

# Tallgrass Sierran

May/June 2000 Volume 28 No. 3

THE HEART OF ILLINOIS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB ♦ P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 ☎ (309) 745-1920

## HOI Group Meetings

WED  
MAY 17

**Nepal: Land and Culture**  
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.



Anne Desjardins will present a program of slides and commentary on the mountainous Asian country of Nepal. Ms. Desjardins, presently a research chemist at the Northern Regional Laboratory in Peoria, taught science in Nepal from 1971 to 1973 and has made four other visits to the country since. She is planning yet another trip for the spring of this year. After Nepal changed to a democracy in 1991, tourism flourished and has largely been responsible for the breakdown of class bondage. Nepal has two principle cultures, Hindu and Tibetan. Ms. Desjardins will discuss the very different land stewardship ethic of these two cultures. (This presentation was rescheduled from January.) *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED  
JUNE 21

**Annual Potluck Picnic & White Elephant Auction**  
Detweiller Park - Moose Shelter, 6:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual summer potluck picnic, presentation of the **Conservationist of the Year Award**, and fundraising auction of unusual, useful, and tasty items donated by our members. Bring a main dish or other food to share, plus your own table service. Iced tea and lemonade will be provided.

This year's picnic will be held at the **Moose Shelter at the south end of Detweiller Park, Peoria**. Enter the park from Rt. 29 and follow Detweiller Drive toward the bluff. Turn left before ascending the bluff and follow the park road to the far south end of the park. Turn right at the Moose shelter sign. Or, from Knoxville Ave. (Rt. 40) take Detweiller Drive east, turn right at the park entrance sign, and then turn right twice immediately after descending the bluff. If you'd

like, don't forget an item to donate to the auction. *And bring a friend! Everyone is welcome!*



## Peoria City Council to Vote on the Future of Rock Island Trail Extension

June 6<sup>th</sup> at City Hall

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

The Peoria City Council will again take up the issue of extending the Rock Island Trail at their regular Tuesday night Council Meeting on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:15 p.m. at the Peoria City Hall, 419 Fulton Street, downtown Peoria. At their February 29<sup>th</sup> meeting the Council deferred the trail extension to allow more time with negotiations for western rail access to Pioneer Park. Please write and call Mayor Bud Grieves and the members of the Council to affirm your support for a public hiking and bicycling trail on the Kellar Branch Line. It is essential that we keep lobbying for the trail extension.

### City of Peoria - Elected Officials

Bud Grieves (Mayor)	125 SW Jefferson Ave, 61602	671-1011
<b>City Council</b>		
Jim Ardis	6141 N. Evergreen Circle, 61614	690-4032
Chris Duncan II	314 Madison Park Ter., 61605	673-0673
Camille Gibson	1627 W. Columbia Ter., 61606	673-7289
Charles Grayeb	510 W. High St., 61605	676-2913
John Morris	4104 N. Chelsa Place, 61614	686-3944
Patrick Nichting	10507 N. Sleepy Hollow Rd., 61615	692-5580
Gary Sandberg	1810 N. Bigelow St., 61604	682-2564
Gail Thetford	1126 E. Fair Oaks, 61603	686-7151
Eric Turner	6212 N. Teal Wood Circle, 61615	691-2537
William Spears	2225 W. Overhill Rd., 61615	688-0960



## Bear Mine Hearing

By RALPH GINN

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) conducted a public hearing on March 7, 2000 to receive oral and written comments on a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit application from Silvercreek Construction Company. Silvercreek began mining coal from Bear Mine, located 2 miles north of Farmington, IL, in June of 1999 without a NPDES permit.

Approximately 35 persons were in attendance and many of them spoke against issuance of the permit. No one spoke in favor of issuing the permit. IEPA called the hearing at the request of Heart of Illinois Sierra Club and Citizens Organizing Project (a Knox County based group). Joyce Blumenshine and Ralph Ginn of HOI spoke of our concerns about adding pollutants to waters (Spoon River, Littler's Creek, Illinois River) that have already been designated as impaired ■ see page 2 ■

■ Bear Mine, from page 1 ■ waters by the IEPA. In addition, we questioned the environmental fitness of a company that would operate without the required permits. We also submitted our comments in writing.

