

Brush Piles



NBPP's Refrigerator Door Companion

Summer 1995

NORTH BRANCHERS "STAR" IN NEW BOOK

The accomplishments of the North Branch Prairie Project and founding member Steve Packard are chronicled in a recently published book by *New York Times* science writer William K. Stevens, *Miracle Under the Oaks: The Revival of Nature in America* (New York: Pocket Books). The author attended North Branch workdays and interviewed many past and present volunteers before writing this inspirational account of the origins and growth of restoration ecology.

Steve's landmark work in discovering and restoring Vestal Grove, Somme's lovely oak savanna, is the book's central theme. Also profiled are prairie experts and mentors Dr. Robert F. Betz and Ray Schulenberg, whose pioneering restoration work at Fermilab and The Morton Arboretum is described. Mr. Stevens' book also recounts the contributions of many more scientists and volunteers who have played key roles in studying and preserving Illinois' natural heritage; as well as the endeavors of several individuals leading volunteer restoration movements in other parts of the country.

Gina Maranto, in her review published in a special "Earth Day '95" section of the April 23 issue of *The New York Times Book Review*, writes that the description of Steve's quest to "bring back to their precolonial splendor a chain of similar sites along the Chicago River's north branch" after finding a remnant of original Illinois prairie there during a bike ride in 1975, "makes for lively reading." Ms. Maranto also notes that "volunteers like those on the north branch project have reaffirmed the vital place of the dedicated amateur in the natural sciences..." The long list of North Branch volunteers who are quoted in the book attests to that.

Mr. Stevens' book describes the important contributions of many individuals who have played key roles in the North Branch Prairie Project over the years, as well as those leading the growing restoration movement in other parts of the country.

Miracle Under the Oaks, a book of particular interest to North Branch volunteers, will be discussed at the September gathering of the North Branch Reading Group. Check the Fall issue of *Brush Piles* for information on the time, date and location.

INDIAN WOODS KICK OFF

The first workday at Indian Road Woods was a grand occasion. A St. Andrews Learning Center Science Club, whose members are home-schooled students from all over Chicago, provided forty hard workers. Twenty North Shore students joined in the fun.

The Riverkeepers program of the Friends of the Chicago River, represented by Bill Koenig, enrolled the science clubs to do their ecology project on the newest North Branch site near Elston and Central.

Apprentice Steward Dave Eubanks, working with old pro Steward Larry Hodak and the EcoMan Committee, developed a management plan and did some preliminary clean-up. Dave, a greenway planner with the Cook County Forest Preserve District, will be making presentations to neighbors to introduce them—and involve them—in restoration work.



Photos courtesy of Hollis Friedman, Forest Preserve District of Cook County

NORTH BRANCH PRAIRIE PROJECT SUMMER 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

SUMMER 1995

June 3	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside Prairie
June 4	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
June 10	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
June 11	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
June 11	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
June 17	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Woods
June 18	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
June 18	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Wayside Prairie
June 20	Tuesday	7:30 p.m.	Book Group
June 25	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash Prairie Grove
July 1	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside Prairie Grove
July 2	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Bunker Hill Prairie
July 2	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Bunker Hill Prairie
July 4	Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Flatwoods
July 8	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
July 9	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
July 9	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
July 15	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
July 16	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside Prairie
July 22	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie (Bunker Hill)
July 23	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
July 29	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
July 30	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods Prairie
August 5	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie (Bunker Hill)
August 6	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
August 13	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
August 19	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
August 20	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
August 20	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
August 26	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
August 27	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
August 27	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods

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.

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

wild communities to flourish as a permanent part of the metropolitan area.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPRING CHIWAUKEE PRAIRIE NATURE WALK & BRUSHMEISTER BARBEQUE

Date: Sunday, May 28, 2:00 p.m.
(after the regular workday)

Time for the annual pilgrimage to Chiwaukee Prairie on Memorial Day to see a dazzling display of spectacular shooting stars in resplendent bloom. Located along the lake at the Illinois/Wisconsin border, Chiwaukee Prairie is The Nature Conservancy's richest and most biologically diverse prairie in Wisconsin—over 400 native plant species have been inventoried there.

We will meet at Chiwaukee Prairie at 2:00 p.m. so everyone can attend the Sunday morning and Monday morning and afternoon workdays.

After exploring the site, we will go to "Brushmeister's Barbecue" at volunteer Brian Seinfeld's in Gurnee. He will supply the grill, coals, and hospitality; you bring food and beverage to share.

If you plan to join the afternoon nature walk and/or early evening barbecue, please call Joanne (312/878-3877).

EARTH WORDS

A reading and journal writing workshop focusing on our experience of nature: of landscape, place, and animals. This class, taught by Carol LaChappelle, is scheduled on four Tuesdays, June 6-27, from 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. The cost is \$150. To register, call Carol at 312/640-1357

READING GROUP

You do not have to be a regular to attend the North Branch Reading Group; just join us when you can. The next selection is *The Ecology of Commerce* by Paul Hawken. We will meet at the Bryer's home on June 20. (Discussion leader: Gladys Bryer).

We meet at 7:30 p.m. Please call Nancy Freehafer at 312/342-6665 or Barbara Rose at 312/248-4817 for directions.

