Chicago WILDERNESS

EXPLORING NATURE & CULTURE

WINTER 2001

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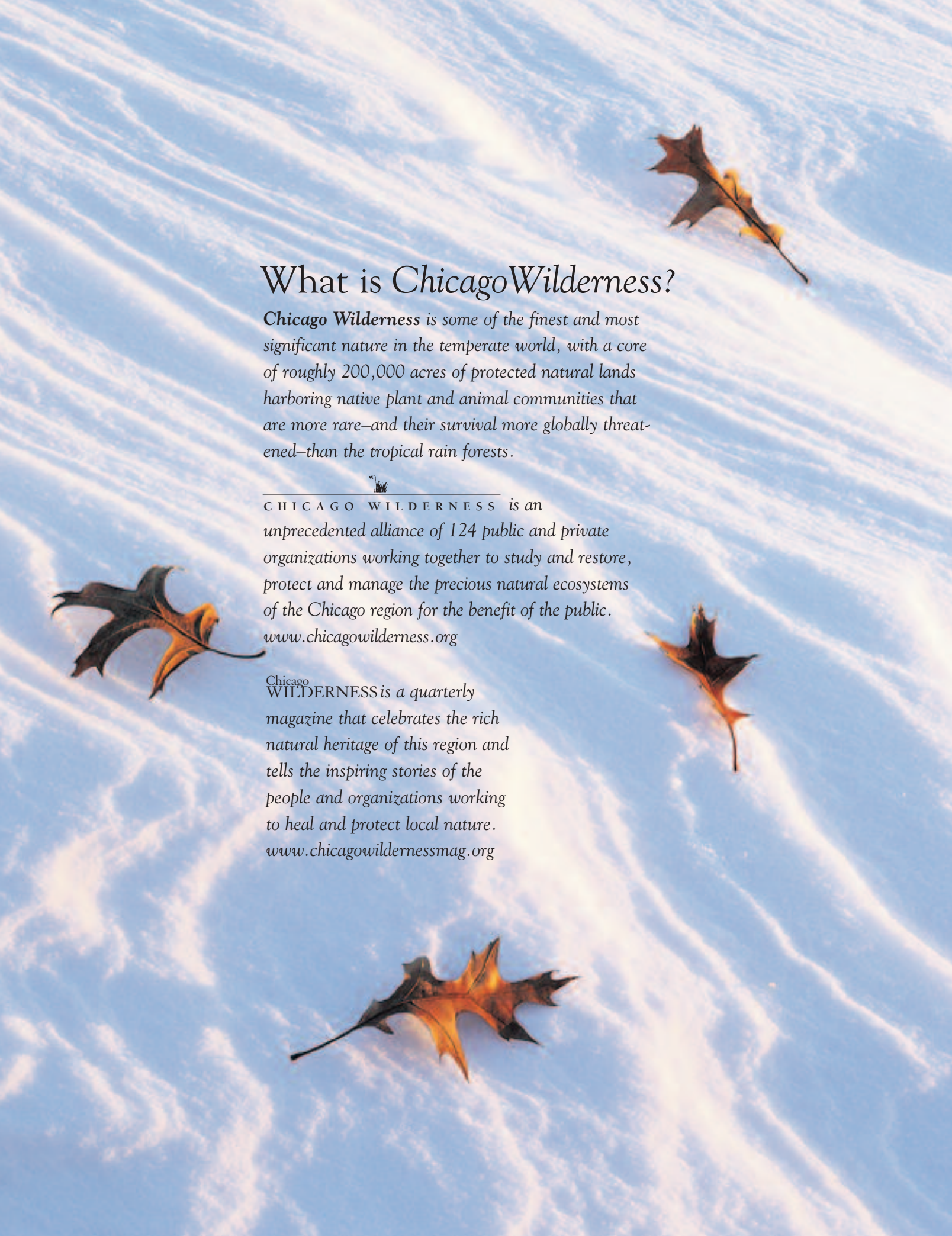
WILEY NEIGHBOR • BORN AGAIN RIVER



What is *ChicagoWilderness?*

Chicago Wilderness *is some of the finest and most significant nature in the temperate world, with a core of roughly 200,000 acres of protected natural lands harboring native plant and animal communities that are more rare–and their survival more globally threatened–than the tropical rain forests.*

CHICAGO WILDERNESS *is an unprecedented alliance of 124 public and private organizations working together to study and restore, protect and manage the precious natural ecosystems of the Chicago region for the benefit of the public.*
www.chicagowilderness.org

Chicago WILDERNESS *is a quarterly magazine that celebrates the rich natural heritage of this region and tells the inspiring stories of the people and organizations working to heal and protect local nature.*
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Looking In Both Directions

OPPOSITE: *Sunset on oak leaves and windblown snow drift by Willard Clay.*

To be human is to want to make things, to construct and build, to shape and mold. We do this with sand and snow for play. "Look, Mom," says young Sonia Pollock in the photo here, "look what I've made." We do this with homes and schools, churches and entire landscapes for human society. The history of our efforts is writ large upon the land, how we have sculpted from wild places the shape of our hopes and dreams, our farms and cities.

But equally human with our passion to build is a yearning for knowledge, beauty, and excellence. We are a curious and imaginative species, endlessly inventive, sometimes irresponsible, sometimes even wise. The humbling lessons we have learned in the century just ended are that we do not, despite our cleverness, know all. We have learned that changing the land is not always right, or good. We have learned that changing the land can mean losing our selves and our place in the world.

Photo: Mike MacDonald

This issue is full of good news, small and large. The story of the born-again river in McHenry County (page 8) shows that we, as groups of people working together, can make amends, can reshape the landscape to provide better habitat for scores of species–and better places for humans to enjoy. The poem by Mona van Duyn on page 28 illustrates the transforming power of the world outside our windows. And Ed Collins's search for Dr. Vasey demonstrates in moving fashion the transforming power of curiosity.

Ed's search for Dr. Vasey, a 19th century physician and botanist who arrived in McHenry County in 1848 and settled at Ringwood, spanned two continents and took him to the archives of numerous universities. Ed found a plant species list for McHenry County in the Asa Gray herbarium at Harvard. He also tried the Internet. Typing in "Vasey" to conduct a search, Ed found a "very famous George Vasey who was an Australian general in World War II." Ha. Wrong turn.

Gradually Ed found the real Dr. Vasey. "There's a very poignant letter written in 1863 before Vasey learned that his younger brother, who was in the Union Army, had been killed in the battle of Fredericksburg," Ed recalls. "It's like looking through a lace curtain, or a shade on a window–it's misty and veiled but you can see the shapes of the past. Vasey arrived in Ringwood eight years after the invention of the plow, so there was very little ground that had been plowed then. The prairies and barrens were still original. He lived in the twilight of the prairie wilderness. To read his letters is to see that world through the eyes of a 28 year-old botanist who's in love with plants."

To read the story of Ed's search for Dr. Vasey is to see the world through the eyes of a passionate and hungry sleuth, to celebrate with him the joys of discovery. But Ed is also the kind of historian who's looking for the future, here in the Middle West, by shuffling mussels, ungirdling rivers, planting the seeds of ancient plants along the sides of modern streams. "We've learned how to take things apart and reduce them to the smallest piece, but when we do, we lose how they're connected and it leaves us, in the end, empty," Ed says. Stewardship–caring for the land and restoring it–gives us that chance, he says, to be re-connected. To be a part, not apart.

Chicago Wilderness offers all of us this priceless opportunity to re-connect our semi-urban selves with wild nature, to shape the land wisely and well, to build a meaningful future. I am so proud to be a part of this.

Debra Shore
EDITOR

C O N T E N T S

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

ABOVE: *The spirit of a bird can warm a winter heart. And in a poem of Mona Van Duyn (see page 28), it can do much more. Photo by Robert Shaw.*
OPPOSITE: *Thorn Creek, Jurgensen Woods, Cook County Forest Preserves. Photo by Joe Nowak.*
COVER: *Coyotes' electrifying howls enrich the night for people living near forest preserves. Photo by Alan G. Nelson/Root Resources.*

Photo: Pat Wadecki/Root Resources

Photo: Pat Wadecki

Photo: Kanae Hirabayashi

Chicago WILDERNESS
Volume IV, Number 2

www.chicagowildernessmag.org
Chicago WILDERNESS is published quarterly.
Subscriptions are $14/yr. Please address all subscription correspondence to Chicago WILDERNESS, P.O. Box 5054, Skokie, IL 60076-5054. (847) 965-9253.
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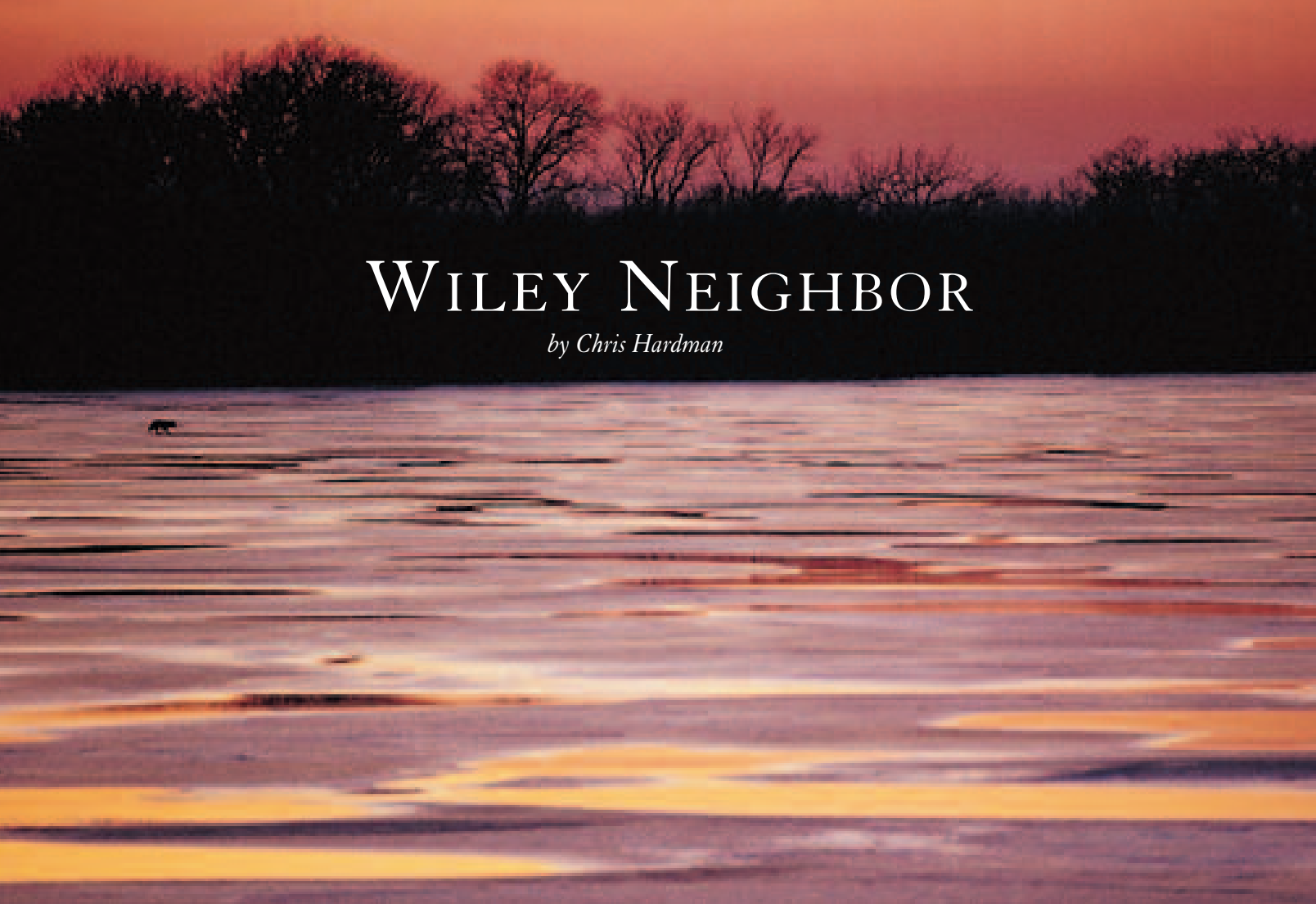
e-mail: editor@chicagowildernessmag.org
Chicago WILDERNESS is printed on recycled paper.
Chicago WILDERNESS is endorsed by the Chicago Region Biodiversity Council. The opinions expressed in these pages, however, are the authors' own.

ISSN 1097-8917. Postmaster, address service requested to Chicago WILDERNESS, P.O. Box 5054, Skokie, IL 60076



Wiley Neighbor

by Chris Hardman

A lone coyote crosses a frozen slough in western Cook County.

The North American coyote has long been a symbol of the wilderness. Snout pointed toward the evening sky with a full moon at his back, the coyote reminds us of what is truly wild in this country. Or does it? These days, the coyote can be found anywhere in Chicago Wilderness–from the bustling streets of Chicago to cultivated suburban neighborhoods to the natural wilds.

Coyotes were roaming Chicago Wilderness forests and prairies long before Europeans immigrated here in the 1800s. Journals kept by early explorers indicate that coyotes were abundant in Illinois in the 1800s but their populations declined dramatically in the latter part of the century. It wasn't until almost 100 years later that their numbers increased, starting in west-central Illinois in the early 1970s and moving to the northeastern part of the state in the late 1970s and early 1980s. According to *Mammals of Illinois*, written by Donald F. Hoffmeister, there were between 20,000 and 30,000 coyotes living in Illinois by the mid-1980s.

The key to the coyote's survival is the animal's amazingly adaptable personality. The coyote can live in the most remote regions of the country or survive well inside our largest cities. In this region, coyotes are most common in forest preserves with a good mix of grassland and open woods, but they also live in cemeteries, local parks, and even at O'Hare Airport.

Chicago residents were taken by surprise in March of 1999 when the *Chicago Tribune* publicized the capture of a coyote that was hiding under a taxi on Michigan Avenue. That was no surprise to Chris Anchor, a wildlife biologist with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County charged with capturing and releasing the urban coyote. According to his studies, all coyote habitat in Cook County is occupied and spoken for. The coyotes have been living among us for several decades.

"One of the reasons they have been so successful is that they are rather plastic in their feeding habits, are opportunistic, and take advantage of a wide variety of food sources," says Frank Drummond, a wildlife biologist for the Lake County Forest Preserves. Coyotes can survive on any type of food. Although their preference is rodents, voles, and mice, they can also eat insects, grasshoppers, beetles, grubs, snakes, lizards, and frogs. In cities they hunt rats and house cats, scavenge from garbage cans and dumpsters, and dine on road kill. Wiley Buck, now working for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, examined for his Master's thesis what coyotes were eating in the suburbs. Focusing on Cook, Lake, McHenry, Will, and DuPage counties, Buck studied coyote scat to determine suburban coyote diet. "The very interesting thing is that we found very little human-related food: garbage or pets," he says. "In other urban areas like San Diego and Los Angeles,

Photo: Brad Semel/Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Coyote pups emerge from their den at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

where the diets have been studied, they depend a lot on cats and garbage-picking to make a living, but the ones in Chicago Wilderness are being pretty traditional and eating wild food." The majority of the coyote's diet was made up of rabbit and deer.

Ironically, widespread development throughout the Chicago Wilderness area has resulted in more food for the coyote. Most forest preserves were a mix of agricultural fields and woodlots before they became conservation land. The mosaic of woods and grasslands that results provides ideal habitat for the small mammals coyotes love to eat. As prey populations have exploded, coyotes have found an abundant and easy food source.

Although the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reports that the coyote population has been stable since the 1980s, more people throughout the Chicago Wilderness region are reporting more coyote sightings and coyote-human interactions than ever before. IDNR Biologist Bob Bluett suggests that the reason people encounter coyotes more often is not because there are more coyotes, but because the coyotes are allowing themselves to be seen. "I think what you're seeing are the effects of evolution of behavior," says Bluett. "When that population increase was going on in the '70s, you had animals coming into residential areas under dire circumstances only–deep snow, cold temperatures. Over several generations that tendency to be afraid of people and be very elusive has given way ...to animals that just take people for granted."

Chris Anchor points out that coyotes feel quite safe in well-populated areas where hunting is not allowed. "Coyotes, in general, in Cook County are not legally hunted or trapped so they've lost a lot of their natural fear of humans," he explains. "In this area coyotes view people neutrally. We get a lot of reports of coyotes hunting in neighborhoods in the middle of the day, walking through picnic groves while picnics are going on right in front of people."

Wildlife biologists are confident that even as coyotes get bolder, by following certain rules, humans can co-exist with coyotes peacefully and enjoy sharing the land with

Photo: Mike MacDonald

Photo: Lynn M. Stone

Coyotes' sharp teeth are a threat to cats and small dogs. But these predators are helping restore balance in our wildlands.

Photo: Stephen Packard

Scat Analysis

Recent analysis of three piles of coyote scat from specimens in western Cook County by Chris Anchor, wildlife biologist with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Prairie vole remains
Meadow vole remains
Rabbit fur
Fox squirrel fur
Plastic from a child's toy
Grass
Cherry pits

Photo: Stephen Packard

They're not vegetarians. Most people seem to love lions and cheetahs and coyotes–in concept. But we're not all that comfortable with the fact that they tear apart other animals for dinner. Yet we can't truly care for nature without appreciating natural processes. Carnivores, scavengers, and decomposers are all part of the beauty of nature–if we have the wisdom to perceive it.

this clever and beautiful animal. The number one rule is to never feed coyotes. "The only documented cases of [coyotes] attacking humans have occurred in areas where people feed them, and they all occurred in people that were age five and younger," says Anchor. "So it's imperative that people do not begin to feed coyotes." Feeding coyotes completely breaks down their natural fear of humans and can cause them to become unusually aggressive. Especially in residential neighborhoods with young children, the results of well-intentioned feeding could be tragic. In order to prevent coyotes from viewing humans as a food source at all, experts recommend securing garbage cans so coyotes don't become regular visitors scavenging for scraps in the back yard. Bringing in dog or cat food and water in the evening also eliminates a potential coyote food source. Although coyotes can pose a threat to small cats and dogs, a simple solution is to keep dogs on leashes and bring cats in at night.

