

Brush Piles



NBPP's Refrigerator Door Companion

Spring 1996

PEOPLE AND PLACES

North Branch Volunteer Barbara Sutcliffe will be reporting on our sites and their stewards for Brush Piles. For this issue, she interviewed Stewards John Berg at Watersmeet and Dave Eubanks at Indian Roads Woods.

JOHN BERG AT WATERSMEET PRAIRIE GROVE

John attended a couple of nature classes at the Chicago Botanic Garden "way back—a long time ago," but nothing sparked his interest in nature until he met Karen Holland at Northeastern Illinois University. "Karen suggested that I go to one of the workdays and once I went, I kept on going." He adds, "Everyone needs their cause, I suppose, and I think this is a good one because this is an ecosystem that's almost extinct anyway. This is my opportunity to do a little something to help keep it from going extinct."

Most of Watersmeet Prairie Grove's 140 acres was grade DC prairie when John starting managing it three years ago. The Forest Preserve District had planted trees in 1962. The site was getting gangly, but lack of attention probably saved a lot of the prairie species. Under John's stewardship, more than 40 acres are being restored and they have been burned three times.

"There's been great improvement," John says. "There are many plants struggling to survive the growth of brush. We have a burn that goes through an area for the first time, and immediately we get this big flush of native plants. So as long as it is doing that, it's just great. We uncovered two endangered species—natives, we didn't plant them. We found *Viola conspersa*, a dog violet, and *Sysyrinchium montanum*, a mountain blue-eyed grass, and then a sedge, *Carex fromosa*, that so far has not been documented anywhere else in Illinois.

Some of the volunteers that work at Watersmeet are John's students from Morton West High School. They work for extra class credits. John feels it's a valuable lesson for them to experience the prairie in whatever way then can. He compliments all the North Branch volunteers for their hard work and dedication and is pleased to see so many young people becoming involved through the Mighty Acorns program.

We asked John how the local people feel about the restoration at Watersmeet. "They're supportive in the sense that they are for it as long as they don't have to do anything. I'd say we have more of a problem with education than anything else, because we have quite a few neighbors who use the site as a dumping

DAVE EUBANKS AT INDIAN ROADS WOODS

Living right across the street made it easy for Dave Eubanks to pick Indian Roads Woods as the site to restore a prairie. He worked for the Cook County Forest Preserve as a greenway planner and was familiar with the North Branch program. To learn more about natural resource management he enrolled in a graduate degree program at DePaul and became a steward for a learning plan activity.

Dave told us, "The other fortuitous event was when Bill Koenig of the Friends of the Chicago River dropped a fantastic home school group in my lap. They were interested in stream/river and prairie restoration. So I've had a great working relationship with parents and students who are extremely dedicated. It's part of their science club activity. I've probably had more work days than any other site—we meet four times a month—and some work days have up to thirty individuals. The parents and kids have adopted the site as part of their whole science curriculum. Home schooling is very hands-on, and they've been just a great group to work with—all ages and ethnicity and a lot of fun."

"We've done a lot of clearing and seed collection," Dave added "and we convinced the Forest Preserve District to allow Indian Meadows and Indian Roads Woods to grow out and not be mowed. It's probably one of the richest sites on the North Branch for wild hyacinth, and in one day we collected \$2,000 worth of hyacinth to spread into the seed mix. We've had a good half a year together so far."

The meadow Dave and his volunteers are restoring used to be a farm field. Some of the neighborhood old-timers tell him there used to be farms and stables in the area. "My site includes approximately 5 acres. The North Branch Prairie Project has managed it since April 1995," Dave explained. "It's a very new site, and I know that the North Branchers have inventoried it and have been collecting seed (especially the hyacinth) from Indian River Woods for a long time. When I came along, it seemed to make good sense that I manage the site since I lived

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JOHN BERG

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ground for yard waste. We have big piles of yard waste in certain areas. We've had the police there talking to them, but there's not much you can do because it is so inaccessible. The other problem we have is people taking over the forest preserve by mowing a little farther every year into the site. Some lawns end where the forest preserve begins. There are places where 100 to 200 feet of forest preserve land have been turned into lawn. Since the area they're encroaching on is not in great shape, nothing much is done about it. They may not necessarily do it on purpose, but a couple feet each year add up. Some of the local people were told by their realtors that if they mowed, it was essentially theirs. I liked that one a lot."

