



Co-Partners of the Volunteer Stewardship Network

# Gatherings Online

**A monthly email newsletter of the Volunteer Stewardship Network  
published by The Nature Conservancy**

To unsubscribe to this newsletter or if you would like to contribute articles, stories, or announcements to be published in future newsletters, please send them to Karen Tharp at [ktharp@tnc.org](mailto:ktharp@tnc.org) by the first day of each month.

The next newsletter deadline is **Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup>**.

## NOVEMBER 2006

*Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience. - Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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## I. NEWS

### **Wild Things, a Chicago Wilderness Conference for People and Nature - Extended Deadline for Call for Presentations is November 17, 2006**

Wild Things, A Chicago Wilderness Conference, will be held Saturday, March 3, 2007. We have received dozens of abstracts for prospective presentations, but we know that there are few more really good stories to be told. Perhaps yours is one of them. If you'd like to make a presentation, there still is time to send in your application and abstract as we have **extended the deadline to November 17**: Visit <http://habitatproject.org/WildThings/callforpres.html>. If you already have submitted an abstract and/or an application to present *and you have not received confirmation of receipt*, please contact Karen Tharp at [ktharp@tnc.org](mailto:ktharp@tnc.org) for verification. You can also check the web site for a list of abstracts received. Please share this invitation with anyone you think might be interested. If you would like more information, or would like to learn of ways you or your organization could participate or act as a sponsor of this conference, please contact Judy Pollock at [chicagowildthings@yahoo.com](mailto:chicagowildthings@yahoo.com) or 847-965-1150.

### **Congratulations to the 2006 CW Excellence in Conservation Award Recipients\***

Congratulations to this year's CW Excellence in Conservation award recipients. This year's awards honor: Individual achievement - Volunteers: **Keith Olson**, Elmhurst Park District and **Joan Palinscar**, Lake County Forest Preserves. Keith Olson and Joan Palinscar embody the spirit of generosity - both have given tremendously of their time, energy, and expertise to create healthy habitat in their communities. In the 1970s, **Keith Olson** became a vocal supporter of a stretch of railroad prairie that, running through the heart of suburban Elmhurst, was slated to be turned into turf. 32 years later, Keith is still working on behalf of the prairie, except these days he's a steward of the prairie and is accompanied by some of the hundreds of volunteers he's inspired to get involved. **Joan Palinscar's** lively curiosity and her commitment to the natural world has led her to listen for calling frogs, search out elusive plants, and be a menace to gloomy stands of buckthorn. As a participant in many of the monitoring programs that abound in Chicago Wilderness and as a long time volunteer at the Ryerson Conservation Area, Joan was the perfect candidate to assist in writing the Herbicide and Stewardship manuals; both manuals have become national models for other stewardship organizations.

Individual achievement - Professionals: **Dale B. Engquist**, USDI National Parks Service / Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. From the very beginning of Chicago Wilderness, Dale Engquist took an active and supportive role and helped to guide the consortium's development. Dale expanded conversations and outlooks and helped forge relationships across political and geographic boundaries. His belief in and support of partnerships, has inspired his staff and his fellow Indiana colleagues to get involved in regional discussions and projects. Dale's leadership and spirit continues to foster a spirit of collaborative conservation.

In the projects, programs and initiatives categories: The **Mighty Acorns Partnership** is an outstanding example of creative partnerships. The program has introduced more than 8,000 students to fresh air and to fresh ideas and may be inspiring our future biologists, ecologists, and restoration volunteers. The program continues to grow and has more than 30 partners. The **Black Walnut Woodland Restoration** project took a densely overgrown natural area and during the restoration, discovered a grove of Black Walnut trees. With the help of Citizens for Conservation, the Garden Club of Inverness, and many other volunteers, the area was restored and now boasts a myriad of wildflowers; the area also functions as an open air classroom for local schoolchildren. A model for municipalities everywhere, the **Village of Schaumburg Biodiversity Recovery Plan**, is helping the Village to implement decisions and wise development choice to ensure a healthy habitat for people, plants and animals. Among the many positive changes already afoot in Schaumburg, the plan has also propelled changes to various Zoning Codes and is working hard to encourage residents to use native plants in their landscaping. The **Landscape Master Plan for the Annunciation of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Parish** came about because the parish wanted to better understand its role on the living land. In the process the parish, the community and the Village of Homer Glen, became remarkable stewards of the earth. The restoration of a woodland, the implementation of storm water management practices, and educating and involving the community, have created a vibrant and living landscape plan. The **Fermilab Ecological Land Management Committee's** thoughtful management of the more than 980 acre prairie speaks to the group's expertise, enthusiasm, and commitment. Besides engaging in intriguing research, the Committee has inspired hundreds of volunteers to attend the annual prairie seed harvests and become invested in the critical work underway at this prairie. For more information on the Excellence in Conservation awards, please contact Michelle Uting at (847) 965-9253 or [muring@chicagowilderness.org](mailto:muring@chicagowilderness.org).

