



CITIZENS  
FOR  
CONSERVATION

# CFC NEWS

*Saving Living Space for Living Things*

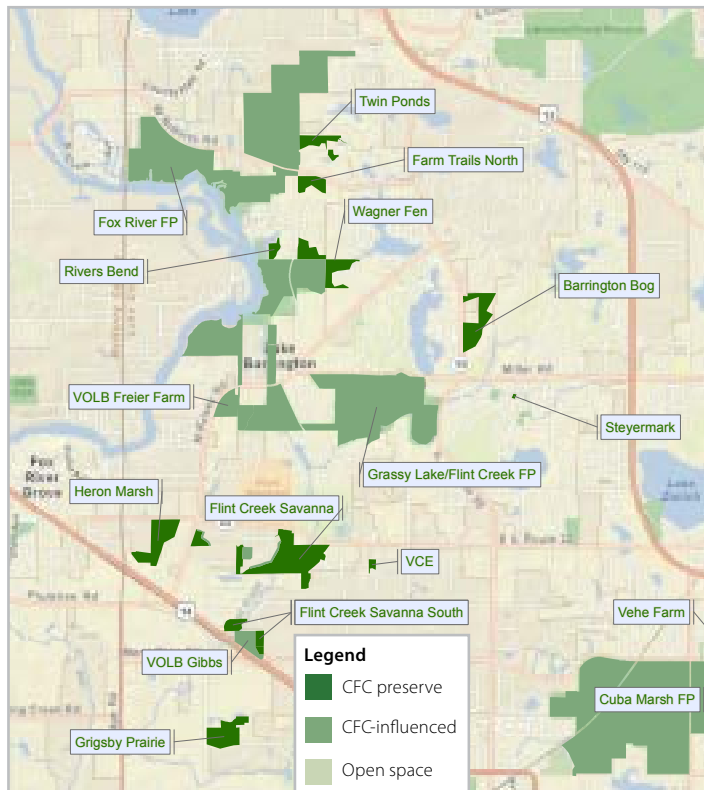
Vol. 33, No. 1, Winter 2014

## CFC unveils Habitat Corridors — be part of the solution

by Meredith Tucker

Citizens for Conservation’s Community Education Committee is pleased to introduce Habitat Corridors, its newest program. This is the largest and most important project the committee has initiated since its inception some ten years ago. Its goal is to encourage and assist local residents and other property owners to become more earth friendly in their landscaping choices and maintenance practices. The project is based on using native plants. Our mission statement says it all: *Saving living space for living things one yard at a time.*

The committee seeks to provide more natural habitat, clean water, and wildlife friendly preferences throughout local properties. Although CFC is constantly seeking new properties



Portion of Barrington area land preserved by or through the influence of Citizens for Conservation. Map courtesy of BACOG.



Pollinator habitat in a hillside garden with asters in front, blazing stars behind and Joe Pye weed in back. Photo by Robert Cantwell.

to preserve and protect as natural land, the amount of such available acreage is shrinking daily. There is less and less suitable property for storing rainwater on site, for providing bird and invertebrate habitat, and for spacious preserves. However, there is an almost endless untapped source of such property privately owned in the area. We mean your yard! Putting together many yards with healthy habitat, residents, friends, and neighbors can create a “national park” of sorts that protects our water table, air quality, native plants, and wildlife for everyone to enjoy.

Part of CFC’s long-term plan is to protect land along Flint Creek from Barrington Hills to the Fox River. Habitat Corridors has the same goal — to supplement private preserves, parks, and forest preserves by creating a corridor extending through the Barrington area for the benefit of nature and a healthy environment. We cannot protect tens of thousands of acres locally; the open land no longer exists and would be phenomenally expensive. The next best strategy is to create a passageway of healthy habitat. It is the most effective way to proceed.

When habitat is threatened or destroyed, much of our wildlife is unable to travel long distances to new locations. Birds are

able to fly, but many of our pollinators and other invertebrates (including bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, and spiders) have limited ability to change location when necessary. This is particularly true of amphibians like frogs and toads and of reptiles like snakes and turtles.

I had many toads in my land-bound yard this year, probably the product of my rain garden during a wet spring and summer. However, if we have another dry year in 2014, the toads will be unable to breed on my property. How nice it would be if my next door neighbor had a pond or other water feature to which my toads could hop for breeding habitat. Corridors provide options for struggling wildlife.



Toad habitat in a rain garden displaying cardinal flower and narrow-leaved loosestrife, a native. Photo by Meredith Tucker.

Like many of our local animals, native plants have limited ability to move. When developers clear a natural habitat, the plants are destroyed; they have no way to migrate elsewhere. However, a natural habitat next door can provide sanctuary, a new home for plants whose seeds land there.

Bloodroot, the beautiful spring wildflower, provides an example of plants and animals that benefit from contiguous open land. Bloodroot emerges, blooms, and sets seed early in spring. The species depends on ants to spread its seeds. (They love the little bit of fat attached to the seed and carry it elsewhere to eat while discarding the seed along the way.) If the ant hill is destroyed, the ants can't migrate very far to begin a new nest. If they live near a property that welcomes ants, they can move along that corridor and take their precious bloodroot seeds with them. If you are lucky enough to live adjacent to a home that encourages wildflowers, you may be the beneficiary of neighboring plants through the helpful ant. (Ants have lots of important functions in the environment. Try not to harm them outside your home. Outdoors they have only positive attributes.)

