PRAIRIE PROJECTIONS

North Branch Prairie Project
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QIWETDEX

By Karen Holland

Dr. Gerould Wilhelm and Linda Wetstein of the Morton Arboretum and Wayne Lampa of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County have developed a Lotus 123-based computer software program to assist in regional natural area assessments. QIWETDEX numerically quantifies the effects of specific ecological restoration management techniques so that evaluations of sites are uniform and comparisons can be made between sites.

QIWETDEX relies on Wilhelm's definition of a natural area: "land on which the existing vegetational assemblage approximates the condition that prevailed just prior to the settlement of the Chicago region in the early 1800's." The program contains the database of plant species, with their accompanying conservative species ratings, as defined in *Plants of the Chicago*

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Inside this issue:

Cooperation and Stewardship

By Adria Goodson

COOPERATION: (noun) *the association of a number of people in an enterprise for the mutual benefit of all.*

Cooperation is exactly what it took to preserve Sauganash Prairie Grove. Larry Hodak, the steward of the site, enlisted the cooperation of five very different groups to protect Sauganash from potential damage; The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Illinois Department of Conservation (IDOC), the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPD), and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). The damage would have been a result of construction of part of the north branch of the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), commonly known as "Deep Tunnel."

The purpose of TARP is to store excess storm water and sewage and then send it through existing treatment plants. The prevention of untreated sewage from overflowing and draining into Lake Michigan and Chicago area waterways results

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Linda Wetstein and Gerould Wilhelm of the Morton Arboretum: Inventors of QIWETDEX.

Brian Seinfeld (center left, checked shirt) and John Berg (Bart Simpson), Volunteers of the Year.

A Potluck to Remember

By Robyn Flackne

Larry, Chris, Eleanor and Hannah Hodak lined their sidewalk with luminaria and welcomed sundry North Branch volunteers and friends to the Annual Potluck Dinner and Membership Meeting on January 18, 1992. At the meeting, the members voted that the North Branch Prairie Project would affiliate with The Nature Conservancy and simultaneously incorporate as a not-for-profit organization. The by-laws for incorporation were approved.

Three initiates were honored as Volunteers of the Year. Jim Cutler, who could not attend, is North Branch's poet laureate and historian. By taking time out from sifting through four file boxes of clippings, documents, photos, and publications, Jim has been able to attend nearly every workday since his first fateful visit to the seed mixing party of November 3, 1990. Brian Seinfeld, purveyor of homemade beer so exquisite it must be ritually poured, has so tirelessly cleared and piled brush that he is now everywhere known as Brushmeister Brian. Besides hardly ever missing a workday since his wide-eyed tour of Harms Woods in May, 1991, he has avidly walked the wilds, read books, and attended classes to acquaint himself with birds, insects, plants, burns, and pesticides. John Berg, in addition to his duty of teaching science at Morton West High School and siring the illustrious Kyle, has pilgrimaged almost weekly from Crest Hills, seeking prairie and savanna knowledge through classes and contacts. He has distinguished himself as apprentice steward at Somme, and can combine what he learns there with what he learns with his ecology club on the school's own savanna.

The evening's entertainment was courtesy of the budding musicianship of Eleanor and Hannah Hodak, the breathtaking slideshow by Steve Packard, and the conviviality of the attendees, all of whom brought and shared in some of the luckiest pots in town. ◆

Editorial: *What's the Connection?*

Brookfield Zoo, Chicago Botanic Gardens, Morton Arboretum, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Chicago Academy of Sciences, Illinois Department of Conservation, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, The Nature Conservancy, etc. All of the above organizations have diverse environmental components. So what's the connection? We all know the North Branch is affiliating with TNC. We know that Morton Arboretum and Chicago Botanic Garden employees make darn good volunteers. Is that all? No. What happens to simple connections when people are committed to finding solutions to environmental problems? Take a look at a few of the articles in this issue. Making connections is good sense, good stewardship and good citizenship. ◆

Karen Holland

$$$$$ Budget 1992 $$$$$

In previous years it took about 20 minutes for the Coordinating Committee to finalize a year's budget for the North Branch. This year, thanks to the generous sum of $15,000 from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and the opportunity to apply for The Nature Conservancy's Restore and Restock grant, North Branch activities are more limited by volunteer availability than dollars. Workgroups have drawn up operating budgets and project budgets and must now decide what projects are do-able in 1992. Some proposed project ideas: a North Branch 15 year anniversary celebration, interns to study herps and insects, "discovery" trail guides. ◆

