

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SPRING, 1990

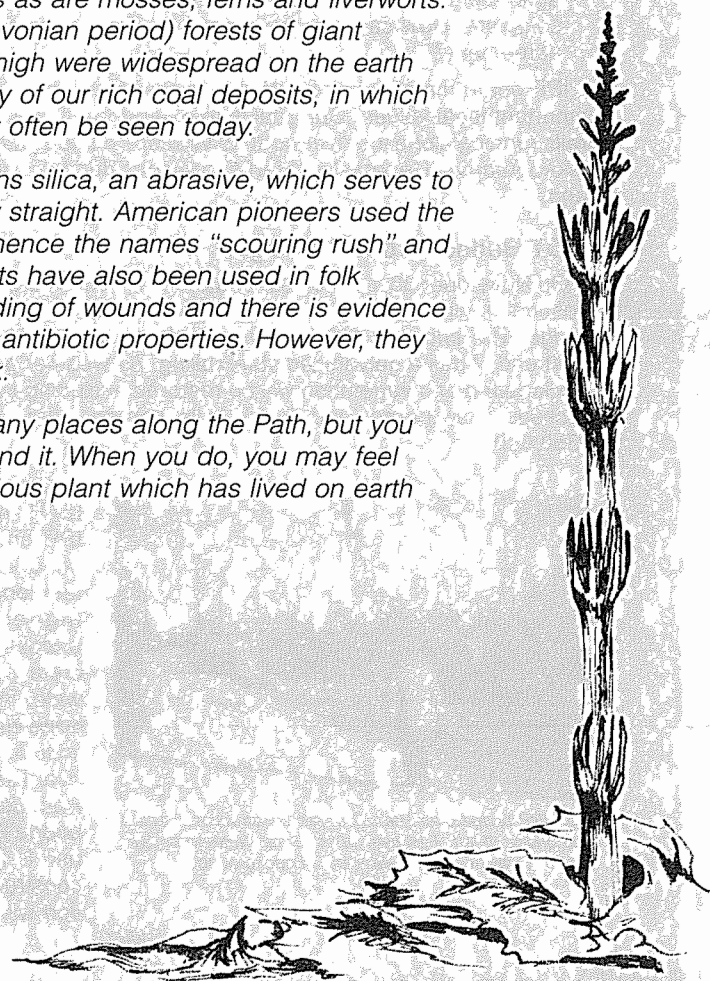
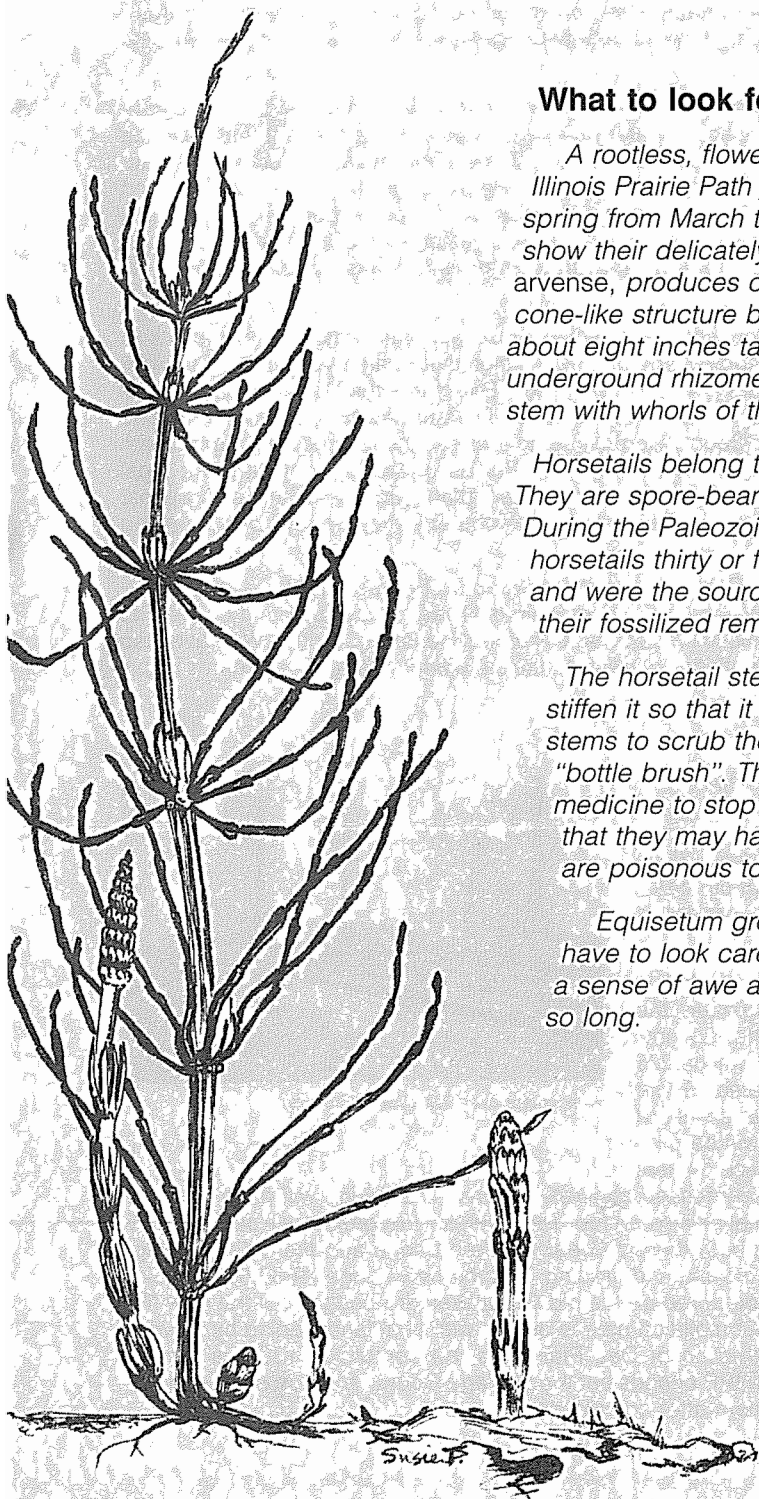
## What to look for: ancient plants

