

TOWN OF NEW GLARUS

PARKS COMMISSION MEETING

APRIL 17, 2019

AGENDA

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Town of New Glarus Parks Commission, County of Green, will conduct a meeting for the transaction of business as is by law required permitted at such meeting as follows:

LOCATION: New Glarus Town Hall
26 5th Avenue
New Glarus, WI 53574

DATE: Wednesday, April 17, 2019
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Proof of Posting
- 3) Approve Parks Commission Minutes
 - a) 03/13/2019 Parks Meeting
- 4) Potential Grants – May 1, 2019 Deadline
- 5) Kim Tschudy
 - a) Shooting Park Barn Follow up
 - b) Large Photo Collection – Estimated Cost
- 6) Bluebird Ridge Conservancy
 - a) The Prairie Enthusiasts Burn
 - b) Sign Maintenance – No Motorized Vehicles
 - c) Bluebird Houses
- 7) Free Concerts
- 8) Workshops
 - a) Workshop Recap
 - b) Tree Sales
 - c) Photo Contest
 - d) Early Bird Swimming Pool Incentive
 - e) Review Workshop Checklist
 - f) 175th Town Anniversary
- 9) Public Comments
- 10) Mailers
 - a) Photo Contest
 - b) Early Bird Swimming Pool Incentive
- 11) Review Open Meetings Law
- 12) Tutorial on ATV Equipment
- 13) Adjourn

POSTED: New Glarus Town Hall 04/04/19
New Glarus Garage 04/04/19
New Glarus Post Office 04/04/19

Harry Pulliam, Chair
New Glarus Parks Commission



Pattie Salter, Clerk-Treasurer

Pursuant to applicable law, notice is hereby given that a quorum or a majority of the New Glarus Town Board or Plan Commission Members may attend this meeting. Information presented at this meeting may help form the rationale behind future actions that may be taken by the Town of New Glarus Board. Persons requiring additional services to participate in a public meeting may contact the Town Clerk for assistance at 527-2390.

OFFICE OF
Town of New Glarus
PARKS COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019
MINUTES

ATTENDING: Harry Pulliam, Chris Narveson, Dana Emmerton, Jason Neton and Andy Elkins.

- 1) **Call to Order:** H. Pulliam called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.
- 2) **Proof of Posting:** H. Pulliam attested to proper posting.
- 3) **Approve Parks Commission Minutes**
 - a) 02/20/2019 Parks Meeting: A. Elkins moved to approve the minutes as presented. D. Emmerton 2nd. Motion carried.
- 4) **Kim Tschudy:**
 - a) Shooting Park Barn - Kim Tschudy was not in attendance. H. Pulliam reported that Kim will be speaking to the Tell Guild to see if they would be interested in selling the property to the Town of New Glarus.
 - b) Large Photo Collection – 175th Anniversary of the Town is next year. Review Photographs at the April meeting.
- 5) **Workshops:**
 - a) Review Workshop Checklist: No action taken.
 - b) Invasive Species Workshop: J. Neton reported that he has been busy trying to reschedule speakers and date for the workshop. The event has been rescheduled for April 7 from 1-3:30 p.m.

P. Salter should update the Event Flyer, Town Website and Facebook page with the new information and RSVP link.
 - c) Tree Sale: No action taken.
 - d) Photo Contest: No action taken.
 - e) 175th Anniversary: No action taken.
- 6) **Public Comments:** None
- 7) **Mailers:** Add to agenda for next month.
- 8) **Review Open Meetings Law:** P. Salter was absent add to next month's agenda.
- 9) **Tutorial on ATV Equipment:** P. Salter was absent add to next month's agenda.
- 10) **Schedule Next Meeting:** Tentatively scheduled for April 17 at 7 p.m.
 - i. Workshop Recap
 - ii. Tree Sale
 - iii. Photo Contest
 - iv. Early Bird Swimming pool incentive – add to May workshops flyer
 - v. Review Workshop Checklist
 - vi. Review Open Meetings Law
 - vii. Tutorial on ATV equipment
- 11) **Adjourn:** J. Neton moved to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. A. Elkins 2nd. Motion carried.



January 23, 2019

TO: Potential Grant Applicants –

- Stewardship Local Assistance grants
- Land & Water Conservation Fund grants
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants

FROM: Cheryl Housley, Community Services Specialist – South Central Region

SUBJECT: Grant Applications must be postmarked May 1, 2019

The Department of Natural Resources is pleased to inform you that application materials for Stewardship Local Assistance, Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and Recreational Trails grants are available on the DNR website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/applylug.html> (see application tab). The application materials are combined again this year for all three programs.

Applications must be postmarked or dropped-off no later than May 1 to be considered for funding. PLEASE clear cached data/history on your internet browser, or these new forms will not display accurately.

The following sections are somewhat different from previous years and are fillable forms:

- Section 1& 2 (Project Information & Background): <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/8700/8700-191.pdf>
- Stewardship, LWCF & Rec. Trails ranking questions (see guidance doc. pgs. 16-29 & answer template)

Guidance with ranking questions:

https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/documents/2019_FY20_StewLUGRTALWCFAppBook_DIST.pdf

Answer Template: <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/8700/8700-338.pdf>

We encourage you to obtain the application materials from our website. A limited number of paper copies are available from our office. Again this year, we ask that you submit both paper and electronic copy (CD or flash drive) of the completed application. Please provide each document as a separate electronic file, rather than one large electronic file (such as a scanned PDF of the entire application).

State Stewardship and Federal LWCF Applications. FY20 Stewardship is pending a new biennial budget year, however we anticipate that local assistance funding level will remain at \$6 million. The Federal LWCF grant funding level is unknown at this time due to the ongoing federal budget process, but applications for this program will be accepted anticipating funds will be delegated National Park Service to Wisconsin. Successful projects may be reimbursed for up to 50% of the eligible total costs. If your community is planning to acquire recreational land, develop outdoor recreation facilities, or update existing facilities to ensure accessibility, an application form is available at the above link. The application covers the state Stewardship subprograms of Acquisition and Development of Local Parks, Urban Rivers, and Urban Green Space as well as the federal LWCF grants.

If your community has a LWCF-only eligible project, i.e. active recreation such as new or renovated ballfields, splash pads, tennis courts, etc. Please prepare a LWCF-only unique application for these types of projects.

Federal Recreational Trails Applications. Recreational Trails funding will be available again this year. At this time, the funding allocation is also unknown due the ongoing federal budget process. Successful projects may be reimbursed for up to 50% of the eligible total costs. **This year, there is a maximum grant award amount of \$45,000 per project.** This program can be used as a funding match for projects in the Stewardship Program as well as the Snowmobile, ATV and UTV programs; however, separate applications must be submitted for Snowmobile and ATV grants.

A prerequisite for applying for state Stewardship or Federal LWCF grant funds is to have a current (within the last 5 years), local comprehensive outdoor recreation plan that has been adopted by your unit of government and submitted to DNR for eligibility approval. Your plan must include a specific reference to the project(s) for which you will be seeking grant assistance. If you plan to apply for grant assistance in 2019 but do not have current eligibility or are uncertain of your eligibility, please contact us to review your outdoor recreation planning needs and status as soon as possible.

If you intend to apply for grant assistance to acquire land or an easement, please contact us as soon as possible. Acquisition projects take more time to implement because appraisal and land and easement acquisition requirements must be met for your project to be eligible for grant assistance.

If your park development project involves both passive and active recreation items, you must submit two cost-estimate worksheets: one for the passive, “nature-based” Stewardship-eligible amenities and a separate one for active LWCF-eligible recreation items.

As you may be aware, **all land acquisition project applications** must now be reviewed to determine if the project will provide public access for “nature based outdoor activities” (NBOA, defined as hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, and cross-country skiing). One or more of the NBOA activities may be prohibited or restricted **only** if necessary to protect public safety or to protect unique plant and animal communities. Because of this policy, if you are planning on submitting an application for land acquisition **it is very important that you contact us as soon as possible.**

Public demand for outdoor recreation and preservation of natural resource areas continues to grow. We encourage you to consider applying for matching grant assistance in 2019 and look forward to our ongoing partnership to provide quality outdoor recreation opportunities in Wisconsin. This may be a great opportunity for you to address a local priority outdoor recreation need at a reduced cost to your residents.

Please Remember: **This year’s application deadline postmark deadline is Wednesday, May 1, 2019.** If you have questions or need assistance, do not hesitate to contact us before the postmark deadline about potential grant projects at:

Phone number: (608)275-3218

E-mail: cheryl.housley@wisconsin.gov

If you are interested in other available grant programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, please access our Community Financial Assistance web site at <http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/>. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing the terrific accomplishments we’ve made together in conservation and outdoor recreation!

NOTE: **Mail your completed application to:**

**Cheryl Housley
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
3911 Fish Hatchery Rd
Fitchburg, WI 53711**

Workshop Planning Checklist

PRE-GAME: WORKSHOP TIMELINE

8 weeks

- Select the Theme/Topic
- Select the preferred date, time, and location
- Contact Speakers confirm date & availability (_____)
- Gather Pictures and Bio of Speakers (_____)

7 weeks

- Set the budget
- Choose the venue
- Create the guest list
- Create invitations & get quote from Postal Connections (_____)
- Create Facebook Post (_____)
- Create Website Post (_____)
- Create Eventbrite Event for Registration (_____)

6 weeks

- Finalize the guest list
- Reserve the location & discuss any special arrangements: parking, seating, audio/visual equipment, menu (_____)
- Start planning your opening & closing remarks (_____)

5 weeks

- Mail invitations (include directions & parking instructions); ask for a 2-week RSVP (_____)
- Email board and committee members invitation (_____)

4 weeks

- Check-in with Speakers - Is everything coming along ok? Are there any special needs? (_____)

3 weeks

- Begin follow-up calls or emails to invitees who haven't responded (_____)

2 weeks

- Confirm all arrangements with the venue (food, seating, parking, special equipment) (_____)

1 week

- Post reminder on Social Media and Website
- Ensure you have all the material you need for that day: handouts, business cards, name tags, sign-in sheet and thank-you gifts/honorariums (_____)

DAY OF THE EVENT

- Arrive at least an hour early to set up and familiarize yourself with the venue. (_____)
- Greet everyone as they arrive; name tag and sign-in (_____)

POST-GAME: FOLLOW-UP

After the event

- Send a personalized thank-you note to Speaker (_____)
- Review/Critique Event

Shopping List

1-3 Days before event

- Snacks
- Plates, utensils, etc.
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-



WMCA Brochure

OPEN MEETINGS LAW - Are You in Violation?

(Converted to flyer format for website)

Originally Provided by WMCA Special Projects Committee-2004

Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law

Section 19.81-19.98, Wisconsin Statutes

All meetings of all local governmental bodies shall be publicly held in places reasonably accessible to members of the public and shall be open to all citizens at all times unless otherwise expressly provided by law.

WHAT IS A GOVERNMENTAL BODY?

A state or local agency, board, commission, committee, council, department or public body corporate, and politics created by constitution, statute, ordinance, rule or order, or a formally constituted subunit of the foregoing. Collective bargaining units, volunteer fire departments organized as nonprofit, and collective bargaining units are excluded from the definition of a governmental body.

WHAT IS A MEETING?

The gathering of members of a governmental body for the purpose of exercising responsibilities and authority vested in the body. If one-half or more of the members of a governmental body are present, the meeting is presumed to be for the purpose of exercising the responsibilities, authority, power or duties delegated to or vested in the body. That presumption may be rebutted by competent evidence to the contrary. The use of e-mail by a sufficient number of members of a governmental body, constitutes a meeting and triggers the various requirements of the open meetings law.

Purpose

The gathering must be for the purpose of engaging in government business (i.e., discussion, decision, or information gathering).

Number

The number of members present must be sufficient to determine the body's course of action regarding the subject matter discussed. A **negative quorum** is a meeting of a group, large enough to block passage of a particular action (ex., if a two-thirds vote of an eleven-member body is required to pass a proposal, four could block passage). A **walking quorum** is a series of meetings of groups less than a quorum including telephone conference calls and forwarded e-mails.

When a quorum of a governing body is present at a meeting of a second governmental body merely because all of the individual members of the quorum make up the membership of the second governmental body, separate notice is NOT required. When a regular attendance of a quorum is present such that the gatherings are not social of chance and one or more of the

members of the governmental body is not also a member of the second governmental body separate notice IS required.

WHAT DOES REASONABLY ACCESSIBLE AND OPEN TO ALL CITIZENS AT ALL TIMES MEAN?

"Open session" means a meeting which is held in a place "reasonably accessible to members of the public and open to all citizens at all times." The two phrases, read together, means that "a governmental body must meet in a facility which gives reasonable public access, not total access, and that it may not systematically exclude or arbitrarily refuse admittance to any individual."

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that meetings be in places accessible to the disabled.
- Telephone conference calls are "reasonably accessible" if the public and news media can effectively monitor it, i.e., speaker broadcasting.
- It is preferable to meet in a public building, but a meeting may be held at the home of a governing body member if proper notice is given and the home is reasonably accessible to the public.

HOW IS PUBLIC NOTICE GIVEN?

