New Addition at Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

by Willis Brown & Cate Harrington

The Prairie Enthusiasts recently purchased a 190-acre parcel, including a historic barn, just west of Barneveld, Wisconsin, in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA). The land was purchased from Doug Thomas whose family had owned the property since 1860. Doug has retained a life tenancy on an 11.2-acre parcel on the property, which includes the barn and all of the buildings.

This purchase is a significant addition to a 79-acre tract that The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased from Doug’s father, Harold Thomas, in 1979. The purchase was made possible with help from TNC and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, along with a federal grant related to endangered species that was secured through working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Prairie bush clover, a federally-threatened plant is present on the adjacent TNC land along with a population of a state-endangered butterfly, the regal fritillary. Much of the land in the TPE purchase is currently in agriculture with plans to restore it to prairie. The pasture on the property is already home to regal fritillary butterflies, some prairie vegetation and many species of grassland birds.

In addition to being adjacent to a prairie remnant, the property spans U.S. Highway 151 and is adjacent to the Military Ridge State Trail, making it accessible to many folks driving, bicycling or walking in the area. The land is also part of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, a 95,000-acre area of Dane and Iowa counties that provides much-needed habitat for grassland birds, a cadre of species in serious decline nationwide. It is adjacent to TNC’s 1,100+ acre Barneveld Prairie and is within five miles, as the

Continued on Page 4
Picking the Seeds for Tomorrow

Chris Kirkpatrick, Executive Director

The end of summer is before us, and the prairies are heavy with ripe seeds of the growing season. Many of us are out picking thus alive the harvest; drying, sorting, cleaning, and preparing to be seeded down this fall. This seed will sit through the winter underneath a blanket of snow in preparation to be a new prairie planting in the years to come. It is a season of planning for the future, and as we look toward the end of the year we are also preparing for the future of The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE). Like the prairie seed that we harvest, there are several exciting giving opportunities that I want to highlight.

As in years past, we are now preparing for our year end annual appeal. We have accomplished much this year, and we look forward to sharing these with you. From newly conserved remnants and amazing restoration projects to successful outreach events, we ask that you please consider making a gift in addition to your membership renewal. One new campaign that we are involved with this year is Earth Share Wisconsin, enrolling state employees to make a gift through their employer. If you are a Wisconsin state employee, or know of family or friends who are, you can pursue donating to TPE through this new program.

In addition to membership renewals and the annual appeal, I am proud to state that the Board of Directors has pledged over $20,000 this year, reflecting the Board’s commitment and leadership. We are also in our second year of the Compass Club program, which recognizes members who donate $1,000+ of unrestricted income. 100% of this giving supports the operations and mission of TPE through conservation, management, restoration, and education.

The TPE summer picnic and annual meeting was held March 21, 2015 at UW-Stevens Point, WI. (L to R) Jim Rogala, Jim Freymiller and Mark Leach.

I look forward to seeing you out on the prairie!

By Jack Kassman

It has been a while since I have discussed accreditation. You will recall that accreditation is a program that the Land Trust Alliance offers to accredited land trusts which meet rather rigorous requirements. The program has been in effect for several years and more and more land trusts are pursuing accreditation. The Prairie Enthusiasts has made a decision to try to meet the requirements and to join the ranks of accredited land trusts.

Four years ago we created an Accreditation Committee. It worked on establishing a general nature which did not fall under the umbrella of another committee. Other committees have since been working on meeting the requirements in their areas. We have joined the LEAP program whereby Gathering Waters and The Land Trust Alliance works with us on a regular basis to assist us and to monitor progress.

We only have a few areas left to complete. Here are some examples. We have given lower priority to registering in states where we solicit a significant amount of funds. We have long been registered in Wisconsin. We have just completed the applications for Illinois and Minnesota and have submitted them to those states. Our application was quickly approved by Minnesota and we are waiting to hear from Illinois. There are some baselines that need to be completed. While we have completed a Board Manual which is required, it has not yet been posted to the website which we need to do. We need to do more work in assessing and meeting stewardship needs for all of our properties.

