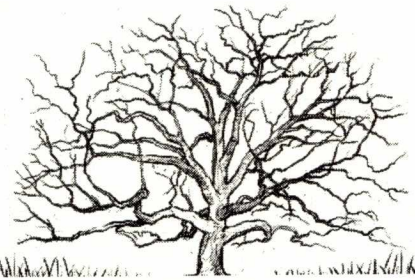


SPRING CREEK ReVIVAL



Vol. 4, Issue 1 News about the Spring Creek Forest Preserves from the Spring Creek Stewards Spring 2007

demise of a dump

Less Is More

by John Yapelli

"I could pick your nose with this thing!" The voice rings out, as Eric Bode adeptly maneuvers a massive, claw-tipped crane over heaps of garbage. And thus begins National Public Lands Day.

The dump insults a grove of bur oaks near the south end of the Spring Creek Forest Preserves. Thanks to the spirit and hard work of sixty volunteers, an extraordinary gift of time, equipment and expertise from Bode Tree Care, and the miracle of hydraulics, the dump is fast disappearing. Bode, who spends three days on the project, uses his crane-equipped cherry-red dump truck and a skid-steer to wrest more than fifteen tons of scrap metal from the piles, to be recycled.

The debris, a mélange of farm implements, heavy appliances, tires, shelving units, pots, pans and an alarming doll's head, had caught the eye and raised the ire of Spring Creek steward Ginger Underwood. "The trees were so gorgeous and the pile so foul." On one side of the pile slumped a mid-sixties Buick, rendered *al dente* by time and rust. "It troubled my sleep," she said. "I wanted it gone!"

Nor was junk the only affront to be redressed, adjacent to the vanishing dump, gnarly buckthorn, honeysuckle, and other unassociated woody growth fell to the National Public Lands Day volunteers. As witchy-looking gnarls were cut and burned in bonfires, sunlight and openness replaced the Stygian shade – a climatic and vital first step toward the restoration of the grove's understory. Volunteers shouted and laughed as they worked, stopping to admire a goggle-eyed frog and some rubbery salamanders. Later, a brief rain shower whet



More than sixty volunteers (and some heavy equipment) cleaned up a trash dump for National Public Lands Day. Yet there's still more junk to clean, brush to cut, and seed to plant. For spring and summer work party schedules, see page 4.



only the appetites of FPD-poncho-clad workers as they wolfed bowls of hot chili brought by steward Jan Nestrud.

"It's important that we maintain the momentum that has been building," said Greg Stolzer of the Sierra Club, as he opened a packet of crackers. Sierra co-sponsored the day with the Spring Creek Stewards, Riding Club of Barrington Hills, Audubon – Chicago Region, Friends of the Forest Preserves, and the Forest Preserve District.

In little steps and big steps, wonderful changes are taking place in the Spring Creek preserves. The time will come when people will experience only rich nature as they stroll through this handsome grove, and with a little imagination, you can glimpse that time already. Join us in making it happen. Heartfelt thanks to all who've helped so far.

People Who Count

(count plants and animals, that is)

by Christopher Mulvaney

Each weekend, like clockwork, the Spring Creek Stewards suit up, convene at a pre-selected site, and go to work. Our mission is grand but simple: to save nature at Spring Creek through habitat restoration. On many days, the work consists of removing invasive brush and trees that have taken over an area and eliminated the natural diversity of plants and animals that once flourished there. In the fall, we gather valuable seed from rare or uncommon local plants to later sow in other areas within the preserve. All of these activities are extremely important and are helping to breathe new life into the prairie, savanna, and oak woodland ecosystems that historically covered the landscape.

Alongside these activities, there is another important effort that is just as vital – monitoring the response of plants and animals. Monitoring is the means by which we can judge where we stand in reaching the habitat restoration goals at Spring Creek. It can also yield critical information that may guide future work. Think about this question: “How are the sites responding to our restoration activities at Spring Creek?” On the surface, it seems like a rather simple question. But how would you answer it? To the stewards and volunteers who have been lending their muscle power every weekend for the past two years, the answer seems straightforward. Positive change is occurring. Yet, try to describe those changes in more detail and the answer becomes much more elusive. The fact of the matter is we need hard data. For example, is natural diversity increasing with time? Are we seeing more conservative species show up (those plants restricted to high quality sites)? Are bird, butterfly, and frog populations increasing or decreasing? To answer these questions we need to monitor. Fortunately, there are a number of ongoing and planned monitoring initiatives taking place at Spring Creek.

Plants provide one of the most visible indicators of ecosystem health. Just as the dominance of one or more invasive species can



Chris Mulvaney, Spring Creek Stewards' monitoring coordinator, is looking for a few good people who would like to help.

point to a degraded habitat in poor health, the return of a diverse assemblage of native flora is a sign that an ecosystem is recovering and once again providing potential habitat for countless other species. This summer, the Spring Creek Stewards plan to expand our vegetation monitoring program to track changes in the presence and abundance of plant species at various restoration sites. In addition to regular monitoring, we will expand plant inventories throughout these preserves to help prioritize and plan for future restoration work. This work includes mapping areas containing problematic herbaceous invasives, such as teasel, garlic mustard, reed-canary grass, or sweet clover.

