

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER



SUMMER, 1989

What to look for: Two rare bird species and a marsh

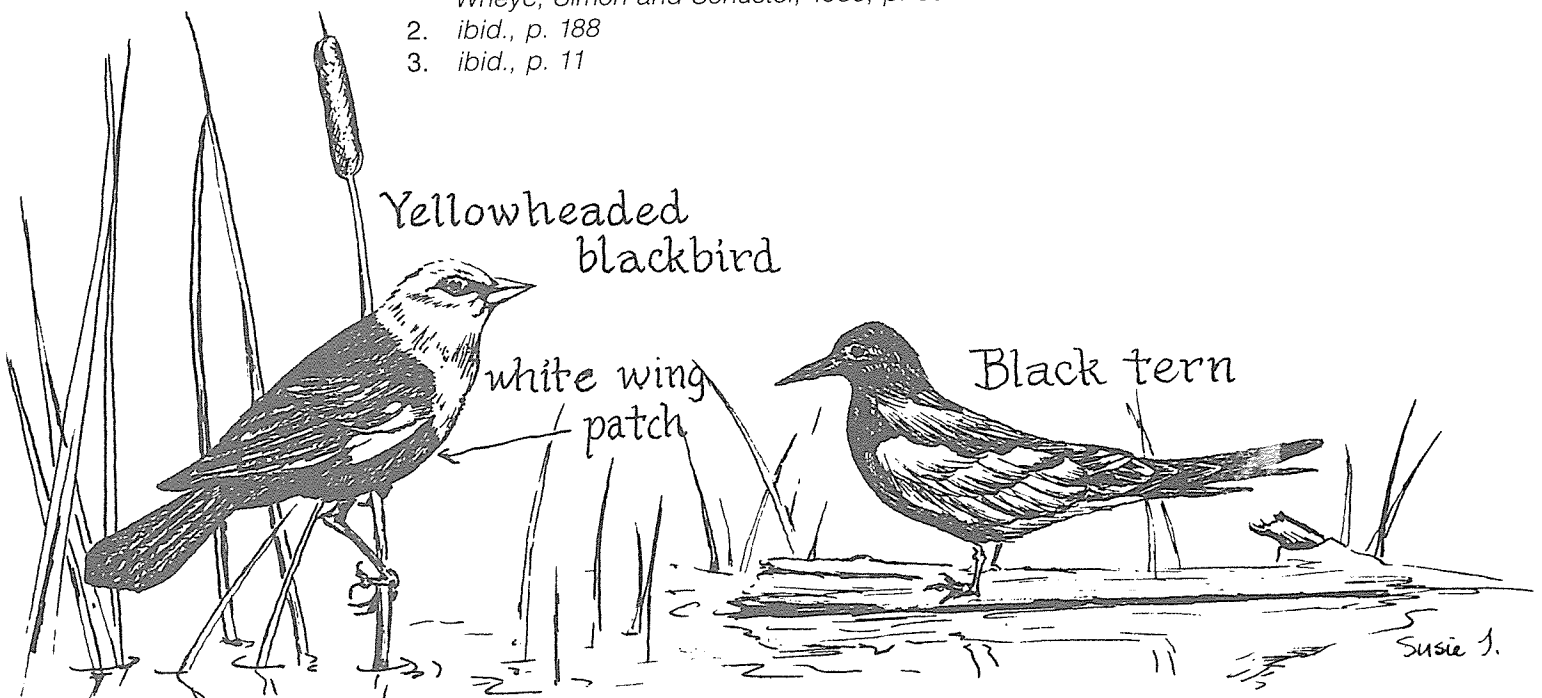
The large marshy lake adjoining the Illinois Prairie Path in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve is a peaceful haven for birdwatchers. It was formed about ten years ago when an industrious crew of beavers dammed a small stream that flows under the Path and thereby flooded a low-lying area northeast of the trail. When the beavers abandoned the dam a couple of years ago, DuPage County Forest Preserve District personnel recognized the value of this watery ecosystem as wildlife habitat and took over the beavers' job of maintaining the lake. A weir in the culvert under the Path one-half mile southeast of Dunham Road now controls the water level.

