

Executive Committee

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



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Newsletter #110

Winter 2012

President's Corner

As I'm writing this, another year of work and visits to the prairie is coming to an end, and we're getting ready to begin 2012. I thank you all, and hope each of you will congratulate yourselves as well, for the contributions you've made. I wish you all a happy and prosperous new year and hope to see you soon on the preserve. I've enclosed the 2012 Schedule of Events for those of you who get this by mail; for the rest of you, the electronic version is available at our web site, listed above.

Steve

Annual Meeting

Our 27th annual meeting was held on August 20. Once again, we started with a great potluck picnic at the Preserve. We held the meeting nearly a month earlier than last year, since it was pretty cold in 2010. The weather was much better this year, although we got about an inch of rain in the morning just before the meeting. Luckily the Forest Preserve District had already set up a tent shelter for us, and we had a fine, dry meeting. This time of year seemed to work better and so we've decided to schedule the 2012 meeting in August as well.

Scott Hensey presented the Treasurer's Report, and we continue to do fine fiscally. We spent only \$621 in the preceding year, much of it for maintaining our equipment and sending out mail. Thanks to our generous donors, we received \$1485 in 2011, so we have a healthy balance for future operations. The work we can do is much more limited by the volunteer-hours than by money.

The next order of business was the nomination and election of officers. All of the existing officers agreed to run again, and we got two new nominations from the floor at the meeting: Linda Fisher and Rob Kaiser. So the candidates were

President	Steve Sentoff
Vice President	Scott Hensey
Sec./Treasurer	Malcolm Boyle
Board Members	Bill Dawe, Jim Dohren, Linda Fisher, Herman Jensen, Rob Kaiser, JoAnn Monge

The entire slate, including the new nominees, was approved by acclamation.

Next was the report on the volunteer work for the year: a total of 1126.5 hours, including 19.5 hours at Nachusa Grasslands. The total was a bit down from last year (when we benefited from the Disney "Give A Day, Get A Day" program), but in line with earlier years. The largest categories of work included clearing - 369 hrs., monitoring - 177, and weeding - 171. Another excellent year. As usual, most of the work is continuing to push the invasives back. We had two major clearing projects last season: one at the west end of the MacQueen Woods, where the Forest Preserve District also worked; and another just north of the parking lot. The results of this last project were apparent to all of us at the annual meeting. Both of these cleared areas got seed that we had collected earlier. We continued our assault on the Oriental Bittersweet, and did our usual management of Knapweed, Garden Heliotrope, Dame's Rocket, etc. Our biggest surprise, and a happy one, was the remarkably small amount of Sweet Clover that bloomed this season. Attendance at the field trips was up a bit from previous years, which is good. We always hope that some of the people who come out will become volunteers. But just having more people realize that we have such a special area nearby is also important.

We also reported on the recent acquisition of 41 more acres in the southwest corner in December of 2010.

As far as upcoming plans are concerned, the coming year will be more of the same, mostly brush removal: cutting, stacking and herbiciding. We'll also want to collect as much seed as

possible, especially savanna species, so that we can reseed areas that have been cleared.

We handed out certificates to volunteers that earned them this year. Due to the soggy conditions, we canceled the planned walk of the West Loop.

New Board Member: Rob Kaiser

As I mentioned, we have two new board members. For those of you who haven't met Rob Kaiser at the work day, here is a picture and an introduction.



By Rob Kaiser

I started volunteering at WCP back in the late twentieth century for extra credit for my Environmental Science class in college. I had always been quite interested in prairie restoration, in fact that was the topic of my major research paper in my Ecology course in college. Largest paper I ever wrote, and I got a 98% on it too! I was, and still am, passionate about prairies. Prairie restoration is what I would love to do for a living, but turns out no one much wants to pay you to do that. After graduation I looked and was unable to find work in that field and took a job in a lab quality control testing medical devices and pharmaceuticals. I kept coming to the prairie for a bit, but it was getting harder and harder to motivate myself to wake up on Saturday mornings at 7 a.m. to come out and do yard work for free. Soon I gave it up altogether promising myself that I would go back one day. Several years later that day came. I had moved to Downers Grove and was suddenly much closer to WCP. I went back to volunteer and haven't looked back since. I have received my herbicide license and when I'm lucky enough to not be using the brush saw I even get to put it to use! I can't wait to be one of the retirees so I can get a break once in a while! Only kidding guys! I'm happy to do it! I continue to look forward to the work days and can't wait to get back out there this winter!

Recent Accomplishments

As usual, we've been out this fall, doing our typical jobs for this time of the year. It was pretty warm all season, but we had a bit more

rain for our work days than usual. Of course, that didn't dampen our spirits.

Seed Collecting and Sowing. We had three seed-collecting work days this fall, mainly collecting prairie species to be used to repopulate areas that we clear of brush. The main species were Wild Bergamot, Pale Purple Coneflower, Mountain Mint, Purple Prairie Clover, Leadplant, Yellow Coneflower, Tall Coreopsis, Culver's Root and Dropseed, all of which has been processed and stored away. The seed collectors included Alan (2) and Sandy (2) Bemis, Veta Bonnewell, Malcolm Boyle (2), Steve Carrow, Mark Donnelly, Patricia Ebelt, Linda Fisher, Scott Hensey (2), Zane, Lucia, Julia and Franklin Jakubow, Rob Kaiser (2), Monica and Steve (2) Sentoff and Jennifer and Ken Wegner, along with three members of the Sierra Club and seven members of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity at NIU. A good turn-out and good results. Some of the seed already has been sown when a group of eight members from the DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church raked it into a newly cleared area on November 12.

