

DuPage Sierran

Sierra Club, River Prairie Group of DuPage County



Chatter From the Chair

By Connie Schmidt

Happy Birthday to the National Park Service! On August 25, 2016, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the treasure of open space or spared land, set aside for habitat, wildness, history, art, or culture. Sierra Club members have good reason to be especially proud of the National Park System because we share a founder, John Muir. Many of you may already know, but in case not, here is how I generally explain what Sierra Club is to my less-informed acquaintances: "Have you heard of the National Park System? Well, when John Muir inspired Teddy Roosevelt to set aside land for a Park System, he knew simultaneously an organization would be needed to watch-dog the government and developers to protect the land for its intended purpose. Hence the Sierra Club was formed!"

Because we don't all live near Yosemite or Yellow-

In this issue...

Chatter From the Chair	1-2
Clean Power Team	3
Forest Preserve Update	4-5
The Magic of Midewin	6-7
Every Waystation Counts for Monarchs	8
Connecting to Nature	9
Shawnee National Forest	10-11
Outings	12-13
Featured Outing: Windmills and Nachusa	14
A Hike at Nachusa	15
Membership Form	16

DuPage Sierran

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For activities, legislative action alerts, and
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Sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie or SCTRIPS.org

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

stone, many of us must "find our wilderness" through national forests or state or local park systems. The closest we come here in Illinois to National Park Land would be Shawnee National Forest and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, another National Forest Service property. Enjoy the two articles in this issue on these extensive wild lands in Illinois. River Prairie Group members who have worked to enhance these areas themselves as volunteers wrote both articles. Recently, I listened to a podcast from the NPS (National Park Service) encouraging all to celebrate wilderness in any local venues, as well. The phrase: "The Wild is where you find it" was the name of this

Continued on Page 2...

“Chatter from the Chair”

(Continued from page 1)

recent campaign to encourage all to get out into the wild in every corner of our nation.

The River Prairie Group Outings program will take you on a variety of trips to feed your need to be wild, and to enrich and educate you. We will feature a trip each issue with an article to entice you to join us. In this issue we invite you on an outing to visit a wind farm near Oregon, Illinois, followed by a guided visit to Nachusa Grasslands, a Nature Conservancy Project. Prairie wild flowers and free-roaming buffalo and their calves will be a special treat on this outing.

We have plenty of wild areas here in DuPage, as well. Because of the extensive Forest Preserve District

of DuPage, we have a wide range of trails, recreational opportunities, and historical places to visit and places of peace to just relax and regroup. Discover what is new with the DuPage Forest Preserve District in their article in this newsletter, and be sure to visit their website for areas of wild to experience with them.

So this summer, I hope you will join me in a quest to find our “Wild Places” and celebrate by spending time in the outdoors. We will return in the fall with a line-up of great educational programs for you, but for the summer, get active with the events on our outings calendar!

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

Officers:

Connie Schmidt – Chair
Jeff Gahrns – Vice Chair
Kathy Franke – Secretary
Bruce Blake – Treasurer

Additional Members of the Ex-Com at Large:

Linda Sullivan – Lobby Chair
Bob Barbieri – Water Research Project
Jeff Gahrns – Solar Energy Liaison
Stacey Salmon – Political Endorsements
Tom Richardson – DuPage County Issues
Pete Potamianos – Council for Environmental Concerns

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

Passionate about the Environment? Join the Illinois Chapter Executive Committee!

The Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club is looking for passionate Club members who want to run for a position on the Chapter Executive Committee. The "Ex-Com" sets the priorities, policies, and state budget that enable the club volunteers and staff to protect the environment and build programs that expand its influence. The Ex-Com members work with Group representatives to maximize the outreach of the groups as they relate to the Chapter.

If you feel called to this exciting role and want to help with the leadership in this important State Wide committee, contact Connie Schmidt, Chair of the Nominating Committee for application information and to discuss the responsibilities of this critical and enriching volunteer role at twstr111@msn.com or 630 234 3029. Thank you!