Many species of water birds nest in the marsh, including the Yellow-headed Blackbird and the Black Tern, both rare in DuPage County. The spectacular Yellowheads are larger than Red-winged Blackbirds and tend to "take over the best territories (areas of cattails and other plants in deep water that harbor the richest insect life) and force the Redwings into the shallower, drier, more marginal habitats."¹ Yellowheads are rare in DuPage only because they are a western bird and our area is at the extreme eastern edge of their range. The normal water depth in this marsh is perfect for them.

The Black Tern, on the other hand, is rare here and is "declining in many areas due largely to loss of wetland habitat. Greatly reduced hatching success in the upper midwest may be due to agricultural chemicals."² From 1978 to 1986 this species was on the National Audubon Society's Blue List, which "provides early warning of those North American species undergoing population or range reductions."³

To help save the Black Tern and continue attracting the Yellow-headed Blackbird we should all support the DuPage County Forest Preserve District and its strong program of wetland preservation.

1. **The Birder's Handbook, A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds**, Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye, Simon and Schuster, 1988, p. 607.
2. *ibid.*, p. 188
3. *ibid.*, p. 11



“...Neither Snow Nor Rain...”

Heroes they were, every one: the stalwart participants in the May 6 Illinois Prairie Path History Treasure Hunt, who pedaled their bikes through miles of snow showers blown by icy winds, and the equally sturdy Prairie Path volunteers, who gamely stayed at their chilly checkpoints through the longest, coldest day in May that anyone could remember.

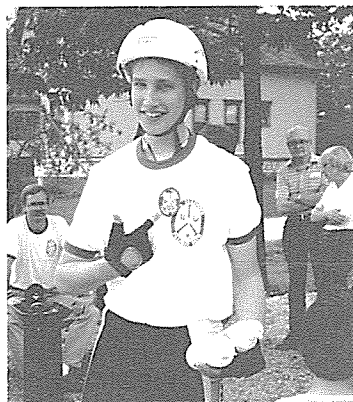
The winners were not hard to identify. The valiant volunteers were all winners, of course, for sheer stick-to-itiveness. They outnumbered the contestants more than two to one. Of the approximately twenty entrants in the Treasure Hunt six were adjudged winners and received Illinois Prairie Path T-shirts at a small awards ceremony at Volunteer Park, Wheaton, on Sunday, May 21. Three participants who managed to visit all fifteen historic sites between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on that one day, riding their bikes (or sometimes walking) the entire distance, also received an Illinois Prairie Path patch in recognition of their outstanding effort. They are: Jim Rice of Wheaton, and the “Team Extreme”, Tad Dinsmore and Chris Koller, Elmhurst. The other prize-winners were interested less in competition and more in a leisurely viewing of the DuPage County historical sites. In the fourteen-years-and-under class were Nada Wigand, 10, of Westmont and Duane Anderson, 12, Wheaton. Each of these two young people visited almost half of the sites, Nada accompanied by her parents John and Lala, and Duane by his mother, Darlene — good sports all. Female winner in the fifteen-to-thirty-nine class was Suzanne Fountas, who traveled the longest distance, all the way from Bolingbrook, to participate. There were no winners in the over-forty class because there were no entrants, undoubtedly on account of the inclement weather.

