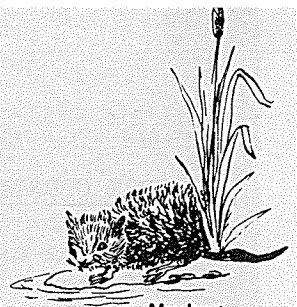


Muskrat house



Muskrat

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1980



Droppings



Muskrat tracks

WHAT TO LOOK FOR – Rabbits and Muskrats

Two animals that are awake and busy all winter long are rabbits and muskrats.

The heavy early winter rains have been kind to the muskrats. Lincoln Marsh, north of Wheaton on the Prairie Path, has more than a dozen new muskrat houses that can be seen from the Path. During dry seasons, muskrats will live in burrows in the banks but prefer the safer watery marsh. About half the houses in the marsh are feeding houses which are smaller than the others, with thinner walls. The bigger nesting houses have walls 2 feet thick with the nest well above the water level. Muskrats eat roots and stems of cattails and other water plants. They have dark brown hair and a long naked tail. The female has a litter of four in May and again in midsummer. At the age of a month, muskrats can fend for themselves. Look for a population explosion next spring unless we have a severe flood.

Rabbits are the same size as muskrats. The Eastern Cottontail is the rabbit of the Prairie Path. Rabbits like grasses and broad-leaved plants but during heavy snows nibble willow shoots and the twigs and bark of dogwood, roses, and fruit trees. Rabbits have many enemies which they try to escape by "freezing"--until danger approaches too closely at which time they explode in a burst of speed. Last winter was very hard on rabbits but they bounce back producing litters of five to six, three times a summer. Many, many rabbits live along the Path. Early in the morning or at dusk they can be seen in open places grazing. Follow their trails in the snow for a woodland drama.



Cottontail rabbit



Rabbit tracks



Droppings

COOK COUNTY EXTENSION

The extension of the Prairie Path 4½ miles into Cook County has finally been effected. Purchase of the former C.A. & E. right-of-way was made by the Illinois Department of Conservation. Total cost of the acquisition was \$600,000. One half that amount was paid by federal grant of Land and Water Funds and one half with the state's capital development bond money. It is anticipated that the Illinois Prairie Path Board will manage the Cook County sector through a leasing agreement. The Prairie Path now stretches from the DuPage County line through the towns of Berkeley, Bellwood, Hillside and Maywood making the total length of the Path in the three counties of Kane, DuPage and Cook, approximately 44.5 miles. Cook County sector Chairman, Keith Olson, and his committee deserve high praise for their long perserverance of this project. Important to the acquisition was an amendment to the Department of Conservation's budget sponsored by Rep. Leverence (d-5th, Maywood) in 1977 which made the purchase possible. Already plans are being made for installation of Prairie Path signs, clean-up and surface improvement.

PRAIRIE PATH BOARD CHANGES

The Prairie Path Board of Directors is pleased to welcome three new members- Nancy Hesler, West Chicago, Larry J. Nilles, Winfield and Jean Mooring, Glen Ellyn.

Nancy has been an ardent user of the Path since late 1960 when she learned of its existence from a friend. So great was her enthusiasm that in 1976 she and her husband moved to Oak Meadows to be near the Path. Since that time she has been very active pruning, filling holes, picking up trash on a regular basis.

Larry is an assistant controller-corporate accounting of Santa Fe Industries in Chicago. He received a B.S. degree in accounting from Northern Illinois University and is a certified public accountant. He also attended the Stanford University Graduate School of Business as a Sloan Fellow and received a M.S. degree in management. He was affiliated with Price Waterhouse & Co. prior to going with Santa Fe Industries. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Financial Executives Institute and past Chairman of the Plan Commission of Winfield where he resides with his wife, Merrily, and their two children Larry and Becky.

Jean, wife of Path President Paul Mooring, is well known for her active support of the Path. She has served as a one-man clean-up crew for the Path in Glen Ellyn, as aide and secretary to Paul, as a member of the local participation committee that serves as liaison between local governments and the Prairie Path Board and as a hard worker for the Path Projects and Maintenance Committee.

Three long time members of the Prairie Path Board have resigned: Bill Nemec, Chairman of the Board and former President who has been on the Board since its incorporation in 1965; Gene Lewis who served for 12 years as secretary; and Louise Headen, Public Relations Chairman for 11 years. On behalf of the Board, Paul Mooring expressed reluctance to accept the resignation of "these devoted members whose efforts contributed to the survival of the Path through its troubled early years when very few took the concept of the Illinois Prairie Path seriously". Commenting on the energy and enthusiasm of the existing Board and its new members, the retiring members expressed their belief that the future of the Prairie Path is in excellent hands.

