

The Habitat HERALD

September 2007

Volume 8, Issue 3

Stewards and Monitors Team Up

*“Do birds use these small dogwoods copses in the prairie?”
“After this savanna was opened up and freed of dense brush,
I started seeing two new species of butterflies.”
“Birds of the canopy are doing well at this site, but we’ve lost
some shrub-nesting birds.”*

When stewards and monitors take a walk together, these are the sorts of questions and observations that arise. These are also the sorts of conversations that lead to better management plans, to sites being managed as whole ecosystems with an eye toward all of the plants and animals present (or absent).

John and Jane Balaban, stewards at Harms Woods and Bunker Hill in Cook County, have lately been teaming up with the bird, butterfly, and dragonfly monitors at these sites. Birders Lee Ramsey and Margo Milde, and dragonfly monitor Krista Clarke, have joined the Balabans to discuss how the animals are doing on the site, and how to manage the site with these animals in mind. They have in effect formed a management team that will work together to develop the best possible plans for the sites.

At Harms, this includes the maintenance of a variety of microhabitats for a diversity of species. It includes maintaining native shrubs, especially near water, and maintaining the water on the landscape.

At Wayside Prairie a few miles south, steward Larry Hodak and bird monitor Suzanne Checchia led a group of a dozen stewards and monitors through the restoration area in July. Mary Busch, co-steward, arranged the outing as part of her effort to incorporate monitors into the North Branch restoration project. Larry said, “When we first started the restoration 28 years ago, we didn’t think about the importance of shrubs. Since then we’ve learned a lot, and we now actively manage for shrubs, to provide animal habitat.”

Birder Judy Pollock adds that, “Certain species are very important conservation concerns for our region, based on their national status. We need to think about how to provide habitat for these species.

Both monitors and stewards seem to feel that there is no substitute for going out in the field together, where you can ask questions, share observations, and discuss challenges as you go. Krista Clarke sends an email to the site stewards immediately after each monitoring outing, to tell them what she found that day. Simple report forms can be developed by monitors and stewards together, so that the monitors can record the information most useful to stewards. For samples, click the “BCN Census” tab at www.bcnbirds.org.

Monitors appreciate seeing management plans for a site, so that they can understand how the animals they are seeing fit into the big picture for the site and provide more useful feedback to stewards. “Even better would be to have monitors help to create the management plan along with the stewards,” says John Balaban.

If you would like to find out who the monitors or stewards are at a site where you are involved, you can find their names on the Habitat Project website, www.habitatproject.org. Go to “Resources” in the upper menu and then click on “Connections.”

After you team up, please let us know (Karen at kglennemeier@audubon.org), so that we can help you spread the word about what you’re learning from each other.



Stewards and monitors share management ideas at Linne and Wayside Forest Preserves in Morton Grove.

In the Chicago Wilderness region, we have 510 sites with at least one monitor, 166 sites with a steward, and 116 sites with both a steward and at least one monitor. Plenty of opportunities for making connections!

Ryerson Woods in Lake County, IL takes the prize for the most going on. It has a site steward as well as people monitoring five different taxa (butterflies, birds, frogs, dragonflies, and rare plants).

Birders are currently covering the most ground of all the types of monitors, collecting data at 240 sites.

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

The future of nature in Chicago Wilderness depends very much on the 921 site monitors and stewards and the thousands of other volunteers and staff who work for the wellness of animals and habitat. To help out at a site – or to adopt one yourself – see the opportunities below.

Grassroots Opportunities



WEEKEND WORKDAYS

[WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG/RESTORATION PROJECTS](http://WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG/RESTORATION_PROJECTS)
OR THE **VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP NETWORK WEBSITE:**
WWW.NATURE.ORG/WHEREWEWORK/NORTHAMERICA/STATES/ILLINOIS/VOLUNTEER/ART9844.HTML

SITE STEWARDS

TRAIN TO SUPERVISE VOLUNTEER RESTORATION OF A PRAIRIE, WOODLAND OR WETLAND PRESERVE. SEND YOUR NAME AND AREA OF INTEREST TO KGLENNEMEIER@AUDUBON.ORG OR CONTACT THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR OF YOUR NEARBY COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OR SIMILAR LANDOWNER.

