

The Habitat HERALD

April 2007

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Circles of Conservation: Dennis Paige & the WGN Marsh

By Mary Cannon

Like many people who leave home to explore the world, Dennis Paige returned to find a Schaumburg much changed from the one he remembered. “As a young man in the 60s I wandered the woods and watched the wildlife—especially the birds,” he says “By the 80s, I found the open land being gobbled up by development; and I wanted to save whatever was left.” So he went to school to become an Environmental Educator, and then went to work.

One example of his influence is the WGN Marsh. Dennis had already been birding the site when a friend proposed making a video focusing on wetland loss and asked him to do the commentary. That experience and his continued

monitoring, including seeing 26 black crowned night herons, convinced him the site was unique. Seeing soil full of purple loosestrife seeds being dumped convinced him the site was unprotected. By the early 1990s he and Barbara Marquardt of the Fox Valley Land Foundation met with executives of the *Chicago Tribune*, which owns the marsh. “We tried to explain how important the area was—especially to migrant birds. They talked about how it was a commerce and ecology mix, with antennas on the ground and in the water to give them good reception. They also said they wouldn’t need the marsh after 2010, so I knew it could be open to development. And I knew I wanted to protect it.”

Dennis contacted Audubon and the Village of Schaumburg and said he would collect data to support its importance. He also asked permission to set up a conservation easement and a weir to regulate water flow in the spring and fall. “We got everyone involved—the Army Corps of Engineers, the *Tribune*, conservation communities, and the Villages of Schaumburg and Elk Grove—to name just a few. We got the permit.”

“We’ve now got a lot of data, and the marsh is included in Schaumburg’s Biodiversity Recovery Plan. That means it has oversight and protection, so the *Tribune* can’t disturb it in 2010 without getting a permit.”

Martha Dooley, Schaumburg’s Senior Landscape Planner, cautiously agrees, “The land isn’t in the village proper, so we don’t have control over it, but we do consider it a priority site; and, should the property ever be annexed, the Village would have a say in protecting the wetland.” According to Dooley—and Dennis—that would be a good thing. Dennis, who’s loved his 20 years of working for Schaumburg’s Spring Valley Nature Preserve, says, “Both the Village and the Park District have adopted the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan.

“I knew I wanted to protect it.”

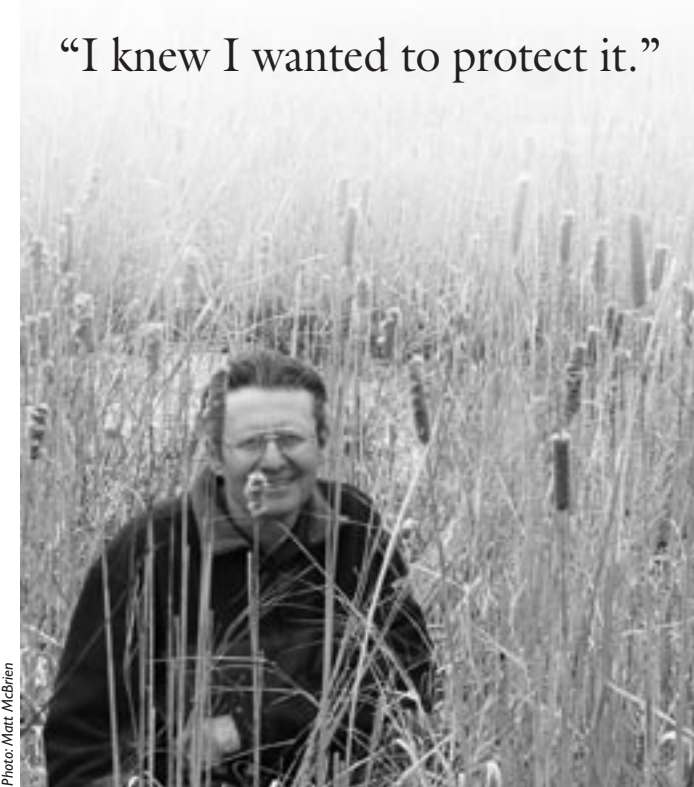


Photo: Matt McBrien

Dennis Paige is working to protect marshland bird habitat in Schaumburg.

Circles of Conservation— continues on page 4.

The Habitat Project serves the grassroots of the Chicago Wilderness conservation community:



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. The Habitat Project helps to provide resources for the thousands of grassroots scientists, monitors, stewards, and advocates who work side by side to assure the holistic and effective conservation of Chicago Wilderness.

