

EDITOR'S LETTER

What is the story behind your food?

By Jenny Smiechowski

Is it a fairy tale? A horror story? Or perhaps a mystery? Does your food come from a farm? A factory? Brazil? Or your backyard?

The story of our food is a story we write every day and one of the most important choices we make in our lives. It is a choice that not only affects our health, but the health of our neighbors, communities, environment, and the world.

As consumers, we are inundated with more options than ever before (a phenomena Michael Pollan called the omnivore's dilemma). But as the pitfalls of our conventional food system become increasingly apparent, we are making better, healthier choices.

As a result of these choices and growing demand, the local and organic food movement has gained some major momentum. I am amazed at how prevalent local and organic food has become in just the past five years. You can get it almost everywhere – even many conventional grocery stores and restaurants. Farmer's markets, CSA's, and backyard gardens are spreading like wildfire, and it is becoming easier and easier for us to eat ethically.

For these and many other reasons, I am eager to share with you an issue of the DuPage Sierran that shines a light on the locavores of DuPage County and reminds us of the numerous healthy, ethical food options available in our own backyards.

In the words of Michael Pollan, "At home I serve the kind of food I know the story behind." Hopefully this issue will bring us one step closer to making this statement a reality in homes across DuPage County. **Enjoy!**

Urbana's farmers market is a real community event, with upwards of 10,000 shoppers attending on Saturdays.

Photo by Lonnie Morris



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DuPage Sierran

Executive Chair: Lonnie Morris

Editor: *Jenny Smiechowski*

Writers: *Jane Biddle, Jean-Marie Kauth, Danielle Logacho, Barbara Lonergan, Vicki Nowicki, Emily Prasad, Jenny Smiechowski*

[Http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg)

For activities, legislative action alerts, & outings information

We are on Facebook! Check out:

http://www.facebook.com/pages/River-Prairie-Group_of_the_Sierra_Club/96257429851

Farmer's Daughter's Wife

By Jane Biddle

Growing up, I was a suburban girl who dreamt of living in the big city of Chicago. So after college, I lived in Chicago, the burbs and many other Midwestern spots along the way. Fifteen years ago, my life took a very different turn. I met Teresa, a farmer's daughter.

Her life had been a bit hectic also. She had moved from city to city over the years and none felt like "home." Ten years ago, we decided to forgo the net and make the leap to rural Illinois close to her childhood farm. Quickly, we found our spot, a circa 1860's home with nine acres behind it. The landscape had a wonderful tree line out back, a grove of pines, and lots of potential.

Upon our arrival, the property was covered with corn. Before the first year ended, we had the ground tilled, pasture planted, fences built, and the animals moved in. We have since planted raspberries, enlarged our garden plots, started egg production, butchered chickens, raised hogs, put up a greenhouse, and sheared alpacas.

Along with all this work, came some wisdom. We gained a greater understanding of food and how important it is to be aware of what we eat. We went from bopping down the street for take-out on a regular basis to cooking what we call "backyard meals" where everything on the plate was grown within 50 yards.

We now can and freeze our summer stash, and although we cannot be certified organic (conventionally farmed land surrounds us) we do take pride in our efforts to be chemical free in our garden. We are very careful about our animal feed, choosing the more costly no animal by-product and essential oil products. Our land has recuperated from its many years of chemical fertilizer and is now healthy pasture for our grazing horses, alpacas and chickens. We use compost and manure for our fertilization, keeping the natural cycle right here on our farm.

For years, we brought our farm fresh products to friends and family in the city and suburbs. Most were shocked by the difference.



*"Not quite old enough to roam"
All photos by Jane Biddle*

The eggs yolks are richer, the pork is more flavorful, and the greens are fresher. I was traveling into Lombard every couple of weeks to visit my Mom and bring in produce.

Environmentally, it made sense to get the most out of the gas we consumed to bring food to our families and friends. So, in 2011 we developed a business to deliver our fresh eggs to the western suburbs of Lombard and Glen Ellyn. Word spread quickly about the egg farmer coming right to your door.

More and more people are raising their awareness about the food system. Eating locally, is not only good for the cook, it is good for local economies and the environment. Of course, our methods have their challenges. Not having chickens locked in a building with cages, makes them susceptible to predators. My two favorite animals are now my nemeses, foxes and hawks.



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Farmer's Daughter's Wife, continued

We do our best to allow our chickens to roam and express their chicken-ness while still keeping them safe. Around here, the "learn as we go" motto never wears thin.

Certainly, I never thought that I would excitedly explain a hen's egg production, identify different varieties of chickens or realize the importance of a rooster protecting his flock. I must say, we have found our home... *Stone Home Farm*.