I attended the annual Land Trust Alliance Rally in Providence, Rhode Island, for three days in mid-September. I was attracted to this in part because of the programs on becoming accredited. Half of my time at the conference was at accreditation programs. These included one held by presenters from land trusts that have recently completed the process. Following the rally, I hope to focus on areas where we are still falling short and bring these into compliance so that we may actually submit the application for accreditation within the next couple of years.

One of the requirements that we have initiated is appointing a three member committee to conduct an annual review of the by-laws. Each year the membership of the committee changes so that we are getting fresh perspectives and ideas annually. The committee takes a hard look at our current governance document and recommends any changes to stay current with the needs of our growing and evolving organization. The subject of board term limits was raised in this connection. The majority, but not all board members, felt that this might be a good idea but it may not be practical as difficult as it sometimes is to recruit board members. It was specifically agreed that this question will be part of the annual review. Thanks to Linda Lynch, Mark Leach and Nick Faessler for agreeing to serve on this year’s committee.

In my next message I will report on the LTA Rally and what I am able to take away from it.

Save the Date!!

TPE Annual Conference & Banquet: March 21, 2015 at UW-Stevens Point, WI

Photos fromTPE Picnic & Annual Meeting

The TPE summer picnic and annual meeting was held at Truwing Park in Monroe, WI on July 19.

Both photos by Evanne Hunt
Double Oak Savanna Dedicated

by Jack Kaemmel

There were times when Alice and Walter Mirk were not sure they would ever see it happen, but the dedication of Double Oak Savanna finally took place on Saturday, October 4. This 23 acre gem, located in the Town of Millville in northern Grant County, was a project that worked for 25 years, and it was five years ago when they were ready to turn it over to The Prairie Enthusiasts. A series of problems challenged this effort. First there were zoning issues that took some time to resolve. Next was a problem with getting Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funding. The application was good and the project was within about two weeks of final approval. Then a new governor took office and all stewardship funding was stopped while the whole program was being revisited. Another year of waiting passed before a new application was submitted and funding was approved. Because of a quirk in the transition from the old program to the new program, funding was awarded for the full purchase price rather than the normal half. Because the Mirks donated back the entire sale price, the size of the endowment was double what it would have been had the first application been approved. Sometimes things work out much better than expected.

Closing took place in the summer of 2012. We held off on the dedication until 2013, because we wanted to do a burn on the property to get it looking its best. A late spring 2013 burn was called for. The weather was perfect when the burn was scheduled. Wild fires in other parts of the state, however, led to a state wide burning ban. When it was lifted it rained and then it was too late in the season to burn.

Driftless Area Land Stewardship was contracted to do the burn this spring. They looked with dismay at the rugged terrain over which they have to prepare firebreaks. Consulting with DNR, which owns all of the surrounding property as part of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway, they got permission to use roads on the DNR property as fire breaks. This meant that instead of only 23 acres being burned, over 100 were in the burn unit. We expect this relationship with DNR to continue.

There was more good news this summer when a DNR crew staked out the survey boundaries. It turns out that Double Oak contains an area next to the high quality prairie everyone thought the state owned. A work party in November will be cutting out red cedars which have choked prairie growth and will now allow for expansion of the quality prairie area.

The morning of the dedication there was rain and snow in the area, which fortunately ended an hour before the program. Attendance was excellent in spite of the cold and wind. Walter led a two hour hike around the property, which in the rough terrain seems like much more than 23 acres. There was a short program which ended with Walter and his granddaughter unveiling the Double Oak Savanna sign. A pot luck meal was then enjoyed by a hardy group bundled up against the cold.

The dedication was a great ending to the long saga of getting this parcel protected.

New Addition at Military Ridge (continued from Page 1)

by Jim Rogala

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Update on TPE Burn Policy

by Jim Rogala

The Land Management Committee (LMC) hopes that TPE can fully implement the burn policy for the 2015 spring burn season. The missing pieces that were postponed last year were 1) burn boss and line leader approval and 2) no formal review of burn plans. Several chapters have recently provided data to the committee for the purpose of approving burn bosses and line leaders. The data is quite impressive, and illustrates the depth of experience and training of those burning with TPE. We encourage all chapters to submit data on experience/training, even if the chapter doesn’t intend to conduct TPE sanctioned burns.

