

The Habitat Project 2002 Leadership Awards

The Habitat Project is about effecting change, starting with the collection of knowledge. It is about building a culture of conservation that connects people to our natural heritage and brings neighbors together to protect and enjoy it. The following people exemplify the Habitat Project spirit. They are changing the world, and we are all a part of their success.



Alan Anderson's contributions to bird conservation go back decades. In recent years, he organized the *Cook County Nesting Bird Census*, and encouraged the *Bird Conservation Network* (BCN) to take it on and make it a regional effort – giving birth to the BCN Census. He has participated in numerous important conservation campaigns, from *Lake Calumet* to *Bartel Grassland* to *Meigs Field*. This year, he worked to improve lines of communication with the land managers for the *Chicago Park District* and the *Forest Preserve District of Cook County*, and has done a Herculean job of organizing monitors for the BCN Census in the city and county. Alan maintains a long list of contacts, thinks conservation wherever he is, and advocates for wildlife and habitat whenever he can.



Barbara Birmingham is a source of inspiration to the citizen scientists who work with her. Trained as an educator, Barbara became an expert in plant identification and restoration ecology through many hours spent in the field with botanists, land managers, stewards, and others. Barbara is the Steward for the *Theodore Stone Preserve* in western Cook County and produces *Currents*, the newsletter for the *Des Plaines River Valley* Volunteers. Barbara is leading the transformation of Theodore Stone Preserve from a thicket of invasives to a functioning, intact ecosystem. She recruited dozens of citizen scientists for the *Chicago Wilderness Wooded Lands Audit* in 2002 and spent many hours monitoring, because so many citizen scientists wanted to team up with her! She attracts people to the fun, hard work of conservation, and she teaches us what we need to know to make a difference.



Mary Borecki has participated in *Plants of Concern* (POC) since the beginning (2001) and has monitored rare species at seven or more locations over the past two summers, including intensive monitoring of *Viola conspersa* (dog violet) at two sites. With land agency staff and scientists, she has served as a volunteer representative on the POC Advisory Group. She also has put in many hours coordinating the *Lake County* POC monitors, acting as a strong liaison between the Forest Preserve District, POC and the volunteers. She gave presentations at the stewards meetings to recruit monitors, got people to the training workshops, coordinated equipment distribution, sent followup notes, and tracked down completed data forms. Mary is a model of volunteer leadership for POC.



Leslie Borns has been an advocate for bird habitat at several *Chicago Park District* sites, particularly *Montrose Beach*, for several years. More recently, as a *Plants of Concern* (POC) monitor, Leslie has been a regular watchdog, keeping an eye on threats to the rare plants. She has been indefatigable in working with the Park District to protect the dune formations at Montrose that are now supporting rare species – through fencing, dog exclusion, signage, and cessation of mechanical garbage pickup that would uproot plants. Leslie has involved about 10 new people in the POC program, and she helped train several of them at lakefront sites. She also recruited a friend, John Purcell, who helped produce wonderful, up-close maps of the areas Leslie monitored. Photo from *Chicago Wilderness Magazine*.



Therese and Gary Davis are *amphibian monitors* at several sites. This year at *Danada/Herrick Forest Preserve in DuPage County*, when they were out investigating their route for access, they came across a big dumpsite along a small stream in a wooded wetland site. The area was loaded with broken bottles, metal etc. Therese and Gary were concerned that this litter would injure wildlife, so they requested assistance from the DuPage Forest Preserve District in the cleanup. They took digital pictures of the litter and provided the district with an aerial photo of the site. The site has been cleaned up, and the threat to wildlife is gone.



