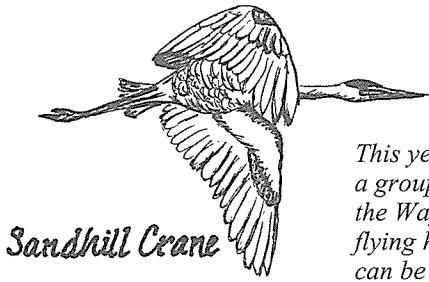


THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Summer, 1995

What to look for: Sandhill Cranes!



Sandhill Crane

Sandhill Cranes, an endangered species in Illinois, have been sighted flying over the wetlands in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve every spring during the past three years. This year they are back again, as three Illinois Prairie Path members can attest. The three were part of a group of birders who were helping with the Illinois Department of Conservation spring bird count in the Wayne area on May 6. They heard cranes bugling and then saw three of these magnificent birds flying high above the marsh with two more closer to the ground. (The call sounds like gar-oo-oo and can be heard for more than a mile.)

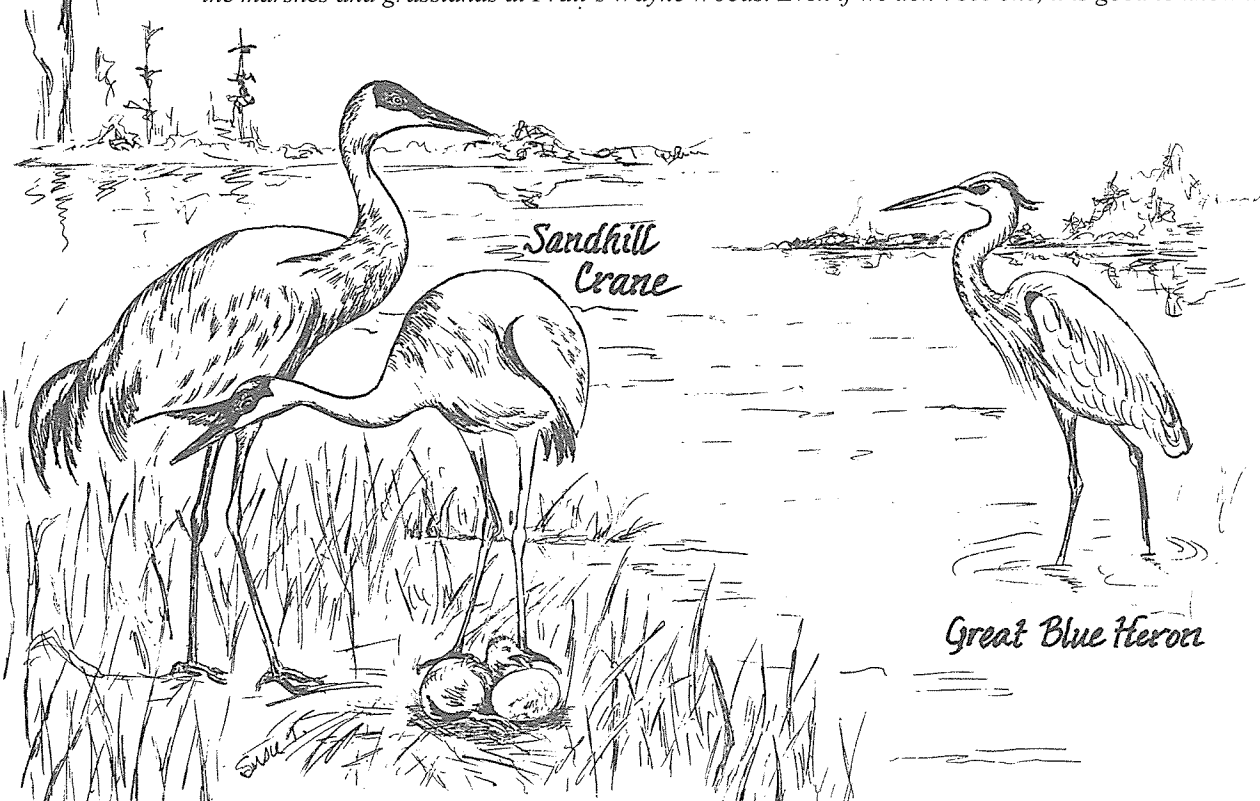
Slightly smaller than the Great Blue Heron, which is frequently seen at the Pratt's Wayne Woods marsh, the sandhill crane adult is gray overall with a dull red skin patch on the crown of the head and a "bustle" of feathers for a tail, lacking in the great blue heron. By contrast, the great blue heron is slate blue with a white head and black stripe extending above the eye and a distinctive yellowish beak. In flight the crane's neck is stretched out while the heron's is crooked.