Business has grown so fast, we have not been able to keep up. We have new chicks about 12 weeks old and another batch on order. It takes 20-22 weeks for our first egg to appear from the young ones. If you would like to get on our waiting list or if you have any questions about Stone Home Farm fresh egg delivery, feel free to contact Jane Biddle at stonehomefarm@gmail.com or 815-440-5556.

Jane Biddle & Teresa Geiger

Stone Home Farm
"Good Natured Produce"

1125 Inlet Road
PO Box 19
Lee Center, IL 61331



"Mia & Junior: Meet and greet"



"Alpacas share the pasture"

Upcoming River Prairie Group Elections

The annual election for Executive Committee will be held this fall with four open seats.

To be qualified to run for River Prairie Executive Committee, one must be a Sierra Club member in good standing (currently paid membership) and available to attend the six annual meetings.

Executive Committee members vote on budgetary matters, endorsements and policy positions. Executive Committee members also participate in Group administrative responsibilities, serve on committees and represent the Sierra Club to the local community.

If you're interested in being considered for nomination, please contact **Joe Pokorny**, nominating committee chair, at rpgsierra@comcast.net.

Qualified candidates will be announced and ballots made available in the September issue of the DuPage Sierran.

Local Organic Food Isn't Everything, It's the Only Thing

*(As Vince Lombardi Would Have Said
If He Had Been a Farmer/Gardener)*

By Vicki Nowicki

To paraphrase Sir Albert Howard, the father of organic gardening, "Organic gardening is an ecological act..."

Go back to 1942 and you will find the beginnings of the modern day organic farming/gardening movement led by Sir Albert Howard and J.I. Rodale. They started publishing a tiny little pamphlet expounding their ideas about creating healthy, living soils which would produce robust vegetable crops by following an ecosystem model for organic agriculture.

Howard and Rodale were in fear of the large scale, chemical, mechanistic models of agriculture that were taking over the existing small, diverse-crop, family farm culture of the American farmer. We still struggle with these concerns today and, in fact, are in a critical period where we make an important choice every time we pick up our forks.

So how does one garden as though the site is an ecosystem?

- Treat the garden as a closed system (the mixed vegetable and animal wastes are converted into humus)
- There is no waste (the processes of growth and the processes of decay balance one another)
- Microorganisms are integral part of community (avoid killing with chemicals or rototilling)
- Treat the garden gently (maintain consistent soil moisture, soil temps by using mulches, compost is best)
- The greatest care is taken to conserve and store the rainfall (creating porous soil with microorganisms will hold water in the soil and prevent runoff)
- Treat the garden like a respected, independent community (when disease or pests become apparent, allow the immunities of the plants to work things out, up to a point; certainly spraying with poisons will not help the plants or the community)

The importance of returning to this method of growing cannot be overemphasized. Organic growing can sequester huge amounts of carbon, restore our endangered water tables, save untold amounts of fossil fuels, make some huge conciliatory steps to reverse the damage caused by



Ron and Vicki Nowicki's suburban vegetable garden which provides produce during the growing season and surplus for preserving, canning, and freezing for the winter months.

Photo by Ron Nowicki

our linear system of resource consumption, slow global climate change (whose main cause is industrial farming), and if the foods are consumed regularly, ameliorate our burdened health care system.

In the words of Wendell Berry, "Eating is an agricultural act..."

We have no choice as a country but to go forward with organic growing methods, and each individual who owns land or has access to land must urgently make a choice to help turn things around. This is an easy answer to a complex problem.

We must make a commitment to take care of this precious land for ourselves and implicitly for all the other 7 billion people who are here now. Our food can no longer be anonymously thrown into a grocery cart. Not if we still have a choice...and we do! We can grow it ourselves or know the person and process under which it was grown and make sure that it was ethically grown. Any person can still choose without waiting for commission or a committee or an ordinance.

"Eating local, organic food is a powerful, intelligent, passionate, spiritual, patriotic act ..." Vicki Nowicki

Vicki Nowicki, designer and education with the Land Office (a local garden design, installation company), relies on ecological principles to guide her garden designs. The Land Office is located in the passive solar home of Vicki and Ron Nowicki in Downers Grove.

Raise Your Glass to Flight 112

By *Barbara Lonergan,*
Elmhurst Cool Cities Coalition

If you didn't do your homework beforehand, you could walk into **Flight 112** in Elmhurst thinking it is a run-of-the-mill wine bar. But this organic wine bar is more than what meets the eye ... or palate.

Seventy percent of the wine served at Flight 112 Wine House falls under the categories of sustainable, organic or biodynamic.

"Taste and quality matter most," says owner Visal Kheam. "No one wants to drink a 'green' wine if it doesn't taste good."

"Organic wine makes a great story," says Kheam. "It makes my work more difficult, trying to filter out only organic wine, but that makes it all the more interesting."

