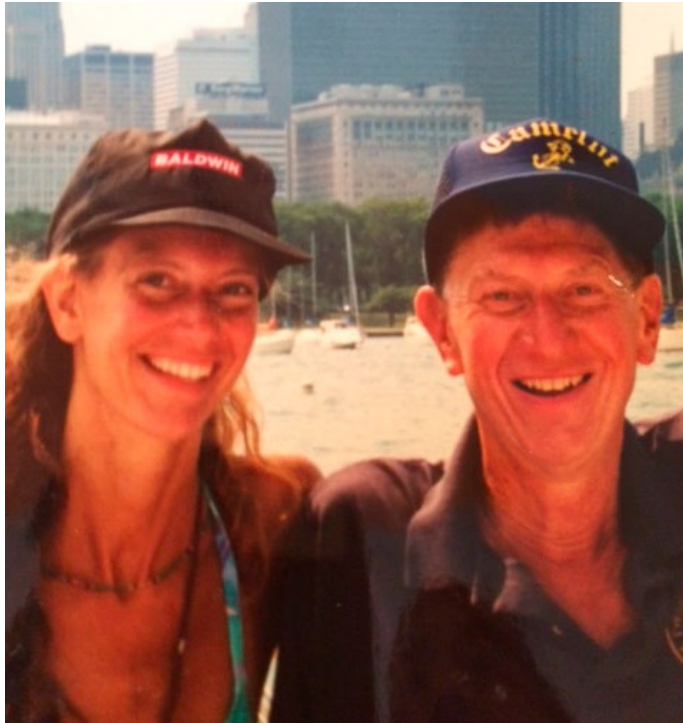


DuPage Sierran

Sierra Club, River Prairie Group of DuPage County



Chatter From the Chair

By **Connie Schmidt**

The seasons, they are a changin'. This summer has been brutal, for me personally: HOT, busy (my son got married at our home--in my yard--and I not only gardened a whole lot, but we decided to do a long overdue remodel of our living room, down to the studs and subfloor!) and my 88-year-old father was ill and passed away on the 4th of July. (He was the most patriotic man I have ever met, so the date was very fitting.) I feel quite spent; however, I and WE all have to gear up for important work this fall . . . It is ELECTION season.

Of course, we know the biggie, the presidential one, but the local and state elections are extremely important, too. These elections can affect your life significantly from local infrastructure to taxing and policy decisions. The River Prairie Group makes some endorsements at the local and state level. If you are interested, check with our leadership for endorsed candidates, or contact us and get involved to help them succeed. (Connie: 630-234-3029). You will receive a paper newsletter in the mail from the Illinois

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DuPage Sierran

Executive Chair: Connie Schmidt

Editor: Sherry Stratton

Writers: Connie Schmidt, Ryan Smith, Lonnie Morris, Ed Max, Dennis Streicher,

Layout: Dave Blake

For activities, legislative action alerts, and outings information:

Sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie or SCTRIPS.org

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

Chapter of Sierra Club with a listing of the endorsed candidates across the state, so watch for that important item this fall.

We can't forget the obvious, the beauty of the fall season to get out and enjoy our natural world. The Outings group of RPG has plenty of activities in store for you. Included in this newsletter is a full listing as well as a featured event. Our leaders are among the most active in the state with plenty of variety for you to enjoy. For up-to-date information, go to sctrips.org. In addition, our local Forest Preserve District of DuPage has a regular column in this newsletter and a plethora of activities available to all ages.

