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A Prairie Rendezvous, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 2001-2002)

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A Prairie Rendezvous

A joint publication of...



Prairie
Grove
Volunteers

WINTER VOL. 4, NO. 1, 2001/2

Something's different...

As *Prairie Rendezvous* begins its fourth year, it gets a new editor and designer. While I have experience in publications design along with several years of newspaper copy editing experience, I will have to work hard to fill in for Doug Chien and Alf Siewers, who I gather knew a lot about prairie restoration. I, on the other hand, have only been on a few burns, am not a biologist (I teach ESL and Spanish), and am still learning the basics.

While I'm learning more about the Grand Prairie, I'll endeavor at the same time to make this a great publication. I've made some (minor) changes to the layout, but if there is anything that would make *Prairie Rendezvous* more attractive, and readable, please let me know.

The Greenup Issue will be my second effort; please send any material you wish included to me by February 15, along with any other comments or suggestions you might have.

Finally, I'd like to thank the board members for giving me the chance to work on *Prairie Rendezvous*.

- the editor

NEW GPF BOARD MEMBERS, OFFICERS ELECTED

Joyce Hofmann, Brenda Molano-Flores, and Robert Vaiden were elected to three-year terms on the Grand Prairie Friends Board of Directors at the annual meeting in September. Finishing their terms were Paul Tessene who served as Vice President during 2000-2001 and Patti Malmborg who had been GPF's Land Acquisition Chair for the past two years. Continuing members of the board are Lisa Braddock (term expires 2003), Jamie Ellis (2003), Chris Hauser (2002), Mary Hruska (2002), Heidi Leuszler (2002), and Jim Payne (2003).

Joyce Hofmann is a Research Scientist at the Illinois Natural History Survey where she conducts surveys for mammals, especially threatened and endangered species, throughout Illinois. She also gives many programs about mammals (especially bats) to school classes and the public. Joyce has just completed a term on the GPF Board of Directors and is steward of Bonnie's Prairie Nature Preserve.

Brenda Molano-Flores is Coordinator of the Critical Trends Assessment Program (CTAP) at the Illinois Natural History Survey. A native of Puerto Rico, Brenda fell in love with prairies while working on her PhD degree at the University of Iowa. Her research interests are plant reproduction, plant breeding systems, and prairie restoration. From 1998 to 2000 Brenda was the prairie restoration ecologist at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Robert Vaiden is a geologist in the Groundwater Section of the Illinois State Geological Survey. He spends a fair amount of time conducting workshops for teachers and talking to elementary school students and also is a part-time instructor at Parkland College. Bob has been active in the Champaign County Audubon Society and GPF for many years and serves as steward of Meadowbrook Prairie in Urbana.

At its October meeting the Board of Directors elected officers for 2001-2002. Jamie Ellis will serve as President, Joyce Hofmann as Vice-President, Bob Vaiden as Secretary, and Jim Payne as Treasurer. The other board members will hold the following positions: Lisa Braddock - Publicity Chair, Chris Hauser - Land Acquisition Chair, Mary Hruska - Membership Chair, Heidi Leuszler - Education Chair, and Brenda Molano-Flores - Stewardship Chair.

The GPF Board of Directors meets monthly and its meetings are open to members. During the winter, meetings will be held at 6:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month at the Illinois Natural History Survey's North Annex, 406 S. Third Street, Champaign. Any changes in the location will be announced on the GPF website.

A Prairie Rendezvous
PO Box 36 • Urbana, IL 61803-0036

Editing/Layout: Raymond Meredith

A Prairie Rendezvous is a joint publication of the Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois (GPF) and the Prairie Grove Volunteers (PGV) for the restoration community of east-central Illinois.

