

The Habitat HERALD

April 2003

Volume 4, Issue 2

Is That a Bird?

by Mary Cannon

It's a warm, still, blue-sky, fall day at Illinois Beach State Park. It's perfect for a picnic, but I want winds and clouds! Why? Because I'm there to count hawks; and hawks don't fly much without wind and are hard to see without clouds as backdrop. I have dutifully brought my notes from the summer training seminar and am getting set for my first Monday afternoon of waiting for the great migration—which will, no doubt, blot out the sun. My binoculars are in hand as I scan the skies and ask the pertinent question, "Is that a bird?"

Luckily, Bill Wengelewski can see where I'm pointing and answers, "Yes, but it's a gull." Bill remains enthusiastic. "One of the greatest rewards is seeing a distant speck flying way-out-there—and identifying it. Then, it gets closer and you find out you were right. There's something magical about the process." Of course, as a naturalist with the DNR, Bill's abilities—and eyes—are already developed.

So, when Vic Berardi wanted to start the Illinois Beach hawk watch volunteers, Bill was a "natural," so-to-speak. Vic had been monitoring at the Concordia College watch in Wisconsin since 1996, and had heard that hawks frequently migrate along the lakefront when conditions are right. Thus, starting in 1999, Vic, Bill, Janice Sweet, and Paul Sweet became the nucleus for migration monitoring at this new site. By 2002, the group had grown to 25 volunteers who put in 503 hours over a 92-day season. With just 13 days missed because of weather, that's a 6.4 hour a day average.

Why do it? Vic gives two reasons. "First, since hawks are at the top of the food chain, they can give an idea of the condition



Photo: Ron Panzer, McHenry County Conservation District

Hawkwatchers Paul Sweet and Vic Berardi scan the skies for raptors like this Rough-legged Hawk.



of habitat; if, over 5-10 years of monitoring, their numbers change drastically, that will give us a picture—for better or worse. Second, it brings the birding community together. We are stationary. We are there, and people can see us with our binoculars. They come to ask what we're up to—and eventually they join us."

Why shouldn't they? Some of Bill's highlights from 2002 included seeing an Osprey, a Golden Eagle, an adult Bald Eagle, and an immature Bald Eagle—in fifteen minutes. And Vic adds,

"I love the anticipation of waiting, of being about to see them. I love the awareness of nature and the challenge of trying to identify them. That's why I do it."

Having spent most Mondays this fall with the afternoon group, I can understand his anticipation and his idea of "community." While I didn't see much of Vic and Steve Huggins, who covered mostly weekends, I came to look forward to seeing who would show up each week. However, I always hoped to see both Bill and Janice Sweet, who not only

gave practical tutoring but also encouragement. Janice's mantra to me and Marie Sprandel, another novice volunteer, was, "You'll get it; just keep looking." And I'm going to keep looking. Who knows? Maybe in a few years, I'll graduate from "Is that a bird?" to "Is that a merlin or a falcon?"

If you are interested in volunteering for the fall hawk watch at Illinois Beach State Park, please contact Vic Berardi at Vbirdman@aol.com.



What, and Who, is the Habitat Project?

The Habitat Project is a network of more than 600 volunteers and staff who monitor and protect birds, frogs, butterflies, and plants in the regional nature reserve called Chicago Wilderness. The Habitat Project includes each of the programs below, plus all the bits of glue that connect each program to the others. Through the work of volunteers and staff, the Habitat Project ensures that data collected from each of the programs below are available and useful to scientists, land managers, stewards, and the public.

Butterfly Monitoring Network

A diverse group of volunteers who, over 14 years, have run over 3000 routes on sites in Illinois. These insect investigators collect data that are valuable to scientists, researchers and land managers in evaluating how restoration practices and other changes affect butterfly populations.

Chicago Wilderness Calling Frog Survey

Three years ago, we knew almost nothing about the status and distribution of frogs and toads within the Chicago region. Now, close to 400 dauntless data collectors are trained to monitor the Chicago region's wetlands in search of the 13 species of frogs and toads that live here. We've also begun looking for salamanders, snakes, and turtles.

Plants of Concern

A partnership between Chicago Botanic Garden and Audubon of the Chicago Region trains volunteers to monitor populations of threatened or endangered plants. Information about habitat quality and disturbance levels will help reveal the factors that influence rare plant populations.

Woods Audit

Plant monitors are assessing the status of the upland forests, woodlands, and savannas throughout Chicago Wilderness. Beginning and expert plant identifiers team up to survey hundreds of 500 m² plots located randomly throughout the region's woods.

Bird Conservation Network (BCN)

BCN is raising awareness of the conservation needs of birds throughout our region by educating the public and working with policy makers to improve bird habitat. Monitoring projects include the ongoing BCN Nesting Census, in which dedicated birders are monitoring more than 90 sites to produce data that are regularly shared with land agencies for use in ecological management and restoration. In 2003, BCN also is organizing the June Grassland Bird Blitz, in which birders count the birds in as many grasslands as possible, and the West Nile Virus bird project.

