

PRAIRIE PRESERVATION WHERE THERE IS NONE

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Abstract: When, I arrived in Illinois from Australia, some years ago, I was looking for the local prairie ecosystem. I found it hard to find. I started to put prairies in the context of their geology and history. I realized that most locals were also immigrants and that they did not know much about their ecosystem. In six generations they have had to survive, and develop their farmland and urban resources. The newer generations are now seeking a more intimate appreciation of their natural landscape. I began teaching subjects such as "Reading the Landscape". Interested individuals emerged and helped established not for profit agencies to acquire railroad rights of ways and to care for remnant prairies. These groups have done an excellent job of educating the public. They have been preservationists rather than specialists but they get specialist help. We are most concerned about preserving the gene pool but our educational interests range into associated studies at universities, colleges and into the education of concerned citizens. We need team approaches that bridge institutions and disciplines. We also a need to train team leaders and support personnel for without these individuals we cannot have the impact that is needed for community action. I will give examples of some of the challenges we have met including the archiving of information for future generations.