

The Prairie Dog

Newsletter of the Native Prairies Association of Texas

2004 Vol. 17, No. 3



Book Review

Prairie: A North American Guide

By Suzanne Winckler Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004. 132 pp. \$16.95.

Review by William J. Scheick

Washington Irving, the famous author of "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," adventurously journeyed through Oklahoma in 1832. Recording his experiences there in *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), he left little doubt of his ambivalent reaction. He was, on the one hand, impressed by the beauty of wind-ruffled prairie grass looking like undulating ocean water — an emblem of freedom, he thought. On the other hand, this same "vast tract of uninhabited land" struck him as a disturbing "wilderness ... [of] primeval silence and solitude." "There is," Irving reported, "something inexpressibly lonely in the solitude of the prairies" so "far beyond the bounds of human habitation." People in Irving's time favored agricultural over wild landscapes, domesticated eastern civilization over untamed western nature.

Of the Oklahoma grasslands which Irving fretted over, less than 30% remains today. This drastic attrition is, in fact, the sorry state of all the prairies that once ranged from southern Canada to Mexico. If this loss might have satisfied Irving's early 19th-century sensibility, it disheartens Suzanne Winckler. Texas-born, Ms. Winckler has spent ten years raising funds for prairie conservation and restoration projects. She now hopes her handy new book, *Prairie: A North American Guide*, will encourage people to discover the beauty of what remains of our native grasslands and will, as well, recruit readers to the cause of conserving and restoring our native grasslands.

Her slim paperback is neither a picture book nor a botanical manual. It is a useful travel guide with maps, driving directions and brief region data relating to over 300 grassland fragments. Arranged by Canadian provinces and American states, her guide provides the name of each prairie remnant, its size, a contact telephone number, and a two-paragraph description. The section on Texas, for example, lists 28 locations suitably subdivided under such regions as the high plains, the cross timbers, the Edwards plateau and the Texas gulf, among others. Ms. Winckler indicates that the desert grasslands of far west Texas deserve more attention than her first-hand knowledge permitted on this occasion.

The prairies are a study in subtleties. They come in tall, mixed and short grasses — blankets of color majestically changing with the seasons. Varieties of native grass tend to be determined by soil and availability of water. Generally, as a result, prairie grasses decrease in height as they range westward, where less water and its evaporative loss restrict their size. NPSOT readers wishing to witness something of the subtle artistry of the grasslands that once widely covered the mid-section of our continent will be grateful for Ms. Winckler's labor of love in *Prairie: A North American Guide*.

William J. Scheick is a former NPSOT vice-president and member of the Central Texas Horticulture Council.

**WHO WE ARE AND
WHAT WE DO**

NPAT's purpose is to promote conservation of Texas prairies. We are interested laypeople and professionals. Our members join:

- to learn how to recognize prairies
- to encourage conservation of prairies
- to restore and manage prairies
- to study and visit prairies
- to meet other people who love prairies!

The Prairie Dog is published quarterly. Submit articles to
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About this Newsletter

NPAT is in need of a permanent newsletter editor. Contact Evelyn Merz elmerz@hal-pc.org to volunteer for the position.

Please submit articles and reports to DKnowlesPE@aol.com. Send articles for the 4th 2004 issue by November 15. Photos, field trip and work project reports and prairie status reports welcomed.

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GEORGIA PRAKASH**

**NOTE from Georgia Prakash:
We will send NPAT event
updates by e-mail to
members. If you did not write
your e-mail address on the
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wish to receive updates, or
if your e-mail address has
changed, please send it to
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Joe Williams of Dallas
Larry Wisdom of Blooming Grove
Steve Wood of Cypress
E.M. Woodrey of Burleson

Prairie Work Projects

NPAT Prairies are: **Maddin Prairie** - 1,114 acres one hour north of San Angelo, 15 minutes southeast of Colorado City, **Riesel Prairie** - 5 beautiful tallgrass prairie acres near Riesel, Texas southeast of Waco in Falls County, and **Peters Prairie** - 4 beautiful tallgrass prairie acres west of Greenville (east of Dallas) in Hunt County. Want to adopt a Prairie? **Call John Pickett at 254-897-3646, jdpick@charter.net for more information.** Ask to be notified of future prairie restoration projects. *What kind of activities restore prairies?* Restoration activities may include invasives removal (carefully timed mowing, burning, selective poisoning, grubbing, hand weeding), increasing biodiversity (collecting seeds & plants, planting), watering freshly planted prairie plants, collecting data, and more. Your presence is needed!