The future of nature depends on the thousands of volunteers and staff who conduct the controlled burns, combat the invasive species, fend off the off-road-vehicles, monitor the plants and animals, and generally work for the wellness of wild animals and habitat. Staff, volunteers, scientists, monitors, and land managers work side by side to assure holistic and effective conservation with the Chicago Wilderness regional nature reserve.

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We welcome to our newsletter team new writers, editors, stamp lickers, photographers, graphic artists, staplers, and anyone else who would enjoy getting involved.

To learn more, contact Mary Cannon at 847-375-8301 or mjkcannon@hotmail.com

Correction

We mistakenly printed the wrong name for the author of "Citizen Scientists to the Rescue" in the January 2003 issue. Mary Cannon wrote this inspiring tale of bird rescue in downtown Chicago. Mary is a Herald editor and regular contributor. We apologize for the error and look forward to reading Mary's contributions in this and future issues.

I Do Want to Hear a Peep Out of You

by Elizabeth Plonka

Espie and Don Nelson heard a peep last year, from a spring peeper that is. It was their first year of frog monitoring in Lockport and they heard many amphibian species—including bull frogs, green frogs, leopard frogs, chorus frogs, American toads, and cricket frogs.



Spring peeper, Hyla crucifer.

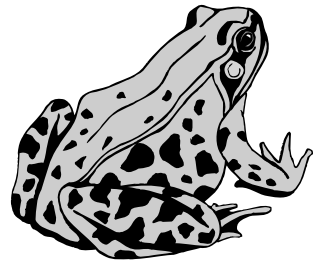
Then they heard a peep. After recording it, they played the tape for the land manager, David Mauger, of the Will County Forest Preserve District. He believes they recorded an individual spring peeper. "It could be a fluke, or there might be a small population present," speculates Mauger. "Either way, historic work has not found this species at Lockport, Romeoville or Keepataw, so if it is confirmed, I can only conclude a range extension of the species." Confirmation is the next task for the Nelsons, who this year will try to find some more listening spots. Espie reports that they "could hear frogs from other areas" last year, so they will know where to start this year.

Cricket frogs are also found in the area. David Mauger is concerned that last year's dry weather has negatively impacted the cricket frog population. There is speculation that the drought in 1988 contributed to the extirpation of the species from certain ponds. Mauger and the Nelsons will be keeping a close ear on populations this year to find out if the recent dry weather is having a similar impact.

This kind of partnership between land managers and citizen scientists is a powerful force for conservation. Monitors like the Nelsons make unexpected discoveries because they spend so much time in particular preserves. Then land managers can help put these discoveries into the context of their own experience and the management plan for that site. And finally, both monitors and land managers can conduct the necessary follow up work that identifies new populations or tracks the impacts of disturbance on the species or community.

The Nelsons will be busy this season. They monitored seven points for amphibians last year and have plans to expand. In addition, Don and Espie are stewards at Vermont Cemetery Prairie, a "super high quality site," according to Don, that has never been plowed. Don is also a steward at Lockport Prairie where they both do restoration work. In addition to frog monitoring, the Nelsons are monitors for the Plants of Concern program. Chicago Wilderness is certainly fortunate the Nelsons took the time for frog monitoring.

Their contribution to the land manager's information and data is extremely valuable. "[This is] clearly a good example of how important a role the CW froggers can perform." exclaims Mauger.



Frog Roundups

In July, froggers and herpers will re-convene to share their findings from the 2003 monitoring season and discuss what the results mean for reptile and amphibian conservation in the Chicago Wilderness region. Monitors can bring their data to these meetings, for handoff to county coordinators, or for entry into the database right then and there (most meetings will have computers). We'll also talk about the daytime reptile and amphibian monitoring protocol and discuss ways that monitors can continue to improve their herp ID and search skills over time.

Chicago: Saturday, July 19 from 10am to noon Lincoln Park Cultural Center auditorium, 2045 N. Lincoln Park West (no computers at this roundup).

Indiana: Saturday, July 12 from 10am to noon St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, Indiana – on Hwy. 231 South, just off of Interstate 65. Meet in Courtney Auditorium in the core building.

Kane County: Saturday July 26 from 9am to 11am Pottawatomie Park in St. Charles. Coming west on Route 64 (called Main St. in St. Charles), turn north at 2nd Ave., two blocks before the river. Second Ave. ends at Pottawatomie Park – head west and go to the large building down by the river. Monitors from DuPage & McHenry Counties are invited to attend.

Lake County: Saturday, July 12 from 10am to noon Ryerson Visitors Center. Located about a mile south of Half Day Road, between I-94 and Hwy 45. Head west on Half Day road from I-94, then turn south on Riverwoods Road and look for the entrance on your right. Monitors from McHenry County are invited to attend.

S. Cook/Will County: Saturday, July 19 from 10am to noon Sand Ridge Nature Center, at 15890 Paxton Avenue in South Holland, two blocks north of 159th St.

2003 Herp Searches



Photo: Lynda Wallis

Tessa Wallis Deering and Becky Nash hone their salamander ID skills at a 2002 herp search in Lake County, IL.

