

BRUSH PILES

NORTH BRANCH RESTORATION PROJECT

SPRING 2007

RUMINATIONS ABOUT THE NORTH BRANCH ON THE OCCASION OF OUR THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

by Laurel Ross

Some of us have been thinking and talking about the future as we look back and celebrate the accomplishments of the past. At a Somme Prairie workday last summer, I noticed that grey heads dominated. No one was much under the age of fifty, many were over sixty and two were over seventy. That did not mean that the work we tackled was slow or timid, and the conversation was certainly rich. But we are committed to these places for the long haul and as I looked around I wondered who would be on the crew thirty years from now. Yikes! Are we doing enough to replace ourselves? In order to do that we not only have to get new people to come, we have to get them to come back and inspire them to take responsibility.

Why do people come back? I did a non-scientific survey recently and asked several people about their first time at a NBRP workday. Interestingly, we all seem to remember our first time and everyone I asked had a clear memory and told me a story – some recent, some decades old.



Laurel Ross broadcasting the seed of rare woodland wildflowers and grasses in Vestal Grove.

My own first workday was very different from our current format of 9 am to noon with a bagel break in the middle. I remember being picked up at around 8 am and being driven to Buffalo Grove Prairie to collect seeds. The first species was Puccoon. If you have ever collected Puccoon seeds you know that they are really small and there aren't very many on any one plant

(If you can find a plant after the bright flowers are gone.) After an hour or so of hunting on our hands and knees in good-natured camaraderie, we combined our booty. I had a paltry teaspoon to add to the haul, but to my utter amazement, this contribution was warmly praised. Preston Spinks told me how he could grow those seeds in his garden and produce dozens of plants that would provide hundreds or even thousands of seeds every year. It was remarkably satisfying and felt unlike any other "good deed" I had ever done.



Larry Hodak and David Wivagg getting ready to transplant rare plants grown from local seed.

The rest of that day consisted of carpooling from place to place to collect seeds, stopping for lunch, weed pulling, more seed collecting, and finally dinner at an Indian restaurant where the conversation was about planning the next week's adventure. Getting home 12 hours after I had left, I sheepishly faced my young daughter's disapproval. "Where were you???" But I thought about that day for weeks and even though it wasn't clear how a working mom could reasonably ask for such long absences from her family regularly, I knew this was something I wanted in my life and eventually figured out how to manage that.

So here's a question: How can we make each new person's experience of the North Branch something irresistible?--so that when they leave they can't stop thinking about it and talking about it and they figure out a way to make it a part of their lives.

NBRP Workday Schedule - Spring 2007

MARCH BC = brush cutting, GM = garlic mustard pulling

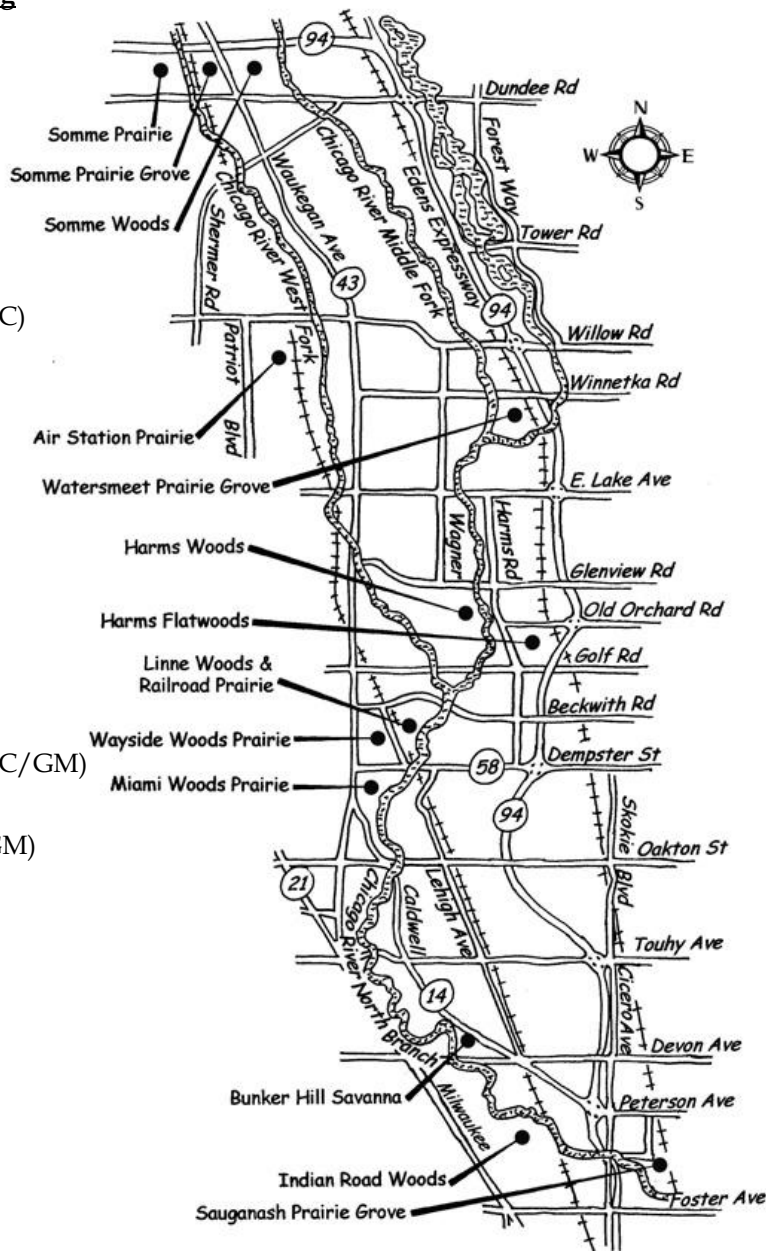
3	Saturday	8:00-5:00	Wild Things Conference
4	Sunday	9-12, 1-4	Harms Woods (BC)
10	Saturday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove (BC)
11	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Woods (BC)
17	Saturday	9:00-noon	Bunker Hill/Oxbow (BC)
18	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove (BC)
24	Saturday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove (BC)
25	Sunday	9:00-2:00	Somme Prairie Nature Preserve (BC)
31	Saturday	9:00-noon	Bunker Hill/Oxbow (BC)
		9:00-noon	Linne Woods North (BC)

