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# A Prairie Rendezvous

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SPRING VOL.18, No..1, 2016  
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## GPF Protects More Land in Coles County!

by Jamie Ellis

With generous grant support from the Lumpkin Family Foundation of Mattoon and some diligent work by GPF volunteer leaders, GPF purchased about 200 more acres of land in Coles County! This property consists of over 100 acres of upland oak and hickory forest as well as some floodplain forest along the Embarras River. The remainder of the property is currently being farmed for corn and soybeans.

In 2011, GPF successfully raised funds through grants and donations to purchase the 141-acre Embarras Ridges Land and Water Reserve.



Dave Easter at GPF's new land in Coles Co.

*(continued on page 5)*

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## Another Successful Rattlesnake Master Run

by Tara Beveroth, Connie Cunningham, & Jen Mui

With sunny skies and next to no wind, Sunday November 1st proved to be a great day to race at the 18th Annual Rattlesnake Master Run (RMR) for the Prairie. Nearly 250 participants gathered together to make this Grand Prairie Friends fundraiser a success. Prior to the start of the race, runners and walkers milled about chatting and stretching, all the while removing extra layers they deemed unnecessary in the warmth of the sun.

As always, pre-race jitters had the lines to the porta-potties booked until the start of the race at 9:00 a.m. The beautiful weather allowed many spectators to gather and cheer participants on.



10K runners stretch while they wait under a warm blue sky

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Jamie Ellis, President,  
GPF Board of Directors

It's winter. Then it's not winter. It's cold, then it's not cold. Back in December and early January, central Illinois received torrential rains that quickly inundated ditches, rivers, and streams, and the floodwaters climbed high! I hope that you weathered these storms healthy and well.

Why do I always talk about weather in these columns? As a born and bred Midwesterner, it's just what we do. What's happening (or not) out-of-doors is a common tie among people in a particular geography. We can all relate to the weather—like it or not. It's important to our farming culture. When strangers meet it's a neutral topic, a conversation starter—at least it used to be before the reality of a changing climate. The weather connects each of us and connects us to nature. And I have always argued that it's one of the last things in our human-dominated landscape that is truly wild and free. We can't tame the sun or rain or the gentle breeze under a blue sky on an afternoon in May.

### *More Land!*

Yes. It's true. Grand Prairie Friends owns over 200 more acres of land in Coles County. Thanks to the Lumpkin Family Foundation, who provided the money, and a few GPF folks willing to put in the time, we bought more land in December. After spending quite a bit of my own time raising money and awareness to buy Warbler Woods North early in 2015, I wasn't quite ready to take on another project so soon. Well, when there's an opportunity staring you in the face, sometimes you just can't say "no." When you get a chance to walk the ridges and see the trees and wildflowers and beautiful views for yourself, I know you'll agree it was worth the time and energy. And in the future that energy will be needed for ecological stewardship, trails, and other amenities.

## *Land Stewardship*

Since the inception of Grand Prairie Friends in 1984, we have relied on volunteer stewards and assistance from colleagues in the IDNR and other agencies to take care of our properties and other natural areas in East Central Illinois. In 1994 we started a summer internship program to assist volunteer stewards. Now with about 700 acres of land to take care of, we need to move toward more than volunteers and interns. Your Board of Directors is working hard to develop a strategy for hiring a land steward. This year it might be a contract position, but I would really like GPF to hire a permanent employee. Someone dependable. Someone proud to be part of GPF. Someone with the knowledge and skills to manage natural areas, coordinate volunteers, and be a spokesperson for GPF. This means raising the money needed or finding a revenue stream to gainfully employ such a person. Want to be part of the team to work on this? Let me know.

### *Winter Meeting*

Not sure if you'll read this before the Annual Winter Meeting on February 26, but I'm really looking forward to hearing our guest speaker Elizabeth Bach. She is a soil ecologist and a person who knows and cares about the rich diversity of life contained in the soil under our feet. And under our prairies! Hope to see you there.

### *Plant Sale*

With capable leadership from Dave Easter, Ed and Diane Wilhite, Gary Russell, and many others, planning for the Annual Native Plant Sale is well under way. Mark your calendars for May 7! Before that, come out and help us transplant seedlings each Thursday evening in April. We'll have a few more plants and a few more species this year, and we'll need your help. ([Click here to see more about volunteering!](#)) Can't help this year? No problem. Come and buy plants instead. The butterflies and bees will thank you. I'm looking forward to it.

Peace,  
Jamie Ellis  
[James.ellis72@gmail.com](mailto:James.ellis72@gmail.com)

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## Poetry, Prose, & Pics

### Tonight

Walking under crystal skies I hear two sounds.  
The brittle crunch of my footfalls in the fallen snow,  
And the great horned owl in the distant trees,  
Protecting his territory.