The three champions provided some memorable moments for the volunteers. For example, the lonely checkers eating a cold picnic lunch in a snowstorm at their remote outpost in the middle of the Winfield Mounds Forest Preserve, will never forget their first glimpse of Jim Rice, the Red Knight, emerging from a cloud of swirling snowflakes on a fiery red Nishiki International with a huge frost-covered wraparound windshield, a do-or-die look on his face. “Somebody found us!” shouted the frozen trio joyfully as Jim rode up. “Are you really here for the Treasure Hunt?”, gasped one in disbelief. “Why else would I be riding my bike through the woods on a day like this?” replied Sir Jim, patiently pausing to accept their congratulations before speeding off on his solitary quest. The same checkers, packing up to leave at the end of the day, will also remember the Team Extreme flying along Geneva Road, waving and smiling as they pedaled furiously back to Volunteer Park from their last checkpoint at the West Chicago Prairie to beat the 5:00 p.m. deadline. The boys made it and noted that their odometer registered sixty miles for the Treasure Hunt, to which they had to add another ten miles before they reached home in Elmhurst. This was even more remarkable because they had had a flat tire near the County Courthouse early in the morning! When asked what motivated them to finish the grueling course in such miserable weather, Jim, Tad and Chris agreed that it was the newspaper stories they had read. Reporters for the Chicago Tribune and the Daily Journal had quoted both Jean and Paul Mooring as saying they believed such a feat was impossible. “Well, they proved us wrong,” laughed Jean later. “These three wild and crazy guys made everyone’s day!”

Many members and friends of The Illinois Prairie Path who were unable to participate in the Treasure Hunt have asked us for copies of the worksheet to guide them in their trail explorations in the future. Accordingly, the worksheets will be available at the IPP office in Wheaton and at the Villa Park Historical Museum/IPP Visitor Center, open weekdays, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., May through October. One is also included with this *Newsletter*. To complete the historical record, several copies have been mailed to the DuPage County Sesquicentennial Steering Committee.



Treasure Hunt organizers Jean Mooring (left) and Esther Cryderman (right), flank five winners, Chris Koller, Jim Rice, Suzanne Fountas, Tad Dinsmore and Duane Anderson. Nada Wigand could not be present for awards ceremony.



Tad Dinsmore, half of the Team Extreme, points with pride to his new IPP T-shirt and patch. In background are Lyn Cryderman and Bob and Bonnie Hargis.



Jim Rice signs in at Checkpoint #5. Margaret Mooring, Madison, Wisconsin, welcomes him.

Photo by Jean Mooring

Honor Roll of History Treasure Hunt Volunteers

Defying the weather, forty-eight friends of the Prairie Path cheerfully manned the fifteen Treasure Hunt checkpoints and initiated the participants' worksheets during all or part of the day. They also circulated questionnaires on behalf of the Illinois Rails-to-trails Conservancy, which is conducting a survey of trail usage on all Illinois trails during and after Trail Appreciation Month. We thank these generous people for a job well done:

Checkpoint #1, Valparaiso Moraine, Glen Ellyn. Hope Marsh, Ed Marsh, Susan Terwedow.
 Checkpoint #2, Perry Mastodon, Wheaton. Esther Cryderman, Lyn Cryderman.
 Checkpoint #3, West Chicago Prairie. Mel Hoff, Scott Hensey, Renee Robbins, Paul L. Johnson, Joyce Siebens.
 Checkpoint #4, Buffalo Herd, Fermilab. Don Pellico, Bill Booth, Jean Booth, Doug Van Tol, Bob Rawls.
 Checkpoint #5, Indian Village and Mounds, Winfield. Jean Mooring, Margaret Mooring, Roberto Aldana.

(Continued on page 3)

Long Distance Biker Visits Illinois Prairie Path

This story appeared last winter in *The Whistlestop*, the newsletter of the Villa Park Historical Society.

"On October 19, 1988, a cyclist stopped at the Museum. He was sun-tanned and had three bags of gear strapped to his bike. He was riding across the United States. That morning he had ridden in from St. Charles via the Prairie Path. From his home in Austin, Texas, CHARLES FREEMAN traveled on his bicycle to California and then north across the Plains. He crossed the Mississippi River in Minnesota, then came down to Illinois. From our museum he was bound for 'Michigan Street' (Michigan Avenue and the Lakefront). After visiting with a friend in Chicago, he was heading for Georgia, then home to Texas. He thought the Prairie Path was wonderful, a pleasant route on his long journey. Charles signed our Guest Register, took along trail maps and a Villa Park Historical Society folder as a souvenir of his stop in Villa Park."

