

A Prairie Rendezvous



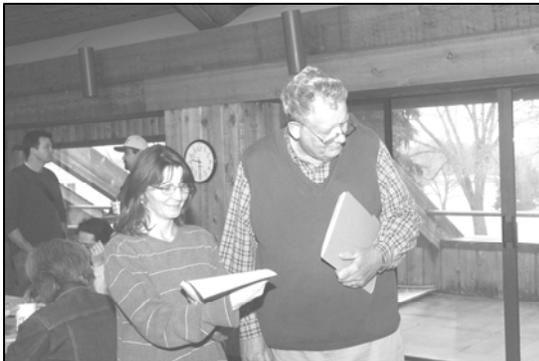
SPRING VOL. 11, NO. 2, 2009

14TH ANNUAL STEWARDS' LUNCHEON

by Jean M. Mengelkoch and Paul B. Marcum

On March 7th a total of 19 participants gathered at the Lake of the Woods Golf Course Clubhouse for the 14th Annual Stewards' Luncheon. The purpose of the luncheon is to thank the stewards of our sites and to provide an

Prairie seed collection for the rest of the land will continue to be collected. Keep an eye out for seed collecting workdays! Derek Liebert informed us that a natural areas stewardship manual has been developed for East-central Illinois



Another successful Steward's Luncheon! The lunch was held at the Champaign County Forest Preserve-Lake of the Woods Golf Course Clubhouse.



opportunity for stewards to share their triumphs, challenges, and questions with other stewards. Many stewards talked of controlling invasives, such as garlic mustard, honeysuckle, and wild parsnip on their sites. Attendance at workdays was extremely variable throughout 2008 with a high of 28 volunteers at Buffalo Trace one day! In other news, as we all know, an additional nine acres around Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve was purchased by GPF in November 2007. In February about 3.5 acres of the land were planted with about 60 lbs of prairie seed collected by GPF volunteers.

(more details in this issue). Last, but definitely not least, there was much discussion of the emerald ash borer (*Agilus planipennis*). First discovered in Illinois in the Chicago region in 2006, it was found in Bloomington, IL (McLean County) in July 2008. Therefore, it is likely that the emerald ash borer will reach Champaign County in 2009 and the county will join 21 other quarantined Illinois counties. Strategies for addressing the coming infestation are being discussed by many environmental groups throughout the state.

LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION: MOVING FORWARD

by Jamie Ellis

During the summer of 2008, Grand Prairie Friends took the first steps on the path of becoming an accredited land trust. This is a voluntary process administered by the Land Trust Alliance (www.landtrustalliance.org). Organizations seeking accreditation must demonstrate compliance with a set of accreditation indicator practices selected from Land Trust Standards and Practices. These practices are designated

by the Land Trust Alliance and indicate a land trust's ability to operate in an ethical, legal, and technically sound manner to ensure the long-term protection of land in the public interest. Indicator practices are chosen based on the following criteria:

- ☞ Responsible governance of the organization
- ☞ Protection of the public interest

- with sound and sustainable land transactions and stewardship
- ☞ Ethical operations
- ☞ Accountability to donors and the public
- ☞ Compliance with all laws, such as IRC §170(h) and §501(c)(3)

In September 2008, the GPF Board and a few other members met with

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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 GPF P.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 (2010)

Drew Becker (2011)

Fred Delcomyn (2010)

Rob Kanter (2011)

Dan Olson (2011)

One board position is 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

☞ **Fall Issue** (Sept., Oct., Nov.): **Aug. 1, 2009**

☞ **Winter Issue** (Dec., Jan., Feb.): **Nov. 1, 2009**

☞ **Spring Issue** (Mar., Apr., May): **Feb. 1, 2010**

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Jamie Ellis, President, GPF

As I was reading through a devotional booklet for the Christian season of Lent, I was struck by this story:

“Tell me the weight of a snowflake,” a mouse said to the dove. “Nothing, less than nothing,” was the answer. “In that case, I must tell you a story,” said the mouse. “I sat on a branch when it began to snow. Since I had nothing better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on my branch. I counted exactly 3,471,962. When the next snowflake landed, the branch broke off.” The mouse scampered away.

Indeed sometimes we feel as if our actions and voices are like a single snowflake without weight, but taken together, we are massive. Sometimes our actions seem benign—my one vehicle doesn't pollute that much. What about three million vehicles? Sometimes our actions seem insignificant—my one garden of native plants doesn't seem like much. What about three million yards turned from lawn to native plants?

I hope that my actions to conserve plants and land do count for something. To make sure that our actions are effective, the GPF Board has made progress on working through recommendations from the Land Trust Alliance as part of the Guided Organizational Assessment. This exercise is a bit tedious and requires the work of all Board members, but in the end, we will have strategies, policies, and plans in place to make GPF a stronger organization. We will also need the help of all members as we work through this process.

