

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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Grassroots Conservation at Work

Endangered Whooping Cranes Grace TPE's Shea Prairie

By Rich Henderson

For three weeks in late summer, two whooping cranes and a companion pair of sandhill cranes spent much of their time at TPE's Shea Prairie (see restoration article on page 4). This photo shows the birds at the preserve, as does the YouTube video taken by Eric Preston.

Whooping cranes are a federally-endangered species with less than 500 birds in the wild. For the past 10 years, efforts have been underway by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, International Crane Foundation, Wisconsin DNR and others to establish a wild population in Wisconsin, which migrates to Florida in the winter. The birds that took a liking to Shea Prairie this summer are part of that flock. They were a pair of two-year-old females that had been spending time down in Lafayette County, Wisconsin.

The recently expanded Shea Prairie is now more than 100 acres in size. In the spring and early summer of 2012, major wetland, stream and prairie restoration work



*Whooping cranes at Shea Prairie in late August.
Photo by John Dadisman*

was done on the preserve. Even in this year's drought, the wetland restorations filled with water and immediately attracted a great diversity of aquatic insects, frogs and toads, turtles, shore birds and waterfowl. However, to our surprise and delight, the most noteworthy animals to arrive were the whooping cranes, which took advantage of the newly created habitat and open landscape. For three weeks in late summer, they hung around loafing and feeding along with a companion pair of sandhill cranes. This seems to be a most rewarding example of build it and they will come.

With the help of many volunteers, supporters, partners and grants, a diverse prairie/grassland landscape is starting to take shape at Shea Prairie and the rest of the Mounds View Grassland Preserve (570 acres total), providing not only habitat for a wide range of rare and declining species, but also opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature appreciation such as hiking, wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing.

Your support of TPE is making this possible. Thank you all!

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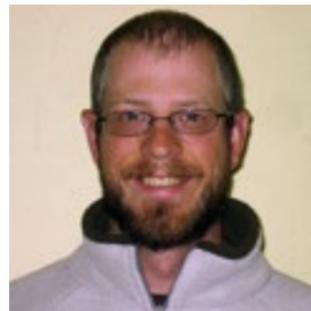
Planting the Seeds of the Future

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

The end of a growing season has come, and now we can look out at our prairies and be satisfied at all the hard work we have accomplished this past year. From burning to weeding parsnip to collecting precious seed from all the season's diversity of grasses and forbs, we see the fruits of our labor. Now we are into the winter months of cutting brush, burning piles and planning for spring burns. Thus follows the cycle of The Prairie Enthusiasts as we steward our lands. At the same time the organization is also going through its changes as it is taken care for by our members, chapters, committees, and Board of Directors. This past season we have also been focusing on our plans for the coming years. After listening to input from our chapters, the Board of Directors this past fall has put together and approved a strategic plan to prepare the organization for its next phase of growth.

The plan has six areas to focus on. The first and foremost is to support our chapters to carry out our mission by fostering open communication, transparent decision making processes, identification and support of chapter needs, and a network of expertise. We wish to grow our membership and recognize our volunteers' contributions. We also seek to continue our land management and land protection initiatives. Additionally we seek to implement policies and procedures to ensure we are a strong organization which will prepare us to become accredited. Finally we seek to be a financially sound organization while continuing to grow to support our needs. This winter we plant these seeds and prepare for them to sprout into a vibrant future for The Prairie Enthusiasts.

As with our prairies, we need your help to take care of the organization; planting and weeding it as these goals begin to grow and we advance as an organization. This will ensure that each chapter moves forward with its unique version of these goals that fits its local landscape. We all want to see the perpetuation of prairies and oak savannas by ensuring that our grassroots conservation can occur at the local level, which is where we know we will succeed. To do this we have prepared a great seed mix for each chapter to sow its own picture for the future of the organization with an overarching commonality to foster our mission to grow. Just as every remnant has its own unique assemblage of diversity, it is collectively a part of the fire dependent ecosystems of the upper Midwest. Every chapter has its own uniqueness but together we form a diverse grassroots organization. With this strategic plan we can continue to grow with the intent to ensure the perpetuation of the prairies, savannas, and associated ecosystems for which we are dedicated stewards.