ADOPT A PRESERVE

WATCH FOR MISUSE OR ECOLOGICAL THREATS. REPORT FOUR TIMES A YEAR TO THE HABITAT PROJECT AND THE LANDOWNER. SEND YOUR NAME AND AREA OF INTEREST TO KGLENNEMEIER@AUDUBON.ORG.

BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK

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, TOM PETERSON 630-443-8604

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

ADVOCACY AND POLICY WORK

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

GRASSROOTS EDUCATION

WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG

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Having the Choice: Nature—Not Cars

By Mary Cannon

There are scores of natural settings in the city and suburbs which can be reached without a car. But how many people know this?

In Chicago, the Park District has been working for almost a decade to set aside some of the parks' 7,300 acres as natural areas, easily accessible to everyone. Further, the Cook County Forest Preserves, encompassing 68,000 acres, were actually planned to provide "nearby recreation, relaxation and spiritual renewal for urban communities." "Nearby" is the operative word since, in the past, many people used public transportation to travel to these "hidden wonders."*

Clearly, times have changed; and now most climb into their cars to reach sites in the Chicago Wilderness. Nonetheless, there is a growing number who take public transportation, or bike, or walk—not because they have to but because they want to.

Diane Huebner, grad student in Northwestern University's Plant Biology and Conservation Program, monitors butterflies and dragonflies at Bunker Hill, Skokie Lagoons, and Forest Glen. "I travel everywhere by bike," she says. "And when I go to farther sites like Bluff Spring Fen or the Indiana Dunes, I take the Metra—which now allows you to travel with your bike. I find it so much more peaceful!"

Mary Zaander, who works for a native landscaping firm, echoes Diane's enthusiasm. "I bike Kenyon Woods, Blackhawk Forest Preserve, Norris Woods Nature Preserve, River Park of Geneva, Fabian Forest Preserve, Batavia Riverwalk, and Glenwood and Les Arends Forest Preserves. I've also traveled from my home in Geneva to an Oak Park monitoring meeting by taking my bike on the Metra. Since I hate heavy traffic, I wouldn't even have gone if I had to drive."

Vivian Visser, artist and restoration volunteer, says, "I used to live in a city where you couldn't walk or bike anywhere because it wasn't safe. Now I can take the El or bus and get to the North Park Nature Center, North Pond, the Magic Hedge, even to Gompers Park. And I can interact with nature and people because I'm not isolated in my car."

All three feel their choices enhance their experience. "I see and hear and smell things much more acutely than I would in a car; I'm much more a part of my world. It also makes me realize I don't have to rush everywhere," says Diane. Mary adds, "My work demands that I drive. Maybe that's why I enjoy biking through natural areas in my free time." Vivian agrees. "Living in the Chicago area, I now have the privilege to be able to make this choice."

*Quoted and paraphrased from "Ten City Escapes" brochure, produced by the Friends of the Forest Preserve and Friends of the Parks.

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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 THE COMING YEAR, PLEASE CONTACT [JPOLLOCK@AUDUBON.ORG](mailto:jpollock@audubon.org) OR SEND US A NOTE AT 5225 OLD ORCHARD ROAD, SUITE 37, SKOKIE IL 60077.

Two local birds you should know: Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos

By Bob Fisher



Photo: Kanec Hirabayashi



Photo: Jerry Kummery

Cuckoo numbers – whose call has been transcribed as Ka-ka-ka-ka-kow-kow-kow-kowlp-kowlp – were up in Chicago Wilderness this year, due to abundant food. Upper photo: Black-billed Cuckoo. Lower photo: Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Are cuckoos 17-year cicada specialists? Based on the spring/summer of 2007, it would be easy to believe they are. Many observers reported a significant influx of cuckoos (especially Yellow-billed) into northeastern Illinois this year, all taking advantage of the huge numbers of cicadas as a food source. But then what do they do the other 16 years?

Our two resident cuckoo species are clearly opportunists when it comes to finding a localized food source. Just as with 17-year cicadas, both species are frequently associated with big outbreaks of tent caterpillars and gypsy moths. In this ability to home in on an abundant insect, they're just like a couple of woodpecker species – American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, who appear in numbers almost by magic after a forest fire to feed on the grubs that infest fire-killed trees in great numbers. Ornithologists are not yet certain how either the woodpeckers or the cuckoos learn about these outbreaks, but clearly the word is spread somehow.

