



# DuPage Sierran

Sierra Club, River Prairie Group of DuPage County

Summer 2015  
Volume 34, No. 2



## Chatter from the Chair

By **Connie Schmidt**  
Chair, River Prairie Group  
Sierra Club

Summer Time! Before looking ahead at this glorious season, I have to reflect on the last one. We made it through the hectic spring legislative session where so very many of you were active in district and at the Earth Day rally in Springfield. Sierra Club members spoke out loud and clear on issues such as Clean Energy, protecting the Mahomet Aquifer in Central IL, fighting against invasive species, toxic coal tar sealants, fighting against the hunting of bobcats and preventing drilling on or under public land.

A local concern was raised when a bill was introduced to recombine the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. The River Prairie Group mobilized with the help of the Environmental Council and the Conservation Foundation and other groups. In all,

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### DuPage Sierran

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and Beth Kosson

Layout: Dave Blake

For activities, legislative action alerts and  
outings information:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie>

[Click Here for the River Prairie Group on Facebook](#)

more than 400 witness slips were posted along with numerous emails and phone calls. These voiced efforts resulted in the abandonment of the proposed consolidation bill. Activism is alive and well here in DuPage County, thanks to all of you who took action!

The Green Readin' Book Group hosted discussions at two locations, Warrenville and Lombard. And the big event of the spring, Party on the Farm, hosted by the RPG as an Illinois Chapter fundraiser, was once again a fabulous success, thanks to the support of the many volunteers and helpers. For 10 years the Almost Brothers Band has donated their time and tal-

**Continued on Page 2...**


## Chatter from the Chair (continued)

ent for this event. Check them out on Facebook and hit one of their gigs this summer in appreciation!

But ahhhh, yes, now it is summer. The River Prairie Group hosts no member meetings during this time. We want you to get out and enjoy and explore, as the motto states. There are Illinois Prairie Path clean-up days and Glacial Ridge Restoration days hosted by our group on weekends so we may donate back to the beauty of open space in DuPage. In addition, the outings leaders offer an amazing array of experiences. We offer more outings than any other group

in Illinois, and they take place in a wide region, from Shawnee to Northern Wisconsin as well as at our local forest preserves. I'm already signed up for Kayaking on the Kishwaukee, which promises to be one of the most pristine rivers in Illinois. Check out the calendar on our website!

Your executive committee is beginning to brainstorm educational meetings for the fall, so stay tuned for speakers to be announced. Until then, I hope to see you on the river or trail here in DuPage.



## The River Prairie Group could not function without the volunteers who step up to the various jobs and positions.

### **Officers:**

Connie Schmidt – Chair  
Jeff Gehris – Vice Chair  
Kathy Franke / Pete Potamianos – Secretary  
Bruce Blake – Treasurer

### **Additional Members of the Ex-Com at Large:**

Linda Sullivan – Lobby Chair  
Bob Barbieri – Water Research Project  
Jeff Gehris – Solar Energy Liaison  
Stacey Salmon – Political Endorsements  
Tom Richardson – DuPage County Issues

### **Additional Committee Chairs:**

Moira Noll – Programs  
Bonnie Blake – Water Monitoring  
Paul Saindon – Outings  
Andrew Cohen – Webmaster  
Joe Pokorny – National Liaison  
Sherry Stratton – Newsletter Editor  
Dave Blake – Newsletter Layout



# THE “GLUE” THAT CONNECTS ALL THINGS SIERRA IN DUPAGE

## Our Newsletter: *The DuPage Sierran*

The River Prairie Group extends a HUGE thank you to Bill Weidner and Andee Chestnut for nearly two years of editing and creating the newsletters for us. Both brought an amazing array of experience and talent to our publication. We are deeply grateful and wish them well in all future endeavors.

We welcome Sherry Stratton who will pick up the reins as our new editor. Her bio reads, “After a career in technical writing, Sherry Stratton has focused on the subjects closest to her heart, including nature and literature. She is a former member of the Environmental Advisory Commission for the City of Warrenville, and has earned Naturalist and Ornithology Certificates at The Morton Arboretum. Her

writing has been published or is forthcoming in Bird’s Thumb, Portage, Snowy Egret, and elsewhere. Sherry is copy editor for Fifth Wednesday Journal. She lives at the edge of a DuPage County forest preserve, where she walks most days.” What a perfect blend of experience to add to our River Prairie Group leadership.

While talking about the newsletter, we have to mention our fabulous “layout guy” Dave Blake. Dave has been a constant for many years now, finding unique graphics, offering distribution suggestions and designing one of the most appealing newsletters in all of the Illinois Sierra Club groups. Back and current issues of our newsletter can be found on our website.

