Unregulated floodplains: good for plants, people

by Beth Nixon, MNNPS Conservation Committee chair

Adaptation to the greater powers of the Earth has made numerous native plant species, anthropomorphically, look forward to the floods of spring for their livelihood. Rivers still unregulated enough to escape their banks in the spring nourish floodplains and backwaters with the spring flush of the land’s meltwaters. Viewed from Google Earth, unregulated river floodplains stand out as a prominent signature of floodplain forests — chockfull of native plant species in balance with the annual flooding ritual. Up close, floodplains present themselves with tall forests of silver maple with elm, ash, cottonwood, and often laced with riverbank grape vines. Underfoot, carpets of herbs rise and fall on an annual basis, surviving on the nourishment of spring floods.

These floodplains welcome flooding, and people who find these unregulated places learn to appreciate the power and beauty of the spring ritual. Conservation of these unregulated rivers and floodplains shows what could be done for people trapped in harm’s way, where rivers run regulated and floodplains are nonexistent.

You can advocate for programs for conserving and restoring floodplains. Through the federal Emergency Watershed Protection easement option, lands with a history of flooding can be preserved. The Nature Conservancy’s Upper Mississippi River Program is a focal point of their ambitious three-year-old Great Rivers Partnership. Top priorities include the Root River and areas tributary to the St. Croix River.

Although there are several altered floodplains, such as the Red River Valley, which no longer are havens for native plant species, many large and small floodplains still abound throughout Minnesota. Foremost is the granddaddy, the Mississippi, at several recreation sites. A site not to miss is the McCarthy Lake Wildlife Management Area at Kellogg, near one of the Society’s favorite field trips, Weaver Dunes. Further upstream, and north of the Twin Cities, is the Mississippi River Islands SNA near Elk River. Then there are the lower Cannon River Turtle Preserve SNA, the

Continued on page 3
President’s column

by Scott Milburn

We are coming off another successful symposium, our fourth consecutive year focusing on a region of Minnesota. This year a great roster of speakers explored the often underappreciated Tallgrass Aspen Prairie. Over 130 people attended the all-day event. I would like to thank our speakers, including Rhett Johnson, Nancy Sather, Robert Dana, Cary Hamel, Russ Reisz, Donovan Pietruszewski, Laura Reeves, and Ross Hier. Most of them made the trek down from the Northwest, including Cary and Laura who came all the way from Manitoba. I would also like to thank the symposium committee for their time and effort. This year’s committee had two new members, with Erika Rowe taking charge of much of the planning and Angela Hanson coordinating the catering. It is also important to point out how gracious the Bell Museum of Natural History has been to host us the past several years.

As keepers of our natural history, the Bell Museum serves an important role in educating the public. The Bell is the state’s repository of Minnesota animal and plant life. Anyone visiting the Bell will notice the beautiful dioramas depicting the Minnesota landscape with the prominent fauna and flora. As you may already know, the Bell Museum is seeking funds for a new facility as part of the 2009 capital bonding request. This request for funds is not new. Last year’s request was denied through a line-item veto. This funding request will likely face similar scrutiny from those who have opposed it in the past, with the economic decline making things that much more difficult. The purpose and mission of the Bell is in line with ours, and we have an opportunity as individuals to show our support. I encourage those who feel strongly about this to contact their local representatives, including the Governor’s office.

In other news, the board has three new members replacing myself, Peter Dziuk, and Shirley Mah Kooyman. The new members are Angela

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Minnesota Native Plant Society’s purpose

(Abbreviated from the bylaws)

This organization is exclusively organized and operated for educational and scientific purposes, including the following.
1. Conservation of all native plants.
2. Continuing education of all members in the plant sciences.
3. Education of the public regarding environmental protection of plant life.
4. Encouragement of research and publications on plants native to Minnesota.
5. Study of legislation on Minnesota flora, vegetation, ecosystems.
6. Preservation of native plants, plant communities, and scientific and natural areas.
7. Cooperation in programs concerned with the ecology of natural resources and scenic features.
8. Fellowship with all persons interested in native plants through meetings, lectures, workshops, and field trips.