USDA TO ASSESS ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

In-depth studies to be conducted in 20 watersheds

On July 22, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced a five-year effort to study the collective environmental benefits of government conservation programs on agricultural land.

Through the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) the Department of Agriculture will study the environmental benefits of conservation practices implemented through 2002 Farm Bill programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Security Program and Conservation Technical Assistance.

CEAP is composed of two basic parts: a nationwide assessment of conservation benefits and more in-depth studies of these benefits in 20 selected watersheds. The national assessment will be reported annually starting in 2005. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) National Resources Inventory will be used as the sampling basis for estimating the environmental benefits of conservation practices, as well as farmer surveys and existing USDA computer models.

In-depth studies within eight special-emphasis and 12 benchmark watersheds will occur simultaneously with the national assessment and other on-going watershed research efforts. NRCS selected the special-emphasis watersheds to address specific concerns such as manure management on animal feeding operations, water use on irrigated cropland, drainage management, wildlife habitat and riparian restoration. These watershed studies also should help develop performance measures for estimating soil quality, water quality and wildlife habitat benefits for specific conservation practices.

Special Emphasis:

Watershed / Location / Primary Conservation Issues

Choptank River - *Maryland* Poultry manure management

Maumee River- *Upper Tiffin River Michigan* Dairy manure management and subsurface drainage

Maumee River- *Upper Auglaize River Ohio* Subsurface drainage

Upper Snake Rock Creek - *Idaho* Irrigation management

Cheney Lake - *Kansas* Wildlife habitat and beef cattle manure management

Upper Klamath Lakes - *Oregon* Irrigation management

North Bosque River - *Texas* Dairy manure management and reservoir water quality

Stemple Creek - *California* Dairy manure management and riparian restoration

USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has been conducting research on most of the 12 benchmark watersheds for a considerable period of time and anticipates that watershed-scale research and assessments will be continued over many years.

Benchmark:

Watershed / Location / Primary Conservation Issues

Beasley Lake *Mississippi* Fertilizer management, pesticide management, wildlife habitat, and riparian restoration

Goodwin Creek *Mississippi* Tillage management, wildlife habitat, and riparian restoration

Little River *Georgia* Tillage management, pesticide management, and riparian restoration

Mark Twain Reservoir *Missouri* Fertilizer management, pesticide management, tillage management, reservoir water quality and surface drainage

South Fork *Iowa River Iowa* Management of Fertilizer, swine manure, tillage and pesticides

USDA TO ASSESS ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, Continued from page 4:

Watershed / Location / Primary Conservation Issues

St. Joseph River *Indiana* Fertilizer management, pesticide management, tillage management, reservoir water quality and subsurface drainage

Town Brook *New York* Dairy manure management, streambank fencing, and reservoir water quality

Upper Big Walnut Creek *Ohio* Fertilizer management, pesticide management, reservoir water quality and subsurface drainage

Upper Leon River *Texas* Dairy manure management and reservoir water quality

Upper Washita River *Oklahoma* Fertilizer management, irrigation management and rangeland health

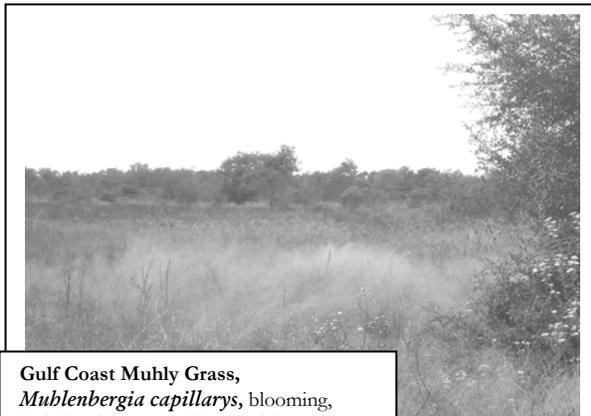
Walnut Creek *Iowa* Fertilizer management, pesticide management and tillage management

Yalobusha River *Mississippi* Wildlife habitat and riparian restoration

In addition, the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service in April 2004 issued a notice to accept applications for competitive grants for additional CEAP watershed studies.

Additional information about CEAP can be obtained at www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap.