"Over time, I've come to realize that organic wines are earthier, with less fruits on the palate. They go better with food."

As a practice, Flight 112 rotates out the wine and food menus every four months. This spring, menus will focus on California – a majority of wines from Sonoma County and food with a California flair.

But Flight 112 does a lot more than just support organic winemakers.

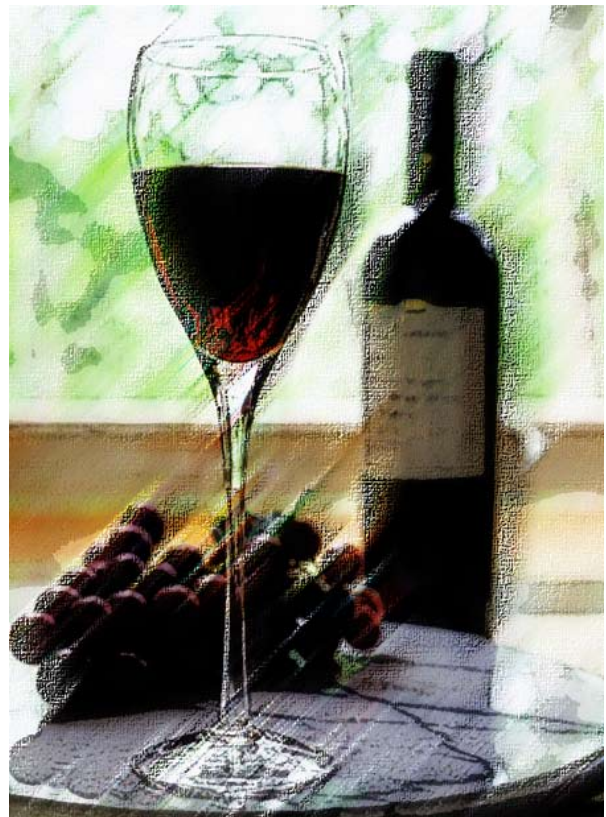
"When we first opened three years ago, we changed our garbage collection program," says Kheam. "We introduced recycling bins for cardboard, plastic, paper and lots of wine bottles. We also save corks and send them to Recork.org, which specializes in making SOLE products (shoes)."

"And I'm a big believer in supporting the local community," says Kheam. "It's probably the only sure thing as a business that we can hang our hat on."

Flight 112 supports the Elmhurst/Yorkfield Food Pantry. Each Wednesday, customers are treated to half-off the extensive Craft Beer menu if they donate \$5 to the food pantry.

"It's a great way for customers to try our beers. Most of them are not familiar beers that you'll find in the grocery stores."

Organic wine. Recycling. Cork collection. Community support. *We'll drink to that.*



"Green" Wine Terminology

Organic: The definition of organic wine varies, but almost always means that a reputable, third party certification agency has certified the grapes used in the production of the wine are 100 percent organically grown, free from the use of chemicals. In particular, no pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides or chemical fertilizers can be used.

Sustainable: A holistic approach to growing grapes that respects the environment, the ecosystem and even society.

Biodynamic: endorses the concept of "harnessing" life energy in growing grapes. Biodynamic farming pays homage to traditional farming, with no chemicals (organic), and incorporates the spiritual and cosmic energies in farming activity.

-Organic Consumers Association

Tips from a Lombard Locavore

By Danielle Logacho

Emily Prasad grows vegetables and berries in her family's backyard garden. She belongs to a produce CSA (community supported agriculture co-op) and a meat CSA. She has milk and eggs delivered from local farms. She bakes with local flour, and even goes out of her way to buy coffee that has been roasted in Chicago.

For her, the small decisions about what to eat and drink are a form of everyday environmental activism. "Local eating lets me have a big impact in my household," says Emily, who lives in Lombard with her husband and four-year-old son. "It's under my control, and I can clearly see my money supporting things I believe in."

Emily has an M.A. in Environmental Education and taught ecology at Hadley Middle School in Glen Ellyn. Her interest in local eating began with a trip to the farmer's market, and as that interest has grown, she has become a community leader – blogging, rallying folks on Facebook and even teaching a course at the library.

Her deepening commitment to local eating has also led her to do things that, she admits, the average person might not necessarily do. In 2010, for example, she tried to move her source of eggs closer to home and led the campaign to allow backyard chickens in the village of Lombard.

The chicken initiative failed, but Emily is still dedicated to keeping her food local. She cans applesauce and green beans. She makes and preserves her own jams and routinely makes meat stock (from CSA meat) and cans that, too.

"People always ask, 'Isn't that hard?'" she says. "And I say, yes, it's work, but it's really about a skill, something you need to practice. Gardening, canning – these are skills people used to have. The more you do it, the easier it gets."