FOCUS

Thoughts on the Deer Problem

By Laurel Ross

All things by mortal power
Near or far
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling a star.
Francis Thompson (1859-1907) English poet

"The Deer Problem," a short article which appeared in the last issue of *Brushpiles*, asserted that because white tailed deer have become so numerous in our preserves, we are seeing possibly irreversible damage to our prairie projects. Ecologists and wildlife biologists recommend that the numbers of these deer be significantly reduced as soon as possible to allow recovery to begin. This is the promised follow-up to that article.

People and deer have an ancient and continuing association which we are seeing at one moment in time. Viewed in this context, "the deer problem" is not a single-species problem, but one of many manifestations of an ailing ecosystem. I think it is appropriate here to broaden our discussion, to remind ourselves of the importance of the work we do, and to underscore the *ecological role* that we play as restorationists.

As the lyrical Mr. Thompson notes, we live in a universe of myriad connections. Above all there is order in the natural world, at the same time elegantly simple and extravagantly complex. According to fundamental ecological principles every ecosystem has a structure with nonliving components (minerals, soil, water) and living components. Energy flows through these living components from producers (plants), to consumers (animals), to decomposers (bacteria and fungi). Plants, the only organisms that can manufacture food (from sunlight, water, earth, and air), support all life on earth. Consumers must eat to live. Herbivores can only eat plants, carnivores must eat flesh, omnivores eat some of both, and scavengers eat leftovers. Decomposers, great equalizers, break down all organisms so that they are released back into the ecosystem for another round. There are no moral judgments involved in this structure; it exists by biological decree.

A healthy, functioning ecosystem is dynamic, however, not static. A web of countless interdependencies maintains the ecological balance. Biodiversity, the rich complement of species, gives a community the means to adapt to stresses such as drought and disease, and still maintain the integrity of the system. But only up to a point. Prolonged or intense disturbance will eventually take its toll, especially on an ecosystem weakened by other factors.

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it does otherwise.
Aldo Leopold

We are usually taught ecology as if we human beings, except for our penchant for making a mess of the world, are uninvolved spectators of the dance of nature. This attitude can alienate and paralyze us. An alternative view is that humanity is an inseparable component of the natural world. Chris Maser, Bill Jordan, and other seminal thinkers on this subject tell us that we have a role, even a duty, to participate in natural processes.

Restoration ecology is a way to consciously reconnect with the landscape, not just observe it. Look at our history. The primeval landscape may have been pristine, but it was not untouched by human hands. For thousands of years aboriginal peoples hunted game, collected plants, and set fires. These were natural influences. The attempt to restructure or oversimplify nature is one way we get into trouble. In places like Yellowstone, this lesson was learned the hard way. When predators (including Indians) were removed, serious repercussions resulted.

In *Sand County Almanac,* Aldo Leopold wrote a compelling description of the effect of bungled management via systematic predator extermination in our western states. "I thought that, because fewer wolves meant more deer, no wolves would mean a hunters' paradise . . . Since then I have watched state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a

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TARP, *from page 1*

in less pollution. In the first year alone, the Mainstream TARP system eliminated 80% of the combined sewage pollution problems throughout most of Chicago and 15 nearby suburbs. Still to be constructed is one tunnel for the north branch which will run directly under Sauganash Prairie Grove.

Last September, Larry Hodak discovered that a work area had been marked off within the Sauganash Prairie. After a week of investigation, he learned that it would be a work site for a drop shaft for the north branch of the TARP system. Included was a portion of prairie originally chosen for preservation because of its "rich mosaic of wet prairie, floodplain woods and swamp white oak savanna."

In October, Larry organized an informational meeting which was attended by The Nature Conservancy, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and the Forest Preserve District. The FPD and TNC provided information on the scope and importance of their work with the prairies in the Chicago area, while the MWRD discussed the flexibility in the TARP system plan. The TARP system plan could possibly be reconfigured or moved to leave the prairie site intact. This initial meeting allowed Larry to establish cooperative working relationships between the key parties.

