

Minnesota Wildlifers,

Welcome to the March 2022 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

- [Yellowstone aims to cull 900 bison this year](#) - Yellowstone National Park has begun its annual winter effort to remove bison from the park's herd to help meet population objectives and reduce spread of disease to livestock, damage to private property, and threats to human safety. This year, the National Park Service aims to cull 900 of the 5,000 bison in the park, and is prioritizing relocation over slaughter.
- [Farms following soil-friendly practices grow healthier food, study suggests](#) - Results of the preliminary experiment, which included 10 farms across the U.S., show that the crops from farms following soil-friendly practices for at least five years had a healthier nutritional profile than the same crops grown on neighboring, conventional farms.
- [Minnesota farmland values rise, with biggest jump in the south](#) - Minnesota land values in 2021 increased from 2020, according to a report from the Minnesota chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. The report, released March 1, 2022, does not give a state score but focuses on local and county changes. Ag land values are generally higher in the southern part of the state than the north.
- [Benefits of cover crops extend to dry areas](#) - Cover crops do far more than cover soils. They provide an array of benefits, such as the ability to reduce soil erosion and increase soil health. They can help attract pollinators, repel pests, turn into "green manure," or can be used as feed for livestock.
- [Conservation Reserve Program's Evolving Mission](#) - Its historic focus has been the removal of whole fields and farms from production, both to reduce crop output and attain conservation benefits. CRP is currently a portfolio composed of General CRP, Continuous CRP, and Grassland CRP. Total CRP acres on October 31, 2021 were 22.3 million, with 46%, 36%, and 18% in General, Continuous, and Grassland CRP, respectively. This was the first time General CRP accounted for less than 50% of CRP acres. The previous low was 55% on October 31, 2020. Total CRP acres peaked at 36.7 million in 2007.
- [Human-mediated trophic mismatch between fire, plants and herbivores](#) - A recent study compares the timing of anthropogenic fires vs. lightning-lit fires. The authors also pair their review with a field study tracking white-tailed fawn survival in which they found that fawns were more likely to starve when born far from areas burned during the peak month of lightning fire phenology. They suggest that human activities (e.g., prescribed fires) may be an additional causative agent of trophic mismatch, beyond climate change factors.

Pollinators and Insects

- **[‘A world of wounds’: Decline in grasshopper populations offers window into consequences of climate change](#)** - For the last two decades, the grasshoppers of the Konza Prairie Biological Station in Manhattan, Kansas, have been declining — even as their main food source, grass, has nearly doubled in abundance. The Konza grasshoppers have declined by over 30% in the last 22 years.
- **[Milkweed species proves beneficial for monarch conservation](#)** - Researchers have identified a species of milkweed that holds promise for planting on roadsides to improve conservation habitat for migrating monarch butterflies. The findings verify that the bract milkweed (*Asclepias brachystephana*) is a good candidate for planting within roadside or rights-of-way conservation projects.

Pesticides, Invasive Species, and Disease

- **[Threat of deadly virus keeps poultry farmers on edge](#)** - After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, case numbers are finally on the decline, and many restrictions are being lifted. But Minnesota's poultry producers are on high alert for a different deadly virus: highly pathogenic avian influenza.
- **[US officials reverse course on pesticide’s harm to wildlife](#)** - U.S. wildlife officials reversed their previous finding that a widely used and highly toxic pesticide could jeopardize dozens of plants and animals with extinction, after receiving pledges from chemical manufacturers that they will change product labels for malathion so that it’s used more carefully by gardeners, farmers and other consumers.

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

- **Bumble Bee Short Course for Community Scientists: building skills of community scientists interested in bumble bee biodiversity, ecology and conservation.**
 - *Six consecutive Fridays from 1PM to 2:30PM EASTERN, March 18th — April 22nd*
 - More Info Here: <https://u.osu.edu/thebumblebeeshortcourse/>
- **Parks and Rec meets Berry and Leopold: Nick Offerman’s Growing Conservation Ethic.**
March 10th at 7pm (hosted through Zoom)
 - How do we “comprehend, protect, and truly experience the outdoors,” even in fields outside of conservation? Actor, author, humorist and woodworker Nick Offerman explores this question in his latest book, *Where the Deer and the Antelope Play*. Join the Aldo Leopold Foundation, led by Buddy Huffaker, for an evening in conversation with Offerman as we search together for answers.
 - This event is free, but registration is required! Save your spot at: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nHNo7PYgQnS546nGFSNYiw?fbclid=IwAR3HxSrtFDQB7kvfotD4RKZs64kfnsEp_ngl90lLqkDLXR3ltpCxeCKRq-8