

ParkLands Foundation

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www.parklandsfoundation.org



Newsletter

October -

November 2011

Honorary Directors

Dale Birkenholz & Guy Fraker



2011 Productive Year for ParkLands

This past year has been a busy one with many projects and activities. At the recently acquired Sweeney Woods Nature Preserve, we designed a parking lot and a canoe launch and began construction of these structures. Large base rock has been placed in the parking lot, and after it is compacted, additional finer rock will be spread over it in the spring of 2012. This will be a good place for hikers and paddlers to park to enjoy the preserve and river. This project was made possible with a generous gift from the family of Wilma B. Erwin.

We hired two interns this past summer to help with maintenance and stewardship on ParkLands properties. Claire Raver, one of the two interns, received an associate's degree in Conservation Biology from ICC. Currently, she is attending ISU and is planning on completing a B.S. in Environmental Science. Claire hopes to get a job working with wetlands and prairie restoration.

Eric Janssen, the other intern, is working on a B.S. in Natural Resources at the University of Illinois. Eric plans on working on a graduate degree in the West at a school like the University of Colorado after he graduates. After college, Eric will seek employment with the National Park Service in the West and would like to be involved in ecological restoration. We also had a volunteer intern this summer. Ryan Brase is an undergraduate student at ISU majoring in Geology/Geography and needed intern experience to meet graduation requirements at ISU. ParkLands thank all of the interns for their help with projects this year.

The majority of the interns' time was taken up installing 4,000 tree protectors on several sites along the Mackinaw River. In 2010, we planted close to 50,000 tree seedlings with funding from the Land Owners Incentive Program. The majority of the protectors were used on these plantings. Tree protectors were installed on ten percent of the trees to help protect the trees from deer damage due to browsing and rubbing, and to mark the tree rows so we could mow between the rows to keep down competing weeds. ParkLands staff was ecstatic when the last tree protector was installed.

The interns also helped spray herbicide on re-sprouts on approximately 50 acres of previously mowed patches of invasive woody species on Merwin Nature Preserve and Chinquapin Bluffs Land and Water Reserve. These invasives included Honeysuckle, Autumn Olive, Japanese Barberry, and



Roger Anderson had a lot to share about the amazing North Savanna restoration at Merwin Preserve. Come out and see for yourself!

continued on p. 3

ParkLands 45th Annual Meeting September 11 Summary

President *Don Schmidt* convened the 45th ParkLands annual meeting on a fine fall Sunday morning at Davis Lodge on Lake Bloomington. With the new ParkLands slide show running behind him, Don and his board efficiently dispensed with several business items, beginning with *Barry Brennman's* treasurer's report.



Members in attendance voted to change the 4 lowest membership dues levels: student from \$10 to \$15, regular \$25 becomes individual \$30, active \$35 deleted and contributing \$50 becomes family \$50. There was no change in the \$100-250-500-1000 membership levels.

Board changes

Election of board members was next on the agenda. We welcome *Nancy Armstrong*, *Matt Fraker*, *Given Harper* and *Krista Kirkham*. *Jim Franks* and *Maria Lemke* were introduced as new board members filling out two vacancies. Don announced that *Todd Bugg* will become Vice President, succeeding *Mary Horgan*, who had reached her maximum term limit. Past president *Angelo Capparella* was also recognized for his service upon reaching the maximum term limit.

Honor Society

President Don recognized several off-board members for their contributions: *Sherrie Snyder* for maintaining the membership list; *Doug Welch* for his work on the canoe launch; the college interns who put in lots of sweat equity this summer; *Jim Franks* for leading a long-range planning effort; *Gretchen Knapp* for her "social media" expertise and *Gretchen Monti* for editing the newsletter.

Members heartily approved a bylaws amendment that provides for recognizing long and distinguished service to conservation and ParkLands in particular. *Guy Fraker* and *Dale Birkholz* became our first *Honorary Lifetime Directors*, nominated by the board and elected at the annual meeting.

Gretchen Monti



A special guest at the annual meeting was *Fran Harty* (right), a tireless worker for Illinois conservation — first with the Dept. of Conservation (currently Natural Resources) and now with The Nature Conservancy.

Fran modestly called himself a "cheerleader" but he has played major roles in protecting the rare Kankakee Sands ecosystem, establishing Midewin Prairie in Will County, and obtaining a major grant to conserve a portion of our own Funks Grove.

On behalf of ParkLands members, *Guy Fraker* presented Harty with a *Robert Shaw* photograph of an elderly white oak in Merwin Preserve to thank him for his work to make sure ParkLands thrives in its mission, which Fraker defined as "saving defenseless species from human destruction".



Is there anyone interested in donating a new or used-but-working printer? My printer has stopped working at the ParkLands office. I would like to get an "all in one" printer/scanner/ color copier/fax. It was a thought before we have to buy one.

