

# Iowa Prairie Network Newsletter

## Summer 2017



Coral hairstreak on butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) Photo by Tenlea Turner

## Iowa Prairie Conference – **JULY 14-15, 2017**

Source: [goldenhillsrcd.org](http://goldenhillsrcd.org)

The **2017 Iowa Prairie Conference** is right around the corner. This year it will be held at **Iowa Western Community College** in **Council Bluffs, IA July 14 & 15**. The conference will focus on prairie protection, restoration and reconstruction in the central and southern Loess Hills.

Friday morning's keynote will be John Price, an author, Creative Writing professor, and Council Bluffs resident. Steve Chaplin with The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota, who helped write the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, will provide Saturday's keynote. He will discuss the prairie plan and inspire Iowans to develop a similar plan. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, "The Prairie Conservation Plan focuses efforts on grassland and wetland, and demonstrates unprecedented cooperation between federal agencies, state agencies and the state's most active conservation organizations. The plan identifies core conservation areas and creates a vision of a connected landscape from Canada to Iowa."

Breakout sessions will include topics such as prescribed fire, invertebrates, invasive species, pollinators, landowner options for prairie protection, restoration, and reconstruction, and more. The conference will highlight many of the great projects that have taken place and continue to progress in the Loess Hills. The most successful projects have involved diverse partnerships with public and private individuals and agencies. Grassroots approaches led by local people instead of hierarchical bureaucracies have been most effective and can provide excellent models to emulate elsewhere. Conference attendees will be encouraged to think outside the box to develop solutions for prairie issues where they live and work, and will leave inspired by the stories they hear.

Attendees will have the opportunity to do two of three field trips. One will focus on prairies within and near urban areas. Representatives from Sioux City and Council Bluffs, the largest cities in the Loess Hills, will teach about lessons learned from their prairie projects. Another field trip will head north to county- and state-owned lands in Harrison and Pottawattamie counties. A third trip will explore prairies in the southern Loess Hills, including public and private lands projects.

The Iowa Prairie Conference is a biennial event for prairie practitioners and enthusiasts to meet and learn about all the great things happening across the state. The 2015 conference was held at the Tallgrass Prairie Center in Cedar Falls. For information about the 2015 conference, including videos of presentations visit [www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org/2015-prairie-conference](http://www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org/2015-prairie-conference).

The conference is **open to the public**, but **pre-registration is required**. Registration costs \$80 and includes five meals. A discounted rate of \$60 is available for students, and the **Iowa Prairie Network is offering scholarships for students to attend the conference** - contact Mark Wilson at 515-412-7130 or [iowaprairienetworkorg@gmail.com](mailto:iowaprairienetworkorg@gmail.com) to apply.

**Register today** at [www.goldenhillsrcd.org/prairie-conference.html](http://www.goldenhillsrcd.org/prairie-conference.html) - **prices will increase after June 15th if space is still available**. Contact Lance Brisbois at [lance@goldenhillsrcd.org](mailto:lance@goldenhillsrcd.org) / 712-482-3029 with any questions.

"I attended my first Iowa Prairie Conference in 2009 as an intern with INHF while attending UNI. As a young undergrad, attending the conference was an eye-opening adventure into a much broader understanding of the conservation movement in Iowa. That experience, among others that summer, has provided me with the energy and vision that has led me along my career path in conservation to date. I highly encourage any students and interns to take advantage of the scholarships offered by the Iowa Prairie Network to attend this conference for free!" **Mark Wilson, Iowa Program Manager, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa; President, IPN**

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Pictured: 2015 Iowa Prairie Conference field trip to the Prairie Power Project research sites in Black Hawk County

# Prairie Highlight

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

Photo by Tenlea Turner

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## WHAT LEADS TO SUCCESS WHEN PLANTING PRAIRIES FROM SCRATCH?

**INFORMATION IS POWER IN GETTING FROM SEEDS TO SUCCESSFUL PRAIRIE...EVERY TIME!**

Authors: Pauline Drobney, Amanda McColpin, and Melinda Knutson. Originally published on DNRCP

Science Support Digest at [www.fws.gov/Midwest/Planning/r3ssd/main.html](http://www.fws.gov/Midwest/Planning/r3ssd/main.html)

**In a Nutshell** Learning how to consistently plant a diverse prairie that establishes quickly, has minimal weed pressure, and remains in good condition is not about following the “right” formula. Instead, it is about sharing the results of many methods, conditions, and patterns in order to quickly learn the most effective and efficient process. This is the goal of the Prairie Reconstruction Initiative.

