

Chicago EXPLORING NATURE & CULTURE WILDERNESS

S U M M E R 2 0 0 1

chicagowildernessmag.org



BIRD CAPTURES PIER • GREEN TOWNS • NEAT BUGS



What is *Chicago Wilderness*?

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

CHICAGO WILDERNESS is an unprecedented alliance of 131 public and private organizations working together to study and restore, protect and manage the precious natural ecosystems of the Chicago region for the benefit of the public.
www.chicagowilderness.org

Chicago WILDERNESS is a quarterly magazine that celebrates the rich natural heritage of this region and tells the inspiring stories of the people and organizations working to heal and protect local nature.
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CHICAGO WILDERNESS
A Regional Nature Reserve

We the People

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to speak out and be heard, to seize control of their destiny, we as Americans have the freedom and good sense to do so.

Consider, for a moment, the people of Homer Glen, a brand-new town (b. 4/17/01) in Will County populated by approximately 22,000 citizens of this great republic. The people of Homer Glen have lived in a broad and rolling land of fields and woods, far from the bustling city. The people of Homer Glen loved their land, its open vistas and rural way of living. But they felt threats on their borders, subdivisions marching unchecked and unregulated across their (unincorporated) land. Similar areas in other parts of the region had gradually let pro-density towns annex more and more land, until there was nothing left but the least attractive kinds of sprawl.

To hold on to their values as a community, they needed to work together in a formal democratic institution. To control their destiny and save their way of life, the people of Homer Glen needed to establish a different kind of government. So they voted and won and formed a new “open lands” kind of town (see our story about their success and their plans, starting on page 8).

Charting our destiny is at the very foundation of our American political system. Honoring, as it does, our passion for freedom, our system is also an intellectual construct: it is rooted in reason. And it is no longer reasonable for us to gobble up land without regard for the consequences. It’s not good for the cities, or the suburbs, or the countryside. It is no longer reasonable to disregard the health and welfare of our non-human neighbors, to live in a way that only consumes natural resources and does not replenish them.

Will County is on the front lines of urban sprawl, but

it is not the only front line. McHenry County and Kane especially face similar aggressive growth rates. Population and employment forecasts for 2020 suggest that the Chicago Wilderness region will sustain significant growth, perhaps 25 percent overall. But, according to a report by the Openlands Project, developed land could increase by 55 percent in the next 10 years alone with Kane and Will Counties experiencing the greatest development pressure.

The people of some of the towns and counties surrounding Chicago have

begun to respond to these projections by voting for candidates who support open lands and a better way of growing their communities (see our victory stories on page 11).

So it is here, in both older communities and in the new village of Homer Glen, that our future is being scripted and sculpted. Will this end in a kind of sprawl that works neither for people nor the ecosys-

tem? Or will we manage, as communities, to grow smartly, sustainably?

Will we continue on the path of unchecked, irresponsible growth? Or will we manage, as communities, to retain those things we cherish – open spaces, farms, prairies, oak woods, and nature in the neighborhood? Chicago’s planting wildlife-friendly trees on streets and in parks – and even making space for nature on Navy Pier.

We are at a special moment in world history – and we have a lot to lose. Or we have something great to build. Chicago Wilderness is leading the effort to put nature and humans into the picture together. Healthy natural communities depend utterly on the wise and caring intercession of people. Healthy human communities depend equally on woods and fields, to replenish our spirits as well as to cleanse the air and water.

Who can restore the balance? We the people.



Photo: Chris Sweedy/Daily Southtown

Debra Shore
EDITOR



FEATURES

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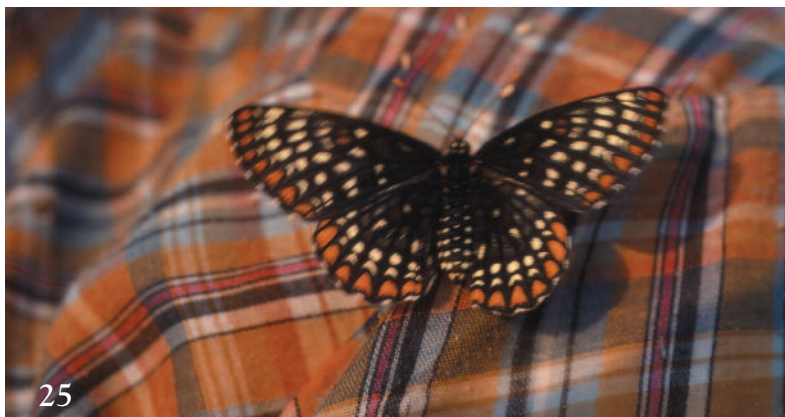
Photo: Richard Mack



Photo: Donna Krischan



Photo: Ruth A. Smith/Root Resources



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ABOVE: Butterfly on my shoulder – plaid shirt attracts a match. Photo by Pat Armstrong.
OPPOSITE: Squirreltail barley from the Great Plains. Ox-eye daisy from Europe. These exotics help heal injured ecosystems (see page 40). Photo by Glenn Jahnke/Root Resources.
COVER: Trendy compound eyes adorn a rare fly. Such bugs inspired writer Edwin Way Teale to his life's work (see page 12). Photo by Rob Curtis/The Early Birder.

Chicago WILDERNESS

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THE BIRD THAT CAPTURED NAVY PIER



*Photographs by Richard Mack
Story by Stephen Packard*

Nine million visitors per year will have more opportunity to appreciate birds as part of their Navy Pier experience.

This story started with sex. Masculine posturing. Maybe even polygamy. Many nature stories do. Worse yet, it began with a ruthless attack on innocent bystanders. People strolling along Chicago's Navy Pier – out to have a good time, see the sights, ambling happily, unsuspecting. Then, repeatedly, near the Ferris wheel, a feathered thug rocketed down out of the sky and pecked their heads.

This is a story about sex and violence. And yet – wouldn't you know! – it's also a story about generosity and love.

We start with Ray Cachares, a big man with a big job. Assistant General Manager for the Navy Pier Exposition Authority, Cachares began to get reports about the attacks near the Ferris wheel. He was not amused.

"I went over there to check it out, and this bird went after my head," he complained. "He got my bald spot. He got the Brinks guy, too. I didn't know if we were getting into a Hitchcock/Tippy Hedren kind of thing."

A male red-winged blackbird was defending a nest near the Ferris wheel. "Frankly, I thought we could do without that bird," said Cachares. But he was also aware that the Mayor had a soft spot in his heart for nature, so he called the

Department of the Environment, and the Department called the Audubon Society.

"When I first talked to Ray, I wasn't sure he was going to have a lot of patience for this," said Jerry Garden, Land Stewardship chair for Chicago Audubon. Garden has a sparkling eye and an infectious passion for birds. "We hiked around the pier and looked at birds. I showed him the barn swallows that nest under the pier. They clear the air of a lot of flying insects! I told him about the rare ducks that birders see from the pier during migration." Cachares told him that nine million human visitors flock to Navy Pier each year. They come because they have a good experience. They watch Shakespeare, explore the Children's Museum, hear concerts, flirt, eat, hang out. They do not come to be dive-bombed by birds. No solution emerged.

Soon more Audubon activists were talking to more pier staff. A lot of issues and options were raised.

"The turn around came in kind of a funny way," said Garden. "I was trying to evoke some understanding for the red-wing. I explained that he too had a hard job. He probably had a number of mates scattered around the pier – each with a nest of eggs or babies." This bird was working to protect his family – or families actually.



Photo: Carol Freeman





Four hundred pairs of ring-billed gulls nest just off the south edge of the Pier. But look around, and you may also see a common loon or a red-breasted merganser.

Cachares started to joke about how this bird “thought he was Hugh Hefner” and was “a real stud.” But a growing respect for this feisty bird began to spark conversations about how visitors to the pier might come to enjoy the gulls, the ducks, the swallows, the nighthawks, even the blackbirds.

Soon Drew Hart from the Department of the Environment was helping Audubon volunteers design interpretive signs for those nine million visitors. Ken



A deluxe osprey nesting platform (right) made by Fidel Romero and James Soulias. The Pier Authority has also erected other kinds of nest structures and is planting and protecting bushes and trees for nesting on less human-accessible parts of the Pier.



Wysocki assembled a list of species. Karen Furnweger edited drafts provided by eight other birders. To date, 26 interpretive signs have been installed describing 31 species, from peregrine falcons to yellow-bellied sapsuckers.

The Pier's carpenters have been building birdhouses and platforms for purple martins, tree swallows, and ospreys. "The staff got excited," says Cachares, "including some people I hadn't seen excited for a long time." After last year's nesting season, bird-proof netting was placed over those shrubs near the Ferris wheel. The red-wings still nest, but in less exposed spots.

Now Cachares muses, "It's changed this place. And to think it all started with a red-winged blackbird attacking people in line."

This story began with conflict. But it gradually became a story about discovery, the excitement of learning, of building something with that knowledge, of sharing. It's a story about people and nature getting along with each other in the very heart of the metropolis. This is a story of Chicago Wilderness.



To engage visitors, the Pier installed signs profiling 31 species. Under discussion are plans for bird walks, festivals, and the installation of many more kinds of nesting structures.



Photos by Ronald W. Kurowski

Founding parents of a green town: Homer Glen Mayor Russ Petrizzo, campaigner Debra Norvil, and Trustees Margaret Sabo and Laurel Ward.

The Vote for Green Towns

On Tuesday, April 17, 2001, two weeks after a stunning victory at the polls, Homer Glen became a town. Since the mid-1980s, the residents of Homer Township in Will County had been seeking to gain some control of their future. It's a tranquil place, Homer Township, but municipalities were encroaching from three directions. Nearby towns and developers found local folks "in the way of development" in many parts of the region, and local residents had long been trying – and failing – to do anything about it.

What the people did here this time seems to be unprecedented. Instead of waiting to get gobbled up by pro-development municipalities, this large unincorporated area went ahead and created a "defensive town." The newly incorporated Homer Glen encompasses nearly 20 square miles. That's enough room for a lot of development and a lot of open land.

The election victory in April was especially sweet because it came after a long series of similar attempts, dating back to the mid-1980s. All prior attempts

had been rejected by Will County committees, voted down by the Will County Board, or had failed at the ballot box.

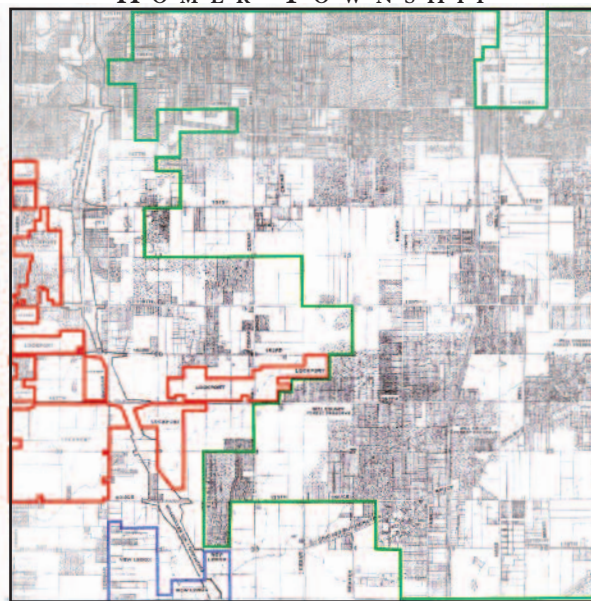
This time, however, recent annexations, overcrowding in the schools, and the striking contrast of high-density development with Homer Township's rural setting had become obvious. By organizing a broad grassroots campaign, the pro-incorporation forces were victorious.

Resoundingly so. They won with more than 66 percent of the vote.

"This was a defensive incorporation," said Margaret Sabo, one of the stalwarts and now one of the new town's trustees. "We wanted to keep what we had. We wanted to keep the farmers farming, protect people with horses and other animals, and not be overwhelmed by the conflicting type of developments that others had in mind for our community."

Homer Glen isn't particularly easy to get to. No major road runs through it, no commuter trains stop there. People have to want to go there and, over the years, many did – seeking a life at some remove from urban bustle, a life in the country. "It's

HOMER TOWNSHIP



- Homer Glen
- Lockport
- New Lenox

Homer Glen, bounded by green, wards off encroachment by neighboring towns.

really an inconvenience to live out here,” said Gail Snyder, a new trustee of Homer Glen, “but people choose to live here because the trade-off is worth it.”

“When you come in to Homer,” said Township Supervisor Bud Fazio, “you can actually feel the temperature change.”

Historic accounts describe the prairies of Homer as “the most beautiful that the enthusiastic Yankee had seen. They were just rolling enough to resemble the billows of the ocean after a storm had passed, and the thick grass, three or four feet high, overtopped with fragrant blossoms Mrs. Mason said she used to take rides across the prairies, when the wildflowers were as high as the top of the wagon, and as the oxen tramped over and the wagon wheels crushed them, they yielded a sweeter perfume than ‘Price’s Unique Extracts’ or the distilled essence of the richest exotics.”

—*History of Will County* by George H. Woodruff, 1878.

One early settler was blacksmith John Lane, who also invented the steel moldboard plow that permitted farmers to “break” the prairie sod. Unlike John Deere, however, Lane never patented his invention. Thus his influence, while profound, led to modest profits.

Homer Township, sparsely settled, became home to cornfields, horse farms, and rural lifestyles. Over time, the Forest Preserve District of Will County acquired significant parcels, including 947-acre Messenger Woods. In the last 40 years, development of estate-size parcels and construction of subdivisions began, many with small lots and others with lot sizes an acre or larger.

In the fall of 1998, voters in Homer Township approved an \$8 million bond referendum for the purchase of open space. We’re willing to pony up our own money, they were saying, to keep land open for wildlife, woods, and streams. Still, over the years, the people of Homer Township have watched what seemed like a relentless march of housing and commercial development consuming farmland, filling in the open vistas, rendering their sense of community vulnerable. Nearby Lockport kept annexing subdivisions, and builders kept erecting high-density housing developments on small lots. New Lenox also annexed land, extending its reach and encroaching more and more into the countryside.

“A lot of our problem was that we were unincorporated,” Sabo said. “We didn’t have any statutory authority. People were getting more and more frustrated. Our taxes were going up, the schools were getting overcrowded, the farmers were disappearing. We had one home on a five-acre lot right next to six homes and a multifamily building

on one acre. If we had zoning authority, we would have had control of development,” Sabo added. “But as an unincorporated area we couldn’t do anything! We asked Lockport to transition to larger lot sizes and provide protection with adequate buffers because of the contrast in zoning and they didn’t do either.”

Prior attempts to incorporate into villages with proposed names of Homer Prairie, Goodings Grove, and Messenger Woods all fell to defeat. Opponents argued that taxes would increase. Yet taxes increased anyway! Opponents had argued that neighboring towns would never come that far – yet Lockport and New Lenox kept gobbling up more and more of unincorporated Homer Township through annexation. Lemont, too, began to set its sights on annexing part of Homer Township. The issue became one of local control.

“Through incorporation we can gain control of development and the effect it has on our schools, infrastructure, environment, economy and taxes,” said Laurel Ward, chairman of the campaign to incorporate, now a new trustee for the village, and mother of three. “We can recover money that should be available to our community. We can identify our own economic corridors and encourage commercial enterprise that is consistent with the character of our community and no one can ever again take them from us. If the encroachment of surrounding towns is not stopped now, it will only be a matter of time before Homer Township is nothing but a memory.”

In January, the Will County Board voted to allow the incorporation referendum onto the April ballot. That left



Unregulated development threatened what this community valued most.

little more than two months for proponents to organize a campaign. Working out of a modest office next to Ace Hardware in a strip mall at 159th near Will-Cook Road, a growing swell of volunteers produced flyers and newsletters, distributed signs, illustrated a series of maps showing the march of sprawl across the township, posted Top Ten Reasons to Incorporate on a Web site (www.homerglen.org),

organized talks to community groups, and tried to reach every subdivision within the unborn town’s boundaries.

They put together a 15-minute videotape presenting the arguments in favor of incorporation and spent the weekend before the election passing out 3,000 tapes door-to-door.

“What sent many people over the edge was when they saw the annexations and some of the construction that went up,” said longtime resident Bud Fazio. “For many it was the development near Bell Rd and 143rd St. with high-rise buildings and high density. It had been a sod farm and everybody enjoyed the view.”

In effect, the citizens who banded together to press for

incorporation were saying, ‘We know and accept that change is going to happen. (After all, developers already own about eight square miles here.) But we think we can make it happen in a very different way. We think we can preserve what is dear to us *and* develop our communities in a responsible way. There’s no reason Homer Glen can’t have a balance of open spaces and development the way other places could have been. There’s no reason Homer Glen can’t strive for developments to be designed in harmony with open space and nature. We want change to reflect *our* values and the character of *our* community.’

At times the campaign bore not-so-faint echoes of revolutionary zeal. The Committee to Incorporate even circulated a sign calling for “Equal Rights for Homer Glen:”

“Through Incorporation we will win the Right of Self-Determination giving our Community the ability to Control Development and other Local Issues enabling us to Improve and Preserve Our Quality of Life!”

