

The Tallgrass Journal

Goose Lake Prairie Partners, 5010 N. Jugtown Road, Morris, IL 60450

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Making Amends with Box Turtles by Janet Marinelli

Gardeners can cultivate safe havens for the declining reptiles—and get rid of some troublesome pests in the process

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN FROM THE START that I was in for a close encounter of the reptilian kind. From my first spring on Shelter Island, a sleepy little place off eastern Long Island, New York, homemade “Box Turtle X’ing” signs sprouted mysteriously along roadsides as soon as the shadbush began to bloom. During the next decade, I’d occasionally see one of the peaceful little beasts chomping on a plump mushroom while plodding deliberately across my moss lawn.

Then one summer morning not long ago, an eastern box turtle lumbered through my butterfly meadow, made its way to the middle of my patio and stopped dead in its tracks. It extended its long reptilian neck and proceeded to look carefully from side to side. After what seemed like ages, it continued across the patio to the edge of the woods and disappeared in the pine needle duff.

Suddenly it dawned on me: The turtle was looking for my bog garden! A few weeks earlier, to make more room for barbecues, I had expanded my patio. In the process, I had removed the little bog I’d created earlier between the house and patio to attract butterflies with moisture-loving wildflowers.



GLP Park Photo

Since that day, in hopes of making amends, I’ve made it my business to find out what box turtles like to eat, where they like to siesta on a hot summer day and how these creatures—among the longest-lived vertebrates—make it through the winter. I’ve done my penance in the library, reading scientific tomes on box turtle fecal contents and other engrossing subjects. I’ve learned not only that we gardeners can help ease the plight of box turtles, which are gradually disappearing from landscapes across North America, but that they have a lot to offer us in return—beyond the usual bromides about the virtues of patience and perseverance.

Four species are native to North America. The eastern box turtle, Florida box turtle, Gulf Coast box turtle and three-toed box turtle are all subspecies of *Terrapene carolina*. The ornate box turtle, *Terrapene ornata*, ranges primarily in the prairies and Southwest; the spotted box turtle, *Terrapene nelsoni*, is native to the Sonoran Desert; and the Coahuilan box turtle, *Terrapene coahuila*, the only truly aquatic species, lives just in a single valley in Mexico’s Chihuahuan Desert.

Eastern box turtles are found throughout much of eastern North America. They are

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Park Notes

The prairie looks beautiful. Our park staff is keeping the visitor areas ready, so why not plan an outing? There are many trails to choose from according to the length of trail you want to walk.

The staff cautions you to bring bug spray, watch for ticks, and be prepared for mosquitoes. The wet spring has enabled propagation of the species so come prepared.

Good walking shoes, a hat and a bit of water are a must. Yes you may bring the dog for a walk also, but remember to pick up after him/her and when you return from the prairie fields, check your pets as well as yourself.

Stay informed by checking the website. <http://gooselakeprairie.org>

Calendar of Events

Call the park desk for more information on any of our activities 815-942-2899

June 2–28th Annual Cabin Festival. Fun for the entire family! See Page 4.

From April through August–Guided Wagon Rides and Walks. See Page 5.

Visit our Butterfly Barn

Learn more about the beautiful Prairie Plants

If you are a wildflower enthusiast, you need to know that in the Park Butterfly Barn we have identified 44 blooming plants with plant markers. The signs have been refreshed and are ready for your use already this spring. In the 2011 season we completely removed all the vegetation from the barn and began a new planting program in the barn.

Plants on the list marked with (A) should bloom in April.



Meadow Anemone caught in the camera last year by J. Giacone.

