

SIERRA CLUB ANNUAL DINNER

Save the date and bring the family –
Annual dinner set for September 22, 2012

The Iowa Chapter annual dinner will be held September 22 at the site of the Whiterock Conservancy in Guthrie County near Coon Rapids in west central Iowa. At this event, there will be a luncheon and trail hike led by Dr. Tom Rosburg of Drake University. Dr. Rosburg has been involved with the Conservancy's latest effort to establish a soft trails system at the resort. He will lead a hike and present a program explaining the natural history of this varied landscape, which the Conservancy's website describes as "sand prairies covering Cretaceous Dakota sandstone outcrops and wetland seeps... [and] upland oak-dominated woodlands and ridge-top savannas."

The Conservancy was established in 2004 as a non-profit land trust by the Garst family, and is administered from the homestead of Roswell and Elizabeth Garst, who hosted Khrushchev's historic visit to the United States in 1959. In fact, the annual dinner will take place on the eve of the 53rd anniversary of Khrushchev's visit. As stated in its website, the Conservancy's mission is to conserve and protect Iowa's natural resources through sustainable rural land management, and to "engage the public with the environment through outdoor recreation and education." To that end, it operates a family-friendly resort that offers activities from biking, fishing and canoeing, to birding and star-gazing. While these activities will be available to those attending the Sierra Club event, please note that they are not sponsored by the Club and may involve a fee payable to the resort.

For those wishing to make a weekend of it, the resort also has lodging available, from a lovely B&B in the original Garst farmhouse, to rustic cottages and primitive campgrounds on the grounds of the resort. You can get more information at <http://www.whiterockconservancy.org/whiterock-resort.html>. Other lodging and camping options are at nearby Springbrook State Park, Swan Lake State Park, and motels in towns such as Carroll and Audubon. The Conservancy is located about 1 hour, 20 minutes west of Des Moines on Highway 141.

Watch for updates at our website [iowa.sierraclub.org] as they become available, and for more details in our next newsletter.

2012 Legislative Update

By Neila Seaman, Chapter Director

This year's legislative session opened in January and with unfinished business from 2011 and a few surprises for 2012.

Unfinished business included the bill that will enable MidAmerican Energy to demonstrate that Iowa is "in the nuclear business" and the "ag gag" bill that would make it a crime to record atrocities at animal feeding operations. Surprises included a section of the House's "efficiency" bill that would require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to sell all land the agency owns except parks, forests, preserves and land purchased with federal funding. Although not really a surprise, both chambers introduced resolutions that would permanently remove language in the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) rule that would ban the use of lead-based ammunition for hunting doves.

Nuclear Power

Sierra Club members and supporters consistently have opposed HF561, the nuclear power bill, since it came up in the last session and then passed the House 68-30 in April. The Iowa Chapter, along with AARP, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Law and Policy Center, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Iowa Environmental Council, Iowa Interfaith Power and Light and the Iowa Farmers Union, joined together to convince legislators to oppose this bill.

Sen. Matt McCoy (D-Polk), who replaced Sen. Swati Dandekar as chair of the Senate Commerce Committee when Dandekar was appointed to the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB), picked up the torch where Dandekar left off and pushed hard for passage of the bill out of his committee. A contentious committee meeting that consumed close to five hours on March 13 included two amendments by Sen. McCoy in an effort to "fix" the bill that passed and six amendments by Sen. Joe Bolkom (D-Johnson) that failed to pass. The amended bill passed by a vote of 8-7.

Although Sen. McCoy insists the amended bill will be more protective of consumers by requiring the IUB to approve prudent expenditures by MidAmerican Energy after the company incurs those expenses and puts an unspecified cap on expenditures, the bill continues to do nothing to shift any financial risk to MidAmerican Energy's shareholders or to protect consumers from the financial risk of paying for a nuclear power plant before it produces electricity.

The Iowa Chapter has been actively opposing new nuclear power in Iowa for three legislative sessions. In 2010, the Legislature approved a bill that allowed MidAmerican Energy to collect \$15 million from its ratepayers to complete a three-year study determining the feasibility of constructing a nuclear power plant in Iowa. Since 2010, the Iowa Chapter has distributed seven action alerts resulting in more than 1,500 responses from our members and supporters who oppose this legislation. AARP has generated thousands of telephone calls to legislators opposing the bill. Newspapers across the state have published editorials opposing the bill. Even with the groundswell of opposition, HF561 is now on the Senate debate calendar.