By Jack Kussmaul

The question has arisen why TPE does not have an entry on Wikipedia. The answer is simply that no one has taken the initiative to put us there. The time has come, however, for us to make the move to help broaden our exposure.

We are looking for a volunteer with some computer savvy who would be willing to take on the project. There are people who will help provide content if we can get someone to actually take charge of the project. If you are interested please contact Chris Kirkpatrick at 815-541-3494 or at executivedirector@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

In fact, we can use volunteers in other areas. Chris Kirkpatrick, our new executive director, in his 32 hour a week position is now doing everything that a part time business manager and a full time development director were doing previously. It has not been easy. We hope to be able to bring him up to 40 hours a week before long and ideally will have an assistant to do routine things like stuffing envelopes so Chris will have time to deal with the big picture.

President's Message

Until this happens we could use some volunteer help. As an example, our real estate records were not well organized and we did not even know for sure what had been accumulated over the years and what had not. Linda Lynch recently volunteered for the task, since completed, of going through the files to organize and catalog. This was a job that needed doing and would have been hard for Chris to get at any time soon.

Other tasks that a volunteer could help with include continuing to help organize our project files. Linda was a tremendous help in identifying what project files we have and what is included within each file. There is still more work that could be done to gather additional information and prepare the files to be scanned and be made available digitally via our file storage company. Additionally having a volunteer take draft minutes of board and committee meetings would be helpful as well as consider serving on one of our committees.

New TPE Volunteer Coordinator

Happy New Year! My name is Diane Hills. I'm excited to kick off 2013 and introduce myself as The Prairie Enthusiasts new TPE Volunteer Coordinator. I started putting down roots with TPE in December and would like to share a bit about myself with you.



With a lifelong passion for the integrity and protection of our ecosystems, I enjoy engaging people in their growing awareness and stewardship of our precious natural resources. My professional experiences are quite diverse, yet all of them have one thing in common – they relate to people and their connectedness to the natural environment.

After obtaining my Bachelor of Science at UW Madison in Landscape Architecture (with a specialization in natural area restoration and management) I worked in environmental research, then at the Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources Natural Heritage Inventory. While protecting rare species and natural areas as the Environmental Review Coordinator, my job was highlighted by the opportunities to conduct terrestrial and aquatic surveys throughout Wisconsin.

Following my job at the DNR, I worked as a landscape architect, focusing on the utilization of native species for Ebert's Greenhouse Villages (a family-owned business in Ixonia, WI) and for Visionscapes, my own environmental consulting and landscape design business. I then worked implementing and managing Global Action Plan's Madison Area EcoTeam Program, a non-profit sustainable lifestyle

program, provided an incredibly exciting and rewarding experience organizing and working with hundreds of volunteers.

Simply said, I'd like to share my knowledge and success from these experiences to further our mission to ensure the perpetuation of the Upper Midwestern prairies, oak savannas, and related ecosystems. The Prairie Enthusiasts would not be here today without the efforts of the volunteers who founded this organization and the hundreds that have committed their time and resources to carry on its legacy. My hope for the future is to cover more ground by expanding our membership and welcoming new volunteers to share their time and talents in many different endeavors. Land management, education, inventory/research, land protection, donations, gatherings and outreach events are just a few of the many ways to help. While my focus will be on the Empire Sauk Chapter, we will be developing tools and techniques that we expect to be useful throughout TPE.

Without your commitment and involvement, we couldn't keep our vital prairie habitats and their unique species from being lost forever. Similar to the deep, strong grass roots of the prairies you have graciously volunteered to protect, I am here to support you as we grow and expand our prairie enthusiasm to others throughout the community. I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as I can.

Volunteering can be an exciting, growing, enjoyable experience. It is truly gratifying to serve a cause, practice one's ideals, work with people, solve problems, see benefits, and know one had a hand in them.

Harriet Naylor

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.