Join other herp enthusiasts, frog monitors, and curious friends to look for frogs, salamanders, snakes, turtles, and lizards. The Herp Searches are led by experienced herpetologists, and all ages and experience levels are welcome. This is an excellent way to improve your ID and search skills and learn from the experts, if you are conducting daytime monitoring at your frog sites.

April 19 – Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area in Indiana, from 1pm to 5pm. Meet there or at St. Joseph College at 12:15 to carpool. Call Bob Brodman for directions or details, at 219-866-6215 or bobb@saintjoe.edu.

April 26 – Rollins Savanna in Lake County, IL, from 1pm to 4pm. Between Routes 83 and 45, near Grayslake. Park in the grass parking lot on Washington Street, just west of Atkinson Road. Call Aaron Schirmer for directions or details, at 847-797-5708 or schirma1@hotmail.com.

May 17 – Middlefork Savanna in Lake County, IL, from 1pm to 4pm. At Waukegan Road (Route 43) and Middlefork Drive north of Route 60 and south of Route 176. Turn west onto Middlefork Drive and follow signs to the Preserve parking area. Call Aaron Schirmer for directions or details, at 847-797-5708 or schirma1@hotmail.com.

May 24 – Freeman Kame in northeast Kane County, IL, from 1pm to 4pm. From Route 72 near Gilberts, head north on Galligan Rd. 1.25mi., then head west on Freeman Rd. about 0.5mi. Entrance and grass parking lot are at the RR crossing. Call Karen Glennemeier for directions or details, at 847-965-1150 or kglennemeier@audubon.org.

May 31 – Wadsworth Savanna in Lake County, IL, from 1pm to 4pm. Take I-94 to Wadsworth Rd. Go east on Wadsworth and meet at the Newport Fire Department next to the Post Office, off Wadsworth Rd. Call Aaron Schirmer for directions or details, at 847-797-5708 or schirma1@hotmail.com.

May 31 – Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie from 9am to noon. Bring binoculars and dipnets if you have them - Mike Redmer will teach some techniques for finding and identifying turtles and tadpoles. Meet at the Newton and Henslow Trails Interim Parking lot. Take I-55 south from Chicago to the River Road Exit (Exit 241). Go left (east) on River Road, and continue east 2.7 miles to Rte. 53. Turn left on Rte. 53 and go 2.3 miles north to Explosives Road. Go left (west) to the parking lot. Note: Access to Midewin is still a bit logistically difficult, so we need to limit attendance to the first 20 people responding. Carpool if possible, and call Mike Redmer to RSVP (847/381-2253 x240 or Mike_Redmer@fws.gov).

Bird Monitoring Data Helps Save Important Grassland Habitat

by Joe Suchecki

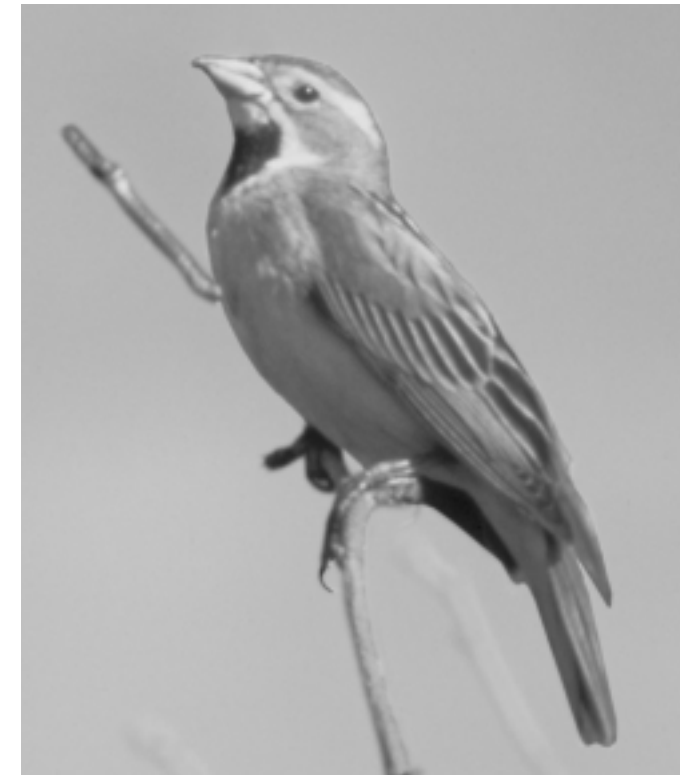
Many citizen scientists collect monitoring data on birds, butterflies, frogs, and plant communities in Chicagoland to document the area's natural communities. But is the information of any value to land managers, and is it being put to good use? The answer is an emphatic YES.

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County is a leader in recognizing the valuable contribution that volunteer monitors can make in gathering information on the natural resources of its preserves. District staff have established a strong natural resource stewardship organization and have monitors at many preserves. I am one of the long-term bird monitors and site stewards – I've been collecting information on the birds of Springbrook Prairie since 1993.

