



Summer 2016

The Web

Newsletter of the Iowa Association of Naturalists

New Threats to Iowa's Prairie Remnants

By Pete Eyheralde

All of us are aware of the destruction of Iowa's tallgrass prairie that occurred in the 19th century, as our once vast grasslands were converted to a patchwork of agricultural fields. Many of us witnessed the turnover in recent years of remaining tracts of native prairies in places like eastern South Dakota and southern Iowa, when marginal crop ground, formerly used as pasture, was plowed under during the ethanol boom. 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 now under threat from the plow, this time not from farmers, but deer hunters.

Food plots are all the rage among deer hunters these days and you can't view internet hunting sites, outdoor TV shows, or hunting advertisements without coming across 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.

Ecologists 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 that 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.

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New Threats, cont.

The preservation of these last prairie fragments can coincide easily with deer hunting, but education will be 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.

So speak up, at your next public program, hunter ed class, county fair, radio interview, or conversation with those hunters that stop by the office. The clock is ticking.... we'll have to get the word out fast, or like the vast 19th century prairies that fell to the plow, these remaining pieces will be gone in a generation.



Hand seeding brassicas in a forest food plot

Photo: fullpotentialoutdoors.com



Prairie remnant on a forest ridge

Photo: timberhilllooksavanna.com

Grapevine News



Diane Hall, Marshall County Naturalist, will retire this fall (Sept 30) after 30 years with Marshall County and 3 years with Northern Trails Area Education Agency. Diane is looking forward to traveling and spending time with her family, including her first grandchild.

Jenny Ammon and her family moved west to Oregon in March.

Monkey the skinny pig joined Jackie Gautsch's family this spring.

Danielle Bennett is Ida County's new naturalist

The new Pottawattamie naturalist is Kristin (Haynes) Bieret who deserves a second congratulations for her recent marriage.

Sarah Davelaar has become the new Sioux County Naturalist

Julie Fosado of Kossuth County recently had a child.

What is it Like to Be on ExCom?

By Victoria DeVos

Being on ExCom is AWESOME!! My experience on the IAN executive committee has been eye opening and really rewarding. I agreed to run for ExCom, not really knowing what I was getting myself into. I knew one of the open positions was the Treasurer, and that appealed to me because I like working with numbers. Naively, I thought I would deposit checks and pay bills and go on my merry way. Boy was I wrong! There is so much more that each member of the executive committee is responsible for than what their title might suggest.

Sure, I do handle all of the monetary transactions, but I also get to look behind the scenes of this organization and make decisions about where we are headed. I have gotten to take a look at how this organization is run, and how we can make it run more efficiently. When members have given me suggestions about services we offer and how we can make them better, I get to help improve our organization.

As a member of ExCom, I have gotten to see where we are doing well and where we need improvements. We want IAN and its membership to be able to get accurate information quickly. We also want to be relevant to people who just happen upon us on the internet. To do this, ExCom decided a social

media committee needed to be formed. This committee will evaluate our website and social media platforms and see if they are serving our membership in the most professional and effective way possible. Technology and the internet has come a long way since we last updated our website, we think it is time to take a good look at iowanaturalists.org and see if it is still serving our memberships needs

I have never felt more connected to IAN as I have the past two and a half years, while serving as the Treasurer. Before, I was an active member of IAN, but I don't think I ever really thought that it was MY organization. Being on ExCom has helped me realize, this is MY organization, and if I want it to work for me, I would have to put in some work too. The people you have elected to oversee the day to day operations of your organization really care about the future of the Iowa Association of Naturalists.

If you are a member of IAN that has not served on the executive committee and you want to know more, please contact any member of ExCom, or talk to past ExCom members about their experience. I think every person in this organization has something to offer IAN. Serving on ExCom has been a great way for me to give back to the Iowa Association of Naturalists.



Summer IAN 2016
August 1–3
Shelby County
Nishna Bend Recreation Area

516 Maple Road, Harlan, IA 51537

Contact: Christina Roelofs: **712/744-3403**

cgroen@fmctc.com

SCHEDULE

Monday, August 1

Please eat lunch before arriving.

