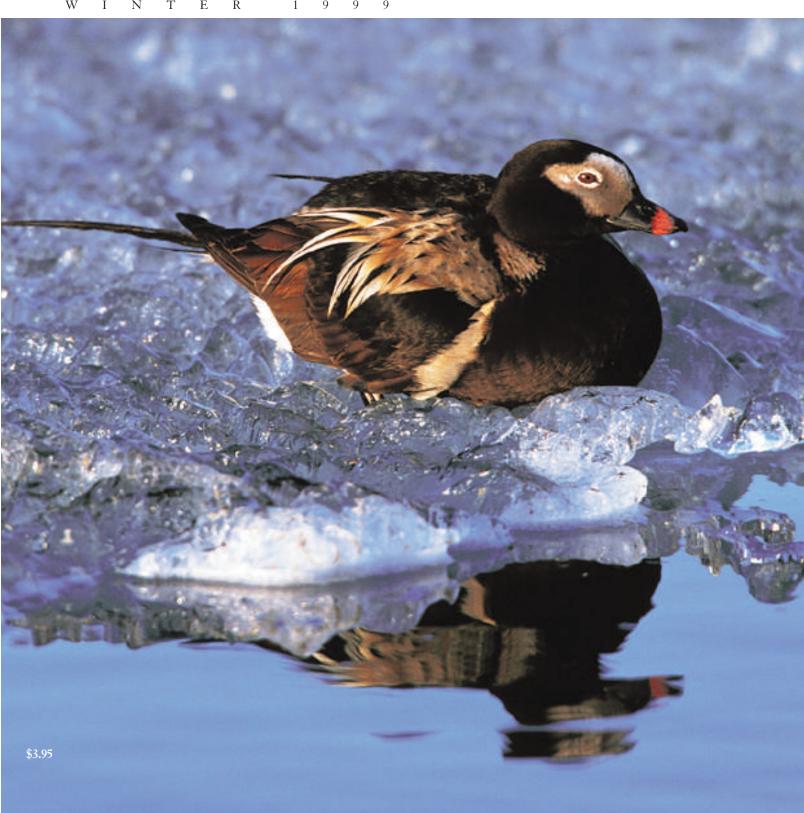
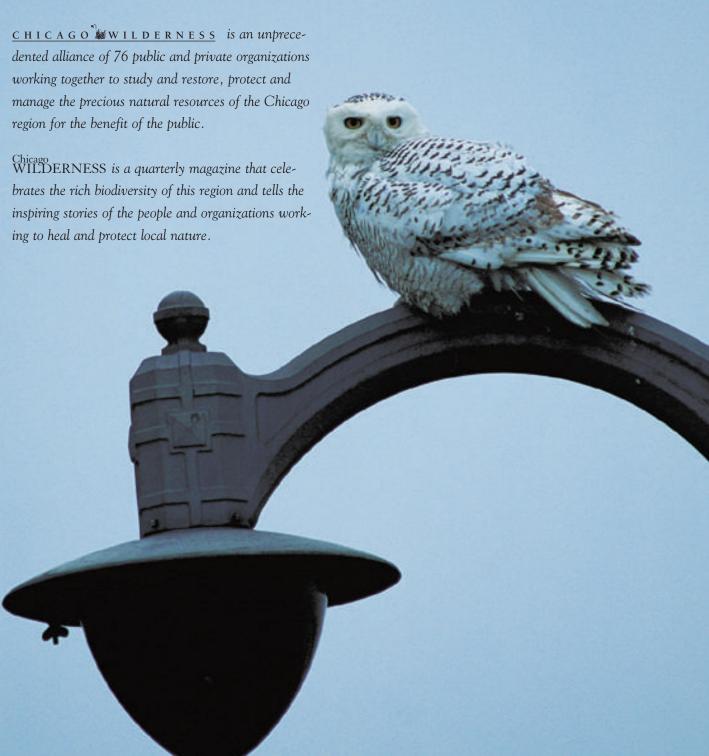
Chicago exploring nature & culture VIII FR R 1 9 9 9



What is Chicago Wilderness?

Chicago Wilderness is some of the finest and most significant nature in the temperate world, with 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.





Friends of Nature

The stirring and a cautionary tale of the battle to establish the Forest Preserve District of Cook County begins on page 4. When Dwight Perkins and Jens Jensen set about saving "natural park lands" for the benefit of people, they

did not know these holdings would become refugia for rare and endangered species, harboring biodiversity of global conservation significance.

They were establishing culture. Along with their friend and colleague Jane Addams, they were concerned for the health and welfare of urban residents—the wage earners, as they put it—who deserved, in their view, pleasant natural areas to enjoy, find inspiration, and cultivate a bond with the natural heritage of the region. At the time, they thought protecting and preserving nature meant simply saving land from development. Everyone did.

The new Forest Preserve District purchased its first land, 500 acres of Deer Grove, on June 25, 1916. They called it a "preserve," campaigned in sometimes charming ways to protect its nature, put out fires, and essentially left the

lands alone. (The young lady appearing on the back cover of this issue was part of an early campaign to educate visitors not to pick the wildflowers.)

But these quaint values were not enough. Many of the places Perkins fought so hard to preserve became less attractive over the years, to both nature and people. Woodland

wildflowers were disappearing from sites, not because they were being plucked but because their habitat was suffering. Once open areas, pleasant for strolling, picnicking or providing respite for the eye, were gradually becoming choked

with invasive brush.

Yet ours is a continuing history of civic pride and action on behalf of nature. Soon all the region's counties would have preserve districts of various kinds. The spirit of Perkins, Jensen, May Watts, and others lives on in the efforts to restore natural areas and in the collaborative conservation initiatives of Chicago Wilderness.

Today, I suspect, we hallow nature no less than Perkins, Jensen, and Watts, but, perhaps, we respect nature more. We have learned what a challenge it is not only to protect tracts of land, but also to preserve healthy complexes of species—the whole communities called marshes, prairies, savannas and woods—that constitute our native landscape.

Those among us today who have the fortitude, vision, and persistence of the forest preserve

founders will be the conservation heroes generations hence. These are the people of Chicago Wilderness, the citizen scientists profiled in this issue, the leaders of organizations large and small (such as Charlotte and Herbert Read and Dr. George Rabb, pp. 21-23), and not least of all, you, our readers. Bless you—and keep the faith.







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ABOVE AND COVER: Old squaw ducks can be seen, sometimes by the hundreds, from the bluffs overlooking Lake Michigan. Before they return to the Arctic to enjoy breeding, their black and white pattern changes dramatically, nearly reversing intelf (see cover). Photo above by Jim Flynn/Root Resources. Cover photo by Art Morris/Birds as Art.

OPPOSITE: Bur oak presides over snowy savanna along Flint Creek near Barrington, Illinois. Photo by Donna Lee.







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To Preserve and Protect...

by Stephen F. Christy, Jr.

Do Forest Preserves face challenges today?

Just look at what they overcame to get started.

ur northeastern Illinois forest preserves total more than 100,000 acres and represent the largest tract of locally-owned public conservation land in the nation. Their benefits for our environment, recreation and education are incalculable, and they preserve much of Chicago's natural charm which, without their existence, would certainly have been lost to the area's growth.

Of the millions of users of our Forest Preserves today few would believe it took more than 20 years for the dream of the preservation of these lands to become a reality. This magnificent civic accomplishment came about largely through the determined efforts of two great Chicagoans: the architect Dwight Perkins (1867-1941), best remembered today for his visionary designs of many of Chicago's public schools, and the landscape architect Jens Jensen (1860-1951), nationally known for his park designs in Chicago and other cities and a life-long champion of conserving America's landscape. Perkins was level-headed, thorough, and methodical, while Jensen was an outspoken, emotional, and charismatic leader. Together they made a

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good team for the long work ahead.

As early as 1894 Jensen, from his frequent local wanderings, had sketched a map of lands then far-distant from Chicago that he felt should be preserved for future generations. Perkins himself was constantly urging people to look ahead on Chicago's growth, astounding people in 1902 by claiming:

"Chicago will be a city of 10,000,000 inhabitants within the next 50 years, and when we are planning for the city's future we must take pains not to be so short-sighted as to overlook it. We have a right to dream — if we are wide awake when we do it."

In 1899 a civic group known as the Municipal Science Club, of which Jensen and Perkins were members, began a study of Chicago's current parks and playgrounds. The Club's report led to the Chicago City Council establishing in 1901 a Special Park Commission having a membership of Jensen, Perkins, and other civic leaders as well as aldermen and park commissioners. The report they prepared said, "In the rapid growth of Chicago north, west, and south, thickly settled communities are approaching natural park territory and other extensive open areas which are suitable park sites and could be improved without a great expenditure of money...before the rapid march of commercial interests and before suburban settlements efface the beauties of nature and destroy the usefulness of these spaces for parks."

As with most novel ideas, this statement had precedent to lend it strength. The Boston landscape architect, Charles Eliot, had convinced that city to set aside 10,000

"In the rapid growth of Chicago north, west, and south, thickly settled communities are approaching natural park territory and other extensive open areas which are suitable park sites..."

acres of outer parks during the 1890s, providing Boston with a total open space system then unsurpassed in the nation. Perkins' wife Lucy, a writer and artist, visited Boston and found this system "...so arranged that parks are accessible from all parts of the city, and it is difficult to think of any Boston child as shut away from the beauties of nature."

So well-received were the Special Park Commission's recommendations that in 1903 Cook County Board Chairman Henry Foreman formed the Outer Belt Park Commission and charged it with "the creation of an outer belt of parks and boulevards encircling Chicago." At the same time the Special Park Commission, seeing that its concerns for playgrounds and inner-city parks were well on the way to solution, turned to the larger question of the

PERKINS: level-headed, thorough, and methodical;





JENSEN: outspoken, emotional, and charismatic...

... a good team for the work ahead.

outer parks. These efforts culminated in 1904 with Foreman's publication of The Outer Belt of Forest Preserves and Parkways for Chicago and Cook County. This publication, edited by Perkins and having a lengthy section by Jensen describing the proposed lands, stands today as the culmination of a decade of diligent groundwork by these two men as well as a classic document from Chicago's great age of civic improvement. Contributing to it also were other well-known civic figures, such as Foreman; landscape architect Ossian Simonds, designer of Graceland Cemetery; meat packer Oscar Mayer; and University of Chicago sociologist Charles Zueblin.

Perkins first dealt with the lack of open space in Chicago, concluding that past city growth revealed largely an "enormous waste of treasure, time, and human life due to the lack of forethought and confidence in the city when it was originally planned."

The Commission's report went on to advocate in detail the preservation of those lands which, for many years, had been recognized as "naturally beautiful": a crescent surrounding Chicago, starting at the north in the Skokie and North Branch valleys, passing west of the city along the Des Plaines River, and turning east along the Sag valley to Lake Calumet after embracing the highlands of the Palos.

The second half of the report, written by Jensen, dealt in greater detail with, as he called it, "the movement for acquisition of large forest park areas." He reiterated three great reasons for this enterprise:

 preserve for present and future generations lands of natural scenic beauty situated within easy reach of the multitudes that have access to no other grounds for recreation or summer outings;

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Forest Preserve founders were struck by the open structure of oak forests, calling them "natural parks."

- preserve spots having relation to the early settlements of Chicago which are therefore of historical importance; and.
- preserve flora in its primeval state for the sake of the beauty of the forest and for the benefit of those desiring knowledge of the plants indigenous there.

"...the woodlands should be brought within easy reach of all people, especially the wage earners."

Jensen then followed with a detailed account of the history of Chicago's native landscape and the special significance of each recommended area.

The report was a masterpiece of landscape planning. Based on the then-current beliefs best articulated by landscape architect and planner Frederick Law Olmsted that "rural life has the effect of countering a certain impression of town life," bolstered by exhaustive study of other cities' progress, and steeped in a thorough knowledge of Chicago's native landscape and a passionate hope for the city's future, it opened many eyes. The 3,000 original copies were distributed in a matter of months, yet 12 years would pass before the first acre of land was set aside.

The trouble began in 1905. Foreman's Special Park

Commission decided a bill to protect these lands must pass at once, noting how rapidly land values were rising. An Act was thus hastily rammed through the state legislature, one viewed by many supporters as favoring certain political interests at the expense of the overall plan. Incidentally, the term "forest preserve" first appeared in this bill coined not so much to emphasize protecting woods but to avoid accusations of double taxation with existing park districts.