As with any wild animal, the best way to enjoy coyotes is from a distance. As long as humans do not threaten them or their pups, coyotes will be the first to run away during a typical coyote-human encounter. According to IDNR statistics, only 16 cases of coyotes attacking humans have been documented in a 30-year period. "Whenever I've handled the animals in the traps, they are very docile and just kind of lie there and let you work on them and put on the collar and take the blood samples," says IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist Brad Semel. "I'd rather work with a coyote than a raccoon."

According to Illinois biologists, the effect coyotes have had on other native wildlife varies from species to species. They note that red foxes have lost territory to coyotes. "The foxes are getting pushed back into different areas. We are getting calls about foxes in subdivisions and under trailers. I think these foxes are trying to find little niches where the coyotes aren't because where the two of them come into contact, the coyotes are actually killing the foxes," explains Semel. "I had radio collars on two foxes that were killed by coyotes. They don't eat them. They just seem to eliminate them from the range of competition." The gray fox seems to fare much better because they are able to escape coyotes by climbing trees.

Deer are affected by coyotes in a different way. Adult deer are rarely a source of coyote food in the Chicago Wilderness area. Because Illinois coyotes don't live in large packs, they are less apt to attempt the takedown of a large mammal like a deer. They do feed on fawns and on road-killed deer. A recent study by John Oldenburg, Manager of Grounds and Natural Resources, and his colleagues at the DuPage County Forest Preserve District shows that newborn fawns are definitely an important food source for coyotes in their area. Of 129 samples of coyote scat they collected between late March through mid-June of 2000, 21.7 percent contained white-tailed deer. By identifying the size of bone remnants, the researchers were able to determine that the remains belonged to newborn fawns. "What this suggests is that predation probably plays a greater role than we were originally thinking," says Oldenburg. "If we can have any natural predation going on to help us manage deer that would be a great benefit." This new information is now being used in DuPage County's computer model to help predict deer population and determine harvest numbers.

Coyotes are great communicators. Scientists have identified at least 11 different kinds of vocalizations such as lone howls, group howls, group yipping, and barks. Coyotes use their voices to establish territory, signal a warning, indicate location, and send greetings. Brad Woodson, restoration ecologist for the McHenry County Conservation District, says that campers enjoy hearing coyotes in the evening. "I think that's a neat thing that adds to the camping experience," he says. Coyotes also use facial expressions and body positions to communicate with each other. For example, grimaces can indicate aggressive feelings. A complex communication structure is imperative for animals used to living as a community; because coyotes normally live in packs, they need to be able to communicate with each other to avoid fights or misunderstandings. In the Chicago Wilderness area, coyotes live

alone, in pairs, or in temporary family groups.

Like other canines, coyotes are very territorial. They mark their territory with urine or scat and warn off any interlopers with aggressive displays. Most territories are already spoken for, which explains the presence of coyotes in the more populated areas. "We did some work with coyotes that came out of city of Chicago," explains Chris Anchor. "We radio-collared them and let them go. Basically what every single coyote tried to do was get back to where they came from. We would take them to the most extreme areas of the county where they had every opportunity to stay away from people if they chose to, and every single animal chose to try and get back to where they came from."

Coyote parents are good parents. Both take responsibility for protecting the pups, feeding them, and teaching them how to be a coyote. During the first week of life, the pups are blind and helpless, and the mother rarely leaves the den. A few weeks later the pups will take their first tentative steps out of the den and begin to explore their surroundings. The next two months are spent learning what to eat, how to howl, and how to spot predators. With the arrival of the fall, the pups usually venture out on their own.

Built into the coyote's survival strategy is the natural tendency to be suspicious of anything or anyone new. The coyote knows every inch of his territory and will immediately notice a new presence. When young pups are around, a coyote mother can easily be spooked into moving her pups into a new den if she senses something out of place in her territory. Their suspicious nature keeps them out of sight when human visitors arrive, making seeing a coyote a rare treat. Actually more people have seen coyotes than they realize. Because coyotes look so much like domestic dogs–with the coloring and build of a German Shepherd–they have been able to travel through populated areas in a sort of disguise.

Unfortunately, coyotes have a sad history with humans. They are one of the most persecuted animals in North America. In 1931, the U.S. government began a campaign of coyote extermination under a department titled Animal Damage Control (recently the name was changed to Wildlife Services). Each year hundreds of thousands of coyotes are legally killed. Ranchers in the West hold a particularly strong hatred for the coyote, blaming them for the loss of livestock. The canines are labeled problem animals and are trapped, shot, and poisoned.

Photo: Pat Wadecki/Root Resources

Like many predators, coyotes practice a form of birth control. Each coyote pack occupies a discrete territory. Only the alpha female breeds in each pack.

As more people come into contact with this beautiful and wild animal, perhaps fear will turn into respect. Biologists remind us of the important role coyotes play in the environment. They help to control rodent populations. They keep in balance the numbers of mid-sized predators. Without coyotes, elevated numbers of foxes, raccoons, and opossums actually eliminate many bird species. "It's always good when you see them," says Brad Semel, "because you know that there is still part of the real wild Illinois left. It certainly would be nice to see some of other creatures they used to co-habitate with, like the elk and bison, and think about what this place looked like 100 years ago."

Writer Chris Hardman is occasionally awakened by the howls and yips of coyotes on her property.

Preventing Coyote Problems

If you may have coyotes on your property or in your neighborhood, follow these tips:

- **Do not feed coyotes. Problems occur when people begin feeding coyotes, either deliberately or inadvertently. Garbage must be stored in secure containers. Do not put meat scraps in compost heaps.**
- **Remove outside pet food containers. Coyotes will prey upon small mammals attracted to pet food.**
- **Keep pets indoors or keep a watchful eye on them. Walk dogs on a leash, especially at night.**
- **Do not leave small children outside unattended.**
- **Encourage your neighbors to follow the same advice.**

From Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Born Again River

Re-Meandering the Nippersink

It began as a dream, the inchoate yearning of one man–a dreamer–standing high on a hill overlooking a flooded valley of a ditched stream. There had been a tremendous rain. It was his humble job, as a new ranger for the conservation district, to find the lost picnic tables.

To his astonishment he saw–lo and behold–the natural meanders of a wild river. Like a memory made real, the floodwaters had settled in sinuous depressions marking the ancient channel, where once the river ran, before it was shunted into the straightjacket of a ditch.

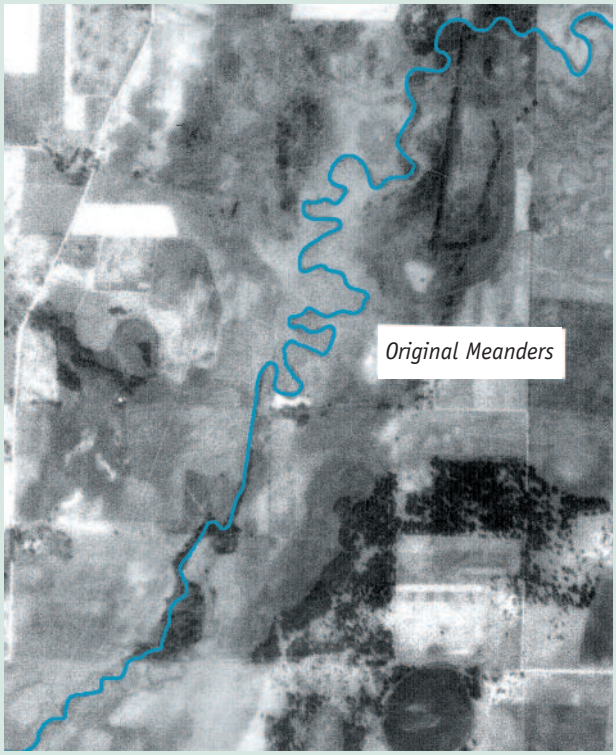
And the dreamer dreamed of un-ditching a noble river–of restoring the gentle meanders, of setting the waters free.

It took years, of course. It took big money, big machines, hours knee-deep in mud, choking in dust, backbreaking work. It took persuasion, planning, research, a team. Flying overhead to study the land, digging down to find old channels.

So the dream became a waking vision, the vision became a plan, and the ranger became a restoration ecologist, leading the team that set the waters free.

–Debra Shore *Photographs by Pat Wadecki*

1939



This aerial photo shows the original stream meanders in blue. Over the millennia the streams developed lazy meanders among the rolling kames, those gravelly hills deposited by glacial rivers.

1967

This photo shows the cultivated landscape. Settlers have removed trees, used gravel from the kames to fill the stream's channel (though its skeleton remains visible), installed miles of drain tiles to make the fields tillable, and dug a straightened ditch to contain the waters of the Nippersink. This was the situation when the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) purchased this parcel in 1990 and when Ed Collins stood on a hill and looked at the river in 1986.

Photo: Laurel Ross

"Nippersink means the place of little waters," declared Ed Collins who was saddened that the waters were relegated to a ditch. "This stream now gives back to her people the priceless gift of local wilderness."

"Gentlemen, start your engines," someone shouted. And the decorated backhoe operated by John Aavang, began to close off the old ditch and open the way for the re-meandered river. In the background, dozer driver John Peters helps to complete the mission.

Beth Jarvis (left), plant propagation specialist for the MCCD, prepares to release a symbolic bouquet of mixed prairie wildflowers into the newly opened channel.

"Blue honors the men and women who channelized the creek 50 years ago and used its waters to make productive farms and raise families," said Ed Collins, who directed the project with colleague Brad Woodson. "Mixed flowers are for the many partners that made this project possible. Orange carries the aspirations of the Natural Resource Management Department who worked on the stream for not only the Nippersink but for other Midwestern streams that can benefit from restoration. White for the generations to come who will enjoy the stream and build their own memories upon its banks."

Nancy Ellison (at right), vice-president of the Board of the McHenry County Conservation District, prepares to cut the ribbon at the ceremony on August 26th restoring the Nippersink. She's joined by Don Larson (red visor), vice-chair of the McHenry County Board, and Ann Kate, member of the Board. Ellison recalled growing up in Deerfield and playing in the creek behind her house looking for crayfish and tadpoles. "But a housing development and golf course changed that," she said.

Call it the Mussel Shuffle. Dozens of celebrants–including Spring and Phil Hayden of Carpentersville–rolled up their pants and waded into the old ditch to search for, and rescue, mussels.

Photo: Laurel Ross

Part of the intrepid summer crew laying erosion control matting.

"It was one of the most moving experiences I have been part of in my career," Ed Collins said. "The young workers–many between the ages of 19 and 21, making less than they could have made working at McDonald's–worked their hearts out. After they rebuilt the kame, they buried two time capsules in the top. (See rebuilt, but not yet revegetated, kame in photo on page 12.) They enclosed letters, poems, and thoughts that they felt the people of the next century should know were important to them and told why midwifing this most difficult birth meant so much to them. Gradually they realized they were redefining the relationship between Americans and rivers."

In excavating the old, original channel, the district crew found entire mussel beds still intact containing 1,200-1,500 specimens of 16 different species. In the ditch were five species of the most common types of mussels, those that can tolerate pollution and silt; only two of those five species were found in the shell deposits in the excavated bed of the original healthy stream. Ed and his colleagues expect rare mussel species will recolonize the restored stream.

This deceptively timeless photo was taken in the midst of major changes. The aquatic vegetation was planted here and the rocks installed to hold the soil and create habitat. Excavated dirt and gravel from another section of the channel was recently piled to rebuild the glacial kame on the horizon. Soon it will be planted with the grasses and flowers of dry prairie. The bulldozers have left and the animals will return.

Nippersink: By the Numbers

Age of the Nippersink: 12,000 years

Average age of crew on re-meandering project: 22 years

Total length in miles of the Nippersink: 24

Miles of Nippersink within Glacial Park: 7

Miles added to length of the Nippersink by re-meandering: 1.1

Miles of erosion matting placed along newly graded banks: 22

Biodegradable staples used in securing erosion control matting: 1,000,000

Plants planted by MCCD staff, volunteers, and school groups: 220,000

Cubic yards of dirt removed to create meanders, fill portions of the ditch, and rebuild three kames: 165,000

Tons of rock used for erosion control along banks: 1,100

Acres of restored marsh and wetland: 290

Feet of drain tile removed from the watershed since the project began: 500,000

Gallons of flood storage capacity provided by restored wetland and marsh: 94,511,000

Mussel species detected in original Nippersink channel: 16

Mussel species in channelized ditch: 5

Mussels relocated into new stream: 2,100

Man-hours devoted to project: more than 40,000

Gender of heavy equipment drivers who rarely got stuck in the mud: female

Gender of heavy equipment drivers with something to prove who tended to get stuck in the mud: the other one

Cost of the project: $586,000

Temporary MCCD tattoos distributed on opening day: about 200

Name of anthem composed by MCCD Natural Resource Music Division: "Set the Waters Free"

Time capsules buried in glacial kame by youthful workers on this project: 2

First public official to canoe the new Nippersink: Illinois Lt. Gov. Corinne Wood

Searching for DOCTOR VASEY

by Ed Collins

My quest for Dr. Vasey began as a simple attempt to locate information about plants to guide the composition of restoration plans. As I have so often found in conducting research for purely ecological reasons over the past decade, beneath the empirical data lay a compelling human drama.

Fifteen years ago I joined McHenry County Conservation District's newly formed Resource Management Division and moved my family near the district's headquarters in Ringwood, Illinois. Eager to learn everything of relevance to McHenry County's natural history, I devoured information wherever I could obtain it, including that cornerstone for understanding the complexities of the plant communities of northeastern Illinois, Swink & Wilhelm's *Plants of the Chicago Region*.

Anyone familiar with this tome knows it is not light reading. Persistently I plowed through the confusing matrix of Latin names a few pages each day. As my botanical comfort level grew, I began to notice periodic references to the town of Ringwood. Without exception, the botanical reference to Ringwood also identified George Vasey as the collector of the relevant specimen.

"*Agoseris cuspidata* PRAIRIE DANDELION One of our very rarest plants. Known in our area only from McHenry County, where it was collected by Vasey in a prairie at Ringwood on May 20, 1858."

Not only did Ringwood's location, a mile south of the District headquarters intrigue me, but also the early dates of many of the specimens. I reasoned that as a botanist Vasey might have left records related to the county's natural communities before many of the human changes associated with the last 170 years had occurred. As time allowed, I began to unravel the mystery of this pioneer plant collector from Ringwood.

Over the years that search has spanned two continents, three countries, and dozens of museums, arboretums, and libraries as each new piece of information produced new leads. I have reviewed nearly 300 letters written by Dr. Vasey, most dated between 1849 and 1866, the time period corresponding to his active collecting in northeastern Illinois. Many Vasey letters provide tantalizing clues about the composition and structure of the Chicago region's natural communities. Perhaps more importantly, his insights and observations have allowed me to see the landscape from a fresh perspective, through the eyes of a man living in a time when much of the human impact on our natural heritage lay in the distant future.

Photo of Dr. George Vasey, courtesy of Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA.

BACKGROUND

George Vasey was born in Scarborough, England, in 1822. His family immigrated to North America the next year, settling in Oriskany, New York, and moved to Illinois around 1840.

The fourth of 10 children, Vasey left school at 12 to take a job as a store clerk. Unable to afford books on botany, he borrowed several, copying them entirely by hand. During Vasey's tenure as a clerk, he met and befriended Dr. P. D. Knieskern, a physician and one of the foremost botanists of the day. Encouraged by Knieskern, Vasey eventually entered into a botanical correspondence with Asa Gray at Harvard and other prominent botanists. Vasey's relationship with Gray, who was then preparing one of the first comprehensive botany manuals, flourished for decades to come.

At 21, George completed advanced studies at Oneida Institute and decided to study medicine, graduating from the Berkshire Medical Institute in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1846. Vasey married Martha Scott of Oriskany and a year later relocated to Ringwood, arriving via the Erie Canal. Here, he would spend the next 18 years of his life practicing medicine and pursuing his other great passion: collecting plants.

As the years passed, Vasey's medical practice flourished. The construction of the Fox River Railroad in 1854 allowed him to extend his medical practice to Elgin. He opened a dry goods store to support a growing family including four children, his wife, Martha, and mother, Jane. The breadth of his botanical correspondence and collecting expanded as well.

By 1858, his list of correspondents numbered in the dozens including S. B. Mead of Hancock County, John Kennicott of Cook County, Michael Bebb of Winnebago County, and Dr. Engelmenn of St. Louis. Late in that same year, Vasey, Kennicott, and several other prominent naturalists established the Illinois Natural History Society. The Society supported natural history and agricultural innovation, eventually evolving into the Illinois Natural History Survey. Vasey served as president and collections curator for several years.

Herbarium specimens collected by Dr. George Vasey, from the collection of the Field Museum.

A son Frank was born in 1859, and Flora Nancy, a daughter, in 1861. Vasey became a prolific writer for the *Prairie Farmer* and the Natural History Society. His books and articles included floristic inventories of the entire state, treatises on buffalo, and even a book on the philosophy of laughing and smiling.

Aaron Vasey was born in 1864 and named for George's brother killed at the battle Fredericksburg the year before. This year (1864) is the apex of Dr. Vasey's Illinois botanical correspondence encompassing nearly fifty other collectors. It also marks the beginning of a series of events that would result in the Vasey family abandoning northeastern Illinois forever. In rapid succession, measles, scarlet fever, and whooping cough devastated both parents and children. Aaron Vasey succumbed to whooping cough in June, four months after his birth.

Martha Vasey grew progressively weaker. In a desperate attempt to save her life, George moved the family to Richview, Illinois in Washington County in 1866. The fervent hope that a milder climate might improve his wife's condition proved short lived. She died within a month of the move.

Vasey's botanical correspondence ceased until 1867, when he began to write once again to long time friend Michael Bebb, a botanist from Rockford. Perhaps the fact that Bebb had also lost his own wife a year before created a special bond between the two men.

In 1871 after joining John Wesley Powell's exploration of the Colorado River, Vasey accepted a position in Washington, D.C. as the first botanist for the Department of Agriculture. Later he would become the first Director of the Smithsonian's National Herbarium, a position Vasey would retain until his death in 1893.

Specimens of Wilderness

The period from 1848 when Vasey arrived in Illinois until his relocation to Washington in 1866 holds the most relevance for restoration ecologists working in the Chicago region. His correspondence is rich in first-hand information relating to the area's natural history. Shortly after arriving in Illinois, Vasey renewed his association with Gray. His earliest letter conveys the excitement for botany felt by this 28-year-old newly graduated physician:

"I have for some time had it in contemplation to write to you, believing that you will be interested in a few remarks on the botany of this section… I have concluded to give you a list of the plants with some occasional remarks which may possibly be serviceable to you in the preparation of a second edition of your manual which by the way is an exceedingly valuable book, and has been of great service to me, and I presume many other learners of botany." October 9th, 1849, Ringwood, Illinois

Ed Collins (right) acts the part of 19th century scientist "Edward Carrington" in heritage festivals. His wife, Denise (center), is a painter. Daughter Aimee, at left, portrays their daughter.

