

The Habitat HERALD

January 2008

Volume 9, Issue 1

Wild Power

By Judy Pollock

Think quick - when was the last time you saw a wild shrubland? Hm, was it under a power line? The big transmission lines that criss-cross our region are cleared of woody vegetation every five or so years. That turns out to be a reasonable facsimile of the kind of periodic disturbance that historically created our shrubland habitat (such as hot fires, beaver dams, floods and windthrows). And, no surprise, there are rare shrubland birds to be found nesting beneath those power lines. As part of the Shrubland Bird Blitz, birders looked under transmission lines during the breeding season. They found 21 sites where shrubland birds of conservation concern are nesting.

ComEd chose two of the sites for special management. One was under lines next to Lions Woods, a Cook County Forest Preserve along the Des Plaines River. The other was between the Morton Arboretum and Hidden Lake, a DuPage County Forest Preserve. Trees and non-native shrubs were removed. The remaining native shrubs were thinned in spots where they were too dense. A pattern of shrubs and grassland

“Our vegetation management will restore habitat for native birds.”

Sara Race, ComEd

that worked for both the birds and the power line was worked out by Audubon's Judy Pollock and Stephen Packard; Robert Sliwinski, the monitor who found many of the sites; and ComEd environmental and vegetation management staff. “While removing trees under our transmission lines is necessary to ensure proper clearance and the safe and reliable delivery of power to our customers, we are delighted to know our vegetation management activities will help restore the nesting habitat for native birds in these areas.” said Sara Race, ComEd senior Environmental Compliance Specialist.

After the work, shrubland birds that had been absent from these sites began to nest there again. This summer Sliwinski found Willow Flycatcher, Orchard Oriole, Brown Thrasher and



Audubon and ComEd are experimenting with mowing patterns that will provide habitat for rare birds by transforming dense brush into open grassland with scattered shrubs.

Eastern Kingbird at the Hidden Lake site. He found Eastern Kingbird, Brown Thrasher and Willow Flycatcher at Lions Woods. As part of the project, ComEd now schedules its vegetation management activities at these and several other important shrubland spots to promote shrubland bird habitats.

Another fine result of all the communication around the project is that a bird monitoring program was started on the adjacent land at the Morton Arboretum by Jody Zamirowski, monitor of the Hidden Lake ComEd site, and Kurt Dreisilker, the Arboretum's Land Manager. Six new monitors now help the Arboretum to identify important habitats, and the Arboretum is restoring the area adjacent to the power lines to extend the habitat, with some funding from ComEd.

Says Ed Cunningham, ComEd Vegetation Management Transmission Project Lead: “We are looking forward to continuing to work with Audubon and other natural resource managers to promote native habitats.”

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

The future of nature in Chicago Wilderness depends very much on the 995 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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We welcome to our newsletter
team new writers, editors, stamp
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who would enjoy getting involved.
To learn more, contact Mary
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Photos: *Bombus affinis*. Courtesy of beespotter.mste.uiuc.edu



Become a Bee Spotter

Honey bee colonies are in decline in many states, but little is known about wild honeybees or their wild cousins, the bumblebees. A new initiative seeks to build a better record of honeybee and bumblebee abundance and distribution in Illinois by recruiting citizen scientists to report on wild bees.

University of Illinois entomology professor May Berenbaum heads the program and is eager to have the help of the Habitat Project citizen science network. "Too little information on pollinator abundance and distribution has been collected, and there are too few pollination experts in the U.S. to bridge the data gap. We need citizen scientists to help gather basic knowledge on these animals."

Here's how the program works: Monitors submit photographs of bee sightings from backyards, parks, or forest preserves on the Bee Spotter website: <http://beespotter.mste.uiuc.edu>. The photos allow entomologists to confirm the species identification and serve as the data record for the monitors' sightings.

On the website, you have access to identification guides for the native bees of Illinois, all distinguishable by their color patterns. Monitors also will have access to field experts, a nationwide bee database, and information about the ecology and identification of North American bees. You will receive periodic updates about the data results, including comparisons of current data with historic records.

Go to the Bee Spotter website now, sign up, and start learning those bees!

2008 Wild Things Winter Workshops

Join stewards, monitors, and other experts for these informal, half-day workshops to increase our skills and knowledge about the ecosystems we study, restore, and protect. In a few weeks, we'll send a postcard with all the details, and you can check www.habitatproject.org then for the details. So stay tuned!

