

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1976

WHAT TO SEE

SHARING OF SPACE IN THE PRAIRIE

In any community there are several types of competition for survival. In the crowded habitat of the prairie there is competition above ground for sunlight and for pollination by insects and wind and there is competition below ground for food, moisture, and root space.

ABOVE GROUND:

Competition is resolved by the sequencing of bloom time and by height of plants; from smaller plants 1 to 2 feet which bloom in spring to the tallest plants which bloom in autumn and may ultimately reach 8 to 10 feet. Several early prairie plants (*Shooting Star* and *Wild Hyacinth*) go dormant below ground when competition for sunlight becomes difficult.

BELOW GROUND:

Competition is resolved by the sharing of soil space through different types of root systems. Most prairie grasses (*Big Blue Stem*, *Indian Grass*, and *Switch Grass*) have many fine roots in dense sods beginning just below the soil surface and extending to a depth of 5 to 10 feet. Other prairie plants (*Prairie Dock*, *Purple Cone Flower*, and *False Boneset*) have tap roots that extend down below the grass roots before they branch into feeder roots. This is one of the reasons prairie plants should be grown from seed. The layering of roots allows food and moisture to be taken from different soil levels. The extensive root systems also serve to incorporate decayed vegetable matter into the soil at great depths and increase the prairie plants' survival ability during periods of drought and fire.

Autumn Prairie

There are sections of prairie along the Path that allow us to see Illinois as it existed several hundred years ago. How often can one walk back into the past and into the future at the same time?

Spring Prairie

Mid-Summer

Barbara Foster Lewis

PROJECTS AND MAINTENANCE

The March 27-28 WORK WEEKEND was held to repair the eroded approach to the bridge over the East Branch of the DuPage River. When that project was completed, the crew cleaned up trash along the Lombard section of the Path.

For the April 11th WALK, 36 members gathered at Herrick Lake for a windy, rugged 12 mile hike along the Path to Eola Road and back.

The State Highway Department has tiled, graded and sodded the underpass at Route 59, and it is now in good shape.

Boy Scout Patrick Phelps of Glen Ellyn has done some much needed pruning on the Path along the West Branch of the DuPage River. Further Spring maintenance will include replacing lost trail-signs and "No Motor Vehicles" signs where needed.

Scout brothers Steve and John Locher of Naperville and some of their Boy Scout friends have constructed railings on the stile leading onto the Path at St. James Farm. They have also spread woodchips on the trail and built a Raymond Watts Special Trail sign.

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has donated a granite boulder and a limestone boulder as added attractions for the Special Trail which is being developed for our blind and handicapped visitors. Future projects there will be planned and carried out by the Senior Girl Scouts of DuPage County. Teachers who are interested in using the Trail with handicapped students can obtain further information from Mrs. Ann Carlson, Naperville, 355-9210.

MEMORIAL

Work has begun on the May Theilgaard Watts memorial project in Wheaton, with the generous help of city planner, Ed Lyons, plus the Department of Public Works crew, plus Ralph Little of Thornapple Nursery. Three natural boulders are now in place and additional landscaping is planned. The Memorial Fund currently stands at \$835.00. The Prairie Path directors have voted to rename the area between West Street and Wheaton Avenue, "Founder's Park", in Mrs. Watts' honor.

DONATIONS

We are pleased to report recent donations to the Illinois Prairie Path from: Illinois Audubon Society, Prairie Club, Hawthorn Bike Club (of Western Electric Co., Chicago), Lombard Junior Woman's Club and the Prairie Path Chapter of Questers. These contributions are sincerely appreciated for the labor/materials necessary to keep the Path in top shape for our many hikers, bicyclists and equestrians.

We would also welcome any pictures or news items from our VOLUNTEERS about their Spring activities. We depend further on you to notify us of any suggestions, problems or complaints you may have regarding your area.



BICENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES

We are pleased to announce that President Gerald Ford has sent congratulations to the Illinois Prairie Path as a participant in the national HORIZONS ON DISPLAY program. He wrote, "America was founded on the conviction that individuals can join together in common purpose....Your project, with its focus on long-term solutions to community problems and needs....is most appropriate."

An exhibit of Prairie Path pictures, our detailed map and the HORIZONS ON DISPLAY certificate is on view in the cafeteria area of the DuPage County Complex in Wheaton (corner of County Farm and Manchester Roads).

International Backpackers Association, an organization to protect, share and enjoy foot trails, be they in urban areas or wilderness, is promoting the improvement of foot trails by active volunteer participation in clean-up, repair and maintenance through its Bicentennial program, ONE FOR THE TRAIL. Thirty-six states, including Illinois, are participating in this effort and are encouraging volunteers to give at least one hour apiece to clean up a portion of the trails they use. Please join us in this program. The Prairie Path needs your help. For their tally, report the hours you spend to the Path (P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois, 60187).

MEMBERSHIP

Annual dues for membership in the Illinois Prairie Path organization cover from May 1st to May of the following year. There was some misunderstanding about the application cards mailed with the NEWSLETTER in February. They were intended for old members to give to potential NEW MEMBERS! However, if you used the card to renew your own membership we have recorded it as such. It is never too late to contact friends and neighbors who might be interested in joining our organization. Our current membership numbers 1,266.

REMINDER: Walks

Saturday, May 15 - Annual Spring Bird Walk - Meet at 10:00 A.M. on the NW corner of Geneva Road and County Farm Road.

Saturday, May 22 - Wild Flower Walk - Meet at 10:00 A.M. at the corner of Washington and Crescent in Wheaton.

Sunday, June 6 - 20 Mile Bike Hike to Pratts Wayne Woods - Meet at 10:00 A.M. at Members Room, Wheaton.

Questions on any outing, call: Paul Mooring (469-4289), or Dick Wilson (299-7882).

To order "THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH - A Guide", by Helen S. Turner (\$1.25) or Prairie Path patches (@ \$1.00), send check to our Wheaton address.

(NEWSLETTER Illustration by Bobbie Lively)