## Cool DuPage

by Lonnie Morris

Climate change mitigation is one of Sierra Club’s top priorities, and the River Prairie Group has successfully ramped up local carbon reduction efforts to the county level.

After many years of working with municipalities to become Cool Cities, the River Prairie Group turned its attention to DuPage County and asked that it actively support clean energy, energy efficiency and conservation. In response, the County Board made a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 10% by 2020 and 20% by 2030 from 2007 levels. Under the leadership and with the support of Chairman Dan Cronin, a Green Government Council was impaneled to oversee this commitment, and in April 2015, a road map for achieving the reduction targets was announced. The full plan can be viewed at: [http://www.dupageco.org/EDP/Waste\\_Recycling\\_and\\_Energy/45427/](http://www.dupageco.org/EDP/Waste_Recycling_and_Energy/45427/)

Over the years, the county has made great progress improving the sustainability of its campus and operations. Clean energy initiatives range from a rooftop solar installation to an electric charging station open to employees and the public located in the south parking lot of the administration building. Now the county is poised to take the message about the benefits of clean energy out to the public.

The River Prairie Group is looking forward to working with county staff on spreading the word about

how energy efficiency saves money, creates job and makes for more resilient and sustainable communities.

You are invited to sign up and join the effort at <http://www.dupageco.org/CoolDuPage/JoinTheEffort/>



**L-R: Jack Darin, Executive Director Illinois Sierra Club; Lisa Gerhold-Dirks, Chair, Elmhurst Cool Cities; Stacey Salman, River Prairie Group; Lonnie Morris, Illinois Cool Cities; Dan Cronin, Chair, DuPage County Board**



# Local Nonprofit SCARCE is Helping Residents Lower Energy Costs and Make Home Improvements

By Carrie Horak  
Environmental Educator  
SCARCE Energy Advisor

*Pictured: During an energy assessment, a Building Performance Institute-certified professional will use tools like infrared imaging (shown above) to figure out exactly where your home is losing energy and how you can fix these costly issues.*

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## **Environmental Educator SCARCE Energy Advisor**

With the average Illinois household spending more than \$2,000 annually on natural gas and electricity, there are many opportunities to save. To uncover these savings, a local nonprofit, SCARCE (School & Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education), is helping homeowners make smarter choices about energy.

You may have noticed ComEd is installing new smart meters in the area. This new technology creates more options for electricity rates for local residents. For example, ComEd offers a Residential Real-Time Pricing program, which takes advantage of smart meters to provide hourly pricing and has saved customers an average of more than \$100 a year since 2008, collectively saving \$13 million.





**A Building Performance Institute Certified contractor explains how energy loss occurs in a home at an energy house party.**

By paying the “wholesale” rate for electricity that changes every hour rather than a fixed price, participants take advantage of low-priced electricity during most of the fall, winter and spring. During the summer, participants can save by shifting energy use during summer weekday afternoons to the evenings or early mornings. Alternative supplier MC Squared also offers a rate with set prices for different times of day that may allow you to save money over the standard utility price. Local SCARCE energy advisors have more information on these and other options.

Even bigger savings have been achieved by more than 4,000 customers who used the Energy Impact Illinois (EI2) program to make home energy improvements. These improvements cut their energy bills by an average of \$400 per year. Participating homeowners begin with an energy assessment. The discounted price is just \$99, or free if the homeowner hosts five or more neighbors for the energy assessment. Certified and vetted contractors use the assessment to find affordable improvements that maximize savings. SCARCE ensures the work gets done

right and that homeowners learn about rebates to reduce the cost.

In addition to reducing energy bills, energy improvements can make homes more comfortable and valuable. Most homes (even newer ones) are too cold in the winter and too warm in the summer, which most families simply assume is normal; but with basic improvements, every home can be much more comfortable year-round – and it’s hard to put a price on that. In addition, homes with improvements that increase their efficiency by 15% or more are eligible for an Illinois Home Performance with Energy Star certificate. This shows the home is energy efficient when it is listed for sale, and research has proven that these homes sell faster and for higher prices.

To learn about their options, homeowners can contact their local SCARCE energy advisor Carrie Horak at (630) 545-9710 or [carrie@scarce.org](mailto:carrie@scarce.org), or by calling (844) 922-1222.