Vasey included in this letter "A List of Some Interesting Plants of McHenry County Illinois," a handwritten key placing many plants he observed as occurring in either prairies or barrens. Some of those observations on now-rare plants are striking today, 150 years after they were first penned.

Platanthera leucophaea (prairie white-fringed orchid) Common in prairies and barrens

Cypripedium candidum (small white lady slipper orchid) Abundant in marshes and wet places

Sporobolus heterolepis (prairie dropseed grass) Perhaps the most common grass of the prairie.

Castilleja coccinea var. flava & sessiliflora (Indian paintbrush) found together and most abundant.

While Vasey's notes on individual species are insightful, the tantalizing hints concerning the appearance of the larger landscape should be even more compelling to today's land managers.

For instance, Vasey selected only two natural communities—prairie and barrens—in assigning specific habitats to the plants he had identified. In 1849, much of the rugged, poorly drained topography of northeastern Illinois still defied cultivation despite the fact that settlement had begun more than a decade before. The country was recovering from a severe economic depression, called the Era of Hard Times, that had lasted more than 10 years. Agricultural drainage lay 30 years in the future. Thus in many areas, the sparsely settled landscape of McHenry County still retained large blocks of native vegetation.

The character and richness of the prairie is understood today as well as it was in Vasey's time. By 1849 the fecundity of the prairie soils had been well established and the introduction of the steel moldboard plow earlier in the decade had convinced most farmers that well-drained prairie soils were superior for crop production.

The barrens, however, have been harder to understand. Vasey, like many of his contemporaries, possessed an intimate familiarity with the diverse flora of eastern forest. By Vasey's time the term "barrens" had come to mean a very specific natural community type, recognized by the predominantly agrarian society of the time as possessing certain attributes in terms of structure and composition. Consider the clear and concise criteria assigned to barrens in Peck's 1836 *Illinois Gazetteer*:

"In the western dialect the term barrens has since received a very extensive application throughout the west….The timber is general scattering, of a rough and stunted appearance, interspersed with patches of hazle (sic) and brushwood. These barrens occur where the contest between fire and timber is kept up, each striving for the mastery.

"Dwarfish shrubs and small trees of oak and hickory have contended for years with the fire for a precarious existence, while a mass of roots, sufficient for the support of large trees have accumulated in the earth. As soon as they are protected from the ravages of the annual fires, the more thrifty sprouts shoot forth, and in ten years are large enough for corn cribs and stables.

"The rapidity with which the young growth pushes itself forward, without a single effort on the part of man to accelerate it, and the readiness with which the prairie becomes converted into thickets, and the barrens into a young forest, shows that in another generation, timber will not be wanting in any part of Illinois."

Vasey clearly distinguished between the barrens and two other communities he knew well, the treeless prairie and the dense Eastern forest. He makes it clear that the fire-dependent oak barrens were a major part of the landscape as he saw it.

As interesting and useful as the natural history information in the Vasey correspondence is, the human drama associated with the letters is even more evocative. The trials and triumphs of an individual emerge through flowing cursive handwriting as one reads the letters.

"I have the pleasure to announce the recent arrival at my house of a very interesting young stranger a little daughter making the third of that kind and including the boys completing my half dozen. We welcome her to our fireside. Her mother is doing well thanks to kind providence." February 25th, 1861, Ringwood

"I know that the attachment between yourself and wife must have been very strong from the few glimpses I was permitted to take of your conjugal relations. Alas that our earthly ties should be so easily sundered. When I lost my little child last year I thought that this world was a failure if there was no future for us. But we have the reasonable and comforting assurance that there is a better and an eternal world beyond and there we may no doubt be permitted to continue and perpetuate the friendship and attachments we form here. So I trust my dear Sir that you have to sooth your great bereavement the Christian hope of a glorious reunion above." October 25th, 1865, Ringwood

People of the Deep Soil

These poignant vignettes of one man's life have bequeathed to me one of the most important insights of all into the management of natural areas. Land is a sentient entity possessed of a tangible living spirit. Human culture has always been a personification of the land itself, a mirror through which nature reflects back her qualities in the character of the people who become part of that landscape.

Nowhere does this intrinsic connection to place ring with more resonance than here in the Heartland. We are people of the deep soil, rooted in the rich blackness of prairie earth. Equally crucial to land stewardship is the cultural legacy that is part of every wild place regardless of its location. We must understand that as stewards we shepherd not only rare plants and animals, but also the tears and laughter and dreams that define each acre as clearly as do its natural communities. Failing this, we have learned only half of the story that land yearns to tell us.

The Midwestern culture we have inherited was intimately connected to that natural world, directly dependent upon its resources for survival. Ours is the world the settlers strove to build, the pinnacle in a long struggle to conquer a wilderness continent. In an odd way, their greatest and most enduring legacy may be the doorways they have left us back into that wild world. In every painting, every journal, every dog-eared letter lies a secret portal back to the natural world.

One is tempted to speculate what the good Doctor might have thought of our rediscovery of the wilderness in our own backyard were he alive today. I am convinced he would support it enthusiastically for in one of his final letters from Ringwood, he wrote these lines to his friend and fellow botanist Michael Bebb:

"I believe with you that those who love nature, and researchers into the field of nature, are generally men and women of blameless lives. If the poet is correct in saying the undevout astronomer is mad, would it not be equally proper to say the undevout naturalist is also mad. For surely it is our appreciation for things of beauty that we come closest to ourselves and to the creator of all that is blessed."

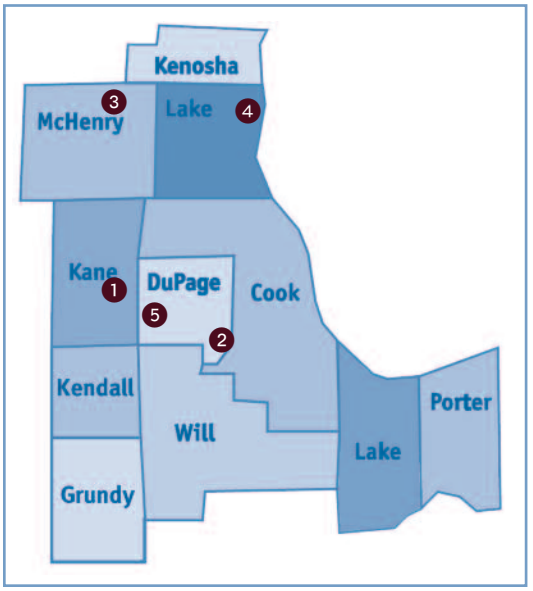
Ed Collins is a restoration ecologist with the McHenry County Conservation District and one of the architects of the Nippersink re-meandering project (see page 8). His popular course–"Landscape Genealogy" taught at several Chicago Wilderness locations–shows how to research the history of land in the region.

Tools for an early botanist, from top: lap desk, egg collection, collecting kit called a vasculum. The smallest egg is that of a Carolina parakeet, now extinct. The vasculum, made of tin, was filled with damp peat moss into which Vasey would place whole specimens collected in the field, later to be pressed, recorded, and saved–for us to study.

Into the Wild

OUR GUIDE TO THE WILD SIDE

Photo: St. Charles Park District



1. CAMPTON HILLS PARK - Kane County
2. FULLERSBURG WOODS - DuPage County
3. GLACIAL PARK - McHenry County
4. LYONS WOODS FOREST PRESERVES - Lake County
5. WEST DUPAGE WOODS - DuPage County

Maps: Lynda Wallis

The Herbicide Helper

by Joe Neumann

It's chilly, damp, and dreary. We are tramping through the woods. What has drawn us out of our comfortable beds on this Sunday morning? If you could ask us, we would mutter: "Buckthorn." Buckthorn is a European shrub that can grow to the size of a small tree. In the case of buckthorn, green is not good. Because it is adapted to Europe's climate, it leafs out early in the spring and remains green through November. This trait makes it an appealing landscape shrub. Its ability to spread into our native landscape makes it a pernicious weed.

Each of my companions has a saw. I am holding a tool of a different sort. It is a herbicide called Garlon. If you cut down a buckthorn and do not apply herbicide to the stump, it sprouts aggressively. We use the least persistent, most effective herbicide in as small amounts as possible. Forest Preserve District of Cook County Outreach Coordinator Jerry Sullivan reports that only 160 pounds a year of herbicide are put into the approximately 8,000 acres of natural lands under active management in the district. To apply herbicide on public property, you must pass a test of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Garlon's active ingredient is triclopyr. The Extension Toxicology Network Web site *http://ace.orst.edu/cgi-bin/mfs/01/pips/triclopy.htm* provides detailed information on Garlon, such as its average half-life (about 46 days depending on soil conditions).

Photo: Stephen Packard

Buckthorn is a more insidious killer than the Asian longhorned beetle. It shades out other plants. Even the mighty oak begins life as a lowly sprout. Nothing but bare soil lies beneath a large buckthorn.

On a damp day in the fall of 1990, I went on a tour of a forest preserve led by Ralph Thornton, then the land manager for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. He told us that we would learn to hate buckthorn. Oh no, I thought, I may cut it if that is what needs to be done but I will never hate any part of nature. I still feel the same way. Unlike Ralph, I never had the depressing experience of witnessing the forest preserves being overrun. A district ecologist once outlined to me the history of buckthorn in the Chicago region. It arrived in the 1950s. Its numbers expanded explosively in the 1970s. Now its population is leveling off. This last statement may seem strange until you wander an unmanaged forest preserve. Much of the site is sure to be so packed with buckthorn that no more can crowd in. Yet if population dynamics are largely responsible for slowing buckthorn's expansion, district employees and volunteers can take some credit too. We have cleared it from thousands of acres of woods and prairies.

Today's crew consists of seven volunteers and district naturalist Laura Ashman. We warm up on some small buckthorn and then shift to a substantial stand. Ellen has her hands full with a buckthorn with several twining trunks. She manages to saw through one but it is so entangled with its brethren that it cannot be removed. I hold the severed trunk out of the way while she applies her saw to another trunk. A herbicider's responsibilities call for him to move among the crew. His role expands from simply being a mechanical applicator to being an all-around helper always ready to lend a hand with the downing of a difficult buckthorn or some chitchat to provide relief from the work. I apply herbicide from a plastic container with a spout. The spout allows me to apply the herbicide directly to the cambium layer next to the bark where woody plants actively grow. This application minimizes the herbicide used and ensures that no nearby plants are inadvertently herbicided. While I have been moving among the group, Chuck has been laboring on a gargantuan buckthorn. I take a turn with the saw. But brute force is not enough to topple this buckthorn. The weight of its trunk closes our cut. The saw blade binds. We abandon the base and direct our efforts against the upper limbs. We remove them all except one that arcs away from our cut. The weight of this limb will help keep our cut open. We set the saw at the base again. Chuck slices furiously into the wood. I push on the trunk, applying my muscle to keep the cut open. Finally the buckthorn topples with a thud. "The townspeople can sleep in peace tonight," Chuck declares wearily. Not just yet. I carefully apply herbicide to the stump. Done. Rest easy, townspeople.

CAMPTON HILLS PARK - Kane County

Campton Hills Park is a splendid 240-acre parcel in St. Charles owned–get this–by the Illinois Department of Corrections. Why? Because a youth home for male felons aged 9 to 18 is located here, surrounded by a tall barbed-wire fence and security system. It has been a correctional facility of one sort or another since the turn of the century. But those facilities occupy only a few acres. Visitors turning onto the road for Campton Hills will see sprawling soccer and football fields on the left, and then pass the Youth Home. On the east side (following a veer to the right) is the first of the restored areas in Campton Hills Park.

The history of this land is as mixed as the topography. It was used for farming, mining, trapping, hunting, and dumping. Some of it is still farmed, but the other activities have ceased. The St. Charles Park District began renting part of it more than 15 years ago. At one time there was a proposal to develop a golf course here. But Carol Stevenson, a local activist, formed Friends of Campton Hills Park, and they fought to keep the land open and natural. And they won! Carol, as volunteer steward, and many volunteers worked with District Naturalist Mary Ochsenschlager to restore the landscape, creating prairie, wetland, and savanna communities.

Today, Campton Hills is a mosaic of restoration, and a veritable study in biodiversity. In just three miles of trail visitors can take in a sedge meadow, marshes, fens, savannas and a dry hill prairie. Acres of aggressive herbs, shrubs and trees (natives and non-natives) have been assiduously removed. Successful clearing has given way to a flowering of native plants and grasses, and a surge of frog and bird life.

The Carol Stevenson Wetlands (named for their greatest advocate) contains two fens bordered by a ridge. In summer the fens hold grass of parnassus, fringed and bottle gentian, flat-topped aster, and swamp thistle. In the trees and shrubs around the fen, look for nesting orioles and towhees in the summer months.

On the west side is another wetland complex with a fen, sedge meadow, and two pothole marshes. Look for swamp aster, angelica, and cardinal flowers, none of them common. A suite of frogs can be heard in the marshes starting in the spring: gray tree frogs, spring peepers, and western chorus frogs. Bluebirds and bobolinks sing out over the meadow. Savannas flank this area with walnut, shagbark and bitternut hickories, and bur, white, and chinquapin oaks.

Perhaps the prize of the day lies in the southwest corner of the park: a pristine dry hill prairie. Farmers, diggers, and dumpers never reached this area. Little bluestem, side oats grama, northern dropseed, and porcupine grass dominate. Rare prairie flowers include stiff aster, purple prairie clover, cream wild indigo, and Hill's thistle.

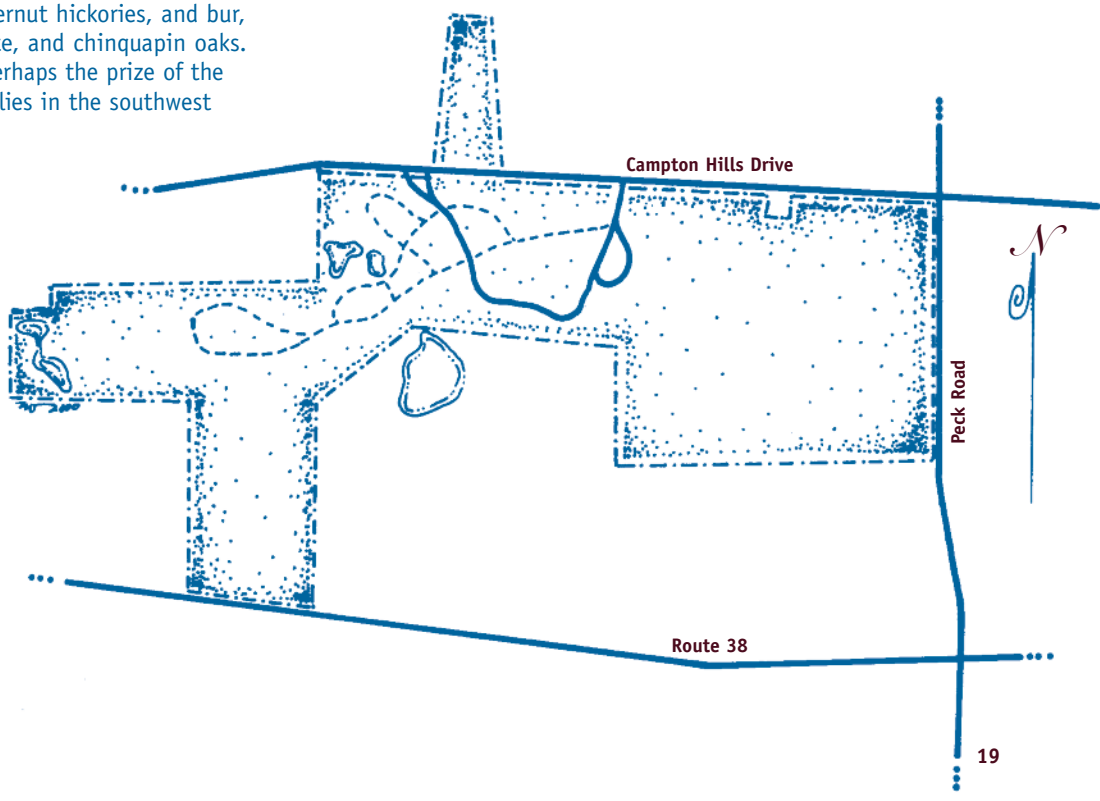
In the fall, the marsh hopped with blackbirds and kinglets and a chorus frog (sounding like someone strumming a comb). The frog was "singing his last swan song," Ochsenschlager said, "before he's submerged" for the winter.

This beautiful area needs volunteers. Workdays are the first Saturday of every month, 9:00 a.m.-noon, all year round. The next nature walk is scheduled for Saturday, March 31, 2001 from 10:00-11:30 a.m. To sign up for workdays or the walk, call Mary Ochsenschlager at (630) 513-3338.

— Gail Goldberger

DIRECTIONS

Heading northwest on I-90, exit Randall Rd. and go south, through Elgin to Rte. 64. Head west on 64 for about a mile, and turn left (south) on Peck Rd. The first intersection will be Peck and Campton Hills Rd. Go west (right) on Campton Hills Rd. and take the second entrance to reach the natural areas.



Directions

Fullersburg is located in the southeast corner of Oak Brook. From Chicago, take I-290 to I-294 south and exit at Ogden Ave. Go east to York Rd., then north one quarter mile to Spring Rd. The forest preserve entrance is on the right.

This 221-acre preserve of meadows, woodlands, prairies, and wetlands along the Salt Creek, offers visitors four trails with interpretive signs. The Fuller House, built in 1840 by Ben Fuller and moved to its current site in 1981, is at the preserve entrance near Graue Mill. It's considered one of the oldest known examples of early balloon construction. Fullersburg (now Oak Brook) was a thriving town until the train line to Aurora bypassed the settlement in 1862. A Civilian Conservation Corps camp was built at Fullersburg during the Depression. Later, the site became so popular for local recreation that officials had to restrict picnicking and boating in order to protect the natural resources.

