

SPRING 1993

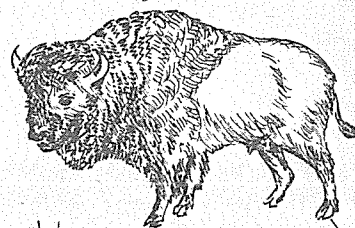
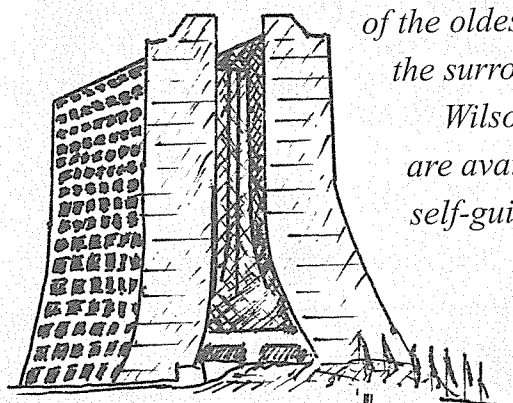
# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

## *What to look for and enjoy: the Fermilab Trail.*

A major goal of The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors is to cooperate with governmental agencies at all levels in developing a network of multiple-purpose trails connecting with the Prairie Path. One such trail was completed last year, including 2.5 miles of the IPP Aurora Branch, 5 miles of the IPP Batavia Spur, and 4 miles of the scenic trail through Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory. These sections are connected by paved paths along Kirk Road (.8 mile) and along Batavia Road (1.9 miles) to make a 14.2-mile round trip.

Points of interest along the way include the Warrenville city hall (a former Chicago, Aurora & Elgin railroad station), the Warrenville library, two city parks, and two attractive fishing ponds at Bilter Road. The Fermilab Trail winds past the Leon Lederman Science Education Center, prairies, savannas, marshes and meadows, home to a variety of native plants, waterfowl, and a herd of American bison. The main building, Robert Rathbun Wilson Hall, houses a world-famous high energy physics research facility for the study of sub-atomic particles; the center atrium displays a giant Foucault pendulum; and the top floor boasts a collection of some of the oldest Indian artifacts found in DuPage County and also spectacular views of the surrounding countryside.

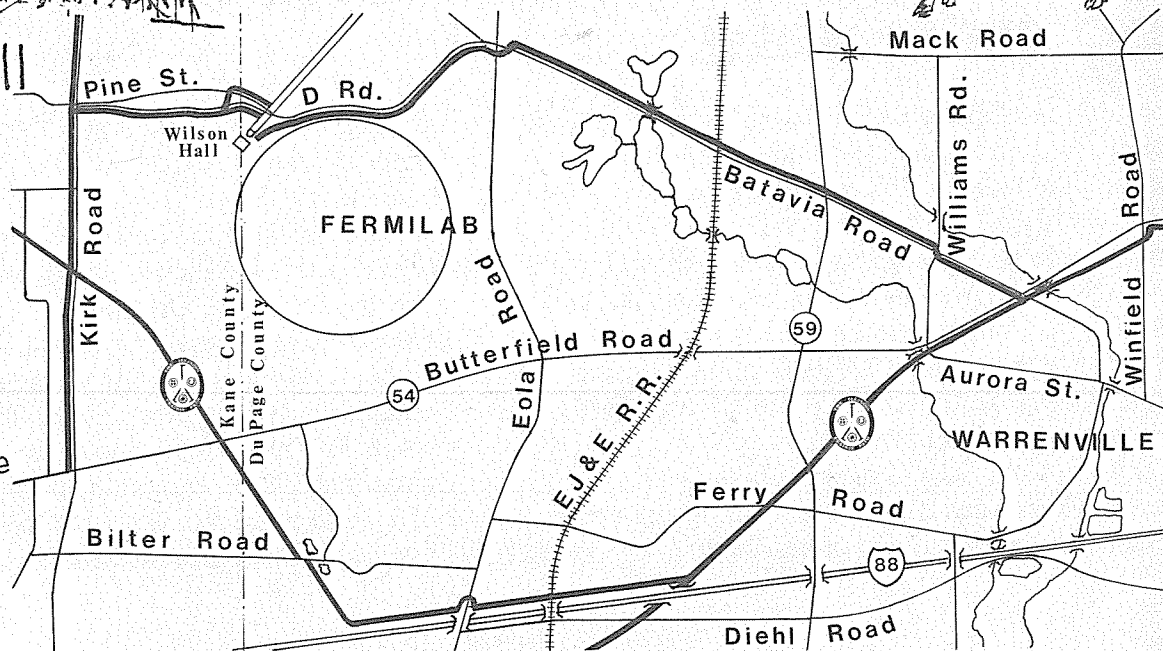
Wilson Hall is generally open for visitors. Food, beverages and toilet facilities are available there, and also in Warrenville. Come on out for a fascinating self-guided tour!



