

Habitat Corridors property in North Barrington — A before and “after” success story

by Alicia Timm

Restoring land with native plants to create a respite for native wildlife (fauna) is an ongoing process. There is always a “before,” but rarely is there an “after.” There are always more weeds to pull, more species to add, and almost always more lawn to remove to make space for living things.

“Every little bit in the right direction counts; one native planted or one invasive removed is better than nothing.” These are words of advice from North Barrington homeowner Stacey Laschen. She and her family keep working each year to improve their property for native fauna. Habitat Corridors (HC) awarded certification for the Laschen property in the summer of 2020.

The Laschen Family purchased their dream property about four years ago. They have over eight acres of land which contain every type of Midwest habitat, prairie (open lawn), sunny wetland edge, hilly woodland, and marshland. Unfortunately, their property also contains acres of common buckthorn and honeysuckle along with dame’s rocket, garlic mustard, burdock, and other weedy species common in our area. The “little bit” of work they have done has been a lot of work. They are removing invasive species. They are adding native plants. They are increasing habitat for birds and waterfowl and pollinators. They have a chicken coop, eight



Before - Elin and Thomas playing in the muddy swale. Photo by Stacey Laschen.



After - the muddy swale now planted with many wetland plants and saplings. Photo by Alicia Timm.

bluebird houses, a purple martin house, wood duck houses, fenced veggie gardens, and even honeybee hives. Mike built many of the bird houses. They do not use any pesticides and only use herbicides to kill buckthorn.

Stacey, Mike and their three kids relocated from Texas in the fall of 2016. They are Midwesterners at heart, however, as Stacey grew up in Minnesota and Mike in North Dakota. Stacey’s interest in gardening started at a young age when she would visit her grandparents in North Dakota where they had large flower and vegetable gardens.

As an adult, she adopted this love of gardening on her own properties and engaged her children in gardening chores. While still living in Texas, her kids would show off the veggie gardens to the neighbor kids and eat carrots right out of the ground. Stacey starting learning about endangered monarch butterflies, as Texas is their main eastern migration path. Her concern for monarchs served as a stepping stone to discovering milkweed and native plants that support native wildlife.

Upon moving to Illinois, the Laschens found that there was a prairie at their children’s elementary school. A school volunteer told them about how she was using native plants and replacing cultivars in her own yard.

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Habitat Corridors

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The volunteer recommended Citizens for Conservation and Barrington Area Conservation Trust (BACT) as resources to help them learn how to reduce invasive species and increase native habitat on their property. BACT had a monarch waystation program and inspired the Laschens to create their own butterfly habitat during the first year in their new home. This butterfly habitat is now a growing prairie. They use weed mats and litter from the chicken coop to smother the weeds and turf grass so each season they can expand the size of the prairie and add more native species.

With the butterfly habitat started, the Laschens enlisted the help of the Habitat Corridors program to help direct their next restoration steps. A HC representative visited and gave advice to reduce the lawn area and information about how to remove common buckthorn and other invasive plants.

The first step in most restoration projects is to remove woody invasive species. There were three main areas of buckthorn to tackle on the property. First was a buckthorn row near the street, which is common in our area. Birds sit on electrical lines or tall trees here and leave buckthorn seeds from the berries they have eaten. You will often find rows of buckthorn along property lines where no mowing occurs. Second, there was a huge swath of buckthorn along the south of the property where stormwater inundates the area and travels down to the marsh behind the house on the neighbor's property edge. Finally, there was a huge forest of buckthorn that leads to the marsh at the west end of the property.

Ridding any property of common buckthorn can be a huge task. Stacey, her husband Mike, and Mike's 87-year-old grandpa Larry (lovingly called "Big Papa" by his three great-grandchildren) were up to the task.

For the streetside buckthorn, they cut the shrubs and painted the stumps with herbicide (Triclopyr). After a waiting period, they planted native trees and shrubs to create habitat and to re-create a privacy screen from the street.

For the south side of the property where stormwater was such a problem, they took a multi-step approach. They cleared the buckthorn from the entire south length of the property that separates theirs from the neighbor's property. The water runs along the property line to the marsh that lies downhill and behind the two properties. Once they removed the buckthorn, all that was left was mud. This is typical of areas formerly covered in buckthorn. No native plants and not even grass can grow in the extended seasonal shade created by buckthorn.

They used a version of hugelkultur to create a berm to contain and focus stormwater into a wetland garden and through a rock-lined, vegetative swale to the back of the property.



Current view from street where buckthorn previously blocked the view of the house. Photo by Alicia Timm.

Hugelkultur is an ancient practice common in Germany and Eastern Europe that uses rotted wood and plant debris to create a raised bed. The Laschens used it to create a natural berm to contain and focus the run-off.

They then planted this area with wetland sedges, forbs, grasses, shrubs, and trees. The former neighbors were not happy about losing their privacy screen, but the new neighbors were supportive of their efforts to help reduce the stormwater run-off that also impacts their land. They explained to the neighbors that it will take time for the roots to help the water infiltrate into the ground and for the trees and shrubs to grow and offer privacy. They planted 15 shrubs and eight tree saplings in this area, four oaks, a sycamore, a pagoda dogwood, and a highbush cranberry. Some non-native evergreens were used for year-round screening as there are very few native evergreen species in northern Illinois.