After the October meeting, Larry wanted to ensure that plans discussed there would be implemented. He wrote to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and sent a copy to the FPD and the MWRD. He urged the Water Reclamation District to either relocate or reconfigure the proposed drop shaft, associated work area, and permanent access road in order to protect the prairie site. He emphasized that this is an especially rare ecosystem because no intact example has been identified in Illinois. Over 200 native plant species, including the state-endangered American slough grass (Beckmania syzigachne), have been recorded at Sauganash.

Richard Kotner of IEPA responded to Larry's request by asking the MWRD to review its facilities plan and address the stated concerns. Mr Kotner has since said that the IEPA will not approve the revised facilities plan until both the Illinois Department of Conservation and the North Branch Prairie Project approve it.

The MWRD has been a key cooperative player in the efforts to revise the work area plan to avoid damaging the savanna and, in particular, the site of the last recorded blooming of American slough grass. They have agreed to reconfigure the site so that it will be mostly located over a fifteen year-old former sewer construction area. Mr. Ayoub Talhami, Assistant Chief Engineer for the MWRD, recently submitted the revised plan to the IEPA for approval.

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Sauganash Prairie Grove, site of a Deep Tunnel dropshaft.

Beckmania syzigachne

Tarp, *from page 4*

In the Winter 1992 issue of *The Conservator*, Al Pyott, Executive Director of the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, is quoted as saying "It's clear that, in the long term, the stewardship component is just as important as the acquisition component. The two have to be brought together in a protection plan for each site." The TARP occurrence at the Sauganash site exemplifies just how important stewardship is. Without Larry Hodak's diligent actions as steward, continued preservation of the Sauganash Prairie site and protection of the state-endangered American slough grass would have been jeopardized. Everyone has benefited from the cooperation of all parties -- in other words, the exact definition of "cooperation." ◆

Seed News

By Laurel Ross and Karen Holland

1991 Results

Thanks to the hard work and many good ideas from volunteers, the North Branch 1991 seed collecting effort was a colossal success. Measured in sheer volume, the fall seed mix parties resulted in 50.75 Kitchen Garbage Bags (KGB's) of processed seed. There were also three different deliveries of berries and early ripening seed to stewards during the summer.

Jane and John Balaban, with the help of their computer, have provided the following data. There were 11 different seed mixes. Dry Mesic Open Savanna and Mesic Open Savanna were most plentiful. Mesic Closed Savanna was in meager supply. Priorities for 1992 will be set in part based on this information.

Seed was divided among nine North Branch sites and three seed sharing partners according to needs and availability. Seeds of the rarest species will be germinated in flats by Garden Coordinator Lindsay McGee and staff at the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG), then distributed to gardeners this spring.

We don't know yet what effect the drought may have had on the viability of seed. Lindsay and the CBG are doing germination tests which will shed some light on this later in the spring. Some species of grass certainly seemed to have had significantly reduced seed production.

The 1991 seed collecting committee, Jane Balaban, John Balaban, Joanne Softcheck and Laurel Ross, would like to thank everyone who participated in the effort. Special thanks to Susanne Masi for her front porch, her truck and her communication with CBG staff, who have generously offered to store our KGB's over the winter. Thanks to Robert Lonsdorf who recruited several large groups for specially designated seed collecting work days at Miami. Thanks also to Lee Hanson who hosted the Seed Mix Party at Emily Oaks Nature Center in November. Committee members Jane and John deserve a medal for their many contributions.

Rare Species Germination

About one year ago volunteer Preston Spinks asked the Chicago Botanic Gardens if the North Branch Prairie Project could use CBG facilities to propagate seeds for North Branch restoration efforts. Dave Sollenberger and other CBG staff were very accommodating and offered expert advise as well as the use of soil mixes, trays, potting tables and mist rooms. About 20 flats of seeds were planted in the spring of 1991 by North Branchers Bev Hanson and Lindsay McGee and cared for during the week by CBG staff.