Georgiann Dytrych is a first-time *butterfly monitor* who gets the attitude award this year. In her own words to Mel Manner: "Well, I have completed my route at the *Bergman Slough* only four times so far. It has been quite an experience for me. Oh my goodness, I have so much to learn, but it has been fun. Initially, I was more interested in finding my way (and getting used to all the flying things, mostly dragonflies) that I didn't see many butterflies. Then, I lost my way ...and came home so scratched and bitten up, I was miserable, but my husband had a big laugh at the sight of me! On my fourth trip, I saw quite a few species and felt very satisfied that I was beginning to learn this business. After my bites healed, I mended my torn pants, and I had studied for a few hours, my husband said, 'Why in the world are you going out there again?' I said that I felt it had been just a test -- did I really want to do this or did I just say I wanted to do this? I really do want to be a part of this, and I'm going to prove it!"



John Elliot has been a great friend to nature for decades. After many years as Director of the *Forest Preserve District of Cook County's* River Trail Nature Center, John is now providing new leadership to the District's land management program as the (still unofficial) Assistant Superintendent of Conservation. He has been instrumental in turning the dreams and suggestions of bird monitors into reality. The restoration project at *Bartel Grassland* in southern Cook County is a big, ambitious project built on the recommendations of Habitat Project monitors at the site. Implementation requires the coordinated work of four partner agencies and legions of volunteers. John, with great patience and wisdom, has helped a complex project avoid missteps, cut red tape, and produce great results.



Marianne Hahn's *bird monitoring at Bartel Grassland* ended up tripling the size of grassland bird habitat in the Preserve. Marianne found bobolinks and Henslow's sparrows on the grassland – mostly old-field habitat dissected by nine miles of hedgerows. Marianne knew that grassland birds don't breed near hedgerows, and she knew how precious Bartel's birds were. So she worked with the Habitat Project and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to find a way to restore the habitat for grassland birds. We now have a partnership among citizen scientists, Audubon-Chicago Region, the FPD of Cook County, Corlands, and the Army Corps of Engineer – a partnership that has garnered hundreds of thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of work toward the restoration of Bartel Grassland. The hedgerows came down in winter 2002, and bird numbers were up in June. The restoration work continues, and Marianne will be out there each June, monitoring the progress.



Barbara Hill invested a Herculean effort in last year's *Cook County Land Audit*. The Land Audit assessed the ecological condition of the county's natural areas and is helping Cook County's staff to highlight their need for increased resources devoted to land management. Barbara almost single-handedly recruited the nearly 100 citizen scientists who collected the Audit's field data. She signed people up, found each a partner, and answered their questions in the field. She also edited the report that summarized the results for the media and the public and that put the spotlight on the critical need for land management in Cook County's beleaguered natural lands.



Maggie Ingalls has monitored *Viola conspersa* with the *Plants of Concern* (POC) program for two years in Lake County. A trained scientist in her own right, Maggie does extremely precise data recording, and asks the most challenging questions all along the way. Coming to POC from the *Lincolnshire Garden Club*, she has spread her enthusiasm for monitoring, but also for native plants and natural areas overall, to many of her colleagues. Her enthusiasm is contagious.



Scott Kobal is one of the smartest, nicest, hardest-working people we've all had the good fortune to work with. A plant ecologist with the *Forest Preserve District of DuPage County*, Scott spends many hours each week with citizen scientists -- monitoring rare plants, woodlands, or research plots. He also collaborates with scientists, land managers, and volunteers throughout Chicago Wilderness to develop wide-ranging conservation initiatives that will increase our capacity for large-scale management and restoration. He has helped develop monitoring protocols for the *Chicago Wilderness Wooded Lands Audit* and the *Plants of Concern* Program. Scott's support of citizen scientists and eager collaboration give energy and quality to the conservation work of DuPage County and the entire region.



Wayne Lampa and Linda Masters have co-designed and implemented two ground-breaking studies in as many years within Chicago Wilderness. The first, the *Cook County Land Audit*, shined the spotlight on the ecological condition of the county's natural areas. Wayne and Linda designed the monitoring protocol, trained almost 100 volunteers to collect data, analyzed the results, and distilled them into key points for the public. This study is helping Cook County's staff to highlight their need for increased resources devoted to land management. The second study, the *Chicago Wilderness Wooded Lands Audit*, is assessing the status of our savannas, oak woodlands, and other upland forests throughout the region. More than 50 citizen scientists went to the woods this August to collect vegetation data. It represents the first regionwide study of its kind and will provide powerful information upon which to base regional conservation decisions.

