

Brush Piles



NBPP's Refrigerator Door Companion

Spring 1993

CROSS-VOLUNTEER POLLINATION

By Drew Ullberg

Brush cutting, seed collecting, sowing seed, and prescribed burning can lead to a resurgence of toddler-like curiosity—"Why, why, why?" "How, how, how?" I wondered, "How are other volunteer groups managing their sites?" Somehow it seemed that this question could not be answered only by simple textbooks or even by veteran volunteers. Over the course of the past several years I have had the good fortune to participate in a wide variety of activities sponsored and organized by the North Branch Prairie Project. But now I needed to go afield!

To satisfy my inquisitiveness, I decided to pursue cross-group involvement. I participated in a few workdays held by Kane County Volunteers and Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards during the late fall of 1992.

At each workday I cut brush with standard North Branch vigor and determination and engaged in lively conversation with co-workers. To their credit, the knowledge of natural area management and restoration possessed by these Volunteer Stewardship Network (VSN) groups was impressive. Also noteworthy was their organization, enthusiasm, and obvious dedication (North Branchers are not the only crazies who cut brush in the snow!)

During this limited cross-group involvement I learned that conquering nuisance weeds and brush is a universally shared goal, herbicides are viewed as a necessary management tool, and that even the use of power tools is being re-evaluated.

Lots of mutually beneficial information was exchanged. For example, one workday we experimented with a brush-cutting tool called a "Swedish brush hook", and discussed using mineral instead of diesel oil as a herbicide-carrying agent. On another, I introduced volunteers to the time-saving tree-control technique of frilling.

From both groups, but especially Poplar Creek, I learned the meaning of "vast acreage." Where we North Branchers work on sites covering tens of acres, they have sites that span hundreds. On reflection, some of the brush management challenges faced by the North Branchers seem paltry compared to the grand scale faced by others.

Communication between the groups in the network has been established through the tireless and tremendous efforts of people like Laurel Ross and Steve Packard. To foster the mutually beneficial exchange of management techniques and to nurture region-wide camaraderie and friendship, I encourage North Branchers to occasionally participate in another groups' workday. Both veterans and neophytes can broaden their horizons. Myriads of benefits are to be gained by just one crossover experience. You might even get to work in a plant community not found at North Branch sites!

Although my exposure to their management practices was limited, I attained a greater understanding of how others are tackling challenging management issues. These visits stimulated a growing hunger for restoration knowledge—an appetite that may never be satisfied.

IT ALL ADDS UP!

By Joanne Softcheck

During 1992, some 379 wonderful volunteers contributed an impressive total of 6,105 hours of their time and energy helping to restore prairies and savannas at North Branch Prairie Project workdays. Some lopped and sawed buckthorn and other nonnative trees and shrubs; others pulled white sweet clover and garlic mustard weeds; and many collected, processed, and broadcast seeds of native grasses and wildflowers to increase the range and diversity of these plants at sites we are restoring.

"The American volunteer spirit is very great," I was told at a recent workday by one of our most dedicated volunteers, Takehiko Momose; and our 1992 tally certainly confirms his view. The North Branch sincerely thanks Mr. Momose, who will be very much missed when he returns to Japan in March after completing his three-year term as day school principal of the Chicago Futabakai Japanese Day School in Niles. We wish him well.

Thanks to each and every one of the spirited volunteers who came out to help last year. We hope to see you all again in '93!

NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT

SPRING WORKDAYS AND ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE 1993

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.

In the spring we cut brush and sow seeds. 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.

