



Sauk-Calumet Group

August 2023 Newsletter Volume 42, Issue 2

Summer Fun and the “New Abnormal”

by Dorelle Ackermann



I’m sure many of us look forward to the summer months when we can get out and enjoy nature. Right? Has the July weather or air quality alerts squelched that idea for you? The slogan of the Sierra Club is: "Enjoy, explore, and protect the planet." I cannot enjoy and explore when this July 1/3 of the US population was under heat alerts and more than 63 million Americans experienced triple-digit temperatures. The Canadian wildfires created “very unhealthy for everyone” air quality alerts for the Chicago area. That leaves me with the need to protect the planet.

Renown climate scientist Michael Mann refers to this as “the new abnormal” ... that average global temperatures will keep going up until we stop putting Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere. Both our individual action and advocacy can prevent “the new abnormal” from being our default future.

I would like to call on all Sauk Calumet Sierra Club members to take action and do what we do best.... be leaders in advocating for a sustainable planet. If not us, who? If you are ready to do this, please join the “Pachamama Alliance Chicagoland Co-hearts” in taking climate action. In collaboration with Sauk Calumet Sierra Club, the Pachamama Co-hearts work locally to present climate education, suggest individual actions and equally important, advocate for community, corporate, local, state and federal government actions. For those of you who are 55 or older, the co-hearts will be offering an



8-week course through the Renaissance Corner Academy at the Tinley Park campus of Moraine Valley Community College. Classes begin Friday, September 8th and registration information can be found at: <http://www.renol.org> For more information contact us at: pachamamacohearts@gmail.com.

Check Out Will County Forest Preserve's Take It Outside Challenge!

by Portia Gallegos

Do you live close to Will County? Do you enjoy the outdoors? Of course, you do, you're a Sauk-Cal Sierra Club member! If you haven't heard about the [Take It Outside Challenge](#), I highly recommend trying this Forest Preserve District of Will County program. I have been having a great time this spring and summer by completing "missions" through the Challenge. To participate, you download the Goosechase app onto your smartphone. It's a free app, available through the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. Then, choose the Take It Outside Challenge from all the Goosechase options. The Challenge, a yearlong program that ends on December 31, 2023, gives you the opportunity to earn points by answering questions about nature, finding certain items - such as moss on a log, or a purple coneflower - and visiting certain forest preserves. Each item you complete is a "mission". For me, it's been a great motivator to hike my local forest preserves more often and explore some new preserves. I didn't realize the Rock Run Greenway had so many lovely wetlands, and it's less than 8 miles from my home. I'd been meaning to visit Joliet Junior College's woodland restoration for years, but finally did so because I could earn more than 50 points by completing three different missions. The Challenge does offer prizes, but the greatest reward is the time spent outdoors, enjoying our beautiful natural world. Try it out and let me know what you think!

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Tinley Park Earth Day Event

by Gregg Ott & Kathy Van Kampen

The Sauk Calumet Group had a table at the Tinley Park Earth Day event.

The event was indoors, and it was geared towards kids. There was an animated storyteller reading aloud to the youngsters who had crayons and paper to draw the things mentioned in the story. Despite the rough weather outside, this event had a steady stream of people looking for information about ways to protect our planet. We handed out native wildflower seeds and answered questions about the Sierra Club. Our most popular item was

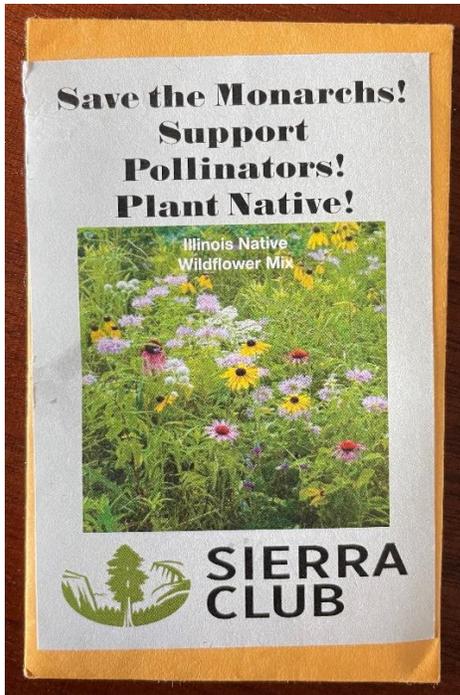
the Butterfly ink stamp, and it wasn't just the kids that asked for the stamp on the back of their hands. Several people were familiar with the Sierra Club, and a few knew about the Sauk Calumet Group. Since everyone was here to celebrate Earth Day, we encouraged everyone to consider joining the Sierra Club.