One forest preserve trail leads to Graue Mill, a National Historic Landmark operated by Hinsdale Township. Frederick Graue used the waters of Salt Creek to run his mill. The basement was used by slaves as a stop along the underground railroad. Corn is still milled there and a museum includes furniture from the 1800's. The Mill is open every day between 10 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. mid-April to mid-November. For information, contact Graue Mill at (630) 655-2090.

The restored prairie along the 1.3-mile Interpretive Trail attracts a variety of songbirds such as cerulean, Kentucky and black-throated blue warblers. Red fox, beaver, muskrat, coyote, white-tailed deer and other mammals also make their home there. Look for some of them along the banks of Salt Creek. Birders have seen the black-crowned night herons and the Coopers' hawks here during migration.

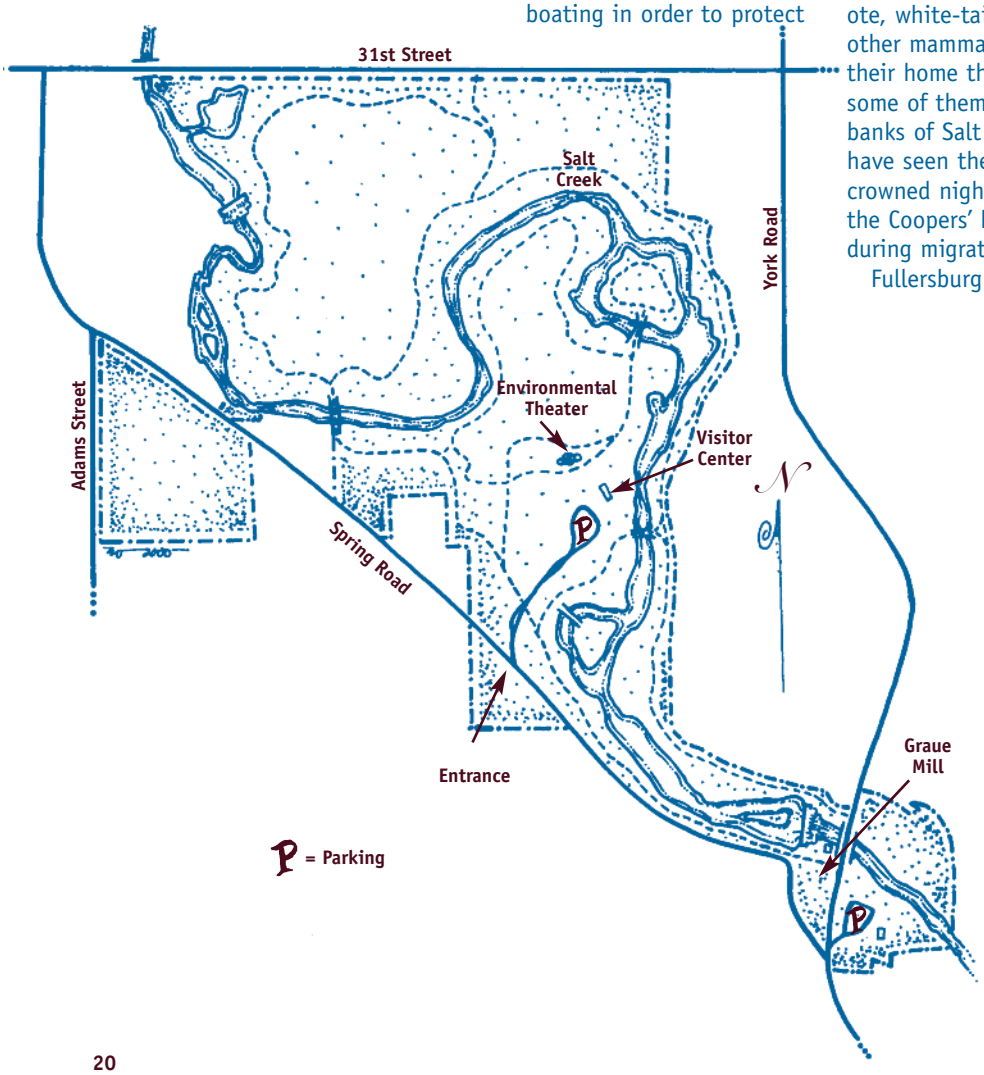
Fullersburg is a great place to examine animal tracks in winter. All told, there are nearly five miles of trails through Fullersburg.

Educating the public about man's influence on the ecosystem is the main focus of the dedicated staff of Fullersburg Woods. Nature Center Supervisor Tom Prey provides students the opportunity to become stewards of the land as they plant trees, monitor streams, and learn about biodiversity. The staff recently enlisted the help of 30-40 local schools to raise 150 bass, which were released along the River Walk in Naperville.

During the winter, naturalists Jack MacRae (author of Chicago WILDERNESS' Natural Events Calendar on page 24–stop in and say hey to Jack), Phil Courington, and others inspire students with programs about winter animals, wildlife issues, the web of life, and how to be a nature detective.

Stop in the Nature Center and experience plants and animals of the wetlands, take an environmental quiz on the computer, or touch the vertebrae of a wooly mammoth. The Visitor Center is open to the public daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. except for Thanksgiving, Christmas Even, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Biking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing are allowed on the main trails. Bring your pet as long as it remains on a leash. Call (630) 850-8110 for more information.

— Susan Larys



"Glacial Park takes us outside our everyday experience and transports us in time to a land on the eve of settlement, with all of its possibilities stretched out before us in waving prairie grasses and wetlands alive with the call of migratory waterfowl," says Restoration Ecologist Ed Collins, rhapsodizing about the Conservation District's 3,000-acre crown jewel near Richmond.

The site's 330 acres of dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve provides habitat for 18 species of state endangered and threatened plants and birds, including least bitterns, sandhill cranes, upland sandpipers, black terns, pied-billed grebes, yellow-headed blackbirds, Henslow's sparrows, and northern harriers.

In 1993, thirteen wild turkeys were reintroduced to the site. Today, flocks of 20 to 50 wild turkeys can be seen flying to their favorite oak perches at dusk.

Short-eared owls top the winter visitor list. "Sometimes you'll see as many as five or six in the prairie at dusk," says Collins, "and they'll get fairly close to you. They're not timid at all."

Hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling (on restricted trails), camping, and pets on leashes are welcomed all winter long. Biking is only permitted on the Prairie Trail that runs along the former Chicago and Northwestern RR line north and south of Harts Road.

The Nippersink Trail is one of the more forgiving beginner's cross-country trails while Deerpath Trail offers a bit more challenge for experienced cross-country skiers. In January and February when there is snow, the Nordic Ski patrol provides hot chocolate and cookies at Weidrich Barn on weekends. The site itself is open from 8:00 a.m. to sunset.

By mid-March spring migration is underway and various waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors can be seen making their way through the area.

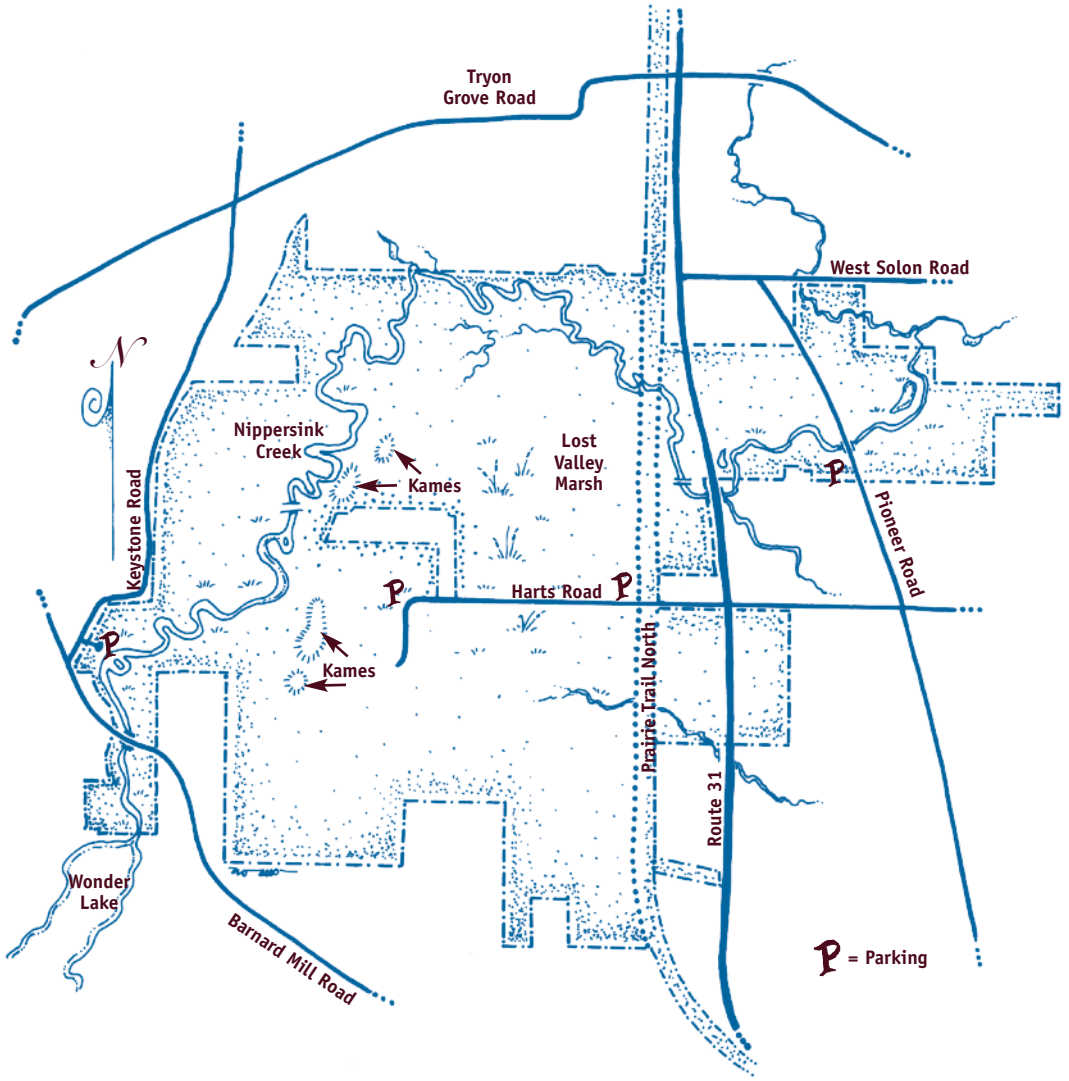
For more information, call (815) 338-6223.

— April Anderson

See pp. 8-12 for an account of the re-meandering of the Nippersink in Glacial Park.

Directions

Take Rte. 31 north to McHenry. Turn left on Harts Rd. and travel 0.6 miles to the park entrance. Parking is available at Weidrich Education Center (north of the entrance or follow the park road around the curve to the parking area east of the marsh). Other parking is available on Keystone Rd., just east of the intersection of Barnard Mill Rd.



Directions

From I-94, go north until it becomes Rte. 41. Take 41 north to Delaney Rd. Turn west (right), onto Delaney and follow to Yorkhouse Rd. Turn right onto Yorkhouse and take it about four miles to North Ave. Take North to Blanchard Rd., and turn left into the parking lot.

Saved from housing and agricultural development, Lyons Woods is a 264-acre high quality mix of restored prairie, oak savanna, forest and fen near Waukegan. The preserve is named for its first known landowner, Isaac Reed Lyons of Massachusetts, who arrived here in 1843 and served as an alderman and business owner in Waukegan.

An evergreen grove just off the parking lot on Blanchard Road—a great spot for birding—was once part of George Pavlik's tree nursery in the 1940s. Winter visitors will enjoy the pine scent and needle-softened trail leading north into the savanna of planted white, bur and black oaks. Red osier dogwood, bottlebrush grass, New England asters, and grassleaf goldenrod line the trail in the meadow of former agricultural fields. Tom Smith, Lake County Forest Preserve District Volunteer Coordinator, explains that though the area is still somewhat degraded, his teams have put in a lot of work planting and burning. They can take pride in fall's healthy display of prairie thistle and side-flowering aster. There's also a notable lack of buckthorn, garlic mustard and unwanted weeds.

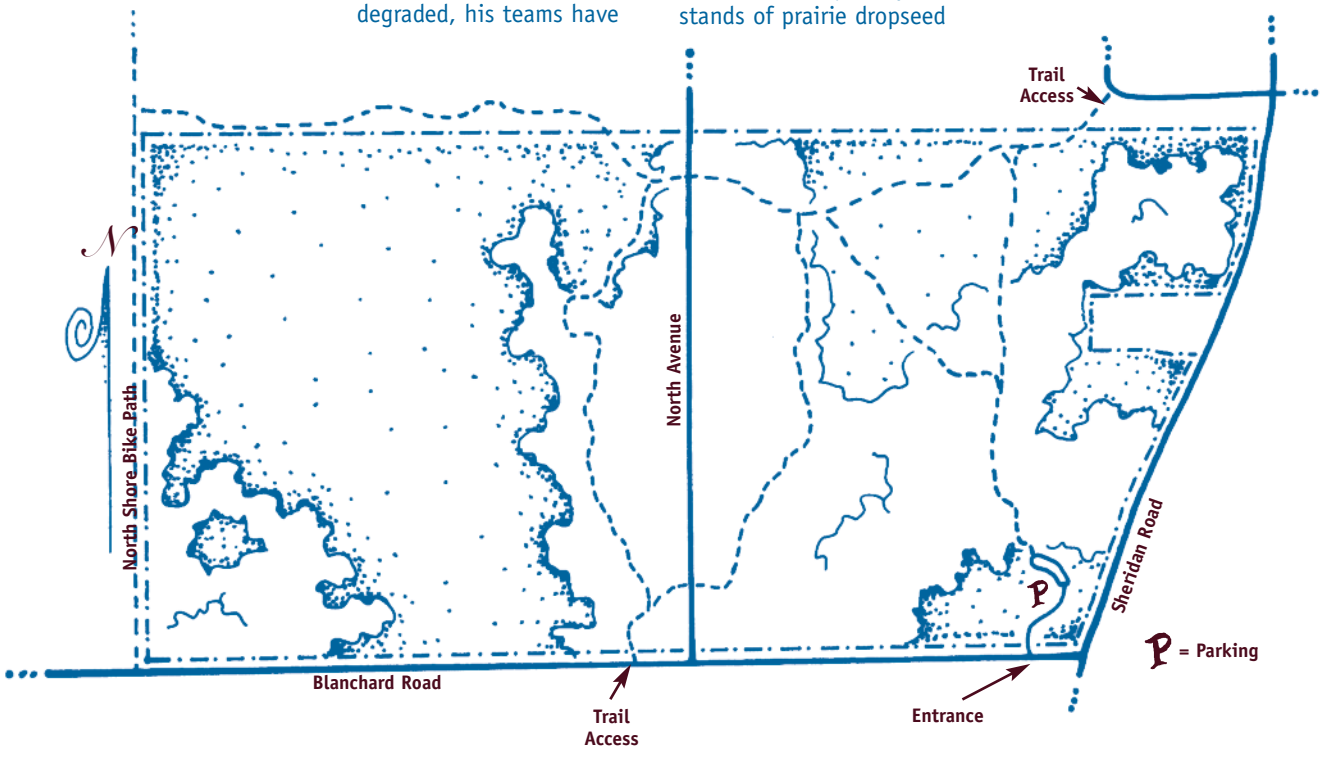
An outstanding mesic prairie, covering the west half of the preserve, and also accessible from Blanchard Rd., just west of North Ave., harbors several state-endangered species.

Flowing in the prairie winds, big bluestem, Indian and switch grasses, soon to be tamped down with snow, surround several abandoned goldfinch nests and busy bluebird boxes. Bluebird habitat efforts have been successful here; several bright males may be seen flitting between the taller dogwood and buckthorn trees. Students at nearby Clark School have helped with the boxes, plantings and workdays, as part of the Mighty Acorns and Preservation Partners programs. Near the school, dozens of low, pillowy stands of prairie dropseed grass appear. Dropseed is considered to be the most common prairie plant native to the area, rather than the taller grasses, according to letters from Dr. George Vasey, 19th century botanist and expert on grasses (see p. 10).

In spring and summer, look for trillium, liatris, sedges, Drummond's aster and several varieties of goldenrod. Towering sawtooth sunflower, iris and prairie dock also provide shelter for bobolinks, prairie larks, and many species of snake. Red-tail fox are also at home here.

Lyons Woods is bounded on the west by the North Shore bike path (McClory Trail), and includes three more miles of trials open to hiking, bicycling and cross-country skiing. Pets are allowed on leashes, and a public toilet is available at the easternmost Blanchard Road trail entrance.

— Lisa Phillips



WEST DUPAGE WOODS - DuPage County

West DuPage Woods, a 460-acre parcel of land divided by the West Branch of the DuPage River, offers fens, floodplain, dry mesic woodlands (white and red oak, shagbark hickory), sedge meadows, and a small prairie. It's downstream from East Branch Forest Preserve and upstream from Blackwell Forest Preserve near Winfield.

On the west side, Black Oak Trail, a one-mile crushed limestone loop trail, offers a wonderful ramble among majestic pre-settlement oaks skirting a 40-acre fen. "This is still the only preserve in the county in which the swamp goldenrod is found...it's very rich floristically," noted Scott Kobal, a plant ecologist with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.

Hikers will also appreciate four loop trails totaling 4-5 miles on the east side among gently rolling oak hills, hawthorn-dotted prairie, and the river. There is also a fen on this side of the preserve. "It's the only fen on the south side of the river," said Volunteer Liaison Cindy Hedges, "and for 1.5 acres it's very diverse." The fen contains four "special concern" status plants that are monitored closely by staff and volunteers.

"One of our volunteers located blue-winged warblers on the east side last spring," noted Hedges. "They are uncommon-to-rare in the area, but need shrubby prairie patches." The dry, shrubby Elsen's Hill Prairie also contains rare Christmas fern and running ground pine. The woods provide great habitat for mink, deer, coyotes, foxes, great horned owls, screech owls, and nuthatches, as well as red-bellied, red-headed, and downy woodpeckers. Fascinating old beaver-gnawed trees can be found by the river, too!

Hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and birding are among the preserve's winter highlights. Small outdoor picnic areas and latrines are also available. The site is open from one hour before sunrise until an hour after sunset.

The forest preserve district is looking for volunteers to conduct spring amphibian surveys at DuPage Woods. Training will take place Thurs., February 8, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Blackwell Nursery Complex on Mack Road.

For more information, call (630) 876-5929.

