

# Prairie Biotic Research, Inc.

## 2009 Annual Report

April 30, 2010

Prairie Biotic Research (PBR) is a 501(c)(3), scientific public charity devoted to basic, field biological research in U.S. prairies and savannas. PBR has four board members and 10 scientific advisors. We are all volunteers and we all engage in this type of research ourselves. PBR promotes basic research through our Small Grants and Third Party Grants Programs. Whereas many attempt to restore prairies, we aim to restore prairie natural history. We cultivate an ethic of thoughtful inquiry. We held our tenth annual meeting on April 28, 2010. What follows are summaries of our 2009 and 2010 Small Grants Programs, each of which occurred partly in 2009, and our 2009 finances.

This is a very simple business and we strive to keep it simple. That said, we have just created a website: **[www.prairiebioticresearch.org](http://www.prairiebioticresearch.org)** Even if you have been aware for some years of our organization and its work, you will surely better appreciate what we do and why we do it by perusing our new website where you can see, for the first time, some of the results, both tangible and intangible, of our efforts to foster basic, field biological research. We hope this will prompt your participation in this work by making a donation of any size to support it.

Since our last annual meeting in April, 2009, our board of directors has been comprised of four people: Andrew Williams (President, Treasurer), Michael Anderson (Vice-President), Rebecca Christoffel (Secretary) and Daniel Young. Our board members and officers have agreed to continue serving in 2010. Over this past year, we've had a group of 10 scientific advisors reviewing grant proposals for us: Craig Brabant of Wisconsin; Jaime Edwards of Minnesota; Brick Fevold, recently of Wisconsin but now of Puerto Rico; Kerry Katovich of Wisconsin; Douglas LeDoux of Missouri; Victoria Nuzzo of New York; Ursula Petersen of Wisconsin; Dennis Schlicht of Iowa; Scott Swengel of Wisconsin; and David Voegtlin of Illinois. We are delighted to have these 10 scientific advisors working with us.

In 2009, PBR received 41 donations, ranging from \$2 to \$5,000 and totaling \$23,988. Solicitation of foundations yielded \$12,675 in donations: \$5,000 from Willow Springs Foundation; \$3,425 from Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation; \$2,000 from The Paul E. Stry Foundation; \$1,000 from Reva and David Logan Foundation; \$500 from The R. D. and Linda Peters Foundation; \$500 from Arthur W. Strelow Charitable Trust and \$250 from Herbert H. Kohl Charities. We consistently pass on 100% of gifts from foundations, businesses and nonprofits to researchers in our Small Grants Program, often over two grant cycles. The Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation grant included \$425 to purchase accounting software and to upgrade our accounting practice.

Individual donors in 2009 were Andria Blattner, Stephen and Nancy Bloom, Kurt Christoffel, Rebecca Christoffel, Hildy Feen, Tamara Felden, Don and Helen Hagar, M. J. Hatfield, George and Marilyn Johnson, Roma Lenehan, Emily Moore, Richard Moore, Connie Mutel, Robert Owen and Catherine Gimse-Owen, Ursula Petersen, Ron Priest, Nancy Schlimgen, Jim and Rose Sime, Glenn Teschendorf, Richard and Elaine Tinberg, Andrew Williams, Ken Wood, and 12 anonymous donors who "fed the donation jar" where I made presentations. These people donated a total of \$11,313.

### **SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM**

Our competitive, annual Small Grants Program awards grants up to \$1,000 to individuals for the study of any species in native or restored, U.S. prairies or savannas. We favor independent researchers, but any individual may apply. Our board members and scientific advisors are ineligible for funding through our Small Grants Program. An historic summary of our Small Grants Program is posted on our new website, where many researcher reports are now readily available to the public for the first time.

**Our 2009 Small Grants Program was announced in October, 2008.** Our grant announcement went by email to 1,329 individuals (past participants, people associated with universities, natural history museums and nonprofits), and appeared on 17 list serves, three grant clearing houses and in one newsletter. We received 96 proposals from 26 states. Each scientific advisor reviewed all 96 proposals, winnowed out the best 20 and ranked those 1-20. The individual rankings of our scientific advisors were summed, yielding a composite ranking that is the board's primary funding guide, tempered only by the restrictions some donors place on their gifts. In 2009, we had donations restricted to supporting research in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin. Participants were notified of our decisions in mid-March, 2009.

We were able to fund 21 of 96 proposals this year, with a total of \$20,494 — more proposals funded and with more money than ever before. These 21 proposals were submitted by 24 people: 13 men and 11 women. Some are academics: two professors, a postdoctoral researcher, five doctoral students and six M.S. students. Ten are independent researchers. The breakdown by state is: Arkansas (1), Colorado (2), Idaho (1), Illinois (4), Indiana (1), Iowa (2), Kansas (1), Louisiana (1), Michigan (1), Texas (1), Washington (3) and Wisconsin (3).

