



# DuPage Sierran

Sierra Club, River Prairie Group of DuPage County

Fall 2017

Volume 36, No. 3



## Chatter From the Chair

By Jeff Gahris

Why am I an activist? Well, for one thing, it's a lot of fun. I find myself meeting wonderful people and forging valued relationships. I enjoy reaching out to all of the residents of DuPage County regardless of skin color, language, or faith. Obviously, we are all in this together as we face a long-term backlash against any science and reason that does not suit certain political ends. But, wait, there's more!

I wish I could say this more eloquently, so I will be blunt. When it comes to issues like climate change, it is because everything is at stake. The recent "Doomed Earth Catalog" article in New Yorker was a shocking assessment of the possible extinction of humanity. Although the article is considered an exaggeration by respected scientists, America and the world are clearly in crisis, and how we respond to new realities can make a real difference. This beautiful planet we call Earth is our home, and we must defend it vigorously and tirelessly. Ultimately, I think we will succeed.

Charles Eisenstein spoke of the concept of

### In this issue...

Chatter From the Chair .....	1-2
Getting to know Bob Barbieri.....	3
Forest Preserve Update .....	4-5
EC3 Adopts Greenest Region Goals .....	6-7
Eagle Scout Project .....	8-9
Help Us Save the Great Lakes.....	10
Monarch Project Call for Art .....	11
SCARCE Green Fair .....	12
Outings .....	13
Fall Programs.....	14
IPP Aurora Branch Public Hearing .....	15
A Profile of Pat Miller .....	16-17
Whooping Crane Festival.....	18
Peter Roskam Meeting .....	19-20
Membership Form .....	21

### DuPage Sierran

Executive Chair: Jeff Gahris

Editor: Sherry Stratton

Writers: Jeff Gahris, Connie Schmidt, Ryan Smith, Bruce Blake, Katrina Phillips, Andrew Van Gorp, Lonnie Morris, Jan Bradford, Linda Sullivan

Layout: Dave Blake

For activities, legislative action alerts, and outings information:

[Sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie](http://Sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie) or [SCTRIPS.org](http://SCTRIPS.org)

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

"Broken Open" when a person's world views come crashing down. This leads to confusion and grief, and questions about what's next. This in turn leads to a new view of life, society, and moving beyond hate-based politics. Can RPG play a positive role in this regard? We are part of the problem and don't have all of the solutions. But we are part of the story, and something new is required. It's a good time to meet with different folks that we don't usually hang out with and ask questions and learn from them. It's

**Continued on Page 2...**

## “Chatter from the Chair”

(Continued from page 1)

a bit risky, because they can ask questions, too, and I find myself feeling uncomfortable. That's a good thing, actually.

Even with an open mind, we must be vigilant and tireless in resisting the narrow fossil-fuel industry agenda. We have had recent successes in Illinois. Most recently, the “Solar for All” program funds were not swept, meaning we can pursue a bipartisan clean energy agenda in Illinois – a victory for us, thanks to our calls and emails. Also, several of us met with Peter Roskam last spring and pressed him on the need to maintain funding of vital Great Lakes environmental programs. Yes, we are making a

difference!

We need and deeply appreciate your enthusiasm, willingness to work while enjoying what we do – whether it be appreciating nature through organized outings, attending program meetings, helping the Clean Power Team, tabling at public events such as farmer's markets, and more.

I would like to see a membership committee form, so I am seeking volunteers to help organize outreach and social efforts that strengthen our group. If interested, please contact me at [jgahris@gmail.com](mailto:jgahris@gmail.com).

### UPCOMING RPG ELECTIONS

Watch for a mailer from the Chapter Office this Fall regarding Excom elections for our group.



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

**Officers:**

Jeff Gahris – Chair  
Connie Schmidt – 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  
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

# Getting to Know Our Volunteers: A Spotlight on Bob Barbieri

This quarter we proudly highlight Bob Barbieri. Bob has been a longtime member of the Sierra Club. Most know Bob as our current River Monitoring Technical Advisor. He coordinates the collection and analysis of water quality parameters for Salt Creek and the East and West Branch of the DuPage River as part of the Sierra Club's national Water Sentinels project. He was a water tester before that. The pollutants we monitor at specific locations are phosphorous, chloride, ammonia, nitrates, and pH. Bob coordinates other volunteers who collect the water samples and conduct the testing. He also helps put together the periodic reports that summarize the data to be used by area planners and policy makers when making critical decisions that affect water quality. For more details about our ongoing river monitoring project, see our web site at [www.sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie/river-monitoring-project](http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/river-prairie/river-monitoring-project)

Bob's knowledge and experience as a scientist capable of conducting professional environmental assessments has been invaluable to us, but some of you may also have met him on our outings to natural areas, where he always makes for pleasant company.