### **Partnership for Urban Restoration Fire Crew \***

The USDA Forest Service is working to develop a partnership project to hire inner city young adults for natural resource crew(s) that would perform restoration work, including removal and treatment of fuels, consistent with Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan goals for forest, savanna, and prairie communities and CW recommendations to increase community support and involvement in diverse communities. To find out how your organization can participate contact Tom Dilley, US FS, at 847-866-9311, ext. 14 or [tdilley@fs.fed.us](mailto:tdilley@fs.fed.us) or Renee Thakali, US FS/Midwin, at 815-423-2114 or [rthakali@fs.fed.us](mailto:rthakali@fs.fed.us).

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## II. WORKSHOPS AND OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### **Save the Date - Herbicide Training and Testing Workshop – Saturday, February 10**

Interested in becoming certified and licensed to use herbicides on public lands? If so, The Nature Conservancy will be hosting the next herbicide training and testing workshop for volunteers on Saturday, February 10 at The Brookfield Zoo. Registration details and other information will follow in the December issue of Gatherings Online. For additional questions, contact Karen Tharp at [ktharp@tnc.org](mailto:ktharp@tnc.org).

### **The Millennium Seed Bank Project – Help Needed to Process Seed**

The Millennium Seed Bank Project is an international conservation effort with a goal of preserving 10% of the world's seed-bearing flora through seed collection. The Chicago Botanic Garden, one of the North American institutes involved, aims to collect seed from 1,500 native species by 2009, with a focus on prairie species due to the loss of prairie habitat. Our objective is to collect between 10,000 and 20,000 seeds of one population from each of the species. By drying to low moisture content and then freezing them, the life span of these seeds is increased to an average of 200 years. These collections can act as a basis for off site (ex situ) conservation and, where and when appropriate, can be used for study and propagation for restoration purposes. Long-term seed banking can also act as an "insurance policy" against extinction in the wild. <http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/msbp/index.html>. We are looking for volunteers to help us process our seed collections from July to early March. Before each seed collection is placed into cold storage, the seeds need to be cleaned and bad seeds removed. We then weigh and count the seeds, which is all done using electronic equipment, and freeze them. Also, there is a possibility of helping us set-up and take data on germination experiments. All work is done indoors on Fridays 8:30 to 4:30 and Saturdays 10 am to 2:15 pm. There are no time commitments. For further information contact the seed bank coordinator, Betsy Allen, at (847) 835-6957 or email [ballen@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:ballen@chicagobotanic.org). Visit our website at: <http://cbgseedbank.org/>.

### **Volunteers Needed for IDNR Butterfly Surveys**

IDNR is looking for dedicated volunteers that are willing to commit to several years of monitoring, 4 times per year at the same site. Dr. Wayne Schennum of Hey and Associates environmental consulting firm in Volo is seeking 4 volunteers to assist in monitoring butterfly populations at 3 IDNR natural areas, primary wetlands, during the summer of 2007. These studies will be conducted on weekdays from mid-June to late July or early August from a portion of the day between 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There are 6 monitoring routes; two at Volo Bog State Natural Area, two at Chain-O' Lakes State Park, and three at Moraine Hills State Park. To date 2 volunteers have been recruited, so 4 more are needed, unless someone wishes to do more than one route. Participants will meet near the census route chosen for each, or at the Hey office in Volo. Butterfly nets will be provided. Schennum will join and teach volunteers about butterfly identification, habitats, and behavior. Each route will be visited 4 times during the sampling period. A tally of the number of each species observed along a census route will be kept on each date studied, and later transferred to forms shared with each volunteer. Schennum will then analyze the data and write a report, which will be submitted to Debra Nelson and Brad Semel, IDNR Heritage Biologists for the region. The butterfly monitoring will be a pleasant experience, with studies on dangerously hot humid days postponed. This year's training experience will provide each volunteer with sufficient knowledge to continue this monitoring program in 2008 and beyond. The information collected each year will assist IDNR with site management and with deriving an estimated capacity to support those butterflies restricted to native wetland communities. If interested in participating in this

effort, please contact: Wayne Schennum, Sr. Biologist, Hey and Associates, Inc., 26575 West Commerce Drive, Suite 601, Volo, IL 60073, 847-740-0888, 847-740-2888 (FAX)