New Lenox Earth Day Event

by Samantha Bretz

It was a brisk sunny morning, filled with intermittent hail, graupel, and rain. A true peacocking of Mother Nature on her day - Earth Day. The Sauk Calumet Group of the Sierra Club Illinois showcased their chapter at the New Lenox Earth Day event on April 22, 2023. Despite the moody weather, folks interested in climate and sustainability came out to participate in activities and educational presentations. The Sierra Club Sauk Calumet Group handed out native wildflower seed packets, with a table full of information about upcoming events and a game to learn about emissions. Every day is Earth Day, we recognize this every time we step outside, breathe the air, consume food and water, and bloom together through the changing of seasons.



If you have any interest in becoming a member of the Sierra Club or would like to donate to an organization catalyzing positive change, these QR codes will take you towards those important actions.



SIERRA CLUB
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DONATE TODAY!



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JOIN TODAY!

CAP AND RUN! Lincoln Stone Quarry

by Dorelle Ackermann

I honestly thought we had resolved the Coal Ash issue when we passed the Illinois Coal Ash Bill in 2019. So, I was surprised when asked by the Illinois Chapter of Sierra Club to attend an EPA hearing seeking public input to strengthen and close loopholes in the 2015 Federal Coal Combustion Residuals (CCR) rule. Thank goodness Sierra Club is vigilant in following legislation both federal and state. Unfortunately, I was in isolation with COVID and could not attend the hearing but that did give me time to research the progress, or lack of progress regarding the coal ash pits at the Lincoln Stone Quarry. Let me share some background details in the hope that some of us who live in Will County might be aware of the issue and choose to support the community directly impacted by the coal ash. Since the early 1960s,



Lincoln Stone Quarry, middle left, is located less than a mile away from residential homes. NRG has proposed plans to cap the quarry, leaving the ash in place. Credit: Google Earth

Lincoln Stone Quarry was used to dump coal ash from two power plants on the Des Plaines River. The quarry now holds over six million tons of toxic coal ash in unlined pits. As the “Google Earth” photo shows, this pit sits near the banks of the Des Plaines River. On August 27, 2019, I attended a presentation by NRG Energy to explain to the community how the company would clean up the local coal ash pits. I read and photographed their many glossy posters that showed what a great and compliant company they were. Clearly, according to them, the only logical answer

was to “cap” the pits, and the community should trust that they would never leak. I was astounded by how one sided the presentation appeared. According to the glossy posters, the community would have to be filled with idiots to choose removal. Perhaps that’s why NRG was totally unprepared for the community not buying what they were selling. The local residents did not want to live with the possibility of ground water contamination, and if you saw the tap water that one resident brought with him (a rusty yellow color) you would agree, I’m sure. Now, four years later, NRG continues to peddle what is sadly referred to as “cap and run” instead of removal of the coal ash that contains arsenic, boron, lithium and molybdenum. Removal would cost more than ten times the cost of cap and run but that is not why NRG favors capping (no comment). Instead, they say the process would take 20 years to complete, with a truck passing by local homes every 5 to 10 minutes. Does this low-income minority neighborhood need to accept 20 years of trucking toxic chemicals out of their community in

order to have safe drinking water? Earthjustice senior attorney Jenny Cassel recognizes the injustice of this. “We know this community has already been bombarded with trucks and bombarded with other pollution sources. That’s unfortunately the classic picture of what disproportionately burdened communities must put up with...” Sarah Aie, a graduate student, and environmental journalist from Northwestern University wrote an article for the Chicago Investigative Project and concluded by saying “In coming months, state regulators will decide whether to approve NRG’s closure plans for Lincoln Stone Quarry. The results may lead to a public comment period or litigation from environmental groups. Hence Joliet’s water future — that of municipal water and private well water — is in the hands of local government and regulatory agencies.” So, here’s my ask of my fellow Sauk Calumet Sierra Club members: let’s join together and support our neighbors by contacting Hannah Lee Flath, hannahlee.flath@sierraclub.org and getting updates on this important issue.

