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## **Newsletter #96**

**May 2007**

### **President's Corner**

Welcome to Spring! We've just about completed our brush clearing season, which you'll read more about below, and started our birding and other field trips. The Marsh Marigolds and Wood Betony are blooming on the Prairie, and with all the rain we've had in the last few months, we have great prospects for lush growth and spectacular blooms this year. I think the Prairie is as wet as I've ever seen it in the 17 years since I've been out there.

Speaking of 17 years, by now you all know that our local brood of the Periodical Cicadas is just about due to emerge. I don't recall seeing (or hearing) cicadas when I first joined, and there isn't any mention of cicadas on the Prairie in the Stewardship Group records. I'd like to hear from anyone who recalls whether there were many cicadas at the preserve last time. We'll soon know the story for 2007.

I hope you'll come out to see the wonders of the natural world that you're helping to protect. See you soon on the Prairie.

*Steve*

### **Meet the WCPSPG – Jim Dohren**



Long before Jim retired from middle school teaching, he knew he wanted to do a lot more than just sit around and relax. He wanted to continue to help others. And, if he could, he very much wanted to do that outdoors doing physical work.

He'd already decided to try volunteering at Kline Creek Farm. That has worked out perfectly. Jim works in the fields and orchard, gives school programs, reads to children in the summer, splits

a lot of firewood and engages visitors as often as possible.

Somewhere along the line Jim also joined the Trail Patrol and rides as often as possible. He has had a part-time job at Wannemaker's Home Center in Downers Grove for 29 years. He works in the seasonal department helping people with their questions and problems concerning growing things. In addition he sings in his church's choir and helps cook and serve a hot meal for the homeless once a month in Aurora.

Jim read about the need for volunteers at West Chicago Prairie, subsequently meeting and working with Mel Hoff. He found that the hard outdoor work suited him right down to the ground. He quickly sensed how important it was as well. Soon after beginning, he accepted Mel's request to take the herbicider's license test and has been an operator for five years. He regularly works with the mid-week crew, except when spending a few months each winter in Florida.

Jim enjoys any of the prairie work, but particularly likes knocking back the invading bad guys so the good guys can reclaim the neighborhood. Since the work keeps you young, he plans on many more seasons of life on the prairie.

## Recent Accomplishments

Clearing. Our biggest work this winter was clearing of the West End Prairie at the far north west corner of the preserve. This area is one of our nice, high quality sections, but it was definitely getting filled with brush and needed some help. We actually began the work on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, but continued with four more of our scheduled winter work days clearing this area. It made a huge difference. We cut right across the area, and even under the trees that form a small peninsula into the prairie. The teams stacked all the brush into six gigantic brush piles, which the Forest Preserve District burned off. We actually reused two of the burn scars to rebuild more brush piles on later work days, so we could minimize the scarring. Once we had this all cut, stacked and herbicided, and the brush piles were removed, we had two more work days to seed the area with most of the seed we had collected last fall. Participants for these work days included Nancy Allured (2), Malcolm Boyle (5), Kathy DiMonte (3), Patricia Ebelt (2), Steve Carrow, Linda Fisher (2), Kathy Garness, Scott Hensey (4), Mark Hubble, Chris Huslig, Roger Kotecki, Jeff Mazrimas, Steve Sentoff (5), Rob Sperl, and Tracey Uhren (4) plus three students.

Garlic Mustard. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, Malcolm Boyle, Herb Demmel, Scott Hensey, Chris Huslig, Dawn, Steve, Noah and Isabel Konteurs, and Monica and Steve Sentoff pulled Garlic Mustard from our savanna. The weather was simply gorgeous, and we had a good trip. Wild flowers spotted (mostly in West Savanna) included Toothwort, Bloodroot, May Apple, White Trout Lily, Jacob's Ladder and Geranium.