Plants are growing in the greenhouse, and that makes me really happy. I'm also happy that so many volunteers came out on February 23 to get their hands dirty sowing seeds in the soil. We'll need all the help we can get in April and May to transplant and sell plants. Not only is this our biggest fundraiser, it's a great way to educate people about the importance of native plants.

Under the leadership of Derek Liebert, I and others have worked hard over the past six months to produce the East Central Illinois

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PRAIRIE EXPANSION BEGINS

by Jamie Ellis

On January 21, 2009, seeds were scattered from the hands of volunteers to the ground near the town of Loda in Iroquois County. Seeds of native prairie plants were spread with the hope and desire to turn a bit of farm land back into the once grand prairie. Conditions were good—a soft snow that allowed the seeds to “stick,” and then a tractor-pulled Brillon planter to pack it all in place.

The process of expanding the remnant prairie at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve continued as volunteers from Grand Prairie Friends and biologists from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources met to plant seeds on a cold winter day. This process to expand and protect the small, unplowed prairie remnant at Loda began in 2007 when members and friends raised \$40,000 to buy nine acres of land adjacent to the preserve. Our goal is to plant more prairie. The 3.5-acre preserve is a botanically diverse, high-quality prairie remnant, but disturbances from adjacent farmland were slowly eating away at the quality of the prairie. The best way, we thought, to protect this prairie for the long term would be to expand the available habitat and buffer the unplowed preserve.

Just buying the land was one small step; the next big step

would be to collect enough seeds of native prairie plants to sow on our new property. The Loda Prairie restoration committee recommended collection of as many species as possible

from within a 30-mile radius of the prairie. Connie Cunningham and Paul Marcum worked hard during the summer of 2007 to collect dozens of species, and many GPF volunteers pitched in over the summer of 2008 to collect more. More volunteers were needed to thresh the seed. The culmination of this effort was over 60 pounds of seeds comprising about 70 species planted on about 3.5 acres of the new property.

We’re not quite done, yet. We need to continue to collect seeds this summer and probably next summer to finish planting the remaining 5.5 acres. The land will be rented to the neighbor and planted in crops until we have the prairie seed ready to plant the rest. Stay tuned and pitch in with seed collection when you can.

Special thanks go to GPF volunteers Paul Marcum, Valerie Sivicek, Mike Davis, and David Trout who came out on that cold day in January. Thanks also goes to our IDNR colleagues who

came out: Eric Smith, Mary Kay Solecki, Wade Louis, Jim Kietzman, and Mike Warnick.



Volunteers assisting with the planting of the Loda Prairie restoration.



PLANTS, PLANTS, NATIVE PLANTS

by Jamie Ellis

Seeds are in the soil thanks to the efforts of over 20 volunteers. On February 23 Grand Prairie Friends volunteers planted over 100 flats of about 50 Grand Prairie species. We’re happy to report that seeds have germinated and seedlings are growing.

With the growth of plants, that means we need the hands of volunteers to transplant seedlings from flats into individual pots. This ensures good plant growth and readies plants for sale. We need all of the volunteers we can muster to come out and help transplant.

Volunteers Needed

Transplanting work nights are set for

Mondays in April in the NRB greenhouse, which is at the corner of Sixth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in Champaign from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. on April 6, 13, 20, 27, and May 4. No experience is necessary—just a willingness to get your hands dirty and desire to nurture young plants.

Volunteers are also needed the evening of May 8 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm to help move plants from the greenhouse to Lincoln Square.

Native Plant Sale—May 9th

The big, spectacular, and absolutely wonderful GPF Mother’s Day Native Plant Sale is set for Saturday May 9th

inside Lincoln Square Village in downtown Urbana. The sale begins at 8:00 a.m. and a wonderful selection of native prairie plants and woodland wildflowers will be offered for sale.

This plant sale is GPF’s biggest fundraiser of the year. Much of the money raised goes to hire summer interns. These interns do the work of cutting brush and pulling weeds while learning about natural areas management.

Volunteers will be needed throughout the morning of the plant sale as cashiers and to help customers with plant selection. We will also need people to help clean up afterwards and

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Grand Prairie Friends

Activity Calendar



SPRING 2009

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, long sleeves, boots, and gloves); no synthetic fabrics. Bring drinking water and a snack. Call Jamie Ellis (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu, 244-5695) for more information.

Volunteer Stewardship Activities

Saturday April 11: Horseshoe Bottom and Windfall Prairie Nature Preserves. Spring Wildflower Hike. Hike the long way past Windfall Prairie Nature Preserve to Horseshoe Bottom Nature Preserve. See hill prairies, seeps, marsh marigolds, and breathtaking views of the Middle Fork of the Vermilion! Be prepared for several miles of (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 am to carpool to the site or at the Lake Mingo dam parking lot at 9:45am. Contact Rick Larimore (hm: 337-7006, w: 244-6716, c: 493-4634; call if weather is 'suspicious')

Friday April 17: Wetland frog and toad count. Bring the kids and search for frogs and toads while learning their calls. Located southwest of Oakwood about thirty minutes east of Urbana. Time 6:30 - 8:30. Bring flashlights, clothes in which to get muddy and old shoes or boots to wear. Limit 20 people. Contact Rick Larimore (hm: 337-7006, w: 244-6716, c: 493-4634) for reservations and directions. (Call if weather is 'suspicious.')

