

Brush Piles



The NBPP Refrigerator Door Companion

Winter 1991-1992

The Deer Problem

"The issue...is not whether to save the deer, it is whether to save the forest. The question is not one of morality, it is one of ecology...a centuries old ecological balance among species has suddenly been thrown asunder...By accepting responsibility as stewards, we accept guarding the balances among species as our primary moral obligation."

Dr. John Fitzpatrick in the Ryerson Almanac

"We envision a future where the native landscape of our public land is restored and managed for its long-term health and for the benefit of all and where volunteers work hand in hand with the landowners who are supported by a knowledgeable public."

from the NBPP Mission Statement

Prairie Project volunteers have faced difficult problems over the years, meeting many threats to the preserves we cherish with action that is guided by intelligence and fueled by strong feelings.

Now we are confronted with a management situation which needs immediate attention. Thousands of acres of forest preserve land are under siege. Because of a dramatic increase in their numbers, white tailed deer are threatening the health of our prairies, savannas, and woodlands. In the judgment of ecologist Steve Packard, "the ecological communities at Somme Woods are undergoing rapid, serious and *potentially irreversible* degradation."

The problem is overbrowsing. That might sound like a minor annoyance, but it is devastating in its effect. Packard describes a profoundly disturbing scenario which begins with the loss of the invertebrate animals, followed shortly by that of rare short-lived plants such as fringed gentian and maple leaf goosefoot. "Soon the understory in the woodland begins to take on a 'feedlot' look. We will have lost virtually all the original plants and animals except those which limit their activities to the tree canopies. The deer by this time will be emaciated and sickly."

This important matter will be the subject of a more comprehensive article in *Prairie Projections* this winter. In the meantime, however, the problem is acute, and our support for the forest preserve district is needed.

The course is clear. Ecologists, wildlife biologists, and other trained professionals agree that the only sensible approach to deer overpopulation on the scale we are experiencing is removal by shooting.

One suggested alternative, relocation, has been found to be cruel, ineffective, and expensive. The stress of the process causes a high mortality and injury rate. Disoriented in new locations, the deer are killed on the road or by hunters. Another possible course, supplemental feeding, only exacerbates the problem by further increasing populations. Sterilization and other birth control methods may be management tools of the future, but are still in the testing stages and results are gradual. We need an immediate, significant reduction in numbers to allow recovery to begin.

There is opposition to this choice by people usually described as 'animal rights activists.' These caring and well-meaning people speak loudly and passionately against the culling of deer, as if saving some individuals should take precedence over saving the precious and irreplaceable system which supports them.

It is important for us not to lose sight of the fact that we, too, care about animals. We put our time and our energy into restoring and preserving habitat so that hundreds of species of animals and plants may thrive.

When newcomers to the Prairie Project challenge the seemingly brutal methods used to control brush and pest plant species, it is explained how and why this is critical to the recovery of an ailing ecosystem. In the same way we must help to educate the public about the deer issue. Talk to your neighbors and friends, write to your local newspaper, contact your

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NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT

Winter Workdays and Activities Schedule 1991-1992

The NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT is working to restore and manage the few remaining prairie remnants along the North Branch of the Chicago River in the Cook County Forest Preserves. These areas, once part of a vast grassland ecosystem, are under tremendous pressure from urban development and non-native species. We are working to restore conditions that will allow these natural wild communities to flourish as a permanent part of the metropolitan area.

Winter 1991-1992

Morning workdays are from 9am to 12 noon; afternoon workdays are from 1:30pm to 4:30pm. Workdays which are scheduled for days other than Sunday are italicized.

