

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1987

What to look for: A field of purple coneflowers

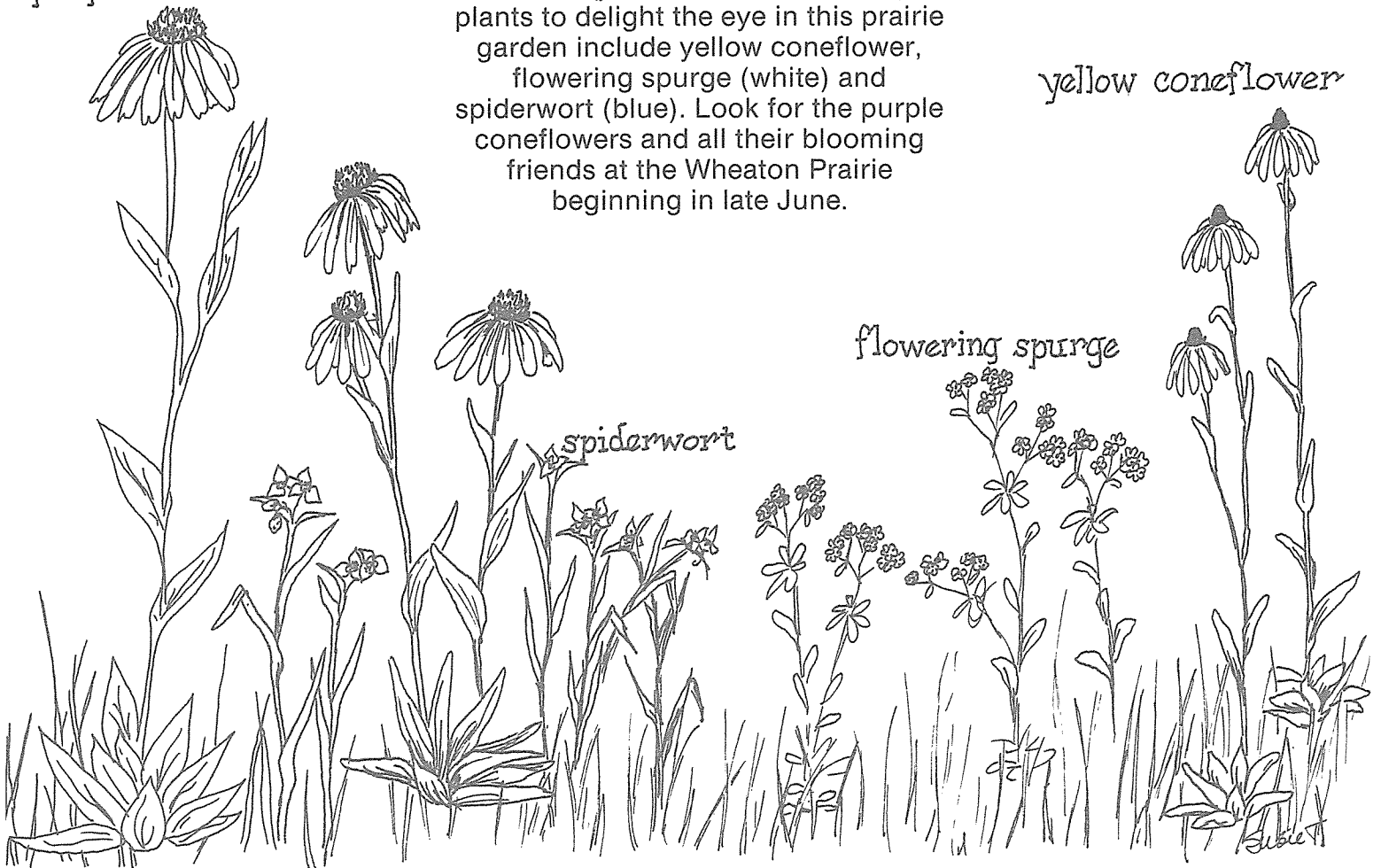
One of the most spectacular of the native plants found along the Illinois Prairie Path is pale purple coneflower, *Echinacea pallida*. Two to four feet tall, this beautiful prairie indicator plant has lower leaves which are long, tapering, parallel-veined without teeth and large daisylike flowers with swept-back pinkish-purple rays and brown center disk. The best stand of purple coneflowers on the Prairie Path grows right in Wheaton in a prairie remnant between the Chicago and North Western Railroad tracks and the Path north of Hoffman Park (just east of Hill Avenue). Other plants to delight the eye in this prairie garden include yellow coneflower, flowering spurge (white) and spiderwort (blue). Look for the purple coneflowers and all their blooming friends at the Wheaton Prairie beginning in late June.

