

Brush Piles



NBPP's Refrigerator Door Companion

Spring 1994

COYOTE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Wiley Buck

The efforts of North Branch volunteer and Oakton Community College teacher Rinda West were rewarded on Wednesday, January 26, when Oakton biology and English students had their first field day at Somme Prairie Grove and Woods. As part of a semester-long class project, the students will be performing a study on coyote diets and gathering other pertinent coyote information.

Originally proposed as a project to the Cook County Science Committee, Rinda became interested because the idea had the potential to engage students. She introduced the idea to her colleagues Gene Carr and Terry Trobec, who were immediately agreeable.

The field day was full of information and fun. Laurel Ross gave a short course in prairie and savanna ecology. Wiley Buck summarized the coyote project. A tracking lesson was given by Tim McAllister. Mary Hanlon captured it all on film.

The students will be collecting coyote scat and analyzing its contents. They hope to determine what coyotes are eating, how many are frequenting Somme, and whether or not they bred successfully this winter.

Note to all North Branch Stewards: Based on observations by Tim McAllister of coyote tracks at Somme Woods, it is believed coyotes may be inspecting brush piles as possible den sites. They are likely to dig beneath the brush piles. Coyotes are known to build more than one den, using the second as a back-up in the event they have to abandon the first.

The next several months are critical for the breeding success of coyotes. In January and February, they pair up, build dens, and mate. Pups are born in April or May with their eyes closed. Therefore, we are asking all stewards to check for the presence of coyote dens before burning a brush pile. If a den is found, especially during the next several months, please keep disturbance in the area to a minimum.

If you have any questions about coyotes or want to help with the Coyote Project, please call Wiley Buck at 312-252-4085 or Tim McAllister at 708-480-0868.



NORTHERN NEIGHBORS

Tor Faegre

In January, as part of an effort to get to know our neighbors, Somme Nature Preserve Steward Laurel Ross and I introduced ourselves to Underwriters Laboratory employees. Underwriters Laboratory borders the Preserve to the north. We discovered that the corporate park consists not only of buildings and lawns but a prairie.

Underwriters groundskeepers Don Reckling and friends proudly showed us the prairie, first planted in 1985. It lies on the sloping sides of a deep pit with a pond at the center. Ducks, geese, and swans inhabit the pond. The prairie is burned occasionally. The pit is the result of years of clay mining for the brickworks that used to operate on the site. The building that used to house the brick kilns still stands.

Our hosts expressed an interest in learning more about restoration and requested North Branch expertise in managing their prairie. In turn, Underwriters employees were invited to join us on North Branch workdays.

Welcome to the Restoration Neighborhood, Underwriters!

NATIONAL CLEANUP WEEK ON THE NORTH BRANCH

The North Branch Prairie Project will participate with the Friends of the Chicago River and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County in National Cleanup Week. On May 15, from 9 am to 1 pm, volunteers will pick up trash at 10 sites along the North Branch. One of NBPP's restorations, Harms Woods, is one of the 10 sites. The cleanup will be followed by a picnic lunch at a central location.

For more information about the cleanup or the location of the other nine sites, call Joanne Softcheck at 312-878-3877.

COMING SOON TO YOUR MAILBOX

The North Branch Prairie Project 16th Year Report!

Expect good reading sometime in March. (The report replaces February's *Prairie Projections* this year. Don't worry, *Prairie Projections* will be back in August.)

NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT SPRING WORKDAYS AND ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

The NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT is working to restore and manage the few remaining prairie and oak savanna 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 plant 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 1994

March 5	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
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
April 2	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
April 3	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash
April 9	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet
April 10	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside/RR Prairie
April 16	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet
April 17	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
April 23	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
April 24	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
April 24	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
April 30	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside/RR Prairie
May 1	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie
May 1	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Sauganash
May 7	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet
May 8	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
May 8	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Perkins Woods
May 14	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods
May 15	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
May 15	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
May 21	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Woods
May 22	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet/Skokie Sedge Meadow
May 22	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Perkins Woods
May 28	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie
May 29	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker Hill
May 29	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Bunker Hill

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

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.

Next meetings: Thursday, March 17 and Tuesday, May 17 at 5143 W. Morse, Skokie

Education/Volunteer Development:

Joanne Softcheck, 312-878-3877

Publications/Publicity:

Karen Holland, 312-929-7658.

Science:

Drew Ullberg, 708-304-6972

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 8 at Emily Oaks Nature Center

READING GROUP

The North Branch Reading Group has been meeting every month for a year and have discussed a variety of books from E.O. Wilson's *Diversity of Life* to George Schaller's *The Last Panda* and Wendell Berry's *What Are People For?* We've had a great time examining old and new ideas and relating our readings to our experiences as urban prairie restorationists and nature-lovers.

In the next year we look forward to the discussion of more current books as well as some classics by writers like Muir, Leopold, and Dillard. If you are interested in coming, don't feel *obligated* to read the whole book, though you'll enjoy the discussion more if you do. In addition, don't hesitate to suggest your favorite book for a future session. Here's the schedule for the next few months:

March 16: *The Voice of the Earth*, on the age of "ecopsychology," by Theodore Roszak. Rinda West, leader.