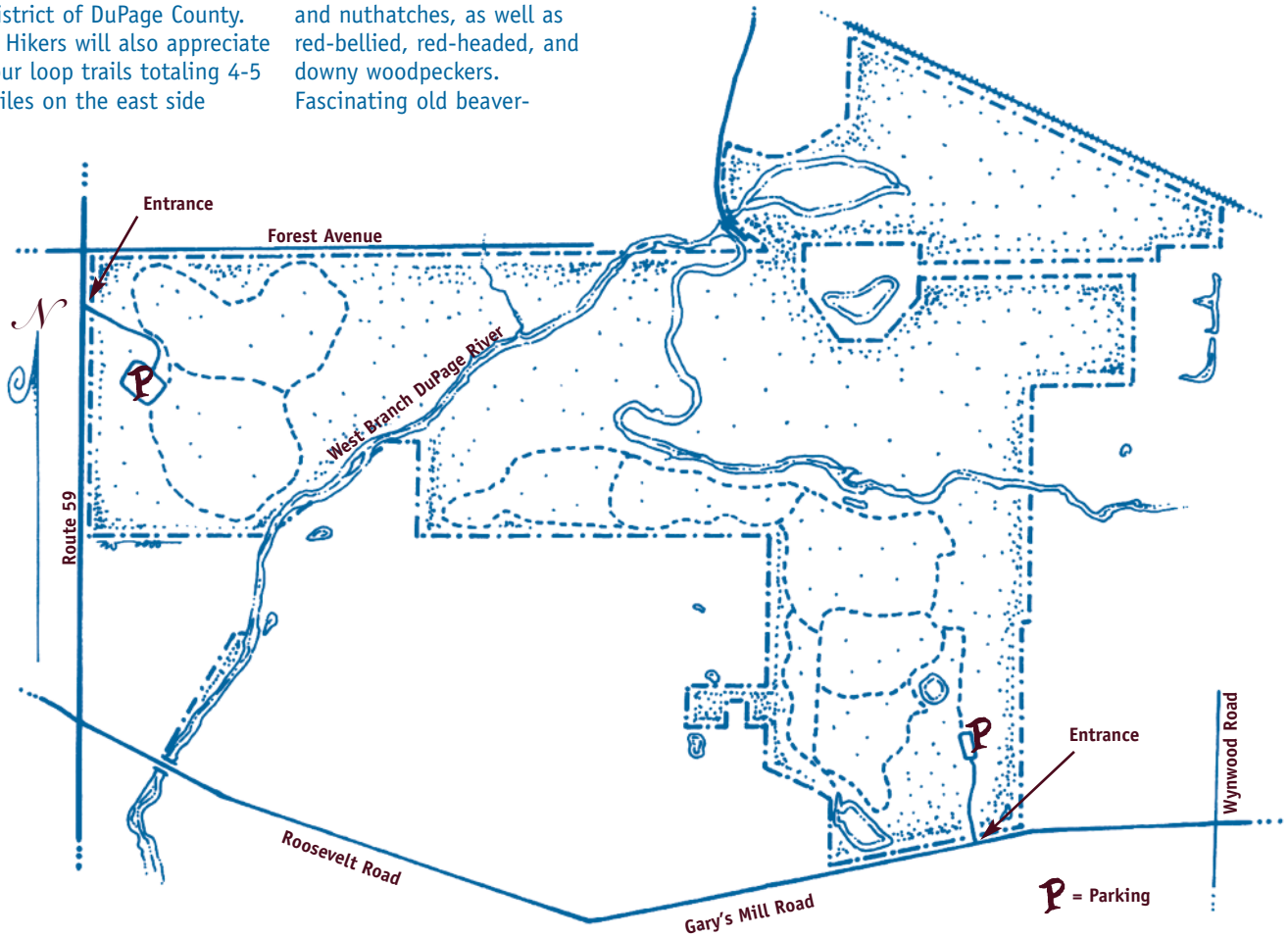
— April Anderson

DIRECTIONS

East Entrance: From I-88, exit at Winfield Rd. north. Pass Roosevelt Rd. (Rte. 38) and go west on Gary's Mill Rd. The parking lot is on the right.

West Entrance: From I-88, exit at Winfield Rd. north. Go west on Roosevelt Rd. (Rte. 38) to Rte. 59, then go a few miles north. The parking lot is on the right.

Workday Schedule: Sat., March 17, 9:00 a.m.-noon. Dress for the weather (long pants, long sleeves, sturdy boots or shoes). The forest preserve district provides work gloves, tools, and equipment.



Natural Events CALENDAR

Here's what's debuting on nature's stage in Chicago Wilderness by Jack MacRae

WINTER 2000 – 2001

THE BEGINNING OF WINTER

Our Native Pines

Late December seems an appropriate time to write about pines, as assorted cedars, firs, and spruce are being hawked as Christmas trees. But Chicago Wilderness has only two native species of pine—the white pine and the brilliantly named jack pine. Both have been growing here for thousands of years while all the others have been introduced from other regions. Up until the time of settlement in the 19th century, white and jack pines were abundant in the sandy soils adjacent to Lake Michigan. The great majority of them were harvested for lumber to build the early buildings in Chicago. At the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the shifting sands have covered and uncovered stumps of white pines that are older than the Great Pyramids in Egypt.

Rough Legs

A few rough-legged hawks have begun their annual winter sojourn, down from their summer nesting grounds around Hudson Bay. Prairie in the winter, their habitat is tundra in the summer. These misnamed buteos actually have soft legs, with a layer of feathers covering their tarsi. Approximately every four years or so, there is an increase in the number of northern birds of prey including rough-leggeds and snowy owls. This irruption is caused by the cyclical fluctuations in the rodent populations, creating a situation where there are a lot of predators and relatively few prey. When this happens, winged hunters are forced to expand their winter range to the south.

THE MIDDLE OF WINTER

Poop as Communication

The crushed limestone trails that wind through our forest preserves seem to serve two purposes. First, they enable people to walk through the preserve, ideally seeing nice things without causing damage to the plants and animals. The other purpose of our trails is to provide a place for coyotes to go to the bathroom. Using their feces as a means of communication, coyotes are careful to place it in a location assured of being well traveled.

At a glance, coyote scat looks a lot like dog poop. But if you get down on your hands and knees and look real carefully, you'll notice coyote poop has lots of hair. Domestic dogs usually don't get a lot of hair in their diet. (I was kidding about getting on your hands and knees. Most people are able to see the hair while standing, without drawing too much attention to themselves.)

Sycamore: A Tree with Balls

There will be a full moon on February 8, 2001. If there is a fresh layer of snow, it would be an ideal night to sneak out and pay a visit to our stately sycamore trees. Their smooth, gleaming upper branches contrast beautifully against the dark night sky. Dangling from the top branches are their balls, distinctive spherical seed clusters that will break apart during the gusty winds of spring.

Sycamore trees are common throughout the valleys of the lower Des Plaines and Kankakee River systems. They are uncommon in the northern section of Chicago Wilderness.

Gulls of Winter

Most of the sleek gulls that all year long patrol the skies above our landfills and strip mall parking lots are either ring billed or herring gulls. But at this time of year, large majestic gulls known as black-backs are soaring over the cold waters of Lake Michigan. With distinctive slate black feathers on their wings and across their shoulders, these dashing birds may finish the winter in our area, then take off and spend the rest of the year cruising the waters off the coast of northeast Canada.

Most of the visiting black-backs are youngsters, their plumage containing streaks of gray and pale brown. They don't receive their striking adult plumage until they are four or five years old.

Greater black-backed gulls are a little bit bigger than lesser black-backed gulls. Say that three times fast.

THE END OF WINTER

Thawing Frogs

This time of year some wood frogs are frozen as a fish stick. But no need to worry. They'll soon be defrosting and hopping down to a local flatwoods pond, eager to procreate their species. Wood frogs have the shortest window for breeding activity of our local frogs. As the air and water temperatures rise to 41 degrees, wood frogs show slight breeding activity. When the air temperature rises to 50 degrees and water temperature reaches the upper 40s, breeding activity reaches maximum intensity. In a few short weeks it will be over and these dark frogs with the black mask will quickly return to their solitary lives in our mature, mesic forests. Wood frogs are uncommon in northeastern Illinois, but frequent in northern Indiana, and common farther east.

Looks Like Liver

A very early blooming woodland wildflower—hepatica—is often found on slopes in our wet forests. The fragile flower emerges from the decaying red oak leaves. The spring leaves of the hepatica are actually from the previous growing season, still green after several months under the snow. The green color, of course, is leftover chlorophyll from last year's photosynthesizing.

Hepatica gets it name from looking like liver. The two species of hepatica in our area are the sharp-lobed and round-lobed, referring to the shape of that livery leaf. The round-lobed species prefers to grow in soil slightly more acidic than the sharp-lobed variety.

Seeding the Snow: artists of the restoration

"We stood between the ponds to do our survey. We were treated to a concert that surrounded us with surprisingly well-orchestrated vocalists. Smiling, we listened for a crescendo. After it came, the peepers dropped off one by one, leaving a silence as powerful as the frog voices had been."

—from "Nightwalk," by Karen Holland Rodriguez in Seeding the Snow, Fall-Winter 1997

Photos: Corasue Nicholas

Christiane Rey and Nancy Freehafer, standing at rear, making art happen.

People who do restoration and conservation work realize that, in nature, it takes many voices to make a healthy chorus. In recent years, a group of Chicago-area women have given a new voice to nature interpretation with the biannual journal, *Seeding the Snow*. It's a collection of original artwork and writing by women in the Midwest involved in the restoration movement, conservation efforts, or local nature in general.

Co-editor Nancy Freehafer says the idea for the journal sprang from a women's prairie restoration weekend campout in July 1994 at Nachusa Grasslands in Lee and Ogle County near Franklin Grove, Illinois. Freehafer's friend and fellow editor Karen Rodriguez had been working on an article about women in restoration and was thinking of eventually writing a book on the subject. After the campout, Rodriguez and Freehafer began collecting manuscripts from others and talking about the project at subsequent gatherings. They realized a need for an ongoing place for women's nature interpretation, so the book idea evolved into *Seeding the Snow*.

Freehafer and Rodgriguez held a planning meeting for the journal in September 1996. During a time of uncertainty for restoration efforts (a moratorium had temporarily been imposed in Cook County), the journal provided a place for women to continue their involvement, above and beyond doing the work itself. The best time to plant some seeds for spring is in a light snow, one of them realized, so the journal's title became *Seeding the Snow*.

The first issue appeared in spring of 1997. Since then Freehafer says the addition of Christiane Rey as art director has brought a stronger sense of continuity, as did formulating their mission statement. The production team also includes graphic designer Corasue Nicholas (who designed the Chicago Wilderness *Atlas of Biodiversity*).

"If the restoration movement is to keep growing," says Rey, "it has to go beyond on-the-ground environmental concerns, and become more emotional in order to reach a wider audience." *Seeding the Snow* includes high quality woodcuts, photographs, poems, and essays on everything from prairie loosestrife to one woman's first seed gathering trip. Ideally, says Rey, the artwork they choose stands on its own alongside the text, with equal weight given to both.

Rey sees the journal's usefulness as a place for women to express feelings they might not feel comfortable expressing elsewhere. In fact, many of the women whose work is eventually featured in *Seeding the Snow* don't really know much about restoration or conservation, but they will learn about it through the journal.

Though circulation is currently only a few hundred, a September 1999 profile in the *Chicago Tribune* helped increase both submissions and subscriptions, and Freehafer says they are trying other ways to reach new readers. *Seeding the Snow* will sponsor a March 11 nature writing workshop to be led by Stephanie Mills, (author of *In Service of the Wild: Restoring and Reinhabiting Damaged Land*. see p. 39.) At a recent potluck dinner, a group of 20 supporters, contributors, and volunteers gathered to hand-bind and mail the recent Fall/Winter 2000 issue. The women sat around tables and on the floor, drank hot cider and carefully poked holes into the spine of each issue, then tied them with raffia. They talked about the color variations and quality of the covers, which are handmade by WomanCraft, Inc., a women's job skills program affiliated with social service organization, Deborah's Place. As they worked and later ate a bountiful meal, they talked about politics, an upcoming seed processing day, and their lives.

"This is a community for women in the Chicago area," says Freehafer. "They have really taken *Seeding the Snow* on as something they believe in."

— Lisa Phillips

To subscribe, mail your name, address and phone with $14 (for two issues per year) to:

Seeding the Snow
2534 N. St. Louis
Chicago, IL 60647-1206

To submit your work for publication, or volunteer for the next potluck binding party, call Christiane Rey at (773) 478-2019 or Nancy Freehafer at (773) 342-6665.

Northern Shrike: on vacation

On a cool December day last year, Gayle Wagner watched a northern shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) in McHenry County pluck what appeared to be a very frozen grasshopper impaled on a twig and chomp it down. Last February, Tom Lally watched a shrike fly down to a small tree used as a caching site and yank the remains of some small mammal off a thorn and wolf it down. Meanwhile Richard Biss was entertained while a shrike in his Lake Villa backyard in Lake County flew near a wetland, caught a vole, and ate it.

These experiences are rare for birders in the Chicago Wilderness region–the northern shrike only visits here in the winter from about October through March and its numbers are declining in eastern North America. These facts should give pause to observers who may not realize birds need not only good habitat for breeding, but also good wintering habitat. Indeed, says Steven D. Bailey, an ornithologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey, "most shrike species throughout the world are declining, for various reasons, some of which are still unknown."

Last winter, Illinois birders documented a record number of northern shrikes–105–and most were in the Chicago Wilderness region, says Bailey. But that doesn't mean the species' numbers are rising. National Christmas Bird Count data from 1900 through 1980 show northern shrikes go through irregular series of cycles. These fluctuations probably occur based on winter severity and prey availability on the shrike's Canadian tundra breeding grounds.

Photo: Rob Curtis/The Early Birder

Northern shrikes wintering here typically choose wet prairies and grassy areas near wetlands and lakes where tussocky grasses provide habitat for its favorite foods: voles, mice, and small birds. Some fairly reliable places to find northern shrikes annually include Illinois Beach State Park in Lake County, Fermilab in DuPage County, and Moraine Hills State Park in McHenry County.

The northern shrike defends large winter territories–as many as 540 acres. Like other members of its family, including the loggerhead shrike (a state threatened breeder in Illinois), the northern shrike catches it prey, then stores it in caches known as larders by impaling the prey on a sharp projection. "Hawthorns, crab apples, osage orange, and barbed wire are common sites for loggerhead shrikes in Illinois, and are likely sites for wintering northern shrikes as well," says Bailey.

The northern shrike is found here only in winter. The loggerhead shrike spends winters in the South but breeds regularly at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie near Joliet.

Shrikes possess extremely acute vision. A trained shrike once spotted flying bumblebees at least 100 yards away. You may not get to experience shrikes catching bumblebees in Chicago Wilderness this winter, but if you choose the right habitat and wait patiently, you may spot a northern shrike perched atop a tree, scouting for prey. Be patient and keep your distance from this wary species because it often flies if approached too closely.

– Sheryl DeVore

Snowy owls nest on open tundra. They defend themselves by ruffling their feathers (making them appear twice as large) rotating their wings and spreading them to look like a great (and fearsome) animated fan.

Greg LeFevre: citizen of the earth

Photos: Wendy Paulson

Young Greg LeFevre (in middle) seeding the snow at Grigsby Prairie with friends.

It is not unusual for volunteers to receive recognition for five or 10 years of service at the annual meeting of Barrington's Citizens for Conservation (CFC). Last February Greg LeFevre was honored with a 10-year award, along with several other restoration volunteers. But Greg was 14 years old at the time.

Greg's dad, Bob LeFevre, started volunteering with CFC in the late 1980s, when the local conservation group began a prairie reconstruction project in Barrington Hills, later named Grigsby Prairie (see CW, summer 2000). Sometimes he brought his two young sons to workdays. "I liked to be outside," says Greg, "so I tagged along with dad."

Greg came week after week. He harvested seed, piled cut brush, weeded, and sowed seed as the prairie expanded. He still says he volunteers mostly because he loves being outside. But on further reflection, he admits that he likes the sense of accomplishment. "You can look back at the end of the day and see a hillside cleared of buckthorn, and it really makes you feel like you've done something."

Early on, it became clear that Greg was a natural at restoration work. He learned to recognize blazing star, prairie coreopsis, sideoats grama, and other prairie species in their seed stages and needed little or no instruction on seed-collection outings. He worked hard and became a resource and inspiration to adult volunteers. "He's very dedicated," says CFC volunteer Gail Vanderpoel. "You can tell he's not going to get tired of restoration work."

This past summer, Greg was hired by Citizens for Conservation as one of three full-time summer interns. He was by far the youngest intern in the five-year-old program—and also the most experienced. Greg was an easy choice for the job, which attracts a large pool of applicants. "We knew what kind of worker he was," says restoration coordinator Tom Vanderpoel. "We knew his knowledge base and how he interacted with other volunteers. Some of the applicants aren't ready to tackle hard work."

Greg says that as an intern, "you definitely get to do more of the whole job. "I knew my dad was always the first to come and last to go, but I didn't appreciate all the preparation and wrap-up for volunteer days. I no longer could work from 9 to 11 as a 'convenience volunteer.' As an intern, I felt more responsibility. I was expected to perform. I couldn't just watch the sunset."

While he has worked at a variety of Barrington-area restoration projects, Grigsby Prairie continues to be Greg's favorite. "I'm more partial to open prairies. When bobolinks began nesting here, I knew it was becoming a really high quality place. And it has diversity, a variety of micro-ecosystems –wetlands, mesic areas, a bit of savanna, hills with little bluestem. It's quiet," he adds, "which makes it different from the other restoration areas. You feel really welcome here."

When he's not involved in restoration work, Greg's tastes still run to the outdoors. He took a week's vacation with his family last summer in the Bighorn Mountain region of Wyoming, where he could do what he loves: hike, camp, backpack, fish.

Now a sophomore at Lake Zurich High School, Greg has returned as a volunteer to collect seeds from native plants on weekends. Seed harvesting remains one of his favorite activities. "Autumn is my favorite season, and I like being in rural areas and along the railroad tracks," he says. "It's a more social occasion and gives you a real sense of accomplishment. Anybody can do it; you don't need to be in special physical condition."