Incorporating Bird Habitat Planning into Restoration Work—Learn the habitat requirements of birds and how you can determine whether your site is – or could be – home to these species. Learn how monitoring data and stewardship work can inform each other. Local success stories and local research results will be shared.

Plant Monitoring at Your Site—Do you think your stewardship would benefit from some regular plant monitoring but don't know how to get started? We'll give you the tools to set up permanent, scientific monitoring, and we'll help you find plant monitors to help with the field work.

Amphibian Habitat Restoration—Learn how to restore habitat for frogs and other amphibians, and how to increase frog diversity at your site. See pages 4 & 5 for more details.

Restoring Larger Prairies—We will pull together a panel of local practitioners who will share promising practices for restoring the plants and animals of large prairies. Then we'll discuss outstanding issues from the audience, with a goal of finding and sharing the best available answers before the next Wild Things conference. If you love and care about prairies, butterflies, birds, other wildlife, or work at a site that is large enough for grassland birds, please come and share your thoughts.

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 THE COMING YEAR, PLEASE CONTACT jpollock@audubon.org OR SEND US A NOTE AT 5225 OLD ORCHARD ROAD, SUITE 37, SKOKIE IL 60077.



Illustration: Lynda Wallis

The year 2008 has been designated The Year of the Frog by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, in order to draw attention to the conservation needs of these animals. The Habitat Project is planning many events in 2008 that will improve frog habitat and broaden our knowledge about how best to protect them in Chicago Wilderness.

2008 Frog Monitoring Workshops

These workshops are for both beginning and experienced monitors. We'll teach and review the calls of our 13 species of frogs and toads, help new monitors find survey sites, and discuss the monitoring protocol. Experienced monitors are encouraged to attend, in order to learn any protocol changes, obtain data sheets, review frog calls, and share lessons learned from last year.

Wed., January 23rd—6:30-8:30pm, DuPage County

The Grounds and Resources Complex at 29 W 220 Mack Rd. in West Chicago, within Blackwell Forest Preserve. From Rt. 59, travel east on Mack Road for 0.6 miles. Turn north into the complex. Pass through the chain link gate and gas tank area.

Park in front of the center building. Follow the signs to the workshop at the rear of this building. Contact Cindy Hedges, 630-876-5929.

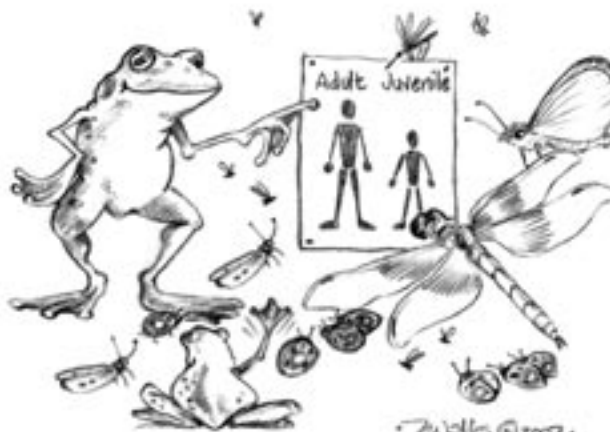


Illustration: Lynda Wallis

Tues., February 5th—7-9pm, Lake County, IL.

Welcome Center at Ryerson Woods. 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. Contact Tom Smith, (847) 968-3329. (Note: Two Lake County workshops are being offered this year. You need only attend one.)

Thurs., February 7th—7-9pm, Southern Cook County

Camp Sagawau, 12545 111th St., Lemont, IL. One-hundred yards east of Archer Ave., or four miles west of Swallow Cliff Toboggan Slides on Rt. 83. Contact Diana Krug, (708) 839-0696, diana.krug@comcast.net.

Sat., February 9th—10am-noon, Lake County, IL

Welcome Center at Ryerson Woods. 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. Contact Tom Smith, (847) 968-3329. (Note: Two Lake County workshops are being offered this year. You need only attend one.)

Sat., February 9th—9am-noon, Kane County

Pottawatomie Park, 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. Contact Pam Otto (630) 513-4346.

Tues., February 12th—7-9pm, Will County

Isle a la Cache Museum. 501 E. 135th Street, Romeoville. Contact Diana Krug, (708) 839-0696, diana.krug@comcast.net or Renee Gauchat, rgauchat@fpdwc.org.

