Citizens for Conservation

CFC NEWS

Saving living space for living things

Vol. 39, No.4, Fall/Winter 2020

Restoration Report

The "Sought-After Sixty" revisited

by Jim Vanderpoel

In the Summer 2017 issue of *CFC News*, CFC's Restoration Committee announced a new initiative. We made a list of species that we determined were underused in our restorations. Then we prepared a plan to increase the populations of these plants on our preserves. After three years, what have we done to execute our plan? What have we learned?

Planting bed with fire pink and two-flowered Cynthia. Photo by Patty Barten.

To begin with, we learned that it is good to have partners. Daniel Suarez, of BGI partner Audubon Great Lakes, liked our list and decided to do a lot of research and annotate the entire list with comments from the three great Chicago-area botanical studies. Second, our long-term collaborator Friends of the Somme Preserves said, "We like your list, do you want some seed?" Sure enough, they presented CFC with seventeen bags of cleaned seed of the desired species. Finally, our joint arrangement with Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) has led to a huge amount of activity. Luke Dahlberg took most of the Somme seed donation and collected a lot of seed (or spore in the case of ferns) on his own, and has grown many of our target plants at the LCFPD nursery. So far, Luke has planted the seeds of thirty-nine species at the nursery or CFC planting beds; thirty-six have germinated; Luke has collected seed from the nursery or CFC beds of fourteen species; and we have transplanted the nursery grown plugs of fifteen species into the beds, and fourteen into the wild!

Our own Native Seed Gardeners program and our planting beds are doing great work at producing the Sought-After Sixty. Last summer, we collected seed of fifteen of the sixty species from the beds. Our planting beds have become places of beauty in their own right. In June 2019, one of the new beds in the shaded area exploded in blazes of color from the brilliant scarlet of fire pink complemented by the yellow gold of two-flowered Cynthia.

The Sought-After Sixty are doing quite well in the garden setting at both the LCFPD Nursery and the CFC planting beds, but have we seen any progress in the field? After three years I would express guarded optimism. Some observations on the list, in alphabetical order by Latin genus name:

Prairie Milkweed - we have three specimens of this classic prairie denizen, two at Flint Creek and one at Grigsby—all three started precariously as spindly stalks and all three have grown in size and vigor by cloning. The problem is the ample flowers cannot self-pollinate among the other blossoms in the clone. The good news is we found one specimen between the two clones this summer, so for the first time we confirmed that it has self-sowed. Future specimens and future seed should be planted close by the existing colonies so they can continue to cross-pollinate.

Canadian Milk Vetch - The existing colony continues to thrive at Grigsby and we have increased our harvest—we have yet to see any seedlings though. It is doing very well in the planting beds so we have high hopes for eventual success.

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Short-awned Wood Grass - This one is the star performer of the initiative. CFC benefactors, the Rudisills, donated our original seeds of this handsome plant, which had survived as a remnant in their well-managed wooded yard. After years of slow, but steady, increase, it has now exploded at Flint Creek South—hundreds of clumps set seed and our harvest this year probably exceeded all of our past harvests combined. This dominant grass of the closed oak woodland is established and seed will be available for other BGI restoration projects. What's the worry? It only took twenty-five years!

Low Bindweed - what a strange case with this one—two months after we completed the list, we found a large colony at Grigsby—at least twenty huge blossoms—not one set seed. Ken Klick of LCFPD is also seeking seed for this plant—he has the same worry that it may require cross-pollination. The strategy must be to get unrelated specimens of these difficult species growing side-by-side so cross-pollination can occur.

Broad-leaved and Prairie Panic Grass - The experience with both of these small but important grasses is the same—both are doing great at the nurseries and both are slowly becoming more common and widespread in the preserves.

Marsh Phlox - This showy wet prairie plant is slowly coming by seed—Luke also transplanted several nursery-grown individuals to our recently cleared wet prairie habitat at Flint Creek South. This is an abundant plant in high quality remnant moist prairies so we'd love for this progress to speed up!

Yellow Water Crowfoot - this interesting buttercup grows in small shallow wetlands. We rescued some from a roadwork repair at a LCFPD site and transplanted it into some small potholes at Flint Creek—it would be great if it can take hold because it will add nice color to wetlands too small to grow water lily and pickerelweed.

Riverbank Dock - We never collected this plant in the early days of restoration—this is one that Friends of Somme gave us and Luke collected some seed from some different spots and has grown very successfully at the nursery. It transplanted very well—we hope it will become a prodigious seed producer like its close relative the great water dock. I would reward it the number two star on the Sought-After Sixty list.

Hard-stemmed Bulrush - We got this one at the Phil's Beach plant rescue. It transplanted very well into Kevin's streambed stabilization project along Flint Creek. It is important that we collect more seed of this plant so we have something that can replace the invasives in BGI wetlands.

Slender Wedge Grass - Several people said this wetlands grass is easy to restore—it should not even be on the list. The Friends of Somme gave us some seed, which I sowed at both Flint Creek and Grigsby. If it is as easy as some say, we should soon be able to collect a lot of seed and add it to our sedge meadow and shaded flood plain mixes. For whatever reason, we underused this plant in the past, so it should be a breeze to correct our past mistake.

Meadowsweet - This lovely member of the rose family was one of the rare complete shut-outs in our restoration efforts. It is a fairly common plant in intact remnant wet prairies and yet we have never seen a single one in any of our restorations. Well, that changed this summer! I participated in a workday this summer where I had the pleasure of transplanting into the Flint Creek sedge meadow some meadowsweet plugs grown by Luke in the LCFPD nursery. I hope it thrives.

