

Executive Committee

S. H. Sentoff, President
H. H. Jensen, Vice Pres.
R. S. Hensey, Sec./Treas.
M. F. Boyle
W. C. Dawe
J. S. Dohren
J. M. Monge



3N771 Woodland Ave.
West Chicago, IL 60185
630-293-1627
<http://www.wcpsg.org>

Newsletter #100

September 2008

President's Corner

One hundred newsletters! Our little group has had quite a bit to write about in all the years we've been out working at the West Chicago Prairie. Think of all the brush we've cut and all the seed we've collected and sown—and all the volunteer names we've mentioned in those 100 newsletters. It's your contributions that are making the prairie such a special place. I hope to see you at the upcoming annual meeting, where you can celebrate your accomplishments and get a chance to visit.

Steve

Annual Meeting

This year our annual meeting will be held on Saturday, September 6 at the parking lot at the preserve. The meeting will start with a Potluck Picnic at 12:00 noon. Family members and friends are welcome. Bring a hot or cold dish, salad or dessert with a serving utensil, and your own plate and silverware. Cold drinks will be provided. There are a number of picnic tables there, but bring a lawn chair if you can.

Starting at about 1:00 p.m., we will hold a brief business meeting in which we will elect members of the Executive Committee, present awards for year 2007 and briefly outline the plans for next year. As stated in our by-laws, nominations for the Executive Committee will be accepted from the floor (with permission of the nominee). Let us know if you're interested in a spot on the executive committee.

After the business meeting, we'll take a tour of the Preserve. Many of you have put a lot of time into helping the preserve without an opportunity to stop and admire your work. Also a number of you have generously donated money to keep us going and may not have visited in quite a while. We thought this would be a great time for you to come out for a visit. Even if you don't feel up to a hike in the preserve, you can see quite a bit just from the parking lot. We encourage all of you to come on out and see it.

Awards

Prairie Steward Awards are given for accumulating 10, 25 and 50 hours, and for every

additional 50 hours of volunteer work for the Stewardship Group. These awards are for total career hours through the end of June, 2008. This year's recipients by category are

10 hours	Pete Curtis, Maria Knecht
25 hours	Steve Carrow
50 hours	Tracey Uhren
100 hours	Linda Fisher
250 hours	Patricia Ebelt
350 hours	Jim Dohren
500 hours	Mollie Millen
700 hours	Monica Sentoff
750 hours	Bill Dawe
1450 hours	Marilyn Bell, Scott Hensey
2800 hours	Steve Sentoff

This is an impressive list, and as always, there are many active volunteers who just happen to be between awards.

This year we'll also give out a New Bird on the Prairie Award to Marilyn Bell, who spotted a Clay-colored Sparrow at the end of our Spring Bird Count on May 10, as you'll see in her column below.

Award certificates will be presented at the Annual Meeting. Please come to acknowledge these contributions and to take your well-earned bows.

Weed Control

As brush clearing season ends, the weed control season begins. We worked first on the Reed-Canary Grass, which is a cool-season grass, and one of the earliest weeds to come up. We

need to get it early, otherwise it requires too much herbicide to control. This grass is such a problem that we've started a cooperative project with the Forest Preserve District; we're working on the smaller, isolated patches that pop up across the prairie, and they are working on the larger infestations, especially in the savannas, since they have larger equipment to work with. Getting rid of the Reed-Canary Grass is going to be a long-term problem, but we can see that the areas we worked on last year are better—you don't get it all in one year, but it's much reduced and only needs mop-up of the patches that weren't killed. One of the problems we've had this year is that the prairie has been so wet that many of the patches were in standing water and couldn't be herbicided. We'll just have to wait for a better time. The RCG herbicides were Jim Dohren (2), Jacqui Gleason (2), Scott Hensey (2) and Steve Sentoff (4).

Next on the list is Dame's Rocket, and Bill Dawe, Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey and Steve Sentoff pulled a considerable amount of it, mostly from alongside the Prairie Path and in the MacQueen Woods where it is invading.

Then comes Garden Heliotrope. We're been working on this one for quite a while now, and even though it's not gone, it's clear that we're making progress on it by cutting the seed heads and herbiciding the plants. Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey (2) and Steve Sentoff (4) worked on this project, which always seems to be needed on the hottest, buggiest and most humid days.