The Clean Power Team

By **Connie Schmidt**

Your Sierra Club is rockin' an attempt to bring the Clean Jobs Bill to the floor of our state legislature in Springfield. In a proactive effort on this campaign, Caroline Wooten, Illinois Chapter organizer, has been dedicated to helping coordinate the outreach along with the volunteer team. Members have been solicited from 13 of the 14 Illinois Groups to participate on a monthly call, share our actions with our membership, and engage in the support of this important bill in Springfield. In brief, the bill is asking to mandate increased energy efficiency and support new renewable energy projects, thereby creating thousands of new jobs. For more details on the bill, go to the Illinois Chapter web page and look for legislative priorities:

<https://illinois.sierraclub.org/act/legislative-priorities>

So far, we have had multiple successes in promoting this important effort. Hundreds of petition cards have been signed across the state and will be delivered in Springfield later this spring. Sierra Club group meetings across the state have been showing the same slide show that we showed in March to their members demonstrating the importance of both the National Clean Power Plan and the Clean Jobs Bill. This slide show is available for meetings in DuPage, so contact us if you'd like a presentation with your organization. Best of all, a busload of volunteers, as well as several cars of activists, joined others to form



a crowd of about 350 on the capital steps to demonstrate to our elected officials that clean energy is a priority to the people of Illinois. Speeches by a great variety of individuals from Republicans to Democrats, urban to rural, old and young were all asking for the same thing: a clean energy future.

The effort is paying off. We have over 60 state Representatives signed on in support of the bill and 30 Senators. If the bill is called for a vote and all of them vote in favor, it will pass, but we could not override a veto, so remaining vigilant is important. By the time this article is in print, our elected officials will probably be on break, but we will communicate with you through Facebook if there is an action needed. Please "like" the River Prairie Group on Facebook and follow our breaking news for what is happening locally here in Illinois and DuPage County.



DuPage County Forest Preserve Update

By Ryan Smith, Senior Ranger
Forest Preserve District DuPage County

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County enjoyed a colorful spring, and now we look forward to our “busy” season fast approaching. With ongoing planning for this summer, we still continue to provide the best outdoor recreational activities to the public. If you missed our annual Family Field Day in May, don’t worry, there is still plenty more to enjoy. Coming June 12th, we will be celebrating our 30th annual “Just for Kids” Fishing Derby. That’s right, 30 years of connecting youth with the outdoors! For the recreationist seeking an archery-themed event, we have our annual Archery Open House on August 6th. For more information, please visit our website, www.dupageforest.com.

With the past few months having been nesting season for many species of birds, District ecologists have spent much time focused on a specific species, the American Kestrel. The American kestrel is the smallest and a very widespread falcon in North America. But some areas have seen a population decline and have listed the Kestrel as a species of special concern. Kestrels are not threatened or endangered, but their numbers have been slowly and steadily dropping over the past 20 years, especially in the central U.S. The main culprit is likely a decline in suitable nesting sites, but increased pesticide use and increased numbers of Cooper’s hawks — prime kestrel predators — may also be contributors. In addition, raccoons, skunks, and snakes are nest predators that eat kestrel young and eggs. Kestrels are known to not build their own nests and rely entirely on preexisting cavities within the natural surroundings. When a Kestrel is unsuccessful in finding a suitable habitat in these surroundings, it is known to move on. This is one reason populations may be on the decline, especially within DuPage County. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage has taken the initiative to help rebound this declining population by installing nesting boxes throughout Danada, Blackwell, Springbrook Prairie, and Greene Valley forest



preserves to attract American Kestrels. “The goal of the American Kestrel nesting boxes is to increase the population of American Kestrels both locally and regionally” says District ecologist Brian Kraskiewicz. The District will monitor the boxes and the overall kestrel population for signs the program is working as planned but does not expect immediate results. “It may take time for American kestrels to find and occupy a nest box,” Kraskiewicz said.

Throughout the spring, other District ecologists not spending time with Kestrel nesting boxes found themselves in a collaborative study with Lincoln Park Zoo. This study was an effort to learn more about DuPage County’s amphibian residents and test for a fungal disease known to affect amphibians. When they find an amphibian, they collect two swab samples, one from the back and one from the belly. The back swab tests for cortisol, a stress indicator, but the belly swab tests for chytridiomycosis, also known as chytrid, an infectious, potentially deadly disease in amphibians caused by the aquatic fungal

Continued on Page 5...

“Forest Preserve Update” (Continued from page 4)

pathogen *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*. Not a threat to humans, chytridiomycosis thickens the outer layers of skin on amphibians, affecting their ability to absorb water and electrolytes. It's found on every amphibian-inhabited continent on the planet and has been linked to serious population declines. Frogs and salamanders can carry and spread the fungus to other amphibians without showing signs of the disease themselves.

