



# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1978

## WINTER AND SURVIVAL ALONG THE PRAIRIE PATH

Brush, thickets, brambles and tangles along the Path offer a green screen for privacy in the summer. They create diverse textures and colors, shade and coolness as we walk or ride along; however, it is in the winter that these become truly important.

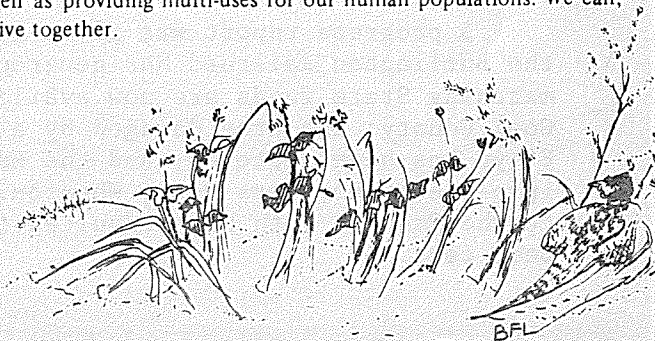
There is no constantly available food supply for wild creatures, so they live under a seasonal threat of starvation. Winter, especially late winter, is a time of hardship because it is a critical period for food supply. The supply of both insect and plant food decreases markedly as weather grows colder. Insect supply suffers most, and wildlife species turn more and more to plant foods. Both plant and insect eaters must search more intensely and over wider areas to find food.

Plants with persistent seeds, fruits or other edible parts, carried high enough so they are above the snow, become valuable sources of food. Vines such as *poison ivy*, *Virginia creeper*, and *green brier* have seeds eaten by the downy woodpecker, flickers, robins, chick-a-dees and other birds. Other fruits and seeds obtainable above the snow line are the *haws* of the hawthorn, *crab apples*, *silky dogwood* and *junipers*. In some areas along the Path, acorns and the seeds within pine cones are eaten by both mammals and birds. *Sumac*, which usually doesn't provide choice food for wildlife, is eagerly gathered as a source of winter substance; seeds, bark and twigs are eaten. Arched canes of *raspberries* and *blackberries* that create wickets peaking above the snow show the sharp diagonal cut of the rabbit's harvest. Buds of the *willow*, *apple* and the remaining seeds of the *ash* are all eaten.

Even the weeds that cause us problems during their growth and pollen season have their use in harsh winter. *Burdock*, various *pigweeds* or *amaranthus*, *ragweed* or *ambrosia* (isn't it nice to know there is some purpose in its existence), some native *sunflowers*, and the *goosefoots* or *chenopodiums* remain persistent upon the dried stalks late into winter and are gathered by birds and rodents. When the snow melts, the leaves of *plantain* are a favorite food of the rabbit.

In areas where prairie grasses still persist, the goldfinches can be seen clinging to the stalks of *big blue stem* rejoicing in their feast. All areas of the Path give shelter and food in varying degrees.

In certain sections of the Path, citizens have removed plant cover so that human users of the Path will be "safe". But they have decreased the survival potential for the wildlife who not only "use", but live on, the Path. We share the world with other citizens and must recognize their needs. This commitment is made more important by the fact that these inhabitants cannot speak or represent their needs or rights. The continuous hedgerows formed on the sides of the Path represent survival for wildlife in an increasingly urban environment, as well as providing multi-uses for our human populations. We can, with a little concern, all share and survive together.



ANNUAL REPORT 1977

The highlight of the Prairie Path Annual meeting, held in November at the Morton Arboretum, was the election of five new members to the Board of Directors to replace those who have recently retired or moved away. The new Board members are:

Sophie Abenante, Bellwood. For the past two years Sophie has been a vital part of a 7-member committee responsible for extending the Prairie Path into Cook County. She and her husband, Jim, have resided in Bellwood for 13 years. They have two children, Lynne, 13, and Jimmy, 11. Sophie is presently employed as a special education teacher in Berwyn. She has received an Associates degree (A.S.) in Child Care from Triton College and a B.A. in Psychology from Mundelein College. Sophie is also an active member of the McKinley School PTA Board and a committee member for Boy Scout Troop 128. Her hobbies include biking, hiking, camping, canoeing, swimming and studying Indian Cultures.

