds View Grassland. With leadership from restoration ecologist Justin Nooker, interns Natalie Haynes (Brigham Young University), Kurt Hacker (UW-Stevens Point), and Clinton Nienhaus (St. Mary's University of Minnesota) accomplished a great deal and learned much about prairie conservation and management.

Joined by volunteers and assisted occasionally by last year intern, Andrew Cory, the crew cleared Erbe Grassland, Kalscheur Savanna, and most of Mounds View Grassland of Parsnip, Sweetclover, Knapweed, Hedge Parsley, and miscellaneous other invasive weeds. They also collected large amounts of prairie seed - over eight pounds of Needlegrass alone - maintained the seed orchards, and helped with vegetation and breeding bird monitoring.

They also spent much time on the stream and wetland restoration at the Shea Prairie unit of Mounds View, planting seed and cordgrass root plugs, putting down erosion netting, and watering the plantings. The intern crew also helped some at Powell Prairie, Mazomanie Bluff, and Pleasant Valley Conservancy.

There were also interns this summer at Pleasant Valley Conservancy and Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie: Sarah Berry (Carlton College) and Dan Lynch (UW-La Crosse). The two crews joined up for a few days during the summer.

We appreciate their hard work through a record-breaking hot summer and hope everyone found their internships to be a worthwhile summer experience. Look forward to a first-hand account from the summer by Nienhaus in the next issue of the *Prairie Promoter*.

Fall 2012

TPE Merchandise Make Great Gifts

The TPE website contains quite a few items that make wonderful gifts for Christmas, birthdays, or just a "thank you".

The TPE hat is a heavy, brushed twill with a cloth strap and tri-glide buckle closure. Available in black, the TPE logo is embroidered in a stunning gold thread that gleams in the afternoon sun. Between now and Christmas, the hat is available for \$5 (plus \$2 for shipping).



How about a t-shirt? Available in black, red, and blue, this heavy, pre-shrunk cotton shirt is roomy enough to be comfortable, but still able to attract admiring looks from men and women, alike. \$8 (plus \$2 shipping).

Visit the website today for complete descriptions of available books, tools, and clothing: <http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/merchandise.htm>



CHIPPEWA SAVANNAS CHAPTER

No report submitted

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

Prairie Blitz Day

The Coulee Region Chapter will be having a "Prairie Blitz Day" on Saturday, Sept. 22, beginning at 8 a.m. The day will run into the late afternoon as there are plans to visit six or seven TPE member properties near La Farge. These members all have prairie reconstructions in some stage of development.

This will be a great opportunity to share knowledge on techniques for establishing prairies. A bring-your-own lunch will be hosted around noon with a short chapter meeting during lunch.

More details will be available in the upcoming chapter newsletter.

Additional information about the Coulee Region Chapter can be found in their newsletter online at <http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapter/coulee/crc-newsletters.htm>.

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

Conservation Award to Empire-Sauk

The Iowa County Land Conservation Committee selected The Prairie Enthusiasts' Empire-Sauk Chapter for the County's 2012 Wildlife Habitat award. This award is given in recognition of hard work and accomplishments in conserving the land and water of Iowa County. The award was presented by County Conservationist, Jim McCaulley, and 2012 Alice in Dairyland, Rochelle Ripp, to Chapter Chair, Rich Henderson at the Iowa County Farmer's Appreciation Day on July 8th. This recognition is the result of the work of many volunteers at TPE's Mounds View Grassland Preserve, Kalscheur Oak Savanna, and Hollandale Seed Orchard.

Job Opportunity: Volunteer Coordinator

The Empire-Sauk Chapter is looking for a person to recruit and support volunteers and promote awareness of TPE in the community (south central Wisconsin). Check the website for the upcoming job posting.

Seed Collecting Help Needed

The Empire-Sauk Chapter plans to plant 90 acres to prairie this fall/winter at the Mounds View Grassland, Erbe Grassland, and other planting projects. We could use all the help we can get this fall to collect the needed seed. We can use both individuals working on their own or in organized groups. Eric Preston, the Empire-Sauk Chapter coordinator for seed collecting efforts, will be matching people with collecting needs. Major seed collecting areas this fall will be at Underwood, Schurch-Thomson, and Shea Prairies, and nearby sites south of Blue Mounds, and at Rettenmund Black Earth Prairie and Pleasant Valley Conservancy. If you wish to be on the contact list to help with seed collecting, please contact Ann Calhoun (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org). Also, we are 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 more than 500 lbs of seed from more than 125 species, and we will likely be doing that much or more, again, 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). We need you! If you wish to be on the contact lists to help with these activities, please contact Ann Calhoun (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org).