Wilson Hall



Prairie  
Smoke



# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends of The Illinois Prairie Path:

I have been president of the board of directors of The Illinois Prairie Path since December, 1972, a little over twenty years now; and I feel that it is time for someone else to assume this responsibility. I plan to finish out my current term which expires in December of this year and do not intend to accept the nomination for another term. However, if I should be re-elected a board member by the membership at the next annual meeting, I would be pleased to continue to serve you in that capacity.

I am proud of what the members of The Illinois Prairie Path have accomplished during the past twenty years. Working together, we have built three steel bridges, two over rivers and the largest one, Volunteer Bridge in Wheaton, over a major railroad, two city streets, and a small park. We, ourselves, have rebuilt the base and surfaced more than ten miles of trail and have lobbied and persuaded local governments to surface many more miles. We have planted trees and maintained and restored prairies; organized and participated in twenty annual cleanups; built and installed display cases, benches, and steps on steep embankments; installed and replaced countless logo and warning signs; mowed and pruned.

During my tenure, your board has planned and held twenty annual meetings of the membership and some two hundred monthly board meetings. While Jean has been editor, we have expanded and improved the quarterly *Newsletter*. We have also issued several revised versions of our trail map and updated Helen Turner's booklet, *The Illinois Prairie Path — A Guide*. We have led bird walks, bike rides, long-distance hikes, and many other special activities for our members and friends. We have

conducted several usage surveys. And always we have monitored the trail and cooperated with all agencies, public and private, concerned in any way with trail management, to promote the best interests of our users and neighbors. We have actively encouraged the development of a network of trails in the Chicago area with the Illinois Prairie Path as its backbone.

Being at the center of all this has been one of the most challenging and enjoyable experiences of my life. I have met many congenial people from all over the United States who are trail enthusiasts. I have seen the trail movement grow nationally and I am proud that Jean and I were able to be a part of it. It is with regret and sadness that I feel I must now step down. It is with some trepidation, however, that I do so. The current members of the board have expressed an unwillingness to serve as president. In fact we have been operating for the last two years without a vice president. We need someone on the board who will make a good candidate. If any of you feel that you may want to serve the community in such a capacity, please let Dick Wilson, the chair of our nominating committee, know. It now seems highly likely that a vacancy will occur on our board in the next few months.

There is much to be done for the Illinois Prairie Path and trails in the Chicago area. Our mission statement (page 7) is still valid. Please write or call our office if you are interested. We have recently acquired a new telephone number. It is (708) 752-0120.

Very truly yours,

F. Paul Mooring, President

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## ICC ANNOUNCES DECISION TIMETABLE FOR COM ED POWER LINE PROPOSAL

On March 1, 1993 the Illinois Commerce Commission will receive written testimony from legal counsel representing the State of Illinois, DuPage County, and several municipalities at the State of Illinois Building, 100 West Randolph, Chicago. Counsel for the Friends of the Prairie Path will present written testimony at that time in opposition to Commonwealth Edison's proposal to erect 85-foot poles carrying 138,000-volt power lines along a three-mile section of the Illinois Prairie Path through the center of Warrenville.

On April 1, Com Ed will respond to the written testimony, and on April 27, the ICC hearing examiner will conduct a cross examination hearing to gather further

information for a recommendation to be passed along to the seven commissioners, who will make the final decision.

