

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1991

Blue
Vervain



Prairie
Blazing
Star



Native
Loosestrife



Purple
Loosestrife



WHAT TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR: BAD AND BEAUTIFUL PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is an extremely aggressive European weed introduced into the northeastern United States in the nineteenth century. It now dominates most marshes in New England and New York State and is becoming established in wetlands, ditches and drier disturbed areas in northern and central Illinois. Because this species annually produces up to 300,000 seeds per plant, it quickly replaces native vegetation in marshes, bogs, fens and moist prairies, which is of great value to wildlife and human beings, with a weedy monoculture of little value to anyone. It can even choke waterways.

This ruthless invader bears very showy masses of pinkish-purple flowers with 5 to 7 petals, in long spikes at the ends of tall branches which grow 3 to 10 feet high (5 feet average). The leaves are opposite or there are 3 in a whorl, without teeth. The stems have 4 angles and are semi-woody at the base. The plant flowers in early July to early September.

Purple Loosestrife has been found along the Illinois Prairie Path (one plant in Glen Ellyn and one compact infestation in the marsh at Pratt's Wayne Woods). If you find a plant you think may be Purple Loosestrife, please call The Illinois Prairie Path office, (708) 665-5310, and leave a message describing the exact location. Do not pull it up yourself because this plant can be confused with some look-alike and very desirable native plants, such as Blazing Star, Native Loosestrife, and Blue Vervain. Native Loosestrife, for example, grows in similar sites but averages only 2 feet tall, has its flowers more widely spaced and usually has its upper leaves alternate instead of opposite. Be vigilant but CAREFUL in dealing with the alien pest. (This report was excerpted with modifications from an Illinois Department of Conservation advisory fact sheet.)

COMED TO CHOOSE ALTERNATE ROUTE FOR HIGH TENSION LINES

As reported in the Spring *Newsletter*, Commonwealth Edison Company is planning to install 138,000-Volt transmission lines to bring needed power to rapidly-growing areas of Wheaton. At the time we went to press in mid-February, we stated that a seven-mile section of the Illinois Prairie Path Aurora Branch was the location chosen by the company; however, we did not know then that the new steel poles would be installed on average only six feet from the edge of the trail or that a great many trees would have to be cut. These facts became evident in March with the appearance of stakes marking the locations of the new poles and yellow or red numbers painted on hundreds of trees. A strong coalition of citizen groups and Prairie Path users formed immediately to save the Path. Calling themselves the "Friends of the Illinois Prairie Path", they held well-attended rallies with wide media coverage and generated hundreds of letters and phone calls to Commonwealth Edison and to public officials at all levels of state and local government. Leaders include John Bengel, a twenty-year Path user who represents Wiesbrook Road homeowners; Art Grant, Arrowhead Homeowners Association, Bob Siebert, Warrenville homeowners; Bob and Maureen Rawls on behalf of The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors, and DuPage County Board member Robert Heap of Naperville. Path Vice President Bob Hargis, Wheaton, board member Jean Mooring and President Paul Mooring, Glen Ellyn, and board member Ken Moss, Elmhurst, also provided support and advice.

The Illinois Prairie Path board members explained to the Friends of the Illinois Prairie Path that Commonwealth Edison Company is, and has been for many years, also a good

Continued on Page 2

DUPAGE COUNTY BOARD RECOGNIZES ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NAME

April 23, 1991 represents a major milestone in the history of the Illinois Prairie Path. On that day the DuPage County Board passed unanimously, and new chairman Aldo Botti signed, a resolution officially recognizing the name of the Illinois Prairie Path. The board also approved a resolution recognizing the outstanding contribution to the County of DuPage of the volunteers led by The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation. The DuPage County Board Transportation Committee presented the two resolutions for board approval. Newly-appointed committee chair-

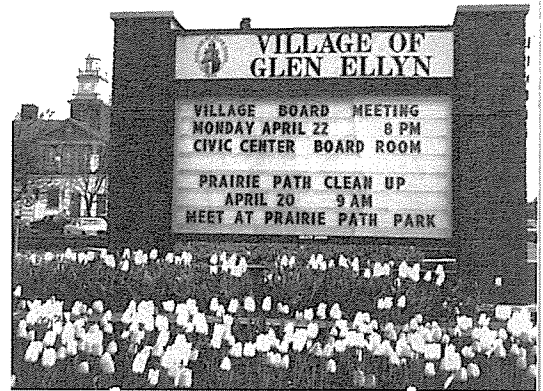
man Carl Roth of Villa Park, a longtime friend of the Prairie Path, said that he had given the matter priority on assuming office and could not see why approval had taken so long. (See insert for copies of the two historic resolutions; the typed name of Chairman Botti has been added next to his signature for legibility.)