Are you interested in participating in plant monitoring initiative? If so, please contact Chris Mulvaney at mcmulvaney@sbcglobal.net or 847/459-0740 to be added to the list of interested monitors. We are looking for those experienced in plant ID or those eager to learn. Join us for this rewarding and critical task.

Interested in birds, frogs, butterflies, or dragonflies? Visit www.habitatproject.org or contact Chris to be connected to any of these programs.

Dragonfly Monitoring at Spring Creek

Rv Craig Stettner

Why monitor dragonflies?

Spring Creek is an awesome restoration project; it may someday be famous. Considering that Spring Creek is Cook County's largest restoration initiative, it is valuable to census as many of the living things as possible. Monitors will acquire data "just for the record" and observe changes in species diversity and population sizes as the restoration proceeds. Unfortunately, study of many types of living things is difficult, even for highly trained, well-equipped professionals. Many organisms "sleep" all day, are really, really good hiders, occur in overwhelming numbers, or are practically impossible to identify. Dragonflies, however, are out "in the open," active at decent hours, usually in countable numbers, and relatively identifiable.

On a larger scale, the dragonfly monitoring network provides data to county, state, federal, and academic biologists, environmental groups, and other interested parties. Dragonfly monitoring data has been used to supplement species lists in several local counties, has included federally endangered species, state-threatened species, and other species of interest to state biologists, and has potential for a variety of research projects.

Where? When?

My route will begin at Penny Road Pond, follow the in-coming drainage ditch on the west end of the pond to the first trail, then, head north to the fen adjacent to Galloping Hill. Because dragonfly larvae are strictly aquatic, the adults are usually found in association with water. Spring Creek has a nice variety of aquatic habitats, including marshes (some temporal, some permanent), several lakes, pools, two fens, and, of course, the creek. Spring Creek should have a nice variety of dragonflies, and has room for additional dragonfly monitors. I will begin as soon as there are dragonflies to count (usually late May).

Master Steward Profile



Craig Stettner

Craig got involved at Spring Creek through his interest in frog monitoring. Craig hopes to see the frog populations make a gradual come-back as the buckthorn gets cut down. "Where you have buckthorn, it's basically a desert; insects, birds and even frogs don't like it." Craig is a biology instructor at Harper College where he offers his students extra credit for restoration work. "For students, the experience of working on large habitat restoration projects, and discussing those projects with veteran volunteers, reinforces and goes beyond what we can accomplish in class, so I offer lucrative extra credit for student participation." Craig will be a great source for ecology concepts and new recruits.



Upcoming Events

- Apr. 25, Wed.** Work Party, Steeplechase Meadow, 6 – 8 pm
Leaders Ginger Underwood and Kim Keper
- Apr. 28, Sat.** Work Party, Penny Road Pond, Galloping Prairie, 1 – 4 pm,
Leader Kim Keper
- May 2, Wed.** Work Party, Steeplechase Meadow, 6 – 8 pm
Leaders Ginger Underwood and Kim Keper
- May 5, Sat.** Work Party, Spring Creek Valley Prairie, 9 am – 12 pm
Leader John Yapelli
- May 9, Wed.** Work Party, Steeplechase Meadow, 6 – 8 pm
Leaders Ginger Underwood and Kim Keper
- May 12, Sat.** Work Party, Headwaters, 1 – 4 pm, Leader Jim Voris
- May 20, Sun.** Work Party, Penny Road Pond, 1 – 4 pm
Leader John Yapelli
- May 23, Wed.** Work Party, Steeplechase Meadow, 6 – 8 pm
Leader Ginger Underwood
- May 26, Sat.** Work Party, Penny Road Pond, 9 am – 12 pm
Leader John Yapelli
- Jun. 3, Sun.** Work Party, Healy Road Savanna, 1 – 4 pm
Leader Dave Cook
- Jun. 6, Wed.** Work Party, Steeplechase Meadow, 6 – 8 pm
Leader Ginger Underwood
- Jun. 10, Sun.** Work Party, Headwaters, 1 – 4 pm
Leader Ginger Underwood
- Jun. 16, Sat.** Work Party, Headwaters, 9 am – 12 pm
Leader Chris Mulvaney
- Jun. 20, Wed.** Work Party, Steeplechase Meadow, 6 – 8 pm
Leader Ginger Underwood
- Jun. 23, Sat.** Work Party, Healy Road Savanna, 1 – 4 pm
Leader Dave Cook



Check out our website for more information on our restoration efforts, www.springcreekstewards.org.

Work Parties: Depending on the season, we will cut invasive brush and burn it, pull weeds, gather native seeds or plant them.

