

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

WINTER, 1990

## What to look for: winter charms of the Lincoln Marsh

The Lincoln Marsh on the west side of Wheaton is one of the most beautiful natural areas in DuPage County. Located near the center of the county and bisected by the Illinois Prairie Path, the marsh is enjoyed by thousands of Path users every year. The air seems fresher there and the views of tranquil ponds and cattails soothe the soul. Side trails entice the student of nature to leave the Path and enter the marsh itself, where each season teaches its own lessons. According to Brook McDonald, who lives on the edge of the marsh and manages it on behalf of the Wheaton Park District, winter is a very interesting time to observe wildlife. After the herons, egrets, Canada geese, ducks and other summer residents leave the marsh and ponds begin to freeze, the winter birds become more visible: juncos, cardinals, chickadees, goldfinches, song sparrows, downy and hairy woodpeckers, pheasants, and, among his favorites, great horned owls which nest on oak knolls in the marsh and incubate their eggs in January! He hears them hooting in the evening as the sun sets. Marsh animals include a herd of seven deer, a red fox family, beaver, mink, and the usual small mammals of suburbia: squirrels, raccoons, opossums, skunks, muskrats, voles, shrews, and white-footed mice. Tracks of birds and animals can often be seen in mud or snow. Dried prairie plants are starkly beautiful in the winter rustling in the wind, especially the saw-toothed sunflowers which stand like sentinels ten to twelve feet tall, guarding the edges of the marsh. Plentiful seeds and berries provide food for wildlife, and red osier dogwood adds color to the scene. When conditions are right, skiers glide over the snowy trails and skaters twirl on the icy ponds.

Visit the marsh this winter. When you do, think about the debt we owe to the farsighted people who fought to preserve this land from development many years ago.

wild black  
cherry

red osier  
dogwood

Jusie  
1990

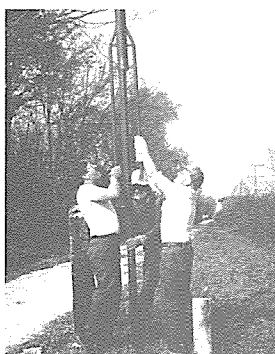
## Annual Meeting

Illinois Prairie Path President Paul Mooring convened the twenty-sixth annual meeting of the corporation at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, November 4, at the DuPage County Historical Museum in Wheaton. An estimated eighty trail enthusiasts attended, filling the hall. The members voted to receive the treasurer's report as presented by Treasurer Joan Hamill (see page 4). Membership Chair Bonnie Hargis reported 1,234 paid members, 117 VIPs, who are sent our mailings as a courtesy, and 15 Life Members. Nominating Committee Chair Ken Moss announced that five board members' terms were expiring and that four, Len Chabala, Steve Hagar, Bonnie Hargis, and Paul Mooring, had agreed to serve again. Esther Cryderman was retiring from the board and Jim Stewart of West Chicago had been nominated to take her place. There being no additional nominations from the floor, the slate was elected by acclamation.

Jim Stewart has long been a good friend of the Path as a scout leader with Boy Scout Troop 54 of Naperville and Varsity Group 6005, Geneva. Many Eagle candidates under his direction have completed projects benefitting the trail. As a resident of West Chicago, he will also be our board's liaison with the city council as work proceeds on the completion of the Geneva Spur.

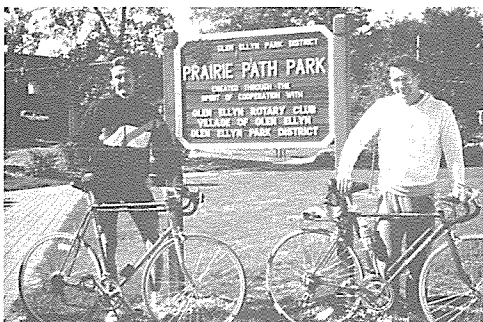
Esther Cryderman has enlivened our board meetings with her cheerful, helpful spirit and good counsel and we will miss her; but we hope to continue utilizing her artistic talents in the future. She has accepted the position of assistant curator of the Billy Graham Center Museum and Archives in Wheaton.

Path Vice President Bob Hargis, who had arranged the program, summarized various projects benefitting the Path during the year, many of which had been initiated and carried out by Boy Scouts, such as tree-planting in several areas and the installation of interpretive signs. He then introduced *Newsletter* Editor Jean Mooring who presented the annual slide program, illustrating many good and a few not-so-good events occurring on the trail this year. The good included our own Illinois Prairie Path projects: the Earth Day cleanup and IPP Earth Day booth at the DuPage County Center; installation by our volunteers of many IPP logo signs at street intersections and of display case stands at Eola Road (Batavia Junction) and at Bilter Road; landscaping by Larry Sheaffer's new firm, Prairie Partners, at the Path entrance west of County Farm Road (paid for by IPP); plus several slides showing Larry's "baby," the colorful and ever-changing prairie restoration at Volunteer Park, which was more beautiful than ever this summer, thanks to plentiful rainfall. Kudos also went to the DuPage County Division of Transportation which completed the wonderful bridge on the Geneva Spur in West Chicago this year, cured some erosion problems with short stretches of asphalt in Glen Ellyn and elsewhere, and surfaced with limestone a new 300-foot trail segment on the west side of Winfield Road south of Butterfield to eliminate a dangerous discontinuity at St. James Farm. The Illinois



Steve Hagar, Bob Hargis, and Dick Wilson drive sign post into ground at Bilter Road on Batavia Spur.

