

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

What To See and Hear

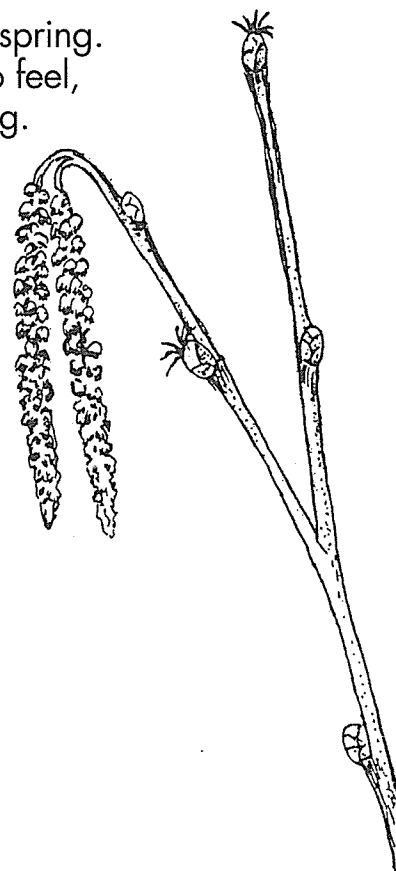
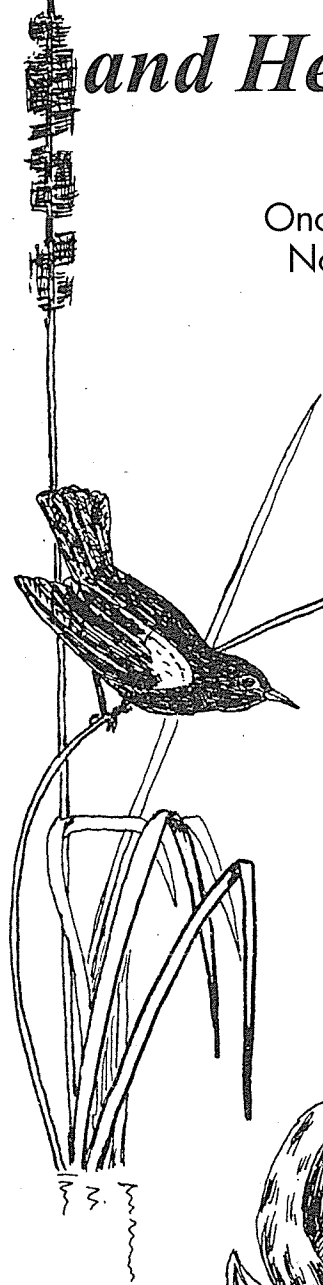
Once again it is time to listen for the chorus of spring. Now, though there is much to see, to smell, to feel, it is the new sounds that seem most exciting.

It is your ear that hears the honk of the *wild geese*, that makes you search the sky for that wavering wedge. It is the trill of the *spring peeper* you hear that puts the final period at the end of another winter; you seldom see this tiny, elusive frog that calls so persistently. It is the kong-ka-reee that announces the return of the *red-winged blackbird*. These are creatures of the wet places.

We can see the flowers of earliest spring in wet places, too. Look for them, for *skunk cabbage* and *hazel* along the water's edge.

Fortunately, the Prairie Path passes many ponds, swamps and streams. There is a superb field of skunk cabbage on the Path just west of Prince Crossing Road. Look for hazel near Eola Road on the Batavia Spur, and don't fail to see its tiny crimson flowers.

Above all, listen. . . always listen for the songs of spring.



FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT SHOULD ACQUIRE KUHN PROPERTY

On February 4, representatives of conservation and environmental groups, together with many local residents, spoke to the DuPage County Forest Preserve Commission urging purchase of 47.2 acres of land east of Prince Crossing Road, south of North Avenue, and adjacent to the West Branch of the DuPage River. The land is owned by Harry W. Kuhn, Inc., and can be easily identified because it was recently bulldozed flat to facilitate the parking of company trucks. Several sign-carrying Kuhn employees opposed the purchase, saying that they believed their jobs were at stake and that the commission should instead accept a conservation easement on slightly less than half the property while the Kuhn interests would be able to develop the remainder in accordance with its industrial zoning.

