



Prairie Telegraph

A Newsletter of the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance for its Members and Midewin Volunteers

Volume 15, No. 2

In Celebration of Midewin's 15th Anniversary

By Jerry Heinrich, President, Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance



Hearty hikers celebrate Midewin's 15th anniversary.

On January 30, thirteen intrepid individuals met at Midewin's Iron Bridge trailhead for the first annual Midewin Alliance winter hike. The trail was blanketed with snow, the temperature was in the upper twenties, the vistas were grand, and conditions were ideal for our three-hour, round-trip hike. At the half-way point, one of the hikers, Carol M., produced two huge bags of cookies to share. After the hike, most of the group headed into Wilmington to consume a few more calories at Hayden's Crossing Restaurant.

For some, our January 30th hike was an excuse to get outdoors and obtain some needed exercise. For optimists like me, this end-of-January hike served to mark the beginning of the end of winter. In any case,

after significant discussion and several cookies while taking a break on the Prairie Creek Bridge, we all agreed that our 2011 winter hike should be in celebration of Midewin's 15th anniversary. (Midewin was created by an Act of Congress on February 10, 1996.) Next year, it is anticipated that the second annual Midewin Alliance winter hike will be held on February 11 in celebration of Midewin's 16th anniversary. We hope that you will join us.

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A Midewin Almanac

From Arthur Melville Pearson, Midewin Volunteer

If you've enjoyed the new signage out at Midewin, you may be interested in *A Midewin Almanac*. Midewin volunteer Arthur Melville Pearson wrote the text for the signage and is currently chronicling his restoration experiences on his blog at www.midewinrestoration.net. At the end of the year, Arthur will compile his experiences – along with research into Midewin's multi-faceted history – into a book. In the mean time, he invites fellow restorationists to share their experiences on his blog.

Plants of Concern – Rare Plant Monitoring At Midewin, 2011

From Susanne Masi, Chicago Botanic Garden

Plants of Concern (POC) is gearing up for its 11th season of rare plant monitoring at Midewin! Volunteers interested in learning more about the rarest species and their habitats in Drummond Prairie and at Grant Creek Prairie are welcome to join. You may choose to come out for a half-day during the season to help out just for the experience, or you may become a participant on a regular basis over the summer as your schedule permits. Training workshops are scheduled below and new POC volunteers are urged to attend; however, in-field training is also available during monitoring days.

The workshops are held throughout the Chicago Wilderness region and some Midewin-based people may wish to take one at another site or venue as a way to satisfy their great curiosity about the region's natural areas! However the workshops at Danada Forest Preserve in Wheaton on Sunday, April 3, 2011, or Plum Creek Nature Center in Beecher on Saturday, April 9, 2011, are the most convenient locations to Midewin. Contact Susan Masi at smasi@chicagobotanic.org for more information.

Former Midewin POC volunteers will be pleased to learn that Tatiana Skyba will return as the POC Midewin Research Assistant as well as the Vegetation Transect project coordinator. She will be back on staff at the Chicago Botanic Garden around May 1, 2011, and will contact returning and interested volunteers about the monitoring schedule. Monitoring begins the second week of May with the White Lady's Slipper Orchid and the Sandwort. The first sessions take place 2-3 days a week through mid-June, with other times to follow throughout the season. In the meantime, to get a head start, monitors can let POC manager Susanne Masi know of their availability – days and times - during May and June at the email address above.

Take a Look at Midewin's New Website

By Marta Witt, Former Midewin Webmaster



On February 28, 2011, Midewin's website moved from its home at www.fs.fed.us to the new national Forest Service "portal" at www.fs.usda.gov. It will look very different, but will contain the same information as the old site and will have many improvements.

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The *Prairie Telegraph* is published bimonthly by the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that serves as an advocate and "Friend of Midewin" by supporting prairie restoration and promoting the many volunteer, research, educational, and recreational opportunities at Midewin. Contact information for:

- Midewin Alliance – Jerry Heinrich, president email: g.heinrich@sbcglobal.net
- *Prairie Telegraph* – Marianne Hahn, co-editor email: mariannehahn@sbcglobal.net or Jolie and Steve Krasinski, co-editors email: joliek@aadimonte.com
- Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie – website: www.fs.fed.us/mntp

Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily endorsed by the Alliance Board or the U.S. Forest Service.

