

# Prairie Flyer



This newsletter only appears three times a year -- in April, August, and December. In addition to our newsletter, we use Facebook and our Alerts Listserv to communicate with members about environmental events and action items. For Facebook, please join the Sierra Club Prairie Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SierraClubILPrairieGroup/> . For our Alerts List: <http://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?SUBED1=il-prairie-alerts>, where you can subscribe or unsubscribe.

The underlined text are internet links, so you can click on them to bring up the pages referred to. All the main articles in this newsletter are by members of the Executive Committee of the Prairie Group.

## Telluride Mountainfilm On Tour film festival

On Tuesday, March 28, Champaign Surplus sponsored a screening of Mountainfilm on Tour at the Art Theater and designated the Prairie Group as the beneficiary. It was a tremendous success, every seat sold. There were about 10 or 12 short films showing people enjoying outdoor activities, most of which were exotic sports which take exceptional devotion and practice - such as paragliding, sky diving, a 24 hour marathon of rock climbing. But there were some inspiring examples of more ordinary activities which were carried out by more ordinary people - a backpacking tour of a lone man and his dog in the Red Rock area of Utah, a young man from the Baltimore ghettos who broke free from the poverty and violence by becoming an artist at using a yoyo, and a woman whose love of ice skating started with professional tours when she was a teenager and lasted until even after she had a stroke shortly before she died at 90 years.

The Sierra Club Prairie Group is extremely grateful to Champaign Surplus for making this year's Mountainfilm a fundraiser for

our group, and grateful to everyone who attended and contributed to it! It raised some \$2500, an astonishing amount. We will work to use it well! - **Dick Bishop**

## Recent Outings and Programs

We've had some fun and interesting events since the last newsletter. We tabled at a talk at The Urbana Free Library about the beauty and science of Yellowstone National Park. We had a great turnout for an organizational meeting in Bloomington-Normal at the Normal Public Library.

I hosted another Cook and Book Club on February 1. We had a very full house and



made homemade minestrone soup, salad, stuffed pizza and tiramisu! Everyone discussed a recent book, article or documentary about the environment that they would recommend and we ate till we could eat no more! Thanks to all who came and special shout out to Eileen Borgia for insisting on doing a bunch of the dishes.

We also had a very informative talk at Urbana Free Library from Kirby Pringle about tallgrass prairie pollinators where we handed out free packets of pollinator seeds (thanks to Nancy Dietrich for helping to divide up all that seed!) and cookies. I hope we will have added some good native pollinator plants to the area come summer, one backyard at a time.

I am going to the People's Climate March in D.C. at the end of the month. Your very own Prairie Group of the Sierra Club has raffled off seat on the bus that we paid for! Go to our Facebook page if you are interested in buying a ticket and attending as well. See below for more details.

Thanks to everyone who has attended our events. We have been quite busy and have a lot more coming up. I'm anticipating an overnight camping trip, Jackie is going to lead a wildflower hike and another Cook and Book Club in the near future! Hope to see you at some of those.

- **Rachel Vellenga**

### **Activities Past and to Come**

Spring is the busiest time for the Prairie Group and this one is no exception. And April, with the week of Earth Day, is

probably our busiest month. Stuart has compiled a list of all that happened and what is planned and Rachel may still add some more outings. Here is what we have, besides those mentioned elsewhere, with some editing by Dick.

### *Sierra Club 101 in Champaign-Urbana, March 13*

About 30 Sierra Club members attended a Sierra Club 101 orientation meeting held at Bar M in downtown Urbana. Attendees were introduced to Sierra Club's structure, upcoming events, and learned how to get involved in Prairie Group. Pizza M's yummy pizza was also enjoyed.

### *"Resist" Letter writing, March 18*

We were pleased to have Deborah Leckband come to our Excom meeting (on March 12) and invite people to join a letter-writing group which she organized. As a result several members met on March 18 and composed letters to our Senators and Representatives in Washington.

### *Third Thursdays, 5:30 pm Sierra Club Happy Hours*

At our January Excom meeting it was suggested that a regular informal social hour for Sierra Club members might be enjoyable and useful. After a couple trials, it was decided that the third Thursday of most months would be satisfactory. An exceptional case will be the larger yearly Happy Hour in the April Earth Week. So far the Pizza M location has worked well.

*Bloomington-Normal SC 101, March 26*

In the area represented by the Prairie Group the members in Bloomington-Normal are the second largest cluster, with about a third of the Group. Almost all of the leadership has long been elected from Champaign County - not by design, but because the distances involved make it awkward for members from other areas to attend the Excom meetings. So it would be desirable if there would be alternative meetings, run by members in those areas, to plan activities of greater local interest.

It is gratifying, then, and we have an activist, Wesley Ward, from Bloomington-Normal who is willing to make such an effort for that area. As a start, he cooperated with Alice Englebretsen of the Excom and

Terri Tracy of the Chapter staff to lead a meeting at the Normal Public Library, especially designed to inform the area members about what the Sierra Club does, on Sunday, March 26. The meeting was appropriately labeled Sierra Club 101.



