
A Prairie Rendezvous



FALL VOL. 15, No. 3, 2013

50 YEARS OF SAVING NATURE...

THE ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

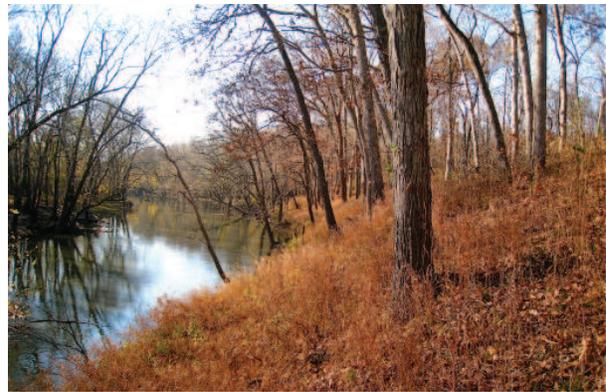
By Mary Kay Solecki,
Field Representative for East-Central Ill., INPC

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) is celebrating 50 years of nature conservation.

Since 1963, INPC has conserved over 100,000 acres of natural lands in the State with 372 dedicated Nature Preserves (over 56,600 acres) in 79 counties, and 170 Land and Water Reserves (more than 48,100 acres) in 66 counties. The Illinois Nature Preserves system has fostered a public-private partnership which works to preserve, protect and defend Illinois' rarest natural treasures.

The INPC was the first agency of its kind in the nation, and 17 states have modeled their programs after it. This State conservation agency preceded national landmark environmental legislation such as the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Endangered Species acts.

The mission of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission is to assist public and private landowners in protecting high-quality natural areas and habitats for endangered and threatened species in perpetuity, through voluntary dedication or regis-



Upper Embarras Woods Nature Preserve was recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory as one of the outstanding remnants of high-quality forest in Illinois and represents the best remaining example of streamside forest along the upper Embarras River.

tration of such lands into the Illinois Nature Preserves System. The Commission promotes long-term conservation of these significant lands and

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MEMBER DONATES TRUCK



For many years, GPF member Beth Wohlgemuth could be easily recognized around town driving her tan colored Ford Ranger pickup truck with the black topper, but not any more. Earlier this year she made the decision to buy a new car, but what to do with the old truck? She realized that the truck had many miles left to go, so she made a decision to benefit Grand Prairie Friends—donate the truck to be used by the organization for stewardship of natural areas! So in July, she handed over the title and keys to GPF.

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A Prairie Rendezvous

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Editor: Jim Fay

Assistant Editor: Jamie Ellis

A Prairie Rendezvous is a publication of Grand Prairie Friends for the restoration community of East Central Illinois.

A Prairie Rendezvous is published quarterly. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at jimfay7@gmail.com or by mail to the GPF P.O. Box 36. Member submissions are gladly welcomed.

Grand Prairie Friends is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to natural community preservation, restoration, and education in East Central Illinois. Our stewards help coordinate volunteer workdays at native prairie, savanna, wetland, and woodland remnants. Inquiries and tax-deductible donations should be sent to the P.O. Box listed above

GPF mission is to preserve and restore natural communities in east-central Illinois and promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources.

Stay in touch with the GPF community through the website (www.grandprairiefriends.org), facebook (www.facebook.com/grandprairiefriends) or the ecostewards e-mail list (lists.communitylists.org/listinfo.cgi/ecostewards-communitylists.org).

GPF Board of Directors (term ends)

Jamie Ellis, President (2015)

Fred Delcomyn, Treasurer (2013)

Rob Stanton (2013)

Gail Snowdon (2013)

Ansel Anderson (2014)

Terry Rathgeber (2014)

Beverly Rauchfuss (2014)

Pam Leiter (2015)

Ruth Green (2015)

Board meetings are regularly scheduled for the fourth Monday of each month (except August and December) at 5:30 PM in the I-Building (1816 S. Oak St., Champaign)

GPF Committees

For information on volunteering and getting involved with any committees, please contact the following:

Membership & Volunteerism: Brenda Molano-Flores

Stewardship: VACANT

Education: VACANT

Finance: Fred Delcomyn

Publicity: Derek Liebert

Land Acquisition: Dan Olson and Jim Payne

Fund Raising: Derek Liebert, Terry Rathgeber, and Jamie Ellis

Submission Deadlines

- Summer Issue (June, July, Aug.): May 1
- Fall Issue (Sept., Oct., Nov.): Aug. 1
- Winter Issue (Dec., Jan. 2014, Feb. 2014): Nov. 1
- Spring Issue (Mar., Apr., May): Feb. 1