We're also continuing our fight against the Oriental Bittersweet. As you know, this one seems to have suddenly exploded in recent years. We have a number of populations of this and Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey (3) and Steve Sentoff (3) have gotten to all of them, in the hope that we can eliminate this threat.

The above activities were all the work of the week-day folks, but we had one scheduled weeding work day this summer—to pull White Sweet Clover. This weed came in with the stockyard operations and pulling or cutting it is just about the only way to get rid of it. On July 26, Malcolm Boyle, Patricia Ebelt, Rob Kaiser, Monica and Steve Sentoff and Tracey Uhren pulled White Sweet Clover from the West Loop Prairie. We worked in the southeast portion of this area, as we have for several years now. By concentrating on the same area repeatedly, we are definitely making a difference in the amount of clover in the area. The area that we've done for several years had only a few, isolated plants; the areas on the borders, where we haven't repeatedly removed the clover had much, much more. This is pretty hot, sweaty work, but at least we can see that it is making a difference. It will be interesting to see it next time this area gets burned.

Tube Beardtongue Monitoring

It may sound like we're just overrun by weed and there's nothing else out there. But I can assure you, there's plenty to make our prairie special. One is the Illinois endangered plant, *Penstemon tubaeflorus*. The plant probably also came in with the stockyard operations, since its normal range is south and west of here. But we have a thriving population and regularly monitor its health. This year, Monica and Steve Sentoff monitored just the east half of the preserve and found 1150 blooming plants. This is more than found on the entire prairie last time the monitoring was done. Apparently the prescribed burn and this year's good moisture have made quite a difference.

A Birder's Diary

by Marilyn Bell

May 10, 2008 Our little Spring Bird Count group takes awhile to notice the YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO trying to hide behind the trunk of a small tree, but we see enough to happily identify it and enjoy a full view before it flies off. Two MARSH WRENS hide in the cattails, but their scolding song bursts forth, giving them away. Five WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS, regal and composed, move about on the trail like so many models, intending to be seen. And BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS, who wouldn't delight in the wide-eyed look of these tiny mites, as they zip in and out of the opening leaves, showing only a long tail, then a head, then—at last—all! Everyone's gone, weary from the extra long count, when a small bird catches my eye. At least it cooperates as I mentally tick off its field marks. Searching my brain and then my book, I settle on CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (later confirmed)! Neat! A perfect end to a great day.

May 31, 2008 Oh, this is so good! I actually saw four, yes four, OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHERS today. Seeing four is amazing to me—and two were in one small bare tree. Social they are not, I saw, as the highest one, apparently not wanting this traveling companion, dove at the lower one and then sang its distinctive—never before heard by me—song, “Quick, three beers!” three times! What a treat.

June 18, 2008 There they are, two HENSLOW'S SPARROWS! I'd hoped they were there, their small bodies quivering with the effort of their one-note emphatic song. Above me, in the West Savanna, an ORCHARD ORIOLE exposes its nest as he feeds a young one. Amazingly, there's two CEDAR WAXWINGS building a nest just a branch away. But neither family seems to object to its neighbor. There are differences in bird personalities, like the differences in people.

June 24, 2008 Listen! Those BLUE JAY young sound just like they're crying, like a baby

wanting its bottle. Oh, now there's a family: 13 young ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS are lined up on a power line, fluttering their wings as a parent comes by, hoping it's their turn to be fed. And here comes a flying show, a COOPER'S HAWK has snatched a young RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD and is being attacked by the family, some birds even appear to ride its back! Eventually the hawk escapes with its prize, maybe to feed its young. What's sad for one is joy for the other.

July 2, 2008 The beautiful song of a WOOD THRUSH floats through McQueen woods. How I wish that I could find a nest and I search, but fail. I have never seen such a young MOURNING DOVE. It barely balances on the power line, its feathers looking soft and rumpled, with scarcely a tail and a difference in its face markings. Its parents stay close by, much more calm than most.

