



Sauk-Calumet Group

August – December 2016 Issue - Volume 35, Issue 2

Sauk-Calumet Chapter of the Sierra Club Celebrates Bison at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

By Ann Baskerville

On May 7, 2016, [Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie](#) and its partners--including the Sierra Club--welcomed visitors to a "Midewin Bison Expedition." The Expedition publicly welcomed and celebrated the reintroduction of bison to Midewin. The bison are considered an experiment because Midewin staff will monitor how bison grazing habits effect prairie restoration. Bison and cattle eat plants differently, so Midewin staff will monitor how bison grazing impacts native plants in the tallgrass prairie ecosystem.

Midewin is bisected by historic Route 66. In fact, locals and tourists getting their kicks on Route 66 can often view the bison herd from the Mother Road. Drawing on this connection, Midewin partnered with the nearby towns of Elwood and Wilmington, also historic stops on 66, to include the bison expedition in "Red Carpet Days," a celebration of Route 66.

Visitors began their expedition by boarding a shuttle bus in Elwood or Wilmington and then traveled to Midewin to view the bison. For this special event, the bison were confined to a "show pasture," which is much smaller than the 1,200 acre pasture they typically roam. High-powered binoculars were set up so visitors could get a closer view of the bison and baby bison. Over 2,000 visitors participated in the bison expedition.



Visitors of all ages had a chance to interact with Smokey the Bear and Woodsy the Owl. Smokey and Woodsy are official symbols of the U.S. Forest Service's Conservation Education Program. Smokey teaches people to prevent forest fires and Woodsy reminds people to "give a hoot, don't pollute!"

Here is Sauk-Calumet's own Georganne Higgins with Smokey.

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Sauk-Calumet Sierra Club Members (L to R) Melinda Elliott, Ann Baskerville, and Maribeth Meaux collect petitions supporting the Illinois Clean Jobs Bill at the University of St. Francis Earth Festival in Joliet. Photo by Robert Schwaan.



On August 3, 2016 the US EPA held the only public hearing on the Clean Energy Incentive Program (CEIP) in Chicago. It was a symbolic day because August 3rd is the anniversary of the Clean Power Plan release. There were over 300 people at the rally in Federal Plaza and 130 people testified for environmental justice at the hearing. Sauk-Calumet Group's Melinda Elliott helped recruit people to attend and testify at the hearing. The CEIP is a program that provides states with incentives for rapid development of clean energy projects especially in low income areas.

Photo taken by Stephanie Spence

~~CO~~₂OL COMMUNITIES

By Christy Mazrimas-Ott

“Growing Sustainable Climate Solutions and Accelerating a Transition to 100% Clean, Renewable Energy One Community at a Time”

The Sierra Club’s Illinois Cool Communities Ready for 100 Initiative’s goal is to deal with the global issue of climate change on a local level by engaging small towns or entire counties to reduce their local carbon emissions. Goals include communities implementing climate action plans and solutions to reduce greenhouse gases, like CO₂.

So far over 55 communities in Illinois (many in the Sauk-Calumet Group) have committed to energy conservation, energy efficiency, and clean energy. By 2030, the goal for Illinois Cool Communities Ready for 100 Initiative is to have a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which is only 2% per year.

Ready for 100 is a Sierra Club campaign to reach 100% clean and renewable energy. Check the link below to see if you live in a Cool Community or if you need to reach out to your town to become a Cool Community. Remember locally, we can help fight the global issue of climate change! <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/priorities/energy/cool-communities-ready-for-100#overlay-context=priorities/energy/cool-communities>

For more information about the Illinois Cool Communities Ready for 100 Initiative, contact: Terri Treacy: Email at terri.treacy@sierraclub.org or 312-251-1680 x193
Virginia Woulfe Beile: Email at Virginia.wolfebeile@sierraclub.org or 618-462-6802



Patrick Coffey (on right) leading a Nature Sunday Hike at [Braidwood Dunes and Savanna](#) with Paul Beck from Valley of the Fox Group (on left).

Nature Sundays Hikes: Re-Connect to Nature

It's summer, a time when you can get back outside and re-connect with nature; and the Southland region has plenty of places available where you can do just that. Whether it's a small trail near home or one of the region's rare habitat sites, nature re-invigorates life.

This year, we planned six hikes as part of our Nature Sundays series. The first was to Hegewisch Marsh in Chicago where we saw tree swallows skimming over the surface of a pond, and a garter snake sunning itself on the trail. At Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie we saw some of the new prairie plantings (with wildflowers such as Culver's Root), as well as the bison (up pretty close) with their new calves. At Braidwood Dunes and Savanna we saw unusual species of milkweeds (all good for Monarch butterflies), like Tall Green Milkweed and Blunt-leaved Milkweed; and at the end of the hike, we all paused to see a Prickly-Pear Cactus in bloom. Spectacular! The last hike in July was a ranger led hike from the Paul Douglas Environmental Education Center at Miller's Woods in Gary, IN.