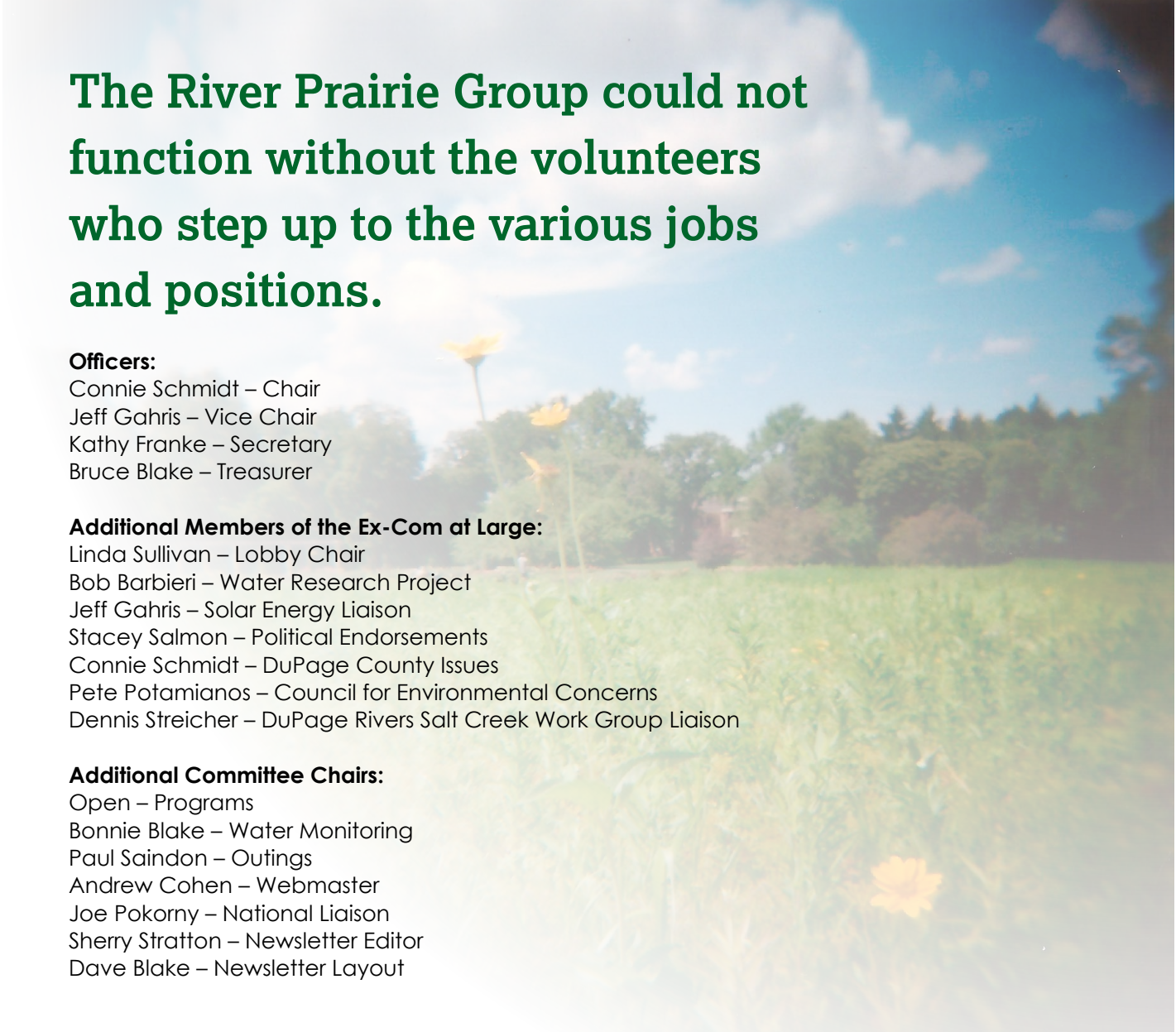
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“Chatter from the Chair”

(Continued from page 1)

Last, each fall we resume our meeting schedule with educational programs for you to enjoy in September, October, and November. This newsletter has the latest information on those programs. You can always check the website for details as well. Have you “liked” us on Facebook? Come on! That is where the latest and most current details are shared regularly.

Enjoy the autumn season...in every way you can!



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

Officers:

Connie Schmidt – Chair
Jeff Gahris – 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 Gahris – Solar Energy Liaison
Stacey Salmon – Political Endorsements
Connie Schmidt – DuPage County Issues
Pete Potamianos – Council for Environmental Concerns
Dennis Streicher – DuPage Rivers Salt Creek Work Group Liaison

Additional Committee Chairs:

