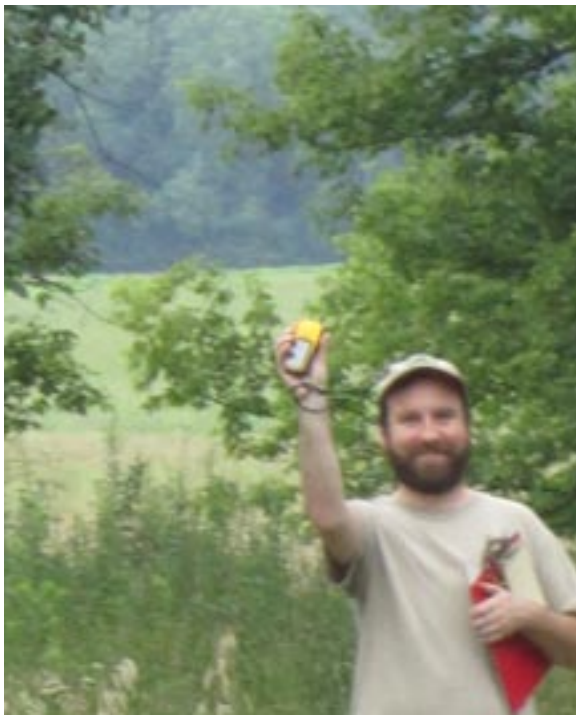


## Weed Scouts Invade Spring Creek

By Karen Glennemeier



Weed Scouts Skip Clarizio (pictured), Donna Hriljac, Ed Max, and Ron Vargason are keeping a close eye and a GPS tracker on Spring Creek's worst weeds.

around a site at a good clip, taking in the scene and spending a few hours getting to know a place – while also keeping an eye to the ground and a search image for yellow flowers, coarse green blades, or other tell-tale signs of the worst weeds.

Weed scout Skip Clarizio put it this way, "It's rewarding to be a part of this process, to be doing the historically significant work of restoring our native prairies. Plus, I love plants, and it's fun to walk around my area again and again to see how things are changing. It's especially gratifying to see weed numbers decreasing as a result of my reports, and to stop and watch the bobolinks whose habitat we are restoring."

If you'd like to join the Spring Creek Weed Scout team, please contact Karen Glennemeier at [kglennemeier@audubon.org](mailto:kglennemeier@audubon.org) or 847-256-2608.

If we could focus on one thing this summer, what would it be? When the project managers at Spring Creek Preserve – including Audubon staff, stewards, and land managers – asked ourselves this question last April, we answered: Weeds.

It's pretty easy to spot a large patch of reed canary grass or yellow sweet clover and get to work removing it. Much more difficult, however, is finding that isolated plant that, if left alone, will send thousands of seeds out into the ecosystem. These were the weeds we wanted to focus on.

Enter the Weed Scouts. Beginning in May of this year, four new Weed Scouts donned boots, hats, bug spray, and a GPS unit and headed into two priority management units at Spring Creek. Every few weeks they walked a regular route and recorded the precise locations of nine troublesome weeds. They immediately sent their reports to Audubon's Justin Pepper, who sent the Forest Preserve District's restoration interns to those spots the very next day. According to Intern Supervisor Bill Hellyer, "Getting these plants before they have a chance to set seed is critical, and we couldn't do it without this kind of regular, immediate reporting from the Weed Scouts. Sometimes the weeds are so scattered that it can become nearly impossible to find single plants. This program has increased the efficiency of the interns immeasurably. They can spend time killing weeds rather than searching for them."

Every type of restoration work has its own special flavor. Weed scouting is for those people who like to move, to hike, to wander



# 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](http://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](mailto:KGLENNEMEIER@AUDUBON.ORG) OR CONTACT THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR OF YOUR NEARBY COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OR SIMILAR LANDOWNER.