Mon., February 18th—7-9pm, Northern Cook County

Edgebrook Community Center. Located at 6100 N. Central on Chicago's northwest side. Contact Diane Huebner, d-huebner@northwestern.edu.

Wed., February 20th—7-9pm, McHenry County

Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake. At 2112 Behan Rd. just south of Hwy 176, between Hwy 31 and the Fox River. Heading NE from Crystal Lake on Hwy 176, turn right on Behan Rd. after passing Valley View/Silver Lake Rd., and take another right at the end of the road. Please call (815) 479-5779 to pre-register. For questions, contact Sara Denham, (815) 728-8307.

Rescue an oak, help a frog

By Diana Krug

When Meredith Horn & Sharron Hart requested Red Gate Woods as their frog monitor site at last year's southern Cook County training workshop, I was excited and impressed. Part of a large tract of land within the

Palos Preserves, Red Gate holds many lovely surprises but also represents an area greatly in need of intervention. Meredith, after spending much of her youth hiking the area with her family and later with her friends and dogs, has a great appreciation for the area even as she has seen the place change from open savanna to closed, hedge-walled trails.

Volunteering for restoration workdays at Palos' McClaughry Springs during the past year gave Meredith more familiarity with the worst culprits – European buckthorn, Eurasian honeysuckle, Japanese barberry, and multiflora rose -- and with the practical methods used to deal with these invasive species.

After a season of monitoring frogs, Meredith wanted to try out her new stewardship skills at Red Gate, to make a dent in the invasive hedges that were crowding out the frogs' aquatic and upland habitat. Meredith showed me her monitoring route when we were choosing the workplace; one of her spots she called "the most lovely wetland" she's ever seen. With sunset colors reflecting off the water, the far shore fall crimson and gold, I couldn't help but agree.

Bill Koenig and Joni Marin of the Forest Preserve District helped us arrange the workday on October 21, with the assistance of four Palos Restoration stewards and many other volunteers. On a bright fall day we trekked up the trail through the woods to a group of large oaks and lopped the snaggle of young buckthorns crowding up in their midst until the dappled sun could reach the earth again. The number of higher-quality plants we saw at the edges gives promise for renewed diversity of native plant life under the oaks next year. This native plant diversity provides important cover for frogs, and it supports the insects that comprise an adult frog's diet.

Frog habitat is comprised of both wetland and upland. Most of our native amphibian species move away from wetlands, as adults after breeding and as young of the year after metamorphosis from the tadpole stage. In Chicago Wilderness, amphibians are limited to the areas that can support them – islands amidst development, industry, roads, and houses. When a wetland and its surrounding habitat degrade or are eliminated, these species can't hop a bus to the next available wetland. So it's imperative to save and restore existing wetlands, not only for the frogs, but for the entire wetland community of birds, insects, plants, and many others.

We had a great time at our Red Gate workday, and we felt good about saving habitat for the frogs we monitor. Additional frog habitat workdays are planned for this spring (see sidebar), and we hope you can come out and give us a hand for our little green friends and their important ecosystems.

Amphibian Habitat Restoration Seminar

Sun., February 10—9am-1pm, Brookfield Zoo, Part of this year's Wild Things Winter Workshop Series, this half-day workshop will feature herpetologists, stewards, and monitors discussing how best to restore habitat for frogs and other amphibians, how to increase amphibian diversity in natural areas, and other topics of interest. The format will be informal, with discussion and questions-answers among the entire group. The goal is for our community to gain a collective understanding of what is known and what is not known about how to help frogs and other amphibians in the region. See our website, www.habitatproject.org, for a full agenda and list of topics. Contact Karen Glennemeier to register, kglennemeier@audubon.org; 847-724-5226.



Photo: Roger Keller

Dense brush turns to open habitat as workers restore upland habitat for frogs and other denizens.

Frog Habitat Workdays

Frog monitors and other frog lovers are invited to help site stewards restore habitat within or around frog breeding ponds and upland habitat.

Lake County, IL

Join steward Nicky Strahl in cutting back the brush surrounding a frog breeding pond. Contact Nicky LStrahl@msn.com, 847-946-6691 for more information.