Department of Transportation completed a major Path improvement when it opened the new IPP bridge over Rte. 83 in Villa Park and finished landscaping the approaches to this bridge and to its other new bridge over nearby Salt Creek. Various civic groups participated by installing antique lamp posts along the Path in Elmhurst and a gazebo next to the Ardmore Avenue station in Villa Park. In Glen Ellyn the park district, village, and local Rotary Club collaborated



Cyclists pose beside new sign at Prairie Path Park, Glen Ellyn.

Relocation of the nearby gun club, expansion of the West Chicago Airport, and the bike route through West Chicago are all still pending.

3. The future of the Cook County section is in doubt. The DuPage Water Commission has defaulted on its promise to build a well-surfaced, continuous trail from First Avenue, Maywood, to Taft Avenue, Berkeley. The Illinois Department of Conservation will not and cannot manage the property and wants to turn it over to local authorities. No one knows who will be in charge.

The invited speaker for the day was Evan Kurrasch, director of the Springfield office of the Illinois Rails-To-Trails Conservancy. She complimented The Illinois Prairie Path volunteers for their trailblazing efforts which have become famous throughout the country. She said she likes the *Newsletter* and frequently makes copies of it to send out to other groups. Her talk covered some of the history of railroads and trails in Illinois from buffalo, Indian and pioneer paths to our present-day rail-trails. She discussed the recent Supreme Court decision



Larry Sheaffer and Wheaton firefighters control burn at Volunteer Prairie. Cyclists look on.

on a complete reconstruction of Prairie Path Park with a gazebo, brick walks, trees, shrubs, and flowers, benches and picnic tables, a new fountain, new park sign, bike racks, and our own Prairie Path display case stand, which was moved from its previous location west of Main Street.

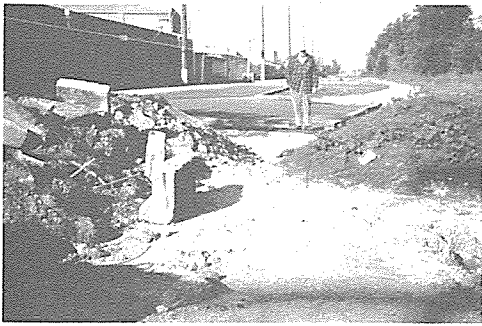
Three problem areas were noted:

1. User conflicts still exist at Pratt's Wayne Woods between bicyclists on the one hand and equestrians and hikers on the other. The DuPage County DOT's plan to widen the opening and build two parallel trails, one of asphalt and the other of limestone, would have treated all users fairly. It would also have set a positive example for trail managers across the country who tend to solve the problem of bicycles vs. horses in the same corridor by simply banning the horses. However, it was never completed or given a fair trial.

2. The Geneva Spur still needs to be surfaced east of West Chicago and connected through forest preserves to the Elgin Branch.



View of Prairie Path Park showing new gazebo and relocated IPP display case.



Disaster area in Bellwood, Cook County. IPP is defaced by bootleg parking lot encroachment (center), huge pile of broken concrete and asphalt (left), and dangerous gully next to Addison Creek (lower right).

supporting railbanking and the Illinois Bikeway Act, which designates \$5.5 million annually for trail acquisition and development. Her office is providing many types of services to Illinois trail fans: notices of pending railroad abandonments, mailing lists of local activists, information on design and construction, maps and brochures, studies of trail impacts, and coordination with government agencies. She emphasized, "Whoever is elected on Nov. 6, it's up to all of us to keep an eye on them."

The meeting concluded with cider, cakes and cookies provided by board members. Esther Cryderman made the table arrangement. Bonnie Hargis presided over the booth at the door selling IPP T-shirts, hats, "Guides," and newly-revised trail maps, hot off the presses.

### "The Birds" Revisited

Newsletter readers are responding to our request for advice on coping with dive-bombing Red-winged Blackbirds. IPP Life Member Richard B. Kemp of Chicago chides us for our somewhat misleading (though catchy) headline: "I couldn't believe my eyes when I read on page 2 'IS THE PATH FOR THE BIRDS? Of course it is! The Path is not for **only people**.' The birds and animals were here first and we are only caretakers. **Daring** to interfere with a bird in its **own territory** is WICKED. The solution is to get out of there fast without harming a bird who BELONGS there and who will **forget** the interloper as soon as he gets his tail out of sight."

S. Hoffman of Lombard has another suggestion: "My personal experience was similar to those reported, — and occurred along the Green Bay Trail near nests, usually in late spring, early summer. The only deterrent seemed to be wearing some kind of headgear — a bike helmet, a cap, even sweat bands seemed to help! I once got so 'spooked' that I lost control of my bicycle and fell off! So don't take the birds lightly, but just wear something on your head."