# DuPage County Forest Preserve Update

By Ryan Smith, Senior Ranger  
Forest Preserve District DuPage County

As we say our odes to the end of summer, memories will still linger and the bright flowers will go to rest. The air will cool as days become shorter, and to some, this can set an anticipation for the approach of autumn, while others grasp all they can of summer's last push. As we embark on a new season, your local preserves will be undergoing vast natural changes. Invitations are not needed to enjoy your very own piece of solitude and tranquility within your local DuPage Forest Preserves this fall. We hope to see many of you out there enjoying the spectacle of nature as you connect with our natural world during a bright and rich season.

Those looking for stunning fall color displays need look no further than our DuPage forest preserves this season. It has been known that fall colors generally peak around mid-October in our forest preserves, but that can vary from year to year. The woods at Maple Grove Forest Preserve in Downers Grove are

known for intense colors. The preserve is composed mostly of black, silver, and sugar maples, which develop into golden tones that seem to shine from every leaf in the forest. At Meacham Grove Forest Preserve in Bloomingdale in the 40-acre grove on the west side of the preserve — designated an Illinois state nature preserve — stately maples, oaks, and hickories often display bold colors, while broad-leaved goldenrods and Drummond's asters show off bright flowers from the forest floor. Three miles of trails traverse the preserve. "There's no better time to connect with nature than in the autumn," said Forest Preserve District of DuPage County President Joe Cantore.

The Forest Preserve Districts of DuPage and Will County are partnering to connect Greene Valley Forest Preserve in DuPage County to Whalon Lake in Will County to create a critical connection to the planned 40-mile DuPage River Regional Trail system.



Fall shot at McDowell Grove

Continued on Page 5...

## “Forest Preserve Update” (Continued from page 4)

The trail extension is slated to open in 2018. The District operates a trail system at Greene Valley, and the Will County Forest Preserve District operates a trail system at Whalon Lake, which is about one mile south of Greene Valley. The bi-county trail segment will extend from Whalon Lake to Greene Valley along Royce and Greene Roads at no cost to the District. The District will maintain the 10-foot-wide crushed limestone trail within Greene Valley once it's completed.

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has started work to create and improve 87 acres of butterfly and pollinator habitat at Night Heron Marsh Forest Preserve near Eola Road and Liberty Street in Aurora. The work is part of the collaborative 12-agency Fox Valley Monarch Corridor Project, led by The Conservation Foundation. The corridor extends over 975 acres and will establish or restore ten multi-acre sites and hundreds of “stepping stone” sites on private land in neighborhoods and business parks to connect breeding and migration habitats of butterflies and other pollinators.

Nectar is important to adult butterflies and other

pollinators because it fuels them through winter hibernation and the fall migration. Milkweeds are vital to the early stages of the monarch life cycle because they're the only plants they eat as caterpillars.

To help homeowners set up pollinator habitats in their own backyards, the District is also offering free “Very Important Pollinator” seed mix packets. The packets contain native rose milkweed, New England aster, wild bergamot, foxglove beardtongue, yellow coneflower, black-eyed Susan, stiff goldenrod, and little bluestem, and can be picked up at Danada Equestrian Center and Danada headquarters in Wheaton, Fullersburg Woods Nature Education Center in Oak Brook, Kline Creek Farm in West Chicago, Mayslake Peabody Estate in Oak Brook, and Willowbrook Wildlife Center in Glen Ellyn.

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.



The monarch corridor project construction



Late Summer sunset

# EC3 Adopts Greenest Region Compact Goals

By Andrew Van Gorp

In an important and strategic move forward, the Environmental Commission & Committee Coalition (EC3) of Sustain DuPage made its first foray into sustainable policy reform on the local level. On April 8, 2017, the Coalition voted to adopt the goals of the Metropolitan Mayors' Caucus (MMC) Greenest Region Compact 2 (GRC2).

The GRC2 instrument was based on the extensive research of Director of Environmental Initiatives Edith Makra and provides municipalities with a comprehensive knowledge of the "State of Sustainability" in the Chicagoland area. The document compiles the Strategic Sustainability Plans of municipalities across Chicagoland. This allows hard-pressed municipalities to read through a "one-stop-shop" of comparable real-world sustainability case studies in the region. The document also allows for municipalities to pick whichever projects are of concern to them on a local level in order to create their own Strategic Sustainability Plan.

The EC3 is one of five "Mission Projects" run by Sustain DuPage, a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit working to create a sustainable DuPage County. Sustain DuPage works to both empower DuPagers with grassroots sustainable living skills and also to engage and support local governments for sustainable policy reform. The EC3 is at the center of that intersectional approach.

The Coalition is comprised of volunteers, board members, and municipal staff who are all passionate about seeking to bolster and improve DuPage's existing culture of environmental values. Huma



Rashid (Sustain DuPage Board Member) led the historic vote. Sustain DuPage will focus in on the "Sustainable Communities" section of the GRC2 document to prevent duplication of efforts among other organizations working toward the same vision in DuPage.