“I was new to the community,” said Therese Lombard. “I’d only been here about a year. But I’d been reading about the campaign in the newspapers and getting angrier and angrier. I’ve never done anything like this before.” Therese showed up at the campaign office and volunteered to help. Soon her husband and nine year-old son got involved, too. “It became a family effort,” Lombard said.

Three local newspapers – *The Star*, *The Sun*, and the *Daily Southtown* – endorsed the incorporation plan, and proponents felt the momentum heading their way. “We never relaxed,” said Nancy Strack, now a township trustee. “A lot of us had never worked on a campaign before, so it felt good.”



Two-thirds of Homer Glen is still open land.

While feeling justifiably exuberant, those who led the campaign to create Homer Glen had little time to savor their victory. Now they had a town to run! Almost immediately they activated the phone tree, drumming up people to sign petitions for a slate of village officials. “We needed

100 signatures per petition and more than 200 people came through the door,” Lombard remembered. “People were standing outside in the rain, waiting to help.”

On April 17, Will County Circuit Judge Herman Haase certified the results of the election – in effect issuing Homer Glen’s birth certificate – and appointed a board of trustees, a mayor and clerk. On April 23, 150 people showed up for the town’s first meeting in the cafeteria at Homer Junior

High School. “They just came to see history being made,” said Sabo.

Town officials are now working to secure intergovernmental agreements with the county sheriff’s department for police protection and with the township for road service. But land use, all agree, is the key.

“Now that we have Homer Glen, we control development,” said new trustee Gail Snyder. “We’re not opposed to development. There’s plenty of money to be made here. We just didn’t like the way Lockport did it.”

So the new leaders of Homer Glen, backed by a legion of volunteers, will craft a land use plan and zoning ordinances that reflect their values, that seek to preserve open space, that reflect the character of their community and preserve a variety of lifestyles. It is a daunting task. They are absolutely thrilled to have the chance.

“How often in your life,” said 76-year-old Bill Karn, “do you get to start a town?”

— Debra Shore

HOMER GLEN STATS

20 – square miles included within the boundaries of Homer Glen

8,500+ acres – undeveloped land (of this, developers and land speculators own more than 2,000 acres)

291 – businesses operating in Homer Glen

22,000 – residents in the new village

In races and measures around the region, citizens ratified a rising swell of support for open land.

McHENRY MANDATE: BUY LAND NOW

McHenry County voters approved a \$68.5 million bond referendum that will provide the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) with additional funds for land acquisition.

Lands targeted for acquisition include sites within the Nippersink Creek and Kishwaukee River watersheds.

The MCCD Board of Trustees will designate up to 10 percent of the \$68.5 million for site improvements, including restoration projects, upgrades for visitors with disabilities, and trail additions and/or improvements.

LONG GROVE: NEW KIND OF VILLAGE PRESIDENT

Anthony 'Tony' Dean did not intend to run for president of the Village of Long Grove. But an advancing proposal to build a large hotel and banquet facility immediately adjoining the largest park in the center of the village and similar challenges to the villages natural environment called out for new leadership. Dean was elected president in April.

A former director of the Illinois Department of Conservation (1973-76) and president of the Board of the Openlands Project, Dean and his family have lived in Long Grove since 1987. Dean had served on the Planning Commission since 1991 but had never held elective office.

"Long Grove residents by and large are committed to keeping what they came here for – open spaces either on the property they purchased or on the property they share, our parks and village open space," Dean said. "We also are going to have to deal with the ever-present pressures of pace, traffic congestion, and cell towers in an imaginative and creative way."

Dean noted that one of the Village's parks had been acquired years ago to serve as a buffer to the historic business district, yet recent development plans threatened its integrity. Dean asked, "Why aren't Park District commissioners acting more aggressively as stewards or protectors of open space?"

Dean hopes to shepherd a review of the Village's comprehensive plan, to add to Village open space through trails and pathways, and to reach practical, near-

term solutions to traffic congestion.

"My career has been spent working with people to be more engaged in the decisions of public bodies that will be badly made if people don't engage in them," Dean added.

BARRINGTON HILLS: STEWART BECOMES TRUSTEE

For the last 15 years, Barrington Hills resident Daria Sapp has served as the volunteer steward for the 560-acre Spring Lake Nature Preserve in northwest Cook County. She has also been an active participant in the orchid recovery project, trying to help the federally endangered prairie white-fringed orchid to reestablish itself in likely habitat. Now, she adds village trustee to her resume.

Sapp, a former junior high school English teacher, had served on the village planning commission for eight and a half years. She'd worked to maintain the atmosphere of living nestled in nature so beloved by area residents. (Barrington Hills has residential lot sizes of five acres and 42 percent of the village is owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.)

"We have an equestrian community here," Sapp noted. "There's a lot of building going on and we're trying desperately to preserve our green space. We also need to protect our water."

Sapp has been named chairman of the Barrington Area Council of Government's Water Resource Initiative, a new effort by seven villages to collaborate on ground water issues such as quality, contamination, and groundwater recharge areas.

LAKE-IN-THE-HILLS: FIGHTING FOR THE FEN

Volunteer stewards Al and Barbara Wilson have been fighting various threats to Lake-in-the-Hills Fen for many years. The latest effort involved a proposal to build a new village hall in the middle of a cornfield next to the 240-acre dedicated nature preserve.

The Wilsons point out that the preserve harbors 407 species of plants, 16 of which are threatened or endangered in Illinois. Six species can only be found at one other Illinois location. On the adjacent 66 acres owned by the village, entomologist Ron Panzer has identified

the red-veined leafhopper and an as-yet unnamed species of leafhopper. Had the village hall been built, runoff containing salt, reduction of groundwater, and other factors would have seriously compromised the health of this rare ecosystem.

Tireless in their efforts to save the fen, the Wilsons prepared mailings to 8,000 households, posted yard signs, and attended numerous meetings. In April, Lake-in-the-Hills residents tossed out three incumbent trustees and elected three newcomers who had pledged not to build on property next to the fen. Now the site may be acquired by the McHenry County Conservation District.

CAMPTON TOWNSHIP: \$18 MILLION FOR LAND

Sometimes an increased tax is a good investment. So voted the citizens of Campton Township. Campton is only the fourth township in the Chicago region to begin buying open land, said Jerome Johnson, executive director of the Garfield Farm Museum. "The voters spoke quite clearly and loudly in voting for not just the referendum," Johnson said, "but in agreeing to tax themselves to do it, and in voting in a full slate of trustees that supports open space."

Still, that doesn't end the battle to keep the rural character of Kane County's Campton Township. The next step, Johnson said, is to find people willing to sell their land, and that may not be as easy as it sounds. State law requires parcels of 50 acres or more and willing sellers, Johnson explained.

Fewer than 7,000 acres remain undeveloped out of the 20,000 acres in Campton Township. The stated goal during the campaign was to purchase 1,000 acres, and Johnson thinks that number is still very possible.

"Development pressures are extremely high," Johnson said. "Every township in Kane County should have 2,000 acres preserved, and Campton has about 300. We're way behind, and the catch-up is going to be very difficult simply because of the rapid development, the extension of the commuter rail. But this referendum gives us an opportunity."

— Adam Wilson

DUNE BOY

*This best-selling author of nature books had
roots in the sandy soil of northwest Indiana.*



by Joan Gibb Engel

*“If the world is dull, it is because we are blind and deaf and dumb,”
wrote the renowned American naturalist Edwin Way Teale.
The world was never dull for Teale, nor was it dull for his readers.
Winner of numerous awards for his nature writing, including
the Pulitzer Prize, Teale had a gift of putting himself in the place
of whatever creature he was writing about
(sparrows in treetops, whales in oceans, bugs in flowers).*



He particularly liked to put himself in the three-paired shoes of insects because, he said, “the way of an insect is so foreign to our mode of life that trying to picture ourselves in its place is always an adventure in imagination.”

Teale describes the world of a daddy longlegs: “Imagine walking on legs so long you could cover a mile in fifty strides! Imagine looking to either side through eyes set not in your head but in a turret-like hump on your back! Imagine your knees, when you walked, working a dozen feet or more above your head!”

Teale also confesses to an Alice-in-Wonderland sensation as he watches a red-and-black ladybird beetle settle down on a hollyhock leaf. He feels himself “shutting up like a telescope” to be as small as it is, then imagines the quarter-inch insect and everything around it expanding to his size so that grass blades are as wide as a highway and crickets are 24 feet long. Teale was forever putting insect facts into human terms to emphasize their exotic lifestyles.

Of the 17-year “locust” he wrote: “While the earth spins on its axis six thousand times, while first-grade students are becoming men and women of voting age, while wars are fought and presidents come and go, these slowly maturing cicadas dwell in tunnels and tiny caves of their own making.”

Teale viewed nature with the amazement of an explorer to a distant shore, fascinated by the strange lives of the natives. Yet his distant shore is his own backyard, and the natives are the ordinary creatures most of us don’t even notice.

THE SOURCE OF HIS GIFT

Teale credits something that happened when he was a child playing on his grandparents’ farm in the Indiana dune country as the source of this “peculiar Odyssey of the

mind:” “Between the yellow flanks of the Indiana sand dunes and my grandfather’s farm, a field of rye used to rise like a mane of hair above the brow of a low hill . . . There, one hot and somnolent afternoon, when I was six or seven, I crawled deep into the gray-green luminous light that filtered down between the stalks in this sea of waving grain.”

As he played in the sandy cave, he imagined himself in the place of the ants, beetles and flies that shared his secret spot.

“I even tried to picture the field as it must appear to little dust-colored toads that hopped, with incorruptibly solemn expressions, down the sandy aisles, and to the harmless, striped garter snake that slid leisurely along the floor of this forest of rye.

“Returning home that evening was like landing from a distant voyage of discovery.”



Photo: Courtesy of Edwin Way Teale Papers, Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries

At right, this flower fly protects itself by mimicking a bee.



Photo: Rob Curtis/The Early Birder

FREEDOM TO EXPLORE

Teale was born June 2, 1899 in Joliet, Illinois, the son of a railroad mechanic and a teacher. He grew up near railroad tracks “in the kind of neighborhood where boys put rocks in their snowballs,” and lived in fear of going through life with a flattened nose on his face. With great joy he escaped over holidays and during the summer months to the farm of his



Teale and watermelon at Lone Oak Farm. All kids need access to nature.

grandparents, Edwin and Jemima Way, located on the Furnessville Road in north-west Indiana not far west of Michigan City and immediately south of what is now the campground of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

The Way farm, called Lone Oak after a 200-year-old tree near the house, was not notable for its ecological integrity.

“Compared with the black loam of the river bottom or the productive acres of the prairie,” he later wrote, “Lone Oak Farm probably was an unpromising tract. But to a boy, alive to the natural harvest of birds and animals and insects, it offered boundless returns.” Teale helped his “Gram” and “Gramp” with chores while savoring the long stretches of time he was left to his own devices.

The beneficent influence of his grandparents on his future careers as writer and naturalist is recorded in *Dune Boy*, Teale’s 1943 reminiscence of his boyhood. He credits Jemima Way with stimulating his imagination through the nightly stories she read to him and Gramp. These included the novels of Cooper, Dickens, and Mark Twain. His grandfather, who settled in the Indiana dune country in 1854 and then fought in the Civil War, was a fund of stories and “flavorsome” remarks, such as when he said of Teale’s wash-shrunk pants that they “look like they’d been picked too soon.” Teale praised his grandparents most of all for allowing him to explore the out-of-doors.

He explored it in many ways. He knew the farm “inch by inch” through walking it, gathering kindling and stove wood, and plucking spearmint and winterberries. He knew the animals and insects by patient observation of their curious ways. At night he listened to the crickets and katydids and he learned the birds’ songs. He also learned from farm catalogs and from books that he took out from the Michigan City library. Photography was another way of learning nature’s ways. One summer he picked 20,000 strawberries – enough so that he could afford to purchase a

box camera. One of his first successful photos was of a wild rabbit that he had accustomed to his presence.

“I was out-of-doors from morning until night, running barefoot and in overalls, a straw hat protecting me from the midday sun,” he wrote in *Dune Boy*. “The debt I owe my grandparents most of all is the freedom they gave me, freedom to roam the acres of corn and wheat and potatoes, the woods and swamps, and to make this world my own.”

FIRST BOOK AT AGE NINE

Having made the world of nature his own, Teale set out to make it everyone else’s. *Dune Boy* was Teale’s eighth book (ninth, if you count *Tails of Lone Oak*, composed at the age of nine). By the time he wrote *Dune Boy* he had established himself as a nature writer and was being compared to the great French entomologist J. Henri Fabré.

Like Fabré, his science was self-taught; like him also, Teale never “prettified” nature. He portrayed it as he saw it – warts, cannibalism, parasitism and all. Nor did he have much truck for naturalists who worked solely with preserved specimens, nor for persons whose idea of nature was based on wishful thinking. On the other hand, Teale refused to close off the possibility that other creatures might share our “higher” appreciations. “Do animals ever appreciate natural beauty?” he asked, and answered, “We see little evidence of it. But who can say?”

Such steadfast refusal to ignore facts, combined with his enthusiasm and philosophic bent, made Teale a favorite writer of his generation. Henry Beston said of him, “It is no easy task to combine the spirit of modern science and the spirit of beauty, but Teale is one of the very, very few who succeeds in so doing.”

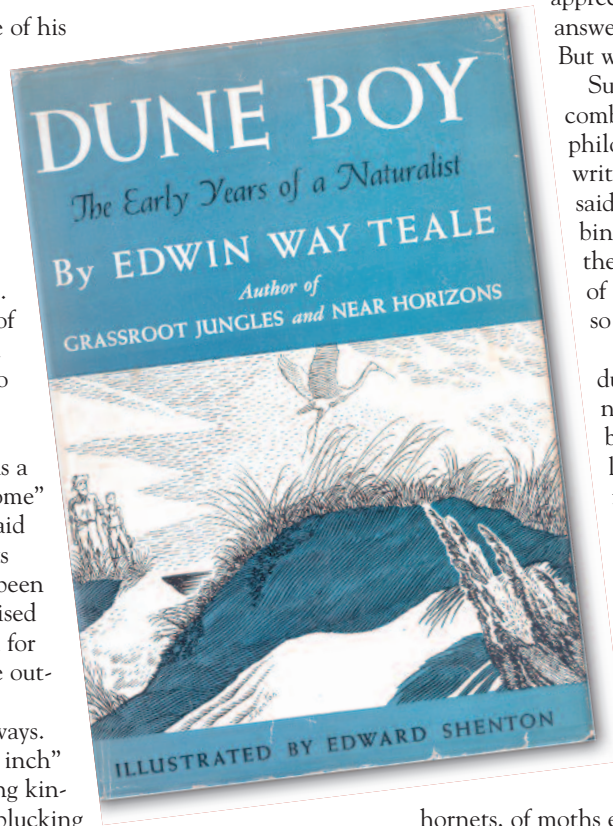
Teale very much wanted to introduce others to the exciting world of nature, but before he was able to branch out on his own as a freelance writer, there were college, marriage to Nellie Donovan, his lifelong companion, the birth of a son, David, and 13 years as a feature writer for *Popular Science Monthly*.

Teale’s “hobby” of photography gave him his first big break in the publishing world. *Grassroot Jungles* was illustrated with 130 photographs of insects: incredible close-ups of the heads of

hornets, of moths emerging from their cocoons, of ants guarding colonies of aphids. To get them, Teale had patiently perfected ways of capturing living insects on film. One of his techniques was to refrigerate insects first so that he could delay their flight while he focused.

DRAMA IN THE BACKYARD

The photographs in *Grassroot Jungles* proved Teale’s contention that there was a most dramatic world awaiting each



of us right in our own backyards. He wrote in the book's foreword, "Few of us can explore the jungles or embark in a bathysphere to view the wonders of the deep sea. But we can find adventure at home exploring the forests of the insects peopled with their small but amazingly strange inhabitants." He said pretty much the same thing in another of his books, *Near Horizons*. "To stop and wonder, to put ourselves for a passing moment in the place of the creatures around us (to visualize life from their standpoint) here, truly, is an adventure in exploring. Such journeys require neither ships nor trains nor rubber tires nor gasoline."

RESPECT FOR GRUBS AND TOADS

"Edwin Teale has to keep reminding himself that other people want to get rid of insects," his biographer, Edward H. Dodd, Jr., wrote. "Read Teale and you will nevermore dare disrespect buzzards, ticks, grubs, starlings, toads, crows, carrion beetles, turtles, moles, poison ivy, cockroaches, hawks, sowbugs and bats."

Because of his beliefs, Teale was constantly asked to write letters and testify in conservation causes, and he did so freely. He supported the establishment of the Indiana Dunes State Park and, at the request of Senator Paul Douglas, wrote letters to support the establishment of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. "The long fight to save wild beauty represents democracy at its best," he believed.