This year the groups have been fairly intimate, but we've taken the opportunity to talk to and learn about each other, as well as about nature. We've connected with people who care about nature, just want to be out in it, or have been activists or volunteers dedicated to preserving it for many years. And there are two hikes to go! Join us this summer; but if you can't, make sure you see some nature for yourself. I've never known anyone to regret it.

The remaining hikes are as follows:

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Elwood, IL Sunday, August 14th, 2:00 pm. We'll meet at the Iron Bridge Trailhead; [there's a map on the Midewin website](#). Native of the area, Ann Baskerville will be joining us. Midewin has live bison this year and some new calves have been born this spring. There's no guarantee we will see the bison, but we will also be taking in the prairie plants and the history of the site. The hike is about 2-3 miles and should take about 2 hours.

Directions: Meet at the Iron Bridge Trail Head, located on the East side of Route 53, about 1.1 miles south of Hoff Road. There are port-a-potties on site.

Paintbrush Prairie, Indian Boundary Prairies, Markham, IL Sunday, August 28th, 2:00 pm. A steward will help guide us around the site. Here's a link for some information on [Indian Boundary Prairies](#).

For more info email Patrick Coffey at pjc1000@comcast.net.

Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group at the Will County Fair

Be sure to visit the Sierra Club Sauk-Calumet booth in the Atrium at the Will County Fair. We will inform the public about our group, our hikes, and our work to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet. The Will County Fair runs from Wednesday August 24th – Sunday August 28th and our booth will be open 10am -10pm every day except Sunday 10am – 8pm. You can check out the [Will County Fair website](#) for more information about the fair.

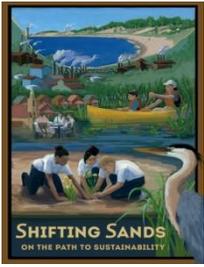
Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 pm on the second Monday of every month at the Frankfort Library (21119 Pfeiffer Rd, Frankfort, IL) with the exception of June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public. **EXCEPTION: The December 2016 meeting will be held on the first Monday of December (Dec. 5, 7:15 p.m.) because of a conflict with the library schedule.**

September 12, 2016: The Benefits of Weeds

Are weeds a valueless plant growing wild? Sauk Calumet Sierran and avid gardener Carrie Rock will help us take another look at the nutritional and medicinal uses of the wild plants growing right underneath our feet!

October 10, 2016: Shifting Sands



We'll watch the new documentary about the Indiana Dunes, "Shifting Sands on the Path to Sustainability," which highlights not only the stark contrast between the area's industrial history and its unique wild history, but also the successful cooperative efforts in recent decades between industry and environmentalists working together to protect the area.

November 14, 2016: Saving the Gulf of Mexico -- Cleaning up Illinois' Rivers and Lakes

Cindy Skrukrud, Clean Water Program Director of the Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter, will describe efforts underway at the national and state levels and in local waterways to clean up nutrient pollution. In 2015 Illinois released its [Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy](#) which guides state efforts to improve water quality at home and downstream by reducing nitrogen and phosphorus levels in our lakes, streams, and rivers. Your help is needed to clean up our waterways.

December 5, 2016: (Please note date change to first Monday this month):



Camping (and more!) in the Forest Preserves!

Cook County Forest Preserve Special Events Director Jacquie Ulrich will show slides and tell us about the new opportunities in the Forest Preserves of Cook County, such as 5 new tent-camping and cabin-camping sites, plus canoeing, kayaking, and more.

January 9, 2017: Members' Slide Night

Calling all members! Please bring slides (film or digital images) or prints of your latest outdoor experience, be it a grand adventure on the other side of the world or the beautiful butterflies of your own backyard. Call Lois Lauer at 708 (923-1550) if you have slides to share.

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at:

sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

Please include your full name and address, and reference the article on which you are commenting.

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Newsletter

***Denotes an elected member of the Executive
Committee**

Before I introduce myself I would like to thank Connie Heinrich for all her hard work and dedication as editor of our local newsletter. My name is Gregory Ott. I have been a Sierra Club member for 15 years and I am the new editor of our newsletter. I volunteered because I strongly believe in the Sierra Club's mission and want to support it where it matters the most to me...locally. I have no editing experience so please let me know what you like and dislike about the newsletter and I will do my best to keep it informative and interesting. There are so many special places in our area to enjoy so after reading this newsletter, grab your hiking boots and head outside to one of your favorites. Here are a few photos of one of mine.