Profiles of TPE Chapters Now Online

by Jim Rogala

The TPE Board formed an Ad Hoc Committee at the March 2014 Board Retreat. The committee’s task was to begin to clarify ongoing organizational issues and to develop strategies to begin to resolve those issues. In the committee report to the Board at the July Board meeting, eight specific recommendations were made. Also included in the report were three documents generated to assist in execution of the recommendations. In this newsletter, we introduce one of the three documents: results from a chapter questionnaire.

The intent of the chapter questionnaire was to provide Board members an overview of the chapters to help better inform decisions regarding how the organization operates. In addition, these surveys provide valuable information to let each chapter know how other chapters operate. That understanding can illustrate commonalities, but more importantly give chapters alternatives to improve their operation. The survey was completed by chapter leadership, with staff providing some membership and financial data.

A summary of the survey responses was used to create chapter profiles using figures, tables and lists of responses. An example of one of the pages is illustrated here. The entire summary has been posted under the TPE “chapters” webpage (www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapters.html). The summary of chapter profiles is a living document to be updated as needed. If the information depicted for your chapter needs updating, please contact Jim Rogala (therogues@charter.net).
As a result of the buckthorn problem, I invented the Buckthorn Baggie and went through several years of testing. Linden contractor Mark Rochon used those salvaged poles as the main supports for the bridge. In Spring 2013, many of you responded to a request in these pages by donating money towards this bridge. Thanks for your help! Your generosity exceeded the cost of the bridge, so we are applying the remaining funds to managing the savanna.

In winter of 2013, a volunteer work party felled and burned up a giant black willow that was growing right where we wanted the bridge to go. In addition to making way for the bridge, that work also brought more sunlight to the angelica, Joe-pye weed and sedges growing along the bank.

Special thanks to Amy Staffen (shown celebrating in the photo), whose persistent pluck kept the project on track for over again. Another major problem is when pulling the buckthorn out by hand. This is a lot of hard work, and many undesirable side effects. Another option is to pull hundreds of buckthorn seeds germinate and start the cycle all over again. As with the event last year, the local Culver’s franchise provided both publicity and funding for the event. Thanks to them and to the over 35 TPE volunteers who made our Prairie Day event a big success!

The patent-pending Buckthorn Baggie is chemical free, does not disturb the soil, results in no erosion, and is 100% effective and have a kill rate of 100%. This is one of those products that is so simple and effective, I often hear, “Wow, why didn’t I think of that?” (to which I think, “You weren’t the one tearing it out every summer”).

Here are the simple instructions:

1) Cut the buckthorn down leaving a 6” stump. For safety, cut should be at 90 degrees.
2) Place a Buckthorn Baggie over the stump - fanning out the bottom.
3) Zip tie the Buckthorn Baggie to the stump.
4) Return after stump is 100% dead and reuse on another buckthorn plant

The patent-pending Buckthorn Baggie is chemical free, does not disturb the soil, results in no erosion, and is reusable. The Buckthorn Baggie also works on any other plants that promulgate from the stump or root ball

For more information, please contact Matt Hamilton at buckthornbaggie@yahoo.com or (651) 734-8332 or visit our company website at www.buckthornbaggie.com

Editor’s note - Matt sent me the above article unsolicited, and I thought his product looked to be of interest to TPE members.
Peichel’s Prairie Tour

Remember times gone by when Sunday afternoons were designated for visiting with family and friends? On Sunday afternoon, August 10th many of us Prairie Enthusiasts did just that; we got together to visit with one another and to tour some amazing prairies. Peichel, near Fort Ridgely invited his fellow Prairie Enthusiasts out to tour his magnificent prairie, which overlooks the grand Minnesota River. We gathered to explore the prairie and share our passion for prairie.

Peichel has restored prairie on all his past cropland.

Great care was taken over the years to ensure the restoration was a success and prospered toward diversity. A true jewel on Peichel’s land is a steep bluff hillside, a unique remnant prairie. The bluff-side has southern exposure facing the broad Minnesota river valley. One can see for miles in either direction from this spot as the large trees along this exposed bluff have been cleared. Truth be told, the remnant still struggles with the encroachment of shrubby vegetation, namely sumac. Despite the woody vegetation there’s still an amazing diversity of plants etching out a living here. Plants such as prairie turnip, ground plum, prairie violet, green milkweed and pasque flower all call this steep bluff prairie their home. In all, 45 species of forbs have been seen on this site.

