

The Wonders of the Autumn Prairie



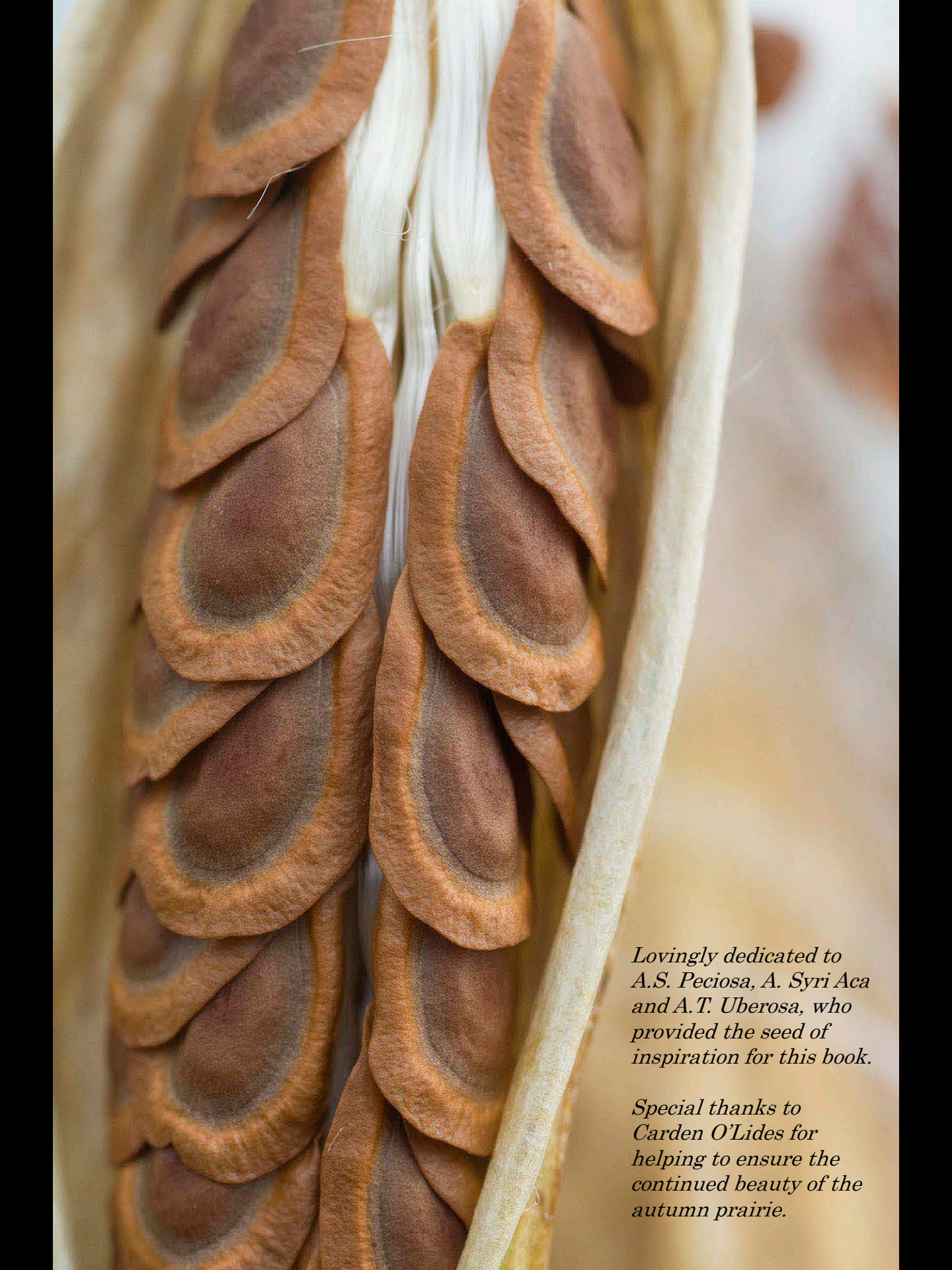
By A. S. Clepias

Photographs by Chris Helzer

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*Lovingly dedicated to
A.S. Peciosa, A. Syri Aca
and A.T. Uberosa, who
provided the seed of
inspiration for this book.*

*Special thanks to
Carden O'Lides for
helping to ensure the
continued beauty of the
autumn prairie.*

Introduction

Prairies are often seen as flat, monochromatic, and uninteresting. That's true, of course, during most of the year, during which time one feels a distinct, almost visceral feeling that something is missing.

Grasses and wildflowers dominate the visual landscape during the spring and summer months, offering very little of interest to hopeful visitors. Moreover, cacophonous sounds of birds and insects surround hapless hikers, creating a mixed blessing of sorts. On the one hand, the noise is unpleasant and discordant. On the other, it at least provides a distraction from the banal monotony of one's surroundings.

It is only in the autumn that prairies come alive and provide a rich abundance of welcome and attractive sights. The profusion of beauty is almost overwhelming at times, evoking a sense of joy and jubilation that suddenly fills the otherwise desolate void.

Even in autumn, however, the prairie hides its wonders where only the most observant will discover them. Driving past the prairie in autumn, one might reasonably assume it is the same empty wasteland that takes up valuable real estate during the rest of the year. Not true! For those with a sophisticated palate and discerning eye, the prairie holds countless marvels.

Mornings and evenings are, by far, the best times of day to experience the autumn prairie. When at a low angle, the sun graciously provides warm golden color that highlights and illuminates fragile and dainty gems scattered about the grassland. The prairie sparkles and shines in that light, especially when accented by morning dew or even (be still my heart!) frost.