Path President Paul Mooring and *Newsletter* Editor Jean Mooring were on hand for the brief ceremony. Jean, who had spearheaded the struggle for recognition since 1986, read the following statement:

"I wish that the founder of the Illinois Prairie Path, May Theilgaard Watts, and the co-founder, Helen Turner (both longtime residents of Naperville, where they were next-door neighbors), could have lived to see this day. Their little trail built on a shoestring budget has at last been recognized by the DuPage County Board as a permanent part of the DuPage County landscape. When May Watts wrote her now-famous letter to the editor of the Chicago Tribune in 1963, she

thought she was only suggesting a rather novel use for an abandoned railroad. Actually her idea was to start the rails-to-trails movement now sweeping the country, and her words were to inspire thousands of volunteers as they built a natural treasure enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year.

The founders of the trail named it the Illinois Prairie Path back in 1964, and that has been its popular name ever since. Today the DuPage County Board has made that name official and has thus recognized the valuable work of our volunteers. On behalf of all of them and our Prairie Path users and friends, I thank the members of the board. I think May



Municipal support for the cleanup was outstanding

COM ED ALTERNATE ROUTE *Continued*

friend of the Prairie Path. We are able to use the trail today because Com Ed granted our organization the legal right to use its easement on the old Chicago, Aurora and Elgin right-of-way back in 1966. Com Ed's approval was just as important to the Prairie Path founders as that of DuPage County, owner of the right-of-way. A mutually beneficial association has thus been built over the years: good public relations for the utility and a beautiful trail for Path users. This productive alliance between a major national trail and a prominent utility is now setting an

example for "greenway" advocates across the nation.

In the spirit of cooperation that has characterized the relationship of The Illinois Prairie Path corporation with Commonwealth Edison and DuPage County, county board Chairman Aldo Botti announced on May 15 that an alternative route would be found that would be satisfactory to all parties and would not jeopardize the Prairie Path. One possible route could incorporate a section of the I-88 (East-West Tollway) right-of-way and

include a relocation of the proposed Wiesbrook Road substation improvement onto Herrick Lake 'Forest Preserve land at the south end of Orchard Road as well as an easement along the edge of the forest preserve. This relocation would require the consent of the DuPage County Forest Preserve commissioners, who are also members of the county board. Since the overhead route along Com Ed's Illinois Prairie Path easement is most cost-effective for the utility,

DuPage County may help with funding whatever alternative route is chosen.



County board member Robert Heap (center left) inspects the Prairie Path in March with Paul Mooring (left) and Bob Rawls, Bob Siebert and other Warrenville residents.



Tree-planting rally held by friends of the Illinois Prairie Path at Center Street, Warrenville, April 20. County board Chairman Aldo Botti watches (right of center).

We are testing a possible new format with this newsletter. Is it more readable? Does it look more up-to-date? Please comment.

RESOLUTION

DT-022-91

Naming the Recreational Trail on the former Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad as the Illinois Prairie Path

WHEREAS, in the mid-1960s the County of DuPage acquired certain unused right-of-way from the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railway which is referred to as the DuPage Parkway in legal documents; and

WHEREAS, the County of DuPage has entered into leases and acquired easements along and adjacent to the former C, A & E R.R. in other areas; and

WHEREAS, the County of DuPage, a not-for-profit corporation known as The Illinois Prairie Path, and certain municipalities have cooperated to construct a recreational trail on most sections of the former C, A & E R.R. right-of-way in DuPage County; and

WHEREAS, most users and organizations refer to various sections of the recreational trail by certain names; and

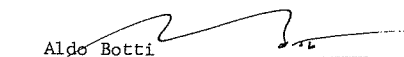
WHEREAS, it is desirable by the County to use the commonly accepted names for the recreational trails on signage and maps to minimize confusion to trail users.

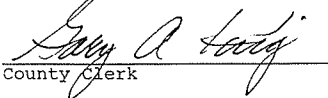
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the County of DuPage will make every effort to sign and refer to the recreational trail on various sections of the former C, A & E R.R. by the following names.