The Friends of the Prairie Path group is currently seeking grants for its legal fund and also planning a major FUNdraising event. On April 17, from 8:00 to 12:00 p.m., the Friends will present two musical groups, the Blooze Brothers and Frankie & the White Boys at the Courtyard Restaurant, Rte. 59, Warrenville. Tickets are \$12.50 per person. For information and/or tickets, call Connie Schmidt at 393-6276 or Bob and Maureen Rawls, 393-6720. Tickets are also available from the Warrenville Park District and the Wheaton Park District.



## *A Valentine For Our Founders*

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you in the hopes you can pass along my letter of thanks to those who started the IPP.

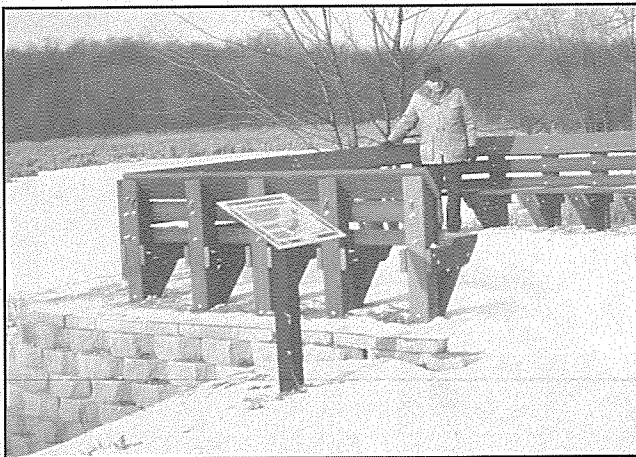
I grew up along the Prairie Path. My family moved to Wheaton in 1965 when I was eight and the rails were still in. I don't know how soon after that the rails and ties were removed, probably just a year.

The "tracks" became the Prairie Path, and it became a great place for a kid. I took picnics and went exploring with my friends. Sometimes we sent notes in bottles down the creek or boats made of paper and twigs that always sank. I caught a giant goldfish in the swamp (now Lincoln Swamp, not "the" swamp). I named my goldfish Freddy, and he lived for days in a washtub behind our house. The Prairie Path was a shortcut to my friend's house, and it was the long way home from school. It was a place to run away from home so I could always find my way back. In the winter, my brothers and I would get some neighbor kids together, throw our skates over one shoulder and a snow shovel over the other, and head down the Prairie Path to the swamp for a game of hockey. When I was a little older, I used to take the kids I baby-sat for a walk or a bike ride down the Prairie Path to kill some time before their parents got home. I rode my bike or ran on it most every day when I was in sports for "conditioning," I said, but really I was daydreaming, always about being on my way to somewhere exciting.

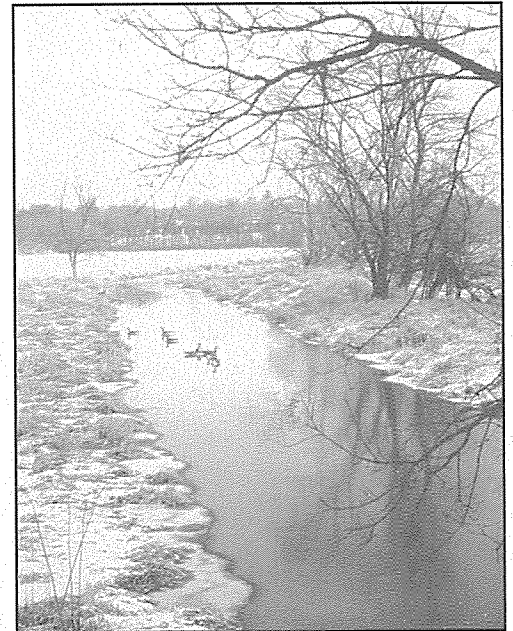
I graduated in 1975 and left Wheaton, but my parents still live next to the Prairie Path. When we are visiting, I take my children for a walk or a ride on the Prairie Path and tell them "when I was your age" stories. The Prairie Path is still a great place.

