

The Habitat HERALD

January 2011

Volume 12, Issue 1

Birders fight teasel

By Mary Lou Mellon and Lee Ramsey



Skokie Lagoons bird monitors Linda Gohlke (pictured below), Dolph Williams, and Mary Lou Mellon worked with the Forest Preserve District, site stewards, and other hard workers such as the Boy Scouts to remove invasive teasel from important bird habitat.

Skokie Lagoons bird monitors Linda Gohlke, Dolph Williams, and Mary Lou Mellon were dismayed to find that one of their favorite monitoring locations was being invaded by teasel. The sedge meadow area that had been formerly productive for shrubland birds was rapidly losing the birdlife they had come to appreciate there. They met with the Skokie Lagoons site stewards Dave Kosnik and Daniel Kielson and expressed their concerns.

“With the stewards’ advice and the Forest Preserve District’s approval, we started an attack on the teasel in July, deheading the plants and cutting them off low to the ground,” said Gohlke. “By this time some of the teasel was over our heads.”

The FPD was impressed by their determination. On July 20th they sent out contract professionals from Tallgrass Restoration to herbicide the teasel they hadn’t gotten to. In two weeks most of it was turning yellow and curling into a well-deserved crisp. The group continues to work to remove the dead stalks and to pull out any new growth. The stewards have lent a hand by calling SOS workdays and finding Boy Scouts to help out. The meadows are starting to rebound, without the overgrowth of teasel.

“We continued to herbicide teasel rosettes last fall,” said Williams. Rosettes are the low-to-the-ground circles of leaves that will produce next year’s flowers and seeds. “By herbiciding in the fall, collateral damage to natural and desirable spring plants is avoided.” In November the North Branch Restoration Project provided an assortment of appropriate seeds with which to plant the meadow to help fill the holes where the teasel once was. We’re hopeful that spring will bring an abundance of new growth from these prairie seeds. Added to the many quality plants that are still hanging on in small numbers in the adjacent wetland, we hope that with a bit more care we’ll see a full recovery of both plants and birds.



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 847-328-1250

CHICAGO WILDERNESS CALLING FROG SURVEY

KAREN GLENNEMEIER 847-328-1250

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 847-328-1250

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

700 Fourth Graders Pitch In

By Citizens for Conservation

Last fall, almost 700 students restored, studied, and enjoyed Barrington area prairies thanks to the leadership of Citizens for Conservation (CFC), as part of the local Leave No Child Inside initiative.

The kids had a first-hand opportunity to connect with the natural world while learning why prairies are important, who makes the prairie home, why prairie restoration is critical work, what it was like for the early settlers to farm prairies, how very little original prairie exists in Illinois, the importance of the significant prairie plant root system, why prairie burns are necessary, what the native Americans used plants/seeds for, and more.

While hiking into the prairie, one lucky group of students saw a pair of knobby-kneed sandhill cranes taking a morning stroll. Other students were treated to the lilting songs of savanna sparrows, the tappings of woodpeckers on nearby trees, and the silent soaring of turkey vultures.

This partnership between CFC and School District 220 was led by Bonnie Gordon, a CFC volunteer, and CFC Staff Director Sam Oliver. They welcomed many volunteers from CFC, Flint Creek Watershed Partnership, Audubon-Chicago Region, Nature Ladies, and Friends of Spring Creek Forest Preserve, and a representative from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. These volunteers guided the “citizen scientists” through the various prairies to collect seeds, complete field documentation, and experience the wonders of nature. Scores of parents helped with this wild experience. Every fourth grade class participated.

Thanks to the District 220 Foundation grant and the cooperative efforts of all involved, these field trips to Grigsby Prairie, Flint Creek Savanna, and Spring Creek Prairie provided students with a spectacular outdoor classroom to enhance their indoor curriculum about prairie preservation.



Photo: Patsy Mortimer

Hundreds of students received hands-on education at Grigsby Prairie, as part of their prairie preservation school studies, through a District 220 Foundation grant and the hard work of many partners. If you would like to explore similar funding opportunities for your school, please contact Sam Oliver at samo480@aol.com.