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

AUGUST 2013

by Jamie Ellis, President, GPF

Summer winds down as I write these words. An unusual spell of cool, mild weather has invaded Illinois making me wonder if it's really still August! The drought and heat of a year ago is a distant memory. Our prairie remnants have responded well to the adequate rain this year. I urge you to get out to Shortline, Loda, Prospect, or other prairie sites to see the lush, diverse growth of plants.

Most of my GPF activities this summer have revolved supervision of the summer interns. Joe Boise and Will Wright have been an inquisitive, hard-working pair and our natural areas have certainly benefitted from their stewardship activities. You can read about their activities elsewhere in this newsletter.

I send a big thank you to GPF member Beth Wohlgenuth who graciously donated her old truck to GPF. It's in great shape and will be a huge asset to help with stewardship work and the plant sale. Ruth Green started the ball rolling over 10 years ago with the donation of her truck. When we were ready to retire Ruth's truck, Eric Smith donated his old truck in 2009, and it has been indispensable for the summer internship program. We hope to get many years of use out of Beth's truck starting soon.

We will elect new Board members at the Fall Meeting on September 20, and I am happy to report that both Fred Delcomyn and Rob Stanton will be running again to serve the organization.

Gail Snowdon will retire from the Board in October, and I sincerely thank her for her service in helping to lead Grand Prairie Friends. Gail has been a long-time member and stalwart in support of natural areas conservation. Her presence on the Board will be missed.

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(MEMBER DONATES TRUCK...)

Ownership and use of a truck greatly benefits the summer internship program. With a truck, summer interns can easily and safely haul tools, herbicide, weeds, and brush to and from the prairie and woodland natural areas they help manage. A truck also comes in handy during the plant sale to haul plants, tables, chairs, and other items for the sale. Volunteer stewards are also able to borrow the truck to do management work. During the prescribed burn season, a truck is indispensable to haul hand tools, drip torches, backpack water sprayers, and other fire gear.

Ruth Green was the first to donate a truck to GPF over ten years ago. When that truck was ready to be retired, Eric Smith stepped up in 2009 to donate his old truck. Now with Beth's donation, Eric's truck will be retired and Beth's put into use for 2014. Thank you, Beth!

INVASIVE PLANT TASK FORCE PUBLICATION

The Invasive Plant Task Force has published *Invasive Plants of East Central Illinois*. It's a nicely printed, 2nd edition of the digital version that's been available for the last 2 years in the Steward's Corner. The booklet lists virtually all of the invasive plants of east central Illinois (both common and botanic names), some of their impacts, recommended action (remove ASAP, phase out, watch for potential problems), and, perhaps most important, landscape alternatives, many of which are native to Illinois.

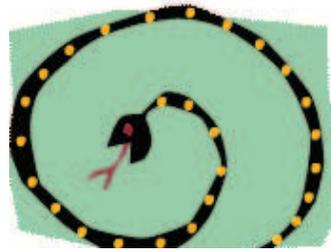
It's not a field guide, but you probably already recognize most of them. It's especially valuable in planning the home landscape and selecting plants at nurseries and garden centers. You can still use the digital version in Steward's Corner. If you'd prefer the hard copy – it's really good looking! – it's available in the UI Extension office, 801 North Country Fair Drive, Champaign.

We've also been collaborating with John Palen, editor of *Field Notes* and webmaster for the ECIMN Facebook page to profile invasive plants each month. So far we've covered: autumn olive, poison hemlock & wild parsnip, sweet clover & alfalfa, and thistles.

We'll follow up in August with teasel and in September with bush & Japanese honeysuckle.

You can access the Facebook page through ECIMN's website (<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/mn/>) or go directly to it (<https://www.facebook.com/ECIMasterNaturalist>).

2013 RATTLESNAKE MASTER RUN



Mark your calendars for the 2013 Rattlesnake Master Run. The 16th Rattlesnake Master - Run for the Prairie will be on Sunday November 3 at Meadowbrook Park starting at 9 a.m.

