



CHICAGO WILDERNESS™

A Regional Nature Reserve

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THE CHICAGO WILDERNESS HABITAT PROJECT

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# 2007 GRASSROOTS CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP AWARDS

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

*These awards are sort of the Academy Awards of conservation. All nominees are proposed by the region's leaders and volunteers – and all decisions are made by a review committee of leaders and volunteers.*

## VIC BERARDI



**Vic Berardi** combines a passion for hawks with a winning way with people. He founded the Illinois Beach State Park Hawk Watch, and it has grown impressively under his leadership. He has also helped in the formation of new hawk watches at Greene Valley in DuPage County and at James Park in Evanston. Vic has been instrumental in starting up the Winter Raptor Survey and has been a principal organizer of the Swainson's Hawk Project, started this spring to determine the extent of the territory of these local endangered birds.

## ERIC BODE

**Eric Bode** did a ton of work; actually, he did 15.5 tons. Eric, of E.C.Bode Tree Care, answered the National Public Lands Day call for assistance in a big way. After seeing an extensive dumpsite at the *Spring Creek Headwaters* Preserve in northwest *Cook County*, Eric decided to help the Forest Preserve District remove the troubling and potentially dangerous eye sore. Utilizing his custom made dump truck complete with hydraulic arm, Eric set off excavating the dumpsite. All told Eric removed 15.5 tons of scrap metal, including a rusty, old tractor. He ferried truck load after truck load to a local recycling facility which stayed opened on a Saturday specifically to receive the corroded fruits of his labor. Eric volunteered 38 hours of staff and equipment to the clean up effort, adding up to around \$6000 in donated services.



## MARY CANNON



**Mary Cannon** was a real find for the *Habitat Herald*. Editor since 2002, she instantly brought outstanding journalism and engaging writing to the newsletter, and she continues to be the “go-to” person on important stories. She consistently captures the crux of the story and the spark of its protagonists, all in 600 words or less. Look for her good work on or near the front page of every issue.

## VICTOR CASSIDY



**Victor Cassidy** spearheaded the organization of the *2006 Chicago Wilderness Habitat Clinics*. He developed a schedule and recruited the site guides who would lead the sessions. With Greg Rajsky and Judy Pollock, he developed a list of sites that represented various geologic features, community types, and land-management issues, located across the Chicago Wilderness region, and then he did the lion's share of research, recruitment, and organization. The result was the successful series of seven Habitat Clinics conducted throughout the Chicago region last May through September. These clinics were enjoyed by over a hundred volunteers and staff from throughout the region.

## BOB FISHER



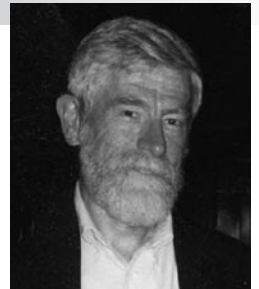
**Bob Fisher** has been instrumental in linking local birding clubs to the *Bird Conservation Network* (BCN) since he helped found the BCN at its inception. He recruits skilled birders from the *DuPage Birding Club* and other local groups for *DuPage County* and regionwide breeding bird surveys, and he trains newcomers on protocols for data collection. For the past nine years, Bob has collected breeding and migratory bird data at the *Waterfall Glen, Wood Ridge, and Oldfield Oaks* preserve complex. Bob regularly presents to District staff an overview of the BCN database, which contains over 11,000 records from the Chicago Wilderness Region. He reports rare finds to District staff, like Barred Owls and potentially nesting Ospreys along the Des Plaines River corridor. Bob promotes the use of sound ecological practices and habitat restoration that lead to healthier ecosystems for birds.

## FRIENDS OF THE LOWER NORTH BRANCH



**Friends of the Lower North Branch** used effective, consistent advocacy to help end the *Cook County* restoration moratorium. **Marianne Kozlowski, Jan & Lou Stessl, and Sue Witkowski**, along with other Friends members, wrote letters to local newspapers and to their County Commissioners, met in person with commissioners, and testified at many Board meetings. Their work was not glamorous, but it was tireless, and it was effective. The moratorium was lifted in September, to an ovation of support from citizens and Board members alike.