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

Interdisciplinary Essays on Environment and Culture

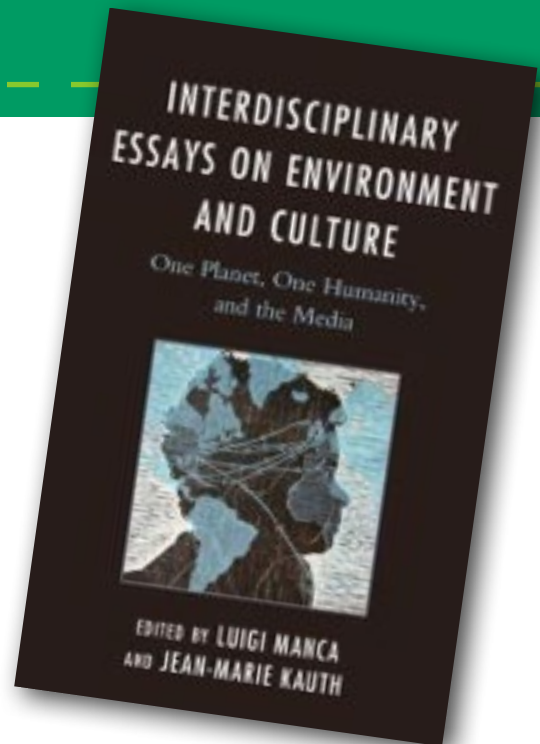
A Chat with the Editors

Join the River Prairie Group on September 22, 2016, at the Warrenville Public Library at 7:00 pm to learn about a fascinating new book. Jean-Marie Kauth and Luigi Manca have edited this collection of essays on pertinent environmental concerns. Jean-Marie and her family live in Warrenville in an 1800s farmhouse complete with native plants and chicken. She is a faculty member at Benedictine University in Lisle. In addition, she serves on the Warrenville Environmental Advisory Commission. She is passionate about removing pesticides and other harmful chemicals from our environment and protecting the health of all citizens, children, adults, and pets alike. Luigi Manca holds a PhD in mass communication from the University of Iowa and is also a professor at Benedictine University.

"This is a collection of essays about the media, the environment, and the whole of humanity at the brink of extinction. As the demands of overpopulation and of an unsustainable consumer economy dry up existing natural resources and destroy vital ecosystems that we need to survive, the corporate-controlled media saturate worldwide audiences with a barrage of hypnotic images and narratives to stimulate over-consumption and to distract us from the consequences of rampant consumerism, while remaining silent about the systematic destruction of the environment and our future.

Academics from across the sciences, the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities engage in an interdisciplinary discussion informed by a vision of an interconnected humanity and focused on the role of the media in forging public discourse.

Contributors to the collection argue that today's media are failing humanity. Rather than providing pictures of reality on which the world's citizens can act, the corporate-controlled media are widely used as instruments of commercial and political



propaganda, creating an immense web of images and narratives that their creators know to be not true—fabrications designed to sell, to manipulate, in a sense to enslave worldwide audiences.

At the core of the discussion in this book is a utopian vision of one unified humanity—billions of people whose destinies and dreams are imbricated and interdependent, and who share the same world, the same habitats. It is a vision of a world that cherishes diversity but is also united—a world where our differences are no longer a cause for conflict and where separate countries or separate ethnic or religious communities no longer have to compete or wage war to exploit available resources. As extensions of humans, the media can be instruments of salvation instead of destruction, liberation instead of oppression. But first, we must recognize the challenges we face."

Roman and Littlefield.com – An independent publishing house.



DuPage County Forest Preserve Update

By Ryan Smith, Senior Ranger
Forest Preserve District DuPage County

It's hard to believe that fall is already upon us. With the kids back in school and family schedules finding their way back into routine, temperatures being manageable and trail use decreasing, we can breathe a sigh of relief. Although for trail users this time of year can be less stressful, it's never a good idea to let your guard down, especially when it comes to curves in the trail. Vegetation can create obstacles for even the wariest trail user. Be aware of bikes, dogs, and wildlife that can dart out at you. As fall and cooler temperatures are approaching, make sure to get out enjoy this beautiful season!

Some late bloomers to look for throughout the county are Late, Stiff, and Elm-Leaved Goldenrod; New England Aster; Bottle Gentian; and Pale-Leaved and Sawtooth Sunflowers. Ragweed and grass pollens are proliferating and in abundance. Goldenrod, Big and Little Blue Stem, Switch Grass, and Indian Grass are all thriving in the many prairies and fields within the county. Please attend to any allergy issues you may have by protecting yourself with proper medications and precautions to ensure a safe and happy experience.

As fall comes into season, we see the many spectacular signs of color throughout the preserves. The county is reveling in fall's spectacular show. The orange and reds of maples; the yellows and brown of hickories and oaks; and every variety of colors at Greene Valley and Pratt's Wayne Woods are easily observed, but what about the wildlife? You may notice some Osprey, Eagles, and Sandhill Cranes passing through from up north. Also, rutting season for the Whitetail Deer occurs in November, so be cautious of their unusual and seemingly erratic behavior.

You might notice large sections of black, charcoal-like expanses in several of the preserves. The conditions of fall make an ideal burn season. Prescription burns are beneficial to the local ecosystem because they release needed nutrients back into



the soil. A prescribed burn can reduce the excessive amounts of brush, shrubs, and trees, encouraging native vegetation to grow in its place. This management helps maintain the many plant and animal species whose habitats depend on periodic fire. So if you see crews out performing a burn, feel free to stop (from a safe distance) and watch.