### **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/](http://WWW.SIERRACLUB.ORG/IL/) OR [WWW.FOTFP.ORG](http://WWW.FOTFP.ORG) (COOK COUNTY) OR [WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.HABITATPROJECT.ORG)

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# Silenced frogs find advocates



Photo: Steve Lipprandt

*Ray Pershing successfully advocated for the Green frogs (pictured) and other species in his condominium's overflow pond, helping to convince landscapers to stop using chemicals that might be harming frog populations.*

Several years ago Ray Pershing's Condo Association hired a landscape architect to design and replant the overflow pond which the condo complex surrounds. The previous years the Association had successfully stocked the pond with fish. Lily pads had started to bloom, and the pond was healthy. Bullfrogs and Green frogs became music by which residents would fall asleep each night. Leopard frogs also were sited by some

observers, although Ray, who is a monitor with the Calling Frog Survey, has not yet verified this identification. Ray says, "I loved the music at night, and I became the resident 'frog guy' whenever there was a question or concern from a condo resident."

This year there were no frogs. Ray obtained a list of the weed killers and other chemicals the landscaping company was using. He and the condo board were able to convince the landscaping company to stop using most of the chemicals. Frog breeding season was over by then, so they will have to wait until next year to listen for their nightly choruses. But Ray and his neighbors are satisfied that the chemicals have been stopped, and they are hopeful on behalf of the frogs. The pond recently was tested, and the plants and fish are healthy, and the water is clean. Ray says, "It was very satisfying that our condo board responded positively and that our landscape company was willing to work with us to ensure that our pond is healthy enough to support frogs and other wildlife." Next year, hopefully the frogs be unable to resist such a neighborly welcome and will come back.

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AUDUBON'S WORK INCLUDES SCIENCE, MONITORING, STEWARDSHIP, AND ADVOCACY. WE WORK WITH CITIZEN LEADERS TO INVOLVE ENTIRE COMMUNITIES IN THIS WORK. WE ORGANIZE NEW STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES, TRAIN MONITORS, DESIGN SCIENTIFIC STUDIES, ANALYZE DATA, AND ENSURE THAT GOOD ON-THE-GROUND ACTION RESULTS FROM EVERYONE'S HARD WORK. WE ORGANIZE AND SUPPORT EVENTS SUCH AS WILD THINGS, FIELD SEMINARS, MONITORING "BLITZES," AND STEWARDS' WORKSHOPS. WE MAINTAIN A STEWARDSHIP INTERN PROGRAM, PUBLISH THE HABITAT HERALD, AND SUPPORT AND COACH LEADERS AND INDIVIDUALS AS RESOURCES PERMIT. WE BELIEVE IN THIS WORK, AND WE HOPE YOU DO TOO. WE MUCH APPRECIATE ALL CONTRIBUTIONS AT 1718 SHERMAN AVE., EVANSTON, IL, 60201, OR CONTACT JUSTIN PEPPER AT [JPEPPER@AUDUBON.ORG](mailto:jpepper@audubon.org).

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# Trap, Neuter, Release Bills Stopped

By Cindy Grau

Illustration: Courtesy of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Good advocacy by Bob Fisher and Donnie Dann should help reduce bird mortality by outdoor cats.

Bob Fisher of DuPage County and Donnie Dann of Lake County have been fighting legislation legalizing feral cat colonies for a long time. Their opponents, the trap, neuter, and release (TNR) advocates have a powerful and well-funded lobby. But Bob and Donnie scored a big win this spring when they helped quash bills in the Illinois legislature aimed at legalizing feral cat colonies in Illinois.

Stray cats left free to roam are huge predators on bird populations. Some estimates say there are hundreds of millions of birds killed each year by cats in the US. Rodents killed by cats are problematic to birds of prey such as owls and hawks that rely on small rodents as a food source.

In an attempt to help alleviate the suffering of feral cats some well-meaning animal advocates are setting up feral cat colonies in which the cats are trapped, neutered, and released into a colony which is cared for by a human. Constituents of Illinois Representative Thomas Holbrook (D) - Belleville convinced him to sponsor legislation to legalize feral cat colonies in Illinois. Stray cats and dogs are a problem in his district near East St. Louis. Currently it is against the law to dump nonnative species, such as cats, in the state.