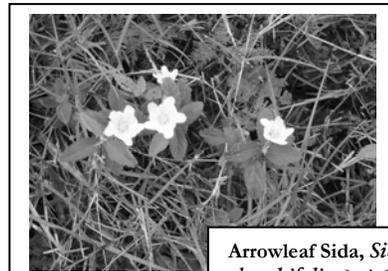
Suzy Friedman, Center for Conservation Incentives at Environmental Defense
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Gulf Coast Muhly Grass,
Muhlenbergia capillaris, blooming,
Jack Road Preserve, Katy Prairie
Conservancy property, Oct. 2004, lwk



Bracted Sida, *Sida ciliata*, Jack
Road Preserve, Katy Prairie
Conservancy property, Oct. 2004,
lwk



Arrowleaf Sida, *Sida
rhombifolia*, Jack Road Preserve,
Katy Prairie Conservancy
property, Oct. 2004, lwk



Buckeye, *Junonia coenia*, on Late-
Flowering Boneset, *Eupatorium
serotinum*, Jack Road Preserve, Katy
Prairie Conservancy property, Oct.
2004, lwk

Maintenance of a Small Prairie:

(Correspondence between Rick Pratt and Lee Stone of NPAT)

Question: How can a small (.66 ac) plot of native dune prairie in Port Aransas be managed? It can't be burned or grazed. Would periodic mowing serve the same management function? If so, what time of the year and how often? What other information is available for managing small prairies?

Response from Lee Stone: Thanks for writing and asking about the best care for your little prairie. I was visiting Padre Island recently and noticed lots of small isolated lots of prairie there. If yours is similar to those, I don't think you need to do much at all, although it is so tempting to.

REMOVAL OF WOODIES: First consideration - invasion by woody trees and shrubs. Have you any trees or shrubs that have moved into the prairie? There are a few small-growing trees that could be compatible, but those that will mature into shade trees should be cut down and the cut surface of the stump painted with Round-up. Do the same with shrubbery which spreads.

GARDEN NOT LAWN: Think of your glorious .66 acre prairie as an exceptionally fine perennial garden. You wouldn't mow a garden, you'd just spend time in it, tidying it up through the seasons. .66 acre is a small enough total area that you may want to consider simply hand-clipping the rowdiest of the plants, and removing flower heads that seem unattractive. Gardeners call this "dead-heading." Clip out any annuals which are brown and dead. You can use this time to collect seeds from plants you particularly admire and move them to other parts of your prairie, or even perhaps into a tame garden around your home. Also, you will get to know your prairie even more intimately.

MOWING: Remember a small prairie isn't not really a lawn - it's a garden. Mowing will cut down plants which have not yet flowered, especially those which naturally flower in the fall. Some do not recover well from mowing. Mowing interferes with the ability of the prairie to hold its own against invasion by non-natives. Mowing can be used, BUT keep in mind that every disturbance left by a mower wheel that digs into the sand will provide an ideal surface for seeds to grow in. If there are weedy plants such as Johnsongrass around anyway, they will manage to find those breaks in the surface crust and use them. Also, if there is bermuda grass growing up against the edges of your prairie, mowing that edge will give the bermuda grass a giant opportunity to move inward. Bermuda grass thrives on mowing. Prairies don't.

WHEN TO MOW IF YOU FEEL YOU MUST: Can you set the mower to 4" to 6"? Any lower is harsh/harmful. Mowing once every 3 to 5 years is OK. Mowing once a year is just downright harsh on some of the plants. Also, keep in mind that some wildflowers require 2 years growth before they can mature and flower. Mowing annually or even biennially will remove these plants from your garden plant list.

TO ENCOURAGE ANNUAL WILDFLOWERS -- A mowing in the late fall can encourage annual wildflowers which grow throughout the winter as rosettes, close to the ground. Mowing gives them more sunlight.

TO ENCOURAGE THE GRASSES -- If you wish to encourage the grasses, mow in the late winter. Cutting the thatch at that time allows more sunlight to reach the ground and that encourages the grasses to wake up and green up a bit earlier. Hope this helps with your management planning. I wish you and your prairie the best of luck and many pleasant mornings and evenings together!

Member News and Reports:

Report from Maddin:

Jim Varnum and **John Pickett** did some work in the seed bank and they were pleased to see the overall condition at Maddin. John reports that earlier seedlings, recent rains and the brush removal program have done their jobs and the grassland is looking very nice. There is a good, healthy survival rate in the seed bank. The quail population looks good, in Jim and John's opinion. They didn't get a chance to talk to Dalton nor could they see where the brush removal is currently taking place but they could see where mesquite had been removed. John reported that James Alderson and Dalton are finalizing a quail hunting lease agreement, and that James has done an excellent job. We are fortunate to have his leadership and energy on the Maddin project. Dalton and NPAT helpers deserve a round of applause too!

Prairie Restoration

Bram McClelland has a 100 acre prairie restoration project underway. We hope to have more information about this restoration in the next Prairie Dog.

