Chicago WILDERNESS
FALL 2004

Phantom Savanna
A Milk Bottle's Tale
Growing Green Kids
Mighty Mites
What is ChicagoWilderness?

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

Chicago Wilderness is an unprecedented alliance of 178 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. chicagowildernessmag.org

For a complete list of Chicago Wilderness members, please visit the Web site at chicagowilderness.org.
A Place in the World

Last week I heard someone mourning the loss of a tree. On her daily walk through the neighborhood, she had suddenly noticed the absence of shade. A brightness shocked her in the place where cool had previously reigned. The grand old elm, estimated to be 260 years old, more than seven stories tall, and nearly five feet across, was likely the oldest and largest on Chicago’s North Shore. My acquaintance spoke of her dismay, her feelings of loss.

Why do we care? That is the question. It’s a question asked with new urgency by people such as Dr. Carol Saunders at Brookfield Zoo, who is helping to establish the discipline of conservation psychology. Children innately seem to care about animals, for instance. Perhaps there is an inchoate recognition of kinship with the creatures of the earth that seems to recede as culture over-takes nature in our experience. But can we verify our hunches? And why do we care whether majestic trees live or die? Is it only due to our consummate self-interest—in the shade, the fuel, or the food they provide? Or is there a deeply human capacity to love and take care of creatures other than ourselves? If so, is that a capacity that we might cultivate? Dave Aftandilian takes a look at questions being asked and answered in his article on conservation psychology (page 12).

When that great elm took root, Native Americans roamed these lands. They were hunters and gatherers, thanking nature for its abundance, shaping the land through fires and, later, crops. Our wild lands were lands with people, touched by them and permeating their culture. Today, some large tracts remain for us to roam across the landscape—Middlefork Savanna, Glacial Park, and Rollins Savanna, to name but three profiled in this issue.

For Native Americans, rituals accompanied the cycles of life and death, a way to mark loss and give thanks. “The Lifeboat, the Milk Bottle, and the Middle Passage” (page 7) recounts the harmonic convergence of people restoring the land—a modern ritual of making amends and giving thanks—and reconnecting with a buried cultural past. Joan Monnig and her son Marlow, pulling garlic mustard at Harms Woods in the photo at left, are part of that story of restoration and reconnection. Exploring nature and culture—that’s Chicago Wilderness.

Now that we live in cities and suburbs, our connection with the land and with creatures other than fellow humans has become more tenuous. Forces seek to estrange us from our roots in nature. We cherish the single tree, not seeing it as part of a former or current ecosystem, not quite seeing it as interdependent with us. Conservation psychology is helping us rediscover our place in the world and our right relationship with the land. We’re not aliens on this planet. Immigrants, Native Americans, and Nature—they make up the united states of America. We have a shared past here. We belong here. And we care.
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Photo by Sam Rowell.

Opposite: A rainy day brings out the vibrant
colors of a black oak savanna in Indiana Dunes
National Lakeshore. Photo by Mike MacDonald/
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GOING NATIVE ALONG THE CORRIDORS
Dear Editor,
First, let me compliment you on a fine magazine—I think the new look is a definite improvement....Have any of the members of Chicago Wilderness approached Commonwealth Edison about restoring native vegetation in their electric transmission rights of way?
These rights of way are extensive, and some, such as the transmission lines along I-355, provide natural connections between existing parcels of our Chicago wilderness. A number of other electric utilities, such as Alabama Power, have done this to the benefit of the company, local communities, and native wildlife.

Frank Ehrhardt
Glen Ellyn, IL

Editors' Note: See this issue's News (pages 34 and 36) to read how utilities and conservationists are collaborating.

MILES OF TILES
Dear Editor,
I really enjoyed Alison Carney Brown's excellent article on drainage tiles in our area (“Miles of Tiles,” Spring '04). As a landscape historian who specializes in the naturalistic designed landscapes of O.C. Simonds, Jens Jensen, and others, I am familiar with the extensive draining of city land to create parks and cemeteries, and was aware that this was common practice on farms. I also ponder the effect of John Deere's steel scouring plough on our prairies. But I had no idea just how much farmland drainage had occurred, or that Illinois had had more than eight million acres of wetlands before drain tiles!
Thanks for a great piece and a wonderful publication.

Barbara Geiger
Wilmette, IL

ECOLOGY UP ON THE ROOF
Dear Editor,
It was salient to feature Chicago's City Hall's Rooftop Garden, which is thriving with plants, flowers, insects, birds and an array of myriad wildlife species (“Birds on a Cool Green Roof,” Summer '04). This monumental endeavor by Chicago's Mayor Daley exemplifies his greatest attribute, specifically, environmental restoration....Daley has transformed long-standing areas of urban blight into nature havens capable of flourishing, if not destroyed by vandals. His most overlooked achievement has been a seminal and proactive ideology to foster ecological stewardship.

Brian Comerford
Glenview, IL

CORRECTION
In our Summer '04 article “Restoring the Butterfly Tapestry”, we incorrectly identified a Harris' checkerspot as a silver-bordered fritillary. CW regrets the error.

INTEGRATED LAKES MANAGEMENT 847-244-6662

Head Out to Tryon Farm!
The farm is 170 acres of restored prairie, dunes, meadows and woods, one hour from Chicago in LaPorte County, Indiana. The houses are clustered in settlements so that 120 acres will be left open to be enjoyed by birds and critters and human creatures who live there.
The houses are simple and handsome with long views, fireplaces, screened porches and enclosed private courtyards. Enthusiastically described in a recent New York Times article, Tryon Farm is near Lake Michigan beaches, harbors and Dunes National Lakeshore.
Tryon is sustainable, accessible, comfortable, and affordable.

Come on the South Shore railroad and we'll meet your train.

OPEN HOUSE SUNDAYS 1-4 PM
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The Phantom Savanna

Nature returns to the Middlefork, home of a rare remnant savanna.

By Don Parker

The land talks quietly at first. It doesn't advertise, though the long views across the valley are magnificent. But stand still. A muskrat will plop into the water behind you. An egret will push into the air and glide behind a screen of thick, gnarled oaks. Then, a bluebird. A green heron. A dragonfly. A turtle. The longer you stay, the more happens and the louder it gets.

About 20 years ago, at the edge of an open farm field in Lake Forest, Illinois, along the channelized Middle Fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River, ecologists discovered the last high-quality tallgrass savanna in the region. It covered only about 30 acres, but it quickly became a magnet for conservationists, who began to pull together resources and organizations to purchase the surrounding land. By 2000, fueled with funds from public referenda and backed by a broad partnership, the Lake County Forest Preserves had protected Middlefork Savanna, a 576-acre fragment of rare ecosystems amid the fast-growing communities of southeastern Lake County. Lake Forest Open Lands Association acquired additional land, bringing the total protected to around 700 acres.
Almost a century ago, famed landscape architect Jens Jensen visited this area and photographed the thriving wetlands and savannas he saw.

Today, Forest Preserve crews and volunteers are restoring the land, rehydrating drained farm fields, planting native plants, cutting invasive brush, and doing controlled burns to maintain the naturally open and varied ecosystem that Jensen observed.

Counterclockwise from upper left: Jensen's shot of Middlefork before it was Middlefork. More than 100 volunteers from Abbott Labs soaked their feet in 2001 to plant a wetland. Burn crews apply life-giving fire to a section of prairie. An old oak stretches out over the open understory just two months after a burn. A storm brews.

Photos: Jens Jensen (upper left), Will Fletcher (left), Carol Freeman (lower left and photos in montage below), Don Balak (upper right).
Conservationists spoke excitedly of this “phantom ecosystem.” A decade before its discovery, no one had even believed that oak savannas existed. There was prairie and there was woodland, but the open woods between them was considered merely a melding of the two, not a unique ecosystem of its own. Yet here in Middlefork lived plants that were nearly absent in prairies and woods. Ecologists suddenly had a real-life, landscape-scale blueprint of how diverse this ecosystem could be.

To date, more than 300 plant species have been identified at the site. “The savanna almost defies definition in that it is both wet and dry, both sunny and shaded,” says Nick Huber, restoration ecologist for Lake County Forest Preserves.

The fire-dependent savanna owes much of its existence to the railroad. “Middlefork was so remote that every summer, trains belching cinder would set fire to it,” says Steve Christy of the Lake Forest Open Lands Association. The area was well contained by wetlands, “so mostly they just let it burn.”

In 1998, Forest Preserve crews began to remove invasive vegetation, and in 2000, they took out miles of drain tiles. “It was extremely rewarding to observe plants, fish, frogs, and
Clockwise from above: Restored wetlands and prairie blend into savanna and oak woods. The green heron lives in the marsh but nests in trees. Blue-winged teal feed in the marsh but nest well out in the prairie—to avoid the predators that frequent wetland edges. Great-spangled fritillary butterflies are powered by the nectar of abundant savanna flowers.


birds immediately inhabiting the hydrologically restored wetlands,” says Huber. Biologists have recorded shorebirds in the marshes, warblers in the savanna, even bald eagles. Extensive surveys also have reported yellow lady slippers, scarlet painted cups, and rare walking sticks and butterflies.

Since 2000, nearly 300 volunteers from surrounding communities have gravitated to this place. “We put in 137,000 wetland plants out here the first summer,” says Denis Bohm, site steward. “We had a lot of public support and a lot of help from volunteers to do that: people from Abbott Labs, high school groups, and Cub Scout packs. A lot of people got muddy.”

The hikers, bikers, and joggers that use Middlefork’s 3.5-mile trail system may never fully appreciate the work that has gone into this place. But stewards restoring savannas across Chicago Wilderness, not to mention the savanna creatures they’re bringing back, owe a debt of gratitude to Middlefork Savanna—simply for surviving.

Visitors can enter the savanna from the east entrance at Elawa Farm. For directions, trail maps, and volunteer opportunities, visit chicagowildernessmag.org/issues/fall2004/middlefork.html.
Growing Green Kids

Psychologists are working to understand why people care about nature. One theory focuses on childhood.

By Dave Aftandilian

CHANCES ARE, if you’re reading this magazine, you care about nature. But why do you care? And when did you start?

