



WHAT TO SEE—

The most common squirrel seen along the Prairie Path is the eastern gray squirrel. An acrobat swinging through the trees, the gray squirrel prefers a lot of brush or undergrowth on the ground which the Path provides. Fox squirrels are larger, more colorful, and are the ones often hunted.

Man wasn't the first to have a cool summer cottage. Squirrels live in tree hollows in the winter and in air conditioned leafy nests high in the trees during the summer. Gray squirrels sometimes have more than one nest; who knows whether this is a sign of ambition, affluence, or more than one girl friend?

Because squirrels do not hibernate, they are easy to see in the winter. In the fall they store quantities of food—nuts, seeds, acorns, and mushrooms—underground and in cracks and hollows of trees. They search for these all winter long and find them by smell rather than by memory. The happy squirrel who stuffs himself at your birdfeeder probably thinks he put all those goodies there back in September.

Mature squirrels have two litters of 2 to 4 babies a year—fox squirrels in January and again in June; gray squirrels in March and again in early July. The babies are born hairless and about one inch long. So when the winter winds howl and spring comes late, toss out some cracked corn and all your bread crumbs for the furry friends as well as the feathered.

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1979

SPRING ACTIVITIES

Although the Prairie Path is still snow-bound, the vernal equinox is little more than 5 weeks away. With it will also come migrating birds, spring flowers, leafy trees and warm sunshine. Join us on the following dates.

Sunday, April 22 - 5 or 10 mile hike. Meet at 9:30 at the Members' Room, 616 Delles, Wheaton. Hike to Grace St. Lombard. Lunch in Grace St. Park. Those wishing the shorter hike, can return to Wheaton on the Northwestern. Others will hike back to the Members' Room. Bring lunch and beverage. Wear suitable clothes and sturdy shoes. Leader: Dick Wilson Phone 299-7882.

Saturday, May 5 - Clean-up Day. Meet at 9:00 just west of Eola Rd. on the Prairie Path. Bring large plastic bags, work gloves, and if possible, a garden cart or wheel barrow. Also bring lunch and beverage. Leaders: Paul Mooring, 469-4289 and Dick Wilson, 299-7882.

Sunday, May 20 - Warbler Migration Walk. Meet at 9:30 at the far north parking lot, Pratts Wayne Woods. Bring binoculars, lunch and beverage. For those interested, a side trip, later in the day, will be made to the Illinois Audobon sanctuary in Wayne. Leader: Paul Mooring, 469-4289 and Dick Wilson, 299-7882.

Saturday, June 2 - Bicycle hike, 19-20 miles. Meet at the Members' Room, 616 Delles, Wheaton. Participants will bike to Pratts Wayne woods and return. Please - no children unless accompanied by an adult. Be prepared for a strenuous ride. Bring lunch and beverage. For further information call Jerry Glenn, leader, 393-1618

The following information does not apply directly to the Prairie Path but it does apply to long-term goals of the Prairie Path and should be of concern to all who enjoy the recreation provided by trails.

GREAT WESTERN NATURE TRAIL PLAN ABONDANED

The decision by the Illinois Department of Conservation to abandon plans for the acquisition of the Great Western Trail in northwestern Illinois was a serious blow to everyone seeking more recreational opportunities in our state. Its loss was due partly to the lack of a good state policy for securing land for public trails use.

Records show that 1,619 miles of railroad track in Illinois have been abandoned, have petitions for abandonment pending, or are being considered for abandonment. Many of these rights-of-way are prime candidates for development as trails. The need for areas for hiking, jogging, bicycle riding, cross country skiing is growing rapidly as huge numbers of persons take to the trails for physical fitness and pleasure. Developing abandoned railroad rights-of-way for public use as trails is the most cost-effective means for Illinois to meet this growing recreational demand.

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) cites the need for more public trails in Illinois, but no policy is outlined for meeting this need. In the meantime, prime opportunities can go the way of the Great Western Trail. You can help. Participate in the Trails for Illinois Symposium (see below) and let Governor James Thompson and your state representatives know how you feel about the need for a state wide trails system. Utilizing and developing abandoned rights-of-way is the most economical way to meet the growing demand for accessible, low-cost recreation in Illinois.