Springbrook is an 1800 acre preserve in Naperville that is being managed as a grassland/prairie and, because of its large size and extensive open grasslands, is home to a thriving population of grassland birds. In addition to large populations of Bobolink, Savannah and Grasshopper sparrows, Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, and Eastern Meadowlark, Springbrook is one of the only sites in Chicagoland with recent records of nesting Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, and Henslow's Sparrow – all threatened or endangered birds in Illinois.

I have established 21 point count locations throughout the preserve to monitor nesting birds, and I also monitor four transects that were originally established by District staff in the late 1980s. These efforts provide information not only on the diversity and distribution of Springbrook's birds but also allow long-term population monitoring to determine how the birds respond to changes in vegetation and site management practices.

Recently, my bird monitoring data were put to good use when a new, multi-use limestone trail was proposed at the site. One section of this perimeter trail was sited to bisect a large field in the northwest corner of the site. However, the bird



The dickcissel is one of many species benefiting from citizen science at Springbrook Prairie

monitoring data collected over the last nine years clearly indicated that the proposed trail would go through the best grassland bird habitat at Springbrook and the center of the site's Henslow's Sparrow population. Since grassland birds are very sensitive to disturbance, the proposed construction and subsequent heavy human use of the trail would have a significant negative effect on nesting grassland bird populations, especially Henslow's Sparrow.

After learning of the trail's proposed path, I contacted District personnel and informed them of the negative impact the trail would have on grassland birds. With the grassland bird monitoring data in hand,

DuPage Forest Preserve District staff John Oldenberg, head of Natural Resources, and Bob Vick, head of Planning and Development, met and selected an alternate route that would avoid this critically important field. The revised path of the trail was through an adjacent area where the monitoring data showed fewer grassland birds overall and no Henslow's Sparrows. This action was taken despite the fact that additional design and construction costs would be incurred to move the proposed trail to the new location.

Without the breeding bird data that documented the importance of the field in question, the proposed trail would have been constructed and a valuable natural resource destroyed. The monitoring data provided the information needed by the land managers of the Forest Preserve District to make informed decisions and helped save a key nesting habitat for grassland birds.

The partnership of volunteer monitors and professional land managers is a powerful force for protecting our remaining natural resources. Our volunteer efforts make a difference.

Photo: Ron Panzer, McHenry County Conservation District

2003 Birding Opportunities Abound for All Experience Levels

The Bird Conservation Network invites you to be a part of the Grassland Bird Blitz, the BCN Nesting Bird Census, or West Nile Virus Bird Monitoring. Our bird conservation efforts are reaching new levels this year as more and more partners are using our census data to make good things happen for birds. Here's how you can contribute:

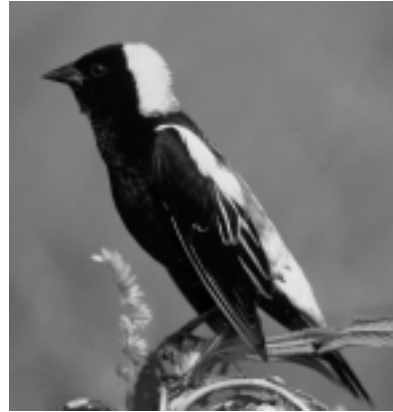
Grassland Bird Blitz

Chicago Wilderness is embarking on a detailed, regional conservation plan to improve and increase habitat for grassland birds. To succeed, we need to count the birds in as many grasslands as possible. Many grasslands already have monitors; our blitz teams will cover the rest. We'll document the abundance and distribution of rare and important species and the location of sites with good habitat potential. In the future, we'll track changes and learn how our management efforts are affecting grassland birds.

The Grassland Bird Blitz will take place from June 13 to 22, 2003, with local gatherings on the 22nd to compare findings and share exciting sightings. County teams and individual monitors will count the birds in as many of the region's grasslands as possible. We'll connect you with your local coordinator, who will give you all the details for your area.

Note: If you already cover a grassland for the BCN Census, your June 2003 data will be included in the Great Grassland Bird Count. This "blitz" is for sites that are not already covered. But please consider monitoring during the Blitz period, if you would enjoy being a part of the energy and celebration that surrounds that week.

Leaders should be able to identify grassland birds by sight and sound, but less experienced birders are welcome on Blitz teams. To participate, contact Karen Glennemeier at 847-965-1150 or kglennemeier@audubon.org.



Bobolink

Photo: Steve Matkowski

BCN Nesting Bird Census

This Census is now in its fourth year and is providing detailed, long-term data on the breeding birds of Chicago Wilderness. Local land managers use bird monitors' information in countless ways.

Monitors have motivated some of the biggest habitat improvement projects in the region...removing nine miles of hedgerows at Bartel Grassland...saving heron rookeries, stopping a harmful marina, and helping to set priorities of the Lake Calumet wetlands...transforming Orland Grassland into a haven for grassland and shrubland birds...restoring wetland and grassland habitat at Springbrook Prairie...and more.

The Census is simple: monitors visit their sites any two mornings in June and return to the same sites every year. Monitoring methods are either a timed checklist (like a Christmas count), a transect (walk the same path each time), or a point count (five minutes at each point).