pale
purple coneflower

yellow coneflower

flowering spurge

spiderwort



Kane County To Host First National Rails-To-Trails Conference

The first national conference of the newly-formed, Washington-based Rails-To-Trails Conservancy will be held October 7-10 at the Hotel Saratoga in North Aurora, Illinois. Major co-sponsors with RTC of this important conference are the Kane County Forest Preserve District, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, DuPage County, the National Park Service, and Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), Seattle.

The Illinois Prairie Path, famous first National Recreation Trail in Illinois, will be featured on field trips as will the beautiful Fox River Trail (located right in the backyard of the Hotel Saratoga). Other local converted railtrails to be included in the conference program are the Virgil Gilman Nature Trail, the Great Western Trail and the Green Bay Trail. The conference will present workshops on legal issues, funding, local organizing, legislation, development and maintenance, and other topics affecting conversion of railroad corridors to trails.

Among the 200 attendees expected are trail advocates and users, elected and appointed officials, trail managers, and representatives of national organizations and agencies. For more information, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to RTC Conference, Suite 400, 1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Editor's Note: A preliminary Illinois Statewide Rails-To-Trails meeting for local railtrail advocates will be held on Saturday, June 13, 9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at Illinois Central Community College in Peoria. Members and friends of the Illinois Prairie Path are invited to attend. Pre-registration is requested and includes a \$5 donation to cover lunch and other expenses. Contact Brian Puka, Program Coordinator, Illinois Natural Heritage Foundation, 320 South Third Street, Rockford, Illinois 61108, (815) 964-6666.

Spring Cleanup Poses Question: Who's in Charge Here?

April 25th was a beautiful day for the Prairie Path cleanup; and quite a few volunteers turned out in several villages, but virtually none in others. In Elmhurst, where the park district has a regular program of litter pickup and mowing along the Prairie Path, 24 boys and six leaders from Cub Scout Pack 24 were still able to fill about 20 garbage bags including a lot of broken glass. Villa Park's park department also has a regular Path maintenance program because the Path is one of that village's major parks. This is always one of the neatest sections as the Girl Scouts and Brownies discovered on their cleanup held the following week. Our thanks to Cadet troop 658, Junior Girl Scout Troops 539, 781 and 899 and Brownie Troops 379, 370, 589, and 641.

Lombard, on the other hand, considers Prairie Path maintenance to be entirely the responsibility of the DuPage County Highway Department and thus did not sponsor a Path cleanup this year. Public Works Director Richard Doherty says that the village is willing to pick up trash hauled to the various street intersections by concerned volunteers. He says Lombard wants a clear statement on Path maintenance policy from the DuPage County Division of Transportation.



Paul Mooring, Don Pellico and Bill Booth with chest-high piles of CNW railroad debris they dragged out of wetland (background).



Hope Marsh hauls brush at Taylor Avenue.

As usual, Glen Ellyn and Wheaton had the most successful cleanups. Ken Merrill of the Glen Ellyn Environmental Protection Commission recruited more than 25 volunteers, including B. R. Ryall YMCA Indian Guides, Cub Scouts from Packs 246 and 158 and several longtime Path members and friends. The hard-working groups picked up 2½ truckloads of brush, railroad tie ends, utility pole sections, building materials and many bags of trash. The Glen Ellyn Public Works Department provided a truck and one man on Saturday and a truck and front-end loader the following Monday to haul away the debris. One pleased volunteer was heard to say, "The Path in Glen Ellyn has never looked better!"