Jensen and Perkins led wildland tours to teach city folk about nature and to build constituency.

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The Special Park Commission and other civic groups opposed this bill, arguing that it would place the administration of the forest preserves in state hands and that there were no provisions for connecting the forest preserves as the original plans had called for.

Nevertheless, Illinois Governor Deneen signed the bill, and it was presented to referendum in November of 1905 where a public favorable to the general idea but unaware of the political machinations behind the bill, passed it. Dismayed, Perkins and his followers prepared to go to court on the grounds that a true majority of voters had not favored the bill. Sensing trouble, Governor Deneen declared the Act inoperative on the advice of his attorney general and refused to appoint the five commissioners required by the Act.

By 1907 the Special Park Commission had prepared its own bill, but this failed to pass due to political infighting. Accordingly in 1909 both houses appointed a "Forest Preserve District and Outer Belt Commission of Illinois" to investigate the entire issue. Perkins and Jensen began their quickly famous "Saturday Afternoon Walking Trips" in which they took this commission, other public leaders, and interested individuals on tours of the proposed system.

The Special Park Commission joined with the Union





Above: Forest preserves were designed for wholesome out-door family relaxation and recreation.

Left: From the beginning, supporters advocated conservation, and had fun doing it.

The vintage photos in this issue are by Dwight Perkins and others. Now in the archives of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, some of these "lantern slides" were hand-tinted long before color photography.

League Club, the City Club and the Chicago Association of Commerce to form a new and more powerful lobby called the Forest Preserve District Association. This association greatly increased grass roots support and enlisted Daniel Burnham's aid in his now-famous 1909 Plan for Chicago, in which he noted that next in importance to lakefront preservation, "the woodlands should be brought within easy reach of all people, especially the wage earners." All these efforts worked, and a new bill satisfactory to

It was an odd spectacle. Perkins' suit charged that his own creation was unconstitutional.

everyone easily passed through the legislature and subsequent referendum. To Perkins, Jensen, and their friends, victory seemed near at hand.

Again, however, politics intervened. Cook County Board Chairman William Busse appointed the five new commissioners—two Democrats and three Republicans—complying with the law that no more than three could come from one party. But Busse and his Republican administration had lost the recent elections and the Democrats regarded these new appointments as rightfully theirs. The Democrats sued to block Busse's action and, although the Circuit Court of Cook County turned back their efforts, the attorney general (aided by lawyers from the Democratic Party) found the forest preserve legislation unconstitutional. In 1911 the Illinois Supreme Court agreed, noting that only those living in incorporated Chicago and Cicero had been able to vote in the referendum.

With that, the forest preserve movement nearly collapsed. The Forest Preserve District Association disbanded, and the Special Park Commission dropped the issue after seeing more than a decade of precious time, and precious lands, slip away. It remained for Perkins alone and a few hardy followers to press the fight. This he did, and in 1914 new legislation had again received approval from downstate and the voters. Perkins immediately challenged the bill himself to test its constitutionality, raising more than \$2,000 to take the issue before the Circuit and Supreme Courts in 1915 and 1916.

It was an odd spectacle. Perkins' suit charged that his own creation was unconstitutional, simply in order to get that fight out of the way quickly. The court ruled "against" him, confirming the legality of the forest preserves statute.

At that time the native landscape was the focus of a newly-emerging concept: the science of ecology. Its birth-place was the University of Chicago and its founder the botany professor Henry Chandler Cowles. Cowles' pioneering work over several decades established the concept that a native landscape is really a highly-diverse group of plant communities, the "residents" of each community adapted to

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one another and the community as a whole requiring specific physical factors—water, light, drainage, fire—to survive and thrive. Cowles' work also revealed what has been confirmed ever since: that the Chicago region is one of the most biologically rich areas in America.

Not since the initial settlement of America some 250 years before had a major urban Society been so close to an original, untouched landscape. By Perkins' time an appreciation of regional

landscapes had flowered in America. This appreciation was spawned by the emerging fields of city planning and landscape architecture (best exemplified by Olmsted's monumental creation of Central Park in New York in 1856); the growing recognition of the natural wonders discovered in the opening of the American West; and most ominously by the accelerating ability of industrial technology to alter and destroy the landscape through mechanized means.



Perkins planned for the grandchildren—and their grandchildren.

What Jensen, Perkins,

and other supporters saw around them was an original native landscape still largely untouched since its creation by the last glaciers some 12,000 years before. This was a landscape of prairies, marshes, woodlands, and savannas, shaped by Midwestern climate and the regenerating fires periodically started by lightning or Native Americans.

In 1916, the newly formed Forest Preserve District of Cook County floated a \$1,000,000 bond issue and in September of that year purchased its first lands—Deer Grove Forest Preserve. By 1922 the District had purchased 21,500 acres, and was well on its way to exceeding Perkins' original goal of 37,000 acres.

The forest preserve founders clearly sought land for public enjoyment through the many activities we find in the forest preserves today: hiking, cycling, field games, picnics and other pursuits not-then dreamed of. But they sought to provide these activities in an overall landscape preserved as it then existed, and had so for thousands of years. Jensen's vision was perhaps the clearest when he urged the saving of these lands in their "primeval state...for the benefit of those desiring knowledge of the plants indigenous there."

This vision can be seen in the enabling legislation itself which, with words unique in American landscape preservation law, requires the Forest Preserve District to "restore, restock, protect and preserve" these lands "as nearly as may be, in their natural state and condition."

Perkins, Jensen, and others were the first to see the

Chicago landscape for what it is: a uniquely Midwestern part of America, as precious as Chicago's social fabric that had taken root in the same ground. Their goal was clear, and presaged the homogenization of America by a century: to preserve for future generations the original native landscape of Chicago, which even then was rapidly disappearing, because it gave strength to a local culture. These founders firmly believed that this landscape was cru-

cial to the spiritual growth of this great Midwestern town, and was an integral part of what makes Chicago a special place to live, work, and play.

Within the first few years, millions of visitors came to the new forest preserves, where the public was allowed to drive or roam at will. People camped in the preserves for months at a time, in some cases making these lands their permanent summer homes.

A police force and regulations were established in 1917. Sadly, ecology and land management as understood today were in their infancy at the time. Fire in the land-

scape was feared, and its role in ecology did not become clear until the 1940s through professor John Curtis' pioneering land restoration efforts at the University of Wisconsin. Exotic plant species like buckthorn had yet to arrive, and prolific native trees such as green ash and box elder had yet to expand from their river bottom habitats.

Thus few people noticed the savannas and prairies slowly filling with brush. Few prairies had even been saved to start with. Late in his life, Jensen was asked why this was so. His poignant answer was simple, and harked back decades to when native prairie, like the buffalo, was limitless: "We never thought it would all disappear."

World War II and the ensuing development boom around Chicago left our forest preserves largely forgotten in an era of "hands off" land management. For a time the preserves were even fair game for tollways and other "improvements" of the post-war era. Yet with the arrival of Earth Day and the environmental movement of the 1970s, it was inevitable that a new generation would focus its attention on these landscapes.

Chicago Wilderness is the natural next step in the conservation of a noble heritage.

Stephen F. Christy, Jr., a Chicago resident since 1976, has been the Executive Director of the Lake Forest Open Lands Association since 1985.

The Amateur and the Pro:

Science at the Grass Roots

by Sheryl De Vore
Photos by Kathy Richland

Citizen – a native member of a nation, an inhabitant of city or town.

Scientist – an expert in the study of the systematic knowledge of the world.

Prom the biologist with a doctoral degree to the 16-year-old girl who is learning to band her first bird, a growing number of us are playing large and small roles in the development of conservation science.

In an unchained sense of the word, all humans are "scientists," gathering facts and performing experiments on the Earth. And in the young, tender world of ecosystem restoration, opportunities abound for new ideas. Indeed, some of yesterday's amateur scientists inspired some of the techniques used today to restore our native ecosystems.

Citizen scientists collect data that professional and volunteer stewards can use to help make good decisions about the managment of conservation lands. Citizen science also offers us a chance to return to our human-ness as we immerse ourselves in prairies, woodlands and wetlands — counting Baltimore checkerspots, red-headed woodpeckers, blue-spotted salamanders, and adder's tongue ferns.

What follows are profiles of six Chicago Wilderness citizen scientists, each exploring, contributing, and having a wild time.



DENNIS DECOURCEY: Taking Flight—From Mentor to Mentor

In one of his earliest photos, Dennis DeCourcey is wearing diapers and feeding a baby mule. He now directs the Chicagoland Bird Observatory, where he still cares for young animals, but in another way.

Dennis and the volunteers he trains are banding birds and gathering data to help determine how to stop the decline of certain populations of birds. "This is where I can make the most effective contribution to the natural world," says Dennis. "I can also train people who can make contributions later on."

When Dennis was 11 years old, he met his first bird banding teacher, Zella Schultz, who led a bird walk he attended. "She took me under her wing for the next five years," says the Brookfield resident.

In high school, Dennis worked on conservation issues with the local Audubon Society. He also played oboe in the band. After graduation, he joined the US Navy where he played oboe for nearly five years.

But the call of the wild was too strong, and soon Dennis was working as a zookeeper and later as curator of birds at the Brookfield Zoo. In 1990, Dennis, 51, and his wife, Leslie, founded the Chicagoland Bird Observatory.

Bird banding is used worldwide to study the movement, survival, and behavior of birds. Banders capture wild birds, then place uniquely numbered metal or plastic bands on their legs. Banders record where and when each bird is banded, how old it is, its sex, and other information, which then gets sent to a central site. When banded birds are later captured, released alive, and reported from somewhere else, scientists can reconstruct an individual bird's movement. For instance, banding has shown scientists that some species go south by one pathway and return north by another.

Last spring, Dennis worked at Goose Lake Prairie in Grundy County, IL, banding Henslow's sparrows, a declining grassland species. This research will help scientists understand what happens to Henslow's sparrow populations when grasslands are burned.

The Observatory, based in Brookfield, IL, is one of some 300 stations worldwide participating in a program called MAPS, Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship. "With this program, as small as a 2 percent change in population can be recognized," says Dennis.

His youngest volunteer, Nellie Carlson, began banding birds at the Observatory when she was 11 years old. "When you have a little tiny creature in your hand and can find out all this information, it's amazing," says Nellie, now a 16-year-old high school sophomore who wants to study zoology. "Banding birds helps us know about nature and how it's changing."

For more information or to get involved, call (708) 387-9265 or e-mail chibirdobs@earthlink.net

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JUNE KEIBLER: Caretaker of Plants and People

Inside a blooming eastern prairie fringed orchid June Keibler finds what looks like a tiny, yellow, chicken drumstick. It is a pollinium, the pollen-bearing structure of this frilly flower, which she removes with a toothpick to transfer to another orchid in a process called hand-pollination.

"These orchids need human help," says June, a 54-year-old former physical therapist from Dundee, IL, who cares not only for humans but also for wild plants. Most of the populations of this federally threatened plant are too small to attract the hawk moths that pollinate this species. "Through the federal orchid recovery project, we hope to expand the existing populations as well as create new ones," June says. "To do that, we need a consistent census of where the orchids are and a consistent seed source. And we need volunteers to do the many hours of field work required to make this program work."

Fifteen years ago, in between working and caring for her children, June began volunteering to cut brush and collect seeds at workdays in McHenry and Kane counties.

She then learned about a draft recovery plan for the orchid written by Marlin Bowles of the Morton Arboretum for the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The plan lists projects for scientists and volunteers so that the endangered plant can eventually be "delisted."

"The plan involves protecting sites and expanding the existing populations by restoring habitat," says June who coordinates volunteers on the project. "Like many prairie plants, the orchid needs sunny, open areas. So we are clearing brush and burning."

June works with 60 loyal volunteers, many active for at least five years. Every summer they pollinate the small populations of these plants, and every fall they collect and disperse a portion of the seed to carefully selected possible new sites. They also census populations and this year began the exacting task of collecting demographic information, including plant heights and numbers of blooms per plant.

"This project requires a team approach and every individual is important," says June. "If this works, it has great potential for demonstrating how we can save other endangered species."