### **Assistance Needed for Red Squirrel Sightings**

Corinna Hanson, a graduate student at Eastern Illinois University is working on a project to study red squirrels. Red (pine) squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) are recognized as a conservation priority mammal in Illinois based on their restricted geographic range, small population size, and specific habitat needs. Corinna is conducting the first comprehensive study of this species in Illinois with the goals of determining their distribution, habitat needs, and limiting factors. In the 1800's, red squirrels were present in northern Illinois, however the abundance and distribution of the species at that time remains unclear. It is thought that red squirrels disappeared from the state in the late 1800's. They were probably absent until the 1970's, when reported sightings occurred in Kankakee and Iroquois counties. Currently, the distribution of these squirrels in Illinois is thought to be limited to a small area in the northeastern part of the state that includes the counties of Kankakee, Will, Iroquois, and eastern parts of Grundy. She is interested in determining the state-wide distribution of this animal, and this is where she could use your help. Anyone who sees a red squirrel, should contact Corinna with date, location, and activity of the animal. By collecting accurate sightings from around the state, she will be able to determine a more precise geographic distribution of the species. Since it is presumed that the squirrels may be immigrating into Illinois from Indiana, she is also very interested in those sightings that may occur near the border (especially in the Middle Fork area).

At a glance, it is easy to mistake a red squirrel for other species of squirrels (fox or gray). However, there are several defining physical characteristics that make their identification easier: (1) red squirrels have a reddish-brown colored pelage (coat) with a white belly, (2) the body size of red squirrels is much smaller than fox and gray squirrels--only slightly bigger than chipmunks, (3) red squirrels have a less bushy tail than other species of squirrels, (4) red squirrels have a distinct white ring of fur around their eyes, (5) red squirrels have a black line of fur separating their reddish coat from their white belly that is especially pronounced in the summer, but may not be noticeable in the winter, (6) red squirrels have a "rattle" type of vocalization that they might use for territorial reasons. To participate in the project, obtain a photo of the red squirrel for identification purposes, for questions and/or to report a sighting contact Corinna Hanson at [cmhanson@eiu.edu](mailto:cmhanson@eiu.edu).

### **Plants and Humans, An Inextricable Relationship - November 11, 2pm, at The Field Museum, Chicago Zoological Society**

Come hear celebrated author Michael Pollan discuss his best-selling book *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*. Get a better understanding of the complex relationship between humans and plants. Tickets are \$20, members \$18. Add a ticket to the exhibition *Gregor Mendel: Planting the Seeds of Genetics*. For more information visit [www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org) or call 312-665-7400.

### **Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) Training - December 4-7\***

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) is open to CW members and will provide National Association for Interpretation (NAI) CIG certification. The goal of the CIG program is to provide consistent, high quality training to people who are responsible for the supervision or implementation of interpretive programs in their institutions. This course is four full 8-hour days; attendance during all four days, with presentations of a 10-minute thematic program on the final day, is required for NAI certification. Courtesy of the FPDCC there will be a reduced fee of \$135 per person. Any CW member

wanting the training without paying for NAI certification is welcome, but expected to full participate in the program. To sign up for the training, contact Sue Holt at [natureflight@aol.com](mailto:natureflight@aol.com) or 847-824-8360; for more information visit [www.interpnet.com/certficiation/index.shtml](http://www.interpnet.com/certficiation/index.shtml). On December 4 and 6, training takes place at the FPDCC Volunteer Resource Center, 6100 N. Central Ave., Chicago; on December 5 and 7 at the Crabtree Nature Center, 3 Stover Road, Barrington.

### **Invasive Plants in the Midwest Program on December 13-14, 2006; Milwaukee, WI**

The North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS), Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN), and the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin (IPAW) will cosponsor a two-day program on invasive plants in the Midwest. This meeting will give land managers and landowners the opportunity to meet with researchers, extension agents, and herbicide and restoration company representatives to discuss the need for further research and products for invasive plant control. For more information on the conference, visit the NCWSS web site at <http://www.ncwss.org/>.

### **Reintroductions and Translocations of Wildlife: Challenges and Strategies for Wildlife Managers on January 17-18, 2007, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago**

#### **Registration deadline: December 15**

This workshop will provide conservation professionals with an overview of release programs, including the science, design, and implementation of reintroductions and translocations, and will include national, midwestern, and local speakers. For more information or to register visit the web site:

<http://www.reintroduction.org>.

