



GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS

February 2021 Newsletter



Feature Story: Partners in Life...and Prairie Dwain Berggren & Barb Wysocki

Dwain Berggren spent 25 years as a Geologist for the Illinois State Geological Survey, and he served as a Grand Prairie Friends Volunteer Steward at Loda Cemetery Prairie from 1989-2001. During his time at Loda, Dwain fell in love with both the prairie and his wife of three decades, Barb Wysocki. Read about how their love story began with a shared passion for the Illinois prairie.

Dwain: "In the summer of 1984, I was living in Champaign and commuting weekly to Chicago. I read a news feature describing a new preserve, which prompted me to find the Loda Prairie one afternoon and see a rarity. I was not

disappointed. After my first visit, I stopped by again and again that season to watch the summer prairie bloom into fall and winter. My mind -- schooled by farming, gardening, and historical references -- imagined "prairie" abstractly, supposing something like a placid, monotonous sea of lush grass, vaguely "horse high," as I recall. Instead, the midsummer reality of Loda Prairie, in detail and within small bounds, presented a marvelously diverse host of unfamiliar growth and bloom -- a primitive and wild place to me."

"Visiting the prairie over the next few years, I noted the early work being done to clear out trees and weeds. The vigorous persistence of teasel was an obvious problem, and in 1989 I was moved to write The Nature Conservancy in Chicago to introduce myself and offer to help weed it. My letter was promptly answered by Stephen Packard, who asked if I would volunteer with the stewardship effort at Loda being managed by TNC and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. That year, 1989, I was appointed Volunteer Steward of Loda Cemetery Prairie and a member of the Volunteer Stewardship Network. Then, I found an association with organizing and growing Grand Prairie Friends, and I befriended the many naturalists and volunteers that worked there."

"One of the highlights of my work at Loda was the chance to meet Barb Wysocki. When her family agreed: "What's not to like about Dwain?", she accepted my proposal for marriage."

Barb: "My introduction to Loda Prairie was in the mid-1980s. Dwain was already deeply committed to the prairie site in Iroquois County. I was relatively new to Champaign County, having just taken a teaching position at Uni High School. His idea of a date was a Saturday afternoon at Loda Prairie, where he'd check out the progress of prairie blooms, identify emerging foreign species, and determine when the area would be ready for a major Grand Prairie Friends workday."

"From Dwain's ongoing narratives, I learned a lot about prairie plants, the structure of a prairie, and the level to which human intervention was appropriate and necessary. I also learned a lot about Dwain. On reflection, I wondered if these excursions were opportunities for him to sell himself to me by impressing me with his knowledge of prairie vegetation and his enthusiasm for preserving this gem of Illinois wildlife."

"Whatever the reason, the rest is history. 2020 marked our 30th anniversary and Loda Prairie is doing just fine!"

Special thanks to John Marlin for providing photo.



Native Plant Sale **Online**

May 2 - May 14, 2021
Pickup Week of May 17, Urbana



Over 40 varieties available. Make your list now, many varieties sell-out fast.
Plant Catalog open now at www.GrandPrairieFriends.org

Pending COVID regulations, a smaller boutique public sale may take place at Lincoln Square Mall on May 22 for persons needing advice or small quantities.



Grand Prairie Friends is hiring! We are looking for a Natural Areas Technician. This full-time, salaried position will be based at the Warbler Ridge Conservation Area. We are also hiring several seasonal interns. [Click here for more information!](#)

Upcoming Events!

In the interest of health and wellness, visit GPF's website and Facebook for event changes or cancellations as our communities navigate COVID-19.

Please send all questions to Diane Wilhite dianeew@sbcglobal.net

RSVP for all events below at [Events](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)



Stewardship Saturday at Warbler Crossing

Saturday, March 6, 9-11 am

Join us to maintain and enjoy Warbler Ridge Conservation Area: all ages welcome, equipment provided, and COVID safety measures observed. Meet at the new Warbler Crossing property at 17487 Bypass Road, Charleston.



Spring Membership Meeting

**Saturday, March 27, 6:30-8 pm,
Zoom**

Among the rows of corn and beans, there are extraordinary plants, animals, and habitats that few of us have encountered. Join IDNR Heritage Biologist Morgan Walder and IL Nature Preserve Commission Biologist John Griesbaum as they uncover their top ten most surprising nature finds.

Registration required by March 26: [Spring Membership Meeting](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)

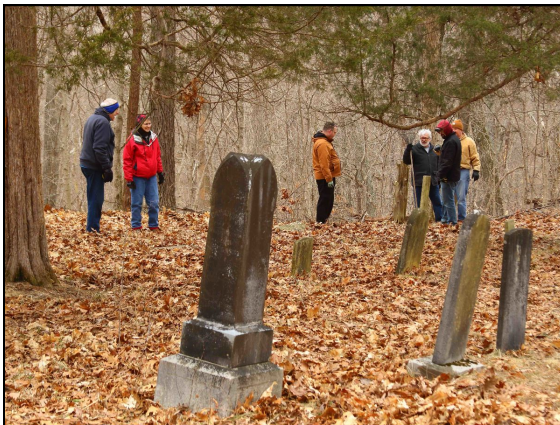


Bats Back from Migration

Tuesday, March 30, 5-6 pm, Zoom

Training for Citizen Scientists observing and counting bats at Warbler Ridge. RSVP to receive Zoom link.

[Bats are Back from Migration!](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)



Cemetery Stewardship Workday at Warbler Ridge

Saturday, April 3, 9-11 am

Meet at McKenzie-Waltrip Cemetery at
Warbler Ridge.

[Cemetery Stewardship workday at
Warbler Ridge](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)

This month's newsletter was designed and written by GPF volunteer, Maria Maring.



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