Sun., February 17—2pm

Elm Road Woods. Take Elm Rd. north off of Route 22 in Lincolnshire, at the Lincolnshire Bath and Tennis Club. Meet at the north end of Elm Rd.

Sat., February 23—2pm

Wright Woods.

Palos Preserves

Sat., February 2—1pm-4pm

& Sat., March 1—1pm-4pm

Cap Sauers Holdings. Work along the Esker Trail and watch for signs of the five frog and toad species that breed here. Contact Bob Arentz, Site Steward, 708-448-7349; triling3@yahoo.com

Sat., February 23—9am-noon

Willow Springs. Restore the savanna surrounding a pond that hosts five species of breeding frogs and toads. Contact Joe Neumann, Site Steward, 773-434-1415; joeneumann@juno.com.

Southern Cook County

Sat., April 19—8am,

& Sun., April 20—1pm

Bartel Grassland in Southern Cook County. Plant plugs within the wetland areas of this restored grassland. We have 5,450 plugs and are attempting to break our 2005 record of 98 volunteers. Contact Dick Riner, Site Steward, 708-720-5683 or dickriner@gmail.com.

Sat., April 26—8am

Old Plank Road Trail, Dewey Helmick Nature Preserve. Join the Thorn Creek Audubon Society in a morning of frog habitat restoration along this beautiful, one-mile section of the Old Plank Road Trail. Contact Dick Riner, Thorn Creek Audubon President, 708-720-5683; dickriner@gmail.com.

Habitat Returns to Spring Creek

By Kim Keper, steward

Spring Creek Forest Preserves are tranquil places, more often visited by four-legged creatures – or bipeds with feathers – than by the other two-legged kind.

Encompassing over 3,900 acres, the Spring Creek Preserves offer an especially rich mosaic of habitats, with large tracts of prairies, oak savannas, oak woodlands, shrublands, fens, and other wetlands. The Spring Creek Prairie is here—a thriving, high-quality



Photo: Ginger Underwood

“Galloping Hill did not have a single pair of prairie birds because it was too overgrown with brush.”

site that in the late 1970’s was identified as one of the state’s finest prairies by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory. Also within Spring Creek Preserves is the 560 acre state-protected Spring Lake Nature Preserve.

In the fall of 2005, 12 students, including myself, graduated from a master stewards training program that was created and taught by Stephen Packard of Audubon-Chicago Region, Tom Vanderpoel of Citizens for Conservation and Bill Koenig of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

Over the past two years, the stewards have held work parties every weekend. They have also gotten certified to chain saw, herbicide and participate in controlled-burns. Committees were formed to organize our advocacy, monitoring, and communications. We have our own newsletter and website (SpringCreekStewards.org)

Restoration work is taking place on many sites, but the one that’s received great efforts is showing remarkable signs of success. Galloping Prairie has been featured on WTTW’s Chicago Tonight program as one of the places that has seen the return of grassland birds in response to the restoration work.

The center of this site, Galloping Hill, did not have a single pair of prairie birds breeding on it when the restoration got underway in 2004 because it was too overgrown with brush. The work there has been a great collaboration. First, the Spring Creek Stewards cut and burned the larger brush (invasive trees); then Forest Preserve District staff Seppi-mowed all the rest; Audubon/FPD

interns herbicided all the resprouts; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funded the clearing of stands of invasive brush and young tree plantations on both sides, that had separated the former prairie on the hill from former prairie (leased hay meadows and brushy fields) on both sides, so the 30 acres of Galloping Hill became the center of the 110-acre Galloping Prairie.

Each year the Spring Creek Stewards combat the white sweet clover and wild parsnip and plant tens of thousands of dollars worth of rare seed, donated by Citizens for Conservation.

Volunteers are now monitoring plants, frogs, butterflies, dragonflies and birds.

The most impressive monitoring record is that of Alan Anderson, of Chicago Audubon Society, who’s monitored the birds there for 22 years. Data like Alan’s helps us plan and improve our work and, frankly, is a big part of what motivates us in this wonderful work.



Photo: Ginger Underwood



Photo: Justin Pepper

Stewards, workday crews, and FPDCC staff remove invasive brush and re-seed Spring Creek with native plant species. Their hard work is rewarded with new sightings of butterfly weed in flower and grassland birds such as dickcissel, meadowlark, savannah sparrow and henslow’s sparrow.

