

End of 2001 Letter from the Director of UIC's James Woodworth Prairie, Dennis Nyberg

Dear Friends of the Woodworth Prairie,

Thank you for your interest in and support of the James Woodworth Prairie. It is appreciated by me. I have made the end of the year report increasingly detailed which you may find less vivid than the usual conservation report. I believe these details will help you and others understand the management that is being done.

Through November, I spent 14,403 minutes at JWP on 70 different dates in 2001. I spent considerable time traveling to other sites to gather seeds for the IC garden and in association with JWP research projects. I also spent a lot of time on the computer, telephone and meetings as part of JWP work. Of course, my minutes were greatly exceeded by the two summer research assistants, Joni Marzalik and Sherry Breedlove, and employees and volunteers that contributed to the education about, knowledge of and management of the prairie.

Highlights of 2001

Management

Burning

After renewing my Illinois EPA burn permit, we conducted burns in both the spring and fall. The 25 March burn covered the east end (east of line 4) and was in UIC news. On 3 April we burned from between the B & C lines to the north fence. When planning a fall burn I learned Glenview had instituted a new permit requirement which JWP obtained. On 6 November 01 we burned the center of the prairie from the path to the north fence. On 23 Nov 01 we burned between the south fence and the trail all the way from the east fence to the parking lot.

Special Workdays

I organized a "Special Clean-up Workday" on 12 May that was attended by 15 people. The focus was on the removal of junk and planting species in the Interpretation Center (IC) garden. Participants got to see the newly discovered White Ladies Slipper. JWP participated in National Public Lands Day on 29 September. Work by participants included the Interpretation Center garden, junk removal, securing fence and seed collecting. 19 people participated in NPLD.

Debris removal

After the burns it was apparent that a considerable amount of concrete, asphalt and rock debris remains in the prairie. This debris is almost exclusively in areas with lower quality vegetation. A hypothesis is that the presence of the debris is preventing vegetation recovery. We began to aggressively remove large pieces of concrete debris in 2001 and will continue with smaller items.

Herbiciding, girdling, pulling & cutting

A substantial effort was devoted to controlling exotic and woody vegetation in 2001. Most of the trees greater than 1 m tall were girdled and many grey dogwood shorter than that were as well. Teasel continued to be a management focus, and will continue to be in 2002. Reed canary grass, lily-of-the-valley and daylily were herbicided. The north fence continues to be a major problem area.

Biomass removal

The quality parts of the prairie have high diversity and plants of short stature. The areas near the fences are dominated by tall plants with thick stems, such as giant ragweed and sawtooth sunflower. Since we know that atmospheric nitrogen deposition has increased, it seemed like removing biomass would alleviate the increase. In 2001 I began to cut or pull giant ragweed and sawtooth sunflower, but the material in yard waste bags and transport it off the site. At a minimum these actions should have removed seeds of these species, hopefully they will have made the site more "oligotrophic".

Research

The prairie cicada

I persuaded a graduate student, Sherry Breedlove, that the prairie cicada would make a good MS project. She has established a prairie cicada web page and made a presentation at the Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop on 10 March 2001.

Species Inventory and development of procedures to treat species lists

During 2001 I detected 37 species that I had not previously seen at JWP: including ten exotic species, namely, *Baptisia australis*, *Cerastium vulgatum*, *Chenopodium album*, *Lactuca serriola*, *Lepidium campestre*, *Lonicera x bella*, *Pastinaca sativa*, *Polygonum persicaria*, *Saponaria officinalis* and *Vicia angustifolia*, eleven native but not prairie species, namely *Bidens aristosa*, *Carex pennsylvanica*, *Carex sartwellii*, *Carex vulpinoidea*, *Eleocharis erythropoda*, *Euphorbia supina*, *Gaura biennis*, *Juncus dudleyi*, *Polygonum pennsylvanicum*, *Populus deltoides* and *Senecio aureus*, and sixteen prairie species namely, *Agrostis hyemalis*, *Carex bicknellii*, *Carex tetanica*, *Cypripedium candidum*, *Erigeron philadelphicus*, *Euphorbia corollata*, *Gentiana flavida*, *Geum triflorum*, *Liatris pycnostachya*, *Oenothera perennis*, *Oxypolis rigidior*, *Phlox glaberrima*, *Prenanthes racemosa*, *Scutellaria parvula leonardii*, *Solidago graminifolia nuttallii* and *Spiranthes magnicamporum*. Certainly the highlight was the discovery of the Small White Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*) which is on the Endangered and Threatened Species List in Illinois. *Oenothera perennis* is also on the IL E&T list and *Spiranthes magnicamporum* is an orchid. The total number of species detected at JWP in 2000 & 2001 is 244.

Vegetation height comparison between native and restored prairies

Becky Ammann has started work on this project. The thesis is the native "tallgrass" prairies actually have short stature vegetation compared to restored prairies. JWP will be sampled for vegetation height throughout the growing season.

Rain gauge

A rain gauge was installed on a post in the prairie in August. Regular records have been kept.

Education and outreach

The kick-off potluck was held on 25 MAY 01. This was a very nice dinner at which I got to meet many of the long time friends of the prairie. There was concern about the end of the guide program for the grade schools. Karen Ramirez was presented with a plaque recognizing her many contributions to the prairie. One school group visited in Sep. A potluck dinner was held just before National Public Lands Day, 29 Sept 01. The JWP phenology project got a start with lists of what was blooming appearing on the chalk board.

The website <http://www.uic.edu/depts/prairie/> was redesigned. The new version is currently being worked on. When the new site is published (expected 1 Jan 2002) you will be encouraged to visit it. The domain <woodworth.info> was donated to JWP by Oliver Pergams.

Building and grounds

The entire Interpretation Center was cleaned and painted in Sep and Oct, both the outside and the inside. The posts on the entry gate were painted white and parts of the bottom of the fence were secured to the ground to prevent paper and plastic debris from blowing into the prairie.

Plans for 2002

- 1) Redo the grid system
- 2) Start exploring conditions in areas currently occupied by goldenrod, specifically determining the extent of rock and asphalt debris
- 3) map and measure ant mounds
- 4) counting and describing crayfish burrows

30 November 2001