

PRAIRIE BREEZE NEWS
Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards – September 2020

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE – Jenny Flexman

Well, we made it through the second complete restoration shutdown in our history! And as the FPCC lifts restrictions, we are starting strong. We transplanted all our propagated plants, even with a 10 person workday limit in June, by simultaneously working at PCP and SRG. For the first time in a few years we had July workdays, for the heat-lovers, humidity-lovers and scythe-lovers. Kirk certainly liked that he wasn't the only person pulling Japanese Hedge Parsley in July. For the first time in ages, or ever, we had a four-person herbiciding crew out and working together: Rick, Dave, Aneta and Kathleen. With the new seed collection season starting we have already had new seed leaders helping out: Nick, Aneta, Dave, Jan and John M. And Diana is training more leaders for this fall. To top it all off, at the start of our 32nd seed collection season we had 24 people at the workday and lunch on September 5th.

Since we haven't had much ability to socialize, that lunch (outdoors, at the site, with social distancing, eating purchased sandwiches) was also a celebration of our 31st anniversary, and everyone's efforts to continue volunteering with new rules during the pandemic. With the pandemic shut-down behind us, the celebration seemed much more a celebration of where we are and where we are headed as a group than a mere celebration of the past. After 31 years we have huge areas that we've restored. We have 30 people who come out on a regular basis plus many more who come out when they can. In the past year we have seen an increase in young volunteers, including five who have done training for, and taken on leadership roles: Nick, Aneta, Kathleen, Koyo and Stephen. On top of that we have a new Community Organizer starting later this month (see item later in this issue). Our future is certainly bright!

CHANGES IN THE TIME OF COVID, OR DEPARTURE OF THE SHARED SIGN-IN SHEET

When attending workdays please approach the Greeter standing by the "PCPS Check-In" sign. At a safe distance loudly (through your multi-layered mask) give your first and last name to the Greeter (and even spell your name as needed). Recognizing regulars can be difficult when everyone is wearing hats, face masks and sunglasses. With the arrival of new volunteers starting on September 13 (FPCC is lifting restriction of only regular volunteers), documenting workday attendance will become an even greater challenge. So, upon arrival if we all (old and new) follow this same procedure and personally check-in with that masked person holding a clipboard before gathering into the Circle-Up, we will make weekly recordkeeping a whole lot easier. Thanks.

SEED CHALLENGE

A bumper crop of native seed awaits us again this season, and it will take some extra effort to collect and process all that we need. At Schaumburg Road Grasslands we're approaching a milestone: just one more 10-acre plot to complete the initial prairie planting. At Carl Hansen Woods we've been tackling weeds in the 3-acre clearing near the hill, and a fall mowing by FPCC will prepare the area for seeding. Thirteen acres – that means 250 lbs. of seed!

Our annual seed processing party will have a new look. Social distancing prevents us from holding our traditional big indoor event. Instead, we're planning a smaller outdoor Harvest Day event at the site sometime in October – using safe practices, of course! Stay tuned for details.

We'll sorely miss our high school student workforce as the schools have suspended community service hours. To get it all done we're scheduling workdays every Saturday and Sunday in October (one of which will be the processing event) – mark your calendars. We'll also announce weekday workdays as needed.

Individuals interested in doing more can pitch in on their own schedule. If you're walking the site during the week, why not head off trail with a bag or two and collect seed as you go? Or maybe you'd like to take home a processing box and work on seed at home. If these activities interest you contact Diana at dgranitto@msn.com and we will set you up.

A HELP TO ALL SEED COLLECTORS

Kelly Schultz, Lake County FPD ecologist and Dale Shield, an early PCPS volunteer, have completed the 2nd edition of *Lake County Seed Collection Guides*. 12 files show pictures of more than 400 species, plus a separate index by scientific name. Files are organized by season and types of plants. Right now (or in the months ahead) we can all use: *Fall Grasses and Kin*, *Fall Prairie Forbs*, *Fall Wetland Forbs*, *Fall Woodland Forbs and Asters/Goldenrods*. Background info and advice on harvesting are provided. The texts are clear and straightforward with periodic light-hearted comments. The pictures are fabulous with multiple views for each plant. They show seed heads, full plants and/or leaves, AND the seeds themselves against measurement backgrounds. Check out this link to the files in Dale's dropbox, then save it for reference: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/33ivcjouib0c5yd/AADYr_AZ6Rj94xt4hWc5Z-5Za?dl=0. The updated guides may be published on the Field Museum website, but not until sometime in 2021.