Stream and Wetland Restoration at Shea Prairie

By Rich Henderson

At long last, the much anticipated stream and wetland restoration work at Shea Prairie, a unit of TPE's Mounds View Grassland (Iowa Co., Wisconsin), was finally done this summer. The only thing left for this fall is to plant more prairie and wetland seed. The goal of the project was to bring a 0.3-mile stretch of the stream (Williams-Barneveld Creek) and its floodplain closer to the state it was in prior to European settlement of the area. Shortly after farming started, and before soil conservation practices were put into place, large volumes of silt ran off the plowed upland fields in the driftless area of southwest Wisconsin, rapidly filling the narrow valley bottoms. This caused the streams to become trapped within high banks of silt and wetlands along the stream to become buried. The resulting banks often are too steep to hold vegetation, and they are scoured with each high water event, releasing sediment into the streams. The valley bottom at Shea Prairie did not escape this fate; approximately 70 years ago part of the stream was straightened.

The project, directed by Peter Ziegler of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, removed the post-settlement silt down to the original floodplain surface over approximately 10 acres and sloped back the high vertical stream banks in other areas. An estimated 15,000 cubic yards of sediment were removed. In the process, seven small ephemeral to permanent wetlands (nearly two acres total) were created in the floodplain. These are supplied by a combination of groundwater and surface runoff. In addition, the stream was placed back into two original meanders that had been cut off by the old stream channeling project. This lengthened the active stream channel by 465 feet.



Removing post-settlement sediment from floodplain.
Photo by Peter Ziegler

A seed mix of native prairie and sedge meadow species (60 total, heavy on grasses and sedges) and 600 cordgrass and bluejoint grass plugs were planted by interns and volunteers along the newly exposed stream banks and in all low, wet areas along the stream and in the floodplain. Biodegradable netting was also placed on the new stream banks to hold the soil until plants grow back. In addition, 600 plugs of 20 species of native emergent aquatic plant species were planted into the newly created wetlands. A cover crop of oats and annual rye were planted across all exposed soil areas. Additional prairie and sedge meadow seed (more than 100 species) were planted by volunteers in the fall across all exposed soil areas (14.4 acres in total). Some of the site, farthest from the stream and out of the primary flood zone, will be kept in crop production for a number of years yet, and then planted to prairie.

Shortly after water developed in the new wetland basins, they were visited by a variety of dragonflies and several species of shorebirds passing through on their way back south. We anticipate these wetlands will be teaming with frogs and toads next spring.

This restoration project was supported by grants from the Wisconsin DNR River Management Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Habitat Action Plan, which Bob Hansis (now retired from Wisconsin DNR) was instrumental in obtaining for the project. The Wisconsin Waterfowl Association was also an indispensable partner, providing for Peter Ziegler's time to oversee and direct the project. TPE is grateful to all for making this happen.



Removing post-settlement sediment from floodplain.
Photo by Peter Ziegler

Crayfish Take Advantage of Restoration

By Rich Henderson

A species of burrowing crayfish has taken advantage of improved habitat that came with the stream and wetland restoration work this summer at the Shea Prairie unit of TPE's Mounds View Grassland Preserve located southwest of Barneveld, WI. The restoration removed up to 5 feet of silt that had buried, at the time of European settlement, the stream's original valley bottom and associated wetlands. Within weeks of the silt removal, I observed signs of a species of burrowing crayfish in the restored areas.

Burrowing crayfish, while found in streams and other water bodies, will readily take advantage of resources in the uplands, often well away from surface water in areas where the soil is deep and ground water is within 1-4 feet of the soil surface. The burrowing species I found evidences of at the Shea stream restoration is most likely the devil crayfish (*Cambarus diogenes*), which is a widespread species in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest that often lives in tunnels or burrows that reach down to the water table. The surface openings of these burrows are characterized by chimneys or volcanoes made of dried mud that the crayfish has pushed out of its tunnel (see picture). The crayfish spend the day in water at the bottom of the burrows, often in chambers. At night, when conditions are wet or at least humid, they venture out on the surface to look for food. They are capable of holding moisture on their gills and drawing oxygen from the air for extended periods out of water.

I had not observed surface burrow openings on the site in the years prior to the restoration work. The deep silt



Burrowing crayfish mud chimney at Shea Prairie stream & wetland restoration. Photo by Richard Oberle.

deposits along the stream prior to restoration may have been too deep for the crayfish to tunnel down to reach water. It is likely that the restoration project has greatly increased suitable habitat for this crayfish species.

