



GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS 2021 Annual Report





Thank you Jamie Ellis

After 20 years on the GPF Board, Jamie Ellis completed his last term in 2021. We are glad to report that Jamie still serves on the stewardship committee and his roots are still here.

Not a Bored Retreat!

In July 2021, Board members canoed through the newly acquired Warbler Bluff property on the Embarras River.



Board Members

Dave Easter (President)
Pam Leiter (Vice President)
Ed Wilhite (Treasurer)
Valerie Sivicek (Secretary)
Craig Milling
Fred Delcomyn
Collin Carlier
Jeff Masters
Mark Shelden

Welcome New Faces!

We want to welcome three new board members: Collin Carlier from Champaign, Jeff Masters from Charleston, and Mark Shelden from Urbana. Next time you see them, please thank them for joining us!



Thank you Samantha Osborne

Many thanks to Samantha Osborne for her years serving on the board. She continues to be involved in events and behind the scenes.

Serving as a Land Trust Board Member

GPF Board Members are elected by the membership for three-year terms and can serve a maximum of (3) successive terms. Members may be appointed to fill open positions prior to the annual membership meeting at which time they must be voted on by the members in attendance. We invite you to consider serving! Reach out to Dave or Pam for information.

Interns Fledge the Nest!

Congrats to our summer 2021 interns. Rachel is now working in Arkansas studying Black Rail populations. While Ashley has a position with The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas on their prescribed fire squad.



You Are Grand Prairie Friends



**Dave Easter,
Board President**

Grand Prairie Friends remains stable and growing! We continue to focus on stewardship with an expanding core of staff and volunteers. It is great to be able to meet new folks with a similar vision for the environment. I believe it is important to periodically stop and think what perpetuity means. We are committing to hold, restore and improve these lands (forever).

We're also committed to bringing these resources to as many people as possible. These ideas keep me motivated to continue to grow this organization along with our wonderful staff and all of you. Thank you for your involvement. We can't do this without you all.



**Sarah Livesay,
Executive Director**

While the world slowed down in 2021, our organizational growth sped up. Now approaching our five-year mark with full-time staff, the Board embarked on an audit of policies, procedures and updated strategic planning.

With assistance from a grant-funded Land Trust Alliance consultant, we are taking the next two years to ensure that we adhere with the established Land Trust Alliance Standards & Practices for accredited land trusts.

We believe this is what you, our donors, members, grantors and supporters, deserve.



**Jeff Peyton,
Natural Areas Manager**

The challenges and uncertainty of the past two years has brought a mix of opportunities. At the same time, this has allowed us to grow, think, and plan creatively to enliven and protect our lands and mission while getting back to our new normal.

Our prairies and forests have continued to act as a place of solace and revitalization. We have continued to acquire land and add new restoration projects to continue our mission of preservation, restoration, and education...and we have you to thank for this! Your time, support, and dedication is invaluable. We appreciate you!



**Jill Maes, Natural Areas
& Operations Technician**

I joined Grand Prairie Friends last August. Before I moved back to my home state of Illinois, I was working for the National Park Service in Flagstaff, AZ. In the past I have worked in National Parks and forests throughout the Western United States focusing on the construction and maintenance of hiking trails. A few years ago, I served as an AmeriCorps Restoration Coordinator for a land trust in Washington, which completely changed my life and my professional career goals.

Since that experience, I have searched for a land trust that felt right for me professionally and personally. I have been truly loving my time living and working here.



A Family of Giving

"The ChickenLions Foundation is the arm of our business, Campfire Concepts, to give back financially to the parks and recreation community of Illinois. When we saw we were ready to start giving at larger amounts, the Blazing Star Family was number one on the list.

We hold monthly financial meetings with our two primary stakeholders: our kids. The first order of business is to celebrate what we are grateful for. The remainder of the agenda consists of reporting numbers and discussing how money could be spent in the future.

Cadence and Gavin are along for the self-employment ride. It is important that they know what's going on financially and have a say in how to give back in slim times and in times of plenty."

~ Jarrod & Jessie Scheunemann

ChickenLions Foundation Joins Blazing Star Society!

We welcomed our youngest Blazing Star Society members to-date in 2021 when Cadence (10) and Gavin (7) Scheunemann joined the team. Meet their family foundation, the ChickenLions Foundation, so named by Cadence and Gavin! And they even have their own logo!

