The Prairie Enthusiasts 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.

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*

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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*

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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*

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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*
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*

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*
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@sbcp.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

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

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

Erbe Grassland & Goplin Prairies, Dane County, Wis.

Come help us look for endangered wooly 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, Mecan 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 Mecan River or Mecan 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 blazing-star 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!