Something To Look Forward To

By Alan Anderson, monitor

As someone who has enjoyed surveying many of the grassland and prairie areas of Cook County for nesting birds over the past 23 plus years, I have seen many changes in bird populations. Many of these areas in the forest preserves have been filling in with brush and overtaken by dense stands of goldenrod, parsnip, teasel and other plants not conducive to nesting prairie birds. In a number of areas, grassland/prairie birds such as Bobolink, Meadowlark, and Savannah, Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows have been losing nesting habitat, year after year. Many birders, including myself, were getting a bit despondent. It's not as much fun when you hope to find prairie birds in your survey areas, but instead find their numbers and habitat declining each year.

When Audubon-Chicago Region and Chicago Wilderness were able to work with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to try to enhance and restore some of this grassland, it was a bit of vindication that years of complaints were finally being heard. More importantly, it revived hope that the habitat for grassland birds would improve.

At the Spring Creek Forest Preserves, I've monitored the grassland areas at Penny Road Pond (which includes Galloping Hill, as well as other grassland fields), fields to the west of this area, and Spring Creek Headwaters north of Higgins Road.

By 2004, the area around Galloping Hill was almost completely engulfed in buckthorn, and no grassland birds nested in this area (few birds nested here at all by this time), although a Meadowlark or two hung on to the east, and some Bobolinks and Henslow's Sparrows still were in evidence in the western fields.

After the first work around Galloping Hill, it was so exciting to find grassland birds returning – at least 10 singing Grasshopper Sparrows (I hadn't seen any in this area in 20+ years!) and eight Savannah Sparrows. In 2006 those numbers increased to at least 14 Grasshopper Sparrows and 21 Savannah



Sparrows – and both species were confirmed nesters as they were feeding young on a July visit. Also, Dickcissels (at least 33 birds) were found in 2006, making the largest

number I'd seen at any Cook County FP in 23 years of surveying areas, and the first time I'd seen them nesting at Spring Creek. Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlark also nested at Galloping Hill, as well as to the fields to the west (and a few to the east).

In 2007, almost all these species were seen in even higher numbers!

“It was so exciting to find grassland birds returning.”

Increasing the most were Grasshopper Sparrows (38 males) and Dickcissel (a whopping 37 males!). In all the areas of Penny Road Pond North, there were at least 22 male Bobolinks and 16 singing Eastern Meadowlarks. Henslow's Sparrows move around a lot depending on many factors, but there were still 5 males singing in July here this year.

Other highlights at Penny Road Pond North included a family of Eastern Bluebirds and three Wood Thrush. A pair of Sandhill Cranes was seen in the area in both June and July but as last year, no young were found.

Besides birds, prairie grasses, and flowers, there has been an increase in the number of insects, including butterflies and grasshoppers (attracting the Grasshopper Sparrows for one – the more food available for young birds, the more pairs will succeed nesting.) You never know what you'll find at Spring Creek – I've seen deer, coyote, and this past July a real surprise – a crayfish walking along the horse trail!

It sure is nice to know that now we actually have something to look forward to when visiting these areas! And that should only increase in future years, as restoration work continues.

Photos: clockwise from top: Dickcissel by Arlene Kozlowski; Eastern Meadowlark by Mary Kay Rubey; Henslow's Sparrow by Carolyn Fields; Savannah Sparrow by Carolyn Fields

Host a Field Trip!

Would you like to have a field trip at your site, with land managers, monitors, and stewards putting their heads together to improve management decisions? Let us know, and we'll help set it up.

Contact Karen Glennemeier, kglennemeier@audubon.org; 847-724-5226.

Creative Stewardship

By Ken Schaefer

So often in our restoration work, the solution to one problem creates others that must also be addressed. Erosion is one of the trickiest to deal with, but it can be controlled with some creative thinking.

On slopes, after buckthorn has been removed and some mature trees thinned, we often are left with bare ground and severe erosion. Seeds cannot germinate and take hold in this unstable soil.

Stabilization can be accomplished by setting up a network of logs on the

slope. I call this terracing. It uses on-site harvested logs from restoration work, and it will last four-to-five years. These logs will help to catch soil, leaves, and other organic matter and will allow rain and snow melt to filter through them.

I have used this terracing technique extensively along the Des Plaines River at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, at Linne Woods in Morton Grove, and recently at the Volunteer Resource Center (CCFPD) in Chicago.