Both cuckoo species are quite secretive, the Black-billed even more so than the Yellow-billed. So in normal years, birders and bird monitors are often content with just hearing their calls. The two species have somewhat similar vocalizations, but there's enough difference that it is possible to identify them as to species in the field. They occupy similar habitats, though the Black-billed prefers edges and dense, shrubby areas whereas the Yellow-billed will often be found in shrubby open woodlands.

Our part of Illinois is near the north end of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo's breeding range, but it is a fairly common summer resident and breeder around here. Most Black-billed Cuckoos go much further north to breed, so they are a rare breeder in the Chicago area (though their stealth may just make them very hard to locate). Bird Conservation Network census data are too limited to draw any valid conclusions about the regional population trend for Black-billed, but national Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a general long-term decline of just under three-percent per year. Yellow-billed population data for the Chicago region from the BCN database suggest a short-term increase. Nationally, Yellow-billed Cuckoos

seem to be declining, and in the western states they have suffered catastrophic range reductions due to habitat loss.

Unlike the European (or Common) Cuckoo, our two cuckoos only rarely lay their eggs in other birds' nests, typically Gray Catbirds, American Robins, or the other thrushes. Interestingly, both species will lay eggs in each other's nest. The young of the two species also share a similar trait – they will leave the nest as soon as a week after hatching, climbing around in the branches near the nest for another two weeks before they are able to fly and officially fledge.

Given continued protection, management and habitat expansion, surely there will again be a cuckoo influx accompanying the next emergence of the 17-year cicadas in June of 2024. I'm looking forward to seeing and hearing cuckoos, along with many other species, feasting on the cicadas. More than 60 bird species, ranging in size from large raptors and gulls down to tiny gnatcatchers and chickadees, were documented taking advantage of this enormous food source in 2007. I'll also bet many of the kids who became fascinated with cicadas this year will be introducing their children to the spectacle – two generations of people caring more about the natural world after witnessing the miraculous emergence.

DuPage Volunteers Document Bird Population Trends

By Scott Meister

At the end of the 2006 breeding season, over 45 volunteers in DuPage County concluded a 10-year effort of monitoring bird populations. The outcome was nearly 4,100 point counts and good insight into the status of our local bird populations.

Results indicated statistically significant trends for 9 of the 70 species analyzed. Five species appear to be increasing in DuPage County (blue-gray gnatcatcher, bobolink, eastern towhee, field sparrow, and Henslow's sparrow), while four species appear to be decreasing (American crow, Canada goose, grasshopper sparrow and ovenbird). The increase in abundance of these five desirable species is a good indication that these species are doing well. The indication that desirable species are declining is never welcome. Those four species are addressed next.

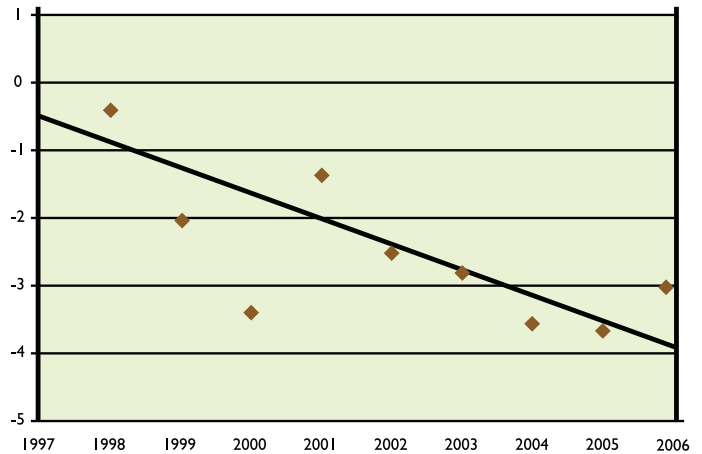
American crow – The emergence of West Nile Virus (WNV) during late-summer 2002 has caused crow population numbers to fall. A noticeable decrease was evident to even the casual observer beginning in 2003, and their populations have yet to recover. Perhaps, as crows tolerant to WNV breed, the species will rebound.

Canada goose – Goose populations appear to have increased during the past couple of decades in the region as more retention ponds were built in concert with sprawling development. Since that time, geese have been viewed as a nuisance species by many people, controlled by professionals locally and in other parts of the country. The USGS's Breeding Bird Survey indicated a similar downward trend in Illinois since 2001.

