

Executive Committee

S. H. Sentoff, President
H. H. Jensen, Vice Pres.
R. S. Hensey, Sec./Treas.
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President's Corner

As you'll see below, we've been out working all summer in spite of the heat and humidity. Thankfully the weather will soon be changing and we'll shift into seed collecting – come on out and join us one of these spectacular fall days.

But first, don't forget to come to the Annual Meeting, for what's always an enjoyable lunch and meeting. See you soon!

Steve

Annual Meeting

This year our annual meeting will be held on Saturday, September 8 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). Kathy DiMonte is planning to move to California, so she'll be leaving the board. 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, 2007. This year's recipients by category are

10 hours	Steve Knecht
25 hours	Tim Monge
100 hours	Mark Hubble
200 hours	Kathy DiMonte
	Patricia Ebelt
	Charles Gasparon
300 hours	Malcolm Boyle
	Jim Dohren
600 hours	JoAnn Monge
700 hours	Bill Dawe
1350 hours	Marilyn Bell
	Scott Hensey
2450 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 Bald Eagle in the Preserve on March 13th; and two New Plant on the Prairie Awards: one to Bill Dawe for Virginia Bluebells and one for Wild Four O'Clock (see below).

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

Recent Accomplishments

We're never going to run out of weeds, but we've been working away on a number of trouble-makers.

Reed-Canary Grass. This is one of our worst problems, and we need to make sure it doesn't spread into any of our high-quality areas. Bill Dawe, Jim Dohren and Steve Sentoff herbicided a number of patches of this on several dates in May.

Garden Heliotrope. The Stewardship Group has been working on this weed for more than 15 years now. It seems to be reducing, but we can't seem to get rid of it. Monica and Steve Sentoff managed to sweep the preserve clear this year with two weeding sessions.

Oriental Bittersweet. This is a new one for us to control, and is on the "New Invaders" list from The Nature Conservancy. Herman Jensen noticed that there seemed to be a few patches of this showing up, and we decided we needed to work on it. As we started to look around, we realized that there were at least seven sizeable infestations. Some of these clearly have been growing for a while. The weekday team of Bill Dawe, Jim Dohren and Steve Sentoff have been working been working much of the summer to cut and herbicide this tangly vine. Because it can grow in among good plants, we've been trying a number of different techniques to see what works best. But it's clear that we'll be working on this one for some time to come.

Knapweed. We actually have two invasive species of knapweed. For many years, we've been working on Brown Knapweed, which continues to show up in the east end of the prairie in spite of our efforts. And more recently, Spotted Knapweed (another "New Invader" from the list) has appeared along the Prairie Path. Thankfully, it only takes one or two passes each year to keep this under control.

Sumac Clearing. Although sumac is a native plant, it can get rather invasive, and we've been cutting it this summer to set it back and keep it from taking over. We cut sumac on our scheduled work day of July 28, and the weekday team also cut sumac. This was some of the hottest, muggiest work we've done in a long time. Cutters included Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey, Mark Hubble, Herman Jensen, Roger Kotecki and Steve Sentoff.

Nachusa Grasslands. On June 30th Malcolm Boyle, Kathy DiMonte, Patricia Ebelt, Linda Fisher, Scott and Katie Hensey, and Monica and Steve Sentoff went to Nachusa on a simply gorgeous day: sunny, not too hot and not too humid. We collected some seed and broadcast it on our Kittentail Knob unit, and cut and herbicided some cherry and walnut resprouts. After lunch we toured some of the Grasslands. All in all, it was a lovely day.

A Birder's Diary

by Marilyn Bell

May 22, 2007 Well, three cheers for those ORCHARD ORIOLES! They're running off a pair of BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS, in defense of their nest. Yep, pairing off and nesting is the order of the day now as FIELD SPARROWS, SONG SPARROWS, COMMON YELLOW-THROATS, EASTERN WOOD PEWEEs, WILLOW FLYCATCHERS and other birds vocalize their pleasure at the prospect. At the tip of a dead tree, an OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER is silent as it twists its head around looking for a meal. It still has traveling to do. In the East Woodland, two birds whose vocalizations sound a bit hoarse make me smile, a YELLOW-THROATED VIREO and a SCARLET TANAGER. Throat lozenges anyone? Whoa, a yellow streak zips by me, emitting only a "twang". It's a YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT, perched now and clearly seen! Its silence could mean a family in progress and I vocalize MY pleasure at that prospect.

