

MARCH 1992

P. O. Box 3593  
Peoria, IL 61612

# TALLGRASS SIERRAN

## MARCH PROGRAM

Ecology, Conservation & Backpacking the Tundra of Alaska will be featured in a slide show by our very own Les Bodell Wednesday, March 18, 7:30 P.M., at Forest Park Nature Center. Les will recount his adventures on 2 trips to Unimak Island in the Aleutians and a 3rd trip to the Brooks Range.

### "LESSONS OF THE ANCIENT FOREST: EARTH WISDOM AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM"

Monday, Mar. 9, 7 p.m.  
Lakeview Museum Auditorium

Don't miss this riveting, slide illustrated talk by acclaimed wilderness lecturer LOU GOLD on the last stands of this nation's ancient forests and their imminent demise -- unless we act now!

While our attention has been on the rain-forests of Brazil, 95% of the virgin forests of the 48 states has been logged, & the timber interests are clamoring for the remaining 5% -- ONLY 1% of which is protected.

For this event we (us & the Sun Foundation) have launched a forest poster contest in the Tri-County schools. Many will be on display at Lakeview Monday.

- There will be several other displays.
- We are planning a petition and letter writing campaign.
- There is a book display in the public library and bibliography on ancient forests.
- We have environmental groups at ICC, Bradley, and ISU working on this.
- The "Lessons of the Ancient Forest" video by Lou Gold is playing twice on both the Peoria and East Peoria TV Ch. 22 (Public access). And PBS Ch. 47 in May!

We've raised about \$800 to \$900 of the funds we need to finance this. Total estimated cost is \$1,700. MORE donations are needed.

But most of all, come with your friends Monday. It's an unforgettable "web of life."  
-- Tom Edwards

## CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

We are hosting the meeting Saturday, March 14 at Hollis Park District. All members are welcome to attend. Call 697-1863 for directions.

**Sierra Club Centennial Weekend** - 4-10 Fri. afternoon through 4-12 Sun. noon. Place: Pere Marquette State Park. Camping and meals provided on a "first come" basis. Registration limited. Call Louise Freeman 618-446-0656 or downstate office 618-462-6802 for form.KBerry

## WHAT, IN HEAVEN'S NAME, ARE WE DOING TO THE WEB OF LIFE OF OUR WOODLANDS???

Sierra Club's purpose is "to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth" . . . by all legal means.

We have to ask: What is being done to our woodlands?

People who want to do something for conservation are being organized to go out to cut trees and "brush" from local and state parklands, here and throughout the state.

At first it was to cut trees and shrubs out of sites where prairie was growing. Now it is to cut into woodlands to make more room for prairie to grow -- and this is being done in the name of "woodland restoration."

Openings are being cut on ridges, hillsides, and ravines.

It is claimed that prairie-oak "savannahs" were there originally. But these woodlands are etched with old logging trails, and contain no prairie soil. Yet there are intentions of making much of the Peoria Park District's holdings a "savannah", including the 900-acres of Singing Woods.

I disagree with much more:

- This so-called restoration is being done to increase "biodiversity". It is doing the opposite. Everything but oak trees are targets of the axe and saw. (Yet in Sand Ridge State Forest even oaks are being cut for prairie).

- A partial list of the trees and shrubs that are subject to the axe is: redbud, sassafras, ash, elm, cherry, aspen, ironwood, shadblow, hawthorn,

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HEART OF ILLINOIS

Sierra Club

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To explore, enjoy and preserve the nation's forests, waters, wildlife and wilderness...

## HOW WOULD YOU RANK CONSERVATION PRIORITIES?

Below are the conservation priorities as voiced by individuals at the Jan. 21 Conservation Comm. meeting.

To rank them, in the order of your preference, send a letter with your ranking to Tom Edwards, HoI Conservation chr., 1421 N. Perry, Peoria 61603. Be sure to sign.

You can also include any other priority choices you may have besides the subjects listed at the committee meeting, which were:

-- solid waste & recycling; environmental education; soil erosion; air quality; Illinois River; energy bill; incineration; duplicate locks & higher dams on Ill. River; wetlands; pesticides; open space acquisition; transportation (airports & X-ways); update of clean water bill.

Two others involving preservation & restoration need to be differentiated:

A -- Preservation and expansion of forest and prairie as described in the proposal in this newsletter, including "forest acquisition & logging practices."

