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# A Prairie Rendezvous

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SUMMER VOL. 16, No. 2, 2014  
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## GPF Native Plant Sale—All About the Milkweed!

by Diane and Ed Wilhite

As the crowd grew inside Lincoln Square in downtown Urbana on the morning of May 10, passer-bys asked what the buzz was about. What are these people onto that I'm missing? Why are these people waiting for plants? Inspired by a recent Environmental Almanac article by Rob Kanter, they intended to help save the monarch butterfly. And they were willing to wait until another supply of milkweed arrived from Grand Prairie Friends so they could transform their property into monarch hatcheries.

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Waiting for the next load of milkweed plants to arrive from the greenhouse.

## Florida—Orchard Prairie Progress

by John Marlin

Work by campus and community organizations continued over the winter at the Florida—Orchard prairie next to the president's house. Seeds collected by students were sown on three occasions on both snow and bare ground. This spring the initial prairie plant density was far greater than last year, although there are still substantial numbers of weeds.

The weeds should diminish over time as prairie plants grow large and shade them out. Quack grass



*(continued on page 3)*

## Oh, For the Love of Birds— Warbler Woods Nature Preserve

by Jamie Ellis and Dan Olson

Grand Prairie Friends is the new owner of Warbler Woods Nature Preserve! The recent owner, Shirley Hunt, generously donated this property to GPF in memory of her husband, Dr. Lawrence B. Hunt. Along with assistance from INPC staff, GPF will work to protect the natural resources and steward this property in perpetuity.

This 202-acre parcel of land lies a few miles south of Charleston in Coles County, and it is adjacent to the 141-acre Embarras Ridges Land and Water Reserve purchased by GPF in 2012.

Dr. Hunt recognized the natural value of Warbler Woods and purchased the land in 1981 in order to protect it and enjoy the beauty it provided. For decades, Dr. Hunt brought Eastern Illinois University students to the property (as well as to his backyard) so they could hone their bird identification skills and witness ornithology in action. It was the first time that many of them were able to catch birds in mist nets and put leg

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## A Prairie Rendezvous

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**Editor:** Jim Fay**Assistant Editor:** Jamie Ellis

*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 [jimfay7@gmail.com](mailto:jimfay7@gmail.com) or by mail to the GPF P.O. Box 36. 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 (2015)

Fred Delcomyn, Treasurer (2013)

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

**GPF Committees**

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

Membership &amp; Volunteerism: Brenda Molano-Flores

Stewardship: VACANT

Education: VACANT

Finance: Fred Delcomyn

Publicity: Derek Liebert

Land Acquisition: Dan Olson and Jim Payne

Fund Raising: Derek Liebert, 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. 2014, Feb. 2014): Nov. 1
- Spring Issue (Mar., Apr., May): Feb. 1

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

MAY 2014

*by Jamie Ellis, President,  
GPF Board of Directors*

Spring! Oh, how I long for Spring!

After what seemed like a long and snowy winter (not the snowiest or coldest over the past 100 years or so), spring is here! The woodland wildflowers are making a grand appearance as well as familiar flowers in each of our gardens. Many remark that bloom times seem late, and I respond that it might simply be what some remember as 'normal.'

A gradual warming of the climate has begun and even here in the middle of the continent, we are seeing some effects. On average flower bloom times are earlier and the flight timing of some early emerging bee species is earlier. As we continue to move into the future with government policies that lag behind the state of the science, affects from global warming will only become more pronounced.

By the time you read this, the **annual spring native plant sale** will be behind us. I do hope you were able to volunteer with the sale or purchase some of your favorite native wildflowers and grasses. I have been coordinating the plant sale since 2001, and each year I marvel at the wonder of growing plants and the dedication of dozens of volunteers who make the event happen. Money raised supports GPF's conservation mission and directly supports the summer internship program.

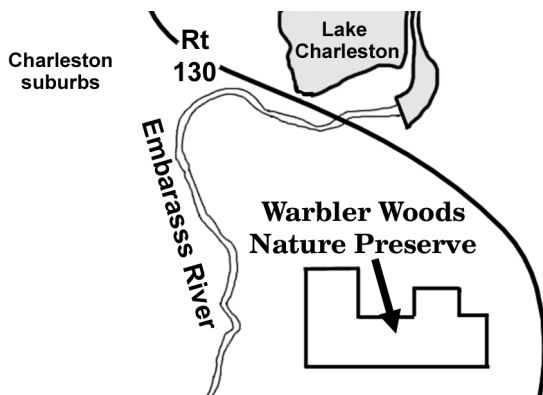
Alas, as much as I love to grow and sell native plants, the future of the plant sale is in **jeopardy** for two reasons. GPF rents greenhouse space from the Illinois Natural History Survey each year to grow plants, but as of June 30, 2014, INHS is walking away from its greenhouse. This means GPF will lose the space where we grow plants.