Fall Work Party Plans

This fall, the Empire-Sauk Chapter will continue its efforts at restoring prairie remnants. Volunteers are needed on 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, 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, and you are uncertain as to whether or not you are on the e-mail or phone notification lists, please contact Ann Calhoun (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org).

Are You Mechanically Inclined?

Empire-Sauk Chapter is still 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 setup 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).



This photo of a Monarch on Rosinweed by JoAnn Lynch was a finalist in the 2012 TPE Photo Contest.

GLACIAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER

No report submitted

MANY RIVERS CHAPTER



Photo courtesy of Scott Seigfreid

Many Rivers members present Tom Peterson, owner of *The Creative Company*, with the chapter's 2012 Conservationist of the Year Award. (l to r) Henry Panowitsch, Marcia Richards, Peterson, and Scott Seigfreid.

Chapter Conservationist of the Year Award

In Fall 2011, the Many Rivers Chapter of TPE decided to create an award to present annually to an individual or company who goes above and beyond the call to practice good conservation measures. Our chapter decided that this was a good way to let the communities that we work in better understand our purpose. The award, although simple and inexpensive, is a good way to cultivate relationships with the local media and general public, and bring awareness of the important role that planting natives has.

In Spring 2011, the chapter entered into an agreement with the City of Mankato to plant a four-acre short grass prairie. Looking to cut cost, the chapter approached Tom Peterson, owner of the Creative Company (a publisher and distributor of children's books worldwide), about harvesting seed from his planted prairie in a commercial development in North Mankato. As luck would have it, Peterson lives above the Troost Pond area in Rasmussen Woods Park where the prairie planting is to be seeded this fall.

Peterson was familiar with our project at the park and, also, with some of the good deeds of our chapter and agreed to allow us to collect seed. As the five-acre planting was originally planted in 1996 by Prairie Restorations, we know we have a good seed source for the park project.

After seeing this beautiful planting in a sea of concrete tilt panel buildings, asphalt and meticulously manicured lawns, I thought, "Wow! There is hope."

The more native plantings that can be established in the Minnesota River Basin, mean holding more runoff water from reaching the river and also create a mosaic of key pollinator habitat in our region.

The Many Rivers Chapter thanks Tom and his staff at The Creative Company for their efforts in making our area a better environment to live.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER



Photo courtesy of Ricky Rachuy

Casper Bluff

NIPE Restorations: 1993-2012

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPE) has been creating grasslands for 20 years. A look back at the effort, and the results, could therefore be instructive. There are, of course, many ways to evaluate this work. Here are some thoughts.

Over two decades, seed was collected from 209 different species of vascular plants. The number of species collected ranged from 58 to 133 per year, with an average of 94. This variation was due, principally, to the type of projects being done, with sandy sites receiving more species. The number of locally collectible species grew significantly over time, which was no accident.

The amount of seed collected each year ranged from 330 to 1,722 pounds. This variation was due to weather, project type and, substantially, to the type of equipment used. Combining grasses and automating thrashing were both major steps forward. Just having sites from which to pick seed was indispensable and required much negotiation with both private and public landowners.

Over the two decades, an average of 35.25 pounds of seed was sown per restoration acre. This consisted of no more than five pounds of tall grass and no less than 25 pounds of forbs per acre. The retail value of the seed mixes varied from \$81 to \$146 per pound and, in total, averaged \$4,483 per acre. Of course, we didn't buy the seed, we collected it.

Looking at the latter decade (2002-11), a core group of eight to 10 volunteers can seemingly restore 25 to 40 acres of high-quality grassland per year. This presupposes they have appropriate equipment, technical competence and a stubborn dedication.

It takes many years and many minds to establish an efficient system for restoration in a given area. But, the more you do, the easier it gets. So let's get at it.

For other news and seed collection schedule please visit our website at www.nipes.org.

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

Kirkpatrick Joins Chapter for Annual Hike

TPE Executive Director Chris Kirkpatrick visited the Prairie Bluff Chapter at 5 p.m. on July 3 for our annual hike at Meinert Prairie (+3 acres with compass plant). The Meinert remnant is located in north-central Illinois, approximately 20 miles west of South Beloit, Ill. Braving triple-digit temps, participants followed-up the hike with a barbecue chicken/potluck/root beer hosted by Nick and Linda Faessler at their home on Stateline Rd. south of Juda, Wis.