Marsh Shield Fern - On the same workday, we planted this attractive fern. Ferns have not been easy to restore—they do not produce seeds, so we have not known how to collect their spores. Luke has figured out a way and has had some success in growing plugs. In general, ferns are present in every high quality remnant, no matter what habitat. I counted four species of fern on a one-hour walk at Gensburg Markham Prairie, the finest remnant prairie east of the Mississippi. You will not see any ferns at the typical restoration. We will anxiously anticipate finding out if they survive the winter and start spreading. I dream of some day seeing lady ferns in our oak woods, bracken at our savannas, and sensitive and marsh shield ferns at our sedge meadows. They should be there.

Prairie Violet - This has been one of our worst frustrations in prairie restoration. We have been collecting seeds of this species for years with minimal results. Two years ago, we discovered a nice population of thirty-five individuals blooming in the center of Grigsby—we might finally have it. We changed our technique on this one—we now sow the seed as soon as we collect them rather than storing them and adding them to the mixes in fall.

Smooth Yellow Violet - This plant was successfully introduced from plant rescues. It is spreading very nicely, but we still need to get this into our seed program so we can establish it at the larger BGI partner preserves without the labor-intensive effort of plant rescues; besides, the sad fact is there are not many unprotected woods left that still have plants worth rescuing.

Heart-leaved Meadow Parsnip - I'd award this parsley family member the number three star. It is slowly spreading from each of the twenty or so clumps that we plugged in over twenty years ago. We are collecting more and more seed from these populations and the planting beds. It is coming from seed very slowly. The great thing about this plant is that it seems to be very long living—as new ones appear, the old ones persist so the population is slowly growing.

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In summary, there is enough good news to be encouraged, but, in all honesty, we have had some very discouraging failures; for instance, cream false indigo has been growing and setting seed for years in our planting beds and yet we have not spotted a single seedling in the field. What are we doing wrong? Do we need to plant with inoculant? Is it just taking time? The odd thing is our success with all of the other legumes is one of CFC's claims to fame. Another daunting challenge is how to establish the two roses on the list—roses are real tough. We have collected pasture rose hips by the grocery bag full for over thirty years and just this year, for the first time, we actually had a pasture rose hip grown from broadcast seed ripen at Grigsby Prairie. How long will it be before swamp rose and Illinois rose will appear when we collect far fewer fruits of these two uncommon species? Well, we do not let these misses stop us as we resolve to make our preserves more potent by adding the Sought-After Sixty.

Notes from the Restoration Manager

Preserving through a pandemic

Kevin Scheiwiller. Photo by Jim Root.

As we are well too aware, life has become much more complicated due to COVID-19. Back in April of this year, there were many looming questions revolving around our restoration efforts. Would we be able to get out and pull garlic mustard or would it run rampant through our woods? Would we be able to plant any plugs in our ongoing wetland restorations? We had pretty much completely pawned off the entire seed season as there would be no way we could get enough volunteers to come out and help us put up the huge numbers of seeds collected in years past.

Fast forward to December. How blissfully wrong we were when we feared that the restoration effort would backslide this year! Early in the pandemic, it became abundantly clear that the safest place to be was, and still is, outside. What better way to enjoy the great outdoors than by giving back? Many stalwart volunteers continued to come out to pull garlic mustard by themselves. Slowly, we were able to start hosting small groups who planted sedges with vigor! Not only did we meet all our 2020 goals that were laid out in the beginning of the year, but even had time to help plant in the Lake and Cook County Forest Preserves as well.

By the time seed season rolled around, we were already functioning like a well-oiled, pandemic-defying machine! We learned how to wear masks, keep our distance, and kick butt all while following protocols. Thanks to the seed leadership of Jim Vanderpoel and Cliff Schultz, we were able to run many small, congruent workdays. All the added interest and volunteer opportunities allowed us to absolutely crush our previous seed season! This year, volunteers collected 698 pounds of 318 different native species. Compare that to the record breaking 2019 season of 519 pounds of 309 species. Just as nature continues about at its own pace, so too can we adapt to the new rhythms of 2020.

As if it wasn't enough getting all our sedges planted and smashing our seed records, we are also having one of the best fall burn seasons in CFC history. At the time of this writing, we have been able to burn four important units: Grigsby, Flint Creek Savanna – Golden Triangle, Flint Creek Savanna – Grand Prairie, and Flint Creek Savanna – Mike's Grove. This has already set us up for a fantastic bloom and seed season in 2021.

If a pandemic isn't enough to keep us from continuing to restore and give back to the land we call home, it is hard to think what, if anything, ever will!

— Kevin Scheiwiller

Workday protocols

Regular workdays continue every Thursday and Saturday from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. with some modifications as a result of pandemic protocols. Volunteer spots are strictly limited and determined by the activity and number of team leaders available for each event. You must pre-register to participate in any workday. If you do not have a confirmed reservation, you will not be able to participate. Please email kevin.scheiwiller@citizensforconservation.org to RSVP. Once your spot is confirmed, please bring your own face mask, work gloves, water, and snack. If you would like to be added to our email group to receive notification of upcoming workdays, please email kevin.scheiwiller@citizensforconservation.org.

Bluebird monitor report

by Laura Simpson and Barb Laughlin-Karon

Eastern bluebird on nest box.
Photo by Barb Laughlin-Karon

The CFC Eastern Bluebird and Purple Martin Monitoring Programs produced some tremendous results this year. Despite the limitations presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to monitor each trail and nest box fairly consistently and collect data from the 2020 breeding season.

We were thrilled with the success we documented on the Eastern bluebird trails. Our Eastern bluebird populations fledged 59 bluebirds this year, which is 36 more than in 2019—a 156% increase! Using research and recommendations from the North American Bluebird Society and the Cornell School of Ornithology Nestwatch program, we had moved some nest boxes to more optimal habitat and experimented with pairing nest boxes to change the dynamics of competition between species. We found that on the trails where these changes were made, we saw the greatest increase in number of fledges. We believe the changes we made increased the chances of successful breeding and this will help us look at where additional changes can be made going into the next breeding season. We will also be adding a trail to Craftsbury Preserve before the next season.