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We welcome to our newsletter
team new writers, editors, stamp
lickers, photographers, graphic
artists, staplers, and anyone else
who would enjoy getting involved.
To learn more, contact Karen
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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.) WITH THESE GIFTS AUDUBON CHICAGO REGION SUPPORTS LARGE SCALE HABITAT RESTORATION, SITE STEWARDSHIP, REGIONWIDE MONITORING PROJECTS, AND EVENTS SUCH AS THE WILD THINGS CONFERENCE.

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 JPEPPER@AUDUBON.ORG OR SEND US A NOTE AT 1718 SHERMAN AVE., SUITE 210, EVANSTON IL 60201.

Partnerships Mean Survival – A Tale of Two Prairies

By Pat Hayes



Photo: Pat Hayes

The Old Plank Road Prairies are getting some new help from the Orland Grassland volunteers, who in return are allowed to gather seeds from the prairie remnants.

The Old Plank Road Prairies represent a collection of Grade A prairie fragments that run alongside Old Plank Road Trail, between Matteson and New Lenox, IL. Its segmented land ownership is held by the Village of Matteson, Rich Township, Will County Forest Preserve District, and the Village of Frankfort.

The prairies have a long history, and it is only through partnerships of advocates that they were preserved. Many partners came together and persisted for many years to keep alive these small but significant 33-foot strips of Grade A prairie on either side of an abandoned train track.

Today, partnerships are again coming to the rescue, for the Old Plank Road Prairies and for a newer, neighboring restoration project at Orland Grassland.

The Grade A prairies at Old Plank Road, said to be some of the finest in Illinois and protected at the highest level by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, are badly overgrown with brush, teasel, and crown vetch. Degradation is rampant, and stewardship is badly needed.

At the same time, nearby Orland Grassland, also protected by the Illinois Nature Preserve system, and under stewardship since 2002, is nearly 1,000 acres in size and in need of as much native seed as it can get.

In a classic win-win partnership, the Orland Grassland Volunteers have obtained exclusive rights from the Nature Preserves Commission to gather seed at Old Plank Road

Prairies, under strict guidelines, in exchange for providing stewardship to this small but mighty remnant prairie. Orland Grassland Volunteers will be “wintering” at the Old Plank Road Prairies for a couple of years, from December through May. We will borrow time from Orland for a while, so that we can turn things around at the priceless remnant prairies. We’ll get invasives on the run, and we’ll train interested local people to volunteer and steward the prairie’s health and diversity into the future.

Although the prairies were set aside and protected as Nature Preserves, there were no provisions for long term care when the original preservation resolutions were made. Stewards came and went, as did the community leaders and local advocates who worked so hard to save this Grade A prairie. Continuity and cohesion were lost. With the current opportunity came the chance to reconnect some old partners and develop new ones. Thanks to good collaboration from the partners listed below, within weeks of the idea’s inception seed

Today, partnerships are again coming to the rescue, for the Old Plank Road Prairies and for... Orland Grassland.

and work permits were issued, a management plan was put in place, outreach tools were created, and work has begun. Pat Hayes is the Site Steward for Dewey Helmick Preserve, and a new steward, Pat Coffey, has come on board for the important segment east of Route 57.

Wild nature in the Chicago region won’t survive if people leave it alone. Even in this most historic remnant, native biodiversity succumbed in a relatively short period of time – fewer than 15 years – to the threats of invasive species and neglect. Nature needs people, and people are a part of nature. It takes protective agencies, professional analysis, collaborative community leadership, and people willing to roll up their sleeves and dig in, in partnership, to preserve, protect, and maintain our most historic and authentic samples of wild nature.

The partners who made this collaboration happen are: Kim Roman and Kelly Neal, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission; Tim Bradford, Carney Barnes and Mr. Laurent, Rich Township; Richard Newhard, Forest Preserve District of Cook County; Stephen Packard, Audubon Chicago Region; and Pat Hayes and Bill Fath, Orland Grassland Volunteer Stewards.

