
A Prairie Rendezvous



WINTER VOL. 11, NO. 1, 2009
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GPF STEWARDS EARN NATIONAL RECOGNITION

by Daniel J. Olson

Phil Hult and Gail Snowdon are familiar faces to Grand Prairie Friends. Their hard work on public land with GPF and the Champaign County Forest Preserve District are well known. Additionally, they have done wonders on their own slice of paradise in northern Mahomet. Their work grew quickly when they envisioned restoring a prairie that could be used for education, recreation, and create vital habitat at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve. In 2000, they began with a small prairie planting on some fallow fields. Today, the area is known as Buffalo Trace Prairie and expansion of that prairie continues each year thanks to their efforts. In addition, Phil and Gail have participated in PrairieWatch, monitored butterflies, helped train GPF interns, and organized numerous workdays



All in a day's work. Phil Hult (right) with Grand Prairie Friends interns Justin Meissen and Brandon Cheek (left) proudly standing over a large pile of invasive parsnip that had been removed from a Buffalo Trace prairie restoration.



Phil and Gail accept the Citizens of the Year award in Baltimore Maryland in October.

for invasive species removal and seed collection. They have spent thousands of hours in the field and in their garage cleaning seed. For all that they have done, we are pleased to announce that Phil and Gail have been awarded national recognition for their outstanding volunteer efforts. After winning the Volunteers of the Year Award from the Illinois Association of Park Districts in 2007, the CCFPD nominated them for national recognition by the National Parks and Recreation Association. Phil and Gail received the award for Outstanding Citizens in the Great Lakes Region for 2008! The two were honored for their hard work at a ceremony during the NRPA national congress in October in Baltimore, Maryland. We are greatly indebted to Phil and Gail for all the work they do. Congratulations to them both.

A Prairie Rendezvous

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Assistant Editors: Jamie Ellis, Mary Ann Feist, and Lynne Scott

Production Designer: Ray Meredith

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

☞ **Summer Issue** (June, July, Aug.): **May 1, 2009**

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

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

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Jamie Ellis, President, GPF

I like winter. A time to test my mettle against the forces of nature—cold walks along city streets, down snowy woodland paths, and through ice-covered fields. Of course, I am thankful to have a warm, secure home to spend the night as we're gripped in a brutally cold week of winter. I also like winter because it forces us inside. It's a time to catch up on reading, writing, and projects left undone from the warmer months; it's a time to tell stories and to listen. I look forward to this time of darkness and cold for these reasons. Unfortunately with busy lives, it doesn't always seem to work out this way.

Well, happy New Year. I sincerely thank everyone who promptly renewed their membership with a donation to Grand Prairie Friends, and encourage others who haven't to make a contribution so that we can continue natural areas stewardship and conservation work in east-central Illinois.

Fall was a time for seed collection. I thank everyone who pitched in his or her time to collect and thresh seeds, which are needed to expand prairie at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve and for the spring plant sale. . . We finally have enough to plant about three and a half of the nine acres we purchased next to Loda Prairie. It's very exciting to be very close to getting seed in the ground on the property you helped to buy in 2007. Seeds are in the refrigerator ready to be planted in the greenhouse in February for the spring plant sale. It will be here soon.

Jim Payne and I continue to participate in guiding Vital Lands Illinois. This will be a grant-making program

(Continued on page 4)

PRAIRIES TO WATCH

by Daniel J. Olsen

If you have ever wondered what a developing prairie restoration looks like, grab your hiking boots and head to Homer Lake Forest Preserve just west of Urbana. At the preserve you will find the beginnings of two major prairie restorations. The first is in an open meadow as you head to the lake. At this location, prairie surrounds a newly added wetland, adding to the springtime diversity that can be found at this site.

Approximately 38 species of prairie and 25 species of wetland seed were planted in the winter of '07 – '08. Many species

germinated that first year, but the brown-eyed Susan and partridge peas were the first to show off their yellow color.



Arrowheads and several species of rushes are doing well at the wetland and have been tasty forage for wading deer. Newly developed trails in the area make

it possible to get up close and personal with the prairie. On the west side of the Preserve, 20 acres of prairie were planted last month thanks to the seed collection efforts of several Champaign County Forest Preserve volunteers. Only time will tell how this prairie will develop, so in the meantime, find your favorite spot and take a photo each season for several years. If you do, you will notice the successional march of plant species ebbing and flowing each year until they find their favorite spot to grow.