Of the other species occupying the bluebird nest boxes, tree swallows fledged 50 nestlings this year, which is down 7 from 2019, and likely due to the increased numbers of bluebirds occupying the nest boxes. House wrens also fledged 17 nestlings, which is up from 0 in 2019.

Purple martin house.
Photo by Barb Laughlin-Karon.

We were also very encouraged by the results of a renewed effort to monitor purple martins at CFC. The purple martin house at Flint Creek Savanna holds 16 compartments. Twelve of the compartments had successful purple martin nests with a total of 56 eggs. By the end of the breeding season, 44 purple martin nestlings successfully fledged. During the monitoring season, we observed a regular group of 24 adults roosting on and flying around the house. By now, the purple martins have migrated to their winter grounds in South America and we look forward to seeing them again in the spring. Thanks to the kind donation from Brenda Borkenhagen and Debbie Koehn, we have added a second house that will be ready for them when they return. The houses will be lowered and covered for winter.

Our data collection gets reported to the Cornell School of Ornithology Nestwatch program, the Lake County Forest Preserve District, and the Purple Martin Conservation Association. We would like to thank McHenry County Audubon for their generous donation of 20 nest boxes this season, which allowed us to replace some older boxes and add some boxes to the trails. We also would like to thank the monitors who were able to give more of their time to us this season, allowing us to monitor consistently in spite of the limitations presented by the pandemic.

Purple martin chicks in nest.
Photo by Barb Laughlin-Karon.

News from Habitat Corridors

Introducing Alicia Timm, new Habitat Corridors chair

After growing up in Oak Park and Elmhurst, I received a Bachelor's degree in Latin American Studies and Women's Studies from Knox College in Galesburg, IL. I worked in corporate administrative positions and at Trader Joe's while raising my children.

I have been a full-time volunteer since 2018. My interest in native plants and native habitat began when I found CFC's website, which changed my vision for my new property from one of perennial cultivars that would bloom through all seasons to that of native habitat for wildlife. Meredith Tucker came to my new home for a Habitat Corridors visit, and we

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Habitat Corridors *(continued)*

Alicia Timm.

discussed removing invasive species from my yard and introducing native species.

Since 2018, I have also served as Volunteer Chair on the board of the Ancient Oaks Foundation of the Lake Zurich area. I learned about native plants at volunteer workdays at CFC properties, Village of Lake Zurich green spaces restored by Ancient Oaks Foundation, and Heron Creek Forest Preserve. I have volunteered at native plant sales for CFC and Openlands. I am close to completing the courses required for certification in the Natural Areas Conservation Training (N-ACT) Program at Morton Arboretum.

I took most of the leaf close-up photos for the CFC Native Plant Database to help users identify shrubs and trees on their own properties or when wandering in nature. I also updated the CFC Native Plant Database with plant associates of the shrubs and trees we offer at our plant sales. This information helps CFC members and plant sale customers understand the native forbs, sedges, grasses, and ferns often found growing in nature with the shrubs and trees.

On my own property I have added a rain garden and swale utilizing sump pump and downspout water. I have added over fifty species of native plants and shrubs including a Swamp White Oak, the ultimate native to add to any property.

—Alicia Timm

Alicia's rain garden/swale. Photo by Alicia Timm.

Summer intern reflections

A few thoughts from three of our 2020 summer interns:

Dane Dalton is a senior at Iowa State where he is completing his degree in Environmental Science.

I am not sure how to start this other than to thank Citizens for Conservation and the Oberweiler Foundation for having me back on the CFC intern team! I was very excited to come back as the intern crew leader this year, as well as to work with the restoration manager, Kevin Scheiwiller, who is an encyclopedia for restorations! Last year I learned so much about restoration work, and this year I was able to apply what I had learned, as well as pick up loads of new knowledge. I had been unsure as to what I wanted to do after college all my life, but I think I have found what I enjoy most.

Summer interns Sophia, Audrey, Matt, and Dane with Larry Anglada. Photo by Patty Barten.

I will not lie; restoration work can be tough. Spending nearly every day outside sends you home exhausted. While this may sound unappealing, whenever I get home and finally sit down to relax, I get a sense of fulfillment. Our work has helped the world, and my friends and I had fun doing it. It is so amazing to be in an environment where the people around you share the same passions as you do. Every second of what seemed like a short summer was a joy. Coming back to CFC has only confirmed for me that restoration is the path I want to take.

I have so many fond memories from this summer, but there is, of course, one that stands out. Arguably the best day that we had was taking a field trip to Nachusa Grasslands. Seeing its roughly 4,000 acres of connected land was not only beautiful, but a great learning experience. We learned how ecosystems like prairies and savannas connect, we saw side by side comparisons of old and new restorations, and we were able to see the equipment and processes used to restore it all. We got a glimpse of what nature used to look like, and it was stunning; I have never seen more butterflies and birds in my life. It is a trip I will never forget and a place I will most definitely return to.

The people I have met through my time at CFC have had a major impact on me. I do not think I met a single person who has not taught me something. I especially want to thank Kevin,

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Intern reflections *(continued)*

for being a massive influence and showing me the ropes of restoration. I did not think it was possible for a human being to know so much and be so passionate about anything! Not only that, but he is also a great friend.