# MORE ECOMYTHS!

By Beth Kosson  
Environmental Educator

## Myth: Earthworms Are Native to the U.S.

**Myth Explored:** Earthworm castings, neat piles of worm poop deposited on the surface as the worms busy themselves with their soil-work, have accumulated on the lawns and parkways. Although nothing seems as natural or as necessary as this silent toiling, earthworms are, in fact, not native to the Chicago area. As crazy as it may sound, nearly every earthworm you've seen in Chicago is an import! Native or not, their presence in gardens is often welcome as they increase soil fertility, making for bigger plants. However, in natural areas, where plant and animal communities have developed over thousands of years on worm-less soils, earthworm presence can be disruptive to these communities. Worms may be excellent companions in our vegetable plots, but are not so welcome in our natural areas.

## Myth (Partially) Busted: Exploring Deeper Chicago's nonnative earthworms may be degrading our natural areas Impact of Nonnative Worms

Earthworms are themselves a pretty species-rich group. Several thousand species are known. As is true of many other biologi-

cal groups, though, increasingly worm species are being moved from one part of the world to another. Many European and Asian species have become very prevalent in the United States. Though this may be good news for farmers and gardeners, the presence of nonnative worms is not such good news for people who want to restore or protect native plants. This is because alien worms can invade areas where there are no native earthworms, like in much of the Midwest. Concerns about earthworms have been increasing in recent years, due the greater scientific understanding of the damage these alien species can cause, including being linked to the decline of an endangered plant species.

**Beth Kosson**

**Posted by Daisy Simmons on Sept. 3rd, 2014**

With a B.S. in environmental science and geography from DePaul University, Beth has put her eco-smarts to work for several organizations around Chicago – from developing educational programming and outreach and studying the invasive earthworms in the Chicago Wilderness region (yes, they are all invasive here), to working on endangered species recovery and release and native habitat restoration.

See more at: <http://www.ecomythsalliance.org/?s=earthworms#sthash.boCUBwtS.dpuf>



# River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings

**Note:** All local group outings are offered at cost. Longer and more expensive outings require deposits (ask leader about refund policy). Contact the leader or assistant indicated for more information and outing requirements. All outings have limits on group size; early signup is suggested.

See [sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie/outings](http://sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie/outings) for new, current and updated outings, new RPG listings and offerings from other local groups.

Visit the activity calendar at: [sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie/outings](http://sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie/outings). The calendar includes meetings, events, dates, times, directions and maps. For general information regarding the River Prairie Group Outings Committee and the outings led by its leaders, contact Outings Committee Chair Paul Saindon at (815) 310-0001 or [paul@paul.us](mailto:paul@paul.us).

## Sun, June 7 – 9:30 AM

### Day Hike #3

#### Des Plaines River Trail, Des Plaines

Join us for Hike #3 along a nicely wooded section of the Des Plaines River Trail. We will learn why the Potawatami Indians used this river as a major transportation route during their stay in the area. We will explore 12 miles, beginning at Big Bend Forest Preserve and traveling north toward River Trails Nature Center. Limit: 20. Level: Moderate. Cost: \$3. Leader is Mark Ginger. Assistant leader is Sheila Mayol. To sign up, contact Mark at [bubbleman@outlook.com](mailto:bubbleman@outlook.com).

## Sun, June 14 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

### Restoration Day

#### Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve

#### Walnut Glen Park, 860 Walnut St, Glen Ellyn

Join fellow Sierra Club members for a fun day at Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve. We'll begin with Site Steward Bruce Blake providing a brief history of this unique Glen Ellyn preserve nestled between the Illinois Prairie Path and Union Pacific Railroad tracks and a review of the management techniques being used to preserve the plant community. We will be removing invasive plants such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. Registration with DuPage County Forest Preserve Volunteer Office is required at least five days in advance. A signed waiver and proper dress are also required. More details are available on the RPG website. To sign up, contact: [volunteer@dupageforest.org](mailto:volunteer@dupageforest.org) or call (630) 933-7681.

## Sun, June 21 – 10:00 AM

### Summer Solstice/Father's Day Bike Outing Batavia

Join a bike ride in celebration of the Summer Solstice and Father's Day. We will cycle on two asphalt paths: The Fox River Trail and the Virgil Gilman Trail. One can choose to ride 30 or 45 miles along these

relatively flat trails that travel along the Fox River and through nicely wooded areas as they meander westward. Lunch will be at Blackberry Farm. After lunch, those choosing the longer distance will continue on to Waubensee Community College in Sugar Grove, while those choosing the shorter distance will turn around and head back to our starting location in Batavia. Limit: 15. Level: Easy. Cost: \$3. Leader is Mark Ginger. Co-Leader is Al Theede. To sign up, contact Mark at [bubbleman@outlook.com](mailto:bubbleman@outlook.com).

