

2022 summary of accomplishments



Partnership Coordination

- Worked with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission to develop an on-line mapping tool that will soon be available to all partners, improving our ability to work collaboratively on regional conservation issues.
- Created a Visioning Document for the region and the partnership, an effort equal in scope and breadth to undertaking a strategic planning process. Cover page shown at right.
- Established a working relationship with Justin Pepper, Chief Conservation Director for the Bobolink Foundation. A capacity grant is likely forthcoming.

COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION AT THE *GRASSROOTS* LEVEL –
BECAUSE GRASS IS GOOD.

PROTECTING AND RESTORING OUR SOUTHERN DRIFTLESS GRASSLANDS

Wisconsin's Southern Driftless Grasslands region provides the best opportunity for landscape-scale grassland ecosystem conservation in the upper Midwest that can secure the survival of rapidly declining pollinators, grassland birds and other wildlife – and the Southern Driftless Grasslands partnership serves as the best opportunity for meaningful collaborative conservation in this critical region.

WHY?

THIS LANDSCAPE HARBORS:

- The highest concentration of unplowed prairie remnants and oak savanna in the Upper Midwest, hosting native banks of biodiversity;
- Regionally significant populations of grassland birds, which as a group are facing an urgent conservation crisis;
- A rural economy based on multi-generational and innovative rural farms, many interested in or embracing grass-based agriculture for premium products;
- A thriving and engaged partnership of local, state and federal agencies as well as nonprofit conservation organizations. The partners in the Southern Driftless Grasslands (SDG) share this mission: to facilitate the conservation of landscape-scale grassland systems, including prairie and savanna remnants, in Southwest Wisconsin for the benefit of the plants, wildlife and people that depend on them.

WWW.DRIFTLESSGRASSLANDS.ORG
DODGEVILLE, WISCONSIN



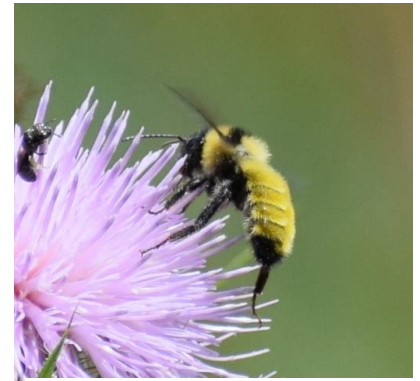
- Secured \$122K from invested partners for project staff, travel and equipment needs, and subcontracting for research-driven projects.
- Held quarterly steering committee meetings
- Established bi-monthly Land Protection team meetings. These meetings ensure partners involved in land protection in the region are aware of current and future real estate opportunities within key priority areas.
- Increased staff capacity temporarily with the hiring of a part-time Outreach and Communications Specialist. The position is currently vacant.

Land Protection strategic planning meeting. September 2022

Conservation Liaison

Landowner Property Visits

- Conducted 26 property visits, 14 of which resulted in cost-share assistance being funded through partner programs.
- Coordinated bumble bee surveys on private lands in key Rusty Patched Bumble Bee zones and Bird Conservation Areas. Volunteer and paid entomologists surveyed 22 sites on private properties, documenting 4 new sightings of Rusty Patched bumble bees. All landowners received a report summarizing the findings from the surveys.



Golden Northern Bumble Bee

Photo credit: Elizabeth Baartz

Land Management Financial Assistance

- Collaborated effectively with members of the Private Lands Team to get cost-share funding into the hands of private landowners.
 - Worked closely with Mike Engel, Regional Biologist with the FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program to secure 10-year habitat improvement contracts. In FY 2021-2022, \$353,000 were invested in the region through voluntary cost-share programs available thanks to the partnership (Pheasant Stamp Funds, Turkey Stamp Funds, FWS Partners Funds, Natural Resource Foundation Pollinator Protection Fund) and landowner contributions, improving and/or enhancing 921 acres of grassland, prairie, and savanna habitat.
 - Worked closely with Britta Petersen (Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist) and Darcy Kind (Landowner Incentives Program Ecologist) to ensure that landowners were aware of state and federal cost-share opportunities available.
- Actively promoted the Driftless RCPP with landowners. This effort resulted in three significant EQIP projects in our prioritized landscapes: 2 Forest Management Plans for Oak Savanna and 1 grazing plan taking row crops out of production and into permanent pasture.

Fall 2023:

Mike Engel explaining the values of a prairie remnant to a captivated audience (including me!) on private property within the Perry Primrose BCA.



Events and Workshops

- Hosted the 2022 SDG Partnership Meeting virtually, with around 70 individuals attending.
- Provided a webinar featuring on-line and printed resources designed to help landowners understand the historical and present day habitats on their land.
- Held a field workshop designed to help landowners identify remnant habitat on their land and promote land management planning.
- Organized a Wildlife on Working Lands Property Tour and Potluck. The event, hosted by Dan McGraw in Garrison Grove BCA, drew in nearly 40 landowners. The event brought landowners and local conservation colleagues together.
- Led a Hike with a Naturalist, an event coordinated and hosted by the Blue Mounds Area Project, on what ended up to be one of the hottest days in July. Seven hardy people attended.
- Organized a Celebrate Grasslands Pollinator Party (Land Trust Days) at Bloomfield Prairie in collaboration with Xerces Society and Driftless Area Land Conservancy. Despite a menacing and active August thunderstorm, nearly 20 people attended the event.

Celebrate grasslands with a
POLLINATOR PARTY!

DRIFTLESS
AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

SOUTHERN DRIFTLESS GRASSLANDS
BECAUSE GRASS IS GOOD

Bloomfield Prairie
3149 County Farm Rd, Dodgeville, WI
Saturday, August 13th, 10am - 2pm

We're having a pollinator party! Head out to the beautiful Bloomfield Prairie for a fun day of learning and exploring.

All Day: Come Explore!

- Go on a story walk across the prairie
- Find resources on supporting pollinators on your own property
- Enjoy delicious snacks!

Morning Session: Take a Deep Dive

- 10:30 - 11:00: Join a tutorial on WiBee, the easy-to-use Wild Bee App
- 11:00 - 11:30: Learn what makes great pollinator habitat in a planted prairie
- 11:30: Take a hike with a WI pollinator expert from the Xerxes Society

Afternoon Session: Catch the Buzz

- 12:30 - 1:00: Kids and parents alike can learn lots from our family-friendly pollinator presentation
- 1:00: Stroll through the prairie and see amazing plants and animals with Driftless naturalists

Questions? Contact Emilee Martell at emilee@driftlessconservancy.org

LAND TRUST DAYS
Have Fun Outside!™

Sponsored in collaboration with The Prairie Enthusiasts by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

This event hosted at Bloomfield Prairie, a property owned by Iowa County, demonstrates the power of partnership. Gathering Waters, DALC, TPE, UW Madison, and Xerces Society all contributed to this event's success.

Communications

- Updated the Guide to Conservation Programs and Partners to include climate smart tips, detailed information about pollinator habitat, identification of remnant prairie and savanna, definitions of the types of prairies found in the Driftless Area, and a land management section.
- Expanded our social media presence, establishing monthly posts promoting pollinator habitat and facts, including monthly tips provided from the Monarch Joint Venture. SDG also hosts an Instagram and Twitter presence.

Thank you all for a fantastic year. It is because of your support and continued commitment to conservation in southwest Wisconsin that this work has meaning and purpose.