Grassroots Opportunities

BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK CENSUS

LEE RAMSEY 847-501-4683

BIRD BLITZES TO MONITOR GRASSLANDS, WOODLANDS, SHRUBLANDS, OR WETLANDS

JUDY POLLOCK 847-965-1150

CHICAGO WILDERNESS CALLING FROG SURVEY

KAREN GLENNEMEIER 847-965-1150

BUTTERFLY MONITORING

ILLINOIS BUTTERFLY MONITORING NETWORK, MEL MANNER 847-464-4426

CHICAGO LOCATIONS, THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR 312-742-4072

DRAGONFLY MONITORING NETWORK

CRAIG STETTNER 847-925-6214

PLANT COMMUNITY AUDITS OF WOODS, PRAIRIES, OR WETLANDS

KAREN GLENNEMEIER 847-965-1150

PLANTS OF CONCERN RARE PLANT MONITORING

SUSANNE MASI 847-835-8269

RESTORATION AND STEWARDSHIP

WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG/RESTORATION PROJECTS OR THE VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP NETWORK WEBSITE AT:

WWW.NATURE.ORG/WHEREWEWORK/NORTHAMERICA/STATES/ILLINOIS/VOLUNTEER/ART9844.HTML

ADVOCACY AND POLICY WORK

WWW.SIERRACLUB.ORG/IL/ OR WWW.FOTFP.ORG (COOK COUNTY) OR WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG

GRASSROOTS EDUCATION

WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG

If You Play the Calls, They Will Come

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We welcome to our newsletter
team new writers, editors, stamp
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To learn more, contact Mary
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mjkcannon@hotmail.com



Illustration: Lynda Wallis

Cook County is a big place, and it can be hard for people to travel from one end to the other to attend a training. That's why Diana Krug stepped forward this year to offer a frog monitoring workshop for folks on the southside. Held at Camp Sagawau in Lemont, the workshop drew 45 people out on a cold, February evening to learn how to monitor frogs and toads. "Holy cats was I busy," said Diana.

Almost all of the people who came had a favorite spot in mind that they wanted to monitor. But, according to Diana, many of them also "caught the bug and would like to take on more than one site." Interest in the elusive wood frog was high, and some folks decided to buy soil thermometers so that they could predict more precisely when the frogs might begin breeding. This species, with its impish "chuck-chuck-chuck" call, breeds "explosively," getting everything done in less than a week as soon as the thaw begins. This timing makes it difficult to catch them in the act, so we currently have limited data on wood frogs.

The new group of monitors will be especially needed to cover more ground within the 16,000 acre Palos Preserves in southwest Cook County, so that we may learn the distribution and abundance of the various species within the preserve. Palos may be one of our most important areas for amphibian conservation, and now we have the people to test this hypothesis.

But there's more. Southsiders will be monitoring frogs at Bartel Grassland and the Tinley Park area, at Wolf Road Prairie, Camp Sagawau, Plum Creek, Hickory Hills, and Midlothian. And the seven other February frog monitoring workshops throughout Chicago Wilderness drew new and veteran monitors alike, for a record total of nearly 200 froggers trained this year. They will be keeping track of our springtime serenaders at scores of sites in more than nine counties, from Chicago parks to Nachusa Grasslands, from the Wisconsin border to the Indiana Dunes.

Clearly, the lure of listening to and protecting these animals extends throughout Chicago Wilderness. All we had to do was ask.

On a cold,
February
evening,
froggers
started
dreaming of
spring.



Photo: Roger Keller

THE HABITAT HERALD IS PRODUCED BY AUDUBON TO SUPPORT THE GROWING CONSERVATION COMMUNITY. AUDUBON-CHICAGO REGION WORKS EXCLUSIVELY ON LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ISSUES, AND WE RAISE ALL THE FUNDS FOR OUR WORK OURSELVES. DONATIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR FUNDING, AND GIFTS FROM OUR FELLOW MONITORS AND STEWARDS ARE ALWAYS PARTICULARLY TREASURED. (MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY SUPPORTERS.)

IF YOU'D LIKE TO JOIN OUR FAMILY OF CONTRIBUTORS, OR IF YOU'D LIKE TO RECEIVE A COPY OF OUR ANNUAL REPORT AND CONSIDER OUR PLANS FOR 2007, PLEASE CONTACT [SANCHETA@AUDUBON.ORG](mailto:sancheta@audubon.org) OR SEND US A NOTE AT 5225 OLD ORCHARD ROAD, SUITE 37, SKOKIE IL 60077.

I think they were the first (municipality) to do it.” Dooley adds, “The Village started to compile a plan in 2001 and adopted it in 2004. It provides for ecological assessments of the Village as well as guides for recycling, engineering, zoning, development, and funding that will achieve the Recovery Plan’s objectives. We received the 2006 Chicago Excellence in Conservation Award and continue to work on the plan’s implementation.”

When not saving marshes and working his full-time job, Dennis wants “to teach people to live lightly on the earth.” To that end, he’s started Swift Deer workshops, which include Native-American story-telling, green lifestyles, and native landscaping. “Schaumburg’s mayor has called me a pied piper for the environment,” he says, “but I’m going for the ripple effect. I want to start all these little circles that will move out, connect, and form a big circle—of conservation.”