CFC's Habitat Corridors will be based around a map of the Barrington area; we will mark on the map each property that is striving to provide healthy habitat for people and for wildlife. Our goal is to build a passageway of properties that provides wholesome homes for birds, beetles, bees, and babies (human babies).

Our volunteers and partner will make home visits and mark on a map the results of that visit. When a property owner emails us, we will schedule a home assessment to make recommendations for changes that are beneficial for critters and for children and homeowners. Our suggestions will range from native plants to rainwater solutions to invasive species identification. A CFC volunteer and a knowledgeable and experienced native plant person will visit.

It is our pleasure to announce that Tallgrass Restoration LLC will partner with CFC volunteers for many of these home visits. You will receive advice from a trusted CFC volunteer and sometimes from a professional in the native landscaping business as well.



Habitat Corridors will provide a yard sign to properties which meet our criteria as verified at a visit. Signs will be awarded without charge to CFC members. Residents invested in using native plants and healthy yard maintenance practices qualify for the sign.

Habitat Corridors will provide its own website at [habitatcorridors.org](http://habitatcorridors.org) with information about yard maintenance, lists of native plants, as well as books, seeds, and other resources. We are also happy to provide your group with a free program on healthy landscape maintenance. Additionally we offer programs on rain gardens, native plants, native trees and shrubs, and invasive plant species. Just contact us to schedule.

Finally, join us on January 25 at the Barrington Village Hall to learn more about Habitat Corridors and how to schedule a visit before our 2014 Annual Native Plant Sale. (See Page 4 for program details.)

Habitat Corridors is important, and your participation is vital to its success. Gardeners and residents / businesses creating earth-friendly properties can slow the rate of extinction in native species of plants and animals. "The choices we make as gardeners can profoundly impact the diversity of life in our yards, towns and on our planet."\*

\*William Cullina, Director of Horticultural Research for the New England Wild Flower Society



Habitat Corridors sign to be awarded to qualifying property owners.

## Restoration Report

### 2013 in Review

by Jim Vanderpoel

2013 was another year of steady improvements in restoration. We continued to spend most of our time on three main techniques: brush cutting and invasive species control; prescribed burning; and seed collection, cleaning and sowing.

For the third straight year we conducted over one hundred volunteer workdays. We expect a record number of volunteers will attend our workdays. In early December, we are at 296 with four workdays remaining. We would love to hit 300 total volunteers for the first time in our history. Our class of four interns, including one returning from 2012, was very strong.

We continued major heavy-duty brush cutting at our new preserve at Flint Creek Savanna South. We also cleared the brush along Henry Lane in the new addition to Flint Creek Savanna. We had several great brush-cutting workdays at Wagner Fen, Farm Trails North, Ela Road and Baker's Lake. For the first time in two years we did some cutting on the fence line at the now very open Grigsby Prairie.

We collected a total of 362 pounds of native seeds that included seed from 200 species.

On our own land we conducted two spring burns at Flint Creek Savanna, one at Grigsby, and one at the Conservation Easement. We had our most successful burn ever at Baker's Lake in cooperation with our partner the Village of Barrington. Our volunteers also burned the remnant railroad prairie with Paganica Homeowner's Association.

Now that most of the land at our two established preserves (Grigsby Prairie and Flint Creek Savanna) has advanced into the second stage of restoration, we find ourselves watching for more subtle signs of progress, looking for signs of habitat maturing into the third stage of restoration. The details are perhaps best described in random anecdotes.

About twenty years ago we transplanted from the doomed Pingree hill prairie a few specimens of prairie gentian at several scattered spots at Grigsby Prairie; we also scratched in a couple of capsules of seed. Those few transplants survived and a few seedlings germinated. Year after year we have kept track of them. Restoration stalwart Wes Wolf actually monitored those precarious specimens by GPS. In the last few years it seemed that they were starting to expand, but they suffer heavy browsing by deer, and they also seem to be a favorite of voles that cut the stems down and stack them for hay. This year for unexplained reasons, this conservative beauty hit the takeoff stage; we counted over two hundred blooming specimens! Of course, we collected a huge bounty of seeds now that we know the colonies are thriving by self sowing. We need to get this plant at our other preserves.



*Prairie gentian at Grigsby Prairie. Photo by Donna Bolzman.*

We had another exciting find. Restorations are most successful in ideal habitat, but all restorations suffer from weedy gaps in the transition zone from habitat to habitat. These transition areas, ecotones as they are called, are probably inherently unstable. This instability invites non-native invasive plants. This year as an extension of the reed canary eradication demonstration project, we cleared a spot in the low, flat but dry area where the oak wood borders a severely degraded sedge meadow. We were delighted to find an established colony of showy wild golden glow. We increased our effort to harvest a good seed mix of wet savanna plants. Hopefully, we can use this mix to fill these gaps with native plants to hold off the worst invasive species.

We had some equally exciting animal milestones. For the first time ever, we had eastern meadowlarks, dickcissels and bobolinks nest at Grigsby Prairie in the same summer! Dickcissels first appeared three years ago, and bobolinks stopped nesting three years ago. It would be great if all three of these declining prairie birds could consistently nest there at the same time.

At Flint Creek we added three new birds to our avian species list: the black-throated green warbler, the American woodcock and the peregrine falcon. The black-throated green warbler is a handsome little neo-tropical migrant, and we were delighted to see it, but its absence on our list was probably just a matter of inadequate record keeping. Its presence is not indicative of habitat improvement.



Peregrine falcon. Photo copyright © 2012 by Alan Stankevitz, [www.iwishicouldfly.com](http://www.iwishicouldfly.com).