Did you know that there are privately-owned Illinois Nature Preserves? Sometimes these properties come up for sale, and it is best for wild nature that the new owners understand and appreciate the significance of the property they own. One such property recently came on the market: Boone Creek Fen Nature Preserve in Bull Valley, IL. If you know someone who might be interested (asking price \$2.2M), please contact the realtor Sue Perdue to learn more (sue.perdue@bairdwarner.com; 815-236-0649).

Frog Monitoring Workshops 2011

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. Please note that you only need attend one workshop.

Cook County:

Wednesday, February 16th, 7:00-9:00pm

Southeast. Sand Ridge Nature Center, 15891 Paxton Ave, South Holland (in SE Cook County). The program will be run by Alan Resetar of the Field Museum. Contact Laura Milkert lmilkert@fieldmuseum.org

Thursday, February 17th, 7:00-9:00pm

South. Camp Sagawau, 12545 111th St., Lemont. One-hundred yards east of Archer Ave., or four miles west of Swallow Cliff Toboggan Slides on Rt. 83. Contact Kristin Pink, 773-631-1790; kristin.pink@cookcountyil.gov

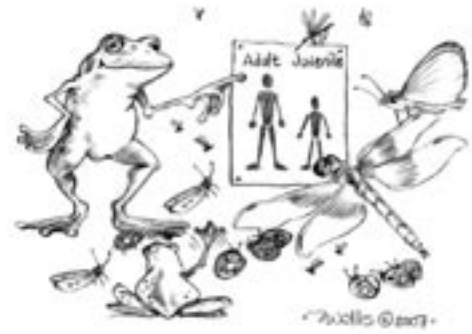
Saturday, February 19th, 9:00-11:00am

Northwest. Crabtree Nature Center in Barrington. Located one mile west of Barrington Road on Palatine Road. Contact Matt Hokanson, 708-408-2933.

DuPage County:

Thursday, January 20th, 6:30-8:30pm

The Grounds and Resources Complex at 29 W 220 Mack Road in West Chicago, within Blackwell Forest Preserve. From Route 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. Please register with Volunteer Services at 630-933-7681 by January 14.



Illustrator: Linda Wells

Kane and Kendall Counties:

Saturday, February 12th, 9:00am-noon

Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, 3795 Campton Hills Road, St. Charles. Hickory Knolls is located past the west athletic field parking lot at West Side Community Park in St. Charles. Parking near the building is limited; please carpool if possible. For Kane County, contact Pam Otto, 630-513-4346, potto@st-charlesparcs.org. For Kendall County, contact Danielle Ebersole or Jessica Pierson, 630-553-4111, jpierson@co.kendall.il.us or debersole@co.kendall.il.us

Lake County, IL:

Saturday, February 12th, 10:00am-noon

Ryerson Conservation Area's Welcome Center at 21950 N. Riverwoods Road, Deerfield. 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 Gary Glowacki, 847-968-3264.

McHenry County:

Wednesday, February 23rd, 7:00-9:00pm

Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake. At 2112 Behan Road, just south of Rte 176, between Rte 31 and the Fox River. Heading NE from Crystal Lake on Rte 176, turn right on Behan Rd after passing Valley View Road, take another right at the end of the road. The entrance to PEC is past the curve on the left. Please call 815-479-5779 to pre-register. Contact Sara Denham, 815-728-8307, for more information.

DuPage County Bluebird Box Monitoring Workshop

Saturday, February 12th, 9:00-11:00 AM

The Grounds and Resources Complex at 29 W 220 Mack Road in West Chicago, within Blackwell Forest Preserve. From Route 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. Please register with Volunteer Services at 630-933-7681 by February 4.



Photo: Mary Kay Rubey

DuPage County Dragonfly Monitoring Workshop

Wednesday, April 13th, 6:00-9:00 PM

The Grounds and Resources Complex at 29 W 220 Mack Road in West Chicago, within Blackwell Forest Preserve. From Route 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. Please register with Volunteer Services at 630-933-7681 by April 8.