Midewin's New Website (continued)

Midewin's website was designed originally and maintained for several years by volunteer Wendy Liles. She taught me how to use Microsoft Front Page software to keep it updated and I have acted as Midewin's "pseudo-webmaster" since about 2003. In 2009, the Forest Service began migrating all national forest websites to the WWW Portal, a new set of technologies hosted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The portal technologies make publishing web content easier, standardize the presentation of the content, maintain a consistent Forest Service brand throughout the country, and ensure that our web pages comply with Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act, making them accessible for people with disabilities.

The design of the new portal websites provides a consistent "feel" and organization of information on all Forest Service sites with lots of room for local customization. A significant change is the organization of recreation information nationwide. Photo galleries are also much easier to upload and view. Midewin's first two web galleries are a collection of Midewin bird photos by volunteer Rich Hickson and a second one of photos submitted by successful Midewin hunters.

The portal template will continue to evolve. Interactive recreation maps are planned in the future, layering recreation information and GIS data on a Google Map base.

Midewin Winter Lecture Series - I'm What You Call "Indoorsy"

From Wendy Tresouthick, Environmental Education Specialist, MNTF

Okay, just kidding, I suspect that if you receive this newsletter you are not the "indoorsy" type, but you have to admit that on certain days, the winter prairie landscape is best enjoyed from the inside of a picture window! If you want to stay connected to the prairie in the comfort of the Midewin Welcome Center, then spend a few of your upcoming Thursday evenings with us for the second half of the winter evening lecture series.

On March 3, 2011, Chris Phillips, Herpetologist from the Illinois Natural History Survey will present *Amphibians and Reptiles of the Tallgrass Prairie*. Chris is an engaging speaker who loves his herps! The vast size of Midewin and the wide range of ecosystems present, from dolomite prairies to wetlands to woodlands, provide for a diverse herpetofaunal community. Participants will get an up close and personal visit with some of these amazing cold blooded creatures.

If plants are more your style, then you'll want to attend *Endangered Plants: Is This The Best We Can Do?* presented on March 17, 2011, by Tim Bell, Professor of Botany at Chicago State University. Tim will discuss threats to the viability of reintroduced and natural endangered plant populations. He will illustrate examples using endangered species of the Midwest including eastern prairie fringed orchid, Pitcher's thistle, leafy prairie clover and savannah blazingstar.

On April 7, 2011, Chris Anchor, Wildlife Biologist with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, will present *Predators of Chicagoland*. Chris will give an overview of the Chicagoland Coyote Research Project as well as a status update on seldom seen wildlife in Illinois: mountain lions, black bears and timber wolves.

The lecture series finale will be on April 21, 2011, when Wendy Tresouthick, Environmental Education Specialist at Midewin, will present *Spiders of the Prairie*. Participants will learn about some memorable 8-legged creatures found while exploring Midewin or while stepping into your bathtub! Even if spiders are not your favorite animals, you may find that there is room for a little "spider love" in us all.

All lectures are free of cost, start at 7:00 pm and last an hour to an hour and a half. Doors open at 6:30 pm with light refreshments provided courtesy of the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance.



From the Internet --- Forest Service News

Beginning March 1, the Forest Service will begin a year-long celebration of the centennial of the Weeks Act (<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/weeks-act.html>), one of the most significant natural resource conservation achievements of the 20th century. Since its passage, the Weeks Act has led to the creation of 52 national forests in 26 Eastern states, and the addition of 19.7 million acres on 92 national forests and grasslands across 41 states and Puerto Rico. This anniversary provides a special opportunity for the Forest Service along with its partners to highlight major land restoration accomplishments and to demonstrate how public forests continue to be an integral part of America's environmental and economic well-being today. The celebration will include a number of national, regional and local events with partners, Forest Service retirees, states, and local communities.