As we look forward to the joys of summer, we cringe with the thought of mosquitos. As we all know, we live in an environment that has strong mosquito populations. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County holds the health of county citizens and preserve visitors in high regard. It monitors mosquito-breeding areas and uses larvacide treatments to protect against West Nile virus. The *Culex* species of mosquito is most likely to transmit West Nile virus through its saliva after feeding on infected birds. The District focuses on areas that could become breeding grounds for the *Culex* mosquito. *Culex* are “drought-driven.” Rather than multiplying in healthy wetlands or after heavy rains, they do so after dry spells that produce the warm, stagnant water their developing larvae need to survive. As a result, District employees continually drain water from trash bins, clogged gutters, truck beds and other containers. Waters that do not contain fish or other animals that eat mosquito larvae may also become breeding areas, so staff monitor 135 of these sites for the presence of *Culex*. If they find *Culex* larvae, they treat the sites with a biologically derived mosquito larvicide that kills the insects but does not harm the surrounding environment. Employees also routinely use larvicide in storm water catch basins in forest preserve parking lots.

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County is excited to announce that it was awarded a \$23,387 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to convert five 2016 Ford light-duty trucks to alternative-fuel vehicles that run on compressed natural gas. Converting the fleet is part of the District's Fleet



Vehicle and Equipment Sustainability policy, which calls for all gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles to be replaced with vehicles powered by alternative-fuel technology. The District runs a fleet of 180 road vehicles and 172 pieces of equipment that use liquefied petroleum gas, compressed natural gas, ethanol, biodiesel, and other alternative fuels or run on hybrid electric motors. The District also helps area municipalities reduce their greenhouse emissions by allowing them to use its alternative-fuel station — the only one in Illinois with four different fuels.

CELEBRATING THE MAGIC OF MIDEWIN

By Ryan Bourgart



The River Prairie Group joins the celebration of the centennial of the National Park System with its closest national land: The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, in Wilmington, Illinois (near Joliet). In 2014, I was involved with restoration activities at the prairie. I spent a few days in this majestic site planting native species in wetlands. Midewin is the only tallgrass prairie preserve east of the Mississippi and the largest public open space in northeastern Illinois with around 20,000 acres. "Midewin" is the name of the Grand Medicine Society of the Anishinaabe, a group of native tribes that live in the Great Lakes region. This organization of healers and leaders were charged with the responsibility to keep the greater society in balance. This history reflects the current hopes to provide healing for nature and humanity through stewardship, restoration, and recreational experiences.

In order to appreciate some of Midewin's healing magic, a brief understanding of its history may

be helpful. This history is divided into four periods: pre-settlement (before 1850), post-settlement (1850-1940), the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant (1940-1996), and present day (1996-present).

The pre-settlement period is important because it serves as a model for restoration efforts today. Human influence over nature was minimal during this period. Native tribes lived in much smaller groups than people today and used fire--as nature did--to rejuvenate the prairie. Humanity and nature were in balance.

Then settlers made their way into the Great Lakes region. As they did, conflicts arose and intensified with Native Americans. The government ordered their removal, and the area was taken over by settlers. They altered the land to suit their needs, erecting various structures. Historical sites are found in the area, including 229 farmsteads, fourteen schools, two churches, and five cemeteries.

Continued on Page 7...

“Magic of Midewin” (Continued from page 6)

For most of recent history, Midewin has been under the control of the U.S. Army. The Army used the area for ammunition and explosives creation and storage. The storage structures are among Midewin's distinguishing features. Nicknamed “igloos” by the military, they were built using reinforced poured concrete and are sixty by twenty feet in area. The process of creating explosives contaminated the topsoil of 4,000 acres of land. Decontamination is under way and will be integrated into the preserve when completed. Because of the inactivity of the Ammunition Plant, most of Midewin has been leased as agricultural land.

In 1996, the Illinois Land Conservation Act (ILCA) took land from the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant and established the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The act outlined four purposes:

1. Manage the land and water resources in a manner that will conserve and enhance the native populations and habitats of wildlife and plants.
2. Provide opportunities for scientific, environmental, and land use education and research.
3. Allow the continuation of agricultural uses of the land.
4. Provide a variety of recreational opportunities that are consistent with the preceding purposes.