For Dr. Carol Saunders, director of communications research and conservation psychology at Brookfield Zoo, caring about nature began during childhood. Growing up in the Northeast, she spent hours alone in her backyard, watching just about any animal she could find. Soon she was bringing some of those animals indoors as temporary pets. Her parents not only put up with lizards running around the house and snakes lounging in terrariums, they also took her to many camping trips, both as a family and with the Girl Scout troop her mom led. When Saunders grew up, she continued her lifelong interest in studying animal behavior, first earning a master’s degree in psychology from the University of Virginia and then a doctorate in behavioral biology from Cornell University.

Looking for a job where she could make a difference, Saunders landed at Brookfield Zoo. She started off as an educational specialist, helping visitors better understand the primates in the rainforest exhibit and care about protecting them in the wild. But as she stayed at the zoo longer, she realized that to create more effective conservation messages required a better understanding of what inspires people to care about the natural world and then act to protect it. That led her to start combing the psychological literature and attending academic conferences, looking for people who had researched how caring for nature develops and ways to encourage pro-environmental behaviors. Saunders discovered that over the past decade a growing number of researchers in psychology and other social sciences have been conducting studies more directly oriented toward the goal of environmental sustainability. Conservation biologists, too, have long realized the need to bring social scientists on board to work on the human side of conservation (simply put, we can’t conserve animals and plants without understanding and working with people). But most people doing this research, Saunders found, were scattered across the country and even around the world, often working in different disciplines with no centralized community for sharing research findings.

To solve that problem, Saunders, along with Gene Myers of Western Washington University and other colleagues, started
Brookfield Zoo’s Carol Saunders believes that connecting kids to nature will help them develop a sense of caring and responsibility for it as adults.

rallying these widely scattered researchers around the banner of conservation psychology. “We’re trying to study in a scientific way the reciprocal relationships between humans and the rest of nature,” Saunders says, “with the end goal to encourage people to care about and take care of the natural world.”

Brookfield Zoo hosted the first national conservation psychology conference in May 2002, bringing together not just researchers but also practitioners, such as environmental educators and communications specialists. Saunders sees this approach as key: “Practitioners, the people on the ground, know the critical questions we need to be asking,” she says.

For instance, how can we foster caring about nature in children? How can we better communicate with political leaders and the public about the importance of conservation? How can we help city dwellers connect with nature? “We need to link them up with researchers interested in doing applied work that improves conservation efforts. This winning combination will help researchers advance the field of conservation psychology and help practitioners have a more strategic impact on their publics.”

At the conference, researchers and practitioners discussed four key areas of future research for conservation psychology: connections to animals, connections to place, encouraging environmentally friendly behavior, and relations between values and the environment. For each topic, researchers drew from previous research and suggested new approaches to pursue. For instance, since 1980, a number of studies have investigated which life experiences have motivated people to act to protect the environment, and at what point in their lives people had these experiences. Researchers have found that people in the United States and Europe consistently point to the same kinds of life experiences, mainly in childhood, as profoundly influencing their later environmental interests and activism.

In one such study, Louise Chawla of Kentucky State University and her colleagues interviewed more than 50 adult men and women who were all committed to protecting the environment. She asked them what experiences had inspired them to care about the environment, and at what times in their lives those experiences occurred. More than three-fourths of the environmentalists Chawla interviewed identified “the experience of natural areas and the influence of family members who directed attention to the value of the environment” as the main reasons they cared about nature.

She also identified several other contributing factors, such as positive experiences with environmental organizations and environmental education, and negative experiences of environmental destruction. Some factors were more influential during childhood, while others were more important as people aged. Additional comparative research is needed to determine the degree to which people’s attitudes about nature come from
The Play Zoo allows kids to see wild animals up close—such as this cecropia moth, above. They can even dress up like the animals and build a human-sized bird nest.

experiences versus a pre-existing affinity for nature; relatedly, researchers plan to explore how people with different starting interests interpret nature experiences differently.

If future studies confirm initial findings, it may turn out that one of the best ways to convince the adults of 20 years from now to preserve natural areas and species is to give them positive nature experiences with adult mentors now, when they are kids. This idea particularly excited staff at the Brookfield Zoo, which has had a longstanding interest in conservation psychology, in part due to the advocacy of its former director, Dr. George Rabb. Like other zoos and aquariums, Brookfield seeks to encourage the development of a conservation ethic among its visitors. To do this, Rabb suggested that Brookfield focus on the concept of caring.

To put its caring-based approach into practice, Brookfield created a new exhibit space: the Hamill Family Play Zoo and Gardens, which opened in June 2001. The Play Zoo is a pioneering attempt to put key research findings from conservation psychology and environmental education into practice in the real world. The mission of the Play Zoo is "to help children and their families develop caring attitudes toward the natural world." Its approach is simple: "give children positive nature experiences now to better ensure they will grow to be good caretakers of the environment later."

At the Play Zoo, kids can pet and groom animals, build nests and other habitats, dress up as bugs, plant gardens, paint murals and banners for exhibits, and even act as zoo director or vet. The exhibit is in part a response to an increasingly urbanized and technologically oriented world, where children have fewer and fewer opportunities to have such experiences. The Play Zoo gives children a safe space to play with their parents in a natural context. Specially trained adult Play Partners from Brookfield enhance the experience, serving as models for how parents can encourage their children to enjoy playing in nature.

Many other aspects of conservation psychology research also informed the development of the Play Zoo. Research has suggested, for example, that to develop caring for nature, children need to have the chance to practice caring behaviors. So the Play Zoo gives them ample opportunities to do so, whether by grooming a dog or misting a garden plant. Researchers have also found that children learn caring from watching others practice it. In the Play Zoo, kids get a behind-the-scenes look at zoo staff feeding and caring for animals.

Like any exhibit, especially new ones, the Play Zoo has to be evaluated to see how well it is succeeding in its mission. This is challenging, as Saunders says, "How can we tell, objectively, if kids are having a caring moment?" One way that researchers try to do this is to observe children interacting with the exhibits, and then score them on a variety of scales. How much are they internalizing what it feels like to be a turtle? How are they practicing the opportunities to care for animals and plants in the exhibit? Do they touch animals gently or roughly? Even if researchers can verify that certain activities
engage or influence a child at one moment, they will need to conduct studies over a period of years to measure long-term effects on attitudes and actions. Depending on the results, Play Zoo exhibits will be refined over time.

Much of the conservation psychology research that informed the development of the Hamill Family Play Zoo at Brookfield can be applied elsewhere in Chicago Wilderness. For instance, a number of researchers have found that actually doing something in a specific place, such as a forest preserve, is a great way to establish a connection with it, and to encourage more environmentally friendly behaviors overall. "Restoration activities are ideal," says Saunders, "because they allow people to experience a form of reciprocity with a place: humans do something to help nature, and nature responds with restored beauty."

A recent study by Jerry J. Vaske and Katherine C. Kobrin of Colorado State University also suggests that repeated visits to a place to carry out an environmentally friendly behavior, such as restoration, can not only lead people to form a strong emotional attachment to that particular place, but can also influence them to treat the overall environment better. Vaske and Kobrin surveyed nearly 200 young people (14 to 17 years old) just after they had finished a five- to seven-week natural-resource-based work program (e.g., maintaining trails in a local park). Based on the youths' answers to the survey questions, the researchers found that doing "specific environmentally responsible behaviors in a natural resource setting (i.e., participating in the youth work program) encourages environmentally responsible behaviors in everyday life (e.g., talking with friends about environmental issues, water conservation)."

Conservation psychology can also help Chicago Wilderness with one of the most difficult tasks of all: evaluating whether the programs we create to nurture caring and encourage pro-environment behaviors are achieving what we hope they will achieve.

One step, Saunders suggests, would be to conceive a set of social indicators, along the lines of the biological indicators that are being developed to measure the ecological health of Chicago Wilderness. "Sense-of-place scales" developed by psychologists could be used to monitor the connections people feel with their communities; people could also be surveyed before and after participation in a particular program to see how successful it was at increasing their regional pride and awareness of local biodiversity.

Saunders says we will also need qualitative measures, not just quantitative ones; listening to people's personal narratives and stories could serve as one such measure.

"Conservation psychology can help us know what to measure and how to develop programs that are more likely to succeed at their ultimate goal," Saunders notes, "...helping people develop more sustainable relationships with the rest of nature."

To read more about the new field of conservation psychology, visit humanecoloeryreview.org/102.htm.
Each autumn, Chicago Wilderness transforms itself into a swirling landscape of scarlet, orange, gold, and purple. Join Into the Wild as we try to throw our arms around the hefty hues of the Midwest.

Compiled by Lauren Murrow and Don Parker

Into the Wild: Loving Autumn Leaves

The Chicago Wilderness Autumn

The fall leaf colors of our region reflect Midwestern sensibilities. The native trees and shrubs don't mess around with the lighter hues of the Northeast; they go straight to bold crimson and brawny browns and golds. The landscape seduces with rattling bronze oak leaves, the dark chocolate of the crisping prairie dock, and waving golden grasses. But everywhere, there are dashes of unexpected brightness: a sumac, a maple grove, the multi-colored leaves of goldenrods.

Appreciating Fall
How many autumns have passed by in a rush of obligations, when the leaves came down before you had a chance to notice? Fall is something worth setting time aside for.

Journal
Write about the changes of fall. Imagine that you have never seen a tree change colors. What's happening? Which trees change when? What happens to the leaves once they're on the ground? How do the leaves smell, sound, feel?

Head into the Preserves
While it's great to know the trees on your street, try a hike in your local forest preserve. Not only will you get a greater variety of tree color, but the display will be mixed with the colors and textures of grasses, fall wildflowers, shrubs—even migrating birds.

Art
Painting, drawing, and photography can help you see things you might not otherwise notice: the unique carpet of leaves under each tree, the full range of color in the woods, the veins on a single leaf.

Leaf Hikes
Take a long walk at least once a week so you can see the slow-motion fireworks unfold. Join a group leaf hike (see below) to learn what kind of tree you're looking at. You might even be able to determine its health and its place in the ecosystem by the leaves it drops.

Local Group Hikes
Here are a few groups that are leading "leaf hikes" this fall:
- October 16: "Legends of the Fall" at The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois. To register, call (630) 719-2468.

Contributors: Scott Wenthe, Nancy Clifton (Chicago Botanic Garden)

Turning Leaf:
Will It Be a Good Year for Reds?
A few key ingredients for a robust leaf season:
- A warm, wet spring followed by a mild summer.
- A bright, sunny fall with plenty of cool (but not freezing) nights. (Lots of cloudy fall days often mean rustier reds and more tarnished golds.)

