

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

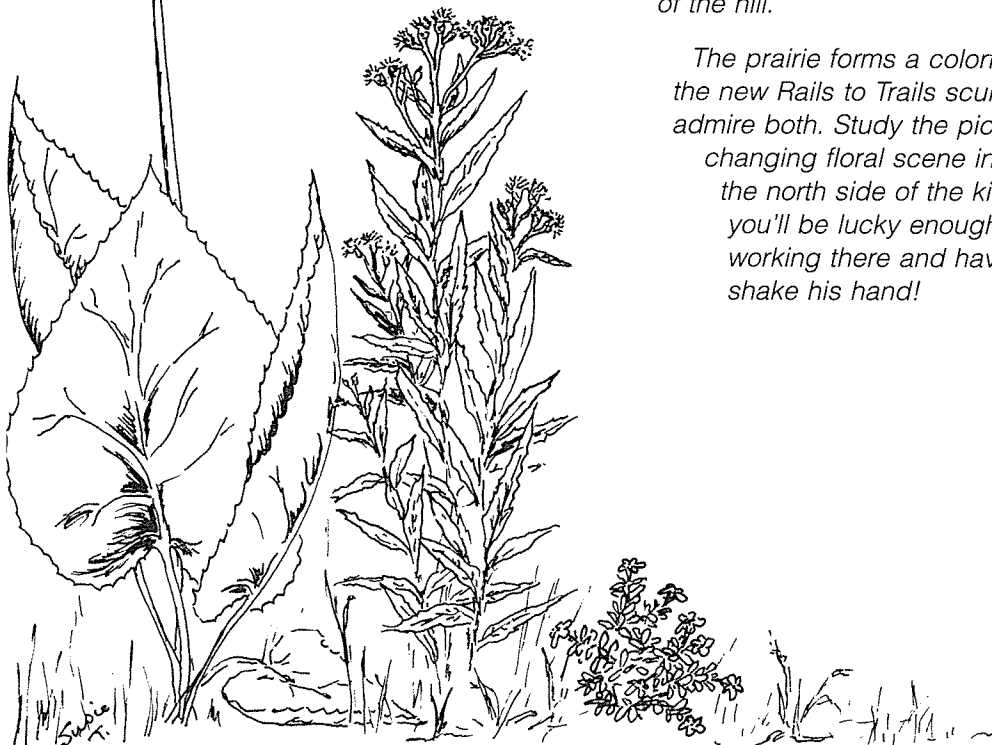
FALL, 1989

## What to see: a prairie garden triumphant

*This summer for the first time the native flowering plants in the demonstration prairie at Volunteer Park in Wheaton have been putting on a tremendous show. Since early June the hillside has been a kaleidoscope of color, gradually changing week by week as early-blooming flowers fade and later ones reach their peak.*

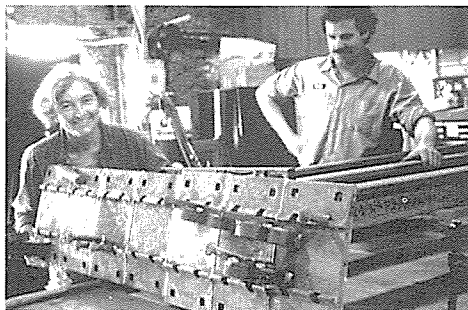
*We can all take pride in our "Volunteer Prairie"; but proudest of all, and justly so, is prairie manager Larry Sheaffer. Planting a demonstration prairie at the geographical center of the Illinois Prairie Path was Larry's idea. He supervised site preparation and planting of the area and can often be seen weeding, watering, pruning, seeding bare spots, and just checking up on things. He knows the name of every flower and can point out those that were donated and planted by volunteers in 1984 with tender loving care and those that were planted in 1988 with equal TLC by employees of the Natural Garden Nursery in St. Charles, under contract to The Illinois Prairie Path corporation. He is particularly pleased with certain special plants, the plucky survivors of last year's many adversities, such as an eight-foot-high yellow-flowered Prairie Dock and a magnificent purple Ironweed with a delicate lavender Wild Petunia (Ruellia) at its base near the bottom of the hill.*

*The prairie forms a colorful backdrop for the new Rails to Trails sculpture. Stop and admire both. Study the pictures of the changing floral scene in the case on the north side of the kiosk. Maybe you'll be lucky enough to see Larry working there and have a chance to shake his hand!*



## Rails To Trails Sculpture Installed at Volunteer Park

On July 24 a sculpture named *Rails To Trails* was installed on the Illinois Prairie Path at Volunteer Park in Wheaton by the City of Wheaton Public Works Department. Erika M. Bajuk, noted Wheaton artist, created the witty and joyful work, which was commissioned by the board of directors of The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation for the benefit of the people of DuPage County.