The race runs through Meadowbrook Park in Urbana and includes a 5K and 10K run, a 5K walk, refreshments, and prizes! Lots of volunteers and participants are needed. If you would like to volunteer to help with the race, please contact Brenda Molano-Flores (bmfhawkeye@gmail.com). For those interested in participating, race forms will be available at sponsor Body n Sole in Savoy or on the GPF web page.

FALL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday September 20, 2013, 7 PM
Anita Purves Nature Center,
1505 N Broadway Ave, Urbana, IL

Special guest speaker: Jeremy Tiemann, Aquatic Ecologist/Field Biologist, Illinois Natural History Survey. He will be discussing the reintroduction of two endangered mussels into Illinois.

The speaker will be preceded by a short business meeting to elect new members to the Board of Directors and a dessert potluck. Please bring a dish to share if you are able. Table service and drinks provided. Free and open to the public.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Prairie conservation and restoration is not just pulling garlic mustard, cleaning seed and doing burns. The administrative details are just as essential.

We currently need one or two folks to serve on the Finance Committee of the Board of Directors. This committee is charged with overseeing the finance of Grand Prairie Friends including creation of a budget, verifying income and expenses, and investments. This committee meets three to four times a year.

Contact Jamie Ellis at James.ellis72@gmail.com or 217-244-5695.

(ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION...)

provides leadership in their stewardship, management and protection. The Illinois Nature Preserves system allows many types of landowner—local or state government agency, private business, corporation, not-for-profit organization, or individual—to retain ownership of the land while ensuring the natural area will be protected in perpetuity.

The Natural Heritage Landmark (NHL) Program was created in 1980 to recognize private landowners who voluntarily protect their natural areas. Eighteen NHL's occur in 9 east-central Illinois counties. These private landowners protect significant natural resources including important stretches of biologically significant streams such as the Embarras River, Sangamon River and Salt Fork of the Vermilion River. Several also afford protection to the state-endangered Sangamon phlox.

In east-central Illinois, rare fish and mussels are among the natural treasures protected through the Nature Preserves System. Edgewood Farm Land and Water Reserve (LWR) and Larimores Salt Fork of the Vermilion River LWR conserve habitat for rare fish and threatened or endangered mussels such as the purple wartyback, wavy-rayed lampussel, and rainbow. Farther south, Embarras River LWR within Fox Ridge State Park protects habitat for the eastern sand darter, harlequin darter and little spectaclecase.

Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) is a critical partner in the successful conservation of significant natural areas in east-central Illinois through its ownership of several natural areas and stewardship of many more. GPF owns and protects a high-quality prairie remnant with a stunning array of native wildflowers at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve. In recent years, GPF acquired cropland surrounding the core prairie and is restoring it to prairie in order to buffer and enhance the original prairie.

At Fairchild Cemetery Savanna Nature Preserve, GPF owns and stewards a rare savanna remnant. GPF's most recent acquisition, Embarras Ridges, was registered as a Land and Water Reserve to permanently protect high-quality forest, rare plants, and important songbird habitat. Grand Prairie Friends' preserves and reserve sustain several State threatened or endangered plants including such rarities as the eastern prairie-fringed orchid and fibrous-rooted sedge.

Other important conservation partners are the Champaign County Forest Preserve District which

conserves a stretch of the Sangamon River as River Bend Land and Water Reserve and the Vermilion County Conservation District which owns 6 nature preserves. Among these gems are the extensive beech-maple forest at Russell Duffin Woods Nature Preserve and the lovely hill prairie overlooking the Middle Fork of the Vermilion River at Windfall Prairie Nature Preserve. The combined efforts of the Commission's many conservation partners has created an enduring legacy of protected natural areas that we intend to expand on in the next 50 years.

You can access a directory of nature preserves and learn more about the Commission on the Web at <http://dnr.state.il.us/inpc/> or look us up on Facebook.

ALONG THE EMBARRAS...

TRIMBLE TREE FARM

One resource along the Embarras River is Bob and Pacie Trimble's Tree Farm in Douglas County. In 2007 The American Forest Foundation selected the Trimbles as Illinois' Outstanding Tree Farmers, and the farm has been the site of numerous field days and workshops to inform the public, not only about forest improvement practices, but other environmental practices as well.

The farm is, of course, mainly devoted to trees. But in 2003 Bob and Pacie began developing a two-acre prairie, and it has been the object of a concerted efforts of seed and root planting, burning, and documentation. It is today a quality prairie.