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*(WARBLER WOODS NATURE PRESERVE)*

bands on birds for scientific research. As an added treat, many students remember Shirley bringing along cookies and lemonade to enjoy while waiting for birds to arrive.

Although Dr. Hunt had a passion for birds, he recognized several species of amphibians that thrive on the land. In the mid 1990's, the spring peeper choruses were so loud that you could not hear yourself speak. The wood frog populations were amazing and the smallmouth salamanders made their early spring appearance by attaching egg masses to grasses and twigs submerged in pools of water throughout the forest.



Dr. Hunt dedicated Warbler Woods as a nature preserve in 1999 to conserve high-quality dry-mesic and mesic upland forest, adjacent forest, and all the native plants and animals that inhabit the area. Two years prior to nature preserve dedication, Warbler Woods was registered as an Illinois Land and Water Reserve to conserve an ~ 152-acre forest and associated land that is vital habitat for at least twenty species of breeding birds—including many warblers—that are moderately or highly sensitive to forest fragmentation.

An uncommon wildflower, false hellebore (*Veratrum woodii*) occurs on a ravine terrace in the southwest part of the woods. False hellebore was listed as threatened in Illinois when this preserve was dedicated, but it is no longer on Illinois's threatened and endangered species list. The preserve is part of a once extensive forested tract along the Embarras River that flows a stone's throw to the west of the preserve.

An event will be planned later this year to formally thank Mrs. Hunt for her generous donation. Watch for notices via e-mail and postal mail. David Mott, neighbor to both Embarras Ridges and Warbler Woods will continue to steward and watch over the properties. GPF will work to erect

*(FLORIDA—ORCHARD PRAIRIE PROGRESS)*

remains a problem and will be selectively sprayed. Prairie grass plugs will be added this summer.

Persons wishing to help with this project should contact [jcmarlin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jcmarlin@sbcglobal.net).



a new sign at the site and develop an informational brochure. In the meantime, the preserve, along with Embarras Ridges are open for you to explore, take pictures, study, and commune with nature. Parking is limited along Daileyville Road, so it might be best to park a vehicle at Embarras Ridges and hike north into Warbler Woods.

*(GPF NATIVE PLANT SALE)*

We sold nearly 19 flats of Sullivant's milkweed, 1 flat of Swamp milkweed, and 60 flats of orange butterfly weed. Holy Asclepias! That is nearly 1400 milkweed seedling going into the yards and gardens across Urbana and Champaign!

And what was most excellent about making this good-natured crowd wait a bit was that plant experts like Bob Vaiden, Bill Handel, Phil Hult, and other volunteers had the opportunity to regale them with the virtue of other prairie wildflowers and grasses that were available for sale.

This was the 20th year for the native plant sale and probably our most successful in terms of sales, but it was a challenging one in terms of raising sufficient inventory. As you may know, the work for the sale starts in the fall when we collect seed heads, clean seeds, and then prepare them for planting in February. Once they have sprouted and are big enough, we transplant them to individual pots and label them over a period of six weeks. There were probably 80 different volunteers who helped with these tasks, guided by Jamie Ellis. Our stock consisted of about 45 different species. Phil Hult also donated a sizeable number of plants to expand our offerings. Volunteers from Grand Prairie Friends and the East Central Illinois Master Naturalists helped man this sale as well as a smaller one on May 17.

Sales netted for Grand Prairie Friends: ~\$10,000.  
Education for the community: Free  
A boost for the monarchs: Priceless.

Many thanks to Jamie Ellis who is retiring as plant sale coordinator after 14 very successful years. It's always good to end on a high note! He plans to focus on other Grand Prairie Friends efforts moving forward.

Grand Prairie Friends would sincerely like to thank these volunteers who gave of their time and talent to make the native plant sale a success!

Carl Alstetter	Zoe Andsager
Irene Andsager	Sandy Bales
Jill Baty	Eileen Borgia
George Brock	Rebecca Bunn
Duane Dassow	Mike Davis
Dottie Davito	Jim Davito
Ron Deering	Brody Dunn
Dave Easter	Dianda Easter
Julie Elder	Chuck Elder
Jamie Ellis	Bonnie Ellis
Alice Englebretsen	Jim Fay
Meredith Fay	Joe Finnerty