I live in Humboldt, Iowa, where five years ago a group of us, the Humboldt County Trails Council, started working to convert almost 40 miles of abandoned railroad right-of-way to a nature trail. This summer, the first 18 miles were surfaced; next year surfacing will be complete.

I want to say thank you to those who started the IPP, because I know what kind of people they are. They are people like my friends on the Humboldt County Trails Council.



*New stone and wood observation deck on Illinois Prairie Path overlooking Lincoln Marsh was a Boy Scout Eagle project for Jay Hofner of Wheaton and friends.*



*Canada geese on Winfield Creek; Lincoln Marsh in winter, north of Illinois Prairie Path bridge.*

When I first heard of the possibility of our having a "Prairie Path," I wanted to be part of it, because I knew it would be great. But my friends on the Trails Council had never even seen a rail-trail. Even so, they knew or could imagine what it would be like. I am still amazed by their vision and commitment even after five years of working with them.

I know those who started the IPP must be, like my friends, some ordinary people who imagined something great, then made something great.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Teresa Clarkin Loving  
2043 K Road  
Humboldt, Iowa 50548

## MAY T. WATTS CENTENNIAL YEAR

May 1, 1993 will mark the hundredth anniversary of the birth of May Theilgaard Watts, founder of the Illinois Prairie Path. According to a letter from Carol Doty, curator of special projects in education at the Morton Arboretum, and signed by Marion T. Hall, former director of the Arboretum, Mrs. Watts "has been widely recognized nationally and internationally as an ecologist, writer, and educator. Gifted with enormous creativity, a sense of humor, and a magnetic personality, May Watts was a thoroughly trained scientist (Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Chicago, where she studied under the famous pioneer ecologist Dr. Henry Chandler Cowles), a writer of books and poetry, an artist, a gardener, a conservationist, a visionary, an extraordinary teacher, and a delightful human being."

In memory of the life and work of this remarkable woman, The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors plans two special events this year. The first will be a reading of some of her poems to be presented at Founders' Park in Wheaton (located on the Illinois Prairie Path between West and Wheaton Streets) beginning at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, May 1. After the reading, the group will follow Mrs. Watts' footpath to Volunteer Park and over the bridge to the Lincoln Marsh, teeming with springtime sights and sounds on May Day.

The second Prairie Path event of the May Watts Centennial Year, planned for October in cooperation with



*May Theilgaard Watts, May 1, 1893 – August 20, 1975*

the staff of the Morton Arboretum, will be a hike probably in the Wayne area, to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Path's beginning in 1963. On September 30 of that year May Watts' now famous letter to the editor proposing the conversion of the abandoned

CA&E railroad right-of-way to a footpath was published in the *Chicago Tribune*; and on October 19, 1963, less than three weeks later, the first organized walk was held on the old right-of-way. The eighty trail fans who walked with Mrs. Watts that day did not know that they were making history. Because the Illinois Prairie Path has never had an official "Grand Opening" this event must be considered the unofficial opening of the first great rail-trail in the United States. Floyd Swink, taxonomist at the Morton Arboretum, who was one of the leaders of that first walk, has promised to enliven the anniversary walk with his best puns and point out biotic and ecological changes that have occurred over the past thirty years.



*Leading a nature study group seated in the old cattle crossing under the Prairie Path in Oak Meadows, 1965.*





*May Watts at Indiana Dunes, June, 1945.*

May Watts, staff naturalist at the Morton Arboretum from 1941 to 1961, will be remembered in a series of Arboretum events during this centennial year:

**“Rails to Trails” on the Prairie: How the Illinois Prairie Path Came To Be.** Thursday, February 25, 1:15 p.m. Visitor Center Theater. Special guests will include *Elizabeth Holmes, Bill and Betty Nemec, and Paul and Jean Mooring.*

**“Picnic in a Gritty Wind” — A Day in the Dunes.** A hike through the Indiana Dune woods, one of May Watts’ favorite places, at the height of the spring wildflower season. Saturday, May 1, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Leaders: *Carol Doty and Jerry Wilhelm.*



*Talking up the Prairie Path – with co-founder Helen Turner and friends, about 1971.*

### **Pedal into the Past in Search of “Antiques”.**

Sylvan “antiques” are the focus of this Arboretum bike ride, with clues from May Watts’ book, “Reading the Landscape”.

