



# the leaf

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWEST COOK COUNTY GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB | SUMMER 2007

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For the most up-to-date news, be sure to visit us on the Web:

<http://illinois.sierraclub.org/NWCook>

## Creating Healthy Homes

By SHARON WEINSTEIN, R.N.

We'd like to think that our homes are safe havens. But if we're not careful, certain products and designs can create health risks.

Pollutant levels inside our homes and offices may be two to five times higher than the air outside. Combine that fact with the realization that we spend 75 to 90 percent of our time indoors and we can see why indoor air quality has become a major concern.

Multiple-chemical sensitivity is a heightened reaction to substances that cause symptoms ranging from respiratory ailments to depression and anxiety. The cause, the prevalence, and even the existence of this and other disorders, such as fibromyalgia—a musculoskeletal pain and fatigue disorder—are the subjects of debate. The growing consensus, however, is that the flood of new chemicals introduced into the environment



every year is making people sick.

Symptoms and health effects range from mild short-term acute effects, such as sneezing, itchy eyes, and general discomfort, to more serious long-term effects, such as respiratory disorders, lung cancer, and a weakened immune system.

And, some people report that they react to

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## Veterinarians and Wildlife Biology

By SUZIE CROMBIE

Envirovet was started in 1991 by Val Beasley, of the College of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Illinois, to carry out his lifelong vision of bringing veterinary medicine together with wildlife biology. Though a small-animal veterinarian himself, he wanted to do more in the domain of the ecosystem.

Envirovet is an intensive course for veterinarians and students whose alumni include Joan Embery, of Johnny Carson fame; Leslie Dierauf, who directs the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin; and Lawrence Mugisha, who runs the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee sanctuary in Uganda. To

date, the program has helped educate 300 veterinarians, many of whom voluntarily come back to lecture, guide field exercises, and mentor new students. Students in the program come from all over the world, creating a diverse learning environment and establishing a network for field work after the program ends.

The program's first session focuses on terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and ecosystem health in developed countries. It provides four weeks of lecture, field experience and laboratory work that demonstrate wildlife health in the context of the ecosystem health and what, they, as veterinarians, can do. Half of this session is spent

at White Oak Conservation Center and half at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Florida.

White Oak maintains genetically diverse populations of endangered species and leads professional efforts to improve veterinary care, develop holistic animal management techniques, and better understand the biology of critically endangered species.

Students also travel to St. Catherine's Island, a location closed to the public, where they learn about radio tracking of free-ranging wildlife, geographical aspects of conservation, and in situ stewardship of amphibians,

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# From the Chair

Earth Day was a great success! Over 120 volunteers cut brush and sawed, hauled and burned the invasive buckthorn. Others planted oaks and some picked up roadside trash. Our energy was fueled by members of Boy Scout Troop 495 (Elk Grove Village) and Cub Scout Troop 286 (Arlington Heights). Everyone worked hard and we really appreciate their helping hands.

Some of our more notable brush cutters included John Rogner, a field supervisor with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley, and Congresswoman Melissa Bean and her nephews. I want to thank John, Mike and Congresswoman Bean for their continued support of Spring Creek.

Kristina Anderson and Peter Wessel with the Riding Club of Barrington Hills supplied lunch, snacks and much-needed water. Kristina and Peter, you are wonderful. The event will remain clear in my memory thanks to an extremely reliable photographer, Jim Haba, who came back home from out of state for this event! Jim is a professional photographer who covers corporate events. His company, 20/20 Communications, is in Elk Grove Village, 847.364.7666.

If the day seemed to flow smoothly, this is largely due to the many Master Stewards who participated. These volunteers were always there—offering their friendly expertise, tightening up a burning brush pile, encouraging a tired beginner. Thank you to Dave Cook, Kim Keper, Ginger Underwood, Jim Voris and John Yapelli.