Soon after meeting Mr. Gerald Peichel, anyone would soon come to realize how important all his diverse prairie lands are to him. Beams when he starts to talk about his land and truly wants to leave a legacy of incredible prairie lands to him. He beams when he starts to talk about his land and truly wants to leave a legacy of incredible prairie lands to him.

Upcoming Chapter Events

- Burn plan writing workshop coming this fall – stay tuned.
- Workdays to control brush at various locations
- Continued work evenings, most Tuesdays on a 3 acre restored prairie at Rasmussen Woods Park in Mankato.
- Possible fall burns.
- If interested in hosting a prairie tour, please contact Bridgette Winkels at 507-779-8569. Tours can be anytime, start thinking about a tour for next year.

For contact information please call Deanna Pомнije at 507-600-9900 or by e-mail at prairie4moon@gmail.com.

The final August Prairie Days event for the chapter was the Members Only tour of Hugh Ilils Prairie on Saturday, August 23rd. Property owners, David and Shelley Hamel, lead the tour of their 110 acre property and served a delicious lunch on the deck of their “bog” house which overlooks their pitcher plant bog. Besides puzzling at unusual plants like jointweed (Polygemma articulata), false heather (Hudsonia tomentosa), Polk and Clasping Milkweed, Sundew (Drosera rotundifolia) and Pitcher plants (Sarracenia purpurea), the group examined the huge bog fern present in the sand dune. Attending were both new and present chapter members: Mark and Marilyn Thwaites, Anne Graham, Eric Klein, Carol Kropidowski, Ray Goehring and, of course, Shelley and David Hamel.

All in all, we had a wonderful and active series of events and signed up several new chapter members. Welcome to new members: Anne Graham, Eric Klein, Carol Kropidowski, Mark and Cheri Wolverton.

The August Prairie Days event for the Prairie Sands chapter was an enormous success. We had a booth at Portage County Farm Tech Days on August 11 - 13th in Plover, Wisconsin where we talked to many people from all over the state, handed out hundreds of milkweed seed packets and brochures with information about TPE. The seed was donated by Prairie Nursery and the materials for the seed packets and assembly were donated by chapter members Keith and Sally Schnese. We also had a cut flower display which drew a lot of attention and prompted many questions. Thank you to chapter members Jean Clark, Keith Schnese, Hans Hessser, Fred & Karen Wollenburg, Dick & Ray Goehring, and Shelley Hamel for working the booth.

On Friday, August 15th we had over forty people (including 5 chapter volunteers) attend a tour of the prairie and garden of Dr Robert and Sally Freckmann in Stevens Point. Dr Freckmann is the founder of UW Stevens Points Freckmann Herbarium and Sally has a masters degree in Botany with an emphasis on mosses. Their landscape reflects the diversity of their interests and combined knowledge. Both generously lead tours or answered questions and invited the group to wander through the gardens after the tour. We are so very grateful for their generous hospitality.

Wendy Freckmann, her son, Brian Freckmann and Anne Graham take a tour of the Freckman’s restored prairie at Rasmussen Woods Park in Mankato.

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Work Parties

The chapter has been busy during the late summer with Prairie Days, herbicide spraying, and seed collecting. Thanks to our volunteers Sandy Borden, Greg Brown, Patrick Fleming, Wayne Huhnke, Evanne Hunt, Valerie Kubal, Burt Levy, Mike Miller, Mike Perry, Eric Sanden and Russell Yttri.

Please join us this winter as we continue maintenance on our project sites. All work days start at 10:00 am. Come for 1, 2, 3, or 4 hours – any time you can spare is appreciated!

Sat., Nov 1 - Foster Conservation Area
Sat., Nov 15 - Alexander Oak Savanna
Sat., Dec 6 - Foster Conservation Area
Sat., Dec 20 - Alexander Oak Savanna

Check the website or call Evanne (715-381-1291) to confirm the date and location. Changes are possible between the newsletter deadline and the work day.

