

Iowa Prairie Network Newsletter

Winter 2020-21

Photo by Tenlea Turner

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So Long Dear Friend

Submitted by Pam White



On October 5, 2020 the prairie community lost a good friend and avid supporter, and the Iowa Prairie Network lost a member of its family. Gene Kromray was one of the founding members of IPN and remained an active member for all of its 30 years. He was an upbeat, friendly man as well as a mentor, inventor, and entrepreneur.

Gene's interest in the prairie began when he bought a fancy camera and started taking pictures of woodland flowers and landscapes. He saw some wildflowers in a ditch and, not knowing what they were, began to study prairie flowers. This led to a deeper interest and the pursuit of even more knowledge. In 1990 Gene decided to attend a prairie conference at UNI. One result of that conference was the formation of the IPN with Gene in the midst of it all. In the early years Gene served as our Vice President and later as our President.

In addition to his IPN activities, Gene bought, harvested, and sold prairie seeds; worked on documenting native plant species along roadsides; and tinkered with farm machinery to modify it for prairie use. Gene was instrumental in the fight to save the Eddyville Dunes from becoming a casualty of the realignment of highway 163. The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge also benefited from his dedicated service. Many southeastern Iowans consider Gene their gateway drug to the prairie addiction.

Gene's many accomplishments reached far beyond the prairie – farmer, veteran, and business owner. He also enjoyed painting, photography, building rockets, and gardening. He will be missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him. Our most sincere condolences go out to his wife Rene, family, and many friends. A time to celebrate his life will be held at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to IPN or the Wapello County Conservation Board.

Iowa Prairie Network
c/o Edward M. Sibley, Treas.
4015 Sergeant Road
Sioux City, IA 51106

Wapello County Conservation Board
1339 Highway 63
Bloomfield, IA 52537
641-682-3091



IPN Officers

Michelle Biodrowski, President
Jacob Pitzenberger, Vice President
Ed Sibley, Treasurer
Corinne Bulat, Secretary

Committees

Communications

Chair: Ben Maas
Webmaster: Cory Pritchard
Newsletter Editor: Tenlea Turner

Finance

Chair: Joyce Hornstein

Membership

Chair: Leesa McNeil

Marketing

Chair: Jacob Pitzenberger



Gene & Rene Kromray



Getting to Know You

Meet Tim Youngquist - IPN Board Member since January 2018. Tim grew up on a family farm in western Iowa and holds an MS in Community & Regional Planning from Iowa State University. He is currently the farmer liaison with the Prairie STRIPS team at ISU and travels the state helping farmers and landowners install prairie in their crop fields. In his free time he enjoys being outside, woodworking, and exploring Iowa parks, prairies, and preserves.

Join our Board or become a Committee Member

We are looking for individuals who are passionate about our endangered prairie ecosystem to join us in our mission! Join our Board of Directors or add your special talent to a committee (Communications, Finance, Marketing, and Membership). **Contact Michelle Biodrowski (biodrowski13@gmail.com)**

Prairie Highlight

Field Thistle (*Cirsium discolor*) – Photo by Tenlea Turner

Native Thistles: Friends Not Foes

Submitted by Sarah Nizzi

Native thistles display beautiful, unique flowers and leaf structures which are underappreciated in comparison to our more iconic native plants. Iowa is home to six native thistle species within the genus *Cirsium*, three of which are considered species of special concern according to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Native thistles contribute a great deal to biodiversity and can be found in a broad range of habitats within the state. The seed of native thistles helps sustain vast flocks of songbirds each year and the nectar and pollen of these plants provide food for numerous pollinators. One example is the thistle long-horned bee (*Melissodes desponsa*). This solitary bee collects the pollen of thistles to feed her young, who cannot survive on the pollen of other plants. Native thistles also fill an important bloom gap in late summer and fall when other native species may not be in flower or present within the landscape. Providing floral resources later in the growing season is essential to migratory insects, like the monarch butterfly, newly mated queen bumble bees in preparation for overwintering, and many other species.

As of 2019, native thistles are no longer considered Class B noxious weeds for control under the Chapter 58 Noxious Weeds amendment, relieving landowners and land managers of the requirement to control native thistles on their property. This is a huge accomplishment towards conservation in Iowa. **All nonnative thistles in the genera *Cirsium* and *Carduus* are listed as Class B noxious weeds for control and do require control.** Unlike, introduced thistles, native thistles are not aggressive invaders and do not degrade ecosystems.