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Board is moving forward with plans to complete the West Branch DuPage River and North Central DuPage Regional trails. The Board of Commissioners recently approved proceeding with the first phase of engineering for the West Branch Trail at Blackwell and West DuPage Woods forest preserves, and for the North Central Trail at Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve.

The projects are the last segments needed to complete both trails. When done, the 35-mile North Central Trail will connect the Elgin Branch of the Illinois Prairie Path to Forest Preserve District of Cook County trails and the Schaumburg Bikeway System. The 23-mile West Branch Trail will connect the North

Continued on Page 5...



“Forest Preserve Update” (Continued from page 4)

Central Trail south to Will County, where it will extend to Channahon as the DuPage River Trail. The District has been working for decades with DuPage County, numerous municipalities, park districts, and other entities to complete the regional trails. Work is being funded through a variety of sources, including county, state, and federal dollars.

“We’re saving DuPage County taxpayers’ money and completing these projects in the most cost-efficient way possible by securing funding from outside sources, providing visitors with additional ways to connect to nature,” said Forest Preserve District Commissioner Marsha Murphy, District 1.

In June, work began on a pedestrian bridge over County Farm Road in Hanover Park that will connect Mallard Lake and Hawk Hollow forest preserves. The bridge and a new 1-mile trail at Mallard Lake will

provide a missing link in the greater North Central DuPage Regional Trail. Construction is expected to be completed in summer 2017.

In May, work began on a 1.4-mile stretch of the West Branch DuPage River Trail along Fair Oaks Road between St. Charles Road at Timber Ridge Forest Preserve and Lies Road at West Branch Forest Preserve. Construction should be completed by the end of the year.

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has been connecting people to nature for more than 100 years. More than 4 million people visit its 60 forest preserves, 145 miles of trails, five education centers, and scores of programs each year.

RPG Election Note

The River Prairie Group is looking for passionate Group members who want to run for a position on the Group Executive committee. The "Ex-Com" sets the budget, programs, and priorities for the local group. They also network with other groups in DuPage with like-minded agendas.

If you feel called to this exciting role and want to help with the leadership of the RPG, contact Connie Schmidt, Chair of the RPG, to discuss the responsibilities of this critical and enriching volunteer role. Connie's email and phone: twenstr111@msn.com, 630-234-3029.

Up for re-election this year are: Bob Barbieri, Stacey Salman, Connie Schmidt, and Linda Sullivan. The actual ballot will appear in a paper "snail mail" mailing from the Illinois Chapter in October. You will be able to vote for candidates of the RPG and the Illinois Chapter Ex-Com. Voting will be available electronically or with a cut-out and mail-in ballot. Remember, vote this fall!

A Talk With Solar Ambassadors

As the saying goes, "The World is a Changin,'" and we at the Sierra Club want to help that happen. Solar Energy is here to stay and to improve our environment. Come meet Jeff Gahr, a solar ambassador from the Illinois Solar Energy Association, an educational and advocacy nonprofit. Jeff also sits on the board of the River Prairie Group of the Sierra Club. He is investigating putting solar on his own home with Rethink Electric of Geneva.

In addition, Mike Nicolosi from Rethink Electric will join us. He is a premier installer of solar on homes and small businesses. With over 20 years of experience in the electrical trade, Mike is a North American Board Certified Energy Practitioner (NABCEP) Certified PV Installation Professional™ having installed hundreds of residential, commercial, and industrial solar electric systems for power generation and EV charging. He can give you multiple local examples of how he has helped homeowners generate electricity on their own homes without the use of polluting fossil fuels. Your home's value is increased, as well.

Find out in layman's terms how solar energy works on individual homes. You will learn the benefits to



Jeff at the Aurora Greenfest in June 2016 with the Solar Demonstration House.

both small businesses and residences. Jeff and Mike will address myths about the costs, whether it works in Illinois, and your questions.

The River Prairie Group presents this program on October 25 at 7:00 pm at the Warrenville Public Library. No sign-up is necessary, just invite a friend and join us!

Waystation Update:

Saving Monarchs at City Hall

By Lonnie Morris, DuPage Monarch Project

Summer arrived, but the monarchs didn't--not in the numbers that have shown up in years past.

The number of monarchs goes up and down from year to year, but there has been a steady downward trend over the last two decades that at times is alarming--so alarming they're being considered for listing as a threatened/endangered species by US Fish and Wildlife. The USFWS decision will be issued in 2019, three years from now, and a lot can happen in three years.