While he's unsure of precise future plans, Greg is clear about the quality of his own endeavors in the restoration arena. "Maybe I have a guilty conscience," he says, "but I feel I have a responsibility not only to perform a job, but to do it for the future of the restoration–on a very local level, but really as a citizen of the earth. Others feel they have to do well in sports or school, but this is what I want to do well at."

– Wendy Paulson

Photo: Robert Shaw

Letters from a Father

by Mona Van Duyn

Ulcerated tooth keeps me awake, there is
such pain, would have to go to the hospital to have
it pulled or would bleed to death from the blood thinners,
but can't leave Mother, she falls and forgets her salve
and her tranquilizers, her ankles swell so and her bowels
are so bad, she almost had a stoppage and sometimes
what she passes is green as grass. There are big holes
in my thigh where my leg brace buckles the size of dimes.
My head pounds from the high pressure. It is awful
not to be able to get out, and I fell in the bathroom
and the girl could hardly get me up at all.
Sure thought my back was broken, it will be next time.
Prostate is bad and heart has given out,
feel bloated after supper. Have made my peace
because am just plain done for and have no doubt
that the Lord will come any day with my release.
You say you enjoy your feeder, I don't see why
you want to spend good money on grain for birds
and you say you have a hundred sparrows, I'd buy
poison and get rid of their diseases and turds.

II

We enjoyed your visit, it was nice of you to bring
the feeder but a terrible waste of your money
for that big bag of feed since we won't be living
more than a few weeks long. We can see
them good from where we sit, big ones and little ones
but you know when I farmed I used to like to hunt
and we had many a good meal from pigeons
and quail and pheasant but these birds won't
be good for nothing and are dirty to have so near
the house. Mother likes the redbirds though.
My bad knee is so sore and I can't hardly hear
and Mother says she is hoarse form yelling but I know
it's too late for a hearing aid. I belch up all the time
and have a sour mouth and of course with my heart
it's no use to go to a doctor. Mother is the same.
Has a scab she thinks is going to turn to a wart.

III

The birds are eating and fighting, Ha! Ha! All shapes
and colors and sizes coming out of our woods
but we don't know what they are. Your Mother hopes
you can send us a kind of book that tells about birds.
There is one the folks called snowbirds, they eat on the ground,
we had the girl sprinkle extra there, but say,
they eat something awful. I sent the girl to town
to buy some more feed, she had to go anyway.

IV

Almost called you on the telephone
but it costs so much to call thought better write.
Say, the funniest thing is happening, one
day we had so many birds and they fight
and get excited at their feed you know
and it's really something to watch and two or three
flew right at us and crashed into our window
and bang, poor little things knocked themselves silly.
They come to after while on the ground and flew away.
And they been doing that. We felt awful
and didn't know what to do but the other day
a lady from our Church drove out to call
and a little bird knocked itself out while she sat
and she brought it in her hands right into the house,
it looked like dead. It had a kind of hat
of feathers sticking up on its head, kind of rose
or pinky color, don't know what it was,
and I petted it and it come to life right there
in her hands and she took it out and it flew. She says
they think the window is the sky on a fair
day, she feeds birds too but hasn't got
so many. She says to hang strips of aluminum foil
in the window so we'll do that. She raved about
our birds. P.S. The book just come in the mail.

V

Say, that book is sure good, I study
in it every day and enjoy our birds.
Some of them I can't identify
for sure, I guess they're females, the Latin words
I just skip over. Bet you'd never guess
the sparrow I've got here, House Sparrow you wrote,
but I have Fox Sparrows, Song Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows,
Pine Woods and Tree and Chipping and White Throat
and White Crowned Sparrows. I have six Cardinals,
three pairs, they come at early morning and night,
the males at the feeder and on the ground the females.
Juncos, maybe 25, they fight
for the ground, that's what they used to call snowbirds. I miss
the Bluebirds since the weather warmed. Their breast

Photo at right by Frank Navratil, of his backyard feeder. Birds from the left: two house finches, mourning dove, cardinal, four house sparrows, another dove, and a dark-eyed junco. A fifth house sparrow is on approach for his final landing.

is the color of a good ripe muskmelon. Tufted Titmouse
is sort of blue with a little tiny crest.
And I have Flicker and Red-Bellied and Red-
Headed Woodpeckers, you would die laughing
to see Red-Bellied, he hangs on with his head
flat on the board, his tail braced up under,
wing out. And Dickcissel and Ruby Crowned Kinglet
and Nuthatch stands on his head and Veery on top
the color of a bird dog and Hermit Thrush with spot
on breast, Blue Jay so funny, he will hop
right on the backs of the other birds to get the grain.
We bought some sunflower seeds just for him.
And Purple Finch I bet you never seen,
color of a watermelon, sits on the rim
of the feeder with his streaky wife, and the squirrels,
you know, they are cute too, they sit tall
and eat with their little hands, they eat bucketfuls.
I pulled my own tooth, it didn't bleed at all.

VI

It's sure a surprise how well Mother is doing,
she forgets her laxative but bowels move fine.
Now that windows are open she says our birds sing
all day. The girl took a Book of Knowledge on loan
from the library and I am reading up
on the habits of birds, did you know some males have three
wives, some migrate some don't. I am going to keep
feeding all spring, maybe summer, you can see
they expect it. Will need thistle seed for Goldfinch and Pine
Siskin next winter. Some folks are going to come see us
from Church, some bird watchers, pretty soon.
They have birds in town but nothing to equal this.

So the world woos its children back for an evening kiss.

Attracting Birds to Your Feeders & Your Yard

By Bob and Karen Fisher

Photo: Jim Flynn/Root Resources

Never fed birds before? Be patient–a month may pass before birds appear regularly. To increase species variety, provide several different types of seed in a variety of feeders scattered at various locations.

It's a myth that you can't stop feeding once you've started. Birds adapt well to changes in food supplies and will move around to find new sources. But in an extreme winter cold spell with heavy snow cover you might want to recruit your neighbor to keep the feeders filled while you're basking in a tropical sun.

Locate pole feeders 8-10' from trees if you can. Use a large diameter, tubular sleeve (the least expensive choice is 4" diameter PVC pipe available at hardware and home centers) over the pole to prevent squirrels and raccoons from climbing; their claws slip on the smooth surface. Cover the tube at the top with a plastic baffle to prevent birds from getting trapped down inside the pipe. Some pole assemblies now give you the ability to hang several feeders from one pole. This is a great way to draw a larger variety of birds to one viewing area. If you hang feeders from a tree, use a long S-shaped hanging hook, and a large deep dome baffle over the feeder. Trim any branches squirrels can use to jump on the feeder.

Squirrels and raccoons are nest predators and are upsetting the balance of healthy ecosystems, so try not to feed them.

Birds require nearby shrubs or trees to dart to safety from a sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk attack, but it's important to make sure cats can't hide under those bushes within pouncing distance. Use a 12-14" high chicken-wire barrier around or under these plants. A stalking cat must jump this barrier, usually alerting the birds to its presence. (If neighbors have cats that are routinely outdoors, you may choose to not feed the birds. Feeder birds are easy prey for cats, and it's very difficult to protect them from sneak attacks, even with these precautions.) Remember, our native hawks are natural predators, to which our feeder birds have developed defenses over the millennia. But feral cats are not native, so birds are very vulnerable.

Empty seed hulls are a nuisance. If you clean regularly, seed debris won't kill the grass, but an easier way is to clear a circular area under a feeder, and mulch it with wood or bark chips. Some birds, like fox sparrows, just love to scratch through the mulch with their feet to find those hidden seeds.

Black oil sunflower attracts tufted titmice, northern cardinals, blue jays, black-capped chickadees, goldfinches, and various woodpeckers. Use tube feeders; those with a 1" mesh cage around the tube allow smaller birds like chickadees to enter, restricting the larger birds.

Nyger (aka thistle, but not the prickly thistle that is a gardener's pest!) requires special tube feeders with very small slit openings; fine mesh bags work well also. Providing nyger attracts goldfinches, house finches, pine siskins (when they invade from up north every other winter), and common redpolls. Buy small quantities of this seed at first until these species begin coming. Shake the feeder every day, as the small slits in the tube will clog with the debris in the seed. If house finches hog these feeders, try using the upside-down style tube. Most house finches dislike hanging upside down to feed, whereas the goldfinches love it.

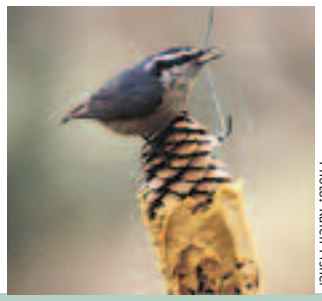


Photo: Karen Fisher

Suet cakes placed in special baskets attract woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches. Buying animal lard (available in tubs in the cooking oil section at the supermarket) and spreading it on the sides of a tree in the cracks in the bark readily draws this group of birds; it's more natural for these birds to cling when they eat. Nuthatches, chickadees, and downy woodpeckers also love peanut butter. Try packing peanut butter (mixed with a little corn meal) into the crevices between the scales of a large pine cone and suspending it from a branch using a thin wire. Chickadees will often hover like hummingbirds, picking off bits of peanut butter from the pinecone.

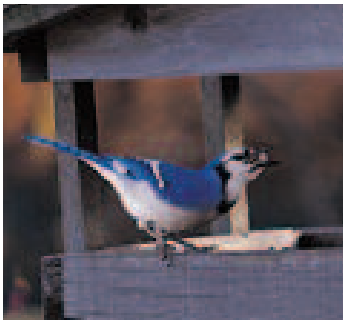


Photo: Carol Freeman

Birdbaths or other water sources are bird magnets. In the winter, water is important. Use a heated bird bath or use a small thermostatically controlled heater that can be immersed in your present birdbath. Don't forget to change the water frequently and periodically scrub the container. Otherwise outbreaks of avian illnesses can occur. Ground areas should be swept and the dropped seed and hulls discarded. Feeders should be scrubbed at least once a month, perches and all, with a mild bleach and water solution. Rinse thoroughly to get all the bleach residue out and dry completely before using them again. Store the seed you buy in a cool, dry, closed container to keep it fresh. A metal garbage can with a tight fitting lid works great. Mice can't chew their way in.

Feeders and seed are available at many different stores, but those specializing in bird feeding have the freshest seed and the greatest variety of feeders, along with a knowledgeable staff to answer your feeding questions.

Several excellent Web sites exist with lots of useful information and answers to your birdfeeding questions. Try these: (US Fish & Wildlife) http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/pamphlet/feed.html (Cornell Lab of Ornithology) http://birds.cornell.edu/birdfacts/feeders.html

Snowy!

Photo: Carol Freeman

Lugging her birding scope and digital camera to Montrose Point, Kanae Hirabayashi pauses to show off a regurgitated owl pellet.

October 25 at Montrose. This immature Snowy Owl is the earliest record for this species in my 20 years of birding in Lincoln Park.

Photo: Kanae Hirabayashi

Photo: Kanae Hirabayashi

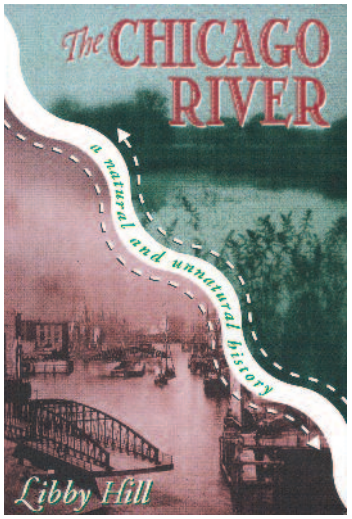
November 2. Here is a shot of the Snowy, still here, in the rain. A couple of passersby were fascinated to see the beautiful visitor from the tundra perched on the sign of a school-kids' garden.

Photo: Kanae Hirabayashi

November 15. This morning at Montrose, there were a short-eared owl, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, three northern harriers, and 50 crows who harassed Snowy who tried to escape them at the tip of Fishing Pier. But the crows wouldn't leave it alone. Twice, the Snowy, as if it knew that crows wouldn't come close to humans, landed seven feet away from us. When the owl flew around us, we could feel wind from the owl's wings. Then crows stayed away a short while and gave the Snowy a little time to calm down. The picture (left) was taken at this time.

Kanae Hirabayashi
Chicago, IL USA

Re-Discovering The Chicago River



We all think we know the Chicago River, but, for most of us, the acquaintanceship is slight. We have a jumble of impressions. I have taken a boat up the river's main stem to look at the skyline; I've visited the I & M Canal in Lockport; I've participated in restoration work along the North Branch. But until recently, these impressions have been fragmentary, and my desire to fit them together was not strong.

All this changed when I read Libby Hill's new book *The Chicago River* (published by Lake Claremont Press, $16.95). A part of my world that had been relatively invisible has become of great interest. I've even started my own explorations, inspired by Hill, who "climbed through brambles, waded through garlic mustard and buckthorn, squealed the car to a halt" in her efforts to see and understand the river.

The Chicago River is a good read. But it is also an important book for it is the first to present, as Hill says in her subtitle, both the river's "natural" and its "unnatural history." The book illumines the river's ancient history as well as its key role in the birth and growth of Chicago. More than that, as "a microcosm of the uneasy relation between nature and civilization," this history reflects the wider world in which we live.

There are more than 30 maps, showing the changes to the river over the years. The book is richly illustrated with photographs, paintings, and drawings.

These include a painting of Wolf Point as it was in 1832, complete with a little log tavern; a drawing of a sectional view of tunnels for foot and horse traffic built under the river in the 1860s; and an amazing picture of a hotel being lifted and moved by hundreds of men when the city of Chicago was raised to build sewers.

The book contains a glossary, extensive notes on sources, a bibliography, a list of organizations and government offices that can provide more information, and a five-page chronology that is a great help in keeping track of the various strands of the story.

The Chicago River is organized chronologically in three sections. The first section outlines the geological foundation of the river and the legacy of the Ice Age as well as of the Native American cultures that flourished in the region for 13,000 years before European settlement.

The second and third sections are focused around various issues or problems. Chapters in the second section reflect the 19th century passion for progress and commerce expressed through huge engineering feats: the construction of the I & M and the Sanitary and Ship Canals, the attempts to remove the sandbar at the river's mouth, the efforts to dilute and divert sewage away from the growing city.

The section on the 20th century shows a growing public consciousness

of the river as a source of beauty, and a new understanding of disease that led to the construction of modern water treatment plants. This section also includes chapters on the transformation of the Skokie Marsh, the construction of the deep tunnel, the work of the Forest Preserve District, and a discussion of the citizens' groups that are currently involved in restoring health and beauty to the river.

Author Libby Hill teaches in the Geography and Environmental Studies Department at Northeastern Illinois University and works for the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. She is also steward of Perkins Woods in Evanston and a member of Friends of the Chicago River. She tells her story with energy and enthusiasm, and she provides numerous quotes that reflect the language as well as the thought of the planners, politicians, common citizens, and press of the respective eras.

Hill's book demonstrates the bewildering multiplicity of interests that have connected the river to the city and nation ever since the early 19th century.

Indeed, a reader can get tangled up in the political, planning, and engineering developments, including the names and acronyms of government and civic groups. The constantly changing geography of the river can also be confusing. Yet Hill has clearly worked to unsnarl the tangled strands of information. And if the book seems too detailed, it is complete, and thus an excellent reference.

In the past, people found the meaning of life in stories of their landscape. This sense of history, of belonging to place, is often lost on those of us who live in the modern city, in a landscape that is repeatedly being torn up. Libby Hill's book serves to reconnect us to our landscape and to our history.

The Chicago River is a hopeful book. Despite the current frantic rate of development along the river, public awareness and involvement in restoring the natural processes of the river have never been greater. And despite all the straightenings, the channels, the wallings in, the tunnels under, despite its reversal, Hill reminds us, the Chicago River is still there, at essentially the same place as it was when the Native Americans camped along its shores.

—Nancy Freehafer

In 1900, the Sanitary and Ship Canal opened and the flow of the Chicago River was reversed. No longer did waters enter Lake Michigan, but they began to flow downstream eventually ending up, via the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, in the Gulf of Mexico.

1 LINCOLNSHIRE VOTES FOR NATURE

This vote did not need a recount. A confusingly worded referendum sought to eliminate culling as an option for controlling overpopulated deer in Florsheim Nature Preserve. The referendum was opposed by conservation groups, including National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. By a margin of 62 percent to 38 percent, the voting public in Lincolnshire wisely rejected the measure.

This victory for good sense is due largely to the impressive educational efforts of the Friends of Florsheim, a grassroots group that organized to rally community support for their local preserve.

The referendum question was a complicated one for an election ballot and was worded in a way that suggested that a few fences could solve the problem. The group that sponsored the referendum also opposed brush control and prescribed burning. Lincolnshire resident and Friends member Jamie Godshalk described how the Friends were successful. "We asked Lincolnshire voters to choose wise management based on what was best for the whole ecosystem. We provided people with information on the effects of deer browsing and the current options for management. Armed with that knowledge, our community chose to protect the wealth of diversity in Florsheim rather than sacrifice all else for a single species."

Many conservationists saw this referendum as a test case for similar actions in other communities. The resounding victory should encourage other communities to support good management of their natural areas.