- As required by statutes (i.e., Class 2 notice is required for hearings on proposed zoning amendments), and
- By communication from the chief presiding officer of a governmental body or such person's designee to:
 - Public. Notice to the public by posting in several public places or through sufficient newspaper publication.
 - News Media. Notice to the news media who have filed a written request for such notice.
 - Official Newspaper. Notice to the designated official newspaper and, if none, to a news medium likely to give notice to the area.

Timing and contents. Notice must be given 24 hours in advance of a meeting unless such notice is impossible or impractical. If there is good cause, shorter notice may be given but in no case may notice be provided less than two hours in advance of a meeting, Section 19.84(3). The notice must include the TIME, DATE, PLACE, and SUBJECT MATTER of the meeting, including that intended for consideration at any contemplated closed session. Separate notice of each meeting must be given.

Exception to public notice requirement. A governmental body which is a formally constituted subunit of a parent governmental body may conduct a meeting without public notice if:

- During a lawful meeting of a parent governmental body, during a recess in such meeting or immediately after such meeting.
- For the purpose of discussing or acting upon a matter, which was the subject of that meeting of the parent governmental body.

The presiding officer of the parent governmental body must publicly announce the time, place, and subject of the meeting of the subunit in advance at the meeting of the parent body.

WHAT HAPPENS IF SUBJECT MATTER IS NOT NOTICED?

Governmental bodies can discuss matters not set forth in the meeting notice if the notice contains items such as “such other matters as are authorized by law.” **Such procedures should be used with restraint.** 66OAG 143 (1977).

Events that come up suddenly or unexpectedly may either be noticed by amended notice with at least 2 hours notice, for good cause, or put off until the next meeting. Matters of interest or importance that arise during the course of the meeting under “such other matters as are authorized by law” should be postponed so that notice can be given and the governmental body should refrain from engaging in any information gathering or discussion or from taking any action on the matter.

HOW TO CONVENE IN CLOSED SESSION

Notice. The notice must specify the subject matter of any contemplated closed session. A governmental body which has convened in open session can convene into an UNANTICIPATED closes session to discuss the subject matter for which the meeting was called if a proper public announcement is made by the presiding officer at the meeting and the closed session is truly not contemplated at the time notice for the open meeting was given. If a governmental body needs to convene into closed session and it was not noticed, it should be dealt with after all other items because the body would be unable to reconvene in open session for at least 12 hours.

Motion. The governmental body must convene in open session before going into closed session. A motion to convene in closed session, properly seconded, must be carried by a majority vote. The vote of each member must be recorded and preserved in the minutes.

Announcement. The presiding office must publicly announce the nature of the business to be considered and the statutory exception. The announcement must become part of the record of the meeting.

When are closed sessions permissible?

- Judicial or quasi-judicial matters
- Discipline and licensing

- Compensation and evaluation
- Crime prevention
- Competitive or bargaining reasons
- Personnel matters
- Conferring with legal counsel
- Ethics advice
- Olympic Ice Training Center support

Who can attend a closed session? Attendance is limited to the body, necessary staff, and other officers, such as the clerk and attorney, and other persons whose presence is necessary for the business at hand.

Proceedings of closed sessions. Discussions in closed session must be limited to only the matters that the presiding officer announced would be the subject of the closed session.

Can governmental bodies vote in closed session? Governmental bodies can take final action and vote in closed session, as long as the voting is an integral part of the deliberation process and is not final ratification or approval of a collective bargaining agreement.

Records of closed session proceedings. Motions and roll call votes of each closed session must be recorded and preserved. The official record must show all motions made, who initiated and seconded the motion, and how each member voted on all votes taken. Records of closed session are open to public inspection. As long as the reasons for convening in closed session continue, the custodian of the record can justify not disclosing information that requires confidentiality. However, the custodian must separate information which can be made public from that which cannot. Typically, the record of the roll call vote would not be confidential. Once the underlying purpose for the closed session ceases, the records of the meeting must be provided to any person requesting access.

Reconvening in open session. A governmental body may not reconvene in open session within 12 hours after completion of closed session unless the original notice of the meeting specified that the body would reconvene in open session.

PENALTIES AND ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement.

- Attorney General
- District Attorney, upon verified complaint of any person
- Individual who filed the complaint may bring an action if the District Attorney fails to commence an action within 20 days after receiving complaint.

Penalties. Members of a governmental body who knowingly attend a meeting in violation of the open meetings law or otherwise violate the open meetings law by some act or omission are subject to a forfeiture of between \$25 and \$300. This is a personal liability and is not reimbursable by the municipality.

However, members may seek reimbursement for costs incurred in prosecutions successfully defended.

“Knowingly” is not limited to positive knowledge but includes the state of mind of one who acts “with an awareness of the high probability” that a violation is occurring.

The open meetings law creates a presumption that meetings of governmental bodies must be held in open session. Although

there are some exemptions to the open session requirement, those exemptions are to be invoked sparingly and only when necessary to protect the public interest. The policy of the open meetings law dictates that governmental bodies convene in closed session only where holding an open session would be incompatible with the conduct of governmental affairs. Public officials must be ever mindful of the policy of openness to ensure compliance with both the letter and spirit of the law.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Wisconsin Towns Association Handbook, 715/526-3157

Handbook for Wisconsin Municipal Officials, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, 608/267-2380 or 1-800-991-5502

Local Government Services, Inc., Dealing with Requests for Public Records, James Schneider, Editor, 608/835-3944, or www.uwex.edu/lgc/program/pubs

Claire Silverman, Legal Counsel, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, 608/267-2380



Wisconsin Municipal Clerks Association

Use of Presenter's Computer with Town Hall Video System

1. Connect computer to either HDMI2 or VGA port back of HDFLOW3 wireless router via HDMI or VGA cable.
2. Plug in wireless router.
3. Use Link/Output Selection Button (at bottom front of wireless router) to choose either HDMI or PC (VGA) input.
4. Point small remote at wireless router.
5. Press **green** button on small remote to power on the router.
6. Press HDMI button in RECEIVER section of small remote.
7. Press either HDMI 2 (for HDMI input) or PC (for VGA input) in TRANSMITTER section of small remote.
8. Point large remote at wall monitor.
9. Press **red** button on large remote to power on the monitor.
10. On large remote press button with cable connector icon and scroll down to HDMI input.
11. On Windows computer, simultaneously press Windows key and "P" key to enable display-sharing function.
12. Select "Extend" to share image from computer to wall monitor.

The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

Grassroots Conservation in Action

VOL 32, NO. 1
April 2019

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The
Prairie
Enthusiasts



A Case for Planting Conservative Species – A Love Story

By Scott Weber

In 1980, as part of my field ecology internship with the International Crane Foundation's (ICF) prairie restoration project, my supervisor Konrad Liegel and I divided our seed collection between an "experimental" fall plot of one acre and a much larger planting the following spring. This was the second planting on the newly purchased farm before any infrastructure was built, and at a time few practitioners saw fall plantings as a good alternative to the traditional spring ones. We didn't know then how pivotal this experiment would be.

This story begins and ends with my love of one species: the downy gentian (*Gentiana puberulenta*). The downy gentian is not the easiest gentian species to grow, but much of its difficulty is a result of the limits humans have imposed on it, not necessarily a fault of the gentian's ecology or life cycle.



A downy gentian among prairie dropseed on our farm. This has proven to be a stable relationship for 30 years and counting. In our experience, neither species requires virgin prairie soil as some authors report. (Photo by Scott Weber)

Continued on Page 4

Our Mission

The Prairie Enthusiasts seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna, and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest through protection, management, restoration, and education. In doing so, we strive to work openly and cooperatively with private landowners and other private and public conservation groups.

Officers

President - Scott Fulton
Vice President - Jerry Newman
Secretary - Jim Rogala
Treasurer - Alice Mirk

Directors

Chippewa Savannas - Mark Leach
Coulee Region - Jim Rogala
Empire-Sauk - Rich Henderson
Glacial Prairie - Alice Mirk
Many Rivers - Deanna Pomije
Minnesota Driftless - Stephen Winter
Northwest Illinois - Jim Rachuy
Prairie Bluff - Jerry Newman
Southwest Wisconsin - Gary Eldred
St. Croix Valley - Evanne Hunt
Prairie Sands - David Hamel

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Executive Director Report – 2018 in Review

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

In 2018, TPE increased its land protection to include eight new, and quite diverse, properties. Here's a recap of our most successful land acquisition year ever.

Using funds from the WI-DNR Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program, we bought two Wisconsin properties this year. Alexander Savanna in Pierce County was the first land protection project for the St. Croix Valley Chapter. And last summer, we purchased Swenson Prairies in Iowa County, a site with high quality dry prairies and habitat for some critically rare insects.

We also were humbled by the gift of two properties, both within the Prairie Bluff Chapter. Jim and Karen Freymiller donated Skinner Prairie in Green County, Wis., which includes both dry prairie remnants and historical diggings from early lead mining. Richard and Joanne Meinert donated Meinert Prairie to TPE last fall. This site, which Nick Faessler has managed for 30 years, protects dry, and dry mesic, remnants in northern Stephenson County, Ill. (See Faessler's story on Page 15). At the end of the year, we closed on a donated conservation easement near La Crosse, Wis., with Jim and Diane Rogala (see Coulee Region Chapter News for the details).

It's exciting to work with chapters on their first land protection projects, and we hope this can be a model for other landowners in the future.

Another TPE mission is to work collaboratively with conservation organizations, and last year, we transferred easements from three other land trusts. In the spring, the Prairie Bluff Chapter purchased the Perkins conservation easement from the Natural Land Institute, which is contiguous to Brigg's Wetland in Rock County, Wis. We also transferred the Ellis Trust conservation easement from the Land Trust Network of Jefferson County Wis. to TPE's Glacial Prairie Chapter. And we're working now with the family to add additional acreage of restored oak savanna.

At year's end, TPE accepted the Richardson conservation easement from the Jo Daviess (Ill.) Conservation Foundation (JDCE). This property near Galena is also known as Horseshoe Mound. In 2019, we will be adding acreage to the easement and finalizing plans to finance restoration of the property.

Each of these projects has an amazing story to tell, and all are great accomplishments. But they stretch TPE's capacity to manage the sites. We have to balance protecting all the sites we want with our capacity to handle the growing interest. Often, landowners and chapters have worked long and hard on these projects, sometimes for decades. I'm a firm believer that we will be able to meet the challenge to protect more sites in the years ahead, while also ensuring their perpetuation and recovery.

Cover Photo: Lupine by Debra Noell



President's Message – Management in Perpetuity

Scott Fulton, President

Recently, Caroljean Coventree stepped down from her roles as Vice President and Board Member of TPE and will be focusing her time and considerable talents on leadership of the Chippewa Savannas Chapter. We want to extend our sincerest thanks to Caroljean for her outstanding service to Chapter Support over the past several years. Thanks also to Jerry Newman of the Prairie Bluff Chapter, who was elected by the Board to the position of Vice President in December.

Leadership change – indeed change of all kinds - is part of the natural order of any human group. Every organization has a life cycle of its own that moves from bright startup to enthusiastic growth, awkward adolescence, mature adulthood, and finally a time to renew the cycle, move on, or perhaps to just pass away. Our own personal involvement in the group has the same life cycle, and most of us are all too aware that our time is limited.

For those of you who may not have memorized TPE's mission statement, take a look at the top of the facing page. A critical part of the mission is to "...seek to ensure the perpetuation and recovery of prairie, oak savanna and other associated ecosystems of the Upper Midwest..." Land trusts all tend to use terms like "in perpetuity" or "forever" to describe their efforts at land protection. "Forever" is certainly an exaggeration – after all, a mere 25,000 years ago our entire region was covered with deep glacial ice, tundra or boreal forest. I personally find the "seven generations" principle of the First Nations to be hard enough for us mere mortals.

But how do we reconcile the finite life cycle of our very human organization and all its members with our mission of protecting these cherished natural communities "in perpetuity?" To put it another way, how can we at least try to ensure that all the countless hours and dollars we have spent working to restore our local sites will not be wasted down the road?

Now that TPE is a fully accredited land trust, we have committed to follow the best practices that have evolved over many decades at other organizations with the same goal to legally protect natural communities. However, as the long-term caretakers of prairie and oak savanna in our region, we face a deeper challenge. We all know full well it's not enough to legally protect a site in perpetuity – we also must ensure that active management is carried on in perpetuity as well, or the prairie and savanna will ultimately disappear.

Successfully meeting the challenge of "management in perpetuity" will require thoughtful and creative use of all our available resources including dollars, staff, professional services and – critically - the committed local volunteers in our chapters. At a recent Board meeting, we asked the Land Protection and Land Management Committees to join forces to consider our long-term strategies, and what potential changes in policies and practices might be needed. Please let us know what you think (president@ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org).



Editor's Notes

Debra Noell, Editor

A brass band from down the street boomed into the open air, dimly lit bar in New Orleans when it happened. An important friend, a travel buddy for more than a decade, mentioned how she voted in the last election. The venomous argument following this exchange surprised us both.