### **CW Interpreters Gathering: Working with Preserved Animals - December 15, 11am-3pm\***

The Chicago Wilderness Interpreters Task Force is hosting an "Interpreters Gathering" on the care and handling of preserved animal specimens as part of an interpretive program (location TBD). Please bring a lunch. For more information and to RSVP, contact Chris Mulvaney, CW Education Team Interim Liaison, at 847-242-6424 or [cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org](mailto:cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org).

### **CW Education Team Green Buildings Workshop - Lake County Forest Preserve District's Ryerson Woods Welcome Center, Deerfield, IL - Rescheduled for December 2006\***

The Chicago Wilderness Education Team workshop on the topic of green buildings, originally scheduled for October, is being moved to December (Exact date TBD). This workshop will provide participants with an overview of the LEED certification process as well as highlight some of the green initiatives underway throughout the CW region. The workshop will conclude with a tour of the Lake County Forest Preserve District's new Ryerson Woods Welcome Center that incorporates a number of green design elements. There is no charge for this workshop. For more information, please contact Chris Mulvaney, the CW Education Team Interim Liaison, at 847-242-6424 or

[cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org](mailto:cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org).

### **CW Midwest Ecological Prescription Burn Crew Member Training Workshops\***

The CW Midwest Ecological Prescription Burn Crew Member Training course is designed to provide staff and volunteer stewards with the fundamental knowledge necessary to safely participate on the crew of a controlled burn in the Chicago Wilderness region. The CW Natural Resources Management Team continues to organize both weekday and weekend sessions. The following two-day workshops

are planned for Spring 2007: 1) February 22 & 23 at Brookfield Zoo and 2) February 24 & 25 at Brookfield Zoo. For registration information, contact Chris Mulvaney, CW Science & Natural Resources Management Teams Coordinator, at 847-242-6424 or [cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org](mailto:cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org).

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### III. CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

#### **Inspiring Conservation - 2006 Chicago Wilderness Congress, November 15**

The CW Congress is just around the corner and it's not too late to register. This year registration is available on-line at [www.chicagowilderness.org/members](http://www.chicagowilderness.org/members) and registration fees can be paid either with credit card or check. Topic sessions include communicating about biodiversity, LEED for neighborhood development, watershed planning and implementation, practical field responses to invasive species, global warming - impact and solutions, and much more. The Congress will be held at Northwestern University's Norris Center in Evanston - many thanks go to Northwestern University's Environmental Policy and Culture Program for hosting this event. For questions or additional information, please contact Catherine Bendowitz, CW program coordinator, at [cbendowitz@chicagowilderness.org](mailto:cbendowitz@chicagowilderness.org) or 312-580-2137.

#### **Soils and Restoration Ecology Conference, DePaul University, December 18-20**

This conference will be a wonderful opportunity for the exchange of information and insight between different constituencies in the field of restoration, and may facilitate a variety of new collaborations. Organizers and many of the potential participants are particularly interested in restoration project being undertaken by managers and volunteers in the Chicago Wilderness region. For information and to register visit [www.srs.fs.usda.gov/events/sre/](http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/events/sre/)

#### **New Strategies for Urban Natural Resources: Integrating Wildlife, Fisheries, Forestry, and Planning, May 15-16, Lombard, IL**

*Abstract submission deadline: November 17*

This event will bring together state and federal forestry and natural resource agency personnel including researchers; city planners and policymakers who deal with natural resources planning or environmental management; university scientists; professors; students; urban foresters; arborists and horticulturists employed by municipalities, counties or private sector; wildlife biologists; wildlife ecologists; urban planners and architects. This conference will be a unique opportunity to address the challenges pertaining to the management of natural resources in urban landscapes and to extend and integrate the knowledge of urban ecology with other disciplines. For more information, visit

<http://www.informalearning.com/Wildlife>

#### **Nachusa Grasslands Seed Celebration and Potluck – November 18**

To be held on Saturday, November 18, 2006 9am to 4pm at Nachusa Grasslands. The schedule for the day is listed below. For more information, contact Bill Kleiman at [bkleiman@tnc.org](mailto:bkleiman@tnc.org).

The schedule is as follows:

9 to 12:30 - Four great things to do:

1. Mill and mix seed.

2. Cut and treat honeysuckle shrubs at Hook Larson Prairie (Using loppers, chainsaw, and/or clearing saw).
3. Harvest seed.
4. Plant seed. Hand plant seeds in the new Clear Creek Knolls planting.