Section A: Friday, May 14, 6:00 -8:00 p.m.

Section B: Saturday, May 15, 7:30-9:30 a.m.

Leaders: *Carol Doty and Floyd Swink.*

### **The Enduring Legacy of May Theilgaard Watts.**

Sunday, May 23, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Cudahy Auditorium, Administration Building.

Leader: *Carol Doty.*

**Note:** There are registration fees, and pre-registration is required. Call the Arboretum at 719-2468.

## **NATIONAL TRAILS DAY SET FOR JUNE 5 — AN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY**



The Illinois Prairie Path event celebrating National Trails Day will be a 15-mile hike on the IPP/Fermilab loop trail led by Dick Wilson (see Spring Activities, back page). This will be a lot of fun for all participants. However, National Trails Day events such as this on trails across the nation will add up to much more than just the sum of their parts. They will demonstrate the need for a three-way partnership among outdoor recreationists, government and business in improving the quality of life for all Americans and preserving our natural environment. According to Stuart MacDonald, state trails administrator

in Colorado and chair of the National Recreational Trails Advisory Committee, this is a grand opportunity for trail activists to work with the media in making trails a national issue and to educate the public and decision makers about the intrinsic value of trails and greenways. MacDonald writes, ‘Trails activists will make National Trails Day a great success. But we need to remember that it’s more than a celebration — it’s the beginning of a new era of trails awareness. Let’s work together to look beyond the next mile of trail and build support in our communities and among our leaders.’

# REPORT FROM THE FIRST ILLINOIS CONSERVATION CONGRESS

The weekend of February 5-7, 1993 brought forth the first fruits of an ambitious constituency outreach effort coordinated by the Illinois Department of Conservation. Begun in the spring of 1992, the process included regional caucuses representing nearly 400 interest groups (open space, wildlife, recreation, forestry, hunting, fishing, conservation education, etc.), followed by the election of 60 regional delegates and the appointment of 58 statewide delegates from the major constituency groups. The first Illinois Conservation Congress brought together in Springfield 110 of these delegates to discuss the environmental state of the State (poor; for example Illinois is 48th in State and Federal public open space per capita) and to make recommendations for action by the legislature and the administration.

Paul Mooring represented the Illinois Audubon Society as an appointed delegate and was assigned to the Public Involvement and Political Action Committee. Jean Mooring attended as a guest of the Department of Conservation and followed the deliberations of the Outdoor Recreation Committee on Trails and Greenways.

Major recommendations of the Congress were: Increase funding for the Illinois Department of Conservation through increased license and registration fees and new entrance fees for state parks, the establishment of a trust fund based on an increase of 1/8 of 1% of the State sales tax dedicated solely to the purposes of the Department of Conservation, and a fee for a special Conservation License Plate; upgrade conservation

education to Division status within the Department; reinstate furloughed IDOC employees and vendors and reopen and/or upgrade state parks; establish the Conservation Congress as an ongoing working body in cooperation with IDOC; prepare a comprehensive statewide greenway and trail plan for Illinois including the establishment of a task force to coordinate the activities of the concerned agencies and departments in the Executive Branch, the convening of regional conferences in 1994, and the formation of a Greenways Council for independent advocacy among the constituent groups together with business and agriculture; establish habitat acquisition as a high priority for the Department of Conservation in the coming decades; create a statewide volunteer network for IDOC; establish a state natural resource policy with ecosystem-oriented goals and applicable to all units of state government under coordination by IDOC; transfer the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant to IDOC for conservation purposes; provide additional protection to priority stream segments; transfer the water-based recreation and conservation functions of the Illinois Division of Water Resources from the Illinois Department of Transportation to IDOC.

The Moorings were encouraged by the delegates' clearly expressed understanding of the need for an ecosystem approach to resource management and recreation enhancement. All agreed that cooperation is the name of the game.

