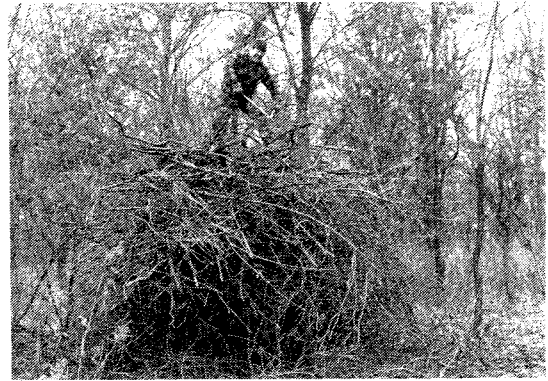


Brush Piles



NBPP's Refrigerator Door Companion

Winter 1993-94

HELLO, EVERYONE!

Kelly L. Treece, Volunteer Coordinator, Forest Preserve District of Cook County

As the new Land Management Volunteer Coordinator for the Forest Preserve District, I want to say right off that I think the members of the Volunteer Stewardship Network are some of the most dedicated, enthusiastic individuals I have ever had the pleasure to work with. I enjoyed talking to many of you at the Starved Rock conference and during various work days, and I look forward to more good times ahead.

My undergraduate degree is in environmental conservation and journalism and was earned at University at Colorado at Boulder. I directed a not-for-profit wilderness advocacy organization, the CU Wilderness Study Group, for two years. After a summer in my hometown, the Chicago region, teaching ecology and restoration techniques to inner-city kids, I went to Tucson as administrative director for The Wildlands Project. Fundraising, public relations, conference organizing, and coordination provided valuable experience.

Since starting on September 13, I have been listening to your advice. What I hear is: help the volunteers communicate more effectively with the Forest Preserve District; reduce confusion by standardizing Forest Preserve District policies; help regional groups share information with one another; and don't create any unnecessary paperwork. How fortunate that this is just what I was hired to do!

LIAISON

Let me open doors, smooth the way, get information.

PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS

This year I will be in charge of pesticide applications.

WORKSHOP/PROJECT COORDINATION

Along with Laurel Ross, I will coordinate workshops such as new volunteer orientation, plant identification, leadership training, etc. We are setting up a fire fighting training course for burn leaders and interested volunteers. It's the standard firefighters S130/S190 course. It will be held the second and third weekends in February, 1994.

MANAGEMENT REVIEW

In order to provide a direct way for stewards to have management plans approved, Ralph Thornton and I will review

and approve annual management schedules. This will give us a clearer picture of your forest preserve activities, and will relieve the nature center directors of this responsibility. A standard management schedule with guidelines will be ready by November 1.

It is great to see conservationists and government agencies working together to protect and restore native lands. Because of the Volunteer Stewardship Network, future generations may get to know what "home" is like in its natural state. I hope to be a catalyst. I look forward to working with you.

IN FOND MEMORY OF JIM CUTLER, OUR POET LAUREATE

Joanne Softcheck

The North Branch mourns the recent death of our good friend and ardent supporter, Jim Cutler, who passed away October 13 at the age of 74 after a long and courageous battle against leukemia and diabetes.

Jim was a gentle and generous man, always ready with a kind word and a helping hand. His spirited wit and lively sense of humor were displayed in his conversation and in his poetry, which has graced past issues of *Brush Piles*.

As a young man, Jim served in France during World War II. When he returned from the war, his lifelong love of books led him to a career as a product specialist for Silver-Burdett Publishing Company. Following retirement, he pursued his deep interest in anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics by taking numerous courses at Northeastern Illinois University. His yearning for learning never waned; from his hospital bed not long before his death he registered for a philosophy course he hoped to be well enough to take.

Jim's lifelong love of nature led him to the North Branch Prairie Project. From the beginning of his involvement as a North Branch volunteer, he steadfastly remained one of the most dedicated workers, devoting countless hours to restore the land. We will miss him very much.

Jim is survived by his 96-year-old cousin Margaret McConnell in Michigan and his cat Owl Pepper, now being cared for by a friend. Jim chose to be cremated, and, as he requested, his ashes will be spread on his mother's grave and on the prairie he loved.

NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT WINTER WORKDAYS AND ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

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 1993-94

December 4	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow
December 5	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Skokie Sedge Meadow & Watersmeet
December 5	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Skokie Sedge Meadow & Watersmeet
December 11	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
December 12	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
December 12	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
December 18	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
December 18	Saturday	6:00 p.m.	Harvest Feast
December 19	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
December 19	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
December 25	Saturday		Holiday
December 26	Sunday		Holiday
January 1	Saturday		Holiday
January 2	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Woods
January 8	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
January 9	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker Hill
January 9	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Buffalo Grove Prairie
January 15	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
January 16	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Buffalo Grove Prairie
January 22	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
January 23	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside/RR Prairie
January 23	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
January 29	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
January 29	Saturday	7:00 p.m.	Potluck Party
January 30	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
January 30	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
February 5	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie
February 6	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Skokie Sedge Meadow & Watersmeet
February 6	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Skokie Sedge Meadow & Watersmeet
February 12	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
February 13	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
February 13	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Buffalo Grove Prairie
February 19	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
February 20	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash Prairie
February 20	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
February 26	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
February 27	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
February 27	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Glenbrook H.S. Prairie
March 5	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods

In the winter we cut brush.. Always dress for the weather and bring some water. Sun protection is important. When it's cold we may go out for lunch. The workday hotline is 312-878-3877.

NORTH BRANCH WORKGROUPS

The North Branch workgroups listed below need volunteers. Contact the chairperson for more information or attend a workgroup meeting.

Ecological Management

Jane and John Balaban, 708-679-4289.

Education/Volunteer Development:

Joanne Softcheck, 312-878-3877

Publications/Publicity:

Karen Holland, 312-929-7658.

Next meeting: Monday, January 11 at 2048 W. Melrose, Chicago. (Call to confirm meeting date.)

Science:

Drew Ullberg, 708-304-6972

Call for information on next scheduled meeting.

ANNUAL HARVEST FEAST

Reza's Restaurants, at their new River North location will be the scene of the **ANNUAL NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT HARVEST FEAST**. Come on Saturday, December 11, at 6:00 p.m. to 432 West Ontario in Chicago. The parking lot is on Kingsbury and Ontario near the expressway. Let Joanne Softcheck (312/878-3877) know you are coming by December 10. The menu is Persian and vegetarian.

READ! TALK

March 6	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker Hill
March 6	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
March 12	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie
March 13	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
March 13	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
March 19	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
March 20	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
March 26	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
March 27	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove

Directions

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

BUNKER HILL/OXBOW (Chicago)—Meet at the Bunker Hill Forest Preserve parking lot on the west side of Caldwell Ave. about 1/4 mile north of Devon Ave.

EMILY OAKS NATURE CENTER (Skokie)—From intersection of Skokie Blvd. and Howard St., go east on Howard to first residential street, Knox. Go north on Knox to Brummel. Turn left on Brummel and go one block to Nature Center parking lot.

GLENBROOK HIGH SCHOOL (Northbrook)—North of Willow Rd. 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 the west side of Harms Rd., just south of Glenview Rd.

MIAMI-INDIGO (Morton Grove-Niles)—Meet at Miami Woods Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot on the east side of Caldwell Ave., two blocks north of Oakton Ave.

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

SOMME NATURE PRESERVE (Northbrook)—Meet in the Post Office parking lot, Dundee and Western Avenues.

SOMME PRAIRIE GROVE, WOODS (Northbrook)—Take Dundee Rd. two miles west from the Edens Expressway to Waukegan Rd. Go north a few hundred feet on Waukegan and meet at the unpaved parking area on the west side of the road.

WATERSMEET/SKOKIE SEDGE MEADOWS (Northfield)—Exit the Edens Expressway at Lake Avenue West. Go west to Wagner Rd., turn north then take Wagner to Winnetka Rd. Go east on Winnetka 3/4 mile. Park on the south side of the street.

WAYSIDE/RR PRAIRIE (Morton Grove)—Meet at Wayside Woods Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot on Lehigh Ave. (a few blocks east of Waukegan Rd. and just north of Dempster Ave.

Share (and perhaps, defend) your ideas, sharpen your thinking skills, expand your knowledge of the biosphere, and explore those wonders of nature that can be described between the covers of a book. Join the North Branch reading group!

Next gathering is 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 7, at the home of Neil Peck and Barbara Rose. Call 312/248-4817 for directions. You are welcome!

George Schaller's new book on panda conservation will be discussed. For more information, call Nancy Freehafer at 312/342-6665.

ANNUAL POTLUCK PLANNED

The North Branch Prairie Project will hold its 1994 Annual Potluck party on Saturday, January 29, beginning at 7:00 p.m., at the home of Rinda West, 4313 North Bell, Chicago, IL 60618 (312/463-9084). Everyone is welcome, but **RSVP** to Joanne Softcheck (312/878-3877) and let us know you are coming.

