

A Prairie Rendezvous



SPRING VOL. 10, No. 2, 2008
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THE NEED FOR SEED: LODA CEMETERY SEED COLLECTION

by Paul B. Marcum, Connie J. Carroll-Cunningham, Grant Cunningham and Jean M. Mengelkoch

The purchase of additional land around the Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve (LCPNP) in Iroquois County was finalized on November 15, 2007. In anticipation of this event and the subsequent need to plant the nearly nine acres of land, a group of us embarked on the initial stages of seed collection.

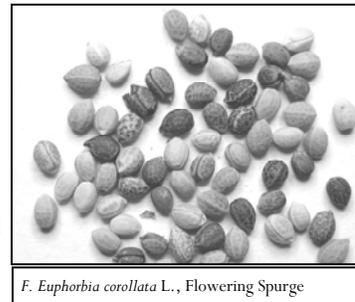


A. Asclepias sullivantii Engelm.,
Sullivant's Milkweed

Beginning in late May of 2007, the authors hit the roadside, railroad and remnant prairies within a 30 mile radius of the Loda site. Collecting permits for seed collection in Illinois Nature

Preserves were supplied by Mary Kay Solecki, our regional Nature Preserves Commission representative. A species list

compiled by observations from Mary Kay, Ken Robertson and John Taft focused our collections. Seeds were to be obtained from species already known to occur at LCPNP. The proposed list included 95 native prairie species composed of 75 wildflowers and 20 grasses and sedges.



F. Euphorbia corollata L., Flowering Spurge

Results of our efforts were a total of 70 species, composed of 59 wildflowers and 11 grasses and sedges. Included among

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ILLINOIS NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY UPDATE

by Deanna Glosser

The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) was a major biological survey conducted during the mid-1970s with funding provided by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The scale of the INAI was unprecedented at the time because it was the first state-wide natural resources inventory in the United States. More than 200 staff and volunteers participated in the project. The three principal results of the INAI were the development of a natural community classification system for Illinois, the grading of the quality of natural areas, and an inventory of the remaining high-quality natural areas in the state. A total of 1,089 sites were included, covering 25,723 acres. This represented only 0.07% of all the land area of Illinois.

During the past three decades the database of areas in the INAI has been

kept up to date; however, some areas have been destroyed, some areas have since been identified that were missed by the original inventory or that were only recognized as worthy of protection as we learned more about Illinois' original landscapes. Consequently, IDNR has decided to do an update of the INAI taking advantage of new technologies and the most recent scientific data concerning natural areas.

An INAI Update was initiated on June 1, 2007. The INAI Update will systematically screen the entire state to find, evaluate, classify, and map natural areas. While it will use twenty-first century technology, including remote sensing, Geographic Information Systems, and digital imaging—the sites will be visited by ecologists where landowner permission is granted. There is no substitute for on-the-ground experts

making the final judgments on the overall condition of a natural community.

Lincoln Land Community College, with Dr. Brian Anderson, is the leader of this project, with Applied Ecological Services-West Dundee, Ecological Services-Champaign, Environmental Planning Solutions-Riverton, and the Illinois Natural History Survey-Urbana being subcontractors. Five regional ecologists have been hired to conduct the statewide assessment. The Field Coordinator, Randy Nyboer, brings thirty years of experience to the INAI Update, and will supervise the field work.

Connie Carroll-Cunningham will be working in Region 2, comprising 28 counties in east central Illinois. Connie graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana with a

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A Prairie Rendezvous

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A Prairie Rendezvous is a publication of Grand Prairie Friends for the restoration community of East Central Illinois. In February 2004, the membership of GPF voted to broaden the group's Constitution and By-laws bringing the missions of GPF and Prairie Grove Volunteers together and the two groups merged.

A Prairie Rendezvous is published quarterly. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at gpf@prairienet.org or by mail to the GPPF.O. Box (above). 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 GPF P.O. Box (above).

www.prairienet.org/gpf

GPF Board of Directors (term ends)

Jamie Ellis, President (2009)

Derek Liebert, Vice-President (2009)

Jim Payne, Treasurer (2009)

Lynne Scott, Secretary (2007)

Nate Beccue (2008), Paul Marcum (2008), and Dan Olson (2008)

Two board positions are vacant and unfilled.

