

Executive Committee

S. H. Sentoff, President
R. S. Hensey, Vice Pres.
M. F. Boyle, Sec./Treas.
W. C. Dawe
J. S. Dohren
H. H. Jensen
J. M. Monge



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

Newsletter #109

Fall 2011

President's Corner

Once again our Group has been working through a summer of heat and humidity to help restore the preserve. Read on to learn about what you've done and what a difference you're making. I hope to see you all at the fast-approaching Annual Meeting.

Steve

Annual Meeting

This year our annual meeting will be held on Saturday, August 20 at the parking lot at the preserve. We moved the date earlier this year due to the unseasonably cold weather we had last time. Let's hope for a pleasant day, with lots to see 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 same officers have agreed to serve another year, and so the nominations are: President, Steve Sentoff; Vice President, Scott Hensey; Secretary/Treasurer, Malcolm Boyle; and general board members, Bill Dawe, Jim Dohren, Herman Jensen and JoAnn Monge.

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, especially since we had a major clearing project right by the parking lot last winter. 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, 2011. This year's recipients by category are

10 hours	Veta Bonnewell Mark Donnelly Matt Gebis Ruth Norton
25 hours	Kyle Wiktor
100 hours	Roger Kotecki
300 hours	Patricia Ebelt
550 hours	Malcolm Boyle
850 hours	Bill Dawe
1800 hours	Marilyn Bell
2000 hours	Scott Hensey
3750 hours	Steve Sentoff

This is an impressive list, and as always, there are many active volunteers who just happen to be between awards. It's particularly nice to see that we have a number of new people on the list.

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

Recent Accomplishments

Summer is typically our weeding season, and this year was no different. It's nearly impossible to completely eliminate any established weed, so we need to continue to monitor our known sites and watch for new invasions.

Our weeding season started with Reed-

Canary Grass. This is probably our worst threat, and both the Stewardship Group and the Forest Preserve District are working on this one. Part of the problem is that the best time to herbicide this plant is early in the season, when much of the preserve is very wet. Nonetheless we herbicided all the patches in the Lone Oak and Three Oaks Savannas, and in the area that we cleared of brush last winter. The fact that the brush had been removed made the job much easier, and I'm sure we were more effective at getting at it. The FPD crew worked on a number of areas as well. Hopefully we're getting ahead of this one, but vigilance will be needed for the foreseeable future.

Next up was Garden Heliotrope. We have a long list of known locations for this one, and we patrolled to clean out these sites. Many of the sites only had a few, and we were amazed that we didn't find more. With the wet spring, and very robust growth of almost everything, we expected to find many more. We did run across a new population that we hadn't noticed before, so we know we can't get complacent. Still, we feel that we know how to keep this one under control.

Nearby the parking lot, we have a patch of Field Thistle, a nasty invasive, which the Forest Preserve District has been working on for a few years. Apparently, it was spreading to the west, but we didn't notice until we cleared the area last winter. So another job was to herbicide all the invaders in that cleared area; we'll keep checking this in future years to push it back.

Most recently, we've been working on Oriental Bittersweet. Again this is one where we have many known locations to patrol. But, like the Heliotrope, it appears that our methods are working. Each year we return to the sites, we find fewer plants, and the job goes quicker.

Most of the summer weeding jobs are done by the Wednesday Work Crew of Malcolm Boyle, Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey and Steve Sentoff. We also had two work days scheduled for July. I had planned these as Sweet Clover pulling days, but there was almost none (see article below), so we did other tasks. On July 16th, Alan and Sandy Bemis, Malcolm Boyle, Rob Kaiser and Steve Sentoff collected Spiderwort, mostly from the Sand Quarry Area and the West Loop Prairie. And on July 23rd, Malcolm Boyle, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser and Steve Sentoff cut sumac in the MacQueen Prairie. We did not herbicide; this was just intended to remove the brush at a time of year when it would be most stressed.

Sweet Clover Behavior

Sweet clover is a non-native biennial, largely introduced by agriculture. Its germination seems to be triggered by some aspect of burning, perhaps letting more light reach the ground, or releasing a flush of nutrients. So what I

expected to see was that in the first growing season after a fire, we would just have newly germinated plants, and no blooming ones. Then, in the second year, we'd have lots of blooming ones, and then have the blooming plants tail off in subsequent years, until the next fire started the cycle again. Since the west half was burned three seasons ago and the east half was burned two seasons ago, I expected lots of sweet clover to work on, and as mentioned scheduled two work days. Yet there was almost none!

From the logs that we keep, I was able to get some data for the sweet clover in the West Loop Prairie and correlate it with the years of the burns. Here is the number of observations for each case from the last 10 years--

Seasons after burn	Amount of Sweet Clover
1	<u>Nearly none</u> (once), <u>Medium</u> (once), <u>Lots</u> (once)
2	<u>Medium</u> (twice), <u>Lots</u> (once)
3	<u>Nearly none</u> (once), <u>Medium</u> (once)
4	<u>Medium</u> (once)
5	<u>Lots</u> (once)

The underlined amounts are what I expected, but clearly something else is going on. Part of it may be that fire is not killing all the plants that are in the first-year stage. That would explain some of the times when there is more sweet clover than predicted by the model. But I haven't come up with any idea for why there would be less than predicted, such as happened this year. Any ideas you have on the topic are welcome.