Trail Cleanup. April 28<sup>th</sup> was this year's annual Illinois Prairie Path Cleanup day, and once again we participated by cleaning our section of the Geneva Spur from Reed-Keppler Park to Industrial Drive. Allison Bachraty, Malcolm Boyle, Linda Fisher, Scott Hensey, Mark Hubble, Jo Ann, Darryl and Tim Monge, Carol Notley, Jack Pace, Monica and Steve Sentoff, Tracey Uhren, and Linda Yurka put on their work gloves and collected about about 30 bags of trash of every description. We also used this opportunity to clean up a large amount of trash that was at the south edge of this winter's clearing project, blown and thrown in from neighboring parking lot. Thanks to Tracey and his pickup truck, we moved it all to Industrial Dr., where the county hauled it away.

Week-day work. Most of our week-day work this season has been clearing in the South Savanna, finishing up work that we started in the fall with a couple of scheduled weekend events. The team of Bill Dawe, Jim Dohren and Steve Sentoff has recently gotten an addition of Allison Bachraty, a COD biology student, who is working on a Service Learning project at the college, and

who significantly reduced the average age of the team, which is typically just old, retired guys.

## A Birder's Diary

by Marilyn Bell

March 13, 2007 Oh no! This is not the welcome I want my first 2007 day back on the Prairie. Four BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS, clustered on a small tree top, squeak their unmusical call, early arrivals, no doubt preparing to do their parasitizing. Surely they have some good purpose. The morning is warmish, but the trails are muddy, flooded, or snow and ice covered and I slog, slish and slide my way along observing male RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS, waiting for the girls, and the usual, expected winter birds. Looks like a hawk perched in a tree near frozen Heron Pond. No, wait, not a hawk, it's an adult BALD EAGLE! YES! No ordinary bird this, its eagle eye on me. I stay very still, fooling a WINTER WREN, who hops up and over twigs near my feet, thinking it's alone. Now that's the kind of welcome I appreciate. I'm coming back.

April 6, 2007 Br-r-r-r. Muddy trails are frozen and every bird-body is fluffed and round on this very chilly morning. Still, a little flock of SWAMP SPARROWS, in the bright sunshine, finds a reason to sing and even bathe! There's not a sound from the EASTERN MEADOWLARK in the dried grasses, though. I'm thinking its doubting that Spring is here. The now-flooded marsh reveals a pair of BLUE-WINGED TEALS, my first observation in a few years, what with little water. An AMERICAN WOODCOCK, strange-looking bird, flushes from the trail to my delight, but is silent, save for the melodic sound of his wings. A RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER sings his spring song, hoping a female appreciates his vocalization. A flock of beautiful FOX SPARROWS vocalizes as well, a beautiful melody, hopping in sight to see if I'm liking it. Ohhh, what's that song, loon-like and a bit blood-curdling. On Heron Pond, which a moment ago appeared deserted, two PIED-BILLED GREBES pop up from the cold depths, one bursting with song. It IS spring after all!

April 14, 2007 What a sight! Above our heads, on this field trip day, WILSON'S SNIPES criss-cross the sky in their courtship flights, up and then down, the wind in their wings making a mournful, pleasant sound. Bark inspectors, otherwise known as BROWN CREEPERS, delight us, also going up and down but quietly near us on tree trunks, always up then flying down to the next tree. Oh, but here's a direct flier. A beautifully white GREAT EGRET flies above our departing group.

May 6, 2007 Look at that perfect miniature of its parents, a young KILLDEER! A single pipe note tells me mom is near and there she is trying to distract me from her child. I leave my early search and join the group on this Spring Bird Count Day. And the birds are here. A pair of EASTERN BLUEBIRDS survey the ground from a

telephone wire. YELLOW WARBLERS serenade us from many places and one pops out, displaying his bright yellow plumage, breast streaked with red. PALM WARBLERS dip their tails from low grasses and high branches, easy to ID. On Heron Pond, a PIED-BILLED GREBE makes like a periscope, for a second showing head and neck only above the water before disappearing, intriguing the students present. A new, somewhat confusing song, attracts us to a marshy area where a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH bobs along some wet branches, happily munching breakfast. And look at that BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER! Its orange throat seems on fire. Rich, piping notes attract us to another flame-orange and black bird a BALTIMORE ORIOLE, always a visual treat. And there beautiful - a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK flies in and peers out at us from emerging leaves. Oh, but look at the path, a WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW stays, letting us admire its beauty. Two DOUBLE-CREASTED CORMORANTS draw our eyes to the skies, as do the tumbling antics of a RED-TAILED HAWK and an AMERICAN CROW, demonstrating their dislike of one another. What a day! Many birds counted and many delighted counters.