iNaturalist: An Online Nature Community

by Patrick Coffey

If you love nature and you can use a cell phone or a camera, iNaturalist may be the thing for you. It’s an online community of nature lovers, who take photographs and pool their knowledge to identify the species in those photographs. Just download the app to a cell phone or tablet. You can also access the iNaturalist website on the internet. I like using the website from my PC as it has more functions that way. Take a photo on your phone or save photos from a camera to a disc. Then upload your photos to the iNaturalist site. It’s easy. Some people use iNaturalist just to access the site’s online identification software. Just take a photo and ask iNaturalist, What’s this? It will give you some likely guesses. You can use iNaturalist to do more complicated things too. This summer I set up a project on iNaturalist to study the insects on the Old Plank Road Trail in Matteson where I live. I upload the photos (from a camera disc), and people on iNaturalist try to identify the insects for me. iNaturalist, like eBird and some other online sites, are great communities of dedicated people trying to advance our knowledge of the natural world. In the long run, knowing what we have out there helps us to know how we can conserve it. There are many nature related sites online that can help you engage more with nature. iNaturalist is just one of the biggest, and it covers all plants and animals. So, no matter what you like in nature, try iNaturalist and see if it can take you to the next level. Here’s the iNaturalist website: <https://www.inaturalist.org/> Or, to download the app, just go to your App Store and search “iNaturalist”. iNaturalist is a free app.

The Sauk Calumet Group is asking everyone who reads this newsletter to help us decide how to do our monthly meetings. Before Covid in 2020, all our meetings were in person at the Frankfort Library. Over the last 3 years we have done all our meetings on Zoom. We found it easier to get speakers to agree to join us online during this time. We also missed seeing each other in person over the past three years. We are asking everyone to let us know which option would make you more likely to attend our monthly meetings. Please send your response to sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

- A) Zoom
- B) In Person at Frankfort Library
- C) Hybrid – a combination of a Zoom option of the In Person presentation at the library

If You See Something, Write Something

by Gregg Ott & Ann Baskerville

Below is a great example of what you can do if you see or read about proposals that might negatively affect the environment where you live. Do some research online to find the local agency that must approve the proposal and send them a list of your concerns. Be polite and thorough while listing your issues with the proposed project. You should always leave your name and contact information for a possible reply. You can also send your letter to local newspapers as possible Op-Ed articles.

Dear Members of the Will County Board,

We are writing to express our concern about the proposal to construct and operate a petroleum products terminal connection pipeline to barge transportation facility in Lockport. This project is identified as zoning case number ZC-23-023.

We share concerns raised by community members regarding how this project may impact safety and the environment. For example, how will local emergency response be implemented in the case of a leak or accident? The 9th Street bridge is the site of frequent traffic backups, how would traffic be handled in the case of an accident? Will local emergency response agencies need to purchase any additional equipment to be prepared to respond to this facility?

Furthermore, the application mentions the need to demolish an old grain facility. How will community members be notified of any demolition? What dust mitigation measures will County staff require?

It is our understanding that the last community meetings regarding this project were held in 2015. The best practice would be for the County to require a community meeting before a vote where residents could ask questions of the developer. It is somewhat uncommon for a project of this magnitude to come before the County Board, and the County should make every effort to inform members of the community that you are considering this project. A community meeting would also allow the public to inquire about similar projects the developer has completed, in order to assess the level of experience the developer has with a project of this magnitude.

Finally, a community meeting would allow residents the chance to inquire about the benefits that may or may not come to Will County from this project. Residents need the chance to weigh costs and benefits of any project, and to have the chance to understand how the County plans to assess taxes for any new project.

Considering the magnitude of this project and the potential impacts, we ask the County Board to allow for more public process and to require the developer to hold a community meeting where residents living near the project are informed of the meeting via postal mail.

Sincerely,

Ann Baskerville, on behalf of the Sauk-Calumet Group of the Sierra Club

Editor's Note: Unfortunately, the Will County Board voted to approve this project. But don't let that discourage you from writing your own letter on future issues that concern you.

The First Sauk Calumet Group Hike of the Summer

by Gregg Ott

The Sauk Calumet Group's first hike of the summer was at the Gensburg-Markham Prairie in July. This is one of five prairie remnants that make up the Indian Boundary Prairies just south of Chicago. This area is the largest remaining high-quality grassland in Illinois. We had beautiful weather for hiking in the prairie today. Due to illness, Ed Max couldn't lead the hike. So Pat Coffey led the hike but asked to make this a group effort. The group of twelve was enthusiastic and helped identify not only the wide variety of plants but the birds and insects as well. Since several people were identifying the plants, it was easier for the novices like me to learn about the prairie plants. It really changes how you look at the prairie when someone gets excited to see something rarely found on a hike in this area. Everyone was happy to share with the group whenever a rare plant was discovered. Editor's Note: I took the group photo. Karen Garrett was kind enough to share the other three wonderful photos.