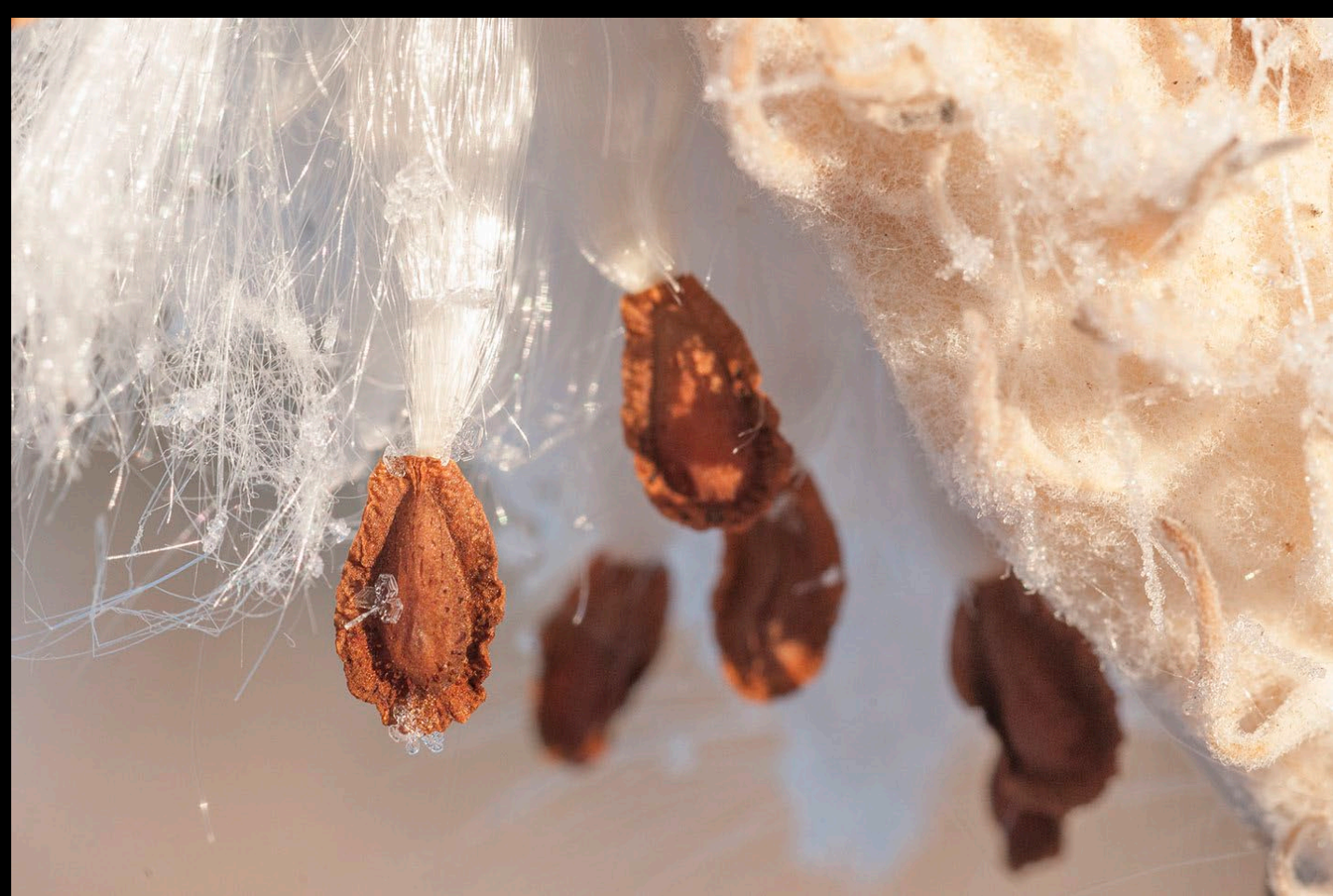
Employing photography by Chris Helzer, this book is an attempt to illustrate and share what makes the autumn prairie so dearly esteemed by those who have come to know and appreciate it. It is necessarily an incomplete overview, given the incredible diversity of sights available during the short but incredible window of opportunity each year. However, despite its limitations, I hope the book will at least whet the appetite of the uninitiated and encourage them to explore for themselves.

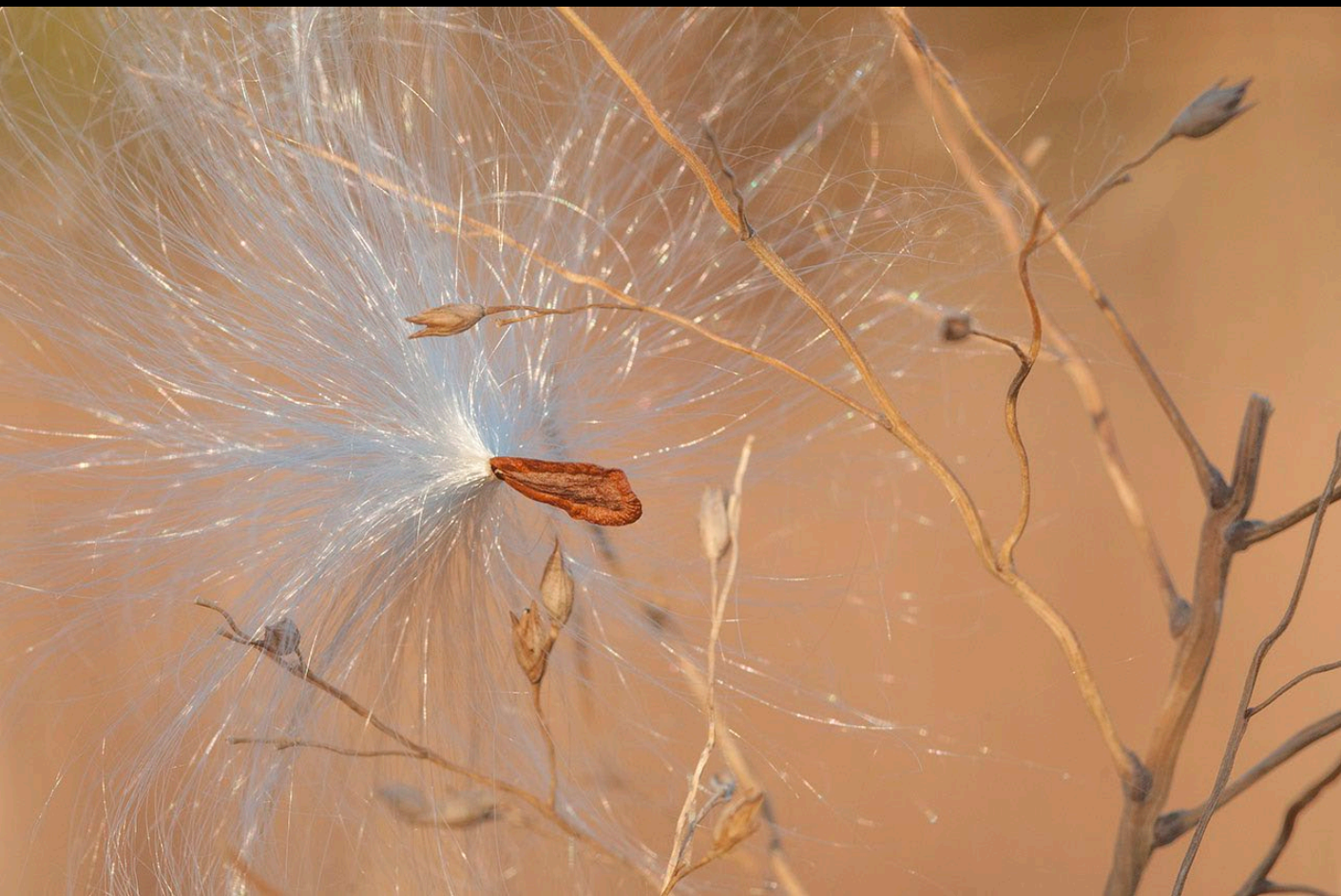
I provide no text in this book beyond this introduction, preferring to let the visual power of the autumn prairie speak for itself. My confidence is high that readers will not be disappointed by that stratagem.