GPF Announcements

Special Symposium in honor of Dr. Roger C. Anderson "Prairie and Savanna Restoration: The State of the Art and Science"

You are invited to attend an exciting special symposium **March 27, 2009**, in honor of the retirement of Dr. Roger C. Anderson, prairie and savanna scientist at Illinois State University.

Invited speakers:

Brian Anderson, Director, Illinois Natural History Survey
 Marlin Bowles, Morton Arboretum
 Danny Gustafson, Dept. of Biology, The Citadel
 Jim Herkert, The Nature Conservancy
 Gregory Houseman, Wichita State University

Bill Kleiman, Nachusa Grasslands
 Bill McClain, Illinois State Museum
 Alicia Mullarkey, Missouri Dept. of Conservation
 Stephen Packard, Audubon Chicago Region
 Ron Panzer, Northeastern Illinois University



Keynote speaker: Reed Noss, University of Central Florida.

Banquet speaker: Guy Fraker, ParkLands Foundation

In addition to speakers, we will have a poster session and vendors; contact Angelo Capparella (apcappar@ilstu.edu) if you are interested in giving a poster or reserving a vendor spot. So save the date and look for additional information regarding registration rates.

Grand Prairie Friends

Activity Calendar



WINTER 2008-09

Volunteer Stewardship Activities

Seed planting and transplanting 2009: GPF will be growing prairie plants in the greenhouse once again next year, and we need volunteers to assist with planting seeds in flats and then transplanting seedlings into pots. Come out on **Monday February 23** at 6:30 p.m. to the NRB greenhouse (corner of Sixth and Pennsylvania, Champaign) to help put seeds in the soil. We'll then be working **every Monday** evening in **April** and early **May** before the sale to **transplant** seedlings and label them for the sale. This is always and fun and gratifying experience getting your hands dirty while nurturing native prairie plants—plants that will add to the beauty and biodiversity of someone's home right here in east-central Illinois. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Jamie Ellis at 244-5695 or at james.ellis72@gmail.com.

Reminder - Workday reminders and updates will be posted on the ecostewards listserv. You can sign up for the listserv on this website: <http://lists.communitylists.org/listinfo.cgi/ecostewards-communitylists.org>. 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.

- 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!

(Continued from page 2)

by the Grand Victoria Foundation, crafted to protect and conserve more land in Illinois. An executive council was selected late last summer to craft the final details of the program, and Jim and I have been responding to questions and recommendations via a secure website.

I'm very excited and proud to be part of a project to be rolled out very soon—The Natural Areas Stewardship Manual. This is a collaborative project between GPF, the Urbana Park District, The Champaign County Forest Preserve District, and East-Central Illinois Master Naturalists. Kudos goes to GPF Board

members Derek Liebert and Dan Olson for getting this project rolling. Many other volunteers have lent their writing, editing, artistic, and layout experience. Thanks and gratitude also goes to The Nature Conservancy of Illinois who will provide funding for the production of this manual.

Stay warm!

2009 Midwest Environmental Education Conference

"Climbing the Green Wall"

October 14-17, 2009
I Hotel and Conference Center
Champaign, IL



As Environmental Educators, we each struggle to overcome certain professional walls or barriers. Whether those walls are with Administration, Interpretation, Natural History, or Sustainability; this conference will give you the knowledge to climb over those walls to maximize your potential in the field of EE!

Invigorating Workshops and Concurrent Sessions will be held each day; along with exciting Field Sessions that will be lead by Illinois Natural History Survey Scientists; giving you tips on how to apply the knowledge gained in and out of the classroom! Inspirational Speakers have been invited for all four conference strands; including a children's literature author, an advocate for cleaning up the Midwest waterways, a motivational environmental speaker, and a first person interpreter of a historic naturalist.

You are invited to present your engaging concurrent session or workshop through the Call for Proposals which will be available this fall!

Visit www.EEAI.net for all conference updates and information!

Visit www.EEAI.net for all conference updates and information!

MEEC Logo design work graciously donated by [Iyan Separate designs](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE BATS IN THE NORTHEAST?

by Jean M. Mengelkoch

Something is killing the bats in the northeastern United States. White-Nose Syndrome (WNS), named for a white fungus present on the nose of many infected bats, has already claimed the lives of tens of thousand bats.

In January 2007 biologists found thousands of dead bats in a cave near Albany, New York during a bat survey. In the next few months, bats with symptoms of WNS were discovered in 3 more caves. By the spring of 2008, WNS was found in caves and mines in Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut

and additional sites in New York.