A rootless, flowerless, seedless primitive plant grows along the Illinois Prairie Path and sends up its odd-looking fertile shoots in spring from March to May. While the woodland wild flowers shyly show their delicately-colored blossoms, Field Horsetail, *Equisetum arvense*, produces only spores, not flowers or seeds, contained in a cone-like structure borne on a single, jointed, brownish-pink stem about eight inches tall. This stem soon disappears and the underground rhizomes then produce a green, bushy, jointed sterile stem with whorls of thin branches, one- to two-and-one-half-feet tall.

Horsetails belong to a family of plants some 400 million years old. They are spore-bearing plants as are mosses, ferns and liverworts. During the Paleozoic era (Devonian period) forests of giant horsetails thirty or forty feet high were widespread on the earth and were the source of many of our rich coal deposits, in which their fossilized remains may often be seen today.

The horsetail stem contains silica, an abrasive, which serves to stiffen it so that it can grow straight. American pioneers used the stems to scrub their pots; hence the names "scouring rush" and "bottle brush". These plants have also been used in folk medicine to stop the bleeding of wounds and there is evidence that they may have some antibiotic properties. However, they are poisonous to livestock.

*Equisetum* grows in many places along the Path, but you have to look carefully to find it. When you do, you may feel a sense of awe at this curious plant which has lived on earth so long.