Monitors should be able to recognize the breeding birds of the region by sight and sound. Apprenticeships are available for less experienced birders. To participate, contact Lee Ramsey at LeeRamsey@aol.com or 847-501-4683.



Female red-winged blackbird

Photo: Jim Natchel

West Nile Virus Bird Monitoring

Our area was one of the hardest hit by West Nile Virus, and our monitoring network is one of the strongest and most thorough in the nation. Last fall, we made national news in describing the impact of the virus on the area's crows and discovered a similar pattern of disappearances in chickadee populations.

Many questions about the impact of the virus on birds remain unanswered, so our work will continue in 2003. We will be particularly interested in studying our summer residents.

Backyard birders are welcome to join this project, as well as more experienced birders. If you are already a BCN Census monitor, your data will also be used for this study. To participate, contact Judy Pollock at jpollock@audubon.org or 847-965-1150.



Black-capped chickadee

Sharing a Sense of Wonder – And Some Good, Hard Facts

by Conrad Fialkowski



Conrad (center) discusses the ecology of restoration with Darrin Croft (left) and Alex Rose.

multiplying exponentially. Take a look at the leaves on a buckthorn and you'll not see any chewing or discoloration."

Again, while bird monitoring, I'm often asked, "Have you seen anything interesting?" If it's a day without a noteworthy sighting, I'll draw on my years of covering the site. I'll say, "Not today, but (then I fill in the blank with some previous encounter)." The site I monitor is along busy LaGrange Road, so I hearken back to sightings visitors might expect to see in the north woods or a visit to a National Park. I'm able to choose from: "A mature bald eagle roosting in those trees; a red-tailed hawk carrying a snake out over that prairie; an osprey with a fish in its talons flying over that slough; three downy, flightless great-horned owl chicks perched in a tree about a hundred yards in that direction." On a busy birding day, bluebirds, red-headed woodpeckers and orioles will interest the casual observer. I'll pull out the bird guide and flip to a picture to prompt an

While I'm out monitoring or on a restoration workday, I welcome the curious observer who asks, "What are you doing?" At a minimum, I'm able to introduce the passerby to the value of the good work we do in our natural areas. In return, I often get, "I'm glad you people are out here doing this." And, just maybe, my intro is the first step toward adding a convert to the cause. There are scores of examples we monitors and brush cutters can use to awaken the casual observer to life they've never imagined right here in our highly urbanized surroundings.

I might be stopped while wearing binoculars, "Are you bird watching?" My typical response: "Actually we're monitoring birds that have come to nest here after we began clearing invasive brush." When I'm asked, "Why are you cutting down trees?" I'll respond: "Only the trees and brush from Asia and Europe. They keep sunlight from reaching the ground and prevent everything else from growing."

The media has done an effective job of acquainting the public with any number of invasive creatures, such as the Asian long-horned beetle, zebra muscles and ladybugs that bite. Referring to this basic information provides a nice segue to buckthorn and honeysuckle, invasives from the far side of the planet. I've used: "There are no predators here to keep the invasives from

"Ooh!" or an "Aah!" The viewer may not remember any specifics, but hopefully the value they place on the preserve they visit will climb a notch or two. Maybe the very concept of preserves will suddenly mean more.

In the spring and fall, flocks of sandhill cranes pass overhead. Their warbling calls can be a stirring reminder to any visitor of the life that exists and persists around us. In spring, because I always carry a comb, I hope I'm near a gathering of chorus frogs. For any passerby, I'll pull out my comb and run my thumb across the teeth to spark an "oh yeah. I hear it. Cool!" In autumn, a common milkweed seedpod is often alive with black and red milkweed beetles in a variety of sizes. Or, find a black and yellow argiope spider in its web and get a "Wow" from just about anyone. We can use deer tracks, a deer-rubbed sapling, a mat of deer hair left where a carcass has been scavenged (by a coyote, maybe?) for an "Oh, yeah." In winter, there are mouse tunnels under the snow, squirrel tracks between trees and areas where deer have pawed the ground for food.

Every monitor can create a mental list of special experiences. Sharing those experiences with people we encounter elevates the value of our remaining natural areas. And sharing gives special and immediate value to the work we do as we restore, monitor and help maintain the health of our preserves.

Pilot Woods Audit a Success. Gearing up for 2003.

Last summer's pilot Woods Audit has successfully laid the groundwork for long-term, scientific monitoring of the upland forests, woodlands, and savannas in Chicago Wilderness. Fifty of us covered 64 woodland plots, located randomly throughout four counties.