The theory is that the cats will eventually die out when they can no longer reproduce. The problem, according to Bob Fisher, President of the Illinois Ornithological Society, is that none of the colonies has shrunk. In order to work all of the cats need to be captured and neutered, which rarely happens. Also, once people see the cats they begin to use the colony as an excuse to dump new cats. And once cats are cared for with shots and food they are able to kill more wildlife.

Mike Gragert, president of the Illinois Trapper Association, called the Illinois Audubon Society, among other groups, when he first found out about the legislation. Mike knew the potential negative impact that this bill could have for birds. Audubon put him in touch with Bob Fisher who then contacted Donnie Dann, the current advocacy chair of the Bird Conservation Network, which is a coalition of groups focused on bird conservation and habitat preservation.

Bob and Donnie headed to Springfield to lobby against the bills on a day they were scheduled for hearings. They met with as many legislators as they could, including Senate minority leader Christine Rodagno (R) and Representative Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago). Bob also went to a Senate hearing prepared to testify against the Senate version of the bill. However, the bill was never called. It was clear to him that other opponents of the bill were out in force at the meeting. After much effort the two men were finally successful in buttonholing the house sponsor of the bill, Rep. Thomas Holbrook, on the way to the house chamber. He was persuaded by Bob and Donnie that his legislation was flawed. Rep. Holbrook agreed to kill the bill and asked the two men to reach out to Gateway Pet Guardians who had persuaded him to sponsor the legislation. Mission accomplished.

Donnie Dann is philosophical about the success when he says, "We won the battle but the war is endless." Their overture to Gateway Pet Guardians was never accepted. Similar measures were defeated in Lake County but not in McHenry County. Both men stay on the lookout for prospects to legalize TNR and will continue to educate lawmakers and lobby to protect the birds of Illinois.

For more information about this issue read about American Bird Conservancy's "Keep Cats Indoors" campaign found at [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)

The image shows a Facebook interface. At the top is the Facebook logo and a search bar. Below that is the profile for 'Wild Things', an organization. The profile picture shows a fox. The page has a 'Like' button and a 'Wall' section. A post is visible, stating: 'Wild Things added 23 new photos to the album Thymia Hunt, August 13, 2011.'

## Wild Things on Facebook

Keep up with your fellows on Facebook – photos of what's being seen out in the field, event invitations, thought provoking articles and more.

We're at 225 people and growing.

Won't you join us?

<https://www.facebook.com/wildthingscommunity>



## What a Blitz!

This year volunteers undertook the largest, most comprehensive bird blitz in the Chicago Wilderness region at the 4,000-acre Spring Creek Forest Preserve in northwestern Cook County. Between June 5th and June 24th, 72 volunteers covered 40 units of approximately 100 acres each. We tallied about 100 species of birds during their nesting season and also noted concentrations of a dozen invasive plants.

The project was led by organizers Jenny Vogt and Lee Ramsey and involved the cooperation of Audubon Chicago Region, the Bird Conservation Network, the Spring Creek Stewards, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and the Army Corps of Engineers, which is undertaking a multi-million dollar mitigation project in the preserve.

Compilation of results is currently underway, and a full report on the Spring Creek Blitz will be published in an upcoming issue of the *Habitat Herald*.

These ten Blitzers joined 62 others to cover the 4,000-acre Spring Creek Preserve this June, looking for all birds and the worst weeds. Clockwise from lower left: Roberta Asher & Nancy Tikalsky; Linda Padera & Jeanne Mueller; Christine and Geoffrey Williamson; Blitz organizers Jenny Vogt and Lee Ramsey; Frank Sterrett; Karen Rosene.

## ...And a Blitz of a Different Color (or Taxon)

In the September 2010 issue of the *Habitat Herald*, we reported on the first-ever Butterfly Blitz at Spring Creek Preserve, where monitors found three species that are known to rely heavily on remnant sedge meadow habitat: Eyed Browns, Black Dash skippers, and Dion skippers.

Butterfly monitors wanted to return again this year to poke around in some additional areas they thought had good potential for butterfly habitat. On July 2, ten monitors scouted a high quality woodland and a wetland-sedge meadow complex to see what else we could find.