When we asked John how he sees the future of the North Branch Prairie Project, he said, "I think things will be getting more large scale for us. For a long time, it's been micro-managed. Everyone has their own little site and does their own thing. I think with The Nature Conservancy advertising the North Branch Prairie Project the last few years, we're getting a lot more global visibility. There's the money the CCFP has received from the federal government to manage Cook County sites. In fact, a couple of North Branchers were hired for those positions. I think they're going to look for ways to help us and want to do it large scale. Also, with the whole seed program getting very large, I think we're going to large-scale management, and we'll be more concerned, not just with our site, but how we interact with the rest of the natural areas in the Cook County region."

When asked what gives him the most satisfaction, John replied, "I guess going to an area that you saw that wasn't doing very well, and after a couple of years there are just all sorts of wonderful plants and the oaks are very happy and you can say that you helped to do that."



DAVE EUBANKS

Continued from page 1

here. I was still with the Forest Preserve, so there are a lot of good tie-ins."

We asked Dave what he hoped to accomplish in the next three to five years. "There's a fantastic closed savanna area filled with mighty oaks and still very open," Dave said, "and once we burn, I think we're going to see a lot more biodiversity come back in there. We've cleared the surrounding slope area that goes down to the Chicago River, so we've got this meadow area ringed by savanna that we want to restore. The biggest challenge is getting the prairie reintroduced into an old farm field that's been left to go to seed and grass and weeds. There is a native seed bank there because we've had purple love grass come up. There's probably other seeds that just need a fire or something to bring them out. So it will be a big challenge to turn crabgrass and all kinds of alien weeds into something quite beautiful and diverse. That is the three- to five-year goal—to make the meadow area a prairie. This will take a little policy change with the Forest Preserve District because technically it is a picnic grove, and we have to convince them that this is a perfect area to sacrifice to active recreation aspects for a different type of experience."

Dave feels the CCFPD has been very supportive and said, "There's a real change of attitude going on about the restoration movement, and they've got some major funding from the US Forest Service—almost a million dollars—to do an ecological restoration plan to bring back 54,000 acres of the habitat, which translated to about 80% of the total acreage of the Forest Preserve. There's federal money coming into the district and I think that we're contemplating a demonstration project for the NBPP as well."

One thing Dave would like to see, as a longer-term goal, is the creation of a nature trail that would pick up where the bike trail ends at Devon. As more restoration is done in-between Sauganash Prairie and Indian River Woods, the sites could be connected. Dave feels that it would be a great base for a nature trail and more restoration sites. "And it's all in the city of Chicago," he adds.

"I think there will be a lot more curiosity from the public, particularly if we get our nature trail put in, about what all these people (North Branchers) are doing in the woods, walking around and cutting down the trees," Dave notes. "My neighbors did not like to see us cutting things down at first, but we explained what the issue was and then they were with us. People really care fiercely about the Forest Preserve, and if they think you're damaging it, they'll confront you."

"Sometimes we forget. We know we're doing the right thing, but that doesn't mean everyone else understands what we're doing. We want to make sure that people understand what's going on."

PRAIRIE STRENGTH

Mary Lou Mrozynski

The piece of wood has sat on my desk for probably ten years. It's about three and one half inches high and two inches in diameter, sawed at both ends, bark still on it. It has perhaps seven rings describing its chronological age. It also has a crack half-way through it, telling of dryness and another kind of age. The wood is buckthorn, a nasty "alien" brush plant which grows in most Illinois woody areas; it crowds out the native oaks and grasses and flowering plants which make up indigenous savanna and tallgrass prairies.

The wood speaks to me of strength and accomplishment. It was part of the trunk of the first buckthorn I sawed down in the early days of learning to do restoration—ecological restoration—some twelve years ago. At that time, my involvement was the result of my long-time concern for the natural environment. Even my 35 minute drive to the prairie workday brought up questions. For depending on my choice of route, I passed continuous sets of strip malls. I would hurry by, knowing that under those endless shopping centers, seeds and roots are smothered, made extinct by yet another consumer outlet. Why is it that all land "development" is seen as progress, while habitat loss is the major cause of extinction of species on this planet? How is it that for many Americans, shopping has become the major and often sole recreational activity, one that must be constantly fed with new land? Aren't there other ways to recreate, and therefore, to create?

