



**The Southeast  
Nebraska Flagship  
Initiative** is a

partnership whose purpose is to work collaboratively on conservation with in the Biologically-Unique Landscapes in southeastern Nebraska. Flagship steering committee members include :

- Northern Prairies Land Trust**
- Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center**
- The Nature Conservancy**
- The Nebraska Game & Parks Commission**

The Flagship Initiative was formed through the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project.

[www.nebraskanaturallegacy.org](http://www.nebraskanaturallegacy.org)

**Mark Your Calendars**

**January 29, 2009**

Tallgrass Prairie Partnership's annual Management Seminar in Beatrice. Talks will include carbon sequestration in grasslands, marketing carbon credits to increase ag income, along with several other topics. There is no cost to attend the seminar and lunch will be provided to those who register ahead of time. Call 402.228.0276 to register.

**FIRST THOUGHTS**

This is the first edition of a new tool designed to exchange information among landowners, biologists, and community members in southeastern Nebraska. Think of it as a hub for information exchange rather than a lecture series. It will be an interactive newsletter – one that relies on information and questions from readers as the major source of material.

Specifically, we are asking you to provide us with questions, sightings, event announcements, and interesting tidbits that other people could benefit from seeing. In return we will try to answer your questions as quickly as possible and/or connect you to someone who knows more about the topic.

We propose to deliver the newsletter by email as much as possible to save both paper and money. If you are receiving this as a paper copy, please send us your email address if you have one, and we'll send future copies that way. We'll make it worth your while by providing more in-depth articles and direct links to more information on the internet. **Send your email address to *Mardell at [mjasnowski@tnc.org](mailto:mjasnowski@tnc.org) or call her at 402-694-4191. If you wish to be added to the mailing list please contact Mardell.***

**QUICK HITS**

***Habitat Program Manager Hired***

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center is pleased to announce that Gordon Warrick began in September as the Habitat Program Manager. Gordon replaces Arnold Mendenhall, who retired but is still an active volunteer at the prairie. Raised on a farm near Blair, NE, Gordon comes to the prairie from a career with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. If you are interested in learning more about tallgrass prairie management and outreach, you can contact him at 402.797.2301 or [gwarrick@audubon.org](mailto:gwarrick@audubon.org)

***Patch-Burn Grazing Working Group in Aurora Sept. 18th & 19th***

The Nature Conservancy's Eastern Nebraska Project Office in Aurora hosted about 45 people from around the country for the annual Patch-Burn Grazing Working Group meeting. This was the fifth meeting of the group, made up of university researchers, conservation land managers, and ranchers. Each year, the group convenes to share recent research results, observations, and ideas, and to tour patch-burn grazing pastures at the host site.

For more information on patch-burn grazing and its potential benefits for both livestock production and wildlife habitat, visit <http://fireecology.okstate.edu/index>.

## NEW WATCH LIST FOR INVASIVES

The Nebraska Noxious Weed Advisory Committee has released an updated Watchlist of invasive plants. The list is meant to be used to gather information on invasive plants that could potentially become noxious weeds. There are no control requirements for these species, but county weed supervisors and others are gathering information on the location, abundance, and spread of these species to gauge whether or not they should be listed as official noxious weeds. If you see these plants, you can contact your county weed supervisor or one of the contacts listed on the last page of this newsletter for advice and so that the information can be captured. More information on this list can be found at <http://www.neweed.org/watchlist.htm>.

### ***Current Watchlist Species:***

***Garlic Mustard***

***Crown Vetch***

***Autumn Olive***

***Perennial Pepperweed***

***Amur Honeysuckle***

***Multiflora Rose***

***Caucasian Bluestem***

***Houndstongue***

***Dames Rocket***

***Sericea Lespedeza***

***Sulfur Cinquefoil***

***Whitetop/Hoary Cress***

***Russian Olive***

***St. John's-wort***

***Dalmation Toadflax***

***European Buckthorn***

## GIVE and TAKE

***This is where we'll field questions from you. Send us questions about weed control techniques or about where to go to get help with prescribed fire, or send us a description of an animal or plant you saw that you'd like identified. We'll get back to you quickly with an answer and will select some questions to post in the next newsletter so everyone can see the answer. Please direct questions to [mjasnowski@tnc.org](mailto:mjasnowski@tnc.org) or call 402-694-4191.***