Foundation support for these grants was provided by the Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation; Hillsdale Fund, Inc.; The Fred Maytag Family Foundation; Russell J. Blattner Charitable Trust; Reva and David Logan Foundation; The R. D. and Linda Peters Foundation; Conservation and Research Foundation; Arthur W. Strelow Charitable Trust; Herbert H. Kohl Charities; and Merganser Fund. The nonprofit Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin contributed to these grants. Businesses supporting our 2009 Small Grants Program were BioLogic Environmental Consulting, LLC, of Fitchburg, WI; Midwest Prairies, LLC, of Milton, WI; The Soap Opera of Madison, WI; and Starbucks. We are especially grateful to Andria

Blattner who provided last minute funding so that we could fully fund several proposals that were tied in their rankings. Her timely gift directly benefits four of the winners listed below who, without benefit of her gift, would have received only partial funding.

**Funds restricted to supporting research in Illinois funded four proposals:**

Andrew J. Berger (\$882): Terrestrial habitat use and movements of juvenile yellow mud turtles (*Kinosternon flavescens*) in Illinois.

Katherine Chi (\$980): Reproductive ecology and population genetics of *Besseyia bullii*, a rare species.

Robert Stanton (\$900): Plant host association and movement of two prairie cicadas.

Jim Wiker (\$1000): Abundance and diversity of inverts (focus on skippers, moths and butterflies) on hill prairies, glades and woodlands along the Mississippi River Bluffs in Illinois.

**Funds restricted to supporting research in Iowa funded two proposals:**

Stephen Hendrix (\$1000): Use of native and introduced plants by cavity-nesting bees.

Irma Tapia (\$1000): Genetic diversity and connectivity in white-tailed jackrabbit populations in Iowa with notes on seasonal home ranges.

**Funds restricted to supporting research in Michigan funded one proposal:**

Raffica J. La Rosa (\$1000): Natural selection by pollinators on floral traits in three species of milkweed.

**Funds restricted to supporting research in Wisconsin funded three proposals:**

Susan K. Chamberlain (\$1000): Persistence of local and non-local warm season grass varieties under warm season and cool season grazing cycles.

Kathleen Kieler (\$1000): Taxonomic analysis of Hymenoptera samples from a Driftless Area prairie and oak savanna remnant.

Eric Matthew Wood (\$1000): Importance of savanna to butterfly communities.

**Funds donated without geographic restriction funded 11 proposals:**

Stacy Duckett (\$1000, TX): Monitoring a translocated population of black-tailed prairie dogs.

Steve Erickson (\$1000, WA): Germination requirements of seed of *Carex tumulicola*.

Carrie L. Hall & Daniel R. Howard (\$1000, ID): Disturbance ecology of the endangered American burying beetle: population dynamics and response to fire and grazing in *Nicrophorus americanus* at The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Oklahoma.

Thor Hanson (\$1000, WA): A survey of bees in prairie remnants of the San Juan Archipelago.

Erica Henry (\$1000, WA): Filling in the gaps: Characterizing habitat requirements of an imperiled skipper, *Polites mardon*.

Daniel J. Martin & Tom Mathies (\$982, CO): Habitat correlates and occupancy rates of herptiles on shortgrass prairie.

Russell L. Minton (\$750, LA): Land snails of Black Bayou Lake Wildlife Refuge: documenting Louisiana's prairie and bottomland fauna.

William E. Peterman (\$1000, IN): From wasteland to prairie land: impacts of prairie restoration and management of reclaimed surface mines on crawfish frog populations and amphibian species richness.

Steven M. Roels (\$1000, KS): Herbivory and effects on reproduction in a threatened prairie plant, Mead's milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*).

Robin M. Verble (\$1000, AR): Inventory of ants (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) in Arkansas prairies.

Julie Whitman-Zai & Maren Francis (\$1000, CO): Field study of prairie funnel web spiders in the genus *Agelenopsis* (Family Agelenidae): what factors cause certain species to inhabit a narrowly defined prairie niche?

**Our 2010 Small Grants Program was announced in October, 2009.** Our grant announcement went by email to 1604 individuals (past participants and people associated with universities, natural history museums and nonprofits), and appeared on eight list serves, three grant clearing houses and in one newsletter. We received 76 proposals from 28 states and even from an American graduate student in the United Kingdom. Each scientific advisor reviewed all 76 proposals, winnowed out the best 18 and ranked those 1-18. The individual rankings of our scientific advisors were summed, yielding a composite ranking that is the board's primary funding guide, tempered only by the restrictions some donors place on their gifts. In 2010, we had donations restricted to supporting research in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. Participants were notified of our decisions in mid-March, 2010.

We were able to fund 18 of 76 proposals this year, with a total of \$17,258. These 18 proposals were submitted by 11 men and 7 women. Some are academics: four professors, five

doctoral students, three M.S. students, and two undergraduates. Four are independent researchers. The breakdown by state is: California (1), Colorado (1), Illinois (4), Iowa (4), Missouri (2), New Mexico (1), North Dakota (1), South Dakota (1), Texas (1), Washington (1), and Wisconsin (1). This is the first time we have funded researchers in California, New Mexico and South Dakota. Two of these 18 researchers are previous winners — Moni Berg-Binder and Rebecca Tonietto both won funding in 2008.