The results of these conservation efforts are reflected, not only on the timber and prairie, but on the ecology of the Embarras River running through those areas.

BRILLIANT LANDSCAPE DESIGN?



Not at all... just a patch of gravelly soil preferred by partridge pea on the driveway that happened to be where seed gathering materials were carried.

WHAT DID YOU DO THIS SUMMER?

A Report from the GPF 2013

Summer Interns

Jamie Ellis, Joe Boise, and Will Wright

When you ask Joe Boise and Will Wright the age old question, "What did you do this summer?" they will tell you about their experience as the 2013 Grand Prairie Friend's summer interns! I have had the privilege for more than ten years to hire and supervise the GPF natural areas interns, and I have been very pleased with the hard work and enthusiasm shown by these two young men. The experience we provide is a mix of hands-on (i.e. pull weeds, cut brush, collect seeds) and education where the interns work beside, interact with, and learn from volunteer stewards and natural resource management professionals.

So how did Joe and will spend their summer? Read below to find out.

JOE BOISE IN HIS OWN WORDS...

Thinking back on the summer internship, I really enjoyed this experience. Having previous experiences with other great internships, there were new things I learned and experienced with the GPF internship. Having semi-flexible scheduling was a miracle while I took an on-line physics class.

(PRESIDENT'S REPORT...)

Gail's departure leaves a vacancy on the Board, which is an opportunity for another GPF member to step into that leadership role. A few candidates are considering the position. Maybe you as well? Please come out to the meeting on September to vote.

Jamie Ellis

GPF board president

I enjoyed the variety of tasks from removing invasive species to getting school children involved and excited in prairie and getting to see the excitement in their faces.

Seed collection was one thing I never really got to take part in, but it was great to do as it teaches not only plant identification, but the time sensitivity involved with plants. I enjoyed my fellow intern as well as working with local stewards and biologists. It was always a unique chemistry on our work crews.

What did I not like? The only thing I could not stand was the burn associated with wild parsnip. While it could get nasty, the benefits of removing large amounts of parsnip (just look at Short Line Prairie) far outweighs a little blistering skin.

(Continued on next page)



take a child outside

Take A Child Outside September 21-29, 2013 Week

Listing of Events

- Film screening, *Mother Nature's Child*, Sunday, September 22, 2:00 pm, Knight Auditorium at the Spurlock Museum, Urbana - free of charge.
- A community forum for scholars, educators, and practitioners to share research about the benefits and best practices for supporting children's nature experiences, Thursday, September 26, 1:00 - 5:00 pm, University of Illinois ARC, \$10/person
- An evening with **Richard Louv**, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Thursday, September 26, 7:00 pm, Alice Campbell Alumni Center, Urbana, \$10/person
- Community events for children of all ages

For more information, please go to: www.ccpd.org/childoutside/home.html

The ability to schedule our own project days was another great thing about the job. It was neat getting to call local stewards and biologists and set up a time and place to meet. Making those connections is likely going to come in handy in future career efforts. While I am fairly seasoned with my prairie plant knowledge, it was great to learn so many other plants I had not known about before. I also enjoyed working in a variety of prairies and woodlands, when time or weather permitted.

It was really cool visiting many local high quality sites, or lower quality sites being transformed into a higher quality. The Florida/Orchard streets prairie project, the Vet Med prairie, Unity East prairie, Short Line prairie, Loda Prairie, Embarras Ridges, Barnhart Prairie, and so many others have been affected for the better because of efforts made possible by this internship.

As cliché as it may sound, the greatest part of this internship (like many others) is getting to return home every day knowing a difference has been made. This internship was also cool for the educational portion. Getting to speak to site stewards and field biologists was not solely for more manpower on the tasks at hand but the wealth of knowledge each of them had to pass on to us. Although this summer internship was enjoyable, there are a few suggestions I could make for improvement.

With such a variety of situations that affected our internship scheduling and location, it was nice that there were local sites to turn to for work to fit requirements of the situation. However, I noticed the remnant prairies needed more TLC than our local projects. The problem, as with any natural management, is the lack of manpower.

I liked the “first come, first served” rule with dividing the interns up among all the stewards and agencies for assistance as long as it was fair. On the “create your own” days, and maybe even at the start of the internship, encourage the interns to go the extra miles and work on a project that is not 15 minutes away. Having pay for the drive time is a nice incentive because it needs to be accounted for, especially for trying to coordinate schedules. Introduce the remnant areas to the next interns before having too many options for them. It allows the work that needs to be done on those sites to get accomplished.