According to surveys of hibernacula, the mortality rate of bats in caves with WNS has ranged from 80-100%.

Symptoms of WNS include a white fungus on the nose, ears and wing membranes, depletion of fat reserves well before spring, difficulty arousing from torpor, scarring or holes in the wing membranes, and emergence from hibernacula in mid-winter.



Photo by Nancy Heaslip, New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation.

At this time the cause of the mass mortality is unclear. Additional information on White-Nose Syndrome can be found at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website (http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html).



SUMMER 2009 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
Sponsored by GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS

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

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

Rate: \$8.50/hr including up to \$300.00 in mileage reimbursement expenses for personal vehicle use (GPF has available a stick-shift pickup truck for use as well).

Time Period: Position begins June 1 and will continue to approximately August 31 (start and end times are flexible).

To ensure full consideration for the internship, applications should be received by **March 31, 2009**. Please send letter of application, resume, and contact information for three references (references need to fill out and send in a reference form) to:

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

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

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

Funks Grove Stewardship Group Work Days

at
Sugar Grove Nature Center

Don Schmidt, *the Dean of Green*, leads a faithful group of volunteers in a variety of stewardship activities every other Saturday throughout the year. Stewards of all ages are welcome to join the group on a regular basis or stop out on occasion to assist with projects. Stewardship projects include exotic species removal, prairie seed collection, tree planting, and other management projects.



Funks Grove Stewardship Work Days provide an excellent opportunity to meet others who believe in the importance of being stewards of the environment. They provide a great volunteer opportunity for Master Naturalists needing to fulfill volunteer requirements as well as scouts and other groups wishing to



complete community service projects. Individuals and families are also encouraged to participate!

The Funks Grove Stewardship Group was established in 1992 and continues to thrive! Volunteers work at their own pace and no experience is necessary. Work days include learning about Illinois' natural history first-hand, while spending a nice morning with friends who share a vision of the value of this spectacular natural area.

At 1200 acres, Funks Grove is the largest remaining intact prairie grove in the state of Illinois. Much of this high quality natural area is protected as registered Illinois Land & Water

Reserve or dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve and portions have been designated a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of Interior.

The group meets at the Sugar Grove Nature Center located in the southern end of Funks Grove. We arrive at 9:00 a.m. September through May and at 8:00 a.m. June through August. Work Days typically last two hours.

Dress for the weather and working outdoors; we suggest blue jeans, heavy shoes, a long-sleeved shirt, and gloves---you'll look like one of the old regulars.

2009 Work Days

January 10 & 24	February 7 & 21
March 7 & 21	April 4 & 18
May 2, 16 & 30	June 13 & 27
July 11 & 25	August 8 & 22
September 5 & 19	October 3, 17, & 31
November 14 & 28	December 12

Sugar Grove Nature Center

309.874.2174

www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org

Registration is NOT required

11TH ANNUAL RATTLESNAKE MASTER RACE

by Lynne Scott and Derek Liebert



Once again, on November 2nd 2008 participants of the most recent Rattlesnake Master Run were treated to beautiful weather! We had a record turnout of 140 participants who either ran or walked around Meadowbrook Park. Participants were enthusiastic and cheerful as they crossed

the finish line. Afterwards, the participants mingled over post race snacks and drinks while awards and prizes were handed out. Michael Jeffords again provided some wonderful photos to overall winners and place finishers were sent home with certificates and native prairie plants. All participants and volunteers received the ever popular race t-shirt. Final race results and course maps can be found at the Grand Prairie Friends website: <http://www.prairienet.org/gpf/>

The race would not have been a success without the help of some 40+ volunteers. Key among these were Derek Liebert and Lynne Scott who acted as co-race coordinators, Jesse Kurylo who was the race



announcer and registration coordinator, Brenda Molano-Flores who was the course set-up coordinator, Connie Carroll-Cunningham who provided the initial course layout and was the food

and beverage coordinator, and Alison Meanor and Joyce Mast who were the awards coordinators. Other volunteers included Jean Mengelkoch and Paul Marcum who assisted with announcing mile times, Valerie Sivicek and Jason Berner who led our participants via bicycle around the course, Molly McNicoll and Stacey James who along with numerous Parkland students provided on course direction, Grant Cunningham, Dan Olson, and Kevin Saylor who assisted Jed and son from Body n Sole with timing, the Red Bison team led by Justin Meissen who assisted Jesse and Adam with registration, several Master Naturalist volunteers including Mike Davis, Eileen Borgia, Chris Eberle, Anne Becker, and Lynn Fennema, Rob Stanton who updated our website, and Tom Rice who provided the registration flyer layout.