With conservation and recreation as the focus, Midewin has become a destination for many. The most recent survey taken by Midewin tells us that in 2008 there were 16,900 visitors. Some of these visitors made use of the museum, interpretive displays, information sites, and developed fishing site, but most utilized the many miles of trails to hike, bike, ride horses, and do other recreational activities. The size and beauty of this preserve does have a healing effect. Recently I took a vacation trip to Midewin to refresh my memory and to receive some of the inspirational healing that nature gives me. All too often, everyday life is full of chaos. As I watch the young morning light glisten off the dew in the grass, I am reminded that nature's elixir relieves and remedies. You may want to schedule a visit, too, and celebrate our centennial of National Parks at this local treasure.

About the Author:

Ryan Bourgart has dedicated his career to the environmental field. He feels a deep connection to nature, inspiring him in his creative pursuits of poetry, photography, and story writing. He feels compelled to share his creativity and passion to help heal the disconnection between society and nature.



Every Waystation Counts for Monarchs

By Lonnie Morris, DuPage Monarch Project



The prairie landscape has disappeared, corn grows to the horizon, roadsides are trimmed and sprayed for unsightly weeds. Natural areas have receded into parks or shattered into thousands of backyard shards. As the Illinois landscape vanished, so did monarchs.

Monarch colors beg to be noticed; it's the point. Orange and black signal toxicity to hungry birds, but gardeners see the warmth and beauty of summer days. Before the population plummeted, clouds of monarchs flew overhead on their annual migration south to Mexico--the sight of butterflies filling the sky described as "stopping traffic and dropping jaws with their brilliance."

Today gardeners report annual monarch sightings in the single digits.

Monarchs need more places with milkweed where eggs can be laid and caterpillars can munch. Monarch habitat is being created at libraries, grade schools, colleges, churches, businesses, and back yards. There are 166 monarch waystations in DuPage County registered with Monarch Watch, providing an estimated 5.8 acres of habitat.

We're doing well, but we can do better.

DuPage residents are stepping up to the challenge, but more milkweed is needed. The Monarch Recovery plan formulated by Monarch Joint Venture, a partnership of over forty organizations and agencies working together to protect monarchs and their migration, estimates one billion NEW stems of milkweed are needed to build a population capable of bouncing back from extreme weather events like the March 2016 storm in Mexico. Monarch researcher Lincoln Bower estimates the storm's high winds and cold rain wiped out 50% of the population. The impact won't be known until the population is measured again in winter of 2017.

If you're a gardener with available space, consider establishing a monarch waystation this summer. Waystations look like regular gardens, require no extra care, and provide the added benefit of attracting iconic butterflies.

Be counted in the one billion new milkweed stems for monarchs: Register your waystation at monarchwatch.org



CONNECTING TO NATURE WITH LOCAL PARK DISTRICTS ADVOCACY BY THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

In the spirit of “get out into the wild” with the National Park Service Centennial celebration, many of us are more comfortable appreciating our local park districts within our municipalities. Recently, Shannon Burns, pictured above (one of our all-time favorite elected officials), conducted a study and formed a position statement connecting the League of Women Voters (LWV) with Wheaton Parks and Recreation.

The League and the Sierra Club share many traits: Both are national organizations with state and local chapters. Both are nonpartisan, supporting issues and agendas, rather than a political party. Both adopt considered positions on matters that relate to their organizational purpose. And, because the LWV exists to promote good government through an informed citizenry, it shares many of these priorities with the Sierra Club. Although the LWV does not initiate joint projects with other organizations, it does partner with local agencies upon request. Thus, the LWV/Wheaton is a potentially valuable partner for the Sierra Club should the need arise for advocacy on matters of shared concern.

One cause shared by both organizations is the protection and management of open space. Park and recreation districts, in particular, depend on local tax dollars for existence. As a result, many local

LWV chapters have established position statements on key elements of park and recreation district management. LWV position statements help inform the public about best-practice management, help to define parameters for LWV action, and provide a reference standard for local governmental agencies in making decisions that impact the tax-paying public.