Andrew Van Gorp (President of Sustain DuPage) was elated to see the vote go through. "I truly believe that this Coalition has the unique opportunity to bring together all of the necessary stakeholders in the region to push through the crucial reforms we desperately need as we head into this century of uncertainty," he stated. "According to the Pentagon, the effects of climate disruption and earth degeneration threaten our very way of life in DuPage. By investing in programs for resilience now, we can avoid catastrophe for our County's future. Our EC3 will make sure that reform is attained."

In addition to representatives from Environmental Commissions across DuPage County, the Coalition boasts liaisons from many pro-earth NGOs in the region: Faith in Place, The Gardenworks Project, The



## The EC3 Committee meets and votes as it takes on environmental issues in DuPage County

League of Women Voters, The Resiliency Institute, The River Prairie Group of the Sierra Club, The DuPage Monarch Project, The Morton Arboretum, and SCARCE.

In preparation for the second EC3 Symposium in the spring of 2018, the Coalition voted to choose one policy issue from the GRC2 they believed was not being addressed in DuPage. The Coalition's progress will be presented at the 2018 Symposium (date TBA).

After much discussion about the GRC2's light-pollution focus, the Coalition voted that the first policy issue they would take on would be the formulation and implementation of a DuPage Starry Sky Ordinance. Such an ordinance would require

best practices for light pollution reduction across DuPage County. The decision stemmed from the belief that DuPage residents (or DuPagers, as they are called at EC3 meetings) have a right to look up at the night sky and see the stars, unobstructed by poorly planned light fixtures. There was also discussion about the environmental and human health effects of irresponsible night-time lighting. By retrofitting private, public, and commercial night-time lighting, the starry skies humans have long drawn upon for inspiration will be restored to this region.

For more information, contact:  
Andrew Van Gorp, Sustain DuPage Founder  
630.880.7709 | [tosustaindupage@gmail.com](mailto:tosustaindupage@gmail.com)

# RIVER PRAIRIE GROUP PROVIDES FUNDS FOR BOY SCOUT EAGLE PROJECT RESTORATION ON ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH

By Bruce Blake  
RPG Chair-Prairie Restoration



*Above: Scout Jimmy Lynch*

Sierra Club's River Prairie Group is a firm believer in helping put roots in the ground when it comes to restoring a section of the Illinois Prairie Path in Lombard. As Scoutmaster for Troop 202 in Lombard, I oversee many of my scouts working on Eagle Service Projects which benefit the community. Only an average of 2 out of every 100 scouts earns the Eagle Badge, the highest award in scouting. One of my scouts, Jimmy Lynch of Lombard, was interested in restoring a section of the Illinois Prairie Path in Lombard with a selection of native plants that would both support pollinators like butterflies and bees, and also be a peaceful spot to stop and rest along the IPP.

Last year Jimmy and I took a walk along the IPP in Lombard to choose a site to work on. Jimmy chose the southwest corner of the IPP at Main Street. It was approximately 25 feet x 100 feet. The site was overgrown with weeds and invasive brush like buckthorn and Oriental honeysuckle. The area would have to be cleared out before he could begin planting.

Every year, each Group in the Illinois Sierra Club has the opportunity to apply for c3 funds. These are Sierra Club Foundation funds, which can only be spent or reimbursed on expenses that are approved as charitable. Our group applied for the funding and received approval for \$750.





Now the real work starts. Leading a project of this size is quite an experience for a 17-year-old.

Jimmy had confidence that his family and friends would be able to help. With guidance from the River Prairie Group about selection of native plants to use, Jimmy first contacted Mr. Eric Spande, president of the IPP to ask what steps needed to be taken. Mr. Spande asked Jimmy to present his proposal to the Board Members for approval. After the IPP Board's approval, Jimmy needed to obtain a permit from the DuPage County Transportation Dept. Jimmy provided details--a plan, map, plant list, and safety concerns--and described his project at a meeting with Mr. Sidney Kenyon. After his approval for permitting work over several weekends, Jimmy contacted Mr. David P. Gorman, Assistant Director of Public works for the Village of Lombard, about the project and to ask if the village could help with chipping up the brush and hauling away the debris. Lombard was very helpful; they picked up the brush and returned it chipped to use as mulch. Jimmy contacted and arranged with York Township to deliver two loads of mulch to cover the ground to

prevent weeds from coming back. Of course, JULIE was called.

Jimmy chose May 7 as a date to clear the site for planting. There were over twenty people working to remove brush and invasive plants from the site to get it ready to plant.

May 27 was the planting date. Over 40 scouts, friends, and family members came to help. Coordinating a large group to plant 35 different native forbs and grasses, amounting to over 700 plants, was quite a challenge. Finally, everything was planted, mulched, and watered.

Two months later, the plants are doing fine. Luckily, we had some good rains, so watering wasn't needed so often. Jimmy will continue to monitor the site, mainly to control weeds and collect seeds to provide more plants.

