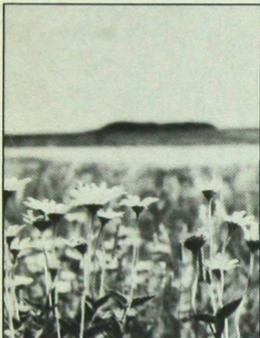


KEN VARLAND



**Common ox-eyes, a native wildflower, beautify a highway right of way in southwestern Minnesota.**

### Inside Back Cover

#### **Great Blue Heron**

As the sun rose one spring morning, wildlife artist Daniel Pierce, Stillwater, spotted this great blue heron at Vadnais Lake. After photographing the bird as it posed in the mist at the water's edge, he created this 36-by-24-inch acrylic painting titled *Blue Morning*.

## **Explore Minnesota's Roadside Wildflowers**

**NEXT TIME** you drive down a Minnesota highway, watch for roadside wildflowers. More than 12,000 acres of native plants grow on state highway rights of way.

Preserving these native stands helps keep Minnesota beautiful, and it celebrates our prairie heritage. Our state's rich farmland was once a sea of tall-grass prairie. Today, only about 75,000 to 150,000 acres remain, much of it along roads and abandoned railways.

Native wildflowers and grasses are perfectly suited to their places of origin in Minnesota. Because they hold the soil better than non-natives, they help prevent erosion along roads. And unlike non-natives, they do not require frequent mowing and herbicide spraying. Unmowed roadsides of native plants make especially good nesting habitat for wildlife. Texas reports that wildflowers and native grasses helped the state save about \$8 million in annual roadside maintenance costs.

Since 1960 the Department of Transportation has planted 766 acres of native wildflowers and grasses along rights of way. In the next 20 years, it hopes to seed another 35,000 acres.

Planting wildflowers can help beautify our highways and communities for ourselves and for the thousands of visitors coming to Minnesota for the U.S. Olympic Festival '90 and Celebrate Minnesota 1990, a yearlong series of activities celebrating the places we call home.

As recommended by the state Roadside Wildflower Task Force created by Lt. Gov. Marlene Johnson, special highway signs and road-map symbols will soon mark several stretches of highway where native wildflowers remain. Appropriately, the first Wildflower Route will be designated on Prairie Day, Aug. 19. Plan to celebrate our native prairies and explore roadsides blooming with wildflowers.

Rudy Perpich, *Governor*  
State of Minnesota