RUSH ORDER: WANTED PCP AND SRG PHOTOS IN 2021 CALENDARS!

We know that many of you out there take photos...really good photos...of landscapes, birds, insects, animals, including volunteers – all on our sites. We don't see these pix very often. I wish they were shared more. Now is the time to share with many people while demonstrating the beauties of our restorations. You have the opportunity to enter two calendar competitions in the coming days. Each year I look through the annual calendars and/or winning photos posted online from the Friends of the Forest Preserves and Forest Preserves of Cook County. I see lovely images, but none from our lovely sites. Either current or past photos are acceptable. Below are links to rules and entry information. Please participate...Jan Ahrensfield

FPCC: **submissions due between September 1 -15, 2020**. See: <https://fpdcc.com/things-to-do/photography-filming/photo-contest/>

FOTFP, 12th Annual Photo Contest; **submissions due by October 4, 2020**; new category added this year, Best Youth Photographer; **cash prizes**. See: <https://fpdcc.com/things-to-do/photography-filming/photo-contest/>

ALSO WANTED: PHOTOS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

We need current photos for our Facebook and Instagram pages showing what Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards are doing and what is going on at our sites. Action shots of volunteers at work (and play) are requested, but also interesting shots of nature and its abundant surprises are welcome. Many of you carry your phones when visiting and volunteering. Try and make a habit of documenting "life on and about our prairies" and then email your photos to Aneta Tyminski at atyminski93@gmail.com. Please include a brief description (general location, image content,

approximate date, etc.) and Aneta will do the rest! Thank you in advance for supporting our social media.

WELCOME MAYA DUTTA

Through a collaboration between PCPS and Friends of the Forest Preserves, Friends has hired Maya Dutta as our new PCPS-dedicated part-time staff member. She begins her Field Organizer duties right as the FPCC cancels its restrictions on new volunteers attending workdays. Perfect timing! Focusing on increasing our volunteer and leadership base, Maya will extend the work done by Kathleen Mueller, while adding her own thoughts and plans as we continue to look to the future. A big challenge for Maya (and FOTFP Field Organizers at other sites) is “recruiting in the time of covid.” Let’s all lend Maya extra support during these most unusual times.

Maya established the City of Waukegan’s first sustainability program this past year while working as a member of the Greenest Regions Corp in partnership with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Americorps. This year she will continue her work there part-time as a city employee. She has also worked as a community garden coordinator, carried out native bee research at University of Minnesota and at Chicago Botanic Garden (heh Cliff, another bee lover) and conducted plant research while attending Washington University in St. Louis.

WORDS WORDS WORDS AND PICTURES PICTURES PICTURES – Kirk Garanflo

The key to identifying a mystery plant that one finds in the woods or on a prairie is understanding the meaning of the words that plant taxonomists use within their keys. Most field guides have a glossary of terms, but the definitions are not always clear. Calyx: the outer perianth whorl. Perianth: the calyx and corolla of a flower, especially when they are similar in appearance. Pictures would really be helpful!

That a picture is worth a thousand words is true enough, and fortunately illustrated dictionaries are available. I particularly like *Plant Identification Terminology: An Illustrated Glossary* by James G. Harris and Melinda Woolf Harris. It can be purchased for less than \$15.00 (some booksellers charge outrageous prices) or be borrowed from a library for free.

Only professional botanists need (and deserve) the thousand plus terms available; amateur botanists on the other hand can get by with far fewer. In the plant description or key for a species with which you are familiar take note of only the terms being used and keep a short list. Most terms are useful for a large number of species.

WITH GRATITUDE TO XMISSION – Suzanne Williams

Many of you may not know that the hosting services for our website at www.poplarcreekprairiestewards.org have been donated to us for many years by XMission in Salt Lake City, Utah. The services we receive from XMission are valued at \$35 per month or \$420 per year!