River Prairie Group members like you are proud to support projects of this kind. Many of these plants originally grew in prairies like this before the Aurora and Elgin Railroad was built. The restored area will provide both nectar and food for butterflies and bees.

# Help us #SaveTheGreatLakes!

By Katrina Phillips, Illinois Chapter office

Photo by Jack Darin

## Intro from the Chair

*As you may have heard, the Administration in Washington has proposed an elimination of Great Lakes Funding. This issue will be before us all summer, and with the likely passage of a continuing budget resolution, the issue could be alive well into autumn. This is why we have been supporting the Illinois Chapter's efforts by collecting hundreds of Great Lakes Protection Pledge cards from DuPage residents this summer. Contact [jgahris@gmail.com](mailto:jgahris@gmail.com) if you want to help with this effort.*

The Trump Administration has proposed an agenda that threatens our Great Lakes, and we're fighting back.

The Administration wants to eliminate the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), drastically cut the EPA's budget, defund science and enforcement efforts, and roll back policies that protect the Great Lakes. These dangerous proposals are a shocking abandonment of crucial, successful efforts to protect our drinking water and the most important natural asset for our entire region.

Great Lakes cleanup efforts have been a tremendous success, but our lakes and communities are still at risk. The GLRI and work of the EPA have protected our drinking water, created thousands of good jobs, protected public health, and kept beaches and fisheries open, supporting a way of life for millions of people.

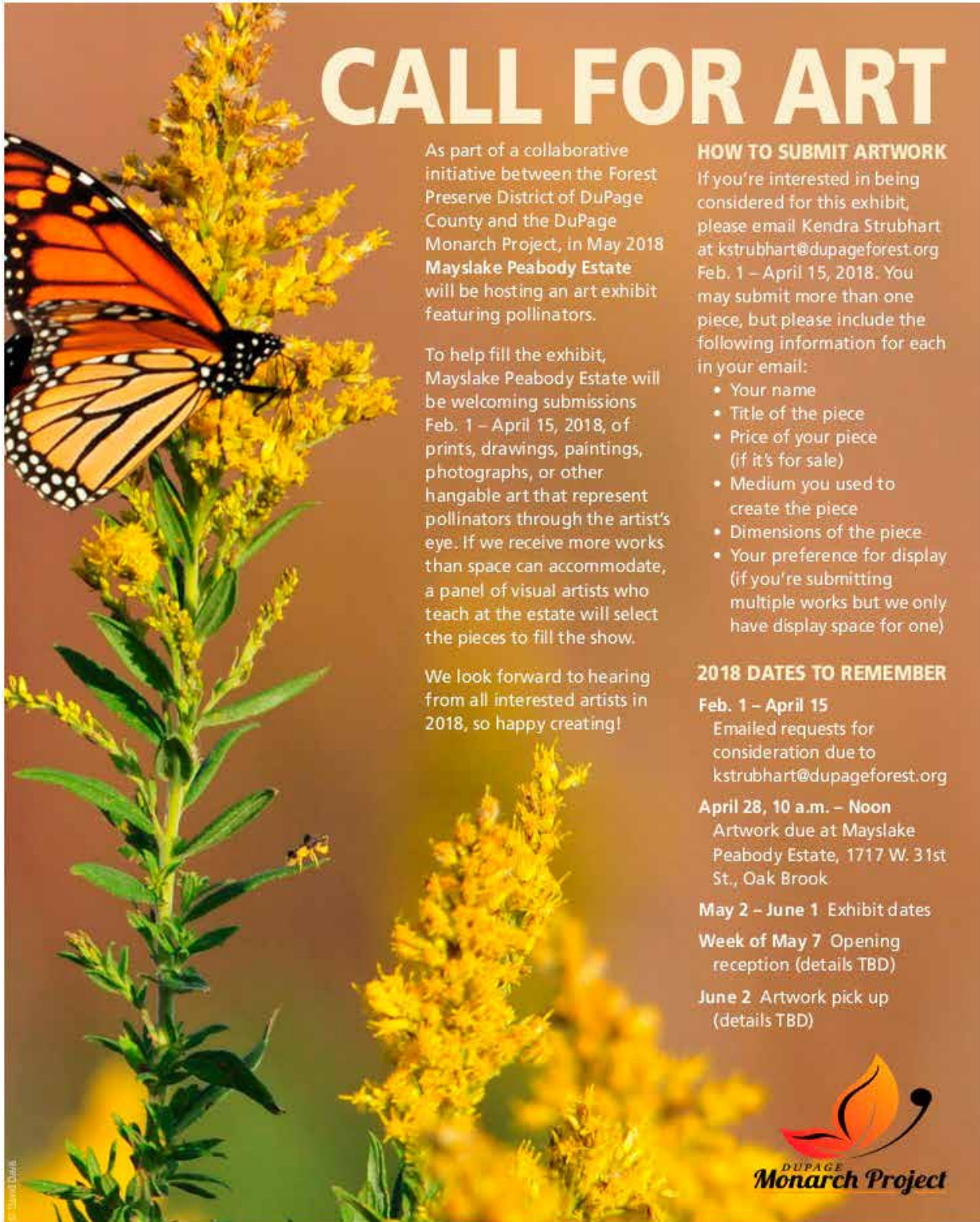
However, our lakes are still threatened by invasive species, nutrient pollution, power plant discharges, climate change, and other threats. Our communities are at risk from lead and other contaminants in our drinking water.