Species	Trend
Henslow's sparrow	+31%
Blue-gray gnatcatcher	+23%
Eastern towhee	+12%
Field sparrow	+10%
Bobolink	+7%
Grasshopper sparrow	-18%
Ovenbird	-23%
American crow	-31%
Canada goose	-35%

Species with significant trends identified through point count data collected within DuPage County forest preserves from 1997-2006. Trend value indicates annual percent change.

American Crow: Trend: -31% P = 0.01



Ten-year trend in American crows for DuPage County, based on breeding season data.

Grasshopper sparrow – Grasshopper sparrows are habitat specialists, preferring large, open prairie with little woody vegetation. The reason for their local decline is unclear. A prescribed fire cycle every 2-3 years will promote grasshopper sparrow habitat by promoting native grasses over weedy forbs and eliminating dense litter build-up. Removal of treelines that separate grasslands and provide predator access into prairies is also desirable.

Ovenbird – Ovenbirds, considered forest interior specialists, prefer very large, open woodlands with little underbrush, a deep litter layer, and a large insect prey base. Studies in other parts of the Midwest show that ovenbirds in smaller plots do not reproduce as successfully. To manage for and promote ovenbird habitat, the size of woodlands should be maximized, and dead material in the landscape should be left to encourage an abundant insect population.

Local land managers should take special care to provide a variety of habitats at different successional stages to satisfy a range of habitat requirements, promote the greatest biodiversity, and assist declining bird populations. Besides habitat, abundant food sources must also be available to sustain bird populations; management practices should seek to promote these.

A special thank-you to all of the DuPage County volunteers who make monitoring our feathered friends a part of their lives. We hope that continued monitoring of bird populations will further enable land managers to make decisions that benefit all species.

Scott Meister is an Ecologist with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.

Such Gifts: The Restoring of Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve

By Mary Cannon

The song sparrow is calling in the distance, a common yellowthroat is chanting nearby, bluebird pairs are feeding babies, butterflies are gathering nectar, and you are catching your breath as you survey the fen, the sedge meadow, the oak savannah, and the prairie. According to the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve is the only place in McHenry County where one can stand on the valley floor and have a 360-degree view of nature unbroken by development. Without Carol Fiala, it wouldn't be here.

It began 13 years ago when she and her husband were looking for a homesite away from suburban sprawl and chanced upon Bull Valley. Struck by the richness and beauty of this glacial area, they couldn't let it be lost; so they bought all 36 acres slated for development. Then the nurturing began.

"The land was already on the Illinois Natural Area Inventory, and therefore qualified as a nature preserve, but it hadn't been managed or restored; so we contacted people who could help set priorities, develop a plan and initiate prescribed burns," she says. They started by removing invasives and burning the fen, the oak savanna, and the prairie. They then began re-seeding. "Brad Semel, District Heritage Biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) helped with the burns and was with us every step of the way; and I studied Swink & Wilhelm's *Plants of the Chicago Region* day and night," she adds. Brad also introduced her to Marla Garrison, McHenry County College biology professor and coordinator of the Habitat Project's butterfly and dragonfly monitoring networks. A working friendship began, and Marla added Carol's land to her monitoring routes as she watched an "explosion of biodiversity." "I've been monitoring there for six years and can tell you Carol knows every bird, every insect, every plant. As for butterflies, she has the largest population of Baltimore Checkerspots in Illinois." Marla adds, "I'd have known nothing about restoration without her."

Carol has brought back an ecosystem that was on life support.

Not content to simply improve her own site, Carol decided to get the neighbors involved. "We had house tours, cocktail parties, speakers—anything to get people's attention and to talk about piecing together a macro-site to conserve this entire valley." She was so successful that five years ago she was able to gather natural resource professionals, local landowners, and representatives from NIPC to form the Boone Creek Watershed Alliance. Boone Creek is a cool water stream that supplies the area, and the Alliance's mission is to protect its health as well as develop wise land-use planning for all of the watershed's 23.4 square miles.

Needing more family time, Carol is no longer the Alliance president but continues to work with neighbors and to restore her land. Is she pleased so far? "Oh, I'm happy the butterflies, orchids, birds, and people are responding. And I'm very happy that Plants of Concern is now here because so many rare natives we thought were lost have returned."* Still, there are down days. "We provide for the birds when they're here, but what happens to them when they leave? Sometimes I look at the world and think I'm not doing restoration so much as hospice work here." Marla Garrison would disagree. "Carol has revitalized 100 different species—given them all another chance. She's truly brought back an ecosystem that was on life support. Every year there are only additions—no deletions."