The third and largest area of buckthorn to tackle was the woodland area that was covered with woody invasives. Over the years, they have cut and burned so much common buckthorn that you can now see all the way through to the marsh. They carefully paint the stumps with Triclopyr to kill the shrubs at the roots so they don't resprout. They burn the piles of buckthorn or use the branches to protect new plants from deer.

This back woodland area takes a huge team effort. Many days in the fall or winter you will find Big Papa quietly building and tending a buckthorn burn pile. He has made it his goal to clear buckthorn from the property. The kids help, too, pulling weeds (dame's rocket and garlic mustard, e.g.), piling up branches, and doing other chores on the property.

Even though the other project areas are ongoing, Stacey has started a new project, the foundational landscaping. She removed hostas to replant elsewhere or give away. She purchased shade-loving natives from the CFC plant sale this spring to plant around the house. Stacey finds a happy

medium between natives and cultivars. They do enjoy non-native plants as well, but they have had to baby those plants during this recent drought when the natives have not required extra water.

The marshland is the next project. It is totally covered in non-native/hybridized cattails and reed canary grass. Stacey would like to try to plant “warrior sedges” at the marsh edge just as CFC Restoration Manager Kevin Scheiwiller is doing on the banks of Flint Creek.

The Laschens are happy to give information about their restoration work to anyone that shows an interest. Some of the most helpful resources have been CFC, BACT, Will County Forest Preserves, and the Conservation Foundation. During the pandemic, Stacey found online programs very helpful such as the community education webinars offered through Barrington Area Library by CFC and Chicago Living Corridors. They also received advice and information from two Habitat Corridor visits and other CFC volunteers.

The Laschens do not proselytize others to restore their properties, but they do want to be an example for their kids and neighbors. They stay motivated to keep clearing buckthorn by watching what the native seedbank reveals once the sun returns to the woodland floor. Green dragon, palm sedge, curly-styled wood sedge and some baby oaks have popped up in the woodland.

Many organizations have certified their efforts. Stacey wanted these certifications to educate and serve as a quiet inspiration for the neighbors about what a native-friendly Habitat Corridor can look like. Her husband lovingly created the wood frame on which to post her certification signs at their mailbox. The Habitat Corridors program is happy to be included on that sign and is so proud of Stacey, her husband Mike, and her helpful kids Thomas, Elin and William for all the work they are doing for nature in North Barrington.



Before - the beginning of a prairie garden in 2017. Thomas – age 7, William – age 2, Elin – age 5. Photo by Stacey Laschen.



After - Dixie standing in the prairie in progress. Photo by Alicia Timm.

Restoration Report

The Underrated

CFC has been developing its restoration techniques since 1988. The general approach is simple—we try to eradicate non-native plants by cutting, pulling or applying targeted herbicides. At the same time, we reintroduce the native plants, to some extent by transplanting, but mainly by seed sowing. But a challenging question is how does the restorationist choose which species of native plants to reintroduce? The priority for the restoration manager is to bring back the most conservative plants, which will compete against each other and establish the most diverse and rich balance. It is generally hardest to bring back the more conservative species of plants.

A note on ecological conservatism: Floyd Swink and Gerould Wilhelm of the Morton Arboretum developed a numerical rating system for each of the native plant species in the Chicago region. The botanists were often asked to evaluate natural areas to see if the spots were worth protecting and Swink and Wilhelm wanted a more objective evaluation system for practical comparisons.

Paul Rothrock wrote the best summary that I have read of ecological conservatism in his book *Sedges of Indiana*.

“The conservatism concept recognizes that individual plant species display varying degrees of tolerance to human disturbance and likewise varying degrees of fidelity to specific natural habitats.”

Sedges of Indiana explains the rating system as follows:

“The Coefficient of Conservatism value represents an estimated probability that a species is likely to occur in a landscape relatively unaltered from the pre-settlement condition.”

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Restoration Report



Yellow avens. Photo by Jim Vanderpoel.

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Conservatism is indirectly related to, but not synonymous with, rarity. For example, hoary puccoon is very conservative (conservatism value rated 8 of 10). In the forty years I have been aware of this plant, I have never seen it growing wild except in a remnant railroad right of way or a preserved Grade A prairie; however, once in a Grade A prairie, it is abundant, blooming in about every square meter.

Sedges of Indiana describes four tiers on the conservatism scale. The second tier is described as follows:

“Conservatism Rating—4-6 Species that are typically associated with remnant plant communities but tolerate significant to moderate disturbance.”

Indian grass (5), big bluestem (5), rattlesnake master (9), starry campion (6) and spotted Joe Pye weed (5) are classic and widely restored plants that can become too aggressive in a prairie or wetland restoration. It may be that these dominant plants need to compete against not only the most conservative species, but other more obscure plants in the second tier. If our goal is to restore the most diverse and potent ecosystem, it may be that we need to encourage not just the best, but also the Underrated.