April 18: An evening with Whitman and other nature writers interpreted

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.

PERKINS WOODS (Evanston)—From I94 exit at Old Orchard Rd., east to Crawford St., south on Crawford to Grant St., east on grant to Ewing St., site is at the corner of Grant and Ewing.

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 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.

GIBSON WOODS WORKDAY

Remember the North Branch Nachusa Grasslands camping trip? How about a day trip to northwest Indiana? The Friends of Gibson Woods invite the volunteers of the North Branch Prairie Project to cut brush, tour, and lunch with them on Saturday, May 28. The Illinois Native Plant Society will be there too, which means there'll be many experts on hand to talk about the special plants thriving in this remnant dune and swale ecosystem. Let's join our Indiana neighbors for a day of discovery! For more information, call Karen Holland at 312-929-7658.

by Robert Lonsdorf.

May 25: "The Savanna Controversy"—a series of articles, criticisms and responses in recent journals. Steve Packard, leader.

June 21: Celebrate the Summer solstice and discuss *Young Men and Fire*, by Norman McLean. Laurel Ross, leader.

Please call Nancy Freehafer (312-342-6665) for more information.



AN EXHIBIT

Experience the native prairie through the eyes of five established artists of the Chicago region:

John Stribrny—Oil Painting/Landscapes
January 31 to March 13

Fred Dreger—Watercolour/Wildlife
March 14 to April 18

Tim Burke—Photography/Native Prairie
April 19 to May 30

John Harmon—Ceramics
May 31-June 30

Tor Faegre—Etchings/Carvings/Furniture
July 1 to July 31

*The
Prairie Arts
and Antiques*

6-1/2 S. Prospect
Clarendon Hills, IL 60514
(708) 789-9897

Open: Tues-Sat. 10-5 p.m.

Fine Nature and Art and Gifts

Brush Pile Crew

Editing: Barbara Rose

Layout: Kathy and Chuck Lapinsky

A walk-a-thon at ~
River Trail Nature Center
3120 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Northbrook, Illinois
(708) 824-8360

Walk For **MORE** In '94

On April 23, 1994, as a part of Earth Day 1994, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the nature center and its citizen volunteers will host a walk-a-thon, Walk For More In '94. Funds raised will aid in the center's programs and activities involving conservation, habitat restoration, wildlife rehabilitation and environmental education.

Conservation
Habitat Restoration
Wildlife Rehabilitation
Environmental Education



A similar event will be held at the District's five nature centers, River Trail, Crabtree, Little Red Schoolhouse, Sand Ridge, and The Harold "Hal" Tyrrell Trailside Museum. All of the District's facilities will be co-hosting the event with recognized local volunteer groups. Proceeds collected will be utilized by the co-hosts to expand and improve environmental activities here in Cook County.

We are seeking your help and involvement. An event of this kind needs as many sponsors and pledges as possible. Sponsors are being sought for donations, prizes and pledge support for the walkers. Individuals can also seek out pledges of fixed donations or a pledge agreement to donate per mile walked.

We would like to see a big turn out. Walking is the best exercise and each walker can cover the distance of their choice. Each participant means support and interest in our County's natural heritage.

Co-hosted by - Forest Preserve District of Cook County
River Trail Nature Center
and volunteer groups

For information, call River Trail at (708) 824-8360

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

536 North Harlem Avenue, River Forest, Illinois 60305

(312) 261-8400 (708) 366-9420 1-800-870-3666

TDD# (708) 771-1190 (for hearing impaired)

Richard J. Phelan, PRESIDENT

Joseph N. Nevius, General Superintendent



CLASSES/LECTURES

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

The Nature Conservancy

79 W. Monroe, Suite 900, Chicago, Illinois 60603

Requirements: These courses are open to active stewards, co-stewards, and monitors in the Volunteer Stewardship Network. Preregistration is required for all classes. To do so, follow the instructions within each course description. Only when no other instructions are given call 312-346-8166 to register.

Butterfly Monitoring Workshop, Part 1. Since 1987, trained volunteers have been monitoring butterfly populations at natural areas in northern and central Illinois. The data they have collected is proving to be extremely valuable in helping to evaluate the progress of the recovery of restoration sites. The presence or absence of some invertebrate species can be an important indicator of health. Currently nearly fifty sites are being monitored, but more monitors are needed. This workshop is the first step in being trained to participate in this program. To apply write a letter describing your interest to Douglas Taron, Butterfly Monitoring network coordinator, at The Nature Conservancy. Instructors: Ron Panzer, Doug Taron, and Don Stillwaugh. Saturday, March 12 from 9:00-noon. Location to be announced. (Part 2 will be a field class held in June.)

Plant Monitoring Workshop. Volunteer plant monitors are trained to study surviving populations of endangered and threatened species of plants at local natural areas. Topics covered in this workshop include a number of monitoring techniques as well as the basics of data analysis. To apply to participate write a letter describing your interest to Plant Monitoring coordinator Duane Heaton at The Nature Conservancy. Locations to be announced. April 10 (south/ southwest regions of Northeastern Illinois); April 30 (north/northwest regions of Northeastern Illinois).