To start, leave a six-inch stump when you cut the trees to be used as anchors on the slope. Remove all of the branches flush to the tree trunk, and cut off the top of the tree down to the point where you leave at least a 3-inch diameter ending. Save many branches with a 2-inch diameter, as these will be used later. The rest of the branches can be burned or chipped.

Cut the logs as long as possible. If you are thinning maples or ashes, you can get some trees 20-30 feet long. For often-convoluted species such as buckthorn, try to salvage the straightest of them. If you end up with 4-6-foot pieces, save these because they will be used to fill gaps.

Pile the logs up until you have a large area cleared, because you need room to move. Ideally, you would arrange your logs somewhat parallel to the top of and the bottom of the slope. The logs would be anchored on the uphill side of the stumps – two stumps per log, with gravity holding them in place. They would also be end to end in a longer row, with 4-6 foot spacing between each row. But this doesn't usually happen. Stumps are in the wrong place, there are dips in the ground, and there may be big downed logs in the way, so you have to be creative.

Start laying your longer logs along the stumps. Often you can use a live tree as an anchor or two. Some logs may be angled, and that is all right. Where there are gaps underneath a log, lay shorter logs alongside until it is reasonably filled.

When you come upon an area that needs a log but there is nowhere to anchor it, you have to make a stake. From the 2-inch diameter branches that you saved cut a 1.5-foot stake with a bevel on one end, and hammer it a foot into the ground. This is not always easy, and it may require a few attempts.

Herbicide the stumps, and trim stumps or stakes if they are too high. Rake seed into the areas between terraces. If the bottom logs are close to running water, nail the logs into the stumps, up to the high water point. Burning through these terraces usually leaves them intact.



Using downed logs on newly-cleared slopes can decrease erosion and help new vegetation take hold.

Obtain or Renew Your Herbicide License

**Saturday, January 19—8am to 4pm,
Brookfield Zoo, Discovery Center**

Attend a special clinic for natural area volunteers, arranged by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and co-sponsored by Brookfield Zoo. General Standards review is from 8:30am to noon (lunch on your own). Testing will run from 1pm to 4pm.

To register and to get more information, please contact Karen Tharp, VSN Coordinator by phone at 866-VSN-LINE (876-5463) or email at ktharp@tnc.org by Monday, January 7, 2008. When registering, please relay the following information: your name and address, phone number, your landowner/sponsoring agency and/or volunteer site, your volunteer title (i.e. Steward, Co-Steward, volunteer, etc.), what test(s) you are taking (if just operator, who is your sponsoring applicator), and if you are planning on attending the morning training session or just the test in the afternoon.

Bird Monitoring Workshops 2008

The Bird Conservation Network, in cooperation with the Forest Preserve Districts of Cook, DuPage, Kane and Lake (IL) counties, the Chicago Park District and the Morton Arboretum, will conduct a series of five workshops for current and prospective bird monitors in the Chicago Wilderness region. Anyone interested is invited to attend any of these free workshops. Monitors are needed at many sites. Each workshop will run for four hours on a Saturday afternoon and will feature forest preserve and park district staff and experienced birders. Each will feature the following agenda:



Photo: Brown Thrasher by Carolyn Fields



Photo: Common Yellowthroat by Arlene Kozial



WORKSHOP AGENDA

Birding By Ear

Optional. Noon-1pm

An instructional presentation on the songs and calls of the region's breeding birds.

Main Session

1-3pm

Recommended monitoring practices:

What works and what doesn't. A discussion with experienced monitors.

Working with land managers and stewards:

Tips and resources from FPD staff and stewards at restoration sites. Updates on bird habitat restoration projects.

The 2007 trends analysis of monitoring data:

Brief explanation of the recently completed analysis of Chicago Wilderness monitoring data. Includes information on accessing results of the analysis.

Using eBird to report monitoring data:

Brief presentation on the most efficient ways to report your survey data to the local and national databases.

For Beginning Monitors

3-4pm

How to monitor with local protocols:

Instructional session for beginning monitors: How and when to do surveys. How to set up a transect. How to set up a point count.

PRELIMINARY WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Visit www.bcnbirds.org for any changes plus presenters and directions.