In contrast, the woodcock likes wet but open woods. We had never seen this instantly identifiable bird even though Flint Creek is right in the heart of its range. I think the woodcock stayed away until the tangles of thorns were cleared. I hypothesize that dense branches interfere with the woodcock's explosive getaway flight.

The peregrine falcon was one of the original endangered species, a fabled bird, a divine presence to the ancient Egyptians, the fastest animal in the world and a prized bird of medieval falconers. It is certainly not a prairie or oak savanna bird; it flies all over the world. The specimen we saw was not accidentally circling overhead in migration. It was actively following the course of the creek hunting for its prey of shorebirds and ducks. It can hunt anywhere, and we saw it hunting at Flint Creek; and why not? That same day we saw a flock of over twenty Wilson's snipe, two lesser yellowlegs and a flock of over ten blue-winged teal. The falcon was there because its prey was there, and the prey was there because the habitat is there.

Another exciting find is the long-tailed weasel we saw on the edge of the Delta at Flint Creek. Again, the long-tailed weasel is by no means restricted to prairie or oak savanna. It ranges from central Canada to Bolivia and lives in all habitats, but it is nowhere common. I suspect we saw it at our preserve because we are restoring the richness that attracts these far-ranging animals.

Let's keep restoring living space for living things. It appears to be working wonderfully!



Long-tailed weasel. Photo from IL DNR website. [http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildlife/furbearers/longtailed\\_weasel.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildlife/furbearers/longtailed_weasel.htm)

## Winter community education programs

### Saturday, January 25 — Habitat Corridors and Earth-friendly Yard Maintenance

Meredith Tucker, CFC Community Education Committee  
This two-part program is the basis for all of our 2014 winter programs. We will introduce our exciting new Habitat Corridors initiative and follow up with suggestions for how to maintain yards in an earth-friendly manner.

### Saturday, February 22 — The Homeowner and the Water Cycle

Kurt O. Thomsen, Coordinator, Flint Creek Watershed Partnership  
Learn how to deal successfully with rainwater on your property, keeping the rain where it falls to infiltrate the substratum and replenish groundwater.

### Saturday, March 22 — Creating Amphibian-Friendly Yards

Michael Redmer, Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Michael Redmer enthralled our audience two years ago with his frog/turtle program. Now he will tell us how to invite these valuable creatures to our properties and sustain them there.

### Saturday, April 12 — Gardening for Birds and Pollinators

Judy Pollock, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Chicago Region  
Kelsay Shaw, Possibility Place Nursery  
Two excellent presenters will show how to make yards attractive to birds and pollinators and how to keep them safe and functioning there. Judy Pollock shares her avian expertise with us for the third time while Kelsay Shaw shows why native trees and shrubs are especially vital to nurturing birds and native insects.

Our programs begin at 10:00 a.m. at the Barrington Village Hall on Hough Street. Please come early to enjoy displays and conversation, choose handouts, and have a cup of coffee.

Members attend all programs at no charge as a benefit of membership. Non-members pay \$10.00 or can become members of CFC at the program! Please RSVP to 847-382-SAVE (7283). We're looking forward to greeting you.

## A Good Read

### **Khan Academy: a web-based source for family learning**

**Editor's Note:** In a change of pace, this issue's "A Good Read" reviews a computer website that provides free education in math, science, and environmental matters.

Some of you may have seen the report on "60 Minutes" or "The O'Reilly Factor" about Khan Academy as a source of stimulating educational programs that many families, home-schoolers, and an increasing number of charter schools use for improving the mathematic skills of their young students. It provides free education.

Always looking for sources of childish stimulation, I decided to take a look at Khan Academy's website, [khanacademy.org](http://khanacademy.org). I found the site very well done, containing lessons on many subjects beyond, "Average rate of change when function defined by equation."

I decided to search "Environmental Science." I uncovered numerous lessons that were clearly formatted with easy-to-understand information that both children and adults can use to enhance their knowledge of environmental issues. I chose to access the discussion on Conservation Biology and Restoration Ecology. The discussion features a description of the recovery of the Clark Fork River in Missoula, MT.



Screen shot from Khan Academy's program — 5 Human Impacts on the Environment.

The presenter discusses in direct terms the role of Conservation Biology and Restoration Ecology in working with the Superfund program to clean up more than 100 years of mine tailings that poisoned over 100 miles of the Clark Fork River and the entire area behind the Mill Town Dam. The Superfund operation removed the dam and all the contaminated material earlier this century. Now at the site is a state park with vigorous, full-fledged ecologic recovery where before were contaminated surface and ground water and earth.

There is access to several other presentations on this same Khan Academy page including: "Ecosystem Ecology"; "Hydrologic and Carbon Cycles: Always recycle"; "Nitrogen and

Phosphorous Cycles: Always Recycle"; "5 Human impacts on the environment"; "Pollution."

One can ask questions and receive answers, make recommendations to fix the video, and discuss the site with Khan Academy administrators. The material is clearly presented and technical but not too much for our children or for adults. Key words are highlighted in case you want to perform further searches on the site to learn more about specific ideas.

I see Khan Academy as a useful resource for families that wish to come together to learn and discuss issues of many types. In this case I recommend it as a resource to teach all comers about important environmental issues and to educate students about potential science careers that will impact our natural world.

— Robert Cantwell

### **Be wise, be charitable: please put CFC on your gift list**

by Edith Auchter

Citizens for Conservation (CFC) is recognized as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Please consider donating a gift of stock to Citizens for Conservation.