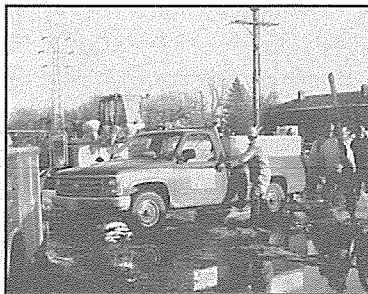
## LAKE MICHIGAN PIPELINE SPRINGS LEAK UNDER PRAIRIE PATH

On Thursday, January 21, less than a year after Lake Michigan water began to flow through the 90-inch diameter, \$390 million pipeline to twenty-three towns in DuPage County, a leak was discovered near 17th Avenue, Maywood in Cook County. A four-mile section of the pipeline is buried under the Illinois Prairie Path in Cook County. The six-inch break was losing hundreds of gallons a minute to nearby storm sewers. An around-the clock repair effort by the DuPage Water Commission contractor, Kenny Construction, restored the pipeline

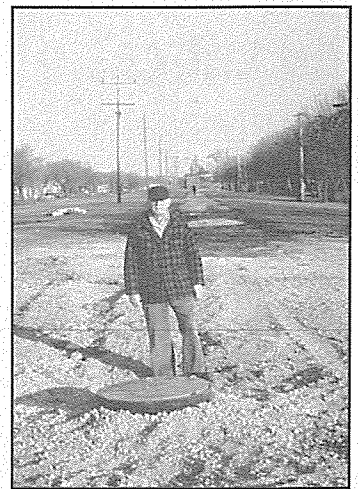
to service by the following Sunday night. However, destruction of a several-hundred-foot stretch of the Illinois Prairie Path and the surrounding right-of-way surface and vegetation was total. An inspection was then conducted by representatives of the Illinois Department of Conservation, owner of the Cook County portion of the right-of-way. Although there is as yet no agreement between the DuPage Water Commission and IDOC, James J. Holzwart, general manager of the commission, stated, "When the weather permits, the water commission will go in and do whatever landscaping is needed to restore the property to its previous condition."



*Water being pumped out of pipeline gushes onto IPP and into storm sewer (foreground).*



*Water on IPP reflects Kenny Construction crew working at top speed to repair leak.*



*Leak is repaired. Where is Prairie Path?*



# **Mission Statement for The Illinois Prairie Path, a not-for-profit corporation**

*Adopted March 5, 1991*

To advise and assist the various governmental agencies responsible for maintaining and developing a safe, public, multiple-purpose trail open to all called the Illinois Prairie Path, located on, or connecting the various segments of, the right-of-way of the old Chicago, Aurora and Elgin electric railroad in Cook, DuPage and Kane Counties, Illinois. Major concerns of the corporation are recreation, prairie restoration, land preservation and beautification, conservation of natural resources and ecosystems, preservation and interpretation of historic sites, and the connection of the Illinois Prairie Path to other trails to form a regional network of "greenways".

## **Goals**

1. Do everything possible to complete development of the Geneva Spur and connect it to the rest of the Illinois Prairie Path via new trails through Winfield Mounds and Timber Ridge Forest Preserves.
2. Complete the Cook County section to First Avenue, Maywood (and east across the Des Plaines River to the CTA station in Forest Park). Needs site plan, adequate funding, responsible management and continuity.
3. Support building a bridge over Taylor Avenue, Glen Ellyn.
4. Promote the development of connecting trails:
  - a. Along the East and West Branches of the DuPage river,
  - b. Through the Lincoln Marsh to connect the IPP to the Great Western Trail,
  - c. Along the Butterfield Road corridor,
  - d. Along Salt Creek to the Illinois-Michigan Canal,
  - e. Along the EJ&E RR r/w to the Illinois-Michigan Canal,
  - f. Any other trails connecting with the Illinois Prairie Path.
5. Support the following standards and management goals.
  - a. Preserve and enhance trail continuity; minimize parking lot encroachments on the Path but provide adequate parking for Path users where necessary; mitigate impacts of new roads, railroads, etc. crossing the Path; support grade separations, or push-button stoplights if grade crossings cannot be avoided.
  - b. Support continued use of relatively inexpensive limestone screenings as the surfacing material acceptable to most users, with asphalt reserved for short stretches having major erosion or other special problems; encourage path widening to ten feet in high-traffic areas.
  - c. Support separate trails for horses where equestrians are more than 1% of users, according to officially recognized user surveys.\*
  - d. Provide amenities, such as logo signs, display case stands with maps of the trail, plantings, benches, drinking fountains, trash containers, toilet facilities, and mile markers. Provide a few signs indicating points of interest.
  - e. Support police protection all along the Path.
6. Support official recognition by DuPage County and other governmental agencies concerned in any way with the trail that the name of the trail on the old CA&E right-of-way is, and always has been, the Illinois Prairie Path, the name given it in 1964 by May Theilgaard Watts and the other Path founders. Support official recognition of the green-and-white logo designed by the founders and registered with the Illinois Secretary of State. It has been used and displayed on the trail since 1967.