## KENT FULLER



**Kent Fuller** gets things done. He has worked with colleagues and public officials to save remnant prairie in his hometown of *Glenview*, was lead author of the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan, and helped get the *Cook County* restoration moratorium lifted. Kent demonstrates the effectiveness of cooperation over confrontation. With his wife Jerry, he is steward at *Miami Woods* Forest Preserve and the remnant *Glenview Naval Air Station Prairie*. A retired scientist for the EPA, he seems to have endless an capacity for collaboration with other conservationists and mentoring of newer ones. Kent currently is chair of the Glenview Natural Resources Commission, which is working to protect the West Fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River and other natural resources within the Village.

## JERRY KOLAR



**Jerry Kolar** started volunteering at *Lake County* Forest Preserve sites over 20 years ago as one of the first stewards with the Forest Preserve District and is now the steward at *Almond Marsh*. Jerry builds connections with other stewards, helping the Lake County program to grow and mature. He spreads the conservation word to the recreational community as well, leading canoe trips for *Prairie State Canoeists* that often focus on an area of environmental significance such as *Horicon Marsh, the Des Plaines River, and the Fox River*. Jerry has done many Sierra Club service trips to the country's National Parks. And he educates public decision makers and the citizenry through regular

letters to the editor and to local politicians. His property is a mini nature preserve with a pond, prairie, and woodlands, including each species of oak that grows in the Chicago region. Jerry's friends describe him as humble, rather quiet, and a strong leader and activist.



## DIANA KRUG

**Diana Krug** hit the ground running in her first year as a monitor for the Chicago Wilderness *Calling Frog Survey*, creatively designing and leading four new projects. She hosted an outing in *Cook County's Palos Preserves* for city monitors who had never heard the call of a gray treefrog. She offered to lead a monitoring workshop for southern Cook County, enabling us to hold a first-ever workshop for south-siders in 2007. She created recruitment flyers for all of the other workshop leaders and distributed them at the Museum of Science and Industry's frog exhibit. She has done extensive reading of the scientific literature to learn what is known about effects of mosquito larvicide on frog populations, has

begun a dialogue with the Mosquito Abatement District to help lessen any possible impacts, and is planning a research project to learn more. Diana is full of new ideas and the energy to carry them out, and she has a lot of fun doing so.

## PETE LEKI

**Pete Leki** uses creative, joyous methods to effect positive change. A teacher at Waters Elementary School in *Chicago*, Pete has brought his Mighty Acorns students, parents, and teachers to *Cook County* Board meetings to regale the Commissioners with songs as well as research to support restoration work and help get the Moratorium lifted at sites along the North Branch of the Chicago River. Pete is an organizer for Riverbank Neighbors, a group that stewards a five block section of the *Chicago River* south of Montrose, creating lush habitat for nesting and migrating birds. The Waters School field ecology program gives students eight years of experience in the wilds of the forest preserves, the Chicago River, Lake Michigan and the school's own extensive native and vegetable gardens. Pete tries to encourage a sense of joy and wonder among us. As a founder of the Bullfrogs Community Choir he helps us remember to celebrate our natural areas, our accomplishments, and our friendships, while we work to protect them.



## MARJ LUNDY AND JOAN PALINCSAR



**Marj Lundy** and **Joan Palincsar** have formed a two-woman purple loosestrife control crew in a little wetland near the Illinois Tollway in *Deerfield*. Marj did the initial work of contacting authorities to get permission, and then she enlisted Joan to help with the ground work. Joan lends her expertise from years as a steward at *Ryerson Woods* in *Lake County*, as well as her ever-positive attitude. Every August, Marj does the paperwork, Joan brings the equipment, and they both start pulling. Their work has made room for the ducks, egrets, and herons who have taken up residence in the wetlands. Says Marj, "We may not be saving the world, but we are protecting our little piece of it." Indeed, we all change the world one little piece at a time.

## KAREN LUSTIG

**Karen Lustig** has led the way in stewardship and rare plant monitoring. She was the first steward at *Illinois Beach State Park* (IBSP) in *Lake County*, in 1981. In addition to work days, she also led native plant walks throughout the year, educating the public about the significance of IBSP. Karen continues to be the Friends of Illinois Beach's authority in plant identification (as well as a botanist and professor at Harper College). Karen was conducting endangered and threatened species monitoring at IBSP before the *Plants of Concern* (POC) program began; in the early 1990s, she provided training on the use of transects, monitoring, and documentation of rare plants at IBSP. Now, she monitors four species with POC, and she recruits, trains, and organizes other POC monitors as well. Karen also is involved with the restoration project for the eastern white fringed prairie orchid, and she is a citizen scientist with Riverwatch.