"Ag Gag"

House File 589, generally referred to as the "ag gag" bill, originally imposed criminal penalties to anyone who entered into or damaged property associated with a facility or operation where animals or crops are maintained; tampered with property associated with an animal facility or crop operation, including damaging property; killed or injured an animal or crop, committed theft or disrupted operations; or interfered with an animal facility or crop operation, including producing an audio or visual record that reproduced and distributed the record.

The bill passed the House 66-27 in March 2011. It was then referred to the Senate Agriculture Committee, whose members recommended passage of the bill but the session ended before the bill was considered by the Senate and it was placed on the unfinished business calendar.

In January 2012, Sens. Joe Seng (D-Scott) and Tim Kapucian (R-Benton) introduced an amendment that drastically amended the bill to prohibit committing fraud by obtaining access to an animal facility or crop operation

by false pretenses for the purpose of committing an act not authorized by the owner, or making a false statement as part of an application to be employed at the location. Ultimately, the Senate passed the bill that included the Seng/Kapucian amendment by a vote of 40-10 in February. The House agreed with the Senate-amended bill and passed it 69-28 the same day as the Senate. The Governor signed the amended bill two days later and the bill became effective upon enactment.

DNR Land Sale

The House State Government Committee introduced a bill that, among other things, requires the DNR to identify and sell all DNR-controlled property except state parks and forests, land that is not farmable and that which is prohibited by federal law or purchased with federal funds. Legislators believed that the sale would generate \$20 million and HF2434 would require the proceeds be used to pay for Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP).

The DNR has completed its list and it does not amount to \$20 million in sales. As of this writing, it is unclear how legislators will treat that section of the bill. As of this writing, we are hearing rumblings that this section will be removed.

Lead Ammo Ban

The Senate is poised to vote on a resolution that would nullify the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) rule banning lead shot while hunting Mourning Doves. SJR2001 and HJR 2001 have both passed their respective Natural Resources committees and the House passed HJR2001 by a 68-27 vote in February. The Senate version is ready for floor debate.

Several issues are preventing legislators from supporting the NRC's rule to prohibit lead shot for dove hunting.

First, some legislators believe the lead issue was discussed and dismissed during the 2011 session when the dove hunting bill was passed. The House version of the Senate bill (HF508) was introduced March 3 and was referred to the House Natural Resources Committee. No additional action was ever taken on HF508. The Senate bill (SF464) was recommended by the Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee on March 7 and placed on the debate calendar. No amendments were ever filed and it passed 30-18 with two absent on March 22.

The next day, the House began debate on SF130, a Senate-passed bill that had no relation to dove hunting until Rep. Richard Arnold (R-Lucas) filed an amendment that completely replaced the language in SF130 and replaced it with language contained in SF464. Representative Mary Wolfe (D-Clinton) introduced an amendment during floor debate that would restrict the taking of Mourning Doves only with non-toxic shot. The amendment failed by 30-51 on a non-recorded vote.

Arnold's amendment was amended and adopted and then the House substituted SF130 with SF464 and it passed the House (58-39 with three absent) exactly as it had passed the Senate. No amendments were ever considered for SF464. The governor signed the bill March 24. When some legislators say the lead shot issue "was taken care of;" with the bill, the response should be "Sort of," because there is no record of how anyone voted on Wolfe's amendment and no record of any discussion about limiting dove hunting to non-toxic shot.

Second, some legislators are angry because they perceive the NRC overstepped its authority in amending its rule to prohibit the use of lead shot in hunting Mourning Doves. Some legislators argue that public comment was never allowed for the lead prohibition. A Notice of Intended Action to commence rulemaking on dove hunting was published on May 4, 2011, and a public hearing nearly three weeks later.

By the time the public comment period closed, the Department of Natural Resources had received 851

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comments. Of those, 541 opposed dove hunting; however, 214 comments supported a non-toxic shot requirement if a dove hunting season was established.

The NRC met in July to consider final approval of the rule. After considering the number of public comments (Commissioners were never given a summary of the comments) and after consulting with Governor Branstad to secure his support for consensus of a non-toxic shot amendment, Commissioner Clement (appointed by Branstad and confirmed by the Senate) moved that the rule be amended to include a prohibition of lead-based ammunition.

Angry legislators who sit on the Administrative Rules Review Committee voted in August to remove the lead-shot ban until it could be considered by the full Legislature. Both chambers introduced resolutions immediately after the opening gavel. That's where we are today.

Finally, opponents argue all sorts of angles to convince lawmakers to remove the lead prohibition from the NRC's rule.