Mark Smith, representing the Wheaton Environmental Improvement Commission, and Bob Hargis, on behalf of the Prairie Path board of directors, coordinated and personally worked on the cleanup in Wheaton and on portions of the Elgin Branch and Aurora Branch as well. Because the Girl Scouts were celebrating their 75th anniversary in Chicago that day only Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts turned out this year. Participating were: Boy Scout Troops 395 and 54 (Troop 34 was to work the following week); and Cub Scout Packs 61, 317, and 369. Several public-spirited individuals also lent a hand, including a group of six from Briarcliff who had had such a good time last year they decided to do it again. Mark

Smith worked with three boys from the Milton Township Committee on Youth and says, "We covered a lot of ground. Among other things we found a water softener, a bunch of tires and even a kitchen sink!" A City of Wheaton truck picked up approximately 15-20 cu. yds. of material including brush the following Monday, according to Public Works Director Joe Knippen. Also on Monday the DuPage County Division of Transportation picked up the trash bags and junk left at intersections in the unincorporated areas.



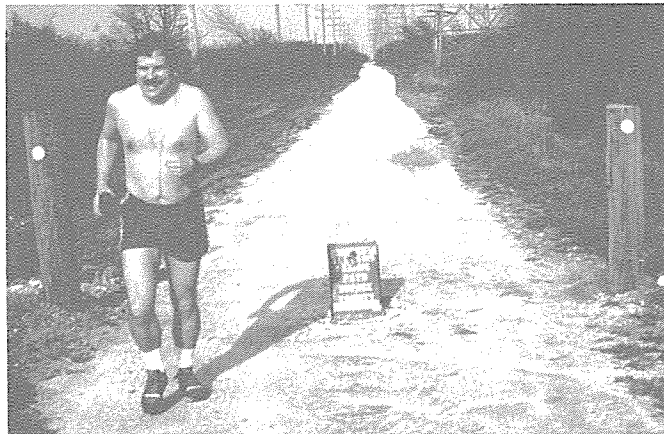
Wading in marsh near Wheaton city limits. Jean and Paul Mooring push logs to shore during Glen Ellyn cleanup.

The City of Warrenville did not participate in the cleanup this year, probably because no one notified city officials to ask for their help.

The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors earnestly hopes that next year the DuPage County Division of Transportation will coordinate the cleanup, enlisting the aid of the public works departments and environmental commissions of all the municipalities through which the Path passes. Keeping the Path clean should be everyone's responsibility but someone has to be in charge.

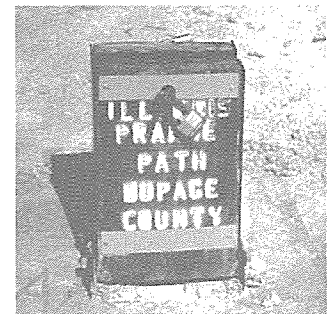
County Installs New Auto Barriers Recognizing Name

Bearing the inscription "Illinois Prairie Path DuPage County", new auto barriers are now in place at most street intersections in the unincorporated areas. Although strictly utilitarian in appearance, the wood-and-steel "clamshell"-style structures are sturdy and should keep unauthorized motor vehicles off the trail while allowing the passage of maintenance and emergency vehicles in the unlocked "down" position. The inscription recognizes Illinois Prairie Path as the trail name. Even better recognition would be achieved, the Illinois Prairie Path board of directors believes, if the DuPage County board should act to adopt the historic IPP green-and-white logo as its official logo to be used on Prairie Path trail signs at all intersections and on all county trail maps.



Jogger heads into Kane County on Aurora Branch past new auto barrier marking county line.

We strongly believe that our volunteers have earned the right, after twenty years of building a nationally-renowned trail, to have *our logo, our "trademark" with all the goodwill it engenders*, remain to identify the trail as long as the trail exists. We, therefore, urge the Division of Transportation not to make any drastic changes in either the colors or the design of the new signs it is currently planning.