The LWV/Wheaton board approved a new position on parks and recreation that recognizes the role of these local public systems in helping preserve land for conservation, in providing active and passive recreation, and in improving the quality of life for residents of all ages and abilities. Through productive leisure activities and pursuits, park districts encourage people to engage in fitness and intellectual challenges, gain new skills, and enhance social outlets.

Considering the current political climate in Illinois, including the potential for uninformed consolidation of local services or reduction in services resulting from failure to pass a budget, the LWV/Wheaton’s revised position on Parks and Recreation could be instrumental in raising awareness of issues that could negatively affect our access to open space.

For more information about the LWV/Wheaton, or to see a complete copy of the study and revised position on Parks and Recreation, visit the LWV/Wheaton’s web site at www.wheatonlwv.org.

Time for a trip to the Southern Regions of Illinois and the Shawnee National Forest!

By Ed Max



Pictured: Devils Backbone in Belle Smith Springs

If you jump in the car and drive due south for 5 to 6 hours, you'll find yourself in the Shawnee National Forest—a patchwork of incredible canyons, waterfalls, forests, bluffs, and wetlands. Possibly because of its distance from our locale and lack of known destinations like large cities or amusement parks, many people know nothing about the area. And that is a shame. Hopefully, that will change in the future. It's an area of natural beauty but a not so prosperous economy. A thriving tourism industry would be a good thing for this area, especially since the coal industry of southern Illinois is dying out.

If you are planning a visit, consider these sites for a starter:

Giant City State Park (Close to Carbondale and to hotels and other amenities) for great hikes, lots of bluffs, climbing, repelling, a nice lodge and restaurant (with awesome fried chicken!), and fine camp sites.

Belle Smith Springs (South of Harrisburg) is a must see. Off the beaten path, so not too crowded. Some of the best water quality in Illinois can be found on its canyons. Aquamarine waters are very inviting for a dip on a hot summer day. A natural bridge and towering stone walls make this a special place.

Little Grand Canyon (South of Murphysboro) is a challenging hike down into a verdant and green

Continued on Page 11...

“Shawnee National Forest” (Continued from page 10)

wilderness. Ever cool and coated in Liverwort, the canyon is lined with unusual species, cold waterfalls, and huge trees. You will feel like you've gone back in time as you hug the moist and scenic canyon walls making your way to the floor. The hike out is all up, but easier than the tricky hike down!

Larue Pine Hills A mosaic of diverse habitats, a place of ongoing study, and a must see. You'll encounter more species of trees, shrubs, insects, and snakes (34 species) than anywhere else in the Midwest. It's a biodiversity hot-spot: where the western plains meet the eastern deciduous forests, and where the southern gulf plains meet up with the northern forests and climes. Thus is created a zone of



*Above: A common resident of the wetlands of Cache River and other swamps in Southern Illinois is the regal and ancient Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). This giant pictured is estimated to be 1200 years old! And right here in Illinois--who knew?*

The Cache River area is an important Bioreserve region, and is also the northern most naturally occurring population of Bald Cypress in the U.S.

incredible divergence!

I hope you now feel motivated to plan a trip to this unusual part of Illinois soon. I've touched on only a fraction of the places and parks within the Shawnee. Many trips are needed to fully appreciate its natural beauty. Spring and fall are excellent times to visit. Look for my hikes and other Sierra club hikes into this region. The Shawnee group also has excellent hikes and talks on the Shawnee.

About the Author:

Ed Max is a writer and naturalist and a Sierran of many years. Ed leads hikes in the Chicago area as well as the Shawnee National Forest.



Above: A view from the top of the Larue Pine Hills area, looking west toward the Mississippi bottomlands. Named a “Biodiversity Hotspot” by E. O. Wilson, known for its great diversity of reptiles (site of the famous Snake Road, just below cliffs seen here) plants, insects, and wetland species. We hike here every spring to see an incredible wildflower display.

River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings

EXPLORE, ENJOY, AND PROTECT THE PLANET BY DISCOVERING YOUR LOCAL OUTDOORS.