A Prairie Rendezvous is published quarterly. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at rmeredith@parkland.cc.il.us

Prairie Grove Volunteers

The PGV is part of The Nature Conservancy's Volunteer Stewardship Network. Its stewards help coordinate volunteer workdays at native prairie, savanna, wetland, and woodland remnants. Inquiries and tax-deductible donations should be sent to: PGV, PO Box 2577, Champaign, IL 61825.

www.prairienet.org/pgv

Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois

GPF is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to prairie preservation, restoration, and education in east-central Illinois. Inquiries and tax deductible donations should be sent to: GPF, PO Box 36, Urbana, IL 61803-0036.

www.prairienet.org/gpf

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Greenup Issue (March, April, May)
☞ February 15

Big Bloom Issue (June, July, Aug.)
☞ May 15

Fall Issue (Sept., Oct., Nov.)
☞ August 15

Member Submissions Encouraged

Printed on Recycled Paper

**GPF BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ADOPTS BURN POLICY**

by Joyce Hofmann

Prescribed burning is an important and widely used management tool for prairies and other types of natural communities. Because those of us who participate in stewardship activities conduct burns so often there may be a risk that we are sometimes a bit casual about them. Fire is inherently dangerous and a burn that escapes from a management area can cause personal injuries and/or property damage. When sites are burned under the leadership of Grand Prairie Friends members the organization (a legal corporation) is liable for any damages that result. Although GPF has liability insurance, accidents potentially could place GPF's financial assets and the property it owns in jeopardy.

To protect volunteers, property adjacent to sites at which we work, and GPF's assets the Board of Directors decided to develop a Prescribed Burn Policy. The policy should reinforce the importance of conducting prescribed burns under appropriate conditions and with all reasonable precautions. I wrote the policy, a Prescribed Burn Plan, Day of Burn Checklist, and Prescribed Burn Report, with significant input from Mary Kay Solecki and Bob Szafoni. Board members reviewed these documents and adopted them at their November meeting. The documents will also be evaluated by GPF's attorney, John McMahon. The policy should be in effect for the spring 2002 burn season.

Anyone who wants to act as a GPF fire boss must read and comply with the burn policy. The policy will be posted on GPF's website and copies of the needed forms will be provided to site stewards by GPF. A fire boss must submit a Prescribed Burn Plan to the GPF Stewardship Chair for approval at least a month prior to the scheduled burn. The fire boss will complete a checklist on the day of the burn and can only ignite the fire if conditions are suitable for a safe burn. After the fire is out the fire boss will fill out the Prescribed Burn Report and send it to the GPF Stewardship Chair. This policy places added responsibilities on fire bosses, but the forms are fairly brief. Grand Prairie Friends will not assume liability for any injuries or property damage caused by a burn that was not conducted in full compliance with the policy.

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**GPF TO PRESENT READERS'
THEATER PERFORMANCE**

Mark your calendars for a special event on Friday March 1, 2002. That evening at 7:30 pm Grand Prairie Friends will present *Earth Oceans: Images of the Prairie*, a Readers' Theatre performance, in the auditorium of the National Soybean Research Center building on the University of Illinois campus (1101 W. Peabody Drive, Champaign). *Earth Oceans*, created by GPF members Susan Post, Michael Jeffords, Mary Lee Sargent, and Joyce Hofmann, was first presented in 1994. It features impressions of the tallgrass prairie written by explorers, settlers, famous literary figures, and scientists and is accompanied by photographic images of the prairie by Michael Jeffords and Susan Post and traditional American music.

