

Executive Committee

*S. H. Sentoff, President
R. S. Hensey, Vice Pres.
M. F. Boyle, Sec./Treas.
J. S. Dohren
L. O. Fisher
H. H. Jensen
R. C. Kaiser*



3N771 Woodland Ave.
West Chicago, IL 60185
630-293-1627
<http://www.wcpsg.org>

Newsletter #116

Winter 2014

President's Corner

Winter seems to have arrived with a bang this year. As I write this, it's not even officially winter yet, but already we've had some really cold days and a pretty good snow cover. I must say that it didn't help the bird count last Saturday, which we did in light snow and low temperatures.

Winter is a peaceful time out on the prairie and a work day, or just a walk, on the preserve is a great way to recover from the stress of the holidays and burn off a few of those calories. I hope to see you at an event soon. Best wishes for new year.

Steve

Annual Meeting

Our 29th annual meeting was held on August 24. Once again, we started with a great potluck picnic at the Preserve. As usual, the Forest Preserve District set up a tent shelter for us, and we had a fine meeting. We'll continue scheduling the meeting in the late summer which seems to be working well.

Malcolm Boyle presented the Treasurer's Report, and we were frugal again this year. We spent only \$310 in the preceding year with most of it going to maintain our equipment. Our mail expense continues to decline in spite of increasing postal rates since many of you now receive the newsletters by email. We received \$350 from our donors last year so we actually added to our already healthy balance for future operations. The work we can do is much more limited by volunteer hours than by money.

The next order of business was the nomination and election of officers. All our existing officers agreed to serve again next year, and the entire slate was approved by acclamation.

Next was the report on the volunteer work for the twelve months ending June 30, 2013: a total of 1168 hours, including 75 hours at Nachusa Grasslands. This is roughly in line with previous reports. The largest categories of work included clearing with 512 hours, monitoring with 113.5, and seed collecting and sowing with 153. Another excellent year.

As usual, most of the work is continuing to push back the invasives. We continued our regular "search-and-destroy" missions to get

Oriental Bittersweet, Goutweed, Dame's Rocket and Garden Heliotrope. The Forest Preserve District also worked on the last one, by herbiciding emerging rosettes on the west half of the preserve after the prescribed fire.

We had major clearing projects in several areas. In the North Wet Prairie, which is the section north of the Geneva Spur of the Prairie Path, we were able to take advantage of drier conditions to get into this area and do considerable clearing. Usually this area is too wet to work in, and so the brush had gotten a bit ahead of us. Since this is one of our higher quality areas, we need to be sure that we protect it.

We also cleared a substantial part of the section along the entrance driveway. Since this is our "front door", we are trying to keep it clear of the invasives. As reported in a previous newsletter, we had a massive turnout for one of our work days, and this was a good site to apply all that help. We had a second work day in this area, which was cut short by a very impressive thunderstorm. We had chosen this site to work in case the weather turned bad and we were very glad to be able to retreat quickly to our cars.

The savannas and woodland also got our attention in the past year. We've decided that we need to clean these areas each year, rather than waiting a number of years and doing clearing on a rotation cycle. It seemed that we just had to start over each time. Now we're sweeping through to get the brush, mostly honeysuckle, each year. This way it should never get really bad, and hopefully we'll get to

the point where there will be enough fuel to be able to keep the invasives out with just prescribed fire.

I also reported at the Annual Meeting that the Forest Preserve District had done a prescribed fire on April 4. This was a particularly hot fire and burned very well across the west half of the preserve. Part of the intensity of the fire was clearly due to the weather conditions, but as we continue to restore the preserve, we are increasing the native species, which are better fuel for the fires.

At the end of the meeting, we handed out certificates to volunteers who earned them this year. It's great to be able to thank all of you who have contributed to the restoration work. We then took a walk around the West Loop Trail to finish off the meeting.

Recent Accomplishments

Fall usually starts with seed collection and this year was no different. We collected seed at work days on September 7, September 22 and October 2 in the West Loop Prairie and the adjacent Wolfberry Prairie. We got reasonable amounts of Wild Bergamot, Compass Plant, Prairie Dropseed, Prairie Dock, Pale Purple Coneflower, Rattlesnake Master. And Culver's Root, plus some Blazing Star, Little Bluestem and Mad-dog Skullcap. One odd thing we noticed was that we saw none of the orb-weaver spiders that we have always encountered during fall seed collecting. It's not at all clear why not; perhaps it was the weird weather this year, or maybe the particularly hot prescribed fire. We'll see what happens next year. Seed collectors included Malcolm Boyle (2), Danny Chen, Jim Dohren, Jim Gillbert, Scott Hensey (3), Mark Hubble, Janet Ostermeier, Monica and Steve (3) Sentoff and Heidi Sila.

On November 16, Malcolm Boyle, Bill Dawe, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser, Ruth Norton, Mike Kalscheur, Ed Max and Steve Sentoff along with 1 student from COD, 2 students from Wheaton-Warrenville HS, 4 students from Bartlett HS, 1 student from Benedictine University and 2 members from the DuPage Unitarian Universalist church raked seed into the eastern end of Restoration Area 9. It was a bit misty and gray,

but with such a big group we got a lot of seed in. We still have a bit more seed for later in the season, but we already have quite a bit planted.

And of course, there's always brush to cut. We had clearing work days on October 5, November 2 and December 7. These were all along the southern edge of the South Savanna. A part of this area is usually wet so we hadn't been able to clear it for a while, but this year the condition were right. We made some big brush piles for the Forest Preserve District to burn off. We were glad to see that there were a number of small oaks in the area that we cleared and also in the old field south of where we worked. Some of these are likely offspring from the oaks in the South Savanna, but others are probably from an oak planting project done by the Forest Preserve District in 1991. Clearly restorationists need to be patient and keep the long view in mind. Our thanks go to Jo Ann Balozy, Gary Bernard, Malcolm Boyle (2), Neil Davis, Scott Hensey (3), Rob Kaiser (3), Mike Kalscheur Monica and Steve (3) Sentoff, plus 7 students from a conservation club at Wheaton College, 4 Cub scouts and their 2 leaders, 2 students and a mom from Fenton HS and 7 students from Bartlett HS. A great accomplishment!

2014 Schedule of Events

Our 2014 schedule is now available. For those of you who receive this newsletter in the mail, a copy is enclosed. For those getting an electronic copy, you can print a copy of the schedule from our website. Those of you who use electronic calendars on your computer or on some hand-held device can subscribe to an electronic version available at <http://www.wcpsg.org/webcal/WCPSG.ics>. I keep this updated, so it always has the latest and greatest information.

Winter Rules

The preserve is open every day from dawn to dusk, but the parking lot is closed from December through February, except when we open it for scheduled work days. If you want to visit in winter, the best access is from the end of MacQueen Dr. Don't park on Industrial Dr.; you may get a ticket.



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