Mark Your Calendar! Midewin Alliance Events

By Jerry Heinrich, President, Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance

March - April 2011 Native Plant Sale & Fundraiser

The Midewin Alliance is currently taking orders for native plants. To help ensure availability, please place your order as early as possible, preferably before the end of March. In addition to forty varieties of forbs, grasses, sedges, shrubs, and trees, we are also offering a special Native Plant Kit consisting of 28 plants that should do well in most sunny, well-drained, mesic to dry-mesic locations, i.e., medium to medium-dry soil moisture. Plants will be available for pickup on Saturday, May 21, 2011, at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. To learn more about our 2011 Native Plant Sale, visit the Midewin website at www.fs.usda.gov or contact Jerry or Connie Heinrich at g.heinrich@sbcglobal.net or by phone at 815- 476-6171.

May 21, 2011 - Midewin Alliance 2011 Native Plant Sale, Saturday, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Administration Site.

Looking for something to do? Stop by and visit with Midewin Alliance volunteers who will be manning a Midewin exhibit at the following upcoming events:

- March 5-7, 2011 Illinois Horse Fair**
Friday 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm / Saturday 9:00 am to 7:00 pm / Sunday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm - Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield, Illinois
- March 5, 2011 2011 Grundy County Earth Expo (aka Grundy County Environmental Fair)**
Saturday 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
Morris Community High School, 1000 Union Street, Morris, Illinois
- March 5, 2011 Wild Things Conference (\$40 registration fee / \$15 student)**
Saturday 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
University of Illinois at Chicago, Student Center East
- April 30, 2011 Plum Creek Nature Center Earth Day Celebration**
Saturday 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
27064 Dutton Rd, Beecher, IL



Earth Day Celebration on April 23, 2011
Please join us from 9:00 am - 2:30 pm

*Give a wildflower a chance to grow!
Help us control the thugs.*



Garlic Mustard, *Alliaria petiolata*, is an invasive species that is taking over many woodland areas. This plant dominates the woodland floor and suppresses valuable native wildflowers within years. Garlic Mustard not only threatens native plants but all other wildlife that depends on the native plants for survival. This plant produces large amounts of seed that allows the weed to spread rapidly. If that is not bad enough, it releases toxins into the soil that inhibit other plants from growing.

We can slow down the Garlic Mustard invasion by eliminating individuals before they set seed.

Together we are making a Difference!

Bring a lunch, grab a friend and help native wildflowers flourish again.

Volunteer Workdays for March and April 2011

Prairie Restoration and Horticulture

From Bill Glass, Jennifer Durkin, Delane Strohmeyer, and Eric Ulaszek, USDA Forest Service, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Date and Day	Time	Meeting Location	Activities
10 March 2011 Thursday	9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Midewin SO (Horticulture Bldg)	Invasive Plant Control in morning, transplanting seedlings in the afternoon.
31 March 2011 Thursday	9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Midewin SO (Horticulture Bldg)	Invasive Plant Control in morning, transplanting seedlings in the afternoon.
2 April 2011 Saturday	9:00 am – 2:30 pm	Midewin SO (Horticulture Bldg)	Moving dormant prairie plants back to the shade houses.
23 April 2011 Saturday	9:00 am – 2:30 pm	Location TBA	Earth Day - Garlic Mustard Control in native woodlands.
28 April 2011 Thursday	8:00 am -12:30 pm	Midewin SO (Horticulture Bldg)	Invasive Plant Control – Garlic Mustard control in native woodlands

The next workday is Saturday (9:00 am), May 7, 2011. Please meet at the River Road Seed Beds. Depending on the weather, we'll be planting prairie plugs or pulling garlic mustard.

All March and two April workdays will meet at Midewin Headquarters. See last page for directions.

Earth Day (April 23 workday) and other field activities The days are getting longer and soon it will be spring. That means birds singing, frogs calling, and spring wildflowers – and garlic mustard too! So we'll be out in April and early May to patrol some of our highest quality woodlands and remove bags of garlic mustard, and the enjoy the rich spring flora present in these woodlands. We'll announce the location of the April 23rd workday as spring progresses; we'll select a site with spring wildflowers that will benefit from the workday!

