

Executive Committee

S. H. Sentoff, President
R. S. Hensey, Vice Pres.
M. F. Boyle, Sec./Treas.
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Newsletter #115

Fall 2013

President's Corner

With all the moisture we had this season, the prairie is incredibly green and lush this year. It's especially so on the west side, which was burned in early April. In many areas we are seeing large numbers of the species we've been raking in for so many years. The indigo and tick-trefoil have been pretty spectacular in some places. It's quite rewarding to see the results of all our work on the preserve. In spite of a cool spring, which meant that many species were late coming up, it now seems that things are rushing along, and some species are blooming earlier than expected. I hope you'll all have a chance to see the preserve in its glory, either on a field trip, a visit of your own, or at the annual meeting. See you soon!

Steve

Annual Meeting

We'll continue our plan of summer annual meetings, and this year it will be held on Saturday, August 24 at the parking lot at the preserve. The meeting will start with a Potluck Picnic at 12:00 noon. Family members and friends are welcome. Bring a hot or cold dish, salad or dessert with a serving utensil, and your own plate and silverware. Cold drinks will be provided. There are a number of picnic tables there, but bring a lawn chair if you can.

Starting at about 1:00 p.m., we will hold a brief business meeting in which we will elect members of the Executive Committee, present awards for last year and briefly outline the plans for next year. The slate of officers is the same as last year, and so the nominations are: President, Steve Sentoff; Vice President, Scott Hensey; Secretary/Treasurer, Malcolm Boyle; and general board members, Jim Dohren, Linda Fisher, Herman Jensen and Rob Kaiser. As always, nominations are open at the meeting for others who are willing to serve on the board.

After the business meeting, we'll take a tour of the Preserve. Many of you have put a lot of time into helping the preserve without an opportunity to stop and admire your work. Also a number of you have generously donated money to keep us going and may not have visited in quite a while. We think this would be a great time for you to come out for a visit. Even if you don't feel up to a hike in the preserve, you can see quite a bit just from the parking lot. We

encourage all of you to come on out and see it.

Awards

Prairie Steward Awards are given for accumulating 10, 25 and 50 hours, and for every additional 50 hours of volunteer work for the Stewardship Group. These awards are for total career hours through the end of June, 2013. This year's recipients by category are

25 hours	Ruth Norton
50 hours	Steve Carrow
	Nick Kubis
250 hours	Rob Kaiser
550 hours	Jim Dohren
850 hours	Malcolm Boyle
1950 hours	Marilyn Bell
2350 hours	Scott Hensey
4450 hours	Steve Sentoff

This is an impressive list, and as always, there are many active volunteers who just happen to be between awards.

This year we will also have a New Bird on the Prairie award, for Marilyn Bell, who spotted a Caspian Tern in the East Wetland on June 28.

Award certificates will be presented at the Annual Meeting. Please come to acknowledge these contributions and to take your well-earned bows.

Sandhill Cranes

We often see Sandhill Cranes from the preserve as they fly by on their migration in the

spring and fall, and they are becoming more common as the population is recovering due to better environmental protection. In fact, there have been nesting pairs of Sandhill Cranes in DuPage County in recent years. But we were still a bit excited in the end of April, when we saw a pair in the preserve.

The first sighting was on one of our Wednesday work days. We were in the East Woodland clearing brush, when we heard a loud call north of us. At first I thought it was geese, but it didn't sound quite right. Shortly thereafter, we saw two cranes take off from Bladderwort Pond, on the east side of the prairie.

A few days later, Wayne Lampa was out on the preserve and also saw them. He was able to photograph them:



With all the rain we had in the spring, the prairie must have seemed like a possibility for this pair. Unfortunately, they didn't stick around to nest. Perhaps another pair will decide to move in sometime in the future.

Weeding Accomplishments

I'm actually starting this section with a non-accomplishment—we had an incredible *seven* "Washout Wednesdays" this year. We hardly ever have a work day canceled due to the weather, but this year they have just come over and over. Even our stalwart crew can't get much done in heavy rain, and several times there was lightning. None of us wants to be the tallest thing on the prairie in a thunderstorm.

In spite of the weather working against us, the Wednesday crew did get a number of jobs done since the report of the last newsletter.

First of these jobs was to finish off the clearing of brush, mainly honeysuckle resprouts in the East Woodland. This had gotten badly overgrown again, and we spent quite a while this winter clearing it out. But it's finally cleaned up once again. We'll need to revisit the savannas more frequently, to keep them from getting so filled with brush.