Give me a call at 309-531-7065 or email me at shoemaj@hotmail.com if you can help out.

Thanks, Jason Shoemaker

Seed Collectors Encounter Delightful Surprise



On Saturday, October 1st, a group of volunteers made the annual fall trek to Cayuga to gather prairie seeds from a variety of forbs including Rattlesnake Master, Wild Quinine, Illinois Bundle Flower, White & Purple Prairie Clover, Lead Plant and several members of the genus *Silphium* including Prairie Dock, Rosin Weed and Compass Plant.

And while walking through this field of prairie flowers we came across several stands of Downy Gentian and Prairie Ladies' Tresses. What a wonderful surprise to see these lovely

plants in their autumnal glory! Here's a picture of the diminutive, fragrant orchid.



I would like to recognize and thank the volunteers who gave up their Saturday morning to drive all the way to Cayuga: Linda Giles, Wayne Gustafson, Angelo Capparella, Sherrie Snyder, Barb Schneider, Frank Zimmerman, Dee Woodburn, and, our Land Steward, Jason Shoemaker.

Mary Horgan

Year in Review *continued*

Black Locust. These areas will need to be treated with herbicide for several years before the invasive exotics are under control.

We are in the process of restoring 10 acres of the Merwin Preserve Prairie, which was eliminated because it was a poor quality restoration that was dominated by grasses with few forbs. The planting at the Merwin prairie is part of an ongoing project to completely restore the entire 25 acre prairie. We will continue planting five to 19 acres of prairie nearly yearly until the site is restored.

In addition, five acres of prairie were planted on the north side of the Merwin Preserve adjacent to the North Savanna. Prior to restoration, the five acre site was undergoing old field succession, dominated by weedy native species and exotic species. This five acre prairie will eventually grade into the North Savanna restoration, and both restorations will be managed with fire in a single controlled burn.

Jason Shoemaker

Hold It!

Privy installation delayed

The new privy at the Merwin Preserve west gate will likely be open for business early in 2012. We're still waiting for regulatory approval.



What's the best holiday gift ever?

***A ParkLands Foundation
membership***

***Download the gift membership form
at www.parklandsfoundation.org***



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On The Wing - Late Fall Migration

Bird migration continues through October and November as large numbers of birds move from their northern nesting haunts to warmer southern climes for the winter. Say goodbye to many of the warblers and flycatchers that graced us in September. American Redstarts, Black-and-white Warblers, and Pewees become harder to find. Nashville Warblers are still coming through and loads of Yellow-rumps can be seen fly catching and eating poison ivy berries which they love.

October is also our best opportunity to see Orange-crowned Warblers. They're more common here in the fall, usually peak in mid-October, and can be seen feeding low on goldenrod and our other wildflowers.

What makes October truly great however is the sparrow migration. Just as the leaves are starting to display gorgeous autumn colors, loads of little brown jobs will be moving south. Grab your field guide and head out to any of our preserves with shrubby/scrubby and open areas to see them in all their glory. Savannah, Lincoln's, and Swamp Sparrows are some of the first to arrive. Then loads of White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows will be moving through, a few of which will stay for the winter. Flocks of handsome Fox Sparrows can be found scratching through the leaf litter for food. This is also the best time to look for two of our most beautiful and uncommon migrant sparrows, Nelson's and Le Conte's, in early and late October respectively. They're both secretive and tend to prefer large damp prairie habitats. American Tree Sparrows will eventually replace our Field Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos should be here by first snowfall.

Other late migrating songbirds to watch for include Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned and

Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, Purple Finch, and the declining Rusty Blackbird.

Dabbling ducks can be found in good numbers throughout October and November. Check any lakes and wetlands to see the drakes in their magnificent plumages. Pintails, Shovelers, and Wigeons will sometimes hang around until everything freezes. Diving ducks can be found on some of our larger and deeper bodies of water. Redheads and Ring-necked Ducks are always crowd pleasers.

Matthew Winks

Calendar of Events

Audubon Program

Curt Meine, Aldo Leopold
biographer
"From Wild Lands to
Working Lands to Urban
Lands"
Thurs., Nov. 3
C101, Center for Natural
Sciences, IWU
201 E Beecher, B'ton

Seed Cleaning

Saturday, Dec. 3, 9 a.m.
B'ton Parks & Rec.
Maintenance Building
1813 Springfield Rd

Workdays Leader:
Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065
shoemaj@hotmail.com

Deer Management Hunt

Preserves Closed

Nov. 18, 19, 20
Dec. 1 & 2, Merwin only
Mac Arnold
(309) 662-3249

NOTE: Work dates are subject to change. Join Jason's e-mail list or log on to www.parklandsfoundation.org.