Whether the stock has appreciated or declined in value, you receive gift credit and an immediate income tax deduction for the fair market value of the stock on the date of transfer regardless of what you originally paid for it. If you give appreciated securities, you may receive an immediate tax deduction and savings on capital gains taxes.

Your broker can electronically transfer the stock to CFC's brokerage account. CFC sells the stock (converted to cash) in accordance with CFC's Finance Policies. Then the proceeds are used to fund programs in accordance with your directives, if any.

For further information about gifts of stock, please call (847) 382-7283 or e-mail CFC. Here are the benefits:

- You receive gift credit and an immediate income tax deduction for the fair market value of the stock on the date of transfer, no matter what you originally paid for it.
- You pay no capital gains tax on the stock you donate.
- You can direct your gift to a specific fund or purpose.
- You have the satisfaction of making a significant gift to benefit CFC and its mission of *Saving living space for living things*.

#### **Welcome New Members!**

Kyle Boatright  
Susan Conover  
Barbara Herrmann

Linda Krauss  
Debra Schoendorf  
Amy and David Underwood

## Notable Natives

### Downy woodpecker

What a lovely, welcoming, good morning sound I hear outside my bedroom window when the days are warming and the world is heartbreakingly beautiful. I can hear this “queek-queek” during most of the year along with other songs of the downy woodpecker.

We find downies most often in woodlands, orchards, parks and suburban yards. For most of us in the Barrington area, downies are probably the easiest woodpecker to recognize and the most common. They are probably named for their feathers, especially the short ones around the nostrils. Rather small birds, five to six and one-half inches long, they have short bills and a black and white pattern on their heads and wings. Like all woodpeckers, the male has a red patch on his head. The differences in the back-of-the-head patterns on both sexes make it possible to recognize individuals of the same sex.

Downies are frequent visitors at bird feeders especially if the feeders include suet which they are generous in sharing with other birds. Birds use my suet feeder in Lake Barrington all summer and winter. There are times when I have to take it down because the raccoons have discovered it.

Have you ever listened closely to their songs? There is a “teak call” which is a single loud note sometimes repeated at irregular intervals which is a contact note between members of a pair. There is also a “whinny-call,” a one- or two-second burst of staccato notes that descends in pitch near the end. The call truly sounds like the whinny of a horse. The “queek-queek call” is three to five notes given very loudly. Downies use it during bill waving, fluttering flight and other behavior associated with courtship.

Downies raise families in Barrington. If you have never watched them excavate a nest hole in a dead tree, you have truly missed a treat. The male does most of the work. You can recognize the progress of the nest from the chips on the ground near the tree hole. Once the hole is deep enough, the bird excavates from inside, and all you may notice are the pecking sounds and bits of sawdust being tossed out. I imagine a good place to see this happening is at Baker’s Lake in springtime.

A problem for all the downies and other woodpeckers and cavity-dwellers is finding dead wood from which to excavate their homes. Downies and other small birds are not strong enough to make holes in healthy, living wood, so we can facilitate their nest building by leaving dead trees standing (when they pose no hazard) and allowing dead limbs to remain on trees. It is not necessary (or desirable) to remove every dead limb.

There are usually four or five white eggs in a nest. The parent reaches all the way inside the nest to feed the young during the first nine days and then for the next few days feeds them from

the top of the nest. On the last day the parents stop feeding the nestlings while the youngsters spend their time squeezing their way out of the nest and off they go! It must be like putting on a slimming spandex garment!

How fortunate we are to have these friendly and beautiful visitors coming to our feeders in the Barrington area. In exchange for a little seed and suet, they give us such joy. A whinny to you, little downies, and to the rest of you, “Happy Birding!”

— Edith Maynard



*Female downy woodpecker. Photo by Diane Bodkin.*

## Seasonal Tip

### Leave dead plants standing

If you have planted native species in your garden, we hope you didn't cut them down during fall clean-up. During the winter many native plants provide birds with food and with protection from harsh weather and predators. Be sure to leave seed heads on through the winter.

Ground feeding birds and finches use native grasses for seeds and protection. Finches also will feed on *Rudbeckia* (black-eyed and other Susans) as well as *Echinacea* (purple and pale purple coneflowers).



*Little bluestem in August. Photo by Karen Rosene.*

Additionally, the stalks of native forbs shelter the eggs of insects that adult birds will feed their nestlings in the spring.

The native grasses and forbs provide a beautiful silhouette for human eyes. There is nothing prettier than the russet color of little bluestem when snow is on the ground.

Provide additional protection for birds and wildlife by using cut or fallen tree branches of all sizes to form a brush pile. Finally, clean out nest boxes so that birds can use them for roosting during frigid nights. I'm about to do that right now as the first snow of the season is falling.

— Karen Rosene



*The same little bluestem plant in November. Photo by Karen Rosene.*

## President's Comments

We are fortunate to live in a community where people value open land and controlled development. Many property owners recognize the value of reducing invasive species like buckthorn in their yards and may even plant some natives to attract birds and butterflies. So in addition to the beauty of open lands, there is habitat value.



During our forty-three years, Citizens for Conservation has had the goal of acquiring and restoring or stewarding ecologically valuable land in the Barrington area. Years ago Waid Vanderpoel, one of CFC's early leaders, recognized the importance of creating corridors of land restored with native species in prairies, savannas, woodlands and wetlands to provide habitat for birds and other animals that need larger tracts of land to nest and thrive. CFC continues to have that as our goal and also recognizes that privately-owned land, properly maintained, can contribute significantly to these habitat corridors.