But he helped the cause of conservation best with his nature writing and he knew it. On his return home after testifying on a conservation measure, he could feel himself "expanding" with the freedom to once again "strike out across open land." In Teale's later works one even senses a tone of questioning melancholy about the future of nature. In *A Walk Through the Year*, his last work, he wrote:

"As I come to these final sentences, I sit here wondering if the time will ever come when such a book as this will seem like a letter from another world. Will the richness of the natural world be overrun and more and more replaced with a plastic artificial substitute?"



Summer bugs, like this tiger swallowtail, open the door to mystery and beauty for curious youngsters.

Photo: Martha Marks

A RETURN TO BOYHOOD WONDER

After the Lone Oak farmhouse burned to the ground when Teale was 15, his summer idylls became memories. In *The Lost Woods*, written the year that David, his only son, died in the war, Teale writes of returning to a blowout in the dunes and sitting in the dark on the beach in silence:

"Memories of beauty, memories of moonlight and starlight, of wildflowers and birds in a cloud-filled sky are things of fundamental virtue. Remembering such things in times of stress brings us consolation."

In the 1950s, Teale and his wife embarked on four journeys across America, covering some 100,000 miles and culminating in his books *North with the Spring*, *Autumn Across America*, *Journey Into Summer*, and *Wandering Through Winter*. In the town of Michigan City, Teale observed a small boy pick up a dead monarch butterfly and stand entranced. He saw himself, the youthful duneland explorer.

"A door was opening for him," he wrote, "a door beyond which lay all the beauty and mystery of nature."

Joan Gibb Engel lives in the Indiana Dunes near the site of Lone Oak and is active in the land preservation work of the Shirley Heinze Environmental Fund.

LITTLE BUGS ON THE PRAIRIE

by Donna Krischan



Bronze copper butterfly



Cabbage white butterfly

My first visit to Goose Lake Prairie southwest of Joliet was to attend a photography workshop. Not being a morning person, I was quite dismayed when the workshop itinerary had us in the field photographing before sunrise.

It was the end of August. The days were hot and the nights were getting cool. With these conditions, the result is frequently a morning very wet with dew. And no one told me to bring rain pants!

Little did I know that the dew provided the perfect opportunity to observe and photograph creatures such as butterflies and dragonflies.

They roost in the grasses at night and cannot fly in the morning until their wings have dried. As we started taking pictures, their wings were closed and very heavy with dew. With the warmth of the rising sun, they slowly spread their wings and eventually, after a few test flaps, took off to start their day.

I came away from my experience at Goose Lake Prairie a bit tired and very wet but with some photographs to remember this adventure by. I hope you enjoy them too!

For more information about Goose Lake Prairie, and other natural areas managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, call (815) 942-2899 or visit: <http://dnr.state.il.us/>.

Donna Krischan, age 40 something, is married and has two Hungarian Vizsla dogs and a one-acre flower garden. A professional freelance photographer, she focuses on garden, wildflower, and nature landscape images. You'll find more of her work on line at <http://www.krischanphoto.com>.

Tickseed sunflower with spider



Damselfly



CHICAGO WILDERNESS

Into the Wild

OUR GUIDE TO THE WILD SIDE



Steve Delaney/Steve Delaney



- 1 HICKENLEY WOODS - Will County
- 2 BLISS WOODS - Kane County
- 3 SANTA FE PRAIRIE - Cook County
- 4 SPRINGBROOK PRAIRIE - DuPage County

Maps: Lynda Wallin



SEEDS COURTESY OF COMED

by Joe Neumann

At the base of a power tower is a cluster of beefy orange blooms of Turk's cap lily. Nearby, purple prairie clover's delicate wands decorate the grassy growth. Yet pretty as these flowers are, they are just a means to an end for the plants and me. Seeds are what we want.

Prairie survives in some surprising places. This one is under the power lines in Bridgeview, a suburb southwest of Chicago. There are condos to the east and train tracks to the west. Beyond the train tracks is the I-294 expressway. The prairie is a wedge about 200 feet wide and half a mile long. The power lines tower over it like the protector that they are. The prairie is in good shape despite the dumpers and the dirt-bikers, let alone the dramatic alteration of the landscape surrounding it. In March, a spark from a passing train set the dry stalks aflame.

I walk north, pausing to collect some hoary puccoon seed. In May, the simple orange-yellow, forget-me-not flowers of this plant dotted this area. Now these plants are harder to find. But I have an eye for them. Their seeds are hard to collect because they ripen slowly over the period of a month and drop once they ripen. Most of them have already fallen, but I collect what I can. Puccoon seeds look like little battleship gray incisors. You pick at them to see if they are loose. It helps to have fingernails that are not too short.

I rattle my collection of puccoon seeds around in a pill container. Thankfully, most native plants are long-lived perennials. This means that you can collect seeds without worrying about harming the population. A good rule of thumb is not to collect more than 50 percent of the seed.

Collecting seed is a two-part equation. The first part requires you to recognize when seed is ripe. The second part requires you to understand the plant's place in the landscape

so that you scatter the seed in appropriate habitat.

Puccoon likes lots of sun and drier conditions. This seed will go into the Palos Forest Preserves a few miles to the west. A lot of the forest preserves were heavily grazed or farmed before the Forest Preserve District of Cook County bought them. There are plenty of places where puccoon should grow.

It's hard to believe that a mere 180 years ago there weren't just isolated individual parcels of prairie but a continuous whole owned by no one. Dealing with nature today means dealing with various landowners and agencies. In the past a seed might get moved from one place to another by hitching a ride on a bison's hide. Now getting seed from this site to a forest preserve requires a different process. I walk this prairie with Commonwealth Edison biologist Jon Keener and work with the Forest Preserve District's Land Management staff. Land stewards like me need to make human connections to restore the natural connections.

The deep pink flowers of marsh phlox gleam from a wet spot. But in a drier area ahead are the plants that I seek. They have shriveled already and are done for the year. They are the marsh phlox's drier cousin, the prairie phlox. The marsh phlox's stem is smooth while the prairie phlox's is hairy. To capture the prairie phlox's seed, I attached stocking feet to the plants with a twistie. When the seed is ripe, it falls into the stocking where I can collect it. As I collect these seed pouches, the power lines crackle. A red-winged blackbird on the telephone line along the train tracks squawks.

There is a lot more summer left, a lot more flowers and seeds to come. I will collect about 30 different species here by the time the season's through. Before I leave, I pause by the Turk's cap lilies and the purple prairie clovers. Come September, I'll be back for some of their seed.

About an hour southwest of Chicago's Loop, wilderness lovers will find the breathtaking McKinley Woods. The forest's steep slope has rendered the site unsuitable for agriculture, and according to Ricky Garza, senior restoration technician for the Forest Preserve District of Will County, "the site has never been plowed." In hopes of limiting human impact, I include in the introduction of this profile a heartfelt reminder to all potential visitors: remain on trail while hiking and, of course, let all beautiful wildflowers be.

McKinley Woods is composed of steep bluffs and deep ravines, carved out by thousands of tons of ice, an age ago. The geologically (and topographically) exceptional site makes for excellent, challenging hiking. Three separate loop trails are accessible from the upper parking lot. They range in length from .25 to 1.2 miles. Those interested in a longer day will find access from the lower parking lot to the 60-mile Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail, perfect for bicycles as well as hiking boots. Canoe access to both the I&M Canal and the Des Plaines is found here as well.

A sturdy stone 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps picnic shelter stands immediately south of the lower lot, in Fredrick's Grove. The clearing to the lot's north, Boatman's Landing, offers excellent overnight camping (permits are required). At the northwest edge of the camping area an eddy provides habitat for the rare

American lotus.

McKinley Woods' south-facing slopes, with their superior sun exposure, provide habitat for some unusual and noteworthy flora. The oak/hickory forest is the only place in Will County where enthusiasts will find redbud trees growing naturally, pushing the edges of their habitat's northern limit. May and early June see the peak of the redbud's gorgeous purple addition to the forest.

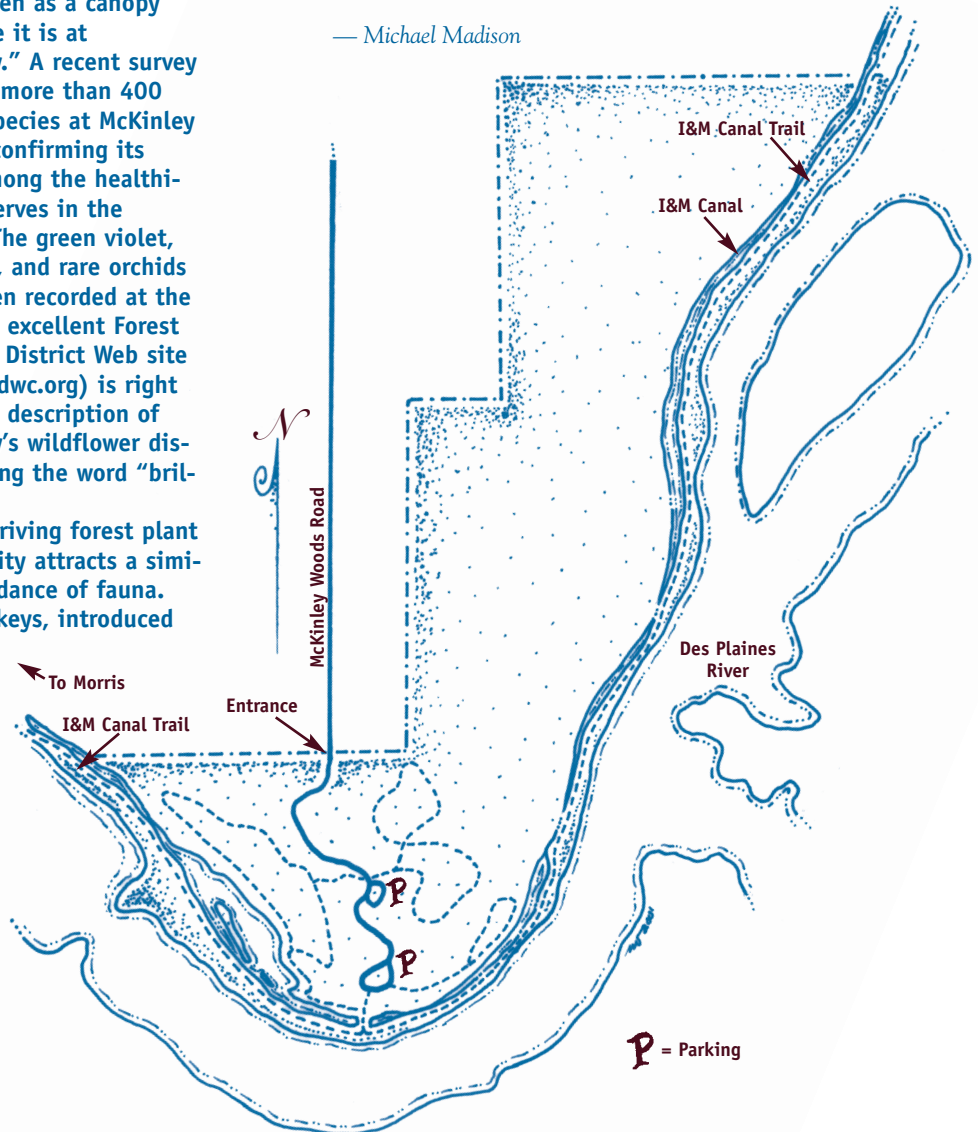
Another member of the Woods' arboreal community is the blue ash, which, says Garza, "is rarely seen as a canopy tree, like it is at McKinley." A recent survey counted more than 400 native species at McKinley Woods, confirming its place among the healthiest preserves in the region. The green violet, twinleaf, and rare orchids have been recorded at the site. The excellent Forest Preserve District Web site (www.fpdwc.org) is right on in its description of McKinley's wildflower display, using the word "brilliant."

The thriving forest plant community attracts a similar abundance of fauna. Wild turkeys, introduced

in neighboring areas, have moved into McKinley. A family of cedar waxwings greeted me practically the moment I stepped on the trail. Egrets, herons, and many other water birds can be spotted from the preserve, as the Des Plaines River runs parallel to McKinley Woods' outer perimeter. Hundreds of migrating songbirds pass through on their annual journey, and some, like the scarlet tanager, make the site their nesting place.

McKinley Woods is one of the true jewels of Chicago Wilderness.

— Michael Madison



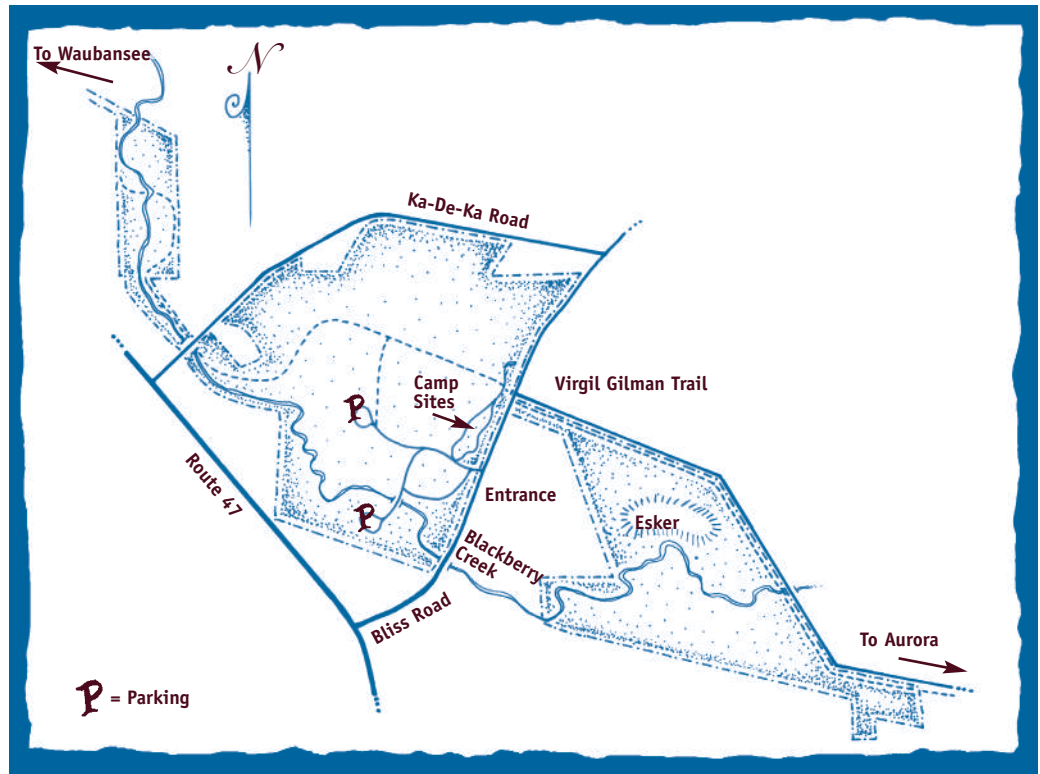
Weekend Explorer

Bliss Woods, Kane County by Todd Savage

At 285 acres, Bliss Woods Nature Preserve in Kane County is a modest-size natural area, but what it lacks in land mass, it makes up for with a rich and diverse array of plants, wildlife, and geological features.

Mary Ochsenschlager a naturalist with the St. Charles Park District who has the good fortune to live next door to Bliss Woods, recognized few of the plants in the woods when she moved there more than two decades ago. "I didn't know a lot about nature, but I knew I was drawn to it," Ochsenschlager says. So thorough was her education that she eventually became a steward for the preserve, and later authored a master plan for it.

For more than three-quarters of a century, Bliss Woods has been a willing teacher to people looking for a glimpse of the natural environment that existed here before European settlers arrived. Set aside as a protected area in the 1930s, it is the second preserve created by Kane County. Although the



name belongs to an early settler, its meaning still pertains: The preserve is a blissful blend of woods, oak savanna, and marsh.

Visitors to Bliss Woods will find plant species numbering more than 240, with some found nowhere else in the

county: narrow-leaved spleenwort, goldenseal, and blue-eyed Mary, which make for a rich wildflower display in the spring. The preserve also is a delight for tree lovers, with an impressive collection that includes red, white (some enormous, 300-year-old specimens), and bur oaks, hickory, white and blue ash, ironwood, and one of the largest butternut trees in Illinois, according to Dick Young, author of *Kane County Wild Plants & Natural Areas*. The woods are a haven for animals, including deer, fox, raccoons, muskrats, woodchucks, mink, and opossum. The preserve's watery environment makes it attractive to other creatures as well. There is both a salamander pond and a heron rookery where several dozen of the

great birds nest.

Geology-minded visitors should venture into the area of the preserve that lies east of Bliss Road, where they'll find one of the preserve's most interesting natural features: the remnants of a large esker, a winding knoll of gravel deposited by an underground glacial river. Known as the Kaneville Esker, most of it was destroyed by gravel mining. The steep northern and southern slopes are covered with woods and an open floodplain where sawtooth sagegrows, one of the only places in the Chicago region where it is found in the wild. The topography of the preserve also includes several semi-conical kames and an outwash plain bisected by Blackberry Creek.