A Shrubland By Any Other Name...

By Bob Fisher

What is shrubland bird habitat? Is it a few isolated shrubby patches in an open grassland or prairie? Or is it a tangled, impenetrable thicket, full of thorny shrubs and multiflora rose canes? Or is it somewhere in between, like grasslands and abandoned fields where shrubby plants dominate but open patches of grasses and forbs still are present?

It seems to be all of the above. For the species (listed below) that we call shrubland birds, most levels of “shrubbiness” within this range can function as nesting habitat. Shrubland species tend to be reasonably opportunistic and flexible – if the shrubby field they used last year has been mowed or burned, they’ll go looking for another shrubby area. Yet in spite of this opportunism, this group contains many of the fastest declining species populations in our region, and in North America. Habitat management to reverse this decline is a vital component of our goal to maintain and enhance the habitat for all of the CW region breeding birds.

An important key when considering the management of shrubland bird habitat is that it is ephemeral, capable of quickly getting more or less shrubby, depending on various environmental factors or land management actions. That’s also probably why the habitat needs are somewhat less well understood for the shrubland nesters than they are for woodland, grassland, or marshland birds. The Illinois DNR contracted a number of studies in the recent past, assessing the habitat needs and nesting success rate of this group of birds throughout the state.

They found:

- Even the more common shrubland birds decline/ disappear when the only habitat is dense thickets (i.e., buckthorn thickets).
- Shrubland species of management concern preferentially use scattered patches of shrubs within grassland -- especially low, wet areas.
- The species of shrub selected for the nest is not particularly important to shrubland birds.
- Shrubland birds will use edges, but there they compete with forest birds like the House Wren and riparian birds like the Baltimore Oriole.

Beginning in 2006, the Bird Conservation Network and the Habitat Project began a three-year Shrubland Bird Blitz (following the highly successful Grassland Bird Blitz conducted from 2003-2005). It aims at getting a snapshot of both the population of the shrubland species shown below and the location(s) and quality of the available shrubland bird habitat within the CW region. The Blitz continues both this year and in 2008, and we need more volunteer blitzers so we can comprehensively survey the entire CW area. Contact Karen Glennemeier (kglennemeier@audubon.org; 847-724-5226) to learn more, or contact the coordinator in your county (see announcement page 10). This year, the Shrubland Blitz will be conducted from June 8 to June 18. New blitzers, come on out!

Chicago Wilderness Shrubland Birds of Conservation

Concern and additional Species of Interest: *American Redstart, Bell’s Vireo, Black-billed Cuckoo, Blue-winged Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, Golden-winged Warbler, Lark Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Bobwhite, Orchard Oriole, Prairie Warbler, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, White-eyed Vireo, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat.*



Photo: Lee Ramsey

Shrublands host an ever-changing suite of interesting finds for birders like Conrad Fialkowski and Ron Klingensmith.

Photo: Eric Secker

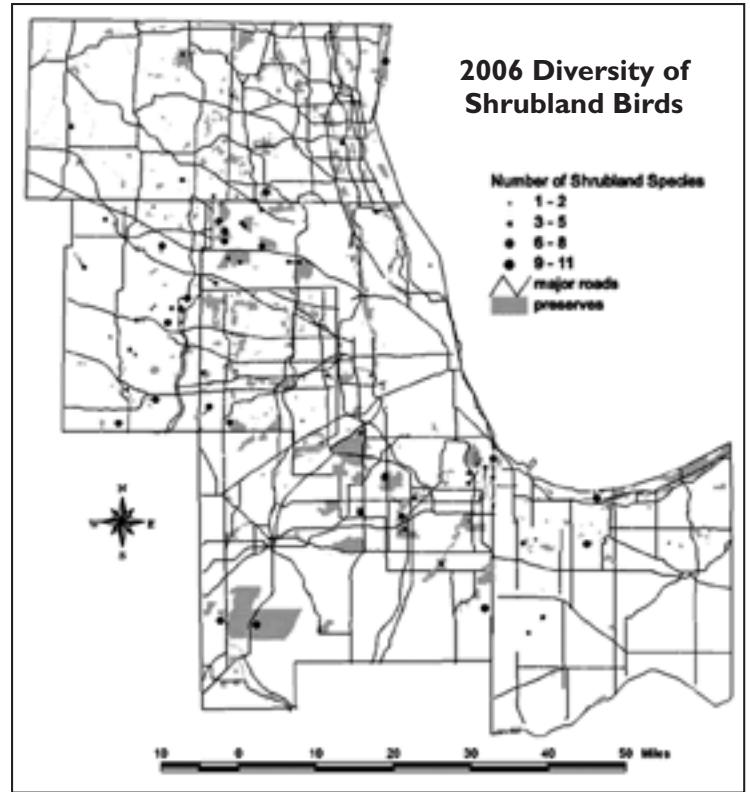


FITZbew!
FITZbew!
Beginning birders, hearing this “song”

