



The GPF Brief

Issue No. 1

August 2022



Help Us Name Our Newsletter!

Tap into your creativity because our newsletter needs a catchy new name!

Send your names to [Sarah Coulton](#)

If your name is chosen, you win a
Grand Prairie Friends T-shirt!

In this Edition of **The GPF Brief**

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New Species Identified at Warbler Ridge!

Volunteers Wilson and Tony stumbled upon what they thought was perhaps a first-time species at Warbler Ridge. The Crane-fly Orchid. See it in the images below. Then, they stumbled upon a couple of other species that were not previously identified in this region.

The Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), also known as crippled crane-fly, is a perennial woodland orchid. According to the [US Forest Service](#), the flowering stem is 15-20 inches tall, herbaceous, greenish-brown, glabrous, and leafless. This orchid prefers the slopes of moist humus-rich soils in southeastern US deciduous forests. Interestingly, this particular orchid is pollinated by night-flying moths, where the pollen-bearing sacs attach to the moth's eye, then the moth travels to another flower for pollination.



One Sunday, Paul Marcum, a botanist for the Illinois Natural History Survey, visited the site with Tony, Wilson, Nancy, and staff and confirmed that it is true: these are new species for our Central IL region! Paul verified that the Warbler Ridge site is the northernmost siting of the Crane-fly Orchid in Illinois.

In addition to the Crane-fly Orchid, they found populations of *Monarda* (bergamot). One of them, *Monarda serotina*, is a new, formally unnamed species with a characteristic double-stacked inflorescence (see below-left image). They also discovered fertile stems of White bergamot (*Monarda clinopodia*) (see below-right image). This is just one small, albeit, important milestone confirming that Grand Prairie Friends' lands are teeming with life that have

specialized needs for rich, healthy habitats! Your hard work is paying off for the flourishing of these specialized organisms!



Q&A with Dave Easter, President of Grand Prairie Friends

Get to know a little more about your current president such as hobbies and why he loves GPF!

By Sarah Coulton

Sarah Coulton: Thanks for agreeing to do this interview for our newsletter. Tell me a little bit about yourself. What is your hometown and how did you end up here?

Dave Easter: I grew up in Tremont, Illinois. My father worked at Caterpillar in nearby Peoria. I was born in Champaign while my father was attending college. I graduated from the University of Illinois in engineering. I loved the campus and environment while in school. My sister moved to the area before us, and then my parents followed. We came to be with family and live in a relatively small college area.

S: What first attracted you to Grand Prairie Friends and what year did you join?

D: We moved to the area in 2012. I signed up for the Master Naturalist program that year and learned about the various conservation organizations in the area. I like them all but really enjoyed the volunteer opportunities at GPF, especially its mission.

S: Hobbies?

D: My hobbies include woodworking and specifically cabinetry and furniture making. I build and Dianda finishes. We built most of the cabinets and furniture in our house and property. I also really enjoy collecting seeds of native plants - forbs, shrubs, and trees. We use the plants to restore our property a patch at a time.

S: What do you love most about Grand Prairie Friends these days?

D: I love that GPF can focus on both prairies and woodlands. We don't have to focus on one or the other. The organization has grown to a sufficient size that both can be treated with excellence. I love working in both prairies and woods to learn about them both. GPF has an amazing cadre of dedicated volunteers who are fun to work with.

S: Favorite flora/fauna and why?

D: My favorite flora are native plants. My least favorite fauna are deer who wreak havoc on my plants. I grew up with a love of trees, spending much of my time in the woods. I learned other plants gardening and landscaping.

S: Thanks so much, Dave!

What's New at Grand Prairie Friends?

Here are the highlights that excited us this season! All possible because of your support!

By Jeff Peyton and Jill Maes



Gearing Up

Summer isn't over yet, but we're already getting ready for our fall prescribed burn season. A Natural Areas Stewardship Grant from the State of Illinois has enabled Grand Prairie Friends to expand our burn equipment with gear like this new Kubota RTV and QTAC fire pump, along with new fire suits and tools, as well as helping to pay for staff time to construct fire control lines. The grant will enable GPF to conduct more and larger burns safely and efficiently. Prescribed fire is an extremely important management tool for prairies and woodlands and our new equipment grows our capacity to apply this tool to the landscape.

Plus, it's pretty fun.



- This summer, the natural areas team at Warbler Ridge has been tackling woody invasives throughout the property. We have mainly been focusing our attention on honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose.

- Tony Willenborg installed a new trail at Warbler Ridge called the Aspen Loop Trail. It is an easy .5-mile hike located at the Daileyville Road parking lot. We will be installing signs for it this year, but we are encouraging everyone to enjoy it now!
- We installed four artificial bat houses in June at our [Warbler Bluff property](#). There are two rocket box houses and two Brandenbark poles (artificial bark to encourage bat roosting). This project was completed by staff, volunteers, and Ameren employees. We are hoping to have bats taking up residence at these spots next year!