SCOUTS WORK FOR THE PATH

Girl Scout Cadette Troup 108, Elmhurst, has been appealing to the city for improvement of the Prairie Path in Elmhurst. While they have received little more than a pat on the head for their efforts they refuse to be put down and will continue

to call attention to the urgent need for repairs of the Path. It is their intention to promote public awareness and support for their effort probably through petitions. Anyone wishing to assist may call Troop Leader Susan Aifenbrey 530-4752.

Kirk Israelsen, Glen Ellyn, working on his Eagle Scout project, has been very helpful to the Path during the past year. He took over replacing and refurbishing Prairie Path signs. His effort required some 85 hours. This was important work since all street intersections along the Path must be marked. Congratulations, Kirk, on your Eagle Scout status. You really earned it.

IMPROVEMENTS ALONG THE PATH

Finley Road Bridge - Although the bridge has been completed and hand rails are in place barriers preventing use of the bridge will remain until protective enclosures are erected.

Lombard Beautification - At Main St. Pine and ash trees have been planted. Bushes will be planted in the spring. This has been accomplished through the effort of the Lombard Park District and a donation of \$500 from the now extinct Community Action Committee.

Kane County - The Chicago Stone and Gravel Company's property has been cleared.

SPRING ACTIVITIES Rain or Shine

Sunday, April 27 - A Wildflower Walk Meet at 10:00 A.M. at the intersection of Longfellow and Walnut streets, adjacent to the Path in Glen Ellyn. Leader will be a qualified nature guide.

Saturday, May 17 - Bird Hike on The Great Western Trail in Kane Co. Meet at Leroy Oaks Forest Preserve at 9:30 A.M. just west of St. Charles. To reach the forest preserve drive west on route 64 (North Ave.) through St. Charles to Randall Road. Turn right onto Randall. Go ½ mile to Dean Road, turn left 1/8 mile to forest preserve entrance. Turn right to parking area. Bring binoculars, lunch and drink. Leaders: Paul Mooring, 469-4289, and Dick Wilson, 299-7882. This is an excellent opportunity to explore this fine new trail.

Sunday, June 1 - 10-mile hike from Wheaton to Geneva. Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the Northwestern Station in Wheaton. Return to Wheaton by train. Wear sturdy shoes and bring lunch and drink. Leaders: Paul Mooring and Dick Wilson.

Saturday & Sunday, June 14 and 15 - Work Weekend. Improvement of crossing over the E.J. & E. railroad tracks near Wayne. Steps are to be constructed of railroad ties. Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the intersection of the Prairie Path and Army Trail Road. Enter the Path and walk south east to the tracks. Bring work gloves, shovel, lunch and beverage. Leaders: Dick Wilson and Paul Mooring.

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Page 4

THE NATIONAL TRAILS COUNCIL

Members of the National Trails Council met in December to discuss trail problems and possible solutions. Jean Mooring represented the Prairie Path at the Rockford Meeting. Of considerable interest was the possible revival of the 2500 mile Tecumseh National Scenic Trail. Conceived some six years ago the trail was planned to extend from Manitoba, Canada, just below Lake Winnipeg, south to the Florida Trail which extends to Big Cypress Swamp and the Everglades. Utilizing existing trails, old logging roads, dirt roads, streams, forest trails the Tecumseh Trail would cross eight states and link seventeen national forests and areas of unique scenic, historical, natural and cultural qualities. Among trails to become part of the Tecumseh Trail would be the Illinois Prairie Path already a designated part of the National Trails System.

PRAIRIE PATH TEE SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE

- Good quality white cotton, short sleeved, knit shirts. Green trim on neck and sleeves. Prairie Path logo on left front. Sizes: Children - medium and large; Adults - small, medium and large. Extra Large special order. Each \$5 plus \$1 for handling and postage. Please send check and order to Hillside Cyclery, 4049 Washington Street, Hillside, IL 60162.

- Prairie Path Patches \$1 each.

- The Illinois Prairie Path - a guide by Helen Turner. Gives history, geology of path. Many illustrations of wild flowers, trees, animal tracks seen on the Path. Each \$1.25. For quantities of 10 to 20 \$1 each; 20 or more \$.75 each. For Patches and Book please send order to Illinois Prairie Path, Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60187.