We are grateful to PCPS volunteer Marty Steitz for reaching out to XMission many years ago to request this very generous donation, and we are extremely grateful to XMission for its continued support, which enables us to reach our volunteers, prospective volunteers, and other interested parties with important information about our project.

Next time you hear of someone looking for web hosting services, please refer them to [XMission](#) – it's a great company with great service offerings, excellent technical support, and reasonable prices.

THIS AND THAT

While Covid Goes On.... Have you found some activities this summer that are totally non-related to covid? Here's what a few volunteers have been doing: Diane Fram created a flourishing vegetable garden at her daughter's house, while teaching her six-year old grandson about plants; Koyo Masore is regularly running and taking long bike rides as training for marathon participation (once they can be scheduled again); telecommuter Jeff Maddox is trying to obliterate poison ivy from his property in Michigan while also trying not to get any major PI infections. Loyola student Stephen Matz got an internship with the FPCC working out of the Northwest Resource Management region. So, like Jeff Maddox, we didn't see much of him at workdays most of the summer; Stephen was doing restoration workdays every day!

Both Prairie and Path Expansions. On Saturday, August 1 Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle cut the ribbon to open a new section of paved trail from the Shoe Factory Rd. and Route 59 crossroads to the Canadian National railroad tracks. The path goes by the area we call "north of Shoe Factory" where we have been working in recent years. Now, more of the public will note our efforts as we continue to encourage prairie remnants through our restoration activities. The new trail connects with the nine-mile Poplar Creek red loop. Our district Commissioner Kevin Morrison also attended the event and later commented in his newsletter that, "we are deeply fortunate to have so much of nature at our doorsteps!"

Noted In Publications. Jenny Flexman was highlighted in the People of the Preserves May issue of FPCC *The Volunteer Ecosystem*. She touted the wonders of Poplar Creek and meeting "the best people" through restoration. Cliff Trahan's picture and narrative appeared in People of the Preserves July column. His photo should be used in a Stihl advertisement! Cliff expressed his love for our entire ecosystem, but also noted the importance for all to combat climate change. The August FPCC *Forest Preserve Way* online newsletter spotlighted the Poplar Creek Trail System as one of six trails to explore in the FPCC system. Trail descriptions identified the brown unpaved loop (2.7 miles) at Poplar Creek Prairie and the yellow unpaved loop (3.7 miles) at Schaumburg Road Grasslands. Our restoration work at both locations was noted in the descriptions. The Nature Conservancy's *Volunteer Stewardship Network's 2019 Annual Report* contains a short article about the high school students that help us with our restoration work. The report also contains one photo of our volunteers carrying flats of transplants and another of John Martin digging holes for the transplants with our gas-powered auger (another Stihl promo?).

Unique Findings: Blue gills were spotted at different times by John Navin, Tom Kastner, Rick McAndless and Cliff Trahan in water swiftly moving across Poplar Creek Prairie due to abundant spring rains. Where did they come from? In July Jenny Flexman was surprised to see big lily pads with huge, beautiful, exotic-looking flowers which she identified as American lotus aka Lotus lily (*Nelumbo lutea*). This plant, now uncommon to our area, covers a large portion of a former farm pond west of Field 1 at Schaumburg Road Grasslands. How did it get there?

Sad News. An early and avid PCPS volunteer, Herb Demmel, died this summer. Memories include his love of brushcutting, his enthusiastic (over-enthusiastic?) use of a drip torch when

PCPS burned the main prairie one year, and his skill as a dancer during social events. Herb's background was in finance, but he quickly became a knowledgeable worker. His restoration skills were particularly manifest when Herb moved to Friendship Village and lead a woodland restoration project there. He was the 2017 Village of Schaumburg Adult Volunteer Award recipient for his work saving Friendship Village's natural area.

Our Labor Day Weekend Picnic - Anniversary and Seed Collecting Celebration: Beautiful weather, good company and tasty food. A special thanks goes to steward Diana Granitto for organizing the event, and also to three shade trees near the parking lot – one small tree where our individually wrapped lunch items were spread out for easy pick up and two large trees under which attendees spread out as they picnicked and visited with each other while social distancing.