Join! Become a Blazing Star

Our Blazing Star Society includes members who make an annual commitment of \$1,000 to Grand Prairie Friends. Membership includes special events, communications and outings scheduled exclusively for this team of supporters as they work together to forward our mission.

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Join this team! Contact Carol or Topper for more information: steinman@shout.net.

Blazing Star Society

Angles from Your Blazing Star Ambassadors

THE GREAT OUTDOORS! We all know this beautiful line. Even COVID and its Variants could not shut this down. The Great Outdoors might have been one of few arenas that opened up even more during COVID - What a feat!

Blazing Star Ambassadors, Topper and Carol Steinman, are shown here at Warbler Woods Conservation Area in a socially-distanced, masked "selfie" with their good friends, Mike and Jane Cain who are also Blazing Star Society members. What a beautiful day we had for a great hike and picnic.

COVID can (and has) shut down lots of things...but it didn't (and can't) shut down "The Great Outdoors" and the impact that Grand Prairie Friends and our Blazing Stars continue to have on our natural settings.

Please join us in our Blazing Star energies and efforts to keep "The Great Outdoors" Alive and Well for all in perpetuity - as in FOREVER! Thanks to Grand Prairie Friends - and to our Blazing Stars - for ALL that you do!

~ Topper and Carol Steinman, Blazing Star Society Ambassadors (2019 Founding Class)



Members:

- Anonymous
- Charlene Anchor
- Dave & Karen Andsager
- Amber Barnhart & Stuart Frank
- Alice Berkson & Alex Scheeline
- Betty Brennan
- Clark & Irene Bullard
- Mike & Jane Cain
- Beth Chato
- Nancy Coutant
- Fred & Nancy Delcomyn
- Dave & Dianda Easter
- Thomas Fehrmann
- Robert Fiedler
- Sandy & Joe Finnerty
- Beverly & Dan Foote
- Eric & Jane Freyfogle
- Janet & Hugh Gallivan
- Wendy Garrison & Richard Raspet
- Ryan & Renee Guynn
- Wanda Haschek-Hock
- Summer & Stephen Hennessy
- Stan Herrin
- Susan & Lew Hopkins
- Phil Hult
- Jenny Hunt & Kristi Mercer
- Shirley Hunt
- Gary & Dixie Jackson
- Karen & Pat Kane
- Linda Kimmel
- Keith Kohanzo
- Peter & Betsy Kuchinke
- Pam Leiter
- Marilyn Lindholm
- Sarah & Jeff Livesay
- Ben & Chiara Lumpkin
- Kenton & Dorothy Macy
- David & Chris Main
- John & Diane Marlin
- Shirley Meece
- Don Meier
- Craig Milling & Carla Cáceres
- Dirk Mol & Jerry Wray
- Sharon Monday & Jack Paxton
- Paul Nance & Glenna Spitze
- Elizabeth & Milton Otto
- Susan Post & Michael Jeffords
- Thomas & Beverly Rauchfuss
- Jessie, Jarrod, Cadence & Gavin Scheunemann
- Trent Shepard
- Mary Kay Solecki & John Taft
- Valerie Sivicek
- Peg Steffensen
- Carol & Topper Steinman
- Cynthia Swanson
- Judith & Dick Turner
- Gloria Valenti
- Alexis Schollmeyer & Daniel Votava
- Michael Walker & Kristina Gunsalus
- James Webster
- Ed & Diane Wilhite
- Bonnie Woodyard

Blazing Star Events



Kickoff Event



Seed Scatter at Prospect Prairie



Chamber Opening Event



Hiking at Warbler Ridge



You Can Help!

Shop for GPF! Visit GrandPrairieFriends.org and access our Amazon and Forestry Suppliers Wish List—you can purchase and ship items straight to us.

Use our new automatic recurring donation option from your bank account and stop worrying! We can set it up for monthly or annual gifts in any amount that you wish.

Porta-Potty Sponsorship! Join the list of “When Nature Calls” monthly sponsors for \$100 and your name will be famously recognized on signage!

Perpetual Giving—have you left GPF in your estate plans? Please let us know now—this helps us plan and allows us to say Thank YOU!

Owe You Something? Friends owe you a favor or payback? Have them donate to GPF in your honor instead!