Editor's Note: The Washington-based Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is working to establish a network of trails, "Greenways," like the Illinois Prairie Path across the country so that more and more adventurous Americans can enjoy the pleasures of bicycling, local and long distance.

Berkeley Beautifies Trail

For the past several years the Village of Berkeley and the Berkeley Park District have been developing an attractive multiple-use park and recreation area on the Illinois Prairie Path right-of-way and the adjacent Great Western right-of-way. The most recent improvement was initiated a year ago by three good friends of the Prairie Path: John Rizzo, Berkeley village trustee, John Kacich, IPP board member, and Laddie Dvorak, a member of the Berkeley ZBA who rides his bike on the Path almost every day. The group met with the Berkeley Park Board at the invitation of President Ken Schill, to present their plan for improved lighting of the area and beautification and resurfacing of the trail. The project was soon approved and the work was completed last fall. The park district spent a total of \$4,000 for a variety of trees planted in the combined park area, including fifteen along the trail, primarily honey locusts. The park district also spent \$3,000 to resurface 1500 feet of trail with limestone screenings and to install two benches beside the Path. Commonwealth Edison cooperated by erecting seven tall pole lights around the playgrounds.

This park has become a tremendous recreational asset for the people of Berkeley; and The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors congratulates everyone who has helped build it.



Ready to leaf out, newly-planted honey locust stands beside resurfaced Prairie Path in Berkeley. Park district shelter house and tot lot in background.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES, Rain or Shine

Saturday, June 3	Trail Appreciation Bike Ride , 40-mile loop trip on Illinois Prairie Path/Fox River Trail. Meet at 9:00 a.m., Rte. 59 and IPP (Oak Meadows). Leader: Nancy Hesler, 293-1062.
Saturdays, June 17 July 15 August 19	Work Days . Volunteer Prairie, IPP at Liberty Street and Carlton, Wheaton. Leader: Larry Sheaffer, 790-0313. Other work projects. Leaders: Bob Hargis, 668-7377; Paul Mooring, 469-4289.
Saturdays, June 24	Bird Walk in West Chicago Prairie, 6:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.
June 24 July 22 August 26	General Field Trips in West Chicago Prairie, 9:00 a.m. to noon.
July 15	Prairie Seed Collection , 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. For all events meet at northeast corner of Electronic Support Systems parking lot on east side of Industrial Drive ½ mile south of Hawthorne and just north of Western. Information: Mel Hoff, 393-4715; Mollie Millen, 232-4394.
Saturday, August 26	Illinois Prairie Path/Lincoln Marsh Tour of savanna, wetlands and prairie, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Meet at IPP Volunteer Park, Liberty and Carlton. Bring cameras and binoculars for this popular 3-mile trek. Co-sponsored by the Wheaton Park District and The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation. Ages 8 and over; limit 25. \$2, residents; \$3, non-residents. Information and reservations: 665-4710.



Cleaning up a storm is youngest volunteer, T.J. Martin, 3, Glen Ellyn.

Prairie Path Is Almost Squeaky Clean

"One of the best spring cleanups ever," reports IPP Vice President Bob Hargis, who coordinated the effort in the western part of the county and Wheaton in cooperation with Mark Smith, chairman of the Wheaton Environmental Improvement Commission. Almost all sections of the trail were covered and there was a great variety of groups working. Among them were Girl Scout Troops 126 and 209, Boy Scout Troop 54, and Cub Scout Pack 335, a 4-H group, the Warrenville Advocates for Values and the Environment, ZMS Unlimited (a young adult group from Mount Prospect), the Glen Ellyn YMCA Indian Guides, and several individuals who worked on some of the more remote areas. The DuPage County Division of Transportation and the Cities of Wheaton and Warrenville hauled away at least 140 bags of trash.

"The Glen Ellyn Environmental Protection Commission was lucky to have an especially enthusiastic crew of volunteers this year," said Jean Mooring, IPP board member. "What they lacked in numbers (there were only thirteen volunteers plus a village truck and two village employees) they made up for in energy. They filled up that 2 ½-ton truck three times with debris like a jungle gym, a rotting stockade fence, pieces of an old bed frame, broken concrete, huge piles of brush, and many bags of trash. Another dozen people, residents of the apartments west of Taylor, cleaned up and raked their area until it shone. Glen Ellyn's section of the Prairie Path has never looked better."