Directions

Bliss Woods Forest Preserve is located in Sugar Grove, 40 miles west of Chicago. Take I-290 west to I-88.

Continue past Aurora to the exit for Rte. 56. Follow it to the juncture with Rte. 47. Go north on Rte. 47 for two miles to Bliss Rd. and turn right; follow it half a mile to the forest preserve's main entrance. Parking is available. For more information call Bliss Woods at (630) 466-4182 or the Forest Preserve District of Kane County at (630) 232-5980.

A drive through the area bears witness to the pressures of residential and commercial development, and Bliss Woods provides something of a buffer to the continuing loss of open space. The Forest Preserve District recently added a new 19-acre parcel of marshland directly north that it obtained as part of the area's flood control efforts. Preserve planners are trying to link as much open land as possible to avoid creating isolated islands of habitat that compromise plant and animal life.

The preserve's history is deeply intertwined with the earliest settlement of the area. To day it has a campground, picnic, and recreation areas, and for more than a century it traditionally has served as a gathering place for the nearby community of Sugar Grove. With flat, open prairie stretching out beyond it, it's easy to see what drew people there. The community takes its name from the grove of sugar maples that attracted Potawatomi Indians – who called this wooded area "Si n qua sip" or Sugar Grove. Early settlers were also drawn to the maple's sugarmaking capacities. According to Ochsenschlager early land records show that settlers who lived on the prairie also owned woodlots in the groves where they could chop timber. The community held Independence Day celebrations there as early as 1843. People came for picnics, to pick violets, and to relax and enjoy the sounds and sights of nature. They still do.

Touring/Roaming



Bicycling is an especially good way to explore Bliss Woods and its environs. The 12-mile Virgil Gilman Trail

crosses through the forest preserve on its way along an abandoned railroad from the east side of Aurora, passing high above the Fox River on a historic railroad bridge, to its endpoint at Waubesa Community College. For more information, call the Fox Valley Park District at (630) 897-0516.

Another way to explore the area is to begin at the college and follow the trail to Aurora. There you can connect to the 37-mile Fox River Trail, which passes through several nature areas, forest preserves, and the river towns of Batavia, Geneva, Elgin, and Algonquin. This trail also links to several others, including the Illinois Prairie Path and the Great Western Trail, and connects to the larger 475-mile Grand Illinois bike trail system. Bicycles can be rented along the Fox River bike path in Geneva at Mill Race Cyclery, 11 E. State St., (630) 232-2833. Leashed dogs are allowed on the trails. Trail maps are available at the information board at the main entrance to Bliss Woods, or at the Kane County Forest Preserve District office at 719 Batavia Rd., in Geneva.

More Daytripping

Nearby are a variety of attractions including Blackberry Farm's Pioneer Village at 100 S. Barnes St., Aurora, (630) 892-1500, a 54-acre open-air museum and parkland recreating a typical Illinois farm village, including a blacksmith, one-room schoolhouse, and pioneer cabin, and natural areas for bird-watching and nature appreciation; the Fabyan Villa Museum, a lavish estate redesigned in 1907 by Frank Lloyd Wright (630) 232-4811



and the Fabyan Windmill, a five-story mill built by a German immigrant in the 1850s. Both are maintained by the Fabyan Forest Preserve and located on Rte. 25 in Geneva.

Another local bit of history is preserved in nearby St. Charles at the Durant House Museum on Dean Street in the LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. It's a brick farmhouse built in 1843 that is one of the area's few surviving examples of a working man's home. Costumed guides offer insight into how people lived there in the mid-19th century. (630) 377-6424. Children with a scientific bent may enjoy visiting Aurora's SciTech, 18 West Benton St., (630) 859-3434, a hands-on science and technology center in the city's historic post office. The center has 200 exhibits explaining weather light and sound, heat, sound and music, magnets, and electricity.

Foraging

Pack your own picnic at Delectables Deli, 10 West State St. in Geneva (630) 232-8649, specializing in fresh sandwiches, homemade soups, and salads. An average lunch is \$5.50. "Geneva's oldest little place" is the Geneva Diner, 14 S. 2nd St., (630) 232-1288, a traditional downtown diner established in 1921 that serves hearty breakfasts and lunches (averaging \$6-\$7) of skillet eggs and potatoes, sandwiches, and daily homemade soups. Impossible to resist is the intoxicating aroma floating out the door at Graham's Fine Chocolates and Ice Cream, 302 S. 3rd St., Geneva, (630) 232-6655, a candy shop with hand-crafted truffles, fudge, and other



chocolate, as well as homemade ice cream and gelato. Settle into an Adirondack chair out front to savor a summer treat for around \$2.

Bedding Down



The best way to get to know Bliss Woods is to camp there overnight. Forty campsites (\$10-\$15/night fee) are available with one large picnic shelter on a first-come, first-served basis; call (630) 466-4182. There are other camping options in the county at Buffalo Park, Rte. 31 and Kane County Line, (847) 658-1188 and Paul Wolff Preserve (Big Timber Rd., 1.5 miles west of Randall Rd.), (847) 888-1361. For a less rustic experience, the town of Geneva offers several lodging options, including the 40-room Herrington Inn (ranging from \$159-\$249/night), 15 South River Lane, (630) 208-7433, a romantic hotel fronting the Fox River that is built within the old walls of a century-old dairy. Nearby is the Oscar Swan Country Inn, 1800 West State St., (630) 232-0173, an eight-room bed-and-breakfast in a stately brick mansion (nightly rates from \$98-\$149).

Events

Sugar Grove Corn Boil

July 27 - 28
Volunteer Park, Sugar Grove
This Sugar Grove tradition includes food, crafts, live entertainment, games for kids, a Saturday morning 5K run, and a big steam boiler full of corn. Call (630) 466-5166.



DIRECTIONS

From southbound I-294, exit at 75th St. At the stoplight on 75th at the bottom of the exit ramp, turn left (east) and follow 75th as it curves to the right past the large United Parcel Service facility. At the stop sign at the end of the road, turn left onto Santa Fe Dr. Continue east for approximately 1/2 mile and turn right at Leon Cook Dr. (before passing under I-55). Go south over the tracks to the end of Leon Cook Dr. at River Rd. Santa Fe Prairie is to the right on River Rd. Parking is on the shoulder along River Rd.

When the wind is right, the smell of a factory baking bread wafts towards visitors approaching Santa Fe Prairie. Remarkably, one of the smallest, rarest, and highest-quality remnants of our original Midwestern landscape, Santa Fe Prairie lies on the edge of an industrial park wedged between a rail yard and the Des Plaines Diversion Channel. Nevertheless, what makes Santa Fe Prairie truly unique is that it has been called the birthplace of the prairie preservation movement.

Santa Fe Prairie sits atop a gravel terrace that formed at the northwestern shore of ancient Mount Forest Island as glacial Lake Chicago drained from the Des Plaines valley more than 8,000 years ago. This "river bottom prairie" remained virtually untouched until the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway acquired it in 1886. They set the parcel aside for future use and for about 75 years it remained protected, benignly neglected.

When botanist Floyd Swink conducted the first botanical survey in 1946,

the Prairie was approximately 40 to 50 pristine acres. On July 6th, 1959, biochemist Robert Betz visited the site with Swink. "The Santa Fe Prairie was the first real prairie I'd seen, and the plant variety astounded me," Betz said. "That first visit with Floyd Swink made me decide to dedicate the next 35 years of my life to prairies."

In the late 1960s, Betz learned of the railway's plans to destroy the prairie to develop an industrial park. He began a decades-long campaign to save it. By 1976, when the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory described the prairie as including "Grade A" dry-mesic and mesic gravel prairie, filling by the railroad to raise the grade above floods had shrunk the prairie to 11 acres.

In July of 1997, after a decade of persistent persuasion, Stan Johnson, chairman of the I&M Canal Civic Center Authority, convinced the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway to donate the prairie to the Authority, which now owns and manages it. The Railway also donated a caboose, which serves as a

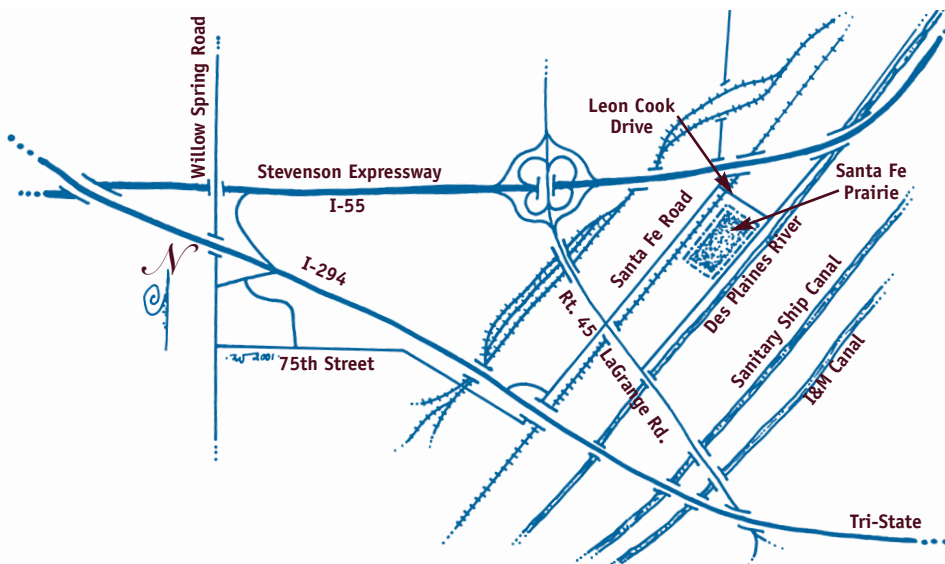
visitor and volunteer center. After 35 years of nearly constant efforts by many people and organizations, 10.84 acres of the original Santa Fe Prairie was designated as an Illinois Nature Preserve on October 3, 1997.

The moist calcareous (calcium-rich) soils and gravelly, well-drained portions of the prairie together host more than 250 native plant species. In summer, the site is a kaleidoscopic mosaic of color. Dry species, such as pale purple coneflower and porcupine grass, may be found here in relatively close proximity to plants that prefer moist conditions, including Virginia wild rye and small skullcap. Variations in soil moisture support far greater plant diversity than would generally be expected of a site its size.

There are no hiking trails at Santa Fe Prairie, but the proposed Centennial Trail will pass on the road between the site and the Des Plaines River. The River is a dedicated canoe trail developed by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and there is an informal canoe landing there.

The visitor center/caboose is open between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on weekends. Interpretive signage, steel silhouettes of Betz and Swink, and a viewing deck alongside the caboose tell the prairie's story to visitors. Volunteer workdays are every Saturday throughout the year. Contact stewards Greg Starr and Karen Stasky at (708) 598-6139. For a virtual tour, see civiccenter-authority.org.

— Gary Mechanic



Acquired by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County in the 1970s, Springbrook Prairie near Naperville was slated to be transformed into a recreational lake. Instead, the creek snaking through the 1,800-acre preserve remains proudly dam-free, and the site once dubbed "Dragon Lake Preserve" is today an open prairie.

In the early 1990s, local naturalists Joe Suchecki and Vicki Shinn spearheaded a community effort to reevaluate the so-called "Dragon Lake Plan." Manifesting a large measure of public sentiment, DuPage County citizens successfully encouraged replacement of the plans for an artificial lake with an ecologically minded management strategy, focusing upon restoration of native prairie and wetland environments. Today, Suchecki is steward for Springbrook's restoration sites.

The restoration has progressed nicely. About one-third of Springbrook Preserve is actively managed, but restoration is planned for the entire preserve. Removal of brush and non-native trees has prompted the return of many grassland birds, including grasshopper and savanna sparrows, bobolinks, and meadowlarks. In fact, Springbrook Prairie is one of the finest birding spots in Chicago Wilderness. "Because of its size," Suchecki says, "Springbrook is an important site for many endangered birds, including Henslow's sparrow, the northern harrier (a ground-nesting hawk), and the short-

eared owl." Prairie plants such as rattlesnake master, rough blazing star, prairie sunflower, and indigo bush have started to take hold in restoration sites.

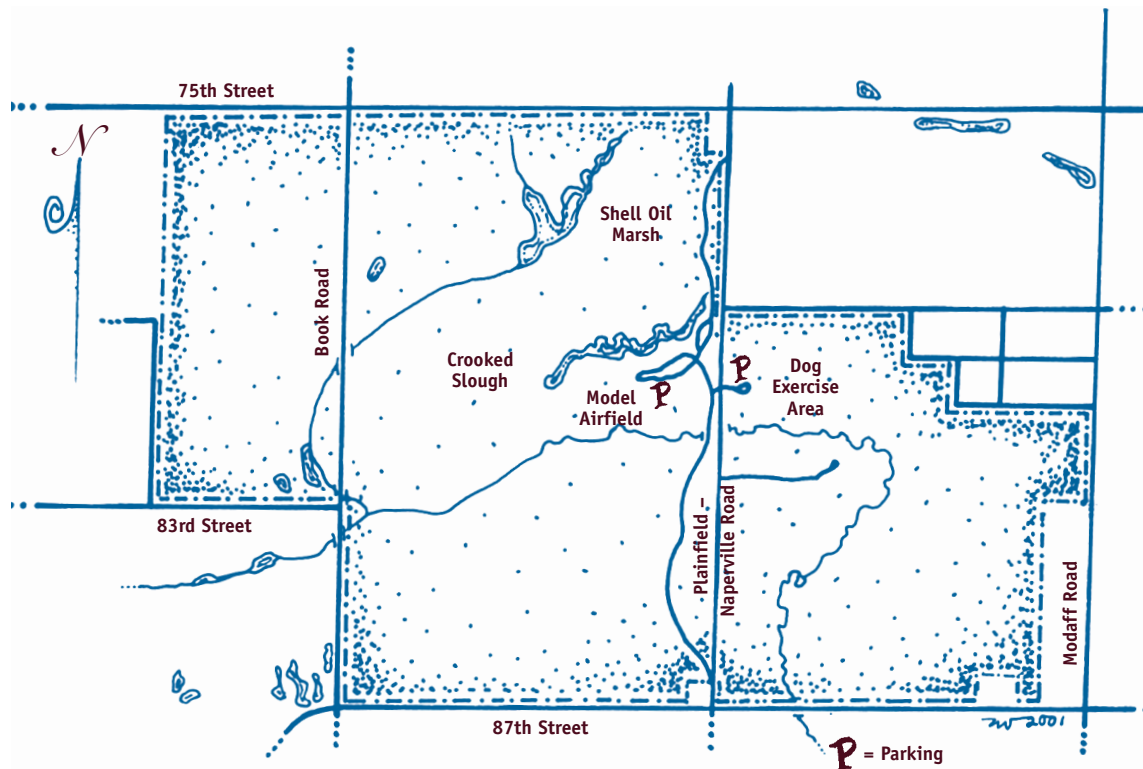
A unique and intensive restoration is in the works for the prairie's creek. While half of the approximately three-mile stream maintains its original meandering path, the other half was manipulated for agricultural use before the site was purchased by the Forest Preserve District. As a preliminary step in an effort to restore its natural path entirely, a study of the creek's geologic characteristics is currently underway. According to Leslie Berns, natural resources supervisor for the Forest Preserve District, this research should be completed by 2002. Even before a spoonful of dirt has been moved, Springbrook Prairie's creek

boasts the highest Index of Biological Integrity rating in DuPage County, and is well worth a visit.

Visitors will find two parking lots at the preserve's north end – one providing convenient access to the dog training area where dogs are permitted off leash and the other close to broad pebbled trails and a model airplane field (permit required). To see the beautiful winding creek, find a single-track trail on the far side of the airplane field, branching off the main path where this larger trail loops around. Follow the small path to a larger jeep trail that will lead back to the main, well-maintained trail – an easy loop through the heart of the preserve. The hiking trails now are rather short, but construction of an eight-mile perimeter path is planned.

— Michael Madison

Take I-55 south to exit 263 (Weber Rd.). Go north (left) on Weber to 111th. Go west (left) on 111th until Plainfield-Naperville Rd., and take a right. Parking lots are located on either side of Plainfield-Naperville Rd., north of 87th and about a half mile south of 75th.



Natural Events

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

SUMMER 2001

EARLY SUMMER

Mussel Beach

People who frolic in the shallows of our lakes, ponds, and rivers are probably familiar with clams. Our waters hold a wide variety of these bi-valves, some of which are quite common as they can survive in polluted, silty waters. These include the giant floaters and the charmingly named pigtoes. Others, such as the rare creek heelsplitter, are intolerant of pollution and can be found only in clear waters such as the Kishwaukee River system in McHenry County and portions of the Kankakee.

Premature Withdrawal

Goofy as this may sound, the "fall" bird migration is now taking place. Beginning in late June, certain shore birds are already beginning their long treks south. Local researchers have noted the early arrival of least sandpipers, short-billed dowitchers, and the greater and lesser yellowlegs. They are coming from their summer breeding grounds in arctic Canada, en route to their warm, winter home along the Caribbean shoreline. It seems the first to arrive are the worst deadbeat dads among the adult males. They're followed a few weeks later by the adult females, and finally the abandoned precocial youngsters.