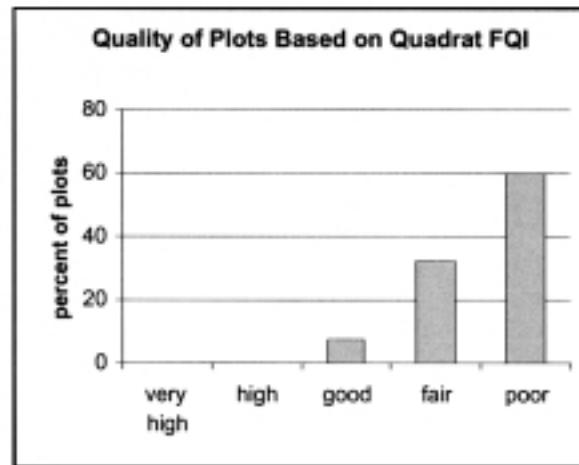
In 2003, we will begin the full "Woods Audit," a critical step for making large-scale progress in wooded lands conservation. Here's what the Audit will do:

- The protocol developed by the Woods Audit can be used by stewards wishing to establish long-term vegetation monitoring in any woods. The experience gained by Woods Audit participants will allow them to use the protocol effectively and teach it to others. This type of data will be widely respected and will be compatible for analysis with data collected from throughout the region.
- The Audit provides 10-20% of the data needed to characterize an entire woods. We select our Audit points at random throughout entire counties, so we won't be taking enough data in any one woods to fully characterize its health. But land management staff or volunteers can

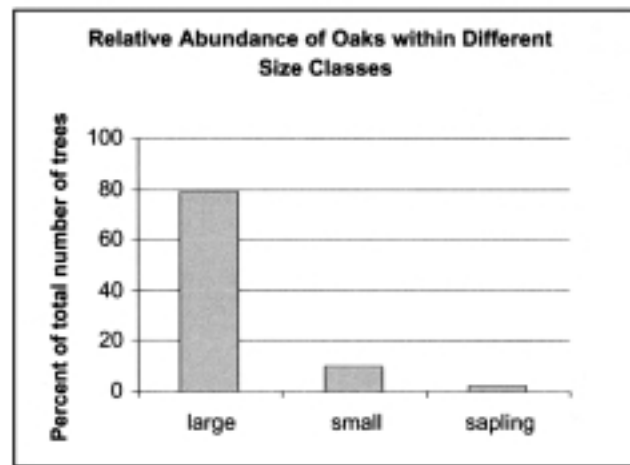
add more plots in future years, perhaps with the help of experienced Auditors, to gather as much information as they need for a particular area.

- Data from the Pilot Project and the full Woods Audit will give us an overall assessment of the health of our region's woods. This assessment is being eagerly anticipated by the task force preparing the Chicago Wilderness Regional Report Card for release in 2004. The health of our woods is a priority concern for the Chicago Wilderness coalition, and the data we Auditors are collecting will provide the necessary regional data. It is our hope and expectation that improved resource allocation for wooded lands conservation will result.
- We are becoming a trained corps of vegetation monitors with experience in scientific data collection. Land managers and stewards need help monitoring all of their woods, and interested Auditors can provide such help in future years. We'll all gain valuable field experience that will allow novices and experts alike to hone their plant ID skills and have some outdoor fun.

Some preliminary snapshots from the 2002 Pilot Data:



The groundlayer of most of our wooded lands is in need of much improvement.



We don't know what level of reproduction is necessary to sustain our oak canopies. With more data and research, we hope to have an answer for this question in the near future. Meanwhile, these baseline data will allow us to determine whether oak reproduction is increasing or decreasing over time.

For those of us who have gotten up close and personal with a buckthorn stem or two, we found an overall average of 3+ buckthorn stems (greater than a meter tall) per 4x4 subplot. This equates to a regional average of more than 2,000 stems per hectare, or more than 5,000 stems per acre.

The data tell us pretty much what we all might expect: most of the woods we sampled are not in very good shape. But many have great potential for restoration, if we can garner the resources needed to make this happen. Our data will allow us to identify these gems and make significant strides in woodland conservation in the years to come. Stay tuned for more comprehensive results in future *Heralds*. And see the back page for **2003 training dates**.

Butterfly Bonanza

Mary Cannon

"Butterflies are Free," provided the title to a hit show, but providing real-life butterflies with habitat and oversight takes both money and commitment. Marla Garrison, McHenry County College biology instructor and butterfly monitor, should know.

Last year Marla obtained a grant of \$10,000 from the McHenry Conservation Foundation and used it to open a living butterfly exhibit and train monitors on campus. This year she got another \$10,000 grant to re-introduce the Silver Bordered Fritillary to Glacial Park, a McHenry County Conservation site. She will be working on this project with fellow biology instructor, Janice Young, and Doug Taron, Director of the Butterfly Monitoring Network and curator of biology at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

The re-introduction is not a simple matter. First, these volunteers will need to be sure various plants and habitat requirements are met; and, then, after the butterflies are set



Baltimore Checkerspot butterflies at Boone Creek Fen.

free—sometime in the fall—will have to monitor their progress. She says, "This will be wonderful because we'll be able to make a real impact on McHenry County's biodiversity and restore something beautiful that was lost."

Just as wonderful might be the discovery of Boone Creek Fen, owned by Carol O'Donnell. Not only has Carol done extensive restoration work, but she has also led an effort to stop development that would imperil the Fen's drainage. Walking through Carol's

property with her last summer, Marla found an entire colony of Baltimore Checkerspots. They counted 72 one day and 85 another. "It was amazing," she says. "We were engulfed by them. They were even mating in my hand!" Now that she's seen the butterflies, Carol has agreed to help Marla monitor the property this coming summer.