APRIL

1	Sunday	9:00-noon	Wayside Woods Prairie (BC)
7	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove (BC)
		9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove (BC)
8	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Woods (BC)
14	Saturday	9:00-noon	Linne Woods North (BC)
		9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove (BC)
15	Sunday	9:00-noon	Miami Woods Prairie (BC)
21	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Nature Preserve (BC/GM)
22	Sunday	9:00-noon	Miami Woods Prairie (BC/GM)
28	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Nature Preserve (GM)
29	Sunday	9-12, 1-4	Harms Woods (GM)

MAY

5	Saturday	9:00-noon	Somme Woods (BC/GM)
6	Sunday	9:00-noon	Harms Flatwoods (GM)
		1:00-4:00	Miami Woods Prairie (GM)
12	Saturday	9:00-noon	Miami Woods Prairie (GM)
13	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Woods (GM)
19	Saturday	9:00-noon	Linne Woods North (GM)
		9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove (BC)
20	Sunday	9:00-noon	Watersmeet Prairie Grove (GM)
		1:00-4:00	Harms Woods (GM)
26	Saturday	9:00-noon	Linne Prairie (GM)
		9:00-noon	Somme Woods (GM)
27	Sunday	9:00-noon	Somme Prairie Grove (GM)
28	Monday	9:00-noon	Bunker Hill Savanna (GM)



BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE

Sundays, 9:00 am - Noon
 March 12, April 9, May 7
 Bev Hansen, 847-272-6211

Work on Sundays at this piece of virgin prairie located on Hastings Road. It is off Lake-Cook, one mile west of Milwaukee. After going under the railroad overpass, turn north on Hastings, and right into the second parking lot. The prairie is under the Com Ed power lines.

SKOKIE LAGOONS

Saturdays, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
 Mar 10, Apr 14, May 12
 Jerry Garden, 773-545-4632
jerrygarden@sprynet.com

Meet at the Tower Road parking lot (east of the lagoon bridge - not the boat launch). There will be a sign with directions to the work site in the picnic field adjacent to the parking lot. Come dressed for the weather. We will provide waders, gloves and tools.

GLENBROOK PRAIRIE WORKDAYS

6:00 pm to dark
 March 8, April 12, May 10
 Rob Sulski, 847-337-0471

The prairie is located at the northwest corner of the Glenbrook North High School property, north of Willow Road on the west side of Shermer Road. Follow the north parking lot past the tennis courts and walk along the north side of the football field until you see us.

NBRP Site Directions and Stewards

DIRECTIONS:

Air Station Prairie, Glenview

Kent & Jerry Fuller – From the Edens Expressway; go west on Willow Road, past Waukegan Road and over the RR overpass. Turn south at the new traffic signals for Patriot Blvd. (The new main road through the redeveloped Naval Air Station). Turn east on Compass to the gate at the south end of the prairie. Patriot Blvd. is also accessible from the south via Lake Ave.

Bunker Hill Savanna/Oxbow, Chicago

Jane & John Balaban – Off Caldwell between Devon and Touhy; entrance located just opposite Tonty Street. For Bunker Hill Meet in first section of parking lot; for Oxbow, follow road until it turns north, then park along the west side.

Harms Flatwoods, Glenview

Neil Peck & Terry Schilling – Meet at the Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Road, directly west of Old Orchard Road.

Harms Woods, Glenview

Jane & John Balaban – Meet at the Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Road, just south of Glenview Road and north of Old Orchard Road.