B -- "Woodlands & prairie restoration" as has been described in handouts and talks to members, which is basically to 1) cut larger openings in woodlands for prairie, & 2) convert existing woodlands to prairie-oak savannahs.

A & B are separate proposals.

You will note that HoI Sierra has done and is doing behemoth work on every one of these issues except transportation -- & that, too, as it relates to barge traffic.

-- T.E.



Virgin Forests 1620



Virgin Forests 1850



Virgin Forests 1990

## The Dwindling Numbers

- Less than 5% of the nation's original virgin forests remain today.

**THANK YOU** everybody who has helped on the newsletter assembly the last 3 years. Thank you all ever so much. -- Kathy Berry

## WHAT ARE WE DOING TO OUR WOODLANDS???

(continued from Page 1)

Juniper, walnut, wild plum, maple, sumac, cottonwood, basswood, paw paw, wafer ash, wahoo, hazel, vines, and a great many more.

-- The wildly diverse woodland wildflowers are just re-establishing themselves at places as Singing Woods and Jubilee Park after over a century of livestock grazing and logging. Now their habitat is again in danger of being overrun.

-- Hatred is being taught in regard to some trees, particularly the early succession trees. Even the stately sugar maple, called the "king of trees" in Indian lore, is being referred to as "trash", "weed", and "junk" tree. Its vigor is resented.

-- Brush is home to a wide assortment of animal life, and a major source of their food.

-- Fire kept the woody plants out of the prairies, it is claimed. But it sure isn't now, which is another reason for so much cutting in addition to burning.

-- It further fragments remaining forests, and wipes out the understory so important to the web of life. (See adjoining story). Shrubs, some of which may be rare enough themselves, are virtual non-entities.

-- Many of the places being termed "prairie" are old farm fields cut by pioneers from woodlands for pasture or crop land, & subsequently became vegetated by prairie.

-- What is being missed is that the much maligned sugar maples are filling a void in the ecosystem with the near total elimination of the American elm, once a predominant tree of Illinois woodlands, by Dutch elm disease.

-- It is even being asserted that trees foster soil erosion. My goodness, trees are the mantle with which Nature chose to cloak her mountains and ravines all across this land & every other land. She knows what she is doing.

This so-called restoration is repeating what the European pioneers did to the land. It is the type of management practiced in Shawnee and other national forests. Called "timber stand improvement", all but the "choice" species of the forest are killed. Some of these "weed" trees and shrubs (as the Pacific yew, an understory tree, was once considered, too) may be found, as the Pacific yew, to have cures for diseases as cancer.

-- And high on the scale of life, as one hiker put it, "The feeling is lost" from the places where woodlands are being cut and burned for prairie planting.

Feeling is the essence of happiness.

What we are dealing with is man's self imposed separation from Nature.

-- Tom Edwards

## PROPOSAL FOR PRESERVATION, EXPANSION, AND RESTORATION OF FOREST AND PRAIRIE

We've done a lot over the last two years. No issue, however, has been more emotional to some than that of questions raised about cutting away woodlands to establish more prairie, and culling species of trees (as the sugar maple, historically one of the major trees of Illinois) when they are judged to be out competing some oaks. And converting the many-specied forests that now exist, particularly along the riverbluff, with paririe grass-oak dotted "savannahs" on the belief of some that that is what was really here when the first European settlers arrived.

This woodland conversion to prairie is being pushed throughout the state by the Dept. of Conservation and other state groups. It would be far from the first time the experts have been mistaken.

There is an easy, happy solution:

### I. PLANT PRAIRIE IN POWER LINE RIGHT-OF-WAYS.

There are enough power line easements, through woodlands and everywhere else, to keep a lot of people busy planting prairie for the next century. Just planting them would put far more prairie within woodlands than ever before.

Advantages would be:

- It would avoid further fragmentation of our seriously dwindling forests in order to plant prairie. (Preserving our remaining large forest tracts and their understory vegetation <sup>has</sup> become a major issue, including in regard to dwindling numbers of songbirds that depend on such habitat. Also, opening woodlands opens these songbirds to parasitism by cowbirds, which is a prairie bird.
- It would stop herbiciding by the power companies to prevent woody growth in the right-of-ways.
- It provides a prairie seed source crisscrossing all areas of the state, which would be spread by birds and wind.
- It provides unending areas to test different management theories.
- Decreases maintenance of power lines.