Why the Leaves Leave
When the days get shorter, a layer of cells at the base of a leaf's stem becomes cork-like, cutting off the leaf's supply of green chlorophyll and exposing yellow and red pigments. Eventually, the leaf breaks off at this cork wall.

Field Guides for Fall Leaves
- Great Lakes Trees & Wildflowers by James Kavanagh.
- National Audubon Society Field Guide to Trees by Elbert Luther Little.
Into the Wild: McHenry County

Glacial Park

**At a Glance**

**THE SCENE** Delta kames, glacial moraines, tallgrass savannas, kettles, meadows, and the meandering Nippersink Creek

**HIGHLIGHTS** Hikes along tall morainal ridges with long views. Paddling and fishing in a grade-A stream. Prime fall birding

**STATE** 3,125 acres (roughly 400 acres of nature preserve). 6.7 miles of hiking trails

**BEHIND THE SCENES** Fifteen years ago, before restoration, there were only 30 acres of wetlands and 3 acres of prairie in the park. The rest was agricultural land.

**GETTING THERE** Take Route 31 to the city of McHenry. Turn west onto Harts Road and follow it a half-mile to the park.

**“BIOLOGICAL EYE CANDY!”** That's what Ed Collins of the McHenry County Conservation District calls Glacial Park Conservation Area in Ringwood, Illinois, with its unusual topography, stunning vastness, and variety of plants and grassland birds.

Glaciers scoured holes and deposited hills to create this rolling landscape of prairie, wetlands, delta kames, kettles, and the meandering Nippersink Creek, resulting in one of the most outstanding examples of knob and basin topography in northern Illinois.

Four hundred acres of state-designated nature preserve form the central core of the 3,125-acre Glacial Park. In recent years, the district has protected additional acres of wetland and prairie in the south and west of the park and more of the Nippersink corridor on the east.

The prairie grass turns a burgundy wine color in fall and mixes with the yellows, golds, and reds of the surrounding oak and hickory trees. New England aster, cream gentian, and saw-toothed and prairie sunflowers further accent the scene. Banded, corn, and Edwards’ hairstreak butterflies thrive in the southern half of Glacial Park, and common wood nymphs, Delaware skippers, and pearl crescent butterflies flit through much of the prairie.

The restored marshes throughout the park attract a wide array of waterfowl, including ducks, geese, shorebirds, and even whooping cranes. “In the fall, it’s not unusual at sunset to see tens of thousands of migrating birds,” says Collins. Wild turkeys, short-eared owls, and northern harriers live at the park year-round.

Glacial Park offers nearly seven miles of hiking trails that wind past many of the park’s pronounced glacial features. Visitors can also cruise the Prairie Trail bike path around the outer edge, as well as horseback riding and snowmobile trails. Canoeing, kayaking, and fishing are popular in Nippersink Creek, with a put-in at the Keystone Road Landing at the southwest edge of the park. Tip A Canoe LLC rentals, (262) 537-3227, provides boat drop-off and pick-up.

This summer, the district completed restoration of the Lawson Creek area. From the bike path north of Harts Road, gaze over this 80-acre oak savanna, with shrubs including American hazelnut, prairie willow, and New Jersey tea, as well as bottlebrush grass and silky wild rye. Collins calls the spot “a masterpiece that’s been uncovered.”

On October 16 and 17, the district will hold its Trail of History festival, where nearly 400 people in period costumes will set up camp in Glacial Park Valley, giving visitors a flavor for life here in the 18th and 19th centuries. Glacial Park also will host a special Weekend Restoration Retreat from November 12 to 14 (see ad on page 34).

Groups wishing to do some camping of their own can call (815) 338-6223 to reserve the site beside Nippersink Creek (accessable by canoe).

Glacial Park is open from 8 a.m. until sunset. Visitors may enter the park before 8 a.m. but must park in the lot on Harts Road. For additional information, call (815) 338-6223.

— Terry Stephan
**Into the Wild: Lake County, IN**

**Ivanhoe Dune and Swale**

**LIGHT INDUSTRY AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

dominate this part of northwest Indiana, and the drone of Interstate traffic fills the air. Yet here, in a working-class residential neighborhood on the west side of Gary, lies one of the largest remaining parcels of the globally rare “dune and swale” landscape.

Ivanhoe Dune and Swale, a 131-acre state nature preserve, is owned and managed by the Indiana chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Much of Ivanhoe was originally surveyed for single-family housing, but TNC began acquiring individual lots at tax sales and through donation in the early 1980s. Once common along the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan, the dune and swale landscape has been reduced to a few remnants, many of them in Lake County, Indiana, where they have miraculously survived the onslaught of heavy industry and urban growth.

Throughout most of the preserve, a series of sandy ridges (dunes) alternates with long narrow wetland depressions (swales), all running parallel to the Lake Michigan shoreline. They formed over the past 5,000 years as the waters of this great lake receded in stages, each time leaving a sandy beach behind. The ridges and swales at Ivanhoe are subtle and not always obvious to the casual observer, especially when vegetation is high. Visitors are more likely to see a gently rolling landscape than a clearly defined “corduroy” pattern.

Though human visitors may not notice the dunes and swales, the plants certainly do. “The landscape supports many different natural communities,” says Paul Labus, director of TNC’s Southern Lake Michigan Rim Project, listing sand prairie, black oak savanna, sedge meadow, wet prairie, and buttonbush swamp. With so many ecosystems beside each other, visitors can find plants and animals not normally seen in such close proximity. Botanists have identified more than 270 species of native plants at Ivanhoe. According to the Indiana Natural Heritage Program, the dune and swale preserves of Lake County sustain the highest concentration of threatened and endangered plant and animal species found anywhere in Indiana.

**Fall is particularly appealing time to visit Ivanhoe. The prairie wildflowers are at their finest in September. Look for rough blazing star, great blue lobelia, sky-blue aster, and showy goldenrod blooming amid the tall prairie grasses. Closer to the ground, visitors may find delicate, purple fringed gentians, as well as white ladies’ tresses orchids. The abundance of wildflowers attracts 50 resident butterfly species in impressive numbers. Among them are the Karner blue butterfly, a federally endangered species (see CW, Fall '04 to read about its reintroduction), and the columbine duskywing, which is known nowhere else in Indiana. Ivanhoe is also a great place to view migratory birds as they seek temporary refuge each autumn after their long journey down the shorelines of Lake Michigan.**

Ivanhoe Dune and Swale is open to the public for walking and nature study. Call The Nature Conservancy at (219) 473-4312 for more information or to help restore habitat at the preserve, or visit nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/indiana/work/art6157.html.

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**At a Glance**

**THE SCENE**

Alternating sand ridges and depressions foster close-knit savanna, prairie, and wetland

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Prairie grasses, gentians, and orchids; a great variety of butterflies; fall birding

**STATE**

131 acres, 270 native plants, short interpretive trail

**BEHIND THE SCENES**

Ongoing project is restoring endangered Karner blue butterflies

**GETTING THERE**

From I-94/80 in Indiana, exit at Clive Avenue (Rd 912) north. Go north 2 miles to U.S. 20 (5th Ave). Head east/right about 1 mile to Hamlin St. Turn north/left and go 1 block to 4th Ave. Turn left and park on either side of the road. Sign marks entrance.
Into the Wild: Weekend Explorer

Morton Arboretum by Thomas Bentley

Birds and people flock to The Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois, in all seasons — for berries, beauty, and the bright array of colors, especially in spring and fall.

Fourteen miles of hiking trails and nine miles of paved roads meander past lakes, over hills, and through serene, park-like fields and woods. The arboretum's 1,700 acres harbor world-renowned tree and shrub collections from 59 countries, arranged primarily by region (the Appalachia or Korea Collections, for example) and tree family (local and non-local species of maple, linden, and pine, among many others). Joy Morton, founder of the Morton Salt Company and son of the founder of Arbor Day, established the arboretum in 1922 to promote conservation and understanding of the world's trees and plants.

Though much of its land is occupied by manicured landscaping and species collected globally, the arboretum also devotes considerable space to local plants. Indeed, it has made significant contributions to the science and art of restoring native landscapes. In 1962, Ray Schulten-berg accepted the challenge of creating a prairie ecosystem in a newly acquired parcel of land. The project started small — with a single acre in the southwest corner of the arboretum — but has now grown to 100 acres. His "prairie planting" includes a tallgrass mesic prairie, wet prairie, oak savanna, and Willoway Brook, a restored prairie stream.

On this proving ground, Schultenberg learned that one can't simply seed an area and pray for a prairie; instead, one must invest countless hours in seed harvesting, weeding, growing and propagating of plants, as well as continuously studying the individual species. Schultenberg's dream continues to flourish thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers. (To volunteer, call (630) 719-2443.)

The new Schultenberg Prairie Visitor Station provides historical background on the prairies and settlers of Illinois, as well as access to the prairie via the Acre Trail. Visitors can also follow the Prairie Trail from Parking Area 25 into the heart of the grassland. In the fall, big and little bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass, and cord grass can grow more than six feet tall, making the prairie trails feel like a maze. Interspersed among the grasses, attentive visitors may find four species of gentians and the yellow splash of many goldenrods. And don't forget to look for the vibrant asters: smooth, sky blue, heath, New England, and silky.

Along Main Trail Loop 1, the Midwest Collection features 100 acres of regional flora. One highlight is the Northern Illinois Collection, with many oak and hickory species. Beginning in the 1970s, arboretum staff collected seeds from the surrounding counties, then germinated and planted them. Many trees bear ID tags, so visitors can hone (or begin developing) their tree ID skills.

Spring may be the most vibrant time in the East Woods, when ephemeral flowers carpet the forest floor. Fall, however, reveals a colorful show of changing leaves in this mesic, mature woodland dominated by black, bur, red, and white oaks.

Just east of Meadow Lake, the Rare Plant Collection re-creates rare dolomite and gravel prairie ecosystems, part of the arboretum's research on endangered and threatened plant species. The collection includes lakeside daisy, leafy prairie cloak, kitten tails, eared false foxglove, Cooper's milk vetch, and early fern sedge, all native plants that most people are unlikely to see elsewhere.

Overlooking the restored Meadow Lake near the arboretum's entrance, a new state-of-the-art visitor center features an environmentally friendly parking area with "bioswales" that collect and clean runoff water. Stop here before touring the grounds, attending one of the arboretum's many classes and events, or conducting research at the Sterling Morton Library. Get directions to the site's many other curiosities, including the one-and-only Illinois Millennium Landmark Tree, the innovative tree houses spread throughout the park (through September 26), the "wild garden," and the turf maze.