Pat talking about Gensburg-Markham Prairie



Skipper on Phlox

Walking Stick



Halloween Pennant Dragonfly



The August Sauk Calumet Group Hike at Two Cemetery Prairies

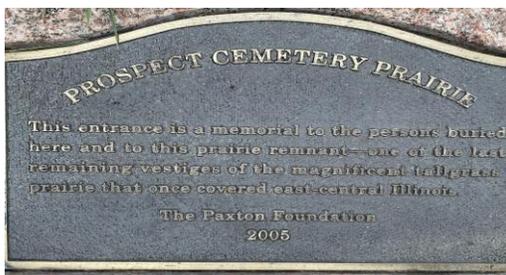
by Gregg Ott

August 13th was an overcast day as we drove south down I-57 to our first hike at the Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve. The highlight of this site is that part of this Prairie remnant has never been plowed. It has been a prairie since before Europeans settled here. As we hiked through the prairie's 130 different species of flowers and grasses, we heard the Prairie Cicadas singing. The site steward, Terry Davis, led us through the prairie answering our questions and pointing out some of her favorite sections of the prairie. Once again, we had a knowledgeable group that was excited to be walking through an original mesic black soil prairie. Everyone stopped for lunch at Pells Park in Paxton. This gave us a chance to get acquainted with our fellow prairie aficionados. It was a short drive to Prospect Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve. This high-quality original prairie is a five-acre remnant of tall grass prairie that once covered east-central Illinois. Of the nearly 80 species of native plants that live in this prairie, 21 of them occur nowhere else in the county. Unlike the first hike which had a prairie around the cemetery, this prairie is an unmarked cemetery and a rare black oak grove. Our guide for this hike was Bob Reber. As Bob walked us through the prairie his lifelong passion for this place was obvious to all of us. The questions and answers covered the identification of plants but also covered deeper issues of land management over centuries and how we must focus on them today. What started out as a day of walking through prairies trying to learn plant names, ended with me wondering about what we have done to all the land around this small prairie. As we walked back to our cars it began to rain. I thanked Mother Nature for holding off the rain until we were done spending time in her beautiful prairies.



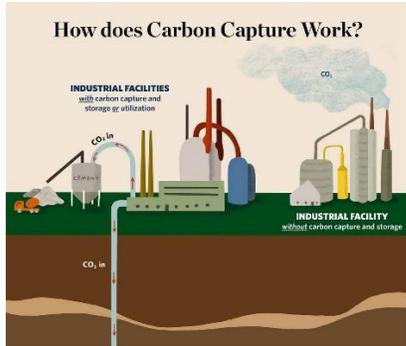
A group photo at the gate to Prospect Cemetery Prairie

Bob Reber talking to our group during our hike in the prairie.



Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group Meetings Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 pm on the second Monday of every month except for June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public. **The September 11th meeting will take place via Zoom. An email will be sent the week before each meeting, asking you to RSVP. A second email will be sent to those who plan to attend with the instructions and connection information for our Zoom conference. Starting in October we plan on having the meetings at the Frankfort Library. We will send details by email about the decision on whether the meetings will be online and in person. Please check on the [Sauk Calumet Sierra Club website](#) and [Sauk Calumet Group Facebook page](#) for the latest information on our meetings.



September 11 - "Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS): The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." Pam Richart, lead organizer for the Coalition to Stop CO2 Pipelines, will speak to us about the status of CCS in Illinois, and what you need to know about the reality of CCS.



October 9 - "Birding in the Fall." One of our local Forest Preserve District naturalists will share the pleasures of fall birding with us. We'll learn more about migration, species to watch out for, and great local birding spots. Bring your own tips, as well!



November 13 - "Visiting the Grand Canyon - Perspectives on When, Where, and How to Visit." Several Sauk-Cal Sierra Club members have visited the Grand Canyon within the last year, and they'll share their insights about the best times to visit, along with favorite parts of the canyon.

TBD

December 11 - TBD



January 8 2024 –"Members Slide Night." Whether it's your garden or the Galapagos, we want to see your outdoors photos. [Contact Portia](#) and let her know you'll be showing us your slides.

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at:

sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

Please include your full name and address and reference the article on which you are commenting.

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The Sierra Club from the national level down to the local groups does so many positive things to help protect our planet. So, let's get outdoors and enjoy our beautiful world together. Click below for Sierra Club Illinois outings.



Remember to check our Sauk-Calumet Group website for current information and news updates on issues relevant to Illinois.

[Click here for our website.](#)

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