Saturday April 18: 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 25: East-Central Illinois Stewardship Manual Training. Open to all current site stewards and any prospective stewards or steward apprentices. Contact Dan Olson (dolson@ccfpd.org) or Derek Liebert (daliebert@urbanaparks.org) for more information.

Saturday April 25: Kickapoo State Park Clean-up day at Middle Fork Nature Preserve. Contact Grant Cunningham (217-733-2660) for more information.

Sunday 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 the site at 10:00 a.m. Contact Bryant Barnes (493-8686; email: bbaarnes@prairienet.org) for more information.

Saturday May 2: Embarras Bluffs. Meet at 9:00 a.m. on-site for a wildflower and warbler walk. Take either SR130 or I-57

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- 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!

8 mi south of US36 to SR133. Take SR133 east, over the Embarras River, to CR2300 E (there's a sign for the Oak Grove Separate Baptist Church). Travel south on CR2300 E until 1600 N and wait at the church parking lot. The site is west of the church on a private drive at 1600 N. Travel time from C-U is about 1 hour each way. Jim Payne, 344-7840 or jjpayne@shout.net if you need more info.

Saturday May 9: GPF Annual Mother's Day Plant Sale at Lincoln Village in Urbana. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact Jamie Ellis (james.ellis72@gmail.com or 244-5695) for more information.

Saturday May 23: Middle Fork Bluffs. Help pull garlic mustard. After working we'll take a hike around the woods to see the wildflowers. Bring gloves 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 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 Jean Mengelkoch (390-3163) or Paul Marcum (333-8459, 390-6141) for more information.

Saturday May 30: 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 jjpayne@shout.net if you need directions.

Saturday June 6: 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 APNC (see inset box) to carpool or 9:45 a.m. at the site. For more information contact Paul Marcum (333-8459, 390-6141) or Jean Mengelkoch (390-3163).

Saturday June 6: Veterinary Medicine Prairie Garden. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The College of Veterinary Medicine plans to install a native prairie plant garden in front of the Basic Sciences Building. Help is needed to plant thousands of seedlings. Come join GPF and many other volunteers in this community project to beautify the Vet Med campus. Meet in front of the Basic Sciences Building (2001 S Lincoln Ave., Urbana). Bring gloves and a desire to work. Please RSVP to Jamie Ellis (james.ellis72@gmail.com or 244-5695) if you can help.

Sunday June 14: 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 (300 E). 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).

THE RIGHT STUFF

by Daniel J. Olson

Did you know that Grand Prairie Friends has tools for loan or stewardship on their lands? Thanks to generous contributions and several grants, we have the right tool for the job for your workdays. If you are interested in borrowing tools for stewardship, contact Jamie Ellis at james.ellis72@gmail.com or Paul Marcum at pmarcum@inhs.uiuc.edu. Also, if you are using the tools remember to sign the checkout sheet so we know who has the tools and when they are gone. Finally, if a tool is malfunctioning or broken, please report is immediately for repair.

Here is what is available to you:

Treatment

- ⌘ Backpack sprayers
- ⌘ Some herbicides

Prescribed Burning

- ⌘ Nomex suits
- ⌘ Indian backpack pumps
- ⌘ Drip torches (with fuel)
- ⌘ Signs
- ⌘ Rakes
- ⌘ Flappers
- ⌘ Helmet

Cutting Tools

- ⌘ Chainsaw
- ⌘ Brushcutters
- ⌘ Personal protection equipment
- ⌘ Weed whippers
- ⌘ Hand saws
- ⌘ Lopping shears
- ⌘ 2-cycle engine gas and oil

BOOK REVIEW: BRINGING NATURE HOME

by Robert Stanton

Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens, by Doug Tallamy

In 2000, Doug Tallamy, a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology in Delaware, bought a parcel of land that had once been farmed, but was currently in a state of unmanaged restoration. The spirit of the naturalist in him, Tallamy identified the plant life growing on the land and eventually calculated that at least 35 percent of the vegetative species present were aggressive exotics. During the observation and identification process, he made the interesting observation that very few of the nonnative plants had any insect-related damage, whereas natives demonstrated considerable appeal to our arthropod brethren. His scientific curiosity piqued, Tallamy then asked if this was a pattern observed elsewhere and if the result was correlated to a decline in insect populations and, subsequently, any population of organisms that depends on them as a nutrient source.