CHRIS KUEHL: Family Values Mushroom

On a recent family trip, Chris and Ken Kuehl and their 13-year-old daughter, Anna, discovered an interesting mushroom they could not identify. The lamp in their hotel room became a makeshift mushroom drying machine.

"Mushrooms are cool. They come in so many shapes and sizes and colors, and they have seasons. There are little tiny ones and great big ones. You can cut them in half and they change colors."

That's Mom talking!
Chris, 42, the volunteer
steward at Green Lake Savanna
near her house in Homewood,
IL, is working with Field
Museum botany curator Dr.
Greg Mueller to catalogue
northern Illinois fungi.

"We photograph them, collect samples, take measurements, make a spore print, dry them, box them up, and bring them to the Field Museum," says Chris. She also collects environmental information such as

what types of trees are growing with the fungus. Trees and certain types of fungus depend on each other for some of their nourishment.

Evidence exists that the mushroom population in Europe is declining. The same could be happening in North America. "But we have no baseline data," says Chris, "so that's what we're gathering."

Her daughter, Anna, may be one of the scientists who repeats this study 10 or 20 years from now. "I just like to go out and play in the woods, but Anna is really hooked, even on the toxicology aspect of fungus," says Chris.

Chris has also taken her knowledge to James Hart Junior High School in Homewood, where she works as a secretary. "I take students on a kind of 3-D Where's Waldo excursion to find mushrooms," she says. "We need to start them young. If they appreciate it, they'll want to save it."



DOUG TARON:Butterfly Network

Doug Taron stood in a New England cranberry bog 20 years ago, watching hundreds of bog copper butterflies flitting in the rare habitat. "That changed the way I thought about butterflies," says Doug, who leads the Butterfly Monitoring Project of the Volunteer Stewardship Network. "All butterflies are not created equal. Some are tied to specific habitats."

That knowledge is important as land managers restore natural areas. "Recently we've had a challenge in Cook County to some of the techniques of habitat restoration," says Doug. "People wondered how animals were being affected by prescribed burns and removal of invasive plant species. They specifically worried about butterflies."

For example, the question was posed: if we weed out wild carrot, a non-native species that is eaten by native black swallowtail butterflies, will we lose the swallowtails? "The butterfly monitoring network has shown that if you remove wild carrot, you're *not* removing black swallowtail," says Doug. "Black swallowtails use

golden alexander and rattlesnake master," native prairie species.

"That information was gathered by our volunteer butterfly monitors," says Doug, whose interest in butterflies began when he was six years old. But while earning his PhD in biochemistry, Doug had little time for his hobby. When Doug moved to Chicago, he expected "there would be no nature here, just buildings, suburbs, and agriculture."

Near his home in Elgin, however, he discovered Bluff Spring Fen, and at the Fen he discovered the Baltimore checkerspot, a butterfly he hadn't seen since childhood. Doug began collecting data, and before long he was leading a first-of-its-kind butterfly monitoring program.

Recently Doug left his job as a biochemist at Amoco Corporation to become the curator of biology at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. There he will make butterfly monitoring data available to scientists worldwide for research.

"Volunteer butterfly monitors have gathered a huge and remarkably sound body of data," says Doug, "and that can make a positive contribution."



KEN MIERZWA: Building a Constituency of Volunteers

Ren Mierzwa listened to a scientist at a recent biology conference complaining that volunteers couldn't always be trusted to provide good research data.

Ken rose to speak.

Volunteers, in fact, had collected seven years of useful data on amphibians and reptiles in the Chicago Wilderness region, Ken said. "Once volunteers understand how to identify the flora and fauna and how the sample protocols work," he said, "they can do a fantastic job."

Indeed, though Ken is now a 43-year-old senior ecologist and associate at TAMS Consultants, Inc. in Chicago, for many years, he did science solely as a volunteer, collecting influential data on amphibians and reptiles in northern Illinois.

Ken learned about local flora and fauna when a neighbor biologist taught him how to identify frogs and salamanders. He then went on to operate a printing business, but he never forgot the joy of finding tiger salamanders and spring peepers in vernal ponds.

One dreary winter, Ken decided he needed some "green space." He went to Ryerson Woods in Lake County where he found a blue-spotted salamander beneath a log. He mentioned

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his find to the staff, and within a few hours he had become a volunteer.

Ken immersed himself in the world of amateur herpetology, surveying populations at various preserves in Will, Lake, DuPage, and Cook Counties. "At some point, I realized this was more fun than what I was doing Monday through Friday," he says. So in 1990, he began working at TAMS, an engineering and design firm that, among other things, prepares environmental impact statements and assesses, develops, and oversees wetland mitigation projects.

"One of the reasons I chose this route was because I can help see that development is done in an intelligent and responsible way," says Ken. TAMS recently helped clinch the acquisition of the Clark and Pine East Nature Preserve west of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. This 200-acre, state-dedicated nature preserve supports 18 species of amphibians and reptiles, a high number compared with other sites in the region.

Ken, also a serious nature photographer and marathon runner, continues to work with volunteers, collecting data on reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. With a current focus on if and why amphibian populations are declining, Ken leads two teams of amateur herpetologists and doctoral candidates in amassing distributional and abundance data. One team studies Spears Woods in Cook County forest preserves; the other gathers data in a remote 6,000-acre area of the Missouri Ozarks.

In addition to other published works, Ken's findings have been reported in the two chapters he wrote for the recent book, *Status and Consevation of Midwestern Amphibians* (University of Iowa Press, 1998).

These teams of professionals and amateurs will be vital to the conservation of Midwestern amphibians. "From a practical standpoint," Ken says, "the resources aren't there to gather the data we need to protect open space. The only way to do that is to build a constituency of volunteers."



RICH HYERCZYK: In the Company of Lichens

Rich Hyerczyk was wandering through a forest preserve 14 years ago when a friend asked him, half jokingly, if he went to the woods to find himself.

Rich has found himself—hanging out with some half plant/half fungus types. These days, when Rich is not working as a draftsman, he's usually hunched over some tree with a hand lens identifying lichens.

Rich says that, while he was content working as a draftsman, he also felt drawn to something intangible, the Earth perhaps. At age 32, he enrolled in a botany program at the Morton Arboretum where his first course was on lichens.

"I didn't even know what a lichen was," recalls the Chicago resident.
"And I figured botanists knew everything there was to know about lichens."

His teacher, Dr. Gerould Wilhelm, convinced him the opposite was true about this curious organism in which fungus and algae live together, meeting each other's basic needs.

Since then, Rich has taught several courses on lichen identification, and has written papers on lichens that have been published in the *Transactions of the Illinois State Academy of*

Science and Erigenia, the journal of the Illinois Native Plant Society. He's also nearly halfway done with the major task of cataloging the lichens of the Cook County forest preserves.

"You can go on a hike in the woods and spend your whole day finding interesting things in one square meter," says Rich.

Like many volunteer scientists, Rich often works with volunteer stewards as they assess restoration needs on conservation lands.

"Jerry (Wilhelm) really encouraged us in the botany class," Rich says. "He said there's not enough time and resources for the professional to do this, but with their help, citizen scientists can do it. If I can do it, anyone can do it."

Wilhelm concurs, and goes a few steps further. "Yes, the data are valuable in their own right," he says, "but these extraordinary, gentle people are even more valuable. Some of the most important conservation scientists among us, both professional and volunteer, are the field people who have come to know the faces of the living things, who understand plant and animal responses to our behavior, and who help land managers make good judgments, day by day, and site by site. They are helping us become native parts of our native landscape."

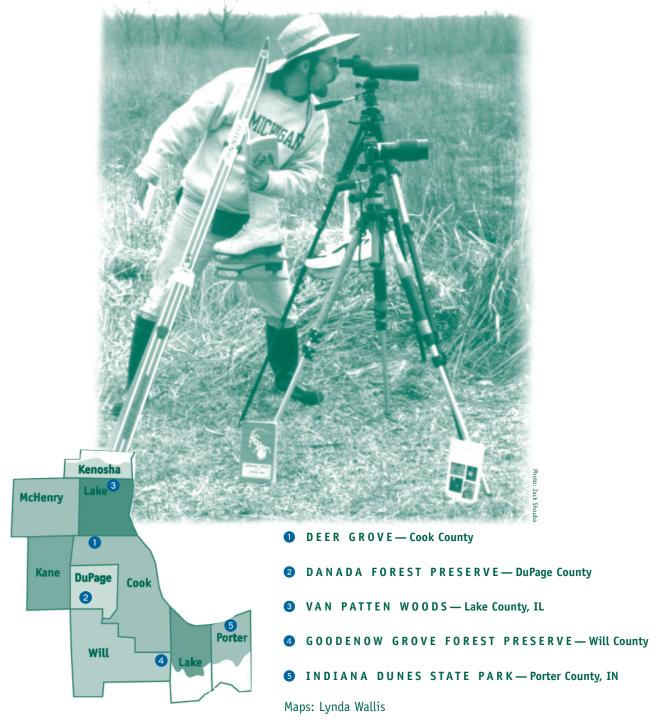
12 CHICAGO WILDERNESS

Into the Wild

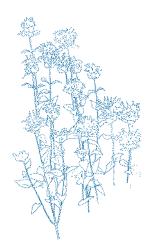
OUR GUIDE TO THE WILD SIDE

Bring field guides and binoculars—or just your senses and spirit.

These lands are among our best and brightest gems of ancient nature.



WINTER 1999 13



Wild Bergamot

n June 25, 1916
the Cook County
Forest Preserve
District acquired its first
land for use as a nature
preserve—a 500-acre component of what is now
known as Deer Grove, near
Barrington in northwest
Cook County. District officials inscribed the following
on a stone marker by the
side of the preserve's main
trail:

"The Forest Preserve District organized February 11, 1915 is the heritage of farseeing men of Cook County and Illinois, who by legislative act, seek to perpetuate the forest and streams, hills and vales, prairies and fields for another generation than this...To the athletically inclined there are outdoor sports—to the fisherman well-stocked streams—to the horticulturist the wildflowers—to the tourist comfort—to the infirmed hope—to the future the untrammeled, unmolested virgin fields and forestsour tribute to future generations...Anton J. Cermak, President"

Deer Grove Preserve now comprises 1,800 acres of prime Chicago area wilderness, and is considered to be one of Cook County's best places to hike, bike or cross-country ski. Its 3.9-miles of paved asphalt bicycle trail, and 8.3 miles of unpaved multi-use trails, lace together the area's diverse habitats, ranging from undulating meadows and hilltops, to wild woodlands and deep ravines, to water-filled, picturesque creeks, which meander through the site feeding the marshes and two lakes located within the preserve.

The bike trail links with the 4.8-mile Palatine Bicycle Trail at Quentin and Dundee Roads, offering extended cycling opportunities. Hikers can enjoy observing jewelweed (a favorite of hummingbirds) along steep ravines or strolling underneath the leafy canopies of oak and maple forests in the summer. A few acres near the center of the preserve have been restored to the open oak woodland conditions that predominated in the grove during most of its prehistory. Here unusual species of wildflowers, butterflies, and birds are found. During the winter, crosscountry skiers will find the preserve's meandering curves and sinuous slopes challenging. And during any season horseback riders can enjoy cantering Deer Grove's

hilly and forested terrain on specially designated trails.

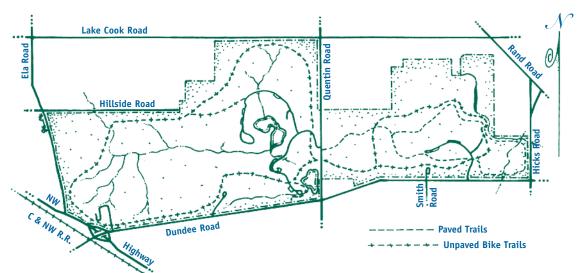
Unfortunately, due to heavy off-trail use by bicyclists and equestrians, the natural plant and animal communities in the ravine areas of Deer Grove have been damaged. Trampling of ground cover plants and resulting soil erosion have undermined forest trees and shrubs and polluted local bodies of water. Cyclists and equestrians have since been restricted from riding off trail or from using non-designated trails; they are asked to use only the trails specially designated and maintained for them. (District police have recently stepped up their intermittent practice of ticketing violators.) By imposing these restrictions, the District hopes to prevent further ecological damage and allow the natural ecosystem to be restored.

