

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

WINTER, 1981

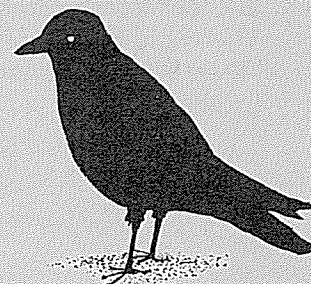
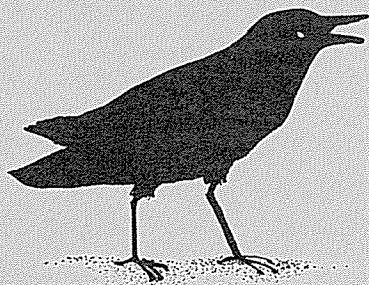
## What to look for - Crows

Everyone recognizes these big all black birds which seem more common in the winter perched in the topmost branches of a bare tree, flying in noisy groups across the Prairie Path, or walking along the Path cawing loudly. Some crows migrate south but many stay all winter feeding in small groups during the day but roosting in large flocks at night.

Crows eat almost anything but prefer corn left in the fields by the corn-picker, then weed seeds, berries, carrion and even garbage. While feeding one crow will sit on a perch to serve as a look out to warn those feeding of approaching danger.

Crows are very vocal and will always harass an owl or a hawk. If you see crows noisily swarming around a tree it is worthwhile to look closer for you may see a hawk or an owl. Owls and hawks eat baby crows but are able to out fly crows and if cornered in a tree are safe as long as they keep their backs to the tree trunk and don't have a nervous breakdown before the crows get tired of harassing them.

Crows can be distinguished from hawks in flight because crows steadily flap their wings and cannot glide more than a few seconds. On the ground crows walk instead of hop. They leave foot and lovely wing prints in the snow when they take off or land along the Prairie Path.





## ANNUAL MEETING

As the Prairie Path celebrated its fifteenth anniversary, the three speakers at the annual meeting on November 1 at the Morton Arboretum looked back into the past and ahead to the future. Steve Hyett, president of the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Historical Society, treated the fascinated audience to a slide show trip on the electric interurban from Chicago to Elgin, Geneva, Batavia, and Aurora on the Fox River with stops at towns and points of interest along the way. His rare pictures, some dating back to the streetcar era at the turn of the century, included scenes of buildings and structures along the railroad. A few of these still exist today, such as the Ingaltan Station at Prince Crossing Road, the picturesque iron bridge over the North Western Railroad in Wheaton, the two stations in Villa Park, and the Ovaltine Building. Some of the beloved old railroad cars, shown in their glory days, also survive in museums around the country, Steve reported.

Philip B. Elfstrom, Chairman of the Kane County Board, who was making his third appearance at our annual meeting, drew applause for his description of the exciting new trails in the Fox Valley between Elgin and Aurora. He pointed out possible linkages with the various branches of the Prairie Path to form a regional trail network. In the small world department, the crowd was delighted to learn that Mr. Elfstrom's father had been for many years general manager of the CA and E Railroad.

President Paul Mooring gave his annual illustrated progress report, showing most of the year's major Path events: curb-cutting in Villa Park, surfacing projects in Lombard and Glen Ellyn, at Jewell Road and County Farm Road, and on the Batavia Spur in Kane County, cleanups, prairie burns, the Hill Avenue embankment cut, the Wheaton ramp project, the spring bird hike, and hikes to Geneva and "The Catacombs" in Bellwood. He also reported that a committee of trail enthusiasts has been formed to consider the feasibility of converting the old iron bridge in Wheaton for use by hikers, bikers, and equestrians. Three more bridges would have to be built over the city streets to the north. The members present voted to approve the City of Wheaton's proposal to place traffic warning signs on the Path south of Roosevelt Road as a safety measure until push-button stoplights or a grade separation can be approved for that dangerous intersection.

Re-elected Board members include: Donna Albue, Leonard Chabala, Jean Mooring, Ray Nelson, and Muriel Smith.

New Board members are: Philip Hodge of Lombard, a registered professional civil engineer interested in the Wheaton bridge project; John Kacich of Berkeley, dedicated cyclist and long-time member of the Elmhurst Bicycle Club, who rides the Prairie Path twice each day; and Dan McGrath of St. Charles, a marketing analyst who is working to add the Geneva Spur owned by Commonwealth Edison Company to the Prairie Path trail system.

The resignations of the following board members have been accepted with regret: Keith Olson of Elmhurst, resigning for reasons of health, a prairie expert and environmental activist who has been a board member since 1975 and as chairman of the Cook County Committee spearheaded the Cook County acquisition by the Illinois Department of Conservation in 1979; and Eldon Frydendall, who served as Chairman of the Prairie Path Public Relations Committee and co-chairman of the Kane County Committee but has recently been elected to the post of alderman on the Batavia City Council.

After the meeting Path members and friends adjourned to the Founders Room for the traditional cider and country breads served by Vi Kolze and members of the Warrenville Junior Women's Club. The recipes for these delectable goodies and many more can be found in the soon-to-be-published "Warrenville Junior Women's Cookbook", says Nancy Huck, club president. Call her at 393-9852 for information.



## A SCREAMING SUCCESS

On the clear, cool night of October 27, two hundred terrified children and parents saw the legendary Lake Ellyn Monster during the Spook Walk on the Prairie Path in Glen Ellyn. This diabolical creature, which has the ability to change its shape in an instant, appeared in many different guises, each more horrible than the last. The beast's favorite lair is the section of Path between Montclair and Taylor, according to board member Dick Diebold, who first spotted the fearsome phantom and alerted the village. Dick believes that all of the Spook Walkers survived their harrowing journey and that many may even dare to search for the monster again next year.

