

Executive Committee

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



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**Newsletter #95**

**January 2007**

**President's Corner**

Happy New Year and welcome to 2007. Once again we have lots of events planned to encourage you to come out to the prairie for a visit or to volunteer. Check out the enclosed schedule of events – I hope to see you soon!

*Steve*

**Annual Meeting**

Our 22<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting was held on September 16, after another fine potluck picnic at the Preserve.

Scott Hensey presented the Treasurer's Report, and I'm pleased to say that we're still doing fine financially, thanks to frugal spending and generous donors. We spent \$646 in the preceding year, mostly for maintaining our equipment and sending out mail, and received \$1482 in donations.

The next order of business was the nomination and election of officers. As previously reported, Herb Demmel resigned from the board, but we had two new nominees, Kathy DiMonte and Jim Dohren. So the slate of candidates was

President	Steve Sentoff
Vice President	Herman Jensen
Sec./Treasurer	Scott Hensey
Board Members	Malcolm Boyle, Bill Dawe, Kathy DiMonte, Jim Dohren, JoAnn Monge

The entire slate was approved by acclamation. Kathy's biographic information is included below for those of you who haven't met her, and Jim's will be included in a future newsletter. Similarly, the requested change to the By-laws, as reported in the last newsletter, was approved by the members at the meeting.

Steve Sentoff then gave a review of events of last year, starting with achieving Nature Preserve status. The Forest Preserve District had a very nice dedication ceremony on August 30<sup>th</sup>, with a number of speakers. The

Stewardship Group then gave some short tours for the visitors.

The report on the volunteer work for the year was a total of 1259 hours, 1160 from our regular volunteers and 99 more from outside groups. The major categories of work included: clearing – 309 hrs., weeding – 175.5, monitoring – 143, seed collection – 99, seed sowing – 77, and volunteering at Nachusa Grasslands – 94.5. Another excellent year. As usual, most of the work is continuing to push the invasives back, and we had a series of dogwood reduction projects on the east side last year, which hadn't gotten much attention for a while.

As far as upcoming plans are concerned, it will be more of the same, mostly brush removal.

The meeting concluded with the awarding of certificates of accomplishment to the volunteers crossing our award boundaries, and a tour of the West Loop Prairie.

**Meet the WCPSG – Kathy DiMonte**



Kathy DiMonte grew up on the southwest side of Chicago where she loved to play in the prairies. "My brother and I flew our kites there and made forts in the shrub stands." Those were some of her fondest memories.

About 10 years ago, she became a Resource Management Volunteer for DuPage County Forest Preserve. Mel Hoff, the previous steward of WCP, was the first one to call her for help. She has been a volunteer at West Chicago Prairie ever since. As one of the WCP's frog monitors (for the Chicago Habitat Project), Kathy really appreciates and supports the healthy diversity of life on the prairie. She is happy to volunteer with so many nice people in such a beautiful place. And she is delighted that a portion of the preserve has become the Truitt-Hoff Nature Preserve. Using her graphics design skills, she has also produced a poster for the Stewardship Group, which gets used whenever we get a chance to advertise for new members.

Kathy and her husband, Angelo, have lived in unincorporated Naperville for almost thirty years. Two of their children live in California and one is an environmental writer on the North Shore. Kathy is currently working as a teaching assistant in Indian Prairie School District 204. Her hobbies include drawing, yoga, bicycling and hiking.

## Recent Accomplishments

Once again the work picked up as we moved into the fall. September was mostly a month for seed collection, with Malcolm Boyle (2), Kathy DiMonte, Patricia Ebelt, Linda Fisher, Stephanie Frantz, Scott Hensey, Jeff Mazrimas and Steve Sentoff collecting varying amounts of 20 different species. Bill Dawe also led a collecting trip for five members of the DuPage Unitarian Universalist church.

Since then, our work has been mostly brush clearing, first in the South Savanna, and more recently, in the West End Prairie. Marilyn and Alex (son) Andrews, Malcolm Boyle (3), Jill Dearmer, Kathy DiMonte, Patricia Ebelt (3), Linda Fisher, Scott Hensey (3), Rob Kaiser, Monica (2) and Steve (3) Sentoff and Jessica Soto cut, stacked and herbicided brush on our regularly scheduled days. We had about 8 inches of new fallen snow for the December 2<sup>nd</sup> event, but we got to experience the prairie covered with a beautiful white blanket on a lovely, sunny day. Meanwhile the week day volunteers (Bill Dawe (4), Jim Dohren (2) and Steve Sentoff (5)) have also been working away, mainly in the same areas.

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, a trusty crew of Malcolm Boyle, Scott Hensey and Herman Jensen went to Nachusa Grasslands to continue our restoration work. They collected, processed and stored a variety of seed to be used at our adopted Kittentail Knob unit.

## A Birder's Diary

by Marilyn Bell

*July 6, 2006* An EASTERN BLUEBIRD on the Prairie in July? That's never been recorded before. He's first on the telephone wire, then flying around and singing, "Cheer, Cheerful Charming". Is he looking for a mate? It seems late. Do we have any empty tree cavities? How strange. Now I'm startled, picking my way through the untrailed south fields, as two RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS pop up out of the grasses into flight, followed by 18(!) others, mostly young. Now there's a family that wasn't delayed.