In more recent news on this issue, Knox County State's Attorney Paul Mangieri and Illinois Attorney General James Ryan filed a complaint on March 27 in the Ninth Judicial Court against Silvercreek. The complaint consists of four charges dealing with water pollution, discharge of water without a permit, operation of a mine without a permit, and soil erosion. This complaint may be mute in that Bear Mine has not been mining coal for the last three months. There are substantive indications that economic problems have forced the shutdown.



The HOI Executive Committee is seeking nominations for the **Heart of Illinois Conservationist of the Year**. The nominee does not have to be a Sierra Club member. This individual's conservation efforts should have been pursued on a volunteer basis, not for pay. Your nomination should include a brief explanation of why you feel this person should be considered. The deadline for nominations is June 14. The winner will be announced at our annual potluck picnic on June 21. Send nominations to **Joseph Laszlo, c/o HOI Sierra Club, 330 S. Barnewolt Dr., Peoria, IL 61604; or call 637-4692.**



### **Burning the Big Prairie at Jubilee State Park**

The Prairie Dawgs, which include HOI Sierra Club and Nature Conservancy volunteers, burned the "Big Prairie" section (approx. 65 acres) at Jubilee State Park on April 1. Periodic burns are required to maintain prairie ecology. The Prairie Dawgs meet the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month. If you are interested in volunteering, call Hal Gardner at 446-9792 for more information. Photo: Richard Klatt

## **Letters and Calls Needed to Help Shawnee Forest!**

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Please write or call Illinois Senators Dick Durbin and Peter Fitzgerald, and Representative Ray LaHood (or your area U.S. Representative), and urge them to support wilderness designation for Burke Branch, Ripple Hollow, and Camp Hutchins in the Shawnee National Forest, southern Illinois. These three areas have exceptional natural values, but are being ruined by ATV use, uncontrolled horse back riding, and other abuses that are causing significant habitat destruction, erosion, and loss of native species. The Burke Branch area contains 23 different habitats for plant and animal life, and it was identified as a roadless area in the RARE II Roadless Study in 1979. It contains a unique type of seep spring, and rare and federally endangered plants. The Ripple Hollow section has rugged topography with steep slopes and deep ravines. Old growth forest in this section is especially in need of protection. The Camp Hutchins area is adjacent to other areas that have already been declared wilderness. It is essential to protect areas with the federally designation Wilderness status so that enough unfragmented forest can be preserved to help the bird and wildlife species that can only survive in large tracts of tree canopy or undisturbed areas. Wilderness designation prohibits building roads, buildings, or parking lots. It also prohibits logging and motorized vehicles. Management must be conducted with minimum disturbance, and no new mineral rights can be sold. The Shawnee Forest is Illinois' only National Forest, and these three areas need wilderness protection before they are ruined forever. Please call or write Senators Durbin and Fitzgerald, and Representative LaHood. Request that they support wilderness designation for Burke Branch, Ripple Hollow, and Camp Hutchins in the Shawnee Forest.

#### **Senator Richard Durbin**

364 Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone 202-224-2152; Springfield 1-880-252-8563;

#### **Senator Peter Fitzgerald**

555 Dirksen Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone 202-224-2854; Springfield 217-492-5089

#### **Representative Ray LaHood**

329 Cannon House Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone 202-225-6201; Peoria 309-671-7027

## **\$1,025 Raised for Aldo Leopold Education Project**

By RALPH GINN

Heart of Illinois group has raised \$525 for the Hult Education Center's Aldo Leopold Project, and Illinois Chapter contributed an additional \$500, for a total Sierra Club donation of \$1,025.

Hult will soon be developing a twelve-learning stations, "hands on," environmental project on a one acre plot adjacent to the Hult Education Center located at 5215 Knoxville Avenue, Peoria, Illinois. This project will be based on the environmental principles described by Aldo Leopold in his book, "A Sand County Almanac." Use of the Leopold Trail will be available to school children and families throughout central Illinois. WELL DONE, SIERRA CLUB!