Day-trippers will find picnic areas, along with tables, water pumps, rest rooms and shelters for their convenience. The preserve, is open sunrise to sunset. For further information, call (800) 870-3666, (773) 261-8400, or (708) 366-9420.

DIRECTIONS:

Take I-90 or I-290 to Rte. 53 north. Exit at either Rte. 14 (Northwest Highway) and head northwest to Dundee Rd., or exit Rte. 14 at Dundee Rd and head west. Entrances are off Dundee between Hicks Rd. and Northwest Hwy., or off Quentin Rd. between Dundee and Lake Cook Rd.

—Eugene Bender



anada (pronounced Duh-nay-duh). Somewhere on this 783-acre preserve you can study nature, hike, jog, bike, fish, tour a farm, learn the equestrian arts, take hay rides, go for sleigh rides in the snow, crosscountry ski, and hold formal receptions, meetings, bridal showers, parties or other catered affairs in a 19-room mansion. There is even a week-long equestrian summer camp for 10-to-14 yr. old children where they can learn about horses from the hooves up. And by the spring of 2000, Danada will become the new headquarters of the DuPage Forest Preserve District. District officials are planning a new building designed in the prairie style which will be located across the street from the Equestrian Center.

Danada's nearly three miles of multi-purpose trails traverse wooded savannas, wetlands, wildflower meadows, marshes, lakes, and

domesticated fields and farmland. Its two-mile Regional Trail leads to the adiacent 767-acre Herrick Lake Forest Preserve. Herrick Lake provides habitat for 300 species of native plants, 13 fish species, 108 species of birds, 19 mammal species, and many reptiles and amphibians.

Within Danada's borders you will find a variety of wildlife, from grassland birds such as meadow larks and bob-olinks, to waterfowl, herons, deer, foxes, and even an occasional wily coyote.

Common wildflowers include trout lily, bloodroot, and wild geranium. Over the years volunteers have helped to restore a 35-acre area into a healthy native prairie. Visitors to the open woodlands can walk beneath the craggy twisting limbs of large spreading bur oaks and through plush carpets of woodland satin grass and golden seal.

Danada also contains a 1,350-acre working farm which yields apples, wheat, and corn. The 19-room Danada House, originally the private estate of Daniel and Ada L. Rice from 1930 to the 1970's, can accommodate gatherings of up to 150 people.

The Danada Equestrian Center, a legacy of the Rices' interest in race horses, has provided firstrate educational and recreational programs for DuPage County residents since 1983. These programs offer a holistic approach to caring for horses as well as teaching basic skills in riding. The District offers horse-drawn hay rides through wood and dale in the summer, or sleigh rides during the winter (provided there's at least six inches of snow-pack) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Public rides cost \$3 per adult, \$1 for children between five and 12. and are free to children under five. Private group rides are also available. Call (630) 668-6012 for further information. Danada is open from sun-up to sundown.

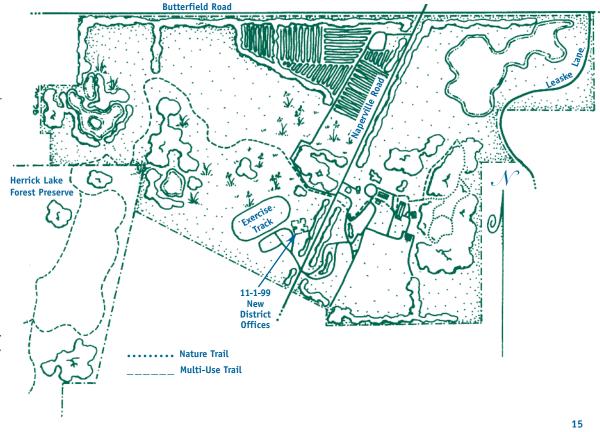
DIRECTIONS:

From I-88 take Rte. 53 north to Butterfield Rd., then west to Naperville Rd., then turn south. The entrance is on Naperville Rd., .6 mile south of Butterfield Rd.

-Eugene Bender



Small-flowered leafcup thrives in moist, shady places



WINTER 1999

an Patten Woods in northern Lake County encompasses 972 acres of prairie, native oak woodlands, and sedge meadows. The Des Plaines River meanders the entire length of the preserve, and the beautiful 74-acre Sterling Lake lies at the southern end of the park.

Just north of Sterling Lake lies the northern trailhead for the Des Plaines River Trail, a crushed gravel trail which extends south for 12 miles with a 33-mile link-up planned for the near future. This trail is open to horses, snowmobiles, bicycles, as well as hikers and runners. In addition, Ster-

ling Lake is encircled by foot trails that stretch approximately two miles. In the eastern half of Van Patten Woods lies a one-mile loop dedicated for hikers and cross-country skiers and a two-mile crushed gravel loop for cross country hikers, horses, and bicycles. Anyone out on the trails may see white-tailed deer, catch a glimpse of a coyote, look up to see some of the many raptors (red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, sharpshinned hawk) or you may be very lucky and see some of the wild turkeys that have been spotted lately.

Sterling Lake is the hub of activity for the park.

Originally a gravel pit that had filled with water, the lake was once a dangerous eyesore with treacherous drop-offs. In 1989 and 1993 major restoration took place

resulting in a safe and beautiful lake where fishing, canoeing, row boating and paddle boating are enjoyed. On the fishing scene panfish, bass, and northern pike are often caught while muskies, channel catfish, and walleye are stocked regularly. Bait, tackle, and boat rentals are available at Chandler's Boat and Bait on the lake's shore. There is also a canoe launch for the Des Plaines River

Winter recreation includes ice skating, hiking, snowshoeing, ice fishing, (provided ice is 4.5 inches thick), cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.

The paramount natural feature of the area is the Des Plaines River. Its flood plain provides refuge for many native plants and animals. Primarily flat to

gently sloping, the grasslands and restored prairies and meadows are dotted by pine groves and natural oak-dominated woodlands. Can you spot the largest oak tree in the county? (Hint...it stands very close to the road running through the preserve).

The District plans to restore the sedge meadow and wetland community that run along the Des Plaines River. These communities are separated by linear oak woodlands that run along the eastern bank of the river. Prairie restoration has started west of Sterling Lake and there are active volunteer groups planting trees and conducting controlled burns of woodland and prairie.

Extensively remodeled just seven years ago, shelters, bathroom facilities, trails and picnic areas are all in new, clean condition. You really get a sense of open country when you visit this preserve and it is large enough and far from highly populated areas to get a feeling of quiet and calm. This is not an overcrowded, overused park by any stretch!

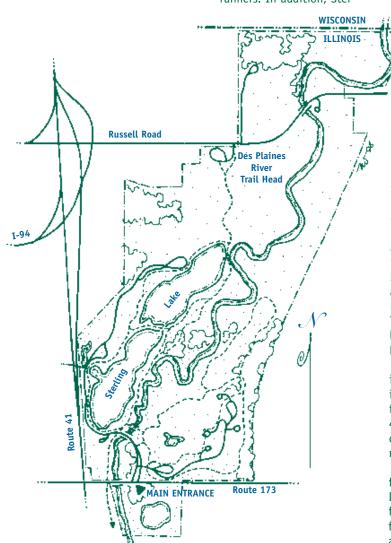
For information about rentals, programs, fishing, contact Lake County Forest Preserves at (847) 367-6640. For information on conservation and restoration projects, contact volunteer coordinator Tom Smith at (847) 948-7750.

Van Patten Woods is open 365 days a year from 6:30 a.m. until sundown.

DIRECTIONS:

Van Patten Woods is located in northeastern Lake County near Wadsworth, IL. The main entrance is on Rte. 173 one mile east of the I-94 tollway and 1/4 mile east of Rte. 41.

—Jim Kostohrys



GOODENOW GROVE NATURE PRESERVE AND PLUM CREEK NATURE CENTER — Will County

oodenow Grove **Nature Preserve in** far eastern Will County offers its greatest recreational bounty after **Old Man Winter graces** Chicago Wilderness with **his presence.** Opportunities abound for cross-country skiing, ice-skating, sledding, and winter hiking.

More than four miles of cross-country ski trails traverse the diverse terrain of Goodenow's 689-acres of oak-hickory forest interspersed with hills and open grasslands. A wide and steep hill near the preserve's Plum Creek Nature Center is ideal for sledding when there is enough snow. Visitors can borrow truck inner tubes to use on the hill for the day merely by placing a driver's license on file (the license is returned after the tube is turned in).

"It's a lot of fun. You can fit three kids on one tube," said Emily Theil, interpretive naturalist with the Forest Preserve District of Will County, noting that as many as 1,000 people come to the hill on busy weekend days. "When they get to the bottom, the kids roll off and tumble in the snow."

Staff on hand supervise the hill and stand ready to help in case something happens, Theil said. The Nature Center doubles as a warming station where the staff offers free coffee, hot water, and cups for making hot chocolate. Don't forget your own cocoa powder.

An ice-skating pond is also nearby, but all Blackhawk wannabes are advised to call in advance. Skating is allowed only when the ice is at least 4 inches thick.

The Nature Center is also home to the Discovery Den and Earth Care Center, good options for winter's coldest days. In the Discovery Den,

young children can make their own spider web and play with animal puppets, such as the tadpole that turns into a frog or the moth that changes into a butterfly. A microscope table is set up for examining snake skins and such. They can also use the balance table to see how many rocks equal feathers.

The Earth Care Center is adult-oriented offering displays on acid rain and landfill dilemmas. Many brochures are on hand for the taking. Theil said.

A hike through the woods offers the opportunity to spot deer, or at least their tracks, and birds as common as chickadees and cardinals to downy woodpeckers. One might be able to spot a great horned owl nesting high in the tallest of trees in January, Theil said. Barred and screech owls also call Goodenow home.

you can't see any other time of the year," Theil said. "You can see the deer tracks and their trails. You can see where they laid for the night. You can be the first one on the trail and have your tracks be the

Will County are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. The Plum Creek

Nature Center is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. If there is enough snow for sledding, the nature center is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Call (708) 946-2216 for more information.

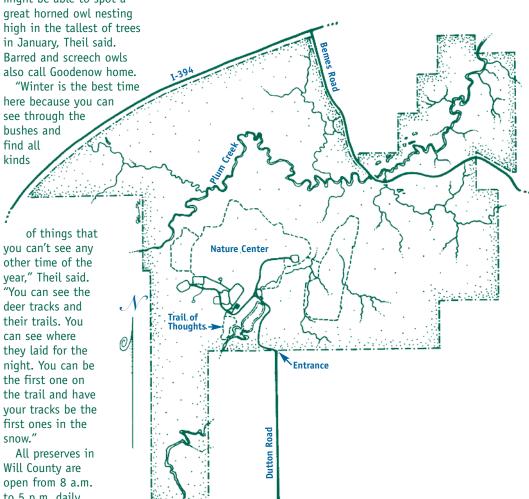
DIRECTIONS:

From the north, take I-94 east to I-394 south. Exit at Goodenow Rd. Turn east (left) for about 2 miles. Turn left on Dutton Rd.; follow to parking area.

— Benjamin Cox



Bladdernut trees form a low canopy in moist woodlands



Goodenow Road

17

WINTER 1999

arl Sandburg once said, "The dunes are to the Midwest what the Grand Canyon is to Arizona...They constitute a signature of time and eternity." Wrought by the incessant work of wave and wind over the millennia, the Indiana Dunes offer a trip forward or backward through geologic time.

Here Dr. Henry Chandler Cowles, the University of Chicago botanist known by many as the father of North American ecology, conducted his landmark studies in plant ecology at the turn of the century. Here he discovered the orderly and predictable sequence of change in plant communities at a given location—what he called 'succession'—as landscape and climate conditions change over time. No wonder Dr. Cowles dubbed this living botanical laboratory a "floral melting pot."