Emily readily acknowledges that her lifestyle is not for everyone. At the same time, she feels strongly that everyone can find a way to minimize their impact on the environment by eating local. It's just different for every family. If you're willing to explore and try new foods, especially new vegetables, it can be very affordable.



Emily son's Peter holding homegrown oyster mushrooms.

For her, an added bonus of local eating is that the benefits go beyond the carbon footprint. "I don't cook fancy," she says, "but food tastes so much better when the ingredients are really fresh." She's also discovered that, by eating what's in season, she looks forward to harvest time and appreciates certain foods more.

And that's an important point she emphasizes: local eating is less about doing without and more about doing differently.

To learn more, or to follow Emily's adventures in local eating, visit her blog, threeandathirdhomestead.com.

Local Food Co-op Helps DuPage County Residents 'Go Local'

By Emily Prasad

When I started eating locally, I never thought it would mean driving away from a farmers market with 80 pounds of popcorn in the passenger seat of my car. No, eating locally doesn't mean I now subsist entirely on popcorn. But, a search for hard to find locally produced staple foods sparked the idea of creating a local foods co-op, which is how I ended up with the unusual passenger.

Eat Local DuPage is a small co-op that coordinates group buys of locally grown foods. The co-op also is a place to share resources about local foods and discuss the challenges and rewards of eating locally and with the seasons. Currently, the co-op has organized purchases of popcorn, whole wheat flour, wheat berries, honey, and dry cooking beans.

When I went looking for a source of local popcorn, it occurred to me that other locavores were probably looking for the same things I was; staple foods that I wasn't able to find reliably at the farmers market and that weren't in my CSA box. I was also looking for a way to make bulk purchases. One pound of cooking beans in my CSA box is wonderful, but it won't last through a winter of soup making. So, I started to look for farmers I could purchase these staple foods from directly.

I knew other local foods supporters must be looking for some of these same foods. It didn't make sense for 10 families to all make a trip to a farm to all buy popcorn or dry beans.



Homemade butter from local cream.

Why not try to pool orders together and bring the food back and fill a gap that our markets and CSAs weren't meeting? If enough people were interested in ordering, maybe it would be possible to purchase at a bulk discount. And wouldn't it be easier for a farmer to deal with one bulk order rather than 10 or 15 small orders?

Eat Local DuPage formed out of this desire to expand local eating beyond fruits, vegetables, meat, and eggs. It is made up of over fifty DuPage residents. More than just a place to purchase local foods, it is also a place for the local foods community to learn about and explore our DuPage county foodshed. Currently, members have been sharing information about an organic apple CSA with multiple drop-off locations in DuPage county, good ways to cook with dry beans, sources for local maple syrup, and places to buy farm eggs. Anyone can participate in the discussion by joining the **Eat Local DuPage** group, which is hosted on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eatlocaldupage/>

Peter helping can applesauce. We did about 2 1/2 bushels this year. Half from Earth First and the other half from a local homeowner who does not use the apples from their tree.



A bountiful harvest Photo by Jan Happel

Heaven and Earth Growers Reap Much More than Just Vegetables

By Barbara Lonergan

It is estimated that farming began out of necessity as early as 10,000 B.C. Today, with a continual rise in food prices, concerns about pesticides, and a change in food quality (do grocery store tomatoes have taste to them anymore?), what was once a lost art is now growing in numbers. An estimated 43 million U.S. households – including the White House – picked up a trowel and planted edibles in 2009.

“Gardening and growing is a lost art,” says Jan Happel, founder and president of Heaven and Earth Growers. “It’s not that difficult.”

“There is satisfaction in growing your own food,” says Happel. And even more satisfaction in growing and giving in abundance to those in need.

The motto behind **Heaven and Earth Growers**, the non-profit Christian ministry of growers, is ***We Grow to Give.***

continued on next page...

Heaven and Earth, continued

"We grow food and share our harvest with those in need," says Happel. "We also share our love for growing things. It is one of life's greatest pleasures to plant a seed, watch it grow to harvest and share what you grow."

With the first vegetable garden planted at the Elmhurst Presbyterian Church in 2007, Heaven and Earth Growers donated 534 pounds of food to local pantries. To date, Heaven and Earth Growers has donated more than 2,225 pounds of fresh produce – a majority harvested from churches, some from the community garden in Golden Meadows, and some community donations.

"In 2006, I had a large garden myself, two children away at college and a husband who traveled," says Happel. "I began sharing my food, gathering with friends at church, and decided to start Heaven and Earth Growers."

What originally started as an organic garden club with planned programs and meetings, became more "cho-reography" than Happel anticipated. "We've become more of a ministry than a garden club."