GLPSNA BUTTERFLY BARN PLANT LIST

Left Side - North		South - Right side	
	Great Blue Lobelia	Yellow Coneflower	
		Culver's Root	
	Hoary Vervain	Black-eyed Susan	
	Sweet Black-eyed Susan	Bergamot, Wild	
	Illinois Sensitive Plant	Germander	
	Yarrow, Common	Ironweed, Common	
	Lead Plant	Tall Coreopsis	
	(A) Golden Alexander	Illinois Tick Trefoil	
	Beards Tongue Foxglove	Quinine, Wild	
	Blue Vervain	Obedient Plant	
	Cinquefoil, Common	Deptford Pink	
	(A) Blue Phlox	Rattlesnake Master	
	(A) Purple Trillium	Shooting Star (A)	
	Nodding Wild Onions	Bouncing Bet	
	Showy Tick-Trefoil	Blue Indigo	
	Smooth Blue Aster	Cream Wild Indigo	
	Prairie Coreopsis	Turk's Cap Lily	
	Slender Mountain Mint	Rough Blazing Star	
	New England Aster	Blazing Star, Prairie	
	White Indigo	Blue Flag Iris	
	Prairie Cinquefoil, Tall	Spiderwort, Common	

(A) - BLOOMING IN APRIL

Keep the **Prairie Partners Gift Shop** in mind when you visit our center...

Many Nature Books are available, some Jewelry items, Handmade Leather Pouches, Clothing & Hats commemorating the Prairie Park and Hand-woven Rag Rugs.



\$4.00 each

Making Amends with Box Turtles by Janet Marinelli (Cont. from page 1)

appealing animals with brightly patterned shells, each one a unique design of yellow to orange splotches, blotches, streaks and dabs on a dark background. Their slow, lumbering gait long ago led the Delaware Indians to call them “sticky heels.” Although eggs and hatchlings are often eaten by raccoons and

Fact: Delayed Reproduction—Female box turtles can store sperm from a single mating for as long as four years, allowing them to produce eggs for several seasons.

foxes, any box turtle that survives the juvenile stages has a shot at living

longer than some humans—assuming it doesn't get crushed by a car or mangled by a lawn mower.

The reptiles' version of turtle heaven includes shady woods with a thick layer of leaf litter and downed branches in which to hang out and sunny areas for basking. They dig out of their overwintering sites in late March or April and are active until October. In spring and summer, they forage, gain weight, bump (literally) into mates and lay eggs. They spend nights concealed in a form, a shallow depression in soil or leaf litter. They not only sleep and hibernate in the litter, but also tunnel through it, blazing trails along the forest floor.

Scientists who have closely examined the digestive-tract contents of eastern box turtles believe the creatures come about as close as it gets to the classic definition of an omnivore. The reptiles will eat almost anything that crosses their path, including—gardeners take note—insect pests, snails and slugs.

All this leads me to conclude that my friendly box turtle came to my bog garden often to dine on juicy slugs, and maybe to cool its sticky heels on sultry summer days. It might have been perplexed (in a reptilian sort of way) by the fact that one of its favorite places had disappeared; scientists believe box turtles have good memories for choice feeding and resting spots.

Although much is known about seed dispersal by birds and mammals, little is known about saurochory—the dispersal of seeds by reptiles. But University of Florida ecologist C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr., who has written a definitive book about North American box turtles, maintains that “eastern box turtles are also important agents of seed dispersal,” moving seeds throughout the forest. What's more, studies have demonstrated that passage through a box turtle's gut increases seed germination rates for a number of plants, including mayapple, black cherry, summer grape, pokeweed and Jack-in-the-pulpit. Black huckleberry, elderberry, mulberry, blackberry, American persimmon and frost grape also serve up fleshy fruits favored by the reptiles.

Sadly, like many other wild animals, box turtles increasingly find themselves marooned in a sea of suburbs. Populations of the reptiles in fragmented habitats may be composed mostly of seniors or nonreproducing adults, putting those groups on long, slow slides toward extinction. Habitat loss

and fragmentation are not the only threats. Although they're protected by state and international regulations, box turtles often are stolen from the wild by poachers, who sell the animals in the pet trade. Road kills reduce turtle numbers even more.

“Population declines have been documented in many states across the box turtle's range,” says Lori Erb, turtle conservation biologist with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. That decline, reports IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, “probably exceeds 30 percent over three generations.”