Most of the remaining work days were

removing invasive weeds. We do this every year, and gradually we're seeing the improvement. The earliest weed we tackle is Dame's Rocket. This is a mustard, which generates copious amounts of seed, so we try to pull it up before seed production time. We have two main areas to work in: near the MacQueen Woods, at the edge of the Prairie Path; and in the southeast corner by the old stockyards operation. The participants for the May 18th Dame's Rocket pulling work day were Malcolm Boyle, Rita and Rick Dolan, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser, Nick Kubis, Nancy and Maria Romero and Monica and Steve Sentoff.

Next on the schedule is Garden Heliotrope. We had less of this to deal with this year since the Forest Preserve District herbicided many of the rosettes early in the season shortly after the prescribed burn. Recently, we've moved on to pulling White Sweet Clover. This is a biennial, and I was hoping that the excellent burn of April would have killed the plants at that time. But they must have stored their energy well underground since they're growing all too well. Thankfully, we can tell that the work we've done in the past is paying off. On July 20, Malcolm Boyle, Brendan Flanigan, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser and Monica and Steve Sentoff pulled White Sweet Clover in West Loop Prairie. The weather was a bit better than it had been earlier—back to normal. Nonetheless, this was hard, hot work.

Finally, we don't want to skip mentioning the Wednesday Crew members who did lots of weed control: Malcolm Boyle (9), Jim Dohren (4), Scott Hensey (10), Nick Kubis (5), Edgar Martinez and Steve Sentoff (10).

Prairie Path Cleanup



On April 27, Zack Audy, Malcolm Boyle, Francisco Cabrera, Alex Christensen, Jim Dohren, William Flickema, Alejandra Guzman, Scott Hensey, Nick Kubis, Elaine McClusky, Monica and Steve Sentoff, Veronica Van and Senyu Ye cleaned trash from along the Geneva Spur of the Prairie Path. We started at the end of MacQueen

Dr. and worked east. We got as far as Reed-Kepler Park. A couple of the young guys pulled out pieces of the rusty car that was at the bottom of the embankment on the north side of the trail. Other than under the bridge and by RKP, there wasn't a lot of trash, but there was enough to make it worthwhile. The day turned out to be the first really nice spring day out at the prairie, so it was quite a pleasant experience.

Botanical Foray



On July 11th, the West Chicago Prairie hosted group from the Plants of Concern. This organization is based at the Chicago Botanic Garden and monitors species that need special attention. They maintain a database of information on the monitored plants and a web site used to enter the data. They also train plant monitors on the species and techniques, so that the data will be consistent. We've been a part of this group for many years, benefiting from their expertise and entering our data in their database.

The event was part of the training. We had one person from the Botanic Garden, plus six other volunteer monitors. They got to visit the preserve and see the very lush vegetation we

have this year (as you can see in the photo above), and learned some plants and how to monitor them. Actually we would have had more participants, but the event had to be rescheduled due to a thunderstorm on the planned date. Just another case of having to dodge the weather this year.

America In Bloom

The City of West Chicago has applied to be certified as an "America In Bloom" city. The program recognizes cities of different sizes for the work they do in landscaping and natural beauty. They have to send in an application and then get judged by a group that visits the city. As part of the process, they also get suggestions for how they can improve.

When the judges came recently, they learned about the West Chicago Prairie and were interested in seeing the preserve and learning about the volunteer involvement from the community in managing it. So on July 9 I took a small group on a short tour of the preserve and talked about our Stewardship Group on the way. I think they were impressed with both. The city was very appreciative of our support as well. We'll find out the results of the visit later.

Donor Appreciation

As you know, we're a pretty frugal organization, but we do need some money to keep our equipment in working order, and handle the mail and some other miscellaneous items. Luckily we have members who donate enough to cover our expenses. Many of these are members who are too far away or who aren't up to the physical rigors of field work. I'd like to recognize the contribution of the following donors: Nancy Allured, Burt & Dorothy Andrews, Alan & Sandra Bemis, Bob Claus, Tim Everding & Marina Kuchinski, Jean Hoff, Joe Houle, Mary Kusmirek and Patricia Rouille. I hope I didn't miss anyone. The Prairie thanks all of you.



*The West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group is
an affiliate of The Conservation Foundation*



Schedule of Upcoming Events

Except as noted below, all events start from the WCP parking lot located on the east side of Industrial Drive between Western and Downs.

Saturday	August 24	12:00 noon - 3:00 p.m.	Annual Meeting and Picnic <i>Join us for a potluck picnic, followed by our annual meeting and a field trip.</i>
Saturday	September 7	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Sunday	September 22	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Collection of grasses and forbs, also a good visit.</i>
Saturday	October 5	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	October 19	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	November 2	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	November 16	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 7	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 14	8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Field Trip - Meet at MacQueen Entrance <i>Winter resident birds. Annual DuPage Christmas count.</i>

Other workdays may be scheduled, depending on the field conditions. Reservations are not required unless you are coming with a group of 10 or more. Special field trips can be arranged for groups.