Extreme weather events and loss of habitat are the primary causes of monarch decline. Fixing the climate is a complicated issue, and while there are many things you can do to help save the climate, there are direct and in some ways more satisfying things that can be done to replace lost monarch habitat.

Monarchs' needs are simple: food, which comes in two varieties, milkweed for caterpillars and any number of beautiful flowers with nectar for the butterflies. It helps if the flowers are bright colors, if the milkweed and nectar plants are grouped closely together, if there is a convenient water source, and the entire garden offers shelter from wind and places for caterpillars to hide. But the main thing is food: milkweed and flowers.

Most gardens with a little tweaking can easily become monarch friendly. What is often missing is milkweed, and there are ornamental, garden-worthy varieties available at many nurseries.

It's autumn now; the planting season is behind

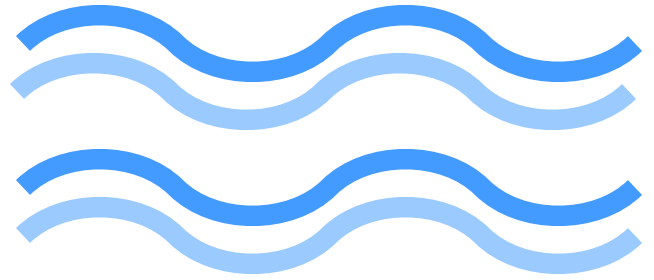


us, but this is the right time for taking the monarch rescue mission to a new level, out of your backyard and into the community. You can ask your mayor or park district board to sign a pledge and make your community monarch friendly. Elmhurst Mayor Steve Morley, Carol Stream Mayor Frank Saverino, and Warrenville Park District President Colin Wilkie signed such a pledge in the summer, and now they're choosing from an extensive menu of actions to implement, such as:

- Including articles about monarchs/pollinators in newsletters and brochures
- Offering classes, programs, and films about monarchs/pollinators
- Hosting pollinator/monarch events, celebrations
- Planting a demonstration monarch garden
- Germinating seeds and growing milkweed for community events
- Educating residents about Integrated Pest Management and how to reduce the use of insecticides
- Including milkweed in ornamental planting
- Managing natural areas for pollinators/monarchs
- Participating in DuPage Monarch Projects 2017 Waystation Challenge

Continued on Page 11...

RPG Teams with Salt Creek Group for River Improvement



By Dennis Streicher

The River Prairie Group (RPG) chapter of the Sierra Club has been an active member of the DuPage River/Salt Creek Workgroup (DRSCW) since its inception in 2005. The RPG has been represented on the executive board all that time. The DRSCW is an organization comprised of a number of environmental organizations and public agencies with the goal of improving the rivers in DuPage County to meet the goals of the 1972 Clean Water Act.

Recently the DRSCW made the first installment of a \$2.5 M commitment by transferring \$.5M to the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County to help

defray the costs of two dam removals, stream bank re-meandering, and substrate improvements along 1.2 miles of Salt Creek as part of the Oak Meadows Country Club renovations. Also, added wetlands and stream bank stabilization improvements will help reduce the sediment and phosphorus loadings to Salt Creek.

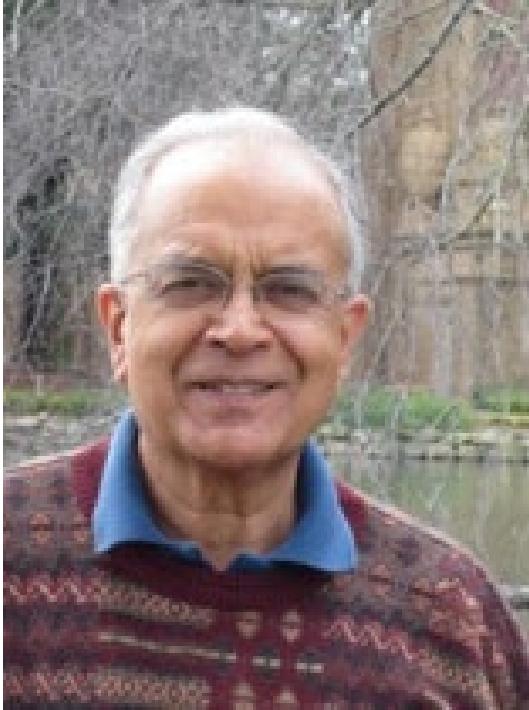
This is one more example of how RPG is working diligently to network with other environmental agencies here in DuPage. Together we can make a bigger difference to protect the land, air, and water in our local environment.