The results of his studies are presented in *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*. The book's introductory chapters lead the reader through a brief tour of ecological concepts such as trophic levels and habitat niches, which are necessary to explain the crux of the developing argument. Tallamy notes that insects are essential consumers of plants (the first trophic level), transforming their captured solar energy into a form that can be used by other organisms, such as birds, that reside at higher trophic levels. Those first trophic levels are changing though, as Tallamy notes in his introductory observations. With the rise of purely human-created landscapes and increasingly rare areas of undisturbed land, plant life and diversity have been significantly altered and reduced. Most yards and urban areas consist of only a few scattered species of plants, many of

which are often nonnative and, as we find out, unused by organisms at lower trophic levels. Rural spaces may have a more diverse body of flora, but monoculture farmland and invading non-natives make up an ever-increasing percentage of it. Our preserves, while important, are fragmented, limited in size and can only serve as reservoirs for diversity at their best.

Insects, Tallamy tells us, are unable to eat nonnative plants in these changed landscapes because it takes a very long time, if ever, for them to develop any sort of adaptation that would allow them to safely process the novel chemical mixes in the new plants they encounter. When one factors in that the plants imported for commercial or aesthetic purposes are typically done so because they are already unpalatable to insects in their native ranges, it becomes even more apparent that herbivorous arthropods are up against formidable odds. Learning that up to 90% of all plant-eating insects are considered specialists on just a few species of plants, the reader realizes the strong limitations insects are confronted with when dealing with nonnative species, and why many of them are in decline. As insects are essential nourishment for a great many species, all suffer when their numbers are reduced, particularly those that specialize on them.

Tallamy discusses the implications of this declining amount of edible food supply with detailed notes on contemporary estimates of habitat loss and the impact it has on existent species. Based upon his and other's work, Tallamy states that humans have altered roughly 95% of land in the United States into agricultural or urban uses. Citing other studies and models,

he concludes that a similar percentage of existing species are likely to be extinct within the next 95 years. 95% of biodiversity disappearing within 95 years: such information should be alarming, though not much of a

surprise. Surveying the landscape whenever we travel, we can quickly note the magnitude that land has been disturbed or otherwise put to "productive" use for humankind. It's not difficult to imagine other creatures having a difficult time eking out an existence in such inhospitable landscapes.

The idea of the "extinction debt" is introduced to further

explain the process of slow mass extirpation that is currently unfolding. In essence, while there may be many species that remain alive today in limited numbers, there is simply not enough in the way of habitat or resources to sustain these populations in the long term. Ever-decreasing available landscape, growing invasions by nonnative plants, random disasters, and inbreeding all amplify the probability of extinction over time. The current landscape for survival being the way it is, Tallamy says extinction will happen, even if it is in a slow-motion form.

The alarming information presented, Tallamy suggests that we resolve the looming biodiversity crisis by taking the advice of other fellow ecologists, particularly Michael Rosenzweig's "reconciliation ecology" concept, wherein restorations of native environments are heavily planted within human habitats, creating a new hybrid environment that suits both contemporary humans and most other life forms as well. The remaining two-thirds of the book is devoted to

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discussing how to successfully include native plants in the landscape and the costs of gardening with or otherwise using nonnative plants, such as reduced forage for wildlife and the accidental importation of exotic pests. Tallamy closes the book by providing a very extensive compilation of native plants and the types of insects that they attract as well as the other animals that prey on

them, essential information for anyone wishing to develop a habitat for specific insects or animals that make use of them. Those wishing to strengthen their understanding of the importance of native plants from the scientific view will find an excellent reference in Tallamy's book. While it reads with much alarm, such concern is needed given the magnitude of the slow extinction crisis. Indeed, this is

a book important enough to buy a copy of, read with a critical eye, and then loan to our neighbors while encouraging them to begin re-envisioning the land they occupy being filled with locally native, life-supporting vegetation. As Tallamy and others have demonstrated with their research, such an effort is not only necessary, but likely the only way most species can avoid complete extirpation.

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return any unsold plants to the greenhouse.

If you have any plant sale questions or a desire to volunteer your time and energy, please contact Jamie Ellis (james.ellis72@gmail.com or 244-5695).

Farmer's Market Plant Sales

Grand Prairie Friends continues to sell plants each year at the Urbana Farmer's Market, and

this year will be no exception. We are looking at setting up on two Saturdays: May 16 and 23. Volunteers are needed to move plants to the sale, staff the booth, and move any unsold plants back to the greenhouse. Set-up is by 7:00 a.m., so early risers and volunteers with trucks are needed. Please contact Jesse Kurylo (jkurylo@inhs.uiuc.edu or 244-0692) with questions or to volunteer.

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Johanna Garsenstein, the Chicago Field Representative of the Land Trust Alliance. At this meeting we went through a self-evaluation of our organization and how well we were following or not following LTA's Standards and Practices. Johanna's report back to us after the evaluation seemed to indicate we're doing okay, but we have a lot of work to do.

Your Board met recently to work on the recommendations of the LTA. Much of the work involves developing a strategic plan and setting goals for the organization. Some basic policies for record keeping, ethics, and conflict of interest also need be drafted. We need to develop fundraising plans, make a yearly budget, and have some sort of financial review or audit. We also need to work on board development

and volunteer recruitment plans. Lastly a strategic conservation plan needs to be made.