Spring 1993

March 6	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami/Indigo
March 7	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker Hill
March 13	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie
March 14	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
March 14	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Glenbrook H.S.
March 20	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
March 21	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash
March 21	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Woods
March 27	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
March 28	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside-RR Prairie
April 3	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
April 4	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG
April 4	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme NP
April 10	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme NP
April 11	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow (Easter)
April 17	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
April 18	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG/SM
April 24	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
April 25	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Woods
April 25	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
May 1	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
May 2	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
May 2	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme NP
May 8	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami-Indigo
May 9	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Woods (Mother's Day)
May 9	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Bunker Hill
May 15	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
May 16	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG/SM
May 16	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
May 22	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside-RR Prairie
May 23	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
May 23	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
May 29	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Skokie Sedge Meadow & Watersmeet
May 30	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme PG

NORTH BRANCH WORKGROUPS

The North Branch workgroups listed below need volunteers. Contact the chairperson for more information or attend a workgroup meeting. *The next Coordinating Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, March 24 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Drew Ullberg, 5539 N. Central, Chicago.*

Ecological Management:

Jane and John Balaban, 708-679-4289

Education/Volunteer Development:

Joanne Softcheck, 312-878-3877

Publications/Publicity:

Karen Holland, 312-929-7658

Science:

Drew Ullberg, 312-631-0332

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 11 at 5539 N. Central, Chicago

SPRING WORKSHOPS

Butterfly Monitoring Workshop

Saturday, March 6. 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Instructor: Ron Panzer, Doug Taron, and Don Stillwaugh

Location: To be announced

The first of two training sessions (Part 2 to be held in June) to participate at one of more than fifty sites. Butterfly data helps evaluate restoration progress. The Butterfly Monitoring Project is

Directions

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.

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, AND SEDGE MEADOW (Northbrook)—Take Dundee Rd. two miles west from the Edens Expwy. 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/SEDE MEADOWS (Northbrook)—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.)

Brush Pile Crew

Editing: Barbara Rose

Layout: Kathy and Chuck Lapinsky

To Apply: Write to Douglas Taron, Coordinator,
The Nature Conservancy.

Plant Monitoring Workshop

Saturday, March 13. 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: Morton Arboretum, Research Building

Learn to study endangered and threatened populations of local plant species. The basics of data analysis, as well as monitoring techniques, will be covered.

To Apply: Write a letter describing your interest to Plant Monitoring coordinator Duane Heaton at the Nature Conservancy.

Building an Effective Slide Presentation

Saturdays, March 13 and 27 (both required).

9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Instructor: Sandy Stein

Location: The Grove, Glenview

Participants will learn how to create an interesting presentation and get tips about improving performance. Both content and delivery will be covered.

To Apply: Call The Grove, 708/299-6096

Wild Gardening Workshop

Saturday, April 3, 1993. 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Instructors: Lindsay McGee and Laurel Ross

Location: Emily Oaks Nature Center, Skokie

Wild Gardeners collect the seeds of rare and beautiful Illinois flowers and grasses that once grew abundantly. They nurture them in their own gardens. This workshop helps you get started.

To Apply: Write to Lindsay McGee, The Nature Conservancy.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Docents Training Workshops

No experience is necessary to learn to lead interpretive nature walks, do hands-on stewardship projects and work with young people in the classrooms, prairies, savannas, woodlands, and wetlands of Cook County Forest Preserves.

To Apply: Write to Carla Vernon, The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy
79 West Monroe, Suite 900
Chicago, Illinois 60603
FAX (312) 346-5606



FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GAME AND FISH CONSERVATION COMMISSION OF ILLINOIS. FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 1913-14.

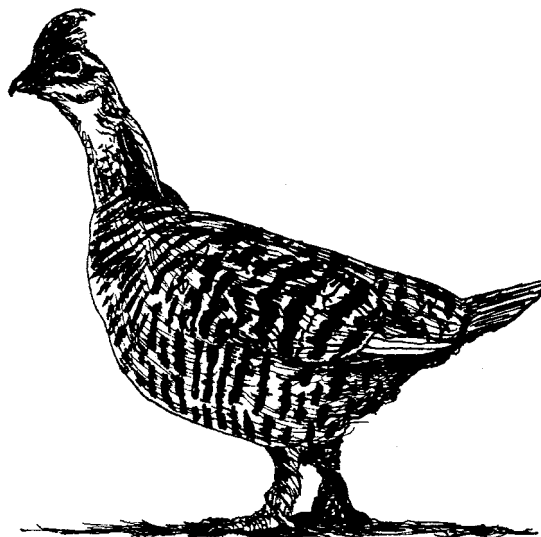
To the Governor:

The Prairie Chicken (Pinnated Grouse)

Like the buffalo and the Indian, the prairie chicken loves the solitude only to be found away from the haunts of the white man. A little touch of civilization is agreeable to the prairie chicken, for under such conditions he can have the broad prairies in which to roam with his mate and young and find a bountiful supply of good food on the farmers grain fields. So it happens that men now living in Illinois remember that when they were young and the country was sparsely settled and unfenced it was no great task for a good shot with a good bird dog to fill a two-horse wagon with prairie chickens as the result of a day's shooting. At that period there was a great amount of unbroken prairie which furnished good nesting grounds for the prairie chicken and room enough as well for such parade ground as this bird likes. Sportsmen used to come to Illinois in those days from New York, Boston and other Eastern cities to kill prairie chickens on our prairies, and they killed them each year by the thousands, without apparently decreasing the supply. In such favor was the sport of hunting prairie chickens at that time sportsmen crossed the ocean to spend a week or two on the prairies of Illinois shooting this bird. It will be recalled that the late King Edward VII, then the Prince of Wales, visited Illinois to shoot prairie chickens in the neighborhood of Wilmington in Will County.

No manner of game conservation will bring back the prairie chicken in such numbers as there were at the period referred to. Simply because the character of the country has been changed by the white man's plow.

Still there is left in the State a goodly number of this magnificent bird, and by a proper method of conservation this number may be greatly increased, so that in all parts of the State an opportunity to kill a small number of these birds each year may be offered the sportsmen.



Under our system of game reservations it is possible to keep in closer touch with these birds than could be done without having special sections of the country for propagation work. Patches where these birds may nest undisturbed in the spring may be easily controlled by the commission. Whereas, without such breeding grounds the birds would be forced to nest in undesirable places.

A good brood is the all essential thing. Once the chicks are able to run about in the grass and grain fields they are likely to develop into mature birds.

During the summer and fall months there is an abundance of food, and if proper protection is given the bird will go into the winter, strong enough to withstand the most severe weather, provided provision is made to have plenty of food which they may get at easily.

The reservations that will be selected throughout the State, on which special attention will be given the prairie chicken, are certain to hold a good supply of birds, for when they get off the reservation and are shot at they will be sure to return to the place where they know they will not be disturbed. While some of the birds will wander away and even raise a brood on adjacent territory, the great bulk of them will remain on the reservations, to hatch more birds that will seek a new home in the adjoining country.

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP NETWORK HONORS NORTH BRANCHERS!

The Volunteer Stewardship Network annual award luncheon took place on January 23 at the Brookfield Zoo. North Branch volunteers **Brian Seinfeld, Robert Lonsdorf, Sharon Gryska, Laurel Ross, and Lindsay McGee** received awards for their significant contributions to restoration efforts. Steve Packard and James Hotchkiss, Illinois Nature Conservancy board president, cited the efforts of each individual. Beautiful, engraved plaques were presented to all Cook County volunteers by Commissioner Herb Schumann and the Forest Preserve District's Chet Ryndak. **Lisa Deutsch** and **Ron Zywicki** received special honors for their coordination of *Prairie University*. Thank you to the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards for organizing the event.