Lindsay recognized that CBG was much better equipped to germinate rare seeds needed by the North Branch and asked Sollenberger if he would be willing to attempt propagation of 10-12 of the most rare seeds. In return, the North Branch would give CBG seed collected on North Branch sites, such as *Soledego rigida* and *Lespedeza violaces*, which are needed by CBG for their restoration

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Indians and Trails

By Tor Faegre and Mike Stachnik

The Potawatomi

Long, long ago, the Chicago area was home to several tribes, but by the time white people arrived at the end of the 17th century, the Potawatomi had moved down from Green Bay to dominate the region. The swampy North Branch was never particularly favored as a home, but any river is a good place to camp. It provided drinking water and canoe transportation and was easy to hunt the animals that came to drink there. In the forests along the riverbank firewood was plentiful, and the deer who yarded up in the winter woods made an easy target. So a few camps were set up on the banks of the North Branch each fall.

The Potawatomi made domed wigwams of bent saplings and covered them with rush mats. The mats, woven of cattails, could be rolled up and moved to the next camp. In summer, they constructed ridge-roofed houses covered with the bark of hickory, ash, or elm.

Before leaving camp for the summer buffalo hunt, they planted corn, beans, and squash and tapped sugar maples. They then left for the prairie where, in addition to game—bison, deer, and elk—they also gathered wild foods. By fall they returned to harvest the crops, collect tubers in the marshes, and set up new winter camps.

The Potawatomi's first contact with Europeans was with French fur traders, who treated them as equals and married the women. The Potawatomi excelled at trapping beaver and came to dominate the fur trade in the Chicago region. They also controlled the strategic portage between the lake and the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. But the fur trade also turned them into consumers of European-style food and goods; they gradually lost their own survival skills. When the fur trade declined, they were at the mercy of the foreign invaders. The onslaught of European diseases and increased warfare decimated the population.

The English, who replaced the French, looked down on Indian culture. They made futile efforts to turn the Indians into farmers and to "Christianize" them, but did succeed at diverting most of the remaining Indian lands to non-Indian ownership.

By 1820, the whites were determined to have the last Indian lands around Chicago. In fact, Andrew Jackson was elected on a platform that promised that all Indians would be moved west of the Mississippi. As a reward to the Potawatomi who had aided them in the Black Hawk War, the whites negotiated, in 1829, the Treaty of Prairie du Chien. It guaranteed that the Indians would receive annual payments in return for their removal to Iowa. (A small group of Potawatomi live there today.) Instrumental in negotiating the treaty was Billy Caldwell or "Chief Sauganash". Born of a Mohawk mother and an English father, his knowledge of both worlds enabled him to broker the pact. He was rewarded 1600 acres of land on the North Branch. (See Prairie