Bring a dish to share, and your beverage of choice. To celebrate our accomplishments, bring your North Branch slides and pictures from the past year. Musical instruments are welcome!



*Mountain mint
in the snow.*

Brush Pile Crew

Editing: Barbara Rose

Layout: Kathy and Chuck Lapinsky

CAMPING TRIP TO NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

Rinda West

Nachusa Grasslands, west of Aurora, was the site of a sweet tent city for about 20 North Branchers on October 9th. We were greeted by Nachusa's newly appointed steward, Bill Kleiman, whose hospitality kept us all warm despite an early frost.

After collecting seeds on Saturday afternoon, we gathered to watch Bonnie Walther split wood and Drew Ullberg tend a splendid fire. We munched until time for a dinner of pots of chili, cornbread, and several salads. Birthday kids Laurel Ross, Joanne Softcheck and Brian Seinfeld were presented with a tray of pastries from Lutz's by Karen Holland which they graciously shared.

The sated campers took some time for a fire circle. We passed around an improved talking stick and considered what we wanted to harvest from our personal lives this year. Afterward, Robert Lonsdorf and Jack Darin accompanied singing with their guitars. (For a real treat, ask Robert to play

"Rocky Raccoon" for you!) Coyote calls harmonized. The next morning Bill told of live coyotes which had gathered and sung in response to his playing tapes of coyote calls.

That night the temperature dropped to 26°F. When we awoke (some maintained that they never went to sleep), the prairie was brilliant with frost. Photographers scattered while the rest of us huddled around the fire and noshed on bagels. The morning warmed up, and we went off for more seeds.

As we worked, Karen Holland went around talking with the women about an idea: the women of the North Branch Prairie Project would adopt Dot's Knob at Nachusa. A few times a year we could put in work weekends in honor of Dot Wade. We received the idea enthusiastically and immediately headed for Dot's Knob to collect Buffalo Grass seed.

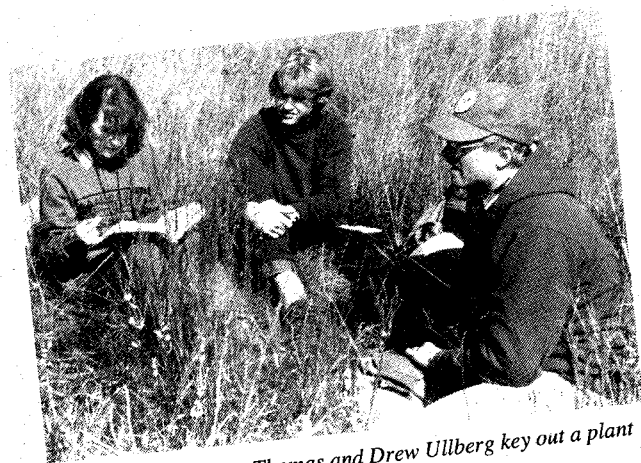
By this time the sun was high. The delicate seeds grow low to the ground, so the best position for collecting them is to lie on your belly while the grasses swim in and out of focus. The sun warmed our backs and, like field mice, we were content to collect seeds for winter meals. (For further developments on the Women's Knob and other volunteer opportunities at this beautiful preserve, watch these pages!)



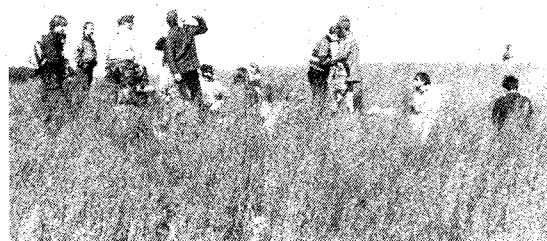
The North Branch tent city at Nachusa



Robert Lonsdorf and Nachusa Preserve Manager Bill Kleiman



Susanne Masi, Steve Thomas and Drew Ullberg key out a plant



Seed collecting at Nachusa

OSAKA VISITORS

Laurel Ross

I ask you, what finer way to spend the mild, sunny Columbus Day holiday than eating seaweed-wrapped, eel-filled rice cakes with friends after a satisfying morning of seed collecting.

Eight North Branchers (Karen Laner, Marian Howard, Hy and Gladys Bryer, Joan Meersman, John Kilis, P.K. Wilson and I) had the honor and pleasure of doing just that when we were hosts to the Osaka City Youth Leaders Mission at Somme Prairie Grove.

It seemed like a good idea to say yes to a request from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce to host a group of about 20 volunteers who work with Osaka youth, but the high spirits and rewards of shared learning exceeded all expectations. I noticed myself smiling more broadly than I have for a long time. With the language barrier, smiles were a good means of communication, but these men and women were as genuine, warm, and likable as I have ever encountered.