Joe Williams, a long time member of NPAT, hopes to reseed and/or re-establish native prairie on part of his property in Hamilton County. We hope to have some information on volunteer field days in the next Prairie Dog.

Have you restored (or preserved) or are you hoping to restore a prairie on your property? Please let us know- we would like to hear about your progress and things that you've learned from your prairie.

NATIVE PRAIRIES LIST

Native Prairies Association of Texas is building an inventory of native prairies; NPAT or other preservation organizations' holdings or easements in Texas. Jim Varnum has started a list of Native Prairies in the DFW Metroplex. Efforts are ongoing to list prairies, and to establish listing criteria. Among other things, an inventory of native and restored prairies could be used for planning alternative routes for linear projects, so as to minimize the chance of traversing valuable habitat.

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Katy Prairie Conservancy

(from their website, <http://www.katyprairie.org/>)

The Katy Prairie Conservancy recently purchased a majority interest in the Warren Ranch, one of the largest contiguous areas of land still in agriculture on the Katy Prairie. By doing so, KPC not only protects 6,478 acres permanently but also in the long-term will provide access for wildlife viewing, hiking, and other recreational activities. The southern end of Warren Ranch's follows Cypress Creek, offering habitat for perching birds and rare neotropical migrants such as Swainson's and Golden-winged Warblers that fly over the Katy Prairie during the spring migration. Within the ranch's northern boundary is Warren Lake, long known to wildlife viewing enthusiasts as a major winter roosting and resting spot for many varieties of ducks, including Blue- and Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck, as well as for Snow, Canada, and Ross's Geese and Bald Eagles. Wood Stork visit the lake in summer, and flocks of American White Pelican can be seen there as well. The Cypress Creek/Katy Prairie Christmas Bird Count will now have access to the property that formerly could be censused only from public roads, allowing observation of numerous hawks, Crested Caracara, Sedge Wren, Sprague's Pipit, and many more. See article page 8.

6,500 ACRES KEPT FROM DEVELOPERS

Katy Conservancy buys stake in ranch

By NANCY SARNOFF

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<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/metropolitan/2644302>

Katy Prairie Conservancy, Continued on Page 9

Katy Prairie Conservancy, Continued from Page 8

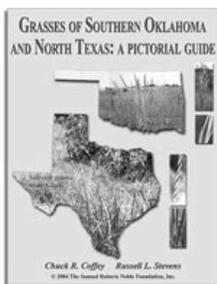
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Mexican Hat, *ratibida columnifera*

PUBLICATIONS

The Noble Publication ***Grasses of Southern Oklahoma and North Texas: A Pictorial Guide*** has more than 100 full-color pages.



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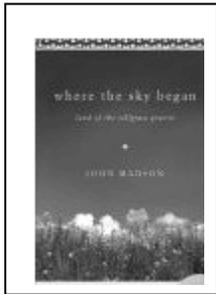
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Include your shipping information and a daytime phone number with mail-in orders. Please allow three to four weeks for delivery.

KNOW YOUR GRASSES, Item number B-182, is available online at <http://tcebookstore.org>. Grasses are one of Texas' most valuable natural resources. Each grass is beautifully illustrated and carefully described, with information about the areas of the state in which it can be found. (100 pages, 100 illustrations, 1 map)

Publication L-5456, "**Restoring Native Grasslands**" is available at the Texas Cooperative Extension website. This publication explains how to carry out native grassland restoration By: K. Brian Hays , Matthew Wagner , Fred Smeins and Neal Wilkins, Published May 24, 2004, and available for a price of \$2.25.

Color photos of grasses can be found at <http://www.noble.org/Ag/Forage/KnowYourGrasses.pdf>



Where the Sky Began: Land of the Tallgrass Prairie (Bur Oak Book) by John Madson, Dycie Madson

Available at Amazon.com:

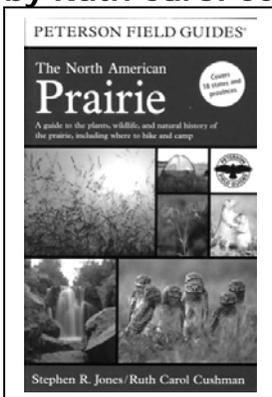
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0877458618/ref=pd_bxgy_img_2/102-9788861-3904118?v=glance&s=books

Iowa native John Madson (1923–1995) wrote about the natural history and resource conservation of rivers, prairies, plains, and deserts. His work has been extensively published in periodicals such as Audubon, Smithsonian, and National Geographic, among many others. His books include Up on the River, Out Home, Stories from Under the Sky, and Tallgrass Prairie.