Arboretum admission is $5, with discounts for seniors and children. Call (630) 719-2400 for more information, or visit mortonarb.org.

Chicago Wilderness
Roaming

For those looking to explore nearby, the Danada and Herrick Lake Forest Preserves, 1,600 acres immediately to the west, provide more than nine miles of multi-purpose trails through scenic prairie and woodland.

Several miles north, in Glen Ellyn, the Willowbrook Wildlife Center cares for injured and orphaned wildlife, offering the public an excellent opportunity to view native animals up close. Call (630) 942-6200.

Belmont Prairie Nature Preserve, a few miles to the southeast in Downers Grove, is a ten-acre high-quality prairie remnant known for its high forb diversity.

Foraging

Located in the new visitor center, Ginkgo Café, (630) 719-2457, has fresh salads, grilled sandwiches, and Mediterranean dishes. Available outdoor seating overlooks Meadow Lake.

A popular sandwich shop in Lisle is The Upper Crust, 1045 Burlington Avenue, (630) 322-8282. Down the road in Downers Grove, try Carlucci at 1801 Butterfield Road, (630) 512-0990, which serves some of the best Italian food in the suburbs.

For the best French bistro in the suburbs, according to the Chicago Tribune, head over to Bistro Banlieue at Highland Avenue and Butterfield Road in Lombard, (630) 629-6560.

Bedding Down

Many convenient lodging options are located just around the corner in Lisle, including the Hickory Ridge Marriott, (888) 644-2567; Hilton Lisle, (800) 472-1003; Hyatt Hotel (800) 614-4520; and the Wyndham Lisle, (630) 505-1000. All four offer special arboretum packages ranging from $85 to $109.

For overnight camping, Blackwell Forest Preserve in Warrenville has 60 wooded sites available, weekends only, through the end of September. Call (630) 933-7200 for reservations.

Events

Prairie Heritage Days

September 25–26, 1–3:30 p.m. at the Prairie Visitor Station. Kids can explore Schulenberg Prairie with a costumed schoolmarm.

Theatre-Hikes

See plays performed in natural arboretum settings. "Quilters": September 11, 12, 18, 19, and "Sleepy Hollow": October 9, 10, 11, 16, 17. All shows 1 p.m. $17 for non-members (includes entrance fee) and $10 for members. For tickets, call (630) 968-0074.

Fall Color Festival

October 1–31, every weekend at the arboretum. Includes foliage walks, hand-dipped taffy apples, pumpkin decorating, a scarecrow trail, and a corn maze.

At a Glance

THE SCENIC: Roads and trails traversing extensive tree collections as well as prairie, wetland, and woodland

HIGHLIGHTS: Trees and shrubs from around the world, pioneering prairie re-creation, native plant collections, and gardens

STATS: 1,700 acres, 14 miles of hiking trails, 9 miles of roads

BEHIND THE SCENES: Arboretum researchers are studying everything from new hybrids to plant hardiness, from endangered species to whole-ecosystem restoration

GETTING THERE: From westbound I-88, exit north onto Route 53. Main entrance is 0.8 miles north on the right.

Want to know more?

For more information and links to all of the natural and cultural destinations mentioned here, please visit us at chicagowildernessmag.org/issues/fall2004/weekendexplorer.html.
AT 1,225 ACRES, THE BROAD
and open Rollins Savanna Forest Preserve in central Lake County, near Grayslake, Illinois, is the largest restoration effort ever undertaken by the Lake County Forest Preserves. This fall, with the addition of a trail system, the county will officially invite the public to enjoy the results of six years of habitat restoration.

Much of the preserve sits on the site of the former White Picket Fence Farm. While acquiring the preserve in phases between 1988 and 1993, Lake County Forest Preserve staff envisioned a large complex of prairies, wetlands, and savanna surrounding the western portion of Third Lake. The restoration work that followed has brought back wetlands and prairie in the center and south, with marsh and sedge meadow, oak savanna, and woodland to the north and east.

"In planning the restoration," explains Jim Anderson, natural resources manager for the Lake County Forest Preserves, "we realized that with the large site we have the opportunity to provide habitat for area-sensitive species."

Forest Preserve staff removed more than 11 miles of agricultural drain tiles, leading to the restoration of approximately 200 acres of wetlands that dot the central section of the preserve. Yellow-headed blackbirds, bobolinks, Henslow's sparrows, sandhill cranes, great blue herons, ruddy ducks, and blue-winged teal are drawn to this expansive space. Anderson hopes that northern harriers will nest here soon, and the county has plans to reintroduce Franklin's ground squirrels and Blanding's turtles.

A wide gravel trail will loop this part of the preserve for 3.5 miles, transporting visitors into a very different world. At a high point above a large basin, waist-high grasses blow in the breeze. The sounds of the surrounding residential communities are blocked out by the distant stands of tall oak trees. Phlox, baptisia, spied lobelia, and rattlesnake master color the prairie in summer. Compass plants and prairie dock should continue through early fall, as the landscape begins to retire into soft browns and reds.

An additional trail winds through the marsh and meadow in the northeast section, and a mile-long self-guided interpretive trail traverses the south edge of the preserve. A portion of the planned 33-mile Millennium Trail will connect to Rollins along the northwest section of the preserve.

A greenhouse and ten acres of nursery beds sit near the main entrance off Washington Street. Here, volunteers and staff will collect seeds from plants to be used for restoration efforts.

On Saturday, September 18, Lake County will officially open the preserve. The public is invited (12-4 p.m.) to share in music, arts and crafts, and nature tours. For more information, or to volunteer to help with ongoing restoration, call (847) 367-6640.

— Terry Stephan
Early Fall

**RED BATS IN MORNING** In early autumn, small groups of migrating red bats funnel along the Lake Michigan shoreline as they head south to spend the winter in the southern U.S. After flying all night, the exhausted bats head ashore at daybreak. Once over land, fatigued red bats become easy targets for predators. Early morning nature watchers have seen gulls, crows, and peregrine falcons all having a bite of bat for breakfast on the beach.

Predators aren't the only danger to the bats. I remember when my old volleyball teammate and mighty fine mammalogist Bob Timm spent a few years documenting the migrating bats that were killed when they collided with McCormick Place windows in downtown Chicago. Sadly, he and other scientists collected more than 70 bats — including 43 red bats — over eight years.

**FREE BIRD** Once upon a time, during a local harvest fest in a quaint Chicago Wilderness town, a small flock of common nighthawks treated the crowd to an entertaining air show. The nighthawks were attracted to moths that were drawn by the bright lights of the stage. Coincidentally, the music was provided by a Lynyrd Skynyrd cover band, playing a passable version of "Freebird."

Nighthawks are common in our skies during early fall. From mid-August to early October, they often fill the dusky sky snatching bugs and uttering their pent calls to keep in contact with one another. As neotropical migrants, nighthawks must fill up on flying insects for their long trip to Argentina, where they'll spend the winter hanging out with the gauchos.

**Middle Fall**

**SWIFT MOVES** Chimney swifts should be grateful for miserly landlords who won't turn on the heat until November 1. As long as the chimneys remain cool and dark, the swifts will gather together to roost safely inside.

The average departure date for these birds from our area is October 6. Readers should try to catch their legendary act before the swifts depart for Peru. Their rapid, full-tilt entry into the chimneys is an amazing sight. At times, more than 100 swifts may rush into a chimney in a matter of seconds. During the first week of October, this spectacle takes place around 6:25 p.m. in those wonderful red brick chimneys of older schools and factories.

**BEE IN THE BOTTLE** The late-blooming bottle gentian, found in moist prairies and savannas, has a unique appearance — the flowers look like blue, pleated sausages. The tight clusters of blue-violet flowers grow on top of the stem and provide bumblebees with an exclusive, late-season supply of nectar. Only these robust bees are capable of forcing their way through the closed petals and crawling into the chamber of rich pollen. Bottle gentians are in bloom during September and October.

**LITTLE KINGS** Eastern milk snakes like to live under the cover of logs and boards. But on warm, blue-sky afternoons in autumn, I have found them basking on a grassy path under some noisy high-tension wires.

There is a nice stand of oaks and the remains of an old farm there, the perfect habitat for the Eastern milk snake. Some researchers believe old stone foundations may be important hibernating sites for the species.

Eastern milk snakes are members of the king snake family, the only king snake in Chicago Wilderness.

Milk snakes have a rounded diet of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, eggs, and invertebrates, with a decided preference for rodents and snakes. Good gumbo, your majesty.

**Late Fall**

**UNDERGROUND** To a cool chipmunk, a good stash is important. Unlike some other cheeky rodents, chipmunks don't put on an extra layer of fat when the nights grow longer. Rather, they depend more on a well-supplied cache of munchies for the long, cold, lonely winter.

By the end of autumn, chipmunks have gathered several pounds of seeds, bulbs, and assorted nuts and packed them into underground storage rooms. Chipmunks won't be entering hibernation and will need to eat to stay alive.
The Greening of Sarah's Grove

By Debra Shore

Photos courtesy of the Village of Schaumburg

When the Village of Schaumburg adopted a Biodiversity Recovery Plan, it became an unlikely leader in natural planning.

0 ye of little faith. Know ye not that, yea, even in the land of IKEA, yea even in the land of Motorola and Woodfield Mall, there also lies Nature?

Be not unbelievers, I say, for the data gatherers and the mappers have gone forth onto the land and they have seen it and it is good. Nay-sayers will challenge you, that will be assured, but you have here the foretelling of a New Age, when men and women shall rise up against the ceaseless paving and reclaim the groves and grasses for all creatures. There will be doubters and skeptics in abundance, yea, but they will be silenced by the sweet sounds of birdsong and the happy murmurs of local waters. Come and rejoice, come and be thankful, for the Village of Schaumburg, née Sarah's Grove, has adopted a Plan for Nature.

To many, Schaumburg has been synonymous with urban sprawl. Known for its Woodfield Shopping Center—the largest mall in Illinois—itself corporate campuses, and business parks, Schaumburg grew from a sleepy hamlet to an economic hub of 76,000 residents over the last 30 years. But through the efforts of a visionary village president and the recognition that the past can be prologue, Schaumburg has become the first municipality in the state to draft and adopt its own Biodiversity Recovery Plan. With this plan, Schaumburg places itself fully within the mission and vision of Chicago Wilderness; “to establish a broad policy of beneficial coexistence in which the region’s natural heritage is preserved, improved, and expanded even as the metropolis grows.” In other words, nature matters in the land of IKEA, and the future of Schaumburg may depend on how well it can reclaim and restore its natural history.