MIDDLE SUMMER

Must Be Jelly

Very few people – even longtime students of local fauna – are aware of our freshwater jellyfish. Uncommon, *craspedacusta* are usually found as colonial polyps, attached to the bottom of a lake or pond. But as the water warms during the summer, the medusea, or free swimming stage, may break away from a polyp tip and float through the water. With

their tentacles hanging down from their gelatinous, bell-shaped body, freshwater jellies look exactly like the marine species of jellyfish, although ours are usually under 2 cm in diameter.

Embryonic Journey

I don't like to say that some animals are smart and others are stupid, unless I'm referring specifically to politicians. But if you compare the size of the brain cavity of a raccoon with that of an opossum, you will see that our resident marsupial has a tiny little brain. But no matter, opossums have done just fine, adapting well to our suburban landscape. During the summer, and after an amazingly short gestation period of less than two weeks, the living embryos of the opossum emerge and crawl along mom's belly to the marsupium, where 13 nipples are located. These peanut-sized babies will lock on to their source of protein, firmly attaching themselves while they continue their development. If there are more than 13 babies, some will be out of luck and will quickly starve.

The Cure

Eddie Cochran may have sung about the summertime blues, but he might have sung a different tune if he watched a male indigo bunting belting out his song in the midday sun. Buntings are members of a group of birds known for their sexual dimorphism, with the males often exhibiting brilliant colors in contrast to the earthtone-colored females. Other local members of this fetching subfamily of finches include cardinals and grosbeaks.

Desert Life

For those of you who like both kinds of music – that is, country and western – our native cacti are now in bloom with their

large yellow flowers. Prickly pear are the only North American member of the cactus family found east of the Mississippi River. In the Chicago Wilderness, prickly pear often grow on sandy ridges among stands of black oaks. Early naturalists reported them being especially abundant along the Lake Michigan shoreline, south of the burgeoning metropolis of Chicago. These days, our cacti can be found in the Braidwood Dunes, the Indiana Dunes, and Illinois Beach State Park, near the mouth of the Dead River.

END OF SUMMER

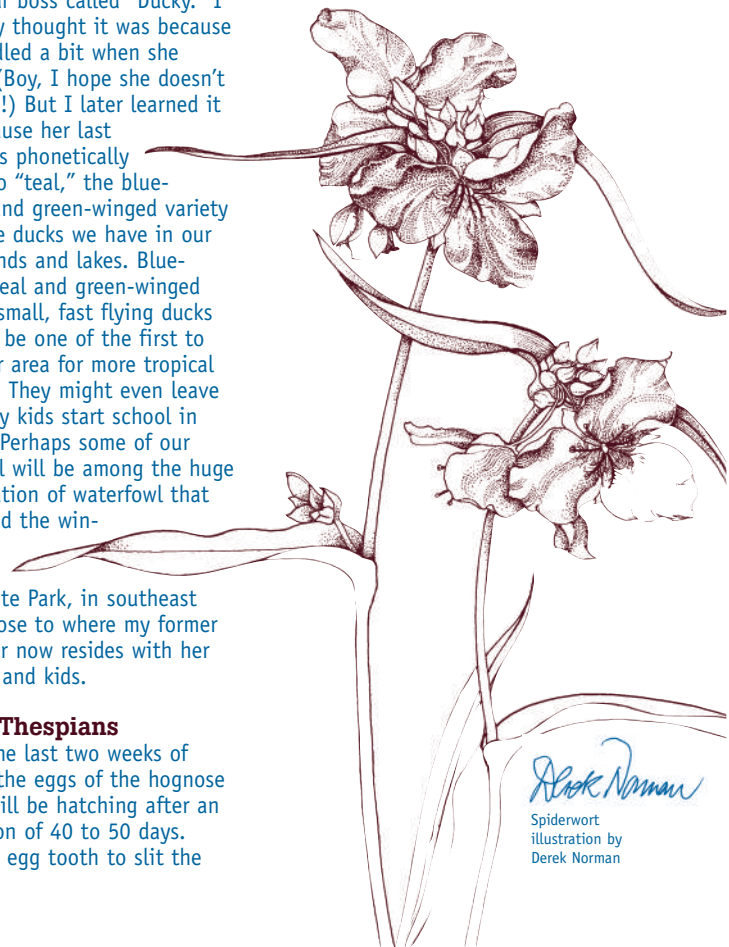
Just Ducky

Years ago, I worked with a girl whom our boss called "Ducky." I originally thought it was because she waddled a bit when she walked. (Boy, I hope she doesn't read this!) But I later learned it was because her last name was phonetically similar to "teal," the blue-winged and green-winged variety of puddle ducks we have in our quiet ponds and lakes. Blue-winged teal and green-winged teal are small, fast flying ducks that will be one of the first to leave our area for more tropical climates. They might even leave before my kids start school in the fall. Perhaps some of our local teal will be among the huge congregation of waterfowl that will spend the winter in Brazos Bend State Park, in southeast Texas, close to where my former co-worker now resides with her husband and kids.

Snake Thespians

During the last two weeks of August, the eggs of the hognose snakes will be hatching after an incubation of 40 to 50 days. Using an egg tooth to slit the

leathery shell, the young snakes will begin searching for toads, their favorite meal. The defensive antics of a hognose snake are well known among reptile enthusiasts. When feeling threatened, the snake ominously inflates its neck – like a cobra – and hisses loudly. It will strike with quick, short jabs. In reality, though, these actions are mostly bluster as hognose snakes rarely open their mouths when defending themselves. If the perceived threat continues, hognose snakes will play possum, feigning death by lying on their backs, even going to the point of dramatically oozing drops of blood from their gaping mouths. Their acting ability would make DeNiro proud.



Derek Norman

Spiderwort
illustration by
Derek Norman

Baltimore checkerspot: gossamer tapestry

When I was asked to write a profile of one of the region's butterflies, I wanted to choose a species that was strongly associated with natural ecological communities rather than parks or gardens. At the same time, I didn't want to pick something that is so rare that it's very difficult to get out and actually see the thing. Fortunately, it didn't take much thought to come up with the ideal candidate.

The Baltimore checkerspot (*Euphydryas phaeton*) is a denizen of specialized alkaline wetlands called fens. Although fens are rare ecosys-



Photo: Casey Galvin

tems, there are enough of them scattered throughout the area that it is still possible to find this butterfly on nearly two dozen sites in Chicago Wilderness.

The Baltimore checkerspot is named for Lord Baltimore, the colonial administrator of Maryland. Lord Baltimore's heraldic colors are orange and black and have been remembered in naming such diverse orange and black creatures as the Baltimore checkerspot and Baltimore oriole. In a freshly emerged adult, the dominant black color of the upper side of the wings has a particularly rich, velvety texture. The scarlet and yellow spotting of the wings are vividly set off by

this midnight black.

The colors that we find so beautiful in Baltimore checkerspots are unappealing to many of their predators. These butterflies have been shown to be unpalatable to birds, and the distinctive spotting pattern serves as a warning coloration, not unlike the more familiar monarch butterfly.

Adults are on the wing from mid-June to early August, with peak flight right around the 4th of July. Although strongly tied to their very specific habitats, they can be abundant when conditions are to their liking. At times, dozens can be seen taking nectar at flowers and basking in the sunshine. Males of the species are territorial and engage in vigorous aerial dogfights.

Female Baltimore checkerspots show an extremely narrow range of plants on which to lay eggs. In the Chicago region, turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*) is the only plant on which the females oviposit. Eggs are deposited in masses of several hundred on the underside turtlehead leaves. Newly laid eggs are vivid magenta. Within about a day, however, they fade to a rather unexciting tan. About three weeks later, the eggs hatch.

Newly hatched larvae migrate to the tops of the turtlehead plants where they spin webs and feed gregariously. In late summer, the larvae stop feeding and add substantially to the web. This thickened web can sometimes be seen a foot or two off of the ground around turtlehead stalks in late August and early September. Long thought to be where the larvae hibernate, this is actually a pre-hibernation web where the larvae spend late summer and early autumn. In late October, the larvae move out of the web and into the leaf litter at the base of the plants where they overwinter.

In late April or early May, hibernation ends, and the caterpillars resume feeding. Although they still feed on



Photo: Casey Galvin

turtlehead, these post-diapausal larvae also feed on a much wider variety of plants. Some of these, like swamp betony, penstemon, and downy yellow painted cup are in the same family as turtlehead. However, the caterpillars eat many other species including ash, honeysuckle, plantain, and valerian. This wider range of host plants allows the Baltimore checkerspot to inhabit sites that contain insufficient turtlehead to function as the sole food source for an entire colony. The largest caterpillars can consume thousands of times more leaf material per day than newly hatched caterpillars. It is this most voracious stage that consumes the widest variety of plant species.

By early June, the larvae again cease feeding, and wander away from their host plant to pupate. The inch long chrysalis is a beautiful creamy white with orange and black markings. Metamorphosis is complete by mid-to-late June, when the first adults again grace the fens of Chicago Wilderness.

— Doug Taron

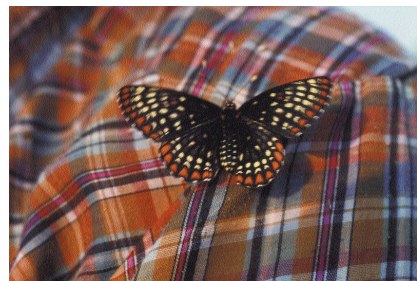


Photo: Patricia K. Armstrong

Valerie Spale: prairie bulldog

Wolf Road Prairie is the last open area of significant ecological value in west-central Cook County. This 80-acre parcel, including parts never disturbed by plow or earthmover, is home to very high quality prairie and an ever rarer high quality oak savanna. But the fact that it exists at all is one part luck and one part plain bulldog tenacity on the part of Valerie Spale, long-time executive director of the Save The Prairie Society (STPS) in Westchester.

"I used to drive by the prairie all the time and just thought it was an empty lot," says Spale, who lives about a mile away in a Westchester two-flat. "And then my son and I attended a slide show about it at the library. It was beautiful and they told us it was being saved. I thought that was fine – my son would always be able to enjoy it. Then I found out that the owners of the lots [that made up the prairie] were petitioning for utilities so they could build. We protested, but the village wouldn't give us the time of day." That was in 1975.

The Great Depression saved the prairie the first time around. Six hundred city-sized lots, averaging 33 x 125 feet, had been sold. Streets were platted, sidewalks laid. Then suddenly no one had any money to build homes anywhere in the 80 acres. After WWII, Westchester changed its zoning laws, making the tiny lots illegal to build on. But that didn't stop speculators from buying up groups of lots and pressing the village to let them start their bulldozers. In the meantime, the prairie itself got a helping hand from kids who would regularly set fires there, especially at Halloween. Sometimes even the fire department would burn it for practice. But when STPS started to acquire land at the prairie, things were no longer so easy: they had to spend hours building fire-breaks when burning underbrush to make sure the fire didn't stray into lots still in private hands.

That lot-by-lot burning illustrates the unique challenges faced by the Wolf Road Prairie. Because it had

been sold in small chunks in the 20s, it had to be painstakingly repurchased from individual owners and their heirs. STPS then turned them over to either the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) or the Forest Preserve District of Cook County – whoever would put up the funds to reimburse the Society.

Spale seeks no personal credit for rescuing the Wolf Road Prairie from repeated attempts to develop the property over the past 20 years. Still, those who've worked with her agree that without her dedication, the prairie almost certainly would be paved over today.

"She's relentless – you punch her down and she just comes back," says Illinois State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, who helped Spale secure the \$8 million in state funds that allowed STPS to turn the first four parcels of the prairie officially into nature preserve land.

Spale certainly doesn't look like a man-the-barricades green revolutionary. She looks like what she is: a suburban wife and mother, stylishly dressed in a grey and black pants outfit who drives a Cadillac. But there is no doubting the fire in her belly, especially when she starts talking about why she thought the prairie was worth so much effort. It's the kids, silly, especially her kid, Kevin. He's married now; he was just in first grade when his mom became a developer's worst nightmare. Her husband, Kenneth, has supported her efforts for 20 years as the group's treasurer and Spale's strong shoulder.

"A lot of people don't have the chutzpah to carry forward; Valerie is simply not daunted by what seems impossible at first," declares Gerould Wilhelm, now a botanist for Conservation Design Forum and technical adviser for many years at Wolf Road Prairie. "She's a great strategist and tactician who knows how to make it difficult for the opposition."

By 1993, STPS, led by Spale, had persuaded IDNR and the forest preserve district to acquire enough lots to make



Photo: Larry Godson

development of the main parcel economically unattractive. "The majority of neighbors call us 'weedniks,'" says Phil Cihlar, president of STPS. "But this area needs this prairie. We're bracketed by two strip malls and we're across the street from the most expensive new development in Westchester. Still, lots of people around here look at this as just an empty field that could have houses on it."

Spale and her volunteer army have continued to use agitation, publicity, persuasion, and legal challenges to thwart the efforts of developers and governmental bodies with designs on parts of the prairie.

In the latest battle, Spale has led the charge to create a buffer zone between the prairie and an EPA Superfund landfill, just to the west, while vigorously opposing efforts to build a 128-unit senior apartment complex and a magnet school in the proposed buffer.

Spale says her greatest reward is seeing Chicago-area schoolchildren discover Wolf Road Prairie for the first time. "This is perhaps their first experience with nature, and they're always fascinated," Spale says. "One even asked me, as we were walking through head-high wildflowers and grasses, 'Where are the tigers?'"

Politicians and bureaucrats at all levels know there are no tigers at the Wolf Road Prairie. Just one bulldog and an equally tenacious group of volunteers and backers. "Valerie takes no prisoners," says Topinka. "She has a vision for the future, for the sanity the prairie will always provide in an urban area. It's for the children."

— Nancy Shepherdson



Ron Olsen: building a better bird box

Ron Olsen is the perfect host. Since 1971, he has invited Eastern bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) to nest in DuPage County by building and helping Scouts build more than 250 nest boxes. With the precision of a tool and die maker (he works at Vector Mold in Wood Dale) and the passion of a birder, Ron refines the design of bluebird nest boxes, monitors them and last year helped the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) develop a bluebird monitoring program.

The Eastern bluebird, as common as the American robin 100 years ago, requires a human engineered nesting box because loss of habitat, pesticides, and competition from nonnative species have diminished populations by almost 90 percent. Today “Ron’s persistence and dedication building and monitoring nest boxes has played a major part in the bluebird’s reappearance as a breeding species in DuPage County,” says Dan Ludwig, FPDDC animal ecologist.

As a Cub Scout, Ron worked in his basement building a variety of birdhouses with his dad’s jigsaw and scraps. He carried this childhood interest with him to a DuPage Chapter meeting of the Illinois Audubon Society in 1971 and eagerly said “yes” to the first member who asked for help. Ron took over coordination of the Prairie Path bluebird trail near West Chicago and began building birdhouses again.

In 1986, Friends of the Marsh and the DuPage Audubon Society established the first bluebird trail program on District land in the McKee Marsh area of Blackwell Forest Preserve in Warrenville. Assistant Scoutmaster Ron rallied

his troop to build and install 50 nest boxes for this site. Two years later, McKee Marsh had its first breeding pair of bluebirds. Ron continues to oversee Eagle Scouts who build nesting boxes for the district.

“This is Ron’s mission. If he had

20 bluebirds fledge last year, he wants 21 this year. He’s always striving for something better,” applauds Cindy Hedges, FPDDC volunteer liaison. A big part of Ron’s mission includes outsmarting European starlings, house sparrows, squirrels, raccoons, possums, and cats. And it’s all in the box. Studying every facet of the once tried and true Peterson box, Ron and bluebird enthusiasts across North America experiment and network via the Web to improve fledgling success rate. Ron’s latest innovation has generated a big stir. “You will have to credit my friend Ron Olsen for the 5-inch diameter PVC birdhouse,” says Frank Navratil Sr., a North Riverside resident, on his bluebird Web site. “He just insisted and persisted and the Fatboy birdhouse was born! Ron feels that healthier and perhaps larger clutches will result from using these Fatboy birdhouses.”

“There are many other benefits to this plastic nest box, but making it bigger in diameter relieves over crowding, helps control premature fledging, makes it easier for adults to remove fecal sacks and keep the nest clean, keeps the chicks cooler in high heat, and helps preserve feather quality of both adults because it’s easier to maneuver inside the box,” Ron reported to fellow enthusiasts on the Web. In 2000, 72 young fledged from 22 Fatboy nest boxes in DuPage County forest preserves. You can find detailed construction plans for the Fatboy at <http://www.concentric.net/~Fmnavrat/fatboy/fatboy.htm>. The material cost is approximately \$4.62 per box and it can be used from year to year.

Sparrows are the only remaining problem. “I haven’t outsmarted them yet,” Ron says. “If it weren’t for sparrows, I wouldn’t have to check these boxes at all; I’d just keep putting more up.”