What to Wear: Sturdy shoes and long pants are essential. Old clothes with long sleeves, gloves and a hat are great. In cooler weather, wear layers. In warmer weather, bring sunscreen and insect repellent.

Site Locations

Headwaters is on Higgins Road, north of I-90 and west of Sutton Rd./Rt. 59. Turn north onto Wichman Rd.

Healy Road Savanna, on Higgins Rd, continue west of Headwaters, pass Beverly Lake. Take next right, a small unmarked street, only open for these work days.

Penny Road Pond Take Rt. 59 to Penny Rd. (north of Higgins, south of Dundee). Go west on Penny Rd. through the forest preserves and look for the parking lot on the south side.

Steeplechase Meadow Park behind the Barrington Riding Center, 361 Bateman Road, Barrington Hills. On east side of Bateman Rd., north of Algonquin Rd.

Spring Creek Valley Prairie Take Bateman Rd. to Long Meadow which is between Dundee Rd. (Rt. 68) and Algonquin Rd. Park on Long Meadow. The entrance to the prairie is across Bateman. Follow the signs to the site.

Wanted Trailer

The Spring Creek Stewards need a rain-tight, lockable trailer to store and haul our restoration gear. A cargo or horse trailer would be perfect. It should be at least 4 x 8 square feet. Contact Jim Voris at voris3bogue@earthlink.net or 847/341-4821, if you have a trailer to donate.

Thank You

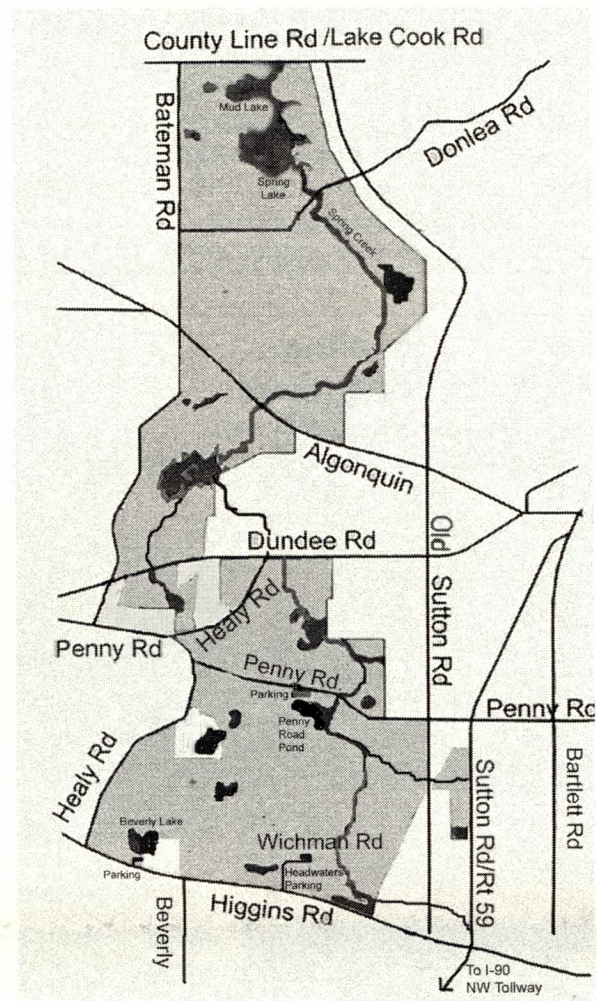
To Ryan White for designing our new mast head logo. We love it!

Sightings

March... The wildlife is coming alive with the warming weather... small numbers of sandhill cranes were chortling in the distance - I suspect up by the sparkling Spring Lake... and what looked like a great blue heron was flying just above the woods north of Donlea Road... later I was walking my dogs and there was a fantastic cacophony of the coyote chorus out in Bluebird Field.....Debbie A.

Sandhill Cranes at Headwaters... Every day I have been hearing and seeing sand hill cranes circling overhead. It seems like they just left.....Jan N.

Spring Creek Forest Preserves



Map by Debbie Antlitz and Terri Everwine

Contributors to this newsletter are: Kim Keper, Chris Mulvaney, Stephen Packard, Justin Pepper, Craig Stettner and Ginger Underwood

Principal Partners

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
www.fpdcc.com

Audubon-Chicago Region
www.audubon.org

Citizens for Conservation
www.citizensforconservation.org

Bird Conservation Network
www.bcnbirds.org

Supporting Partners

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Riding Club of Barrington Hills
Bobolink Foundation
Grand Victoria Foundation
Chicago Area Tracking Dog Clubs
Sierra Club -- Northwest Cook Group

The *Spring Creek Revival's* purpose is to keep friends and neighbors of the preserve up to date on the progress and happenings of the Spring Creek Restoration Project.

If you would like to receive a copy, or know someone who would, contact
Kim Keper at
Keper@sbcglobal.net
847/ 277-0515

**Deadline
for Next Issue**

Please submit articles/
information for the newsletter by

**Friday
June 8, 2007**

to
Dale Harper
tomanddale@comcast.net
847/352-4085

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