It was in the context of these and similar musings that I learned to clear brush and establish "openings," allowing the sunlight to resoak the land so that the native prairie could reassert its life. Clearing land takes skill and hard work. Then—and still—I'm not very good with a hand-saw. The steady back and forth rhythm needed for a quick cut escapes me. Brush cutting with long-handled loppers is more my style. So the little chopped trunk represents achievement indeed. That's why it's had its long-time place on my desk, a talisman saying, "You can do it!" Or more accurately, "Woman, you can do it!"

I've talked with women I've worked with about our prairie efforts. Barbara Rose, like many of us, speaks of nurturing motives; giving back and taking care of. She takes care of here granddaughter, her home, and the prairie, in that order and with the same intensity. She nurtures the prairie because she wants to give back to nature some of what it has given her in beauty, in peace, in adventure. Joanne Softcheck says quite simply, and with great feeling: "It's just so beautiful!" I share all of this. But I add another yearning. The prairie provides me with an essential connection to the earth. I have a dozen house plants that I care for; I also have a small backyard flower garden that I "work." They are not enough. The prairie is a space where an entire ecosystem can flourish with my help. The compass plants and prairie dock, the gentians, the big and little bluestem and the dropseed grasses, the hoary savanna oaks, the golden spider, bluebirds, and hawks, deer, coyote and foxes—even the wind playing among varicolored sheaves create a space where civilization is the outsider; where, in a sense, I and all who work here are not in control. We follow a set of signals given to us—not determined by us. And in that cooperation, nature speaks to something inside—some place elemental, essential, probably sexual. I become creator. There is life.

And so the prairies and savannas are reborn. By some alchemy, I am also reborn. I call it prairie-strength. It's as though the unneeded brush and trees I've destroyed, are recycled, reclaimed and resurrected, growing inside of me. They provide emotional, as well as physical, spine and muscle. The cutting

and sawing, the dragging and stacking, the burns, mold me into a new, stronger reality.

As I ponder this experience, I am reminded of a story Terry Tempest Williams tells in her book, *An Unspoken Hunger*. The Massai of the Serengeti in central Africa worship the trees and grasses. When a child is punished for some inappropriate action, he or she falls to the ground and clutches a handful of grass. This is a sign of humility; the child remembers where her source of power lies.

I respond, not to a punishment, but to an invitation from deep inside and drive the miles to my prairie. I park my car and walk onto the land. Like that African child, I kneel down among the grasses and hang on tight.



BIRD MONITORING FOR THE BEGINNER

Margo Milde

A whole new world can open to you. I guarantee that once you begin to observe birds courting, building nests, feeding and raising young, and migration, you will view natural areas from a totally different perspective. You will literally gain a "bird's eye view" of the world.

Many North Branch Prairie Project sites need bird monitors. It is actually relatively simple, and I hope that this brief article will entice you into birding.

Why monitor birds? Consistent records of bird populations and breeding provide invaluable data about natural area quality. Achieving biodiversity applies to plants, birds, mammals, insects—all life forms. The number and type of bird species present (especially breeding birds) reflect habitat quality, so trends indicate the progress of restoration work at a site. Besides, you will enjoy their songs and visual beauty.

Some species on our North Branch sites, including Veery and Cooper's hawk, are currently state listed (endangered or threatened); breeding information on these species is especially critical.

A bird monitoring program should begin, ideally, before serious restoration work so that baseline data can be obtained, and later changes can be better evaluated. As restoration progresses, changes in species and their populations will undoubtedly be recorded. Because controversy currently exists at certain sites as to whether some changes are "good" or "bad" for the birds, it is important for a person familiar with both the site and its birds to gather objective data annually. Permanent records enable better management plans for the sites as a whole.

Nesting behavior is especially important. I try to spend extra time out in the field in early summer to see fledglings; they are the true measure of success of a nesting pair. We avoid approaching nests closely, as human scent may lead predators to the nest. Try not to agitate a nesting pair—it is best not to cause stress during their critical breeding season.

Illinois has been described as a "song bird sink," as summer nesters are not reproducing at a rate high enough to replace themselves. This is due, in large part, to the increase in cowbirds, as a result of fragmentation of woodlands.