NEWS AND UPDATES

BUTTERFLIES FEATURED AT GPF ANNUAL MEETING

Dr. James Sternburg and John Bouseman, authors of the recently published "Field Guide to Butterflies of Illinois," spoke on Illinois butterflies at the GPF annual meeting on Friday, Sept. 28 at the Anita Purves Nature Center in Urbana. The program was preceded by a review of GPF activities during the past year and the election of new board members. A drawing was held, with prizes that included the butterfly field guide, two subscriptions to "Illinois Steward" magazine, a set of "Good Guys" insect cards from the Illinois Natural History Survey, and a gift certificate for a flat of prairie plants from GPF. John Bouseman, an entomologist at the Natural History Survey, began with a discussion of the geographic and ecological distribution of butterflies in the state. Then University of Illinois Emeritus Professor of Entomology Jim Sternburg, who has spent many years photographing butterflies, showed slides of numerous Illinois species and described aspects of their natural history. In addition to the interesting and informative program, the 50 people who attended the meeting were able to enjoy a variety of tasty desserts. It was also fortunate that the meeting was held in the room at the nature center where the GPF quilt was on display so that some people were able to see it for the first time (*see story below*).

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GPF RECEIVES DONATION OF TRUCK

What do you do if you're in the market for a new vehicle, but your present one has many miles and some rust on it even though it still runs well? If you are Ruth Green, longtime Grand Prairie Friends supporter, you realize a dealer or private buyer will not give you much for the vehicle and you donate it to GPF! The vehicle is a 1988 Toyota pickup, which has seen much use as her personal truck on workdays at Windsor Road, hauling plant waste and tools, and moving plants for the annual plant sale, among other things. So it made sense to Ruth to make a gift of the truck, which, after all, already knows the way to most of our sites. This way, her new vehicle will stay nice longer, the truck becomes available to all GPF members with a need to haul tools and materials either too bulky or too messy for their personal cars, and she gets a tax deduction for the fair market value of the truck. Pretty smart, eh? Thanks, Ruth!

GPF QUILT TOURS CENTRAL ILLINOIS

The Grand Prairie Friends quilt has been displayed in several places since its debut at the Early American Museum in Mahomet during May 2001. In early June it was shown at Lincoln Days in Springfield. From mid-June to mid-July it was on display at the Philo Public Library and from mid-July to early September at the Tolono Public Library. The Anita Purves Nature Center in Urbana hosted the quilt from mid-September through November. People who have viewed the quilt have commented on its "beautiful workmanship that really tells a story" and called it "inspiring," "a treasure," "a masterpiece of God's prairie," and "an honor to our natural world." Others have remarked on its "beautiful quilting and design" and "wonderful textures." Check the GPF website to learn where the quilt will be next. Anyone with suggestions for locations where the quilt could be exhibited should contact Sharon Dorsey (217-344-3016 or ayuda@prairienet.org).

PESTICIDE TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Stewardship of natural areas often involves application of herbicide to control non-native and weedy plant species. Stewards stump-treat cut woody plants and may need to use foliar application occasionally. Application needs to be done in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, and law dictates that you be licensed to apply pesticides on public land. A pesticide use license is required of everyone applying Restricted Use pesticides, and anyone applying pesticides in the course of employment must have a license.

The University of Illinois Extension offers pesticide training and certification clinics for people wanting and needing a license. These classes cover proper pesticide storage and handling, proper application rates, health and safety concerns, types of pesticides, and more. Many clinics are being offered in 2002, including one in Urbana.

If you need to apply herbicides for GPF- or PGV-related work, you should obtain a license. Please see <http://www.pesticidesafety.uiuc.edu> or call 217-244-2123 or 800-644-2123 for more information.

More News and Updates on back page...

Volunteer Workday



Calendar



WINTER 2001/2002

Fall/Winter burns

Burns may be scheduled in December for several sites. Burns are needed at these sites to discourage the competing non-native species and encourage growth of native plants. Wear natural-fiber, non-flammable clothing (long pants, long sleeves, boots, and gloves) Please, *no synthetic fabrics!* Bring drinking water and a snack. Contact Dan Busemeyer (244-2470) or Jamie Ellis (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu, 244-5695) for more information.

Seed planting and transplanting

GPF will be growing prairie plants in the greenhouse once again next year, and we need volunteers to assist in planting seeds in flats and then transplanting seedlings into pots. These volunteer worknights will take place in February, March, and April, so stay tuned. Contact Brenda Molano-Flores (molano@inhs.uiuc.edu, 265-8167) or Jamie Ellis (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu, 244-5695) if you would like to volunteer.