MNNPS Board of Directors

President: Scott Milburn, scott.milburn@mnnps.org
Vice President: Shirley Mah Kooyman, shirley.mah.kooyman@mnnps.org
Derek Anderson, board member, derek.anderson@mnnps.org
Ken Arndt, board member, field trip chair, ken.arndt@mnnps.org
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Introducing new MNNPS board members

Derek Anderson
Derek Anderson is one of the newer members of the Minnesota Native Plant Society. He has been a member for several years and looks forward to serving on the board.

Derek grew up in northwestern Wisconsin, where he developed an interest in the outdoors and plants. He spent a good deal of time on the St. Croix River and the numerous parks located along the river. This interest led Derek to go to the University of Wisconsin–Superior, where he obtained a degree in botany. His early work and interests focused on the forested plant communities of northern Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Derek started working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 2004. While he started with northern forests, he now primarily focuses on the prairies of southern and western Minnesota. The majority of his work within the DNR is centered on the recovery efforts of the plants listed as federally endangered or threatened (Minnesota dwarf trout lily, western prairie fringed orchid and prairie bush clover). More recently, he has started surveying the counties of south central Minnesota as a part of the Minnesota County Biological Survey.

Mike Bourdaghs
MPCA Wetland Biologist Mike Bourdaghs is another one of the new crop of recently elected board members. He has been with the MPCA since 2004, working on techniques to measure wetland quality by looking at how wetland native plant communities respond to human-caused disturbances.

Mike had his first real exposure to the state’s flora during a summer internship on the Kabetogama Peninsula and never looked back. While he has over 10 years of professional botanical experience, Mike freely admits that he has a lot to learn. That is what led him to the MNNPS just over a year ago.

Mike currently resides in Mahtomedi and spends most of his time helping his wife raise a toddler. During breaks in the action he enjoys brewing beer, playing hockey, and thinking about canoe trips to come.

Angela Hanson
The Society’s new board member, Angela Hanson, has been a MNNPS member since she was cultivating her plant knowledge while studying ecology at the University of Minnesota. Since then, she interned with the DNR’s Prairie Care Program (with Society member Dave Crawford), the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community’s Land Department, and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. She now works full time for the City of Burnsville’s Natural Resources Department, where she is involved with programs ranging from wildlife management to water quality improvement to ecological restoration and public education.

Angela lives in South Minneapolis. Her other passions include photography, gardening, sailboat racing, and riding motorcycles. One of her motorcycles is currently having native plants painted on it.

Angela looks forward to her involvement with the board and the Society’s unique blend of native plant proponents. She hopes to attract, inspire, and compel new and younger audiences to sustain or even expand the Society’s concern and enthusiasm for native plants and their habitats.

David Johnson is new lifetime honorary member
by Ron Huber
At the April 2 meeting, David Johnson was awarded an Honorary Life Membership for his many years of dedicated service to our Society.

David was born in West Virginia but has lived in numerous places around the country. After completing his computer science degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he and his wife, Susan, moved to Minnesota. David recalls collecting seeds as a youngster. Later, he taught himself how to grow tropical orchids and native plants from seed. He served as treasurer and membership secretary for the Orchid Society of Minnesota.

David discovered the MNNPS when he saw the display board. He and Susan joined in 1998, and David volunteered to keep membership records. He also became treasurer in 1999. He developed several complex computer programs to handle the membership data. Recently, David made some long-awaited changes, modernizing and streamlining the database. He then turned those duties over to others, but he continues to volunteer his computer programming expertise on an “as needed” basis.

