

Iowa Prairie Network Newsletter Summer 2021

Prairie lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) Photo by Tenlea Turner

Page 1

Why We Do What We Do

Submitted by Michelle Biodrowski, IPN President

Hello all,

I have been struggling with some existential crises that I seem to get on a yearly basis. They include all the regulars - Why am I here? Why do I do what I do? Why am I at the job I'm at? Why do I spend my time volunteering? What could I be doing differently with my life? Etc etc.

I am happy to share that I am on the positive upswing of that emotional low. And I'm also feeling more invigorated to continue the fight for remnant prairie. A big help with that came from a book that I'm reading right now, called *Where The Sky Began*, by John Madson. Here is a quick excerpt from that book that really connected with me and made me want to share it with all of you.

... "Then I turned a corner and saw it, a half mile east of me, spread across two low hillsides that slope down into a little creek lined with ash and box-elder.

My first impression of Sheeder Prairie was of badly worn and weathered canvas, somewhat ragged and patched, and bleached into soft grays, off-whites, and faded duns. It was entirely different in tone and texture from anything else in that landscape, with an indefinable shaggy, fierce look that drew ones eye from the tame lands around it. From any angle it occupied stage center, fixing attention with that strange magnetic quality that can always be felt but never explained, that sure quality of wildness. The surrounding fields lay about like stolid domestic animals, passive and bland, awaiting the pleasure of their masters. The little prairie crouched on its hillsides, still its own master in a wholly mastered land, aloof and brooding and ordered by no commands save those of the sun and rain. Once, long ago, I saw a buffalo bull in a small herd of domestic cows. This was the same. There was the same effect of surprise, and then the sharp sense of contrast between a wild original and its spiritless descendants."

I hope that this helps to remind you why you spend your free time volunteering with Iowa Prairie Network. And why our mission is to spread love and awareness of remnant prairies, fight to protect them, and keep them in existence.

Thank you for your past, present, and future help!



IPN Officers

Michelle Biodrowski, President
Jacob Pitzenberger, Vice President
Ed Sibley, Treasurer
Laura Leben, Interim Secretary

Committees

Communications

Chair: Ben Maas
Webmaster: Cory Pritchard
Newsletter Editor: Tenlea Turner

Finance

Chair: Cait Caughey

Membership

Chair: Leesa McNeil

Marketing

Chair: Jacob Pitzenberger

There's still time to enjoy the **Compelling Ground: Landscapes, Environments, and Peoples of Iowa** exhibition at Brunnier Art Museum on the Iowa State University campus. The exhibition runs **through July 23, 2021** and is open Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free with a recommended donation of \$8.

Getting to Know You

Pete Eyheralde first learned about tallgrass prairies in 1991 from Daryl Smith and Laura Jackson as an undergrad at UNI. Since then, he's been actively involved in prairie restoration and preservation through employment with the Iowa DNR, the Mahaska County Conservation Board, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the US Army Corps of Engineers, as well as on his farms in Monroe and Lucas counties. In 2015 he received a PhD from Iowa State University in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, where his dissertation research focused on bison as seed dispersal agents in tallgrass prairie ecosystems. Pete currently teaches ecology courses and conducts research in the Biology Department at William Penn University in Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Get to know all of the IPN Board members on our website www.iowaprairienetwork.org



Prairie Highlight

Hilltop woodland opening, Marion County, IA - Photo by Tenlea Turner

Page 2

Yet Another Threat to Iowa's Prairie Remnants

Submitted by Peter Eyheralde - Associate Professor of Biology at William Penn University

We are all aware of the destruction of Iowa's tallgrass prairie that occurred in the 19th century. Our once vast grasslands were converted to a patchwork of agricultural fields. Now it appears that even some of our tiniest patches of remaining tallgrass prairie, having survived the last two centuries tucked away out of sight, are under threat from the plow. This time not from farmers, but deer hunters.

Food plots are all the rage among deer hunters these days. Internet hunting sites, outdoor TV shows, or hunting advertisements are filled with advice for aspiring deer hunters encouraging them to create their own whitetail paradise by planting crops to hang a tree stand over. And where should you place these "mini-food plots" or "poor-man's plots" as they're called? - the small patches of "weeds" in the hilltop forest openings on your hunting lease.

Wildlife biologists would call these "weedy" sunlit openings remnants of tallgrass prairie or oak savanna communities. Yet deer hunters across Iowa are being encouraged (with the backing of corporate sponsors ready to sell equipment and seed) to spray down these grassy openings with herbicide and plow them under to create favorable planting conditions for turnips, brassicas, soybeans, or some other deer forage.

Often these recommendations are touted as "good for conservation." Now there are those that would argue we have plenty of reconstructed prairies for grassland wildlife out there in county parks and state wildlife areas. However, for anyone that has spent much time in remnant prairies you know these areas are masterpieces of biodiversity, while most of our attempts at prairie reconstruction resemble finger paintings by comparison.