— Jim Vanderpoel

CFC constantly evaluates its preserves and compares them to the richest remnants. What we have noticed is that the closest we have come to Grade A natural areas are those spots where we rescued conservative plants from doomed high quality remnants. Our past plant rescues targeted conservative wildflowers: hoary puccoon (8), prairie phlox (8), yellow star grass (8), rue anemone (7) and sharp lobed hepatica (8). Almost all of the specimens of these five showy flowers spreading on our preserves today are descended from the transplanted plugs. Other conservative plants were accidentally introduced with the plugs such as northern bedstraw (10), shining bedstraw (7), Mead's stiff sedge (10), veiny pea (8), bastard toadflax (9) and prairie panic grass (10). A surprising phenomenon is that other species came with the high quality plugs that would not be considered conservative: common panic grass (4), yellow avens (3), wild onion (3), starry false Solomon's seal (5), spotted touch me not (4), marsh fleabane (4) and hairy sweet cicely (4). None of these plants are rated conservative. They can grow on the side of the road or along a fence line. They do not typically appear in the list of any seed mixes used in restoration. And yet, they do grow in the very choicest of nature preserves. For instance, I have seen wild onion growing side by side with the rarest of plants at Chiwaukee Prairie, Gensburg Markham Prairie, Black Partridge Woods and Volo Bog, four of Chicagoland's most pristine nature preserves. I believe that the use of these species in a restoration project is underrated.

Time to renew your membership!

If you have not renewed your membership to Citizens for Conservation, please renew today. Our mission of saving living space for living things is more critical than ever.

You may renew online at CitizensforConservation.org or use the return envelope that you received with our appeal in the mail.

Remember, all members receive a 10% discount at CFC's upcoming Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale! In addition to:

- 10% discount at CFC's Native Plant Sale in the spring
- free admission to Community Education programs
- our quarterly newsletter
- on-line CFC news updates
- access to our preserves
- invitations to CFC events

We need your support!

Notes from the Restoration Manager

Over the past decade, we have been slowly perfecting our creekside restorations. Every year we would take on a small section dominated by the wetland thugs (reed canary grass, cattails and phragmites). A thousand square feet here, half an acre there. This year, we decided to take on the largest planting to date. Thanks to a generous grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, we were able to take on 5 acres of the Flint Creek floodplain. Close to 25,000 wetland plugs were slated for planting after all the initial reed canary grass was selectively treated. This seemed like no problem to our hard-working volunteers. Throw a drought into the mix though and planting (and more importantly watering) becomes a little bit harder than expected. Despite the driest spring in close to a decade, we have plugged away getting over 10,000 plants in the ground to date! We still have a lot of work to go to finish this ambitious project, but with the rain now on our side, we should have no problem getting the rest of the plants in the ground before seed season starts! Make sure to get out to a workday to be part of this exciting restoration project.

— Kevin Scheiwiller

Flint Creek Savanna streambank restoration project – matching grant

Thanks to a generous 3:1 matching grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, your donation, of any amount, can have a quadrupled benefit*. (*up to \$7,000 in donations will be matched.)

Donate at: <http://bit.ly/2021flintcreek3to1>.

Prefer to mail in a donation? A printable form is available at the link.

Your \$25 can become \$100 or \$100 can become \$400. If your company has a matching gift program, your donation can become a 7:1 match. Your \$25 can become \$200 or \$100 can become \$800.

Donations will be used for control of invasive wetland plants, equipment, supplies, and the addition of important native plants. Using proven wetland restoration techniques, these donations will allow restoration in a compressed time frame rather than the normal 5–7 year period. Our volunteers can create quality habitat years earlier for native plants, pollinators, birds, and wildlife.

Thank you for making a difference for nature.



CFC awarded grant by the Illinois Ornithological Society

by Laura Simpson and Barb Laughlin-Karon

A team led by Kevin Scheiwiller and Luke Dahlberg, with the assistance of Peggy Simonsen, Barb Laughlin-Karon, Karen Rosene and Laura Simpson applied for and was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Illinois Ornithological Society (funded by the Illinois Audubon Society) that will help CFC study the effect of shrubland habitat restoration on local bird populations. When Craftsbury Preserve was acquired, it presented an opportunity to develop a shrubland habitat unique to this area. Always thinking about the “big picture,” Kevin and Luke sought to do some long-range restoration planning and examine in greater detail what the changes they make over time could mean for the local native birds that rely on this shrubland habitat.



Eastern towhee.
Photo by Stephen Barten, DVM.

Using the Audubon Chicago Region/Shrubland Habitat Study that was conducted in 2015, the CFC team hopes to adapt their protocol to the site at Craftsbury and observe the bird species over a 5-10 year time frame during which restoration changes will be made, including maintaining one area “as-is” for a control area. The grant will be used to remove large areas of non-native buckthorn which will eventually be replaced with native shrubs.

Birds to be studied include shrubland birds of concern as listed by the Bird Conservation Network’s Birds of Concern in the Chicago Wilderness region such as the brown thrasher, yellow-breasted chat and northern bobwhite. The study will also include all shrubland species for this region including



Field sparrow.
Photo by Stephen Barten, DVM.

the eastern towhee, indigo bunting and willow flycatcher. A baseline observation was begun in 2020 to establish whether any of the study’s shrubland species were currently using the habitat. To date, this has been limited to the field sparrow, song sparrow, gray catbird and common yellowthroat with the field sparrow as the only species of concern.