In my lifetime, I've never felt such painful division among friends, colleagues, neighbors, even families. In this polarized climate, should we turn our backs on people we love, lose alliances we've shared for a lifetime, just because we disagree on a certain philosophy?

This question runs through every part of my life, it seems, including TPE.

We in TPE embrace the same fundamental values – nature matters to us. We find peace and balance internally when complete prairie ecosystems thrive around us. But as humans, as Gary Eldred writes in his essay "What Kind of Person?" (page 8), we often focus on our differences. We see what is "bad" in each other. We don't take the time to listen, study, learn and understand.

The debates I've heard at TPE tend toward prescribed fire or no fire, scientific data or anecdotes, restored ecosystems or remnant prairies. I'm sure there are more. I hope we can use *The Prairie Promoter* as a neutral ground to share stories, experiences and differences. Let's talk it out, as my friend and I did, and focus on what we have in common, because in the end, we need each other.

Now more than ever.

I saw my first downy gentian growing among bands of prairie dropseed at Avoca Prairie in Iowa County, Wis., while collecting and scouting seed sources for ICF. With ample rain in the fall of 1980, the dropseed and gentian harvest was great. Flowers with such deep blue color are rare, and the gentian immediately became my favorite prairie species.

From that moment, I wanted to recreate the dropseed/gentian community. These species are not mutually dependent on each other, but they coexist quite well together.

We hand broadcast seed for the ICF planting in mid-November after soybean harvest on semi-frozen ground. In May 1981, the remaining seeds were hand broadcast on four adjacent acres. Both fall and spring seed mixes were identical. After 38 years, the boundary between the two is still visible.

The fall planting is much more diverse - with dropseed and a few gentians plus many other “conservative” species (most associated with virgin or undisturbed prairie as opposed to a planting) while the spring planting is dominated by big bluestem and low diversity.

Ironically, because of sampling methods (percentage native cover) and definitions of success (highest percentage native cover), the spring planting was rated better until the fifth year when the slower maturing species in the fall

plot bloomed. So, either those species were too small to identify, or the sampling method missed them entirely. After that, definitions of success changed, and fall plantings at ICF became the norm, not the exception, as they have for many organizations.

The first planting my wife, Muffy, and I did on our farm in

Sauk County, Wis., in 1988 was a small section of former pasture that we tilled twice and fall planted to dropseed and gentians, leaving out tall grass, cover crops and most everything else common in conventional seed mixes. The dropseed came in as thick as bluegrass and took a few years for the seedlings to thin out. But in five years, we had blooming dropseed and gentians.

Fear of failure is a great incentive to sow too many seeds per square foot, as I learned with the dropseed. A high seeding rate, coupled with the weeds

already in the soil seed bank, results in the most aggressive, first-germinating species dominating at the expense of others. Fortunately, in this case, the gentians probably germinated before the dropseed and, because of different root systems and nutrient requirements, they formed a fairly stable community. But it certainly was not immune to some change over time.

We then planted a diverse seed mix, both clean seed and chaff, on subsoil exposed by bulldozer work along our driveway and near our house. The first downy gentian that bloomed was so small I barely noticed it, but over the years it grew into a nice, healthy specimen, and we have several individuals that are established and reproducing.

Challenging assumptions

In 1999, I read an article about “underground mysteries,” which claimed gentians and other “prairie obligates” need healed or virgin prairie soil, and yet here was contrary evidence right outside my window. Three gentian species – downy, bottle and fringed - grow within a few feet of each other in places. We also have wood lilies, leadplant, hoary puccoon, goat’s rue, cream and white wild indigo, lupine, pale-spike lobelia, downy phlox, wood betony, and two orchids: Case’s ladies’-tresses and the tubercled orchid. Except for the orchids, which arrived on their own, we used mostly seeds and a few plugs.

These plantings and many others contradict the theory that a dropseed/gentian-type community can only be achieved after decades of linear plant succession to a “climax” commu-

Absence of proof is not proof of absence. We often don't appreciate the ability of many species to utilize both organic and inorganic sources of nutrients; a mix of both is probably the most accurate model for our field conditions.



Bumble bee visits a downy gentian. (Photo by Scott Weber)

nity.² In fact, since the original community at Avoca Prairie was destroyed by the flood of 1993 and replaced by big bluestem, the very idea of a climax is debatable. There are no guarantees that the dropseed will return, even in that “wild” system.

Based on what we know about seed germination, these species germinate the first growing season in spring after breaking dormancy, some as soon as the ground thaws. The notion that they “fail to show up”³ is primarily a function of sampling method, seed mix design and planting date, assuming no catastrophic weather event.

The goals of quick native cover and diversity are mutually exclusive because the former works against the latter by favoring the fastest, most aggressive species planted at rates that far exceed the norm for wild prairie. Also, one fall versus spring comparison is one replicate. To average out differences in soil type, weather, seed supply, weed pressure and post-planting management, we need several replicates over many years, and this is where published research has mostly failed us.

ICF, like TPE and Madison Audubon, have plantings that span several decades. Each has excellent examples of better early diversity as seed mixes and methods improve, but publishing and presenting is expensive and not the primary goal of these organizations.

Most prairie species, regardless of their longevity, are essentially pioneer species and able to colonize either bare soil or disturbance in existing vegetation, native or otherwise, by seeding followed by either mowing or burning. If given a choice, I would rather start with bare soil or old field than established tall grass, like big bluestem. Our data from seed and plant production shows that many species thrive on low fertility as a function of their biochemistry, and this gives our natives a competitive advantage on poor soil over many weed species.

Even many orchid species do not wait for “healed” soil. Muffy and I found prairie white fringed orchids, which escaped the nearby virgin prairie and colonized the drainage ditch of the adjacent corn field where herbicide killed the competition. In fact, that was where the majority of individuals were for a year or so until the use of glyphosate-resistant

crops killed everything in and adjacent to the ditch.⁴

We also have more than 40 years of experience planting thousands of acres with the WI-DNR, private landowners and non-profits using no inoculants of any kind under all sorts of planting conditions and soil types, including a reclaimed parking lot.⁵

We greatly underestimate the ability of fungi and bacteria to infect new soil; perhaps spores travel with the seeds

because many pollinators and seed predators spend a good part of their life cycle in contact with soil. Absence of proof is not proof of absence. We often don’t appreciate the ability of many species to utilize both organic and inorganic sources of nutrients; a mix of both is probably the most accurate model for our field conditions.

The great problem in restoration ecology theory is assumptions aren’t tested thoroughly. Just because one study “proves” that one method works, it doesn’t prove that others don’t. And in some circumstances, no methods work because these are natural systems with many variables. Unfortunately, science is rife with examples of methodology designed to prove pre-existing assumptions.⁶

As we learned, simply changing the planting season challenged the assumptions about the fitness of conservative species. Many of our breakthroughs have been accidents resulting from the inability or reluctance to follow the standard procedures. The first gentian blooming on our subsoil, for instance, came from seed cleaning chaff thrown out a nearby window.

The limiting factor for plant colonization, based on our experience, is a function of a species’ seed dispersal from an isolated remnant to new habitat managed for its survival. So instead of an ecological problem, it’s an economic problem; how do we boost seed supplies of the rarest or most-difficult-to-harvest species if their commercial production is unprofitable or unaffordable, and local populations are scarce? How do we deal with human impatience?

Economics & profit affect production

If a species’ production cannot be mechanized and accelerated, it can never be more than a footnote in a seed mix or research project. Throw in the issue of local genotype, and you have a very limited market. Growing downy gentian for any market isn’t profitable, but it’s essential to its survival.



Two-month-old downy gentian seedling. This species will contribute little or nothing to percentage native cover in its first year or two of growth, and therefore, it often escapes the data base of most planting studies. (Photo by Scott Weber)

In the past, I greatly underestimated the economic and social factors that limit seed mix design.⁷ Our data collection may be as objective as possible, but all seed mix designs are highly subjective; no mix for any situation is independent of cost and human bias. The DNR, for example, buys few species (about 3% of the total seed count) that cost more than \$100 per pound.⁸ Gentian, shooting star, phlox, prairie smoke, and many others, are well outside of the price range unless collected on public lands by limited-term labor. Most public and private land managers cannot control their budget or the number of acres to be planted in a given year. When crop fields are taken out of production, the vast majority are enrolled immediately in Natural Resource Conservation Service programs for cost sharing, and in that sector the gentian and other expensive species are excluded.

This is why I'm volunteering to grow downy gentians for the TPE nursery. I must have faith in seeds and disregard the negative literature. There are many challenges for production, including highly variable seedling vigor, which may be a function of inbreeding depression⁹, and lack of good com-

mercial growing media of the correct drainage and pH. The inclusion of downy gentian is a seed supply problem that must be subsidized by non-profits and volunteers, or they will continue to be lacking in restoration plantings.

Footnotes

1. Kleine, Adele. *Underground Mysteries, Mycorrhizal Fungi and the Healing of Prairyerth*, The Prairie Reader, Fall 1999.
2. Schramm, P. *Prairie Restoration, A 25-year perspective on establishment and management*, The Proceedings of the Twelfth North American Prairie Conference, University of Northern Iowa, 1992.
3. Diboll, N., page 137, *Designing Seed Mixes, The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook*, edited by Packard and Mutel. Island Press, 1997.
4. 2000-2008 survey of Wiowash (formerly Oshkosh-Larsen) trail and State Natural Area for *Platanthera leucophaea*.
5. DNR seed production plots at the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. Look for the stand of prairie dock along Highway 12 north of the main gate.
6. See De Waal, Frans. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* W.W. Norton, 2016. Examples of bias methodology to "prove" how smart humans are compared to other animals.
7. Weber, S. *Designing Seed Mixes for Restorations: Revisiting the Formula*, Ecological Restoration. Vol. 17, No. 4, 1999. UW Press.
8. Analysis of 2012 DNR seed purchases.
9. Based on author's unpublished data on *Cypripedium* seedling survival comparing results from crosses with parents of same and different populations. Both gentians and lady slipper orchids are insect pollinated, primarily by bee species.

Welcome New Members

October 17, 2018- February 8, 2019

Dawn Adams
Barbara Bach
Jason Brown
Jesse Downs
Marshall Bruce Edmonson
Amber Gremmels
David Heidel
 gift membership from James Ellis
Jeff & Elizabeth Hubbard
 gift from Charlotte Adelman
Tamberlain Jacobs
Becky Janopoulos
Paul Kjelland
Matt Kubly & Laura Vanderlei
Joshua Lallaman

Peter Leege
Kenneth Love Villar
Bob & Peg Lyons
Lydia Martin
Brad Keith & Kathleen Mason
Gillian Moreland
John Mori
Karyn Niin Kitigade
Royal Scheider
Brent Sieling & Megan Schliesman
Angela Smith
Sogn Valley Farm
William Stein
Connie Weedman

Tree of Life

By David Cordray

Crack, thud, pop - the out-of-place sounds catch my attention. I stare toward the distant oak savanna, cup my hands around my ears, and listen carefully. I hear a soft cadence of continuous “thuds” interrupted by an occasional loud crack or pop.

“Manna from heaven,” I think, and walk over to the oak savanna to investigate.

Acorns are falling everywhere. Dropping from oak tree branches above. Most hit the ground in a soft thud. Others drop from high in a tree, hit a fist-size diameter tree branch below in a loud “crack,” ricochet into a larger tree trunk in a “pop” before landing on the ground in a “thud.”

The path before me is coated with bur oak acorns. It's impossible not to step, or slip, on them. This is an episodic hard mast event, I think, the biggest acorn mast since we started this oak savanna restoration 17 years ago.

Why so many acorns? I believe there are a couple of factors. The first is that it takes time for suppressed oak trees to recover. Restoration activities such as daylighting oaks, or removing canopy competition, allows the struggling oak trees to take in more sunlight. Over time, the oak trees become healthy enough to reproduce again. A second reason could be oak tree regeneration. In order to overcome all of the acorn predators, it takes an amazing amount of acorns. A simple law of numbers – more acorns than predators allows some acorns to develop into oak trees.

I quickly realize there is a lot more going on here than just acorns dropping from the sky. The savanna is as busy as a New York City street. I move ahead in a stiff-legged shuffle, reminiscent of my failed roller skating days.

I stumble only a few paces forward before, one, two, three, four whitetail deer heads pop up from behind an American hazelnut bush. A doe and her three triplets. They watch me lazily, jaws busy with pulverizing acorns. The heads all go back down in the same order they first appeared, apparently more interested in gorging on acorns than watching me.

I hear shrill charr-charr-charr calls and look skyward to see a rowdy flock of red-headed woodpeckers fly into a nearby bur oak tree. Several of the youngsters, evidenced by the brownish-black head, rather than the adult red plumage, appear to be competing with each other for the best acorn-picking branches.

The scene reminds me of my younger self racing with my siblings to the biggest strawberry picking patch only to find our great-grandmother, walking away with a flat of eye-popping large berries, had already beat us to it. I watch the redheads fly away with acorns in beak to some distant location and cross paths with other redheads coming back for more acorns. I wonder how many locations an individual bird will cache acorns? I also wonder if many of the birds will stay this winter given the abundant supply of acorns.

