

Executive Committee

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



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Newsletter #112

Fall 2012

President's Corner

It seems that the weather is always unusual in one way or another, but this year sets a new standard for strange. First it was warm, then cold and wet, then hot and dry, dry, dry, yet still humid. This hasn't made for very pleasant conditions until now, but the stewardship group has still been out, doing what needs to be done. In spite of the odd conditions, or maybe because of them, we're seeing some plants do better this year than they have recently. There's more of the Blazing Star and Rattlesnake Master than usual, and the Prairie Dock (as well as all the other Silphiums) is doing especially well. The upcoming Annual Meeting (see below) should be a good time to visit the preserve and have a chance to see some of these plants. I hope to see you there.

Steve

Annual Meeting

This year our annual meeting will be held on Saturday, August 25 at the parking lot at the preserve. Last year the earlier date worked out well, so we'll do that again. 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. Two of our existing board members have decided to retire from the board, Bill Dawe and JoAnn Monge. Bill has served on the board for 10 years, and JoAnn for 22! We thank them both for all of their service and advice. The remaining 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, 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, 2012. This year's recipients by category are

10 hours	Dennis Clark
25 hours	Alan Bemis Sandy Bemis
50 hours	Kyle Wiktor
200 hours	Linda Fisher Rob Kaiser
500 hours	Jim Dohren
700 hours	Malcolm Boyle
850 hours	Monica Sentoff
1450 hours	Herman Jensen
1850 hours	Marilyn Bell
2200 hours	Scott Hensey
4100 hours	Steve Sentoff

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

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

Recent Accomplishments

In spite of the incredibly hot and humid conditions, we've been keeping up with our weeding activities for the season. On May 17, Alan and Sandy Bemis, Malcolm Boyle, Marcia Dabrowski, Matt Ebelt, Patricia Ebelt, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser and Monica and Steve Sentoff pulled Dame's Rocket from the East Woodland. We also scouted the East Savanna without finding any. There were scattered patches in the south half of the East Woodland, including a largish patch by a big bend in the trail. The southernmost end of the woodland, near the mowed access road had large patches. We cleared out the outlying patches and tried to contain the heaviest areas. Unfortunately there's plenty more of this invader south of the access road, so it will be a long time before we have it under control.

Our Wednesday crew of volunteers made up of Malcolm Boyle, Jim Dohren, Scott Hensey and Steve Sentoff has been fighting more weeds, as usual. We worked on Reed-Canary Grass a bit, but because of the weather, we had a very short interval between when it came up and when it was too big to herbicide effectively. The Forest Preserve District also worked on Reed-Canary Grass this spring, and we were pleased to see how effective they had been in the savannas. Then we worked on Garden Heliotrope. In spite of the fact that we have to work on this every year, this is one of our success stories. Each year there appears to be less of this, and we can sweep the problem areas in less time. We only needed 12 volunteer-hours to do the job this year. Most recently, we've been working on the Oriental Bittersweet that has invaded. A few years ago this seemed to suddenly pop up everywhere, and we concerned that it was going to take over. But our work seems to be paying off, and we're making good progress controlling this one. We still need to check all the spots where it's been found, but the size and number of the plants is definitely decreasing. This is just another example of the value of prompt attention when an invader appears.

On July 21, we had a regularly scheduled work day, and Malcolm Boyle, Linda Fisher, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser and Steve Sentoff showed up to cut sumac in the West Loop Prairie. It seems that we can reduce the sumac by simply cutting them at this time of year, taking their energy when they're already stressed. There was a large patch north of the trail, which we "mowed"

with the brush saw. Inside the loop of the trail, there were scattered sumac. Rather than cut these with the brush saw, which would have removed a lot of desirable vegetation, we cut these by hand. Later, the Wednesday crew finished the job by hand-cutting the sumac south of the trail in the same area.

Storm Impact

You're all probably aware that we had a bad wind-storm on Sunday, July 1. West Chicago was particularly hard hit. The downtown area lost many trees and parts were without power for four days. Reed-Kepler Park seems to have taken the brunt of the storm, with many trees down and broken.