CFC is grateful for the support from the Illinois Ornithological Society and the Illinois Audubon Society and looks forward to shrubland restoration activities and observations as the study commences.

Volunteer through BAVC

by Amanda Moller

The Barrington area is such a unique group of communities working together. Recently a new website, Barrington Area Volunteer Connection (BAVC), was developed to add to the area’s collective nature. In early 2021, the website launched as a hub for local organizations, volunteers and collaborators to post and view volunteer opportunities. The Barrington Area Development Council (BADC) and the Barrington Area Library partnered on this project then offered this online software to organizations for free thanks to funding from the BADC.

While there are a few other websites that can be utilized to search for local volunteer opportunities, BAVC is for Barrington connected organizations to promote local engagement and interaction. This provides a centralized place community members can visit to search through volunteer opportunities based on their interests and skills.

There are many benefits BAVC has for Citizens for Conservation. It gives us a place where we can post volunteer opportunities and needs as they arise. We want to attract new volunteers to the organization but also have a place our current volunteers, members and donors can visit to see our needs in real-time. Volunteers are able to sign up for prairie restoration workdays and express interest in other needs that come up. In early spring, we posted for a bird walk coordinator to support walks this year and quickly found someone through BAVC!

Let’s talk about how many high school students have been coming out to workdays thanks to BAVC. We are lucky to have District 220 support this wonderful website by sending their students to the site. More than a dozen new volunteers have come from the high school and put in more hours (over 100) by May of this year than we had from high schoolers all of last year!

Volunteers are able to submit timesheets through BAVC and see their own hours which are making a difference to this community. We will work to find ways to utilize this feature for future events such as our upcoming fall plant sale. For now it works well for our restoration days which regularly occur twice a week and for various needs that arise.

You can sign up to receive notices when new opportunities are posted for Citizens for Conservation on the BAVC website, <https://thebavc.org>. If you have any questions or suggestions, please reach out to amanda.moller@citizensforconservation.org.

Myrmecochory: recruitment from ants

Plants have become very creative with how they spread their seeds across the earth. We often see them blowing away on the breeze on silky strands designed for that purpose; other times, birds and other animals devour sweet fruits only to drop off the seeds miles away from the parent. Some plants seem to not try that hard, and only shake out of a pod a short distance, but can be either picked up on someone's muddy shoes or last in the soil for decades. Some stick to your clothes, explode out of a capsule, or float away on the water. But one of the most interesting and unusual ways of seed dispersal that I have seen is from a six-legged culprit: ants.



Bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis) pod full of seeds. The elaiosome is the white appendage on the seeds.

Many of us look forward to the show of spring wildflowers that grace our woodlands after a long winter. Plants such as bloodroot, trillium, violets and bellwort bloom abundantly for a short period of time in the spring. As the trees begin to leaf out and produce shade, these flowers fade and begin to ripen into fruits. From the end of May into August, many of our spring ephemeral wildflowers produce capsules and pods that release seeds directly below them. These aren't tasty to animals and too heavy to blow in the wind or be washed away from the rain.



Seeds of barrenwort (Epimedium sp., left) and bleeding heart (Lamprocapnos spectabilis, right). These are native to East Asia, but shows that they rely on ant dispersal as well.

However, the seeds have a fatty, sugary substance attached to them called an elaiosome, and this attracts the attention of ants. As workers scout the forest floor for any sign of food, a worker ant might come across seeds with elaiosomes. Being very strong for its size, the ant will drag the seed back to the colony. At this point, the ants will eat the elaiosome, and show no interest in the seed. In many cases, they will toss the seed into a chamber of the colony that is essentially their garbage dump. Full of ant waste and deceased workers, and having near perfect moisture and temperature control, what more could a seed ask for? The seeds take advantage of this environment, and will germinate when

the conditions are right. In my yard, this explains why I find Dutchman's breeches seedlings 20+ feet from the mother plant!

Ant seed dispersal, or Myrmecochory, is quite common in woodland plants, especially in the temperate forests of North America and Asia. This trait of convergent evolution is shared with many plant families from violets and irises, to sedges and

diverse families like the buttercup family (hepatica, rue anemone), poppy family (bloodroot, wood poppy), birthwort family (wild ginger), and the lily family (trout lily, trillium). The downside to using ants as a dispersal agent is that they can only spread the seeds a short distance from the mother plant. While birds can easily spread a seed five miles away from the source, an ant may only drag a seed about five feet or five yards away at most. In fact, if a plant only relied on ant dispersal, its species may take a century to move five miles! Also, many of the seeds in a given area may not be moved away from the nearby mother plant. I've seen colonies of bloodroots where there are dozens of seedlings just below the big leaves of the mature bloodroots. This makes these plants very slow to recolonize a woodland if it has been destroyed or degraded, and can take even longer since many of these plants have slow reproductive life cycles (for example, a trillium may take 7-10 years to reach maturity from seed). This also makes them susceptible to environmental factors such as climate change since they cannot colonize potentially new habitat as quickly as other plant species. Collecting seeds from different populations of these spring woodland plants and reintroducing them to restored woodlands will give them a chance to survive and continue to thrive in the region. Because many ant-dispersed seeds are recalcitrant—meaning they cannot be dried out or stored in a seed bank—it is critical that the seeds be sowed relatively quickly after collection. This also shows the importance of ants in our ecosystems. Along with spreading seeds, they aerate the soil, help control insect pests and keep their numbers in check, and are a food source for a myriad of other creatures. Although I must wonder: how did these ant-dispersed plants such as bloodroot and trillium recolonize northern Illinois after the glaciers receded? How did they cross the sea of grassland to different forests if only ants were to help them? Did ground-nesting wasps such as yellow jackets find the elaiosome tasty, and help those seeds travel farther distances? Or did birds and small mammals help out as well? That is another mystery of plants to be pondered at a different time.