Since the marsh/prairie habitat is ideal for crane nesting, the forest preserve district by Executive Order in mid-April closed a portion of the preserve in the hope the birds will decide to settle down and raise a family free of human interference. Signs are posted along the northeast side of the Illinois Prairie Path and the west side of Powis Road and south of the recreational lakes in the forest preserve, forming a rough triangle. The message reads: "STOP. Please do not go beyond this sign. This area is critical nesting habitat for the Sandhill Crane, a rare and endangered bird in Illinois. Human activity may force the cranes to leave this habitat. Please help the cranes by avoiding this area until September 1, 1995. Thank you!"

To this we reply, Thank YOU, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, for maintaining a home for the cranes in the marshes and grasslands at Pratt's Wayne Woods. Even if we don't see one, it is good to know that they are here.



Great Blue Heron

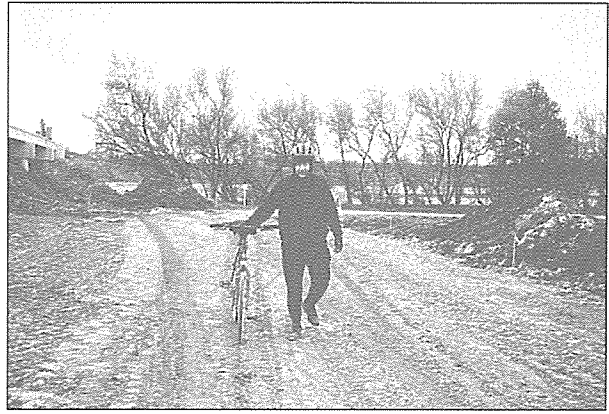


Sandhill Crane

Great Blue Heron

ATTENTION, PATH USERS

The DuPage County Division of Transportation has just started widening Eola Road to four lanes from North Aurora Road to Butterfield Road. Eola Road crosses the IPP Aurora Branch, where a bridge will be built for the Path over the road, and also the IPP Batavia Spur, where an underpass will be built for the Path under the Eola Road bridge at I-88. It is expected that construction of the underpass will be completed by September, 1995, and of the bridge, by early winter, 1995. Until these major improvements are finished, Path users will encounter a poor surface and heavy equipment in these areas and should exercise caution.

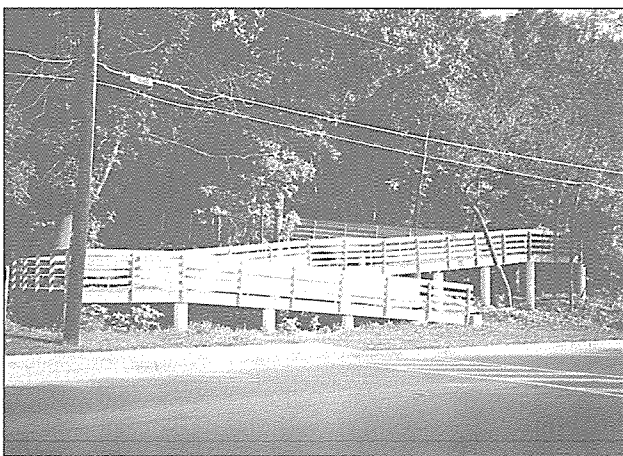


Hard going for a bicyclist on the Batavia Spur at Eola Road.

A SCENIC NEW TRAIL IN GENEVA

The Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur now connects via an off-road trail with the Fox River Trail at the north end of Bennett Park in Geneva! Many will call this new section of the Geneva Spur, which bypasses a long-disputed stretch of the old CA&E right-of-way, the prettiest part of the Prairie Path. The trail leaves the old r/w and runs north on a wide concrete sidewalk beside a city park along the east side of East Side Drive to High Street; then it turns west and soon crosses a handsome steel bridge over a ravine and meanders up and down easy slopes between the peaceful woods of Good Templar Park and the lovely grounds of Oak Hill Cemetery, ending at a well-engineered wood switchback ramp which leads gently down to Rte. 25.

