

ILLINOIS WILDLIFE PRESERVATION FUND

SMALL PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Project Title: Summer Internship Program in Natural Areas Management
Grant Number: 03-021W

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Category: Education

Introduction:

Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois (GPF) is a not-for-profit organization that promotes tallgrass prairie preservation, restoration and education in east-central Illinois. GPF is responsible for the stewardship of about 80 acres of remnant prairie and 40 acres of restored prairie, all of which are biologically valuable and are open to the public. To promote its mission, GPF has sponsored a summer internship program for college students interested in learning about natural areas management in central Illinois. Since 1994, GPF has educated over 14 students in plant identification, environmental education training, natural resources management, and hands-on stewardship practices. The internship program has also evolved over the years to include a broad educational component that introduces students to federal, state, county and grassroots organizations that are involved in natural area management. Many organizations and individuals volunteer their time and energy to provide educational activities for the GPF interns. This program has expanded the conservation work that GPF does in the region by supplementing the management efforts of local volunteers.

The goals of the internship program include but are not limited to:

1. Learning about tallgrass prairie in Illinois;
2. Identification of native and weedy plants of the prairie;
3. Learning current prairie management and restoration techniques from professional and volunteer land managers;
4. Coordination with GPF site stewards to perform needed management activities;
5. Removal of exotic and woody vegetation from GPF sites;
6. Gaining experience with hands-on natural lands management;
7. Learning to assist and plan GPF activities, site visits, and work days;
8. Maintenance of local school prairie gardens;
9. Contributing to the management database for GPF sites;

Materials and Methods:

Applications for the internship are accepted from 15 January to 15 March. An internship subcommittee (consisting of GPF Board of Directors members) selects candidates to fill either a single full-time position or two half-time positions. Formal contracts are drawn up between each intern and GPF. Interns must provide their own auto and health insurance, but are covered under GPF's liability insurance while working on any GPF site. All interns are required to obtain a pesticide applicator license from the Illinois Department of Agriculture to safely apply herbicides at managed sites.

The internship program is a 90-day commitment from June 1 to August 31. Interns are given a GPF Intern Manual which consists of background information about GPF, lists of GPF sites and stewards, management needs at each site, general position information, internship goals, a calendar, and reporting forms. Two books, Newcomb's Wildflower Guide and The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook are given to each intern. They are also allowed to borrow a copy of DeLorme's Illinois Atlas & Gazetteer.

Interns are paid a monthly stipend based on the hours of work they complete, and they are reimbursed for vehicle mileage. Work includes management activities at prairie sites and educational activities. Interns must turn in a time sheet every two weeks reporting hours worked, mileage driven, sites visited, and work performed. The GPF Treasurer issues monthly paychecks with deductions made according to federal and state regulations when these reports are approved. ??

GPF is based in Urbana, and manages natural areas in Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties (see Figure 1). Interns are required to perform management work at sites as determined by site stewards and GPF Board of Directors. Educational components of the internship include many hours of time with volunteers from organizations throughout the state, including The Nature Conservancy, University of Illinois, Parkland College, IL Department of Natural Resources, IL Natural History Survey, Champaign County Forest Preserve District, and Urbana Park District. Through these organizations, interns are exposed to a wide variety of management and educational perspectives that exist within the prairie conservation community.

Results:

Two interns were selected for 2002: Valerie Sivicek and Robert Scott. The GPF Board of Directors decided to hire each on a half-time basis, i.e. 20 hours per week.

Much of Valerie and Rob's stewardship work this summer included removing exotic invasive species from two of the region's best prairie remnants. Combined they spent almost 120 hours pulling wild parsnip, sweet clover, Queen Anne's lace, and teasel from Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve and Prospect Cemetery Nature Preserve (Table 1). Other sites included Buffalo Trace Prairie reconstruction north of

Mahomet, Meadowbrook Park Prairie reconstruction in Urbana, Pelleville Cemetery Prairie near Rankin, Paxton Railroad Prairie, Windsor Road Prairie reconstruction in Champaign, and Shortline Railroad Prairie. The last site, Shortline, is a six-acre railroad prairie remnant in Champaign County between the towns of Gifford and Penfield owned by GPF.

Rob and Valerie spent about 18 hours managing a few local school prairie gardens in Urbana and Champaign. These gardens, located mostly at elementary schools, are used to teach students about native plants of the prairie. The interns pulled non-native weeds and planted new species at some sites.

Educational opportunities included spending time with local prairie stewards and professional land managers. Rob spent a day with Eric Smith, IDNR Heritage Biologist, assisting with grassland bird surveys and eradicating teasel on public land. Rob was able to spend time with John Taft, plant ecologist at the Illinois Natural History, assisting with quantitative plant sampling at Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve. Both Rob and Valerie spent a day with Brenda Molano-Flores, plant ecologist at the Illinois Natural History, sampling rattlesnake master populations at prairie remnants for a plant-insect interaction study. Valerie toured sites with Rick Larimore, botanist at the Illinois Natural History Survey, to learn about fire ecology. The interns learned how to identify grass species from Dave Ketzner, botanist at the Illinois Natural History Survey. Rob and Valerie also assisted CTAP botanists with field sampling work at Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve in Westchester, Illinois. Chris Hauser and Paul Tessene, botanists from the Illinois Natural History Survey, also toured the interns to various sites to teach them native and weedy plant identification.

Grand Prairie Friends maintains records of management performed at GPF's prairie sites (along with The Nature Conservancy's Prairie Grove Volunteers). Rob and Valerie kept detailed records of their work activities, which GPF will use as part of its ongoing management database.

Grand Prairie Friends paid \$4024.00 to the interns over the course of the summer (including the costs of books and intern manuals) and reimbursed them \$600.00 for mileage driven to sites. (Table 2.)

Table 1. Summary of hours worked by Grand Prairie Friends summer 2002 interns including major stewardship tasks performed at each prairie site. Hours are summed from each intern and include driving time to and from site. Not all hours are included in this table.

Site or Activity	Hours	Major Tasks
Buffalo Trace Prairie (CCFPD)*	17.5	tour w/ Phil Hult, pull sweetclover
Fairchild Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve (VCCD)	4	participated in workday pulling invasives
Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve (TNC) Taft	70.5	remove sweet clover, parsnip, teasel; meet w/ John
Meadowbrook Park Prairie (UPD)*	10	remove sweet clover; tour site w/ Bob Vaiden
Middlefork Rest Area (IDNR)	6	cut and herbicide honeysuckle
Paxton Rail Road Prairie Carroll	28.5	remove sweet clover, parsnip; toured site w/ Connie
Pelleville Cemetery Prairie lilies; toured site with Paul Tessene, Chris Hauser	15	remove parsnip, sweet clover, honeysuckle, day
Prospect Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve invasive woody plants	48.5	remove sweet clover, parsnip, Queen Anne's lace,
Shortline Rail Road Prairie (GPF) plants; participated in workday with Paul Marcum	73	remove sweet clover, parsnip, invasive woody
Windfall Prairie Nature Preserve(VCCD) site with Dave Ketzner	5	participated in workday pulling invasives; toured
Windsor Road Prairie plants; toured site w/ Ruth Green	35.5	remove sweet clover, hemlock, invasive woody
School Prairie Gardens	17.5	remove weeds, plant new species, mulch
Educational activities Eric Smith, John Taft, Brenda Molano-Flores	66	meetings with Jamie Ellis, Dave Ketzner, Phil Hult,

*Ownership is indicated in parentheses: CCFPD = Champaign County Forest Preserve District, TNC = The Nature Conservancy, UPD = Urbana Park District, IDNR = Illinois Department of Natural Resources, GPF = Grand Prairie Friends, VCCD = Vermilion County Conservation District

Table 2. Detailed Budget of Expenditures

Item Description	Unit Cost	Units	Total Cost
Labor			
Intern Stipend	\$8. ⁰⁰	hours	\$3,912.00
	Labor Subtotal:		\$3,912.00
Travel			
Intern Travel (estimated maximum for gas, insurance, and mileage based on past three summers expenses)	\$300.00	2	\$600.00
	Travel Subtotal:		\$600.00
Equipment			
Books- set of 3+ manual	\$47.00	2	\$94.00
	Equipment Subtotal:		\$94.00
Commodities			
	Commodities Subtotal:		\$18.00
	Project Total:		<u>\$4,624.00</u>

Discussion/ Summary:

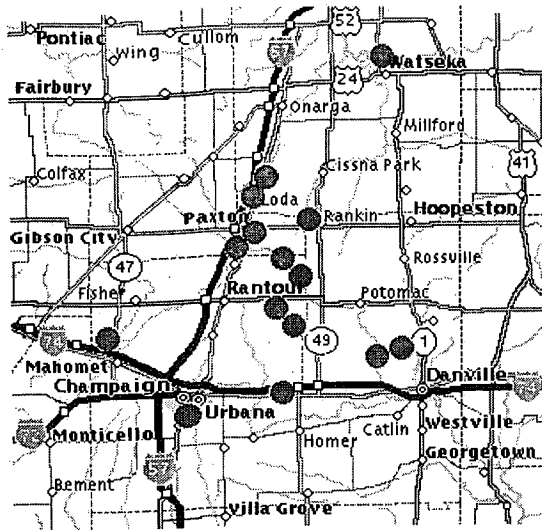
Combined, Rob Scott and Valerie Sivicek provided approximately 310 hours of management and stewardship at GPF's prairie sites in east-central Illinois. As well, the interns received over 60 hours of educational opportunities with experts in natural areas management. Valerie continues her prairie restoration efforts as a student at the University of Illinois and as a leader of Red Bison, the student prairie conservation group on campus. Rob works as an instructor for The School for Designing a Society in Urbana where he teaches about permaculture and promotes the planting of perennial, edible gardens.

The GPF internship program is a very successful, though small, program. Every summer GPF hopes to provide effective management to our small but ecologically valuable prairie remnants. GPF also hopes to provide an education about natural areas management for the next generation of prairie conservationists. The hands-on internship gives interns the experience to learn what management is really about and how it is accomplished. Interns get to work with active land managers and conservationists, to learn useful skills to make them better managers, to make contacts throughout the community, region, and state, and to make a contribution to active prairie management.

Through the Grand Prairie Friends internship program Rob and Valerie contributed greatly to the management of GPF sites, and they are continuing to contribute to the conservation community. Such success would not be possible without funding from the IDNR Wildlife Preservation Fund.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF PROJECT AREA

Map courtesy of Chris Hauser, 2001



- Bonnie's Prairie Nature Preserve
- Loda Railroad Prairie
- Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
- Pellville Cemetery Prairie
- Prospect Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
- Paxton Railroad Prairie
- Middle Fork Wetland Restoration
- Tomlinson Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
- Shortline Railroad Prairie
- Welles Cemetery Prairie
- Fairchild Cemetery Savanna Nature Preserve
- Windfall Prairie Nature Preserve
- Buffalo Trace Prairie Reconstruction
- Prairie Propagation Garden
- Windsor Road Prairie Reconstruction

FIGURE 2: VALERIE AND VOLUNTEER DURING WORKDAY AT SHORTLINE PRAIRIE

Photo courtesy of Dan Busemeyer, 2002



FIGURE 3: WORKDAY AT SHORTLINE PRAIRIE CONDUCTED BY INTERNS

Photo courtesy of Dan Busemeyer, 2002



FIGURE 4: WORKDAY AT SHORTLINE PRAIRIE CONDUCTED BY INTERNS

Photo courtesy of Dan Busemeyer, 2002



FIGURE 5: WORKDAY AT LODA PRAIRIE

Photo courtesy of Dan Busemeyer, 2002



FIGURE 6: CONTROLLED BURNING AT PELLVILLE CEMETARY PRAIRIE

Photo courtesy of Dan Busemeyer, 2002



GPF SITES SUMMARY 2002

This is a site-by-site listing of the work I did, often in tandem with co-intern Valerie Sivicek, on the GPF sites during the 2002 growing season. This summary was culled from the extensive notes I took on the GPF internship, which I considered primarily an education internship, not a labor internship. I reduced 33 typewritten pages of educational notes to the following 2 page labor summary. I included those sites which we visited but never worked on; traces of an obsessive notetaker. Rob Scott, September 2002.

Bonnie's Prairie

8/22/02: We toured the site with Jamie

Buffalo Trace Prairie

7/29/02: I toured the site with Phil Hult.

7/31/02: I removed sweetclover.

8/3/02: I finished removing the sweet clover in the area which Phil Hult had specified.

Busey Woods

7/11/02: Valerie and I delivered plants for an upcoming transplanting session.

I Building, NH Greenhouse, shadehouse:

6/10/02: I helped move trays of plants from the Natural History greenhouse to a shadehouse on campus.

6/24/02: We moved some plants from the greenhouse to the shadehouse.

Loda Cemetary Prairie

6/3/02: We toured the site with Chris Hauser.

6/9/02: I removed sweetclover and parsnip.

6/19/02: Valerie and I removed Sweet Clover.

6/22/02: Valerie and I removed Sweet Clover.

7/3/02: I removed sweetclover.

7/5/02: I removed sweetclover.