Floodplains
Continued from page 1
Chamberlain Woods SNA on the Minnesota River, and numerous other fascinating examples of floodplain natural communities throughout the designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Visit a floodplain, appreciate the native plants and their complex natural communities, and notice the associated animals. Imagine the possibilities for reclaiming landscapes and watersheds complicit in devastating human disasters, and then do something about it.
Northfield residents organize, create natural city park

by Arlene Kjar, MNNPS member

I first became involved with Northfield’s Lashbrook Park in 1988, when I joined a citizen group called People for Parks. The group was intent on saving an 11-acre cornfield from being developed into high-rise apartments. The land had previously been designated as parkland, but developers had their eyes on this prime piece of land tucked in next to St. Olaf College.

It took four years of meetings with the city, many fundraisers, donations and a grant before the park became Lashbrook Park in 1992. This was made possible with the donation of $25,000 from St. Olaf College, and equal amounts from People for Parks and the City of Northfield. Working with the Park Board, a grant of $86,000 was obtained with the efforts of Kathiann and Wesley Brown of People for Parks. The grant funds came from the State of Minnesota, funded by the United States Department of Interior.

The oak savanna portion of the park was planted by Prairie Restorations in 1996. About nine acres are prairie; the other two acres are part of the wooded watershed area next to the prairie. The park was named after the Alfred Lashbrook family that once farmed the land and became world-famous for their Holstein cattle. The name reflects the Northfield motto, “Cows, Colleges, and Contentment.”

Obtaining the park was just the beginning of a continuing battle to preserve it as a restored oak savanna and native wetland woods. Citizen groups came together many times to prevent tennis courts, an archery range, and landscaping from encroaching on the natural park.

Prairie Partners is a new citizen-led group I have joined. Its mission is to help promote, maintain, and preserve all prairie ecosystems in Northfield and the surrounding area. Prairie Partners consists not only of residents of the Northfield area, but many college students.

Education is an important part of our group. Members of Prairie Partners have volunteered to teach classes, such as Drawing in the Prairie, and flower walks that are led in the prairie and woods. Two grants are pending that would provide snowshoes for youth to be used in the park in the winter. A brochure, produced by Prairie Partners, is being distributed to promote awareness of the park. Members attend the city park board meetings and communicate with city staff.

Taking care of an 11-acre natural park is a never-ending task. A volunteer crew pulls Canada thistles and takes out buckthorn, reed canary grass and other exotic invasive plants. Prairie Partners has drawn upon the specialists at Carleton and St. Olaf and naturalists from the state parks for advice. The residents of Northfield think it is great to have a city park that is dedicated to preserving the native habitat of Northfield, and they take pride in helping to care for it.

Shirley Mah Kooyman receives educators award

Shirley Mah Kooyman, MNNPS vice president, received the Bruce Beresford Horticulture Educators Award from the Minnesota State Horticultural Society on Feb. 7. The award is given to honor a person who has been an educator in the gardening world for 15 years or more. Shirley has been at the Arboretum for 24-1/2 years and has been teaching for just as long. She was nominated for the award by the Hennepin County Master Gardener Program, where she has been a member since 1984.

mnnps.org has a new face

by Elizabeth Heck

The Minnesota Native Plant Society’s website has a new face. Check it out at www.mnnps.org. The site is intended to introduce the Society, encourage membership, provide an informational resource for existing membership and be an educational resource. Prospective MNNPS members will find informative details about the Society in the links at the top of the page, while current members are kept up-to-date through the links on the left.

Board member Elizabeth Heck designed and constructed the site, while other board members contributed greatly to the concept and content. Additional contributions to MNNPS online communications include an update to the Society blog being undertaken by member Katy Chayka. This is the place to post the latest in plant-related happenings. Also look forward to our new Facebook being set up by board members Michael Bourdaghs and Angela Hanson.

Thanks to all those who have volunteered their time to make the Society’s online communications available to a diverse variety of plant-loving professionals and enthusiasts.