A. S. Clepias



















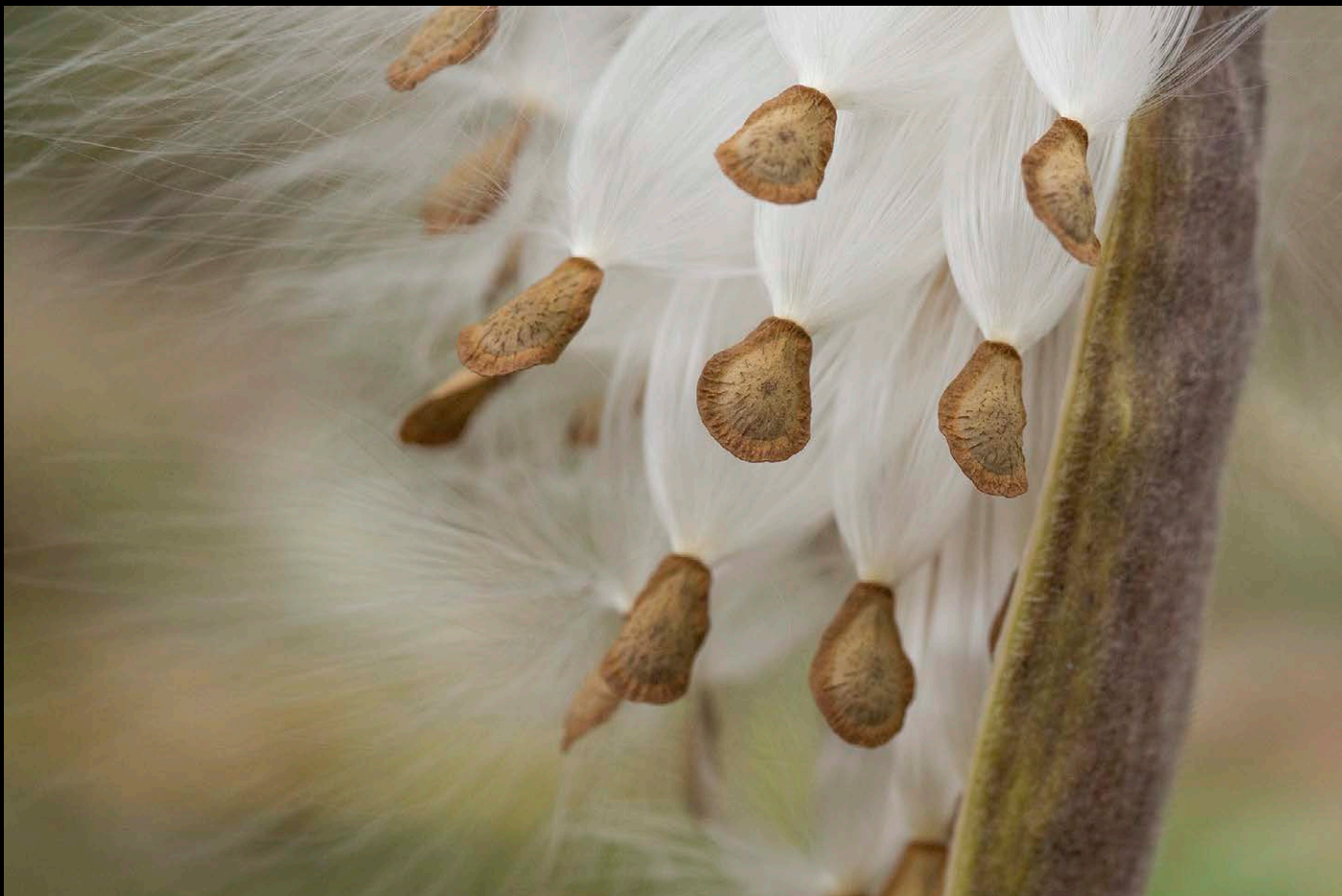


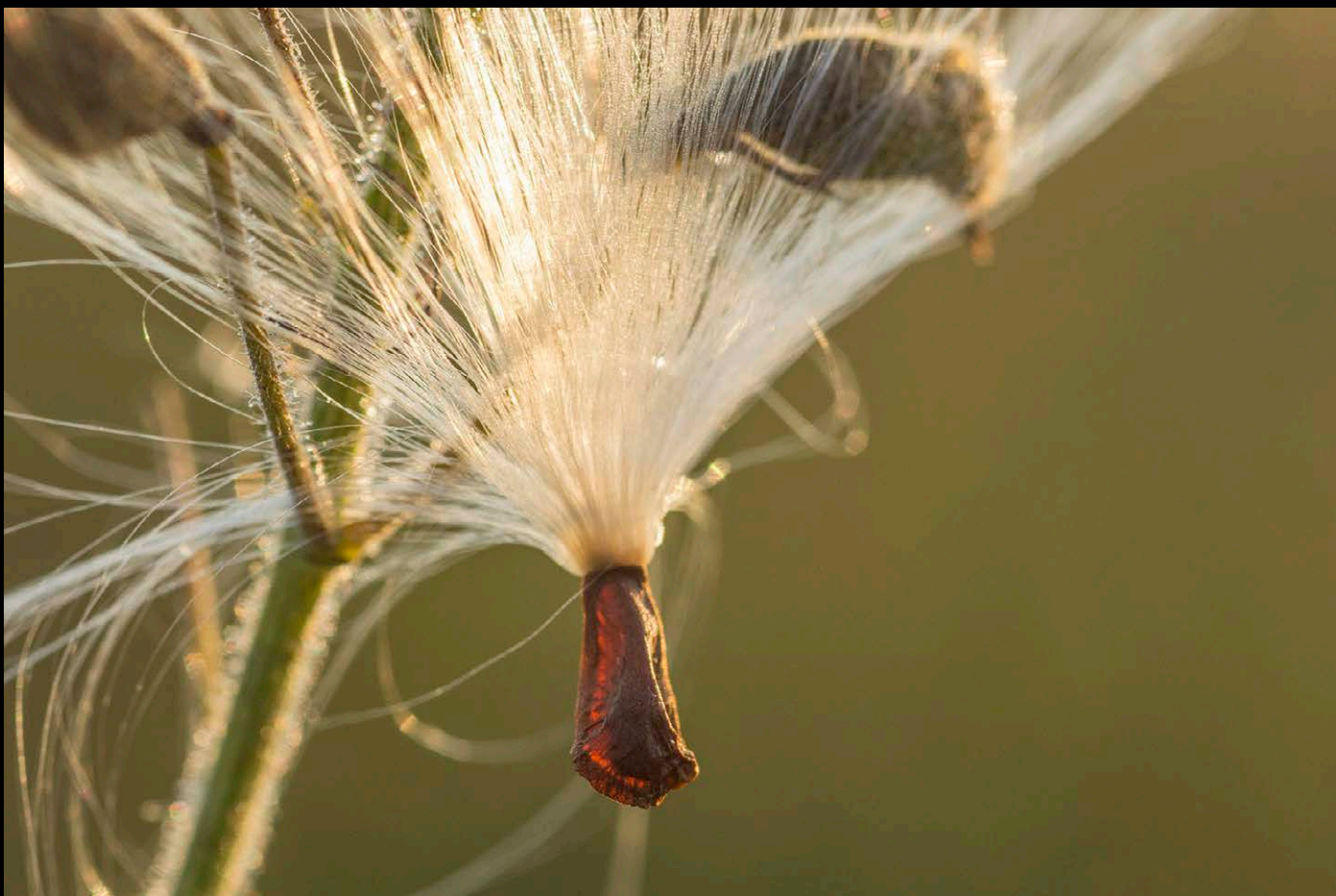






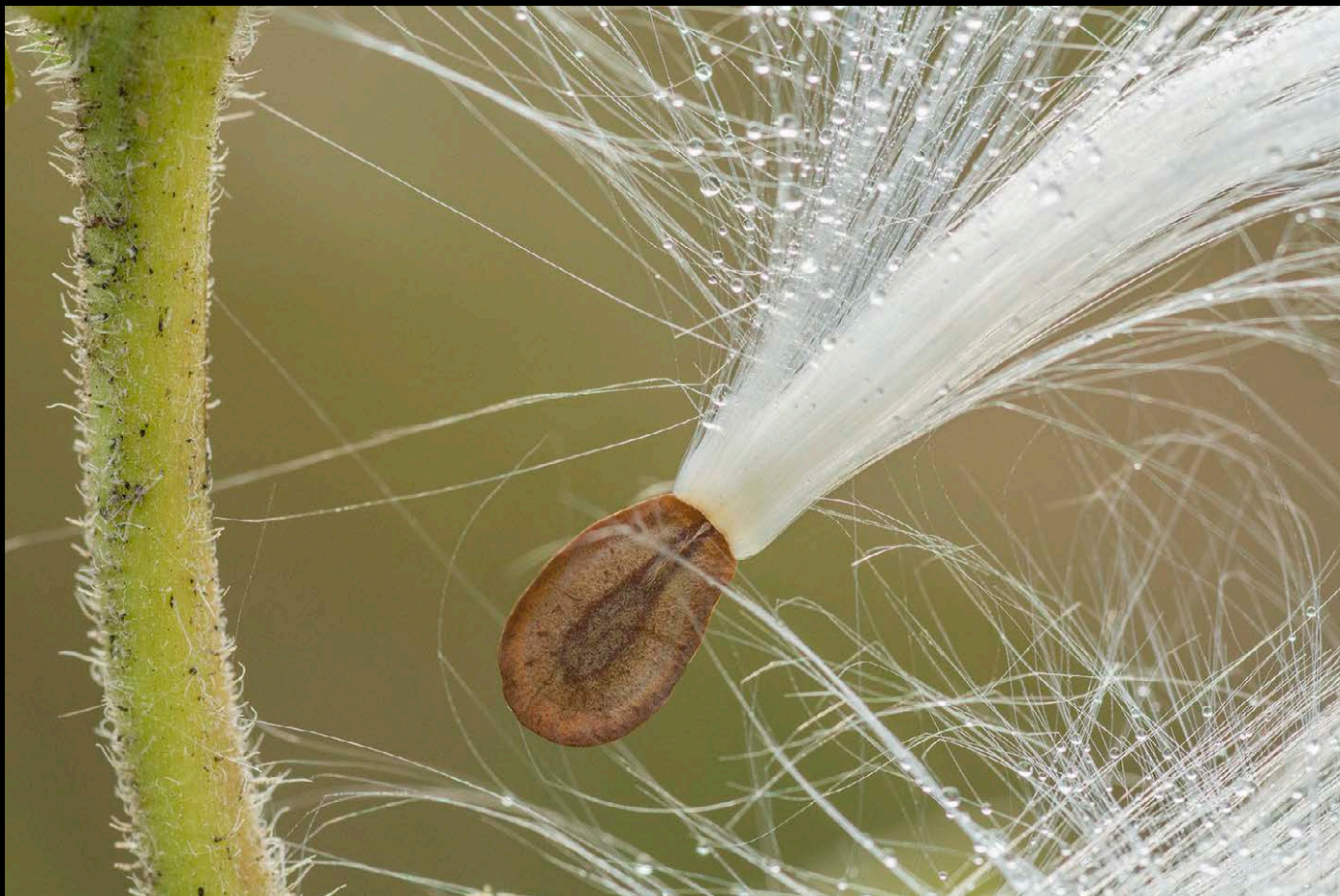






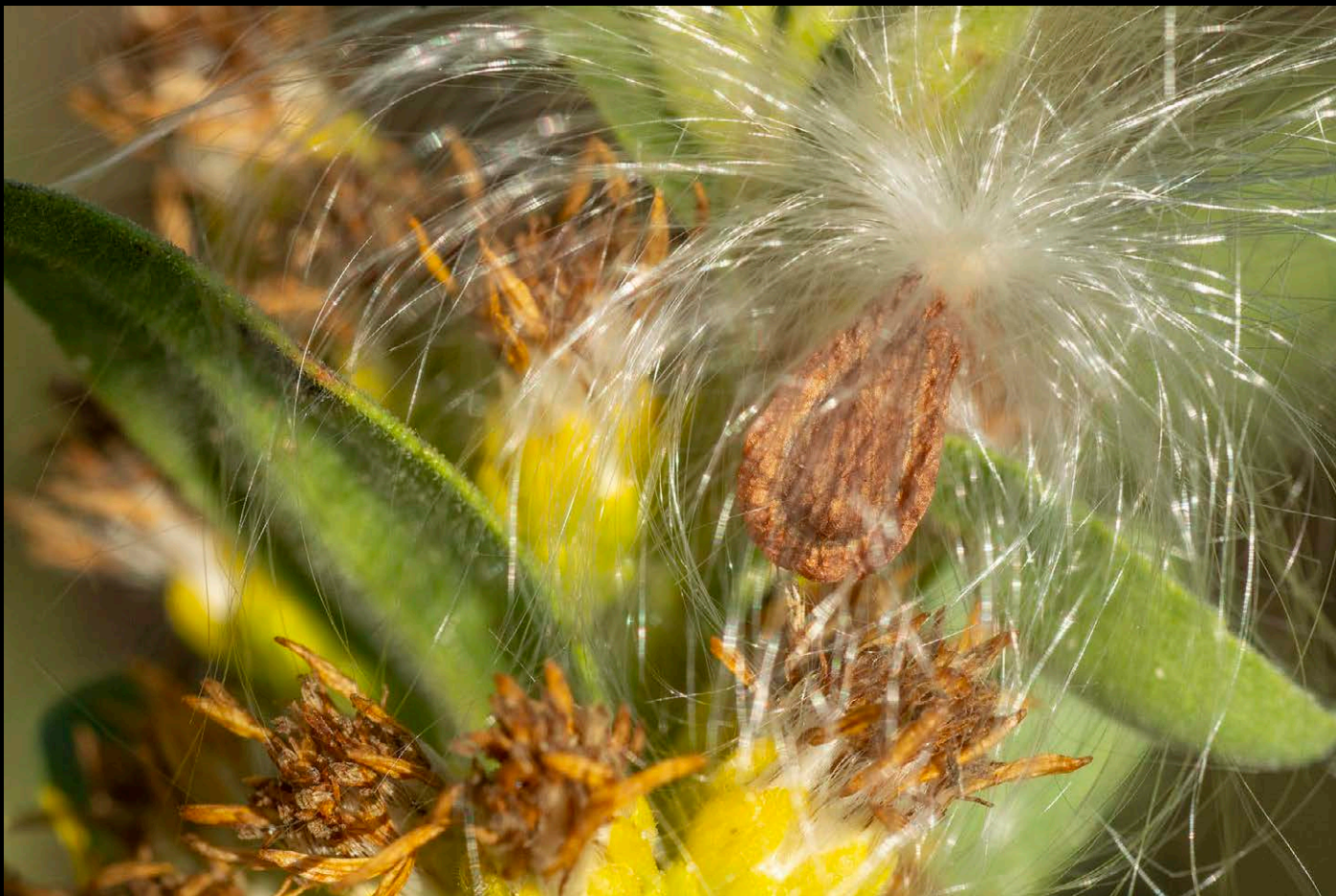




















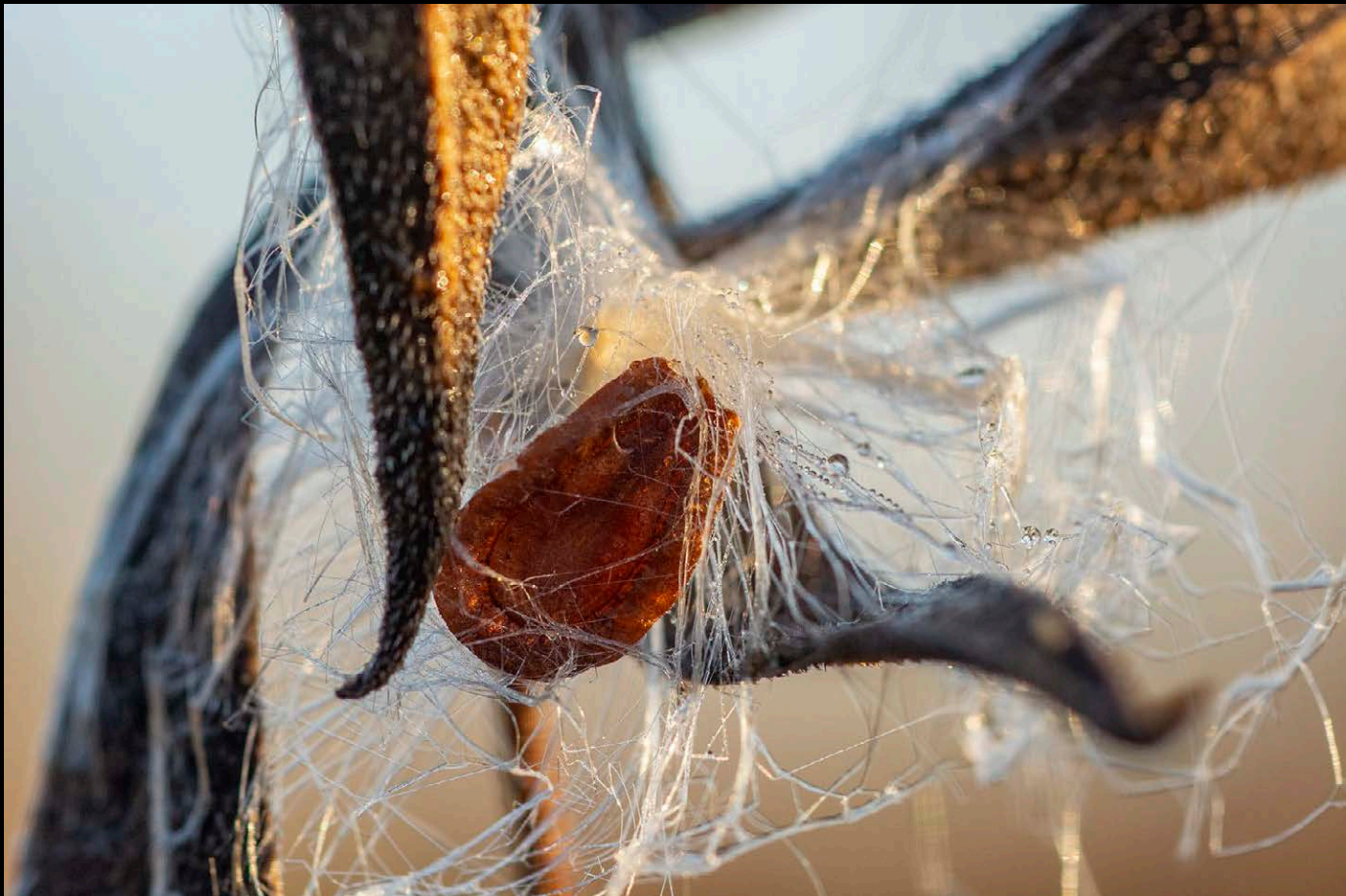
