Jerry Hanlon, Batavia. Jerry is the Executive Director of the Batavia Park District. He received a Master's Degree from Southern Illinois University in Park and Recreation Administration. Currently he serves on the Illinois Park and Recreation Association Board. Jerry has had twelve years of experience in the field of Parks and Recreation and in addition to his work in Illinois he has worked in park districts in Wisconsin and Colorado. He has a special interest in trails such as natural, hiking, bicycling and the European exercise trail one of which he has developed.

Ray Nelson, Wheaton. Ray and his wife Betty have been members of the Prairie Path for eight years and for the past year Ray has assisted at the Prairie Path headquarters. Since being elected to the Board he has been appointed Corresponding Secretary to replace Liz Holmes who has moved to Wisconsin. For 39 years Ray was employed by Northern Illinois Gas Company in Sales and Engineering. During that time he acquired a Degree in Law. Since his retirement Ray has been active at the Ryall YMCA and is currently Chairman of the House Committee on the Board of Directors. He and his wife are skillful swimmers and have been winners of Y sponsored meets. They are also avid gardeners.

Jerry Glenn, Warrenville and Errol Hosteler, bicycle shop dealer in Hillside and Glen Ellyn, are also new Board members. Jerry has been elected Vice-President of the Prairie Path Board. We hope to have more information about these two gentlemen sometime.

A progress report was given by Secretary Gene Lewis who observed that: the Burlington Railroad has generously donated \$500 to the Prairie Path; matching State funds are now available for extension of the Prairie Path into Cook County; the area damaged by a Chicago, Northwestern derailment in Glen Ellyn has been restored; and the Memorial plaque honoring May T. Watts is in place in Founders Park, Wheaton. He also mentioned that possible benefits to the Prairie Path have resulted from the current passion for collecting beer cans.

Guest speaker Representative Ted Leverenz, related the story of the acquisition of State funds for the Cook County extension and urged listeners to get-to know their state legislators. Both they and the governor can be helpful.

Gene Lewis then pointed out that future plans, hopefully for 1978, include completion of the Path surfacing and the building of a vandal-proof bridge across the East Branch of the DuPage River at Lombard.

Following adjournment of the meeting members and guests gathered for refreshments of homemade apple cider, country breads and cookies provided by Vi Kolze, Edith Latal, Winifred Mayne, Helen Player and Nancy Huck.

#### GOOD NEWS FROM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Secretary of the Interior, Cecil D. Andrus, has designated a 5.06 mile extension to the Illinois Prairie Path as part of the National Trails System.

This new component, located in DuPage County, connects with a 22.7 mile segment of the Illinois Prairie Path which was designated a Recreation Trail in the National Trails System in June 1971.

Located southwest of the West Branch of the DuPage River, the new section of the trail reaches from near the village of Warrenville west to the Kane County line.

This section was not included in the original National Trails designation because the river lacked a safe pedestrian crossing. A handsome 115-foot steel and concrete foot-bridge was installed in October 1976, paid for by member donations and grants and qualified the remaining section of the Path in DuPage County for National designation.

Chris T. Delaporte, Director of the Interior Department's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation which administers Interior's responsibilities in the National Trails program, praised the many dedicated volunteers whose creative energies have converted a neglected right-of-way into an important recreational resource."

While the Prairie Path Board of Directors administers the Path it could not exist without the generous support of its many dues paying members and hard working volunteers.

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Prairie Path Patches are available for \$1.00 each.  
The Illinois Prairie Path a Guide by Helen Turner. \$1.25. Gives the history and geology of the Path including many pictures of wild flowers, bird and animal tracks seen on the Prairie Path.

For the above send your order and check to the Illinois Prairie Path,  
P. O. Box 1086, Wheaton, Ill. 60187.