President’s column

Continued from page 1

Hanson, Derek Anderson, and Michael Bourdaghs. I am very pleased to have them serve the Society in this capacity. Each will bring a unique perspective and a new dimension to the board. Also new is the revamped website. (See article above.) One of the web components will be a revised blog. We have had a blog, but we want to make it a more useful tool. We hope folks will contribute to the blog and that it will be beneficial to our members.

In closing, we hope everyone will enjoy the new growing season.
MNNPS welcomes new members

The Society gives a warm welcome to 27 new members who joined in the first quarter of 2009. They are as follows.

Norman Aaseng, Minneapolis
Chel Anderson, Grand Marais
Sarette Arsenault, St. Peter
Karl Bischoff, Welch
Kevin Cavanaugh, St. Paul
Kate Drewry, White Bear Lake
Karen Eckman, Shoreview
Linda Falch, Richfield
Pamela Freeman, Anoka
Nick Grebe, Minneapolis
Dale T. Higgs, Apple Valley
Ric Jasken, Ogema
Karen Jensen, Stillwater
Tara Kline, West St. Paul
Matt Lasch, Prior Lake
Amy Linnerooth, Mankato
Sharon Meister, Corcoran
Dean and Natalie Oknich, Lindstrom
Stacey Olszewski, Minneapolis
Trudi Poquette, Minneapolis
Phyllis Root, Minneapolis
Jacob and Anne Rouland, Blaine
Judith Sims, St. Paul
Phil and Pat Splett, Stanchfield
Karen Stiles, Minnetonka
Natalie White, Minneapolis
Terry Yearwood, St. Paul

How to join MNNPS

There are three ways to join the Society. Information is available on the website (www.mnnps.org), or you may join at any monthly meeting. To join by mail, send your name, address, contact information, membership class, and a check to:

Minnesota Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 20401
Bloomington, MN  55420

Dues are:
$15 - Individual
$15 - Family
$ 8 - Student
$ 8 - Senior
$20 - Institution
$25 - Donor

Community involvement is key to Wild River Park restorations

by Dave Crawford, park naturalist, Wild River State Park. This is a summary of his Feb. 5, 2009 talk.

Prairie Care is a volunteer-based project to reconstruct prairie and oak savanna, maintain existing remnants, and compile data on phenology and locations of native prairie and savanna species.

The project dates to the 1980s. The name “Prairie Care” came about in 2000 for an adopt-a-species approach to getting volunteers to help with early-seeding species.

Wild River State Park lies on the St. Croix River upstream of Taylors Falls, Minn. It was established to preserve river shoreline and to preserve and restore presettlement plant communities. Most of the park is wooded and is rated high to outstanding in biodiversity significance.

An area of about two square miles, which had been altered from presettlement oak savanna by agricultural activity, is in need of restoration. Prescribed burns, invasive species control, and collecting and sowing of local genotype seed from native species are proving effective in accomplishing restoration.

Seed collection and sowing are now done mostly by volunteers and visiting school classes. Resource management goals go hand in hand with educational goals, reaching beyond park boundaries as more visitors become aware of native plant communities and take part in stewardship activities.

Up to 1,000 visitors are involved each year, contributing 1 to 1.5 full-time employee equivalents in total volunteer hours. Estimated retail value of seed collected and sown has risen from $400 per year in early efforts to more than $40,000 a year. Species diversity of collected seed has risen from 20 species to over 200. Henslow’s sparrows and a rare jumping spider, Pelegrina arizonensis, are among the wildlife species known to have benefited from restoration efforts.

The largest part of the increase in species diversity is credited to volunteer Species Stewards, who monitor and report locations and phenology of one or more early ripening, uncommon, or challenging species. Stewards collect seed from their species when it is ripe. This seed may be combined with other species for mass sowing, may be carefully sown in promising locations, or may be used to grow plugs which are planted to establish new populations for further seed collection.

Training materials make it possible for even inexperienced volunteers to be confident of accomplishing what is needed for their species. Data reported by stewards are used to improve training materials for future volunteers. More stewards are needed, as many species are not currently being closely monitored. Stewards are also being sought for the task of making manageable-sized portions of the park buckthorn-free.