A Birder's Diary

by Marilyn Bell

June 16, 2011 Nesting is in full swing now and I see that last year's just-remodeled oriole nest, suspended from a branch not far above my head, is gently swinging as a female BALTIMORE ORIOLE settles into an incubating position. Only her orangy tail is visible. Even that ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW seems to be on territory, refusing to budge from its perch as I move closer. There's one, no two, BROWN THRASHERs peering silently at me from a shrubby area. Silent? These boisterous repeated-phrases singers? They're definitely up to something. A HOUSE WREN pops into a tree cavity carrying food and - Oh! It pops out again in a moment, carrying a fecal sac. Nesting means parental duties.

July 14, 2011 A new sight for me. Low on a small platform on one of the power towers, three fledgling EASTERN KINGBIRDS are being fed by one parent while the other parent, close by, fly-catches for food then brings it in. Wing-flutters and chitter-calls are done by both parents and

fledglings as they interact. What a treat to see! Another good dad, a beautiful ORCHARD ORIOLE carries food to his waiting nestlings. Oh my, here's some over-protective dads. Three male RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS dive-bomb a soaring TURKEY VULTURE. They must not know that vultures eat only carrion! (Could this be the source of "bird-brain?") A brief trek into the newly purchased addition to the Prairie reveals a little swamp with one end deep enough to host a juvenile HOODED MERGANSER, who disappears under the water at my sound. There's a SOLITARY SANDPIPER and 2 SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, one a juvenile! It's a day of surprises.

July 20, 2011 It's a bit quieter today and an EASTERN WOOD PEWEE utters nary a sound, as it sits on the tip of a bare branch. So, now, why is that brightly-colored COMMON YELLOW-THROAT fluttering up into the air singing? I sneak close to Heron Pond and catch the sight of a mother WOOD DUCK with four tiny young. Concern floats through my mind as Heron Pond holds many hazards for little ones, including leg-grabbing frogs, snakes, turtles and muskrats.

August 1, 2011 More quiet today. The usually chattering GRAY CATBIRDS only "Mew." A normally singing WARBLING VIREO checks for insects under each tree leaf - silently. To my surprise, pishing near the large American Plum clone brings out quiet AMERICAN GOLDFINCHes, COMMON GRACKLES, BALTIMORE ORIOLE young, COMMON YELLOW-THROATs, SONG SPARROWS, GRAY CATBIRDS, and INDIGO BUNTINGS! Why? The plums are ripe. Deep in MacQueen Woods, I'm surprised by two RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS zipping around among the trees. A BELTED KINGFISHER surprises too. He's sitting on the wire over Crowfoot Pond, then moves over a small marsh. Pretty shallow dives, guy. Colorful BARN SWALLOWS swoop low over the grasses, but they're twittering. A colorful HOUSE FINCH, beautiful singer, sits quietly on a wire. Such sights and surprises keep me coming back.

Field Trips

As usual, we held a few field trips this summer, to show people around the preserve and tell them about the work that's being done. For the past few years, the attendance has been pretty low, probably because most of the people who are interested have had a chance to come out a few times. Of course, every couple weeks there's always something different to see. This year the attendance was a bit better for our regularly scheduled trips of June 12th and August 6th, even with some generally poor weather.

The best trip was one specially scheduled for the West Chicago Garden Club on July 30th. Nine

participants took a leisurely tour of the West Loop, with plenty to see. Scott Hensey also led field trip for a class from Roosevelt University, which had been brought out by their instructor.

West Chicago Blooming Fest

West Chicago has its Blooming Fest celebration each spring and this year Malcolm Boyle, Bill Dawe, Patricia Ebel, Linda Fisher, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser and Monica and Steve Sentoff staffed our booth. We talked to a few candidate people, but this event hasn't been very successful in getting new volunteers; we'll see if we have any more luck at getting folks out than we have in past years.

Donor Appreciation

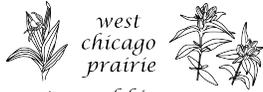
As you know, we're a pretty frugal organization, but we do need some money to keep our equipment in working order, and handle the mail and some other miscellaneous items. Luckily we have members who donate enough to cover our expenses. Many of these are members who are too far away or who aren't up to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

Commissioner Kotecki

Roger Kotecki, Forest Preserve Commissioner from our area (District 6) and one of our regular volunteers (receiving his 100-hour award this year!), has decided not to run for re-election. He has been an advocate for open space and a staunch protector of the Preserves for over 20 years. Over 4000 acres have been added to the system during his tenure, including several acquisitions to the West Chicago Prairie. Since his term runs until the end of 2012, we still have more than a year of his leadership to look forward to. We want to thank him for all his work, and will be watching carefully to see what the candidates for his seat have to say about their plans for future direction of the District.



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



west
chicago
prairie
stewardship group
3N771 Woodland Ave.
West Chicago, IL 60185

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 20	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	August 27	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Saturday	September 10	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Sunday	September 25	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Collection of grasses and forbs, also a good visit.</i>
Saturday	October 8	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	October 22	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	November 5	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 3	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 17	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.