Perhaps most important, this land did not become Valley View Estates but rather Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve. And Carol admits, "This place fuels me and fills me. Such gifts!" Some of us who meet people like Carol Fiala might also say, "Such gifts!"

**Fens are natural seed storage beds and return to life after invasive species are burned off.*



Carol Fiala has been protecting, restoring, and studying Boone Creek Fen for 13 years.



Photos: Marie Sprendel

Join the Fifteen-Mile Prairie Club!

By John Kloempken

Imagine a remnant black soil prairie which stretches for miles – fifteen miles, to be exact. Imagine how wonderful it would be to have such a prairie in your backyard. If you live in McHenry County, anywhere in the vicinity of the Union Pacific/Illinois Railway Museum railroad line, it just may be.

The H.U.M. is an unplowed original prairie and so named because it traverses through Huntley, Union, and Marengo, Illinois. Many of our remnant prairies exist along railroad tracks, because they have been protected from development and agriculture, and because they experienced periodic burns in former decades when train sparks were a common occurrence.

Remnant prairies are genetic vaults within Chicago Wilderness.

Because of the H.U.M. Prairie's linear shape, it is composed of a number of McHenry County's different remnant prairie types – including wet, mesic, and dry silt-loam, as well as sand prairie. Its plant and animal diversity reflect this landscape diversity. Its remnant status means that much of the flora and fauna necessary for ecosystem health, such as some pollinators and soil organisms, are present as well. (Species that require large, unfragmented habitat are not likely to remain in narrow, linear remnants such as the H.U.M.)

Remnant prairies such as the H.U.M. are like genetic vaults within Chicago Wilderness – an important seed source and a source of untold elements necessary for ecosystem function, including features as yet undiscovered by restoration ecologists and stewards. These remnants are critical to our regionwide effort to return healthy, functioning ecosystems to all of our protected natural areas. And they are inspiring, historic places unto themselves.

The H.U.M. Prairie is one of our region's only railroad remnants owned by a conservation organization (in this case, the McHenry County Conservation District, or MCCD). Thus, we have the opportunity to protect this remnant from the threat of invasive species and to return natural processes such as fire to the ecosystem. But the MCCD needs the help of committed citizens to do so. It especially needs a few people who would like to take on the responsibility of leading stewardship work at the site. If you would like to help in the historic work of protecting the H.U.M., please contact Ed Collins at 815-653-2297 x14; Ecollins@mccd.org, or Karen Glennemeier at 847-724-5226; kglennemeier@audubon.org.

Come out to a work day at the H.U.M on Saturday, September 22, from 9 am to noon. We'll be collecting seeds from native prairie plants for use on other restoration sites, we'll remove some invasive weeds, and we'll take a walk and learn some of the history of this remnant. RSVPs are optional but appreciated, to Ed or Karen (see contact information above). Take the northwest Tollway (I-90) to the route 47 exit. Head north to Main St. (also called Marengo Rd.), and turn left (heading west). Proceed to the stop sign at Hemmer and Marengo Road. Turn right and drive 1.1 miles to Diekman Road. Turn right and proceed to the fence. Call 847-212-4615 if you need help.



Some of the species you might see at the H.U.M:

Plants: Violet wood sorrel, Prairie violet, Bastard toadflax, Yellow star grass, Blue-eyed grass, Pale spiked lobelia, Prairie phlox, Porcupine grass, June grass, Side-oats grama grass, Vanilla grass, Poke milkweed, Small green milkweed, Butterfly weed, Indian plantain, Prairie clover, Prairie lily, and Gentians.

Animals: Rainbow bluets and River jewelwings, River otter, smooth green snake, American copper butterfly



The prairie lily is one of many rare plants at the H.U.M. Prairie that depend on remnants for their survival.

Photos: John Kloempken

Last March's Wild Things conference was a success by any measure. Organized by 56 volunteers from 26 organizations, it featured 142 speakers, 33 exhibitors and 7 authors. It had 19 co-sponsors, and there were 830 registrants for the conference. The conference made a small profit, which was used to publicize this summer's Habitat Clinics.

If you had to make a difficult choice between many terrific presentations at the conference, then you're in luck, because many of the presentations are now available on the web, at: <http://habitatproject.org/WildThings/resources.html>. Check it out!



