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Newsletter

**June -
July 2012**

Honorary Directors
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Website

www.parklandsfoundation.org



Meet Your Administrative Director



The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that it has hired **Mike Hall** to be the half-time administrative director, staffing our office at 418 N. Main Street in downtown Bloomington.

Mike earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Univ. of Illinois in 1978. He is

a licensed professional engineer.

After working in consulting, he joined the Town of Normal staff in 1988 as its first city engineer and was promoted to Director of Public Works in 1997. He was in charge of a six-division department with 80 employees and a \$10 million annual budget, which is responsible for street maintenance, sewer maintenance, waste management (including recycling), engineering and administration of all public works.

Mike has served on several boards and commissions in the community, including Operation Recycle and its successor, the Ecology Action Center.

Mike retired from his position at the Town of

The Letcher Basin Eagle Nest is Full!

Three eaglets have hatched, all seem to be thriving. The two adult eagles started refurbishing the nest in late fall/early winter, bringing up more large sticks and then layering the inside with dry grasses. Around February 6, the female appeared to have laid her eggs, as after that point one of the eagles was constantly sitting on the nest. On March 10th it appeared that one or more eggs had hatched (the adults are up more and restless at the nest), and a few weeks later we were finally able to spot three small fuzzy heads poking up out of the nest! Last year there had also been three, but only two survived, so we were cautiously optimistic. And so far they have all made it! The three are now getting pretty big and are often seen up at the nest flapping their large wings, and should fledge (fly out of the nest) in late May or early June. The two adults have been keeping very busy feeding this trio, and fly in with a

Normal in 2010 and is enjoying retirement for it allows him the freedom to pursue activities, projects and programs that promote responsible management of resources and sustainability for our children, their children and all future generations.

Mike is married to Kris and has two sons, Benjamin (26) and David (17). Mike and his family enjoy traveling. Mike also is a history buff and amateur genealogist and loves living in and maintaining a 96-year old historic home in Normal.

**Agriculture + Conservation =
Successful Farming**

What: Demonstration Farm Open House (Franklin property)

Who: Sponsored by The Nature Conservancy, McLean County SWCD and NRCS, and the Franklin Family

When: June 13, from 8:30am-3:00pm (RSVPs for attendance and tram tour times by June 6).

Where: Franklin Farm, located 3/4 mile west of the I-55 exit #178 (Lexington) and south of Co. Hwy 8 (signs will be posted).

Folks will need to RSVP to the McLean County SWCD office (309-452-0830 Ext. #3) with their tour time preferences, which are 9:00, 9:30, 9:45am or 12:00, 12:30, or 12:45pm. Lunch will be served from 11-12. Tours and lunch are free.

meal (fish usually) at least four times a day.

It's been suggested we get our own "eagle cam", but I'm awaiting the volunteer who is willing to: get a permit to climb up to the nest; has the skills to climb up to the nest and place a camera; and has \$\$\$



Summer Birding — Seek Out Breeding Spots

With summer comes the breeding season for most birds. This is especially true for migratory species, which return each year to feast upon the abundance of seasonal fruits and insects our natural areas produce. After the intensity of spring migration, summer birding can seem somewhat slow. But, it's an opportunity to observe breeding birds which use our preserves. Colorful males will sing relentlessly in an attempt to attract a mate. The drive and determination to reproduce becomes obvious after observation. Females usually show up after the males have set up and established their territories. Some females might choose a mate based on the quality of his territory while others might put more emphasis on the quality and complexity of song.

Pair bonding and courtship behavior can be fascinating. Territorial males aggressively defend prime habitats from competing males. Different species employ different mating strategies. Extra-pair copulations by both males and females are common in some species. This type of behavior creates a lot of squabbling and is very entertaining. Males of some species seem to have just one thing in mind, which is to fertilize as many females as possible.

After a clutch is laid, a mated pair will often go into a stealth mode of sorts. They have to be extra careful, so as not to give away the nest location to potential predators. Females tend to be more concerned about ensuring their offspring successfully fledge and become self sufficient. Serious patience is required when observing nesting activity, but it's rewarding as well.

We should be paying close attention to grassland and shrubland breeding birds. Many species that use

and technical expertise to buy equipment and get power to it. If and when, then the Letcher Basin eagles just might be as famous as the Decorah eagles. Meantime, ParkLands members can observe at least 330 feet away from the nest from the end of the road at Letcher Basin on Co. Rd 1975N (N. Denman Road) in Woodford County. The adults are often seen perching in the cottonwoods to the west of the nest or soaring overhead.

Mary Jo Adams

these habitats are declining, some at an alarming rate. Northern Bobwhite and Loggerhead Shrike (state-endangered) have been virtually extirpated from our area. Eastern Meadowlarks have declined dramatically, while Grasshopper Sparrows and Bobolinks are now hard to find. Brown Thrashers and Eastern Towhees continue to decline. We should take special note of all the above during the breeding season. It's a good time to report potential breeding species, so post reports to eBird, to Yahoo! Group CILB (Central Ill. Birding Group) and tell others about the birds you see. Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Black-billed Cuckoo (state-threatened) are other species of concern which should be reported. We have an awesome group of birds to watch using our preserves during the summer season which happens to be the best time to inventory breeding species.

Matthew Winks

Calendar of Events

Invasives Control Hill Prairie

9:00 a.m.
Friday, June 8
Merwin Preserve
West Gate
Workdays Leader:
Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065
shoemaj@hotmail.com

Chingapin Bluffs Tour

South side of river
1:00 p.m.
Saturday, July 21
Fairlakes Golf Club
2203 Co. RD 600 N
Secor
Subject to change
Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065
shoemaj@hotmail.com

Trail Maintenance

9:00 a.m.
Saturday, July 14
Merwin Preserve
West Gate
Workdays Leader:
Jason Shoemaker
309-531-7065
shoemaj@hotmail.com

Annual Meeting

Tour of Sweeney Woods
Sunday, Sept. 9
Details next newsletter

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

Address Service Requested

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