According to Mark Giffin, Lombard Public Works Administrator, "Lombard Pride Week," April 22-29, produced 200 volunteers, who worked at ten especially messy spots around the village. Three of these were on the Illinois Prairie Path — both sides of Main Street, Grace, and Lodge. Cub Scout Pack 243 also planted a lilac bush at Lodge. On the west side of Main a new drinking fountain was recently installed by the public works department. The Village of Lombard Beautification Committee planted a flowering crab east of Main for Arbor Day this year to match the one planted west of Main last year. Both were paid for by the beautification committee, which has also been installing new trash barrels along the Path. The following agencies donated goods and services to the cleanup: Standard Federal Savings, hundreds of trash bags; North American Movers, a moving van to pick up trash; Enchanted Castle, food discount coupons; McDonald's, orange drink; the Lombard Beautification Committee, "Lombard Pride" buttons and car litter bags.



Yo heave ho! Thom Martin, Joe Carlton and Don Pellico hoist heavy section of old stockade fence into Glen Ellyn village truck.

Several weeks before "Lombard Pride Week" the Girl Scouts of America DuPage County Council also sponsored a massive cleanup on the Prairie Path in Lombard west of Main, which involved more than 200 scouts and leaders. "Lombard is proud of all these volunteers who have done such a wonderful job for the village and the Prairie Path," said Cindy Lukas, a member of the beautification committee.

Villa Park's section of the trail always looks neat and didn't need a special cleanup because of an on-going regular maintenance program by staff.

In Elmhurst Ruth Ward, assistant to the superintendent of parks and planning, said that boy scouts cleaned the trail between Poplar and York and that volunteers from the York High School science classes, under the direction of the Prairie Management Advisory Committee, worked on the sections from Spring Road to Salt Creek. The park district hauled away the debris. Ms. Ward added that the DuPage Water Commission has finished rebuilding the trail after installing the Lake Michigan water pipeline but still needs to seed and plant Bradford pears, crabapples and hawthorns. She concluded, "The Prairie Path looks good in Elmhurst."



What a difference a day makes! Sun shines brightly on May 5 as Hope Marsh chooses spot for Checkpoint #1, Valparaiso Moraine, Glen Ellyn.

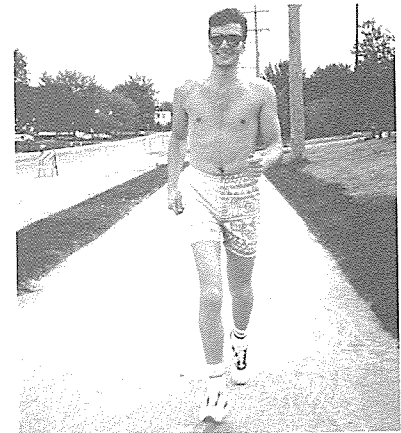
- Checkpoint #6, DuPage River West Branch Bridge, Warrenville. Dick Diebold, Freda Brown, Jim Tockstein.
- Checkpoint #7, Beaver Pond, Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve, Wayne. Rik Alex, Nancy Alex, Lee Anne Harling, Bebe Van Dyke.
- Checkpoint #8, Warren's Mill Race, Warrenville. Larry Sheaffer, Howard Sauer, Eileen Rader, Joan Glasner, Carolyn Wondrow.
- Checkpoint #9, Kline Creek Farm, Winfield. Ken Merrill.
- Checkpoint #10, Volunteer Bridge over Chicago and North Western Railroad, Wheaton. Bob Hargis, Bonnie Hargis, Dee Tevonian, Al Billingsley.
- Checkpoint #11, Maple Street Chapel, Lombard. Steve Hagar, Donna Albue.
- Checkpoint #12, DuPage Country Courthouse, Wheaton. Len Chabala, Elaine Chabala, Jane Kumb.
- Checkpoint #13, Commonwealth Edison Substation, Elmhurst. Ken Moss, June Moss, Arden Rickert, Cheri Neimark.
- Checkpoint #14, Villa Park Historical Museum/IPP Visitor Center. Nancy Becker, Irene Martin, Gail McGrew.
- Checkpoint #15, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, Batavia. Bob Kohlert.