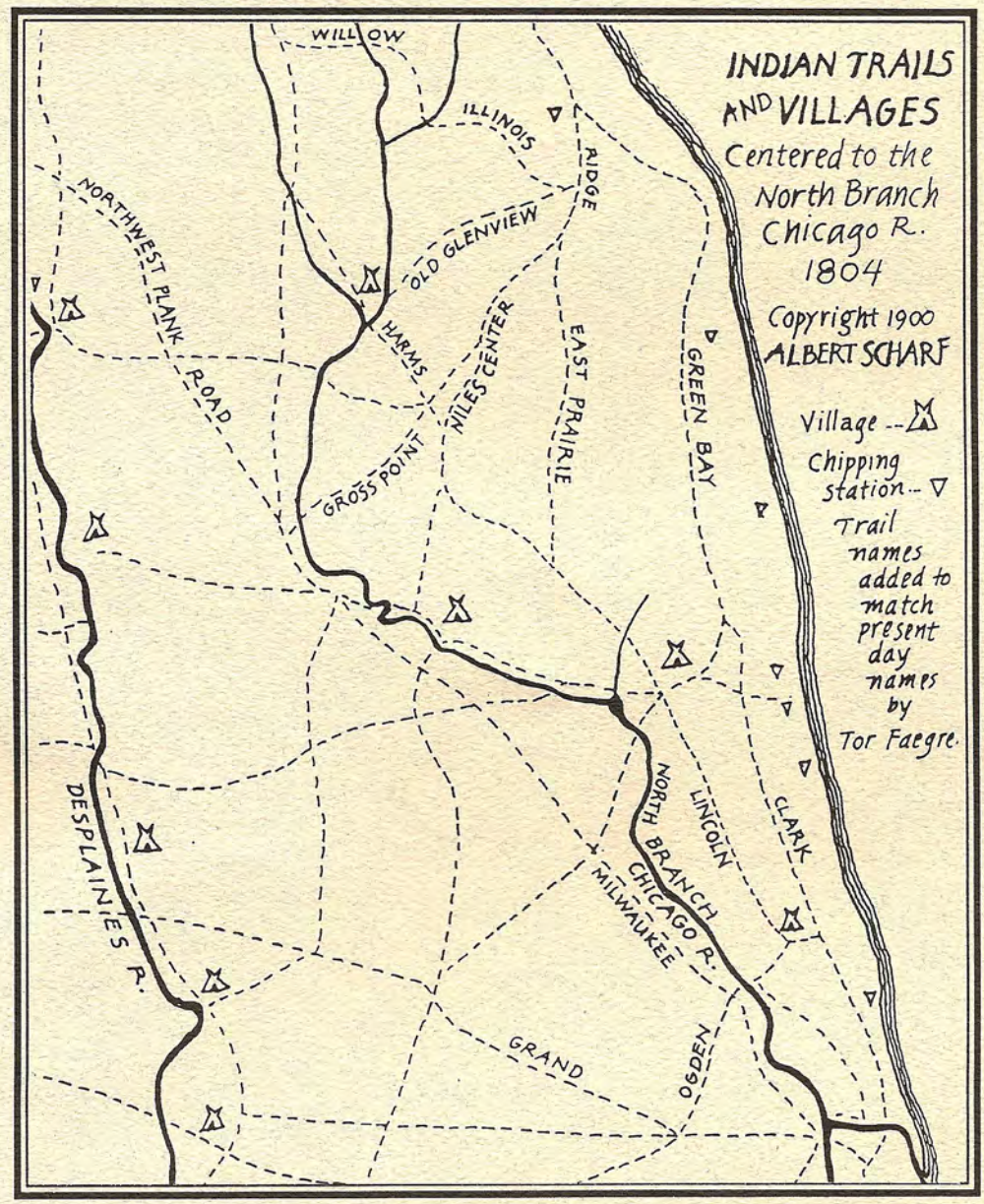
THE POTAWATOMIE TREE
A giant cottonwood was at Edens & Glenview Rd. (At Big Tree Lane). 165 ft. high X 45 ft. circumfrence. 600 years old when it fell in 1903. Hollow chamber at base said to hold 30 persons & used for Indian councils. Drawn from photos at Wilmette Historical Society by TOR.

Projections, January 1989.) Known as the Caldwell Reserve, the Bunker Hill Prairie is located there, and Caldwell Avenue, an old Indian trail, runs through it. Further west, along the DesPlaines River, the Robinson Woods Preserve was saved for Alexander Robinson, who also assisted in treaty negotiations.

The town of Wilmette was named after Archang Ouilmette for the part she played in the Treaty of Prairie du Chien. A Potawatomi who married a French trader, she was granted 1280 acres on the lake in present day Wilmette where she settled.

At Home

As whites moved in, evidence of Indian villages was quickly obliterated. But one old map, drawn by Albert Scharf in 1900, gives us a rough idea of their locations. The largest Potawatomi villages on the north side were on the highest elevations between the lake and the North Branch. One was just west of the intersection of Lincoln, Fullerton, and Halsted Avenues near the DePaul campus. Another was located at Bowmanville, near present day Rosehill Cemetery. Smaller villages were found at Niles Center (now Skokie) and another at the site of Evanston Hospital.



A village found in the fork of the North Branch (just north of Golf Road) was, according to Scharf, "the most romantic and homelike spot in the whole Chicago region—the gem of the Green Bay Trail." Early collectors found thousands of stone tools or flakes, indications of a chipping station. The high ground was composed of sand and gravel, good sources of raw material for arrow heads and tools. Down river from the village was a maple grove used first by the Indians, and later by whites, as a sugar bush in the spring.

Over a hundred years ago, an Indian cemetery was found on the West Fork of the North Branch. Gravel diggers in a pit in present-day Northbrook complained of finding so many Indian bones that they could not work. The foreman had them piled up and cremated. Thus, most evidence of Indian settlements is long gone. But, because their placement on high ground proved so useful to settlers that followed, the trails live on.

