

Elderberry

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1977



Swamp  
Rose

## WHAT TO SEE:

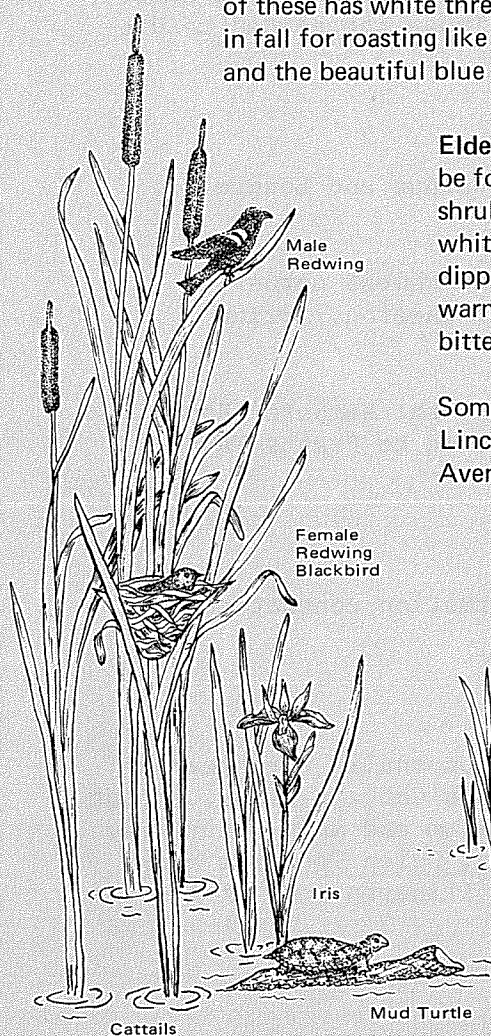
Spring showers fill the ditches along the Prairie Path with water. Wetlands teem with life as birds return to nest and migrating flocks pause to feed in the greening marshes. Look for **redwing blackbirds** nesting in the cattails. They have adjusted so well to man, often nesting only a few feet from the freeways, that their population is increasing. The males with bright orange and red wing patches arrive in March to stake out territories; when the cattails turn green in April, the brown females return to build nests of marsh grass and cattails.

Observe **muskrats** building lodges in the marshes. Cattails are their favorite food and building material.

Look for wetland wild flowers. Several varieties of **arrowroot** grow in wet places. The showiest of these has white three-part blossoms. Indians harvested the starchy tubers of the arrowroot in fall for roasting like potatoes. Look for the pale pink **swamp rose** with its hooked thorn, and the beautiful blue **wild iris**.

**Elderberry** bushes are disappearing from the city but can still be found growing along the Prairie Path. They are native shrubs which thrive in wet ground. Notice their flat creamy-white clusters of flowers or "blows". They are delicious dipped in pancake batter, fried, dusted with sugar and eaten warm. Wonderful winey tasting jelly can be made from the bitter elderberries in August.

Some of the largest wetlands along the Prairie Path are the Lincoln Marsh north of Wheaton, the area south of North Avenue, and the East DuPage River area east of Glen Ellyn.



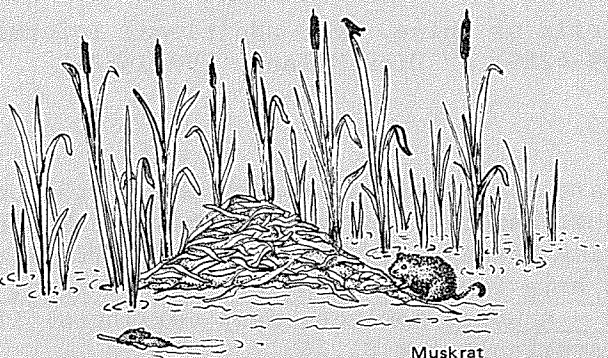
Male  
Redwing

Female  
Redwing  
Blackbird

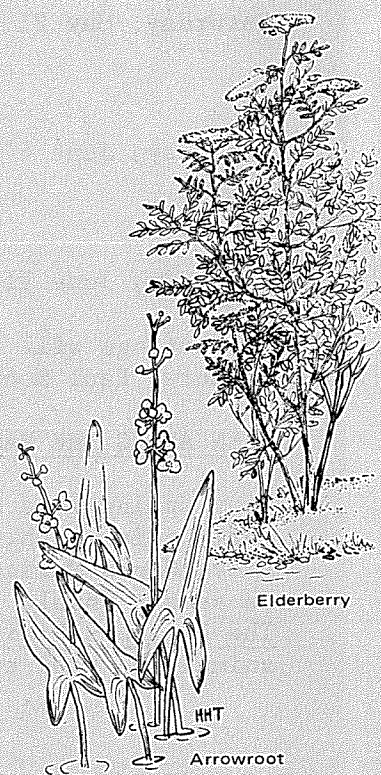
Iris

Mud Turtle

Cattails



Muskrat



Elderberry

Arrowroot



### PROJECTS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Spring has brought out a number of clean-up groups to rid the Path of winter debris. One early bird, the DuPage Audubon Society, was out on March 5 to pick up trash and tidy up the bluebird houses from County Farm to Prince Crossing Roads. In Wheaton Brownie troops, under the leadership of Mrs. John Coye, scheduled a Prairie Path clean-up for April 24. In Glen Ellyn clean-up was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce April 23. Village trucks picked up 6 loads of accumulated trash. Lombard has scheduled a clean-up for May 7.