Jean Mooring spoke on behalf of the Illinois Prairie Path board of directors and membership and advised purchase of the entire parcel. This recommendation is in accordance with the stated mission of our organization: land preservation, and conservation of natural resources adjoining the trail with the goal of increasing trail opportunities and connections to other trails in the region.



View from old railroad bridge over West Branch of the DuPage River shows the Great Western Trail running through the Kuhn property toward Prince Crossing Road.

The Kuhn property lies just a few hundred feet north of the Illinois Prairie Path and has the new Great Western Trail running across it. When the planned north-south trail along the West DuPage River is built in the near future, it will also cross the Kuhn property and thus connect the two east-west trails.

Many speakers pointed out the importance of maintaining this land as open space to filter polluted stormwater runoff and protect the water quality of the West Branch. The land, when revegetated, would also screen the noise and visual pollution of the industrial site from nearby homeowners and would provide wildlife habitat on the west side of the river. The residents reiterated that they had already voted in a referendum to tax

themselves as a Special Service District to help pay for the modest cost of the acquisition: less than \$400,000 for the 47 acres. Some also said that this would be a suitable parcel for purchase with part of the proceeds of the \$5 million land acquisition referendum approved by DuPage County voters last fall. The final decision will be made by the forest preserve commissioners. ■

TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors is now up to its full strength of fifteen members with the election of Susan Wisniewski of Bellwood and Christopher Joyce of Wheaton. They replace Bonnie Hargis, who moved downstate from Wheaton last fall, and Rik Alex of Wayne, who resigned in January because of other commitments.

Susan will serve on the IPP Cook County Committee and will be our official liaison with the village government and citizens of Bellwood as we work with the municipalities and the Illinois Department of Conservation to improve the Prairie Path in Cook County. Susan studied art at Triton College and is a self-employed professional artist who air-brushes her own original

designs on T-shirts and other clothing. She enjoys riding her bike and running on the Path and will be the Path's "eyes and ears" in Bellwood.

Chris Joyce has a degree in history from the University of Illinois, Champaign, and a Doctor of Law degree from John Marshall Law School in Chicago. He is employed as a trust department manager at First National Bank of LaGrange. The father of two young Prairie Path fans, he is a regular Path hiker, jogger and biker. He has worked on the IPP spring cleanup in the past and this year will be in charge of the sections from Roosevelt Road to Winfield Road on the Aurora Branch and from Jewell Road to Smith Road on the Elgin Branch. He will be the Path's Wheaton representative. ■



The hike begins at Volunteer Park where, amid whirling snowflakes, Paul Mooring (left) tells hikers the story of the Rails to Trails sculpture.

TALES AND TRAILS: A HAPPY WALK AT LINCOLN MARSH

Fifteen hikers turned out for the Wheaton Park District's fourth annual winter walk at Lincoln Marsh on January 25. The snow was powdery, the air crisp, and the marsh sound asleep under its white comforter. As the snowflakes drifted down, John Pence, park district naturalist, provided expert commentary on the natural history of the marsh and the district's plans for an educational center while IPP president and co-leader Paul Mooring told the appreciative group tales about the accomplishments of the Prairie Path volunteers over the years. Some longtime volunteers attended, including Don Westlake of Wheaton and Joe and Jozan Carlton of Glen Ellyn. The high spot of the hike was a hot lunch of stew, rolls and cocoa cooked over a roaring campfire at the site of the Teams Course near the Harrison Street entrance. ■



The Lincoln Marsh slumbers peacefully under the snow. View from new boardwalk.



A family of cross country skiers passes our hikers on the Prairie Path.



John Pence (right) describes Wheaton's "EcoBelt" as a hiker studies the interpretive sign.

SB 1283: COMPROMISE ON TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

A REPORT FROM THE ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL, SPRINGFIELD

"Late in the spring session, Rep. Wennlund amended a neutral bill to severely limit the power of forest preserve districts to acquire land for trails and greenways. The action was backed by the STOP anti-trail group from Kane County.

"With an amendatory veto, Gov. Edgar struck the language most troubling to trail advocates but retained what STOP wanted—a ban on forest preserve district power to condemn land for trails.