Mel Manner is the heart and soul of the *Butterfly Monitoring Network*, now in its sixteenth year. With Doug Taron, Mel has helped the BMN to earn its reputation as a respected, serious source of scientific data about our region's insects. She recruits, trains, and supports butterfly monitors throughout the region. She organizes workshops and butterfly walks. She collects all the data and gets it to the land managers and scientists who need it. And she takes great pleasure in watching the butterflies that her hard work is protecting.



Susanne Masi, Research Botanist at the *Chicago Botanic Gardens*, has worked tirelessly for the past two years to develop and implement the *Plants of Concern* (POC) program. The citizen scientists who depend on Susanne for training, support, inspiration, and on-the-ground field help all can testify to her dedication, attention to detail, and love for the rare plants she monitors. The POC program has saved a population of rare plants from future mowing, has helped guide development decisions in the suburbs, and has protected a struggling plant population in the city. It has engaged scores of citizen scientists, who are working directly with land managers to monitor and protect the rare plants that make up the biodiversity of the Chicago Region. All in its first two years.



Mary Ochsenschlager and Day Waterman often are mentioned in the same breath within Chicago Wilderness, as they make up the Dynamic Duo of *frog monitoring in Kane County*. The recruiting, training, and ongoing support efforts of Mary and Day have made Kane County the frog monitoring capital of Chicago Wilderness. With far more monitors than any other county, the frog program in Kane County has led to the rediscovery of the cricket frog and has sparked an expanded program of amphibian and reptile monitoring in the Chicago Wilderness Great Herp Searches. The hugely successful Kane County herp program is a direct result of the time, energy, and talent that Mary and Day have invested in recruitment, organization, training, volunteer support, field help, and data collection. In photo: Day on left, Mary on right.



Lee Ramsey provides a lot of the glue that keeps the *Bird Conservation Network* (BCN) Census going. As chair of the BCN Census committee, he has made and fielded a thousand phone calls - to help bird monitors meet the technological challenge of entering data on the BCN Census web site, to make connections between stewards and monitors, and to keep the BCN records straight. A recently retired English professor, he authors regular communications with all of the BCN monitors. His level-headed approach to problems has been a great source of strength for all the BCN Census organizers.



Brad Semel - In the entire state of Illinois there is only one site where the state endangered Common Tern successfully nested this year, thanks to a joint effort among birders, the US Navy, and Brad Semel. According to Donald Dann, volunteer organizer for the project, if it were not for the tireless efforts of Brad Semel, Wildlife Biologist with the *Illinois Department of Natural Resources*, there would have been no terns. In the fall of 2000 Brad observed that the harbor at the *Great Lakes Training Center in Waukegan*, a few miles south of an abandoned tern nesting site, had potentially excellent tern habitat. The coalition cleared brush and built a 400 foot electrified fence around the nest site. The 2001 breeding effort failed because of mammalian predators. Undeterred, in 2002 Brad built yet another fence on the island and cleared more invasive vegetation. The result was confirmation of at least 26 terns successfully fledged.



Joe Walsh teaches his students at *Northwestern University* to collect and analyze data for the purpose of conservation. Joe and his students measured habitat variables at 50 different ponds and wanted to know which variables were most important for frogs. They analyzed the data gathered by the *Habitat Project's frog monitors* in 2000, and they found that frog species diversity was higher in ponds with more shoreline vegetation, more nearby grasslands, and less shade or forest cover. They also found greater diversity in ponds in the western areas of Chicago Wilderness, compared to the eastern areas. Joe demonstrated the power of the Habitat Project for helping us make good conservation decisions.

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