Sierra Club Local Outdoors volunteers lead a range of outings that are as diverse as their interests. Depending on where you are, you can choose from day hikes, bicycling, skiing, paddling, bird-watching, conservation-oriented activities, or forays into the remaining natural areas of our major cities.

www.sctrips.org

Bluff Spring Fen Botanical & Geological hike Sunday, June 12 – 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM Lake Avenue, Elgin, IL

This is our third trek to this cool place, tucked behind a naturally interesting and historic cemetery—a unique entrance to this park. On the south end of the cemetery is this wonderful habitat; high-quality wetlands and prairies, kames, steams of marl, rare plants, and many unusual insects make this a unique place. The variety of plant species found here is astounding. Ed Max will lead this hike, focusing on the plant types and communities. We will start at 9 AM to beat the heat, in case hot weather is forecast. The prairie is not a hospitable place at high noon on a hot day.

Bring: water, big hat, sunscreen, bug spray. Long pants recommended. Lunch afterward amongst the large oaks and headstones.

Contact: Ed Max, 630-209-3005 or hortusmax@gmail.com.

Adopt a Trail Work Day - Illinois Prairie Path Saturday, June 25 – 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM 485 North Montclair Avenue, Glen Ellyn, IL

This outing will start at 9 AM. This is an easy 2-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 for us is at the east end of the parking lot near 485 N. Montclair Ave, Glen Ellyn, where it dead ends into the Prairie Path, just south of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. People should contact Jeff if interested due to possible late developments (see contact below).

2016 dates are 4/30, 6/25, 8/27, and 10/22 and will be Sierra Club clean-ups, but we will be following County requirements. This allows us to have an Adopt-a-Trail sign on the trail with the Sierra Club name on it.

Contact Jeffrey L Gahris, 630-853-5505 or jgahris@gmail.com.

Windmill (creating electricity) and Nachusa to See the Bison Sunday, June 26 -- 10:00 AM (tentative) Oregon, IL

Come with me and learn about a windmill creating electricity/battery back-ups with grow lights. This will be at the home of Bob and Sonia Vogl who are part of the yearly Energy Fair in Oregon and Illinois Renewable Energy Association. Bob will be our special guest speaker for the windmill information. Then on to Nachusa, where we will divide our time between learning about the bison that have come to Illinois and hiking to see and identify the native prairie flowers of Illinois. Special guest tour guide will be Cindy Crosby, naturalist for Morton Arboretum, who we all enjoyed last year. Limit 20. Cost \$5 (Sierra fee). Assistant leader Mike Way. Contact leader Jan Bradford at jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net.

Kayak or Canoe the Kishwaukee River Saturday, July 16 – 9:00 AM 202 Walnut Street, Cherry Valley, IL

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. It has been described as a "unique aquatic resource comparable to a stream without human disturbance."

Cost: canoe \$30 per person, solo kayak \$35, tandem kayak \$30 per person, own boat \$5. For those renting a canoe or kayak, it includes kayak/canoe, paddle and life jacket rentals, and Sierra Club fees. Leader is Paul Saindon.

To sign up, email Paul at paul@pauls.us or call after 5 pm 815-310-0001.

**Adopt a Trail Work Day - Illinois Prairie Path
Saturday, August 27 – 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
485 North Montclair Avenue, Glen Ellyn, IL**

Please see the description for the June 25 Adopt a Trail work day.

**Porcupine Mountain Wilderness
Friday, Sept. 16 – Sunday, Sept. 18
901-919 E. Cloverland Drive, Ironwood, MI**

Two and a half days of hiking at the Porcupine Mountain Wilderness in Michigan's Upper Peninsula with views unlike any other in the Midwest. Towering virgin timber (pines, cedar, hemlock, oak, and maple), secluded lakes, waterfalls, and miles of wild rivers and streams make a visit to the "Porkies" a trip to remember. We hike 8 to 9 miles on the first two days, 3 on the last. Some rocky terrain and a couple of stream crossings. Cost: \$140 includes: 3 nights lodging at the Indianhead Motel, 823 East U.S. 2 (Cloverland Drive), Ironwood, MI. (906) 932-2031. www.indianheadmotel.com. 3 continental breakfasts, & Sierra club costs. Arrive anytime Thursday, Hiking starts Friday 8:00 AM.

Full payment required in advance. Limit 14.
Leader: Paul Saindon. Assistant leader: Ed Max. Email Paul at paul@pauls.us to sign up.

Please note: Logistics require that we drive about 90 minutes to get to our first hike on Friday, 45 minutes on Saturday, and around 20 minutes on Sunday.

**Adopt a Trail Work Day - Illinois Prairie Path
Saturday, October 22 – 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
485 North Montclair Avenue, Glen Ellyn, IL**

Please see the description for the June 25 Adopt a Trail work day.

