
ParkLands Foundation

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www.parklandsfoundation.org



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**Newsletter
December 2013 -
January 2014**

ParkLands Loses a Dedicated Friend



Tribute to Dave Merwin

Former ParkLands Director Davis U. Merwin died October 28. The *Pantagraph* obituary mentions his ParkLands service; this excerpt provides insight into why he was a loyal supporter of our organization: "...Mr. Merwin's primary interests revolved around nature and the outdoors. He made annual fishing, camping and river rafting excursions to Alaska in many years and fished for Atlantic salmon in Iceland, Norway, Canada, Alaska and Russia. He was a member of the Cornell Laboratory for Ornithology President's Club and other nature organizations. He was an avid hunter, fisherman and conservationist, and his love of 'hook and release' fishing continued late into his life...."

Dave was the nephew of ParkLands founder Loring Merwin, whom he succeeded as *Pantagraph* publisher after Loring's untimely death. Our Board decided to have a major fund drive in 1984 to renew the early zeal of the Foundation. I was the chairman, but felt we had no one on the Board to pursue the big donors whose support we needed. Dave had given generous donations, but that had been the extent of his support. I asked him if he would be "Special Gifts Chair," which he agreed to do. His extraordinary ability to raise money resulted in the wonderful success of the drive. My recollection is that 20% of the donors gave 75% of the total raised--almost all due to Dave's efforts. The revived energy, support, and stature of ParkLands generated by that drive carried us for many years, arguably down to the present. Dave and his foundation continued generous annual gifts thereafter.

Those who love ParkLands are deeply in Dave's debt.

Guy Fraker



Merwin Preserve Prairie Serves as a Living Laboratory



ParkLands is pleased to call a Distinguished Emeritus University Professor one of its own. That would be prairie restoration ecologist Roger C. Anderson. His long devotion to ParkLands as a vol-

unteer board member, stewardship committee chair and member, seed sower and weed whacker was recognized in 2012 when he was elected an honorary board member.

His academic professional interests have led him to conduct research on the 25-acre Merwin Preserve prairie as well as other ParkLands tracts over the years.

Not long after he helped sow locally collected native seed (and a bit purchased commercially) at Merwin in 1988, he — aided by ISU graduate and undergraduate biology majors — began controlled experiments on the fledgling prairie restoration.

One of these long-term projects was published in the academic journal *Restoration Ecology* (citation below). What follows is a layperson's attempt to summarize the findings of a two-pronged effort to determine the effect of reduced deer browsing and success in restoring the Merwin prairie.

The researchers sampled a total of 23 native prairie species in marked-out plots in three years: 1992, 1999 and 2005. Each year the number of species sampled increased by about three species.

Increased native prairie plants

The proportion of native prairie species to all species counted increased from 69 percent in 1992 to 90 percent and 95 percent in 1999 and 2005, respectively.

Indicators of high quality prairie increased over the three years of sampling. Purple coneflower, purple prairie clover, and rattlesnake master had higher frequencies in 2005, while yellow coneflower (an early-to mid-successional prairie species) declined. Several weed species also declined between 1992 and 1999 including black medic, smooth brome, common ragweed and dandelion. Smooth brome, an introduced exotic cool season grass, declined from 33.3 percent in 1992 to 0 percent in the

2005 sample. [You may issue a small cheer here.]

That's the good news. The lesson learned for future restorations is that the abundance of prairie species increased over time but species richness was limited by the number of species initially sown on the restored site.

Reduced deer browsing helps prairie thrive

The study also monitored deer browsing on two prairie forbs (rosinweed and stiff goldenrod) before hunting (1992) and after hunting (1999, 2005).

In 1994 the ParkLands Board decided hunting should be allowed after herds of more than 50 deer were observed on the site and browsing damage was becoming a troublesome concern.

Initially, members of the board supervised the hunt but after about five years hunters largely assumed this responsibility themselves. Local hunters have removed only female deer from the site during the state's designated hunting season.

The number of deer removed annually between 2001 and 2005 was between 22 and 25, down from a peak harvest of 46 animals in 1998.

Interestingly, the findings of the three-year study indicate that at high or low deer density, browsing decreases the diversity of prairie forbs. At intermediate browsing intensities, forb diversity is maximized.

Gretchen Monti

ParkLands Deer Hunting Schedule

In Illinois, the dates of the hunting deer with firearms seasons vary every year depending upon when Thanksgiving occurs.