Retirement accounts (IRAs) can be set up with GPF as a benefactor for your automatic gifts! Many members use this as an easy way to donate without worry.

Time and Talent! Trail monitoring? Counting bats? Technology, video, construction, real estate or baking? No matter your skill, we have a volunteer job for you!



Self-Guided Hike App

Your private guided hike of Warbler Ridge Conservation Area is ready whenever you are!

The guided hike will navigate you through the Warbler Trail with 12 stops along the way to explain plants, animals or history of the area. You can select to read the content as you hike or listen to the audio version.

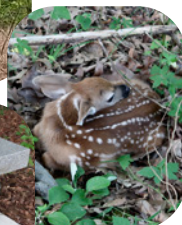
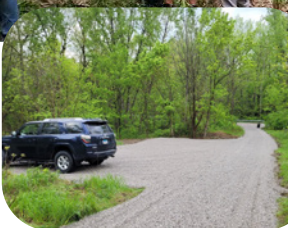
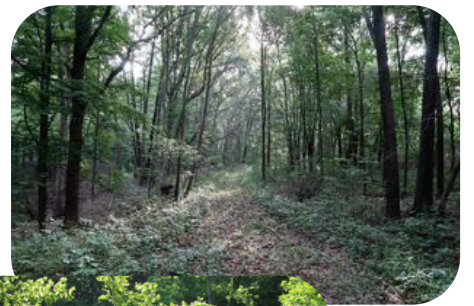
Simply purchase “Prairie State Hikes” in the App Store and download to your smartphone or device (0.99). By purchasing this app, you will also have access to over 10 other Illinois natural area hikes including Starved Rock, Allerton, Illinois Beach and more!



Saving More Land

In December 2020, GPF purchased both the 12-acre Warbler Crossing and 42-acre Warbler Bluff properties to add to the Warbler Ridge Conservation Area. These land purchases were made possible thanks to grant funding provided by Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and The Lumpkin Family Foundation. Brookfield Renewable Energy is a partner in restoring bat habitat at these sites. These lands will now be protected forever thanks to the financial and time donations from you, our members, donors and volunteers. Reach out to us to discuss your long-term giving plan today.

Warbler Bluff: Photo Calendar of the First Year!

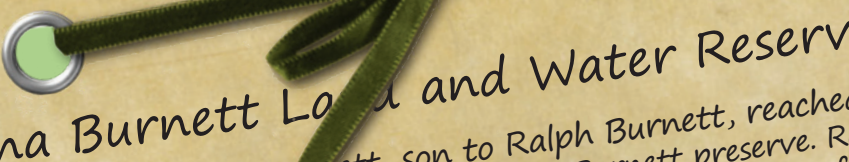


Warbler Crossing

As it has for 115 years, the historic Blakeman bridge ushers visitors from Highway 130, over the Embarras River and directly (now) in to Warbler Crossing. For the first time in history though, Grand Prairie Friends now has a home office.

No time was wasted with space hosting meetings for Master Naturalist, Scouts and events.





Edna Burnett Land and Water Reserve

Oct 14, 2019: Gary Burnett, son to Ralph Burnett, reached out to Jamie Ellis and I today seeking photos of the Burnett preserve. Ralph's 96th birthday is approaching and his request is simply photos of his Edna Burnett Reserve, which he donated to GPF in 2015.

Dec 9, 2019: It seems that there may be an opportunity for Northern Long-Eared bat habitat restoration in the Embarras Watershed. Could this be the way we turn their Edna legacy from 20-acres to 80-acres? The family agrees this potential would be a great legacy for them.

June 10, 2020: Ralph has decided he wants to expand the Edna Preserve - now we figure out the details. Let's hope we can make this work!

January 29, 2021: I was able to meet with Ralph and sons on a zoom call. It was certainly a happy sight for my sore eyes during this pandemic to see them all doing so well. So many emotions when Ralph talks about Edna, and when the boys look at their Dad. This is good work.

March 3, 2021: After bat partner meetings today, we have determined to move ahead with the final bat research needed for the mitigation. So, let's find some bats on the property - not just any bats - Myotis species or Northern Long-Eared bats. Gary said he hopes we find the bats because we need "more Edna" - I agree.

April 30, 2021: I called Gary today to tell him that I've signed contracts with Illinois Bat Conservation to search for the bats. Gary had bad news. Ralph is being transported by air back to Illinois for hospice care. He said he really wants to find those bats now even more.