**Why Is This Important?** The rich and diverse tallgrass prairie that dominated the midsection of North America is essentially a thing of the past, relegated mostly to isolated remnants. The need to rebuild a semblance of that former grassland landscape now dominates many conservation efforts.

Unfortunately, planted prairie can range from highly diverse, functional prairies to disappointingly weedy places with few native species. The question is why? The process of prairie reconstruction, or planting prairies “from scratch” where they no longer exist, is necessary but costly, and we need to learn how to do it right the first time, every time.

**What Happened and What Did We Learn?** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is not alone in facing this dilemma. More than 17 conservation organizations have joined forces in a group called the Prairie Reconstruction Initiative (PRI), seeking the best ways to plant prairies from scratch. The group is led by the Prairie Reconstruction Advisory Team (PRIAT) that coordinates activities focusing on specific pieces of the puzzle. Some of the main PRIAT projects include:

**Field Days** – Field days allow attendees to immerse themselves in reconstructed grasslands and engage in animated discussion and problem solving while experiencing the results of a variety of management techniques firsthand. Past field days have focused on topics such as highly diverse reconstructions, sites that failed to meet expectations, results of specific management actions, and attempts to add diversity to existing grasslands through interseeding. Field days have also served as training for novice prairie reconstruction practitioners.

**Prairie Reconstruction Retrospective Study** – Researchers analyzed planting and management data from past plantings to evaluate which components of prairie reconstruction are most important to achieve success. This work uncovered a need for consistent planting and management records - if we want to know what worked, we have to know what happened during the reconstruction process.

**Prairie Reconstruction Database** – Prairie managers voluntarily record the site characteristics, establishment methods, ongoing management actions and outcomes (via monitoring) of their plantings. The database can serve as a centralized location for data storage and retrieval and will be the foundation for future data analyses.

**Prairie Reconstruction Monitoring Protocols (in development)** – A suite of protocols designed in tandem with the database will produce the data needed to understand what leads to success.

To find out more about PRI, their vision, purpose, and mission; where they are now and what's next contact:

**Amanda McColpin**, PRI Coordinator

([Amanda\\_McColpin@fws.gov](mailto:Amanda_McColpin@fws.gov))

**Paul Charland**, PRI Coordinator

([Paul\\_Charland@fws.gov](mailto:Paul_Charland@fws.gov))

**Pauline Drobney**, PRI Science Coordinator/I&M Zone Biologist

([Pauline\\_Drobney@fws.gov](mailto:Pauline_Drobney@fws.gov))

Or visit [LCCnetwork.org](http://LCCnetwork.org)



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*“When we see the land as a community to which we all belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”*

Aldo Leopold





Have you registered your prairie or garden with Plant.Grow.Fly. yet?



Help *Plant.Grow.Fly.* reach its goal of 1,000 registered pollinator gardens by the end of 2017, and mention IPN on your registration form! Blank Park Zoo is offering discounted zoo membership to PGF Gardeners when they register their garden!

[www.plantgrowfly.org](http://www.plantgrowfly.org)

IPN has 95 members that share an enthusiasm for prairies! Consider joining today!

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership Levels & Dues (check one):

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*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”*

Don't forget to **RENEW** your membership! Go to [www.iowaprairienetwork.org](http://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 2017 Events

**Upcoming Events – check the IPN calendar for details, updates and more events!**  
[www.iowaprairienetwork.org](http://www.iowaprairienetwork.org)

### July

- 13 **Partners on the Prairie Land Care Day** - Vincent Bluff State Preserve, Council Bluffs, IA  
 14-15 **Iowa Prairie Conference** - Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs, IA  
 22 **INPS Field Trip** – Nelson Paradise Wildlife Area, Mitchell County  
 27 **Doolittle Prairie Walk** – Doolittle Prairie State Preserve, Story City, IA

### August

- 24 **Doolittle Prairie Walk** – Doolittle Prairie State Preserve, Story City, IA

### September

- 10-16 **Iowa Prairie Heritage Week** – Multiple events across the state celebrating Iowa's prairie heritage. Go to IPN calendar at [www.iowaprairienetwork.org](http://www.iowaprairienetwork.org) for details  
 13-14 **Quad Cities Pollinator Conference** – RiverCenter, Davenport, IA  
 17 **Monarch Festival** – Blank Park Zoo, Des Moines, IA  
 20 **Monarch Habitat on Farms Demonstration Days** – Renewable Farm, Cedar Falls, IA  
 21 **Monarch Habitat on Farms Demonstration Days** – J.H. Roadman Memorial Park, Dike, IA



Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)



Prairie lily (*Lilium philadelphicum andinum*)



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

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