Exact dates for seed transplanting and burning will be announced on the ecostewards listserver. Workday reminders and updates will also be posted. To sign up for this listserver, contact Jamie Ellis (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu).

- 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).

Brush Cutting and Non-Native Species Clean-up: The first and third Saturdays of every month

Enjoy a woodlands close to home; join other volunteers in Busey Woods for brush cutting and removing non-native species. Bring loppers or handsaws if you have them. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center at 9:00 am. Cancellations may occur if there is bad weather. Contact Frank Hassler (390-8846) or Matt Hohmann (329-4122) with any questions.

Seed Cleaning: Wednesday December 5

Many volunteers helped to collect prairie plant seeds this fall. These seeds will be used to grow plants for the annual GPF plant sale and will be used for local restoration projects. To prepare seeds for planting, they must be cleaned of chaff From 7-9 pm at the Natural Resources Study Annex Greenhouses on Griffith Drive. Contact Jamie Ellis if you need directions (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu, 244-5695).

Brush cutting. Middle Fork Bluffs, Kickapoo State Park: Saturday, December 8

We will be cutting and pulling non-native honeysuckle and multiflora rose. Meet at Anita Purvis Nature Center at 9:00 am to carpool, or on site at 10:00 am (immediately east of the interstate rest stop on west-bound I-74). Contact Dan Busemeyer (wk: 244-2470, hm: 378-5352) for more information.

Brush cutting at Loda RR Prairie: January 19

Autumn olive has invaded some areas of this rail road prairie remnant north of Loda. Come help cut and clear out this shrub. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center at 9 am to carpool or meet at the site at 10 am. We'll probably work for two hours. Dress warmly. Contact Jamie Ellis if you need directions (jamese@inhs.uiuc.edu, 244-5695).

More calendar items on next page...

Events Calendar

GPF Board of Directors meeting

When: Tuesday, December 11, 6:30 pm
Where: Illinois Natural History Survey North Annex, 406 S. Third Street, Champaign

GPF Board of Directors meeting

When: Tuesday, January 8, 6:30 pm
Where: Illinois Natural History Survey North Annex, 406 S. Third Street, Champaign

GPF Board of Directors meeting

When: Tuesday, February 12, 6:30 pm
Where: Location to be announced

Earth Oceans: Images of the Prairie

When: Friday, March 1, 7:30 pm
Where: Auditorium, National Soybean Research Center, 1101 W. Peabody, Champaign

Ferns Identification Workshop

When: Saturday, January 26, 2002, from 9:00 until about noon
Where: Illinois Natural History Survey
Who: Join us as Dave Ketzner from the Illinois Natural History Survey teaches us how to identify ferns of Illinois. The workshop will take place at the Contact Connie Carroll (H: 352-4731, W: 244-7741) for more information. Space is limited so please call to reserve your place.

Other Announcements

For TNC/PGV Steering Committee meeting times call or contact Mary Ann Feist at 244-6858 or mfeist@inhs.uiuc.edu.

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A few *Proceedings of the Fifth Central Illinois Prairie Conference* are still available for \$10. To purchase a copy send a check to Grand Prairie Friends, PO Box 36, Urbana, IL 61803.
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Beginning with this issue Ray Meredith takes over as editor of *A Prairie Rendezvous*. Many thanks to Doug Chien who developed the joint Grand Prairie Friends/Prairie Grove Volunteers newsletter with Alf Siewers and served as its managing editor for three years.