In 1997, Ron contacted managers at the District’s Oak Meadows and Maple Meadows Golf Courses about installing bluebird trails. “The habitat at these courses is open, short grass meadows, with nearby perches, but away from brush – a perfect place for bluebirds to safely hunt insects,” Ron explains.

His first season monitoring at Oak Meadows, Ron saw how his efforts made



Photo: Myles Olsen

a difference. “I approached a nest box to check it and the adult bluebirds flew at me,” Ron remembers. He quickly retreated to sit and watch. “Soon three bluebird chicks came out and hung on the box hole trying to get food from the adults calling above. Then one chick flew to the closest tree joined by the male adult. The second chick followed, again escorted by the male.” He checked the box two days later and all three chicks had fledged. “I’m glad I saw that,” Ron said, still struck by the moment.

Since then, he has installed 77 nest boxes on three trails at the two courses. He has documented 101 successful bluebird fledglings and a great many clutches are being monitored this season. Paired boxes are mounted about 100 yards apart so the bluebirds aren’t fighting over feeding territory. “They should be working on their goal of raising chicks and not wasting precious time fighting,” Ron explains. “I double all my boxes to let the tree swallows take one, because they’re going to anyway. Tree swallows won’t let another of their species take the other paired box, so a bluebird moves in.”

On May 3, Ron received the FPDDC President’s Award for “Making A Significant Contribution To The Natural Resource Management Program” at an annual volunteer banquet.

To get involved in the bluebird monitoring program conducted by the Forest Preserve District of Du Page County, call Cindy Hedges at (630) 876-5929.

Programs are sponsored statewide by the Illinois Audubon Society at (217) 446-5085.

—Alison Carney Brown



Photo: Ron Olsen

Prairie Dropseed: highly conservative

Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) is a beautiful ‘clump’ grass found in high-quality prairies throughout the region. It is readily identified by its narrow long leaves, rarely wider than 1/8 inch,

used to ground them into a tasty flour. Naturalists say the scent, quite open to interpretation, most closely resembles buttered popcorn or, less surprisingly, sunflower seeds.

Prairie dropseed is often introduced

Prairie dropseed is one of the most popular native species for local gardeners and landscapers. Dropseed makes for an excellent, distinct border when planted at two-foot intervals. According to local naturalist Pat



Photo: Dan Kirk

which spring from the soil and fall to the ground like a smooth waterfall. Dropseed leaves grow densely around a circular base. They vary in color from green to steely blue-gray, and grow up to three feet long.

Dropseed is a prominent contributor to the prairie palette in summer and fall. In autumn it displays its unique color, a golden rust that stands out from the season’s other reds and browns. July and August find prairie dropseed in bloom with small, humble white-tan flowers.

The name prairie dropseed reflects the species’s “ungrass-like” BB-size round seeds, to use local steward Dennis Nyberg’s phrase. The seeds are quite fragrant, and Native Americans

early in the development of restoration sites, as it is a cornerstone of healthy prairie plant communities. Unlike other prairie grasses such as big bluestem and Indian grass, dropseed generally takes a long time – up to five years – to mature from seed. In response, many restoration projects use plants grown from seed in nurseries.

Dropseed favors moist to drier soils, is drought-resistant, and is not found in wetlands. Since prairie dropseed is one of the first plants to disappear from disturbed areas and is highly sensitive to grazing, Floyd Swink and Gerould Wilhelm’s *Plants of the Chicago Region* rates the grass as highly conservative.

Armstrong, new garden dropseed plantings require due attention. Seeds must be watered for their entire first growing season, and more mature transplants until they take root. Established garden dropseed, like many ornamental grasses, requires little attention – just cut off the dried grass (pretend you’re a prairie fire) once in late winter or early spring and enjoy the colors for the rest of the year. Plant prairie dropseed in full sun, as shaded dropseed slouches in a sort of lugubrious flop rather than the attractive proud fountain seen in thriving specimens.

— Michael Madison



RESPECT FOR MOSQUITOES

Dear Editor,

As we all know, after the spring ephemerals die back in the forest preserves, mosquitoes begin to buzz around. My eight-year-old grandson, Clinton, had an interesting observation

about those pesky little insects. I've gotten him involved in hiking through the various forest preserves in Lake County. We hiked

through nine of the designated forest preserves, and for that he earned a shield for his walking stick in the "Hike Lake County" program. As we hiked through the Ryerson Forest Preserve, he noted some deer tracks and wanted to follow them. I suggested we stay on the trail to keep from disturbing the native plants, and also to keep from stirring up the mosquitoes. Clinton said, "Yeah, after all, it is their habitat."

Mike Lawler
Vernon Hills, Ill.
bikeitmike1@aol.com

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Dear Editor,

Something I noticed in one of the short news stories in the Spring issue really surprised me. It mentioned how good Tellabs, Sears and Lucent are for setting aside a small section of their land as a natural environment....Before Lucent built there, it used to be a nice prairie. Now most if it has been destroyed and two buildings were put in the prairie's place...

Next, the two buildings that Lucent erected are almost all glass. I'm sure the HVAC companies were happy with this decision. It means bigger systems to keep them warm and cool since glass is not a good

insulator. Bigger systems mean more depletion of resources, more Arctic Wildlife Refuge drilling, more stripping of the land for coal, more nuclear waste, etc.

Just my two cents.

Gary Davis
Warrenville, Ill.
GDavis@worknetinc.com

Editor's note: While it is true that Lucent built on open land in Naperville, the parcel consisted largely of old agricultural fields, not prairie. Many Lucent employees are actively involved in habitat restoration there and elsewhere in the region. The prairie on the property was created by Lucent. Prairie landscaping is a vastly better habitat for wildlife compared to lawn, even if some of it needs to be gobbled up from time to time by other needs.

We asked Hans Detweiler from the Environmental Law and Policy Center to educate us on the energy aspects of glass buildings. He wrote: "Generally speaking, all glass buildings tend to have high energy costs, more because they trap heat, greenhouse style, than because they lose heat in the winter. The high heat loads they take on in the summer can require large and wasteful cooling systems."

"An all-glass building probably did miss out on many of the environmental and economic benefits of green building design. If you are interested in follow up, the folks at the Daylighting Collaborative would probably be very helpful: www.daylighting.org."

OWL BLESSING

Dear Editor,

An enormous female great horned owl was rescued at Horner Park in Chicago on February 16. An early morning dog walker spotted the owl dangling by a kite string from a tree. He quickly borrowed a pocketknife, scaled the tree, and cut the owl down. The bird hobbled toward the river unable to fly. Kite materials were treacherously wrapped around the owl's wings and torso and a dragging wing appeared to be broken. Word spread quickly through the neighborhood, and by 8:30 a.m. birders and other caring neigh-

bors arrived to see how they could help. There is nothing like two feet of bristling, in-your-face shrieking, avian energy to make you forget whatever you had to do today.

Several hours later, raptor rehabilitators from Spring Brook Nature Center in Itasca retrieved the bird. They estimated she was tangled up several days before being discovered.

The injured owl weighed in at a hefty 62.4 oz. and was characterized as a "very street smart bird," according to Debbie Farley, Spring Brook Raptor Supervisor. The rehabbers believed she was a nesting bird, and even if this year's nest was no longer viable she needed to return home quickly



Photo: Debby Farley

to maintain the pair bond. Great horned owls can remain with the same mate for as long as a pair lives.

On February 27, Spring Brook released the healed bird at Horner Park with more than 25 people looking on...dog-walkers, neighborhood residents who had observed the owl or assisted in the rescue, birders, and representatives of Friends of the Chicago River and the Chicago Park District.

After a brief thank you and

owl farewell blessing delivered by pastor and birder David Antieau, the blanket-covered cage was gently carried to the spot where the owl was found. Rehabbers removed the blanket and top half of the cage, revealing the owl hunkered face-down in the bottom. The bird lifted its head and looked about, then stared calmly at the group for the next 10 minutes or so, its head revolving slowly around.

The owl finally lifted off like a huge feathered blimp, and landed in a large tree on the riverbank opposite Cullom Street, completely camouflaged in the thick brown branches. After an hour, she settled in a dense evergreen on the riverbank, about two blocks north of the Montrose Avenue bridge. An entourage of about 50 crows stayed with her the whole time, but eventually quieted down when she was no longer visible inside the tree. A couple of hours later the crows were still hanging around the neighborhood complaining. We left thankful.

Leslie Borns
Ravenswood Manor resident
Chicago, Ill.

INNER CITY BLUE

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to share this with you. One of my rough and tumble third grade boys, Anthony Barber, spotted an indigo bunting. He wrote a story about it:

"I liked the blue bird that flew right past me. That bird was nothing I ever dreamed about. It was nicer than all the other birds. A good bird, so I would like to see that bird again, OK?"

Of course, I say OK, again and again.

Sue Friscia
Carver Primary School
Chicago, Ill.

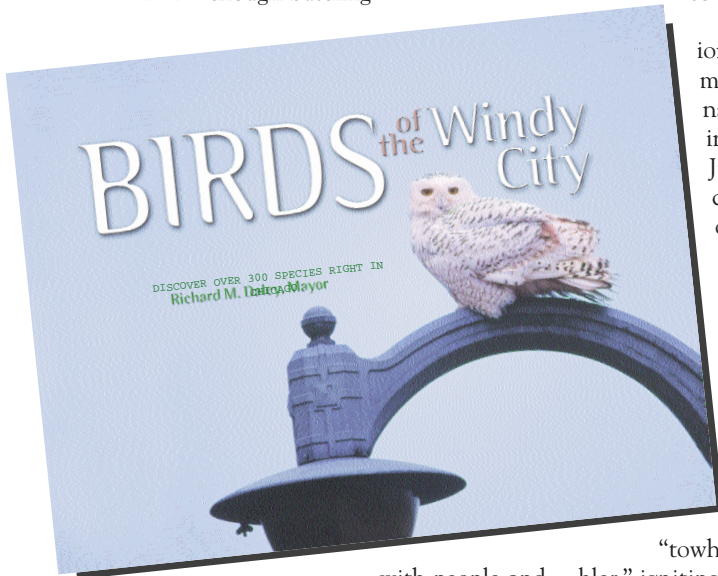
MY BIRDS OF THE WINDY CITY

by Beverly McClellan

Birds of the Windy City dispels any remaining notion that Chicago, though bustling

the southeast corner of the Dirksen federal building. I was never so glad to be working late.

Nature Museum. I did not think she believed a falcon would actually show up in my city yard. However, just as she was leaving, I heard that unmistakable call and there he was, swooping over the townhouse right before her eyes. “Cool,” she said. I was vindicated. Of course, other neighbors walking by wanted to know what we were craning to look at, and they too were delighted to see him flying over their city sidewalks and streets.



“Pondering birds’ behavior connects us with the mystery and power of the natural world, right here in the city,” writes author Judy Pollock, projects coordinator for Audubon of the Chicago Region. I agree and find that it also can connect us with each other. In my neighborhood, I have made several friends out of our shared interest in birds. During migration seasons, our phones ring with quick quips of

Birds of the Windy City encourages us not only to enjoy the birds of Chicago, but also to play a role in keeping them around. For example, we can plant a variety of native flowers and grasses that attract birds. My columbine was the main attraction for a ruby-throated hummingbird passing through one cold fall day. I could hardly believe I had a hummingbird in my Chicago backyard. The book also suggests allowing dead stalks with seeds to stand through winter. I remember just last fall watching the goldfinches doing acrobatics on my black-eyed Susans to get at the tasty black seeds.

with people and towering with buildings, cannot be a haven for an exciting variety of birds. I know because I actually see these birds in my tiny backyard – a 14-by-22-foot patch of plants, trees, and flowers just south of the Loop. I have not seen the tanagers from the Amazon and snowy owls from the Arctic that the book describes, but they do visit other nearby areas, like Montrose Point and Lincoln Park.

Birds of the Windy City, a new booklet published by the Chicago Department of Environment and Chicago Park District, in collaboration with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society, illustrates the many resources Chicago has to offer migratory birds and year-round residents, from its long Lake Michigan shoreline to its little corner parks downtown. Imagine sitting in your downtown office at dusk and hearing the “kiiirr” of a bird you know is not the typical downtown pigeon. This happened to me about a year ago when I looked out and saw a stately peregrine falcon perched on

“towhee” or “Nashville warbler,” igniting a frenzy of getting to the window with binoculars and bird book. One of my most memorable sightings is a male American kestrel, with its bold blue-gray and rust markings and black sideburns. On a winter day last year, I heard him first and knew he was not a typical backyard bird. I spotted him perched on the chimney pipe on my neighbor’s roof, warning off any annoying birds with his high-pitched call. He made so much noise, he clearly had no intention of hunting, all stealth thrown to the wind. He wanted his peace while he warmed up on the steamy heat coming up out of the fireplace.

I tried to share this experience several months later with a “nonbirding” friend after visiting the “Birds of Prey” exhibit at the Peggy Notebaert

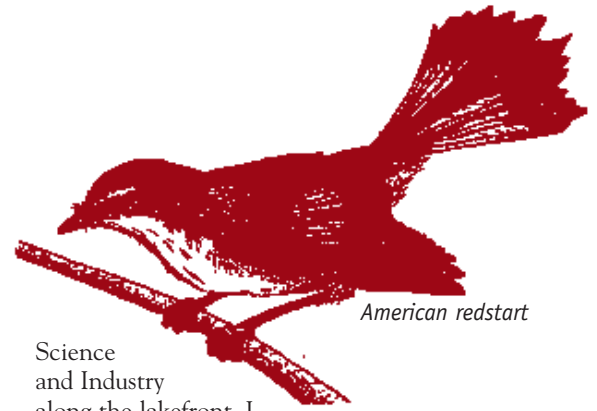


Illustration: Lita Forsyth

Chicago's birds are so engaging that even the city and federal governments are getting in on the action. For example, last year, Chicago residents elected the peregrine falcon as the first-ever official city bird (CW, Winter '00, p.31). In addition, Mayor Richard M. Daley and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Director Jamie Rappaport Clark signed the Urban Treaty for Migratory Birds in March 2000. According to *Birds of the Windy City*, the treaty provides for new policies, programs, and habitats for Chicago's migratory birds, thanks to the cooperation of many local conservation groups and organizations. Indeed,

the treaty made *Birds of the Windy City* possible and will make it available to the public for free.

One of my favorite aspects about *Birds of the Windy City* is its challenge to "venture out into the wilds of Chicago." The booklet provides three challenges and bird checklists. One challenge asks how many year-round resident birds the reader can find on a walk through neighborhood streets and parks. Another asks how many local nesting birds (such as a great blue heron or indigo bunting) the reader can find in one summer. The third challenge requires the reader to visit spots on the map provided (a nice, compact resource) to find spring and fall migrants. I have taken on this challenge and, after visiting the Paul Douglas Nature Sanctuary at Wooded Island just south of the Museum of



American redstart

Science and Industry along the lakefront, I checked off five birds, including a mustard-colored yellow warbler – a first time sighting for me. Only five more to go and at least 25 more birding spots left to discover!

If these challenges do not get your bird juices flowing, the section on Chicago's Year in Birds will. This nifty calendar provides nuggets of information on what birds and bird behavior to look for – and where – during each month of the year. For example, in June begin to watch for nesting and young to be born. In August, look for the masses of swallows that swarm Montrose Point.

Birds of the Windy City also provides a list of local bird clubs, conservation organizations, print resources, Web sites, and listservs. Listservs have provided me with delightful accounts of others' bird experiences and let me know what birds to look for as listserv members south of me report sightings during spring migration (or north of me during the fall).

To obtain a free copy of *Birds of the Windy City*, call the Nature Chicago hotline at (312) 744-1821 or write to Nature Chicago, Chicago Department of Environment, 30 North LaSalle, 25th floor, Chicago, IL 60602.

www.ci.chi.il.us/environment/naturalresources/naturechicago.html



Barn swallows

1 ISOLATED WETLANDS NEED PROTECTION NOW

Forward and quick thinkers could help save some of the thousands of isolated wetlands in Chicago Wilderness that recently lost federal protection (CW, Spring 2001, p. 32). DuPage County has a unique ordinance already in place to protect these wetlands. Now, Lake and Kane County officials are working to strengthen their wetland ordinances. These officials understand how important wetlands are for flood and pollution control as well as habitat for wildlife.

A Supreme Court decision in January allowing an isolated wetland to be destroyed to create a landfill in Bartlett, Illinois, opened the door for many more isolated wetlands to be disturbed or destroyed. Lake County alone could lose protection of nearly 7,000 acres of wetlands. And while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies are still hammering out a workable definition for "isolated wetland," an estimated 30 to 60 percent of the nation's wetlands have lost protection because of the Supreme Court ruling.

"We've looked at all the best available information to determine to what extent

isolated wetlands make up the landscape, and we found that Lake County contains thousands of isolated wetlands," says Ward Miller, executive director of the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission. "Lake County may begin to see more flooding, poorer water quality, and decreased natural habitat if these are allowed to be filled in or further disturbed without some kind of mitigation."