Wes presents some slides and graphics

*Thursday, April 6 Environmental Lobby Day in Springfield,*

Environmental groups from around the state gathered to urge the legislators to support our chosen bills. In addition, smaller Prairie Group delegations will meet with some legislators at their local offices.

*Thursday, April 13, 6:30 pm Coal Ash on the Middle Fork - Eco-Justice Collaborative*

Danville Public Library, 319 N. Vermilion, Danville

<https://www.facebook.com/events/172452303266263/>

The Middle Fork is Illinois' only National Scenic River, and a favorite of paddlers, fishermen, and photographers. The river and surrounding Kickapoo State Recreation Area draw over a million people every year, substantially contributing the local economy of Vermilion County and Danville.

But toxic coal ash dumped in the river's floodplain by utility companies for more



Alice and Terri lead the discussion

than 55 years threaten the river and the tourist trade that Vermilion County and Danville hope to expand.

Come to this 30-minute presentation by [Eco-Justice Collaborative](#), followed by Q & A. Learn about this threat and what you can do to protect the region's health, economy, scenic values, and recreational opportunities that you both enjoy and depend on.

Contact Pam at (773)-556-3418 with questions or for more information.

*Thursday, April 20, 5-7 pm - Earth Day Happy Hour at Koh-i-noor Restaurant, Champaign*

This year's Earth Day Happy Hour will be on Thursday, April 20th, at 5pm. This is one of our big gatherings of the year - please come by and talk with others of like mind. We'll also hear from Carol Hays of Prairie Rivers Network.

We'll serve appetizers, and you can buy your own drinks.

In recent years, our annual happy hour has been at Escobar's, which is no more. In its same location is a new Indian restaurant, Koh-i-noor, and they are happy to accommodate us this year - at 6 E. Columbia St., just north of downtown Champaign.

*Sunday morning, April 23 Wildflower hike at Lake of the Woods*

Jackie Potter will be the guide. Watch for more details on Alerts notices and our Facebook page.

*Saturday, April 29, 2-4pm C-U People's Climate March at West Side Park, Champaign*

Prairie Group of the Sierra Club is one of the main co-sponsors of the upcoming People's Climate March here in Champaign-Urbana. This march is in conjunction with the People's Climate March in Washington, D.C., and other sister marches throughout the country to demand action on climate issues and show the world and our leaders that we will resist attacks on our people, our communities and our planet. More information, and to RSVP that you are going, can be found on the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/405487983163819/>

*Saturday, April 29 DC People's Climate March in Washington, DC*

A bus is being organized to DC to what should be a great Climate March event. Bus would leave CU 5pm Friday, return on Sunday morning:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1850737371857136/>

See the ticket signup page for details. Other People's Climate March events are happening around the state (see above) including [Chicago](#).



*Events to come, more details to appear.*

5/18 SC Happy Hour  
 5/20 SC Farmers' Market  
 6/17 SC Farmers' Market  
 6/22 SC Happy Hour  
 7/15 SC Farmers' Market  
 7/20 SC Happy Hour  
 8/17 SC Happy Hour  
 8/19 SC Farmers' Market  
 8/xx picnic  
 9/9-17 National Drive Electric Week, event  
 sometime (Scott Greene)

**About the Prairie Group**

The current Prairie Group Excom consists of Alice Englebretsen (a.engebretsen at comcast.net), Bob Illyes (bob.illyes at gmail.com), Nancy Dietrich (nancydietrich01 at [gmail.com](mailto:nancydietrich01@gmail.com)), whose terms end in December, 2017; Don Davis (zoots2005 at gmail.com), Stuart Levy (stuartnlevy at gmail.com) Rachel Vellenga (rlvellenga at yahoo.com), and our newest appointee Jacquelyn Potter (jackienbrad at yahoo.com), whose terms end with December, 2018. Usually we have an election towards the end of each year, but if there are no more candidates than positions to fill or if a position becomes vacant, the current Excom may appoint people for those

positions. It has been difficult to recruit candidates and we would be extremely pleased to have more people come forth with an email to any of the current members.

The Excom has the responsibility to decide on all activities and expenditures of the Prairie Group. Usually these decisions are taken at the regular Excom meetings, which occur 6 times each year in the odd-numbered months on a Sunday afternoon. In January of each year we decide on who will be the elected officers and designated activity positions.

Membership in the Excom is open to any Prairie Group member, but ordinarily we have been unable to recruit anyone outside of Champaign-Urbana, mainly due to the long distances required to attend the meetings. The Excom meetings are usually held at one of the Excom members' homes. They are open to the public but not usually actively publicized.

The current officers are Chair: Stuart; Vice-chair: Don; Treasurer: Alice.

Some activity positions are Secretary: Dick Bishop; Delegate to Chapter Excom: Alice; Alternate Delegate: Don; Outings: Rachel Vellenga; Sales of Calendars: Trent Shepard; Editor of this newsletter: Dick (richardl.bishop at gmail.com)