Foundation support for these grants was provided by Willow Springs Foundation; The Fred Maytag Family Foundation; The Paul E. Stry Foundation; Reva and David Logan Foundation; James E. Dutton Foundation (gift arrived in early 2010); The R. D. and Linda Peters Foundation; Merganser Fund; and Herbert H. Kohl Charities. Businesses supporting our 2010 Small Grants Program were BioLogic Environmental Consulting, LLC, of Fitchburg, WI; and Midwest Prairies, LLC, of Milton, WI.

**Funds restricted to support research in Illinois funded one proposal:**

Kenneth W. McCravy (\$1000): Native bees of west-central Illinois: diversity and survey methodology.

**Funds restricted to support research in Iowa funded three proposals:**

Marguerite Brandenburg (\$1000): Reproductive ecology of white-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus townsendii*) in central Iowa.

William H. Heyborne (\$1000): Terrestrial gastropods of Iowa's Loess Hills.

Ted Wilson (\$1000): Survey of insects with emphasis on fireflies (Lampyridae) at Sioux City Prairie.

**Funds restricted to support research in Wisconsin funded one proposal:**

Ryan Stephens (\$1000): Small mammal assemblages and habitat associations in Wisconsin prairies.

**Funds donated without geographic restriction funded 13 proposals:**

Moni Berg-Binder (\$988, IL): Are *Formica* ant mounds favorable microhabitats for invasive leafy spurge?

Scott Chamberlain (\$896, TX): Pollinator communities of crop and wild sunflowers.

Peter Christensen (\$1000, ND): The effects of landscape pattern on prairie pothole wetland invertebrate community structure.

Adam Clause (\$900, CA): Distributional ecology of the federally 'Threatened' delta green

ground beetle (*Elaphrus viridis*).

Jennifer M. Duggan (\$1000, IL): Movement of Franklin's ground squirrel in prairie and agricultural habitats.

Steve Hummel (\$850, IA): The distribution of Odonata of South Dakota.

Cara Joos (\$1000, MO): Fitness and habitat selection of Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii bellii*) in central Missouri.

Kaylan Kemink (\$923, MO): The Missouri greater prairie-chicken: Historic decline and present-day survival and movement.

Frank T. Krell (\$975, CO): The dung beetle fauna associated with re-introduced bison in the Colorado prairie.

L. Brian Patrick (\$748, SD): Spider and beetle diversity in a high quality remnant prairie and a reseeded CRP field..

Jennifer E. Ramirez (\$978, NM): Black-tailed prairie dog colony persistence and efficacy of using remote-sensing as a tool for estimating prairie dog populations.

Rebecca Tonietto (\$1000, IL): Effects of prairie restoration on bee-pollination ecosystem services.

Joshua Lewis Wallace (\$1000, WA): Developing an effective method for sampling reptiles in prairie environments using artificial cover objects.

Our 2011 Small Grants Program will begin in mid-October, 2010.

### **THIRD PARTY GRANTS PROGRAM**

We encourage independent researchers to submit grant proposals to other agencies under the non-profit aegis of PBR, thereby opening up new avenues of research funding for individuals. No such proposals came to PBR in 2009.

### **WE NEED YOU**

Donations are our life blood. The size of any donation matters little; what does matter is that we show the IRS that PBR is valued and supported by the public. You may specify how we use your donation: for our Small Grants Program, to build our research endowment, to cover operating expenses or any combination of these. PBR is run entirely by volunteers and maintains no office or vehicle so our operating expenses are very low. We are most grateful for your past

interest and support and hope you will continue to support PBR. Please try to interest others in PBR and its mission.

PBR funds experimental research but we also fund observational research -- natural history. We fund applied research to grapple with particular conservation problems, but we also fund basic research that has no currently appreciable connection with conservation. We fund only individuals. We support field-oriented research on any taxa in U.S. prairies and savannas, on restoration and management, on control of exotic species, and we fund biotic inventories. We favor research that produces specimens donated to institutional collections where they will be available to support future research by others. We fund research by self-motivated students and academic faculty but we are most eager to fund research by independent individuals -- curious, knowledgeable people who have expertise and concern for threatened prairie and savanna habitats and all the varied life forms living there and who are not already adequately funded. We prefer research that leads to publications and presentations.

More than half of our grants support graduate students, so there is an educational aspect to our work. There is also a cultural aspect to our work -- for us, the need to study our natural world is as compelling as painting is for the artist. What makes this activity so urgent is that these habitats and the species that live in these habitats are vanishing, as you well know. We are gathering information that may slow this terrible erosion of our natural heritage, while fostering the development of these researchers, thereby sustaining our cultural heritage.

Science, itself, and thus Prairie Biotic Research as well, are antidotes to dogma, to celebrity, to established authority. We revel in the wonders of nature through inquiry. We foster the development of curious people who feel driven to figure out how our world works so that we can lessen our destruction of nature. Please help us to help more such people as we cultivate an ethic of thoughtful inquiry.

All of us are besieged with pleas for money from nonprofits of every stripe and description. But it means a great deal to the 14 of us volunteering to make this charitable work as successful as possible that we and you, together, make this opportunity possible for the researchers we jointly serve. Please help us to the extent you can.

Respectfully submitted,

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