This year, we again found the remnant-dependent Eyed Browns and Dion Skippers (but no Black Dashes). In addition, we also found several species that are not remnant-dependent but that are considered by butterfly experts to be highly responsive to habitat management. In other words, they are not exclusively found in undisturbed, remnant habitat, but they do require intact, quality natural areas and thus are a high conservation priority, because ecological management can increase suitable habitat and thus butterfly numbers.



Photo: Tom Peterson

Tom Peterson and Tom Poklen of the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network teamed up with Audubon and other butterfly monitors for a second Butterfly Blitz at Spring Creek, where this Grey Comma was spotted.

The responsive species we found were Pearly Eyes, Grey Commas, and Banded Hairstreaks. Last year's responsive species were Northern Cloudywings, Bronze Coppers, and Purplish Coppers.

These Blitz results tell us that we have at least nine butterfly species of conservation significance at Spring Creek Preserve. The Spring Creek stewards and land managers now have the information necessary to begin incorporating these species' host plants and nectar plants into management plans. Going forward, butterfly monitors can tell us how our nine species are responding to management efforts so that the work continues to be of benefit for them and their habitat.

Monitoring a regular, annual route is the best way to keep track of our nine species. If you are interested in establishing a butterfly route at Spring Creek, please contact Karen Glennemeier at [kglennemeier@audubon.org](mailto:kglennemeier@audubon.org) or 847-256-2608.



# Plants of Concern Uses GPS to Protect Rare Plants

By Greg Hitzroth



Photos: Greg Hitzroth

POC Research Assistant Rachel Goad demonstrates how to use Garmin e-trex GPS unit at the POC spring workshop.



Associated Colleges of Illinois Intern, Ocativo Oliveira De Araujo, learning to use a Trimble Juno SC GPS unit.

When selecting a GPS unit, consider the intended purpose. You may not need a unit that will help you navigate to the nearest coffee shop if you want to record the latitude and longitude of a plant population. POC uses the Garmin “e-trex” GPS unit, which is a very basic model that is easy to use. Most smart phones can be used as a GPS receiver, with a mindbending number of GPS applications published for these devices. When deciding on an application keep in mind what you are trying to accomplish and how the functionality of the program compares to that goal.

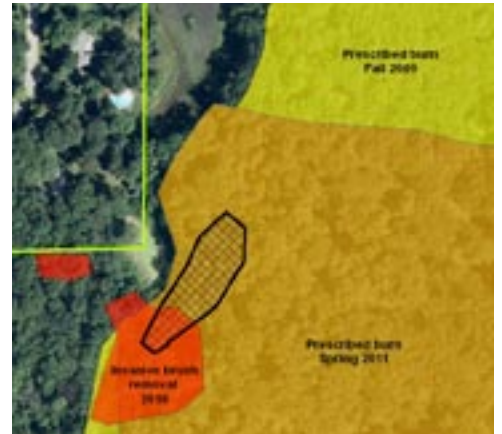
When volunteers with Plants of Concern (POC) monitor the Chicago Wilderness Region’s rare plant species they are collecting data on the overall health of a population, but they are also collecting location information in the form of written directions, hand-drawn maps, and latitude and longitude coordinates. These coordinates are easily obtained using a Global Positioning System (GPS). The navigational system uses a network of orbiting satellites to determine latitude, longitude, and altitude. Access to the system is free to the public, but one needs a GPS receiver to take advantage of the service.

Latitude and longitude coordinates are very important for creating accurate long-term records of species locations.

Although site names, road names, and landmarks may change, latitude and longitude coordinates do not. In the field, GPS units save POC staff and volunteers countless hours navigating to populations. Having accurate location information helps to track changes in a population’s area such as expansion or reduction in range and shifts in locations. Coordinates help to create maps for the distribution of information to land managers and their crews with the aim of aiding in efficient and focused management. When working with a spatially referenced database known as a Geographic Information System (GIS), the latitude and longitude data become quite powerful, used to analyze changes in populations related to other data such as soil conditions, habitat quality, and changes in climate.