DuPage County DOT Scores Again!

By mid May the DuPage County Division of Transportation had completed three major improvements to close gaps in the Illinois Prairie Path. They include the following: building a ten-foot-wide, continuous, separate, and clearly-defined limestone trail along the west side of Carlton from Liberty to Roosevelt in Wheaton; eliminating a small parking lot and aligning and rebuilding the trail on both sides of Westmore in Lombard; and narrowing the parking lot to permit an attractively-landscaped trail to be built along the lot's southern edge west of Villa Avenue at the Villa Park Historical Museum.

Chuck Tokarski, DPCDOT Chief of Traffic, Plans and Programs, said that Productive Paving of Addison was the contractor for the \$178,000 combined project, and the lion's share of the cost was for removing and relocating the curb and repairing Carlton Avenue.

Tokarski also reported that work is proceeding according to plan on the IPP Geneva Spur. Construction of the million-dollar 494-foot-long arch bridge over the North Western and EJ&E Railroads near West Chicago is scheduled for completion this fall; and surfacing of the trail section between the West Branch of the DuPage River and Prince Crossing Road should be done next year, benefitting from a \$100,000 state Open Space Land Acquisition and Development matching grant. DPCDOT and forest preserve district staff are also discussing plans for the connecting link through the forest preserves along the West DuPage River to join the Geneva Spur to the IPP Elgin Branch west of the trailer court.



This jogger is among first to try new two-block section of Illinois Prairie Path west of Carlton.

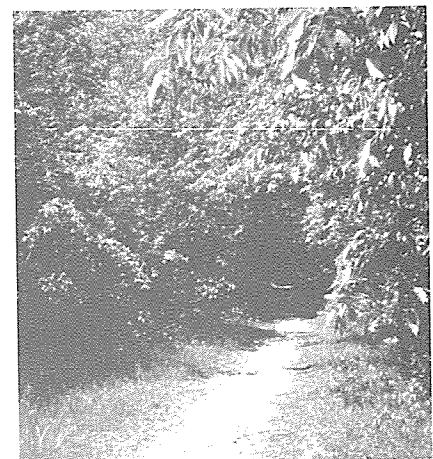
We'll keep our readers posted on these developments. In the meantime we say to DPCDOT: Keep up the good work. Go, Team, go!



Trail segment under construction west of Westmore, Lombard. Note new "Lombard Pride" trash barrel.



Cyclists ride on just-completed trail segment in front of Villa Park Historical Museum.



Awaiting connection to the Elgin Branch, IPP Geneva Spur runs through leafy tunnel in Winfield Mounds Forest Preserve toward West Chicago and the Fox River Trail in Geneva. Surface is original railroad ballast, glacial till from nearby gravel quarries.

Prairie Path T-Shirts Now Available

—Good quality white cotton, short-sleeved, knit shirts. Green trim on neck and sleeves. Prairie Path logo on left front. Sizes: Adults - small, medium, large and extra large. Each \$8.00 - includes postage.

—Prairie Path patches \$1.50 each.

—Trail map \$.50 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 \$1.50. For quantities of 10 to 20 \$1.00 each; 20 or more \$.75 each.

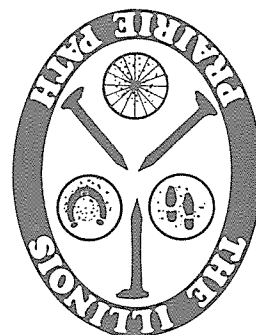
For any of the above items please send order to Illinois Prairie Path, Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All items also available weekends and weekday evenings, May through October, at the Prairie Path Visitor Center in the Villa Park Historical Museum on the Path at Villa Avenue.

—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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