# GMO'S...THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

By RALPH GINN

The title from Clint Eastwood's 1970's movie may describe the current controversy over GMO's (genetically modified organisms) pretty well. In Illinois the two most commonly used GMO'S are Bt corn that produces a toxin that kills the European corn borer, and Roundup Ready soybeans that have the Roundup (weed-killer) gene and are resistant to Roundup herbicide. Cotton and potato crops have also been genetically engineered.

The good side of GMO'S is that they require less pesticides and herbicides. There is also evidence that yields are higher and they allow the farmer to make fewer applications to his fields, thus savings on gas, oil and machinery maintenance. The bad side of GMO's is formidable. Each and every cell of the plant carries the modified gene. While there is no scientific evidence that human consumption is harmful, there is evidence that GMO'S do harm other organisms. The Monarch butterfly for instance. A study out of Cornell University reports that the pollen from Bt corn, landing on milkweed plants, can kill Monarchs. Studies have also indicated that other beneficial insects, such as honeybees, ladybugs, and lacewings may be harmed.

Gary Rolf, speaking at a GMO forum in Brimfield, IL, sponsored by Illinois Farm Bureau, in Jan. 2000, listed several concerns that he shares with his colleagues from the school of

agriculture at the University of Illinois: transfer of the gene to wild populations of pest species, transport of decomposition products downstream, GMO'S could result in increased marginal land farming, development of resistance in pests, impact on organic farming (GMO pollen is very difficult to control), harmful effects on soil microorganisms that are essential to soil fertility. Mr. Rolf expressed grave concern that many of these potential problems with GMO'S have either, not been researched at all, or inadequately researched.

Ugly is the decision that farmers face this spring. Gerber and Heinz (baby food), and Frito-Lay, are not buying GMO products. ADM is not accepting GMO'S at some of their plants. Other companies appear to be on the verge of following suit. Europeans are boycotting GMO products as are some Asians. Farmers can get a premium of 10 to 20 cents a bushel for non-GMO corn and soybeans. In 1996 when GMO's were introduced to the seed market, farmers fell in love and rapidly expanded their use, in spite of higher seed prices. In 1999 the sharp increase in GMO plantings leveled, and estimates are that the use of genetically engineered seeds will decline 25% this year. Given the environmental questions and lack of research on the long term effects of GMO'S, this decline is welcome.

## Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Needs Your Help!

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Please phone and write Senator Peter Fitzgerald to ask that he be a cosponsor of Senate Bill 867, which will designate the coastal area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as a wilderness for permanent protection. This small section of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is on the only remaining arctic coastal plain that has not been opened to oil exploration and drilling. Thousands of caribou and birds depend on this area for their spring migrations, where they calve and nest. Senator Fitzgerald voted against Republican budget provisions that would include funds from oil drilling on this refuge coastal plane as part of federal budget revenues. The Republicans tried this tactic as a way to get the coastal refuge opened to drilling. Senator Fitzgerald deserves our thanks for his concern about the refuge, and we need to urge him to be a cosponsor of S.B. 867. Senator Richard Durbin has been a leader in efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and you can call to leave a message of thanks for him at 202-224-2152. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, "America's Last Great Wilderness," is a national treasure, and deserves permanent protection. **Contact Senator Fitzgerald at 202-224-2854, and write to him at 555 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. His Springfield office phone number is 217-492-5089.**



☒ **Yes, I want to help safeguard our children's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.**

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Contributions, gifts or dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

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# HOI Group Calendar

## May

- 7 Forest Park Spring Hike, 1p.m.**  
SUN We'll hit the trails at Forest Park to check out the Spring flower specials. Those who have any specific knowledge of this location will be encouraged to lead. Meet at the Nature Center at 1p.m. For more information, call Richard Klatt at 274-3792.
- 10 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**  
WED Cindy and Norman Ewing's home, 3336 W. Brookside Dr., Peoria. Call 686-4122 for directions.
- 17 Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**  
WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Anne Desjardins, Nepal: Land and Culture.* Everyone is welcome!