May 15, 2021: Today we lost Ralph. All of the boys were with him. I'm so sad but motivated even more to make this happen for them; for the bats; everyone.

August 2, 2021: We are down to the wire. A matching grant is due in 20 days. Bat researcher, Tara, tells me that yes, the bats are there. We all smile. Now is crunch time.

August 23, 2021: As required for the grant, the purchase agreement is voted on and signed.

October 27, 2021: Grant notification and funding is received. The Burnett family is healing, mourning, remembering. This will be a wonderful closing story.

November 22, 2021: The GPF board voted unanimously to purchase the Burnett property and engage in a 30-year restoration of the site.

December 31, 2021: Ralph's sons Greg, Gary, and Jeff sold us the new addition of the Burnett Land & Water Reserve. And Ralph smiled.

~ Sarah Livesay

A River of Opportunities

Embarras River Corridor

The Edna Burnett Land and Water Reserve is part of a string of conservation areas protecting the watershed and riparian areas of the Embarras River. These preserves are owned by a variety of agencies and organizations.

In 2021 GPF purchased a 60-acre addition to the Edna Burnett Land & Water Reserve. This protection was made possible through grant funding from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. As part of a 30-year bat habitat mitigation with Brookfield Energy, this area will be restored as forest habitat. In the meantime, artificial bat habitat pods will be installed like the ones at Warbler Ridge.

Mattis Park,
Champaign
Park District

Meadowbrook
Park, Urbana
Park District



Edna Burnett
Land and Water
Reserve

Nanney Research
Area, University
of Illinois

Walnut Point State
Park, Illinois DNR

Upper Embarras Woods
Nature Preserve, Illinois DNR



Warbler Bluff Land
& Water Reserve

Woodyard Conservation
Area, City of Charleston



Warbler Ridge
Conservation Area



Warbler Landing
Land & Water Reserve

Fox Ridge State
Park, Illinois DNR

Ambraw
Woods,
Lumpkin
Family
Foundation



Volunteers: It's What You Do!



Habitat Maintenance & Land Stewardship

SITE STEWARDS

WARBLER RIDGE CHAMPIONS

RIDGE ROVERS (New in 2021!)

BURN CREW

STEWARDSHIP SATURDAYS

PRAIRIE WORKDAYS

BAT MONITORS

Events

NATIVE PLANT SALE

RATTLESNAKE MASTER RACE

EVENTS COMMITTEE

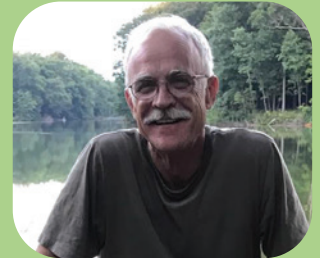
Administration

MAILINGS

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

2021 Highlights

- Both the Rattlesnake Master Run for the Prairie and the Annual Native Plant Sale set record fundraising amounts! Thank you!
- The new Master Naturalist program in Coles County completed a project to plant and maintain native plantings at the south end of Warbler Trail.
- Staff led 18 workdays in 2021.
 - 8 Stewardship Saturdays
 - 3 days tree planting & caging
 - 3 days of cemetery restoration
 - 2 Loda Prairie workdays
 - 2 days cleaning & sealing the Overlook at Loda Prairie
 - 1 large mailing



Terry Smith was named volunteer of the week by Serve Illinois.

1,346: Hours directly supporting our lands!

237: Hours of communications and outreach

534: Hours for the Plant Sale

403: Hours for the Rattlesnake Master Run

2,520: Total Hours You Gave!



Habitat for Humanity Project

"We Need Help", Kim's voice was solid but urgent. As Community Development Director at Champaign County Habitat for Humanity, her summer 2021 timeline was getting tight. "We need to get a homeowner into a new home so we can build more for our community".

Habitat for Humanity had been gifted a home, built by students- and originally planted with beautiful native plants. But absence and time had taken a toll- the curb appeal -and native plants- were struggling. Funds from the sale of the house could balance out the soaring cost of building materials. Could give hope to a new homeowner. But, now WHAT? Now WHO? Now HOW? Now YOU!

Without discussion, compensation or argument, you all knew it would be YOU. It would be Grand Prairie Friends volunteers that would reclaim these native beds and restore hope for the neighborhood, the new homeowner, the non-profit. Hope is vital. Too important.