FEATURED OUTING: WINDMILL AND NACHUSA TO SEE THE BISON

By Jan Bradford

**JUNE
26TH**

Our day will start out by visiting a 1-Kilowatt Bergey wind generator installed in 2005 at the farm of Bob and Sonia Vogel. This wind generator has a rotor diameter of 2.5 meters (8.2 feet) and a peak output spiking over 2,000 watts. For daily loads, this wind turbine will be less expensive than diesels or grid extension for virtually any wind resource above 5 m/s (11 mph).

The Vogels installed this windmill to generate enough electricity to run their home and be completely independent of electric companies. And they also wanted to educate the public as to alternative electric methods available today.

But to achieve their goal, a battery system also had to be designed and developed to store the electricity when the wind was not blowing. By inter-linking several batteries together and connecting them to the windmill via a monitoring meter, electricity generated could be stored in the batteries for the electricity needed for the home 24/7. We will learn more about how this was done in our Windmill tour.

Then our day continues at Nachusa Grasslands, which is a 3,500-acre preserve of tall grass prairie, wetlands, woodlands, and virgin Illinois prairie land. The Nature Conservancy has owned it since 1986.

The preserve's first herd of 20 bison arrived in 2014 after many years of planning, preparing the prairie where the bison would roam, and negotiations of where the bison would come from and their future. Last year, 14 calves were born, and we will see new calves this year, too. Additional fencing was completed and opened in 2016 for this expected



increase in population. Eventually, about 120 bison will roam over 1500 acres.

In addition, Nachusa has more than 700 species of plants and more than 180 species of birds. The ornate box turtles, bobolinks, and eastern-fringed orchid are also increasing in number as they make their homes at Nachusa.

And, of course, on the prairie something is always blooming, and we will learn more on this special day. So come join us on June 26, 2016, as we learn more about making electricity for our homes, restoring Illinois prairies, and bringing back the bison to Illinois.

About the Author: Jan Bradford has been leading Sierra Club outings for 13 years. She enjoys outings that educate herself as well as those she is leading on important issues, while enjoying open space. In particular, she welcomes children on the trips she leads because, she says, "we need to protect the future for them and their children."

A Hike at Nachusa Grasslands

By Cindy Crosby



Have you ever heard the song of the dickcissel? Or watched a bison wallow in the tallgrass? You've got a good chance of both when you visit Nachusa Grasslands in Franklin Grove, Illinois.

The preserve's first herd of 20 bison is quickly multiplying. Bison have been extirpated from Illinois since the early 1800s. One of the unforgettable experiences of visiting Nachusa is seeing baby bison running across the prairie with their mothers, while a big bull protectively looks on. Illinois once had more than 22 million acres of tallgrass prairie; less than one-tenth of one percent remains. Indeed, tallgrass prairie is one of the most threatened ecosystems on earth. Nachusa's acreage includes 274 acres of remnant prairie, as well as hundreds of additional acres of cropland restored to prairie. On a hike through the prairie, you may see the regal fritillary, red-headed woodpecker, eastern prairie fringed orchid, ornate box turtle, bobolink, or Hill's thistle. Compass plants, blazing star, Michigan lily, shooting stars, and other prairie wildflowers are common sights throughout the season.

Nachusa's riches are not just in its land. The site stewards and volunteers are integral to the quality

of the restoration accomplished. Hundreds of volunteers have put in thousands of hours managing weeds, collecting seeds, planting prairie, and helping staff with prescribed burns. Researchers conduct studies at Nachusa on everything from bison influences to bees to rare and endangered plants.

Visitors to Nachusa enjoy the rolling hills or "knobs" and St. Peter's sandstone outcrops, which are a signature of the region. The site also has a calciferous fen and sandboil. These and other unusual landscape features have helped make Nachusa a magnet for photographers, birders, and hikers! A Visitor Center Pavilion is slated for completion by the end of 2016. Come and discover for yourself what makes this landscape so special.

About the Author:

Cindy Crosby is a steward and dragonfly chaser at Nachusa. She also serves as vice-president of communications for Friends of Nachusa Grasslands. Her forthcoming book is *Introduction to the Tallgrass Prairie: A Beginner's Guide* from Northwestern University Press (2017).



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