Now CFC's Community Education Committee is launching Habitat Corridors, an ambitious initiative to assist property owners in creating more ecologically valuable habitat in the Barrington area. Whether you own a small lot or many acres, you can contribute to the corridors of healthy habitat by removing invasive species in your yard, planting native species and employing earth-friendly yard maintenance practices that contribute to a healthy ecosystem. If you live in a planned community, perhaps you can introduce your neighbors or the property managers to this new challenge.

We will provide a variety of resources to assist you. We start with a series of winter programs on engaging topics to inform you about all you can do if you choose to get involved. We will introduce a new website, [habitatcorridors.org](http://habitatcorridors.org), with a wealth of resources, and there is more to come. In the spring, the Community Ed committee will schedule yard visits on request to advise you how to get started or to acknowledge your existing earth-friendly practices. Invite us to make a presentation to your garden club or other group to spread the enthusiasm. After all that effort to improve your property, you can proudly display a Habitat Corridors yard sign to acknowledge your results and promote others' involvement.

Recognize that open land by itself is not necessarily good habitat. Restore it with native plants that replace invasive species and cultivars and add biodiversity. Using natives and sustainable yard practices not only will add to the habitat value of your property but will contribute to the beauty of the area we all enjoy. Make this a New Year's resolution!

— Peggy Simonsen, President

## News Briefs

**Mural dedication:** On December 6, the Barrington 220 Early Learning Center (ELC) dedicated the mural painted by CFC member Susan Hanson. The “Four Seasons” mural was the culmination of a collaboration that included the Barrington 220 Educational Foundation, Citizens for Conservation and the Early Learning Center PTO. School district personnel including Superintendent Tom Leonard, ELC Principal Barbara Romano, faculty and staff, Educational Foundation members, family and friends of the artist, donors, students, PTO and CFC members joined to celebrate the completion of the beautiful 35-foot long mural that greets everyone who enters the Learning Center. Native trees, shrubs and other plants provide the background habitat for a wide variety of birds, animals and insects found in all seasons in the Barrington Area. District 220 had asked Citizens for Conservation to recommend an artist to paint the mural, and CFC also provided advice on the native plants in the mural. This was an exciting day for all who attended, and CFC looks forward to being part of plans to use the mural as a teaching tool.



*Native plants and animals in summer from Susan Hanson's "Four Seasons" mural. Photo by Diane Bodkin.*

**Village of Tower Lakes and Cuba Township win BACOG 2013 Donald P. Klein Award for “Purchase and Preservation of Barclay’s Woods”:** The partners in this project acquired a high value tract of land that had been slated for development and safeguarded it as a nature preserve. Partners and participants encompassed the two local governments, three local non-profit organizations including Citizens for Conservation, and four private contributors. The land provides a number of benefits to the BACOG area including protection of fifteen acres of valuable forested open land and wetlands and protection of groundwater recharge areas that supply area aquifers.

**Let your voice be heard:** Take the Healthier Barrington Survey! In February, the Healthier Barrington Coalition will send out the 2014 Healthier Barrington Needs Survey. The Coalition, which includes CFC as a founding member, has conducted the survey every three years since 1996 and offers

residents in the 60010 area an opportunity to provide input on various aspects of living in the Barrington area. Topics include the environment, transportation, recreation, education, healthcare, employment and more. If you receive a copy of the survey, please take a few minutes to share your viewpoint. Your voice will be heard, and you can help shape the future in the Barrington area.

**Do we have your current email address?** If you are not receiving the monthly *CFC e-News*, that means we don't have a correct email address for you. Please send us an update at [cfc@citizensforconservation.org](mailto:cfc@citizensforconservation.org) to receive the fun, fast and forward-focused *e-News*.



— Sam Oliver

*Native plants and animals in winter from Susan Hanson's "Four Seasons" mural. Photo by Diane Bodkin.*

### Thanks to ...

Margaret Hudson for sharing her talent by designing the distinctive logo for CFC's new Habitat Corridors program, who many years ago designed the attractive and unique CFC logo as well.

### Thanks from ...

Tisha Howell who wrote: “As a representative of Grove Avenue Elementary School P.T.O. ... I am delighted to notify you that we have selected Citizens for Conservation as one of the organizations to benefit from our Community Contributions Program. We applaud the great work you are doing to help protect and restore our natural resources. We have enclosed a check for \$200 that we hope will assist you in furthering the services you provide.”

Marion Tucker, a student at Columbia College, who wrote: “To the Members of Citizens for Conservation, Thank you so much for allowing me to film in Grigsby Prairie this past weekend. I appreciate the use of this beautiful space and the generosity of the members on site who donated their time. It was a privilege to film in the prairie and my crew and I enjoyed learning about its flora and fauna. Once again, thank you so much and I will be sure to send you a copy of the final product!”

Deer Grove East Volunteers, friends of CFC's Face Book, posted this message on CFC's page: “Our heartfelt thanks to Tom Vanderpoel and Citizens for Conservation for their generous gift of a bountiful supply of mesic prairie seeds for our restoration efforts. This means so much to a fledgling group like ours!”



## Fourth grade citizen scientists learn on the prairie

by Sam Oliver

Citizens for Conservation once again partnered with Barrington School District 220 to provide prairie field trips and instruction for all fourth graders in the district.