Cowbirds are parasitic birds whose females lay their eggs in other species' nests, their young being raised by those other species to the detriment of the true nesting birds' eggs and young. They are becoming more of a problem at our sites. It is therefore essential to note failures of our native birds resulting from cowbird activities (such as a cardinal feeding a fledgling cowbird), and note cowbird population trends. Better data collection and documentation of cowbird numbers on our sites will aid in formulating plans to control them.

How does one monitor birds? More detailed information is available from the Volunteer Stewardship Network, but the basics can be summarized here.

- Establish a definite route. At Glenview, I use the existing trail system to avoid trampling upon sensitive vegetation and to prevent establishing new trails.

- Set up equidistant stations approximately 100 meters apart from which to monitor. At these stations, you will stop for at least five minutes (preferably seven or even ten) and record everything you see and hear.

- Set a definite schedule. Some monitors walk their sites weekly during the entire year. If you are unable to do that, a weekly walk along your route during the critical months of April through July is essential. Early morning (the first few hours after first light) is usually the best for birding. Late afternoon into twilight is also rewarding. However, during midday, birding is usually not as good, as birds are quiet and inactive. This method lets you hear the most bird songs, which indicate possible breeding birds on territory.

To obtain the most consistent data, your route and stations should not vary from year to year. If you know of state-listed species at your site, you may wish to gather detailed information, providing you can do so without disturbing them.

What equipment is needed?

- Decent, not necessarily expensive, binoculars. (If you're a beginner, a 7x10 may prove most suitable.

- A good field guide like Peterson's *Eastern Birds*. You will acquire more as your interest increases.

- Experienced birders say that knowing bird songs and calls is essential. Songs are usually sung by a territorial male; however, in some species females also sing. Calls are communication among birds of a species. Peterson's *Eastern/Central Bird Songs* are among the best for our area. I highly recommend *Know Your Bird Sounds*, Volume I (Yard, Garden, and City Birds) and Volume 2 (Birds of the Countryside), produced by Nature Sound Studios. All those strange chips, rattles, picks, chatters, and buzzes will take on new meaning for you!

- Another useful series of books is the three volume *Stokes Nature Guide's: A Guide to Bird Behavior*. These paperbacks provide in-depth descriptions of birds' lives, and enable us to interpret the meanings of their subtle visual cues and sounds.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County, The Nature Conservancy, and Chicago Audubon Society are planning to computerize data collected by dedicated birders who have spent thousands of hours out in the field. Therefore, information gathered for each North Branch site will become increasingly valuable.

Won't you join us in this important task? If you are interested, your site steward could help you get started. Good Birding!

In addition to monitoring birds at Harms Woods, Margo Milde participates in the annual Cook County Nesting Bird Census for Harms, Chipilly, and Spring Lake Nature Preserve. She is a seed collector for Glenview East and Chipilly. In 1994 and 1995 she participated in Botany Inventory and Research at Pistakee Bog Nature Preserve and Volo Bog Nature Preserve, and is a co-steward at Spring Lake Nature Preserve.

Permit Holder:
The Nature Conservancy
8 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 6632
Chicago, Illinois

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.*

CLASSES

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

The Nature Conservancy

8 S. Michigan, Suite 900, Chicago, IL 60603, (312) 346-8166

Requirements: These courses are open to active stewards, co-stewards, monitors and volunteers 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.

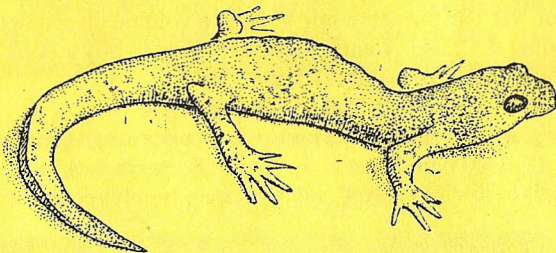
Surveying Feathered Songsters. A class in basic bird identification and nesting census techniques followed by three field trips—one to Lake Calumet for wetland species, one to the Chicago lakefront to see as many birds as possible in a morning, and one to Somme Prairie Grove to see birds singing on their territories. Bring binoculars and field guides. Preregistration required. Instructor: Jerry Sullivan. Introductory class at Evanston Ecology Center, W Apr. 17, 7:30-9:30 PM; Field trips: Lake Calumet, SA Apr. 20, 8:00 AM-Noon; Montrose Harbor, SA May 11, 8:00 AM-Noon; Somme Prairie Grove, SA May 28, 8:00 AM-Noon. Limit: 15.