Prior to 1850, Schaumburg was called Sarah’s Grove after a trio of Sarris whose families lived there (Sarah McChesney, Sarah Friske, and Sarah Smith), and in recognition of its towering oaks and hickories. Indeed, some of the magnificent trees still stand in a park called Sarah’s Grove and at nearby Friendship Village, a retirement community with a remaining grove.

The first step on the path to reclaiming nature in Schaumburg was to conduct a detailed inventory of natural areas and open spaces within the village and in adjacent communities, to evaluate the existing conditions, and to assess the potential for enhancing biological diversity. Village officials hired Applied Ecological Services to develop a recovery plan. The company would create manuals on native landscaping and biodiversity protection for residential and corporate developments, target specific high priority sites and make recommendations for their protection and restoration, and revise village ordinances and codes in order to promote biodiversity protection.

A tall order, but Village President Al Larson had seen the recovery plan developed by the Chicago Wilderness consortium and wanted to do the same for his town.
“As a kid growing up on the Northwest Side of Chicago, there were a lot of vacant lots and we called them ‘prairies,’” said Larson. “We used to hunt for crayfish and for snakes—garter snakes—and this beautiful, beautiful green snake. We called them ‘greenies.’ We used to catch spiders—orb weavers—with a Mason jar and a cap.”

Larson became Schaumburg village president in 1987 and was elected a commissioner to the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) in 1997. While serving as a NIPC commissioner, Larson learned about the Chicago Wilderness effort to develop a biodiversity recovery plan for the region. He was smitten. Why not develop a recovery plan for his own village, he thought? Why not conduct an assessment of the natural resources still present in the village and embark on a plan to protect and restore them?

How many would guess, for instance, that Schaumburg contains 2,475 acres of open space—admittedly, most of it turf grass with negligible ecological function? Still, how many would guess that four state threatened or endangered animals occur within Schaumburg, including the black-crowned night-heron, yellow-headed blackbird, black tern, and common moorhen?

Applied Ecological Services’ assessment gave officials a more detailed picture of Schaumburg’s open space. They found that wetlands comprised 2 percent of the area in the village. Forested land covered 2.4 percent, and open water covered 3.5 percent.

Parkland, which includes turf grass, agricultural land, old fields, and prairie remnants, comprised 10.2 percent of the land use.

While the study found that most of Schaumburg’s open space was in a degraded ecological state, it also identified high-priority sites and positive trends from which to build. It pointed out several areas that are already in the process of being restored, including parts of the Spring Valley Nature Center, the Municipal Center Grounds, Oak Hollow Natural Area (the highest quality remnant oak savanna in Schaumburg), and the Motorola corporate campus.

At the Motorola corporate campus, for instance, the company has revegetated a half-mile-long wet area with native plants, is converting approximately five acres of turf grass to a re-created prairie, and has plans to naturalize a 300-foot-long
stream bank. The company has also been using the Gallerucella
beetles to attack stands of invasive purple loosestrife.

The Schaumburg plan also includes a set of principles, both
cultural and ecological, to guide future residential and com-
mercial development and redevelopment. "We're saying, 'Here's
what we should think about in any development plan,'" said
Mark O'Leary of Applied Ecological Services. "I'm thinking
this development plan protect and enhance the environment,
nurture a healthy lifestyle, create a sense of place and of commu-
nity, foster economic and cultural diversity, construct a
convenient and efficient intermodal transportation system,
encourage energy and resource conservation, promote lifelong
learning and education, and foster economic viability?""

Recognizing that the preservation of natural open space
enhances quality of life by making communities more enjoy-
able places to live, work, and play, the plan recommends spe-
cific ecological principles that should be incorporated into the
design of any conservation development. These include
encouraging the use of native landscaping, integrating natural
resources with development, preserving the integrity and sus-
tainability of ecosystems, restoring habitat and connecting
natural communities, and enhancing ecological education.

With respect to stormwater runoff, for instance, the plan
recommends that impervious surfaces be minimized to allow
for expanded open spaces and preserved or restored ecological
systems that provide natural stormwater management func-
tions. Traditional storm sewer systems, including curb and gat-
ter and deep detention basins, are to be avoided where possible.
"I'd like to see more swales handling stormwater runoff rather
than pipes," says Larson.

Schaumburg's Biodiversity Recovery Plan recommends the
use of native landscaping in both residential and commercial
sites, and suggests a number of greenway linkages that could
be restored. The village has roughly five areas with large par-
cels of connected open space that could be considered green-
ways. They are the West Branch Salt Creek riparian corridor,
the Motorola corporate campus, the Woodfield Business Center
wetland complex, the West Branch of the DuPage River, and
the Lancer Creek corridor.

Finally, Schaumburg revised a number of its ordinances in
order to promote and sustain biodiversity. The village amended
its ordinance covering storm sewer and drainage systems, for
example, to permit the use of deep-rooted native landscaping
for stabilization, which will also mitigate sedimentation and
pollution, instead of the prior requirement that all retention
ponds utilize sod or riprap to stabilize pond banks. It revised
the tree preservation ordinance to allow selective woody brush
removal as part of ecological restoration efforts. And it revised
the landscaping and screening ordinance to encourage land-
scape designs that promote sustainability, reduce irrigation
requirements, and utilize effective on-site stormwater manage-
ment techniques.

Carol Hall, who serves on the village's zoning board and
was instrumental in the adoption of the plan, recalled some
concern about the recommendations to promote native land-
scaping in backyards. "People wanted to know, 'Would it look
like a bunch of weeds with grasses and plants 12 to 14 inches
high?'" she said. "It's a new idea and most people are used to a
traditional landscape. But we knew the planning department
wouldn't bring us something that wasn't good for the village." Hall
is an enthusiastic supporter.

Having adopted the plan and revisions to village ordinances
in late April, the challenge now, as for all of Chicago
Wilderness, is to make changes happen on the ground and in
the culture. But the plan is a first step, and Schaumburg now
has a blueprint for change.

"You know, I was struck by something I heard from
the mayor of Charleston, South Carolina," President Larson mused.
"He said, 'Don't be afraid to bring beauty into the public
realm.'" Let's hear it, then, for the greening of Sarah's Grove.

To read the full recovery plan, please see the Web version
of this article at chicagowildernessmag.org/Issues/Fall2004/
sarahsgrove.html.
the Lifeboat
the Milk Bottle &
the Middle Passage

How one man’s discovery
opened a new world and made
connections with the old.

By Debra Shore

Our story begins with a simple and generous act. On a Sunday morning in May, Michael Durbin was pulling garlic mustard with his family at Harms Woods Forest Preserve in Glenview, Illinois. Michael, his wife Joan Monnig, and their son Marlow, 8, and daughter Greta, 5, had been joining the volunteers of the North Branch Restoration Project for more than a year to cut brush, pull weeds, and collect seeds—the basic work of restoring habitat to the woods near their home. Joan, who homeschools the children, had learned about ecological restoration from other local homeschoolers on the Internet and began taking the kids out once or twice a month to learn about nature. Soon Michael, a financial software developer, joined them.

“It was something I read in Miracle Under the Oaks, I think,” Durbin said, “that these restoration projects are building lifeboats for the planet. That whole idea resonated with Joan and me. We feel the earth has been wounded, and we’re driven by the idea to do our part to maintain habitat. Plus,” he said, “we all just enjoy being in the woods, and we like doing something on a regular basis with our kids that teaches them about something bigger than themselves.”

On this given Sunday, site steward John Balaban, a teacher of math and physics at St. Ignatius High School in Chicago, asked Michael to clean up an area of broken bottles and debris. Not infrequently, people will find bottles fresh from a night’s furtive partying. They also find older “junk”—from the site’s prior habitation—that verges on the antique. The 160-acre tract known as Harms Woods, bisected by the North Branch of the Chicago River, had been purchased by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County some 80 years before. Part of it had been farmed or was used for pasture where cattle and horses had water and shade under the many varieties of oaks, maples, ash, hickories, and other abundant trees. Among the shards of broken glass in what may have been a garbage dump, Michael Durbin unearthed an old milk bottle with raised letters that read: “Property of and Filled by Johnson Dairy Company,
Evanston, Ill. "See what you can get for it on eBay," someone in the group suggested. Intrigued, Durbin decided to take it home, little knowing he had stumbled upon a precious link to the past.

At home, Durbin typed "Johnson Dairy Company + Evanston" into the Internet search engine Google, which immediately linked him to an essay by noted author Charles Johnson, circa July 2003, called "An American Milk Bottle" (usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/writers/johnson.htm). Johnson, who was born in Evanston, now lives in Seattle where he is the S. Wilson and Grace M. Pollock Endowed Professor of English at the University of Washington. A cartoonist and author of numerous books (he won the National Book Award for his novel Middle Passage in 1990), Johnson was named a MacArthur Fellow in 1998. "Middle Passage" refers to the historic journey of the slave ships from Africa, carrying human cargo to America and returning with sugar, tobacco, or other products bound for Europe.

Durbin read Johnson's dramatic and affecting essay (excerpted in box at right) telling of his family's passage from Africa to South Carolina to Evanston, Illinois, where his great-uncle William founded a dairy company to deliver milk to blacks because no other company would. The story was larger than Durbin had ever expected.

Though most discoveries don't have such a clear historical payoff, volunteers often uncover plates and bits of porcelain, old drain tiles, even foundations of farm buildings. While the finds are rarely economically valuable, they testify to the rich and varied cultural history of our preserves.

From 1907 until 1926, for instance, a trolley line—still traceable, if you know where to look—ran through Harms Woods, bringing picnickers from Evanston and members and golf caddies to the Glen View Club. In the late 1930s, roughly 2,000 men lived in a Civilian Conservation Corps camp nearby while they dug the Skokie Lagoons.

Our forest preserves also carry records of another history. Just as the National Archive preserves the most precious foundational documents of our democracy, these places are repositories for the essential elements of our natural heritage: the genetic material—in plants, animals, and countless other organisms—of our Midwestern landscape.