Board meetings are the third Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m. and are open to the public. Directions to the meeting location can be obtained by contacting the President.

GPF Committees

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

Membership & Volunteerism: Brenda Molano-Flores

Stewardship: Betsy Kuchinke, Paul Marcum, and Dan Olson

Education: Lynne Scott

Publicity: Derek Liebert

Land Acquisition: Dan Olson and Jim Payne

Fund Raising: Derek Liebert and Lynne Scott

Submission Deadlines

☞ **Summer Issue** (June, July, Aug.): **May 1**

☞ **Fall Issue** (Sept., Oct., Nov.): **Aug. 1**

☞ **Winter Issue** (Dec., Jan., Feb.): **Nov. 1**

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Jamie Ellis, President, GPF

If I neglected to say it before, I'll say it now: thank you. Thank you to everyone who donated money to realize the vision of buying land at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve. Thank you to everyone who made this project possible. You renewed my hope and showed that you value natural areas. Those values translated into money to buy land to restore native tall grass prairie. A good choice directed by good values.

I believe our values direct our choices, and I struggle with choices every day. Should I ride by bicycle or drive my carbon dioxide polluting car? Should I buy the more expensive locally grown or organic vegetables or go with the cheaper ones? Who should I vote for president? What are your values and how is that reflected in your actions?

The annual steward's luncheon was well attended and enjoyed by all. This is a time we take each winter to thank our natural area stewards. Attendees have a time to ask each other questions, share knowledge and techniques and reconnect with each other.

Well, I'll report that planning for our usual events is going well. Natural area workdays are scheduled. We'll be putting seeds in the soil for the plant sale very soon. We plan to hire summer interns again this year. Other usual events include recruiting volunteers to serve on the GPF Board of Directors. This three-year leadership commitment is important to the organization and even more important this year with two vacant positions. I also think it's time to work on a strategic plan, vision and goals. There will be more opportunities for land conservation by purchasing land and easements, and we need to be ready for these opportunities.

Think Spring!

CEMETERY PRAIRIES: PRESERVING CULTURAL AND NATURAL AREAS' VALUES

by Mary Jay Solecki

Grand Prairie Friends owns or manages several pioneer cemeteries that contain significant prairie or savanna remnants, including Fairchild Cemetery Savanna Nature Preserve, Prospect Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve and Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve. The protection and long-term stewardship of pioneer cemetery prairies and savannas can be challenging. A delicate balance exists between ensuring the long-term viability of native plants and animals, while maintaining the cultural resource of the historic burial sites. Many people are accustomed to highly manicured grass in their yards, neighborhood parks, and cemeteries. They often expect pioneer cemeteries to appear the same. Prairie cemeteries, with grasses and wildflowers 3 to 6 feet tall, are often viewed as unkempt, even though the cemeteries retain their original vegetation - an important biological resource.

Caring for prairie plants, protecting cemetery stones, and providing public access need not be goals that stand in conflict. Working together, cemetery advocates and natural area stewards can reach accommodations. Grand Prairie Friends strives to provide information on both the natural and cultural resources found at cemetery prairies and savannas under its stewardship to enable visitors to gain an appreciation

for all the resources. When burials occurred in early pioneer cemeteries in east-central Illinois, the burial grounds typically were not mowed. It is important to realize that the prairie or savanna plants surrounding the burials are historically authentic parts of the burial grounds and provide an accurate historical context for the burial sites.

The pioneer cemetery prairies and savannas that GPF works at are Illinois nature preserves. As such, the following guidelines apply. The maintenance of burial plots in cemetery prairies and savannas that are nature preserves is allowed under nature preserve rules. Nature preserve dedication does not affect the legal rights of continuing use of the cemetery for cemetery purposes including the maintenance of markers and the care of any burial space.

In general, burial sites in cemetery prairies or savannas that are nature preserves can be maintained in the following manner. Volunteers or the landowner (or the landowners designees) can come in and document the historic cultural features (condition of the stones, inscriptions), clean around the markers by hand pulling or using a nylon weed whip (no metal), and clean the stones with water/ammonia and soft bristle brushes (such as paint brushes or toothbrushes). A

trail system can be maintained to allow access to the burial stones and the burial plots can be mowed. This can be done by the owner of the burial grounds or interested volunteers with the owner's permission.