Book Description, **Where the Sky Began: Land of the Tallgrass Prairie:**

"It was a flowing emerald in spring and summer when the boundless winds ran across it, a tawny ocean under the winds of autumn, and a stark and painful emptiness when the great long winds drove in from the northwest. It was Beulahland for many; Gehenna for some. It was the tall prairie."—from the prologue Originally published in 1982, *Where the Sky Began*, John Madson's landmark publication, introduced readers across the nation to the wonders of the tallgrass prairie, sparking the current interest in prairie restoration. Now back in print, this classic tome will serve as inspiration to those just learning about the heartland's native landscape and rekindle the passion of longtime prairie enthusiasts.

Peterson Field Guides: The North American Prairie (Peterson Field Guide Series)
by Ruth Carol Cushman and Stephen R. Jones



Book Description

The North American prairie extends across eighteen states and provinces in the heartland of the United States and Canada, and many prairie preserves are within easy driving distance of large cities. This new field guide provides detailed profiles of 48 major North American prairie preserves and capsule descriptions of 120 smaller preserves. Each preserve profile includes practical information on what times of year to visit, how to get there, where to go hiking and camping--and even boating. Each profile also covers weather conditions and wildlife of special interest, in addition to the flora, fauna, and natural history of

the preserve. More than 250 stunning color photos illustrate everything from scarab dung beetles and orchids to bison wallows and hailstorms.

Native Prairies Association of Texas 2004 – 2005 Calendar of Events

Notes: For additional information please e-mail Jim Varnum at jevvarnum@aol.com. Please send notices of events of interest to prairie enthusiasts.

Date	Event	Location	Remarks
10/14-17	NPSOT Fall Symposium	Longview, TX	www.npsot.org
10/16	Fall Prairie Tour led by Jim & Stephanie Varnum	Clymer Meadow and other locations	
10/16	Hill County Landowner Workshop	Barton Creek Habitat Preserve	
10/28-31	Land Trust Alliance Rally.	Providence, RI	http://www.lta.org
10/30	HRM of Texas – Field Day	Near Waco, TX	
2005			
1/15-16/2005	NPAT board meeting #1 and retreat.	McKinney Roughs --- tentative	
2/5-11/2005	SRM 58th Annual Meeting: Rangeland Trails under the lone Star	Fort Worth, TX.	http://www.rangelands.org/texas2005/
2/25-26/2005	Texas Land Trust Council – Statewide Conference	Marriott Austin S. 4416 IH-35, Austin, TX	512-389-4779 or carolyn.vogel@tpwd.state.tx.us
2/26/05	HRM of Texas – Annual Conference	Austin, TX	Peggy Cole Jones delphic@earthlink.net
	NPAT board meeting #2		
	NPAT board meeting #3		
	NPAT board meeting #4		
	NPAT biennial conference and workshops		
10/14-17/2005	Land Trust Alliance Rally	Madison, WI	

2004 Unscheduled Events

Williams Prairie conservation easement survey
Workshop – restoration techniques

Illinois **bundleflower**



(*Desmanthus illinoensis*)

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Native Prairies Association of Texas

MEMBERSHIP AND INFORMATION FORM

Use this form to request information or to join NPAT. If you are joining, please mail a check to:

The Native Prairies Association of Texas
P.O. Box 210
Georgetown TX 78627-0210

Membership categories are: \$350 Life, \$35 Group, \$30 Family, \$20 Individual, \$10 Student.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home/Office Phone _____ E-mail Address: _____

I'm particularly interested in prairies because: _____

Life Memberships are put into the NPAT Endowment Fund. Please consider adding an extra \$5 or \$10 to your membership dues. It really helps us out! <http://www.texasprairie.org>

Native Prairies Association of Texas
P.O. Box 210
Georgetown, Texas 78627
<http://www.texasprairie.org>

Table of Contents

<i>Book Review, Prairie A N. Am. Guide.....</i>	1
NPAT Information & Contacts.....	2
Send E-mail addresses to Georgia Prakash	2
New and Renewed Members.....	3
Prairie Work Projects.....	3
USDA to Assess Envir. Benefits of Cons. Prgrms...4	
Dialogue on Maintenance of a Small Prairie.....	6
Member News and Reports, Katy Prairie.....	7
6,500 Prairie Acres Kept from Developers.....	8
Publications.....	9
NPAT 2004-2005 Calendar of Events.....	11
Membership Form.....	12

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Association of Texas and help
our Texas prairie conservation
programs.

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