Indiana Dunes rolls over thousands of acres of lakeshore wilderness. Visitors can observe the diversity of flora and fauna that flourish in its many habitats. Starting at the lakeshore, you'll see the Beach Association, or first plant colonizers of the area, consisting of flora like seaside spurge and sea rocket. Strolling along from the lake towards the interior, you'll encounter the Foredune Association: dune-

18

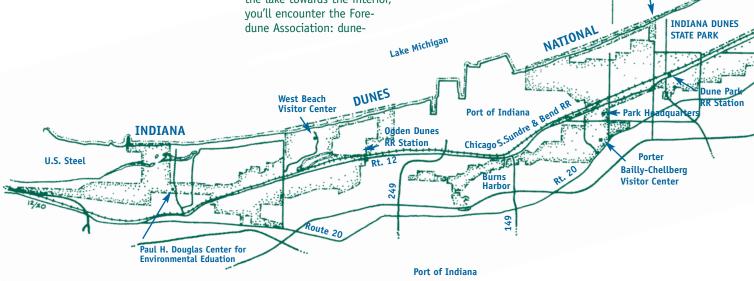
builder plants like marram grass, sand reed grass, sand cherry, and willow shrub. Next comes the Cottonwood Association, young dune species like cottonwood, milkweed, and hoary puccoon. The Pine Dune Association, consists of, among others, arctic bearberry, jack pine, white pine, juniper, and cedar. Continuing on your walk through time vou'll encounter the Black Oak Association where oak, hickory, ash, maple, and other plants thrive that are not tolerant to the earlier shifting topography, extremes of climate, or poor soil conditions. Lastly, in a few areas that were protected from fire, the Beech Maple Association can be found further inland.

Also here you can observe blowouts, huge amphitheater bowls of scoured-out areas hidden among the high dunes. Or look for the tree graveyards: standing dead groves of relic trees buried by the advancing dunes, then disinterred by their retreat. One unusual plant for this region is the prickly-pear cactus, a plant more used to the desert regions of the Southwest, but also found here in the sandy

wilderness of the dunes. Jack pines are isolated relics of earlier arctic conditions, when glaciers were still active in the area. Normally found only 60 miles north of the dunes, this tree species migrated south when the climate here resembled that of more northern regions. When the climate warmed, the jack pines managed to survive in the dunes' exposed conditions.

The Dunes are part National Lakeshore and part State Park. At the latter, 10 trails totaling 16.5 miles pass over nearly 200-foot tall drifting mounds of sand, across three miles of lakeshore beachfront, along marshes, and through 1,800 acres of woods. Winter visitors can cross-country ski or snowshoe along the 9.2mile Calumet Trail. It traverses varied and unusual topography, from interior blowouts to exposed foredunes. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore surrounds the state park on three sides. The park is open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day of the year.

Porter Beach



For more information, call (219) 926-1952.

As you walk, listen for the singing of the sands, a high, clear, musical ringing tone, similar to that of a tuning fork, which you will create just by walking on the wet sand and producing friction. This harmonizes with the quartz crystals, moisture and pressure; you will, in effect, be strumming the earth with your toes.

DIRECTIONS:

From Chicago, take I-90 south, then east, into Indiana. Exit at Rte. 49 north for 2.6 miles until you reach the entrance to the state park. National Lakeshore entrances are shown on the map.

—Eugene Bender

COOK COUNTY:

Deer Grove:

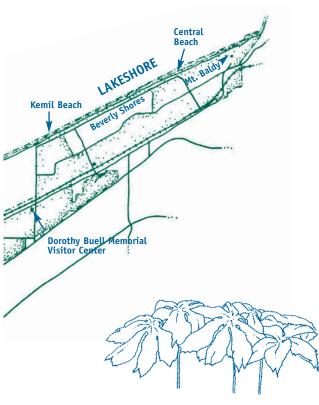
1st Saturday and 3rd Sunday of each month, 9 a.m. Contact Dale Shields: (847) 634-0824.

Ashburn Prairie:

Feb 28, 9 a.m.
Park on Redfield just north of
71st and Kedzie, walk north.
Contact Joe Neumann: (773)
434-1415 or Palos Restoration
website:http//:members.xoom.
com/palosrestor/

Hidden Pond:

Feb 13, 20, Mar 13, 20, 9 a.m. Meet at north side of parking lot at 94th and Kean Ave. Contact Roger Keller: (708) 598-2234 or Palos Restoration website:http//:members.xoom.com/palosrestor/



May apples Rich spring woodland

Powderhorn Marsh:

Feb 6, Mar 13, 9 a.m. From I-94. East on 130th St. to Brainard Ave. Southeast on Brainard. Parking lot on left just past Burnham Ave. Meet at back end of lot. Contact Joe Nowak: (708) 333-3642.

Somme Woods:

Jan 31, Feb 14, 9 a.m.
On the north side of Dundee road, 2 miles west of the Edens (I-94), one block east of Waukegan road. Contact North Branch Restoration Project hotline: (773) 878-3877.

Thatcher Woods:

Feb 6, Mar 6, 9 a.m. Located at Thatcher Ave. & Washington. Contact Jean & Victor Guarino: (708) 848-7175.

Harms Woods:

Jan 24, Feb 21, 9 a.m. Meet at Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Rd., just south of Glenview Rd. Contact North Branch Restoration Project hotline: (773) 878-3877.

DUPAGE COUNTY:

Fern Meadows Marsh:

Mar 13, 9 a.m. Take Rt. 59 to Smith Rd. West on Smith to Munger Rd. Park on Munger Rd.

Fischer Woods:

Feb 6, 9 a.m.
Park on Arthur Ct., 1 block
north of Grand Ave. & Church
Rd. intersection.

Waterfall Glen:

Mar 6, Apr 10, 9 a.m. Argonne National Laboratory, south of Darien. Contact DuPage County Forest Preserve District: (630) 876-5929.

WILL COUNTY:

Contact Bruce Hodgdon, Public Information Office, Will County Forest Preserve District: (815) 727-8700.

Hickory Creek Barrens:

Jan 30, 9 a.m.

Raccoon Grove Nature Preserve:

Feb 20, 9 a.m.

Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve:

Mar 20, 9 a.m.

KANE COUNTY:

Fabyan Shelf Prairie:

Feb 13, Mar 13, 9 a.m.

Freeman Kame:

Feb 16, 9 a.m.-noon. Contact Grace Koehler, Kane County Forest Preserve District: (847) 741-9798.

Ferson Creek Fen:

4th Saturday every month, 9 a.m.

East side on Rte. 31, north of St. Charles. Contact Mary Ochsenschlager: (630) 513-3338.

LAKE COUNTY:

Grant Woods Forest Preserve:

Feb 20, Mar 20, 9 a.m.-noon. Entrance on Monaville Rd. just east of Rte. 59. Meet in first lot. Contact Joyce Proper: (847) 356-8138.

Liberty Prairie Reserve:

Jan 23, Feb 27, Mar 27, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.

Oak Openings:

Feb 6, Mar 13, 8 a.m.-11 a.m. Contact Julie Roszkowiak, Liberty Prairie Conservancy: (847) 548-5989.

MCHENRY COUNTY:

Alden Sedge Meadow:

1st Saturday every month (except summer), 9 a.m. Contact Dan Wilson: (815) 648-2389.

Hickory Grove:

3rd Sunday every month, 9 a.m.

Main entrance of preserve on Hickory Nut Rd. Contact Jack Kaskel: (815) 459-5813.

Natural Events

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

WINTER INTO EARLY SPRING

Great Fecundity

A warm blanket of snow sounds oxymoronic. But to the meadow voles in my backyard, a six-inch layer of snow is cause for a terrific increase in comfort level. Not only does the air temperature rarely fall below 30°F under the snow, the white covering allows direct, yet concealed, passage from my lilacs to the compost heap. Voles are warmer and safer under the snow than on the bare ground.

Two species of voles are found in the Chicago Wilderness, the meadow vole and the superficially similar but more rare prairie vole. Both are known for their amazing fecundity and reproductive abilities. Voles breed throughout the year, with litters of up to eight young born every six to eight weeks. The young females are sexually mature at the age of one month. Explosive, cyclical population booms may raise the vole density to over 400 individuals per acre every few years, thus making them an important source of energy in a grassland food web. Thank goodness for predators.

Meadow voles are found almost anywhere there is long grass. You can locate their intricate maze of runways by parting the thick grass in a vacant lot.

Feeding Wild Animals

I know some people who think if you start feeding birds in the winter, you had better continue or the birds will starve. Not necessarily true. During most winters, the survival rate of birds does not drop when feeders are neglected. The feeding stations generously provided by humans are usually used only to supplement a bird's diet. A study in Wisconsin found that chickadees obtain only 20-25 percent of their

daily energy requirement from a feeder, picking up the rest from their foraging trips through the woods and fields. Feeders DO help birds survive when temperatures dip below 0°F, when the energy requirements for our feathered friends increase by 50 percent over their normal winter intake.

FEBRUARY

Animal Holiday

There are plenty of similarities between groundhogs and badgers. They both live in holes in the ground. They're roughly the same size and shape. Groundhogs have a holiday named in their honor; badgers are the mascot for the premier party school in the country. But that's where the similarities end. Their behavior, habits, and habitats are entirely different.

Groundhogs abound in our area. Originally an animal of savannas and forest edges, they have adjusted well to life to in our parks, yards and roadsides. Their food of choice (emerging grasses, flowers, bok choy from my garden) is found everywhere. Groundhogs—like most members of the squirrel family—are active during daylight hours.

Badgers are rare in our area, though they turn up regularly. Originally an animal of sand prairies, they have been unable to adapt to the innumerable changes in the Chicago Wilderness landscape. Badgers are excellent hunters, preying extensively on mice, voles, groundhogs, ground squirrels, and rabbits. They are basically nocturnal.

Due to the progressive restoration and management practices in our area's prairies, the future for our badger populations may be promising. The Braidwood Dunes and Savanna in Will County provides many acres of suitable habitat, as does the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Woodpeckers

Winter is a great time to observe our resident woodpeckers. They are colorful and conspicuous as they dash among the trees. They're also loud. This is the time of year when woodpeckers drum, where they bang their heads against trees to attract a mate and announce their territory. I had a roommate at Southern Illinois University who did the same thing.

There are several different species of woodpeckers found within Chicago Wilderness habitats. The elegant looking redheaded woodpecker is found in our open oak woodlands. Pilcher Park in Joliet is a terrific place to spot red-heads as well as the closely related red-bellied woodpecker. The pileated woodpecker—the largest of our local woodpeckers—is uncommon in our region. They require large tracts of timber. There are a few pileateds that reside in Warren Woods in Indiana, and one used to live along Hickory Creek in Will County, but has not been seen for several years. Hairy woodpeckers, and the similar in appearance (but smaller) downy woodpecker, also live in our forest preserves and older neighborhoods. They can be attracted to feeding stations with suet feeders.

Downtown Foxes

Fox couples throughout suburbia are currently busy checking out real estate. They will use several shelters during the course of the spring as they move their family frequently. Their ideal home is under the root of an overturned tree, but they're not too choosey. A pile of concrete rubble will be suitable. They'll den almost anywhere, especially when the local vole population is booming.

In downtown Naperville, a couple of blocks from the Cock Robin Restaurant, lives a red fox. The neighbors see her scamper through the backyards and across the school playground. You can track her through the snow by following her straight line of foot prints. She used to live in a small tangled plot of box elder, until it was recently cut down for the new River Walk expansion.

MARCH

Wood Ducks

I'd like to propose a toast to Mr. A.C. White of Connecticut. In the early years of this century, it was feared wood ducks had become extinct in the wild. Their habitat had been devastated through development and forestry practices, and they were a favorite target of market hunters. In 1914 there were certainly fewer wood ducks in the wild than in captivity. Mr. White came to the rescue. He set up a captive, breeding colony of wood ducks and, for 17 consecutive years, raised and released thousands of ducks into the wilds of North America. Thanks A.C.

Many wood ducks return to the Chicago Wilderness to nest in the early spring. All along the Des Plaines River and its tributaries you can find these beautiful birds, who exhibit their most colorful plumage at this time of year. In the early morning hours at Fullersburg Woods in DuPage County, there's a pair of wood ducks who sit on a low branch of an oak, watching me prepare the kettle of maple sap for boiling over a fire.

20

Charlotte and Herbert Read:

Saving the Dunes



t the base of Mount Baldy, a sign Ainvokes the dilemma of defining the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. "Predator or Prey?" reads the sign. Predator because the dunes are continually moving, obliterating forest as they go. Prey because humankind's penchant for development can move so much faster than the dunes' geologic pace. The evidence is as clear as a day at the beach, which along Indiana's lakeshore includes equal parts sand, water, and majestic views of industry. Puffing steel mills are as accepted by the millions of beach-goers as is the heat of summer.