"SB 1283 died after it was ruled 'out of compliance' — i.e. the Governor's amendatory veto went too far for Speaker Mike Madigan. Later the amended provisions were attached to HB 922 and passed."

Editor's Note: These amended provisions do not apply to counties with a population over 500,000 —such as DuPage.

DOCUMENTING CHANGE

When Helen Turner wrote and illustrated the front page nature notes for Spring, 1970, she knew that development would ultimately change the face of DuPage County. She probably did not foresee the rapid rate of change, however. In just 22 years, highways, industrial parks, shopping centers and housing developments have gobbled up much of the rural countryside. In the same time span more subtle ecological changes have occurred, sobering indicators of the impact of "progress" on natural systems. According to Wayne Lampa, naturalist with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, the trill of the *spring peeper* is heard no more along the Illinois Prairie Path; this little frog has become virtually extinct in the county, probably because of pollution resulting from human activity. The adaptable *red-winged blackbird*, on the other hand, is no longer confined to wet places but can be found nesting in old upland fields and even in an

occasional suburban garage. Similarly, the *Canada goose*, which was once quite rare in the county and was seen in great numbers only during spring and fall migrations, is now a yearlong resident. Grazing on golf courses and parks and frequenting the detention ponds required by modern zoning codes, Helen's wild geese have adapted too well to suburban living and have even become a nuisance in some locations.

Some things have not changed, fortunately. Wayne Lampa reports that *hazel* still grows along the Prairie Path in the Big Woods area west of Eola Road near the former Batavia Junction. (It can also be found on the Geneva Spur embankment at the West Chicago Prairie.) And the wonderful *skunk cabbage* still inhabits the small wetland south of the Path west of Prince Crossing Road, where it continues to delight Path users as one of the earliest harbingers of spring. ■

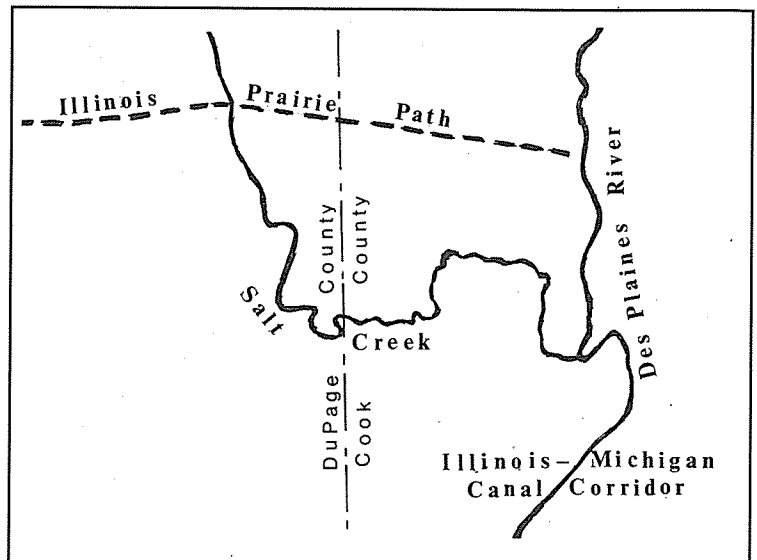
SALT CREEK GREENWAY: A DREAM THAT MUST COME TRUE

On January 14, 1992, the DuPage County Board voted to purchase the Elmhurst-Chicago Stone quarry for \$39.9 million. This expensive, 87-acre "hole in the ground" was purchased for stormwater storage during major flood events such as the 500-year flood of 1987. Such events are extremely rare; and, therefore, most of the time the quarry will be a white elephant requiring care and maintenance but generating few benefits for the taxpayers of DuPage County. Some engineers question whether it will serve even the limited purpose for which it was purchased: flood control.