### II. USE LAND NOW BEING FARMED BY D.O.C. AND PARK DISTRICTS TO RE-ESTABLISH BOTH PRAIRIE AND FOREST, AND TO PLANT THINGS OF CURRENT SPECIAL INTEREST, AS OAK TREES. ALSO, ACQUIRE MORE OPEN SPACE FOR THAT PURPOSE.

### III. DO DEMONSTRATION PLOTS OF "SAVANNAH" ON PLACES WHERE THE UNDERSTORY HAS ALREADY BEEN CLEARED, and big old oak (or other trees) left growing -- and where the general public can readily view them.

(Note: Such "oak groves" are numerous in the Peoria region. And in the Peoria Park District such sites exist in two major in-city parks, Bradley and Glen Oak.)

### IV. DEMONSTRATE A FOREST BURN ON AN IN-CITY SITE, as a hillside alongside the trail of Forest Park Nature Center, half of the hill to be burned and the other half left, so the general public can register its preferences. Ask the Soil Conservation Service to measure rate of erosion from respective halves. Involve people with diversity of thought.

### V. ESTABLISH NATURAL REGENERATION SITES FOR FOREST AND PRAIRIE ON SITES THAT WERE ORIGINALLY PRAIRIE OR FOREST.

-- from Tom Edwards

(Note: We already have a sweeping proposal on wetlands.)

## ENVIRONMENTAL ALERT

National Sierra Club is urging members to write to senators and representatives to urge Pres. Bush to cease the foot dragging and provide leadership at the international environmental Earth Summit in June in Rio de Janeiro.

Also, write Bush to urge him to attend the summit, and to "commit to specific timetables for reducing carbon dioxide emissions and air & water pollution, and for protecting the world's forests."

-- T.E.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING -- Celebrate the vernal equinox (first day of spring) by attending this meeting Friday, Mar. 20, 7 p.m. at S. O'Connell's house, 1609 N. Knollwood Ct.  
-- T. Edwards 676-5248

## SOIL CONSERVATION IMPETUS

About 20 farmers in the Partridge and Ric Richland Creek watershed in Woodford Co. met last month to map joint plans to prevent and slow water runoff from their lands, and start an outreach program to help more farmers switch to conservation tillage. -- T.E.



## AN OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR EDGAR ON WETLANDS POLICY

The Peoria Journal Star reported in January that you oppose the proposed Bush administration changes to the definition of wetlands. I applaud your stand on this matter. The remaining wetlands of Illinois are far too valuable to turn over to developers.

The Journal article also indicated you felt that more scientific study is needed on this issue. While I'm not against further research on wetlands, a definitive study on wetlands policy has been conducted recently by the National Research Council ("Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems: Science, Technology, and Public Policy," Committee on Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems, NRC, Nov. 1991). This report calls for expanded wetlands protection and reclamation.

I suspect you are already fully aware of the report's contents, and your call for more study was an attempt to placate farmers and developers. I continue to be astounded by the crass duplicity of groups such as the Ill. Farm Bureau. I have heard Farm Bureau representatives speak at length about their commitment to environmental protection through improved farming practices. Then they turn around and promote a policy that will inevitably lead to degraded water quality in our state. Please, do not follow these people's advice. They wish to fill their pockets in the short term. Your responsibility is to the long-term health of all citizens of this state.

Sincerely,  
Joseph A. Laszlo

**Outings March 25, 7 p.m.** See the latest Lakeview exhibit with photographs of earth taken by astronauts. Refreshments and light intellectual conversation afterwards.

• **March 13, 6:30 Outings Committee meeting.** We will also plan a family outing!

• **April 7, 6:30 Friendly get-together at Peoria Pizza Works** on Prospect to help assemble of the newsletter. Fresh faces and staplers needed. Jan Hoyer

• **April 3, 4, 5 Shawnee National Forest- Spring Trip-** View the beauty of the Little Grand Canyon, 1000 year old cypress trees, along with the results of logging at Fairview, and areas scheduled for logging in 92. Camp with us at Giant City State Park, or call ahead for lodging. 20 person limit, with advance notification required. Call Eric or Jan at 694-2732.