We all need to do our part to protect our Great

Lakes. Sign the petition at [bit.ly/addupgreatlakes](http://bit.ly/addupgreatlakes) to tell your Members of Congress to stand up for the GLRI, EPA funding, and policies that protect clean water. Join our efforts to collect petition signatures at farmers' markets and other local events.

For some real fun and another powerful way to help, take the action described below:

1. Take a photo: a selfie with the petition and/or with someone who signed the petition, or a photo of the Great Lakes and how you enjoy them.
2. Post to your personal and/or Group Facebook page or Twitter account.
3. Use #SaveTheGreatLakes and add the link to sign the petition at [bit.ly/addupgreatlakes](http://bit.ly/addupgreatlakes).
4. Tag @SierraClubIL and @[your Group] if possible when posting on personal account.
5. Send your photo to me ([katrina.phillips@sierraclub.org](mailto:katrina.phillips@sierraclub.org)) to post to the IL Chapter Facebook page and share with others.



# CALL FOR ART

As part of a collaborative initiative between the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and the DuPage Monarch Project, in May 2018 Mayslake Peabody Estate will be hosting an art exhibit featuring pollinators.

To help fill the exhibit, Mayslake Peabody Estate will be welcoming submissions Feb. 1 – April 15, 2018, of prints, drawings, paintings, photographs, or other hangable art that represent pollinators through the artist's eye. If we receive more works than space can accommodate, a panel of visual artists who teach at the estate will select the pieces to fill the show.

We look forward to hearing from all interested artists in 2018, so happy creating!

## HOW TO SUBMIT ARTWORK

If you're interested in being considered for this exhibit, please email Kendra Strubhart at [kstrubhart@dupageforest.org](mailto:kstrubhart@dupageforest.org) Feb. 1 – April 15, 2018. You may submit more than one piece, but please include the following information for each in your email:

- Your name
- Title of the piece
- Price of your piece (if it's for sale)
- Medium you used to create the piece
- Dimensions of the piece
- Your preference for display (if you're submitting multiple works but we only have display space for one)

## 2018 DATES TO REMEMBER


**Feb. 1 – April 15**  
Emailed requests for consideration due to [kstrubhart@dupageforest.org](mailto:kstrubhart@dupageforest.org)

**April 28, 10 a.m. – Noon**  
Artwork due at Mayslake Peabody Estate, 1717 W. 31st St., Oak Brook

**May 2 – June 1** Exhibit dates

**Week of May 7** Opening reception (details TBD)

**June 2** Artwork pick up (details TBD)





Saturday, September 30, 10am - 4pm



# GREEN FAIR

**Save the Date! All Ages Welcome!**

eco vendors • recycling extravaganza

solar house • upcycled products

farmer's market • water conservation

eco-art contest • backyard chickens

food trucks • kid's maker space & more

DuPage County Fairgrounds, Wheaton

Organized by SCARCE

[www.scarce.org](http://www.scarce.org) • 630-545-9710

Sponsored By:



# 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.

For more details on these outings, visit: [www.sctrips.org](http://www.sctrips.org)

## Camping at Friends Creek, Cisco-Pot luck, hike, stars...

Saturday, August 26 to Sunday, August 27

## Illinois Prairie Path Clean-up (RPG Section)

Sat, Aug 26, 2017 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

## Whooping Crane Festival

Fri, Sep 8, 8:00 AM - Sat, Sept. 9, 6:00 PM

## "A Little Bird Told Me" - A Perspective on Ecological Conservation

Thu, Sep 14, 7:00 PM

## Bicycle on Washington Island WI

Fri, Sep 15, 4:00 PM - Sun, Sep 17, 6:00 PM

## Urbana 'Drive Electric' Fair

Saturday, September 16

## The Trump Administration Assault on the EPA - A Discussion

Wed, Oct 11, 2017 7:00 PM

## Porcupine Mountain Wilderness - Two and a half days of hiking

Thu, Oct 19, 6:00 PM - Sun, Oct 22, 12:00 PM

## Illinois Prairie Path Clean-up (RPG Section)

Sat, Oct 28, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

## Hike Kettle Moraine Nordic Trail

Sat, Oct 28, 9:30 AM - 4:00 PM

## Cindy Crosby Speaks on the Tallgrass Prairie

Wed, Nov 8, 7:00 PM

## Fall Forest Preserve Work Days

Churchill Woods/Glacial Ridge

Forest Preserve Service Event Organized by Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Dates:

Sat. Sept. 9 - 9:00 to 12:00

Sat. Oct. 7 - 9:00 to 12:00

Sat. Oct. 21 - 9:00 to 12:00

Sat. Nov. 11 - 9:00 to 12:00

Sat. Dec. 2 - 9:00 to 12:00

Meet at Walnut Glen Park, 860 Walnut St, Glen Ellyn, IL. Preregistration, waiver, and proper dress are required.