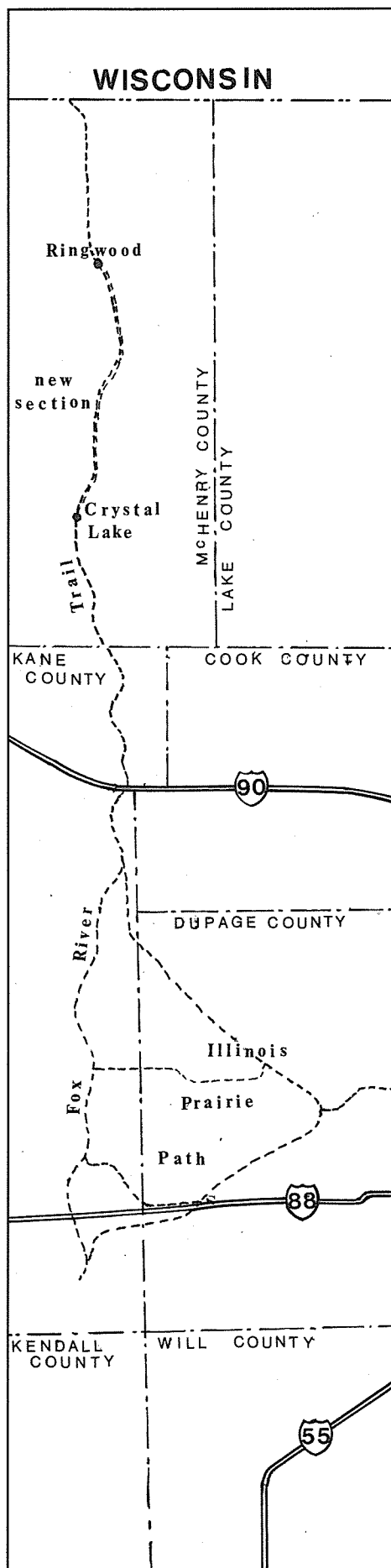
An alternative proposal received short shrift from the majority of the board members, who were following instructions from county Republican Chairman, Senator "Pate" Philip. The non-structural Salt Creek Greenway plan, presented by the engineering firm of Sheaffer and Roland, would have prevented stormwater damage by removing floodprone structures from the floodplain and allowing for floodplain storage of stormwater as nature intended. Besides being less expensive, this plan would have provided much-needed open space along the creek, which could have been used and enjoyed by the citizens and the wildlife of DuPage County all year round. Many local residents spoke in favor of the greenway approach, as did representatives of The Illinois Prairie Path, the Salt Creek Greenway Association, the Sierra Club, the DuPage Environmental Awareness Center, and the Conservation Foundation of DuPage County.

Although the greenway proposal lost this time, it still remains the best plan to prevent flood damage as well as to provide a natural amenity that will someday be treasured by the people of not only DuPage County, but also Cook County. It will link natural and historic sites

such as the Historic Village of Riverside, the Brookfield Zoo, the Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve, the Graue Mill and Fullersburg Nature Center, the Butler National Golf Club and Oak Brook Polo Club, and the St. Francis Retreat House which was formerly the Stuyvesant Peabody Mansion at Mayslake (voters will have the chance to approve a \$15 million forest preserve bond referendum to purchase the extraordinary Mayslake property at the primary election on March 17.) Almost the entire southern reach of Salt Creek in Cook County is already bordered by forest preserves. Perhaps most important to Prairie Path users is the fact that the Salt Creek Greenway can provide the long-sought trail linkage between the Illinois Prairie Path and the Illinois-Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. (See map.) We'll keep working on it. ■



ON TO WISCONSIN!



Our good friends at Openlands Project in Chicago, which helped launch the Illinois Prairie Path almost thirty years ago, are at it again. We reprint their recent news release: "CORRIDOR SECURED FOR GREENWAY SYSTEM. CorLands, the real estate affiliate of Openlands Project, recently played a major role in adding 13 miles of bike trails to the expanding network of greenways in northeastern Illinois. By entering into a contract to purchase the right-of-way from the Chicago & North Western Railroad in the spring of 1991, CorLands ensured that when the McHenry County Conservation District received funding from the Illinois Department of Conservation, the right-of-way was available and the price established. The three-party transaction, completed at the end of 1991, transferred ownership of the right-of-way to the Conservation District. The District plans to begin the construction of a bike trail later this year.