## MARY ALICE MASONICK



**Mary Alice Masonick** exemplifies the Habitat Project spirit in all that she does: she collects knowledge, effects change, and builds a culture of conservation. She is a monitor with *Riverwatch*, the Chicago Wilderness *Calling Frog Survey*, and *Plants of Concern*. She stewards *Burnidge* Forest Preserve in *Kane County*, participates in river cleanups, harvests seeds, and is a board member of the *Friends of the Fox River*. Mary Alice actively builds a culture of conservation with the Green Sanctuary Committee at Unitarian Universalist Church in *Elgin*, where she spreads environmental awareness through education and action to her community. All of this, and she is secretary for the local Sierra Club group, too.



## BOB AND ANITA MORGAN



**Bob and Anita Morgan** were principal organizers of the Swainson's Hawk Project. Their research and monitoring of Swainson's Hawks has played a critical role in our understanding of this savanna bird's habits in the small part of Illinois in which it lives. Last year, they helped organize over 40 volunteer field workers to search for the birds throughout the bird's potential nesting area. They also shared critical information with Com Ed when they learned that proposed transmission lines would destroy a nesting location.

## THE PRESIDENT'S COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**The President's Community Advisory Council** has worked hard over the last ten years to gradually restore consensus and effectiveness to the *Cook County* land management program. Appointed after a former FPD Board president responded to some misleading newspaper articles by imposing a temporary moratorium on restoration, the Council members heard presentations by technical experts, FPD staff, and advocates on all sides. They quickly determined that ecosystem restoration was central to the District's mission. Within a year, the formal moratorium was over throughout the District except for five small preserves in the Edgebrook area of Chicago. In 2006, a unanimous vote encouraged President **Bobbie Steele** to end the whole moratorium everywhere, which she did. This award recognizes good leadership from President Steele and the entire Council, including **Kent Fuller, Carl Glassford, Pat Hayes, Jean Sellar** (shown here), **Debra Shore**, and **Ted Wolff** in doing the difficult work of achieving consensus.



## PHYLLIS SCHULTE



**Phyllis Schulte** helped grow the *Hickory Creek* Nature Preserve stewardship group from one or two volunteers per workday to a group that regularly has four or five chainsawers, lopper and handsaws cutters, brush stackers, and herbicide applicators. Phyllis has been a steward for 12 years at this 1,800-acre site. She inspires the volunteers to do just a little more as she leads the way; and she feeds them well, too, with daily homemade goodies and an annual January pot luck. Phyllis also is a *butterfly monitor* at her site, where she and a fellow monitor provided positive documentation of the uncommon Byssus Skipper. Phyllis creates *The Brush Pile*, a quarterly publication for local volunteers. And she shares her knowledge with her fellow Master Gardeners and local garden club members, helping to nourish a shared culture of conservation in the region.

## DEBRA SHORE

**Debra Shore** decided to take the plunge, so to speak, into regional politics by running for commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of *Cook County*. She ran on a conservation platform, citing the important role of the MWRD in cleaning our water and regulating the hydrology of our natural areas and rivers. Citizens heard her message that "water matters," they liked it, and they elected her to the board. Debra had the courage to put herself in front of the people, backed by the conviction that people care about our natural resources, and motivated by her desire to make a difference.



## AL AND BARB WILSON



**Al and Barb Wilson** are tireless workers, dedicated stewards, and tenacious advocates on behalf of *Lake in the Hills Fen*, a state nature preserve in *McHenry County*. Now that both Al and Barb are retired from their respective careers, they devote more time than ever to matters of site management, species monitoring, and public education. In the past ten years alone, they have coordinated the application of more than 60,000 hours of activity at the site. They have led 14,000 "contact hours" worth of monthly public walks and tours for others. They have organized nearly 15,000 volunteer hours working on restoration, management, and monitoring.

Significantly, they have coordinated the work of community service workers through the *McHenry County* court system, totaling more than 30,000 hours since 1996. Barb has edited "The Acorn" quarterly newsletter published by TNC for *McHenry County's* 700 volunteers for over 12 years. With energy and vitality, the Wilsons are making a difference.