After reading Johnson's essay, Michael Durbin sat back in awe. He had discovered a family heirloom. As if repatriating sacred ancestral bones, Durbin felt he must return the bottle to its rightful heir. "From his essay, I knew Charles Johnson had one milk bottle from the Johnson Dairy—a smaller, very scarred and cloudy bottle found in the walls of an old Evanston building," Durbin recalled. Contacting Johnson via e-mail, Durbin asked, "May I send you another? Quart-sized and in perfect condition?"

Within the hour he had a reply from an ecstatic Charles Johnson: "Yes, please!" Michael and Joan carefully wrapped and packed the bottle and shipped it off to Seattle, worrying for the next three days until they received word of its safe arrival at Johnson's home.

"We were just out there pulling garlic mustard," Durbin said, still sounding amazed weeks later. "This discovery has enlightened us to a whole dimension of history, the migration of black Americans from the south to the north, the dairies that wouldn't serve blacks. It was just thrilling to connect with Charles Johnson because he was so excited about it and that was just infectious," says Durbin. "It just took us so much beyond garlic mustard."

John Balaban, the volunteer steward at Harms Woods, shared the story of the milk bottle with his colleagues at St. Ignatius, who teach Johnson's Middle Passage in an African-American studies course. The black student organization there also is called Middle Passage.

"And so I suppose our passages continue," Durbin says. "The milk bottle is home. Harms Woods has a new patch of soil for its next wildflower or sedge, and my family and I have yet another workday experience we won't soon forget."
From
"An American Milk Bottle"
by Charles Johnson

Under a glass globe in my living room, there is a remnant of my family’s four centuries of history on the North American continent. I’m sure everyone who has visited my home must feel it is the strangest of heirlooms, an indiscernible piece of the American past, a tissue of time and forgotten lives. On it I often perform a private hermeneutics, peeling away its layers of meaning as one would a palimpsest. I try to imagine (as archaeologists do with tools from Pompeii or shards of pottery from the Incas) the African-American world of hope, struggle, heroism, and long-deferred possibilities that background this 80-year-old object. What rests mysteriously under glass is a thick, cloudy milk bottle, very scarred, that bears in relief the inscription “One Pint. This Bottle Property of and Filled by JOHNSON DAIRY CO., Evanston, Ill. Wash and Return.” The venerable Johnson who owned that bottle was my late, great-uncle William....

Like many black people who migrated to the north after World War I, he traveled to and settled in Evanston, a quiet suburb, bringing with him nothing more than a strong back, a quick wit, and a burning desire to succeed against staggering racial odds during the era of Jim Crow segregation. In Evanston, he discovered that white milk companies did not deliver to blacks. Always an optimist, a man who preferred hard work and getting his hands dirty to complaining, building to bellyaching, Uncle Will responded to racism by founding the Johnson Dairy Company, an enterprise that did very well, thank you, delivering milk each morning to black Evanstonians until the Great Depression brought his company to an end.

When that business failed, Uncle Will worked on a construction crew until he learned the ropes, then he started his second venture, the Johnson Construction Company, which lasted into the 1970s and was responsible for raising churches (Springfield Baptist Church), apartment buildings, and residences all over the North Shore area—places where today, long after my great-uncle’s death in 1989 at the age of 97, people still live and worship their god. In fact, once this second business took off, he was able to promise his brothers in the South jobs for their sons and daughters if they came north. My father accepted his offer, and met my mother shortly after relocating to Evanston.

I grew up in a town where every day I saw or entered buildings that were produced by the ingenuity, sweat, and resourcefulness of my great-uncle’s all-black construction crew, which once employed my father and uncles. And so, as a child, I never doubted—not once—the crucial role my people have played since the 17th century colonies in the building of America on all levels—the physical, cultural, economic, and political. Growing up in Evanston, and attending schools integrated since the 1930s, I knew—thanks to my parents, elders, and teachers—that American democracy was a “work-in-progress,” as well as an invitation to struggle (as I believe Benjamin Franklin once phrased it): an open-ended experiment in freedom which, like a torch, was passed from one black generation to the next for its refinement and realization. My elders taught me that racism was atavistic, destined for the trash heap of human evolution, and beneath anyone who truly understood the real spirit of America.

Whenever I walk through my living room, passing Uncle Will’s milk bottle, I can hear the urgency that entered his voice when he counseled his great-nephews and nieces to, “Get an education. That’s the most important thing you can do. Lacking that is the only thing that slowed me down.” He understood—and made us see through his personal example—that while black people had endured often mind-numbing oppression, America was founded on principles, ideals, and documents (the Declaration of Independence and Constitution) that forced it to be forever self-correcting. That, he knew, was the ground that nurtured black Americans. The opportunities denied him would be there for us, he said. But only if we were educated and hardworking....

Sometimes when I’m working late at night, and walk from my second-floor study downstairs to the kitchen for a fresh cup of tea, I see his milk bottle on an endtable, and I try to imagine how Will Johnson must have looked, early in the morning before sunrise, carrying clinking bottles like this down empty, quiet streets from one Negro family’s doorstep to another, hustling to get ahead, to carve out a place for himself and his loved ones against the backdrop of the New Deal and a world careening toward war. I wonder how tightly the dreams of this tall, handsome, industrious black man were tied to these tiny pint containers. Did other black men tell him he was foolish to try competing with the white milk companies? Did he stay up nights wondering, like any entrepreneur (or artist), if he might fall on his face with nothing to show for his sweat and sacrifices except spilled milk? If so, then that was just all right. For America guaranteed that he would have the chance to dream again.
Meet your neighbors

Red Velvet Mite: ruby lord of the love garden

At first glance, the minute red critter dancing across the earth is stunning. A closer look under the microscope announces it to be breathtakingly beautiful.

Can this really be said of one of nature's hairy eight-legged arthropods? Absolutely, if it's a red velvet mite. Long a favorite of biologists and children, these ruby gems of the family Trombidiidae are most often sighted on the woodland floors of the world, with millions inhabiting the woods of the Chicago Wilderness region.

"Under the microscope they are beautiful!" says Liam Heneghan, an ecosystem ecologist at DePaul University. "They look like a thumbprint." Most red velvet mites are egg-shaped and less than a millimeter in length. Fine decorative hairs, some of which may serve as feelers, give the creatures their lush red velvet appearance.

Though lovely to the eye, red velvet mites are disliked by the palate: their color may warn predators to the mites' unpleasant taste. "There are stories about biologists popping them into their mouths," says George Hammond, a University of Michigan graduate student who studies velvet mites. Other than ill-advised scientists, however, he knows of no natural enemies of these arachnids: "I've put them on an ant hill and no ant would touch them."

Heneghan describes red velvet mites as chelicerates. This means that they have tiny lobster-like claws that serve as mouthparts, a feature that relates them closely to spiders, scorpions, and harvestmen.

Sensitive to humidity and apt to dry out easily, red velvet mites make their home in the litter layer of woodlands and forests. They live from one to several years, Hammond says, depending on the species. As larvae, they attach themselves to a variety of arthropods and feed parasitically. They will suck blood from a gnat or grasshopper, for instance, sometimes hitching a ride with several other mites.

When red velvet mites become nymphs and then adults, they take to the soil to devour much smaller prey, including other mites and their eggs, the eggs of insects and snails, and primitive wingless insects. Unlike their brethren the chigger and the tick, the velvets keep their mouthparts off of humans.

The presence of red velvet mites is extremely important to the environment. "These mites are part of a community of soil arthropods that is critical in terms of rates of decomposition in woodlands and in maintaining the structure of the entire ecosystem," says Heneghan. "By feeding on insects that eat fungi and bacteria, they stimulate the decomposition process. And when they are removed from the area, many critical processes in the soil go much slower."

Hammond and Heneghan say they've studied the red velvet mite mating dance, and it's not to be missed. The males release their sperm on small twigs or stalks, in areas that Heneghan likes to refer to as "love gardens." Hammond likens them to an array of tiny golf balls on tees.

That ritual is followed by the male laying down an intricate silken trail to the sperm. Females spot these "artistic" trails, then seek out the individual artist. If he's to her liking, she sits in the sperm. But, warns Heneghan, it's a brutal world out there. If another male spots one of these love gardens, he'll promptly trounce it and lay his own.

The planet is home to millions upon millions of mites. Biologists believe there may be thousands of species of red velvet mite alone. Mites remain an under-researched enigma, says Heneghan. "I think we have no real idea what their role is," he continues. "We've only come to realize the importance of the food web in the soil in the last 15 to 20 years. It is the great undiscovered frontier."

—Lori Rotenberk

In case you were wondering, this velvet mite is about as big as one of the letters in this sentence.
To help restore the prairie landscapes of northern Illinois, June Keibler has led a brigade of volunteers armed with toothpicks. Pursuing the same goal, her husband, Steve, has piloted an airplane and wielded an acetylene torch.

Long involved as a volunteer steward directing prairie restorations in Kane County, June Keibler took her conservation life in a more intimate direction in the early 1990s with the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid Recovery Project. Many of these rare white orchids had become so isolated that they couldn't attract the hawk moths that pollinate them. For nearly a decade, June trained volunteers to find, record, map, and then pollinate the plants, using toothpicks to transfer pollen between flowers. To keep volunteers involved in this deliberate process, June cultivated them with gratitude, feedback from project scientists, and a voice like a prairie stream—a gentle current that cuts its path by sheer persistence. “Some of the planted sites bloom irregularly now,” June said. “One site has had flowers every year since the first bloom. It’s very exciting.” This year, June handed over the orchid project to focus on leading workdays, heading a stewardship committee, and managing her eight-person restoration business, Witness Tree Native Landscapes.

Steve worked from a very different perspective—frequently, from 500 feet overhead. A commercial airline pilot, Steve had always supported June's endeavors, including helping to restore the couple's yard to prairie. But in 1992, he bought a 1946 Piper Cub with nature in mind. Steve and his small plane quickly became an important tool for conservationists across Chicago Wilderness.

In the mid-1990s, photographer Terry Evans used Steve's services to document for The Nature Conservancy the land that would become the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. “To understand the space, the 25,000 acres,” Evans wrote, “I needed to see it from above. Flying, I saw one place after another, quickly revealed...a cemetery through a clearing, Prairie Creek running beside the manufacturing area.” Steve, she says, “was very careful, handling his plane like a delicate instrument.”