Mitigation is one way to protect wetlands. Under the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the authority to deny or grant permits to owners of wetlands who wanted to fill them in. If the permit is granted, the owner has to recreate (mitigate) wetlands at least as large as those disturbed or pay for wetlands to be restored elsewhere.

Several years ago, the Army Corps denied a permit for the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) to create a garbage dump or baffle in Bartlett, where more than 100 great blue herons nest. SWANCC took its fight all the way to the Supreme Court and won.

"While the true significance of this ruling may not be known for some time in the Chicago Wilderness region, we do know that the destruction of our isolated wetlands will have devastating effects to our water resources and natural habitats," says Dennis Dreher of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Chicago Wilderness Smith Family Fellow.

Isolated wetlands can hold large quantities of water for a long time during wet seasons, which helps to control flooding. "Studies have shown isolated wetlands, even those relatively small in size, provide essential habitat for amphibians, birds, and migrating waterfowl," says Dreher. "They also are important in transforming damaging pollutants that run off the landscape, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, thereby minimizing their adverse impacts on downstream rivers and lakes." Dreher says people need to let their local government officials know how important wetlands are.

"If these wetlands are destroyed, their habitat, water quality, and flood protection benefits will be forever lost."

People in the Chicago Wilderness can protect, and, in fact, already are protecting some of these wetlands, he says. DuPage County already has an ordinance that fully regulates wetlands, including those that are isolated. "We wrote an ordinance to protect all wetlands of any size," says Bruce Maki, regulatory services administrator for DuPage County's stormwater management ordinance. The Army Corps agreed to allow DuPage County to assume jurisdiction over all the county's wetlands. Since the passage of the ordinance in 1992, anyone wanting to fill in a wetland of any size in DuPage County has had to mitigate at least 1 to 1. Part of that strong ordinance was driven by the massive flood damage the county has experienced due to rapid growth and development. DuPage County had already lost 80 percent of its wetlands by the time the ordinance was written, Maki notes.

Kane County and Lake County are working to amend their countywide ordinances to include these isolated wetlands. The Lake County Stormwater Management Commission has introduced an ordinance would give the Commission jurisdiction over the county's isolated wetlands. "We want to mimic how the Army Corps is already doing business," says Miller. Under this proposal, owners of isolated wetlands would submit requests for permits locally instead of federally. If permits are granted, the owners would have to mitigate. The majority of people who attended the first of several public hearings in Waukegan supported the amendment to the ordinance, said Rebecca Grill, chairman of the Highland Park Environmental Commission.

Illinois legislators are trying to gain support for legislation to protect wetlands across the state. Wisconsin legislators recently voted unanimously to restore protection to isolated wetlands, although they did not act in time to save 23 acres of wetlands filled for a new truck stop. The bill, which was passed after much debate and changes, gives local governments more authority regarding filling wetlands smaller than one acre, and it gives the state authority to enter private property to investigate possible violations. Charlie Luthin, executive director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, organized a coalition of over 70 groups that supported saving wetlands in Wisconsin that lost federal protection.

— Sheryl De Vore



2 NAVAL CENTER SANCTUARY

Last year, the Great Lakes Naval Training Center Environmental Department and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) identified remnants of a common tern nesting colony that had been preyed upon and abandoned. The state-endangered common tern had chosen to nest along an area adjacent to the tip of the center's north breakwater along the shore of Lake Michigan. Evidently, the birds had been disturbed by people and the nests had been ransacked by mammalian predators. Since these migratory birds require specific sandy habitats in which to nest, the Naval Training Center decided to provide them a safe space to do so.

This spring, the Navy and IDNR created a Protected Bird Sanctuary enclosed by a four-foot high, vinyl-coated, gardening fence and electric fencing. The space encompasses about two acres of transitional area that will someday be completely submerged when Lake Michigan waters are restored to their normal level from the current low level.

Donald Dann, an avid birder and concerned environmental leader, brought this site to the attention of Brad Semel, IDNR natural heritage biologist. Semel and Dann recognized that the only other site known to support nesting common terns had been abandoned earlier in the year due to repeated attacks by a pair of peregrine falcons that had established a nesting site nearby. "The Navy's willingness to protect this site is a significant step in protecting the state's only known nesting colony," said Semel.

3 WOLF LAKE VISION

Wolf Lake has long been the promise and concern of many conservationists in Indiana and Illinois. The 804-acre lake straddles state lines. The city of Hammond manages Indiana's side, with support from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources manages the half that lies within the Chicago city limits. On May 22, following a series of seven bi-state gatherings, the Association of Friends of Wolf Lake released a vision statement for the protection and enhancement of Wolf Lake.

Lake sturgeon, endangered in both Indiana and Illinois, and banded killifish, threatened in Illinois, both inhabit the waters of Wolf Lake. The lake and nearby wetlands provide nesting habitat for four species of endangered birds: little blue heron, yellow-crowned night heron, black-crowned night heron, and yellow-headed

4 SPRING BURN SEASON

Short and sweet. By most accounts, that's a good description of the spring 2001 burn season in Chicago Wilderness.

"We didn't have any real hot, intense fires this season," said Brad Woodson of the McHenry County Conservation District. "It just seemed like things were cooler and damper than normal."

Dave Perfect, of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, agreed. Kane County set a goal of 1,000 acres, but only ended up burning 625.

It wasn't just an unusually long-lasting winter that made it difficult to burn. For some agencies, red tape was the biggest obstacle.

"Because of changes in the Department of the Interior and the National Park [Service's] changes in fire procedure, we had to revise our burn plans," said Al Nash of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (IDNL). Nash explained that the IDNL's spring burn season is much earlier (late March to early May) than that of most national parks, so the changes in procedure affected the Indiana Dunes where they may not have affected other parks.

The Forest Preserve District of Will County had hoped to burn 667 acres, but with only half of their fully trained staff available, they ended up burning just 404.

Despite a short window of opportunity, most burn supervisors were pleased with the results of the burns that they were able to conduct.

"The only thing that was disappointing was that we didn't get more acreage," said Jeff Skibins of the Morton Arboretum. "What we burned was successful."

— Adam Wilson

Location	Sites	Acres	Observations
Cook County Forest Preserve District	12	168	"Two crews this year made it a lot easier, especially in sites where there was a lot of mop-up work to be done."
DuPage County Forest Preserve District	NA	1200	"Attempted 1500-1800 acres. It was a fairly good season. Not spectacular, but good."
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore	10	108	One burn served as a buffer for a wildfire a few days later, stopping it from reaching the town of Ogden Dunes.
Kane County Forest Preserve District	9	625	Still ice at some sites when they started. Goal was 1,000 acres.
Lake County Forest Preserves	13	704	Rain reduced opportunities in oak woodlands and savannas which were too green when they finally dried out.
McHenry County Conservation District	11	550	"We felt fortunate we got what we did get done."
Morton Arboretum	1	200	"The only thing that was disappointing was that we didn't get more acreage. What was burned was successful."
Nature Conservancy	3	80	"A burn in McHenry County still had snow on the ground in lower areas."
Will County Forest Preserve District	9	404	"It was like a compressed window - within the time frame conditions were good, though."

blackbird. The wetlands also shelter the threatened marsh speedwell and the endangered sedge, *Carex garberi*. Wetlands adjacent to the lake include the 250-acre Eggers Woods Forest Preserve, 175-acre Powderhorn Lake Prairie, and 40-acre Hyde Lake Wetland.

While these urban oases offer renewal and recreation to visitors, the ecosystems have been weakened by misuse and incompatible surrounding land use. At the 14th Annual Earth Day Wolf Lake Cleanup on April 21, more than 350 volunteers, including Hammond Mayor Duane

Dedelow, Jr., helped clean up and remove an estimated 18 tons of junk and trash. A week later, at another event sponsored by Friends of Wolf Lake, participants collected more than 3,000 discarded tires from the lake and its shoreline and turned them in for 50 cents each as part of the Chicago tire bounty program. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Illinois Water Survey are also studying ways to halt degradation of the lake and the USDA Forest Service is helping with a study of public interests in recreation at Wolf Lake.

"The vision statement gives the atten-

tion to Wolf Lake that it deserves,” said Mike Aniol, spokesperson for Friends of Wolf Lake. “With the vision in print, we can tackle the next step of implementing the vision elements through careful bi-state planning.”

For more information about the Association of Friends of Wolf Lake or to receive a copy of the Wolf Lake Vision Statement, contact Michael Boos at (773) 646-6373, melbows@aol.com.

— Alison Carney Brown

5 HIGHLAND PARK DEER CONTROL

This past winter, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources granted a permit to the city of Highland Park to cull 20 white-tailed deer. The city acted in response to two major concerns on the part of area residents. One involved deer eating private landscaping, causing automobile accidents, and potentially spreading Lyme disease. Equally great concerns were expressed about the ecological impact of extremely high deer populations. Opponents of the control plan initiated an ardent debate that led the City Council to restrict sharpshooters to 100-acre sites, a minimum of 300 feet from any residence. Only one site met these criteria, and eight deer were culled.

“We recognize the need to reduce the herd,” says Highland Park Councilman Pete Koukos. “We feel it is necessary to restore a balance that will enable songbirds and other creatures of nature ... to enjoy a healthy ecosystem.”

Highland Park’s ravine and forest habitats have been damaged by the over-population of deer. They have devoured trillium, meadow rue, Solomon’s seal, bellwort, marsh marigold, and trout lily, to name a few of their wildflower favorites. Some of these plant species will not recover in the seasons that follow, creating the opportunity for undesirable, aggressive species, such as garlic mustard, to invade and gain a permanent foothold.

The permit to cull deer expired on March 31 and the city council plans to review the program before next winter. Most nearby towns have effective control programs that keep deer numbers within reasonable limits. In each case these programs were accompanied by some level of controversy in their early years.

Donald Dann, a Highland Park resident and conservationist, was invited to participate in the council’s deer task force discussions. “I hope we will find a practical solution to this issue in a way that eases citizen concerns and protects the environment,” he said. “Residents need to be aware that

our ravine ecosystems are a very unique habitat. An overpopulation of deer affects the understory birds, invertebrates, and wildflowers that live in the ravines and woods – the entire food chain breaks down and fewer plants and animals can survive. We lose the natural beauty that makes Highland Park so special to us.”

— Michael Graff

6 LAKE COUNTY ACQUIRES TWO NEW FOREST PRESERVES

In April, the Lake County Forest Preserves Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of the Epstein property, located in Fremont Township, creating a new 391-acre forest preserve.

“The Epstein property is a critical link that connects neighboring 2,100-acre Lakewood and 403-acre Ray Lake Farm Forest Preserves, creating a nearly 3,000-acre greenway,” said Al Westerman, president of the Lake County Forest Preserves. “Large, contiguous land holdings along the greenway provide for better land management and wildlife protection, and expanded outdoor recreation opportunities.”

Currently agricultural fields, the Epstein property also features oak and hickory woodlands, nine wetlands containing high-quality sedge meadows, and two open-water ponds. The site’s wetlands serve as important bird habitat for the least bittern, black tern, yellow-headed blackbird, black-crowned night heron, sandhill crane, and the pied-billed grebe spotted on the site.

The site’s strategic location near the Broberg Marsh and its connection to other area wetland habitats helps create a large macro site complex that expands nesting, breeding and foraging areas for a variety of wetlands birds. In recent studies conducted by Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, Broberg Marsh and the surrounding wetlands were identified as one of the best wetland breeding bird areas in the Chicago region. Restoration of the site’s upland areas to native prairie also will provide excellent habitat for grassland and savanna wildlife.

In May, the Lake County Forest Preserve Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of 467 acres from Abbott Laboratories. The acquisition, located in Antioch and Newport Townships, includes 170 acres of century-old bur oak, white oak, shagbark hickory and black walnut trees, representing the largest unprotected oak-hickory woodlands remaining in Lake County.

The site’s strategic location next to the 281-acre Raven Glen Farm and 75-acre Timber Lake Forest Preserves (purchased

in August 2000) offers a direct linkage creating an 823-acre preserve. Scattered throughout the site’s oak-hickory woodlands are small, isolated forest ponds that hold water in the spring and early fall. These ponds, along with two wetlands bordering the high-quality Old Mill Creek stream corridor, and several creeks that flow into the site’s prominent 60-acre Rasmussen Lake, provide valuable wildlife habitat and food sources for a variety of birds, mammals and reptiles.

The new 467-acre forest preserve has been named Ethel’s Woods in honor of Ethel Untermeyer of Riverwoods, who led a successful referendum campaign in 1958 that formed the Lake County Forest Preserves. Ethel took action to fulfill the request of her three-year-old son, Frank, who wanted a place to play in the woods.

For more information or for a free preserve packet containing a map and guide of the Lake County Forest Preserves, and a set of trail maps, call (847) 367-6640. Visit <http://www.co.lake.il.us/forest/> to subscribe to the *Horizons* newsletter or to download the latest edition.

7 STUDIES FUNGI UNDER FIRE

In southwest Cook County, Field Museum scientists are studying a number of organisms in Swallow Cliff Woods – from birds to beetles – to determine how these organisms respond to restoration. A large unrestored area of Cap Sauers Holdings, a mile west, serves as the control plot. Gregory Mueller and Patrick Leacock, with the assistance of students and volunteers, are studying the area’s



mushrooms. Fungi are crucial members of the ecosystem and serve many roles including nutrient recycling (through decomposition) and aiding plant vigor via mycorrhizal partnerships.

At Swallow Cliff, Forest Preserve staff conducted spring burns in 1999 and 2000. Using temperature sensing pellets, Leacock and students found that as the fire consumed the litter layer (primarily oak leaves), the soil surface experienced tem-



peratures in excess of 115 to 250° F, rarely 390° F. However, only 3 cm (about an inch) below the surface, temperatures remained below 115° F, indicating that fungi and other soil organisms were not affected. Woody plant basal area measurements documented the noticeable reduction in shrub cover. Three years of baseline data prior to restoration and two subsequent years of sampling have revealed high fungal diversity of 250 species in four 0.1 hectare plots. Sampling in 1998-2000 turned up 10 to 30 additional species in the plots each year, so even after the fifth year the total diversity of fungi cannot be reliably estimated.

No negative impact of burning on fungi has been seen. But Mueller's team was especially on the lookout for pyrophilous (fire-loving) fungi. The one they found was unexpected. The many-colored pholiota (*Pholiota polychroa*), began to appear after the first burn and became common the second year on burned wood. Having seen this mushroom before in burned woodlands, Mueller and Leacock now think its fruiting is fire-induced, a new discovery for this species. They anticipate that reduced shrub cover and increased regeneration of oaks will promote greater diversity of fungi and other organisms as the woodland becomes more diverse in age structure. Restoration benefits not only native plants, but also the ecosystem's animals and fungi.

— Patrick Leacock

8 MIDEWIN MANAGEMENT PLAN

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie has a new official land use plan as of May 8. The USDA Forest Service has released the Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement containing six alternative habitat management and land use plans. After a 120-day public comment period, one of the alternatives will be selected as the basis for how Midewin is managed for the next 10-15 years.

During the 120-day public comment period, individuals and organizations are encouraged to write and tell the Forest Service which alternative they like best and specifically why they like it. The six alternatives vary in some of the specifics of habitat management and recreational use of the 16,000-acre grassland. All the alternatives center on habitat management for wildlife. How much of the territory, for instance, will be managed for birds of the upland prairie or for the creation of wetter prairie habitat?

To obtain a copy of the proposed Midewin land use plan and to learn

more about the process by which it was created, visit Midewin's Web site at www.fs.fed.us/mntp or contact Renee Thakali, Planning Team Leader, at rthakali@fs.fed.us or (815) 423-6370. Site tours and public workshops will be scheduled throughout the summer to provide opportunities to learn more about the proposed plan. One of several planned Chicago area workshops is scheduled on July 11, 2:00-6:00 p.m. at the Metcalfe Federal Building, Lake Michigan Room, 77 W. Jackson Boulevard in Chicago.

The Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club will post its recommendation for the Midewin plan at www.sierraclub.org/chapters/il.

— Douglas S. K. Chien

9 BURNING THE OAK WOODS

What a difference five years makes! Biologists at the Lake County Forest Preserves are finding it takes about five years for a degraded oak woodland to regain health. "Oak woodlands need fire as much as a prairie does," says Ken Klick, district restoration ecologist. But it takes longer for the oak woodlands to become their former selves compared with prairies, he says. "Fifty years of shading from buckthorn have wiped out the woodland seed bank. We've found after we begin restoration, there's a five-to-six year lag until we start to see results."

If a woodland is open, ground vegetation exists that can fuel the fire. But many of the region's oak woodlands have become choked with buckthorn and invasive natives such as ash and cherry. Workers clear invasives from the woods first, carefully herbicide the stumps, and then reintroduce seed and plants of grasses, sedges, asters, sunflowers, and other forbs.

District staff and volunteers began restoring Grant Woods five years ago. Once the grasses were established, they provided fuel for fire. Now wildflowers are blooming, too, providing nectar for insects, which, in turn, attracts birds. "The whole ecological chain is being re-established," says Klick.