Sunday	December 8	9am	Somme Woods
Sunday	December 15	9am	Harms Woods
Sunday	December 29	9am	Somme Woods
Sunday	January 5	9am	Sauganash
Sunday	January 12	9am	Schiller Woods
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>January 18</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Miami Woods</i>
Sunday	January 19	9am	Buffalo Grove
Sunday	January 26	9am	Buffalo Grove
Sunday	February 2	9am	Miami Woods
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>February 8</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Bunker Hill</i>
Sunday	February 9	9am	Wayside/RR Prairie
<i>Saturday</i>	<i>February 15</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>Bunker Hill/Oxbow</i>
Sunday	February 16	9am	Somme Woods
Sunday	February 16	1:30pm	Glenbrook HS NP
Sunday	February 23	9am	Bunker Hill
Sunday	March 1	9am	Miami Woods
Sunday	March 8	9am	Somme Woods

Directions

BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE (Buffalo Grove) - Turn north on Johnson Drive, which is the first light west of Milwaukee on Lake-Cook Rd. Meet in Cryovac lot, the first driveway on the west side of Johnson Dr. The prairie is under the Com Ed power lines.

In the winter we cut brush. Dress for the weather and bring some water. If the wind chill is below zero, call to find out whether the workday will be cancelled. The information number is 312 878-3877.

NORTH BRANCH WORKGROUPS

The six North Branch workgroups listed below need volunteers. Contact the chairperson for more information or attend a workgroup meeting. The next **Coordinating Committee** meeting has yet to be announced. Call 312 878-3877 for more information.

Ecological Management:

Jane and John Balaban, 708-679-4289

Next meeting: call for information

Education:

Cora Sue Nicholas, 312-262-8643

Next meeting: December 4

Publications:

Karen Holland, 312-929-7658

Next meeting: December 9

Publicity:

Gail Schmoller, 312-935-0654

Next meeting: call for information

Science:

Susanne Masi, 312-973-2608

Next meeting: December 18

Volunteer Development:

See meeting announcement below

Next meeting: December 7

BUNKER HILL (Chicago) - Meet at Bunker Hill Forest Preserve parking lot on west side of Caldwell Avenue about 3/4 mile north of Devon Ave.

GLENBROOK H.S. (Northbrook) - The high school is north of Willow Road on the west side of Shermer Road. Enter the parking lot at the north driveway and park by the tennis courts.

HARMS WOODS (Glenview) - Meet at Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on west side of Harms Road, just south of Glenview Road.

MIAMI WOODS PRAIRIE (Morton Grove/Niles) - Meet at Miami Woods Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot on east side of Caldwell Avenue, two blocks north of Oakton Avenue.

SAUGANASH PRAIRIE (Chicago) - Meet at edge of Forest Preserve along south side of Bryn Mawr Avenue at Kilbourn Avenue (south of Peterson Ave. and east of Cicero Avenue).

SCHILLER WOODS NORTH (Chicago) - Enter from Irving Park Road at the third driveway west of Cumberland/Pueblo. Continue 1/2 mile, keeping to the right, to the large parking lot at the end. The Montrose/River Road entrance has been closed.

SOMME WOODS PRAIRIE (Northbrook) - Take Dundee Road 2 miles west from Edens Expwy. to Waukegan Road. Go north a few hundred feet on Waukegan and meet at the unpaved parking area on the west side of the road.

WAYSIDE WOODS PRAIRIE (Morton Grove) - Meet at Wayside Woods Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot on Lehigh Ave. (a few blocks east of Waukegan Road and just north of Dempster Avenue).

For Biped Spermophiles

Bags of plastic you will need
To gather up the ripened seed,
Unerring eye and limber back,
A guide to put you on the track.
And off you go into the woods
And fields in search of priceless goods,
Which wisely used will recreate
Our precious prairies' pristine state.

Jim Cutler

Brush Piles Crew:
Edit: Barbara Rose
Design: Joel Spears

The Annual North Branch Potluck Supper and Membership Meeting

will be held at the home of Chris and Larry Hodak, 4455 N. Mozart, Chicago, on January 18, 7pm. The membership meeting will begin at 7pm followed by the potluck. A vote will be held on whether or not to approve the by-laws for incorporation and the charter for affiliation with The Nature Conservancy. To receive copies of the final drafts of both documents, please call one of the Coordinating Committee Members listed under "North Branch Workgroups."