According to the Illinois comptroller's web page on cemetery care at <http://www.ioc.state.il.us/office/cbct/index.cfm?Fuseaction=showPage&PageID=93>, "legally, an abandoned cemetery is the private property of the person whose land it is located on, whether or not that person has any ties to the cemetery. While a landowner is legally prohibited from destroying or damaging the cemetery in any way, he/she is not obligated to either maintain the cemetery or allow others to access it for the purposes of cleanup or visitation". Therefore, the landowner's permission must be given before attempting to restore a cemetery. As the owner of Fairchild Cemetery Savanna Nature Preserve, Grand Prairie Friends works in partnership with volunteer stewards and cemetery advocates to maintain both the natural and cultural resources found at this cemetery savanna, as well as the cemetery prairies under its stewardship.

A CALL FOR LEADERS: APPLY FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Volunteers are the backbone of Grand Prairie Friends. Our natural area stewards, plant sale helpers and Rattlesnake Master Run organizers are all volunteers. We are governed and led by a nine member Board of Directors who are volunteers. They give their time because they have the commitment and passion to support an organization that protects and manages natural areas in east-central Illinois.

Right now we are looking for volunteers with that same passion and commitment to lead this organization. Please consider applying to be a Board member. What does it

involve? Board members have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that the organization does the best work possible in pursuit of its purpose, mission and goals. Board members actively participate in projects and activities throughout the year. Board members are expected to help with fundraising. Work is accomplished through 8-10 meetings throughout the year as well as through email and phone communication.

If you want to share your talents and expertise as a leader for Grand Prairie Friends, please contact **Jamie Ellis** at 244-5695 or jamesc@inhs.uiuc.edu.

Grand Prairie Friends



Activity Calendar



SPRING 2008

Spring burns will be scheduled in March and early April for several sites. Burns are needed at these sites to discourage the competing non-native species and encourage growth of native plants and native wildlife habitat. Wear natural-fiber, non-flammable clothing (long pants, longsleeves, boots, and gloves); no synthetic fabrics. Bring drinking water and a snack. Call Jamie Ellis (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu, 244-5695) or Paul Marcum (pmarcum@inhs.uiuc.edu; 333-8459) for more information.

Volunteer Stewardship Activities

Urbana Park District Workdays: Enjoy a natural area close to home. Help remove invasive species, improve trails, collect seed, and plant native species. Tools and refreshments will be provided. Call 217-384-4062 to register or for more information.

Second Saturday of every month

9-11 a.m.: Busey Woods--Meet at APNC*.

1-3 p.m.: Weaver Grove--Pull off south of intersection of Main St. and Smith Rd

Fourth Saturday of every month

9-11 a.m.: Meadowbrook Prairie--Meet at Race St. parking lot.

1-3 p.m.: Perkins Road Site—Meet at Dog Park, ½ mile east of the Cunningham Ave. on Perkins Rd. The group will then walk down to the lower restoration project area.

Every Sunday

Red Bison. Workdays held every Sunday unless otherwise noted. Members and non-members welcome. Meet at the University YMCA at 1:00 p.m. Contact Mike Polito (mpolito@@uiuc.edu [until May/June] or redbison@gmail.com) for more information.

Saturday March 15: James Nance Woods. Meet at 9:00 a.m. on-site for control of multiflora rose. Bring shovels. Take I-57 south, about 12 miles south of Mattoon, to the Neoga exit. Take 6th Street west from the four-way stop sign in Neoga, go 2.2 miles past the city limits to CR 3425 E., turn right and go 0.9 mile past two 'S' curves to the woods on the right. Travel time from C-U is about 1-1/4 hours each way. Jim Payne, 344-7840 or jpayne@shout.net if you need more info.