I sense my fallen friends. I sense my father.  
My heart quickens, my pace slows.  
I sense excitement and joy.  
Perhaps adventure still awaits me.

The waning moon  
is ready to catch Saturn  
in its crescent pouch  
as Scorpius and Libra watch nearby.

The Great Horned Owl  
cheers the moon's daring.  
I don't have to leave the yard  
for adventure.

~ Nick Dalrymple



*Photo courtesy of HMANA*

### The Hawk and the Mouse

Shadows of past and future  
Pass over me  
Like the shadow of a hawk  
Passes over a mouse

Leaving feelings of dread and worry.

~ Nick Dalrymple

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### My Great Horned Owl

My acre and a quarter is ideal for my Horned Owls. It is about one third old trees, one third barn yard and brush, and one third farmhouse, yard, and a few scattered large mature trees. There is farmland on three sides and the old empty double railroad bed on the fourth side (the route of the Urbana-Danville bike path). Nut trees, old fruit trees, and hazelnuts attract squirrels.

In my "Havahart" trap I have caught mink, skunks, groundhogs, opossum, raccoon, and birds. There are often plenty of crows around. The grain elevator across the road usually has spilled corn or beans where the trucks make the sharp turn from the main road on the way to the elevator road. This assures there is a good supply of rodents for the owls. And of course there are toads and snakes. The owls will eat any of these.

Soon the owls will quiet down and before long begin nesting, as early as February. I heard them tonight: "You still up? Me too." And I wish them well.

~ Nick Dalrymple

(See a video I took on the abandoned track bed I mentioned here: [A Walk Alone](#))

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*(continued on page 4)*

**(POETRY, PROSE & PICS...)**

Prairie remnants mixed with a dash of  
 Restoration and seed collection  
 Allows Nature to do her work.  
 Integrated with elbow grease,  
 Research.  
 Interest, and intelligence equals  
 Environmental resurgence.

~ Jim Hoyt



**Christa Weiss** took these lovely photos at the  
 Anita Purves Nature Center:

“The weather was perfect. In fact, I was late  
 back to class as I was having so much fun... Oh  
 well, sometimes it’s good to be late and just go  
 slow so you don’t miss really cool occurrences  
 like five different insects on one plant!”

~**Christa Weiss**

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**(NEW COLES CO. PROPERTIES...)**

Just to the north, GPF received a generous donation of land in 2014—the 202-acre Warbler Woods Nature Preserve. And to the north again, GPF raised the funds necessary to buy the 90-acre Warbler Woods North. These three properties protect over 400 acres of oak and hickory forest and forest restoration as valuable habitat for a multitude of plant and animal species.

In early November 2015, the GPF Board of Directors received a phone call from Lumpkin Family Foundation executive director Bruce Karmazin that land near the GPF properties was going for sale. The only hitch was that the land was being auctioned off in three separate parcels. And the auction was set for the day before Thanksgiving—December 23! This only gave GPF three weeks to act!



Members of the Board of Directors, along with Bruce Karmazin, had many conversations, visited the properties, and explored options for raising or borrowing money to buy these three parcels. It only made sense for GPF to try to buy this land, as the forest on the largest parcel was an extension of the same high-quality forest habitat at the properties GPF already owned. We had to try.

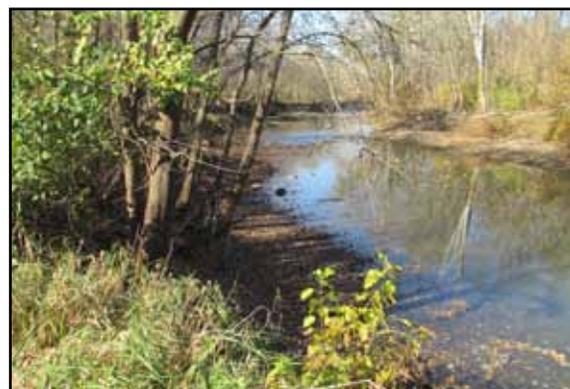
In the end, the Lumpkin Family Foundation made a very generous grant that allowed GPF to successfully bid at auction and buy these three properties. They became “ours” when we closed the deal on December 29, 2015.

We could not have done this without the diligent work of GPF’s Board of Directors, other volunteers, and IDNR colleagues.

This includes Dave Easter, Ed Wilhite, Fred Delcomyn, Carol Steinman, Craig Milling, Pam Leiter, Rob Stanton, Bob Szafoni, Mary Kay Solecki, Jim Payne, and Roger Jansen. We send special thanks to Bruce Karmazin and the Lumpkin Family Foundation!