## June

- 11 Jubilee Hike, 1 p.m.**  
SUN We'll hike some more of Jubilee Park - maybe we'll make it up to the "Big Prairie" section to check out the prairie growth after the April burn. In any event, the pie break at the "B" afterwards will engender smiles. Meet at the Jubilee College State Historic Site parking lot. Call Richard Klatt at 274-3792 for more information.
- 14 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**  
WED John Wosik's home, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct., Dunlap. Call 243-2230 for directions.
- 17 Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup, 9 a.m.**  
SAT Route 26 volunteers meet at the Total Gas Station at the Rt. 26 & 116 intersection. Route 40 volunteers meet at the Fry Farm at the intersection of Rt. 40 and Singing Woods Road. Gloves and hard-soled shoes are recommended. Sorry, no helpers under 10 years due to safety concerns. For more information, or if you have not viewed the safety video (required), call Grayce Haworth at 246-8397.

Other 2000 Adopt-A-Highway dates:  
Sept. 16 • Nov. 18

- 21 Annual Potluck Picnic & White Elephant Auction, 6:30 p.m.**  
WED Detweiller Park, Moose picnic shelter. See front page for more details.
- 23 Newsletter Deadline**  
FRI Send articles for July and August to: John Wosik, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct., Dunlap, IL 61525, or johnwosik@home.com
- 24 Hike & Lunch at Larry Johnson's Cabin in the Woods, 10 a.m.**  
SAT Hike will be on regrown strip-mine land. Meet at 10:00 a.m. in the parking lot at United Van Lines/Johnson Moving & Storage, 901 S. Bosch Pkwy., Peoria (located on the way to the Peoria Airport: turn north off Airport Road at the corner where CEFCU is and go to the end of Bosch Parkway). If enough people show up we will carpool to the cabin, located south of Bartonville, out in the country. Mud type boots and clothes should be worn if it has been raining. For more information phone Larry Johnson at 697-0900.

- 29 Newsletter Mailing, 7 p.m.**  
THU Peoria Pizza Works; Everyone welcome

**Other Events:** (Not sponsored by the Sierra Club but provided as a public service.)

### Just Say NO! to Biotech Food

**Saturday, May 13**  
Peoria PEACE, Sierra Club members, and all interested individuals are welcomed to join in a sidewalk gathering to show concern regarding genetically modified foods and the current American agriculture policy. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Peoria Civic Center and bring signs. For more information call Joyce at 688-0950.



### Forest Park Nature Center Book Club

May 23, 7:30pm - *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson  
June 27, 7pm - *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold

Copies of all chosen books may be purchased at the Trailhead Nature Store at a 25% discount. For more information, call Kristin Jacobson at 686-3360.



### Prairie Dawgs Work Crew

Work includes prairie burns, brush cutting, eradicating alien plants, native plant seeding, and planting root stock. Crews meet the 1st & 3rd Saturdays at 9 a.m. at Hal Gardner's old house about 2.4 miles west of Jubilee-Princeville Rd. on Jubilee-Brimfield Rd. Call Hal Gardner at 446-9792 for directions.



### Friends of the Rock Island Trail Workdays

Call Melinda Kitchens at 243-5082 or 695-2228 for more information on future workdays. Everyone is welcome!

## Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

**HOTLINE:** Local Meetings & Outings • Action Alerts (309)  
• Public Contacts • Leave Messages 745-1920

### Executive Committee

Chair	Rudy Habben	685-5605
Vice-Chair	Norman Ewing	686-4127
Secretary	Joseph Laszlo	637-4692
Treasurer	Grayce Haworth	246-8397
Conservation Chair	Ralph Ginn	274-3289
Outings Chair	Richard Klatt	274-3792
Newsletter Editor / Chapter Del	John Wosik	243-2230
Membership Chair	Cindy Ewing	686-4122
Alternate Chapter Delegate	Joyce Blumenshine	688-0950
I-TAN	Mary Bodell	745-5479
Calendar Sales	Chris Meydam	682-0549

HEART OF ILLINOIS

*Sierra Club*

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