

ParkLands Foundation

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Treasurer: Barry Brenneman

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Find us on the web at:
www.parklandsfoundation.org

Newsletter
August –
September 2007

McLean County Gains 1st Land & Water Reserve

On July 19, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission announced that 639 acres of Merwin Nature Preserve have been dedicated as the first Illinois Land and Water Reserve (L&WR) in McLean County. The Mackinaw River L&WR includes 1.9 miles of the high quality river. Last year, the northwestern 78 acres of the Merwin Nature Preserve was dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve and named the Merwin Savanna Nature Preserve.

ParkLands Foundation remains the sole owner of both dedicated lands, and continues to be responsible for all land management activities. However, the dedications increase the protection granted to these lands by the State and increases the assistance available from the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources to further our ecological restoration goals as we continue to improve the habitat for native species.

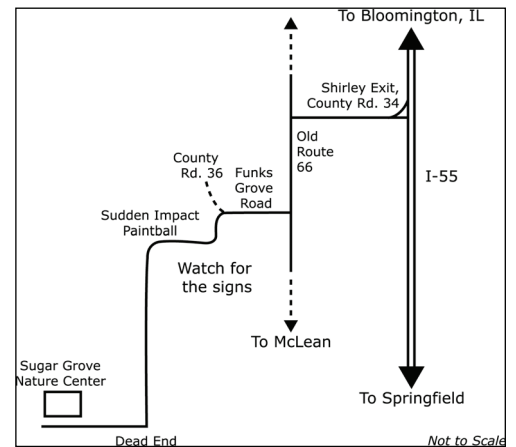
The Mackinaw River L&WR is notable for having populations of two state-threatened mussel species. Terrestrial habitat includes native upland and bottomland forests, tallgrass prairie and pasture, and shrub land and early successional areas. Two state-threatened bird species were documented on the site during the 2006 breeding season.

The dedication of the Mackinaw River L&WR is great testimony to the long-standing (since the 1970s) hard work and dedication by our volunteers and members.

Angelo Capparella

ParkLands 41st Annual Meeting

It's hard to believe that summer is drawing to an end and that fall is fast approaching. This means it is time for our 41st Annual ParkLands luncheon and meeting. In response to overwhelmingly positive feedback, we will again meet at Sugar Grove Nature Center on **Sunday, September 16th**. Our meal will be served at 12 p.m. by C.J.'s Restaurant & Catering so please plan to arrive before then to take in the beauty of the surrounding Funk's Grove prairie maintained, in part, by our very own Don Schmidt. Our meeting this year will be an especially exciting one featuring Eric Freyfogle, noted author and conservationist and University of Illinois law professor. We will then take a few moments to update everyone on the exciting events of the past year. We will close with a special recognition ceremony. Please make your reservation by **Friday, September 7th**. Looking forward to seeing you on September 16th!



Mary Horgan, President

Sept. 16, 2007 ParkLands Foundation Annual Meeting Reservation Form

Name(s): _____

Number of Meals: _____

Payment enclosed: _____ Will pay at the door: _____

(\$10 per meal. Make check payable to ParkLands Foundation.)

Please make your reservation with Mary Horgan by September 7th

Mail this form to Mary Horgan at 580 Fairway Drive, El Paso, IL 61738 or call Mary at 309.527.5636 or

E-mail your reservation to Mary at Horgan@mcchs.org

Look for the deer antlers on small trees

There are several sumacs but the staghorn (*rhus tyypina*) is the most common. It is a small tree with very large compound leaves. These leaves take the place of small branches and the tree is left with thick branches looking like deer antlers, hence the name. In spring new branches develop hairy velvet fuzz just like a stag's horn.

The tree's natural place is between the forest and the full sun of the prairies. Most of these locations have been plowed so sumac is now found most often along old railroad and highway embankments. There are several places at Comlara Park and ParkLands where sumac is taking over.

This multiple stem plant is often damaged by fire or rabbits. They do no permanent damage—it just sends

up more stems and becomes a denser thicket. One tree can cover an entire acre with the multitude of sprouts.

Staghorn has upright cone-shaped flowers 6 or 7 inches high which start to bloom in the early summer and will last all winter. This cone is very important to notice for it identifies staghorn and similar sumac from poison sumac. Poison sumac has hanging berries.

Sumac, like black walnut, is capable of preventing some other plants from growing nearby. Since sumac also produces a dense thicket, is hard to tell how much of this suppression is due to a natural herbicide and how much is due to thicket crowding. There is no urgent need to conduct experiments to find out.

John English



Nominating Committee Report

The nominating committee is recommending the following directors for another 3 year term: Dale Birkenholz, Guy Fraker, Angelo Capparella and Matt Fraker. The committee is also recommending Andy Hedberg for a three year term to fill one of two open director positions. Work is ongoing to fill the second director position. Members may nominate candidates for director by petition filed with the secretary (Martha Phares) at least 7 days prior to the annual meeting. The petition must contain the signatures of at least 15 ParkLands Foundation members. No nominations are allowed from the floor during the annual meeting.

*Barry Brenneman
Matt Fraker*

Editor's Note - Dale Birkenholz wrote the Four Decades article in the June newsletter.

Calendar of Events

Annual Meeting

Sunday, September 16, noon
Sugar Grove Nature Center
309-452-8086 or Horgan@mcchs.org

Seed Collection

Saturday, Sept. 29. 9:00 a.m.
Towanda FS Fast Stop
>Mary Horgan, leader
309-452-8086 or Horgan@mcchs.org

Seed Collection

Sat., Oct. 20,
Cayuga Ridge, Pontiac
Leader: Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065 or shoemaj@hotmail.com

NOTE: Dates are subject to change. For up-to-date information, check with the leader or log on to www.parklandsfoundation.org.

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