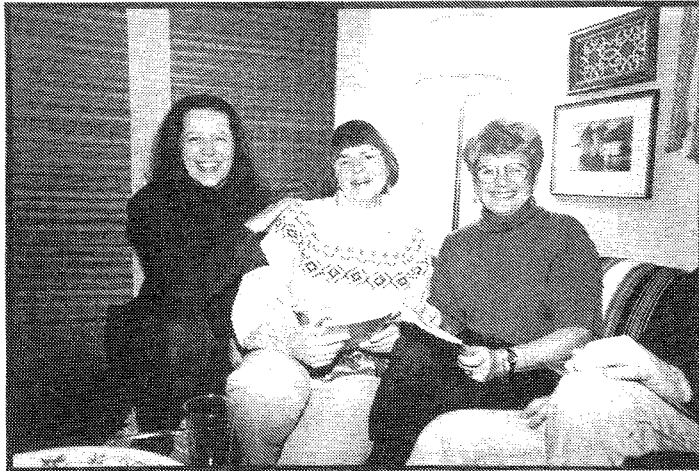
READING GROUP TO CONVENE

Nature and environmental readings can be incredibly provocative. A book discussion group provides an opportunity to share ideas, deepen knowledge, discover new depths of understanding. Nancy Freehafer is willing to lead monthly sessions. To sign-up and to suggest readings, call her at (312) 342-6665.

VOLUNTEERS-OF-THE-YEAR NAMED

Thirty-five North Branchers applauded the 1992 VOLUNTEERS-OF-THE-YEAR, Marion Howard and Joan Meersman. Laurel Ross cited the seed-collectors for their commitment to prairie restoration, when she presented them with copies of *Prairie Plants of Northern Illinois: Identification and Ecology*.

In addition to collecting seed during the week and doing preliminary processing, Howard and Meersman



Laurel Ross congratulates Volunteers-Of-The-Year Marion Howard and Joan Meersman.

are working with Suzanne Masi preparing a plant identification guide to be used in the field. They also participate in the Wild Gardening Project at the Chicago Botanical Gardens.

The occasion was the North Branch Prairie Pot Luck Dinner held on January 30 at the home of Judy and Allan Bluestone. Wonderful food, generous hospitality, and good company provided the celebration.



Judy and Allan Bluestone

FIELD PLANT IDENTIFICATION CLASS

at Harms Woods, May 22, 1993, 1:30-3:30 pm.
Instructor: Laurel Ross

Designed for the serious plant identification student with some previous experience. Bring a favorite field guide, Swink & Wilhelm (if you have it), a pencil, notebook, and hand lens.

The class will include:

- Identification of flowers and grasses in the field;
- Learning to identify plants by flowers as well as other distinguishing characteristics;
- Participants will key out at least one plant;
- Worksheets and other appropriate materials will be provided.

Class size: Limit 15 Fee: \$2 per person
See directions under the Spring Workday Schedule

REGISTRATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Day phone: _____ Night phone: _____

Mail this completed form & your NBPP check to:

Joanne Softcheck, 4537 N. Hamilton, Chicago, IL 60625

VIDEO CHALLENGE

Interested in helping to make a video about the restoration work of the North Branch Prairie Project? We are looking for a coordinator and a team of creative thinkers, writers, designers, and "videographers" to work together on this project.

The North Branch has been invited to produce a video about our restoration work at Somme Prairie Grove for broadcast on NCTV (Northbrook Community Television), a local cable channel. We would also receive a copy of the video to use for our own recruiting and educational programs.

Additional videos of our work at other sites could also be produced for various local cable channels serving the communities where each site is located.

If you are interested in being a part of a video team, or have any questions about this, call Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877.



THE BLUE-SPOTTED SALAMANDER

By Karen Holland

It was the crow who first pointed out the way. "This way," she kept saying. "You must come this way where the ground is moist and the food is plentiful."

The small, blue-spotted salamander, recipient of this advice, did not entirely trust the crow's loud, raucous response to his request for help. But having found no suitable place for a home thus far, he started in the direction indicated by the shiny, black bird.

Soon, as if to confirm the crow's good sense of direction, two geese circled overhead, then swooped and dipped to the earth, out of the salamander's sight. He heard the soft splash as the geese touched water.

The salamander hurried in the direction of the geese. The distance was great. Just as he was tiring, three meadowlarks flew overhead. They encouraged him to continue. "You are close to a good place," they said.