## A Water Pipeline vs. a Trail: Legal Questions in Cook County

On January 11, 1990, the board of directors of The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation sent a letter to the chief of the legal division of the Illinois Department of Conservation with copies to Director Mark Frech and to Representative Lee Daniels (R, Elmhurst). The letter lists "certain major deficiencies in (the department's) negotiations with the DuPage Water Commission regarding the location, development and management of a trail, the Illinois Prairie Path, on the old Chicago, Aurora and Elgin right-of-way in Cook County, most of which property is owned in fee simple by the department of conservation with easements on a few parcels to provide trail continuity. As everyone can see, the water commission has now virtually completed installation of the Lake Michigan water pipeline on that state-owned right-of-way, deriving great benefit therefrom; yet it is equally apparent that the department of conservation has overlooked the failure of the water commission to provide reciprocal benefits in the following ways:



Part of Lake Michigan water pipeline is visible in huge hole east of Taft Ave., Hillside. Interrupted Illinois Prairie Path, upper right.

1. Failure to provide a continuous, surfaced, well-marked trail on the pipeline easement from the east side of Taft Avenue, Hillside, to the west side of First Avenue, Maywood. The major discontinuity begins two or three hundred feet northwest of Butterfield Road and extends to the west side of Mannheim Road. The trail should be located on the twenty-foot trail easements clearly spelled out on the deeds for all the parcels in that section. These easements are now blocked once again by several chain link fences that have been rebuilt after having been taken down during pipeline construction. Is there some question about the easements? Why does the department not enforce them?
2. Failure to establish an initial trust fund and a permanent revolving maintenance fund financed by water user fees to provide permanent maintenance for the Cook County section of the trail and right-of-way, including resurfacing as needed, landscaping, regular cleanup, pruning and mowing, and police safety patrols as required. How is it that proper funding for trail maintenance and development has not yet been provided when the land was bought with federal and state matching funds specifically for trail purposes?
3. Failure to sign a permanent agreement with the department of conservation, which would explicitly state the obligations of both parties for the proper maintenance and development of the subject property as a major linear park overlying a vital water pipeline. Before construction began, a letter of understanding was signed by Mark Frech, Director of the Illinois Department of Conservation; James Holzwart, General Manager of the DuPage Water Commission; F. Paul Mooring, President of The Illinois Prairie Path; and Len Chabala, Chairman of the IPP Cook County Committee, to address these concerns in good faith and anticipation of a final legal, binding agreement that all parties could approve. Yet as of the present date, no legal agreement has been signed by the water commission and the department of conservation, and the pipeline is almost complete. How can one governmental body encroach upon, utilize and benefit from, another's property without a binding agreement?"

IPP board members and Attorney Walter Maksym will meet with IDOC officials in Bellwood on February 22 to resolve these important legal issues. Our goal is to extend the Illinois Prairie Path east to the Des Plaines River in Maywood and connect to trails running along the river north to Wisconsin and south to the Illinois-Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. We have also asked Attorney General Neil Hartigan to consider defending the recreational interests of the state and federal governments in this land.

## IDOT Builds Two IPP Bridges

On November 30, right on schedule, the Illinois Department of Transportation closed the gap in the trail at Salt Creek with a strong new pre-stressed concrete bridge. The bridge is 190 feet long, 15 feet wide, and elevated 4.5 feet at the west end; it has a galvanized steel railing. As weather permits, the deck will be blacktopped and vegetation will be restored, including the planting of bur oaks, cockspur hawthorns, and Black Hills spruce. Total cost of this project is \$350,000.



New IPP bridge over Rte. 83 under construction (center). Old bridge at left. Trail bypass on Great Western bridge (right). Ovaltine plant, Villa Park, in background.



New bridge over Salt Creek, Elmhurst.

According to Paul Helmick, IDOT resident engineer, the IPP bridge over Rte. 83 now under construction, will be 225 feet long and elevated 15 feet higher than the present bridges; the deck will be concrete poured in place 14 feet wide, instead of pre-stressed concrete beams. The bridge will have low concrete walls with metal railings on top. Total cost for this project will be \$900,000, including removing both the old Great Western bridge and the old IPP bridge over Rte. 83, earthmoving and grading, and the new bridge (\$600,000). Prairie Path users will be detoured on the old Great Western bridge until the new IPP bridge is finished. Completion date is July 1, with final landscaping by November 1. Lorig Construction of Des Plaines is the contractor. IDOT is funding construction of both IPP bridges but the DuPage County Division of Transportation will maintain them after completion.