Clearing. We'll never run out of invasives to deal with, and this fall we've been working in the northwest corner of the preserve on resprouts of buckthorn, sumac and gray dogwood, with a bunch of blackberry thrown in. We worked in this area only five seasons ago, so we were surprised at how nasty it had become. We had four of our scheduled work days cutting, stacking and herbiciding in this area. Thanks to Alan Bemis, Malcolm Boyle (3), Kristen and Jamie Brunskill, Dennis Clark, Jim Dohren, Patricia Ebelt, Linda Fisher, Paul Heidebrecht, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser (2), Dave Oswald and Steve Sentoff (4) plus three students from Bartlett H. S., three members of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity and three students from Fenton H. S. In addition to all these hands, the Wednesday Work Crew of Malcolm Boyle, Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey and Steve Sentoff also had a number of work days in the same area. There are now four huge brush piles in the area, and we're almost finished pushing this regrowth back to the perimeter. Once we finish, and there's a good cover of snow on the prairie, the Forest Preserve District will burn off the piles.

A Birder's Diary

By Marilyn Bell

September 12, 2011 Just listen to that WARBLING VIREO's wobbly song. Must be a first year bird practicing. Young birds still dominate. Oooo, could that be a KENTUCKY WARBLER? Yes! The image in my well-worn field guide confirms a first fall male, new to the Prairie. I'm startled by a large green-thing landing on a nearby leaf. It's a PRAYING MANTIS! I know, it's not a bird, but it does fly! And, still off-topic, a beautiful RED FOX is eying me. Exciting, as

they're seldom seen anymore. And, there's a beautiful BUCKEYE BUTTERFLY. The Prairie is host to many kinds of beauty.

October 5, 2011 Huh? Seems strange.

Seven ROCK DOVES, aka pigeons, are flying in a V-formation overhead. Sparrow migration has begun and I'm treated to a little flock containing SWAMP, LINCOLN'S and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS. A PHILADELPHIA VIREO sits low on a bare branch giving great viewing, while an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER perches on the tip top of a small bare tree, always a pleasure to see. And here's a NORTHERN PARULA, a tiny colorful Wood Warbler. It's treat upon treat today and I'm ready for it! It's the season for romance, too, and a pair of RED-TAILED HAWKS are soaring low, circling each other. Nice. I leave with a warm feeling in my heart.

October 24, 2011 Looking brown in the early morning light, an EASTERN BLUEBIRD confuses me. An OVENBIRD walks along a tree branch and my heart jumps. It's my first of the season and the season is nearly over! FOX SPARROWS and a RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET add to my delight. Is that an EASTERN SCREECH OWL I hear? It's definitely that time of year. Four EASTERN TOWHEEs hop up near me - all females! Exchanging gossip maybe? A flock of EUROPEAN STARLINGS perch on a power tower, ordinarily not worth reporting, but most are molting juveniles with gray heads and white body spots. They look so neat, they become a fun end to this fall walk.

November 12, 2011 Why is it No-venber, no birds, I mutter to myself after seeing only three species, but then an unfamiliar sound lifts my eyes to a bare treetop. Yes! It's a NORTHERN SHRIKE. My target bird today! That explains the silence and lack of birds. But here's something I've not seen in a few years, a murder of AMERICAN CROWS, 28 in number. They're definitely coming back after the plague of West Nile Virus. Down in the marsh a few RUSTY BLACKBIRDS flip moist leaves over and over, hoping for an edible prize underneath. Just one

special bird makes an unexpected great day and more than one makes it tops!

November 30, 2011 Very few birds today and my walk is short. AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS have come down from the colder north now and male NORTHERN CARDINALS are congregating as they never would in the spring/summer, creating a beautiful red flock. Winter is near. DARK-EYED JUNCOS "Snow Birds," another northern visitor, are easily ID'd by their charcoal gray and white tail. Two BLUE JAYS seem to be thinking of staying and toughing out the winter. A large flock of WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS munch something in the underbrush of the East Woodland, probably just migrating through. Hearing their little song is very pleasant in this season of relative silence.

December 18, 2011 It's a chilly, somewhat snowy, Christmas Bird Count Day and there seems few to count! BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES cheerfully bounce around here and there, with an occasional song. AMERICAN GOLDFINCHes, with their roller-coaster flight, top the count list. And there is adventure: A RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER presses a peanut, snatched from a home feeder adjacent to the Prairie, into a crevice in a telephone pole. Satisfied that it's secure, he flies off and is soon replaced by the smaller DOWNY WOODPECKER, who promptly proves that it's NOT secure! A SWAMP SPARROW hides among some dried plants giving us all a work-out, trying to see the field marks. Eventually it hops out into the open enough to truly identify this handsome bird. Two HAIRY WOODPECKERS show us their longer bills and larger size than the little Downy and one AMERICAN ROBIN chuckles a little and flies off. The RED-TAILED HAWK pair sit side-by-side in the woods of the newest Prairie acquisition, their closeness reserved for breeding season only. Not a great day, but the Prairie is a Christmas card of snow-white trees and bushes, and "cotton" tufted forbs and grasses. So, we wish each other a Merry Christmas, and a farewell to the Prairie until 2012, and go on our way.



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



Winter Rules

The preserve is open every day from dawn to dusk, but the parking lot is closed from December through February, except when we open it for scheduled work days. If you want to visit in winter, the best access is from the end of MacQueen Dr. Don't park on Industrial Dr.; you may get a ticket.