Interested in some fresh air and a chance to learn and restore nature? Come out and enjoy the special fall colors.

Contact Bruce Blake for more information - [rllnstns1@aol.com](mailto:rllnstns1@aol.com). Call the FPDDC Volunteer Office at (630) 206-9630 to register and fill out a waiver. If you are under 18, a parent or guardian must sign the waiver for you. Ages 8 through 17 must be accompanied by an adult. Online - <http://www.dupageforest.org> drop down column under volunteer/NRM. Also check "more info" for waiver link. Note: This outing is under the auspices and rules of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC). This is not a Sierra Club sponsored activity, but we strongly support the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.

How to Dress: Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and bring your own work gloves, if possible. Dress in layers if cold weather. Shorts are not recommended, as you will be working amidst thorny brush and, occasionally, poisonous plants. Flip-flops, sandals and open-toe shoes are forbidden.

# Autumn 2017 Programs

## Denis Kania

September 14, 7 pm  
Wheaton Public Library  
225 N. Cross Street, Wheaton

"A Little Bird Told Me"

It all started innocently enough with the idea of identifying the little birds found around the neighborhood. Over time, these birds changed Denis Kania's life in ways that he never would have imagined. He now looks differently at people, the world and our future.

Join Denis as he explains how his world travels have shaped his perspective on ecological conservation both near and far away. The ultimate message is; how we can make better decisions at home that not only affect our own local environment but also places halfway around the world that we will never see.

## Dale Bryson

October 11, 7 pm  
Glen Ellyn Public Library  
400 Duane Street, Glen Ellyn

A discussion about the assault on EPA by the current Administration in Washington. Mr. Bryson is a retired senior manager at EPA, Region 5, where he was in charge of all water programs, including water pollution control, water protection, safe drinking water, and wetland protection.

Mr. Bryson is active in a speakers group, ACE-Naperville, that covers environmental and other social issues.

## Cindy Crosby

November 8, 7 pm  
Glen Ellyn History Center  
800 North Main Street, Glen Ellyn

Cindy Crosby is the author, compiler, or contributor to more than 20 books. She teaches and speaks on the tallgrass prairie, and is a steward supervisor for the Schulenberg Prairie at The Morton Arboretum and a steward at Nachusa Grasslands. Her new book is "The Tallgrass Prairie: An Introduction" (Northwestern University Press).

Cindy blogs weekly at \*Tuesdays in the Tallgrass\* at Wordpress. When she's not hiking on the prairie, she is in the garden, kayaking, or out chasing dragonflies.



# Illinois Prairie Path Aurora Branch Public Hearing

By Connie Schmidt



On August 3 a public hearing was held at Metea Valley High School in Aurora to announce some changes to the Illinois Prairie Path. Information obtained prior to the meeting suggested possible closing of a portion of the Aurora Branch and a new connector to be built along Eola Road. The message at the hearing from DuPage County officials was that there would be no closure to the Aurora Branch and only a new connection was being planned.

A brochure was available from the Division of Transportation describing the project scope: "The Eola Connector is a nearly 4,200 foot long trail that will safely and efficiently increase connectivity within the DuPage County trail network. The project will consist of a 10-foot wide, asphalt paved, shared-use path to be built from Mustang Way to the Batavia Spur. The project will include widening of the Eola Road Bridge over I-88 and will feature connections to Metea Valley High School, the DuPage Technology Corridor Trail, and the Illinois Prairie Path via the Aurora Branch and the Batavia Spur. This project will require right of way acquisition at certain locations along Eola Road."

Members of the River Prairie Group Executive Board attended the open house and submitted comments. Among them, Connie Schmidt made the following remarks.

"The Illinois Prairie Path is one of two paths recognized as the very first Rail Trail conversion project in the United States. It is historically important and treasured in the Chicago Suburbs. Maintaining the integrity of the path is important to the residents and trail users. Adding new connections is a great asset, but closing a part of the path to facilitate commercial development, a utility, or railroad is not in the best interest of the intended use of the path."

She continued with the following remarks regarding the plans for the Eola Connector. "I would ask you to use the consistent surface product of limestone screenings, which encourage a multi-use philosophy. Limestone keeps the speed of bicycles more respectable to pedestrians and equestrians and is better for joggers' joints. Horses do better on limestone as well. Asphalt invites very quick speed from bicyclists risking more dangerous encounters with other trail users. "

The current plan is in Phase I and is accepting public comments. Project information may be obtained from Engineer Michael Barbier 630 407 6900 or Michael.barbier@dupageco.org . Phase II begins in 2018 and covers the contract documents and land acquisition along the Eola Right of Way. Phase III, Construction, would not begin until 2020.