*August 9, 2006* There's a fuzzy little HOUSE WREN youngster edging down the bare branch, so close. This is the fun season and I love the curiosity of the young. What?! In the July hangout area of the EASTERN BLUEBIRD is now a spotted young one. What's going on? Too bad he can't be interviewed. Everywhere, it seems, are mingled families of CEDAR WAXWINGS, the young not yet clothed in the soft, sleek plumage of an adult. There's 30 here and 16 there and ... A brown-headed RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER climbs a tree-trunk nearby. His zebra-striped back gives him away, but his head plumage is so different. Four heavily striped young HOUSE FINCHes cavort among bugs and leaves, getting their own eats, but still under the watchful eye of their mom. An EASTERN KINGBIRD parent quarrels with its young, tired of caring for an age-independent child. Go get your own food, it seems to be saying. The shorter-tailed young of the line-sitting MOURNING DOVE are obvious, as are the abbreviated-tailed young of the BARN SWALLOW. But some parents still care for nestlings, COMMON YELLOW-THROATS and AMERICAN GOLDFINCHes eying me, the mouths holding food for the unseen little ones. Good parents all!

*August 16, 2006* A COMMON NIGHTHAWK! So nice to see in the morning, with its swooping, graceful flight, snatching bugs. An AMERICAN GOLDFINCH sails into the air in a courtship flight. A busy CHIMNEY SWIFT joins in the aerial flights, a flying cigar, snatching his share of insects.

*August 23, 2006* What!?! On this foggy morning a cranky EASTERN KINGBIRD runs off the OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER I was admiring! And look at this: Here come six more kingbirds to this bare tree! Are they young birds observing how to be mean (their Latin name is *Tyrannus tyrannus*.) or migrating adults? What a show. High above, three TURKEY VULTURES fly unsteadily in a kettle, catching thermals.

*September 6, 2006* Such a treat! Momma (or is it Poppa?) EASTERN WOOD PEWEE is feeding her almost-independent young ones - three of them! Fluffy and trusting, they perch on eye-high branches checking out their new world. CEDAR WAXWINGS, social birds that they are,

are easy to spot, flying around in large flocks, landing on tree-tops and fly-catching their next meal - with a bit of jostling, as in every family with siblings. Six GREAT EGRETS fly by overhead, their white plumage easily visible. Searching for more water, I would guess. Oh, but here come some back again. Just like people, some are hard to please. Like an antiphonal choir, three WARBLING VIREOS sing back and forth triangularly, high in widely separated cottonwoods. INDIGO BUNTINGS remain in little family groups, one perturbed female still carrying food to an unseen fledgling!

*September 20, 2006* What a beautiful, cool day, on the brink of fall, but frustrating in that the birds are lying low, not responding to my coaxing. Do they know that hawk migration has begun? There's a RED-TAILED HAWK now hovering above the Prairie. Amazing how this powerful soaring bird can also just hang in mid-air, spotting a potential meal. A LEAST FLYCATCHER perches on a bare limb. He, too, hopes to spot a potential meal. In the low brush, a small bird is thoroughly agitated, but I'm thoroughly pleased. It's a LINCOLN SPARROW migrating through.

*October 20, 2006* Nice greeting today, as a beautiful WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW joins several WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS and the summer-resident FIELD SPARROW family in full view on the gravel entry trail. A bit further down, a boldly patterned FOX SPARROW pops out of the brush to see what he's missing and I'm not missing a moment of checking him out. A SWAMP SPARROW peers from the cattails along the edge of Heron Pond, unhappy with my presence, but bringing me happiness.

Overhead, clouds of RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS ebb and flow into different shapes, undoubtedly on their way to warmth. Sounds good to me too!

*November 28, 2006* Whee! This little flock of AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS have their own Great America! Landing on a tall dried grass stalk, they ride it as it bends to the ground. What fun! The day is dark with intermittent sprinkles, but the birds are loving it! DARK-EYED JUNCOS, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES, and NORTHERN CARDINALS are happily showering in the drips. And looky here! A shrunken Heron Pond holds 74 MALLARDS!! Well, it is a great day for ducks! Can it really be the end of another November, quickly come? I wave a wet good-bye to this beautiful bit of nature, already looking forward to the surprises the soon-to-be-

burned Prairie will divulge, and smiling in remembrance of the year its been.

## Herbiciding Workshop

One of our most critical tasks is the control of invasive non-native plants. Often the only available mechanism is the spot application of herbicides to prevent their spread, and so we need volunteers who are licensed herbicides.

Again this year there will be a herbicide clinic on Saturday, February 10, from 8:15 to 4:00 at the Brookfield Zoo. There will be a training session from 8:15 to 12:00 followed by a testing session from 1:00 to 4:00. Licensing comes at two levels: Applicators, who have passed two tests and can work on their own, and Operators, who only have to pass one test, but then must work under the direction of an Applicator. Most people can pass the Operator test just by attending the training session, though a little study ahead of time helps. You'll definitely need some study if you intend to take the Applicator's test, since much of the material for it is not covered in the training. The stewardship group has several copies of the training material (for both tests), which we can lend out, or you can get copies for a nominal charge from the University of Illinois.

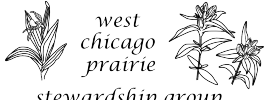
You must register with Karen Tharp of The Nature Conservancy at 866-876-5463 by Friday, January 26th, 2007 to attend this clinic. The Department of Agriculture will run the session only if there are at least 50 attendees, so it's important for us to get a good showing. Contact me if you need other information, or if you would like to borrow the training material.

## "Wild Things" Conference

On Saturday, March 3, Chicago Wilderness is sponsoring a one-day conference to bring together experts, volunteers and anyone else interested in nature. Topics range from restoration techniques, to teaching methods, to the politics of habitat protection. They have been doing this every other year for a while now, and I can heartily recommend this to anyone who would like to learn more about our natural habitat and meet others with similar interests. It will be held at Northeastern Illinois University. The fee is a very reasonable \$25, plus another \$10, if you want to include lunch.

Registration will begin later in January. For more information, you can call 847-965-9239 x21 or visit [www.habitatproject.org](http://www.habitatproject.org).





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