

Executive Committee

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**Newsletter #94**

**September 2006**

**President's Corner**

Although there's plenty to see on the prairie in the summer, it sure makes for hot work. You'll see, though, that we've still been out there doing what needs to be done. And things are definitely starting to ramp up for the fall, starting with two special events: a celebration of achieving Nature Preserve status, and our Annual Meeting. Read up on these coming events below, and I hope to see you there.

*Steve*

**Nature Preserve Dedication**

As you know, we've finally received Illinois Nature Preserve Status, and the Forest Preserve District is planning a short celebration for the Truitt-Hoff Nature Preserve on Wednesday, August 30 at 4:30 p.m. at the main parking lot. There will be a few speakers and then a guided tour of the West Loop area for anyone who wants to visit. Happily we haven't had drought like last year, so the prairie will be putting on its normal, gorgeous display for the event. Everyone is invited.

For those of you who are still wondering just where the Nature Preserve is, I've put in a map at the end of the newsletter with its boundary. As you can see, about half of the Forest Preserve is Nature Preserve. Most of the highest quality areas are included.

**Annual Meeting**

This year our annual meeting will be held on Saturday, September 16 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 2006 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). Herb Demmel has decided not to serve on the board for the next term, and so we're at our minimum board size of six. We'd like to add one or two to the board.

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, 2006. This year's recipients by category are

10 hours	Patsy Carrow Steve Carrow Jill Dearmer Jacqui Gleason
25 hours	Rob Kaiser Karl Knecht Tracey Uhren
50 hours	Bob Kusiolek
150 hours	Patricia Ebel Charles Gasparon
200 hours	Malcolm Boyle
250 hours	Jim Dohren

650 hours	Bill Dawe
	Monica Sentoff
1250 hours	Marilyn Bell
	Herb Demmel
1300 hours	Scott Hensey
1350 hours	Herman Jensen
2200 hours	Steve Sentoff

This is an impressive list, and as always, there are many active volunteers who just happen to be between awards. We're also delighted to see a few new names on the list.

This year we'll also give out two New Bird on the Prairie Awards to Marilyn Bell, our ever-diligent bird monitor, for spotting a Carolina Wren on March 29<sup>th</sup> and a Summer Tanager on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

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

## Western Beardtongue

Since the earliest plant surveys on the Prairie, two different Beardtongues have been known to be here. One is Foxglove Beardtongue, *Penstemon digitalis*. It's fairly common, and a plant that we regularly collect and sow into our restoration areas. It has a pretty, white cluster of flowers in late June. We also have a very close relative, Western Beardtongue, *Penstemon tubaeflorus*. This Beardtongue also has white blossoms, but with a different shape, and blooms a couple weeks later. According to Swink and Wilhelm, this plant is an introduced species from farther west or south. We've always considered it to be a plant that got to the preserve during the stockyards operation; we have several species of other plants that also seem to be somewhat out-of-place.

It turns out, however, that this species was added to the Illinois list of endangered plants in 2002. Apparently its range in Illinois is shrinking to the point where it needed to be listed. I only learned this earlier this year, and when I talked with the Forest Preserve District, they said that they had monitored the population once, but would be delighted if we would check it this year. So at the end of June, several of us, armed with the information from the earlier monitoring, went out to see what we could find.

The bottom line is that we have a thriving population of this species – we counted over 1200 blooming stems all across the prairie. We even found some in the newest acquisition by the entrance road, where the Forest Preserve District cleared the brush this winter. Admittedly this seems to be a particularly good year for many of the plants on the prairie, and in particular for both of the Beardtongues, but we obviously have a thriving population of this endangered species. We're not sure it really belongs here, but it sure seems to like it.

For now, our management plan for this species is to monitor it only. We've never tried to reduce it since it didn't seem to be a threat, and we've avoided collecting it, since we considered it to be an introduced species. It's possible, however, that we've unintentionally spread it around the preserve. In addition, there are other DuPage County Forest Preserves where this plant occurs, and in these cases, there are records that they received seed collected from West Chicago Prairie in the past.

## Recent Work Projects



Much of our late spring and early summer work normally is weeding, and this year is no exception. We had one regular work day at the prairie to remove White Sweet Clover. Thankfully we didn't have anything like the horrible amount of this that we had last year. The germination of this biennial plant seems to be triggered by the prescribed burn, so two growing seasons after the burn, it's really bad. Since it's been three seasons since the burn on the west side and four for the east side, there were only scattered patches of clover to worry about. Malcolm Boyle, Kathy DiMonte, Scott Hensey, Karl, Maria and Stephen Knecht, Dan Liu, Bob Seagraves and Steve Sentoff got plenty sweaty pulling and stacking this invader.

Even our Nachusa work day was mostly a weeding exercise. We moved the date to early July, partly so that we could do some weeding, but also so we would have a chance to see that preserve when it was blooming. For the past few years, we've only been going out in the late fall and winter to cut brush, and there wasn't much to see. Malcolm Boyle, Patricia Ebelt, Katie and Scott Hensey and Monica and Steve Sentoff cut and herbicided unwanted plants, mostly olive and St. John's Wort in our adopted Kittentail Knob unit. After a pleasant lunch in the field we had a chance to talk a walk and see the sights.

And of course, our week day volunteers have been hard at work on a number of weeds including Canada Thistle, Reed Canary Grass, Dame's Rocket, Garden Valerian, Teasel, Knapweed, etc. Thankfully, we only have little bits of these, but have to keep up with them every year. Our crack crew included Bill Dawe (7), Jill Dearmer (2), Jim Dohren (8), Rob Kaiser (3), and Monica and Steve (10) Sentoff.