12:30 - 2:15 Potluck lunch. Bring a dish to pass. We need entrees, side dishes, salads, bread, a little dessert. Bill Kleiman will give a short PowerPoint presentation.

2:15 - 4:00 Tour Clear Creek Knolls and the new Bishop tract. We will hike along the meandering Clear Creek, see Gobbler Ridge, Dropseed Hills, walk by a few new plantings, and if time permits see some recent work at the Sand Farm. We will arrange a driving tour for those who want wheels.

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## IV. GRANTS AND OTHER RESOURCES

### **2007 National Wetlands Award - Deadline: December 15, 2006**

The nomination period is now open for the 2007 National Wetlands Awards, sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, EPA, NRCS, USFWS, USDA Forest Service, NOAA Fisheries, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Federal Highway Administration. Awards are given in six categories, including Education and Outreach, Science Research, Conservation and Restoration, Landowner Stewardship, State/Tribal/Local Program Development, and Wetland Community Leader. Visit the National Wetlands Awards Web site for complete program information and the 2007 nomination form. <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/10004924/nationalwetlandsawards>

### **USDA National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program**

#### ***Deadline: Due dates vary by program***

The purpose of the NRI Program is to support research, extension, and education grants that address key problems of national, regional, and multi-state importance in sustaining all components of agriculture (farming, ranching, forestry including urban and agroforestry, aquaculture, rural communities, human nutrition, processing, etc.). Providing this support requires that NRI advance fundamental sciences in support of agriculture and coordinate opportunities to build on these discoveries. Building on these discoveries will necessitate new efforts in education and extension that deliver science-based knowledge to people, allowing them to make informed practical decisions. In FY 2007, the NRI Program will accept applications for fundamental research, mission-linked research, and integrated research, extension, and education projects. For more information visit <http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&oppld=10950>

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## V. JUST FOR FUN

### Thanksgiving Walk

From: *Essays on Nature* by Virginia S. Eifert, 1967

The grey sky is full of withheld snow; white frost crystals lie thinly on the stiffening earth; hoarfrost clings to dead weeds by the road. It is the morning of Thanksgiving Day. This is the end of autumn, the day before winter, the brown time, the period when pastel shadings of brown and russet and beige are everywhere. The landscape has grown restful; it lays a calmness over everything, including man, a waiting sense of quietness...waiting. Ragweeds by the roadside have grown dusky, and every twig, every seed stalk, every shriveled old leaf is silhouetted against the discerning greyness of the sky. Among them is the musical cheeping of tree sparrows from the northern woods, the scratch-scramble sounds of small feet among fallen leaves where the weed seeds lie. Thanksgiving Day, and in town there is cooking food and the traditional scents that always have meant the Day in America; roasting fowl, the spice of hot pumpkin pies just out of the oven, cranberry sauce like a ruby in a glass bowl. But out in the cold, frosty air of that morning, the values of today's Thanksgiving may be seen more clearly. The stern landscape of November is like a Puritan in its soul-searching demands and its inspiration to courage. Down the road stand the quiet winter woods. Low shingle oaks full of russet leaves gather at the edges, and further in the woods are the taller oaks and elms that hold their bare lacy twigs against the sky. Three blue jays, clarioning, fly on rhythmic wings across the oak-edge, not rapidly but with a purposeful beat measured to the meter of their clanging voices. Crows in a treetop shout nasally into the exhilarating, cold morning air; a squirrel with a rattling of claws on bark races up an elm, out on a branch, and lands in the next tree-scurrying as if to hasten the slowing pulse of the year. These are the woods on Thanksgiving Day in the morning. And then suddenly there comes a hint of acid fragrance in the still air, a cold, lemony scent somewhere, anywhere. And there in the woods a bare bush is full of delicate pale yellow flowers. Here is the final flower of the year, defier of cold and frost, a wild flower for Thanksgiving Day, the witch hazel. Not until late autumn and early winter do the small yellow calyces open, from which emerge four thin, narrow, twisted petals an inch long; the gnarly twigs are fringed with them. There also are hard brown seed pods which burst open suddenly after frost, and the little stony black seeds, a pair in each pod, are catapulted many feet away into the woods. But long after the seeds have gone, the yellow flowers of the witch hazel make a glow in the dark November days. Faithful to tradition, they represent a strength to meet the winter. At sight of them, that brooding sense of waiting is changed to a brave certainty of Spring. (November 1943)

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*Thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to this newsletter: Betsy Allen, Joanne Skoglund, Michelle Uting (Chicago Wilderness Member e-Bulletin, Nov. 2006), AND the book "Essays on Nature" by Virginia S. Eifert.*