In the end, we're going to need your input and help to finalize our plans and goals. This is your organization, and protection and conservation of land in east central Illinois is vital to everyone. We'll keep you informed of our progress and seek your input soon.

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Penfield, 1:00 P.M.-4:00 P.M.

Bring your family and friends to the forest preserve for some free fishing fun! Whether you have been fishing for a while, or have never held a fishing pole, you will learn something new. There will be demonstrations, kids'

activities, prizes and more! Basic fishing instruction will be provided. The Illinois fishing license requirement will be waived for this event. Fishing poles are available to borrow; feel free to bring your own. Bait provided. Adult supervision of children is required. Free. For more information, call (217) 896-2455.

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Natural Area Stewardship Manual. This project has been a partnership with the Urbana Park District, Champaign County Forest Preserve District, and East Central Illinois Master Naturalists. I feel good that we have produced a really good and useful manual for stewards. Experienced stewards as well as new volunteers should find the information useful. Not only will we have a paper manual available, volunteers will be able to download the manual from the GPF website. I encourage you get a copy when it's available in late April.

A big thanks to Rob Stanton and Justin Meisen who have been working on a new look for the GPF website. Please take a look and point your browser to **grandprairie-friends.org**. Let them know what you think.

As a blossoming land trust, we plan to buy land and hold conservation easements to protect natural areas. While we haven't bought any land since 2007, I'd like to report that we have been getting some phone calls with landowners interested in easements. We also have followed some leads on possible land purchases. Nothing is in the bag yet with easements or purchase, but we'll let you know when something happens (and we'll probably ask you to help with the purchase).

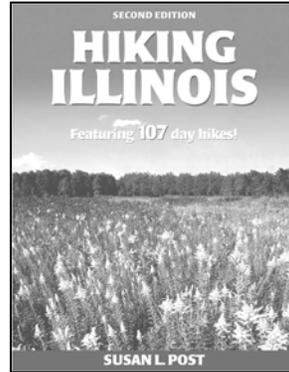
Stay safe when you burn. Get out for spring wildflowers and birds. I know I'll be looking soon.

BOOK REVIEW: TAKE A HIKE!

by Jamie Ellis

Hiking Illinois, by Susan L. Post
Published by Human Kinetics, 2009

Most people don't think of Illinois when they think about hiking. Yes, much of the Illinois landscape is flat, boring agricultural fields—no evident opportunities for hiking. Luckily Illinois has Susan Post. *Hiking Illinois* reveals many opportunities for anyone who wants to get out and stretch their legs, explore new areas, and experience some wild nature in the Land of Lincoln. This book features 107 day hikes at 60 publicly accessible parks, recreation areas, and historic sites that span the length and breadth of Illinois. An easy to interpret Trail Finder table gives the hiker basic information about the hikes featured in the book. You'll find the park name, trail name, length of trail in miles, and an estimate of difficulty. Other information includes basic natural feature information you're likely to encounter on the trail. I most appreciate the detailed hike descriptions. What will I



see? What interesting plants or birds might I see? Where do I turn when I come to a fork in the trail? What do I need to watch out for? The author has personally hiked every trail, and she takes the time to describe not only the physical trail but tidbits of nature as well. She also points out culturally unique or historical features along each hike. This fairly large soft cover book will not readily fit in your back pocket, but will not take up too much room or weight in a daypack. I'm likely to be leaving this book in the car when I hike: I tend to pick up a local trail map that will fit my pocket. Lucky for me the author has meticulously included contact information for each park.

Not every possible hike in Illinois is featured, and the reader will notice large areas of the state with no hikes. Don't despair, that's just the nature of Illinois. With over 100 hikes to choose from, though, there are more than enough trails to keep the avid hiker or intrepid naturalist busy.

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

by Pam Leiter

April 4: ILLINOIS RIVERWATCH WORKSHOP 2573 S. Homer Lake Rd., Homer, 10:00 A.M.-11:00 A.M.

Environmental Education Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2573 S. Homer Lake Rd., Homer, 9:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.

Want to get involved in the stewardship of the state's rivers and streams? Grab your rubber boots and join the Illinois RiverWatch Program. During this interactive workshop, we will learn to identify stream macroinvertebrates (e.g., dragonfly and mayfly nymphs, beetles, snails, and much more) and practice proper monitoring techniques at a local stream. Equipment will be provided. Please bring knee-high boots or waders, sun block, insect repellent, a water bottle and lunch. After completing the workshop, you may adopt a local stream site and monitor annually. Fee: \$20/person. For more information, call (217) 896-2455.

April 25: BIRD IS THE WORD WORKSHOP

Salt Fork Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve,

Join Brian "Fox" Ellis for his exciting Bird is the Word workshop to learn about journaling, poetry, nonfiction writing, and ornithology. A poet's eye and gift for language is very similar to the detailed observation and ability to communicate complex ideas required of field ecologists. In this participatory workshop you will learn some tips for effective journaling. You will learn to use haiku to focus your eye and ear. You will learn to use poetry to help you write clearer, more exciting essays and turn your field notes into publishable articles. Come to celebrate the voices of nature and find your voice in the natural world. \$10 per person. Registration and payment due by April 23; call (217) 896-2455.