You weeded. You mulched. You educated. You saved.

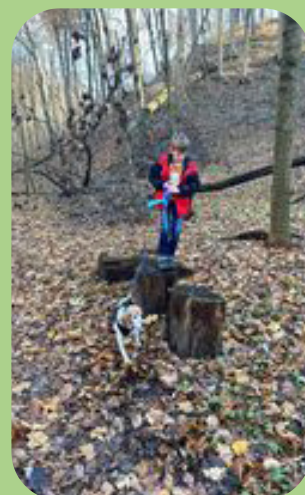
The native beds were reborn. The house sold.

The non-profit thrived. Because of YOU.



Ridge Rovers Rule!

New volunteer role in 2021! These are volunteers who adopt a trail and/or section of Warbler Ridge Conservation Area and visit regularly (twice a month) to observe and communicate observations back to staff.



Overflow of Outreach

Dozens of outreach events and efforts happened throughout the year in a variety of ways.

Here is just a sampling!

"Picturing the Prairie"
Art & Nature
GPF Spring
Member
Meeting



Farmer's
Market



New Educational
Trailside Signage



EIU Lifelong
Learning
Walks



New
Highway
Signage



Local
Media



Scout Programs

The Coles County Master Naturalists installed a native plant education garden at Warbler Ridge.



Seminars



Prairie Hikes



Almost 200 Friends joined in 23rd Annual Rattlesnake Master Run for the Prairie!

Stewardship is Forever

Planning, Planting, Pruning, Pulling, Pollinating ... then Planning Again

Grants and gifts are acquired. Closing papers are signed. Attorneys have closed the files. Now work begins. The pen comes out, management plans are written for years to come; materials and contractors are ordered; fires are set and seeds are drilled deep in the earth. Acquiring the land is the sprint; restoration and management is the never-ending marathon.

Did you know?

Many of the Warbler Ridge properties are currently in year 1, 3 or 4 of a 30-year restoration plan!

Did you know?

Our staff perform an "annual checkup" monitoring process at all of our properties to watch for landscape changes and identify new threats to the conservation values of the land.



Shortline RR Prairie: 1984



Shortline RR Prairie: 2021 prescribed burn



Loda Prairie: 2012



Loda Prairie: 2021

- 6: Properties Registered as IL Land & Water Reserves
- 4: Properties Dedicated as IL Nature Preserves



Don't Fence Me In

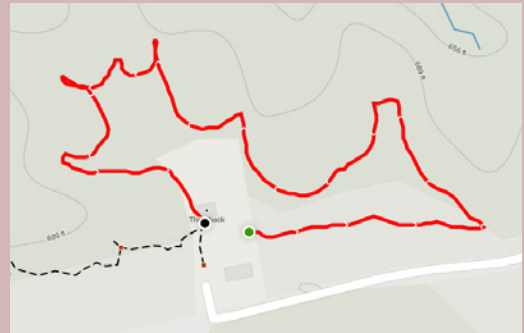
Now four years (and 70,000 new trees!) into the bat habitat restoration project at Warbler Bottoms, fences were installed in 2021 to protect this investment against our resident deer population.



Coming in 2022

New Trail at Warbler Ridge: Aspen Loop Trail

This trail offers a 1/2 mile, easy trail option with great views of the landscape! Located at the Daileyville Rd. parking area, this loop trail will serve our guests looking for a starter trail with little elevation.



Magic Stump Documentary

Grand Prairie Friends is a sponsor of this new documentary currently in development. It highlights the "Magic Stump" which has become a sensation among birders. In 2022 we will offer a special showing for GPF members; stay tuned!



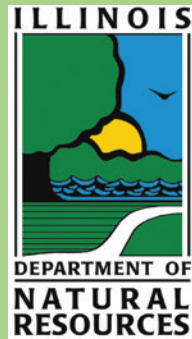
Thank you!

Grant & Acquisition Partners

Brookfield
Renewable U.S.