Introduction to Soil Science.

Part 1: March 10, 7:00-9:30 PM, location to be announced. Class room introduction to soils. Topics will include: physical characteristics of soil, how and why soils differ, interpretation of soil properties, soil formation processes, how to determine probable native vegetation from soil characteristics, characteristics of wetland soils, and a brief overview of the soil classification system.

Part 2: March 26, 9:00-11:30 AM, Miami Woods Forest Preserve Follow-up Field Activity. Hands-on, close-up look at soil features. Will discuss the implications of different soils in site management. A hand lens would be helpful, but not required. Dress for the weather.

Wild Gardening Workshop. Hundreds of home gardeners currently participate in this important project, and many more are needed. The limiting factor in many restoration projects is the availability of the seeds of the rare and beautiful flowers and grasses which once grew abundantly in Illinois prairies, woodlands, and savannas. Using techniques and guidelines developed by the North Branch Prairie Project, Wild Gardeners are trained to care for and collect the seeds of these plants in their own gardens. This workshop provides the information necessary to get started. For more information about the Wild

Gardening program write a letter describing your interest to Lindsay McGee at The Nature Conservancy. Instructor: Lindsay McGee. Saturday, April 23, 9 am to noon and Sunday, May 1, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at North Park Village Nature Center.

Docent Training Workshops. Volunteers are trained to work with young people in the classroom and in the field. Activities included in this new program called the Mighty ACORNS will be interpretive nature walks, hands-on stewardship projects, and other direct experiences in the prairies, savannas, woodlands, and wetlands of the Cook County Forest Preserves. No previous experience is required. To participate in this program write a letter describing your interest to Diane Reckless at The Nature Conservancy.

Other workshops to look for in 1994:

Historical Perspectives of the Forest Preserves:

Presettlement Landscapes

Exotic Species Control

Burn Workshops for the Beginner

Stewardship Training Series

Natural History Workshops

Bird Walk, Sunday, April 10, 7:30 am at Harms Woods.

Wildflower Walk, Sunday, May 1 1:00 pm at Harms Woods.

Call River Trails Nature Center at 708-824-8360 to register. (No fee)

Prairie Burn

*Standing there holding death in my hands.
So hot and bright. So powerful.
Looking out at life in color.
Bending down, touching death to the ground.
A ball of flame is produced.
As the wind blows the thick, black smoke,
We destroy life to produce new life.
Killing off all the intruders.
The wind scatters the seeds of life.
Seeds that come from dying plants.
The ground that once was color,
Now is black and white.
Everything is gone.
All that remains is ashes and dust.
New plants will start to grow.
To produce more seeds.
The cycle of life will continue again.
Whatever is supposed to be there,
Will continue to grow.
What is not, will die forever.*

By Shari Gill
October 20, 1993
Morton High School Class of 1994

WHAT A WONDERFUL EVENING

Karen Holland

Pleasant conversations, good food, and fun photo and video viewing marked the North Branch annual potluck event held on January 29, at the home of Rinda West. Thank you, Rinda, for being yet another in a long line of perfect potluck hosts.

Three volunteers received North Branch Volunteer of the Year awards. Drew Ullberg is the proud owner of the new Swink and Wilhelm *Plants of the Chicago Region* for his work as Chair of the Science Workgroup and for the small white lady's slipper orchid save he orchestrated over Memorial Day weekend at Buffalo Grove. Justine Kusner also received the new Swink for her work in community education. Chris Urban received the book *Plants of Kane County* for organizing the North Branch Emergency Response Group.

North Branch photographers Rick Gabriel, Karen Holland, Susanne Masi, Laurel Ross, and Drew Ullberg, drew oohs and aahs from an avid audience. Larry Hodak brought the video of *Dennis the Menace*, featuring scenes from our own Indigo Oak Openings.

Congratulations, Award Winners! Thank you to everyone for an enjoyable, wonderful evening!

WILD GARDEN WORKSHOPS

This spring the North Branch Prairie Project Wild Garden program will hold two introductory workshops to train new volunteers who are interested in becoming seed propagation gardeners for the North Branch Prairie Project.

Both workshops will be held at the North Park Village Nature Center, 5801 North Pulaski Road, in the Nature Center building (look for the big tipi).

The dates are: Saturday, April 23 from 9 am to 12 noon. Sunday, May 1 from 1 pm to 4 pm.

The workshops are free but you *must* register by calling Lindsay McGee at 312-346-8166 or 312-871-1293.

The workshops will provide all the basic information you need to get started as a North Branch Wild Gardener. Individual plants will be discussed and available for adoption.

For gardeners who have already attended an introductory workshop but are interested in adopting more plants, you may pick up plants on Sunday, May 1 from 3 pm until 4 pm. However, please call Lindsay at the above phone numbers to discuss what plants are available and the quantity you would like to adopt.

Permit Holder:

The Nature Conservancy
79 W. Monroe
Chicago, IL 60603

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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