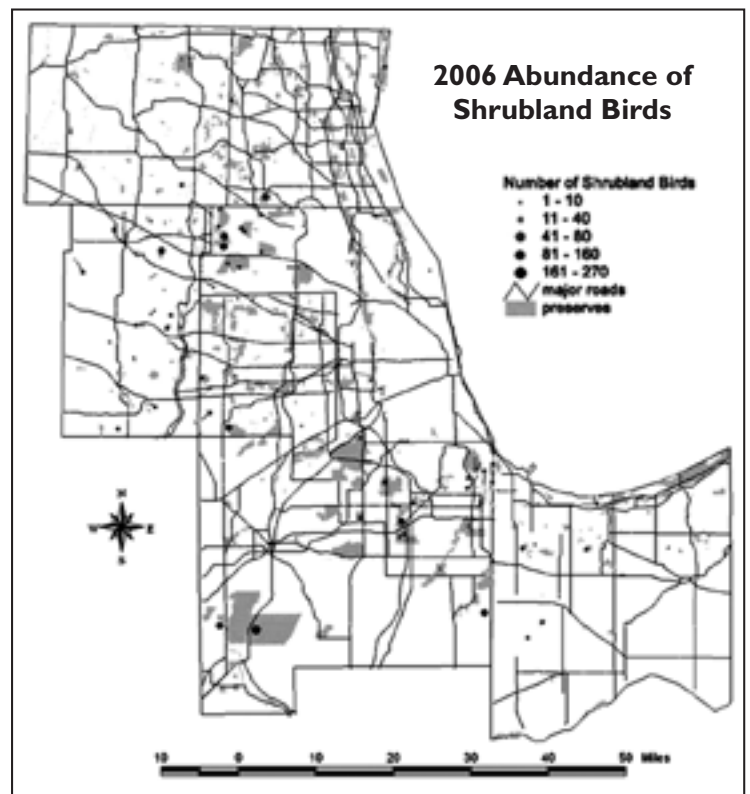
repeatedly emanating from a small, nondescript flycatcher perched atop a shrub in a mostly open, often wet field or marsh/stream edge, may wonder why the bird is sneezing. Presumably, the Willow Flycatcher making these sounds believes he’s very melodic. Experienced birders often despair of separating the *FITZbew* of the Willow from his cousin the Alder Flycatcher, who serenades us with *freeBEEr*. In fact, these two species (essentially inseparable by plumage through binoculars and difficult IDs even for bird banders) were once considered a single species, the Traill’s Flycatcher. And dare I mention *quick-3BEERS*, the song of the Olive-sided Flycatcher? If they’re some distance away, you may not hear the *quick*.

But don’t despair. Confusing these songs is only a problem during spring migration. The Alder and Olive-sided keep heading north – only the Alder very rarely nesting here in Illinois – whereas the Willow Flycatcher serenades us right through the breeding season at numerous locations in the CW region where they can find their preferred habitat. The male Willow perhaps has all that time to sing since the female builds the nest and incubates the clutch of 3-4 eggs. Once the young are born, he does tend to pipe down as he and the female both feed their young.

Habitat losses, especially streamside habitat, have led to a national decline in Willow Flycatcher numbers, most notably in the Southwest. But we can still hear their emphatic song fairly widely around the CW region, especially in wet, shrubby places. Gathering data about this and other shrubland birds via the Shrubland Bird Blitz should assure continued good management practices leading to lots more *FITZbews* (and maybe an occasional *freeBEEr*) in the future.



These maps show the locations of greatest and least shrubland bird diversity and abundance, as recorded by Shrubland Bird Blitzers in 2006. Please help us to identify additional shrubland bird habitat – areas not covered in 2006, that we should include in the 2007 Blitz. (See www.habitatproject.org for a list of the sites.) And please join us in the field for some great birding! Contact Contact Karen Glennemeier at kglennemeier@audubon.org; 847-724-5226, or contact the coordinator in your county (see announcement page 10).



Volo Bog State Natural Area to Host Dragonfly Meeting

By Yvette Liataud

Interested in dragonflies? This year the seventh annual Great Lakes Odonata Meeting (GLOM) will be held at Volo Bog State Natural Area in Ingleside, Illinois from June 8 to 10th. The meeting will bring together professionals, naturalists, monitors, and enthusiasts who are interested in dragonflies and damselflies and conservation of their habitat. This year we will be concentrating on field identification, habitats, and developing species lists for our area.

Volo Bog is home to about 14 species of dragonflies and seven damselflies, an unusually high number for a bog. These numbers are encouraging, as odonates are a key indicator of a healthy environment. Dragonfly watching has become a fast growing pastime in recent years, yielding only to birding. The skills required for observing these little buggers are similar to those for birding, so it is a natural step for the two groups of monitors to cross over. Northern Illinois is home to seventy different odonate species, including two state threatened and one federally endangered dragonfly.