The preservation of these last prairie fragments can coincide easily with deer hunting, but education is the key. Hunters are not intentionally stamping out the last of our native grassland communities, just as the early pioneers had no notion of the vast ecological changes they wrought by their daily toils. If hunters were made aware of the biological, genetic, even intrinsic value of these tiny prairie remnants, then perhaps that big patch of autumn olive, tatarian honeysuckle, multiflora rose, or some other invasive in their forest hunting grounds might seem a better place for creating a new food plot.

We can all help to quell the further destruction our prairie remnants by sharing this information with others, whether it is person-to-person or through outreach programs, hunter education classes, county fairs, or other conversation events. It's important to get the word out now, or like the vast prairies that fell to the plow in the 19th century, these remaining pieces will be gone in a generation.

IPN Board of Directors

Region 1

Ben Maas
Tabitha Panas

Region 2

Vacant

Sarah Nizzi

Region 3

Tim Youngquist
Justin Meissen

Region 4

Vacant

Vacant

Region 5

Lance Brisbois
Cait Caughey

Region 6

Tenlea Turner
Jacob Pitzenberger

Region 7

Pam White
Ray Hamilton

At Large

Jon Judson
Michelle Biodrowski
Corinne Bulat
Laura Leben
Derek Miner
Pete Eyheralde

Find a Prairie

The IPN website now lists public prairies in all 99 Iowa counties.
<https://www.iowaprairienetwork.org/find-a-prairie>

Join our Board or become a Committee Member

We are looking for individuals who are passionate about our endangered prairie ecosystem to join us in our mission! Join our Board of Directors or add your special talent to a committee (Communications, Finance, Marketing, or Membership).

Contact Michelle Biodrowski (biodrowski13@gmail.com)



"Men and nature must work hand in hand. The throwing out of balance of the resources of nature throws out of balance also the lives of men." ~Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to Congress on the Use of Our National Resources, Jan. 24, 1935

Featured IPN Connection

IPN works with a multitude of agencies and organizations to support us in our mission. We thank them for their support.



"The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."



Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Prairie City, IA

Membership Corner

IPN has nearly 200 members that share an enthusiasm for prairies! Consider joining today!

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____

Email: _____

Phone (optional): _____ Circle one: home - work - cell

Membership Levels & Dues (check one):

- ☐ Student **Free** - please provide a valid school email address or ID
☐ Intern \$ 10 ☐ Family \$ 30
☐ Individual \$ 20 ☐ Organizations.....\$100

Newsletter Options (check one):

- ☐ Prefer to receive newsletters via e-mail at the address listed above \$0
☐ Prefer to receive printed newsletters via mail add \$5

IPN is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization

Please make checks payable to:

Iowa Prairie Network

c/o Edward M. Sibley, Treas. 4015 Sergeant Road, Sioux City, IA 51106

The membership form can also be downloaded from our website – click "Join Us"

You can join online with PayPal

Don't forget to **RENEW** your membership! www.iowaprairienetwork.org. **Thank you!**

The Iowa Prairie Network is a grass-roots, volunteer organization that is dedicated to the preservation of Iowa's prairie heritage. IPN was formed in 1990 by Iowans concerned that our prairie heritage was disappearing. People needed an organization that would bring those who know about prairie together with those who wanted to learn, to form a network of advocacy for Iowa's natural heritage.

Summer 2021 Events

Please be advised: Scheduling of events is ever-changing due to Coronavirus. Check the IPN Calendar for continued updates. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Upcoming Events – check the IPN Calendar for details, updates and more events!
www.iowaprairienetwork.org

June	5-6	Loess Hills Prairie Seminar – Virtual event with tentative outdoor events
July	26-29	Midwest Environmental Education Conference – Luther College, Decorah, IA
	31	Iowa Prairie Conference July 31 – Aug 1 – Virtual Presentations and state-wide prairie field trips
August	7-28	Okoboji Blue Water Festival – Preservation Plaza Arnolds, Park, IA INPS Field trip to Wolters Prairie Preserve in Butler County

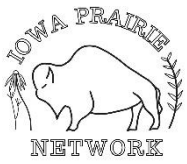
2021 Iowa Prairie Conference – July 31-Aug 1

Check the IPN Calendar for details.

Did you miss the IPN 2021 Winter Meeting? View it now on our website. www.iowaprairienetwork.org



Rosinweed (*Silphium integrifolium*)
Photo by Jacob Pitzenberger



Iowa Prairie Network, Inc.
4015 Sergeant Rd.
Sioux City, IA 51106-4013
iowaprairienetworkorg@gmail.com
www.iowaprairienetwork.org

IPN's Mission: To Learn About, Teach About, Enjoy, and Protect Iowa's Prairie Heritage

SUMMER 2021

Inside this issue:

- Why We Do What We Do
- Getting to Know You p 1
- Prairie Highlight: Yet Another Threat to Iowa's Prairie Remnants
- IPN Board Members
- Join Our Board or Become a Committee Member p 2
- Featured IPN Connection
- Membership Corner
- 2021 Summer Events p 3