Now GPF owns over 600 acres in almost one contiguous block (one small parcel sits to the north) of land between Charleston and Fox Ridge State Park! Now what? At least for 2016 and maybe 2017, we will lease out the farmland and make plans to restore these agricultural fields to trees, prairie, and other vegetation cover for wildlife habitat. GPF will also try to hire a land steward to begin ecological restoration on the new parcels, and continue that work on the other properties.

As with all of GPF’s properties, they are open to visitors year-round. We encourage everyone to explore the forest-cloaked ridges and ravines on GPF’s properties. More information and directions will be posted on the [GPF website](#) soon!



**(RATTLESNAKE MASTER RUN...)**

Many runners and walkers could be seen with smiles on their faces as they raced around the prairie. This makes us very happy, since race planning is not always a stress-free endeavor.

Before and after each year's RMR, coordinators meet to discuss changes and improvements we can make to help ensure the race runs as smoothly as possible. Race logistics can be a bit tricky and we always have to be prepared for bumps in the road or along the course (often literally!). Luckily, for this event we had many seasoned coordinators and volunteers.



**Pam Leiter & Andrea Winter register participants**

Brenda Molano and Derek Liebert did a great job ensuring the course was well-marked race morning. Jen Mui worked hard accounting for all volunteer positions, and recruited some extra volunteers to cover a couple of new positions. Ed and Diane Wilhite made sure registration ran smoothly and made everyone happy by distributing race t-shirts for the year. Finish Line and Scoring were equally successful, with few glitches.

Plentiful treats were provided by Great Harvest Bread Company and Wolfe Orchard. While snacking on the tasty food, participants eagerly waited to see if they had won any of the numerous door prizes donated by Body n' Sole, Dandelion, Exile on Main St., and the Illinois Natural History Survey. Many participants also stayed for the presentation of awards.

The awards featured a new design this year. Each of the overall winners took home a handmade ceramic trophy from the Champaign Urbana Potters' Club and a bur oak tree donated by Possibility Place Nursery. Age-group winners received hand-crafted ceramic medals and a packet of prairie seeds to start their own native landscape.

This year we successfully recruited more families to participate in the race and it was fun to see so many young faces crossing the finish line. We definitely had some fast runners and walkers participating! After a mere 17 minutes and 29 seconds, Michael Moreman crossed the finish line to win the Overall 5K Male award. Chian Scott was the Overall 5K Female at 19 minutes and 19 seconds. Nicholas Heller finished the 10K in a fast 34 minutes and 15 seconds to claim the prize for Overall 10K Male and Elise Sigg won for Overall 10K Female at 38 minutes and 43 seconds. Michele Neill was the Overall 5K Walk champion, coming in at 38 minutes and 54 seconds. Race results can be found at the [GPF website](#).

We would like to thank everyone who supported the 18th Annual Rattlesnake Master Run for the Prairie, especially all the volunteers and participants! At 18 years running I think we can say this race is a continued success!



**Runner Jeff Kohmstedt enters the finish chute**

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Here it is, that grey and brown and cold time of year when I long to be outside in the prairies or forests investigating all the wonderful plants and creatures. But alas...everything is dormant. Ugh! That's when I reread this beautiful poem that I've had taped to the wall over my desk for years. It always makes me smile and purr.

~ Betsy Kuchinke

### **The Summer Day**

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean –  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth  
instead of up and down –  
who is gazing around with her enormous and  
complicated eyes.  
Now she lifts her pale forearms and  
thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll  
through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life

~ Mary Oliver

**(RATTLESNAKE MASTER ...)**

**Photos from left to right:** Alison & Lukas Stodola (the youngest volunteer!); GPF Pres. Jamie Ellis walking; Runner Betsy Chominski; Finish line volunteers Jed Bunyan, Grant Cunningham, & Jason Meier; Young runners; New race medals; 10K race return.

*Article photos by Rainer A. Robinson, Jen Mui, and Jamie Ellis.*

## Meet Your Editor



**Editor Melanie Grove  
with Jen Mui at the  
Rattlesnake Master Run**

Hello to all my fellow naturalists! I thought you might like to know a bit about your new Editor. Last year Jim Fay put out the call for a new Editor and Production Designer for *A Prairie Rendezvous*, and I raised my hand. I have only a small amount of design experience, and I'm fairly new to InDesign, the program used for producing *APR*. I want to thank you for all the wonderful content you're sending in and ask for your patience as I learn and experiment with the program.