Noon – Arrive and set up camp

12:30 – Leave for Sawmill Hollow Aronia Berry Farm and Loess Hills Lavender Farm

4:45 – Arrive back at Nishna Bend for Supper

6:00 –8:00/8:30 – Canoe (or kayak) the Nishnabotna River

Tuesday, August 2

7:30 – Breakfast

8:30 – Leave for Custom Seed Service

11:00 – Lunch at Milk and Honey in Harlan

12:00 – Arrive at Farmtable Delivery and Procurement

12:45 – Head to Rosmann Farms

5:00 – Supper at Nishna Bend

6:00 – Visit Iowa Wines and More

7:00 – Arrive at Dinesen Prairie to learn about an orchid research project



Wednesday, August 3

7:30 – Breakfast, pack up

8:15 – Leave for Prairie Rose State Park to see Goats on the Go

9:15 – Leave for the Museum of Danish America

11:30/12:00 – Lunch at the Flour Mill in Elk Horn and depart

Lodging

The Shelby County Conservation Board has graciously offered the use of their two cabins and free camping for those attending. There are two cabins. One sleeps eight people and the other sleeps six people. There are no bathrooms in the cabins, but there is a bathroom and shower nearby. There is also a large bathroom/shower house in the middle of the camping loop. All campsites have electricity and water near them. If you are planning on using the cabins, please bring with a pillow and a blanket or sleeping bag. There are hotels in town. If you need contact information or recommendations, please contact Christina.



Nishna Bend Recreation Area has about two miles of hiking trails. There are five ponds stocked with bass, bluegill, channel catfish (which people have good luck with at that time of year), and crappies. There is a small nature center where Christina's education birds are housed. The area also includes an access to the West Nishnabotna River.

What to Bring

Camping gear, table service, water bottle, sun screen, sunglasses, insect repellent, canoeing apparel (including clothes/footwear that can get wet/muddy), day pack, rain gear, hat, snacks, beverages, canoe/kayak (optional), fishing equipment (optional)

Activity Details

Sawmill Hollow: Sawmill Hollow, located in Harrison County, is the first aronia berry (chokeberry) farm in the United States. This native Midwestern berry is considered to be one of the most nutritionally dense fruits on the planet. We will have a guided tour of this organic farm and will get a chance to sample and purchase aronia berry products. Visit their website at <http://sawmillhallow.com>

Loess Hills Lavender Farm: Loess Hill Lavender Farm is located just down the road from Sawmill Hollow. This farm started in 2009 out of their garage and has blossomed from there. We will have a guided tour and refreshments of lavender lemonade and lavender cookies. They also display and sell the works of over forty local artists. Visit their website at www.loesshillslavender.com



The West Nishnabotna River: Nobody is 100% sure what exactly the word Nishnabotna means. The only thing agreed upon is it has something to do with canoeing. We will put the canoes in at Harlan and canoe down the river to Nishna Bend. Ten canoes are available for use. If you have a canoe or kayak of your own, you are welcome to bring it.

Custom Seed Service: Located in Panama, Iowa and owned by Roger Schwery. Roger does a lot of custom seed work in restoring prairies and planting CRP. He has a large operation in which he harvests and cleans local ecotype seed that he plants in our area. We will tour his place and may get put to work for a little bit.



Milk and Honey, Farmtable Delivery and Procurement, and Rosmann Family Farms: These are all joint ventures of the Rosmann family. Milk and Honey is their restaurant that features local food. Farmtable Delivery helps distribute local foods. Rosmann Family Farms is an organic farm. They do crops, compost, livestock, crop rotations, small grains, cover crops, and so much more.

Iowa Wines: This shop features wines made in Iowa. We will have time to do some sampling.

Dinesen Prairie: Dinesen Prairie is forty acres of native prairie. We have a good population of Fringed Orchids which have been studied over the past few years by Lori Biederman. We will learn about this research and have a chance to wander through the rest of the prairie too. Pants are highly recommended as we do have poison ivy.

Prairie Rose State Park/Goats on the Go: Goats on the Go is in its second year at Prairie Rose State Park. We will see what the goats have been doing and, if time permits, talk about the lake restoration that just concluded this past year.