The first hunting season occurs on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday before Thanksgiving and the second season occurs two weeks later. This year the first season was Nov. 22-24.

The second season is a four day season (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday); however ParkLands allows hunting only during the first two days of this season: December 5 and 6 this year.

Please be aware if you are thinking of hiking our properties in early December.

Roger C. Anderson, Brad Dorick, Teresa Crispino, "Impacts of Initial Species Richness and Deer Browsing on the Quality of Restored Prairie in Central Illinois", *Restoration Ecology*, June 2007, V. 25:issue 2.

Meet the New Board Members

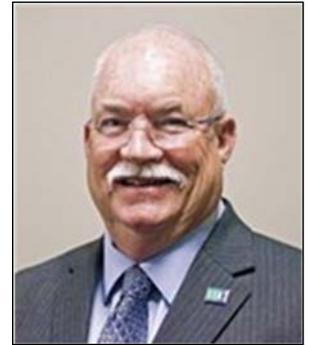
I am currently the Interim CEO of the Economic Development Council of Bloomington-Normal and the McLean County Area. I joined the EDC in September 2012 after a 36-year career at Illinois State University.

I served as Director of Grounds for the 490 acre ISU campus. During my time at Illinois State the department was awarded 10 national and 4 local awards for its beauty and management. *Landscape Management* magazine named me one of the Top 10 Grounds Professionals in the U. S. I initiated a number of sustainable programs including the installation of rain gardens, bio-swales and Ultra-Thin White Topping Permeable concrete (over existing asphalt) to improve storm water management in parking lots. I also introduced the first community-wide food waste composting program that has diverted millions of pounds of food waste from the local landfill.

My wife Connie and I live in Hudson, not all that far from ParkLands properties. We have two children, Brandon and Jamie.

I have been involved in government relations at all levels for many years and presently handle investor relations and government affairs for the EDC. I also am the Hudson Township Supervisor.

Some of my recent community service activities include: Illinois Green Business Association Board of Directors, McLean County Chamber of Commerce Board, ISU Redbird Pride Committee and President of the Kuchan Foundation.



Mike O'Grady



Finn Amble

With a name like mine, you will surely have questions which I answer all the time. The name is Norwegian and all of my family is from Norway where nature is prized highly and enjoyed regularly. Having been born in San Diego, your next question is likely why am I here. While training at the Mayo Clinic, I fell in love with Midwestern patients. Though liking Minnesota quite a bit and even being Norwegian-American, I tell people that "Snow in May should be illegal..." I also tell my friends across the country how amazing the people here are and that this collective community "is like Mayberry on steroids."

Eighteen years ago, I found myself living across from the Moon Tract. Neighbors got me involved in working on this quite small but very precious jewel in the ParkLands custody. Those were the same neighbors I would later drag out to cut invasives on a regular basis. Then, the next day, I would invariably prescribe them Cortisone for their poison oak...

Along the way, I became impressed with the ParkLands organization and mission. First Guy, then Matt, asked me to be on the board but it wasn't good timing. When Don asked again, I figured I'd better say yes as it might be the last invitation. Besides, Don has a national audience and it would be embarrassing to be a test subject for a new yet mysterious herbicide.

It was with Mary Horgan's article in the Parklands mailer that I learned about the inaugural Master Naturalist course. I took it and it has been the single best course I have ever known of. And that was when I began to fully appreciate what you all do and have been doing for years with unbelievable vision, zest and members. To take the Mackinaw and turn it into the single best environmental stream/river in the state is exceptional. You are to be warmly and regularly congratulated. Thank you sincerely for the honor to serve among stellar individuals who know so much more than myself. I'll try to catch up 😊



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Dan Deneen reports that beavers are at work in Letcher Basin and North Wyatt's Ford. As of early November, no dams were yet to be constructed.

Out and About

Preserves Closed

Deer Management Hunt
Thurs., Fri.
Dec. 5-6

Invasives Control

Fri., Dec. 20, 9 am
Moon Tract
Workdays Leader:
Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065
shoemaj@hotmail.com

"From Lawn to Garden"

Mon., Jan. 13, 7 pm
Location TBA
Matt Hickman &
Jack Pfaffman
Ill. Prairie Wild Ones
[Wildones.org/chapters/
ilprairie](http://Wildones.org/chapters/ilprairie)

NOTE: Work dates are subject to change. Join Jason's e-mail list or log on to

Have a story idea or want to submit an article or photo for the newsletter? Contact editor Gretchen Monti at 309-829-2450 or gretchenmonti@gmail.com.