November Program Features Standout Birder LaVia

The November RPG meeting hosts Vernon LaVia, an avid bird watcher from Kane County. Vernon is extraordinary not just because he has a very impressive list of identified birds in the field, but also because he is able to reproduce many of their calls to help attract them to his waiting eyes. Vernon travels the world including Newfoundland, Greenland, Europe, and Alaska to increase his bragging rights of species seen. He has been to 44 countries on six continents and all 50 states. Vernon is in the league of the "superlisters," with more than 3,300 species identified around the world. He has also spotted 740 of the 914 known species of the U.S. and Canada.

With novice bird watching on the rise, this program promises to be a treat to all! No reservations are needed. We hope you will plan to join us at the Glen Ellyn Library on November 17 at 7:00 pm.





Meet Hari Lamba

Hari, a resident of Downers Grove, only recently became involved with the Sierra Club - but we are glad he did. Already, he is Co-chair of the Sierra Clean Power Team, which plans strategies for advocating for clean power in Illinois.

Hari has a bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering from India and a PhD in Engineering Mechanics from the University of Illinois. He considers himself an engineer with a social and environmental conscience.

Hari recently authored the book *Personal Climate Change Handbook*, published on Create Space, and Amazon describes it this way:

"This Handbook is for someone who really wants to do something, either in their lives or out there. In one package this book provides the reader with all of the most basic information about Global Warming or Climate Change – what it's already doing to devastate our Planet Earth, what it will do in the future, what global society has done so far, and what has been agreed to at the latest global agreement among nations. After providing the reader with basic information on Global Warming, the book lets you know what you can do in your life to reduce your carbon emissions, and what you can do through activism out there from the local to the global level. It concludes with descriptions of what our Earth and our communities, and human activities will look like after we have solved the problem of global warming and avoided its worst effects."

This book has been published in both the print and eKindle formats, and the front cover is quite attractive with a water color of planet Earth. The print copy may be ordered from the Create Space store by clicking on:

<https://www.createspace.com/6168362>

The eKindle version can be ordered and downloaded from: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/1530759536>

He is also the author of the book *Rethinking Progress – Towards a Creative Transformation of Global Society* (order print copies from www.renewtechs.com). In that book, Hari provides an update and analysis of where we stand today, mainly in terms of progress as a whole, but also specifically in terms of environment, development, finance, and planetary and human history.

How did you get involved in the River Prairie Group and the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club?

After almost 40 years of working as an engineer, I retired in April of this year. Late last year, I had participated in the rally organized by the People's Climate Movement in Chicago. I soon found that the Sierra Club was taking a leadership role in this activity, so I began to participate in calls and activities to become a member and help the Sierra Club in these efforts. The week after I retired, I participated in the

Continued on Page 10...

Hari Lamba Continued from Page 9

Clean Jobs Rally in the Illinois state capital Springfield in April, and was glad to help as one of the local bus captains.

I am attracted to the activities of the Sierra Club and the River Prairie Group that aim at species protection from an ecological perspective, in Clean Energy/Climate Change activities, and in all other environmental activities. I participated in the rally at downtown Chicago on August 3 and testified at the US EPA hearing of the proposed Clean Energy Incentives Program. On August 6, I organized our participation in the Downers Grove Farmers Market and got folks to sign the Clean Energy pledge that we can use.

What motivates you to care for the earth in a society where so many people either “greenwash” or show no concern, and how do we go about convincing them?

I love nature and love the beauty of our Earth. I write poems about this all the time, and I have published a small book, *Our Only Home – Poems for Our Planet Earth*, a collection of about 28 poems (Go to <https://wwwcreatespace.com/6017194> for a print version.) As we look around in the universe, our Earth is a beautiful and productive paradise – nothing else is close or accessible. So, we need to present the evidence to people that our Earth is our only home, and that we need to protect it for our own survival.

Your books hint at some real changes needed in global society and our ways of doing things – how fundamental are these changes?

We face a very severe global environmental crisis, all the way from global warming and ozone layer depletion to large ecosystem destruction, species extinction, and increasing toxic and radioactive waste pollution. The gravity of the environmental crisis is so severe that we need to come to some fundamental realizations about ourselves, our environment, and our planet Earth. The internal and external environments meet at our skin, and we are a mammal species and are a part of nature – so we have to look after the rest.