My other suggestion is for stewards and agencies. The truth is I was honestly surprised when a



Joe Boise triumphantly holding up a teasel at Little Embarras Valley

(photo by Jim Payne)

steward would act as if working together once was enough. Taking care of personal scheduling does take priority, but do not be afraid to contact Jamie and say “I would like to work with them at my site again” as if it would be turned down.

We interns enjoyed working with stewards on multiple occasions, even if it was strictly labor without education. It establishes a connection, which helps interns to grow. Besides, in this field, the general consensus is the more the merrier!

I plan to use this knowledge in my coming coursework, including Grassland Ecology, Conservation Biology, Wildlife Principles and Techniques, and Animal Behavior. The variety of plants in the woodlands and prairies I have encountered and learned about over the summer should provide new and unique details for discussion, particularly among classmates unfamiliar with these plants. In simplest terms, they can “make me sound smart” in the long run.

Finishing up my final undergraduate year at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, I am going to graduate with a Bachelor of Sciences in Zoology, specialized in Wildlife Biology and Conservation. From there, I plan to attend graduate school and hopefully earn a residency with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. My graduate work will be in ecology or toxicology but the land management techniques and variety of species will likely resurface when that time comes.

I plan to count on individuals from Grand Prairie Friends to provide support, advice, and a reference if they would be so inclined. I would appreciate any help or support as this internship comes to

an end. I want to thank the Grand Prairie Friends for providing this experience, and it was an honor and privilege to be one of the interns for 2013.

WILL WRIGHT IN HIS OWN WORDS...

All of my friends and family lately keep asking me how my internship has been this summer. Unfortunately for them, that question locks them into a lengthy series of awesome stories of how much I loved my summer with GPF. My internship quickly became more than a way to get experience. My job is fun. The sites I work on have become places that I care about. I enjoy my work so much that one day I decided to stay at work until the sun went down just because I was having so much fun.

I've honestly loved my summer from the very beginning. When Jamie took me on my first tour of the local prairies I would be working on, I knew that I was in the right place in life. I've always enjoyed learning, especially about nature. So, as we were walking through the prairie, we talked about the names and life cycles of all of the plants that we found.

My most vivid memory from that day was the shooting star that was in bloom that day. I tried my best to remember the cascade of names and facts that Jamie sent at me, but there was just too much. It was a pleasant challenge to try and absorb as much knowledge as possible from such an experienced expert. I have no clue how he knows so much about plants.

The next few weeks were spent learning how to take care of the prairie. Which herbicides go with which plants and so on and so forth. I learned which plants were the good, which were the bad, and which were the ugly. My partner, Joe, and I battled (and defeated) a half a mile of parsnip at Short Line Prairie, a monoculture stand of reed canary grass, and acres and acres of garlic mustard infested woodlands. We were also introduced to many of the local biologists and conservationists of GPF. I'm sure the networking will prove to be very valuable for me as I move on to my career in wild-life management soon.

Above all else, though, I've just enjoyed being able to be outside again. I spent my youth growing up outside both in the woods and playing sports. When I got to college, though, most of that went on break. I got weak and spent most of my



Will Wright with a truckload of wild parsnip at Shortline Prairie

(photo by Joe Boise)

time cooped up in my room in the city. Being able to be outside and work has made me strong and happy again. I definitely want to be able to continue spending my life outside, doing the things I love.

Even the bad stories from this summer are great! My first experience with a parsnip burn was painful but slightly hilarious. I got it all over my arms one day and broke out in itchy painful blisters.

Unfortunately, my girlfriend didn't know what I had and gave me a hug. I just couldn't help but laugh at how unfortunate the situation was. Also, I can't even tell you how many times that I got sunburned this summer. On the bright side, I now have a great tan and almost can't get a sunburn anymore!

Honestly, I don't want this internship to end. I've had too much fun, learned too many interesting things, and made too many friendships. I hope to be able to extend the internship through the fall. Regardless of when it does end, though, I'm sure that I'll never truly leave GPF. My great experiences will stay with me forever.

AND A BIG THANKS...

This internship has been made possible by a grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Preservation Fund, a generous donation from a GPF member, and proceeds from the annual native plant sale.