*“Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.” –Vincent Van Gogh*

# A PROFILE OF PAT MILLER

By Lonnie Morris



From left: Pat Miller and Jane Foulser.

Monarch butterflies are a hot topic these days; everyone is talking about them. They pop up in expected places like gatherings of environmentalists, but also casually among gardeners, teachers, and school children. When a conversation gets going, it doesn't take long for someone to mention Pat Miller. The long-time monarch advocate frequently speaks around DuPage and recently appeared at the Children's Monarch Fest sponsored by the Elmhurst Cool Cities Coalition. An impressive string of credentials follows her name, including Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist, Master Gardener, and Master Naturalist. She is the woman the Chicago Tribune dubbed "Queen of the Monarchs."

It wasn't always this way. A decade ago, monarchs were just pretty butterflies people

remembered from their childhoods or had once seen in their gardens. The monarch movement came to DuPage in 2005 when Jane Foulser, a long-time Sierra Club member and activist visited a friend in Lawrence, Kansas, one of the epicenters for monarch research and conservation, where she met Chip Taylor, founder of Monarch Watch. She learned of the threats facing the migrating butterflies and their dramatic decline. Taylor had just kicked off the Monarch Waystation program, a habitat replacement solution directed at gardeners. Foulser, an accomplished gardener, quickly saw how easily gardens could be modified into monarch-friendly oases if gardeners knew what to do. Her experience as a Sierra Club activist had prepared her for taking this message to the community and she was eager





to get started.

When Foulser returned to Elmhurst, she enlisted long-time friend Pat Miller to join her in taking the message to the community. They began by modifying and registering their own gardens with Monarch Watch, the first in DuPage to be added to the registry, then the two monarch crusaders took to the speaking circuit with posters and PowerPoint in hand. They believed ten local waystations with milkweed and nectar plants, especially the fall-blooming species like asters and goldenrods that supply fuel for migration, could be registered in the first year. By 2006, nine more waystations had been added to the registry. The goal had been reached, and Miller had found a calling.

Twelve years into the Monarch Waystation program, Miller's garden beautifully exemplifies what her talks describe as the solution to the declining number of monarchs. This decline threatens the monarchs' ability to bounce back from extreme weather events and exposure to insecticides. The front and back yards are a mix of milkweed and the more traditional flowers found in suburban gardens, harmoniously combined into several flowing perennial beds.

Becoming a monarch messenger was a natural for Miller. She grew up as an "outdoor kid" in central Illinois, directly experiencing nature and making discoveries on her own. Her fresh delivery and enthusiasm for talking about monarchs is fueled by a desire to pass along the wonder and joy of her childhood to a generation of kids spending less and less time outdoors. Butterflies are a safe and

engaging ambassador for the insects children are encountering less frequently in parks, preserves, and their own yards.

"Maybe the single most important thing we can do for conservation in general," writes Anurag Agrawal, author of *Monarchs and Milkweed: A Migrating Butterfly, A Poisonous Plant and Their Remarkable Story of Coevolution*, "is to give people an appreciation of nature." When Miller passes around monarch eggs, caterpillars, and the iconic orange and black butterfly to her audience while telling the story of a life cycle that includes a 3000-mile migration, she is giving them a connection to the natural world. Suddenly they see their backyards as habitat and how their gardens fit into the bigger picture, as a trail of resting places dotting a long and arduous journey.

Her message is being heard. What began with two waystations in DuPage County has grown to 241 by 2017.

Monarchs still need our help. Monarch Joint Venture has put out a call for an "all hands on deck" approach to creating the amount of habitat necessary for a monarch population large enough to weather normal annual variations. Miller is confident it can be done, one garden at a time.

"We make choices every day," said Miller, "what we wear, what to eat for breakfast, whether or not to squish a bug. We have so much power in our everyday choices. Don't ever forget how much power you have to change things."

# WHOOPING CRANE FESTIVAL

PRINCETON, WISCONSIN

SEPTEMBER 8-9, 2017

By Jan Bradford



This trip is a new one, but I have wanted to do it for some time since Necedah Wildlife Refuge Whooping Crane project was moved to White River Marsh Wildlife Area near Princeton, Wisconsin.

Our trip will begin with an optional (additional cost) Friday dinner, award ceremony, and an informative and entertaining presentation by Joe Duff, co-founder of Operation Migration. Cash bar and silent auction will be included, too, in this evening of fun you won't want to miss.

The crane festival starts Saturday in Princeton, Wisconsin. Speakers presenting at the crane festival will be Eric Rotering (master falconer), Daryl Christensen (Kirtland's warbler in Wisconsin), and Patricia Fisher from The Feather Wildlife Rehab/Education Center.