April 25: MIGRATION FEST

Salt Fork Ctr & Education Ctr, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2573 S Homer Lake Rd, Homer, 1:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M.

Celebrate the migration season with live raptors, acclaimed story teller Brian "Fox" Ellis as J.J. Audubon, crafts, hikes and more! For more information, call (217) 896-2455.

May 9: KEEPING A NATURE SKETCH JOURNAL

Environmental Education Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 2573 S. Homer Lake Rd., Homer, 2:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

No artistic skills required! Join Carie Nixon from the Illinois Natural History Survey to learn about sketching in nature and how it can improve your observation skills. Sketchbook and pencil provided. \$5 per person. Space is limited. Registration required by May 7; call (217) 896-2455.

May 23: TAKE ME FISHING

Activity Center, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 3433 County Road 2700 E,

(Continued on page 7)

Announcements

Butterfly Monitoring Beginner's Training Workshop

Join a statewide network of volunteers who monitor butterflies. Learn how to identify the more common species and the data collection protocols for monitoring. This workshop is strongly recommended for new monitors. **Part I** is an orientation covering the details on how to monitor and **Part II** teaches how to look at butterflies for identification and goes over the markings of 25 common species.



Instructor: Mel Manner

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2009

Time: 9- 11.30 a.m.

Location: Champaign County Extension Office, Auditorium,
801 N Country Fair Dr. Suite D, Champaign, IL.

Registration is required. Call Mel Manner at 847-464-4426 or email her via http://www.bfly.org/cgi-bin/contact/released/contact_us.html. Directions and meeting locations will be sent to all registrants.

No previous experience is required. For more information about monitoring in Illinois go to <http://www.bfly.org/>

2nd Illinois Hill Prairie Conference **Illinois Hill Prairie Conference - *Slash, Burn and Graze, Is That Any Way to Treat a Hill Prairie?*** will be hosted by Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois on **Friday and Saturday, May 1-2**. For more information visit the conference website for more information: <http://www.augustana.edu/hillprairieconference/>



National Pollinator Week 2009 is buzzing with activities this year in the Champaign-Urbana community! Kickoff activities will begin Sunday, June 21, as we celebrate the opening of the new Pollinator Discovery Center. Additional activities will occur daily throughout the week and include guided nature walks, workshops on macrophotography, pollinator identification, and propagating pollinator friendly plants, and other children or family oriented activities at local parks and libraries. Please come out and celebrate the summer, our local pollinators, and all the services they provide. For more information on volunteering or attending activities, please visit the website: <http://www.life.uiuc.edu/entomology/pollinators/>



The Environmental Education Association of Illinois is proud to announce the **2009 Midwest Environmental Education Conference** Speaker Line-Up! A Special Guest Speaker for each of the four conference strands has been invited to inspire all participants to "Climb the Green Wall" on October 14-17, 2009 in Champaign, Illinois. For more information about the conference, please visit www.EEAI.net.



Keynote Speaker for the Administration/Leadership Strand - *Dr. Ed Kesgen*

Kickoff Speaker for the Sustainability Strand - *Chad Pregracke*

Special Guest Speaker for Interpretation Strand - *Brian "Fox" Ellis*

Special Guest Speaker for the Natural History Strand - *Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini*

URBANA PARK DISTRICT NATURAL AREAS STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

Come join the Urbana Park District for our monthly Stewardship Saturdays. Help remove invasive plants, improve trails, plant native trees and flowers, and assist with general clean-up. This is a great way to get connected with local natural areas while providing some much needed assistance in their care. Please dress accordingly. Tools, gloves, instruction, and

refreshments will be provided. Let us know you'll be attending by calling 384-4062 in advance.

Busey Woods from 9-11 a.m.: Mar 14, Apr 11, May 9, June 6, July 11

Weaver Park from 1-3 p.m.: Mar 14, Apr 11, May 9, June 6, July 11

Meadowbrook Prairie

from 9-11 a.m.: Mar 28, Apr 25, May 23, June 20, July 25

Perkins Road Wet Prairie from 1-3 p.m.: Mar 28, May 23, June 20, July 25

For Busey Woods
Meet at the Anita Purves Nature Center

For Meadowbrook Park
Meet at the Race Street

parking lot south of Windsor Road

For Weaver Park
Pull off at the intersection of Main Street and Smith Road

For Perkins Road Wet Prairie
Meet at the Dog Park parking lot on Perkins Road, 1/2 mile east of Cunningham Avenue.

(Continued from page 12)

Now let me get you excited about an alternative picture. Birds, breeze, bees – all these can be your companions as you go foraging for wild culinary ingredients. Here's a perfect example: just the other day, as my husband and I walked along a county road near Homer, IL, we spotted elderberry flowers (*Sambucus canadensis*) – the most important ingredient for our "Elderberry Pancakes."

how about cooking up some "Sesame Wild Leek Sauce" after your stroll through the woods? In the early spring, wild leeks, also called ramps (*Allium tricoccum*), are a glorious green as they push their way up through the leaf litter.

