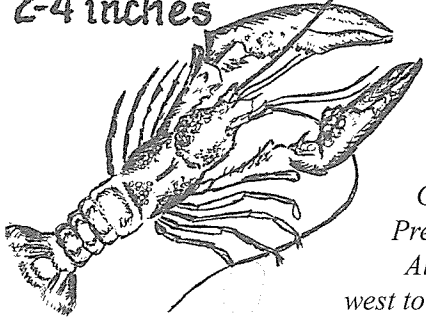


THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1995

Burrowing Crayfish
2-4 inches



A Rare Species To Appreciate: Graham's Crayfish Snake

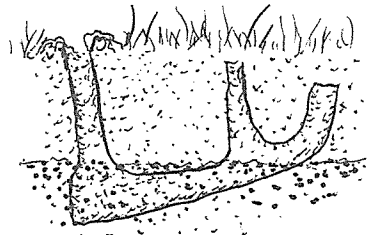
Riding your bike along the Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur through the West Chicago Prairie, you probably won't see this shy fellow. Even if you get off your bike and walk into the prairie, you still won't see him, but you may at least find evidence of his favorite food and living quarters: crayfish and the holes they burrow into. The reticent resident is a snake, Graham's crayfish snake (*Regina grahamii*), which was recently discovered by a Forest Preserve ranger sunning itself on the Prairie Path at the West Chicago Prairie.

Although eastern Illinois represents the easternmost edge of the snake's range, which extends west to Iowa and south to Texas and Louisiana, the snake was thought to be possibly extinct in

DuPage County due to rampant habitat destruction. Forest Preserve officials and staff were, therefore, delighted by the finding of this rare species because it is an indicator of high quality wet prairies and wetlands, which continue to exist today in DuPage County largely as a result of the successful land acquisition and ecosystem management efforts of the District.

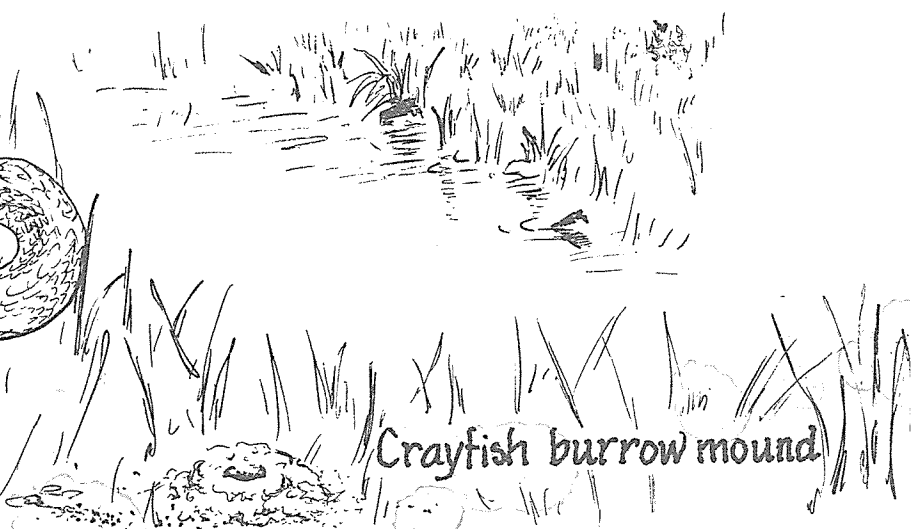
Graham's crayfish snake is an unspectacular smallish snake, usually between 18 and 28 inches long (the record length is 47 inches), comparable in size and temperament to a garter snake. Though harmless, both can emit an unpleasant musk when captured. Graham's crayfish snake is brown or yellowish-brown above, with a yellow or tan stripe along the lower sides, which may be bordered by a thin, dark brown line. The belly is white or very light gray, and sometimes has a central row of gray or brownish dots. It eats primarily crayfish but will also eat tadpoles and frogs, and small fish. It lives in the burrows of crayfish at the edges of wetlands or areas of high perched water tables in prairies. The snake mates in April and May, and 15-20 young are born live in late summer.