Fresh vegetables have been donated to the **Humanitarian Services Project** in Carol Stream, **Yorkfield Pantry, IC Food Pantry, Shared Senior Housing** in Elmhurst, **Elmhurst United Community Concern, Northern Illinois Food Bank, and P.A.D.S.** (Public Action to Deliver Shelter).

"We've pared it down to local organizations, which requires less driving and less carbon dioxide emissions," says Happel. "Also, some organizations have refrigerators and some don't, so we have to time it right so our harvests have a quick turnover."

"For individuals receiving donations, this often is the only fresh food they receive. Most food pantry donations are non-perishable, canned food which is highly processed, overly salted and not organic."

In 2010, Heaven and Earth Growers expanded to Church Street on the south side of the First United Methodist Church. The garden is maintained by the Methodist Church, St. Peter's United Church of Christ, Immaculate Conception Parish, and Heaven and Earth Growers.

"We plant in raised or separated beds. This way, we don't have to rototill every year. We just refurbish the beds with organic fertilizer and plant," says Happel. The Church Street garden is watered with rain captured by four rain barrels on the property.

Groups, including Girl Scouts and Eagle Scouts, are organized to help one week per month, which won't overtax any one group. They weed, water, harvest and deliver June through September.

"The garden is rewarding in so many ways," says Happel. "All ages benefit from gardening, but teaching the children is really special. Three year olds love to dig in the dirt, plant seeds."

"They grow to love gardening. Some children have never been in a garden before. They don't know corn grows on stalks. Some think food [only] comes from the grocery store."

"At the Presbyterian Church, children go out to the garden during the sermon, then bring the harvest to the altar."

Happel's advice to first time gardeners: Start small. Think organic. Don't use chemical fertilizers. Variety makes it better. Learn when to pick. Learn to be sustainable.

If you are a faith-based organization and want to start a plot, contact Happel for help setting it up. Home gardeners do not have to be a member of the church to donate a harvest. When donating food, please give a few days advanced notice. Contact heavenandearth-growers@yahoo.com for more information.



*Members of Elmhurst Presbyterian Church
Photo by Jan Happel*

Review:

Michael Pollan's The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals and In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto

By Jean-Marie Kauth

Whether you're the kind of person who hunts your own meat and gathers morels or the kind of person who prefers diet coke with your M&Ms and Big Macs, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is an entertaining and eye-opening read.

Who knew that what we eat is such a big story? Pollan traces four different meals – McDonald's, Big Organic, Grass Fed, and Wild Boar – back to their respective origins, examining their environmental and health impacts. Did you know that chicken nuggets contain dimethylpolysiloxene, which is "a suspected carcinogen and an established mutagen, tumorigen, and reproductive effector"? Or that they contain TBHQ, a form of butane that in much larger amounts can kill?

Pollan also surprises with his revelation that by comparing carbon isotopes in human bones, scientists have determined that because we eat so many corn derivatives and corn-fed animals, we contain more carbon atoms from corn than Mexicans, whose staple grain is corn. He makes the point that when we eat the products of food factories rather than the kind of food our grandmothers would have recognized, that we are eating culture rather than nature.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the frequent references to manure and compost piles, the section on grass farming was one of the most idyllic in the book. At Joel Salatin's farm in Virginia, we meet happy pigs, happy cows, and happy chickens who, before being eaten, live a life true to their own natures. The pigs root around for corn thrown into the cow shed during the winter: come spring they are as happy as the proverbial "pig in shit." The cows munch down pastures whose grasses grow better for the moderate clipping and generous fertilization. The chickens are happy to finish off the job of fertilizing the fields and to peck around in the cow pies for three-day-old grubs, making their eggs particularly tasty and eliminating the need for pesticides on the cows.

Having previously been a vegetarian, Pollan's description of hunting wild boar is somewhat unsettling but riveting nonetheless. The repast that he describes as the "perfect meal" is complete with hand-gathered wild mushrooms,



cherries from his neighbor's tree, and bread made with native yeast, harvested from the air of San Francisco.

In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto follows up on *The Omnivore's Dilemma* with some practical advice on how to eat. The message is concise but pithy: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly vegetables." Pollan maintains that most of what we eat now is not, in fact, food, but food-like substances. We worry endlessly about nutrition and yet are malnourished.

His list of guidelines sounds like old-fashioned common sense: "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food; Avoid food products containing ingredients that are A) unfamiliar, B) unpronounceable, C) more than five in number, or that include D) high-fructose corn syrup; Avoid products that make health claims; Get out of the supermarket whenever possible." Local Farmer's Markets are one step in the right direction toward following this advice.