I hear a call of a hawk and quickly realize it's a trickster blue jay doing its best to imitate a red tailed hawk. “Trying to scare off the redheads,” I say to the jay, “it doesn't appear to be working.” The jay, along with several buddies, settle for another oak tree. They pry out smaller nuts from their husks,

stuff their crops to near breaking point, and still manage to secure that last large nut in their beaks before flying off over the nearby prairie to some unknown location. Blue jays are excellent dispersers of oak trees. They fly great distances with acorns and inevitably drop many along the way.

Out of my peripheral vision, a long set of probing antennae comes into view. I recognize it immediately – a walking stick insect. It must have fallen from above and landed on my arm. I watch it move in a repeatable pattern of a stiff jerk or sway followed by a freeze, reminding me of a street mime routine. Walking sticks feed on oak leaves. They rely on their stick-like camouflage to avoid numerous predators.

I return the walking stick to an oak tree branch and skate forward over the acorns. Pieces of acorn shells rain down on me, and I trace the falling debris to a fox squirrel directly above me. I notice little piles of acorn shell pieces on a log and quickly find the pile maker. A chipmunk sits on the far end of the log, spinning an acorn in his little front feet as his teeth strip the shell from the tasty insides.

Moving on, I find a large area where the ground has been scratched and scraped, leaving fresh earth visible. Eastern wild turkeys, I think, exposing freshly fallen acorns hidden in the vegetation/litter on the woodland floor. Suddenly, a white-footed mouse scampers down a tree, grabs an acorn in its teeth, and scurries back up the tree out of sight.

I find a location where the path is littered with thumb-size diameter broken oak tree branches, the attached leaves still green but the acorns missing from the attached husks. A family of raccoons, I think. They love to climb up, break off branches, drop them to the woodland floor and collect their bounty. Way more efficient than trying to pick off one nut at a time in the tree.

So much diversity of life here, I think. All of these animals, in some way, dependent on the oak tree - the tree of life. What a rich experience to be able to touch, hear and see this amazing display of nature's richness.

I think about the long years, months, days, hours of saw work, invasive species control, and prescribed fire needed to bring back this oak savanna from the near-death condition it was found. I try to imagine what it must have been like for southern Wisconsin's early settlers. Did they see this land of expansive oak savannas teeming with wildlife as a natural wonder or as another obstacle in the struggle to carve out a livelihood?

Today, of course, the expansive oak savanna is gone. Whittled down to a few hundred acres and labelled with the term “endangered.” Nonetheless, I feel fortunate in having participated in the rebirth of this oak savanna.

I take in a deep breath, filling my lungs with the energy of this place. A blue jay sweeps by and I follow its flight out of the savanna, over the prairie and into a distant overgrown woodlot. I hold the woodlot in my gaze, parsing out a few oak trees from the woodlots thick canopy.

“I'm coming for you soon,” I whisper to myself.

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Photo by David Cordray

What Kind of Person?

By Gary Eldred

At one time or another, we have all uttered these words. Usually, it's when we've seen or heard about someone doing something over the top stupid, selfish, hurtful or even evil. Last December, I had to ask myself that very same question, oddly enough, from 180 degrees the other direction. Let me explain.

I was on a winter's afternoon drive in northeast Iowa. I started from Marquette, Iowa, and headed north to Harpers Ferry. The next town was Lansing, a picturesque, Mississippi River town in northeast Iowa. A couple miles south of Lansing, I was pleasantly surprised to see a large, south-facing bluff that had been restored to a very impressive 30-acre oak savanna!

I admired the person who would put so much effort into such a project, but I continued on north toward Lansing. After about a mile, I decided that I needed to overcome my introverted tendencies, go back and attempt to contact the owner. To my surprise, someone was home. I introduced myself, and he invited me in.

It turned out he was a retired USFWS, Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge supervisor. We had a great conversation that lasted for over an hour!

He had many interesting stories to tell, but one I found to be the most moving, although short, was about an

encounter he had with a timber rattlesnake on the road adjacent to his property. It seems that one day, there was this rattlesnake in the road, and he stopped to admire it and let it move to safety. While watching it, an oncoming motorist stopped and stated that if my friend would backup, the motorist would crush the hapless reptile with his 2,000-pound car! "The hell with you. That's my snake," was his angry response.

That's what got me to thinking about what kind of a person would do that for a rattlesnake? About an hour after thinking about this man's kindness and compassion, I think I came up with an answer.

He's the same kind of person who would open a car window to let a bee out rather than kill it. The same kind of person who would remove a spider from a bathtub rather than wash it down the drain. The same kind of person who would slow down to avoid killing a migrating monarch butterfly with a car. The person who pulls their car over and moves a turtle off the road.

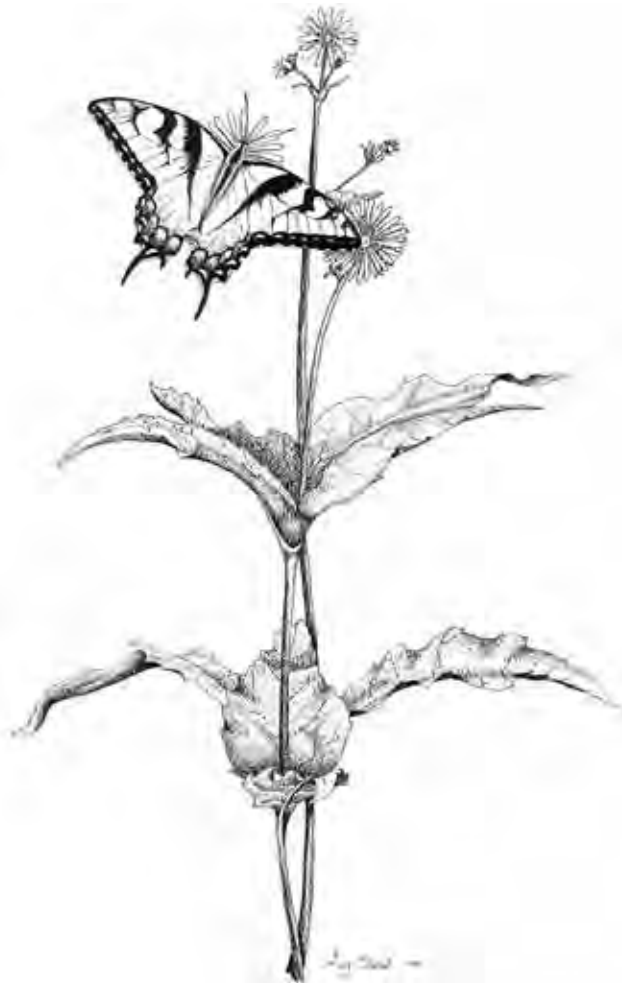
These people are us – Prairie Enthusiasts.

We spend decades cutting trash trees and brush from prairies and savannas to care for and restore them. We spend years protecting and loving native prairie plants, insects, birds and animals. We wait, year after year, for a favorite compass plant or purple milkweed to turn its mystical and spiritually enriching blooms toward the life-giving sun. We spend countless hours collecting, cleaning and planting prairie seed with unyielding optimism that we are helping save some of the beauty and mystery we love, value and wish to leave to future generations.

I am unable to fully express my deepest respect for those who put these qualities high on the list of what is so important in their lives. After 43 years of prairie conservation and restoration efforts, I can honestly say: "That's the kind of people we are!"



(Bottle gentian sketch by Gary Eldred)



(Sketch by Gary Eldred)



(Lady's-tresses sketch by Gary Eldred)

Exhibit Showcases Eldred's Artwork

By Grace Vosen

Gary Eldred guessed 50 people might attend his exhibit opening at Holy Wisdom Monastery in January. When nearly 200 people appeared that night, he was “absolutely, completely humbled.”

The attendees, representing at least a dozen conservation groups, came to honor the artist and admire the art. They packed into the monastery's event center in Middleton, Wis., where 23 images were displayed in tidy black frames. These were prints of Eldred's pen-and-ink drawings of prairie plants. A founding member of TPE, Eldred had encountered the rare species on the remnants he helped preserve. Now, almost three decades after creating the drawings, he shared a story with the reception guests.

Rare native plants are often left out of field guides, Eldred explained. He'd set out to draw pictures that were as true-to-life as botanical illustrations. Studying multiple photos of one species, he would use different elements of each photo to draw a composite image. A single drawing in his pointillist style could take him 30 hours to complete.

Eldred matched this investment of time with a healthy dose of talent. But up until 2019, he had never put his work on display. The Holy Wisdom exhibit was the brainchild of Empire-Sauk Chapter member Ron Endres. Its location was far from random; Endres had been involved with prairie restoration at the monastery for several years. During this time, he'd seen art exhibits come and go, and he noticed there was “down time” between displays. He wanted to give the monastery a permanent collection to put up at those times.

This collection would reflect the beauty of the prairie outside the building, connecting visitors more deeply to the land. Eldred's drawings fit the bill perfectly. Not wanting to cost Holy Wisdom any money, Endres paid to have the prints framed. He then showed the drawings to monastery staff, helping them appreciate what he calls “a perfect match of art and venue.” When they approved the collection, he also organized and sponsored a reception.

To teach visitors about the artwork, Endres developed a set of informational cards. The cards hung below the pic-



Visitors enjoy Gary Eldred's artwork. (Photo by Grace Vosen)

tures, describing the biology, uses and legends of each plant. They also noted whether the species could be found in the prairies at Holy Wisdom. Such details highlighted the importance of personal experiences with nature.

Guests left the event with an appreciation for natural beauty. Landscape artist Ken Schneider gave a glowing review of Eldred's work, saying that it “displays a fundamental knowledge of both style and subject matter... Gary deftly balances the strength and fragility of these beloved gems.”

Dominique Taquet, another local artist, added: “Pointillism requires a lot of patience and a very poised and analytical mind. It's obvious Gary loves his subject matter... Beautiful work!”

In his speech that night, Endres gave his own take on the meaning of the artwork: “Holy Wisdom demonstrates the Benedictine view of caring for the Earth, and Gary's art reflects how much he cares for native prairie plants.” Eldred echoed this sentiment. As someone with no formal artistic training, Eldred said his talent – like his love for all things prairie – came from within: “We all have certain gifts we can lean on, and this was one of mine.”

The formal exhibit at Holy Wisdom Monastery, 4200 Co. Hwy. M, Middleton, closed Feb. 28. Eldred and his artwork will be featured in a video on TPE's website this spring.



Gary Eldred shows his original drawings to Ron Endres. (Photo by Rob Baller)



Gary Eldred takes a question from the audience. (Photo by Rob Baller)

Prairie Promoters Remembered

John Morton Rutherford 1930-2018 Barbara Jean Rutherford 1932-2018

John M. Rutherford passed away on Dec. 29, 2018. He and his wife Barbara, who passed away on June 30, 2018, were founding members and steadfast supporters of TPE, especially the Northwest Illinois Chapter (Nipe). They will be missed.

Upon retirement in 1990, John and Barbara moved from Glen Ellyn, Ill., to Apple River, Ill., and quickly became involved in county politics and nature conservation. In addition to their farm, they made a significant land purchase in Jo Daviess County known as Twin Bridges (which they found by surveying the



(John Rutherford)



(Barbara Rutherford)

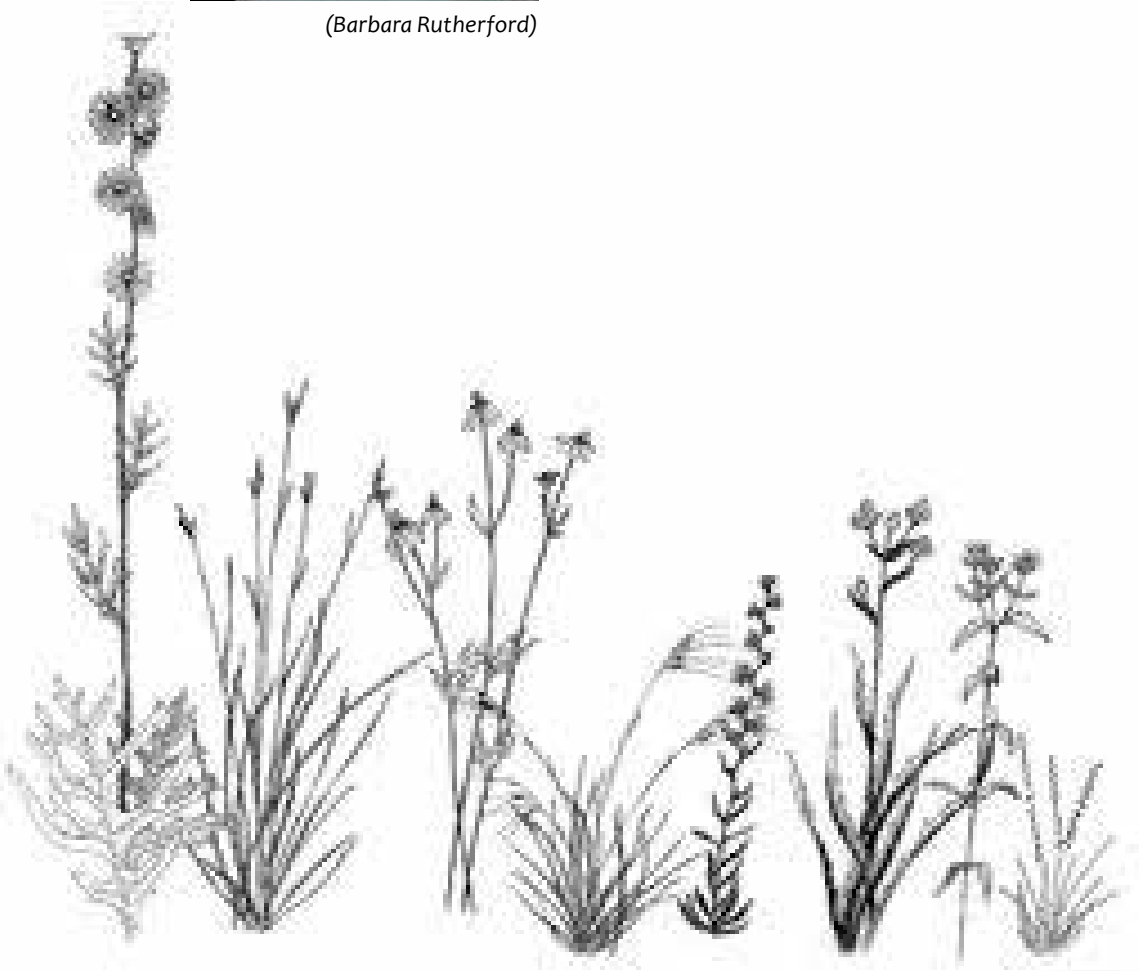
area from the air), and managed it as a natural area. They removed drainage tiles on a good portion of the farm and created a wetland that is a favorite of migrating birds. They also purchased the old train depot building at Apple Canyon Lake and turned it into a party venue for both family and the community.