7/7/02: I removed sweetclover.

7/14/02: I removed sweetclover and set up bag-a-bug traps.

7/17/02: Valerie and I removed sweetclover.

7/18/02: Valerie and I removed sweetclover.

I changed the bag-a-bug bags, which were overflowing with Japanese Beetles.

7/21/02: I changed the bag-a-bug bags, some of which were bursting open at the seams, again.

I noted only one sweetclover plant growing in the entire site.

I shifted to removing teasel.

7/26/02: I removed the bag-a-bug traps -- they were only half full, and all the bugs inside were dead.

8/11/02: I applied glyphosate to cut Teasels.

8/20/02: We sampled the *Eryginum yuccifolium* populations with Brenda Milano Flores.

Meadowbrook Park

6/25/02: We pulled sweetclover with Bob Vaiden

6/29/02: I pulled sweetclover with Bob Vaiden

9/3/02: We toured the site with Dave Ketzner, identifying grasses.

Middlefork River Forest Preserve

6/3/02: We found the site with Chris Hauser, didn't have much time to tour there.

6/11/02: I attended a "teachers workshop" organized by Sarah Livesay featuring Ken Robertson.

I asked around: "does anyone want the GPF interns to work on the prairie here?" No definitive answer.

6/25/02: We toured the site with Paul Tessene

8/20/02: We sampled the *Eryginum yuccifolium* populations with Brenda Milano Flores.

Pelville Prairie

6/3/02: We toured the site briefly with Chris Hauser.

6/25/02: We toured the site with Paul Tessene

8/20/02: We sampled the *Eryginum yuccifolium* populations with Brenda Milano Flores.

8/24/02: I removed **seedy** sweetclover and parsnip.
8/26/02: I removed **honeysuckle**.

Paxton RR Prairie

6/3/02: We toured **the** site with Chris Hauser.
8/10/02: I removed **seedy** sweetclover and parsnip.
8/18/02: I removed **parsnip** and sweetclover.

Phil Hult's place

7/22/02: I toured the **site** with Phil.
7/29/02: I finished the **tour** with Phil.

Prospect Road Prairie

6/3/02: We toured **the** site with Chris Hauser.
6/7/02: Valerie removed Parsnip; I removed Asparagus.
7/20/02: I removed **whatever** sweetclover I could find as well as a bit of the Queen Anne's Lace.
7/26/02: I removed a **some** straggler sweetclover plants.
8/9/02: Valerie and I cut trees and removed black raspberry.
8/20/02: We sampled **the** *Eryginum yuccifolium* populations with Brenda Milano Flores.

School Prairies

6/11/02: Valerie showed me the School prairies, because I had missed the tour with Ruth Green.
6/18/02: Valerie and I removed various weeds from Dr. Howard School, King School, and Washington School.
6/23/02: I removed Wild Strawberries, as was requested by Ruth Green, from Dr. Howard School.

Short Line Prairie

6/3/02: We found the site with Chris Hauser, didn't have much time to tour there.
6/25/02: We toured the site with Paul Tessene.
7/24/02: Valerie removed Parsnip; I removed sweetclover.
7/26/02: I removed sweetclover.
7/28/02: I removed sweetclover and black raspberry.
8/3/02: I removed sweetclover, black raspberry and blackberry.
8/4/02: I removed sweetclover, black raspberry and blackberry.
8/7/02: Valerie and I removed sweetclover.
8/17/02: I removed sweetclover.

Springfield USDA

6/20/02: I was licensed as a Pesticide Applicator.

Tomlinson Cemetary

6/3/02: We found the site with Chris Hauser, didn't have much time to tour there.

Windsor Road Prairie

6/8/02: Valerie removed Sweet Clover.
I mowed a 10 foot strip next to the road, and pulled Sweet Clover, Water Purslane, and (mainly) Poison Hemlock.

I returned in the evening to remove a 15' tall White Birch, and remove some more Hemlock.

6/10/02: I removed Poison Hemlock and Sweet Clover
6/27/02: I removed sweetclover, and applied 2-4D to Crown Vetch.
6/30/02: I removed sweetclover.
7/11/02: I removed sweetclover.
7/18/02: I removed sweetclover and a solitary stand of hemlock.
8/11/02: I removed sweetclover -- almost completing the removal of sweetclover on the South side.
8/13/02: I removed sweet clover and reed canary grass.

Wolf Road Prairie (Westchester, IL)

8/14/02: I toured the site with Jamie and CTAP folks.