Both of these books are important not just for the practical advice they offer, but for the way they ask us to change our thinking about food. They ask us to rely on time-tested food cultures instead of the latest nutritional advice. They ask us to enjoy our food, and to increase that enjoyment by taking the time to know where our meals come from. Pollan articulates the difference between the extremes in his four meals as a difference in perception: "The pleasures of the one are based on a nearly perfect knowledge; the pleasures of the other on an equally perfect ignorance." Pollan asks us to acknowledge the high costs of cheap food and finally, to simply respond to this: "What it is we're eating. Where it came from. How it found its way to our table. And what, in a true accounting, it really cost."

Author Bio:

Jean-Marie Kauth, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Languages and Literature at Benedictine University, member of the Warrenville Environmental Advisory Commission, and founder of the Chicagoland Healthy Lawn Team, a grassroots effort to educate the public on the hazards of lawn chemicals.

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, June 6 – Joint RPG Outings Committee and Excom Meeting

6:30pm-9pm, See Contacts for Location Information

Come to the RPG June Outings Leader Meeting and meet the RPG Excom members for a joint social food event and meeting. Please RSVP for the food so we can estimate amounts. Bring food and beverages after checking with hosts. Details in emails to Outings Leaders and Excom. RSVP **Steve Turner: 630-782-5865** sdturner@gmail.com or **Lonnie Morris: 630-627-3982** herbdove@comcast.net.

Wednesday, June 13-26 – Paddle With a Ranger**

10am-12pm, Fullersburg Woods, Oak Brook

Bring your own kayak or canoe, and join a ranger for a paddle. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. Free. Registration is required. Registration begins two weeks prior. Call **630-933-7248**. Also on: Tuesday, June 26, 10am – 12pm at Hidden Lake.

Saturday, Jun 16, Jul 21, Aug 18 – Workday at Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve**

9am-12pm, Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve, Glen Ellyn

Would you like to help restore a local prairie, woodland or wetland? The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has several restorations going on. One of these is at the Churchill Woods/Glacial Ridge Forest Preserve in Glen Ellyn. We are looking for volunteers to help remove invasive plants, cut brush, and collect and plant native seed. For more information, contact Steward **Bruce Blake** at **630-629-2520** or RlInstns1@aol.com. Preregistration and waiver are required; go to www.dupageforest.org/GetInvolved/Volunteer. More details on the RPG Activity Calendar.

Saturday, June 23 – Monitoring Monarchs**

10am-11am, Fullersburg Woods, Oak Brook

Learn about our state insect, the monarch butterfly. Search for its eggs and caterpillars, and find out how you can help monitor the monarch population at Fullersburg Woods. Registration is required. Ages 7 and up; under 12 with an adult. \$3 per person. To register, call **630-850-8110**.



Milkweed is a larval food source for Monarchs

Photo by Linda Mierendorf

Saturday, June 30- July 1 – Celebrating the Fourth

1:30pm-3:30pm, Kline Creek Farm, West Chicago

Experience one of the country's first holidays through 1890s games, music and speeches, including the reading of the Declaration of Independence. Bring a picnic, and help make ice cream. Ceremony begins at 2:30 p.m. All ages. Free. Registration not required. Call **630-876-5900**.

*** Indicates activities that are not sponsored nor administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision, or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service because it may be of interest to the readers of this publication*

Join the River Prairie Group Listserv!

We encourage everyone to sign up so you do not miss out on any of our news and activities. Stay up-to-date on the River Prairie Group's latest activities by joining our listserv. The listserv is open to anyone interested in finding out more about our group. The purpose of this list is to announce the activities, meetings, news and special events of the the Sierra Club's River Prairie Group, located in DuPage County, Illinois. The format of the list is for announcement and news distribution only, so members will receive but not be able to post messages.

Anyone interested in subscribing to this list can join in either of two ways:

Go to: <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/IL-RPG-NEWS.html> and click on "Join or leave the list."

or send an email to: Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org

Leave the subject line blank, in the message area type: **SUBSCRIBE IL-RPG-NEWS Firstname Lastname** (substitute your first and last names)

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.

Including updates on those below, new RPG listings, and offerings from other local Groups, current listings are located at illinois.sierraclub.org/outings. However, we are migrating to a new Activity Calendar which will replace the current outing system, include meetings and events, and offer map and direction links. Check out the new Calendar at: illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg/calendar/.

Jun 2 (Sat) Cycling in Cedarburg, WI

Join us in a moderately paced 40-mile bike ride through the picturesque glacial rolling hills and farmland of nearby eastern Wisconsin, just north of Milwaukee. Stay for dinner or ice cream in Historic Cedarburg. Bike helmets required. Cost: \$3. Limit 15. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Assistant Leader is **Mary Fox**. Call Mark beginning April 15th at **847-699-0329**.