We are pleased to have as keynote speaker at GLOM Dr. Tim Cashatt, Chair and Curator of Collections at the Illinois State Museum. As a well-respected odonologist, he will be sharing a report on the status of dragonflies in Illinois. Among our other guest speakers will be Bob DuBois, an aquatic ecologist for the Wisconsin DNR and author of *Damselflies of the Northeast Woods*.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Volo Bog State Natural Area at 815-344-1294. Seating is limited to 80 people and reservations are required. Priority seating will go to monitors from the Dragonfly Monitoring Network, scientists, and Friends of Volo Bog.



April Dragonfly Monitoring Workshops:

Saturday, April 14, (site and time to be determined) Kendall County

Saturday, April 21, 10am
McHenry County College (Crystal Lake)

Friday, April 27, 1pm
College of Lake County (Grayslake)

Saturday, April 28, 10am
Peggy Notebaert (Chicago-Lincoln Park)

RSVP is appreciated, but not required.
Craig Stettner (847) 925-6214
cstettne@harpercollege.edu

Photo: www.antsp.org

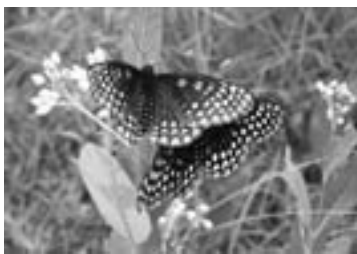


Photo: Dick Riner

Butterfly Workshops in April

Beginner's Training Workshop:

You only need to attend one of the sessions. Part One of the workshop covers all the details on how to monitor. Part Two teaches how to look at butterflies for identification and goes over the markings of 25 common species. The entire workshop will run 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

(Session 1: Presented by Marla Garrison on April 2, before this issue went to press.)

**Session 2: Presented by Tom Peterson – Fermilab Lederman Science Education Center
Wednesday, April 11, 7:00pm to 9:00pm**

A map of the Fermilab site is available online at <http://www.fnal.gov/pub/visiting/map/site.html>. Limit: 20 people.

Intermediate's Training Workshop:

Recommended for monitors with some identification experience. Part One of the workshop is "Improving your Data" and data entry methods. Part Two is the identification marks of 32 species of butterflies. The workshop, covering both parts, will run 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

**Presented by: Tom Peterson – Fermilab, Wilson Hall, Room 1 North
Saturday, April 21, 10:00am to noon**

A map of the Fermilab site is available online at <http://www.fnal.gov/pub/visiting/map/site.html>. Limit: 20 people.

Successful Year for the Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project

By Robert Morgan



Photo: Robert & Anita Morgan

The year 2006 marked the first of many in what we hope will be a long-term field project to study and protect the Swainson's Hawk in northeast Illinois. Though we have been studying the Illinois population since 2002, the Swainson's Hawk Project was a new undertaking and a collaborative effort to enlist the help of others. This venture paid off, as we found new breeding pairs, confirmed nestings, and saw hundreds of other raptors. Twenty observers collected data this year, providing information from 17 locations.

Collectively we counted 845 raptors of 11 species during 137 hours of watching in and near the hawk's known territories in Kane and McHenry counties. Not surprisingly, over half of these sightings were Red-tailed Hawks. Other raptors recorded included Turkey Vulture (190), American Kestrel (53), Cooper's Hawk (48), Northern Harrier (9), Osprey (5), Sharp-shinned Hawk (4), Broad-winged Hawk (4), Red-shouldered Hawk (1), and Merlin (1).

Swainson's Hawks were recorded 71 times. This high count reflects the fact that we made numerous visits to known pairs to collect information on behavior and nesting success. A total of five pairs were found, with observations of single birds in three other areas. These singles may represent breeding birds that were overlooked, or they may have been migrants or non-breeders. They are worth following up on next year.

The five pairs produced three fledged young from four known nest sites. This is a typical production of young for Illinois over the last five years. (See Morgan, Robert A. and Anita Morgan. "Observations of Nesting Swainson's Hawks in Illinois, 2002-2004," *Meadowlark* 14, no. 2, 2005.) What is of major interest, however, is that two of the successful 2006 sites were new. These new sites may have been used in previous years, but no records exist of this. With the help of the Illinois Swainson's Hawk Project, we hope to answer these questions. Whether these sites represent a shift in breeding areas or the location of existing pairs is impossible to say, but this made our fieldwork efforts for 2006 memorable.

The importance of even a single sighting of a Swainson's Hawk is exemplified by one such occurrence in April 2006. One of our observers found a Swainson's Hawk perched in a tree in April. Following up on this sighting in late May, we eventually tracked this bird back to a nest that successfully fledged a young bird. This was one of the new pairs found in 2006. It just shows how easy it is to miss a pair, and conclude, erroneously, that there are no Swainson's Hawks in a given location.