The gorgeous, glowing orange flowers of common day lilies

(*Hemerocallis fulva*) have a nasty reputation lately, mainly because they're spreading everywhere. They are

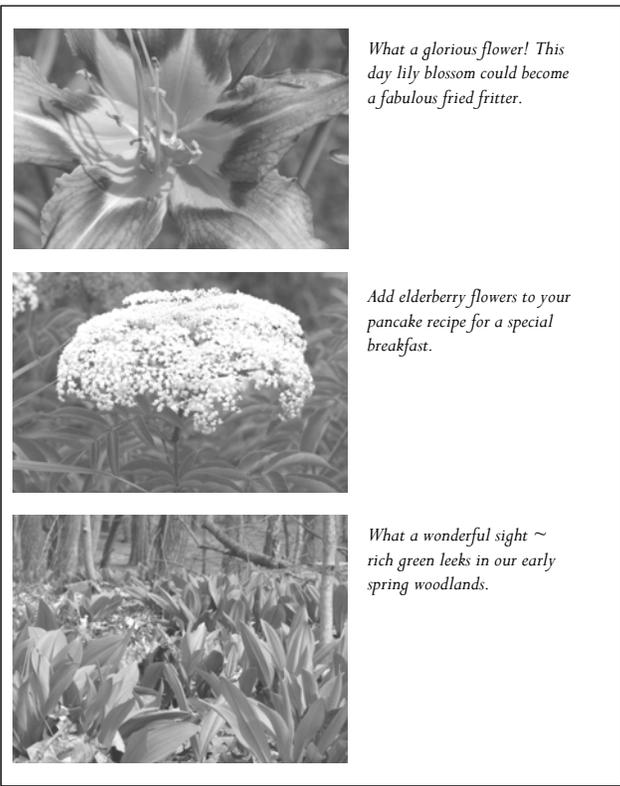
actually considered an "invasive species" because they crowd out our native wildflowers. But there's good news: the flowers and buds are delicious. I was

green katydid nymph perched on the leaf next to my hand. With our heads cocked, our collective eyes popped as we checked each other out!

helping our local ecosystem by eating those miserable plants? Try some "Garlic Mustard Pesto" for instance, or boil up some "Exotic Jade Soup" – it uses

Nutritionally, wild edibles are far superior to commercial produce. Curly dock (*Rumex crispus*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) are both rich in vitamin A and C, containing more A than carrots. Those nasty stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are very tasty and have high levels of minerals, especially calcium, magnesium, iron, and potassium. Plus, they're 10% protein, more than any other vegetable! Don't forget the acorns each fall; they contain significant quantities of calcium, magnesium, potassium, "good" fat, and protein. (The best pancakes I ever made used white oak (*Quercus alba*) acorns that were first boiled, roasted, and ground.) Took time, but they were delicious.

Hopefully you're eager to learn more about harvesting wild foods. When collecting wild foods, never take an entire stand and be **100% positive** of correct identification.



What a glorious flower! This day lily blossom could become a fabulous fried fritter.

Add elderberry flowers to your pancake recipe for a special breakfast.

What a wonderful sight ~ rich green leeks in our early spring woodlands.

snipping some the other day (planning on making crispy "Day Lily Fritters" for dinner) when I spotted a lime

The Spring 2002 issue of *The Illinois Steward* had a fascinating article about invasive species. How about

many local weeds/ invasives like lamb's quarters, dandelion leaves, sorrel, and purslane.

April 7, 2009 Referendum Information



Urbana Park District

The Urbana Park District has put a question on the April 7, 2009 ballot requesting a property tax increase of 15¢ for every \$100 dollars of assessed property value. With a tax rate increase, the Urbana Park District can continue to offer a broad range of services to its citizens, contributing to the health, vitality, beauty and economy of the community. Without a rate increase, the district will operate a diminished natural areas and recreation system, no longer able to operate in the way the community has experienced. Services, programs and other offerings must be eliminated to balance the budget.

Why a referendum?

Increasing costs means current tax revenue is no longer sufficient for the Park District to meet Urbana's needs. During 10 years of tax caps, the UPD's share of the local tax bill has shrunk by more than 10%.

What will it cost?

A property tax increase of 15¢ for every \$100 dollars of assessed property value is an increase of \$50 on a home worth \$100,000.

How is this different from the last referendum?

The UPD Board understands that the country's economic situation is different now than it was in February 2008 when the District sought a larger tax increase. A request of 15¢ is the smallest rate increase that will allow the district to maintain rather than cut services.

What about Crystal Lake Pool?

Unfortunately, a 15¢ increase will not replace Crystal Lake Pool or keep it open for 2009, but it will provide modest funds for planning and concept work for a replacement pool.

What about the Planning and Operations facility?