***Greetings From New Staff:
Meet Sarah Coulton
Your New Administrative Projects Manager!***



Hey there!

As I write this newsletter, I am musing over a group of blue jays squabbling amongst themselves out my window and it reminds me why I am so excited about working for Grand Prairie Friends. Nature is fascinating and I am thrilled to be in the thick of it all. I am learning that the people who work to conserve it are pretty neat too. I am looking forward to meeting you if we haven't crossed paths yet.

Previously, I worked for Coles County Regional Planning as their GIS technician and the County's Solid Waste Coordinator. During my 5 years at the courthouse, I made a wide variety of maps, collected data, built community relationships, and managed the County's solid waste and recycling. I am curious to see where those skills can be applied here at GPF. Somewhere in the shuffle, I finished my degree at EIU and it reinforced my hunger to work in conservation.

This was a fun year for me. Not only did I start a new job working for a conservation nonprofit, but I also got married to a pretty great guy and we had a killer honeymoon in Italy! My favorite places were Rome and Venice if you were wondering. I'm hoping you will get to meet my husband Joe at future events. He's a high school science teacher at Oakland and is happy to be back with his students. When I have some free time, I enjoy hiking, birding, gardening, reading a good book, and snuggling my sweet kitty, Pepper. Pop in at the Warbler Crossing office sometime and introduce yourself!

Shoutout to EIU's New Student Volunteers!



Thanks for volunteering at Warbler Ridge on Saturday! The day began with 16 students being introduced to Warbler Ridge and Terry sharing the interesting history behind the McKenzie-Waltrip Cemetery. Students were tasked with removing rusty old fencing around the historic cemetery. The students eagerly cut down the fence and carried it to the truck so quickly that we ran out of work for them to do! Then Diane, Terry, and Tony led a fun excursion along the Cemetery Ridge Trail. It was a fun and educational work day!



Walking the Warbler Ridge Trail may require dodging butterflies and bees in the thriving pollinator planting at the south trailhead. Volunteers from Prairie's Edge Master Naturalist program led by Nancy Coutant and aided by Terry Smith, Rich Wandling, Jenny Lee, and Tim Galos prepped and planted/transplanted native pollinator plants in 2021. Weeding, watering, and supplementing plants in 2022 has led to a beautiful display of over 25 species which has elicited tons of positive comments from visitors. This is the crowning jewel of the Red Shack area makeover. Don't believe us, come and see for yourself!

-Diane Wilhite





Upcoming Events- Please Join Us!

 **GRAND
PRAIRIE
FRIENDS**

FALL FÊTE 2022
MOVIE PREMIERE
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

**PROSPECT PRAIRIE
RIBBON-CUTTING
& FALL MEETING**
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

 **the
magic
stump**



FALL FETE 2022 IS HERE!

Saturday, September 24, @ 4-8 PM

Outdoor Movie Premiere of

The Magic Stump

Guided Bird Walks & Talks by Local
Birding Experts Tyler Funk, Ron

Bradley, & Dave Mott

Children's Activities

Grand Opening of the *NEW* Aspen
Trail Loop

Food Truck, Activities, & Family Fun!

WARBLER RIDGE RED BARN

17161 Daileyville Rd., Charleston

[See Website For More Details!](#)

Prospect Prairie Ribbon Cutting & Fall Membership Meeting

Saturday, October 15, 2022 @ Prospect
Prairie @ 2 PM

Join Us to Celebrate GPF's

Purchase of Prospect Cemetery

Prairie Nature Preserve

Annual Elections, Food, & Friends!

[See website for more details](#)

1398 S Vermillion St, Paxton, IL



The 24th Annual Rattlesnake Master Run For The Prairie

Saturday, November 6, 2022 @ 9 AM

This race includes a 10K and 5K run
and 5K walk using chip timing. All
proceeds support our great work!

[Click Here to Register!](#)

Meadowbrook Park, 2808 S Race St,
Urbana

Upcoming Volunteer Events!



Stewardship Saturday at Warbler Crossing

Saturday, September 3, 9-11 am

Join us to maintain and enjoy Warbler Ridge Conservation Area on the first Saturday of each month: all ages welcome, equipment provided. Meet at Daileyville Road parking area, 17161 Daileyville Rd, Charleston.

[Stewardship Saturdays at Warbler Ridge](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)



Invasive Strike Team

Saturday, September 17, 9-11 am,

Are you interested in wiping out harmful invasives to preserve Warbler Ridge's natural beauty? Join this team led by Wilson Montgomery! Team meets 3rd Saturday of Every Month at Daileyville Road parking area, 17161 Daileyville Rd, Charleston.

[Invasive Strike Team](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)



Volunteer at Fall Fete

Saturday, September 24, 3-8 pm

Volunteers needed to assist with the festival. Meet at Red Shack.

[Fall Fete](#) | [GrandPrairieFriends](#)



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PRAIRIE
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