If you would like to join us for the 2007 fieldwork project, please contact Bob and Anita Morgan, at 708-209-1938 or amorgan@sxu.edu. We hope that you can join us and help in this important fieldwork.

2007 Plants of Concern Training Workshops for Rare Plant Monitoring

Plants of Concern, launched in 2000, is a rare plant monitoring program designed to gather standardized, regional monitoring data over time to learn population trends for our rare plants. The data are providing land managers with information that helps them to set management goals and evaluate management practices for over 135 species within a community context.

Plants of Concern will be recruiting and training volunteer monitors for the 2007 season:

Sunday, April 15th, 9:30am to 3pm, Morton Arboretum (Lisle, Du Page County)

Sunday, April 22nd, 9:30am to 3pm, Ryerson Woods (Deerfield, Lake County)

(Prior to press time, a workshop was held Saturday, March 31st at Volo Bog)

For more information, please visit our webpage at: www.plantsofconcern.org. To sign up for a workshop or to get on our mailing list, please contact Emily Hudson Richter (847-835-6873; ehudson@chicagobotanic.org).

Increased Diversity in Prairie Restorations – Why and How

By Chris Hauser, Stephen Packard, Tom Vanderpoel, and Bill Kleiman

This article is abridged from a presentation at the March 3 Wild Things conference.

In many prairie restorations, Big Bluestem forms tall grass monocultures, eliminating the potential (at least short term) for a diverse community of forbs, sedges and other grasses. While a tall grass monoculture may have some redeeming ecological value, so far as reproducing or restoring a real tallgrass prairie community with a diversity of conservative plants and animals, it stops far short of success.

However, it is difficult to increase diversity within tall grass monocultures due to intense soil competition from tall grasses. How can stewards and land managers restore and create diverse prairie ecosystems?

“The greatest success has come from using high seed densities with great diversity from the start.”

There are two main types of prairie restorations: those that attempt to re-create a prairie ecosystem upon the plowed ground of former agricultural fields, and those that interseed prairie seeds into an existing grassland of weedy grasses and forbs. The cornfield restorations are the most likely to become tallgrass monocultures, usually because the original seed mix was too heavy on Big Bluestem – and didn't contain enough of the different kinds of plant functional groups that help to maintain diversity. These functional groups include the following: (1) conservative grasses and sedges, (2) aggressive, conservative, rhizomatous species, (3) dominant, conservative, “stay put” species, and (4) parasitic or allelopathic forbs (see box for species lists). Species from Group 2 form a major part of the matrix of most remnant prairies, with

the rhizomatous clones completely interspersed among each other. They provide great insurance against the aggressive tall grass species. Species from Group 3 are long lived. A seed will germinate, claim a spot, and dominate that spot for many decades. Group 4 species play a keystone role in creating niches for other species. High quality remnant prairies always have parasitic and/or allelopathic forbs.

“Pioneer” species provide quick color to new plantings, and they are important early-successional components of the prairie. However, a standard problem with “de novo” plantings is that many seed mixes are simply tall grasses plus many of these pioneer species. When these are the only forbs in the seed mix, the result will be a tall grass monoculture in a few years. This is probably the most common cause of tall grass monocultures in cornfield prairie plantings. At Nachusa Grasslands, the greatest success has come from using high seed densities with great diversity from the start, including a large amount of conservative seed.



Photo: Susanne Mosi

Showy Goldenrod helps to maintain prairie diversity by staking its ground and staying put for many years.

Diversity— continues on page 9.

Species Lists for Prairie Restorations

Conservative graminoids: Little Bluestem, Prairie Dropseed, small Panicums, Junegrass, Three Awn, Porcupine Grass, Sweet Grass, Blue Joint Grass, Cord Grass, Carex cristatella, Bicknell's Sedge, some Juncus, etc.

Aggressive, conservative, rhizomatous species: Mountain Mint, Early & Missouri Goldenrods, Prairie Coreopsis, Western/Downy/Stiff Sunflowers, Bastard Toadflax, Heath Aster

Dominant, conservative, “stay put” species: Wild Quinine, both Baptisias, Showy Goldenrod, all four Silphiums, Prairie Dropseed, Lead Plant, Rattlesnake Master, (and in dry areas) Pale Coneflower.

Parasitic or allelopathic forbs: Wood Betony, Bastard Toadflax

Pioneer species: Bergamot, Yellow Coneflower, Tall Coreopsis, Canada Rye, False Sunflower, Black-eyed Susan, Round-headed Bush Clover, Foxglove Penstemon

Diversity—continued from page 8.

Some of the best restored prairies have resulted from a few years of repeatedly sowing a rich mix of prairie species directly into diverse old fields, a technique called interseeding. This technique works slowly or not at all in dense stands of tall goldenrod or certain pasture grasses but is otherwise well suited to many of our old field restorations.