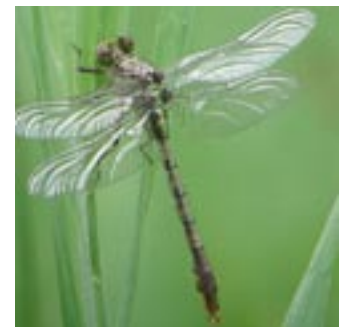


Photo: Carolyn Fields

Plants of Concern Monitors Hard at Work Saving Chicago's Rare Plants

By Greg Hitzroth, *Plants of Concern Research Assistant*

The flower of the white lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium candidum*) has a white swollen lip with purple stripes on the inside. It has a yellow staminate area above the swollen lip which is thought to act like a beacon for insect pollinators. In the Chicago region, they grow in moist to wet prairies, fens, or seeps and prefer calcareous soils and open areas with little to no tree or shrub canopy. This beautiful species of orchid is threatened in Illinois by reduced habitat availability and fragmentation, limited pollinator based reproduction, poaching, and competition with invasive species.

This species requires dedicated care and attention, and it's getting just that. White lady's slipper orchid is one of over two hundred rare plant species monitored by Plants of Concern (POC), a conservation program based at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

POC monitors don't just collect data and put it on a shelf; the data are used to track population trends and make management decisions. While out monitoring white lady's slipper orchid in 2008, POC monitor and Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) Ecologist Scott Kobal noted that a population was being crowded and shaded by buckthorn, honeysuckle, and gray dogwood, all threats to the population of this generally shade intolerant plant. This population of white lady's slipper has been monitored for over eight years by POC. During this time the population remained relatively small. The winter after the 2008 POC report, a DuPage ecology crew cut and herbicided the invasive brush. In the next two years POC monitors were happy to report that this population of white lady's slipper orchid had almost doubled in number.

The program's goal is to monitor rare, endangered, and threatened plant species in the Chicago Wilderness region by promoting citizen science. POC volunteers work with ecologists, land managers, site stewards, and other volunteers to collect important population data that land managers and ecologists are not able to collect on a regular basis. POC monitors collect

In the next two years... this population of white lady's slipper orchid had almost doubled in number.

data on rare species size and numbers, associated plant communities, and threats to these populations. Since it began in 2001, POC has worked with hundreds of volunteers to preserve rare plant species in the Chicago Wilderness.

At the heart of the success of POC are dedicated citizen scientists, stewards, ecologists, land managers, and volunteer coordinators. Citizen scientists are irreplaceable components of modern land management. They are an extra set of eyes and ears for land managers. When they are paired with outstanding land managers and ecologists such as those found at the FPDDC, monitors are able to make amazing things happen for the region's rare, endangered, and threatened species.

POC is coordinated through the Chicago Botanic Garden and offers multiple workshops in the spring each year to train citizens to monitor rare, endangered, and threatened plants in the Chicago region. To learn more about our program and how you can get involved in protecting our environment, please visit us at our website: www.plantsofconcern.org.

Are you aware that nearly 200 dedicated monitors are keeping track of Chicago Wilderness birds? Would you like to know who some of these people are and what contributions they're making? Since August, the Bird Conservation Network's eBird has presented monthly "news items" with stories about the ambitious monitoring & restoration project at Orland Grassland, a teasel-clearing effort by monitors at Skokie Lagoons (see story, front page), 11 years of steady reports from Johnson's Mound, and birding discoveries at the new Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve. Our newest stories feature the monitoring at Paul Douglas Forest Preserve and Springbrook Prairie. New stories keep coming! You can see these features for yourself – with photos of the sites and the monitors – by going to: www.ebird.org/content/bcn. You don't have to be registered. Be sure to click on the link to see the whole story. And keep coming back!



Photo: Kathy Garness



Photo: Sue Page

By clearing invasive brush, volunteers and land managers bring in more light, which is good news for the threatened white lady's slipper orchid.



New Tools for Identification: Keys to Nature and Rapid Color Guides

The Field Museum and its partners have developed several tools to aid in biological identification.

