

2003 Report of the Director
James Woodworth Prairie of University of Illinois at Chicago
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Highlights of 2003

Budget changes from UIC

UIC has cut the budget of the prairie twice this year. Early in the year I found out that the prairie would have to give back 10% of its budget. All units were cut 10% so this seemed fair albeit not desirable. I supported two graduate students in the summer of 03. Kathy Paap focused her effort on herbiciding Reed canary grass. Becky Ammann focused her effort on getting exotics and some weedy native species out of the IC garden. In September I learned that the JWP budget was cut to \$7000 from \$13,200 and that I had already spent the entire budget available thru 30 June 2004. JWP was considered an Administrative unit and that was the reason for the very large budget cut. I protested this extreme cut. It is unclear what will happen in the future. Clearly it is desirable from both UIC's point of view and from that of the prairie if JWP had an endowment and/or was generating money as a research field station.

Research

Steve Apfelbaum of Applied Ecological Services called up looking for soil samples he took in 1979. Unfortunately they were not found. Becky Ammann continued the Robel pole visual obstruction measurements doing monthly measurements from July until October. In 2002 we had stopped in August. Erin Haase began her thesis work on the effects of adding material designed to reduce the amount of nitrogen in the soil. She found that sugar reduced the nitrate in the soil but that the effect does not last long. Vegetable oil reduced the nitrate but had negative effects on vegetation cover. Water paradoxically increased the nitrate concentration. None of the treatments affected the level of Ammonium in the soil. Anna Ruszaj, a UIC undergraduate, studied the effects of prairie burns on small mammals. During the growing season the small mammal populations on the burnt and unburnt sections were indistinguishable. Erika Mynarich, a Loyola undergraduate studying with Dr. Robert Hamilton, did a study entitled "Population studies of *Haplorhynchites aeneus* (Boheman) in a Northeastern Illinois prairie remnant (Coleoptera: Rhynchitidae)". She found the numbers of this weevil had declined since the 80s. The walking stick was identified as *Diaperomera blatchleyi blatchleyi* based on information sent by Dr. Ron Panzer of Northeastern Illinois University. I detected two new plant species, *Asclepias verticillata* and *Veronica peregrina*, in 2003. Both species are weedy native species.

Management

On 6 April we burned from line G south and from line 14 east to the Greenwood fence. One week later we burned all the prairie west of line 14 (leaving A1..F13 unburnt). On Nov 22 we tried to burn the NW corner of the prairie but were only able to get the north edge of the Milwaukee swale to burn (about 40 m²).

I discovered a large number of chunks of concrete in the south part of the Milwaukee swale. I removed some dirt from the concrete. I notified the Army Corp of Engineers that I would like the restoration of the swale to be considered for mitigation. The soil that was removed from that concrete was sifted thru a 4 mm screen. About ten 5 gallon buckets were filled with shifted soil. This soil was used to fill the hole in the 15D cell (the soil is maybe 4-5 cm below the

surrounding prairie now). Max and Jim did most of the sifting and filling. Work continued on the IC garden, including digging out a patch of quack grass. I expect the planting to be completed in 2004. A highlight of 2003 was the gift of about 20 *Viola pedatifida* plants from Ken Schaefer. I was most happy to get individuals of that species. Kathy Paap is the site Manger of the Wetlands Demonstration Project and I had her herbicide Reed Canary Grass, which inventories had identified as the most common exotic at JWP. She killed all patches and almost all individuals. I am hopeful that the abundance of that troublesome species will substantially diminished next year. Erin dug out all the German iris. Becky kept the annual Narrow-leaved Vetch from setting seed in the IC garden. We continued cutting of blackberry and sumac.

Education and outreach

The only volunteer workday in 2003 was with a Girl Scout troop in April. After I told the girls I had not seen a snake since 1999, we spotted a plains garter snake. The scouts did a great job picking up debris from the prairie. An article written by Anna Sachdeva and myself was published by Chicago Wilderness Magazine. They sent photographers out in May. I showed the photographers the kildeer nest and I never saw the birds again. In August I gave a tour to a group from Lake County Audubon. Cedar waxwings were abundant at the prairie during that tour.

Building and grounds

The water meter reader discovered a leak out by Greenwood Ave in March. That had to be fixed before water could be turned back on. Apparently there had been a problem in that area long ago. In the fall I detected woody debris in the prairie that had obviously been dumped after trimming woody vegetation along the north fence. The debris was scattered along the entire length of the fence. I did not find time to identify the source of this abuse.

Effort details

From 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003, I spent 14633 minutes at JWP on 73 different dates. Major projects included: 1) planting the prairie garden around the Interpretation Center, 2) removing exotics and planting prairie species along the North fence margin, 3) research on vegetation height and effects of carbon addition, and 4) studying the response of small mammals to prairie burns.