Somme was one of many stops on their jam-packed itinerary which included visits to three U.S. cities—San Francisco, Chicago, and mysteriously, Niagara Falls—to learn how young people can get involved in the outdoors, and to see what American volunteers are up to. They loved collecting seeds and asked many questions and were eager for us to learn about their programs and ideas.

After collecting bags and bags of seed, we went to the picnic grove at Somme Woods where they graciously set out their box lunches buffet style and shared their lovely and remarkable food with us. We got points for knowing how to use chopsticks, but had a lot to learn about the food. Twenty-two-year-old Noriko Doni, who spoke some English, sat next to me and beamed at every question. Asked about the delicious, but unrecognizable green vegetable we were eating, she looked in her Japanese-English dictionary and pointed shyly to "bracken fern." "These grow in our woods!" we erupted. She showed us her business cards which were printed on exquisitely folded red origami cranes. When we admired them she brought out origami paper and led us patiently through the process of folding the cranes.

After lunch, out came a wide variety of interesting objects and activities including a most difficult spinning top. The Chief of the Education Section Office of the Osaka city government presented an array of gifts: a charming wooden doll, handmade book marks, chopsticks, photos, and books about Osaka and the difficult top. (We need a North Branch Museum.) We took dozens of group pictures.

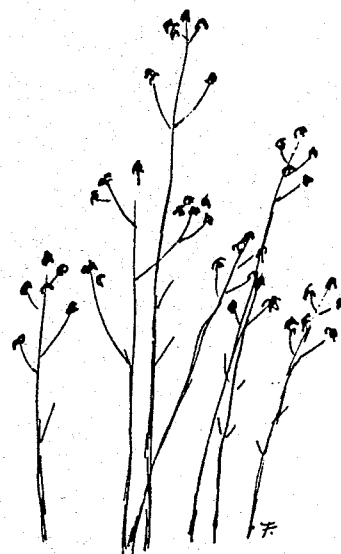
When it was time for the bus to leave, there were hugs and a promise to visit them in Osaka. So, here is a modest proposal: Let's organize a North Branch trip to Japan next year. What do you think?



Joan Meersman instructing our visitors on seed processing



Marion Howard explaining seed collecting to two of our Osaka visitors



SENEGAL VISITORS

Laurel Ross

North Branch is having a truly international fall. In late October, Jane Balaban and I introduced a Senegalese study tour to Bunker Hill at the request of friends at the U.S. Forest Service who admire our restoration work. Five senior officials who occupy high level policy-making and leadership positions in the Senegalese Reforestation Project included Ale Ndiaye, Secretary to the President of Senegal, and Sekou Gassama, Chief Forester. They walked and talked with us along the bike trail, one stop in their two week visit to our country "to observe and discuss policies, practices, and techniques for the application of forestry in development, in business and industry, and in conservation of resources."

Jane and I are fluent in neither French nor Wolof, the two major languages of Senegal, but the combination of an easy-going interpreter, Tim Donohue, and some knowledge of English among the visitors made communications not only possible, but fairly comfortable. We learned that Senegal is an independent republic located on the bulge of west Africa on the Atlantic coast. Its major crop is peanuts. Rapidly increasing urbanization is putting pressure on their natural resources as they look to their woodlands and forests to provide products, employment, and leisure.

The visitors listened intently as we described our work at Bunker. They are particularly interested in increasing grass

roots participation in urban forestry projects in Senegal. Our use of fire in management elicited a strong response. Fires are considered to be a serious problem in their grassland communities. The presence of a curious white-tailed deer near the trail prompted a lively discussion about our urban deer overpopulation, a baffling situation for which hunting seemed to be an obvious easy solution from their point of view. They took note of our emphasis on native species. One of their major interests is firewood production.

Our thanks to the U.S. Forest Service for giving us this opportunity. It was an honor to be included.

I have collected seeds with a number of groups this fall and gotten a wide variety of responses. Among them: Third graders from Lake Forest. "We learned about prairies in school last year. We dressed like pioneers." U.S. EPA employees. "It's so important to get out in the field. It makes the rest of our work feel more real." The Fort Dearborn Audubon Society. "This is so much more interesting than just doing identification." The Junior League of Evanston/North Shore. "This has meaning for the whole family. It's fun!" St. Ignatius High School students. "Let's do more seed collecting and less paperwork next time." and (my personal favorite) "The stewards are incredibly intelligent."

Laurel Ross

North

Branch

Prairie

Project

P.O. Box 74
Northbrook, IL 60065

**ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED**

*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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