Mourning Doves and Iowa's environment have become the scapegoats of power and control. Legislators have forgotten the issue is about protecting our environment, our wildlife and our future and focusing instead on who is in control – the legislative or the executive branch.

Stay up-to-date on bills the Chapter is following on our website at <http://iowa.sierraclub.org/Legislature/2012Legislature.htm>

IOWA SIERRAN

Editor: Jane R. Clark
Associate Editor: Jo Hudson

The Iowa Sierran is dedicated to informing members and other friends about environmental issues that affect Iowa. It is a forum for the expression of ideas on topics of environmental concern, as well as the voice of the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club. Articles with a byline represent the research and opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Sierra Club.

We invite submissions of letters, articles, photographs and illustrations. Letters and articles must be complete, accurate and identified with your name, address and phone number(s).

Deadlines are March 5 for the Spring-Summer issue; July 5 for the Autumn issue; and November 5 for the Winter issue. Preference will be given to articles 400-1,000 words in length that relate to Iowa. Longer articles will be considered. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity, space and libel reasons. Copy may be submitted by email, or typed or clearly handwritten and sent to Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter, 3839 Merle Hay Rd, Suite 280, Des Moines, Iowa 50310. Articles sent by email should be included in the body of the message, not sent as an attachment. If you must attach a file, use a Word document and send to [jrclark\(AT\)radiks.net](mailto:jrclark(AT)radiks.net).

A subscription to the Iowa Sierran is included in the cost of Sierra Club membership. For nonmembers, a subscription is \$5 per year.

**Sierra Club Challenges Constitutionality of Legislative Rules Review Committee**

The Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club filed a lawsuit in Polk County District Court on March 21, 2012 alleging that the Iowa Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee (ARRC) is unconstitutional. The Sierra Club alleges that the Iowa law creating the ARRC violates the separation of powers in the Iowa Constitution because it authorizes the ARRC, a legislative oversight committee, to suspend the implementation of an administrative rule legally adopted by the executive branch of government.

The rule being challenged in the lawsuit was adopted by the Natural Resource Commission in July 2011. The Commission amended its dove-hunting season rule to ban the use of lead shot. The ARRC allowed the hunting season but delayed implementation of the ban on lead shot until legislators could address the ban during the 2012 legislative session.

"We have three separate and equal branches of government," said Wally Taylor, the Cedar Rapids attorney representing the Sierra Club. "The legislative branch through the ARRC cannot constitutionally stop the actions of the executive branch acting through the Natural Resource Commission."

In February, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution permanently prohibiting the ban on lead-based ammunition. The Senate resolution has not yet been debated.

In addition to the Administrative Rules Review Committee, the lawsuit names the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for implementing the unconstitutional rule.

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"If suburbia were landscaped with meadows, prairies, thickets, or forests, or combinations of these, then the water would sparkle, fish would be good to eat again, birds would sing, and human spirits would soar."

- Lorrie Otto,
founder, Wild Ones Natural Landscapers

Ice Cream Social Educated Legislators on Hazards of Lead in Dove Hunting

Several Central Iowa Sierra Group members participated in the Lead Is Poison Coalition ice cream social to educate legislators about the hazards of lead ammunition in dove hunting, lead poisoning and its effects on the health of both humans and wildlife. The event was held on January 17, 2012, in the Iowa State Capitol cafeteria.

Lead is a potent neurotoxin. The scientific evidence is growing on the negative health and environmental effects of lead ammunition. Doves and other ground feeders can ingest lead shot mistaking it for seed or grit, thereby becoming poisoned. Banning lead ammunition for other than waterfowl, however, has proved difficult. Guns-rights groups defending "traditional ammunition" interpret attempts to regulate lead ammunition as an attack on the sport of hunting, and downplay the poisonous nature of this neurotoxin.

An Iowa nonprofit group, the Lead is Poison Coalition formed after the 2011 decision to allow

lead-based ammunition in hunting mourning doves. The Iowa Natural Resources Commission, after extensive review of the evidence of the harmful effects of lead-based ammunition, voted to ban lead shot for hunting doves. However, implementation of this rule was delayed by the Iowa Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee. The Legislature has been debating the ammunition issue during the 2012 legislative session.

When asked why the Coalition decided to take on this issue, Manager, Cynthia Hansen stated, "As good stewards of our land and all its natural resources, it only makes sense to remove lead ammunition from use in dove hunting in an effort to protect our families and our wildlife, and to ensure the future of dove hunting for generations to come. Safe alternatives are available for lead-based ammunition. Steel shot is an effective alternative for hunting doves."