A huge thanks again to everyone who had been involved in my summer. Each of you made my summer that much better, and I hope to see everyone again at volunteer workdays! If anyone is reading this and has not been to a volunteer workday, I urge you to go and try one out. I do not think there is a better way to spend a morning than being outside, helping the Earth, and admiring everything it has to offer. I guarantee you will learn something new from Kevin, as well as many of the other volunteers we regularly see. Don't forget to stop by and talk to Katherine Grover if you see her working hard in the native seed garden. She has this special power that allows her to recite all the scientific names of each plant in there. And trust me, there are a lot!

Audrey Taillon is a sophomore at Wellesley College where she is pursuing environmental related studies.

Audrey Taillon. Photo by Juliann LaRocque.

I came home every day this summer covered in mud or seeds, but I learned more in those ten weeks than any year of school could teach me. Last summer, I spent a few weeks coming out to workdays with CFC, but at the time I wasn't at all sure what I wanted to do or study other than general environmental sciences. The brief introduction into conservation that volunteering gave me helped guide my interests during my first year in college though and I found myself wanting to learn more about ecology and the natural world. For the hands on experience I've gained in ecology, I'm so grateful the intern program continued this summer despite uncertainties with the pandemic.

What I most appreciated about CFC's internship was how the work we did reflected so much of what I've learned in classrooms in a tangible way. We're always taught that ecosystems provide services such as regulating air and water quality and preventing erosion; I had the chance to see this firsthand through our work planting sedge plugs in simple matrices that will fill out in the next two to three years and become a beautiful and natural water filtration system. Finishing the west bank of Flint Creek with the volunteers and planting all the BGI flats of sedges at Craftsbury felt like such amazing accomplishments (I think I can say this for all four of us interns) and even though the work was hot and muddy, those were some of the best days of the summer.

I'm also so proud of the fact that now I can recognize all kinds of prairie, wetland, and savanna plants. Watching the landscape of the sites we worked at change over the course of the summer as new plants bloomed and others went to seed was beautiful to witness. This phenology of native plants is important to restoration since it determines when each plant's seed should be collected, but I learned that it is also crucial to the overall dynamism of the ecosystem. I remember we noticed a killdeer mother and her nest early on in the summer and although her eggs didn't make it, I realized that she depends on the less densely vegetated floodplain of a sedge meadow to raise her young, which she wouldn't be able to do if the floodplain was a monoculture of reed canary. Helping bring back the habitat that threatened wildlife species need is especially compelling to me, and so one of the highlights of the internship was meeting the Moth Man (Rich Teper) who told us about *schinia lucens*, a threatened moth that depends solely on leadplant. He asked us to keep an eye out for the larvae, and although I can't say for sure if we successfully confirmed the couple of larvae we did find, I had a great time checking every leadplant we came across and adding a bit of ecological monitoring into our work. What's important though is that the *schinia lucens* and countless other insects and animals are the indicators of a healthy ecosystem. Seeing them slowly return to even a suburban area is proof that CFC's efforts are valuable to both wildlife and our human community too.

Interns Matt, Sophia, Audrey, and Dane. Photo by Patty Barten.

Another aspect of restoration and working with the natural world that I learned from our internship was how to approach managing a natural area. I found our collaboration with Smart Farm on their new permaculture plot an insightful way to manage land; agriculture is after all a big part of the modern world and I think that incorporating native plants with crops could be a way to continue producing just as much while maintaining healthier soil. As for our work in ecological restoration, Kevin showed us the early stages of the Craftsbury West restoration plan which we saw entailed cutting down all the buckthorn first; from there though it's difficult to decide what to do next. I was amazed to find how complicated the entire restoration process truly is; as a fairly new science, a lot of it is experimentation to see what works, from deciding how and when to remove invasives to which environments each plant species will thrive in. Since every plot of land varies, slightly different approaches need to be considered as well, including how to nurture a potential native seed

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Intern reflections *(continued)*

bank or combat an invasive one. Tackling these challenges through experimentation really excites me and to keep up what I learned during the internship, I'm looking forward to hopefully starting a small project restoring a meadow on my college campus this year.

Matt Sarnowski is pursuing interests in renewable energy and zero emission solutions at Purdue University where he is a sophomore.

I cannot thank CFC enough for the opportunity I got this past summer. It was amazing to be a part of such an awesome organization full of dedicated volunteers that worked so hard to create these amazing native areas that are so overlooked in our world today.

My time as an intern opened me up to so many areas of study that all fit under the umbrella of environmental science. Of all those fields that come together at CFC, the botany side of it all was one that I found particularly interesting. Having never taken any botany classes in high school or throughout my young college career, my first exposure to the field was at CFC. Having the opportunity to learn about a large variety of plant species allowed me to develop a different appreciation for native ecosystems like the ones found at CFC.

I want to give a big thank you to Kevin for everything he did for us throughout my ten weeks as an intern. It was amazing to see how much he knew about the field. He never missed an opportunity to pause from what we were doing and take the time to introduce us to new plants or ecosystem functions that we may have never been exposed to. His patience with the other interns and me as we tried to learn the field was also very much appreciated. In my opinion, what made Kevin so great to work with is his work ethic. He is obviously very passionate about the field and that really allowed me to develop a greater interest in it as well.

I would also like to thank Larry Anglada for giving me the opportunity to become an intern. His knowledge and experience allowed me to learn so much from him. I wish him well as he departs from CFC.

This summer at CFC impacted me in many ways. Not only was the internship experience extremely valuable for future career opportunities, it also solidified my decision to pursue a career in environmental science. Having the opportunity to apply what I had learned from my high school and college courses was very cool, but it also made me realize how much more I need to learn. Again, I wish to thank everyone at CFC for an amazing summer, no matter how tiring it was at times. This organization is truly doing amazing work. Though the internship has ended, I hope to remain involved as much as possible in the future.