POC volunteers regularly use GPS in monitoring rare plant species, applying the technology to locate known groups of plants and report new ones. For example, while monitoring a population of *Carex woodii*, a threatened species, POC monitor John Nickel used a GPS unit to locate known groups of the plant from previous years. Knowing the precise location of previously-recorded plants allowed him to conclude that the new sedge groups he was finding represented an addition to the total population. Nickel finds this kind of objective confirmation satisfying: “I enjoy making the link between my current ‘find’ of a species and a previous monitor’s find. It’s reassuring to find a population that someone else had recorded, and GPS allows us to go straight to the spot. We know if the population still exists, we’re going to find it.” For this threatened sedge, Nickel’s new population area information has been passed on to managers, giving them a better idea of the extent of this population and thus helping them make more informed management decisions.

*POC is coordinated through Chicago Botanic Garden and offers multiple workshops in the spring each year to train citizens concerned about the environment to monitoring 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](http://www.plantsofconcern.org)*



Using spatially explicit tools like GIS allows land managers to learn how management activities such as prescribed burns and invasive brush removal affect populations of threatened and endangered species (checkered area on map).

Credit: Rachel Reklau, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

# Get to Know our Bird Monitors and Their Sites

Each month, Lee Ramsey posts a new feature about the work of a bird monitor on the eBird/BCN home page. Check it out! <http://ebird.org/bcn/> Here's the June entry.

**M**acArthur Woods, a 450-acre preserve along the Des Plaines River in Vernon Hills, contains one of the larger tracts of unbroken forest remaining in our area. For two years Gary Hantsbarger, a skilled birder with 28 years experience, has been surveying birds here, using monitoring points set up by the Lake County Forest Preserve District.

MacArthur Woods isn't easy of access. There is no public parking, so most of us can get in only by canoe or by the bike path that doubles for cross-country skiing in the winter. In the Chicagoland area, of course, habitat fragmentation is the rule, and this preserve offers at least a hint of what the bird populations would be like in a larger and less disturbed forest.

Gary finds that the interior of MacArthur Woods has some interesting birds, but the typical suburban birds, including cowbirds, prevail along the edges. Deeper into the woods are scarlet tanagers, wood thrushes, ovenbirds, veerys, great crested flycatchers, and wood ducks – all probably nesting. Others, which may or may not be nesting, include hooded and prothonotary warblers. "Since MacArthur woods is pretty heavily forested," he comments, "most of my IDs are by voice rather than by sight. I carry an iPod with me with all the local bird calls to compare if I have any doubt."

"To anyone just starting out, I could give a few pointers. Get a GPS, but don't rely on it too much. On a cloudy day, it might only get you within about 100 yards of the post. When you find the site, take notes describing the location. An iPod or MP3 player loaded with all the local calls is more useful than a field guide. At MacArthur Woods in the summer it is even more useful than binoculars. If your monitoring takes you far off the trail where the undergrowth is thick and the ground swampy, thick-soled boots and a trekking pole come in very handy."

Current management at MacArthur Woods primarily has been clearing of buckthorn and other aggressive species. In the longer term the district hopes to restore the historic woodland structure and composition of the Upper Des Plaines River forest preserves, including MacArthur and nearby Grainger, Wright Woods, and Ryerson. According to Gary Glowacki, LCFPD Wildlife Biologist, "Over the past several decades, these woods went from being dominated by oaks and hickories to being dominated by ash and maples. One of our likely goals would be to thin the maples and ashes to allow more sunlight to penetrate the forest floor and encourage understory vegetation. This would also reduce the amount of leaf litter (and decomposition of the litter) which would increase levels of dissolved oxygen in the vernal pool systems—a big benefit to amphibians!"



Photos: Gary Hantsbarger by Matthew Hantsbarger; Scarlet tanager by Nolan Lameka; Hooded warbler by Phil Yates



## Please tell us what you think!

The Habitat Herald is in its twelfth year of publication, and this seemed like a good time to check in with all of its readers and see how the Herald can continue to best serve the conservation community.

Please take a minute to complete a seven-question survey here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VH8SBGB>

Thanks.



## *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](mailto:kglennemeier@audubon.org) (or mail it to the return address on this newsletter).

All 2010 and 2011 awardees will be recognized at our Leadership Awards Dinner in March. Look for details in the January *Habitat Herald*.

*Thanks for helping spread the word about these inspirational people!*