The planning and operations facility supports all areas of District operation. The Park District will continue to plan for replacement of its outdated, substandard and poorly located maintenance facility. Implementation of the plan will be phased over time.

What if the referendum fails?

The Urbana Park District will no longer be able to offer a broad range of services to its citizens. The Urbana Park District has already reduced programs in fiscal year 2008-09 and is planning for more cuts in fiscal year 2009-10 to balance the budget. These reductions will become permanent and cuts will be deeper unless the referendum passes. **Significant additional cuts will be necessary without this tax increase:** the District will be forced to reduce operations each year for the foreseeable future. All areas will be affected:

- **Reduction and/or elimination of programs, services and staff, including:**
 - Outdoor and indoor programs for children, adults, and families;
 - Community events such as Neighborhood Nights, Strawberry Jam, Jazz Walk, Turkey Trot;
 - Park services including restrooms, water, light, power;
 - Mowing, landscaping, flower planting, tree planting;
 - Operating hours of the Lake House, Brookens Gym, Anita Purves Nature Center, Phillips Recreation Center
 - At peak times, the District employs more than 300 people full- and part-time. The UPD will contribute fewer jobs to the local economy as reductions and cuts are made.
- **Discontinuation of planned playground replacement program.** Unsafe playground equipment will be removed. Funds will not be available for replacement of equipment removed for safety concerns.
- **Deferral of needed park improvements and maintenance.** Regular maintenance work will be delayed, and maintenance already deferred will be postponed further. As a result, parks and facilities will deteriorate.

What if the referendum passes?

The Urbana Park District can have a fiscally sustainable operation for roughly the next five years, allowing the District to:

- **Plan to replace Crystal Lake Pool.** 15¢ will not provide sufficient funds to replace Crystal Lake Pool, but it will provide modest funds for planning and concept work for a replacement pool. The community will be invited to help the UPD plan for a new outdoor aquatic facility; the District will seek funding for the facility based on public support.
- **Continue to offer a broad range of important programs, services, and facilities** to Urbana residents, including youth and family programming, general and special interest programs, community events, and green spaces.
- **Perform critical maintenance** in neighborhood parks and repair recreation facilities and amenities. This includes improving energy efficiency, conducting preventive maintenance, and replacing playground equipment.
- **Leverage matching funds to seek new grant opportunities.** Funds will be available to match modest grants for neighborhood and community park projects and for internal trail projects. The District must have the money before grants are awarded.

Comments/Questions: Send your comments or questions to Commissioners Michael Walker, Nancy Delcomyn, Deborah Rugg, Bob Stewart, and Bruce Larson at <http://www.urbanaparks.org/people/board.html>. Or call 367-1536 or e-mail vmjmayes@urbanaparks.org

THE PRAIRIE CHEF

by Betsy Kuchinke

This article will be slightly different from my previous *Prairie Chef* articles because I'll be giving you an excerpt from *The Illinois Steward* magazine. The Winter 2009 issue that just came out features articles written by members of the Allerton Corps of Discovery. (And yes, I am one of the lucky members!) To receive a copy, call the *Steward* at: 1-800-345-6087.

Here's an excerpt from my "Incredible Wild Edibles" article, but please check out the magazine for the complete article and more recipes!

"One of the greatest benefits of eating wild food is that it reminds us that we are fed not by the supermarket, but by the sunshine, rain, and soil." -

Samuel Thayer, *The Forager's Harvest*

It's inevitable. Each time you're collecting wild food something will happen that makes you smile. Maybe a beautiful bird will land nearby as you collect wild leeks for dinner. Or perhaps you'll see frogs mating or young squirrels doing somersaults. Maybe just the peacefulness of walking in a natural area will help you solve the problem you've been wrestling with for days.

It may not be immediately apparent, but the minute you step out your front door, there's an abundant supply of free and delicious organic treats waiting for you! We are blessed

Garlic Mustard Pizza

- ⌘ 1 package of ready-made pizza crust
- ⌘ ½ jar white sauce (lite Alfredo or Parmesan-mozzarella)
- ⌘ 2-3 cups chopped, cooked and drained garlic mustard leaves
- ⌘ 6-8 ounces mozzarella cheese
- ⌘ ¼ cup chopped onion
- ⌘ ½ cup chopped bell pepper
- ⌘ ½ cup chopped mushrooms



Prepare pizza crust. Then top with sauce and layer with cheese and vegetables. Bake according to package directions.

with the best – rich sources of delicacies abound in our Illinois woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and roadsides.

Before I describe a few of my favorite wild edibles, let's think about our supermarkets for a minute. After all, that is where most of us buy our produce unless you're lucky enough to shop at a local farmer's market, organic food coop, or health food store. Supermarkets are pretty much all the same: the air is too cold, the artificial lighting is unfriendly, and the perfectly arranged produce is coming from all over the world. The majority has been grown with chemical fertilizers and pesticides; therefore, it basically tastes just... OK.

(Continued on page 10)

Grand Prairie Friends

A Prairie Rendezvous

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