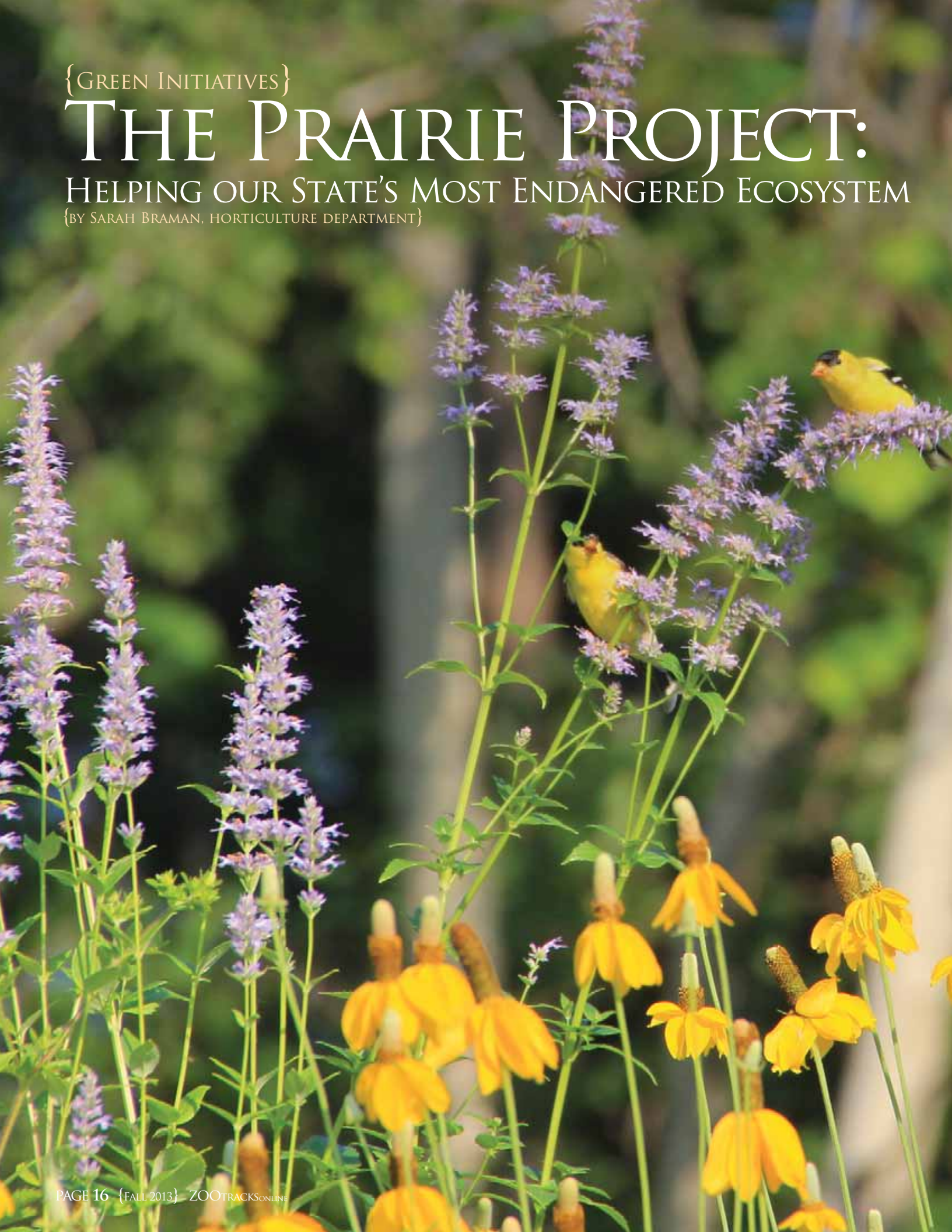


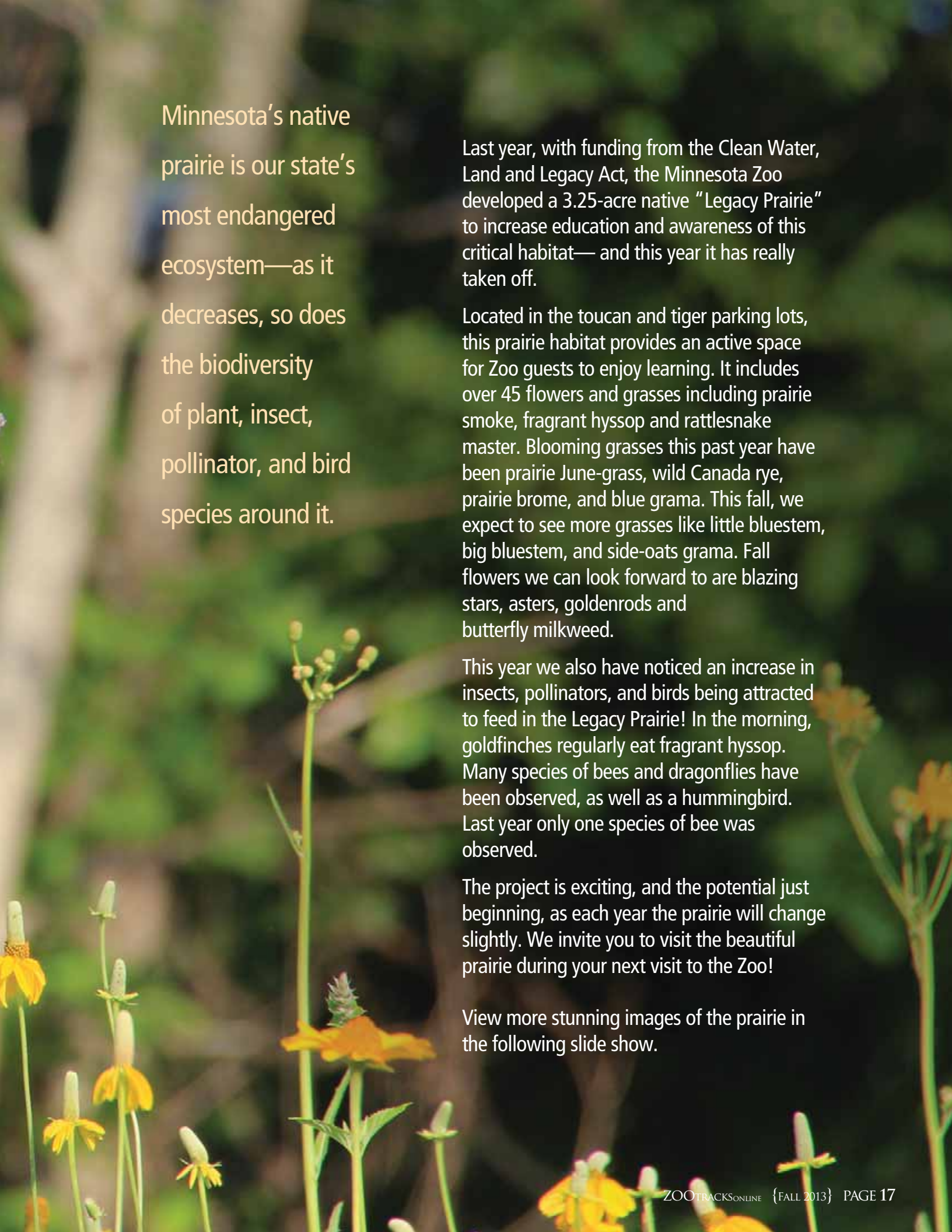
{GREEN INITIATIVES}

THE PRAIRIE PROJECT:

HELPING OUR STATE'S MOST ENDANGERED ECOSYSTEM

{BY SARAH BRAMAN, HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT}





Minnesota's native prairie is our state's most endangered ecosystem—as it decreases, so does the biodiversity of plant, insect, pollinator, and bird species around it.

Last year, with funding from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Act, the Minnesota Zoo developed a 3.25-acre native "Legacy Prairie" to increase education and awareness of this critical habitat—and this year it has really taken off.

Located in the toucan and tiger parking lots, this prairie habitat provides an active space for Zoo guests to enjoy learning. It includes over 45 flowers and grasses including prairie smoke, fragrant hyssop and rattlesnake master. Blooming grasses this past year have been prairie June-grass, wild Canada rye, prairie brome, and blue grama. This fall, we expect to see more grasses like little bluestem, big bluestem, and side-oats grama. Fall flowers we can look forward to are blazing stars, asters, goldenrods and butterfly milkweed.

This year we also have noticed an increase in insects, pollinators, and birds being attracted to feed in the Legacy Prairie! In the morning, goldfinches regularly eat fragrant hyssop. Many species of bees and dragonflies have been observed, as well as a hummingbird. Last year only one species of bee was observed.

The project is exciting, and the potential just beginning, as each year the prairie will change slightly. We invite you to visit the beautiful prairie during your next visit to the Zoo!

View more stunning images of the prairie in the following slide show.