Today, Chicago is again an Indian center with a population of over 10,000. Potawatomi live in Michigan and Indiana, and the

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QIWETDEX, *from page 1*

Region by Swink and Wilhelm. Conservative species "are those that, while not necessarily uncommon, are usually found only in areas which are relatively intact ecologically. Every plant species in the Chicago region has been assigned a number from 1 to 10 *(and higher for very rare species)* which expresses its relative level of conservativeness in relationship to all other local plants."

For each species the following information is derived from QIWETDEX upon entry of a site specific listing of plant species: the scientific name, the common name, the physiognomy, the designated coefficient of conservatism (0 = weedy, 10 = conservative, 15 or 20 = rare), the National Wetland Category (obligate wetland, facultative or upland species), and a wetness coefficient (-5 = wet, +5 = dry). QIWETDEX then tabulates an overall index of site quality. Over time, changes in site quality can be demonstrated numerically.

For more information about this program, contact Linda Wetstein at the Morton Arboretum. ◆

Linda Wetstein demonstrates QIWETDEX.

Deer, *from page 3*

maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anaemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two to three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades."

The community you are attempting to restore generally won't function until you've supplied all of the necessary elements, including those that nature normally provides."

Jared Diamond

The deer was a highly valued animal to the Indians of the Midwest, not only for food, but as a source of hides for clothing, antlers for ornaments and tools, sinews for bowstrings, and brains for tanning hides. By some accounts, hunting did not deplete deer populations. Deer populations in Illinois have undergone major fluctuations since European settlement. Travelers' diaries from the early 1800s listed the white tail among the most numerous wild species in the state. It was the combination of uncontrolled market hunting and terrible winters that caused a rapid decline in the 1850s. In 1931, a U.S. game survey estimated that the last occurrence of deer in northern Illinois was in 1874.

Their dramatic comeback began with restocking by the Department of Conservation in the 1930s. By the mid 1950s numbers were so sufficiently recovered that public hunting was permitted in selected counties. Populations have continued to increase. Winters have been mild. Edge habitat has expanded. In local forest preserves where no large predators are tolerated, and where recreational hunting by people is impractical, numbers of white tail deer have reached levels so high that they now endanger the very habitat that supports them.

The ecological balance, made delicate by a host of other stresses on it, has been further disturbed by this population surge. Such intense pressure cannot be absorbed without having a major impact. Without human intervention, nature will take its course — starvation will eventually reduce populations. But before that happens many species of plants and animals will have been doomed. Serious losses have already been documented at Somme Prairie Grove.

Wild thing
You make my heart sing.

Popular song lyric

People are attracted to the Prairie Project by a love of nature, cherishing the forest preserves as places of beauty where it is possible to quiet our minds, nourish our spirits, and even to experience joy. As we are initiated into the discipline of ecological restoration we begin to see with more discriminating eyes. This has sweet rewards. Learn the local flora and, in September, you can see four different species of gentians from one spot on the trail in Miami Woods Prairie.

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Jane Balaban shows an herbarium speciman to a Grasses and Goldenrods class.

What Is an Herbarium?

By Nancy Frehafer

The August 1991, issue of *Prairie Projections* carried a front page story, "A Gift for an Herbarium," detailing how a gift of $750 from Dr. Margaret Murley of the Fort Dearborn Chapter of the Audubon Society had helped purchase equipment for a North Branch herbarium. But what exactly is an herbarium? According to the dictionary, an herbarium is "a collection of dried plants mounted and labeled for use in scientific study." Herbariums serve as scientific records and are also useful in educational programs such as the plant identification classes conducted periodically by the North Branch.

To prepare an herbarium, plants are first dried and pressed, then glued onto "herbarium" paper, specially prepared acid-free, heavy paper, about 12" x 16" in size. Labels indicate where, when, and by whom the plant was collected, and also what other plants were found near it. Then the plants are catalogued and stored in special cabinets. All of the data is then computerized.

There are several herbariums in Chicago. For North Branchers, the herbarium at the Chicago Academy of Science is possibly the most interesting because of the age and number of its specimens. Most of these plants were gathered in the Chicago area between 1870 and 1930. Thus, if the herbarium were organized, it would contain an excellent record of the native flora of our area - - invaluable information for us about original prairie plants.