Tile Fields. Ed Collins will teach you how to locate a tile field as you tour Poplar Creek, a 600 acre restoration project in northern Cook County. You may also have the opportunity to participate in tile-breaking using one of the techniques Ed describes. Be prepared to get muddy. SA Apr. 20, Noon-4:00 PM. Limit: 25.

Butterfly Monitoring Workshop. Since 1987, trained volunteers have been monitoring butterfly populations at natural areas in northern and central Illinois. The data they have collected are 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. If you are interested in becoming a monitor, contact Douglas Taron, Butterfly Monitoring network coordinator at (708) 695-4568. Location of workshop to be announced. SA Mar. 9, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM.

Rare Plant Monitoring. Volunteers are monitoring populations of endangered plants in northeastern Illinois. The methods used by plant monitors vary depending on the size of the population at a site, growth habit of the particular species, and the experience of the monitor. As a rule of thumb, every plant is counted in small populations; for larger populations, transects are established so exactly the same area is studied each year. These methods will allow comparison of the numbers over a period of time to identify any trends, thereby providing insight into the health of the population. The primary requirements to get started as a plant monitor are simple—a genuine concern for our native populations of rare plants and a willingness to spend some time in the field. A plant monitoring workshop is in the works for early Spring. If anyone is interested in the plant monitoring program, call Katie Green at (312) 346-8166 ext. 31.

Mushroom Collection, Identification, and Curation. Field Museum Research Associate Jack Murphy will lead two sessions designed to teach methods required to collect and identify fungi, and to preserve them for future scientific reference. The first session will be a classroom-style presentation, and the second session will be a field trip in which the earlier lessons will be implemented. Instructor: Murphy. SA May 4, 11, 9:00 AM-Noon. Location TBA. Limit: 25. Call Betty Gathings at (312) 346-8166 ext. 10 to preregister.



HOW THEY HOWL!

Wiley Buck

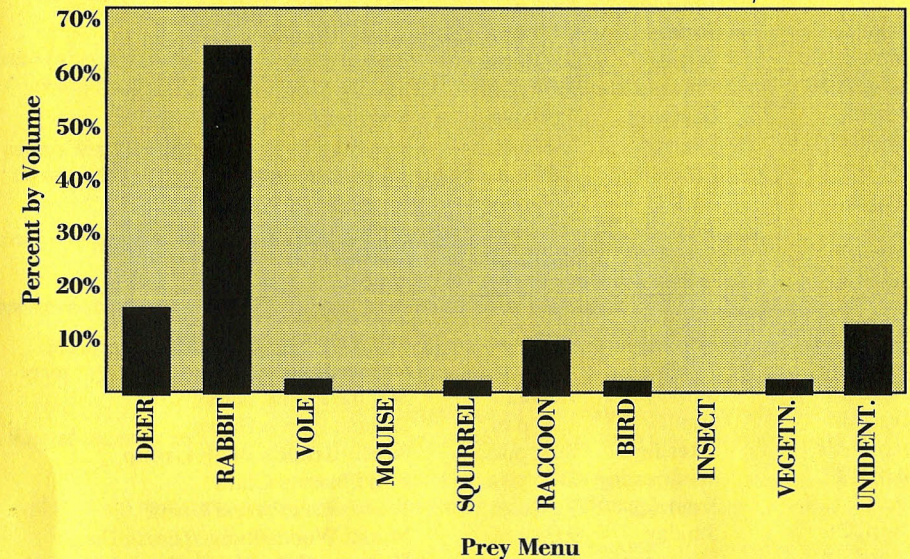
North Branch Prairie Project has spawned The Coyote Project, volunteers who are monitoring coyote in the region. Population trends and coyote diet are the subjects of studies begun last year.

Two different study methods were used this past fall. The first is the scent station method, where a capsule scented like a rotten egg is placed in a circle of sand. When coyotes come to sniff the capsule they leave tracks. By comparing the percentage of stations visited from one year to the next, we can document population trends.