Those millions, however, do not include Herb Read, one of the few not properly dressed for a day at West Beach. Milling around him are young women with tanned bodies wrapped in bikinis and kids scuffling along in Tevas behind parents toting huge rubber rafts, coolers, and towels. Dressed in a white shirt, blue jeans, and walking shoes, with a camera slung around his neck, Herb's here to teach me.

For the past 46 years, Herb and his wife Charlotte have been active members in the Save the Dunes Council, a preservation coalition that has contended with big industry and an

assembly of politicians, private property owners, and the National Park Service. The Council's goal is enabling a park marked by political boundaries to be defined instead by its own ecology, a contiguous 25-mile stretch of lakeshore and inland vegetation, interspersed with bogs, pannes, and more than 1,400 vascular plant species. Among national parks, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore ranks seventh in native plant diversity, far greater than preserves many times its size. Right now, however, the park map looks like a child's drawing, with some park land outside the lines and some holes in the center.

"That's park. That's not," Herb says, pointing first to the right, then to the left, indicating which land they have won for preservation as he drives along Indiana State Highway 12.

This natural-versus-political boundary debate is played out in most national parks, whether Yellowstone or the Indiana Dunes. "Our struggles are to do what we can to improve the ecological boundaries," says Charlotte, who is wearing a Save the Dunes tee shirt. "Scientists have realized it all along. It's a balance between the needs of the resource and the political realities of getting the resource protected."

The difference at the Indiana Dunes is the people lobbying for the park's protection. Founded by Dorothy Buell in 1952, the Save the Dunes Council is a grass-roots effort Herb and Charlotte joined because they feel personally connected to the region. Unlike the larger parks in the West that gained national attention with outsider champions such as John Muir, the Indiana Dunes need the support of the local community to survive.

The Reads have made this a family crusade. "The Dunes are personally special to me because I grew up in Chicago near Jackson Park," Charlotte says. "I always had a park in my backyard. I thought everybody had that opportunity, and I think that created an awareness and sensitivity in me early on, that open spaces and places to go are a part of growing up." Herb's family also lived in south Chicago and made frequent trips to the Dunes when he was young. Now, given their full schedules working at the Council's office in Michigan City and occasional lobbying trips to Washington, D.C., the two don't get to visit the Dunes as much as they would like.

But, then, the Reads *live* in the park. Their current house, tucked in the woods of the National Lakeshore, is on leaseback until 2010, when it becomes property of the federal government. Many of the residents who settled before the Dunes became part of the park system also have their homes on leaseback.

Herb joined the Council in 1952 as chair of the engineering committee, and after their five children got older, Charlotte became the Council's first employee in 1974. The Council now has 1,000 members, an office, a small staff, and a gift shop run by volunteers. And support from outside the Council is growing. Other regional groups, such as the Friends of the Dunes and the Shirley Heinze Environmental Fund, have joined the effort to preserve the Dunes.

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Meet your neighbors

"While the Dunes Council was the leader in all of the Dunes legislation, we were never there alone," Charlotte says. "In 1992, we had a coalition of 22 groups in Indiana convincing our federal legislators that the Dunes area needed to be larger."

Since Congress first authorized the creation of an 8,000-acre Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in 1966, the Council has lobbied in Washington dozens of times, expanding the national and state park's boundaries to approximately 16,000 acres (see p.18). Many of the Dunes bills were small victories—13 acres here, another plot there—but slowly the culture is changing. The steel industry, the Council's biggest opponent in the 1960s and mid-70s, has morphed into a quasi-ally, even donating park land

for the protection of endangered species such as the Karner blue butterfly.

The next step most likely will be getting more support from the people who use the park. With progress in education, especially at the new Indiana Center for Learning at Camp Goodfellow and the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education at Miller Woods, younger kids are starting to recognize the importance of open spaces and preservation. And this education touches more than just the immediate neighbors of the park.

"You start with the kids," Charlotte adds with enthusiasm. "The next generation will be more sensitive to the environment and ecological boundaries of the park."

—Eva Dienel



Dr. George Rabb: Statesman of Nature

Here's what most people don't know about Dr. George Rabb, director of the Brookfield Zoo: he has one of the longest tenures (22 years) of any zoo director in the country; he has a hot collection of classical CD's; he is a gourmet cook (taught by his mother) and wine connoisseur; his career of international conservation prominence began with ants.

Here's what many people do know: he's a bit shy; he is a host of surpassing graciousness (an expression of his southern roots, no doubt); he loves amphibians.

First, to the ants. "Very early on, when I was four or five," Rabb says, "I got into watching the carpenter ants on their trails to this enormous live oak that extended into the street in

front of my grandparents' house in Lumberton, North Carolina. I used to stick my ear down and imagine I could hear them. Their conversation was about where to get the best food and all that jazz." Rabb conducted experiments of his own making, transporting some of the ants and bringing them back. He reveled in the nature abundant in his hometown of Charleston, South Carolina. Wood storks, bald eagles, all manner of snakes—these were his sought-after companions.

Rabb became a "museum kid," steered into a professional student track at the Charleston Museum, and trained to collect and prepare ornithological specimens. More than anything, he loved herps (professional shorthand for herptiles, known to us as reptiles and amphibians).

Fortunate in finding mentors and helpful friends, Rabb as a high school student spent time at an Emory University Field Station in southwestern Georgia chatting up the graduate students in ecology (cheekiness and confidence are also Rabb traits), collecting mosquitoes—for science!—and sampling birds, reptiles, and mammals to determine if they were carriers of malaria. At College of Charleston he majored in biology, then earned a PhD in zoology from the University of Michigan. In 1956, he came to the Brookfield Zoo as research zoologist, with an office in the Zoo's animal hospital. In 1976, Rabb was chosen to become Director of Brookfield Zoo and President of the Chicago Zoological Society.

Gradually he rose through the ranks of world conservation to serve as chair of the World Conservation Union's Species Survival Commission, a network of 7,000 scientists, field researchers, government officials and conservation leaders in 180 countries. He has received the Silver Medal of the Royal Zoological Society in London, the Marlin Perkins Award from the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, and the Society for Conservation Biology Service Award, among others.

As a newly-elected vice chair of the Chicago Region Biodiversity Council, Rabb in his far-flung travels is a compelling ambassador of Chicago Wilderness. "I see this consortium of conservation organizations, and their attention to preserving the biological resources of the region, as a way to show the rest of the world how to do it," he says. "It's a potential model for preserving nature in metropolitan areas around the world."

Rabb is fascinated by the idea that the greater Chicago metropolitan area might become the world's first urban biosphere reserve. "Unlike traditional national parks and other protected areas, the intent of biospheres is to secure the biological riches of such areas in the context of the local human interests," he explains. "Basically, the concept envisions establishing a core area where the biological riches will be left intact—an entire national park, for instance and allowing degrees of intrusion and use of surrounding areas." Thus the core, in a standard biosphere reserve, is pristine nature.

Chicago Wilderness turns this concept inside out: the core is the highly developed part and the rich biological resources surround the developed core. "An urban biosphere reserve would ally conservationists with people concerned about our cities," Rabb adds. "The idea of a metropolitan biosphere would be to bring diverse interests together to determine the best outcome for the community in all its ecological and social dimensionsfrom water and air quality, to equality in provision of basic education and social services, to appropriate restraints on land and water usage and, perhaps, population growth."

These days, as an ambassador for Chicago Wilderness, he tells the people of Prague and Paris of ants and frogs and air quality, and social services, and how the future of nature is intertwined with the future of the world's people, in metropolis.

—Debra Shore



Real Mink

The mink (Musela vison) is more familiar to some people in the form of a stole or coat than as a wilderness neighbor. But Brad Semel, a biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, says these sleek, reddish-to-chocolate brown predators "can be found near many perennially wet natural areas, even the densely developed ones where natural corridors surround waterways." Although they do not spend as much time in the water as their otter cousins, mink are well adapted to aquatic habitats, with their webbed toes and dense fur.

Though common and widespread, mink are rarely seen because they're principally nocturnal. Semel notes that if you want to spot one, your best bet is in winter. "Males travel longer distances and more often in daylight between January and March, because this is breeding season. If you go to a stream or wetland, especially on a snowy winter day, you might catch sight of one. Even if you don't," Semel adds, "you are almost sure to see their tracks in the snow, or their distinctive scat, full of feathers, fur, and bones. This fall, my young son spotted a mink scat on the boardwalk at Moraine Hills State Park [in Lake County, IL]. Closer curious investigation revealed cottontail and muskrat fur. Some people are

not so thrilled to pick apart scat, but we were fascinated by the story it told."

Robert Kennicott, a founder of the Chicago Academy of Sciences in 1856 and among the first to document Illinois fauna, saw mink often: "In the prairie sloughs it devours at times considerable quantities of cray-fish, tadpoles, and frogs; and when the smaller of these places becomes nearly dry from evaporation, and are quite alive with tadpoles, and occasionally with mud-fish and sticklebacks...it clears these muddy pools entirely of their unfortunate inhabitants, which have no way of escape."

According to Dick Bautz of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, mink have poor vision. "If you stand really still, one might run by you as close as six feet away and not notice you," he says. They have few predators beside the great-horned owl. People used to trap them, but today most people would rather watch one through binoculars. "Often I see them while I am up on a ladder checking wood duck boxes," Semel notes. "They explore every wood stump and burrow, ever alert and quick, beautiful animals. This daily drama of the hunt and birth and death occurs all around us."

> —Greg Melaik and Elizabeth Sanders

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Remembering May Watts

The shoes, sensible. Her walk, lighthearted and determined.

by Lori Rotenberk

That's one thing those who studied and worked with May Theilgaard Watts—oh, and there were many—recall. The sound of her swift footsteps leading them through the canopy of trees, bogs and marshes, trails and sand dunes, searching for the clues that would teach them how nature has evolved.

They double-stepped to keep up with her enthusiasm and quick humor. Ahead of her time in so many ways, Watts,

once a one-room schoolteacher herself, blossomed, graduating in 1918 from the University of Chicago Phi Beta Kappa in botany and ecology under the renowned naturalist, Dr. Henry Cowles.

Stargazer, artist, poet and naturalist, Watts' interests were many. It shows in her 1957 *Reading the Landscape*, a beautifully written book used for decades by educators, which explains just how glaciers, climate change and farming altered our landscape. Watts later penned *Reading the Landscape of Europe* and, besides scientific papers, also wrote guides still in use today on tree and flower identification. Watts

also wrote "Nature Afoot," a popular nature column for the Chicago *Tribune*, and had her own educational horticulture program on public television.

This tall, lovely woman, who often secured her braided

hair in a red bandanna, may be most warmly remembered as staff naturalist at the Morton Arboretum, from which she retired in 1961. A few years later she spearheaded successful efforts to establish the Illinois Prairie Path, a 40-mile treasure of a hiking and recreation trail on the former right of way of the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin Railroad in DuPage County.

When May Watts died at age 82 on August 20, 1975, she

left behind a legacy through her writings and in the spirits of her hundreds of students; many who knew her carry on her work and spirit today.

She was boisterous and sensitive. May Watts, her friends recall, was advocate for the heavens, the birds, the insects, the prairie plants, the pines and oaks, the gritty dunes. An avid reader of mystery novels, Watts took that same approach to her reading of the landscape—forever seeking clues and evidence on how things began and where they might next be found.

Come early morning on the days she taught at the Morton, a gaggle of

her students would depart from Chicago on the Burlington train and walk the mile to the Arboretum from the station, recalls Carol Doty, a former friend and student of Watts who has just retired as the Arboretum historian.

"Then, Lisle was a sleepy little crossroads and May had people of all ages coming out to take her unusual classes," Doty said. Through ditties, and handmade, giant flowers that unzipped to reveal stamens, stomas, filaments, anthers and sepals, Watts taught bits of taxonomy and botany. Her landscape sketches and poems were a constant in the classroom, and tools by which students became adept at identification.





May Watts (left) teaches prairie, among the tall grasses. Photos courtesy of Morton Arboretum Archives.









On Improving the Property

They laid the trilliums low, and where drifted anemones and wild sweet phlox were wont to follow April's hepaticas—they planted grass.

There was a corner that held a tangled copse of hawthorn and young wild crabs, bridal in May above yellow violets, purple-twigged in November.

They needed the place for Lombardy poplars—and grass.