Applications for CFC's 2021 Summer Internship Program are now being accepted. More information and application at this link: https://forms.gle/G8Dg1zsod5aNfXnb9

2021 Community Education programs

Winter 2021 Community Education Programs are free and offered in virtual webinar format due to COVID-19 guidelines. We thank the Barrington Area Library for partnering to host these sessions. To participate, please register at the link provided on the program description. The entire Winter CFC Community Education series is available at https://balibrary.librarycalendar.com or you can call the library at 847-382-1300 to register and provide an email for connection. You can also send questions to communityed@citizensforconservation.org or call 847-382-7283.

50 Ways to Improve Habitat in Your Yard
Saturday, January 16, 2021 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Peggy Simonsen, Director, CFC

Photo by Peggy Simonsen.

Celebrating CFC's 50th anniversary, Peggy will share important ways to use shrubs, trees and native plants in all seasons, water resources and earth-friendly practices to increase habitat for birds, pollinators and other useful critters. Peggy is the Chair of CFC's Community Education Committee and former president of CFC. She has improved habitat in her yard with over 200 species of native plants.
https://balibrary.librarycalendar.com/events/50-ways-improve-habitat-your-yard

Backyard Wildlife: If You Build It, They Will Come
Saturday, February 20, 2021 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Stephen Barten, Naturalist

Photo by Stephen Barten, DVM.

Using observation, photography and trailcam videos, Stephen has documented 20 species of mammals and 15 species of reptiles and amphibians, plus myriad birds after 25 years of clearing buckthorn and other invasives and planting native plants in his yard. His message is clearly the benefits of restoration, encouraging others to improve the habitat in their own yards to achieve similar results. Stephen is a veterinarian at Vernon Hills Hospital and an accomplished photographer.
https://balibrary.librarycalendar.com/events/backyard-wildlife-if-you-build-it-they-will-come

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Education programs *(continued)*

Stormwater Management Success
Saturday, March 13, 2021 10:00-11:30 a.m.
Andy Hays, Project Manager, Village of Tower Lakes
Andy Hays will share the process that Tower Lakes used to reduce pollution from reaching the community's lakes and to reduce the volume of stormwater entering drainage systems. His community's success can be replicated by homeowners and residential neighborhoods. Andy was project manager for their Raingardens and Bioswales project and the recipient of Lake County's Steward of the Year award in 2020.
https://balibrary.librarycalendar.com/events/stormwater-management-success

Photo by Andy Hay.

Winter – a time for children to observe

by Julia Martinez

These short days, at times, it feels like there's less to see in the outdoors. While many species have migrated or gone dormant, children have the opportunity to make sense of the observations they've made while exploring during the warmer months. While there is plenty still to see, the chilly weather encourages us to crack open a book inside and answer some questions that have been percolating for months. This fall, while walking to the park, I spied a paper wasp nest. While it was there all season, the fall allowed the nest to be seen without actively searching. Spotting the paper wasp nest (or was it a hornet nest?), I decided to read up on wasps a bit. Like bumblebees, only the queen survives the winter. While it takes a great amount of faith to put the continuation of the species on individuals like that, encouragingly, it has worked for generations. She will start from scratch, as the nest from the previous year will not be used again. Some wasps are solitary—a mother taking care of her young on her own, and others have clear hierarchy systems in which each individual has well-defined roles and diets. Wasps and hornets will feed their young insects and whatever they can scavenge from your picnic table whereas bees stick to foods found at flowers. While insects that are so much a part of the summer may seem gone for the present, they're still all around. They're resting in a crack in the foundation or waiting in the leaf litter in the backyard. During the colder months, we have the opportunity to slow down. As they wait for the days to lengthen, we can still encourage the children in our lives to keep exploring. Whether we choose to perform Google searches to answer questions that cropped up over the summer, crack open a book such as *A Field Guide to the Familiar*, or keep making observations over the winter, there remain ample opportunities to discover the natural world with children.

Paper wasp nest. Photo by Julia Martinez.

Fourth graders on the prairie, primarily virtually

by Edith Auchter

Like everything else this year, the twelfth year of the award-winning prairie field study was anything but normal due to COVID. Over the summer, Barrington School District 220 advised CFC the field trips would not be allowed in the fall even if schools were in session. District 220 shared ideas they gleaned as effective with elementary students during spring virtual learning. They asked if CFC would be interested in providing a virtual experience recorded by volunteers which students could watch online, offering visit dates on weekends or evenings so students could attend with their families, or having a Zoom session with CFC volunteers including a question and answer session. After discussions among volunteers, CFC decided to do it all.

When contacted in August, the District's BHS TV teacher offered the opportunity to work with CFC to prepare educational videos to his high school students. Many thanks to Annie Thyfault for volunteering to meet Kevin Scheiwiller and me at Flint Creek Savanna for several video sessions on two beautiful, sunny days. Annie condensed the video, added some stills and video provided by CFC, and produced two short educational videos focused on the structure and function of prairie plants as well as restoration of prairies. As Kevin commented, "Neither of us will be giving up our day jobs for an acting career." We hope you enjoy watching the videos prepared for fourth graders. They can be accessed at https://youtu.be/KUi0ZqElIe8 and https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DcbXavwoLzngesvnAHswvB1W2NaNXLav/view?usp=sharing

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Fourth graders *(continued)*

An optional field experience sponsored by CFC was held from 4:00-5:30 p.m. at Younghusband Prairie on September 21-23. District 220 communicated the message to all fourth graders and their families, and all were thrilled CFC offered this opportunity. Almost 50 students from all eight of the district's elementary schools participated in a very enjoyable prairie immersion. Those who attended were thanked and provided information about CFC. As usual, we had a terrific response from CFC volunteers which is thoroughly appreciated. COVID protocol of masks and social distancing was required.

