

**ParkLands Foundation
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Find us on the web at:
www.parklandsfoundation.org

**Newsletter
December 2008-
January 2009**

DRIVE OR PADDLE IN TO WYATT'S FORD

The south Wyatt's Ford area is a nice holding in the ParkLands' properties. It is readily accessible from Carlock, taking Church Street north from town (which turns into Denman Road) to the end, veering left at the two "Y" intersections. Our property begins at the Fenis canoe launch and continues to the creek that runs into the Mackinaw River at the NNW corner of the prairie area. It also includes a stretch of several hundred feet along the Mackinaw.

ParkLands Foundation took title to the property subject to numerous leases for campsites along the Mackinaw. While several leaseholders maintained their property appropriately, many did not. Several campsites were eyesores with abandoned vehicles, unsightly structures and trash. In 2006 the Woodford County Health Department advised us that the lease sites were not in compliance with regulations because of several outhouse structures and other violations. We were able to obtain compliance by the leaseholders, with the outhouses becoming "storage areas".

In early 2007 the Mackinaw flooded campsites and the ParkLands Prairie. A great amount of debris floated from the campsites onto the prairie -- hundreds of beer cans, dozens of trash bags, and other garbage. The St. Patrick Church of Merna Youth Group helped remove 10 garbage bags full of debris, but much was left behind because the cleanup took place with the grasses growing. The leaseholders were advised that they needed to keep their sites clean and remove debris. A dumpster was provided for cleanup. Some complied, but many did not.

Two floods in early 2008 brought additional problems. An abandoned camper floated "down" to the creek that abuts our property, lodging between our property and that of a neighbor. These floods washed away many of the cans from the 2007 flood, but there was additional garbage and debris. The leaseholders were again reminded, and ParkLands again placed a dumpster on the property.

Woodford County inspected the properties and found violations of its Floodplain Ordinance. Notice was sent to ParkLands; we promptly passed along the information to the leaseholders. The threat of government action, with possible forfeiture of the leases, resulted in the cleanup of campsites that were not in compliance with appropriate standards. The abandoned vehicles have been removed, garbage taken away, and the area is much nicer.

We hope that the transformation of the past two years will continue. We anticipate that Wyatt's Ford will get a great deal more use by the general public as canoeing on the Mackinaw expands with the new canoe launch by the Sparks Bridge. A trip to this ParkLands property in Woodford County should be on the "to do" list for all ParkLands members who have not visited the area and a repeat visit for others.

Dan Deneen

Autumn is harvest time at ParkLands

On a crisp, beautiful fall day volunteers walked Cayuga Prairie collecting seed. This prairie remnant is north of Pontiac off old Route 66. It has a variety of native forbs from which we collected a modest amount of seed: Round-headed Bush Clover, Prairie Rose, Prairie Dock, Compass Plant, Leadplant, Sullivan's Milkweed, Wild Quinine, Bundle Flower, Yellow Coneflower and Canada Wild Rye. This seed is scheduled to be spread in the open areas in the North Savanna on the Merwin Preserve. Soil evidence and Government Land Office records indicate that the agricultural field just north of ParkLands was once prairie and graded into savannah southward into the Merwin Preserve. ParkLands will be restoring the site by planting prairie seed between the open trees in the North Savanna Thanks to dedicated volunteers Linda Giles, Frank Zimmerman, Dale Birkenholz, Kristi Trendle and land steward, Jason Shoemaker.

One more task is cleaning the seed. Join us at 9 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 6, Bloomington Parks Maintenance Building, 1813 Springfield Road.

Mary Horgan



Meet your board member — **Angelo Capparella**

I grew up in the piedmont of North Carolina during a time when kids could go wandering about at will in the creeks and woods, catching and raising insects and herps. In college I developed an interest in birds thanks to the Chapel Hill Bird Club, and also came of age in the environmental awakening of the late 1960s. Throughout the 1970s, I watched as most of my favorite natural areas fell to development--roads, dams, housing--with the explosive growth of the Research Triangle.

I came to Illinois State University in 1988, having earned my doctorate at Louisiana State University working on birds in the Peruvian Amazon. I was hoping to see vast prairies here, so was disappointed when I encountered the local landscape. However, thanks to ParkLands' members, I came to know and appreciate our remaining natural areas and witness ParkLands' long-standing commitment to rescuing and restoring more of our local natural heritage.

Although a member and restoration volunteer since 1988, my first term on the Board occurred in 2004 and soon I was doing my first two-year term as President; this fall I started another two-year term. I've seen the capacity of ParkLands expand tremendously both in lands protected and in support from an active membership.

We face many challenges protecting and restoring natural areas in our growing region. But with the expertise and commitment of our Board and members, I'm confident that we can help nature persist and expand, and do our part bringing prairie and more back to our corner of the prairie state.

Angelo Capparella
President

ParkLands Board reorganizes

The board began a new year by electing Angelo Capparella as president, with Mary Horgan changing to vice president. Barry Brenneman and Dan Deneen continue as secretary and treasurer, respectively.

The board said farewell to Andy Hedberg and welcomed Julie Elzanati.

Gretchen Monti, Newsletter Editor

Ghost gobbler awaits hikers in Merwin Preserve

There are two areas of interest to hikers who visit the Merwin Nature Preserve along PJ Keller Highway and County Road 29. One area is accessed from the South Gate located along the PJ Keller Highway. This road runs from Lexington to Lake Bloomington. Park at the south gate and walk east along the dirt road to a green gate which accesses the Gas Well Trail. Keep your eyes out for the white turkey! This albino turkey has been spotted on several occasions along the trail, and the dirt road and feeding in the pasture. It may also be seen around the shed at the south gate. Going east, the Gas Well Trail goes to the gas well area, which has a restored prairie and a few areas where exotic species have been removed. Going west, it intersects the Lantz Loop Trail.

Another area of interest at the Merwin Preserve is what is called the North Savanna Restoration Unit. ParkLands has had a contractor remove the exotic species within this area, such as Japanese Barberry, Tree of Heaven, Honeysuckle, Autumn Olive and Multiflora Rose. A machine grinds the brush into woodchips. We then spray herbicide on the stumps or re-sprouts of these plants to kill them. We plan to completely restore this area to a savanna. Native grass and forbs will be planted when the brush is under control.

Jason Shoemaker
Land Steward

Calendar of Events

PARKLANDS CLOSED

Thur.-Fri., Dec. 4 & 5
Deer Hunt

Seed Cleaning

Saturday, Dec. 6, 9 a.m.
Bloomington Parks
Maintenance Bldg
1813 Springfield Road
Leader Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065
shoemaj@hotmail.com

NOTE: Dates are subject to change. To receive up-to-date information, ask Jason Shoemaker to put you on the email contact list or go to the website:
www.parklandsfoundation.org.

Address Service Requested

Ecology Action Center
P. O. Box 3132
Bloomington,
Illinois 61702-3132
(309) 454-3169