John was a hard-working member of the Jo Daviess County Board, the Local Redevelopment Authority for the Savanna Army Depot (Lost Mound Unit of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge.) and the Driftless Area Partnership. Before retirement, Barbara was a volunteer at the Morton Arboretum in DuPage County where she learned much about botany. She brought that knowledge with her and led many field trips in northwest Illinois, spreading her enthusiasm for native forbs and grasses to all who would listen.

Together they founded the Jo Daviess County Natural Area Guardians, which later merged with the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JDCF). In 2017, John and Barbara received the Nancy Hamill Winter Conservation Leadership Award from JDCF. They are survived by four children, nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Dorothy Gessert (1928-2018)

Read her story in *Prairie Bluff Chapter News* (Page 20)



'The Lost Words' - Book Review

When Oxford Junior Dictionary came out in 2007 without 40 common words associated with nature, author Robert MacFarlane and illustrator Jackie Morris, wrote a book of magic spells to “conjure back” 20 of these lost words.

By Chuck Wemstrom

On our coffee table at home sits a beautiful book, “The Lost Words,” written by Robert MacFarlane and filled with Jackie Morris’ lovely paintings. I bought my copy in 2017, the year it was published in England, at an Audubon silent auction. My friend, Susan Post from the Illinois Natural History Survey, also saw it and started bidding. When she realized I was bidding, she graciously let me have it.

I can’t imagine how the donor could part with such a lovely book, even for a great cause. When I heard the book was “spells,” I thought it must have something to do with vocabulary, but I was wrong. It’s a book with acrostic poems designed to magically bring back words we’ve lost in the English language that are associated with nature. And, the book is certainly filled with magic:

Fern

*Fern’s first form is furled
Each frond fast as a fiddle head
Reach, roll and unfold follows. Fern flares.
Now fern is fully fanned
~ “The Lost Words”*

The idea behind the book is that children are losing touch with nature; they can’t, for example, identify even the most common trees - oaks and maples - or simple plants such as dandelions and ferns. Words about nature don’t even become part of their vocabulary. This book was written in part to try to reverse that growing trend. It was conceived with children in mind, but adults love it as well. What a great way to talk with one’s kids or grandkids about nature, art, the beauty of words and how they interconnect.

The paintings are magnificent. I thought I knew the common birds, but I confused the raven and the crow. I couldn’t immediately identify the European goldfinch, and the Eurasian kingfisher looked familiar but not quite. After seeing Morris’ painting of one heron feather, I realized one feather is as beautiful as the entire great blue.

Her painting of the English skylark, along with MacFarlane’s spell, will chase away one’s blues. Although I’m not ready to trade our horned lark for the English species, I’m tempted. You’ll miss the newt the first two or three

times you look for it. I’ve never seen an otter swimming under water – until now – and never heard of a conker (seed or nut of the horse chestnut tree). So the book was also an education.

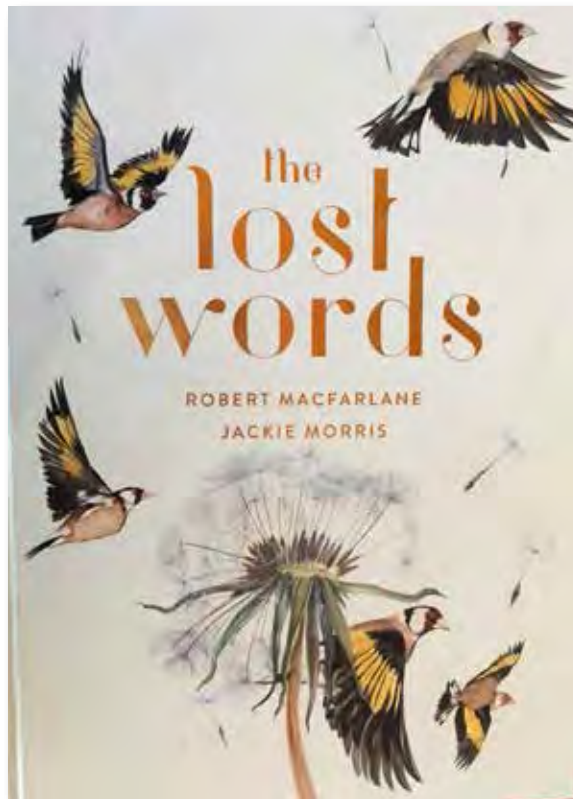
Seeing a bird in the wild is fun; seeing one up close with binoculars is even better. Seeing Jackie Morris’ paintings of England’s birds and wild critters is breathtaking. Morris’ pictures of the wren will make you rethink the pro-bluebird, anti-wren animosity we’ve all learned.

Here at home, we usually find a solitary kingfisher on a utility wire over a small creek, but Morris’ picture of half a dozen fishing and sunning is a joy. Go back and look at the bramble; even the lowly dandelion and the oft-overlooked fern come alive in a beautiful new way on these pages. Watch for the little insects. Play the game of finding how many creatures are in this picture or the next one.

Instead of chapter titles, the authors use word search, and although designed for kids, adults will also have fun with them. The acrostic poems, the spells, are sometimes cute, occasionally

thought-provoking and often simply good poetry. We never stop learning how to see, to become better observers of our world. And sometimes we need a reminder just to pause, to simply look around and enjoy.

Everything in life is connected. When we’re picking prairie seed on a Midwest prairie restoration, England seems so far away. But we share the same beautiful world and many of the same concerns, including how to find clever and lasting ways to teach coming generations about nature.



Avon Ridge Fundraiser!

Help save the next addition to Avon Ridge Prairie, Rock County, WI
6 acre "Foslin's Bluff"



May 2017 - solid shooting star, hoary puccoon, blue eyed grass (Photo by Tom Mitchell)

The Prairie Bluff Chapter of TPE

(serving Rock, Green and Lafayette counties in WI)

is purchasing 6 acres of dry hill prairie to add to the 16.4-acre TPE Avon Ridge conservancy (acquired in 2015) on Newark Road in southwestern Wisconsin.

Stewardship Grant for one-half the cost is acquired.

You helped us before (with warmest thanks). Please consider again.

We have one year to purchase from the willing landowner!

We need to raise \$17,000

See further details at TPE website under Prairie Bluff Chapter – Avon Ridge Addition

Yes! We will donate \$_____ to help purchase the Avon Ridge addition!

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Please clip & mail with check to Prairie Bluff Treas. Jenny Mitchell, 616 27th Ave, Monroe, WI 53566

The Prairie Enthusiasts is a 501(c)(3) organization and contributions are deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law



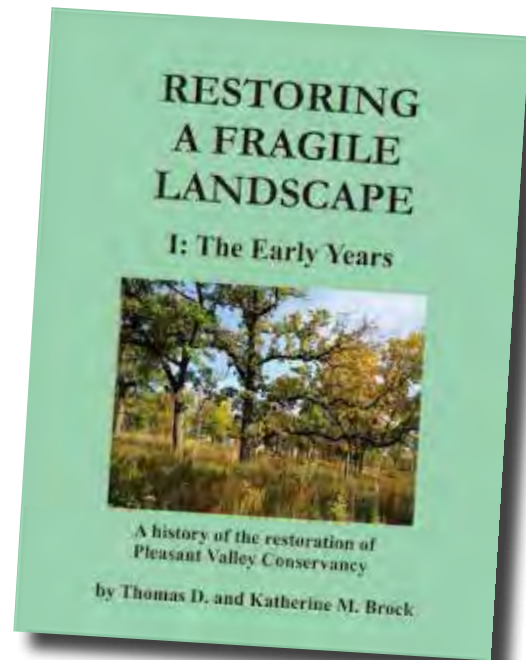
Announcements:

Download the Brocks' New Book for FREE

Tom and Kathie Brock have written a new book: "Restoring a Fragile Landscape," and they're offering it as a free download through their website at www.pvcblog.blogspot.com

The book details the history and processes of restoring Pleasant Valley Conservancy (PVC) in western Dane County, Wis., over the past 20 years. This book is the first of what the Brocks hope will be a two- or three-volume presentation about their work at PVC, a 140-acre dedicated State Natural Area.

Although the book covers restoration of PVC's tallgrass prairies, oak woodlands and wetlands, there's emphasis placed on oak savanna restoration. The book is extensively illustrated with photos taken throughout the restoration process. In addition, TPE has learned Tom Brock will be awarded an honorary doctoral degree from UW-Madison this spring for both his work in microbiology and his post-retirement work promoting biodiversity and ecological conservation.



Detailing the Day of Insects

By MJ Hatfield

If you read this edition in time, consider attending the 11th annual Day of Insects (DOI) at Reiman Gardens March 29 – 30 at Iowa (Ames) State University.

This annual event brings together professionals, academics, advocates and enthusiasts of all levels from across the country to explore and celebrate entomology (the study of insects). Topics often include insects native to Iowa, exotic and endangered insects, conservation efforts and new educational programs aimed at advancing the appreciation of all invertebrates.

This year there are several presentations related to insects in prairies, oak forests and native-planted yards. For the agenda and more information, see the website at www.reimangardens.com/collections/insects/day-of-insects/

If you can't make it this year, follow the website for the 2020 event, and if you're interested in being a presenter, contact MJHatfield@onetoa.org or mantisb@iastate.edu. Each year, we open two "wild card" slots for the invertebrate community. One of the goals of DOI is to give individuals working on insects an opportunity to share with others. What insects fascinate you? What are you working on and are you ready to share your enthusiasm and knowledge with others? Let us know.



TPE 2019 Banquet & Conference Recap

By Evanne Hunt

Following the snowiest February in history, the annual TPE conference and banquet attendees warmed themselves by talking prairie March 2 at the Off Broadway Banquet & Conference Center in Menomonie, Wis.

Co-hosted by the Chippewa Savanna and the St. Croix Valley chapters, the theme was Identification, Conservation & Fun. TPE staff handled the registration, processed payments and assembled conference folders for 146 attendees; 95 stayed for the banquet.

The raffle (\$1,741) and silent auction (\$1,677) raised a total of \$3,418 for the chapters.

Dr. Susan Galatowitsch gave the conference keynote presentation titled “Why Organizational Resilience Matters to Restoration.” This topic was timely as TPE moves from a “young” organization to a “mature” one. Resilience is the capability of an organization to anticipate crises, react to short-term shocks and adjust to unexpected disruptions.

A popular presentation was “Rare plants of Wisconsin’s Western Prairie and Upper Driftless Area” by Kevin Doyle who described the unique flora and “edge of range” species to look for on field trips. A total of 12 breakout sessions covered such diverse topics as “Art on the Prairie,” “Wild Food from the Prairie Landscape” and “Climate Change and Prairie Plants.”

New this year was a group conversation on motivations for joining and participating in TPE and ways TPE can support younger members. The 15+ group was led by Gary Eldred and Amy Delyea-Petska.

After the evening banquet, Dr. Shawn Schottler entertained us with an interactive quiz. He challenged our views of plants, and how they do or don’t meet our conservation objectives – such as creating habitat for pollinators.



Photo contest winner “Karner Blues” by Kerstyn Perrett

Banquet Awards & Recognition

Chris Kirkpatrick, executive director of TPE, announced the **winner of the 2019 photography contest: “Karner Blues” by Kerstyn Perrett**. Runner up was “Prairie Sunrise” by Gary Shackelford. Other finalists were “Disciples and the Master” by Rob Baller, “Fawn in Prairie” from Gary Shackelford, and “Jewel of the Prairie” by Lydia Martin.