The race also benefited enormously from the support of 15 different sponsors: Body 'n Sole, Campus Sportswear, Curtis Orchards, Dandelion, Esquire, Great Harvest, HDC Engineering, Macks Recycling, Mike 'n Molly's, Midwest Potty House, Red Bison, Rick Orr, Road ID, Strawberry Fields, and Winfield Village.

Many, many thanks to all who helped out! Thanks to our many participants, volunteers, and sponsors, the race is expected to gross approximately \$1,800. These funds will help allow Grand Prairie Friends continue to preserve and restore the natural communities of east-central Illinois.

GPF Announcements

Grand Prairie Friends Native Plant Sale 2009

Mark your calendars for **Saturday May 9**. That's the day set for the Annual Mother's Day Native Plant Sale. Plans are being made to hold the event once again at Lincoln Square in downtown Urbana from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. John Marlin plans to provide a selection of woodland wildflowers. We'll also be teaming up with Champaign Urbana Business and



Professional Women as well as the CU Herb Society who will be selling a variety of bedding plants, annuals, and herbs. Volunteers are needed on the day of the sale as well as Friday evening **May 8** to move and set-up plants. See the Grand Prairie Friends Activity Calendar Winter 2008-2009 for seed planting and transplanting dates.

Native Seed Propagation Homer Lake Forest Preserve Friday, February 6

The seeds of prairie plants need special care for them to germinate in a timely manner! Join Jamie Ellis of Grand Prairie Friends to learn how. Free.

Registration is required; call (217) 896-2455.

This event will be held at *Environmental Education Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.*



Sugar Grove Nature Center Maple Sirup Experience Tours Saturday, February 28

It's the time of year when buckets decorate the sugar maples throughout Funks Grove. Have you ever tasted 'sweet water' dripping from a spile? Here's your chance! Join us for the Sugar Grove Nature Center Maple Sirup Experience on Saturday, February 28th. Gather



around the fire at the sirup camp to learn how the Native Americans and early settlers collected and prepared sap. Visit the sugar shack where the smell of maple sirup hangs in the air. Journey into the sugarbush to tap a tree. Stop inside the nature center to sample a variety of sweet treats made with maple sirup including candy, cookies, muffins, fudge and more! Tours start at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. Tour size is limited so reserve your space today by calling 309.874.2174 or emailing register-sgnc@earthlink.net. This program is suitable for adults, children, scouts, and other interested groups. Experience an important part of Funks Grove heritage! Fee- Members: \$5/adult, \$3/child (16 & under); Non-Members: \$7/adult, \$5/child (16 & under).

For a map and directions to the nature center as well as updated program information, visit us online at www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org. For additional information contact Angela Smith, Director, 309-874-2174 or sugargrovenaturecenter@earthlink.net

EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS STEWARDSHIP MANUAL

by Derek Liebert

Grand Prairie Friends, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, and the Urbana Park District have been partnering together to develop an East Central Illinois Stewardship Manual for use not only within their own stewardship programs, but also as a resource to similar organizations within the East Central Illinois region. This manual will provide ecological management information and leadership resources for area volunteer stewards. The manual is intended to be a valuable guide to first-time and established stewards alike. In addition to a bound printed version, it will also be made available in an elec-

tronic format complete with appendices and report forms that can be reprinted for use by volunteers or used electronically. A second and smaller handbook is planned that will include just those portions of the larger manual that are applicable to stewardship in the field.

The partnering organizations received a grant from The Nature Conservancy's Volunteer Stewardship Network (VSN) to cover many of the costs associated with the manual's development. VSN was also a tremendous resource in providing sample stewardship manuals from which the manual is significantly based. They include *The Nature*

Conservancy-Volunteer Stewardship Network's Steward's Handbook, *The Forest Preserve District of Cook County's Volunteer Stewardship Manual*, *McHenry County Conservation District's Site Stewards Manual*, *Lake County Forest Preserve District's Volunteer Stewards' Manual*, and *The Nature Conservancy of Ohio's Volunteer Stewardship Manual*.

The manual is expected to be printed this spring and along with its release, the partnering agencies will be hosting a pair of training sessions to go over the manual with interested existing and prospective stewards. Please watch for future announcements.

Grand Prairie Friends

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