Greenhouse Activities With the greenhouse up and running, we'll have some workday afternoons transplanting seedlings. On a sunny but cool day, our greenhouse is a pleasant place to remind you of the coming growing season. Schedules permitting, we may schedule a day for transplanting in the greenhouse.

A few reminders! Please note that start and finish times vary with day and activities. Activities will include cutting and treating invasive brush (only volunteers with pesticide license can apply herbicide), cleaning/planting seed (indoors), and sharpening/cleaning tools (indoors). Because workdays may be cancelled because of poor travel conditions, please call ahead!

Please contact Allison Cisneros, Volunteer Coordinator, if you plan on attending workdays (telephone 815-423-2149, or email at amcisneros@fs.fed.us). Knowing how many volunteers will attend a workday allows Midewin staff to better organize the workday, and we can inform you of any changes. If you plan on staying for the entire workday, please bring your lunch. As always, Midewin will provide tools, safety gear, and water for volunteers.

Children are welcome, but must be accompanied and supervised by a parent, guardian or chaperones (for educational groups). Volunteer groups are welcome to join our workdays; many hands make for light work! Please call ahead to schedule your group's visit, so Midewin staff can plan ahead and provide an appropriate activity for your group's size and abilities. Please do not bring dogs or other pets to workdays.

Midewin Alliance Annual Financial Report - 2010

by Connie Heinrich, Midewin Alliance Treasurer

Presented below is an accounting of the finances of the Midewin Alliance for 2010. It does not include earnings and expenses of our sister organization, the Midewin Interpretive Association, which operates the bookstore in the Midewin Welcome Center.

The Alliance is looking forward to making a major contribution to Midewin in 2011. As you can see from the table below, the Alliance accumulated enough money in 2010 to fund a significant project this year. The Alliance board is considering several projects to undertake at Midewin, but to date, a decision has not been made. Of course, any project would require approval from the Forest Service. When the project is decided upon and approved, the details will be published in the *Prairie Telegraph*.

2010 MIDEWIN ALLIANCE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Income	Gross income	Net income
Fundraiser / Sales	\$ 14,365	\$ 8,303
Grants	2,000	2,000
Donations	11,892	11,892
Interest income	185	185
Other	85	85
Total	\$ 28,527	\$ 22,465

Expenses	Percent	Amount
Administration costs	3	\$ 411
Illinois Sales Tax	4	645
Program expense	22	3,159
Newsletter	22	3,297
Grant expenditures	6	882
Contributions to Midewin	43	6,299
	100	\$ 14,693
Starting balance - 12/31/09		\$ 34,155
Ending balance - 12/31/10		\$ 41,927

Membership Application If you are already a member, tell a friend!!

Yes, I (or my organization) would like to become a member of the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance (MTPA).

Enclosed is my check for annual membership: () \$15 for individuals, or () \$25 for organizations

MTPA is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Name(s): _____ email: _____

Name of organization and your title (if applicable): _____

Street address: _____ City: _____

State and zip code: _____ Phone: _____

Send to: Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance, P.O. Box 2026, Joliet, Illinois 60434

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Joliet, IL 60434

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Directions to Midewin

From I-55: Take exit 241 at Wilmington and at the top of the ramp, turn left (east). Go 3.5 miles on New River Road, turning left (north) on State Route 53, and proceed 1 mile to the site.

From I-80: Take exit 132, State Route 53 (Chicago Street), and turn right (south) at the end of the ramp. Go south about 15 miles to the Headquarters. For the Seedbeds, go about 1 mile further and turn right (west) on River Rd.

From I-57: Take exit 327 at Peotone and turn left (west) from the northbound ramp, or right (west) from the southbound ramp. Go about 15 miles to State Route 53, and turn right (north). Go about 1.5 miles, passing River Rd., to the Headquarters.

River Road seedbeds: The entrance is on the north side of River Rd., across from Boathouse Road, about 2.5 miles from Route 53 or about 1.3 miles from I- 55.