Dick Wilson, Projects Committee Chairman, reports that auto barriers are in place at the North Woods entrance to the Path, on both sides of the Ferry Road entrance and the north entrance at Diehl Road. Others will be installed as needed.

### SPRING OUTINGS

A ten mile hike was held Sunday, April 17 from Glen Ellyn to West Chicago. Some 50 hikers joined the group - an unusual number for such a long hike. Return to Glen Ellyn was by train.

Saturday, April 23, was a work day. Fifteen volunteers joined the work crew to help install new signs and posts on the Wheaton to Aurora branch of the Path. Ten holes were dug for the posts which will be anchored in concrete. Those not needed to dig holes kept busy picking up rubbish.

Additional spring outings will be held:

Sunday, May 8      Wild Flower Walk in Glen Ellyn. Meet at Walnut and Longfellow Streets at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 21   Spring Bird Hike. Meet at 10:00 a.m. on northwest corner of Geneva and County Farm Roads, northwest of Wheaton. Bring lunch, drink and binoculars.

Saturday, June 4   A 20-mile Bike Ride. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Members' Room (616 Delles Road, Wheaton). Ride will extend to Pratts Wayne Woods and return. Bring lunch and drink.

Saturday, June 11   Work Day. Same as April 23.

All outings will be held rain or shine. For additional information contact the leaders, Paul Mooring (469-4289) or Dick Wilson (299-7882).

### SEEN ALONG THE PATH

Many spring wild flowers are now in bloom brought out by the unusually warm weather early this month. Bloodroot has come and gone as has the Skunk Cabbage bloom. Trout Lily, Marsh Marigold, Spring Beauty, Jacobs Ladder, Red Trillium and many others may be seen. Should you need help identifying plants and flowers, Helen Turner's book The Illinois Prairie Path - A Guide includes many delightful illustrations of flowers, animal and bird tracks. Available for \$1.25.



### HEARD FROM OUR FRIENDS

A recent item about the Prairie Path appearing in Action Line in the Chicago Tribune brought more than 300 requests for information about the Path. Included were many nice comments about the Path, one of which we thought you might like to read:

"....I have read two separate stories relating to the Pathway, and I would love to see for myself the outstanding, marvelous, and rare Pathway that this area so critically needs. It seems hard to believe that we, living in the Chicago area, should be so lucky as to have even one such 30 mile pathway. I only hope that some day soon my family and I will be able to enjoy such an honored by-product as you people have uncovered for the people of our great community."

A.H.T.  
Chicago

### MORE ABOUT THE BOTTLE BILL

The Illinois Beverage Container Act HB 730 has been introduced in the Illinois House of Representatives by a coalition of environmentally concerned members both Republican and Democrat. Principle sponsor is Daniel Pierce, R., Highland Park. The basic provisions of the act are: 1. A minimum 5-cent deposit on all beer and soft drink cans and bottles sold in Illinois. 2. A mandatory refund of deposit by all dealers for all brands and sizes that they sell. 3. A ban on detachable metal "pull tabs". (Easy open cans would have to be of the "button down" or similar variety.) 4. A phase-in period to ease the transition. All companies would have to reach full compliance by January 1, 1980.

Passage of the bill will: 1. Reduce litter (a constant problem to the Prairie Path, parks, beaches, road sides and all public areas. 2. It will save energy and raw materials required for the manufacture of these products and will also diminish air pollution. 3. It will save taxes levied for picking up municipal wastes and disposing of them in landfills. 4. It will reduce consumer costs. 5. It will create jobs in retail distribution and recycling programs. 6. It will benefit the Path and all Illinois citizens as has a similar bill provided the people of Oregon.

The Board of Directors of the Illinois Prairie Path supports this bill and urges Path members to write immediately to their state legislators and state senator regarding this bill.

### MAY THEILGAARD WATTS' HOUSE TO BE MUSEUM

Those of you who knew May Watts may be interested in knowing that a non-profit society has been formed to acquire her house in Naperville for a museum and center for activities relating to natural history, ecology, gardening and local history.

The house, which was "The Stylish House" in Mrs. Watts' book Reading The Landscape was built in 1866 and is among the most notable historic buildings in Naperville. The adjacent flower is comfortably old-fashioned in character and incorporates a small picturesque greenhouse moved there from the Joy Morton estate. For further information please call Jane Sindt (335-1988) or Carol Doty (969-2646).