Capsule of white trillium (Trillium grandiflorum) showing the ant-dispersed seeds

All photos by Luke Dahlberg.

— Luke Dahlberg

Spring Native Plant Sale could restore 3+ football fields

by Laura Mandell

Heartfelt thanks to the 80+ volunteers who invested more than 1,250 hours in the 25th annual Native Plant, Shrub & Tree Sale. Volunteers worked tirelessly in the rain and wind to prepare more than 600 orders which were picked up by appointment over four days.



Volunteer Elizabeth Root. Photo by Laura Mandell.

The 18,000+ plants purchased at the 2021 sale are enough to ‘restore’ 3.36 acres. That may not sound like a lot, but that’s equivalent to 3-1/3 football fields that are now offering food to pollinators, storing carbon in the soil, and helping to retain water. An additional 600+ shrubs and trees have found new homes throughout the Chicagoland area.

A special thanks to Good Shepherd Hospital (especially the Grounds Crew) for providing the space we needed.

Next year we hope to return to an in-person, public sale in early May, as always—but be sure to visit citizensforconservation.org for information and pre-ordering. The extensive plant database available there makes it easy to plan your garden and shop online while it’s still cold and dreary outside.



Helen Sheyka and Jurate Mantatsky teamed up to pull customer orders. Photo by Laura Mandell.

July 4th Parade

by Julia Martinez

On July 3, the annual Barrington Village Fourth of July Parade was greeted with weather perfect for marching.



CFC marches in Barrington July 4th parade. Photo by Patty Barten.

Citizens for Conservation was proud to be part of the large number of enthusiastic participants and observers celebrating our special community. CFC’s 50th Anniversary theme this year, *Deep Roots and Growing*, reflects not only the rich history of CFC, but our place within the future of the Barrington community. Our parade marchers included board members, volunteers, and current and former interns. Each brought the same energy to the parade that we all do to CFC’s conservation and education efforts. Marchers handed out pens and pencils to enthusiastic groups of children. Our restoration truck was decorated with banners and carried our six foot



CFC’s parade group. Photo by Patty Barten.

sandhill crane nestled in a patch of live sedges. The spectators were enthusiastic, cheering and giving thumbs up as the CFC truck passed them. “Thank you for what you do”, “Great job”, and “Bless you” were frequently shouted from the crowd. CFC is proud to support the greater Barrington area and residents.

Following the parade, we were pleased to learn that CFC was awarded the Grand Prize by the Village of Barrington. Thanks and congratulations to everyone who made this possible.

Summer camp pleasures

by Julia Martinez



A camp hike. Photo by Julia Martinez.

Each year, we eagerly anticipate the unique experiences our campers have the good fortune to have during summer camp. This year did not disappoint.

On Monday, campers learned about characteristics of insects and explored insects of the prairie. Campers used various methods for collecting insects and showed their parents what they found. We are fortunate to have

milkweed beetles that make great ambassadors for the insect world because they are visually dazzling, gentle and durable creatures. Another insect we encountered this week was the two-marked treehopper. These little triangular insects peppered the campers as they sat at the tables outside. Native Seed Gardener volunteer Katherine Grover reported that her yellow slicker was covered in so many treehoppers that it looked as though she had gotten into a thorny patch!

Tuesday we explored light and color. Campers searched for the colors of the rainbow on the prairie. We took an extended hike and enjoyed a clear view of the sandhill crane family during our snack time. Campers saw up close (as close as is reasonable) the sandhill crane family exhibiting how well they are camouflaged in the grasses and how they protect their colt by making sure he is between his parents when moving about.

Wednesday was a rainy day, but it didn't put a damper on our focus on mammals. Campers learned about camouflage and animal prints. Oddly, we did not see any deer, but we had many unique visitors this week.

Thursday was bright and sunny. Campers explored "water critters" and practiced using pipette, Petri dishes, and the course and fine adjustments on microscopes. We saw several frogs and one large leech. It was hard to tell which was the fan favorite between those two.

Finally, Friday we had a "feathers and scales" day. Volunteer Diane Benz shared feathers from her parrot pets and discussed the structure of the feather and demonstrated how the feathers "zip up." Campers explored feathers by handling them and

looking closely at them under the microscope. We explored the prairie and searched for snakes, knowing the weather was not conducive to seeing snakes out in the open. While on our hike, we saw multiple turtle nests complete with shells. Campers noted the contrast between these reptile eggs and more familiar bird eggs. A garter snake quickly darted off the path so that campers could not catch a glimpse of him, but, luckily, near the parking lot, several campers saw and tracked a snake on the path. They noted the slight twitches in the grasses as the snake slithered away.