The information in this article was supplied by Brook McDonald and Mike Redmer of the Forest Preserve District. They ask everyone to help protect the many valuable plants and animals found in the forest preserves along the Illinois Prairie Path. Remember: "Look but do not take." Please report violators to District headquarters, 790-4900.



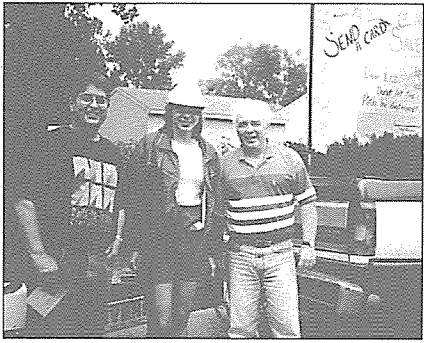
Crayfish burrow extends
below water table

Graham's Crayfish Snake



Crayfish burrow mound

ICC POSTCARD CAMPAIGN HEATING UP



Tom Yule, Mary Marzano, and Bob Siebert with Friends of the Prairie Path 4th of July float in Warrenville.

"People are starting to see red," say the Friends of the Prairie Path. As most Path users know, the Friends group was formed almost five years ago to defend the trail from the 138,000-volt Commonwealth Edison transmission lines proposed for a

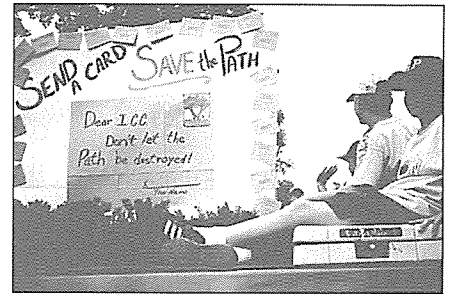
four-mile stretch of the Path between Warrenville and Wheaton. The threat to the trail is real, as a glance at any high tension line in the area shows: when the 85-foot steel towers go up, the trees will come down, and this beautiful section of the popular nature trail will be destroyed. A frightening precedent will also be set: the entire Illinois Prairie Path national recreation trail, which for thirty years has co-existed amicably with Com Ed's lower voltage 34-kilovolt lines on inconspicuous 30-foot wood poles, will be vulnerable to similar degradation.

Red is the color of the postcards the Friends are urging everyone to mail to the Illinois Commerce Commission, which has just completed the second round of hearings on this issue. A final decision is expected in the fall. The postcard reads: "I am opposed to Com Edison's plan that would destroy the Illinois Prairie Path, changing DuPage County forever." It is important to understand that although other less costly and less damaging routes for the power lines do exist, Com Ed is determined to establish once and for all its legal right to

use its easement on the Prairie Path right-of-way for transmission lines of any magnitude at any time because it claims that land acquisition costs may be less. The health and happiness of citizens and the preservation of a national recreation treasure can not be measured easily in dollars and cents if the bottom line is the only thing that counts.

Please show Com Ed and the ICC that you count too. Mail the enclosed card to the ICC today. More cards are available from the Friends of the Prairie Path. Call Connie Schmidt, (708) 393-6276. Remember that we are not alone. Other intervenors on behalf of the integrity of the Path include The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation, DuPage County, the DuPage County Forest Preserve District, the City of Warrenville, the Warrenville and Wheaton Park Districts and CUB, the Citizens Utility Board. Over the years, many of these agencies and many others including the Illinois Departments of Transportation and Conservation and the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority have spent an aggregate of more than 5 million dollars acquiring and improving the Illinois Prairie Path. The bottom line should reflect these investments too.

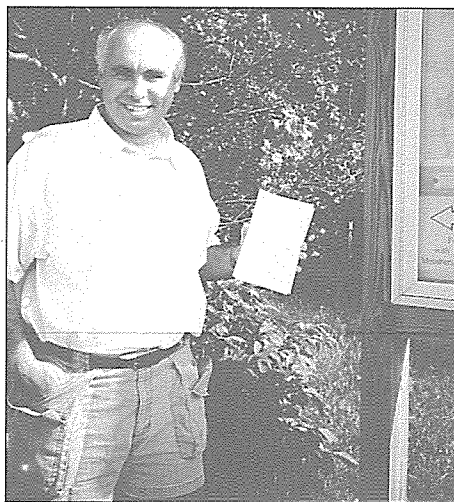
Together we can win! Cards are also available at the Wheaton, Warrenville, and Glen Ellyn Park Districts and Libraries, as well as at many local businesses.