Joe Rising announced the winners of the Prairie Haiku contest: Matt Kaproth and Jake Michaels.

*Moonrise in summer
Jewels upon the prairie
Glisten dew collects*
- Matt Kaproth

*Oak leaves underfoot
Crispy, crunchy, light it up
Honeysuckles roast*
- Jake Michaels

Rich Henderson recognized the Moely Prairie management team for their extraordinary work and exemplary community outreach. Denny Conner and Paul Anderson were in attendance and talked about their goals, the volunteers, and why Moely is special to them. Amy and Rick Chamberlin, not present, also are part of the team.

Thank you to all for a great conference!

The organizing committee for the conference included Caroljean Coventree, Amy Delyea-Petska and Evanne Hunt. Everyone involved would like to thank all the speakers and presenters, our sponsors and exhibitors, and the many volunteers who contributed to making the event a tremendous success!



Intergenerational conversation breakout session. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)



Presenters Kevin Doyle and Rich Henderson. (Photo by Greg Korman)

Meinert Prairie: A Prairie Bluff Partnership & Protected Gem

By Nick Faessler

Meinert Prairie, a hidden remnant of the Allen Meinert farm near the Illinois-Wisconsin border, has been my restoration passion for three decades. Now, thanks to the Meinert family and TPE, it will be protected into the future.

Richard and Joanne Meinert donated the prairie to TPE in December 2018, after it changed hands a number of times within the family since Allen Meinert owned it in the 1980s. TPE paid for the survey work on the property and divided the prairie from the agricultural land, which was sold to another farmer.

I first found this little patch of flowers, with few grasses, more than 30 years ago. Like most prairies deprived of fire, it had been overrun with eastern red cedars, sumac and other invasives, but a remnant prairie remained. The Meinert family gave permission for me to do the usual burns, sumac clearing, brush cutting and weed pulling. Over 75 native plants survive on this 6.5-acre parcel in Stephenson County, Ill., just over the Wisconsin state line.

Meinert Prairie shows off fields of pasque flowers, shooting stars, pale purple coneflowers, lead plant and New Jersey tea.



Seneca snakeroot

Join us for a tour from 1 to 3p.m. May 11.

Historically, after the Meinert family's small herd of cows were milked, they were turned loose

to graze the entire day, ambling down a long lane to find the tasty flowers on the small prairie. But when they planted corn or oats instead of grazing the land, the cows lost access to the back corner and grazed elsewhere. It was never tilled because a large ditch prevented access by farm tractors, and the native flora survived.



Richard and Joanne Meinert (Photo by Nick Faessler)

Kim Meinert shared a story about a time her father, Allen, drove the tractor near that patch of land to collect flowers. Her mother made arrangements to show at the local county fair. As a little girl, Kim packed a lunch and took an expedition to enjoy the prairie on her own.

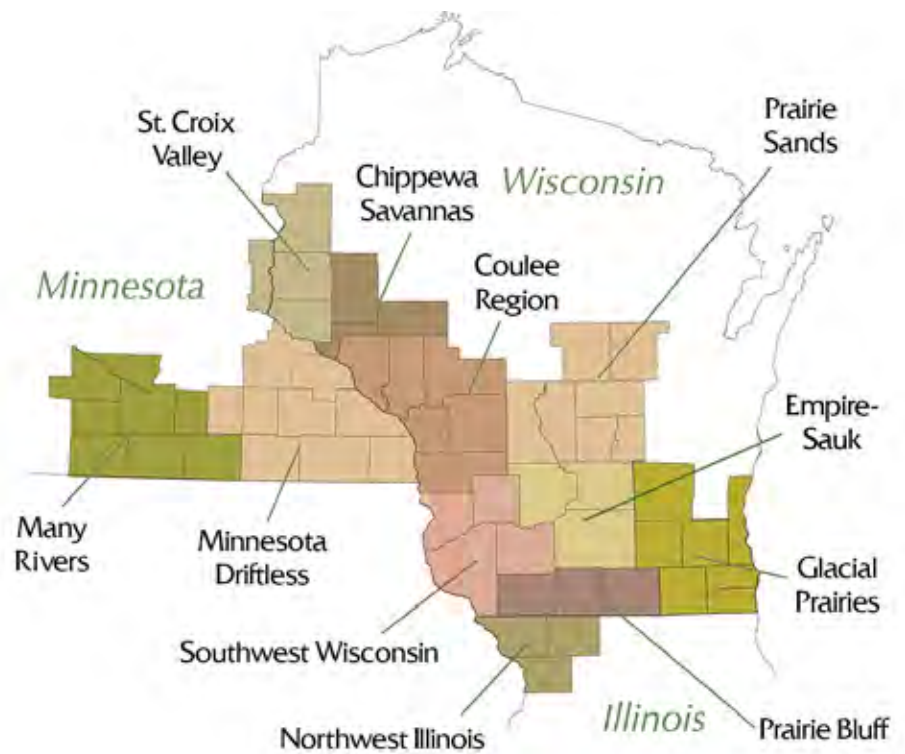
Thanks to our collective efforts, this parcel of land has been added to the list of TPE's lands to own, care for and protect. We consider the Meinerts' gift a compliment and thank them for entrusting us with their most valuable possession. Allen Meinert must have thought I was crazy to suggest his flowers needed burning to protect them from disappearing, but he trusted us. After a few years, he agreed to a prescribed burn, and the prairie has been showing improvement with more species appearing each year.

It's gratifying to know the work here will not be lost, and TPE will protect this beautiful spot in perpetuity.



Field of shooting star with wood betony & golden alexander. (Photos by Nick Faessler)

Chapter Updates



Coulee Region

Chapter's First Land Protection Project

Jim Rogala

The Prairie Enthusiasts operates as a diverse set of chapters with a wide range of activities in land protection. In the past, the Coulee Region Chapter has focused on being a landowner support chapter and doing educational outreach. But in December, our chapter completed its first land protection project by establishing a conservation easement held by TPE on my family's property in La Crosse County.

The project, named Rogala Prairies, is on land that contains small hill prairie remnants (outlined in yellow on the map) with southwest facing slopes within an oak/hickory forest that was once an oak savanna. The scattered remnants total about 5 acres and contain most of the typical hill prairie plant species found in this part of the state.

Species with the highest conservative index include: downy paintbrush, smooth cliff brake, pasque flower, hairy puccoon and hoary puccoon. Many other species typically found on hill prairies are present, including short green milkweed, cylindrical blazing-star, fringed puccoon, silky aster, aromatic aster, white camass and bird's-foot violet. Within the 128-acre property is also 30 acres of reconstructed prairie (outlined orange) that began in 2001.

Management of my prairies has been completed using a variety of resources since 2001. Like many Coulee Region Chapter landowners, I've relied on volunteers from our chapter to help conduct prescribed burns on my property. I've also tapped into TPE's "Hill Prairie Initiative" funding



Rogala Prairie near La Crosse, Wis. Yellow outline are remnants; orange outline shows reconstructed prairie. (Photo courtesy Jim Rogala)

from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to complete brush management on the remnants. A similar grant from the WI-DNR Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) addressed non-native woody species invasions in areas adjacent to the remnants. And as with most landowners, I spend a ton of my time performing the varied management tasks required to maintain and enhance my prairies.

This first land protection project for our chapter has served to familiarize us with the process and we'll be ready when the next opportunity comes along. Thanks to TPE, particularly Chris Kirkpatrick, for helping our chapter establish an easement protecting more prairie in the Coulee Region.

Chippewa Savannas

Prescribed Fire Class

The Chapter welcomes all to its prescribed fire workshop April 13, 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., at Simply Dunn in Downsville, Wis. There will be classroom work covering the basics of fire behavior and management, then move to a hands-on experience with tools. If the weather conditions are suitable, we will use the tools to ignite and extinguish a grass fire.

Instructors are Kathy Ruggles, Mark Leach and Amy Delyea-Petska. Registration fee of \$15 is due by April 8. To register, contact Ruggles at 715-664-8368 or kathyaruggles@gmail.com

Empire-Sauk

Fall 2018 Badger Volunteers

Ted Cochrane

Last fall, the Empire-Sauk Chapter continued for the 6th year as a community partner with the UW-Madison's Badger Volunteers program, which organizes teams of student volunteers who serve for a semester with one of some 80 local agencies focused on education, sustainability and public health. Each team receives orientation, education, and training while performing weekly service on a predetermined day and time. This year, two undergraduates - Molly Russell (team liaison, environmental studies/history major) and Katherine (Katie) Hullin (anthropology/genetics major) - volunteered three hours (including travel time) each Tuesday afternoon, joining TPE mentors Denny Connor, Randy Hoffman and me on work parties.

The work parties took place on TPE's Hauser Road Prairie and two partner properties, the

Koltes Addition of the Empire Prairies State Natural Area (owned by Groundswell Conservancy) and the tract abutting the west edge of the Hauser Road site (owned by Mike and Kathy Ripp). The activities ran from about 2:30 - 4:25 p.m., followed by 10 to 20 minutes for stowing equipment, debriefing and enjoying snacks. TPE supplied supervision and necessary equipment and supplies.

Owing to this year's small team size, various absences and rainy weather (two sessions cut short and one canceled altogether), the five of us worked a total of 76 hours at 10 sessions, less time than spent outdoors previous years. Nonetheless, our efforts continued to generate visible impacts.

At the first meeting, I told the volunteers about TPE, who we are, and what we do, and Hoffman gave background information on the Empire-Sauk Prairies, but the onset of rain prevented our starting seed collecting.

This semester's tasks consisted of collecting seed (the next three sessions); cleaning and mixing seed (one session); mixing and sowing seed (one session), and finally, cutting, treating and piling small trees and brush (four sessions). The students delighted in having the opportunity to handle a brush cutter, but they were disappointed that weather conditions this year prevented us from burning brush piles or conducting a prescribed burn.

Meetings began with mini-lectures on such topics as species composition along the prairie gradient, habitat restoration, herbicides, firebreaks, undesirable woody vegetation, and planting and sowing seeds. These often delivered while shuttling from campus to save time at work sites.

On behalf of TPE, I wish to extend a heartfelt thanks to Molly and Katie, who experienced a unique opportunity to learn about conservation practices while helping enhance the health of important local prairie remnants. I also thank Denny and Randy for their expert assistance.



Student volunteers Molly Russell (L) and Katie Hullin (R), displaying tools of the trade. (Photo by Ted Cochrane)

New Kiosk at Schluckebier Sand Prairie

By Brandon Mann

On a cold, rainy, late October day, Denny Connor and I erected a new kiosk for the Schluckebier Sand Prairie property outside Prairie du Sac. This marks the first time this property has had a kiosk for visitors sharing information about the site's human and natural history. The design and layout is consistent with kiosks at other TPE properties. It's located just off the corner of the grass parking lot of the south unit. Funding for the project was generously provided by Brian and Sara Kehrl of Prairie du Sac.

The project suffered several setbacks along the way but was eventually completed thanks to dogged persistence by everyone involved. One setback occurred when the company we were working with closed unexpectedly halfway through the process. We had to drive by the store to verify the company was indeed gone! We found another company but had to start over with the text and graphic editing.

Two members deserve special recognition for their efforts. Amy Staffen provided crucial help with the graphic design and took the lead managing the editing



Scott Sauer using his Jedi skills. (Photos above and below by Rob Baller)

process with the graphics companies. Connor generously donated the materials and tools for constructing the kiosk and also made the frame supporting the panels. It's a great addition to the property!

Swenson Stewardship

By Rob Baller

In mid-January, a few days before the snow and cryogenic vortex, chapter members Scott Sauer and Rob Baller visited Swenson Prairie in southwestern Wisconsin. Their aim was to clear brush. The little known, super steep, TPE-owned, southwest-facing hill was resplendent with the customary ungrazed and dehydrated prairie.

For a half-day, Sauer became tree sawyer while Baller removed smaller brush with hand tools and herbicide. Lacking more tools, Sauer used his Jedi powers to arrange debris into piles. Next time we hope to have more volunteers.



New kiosk at Schluckebier Sand Prairie. (Photo by Brandon Mann)



Swenson Prairie panoramic doesn't capture how steep it really is!

Glacial Prairie

Alice Mirk

Sights on Spring

It's going to be a busy spring for Glacial Prairie Chapter members. First, we have a brand new easement - Shining Oaks Preserve - with shrub carr, sedge meadow and oak savanna in eastern Jefferson County – for which we take responsibility. This is a beautiful site we look forward to exploring, working and maintaining. We had a walk through Feb. 23 despite the deep snow!

In April, we are offering another Burn School for beginners at the UW-Waukesha Field Station. The date is April 6 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. The training will follow the guidelines of the Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council. Successful completion of this training, along with participation on two TPE burns as an apprentice, provide qualifications as a crew member on future TPE burns. The Glacial Prairie Chapter will keep a registry.

We also will have work parties on our protected sites throughout the spring every Saturday morning from 9 a.m. – noon. The sites we work on are Adams Birding Conservancy near Whitewater; Willowbrook Wetland and Savanna near Hartland; Adelman-Schwartz Preserve in Walworth County, and a variety of sites in Muskego owned by the City of Muskego.

