

SPECIAL PROJECTS FINAL REPORT

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During the 1993 field season several special projects have been started, but have not been completed. These projects include: prairie field guide, local cable access show, vertebrate and invertebrate checklists, and prairie plant interpretive signs.

This was designed to encourage and enhance visitation and enjoyment of the prairie. Since there are no guided tours of the prairie, a field guide which included drawings and descriptions of plants and animals, as well as other educational facts was proposed. Five prairie plants and five animals have been selected for a prairie field guide. Short descriptions of each have been developed (see checklist section) that should be expanded to include anecdotal information about each. Drawings of prairie plants have also been found. Plants and animals are in the process of being verified. Text expansion and text/graphics layout has yet to be completed. Printing and associated costs have not been investigated.

In January 1993, I suggested that a 20-30 minute show on the West Branch cable access channel would be a good way to impart information to the West Branch community about the Hoover Prairie and associated concepts. It would also present a forum in which current events could be plugged. I had developed a lead-in show about biodiversity complete with scripted introduction. However, a simple set would need to be developed and the actual taping session, etc. would take more personnel than just myself. I felt this topic to be a good opening show because the NPS already has a short video on diversity in the national parks. Also, there wasn't a lot of stage direction, props, set design, editing, etc. While the first show was running, those things could be planned further. Other topics would include segments on prescribed burns, resource monitoring, environmental tips, etc.

Vertebrate and invertebrate checklists are tied with inventory and monitoring activities.

However, this project was to produce checklists for use by the public, either free or at a nominal charge. Essentially, this project deals more with format than with actual content (see I&M reports). I have acquired many different formats of checklists from some of the areas I visit and I have put a copy of a checklist format that I like in the checklist file. I've seen some checklists that were xeroxed pages and some that were very elaborate. For the less charismatic species (insects, aquatic, spiders, butterflies) a folded xerox page would be sufficient. For other species, such as prairie flowers, birds, mammals, a slicker, printed checklist would be easier to read and carry.

Prairie interpretive signs have traditionally been placed near plants in the demonstration plot at the prairie overlook. However, the signs were too short to be seen because of tall, dense vegetation on the demo plot. Also, the most common species on the prairie were not represented by signs. Therefore, I suggested that the sign stake be 2 ft (instead of 1 ft) and placing them along the trail instead of only at the demo plot. I felt this would encourage visitors to use the trail rather than staying at the outskirts. I ranked plant species as to their commonality, showiness, or importance. These rankings were used to determine which plant names would be imprinted onto signs. We have received these signs back and now are waiting for them to be attached to the metal stakes by the blacksmith or maintenance. In addition, I believe that signs stating that plants are not to be picked should be placed at trailheads because I have seen people removing "souvenirs" from the prairie.