

Executive Committee

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## Newsletter #118

Winter 2015

### President's Corner

We've rounded out another year of clearing brush, pulling weeds and collecting and sowing seeds at the Preserve. Read on to get the details and congratulate yourselves for all the work. In the coming year we'll be doing much of the same, and each year we make a bit more progress. We have pretty much eliminated the big dogwood clones and have gotten the honeysuckle in the savannas under control, though not gone. There will always be work to do and friends to do it with. I hope you'll get a chance to come out with us and see what a difference you are making. Best wishes in the New Year!

Steve

### Annual Meeting



Our 30th annual meeting was held on August 23. This is quite a remarkable milestone for our little group. As usual, the Forest Preserve District set up a tent shelter for us at the Preserve. Once again, we started with a great potluck picnic and then we had a fine meeting.

Malcolm Boyle presented the Treasurer's Report, and we were frugal again this year. We spent only \$441 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 \$160, which was bit less than we spent, but we still have a healthy balance to keep us going financially. 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, 2014: a total of 1023.5 hours, including 33.5 hours at Nachusa Grasslands. This is down a bit from previous years, partly due to the harsh winter conditions we had last year, as well as a somewhat reduced participation at regularly scheduled work days. The largest categories of work included clearing with 384.5 hours, monitoring with 81, and seed collecting and sowing with 184.5. The seeding hours are up a bit from usual, since we had rather nice fall conditions in 2013 and were able to collect more seed than normal.

The clearing projects of last year started out fairly typically. We cleared around Blackbird Pond and along the margin of the South Savanna. We got especially good help from a conservation club from Wheaton on the savanna project. Meanwhile the Wednesday crew was policing the honeysuckle resprouts in the savannas. But then we got walloped by the winter. We had to cancel our scheduled February 1st work day, plus a few of the Wednesday work days because the deep snow made it unreasonable to get to the work site or do much if we had gotten there. We did some work in the MacQueen Woodland and along the Prairie Path, since these areas were more accessible.

We did have very good participation at the Prairie Path clean-up project. We also had good attendance at one of our field trips, though in

general, we have many fewer people at these than we had in past years.

We also had an excellent Spring Bird Count this year. After several years of marginal weather, we finally had good conditions, and we also had a crack crew: Marilyn Bell, Herman Jensen and Mike Kalscheur (plus me to take notes). We recorded 60 species and 372 individuals.

Bob Claus gave a short talk on the role of voles and rabbits in maintaining the prairie by girdling the small stems of sprouting brush.

We then handed out the certificates to those people who earned them, though in a bit of a rush. We had checked the weather and could see that a storm was approaching. As the clouds got closer we scurried to pack up our stuff so we wouldn't get drenched. We *almost* made it.

## Wild Things Conference

Every two years a number of conservation and stewardship groups in the Chicago region organize the "Wild Things Conference." This is an excellent one-day event filled with lectures and poster sessions. The next conference is scheduled on January 31 at the UIC campus in Chicago. All the details are available at the web site: [www.habitatproject.org/WildThings2015/](http://www.habitatproject.org/WildThings2015/), and you can register there online. The hardest thing is to decide which of all the available programs you'd like to hear. If you hurry, you can register at the lower early rate. I'll be attending, and still have a couple seats available in my car, if you'd like to carpool to the event.

## Recent Accomplishments

Of course, since the Annual Meeting we haven't just been resting. We had a few seed collecting work days, with Malcolm Boyle (3), Terry Harrison, Scott Hensey (2), Mark Hubble, Mike Kalscheur, Ruth Norton, Rob Kaiser and Monica and Steve (2) Sentoff plus three students from Hinsdale South H.S. and seven scouts and eight parents from Cub Scout Pack 27 out of Geneva harvesting seed from the prairie and the savannas. It's all been prepped and stored away safely. In fact, the prairie seed has been put out already to give it a good chance to overwinter and be ready to germinate in the spring. The seeding was done by a group of ten Bartlett H.S. Students led by Malcolm Boyle, Scott Hensey and Steve Sentoff.

Much of our other work has been our continuous process of clearing invading brush. The Wednesday crew spent a few sessions working at the east end of the Sand Quarry Area to remove brush and open a channel so that fire could get into the central part of that area. In spite of the work that was done in the early 70s to remove the sand, there are a number of species in here that are especially adapted to

the thin, sandy soil. We want to make sure we don't lose these through neglect.

We also had a particularly effective work day to clear brush under two large cottonwoods in the Wolfberry Prairie. I had originally thought this would be a two-work-day job, but Malcolm Boyle, Chris Cherek, Scott Hensey, Rob Kaiser, Mike Kalscheur and Monica and Steve Sentoff (see photo) cut, stacked and herbicided all the brush in short order. We even had time for a bit of a walk out to see some of the preserve.



## 2015 Schedule of Events

Our 2015 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.*