One of these, the **Keys to Nature Project**, www.keystonature.org, provides a forum and tool set for scientists, partners, and volunteers to develop and share on-line, photo-based keys to any group of plants, animals, or fungi in the Chicago Region. Fourteen keys are now available, for regional milkweeds, shrubs, mussels, salamanders and newts, turtles, frogs and toads, and more. Stay tuned for several new keys—to regional orchids, goldenrods, and damselflies—to be available in the spring.



The **Rapid Color Guides**, a second set of tools, are photo-rich documents designed by regional experts to serve as a quick reference for field identification. The free guides can be downloaded and printed from the Field Museum website at: http://fm2.fieldmuseum.org/plantguides/rcg_intro.asp?zone=temperate.

Current Rapid Color Guides for regional biota include:

- Amphibians and Reptiles of the Calumet Region
- Sedges (*Carex*) of the Chicago Region
- Shrubs of the Chicago Region
- A Field Guide to the Freshwater Mussels of Chicago Wilderness
- Chicago Lakefront Fishes
- Common Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Chicago Region
- Common Frogs and Toads of the Chicago Region
- Damselflies of Chicagoland

Have an idea for a new key or guide? Interested in developing a key to a group you know well, or have photos to contribute to a guide? If so, please contact Rebecca Schillo (rschillo@fieldmuseum.org) at The Field Museum.

Plants of Concern Volunteer Citizen Scientists Needed for Monitoring Endangered and Threatened Native Plants in NE Illinois, SE Wisconsin, or NW Indiana

Please join us for one of our 2011 POC Workshops:

Sunday, April 3– Danada House at Danada Forest Preserve, Wheaton, DuPage County

Saturday, April 9– Plum Creek Nature Center at Goodnow Grove Forest Preserve, Beecher, IL, Will County

Saturday, April 16– Barker House at Barker Woods, Michigan City, IN

Saturday, April 30– Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, Cook County

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

Join this exciting citizen science program entering its 11th year. More than 550 volunteers have worked with this program region-wide, monitoring 225 species at 275 sites! Receive training in Plants of Concern monitoring techniques, meet land managers, talk with seasoned monitors, or refresh your skills for the new season. One workshop is required for all new POC monitors and we ask any former monitors who have never been to a workshop to attend. Morning refreshments will be served, but bring a lunch. Registration is required. A confirmation will be sent after registration, and directions will follow shortly before the workshop date. **Please visit www.plantsofconcern.org to register (after February 1)**, or contact Greg Hitzroth at ghitzroth@chicagobotanic.org; 847-835-6856. Plants of Concern is coordinated through the Chicago Botanic Garden by Susanne Masi.



Chicago Wilderness Habitat Project

 **Audubon** CHICAGO REGION
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Wild Things 2011
*a Chicago Wilderness Conference
for People and Nature*

Saturday, March 5, 2011
8:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.
University of Illinois at Chicago



The fourth biennial Wild Things conference is coming up– a great gathering of the inspiring souls who live and breathe Chicago nature.

This day-long conference brings together the region's best experts, hardest working professionals, most dedicated volunteers, and anyone interested in nature. Technical presentations and interactive workshops will explore the latest in natural areas conservation, wildlife protection, and monitoring. The conference is organized in "tracks" designed for everyone from newcomers to experts. There is special focus on empowering citizen scientists, stewards, and advocates with information, networking, and good ideas.

This year's Keynote Presentation will be given by Curt Meine, conservation biologist, writer, and Aldo Leopold biographer. He will discuss the powerful role of famed conservationist Aldo Leopold in the birth and evolution of ecosystem conservation, and how his legacy is reflected in the work we all are doing in the Chicago region. We will also have the opportunity to preview a new film about Leopold.

Early registration cost is \$28, until January 30, 2011. (Registration after January 30 is \$40.) Registration and conference information can be found on the Habitat Project web site at www.habitatproject.org. For questions, contact chicagowildthings@yahoo.com or tel. 847-328-3910 ext. 21.