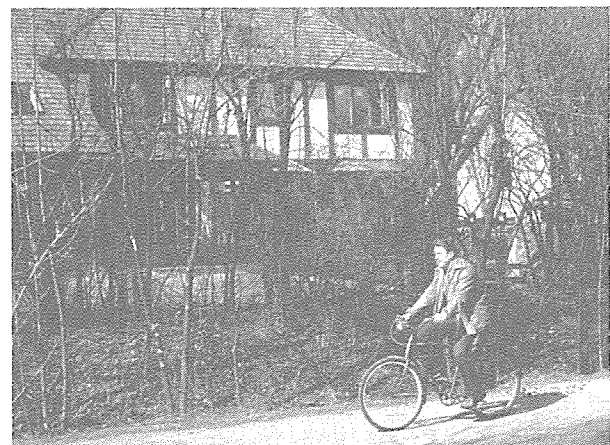


Typical new barrier has reflective yellow strips at top and bottom.

Realtors and Developers Love Our Trail

DuPage County realtors frequently mention in their circulars and newspaper ads for residential property proximity to the Illinois Prairie Path because of its natural beauty and recreational benefits. Local developers, builders, and other businessmen too, have discovered the Path's attractions. Indeed, high quality residential developments adjoining the Path are now springing up in several areas in Wheaton: on the Aurora Branch at the former Midwest Military Academy site near Orchard and Plamondon Roads and all along Wiesbrook Road to Atten Park; and on the Elgin Branch near Jewell Road where Joe Keim is building a whole new subdivision of handsome single-family houses overlooking Lincoln Marsh and backing up to the Prairie Path, which runs through the marsh. A little farther out on the Elgin Branch at the intersection of County Farm Road and Geneva Road there is even a major new commercial development with stores and professional offices located across the street from the Illinois Prairie Path, which proudly calls itself "The Prairie Trail Center" and boasts a drug store named "Prairie Trail Pharmacy".

How we envy the lucky folks who will shop at these stores and buy all these new homes and have the Illinois Prairie Path only a few steps from their doors!



Cyclist on Illinois Prairie Path rides by new house near Plamondon Road, Wheaton.

Work Begins on Prairie Path Bridge Over Tollway



View of denuded countryside east of Rte. 53, looking south from old CA and E bridge on Prairie Path.

About April 20th Walsh Construction Company of Illinois, which has the contract from the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority for the construction of the Illinois Prairie Path bridge in Lombard, started site preparation. The bridge will span both the new North-South Tollway and relocated Rte. 53. Surveyors' stakes are in showing the location of the new bridge, approximately 50 feet south of the old CA and E railroad bridge over Rte. 53. Chainsaws and a huge earthmover have clearcut and leveled the woodland east of 53. An attempt is being made to save two magnificent old bur oaks at the edge of the toll road right-of-way.

According to Steve Kehle, field engineer for Walsh, the bridge will be 360 feet long and will be elevated fifteen feet above the present Path grade. Maximum slopes will be 5%. Expected completion date is spring 1988. Until the new bridge is finished, the old bridge will remain so that Path usage will not be interrupted.

Summer Activities, Rain or shine

Saturday, June 20	Work Day. Call Dick Wilson, 299-7882 (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)
Saturday, June 27	Two-Day Bike Trip Overnight to Kirkland (Rockford area). Experienced bikers only. Bring own gear. Approximately 48 miles per day. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Nancy Hesler's, Oak Meadows. Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.
Sunday, June 28	
Saturday, June 27	Wildflower Walk at West Chicago Prairie , sponsored by West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at northeast corner of Electronic Supply Systems' parking lot, located on Industrial Drive just north of Western and south of Hawthorne, West Chicago. Leader: Mel Hoff, 790-4912.
Saturday, July 25	Work Day. Call Dick Wilson, 299-7882 (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.) or Bob Hargis, 668-7377.
Saturday, August 1	Explore Four Bike Trails , IPP, Fermilab, Kirk Road, and Fox River Trail. Approximately 30-mile loop trip. Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.

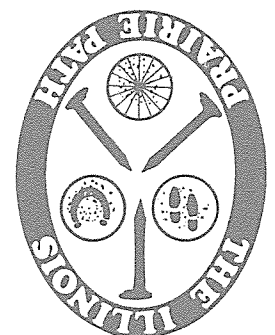
— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

MEMBERSHIP RATES: Individual \$10; Family \$15; Organization/Supporting \$20; Contributing \$25; Sustaining \$50; Patron \$100; Lifetime \$500

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