Whoop it up while you wind it down,

at the Chicago Wilderness

Habitat Hootenanny!

Sunday, September 30th, 3 pm till dusk,
at Salt Creek Park in northeastern DuPage County



Illustration: Lynda Wallis

Celebrate autumn and the winding down of another glorious field season with other monitors, stewards, advocates, and friends, at the 3rd Annual Habitat Hootenanny.

Bring a dish to share, as well as any instruments or games to share. Kids and families, too! We'll have a real hot dog cart with dogs, brats, and buns. Here's some suggested pot-luck assignments:

Plant monitors: Veggies and salads

Stewards: Main dishes

Frog and bird monitors: Appetizers or side dishes

Butterfly and dragonfly monitors: Desserts

Featured events:

Way-Out Wilderness Awards. Nominate a friend for an award honoring their bravery, mettle, humor, accomplishments, or spirit. See suggested categories at www.habitatproject.org, and send your nominations to kglennameier@audubon.org.

Networking and Recruiting. Share your local group's mission with other people.

Kids' Art Table.

Swap Table. Bring items that you no longer need but that others might appreciate.

New Happenings. Reserve a one-minute slot to tell everyone about something new you'd like us all to know about.

Salt Creek Park is located on the north side of Elizabeth Drive, east of Addison Road and west of Wood Dale Road. Exit I-290 at Rte. 83 and head north to 3rd Avenue, then west to Wood Dale, and north to Elizabeth.

RSVPs appreciated, to Karen Glennemeier at kglennameier@audubon.org or 847-724-5226.

The Hootenanny is sponsored by the Habitat Project and Plants of Concern.

Cricket frog clicks heard at Romeoville Prairie

One reason for our extensive monitoring networks is to learn the geographic range of species that are rare in our region. This is especially true for Blanchard's Cricket Frog, *Acris crepitans*, as this formerly common species has become quite rare in northeast Illinois, and we need to know the extent of its current range so that we can protect its habitat.

Enter Mike O'Brien, co-steward of Romeoville Prairie, who became a frog monitor this year and found a population of cricket frogs at the prairie. According to Dave Mauger, wildlife biologist with the Will County Forest Preserve District, this location was an area where we might have expected the cricket frogs to be, given their known range and habitat requirements. Mike's findings have confirmed that the frogs are, indeed, living in this habitat, and have provided us with valuable information needed to continue protecting this species in northeast Illinois.



Photo: Mike Redmer



Cicada Stories

Gathered and edited by Steve Constantelos

Allison Lehnen—Lake County Forest Preserves, Libertyville

I live on a forest preserve in southeastern Lake County, Illinois. So, as you might imagine I was witness to heavy emergence. It was wonderful.

The garden beds around the house had lots of action, so we were able to pull up lawn chairs, sit back, and enjoy the phenomenon. On one of the first big emergence nights, we were sitting there and noticed a raccoon that came right up to the edge of the house. He was shoving fistfuls of teneral cicadas in his mouth. He didn't even care that we were sitting right there! He just grabbed them by the handful from each plant and kept on going. We were able to watch him for at least half an hour. He was less than 10 feet from us! It was sooo neat! Eventually he wandered off and up came an opossum and a skunk. They really are like Hershey's Kisses to the wildlife. Yummmmmmm...

Mike Lawler—Vernon Hills

I saw a bumble bee riding the back of a *Magicicada septendecim*, stinging the cicada. After about an hour the cicada died. Why would a bumblebee sting anything? It's too focused on gathering nectar. Perhaps the cicada accidentally flew into the bumblebee, which defensively reacted by stinging it.

Diana Krug—Steward at McClaughry Springs, Palos Restoration Project

I'm sitting at work feeling like a wolf, about ready to chew my leg off to get outside and enjoy some nature instead of the cement city. The phone rings and I answer it. Instead of a business associate it's something loudly bleating and then hanging up. The phone rings again, the cicada prankster again. My fellow co-workers laugh, "Only you would get calls from cicadas at the office." Of course it was my pal John Banaszak, I know, because later that week in the warm sun at Wolf Road Prairie, we were soberly learning how to conduct the land audit,

when suddenly from behind me a cicada bleats again, disturbing the instruction like a large burp in a museum. John had figured out how to "motivate" the cicada into vibrating its abdomen. I had to giggle; a lovely auditor across from me had three dangling from her hair. We will miss their golden wings and coral red eyes in Palos!