June 5, 2007 Sunshine and birds after the rain, what a glorious, musical treat. Oh, but the mosquitoes love it too. Ouch! Right here in the parking lot, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS swoop and glide, emitting their buzzy "song", barely clearing my head! INDIGO BUNTINGS, brilliantly blue in the sunlight – though some do look a bit damp – sing persistently throughout the Prairie. Oh, I know that song. A BROWN THRASHER sits at the tip of a bare tree, his rust-red body quivering with the intensity of his signature song. WARBLING VIREOs and BALTIMORE ORIOLES draw my attention with their beautiful melodies. And here's a small bird hopping from limb to limb, busily focused on the collection of nesting materials. It seems to be a female WARBLING VIREO, building her nest, while her mate sings. I've heard about a woman's work...

June 13, 2007 A DICKCISSEL!! I've never seen one on the Prairie, but there he is. My rusty memory of his song twisted my brain 'til he flew into sight, pointed out by Steve Sentoff. Beautiful. CEDAR WAXWINGS, another beautiful, velvety bird, seem to have descended on us and check me out from their high perches all around. Walking through the East Woodland, it seems I'm intruding, as a GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER makes a scolding noise, I would have otherwise attributed to a robin. Always something new to learn. Its mate joins in the scolding, so I hurry along -- and then get repeatedly "Chewink"ed by Mrs. EASTERN TOWHEE! Her mate enters the scene, too, and I'm thinking nests are filled with gaping mouths and I'm not wanted. High on the power tower that holds their nest, two young RED-TAILED HAWKS, not yet able to fly, look around for their fast food delivery. And there's my first (somewhat beautiful) Cicada of the season – wriggling in the mouth of an EASTERN

KINGBIRD! The bugs are eating me and the birds are eating the bugs. Ah, summer.

June 22, 2007 Do AMERICAN GOLDFINCHes grow! That one sure looks like it, as he faces off against a WILLOW FLYCATCHER – and loses, as the flycatcher lowers his head and approaches menacingly. The goldfinch should know better; they're on a willow tree branch!

July 7, 2007 Is it bugs, or berries, or both? Something is drawing the birds to these shrubs and cottonwoods. There's an ORCHARD ORIOLE, and now a BALTIMORE ORIOLE. From a bush, a FIELD SPARROW pops up, joined by an EASTERN PHOEBE and a HOUSE WREN. And the list keeps growing. It's hard for me to keep up – or walk on.

July 24, 2007 Now this is birding, standing and letting the birds come to me! That means it's young bird season. I think that tiny HOUSE WREN would make my shoulder its perch, except for the noisy consternation of its parent! BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS are "Zee"ing at me and BALTIMORE and ORCHARD ORIOLE parents scold, while their young frolic in the bushes and stretch their necks in my direction. Oh joy! That rapid chatter means SEDGE WRENS are here, popping up out of their favorite grasses, their wings vibrating, as they briefly fly and drop quickly down again. Skinny, young COMMON FLICKERS and pale-headed, young RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS poke at tree bark, now noisily feeding themselves. YELLOW-BREASTED CHATS perch in the open, perhaps thinking that if I focus on them, I won't locate their young. And just look at that, a GREAT EGRET, pure white in the sun, is perched on a telephone wire!! Ridiculous. Wonder what it's locating. What a day! What a summer.

New Plant on the Prairie

During the field trip on June 3rd, I spotted a plant that I didn't recognize, and it wasn't familiar to Herman Jensen, either, who was also on the trip. We looked it up in our field guide and found that it was Wild Four O'Clock (*Mirabilis*

nyctaginea), sometimes also called Umbrellawort. The interesting thing about this plant is that it's listed as another plant that's from farther west. Because this site was used as a stockyard for so many years, we seem to have a number of these plants.

Nature Preserve Buffer

As you know, last year about 130 acres of the West Chicago Prairie was dedicated as the Truitt-Hoff Nature Preserve, thus receiving the highest level of protection from the state of Illinois. The Forest Preserve District has been pursuing Nature Preserve Buffer status for the remainder of the site. This will provide nearly the same level of protection to the areas that we are restoring. On August 7th, the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission gave its approval to this application. At the meeting the INPC recognized the work of the Stewardship Group and Mel's leadership in protecting the preserve and in contributing to stewardship in the area in general. There are a few more steps in the process, but these are mostly formalities, and we expect that we'll soon have state protection for the entire site. It's nice to get the protection, as well as the recognition for a job well done—take your bows for the work you've contributed.

Donor Appreciation

As you know, we're a pretty frugal organization, but we do need some money to keep our equipment in working order, 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, Ruthanne Baird, Sally Baumgartner, Alan and Sandy Bemis, Bob Claus, Jill Dearmer, Jacqui Gleason, Jean Hoff, Joe Houle, Mollie Millen, Gerald Moody, Paul and Jean Mooring, and Margo Owano. I hope I didn't miss anyone. The Prairie thanks you.





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 8	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 16	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Saturday	September 29	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Collection of grasses and forbs, also a good visit.</i>
Saturday	October 13	7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Nachusa Grasslands <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 27	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Sunday	November 11	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 1	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 15	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.