I have outlined in my earlier book, *Rethinking Progress*, the symptoms of the environmental and developmental crises we face. The environmental crisis we know, but there is also a developmental crisis where a large proportion of the world's population is suffering and seeing a deterioration in their conditions. The second half of the book is all about where we go from here, the alternative paths we have to pursue to save our Planet Earth, save ourselves, and provide a healthy and wholesome life for all.

We have to begin by repairing the life support systems of our planet Earth – our atmosphere and oceans (or global warming), and the ozone layer. We have to repair all of the major ecosystems of the planet, like the forests, the coral reefs, the coastal ecosystems, the freshwater masses on land, and the arid and desert environments. We have to stem the tide of species extinction, which is very dear to the Sierra Club, so that the biodiversity of our planet may flourish again.

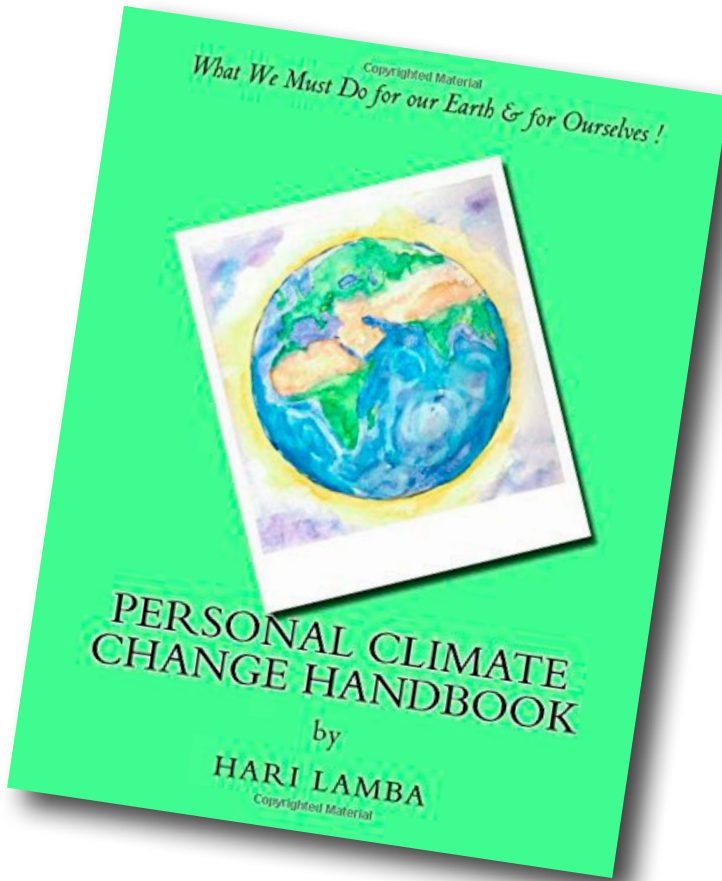
This requires us to transform all human activities, such as our cities and transportation systems, to make them low carbon and like ecosystems in the sense that they recycle water and materials to produce on a net basis all of the required energy and food. This transformation would include habitats and protections for other species. In my book I have described the transformation of all of these ecosystems. In the rest of that book I describe alternative economics principles, alternative and deeper democracy, and the desperate need for transparent and democratic international institutions.

OK, I care about the environment and want to do something, how do I start?

When it comes to Clean Energy and Climate Change, my *Personal Climate Change Handbook*, that I have just self-published, has entire sections on what a person can do. You can get involved in the effort to get the Clean Jobs Bill passed in Illinois and encourage the federal government to implement the Clean Energy Incentive Program.

Beyond this, one needs to look around and see

Continued on Page 11...



Hari Lamba Continued from Page 10

the skills that one has, and see in which area one can make a contribution to save global ecosystems and transform human activity. Besides clean energy, a crying need is in transforming our transportation systems to make them low carbon, integrated, safe, and accessible.

Monarch Waystation Update Continued from Page 7



- Encouraging participation in Citizen Science monitoring efforts
- Reviewing weed ordinances and removing bans on milkweed
- Hosting a tour of local Monarch Waystations
- Creating a recognition program for Monarch Waystations, featuring them on a local cable television station

Talk to a friend about monarchs and working together to reach out to your mayor or Park District. Form a team, look at the sample pledge/resolution available at dupagemonarchs.com. DuPage Monarch Project volunteers are available to meet with you to help organize and prepare for contacting your mayor.

Working together we can create the most monarch-friendly county in the state. Pitch in, plant milkweed, get the mayor on board, and we'll be seeing more butterflies soon.