- APNC (Anita Purves Nature Center) is located at 1505 N. Broadway Ave. in Urbana.
- NATURAL RESOURCES STUDIES ANNEX: 1910 Griffith Drive, Champaign. Griffith Drive runs south from St. Mary's Road just east of the Illinois Central railroad viaduct (next to St. Mary's Cemetery).
- Workday reminders and updates will be posted on the ecostewards listserv.
- Please leave your pets at home. Pets are not allowed on Nature Preserves. Activities such as prescribed burnings may endanger pets, even if they are on leashes or otherwise supervised.
- Please wear clean clothes and boots as a general precaution. After a workday wire brush or scrape lug soles clean. Also, do not wear the same clothes that were used to visit a site with mature exotic seed into another site before laundering them. This is to avoid becoming unwitting carriers of the very invasive species that we are trying to control!

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Saturday April 5: Middle Fork Bluffs. Come enjoy an early season hike to see Snow Trillium (*Trillium nivale*). We will also pull and scout for garlic mustard as we hike through the woods. Bring gloves and drinking water. Water, food, and rest-rooms are also available at the Salt Kettle I-74 rest-stop (just west of the site). Meet at APNC (see inset box) at 9:00 a.m. to carpool or at the Salt Kettle rest-stop at 10:00 a.m. This rest area is just west of Danville. Contact Paul Marcum for more information (333-8459, 390-6141).

Saturday April 12: Horseshoe Bottom and Windfall Prairie Nature Preserves. Spring Wildflower Hike. Hike the long way to HBNP. See hill prairies, seeps, marsh marigolds, and breathtaking views of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion!!! Pull garlic mustard along the way!!! Be prepared for several miles of rough (and maybe a bit wet) hiking. Wear good boots and bring water and a lunch (WE WILL BE MOST of the DAY). Meet at APNC* at 9:00 a.m. to carpool to the site or at the Lake Mingo dam parking lot at 9:45. Contact Rick Larimore (hm: 337-7006, w: 244-6716, c: 493-4634).

Saturday April 19: Jasmine Hollow. We'll be pulling garlic mustard, and thinning coralberry and gooseberry. The spring wildflowers should be showing nicely! Meet on site at 9:30 a.m. We'll

work until noon, then have refreshments and take a hike afterward if folks are interested. The address is 1172 N. 200 East Rd., Piatt County. Phone 344-7840 or email jpayne@shout.net if you need directions.

Saturday April 26: Embarrass Bluffs. Meet at 9:00 a.m. on-site for a wildflower and warbler walk. Take either SR 130 or I-57 8 mi south of US 36 to SR133. Take SR133 east, over the Embarras River, to CR2300E (there's a sign for the Oak Grove Separate Baptist Church). Travel south on CR2300 E. to 1600N and wait at the church parking lot. The site is west of the church on a private drive at 1600N. Travel time from C-U is about 1 hour each way. Jim Payne, 344-7840 or jpayne@shout.net if you need more info.

Saturday April 26: Nettie Hart Memorial Woodland. Help us remove one of the more insidious invasive plants - garlic mustard, as well as other non-natives. This woodland includes upland forest and floodplain forest along the Sangamon River. Wear gloves and bring drinking water too. Meet at APNC* at 9:00 a.m. to carpool. Contact Bryant Barnes (493-8686; email: bbarnes@prairienet.org) for more information.

Saturday April 26: Pellville Cemetery. Help pull some invasive species!!!! at Pellville Cemetery. Wear gloves and bring drinking water too. Meet at APNC* at

9:00 a.m. to carpool. Contact Paul Tessene (244-7984; ptessene@inhs.uiuc.edu) for more information.

Sunday May 4: Russell Duffin Nature Preserve. Wildflower hick and garlic mustard.

Meet in the Big Woods parking lot in Forest Glen Preserve, Vermilion County at 2:00 p.m. We'll mainly be hiking and looking at wildflowers, but we'll also keep our eye out for garlic mustard. Bring water to drink and gloves. Contact Connie Cunningham (h: 733-2660, w: 244-7741, email: carrollc@inhs.uiuc.edu) for directions or more information.

