

Got a restored prairie?

Interested in learning about insects?

Excerpted from the Fraxinus Natural History blog by John van der Linden <http://fraxinus-nathist.blogspot.com/2018/01/when-prairies-provide.html> and a note from MJ Hatfield

MJ Hatfield, big-time volunteer Insect enthusiast, recently issued an invitation to Iowa and Minnesota naturalist-types: Would you be interested in investigating the insect life in a planted prairie near you?

MJ points out that natural history and science are way too important and way too much fun to leave just to the professionals! For years, MJ's insect natural history studies have included both remnant and planted (or reconstructed) prairies, mostly in Iowa and Minnesota -- and her work in reconstructions has shown clearly that these places do harbor native insects, including specialists that require native prairie plants for their survival. Research led by Kirk Larsen at Luther College is another local example of work that's shedding light on the insect life in northeastern Iowa's planted prairies.

At the same time, there's a lot still to learn. While reconstructed prairies are becoming more and more common, our understanding of their insect fauna, generally speaking, is quite poor. In most cases we know very little about how this whole prairie reconstruction thing is working out for native insects.

MJ and her friends aren't just looking for any insect, and not so much for nectaring or pollinating behavior, but rather those insects found utilizing a native host plant, perhaps in the larval stage, or by signs such as leaf mining, gall making or chowing down.

Here's the place MJ suggests that folks start: common goldenrod stem galls (pictured below). Many of you might know the goldenrod gall fly only as a gall on goldenrod, but how many of us have seen the adult fly? Well, late winter is the perfect time to collect some stem galls, put them in a big container and hope that the adult flies emerge, sometime about the end of April.

All folks need to do is have access to a planted prairie, email MJ that they want to look for signs of insects, take photos to share with all of us, perhaps even learn to post to BugGuide and that's it. There is no designated number of times folks have to look but hopefully they will look closely and document what they see when they walk through a planted prairie. For example: MJ, who says she has "NEVER paid ANY attention to bird pecks on stems" recently spotted yucca stems torn open, up and down, by birds getting the nutritious larvae.

If interested, send MJ an email - mjhatfield@oneota.org - and she'll forward a few of this winter's email exchanges so that you can get a feel of what her group is doing.

Goldenrod (Solidago) Stem Galls



Eurosta solidaginis - Goldenrod Gall Fly
Adults emerge in May

Goldenrod Gall Moth, *Epiblema scudderiana*
Adults emerge in May



MI Hatfield

Cecidomyiidae, *Lasioptera solidaginis*
Adults emerge in May

Goldenrod Elliptical-Gall Moth, *Gnorimoschema gallaesolidaginis*
Adults emerge in September