Over the course of 110 flights—about 250 hours of donated time in the air—Steve has piloted hydrologists looking for signs of prairie remnants. Streams, ecologists documenting soil types in order to direct restorations, and biologists trying to chart purple loosestrife populations for elimination.

Sometimes, Steve even heads out for some rare-plant barnstorming, “Once, flying low over a railroad right-of-way looking for prairie remnants, I saw a patch of blue along the track,” he says. “It was Jacob's ladder. We went back to the site and also found puccoon and lady's tresses.”

The Keiblers' commitment to conservation solidified decades ago, when they recognized that the bluebirds nesting in their yard in Dundee Township depended on nearby field habitat at an abandoned racetrack. Over the next twenty years, June helped establish groups such as the Kane County Natural Area Volunteers and the Fox Valley Land Foundation. She spearheaded the campaign to create the Dundee Township Open Space District, helped elect a conservation-minded supervisor to oversee restoration efforts, and fostered partnerships with the Forest Preserve District and the Park District to purchase land. This network helped save what is now Raceway Woods, and protected many other valuable local sites.

At the recently purchased Dixie-Briggs parcel in Dundee Township, for instance, at the foot of a hill with rare fens and prairies like Hill's thistle and prairie buttercup, an old International Harvester pickup truck lay upside-down in a creek. While June documented the plant life, Steve took responsibility for the pickup. “There was no way to haul it out without doing more damage,” Steve said. “So a buddy and I went in with acetylene torches and cut it into pieces.”

The Keiblers share an ethic of connectedness. “We’re part of a restoration community with such great teachers and enthusiastic people,” June said.

“Everything’s connected,” Steve echoed. Orchid and hawk moth, bluebird boxes and nearby prairies—even the toothpick brigade and the acetylene torch crew—all are woven together in the lives of June and Steve Keibler.

—Ryan Chew
Meet your neighbors

New England Aster: sunny showoff

Amid the fall yellows of the saw-toothed sunflower and the stiff goldenrod, the colorful New England aster, Aster novae-angliae, literally stands out from the rest. Topped with a distinctive deep violet flower, it is one of the tallest asters, growing to between four and five feet tall. The Peterson guide to wildflowers calls it “our most showy wild aster.”

“It’s really quite a comely plant,” says Gerry Wilhelm of Conservation Design Forum. The flower of the New England aster tends to be a deeper color and have more rays than other asters—usually more than 40 in all—often with a reddish cast. More rarely, a white variety arises, as do pink ones. Although their size can range widely, flower heads tend to be about one inch to two inches wide, with bright yellow disk flowers encircled by the extending rays.

An adaptable native that can be found in high-quality prairies and roadside ditches alike, the New England aster is often the “last man standing” in disturbed natural areas, surviving long after its native plant companions have succumbed to invasive species. Despite its name, the plant ranges across the Northeast and Midwest, and has been quite at home throughout the Chicago Wilderness region for millennia. According to Wilhelm, it grows abundantly in every county of the region: in moist meadows, prairie remnants, dry pastures, and even calcareous fens. Though it can thrive in both wet and dry areas, the plant tends to like habitats with lots of light.

The Potawatomi Indians called the New England aster pukwanda’skin, or “the reviver.” According to the Manatawa American Indian Council, the Prairie Potawatomi used it as a fumigating agent (with a less than “reviving” effect, one would think). But the New England aster is certainly a “reviver” in another sense: given its ability to withstand weedy competition, conservationists often use the plant in restoring prairies.

The genus name Aster comes from the Greek word for star, a reference to the stary shape of the flower head, says Susanne Masi, co-author of The Sunflower Family of the Upper Midwest. An older name for the plant, Michaelmas daisy, stems from its approximate blooming date of September 29, the Feast of Saint Michael.

Today, ecologists still puzzle over the tiny glands, bulbous and translucent, that poke out from the upper stems of the plant and the bracts around the flower heads. “We can’t pretend to know what each one’s for,” says Wilhelm. The glands may produce secondary plant chemicals, suggests Masi, which would serve either to repel predators or attract beneficial insects.

Look for the blooming New England aster from August through October anywhere from wet meadows to the sunny, open fields of most forest preserves. But also take notice of abandoned lots and roadsides—there’s a chance the violet flower of this aster will be poking above the weeds. To hone your “search image” for the plant in the wild, visit the Chicago Botanic Garden, where more than 20,000 New England asters bloom in the Suzanne S. Dixon Prairie.

—Allison M. Knab
Chicago WILDERNESS Named One of the Best Magazines
In mid-June, Chicago WILDERNESS was named one of the 50 Best Magazines by the Chicago Tribune. “What makes a magazine great?” the team of judges wrote. “The writing. The photography. The design. Sure. But more importantly, a magazine’s worth depends on how it catches readers’ glances, and then their hearts.” We agree.

Illinois Protects Funding for Natural Areas Acquisition
Partners for Parks and Wildlife, a broad coalition comprised of nearly 150 Illinois park, environmental, conservation, and outdoor recreation organizations (including the Chicago Wilderness Trust on behalf of the Chicago Wilderness consortium) rejoiced when the Illinois legislature finally passed a budget in late July, for it contained full funding for the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program and the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF). These programs, which are supported by a dedicated portion of the real estate transfer tax, are primarily used by forest preserve districts, conservation districts, and park districts to purchase land for habitat preservation and for recreational purposes. Annually, the programs represent $30.6 million in Illinois’ $54 billion budget.

The budget also preserves funding for state heritage biologists and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, which has helped to protect thousands of acres through conservation easements and other methods.

“The OSLAD program has been essential for acquiring open space in Illinois’ most rapidly developing cities and villages,” says Ted Flickinger, chief executive officer of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and founding member of Partners for Parks and Wildlife. “We commend the legislative leaders and the governor for keeping this dedicated funding intact. It sends a strong message to all citizens of Illinois that open space and recreation are important to our quality of life.”

An estimated 2,500 acres of high-quality natural areas and endangered species habitat were in peril if the NAAF program had been cut from the budget. But Partners for Parks and Wildlife organized a concerted grassroots campaign that proved successful in retaining the funding.

Though the funding for the acquisition programs was restored to the budget, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources still faces substantial funding cuts, the possible loss of as many as 150 staff or contract employees, and significant program reductions.

Lt. Governor Launches School Rain Gardens
Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn launched the Illinois Rain Garden Initiative in June, a program designed to educate the public and provide “green solutions” to flooding and poor storm water management.

The initiative, introduced after counties along the Des Plaines River suffered from flooding last spring, creates basins full of native plants to soak up excess rainwater and reduce flooding. Rain gardens aid in reducing some effects of development, as concrete and buildings progressively replace wetlands and open spaces, said Rishi Garg, policy advisor for the Lt. Governor.

The initiative includes a schoolyard project, funded by the Bureau of Fish and Wildlife, which provides $500 grants to schools and community organizations interested in planting for educational purposes. In addition, the U.S. Department of Energy donates native seeds to participating schools from its large prairie re-creation at Fermilab. The schoolyard project currently includes eight Illinois schools and The Burpee Museum of Natural History in Rockford.

“The Lieutenant Governor believes if we can educate the youth to be environmental stewards at a young age, then maybe they will plant gardens later in life and will do what needs to be done in the community to take control of storm water management,” Garg said.

The initiative anticipates a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to expand the scope of the program to include rain barrels and increased permeable surfaces, according to Garg. In the future, the program plans to use an Urban Forest Effects (UFORE) model in schools, a tool that can measure the environmental impact of rain gardens. UFIRE can calculate species composition and diversity, as well as gauge the impact of plants on air pollution, greenhouse gases, and global warming.

“What is unique about this project is that we’re trying to bring low-cost water management solutions to the community while they’re waiting for the necessary pumps and pipes,” Garg said. “Green

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DuPage Leases Natural Corridor from ComEd

One of Illinois’ largest corporations is giving more than lip service to its corporate goal of ecological stewardship. The Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd) has entered into an unprecedented 25-year natural ecosystem leasing agreement with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPD) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), turning over some rare wetland areas for their management and restoration. ComEd will continue to have access to the land as needed, but the FPD can now incorporate management of this area into its larger ecosystem management plans.

The land included in the lease is near Brewer Creek with boundaries common to the south being Pratt's Wayne Forest Preserve in Wayne and, to the north, IDNR's Tri-County State Park in Bartlett. The parcel is divided into several areas, each with a specific plan for management and restoration intended to benefit all involved.

“...the natural ecosystem lease with ComEd is significant because a potential exists to restore and expand the quality and ecological value of natural resources under a single management effort,” said John Oldenburg, FPD director of natural resources. “It represents the final puzzle piece in being able to restore, restock, preserve, and protect an ecosystem already undergoing habitat improvement initiatives in the Brewer Creek Wetland Restoration project area.”

The management objectives for the leased area include restoring ecological processes; protecting natural resources; conducting plant, animal, soil and water monitoring programs; enhancing the native flora and fauna; and restoring the physical and biological integrity of the Brewer Creek stream corridor.

As the soils rehydrate and the effects of farming are eliminated, Oldenburg added, the upland, wetlands, and stream corridor are likely to once again become a high-quality wildlife habitat.

“Through our involvement in Chicago Wilderness and a long-term partnership with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, ComEd is advancing the environmental agenda that we all benefit from,” said George Welter, external affairs manager for ComEd. “This partnership is a three-way win.”

ComEd, a member of the Chicago Wilderness Corporate Council, has also contributed $12,000 toward the restoration effort.

—Karen Tornberg
5 Audit Finds Woods in Poor Shape

Results from an extensive “audit” of wooded lands throughout Chicago Wilderness reveal a picture of decline. For the last three summers, a team of 140 professional and volunteer plant monitors has fanned out to assess in a rigorously scientific manner the current condition of the upland forests, woodlands, and savannas within Chicago Wilderness. Monitors collected detailed vegetation data in 246 randomly located plots in the wooded lands of eight Chicago Wilderness counties.

They identified the species and measured the circumference of all trees within a five hundred-square-meter circular plot. Within four subplots of 16 square meters, monitors counted stems of all shrubs and tree saplings. Within still smaller subplots, they identified the species and estimated the percent cover of all herbaceous plants and tree seedlings, as well as the percentage of bare ground.