Zoom sessions were held with every fourth grade classroom in the district over a two-week period to provide information about prairies. Students were encouraged to help make a difference by volunteering to restore this endangered ecosystem. Many thanks to Larry Anglada and Angela Llerena who each volunteered to present a session while I presented to six elementary schools. Following each presentation, we were able to answer students' questions about the prairie. Several students who had participated in the prairie immersion shared their discoveries with classmates during the Zoom. They were delighted to act as ambassadors for prairie stewardship.

Many thanks to all who participated and contributed to the success of this year's program! Special thanks to Peter Whitney who stepped in to coordinate responses from volunteers and students for the prairie immersion while I was away. Please send me an email (edith.auchter@citizensforconservation.org) if you are interested in volunteering next year.

CFC Video Root and Structure Focus

Thank you Silbrico Corporation

It's time again for CFC to thank Todd Kokes and our Silbrico friends for generously donated 50 plus bags of Coarse Krum Horticulture Perlite to CFC for our annual seed mixing. The perlite is an essential component for success as it helps bond with the tiny seeds for even distribution in the mixing. It also serves as an extender, helping volunteers see where the seed mix has been sown for better coverage during hand sowing. Thank you to Silbrico for supporting nature by sharing your high performance, environmentally friendly perlite with us.

Water: essential for life and bird watching!

by Meredith Tucker

If you enjoy watching birds in your yard and if you want to help make their lives less stressful, add a birdbath to your property. There are so many choices: baths on pedestals, French baths a foot above ground, cement or pottery bowls to place on the ground or on patios. Wherever you put the bath, the birds will appreciate your providing them with this necessity of life.

Some people who enjoy watching birds don't want the mess they may make under feeders. Others don't want the expense of buying seed. Providing clean water has neither of those disadvantages.

I am a bird fanatic, so I have eight baths on my one-acre lot. I love watching the birds drink and bathe. Here are a few things to consider if you are installing a bird bath or adding a new one.

Put the bath where it is easy to fill with your hose so that you will keep the water fresh on a daily basis. Dirty water is disgusting and can spread disease. Additionally, birds come to rely on specific properties and may really need your water on occasion.

Bird bath. Photo by Meredith Tucker.

Try having several baths at different heights. Some birds like pedestal birdbaths; others like to drink and bathe close to the ground. One of my favorite baths (and it is the favorite of my robins) sits on top of a three-foot tall ash stump. When I had the tree cut down because of emerald ash borer, I purposely had the stump left high so that I could use it for this purpose. The robins love it. They can easily see around them as they bathe, so that they feel safe from predators. The location also makes it easy for me to watch them!

If possible, place your birdbath where you can see the birds use it. A few years ago, I was regularly visited by a pair of mallards even though I am nowhere near a water source. The female

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Bird baths *(continued)*

Heated bird bath in January. Photo by Meredith Tucker.

would recline in the middle of the bowl while her mate kept watch near her.

Of course, other creatures will use the water as well. I have watched squirrels drink from the baths, and I feel sure that skunks and raccoons do so at night. Sometimes the water in one of my ground baths is filthy with mud, a sure sign that a raccoon was washing its food there.

Finally, I keep a single heated bird bath going all winter. The birds love it! One can purchase heated baths that just plug in to an outdoor outlet. (I use a heavy duty extension cord to locate it where I can watch.) Unfortunately, I have never had one of these baths last more than a single season. Now I use one of my large cement baths set slightly above ground in a raised ring (left from the defunct heated bath). Then I put a horse trough heater into it. As long as the element is covered in water, this heater lasts for years as it is made for heavy-duty service. (It will not work in a plastic bath; its heat could melt the bath.)

Just as you enjoy the summer birds, I think you will enjoy watching the winter birds this year if you try a heated bath. You will also have the satisfaction of knowing that you are making the lives of these native creatures a little easier.

A year to be grateful

by Amanda Moller

Prairie burn. Photo by Amanda Moller.

If there ever was a year to make us appreciate the outdoors for its beauty and the respite it provides us, it has certainly been 2020. For some it has meant spending more time outdoors than ever before and for others it has meant staying home and yearning to do the

Seed collecting. Photo by Amanda Moller.

activities you enjoy most. Volunteers are always on our minds as we look forward to seeing familiar and new faces at prairie restoration workdays, getting help in the office, and working with each other on efforts such as bluebird monitoring, fourth graders on the prairie, membership, sponsorships, and the spring and fall plant sales. There were still many folks we got to see as we are lucky that restoration can be done distanced from each other and other group efforts could be moved to online meetings, which is just a new skill to add to the 'ol toolbelt. We are grateful for our community of volunteers who were still able to have an impact on our environment and community this year. Tons of work was still done outside in smaller groups, beautiful wildlife and landscape pictures were still taken and posted on social media, we still had a bigger than ever Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale, we still had youth camps, and so much continued to be done behind the scenes. Even with everything 2020 could hit us with, it is great that records were still broken in the area of seed collection! Thank you to everyone who has stood by us with your time and energy to keep restoration and CFC moving forward. We are beyond grateful!

During this tough year it has meant not everyone felt safe or maybe did not feel like doing the things they would normally want to do. So while we think of and thank all those that volunteered and gave what they could this year, please know we are also thankful for all those who have kept us on their minds but are taking care of themselves and their families. We can't wait for the day when you are ready to jump back in or maybe when you are up for trying to help in another way from home. Whenever that time is in 2021, we will be happy and grateful to see or hear from you.

As we move into our 50th anniversary year, we look not only to celebrate an amazing past but also to plan for the future. How can we improve the volunteer experience? Do volunteers wish to attend trainings or certifications to support conservation efforts? How else can we show our appreciation beyond our current efforts? If you would like to join the Volunteer Support committee to meet quarterly to discuss and plan, please email Amanda Moller at amanda.moller@citizensforconservation.org. Feedback and suggestions are always welcome any time of the year.