I think she is bringing live raptors.

There will also be many distributors, displays, artists, Wildlife people, food, kid's activities with Dave Stokes (he brings his live animals), and a silent auction, too. Lots to do, learn, and see, and very knowledgeable people to talk to.

An option will be available for people wanting to spend an additional night and then exploring the White River Marsh Wildlife Area in the morning, with the hope of spotting the wild whooping cranes there and also identifying other birds.

So, come join me for a getaway weekend to learn about the attempts to save the Whooping Crane of North America.

# You did this!

## RPG members' action and phone calls result in meeting with Rep. Roskam and bear results for environment



**Congressman Peter Roskam.**

By Linda Sullivan

In January, almost 300 Sierra Club members rallied on a freezing Monday afternoon at Congressman Peter Roskam's (R-6) West Chicago office demanding that he stand up against President Trump's polluter agenda. Over the following months, Sierrans logged thousands of calls to the Congressman both locally and to Washington, DC. Three months later, the six-term Congressman agreed to meet with four Sierra Club constituents, who asked him to oppose President Trump's proposal to cut the Environmental Protection Agency budget by 30 percent and eliminate the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funds.

Sierra Club members can take a minute to feel the power of what their activism can accomplish even in the face of an environmentally hostile President and Congress. At the point of this writing, the GLRI funds have been fully restored to the version of the budget that the House sent to the Senate. The EPA budget is cut by seven percent, not 30. The seven percent cut to the EPA budget is far too deep to a budget that already has been decimated by 20 percent cuts over the last eight years, so the fight is not over or won, but we have seen that we can accomplish much if enough of us speak up.

Mr. Roskam, who has faced multiple protests and

accusations that he will not meet with constituents, met for 20 minutes at the West Chicago office with River Prairie Group Chair Jeff Gahris, Wheaton; Stacey Salman, Downers Grove; Linda Sullivan, Lombard; and Jan Ahrensfeld, Palatine, on April 10.

He was thanked for signing the Congressional sign-on letter asking for restoration of the \$300 million in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds that had been eliminated from President Trump's budget. While all 12 Illinois Democratic congressmen signed the letter, Mr. Roskam was among only three out of six Illinois Republicans to sign it. Rep. Randy Hultgren (R-14) did not sign the letter.

The Sierra Club provided Mr. Roskam with talking points for restoring the critical funds and asked him to be more actively involved. Mr. Roskam issued this statement: "The Great Lakes are a vital freshwater system and truly a national treasure. The system accounts for nearly 90% of the United States fresh water supply and is an economic driver that supports jobs, transportation, and tourism for millions.

The Administration's proposal to eliminate the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was a serious and unacceptable error. Having voiced my concern in the House as well as to Administrator Pruitt, I am pleased to know that the GLRI has been fully funded in the 2018 Interior and Environment Appropriation bill."

While the Congressman was on board with restoring the popular Great Lakes funds, he was noncommittal about reversing the crippling 30 percent cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency. He acknowledged that his constituents care about clean water and air. He said his record was "balanced" on the environment.

But Ms. Ahrensfield pointed out that his voting record was, in fact, hostile to the environment. "Rep. Roskam purports to be supportive of the environment, but his actions speak louder than words," she said. "During our meeting I quoted a form letter I received from him in March 2017 in response to an email message of concern I had sent to him. It included platitudes such as, 'As a father of four, I share your desire to pass on a clean, healthy and sustainable planet to future generations; I will continue to promote environmentally friendly policies.'

"However," continued Ms. Ahrensfield, "based on these statements I asked Rep. Roskam why he received a three percent score with the League of Conservation Voters for 2016 and a lifetime score of eight percent. I pointed out that he voted an anti-environment stance on all 11 resolutions introduced since the beginning of January 2017 including several that would limit climate change activity, assault environmental safeguards, block efforts to reduce methane pollution, and threaten drinking water near coal mining operations."

Mr. Roskam responded that the League of Conservation Voters scorecard was meaningless and insisted that his record on the environment was balanced. The meeting ended amicably with both sides pledging to stay in touch.

We know that our actions matter. Phone calls, rallies, and meetings with elected officials are all part of the resistance, and they are how we will win. Currently, EPA's budget is still facing massive cuts. While the addition of the GLRI funds is positive momentum, it is like funding the fire trucks while cutting funding for the fire fighters. Thanks for continuing the fight against Donald Trump's polluter agenda!

**Below: Sierran J.C. Kibbey addresses a crowd of almost 300 Sierrans rallying at Rep. Peter Roskam's West Chicago office demanding that he oppose President Trump's anti-environment agenda.**





# 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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

YES! I would like to give a gift membership to:

Gift Recipient \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club  
 Please charge my:  Visa  Mastercard  AMEX

Cardholder Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 15	N/A
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 175
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
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35

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](http://www.sierraclub.org)

F94Q W0715 1