## Warrenville Plans a Trail

The Warrenville City Council has voted to approve drawing up a concept plan to identify funding sources and determine the best route for a proposed two-mile hiking-biking pathway along Batavia Road from the Illinois Prairie Path to Fermilab. The pathway would connect the Prairie Path trail network to the extensive trail system on the Fermilab grounds and would undoubtedly be used by Fermilab employees as an alternative route to work, as well as by local residents seeking recreational opportunities. Preliminary recommendations are that the surface should be asphalt, eight feet wide, and that the pathway should be located along the edge of the right-of-way as far from the highway as possible.

At their February meeting, the members of The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors voted to concur with these recommendations and to write letters of support to the Illinois Department of Conservation if Warrenville decides to seek an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant from the state.

## New Board Member

The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors is pleased to announce that Bob Rawls of Warrenville with his wife Maureen has agreed to serve on the board, replacing Bob Kohlert of St. Charles, who resigned late last year due to the travel pressures of his new job.

Bob and Maureen Rawls are good friends of the Prairie Path. Their house is near the trail, which they and their children, twins Greg and Laura (5) and Meagan (2), hike or bike on as often as they can (Meagan in a two-wheeled cart). Bob is employed at Allsteel, Aurora, makers of office furniture. Last year, as members of Warrenville Advocates for Values and the Environment, Bob and Maureen worked hard for the Prairie Path against the proposed and recently-cancelled OTB parlor. They also helped with the History Treasure Hunt and the annual cleanup and, with the aid of their children, did an excellent job of painting out graffiti on the underpass at Rte. 59.

The IPP board is glad to have a Warrenville member again after many years without one. Now we will have a liaison with the city who can keep us informed on events in the most rapidly-developing area of DuPage County.

## North-South Tollway (I-355) Opens

Governor James Thompson cut the ribbon officially opening the North-South Tollway (I-355) on December 21, 1989. The ceremony took place on one of the coldest days of the winter in a large heated tent at the Army Trail Road tollway plaza. A crowd of approximately 400 invitees enjoyed a delicious buffet luncheon, champagne and a musical combo, followed by several prominent speakers, including the governor, U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Samuel K. Skinner, Jack T. Knuepfer, Chairman of the DuPage County Board, Frank Riley, President of the DuPage County Building Trades Council, and officials of the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority.



Tollroad sign near bridge reads "IL Prairie Path."

Illinois Prairie Path board member Jean Mooring attended the luncheon with husband Paul as her guest. Jean had represented The Illinois Prairie Path by writing letters and attending public hearings during the Environmental Impact Statement process. Later, the Moorings drove the length of the tollroad and noted with approval the green-and-white signs officially identifying the million-dollar Illinois Prairie Path bridge over I-355 and Rte. 53, financed by tollroad user fees.



Governor Thompson, holding gigantic scissors after ribbon-cutting, shakes hands with Jack Knuepfer as flash bulbs pop.

## What To Do on Earth Day Weekend

Saturday, April 21. Rite of spring: help clean up the Illinois Prairie Path! Landfilling of yard wastes officially ends on July 1. We must also teach people not to dump their yard wastes on the Prairie Path or any other public property. Mark your calendar!

Sunday, April 22. Come to the Morton Arboretum at 7:00 a.m. for a sunrise celebration of Earth Day including a dedication of Crabapple Lake and a ceremonial tree-planting of the tollway berms. Dress warmly, wear appropriate shoes or boots, and bring a shovel. Warm-up beverages and breakfast snacks will be provided.

Then attend the Earth Day Festival at the DuPage County Center, 421 N. County Farm Road. There will be speakers, entertainers, demonstrations, and exhibits of environmentally sound goods and services. The Illinois Prairie Path will have a booth, a folding screen pictorial display and a slide show.