Students engaged in hands-on science experiences while learning the importance of preserving and restoring rare prairie plants and ecosystems. The activities were all part of the District's fourth grade science curriculum. While on the prairie, students measured and recorded native plant sizes, and when they returned to the classroom, they compared the data to that from previous classes' measurements dating back to 2009 when the program began.

They used their observational skills and drew prairie plants in increasing degrees of detail. They also spent time in the field collecting seeds of native plants, plants usually taller than the students. Citizens for Conservation shares those seeds in prairie restorations in the greater Barrington area. Students participated in "discovery walks" and were delighted to find interesting birds, bugs and insects along the way.

One of CFC's board members participated this year as a "seed gathering mentor." He said, "I cannot begin to tell you how delightful it is to interact with the students. I overheard one fourth grade girl state to her friends, 'I'm in my element now' because she was so excited to be there. This was not unique to her as most of the kids really enjoyed themselves while they learned."

This year the program involved 657 fourth graders, twenty different Citizens for Conservation field leaders and volunteers, and about 130 parent chaperones over a two week period. CFC volunteers visited every fourth grade class in the district to prepare students for the field trips to local preserves, either CFC's award-winning Grigsby Prairie or Flint Creek Savanna or to Forest Preserve District of Cook County's Spring Creek Prairie.

CFC Staff Director Sam Oliver has been especially involved in the project along with the many CFC volunteers who participated. Sam stated, "Our District 220 involvement is exciting because it is an integral part of the science curriculum."



*Rattlesnake master captivates fourth grade citizen scientists on a discovery walk at Spring Creek. Photo by Diane Bodkin.*

## Whooo goes there? Whooo wants to know? – about owls, that is!

by Pat Winkelman

Citizens for Conservation (CFC) Youth Education wanted to share more nature with the Barrington 220 School District. Currently, CFC's volunteers provide their experience and knowledge at the D220 fourth grade field trips. However, volunteers wanted to do more!

With a grant from the Barrington Junior Women's Club to help offset costs and with the approval from D220 Sunny Hill Elementary School, we could teach students about owls. Children from grades one through five were randomly selected to take part in this free educational opportunity. We also invited family members and other caregivers to join us, providing an occasion for the whole family to share and enjoy.



*Students dissect owl pellets. Photo by Diane Bodkin.*

After Youth Education volunteers gave a brief introduction about CFC, Dawn Keller of Flint Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation brought out the first owl. The almost one hundred attendees were in awe as Pennsylvania, a female great-horned owl, fluffed up her feathers and showed her beauty! Female owls are twice as large as their male counterparts. Participants also learned about owl habitat, food preferences, and camouflage. They learned how an owl uses its hearing to catch food, and they saw up close the glowing yellow eyes of the great-horned owl.

The next owl was Pip, a barn owl. The class was surprised to see such a small, mostly white owl. Pip thought he was going to free-fly and spread his wings for everyone to see. Dawn explained that owls are not able to digest bones and fur so that they regurgitate the matter like cats expelling hair balls. Dawn then told the children they would be dissecting owl pellets. There was definitely a look of uncertainty on their faces at the thought of dissecting a hair ball with bones.

Out came the pellets and directions on how to dissect them. Part of the educational process was a printed guide every child received to aid in identifying the bones. Children quickly found vole skulls (voles are a favorite meal of owls), a rat skull, bird skull, and several mouse skulls along with a leg, hip, and other bones. One child found a very large hip bone and thick leg bones, bones much too large for a mouse or vole. With Dawn's expert help, children identified the bones as those of an immature chipmunk. Finally, everyone had the chance to have his photo taken with Pennsylvania.

To learn more about CFC's youth education classes, call 847-382-SAVE (7283), visit [www.citizensforconservation.org](http://www.citizensforconservation.org), or email [youth-ed@citizensforconservation.org](mailto:youth-ed@citizensforconservation.org).

# CFC and BHPD combine to teach geo-caching with GPS

by Pat Winkelman

On November 9, our Youth Education Committee presented “Geo-caching with Citizens for Conservation.” It was a beautiful, sunny, albeit breezy day. Over fifty participants arrived at the Barrington Hills Riding Center to learn about using global-positioning units (GPS) to search for and locate caches hidden at the pastoral setting.

After a brief welcome by CFC volunteers, Jill Hidding of the Barrington Park District explained what geo-caching is all about. She explained that she had hidden caches on about three acres surrounding the horse barn and told how to use the geo-caching field guide that she provided to participants. She also showed how to use the GPS units. Seven teams set out to find eight hidden caches. The first cache name was “Bird” with waypoints of N42 08.240 and W13.267. Class members used a decryption key to decipher the word clues, and the groups stamped their field guides when they found a cache; they also wrote the letter from the cache in their guides.

Teams quickly learned that working together was important in finding the caches. Some caches were easy to find like a “rock” close to the front of a building while others were difficult to spot such as the cache in the small hole of a split rail fence. It was fun to watch parents and children work diligently and secretly (so the other teams didn’t see where they had found a cache). Participants could see the general location of the other teams but had to use the GPS units and clues to locate the tiny caches.



Team members find a cache at geo-caching event. Photo by Diane Bodkin.

Some groups used the GPS applications on their smart phones to help locate caches. Team five was first to find them all and was eager to return to the clubhouse as winds picked up and temperatures dropped.

Back in the warmth of the clubhouse, participants enjoyed juice-boxes donated by Costco of Lake Zurich while Jill explained where all eight caches were located. To end the day, participants made a holiday craft of decorated grape vine wreathes. After completing their wreathes, some participants ventured back outside to find the elusive cache and complete their field guides!