We continue with our educational programs in the chapter area giving talks to local schools and environmental groups, and building relationships with local landowners who need consultation regarding conservation and preservation. We look forward to another fruitful and rewarding year out on the savannas, wetlands and prairies!



Walter Mirk guides and teaches 5th graders from Mayville School about prairies as they inventory plants at the Mayville School Prairie. Each year, the TPE chapter adds plants that are missing from a typical prairie. (Photo by Alice Mirk)



"Shirley's Savanna," part of the Shining Oaks Preserve. Shirley Ellis worked on the property for years by herself. (Photo by Laura Cotting)

Northwest Illinois

Susan Lipnick

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPE) had a banner year collecting and distributing prairie plant seeds in 2018. Volunteers and staff harvested more than 2,700 pounds of seed from almost 200 varieties of plants. The seeds, in turn, were distributed to more than 95 acres for restoration and/or overseeding. In all, 16 projects benefitted from the seeds - an increase from the prior year's total of nine projects.

Until last year, NIPE had averaged 40-60 acres of projects requiring prairie seed, collecting about 2,000 pounds of seed per year. So why the surge in seed collection and distribution in 2018? According to NIPE Seed Coordinator Barb Siekowski, the chapter's commitments to various prairie owners and other seed customers required the increase. Fortunately, NIPE's planning throughout the year resulted in happy customers.

The increase in seed picking also improved volunteer opportunities at Hanley Savanna, helping meet a requirement of a current stewardship grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.

Ultimately, the number of acres restored in any given year depends on how much seed and what kinds of seed are available. Siekowski explains that dry-mesic sites are the easiest to supply with seed because NIPE has multiple seed sources from local dry-mesic restorations at various stages of maturity. It can be more challenging to find local sites to harvest seeds for savannas and other very specific habitats, such as wet sand prairie.

Prairie Bluff

Tom Mitchell

Remembering Dorothy Gessert

Our chapter lost an original prairie enthusiast in December with the death of Dorothy Gessert (1928-2018). In addition to being a charter member of the Wisconsin Prairie Enthusiasts in 1987, she was an organizer, a pyro-technician, a crane counter, a newspaper columnist and a dear friend to many in the Green-Rock county area.

Dorothy Mae Stuessy was born in Avon Township, Wis., and attended Stokes School. In 1950, she married Robert Gessert, and together they farmed for nearly 50 years, earning recognition for their conservation methods and progressive agricultural practices. Together they raised three children and were blessed with 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Chapter members Rob Baller and John Ochsner recall that Dorothy was there at the formation of WPE, a group that eventually merged with others in 1993 to form The Prairie Enthusiasts. “Both Bob and Dorothy were involved in some of our very earliest activities in the 1980s,” according to Ochsner, who mentions prairie hikes, seed collecting and record Wisconsin tree tours. Baller recollects that Dorothy was always a dependable volunteer member of early burn crews, and provided a photo of her – clad in an orange jumpsuit – under the oaks at Magnolia Bluff.

A neighbor near Nelson Road, east of Brodhead, Wis., remembers the Gesserts helping him after he planted acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). “I had a



Seed harvest processed in the Seed Shed at Lonetree Farm in Stockton, Ill., this past summer and fall. The photo was taken in November. NIPE staff member Jim Richards is in the background. (Photo by John Arndt)

NIPE strives to use only local genotype seed, but it will purchase seed to meet its needs and to increase species diversity when no local sources are available. NIPE harvests the majority of seed from restored local prairies such as Lonetree Farm, Hanley Savanna, Casper Bluff, Gateway Park and Wapello. It also collect seed from remnant plant populations in Jo Daviess County, Ill., and from its rare species garden at Lonetree.



Dorothy Gessert (Photo by Nick Faessler)

terrible thistle problem, and wouldn't you know that the worst of it was right next to Bob and Dorothy's," recalls Ray Douglas. "I didn't want the thistle to go to seed, so I mowed them off. It took many years of mowing, spot spraying and pulling blossoms off to get them under submission. But one thing I remember was, as soon as I finished mowing, Bob would come over the fence with two Huber beers to show his appreciation for me trying to keep thistles from going to seed." During these conversations, the Gesserts encouraged Douglas to join the local chapter of TPE, and after Bob Gessert's death in 1996, Dorothy remained a source of information. "Nature has lost a tireless, gold-star steward with her passing," he notes.

Dorothy Gessert and Jean Blum coordinated the annual Midwest Crane Count in Green County, Wis., for many years, working with the International Crane Foundation (ICF) near Baraboo, to assemble local volunteers to count sandhill crane populations on a single day in mid-April. They also led programs about sandhill and whooping cranes for Monroe's school kids during Earth Day celebrations. "We had many good visits together, sitting in our kitchens drinking tea, sharing our interests in birds and prairies," remembers Blum.

Linda Faessler tells a story about a time she called Gessert to ask what baby bluebirds looked like. It wasn't long before she looked out the window, "and there was Dorothy, sitting on the ground, legs straight and ankles crossed, back against a tree, staring intently at the birdhouse that held the alleged bluebird babies. I have no idea how long she had been out there, and I was hesitant to interrupt, so I went about my business for awhile and later looked out, and she was still there in the same position. I slowly and quietly opened the front door, and she looked my way. She jumped up, and she said they were definitely bluebirds. She had been watching the parents feeding the babies and taking care of them."

It's likely Gessert used the experience for a column she wrote for the Brodhead Independent Register. My wife, Jenny (Zimmerman) Mitchell has been subscribing to her hometown weekly newspaper since 1970, and Gessert's "Dots-Dashes" were interesting commentaries on the natural world we left behind as we moved from Wisconsin to Texas to Illinois, before returning to Monroe, Wis., in 2007.

Gessert's daughter, Crystal Zimmerman, says her mother started writing a column, "Dishwater Reflections," for a newsletter of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), and was a correspondent for the Rockford Morning Star.

Anyone who ever attended a chapter social event will recollect her Concord grape pies. Dianne Eisenhuth reminisces that "those pies were so good, and I have never known anyone else who ever made them." Eisenhuth remembers looking up the recipe and learning why they were seldom made. "It was time-consuming, separating the seeds and meats from the skins, cooking that, using a mill to separate the seeds from the meats, then putting the skins and meat together again before mixing the filling for the pie crust shell." And, of course, her piecrusts were homemade.



*Prairie Sands annual Christmas party and seed exchange.
(Photo by David Hamel)*

Prairie Sands

Ray Goehring

Twenty-four members and guests of the Prairie Sands Chapter celebrated their annual Holiday Gathering and Seed Exchange on Dec. 4 at More Healthy Foods & Cafe in Montello. TPE's Gary Eldred and Gary Adams, as well as U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Brendan Woodall were special guests.

While we ate delicious organic pizza, chapter members Ben Bomkamp and Kerstyn Perrett of Nature Works LLC gave a presentation/tutorial on iNaturalist, and Shelley Hamel presented information on the Fire Effects Information System website (www.feis-crs.org), which provides scholarly articles on the syntheses between fire ecology and fire regimes in the U.S.

We are looking for a new volunteer for the TPE board to replace David Hamel who has been in the position for the last five years. No one volunteered at the meeting, but we voted on and agreed to pay \$100 for every in-person board meeting the new volunteer attends as representative of our chapter. The Board meets eight times throughout the year – four by telephone conference call and four in-person meetings. If you have any interest or questions about the position, contact David Hamel at sdhamel@gmail.com

We also voted on and approved a \$200 budget for a portable outdoor microphone system for chapter field trips.

Thank you to Jill Schuettzpelz for being our silent auction coordinator for the TPE Annual Conference on March 2, and to Cathy Franks, David Hamel and More Healthy Foods & Café for their help in getting chapter donations to Schuettzpelz. And, last but not least, thank you to all of you who donated items.

Thanks also go out to Chris Schaefer for volunteering to be our Membership Coordinator. Schaefer will remind you when your TPE Membership dues need renewing.

We are currently working on our 2019 chapter field trip schedule. So far the schedule includes "Frogs, Bogs and Hot Dogs" at the Hamels on May 4, and "Witness the Second Flight of Karner Blue Butterflies" at Mekan Prairie on July 21. Contact me at raygoe@yahoo.com if you wish to give a tour or have questions about tours.

Southwest Wisconsin

Jack Kussmaul

The biggest news from the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter is the new Land Management Endowment – an anonymous donor a year ago gave \$24,000 to start the endowment.

This fall, we launched an appeal to chapter membership to bring it up to \$50,000. We never imagined that by the end of the year we would be close to \$180,000. This was due in large part to an extremely generous, but unfortunately anonymous, donor who made a gift of \$150,000 worth of appreciated stock. A complete list of all donors to the fund can be found in the donor section of this edition of TPE.

Be sure to thank them when you see them! If you add the list of donations and the starting amount, the total will come to more than \$180,000. The difference reflects a reduction in the stock market value during 2018 and fees. The value will, of course, continue to fluctuate with changes in the stock market and further gifts. The draw from the endowment is 4% of the value at the end of the previous 12 quarters. At \$180,000 this will yield \$7,200 annually.

We have long realized that we cannot always depend on volunteers and may need to hire work done. The board is already discussing which sites are in greatest need and where this income can best be used. In the meantime, our volunteers continue to manage our sites.

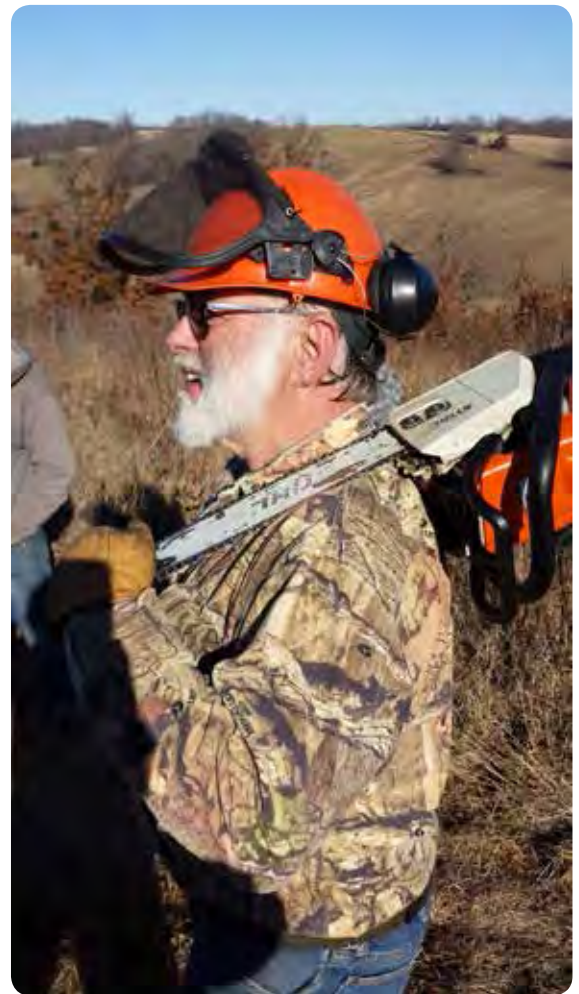
We had one work party at Double Oak where we cut and treated sumac while hanging onto trees to avoid rolling down the very steep slope. We had a good turnout at Eldred Prairie to cut and treat sprouting oaks and undesirables that were encroaching on the prairie. Walter Mirk continues to spend days at Double Oak and Gary Eldred and his crew continue their efforts at Iris Drive.

After a balmy winter, the work party at Sime Bald was canceled due to a snowstorm. We had 18 people turn out for our holiday dinner at the Castle Rock Inn - our best turnout ever. It gave an opportunity for friends to connect and, just as important, to meet some new people.

We move into 2019 with great hopes and plans.



Holiday party for the Southwest Chapter on Dec. 8 at Castle Rock Inn, Muscoda. (Photo by Martha Querin-Schultz)



Roger Smith and his chain saw at the Eldred Prairie work party Dec. 18. (Photos by Steve Querin-Schultz)



The work crew at Eldred Prairie (L-R) Bob Costanza, Michael Nee, Dale Halink, Jack Kussmaul and Roger Smith (missing from the photo is Steve Querin-Schultz).

St. Croix Valley

Evanne Hunt

Foster Oak Savanna Reaches Stasis

That is, Foster Oak Savanna is in equilibrium! The invasive Eastern red cedar, Siberian elm and ironwood on the hillsides have been removed; the buckthorn is on the run, and the plants are thriving.

The St. Croix Valley Chapter began our work 21 years ago - our first work party was on May 23, 1998. We hiked past the wastewater treatment plant and up the hill to the cemetery. The hill was overgrown, and I remember asking "Where's the prairie?" Fortunately, Wayne Huhnke knew where the prairie bushclover, leadplant and kittentails were hiding under the dense canopy.

As we begin our 21st year at Foster, the signs of our success are everywhere - you can see the Kinni from the cemetery and the savanna communities have been revitalized, providing much needed habitat for the plant species and wildlife that use the site.

Join us on a field trip this summer and celebrate what you have accomplished.