Our summer camps never go as planned, yet never disappoint. We could not share these precious, personal moments with our campers without our dedicated volunteers: Diane Benz, Daisy Golke, Victoria Self, Julia Martinez, and Celeste Guilfoil (set up and clean up).



Microscopes and water critters. Photo by Julia Martinez.

Juli LaRocque

by Kathleen Leitner

Friday, June 18 was Juli's last day working at CFC.

Juli has been with CFC for over 6 years. She has been running the office—answering the phone, emails, coordinating volunteers—all with a smile for everyone. Juli has been such a tremendous help to the Board, and to all of our committees, in particular the Annual Appeal, the Plant Sales, the Membership Drive, and the Community Education series.

But more than that, Juli has been—and is!—a tireless champion of CFC's mission of *Saving Living Space for Living Things* through protection, restoration and stewardship of land, conservation of natural resources and education. Please join me in wishing Juli well in her next venture!



Photo courtesy of Juli LaRocque.

Investing in the future – Fall Native Tree and Shrub Sale begins August 1

by Erin Hokanson

Trees and shrubs are long term investments that benefit us and nature, even in a drought! Some of the critical services trees provide directly mitigate the negative effects of a drought. For instance, during prolonged dry periods, some tree species native to the U.S. are known to transfer the movement of water from local groundwater

sources to dry soil through their root systems to prevent root death and retain soil moisture. This process is known as hydraulic redistribution. Other trees, shrubs and herbaceous vegetation located nearby trees undergoing this



*Watering a young tree.
Photo by Erin Hokanson.*

process can benefit as the redistribution of water toward the soil surface will provide a drink of water to those with shallower root systems. Another benefit trees provide during a drought, as they use up water during photosynthesis, is releasing water from leaves (transpiration) which can cool the surrounding air. Finally, the shade provided by tree cover also helps retain water in the soil, rivers, streams, ponds and other water sources in addition to cooling the nearby areas on hot summer days. In urban landscapes, tree cover mitigates the heat island effect as the shade can drop the temperature up to 10 degrees in heat islands.

So, should I invest in planting and watering a tree or shrub during a drought? Our answer is yes, most definitely! Trees and shrubs can be responsibly planted and maintained during a drought year. Installing mulch around the dripline of a tree (approximately two to four inches deep) will help to retain soil moisture after watering. Newly planted, young trees only require approximately 10 gallons of water per caliber inch of tree or one inch of rainfall per week. Compared to a standard turf grass lawn, to provide a 100-foot x 100-foot lawn with enough water to stay green, it will take approximately 6,230 gallons of water every time the sprinklers are turned on! Perhaps the most important element of watering when it comes to trees, especially during a drought, is “how.” Watering slow and deep is an excellent method and can be achieved by using drip lines, a tree watering bag, or spray from a garden hose.

Although benefits from trees require time to develop and trees do require some thought and care throughout their lives, the long-term benefits outweigh the initial costs. You can begin investing now by ordering trees and shrubs from our Native Tree and Shrub Sale! All sales are PREORDERS

ONLY during the month of August (August 1 through August 31). Pick-up will be available on Saturday, September 11 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Freier Farm located at 23585 N. Kelsey Road, Lake Barrington.

If you are not currently a CFC member, please consider joining our community! CFC members will receive a 10% discount off all orders. Proceeds from this fall sale will be used to further our mission “Saving Living Space for Living Things” by continuing to protect and restore our land, conserve natural resources, and promote education for little ones and adults alike.

If you would like additional information about native trees or shrubs or if you have questions about the fall sale, please reach out to the CFC office.



50th Anniversary Year-Long Celebrations

Additional information on these events will be available soon.

Craftsbury Preserve Dedication & CFC Major Donor Recognition - August 20, Wild Onion Brewery

Celebration and luncheon thanking major donors.

50 FEST Community Celebration - October 9

50 FEST will include:

- Family friendly fun and something for everyone
- Big tent event, food trucks and beverages
- Music, games, crafts
- Guides tours of Flint Creek Savanna

Tom Vanderpoel Recognitions - October 9

Two dedication events will honor Tom Vanderpoel's decades of leadership.

Conservation Art Show - December 16, Barrington White House

Free event will showcase the work of CFC volunteers, members and BHS students.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for all these events. Please contact CFC's office for additional information. cfc@citizensforconservation.org or 847-382-7283.

Bird walks return in 2021

by Laura Simpson and Barb Laughlin-Karon

While 2020 saw the pandemic-related cancellation of the popular CFC bird walks, birding has made a big comeback in 2021. When

much of the world was on lockdown, people discovered a renewed appreciation for nature and outdoor spaces—a safe alternative to being stuck indoors that also allowed for easy social distancing.



Wendy's group in foreground with Laura and Barb's group in background. Photo by Stephen Barten, DVM.

Discovering and watching birds became a popular pastime that has continued into the new year. eBird, the community science database for birders, has reported a global increase in checklist reports, with new backyard bird lists up 900%!

As spring of 2021 approached and we were able to safely gather outdoors again, the CFC spring bird walk schedule was announced and resulted in long waiting lists for each hike. In an effort to accommodate more bird and nature lovers, naturalist Wendy Paulson added an additional section to each walk which was led by Barb Laughlin-Karon and Laura Simpson. The two groups would meet up at the same location and take different routes on the trail, or would stagger start times. This allowed for a fun meet-up as their paths crossed to share notes and interesting sightings along the way.