CFC thanks the Riding Club of Barrington Hills and Friends of Spring Creek for sponsoring us and the Barrington Hills Park District for allowing us to have the program at its riding center. We also thank Jill Hidding and the Barrington Park District for sharing the GPS units and her expertise. To learn more about geo-caching, contact Jill at [teamscourse@barringtonparkdistrict.org](mailto:teamscourse@barringtonparkdistrict.org).

Registration is now open for CFC Youth Education’s January 11 class “Raptors – Birds of Prey.” Contact [youth-ed@citizensforconservation.org](mailto:youth-ed@citizensforconservation.org) or call 847-382-SAVE (7283).



Grigsby Prairie stars in student film. Photo by Diane Bodkin.

## Students film at Grigsby

In early October, five students from the film class at Columbia College Chicago made a pre-approved visit to CFC’s Grigsby Prairie to make a video for a class assignment. Complete with dolly, rail track, super 16 mm film camera, six rolls of film and other equipment, the students filmed for six hours. Leader Marion Tucker, granddaughter of Norm Tucker, a CFC Life Member, sent a note thanking CFC for the volunteers who donated their time on site. She promised to send CFC a copy of the video “story” when it is complete.

## ***Volunteer Portrait***

### **Ralph Tarquino**

Being an intern at CFC was one of the most rewarding and memorable of my work experiences. The internship really helped me connect with issues and tasks that I was passionate about, and it had the added benefit of allowing me to spend some quality time with my dad Ralph.

He started coming to Saturday volunteer workdays, and I loved seeing him enjoy himself picking seeds, pulling weeds, and spending time with like-minded individuals. He really seemed to take to it, and when my internships ended and I went back to school, he continued to volunteer for restoration workdays. My dad would come home from volunteering and tell me all of the new things he had learned. It was great to be able to talk about things like the new invasive plant he had found or a property that he had not visited previously. I am really proud of the things that he has accomplished during his time with CFC, and the organization has benefitted him just as much as he has contributed to it.

Ralph has always enjoyed being outside, and volunteering gives him a release every weekend and a chance to connect with nature. He really appreciates the other volunteers and the great people like Tom who make the experience possible. I am very glad he has stayed involved with CFC and know that his contributions to the organization have had an impact. My dad has kept me connected to an organization that means a lot to me, and I am grateful for it.

— Kate Tarquino



*Volunteer Ralph Tarquino on a winter workday. Photo by Donna Bolzman.*

### **Silbrico's donation facilitates best results for native seeds !**

Once again Silbrico has donated large amounts of Perlite to CFC for mixing with our 2013 seed harvest. All of CFC and particularly the Restoration Committee are thrilled and grateful for this generous contribution.

This fall Silbrico gave CFC forty bags of Perlite with each bag containing four cubic feet of product. Restoration used every bit of it to create twelve different seed mixes that were spread over 460 acres of land.

As in past years, CFC volunteer Jim Voris drove board member Ginger Underwood to Hodgkins, Illinois to pick up the bags with his horse trailer.

Crum Perlite is an agricultural product specially processed by Silbrico for propagating and growing plants. The puffy white granules provide an ideal combination of absorptive capacity and insulating attributes. The granules help to retain water, air, and nutrients, protecting the seeds and improving conditions for germination.

CFC mixes Perlite with the native seeds volunteers pick from our preserves, creating a large pile of seed and Perlite for each individual seed mix. After gathering each mix in a separate container, volunteers transport each barrel to the appropriate habitat for volunteers to sow. The Perlite provides a method for spreading the seeds evenly and then nurturing them when they germinate in the spring.

CFC especially thanks Silbrico's Todd Kokes for his help and support.

### **Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale sells record numbers of plants**

by Karen Hunter

CFC sold nearly 150 trees and shrubs at its Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale. The increase in sales was mainly due to the loss of ash trees caused by the emerald ash borer. (Although everyone hates to lose a mature tree, the misfortune is mitigated when one replaces the ash with a native of another species.) People drove all the way from Crystal Lake, Bartlett, and Chicago to purchase native trees and shrubs.

We know you will love your new trees and bushes when they have adjusted to your yard and are growing and providing all the great environmental services that natives supply. Enjoy the pollinators and other little creatures they nourish.

CFC thanks everyone who shops at our Spring and Fall Plant Sales.



*Barrington resident and Superior Exhibits President Bob Hasse with two recently engraved signs. Photo courtesy of Superior Exhibits and Design.*

## New signs highlight CFC's preservation successes

by Diane Bodkin

We hope you've noticed the new cedar preserve sign at Flint Creek Savanna along Route 22. There are also new ones at Flint Creek Savanna South, Farm Trails North, Barrington Bog, and Wagner Fen. We hope the signs help people notice that CFC has saved and protected these beautiful natural preserves.

The new signs are the culmination of a project that Diane Bodkin, a CFC board member, started. She began discussions in 2011 with very generous donor-engravers, Bob Hasse, President of Superior Exhibits in Elk Grove Village, and Steven Klopack, owner of Design Signs in Addison. Both men generously helped create our beautiful signs.

Eleven volunteer painters accepted the tedious job of making the signs attractive: Doe Crosh, Bonnie Albrecht, Jerry Masino, Donna Bolzman, Pat Winkelman, Cindy Kozlowski, Diane Bodkin, interns Joel Rangel and Stephanie LoCasto, and Eagle Scout candidates Brendan Boutilier and Joe Flaherty. We thank all of our wonderful volunteers and others for helping us create these beautiful signs so that community members and passersby recognize our restored and/or managed nature preserves.