There is another species of burrowing crayfish (*Procambarus gracilis*) that specializes in wet and wet-mesic prairie of the eastern tallgrass region. However, in Wisconsin it is only found in the extreme southeast corner of the state. None are known from southwest Wisconsin, which leads me to believe that the tunnels and chimneys I found at the Shea Prairie stream and wetland restoration site are work of the devil crayfish and not the prairie crayfish.

1987: A Big First Year for The Prairie Enthusiasts

By Tom Mitchell

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

In 1987, WPE harvested – by hand – and combined seeds for rare wildflowers on the George Lazareus property along Highway 81 near Beloit in Rock County, leased by Roger Bates of Rockton, Illinois. This generally undisturbed patch of ground has many rare wetland and prairie wildflowers. We collect these seeds for plantings in Green, Rock, Winnebago and Stephenson Counties. The Lazareus property is the best place we are aware of for harvesting these seeds, which will be used for planting at the two parks in Monroe. The WPE and RCC groups constitute over 400 people in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

November 14, 1987: Several dozen volunteers from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin gathered at Nachusa

Grasslands to reseed 40 acres of retired cornfield, located within the preserve near Dixon, Ill. Volunteers, including high school students from Chicago, walked transects across the freshly-plowed field, dispersing seeds of more than 50 species, which were collected by Illinois volunteers and processed by Applied Ecological Services, Inc., with a value of more than \$2,000. This may be one of the first projects in the Midwest where farmland, located within a prairie preserve, is restored back to prairie by the many devoted hands of volunteers. Anyone desiring to learn more about how to get involved at Nachusa can find out how from Steve Packard, Illinois Nature Conservancy in Chicago, Ill.

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.

Mounds View Grassland: An Intern's Perspective

By Clinton Nienhaus

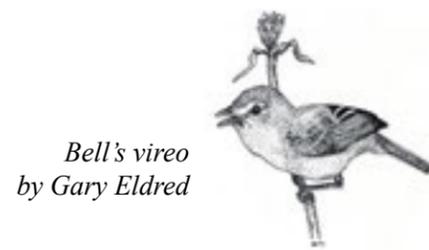
(Editor's Note: Clinton was on the intern crew that spent 12 weeks this past summer at TPE's Mounds View Grassland.)

When I think back to the first day on the prairie, I recall the feeling I had looking out to the hillside of Underwood Prairie and the valley bottom of Schurch-Thomson Prairie. I think back to the feeling of wonder, the feeling of awe, the feeling of pure elation when taking in the wide open spaces where I would be spending my summer.

I personally came into my internship with a very limited knowledge of the prairie ecosystem other than the basics of what a prairie is defined as and what birds inhabit prairies, in particular. The feeling of wonder I had on that first day was a feeling of not knowing what exactly to expect looking upon a landscape with seemingly hundreds upon hundreds of plant species with which I was not familiar. However, the wonder was followed by the awe brought forth by the knowledge of my supervisor, Justin Nooker, and DNR ecologist, Rich Henderson. Their guidance allowed me to see the individual plants of the prairie in addition to the broad, sloping, grass-filled prairie with which I was familiar. I have come to love this ecosystem, and all of the work we put into it through my three month internship makes me happy – happy that I could have a hand in preserving a wonderful plant and animal community.

Prairie birds are truly what get me excited. I am a bird lover and was more than ecstatic to be able to spend my time this summer with birds that are particular to the prairie. This joy was compounded by seeing species that are threatened in the state of Wisconsin and rare around my home in Minnesota. Nothing will ever replace the joy in my heart brought by spending nearly every day hearing or seeing a red-headed woodpecker, a bird that is few and far between in Minnesota.