"The stretch of land runs from Crystal Lake to Ringwood, Illinois, just north of McHenry, and is a crucial link in the greenways system of northeastern Illinois. Once this section of trail has been built, hikers and cycling enthusiasts will be able to traverse a 55-mile stretch of unbroken trails from Aurora in southern Kane County to the Wisconsin border.

"This transaction marks the first time in Illinois history that an operating railroad has sold off a portion of its right-of-way, highlighting the leadership role played by Openlands Project in the continuing effort to preserve our open spaces."

Editor's Note: Completion of this trail segment will at last connect the 55-mile Illinois Prairie Path trail system via the Fox River Trail to our sister state of Wisconsin and soon thereafter, we hope, to Wisconsin's wonderful trail network! (See map.) ■

PRAIRIE PATH CAPS NOW AVAILABLE

- Green-and-white ventilated caps with logo on front and adjustable band.
Each \$6.00 plus \$.75 for postage and handling.
- Good quality white cotton, short sleeved knit T-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 and handling.
- Prairie Path patches \$1.50 each plus \$.50 postage and handling.
- Trail Map \$.50 each plus \$.50 postage and handling.
- *The Illinois Prairie Path - A Guide*
by Helen Turner.
Gives history, geology on Path. Many illustrations of wildflowers, trees, animal tracks seen on the Path.
Each \$3.75. Includes postage and handling.

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

SPRING ACTIVITIES — RAIN OR SHINE

■ Saturday, April 25

Annual Earth Day Cleanup along entire length of Path. For information call: Maywood - Len Chabala, 343-4596; Bellwood - Susan Wisniewski, 493-1316; Hillside - Nancy Becker, 544-7517; Berkeley/Elmhurst/Villa Park/ Lombard - Ken Moss, 833-9159, or Paul Aeschleman, 782-0336; Glen Ellyn - Jean Mooring, 469-4289; Wheaton, Volunteer Park east to Glen Ellyn, south to Roosevelt and north to Jewell - Ray Holdsworth, Wheaton Environmental Commission, 690-9123; Aurora Branch from Roosevelt to Winfield Road and Elgin Branch from Jewell to Smith Road - Chris Joyce, 653-3280; Winfield Road to Kane County - Bob Rawls, 393-6720; Smith Road to Kane County - Joan Hamill, 584-3567; West Chicago to Geneva on Geneva Spur and I-88 to Batavia on Batavia Spur - Jim Stewart 231-8870.

■ Saturday, May 16

Spring Bird Walk in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve. Go west from Rt. 59 on Army Trail Road to Powis Road in Wayne (about 2 miles). Then north to forest preserve entrance. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in far northwest parking lot. Bring binoculars, lunch and drink if desired. Leaders: Paul Mooring, 469-4289, and Dick Wilson, 299-7882 (Call 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

■ Sunday, May 31

Twelve-Mile Hike on the Fox River Trail. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Voyageurs Landing Forest Preserve., located on the west side of the Fox River and the north side of the Northwest Tollroad (I-90). Exit I-90 at Rt. 31 and go one block south to West River Road (Ramada Inn on the corner). Go east on West River Road and after it swings under the tollroad you will see the forest preserve entrance. Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, 299-7882. (Call 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

■ Saturday, June 20

Work Day. Call Ken Moss, 833-9159.

■ May 1 to May 31

Illinois Trail Appreciation Month. Enjoy!

West Chicago Prairie Events

■ Saturday, March 14

Restoration Work Day. Raking in seed and/or clearing invading brush. Noon to 3:00 p.m.

■ Saturday, March 28

Restoration Work Day. 9 a.m. to noon.

■ Saturday, April 11

Restoration Work Day. 9 a.m. to noon.

■ Saturday, April 18

Birding Trip. Good mix of winter residents and early arrivals. 7:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.

■ Saturday, April 25

Restoration Work Day. 9:00 a.m. to noon.

■ Saturday, May 2 and 23

Birding and/or Field Trips. Call Mel Hoff.

All events start from the new West Chicago Prairie Forest Preserve parking lot located on the east side of Industrial Drive 3/4 mile south of Hawthorne Lane.

Please be on time or you may have difficulty finding us.

Information: Mel Hoff, 393-4715.

— 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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