Message on Friends of the Prairie Path prize-winning 4th of July float reads: "SEND A CARD—SAVE THE PATH."

WE HAVE ONE THOUSAND NEW MEMBERS!

David Tate, IPP membership chair, reports this impressive statistic, which brings total IPP membership to 2,050. We haven't attracted so many new members since our famous Volunteer Bridge project in 1983-84. David attributes this great leap forward to the free maps and membership information contained in the mailboxes which he has attached to each of our active display cases along the Path. He began the program last year and has been regularly maintaining and monitoring the boxes ever since. The 1000th new



membership belongs to Doug and Nancy Mahar of Pleasant Hill Road, Wheaton, who joined at the \$50 Sustaining level after picking up a free Path map from the display case stand at County Farm Road.

We extend a warm welcome to the Mahars and tip our collective hat to David for this outstanding achievement. Congratulations and many thanks!

David Tate gets ready to put some free maps into mailbox attached to side of display case stand at County Farm Road.

IPP SUMMER WORK PROJECTS COMPLETED



Paul Mooring, Nancy Wilson, and Dick Wilson pack concrete around legs of repaired bench at Geneva Junction.

Saturday, May 20. Dick and Nancy Wilson and Paul and Jean Mooring repaired two benches at Lincoln Marsh (within a month one was vandalized again), also one each at Geneva Junction and at Founders Park, Wheaton.

Saturday, June 3, National Trails Day. Dick Wilson led the

hike on the Elgin Branch from the Members' Room in Wheaton to the junction with the Great Western Trail west of Prince

Crossing. It was a nice day and 17 persons turned out including Dick and Nancy, two from DuPage Audubon and several from the Sierra Club. During their half-hour lunch on the Great Western Trail berm they handed out membership cards, Newsletters, and other



Dick Wilson, David Tate and Paul Aeschleman replace all boards on bench at Lake Arrowhead.

info to at least a dozen passers-by.

Saturday, June 17. Work Day at Volunteer Prairie, Wheaton. Paul Aeschleman, Sharon Rakowski, DuPont Snowden, and Dick and Nancy Wilson planted several hundred prairie grasses and forbs, 200 of which were donated by the Elmhurst Park District, courtesy of Steve Plumb, while the rest were purchased by the IPP. A good



IPP board members and friends plant forbs and grasses at Volunteer Prairie, Wheaton.

time was had by all, especially the overheated passing bicyclists who asked for and received a cool shower from the hose used to water the new plants. Professional landscaper and former IPP board member Larry Sheaffer planned and directed the project.

Saturday, July 15. Paul Aeschleman, David Tate, and Dick and Nancy repaired the bench at Lake Arrowhead using boards and hardware assembled by Paul Mooring. They also pruned the trees on the south side of the Path to open up a view of the lake.

WEST CHICAGO PRAIRIE EVENTS

Saturday, September 9

Seed Collection. General seed collection, mostly forbs. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Sunday, September 24

Field Trip. Good displays of Asters (five species), Goldenrods (four species), Bottle Gentian and tall grasses in seed. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Sunday, September 24

Seed Collection. General seed collection, mostly forbs. 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 21

Field Trip. "What Flower Was This?" We will be looking at seeds heads instead of flowers (just as striking and interesting) and enjoying the fall colors of the prairie. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Saturday, October 21

Seed Collection. General and seed collection, mostly tall grasses. 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 4

Restoration Work Day. Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Sunday, November 19

Restoration Work Day. Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Saturday, December 2

Restoration Work Day. Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

All events start from the West Chicago Prairie parking lot located on the east side of Industrial Drive between Western and Downs. Information: Mel Hoff, (708) 393-4715 or JoAnn Monge (708)961-2041, day or evening.