Prairie Days 2019 – June 1

The chapter will celebrate Prairie Days on June 1 at Willow River State Park. Dr. Stanley Temple returns and will talk about sandhill cranes. There also will be games and exhibits for children. Watch Facebook and the website for details. Here's the schedule so far:



- 8 a.m. - Prairie walk
- 8:30 a.m. - Bird walk
- 9 a.m. - Terrestrial invasives
- 9 – 11 a.m. - Exhibits outside the Nature Center
- 10:15 a.m. - Dr. Stanley Temple's talk in the Nature Center
- 11 a.m. – TPE video "Prairie Enthusiasm" showing in the Nature Center classroom

Exhibitors include Friends of Willow River and Kin-ninicknic River State Parks, and the St. Croix Bird Club. For kids, there will be a craft table, TPE zap board, firefighting equipment, buffalo chip toss, scavenger hunt and bingo.



A panoramic vista of Foster Oak Savanna, and the gathering of friends in the picture above, shows how work, fun and camaraderie played a role in the restoration success. (Photo by Evanne Hunt)

The Prairie Enthusiasts



Prairie Promoter Field Trip Guide: April - July, 2019

The Prairie Enthusiasts Field Trip Guide is a way to identify opportunities to get out on the prairie and enjoy a guided hike. **Full details and directions** are available on our website calendar (http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/calendar_month.asp) or by calling the office at 608-387-1873.

Contact your tour leader if you have questions about the trip or if the weather is questionable.



Bog boardwalk (Photo by Shelley Hamel)



Pitcher plant (Photo by Shelley Hamel)

April 13, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Skinner Prairie, Green County, Wis.

Pasque flowers adorn this 12-acre prairie, donated to TPE in 2018 by Jim and Karen Freymiller. Old mining pits are still visible across a hillside prairie where John Skinner had his diggings before 1830.

Trip leader: Tom Mitchell, 608-214-8690

May 4, 5:00 p.m. to TBD

"Frogs, Bogs & Hot Dogs," Marquette County, Wis.

Explore the boardwalk and walk the trail around 20 acres of tamarack bog with pitcher plants, cottongrass, bog rosemary, sundews and more. Then grill something you bring over a campfire while we listen and identify the many species of frogs.

Trip leaders: David & Shelley Hamel, hamelshelley@gmail.com, 608-296-2866 or 608-421-4426

May 11, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Meinert Prairie, Stephenson County, Ill.

Shooting stars and puccoon are among the colorful sights at this recent addition by TPE, a donation in 2018 by Richard and Joanne Meinert, one of eight sites managed by the Prairie Bluff Chapter.

Trip leader: Nick Faessler, 608-214-3852

May 11, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Mound Prairie Scientific Natural Area, Houston County, Minn.

Our trip leader will be Scott Leddy, a naturalist and restoration practitioner who is intimately familiar with the goat prairies of southeast Minnesota. The first part of the field tour will take place on relatively level, low-elevation prairie. After that, the tour will work its way up the bluff to a higher elevation goat prairie. Join us for one or both.

Trip leader: Scott Leddy, sleddy27@gmail.com, 507-450-6548
Trip coordinator and contact: Stephen Winter, stephen.winter@okstate.edu, 402-310-5460

May 18, 6:45 a.m. to noon

Tiffany Bottoms Wildlife Area, Buffalo County, Wis.

Take an open-air train ride deep into remote areas of the Tiffany Bottoms extensive lowland, hardwood wetlands, wet meadows, open prairies and floodplain savannas within the heart of the Lower Chippewa River. An ornithologist will be on the train to guide our bird identification and share knowledge about bird behavior.

Trip leader: Kathy Stahl, theprairieenthusiasts.csc@gmail.com, 715-962-4010

May 22, 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Spring Flowers, Birds & Bees, Schurch-Thomson Prairie, Iowa County, Wis.

Come hike into the secluded valley of the Schurch-Thomson and Underwood prairies. The hike will include extensive grassland bird habitat filled with bobolinks, meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows, upland sandpipers, and Henslow's sparrows.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065



Cream wild indigo bloom on the hillside at Mount Prairie State Natural Area in Minnesota. (Photo by Stephen Winter)

May 29, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Sugar River Oak Savanna, Dane County, Wis.

This diverse 9-acre oak savanna is a TPE preserve managed by the Empire-Sauk Chapter. Management with frequent fire since 1976 has resulted in diverse flora of prairie and savanna species with nearly 400 native plants present. A wide array of late-spring wildflowers should be in bloom.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065

June 1, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Pleasant Bluff Prairie, Winona County, Minn.

The Minnesota Driftless Chapter will host a field trip at Pleasant Bluff, a large bluff prairie remnant. In addition to the prairie flora at the site, participants can enjoy breath-taking views of the Mississippi River Valley, adjacent bluffs and Winona, Minn. UW-La Crosse Professor Emeritus Jim Theler will share his expertise about Pre-Columbian archaeology and terrestrial snails of goat prairies.

Trip leader: Gabe Ericksen, gtericksen@gmail.com, 507-458-3684

June 8, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Moely Prairie, Sauk County, Wis.

Moely Prairie, a 25-acre dry site spared from the plow and heavy grazing, is known for its display of thousands of prairie smoke each spring. Over the past several years, it's been undergoing significant restoration with invasive brush removal and prescribed burns. It's the largest of the few remaining parcels of the original 13,000-acre Sauk Prairie, and it's a jewel in the making.

Trip leader: Denny Connor, 608-798-4195 or cell 608-516-1253

June 9, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Haley Savanna, Jo Daviess County, Ill.

The Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPE) will provide light snacks and offer a wagon ride to view various Haley Savanna prairies. Experts on birds, plants and prairie restoration will be on hand to answer questions.

Trip leader: Laura Dufford, 815-541-8958



Pleasant Bluff prairie. (Photo by Stephen Winter)

June 15, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Feist Prairie tour, Grant County, Wis.

This 3-acre remnant was purchased in 2013. Though small, it contains a large number of species on land never cultivated, pastured or sprayed. We will talk over the history, prairie plant diversity, restoration methods and long-term goals.

Trip leader: Gary Eldred, 608-375-5271

June 15, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Pleasant Valley Conservancy, Dane County, Wis.

This beautiful state natural area with steep goat prairies, oak savanna and marsh will be host to visits this time of year from Baltimore checkerspots, wetland skippers, swallowtails, silvery checkerspots, fritillaries and blues. The field trip is co-sponsored by TPE, the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association and the Madison Audubon Society.

Trip leaders: Doug Buege, Tom & Kathie Brock, Tdbrock@charter.net, 608-238-5050

June 15, (rain date June 16), 3:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Summer Solstice (almost) hike and picnic on Rattlesnake Ridge, Iowa County, Wis.

Join us for an afternoon of hiking the bluff, prairie and barrens of Rattlesnake Ridge, and celebrate the long evening of summer with a potluck dinner in the garden meadow. We can look for rusty patched bumblebees on the prairie, see the effect of the first prescribed burn on the bluff, and check the 40 acres of privately owned sand barrens for the 4:30 show of the fame flowers. Then stay to celebrate the upcoming solstice and relax with friends, a great meal, a musical jam and all a Wisconsin summer has to offer!

Trip leader: Sue Steinmann, ssteinmann6@gmail.com, 608-753-2332



Karner blue butterfly rests on the photographer's hand at Mecan Prairie. (Photo by Susan Schillinglaw)

June 16, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Parrish Oak Savanna State Natural Area, Dane County, Wis.

Looking for a Father's Day outing? Come explore TPE's 30-acre Parrish Oak Savanna. It has diverse savanna and woodland flora with 240 native species. Spiderwort, frostweed, alumroot and roses should be in bloom. Savanna birds, such as red-headed woodpeckers and bluebirds should be active, so bring binoculars. The preserve consists of a rugged dolomite-capped ridge underlain by sandstone, with outcrops that provide for a scenic view of nearby Brigham and Blue Mounds parks, so be prepared for uphill walking.

Trip leaders: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065, and Pat Trochlell & Ken Wade



John Shillinglaw walks through a field of lupine. (Photo by Susan Shillinglaw)

June 22, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Summer Shows on Swamplovers' Preserve, Dane County, Wis.

Celebrate the first day of summer at this wonderful preserve that consists of remnant and restored wetlands, bluff and tallgrass prairies, and dry hilly oak-hickory woodlands. In past years, we have observed an impressive variety of dragonflies and butterflies as we explored the different habitats. Bring binoculars (close-focusing ones work best) along with your own lunch and beverages to enjoy when we finish the trip at the bluff-top picnic shelter.

Trip leader: Lee Swanson, lswanson@sbcpc.bank, 608-228-0743

June 29, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Reviving a Lost Prairie Landscape, Mounds View Grassland, Iowa County, Wis.

Come for a day of hiking across TPE's 570-acre Mounds View Grassland preserve. We will be encountering rich displays of early summer prairie flowers, including pale-purple cone-flower, wild quinine, white wild indigo, white prairie clover, and more. Along the way, we will also observe many uncommon grassland birds such as bobolinks, meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows, upland sandpipers and Henslow's sparrows, as well as butterflies and bumblebees.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065

June 16, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Erbe Grassland & Goplin Prairies, Dane County, Wis.

Come help us look for endangered woolly milkweeds, wood lilies and grassland birds. We want to see how well the wood lilies have established from planted seed. This is also a great site to experience rare and uncommon grassland birds such as upland sandpipers, bobolinks, meadowlarks, Henslow's sparrows, grasshopper sparrows and more.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065

July 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Rettenmund Prairie, Dane County, Wis.

Take an evening walk in this high-quality remnant with displays of butterfly milkweed, leadplant and coreopsis. Trip co-sponsored by TPE and the Madison Audubon Society.

Trip leaders: Tom & Kathie Brock, Tdbrock@charter.net, 608-238-5050

July 13, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Butterflies and flowers of Schurch-Thomson Prairie, Iowa County, Wis.

We will be hiking through the Schurch-Thomson Prairie unit of TPE's Mounds View Grassland preserve, a 570-acre area that contains remnant and restored prairies and grasslands, savannas and woodlands, spring seep wetlands, and cold water streams.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065

July 14, 1:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Bike Tour – Sugar River Meadowlands, Dane County, Wis.

Come for a leisurely bike ride on the Military Ridge State Trail from Verona to Klevenville along the Sugar River. We will stop frequently along the way to learn about the valley's original wetland and prairie landscape. We'll also explore what still remains of these ecosystems and discuss the potential to restore the Sugar River and its associated wetlands and wet prairies along this eight-mile stretch of the river. The ride is 16 miles round trip.

Trip leaders: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net, 608-845-7065, and Pat Trochlell & Ken Wade

July 17, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Kalscheur Oak Savanna, Iowa County, Wis.

Come look for butterflies and flowers on this 19-acre preserve. It's topographically diverse with a south-facing aspect, and is covered by scattered oak trees and prairie openings. At the base of the slope, springs and ground water seeps flow into a stream-side wetland complex. So far, 243 native plant species have been identified on this site.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net or 608-845-7065

July 21, 9:30 a.m. to noon

Witness the second flight of the endangered Karner blue butterfly, Mekan Prairie, Waushara County, Wis.

John Shillinglaw, landowner, will host a guided, educational hike through the restored prairie and savanna. We hope to see rare plant communities and Karner blues. This historic prairie has a few mowed paths and a port-a-potty. Bring a picnic lunch and a kayak, and Shillinglaw can tell you where to put in on the Mekan River or Mekan Springs.

Trip leader: John Shillinglaw, jshillinglaw@gmail.com, 920-213-8037

July 21, 12:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Iris Drive prairie hike, Crawford County, Wis.

Join us after the Annual Membership Picnic to view the Southwest Chapter's newest prairie. We will hike the two remnants, focusing on the west unit that was newly cleared to see what is coming up this year. We will talk over the history, prairie plant diversity, restoration methods and long-term goals for the adjoining oak woodlands. You are in for a treat; this site is really coming along!

Trip leader: Gary Eldred, 608-375-5271

July 27, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Shea Prairie, Iowa County, Wis.

Explore the remnants of dry prairie and restorations of wetlands and wet- to mesic-prairie of the 100-acre Shea Prairie. On the hike, we are likely to find the endangered regal fritillary butterfly along with many other butterfly and dragonfly species. A great diversity of high summer prairie wildflowers should be in bloom, including rosinweed, compass plant, rattlesnake master, prairie blazingstar and many more.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net or 608-845-7065

July 30, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Sugar River Oak Savanna, Dane County, Wis.

Forty years of near annual fire has fostered a remarkable recovery of this native prairie and savanna. There are now nearly 400 native plant species present. Prairie blazingstar, rattlesnake master, giant false foxglove, and a great variety of prairie and savanna species should be in full flower, and many species of butterfly should be on the wing.

Trip leader: Rich Henderson, tpe.rhenderson@tds.net or 608-845-7065

Thanks for your interest and support of these native prairies. We hope to meet you out there!

Bring a friend or two!

Thank You Donors

We thank the following who donated to TPE between October 17, 2018 - February 8, 2019.

These gifts include those from our annual appeal, are beyond membership dues and are truly generous and appreciated.

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