July 10, 2008 A pair of EASTERN BLUEBIRDS are hawking insects from the telephone wires and—omigoodness! There's four young near them! Spectacular! I think this brood is a first for the Prairie. But where is the pair of RED-TAILED HAWKS that were always together? No young ever fledged and, for three weeks now, only one adult sits alone on the power tower, giving an occasional cry. Makes me sad too. The West Savanna is alive with noisy birds. ORCHARD ORIOLES, NORTHERN FLICKERS and CEDAR WAXWINGS tend to their youngsters and young AMERICAN ROBINS fly noisily from tree to tree, curious about their new world. The EASTERN WOOD PEWEE's nest now shows two young, almost falling out as they struggle to grab food from their weary parents. Leaving the Breeding Bird Survey area, I sneak quietly to Heron Pond. Now, what are those waterfowl at the far end? HOODED MERGANSERS? Two parents (the male in eclipse plumage) and five young are on alert, watching me! Scott Meister of the forest preserve confirms the find, which I think is another first. A record day!

July 16, 2008 Yes! Today I can check off one of my heart's desires—to see a young YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT! Not too different from its parents, but obviously young, it fearlessly poses for me, a very nervous parent not far off. The gravel on the Prairie Path is a lure today and, hopping in and out of the bushes, a HOUSE WREN takes a quick dust bath hoping to rid itself of mites. A BROWN THRASHER is attracted too, but its reason seems to be getting some tasty insect on its insides! The ways of birds never cease to be fascinating.

August 12, 2008 What a lovely day—overcast, with just a bit of sun and so very still, and newly mowed trails a pleasure to hike. The Prairie is adorned with dots of purple, pink, yellow, white and more. Butterflies and dragonflies distract me from birds and I soak it all in. But I'm focused again when I see four very young EASTERN BLUEBIRDS with their dad.

Is this a second brood? I long for an interview. It's definitely youth season and feeling stared at, my eyes fix on a curious young red fox in the trail—and later, a fawn, it's spots fading now, staring me down. Birds are there too and the chattery song of a perky SEDGE WREN sets me to calling it up to see that it appears young. A scruffy-looking male NORTHERN CARDINAL can't be called beautiful and it's evident that he, too, is young. But summer is no longer young and my first migrant, a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, “chink”s and reminds me to savor each day.

Nachusa

Because it's difficult to plan work at Nachusa so far in advance, we didn't schedule a work day this spring, but on June 14, Malcolm Boyle, Jim Dohren, Patricia Ebel, Scott Hensey and Monica and Steve Sentoff spent a gorgeous day at Nachusa Grasslands. In the morning we spaded Parsnip from a planting that Bill Kleiman wanted weeded. Then we had lunch at Kittentail Knob and took a short walk around that unit. Sunny day with reasonable humidity and a good breeze to keep the bugs away, so we had a lovely time.

This *impromptu* scheduling approach worked pretty well, and so we may try it again. Let me know, if you would be interested in participating, and I'll get you the information about any upcoming events.

Remember that September 20th is the date for Nachusa's Autumn on the Prairie celebration. Everyone is welcome to attend the day of tours and other events at the preserve.

Donor Appreciation

As you know, we're a pretty frugal organization, but we do need some money to keep our equipment in working order, and handle the mail and some other miscellaneous items. Luckily we have members who donate enough to cover our expenses. Many of these are members who are too far away or who aren't up to the physical rigors of field work. I'd like to recognize the contribution of the following donors: Burt and Dorothy Andrews, Alan and Sandy Bemis, Bob Claus, Jill Dearmer, Jim Dohren, Jacqui Gleason, Jean Hoff, Joe Houle, Gerald Moody, Muriel Smith, Anne and Werner Thiele and Margo Owano, as well as a donation from the Cress Creek Pet Pals. I hope I didn't miss anyone. The Prairie thanks all of you.



*The West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group is
an affiliate of The Conservation Foundation*



Schedule of Upcoming Events

Except as noted below, all events start from the WCP parking lot located on the east side of Industrial Drive between Western and Downs.

Saturday	September 6	12:00 noon - 3:00 p.m.	Annual Meeting and Picnic <i>Join us for a potluck picnic, followed by our annual meeting and a field trip.</i>
Sunday	September 14	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Saturday	September 27	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Collection of grasses and forbs, also a good visit.</i>
Saturday	October 11	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	October 25	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	November 8	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 6	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 20	8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Field Trip - Meet at MacQueen Entrance <i>Winter resident birds. Annual DuPage Christmas count.</i>

Other workdays may be scheduled, depending on the field conditions. Reservations are not required unless you are coming with a group of 10 or more. Special field trips can be arranged for groups.