WEST CHICAGO BUILDS ITS SECTION OF IPP GENEVA SPUR



New section of Geneva Spur runs through historic Turner Court past new library (left).

The City of West Chicago is the latest agency to take an active role in developing the Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur. After much deliberation, the city has selected the best route for the trail through the central business district, where the Path will closely parallel the right-of-way of the famous old Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin electric line. Between Prince Crossing Road and Elmwood, north of the public works garage, the trail will be mostly a ten-foot-wide concrete sidewalk (with some short limestone sections), safely separated from traffic along Main Street and Fremont. Included is a short, southerly detour from the new NorthWestern (now

Union Pacific) station under the Wilson Avenue bridge through the historic and picturesque Turner Court to the new library at Washington Street. The concrete for this 2000-foot section was poured in early August.

According to city Engineer John Moore, the total contract for this parking lot/2000-foot bike path section costs \$433,000, of which approximately half is allocated to the bike path and includes attractive retaining walls, six or eight bike lockers and landscaping. The source of funding is a CMAQ grant (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) which is administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation and provides for an 80% federal and 20% local match. The city hopes to be reimbursed by DuPage County for its 20% share. West Chicago also has an ongoing program to widen existing sidewalks along the route and plans ultimately to run the trail under the

Rte. 59 / Neltnor bridge as well.

DuPage County Chief Engineer Chuck Tokarski says that the DuPage County Division of Transportation is cooperating by improving the trail with limestone and fencing on the Belding property, the section of the old right-of-way south of the public works garage. He adds that DuPage County will be choosing a contractor for the bridge over the West Branch of the DuPage River and the connecting section from County Farm Road, probably in August. Work on this final portion of the Geneva Spur will start this fall with completion expected by the end of 1995, or at the latest, early spring.

ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH BOARD MEMBERS, 1995

Paul Aeschleman, President	Oak Park
Nancy Becker, Secretary	Willowbrook
Steve Hagar	Palatine
Nancy Hesler	West Chicago
John Kacich	Berkeley
Tom May	Carol Stream
Jean Mooring, <i>Newsletter</i> Editor	Glen Ellyn
Paul Mooring	Glen Ellyn
Ken Moss	Elmhurst
Steve Plumb, Treasurer	Elmhurst
Bob Rawls	Warrenville
David Tate	Winfield
Dick Wilson	DesPlaines
Susan Wisniewski, Vice President	Bellwood
Tom Yule	West Chicago
Joan Hamill, Chairman (Hon.)	Wayne



New concrete section of Geneva Spur (center) curves to pass under Wilson Avenue bridge toward Union Pacific (formerly CNW) station.

NEWLYWEDS PHIL AND MARGIE HODGE NOW AT HOME IN TENNESSEE

The wedding in Connellsville, Pennsylvania on June 10 was a blast, say the Prairie Path friends and supporters who attended. They include Nancy Hesler and Birt Hurlbert, Paul, Jean, and Margaret Mooring, and Karen Fonte, who worked for the Wheaton Park District when Volunteer Bridge was being built and is now on the staff of the Will County Forest Preserve District.

A six-foot-long, rainbow-shaped and -colored cake set the happy tone for the festivities, enhanced by balloons and the many-hued dresses of the attendants which matched the groom's tie and cummerbund, all garments handmade by the bride. The ceremony in Immaculate Conception Church was followed by a reception in the nearby park, where a brief shower did not dampen the high spirits of family and friends safely under the roofs of two large, side-by-side picnic shelters.