Many prairie species only grow about one inch tall the first year or two. If the other plants (or the dead thatch) are dense enough to shade out small prairie seedlings, then shade control is needed, and planting should wait until after dense grasses or goldenrod have been thinned by mowing or fire. Mow in August the year before planting to decrease tall goldenrod. Fire will thin out the pasture grasses over one to four years, in most cases. Or mow after planting, just often enough that the young prairie plants don't get dense shade. Make the seed mix as diverse as possible, burn as soon as you can, and keep mowing as long as there's a bad weed problem.

What is the best way to restore an existing tallgrass monoculture to a more diverse and more natural prairie? Many conservative species can be interseeded directly into tallgrass monocultures, so long as the pioneer species are avoided. Forbs have an easier time fighting big bluestem than the conservative grasses. One way to establish the forbs is to herbicide meandering strips through the monoculture and then plant diverse grasses and forbs the following fall.

White Baptisia is a champion in germinating from seed in tall grass monocultures, no matter how dominant the tall grass. Burn the prairie, and sow the Baptisia seed, and you will have flowering plants in several years. Several prairie managers have suggested that Wood Betony also could be a "savior" of our tall grass monocultures, as it is a powerful tool in opening the tall grass sod.

Chris Hauser wrote the first draft of this piece as a Restoration Ecologist with the Kane County Forest Preserve District. **Stephen Packard** directs Audubon – Chicago Region and is steward of Somme Prairie Grove in Cook County. **Tom Vanderpoel** directs Citizens for Conservation in Barrington. **Bill Kleiman** supervises management of The Nature Conservancy's Nachusa Grasslands.



The results from the 2005 regionwide Chicago Wilderness Grassland Audit were published in the fall 2006 issue of the *Chicago Wilderness Journal*, which is available online at <http://www.chicagowilderness.org/members/cwjjournal/index.cfm> or at the Habitat Project website, at www.habitatproject.org, under Results and Data. Check it out!

WILD THINGS

A Chicago Wilderness Conference for People and Nature Saturday, March 3, 2007

Wild Thing Conference 2007 T-shirts are available for \$5 each

Please specify number and sizes S – XL and make checks payable to National Audubon Society, 5225 Old Orchard Road, Suite 37, Skokie, IL, 60077. T-Shirt art by Bobby Sutton.



More than 800 people attended this year's Wild Things conference, where they learned, networked, and enjoyed each other's company.

Photo: Erick Howersline

Join us for the Cook County Land Audit

In the summer of 2007, scores of expert botanists and able-bodied assistants will span out across the natural areas of Cook County to record data in grasslands, woodlands, and savannas.

The goal of the Cook County Land Audit is to assess the quality and health of the natural areas within the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

The District has been devoting more resources to restoring the forest preserves. We'll measure how much progress has been made over the past six years. Are the preserves getting healthier, or do they still need a stepped-up effort to restore their diverse plant and animal communities?

With the results, we will work with the District to:

- Increase the number of sites with volunteer stewards;
- Increase the resources devoted to restoration; and
- Educate the public about the condition of the preserves and the steps needed to restore them.

We'll do this with our partners, the County Commissioners, FPDCC staff, and the grassroots volunteers of Chicago Wilderness.

If you would like to join us, please contact Karen Glennemeier (kglenemeier@audubon.org, 847-724-5226) or Paul Bollinger (pbollinger@bollingerlach.com, 630-990-1385).

Project Partners: Audubon-Chicago Region and the Habitat Project; Friends of the Forest Preserves; Bird Conservation Network; Forest Preserve District of Cook County; Chicago Wilderness; Bollinger, Lach & Associates, Inc.; The Sierra Club



Photo: Paul Bollinger

Join Us For the 5th Annual Breeding Bird Blitz

This year, it's Shrublands

June 9th is Breeding Bird Blitz Day

Between June 8 and 18, and especially on June 9, we will count the birds in the shrublands of Chicago Wilderness.

Chicago Wilderness has recognized shrubland birds as a top priority for data collection in 2007. We need to identify all potentially important shrubland sites and count the birds in as many as possible.

If you can identify all of the target shrubland birds (see list page 4) and would like to spend a morning counting them with a team or on your own, please contact:

Cook – Alan Anderson; 847-390-7437; casresearch@comcast.net

DuPage – Jim Green; green9698@sbcglobal.net,
– **Jeff Smith;** mrqmagoo@comcast.net

Indiana – Barb Dodge; 219-992-2413

Kane – Roger Hotham; 847-697-7484

Lake – Donnie Dann; 847-266-2222; donniebird@yahoo.com

McHenry – Karen Glennemeier; kglenemeier@audubon.org;
847-965-1150 x20

Will – Dick Riner; 708 720-5683; rrinersprint5@earthlink.net

There will be a "countdown lunch" in every county to compare notes, celebrate our great finds, and hang out with other birders on June 9.