For more information, go to the website: www.leadispoison.com Or on Facebook: Lead Is Poison Coalition



Photo by Jim Riggs

Pictured are Ginger Soelberg, Kay Neumann with Peregrine Falcon (Saving our Avian Resources), Debbie Neustadt and Jane Clark

Missouri River

Scapegoats, Setbacks, and Iowa's Role in Averting another Record Flood

By Jim Redmond

Just before the end of 2011 and behind closed doors, a group of senators and representatives, (riding a popular rumor that the endangered pallid sturgeon and a couple of birds distracted the Army Corps from their management of the Missouri system for flood control) wiped out funding for the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Study and Plan.

The ecosystem restoration study was authorized by Congress in 2007 and engaged more than a hundred federal staff and Missouri River stakeholders for several years. Sierra Club will need to work hard with other national and local environmental groups to restore this key funding for fiscal year 2013. See contact information below for the Club's Missouri River Activist Network and Sierra Club Missouri River policies summary printed in this issue of the newsletter.

We have seen an anti-science culture take over the political airwaves. Climate change deniers want to continue with the fuels they are familiar with instead of listening to the warnings from scientists. In our Missouri River basin, these people deny that the largest reservoir system on the continent was not large enough to handle a 20% higher level of run-off than any previous run-off on record.

While residents of nine states suffered from the flood, Iowa suffered the brunt of damage from the 2011 Missouri River Flood from Sioux City to Hamburg.

Some Iowans refused to learn the lessons and have pushed for the repair of the discredited levee system.

Instead of leading responsibly during this critical time, elected officials have cherry-picked a few budget numbers and trumpeted the claim that only \$6 million was spent this year on flood control and that \$70 million was spent on endangered species. In fact, none of the emergency funding has addressed the endangered species and only 20% of the Corps annual basin budget addresses floodplain connections/habitat/endangered species programming. Twice that amount, 40%, goes to flood control every year. Instead of questioning their denials of climate change and the effects of carbon pollution, some Iowans followed their Missouri neighbors in finding scapegoats instead of learning the precautions basin governments need to take. Instead of calling for reconnecting the river to its floodplain, locals are calling for Super Levees. Under pressure, the Army Corps has ignored its own call for non-structural/landscape responses to the flood even when the Corps saw the success last Spring of their Floodway easement program at Bird's Point, Missouri. Taking out a portion of levee helped save Cairo, Illinois, from the Mississippi and Ohio River flood. This is the first time in the half century since construction that the largest reservoir system in the nation was not able to cope with a record rain event and high snowmelt on the Great Plains. The previous run-off record above Sioux City was 49 million acre feet (maf is a foot of water covering a million acres.) The 2011 Missouri River record of 60 maf eclipsed that old record and overwhelmed the Corps management.

Danger of Dam Failure Drove Corps Decisions

Residents and even the media described the flood as man-made because the Army Corps of Engineers more than doubled the record amount of water it released from the reservoirs. The upper dams and the last dam, Gavins Point (with almost no real flood storage) released 160,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) FOR MORE THAN TWO MONTHS; the previous record release was 70,000 cfs and was for a much shorter time.. Faced with monsoon rains in North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming, the Army Corps worked feverishly all summer long to maintain the integrity of their dams. Daily River Watch bulletins revealed that reservoir levels were close to overtopping the structures.

As a recent independent panel of scientists reported, guarding against failure in dam infrastructure, the Corps had to accept downstream damage. "The panel wants to emphasize that the operators must consider the security of the infrastructure in their decisions. The serious consequences of dam failure require the operators to take precautions such as to evacuate flood waters and increase releases as they did in 2011."

The Fort Calhoun Nuclear Plant was apparently not the only pending river catastrophe keeping Corps engineers awake at night.

While Iowa and the region watched this 2011 disaster unfold during the summer from hell, critical lessons were learned. Besides verifying the predicted results of global climate change, the disaster underscored one of the Sierra Club's goals—a resilient landscape and ecosystem. This lesson was highlighted by comparing the damage at Hamburg, Iowa, with the resilient river channel north of Sioux City. That's right; the segment of river just below Gavins Point dam suffered little from the record flows—the segment that is home to the Missouri National Recreational River. There the channel has not been turned into a nine foot ditch for barges. Experts were amazed at the difference made by the wider channel, side channels, and the functioning floodplain.