TNC PRAIRIE FESTIVAL

The Nature Conservancy is planning a Prairie Festival and Illinois Chapter Benefit on Saturday, September 23rd at the Poplar Creek Forest Preserves. The Festival will celebrate with music, food, displays, merchandise, stewardship demonstrations, nature walks. To participate (a great way to recruit volunteers for your site), call Sandi Stein at 312/346-8166, ext. 37.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

PRAIRIE PROJECTIONS could use a *coordinator* to manage distribution. This person will be a member of the Publication Committee. Contact Barbara Rose at 312/248-4817 if you are interested.

Shermer Road. Enter the parking lot at the north driveway and park at 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.)

BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE SUMMER WORKDAYS

DIRECTIONS: Take Lake-Cook Road to Hastings Road (one street west of railroad overpass and one mile west of Milwaukee Avenue.) Turn north on Hastings to second lot on right (one lot past new CDW.) Park at east end of the lot nearest the prairie.

All workdays are on Sundays from 9 a.m. to noon.

• June 4 • July 2 • August 13

NORTH BRANCH WORKGROUPS

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

Ecological Management

Next meeting is August 1. Call for further information
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, 708/304-6972

MIGHTY ACORNS NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

to lead small groups of children in stewardship activities. Skilled adults are needed to teach and help with brush pile building. Children need instruction in proper construction, and help in getting the brush up on the pile a la Brushmeister Brian! Call Justine Kusner, 708/825-3835, or Diane Reckless at The Nature Conservancy, 312/346-8166 for time and dates.

PLANTS OF THE CHICAGO REGION

The new Swink & Wilhelm is available to North Branchers at a substantial discount. Call Jane Balaban at 708/679-4289.

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

The Nature Conservancy
8 S. Michigan, Suite 900
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Requirements: These courses are open to active stewards, co-stewards, regional leaders 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.**

Plant Families Field Identification. Participants will learn characteristics of several plant families by examining species in the field. With the help of written materials, specific characteristics of some of the more common plant families will be identified. This class, led by Mim Anderson, is designed to be helpful for beginners and for those who are interested in a formal approach to identifying plants. Bring a hand lens, your favorite reference, insect repellent and your lunch. SA June 10, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Lake County Forest Preserve Headquarters in Libertyville. Limit 30.

Identifying Grasses in the Field. Identifying grasses takes special knowledge and skill. This introduction to the family Graminae is designed to help you get a good start in mastering this difficult, but important group of plants. We will be learning both prairie and savanna grasses using herbarium sheets and field examples. The emphasis will be on recognition by gestalt, not keying technical features. The morning will be spent inside at the North Park Village Nature Center. Bring a lunch and picnic at North Park Village or find a place to stop on the way to Bunker Hill. Materials: a hand lens and your favorite reference. SA Aug. 5, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago. 1:30-3:30 p.m. Bunker Hill Prairie, Chicago. Instructors: John and Jane Balaban and Laurel Ross.

Fifth Annual *Thismia* Search. Join some of the midwest's best botanists to rediscover Norma Pfeiffer's *Thismia americana*, last seen in 1916. George or Marilyn Johnson. SA Aug. 12, 10:00 a.m. Sand Ridge Nature Center. 815/943-5256.

Introduction to Spiders. Workshop in the planning stages. Instructor: Bob Wolff. SA September 23, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Lake Katherine Nature Preserve, Environmental Learning Center.

Brush Piles Crew

Editing: Leslie Borns, Karen Holland, Barbara Rose, Joanne Softcheck, Chris Urban
Layout: Kathy and Chuck Lapinsky

WEAR YOUR FRIENDLIEST SMILE AND... greet and orient new volunteers!

We North Branchers accomplish a tremendous amount of work. Yet sometimes we focus so much on our tasks that we fail to give enough attention to new volunteers. We want more volunteers to become engaged, who will become part of the North Branch Prairie Project. We certainly don't want to end up as an ingrown group of aging restorationists!

Recently the Volunteer Development Work Group got together to discuss this and related issues. Because most of us, like you, are very busy, we propose some simple and unbureaucratic ideas.

Here's what we need:

- to welcome new people,
- to provide some kind of orientation,
- to make them a part of the group.

We also need

- to ask them if they would like to be on our mailing list,
- to contact them later to thank them,
- to encourage them to come again.

Even though this should take only a few minutes, the crew leaders may have several tasks and cannot be expected to take care of new people, too.

So, ideally, each site should have a special person who acts as host. It would be up to this person to decide how to fulfill the described tasks. For example, the follow-up contact could be made by phone or by a simple thank-you card with notice of the next workday. And depending on how much time the greeter had for the job, he or she could also keep a running list of new volunteers at the site and welcome and encourage those who come back a second or third time. If the greeter had to miss

a day, he or she could get a substitute.

We know that this isn't an ideal world and a system of hosts or greeters may not work perfectly, but it would be an improvement over what we are doing now. So here is the question:

Do you have a favorite site, a site for which you would be willing to play host?

Would you be willing to spend a few times a year to be a North Branch greeter? If so, please call Nancy Freehafer at 312/342-6665 (best time to call is midweek, Tuesday to Thursday).

The rest of us also have a role to play. We know what it feels like to be an outsider. We don't have to wait until there is a greeter system in place. We can all be friendly and welcome our new volunteers!



To contribute to *BrushPiles*.

Your photos and cartoons would look great on these pages. Your features, anecdotes, essays, announcements, requests, poems, comments, and letters are also welcome. To discuss your ideas, call Barbara Rose, 312/248-4817 *before* the deadline. Deadline for the Fall 1995 issue is **July 30** (for September, October, November).

Permit Holder:

**The Nature Conservancy
8 S. Michigan Avenue
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 and
the Volunteer
Stewardship Network.*

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