Since this is so close to the West Chicago Prairie, I thought I should check the preserve. Of course, the prairie itself had no impact, and even with the intense rain, had already soaked all the rainwater up. Checking the savannas, I found many limbs of varying sizes down. We did also lose a couple of trees. In the West Savanna, a large oak in the northwest corner came down, and a large cherry tree fell across the East Trail, running between the East Savanna and the East Woodland. There was more impact in the Railroad Savanna, which is nearest to Reed-Kepler Park. There, a particularly large oak fell, and several smaller trees, including a scarlet oak, were simply snapped off about 10 to 15 feet above the ground. It's hard to imagine the force it must take to do that.

Of course, all this is just Nature in action. Hopefully we'll see new oaks germinating in the openings, and wildlife taking advantage of the dead trees as habitat.

New Board Member: Linda Fisher



I have been a member of the Stewardship Group since the late 1990's, after I got married and moved into a house just down the street from the MacQueen entrance. I was pleasantly surprised when my neighbor told me that there was a group I could volunteer with and be able to work right in the prairie, and learn about

prairies and all the plants associated with them.

Born and raised in western Michigan, I fell in love with Nature as a kid, and earned my degree in Biology and Secondary Education at Michigan State University. There were several environment groups there, which I could volunteer with. It was very satisfying to be part of a group exerting major influences on state and local laws and regulations.

Eventually I finished an M.S. from MSU in growing vegetables organically, and then decided to move here with some fellow church members as part of a church-plant in the Chicago area.

I have taught Biology part-time at several Community Colleges in this area and have been pleased to allow my students to earn extra credit for volunteering with the Forest Preserve District.

Recently, I've been able to be part of a team monitoring dragonflies at the Prairie, and have thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Stewardship Group.

Prairie Shrubs

We spend a *lot* of time removing unwanted shrubs and brush from the prairie. Many of these are non-native species, such as honeysuckle, buckthorn and olive. We also remove invasive native species, such as gray dogwood and sumac, which have taken over areas due to the suppression of fire for many years.

But there are some desirable shrubs on the preserve, and some that we like to encourage. For example, the sumac is quite suitable at the boundaries of the site, and we leave it there as a general rule. We also keep the Blue-fruited Dogwood where it grows in the prairie. Unlike its gray cousin, this species seems to stay quite compact and doesn't continually spread into adjacent areas.

We have also intentionally added some shrubs, notably American Hazelnut. This shrub was once common across the area; some say it was the dominant shrub prior to settlement. But changes to the landscape have made it quite rare. We already had some Hazelnut on the preserve, mostly along the Prairie Path, but since we had suitable spots for it, we have added it in several places. Many of you may have worked on these projects in the past.

In a few cases, we collected and seeded in nuts. Although some of these germinated and started to grow, these patches do not seem to have gotten established.

We also have planted a number of patches from plants provided by the Forest Preserve District. With just one exception, these have gotten established and are thriving. Most of the plantings were done in the late 1990's. There are three nice patches along the trail by the MacQueen Woodland, a patch by the Railroad Savanna, four patches in the area by the West, East and South Savannas, and one patch in the Restoration Area south of the parking lot.

The one patch that seems to have disappeared was in the West End Prairie. This area was quite brushy, and may have been too much competition. We have since cleared the area, but didn't find any of the Hazelnut when we worked in the area.

Another shrub that we've tried to increase is New Jersey Tea, a nice small native plant that is actually in the same family as buckthorn. A couple were planted in 1998, and 50 more planted in 2001. These plants have taken, but seem to be especially hard hit by the deer and rabbits, even though they were protected by chicken-wire cages for a while. We continue to monitor these to see if they will start to propagate themselves and expand into the neighboring areas.

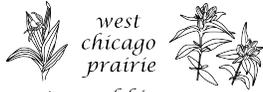
We may intentionally plant some more shrubs, especially where we want to discourage traffic, such as at the boundaries of the preserve. But we don't want to get too carried away with this—after all, we are a Prairie.

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 Andrews, Ruthanne Baird, Bob Claus, Joe Houle, Mary Kusmirek, Margo Owano and Pat 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*



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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 25	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 8	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>General seed collection, mostly forbs.</i>
Sunday	September 23	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Collection of grasses and forbs, also a good visit.</i>
Saturday	October 6	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	October 20	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	November 3	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 1	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Restoration Work Day <i>Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.</i>
Saturday	December 15	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.