***Question – Is there any way to kill brush without killing all the grass and good plants underneath them?***

There are at least two good options. One is the basal bark, or streamlining, technique in which you apply a small amount of herbicide and oil (like diesel) to the lower stem of a small tree or bush. This technique uses small amounts of concentrated chemical but kills the tree without having to cut it first and works year-round, even in the winter. It's great for widely scattered small trees or small patches of shrubs. Herbicides using the chemical Triclopyr, such as Remedy, work well with this technique, and the technique is described well on the Remedy label.

For larger dense stands of brush, a wick applicator can be a good solution. There are multiple kinds of wick applicators from the old soybean wicks many farmers have used to more advanced "roller wicks" sold by companies like Agriweld and Rotowiper. In any case, the idea is to wipe herbicide on the foliage of the shrubs without impacting the vegetation that grows beneath them. It works very well in situations where the brush is taller than the grass beneath it but not so big that it tears up the wick applicator equipment. Concentrated amounts of chemicals like Roundup and Garlon are commonly used. Steve Clubine, biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation, had an excellent article on wick application for brush control in a recent edition of his Native Warm-Season Grass Newsletter. That article is available on our website.

**Question – *What are those “lumps” I see on some goldenrod plants?***



Those are galls formed by the Goldenrod Gall Fly, a small fly that lays its eggs inside goldenrod stems. When the eggs hatch, the larvae begin eating the inside of the stem. Their saliva has a chemical that stimulates growth of the stem and forms the ball-shaped gall that provides both food and protection for the fly larvae. There seems to be little negative impact of this on the goldenrod plant. While the gall provides protection for the fly larvae, some bird species - including downy woodpeckers, seek out the galls and eat the larvae. In addition, there are at least two parasitic wasp species that lay their eggs inside the gall where their larvae then feed on the goldenrod fly larvae. Both the wasps and the fly only live in goldenrod stems. More information can be found at

[http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/goldenrod\\_gall\\_fly.htm](http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/goldenrod_gall_fly.htm)

**Question: *I’ve heard that wind turbines can be bad for wildlife. Is that because the blades hit birds?***

Wind energy is an important renewable energy source and needs to be considered as part of a larger strategy to reduce the use of fossil fuels. The amount to which wind energy could contribute to the total energy needs of our country is being strongly debated right now. At least with current and foreseeable technology, it will certainly not be able to supply all of the country’s electricity. If all economically-feasible sites were developed for wind, including offshore sites, the best estimates are that those wind farms might supply up to 19% of the U.S. power supply. However, regardless of how much wind power will contribute to our future energy needs, it is a growing industry.

The impact of wind turbines on wildlife is still being evaluated. The threat of collisions between birds (and bats) and turbines is usually low, except in rare cases where wind farms are located in narrow migratory corridors. There are a number of important migratory bird sites in Nebraska where collisions could be a problem, particularly if turbines were placed near rivers and wetlands where waterfowl and other water birds make frequent stops. However, the biggest threat to wildlife from wind farm development is the fragmentation of our grasslands.

Some areas of Nebraska with high wind production potential are in the largest and best of our remaining grasslands. There is growing evidence that some grassland birds, including prairie chickens, will abandon habitat within a zone of up to a mile or more from wind turbines. Many birds have been known to avoid using areas near other human-caused disturbances – buildings, oil/gas well-heads, power lines, roads, etc. Since each wind turbine is accompanied by a gravel service road and a transmission line, the disturbance to wildlife comes from more than just the tower itself. Additional research is underway to help us better understand the kinds of impacts wind farms might have on wildlife (birds and otherwise). In the meantime, it will be important to consider potential wildlife impacts and choose locations that minimize that risk. There are plenty of areas in Nebraska that have good wind potential and few conflicts with grasslands and grassland wildlife. As with many other things, it’s not that wind power is a good thing or a bad thing - it all depends on where and how it is used.

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