Results show that the current state of wooded lands in the region is poor. Using a standard measure of floristic quality, only 18 percent of the plots were rated as good or excellent, while 82 percent rated fair or poor. Oak plots were generally of poorest quality, followed by white oak plots; red oak plots were generally in better shape, although overall quality still ranked mostly ‘fair’ and ‘poor.’ Black oak plots were the highest quality plot type. Unfortunately, the data showed that oaks are not reproducing. “Our analysis suggests that there have not been replacement levels of oak reproduction during the last 50 years at most locations,” says Karen Glennemeier, science coordinator for Audubon–Chicago Region.

The woods audit is an effort to provide scientifically sound and statistically rigorous data about the state of wooded lands throughout the region and to assess the nature and extent of threats to woodland biodiversity. It also seeks to chart how these play out in various types of woods and within different geographic areas of the region.

Chicago Wilderness has a goal of restoring 70 percent of the region’s woodlands to a healthy state by 2025. Read more in the July issue of Chicago WILDERNESS Journal at www.chicagowilderness.org/members/cwj/index.cfm.

6 DNR Brews Wildlife Conservation Plan

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is currently working on a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan (CWCP) for Illinois. The goal of this plan is to identify problem species or habitats that are in need of special attention and organize the means to remedy these situations. A draft of the plan will be available for public comment in early 2005 at dnr.state.il.us/DR/Includes/content.htm.

The CWCP will establish ambitious conservation goals for the next 20 years. According to IDNR’s Jeff Walk, the plan will provide a more inclusive approach to wildlife conservation that focuses on habitats as well as individual species. The plan also must include provisions to monitor declining species, identify problem locations, and ensure public review and participation. Walk is planning a series of regional meetings throughout the state to encourage public participation in drafting the plan.

—Dan Spencer

7 Carp Approaching Great Lakes While Barrier Is Stalled

Asian carp, fish that pose a serious threat both to the Great Lakes ecosystem and to the fishing industry, are approaching and may enter the Great Lakes unless the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers receives an additional $1.8 million to build a second electric barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. The Corps hopes to receive funding from the federal government or contributions from the Great Lakes states, said Marc Gaden, communications officer with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

The $8.5 million barrier, funded thus far by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Illinois, will replace a temporary barrier that exists 800 feet upstream. The carp are approaching Lake Michigan from the Illinois River and are estimated to be 15 miles from the existing barrier. The carp are copious breeders capable of consuming enormous quantities of plankton, with no natural predators in the Great Lakes.

“Most people recognize that this is a federal responsibility,” Gaden said. “Invasive species is a national problem, and the barrier project benefits the...
News of the wild

entire Great Lakes basin, not just the Chicago area.”

If the additional funding is not received, the new barrier’s design will be scaled back to half the electrical power of the original design. The barrier is expected to be completed by early fall.
— Lauren Marrow

NiSource Funds Restoration of Indiana Utility Corridor
Save the Dunes Conservation Fund has received a $50,000 grant to replace invasive brush and plants with prairie species on seven miles (424 acres) of power-line right-of-way in northwest Indiana. The land belongs to the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO).

According to Carol Cook of Save the Dunes Conservation Fund, “This is a very exciting model project involving a public utility company and a not-for-profit organization looking towards restoration of natural habitat along a public right-of-way.” NIPSCO is assisting with restoration planning and work. In addition, NiSource, NIPSCO’s parent company, is providing a $56,000 match to the grant by donating a nearby 11-acre prairie to Save the Dunes.

A plant inventory of the right-of-way has already identified 81 plant species, including Culver’s root, colic root, lead plant, and white wild indigo. Cook, a botanist by training, says she is “thrilled as I look around at the plants that are already there and think about those that will appear there soon.”

Restoration work currently underway includes removal and, as needed, herbicide application to eliminate invasive brush, purple loosestrife and common reed (Phragmites). Seeds from previously restored rights-of-way near Michigan City will be used to replenish areas left bare by removal of invasives. Save the Dunes Conservation Fund will also contract for prescribed burning under the grant.

NiSource Vice President Arthur Smith told the Northwest Indiana Times that the company’s maintenance costs will be lower once prairie plants have replaced the brush.

The project will also exclude off-road vehicles from the right-of-way by erecting barriers and signs. These vehicles have caused extensive damage in both the utility corridor and the Liverpool Nature Preserve, according to Cook.

The utility corridor runs from Three Rivers County Park in Gary through Hobart to Indiana Route 30. The Liverpool Nature Preserve in Hobart adjoins the corridor, and Hobart Prairie Grove in the Indiana Dunes National Lake Shore lies nearby. The right-of-way helps to connect these existing natural areas and will be an important link in a web of natural areas now being pieced together by many partners in northern Indiana.
— Barbara Hill

Chicago Wilderness Welcomes Six New Members
Six organizations joined the Chicago Wilderness consortium in July, bringing the total membership to 178. The Village of Schaumburg in northwest Cook County has developed its own biodiversity recovery plan (page 24); the all-volunteer Indian Creek Watershed Project is a nonprofit dedicated to restoring wetlands and improving water quality, the Lake Katherine Nature

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The Natural Facts

44 species of wild orchids are native to the Chicago area's prairies, wetlands, and forests.

Nature outfits the average hummingbird with about 1,000 feathers.

A raccoon in the wild may live to be as old as 12 to 15 years.

At 19,165 acres, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, a former military arsenal, is the region's largest preserve.

John James Audubon was the first to tie a silver thread around a bird's leg to see if it would return to his yard the next spring. It did.

Honey, beeswax, dyes, shellac, and silk are all commercial products made by insects—valued at about $300 million a year in the US.

Standing 50 inches high, the whooping crane is North America's tallest bird.

These and many other fascinating facts can be found in the pages of Chicago WILDERNESS magazine.

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Preserve is a reclamation site-turned-environmental education center and nature preserve along the Calumet-Sag Channel in southwestern Cook County; the McHenry County Defenders have worked tirelessly to make the watershed development ordinance a reality for McHenry County; the volunteers of the Village of Hoffman Estates Environmental Commission strive to promote biodiversity in their community; and the City of Park Ridge has been a strong supporter of maintaining the integrity of our regional landscape.

10 Native Plants Showcased in Chicago's New Park

In July, the city of Chicago proudly opened Millennium Park to the public. The 24.5-acre space, built over commuter train tracks east of Michigan Avenue and south of Randolph, provides a new oasis in keeping with the city's motto, “Urbs In Horto,” meaning “city in a garden.” The Lurie Garden, located in the southeast corner, combines several design elements to symbolically represent Chicago’s future as well as its natural history. As part of that objective, the garden welcomes back native plants that had once been evicted from the land to make way for urbanization.

Landscape architects from the Seattle-based design firm Gustafson Guthrie Nichols, Ltd., collaborated on the project with world-renowned Dutch horticulturist Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel, a Los Angeles-based theater set designer. Together, they created a unique, four-season garden to showcase a harmonious blend of native and exotic plants.

“Piet is responsible for the perennial plant palette. He did extensive research on native species selection,” explains Jennifer Guthrie, one of the garden's designers. Oudolf is known for pioneering the “New Wave” planting style, which tries to evoke nature (rather than copy it) through form, texture, and color.

Roy Diblik, co-owner of Northwind Perennial Farm in Wisconsin, took Oudolf to visit various prairies around Wisconsin and at The Morton Arboretum. “Each time he was just astounded by what he saw,” says Diblik. Some prairie denizens now in the garden include white false indigo, purple coneflower, Joe Pye weed, blazing star,
prairie dropseed, and golden Alexanders. “There is a natural flow and rhythm that prairies have,” says Diblik, “and that’s what Piet wanted to capture.”

— Viveka Neveln

**11 Chicago Park District Signs Up For Interpretation**

Visitors to Chicago’s parks, beaches, conservatories, and gardens can now learn everything from the history of the “Montrose Magic Hedge” to the habits of muskrats and beavers along the Chicago River. The Chicago Park District, in partnership with ComEd/Exelon Corporation, will be completing the installation of more than 200 interpretive signs throughout the city parks this fall. These signs will describe the parks’ plants and animals, as well as the natural processes going on around them. “Our goal is to promote awareness of our urban wilderness,” says Mary Van Haften of the Chicago Park District.

The Park District has installed the signs in approximately 50 locations across Chicago. The interpretive signs are part of a broader program of community-based nature education and restoration initiatives sponsored by ComEd/Exelon and the Chicago Park District. Other projects include restoration of several Chicago natural areas, such as the Jens Jensen Prairie River in Humboldt Park.

— Dan Spencer

**For a listing of fall events, visit chicagowildernessmag.org/calendar.**
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By their seeds ye shall know them

There's an earthy revival in Chicago Wilderness. Every fall, clans of hunter-gatherers fan out across the landscape where they learn to identify plants by their seeds. They have permits and plans. They're pragmatically filling bags with seeds for ecological restoration. But there's also a powerful drama to it. People are learning to recognize rare seeds and collect them, not so differently from the way earlier peoples sought the nutritious prizes that would feed themselves and their families—a practice that went on for millions of years before our species started farming. This tradition is old. Very old. When we collect seeds, we feel in touch with "the hunt." It's like a peanut hunt or an Easter egg hunt, but a good deal more primal.

Fall is such a rich and primal time. The last of life before the winter. Plants dying but leaving behind those beautiful, magical seeds.

It seemed odd to me at first that a person would fall in love with a plant that wasn't in flower, especially a seedy old plant that's nearly dead.

When I first started falling in love with wild plants, it was spring. The new plants would always be in gorgeous full bloom. Flowers, at least if you're in a receptive mood, just reach out and grab you by the emotions. Beautiful, sexy, vulnerable, mysterious.

But seeds? You can eat them, of course. With a little processing, they make great muffins, chili, pilaf, beer, popcorn, nut butter, and hummus. Even before civilization produced the deep-dish pizza crust, seeds made porridge, gruel, or scrumptious mush. Back then, we sought seeds for sustenance. Now we gather them for spirit. To restore the future.

The plant in the photo is goat's rue. The flowers that preceded these earthy starbursts of pods were luscious yellow and pink pea flowers. They're a regular feature of Chicago Wilderness's rare black oak savannas each June and July. Each pod has one row of adorable and perfect little beans. I have no idea what they'd taste like refried. But I do know that they'll make more goat's rue. If they're lucky. Somewhere.

Photo by Casey Galvin.
Words (and little photo) by Stephen Packard.
To join a seed hunt, check out volunteer opportunities at fotfp.org/volunteer.html or chicagowildernessmag.org/ issues/fall2004/seedpicking.html.
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