This year the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation partnered with the Iowa DNR to create an informational identification brochure to Iowa's native thistles and common nonnative thistles found throughout the state. The tri-fold brochure is available online at <https://xerces.org/publications/brochures/guide-to-iowas-native-thistles>.

There is more work yet to be done in regard to native thistles. While the requirement to control them on private and public land has been lifted, they are still listed as noxious weeds. More advocacy is needed in order to remove native thistles altogether from the noxious weed list (I can think of a few alternates worthy of taking their place). Hopefully through education, advocacy and policy change we can continue making improvements to save our native species and enhance biodiversity within Iowa.



Cirsium muticum (Swamp thistle) is one of three native thistle species listed as a species of special concern in Iowa. This thistle can be recognized by its slender stems and cotton-like bracts on the flower head. Photo by Sarah Foltz Jordan, Xerces Society.



Bombus impatiens on *Cirsium discolor* - Photo by Sarah Nizzi

Cirsium hillii (rare) – Photo by Pauline Drobney



IPN Board of Directors

Region 1

Ben Maas
Tabitha Panas

Region 2

Luke Gran
Sarah Nizzi

Region 3

Tim Youngquist
Justin Meissen

Region 4

Vacant
Vacant

Region 5

Lance Brisbois
Cait Caughey

Region 6

Tenlea Turner
Jacob Pitzenberger

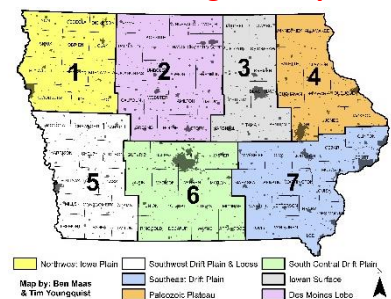
Region 7

Pam White
Ray Hamilton

At Large

Jon Judson
Michelle Biodrowski
Corinne Bulat
Laura Leben
Derek Miner
Pete Eyheralde

IPN's New Region Map



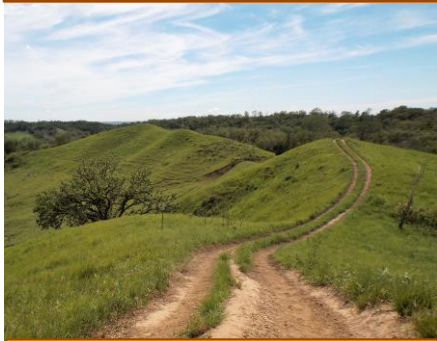
“The thistle is a prince. Let any man that has an eye for beauty take a view of the whole plant, and where will he see a more expressive grace and symmetry; and where is there a more kingly flower?” ~Henry Ward Beecher

Featured IPN Connection

IPN works with a multitude of agencies and organizations to support us in our mission. We thank them for their support.



The mission of Pottawattamie County Conservation is to provide meaningful experiences for people of all ages with the unique natural resources of Pottawattamie County through diverse and sustainable education, recreation and conservation opportunities.



Hitchcock Nature Center
Honey Creek, IA

Membership Corner

IPN has nearly 200 members that share an enthusiasm for prairies! Consider joining today!

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____

Email: _____

Phone (optional): _____ Circle one: home - work - cell

Membership Levels & Dues (check one):

- Student **Free** - please provide a valid school email address or ID
- Intern \$ 10 Family \$ 30
- Individual \$ 20 Organizations.....\$100

Newsletter Options (check one):

- Prefer to receive newsletters via e-mail at the address listed above \$0
- Prefer to receive printed newsletters via mail add \$5

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”
You can join online with PayPal

Don't forget to **RENEW** your membership! 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.

Winter 2020-21 Events

Please be advised: Events may be postponed or cancelled due to Coronavirus. Check the IPN Calendar for continued updates. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Upcoming Events – check the IPN Calendar for details, updates and more events!
www.iowaprairienetwork.org

December	25	<i>Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!</i>
January	1 30	<i>Happy New Year!</i> IPN Winter Meeting – Details at www.iowaprairienetwork.org
February	TBD	Go to www.iowaprairienetwork.org for updates



Hoar Frost
Photo by Tenlea Turner

2021 IPN Virtual Winter Meeting
January 30, 2021 9:00 a.m., details at www.iowaprairienetwork.org



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

WINTER 2020-21

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IPN Celebrating 30 Years