\*All surveys done to date agree that bicyclists represent 80% of users on all sections, and joggers, 15%; the rest are mainly hikers except in the Wayne area, where more than 1% of regular Path users are equestrians.

# SPRING ACTIVITIES — RAIN OR SHINE

■ Saturday, April 17

**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; Glen Ellyn - Jean Mooring, 469-4289; Wheaton, Volunteer Park east to Glen Ellyn, south to Roosevelt and north to Jewell - Ray Holdsworth, 690-9123, and Stephen Kettlestrings, 665-7981, Wheaton Environmental Commission; 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, (815) 824-2976.

■ Saturday, May 1

**The Poetry of May Theilgaard Watts.** 9:30 a.m., Founders Park, Wheaton (on the Illinois Prairie Path between Wheaton and West Streets). Selections from the poems of a warm-hearted woman who loved words as much as flowers and footpaths. A short walk along the Prairie Path will follow. Leader: Jean Mooring, 469-4289.

■ Saturday, May 15

**Spring Bird Walk in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve.** Go west from Rte. 59 on Army Trail Road to Powis Road in Wayne (about 2 miles). Then north to forest preserve entrance. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in far northwest parking lot. Bring binoculars, lunch and drink if desired. Leaders: Dick Wilson (708) 299-7882 (Call 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.), and Paul Mooring, 469-4289.

■ Saturday, May 22

**Work Day.** Call Dick Wilson (708) 299-7882 (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) or Paul Mooring, 469-4289.

■ Saturday, June 5

**Fifteen-mile Hike on the loop trail through Fermilab and along the IPP** in celebration of National Trails Day. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Wilson Hall (Fermilab main bldg.) parking lot on the northeast side (left side when facing the front of the bldg.) Bring lunch and drink. This loop trail is an excellent example of intergovernmental cooperation to connect existing trails. Leader: Dick Wilson, (708) 299-7882 (Call 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.).

## West Chicago Prairie Events

■ Saturday, March 20 – 9:00 a.m. to noon

**Restoration Work Day.** Raking in seed and/or clearing invading brush.

■ Saturday, April 3 – 9:00 a.m. to noon

**Restoration Work Day.** Raking in seed.

■ Saturday, April 17 – 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Birding trip.** Good mix of winter residents and early arrivals.

■ Saturday, April 24 – 9:00 a.m. to noon

**Restoration Work Day.** Raking in seed.

■ Saturday, May 8 – 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Birding trip.** Summer residents, migrating warblers, and sparrows. About 50 species. Annual DuPage Co. spring count.

■ Saturday, May 22 – 6:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

**Birding trip.** Summer residents and migrating warblers. Should see Yellow-breasted Chat. About 50 species expected.

■ Saturday, May 22 – 9:00 a.m. to noon

**Field trip.** Good displays of Golden Alexander, Shooting Star, Hoary Puccoon, Wild Blue Indigo, Yellow Star Grass, Prairie Violet, and Cream Indigo. Many others in bloom.

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
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	Sustaining \$50
	Patron \$100
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