Barb Gore—Waubensee Community College, Sugar Grove

We spent half a workday planting shrubs and small trees. We then spent the other half covering them with mesh, so the cicadas wouldn't destroy them. I purchased many yards of mesh, from various outlets because no one had a lot left. Later, our campus operations crew had to remove the mesh. In the end, it was much ado about nothing. We didn't see any cicadas (maybe one, once).

Emily Kenny—Chicago Heights

While riding my bicycle to the library the singing cicadas were extremely loud and they were difficult to avoid hitting. When I made it to the library I noticed about a half a dozen cicadas using me as public transportation. I removed them and went into the library. Well I guess there were some on my back that I did not see and when I sat down they buzzed to inform me of their predicament. As I sat back up they flew off into the library and I overheard the librarian say, "Not again." I guess I wasn't the only patron bringing uninvited guests.



Photos: Karen Glennemeier

We are looking for a few people who would like to contribute some occasional help from home, helping to enter data and do other computer-based work. The only computer skill required is a basic comfort with Microsoft Excel or a similar spreadsheet program. If you are interested, please contact Karen at kglennemeier@audubon.org.

We are also looking for a volunteer to assist with the website (www.habitatproject.org). You would work with a small group of existing volunteers using ASP and HTML to provide site functionality and database connectivity. If you are interested, please contact Karen at kglennemeier@audubon.org.

Ambitious Stream Restoration Project at Springbrook Prairie

By Joe Suchecki



Work began earlier this year on a major stream restoration and habitat improvement project at Springbrook Prairie Forest Preserve in Naperville. The project will restore a portion of Springbrook Creek running through the preserve that was ditched and channelized many years ago to drain adjacent farm fields. The currently straight, channelized streambed (essentially a ditch) will be restored by re-creating meanders, riffles, and pools to provide a more ecologically valuable and diverse stream structure.

Work by the DuPage County Forest Preserve District on the approximately 1.5-mile stream section started in early spring and

The non-channelized portion of Springbrook Creek is one of the highest quality streams in the county.

will be completed in the fall. The initial phase of the project will re-meander the stream from the current wetlands and ponds near 75th street southwest to the intersection of Book Road and 83rd Street. The project includes removing invasive black alder trees that currently line the stream, creating a new channel that mimics the sections of the stream that were not channelized, adding gravel and rock substrate to create a diversity of riffles and pools for aquatic species, and restoring land contours to create some streamside wetlands and floodplain habitat. Adjacent areas will be seeded with native plant mixes.

The non-channelized portion of Springbrook Creek already is rated as one of the highest quality streams in DuPage County because of its high diversity of aquatic invertebrates and native fish

This section of stream at Springbrook Prairie has been re-meandered to improve stream health, increase animal habitat, and improve water quality.

species. The current restoration project will create additional high quality aquatic habitat and serve to improve downstream water quality. The restored floodplain and wetlands will provide additional habitat for Springbrook's bird populations.

One aspect of the stream restoration project that creates a significant additional benefit at Springbrook is that tree rootballs and trunks are used to form the new stream channel and to help stabilize the stream banks. Lining the length of the new meanders requires a lot of rootballs, and the District is using trees from Springbrook that currently bisect grassland bird habitat. Removal of the trees for use in the stream restoration project greatly improves the bird habitat at Springbrook by expanding the size of the contiguous grassland areas needed by the preserve's area-sensitive grassland birds. This is an added bonus for the continuing upland prairie restoration work at the site.

The project will enjoy a brief hiatus in summer to minimize the project's impact on nesting birds in adjacent grasslands that include substantial populations of Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Sedge Wrens, and Henslow's Sparrows. While the major construction and earth moving will create some short-term habitat loss, the completed project will greatly improve aquatic and grassland habitat at Springbrook. The end result will be a gently meandering stream through open prairie that was characteristic of presettlement conditions in northeastern Illinois.

Phase Two to restore a second section of the stream are on hold until the District can obtain sufficient funds for the work. Readers can view the recently completed portions of the project by walking east along the multi-use trail from the main Springbrook Prairie parking lot on 83rd Street in south Naperville.