Some of the prairie denizens like the eastern meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, dickcissel and bobolink had a particular impact on me, but none as wonderful as the red-headed woodpecker or the bird I was most hoping to see: *Bartramia longicauda*, the upland sandpiper. How heart-broken I was the first day of work when Rich told us that we had just missed them calling earlier that morning!! I cannot recall a time when I have felt more elated birding than seeing my first pair of "Uppies" at Schurch-Thomson Prairie. What a blessing to see these scarce birds. What a blessing to see so many of them! I can still recall the morning the crew and I were weeding the drive up to the barn when we were surrounded by the playful, lyrical whirring and whooleeing of three pairs of upland sandpipers. What a sound and what a joy to be in the presence of such glorious birds! Not to be outdone, however, is the small elusive songster: *Vireo belli*, Bell's vireo. What a splendid call and what an honor to be in the proximity of such a rare, little bird, which is incredible to behold; a small bird with a distinct warbling, rambling call. It has been such an honor to share my summer with the myriads wondrous prairie denizens!



Bell's vireo
by Gary Eldred

I still don't believe that I was able wrap my head around all of the plants of the prairie. I can still remember that overwhelming feeling when Rich first gave us the tour of Mounds View. He would point out plant after plant after plant, in hopes we would be able pick out the ones to look out for and the plants we would be ridding the prairie of. It is surprising how much one can learn in three months! All of the plants we would encounter became second nature to us crew members. Our familiarity increased our love of these plants, some of which are very specialized even within the special prairie ecosystem. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought I would be so inspired by plants! I will miss the green milkweed, swamp milkweed, butterfly milkweed, hoary puccoon, the triad of *Liatris* species, pale spike lobelia, cup-plant, compass-plant, rosinweed, cream *Baptisia*, prairie dropseed, Indiangrass and the *Panicum* species. Such diversity on the prairie! I only have glowing reviews of the wondrous plant communities the crew and I had the honor to work on this summer. For me, it was eye opening that there is so much to a prairie. The alternate blooming seasons, the succession of plants dying and flowering, the beauty over such a large area! Such beauty would not be possible without the efforts that have been put forward by volunteers, interns and people who truly love the prairie. No wonder the organization is called The Prairie Enthusiasts!

Now, I have spent too much time reveling in the sights and sounds of the prairie. My intention of writing was to reflect on what the summer has been for me. I am sure that my fellow crew members can attest to some of my thoughts, but this is simply from my heart. Initially, my idea of this internship was putting in hard work, not knowing exactly what my time would entail. I knew prior to coming to the prairie that my thoughts on working were steadfastly focused on conserving an ecosystem that is in sparse occurrence, an ecosystem that has been severely degraded to the point that only a few remnants exist from historic plant communities. What would happen to these prairie remnants were it not for The Prairie Enthusiasts and The Nature Conservancy?

I feel proud to have been part of the driving force in Iowa and Dane counties to maintain these glorious prairies, hoping one day that there will be no invasive plant species on their grounds. Pulling wild parsnip, yellow and white sweet clover, Japanese hedge parsley and spotted knapweed felt like a never-ending endeavor. I feel that the work done this year has only slowly begun to stop the advance of these

weeds; an advance that, left unchecked, could drown out the prairie, which decades of toil has worked so hard to maintain.

I have gained a true vision of the work that goes into restoring prairie through my internship. I have cemented the idea in my head that it is not a lost cause to work on a task that will never truly be finished in a lifetime. It is a treasure that we work on today to show our children and the generations to follow. For me, learning that restoring a prairie truly is a labor of love is the most important thing I can hope to take away from the summer. This is not a love in the sense of infatuation with an idea or a person perhaps, but a love in the sense that the work done today can be appreciated by the

generations to come who do not know the initial struggles that go into the maintenance of an entire ecosystem. Such a wonderful endeavor I think.

I will take away many things from my hours on the prairie this summer. I will take away a newfound knowledge of conservation, the sense of being a part of a great endeavor and the feeling of knowing the world around me in a greater sense. I have no words that can portray how I truly feel about the Mounds View Grassland. I only have the greatest admiration of the land that surrounded me on a daily basis, a land that I will miss very dearly.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TPE Annual Photo Contest - Enter Now!

TPE members are encouraged to submit photos for TPE third annual photo contest, in conjunction with our Annual Conference. Images can portray all things prairie, so be creative! Subject matter may include anything that includes plants, animals, insects or amphibians that are native to prairie areas or, activities that are taking place on a prairie.