Questions? Contact Lonnie Morris, herbdove@gmail.com

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

Adopt a Trail Work Day Illinois Prairie Path Saturday, August 27, 2016 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. Because of possible late developments, people should contact Jeff Gahris, 630-853-5505, if interested. 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.

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, 2016 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM 485 North Montclair Avenue, Glen Ellyn, IL

See description from previous work day.

Hike Kettle Moraine Nordic Trail Saturday, October 22, 2016 9:15 AM County Road H, Elkhorn, WI

We will meet at 9:15 AM at the Nordic Trail parking lot on Highway H, approximately 1 mile north of the intersection of H and US highway 12 in Lagrange, WI.

We will hike the 9-mile loop along wooded trail over rolling glacial topography, stopping for lunch along the way. The Nordic trail provides hiking through a variety of vegetation, hardwoods, pine plantations, open meadows, and kettle moraine terrain.

We should be back to the lot by 3:30 PM. Cost: \$3. Limit: 14. Leader: Paul Saindon. Email Paul at paul@pauls.us to sign up.

Note: Nonresidents pay a \$10 parking fee, car-pooling is encouraged.



*those highs
(and lows)
of Starved Rock*

By Edward Max

It may have been the nice weather, or the first nice hike of spring, but what a turnout we had—with nearly 50 attendees along, and more on a wait list. Crazy! Not to mention the throngs of humanity streaming in later in the day.

With the quality and future of this amazing speck of diversity at stake, Starved Rock State Park needs an intervention. More on that later, but first, the highlights of the trip. Our group was so huge we split it in half. Rules at the park do not permit groups larger than 25. Were it not for the raft of assistant leaders, Bernie and I would have been in a heap of trouble keeping everyone accounted for! I think every leader from our RPG was present and pitched in. Thanks to all for doing so!

We hiked the entire length of the park. Starting out at the far-flung parking lots near Wildcat Canyon, we set off toward the "Rock." As we hiked the beautiful canyons and budding forest, the day warmed up. With no leafy canopy above, it got toasty by noon. But it was good. And the carpets of wildflowers were nearing peak: Trillium, Bellwort, Anemone, and Dutchman's Breeches, to name but a few. Rarer still are the incredible groves of Witch-hazels, Bladderwort, and Winterberry—unusual shrub communities within this park, not seen in other areas of Illinois but only in these rare rocky habitats. And it's these small plant communities that worried me:

Watching unattended kids blithely unaware of these species, having fun—off trail—being kids, or that nasty mother in the park that day (illegally) picking every violet she could find. When I nicely mentioned that harvesting every violet in sight was not a good idea, she replied, "But they're needed for a wedding!" She had her daughters in tow, as well. An unfortunate example being set.

After hanging out in the crowded LaSalle Canyon for lunch, we headed back toward the main area. It was a nice day, and the group was interesting and fun to hike with. A few were a bit worn.

The Problems of the Park: The park was awash in humanity by the time we reached the parking areas. With no limits on attendance, and the cutting of Park Service staff and budget, you can really see the effects we are all having on this special place. With no answers (or monies) readily available, staff there are very frustrated.

Funds set aside from the Lodge are being "Swept" by the state: monies desperately needed for upkeep are somehow being used elsewhere by our state government, while this incredible park goes without. It's a sad and irritating situation. Add to that the unhealthy news of the massive open pit soon to be underway next to the east boundary of the park.

Continued on Page 14...

Starved Rock ***Continued from page 13***

Shortsighted? I'd say so. A 24/7 operation, essentially blessed by the town of Ottawa to go ahead. Sad again, as this town derives much revenue from the park's existence.

So, this frack sand pit is a go; it's too late to do much about it. The good news: there is still time to repair trails, remove invasives. Canyons can be closed off to recover. And perhaps it's time to limit the

crowds, or maybe charge an entrance fee? Something must be done. Is this an effort we as Sierrans should undertake? To do nothing risks the integrity and health of this tiny gem, so enjoyed by so many. Updates will follow in future articles.

[Ed is a naturalist, natives landscaper, and writer from Dupage County.]





Don't Get Left Out in the Cold... Join Us!



Sierra Club Outings are a terrific way to meet new people and enjoy the great outdoors. Whatever your interests - hiking, canoeing or birdwatching - there is an outing for everyone. If you are new to the area, let your local Chapter or Group give you the lay of the land. Join today and become part of America's largest environmental organization offering the most enjoyable outings.

Name _____
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Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
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Contributions, gifts & dues to Sierra Club are tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$ 7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine and \$ 1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose a check and mail to: Sierra Club, PO Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041 or visit our website: www.sierraclub.org

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