Last June the elderberry was fragrant here, and in October the viburnum poured its wine beneath the moon-yellow wisps of the witch-hazel blossoms. They piled them in the alley and made a burnt offering—to grass.

There was a slope that a wild grapevine had captured long ago.

At its brink a colony of mandrakes held green umbrellas close, like a crowd along the path of a parade.

This job almost baffled them: showers washed off the seed and made gullies in the naked clay.

They gritted their teeth—and planted grass.

At the base of the slope there was a hollow so lush with hundreds of years of fallen leaves that maiden-hair swirled above the trout-lilies, and even a few blood-roots lifted frosty blossoms there. Clay from the ravaged slope washed down and filled the hollow with a yellow hump. They noticed the hump—and planted grass.

There was a linden that the bees loved.

A smug catalpa has taken its place,
but the wood ashes were used to fertilize the grass.

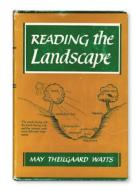
People pass by and say: "Just *look* at that grass — not a weed in it. It's like velvet!"

(One could say as much for any other grave.)

— May Theilgaard Watts

Mrs. Watts wrote this ironic poem during her residence in Ravinia. She and fellow Ravinia resident Jens Jensen sought to preserve some examples of the unique character of Ravinia's then-wild landscape.





For information about ordering books in the finder series of pocket guides, or the forthcoming reprint edition of Reading the Landscape of America, available in March 1999, a revised and expanded edition of Reading the Landscape, write or call Nature Study Guild Publishers, P.O. Box 10489, Rochester, NY 14610, (800) 954-2984.



May Watts meandering along the Illinois Prairie Path.

Rose Oplatka of Berwyn, now in her mid-80s, recalls, "I was teaching seventh grade, and had signed up for Mrs. Watts' first course. During that time you would have to come to the Arboretum and stay overnight in cabins that were near the Thornhill building. I earned several certificates from her."

"May was a remarkable person," Oplatka continues.

"Personally I thought she was like a Viking princess, looking like a queen even as an elderly lady. She was most compassionate, a very kind person."

As a slightly mischievous young woman, Watts grew up in Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood, where her Danish-born father, a landscape designer, first introduced her to plants. Often she would camp with her sister overnight on the lakeshore, where the old Edgewater Beach Hotel now stands. There began her penchant for sleeping in the bosom of the earth, deciphering the night sky.

An adventurer in every respect, she along with her husband or students trekked the mountains and forests of both Europe and the United States studying ecosystems and plant life. Along the way, Watts, who also attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, documented the terrain in colorful sketches that are now kept in archives at the Morton's Sterling Library. Among her favorite pastimes besides art and poetry was picking flowers that graced tables in her Naperville home.

Early in their marriage, the Wattses lived in Ravinia and there May joined noted landscape architect Jens Jensen, urging residents in that community to save the wild prairie that yet remained there in a 1936 booklet titled "Ravinia: Her Charms and Destiny."

Ray Schulenberg, former Curator of Woody Plants at the Arboretum and one of the Midwest's major figures in

ecosystem restoration, says of Watts: "I idolized her. She was one of the most charismatic people I've ever known. Maybe the most. She had this strong and admirable character and personality. And she could teach in the most unusual ways, which I think came from her background teaching in a one-room schoolhouse."

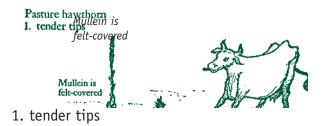
"Some of the people my mother taught at the arboretum became life-long friends," says her daughter Erica, now 72. "But her best students were myself and my brother and sister. She used to keep us busy. She would tell us to go out and find a maple leaf and bring it back. So out we would rush to see who would be the first. Then we would return and she'd say, "Go find an ash leaf" and so it would go. She would come home from teaching and tell us wonderful stories. Once someone had found in the winter a snowy owl which had run into the building and had broken a wing. She had tried to set the wing on the snowy owl, but the bird gave one heave and took off. The things she got to see!"

Years after her death, during a campaign to make her Naperville home an historic landmark in that town, was found a poignant memento. Drawn in pencil on the white clapboards of that house were the various stages of an eclipse that occurred in 1963, traced from the shadow cast by an instructive little cardboard box.

Testimony to what everyone who ever knew May Watts had seen in her: a passionate interest in all aspects of nature, from the smallest wildflower to the eternal heavens.

Lori Rotenberk is a reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times. After researching this story, she says, "I'll never see prairies and dunes ever again in the same way. I can read them now because of what she taught me."



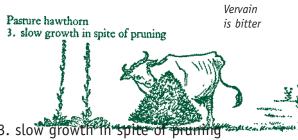


How the Hawthorn Got Its Shape:

A May Watts Lesson

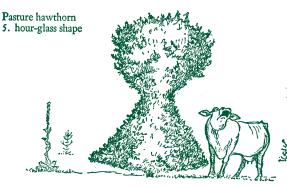
Pasture hawthorn 2. pruninghistle is prickly

2. pruning





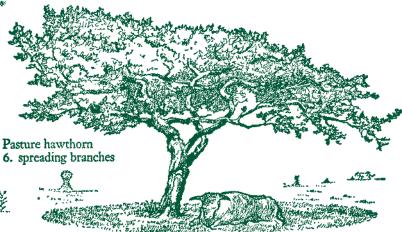
4. top shoots inaccessible



5. hour-glass shape

If buffalo had not grazed out there in the I prairie beyond these woods; if Indians had not hunted the buffalo with prairie fires; if the prairie fires had not beaten against the edge of the forest; if the bur oak had not worn a corky bark that kept it from being eliminated along with the thinner-barked trees; if a farmer who came after the Indians had not turned his cows into this oak opening to graze; and if hawthorns had not worn stout thorns that kept them from being grazed by the cows, then we should not have been lunching in a parklike area such as this, and listening to a brown thrasher singing in a hawthorn tree."

—Illustrations and text from Reading the Landscape by May Theilgaard Watts® 1957, 1985 by estate of May Theilgaard Watts, used by permission.



6. spreading branches

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Photo by Robert Hughes at Illinois Beach State Park.

Whooping Big Bird Story

Midwesterners wanting to see the federally endangered whooping crane plan trips to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in south Texas where the world's nearly 200 remaining wild birds spend their winters after breeding in Canada.

Experienced birders Robert Hughes and Bob Erickson of Chicago, however, had to go no farther than Illinois Beach State Park in Zion to see this spectacular bird. Standing along the Lake Michigan shoreline on Nov. 11, 1998, Bob Hughes panned the sky with his camera as a flock of sandhill cranes flew by. Just above, he noticed a white crane with black primary feathers and black legs. "It's a whooping crane," he shouted, clicking photographs. Erickson, with binoculars poised, also saw the bird.

The last verified sighting of a whooping crane in Illinois occurred in 1958 when an adult was seen and photographed in Pike County. The bird fed in a cornfield near a slough from October 16 to November 5, according to H. David Bohlen's book, *The Birds of Illinois*.

In the late 1800s, the whooping crane was considered common in Illinois during migration along the Illinois River and more thinly settled portions of the state. Whoopers originally bred in prairie marshes from central Illinois northwestward to North Dakota and into Canada. They still bred in Glenview, IL in the mid-1800s, when young naturalist Robert Kennicott found a nest.

Today, only one breeding population of whooping cranes exists in the wild.

"The current migration path runs on a fairly straight line from Wood Buffalo National Park (its breeding range in Canada) to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (its wintering grounds on the Texas Gulf Coast)," says Gordon Dietzman, Manager of the Education Program and Resources at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

"The migratory route of this population is fairly constricted on a longitudinal basis. They don't seem to deviate from this path by more than 100 miles or so," he says. "This route is about 600 to 700 miles west of Illinois."

Dietzman speculates that hurricane force winds found over much of the Midwest a few days before the sighting may have driven whooping cranes toward Illinois. "These winds were a

very unusual occurrence so we should not be surprised to see wildlife react in an unpredictable manner," he says.

In five to ten years, whooping cranes might start visiting Illinois a little more often. That's because the Whooping Crane Recovery Team is concerned that as long as these cranes use only one breeding area and one wintering area, this species could be lost in the wild. Work is underway to establish additional populations. The beginning of a non-migratory flock has been established in central Florida. The recovery team has recommended Wisconsin as the next site for the restoration of whooping cranes, pending a habitat analysis, says Dietzman. "These birds would be taught to migrate to a wintering area in Florida. Their migratory path will probably take them through Illinois," and the Chicago Wilderness region. Reintroductions could begin within the next four-to-five years.

A combination of habitat loss and human disturbance of breeding areas probably caused the decline of the whooping crane population. In addition, humans shot birds for their feathers, and collectors took their eggs. These threats, plus the fact that the whooping crane has a low reproductive rate, resulted in a rapid decline of the species earlier this century. In 1937, only 35 wild whooping cranes remained.

Robert Hughes and Bob Erickson were lucky enough to be there when one whooping crane flew off course. They saw a chance windblown native that one day may return for good.

-Sheryl De Vore



Whooping crane (foreground) mingles with sandhill cranes in migration.

NATURAL LANDSCAPING FROM THE GROUND UP

Learn how to bring the wild back to your patch of Chicago Wilderness at the 1999 Natural Landscaping Seminar sponsored by the Wildflower Preservation and Propagation Committee of the McHenry County Defenders. Learn about native flowers and trees, landscape genealogy, attracting birds with plants. Speakers include Ed Collins from the McHenry County Conservation District.

Date: Saturday, February 27 Location: Conference Center of McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, IL Cost: Includes lunch. In advance \$25, at door \$35 Information: (815) 338-0393

2 SEVEN NEW MEMBERS

On December 2, Chicago Wilderness welcomed seven new members. Chicago **Audubon Society**, with more than 5,000 members, focuses on the protection of the environment, especially birds and their habitat. The Division of Nature Preserves of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources identifies, protects, and manages nature preserves to maintain viable examples of all Indiana natural communities and endangered, threatened, and rare species. The Illinois Audubon Society, with five chapters in the Chicago area, protects natural areas, birds, other wildlife, and their habitat. Iron Oaks Environmental Learning Center in Olympia Fields, IL, manages and restores natural areas and provides education and recreation programs that focus on conserving natural resources. The Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District provides technical information to the public on methods of soil and water conservation and participates in natural resource inventories, streambank stabilization, wetland restoration, and other activities promoting sustainable use of natural resources. The National Audubon Society—Chicago Wilderness Program, an initiative set up by the national organization with seven chapters in the Chicago region, seeks to conserve and restore natural ecosystems for the benefit of birds, wildlife, and humanity. Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation works for a sustainable northwest Indiana by stimulating private-sector economic growth and supporting many collaborative environmental and natural resource efforts.

Information about Chicago Wilderness organizations is available from the Chicagoland Environmental Network (708) 485-0263 x 369.

LYMAN WOODS: LESS, AND MORE

For many years the Pierce Downers Heritage Alliance has encouraged the DuPage County Forest Preserve District as they have gradually acquired 128 acres of Lyman Woods, a high quality oak woodland in Downers Grove. In August 1997, Town & Country Homes offered to sell a 4.7 acre parcel of forest adjacent to the preserve. Consensus to buy the property could not be reached before a "no-cut" agreement expired on August 30, 1998. Two days later, county commissioners

finally voted to delay action on the proposed acquisition. The next day, Town & Country Homes began cutting down trees, clearing the site for a two-story corporate office to house its headquarters. Commissioners voted on October 20 to condemn and then purchase the property. Once inventoried with 166 mature trees, the parcel still had approximately 45 standing trees when it became part of Lyman Woods Forest Preserve on December 1. The loss included as many as 80 two-hundred-year-old oaks. Citizen advocate Gordon Goodman said, "It's unfortunate that it took so long to acquire this parcel," but he's glad it's finally added to the preserve. According to Forest Preserve officials, "We did not stop the bulldozer, but fortunately the soil structure, which is a vital component to the life zone at Lyman Woods, remained intact." The property will be revegetated and possibly developed for an environmental interpretive center.