Correction

There is an error in a chart accompanying the article, “Inventory shows the extent of non-native invasive plants in Minnesota forests,” that was in the Winter 2009 issue. European privet should not have been listed as a non-native invasive species found in the plots.
Summer field trips set

by Ken Arndt

We have a great line-up of field trips in 2009. In March we went to the University of Minnesota Herbarium. Outdoor field trips begin in April.

All field trips are open to MNNPS members at no cost. Register for trips at one of our general meetings, where you can sign up in person, or go to our website (www.mnnps.org) and follow the link to the field trip page, where you can e-mail me.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary
Saturday, April 25, 9 to 11 a.m., and 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Led by Scott Milburn, MNNPS president, board member and Midwest Natural Resources botanist/ecologist, and Elizabeth Heck, MNNPS board member and Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden naturalist.

Stroll through the oldest wildflower garden in the country. This 102-year-old garden is home to over 500 species of plants, all within 14 acres. We will visit woodland and wetland areas and see many spring ephemerals. Due to the narrow trails in the garden, we will be limited to 20 MNNPS members for each time slot. The first is full. The second will be from 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Hastings Sand Coulee Scientific and Natural Area
Tuesday, May 5, 6 to 8 p.m.

Led by Karen Schik, ecologist and project manager for Friends of the Mississippi River; Ellen Fuge, SNA Progam staff; and Tom Lewanski, conservation director for Friends of the Mississippi River.

This will be a joint field trip with Friends of the Mississippi River and will be limited to 15 MNNPS members. Currently this field trip is full, but we are taking names for a waiting list.

This will be an evening hike into one of the DNR’s newest Scientific and Natural Areas. Hastings Sand Coulee is a dry sand prairie of about 80 acres located just south of Hastings. It is the largest sand gravel prairie left in Dakota County and is home to rare plants, including James’ polanisia (endangered) and sea-beach needle grass.

This will be, in part, a hands-and-knees adventure, as some of the earliest spring prairie flowers are quite tiny. But there will be some splash too, with the bird’s foot violet and other early prairie wildflowers.

Mdewakanton Sioux Property and Spring Lake Regional Park
Saturday, May 16, 9 a.m. to noon.

Led by Victoria Rauna, environmental assessment specialist for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

View several different native plant communities in Scott County. Participants will hike on Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux tribal land and in parts of Spring Lake Regional Park to view maple-basswood forests, created prairie, rich fen with stunted tamaracks, shrublands and other wetland plant communities.

Victoria Rauna has worked with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for three years, surveying the flora on the reservation and working on a program to restore native prairie. She will tell us about her work and management plans being implemented on the tribal lands in Scott County.

Orchid hunting up north
Grand Rapids/Hill City Area
Saturday, June 27, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Led by Dr. John Almendinger, DNR forest ecologist; and Scott Milburn, MNNPS president and Midwest Natural Resources botanist/ecologist.

John and Scott led this trip two years ago, and many members have asked for a repeat trip. Spend the better part of a day, hiking through a rich cedar swamp and black spruce bog in search of the unusual and the beautiful.

Participants will learn about the local geology and ecology of this section of Minnesota, as well as get an understanding of how bogs are formed. A number of unique native plants will be encountered along the way, including over a dozen different native orchids. Don’t miss this chance — there are only a few spots left.

Aspen Parkland region
July 11 weekend

Led by Nancy Sather, DNR botanist/plant ecologist.

Set aside the weekend of July 11 for an in-the-field follow-up of this year’s symposium topic, the Aspen Parkland region of northwestern Minnesota. Details for this trip are being planned now. Highlights will include surveying for the federally threatened western prairie fringed orchid, Plantanthera praecita, and a close look at the many different plant communities of this region of the state.

Weaver Bottoms
August

Led by Steve Eggers, senior ecologist for the St. Paul District Corps of Engineers.