Save the date: CFC Annual Meeting

CFC's 2021 annual meeting which will kick off our 50th Anniversary celebrations will be held on Thursday, March 11th. Stayed tuned for further details to come.

A new addition

by Tom Benjamin and Juliann LaRocque

The Build Team volunteers. Photo by Juliann LaRocque.

Have you noticed the beautiful deck leading to the back-door entrance of CFC's headquarters farmhouse? It is part of a landscaping plan that has been ongoing by our Landscape Committee for the past year. The deck construction required more skill than what CFC's Building and Grounds Committee was capable of, so "The Build Team" (TBT) was contacted to find out if this would be something that would fit with their mission. Fortunately, this local not-for-profit volunteer team of builders was formed to give back to the community and was eager to help CFC.

After our first meeting with TBT, Jim Peterson, a retired architect from Deer Park, drew up some plans for our deck and met with the TBT crew that would be doing the construction phase. Once the materials list was created and ordered, we found an unexpectedly lengthy waiting period for the materials to arrive. Again, we lucked out when the materials came in earlier than expected and TBT rearranged their schedule to take advantage of the few last beautiful fall days.

Construction began October 24th with four experienced TBT team players—Jerry Roman, Matt Kerekes, David Brooks, and Peter Shaeffer who delivered quality in their work and a smile behind their masks as they shared their talents and time at CFC. The layout and setting of the piers were the initial steps that needed to be accomplished; it was soon discovered how compacted the soil and rock were around the house foundation. Even with the use of a power auger, an entire day was needed getting the holes drilled and cement poured for the setting of the piers. Once the piers were in and set, the framework began allowing the size/shape of the deck to fit in with the headquarters building.

While the construction work was proceeding, Jerry came up with several finishing touches that enhanced the visual aspect of the structure. Plugs were used with the countersink decking screws thus hiding the screws completely. He also used a white facia material to blend in the under structure of the deck with the color of the building. The finishing work of a few add-ons will be completed as weather permits.

Our hats off to The Build Team—Jerry, Matt, Pete, and Dave, who totally complemented each other while working together. They were thoroughly professional, detailed, and efficient. Every day they relayed their progress and took great care of our site by keeping the entire area clean and safe for our other volunteers. We owe much gratitude to them for donating their volunteer hours, which turned into days, and a beautiful addition to CFC's Headquarters!

The Build Team at work. Photo by Tom Benjamin.

Notes from the Nursery

Recalcitrant seeds

Many who have participated on our seed collecting volunteer days know the sheer volume of seeds that end up in paper and plastic bags at the end of a hard-earned workday. A vast number of our native plants have adapted to produce seeds in the fall before they either die out or go dormant for the winter. This ensures that the seeds go through stratification, a process where dormancy mechanisms are broken down gradually through the winter to allow the embryo inside the seed to germinate once the soil warms in the spring. This is why we sow seeds of most of our native plants in the fall. But there are also native plants that produce their seeds throughout the growing season beginning in late spring and going through the summer. The vast majority of these seeds fall into a category of seeds known as recalcitrants, and understanding

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Notes from the Nursery *(continued)*

Bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis) seed. This species greatly benefits from being sown several days after collecting. The white appendage is called an eliaosome, a fatty substance to help aid the seed's dispersal by ants.

their nature could be a key tool in restoring and conserving these species. Recalictrant, or hydrophilic, seeds require much different handling and storage. Most seeds—whether the vegetable or annual seed packets you can buy at the store, or wildflowers and grasses collected in the wild—can reduce the moisture contents in their endosperm (the starchy component of a seed) to a very low rate (5%-20%). This is a great benefit to us because we can store seeds for long periods of time to use later, such as heirloom varieties of vegetables, or flower cultivars that you want to use in containers again for a different year. In the case of restoration, we can allow many of our native wildflowers and grasses to dry out in storage until we sow them in the colder months of fall and winter. Unlike those seeds, recalcitrant seeds have high moisture contents (45%-60%). Some have an undeveloped embryo that needs more moisture to progress their development, and others were formed inside a fleshy fruit where drying was not possible. If allowed to dry out, their viability drops rapidly, even resulting in the death of the seed itself.

Seedlings of Prairie Phlox (Phlox pilosa fulgida) that germinated this October. Seeds were sown fresh in July. I have had great results with this method, and the seedlings survive the winter in this stage with no problems.

So why is this important? Going back to an earlier statement, many of our native plants that go to seed from late spring to mid-summer fall in this category. These include spring woodland wildflowers such as bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) and bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), spring prairie forbs such as prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa fulgida*) and prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*), many of our warrior sedges, and trees and shrubs with either fleshy fruit or nuts. In my experience with this group of seeds, I try to sow them within a week of collection either in trays or directly into the wild. If I have to hold on to them for a longer period of time, I will store them in damp sand or vermiculite in a Ziploc bag until I need to sow them. Through many tests and trials, this has allowed me to grow hundreds of plugs of wetland sedges from seeds (many in the commercial trade are produced through divisions of rhizomes), and dozens of our rare spring prairie wildflowers. When I sowed these seeds in the fall after they had completely dried out, I had very little to no germination.

How does this information help us? Regionally, many are having difficulty restoring these key species, and sowing recalcitrant seeds that are dried out could be a factor. While we do have some of these key species slowly coming up in our restorations, could sowing them relatively fresh increase their germination rate and increase their numbers? Or are other factors such as competition with other plants or soil conditions another factor? The last couple of years we have been testing out a "Fourth of July" seed mix on CFC properties to see if the early sowing helps the process of reintroduction. These species are cleaned and sown around early to mid-July by CFC interns and volunteers. It will likely take several years before we see any significant results, but giving the right treatment methods to these recalcitrant seeds could be a key turning point in making our high-quality restorations even better.

