



The  
Prairie  
Enthusiasts 

# The PRAIRIE PROMOTER

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*Grassroots Conservation at Work*

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# 2015 TPE Annual Conference

*By Scott Fulton*

The 2015 TPE Annual Prairie Conference and Banquet was held at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point campus on March 21. The theme of this year’s conference, hosted by the Prairie Sands Chapter, was “Connections”, based on a quote by John Muir – “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the Universe”.

The conference program opened with a world premier showing of a nearly completed new video to be called “Prairie Enthusiasm”, which features TPE members talking about managing, learning about and protecting prairies and oak savannas. The video project was sponsored by TPE under the leadership of Karen Agee, Scott Fulton, Gary Eldred and Mark Leach, and was filmed and edited by Joe Maurer. The final product will soon be available on the TPE website and for public showings, and is being considered for airing on public television.

The program included a very diverse range of talks. Highlights included a fascinating talk by Marcie O’Connor on her work studying the species on the property she and her husband Mike have been restoring in western Wisconsin, with a particular emphasis on moths. Mike later showed an amazing video and demonstration of the use of drones as a land management tool. Concurrent sessions included a wide range of talks on insect and plant-insect relationships, the

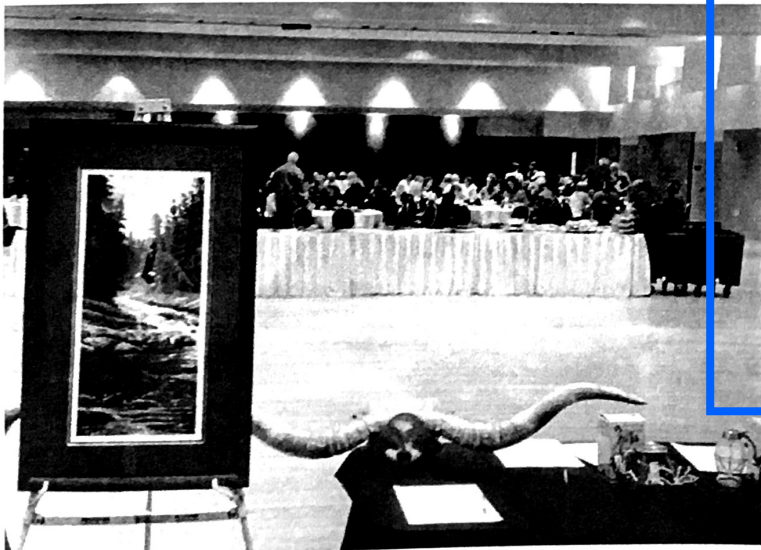
history of oak savannas and of the Greene Prairie restoration at the University of Wisconsin – Madison arboretum. The formal program concluded with a very lively and informative panel discussion on oak savanna restoration, which provoked a great deal of audience comment and response.

As usual, the conference included the popular silent auction and raffle (overseen by Evanne Hunt), with the proceeds going to support chapter activities. After a social mixer, the conference concluded with a wonderful banquet. The dinner speaker was Heather Holm, author of *Pollinators of Native Plants*, who spoke on “Native Bees and Predatory Wasps of Prairie Ecosystems.”

Many, many thanks to the TPE Prairie Sands Chapter for planning and directing all of the aspects of the conference program and banquet. The Conference Chairs were Shelley Hamel, Karen Wollenburg and Jean Clark. Other key volunteers from the Chapter included Neil Diboll, Mary ‘Ray’ Goehring, David Hamel, Fred Wollenburg, Betsy Kerlin, Charlie Church, Laurel Bennet, John Shillingshaw, Cathy Franks, Joan Voigt and Nancy Katzbeck. Sean Piette and Lucas Joers from UW-Stevens Point also volunteered to help with the conference. Thanks also go to the TPE staff members Chris Kirkpatrick, Joe Rising and Jerry Pedretti for helping with arrangements.



Mike: drone demo



*Photos by Joe Rising & Evanne Hunt*