But, according to Ron Vasile, Collections Coordinator at the museum, only 3,000 of these specimens have been catalogued, and of these, the data from only 1,000 have been computerized. 40,000 are still to be catalogued. Many of the plants have not even been mounted, but are pressed loosely between pieces of newspaper. (They were sitting in cardboard boxes until 1983!) Ron is eager to find a botanist, perhaps a student intern or a graduate student, to take on the long-term task of mounting, cataloguing and computerizing. For the right person, this project might generate several professional papers or a dissertation!

The specimens in the North Branch herbarium will be catalogued alphabetically by genus and stored in a controlled climate cabinet at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe. A hundred years from now researchers will be comparing our collection with the plants on their restored prairies. In the meantime, North Branch members as well as members of the Fort Dearborn Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society may use our herbarium and should contact Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877 to make arrangements. ◆

Seeds, *from page 5*

display of five prairie ecosystems. Sollenberger was pleased at the opportunity to add a new genetic source of seeds to his restoration project and readily agreed to propagate rare seed such as *Brachyelytrum erectum* (long-awned wood grass) and *Agropyron trachycaulum* (slender wheat grass).

Both the North Branch and the CBG work on Cook County Forest Preserve District (FPD) land, so they share the FPD's mission of restoring and preserving rare ecosystems. Cooperation has lead to the development of a seed sharing and propagating team which strengthens both the North Branch's and the Chicago Botanic Garden's efforts in support of that mission.◆

Nesting Bird Survey Results

By Jerry Sullivan

Nesting birds were the focus of surveys at five North Branch sites in 1991. Surveyors Bev Hanson, Joe Lill, Margo Milde, Judy Pollock, Laurel Ross, Jeffrey Rovner, Bill Valentine and myself discovered the following:

The bird life on North Branch sites is dominated by species whose favored habitat is edges, the brushy spots that typically mark the boundary between a woodland and a prairie. Notable species in this edge community include song sparrow, mourning dove, red-winged blackbird, yellow warbler, catbird, goldfinch, northern cardinal and indigo bunting.

We have two daytime raptors confirmed as nesting, the redtailed hawk and the American kestrel, and we have a broad-winged hawk as a possible nester at Sauganash. So far, we have not been able to confirm breeding for any owls.

Our standing dead timber gives us four species of woodpeckers as confirmed nesters and a fifth as a probable. The holes the woodpeckers dig may later be occupied by kestrels, great crested flycatchers, black-capped chickadees, house wrens, eastern bluebirds, starlings and house sparrows.

So far, we have not confirmed nesting for any prairie species along the North Branch. However, we do have sightings of eastern meadowlark, savanna sparrow and bobolink.

To hear more about the birds of the North Branch and plans for the 1992 survey, come to Emily Oaks Nature Center in Skokie on Wednesday, April 22, at 7:30 pm.◆

Deer, *from page 8*

There also are sorrows. Having learned to recognize the symptoms, we see languishing natural areas all around us. Many formerly abundant species of plants and animals are rare or gone forever. In their places exotic species abound: buckthorn, quack grass, and purple loosestrife; house sparrows and starlings; European skippers and cabbage white butterflies. Populations of some native species like cowbirds and deer are seriously out of balance. Human disturbance, in the form of development, vandalism, and misuse, has taken a toll. An invasion of killing brush has resulted from decades of fire suppression.

The combined effect of these pressures is profound. It is incumbent on us to take actions.

I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility), the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
William Cowper, English pre-romantic poet

Deer are beautiful and charismatic creatures. The prospect of shooting them is understandably distasteful to many people, and public debate on this subject has at times been emotional. In the course of researching this essay I have read much passionate dialogue. Some discussions have been excellent. Notably, the *Ryerson Almanac* has published several well-written, sensitive, informative articles over the past three years. Cynthia Gehrie provided a compelling ethical, spiritual, and political analysis of the deer issue in Cook County in the magazine, *Conscious Choice*. North Branch's own Jerry Sullivan has contributed to rational discussion in his "Field and Street" column in *The Reader*. Other writers may be contributing to the problem. For example, an article in New York Times Magazine referred to deer as "rats with hooves."

Friends. This is not a dispute between deer lovers and deer haters. Let us keep the focus on the ecosystem. The inescapable fact is that there is an acute and growing problem which will not improve until some of these animals are removed. ◆

All winter long
behind every thunder
guess what we heard!
- behind every thunder
the song
of a bird,
a trumpeting bird.