## Sat, June 27 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

### Adopt a Trail Work Day

#### Illinois Prairie Path, Glen Ellyn

This is an easy two-mile walk on the Illinois Prairie Path to Hill Avenue and back. It may be canceled if weather is severe with back-up date the next Saturday. The starting location is the east end of the parking lot near 485 N. Montclair St, Glen Ellyn, where it dead ends into the Prairie Path just south of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Contact Jeff Gahris at (630) 853-5505 or [jgahris@wideopenwest.com](mailto:jgahris@wideopenwest.com).

## Sun, June 28 – 10:00 AM (time tentative)

### Tour Day-Solar Home, Bison and more... Oregon

Enjoy a fun day learning about solar/geothermal homes and LED lights, then to Nachusa to see the restored prairie and view the bison that now live there, and finally to an organic farm for fresh produce, a rock history tour and then learn about importance of growing organic vegetables. This tour day will give a view of future homes that save energy, show why Illinois is called the prairie state, teach about bison, organic produce, and history of the rocks. Must wear comfortable shoes. Limit: 20. Cost \$5. Level: Easy. Assistant leader is Mike Way. Please contact Leader Jan Bradford at (847) 477-5518 or [jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net).



**Sat, July 18 – 9:00 AM**  
**Kayak or Canoe the Scenic Kishwaukee River**  
**Seth Atwood Park, Rockford**

The Kish maintains a class "A" rating from the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, making it one of the three highest water quality river systems in the state. Cost: Canoe-\$36/person; Solo Kayak-\$51; Tandem Kayak-\$36/person. Cost includes kayak/canoe, paddle, life jacket, transportation to put-in spot and Sierra Club fees. Level: Moderate. Leader is Paul Saindon. To sign up, call (815) 310-0001 or email paul@pauls.us.

**Sun, July 19 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM**  
**Restoration Day**  
**Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve**  
**Walnut Glen Park, 860 Walnut St, Glen Ellyn**

See June 14.

**Sun, Aug 9 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM**  
**Restoration Day**  
**Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve**  
**Walnut Glen Park, 860 Walnut St, Glen Ellyn**

See June 14.

**Sun, Aug 16 – 10:00 AM**  
**Cycling Northeast Indiana**  
**Griffith Bikeway/Oak Savannah Trail/Prairie Duneland Trail**  
**Griffith, IN**

Join a leisurely 45-mile summer bike ride in north-east Indiana. We will ride along three asphalt paths: The Griffith Bikeway, the Oak Savannah Trail and the Prairie Duneland Trail. The Oak Savannah trail is a 7.5-mile path going through an ecosystem that transitions between tall grass prairie and oak woodland. The Prairie Duneland Trail is a 10.5-mile path considered to be one of Indiana's "crown jewel" trails. It traverses some of the most beautiful areas in the state. Limit: 15. Cost: \$3. Leader is Mark Ginger. Co-Leader is Mary Fox. To sign up, contact Mark at bubbleman@outlook.com.

**Sat, Aug 22 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM**  
**Adopt a Trail Work Day**  
**Illinois Prairie Path, Glen Ellyn**

See June 27.







## Mail-in Membership Form for Sierra Club Membership

**Join or Renew with the Sierra Club today and receive a free backpack!  
Print this page, then fill out the information below.**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**J03WOT0007**

**Please select a membership level:**

**Individual Membership**

- \_\_\_ Introductory \$25
- \_\_\_ Regular \$39
- \_\_\_ Supporting \$75
- \_\_\_ Life \$1000
- \_\_\_ Student \$25
- \_\_\_ Senior \$25
- \_\_\_ Limited Income \$25
- \_\_\_ Contributing \$150

**Joint Membership**

- \_\_\_ Regular \$49
- \_\_\_ Supporting \$100
- \_\_\_ Life \$1250
- \_\_\_ Student \$35
- \_\_\_ Senior \$35
- \_\_\_ Limited Income \$35
- \_\_\_ Contributing \$175

**Please select a payment method: AMEX: \_\_\_ MasterCard: \_\_\_ Visa: \_\_\_**

**Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Expiration Date (mm/yy): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_**

**I'd like to make a special, additional gift, over and above my membership dues, to help in the following area(s):**

- Sierra Club** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (lobbying and legislation)     **The Sierra Club Foundation** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (research and public conservation)     **Environmental Law Program** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (environmental litigation)

\_\_\_ Please do not send me the free backpack. I prefer that all of my contribution goes towards protecting America's environment.

From time to time, we make our mailing list available to other worthy organizations. If you prefer that your name not be included, please check here: \_\_\_

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**Mail this form to:                    Sierra Club Member Services  
85 Second Street, 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441**

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Contributions to The Sierra Club Foundation and Environmental Law Program are tax-deductible. Your dues include \$7.50 for your subscription to Sierra Magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletter.