

FAVILLE GROVE SANCTUARY VOLUNTEER NEWS

Madison Audubon Society

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Let's Plant! Let's Celebrate!

Volunteering is always fun, but a planting party is especially festive. We have tentatively set the time for this year's planting at Faville Grove from 9 until noon on November 15, weather dependant, as always. Please let David know if you are able to help out so that we know who we can count on, and we can let you know of any last minute changes of plan (dmusolf@uwalumni.com or (608) 265-4562).

We plan to reseed the south 40 acres of Charles Prairie. Originally planted in 2006, this was the newest planting subjected to this summer's flooding and, as such, lacks a seed bank in the soil to recover on its own. Time permitting, we may scatter seed in the savanna area along Prairie Lane also.

Following the planting, we will have a pizza lunch and celebration at the planting site on Prairie Lane. We will celebrate the completion of another season of seed collecting and planting, the beginning of the *TogetherGreen* Volunteer Days program and upcoming volunteer events, and the completion (more or less) of the remodeling of the Prairie Lane House. We will also welcome Lars to his role as resident (at last!) restoration ecologist.

After lunch, we will show the house to anyone who cares to stick around. Some of you may have heard rumors of a planned open house at the remodeled Prairie Lane House to happen this Saturday (October 18), or even last month. Well, they're nothing but rumors (but the house will be ready this time around — we should have known better than to plan a public event around a remodeling project)!

Documenting the Recovery: *Monitoring the Crawfish Prairie after the Flood*

As reported last month, Faville Grove Sanctuary was hit hard by the devastating floods that occurred throughout much of Wisconsin this spring. As the waters of the Crawfish River swelled, those of us at the sanctuary could do little but watch as Faville and Snapper Prairies and our surrounding restorations were slowly submerged under several feet of water.

Only days before the first raindrops fell, we walked



Photo by L. Higdon

MAS summer interns Nick Sievert, Maggie Wagner and Mitch Levenhagen record data on flood damage and recovery from a square-meter quadrat on Faville Prairie.

cheerfully through the prairies with the summer interns, introducing them to the brilliant display of shootingstars, toadflax, phlox, and wood-betony while discussing our plans to battle weeds and gather seeds. Our work plans would quickly change, refocusing on the higher ground in the sanctuary as we watched the waters rise behind us. Flooding of this magnitude is truly unprecedented in modern times. According to USGS stream flow data, this was the largest flood ever recorded on the Crawfish River since the installation of monitoring equipment in 1931. On a geological time scale, however, it is likely that comparable

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floods have occurred occasionally over the past 10,000 years. In the absence of industrial-scale agriculture, floodplain prairies could recolonize from the surrounding landscape. And without the threat of invasives, native plant communities would eventually populate the site once again. Today the story is much different. Farmland and degraded woodlots now constitute the surrounding landscape. The potential for outside recolonization is low and the threat from invasives,



The level of the flood water was clearly visible in the brush near the “ridge” on Faville Prairie.

especially reed canary grass, is great. Many questions remain as to how the Crawfish Prairie will recover in the presence of these modern day challenges.

At the moment, we know very little about the tolerance of prairie species to sustained flooding events. We suspect (and hope!) that some species were not killed below ground and will resprout from the roots. We also suspect that a seed bank remains dormant in the soil and serves to provide another level of insurance after disturbance events. It remains to be seen how certain species will respond, particularly rare and sensitive species such as the eastern prairie fringed orchid and the small white lady’s slipper orchid.

In an attempt to learn from this event, Madison Audubon Society and the UW Arboretum have partnered to begin monitoring the recovery of Faville Prairie. In early August, a monitoring protocol was developed by Paul Zedler and Brad Herrick of the UW Arboretum, and Lars Higdon. The protocol calls for sampling 48 quadrats throughout the prairie. With the help of our summer intern crew, we collected data in each quadrat, including which species were pres-

ent, their condition, their abundance, and how they appeared to recover (i.e. from seed, resprouted from ground, etc). We were also interested in determining which species were present before the flood but showed no sign of recovery. Together with the UW Arboretum, we plan to continue monitoring the site this fall and next year. We have expanded monitoring efforts across the sanctuary by conducting walk-through surveys of our restorations and documenting the recovery with notes and photographs.

Based on our observations to this date, certain species such as prairie loosestrife, rattlesnake-master, and prairie cord grass, despite showing obvious signs of damage, appear to have endured the flood. The fate of many other species such as prairie drop-seed and our rare orchids is yet to be seen. The only thing that can be said for sure is that nature is incredibly complex and difficult to predict. It is easy to look at this flood as a devastating setback to our efforts at the sanctuary but we must also look at this event as a valuable opportunity to learn more about prairie communities. In turn, this added knowledge will help guide future restoration efforts on the sanctuary and elsewhere.

— Lars Higdon



Sedges were among the first plants to green up after the flood waters receded.

Woodworker needed to make small, routed wood signs to identify the various sanctuary properties. Let David Musolf know if you can help out (dmusolf@uwalumni.com or (608) 265-4562.).

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Regular volunteer parties will continue rain or shine through November 8 every Saturday, 9:30 to noon and 1:30 to 4:00, as well as Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. until whenever. If we're not collecting seed, we will move to the barn to clean or mix seed. Whatever the activity, there's sure to be plenty of prairie banter, so come on out.

From Madison take I-94 east to the Lake Mills/Waterloo exit (Highway 89), go north approximately 1.75 miles and turn right onto County G. After approximately 1.5 miles, turn right onto Prairie Lane and meet at the sanctuary sign. And don't forget to contact us if you can help with the planting planned for Saturday, November 15 (see page 1).

Weather permitting, we also are planning to do some controlled burning this fall (always on short notice), both before and after the planting date, so let us know if you are interested in helping with that. And stay tuned for wintertime brush work in the savannas along Prairie Lane. We have a lot of clearing to do in advance of next year's wetland restoration!



We aren't collecting by the Tillotson Oak this year due to the flooding, but other areas have good seed. (See page 5 for another rendition of the tree.)

October 15, 2008

Recent sightings at Faville Grove



Great Plains lady's-tresses, *Spiranthes magnicamporum*, perfume the air.



Stiff gentian, *Gentianella quinquefolia*, also called ague-weed, for it's use in the treatment of fevers.

Photos by R. Packard

Extreme Make Over

Remodeling work on Madison Audubon's on Prairie Lane house at Faville Grove Sanctuary is finally nearing an end. We have many loose ends to wrap up, but the end result will be an updated, handsome, and energy-efficient residence for the sanctuary ecologist, and gathering place and restroom facility for summer interns and volunteers.

After the new roof was put on, volunteers removed the old siding, windows and doors and we had rigid foam sprayed between the studs, with plywood sheathing and insulating foam board applied over the studs. This will provide insulation value of about R-30 in the walls while strengthening the walls and sealing all the leaks in the once-drafty house. The crawl space



Photo by C. Caslavka

and basement sills have been foamed, and we plan to have the attic insulated to R-50. New siding, and energy-efficient windows have been added, with new doors coming.

A deck has been added that will permit access for summer interns and volunteers to the screened porch. The interior layout of the house has been modified to allow direct access to the first-floor bathroom from outside while improving the layout of the kitchen and dining area. And the garage under the house has been eliminated to keep the basement warm and the house exhaust-free.

New oak flooring has been installed, and new kitchen cabinets are in place, and we hope to complete structural work on the porch soon. Volunteers have been busy painting the interior. The electric service has been buried, and the ugly utility pole and glaring yard light have been removed.

We extend our thanks to a number of local businesses that have made in-kind contributions toward the house remodeling. Ulrich Builders of Lake Mills has done a terrific job as general contractor and has

given Audubon a nice break on the costs. RenewAire of Madison has donated a heat exchange ventilator to efficiently provide fresh air in the now airtight house, and TemTec in Lake Mills will install the unit free of charge. Other businesses that have provided discounted services or supplies include Gene Burrow Plumbing and Empire Electric, both in Lake Mills, Country Wood Floors in Fort Atkinson, Premier Paint in Mc-



Photo by C. Caslavka

Farland and EvenAire in Madison.

We also thank Sally and Dick Keyel for donating an electric range, and Epic Systems of Verona for a used computer. And none of this work would be possible without generous financial contributions from a number of individuals. We still need a variety of household furnishings, as well as a rider mower and other yard equipment, so if you are looking to part with anything that might be of use at the Prairie Lane House, please contact David Musolf at dmusolf@uwalumni.com or (608) 265-4562.



Photo by R. Packard

Note the blooming calico aster, *Aster lateriflorus*, that has volunteered in the former lawn/future savanna.

Sacred Ground: *Nature and reality*

(Originally published in
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The Madison Audubon Society recently held an "Audubon Adventure Day" at Faville Grove Sanctuary in Jefferson County, entitled "Prairies in Bloom." Bird watching, the lifecycle of butterflies, a look at the world of snakes, turtles, and salamanders, were all part of the day. People learned about prairies and wetlands as plant and animal communities. These ecosystems are a look at the unity of nature itself.

As the late afternoon breeze picked up, the nearly oppressive heat of the day waned, and the compass plants and other silphiums seemed to wave at the sun as they followed its path through the sky. We caught flashes of yellow from a warbler and a meadowlark. As the prairie moved with the breeze, it was more than just alive. The impressions of light, color, sound, and smell called us to explore.

What would bring children, their parents, and grandparents out on a hot July day to experience prairies and wetlands, those parts of our landscape that were nearly erased from Wisconsin over the last century?

Prairies, woods and wetlands invite our attention. They have to be experienced to be understood, not read about, not watched on TV, or browsed on a monitor. Many who have experienced them recognize our prairie remnants, undrained wetlands, and restorations as some of the most beautiful and inspiring places in Wisconsin. These aspects of nature are not a distant reality. They are our reality, shaped by forces that across eons shaped our bodies, and the remarkable phenomenon of human intelligence itself.

When we learn about the plants and trees indigenous to an area, we see how they are one with the soils, geology, and climate of the region. We discover a sense of place and that we too are part of that place. Rather than being a population that is basically not native to anywhere, we might find a feeling of belonging, by becoming aware of plant and animal communi-



"September Morning – Faville Grove" by Terrill Knaack

ties that are an extension of our own communities.

Protecting our few intact natural areas, and the restoration of the vast acreage of biologically degraded lands and waters in Wisconsin, perhaps can come about through this awareness and sense of belonging.

For ourselves, as well as our youth, learning about nature enhances our awareness of what it means to be human, and that the order and beauty of natural systems are fragile. A sense of responsibility can possibly grow from these insights. The man-induced disintegration of the natural world by means of climate change, the spread of invasive species, and pollution, are not degrading the existence of some "other world." They are degrading the potential of our own children, the quality of life for millions, as well as our own health.

There are many ways we can expose our children to nature, including hunting, fishing, and hiking. In addition, try walking through an old-growth woodland this fall, canoeing one of Wisconsin's incredible wild rivers, or listening to the wind through the prairie grasses. Get away from the din of the traffic and listen to the distant calls of grassland and woodland birds. Around every bend, there is life, beauty, and order.

— Terrill Knaack

Terrill Knaack has been painting Wisconsin landscapes and wildlife for 30 years. He is also a photographer and a perpetual observer of Wisconsin's natural history. (See <http://www.terrillknaack.com/>.)