Lucky for the butterflies, these are just a few of the folks who devote time and effort to keep them flying free.

Learn to Monitor Dragonflies!

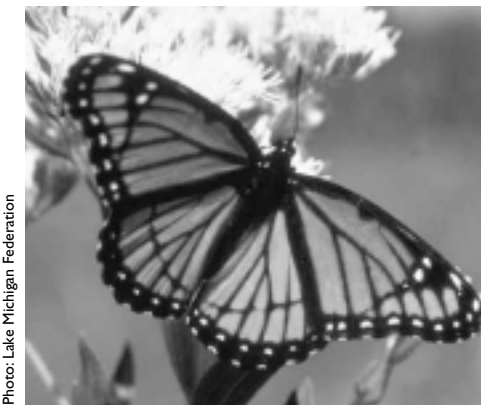
Learn to identify and track these spectacular insects, as part of our newest monitoring program, sponsored by the Chicago Academy of Sciences. Trainings will be held April 12 and 19 at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago, from 10:30am to 12:30pm or so. It is only necessary to attend one of the trainings.

Contact Gareth Blakesley for more information: 773-755-5100 x3032 or gblakesley@naturemuseum.org.

Butterfly Monitoring Clinics

The Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network is holding several regional training workshops for current monitors, new monitors, and anyone interested in finding out more about how to be a monitor. To register for these workshops, or for more information about the IBMN, please contact **Mel Manner at manner@foxvalley.net or 847-464-4426.**

Beginner's Session: This session is broken into two parts. Part One is an orientation covering all the details on how to monitor. Part Two teaches how to look at butterflies for identification and goes over the markings on 25 common species. Mel Manner will offer this session twice this Spring, in two locations:
April 7 at 7pm – McHenry Community College, U.S. Highway 14 in Crystal Lake. Maximum 30 people. Room to be announced.



Monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*.

Late April/Early May – Lake County area: Location and date to be announced. Call Mel for details.

Computer Tutorial: This session will demonstrate the new IBMN Website, including downloading Guidelines and Field Forms, and cover how to enter data through the IBMN Database Site. This is open to current and new monitors only. Presented by Jim Peterson, IBMN Webmaster.

May 5 at 7pm – McHenry Community College, U.S. Highway 14 in Crystal Lake, A228 - 2nd floor of building A. Maximum 24 people.

Plants of Concern Training Opportunities

Learn to monitor rare plants with more than 100 other citizen scientists.

Workshops are required for new monitors. Returning monitors are encouraged to attend for update and review.

Bring a lunch and dress for the weather. Coffee will be provided. Bring a GPS unit if you have one (several will be available).

Pre-registration is required for one of the following workshops:

- **Saturday, April 12 – Blackwell Forest Preserve, West Chicago (DuPage County) from 9am– 2:30pm**
- **Saturday, April 26 – Reed-Turner Woodland, Long Grove (Lake County) from 9am – 2:30pm**

To sign up for a workshop and for directions, contact Susanne Masi at 847-835-8269 or smasi@chicagobotanic.org.

The optional course, **Principles and Techniques of Plant Population Monitoring**, is an opportunity for monitors wishing to conduct more intensive monitoring or to gain more indepth understanding of the purpose of monitoring at a regional scale. This four-session course combines theoretical instruction and field application. The course is offered through the School of the Chicago Botanic Garden and is an elective in the Morton Arboretum Naturalist Certificate Program. Scholarships are available for volunteer monitors.

Dates: **May 3** from 8:30am-1pm, **May 10 & 31 and June 7** from 8:30am -12:30pm, at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, IL.

For complete course & registration information, please visit the Chicago Botanic Garden Website at chicagobotanic.org (Education/Continuing Education) or contact the School of the Chicago Botanic Garden Registrar, Chicago Botanic Garden, 847-835-8364.



Hill's thistle, *Cirsium hillii*, is monitored by POC citizen scientists.

Photo: Kityr Kohout and the Wisconsin State Herbarium

Grassland Bird Field Clinic

Thinking of joining the Grassland Bird Blitz? Need to brush up on your bird song ID skills? Kane County Audubon invites you to attend a presentation on *Identifying the Songs of Grassland and Shrubland Birds*.

Ann Haverstock, grassland birder extraordinaire, will help you learn to recognize songs (often the only way to identify those distant fuzzy blips). The meeting will be held on **May 14 at 7pm**, at the Geneva Park District's Peck Farm. Please **RSVP to Bob Andrini at 630-584-8386**.

Nominate Great Bird Habitat

The Illinois Important Bird Areas (IBA) program is a major new tool for saving wildlife and habitat. Illinois IBA is launching a two-part process. First, we identify the most important areas in the state for bird conservation. Then, where needed, we convene conservation teams to prioritize needed action (acquisition, land management, or whatever is needed). The teams

include landowners and other knowledgeable individuals and groups. IBAs in other parts of the country have already resulted in protection and improved stewardship for millions of acres of habitat. **Any knowledgeable person can nominate a site for an IBA.** The nomination period has just begun in Illinois. To get more information, visit the Habitat Project website at www.habitatproject.org or call **Judy Pollock at 847-965-1150**.