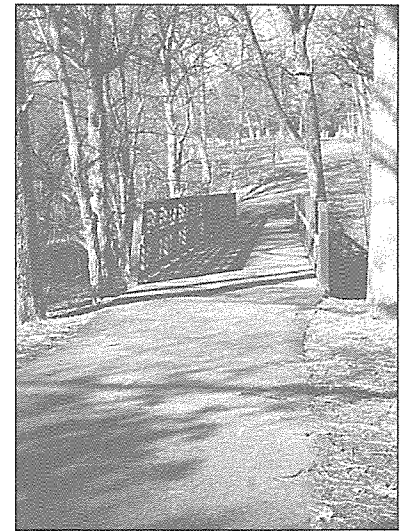
According to Jon Duerr, director of field services for the Kane County Forest Preserve District, this new trail



Switchback ramp at Rte. 25 across from Bennett Park, Geneva.

represents a cooperative effort among many agencies: the City of Geneva, which built the trail; the forest preserve district, which built the ramp and the bridge and installed the chain link fence along the Good Templar Park easement; Good Templar Park, which granted an easement on a 12-to-15-foot strip along the north edge of its property; Geneva Township, which donated a strip of cemetery land near the bridge; the Geneva Park District, which contributed a sum of money because the trail along East Side Drive runs beside its park; and the Illinois Department of Conservation, which provided a \$40,000 matching grant from its bicycle grant program.

The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors congratulates the City of Geneva, the Kane County Forest Preserve District, and all the participating agencies, public and private, for this excellent project. Similar cooperative efforts at trail-building in DuPage and Cook Counties could work wonders too!



Bridge over ravine at east end of Good Templar Park is flanked by tall trees.

HIKING & BIKING IN DUPAGE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

As the title indicates, this new book is a comprehensive guide to the many trail opportunities available in DuPage County. The author, Jim Hochgesang, whose publishing company Roots & Wings is based in Lake Forest, has personally explored the county bike paths and also the trails in 24 forest preserves, which he describes in accurate detail. The book features the Illinois Prairie Path, the Fermilab bike path and nature trails, the Naperville Riverwalk, the Morton Arboretum paths and the Wheaton

EcoBelt, and describes more than 240 miles of off-road trails and bike paths at 41 different sites. County and specific site maps are included, together with information about unique natural features and flora and fauna found at each site. There is also a listing of area attractions, nearby bike shops, a calendar of events, and related organizations.

This excellent guide is available for \$11.95. Call Roots & Wings at (708) 234-7174.

BERKELEY BEAUTIFIES BETWEEN BRIDGES

The short section of the Illinois Prairie Path between the I-290 and I-294 overpasses in Cook County had for many years been an orphan neglected by all until last November when the Village of Berkeley adopted it, gave it a home in the park district, and planted trees and shrubs on it. Berkeley Building Commissioner Arthur Rubel designed three new berms for landscaping on both sides of the Prairie Path, and a group of volunteers did the planting on November 13, 1994. The volunteers included the village president, several trustees, the public works

superintendent, and the chief of police. Money to help with the project and two pole lights for the Path were donated by the Harp Sign



Berm newly planted with trees and shrubs in Berkeley. I-294 overpass in background.

Company, which has a large advertising sign between the two overpasses. Rubel plans more refinements this year, including replacing some small junipers damaged by road salt, bringing in more black dirt and bark mulch, and planting a mix of colorful wildflowers.

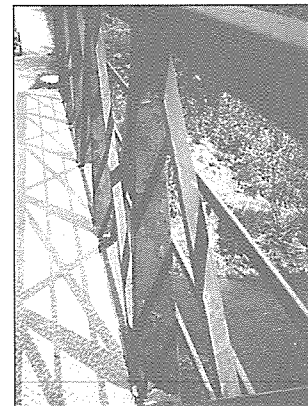
The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors extends sincere thanks to the people of Berkeley for this ongoing improvement, which all Path users will appreciate. It won't be long before this section will be as beautiful as the older developed park east of the bridges.

AN EAGLE SCOUT CHALLENGE

The Illinois Prairie Path has a good, hard project for an Eagle Scout candidate: painting with rust-proofing paint the steel bridge over the East Branch of the DuPage River between Glen Ellyn and Lombard. The bridge was last painted by IPP volunteers about ten years ago, and the surface is now rusting and peeling badly. (See picture.) This is one of our most important bridges because it is located on the Main Stem and carries on average more than two users every minute on pleasant summer weekends.

We must not let it rust to the point where it becomes structurally unsound. The task will require wire-brushing or some other effective method of preparing all surfaces for painting. The Scouts will probably have to stand on platforms suspended over the river by ropes to scrape, smooth and paint the outsides and underside.

The job can be done by Boy Scouts. A troop from Bellwood painted the bridge the first time in 1978 as an Eagle project. Scouts who want a REAL challenge should



Rusty railing on bridge over East Branch of the DuPage River. This bridge needs help!

call our office at (708) 752-0120, or write to The Illinois Prairie Path, Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60189.