In addition to all this weeding, we did collect Spiderwort on our July 15 work day. This plant used to be abundant all across the prairie, but has now been reduced, apparently as more of the native plants compete with it. Nonetheless the crew of Malcolm Boyle, Patsy and Steve Carrow, Scott Hensey, Punit and Vinita Sarup, Steve Sentoff, Tracey Uhren and Dan Wilcox still got a fair amount of it. We'll sow this later in the year.

## By-laws Update

Our Stewardship Group has a set of very simple by-laws that provides the basis for our operations. If you'd like to see it, there's a current copy on our web site, [www.wcpsg.org](http://www.wcpsg.org) – just click on the More Information link and find the By-Laws link on the page. However, it hasn't been updated since 1988, and with our change to the schedule of the annual meeting, it could use amending. Probably you didn't realize when you got the Schedule last December that the notification of the annual meeting coming in September was partly to meet the By-laws. The

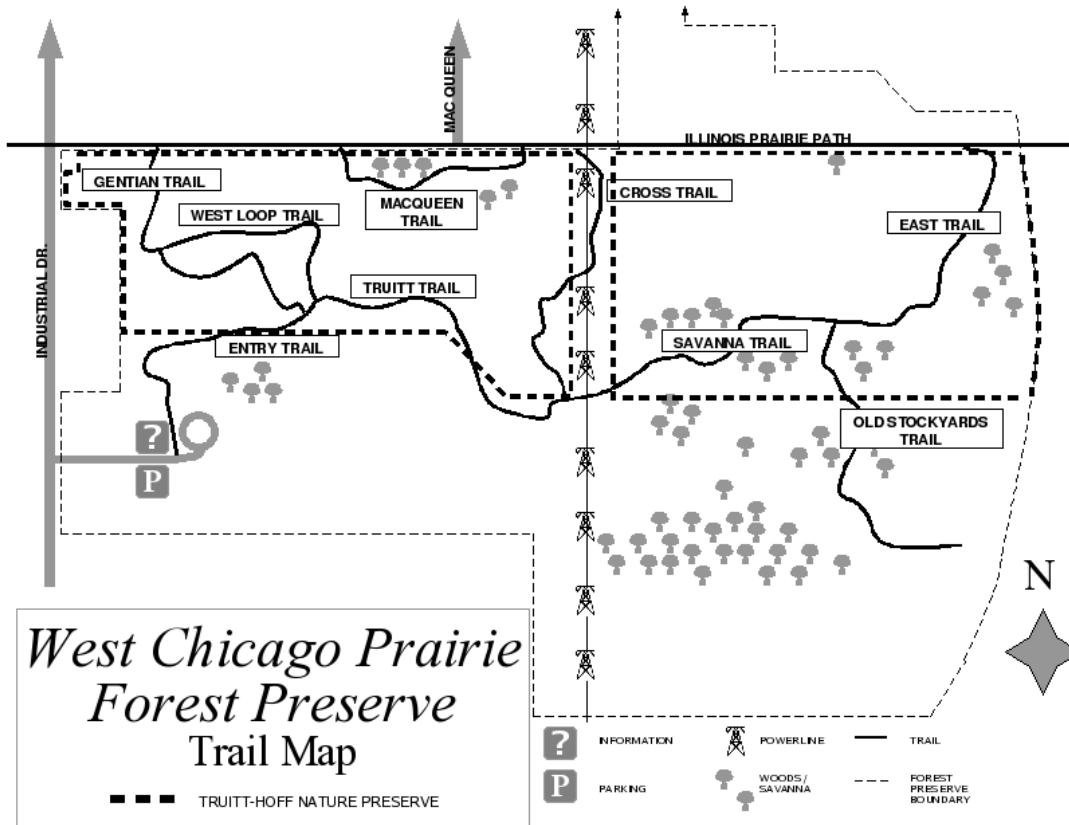
Executive Committee recommends that we amend the By-laws at the annual meeting, by changing Article 10, Meetings to read as follows:

*The annual meeting shall be held each calendar year at a time and place designated by the Executive Committee, and will be announced to all members in the NEWSLETTER. Business meetings of the Executive Committee will be held on an as-needed basis, as determined by the Executive Committee members.*

This will simplify some of our scheduling. We'll vote on this at the annual meeting.



Sorry, no Birder's Diary in this Newsletter, due to space limitations. And we still want to remind you that Marilyn is looking for an assistant. Anyone interested in increasing their knowledge of birds should contact us.





## 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	August 26	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Wednesday	August 30	4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	<b>Nature Preserve Dedication</b> <i>Ceremony for the dedication of the Truitt-Hoff NP.</i>
Sunday	September 10	12:00 noon – 3:00 p.m.	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Saturday	September 16	12:00 noon – 3:00 p.m.	<b>Annual Meeting and Picnic</b> <i>Join us for a potluck picnic, followed by our annual meeting and a field trip.</i>
Saturday	September 30	1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> <i>Collection of grasses and forbs, also a good visit.</i>
Saturday	October 14	7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	<b>Nachusa Grasslands</b> <i>Bring a field lunch. We will be clearing brush, herbiciding and/or seeding on Kittentail Knob. Meet at the WCP parking lot for carpooling.</i>
Saturday	October 28	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Sunday	November 12	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 2	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 16	8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	<b>Field Trip – Meet at MacQueen Entrance</b> <i>Winter resident birds. Annual DuPage winter 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.