Saturday May 10: GPF-PGV Annual Mother's Day Plant Sale at Lincoln Village in Urbana. 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Saturday May 17: Orchid Hill Tour led by Paul Marcum (Illinois Natural History Survey Botanist). 10:00 a.m. Come see the orchids in spring bloom and enjoy some topography! This is a rare chance to explore this natural area which is usually closed to the public. Contact Paul Marcum (pmarcum@inhs.uiuc.edu; 333-8459) to sign up and get directions. Space is limited to *12 people*. Meet at site at 10 a.m. or at APNC* to car pool at 9:15 a.m.

Sunday May 18: Middle Fork Bluffs. Help pull garlic mustard. After working we'll take a hike around the woods to see the spring wildflowers. Bring gloves

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and drinking water. Water, food, and restrooms are also available at the Salt Kettle I-74 rest-stop (just west of the site). Meet at ANPC (see inset box) at 9:00 a.m. to carpool or at the Salt Kettle rest-stop at 10:00 a.m. This rest area is just west of Danville. Contact Paul Marcum for more information (333-8459, 390-6141).

Saturday May 24: Jasmine Hollow. We'll be pulling garlic mustard, and thinning coralberry and gooseberry. Meet on site at 9:30 a.m. We'll work until noon, then have refreshments and take a hike afterward if folks are interested. The address is 1172 N. 200 East Rd., Piatt County. Phone 344-7840 or email jpayne@shout.net if you need directions.

Saturday June 7: Shortline Railroad Prairie. Help restore GPF's first prairie remnant by removing non-native vegetation. Wear long sleeves and bring gloves and drinking water. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at ANPC (see inset box) to carpool or 9:45 a.m. at the site. For more information contact Paul Marcum (333-8459, 390-6141).

Sunday June 8: Buffalo Trace Prairie. Help pull parsnip!!!!. Bring gloves, drinking water, and wear long sleeves. Bring a snack too if you'd like. Workday will start at 8:30 a.m. (latecomers are more than welcome). Directions to Buffalo Trace Prairie: From I-74, take Route 47 North away from Mahomet. At first asphalt road to the left, turn left (2100 N) and turn left again at the next intersection (300E). Drive south to the parking lot on the left across from the cell-phone tower. Walk out on the bike path to the prairie between the 0.2 and 0.3 Mile mark on the bike path. Contact Phil Hult and Gail Snowdon for more information (217-586-4511).

Sunday June 15: Buffalo Trace Prairie. Help pull parsnip!!!!. Bring gloves, drinking water, and wear long sleeves. Bring a snack too if you'd like.

Workday will start at 8:30 a.m. (latecomers are more than welcome). Directions to Buffalo Trace Prairie: From I-74, take Route 47 North away from Mahomet. At first asphalt road to the left, turn left (2100 N) and turn left again at the next intersection (300E). Drive south to the parking lot on the left across from the cell-phone tower. Walk out on the bike path to the prairie between the 0.2 and 0.3 Mile mark on the bike path. Contact Phil Hult and Gail Snowdon for more information (217-586-4511).

Saturday, June 21: Paxton Railroad Prairie. This high quality prairie has about 100 species, and many will be blooming! Help collect seeds and remove non-native species. Wear long sleeves; bring gloves & water. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Contact Betsy Kuchinke for directions or to carpool. (355-6911 or bkuchinke@insightbb.com)

Sunday June 22: Loda Addition Seed Collection Workday. Come out and collect early season seed for the new Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve Addition. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at ANPC (see inset box) to carpool. For more information contact Paul Marcum [217-333-8459 (w), 217-390-6141 (c)] or James Ellis (217-244-5695).

Saturday June 28: Shortline Railroad Prairie. Help restore GPF first prairie remnant by removing non-native vegetation. Wear long sleeves and bring gloves and drinking water. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at ANPC (see inset box) to carpool or 9:45 at the site. For more information contact Paul Marcum (333-8459, 390-6141).

Sunday June 29: Loda Addition Seed Collection Workday. Come out and collect early season seed for the new Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve Addition. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at ANPC (see inset box) to carpool. For more information contact Paul Marcum [217-333-8459 (w), 217-390-6141 (c)] or James Ellis (217-244-5695).

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these were seven species, collected from LCPNP, but absent from the species list. Notable among these were the conservative prairie species, *Coreopsis palmata* (prairie coreopsis), *Potentilla arguta* (prairie cinquefoil) and *Prenanthes aspera* (rough white lettuce).