Photos may be submitted to Scott Seigfreid at manyriverschapter@gmail.com. Full details will be available on the TPE website. A few details to keep in mind:

- All photos will need to be submitted in digital format. Maximum three entries per member.
- A finalist group of photos will be selected by a professional photographer and displayed at the TPE Annual Conference, where members will vote for their favorite. The winning photo will be used on the cover of the 2012 TPE Annual Report.
- All photographers selected as a finalist image will receive \$100 and a fine print suitable for framing.
- Copyright remains with the photographer.

Submittal deadline is Feb.1, 2013. You must be a TPE member to participate.

Blue flag iris
(finalist in 2012
TPE Photo Contest)
by Kathie Brock



Editor's Note

After the last issue, Dana Bolwerk handed off the editing of *The Prairie Promoter* to Scott Fulton. We thank Dana for her years of great work! Unfortunately, with all new staff at the helm, things have not gone very smoothly for this issue. My apologies for the tardiness, and especially to those chapters whose reports I did not receive until too late in the process. We will do better next time!

Call for Poster/Display Presentations

TPE welcomes posters showcasing the results of research and lessons learned from prairie and savanna restoration or management projects at the upcoming 2013 TPE Annual Conference on Saturday, March 16, 2013. (see insert in this issue of *The Prairie Promoter*. Posters will be displayed for the entire day of the conference. A session will be offered in the afternoon for presenters to attend their posters to answer any questions from the attendees. Adequate space will be provided for displaying and viewing the posters.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Pollinators and native plants
- Controlling and managing invasive species
- Critical area plantings to improve water quality
- Case studies of restoration for prairie and/or savanna
- Ecosystems services provided by prairie
- Wildlife habitat management for prairie species
- Role of fire in Midwestern ecosystems
- Effective educational and demonstration projects
- Research in prairie and savanna ecology or species

To be considered for the poster presentation, please send a brief abstract and the following information to Brooke Hacker, hacker_brooke@yahoo.com, on or before Tuesday, February 15, 2013. Please include:

Author name(s) & affiliation(s):

Primary presenter:

Primary presenter e-mail address:

Poster presentation title:

Poster presentation abstract [250 word limit]:

You will be notified of acceptance to the conference poster session by March 1, 2013. If you have questions, or need further information, please contact Brooke Hacker at hacker_brooke@yahoo.com or 507-995-2364. For annual conference and banquet details, please visit www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/.

CHIPPEWA SAVANNAS CHAPTER

No report

COULEE REGION CHAPTER

No report

EMPIRE-SAUK CHAPTER

Donations Sought for Annual Raffle/Auction

It is time again to line up items for TPE's annual raffle/auction fundraiser. If you wish to contribute items to the Empire-Sauk Chapter, please contact Rich Henderson (tpe.rhenderson@tds.net). Proceeds from items donated to the Chapter help with land protection and land management activities in the Chapter's geographic area of operation. All items must be preregistered. The banquet and raffle/auction are the weekend of March 16, 2013. See details under banquet and conference announcement; note the deadline for registering items.

\$127,000 Worth of Seed Collected for the Military Ridge Area

Starting in late June and on through October, Empire-Sauk Chapter volunteers, with assistance from our summer interns, collected and processed 470 pounds of clean seed from 132 species for use in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) in western Dane and eastern Iowa counties. The estimated value of this seed is \$127,000. The leading volunteers in this effort were Todd Casanova, Jan Kettle, Eric Preston, Kathy and Rich Henderson, Richard Oberle, Erik Goplin, Ted Cochrane, Peter Thomford, along with many others. Their efforts are much appreciated and will help expand critical habitat for many threatened and declining prairie species of both upland and wetland settings.

The collected seed, along with purchased seed of southern Wisconsin origin, will be planted across 70 acres in the MRPHA this fall and next spring. It will be used on wetland and prairie restorations projects across TPE's Mounds View Grassland and Erbe Grassland. The purchase of seed is made possible, in part, by a grant from Alliant Energy Foundation (via The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin office) to plant prairie in the MRPHA, and cost share funds from the USDA Conservation Reserve Program.