The second method is the howling survey. We go out in the middle of the night (with permits, of course) and play a series of tape-recorded lone coyote howls. We were thrilled when, at Somme Nature Preserve, we elicited two “woofs” from coyotes who were in the grass an estimated 50 yards away.

The regional diet study, which began a year ago, is now giving us a good picture of the coyote preferences.

THE COYOTE PROJECT DIET REPORT 6/95



Seventy-three scat samples were collected during the first six months of 1995. The Eastern cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) is the food item of choice. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)—scavenged and otherwise—is the second most predominant food item.

If you would like to volunteer for The Coyote Project and become an expert on this inspiring and contentious animal, please contact Wiley Buck at (312) 769-6604.

NORTH BRANCH POTLUCK

More than 50 North Branchers partied in the rustic setting of the Edgebrook Community Center. Master of Ceremonies Laurel Ross welcomed honored guest Floyd Swink to the annual potluck dinner on January 20. Then, we dined in front of a warm fire on the traditional North Branch gourmet dishes. After supper and workgroup reports, Steve Packward reported on the ongoing restoration project of the Cook County Forest Preserve, funded by U.S. Forest Service appropriations.

The highlight of the party was presentation of awards to outstanding Volunteers-of-the-Year:

Kent and Jerry Fuller, newly appointed apprentice stewards at Harms Flatwoods, for their efforts to save part of Glenview Naval Air Station for preservation and restoration.

Neil Peck, for his all around helpfulness, and especially for his efforts in the

acquisition and remodeling of our huge new storage shed.

Dave Eubanks, for organizing an enthusiastic group of volunteers at the new Indian Road Woods Prairie site.

Nancy Freehafer, for her efforts at volunteer development, especially in resurrecting the host/greeter program.

After dessert, Larry Hodak showed slides of Sauganash Prairie (including some mystery sedges), Kent Fuller showed slides of the Glenview Air Base, and Pete Leki provided a surprise treat with his sweet fiddle tunes.

Many people helped make this potluck a success, notably Joanne Softcheck, Nancy Freehafer, and Leslie Borns.

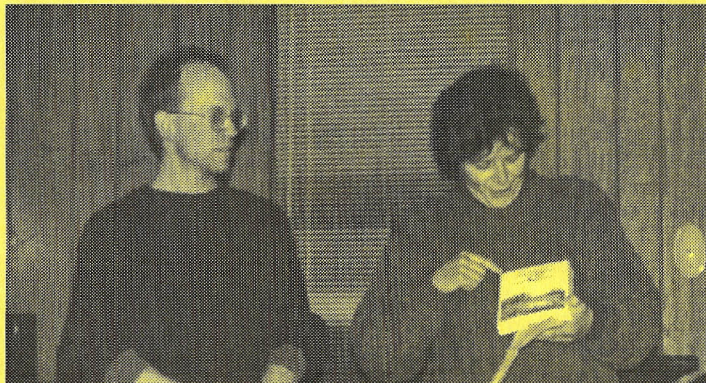


Photo top left: Wiley Buck receiving his award from last year for his work on the Coyote Project.

Photo bottom left: Nancy Freehafer accepting her award from Laurel Ross for her volunteer development work; and

Photo right: Kent and Jerry Fuller displaying their award.

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

SPRING 1996

March 2	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
March 3	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash Prairie Grove
March 3	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Sauganash Prairie Grove
March 5	Tuesday	7:30 p.m.	North Branch Book Group
March 9	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
March 9	Saturday	1:00 p.m.	Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon
March 10	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
March 10	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
March 16	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie (Bunker Hill)
March 17	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
March 17	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Harms Woods
March 20	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Spring Flowers Class
March 23	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
March 24	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside/Railroad Prairie/Linne Woods
March 30	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods/Indigo
March 31	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Indian Road Woods
April 6	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
April 7	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Nature Preserve
April 7	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Nature Preserve (Easter/Passover)
April 10	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Summer Flowers Class
April 13	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie (Bunker Hill)
April 14	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
April 14	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
April 16	Tuesday	7:30 p.m.	North Branch Book Group
April 17	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Fall Flowers Class
April 20	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
April 21	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods/Indigo (Earth Day)
April 24	Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Women of the North Branch Potluck
April 27	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Miami Woods/Indigo
April 28	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
May 1	Wednesday		Brush Piles copy due
May 4	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Woods
May 5	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
May 5	Sunday	1:30 p.m.	Somme Prairie Grove
May 7	Tuesday	7:30 p.m.	North Branch Book Group
May 11	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
May 12	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Wayside/Railroad Prairie/Linne Woods
May 18	Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oxbow Prairie (Bunker Hill)
May 19	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Harms Flatwoods
May 25	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	Watersmeet Prairie Grove
May 26	Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Sauganash Prairie Grove

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 is cold we may go out to 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, 847/679-4289.