[Editor's note: Marilyn will be awarded a New Bird on the Prairie Award for the sighting of the Bald Eagle noted above.]

### **New Plant on the Prairie**

Just about two years ago, Bill Dawe reported to me that he had found a plant that he thought was Virginia Bluebells out by the South Savanna. I'm sure that most of you are familiar with this plant, which is frequently used in home gardens. However, it had never been recorded at WCP. At that time, though, we were never able to find the plant again, so we couldn't confirm the finding. But while the week-day crew was clearing under the biggest oak in the savanna a few weeks ago, we found a couple of plants. Although Bill says he thought the ones he saw were a bit farther north than these, we can now confirm that Virginia Bluebells is present on the prairie. Bill will finally get his New Plant on the Prairie Award at the next annual meeting. Congratulations!

### **Registration**

It's time to renew our membership records, and there's a registration form included with this



newsletter. Our by-laws state that anyone can be a member just by registering, so it's an easy and painless process. No dues are required for membership, but all members are encouraged to donate time, money, skills and/or equipment to further the purposes of the stewardship group. If our records show that you've participated in some activity in the last year, you will automatically be continued as a member. If your phone number or address, or any of the other information has changed, please fill out the registration form. This helps us keep our records up-to-date.

### **Willowbrook Foundation**

The Willowbrook Wildlife Foundation is a support group like us for the Forest Preserve District. It supports the Willowbrook Wildlife Center, a treatment and rehabilitation haven for injured and orphaned wildlife. The center, located in Glen Ellyn, receives wildlife from DuPage County and the greater Chicago metropolitan area, treating more than 6,000 animals in 2006. The Foundation is currently seeking candidates for trustee.

Trustees serve a two year term beginning July, 2007, and can renew twice for a total of six years. Ideal candidates are individuals who have a passion for wildlife and transferable business experience and skills such as fund raising, public relations, membership and operations. A time commitment of 8-10 hours per month is required.

If you're looking for more volunteer opportunities, please contact Carl Giessel, chair of the nominating committee, at 630-665-3203 or [cgiessel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cgiessel@sbcglobal.net).

### **Koi Ponds at Friendship Village**

Long-time volunteer and former board member Herb Demmel has been working on restoration at Friendship Village in Schaumburg, where he lives. This retirement community has recently installed several indoor and outdoor koi ponds and is planning opening tours on Saturday, July 14, from 9:00 to 5:00. Herb would like to invite any WCPSG members who are interested. For more information, you can contact him at 847-884-5217.





## Schedule of Upcoming Events

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

Sunday	June 3	8:00 – 11:00	<b>Field Trip</b> A mix of summer resident birds and early prairie flowers.
Saturday	June 30	7:30 – 5:00	<b>Nachusa Grasslands</b> Controlling invasives and/or collecting seed for our adopted Kittentail Knob unit. Bring a field lunch. Meet at the WCP parking lot at 7:30 to form car pools, or at the New Steward's Barn at the Grasslands at 9:00.
Saturday	July 28	8:00 – 11:00	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> Removal of Sweet Clover
Sunday	August 12	8:00 – 11:00	<b>Field Trip</b> Good displays of many prairie flowers.
Saturday	August 25	9:00 – 12:00	<b>Restoration Work Day</b> General seed collection, mostly forbs.
Saturday	September 8	12:00 – 3:00	<b>Annual Meeting</b> Join us for a potluck lunch, followed by our annual meeting and a field trip.