Further south at Hamburg, we saw the results of some of the worst engineering on the river. Levees downstream from Hamburg pinched off the river and a great many agricultural acres were smothered. When the barge channel hit capacity, the Missouri widened out to ten miles in some reaches.

The Army Corps fought to save the town by building a couple of temporary levees (at \$25,000 per resident.) Why did the already existing levees make the problem worse? Because the levee system up and down the river is not part of any Corps master plan. Politics and private property dictated the placement of those standing levees.

The Sierra Club's Missouri River Activist Network (a working group for more than a decade (google>sierra missouri river activist network) joined with other environmental organizations in our state and region to lobby against several bills that ignored the lessons of the flood. We were able to sideline a measure that would have transferred \$50 million from the floodplain & habitat-restoring Species Recovery Program to levee repairs. But the "last minute Congress" saw decisions being made by a handful of senators and representatives in conference committee.

Missouri Senator Blunt's anti-environmental riders defunded the two key avenues for designing the river's future—the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study and the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan.

What can Iowa Sierrans do?

Promote public awareness of this complex river issue through programs and letters to the editor.

Iowans should do more than leave this issue in the hands of Congress, the Corps, or federal agencies. No state has suffered more unnecessary flood damage in the last decade than Iowa, but the state is merely trying to put the humpty-dumpty levees and barge channel system back together again.

Write the governor and speak to state representatives and senators. Contact Iowa's Congressional delegation. Tell officials that the longest river in the country needs an up-to-date master plan, not a plan from 1944. Tell them Iowa and Missouri have to cooperate with all states in the basin, not just our immediate neighbors. Urge Governor Branstad to support the studies leading to a Master Plan for the Missouri.

Contact Sierra Club's Missouri River Network chair Bill Griffith for information and support: griffith6@kc.rr.com or Jim Redmond: jim.redmond@briarcliff.edu. Become familiar with Sierra Club policies on the river and their response to the flood of 2011.

Below is a website that will lead you to the Ecosystem Restoration's diagnosis of the river's illnesses. This Purpose and Need Statement is the draft first step of an Environmental Impact Study and Statement. <http://www.moriverrecovery.org/mrrp/?p=136:45:3320297486399452>

Jim Redmond

*Sierra Club stakeholder on the congressionally mandated Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee

Sierra Club Missouri River Policies

The Sierra Club supports the following Missouri River dam and reservoir management positions for minimizing future flood damage while maximizing the river's natural ecosystems.

1. Lower Pool Levels
2. Unbalance the Reservoirs
3. Implement the Spring Rise
4. Reduce Navigation Support
5. Reduce Levee Dependency
6. Promote Buy-Outs and Floodplain Easements
7. Improve Zoning
8. Study Watershed Land Use

Status of Coal Plants in Iowa

By Pam Mackey-Taylor, Energy Chair

In order to solve global warming, a key solution will involve transitioning from coal to wind, solar, and geothermal along with significant efforts in conserving energy and implementing energy efficiency.

In the last several months, several coal-burners made significant announcements about the transition from coal, including

- John Deere Dubuque Works, a farm machinery manufacturing plant in Dubuque, ceased burning coal and stated one of the reasons for that decision was the proposed maximum achievable control technology (MACT) standards for mercury and other hazardous air pollutants.

- Alliant Energy is expected to complete converting its Sutherland Generating Station in Marshalltown from coal to natural gas in April, 2012.

- The Pella Municipal Power Plant announced it would be shuttering its coal-fired power plant in 2012.

- In November, 2011, Alliant Energy switched its the Dubuque Generating Station from coal to natural gas.

These transitions come on the heels of a number of other coal-fired power plants and related projects that have been suspended before they were built or have been retired, including

- In 2004, Dairyland Power Cooperative abandoned plans to build a power plant near Mona.

- A proposed coal-fired ethanol plant for Des Moines was withdrawn by Lincolnway Energy in 2006.

- The Sixth Street Generating Station in Cedar Rapids was shuttered by Alliant Energy after the plant was heavily damaged in a flood in 2008.

- LS Power abandoned plans to build a power plant near Waterloo in 2009.

- Alliant Energy cancelled a new power plant in Marshalltown in 2009.

- A coal heap planned to be built by Southern Coal Handling near Nevada was abandoned in 2009.

- Lincolnway Energy in Nevada, a coal-fired ethanol plant, received a \$1.9 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to assist in the conversion from coal to biomass.