Kane County

March 1, Noon-4pm

Aurora West Forest Preserve, Aurora

DuPage County

March 8, Noon-4pm

Morton Arboretum, Lisle

Lake County, Illinois

March 15, Noon-4pm

Ryerson Woods Welcome Center, Deerfield

Cook County North

March 29, Noon-4pm

Crabtree Nature Center, Barrington

Chicago & Cook County South

April 5, Noon-4pm

South Shore Cultural Center, Chicago

IMPORTANT: If you plan to attend one of these workshops, we would appreciate an RSVP. Phone or email Judy Pollock, giving your name, contact information, and the workshop you will attend: 847-965-1150, ext 21 or chicagowildthings@yahoo.com.

A Battle Worth Fighting: Restoration at Hickory Creek Barrens

By Mary Cannon

Will County's Hickory Creek Barrens near Frankfort covers approximately 1800 acres, but Phyllis Schulte and Linda Andrews concentrate on about 350. Phyllis, volunteer steward and butterfly monitor since 1992, says, "The area is pre-settlement open prairie—never plowed but certainly over-grazed. There had been no management or burning, and there were invasives all over when we started trying to get it back to its Oak-Hickory habitat."

The Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC) takes care of the burns, but "it doesn't have many resource management employees, so it's hard for them to take care of it all," she says. "So cutting, spraying, re-seeding, and planting are done by the volunteers who get trained and licensed and even buy their own tools—including chain saws." Right now the chain saws are being used on a huge Black Locust clone which crawls over the land by putting out shoots.

Does she feel they're making headway? "I have good days and bad days. I look at the work that needs to be done and think it's an uphill battle. Still, it's nice to see the areas that are better or to hear a biker say, 'Wow, there's not so much garlic mustard now!'"

It's also rewarding to be surprised. "Three years ago we found an uncommon butterfly, the Byssus skipper (*Problema byssus*), in an un-cleared area. So we went to work, and that species is now flourishing. This year we found four new varieties: the Dainty sulphur, the Tawny emperor, the Banded Hairstreak,



Photo: Dick Thomas

Linda Andrews reports that the bluebirds are doing well at Hickory Creek Barrens.

and the Harvester. That was fun."

Phyllis figures she spends about 300 hours a year in the field. She also puts out the bi-monthly **Brush Pile** newsletter. She also works full-time at her "day job." "I'm just one of the 'usual suspects,' those of us who always show up on work days throughout Will County."

Linda Andrews is Eastern Bluebird monitor and co-steward with Phyllis for the last six years. "I'm semi-retired, so I help with work days and do follow-up spraying or cutting but monitor my 22 Bluebird boxes on my own," she says. And Linda is happy to report that Bluebirds, with 35 a

year normally fledged, and Tree swallows, with 90 fledged last year, are doing well. "In restoration, you'll never run out of work, but we're gaining ground; we just need more help."

A normal turn-out for workdays is 10 to 12 volunteers, but the Frozen Butts workday in January can bring out more than 30. "Phyllis started it and makes it fun. We work and share dinner and award prizes, so everyone enjoys. Wish we always had 30. It's a tougher battle without more people, but it's a battle worth fighting." And she regards her own work as a gift. "So many times you feel like the world is being paved over or exotics are encroaching, but here I can go out in beauty and do something to make a difference." Phyllis agrees, "It's nice to see some progress and say, 'I was a part of that.'"

If you'd like to help, you can contact Phyllis Schulte at farfel51@hotmail.com. The Frozen Butts workday is scheduled for January 26, 2008.

Welcome Rare Plant Enthusiasts!

Please join us for one of our 2008 Plants of Concern Workshops:

Saturday, April 5—Volo Bog (Ingleside, Lake County)

Thursday, April 17—Midewin Tallgrass Prairie (Joliet, Will County)

Sunday, April 27—Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe, Cook County)

Workshops will be held from 9:30am to 3pm.

Receive training in Plants of Concern monitoring techniques, talk with seasoned monitors, or refresh your skills for the new season. We ask any monitors who have never been to a workshop to attend. Bring a lunch. Morning refreshments will be served.

Registration is required. A confirmation will be sent after registration, and directions will follow shortly before workshop date. Please contact Marian Hofherr; mhofherr@chicagobotanic.org; 847-835-6873. Visit www.plantsofconcern.org for more information.

Teaming up to Restore Habitat

By Sheila Hoyos

A birder once told me she thought the restoration volunteers spent too much effort restoring plants without planning for the needs of the birds. Here is a story of collaboration where “bird people” played a critical role in helping to restore the habitat of a prairie.