Sandy Finnerty	Beverly Foote
Brandon Giannoni	Ruth Green
Melanie Grove	Jim Hamilton
Bill Handel	Bruce Hannon
Alan Hays	Suzanne Hendren
Susan Hopkins	Lew Hopkins
Debbie Insana	Doug Jackson
Stacey James	Rhonda Jurinak
Betsy Kuchinke	Linda Lauchner
Nate Lawrence	Pam Leiter
Jim Long	Mary Yemma Long
John Marlin	Bill Marshall
Chloe Mattia	Susan McIntyre
Rich McMahon	John McWilliams
Craig Milling	John Palen
Jim Payne	Ian Pearse
Jeff Peyton	John Randolph
Terry Rathgeber	Beverly Rauchfuss
Alan Rider	Wyatt Rienhart
Molly Roche	Sandra Rosenfield
Gary Russell	Marsha Russell
Kate Scott	Valerie Sivicek
Haley Smetana	Suzanne Smith
Tom Smith	Katie Smith
Kathy Springer	Rob Stanton
James Treat	Bob Vaiden
Kimberly Warner-Blodgett	
Ed Wilhite	Diane Wilhite
Mary Beth Willems	Leah Wurster

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## GPF To Hire Bookkeeper

Grand Prairie Friends has always taken pride in carrying out conservation work as an all-volunteer organization, but as we grow in membership, projects, and land protected, we need to take a hard look at how to keep up. We have hired summer interns for twenty years and other help on a short-term basis. Now we're taking a step aimed at administration rather than stewardship.

The GPF Board has decided to hire Nancy Mickenbecker on a contract basis to assist with financial record keeping and work with the Treasurer to track and record revenues and expenses and help prepare monthly and annual financial reports.

Nancy received undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Illinois. She worked at a variety of positions including over 20 years for the University before starting *Second Wind Consulting*.

She loves gardening and says if she has a vice, it's spending too much money on plants and flowers.

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## May: Invasive Species Awareness Month

### Invasive Plant Task Force

A day-long symposium at IDNR in Springfield capped May's Illinois' Invasive Species Awareness Month.

As we all know, invasive species are those that can invade an ecosystem causing ecological or economic harm. Without the factors that kept them in check in their native environment, invasive species can multiply rapidly, displacing native plants and animals and degrading habitat. Habitat loss and competition from invasive species are the primary reasons plants and animals become threatened or endangered.

This year's theme was "Invasive Species Affect Everyone" and covered topics from the history of invasive species control and eradication efforts to the value of early detection, surveying for forest pests, managing the damage inflicted by feral swine, an overview of the aquatic nuisance program, and an update on Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

Over 100 activities were planned across the state for public participation during May.

Here in central Illinois, we held our 4<sup>th</sup> Great Garlic Mustard Hunt. We didn't match the incredible 7 tons of 2 years ago when garlic mustard was being weighed by the truckload. The warm winter and spring of 2012 is probably the reason for such prolific germination – and we hope – similar depletion of the seedbank. Garlic mustard seed can remain viable up to 10 years in the soil.

This year's cold, wet winter kept the garlic mustard small, but still blooming throughout May and now in seed. It takes many itty-bitty plants to make up the 50-pound bags we normally use. All the numbers aren't in yet, but it looks like we'll have about 2 tons.

These same winter conditions may also have favored native plants over the garlic mustard. Either way, we seem to be making progress in the natural areas. The unfortunate thing is, we're seeing more garlic mustard showing up in the home landscape.

Of course, none of this is possible without the willing – nay, eager! – participation of many volunteers. A big "Thank You" to all of you.



### Marilyn Leger Named Volunteer of the Year

On May 29 as part of the Illinois Invasive Species Symposium at the IDNR headquarters in Springfield, Marilyn Leger was recognized as that organization's Volunteer of the Year. She received a wood plaque inscribed: "Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month - Volunteer Award."

She also received a bouquet of spring flowers from her sister-in-law along with the comment, "I hope none of these are invasives."

Here is the IISA committee's summary of Marilyn's contributions:

"Marilyn Leger is receiving this award for her dedication and leadership in invasive species work in east central Illinois and statewide. Marilyn has been a driving force to address invasive species in east central Illinois. Through the local chapter of the Master Naturalists, Marilyn founded and co-chaired the East Central Invasive Plant Task Force. Under her leadership, this task force has organized trainings, published invasive plant educational materials, and created the "Great Garlic Mustard Hunt." In addition, Marilyn has been heavily involved in the Invasive Plant Species Council and has been instrumental in the assessment of plant species."

*(President's Report...)*

The other reason is me. I put in many hours throughout the whole year to collect and clean seeds, coordinate volunteers, and grow plants. Of course, I never do this all by myself, and I thank everyone who has ever helped with the plant sale. It is time for me to move on, and focus my volunteer efforts on more land conservation and management. I am not quitting GPF, but I do wish to quit the plant sale.

And speaking of land conservation, I am very, very pleased to announce that GPF is the proud new owner of **Warbler Woods Nature Preserve!** Thanks to the generous donation of Shirley Hunt, GPF now owns this mostly wooded property that sits directly north of Embarras Ridges approximately three miles south of Charleston. Please take a day to visit this year to search for wildflowers, bird watch, hike the ridges and ravines, or just relax in the cool forest under towering trees.