Music on the Prairie

By Jesse Bennett & Rose Sime

The Southwest Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts held their first music festival, “Music on the Prairie”, on Sunday, September 28th at Borah Creek Prairie, 11949 Mount Ridge Road, Fennimore. The prairie hike portion of the extravaganza took intrepid explorers across a former cornfield, now a newly-established prairie planting, and through “Heather’s Prairie,” the ecologically-rich portion of Borah Creek SNA that originally caught the eye of prairie enthusiasts in 1988. TPE Site Steward, Jesse Bennett, was joined by a number of long-time prairie enthusiasts as well as a number of new faces. We discussed the management history of the site and observed a great number of uncommon species including the federally-endangered Prairie Bush Clover, Marbleseed, Wild Quinine, and Downy Gentian. The experience surely gave participants a sense of the richness of the region’s pre-European settlement natural communities as well as TPE’s role in protecting and managing our preserves.

Following the hike, the crowd enjoyed a flavorful pot luck lunch in the newly restored barn. Toes were a tappin’ and hands were a clappin’ as an enthusiastic crowd enjoyed the music of Pie City Ramblers, a local bluegrass band. Thus ended another great day on the prairie.

Music on the Prairie was a celebration of the prairie and it’s place in our heritage. The Pie City Ramblers perform at the Borah Creek Prairie barn Photo by Steve Carpenter

In Memory of Gail Adams

Gail Adams, a long time Board Member of the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts and one of the original organizers of TPE passed away on April 2, 2014.

The Chapter has purchased a bench with a plaque honoring Gail’s hard work as a Prairie Enthusiast to be put outside the Soldiers Grove Library. If you would like to contribute to that memorial, please send your donations to the Southwest Wisconsin Chapter of TPE in memory of Gail Adams.

THANK YOU DONORS

These gifts above and beyond membership dues and the annual appeal are truly generous and appreciated.

$500 or more

Culver’s
C. Topf
Wells & Sally Probasco

$100 - $499

Citizens Natural Resource
Ray & Rodoma Amiel
In memory of Charles Adams
Eddie & Cheryl Coplin
Chris Hughes
Don & Julie Plummer
Tim & Sherri Dohmann

Under $100

Ed & Karin Stremski
Warren & Marion Lang
Andy Chikowski
Bruce & Ruth Marion
Melinda Knutson
Thomas & Jean Weedman
Andy Chikowski
Invasive Plants Assoc. of WI
Melinda Knutson
Bruce & Ruth Marion
Jiek Saltes

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people have joined TPE during the period June 1 – September 30, 2014

Rodney Sykora, Minneapolis, MN
Rebecca Giliman, Argyle, WI
Anne Graham, Stevens Point, WI
Andrea & Raymond Young, Hanover, IL

For the Double Oak Savanna

Citizens Natural Resource
Ray & Rodoma Amiel

For Avon Ridge Project

In memory of Charles Adams
Eddie & Cheryl Coplin
Chris Hughes
Don & Julie Plummer
Tim & Sherri Dohmann

In Memory of Gail Adams

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St. Croix Valley Chapter herbicide spraying & seed collection. Photos by Evanne Hunt

Downy gentians (Gentiana puberulenta) on Borah Creek Prairie Photo by Steve Carpenter
**TIME TO RENEW?** *(hint: check the renewal date printed above your address)*

Did you know you can renew online? Visit: **www.ThePrairieEnthusiasts.org**

Or, mail a check and the form below to:

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

Questions? E-mail Joe Rising (Communications Coordinator) at TPE@theprairieenthusiasts.org. Thank you.

Name: ___________________________________________________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________________________________________________
City: _____________________________________________________State: ___________  Zip: __________
E-mail: ___________________________________________

**The Prairie Enthusiasts Membership Levels:**

[  ] $15  Student  [  ] $200  Blazing Star  
[  ] $25  Little Bluestem  [  ] $500  Compass Plant  
[  ] $40  Big Bluestem  [  ] $1,000  Monarch  
[  ] $65  Pasque  [  ] $1,000+ Compass Club (100% to TPE)  
[  ] $100 Shooting Star [  ] $5,000+  Bur Oak Benefactor