Museum of Danish America: Elk Horn and Kimballton are considered to be the Danish Villages of Iowa. The museum itself tells of the history of the immigrants from Denmark, the relationship between the United States and Denmark, and traditions still carried by the later generations of the immigrants. We will focus on the outdoor areas. The Danish Museum has done a lot of native prairie restoration. They have added a green roof to their newest addition. They also have an outdoor workout area. We will have a guided tour around these projects and also have time to explore the museum.



The Flour Mill: Is one of Elk Horn's newest restaurants. They specialize in brick oven pizza and Italian food, but also serve sandwiches. Since they are in a Danish community, you can get Danish pizza toppings.

There is also a Danish Windmill in town if anybody would like to stop there after lunch.

Registration

Name: _____ Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Any special food requirements: _____

Lodging: I plan to stay in a cabin I plan to camp

Monday, August 1 (Eat lunch before you arrive)

Supper: Pulled pork, salads, chips, drink \$9.00

Tuesday, August 2 (Lunch: Bring money to eat at Milk and Honey)

Breakfast: Muffins, fruit, juice, coffee \$6.00

Supper: Burger or brats, baked beans, salads, chips, drink \$9.00

Wednesday, August 3

Breakfast: Egg Casserole, fruit, juice, coffee \$6.00

Canoeing: I need a canoe I will bring my own canoe/kayak

Workshop fee (includes all tour fees) **\$15.00**

Meals total _____

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED: _____

Please make checks payable to **IAN Treasurer** and mail completed registrations to:

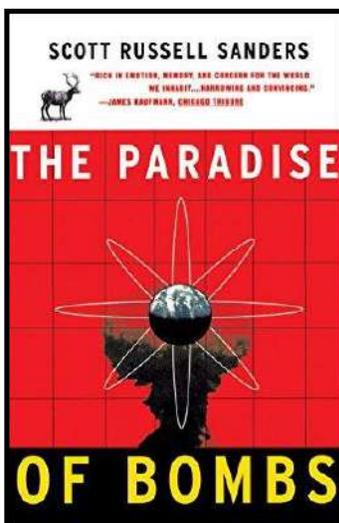
Christina Roelofs, Naturalist
Shelby County CCB/DNR
516 Maple Road
Harlan, IA 51537

Book Review

The Paradise of Bombs By Scott Russell Sanders

Reviewed by Rebekah Beall Warburton, Story County Naturalist

The essays in *The Paradise of Bombs* show Scott Russell Sanders' love for places beat up, mined, and broken—and the survivors (animal, plant, human) who inhabit them. You will recognize this landscape: Sanders and his homeplaces are Midwestern to their core. His nature is that of margins between farm fields, water-filled quarries, even the no-man's land of a military arsenal.



And yet, bleak as this sounds, he searches for a “remedy” through several of the following essays, hiking mountains and, in a piece that naturalists should love, calling owls. Toward the end of the book, he returns to essays that reflect themes of “*The Paradise of Bombs*,” examining the mined limestone quarries of Southern Indiana. Anyone who has swum a long-abandoned quarry will appreciate how Sanders weaves the human and natural history of these places together.

The title essay, “*The Paradise of Bombs*,” is complicated and stark, marking an early milestone in Sanders' long career as a nature writer. His father's job moves his family to an “Ohio Arsenal.” They live in government quarters within 21,000 fenced acres, described from Sander's childhood point of view as “a tangled, beast-haunted woods.” This is where Sanders and the Arsenal's other children run wild. From here, the essay balances between images of destruction and renewal. As he explores his home, he gives us image after image of nature growing through munition dumps, silos of displaced farms, and chemical spills. From this backdrop, Sanders watches the paranoia of the Cold War crack the mental health of the adults around him. He finds refuge in his broken “wilderness” until, as he comes of age, he realizes a fear: “The fences of the Arsenal have stretched outward until they circle the entire planet. I feel, now, I can never move outside.”