In August, MNNPS members will return to Weaver Bottoms in Winona County for a canoeing field trip. American lotus and other aquatic plants will be in bloom, wild rice stands will grace the river, and a diverse assemblage of emergent, floating and submergent aquatic vegetation will be experienced throughout the day.

For more information ...

Stay tuned to our website for additional details of existing trips, as well as more trips being planned for late summer and fall. If you would like to receive periodic field trip update e-mails, just contact me at karndt@ccesinc.com and ask to be put on the list. I look forward to seeing many of you this summer.
What is Dutchman’s breeches?
Dutchman’s breeches is a native, perennial, early spring flower named \textit{Dicentra cucullaria} in the fumitory family. It is a close relative of bleeding heart.

What do its names mean?
It is called Dutchman’s breeches because its blooms resemble white breeches (pantaloons). \textit{Dicentra} comes from a Greek word meaning twice-spurred, referring to the two-spurred flowers. \textit{Cucullaria} means hood-like or hooded, descriptive of the flowers.

Where does it grow?
Dutchman’s breeches thrives in rich woods in most of the deciduous-wooded areas of the state.

What do the plants look like?
All of the leaves and flower stalks are basal and grow from short, scaly rhizomes. Leaves are three-parted with finely divided leaflets. The five- to nine-inch long stalks (scapes) end in white flowers arranged in a raceme. When spring is over (April - May), the foliage turns yellow, and the plant is not visible in summer or fall.

What is the relationship to ants?
Seeds of Dutchman’s breeches are spread by ants. A fleshy structure called an \textit{elaiosome} is attached to a seed and attracts ants. Ants carry the seeds to their nests, where ants feed the elaiosomes to their larvae and then put seeds in their waste disposal area. Thus seeds are protected until they germinate in the rich substrate of ant nest debris — a mutual benefit.

Are plants edible, medicinal, or poisonous?
They are not edible. The species contains several alkaloids that can affect the brain and heart. Native Americans and colonial practitioners regarded this plant as useful for treatment of syphilis, skin conditions, and as a blood purifier. In some people, it causes dermatitis. Plants are also reported toxic to grazing animals.

What does this plant have to do with courtship?
Stories are told that Menomini Indian suitors used this plant as a love charm. A young man throws flowers at an Indian maiden, or chews on roots and projects his breath toward a potential mate as he encircles her, hoping she will follow the scent and him.

Annual Plant Sale is June 4
by Ken Arndt
This year’s native plant sale, which raises money for the Society, will be held at the June 4 general meeting. We encourage members to divide or propagate their own native plants and donate them to the sale.

We will again hold the sale on the patio outside of Dakota Lodge. We need all plants by 6 p.m., so our volunteers will have time to get the sales area set up. The sale will take place after our speaker’s presentation. Members and non-members may participate.

Bring only native plants from the region (Minnesota/western Wisconsin). Do not bring cultivars (horticultural selection) of native plants (e.g. “Goldstrum” black-eyed Susan or “Gateway” Joe-Pye-weed).

Plants should be from your own property, or other private property (with that owner’s permission), and not from public property. The plants should be in typical nursery containers with adequate water and soil. Label them with both common and scientific names. Pricing will be done by volunteers at the sale. We will have plant guides at the sale to help with correct labeling.

Try to dig your plants at least two to four weeks before the sale, especially if you are dividing your plants. The plants will then have time to get through transplant shock.

A few volunteers are needed to help with setting up and cleaning up the sales area, along with assisting members with their plants. To volunteer, contact Ken Arndt at karndt@ccesinc.com
Spring 2009

**Thompson County Park:**
360 Butler Ave East, West St. Paul, MN 55118

**Directions:**
Take MN Hwy. 52 to the Butler Ave. E. exit in West St. Paul.
Go west on Butler 0.2 mile to Stassen Lane.
Go south on Stassen Lane to Thompson County Park.