Fortunately, **gardeners can play a role in nurturing box turtles**. Here are a few actions to consider:

- **Invite box turtles into your garden** by cultivating a plant species native to your region that provide favorite turtle fruits. In sunny areas, encourage dense clusters of brambles and let the ripened berries fall. Choose species that fruit at different times during the season. (But be aware that the turtles have a well-known penchant for raiding vegetable gardens, so erect a small barrier.)

- Terrestrial box turtles are poor swimmers, so **be sure your pool is properly fenced in**.

- **Leave large, continuous areas of natural leaf litter mulch beneath trees** on your property so the turtles can remain camouflaged and forage for prey. To provide places where the animals can pass the night or overwinter, build brush piles on top of soft, loose soil by layering branches and leaf litter.

- **Any moist area, whether rain garden or damp forest depression, will help turtles survive** the hottest parts of the day.

- **Provide a large, and preferably isolated, clearing**. Box turtles use such areas for traveling, mating and basking. They also lay their eggs in sunny spots.

- **Locate all turtle habitat as far as possible from deadly roadways**. If you do see a box turtle crossing a street, the best thing to do is to move it carefully to the side of the road, pointed in the direction it was heading.

- **Before mowing, walk the area in search of turtles**. Mow on a dry day, at midday, when turtles are less likely to be out and about.

New York writer Janet Marinelli's most recent book is *The Climate Conscious Gardener*. Visit www.janetmarinelli.com. This article is reprinted from the April/May 2012 edition of *National Wildlife*. © National Wildlife Federation, 2012. To learn more visit <http://www.nwf.org>



28th Annual Cabin Festival



GOOSE LAKE PRAIRIE STATE NATURAL AREA

Saturday June 2, 2012
10:00 am to 3:00 pm



Join us for the 28th annual Cabin Festival; a day celebrating pioneer living in the 1800s on the prairie. Re-enactors in period dress will demonstrate and teach throughout the day. A wagon ride will be available from the parking lot to the Cragg Cabin.

The day will include many activities & demonstrations: American Indian crafts, games & dances, dream catchers; bobbin lacing, crocheting, knitting, tatting, spinning, & weaving. Candle making, soap making, wood working, & wood carving. Wagon rides to and from the cabin, hiking, flower walks, & children's games. The visitors center, butterfly barn & the picnic areas will be open. The food shop will be open for lunch serving hot dogs, brats & buffalo burgers. The gift shop will be open.

GOOSE LAKE PRAIRIE
STATE NATURAL AREA

5010 N. Jugtown Road

Morris, Illinois 60450

Phone: 815 942-2899

Directions: From Morris take Route 47 South to Pine Bluff Rd; then east 6 miles to Jugtown Road and watch for the stone park entrance sign on the left.

From I-55 take Lorenzo Road west about 7 miles to Jugtown Road and watch for the stone entrance on the right.



Prairie Walks at GLPSNA

Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area

The State Park South of Morris on Pine Bluff & N. Jugtown Roads



How many times have you strolled along the prairies in Illinois wondering just what flowers you might be seeing? This is your opportunity to visit with a master gardener, and self-taught naturalist who can help you identify the beautiful flowers and grasses on the Prairie.

Spend an hour with our guide leisurely strolling about a mile of trail and enjoy the Wild Flower Walks from April 28 to August 25. The walks will begin at 10:30 a.m. in the visitors center allowing plenty of time for observations and questions. Call the visitors center to reserve a walk or a wagon ride with our guide. (815-942-2899)

We have heard it said time and again, that you can visit the park on any given weekend and see wonderful splash of color on the prairie, and come back in two weeks and that color splash will be different.

*From
April 28
To August 25
starting at
10:30 am*

Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area is Illinois' best prairie example.

There are many forbs and grasses to be explored.

The Sixth Annual Nature Photo Contest 2012

For Adults & Youth

This contest is open to all amateur photographers (those deriving less than 25% of their income from the sale of photographs.)

Best of Show 2011 was awarded to Peggy Hanna of Godley, Illinois.