My background is in writing (both creative and professional), and I currently work as a Content Manager. I love to roam around our local natural areas, and many moons ago I volunteered at Allerton Park Visitor Center. I became a Master Naturalist in 2013 just so I could learn the names of all the plants at Meadowbrook Park (and I learned a whole lot more in the process!). While I can't name all the plants yet, I now have many of them growing in my yard, thanks to GPF's Native Plant Sale. I live in Champaign with my partner Chris, have one married daughter and one daughter on her way to college. I haven't done any nature writing recently, but I hope to change that soon — perhaps after the young one goes off to school!

If you have suggestions or comments, please feel free to contact me at [melgrove@gmail.com](mailto:melgrove@gmail.com).

~ Melanie Grove

## Opportunities to Get Your Gloves On

Wow, it's cold outside, but that doesn't stop us from thinking of spring. And thinking about the **Grand Prairie Friends Annual Native Plant Sale**. Mark your calendars for **Saturday May 7, 2016 from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM** inside Lincoln Square in downtown Urbana.



Yes, the plant sale goes on under a different model! GPF is buying seedlings from a nursery, but we will need volunteers to re-pot seedlings into larger pots. **Plants are set to be delivered April 1, and we'll gather on Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:00 PM after that date—April 7, 14, 21, 28, and May 5 in the Natural Resources Study Annex (NRSA) Greenhouse, 1910 S. Griffith Dr., Champaign.** This greenhouse is south of St. Mary's Road and west of First Street to the southwest of the Assembly Hall.

**On Friday May 6 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM we'll move plants** from the greenhouse to Lincoln Square to get ready for the big sale on Saturday morning.

**GPF needs all the help it can muster!** If you like to get your hands dirty, come out and help transplant in the greenhouse. We'll need strong hands and backs as well as a few people with trucks on May 6 to move plants. Volunteers are vital on the day of the sale to help customers, to answer questions about native plants, to promote GPF, and to serve as cashiers.

**The Native Plant Sale is GPF's biggest fundraiser of the year.** This event provides money to carry out our conservation mission of natural area protection and stewardship. Tell your friends!

**If you have any questions please contact Jamie Ellis (244-5695 or [james.ellis72@gmail.com](mailto:james.ellis72@gmail.com)).** Diane Wilhite ([dianeed@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dianeed@sbcglobal.net)) will be coordinating set-up at Lincoln Square, and Ed Wilhite ([dianeed@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dianeed@sbcglobal.net)) will be coordinating volunteer cashiers.

## Opportunities to Get Your Boots On



**Demonstration plots of various native prairie species are in place just west of the Pollinatarium.** The four plots contain species expected to grow to different heights and collectively bloom over the growing season. If successful, they will allow local planners and gardeners to see how various species will look in pollinator pockets and small plantings around public or corporate facilities.

**A cooperative effort is removing honeysuckle and other invasive plants from the 22 acre South Arboretum Woods** bordered by Lincoln, Windsor, and the pollinatarium. The plan is to put prairie plants along the margins, then native shrubs and trees. The area will eventually be used for research and as part of the Arboretum demonstration plantings. Ideas for trees and shrubs that are beneficial to butterflies, moths, pollinators and other critters are being sought

**Volunteers are needed for this spring and summer.** The Student Sustainability Committee is providing funding. Several student organizations and community groups such as the East Central Illinois Master Naturalists are providing volunteers. The Arboretum staff and extension forester are heavily involved with planning and execution.

**Contact John Marlin ([marlin@illinois.edu](mailto:marlin@illinois.edu)) for information about volunteering.**

*(Photo by John Marlin)*

### 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.

A Prairie Rendezvous is published quarterly. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at [melgrove@gmail.com](mailto:melgrove@gmail.com) or by mail to the GPF P.O. Box 36, Urbana, IL 61803. 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](http://www.grandprairiefriends.org)), facebook ([www.facebook.com/grandprairiefriends](http://www.facebook.com/grandprairiefriends)) or the ecostewards e-mail list ([lists.communitylists.org/listinfo.cgi/ecostewards-communitylists.org](http://lists.communitylists.org/listinfo.cgi/ecostewards-communitylists.org)).

GPF Board of Directors (term ends):  
Jamie Ellis, President (2018)  
Dave Easter, Vice President (2016)  
Carol Steinman, Secretary (2017)  
Ed Wilhite, Treasurer (2018)  
Pam Leiter (2018)  
Craig Milling (2017)  
Rob Stanton (2016)  
Fred Delcomyn (2016)  
Vacant (2017)

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

GPF Committees:

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

Finance: Ed Wilhite  
Publicity: Derek Liebert  
Land Acquisition: Dan Olson and Jim Payne  
Fund Raising: 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., Feb.): Nov. 1
- Spring Issue (Mar., Apr., May): Feb. 1