Name	From	To
Illinois Prairie Path Main Stem DuPage County Section	East DuPage County Line in Sec. 12, T39N, R11E.	Intersection of Liberty Street & Carlton Avenue in Sec. 17, T39N, R10E
Illinois Prairie Path Aurora Branch DuPage County Section	Intersection of Liberty Street & Carlton Avenue in Sec. 17, T39N, R10E.	West DuPage County Line in Sec. 8, T38N, R9E.
Illinois Prairie Path Elgin Branch DuPage County Section	Intersection of Liberty Street & Carlton Avenue in Sec. 17, T39N, R10E.	West DuPage County Line in Sec. 7, T40N, R9E.
Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur DuPage County Section	Former C,A&E RR Crossing over the C&NWRR and the E,J&ERR in Sec. 4, T39N, R9E.	West DuPage County Line in Sec. 6, T39N, R9E.
Illinois Prairie Path Batavia Spur DuPage County Section	Intersection of the Ill. Prairie Path Aurora Branch, DuPage County and the East-West Tollway in Sec. 4, T38N, R9E.	West DuPage County Line in Sec. 6, T38N, R9E.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Clerk transmit certified copies of this Resolution to the DuPage County Board, the DuPage County Division of Transportation, the DuPage County Department of Maps and Plats, State's Attorney's Office, and The Illinois Prairie Path, P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189.

Enacted and approved this 23rd day of April, 1991, at Wheaton, Illinois.


 Aldo Botti
 Chairman, DuPage County Board


 County Clerk

ATTEST:

Ayes: 19
Absent: 6

RESOLUTION
DT-023-91

Recognition of the Outstanding Contribution of The Illinois Prairie Path to the County of DuPage

WHEREAS, in the mid-1960s the County of DuPage acquired certain unused right-of-way of the Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railway in DuPage County, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, on May 10, 1966, the County entered into the first of a series of lease agreements with the not-for-profit corporation known as The Illinois Prairie Path, for the establishment of a nature trail on a portion of the right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, members and friends of The Illinois Prairie Path, inspired by the rails-to-trails idea of Path founder May Theilgaard Watts and co-founder Helen Turner, have worked tirelessly as volunteers to create and build the long and continuous trail they called the Illinois Prairie Path, and to enhance the right-of-way for the enjoyment and pleasure of all by donating more than \$200,000 and thousands of hours of time and labor over a period of more than twenty years; and

WHEREAS, some of their major accomplishments are as follows:

- a) They built the trail itself by erecting three steel bridges over rivers, city streets and railroad tracks, by surfacing with limestone more than ten miles of trail mainly in the unincorporated areas, by constructing steps and ramps on steep railroad embankments, by installing hundreds of signs and by lobbying municipalities to improve sections within their corporate limits;
- b) They established the continuity of the trail and connected the separate DuPage County-owned parcels by obtaining licenses, leases and permits from numerous private, public or corporate owners including three railroads and one utility and then built the trail on these connecting parcels as well;
- c) They enhanced the right-of-way by preserving prairie remnants, by planting trees, shrubs and flowers, and by cleaning up dumps and debris which disfigured every branch of the right-of-way from one end of the County to the other; and
- d) They brought honor to the people of DuPage County by securing for the Path from the United States Department of the Interior the designation "National Recreation Trail": the first in Illinois; and as a crowning achievement they proved to the nation that determined volunteers could overcome all obstacles and convert an abandoned railroad right-of-way into a successful, long urban trail; and

WHEREAS, the lease agreements between The Illinois Prairie Path and the County of DuPage have been discontinued by mutual consent and replaced by a consulting agreement per Resolution DT-0047-86; and

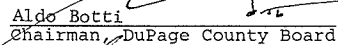
WHEREAS, the County of DuPage, recognizing the benefit of the Path to the public, and in furtherance of the goals and policies set forth in Ill. Rev. Stat. ch. 121, par. 601, *et seq.*, has since dedicated funds, equipment and manhours to resurface major portions of the Path and furthermore, major additions to the Path are proposed to close existing gaps in the Path and to extend it to all sections of the former C.A.&E. Railway right-of-way; and moreover, the County is seeking to expand the County Trail System to include new trails which will eventually be connected, to other trail systems within and beyond the borders of DuPage County; and

WHEREAS, the County of DuPage wishes to recognize the invaluable work and impetus provided by The Illinois Prairie Path.

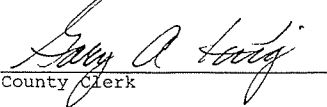
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the DuPage County Board express its sincere thanks and appreciation to The Illinois Prairie Path for their outstanding volunteer efforts that have been to the enormous benefit of the people of DuPage County as well as the State of Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Clerk transmit certified copies of this Resolution to the DuPage County Board, the DuPage County Division of Transportation, the DuPage County Department of Maps and Plats, State's Attorney's Office, and The Illinois Prairie Path, P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189.

Enacted and approved this 23rd day of April, 1991, at Wheaton, Illinois.


Aldo Botti
Chairman, DuPage County Board

ATTEST:


County Clerk