American white pelicans.
Photo by Stephen Barten, DVM.

Birders experienced the varied habitats at some of our best local birding hotspots. Beginning in early April, birders took note of the long-distance migratory birds that were just passing through on their journey north, summer resident birds that

will nest here this season, as well as the birds that live here year round. Beginning the season at Crabtree Nature Center, highlights included the colorful migrating spring warblers, some wonderful looks at a Caspian tern plunging into the water to catch fish, and American white pelicans on Crabtree Lake. We hiked the beautiful terrain at Beverly Lake where we saw the brilliant colors of scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles,



Dickcissel.
Photo by Stephen Barten, DVM.

indigo buntings and red-headed woodpeckers. The season ended in early June with several walks at Spring Creek Forest Preserve—Galloping Hill, a critical locally restored habitat that has allowed for the return of grassland birds like the bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, Henslow's sparrow and dickcissel.

We hope the interest and enthusiasm for birding continues into the fall season and beyond, and look forward to hosting additional walks. CFC hopes to keep birders of all ages, from the brand new to the very experienced, involved and learning about our local bird populations and enjoying time in nature together.

Juras exhibit at Chicago Botanic Garden

by Patty Barten

Were you one of the fortunate attendees at CFC's March 2020 Annual Meeting who saw Philip Juras share his *Picturing the Prairie* presentation? The following day Illinois went on COVID lockdown which cancelled five other presentations to major regional conservation organizations and the major exhibition at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Lucky CFC meeting attendees were taken on a unique journey of local and regional prairie landscapes through Juras's paintings and inspiring words. Many of the images were of CFC and local preserves. People were left wanting to see more. Luckily, the *Picturing the Prairie* exhibition was rescheduled and is currently at the Chicago Botanic Garden through September 12, 2021.

Juras's work is inspiring to see in person and relates his passion and love for the prairies. He is a botanist, naturalist, landscape architect, historian, accomplished artist, and long-time friend to CFC. Juras combines his expertise, experiences, and talents to depict prairie landscapes through oil paintings of remnants, restorations, and imagined re-creations of earlier times.



Philip Juras and Kathleen Leitner at the exhibit. Photo by Mark Leitner.

(continued)

Juras exhibit

(continued)

Several organizations have created information and activities based on the *Picturing the Prairie* exhibit. Highlights of paintings, video interview with Juras, companion Field Guides created by the Field Museum, and more can be found at https://www.chicagobotanic.org/picturing_prairie.

There is also a book available showing fifty-four of Juras's paintings celebrating the rare tallgrass prairie environments of Illinois and the remarkable conservation efforts that sustain them. An accompanying essay by acclaimed conservationist Stephen Packard shares how the tall grass prairie ecosystem is being saved from extinction in Illinois by individuals and initiatives that have inspired conservation practices far beyond our area. Copies of the book, second printing, can be reserved at cfc@citizensforconservation.org.

Welcome interns and Oberweiler Foundation

by Kevin Scheiwiller

The 2021 interns have been hard at work this summer collecting seeds, planting thousands of plugs, and weeding throughout the preserves. This group is just one of the generations of interns that have come through CFC's long standing intern program. Since its inception, the summer internship program has been funded by the Oberweiler Foundation and this June the founders got to see the interns in action! We were very fortunate to host the founders, a board member, and the executive director from the Oberweiler Foundation on June 10. They were able to meet the current class of interns, as well as see the fruits of the labor of many years of hard work from past generations of interns.



Laila Franklin, Bryan Huila, Andreas Harris and Lucas Rot (in wheelbarrow). Not pictured: Loona Dillon. Photo by Patty Barten.

Over the years, this program has reached college interns from 30 different schools all over the Midwest. Many have gone on to work full time in conservation for groups including the Aldo Leopold Foundation, County Forest Preserve Districts (DuPage, Lake, Boone), ecological restoration contractors (Applied Ecological Services, Bluestem Ecological, Stantec, Tallgrass Restoration), and the U.S. Forest Service. These ambitious interns are working hard to leave the planet in a better place than when they found it. None of this would be possible without the generous support by the Oberweiler Foundation!

Our 2021 interns are:

- Loona Dillon – North Park University – Environmental Science
- Laila Franklin – St. Olaf College – Environmental Science and Art
- Andreas Harris – DePaul University – Environmental Science
- Bryan Huila – Northern Illinois University – Environmental Science
- Lucas Rot – Louisiana State University – Environmental Science/Biology

Buckthorn: the bane of Barrington

by Meredith Tucker

When choosing a subject for this article, I considered changes a homeowner might make to bring his property more in tune with nature.



Buckthorn berries.
Photo by Robert Cantwell.

The Barrington area's early landscape was glorious, rolling prairie interspersed with wetlands and oak and hickory woodlands. The long-lived hardwood trees grew at a considerable distance from each other, providing dappled shade, excellent habitat for woody shrubs, wildflowers and grasses.

