

Spring 2010

"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"

— Robin Williams

Workday Schedule

Saturdays

June 12

June 26

July 10

July 24

August 7

August 21

September 4

Sundays

June 6

June 20

July 4 (Summer Potluck)*

July 18

August 1

August 15

August 29

Except as noted, all workdays start at 9 a.m. at the Poplar Creek Forest Preserve in Hoffman Estates

General Information:

www.poplarcreekpraiirstewards.org

Brush Cutters Brunch

It was not a dark and stormy night but a brisk and windy day that welcomed our volunteers for our annual winter/spring outdoor brunch on April 11. Following a shortened workday, 37 workers met in the back shelter for a noon meal and fellowship. **John Navin** thanked all the high school students who have greatly enhanced our brush-cutting efforts this year. In recognition of his extraordinary efforts in restore our sign to its proper position, **John Martin** received a custom-layered selection of cereals (ask him what that means) along with (belatedly) a Poplar Creek grocery bag. John also recently reached his one-year milestone as a volunteer with our group. Thanks to the two Johns.

Speaking of Grocery Bags ...

We still have a few of these canvas totes available for sale. The limited-edition Poplar Creek bags feature photos by **Dale Shields** depicting flora and fauna from our site. If you are interested, see Diana Granitto.

** Mark your calendar for the Summer Potluck Party, July 4 at the Flexmans'. Watch your e-mail for details!*

2010 Grassroots Conservation Leadership Awards

Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards **Steve Flexman**, **Lee Ramsey** and **Jenny Vogt** were among the winners recognized at this year's dinner and presentation ceremony February 17 at the Brookfield Zoo Discovery Center. The event was sponsored by Audubon Chicago Region, Wild Things, Chicago Wilderness, Volunteer Stewardship Network, Openlands, and Friends of the Forest Preserves. Previous PCPS winners include **Barbara Hill**, **Victor Cassidy** and **Lee Ramsey**.

Hanover Township Award

On April 6 **John Navin** and **Jill Flexman** attended a Hanover Township meeting where, in conjunction with the township's Conservation and Native Landscaping Week, they accepted a Proclamation honoring PCPS as a Hanover Township 2009 award recipient and as a leader in their Conservation and Native Landscaping Program.

Coyote Sightings at Poplar Creek

I have seen evidence of coyotes at Poplar Creek for many years: dens, scat and even individuals at considerable distances. On November 11, 2009, we finally met. I had gone out to survey the extent of the recent prescribed burn conducted over a two-day period by a FPDCC crew of six (an extensive job well done, I might add), when I saw some movement directly ahead of me at a distance of 100 feet or so. It was a gray coyote about the size of a German shepherd that had been lying in the burned grassy field west of the north-south trail just east of the dam.

The coyote moved very slowly for a few feet, then turned to watch me as I angled away from it and toward the trail; I was in the woodland. The coyote did not seem injured, only leery, tired and sad. I reached the trail and, not wanting to disturb the animal, began moving a few steps at a time northward toward the service road. We watched one another, it without moving much, as I moved slowly until I lost sight of it.

On November 12 I returned to complete my survey. As I walked westward along the service road I heard the loud and nearby call of Sandhill Cranes. Looking north through the trees I saw two cranes flying eastward at eye-level at the woodland edge near the cattail

marsh. A few minutes later coyotes appeared again; this time (about 2:00 p.m.) there were two in the short grass of Lake Leaky's (a misnomer this year) floodplain just west of the cattail marsh! Slowly moving through the woodland, I reached a large log, sat down and watched them for about 20 minutes. Both were gray but one had a lot of reddish-brown on its haunches and behind the ears. The gray coyote was not very active but every few minutes, the "tinted" one would get up, wander out of sight, and then return. Each time, it returned to within a few feet of the gray and settled next to it. Once it slowly nosed through the short grass, probably looking for dinner. They appeared to be robust, so our efforts at prairie restoration must be good for both predators and prey.

The next day at noon, two Sandhill Cranes were foraging in the short, grassy flood plain at the north edge of the lake. Perhaps they were scouting for a territory for next year. We can always hope. —Kirk Garanflo

And there's more...

In October, in full view of everyone at the workday circle-up, a lone coyote ambled out of the woods by the pump, strolled past the assembled volunteers and slipped into the prairie using the path by the sign.

Steve Flexman and **Sheila Hoyos** saw a coyote hunting on the horse trail south of the nature preserve before a December workday. Sheila also spotted a great horned owl at the site during a workday early in January.

After a winter workday, **Diane Benson** and **Diana Granitto** were tending the remains of a woodland brush pile burn when suddenly they heard a big commotion across the horse trail, in the woods opposite the mini-swale. It was a yip-fest punctuated by howls—sounded like a dozen coyotes at war or having an orgy. By the time Diane and Diana reached the top of the hill for a view of the action, it had settled down. The three coyotes that emerged from the wooded area looked rather subdued and went off separately. Were they the same three that Diane saw on a February workday at the corner of 59 and Shoe Factory, and then later that day along the bike path?

And then, on two different early April workdays, the work parties saw Sandhill Cranes by Lake Leaky and in the drainage area. Were they the same ones that Kirk saw in the fall returning and using us as a stopover point? Let's hope so.

On a May weekday workday, a female coyote was spotted along the preserve fence. She appeared to be trying to lure our workers away from her den. In addition, coyotes have been seen and heard several times this spring at the Schaumburg Road Grasslands.

We don't need to mention the many, many deer that are spotted, almost at every workday. The most seen together at one time is thirteen.

Prairie Poop

- Our deepest condolences to **Rick McAndless** on the loss of his mother in March.
- **Cliff Trahan** is starting his third year as butterfly monitor and second year as dragonfly monitor, with **Marge Trahan** as his able assistant since the beginning.
- **Trudy Zaja** won the election for Hanover Township Democratic committeeperson.
- Our volunteers have been battling ailments from top to toe. We have **Jan Ahrensfeld** recovering from eye surgery, **Diane Benson** from foot surgery, **Dave Webb** from hip surgery, and **Mo Deenhan** from shoulder issues. Glad to see you all are coming along nicely.
- **Jim Robinson** went to Gulf Shores, Alabama, in April for his annual pitcher plant hunt. He spotted many species.
- Our latest retiree is **Linda Kronholm**, who moved to faraway Florida a couple of years ago in anticipation of this milestone. **Tom Borchard** also retired recently, giving him more time for his Sierra Club and Iowa projects.
- Thanks to **John Navin** and **Jan Ahrensfeld** for staffing our table at the Bartlett Environmental Fair.
- In April we were visited at one of our workdays by 14 teenagers and two chaperones from the BuildOn youth community service program based in Chicago.
- Finally, many thanks to outgoing (in more ways than one) *Breeze* volunteer **Arlene Kline**. Arlene is the one who has seen to the printing, collating, labeling and stamping of the *Breeze* for many, many, many years. We appreciate all you have done, Arlene. Welcome to **Norina Waugh** who will now be preparing the print copies.

Please send postal or e-mail address corrections to *Prairie Breeze*, 37 S. Forest, Palatine, IL 60074, jahrensfeld@sbcglobal.net



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