Though some of these essays shine more than others, this book is well-worth reading, especially as an introduction to a well-respected Midwestern nature writer. Be forewarned that those looking for 100% nature will find several essays (among the best) focused on themes of fatherhood. Regardless, *The Paradise of Bombs* has a significant place in defining love for undervalued landscapes and their people, swinging from horror to healing through all the complications in between.

Upcoming IAN Workshops

Fall '16 - Floyd County (November 2-4)

Spring '17 - Plymouth County (March 8 - 10)

Summer '17 - Jackson County (Dates TBD)

Fall '17 - TBD - Prefer central Iowa area since NW and NE workshops earlier. See Annette.

All 2018 workshops are available for hosting.

Spotted Skunk Spotted

A roadkill spotted skunk was collected in Sac County by a local citizen in April 2016 and brought to the Sac County Conservation Board. This marks the second confirmed documentation from Iowa in two years of this endangered mustelid that was thought by many to have been extirpated in the state.

Standard measurements, as well as genetic samples were taken for future testing. The Sac County Conservation Board plans to have the skunk mounted for display.

According to the NAI database the last spotted skunk in Sac County was documented south of the town of Lake View , April 23rd 1984.



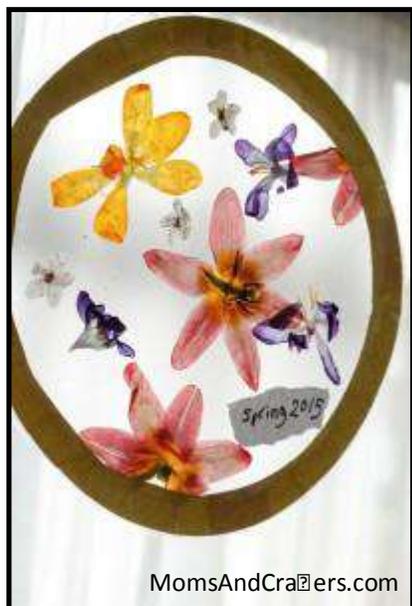
Name that Nature Center Contest

Submit guesses to Karen Johlas-Szalkowski. Please use "Name that Nature Center" as the subject line. The sender of the first correct answer will win bragging rights in the next issue of the Web!



Nature Craft: Nature Sun Catchers

By Victoria DeVos



Materials

- ◆ Stiff paper/paper plate
- ◆ Clear contact paper/laminating sheets and carriage
- ◆ Flat nature stuff

Method

Collect your "nature stuff".

Cut a shape out of your paper plate or stiff paper. Make sure the opening is large enough.

If using contact paper, lay sticky side up on table. Put paper/ paper plate on contact paper. Fill the center circle with "nature stuff. Place other piece of contact paper on top and flatten with a heavy book or other object.



If using a small table top laminator, be sure to load the laminating envelope into the carriage pouch. Not doing so, could result in the laminator eating your sun catcher (TRUST ME!).