Education/Volunteer Development:

Joanne Softcheck, 312/878-3877

Publications/Publicity:

Karen Holland, 312/929-7658.

Science:

Drew Ullberg, 847-991-3671

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WILDFLOWER COURSE

Brighten up your winter with a three-session presentation on native wild flowers: spring, summer, fall (with a few grasses tossed in).

Wednesday, March 20 (Spring flowers for the first day of the season)

Wednesday, April 10 (Summer flowers)

Wednesday, April 17 (Fall flowers)

All classes will be from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln, Morton Grove.

You may find the *Peterson Field Guide to Wildflowers* (Northeastern/North Central) useful. We can purchase this book at a volume discounted rate of \$15.56 (including tax.) So...want to register? Want to buy a book? Have a question? Call Gladys Bryer (847) 328-9531.

WILDFLOWER WALK

Discover springtime woodland flora and explore our new site. Harms Flatwoods, Sunday, May 11, 1:00 p.m. Meet in the Forest Preserve parking lot on Harms Road, just south of Old Orchard Road. Boots are highly recommended.

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 Shermer Road. Enter the parking lot at the north driveway and park by the tennis courts.

HARMS FLATWOODS (Glenview)—Meet at Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Rd., just south of Old Orchard Rd.

HARMS WOODS (Glenview)—Meet at Forest Preserve Grove parking lot on the west side of Harms Rd., just south of Glenview Rd.

INDIAN ROAD WOODS (Chicago)—Meet at parking lot adjacent to Indian Road (the first picnic grove north of Elston Avenue, on Central Avenue.)

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 St.)

BUFFALO GROVE PRAIRIE WINTER WORKDAY SCHEDULE

The Guardians are volunteers working to restore the native Illinois prairie near Lake-Cook Road. We invite you to join us when we eliminate weeds, collect seeds and the ever popular brush-cutting. Dress for the weather and bring sun protection. Tools, camaraderie, homemade snacks and beverages will be provided.

All work days are on Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

March 10 • (none in April) • May 5

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 into the second lot on the right (one lot past the Computer Discount Warehouse.) Park at east end of the lot nearest the prairie.

QUESTIONS: Call 847/677-7001 (daytime) or 847/520-5822 (evenings) with questions. Ask for Lee.

READING GROUP

You do not have to be regular to attend the North Branch Reading Group; just join us when you can.

On March 5, Gladys Bryer will lead a discussion of Carolyn Merchant's, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and Scientific Revolution*.

On April 16, we will discuss *Sacred Sands: The Struggle for Community in the Indiana Dunes*, by J. Ronald Engle. Robert Lonsdorf will lead the conversation about this early conservation group located less than 50 miles away.

Earth in Mind by David W. Orr is the May 7 selection. Wendell Berry says 'Orr examines the calamitous "success" of the industrial economy and the educational system that serves it.' "...also a manual of ideas and possibilities for those who want to work toward a better end than the one now in view.' Nancy Freehafer will lead the discussion.

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

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

Look for an announcement soon of the location for the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon for Cook County. Meanwhile keep March 9, 1:00 p.m. available.

WOMEN OF THE NORTH BRANCH

Great food and great conversation are the norm when women get together. Join us for our next potluck on Wednesday, April 24 at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Gladys Bryer. Call Gladys at 847-328-9531 for directions. Are you a woman and a NBPP volunteer? You are invited!

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, 847/825-3835, 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 847/679-4289.

To contribute to *Brush Piles*.

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 or Leslie Borns 312/751-1497 *before* the deadline. Deadline for the Summer 1996 issue is **May 1** (for June, July, August).

Brush Piles Crew

Editing: Leslie Borns, Lisa Ferro, Barbara Rose, Joanne Softcheck, Barbara Sutcliffe
Layout/Production: Kathy and Chuck Lapinsky