



Blue Jay

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Summer 1994

What to look for . . . Bluebirds.

Bluebirds have been sighted this year not far from the Illinois Prairie Path in the savanna areas of the Lincoln Marsh in Wheaton. They are also seen where meadow meets forest in Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve near Wayne.

Called the "blue robin" by some, the eastern bluebird is a thrush like the robin with a brighter orangy-red breast. Where the robin is mostly brownish-gray, the male bluebird's head, back, wings and tail are a true sky-blue and his belly is white; the female is similar but paler. This beautiful songbird's habitat is farmlands, orchards and open woodlands where it can find cavities fairly close to the ground to nest in. The bluebird is sometimes confused with the indigo bunting, which is smaller and a more metallic all-over shade of blue, with no hint of white or red, and likes a similar habitat of brushy pastures and woodland edges.

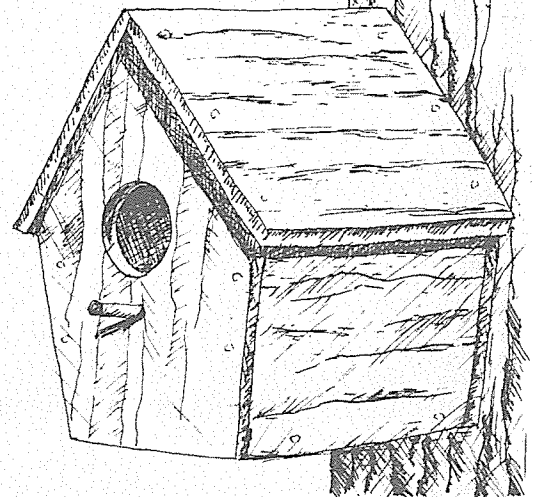
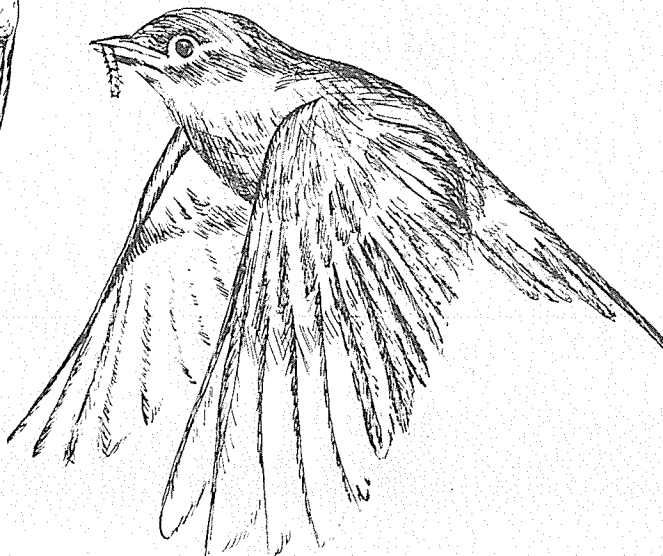
Although DuPage County's bluebirds have been in decline for many years due to destruction of habitat and increasing competition for nesting cavities from alien invaders like house sparrows and starlings, the gentle songsters today seem to be making a comeback. Bluebird houses built by members of the DuPage Audubon Society and other environmental groups have been installed along the Illinois Prairie Path, in the Morton Arboretum, and in several forest preserves. These houses are helping to replace the cavities in fence posts and in dead or low-growing trees that once were homes for bluebirds.

As a result more of the birds are now being seen. Many more houses are still needed, however, to restore the bluebird to its pre-settlement numbers.

Happiness is catching a glimpse of a feathery bit of blue sky flitting through the trees along the Prairie Path. Keep your eyes open!



Indigo
Bunting



Bluebirds

REPORTS ON SPRING CLEANUPS

In January The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors decided to coordinate the annual cleanup with the various municipalities along the Path, most of which have accepted responsibility for keeping clean the Path and its right-of-way within their corporate boundaries. We decided, therefore, to ask the villages to choose the dates for their individual cleanups, preferably around April 22, the official Earth Day.

The reason for a mid-April cleanup date is that the leaves are not fully out until the first week in May and thus the winter's accumulation of trash is still highly visible.

Glen Ellyn and Warrenville chose April 16, a clear, cool, breezy day. Jean Mooring reports that the Glen Ellyn Public Works Department provided two employees plus a six-wheeler truck and a front-end loader to help the volunteers, more than twenty of whom from senior citizens to toddlers, turned out. Joe Carlton, Jim Wear and Jean headed west from Prairie Path Park toward the Wheaton city limits in Jean's car followed by the village truck. In less than two hours the three volunteers and two



Standing in front of Glen Ellyn village truck overflowing with IPP debris are Joe Rein, Eric Hendrickson, Jean Mooring (with insulator top) and Jim Wear. Photo by Joe Carlton.

village employees filled up the truck once and got a good start on a second load. Items picked up included waterlogged railroad tie ends, broken concrete, logs, sections of Com Ed utility poles, lumber scraps, bricks, brush, and a twelve-foot-long piece of steel guard rail. One treasure was found: the rusty square iron top section of an authentic 3-piece C.A. & E.R.R. Co. electric insulator with the inscription still legible after more than thirty years. Meanwhile the other volunteers, including a group of energetic Cub Scouts from Pack 141, Den 11, fanned out in both directions from the park and picked up



Photo by David Tate

Wheaton Boy Scout Troop 2258 worked on IPP Elgin Branch cleanup. From left: Greg Ridge, Ben Uvodich, Bryan Routenberg and Derek Ridge.

cans, bottles, food wrappers, broken glass and every scrap of litter in sight west to the Mayflower Storage and east as far as Hill Avenue. Their reward was discovering the skull of a small animal, possibly a raccoon or possum, which may by now have found its way to a school science class. "Our best cleanup ever," said Jean.

Warrenville's cleanup went well too, according to IPP board member Bob Rawls. Volunteers included the Ku-Du 4H Club, the Walker family, Rev. Dale Williams of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Kari Jansen, and the Rawls family — eighteen in all. They cleaned the Aurora Branch from Winfield Road to Rte. 59, filled about twenty 30-gallon garbage bags, and collected an assortment of bigger junk, including sections of a pool table, pieces of sheet metal, and some sports car wheels. Bob says he is putting together a second group to cover the IPP west from Rte. 59 to the Kane County line, "Phase II" of the cleanup. Call him at 393-6720.

Earth Day weekend provided more nice weather for two more cleanups. Joan Hamill reports that members of the Wayne-DuPage Hunt joined Girl Scouts from Wayne, fourteen volunteers in all, and covered the IPP Elgin Branch from North Avenue to Dunham Road. They took home with them the trash collected and disposed of it with their household garbage. "The Path always looks pretty clean in the Wayne area," said Joan.

David Tate, our new board member from Winfield, organized the Earth Day cleanup on the entire five-mile section of the Elgin Branch between Jewell Road and Rte. 59. That section looks fine, he reports, with one deplorable exception: the area of the path behind the Oliver Square Shopping Center. This center is located in the City of West Chicago at the intersection of North Avenue and Rte. 59. On behalf of The IPP board of directors David writes,