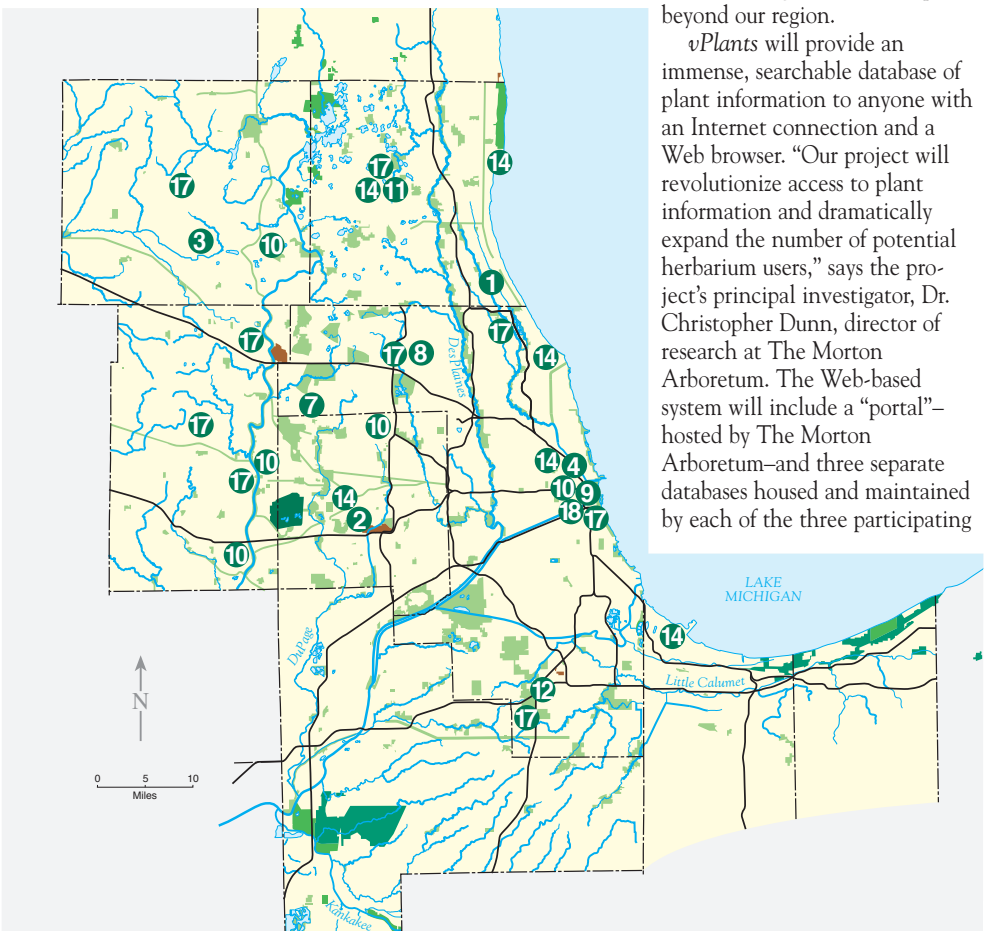
— Steve Frankel

2 A CHICAGO REGION "VIRTUAL HERBARIUM"

In September, The Morton Arboretum received a $420,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to develop and launch an online herbarium –*vPlants*– of Chicago region plants. This database is being developed over the next two years in partnership with the Field Museum and the Chicago Botanic Garden. It will encompass data about, and high resolution color images of, plants in the herbaria of these three preeminent Chicago area botanical institutions. While the initial focus will be plants of the Chicago region, *vPlants* will readily allow future expansion and creation of a larger database of plants beyond our region.

vPlants will provide an immense, searchable database of plant information to anyone with an Internet connection and a Web browser. "Our project will revolutionize access to plant information and dramatically expand the number of potential herbarium users," says the project's principal investigator, Dr. Christopher Dunn, director of research at The Morton Arboretum. The Web-based system will include a "portal"–hosted by The Morton Arboretum–and three separate databases housed and maintained by each of the three participating institutions. Ultimately, the entire collections of each institution, totaling more than 2,000,000 specimens, may be available online.

Botanical institutions maintain herbaria to assist in the identification of plants, to provide data necessary to document past incidence of plant species, map current species distributions, detect changes in the diversity and distribution of species, and forecast trends. *vPlants* will become a much needed research tool for Chicago Wilderness, and will significantly promote the plant information interests of schools, community groups, educators, and other plant professionals.



3 ROUTE 47

Ten years ago, U.S. Senator Daniel Moynihan recognized that governments had spent untold money on highways without paying attention to how transportation affects land use and the environment. Moynihan drafted legislation that for the first time made federal transportation funding sensitive to these issues. Recently, the Route 47 communities of Woodstock, Lake in the Hills, and Lakewood, along with the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD), received a major grant from this funding (now called the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21) to develop best management practices that will guide development in ways that will protect the headwaters of the Kishwaukee River.

While much of this property is already annexed and zoned, it is still underdeveloped leaving a window of opportunity to achieve conservation goals. Conservation Research Institute (CRI) is administering the demonstration project that will give these communities the tools to achieve their goals.

"Since this is a pilot project, the process of involving the communities is very important. By making quality decisions now, we can not only forestall negative environmental impact but expensive and frustrating retrofitting later on," says Melinda Perrin of CRI. "If we can show that this process works, it will become a model for sustainability in other areas facing similar development pressures."

The Route 47 corridor includes streams that feed into the Kishwaukee River, a high quality stream. Partner municipalities, the MCCD, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources will work with the Openlands Project and CRI to develop a plan that includes giving people transportation alternatives while protecting the Kishwaukee and biodiversity.

Funds for the Route 47 project include the $198,000 TCSP grant, $12,000 from MCCD, and $26,000 from Woodstock, Lake-in-the-Hills, and Lakewood. The project is augmented by a $20,000 State of Illinois Conservation 2000 grant for a natural features study along the Kishwaukee River throughout the study corridor.

— Alison Carney Brown

4 CHICAGO RIVER ENHANCEMENTS

The Chicago Department of Environment and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers teamed up in a $4 million project to improve four sites on the Chicago River to provide habitat enhancement and public access. The projects–at Chicago's Von Steuben and North Side College Preparatory high schools, on Goose Island off Weed Street, and on the river's South Branch at the former Cuneo Press at 18th Street–vary in scope and design. They include footpaths, a canoe landing, and still lunkers (hiding holes for fish) built into spots where no natural bank remains. The high schools will use the enhanced riverside as a living learning laboratory.

New plantings will include bur oak, willow, and linden trees, aquatic plants, wild onion, grasses, cow parsnip, prairie dock, and bee balm. Friends of the Chicago River, local government agencies, 17th District State Senator Lisa Madigan, and 33rd District State Rep. John Fritchey assisted in the plan's development.

—Michael Graff

5 MALAMA HAWAI'I

"Malama Hawai'i" is a conservation partnership on the island of Oahu–inspired by and modeled upon Chicago Wilderness –was launched in June 2000. The Memorandum of Understanding that describes this effort is poetic and inspiring: "Our work will integrate the environment, health, education, justice, culture and the economy; and celebrate the strength of community."

Pauline Sato, program director of the Oahu chapter of The Nature Conservancy, had been watching the development of Chicago Wilderness for several years and believed it would be a good conservation strategy on the island of Oahu. That island has both a dense human population and critically important biodiversity to conserve. Sato brought in Debby Moskovits, director of environmental and conservation programs for the Field Museum, and Laurel Ross, area director for The Nature Conservancy of Illinois, for the 1999 Hawaii Conservation Conference to describe Chicago Wilderness efforts. A week of meetings followed to brainstorm a plan of action for the island. After about a year of organizing, more than 60 organizations signed an agreement and the Hawaiian group is a reality! The emphasis will be on public awareness that will support and inspire on-the-ground conservation work.

6 ILLINOIS RIVERS 2020

On November 3, the U.S. House passed the final version of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA 2000) that includes a $100 million, three-year authorization for the Illinois Rivers 2020 initiative, clearing the measure for President Clinton's signature. "This is a tremendous victory for Illinois," Lt. Governor Corinne Wood said. "The Illinois Rivers 2020 program is the kind of comprehensive environmental initiative that will serve as a model for the nation."

The Illinois River and its watershed stretch across 55 counties and affect 90 percent of the state's population. More than 900,000 people receive their drinking water from the river. Illinois Rivers 2020 moves beyond studies and begins implementation of restoration and prevention throughout the basin. This expanded voluntary, incentive-based program was developed by Lt. Governor Wood's Illinois River Coordinating Council, which worked with members of the Illinois congressional delegation, agricultural, environmental, and natural resources agencies. The initiative will develop new technologies and innovative approaches to improve water quality within the entire Illinois River Basin; protect farmland and open space; restore, enhance, and preserve habitat for plants and wildlife; enhance the waterway as a vital transportation corridor; and provide for land treatment of storm water and best management practices for upland areas.

All 22 members of the Illinois congressional delegation, more than 65 environmental, conservation and agricultural groups, and more than 350 mayors endorsed the initiative. This was the first year Illinois Rivers 2020 was introduced in Congress.

7 BARTLETT BALEFILL CASE

For 15 years, the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC), a consortium of 23 suburban Chicago municipalities, has been trying to build a solid waste landfill on a 533-acre site in Bartlett. The site contains woods, the remains of a gravel strip mine, 17.6 acres of wetlands used by migratory birds, and a heron rookery with 192 great blue heron nests.

In 1986, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) denied SWANCC a permit to fill lakes and ponds on the Bartlett land citing its authority to regulate "waters of the United States" under the federal Clean Water Act. Using its Migratory Bird Rule, the ACOE claimed jurisdiction over intrastate waters that are or would be used as habitat by birds. When the solid waste agency sued, both the district court and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals found for the ACOE. In May, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case and held its hearing on October 31. If the court turns the regulatory oversight to state and local governments, it could become harder to enforce the Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts.

For more information, contact the Sierra Club at (312) 251-1680 or illinois.chapter@sierraclub.org or the Environmental Law and Policy Center at (312) 673-6500 or www.elpc.org.

— Gail Goldberger

8 IDOT WALLS

As part of a roadway construction project in northern Cook County, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will install an exclusionary wall to protect a population of the state-endangered massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*).

Slated for construction in the summer of 2002, the wall will be three feet high and run approximately 3,000 feet along a stretch of roadway adjacent to one of the last remaining massasauga populations in Illinois. During the project planning process, IDOT collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and others. "We gave careful attention to the design of the wall," said Dr. Christopher Phillips, an ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey. "The design and materials were chosen to minimize the project's impact on the habitat, while maximizing the protection for the massasauga."

Studies conducted by the Ohio Division of Wildlife on mortality factors for the massasauga cited roadkill as a major cause for the decline of that state's massasauga population. According to Tom Anton, a consultant and herpetologist hired by IDOT to study the Chicago Wilderness population, the snake's genetics don't help much either. "Because the body of a massasauga is short, fat, and stocky they are slower than most snakes," said Anton. "That makes it much harder for them to move quickly across a roadway."

Massasauga rattlesnakes were once known from 24 widely scattered popula-

The bones of snowy owls have been found a Neolithic dwelling sites, suggesting they were part of these people's diet.

tions in Illinois, but they are now only known to occur at six. This decrease prompted the state to list the snake as endangered in 1994. Once common from western New York and southern Ontario, south to eastern Iowa and eastern Missouri, the massasauga is now endangered throughout most of its range and is a candidate for listing as a federally endangered species. If the exclusionary wall proves to be successful, scientists hope this approach can be used elsewhere in the state and throughout the massasauga's range.

— Gian Galassi

9 LIGHTS OUT DOWNTOWN

This fall, night by night, the skyline dimmed in Chicago's Loop. Thankfully this meant the survival of many migrating birds on their southward journey. For reasons that are not well understood, migratory birds are attracted to lights during their nighttime journeys, and it is estimated that thousands hit skyscrapers and die every migration season in Chicago.

As part of the Urban Bird Treaty signed by Mayor Daley and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in late March (CW Summer 2000), the Mayor's Wildlife and Nature Committee and the City of Chicago Department of the Environment sent flyers this summer to the Building Owners and Managers Association encouraging them to turn out their lights at night during the spring and fall migrations. In addition to the buildings that observed the request last spring, many others joined in support this fall, including the Sears Tower, John Hancock, Tribune Tower, Leo Burnett, NBC Towers, R. R. Donnelley, Stone Container Building, and 55 W. Wacker.

"Thanks to Linda Day, volunteer chair of the Mayor's committee, and the Building Owners and Managers Association we've had quite a response to this program," says Suzanne Malec, the city's Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources. "I think the most exciting part was looking at the skyline and visibly seeing the difference that was made and you could imagine the impact it was making during migration–potentially saving thousands of birds that were silently flying above."

"Many of these buildings are landmarks," says Day who has worked in the building management profession for 20 years. "It's a huge sacrifice to darken their profile. It's incredible that they're doing it."

In addition to establishing a building lighting policy that strives for minimal lighting at night during migration seasons, the Mayor's Wildlife and Nature Committee is also encouraging building managers to establish a "Bird-Friendly Building Program" by adding the responsibility and specifications for reduced lighting to the tenant operations manual and incorporating the same into tenants' leases. Loop conservationists can be a part of this ongoing program and help monitor its success by contacting Judy Pollock, Bird Conservation Network representative to the Mayor's Wildlife Committee, at jpollock@audubon.org or (847) 965-1150.

— Alison Carney Brown

10 CONSERVATION AND NATIVE LANDSCAPING AWARDS

On November 11, Chicago Wilderness and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency honored the five winners of the first annual Conservation and Native Landscaping Awards. The program recognizes park districts and municipalities that make extensive and creative use of natural landscaping to restore and support native plants and animals. The winners are:

Village of Sugar Grove – Sugar Grove Detention Basin Prairie

City of Chicago, Department of Environment – North Park Village Nature Center Native Plant Garden

Roselle Public Works – Central Avenue Wetland

City of Crystal Lake – Crystal Cove Pond Wetland Restoration

St. Charles Park District – Campton Hills Natural Area and Pottawatomie Native Plant Education Area

11 VOTERS HELP PROTECT LAKE COUNTY

On November 7, Lake County voters resoundingly approved a Forest Preserve District ballot issue, with 67 percent voting for $70 million worth of land preservation and $15 million worth of restoration and improvement projects. These new land acquisition funds will bring the district closer to its goal of preserving 40 acres for every 1,000 residents of Lake County.

With 1999 referendum funds, the district: acquired 403-acre Ray Lake Farm near Wauconda; combined two adjacent purchases to create a 356-acre refuge near Antioch; and added 213 acres to the Fox River Forest Preserve and 41 acres to Fourth Lake Fen.

Passage of the 2000 ballot issue allows the district to continue its acquisition efforts while land is still available and affordable.

Many Chicago Wilderness members assisted in the referendum campaign. Joyce O'Keefe, of the Openlands Project, chaired the Friends of the Forest Preserves efforts. The Friends of Ryerson Woods made major campaign donations, with additional assistance provided by the Nature Conservancy, Liberty Prairie Conservancy, Lake Forest Open Lands, Lake Bluff Open Lands, Citizens for Conservation, Sierra Club-

Photo: St. Charles Park District

Woods, and Wetlands Chapter, and others.

12 NATURE ADDS VALUE

This past spring the Palos-Orland Conservation Committee (POCC) released a study on "The Economic Impact of Environmental Resources on the Palos-Orland Region." Conducted by Don L. Coursey, a professor at the Harris Graduate School at the University of Chicago, and Douglas Noonan, a doctoral candidate at the Harris School, the study found that if population density and traffic increase by 50 percent in that section of southwestern Cook County–a "degradation scenario" that has occurred in other suburban Chicago communities–then "the total effect on housing values in the region results in a loss of $225,000,000 in total residential property value. (This represents a loss of about 6.5 percent of an average home's value)."

Southwest suburban Palos and Orland Park share seamless borders with large tracts of Cook County forest preserves–more than 15,000 contiguous acres in the Palos/Sag/Tinley areas. Palos Park was developed in the late 1800s as summer homes for Chicagoans, while Orland Park became a vibrant farming community. Over the past several years, much of the farmland has been developed and Palos's larger properties have been subdivided, resulting in a significant loss of natural features and the fragmentation of interconnected ecosystems. The study shows that further development will result in lower residential property values.

On October 1, a cluster of citizens' groups including the POCC, Concerned Property Owners in the Greenway, DesPlaines River Watershed Alliance, and the Sierra Club sponsored a Greenway Gathering to support completion of the proposed greenway between Tampier Lake and McGinnis Slough. The greenway connection was first proposed 10 years ago and

the Forest Preserve District of Cook County has begun making acquisitions. The citizens groups are particularly interested in an undeveloped parcel (No. 12) that includes wetlands, a stand of oaks, and splendid views of Tampier Lake. The event included hayrides, refreshments, and speakers, and drew families and public officials from around the region including national Republican environmental leader (and Lake County Commissioner) Martha Marks.

Meanwhile, the Village of Palos Park is considering adopting an ordinance to ensure responsible construction practices that protect natural features. "This effort goes beyond a 'tree ordinance,'" says Planning Commission and POCC member Dave Kibort. "It treats the greater natural community as an ecosystem that must not be fragmented." Numerous citizens and groups, including POCC and the Palos Park Tree Body, have commented at public forums. The planning commission will have a recommended final draft ordinance submitted to the village council for approval in January 2001.

In November, villagers celebrated the passage of a $20 million bond referendum by Orland Park to support land acquisition. Prior to the elections, the POCC sent out hundreds of postcards, distributed buttons and flyers, and wrote letters to the editor in support of the Orland Park Save Open Space Initiative that passed by 57 percent on November 7. "Nine hundred homes could potentially be built on the 300 acres the referendum money could purchase," said the Openlands Fund Commission chair Lou Mulé. Referendum supporters estimated that the resulting 9,000 new vehicle trips and 1,350 new school enrollments could cost the village an estimated $1,800,000 in services annually. Passage of this initiative, said Mulé, "demonstrates that residents understand that open lands are just as vital as roads and sewers and schools."

—Alison Carney Brown

⓭ SIDNEY R. YATES 1909-2000

Former U.S. Representative Sidney R. Yates of Chicago, 91, champion of national parks, forests and waterways and an early supporter of the Chicago Region Biodiversity Council, died on October 5. Congressman Yates represented Chicago's 9th District, spanning the north lakefront and north suburbs, for 48 years. As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, Congressman Yates brought "a strong interest in the environment and a strong interest in serving urban people," says John Dwyer, Evanston-based research forester for the U.S. Forest Service. "His perspective translated into support for a large number of urban conservation projects in Chicago and around the country."

"Congressman Yates knew how to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and accomplish some truly great things," remembers Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, legislative assistant and the Congressman's director of suburban operations for 26 years. "In our region, the Chicago lakeshore and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (IDNL) are prime examples of how he worked to protect the great treasures of our country." Yates sponsored appropriations that increased the size of IDNL and won approval for creating the environmental education center there.

According to Stephen Packard of National Audubon, Yates played the key role in Chicago Wilderness obtaining its initial funding from the USDA Forest Service and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service.

Yates was also a renowned supporter of the arts, humanities, and museums. In 1998, Congress passed a $2 million direct appropriation to establish the Sidney and Addie Yates Exhibition Center at The Field Museum as a permanent tribute to Congressman Yates when he retired.