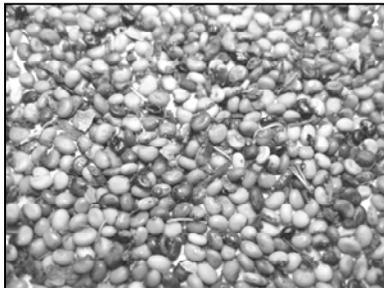
In the coming year, we hope to continue our efforts and would like to involve other Grand Prairie Friends members as well. Watch for workday notices, posted in the Newsletter and through the Ecostewards listserve, throughout the year.



E. *Zizia aurea* (L.) Koch., Golden Alexanders



D. *Sporobolus heterolepis* (Gray) Gray, Prairie Dropseed



B. *Baptisia bracteata* Ell., Cream Wild Indigo

SUMMER 2008 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Sponsored by Grand Prairie Friends

Position: Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) seeks interested applicants for two full-time summer internship positions for summer 2008 in ecological stewardship and management of natural areas in east-central Illinois. Interns will work independently and as a team to control and remove exotic, invasive plant species from prairie and woodland natural areas using mechanical and chemical techniques. Educational opportunities include outings in the field with natural resource professionals, scientists and volunteers. Interns might also assist with planting native plant seedlings and collecting native plant seed.

Qualifications: Applicants should be highly self-motivated and able to work with little or no direct supervision. Applicants must be willing and able to work in the field under a variety of environmental conditions. Course work or interest in the biological and ecological sciences is preferred. Ability or willingness to operate hand and power tools including bow saws, clippers, power brush cutter, chainsaw, etc. is also preferred. A pesticide applicator license will be required after the start of the internship. A valid automobile driver's license is required.



Rate: \$8.00/hr including up to \$300.00 in mileage reimbursement expenses for personal vehicle use (GPF has a stick-shift pickup truck available for use).

Time Period: Position begins June 1 and will continue to approximately August 31, 2008.

To ensure full consideration for the internship, applications should be received by **March 31, 2008**. Please send letter of application, resume, and contact information for three references (references need to fill out and send in a reference form) to:

Grand Prairie Friends-Summer Internship
P.O. Box 36
Urbana, IL 61803

Specific questions regarding the summer internship can be directed to Jamie Ellis (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu or 217.244.5695).

GPF is an all-volunteer not-for-profit conservation organization dedicated to the protection and stewardship of prairie, woodland and wetland natural areas in east-central Illinois. We also educate interested citizens about the ecology, natural history and importance of our remaining natural areas. More information about GPF can be found at www.prairienet.org/gpf.

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership Renewal Reminder

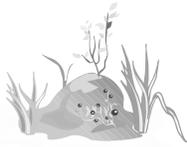
Thank you to everyone who responded to the membership renewal and paid dues for 2008. I know you and everyone involved with Grand Prairie Friends values this organization and the work we do. If you value our conservation work, please take the time to renew your membership by sending in a monetary donation. Membership is based on a calendar year. Thanks.

Winter Membership

Please join Grand Prairie Friends on **Friday March 14 at 7:00 p.m.** for the annual Winter Membership Meeting. We'll gather at Anita Purves Nature Center, 1505 N Broadway, Urbana (<http://www.urbanaparks.org/facilities/4.html>). After a short business meeting and dessert potluck we will have a special guest speaker TBA. Please bring a dessert to share. Drinks and table service provided. Free and open to the public.

North American Prairie Conference

The 21st North American Prairie Conference, August 4-8, 2008, Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota. Because Winona is located next to a major river and since there are nearby examples of prairies that range from sand prairie to dry



Field Biology Course at Parkland College

Would you like to spend a few weeks this summer learning about the natural world around you while at the same time earning two hours of college credit? If so, sign up for Field Biology (Bio 220) at Parkland College where we'll spend most every day outside studying ecological processes of local forests, grasslands, and aquatic systems. This course will be almost entirely field based. We'll spend a little time in the classroom going over principles and sampling techniques, but a majority of the time will be outdoors meeting with local experts, exploring our natural areas, and doing some sampling of our own. The majority of our time will be spent investigating our local prairie, woodland, and stream ecosystems. We will talk about conservation and restoration issues and practices, learn plant identification skills, assess habitat quality (from a canoe), and learn more about our local flora and fauna. The course begins June 9th and ends June 18th with classes M-F from 9:00 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. The course will culminate with an overnight camping trip to Southwest Michigan and Northwest Indiana to explore bog and dune ecosystems. For more information, please contact Lynne Scott (lscott@parkland.edu).