*Erika Bajuk, sculptor, and Randy Meyers, welder, with just-completed section of sculpture in Wheaton public works welding shop.*

The sculpture, made of railroad artifacts, suggests the metamorphosis of an abandoned railroad into a nature trail through the power of "a thousand points of light" (the volunteers who conceived and built the trail). The slightly-curved rail sections (with a radius of curvature of 150 feet) are original and came from the Wheaton yards of the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad, a famous electric interurban that began operations in 1902; the commuter service continued until 1957 and the freight operation until 1959; the line was abandoned in 1961. The site of the sculpture is just north of the old CA&E Wheaton yards where the maintenance shops were located (and 300 feet south of Volunteer Bridge, the historic iron truss CA&E bridge which now can be viewed through the sculpture as in an antique iron frame). A small section of the original



*Sculpture with Chicago, Aurora and Elgin logo forms striking frame for historic CA&E bridge at top of hill.*

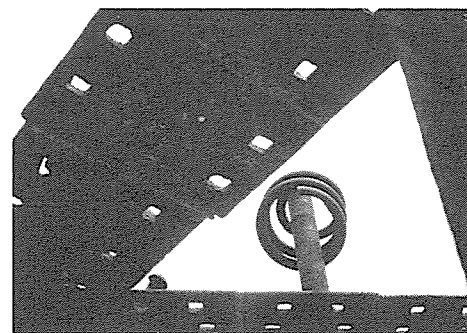
"Third Rail" with attached electrical fittings is welded to the base of one of the rails, together with a typical three-piece insulator assembly found submerged in the Lincoln Marsh by Illinois Prairie Path board member Jean Mooring in 1984. Many people fondly remember the "Roaring Elgin", giving off sparks as it carried commuters to and from the city faster than they can travel today. The 800-pound iron railroad wheel was donated by the Griffin Wheel Company, Bensenville. Larry Steele, horticulturist, City of Wheaton Public Works Department, who first proposed erecting a sculpture to commemorate the historic CA&E Railroad, arranged for the donation.

The sculpture is crowned by a series of tie plates welded together to suggest a trail with many branches, the Illinois Prairie Path, built by volunteers (the points of light) on the old roadbed. Railroad spikes, bolts and curved rail anchors represent hikers, joggers and bicycle riders happily using the trail. The imaginative viewer walking around the sculpture can find a group of scouts (or schoolchildren), a pair of lovers, and even a small dog running along in front of two joggers. Other artifacts are welded in the shape of trees, one with a person standing in its welcome shade.

Most of the historic materials, including the rail sections, were supplied by the Fox River Trolley Museum, South Elgin, where some CA&E cars are still in service. Randy Meyers of the Wheaton Public Works Department welded the sculpture under the artist's direction.



*View of Rails To Trails sculpture looking south toward site of former CA&E R.R. Wheaton yards. Note insulator assembly and fragment of Third Rail (bottom left).*



*Points of light (spike holes in the tie plates) contrast with tree welded solidly to trail and symbolize the volunteers who have defended with spirit every foot of the Illinois Prairie Path for more than 25 years.*

### A word about the sculptor:

Erika Marija Bajuk, artist and art instructor at the College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, was born in Celje, Slovenija, Yugoslavia. She entered the United States on an International Scholarship and earned her B.A. at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, and her M.A. in Sculpture at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois. She exhibits in the United States, Europe and Japan. Her works are in museums and in public and private collections. One, an abstract sculpture in concrete, may be seen a block east at Liberty Square Park.

## Horses Not Permitted on IPP Aurora Branch in Kane County

According to Charles E. (Chuck) Hoscheit, Director of Parks and Recreation for the Fox Valley Park District in Aurora, horseback-riding is not permitted on any park district trails. Since the park district is responsible for development and maintenance of 3.1 miles of the Illinois Prairie Path on the Aurora Branch in Kane County, this policy also applies to that section of the Path. An ordinance banning horses was adopted by the park board in the late 1970s because horses pose safety hazards to other non-motorized users and can also damage both limestone and asphalt surfaces. "There can be an exception in areas designated for such purposes," Hoscheit said, but added that there are no plans at this time to build a separate horse trail on the Prairie Path Aurora Branch.