Photo submitted by Rob Baller

(l to r) Kevin Doyle, Bill Walz, Nick Faessler, Billy Eisenhuth, Tom Mitchell, TPE Executive Director Chris Kirkpatrick, Nate Gingerich (behind compass plant), Rob Baller.

ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER



Photo by Burt Levy

St. Croix Valley Chapter members and volunteers participate in a plant inventory.

Chapter Completes Plant Inventories

The St. Croix Valley Chapter of TPE had two plant inventories this past spring and, again, in the fall at our managed sites: the Foster Conservation Area and Alexander prairie. These plant inventories are required for our site management plans. Knowing what plants currently exist on our sites determines how we allocate our resources and helps us measure our success. These working field trips increase our skills in plant identification and provide a good inventory of any threatened, endangered, and rare plants to help obtain management grants.

The Prairie Promoter

Update on Strategy Plan

We continue to complete action items from our chapter strategy plan in the areas of land management, education, and membership. Our strategy plan helps us determine where we, as a chapter, want to focus our resources. You can review our plan and completed items on our chapter website.

PRAIRIE SANDS CHAPTER

No report submitted

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

Prairie Smoke Chapter Tour

Participants from Rochester enjoyed sand prairie summer flowers and a historic stone house during a Prairie Smoke tour of the Paul Gruchow Memorial Prairie near Elba, Minn., on Sunday, July 29. The tour was led by Chuck Kernler, a Prairie Smoke board member.

This privately owned site is a former sandpit and a fantastic demonstration of what nature can do with only a little coaxing. The tour included a view of the historic Kieffer-Hemmelberg House, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Elba Firetower was also nearby and open to the public, but participants chose not to climb it, due to on and off rains.

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Soil Survey Project at Eldred Prairie

Exciting events will be taking place at Eldred Prairie over the next few months. The Southwest Wisconsin Chapter of TPE is working with UW-Platteville to map and characterize the soils at Eldred Prairie, as well as to host regional and national collegiate Soils competitions. Eldred Prairie is an ideal location for these events due to its diverse topography, soils and historical land use. The events will not only provide UW-Platteville students with an opportunity to describe soils and relate them to differences in topography, historical vegetation and management, but will provide students from all over the United States with an opportunity to learn about the ecological importance of the prairie community and the species that make Eldred Prairie so special.

Work Party Schedule

The SW Chapter has set the following dates, locations and times for work parties this fall. Directions can be found on TPE website. All workparties start at 10 a.m. with a meeting to follow:

Sept. 15 Eldred Prairie
Oct. 20 Twin Oaks Savanaa
Nov. 10 Borah Creek Prairie

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period May 11, 2012 through Aug. 23, 2012:

Valerie Galajda, Minneapolis, MN
Brad Cords, Mankato, MN
Marcia Richards, Mankato, MN
Tim & Sherri Dohrmann, Cedar Rapids, IA
Matt Weber, Lake Mills, WI
Bryan Kingsriter & Elaine Allen, St. Paul, MN

Martin Steitz, Forest Lake, MN
Four Miles to May, Mount Horeb, WI
Chris Baxter, Platteville, WI
Ryan Kemmerick, Rochester, MN
Eugene Braam, Mankato, MN
Marcia Ukura, Goodhue, MN

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

To:
Kinnickinnic River Land Trust
Gayle Edlin

From:
St. Croix Valley Chapter
Dean Edlin

THANK YOU DONORS

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period May 11, 2012 through Aug. 23, 2012. These gifts above and beyond membership dues are truly generous and appreciated.

\$5000 or more _____

Walter & Alice Mirk

\$1000 - \$4999 _____

Jeff Ralston
Driftless Land Stewardship LLC

\$500 - \$999 _____

Nick & Linda Faessler
Jack Kussmaul

\$100 - \$499 _____

Greg Lamp, *IBM matching grant*
Nick & Mary Kunz, *for burning prairies*
Vance Baker
Town of New Glarus, *for Bluebird Ridge Controlled Burn*
Tim & Michelle Burns

Ann Kalvig, *in memory of Lois Kvitek*
Barbara & Brad Glass
Jan Kettle, *in honor of Carol Winge*
Charles Wellington
Mark Krosch and Crista Browne-Krosch

Under \$100 _____

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Glen & Thelma Seigfreid
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Andrea Benco, *in memory of Bob Lee*
Jeff Green
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Did you know you can renew online? Visit: **www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org**

Or, mail a check and the form below to:

The Prairie Enthusiasts, P.O. Box 1148, Madison, WI 53701-1148

Questions? E-mail Victoria Oberle (membership coordinator) at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

Thank you.

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The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:

- | | |
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