Winter Work Party Plans

This winter, the Empire-Sauk Chapter will continue its efforts at restoring prairie remnants. Volunteers are needed to clear trees and brush and burn brush piles. This winter, we will be working at Mounds View Grassland (includes Underwood, Shea, A to Z, and Schurch-Thomson prairies) south of Blue Mounds, Ripp Prairies north of Waunakee, Westport Drumlin/Koltes Prairie east 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. Winter work parties come with refreshments (such as homemade cookies and apple cider), crisp weather and a fire to warm up by (when there is snow on the ground), and they 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 our new Volunteer Coordinator Diane Hills (volunteers@theprairieenthusiasts.org).

New Shed at Schurch-Thomson Prairie

Thanks to income from the portions of the preserve enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and support from Jim & Rumi O'Brien, there is now a new 30 x 50 ft shed at Schurch-Thomson Prairie (see photo). This shed is much needed to keep tractors, mowers, and trailers, that don't fit in the barn, out of the elements. This is equipment critical to the management and restoration of the 570-acre Mounds View Grassland complex and other TPE preserves in the region. The site preparation and gravel work was done by Fink's Paving & Excavating of Mt. Horeb, the shed was built by Cleary Building Corporation of Verona, and the electrical work was done by Oimoen Electric of Blue Mounds.



Photo courtesy Rich Henderson

Are You Mechanically Inclined?

The 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 set up 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).

GLACIAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER

No report

MANY RIVERS CHAPTER



Juvenile North American (Blue) racer. Photo courtesy of Professor Mary Coughlan

All God's Creatures

By Steven Gahm

Mary Coughlan, Art Professor at Winona State University, MN, took this photo of a juvenile North American Racer – also known as a Blue Racer. She leaned out the open car window while I hurried around the backend of the vehicle from the driver's side to have a look. Mary and my wife, Denise Friesen, are both members of the Wisconsin/Minnesota Project Art for Nature (PAN) group. Mary was visiting Mankato to open an art exhibit with Denise at the local Carnegie Art Center.

We had spent most of the day gathering seed with other members of the Many Rivers Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts, and then spent some time exploring the Kasota Prairie Scientific and Natural Area. Unimin Corporation, a miner of hydraulic fracture ("fracking") sand is expanding its operations on land adjacent to the Scientific and Natural Area. It was on the road that bisects the Scientific and Natural Area that Mary took this photo.

Some snakes lay eggs and others have live births. It was Carol Hall, MN DNR Amphibian and Reptile Specialist, who informed me of this. I first met Carol at a PAN show in the Bell Museum of Natural History in Minneapolis. More recently, she has been working at the Kasota Prairie Scientific and Natural Area.

Blue Racers lay eggs. They are found in dry prairies and savannas. In Minnesota they are listed as "Special Concern, Species in Greatest Conservation Need". Juveniles of this species have a different coloration and pattern than the adults; the adults are blue to gray or greenish. And they're fast; both the juveniles and adults are fast – four miles an hour fast.

When I see this splendid photo, or a Blue Racer itself, if I'm lucky enough to have the chance (I've only ever seen the one) I see God the biologist, but I also see God the artist – most certainly God the artist.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS CHAPTER

No report

PRAIRIE BLUFF CHAPTER

One of the species proposed to be added to Wisconsin's threatened species list is the upland sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*). From an analysis prepared by the WI Department of Natural Resources, this is a bird "found primarily in southwest, northwest sands, and northeastern part of the state. This species prefers large, open landscapes with short to mid-height grassy vegetation, including prairie remnants, lightly grazed pastures, barrens, old fields, and other idle grasslands and hay fields. The species is in decline in Wisconsin, some of the largest declines in its range; it was once reported at 55 sites. It may disappear from Wisconsin without large blocks of idle and/or grazed grasslands."

This long distance flier can still be seen sitting on a fencepost in early summer at Marbleseed Prairie, but it prefers the bigger grasslands at Hoesly Prairie and Military Ridge. Gary Felder says it was at Butenhoff Prairie in the early days, when it was part of a larger grasslands complex; Butenhoff is now bounded on two sides by houses and lawns, with the former CRP acreage on the other sides now planted with corn, as "idle lands" disappear with higher grain prices.