## CA&E Bridge over Route 83 To Be Replaced

The Illinois Department of Transportation has advertised for bids and has received a low bid of \$847,913 to remove both the CA&E (Illinois Prairie Path) bridge and the Chicago and Great Western bridge over Rte. 83 in Elmhurst and to replace the IPP bridge. The contractor is Lorig Construction Co., Des Plaines. According to Paul Helmick, IDOT Resident Engineer, the new bridge will be located between the two structures to be razed and will be approximately fifteen feet higher. The project will begin about September 1 and the new bridge should be completed by mid 1990. Prairie Path users will be detoured over the Great Western bridge during construction. This project is one segment of the ongoing Rte. 83 improvement which will ultimately eliminate a perennially-flooded underpass.

Helmick also reported that another ninety-year-old and crumbling Illinois Prairie Path bridge in the same area will soon be replaced: the CA&E bridge over Salt Creek. The project is in the bid-letting stage now and construction should start by October 1.

### Toll Road's Water Wonderland: Best-Kept Secret in DuPage County

Construction of the North-South Toll Road has produced one major benefit for nature lovers in DuPage County: the system of wetlands, detention basins, and open space with native vegetation, which parallels the tollway and the East Branch of the DuPage River between the Illinois Prairie Path and Roosevelt Road. The wetland system, developed by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority to mitigate floodplain filling, destruction of former wetlands and other harmful environmental impacts, has turned out to be a magnet for water birds rarely seen in an urban county like DuPage. Snowy white Great Egrets can be found feeding in the shallow waters together with majestic Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Green-backed Herons, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Kildeer, Sandpipers, many varieties of ducks and the ever-present flocks of Canada Geese. The area is a bird-watcher's dream come true.



*Paul Mooring adds a plank to wooden footbridge in Glen Ellyn, currently the only safe access to toll road wetlands.*

Although many of these water birds can be briefly glimpsed from cars speeding along Rte. 53 or Roosevelt Road near the toll road and the East Branch of the DuPage River, access to the wetland area for serious birders and trail users is almost impossible. For example, on the reach of the river between the Illinois Prairie Path and the forest preserve headquarters at Rte. 53, there is only one small private wooden footbridge over the river near the end of Roslyn Road in Glen Ellyn. There is no public access to the wetland service road between Rte. 53 and Roosevelt Road. Possible entrances to the service road (which could also serve as a north-south trail) from the Illinois Prairie Path, Rte. 53, and Roosevelt Road are blocked by cable barriers or chain link fences with NO TRESPASSING signs.

According to Steven Halberg, director of planning and development for the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, these wetlands are now the property of the toll highway authority but will be turned over to the forest preserve district by the end of 1990 if the contractor for wetland mitigation, Applied Ecological Services, Juda, Wisconsin, can prove that the effort has been successful. The long-sought trail along the river does not have a high priority now and may not

even after the wetlands are turned over to the forest preserve district, says Halberg; nor are there any plans for public access bridges over the East Branch.

Prairie Path members, birdwatchers, and trailfans, especially those living in Glen Ellyn and Lombard, may want to visit this wonderful area (call Jean Mooring for information) and then discuss the proposed trail and needed access bridges with their representatives on the county board and the Glen Ellyn and Lombard village boards and park districts. The proposed trail will be a vital link in the future 25-mile-long central DuPage County circle trail, which will follow the Prairie Path from Kline Creek in Winfield east through Wheaton and Glen Ellyn to the East Branch of the DuPage River in Lombard, then south along the East DuPage to the Morton Arboretum and the Butterfield Road Regional Trail, west through the forest preserves along Butterfield Road to the West DuPage River at Warrenville, and then north along the West DuPage through forest preserves back to Kline Creek and the IPP.



*IPP board members Bonnie and Bob Hargis enjoy evening stroll on wetland service road, Lombard.*

### A Beautiful Gazebo for Warrenville

This summer the City of Warrenville dedicated a new gazebo at the municipal complex adjacent to the Illinois Prairie Path. The handsome structure, which was donated to the city by the Warrenville Kiwanis Club, will be the setting for band concerts and other community events. As the focal point of the new Albright Park, the gazebo is flanked by the library on the west and the city hall on the east (once the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin railroad station). Sod has been laid; steps have been installed leading down to the Prairie Path; and many trees and flowers have been planted (one tree was donated in memory of the late Douglas Quinn, a well-known local theater director and former teacher at Glenbard West High School). There is also a new drinking fountain near the gazebo, a boon for thirsty Path users. Total cost of materials and contractors for the gazebo and other amenities exceeded \$23,000. Although not in the same class with the elegant gazebo, there is another facility on the opposite side of the trail which is greatly appreciated by Path users and deserves honorable mention here: the portable toilet, maintained for the past several years as a public service by the City of Warrenville. On behalf of Illinois Prairie Path members and friends we send congratulations to the Warrenville Kiwanis Club and to Mayor Vivian Lund and the city council for all these well-planned improvements!