BOOK REVIEW

PRAIRIE RECONSTRUCTION

Brenda Molano-Flores and Mary Ann Feist

CARL KURTZ. A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PRAIRIE RECONSTRUCTION. UNIVERSITY OF IOWA PRESS, 2001. 57 PAGES. (WWW.IOWA.EDU/LIOWAPRESS)

Prairie restoration potentially provides the only way prairies will be remembered in the Midwest. However, since most of it has been destroyed, restoring it is difficult. Prairie restorationists have been trying to recreate this habitat as best they can, with the general public often leading the way. It is for this group that Carl Kurtz has written his book, *A Practical Guide to Prairie Reconstruction*, a basic how-to book on prairie restoration.

Most of the subjects are complex, covering issues ranging from the history of prairies to site selection, seed sources, seeding, and management. Unfortunately, Kurtz does not go into much in-depth discussion about any of them. Each chapter is only two to three pages long, and, though the author does provide some useful information, he leaves us with more questions. For example, he recommends having an even distribution of prairie species but provides no explanation for this. As biologists, we were curious why the author thinks that having an even distribution of every species is better than clumped or random distributions. He also provides a lot of anecdotal information but very little information based in scientific experimentation. This seems to be a common problem in the area of prairie restoration. However, since anecdotal information is often the only information available, perhaps rather than a criticism of the author this is a call to researchers.

There were several things we liked about this book. The author made a good point about the role of diversity in prairies and provided useful suggestions on how to achieve this. Restorations should not only be grasses and a handful of forbs, but a blend of forbs and grasses. Also, the last chapter, which is in a question and answer format, was very informative. He provided answers to ten of the most commonly asked questions concerning prairie restoration, such as "Will prairie plants invade neighboring crop fields?" and "Can the use of herbicide aid in the establishment process?" In addition, the conservation guidelines from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the list of seed sources and services found at the end of the book are very useful. Everyone involved in restoration and management should know and practice TNC's conservation guidelines.

Finally, although this book addresses restoration in Iowa, most of the book's recommendations can be applied to Illinois. For people that would like to start a prairie restoration, this book will provide a basic, and we would like to emphasize *basic*, overview of how to do prairie restoration and some of the problems that they might confront. Once you are done reading this book you may want to check a local source such as *Prairie Establishment and Landscaping* by William E. McClain or a more comprehensive source such as the *Tallgrass Restoration Handbook* edited by Stephen Packard and Cornelia F. Mutel.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS YEAR'S WORKDAY TURNOUTS!

By *Mary Ann Feist*

REGIONAL STEWARD (PRAIRIE GROVE VOLUNTEERS)

On average, the number of volunteers turning out for workdays this year was greater than in the past several of years! I received detailed reports for about twelve of this years workdays. The average number of people attending these workdays was 9. There were several workdays where the number of volunteers reached into the double digits. Fifteen people turned out to help steward Connie Carroll cut sandbar willow, gray dogwood, and smooth sumac out at Paxton Railroad Prairie. Thirteen people met up with steward Rick Larimore for a hike through Horseshoe Bottoms and twelve people, including six girl scouts, helped steward Dan Busemeyer pull garlic mustard at Middle Fork Bluffs. Thanks to everyone who turned out to help! Check out the calendar in this newsletter for a few more opportunities to volunteer this year. Bundle up and join us to cut brush at Busey Woods, Loda, or Middle Fork Bluffs. Or if you prefer to stay warm, come to the Survey greenhouse and help us transplant seedlings.

BUR OAKS DONATED *IN MEMORIAM*

Grand Prairie Friends and Prairie Grove Volunteers (as well as individuals) have donated bur oaks to the Vermilion County Conservation District Foundation in memory of Robert Westfall, husband of Doris Westfall. The trees will be planted in the Forest Glen Savanna. Doris, a pioneer in prairie restoration in east-central Illinois, is a greatly respected member of the conservation community. Considering her amazing accomplishment of creating a prairie at Forest Glen that has been dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve, native oaks adjacent to that site seem a fitting memorial for Bob.

A Prairie Rendezvous
PO Box 36
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In this issue...

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... and more

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