*Editor's Note:* Thanks, friends, for your comments. We always welcome them and will try to print as many as we can.

### A Partnership and a Plan for Lincoln Marsh

The Wheaton Park District, in partnership with a newly-formed support group, has exciting plans for the Lincoln Marsh. It all started back in 1979 with an ambitious program of floodplain land acquisition along Winfield Creek; the final purchases bringing the total to 125 acres will be completed soon. Other agencies assisting in this open space preservation effort are the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, the DuPage County Division of Transportation, the Illinois Department of Conservation, and the U.S. Department of the Interior. The goals are fourfold: flood control along Winfield Creek, which flows through the marsh, using the land to provide stormwater retention/detention areas; water quality improvement (cattails and other wetland plants trap and soak up pollutants); restoration of native plant and animal communities and development of an environmental education program for the public; and the provision of outdoor recreation facilities, such as the Teams Course and trails for hiking and bicycling.

Supervising the plan is Brook McDonald, who joined the staff at the Wheaton Park District in 1987 as Manager of Interpretive Services. He oversees the Lincoln Marsh's development as well as the park district's environmental planning, environmental management and all outdoor education/recreation programming. In just three years volunteers and staff under his direction have cleaned up the junk cars and other debris defiling the marsh, have conducted several burns to eliminate weeds and encourage the growth of native prairie plants, have cleared hiking trails, and with the aid of off-duty Sheriff's police paid by the park district have eliminated the motorcyclists and teen-age party-goers.

Future projects at the marsh include an observation deck built out from the Illinois Prairie Path and level with it near the southerly bench; a short boardwalk; an environmental center on one of the oak knolls to house the Interpretive Services program with space for research, exhibits, and educational classes; and a multiple-purpose north-south trail along the edge of the marsh connecting the Prairie Path to the County complex on the south; and to Northside Park in Wheaton, to Community Park in Carol Stream, and then to the Great Western Trail on the north.

Inspired by Earth Day, 1990, local citizens have formed a group to support the Wheaton Park District in the development and implementation of the comprehensive Lincoln Marsh master plan. The name of the group is "Partners for the Lincoln Marsh." Members are people of many talents and include natural resource planners, engineers, scientists, teachers, scout leaders, four present or former IPP board members, representatives of the Wheaton Environmental Improvement Commission and other friends and users of the Lincoln Marsh. Miles Lowry of Wheaton is the chairman and will welcome volunteers to help with any of the three committees (water resources/habitat improvement, nature center/education, and trails) or with fund-raising. Call him at 653-6495. This is a chance for Earth Day activists to protect a beautiful but fragile ecosystem and to have fun doing it.



Winter at Lincoln Marsh. Hikers descend steps to marsh from Illinois Prairie Path.



Late fall at the marsh. Brook McDonald stands in prairie with oak knoll behind him and sketch board in hand.



Summer hikers learn about marsh ecology at water's edge.

## Wheaton Park District Announces Third Annual Winter Marsh Hike

"For this hike, which is offered by the Wheaton Park District in cooperation with The Illinois Prairie Path, we'll meet at the Prairie Path's Volunteer Park (corner of Liberty St. and Carlton Ave.) and walk to the Lincoln Marsh. Once at the marsh, we'll stroll through its skeletal landscapes searching for old savannas and the 'forgotten prairie.' Before our return, we'll be treated to hot stew, biscuits and a warm beverage heated over a fire. The total distance is about three miles. (Children 8-12 must be accompanied by a paying adult.) For ages 8 and over. Saturday, January 26, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Limit 25. \$3/resident; \$5/non-resident."

Come and learn more about the plans for the Lincoln Marsh!

## Treasurer's Report, November 1, 1989-October 31, 1990 (Unaudited)

Balance on hand, November 1, 1989

State Bank of St. Charles  
SteinRoe Cash Reserves

\$ 2,192.30  
41,425.96

Total \$43,618.26

Income

Donations  
Dues  
Sales (Maps, T-shirts, patches, "Guides")  
Com-Ed Contractor (payment for damages)  
Interest  
Miscellaneous

222.27  
19,135.00  
2,026.20  
550.00  
3,869.42  
73.69

Total \$25,876.58

Expenses

Capital Improvements  
Maintenance  
Newsletter  
Membership mailings  
Printing  
Office rent and telephone  
Office supplies  
Merchandise (T-shirts, etc.)  
Legal  
Villa Park Historical Society (a)  
Miscellaneous

4,433.00  
1,841.69  
3,985.00  
541.67  
1,354.00  
1,055.11  
92.05  
0.00  
0.00  
500.00  
748.43

Total \$14,550.95

Balance on hand, October 31, 1990

State Bank of St. Charles  
SteinRoe Cash Reserves

4,836.61  
50,107.28

Total \$54,943.89

(a) IPP visitor center.

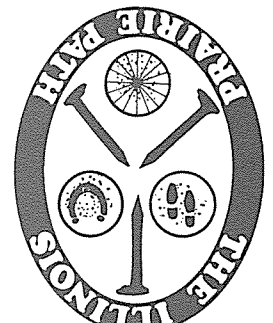
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—Jean C. Mooring, Editor—

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

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