Above all, resolve to "Think Globally and Act Locally" and take the **Green Pledge...**

*BECAUSE...our planet today faces severe environmental crises such as global warming, rain forest devastation, rapidly-increasing population and water and air pollution...*

*BECAUSE...the planet's future depends on the commitment of every nation, as well as every individual...*

*I pledge to do my share in saving the planet by letting my concern for the environment shape how I:*

**ACT** — *I pledge to do my utmost to recycle, conserve energy, save water, use efficient transportation, and try to adopt a lifestyle as if every day were Earth Day.*

**PURCHASE** — *I pledge to do my utmost to buy and use those products least harmful to the environment. Moreover, I will, to the maximum extent possible, do business with corporations that promote global environmental responsibility.*

**VOTE** — *I pledge to vote for and support those candidates who demonstrate an abiding concern for the environment.*

**SUPPORT** — *I pledge to support the passage of local, state, and federal laws and international treaties that protect the environment.*

## Path Lighting Up in Elmhurst

Last fall, People for Elmhurst Parks Foundation (PEPS) completed installation of approximately twenty-five old-fashioned lampposts located a hundred feet apart along the trail between Spring Road and York Road. The project was delayed until installation of the Lake Michigan water pipeline between the Chicago Central tracks and Salt Creek had been completed. This is the first phase of an ambitious plan that will eventually light the entire two-mile Elmhurst section of the trail. Following the lead of Villa Park, PEPS is seeking donations of \$1,000 per light and will then install a memorial plaque on each.

Next summer, thanks to PEPS, Elmhurst residents will be able to promenade on their beautifully lighted Prairie Path and enjoy the cooler evening hours outdoors.

*Old-fashioned lights east of  
Spring Road, Elmhurst.*



## SPRING ACTIVITIES, Rain or Shine

- Saturday, April 21 **Earth Day Cleanup** in every town and along entire length of Illinois Prairie Path. For information, contact your municipal environmental protection commission; the DuPage County Boy Scout and Girl Scout offices; Tom Merriam, DuPage County Division of Transportation, (708) 665-1155; or Bob Hargis, IPP, (708) 668-7377.
- Sunday, April 22 **Earth Day Festival**, DuPage County Center, 421 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton. Speakers, entertainers, exhibits. Fun for all! Come and learn how to help your Mother — Earth, that is.
- Saturday, May 12 **Bird Walk** in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve and along the IPP. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in far northwest parking lot. Bring binoculars, bird book, lunch and drink.  
Leader: Paul Mooring, (708) 469-4289.
- Saturday, May 19 **Work Day** to install sign kiosk at Bilter Road on Batavia Spur. Meet at 9:30 a.m.  
Leader: Paul Mooring, (708) 469-4289.
- Sunday, May 20 **Spring Hike** on the Geneva Spur of the Illinois Prairie Path. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Reed-Kepler Park in West Chicago [from Rte. 59 go west on Washington Street (Geneva Road) to Fremont Street (approx. ½ mile), then north to park]. We will see the new bridge that crosses the railroad yard, walk past the West Chicago Prairie, and lunch beside the Fox River. Ten-mile round trip.  
Leader: Dick Wilson, (708) 299-7882 (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, June 16 **Work day** to install kiosk at Eola Road on Aurora Branch. Meet at 9:30 a.m.  
Leader: Paul Mooring, (708) 469-4289.

## West Chicago Prairie Events

- Seed Planting** March 17, April 1, April 14, April 28.
- Bird Trips** April 21, May 6, May 19, June 23.
- Field Trips** April 21, May 19, June 23.

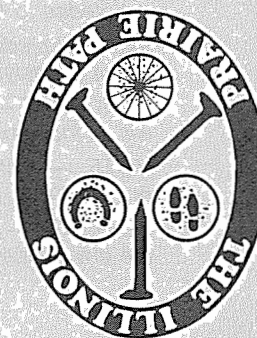
All events start from the northeast corner of the Electronic Support Systems parking lot on east side of Industrial Drive just north of Western Ave. and ½ mile south of Hawthorne. For bird and field trip reservations call (708) 790-4912. Information: Mel Hoff, (708) 393-4715, or Mollie Millen, (708) 232-4394.

— 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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