Ford Ridge Wind Energy Conservation Grant



Morgan Family Loda Prairie Grant

Kane Family Warbler Crossing Amenity Grant

“When Nature Calls”

Monthly Porta-Potty Sponsors

- Forest Resources
- Corrie Appraisal & Consulting
- Coles County Hiking Club
- Standerfer Construction
- Fresh Cut Lawn, St. Joseph
- Adrienne & Jason Beers

Services



**GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS
THANKS**

**PRO-MOW
LAWN CARE
& LANDSCAPING**

**FOR PROVIDING IN-KIND
MOWING SERVICES**

Pro-Mow Thank you for in-kind lawn care so we can concentrate on trees & prairie but keep our areas accessible to the public!

Ryan Boske-Cox Designs

Samantha Osborne Designs

Don Howie, Quality Electric

Rattlesnake Master Run

- Royse-Brinkmeyer Apartments
- Prospect Bank
- Birkey's
- Campus Ink
- Dr. Lindsey Hans
- Illinois Native Plant Society Forest Glen Chapter
- Illinois Portable Toilets
- Iroquois Federal
- Mack's Twin City Recycling
- Meijer
- Minuteman Press
- Nate Evans Group
- Serra Ventures
- The Original Pancake House
- Taylor Studios

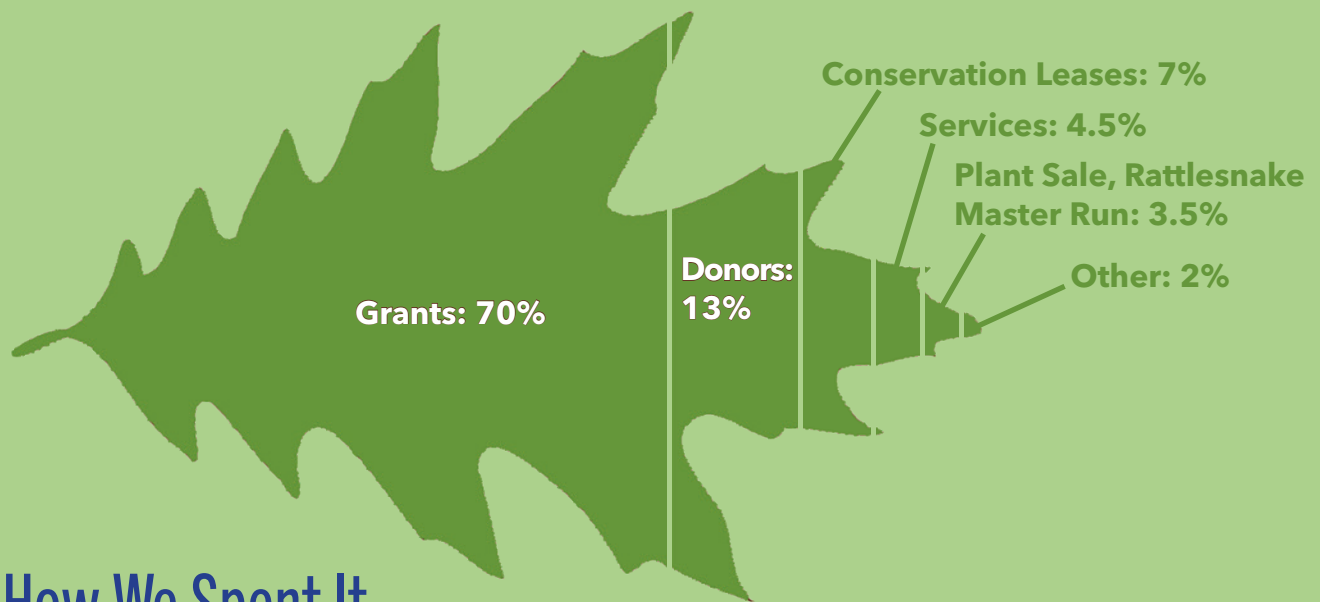


2021 Financial Statement

Where Our Money Came From

Restricted Land and Project Grants	\$ 738,392
Donations from Members & Friends	134,721
Conservation Program Leases	73,663
Plant Sale & Rattlesnake Master Run	37,758
Technical Services	48,961
Other	25,989
TOTAL	\$ 1,059,484

\$134,721
Your
Generosity!



How We Spent It

Land Acquisition	\$ 562,536
Stewardship & Restoration	298,760
Administration	101,203
Growing Our Endowment	19,703
Plant Sale & Rattlesnake Master Run	14,135
TOTAL	\$ 996,337

\$562,536
Preserving
More Land!



GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS

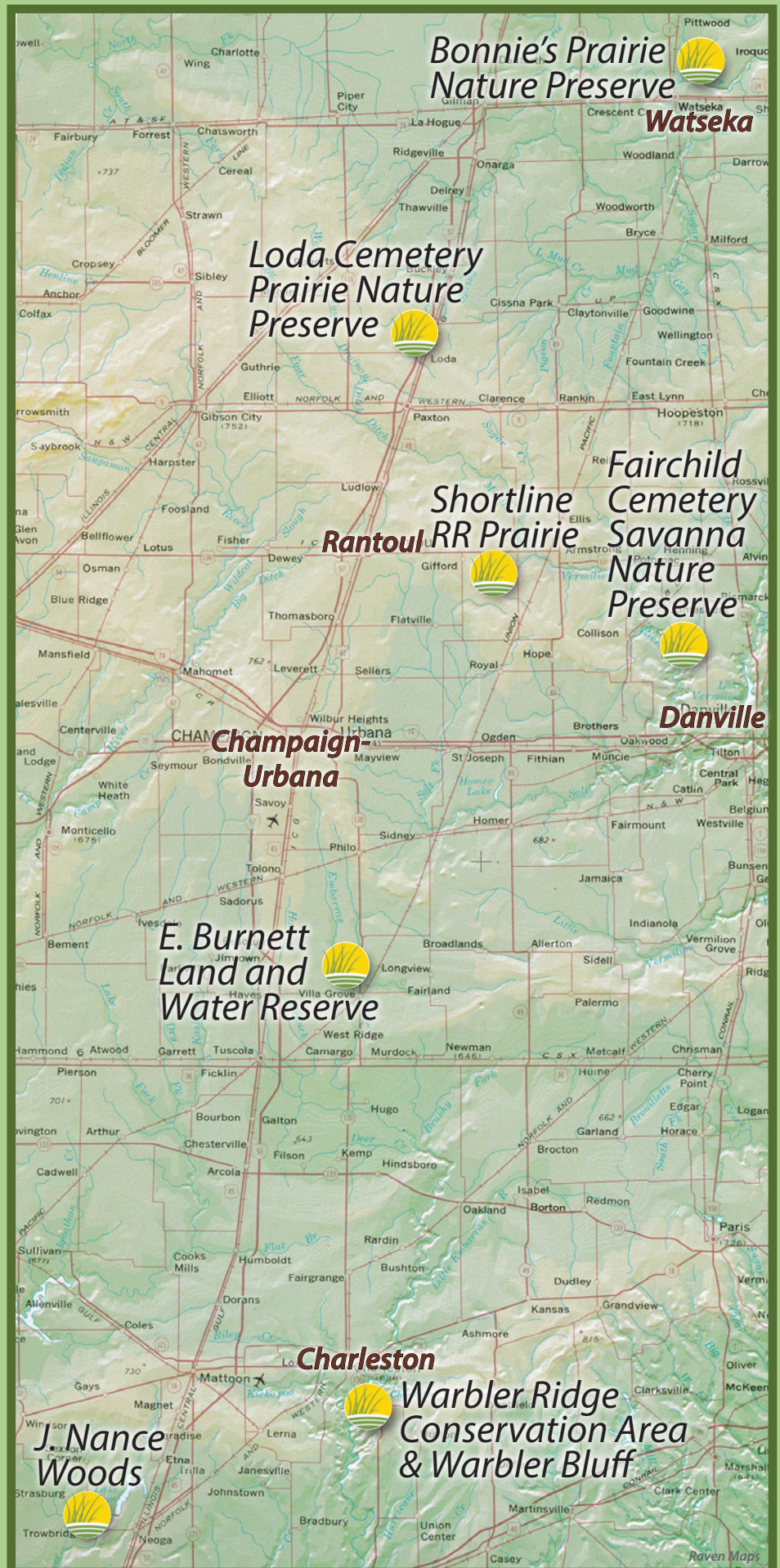
GrandPrairieFriends.org

Mission

Preserve and restore natural communities in east-central Illinois and promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources.

What is the Grand Prairie?

The Grand Prairie was a unique natural ecosystem in east-central Illinois. It consisted of thousands of square miles of tallgrass prairie and extensive marshes, interspersed with forested rivers and oak savannas.





GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS

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2021 Annual Report



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