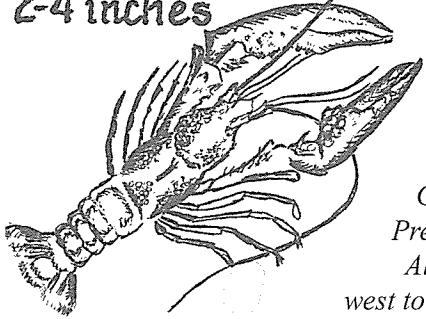


THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1995

Burrowing Crayfish
2-4 inches



A Rare Species To Appreciate: Graham's Crayfish Snake

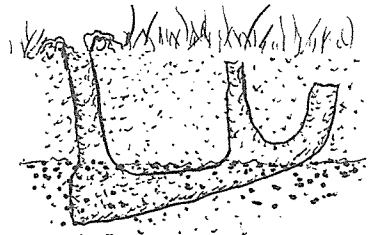
Riding your bike along the Illinois Prairie Path Geneva Spur through the West Chicago Prairie, you probably won't see this shy fellow. Even if you get off your bike and walk into the prairie, you still won't see him, but you may at least find evidence of his favorite food and living quarters: crayfish 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.



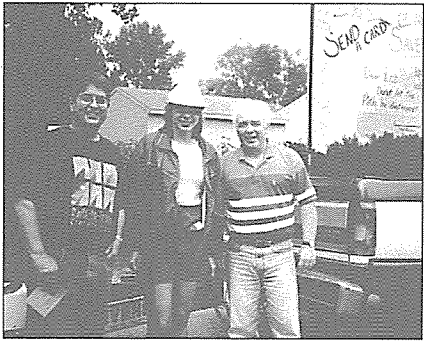
**Crayfish burrow extends
below water table**

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

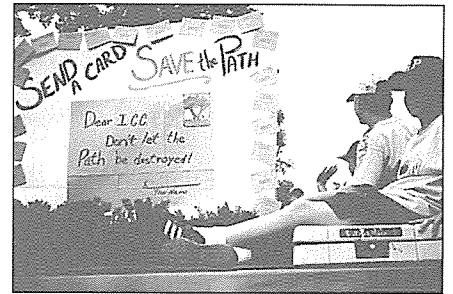
four-mile stretch of the Path between Warrenville and Wheaton. The threat to the trail is real, as a glance at any high tension line in the area shows: when the 85-foot steel towers go up, the trees will come down, and this beautiful section of the popular nature trail will be destroyed. A frightening 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.

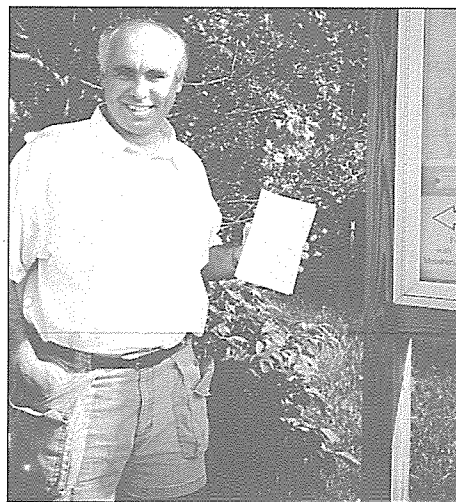
Together we can win! Cards are also available at the Wheaton, Warrenville, and Glen Ellyn Park Districts and Libraries, as well as at many local businesses.



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.