

Minnesota Wildlifery,

Welcome to the December 2020 edition of the Prairie/Farmland Newsletter. Enjoy!

Remember - we'd love for you to share any relevant content with us for inclusion in the next edition. Please send those items to either Jake (jcnelson8487@gmail.com) or Nicole (ndavros@gmail.com). And if you have any issues you'd like to investigate further with the committee, let Jake know.

Grassland/Farmland Wildlife, Habitat, Farming, Soil Health, & Federal Conservation Programs

- [FSA - USDA to Open Signup for the Conservation Reserve Program and CRP Grasslands in Early 2021](#) The USDA today announced the signup periods for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the CRP Grasslands in 2021. Signup for general CRP will be open from Jan. 4, 2021, to Feb. 12, 2021, and signup for CRP Grasslands runs from March 15, 2021 to April 23, 2021. Both programs are competitive and provide annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.
- [Brainerd Dispatch - Protecting a wild landscape in west-central Minnesota](#) Ongoing improvements to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Weber Waterfowl Production Area north of Willmar tell a story of public lands management and of their importance.
- [Duluth News Tribune - Tallgrass prairie region provides a Minnesota hiking alternative](#) While wooded hikes are popular in Minnesota, the woods are not required, as the tallgrass prairie region in the southwestern corner of the state offers three unique places to get out and view the diverse landscape.
- [The Conversation - To save threatened plants and animals, restore habitat on farms, ranches and other working lands](#) Restoring native habitats to at least 20% of the world's land currently being used by humans for farming, ranching and forestry is necessary to protect biodiversity and slow species loss. Analysis found that this can be done in ways that minimize trade-offs and could even make farms more productive by helping to control pests, enhancing crop pollination and preventing losses of nutrients and water from soil. These working landscapes can still be grazed, mowed, harvested or burned, as long as these activities sustain or restore native species diversity.
- [The urgency of transforming the Midwestern U.S. landscape into more than corn and soybean](#) - This Rapid Response Opinion piece published in May in Agriculture and Human Values discusses how "a re-envisioned Midwestern landscape can balance sustainability goals, build the adaptive capacities of rural communities, and strengthen resiliency against the system shocks that the COVID-19 crisis has laid bare. It can also address climate variability, changing consumer demands, and volatile markets that were already placing tremendous pressure on agriculture and rural communities before the ongoing pandemic. To accomplish these goals, we must increase the diversity of agricultural systems at farm, landscape, and market/supply chain levels so they are more resilient for farmers, rural communities, and the environment."
- [BWSR Snapshots: Easements protect drinking water](#) - Native grasses replacing row crops have shown the most dramatic results in wellhead protection efforts by Rock SWCD.
- [The Prairie Ecologist: A Beginner's Guide to Conservation Grazing, Part 1](#) - This post is designed for people who might be considering cattle grazing as a management tool for a prairie but don't

have any/much experience with grazing management. Chris gives examples of the kind of objectives you might set for a potential grazing program and then some initial basic information on how to actually get started.

- [Economic and Soil Health Impact of Grazing Cover Crops, 2018-2019](#) - Six Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) cooperators, each integrated cattle-crop farmers, grazed cover crops in the fall, winter, and/or spring. Each cooperator profited from grazing cover crops within the year of planting while soil samples from May 2019 showed no detectable trends in soil health indicators. While economic returns can be realized within a year's time, soil health impacts seemingly are slower to manifest.
- [Tallgrass prairie ecosystem management: a gastropod perspective](#) - This 2019 study, published in The Canadian Field-Naturalist, found that gastropod communities were negatively affected by grazing and burning that occurred in the five years prior to their survey. Next time you're planning a prescribed burn, don't forget to think about the slow critters like snails and slugs in your burn plan!

Pollinators

- [West Central Tribune - Prepare your pollinator-friendly garden for winter](#) As temperatures drop and winter is coming right around the corner, the thoughts of pruning, raking and weeding come to mind. However, pollinators would appreciate it if you did not prune, rake or weed. A garden that looks unkempt for the winter is a good garden for pollinators.
- [Plos One - Strips of prairie vegetation placed within row crops can sustain native bee communities](#) In this study, conducted in Iowa, USA, researchers found that increases in both the abundance and diversity of floral resources in strips of native prairie vegetation within agricultural production fields greatly and positively influenced the bee community. The benefits to the bee community were important for both common and uncommon species and the effect may be strongest early in the season.
- [Scientists create a buzz with the first ever global map of bee species](#) - For as often as they make the news these days, we know surprisingly little about where bees live. A new study published in Current Biology reveals that bees avoid moist, tropical ecosystems and instead favor dry, treeless landscapes. The greatest diversity of species lives in two bands around the globe - mostly in temperate zones.
- [Butterfly photographed in Guanajuato \(Mexico\) had been tagged in Iowa](#) - A monarch butterfly was tagged on September 23 during its migration, and 39 days and 2,900 kilometers later it was sighted again in excellent condition. Founded in 1992, Monarch Watch's tagging program now distributes over a quarter million tags to volunteers across North America who tag the monarchs as they migrate through their area. The majority of the tags are then sighted again in central Mexico.

Pesticides and Invasive Species

- [Center for Biological Diversity - EPA finds Glyphosate is likely to injure or kill 93% of endangered species](#). The long-anticipated draft biological evaluation released by the agency's pesticide office found that 1,676 endangered species are likely to be harmed by glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup and the world's most-used pesticide. The draft biological opinion also found that glyphosate adversely modifies critical habitat for 759 endangered species, or 96% of all species for which critical habitat has been designated.

Webinars, Podcasts, Videos, Social Media, & Other Events

- Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) is holding a [FREE virtual cover crop boot camp](#) on December 3-4, focused on discussing how cover crops can improve soil health, weed suppression, and opportunities for livestock grazing.
- [PFI's annual conference](#) will be held January 21-23, 2021 as a virtual conference. The conference will feature its familiar elements such as practical, farmer-led sessions, roundtables, and moderated panels but also feature some new offerings such as youth sessions, lightning talks, farmer-to-farmer conversations, a night of storytelling, and PFI's first feature-length film, "Livestock on the Land."
- [Sustainable Farming Association's \(SFA\) annual conference](#) will also be held as a virtual event from February 8-13, 2021. The conference is planned as an interactive online program featuring the shared wisdom of the sustainable farming community. Where possible, local in-person gatherings that conform to COVID-19 guidelines will be held. Registration is now open and is free to SFA members and \$40 for non-members.

Other Topics (including those outside of our prairie region)

- [Pheasants Forever - PF & Partners Permanently Protect 242 Acres In Minnesota's Carlton County](#) Spearheaded by the St. Louis/Carlton County Chapter of Pheasants Forever with matching investments from the state's Conservation Partners Legacy Program and Outdoor Heritage Fund, the White Acquisition features diverse wildlife habitat and an important off-road corridor for the North Country Trail on the Minnesota-Wisconsin border.
- [Plunging floater survival causes cryptic population decline in the Common Loon](#) - This recently published study, stemming from a 27-year investigation of a marked population, describes a population decline in Common Loons in northern Wisconsin. The authors' modeling results suggest that declines in vital rates could lead to a loss of 52% of the current population and a decline of 37% in territory occupancy by 2031. Check out the plain language summary on the AOS Wing Beat's blog [here](#).