In addition to emitting greenhouse gases, burning coal emits toxic air pollution, such as mercury and particulate matter which exacerbates asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Iowans can breathe easier without the pollution emitted by these power plants.

IOWA CITY AREA GROUP GOES ELECTRONIC

The Iowa City Area Group newsletter is moving to an electronic format. This will save paper and postage and allow you to receive more timely news about our activities. To read the latest edition of the Iowa City Sierran, which is available now, please visit our website: <http://iowa.sierraclub.org/icag>. When each new edition of our group newsletter goes up on our website, we will send you a notification with a link, if you give us your email address. To sign up for this email notification, please send your internet address to: [carsner\(AT\)mchsi.com](mailto:carsner(AT)mchsi.com). If you have questions or comments contact Tom Carsner, Iowa City Area Group Chair at the same address.

The Iowa City Area Group serves Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Keokuk and Washington Counties in East Central Iowa.

Cedar Prairie Group Hikes the Turkey Ridge Wildlife Area

By Jo Ann Finkenbinder, Cedar Prairie Group

The Cedar Prairie Group of the Sierra Club sponsored a public introduction hike to Turkey Ridge Wildlife Area on February 25th. The Black Hawk County Conservation Board is seeking input into the future use of this area and the Cedar Prairie Group has submitted a recommendation.

The tour was guided by Bob Young, a Sierra Club member, and fifteen attended the hike.

Turkey Ridge Wildlife Area is a Black Hawk County Conservation Board management area in the northwest corner

of the county. This 97 acre park provides very impressive scenery and is an invigorating hiking experience. The area includes a small lake, upland forest, and prairie. The park borders the Cedar River on the north.

Cedar Prairie Group will host the following walks and talks this spring:

May 12, Saturday, we will hike Ulrich Park in Cedar Falls on Union Rd. We hope to see the Showy Orchis among other woodland flowers. We will meet at Thunder Ridge Mall on First St. in Cedar Falls, in the parking lot east of the Veridian Credit Union at 1:00 pm. People may meet us at Ulrich Park if they would like, we will arrive at the park at about 1:15. Allow 1-1/2 hours for the hike.

May 20, Sunday, we will walk Wolter Prairie in Butler County. We will meet at 1:30 pm at the same location in Cedar Falls as noted above. Allow 2-2 1/2 hours for the hike.

Bruce Stiles will lead the walks, for more information call Bruce at 319-235-9907.



Turkey Ridge Wildlife Area

Photo by Randy Maas

PRAIRIE

By Andrew Williams

A natural prairie is a kind of habitat — one of many kinds — that represents in the here and now the Grand Plan for a particular piece of land. Many kinds of plants live in a prairie, and many times that many kinds of animals do too, so many in fact that no one can list them all. All their actions and reactions of life, combined, make the prairie what it is, in this place, on this soil, right here. No two wild prairies are alike, and even one small piece of land may have different kinds of prairies on it, as one climbs up from the moist bottomland to the drier slope above, or as one skirts the shoulder of a slope and the quality of the light changes. Though we, quite admirably, sometimes seek to recreate a likeness of a natural prairie, the time it takes for a prairie to mature is so long and the species we employ in the effort so few that all we see is a quick likeness of the real thing, like a reflection in a mirror.

A natural prairie is a piece of the original fabric of the world, the fabric that supports all life, including our own human society. We have acted foolishly by dismantling the prairies for the short-term rewards that provides us. Still today, after all our years of abusive mistreatment, one feels the value of that fabric. It's full of beauty, of color, of tactile stimulation, of fragrance; it's full of puzzles and surprises and mystery. It's different every hour of every day, and no two visits are the same for a visitor with a bit of curiosity and wonder. It changes with day and night, with temperature and season, as wind rises and falls. It refreshes one's spirit with its wildness, wide open to the sky, and suggests to the suggestible that we have a future, still.

Andrew Williams, Naturalist and Conservationist
President, Prairie Biotic Research, Inc.

prairiebioticresearch.org

President, Endow-Bio, Inc. endow-bio.org

*Part of this essay previously appeared in the Missouri Prairie Foundation's "Missouri Prairie Journal", vol. 32, no. 2, p.7, Summer 2011 and is reprinted here with permission of the Missouri Prairie Foundation and the author. The essay also previously appeared on the listserv of the Iowa Native Plant Society.

Create An Environmental Legacy

Bequests have played a key role in the Sierra Club's environmental successes over the years. Planning now may make your gift more meaningful and reduce taxes on your estate. We have many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter. For more information and confidential assistance contact:

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