The savannas were radiant in October. Oak foliage changed to red, orange and rust while hickories turned yellow. Most spectacular was the understory. Beneath the trees, American hazelnut glowed iridescent orange; witch hazel and spice bush shown lemon yellow, and native viburnums amplified the color pallet with mahogany blackhaw and radiant arrowwood.

Herbaceous plants waved grassy leaves and painted the grove floor with purple, white and golden blooms of gentian, aster and goldenrod. Countless species created a kaleidoscope of color and diversity.

Notice the woods this October, perhaps Deer Grove or Paul Douglas Forest Preserve. Some mature oaks are there and a few hickories, but these are no longer the open woodlands of the past. The woods are congested with understory vegetation suffocating most native species. Notice the uniformity the woods exhibit: the understory a solid green barrier, a disaster. When it should be flaming with color, it is a stifling, unvaried wall of buckthorn. Lack of diversity screams of poor ecological health because plants from other continents have destroyed native species that cannot compete with them.

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and glossy buckthorn (*R. frangula*) became widespread in this country in the 1900's. People cultivated the Eurasian shrubs as hedges since they grow quickly, are extremely hardy, and provide dense foliage for privacy. The very attributes that encouraged people to plant the shrubs are the attributes that make them destructive to the woodlands.

Buckthorn has a long growing season, leafing out before native plants have broken dormancy and retaining their leaves until late fall.

Its foliage creates dense shade in which wildflowers, grasses and shrubs cannot thrive. Buckthorn's shade also prevents growth of young oaks and hickories. In the local woods, one may see some mature oaks, but you are unlikely to find saplings unless volunteers have eliminated buckthorn.

Prolific seed production also allows buckthorn to flourish. Female plants produce numerous small, black, berry-like fruit most of which fall directly under the shrubs, creating an impenetrable mass of seedlings. Some of the fruit is eaten by birds and carried beyond the mother tree. Because birds have difficulty digesting the fruit, they rapidly expel the seeds (note the species epithet, *cathartica*) letting the shrubs reproduce and spread rapidly.

If buckthorn is bad for forest preserves, it also affects homeowners. It respects no boundaries. It was in my yard; it is in my neighbors' yards. It may be in your yard if you have some bushes and a little shade. Some residents tend and trim their buckthorn not realizing they are nurturing a noxious weed that is invading every open space. Buckthorn is adaptable; it likely exists in every neighborhood, possibly excepting those with only mowed lawns and a few trees.

To control buckthorn, first learn to identify it. A shrub or small tree that can reach twenty-two feet in height, its bark is



Buckthorn leaves. Photo by Robert Cantwell.



Buckthorn choking maples. Photo by Robert Cantwell.

gray to brown and looks like that of plum or wild cherry. A spine often tips common buckthorn twigs. Leaves are dark green, broadly oval, and may have pointed or rounded tips with toothed edges. A reliable sign is its green foliage late in autumn after native shrubs have lost their leaves.

If you have buckthorn, please try to eliminate it. One can hand pull small plants and use a weed wrench for plants up

to 1½ inches in diameter. With these methods they are gone forever, roots and all. However, if your buckthorn is larger, it is best to saw the stems near the ground; unfortunately, buckthorn will resprout. To prevent resprouting, paint cut stumps with glyphosate (Roundup) immediately after cutting, being careful to avoid touching other plants since the herbicide kills all growing vegetation. The best time to attack the problem is in the fall when buckthorn is one of the few actively growing shrubs.

I removed buckthorn from a corner of my yard where it had lived for several decades, and the following spring the ground was carpeted with trout lilies, red trillium and white baneberry—native woodland wildflowers. For at least thirty years, they had waited for a little sunlight! I don't promise that wildflowers will germinate if you remove your buckthorn, but I do promise that beautiful non-destructive native plants will thrive there if you plant suitable species.

Workday volunteers needed

Regular workdays continue every Thursday and Saturday from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Reservations are no longer required, but are helpful for planning purposes. In addition, Native Seed Gardeners have launched Thursday morning workdays. This group is limited to five participants, so reservations are required. Please email kevin.scheiwiller@citizensforconservation.org to RSVP. If you would like to be added to our email group to receive notification of upcoming workdays, please email kevin.scheiwiller@citizensforconservation.org.

President's Comments

Saturday, May 8, CFC's Jim Vanderpoel led a lucky group of 20 or so people on a walk of Grigsby Prairie. And we had a special guest along—Philip Juras! As we walked the high ground, Jim explained how prairie plants like to live together, pointing out golden alexanders, porcupine grass, common blue-eyed grass, meadow anemone, young compass plant and prairie dock among others. As we continued along the path, we saw two scarlet indian paintbrush and Jim was able to identify several yellow-orange hoary puccoons that he planted years ago as seed. We passed through a stand of young shagbark hickories sprouting their new spring growth. Great angelica was already shooting skyward on the hillside.

In 2017, Philip painted Grigsby Prairie, highlighting purple and white prairie clovers, pale purple coneflowers, lead plant, coreopsis and black-eyed Susans. And while those plants were not yet in bloom for our walk, Philip remembered the exact spot where he set up for this beautiful painting. It was fun to hear him recall the experience. The day was lovely and perfect for viewing Grigsby's bounty, and Grigsby seemed to be welcoming us and all of the many springtime blooms.

— Kathleen Leitner



Photo courtesy of Philip Juras.

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