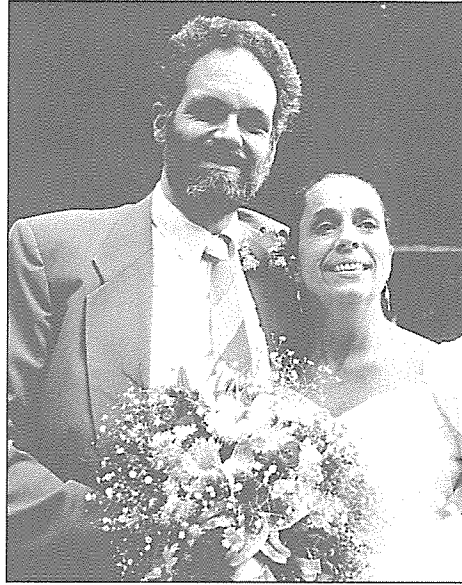
The wedding gift from the Moorings was a framed

drawing by our favorite *Newsletter* illustrator Susan Terwedow of Phil and Margie (who are both pilots)

riding in an open World War I plane, followed by Margie's three children in three smaller planes of similar vintage. All trail personalized Snoopy scarves as they fly high over Volunteer Bridge following a path which leads into a bright future with hills and dogwood trees.

Phil writes that the Hodges are now at home near Spring City, Tennessee, (appropriately called the Volunteer State) on their "new spread of about 90 acres of hills and woods with a private landing strip, on a section of the Tennessee River that's been dammed to form Watts Bar Lake." He adds, "Of all the construction projects I've been a part of over the years the Bridge will always be very, very special."

Phil knows that he will always be very special to us. He and Margie shouldn't be surprised to see a bunch of Prairie Path volunteers beating a path to their door!



Phil and Margie Hodge arrive at their wedding reception.

ILLINOIS RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY PLANS GRAND ADVENTURE

Mike Ulm, IRTC director, reports in the latest issue of *Trailblazing in Illinois* that the Illinois Chapter has announced plans for a promotional event to be held in May, 1996, along the entire length of the proposed Grand Illinois Trail. As our readers will remember, the Grand Illinois Trail, as envisioned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (formerly the Department of Conservation), will form a loop crossing northern Illinois twice and connecting the Chicago area to the Mississippi.

The event, dubbed "The Grand Adventure," will feature IRTC Director Ulm hiking, bicycling, horseback-riding, roller-blading, and possibly even canoeing segments of the trail's entire 475-mile distance. The chapter expects this event to bring important media attention and public awareness to the trail, while emphasizing the need for its expedient completion. (The goal is completion within five years.)

"We need to get people out along the route, especially in the unfinished segments, to show local leaders that

people want this trail," says Ulm. "We plan to involve as many local organizations as possible when the Grand Adventure crew rolls through each community." Mike adds that the tour will probably take three weeks and, it is hoped, will generate corporate sponsorships. Participants will carry cellular phones and plan to report progress on an Internet bulletin board. It will be a great opportunity to publicize bed-and-breakfasts, restaurants, bike shops, and historic and recreational sites along the way.

The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors is getting excited about this adventure too. Paul and Jean Mooring plan to parallel the route in their minivan, which can double as a "sag wagon." They want to hike on all fifteen of the existing trails which will be connected to form the Grand Illinois. Says Jean, "We hope to see Governor Edgar on the trail, as well as many state and local officials and lots of ordinary folks who love trails. Beautiful Illinois scenery will be on view and there will be great photo ops. We'll keep our members posted as plans develop."

FALL ACTIVITIES, rain or shine

Wednesday, September 20

A Public Forum to Review DuPage County Draft Bikeways Plan. 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. DuPage Center Auditorium, 421 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton. Maps will display current and planned trails and bikeways throughout the county. Free admission. Come with your suggestions of where trails are needed!

Saturday, September 30

Rails-to-Trails Day, ten-mile hike on the Fermilab Trail and Illinois Prairie Path. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Wilson Hall (Fermilab main building). Park in lot on left side of building when facing front. Bring lunch and drink. Leader: Dick Wilson, (708) 299-7882, (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.)

Saturdays, September 16, October 21 & November 18

Work Days. Information: Dick Wilson (708) 299-7882 (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.); Paul Mooring (708) 469-4289.

Sunday, November 5

Annual Meeting of Membership. 2:00 p.m., The Abbey, 407 W. St. Charles Road, Elmhurst. Featured speaker to be announced. Good company, delicious food, and a chance to meet your board of directors. Watch your mailbox for your invitation and come on out!

– 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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