BCN Website Improvements Coming Soon

BCN Census monitors can look for improvements to the data entry website in May. All data from the past four years will be available, you will be able to enter timed observation data for any site without a special password for that site, and there will be powerful (and very cool) new tools available for viewing and analyzing the data. Improvements to the site are being funded by Chicago Wilderness, Audubon, and the Bird Conservation Network. Check it out at www.fmnh.org/birdcensus.

Photo: Dave Menke, courtesy of USFWS



Savannah Sparrow

Mapping out Bird Conservation

by Stan Stec and Karen Glennemeier

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) needed to know if its wetland restoration was working. The wetland in the Paul Douglas Forest Preserve looked good, but did the birds agree?

So they asked Stan Stec, long-time bird monitor at Paul Douglas, what his monitoring data were showing. Stan reported yellow headed blackbirds, ruddy ducks, and pied billed grebes – all signs that the restoration was, in fact, a success. News the District needed to hear, in order to continue with the proper management for the wetland.

But Stan went one step further. To help the District plan for future grassland habitat restoration, as well as other management needs, Stan drew a map of the site. He included all habitat types – such as grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands – and land uses such as soccer fields. And he noted the locations of all the birds recorded during his monitoring routes.

The map revealed some critical information for the site's grassland birds: they were nesting right next to the soccer field, which has expanded somewhat due to increased mowing. Using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit borrowed from Audubon's Skokie office, to more precisely define the field's boundaries, Stan's map showed how important it was to maintain the proper mowing boundaries and to be sensitive to mowing dates during nesting season. The visual information provided by the map made the appropriate management strategy obvious.

But where does one start, in creating an accurate map of a site? Stan says he started with a United States Geographical Survey (USGS) map that included the preserve. He used his several years of personal birding experience – including grassland point counts on two different transects and timed observations for the Bird Conservation Network – and data from Cornell University's "Birds of the Forested Landscape" study to define habitat boundaries and locate nesting bird species on the map. He color coded the habitat boundaries to make the map easier to decipher.

To keep the map from getting too complicated, he concentrated mainly on grassland birds, some of which are endangered species – so not all habitat types and bird species are shown on the map. He reported confirmed nesters such as



The Paul Douglas Preserve. Stan's detailed map has been distilled down to the basics here – see the narrative for more details.

Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, Meadowlark, Sedge Wren, Savannah Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow. He also noted species that use the fields for hunting – such as Northern Harrier, Northern Shrike, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawk.

Stan included some woodland and shrubland birds, including the Eastern Wood-peewee, Wood Thrush, Yellow-throat Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Woodcock, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and Willow Flycatcher. And, of course, he referred to the wetland species that helped the FPDCC so much with its restoration.

All of this hard work resulted in an incredibly effective tool for the District and site stewards to use as they restore and manage the site. And Stan, as well as the site's other monitors, can use the map for tracking long term trends or collaborating with land managers and stewards to maintain the best possible habitat for the site's rare birds.



Know your plants? Love the woods?

Join us for the 2003 Woods Audit

If you can identify most of the plants you are likely to find in our region's woods and savannas, please join us for this all-out effort to assess the health of the 50,000+ acres of wooded lands in our region. Assistants also are needed, for which no plant identification knowledge is necessary.

The time commitment is up to you: spend one afternoon or several days from July through August sampling the woods of Chicago Wilderness. Your data will help make conservation history. Contact **Karen Glennemeier** to sign up or learn more: **847-965-1150; kglennemeier@audubon.org**.

Woods Audit Training Workshops: Please let Karen Glennemeier or other Woods Audit Leaders know if you plan to attend.

Lake County – Tuesday, June 24, 6:30-8:30pm, Ryerson Woods. Meet at the Council Ring. On the main road into the preserve, head straight back into the farm area, and look for a group of cabins on your right. The Council Ring is just before these cabins.

Kane County – Thursday, June 26, 6:30-8:30pm. Campton Hills Park in St. Charles. From the intersection of Randall Rd and Rte 64, head west on 64 to a Y-intersection with a left-turn

lane. Take the left fork (Campton Hills Rd) and continue past Peck Rd, until you see Campton Hills Park on the left. Take the second entrance (first is a ballfield).

DuPage County – Wednesday, June 25, 6:30-8:30pm. Danada Forest Preserve in Wheaton. From I-88, head north on Naperville Road. The preserve parking lot is on the east side of the road, at the second stoplight after Warrenville Rd. – look for the barns and park in the NE part of the lot.

S. Cook/Will Counties – Thursday, June 19, 6-8pm. Plum Creek Nature Center, at 27064 S. Dutton Road in Beecher, IL. Located in Goodenow Grove FP, 1.25 miles east of the intersection of Routes 1 and 394 on Goodenow Rd.

The Habitat Project is generously supported by the Illinois Conservation Foundation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Grand Victoria Foundation, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the National Audubon Society, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and individual supporters of Audubon-Chicago Region.