Notes from the Habitat Clinic at Gensburg-Markham Prairie

By Laurie Dettmers and Tori Graham

I wonder how the idea ever caught on that our open spaces should be made up of a few imported green grasses. Prairies contain a breathtaking diversity of plant and animal species, and none is more breathtaking than the Gensburg-Markham Prairie located along I-294 at 159th Street. The Gensburg-Markham Prairie is one of four remnants comprising the Indian Boundary Prairies and is jointly owned by Northeastern Illinois University, The Natural Lands Institute, and The Nature Conservancy.

We attended the July 7 Habitat Clinic at Gensburg-Markham, where the Regal Fritillary butterfly has been reintroduced following an approximate 30-year absence. Part of our interest was in the butterflies (Tori is a new member of the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network), and part of it was in the prairie plants. The hours passed quickly as our guides Karl Gnaedinger and Stuart Goldman acquainted us with the site's flora and fauna.

When it was first discovered by Dr. Robert Betz in the 1960s, many people did not believe the site was prairie since it was so overgrown with trees and shrubs. But prairie it was, and we saw it bursting in color from the blossoms of wild quinine, purple prairie clover, lead plant, and prairie coreopsis. There are several habitats within the prairie, including a low, wet swale where the glacial lake reached thousands of years ago and where now we see royal, cinnamon, and marsh shield ferns. Twelve feet up a sandy ridge, we find willow, prairie lilies, huckleberry, and goat's rue. Nearly 300 different plant species grow on this 100-acre preserve.

The stewards also are committed to managing for conservative animal species, and as evidence we saw cordgrass leafhoppers, *Petalostemum*-dependent weevils, katydids, grassland walkingsticks, fritillaries, and Acadian hairstreaks. Butterflies were everywhere, and nearly 1,000 different insects have been recorded on the site. It is believed that closer to 3,000 insects find habitat on the site, and that 200 are remnant dependent. About 10 to 15 percent of the insects found in high quality prairies are remnant dependent, while the rest have adapted to non-native plants. Those that have adapted do quite well in large natural areas of 400 acres or more. The others require remnants such as Gensburg-Markham for their continued survival.

Site management goals include maintenance of the historic local flora by annual burning under three-year rotation, herbiciding, and mowing. Volunteers play an integral role in the maintenance of the prairie. The long-term goals for Gensburg-Markham include restoring newly acquired tracts adjacent to the existing remnant, to protect the remnant's biodiversity. The adjacent tracts can be reconstructed using the remnant soils, microorganisms, and biota of Gensburg-Markham.

The stewards shared their management strategies and challenges, and they impressed upon us that regionwide restoration efforts depend on the commitment of both citizens and scientists working in these remnant prairie locations.



Photo: Barbara Burns



Photos: Karen Glennemeier

Auditors take stock of Cook County Forest Preserves

We got trained in June and collected the data in July. Eighty-two people fanned out across the Cook County Forest Preserves to take detailed vegetation data within 219 randomly-located sample plots, at more than 40 sites.

There were also eight monitors who collected bird data from these same plots. These randomly selected data will be used not only to characterize the bird life in the preserves, but to help verify and improve the results of the BCN Census.

The work was hard and fun, the adventure high. We went to some places no botanist or birder has visited for decades, and to other places near and dear to us. We are currently analyzing the results and plan to work with the Forest Preserve District and the region's grassroots volunteers to make great strides for biodiversity. It will be exciting to work on this together, so please join us for this next phase of citizen-science based action. If you'd like to help with media outreach, public education, or FPD collaboration, please contact Karen Glennemeier at kglenneier@audubon.org or 847-724-5226.

Congratulations to all of the monitors who made this project a great success.

Chicago Wilderness Habitat Project

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*Call for Nominations
Help Recognize Local Heroes*



Illustration: Lynda Wallis

The Habitat Project is about collecting knowledge, effecting change, and building a culture of conservation in our communities through monitoring, stewardship, and advocacy for natural areas. The Grassroots Conservation Leadership Awards recognize those individuals who exemplify the Habitat Project spirit and are changing the world by doing so.

Do you know people who deserve recognition for their hard work and leadership? Please nominate them for a Leadership Award and share their names and stories with the rest of us. Send a short paragraph describing why you're nominating them to Karen Glennemeier at kglennemeier@audubon.org (or mail it to the return address on this newsletter). Nominations are due by October 15.

Thanks for helping spread the word about these inspirational people!