— Luke Dahlberg

CFC celebrates its 50th

Citizens for Conservation was founded by a group of concerned citizens in 1971. We've come a long way since then and, to mark that milestone, we are planning a number of special community-based, 50th Anniversary Celebration events for 2021. We hope you will join our celebration throughout the year as we look forward to another fifty years of Saving Living Space for Living Things. Details will be announced in the near future. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

Record breaking fall plant sale

by Matt Hokanson

The 2020 Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale was an astounding success. There were an incredible number of sales and we smashed any previous records that had been set. We were able to get over 545 trees and shrubs into the hands of people this year. It was great to see so many smiling faces as everyone came to pick up their order.

This year the sale was held at a new location—Freier Farm in Lake Barrington. The new location worked out fantastically as there was ample space for the deliveries, laying out and organizing the orders, and for customers to pick up their order. The pickup times were spaced out in specific time slots to allow for proper social distancing. It worked out very well.

A tremendous thank you to all who helped as these native plant sales would otherwise not be possible. Sarah Hoban, Patty Barten, Juli LaRocque, and Judy Springer worked hard to promote the sale. Dave Underwood worked his usual magic with the website. The online pre-order system makes the whole sale possible and operates like a well-oiled machine.

The almost overwhelming number of trees and shrubs that had been delivered were unloaded and sorted with wonderful efficiency. Alicia Timm, Ginger Underwood, Peter Whitney, Pete Landwehr, Bill Reid, Patty Barten, and Amanda Moller worked extremely hard with the delivery and were amazing. Also, a big thank you to Jim Voris for making the usual trip to one of the nurseries to pick up one of the orders so we can save on delivery costs. The customer pickup that occurred throughout the weekend of the sale was staffed by myself, Charlie Keppel, Lisa Pool, Pete Landwehr, Janet Agnoletti, Joanne Sullivan, Alicia Timm, Juli LaRocque, Peter Whitney, and my lovely wife, Erin Hokanson. Thank you for your patience and help with getting the plants into people's hands. Everything went very smoothly.

Looking forward to the 2021 plant sales and the hope that we are able to be just as successful and break more records!

Shrubs awaiting pickup. Photo by Matt Hokanson.

Unloading plants. Photo by Matt Hokanson.

Movies we like

Need some hope about our planet? We suggest the new documentary *Kiss the Ground*. The film provides an easy to understand overview of the importance of plants and soil to controlling climate change through biosequestration. Well worth your time to watch. This is why you see CFC partnering with other organizations like Smart Farm and Mindful Waste to create demonstration areas and methods that improve soil. Our efforts to cultivate native plants, restore prairies, and improve habitats also improve the soil. There is hope for the future if we work together.

Kiss the Ground - The story of a simple solution, a way to heal our planet by regenerating the dirt under our feet. A group of activists, scientists, farmers, and politicians band together in a global movement of "Regenerative Agriculture" that could balance our climate, replenish our vast water supplies, and feed the world. Preview https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3-V1j-zMZw

Other suggestions:

The Biggest Little Farm - People, animals, plants, and wildlife working together to reclaim regenerate land. John Chester and his wife Molly work to develop a sustainable farm on 200 acres outside of Los Angeles. Preview https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfDTM4JxHl8

David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet - In this unique feature documentary, the celebrated naturalist reflects upon both the defining moments of his lifetime and the devastating changes he has seen. The film addresses some of the biggest challenges facing life on our planet, providing a snapshot of global nature loss in a single lifetime. With it comes a powerful message of hope for future generations as Attenborough reveals the solutions to help save our planet from disaster. Preview https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64R2MYUt394

President's Comments

Kathleen Leitner.
Photo by Patty Barten.

It is amazing how we have figured out how to adapt CFC projects during these times. Of course it helps that so much of our work is performed out of doors where it is easier to maintain social distancing. But even the inside projects have kept up, and all of this is a credit to our board, our staff, and our terrific volunteers. And even though we have had to curtail or limit workdays in compliance with state law, we have accomplished much this year. So with the holidays right around the corner, I'd like to thank everyone who makes CFC work, and call out a few of our many dedicated faithful for their efforts just this past quarter.

Thanks to Peggy Simonsen, CFC has been the fortunate beneficiary of many grants this year which have enabled us to purchase and restore additional properties, expand and diversify our education program, improve our safety equipment, employ our interns to create demonstration projects and otherwise assist us in contributing to our greater Barrington community.

Thanks to Larry Anglada we were able to have our college internship program even with social distancing. Our interns worked on a joint erosion protection project with the Barrington Area Conservation Trust and the Flint Creek/ Spring Creek Watersheds Partnership demonstrating for homeowners along those creeks how they can shore up their creek banks. And they also created a pollinator garden for our friends at Smart Farm.

Thanks to Karen Rosene, Laura Simpson and Barb Laughlin-Karon, we have had a successful bluebird monitoring program, with noted increased fledging. And this is the first year we monitored purple martins which populated both of our purple martin houses. We are fortunate that both species are attracted to Flint Creek Savanna!

Thanks to Matt Hokanson for running a record breaking Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale!

Thanks to Donna Bolzman for sifting through decades of CFC materials and to Virg Black for everything she does to help Juli in the office!

These are only some of the many people whose efforts have kept us going this year, but our biggest thanks go to Mother Nature for a very generous year, making our seed collection record shattering yet again. Seeds are already being scattered among CFC and BGI sites awaiting the spring thaw. Have a safe and happy holiday season everyone.

— Kathleen Leitner

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