Poplar Creek is fortunate. We have two bird monitors to help guide stewardship. Judy Mellin has monitored birds here since 1989. She walks the same route through many habitats several times a week. Her data and observations give us a good long-term record of bird populations at the site. Lee Ramsey, another avid birder, is a member of the Poplar Creek Site Management team. He volunteers with the Bird Conservation Network, monitoring birds at several locations around the Chicago area and contributes advice on how birds will be affected when we discuss management plans.

In 2005, we began working in earnest on a second prairie, roughly the shape of a rectangle. Inside that rectangle, in the southeast corner, was a smaller rectangle of Siberian Elm. Gray dogwood clones and small shrubs bisected the prairie from the northwest to southeast corners.

“‘Bird people’ played a critical role in helping to restore a prairie.”

Judy advised that bobolinks prefer a large area of contiguous grassland to nest and raise young. A line of shrub can discourage grassland birds if it splits a meadow into small sections. With Judy’s comments in mind, we sent interns with chain saws to remove the invasive elms. Then we dispatched two teams of volunteers. One team removed the gray dogwood and the other team cut and stacked the Siberian Elms

and burned the brush piles. We worked every weekend from the fall of 2005 through the spring of 2006. Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) staff burned



Photo: Bobolink by Nolan Lametka

our smaller prairie that spring, and the next week the seed team planted.

July of 2007 marked the second growing season since the burn, which meant that sweet clover would be ready to flower and produce seed. We planned to ask the FPD staff to mow the area, but our birders had concerns. They spotted a pair of bobolinks in an upland area and heard a meadowlark there as well. Lee suggested that if we waited until after the middle of July to mow, the bobolinks would fledge. However, in some years the seeds have matured by mid-to-late July and mowing would not be an effective means of control. We decided that if FPDCC could only mow in early July, we would flag the likely nesting area and pass the information along to the work crew.

Every year since 2000, Judy has confirmed Henslow’s Sparrows in the main prairie at Poplar Creek. With this in mind, our long term goals will be to continue to restore structure and to link the smaller prairie with the main prairie, creating one large, unbroken grassland.

Weather and equipment do not always cooperate, and we were not able to get the field mowed as we intended. But the bobolinks fledged without interference. In the meantime, we will keep watch for more bobolinks, meadowlarks, and Henslow’s sparrows, and we will continue to incorporate their needs into our management plans for Poplar Creek.

Geographic Information System Assistance

Audubon-Chicago Region has GIS software, hardware and lots of ideas of graphics and analyses that would be helpful in furthering conservation work in the area. The only thing we lack is a GIS-savvy person with the time and interest in working with us to produce these.

If you are such a person, please contact Justin Pepper (jpepper@audubon.org or 847/965-1150). Or alternatively, if you are experienced with the software and are interested in using our equipment to further your own conservation projects, we are happy to offer our software for your use.



Photo: Nolan Lametka



Photos: Bruce Marlin www.cirrusimage.com

Come Restore Butterfly Habitat

Join butterfly monitors and Fermilab stewards for a workday to restore gray comma habitat. We'll clear brush to help expand the suitable woods/savanna habitat of the gray commas. Other woodland butterflies like banded hairstreaks, eastern commas, mourning cloaks, giant swallowtails, and pearly-eyes also live here in a fairly high-quality woods. We'll also spread seed in the adjacent prairie for the nectar plants for the swallowtails and great spangled fritillaries, which live at the woods edge and find nectar in the prairie.

This workday coincides with the usual third-Saturday workday organized by steward Barb Kristen. Tom Peterson will describe the habitat needs of butterflies at Fermilab and how your work will help them thrive.

Saturday, March 15 at 10 am. Meet at the Prairie Interpretive Trail off the Pine Street entrance from Kirk Road, across from the Lederman Science Education Center at Fermilab.

Wild Ambassadors Needed

Would you enjoy spending a morning, afternoon or evening doing outreach for the Habitat Project? We are often invited to have a table at a fair or conference where we might find people interested in joining the region's stewardship and monitoring network. We have a display – we just need a few more enthusiastic spokespeople to explain our work to others and invite them to participate. Contact Judy Pollock at: jpollcock@audubon.org if you're interested.