All winter long
beneath every snowing
guess what we saw!
- beneath every snowing
a thaw
and a growing,
a greening and growing.

Where did we run
beyond gate and guardsman?
Guess, if you can!
- all winter long
we ran
to the sun,
the dance of the sun!
Native American Song

Indians, *from page 7*

largest groups live on reservations in Kansas and Oklahoma.

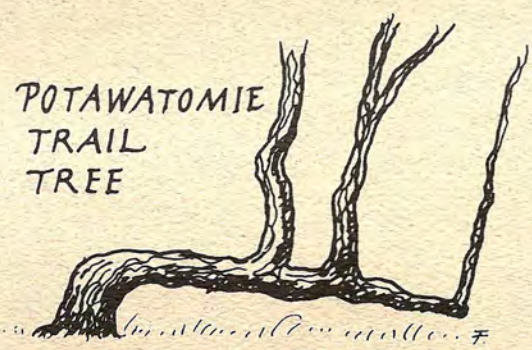
On the Trail

The North Branch area was largely swamp and flood plain. In spring much of the area was under water, but rising above the lowlands like great whales in an inland prairie sea, sand and gravel ridges provided dry ground year-round. These ridges, remnants of earlier lake shores, ran roughly parallel to the existing shore and are natural pathways.

A network of trails tracked the North Branch and followed the high ground to and from the lake. As the Potawatomi were forced westwards, the trails were turned into wagon roads and finally became concrete highways. Because the trails followed the natural contours of the land, many of these paths can still be traced today. Look at a map of Chicago and pick out the diagonal streets—Lincoln, Gross Point, Niles Center—these follow the high land and were originally Indian trails.

The most important path was the Green Bay Trail. It began at the mouth of the Chicago River and followed the "North Clark Sand Ridge" and other high ground all the way to Green Bay, Wisconsin. Early accounts tell how, from centuries of foot traffic, it was worn down over a foot deep. Green Bay Trail became the main artery for early settlers on the north shore.

After the Green Bay Trail, the most important trails ran northwesterly. Two of them, between the lake and the North Branch, became Lincoln and Elston Avenues, and two others located between the North Branch and the Des Plaines Rivers became Milwaukee Avenue and Northwest Highway—originally the "Northwest Plank Road" (one of the first roads in Chicago to be converted from mud to plank.)



A red oak, once at Davis & Sheridan, Evanston. Such trees, bent over & tied as saplings to indicate trails, were found throughout the North Shore.

One of the higher elevations on the north shore is found just inland from the lake above the Wilmette-Evanston Line on the "Wilmette Spit.". A great sand ridge spreads out to the southeast between old Gross Point (Wilmette) and old Niles Center (Skokie). The trails on this ridge became Gross Point, Niles Center, and Illinois Roads. Running east and west across the ridge and across the North Branch was a trail that became Wilmette Avenue and Old Glenview Road. Further north, an old portage trail running east and west connected the lake to the Skokie, North Branch, and Des Plaines Rivers.

Author's Note

Like other writers investigating the North Branch sites, I discovered how little information exists. There are many contradictions. One source said that the Indians wintered on the North Branch while another said they summered there. Lists of "native" foods sometimes included European imports like dandelion. This may stem from the fact that Indian culture disappeared quickly—even before settlement began. In my imagination, though, I see the Potawatomi living on the North Branch today, keeping the deer population in check and burning the prairies. ◆

Brookfield Zoo Offers Resources

By Jane Balaban

Several North Branch members - Karen Holland, Laurel Ross, Steve Packard and Jane Balaban - attended a luncheon meeting held by the Brookfield Zoo Sunday, January 12. Dr. Rabb, Director of the Zoo, expressed his willingness to make Brookfield Zoo resources available to volunteer groups in the area. Two possibilities were raised that are of interest to the North Branch. One was the use of audiovisual facilities and staff to help us make training films. The other was assistance from zoo scientific staff in designing and conducting animal studies on our sites, and providing training in the techniques of these studies. It's very preliminary at this point but it seems as though some good things could come of this! ◆

Preston Spinks, "gizmo extraordinaire", has done it again! The ***Wunderbar***, his latest invention, makes herbicide application easy on our backs and minimizes the amount of chemicals used. Thanks Preston.

Prairie Projections

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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

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