At Old School Forest Preserve where workers began restoring a savanna-type woodland in 1997, "the difference is dramatic," says Klick. Now it's an open woodland with pockets of prairie and savanna grasses, wet depressions where blue flag iris bloom, and space between trees for savanna birds such as pewees to perch, then sally out to catch insects.

The Lake County Forest Preserves manages 6,000 acres of forest preserve land with fire, burning about 1,000 acres annually. More than half the fire-managed acreage includes oak woodlands and savan-

nas.

— Sheryl DeVore

10 CHICAGO WILDERNESS WELCOMES SEVEN NEW MEMBERS

On March 13, the Chicago Wilderness Council approved seven new members, bringing the total to 131. The mission of **Elmhurst Park District** is to protect and improve the natural environment through saving and increasing open space and through teaching, fostering, and practicing good stewardship. The **I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Civic Center Authority** is committed to the cultural, historic, recreational, and economic development of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. The mission of the **Lake County Parks & Recreation Department** is to create and responsibly manage a county-wide system of parks and open space resources and to provide recreational, cultural and educational programs based on these resources for the use and enjoyment of all Lake County, Indiana citizens. The mission of the **Naperville Park District** is to enrich the community's leisure experience in the cultural arts, recreation, and environment. The natural environments within the Naperville Park District are managed to be sustainable. Educational and interpretive programs encourage Naperville residents to be environmentally responsible and appreciate the natural environment.

The **University of Illinois at Chicago** is a comprehensive public university that owns and manages the James Woodworth Prairie in Glenview. There UIC seeks to maintain the populations of native species in an array of abundances that, as near as possible, preserves the evolutionary relationships the species would have had if the surrounding land had not been altered by the economic activities of humans.

The **Village of Deer Park** is committed to provide high quality services to its residents in a setting that provides open space amenities and the protection of natural areas. The **Village of Frankfort** is working towards preserving natural habitats that lie within the community through enforcing policies and ordinances that protect natural habitats and by managing them for biodiversity conservation.

11 FIRE PINK

The children of Indiana have spoken. But is anybody listening?

During the 2001 Indiana legislative session, several state lawmakers effectively quashed a bill that would have changed the state flower from the non-native peony to the native fire pink (*Silene virginica*).

Four years ago, more than 27,000 Indiana 4th-graders voted in a poll to change the state flower, and the overwhelming winner was the fire pink. The peony, which hails from China, has been



Fire pink

Photo: Ruth A. Smith/Root Resources

the state flower since 1957, but a campaign that began in the early 1990s seeks to change that.

The Indiana Academy of Sciences spoke to 55 experts from around the state, who devised a list of 13 plants – all natives – that would represent the state well. Fourth-grade students throughout Indiana then voted on the slate of 13, and fire pink won by a substantial margin of 2,000 votes. By coincidence, the 55 experts had also

selected the fire pink as their first choice, according to Bill McKnight of the Indiana Academy of Sciences, one of the people instrumental in starting the campaign in the early 1990s.

After the vote, the campaign's supporters had to find a legislator to sponsor a bill. State Senator Robert Jackman (R-Milroy) agreed to do it. "The kids have spoken," Jackman said. "They've chosen this flower over the peony, and they need to know that their voice will be heard by the legislature."

Despite his support – joined by others in the Indiana Senate and the House – the bill was not granted a hearing in the public policy committee, Jackman said. But the push for the fire pink is far from over. Sen. Jackman plans to meet with Carolyn Harstad of the Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society later this year to discuss strategies for the next legislative session.

— Adam Wilson

12 AQUATIC WELLNESS

The Lake County Health Department recently completed a study of 32 lakes to determine their overall ecological health and guide future management decisions. The study, part of the Lakes Management Initiative, included an analysis of plant

species by month and location, and looked at problems such as shoreline erosion and invasives.

The department was able to complete water quality surveys for only about 10 lakes a year prior to receiving \$125,000 in January from the Lake County Board and the Lake County Forest Preserves to fund the initiative. The additional staff and lab equipment has led to some exciting finds. At Cranberry Lake in Hainesville, for example, health department staff found two endangered plant species and one very rare species. "Until we start looking closely for these things, we don't even know they exist," said Mark Pfister, an aquatic biologist and coordinator of the Lakes Management Unit.

This is the first time all the lakes have been looked at by any agency in this way. According to the 2000 study, 66 percent of the lakes monitored are being used by threatened and endangered bird species. "Ospreys were seen fishing those lakes. Also, black-crowned night herons and double-crested cormorants," Pfister stated. "We certainly want to maintain the habitat for those species."

The study has also provided information that may minimize the impact of recreation.

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For example, Eurasian water milfoil, a non-native aquatic plant that forms mats, obstructs light, and displaces native plants and animals, was found in 44 percent of the lakes studied. However, this bad news is better than the health department feared! Now the department hopes protect the other 56 percent of the lakes by helping agency managers educate boaters who inadvertently transport the plant on trailers and boat propellers.

The level of analysis accomplished in the Health Department study can also help managers preserve a healthy site from the moment it is acquired. In 2000, the Lake County Forest Preserves purchased Timber Lake, a site identified in the study as a pristine glacial lake. The Health Department hopes to identify other high quality lakes and alert agencies or associations that might be interested in preserving them.

The department plans to study every body of water in Lake County by 2004. "The goals of the Lakes Management Initiative include improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, and minimizing exotics," Pfister stated. "After five years, we'll begin studying these lakes again to see how well we've achieved these goals."

— Alison Carney Brown

13 CARA NEW YEAR

In last year's 106th Congress, two bills were enacted as a result of efforts to pass the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) (CW, Fall '00, p. 36). Although there is provision for \$1,648,185 for wildlife conservation in Illinois this year, neither law addressed the main purpose of CARA – the need for adequate, long-term, guaranteed funding for states to use for wildlife conservation and recreation, coastal and marine conservation, state and local urban parks, and historic preservation.

CARA, as it has been introduced in the 107th Congress, includes provision for: \$1 billion Impact Assistance and Coastal Conservation; \$900 million Land and Water Conservation Fund Revitalization; \$350 million Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Fund; \$125 million Urban Park and Recreation Recovery; \$50 million Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery; and \$350 million Payment In Lieu of Taxes and Refuge Revenue Sharing.

Illinois Congressman Mark Kirk has signed on to be a cosponsor of this year's CARA legislation. Plaudits to Congressman Kirk. If the original CARA allocation for Illinois is approved by the 107th Congress (seven times the amount

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approved in 2000), funds will be available to study, restore, protect and manage natural area. For more information, visit <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/cara/>.

— Donald Dann

14 CALUMET NIGHT HERONS

Oh, the trials and tribulations of a heron rookery! The Calumet (southeast Chicago) black-crowned night heron nesting colony has had its ups and downs with highly changeable water levels in the marshes. Excessively high water levels flood out and eventually kill the emergent vegetation that the night herons nest in. Fortunately, the city of Chicago is now taking an active role in regulating water levels so that nesting black-crowns will flourish in the Calumet area.

Over the past two years, the Calumet night herons have nested exclusively at Indian Ridge Marsh, an area gradually being flooded out because of a blocked drainage culvert. With the high water, the

marsh vegetation receded, resulting in a 10-year low count of 559 adult night herons surveyed on a May 2000 census (compared with 808 adults in 1999, and 712 in 1998). In February 2001, the Chicago Department of Environment (in cooperation with various other agencies) came to the rescue, clearing out the blocked drainage culvert at Indian Ridge and then installing a permanent water level control mechanism a month later. Then, however, the water levels dropped too quickly. By late March, water levels at Indian Ridge were far too low to provide the cover night herons need to nest successfully.

The water drainage has since been stopped, and water levels have continued to rise from the spring rains. In the meantime, the Calumet night herons have opted to relocate to an alternate, adjacent wetland. A May 2001 survey revealed 706 adult black-crowns present – well up from the number last year. An important com-

ponent of night heron management is allowing for the availability of alternate nesting sites should the primary site be rendered unsuitable.

— Walter Marcisz

15 NEW ACADEMY FOR NATURE AND CULTURE

A new program is being developed nationally to provide college-level training for leaders of community-oriented conservation efforts. It has established its first regional center in Chicago and will begin offering courses in partnership with two Chicago-area universities in the upcoming academic year.

The aim of the program, called the New Academy for Nature and Culture, is to assist participants in the development of the skills they need to help others benefit from activities such as ecological restoration, habitat management, community gardening and community-supported agriculture, according to Director Bill Jordan III. Formerly editor of the journal *Ecological Restoration* and a founder of the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), Jordan recently left his position at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to devote full time to development of the New Academy.

“Chicago makes an ideal home for the first of several planned regional centers,” Jordan says, noting that this area has a long history of leadership in community-based conservation and a well-developed “conservation culture” that provides virtually unlimited resources for a program of this kind. Jordan says that collaborators are currently developing additional centers in Texas, Arizona, and California, and that the New Academy is also working in close partnership with SER.

“Restoration as an academic discipline becomes one-dimensional because it is shoehorned into an existing department,” comments John Rogner, Chair of Chicago Wilderness and supervisor of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office in Barrington. “Restoration as practiced by laypeople on weekends is rich in experience and social interaction, but often lacks the solid underpinnings of ecological science. In fact, much of the human experience can be captured through the art and science of restoration, and the New Academy will explore this richness.”

Chicago’s New Academy program will begin this fall, with courses in geography and environmental studies, philosophy, and English offered at the Master’s Degree level at Northeastern Illinois University.

A program leading to a Bachelor’s Degree from Loyola University is expected to begin in Spring 2002.

The program will offer work in the field with experienced practitioners supplemented by courses in the social sciences, humanities, business, and leadership, in addition to the natural sciences.

For further information contact Bill Jordan III at (773) 508-8992 or (847) 328-8389; Tom Simpson at Northeastern Illinois University, (773) 442-5642; or Alanah Fitch at Loyola University, (773) 508-8992.

16 PRAIRIES IN SPACE

A point and click of the mouse will transport land managers to prairie communities in and around Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie via Hyperspectral Remote Sensing (HSS). An interactive Web page at http://wetlands-initiative.org/wetlands_app/index.html allows visitors to evaluate the use of HSS for the analysis and monitoring of natural communities. The Web page is a cooperative project between The Wetlands Initiative, the Laboratory for Applications of Remote Sensing at Purdue University, and Hey and Associates, and is funded by Chicago Wilderness.

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HSS offers a synoptic, yet detailed, perspective of the plant community structure and development, especially for large-scale ecological restorations involving hundreds of thousands of acres.

17 COOK FPD RESTORATION FUNDS

This spring, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) received a number of grants through the Corporation for Open Lands (CorLands) to acquire and restore land. These CorLands funds come from a settlement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Material Services Corporation for violations of wetland laws. The Sag Valley project, near Lemont in southwest Cook County, got \$450,000 for the restoration of approximately 150 acres of natural communities including dolomite prairie, fen, savanna, and marsh.

The Sagawau Canyon Addition is a 10-acre acquisition of buffer land to Sagawau Canyon Nature Preserve. The District had previously received a 50 percent grant through the Illinois Department of Nature Resources amounting to \$300,000. The CorLands award will provide the District with much of the local match required for the estimated \$600,000 project. The preserve includes woodland, oak savanna, a restored prairie, streams, springs and the rare dolomite limestone cliffs, bluffs and small caves that make up the canyon.

The District has begun its Bartel Grassland project in partnership with the National Audubon Society. CorLands funding amounts to \$357,120 to add 200 acres of prime nesting habitat for prairie birds to the 100 existing acres. Many grassland birds require large, continuous, and tree-less tracts to be able to survive and reproduce successfully. To promote an optimal environment, hundreds of hedge row trees covering 15 acres will be removed from the Bartel Grassland interior. Experimental areas will be restored with native prairie plants specifically chosen for the grassland birds common to this area.

The District also received funds toward the restoration of the 930-acre Orland Tract. The tract was farmed for many years before being acquired in the early '70s and partially planted with trees. A \$400,000 grant will support two wetland enhancements including drain tile investigations, control of invasives, and seeding with native plants.

The Bergman Slough project, with \$500,000 from CorLands, undertakes to restore the hydrology and vegetation of 100 acres of former row crops. Plant com-

munities native to this 250-acre preserve in the Palos area are sedge meadow, wet and mesic prairie and savanna.

"We have tremendous natural wealth in Cook County, and we're grateful to CorLands for providing support to help conserve our irreplaceable native habitats," said Cathy Geraghty, the FPDCC's Director of Grant Development.

18 THE SCIENCE OF BEING NEIGHBORLY

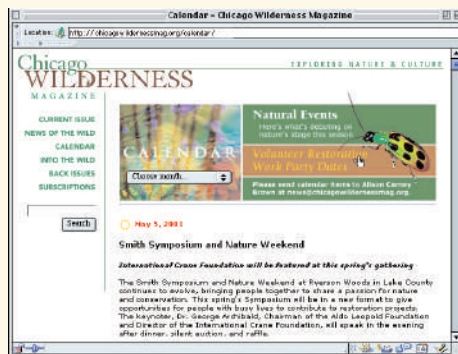
"What Does Ecology Have To Do With Me?" a brochure published by the Ecological Society of America (ESA), introduces the science of relationships between living organisms and their environment in a user-friendly format.

Another ESA brochure, "Ecological Principles for Managing Land Use," introduces key ecological principles and guidelines that are critical to sustaining the ecosystems on which we depend. In the ESA's continuing series of reports, "Issues

in Ecology," several major ecological issues are explored more fully, including references to current scientific findings and a list of titles for further information. Titles include "Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning: Maintaining Natural Life Support Processes;" "Human Alteration of the Global Nitrogen Cycle: Causes and Consequences;" and "Ecosystem Services: Benefits Supplied to Human Societies by Natural Ecosystems." This series is available on the Web at <http://esa.sdsc.edu/issues.htm>. Printed copies of the brochures and issues series are available for \$3.00 each from Subscriber Services, Ecological Society of America, 1707 H St., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20006.

For a full listing of events this summer, check out the Magazine's Web site: chicagowildernessmag.org

There's more Chicago Wilderness online!



Our Web calendar has all the important nature, conservation, and restoration events happening in the months ahead.

You'll also find tips on seasonal "Natural Events" to look for locally, and a link to the Illinois

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Invaders from Weedland



Ah! The beauty of wildflowers! Or are these weeds? To most people, the picture above is one of richness and beauty. An ecologist would agree. Yet the ecologist would see, technically speaking, weeds.

The white flowers with the yellow centers are ox-eye daisies – garden escapes from Europe that are among our commonest wildflowers. The yellow is moth mullein, and the brown-topped grass is meadow fescue. All three of these are alien weeds.

Ecologists define weeds somewhat differently than gardeners do. To the ecologist, a weed is a plant that heals disturbances. Something destroyed the original nature of the ecosystem here. Maybe a bulldozer, or a plow. There is healing in progress here. Beautiful healing.

Most weeds are wonderful plants. Some are native and some are alien. We hear a lot of talk these days about alien invasives. We'll get to them below. But most aliens are a valuable part of local ecosystems. An alien red clover can supply delicious nectar to the rare Aphrodite butterfly. More importantly, a turf of simple weeds – native or alien – is like a healthy scab that begins the healing of a wound. Weeds in nature go away gradually, once the disruption of the ecosystem has stopped.

Toward the bottom right in this photo, if your eyes are sharp, you may be able to pick out the leaves of a dandelion. These leaves have the recurved “lions teeth” that gave the plant its name (the “dande” is from dens/dental meaning teeth). As in your yard, if you stopped mowing and left nature alone, the dandelions would go away in time. They thrive on mowing or

trampling but can't compete in a rich prairie or forest.

If the recovering area shown here were in a prairie preserve, these weeds would be part of the healing process that would tend eventually toward complete recolonization by the ancient plants that the bison and elk ate. (The leaves of arrowhead, visible in the water, show that some of those ancient native plants are reasserting themselves already.) If this were part of a well-managed forest, the ecosystem that would win out would feature trees. Classic weeds can be a healing step toward either forest or prairie.



But disaster lurks. Notice the blue and pink flower. It's crown vetch, an invasive. Invasive plants and animals, whether native or alien, are one of the major threats to healthy nature. To be sure, crown vetch may seem to behave like a weed after an ecosystem is damaged. But it doesn't yield to the diversity that makes for healthy ecosystems; in fact it invades and degrades healthy ecosystems.

Crown vetch can spread across prairie and eliminate most of the richness of life there. Invasives in both prairie and forest include native trees and shrubs. It's not the alienness or nativity that makes the difference. It's whether the species is one of the “out of balance” or “aggressive” invasives that crowd out biodiversity and degrade the natural community.

Land managers are learning to control invasives in field and forest. With invasives in check, we can once again appreciate the beauty of simple weeds.

*Weed photo by Walt Anderson/Root Resources.
Butterfly by Jan Kanter. Words by Stephen Packard.*

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Palos-Orland Conservation Committee
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How a feisty and pro-family blackbird changed the spirit of Navy Pier. See page 4. Bird by Art Morris/BIRDS AS ART.

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