## NEW TRAILS AT ST. JAMES FARM

In November the Prairie Path completed the long-awaited surfacing of one mile of trail in the area of St. James Farm between Madison Street and Winfield Road. David Harvel, owner of the Pete Nelson Trucking Company, South Elgin, was the contractor and did an excellent job. On four unusually fine late fall days, 761 tons of 3-inch crushed limestone were laid to form an eight-foot-wide base; this was topped with 606 tons of limestone screenings approximately six feet wide. A power shovel-tractor with grader blade compacted the crushed rock after the six-wheeler trucks tailgated it; and a Layton box asphalt spreader, modified for six feet, was used to lay the screenings uniformly on top. The job cost \$14,088, which was more than covered by a recent donation to the Path from Edward Heil of E and E Hauling.

This major construction project of 1981 would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of Brooks McCormick, owner of St. James Farm, who has allowed the Path to use a strip along the edge of his property since the Path's earliest days. The Illinois Department of Transportation also supported the effort by giving permission to develop our trail on the 2000-foot-long section of Butterfield Road right-of-way between the underpass and Winfield Road.

Special thanks go to Austin Boosted, president of the Warrenville Horse and Pony Club, and to the hard-working members of the club who joined Prairie Path board members and friends in cutting two trails through the woods, one for equestrians and the other for bicyclists and hikers. We hope this dual trail system will become standard on all Prairie Path sections west of Wheaton.

## WHEATON RAMP

This project, completed in two days at the intersection of Wesley and Western, is a monument to the stubborn determination of Prairie Path volunteers. This first day's work on September 26, cutting trees and clearing brush, was done in a steady downpour by watersoaked Path members and equally soggy members of the Indian Hill Bicycle Club. We mean it when we say Prairie Path activities take place rain or shine! The weather improved greatly the following weekend, and the ramping was finished. Surfacing with crushed rock and limestone screenings will be done in the spring. Other agencies participating in this cooperative effort include the DuPage County Highway Department, which made the BRIDGE OUT warning signs; the City of Wheaton Public Works Department, which installed the signs, hauled away the brush and debris and added a DEAD END sign at the bridge abutment; and Commonwealth Edison Company, which moved a hazardous guy wire away from the ramp.

## BATAVIA SPUR SURFACED IN KANE COUNTY

The Batavia Spur of the Prairie Path in Kane County has been surfaced with limestone screenings for bicycling a distance of four and a half miles from the Kane County line south of Butterfield Road to the Fox River. The Kane County Forest Preserve District did the work this fall at a total



cost of \$156,000, which included a wooden bridge, handsome wood sign posts, and culverts where needed. Of that amount \$72,000 was a snowmobile grant from the Illinois Department of Conservation. Therefore, snowmobiles will be allowed to use the Batavia Spur in Kane County in the winter when snow cover is adequate, but other types of motor vehicles will be prohibited at all times. Philip Elfstrom, who is also a member of the Kane County Forest Preserve Commission, explained at the Prairie Path Annual Meeting that a separate trail for horses will soon be added.

### OTHER PATH IMPROVEMENTS

Elmhurst has surfaced the section between Poplar and the Cook County line.

Villa Park has cut down the curbs at Harvard and Ardmore.

Lombard has resurfaced its entire section of Path from Westmore to the East Branch of the DuPage River. New crosswalk lines have been painted at most intersections and new Prairie Path signs installed.

Glen Ellyn has resurfaced the unincorporated area between Hill Avenue and Whittier.

The Prairie Path, with funds donated by Jean Mooring, has resurfaced the steep slopes on both sides of Taylor Avenue in Glen Ellyn. This is a demonstration project to show that a crowned surface will minimize erosion even on a hill.

The DuPage County Highway Department has resurfaced a 2000-foot section east of County Farm Road with a mixture of crushed rock and limestone screenings. Plans are to apply a top dressing of screenings in the spring.

### NEW TRAIL MAP

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the publication of a revised trail map and brochure. The three-color map, which is free to members and available to the public for a nominal charge, shows the Path as a green corridor linking municipalities, parks and forest preserves. Points of interest are indicated, such as prairie remnants, bridges, underpasses, rivers, and historical structures. Distances between certain points are also shown.

Bob Thomas, professional landscape architect with J. Christopher Lannert Ltd. of Geneva did the drafting and art work for the map, a monumental task. Jean Mooring and members of the Public Relations Committee revised the text, and Paul Mooring coordinated the yearlong project.

### OUR OWN MARATHON RUNNER

One of our most dedicated Prairie Path users has to be Susan Terwedow of Glen Ellyn. Every Sunday in good weather Susan runs twenty miles on the Path, accompanied by one of her children, Henry, Keri, or Alison riding a bicycle. Their round-trip route from their home in Glen Ellyn takes them east on the Path to Westmore in Lombard, then west to County Farm Road and home again. When time permits Susan's husband Henry runs with her. Susan and Company also do at least ten miles on the Path almost every day during the week. Why does she follow this strenuous routine? "When I started running back in 1979," says Susan, "I asked myself that same question. Now, after running in two marathons, I'm in shape and I do it because it's fun and makes me feel so good. My kids really get a kick out of riding along with me on our wonderful Prairie Path!"

-Jean Mooring, Editor-