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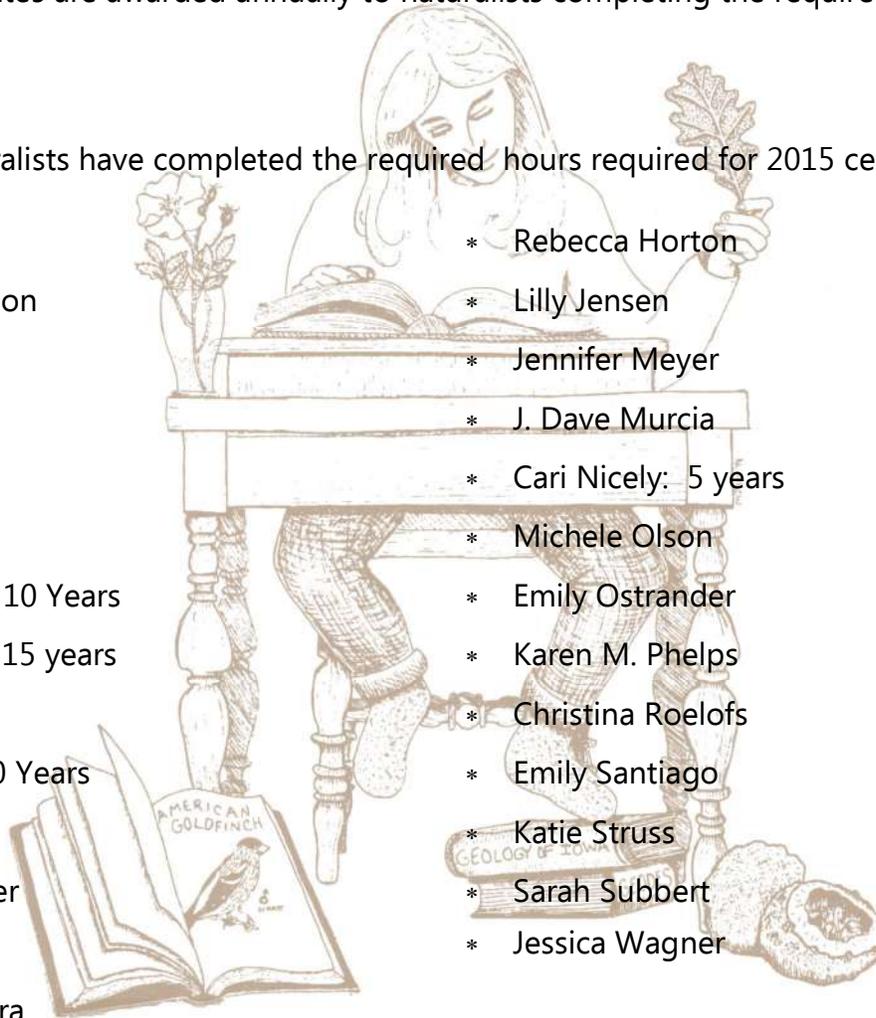


2015 IAN Professional Development Recipients

The Professional Development Program is designed to recognize IAN Naturalists that attend workshops and educational opportunities on a regular basis to make themselves better at their profession. Certificates are awarded annually to naturalists completing the required continuing education.

The following naturalists have completed the required hours required for 2015 certification:

- * Heidi Anderson
- * Lyndsey Anderson
- * Aaron Askelson
- * Katie L. Cantu
- * Megan Cook
- * Laura DeCook
- * Victoria DeVos: 10 Years
- * Charlene Elyea: 15 years
- * Chelsea Ewen
- * Sunday Ford: 10 Years
- * Diane Hall
- * Abbey Harkrader
- * Emily Highnam
- * Trenton Hoekstra
- * Rebecca Horton
- * Lilly Jensen
- * Jennifer Meyer
- * J. Dave Murcia
- * Cari Nicely: 5 years
- * Michele Olson
- * Emily Ostrander
- * Karen M. Phelps
- * Christina Roelofs
- * Emily Santiago
- * Katie Struss
- * Sarah Subbert
- * Jessica Wagner



Professional Development Recognition applications are due annually by December 31st. For more information contact: Miriam Patton; Palo Alto CCB; P.O. Box 417; Ruthven, IA 51358; 712/837-4866; paccb@ruthventel.com. Information and forms can be found on the IAN website at http://www.iowanaturalists.org/comm_profdev.htm.



Naturalists — planting the seed of environmental stewardship by communicating the meanings and relationships in natural, cultural, and historical resources.

Visit us at www.iowanaturalists.org

IAN Executive Committee

President

Matt Crayne

Chickasaw County Naturalist

1181 240th Street

Ionia, IA 50645

319-330-7798

mattcrayne@hotmail.com



Vice President

Emily Herring

1004 10th St.

Eldora, IA

515/290-5187

emilyherring@gmail.com

Workshop Coordinator

Annette Wittrock

Wapello County Naturalist

1339 Hwy 63

Bloomfield, IA 52537

641-682-3091

annette_wittrock@hotmail.com



Treasurer

Victoria DeVos

Plymouth County Naturalist

PO Box 1033

Hinton, IA 51024

712-947-4270

vdevos@co.plymouth.ia.us



Secretary

Karen Johlas-Szalkowski

Warren County Naturalist II

15565 118th Ave

Indianola, IA 50125

515-961-6169 Ext 206

karenjohlas-szalkowski@warrencb.org