MAVIGATING NOVEMBER

"Birds often stay along a usual migration path, but this past November you could look up and see them anywhere," said Richard Biss, manager of the Chicago Audubon Society's Rare Bird Alert. Jim Landing, conservation representative of the Illinois Audubon Society's Fort Dearborn Chapter, did just that on November 12 and saw more than 700 sandhill cranes passing over his home in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. "My groceries dropped and I gawked, probably making all the neighbors start toward their





On a chilly day last October Dave Genc, left, and Jim Bland collected several species of fish whose populations are threatened or endangered and re-introduced them in ponds at Prairie Crossing, a conservation community in Grayslake, IL. Checking the net for blacknose shiners, top right, are Grea Zink, Dave Genc, Kirby Wolf, and John Janssen. They are helping to establish the first fish refuge of its sort in Illinois.

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News of the wild

phones," he said. "Although I have frequently seen sandhills migrating, I have never seen them just above my home roof." Biss notes that more sandhill cranes than usual—12,000 total—were reported migrating past Chicago this fall.

This region usually sees a good fall migration, but day after day of strong west winds caused a spectacular movement this past fall. November 10th saw 50 mph winds with gusts up to 80 mph. On November 11, 6,000 ducks (190 flocks) flew over Lake Villa, IL— a place which Biss is quick to note is "an inland location, not a migration point." On November 11, Eric Walters of the Illinois Ornithological Society and teenage birder Josh Engel watched as 7,000 water birds flew over Northwestern University's Evanston, IL, campus. Walters described seeing 877 snow geese, 1,660 northern shovelers, 269 Franklin's gulls, 3-5 peregrine falcons (one seen snaring a red-winged blackbird, another chasing off a harrier, another harassing an owl); "and 2 very cold Homo sapiens." Walters believes the snow goose and northern shoveler numbers set lakefront records.

Walters also notes that "the early

arrival of passerines (perching birds) set all-time records in northeast Illinois." And the endangered whooping crane made a surprise visit too (see page 28).

West winds and cold fronts may also have contributed to last fall's prolonged migration. "We had a lot of cold fronts we didn't have in the spring," said Jim Landing. "As birders say, birds follow fronts. Three or four good cold front passages in a two-month migration season certainly increases the number of birds in our area."

-Alison Carney Brown

5 ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SUCCESS(ION)

Mark your calendars. The Field Museum's spring symposium, Ecology and the Chicago Region: From Cowles to Chicago Wilderness, will commemorate the 100-year anniversary of Henry Chandler Cowles' revolutionary dissertation "An Ecological Study of the Sand Dune Flora of Northern Indiana." This paper introduced the concept of ecological succession and launched the career of America's first professional ecologist. The Indiana Dunes Environmental Learning

Center and Chicago Wilderness are co-sponsoring this celebratory symposium on April 9 and 10, 1999.

Peter Vitousek, scholar of biosphere dynamics and soil development, will give the keynote address on Friday, April 9. On Saturday morning, international and regional ecologists and conservationists will discuss the impact and ramifications of Cowles' work today. In the afternoon, attendees can choose one of seven field trips led by local experts, who will cover topics such as succession, restoration, education, and the partnerships between natural areas and industry. In the evening, participants can enjoy a campfire, dinner, and entertainment at the

LAKE MICHIGAN

5 13

Indiana Dunes Environmental Learning Center.

For information, e-mail Tina Bentz at cbentz@fmnh.org, or call (312) 922-9410 x 550. Special discounts are available for Chicago Wilderness staff, volunteer stewards, and students.

-Eugene Bender

6 REBENDING THE NIPPERSINK

Better fishing for smallmouth and large-mouth bass and northern pike. Better canoeing along a natural meandering stream instead of in a ditch. Healthier streamside wetlands and wildlife habitat. Clear pools for silt-intolerant fish and mussel species, some of them a state list of threatened species. Reduced erosion and better flood control. These are some of the advantages of restoring the Nippersink Creek canal to its natural streambed, as described by Dr. Wayne Schennum, Natural Resources Manager for McHenry County Conservation District.

The Nippersink Creek Dechannelization Project will restore 1.6 miles of streambed within Glacial Park Conservation Area, a Chicago Wilderness site noted for its spectacular landforms, extensive wetlands, and large concentrations of waterfowl. The US Army Corps of Engineers is currently conducting hydrological modeling and engineering to determine the extent of work required to restore this valuable waterway.

—Gerald D. Tang

RARE BIRDS, RARE MEN



Would you believe 240 species of birds on one small island in a city park? In Chicago's Jackson Park, in the Paul Douglas Sanctuary, "the best place within 100 miles of Chicago to see the largest variety of birds in one small area," Doug Anderson will launch his 25th season of bird walks in honor of conservationist and former Senator Paul Douglas. Rare birds

here have included last fall's sighting of "the Virginia's warbler (see photo), never before seen in Illinois," said Anderson, known among birders as "the conscience of Jackson Park." To join this historic bird walk, meet at 8 a.m., March 26th (the Senator's birthday), on the Clarence Darrow bridge behind the Museum of Science and Industry.

— Gregg Baker

TRACKING NATURAL HISTO-RY ON THE HERITAGE TRAIL

On September 20, 1998, the Heritage Trail opened at The Morton Arboretum. This new trail introduces travelers to the site's historical occupants: glaciers, Potawatomi Indians, early settlers and farmers, and finally us. At each of nine stations along the trail, visitors can stop to "read" the natural and cultural history of each place from the landforms, vegetation, and wildlife present. Slightly more than a mile in length, the trail leads visitors through a white oak woodland, a marsh at the woodland's edge, a valley or floodplain savanna, over a gravel hill or kame (now occupied by a bur oak), across an old sawmill road, through a future prairie, and finally up to Big Rock, an erratic boulder deposited by the last glacier. For additional information, contact Visitor Services at (630) 719-2465.

-Eugene Bender

THE BEETLES!



Ever since the first Asian longhorned beetle sighting in the Chicagoland area in July 1998, controlling the spread of the tree-killing insect has been a top priority for both government officials and regular folk.

The Openlands Project, working with Chicago's Bureau of Forestry, the US Department of Agriculture, and the Chicago Park District, sponsored three volunteer training sessions since last September that taught approximately 40 volunteers how to identify signs of infestation. Twenty of these folk have "adopted" parks that lie within Chicago's quarantined zone, which is nearly 19 square miles, or five percent of Chicago's total area. The other volunteers are serving at-large.

By the second workshop, the value of those extra eyes in the field was clear. David Wachtel, an ecologist and birder, spotted beetle exit holes in an ash tree, a tree species not previously suspected to be a host for the pest. This revelation means that fully 70 percent of urban street trees that are planted on a routine basis are potential hosts for the beetle.

The Cook County Forest Preserve District has a plan to inspect and monitor over 95 sites, according to Chief Forester Richard Newhard. "Currently, though, we have no reported case of the beetle—thank God."

Fact sheets are available from Openlands at (312) 427-4256 or via e-mail at openlands@aol.com and Cook County Forest Preserve District at (708) 771-1180.

A grant of \$550,000 from the USDA Forest Service will help replace hundreds of damaged trees that will be removed this winter to fight the infestation in Chicago's Ravenswood community, along with infested trees in southwest suburban Summit and unincorporated DuPage County. Urban Forester Gina Childs says replacement varieties such as oak, basswood and hackberry will be less popular with the polka-dotted beetles.

—Julie Schuster

10 GOOSE GOSSIP

What's with all these Canada Geese? Back in the days when prairies and woodlands were dominant features of the region, the geese weren't much of a factor. But now, drawn by conditions similar to their favorite northern Canada habitat—short green grass and few predators—these geese are reproducing in the region in ever greater numbers. Too much of anything is not a good thing, and in this case it is a clear indicator of an environmental imbalance. As wild predation is unlikely due to the large human population nearby, the answer to restoring the ecological balance seems to lie with us. In mid-November, the DuPage Environmental Commission and the Office of the County Board Chair held a Canada Goose Habitat Control Conference to discuss ways to make the landscape less attractive to geese. Suggestions included breaking up open lawn with trees and shrubs and planting tall grasses around detention ponds. For

more information and to order a free copy of "Canada Geese in DuPage County: A Natural Approach to Goose Mitigation," call (630) 682-7285.

-Andrea Friederici Ross

BUTTERFLY MONITORING WORKSHOP

The Butterfly Monitoring Network is recruiting monitors for sites throughout the Chicago area. Don't know your butterflies? Never monitored before? Great! The Spring Indoor Workshop will hold a beginners' session working with mounted specimens to learn identification.

Date: Saturday, March 20 Time: 9 a.m. Location: Elgin, IL Information: Mel Manner (847) 464-4426.

"FROGGY WENT A "COURTIN"

The earliest spring arrivals are not just birds. Some frogs, toads, and salamanders too, come out of their winter lairs in March. Some sing, some don't, but they all head for the nearest water to begin their yearly courting rituals. Instructor Ken Mierzwa is one of the top experts on amphibians and reptiles in northeastern Illinois (see p.11). The Conservation Research Institute, together with St. Charles Park District and Kane County Forest Preserve District, is offering a class with Mierzwa. He'll share his slides and vast knowledge of the habits of these often-secretive but fascinating animals.

Date: Sunday, March 7
Time: 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Location: Tekawitha Nature Center in
St. Charles, IL
Registration: \$8
Information: (630) 513-3338

CREATIVE CORRECTION

The final sentence of the first paragraph of "CREATIVE CLEANUP" (Fall '98, pp. 28-29) should read: "Recently, however, the company reached a surprising—and innovative—settlement of a suit filed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)." The public is now welcome to visit, hike, birdwatch, and enjoy 80 acres of rare dune-and-swale habitat, which was added to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore as part of this settlement.

The following deserve thanks for their help with this issue's news: John Cieciel, David B. Johnson, Richard O'Hara, Donna Peterson, Judy Pollock, Mark Sheehy.

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Reading pictures



The Unseen

A snowdrift tells the story of recent winds. This drift sits atop the longer history of a Lake Michigan dune.

Dune cottonwoods may have many feet of buried trunks below shifting sand. Under the snow, meadow voles tunnel

through the grasses that will hold the sand once a grassland turf has formed.

In the shape of the snowdrift we can almost see the currents of past winds. In the dune that rose grain by grain, we sense decades and centuries. And in the unseen evolutionary forces that designed the tawny little bluestem to stabilize this dune, and the snowy owl to eat the voles that eat the grass—the past we perceive is millennia, and eons.

To be in touch with the strange intensity of the owl in this photograph, we need to be told by the photographer that, as she snapped the shutter, on

Chicago's frigid windswept Montrose Beach, a peregrine falcon was dive bombing its fellow raptor. Unseen here, just outside the frame.

The concealed present and past include people too. We

owe our contact with today's wildness to the activists and neighbors, and civic leaders who protected it. And to the ecologists and grade school teachers, and all those who taught us to sense more than we can see. Unseen friends enrich our experience.

In winter landscapes of death and promise, and rest, and peace—we feel the rich starkness of life and nature. In the presence of the unseen.



Indiana Dunes photo by Ronald W. Kurowski. Snowy owl photo by Kanae Hirayabashi. Words by Stephen Packard.



Photo: Casey Galvin

Butterfield Creek Steering Committee Calumet Ecological Park Association Campton Historic Agricultural Lands, Inc. Canal Corridor Association Center for Neighborhood Technology Chicago Academy of Sciences Chicago Audubon Society Chicago Botanic Garden

Chicago Ornithological Society

Chicago Park District

Citizens for Conservation City of Chicago, Department of Environment

Crystal Lake Park District The Conservation Foundation

Conservation Research Institute

DuPage Audubon Society

The Field Museum

Brookfield Zoo

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Forest Preserve District of Will County

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Friends of Ryerson Woods The Grove National Historic Landmark Hammond Environmental Education Center Illinois Audubon Society

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Illinois Natural History Survey

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Indiana Department of Natural Resources Indiana University Northwest

Iron Oaks Environmental Learning Center

Jurica Nature Museum Kane-DuPage Soil & Water Conservation District

Lake County Forest Preserves

Lake County Stormwater Management Commission

Lake Michigan Federation

Lake View Nature Center

Liberty Prairie Conservancy

Lincoln Park Zoo

Long Grove Park District

Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation

McHenry County Conservation District

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

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US Dept. of Energy, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory

US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5

US EPA Great Lakes National Program Office

USDA Forest Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDI Fish & Wildlife Service

USDI National Park Service

The Wetlands Initiative

Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, Ltd.



No flowers were harmed in the taking of this photograph. More lantern slides from the courageous and quaint history of the forest preserves starting on page 4.



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