*Airy gazebo graces Albright Park, Warrenville. New drinking fountain at left.*

### Gazebo Fever Is Catching

At least two other municipalities, through which the Prairie Path runs, are also building or planning gazebos near the trail. In Villa Park, Rotary Club members are working hard on theirs, which is going up just west of the Ardmore Avenue station (the restored CA&E station now on the National Register of Historic Places). In the tradition of many projects along the Illinois Prairie Path, the gazebo is being built with donated money, equipment, materials and labor. Total estimated cost is \$100,000, and the village will be paying approximately \$20,000 for the custom-designed structure. Chief engineer is Walter Allen, a Villa Park Rotarian. The building will be twenty feet in diameter and fifteen feet high and will stand atop a five-foot-high substructure made of concrete with cobblestone veneer to harmonize with the nearby historic station. Permission to build was granted by DuPage County, owner of the right-of-way, after a land swap: 5700 square feet of land under the gazebo for a strip of village land including some of the parking spaces just north of the right-of-way.

The Glen Ellyn Rotary Club is also planning a gazebo, new drinking fountain, benches and picnic tables, a brick path, and many new trees, shrubs and flowers for Prairie Path Park, located south of the trail and across the tracks from the North

Western station. The club has pledged \$10,000 and 336 hours of on-site labor. Cooperating in the effort are the Glen Ellyn Park District, (purchase and planting of several large trees and regular park maintenance), the Village of Glen Ellyn (\$5,000 for benches, tables and brick for the path), and Glenbard West and Glenbard South High School students (additional labor). Work on the project is scheduled to begin in August and the dedication is set for Memorial Day, 1990. Perry Woodward, longtime Glen Ellyn Rotarian who is the project coordinator, says, "Prairie Path Park is enjoyed by commuters, employees of the various businesses in the adjacent shopping area who like to eat lunch there, senior citizens who live nearby, and of course Prairie Path users. It has the potential to be a real jewel in downtown Glen Ellyn."

**More Cleanup Kudos**

Path Vice President Bob Hargis writes, "A special note of appreciation should be given to Boy Scout Leader Ted Kraft of Glen Ellyn, who organized a combination hike and cleanup day on April 22nd. Many Cub and Boy Scout troops participated and collected 26 bags of litter and other miscellaneous items on the Elgin Branch between Geneva Road and Wayne. The trash was deposited at Prince Crossing Road for pickup by the DuPage County Division of Transportation." Our thanks to the scouts and the county and to Bob for passing the word along.

**FALL ACTIVITIES, Rain or Shine**

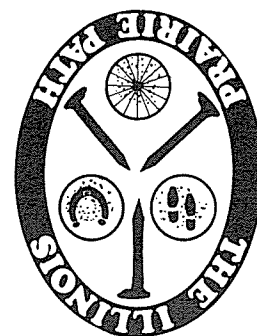
- Saturdays, Sept. 16 **Work Days.** 9:00 a.m. Sign installation. Leaders: Paul Mooring, 469-4289; Bob Hargis, 668-7377.  
Oct. 21
- Saturdays, Sept. 9 **Seed Collection,** West Chicago Prairie. Meet at northeast corner of Electronic Support Systems  
Sept. 30 parking lot on east side of Industrial Drive 1/2 mile south of Hawthorne and just north of Western.  
Oct. 28 Information: Mel Hoff, 393-4715; Mollie Millen, 232-4394.  
(9:00 - Noon)
- Sept. 23  
Oct. 14  
(1:00 - 4:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, Sept. 30 **Fall Walk** to explore toll road wetlands. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Moorings' home. Bring binoculars  
(and lunch if desired). For more information and directions call Jean Mooring, 469-4289.
- Sunday, Nov. 5 **Illinois Prairie Path Annual Meeting.** 2:00 p.m. DuPage County Historical Museum, 102 E.  
Wesley, Wheaton. News of trail progress, good speakers, delicious food. Come one, come all!  
Information: Bob Hargis, 668-7377.

— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

**MEMBERSHIP RATES:** Individual \$10; Family \$15; Organization/Supporting \$20; Contributing \$25; Sustaining \$50; Patron \$100; Lifetime \$500

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