Annual Plant Sale

The annual Mother's Day Native Plant Sale is set for **Saturday May 10, 2008** inside Lincoln Square Village, downtown Urbana. The sale will run from 8 a.m. to 1p.m., and there are many volunteer opportunities this year.

Transplanting. We will be transplanting seedlings from flats into pots at the NRB greenhouse on the corner of Pennsylvania and Sixth in Champaign from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. on **April 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th and May 5th.**

Sale Preparation. We will move plants from the greenhouse and set up at Lincoln Square the on **Friday, May 9th** from 6 to 8 p.m. Volunteers with trucks are especially needed. (Please RSVP to **Jamie Ellis** [jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu or 244-5695] if you are available to help on this date.)

prairie to wet prairie to the special thin-soiled "goat prairie" of the surrounding limestone and sandstone bluffs, we have chosen **The Prairie Meets the River** as a theme to emphasize the importance of water in the prairie environment. For more information about this great conference go to <http://bio.winona.edu/NAPC/>

East Central Illinois Environmental Alliance Formed

The Natural Resources Committee of the League of Women Voters - Champaign County (IL, PO Box 201, Urbana, IL 61803-0201) held a meeting of all interested local environmental groups October 29, 2007. They decided to form the **East Central Illinois Environmental Alliance** with the League of Women Voters as convener. A listserv on Prairienet was developed as a place for local environmental organizations and interested individuals to discuss issues and activities that go beyond one organization's scope. If you are trying to find out what's known locally about some issue, if you are trying to get discussion going, if you'd like to let people know of an action or event of general interest, this could be a good place to do it. For more information on the listserv, go to <https://mail.prairienet.org/mailman/listinfo/ecilea-list>

Day of Sale. Volunteers are needed the day of the sale to work with both customers and plants, as well as clean up after the sale on **May 10th.** Leftover plants will also need to be taken back to the greenhouse. We will run two shifts at the sale – 8:00 to 10:30 a.m. and 10:30 to 1:00 p.m. Clean up will follow the sale. (Please RSVP to **Jamie Ellis** [jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu or 244-5695] if you are available to help on this date.)

Farmer's Market plant sale We also will need volunteers to sell plants at the Lincoln Square Farmer's Market on May 17th and May 24th from 6:00 a.m. to noon. (Please RSVP **Jesse Kurylo** [jkurylo@inhs.uiuc.edu or 244-0692] if you are available to help on these dates.)

RED FOX OR GRAY FOX?

by Jean Mengelkoch

Two species of fox occur in Illinois – the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*; top photo) and the gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*; bottom photo). The two foxes differ in appearance, habitat preference, and even behavior. Contrary to its common name, the red fox is not always red. In fact, the red fox can come in three different color morphs (types). Red is the most common color morph, but they can also be silver (black with silver-tipped guard hairs) or cross (gray with a dark stripe down the back and across the shoulders). The gray fox does not exhibit such dramatic color variability. The gray fox has a grizzled, gray coat with hints of red on its buff-colored neck, belly, and legs; it does not have multiple color



Gray Fox (photo J.F. Merritt)

morphs.

In general, the gray fox is slightly stockier and smaller than the red fox. The fur of the gray fox is not as long and luxurious as that of the red fox. The easiest distinguishing characteristic to look for is the color of the tip of the tail. The tail of the red fox always has a white tip (even at birth!) and the gray fox has a black-



Red Fox (photo P. Marcum)

tipped tail.