"Flight of the Barred Owl"



August 12	Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area Visitor's Center.
Accept photo entries	Noon to 3:00 p.m.
August 17	Visitor's Center
Contest judging	Auditorium (private)
August 18/19	GLPSNA Visitor's Center
Public display of entries	10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. both days
August 19	GLPSNA Visitor's Center
Photo pick up.	4:00 to 4:30 p.m.



**Partners Hold Quilt
Fundraiser 2012
To Benefit the Park**

**"Study in
Blue"**

Twin Size Quilt

1 ticket for \$1.00

OR

6 tickets for \$5.00

**The drawing will be
September 15, 2012**

This lovely "Study in Blue" Quilt has been a project of Prairie Partner Becky Sipple who contributed the fabrics and did the piecing. The Quilting was donated by Ann Register. The quilting pattern is Brown Eyed Susan.

This quilt will fit perfectly on a day bed or a twin sized bed.

You need not be present to win. Whether you win or not, your contribution to Goose Lake Prairie Partner events and activities is greatly appreciated. Ask for tickets at the visitor's center desk.

The prize must be picked up in 30 days or a new winner will be chosen. We must reach at least \$200.00 in ticket sales or the quilt will not be let go. In which case, the raffle date will be changed to allow a longer period to sell.

3-24-2012

Park Happenings

- It is exciting to see the so many visitors busy at the park. We have been noticing people with cameras, children and pets on the park trails. Remember to watch for ticks; check yourselves when you get off the trails.
- Please notice that we are a bit short handed as we did not get our regular allotment of summer workers this year. The four permanent staff members that we have are really over-stretched as they try to keep the park as pristine as possible and still assist the sportsmen and nature lovers. Weekends the center is managed by volunteers. Check the sign by the door to be sure the center is open on any given weekend.
- Friday, April 20, or April 23 (rain date) the fishing teams from local high schools are holding their yearly fishing completion at Heidecke Lake State Fish and Wildlife area. The annual **Illinois High School Bass Fishing Tournament Series** will hold its sectional tournaments statewide April 20. The finals will be held on Carlyle Lake, May 4-5.

Here is a breakdown by the numbers: 19 sectionals to be held at 18 locations. Chain O' Lakes in northeast Illinois will host two sectionals. 231 schools will participate. Each school is allowed two teams. Each team may have up to four anglers. 1,848 youth that could compete this spring. (For more information click [here.](#)) IDNR fisheries biologist Dan Stephenson says regional tournaments may be needed in the future if participation grows. Stephenson is the DNR coordinator for the tournament.

Gifts To The Park Are Tax Deductible.

Goose Lake Prairie Partners are looking for a few new items to add to the visitors center as well as the park itself. If you or your organization is looking for a special project why not consider the following items:

- 1.) Choose a park trail and monitor it to keep it pristinely clean for our visitors.
- 2.) Volunteer to work the Visitor Center Desk during the weekend to help keep the center open. Normally the Center is only open on weekends if volunteers work the center.

3.) Consider purchasing an item for the park. At the current time our "Want List" includes:

- Caterpillars for the Butterfly Barn. (Seasonal.)
- New mounted bird or mammal species.
- Park benches to strategically place around the park on various trails.
- New folding chairs for our events.
- New folding tables with plastic tops
- Fund a mural for the Auditorium
- Purchase a chain saw art piece to sit in

If you are looking for an interesting program for your club or group, why not consider a Nature Program? Call the Park Desk for more information.

Bird Corner.

Tax deductible gifts are recognized with a "certificate of gift" which can be used for tax deductions.

Call 815-942-2899 for information.

Park Contacts:

Joe Giacone, Site Superintendent

Char McDade, Office Coordinator

Susie Johnson, Prairie Partner President

Bev Mansfield, Vice-President

Rebecca Sipple, Secretary

Jackie Martin, **Treasurer/Purchasing Agent**

Norma Hedges, Gift Shop Chairperson

Jo Fleming, Historian.

Tom Kaluzny, Board Member

The Mission of the Goose Lake Prairie Partners

The mission of the Prairie Partners is to help the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area in the following ways.