Jun 8-10 Volunteer (Service), Hike and Bike Hopper Lakes/Hennepin Canal, Putnam County, IL

Join us for a weekend of volunteering, hiking, and cycling at the **Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge** and along the Hennepin Canal in Putnam and Bureau Counties. On Saturday morning, we will help the Wetlands Initiative plant plugs, followed by an afternoon of hiking three short trails (3 miles total), bird watching from an observation deck, and frog spotting. An option to canoe/kayak also is available. On Sunday, we will cycle approximately 30 miles along the Hennepin Canal. \$60 fee includes 2 nights lodging, 3 meals, and Sierra Club fees. Limit 12. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Assistant Leader is **Cindy Oakley**. To sign up, contact Cindy at **815-433-3688**.

Jun 9 (Sat) Kayak/Canoe the scenic Kishwaukee River, South East Rockford, IL

Kayak or canoe the scenic Kishwaukee River, Rockford, 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 often been described as a "unique aquatic resource comparable to a stream without human disturbance". The cost of \$51/kayak or \$36/canoe per person includes kayak/canoe, paddle and life jacket rentals, transportation to put-in spot and Sierra Club fees. Leader is **Paul Saindon**, Assistant Leader is **Karen Willden**. To sign up, email **Paul** at paul@pauls.us or call after 5pm **815-310-0001**.

Jun 16 (Sat) Nippersink Creek Canoe Trip, McHenry, IL

Nippersink Creek offers much diversity and some challenges from beginning to end, and a chance to learn about and observe the native wildlife. The first portion of

the trip takes us down the original channel of Nippersink Creek (learn about its recent restoration!) in **Glacial Park**. Many twists, turns and riffles have been added to this section. After leaving Glacial Park, the creek still presents challenges and has interesting scenery. After canoeing plan for an evening cook-out at the near-by residence of Mike Davis after canoeing! This outing is recommended for experienced canoeists; the ability to navigate a canoe is a must! Cost of the outing is the deposit of \$35 to cover canoe rentals and other expenses. Limit 20. Leaders are **Mike Davis** and **Mike Way**. Assistant Leader is **Leigh Wilson**. To sign up, contact **Mike Davis** at **815-331-3042** or mikeyd5600@comcast.net.

Jun 23-24 Biking the Driftless Region of Southwest Wisconsin

We will be camping on a secluded farm in SW Wisconsin, riding the low traffic paved roads on Saturday, and checking out the Pine River trail Sunday. We will ride from 20-40 miles Saturday on hilly paved roads, and 15 miles on flat limestone Sunday. I'm rating this as moderate, but you need to have done some hill work or it will be a long day. We'll have a campfire at the farmhouse Friday night and ride Saturday and Sunday. We will also visit the **Kickapoo Reserve** visitor center to learn about the history and geology of the area. Cost is \$30, covering fees, breakfast Sat. and Sun. and dinner Saturday. Leader: **Steve Carrow**. Assistant Leader: **Mark Ginger**. Call **Steve** at **630-293-4988** or email stephencarrow@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Jun 30 (Sat) Early Summer Hike Danada/Herrick, Naperville/Warrenville, IL

Danada/Herrick is close to most of us. And this year I thought we would see it in the early summer time before it really gets too hot. The fruit trees should all have fruit on them. And the birds will be plentiful. So bring your bird books and binoculars and let's go for a hike. Cost: \$3, Limit 20. Contact **Jan Bradford** at **847-455-2947** or email jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net. After the hike there is an option to go to my favorite Mexican restaurant for a bite to eat. Co-leader is **Mike Way**.

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River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings, continued

Jul 14 (Sat) Cycling the Milwaukee, WI area Bike Trails

Join us for a mid-Summer bike ride along three of the Milwaukee area's bike paths. We will cover approximately 40 miles from the Lake Michigan lakefront in Milwaukee to New Berlin, WI along the **Hank Aaron State Trail**, the **Oak Leaf Trail**, and the **New Berlin Trail**. These are all asphalt paths with the exception of a two mile connector trail which is crushed limestone. Cost: \$3. Limit 15. Assistant Leader is **Joan Willmeth**. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. To sign up, contact **Mark** at **847-699-0329** or **bubbleman@earthlink.net**.

Jul 14 (Sat) Kayak/Canoe the scenic Sugar River, North-central IL

Kayak or Canoe the scenic Sugar River, North-central Illinois (Winnebago County). *You must have and transport your own boat, there are no rentals.* We start 13 miles east of Beloit, WI. The Sugar River is a migration route for birds; over 150 species have been banded at the bird-banding station in **Colored Sands Bluff Nature Preserve**. The cost of \$3 covers Sierra Club fees. Leader is **Paul Saindon**, Assistant Leader is **Karen Willden**. To sign up, email **Paul** at **paul@pauls.us** or call **815-310-0001** after 5pm.