Note: If you already cover a shrubland for the BCN Census, your June 2007 data will be included in the Shrubland Bird Blitz.



Other Bird Monitoring Opportunities for 2007:

Important Bird Area Spring Migrant Hot Spot Search:

847 965-1150 x15;

www.habitatproject.org/iba.asp

Swainson's Hawk Survey:

847-680-5281; www.bcnbirds.org/shp

BCN Census: 847 965-1150 x23;

www.bcnbirds.org/census.html

West Nile Virus Driving Survey:

847 965-1150 x15;

www.habitatproject.org/default.asp?cid=28

Become a Conservation Mentor!

Introducing the Chicago Wilderness Fieldbook... A Passport to Discover Nature's Hidden Treasures

By Pat Hayes and Kathy Garness

Both locally and nationally, people have started noticing a disconnect between children and nature. Some of us decided to form a grassroots outreach committee to see what we could do about this problem here in Chicago Wilderness. If you would like to share your love of nature with children, please join us!

A lot of great curriculum already exists in many different venues, and we decided that our major contribution could be to provide more opportunities for kids to bond with nature and with naturalists through purposeful participation in stewardship. Children are not being given enough time or space to wander through natural settings, make observations, and raise curiosity, and we wanted to try to provide such opportunities for interested children and parents.

Chicago Wilderness has 300,000 acres of protected lands and a network of citizen-scientists and stewards who are connected to this land. We volunteer to heal and protect the unique and spectacular qualities of the ecosystems around us. What a natural place to begin inviting children back out into the natural world!

We devised the Chicago Wilderness Fieldbook program as a way to help young people develop a stewardship ethic, expose them to the stewards' and monitors' knowledge and passion for nature, and keep them coming back to our sites. We gave a great deal of thought to different approaches, and the result, after many meetings, is an easy-to-use, three-level set of small, inexpensive fieldbooks for youth of different ages to work in (from grade school on up), documenting sightings, stewardship activities, and such, as a diary of their experiences and reflections.

The fieldbooks have a passport feel, complete with a stamp from each steward or monitor for the day's activities. The books were devised to allow a great deal of time and space for the child's own observations and reflections, under the mentoring of a site steward or monitor and parent or educator, while also encouraging hands-on participation and stewardship.

Immediate tangible rewards for participation are the passport as a personal journal of nature-based experiences, collection of passbook site stamps and steward signatures in the passbook, and creation of a personal reference guide.

The program and passports were introduced at the Wild Things conference, and we plan to get them out in the field this season. **If you would like to participate as a steward, monitor, parent, educator, or young person**, please contact Pat Hayes (ptihys@yahoo.com, 708-220-9596), Kathy Garness (kmgfinearts@comcast.net, 708-366-7584), Diane Huebner (d-huebner@northwestern.edu), Dick Riner (rrinersprint5@earthlink.net), or Karen Glennemeier (kglennemeier@audubon.org).



Photo: Lynda Wallis



Photo: Lynda Wallis



Attention McHenry County: Vote, Tuesday, April 17!

General Obligation Bond Referendum Question to appear on the April 17 ballot:

"Shall the McHenry County Conservation District, McHenry County, Illinois, acquire and improve open land in order to protect open space and natural areas; protect watersheds to improve the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams and control flooding; preserve and restore wildlife habitat, including sensitive at-risk ecological systems such as wetlands; and provide for recreational activities, such as hiking, fishing, walking and experiencing nature; and issue general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$73,000,000 for paying the costs thereof?"

What do you think?

For more information, contact the McHenry County Conservation District at 815-338-6223, or go to www.MCCDistrict.org.

Chicago Wilderness Habitat Project

 **Audubon** CHICAGO REGION
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The BCN invites you to our second annual ...

Bird Monitor's Brunch

This was so much fun last year we are doing it again! This year, the BCN will treat some very important people to brunch ... anyone who has monitored every year since our project began in 1998. Consistent data is critical to the success of our analysis. All bird monitors and their friends are invited to join us in honoring them on Saturday, June 30 (non-honorees pay for their own brunch.) We will bird at Bartel Grassland where Dick Riner, steward and bird monitor, will lead us to the newly arrived bobolinks and other grassland birds, and describe the habitat restoration underway. Park in the lot on Flossmoor Road between Central and Ridgeland, cross Flossmoor and walk south to the viewing berm. Arrive any time between 7:30 and 8:15, at which time our walk will set off. Then, at 11, we will caravan to brunch at nearby Kingsberry Waffle House, 3345 Vollmer Rd. in Flossmoor. The brunch is organized by Dick Riner and Suzanne Checchia. RSVP to Dick Riner at 708-720-5683.

The Chicago Park District is considering starting a program to install and monitor bat houses in parks with good habitat. If you are interested, contact Zhanna.Yermakov@ChicagoParkDistrict.com.