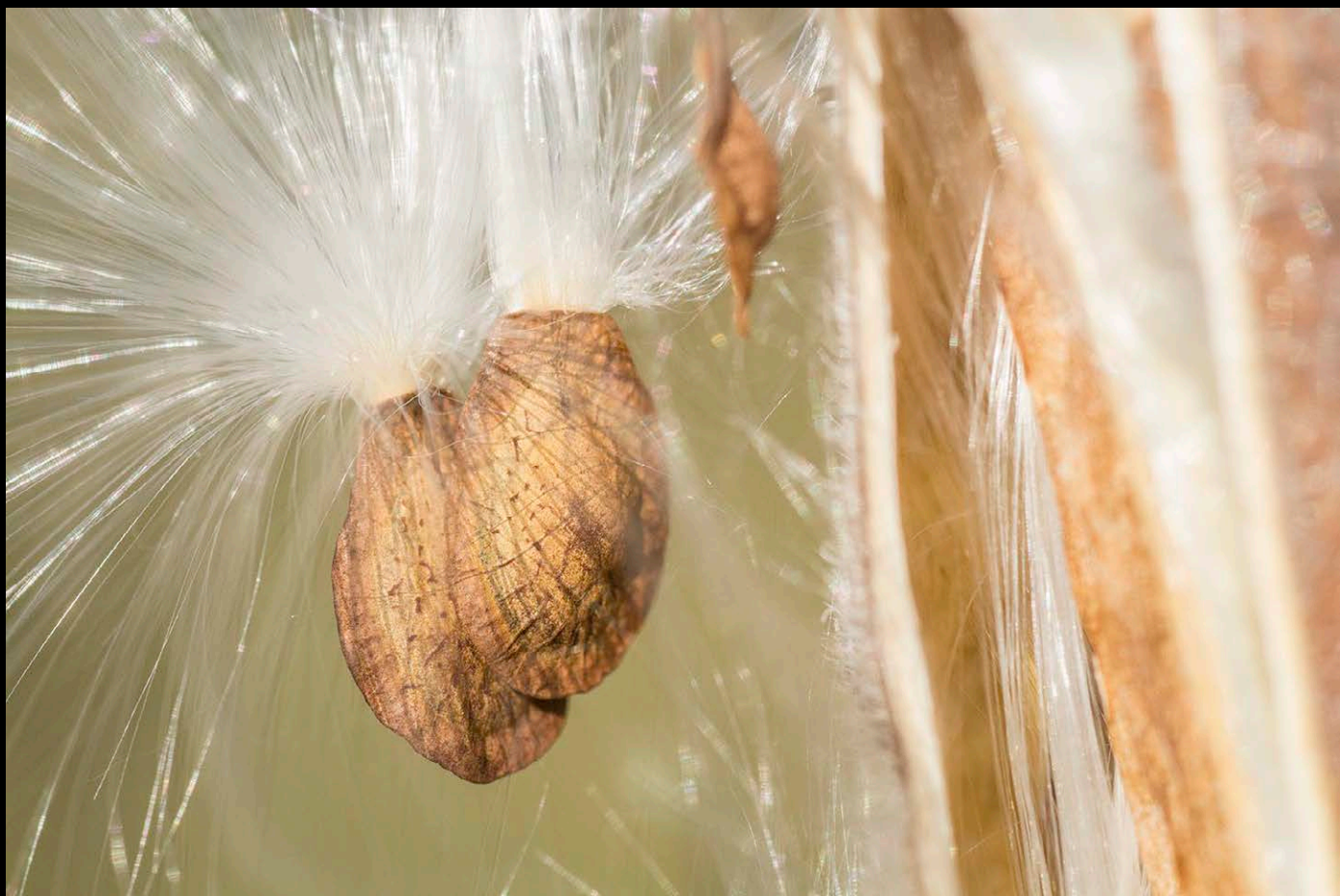








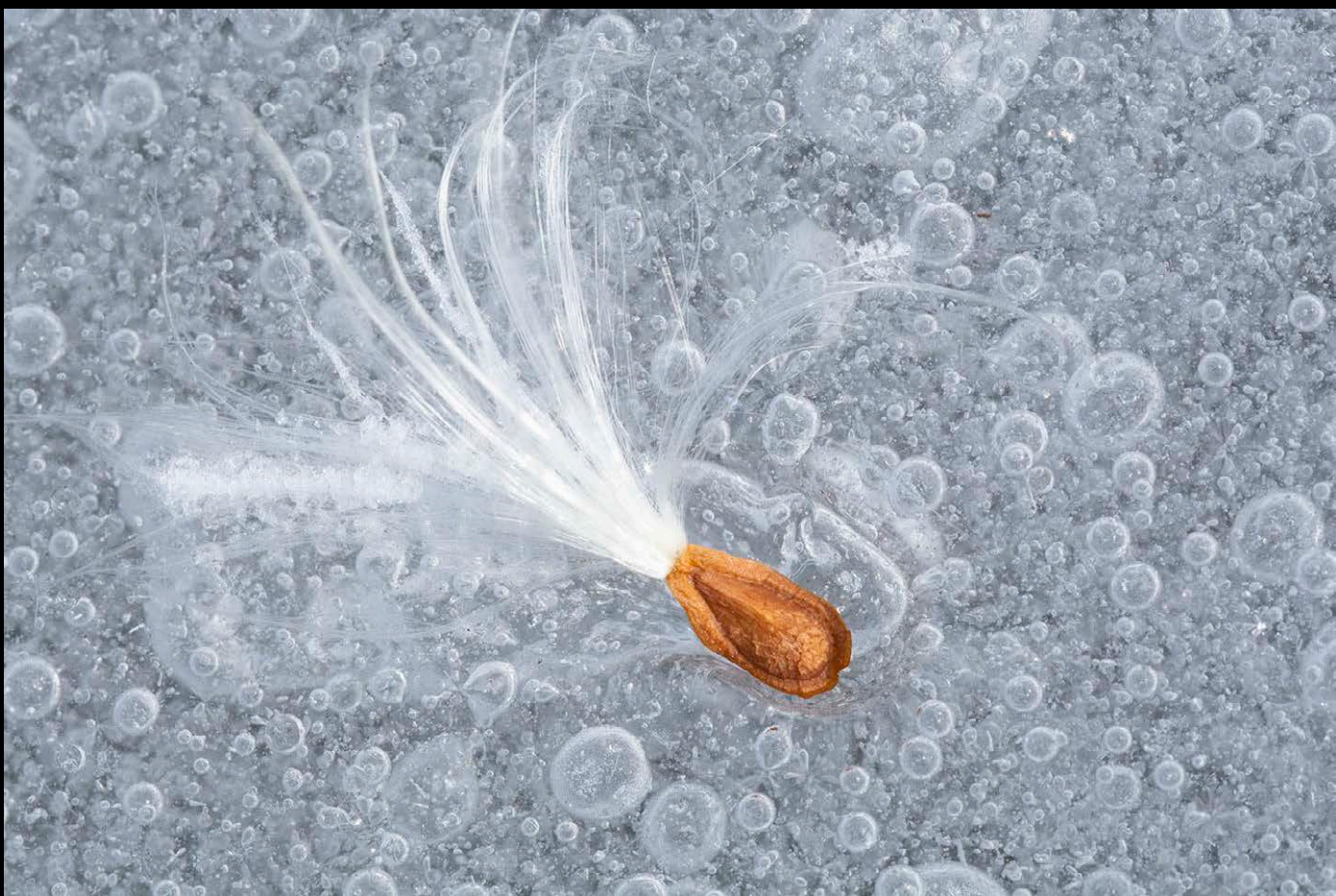










































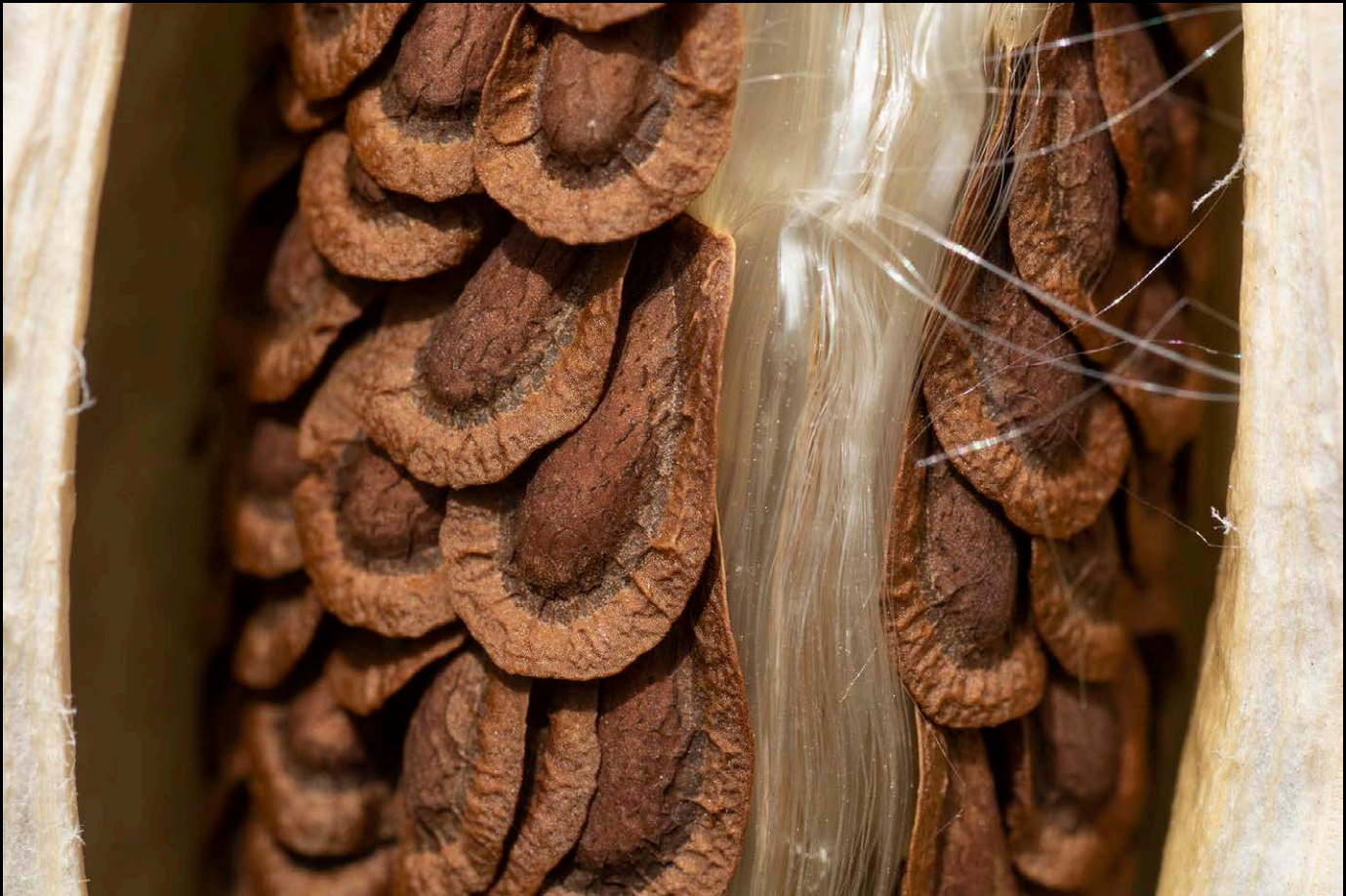


























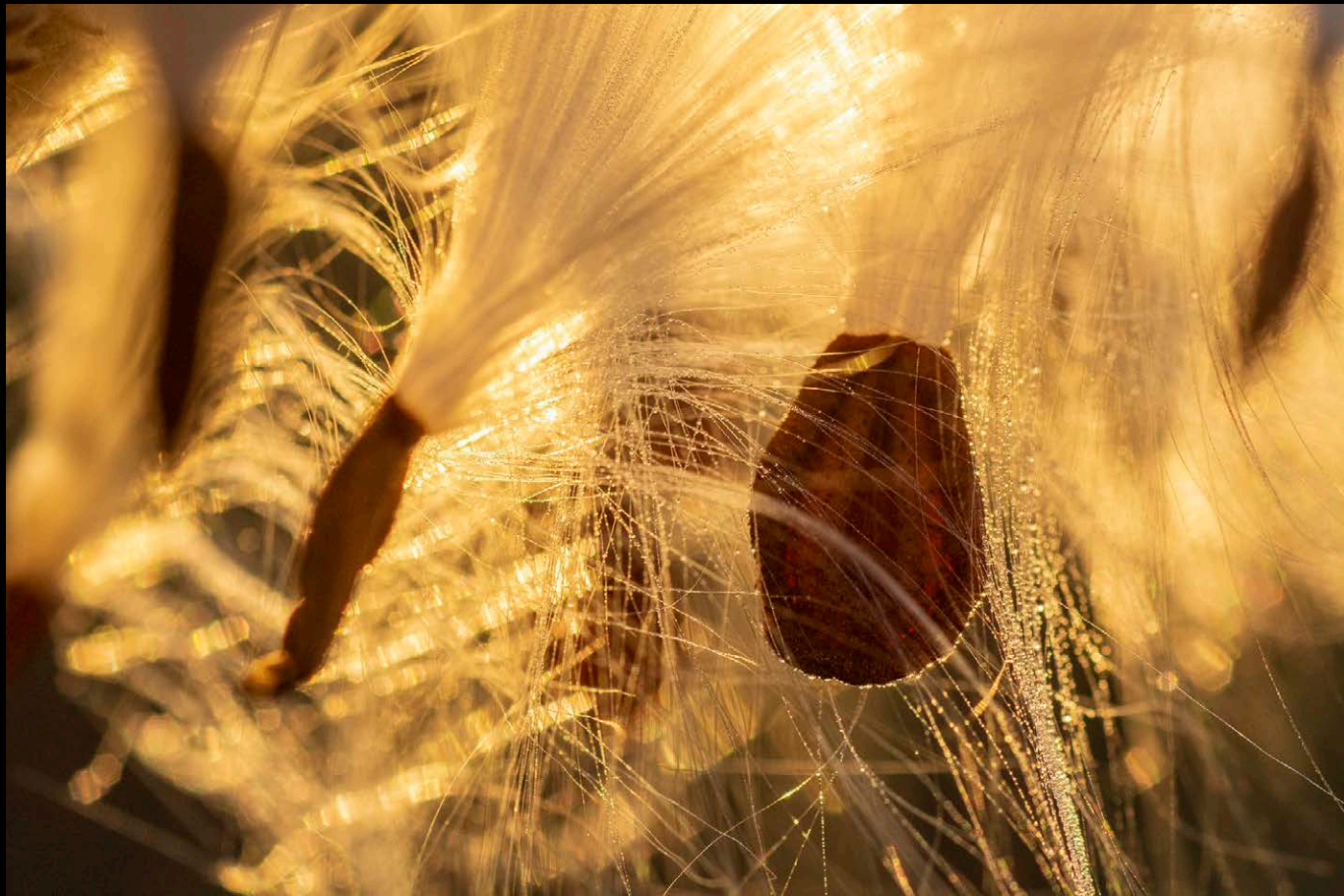


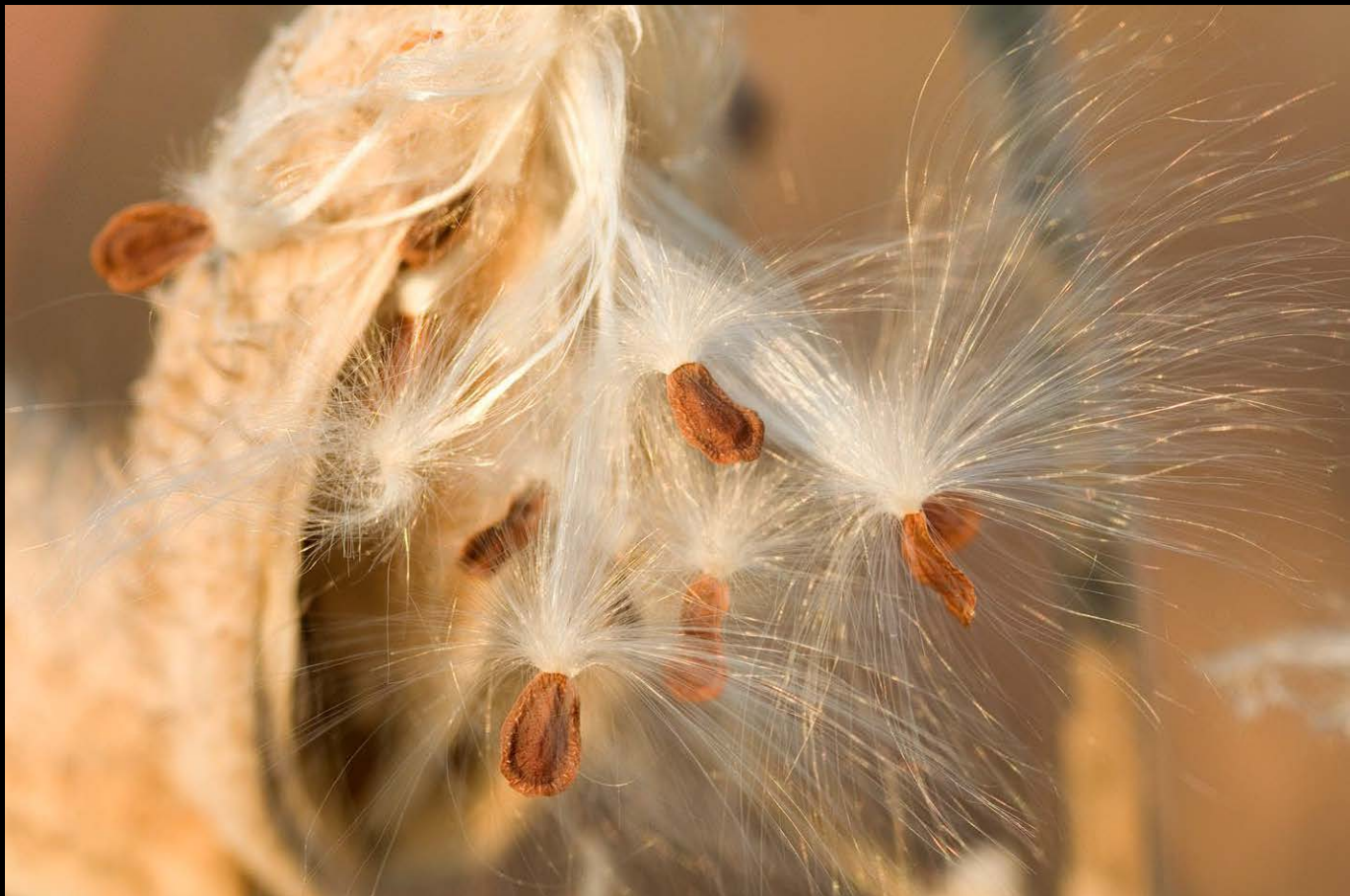