The Northwest Cook County Group's volunteer support supplied everything they promised, and more! Tables were set up, drivers were directed to parking, water was boiled, people were greeted as they arrived. Tad brought his sons to help—two extra-hard workers. Tom delivered the good weather that he promised. Greg left his new son to join us for the workday. All of your efforts made this day perfect.

Thank you to Steve Packard for the education and also many thanks to the Forest Preserve employees, who have always supported our



Which group was one of the main sponsors of the event?

efforts.

Our Earth Day event was co-sponsored by the Northwest Cook County Group, Sierra Club, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Spring Creek Stewards; The Riding Club of Barrington Hills, Audubon-Chicago Region; Citizens for Conservation, Fox River Valley Pony Club, The League of Women Voters Palatine Area.

A reminder: Public Lands Day is Sept 29. We will once again be working in Spring Creek. Come out and join us. If you'd like to help with the planning, please call me at 847.967.7835.

—Donna Hriljac



Master Steward Dave Cook, left, gives instructions on buckthorn removal. Right, the demise of the buckthorn.

All photos courtesy of Jim Haba

# Spring Valley Events

**Sunday, July 8. 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

## **Mowing & Mooing at the Heritage Farm**

We'll be harvesting the mid-summer hay crop with draft horses and milking the dairy cow. Back at the farmhouse, process fresh cow's milk into cheese and ice cream. There will also be refreshments, games, and crafts. \$1.50 per person. Take a hayride from the Nature Center to the Farm.

**Friday, July 13. 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.**

## **Nature's Night Life**

An educational walk around Spring Valley for adults. Pre-registration required, so please call in advance.

**Friday, July 27. 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.**

## **Lights in the Night**

A firefly program for youngsters. Pre-registration required so call in advance.

**Saturday, Sept. 22. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

## **National Public Lands Day**

A morning of native seed collecting. All of the seed is dried, cleaned, and used to replant additional acres of native wildflowers and grasses in Schaumburg's parks and nature preserves. Learn ways to heal the land and help restore rare plants and animals. All participants will receive a free packet of native wildflower seed. Free and open to all ages, but please call the Nature Center at 847.985.2100 to RSVP.

**Sunday, October 7. 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.**

## **Autumn Harvest Festival**

Demonstrations of 19th century farm life at the Volkening Heritage Farm. Activities include cider pressing, woodstove cooking, blacksmithing, and horse-powered threshing, primitive fire starting, campfire cooking, musket firing, and more. Children's activities, live music, hayrides, and sales of refreshments will be available. \$3 per person. Call 847.985.2100.

*Spring Valley is located at 1111 E. Schaumburg Road, just west of Meacham Road. Call (847) 985-2100 for reservations or more information.*

# Group Calendar

## **July and August**

Summer Break  
Enjoy the the Summer!

## **August 25th**

Sierra Club NWCCG Picnic  
Watch for info.

## **September 13th**

Program Meeting  
Topic yet to be announced.

## **September 29th**

### **Public Lands Day**

### **Spring Creek Preserve**

We will be hauling away trash and doing our regular ecological restoration work. We will have a variety of area and eco co-sponsors. Come out and join us. It is a great day outside, for a great cause, with some great people! If you'd like to help with the planning, please call Donna at 847.967.7835.

Program meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month, September through June, at the Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary at 1111 East Schaumburg Road in Schaumburg. Meetings start at 7:00 p.m. and the program, focusing on natural history or environmental issues, starts at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. For more info, contact Greg Stolzer at [greg.stolzer@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:greg.stolzer@illinois.sierraclub.org) or (847)368-0483.

Also, see the Outings section of *Lake & Prairie* for more information on events.

# *Envirovet: Treating Wild Animals*

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gopher tortoises and sea turtles. The aquatic session at Harbor Branch features research submarines, estuarine and reef assessments, ecological toxicology and ecosystem health for fish, and marine birds and mammals.