The **summer internship** is near and dear to my heart, and this marks 20 years! And we have two amazing interns who are looking forward to learning as much as they can about natural areas stewardship. I hope you get a chance to meet or work with Brody and Jeff this summer.

GPF is hiring a **bookkeeper!**

What?

Yes. I am very pleased to announce that we will be hiring a bookkeeper on a contract basis to help with the week-to-week duties currently performed by the treasurer, Fred Delcomyn. Please help me welcome Nancy Mickenbecker to this role.

I sincerely thank board member Dave Easter for helping me write and submit a **grant** to the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. This Foundation is rolling out a new grant program to provide stewardship funding for properties that their grant money helped buy.

In 2011, GPF received a major grant from ICECF to help buy Embarras Ridges, so we submitted a grant that will help buy equipment for management of the forest and provide funds for a contractor to carry out that work. We will be notified of success or not after July 1.

This column would not be complete without making an appeal to you to volunteer. There will likely be positions open for Board members this fall, and I urge you to contact me to see how you might step-up to lead.

## Welcome Summer Interns 2014

Jamie Ellis,  
Summer Internship Coordinator

This year, 2014, marks 20 years for the Grand Prairie Friends summer internship program. Since 1994, dozens of young people have spent their summer learning about and working on management of natural areas in east-central Illinois.

GPF is pleased to continue this valuable program. Summer interns are given the opportunity to learn to identify native and invasive plant species, techniques to remove and control unwanted plants, learn how to collect seeds, and learn general concepts of ecology and conservation of our valuable prairie and woodland remnants. They generally work June through August, and they are out every week working by themselves or alongside natural resource professionals and volunteers. The GPF members and volunteers who work with the summer interns are a valuable part of the program who teach skills and pass along knowledge about local ecosystems. The summer internship program is funded through the native plant sale and through generous donations from members.

This summer, GPF will hire two young men, who are very enthusiastic to learn about and manage local natural areas. Let's give a hearty welcome to Brody and Jeff!

### Brody Dunn



My name is Brody Dunn. I'll be graduating from UIUC in the Spring of 2015 with a double major.

*(continued on next page)*

My first major, and the one I'm most passionate about, is from the Earth, Society, and Environment program. My second is in Anthropology. I'm fascinated by the interactions people have with their environment. I find the Illinois ecosystem to be particularly interesting because humanity has been key to the composition and form of the landscape both in the present and deep into the past. I think submerging myself in stewardship by restoring and preserving natural areas around Illinois will give me a unique perspective that I'll be able to apply to future educational and vocational ambitions.

I enjoy working with my hands, and I pursue skills that enable me to use them in my everyday life. I've learned basic car mechanics, welding, knitting, and sewing, and I am currently pursuing oil painting and woodcarving. When I'm not working in the garden center at Prairie Gardens or attending classes, you can find me hiking at Allerton Park near Monticello or drinking tea over a painting easel or fresh block of wood.

I hope I can use the knowledge I gain from my experiences both at the U of I and with Grand Prairie Friends to bring people closer to the environment in which they live, be that through working with the government or a non-profit organization, or by starting a business that offers sustainability counseling for businesses and homeowners.

### Jeff Peyton

Hello! My name is Jeff Peyton, and I am one of the 2014 summer interns with Grand Prairie Friends. I currently work at the Anita Purves Nature Center in Urbana, where I lead public programs, care for the center's animals, assist with exhibit design, and help around the office. I very much enjoy working for the park district, but I am excited to take some time away from the nature center in order to begin my internship. My favorite parts of my current work are the parts that take me out into natural areas, so I believe this internship will be the perfect fit for me.

I received a master's degree in Middle East Studies from the University of Illinois and had



planned to continue with an academic career in the same field, but instead made the decision to break off my studies in favor of a career that would bring me in contact with nature.

In pursuit of this new direction, in 2013 I completed the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist training program through the university's extension office, as well as leading interpretive hikes for school groups as the Champaign County Forest Preserve District's fall naturalist intern.

I have lived in the Champaign-Urbana area since I was three, and I have fond memories of enjoying the nearby natural areas with my family: camping at Moraine View State Park and Forest Glen, fishing with my father at Homer and Clinton lakes, and hiking and canoeing at Kickapoo State Park.

I am excited to now have the opportunity to do my part in helping to preserve the habitats maintained by the Grand Prairie Friends. I am also excited to expand my skills and knowledge in the field of natural areas management, to learn the tools and techniques that I will apply in my new career path, and to work with and learn from experts in the field. I can't wait to get out there and start working!