**The challenge of restoration** is to try to hang on to the last of the best of our flora and fauna. The problems they face are many. Exotic, invasive species which lack natural controls are a threat. Invasion of mesic species into dry upland areas results in shading, which can be deadly to many woodland/savannah flowers, which are sun loving.

Restoration varies across the nation. Locally, controlled burns provide one way of restoring the context of cyclical fire and thereby enhancing the success of what's left of our native flora.

This is one reason why restoration is one of the Sierra Club's missions. We can do something to protect rare and endangered species. This is one of the primary missions of the Sierra Club and why many chapters are actively involved.

If interested in learning about the Sierra Clubs involvement in restoration, attend the SC Chapter meeting in Peoria on March 14. Call Eric at 694-2732 for time and place.

Dale Goodner- member.

**OUTING: Sun 3-22, Conservation Comm. trip to the virgin woods & resplendent wild flowers of Funk's Grove. Meet at 12N Unitarian Church prk.lot. S. O'Connell 676-5479 or T. Edwards 676-5248. TE**

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## \$\$YOUR MONEY AND YOU\$\$

You've already put your "money where your mouth is" on your conservation & environmental beliefs by supporting the Sierra Club. Now it's time to go one step further - to realize that how and where you spend your money can make a positive difference in the world we live and leave as a heritage to future generations. Instead of overwhelming you with too much change, one step at a time will be easier and get better results on your road to becoming an environmental shopper.

Keep in mind, there are no perfect products or companies. Everything produced has an impact on the environment. However, most definitely, some products are a step in the right direction for a healthier planet.

The first habit to change is to start paying attention to packaging. Too many products we buy are overpackaged with layers of paper, plastic, & cardboard, etc., with the sole purpose of getting you - the consumer - to buy the product within. Who bears the cost of the packaging? You do, in the purchase price & in the environmental impact caused by the overpackaging.

Try to start making choices in you spending & look for the product that is not over packaged. Whenever possible, advise the stores you frequent, the distributors, & the producers why you will no longer buy products that are overpackaged. While you are noticing packaging try to buy what can be reused and/or recycled, is made with recycled content & start to recycle! Look for more \$ tips in future issues. Luan Railsback

## \*\*\*\*MARK YOUR CALENDAR\*\*\*\*

- |       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| MARCH | 9  | Lou Gold 7pm Lakeview Aud.                          |
|       | 13 | Outings Comm. Meeting                               |
|       | 14 | Chapter Meeting(see front page)                     |
|       | 17 | Election - Vote Green!                              |
|       | 18 | Monthly SC Meeting 7:30 FPNC                        |
|       | 24 | EX COM 316 Barrington Rd. 7pm                       |
| APRIL | 1  | Newsletter Deadline<br>705 E. Republic 61603        |
|       | 3  | Newsletter Paste-up 7pm<br>Johnson Moving & Storage |
|       | 7  | Newsletter Assembly 6:30<br>Pizza Works             |
| MAY   | 16 | Garage Sale 705 E. Republic                         |

**EARTH DAY '92** Environmental Fair will be held 4-26 at Northwoods Mall from 12-5. It will be a culmination of Earth Week activities & consist of informational booth of organizations & businesses with environmental entertainment by local schools & groups. Various events will be held through the week & on Earth Day, 4-22. More info call Luan Railsback 685-2866/682-8830 LR  
**FRIENDS OF THE ROCK ISLAND TRAIL**

Workdays: 4-4-92 and 5-2-92

meet at the trail office in Wyoming at 9 a.m. As you enter Wyoming on Rt. 91, the office is on your left between IDOT and Magnussen Chev. The office is in the rear of the green and white bldg. Paul 695-2228 or Chris 691-2246.

\*\*\*\*MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH & BIKE RIDE\*\*\*\* May 10

## ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

The Political Action Committee of the Ill. Chapter has endorsed the following Congressional candidates: Collins, Cox, Durbin, Evans, Faywell, Russo, Sangmeister, & Yates. The League of Conservation Voters proenvironment ratings for Members of Congress and the U.S. Senate are: Dist. 17 Evans 100%; Dist. 18 Michel 25%; Dist. 19 Bruce 88%; Dist. 20 Durbin 63%; Senator Dixon 42%.



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682-8830  
697-3211  
691-9643  
676-5248

EXCOM 1992  
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