⓮ TEN NEW MEMBERS

The Chicago Wilderness consortium has now expanded to 124 members. **The Butterfly Monitoring Network** monitors changes in butterfly populations enlisting volunteer citizen scientists to collect field data. The Network's data and analyses are made available to land managers and management agencies. **The Chicago Herpetological Society** enhances the education of members and public through society programs; promotes conservation of all wildlife in general and of herpetofauna in particular, whenever and wherever possible; and works to achieve a closer cooperation and understanding between amateur and professional herpetologists. **The DuPage Birding Club** provides opportunities for people to enjoy the diversity of bird life in the Chicago area with a specific focus on DuPage County. The group is active in Bird Conservation Network efforts to standardize bird monitoring in the Chicago area, provides small grants for bird research in the Chicago area, offers field trips, and participates in monitoring bird populations in DuPage County. **The Garden Clubs of Illinois** informs and educates members and the general public about the preservation of the natural resources of our state, the protection of endangered species and the recycling of waste materials. Members create beauty through the artistic use of plant material in the home and in the landscape. **The Grand Calumet Task Force** is a community environmental organization working cooperatively to improve the land, air, and water quality of the Grand Calumet River and the urban ecosystem that surrounds it and to achieve environmental justice for the people of northwest Indiana. The mission of the **Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District** is to conserve the biodiversity of Lake County by educating the public on natural resource protection. **The Natural Land Institute** preserves natural areas and natural diversity through a comprehensive program of land protection, stewardship, research, education and advocacy. **The Northeast Region of University of Illinois Extension** offers practical, research-based programs that help people improve their lives and address critical community issues involving youth, families, economics, health, agriculture and natural resources. **The Office of Continuing Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign** has established a new division in Chicago to offer environmental education to a variety of professional and non-professional audiences using an intensive, modular curriculum that combines online, face-to-face, and field-based instruction. The mission of the **Waukegan Harbor Citizens' Advisory Group** is to ensure expeditious development and implementation of a remedial action plan for the Waukegan Harbor 'Area of Concern'; to foster among the public a sense of responsibility for restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of the Waukegan Harbor; and to promote a lakeshore environment for public use.

⓯ AN HONORED ACTIVIST

On October 31, Openlands Project honored Marian Byrnes with its Conservation Leadership Award. Byrnes has led the Southeast Environmental Task Force in the Calumet region of Chicago since 1989. Under her leadership, the task force has become the leading citizen-based organization on the Southeast Side, advocating relentlessly to stem the deterioration of both residential neighborhoods and the natural landscapes of the Lake Calumet area.

Byrnes has also pursued and supported environmental justice issues on the Southeast Side. She is one of the key leaders of the Calumet Ecological Park Association (CEPA). Byrnes and CEPA are moving closer to achieving National

Whether they hibernate or not, many animals begin the winter with large reserves of fat. Many humans end the winter that way.

Park Service designation of the Calumet area in Illinois and Indiana as a new National Heritage Corridor.

Byrnes was also the key neighborhood spokesperson, working with Citizens for a Better Environment, to prod the U.S. EPA into addressing the high toxic concentration at a cluster of abandoned waste facilities at 122nd and Stony Island.

Five years ago Byrnes led the initiative to define a series of sustainable development practices for a 150-acre brownfield site that is slated to be the CenterPoint Supplier Park to Ford Motor Company. The practices she identified remain a model for site design of the industrial park.

⓰ THE NATURE OF COMMUNITY

Would you like to see more natural landscaping in your community? More initiatives that protect the watershed? *Protecting Nature in Your Community: A Guidebook for Preserving and Enhancing Biodiversity* focuses on how local municipalities, counties, and park districts can play an active role in implementing the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan. The Guidebook covers topics ranging from land use planning to improved stormwater management to natural landscaping.

Written by Jason Navota and Dennis W. Dreher of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), *Protecting Nature* includes numerous examples of local programs that support the

Photo: St. Charles Park District

Guidebook's recommendations and can serve as models. For instance, the St. Charles Park District owns and manages approximately 500 acres of fens, marshes, upland swamps, woodlands, and prairies. In 1996, the District identified land acquisition as a major goal in its comprehensive master plan to protect wildlife and fragile ecosystems and provide a variety of recreational uses.

Olympia Fields Country Club in the Village of Olympia Fields has also taken a number of significant actions to provide habitat for plants and animals. These include controlling erosion of streambanks and pond edges with native plantings; reestablishing prairie and savanna vegetation; planting native trees and woody understory from locally collected seed; removing invasive nonnative species; conducting prescribed burns for prairie and savanna areas.

Prepared for the Chicago Region Biodiversity Council and funded in part by the USDA Forest Service, *Protecting Nature* was sent last spring to a wide variety of public officials in northeastern Illinois. Navota and Dreher have since developed a PowerPoint® presentation and on-site training. Public officials can review the guidebook and follow up with the authors or begin to implement some of the recommended programs on their own. Often it doesn't take much. Slight shifts in a community's focus, minimal modifications of ordinances, and a general commitment to biodiversity protection can achieve critical results. Call Chicago WILDERNESS magazine at (847) 965-9275 for a complimentary copy of the guide. Navota and Dreher can be reached at NIPC: (312) 454-0400.

⓱ GRANTS FOR OPEN SPACE

In early November, Governor George H. Ryan announced $76.7 million in projects to protect open space and acquire and develop new hiking and bicycling trails throughout Illinois. The grants are funded through the Open Land Trust (OLT), the Department of Natural Resources' Bicycle Path Grant program, and the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP).

"It is no secret that urbanization is consuming open space, farmland, wildlife habitat, recreational areas and natural land faster than we can preserve it," Ryan said. "That's why my administration initiated the Illinois Open Land Trust Program–to preserve those dwindling resources while there is still time to do so." The governor announced a total of 92 projects through the OLT program (15 projects), Bike Path program (26), and ITEP program (51).

Governor Ryan's Open Land Trust initiative, the largest land acquisition program in state history, is providing $160 million over four years for land purchases and improvements.

Grants awarded in the Chicago Wilderness region include:

Chicago Park District: $2 million to acquire five acres along the North Branch of the Chicago River to connect Gompers and Eugene Field Parks, extend Gompers Park wetland, and fund restoration work.

Forest Preserve District of Cook County: $2 million to acquire 65 acres of the former Klehm Nursery extending Spring Lake Preserve to the east and provide additional protection for the headwaters of Spring Creek. The project will preserve existing wetland habitat and allow for the restoration of former wetland areas.

Dundee Township: $1,967,700 to acquire 248 acres which includes the former Elmhurst-Chicago Stone gravel mine and a portion of the Bright Farm, a critical component of the Jelkes Creek greenway. Restoration/recovery activities include the reestablishment of natural grades and contours, restoration of the dry gravel prairie vegetation and the establishment of native tallgrass prairie.

Geneva Park District: $487,500 to acquire and enhance a 22-acre addition to Peck Farm, including prairie restoration and habitat demonstration plots.

Kane County Forest Preserve District: $2 million to acquire the 121-acre Carson's Slough, home to at least five state threatened or endangered bird species, and a 292-acre portion of the Thornton Farm, an integral part of the Blackberry Creek watershed. Site enhancement at Thornton Farm includes wetland restoration and the replanting of an oak/hickory woods.

Lake County Forest Preserve District: $2 million to acquire a 270-acre site, part of a larger 403-acre parcel, which will be called

Ray Lake Farm. The 270 acres contain three wetlands, a large woodlands, and agricultural land that will be restored to prairie.

McHenry County Conservation District: $1,467,500 to acquire two parcels of land totaling 180 acres of mixed hardwood and upland and wetland complex in the city of Woodstock. Ninety-four acres are at the headwaters of the Kishwaukee River, which contain the longest stretch of top quality stream in the state. Another 86 acres are at McConnell Woods, comprised of oak savanna and a wetland fen complex.

Northbrook Park District: $2 million to acquire a 14-acre parcel south of Illinois Road. The 14 acres is part of a larger 60-acre parcel being acquired by the District. The District will renovate existing wetlands and a 1.2-acre mesic prairie planting area is planned.

Village of Orland Park: $1,950,000 to acquire 28 parcels of property totaling 48 acres. The site contains several endangered bird species and an endangered sedge. The Village will restore the existing wetlands, a native oak/hickory savanna and three ponds.

The Open Land Trust grants are administered by the Department of Natural Resources and provide up to 50 percent state funding assistance for approved property acquisition projects. For more information on the Illinois Open Land Trust Fund, visit *www.state.il.us*.

18 CITIZEN SCIENCE FOR THE MAYOR

The city of Chicago plants thousands of trees each year. Millions of migratory birds search for food in them. City officials, led by Mayor Daley, take pride in these trees and would like birds to find what they need there. But what species of trees do the birds use? Many spring migrants are stocking up on protein—a.k.a. bugs—to fuel their long and difficult journeys. Others take the candy bar approach–they need nectar. Which trees will provide it? Which will flower just as the birds pass through? Which have the most sought-after insects? Cool weather along the lakefront means delayed flowering and leafing out compared to inland; are the birds using different tree species in each place? The Mayor wants to know, so that the right species will be planted in the right places.

This spring the Chicago Department of the Environment and the National Audubon Society will let the birds "vote with their beaks." Teams of volunteer tree and bird enthusiasts will canvas the tree choices of foraging birds in parks and preserves across the Chicago Wilderness region. Other partners in the project are Openlands Treekeepers, the Field Museum, and the Bird Conservation Network.

Volunteers with basic bird or tree ID skills are needed. The more good data collected, the better our trees will be for migrating birds. Attend a one-hour training session to learn the methods. Three-hour brush-up sessions on bird and tree ID are also available. For details call Audubon at (847) 965-1150.

— Judy Pollock

EVENTS

STEWARDSHIP FORUM: RIVERS & WETLANDS MANAGEMENT

Rivers, wetlands, and watersheds are arguably the most difficult ecosystems to manage and restore. They often suffer from overuse and high levels of pollution. These systems also represent some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in our area. Join co-sponsors The Morton Arboretum and Chicago Wilderness for a day of presentations from local experts who are using the most modern management techniques. Speakers include, Brook McDonald,

Fish slated for restoration to the re-meandered Nippersink: the banded killifish, star-headed top minnow, and the least darter.

director, The Conservation Foundation; Ed Collins, restoration ecologist, McHenry County Conservation District; Alice Thompson, wetland ecologist; Chris Molzahn, Ecowatch coordinator; and Kris Bachtell, director of collections and grounds, The Morton Arboretum.
Date and time: January 27, 2001, 9:00 a.m-5:00 p.m.
Place: The Morton Arboretum, Lisle
Fee: $105 nonmembers; $85 members, includes box lunch
Information: (630) 968-0047 or www.mortonarb.org

MASTER CLASS IN DORMANT TREE IDENTIFICATION

Brush up on winter tree ID with experts George Ware and Suzanne Malec. Train to participate in Audubon's study of trees used by migrating birds. Sponsored by the Openlands TreeKeepers and National Audubon Society. Dress for the weather. Choice of two class dates.
Date and time: : February 3, 2001, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Place: Horner Park, Chicago
Date and time: February 24, 2001, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Place: Washington Park, Chicago
Fee: Free
Information: (312) 427-4265 x 232

NATURAL LANDSCAPING SEMINAR

"Living With Nature" is the theme of this year's Natural Landscaping Seminar sponsored by the Wildflower Preservation and Propagation Committee of the McHenry County Defenders, McHenry County College, and the McHenry County Conservation District. Stephen Packard, director, National Audubon Society Chicago Area Program, and editor of the *Tallgrass Restoration Handbook*, will be the featured speaker. Other presenters include Connor Shaw, owner of Possibility Place Nursery; Pat Armstrong, owner of Prairie Sun Consultants; and Janice Steiffel, a regular contributor to Wild Ones.
Date and time: February 24, 2001, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Place: McHenry County College, Crystal Lake
Fee: $30, includes lunch
Information: McHenry County Defenders (815) 338-0393

NORTHERN ILLINOIS PRAIRIE WORKSHOP

The 12th annual Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop is sponsored by the College of DuPage, Chicago Wilderness, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Volunteer Stewardship Network. This year's theme, "2001, A Land Odyssey: An Exploration of Prairies, Wetlands, Savannas and Beyond" will be explored in eight concurrent sessions. Renowned environmental writer Stephanie Mills will be the keynote speaker. Registration materials will be available in early January.
Date and time: March 10, 2001, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Place: College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn
Fee: $35
Information: Natural Sciences Division (630) 942-2706

WOMEN WHO WRITE

Stephanie Mills, author of *In Service of the Wild: Restoring and Reinhabiting Damaged Land*, will lead this writing workshop for women.
Date and time: March 11, 2001, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Place: North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago
Fee: $35, includes a light lunch
Information: (773) 478-2019 or (773) 342-6665

BIRD MONITORS TRAINING

Learn to collect information about native birds in a two-part training session. In the Bird Conservation Network Census training you will learn how to census bird life in local parks and preserves. In the Tree Preferences of Migratory Birds Study training you will learn how to participate in the study to determine which trees migratory birds use most. BCN Census Training will be offered in four other locations. Call for dates and times. Training is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Bird Conservation Network.
Date and time: March 17, 2001, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Place: Humboldt Park Field House, Chicago
Fee: Free
Information: (847) 965-1150

True Progress

The blue water of this graceful curve of Nippersink Creek was not here a few days earlier.

The two hills visible in the background are just where they were for most of 12,000 years, since the glacier left them. But they weren't there a year ago. The material of those hills had been used to fill the former channel of the Nippersink. The water of this meandering stream had been diverted to a straight ditch.

It seemed like this wet prairie stream and those dry prairie hills were gone forever. The good farmers had needed all the farmland they could flatten and drain, to feed their families and feed the rest of us as well. But in recent years, residential communities have been replacing the farmland of eastern McHenry County. Paradoxically, development can be harnessed for conservation.

With development come resources, planning, and a constituency of people who care about nature. The first canoeists of the restored stream (above) and the lad showing us a fat mussel (right) are examples.

When the water was cut off from the ditch and redirected to its restored ancient channel (see story on page 8), the Conservation District held a ribbon-cutting ceremony. There had been little fanfare beforehand. The District's Ed Collins, who oversees this massive project, expected a few dozen people to show up, mostly family of the young people who'd done the hard work. To his amazement, 300 people came.

As the ditch water began draining away, the attendees were invited to wade in, find stranded mussels, and move them where the creek now flowed once again. Scores of folks were soon up to their knees in mud and water, saving some creatures that needed help. Ed returned the next morning to see how the place looked. Dozens of people were back out there in the mud, uninvited, unexpected, but very welcome, finding mussels large and small and transporting them to their new and very much improved home.

This wetland floodplain had never been the best place for farming, and it would have been even less the best place for a subdivision. The people who are choosing to live nearby–and paying the taxes there–want nature saved. Restoring the Nippersink is an achievement to celebrate.

Photos by Pat Wadecki and Laurel Ross. Words by Stephen Packard. Land and biota acquired and restored thanks to the dedicated folks at the McHenry County Conservation District and the wise voters who support their work.

***OPPOSITE:** Ice bubbles on the Kankakee River in Will County by Bill Glass.*

Rare mussels like the slippershell (threatened) and the rainbow (endangered) are expected to recolonize the newly healthy habitat in the restored Nippersink.

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Bird Conservation Network
Brookfield Zoo
Butterfield Creek Steering Committee
The Butterfly Monitoring Network
Calumet Ecological Park Association
Calumet Environmental Resource Center
Campaign for Sensible Growth
Campton Historic Agricultural Lands, Inc.
Canal Corridor Association
Cary Park District
Center for Neighborhood Technology
Chicago Academy of Sciences
Chicago Audubon Society
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago Herpetological Society
Chicago Ornithological Society
Chicago Park District
Chicagoland Bird Observatory
Citizens for Conservation
City of Chicago, Department of Environment
College of DuPage
The Conservation Foundation
The Conservation Fund
Conservation Research Institute
Crystal Lake Park District
DePaul University, Environmental Science Program
Downers Grove Park District
Ducks Unlimited-Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office
DuPage Audubon Society
DuPage Birding Club
Emily Oaks Nature Center - Skokie Park District
Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest
The Field Museum
Forest Preserve District of Cook County
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Forest Preserve District of Kane County
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Fox Valley Land Foundation
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Friends of the Parks
Friends of Ryerson Woods
Garden Club of Illinois, Inc.
Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
Geneva Park District
Glenview Prairie Preservation Project
Grand Calumet Task Force
The Grove National Historic Landmark
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Illinois Audubon Society, Ft Dearborn Chapter
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Natural History Survey
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Lake Co. Stormwater Management Commission
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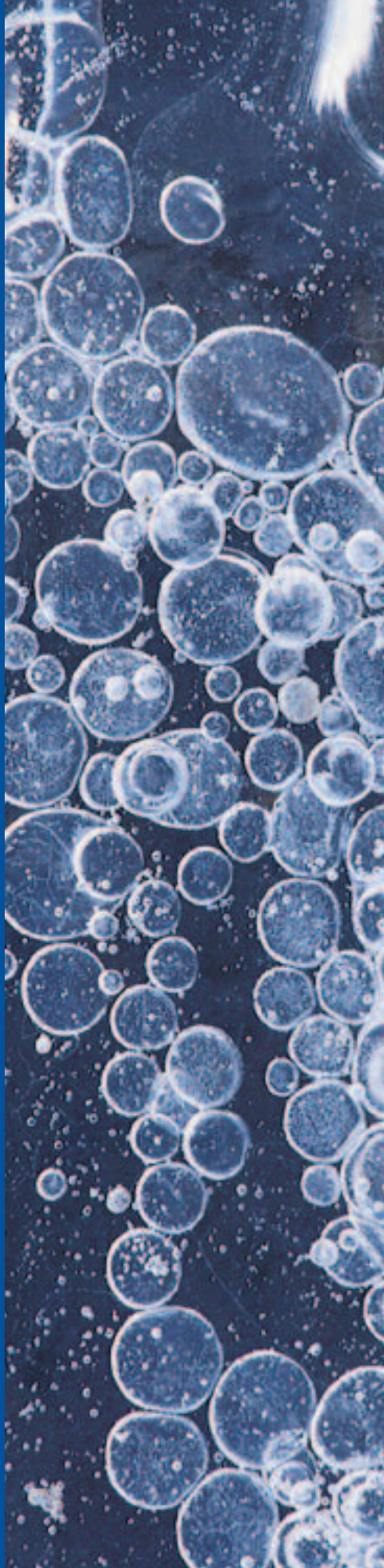

This issue is supported by a grant from the Grand Victoria Foundation.

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Chicago
WILDERNESS
Chicago Wilderness Magazine, Inc.
P. O. Box 5054
Skokie, Illinois 60076-5054

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