The students are trained through postmortem examinations of frozen sections of multiple species of birds and marine mammals from spontaneous major lethal events in the field. Faculty of the terrestrial and aquatic units hail from across the U.S. and Canada, and include such experts as Scott Citino of White Oak, Kirsten Gilardi and Jonna Mazet of the University of California

at Davis, Tom Lovejoy of the Heinz Center for Science Economics and the Environment, Jeff Zuba of the San Diego Zoo, Daniel Martineau of the University of Montreal, and Greg Bossart of Harbor Branch.

The second session teaches students to work across national boundaries. Each year the location varies, but during the last few years it has been organized in South Africa or Swaziland. Students explore opportunities to see what types of problems these countries deal with and the many ways in which veterinarians are needed. These include preventing diseases and gene-jumping not only

between wildlife and domestic animals, but also between wildlife and human populations. Students also undertake hands-on work in wildlife health assessment, and preventive medicine related to the interface of national parks and private lands.

Val Beasley's vision is growing daily. Past students return to the field with new insights, and use their new knowledge and skills to make a difference for wildlife populations.

—*Suzie Crombie is a freelance film editor and videographer. She is currently working on a film for Envirovet. For more information, see: [www.cvm.uiuc.edu/envirovet/index.html](http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/envirovet/index.html).*



## *the leaf*

Summer 2007

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# Home Health Havens

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chemicals in their environments; these allergy-like reactions seem to relate to exposure to a wide variety of synthetic and natural substances, including paints, carpeting, plastics, perfumes, cigarette smoke, and plants. In my own home, I keep pollen and spore counts down with an air filtration system based on creation of negative ions. The five filter system ensures air quality. I also keep my air conditioning system set on recirculate to reduce pollen and mold.

Today's homebuilders strive to build homes that meet the demands and needs of health-conscious home buyers, as today's consumers are well-educated about indoor air quality, radon, and environmentally correct building materials.

Banning toxins is another approach. Some health-conscious homeowners are rejecting the use of natural gases, which according to some studies is believed to aggravate chemical sensitivity. They are ripping out carpets, which can trap toxic fumes. The good news is that carpets, paints, wood treatments, drapes and bedding are increasingly available in nontoxic versions, devoid of substances linked to carcinogens.

"Healthy Homes" is a century-old concept that promotes safe, decent, and sanitary housing. Healthy housing is receiving considerable attention from public health professionals and policymakers as a result of emerging scientific evidence linking health outcomes, such as asthma and lead poisoning to substandard housing. Such unhealthy substandard housing can be seen across economic lines! Even expensive new homes may have biohazards lurking within. So, what is a homeowner to do?

First, assess how unhealthy your home might be. Examine cleaning-supply labels and pesticides. Even

scented personal products can be big offenders. There are approximately 5,000 chemicals registered for use in personal products that can negatively impact the immune system of a child. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences has explored the link between children, the environment and neurotoxicity. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Environmental Health, the toxins that invade our homes and accumulate in the immune systems of children contribute to learning disabilities, hyperactivity, and Attention Deficit Disorder.

As a homeowner, parent, or grandparent you can be involved in making healthier decisions for your family. Health-conscious homeowners are now buying cutting boards and countertops treated with bacteriocides.

They have also found that silver and copper are naturally sanitizing. For information on 'green' environments to incorporate into your home, visit [www.pathnet.org](http://www.pathnet.org) or [www.globalgreen.org](http://www.globalgreen.org).

On the cutting edge of wellness

technology are materials that radiate far-infrared rays, a part of the sun's invisible spectrum that can penetrate deep into human tissues. Such materials have been widely used in Japan for years and are gaining respect here as germ-zappers and remedies for ailments such as arthritis and fibromyalgia. These materials are available in comforters manufactured by Nikken, a Japanese wellness company.

A healthy home can and should be a healing home. Good health begins and ends with you!

—Sharon Weinstein is a registered nurse, health educator, author and wellness and environmental specialist. Visit her online at: [www.corelimited.com](http://www.corelimited.com). She can be reached at [sharonw@corelimited.com](mailto:sharonw@corelimited.com).

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