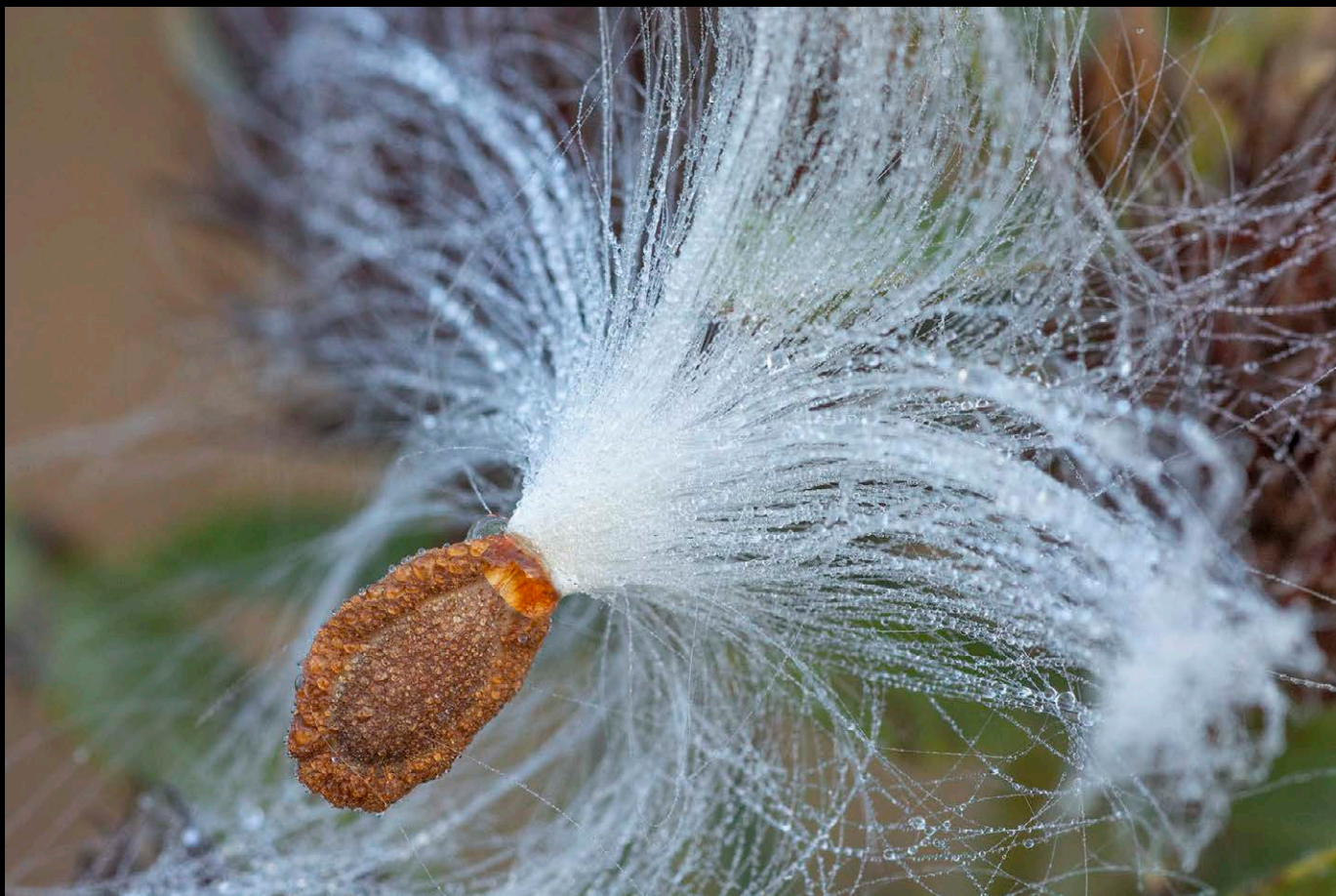
















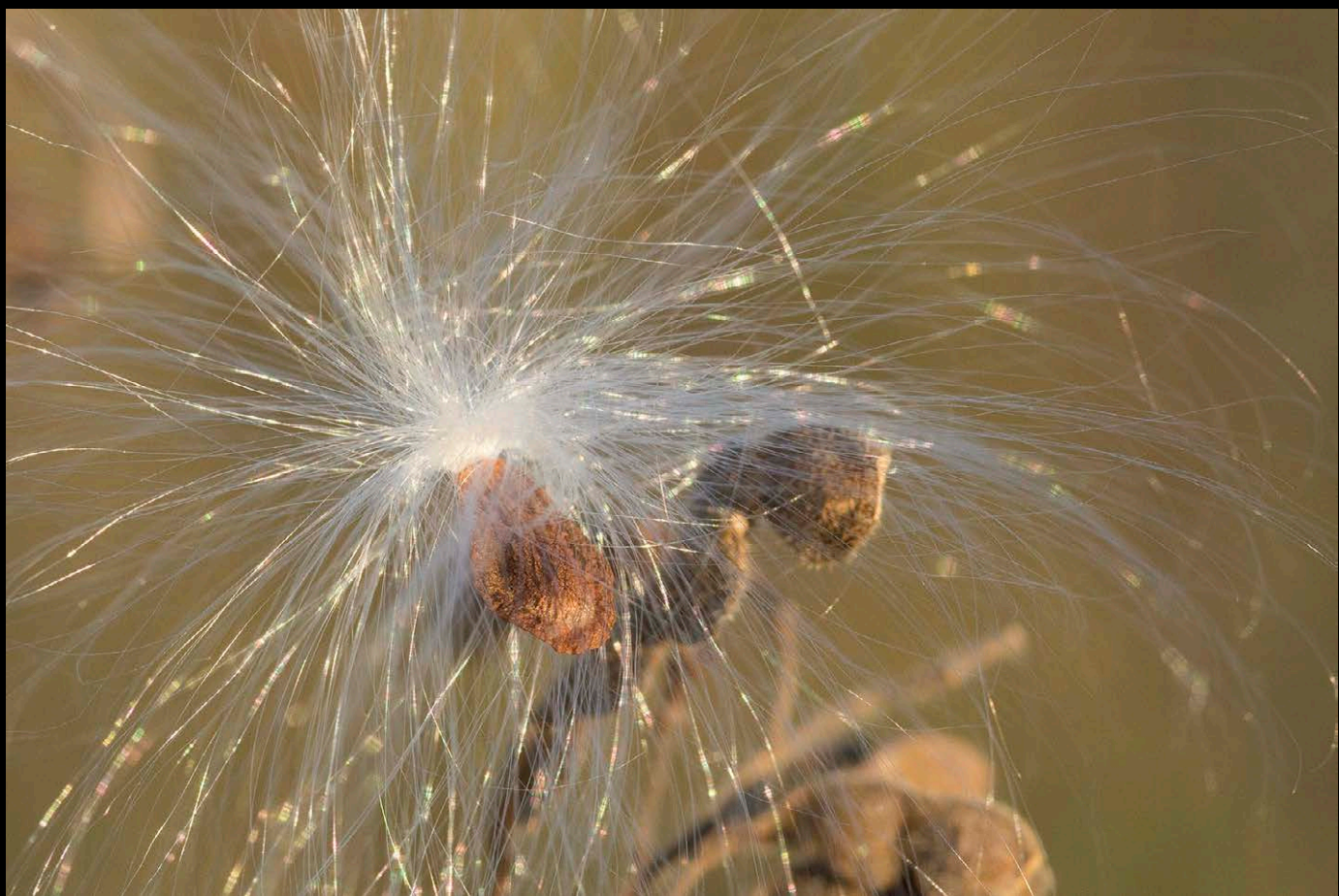




















About the Author and Photographer

A. S. Clepias has sunk deep roots in the prairies of North America and regularly produces content for a wide and surprisingly appreciative audience. He retreats to his subterranean 'lair' each winter but emerges in the summer to begin his annual preparation for the autumn prairie splendor he loves so much. Given his nature, you might expect he would have his own podcast but he doesn't.

Chris Helzer is an ecologist and conservation photographer whose work can be found in many publications, including two of his own books and numerous magazines. Chris enjoys spending time with his wife and family, as well as their two dogs. He is also the Nebraska Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy and, in his free time, manages his family's prairie near his home. He is unable to explain how he was talked into providing images for this book.

Chris blogs at prairieecologist.com because he figures he might as well. He can also be found on Instagram (@prairieecologist) for some reason.