Rain began to fall gently even as the sun peeked from behind clouds long enough to warm the air. The blue-spotted salamander, fatigued, found a pile of wood inviting. He decided to rest for a while on a damp, mossy, well-shaded log.

"So you've finally come," said a friendly voice. The salamander, examining the length of the log, discovered the originator of the salutation. A very small, round, gray, fuzzy mouse sat a short distance away. "They will be happy that you've come," said the mouse. "They've been waiting a long time."

"They?" The salamander was puzzled.

"The Prairie People," answered the mouse. "They have been working many years to make this place ready for you."

"Good heavens," said the salamander. "This is all they've managed to do?" He looked at the sparse vegetation surrounding the wood pile. Not more than a half dozen kinds of grasses and forbes were visible.

"Well," said the mouse. "It does get a little better over that way." He nodded toward distant tallgrasses, thicker and lush looking. The mouse continued. "They have very good intentions. By the way, you are considered to be somewhat of a special creature, sacred almost. One or two of the Prairie People might even talk to you."

Just at that moment, the blue-spotted salamander was lifted into the air and found himself looking at a number of very large humans.

"Welcome," said Brian, the Prairie Person who had picked him up.

"Welcome to your new home," said the other Prairie People.

The salamander was a bit shaken. These humans were talking to him, and he could understand them. "Better make the most of this," he thought.

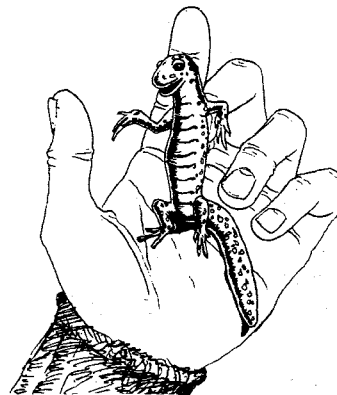
"I haven't decided to make this my home just yet," said the salamander.

"What can we do to make you so comfortable that you will never want to leave?" asked Joanne.

"First," said the salamander, "I need a little more vegetation as habitat than what seems to be surrounding this space."

"We will take you to the tallgrasses next to the pond," responded Joel. "You will be able to hide and stay cool there."

"I also need a good supply of my favorite, tasty foods."



"Wonderful, delectable morsels will be provided for you," answered Chris without hesitation.

"Finally," said the salamander very quietly and quite seriously, "my new home needs to be protected from bulldozers and trampling feet and thieves."

"We will do our best to keep this place safe from all destruction," promised all of the Prairie People.

The blue-spotted salamander considered very, very carefully what was said. "Well then," he said. "I will stay."

The salamander was transported to the tallgrasses by the pond. He looked around at the cordgrass and spring growth of big bluestem and Indian grass nearby. He was surprised to see phlox, milkweed, and spiderwort shoots. Tiny insects flitted past and buzzed and chirped. The earth was fragrant and enticing.

"Thank you," said the blue-spotted salamander, pleased at his new surroundings. "Keep up the good work, Prairie People!"

SCIENCE WORK GROUP SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

Assist with the on-going herbarium, monitor butterflies, or inventory vegetation projects. These are just a few of the projects and studies we do to expand knowledge of our sites.

But don't be fooled by the group's title. You need not be a trained scientist. Help with literature research, archiving, taking field notes, counting plants or insects, or preparing reports. Veteran volunteers and/or specialists will train you to do the specific tasks.

The only prerequisites are ambition, determination, and curiosity about the natural world. (An eye for detail helps.)

The mission of the Science Work Group is to initiate, coordinate, and catalog research-related projects occurring on sites under the stewardship of the North Branch Prairie Project.

In addition to the on-going projects, the Science work group hopes to begin:

- detailed studies of the wonderful marshes in Somme Woods,
- an official North Branch Prairie Project insect collection,
- quantitative plant sampling in selected areas in order to evaluate management effectiveness.

Interested? Contact Drew Ullberg, at 312/631-0332 for more information.

Next meeting: March 11, 1993.

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Residence of Drew Ullberg
5539 N. Central Avenue, Chicago