Each workgroup will give a brief report on the activities of the past year. Members will be able to choose the logo design for the 15th Anniversary Celebration of the NBPP.

All are welcome but please RSVP to Joanne Softcheck at 312 878-3877 by January 15.

NORTH PARK VILLAGE GARDEN WORKSHOP

Here are the dates for the next workshop:

April 26, 2pm
May 9, 2pm

Call 312 583-3714 for more information.

The Volunteer Development Workgroup

will meet on December 7 at 1:30pm at the home of Jane and John Balaban to set goals and find people willing to help accomplish them.

WINTER FASHION TIPS FROM BRUSHMEISTER BRIAN:

Highly recommended for safe, effective and prolific brush cutting:

leather boots (6" minimum)
Not gym shoes.

In winter and early spring high rubber overboots are recommended for that extra margin of comfort.

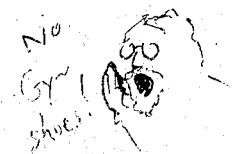
Long heavy-weight pants with long-sleeved cotton or natural fiber shirt (shorts are not recommended).

For the hands, full leather work gloves (including leather backs). In winter, fleece lining is recommended.

Brimmed hat to guard from sun and wind. Sun can burn in winter too.

To make your workdays more enjoyable in all weather, you should carry these accessories:

1 quart of water
sun glasses
lip balm
raingear
sun screen
safety goggles
a nosh.



North Branch Prairie Project
 The Sierra Club
 Suite 525
 506 S. Wabash
 Chicago, IL 60605

The North Branch
 Prairie Project is a
 cooperative effort
 involving The Nature
 Conservancy, the Chicago
 Audubon Society, and
 the Sierra Club, Chicago
 group.

We manage these sites
 as volunteers for the
 Forest Preserve District
 of Cook County

Non-Profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
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The Deer Problem

ected representatives, and make your feelings known.

Deer control parallels other management techniques. Because we know fire is essential but cannot live with uncontrolled wild fire in a populated area, we have substituted safe, controlled burning.

Nature provided wolves, bears, mountain lions, and people to keep deer populations in balance. If we cannot tolerate these large predators in our cities, then we owe our natural areas a substitute that we and they can live with.

LMR

DESIGN CONTEST TO KICK OFF CELEBRATION

The year 1992 marks the 15th anniversary of the North Branch Prairie Project. Don your thinking cap and a festive frame of mind. A commemorative design to be used on t-shirts, buttons, bandanas, caps, etc. is sought by the Education Committee.

Entries will be displayed at the Winter Potluck on January 18. Party-goers will choose the winner by ballot. We will also decide which types of wearable memorabilia will be used.

Send your ideas (or a description of them - drawings are not necessary) to Corasue Nicholas, 2735 W. Jerome, Chicago, 60645.

WILHELM TO KEYNOTE NATIVE PLANTS WORKSHOP

the "real" Illinois and why it is desirable to use its native plants will be the subject of the keynote speech by Dr. Gerould Wilhelm. The plant taxonomist with the Morton Arboretum will kick off a one-day workshop, "Landscaping with Native Plants," to be offered January 11, 1992, at the Pottawatomie Community Center, 8 North Avenue, St. Charles.

Other topics will include: what is a native plant; which native plants take well to manipulation and transplanting; how to transform your yard into a prairie; how to minimize damage when moving into a savanna or woodland; working with low or wet areas in your yard; using woody plants in the landscape; and municipal laws and natural landscaping.

Deadline for registration is January 1, 1992. Cost is \$20 per person or \$35 for two. A late fee of \$5 will be added for late registration. The fee includes a program and printed materials.

Bring your own mug if you want to have the coffee and rolls that will be served in the morning. A box lunch, costing \$6, will be available and should be ordered at the time of registration.

Sessions will start at 8am and will end by 4:30pm. More information is available for Jan Stark at 708 513-5883.

The workshop is sponsored by Morton Arboretum, St. Charles Park District, Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District, Kane County Natural Areas Department, And Kane County Development Department.