- To understand, maintain and attract the public to the park by producing various festivals, educational events, and displays centered around early life on the prairie and on the natural environment of the park.
- To provide assistance and funds as needed by the park and its staff for equipment, supplies and other items for improvement and maintenance.

**Monetary or Time Donations
Are Always Welcome.**

Text in this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors of the articles and not the responsibility of the Park or the Prairie Partners.

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We are on the Web.
<http://gooselakeprairie.org>

[Introduction](#) | [Waystation Seed Kit](#) | [Certify Your Site](#) | [Registry](#) | [Downloads](#)

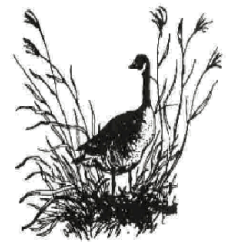


MONARCH WAYSTATIONS

CREATE, CONSERVE, & PROTECT MONARCH HABITATS

www.MonarchWatch.org

Take Only Memories.
Leave Only Footprints.
Thank You Very Kindly.



Each fall, hundreds of millions of monarch butterflies migrate from the United States and Canada to overwintering areas in Mexico and California where they wait out the winter until conditions favor a return flight in the spring. The monarch migration is truly one of the world's greatest natural wonders, yet it is threatened by habitat loss in North America - at the overwintering sites and throughout the spring and summer breeding range as well.

Monarch Waystation Habitats. Monarch Waystations are places that provide resources necessary for monarchs to produce successive generations and sustain their migration. Without milkweeds throughout their spring and summer breeding areas in North America, monarchs would not be able to produce the successive generations that culminate in the migration each fall. Similarly, without nectar from flowers these fall migratory monarch butterflies would be unable to make their long journey to overwintering grounds in Mexico. The need for host plants for larvae and energy sources for adults applies to all monarch and butterfly populations around the world.

Why We Are Concerned. Milkweeds and nectar sources are declining due to development and the widespread use of herbicides in croplands, pastures and roadsides. Because 90% of all milkweed/monarch habitats occur within the agricultural landscape, farm

practices have the potential to strongly influence monarch populations.

Development. (Development Subdivisions, factories, shopping centers, etc.) in the U.S. is consuming habitats for monarchs and other wildlife at a rate of 6,000 acres per day - that's 2.2 million acres each year, the area of Delaware and Rhode Island combined!

Genetically Modified Crops. Widespread adoption of herbicide-resistant corn and soybeans has resulted in the loss of more than 80 million acres of monarch habitat in recent years. The planting of these crops genetically modified to resist the non-selective systemic herbicide glyphosate (Roundup®) allows growers to spray fields with this herbicide instead of tilling to control weeds. Milkweeds survive tilling but not the repeated use of glyphosate. This habitat loss is significant since these croplands represent more than 30% of the summer breeding area for monarchs.

Roadside Management. The use of herbicides and frequent mowing along roadsides has converted much of this habitat to grasslands - a habitat generally lacking in food and shelter for wildlife. Although some states have started to increase the diversity of plantings along roadsides, including milkweeds, these programs are small.

Unfortunately, the remaining milkweed habitats in pastures, hayfields, edges of forests, grasslands, native prairies, and urban areas are not sufficient to sustain the large monarch populations seen in the 1990s. **Monarchs need our help.**

What You Can Do. To offset the loss of milkweeds and nectar sources we need to create, conserve, and protect milkweed/monarch habitats. We need you to help us and help monarchs by creating "Monarch Waystations" (monarch habitats) in home gardens, at schools, businesses, parks, zoos, nature centers, along roadsides, and on other unused plots of land. Without a major effort to restore milkweeds to as many locations as possible, the monarch population is certain to decline to extremely low levels.

The Value of Monarch Waystations. By creating and maintaining a Monarch Waystation you are contributing to monarch conservation, an effort that will help assure the preservation of the species and the continuation of the spectacular monarch migration phenomenon.



NOTE: This information is off the website for Monarch Waystations. Go to the website for more information.

Do not forget to check yourselves for Ticks. While the Prairie is very pretty and fresh looking this time of year, the pests have beat you here and would like to go home with you. Also check you pets if they walked with you today.