The red and gray fox also differ in the habitat in which they live. The red fox can be found in open country, such as cornfields, in the brushy areas at the edges of woods, and in open woodlands. In addition, they can thrive in the city and suburbs and have even been found living in both Boston and New York City! The gray fox, however, is

closely affiliated with the deciduous forest. They prefer to live within dense woods or forest, though they may venture out into brushy areas.

A key behavioral difference between the red and gray fox is that the gray fox readily climbs trees. That's right, the gray fox can use its long, curved, sharp front claws to clutch the tree trunk and push itself up the tree with its hind legs. It has been documented climbing 60 feet up a branchless tree. Once it is up in the tree, it can jump from branch to branch. The gray fox climbs trees to escape predators, search for food, and to rest.

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purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), and sorrel (*Rumex sp.*)—grow wild along the edges of roads and fields, where they compete with native plants. Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), on the other hand,

is usually found growing in cold, flowing streams.

Though all of these greens are high in vitamins and minerals, each—peppery watercress, tangy purslane, lemony sorrel—retains its own unique flavor. The

combined effect, says David Hirsch, chef of Moosewood Restaurant in Ithaca, New York, makes for a delightful and warming spring soup.” (*Audubon* magazine, Oct. 2004)

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Bachelor's in Animal Science and a Master's in Forestry, focusing on forest ecology. Connie (pictured) has worked for the past 10½ years as a full-time botanist for the Critical Trends Assessment Program at the Illinois Natural History Survey. This project involved the establishment of randomly selected permanent plots in forest, wetlands, and grasslands across the state of Illi-



nois Vegetation inventories were conducted at all sites; sites being revisited every 5 years to assess changes. Connie also serves as the volunteer regional ecologist for the former Prairie Grove Volunteers and currently serves as the Secretary for the State board of the Illinois Native Plant.

A process for nominating a site for the regional ecologist to evaluate will be developed and posted on the INAI web site. Visit <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/inai/> for this and other information about the INAI Update. For more information about the INAI Update, you can also contact Dr. Deanna Glosser, 217-629-8949 or dglosser@insightbb.com.

PRAIRIE CHEF: PLANTS FOR THE CRITTERS

Be proud. Take part. Let's eat that nasty army! I'll call it the "Army of Invasive Edibles"! Granted, they're small, but formidable nonetheless.

We hear about invasive species practically every day, so the recipe you see here is using five of those pests. None of them are making the headlines, but we spend millions of dollars each year trying to control the stubborn dandelion alone.

With the aid of photos, you'll begin to notice them all over Illinois—creeping into your gardens, advancing along fences, thriving in the heat, and happy as pearls in oysters growing bigger each day in the tiny crevices of cement.

About 4 years ago *Audubon* magazine had an article about eating exotic plants. Here's an excerpt, along with the wonderful recipe they featured:

"...Americans could save a lot of money and avoid a lot of chemicals by taking a cue from early colonists, gathering the tender, young leaves for salad and the golden blooms for flower wine. Many edible, exotic greens—such as lamb's quarters (*Chenopodium album*),

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Exotic Jade Soup

Serves 4 to 6



- 4 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 1 c. boiling water
- 6 c. vegetable
- 1½ tbs. grated fresh gingerroot
- 1½ c. thinly sliced carrot rounds
- 1½ c. thinly sliced leeks or onions
- 6 lightly packed cups of chopped exotic spring greens (dandelion, watercress, sorrel, lamb's quarters, purslane) just to name a few; for better flavor, use at least two or three kinds of greens
- 1 cake soft or silken tofu, cut into ½" cubes
- Soy sauce to taste
- Minced scallions or chives
- Sesame oil

1. Place the mushrooms in a heatproof bowl, cover with the boiling water, and set aside for 10 minutes.

2. Heat the stock and add the gingerroot, carrots, and leeks or onion. Simmer for 5 minutes, then add the greens and cook for 5 to 10 minutes, until the vegetables are tender but still somewhat firm.

3. Drain the mushrooms and add their soaking liquid to the soup. Thinly slice the mushroom caps and add them to the soup along with the tofu. Heat for 5 minutes. Add soy sauce to taste.

Garnish each serving with scallions or chives and a few drops of sesame oil.

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☞ *Loda Cemetery Seeds*

☞ *Internship Announcement*

... and more