Three other species that are being removed from the endangered and threatened species list occur in Green County:

Wild quinine (also known as American fever few) is "found in dry mesic to mesic prairie and savanna ... in the southwest and southeast corners ... the Wisconsin population appears stable." Remnant populations can be found at Green's Prairie Cemetery and Weber Prairie.

Prairie Indian-Plantain "has been reported from the southern two tiers of counties, including Grant, Crawford, Lafayette, Iowa, Green, Dane, Rock, Jefferson, Walworth, Kenosha and Racine counties.... It has responded well to prairie management." Butenhoff Prairie and Oliver Prairie have stable populations.

Yellow Gentian is "found in dry to moist prairies and savannas... from 32 counties, mostly in the south-central portion of the state. The population in Wisconsin is increasing... mostly in old fields." Marbleseed Prairie, a dry, rock component of the York Prairie State Natural Areas, hosts this plant on a north-facing slope.



Upland sandpiper
by Gary Eldred

ST. CROIX VALLEY CHAPTER

Dotted Blazing Star Relocated

By Evanne Hunt

Members of the St. Croix Valley chapter worked with the WI DNR and WI DOT to rescue a population of 30 *Liatris punctata* from the path of the new St. Croix River crossing north of Hudson, WI.

Dotted blazing star (*L. punctata* var. *nebraskana*), a State Endangered plant, has been found only in five Wisconsin counties along the St. Croix River. Harvey Halvorsen, TPE member and DNR Supervisor, said that this was the largest population of "punctata" he had ever seen.

On October 6, chapter members collected the seed; on November 3, members teamed up with officials from the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources to dig up the plants.



Photos courtesy Evanne Hunt

After a brief orientation from Troy Stapelmann (WI DOT) and Dan Salas of Cardno JFNew on how to uproot the plants, chapter members carefully excavated around and beneath the plant to free the corm. Each individual plant was then washed, photographed, measured, treated with anti-fungal chemicals, and wrapped for transport by ecology students, volunteering from UW-Eau Claire.



The plants' root structure varied from six inches to nearly three feet. Some grew straight down and others grew horizontally. Speculation was that a natural gas line trenched-in several years ago severed some of the roots and affected the root morphology.

The rescued plants will spend the winter in the DNR nursery in Hayward. Next spring, the corms will be monitored for seed production. Several corms were planted at the DNR Star Prairie seed farm. The fall harvest of *L. punctata* seed will be container-planted by students at the New Richmond High School in their greenhouse for seedling production. These seedlings will be shared with Houlton Elementary School, the Somerset Parnell prairie and select public lands that closely resemble the original soil/plant association where the plants originated. All plantings target both private and public prairie sites to increase the chances of survival and distribute the genetic material. The seeds will also be cultivated at the nursery in Hayward, and at the DNR seed farm.

TPE became involved this summer when Evanne Hunt, chair of the St. Croix Valley chapter, received a call from Gary Birch with the Wisconsin DOT in Madison informing her of the find. By law, WDOT must conduct searches for endangered plants prior to construction. Naturally, Evanne agreed and put out a call for immediate action. TPE quickly grasped the opportunity to learn more about the endangered plant, share camaraderie, rescue an important plant species, and forge a partnership that knows no boundaries.



PRAIRIE SANDS CHAPTER

No report

PRAIRIE SMOKE CHAPTER

No report

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN CHAPTER

No report

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period August 23, 2012 through November 14, 2012:

John Molloy, Boyd, WI
Paul Wade, Mapleton, MN
Robert McManus, Bayport, MN
John Heywood, Shorewood, WI
Christina Rathman, Ellsworth, WI

Sue Curtis, Mineral Point, WI
Judith Lary, Cross Plains, WI
Lytton Musselman, Norfolk, VA
Richard Barloga, Hales Corners, WI

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

To:

Nancy McGill

From:

Larry Hartzke

THANK YOU DONORS

We thank everyone who made a donation to The Prairie Enthusiasts during the period August 24, 2012 – November 14, 2012. These gifts above and beyond membership dues are truly generous and appreciated.

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

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