*All six signs painted and ready for installation. Front to back: Interns Joe Flaherty, Mitch Groenhof, Joel Rangel; Staff Director Sam Oliver; Intern Stephanie LoCasto; Board Member Diane Bodkin. Photo by Diane Bodkin.*

## Volunteers made a difference

On Make A Difference Day, the nation's largest day of community service, millions of volunteers across the country worked to improve the quality of life in their communities. At Citizens for Conservation, families, friends, youth and community groups composed of experienced as well as new volunteers gathered the seed of native plants at CFC's Grigsby Prairie. CFC workers processed that seed along with all of the other seed gathered during many seed collecting workdays this fall. CFC volunteers cleaned, weighed and mixed all of it for various ecosystems, and it was sown in appropriate areas of local restorations. That planting was completed by the end of November.



*Experienced and new volunteers gather seed on Make A Difference Day. Photo by Donna Bolzman.*

## Fulfilling experiences for Whole Foods volunteers

by Gene Branson

A total of thirty-six volunteers came to a CFC workday on September 14. About twenty-three of them were Whole Foods customers, children, and employees. Whole Foods supplied a buffet lunch of fresh fruit salads, cookies, and drinks for all the workday volunteers. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day.

This was the second year that the group has volunteered with CFC. They picked seeds, mainly from compass plant, wild bergamot, and coneflower.

While the volunteers were picking seed, they had an extended opportunity to view a pair of sandhill cranes looking for food in the backyard of one of our preserve neighbors.

CFC is grateful to Whole Foods for bringing such a large group to help us with our seed-picking task. We also send our thanks for the wonderful lunch!

## Upcoming Events

### **Community Education Programs for Winter, 2014**

We will present all programs at the Barrington Village Hall on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. See details on Page 4.

January 25 – Habitat Corridors and Environmentally Friendly Yard Maintenance

February 22 – Managing Rainfall and Water Resources at Home

March 22 – Gardening for Amphibians: Frogs, Toads, and Salamanders

April 12 – Gardening for Birds and Pollinators

### **Annual Native Plant Sale**

Check our website in late winter for the order form and pre-order information. Sale dates May 3 and 4, 2014.

### **Youth Education Classes**

January 11 – Raptors: Birds of Prey at Flint Creek Savanna, CFC headquarters

February 15 – Great Backyard Bird Count at Citizens Park in Barrington

April 5 – Astronomy at Flint Creek Savanna, CFC headquarters

### **The Natural History Society of Barrington**

All meetings will be held at Lake Barrington Woods, 22320 Classic Court, Lake Barrington, IL. at 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 20 – Members' Night – Three members will give 20 minute presentations:

- “Mammals of the U.S. and Canada” by Tony Szabados.
- “Naturalists and Nature Writers You Should Know” by Chuck Westcott.
- “The Galapagos Islands” by Peggy and Les Eastwood.

Thursday, March 20 – “A Birder Goes to South Africa” by Chuck Westcott, a long-time Society member.

Thursday, April 17 – “Mega-Fauna Occasionally Occurring in Illinois” by Chris Anchor, Chief Wildlife Biologist for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

Thursday, May 15 – “Madagascar” by Josh Engel, Research Assistant with the Field Museum and tour leader for Tropical Birding.

### **NHSB Outings**

Tuesdays, April 22 & 29 and May 6 & 13 at 8:00 a.m. – Spring Bird Walks at Crabtree Nature Center

Meet in the parking lot at Crabtree Nature Center off Palatine Road. Walks last about 2 hours.

## **Community fêtes Sam Oliver for her exceptional achievements**

by Meredith Tucker

On Monday night, November 18, an overflow audience paid tribute to Sam Oliver, resident, volunteer, and worker extraordinaire through the Library's Community Conversations. Sam's friends and acquaintances, more than sixty of them, with many audience members sitting on the floor, packed The Garlands Surround Sound Theater.

In “Heart of Gold: Sam Oliver” the Library's Barbara Alvarez interviewed Sam about her early life and her countless activities and accomplishments with educational, health, and environmental organizations. It is a cliché, but in this case true, that her resume would fill volumes rather than pages and is too long to review here in total. Among other things, she has played the flute since childhood often in a group with other flutists.



*Sam Oliver (left) with interviewer Barbara Alvarez. Photo by Bob Lee.*

Sam credited her early life in a small Iowa town with imbuing in her the spirit of helping. She has helped people in this country and elsewhere, and she helped establish Hospice in Barrington and was the first woman President of the American Heart Association of Metropolitan Chicago. She has been Staff Director of Citizens for Conservation since March, 1984.

Sam showed a video of CFC's properties and the children and other volunteers whose work is helping to restore them. Meanwhile, the video of this tribute will be available in the Library's Local History Archive as well as on YouTube. Sam hopes anyone viewing it in the future will find CFC stronger than ever, still Saving Living Space for Living Things.

After questions from the audience, Sam put on another hat and attended CFC's Board meeting immediately after the tribute. She doesn't let any grass grow under her feet!

# CFC installs plaque for the Peggy Richards Trail

Citizens for Conservation's Board of Directors unanimously agreed to name its Grigsby Prairie trail in honor of Peggy Richards. CFC wishes to memorialize in perpetuity her generous land donations. Board members John Schweizer and Doug Johnson installed the bronze plaque this December. Note the beautiful golden grasses surrounding it. We think Peggy would have loved it.



Photo by Diane Bodkin.



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