Linne Prairie, Morton Grove

Mary Busch & John Thill (847-966-0231) – Meet at the Wayside Woods Prairie parking lot on Lehigh Ave, a few blocks east of Waukegan Road and just north of Dempster.

Linne Woods North, Morton Grove

John & Marian Thill (847-966-0231, mjthill@icsp.net) - From Edens go west on Dempster street about 1.5 miles. The forest preserve entrance will be on the north side of the street directly across from McDonalds. Follow the winding road all the way back until it dead-ends at the turn-around circle.

Miami Woods Prairie, Niles/Morton Grove

Kent & Jerry Fuller – Located on the east side of Caldwell, two blocks north of Oakton. Meet in the parking lot for Miami Woods.

Prairie View Nature Preserve, Morton Grove

Kent Fuller – From Dempster, 2 blocks east of Waukegan, turn north on Oak Park Ave. Turn left on Churchill and drive to the end. Park in the parking lot on the north side.

Sauganash Prairie Grove, Chicago

Larry Hodak & Pete Leki

(watersschool@yahoo.com) – Meet at the edge of the Forest Preserve along the south side of Bryn Mawr at Kilbourn, which is south of Peterson and east of Cicero.

Somme Prairie Grove, Northbrook

Stephen Packard (847-509-0431,

spackard@audubon.org) – **WE NOW PARK AT SOMME WOODS FOR THIS PRESERVE.** Park by the new signs, on the left, near the entrance and follow the new trail. From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road two miles west and turn right into Somme Woods parking lot (just before the light at Waukegan Road).

Somme Prairie Nature Preserve, Northbrook

Laurel Ross (312-665-7432,

lross@fieldmuseum.org) & Christiane Rey (773-478-2019) – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road 2½ miles west (past Waukegan) to Western. Turn north and park in the post office parking lot.

Somme Woods, Northbrook

Linda Masters (847-509-0431,

masters2001@comcast.net) – From the Edens Expressway, take Dundee Road two miles west and turn right into Somme Woods parking lot (just before the light at Waukegan Road).

Watersmeet Prairie Grove, Northfield

John Berg (Kerg111@aol.com) – From Lake Avenue and Wagner Road, turn north on Wagner to Winnetka Road. Turn east on Winnetka for ¾ mile. Park on the north side of the street or a side street.

Wayside Woods Prairie/Linne RR Prairie, Morton Grove

Gladys Bryer & Bob Bluestone – Meet at Wayside Woods Prairie parking lot on Lehigh Ave, a few blocks east of Waukegan Road and just north of Dempster.

BEAVERS IN WINTER

by Eileen Sutter

This morning on my jog, as I crossed the Chicago River at Wilson, I saw two beavers, very close to the shore, very much out of the water. They looked quite big almost completely out of the water. I watched what they were doing. They had large sticks in their mouths, and they were stripping off the bark and eating it. They were going around and around the twigs, the way people eat corn on the cob.

The twigs were very light, almost white, where the bark had been stripped off. I looked more closely and saw another beaver, about 10 feet away, doing the same thing. This beaver was lighter colored, more like a dark tan; the other beavers were the typical dark brown-black. They were just upstream from a large cotton wood tree, a favorite food of beavers from what I have seen. I heard their teeth crunching in the quiet.

I went on my way to my turn around point, and turned for home. When I came back to the river, two of the beavers were still there, and the nearby bank and the river was littered with these very light stripped twigs. I counted 11 stripped twigs. So that is what beavers do for breakfast in the winter.

This is the first time I have seen 3 beavers so close together, staying so long in one place, and looking so big. Usually I see them swimming in the water, and their size is less apparent. I think I need to make a beaver journal, and retire to spend more time watching beavers.

North Branch Restoration Project

P.O. Box 2154

Northbrook, IL 60062-3707

The North Branch Restoration Project is a cooperative effort involving the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, and Sierra Club. We protect and restore woodlands, prairies, and wetlands as volunteers for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and other local agencies. Working on sites along the North Branch of the Chicago River, our goal is to restore conditions that will allow these natural wild communities to flourish as a permanent part of the metropolitan area.

www.northbranchrestoration.org

Brushpiles is available electronically. If you would like to receive it via email send a message to publications@northbranchrestoration.org. We will email you a ".pdf" file that can be read and printed by Adobe Acrobat Reader (available free at www.adobe.com).

TO: NORTH BRANCH RESTORATION PROJECT

Just to set the record straight regarding the "old timer" award given to me at the Potluck, my first workday on the North Branch was at Somme in March, 1982. Present at that workday were Steve Packard, John and Jane Balaban, Chris and Larry Hodak, Ross and Robbie Sweeney, Pete Baldo, Rosemary Weston, the late Mim Desmond, some woman I never saw again, and a small party of chickadees. Some other "old timers" who didn't get mentioned are: Preston Spinks, Bev Hanson, Donna Hriljac, and Tom Murphy.

Thanks,
Duke Rikken



Duke, Spring 1982, Miami Woods Prairie