Jul 21 (Sat) Bike/Swim South Kettle Moraine State Forest, LaGrange, WI

We will bike 43 miles over hilly terrain on prime biking country roads in the **South Kettle Moraine State Forest** in southern Wisconsin. Our route will include swimming opportunities at a local beach where we will have lunch. We will begin and end at the General Store in LaGrange. *Bike helmets required.* Cost: \$3. Limit 25. Leader is **Paul Saindon**. Email **Paul** at **paul@pauls.us** to reserve your spot. *Assistant Leader needed.*

Jul 28 (Sat) Cycling the I & M Canal: Channahon to Morris, IL

Join us for a relaxing bike ride along the I & M Canal in the midst of summer. We will cycle from the Channahon access point to Morris where we will stop for lunch in **Gebhard Woods State Park**. We will cover 30 miles round trip on this flat crushed limestone path. Cost: \$3. Limit 15. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. To sign up, contact **Mark** at **847-699-0329**. *Assistant Leader needed.*

Aug 18 (Sat) Kayak/Canoe the scenic Kishwaukee River, South East Rockford, IL

Kayak or Canoe the scenic Kishwaukee River, Rockford, 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 often been described as a "unique aquatic resource comparable to a stream without human disturbance". The cost of \$51/kayak or \$36/canoe per person includes kayak/canoe, paddle and life jacket rentals, transportation to put-in spot and Sierra Club fees. Leader is **Paul Saindon**, Assistant Leader is **Karen Willden**. To sign up, email **Paul** at **paul@pauls.us** or call **815-310-0001** after 5pm.

Aug 25 (Sat) Bike-N-Hike Tinley Creek Trail, Palos Heights, IL

Join us on a bike-n-hike day on the **Tinley Creek Trail**. We will cycle a loop of approximately 34 miles from **Yankee Woods** in Tinley Park to **Lake Katherine** in Palos Heights. We will ride through woods and meadows on this asphalt path as well as in some neighborhoods. We will hike two miles at Lake Katherine and check out the **Lake Katherine Nature Center**. Cost: \$3. Limit 15. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Assistant Leader is **Mary Fox**. To sign up, contact **Mary** at **mlbikes@prodigy.net**.

Sep 21-23 Bike and Hike Washington Island, Door County WI

Join us for a biking/ hiking low stress adventure on secluded Washington Island located six miles off the tip of the Door County peninsula. We will bike on uncrowded paved roads around the island. Approximate cost of \$130 includes lodging Friday and Saturday at a historic resort on the island serving Scandinavian breakfasts. Please note: The group will meet late morning on Friday to catch the Ferry over to the island or you can catch a later ferry. Meals, ferry to Washington Island and incidentals are NOT included. Leader is **Mike Davis**. Assistant leader is **Berni Kolasa**. Call **Mike** at **815-331-3042** after July 1 for more details and to reserve your spot.

For more and up-to-date information, visit
illinois.sierraclub.org/outings
and the new Activity Calendar at
illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg/calendar

What is "Off Grid?"

This summer the Sheldon Peck Homestead in Lombard, Illinois will be offering a series of free programs and \$5.00 per person workshops based on "Living Off Grid."



A traveling bee hive from Little Honeyzzz LLC, a family owned and operated company in Janesville, Wisconsin.

Photo by the Lombard Historical Society

What is "Off Grid?" For many the grid refers to the electric grid in a community. Living "off the grid" can range from having a home that is not connected to the electric grid and uses solar, wind, or hydro power systems, to shunning modern society and living as a recluse. Many people living off the grid use wood stoves for heat and generators or lanterns for light. For the Sheldon Peck Homestead the goal is to teach pioneer skills that allow us all to live a little greener. For more details about our summer programs and workshops visit: www.lombardhistory.org, email our Education Coordinator: alisoncostanzo@lombardhistory.org or call: **630-629-1885**.



The Sheldon Peck Homestead located at 355 E. Parkside in Lombard

Photo by the Lombard Historical Society

Join the Bluestem Network, The Official Lobbying Network of the River Prairie Group!

You'll receive a call whenever the Sierra Club Phone Tree Network is activated with an environmental action alert. Bluestem is generally activated on a monthly basis. Upon receiving the phone call notification, members can access the environmental action alert by two ways: receiving it at an email address or by checking the RPG Web page. The action alert instructs members how to place a call to elected representatives and the position that the Sierra Club has taken. A phone call to elected officials has proven to be the most effective way to have an impact on public policy. To join, clip and mail the application to Linda Sullivan, 302 W. Windsor Ave., Lombard, IL 60148.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

IL County _____

Sierra Club Member? Yes No

Home phone number _____
(required to join)

Answering machine? Yes No

Email address _____
if you wish to receive action alerts via email