



DuPage Sierran

Sierra Club, River Prairie Group of DuPage County

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2010 Election: Something to cheer about in Illinois!

By Linda Sullivan

The day after the November election while environmentalists all over the U.S. were grieving the defeat of so many environmental champions and heroes, Sierrans in Illinois breathed a sigh of relief on many fronts.

In DuPage County, the River Prairie Group was thrilled to find that all of its endorsed candidates had won.

Illinois Sierrans can take much credit for the biggest relief which is that environmentalist Pat Quinn and not climate change denier and clean energy foe Bill Brady will be governor.

Bucking the general apathy that overcame most progressive voters in this election, Sierra Club members were a spirited part of Quinn's campaign. Sierra Club members made 7,208 phone contacts with members throughout the state. Everyone who helped make these calls knows that they made a difference. The typical reaction from our members was joy when they heard something positive in a campaign dominated by negative ads. Many voters who had planned to stay home or vote third party vowed to vote for Quinn when they heard about all he had done for open space and clean energy in Illinois.

RPG members were among the most dedicated participants in this process. They included myself as Sierra Club point person for both the Quinn and Giannoulis campaigns, Lonnie Morris, RPG Chair, Connie Schmidt, Pete Potamianos, and Carol Squires. Don Kirchenberg organized an important program of general calls (rather than member calls) for the Quinn campaign.

Schmidt said, "It was great fun to call on fellow Sierrans and let them know how their local group was working to support their interests in this campaign. I think phone banking is a great way of connecting on a meaningful level with our members."

Member time spent organizing Political Action Committee or PAC fundraisers enabled the Illinois Sierra Club to put paid organizers in several key districts and send 42,384 pieces of mail to our members. Tom Wronski and Connie Schmidt deserve shout outs for organizing the River Prairie Group's PAC fundraisers.

Revised Version

Calendar of Events

Tom Wronski was the principal organizer of a fabulous January PAC fundraiser at the Black Finn Bar & Saloon in Naperville. *Connie's Party on the Farm* – her surprising home in Warrenville – features live music and farm animals. Yup! In Warrenville!

The next *Party on the Farm* will be Sunday, May 22, 2011. Mark your calendars to have a great time and do something important for the environment at this fun event!

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DuPage Sierran

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[Http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg)

For activities, legislative action alerts, & outings information

We are on Facebook! Check out:

http://www.facebook.com/pages/River-Prairie-Group_of_the_Sierra_Club/96257429851

2010 Election, continued

These efforts were a huge reason that throughout Illinois supporters of the environment were returned to the General Assembly and many promising newcomers endorsed by the Sierra Club won. While so many other Sierra Club Chapters are wondering how they will get their legislative agendas through their state houses, in Illinois we find ourselves in a good position.

The RPG is honored to endorse many environmental champions and delighted that all of them won.

Hard fought campaigns returned Dewey Pierotti and Roger Kotecki to the DuPage Forest Preserve Commission where they are sure to continue their support of clean water, biodiversity and public access to our forest preserves. Mike Formento, who survived a primary challenge with the Sierra Club's endorsement, will also return to the Commission where he has consistently fought for the same issues.

Michael Fortner (R-West Chicago) and Sandra Pihos (R-Glen Ellyn), both strong fighters for renewable energy and energy efficiency, were returned to the Illinois House. Dan Cronin moved from Illinois Senate to DuPage County Board chair.

The Sierra Club looks forward to working with newcomer Chris Nybo (R-Elmhurst) who was endorsed by the Sierra Club for his strong support of clean energy. His seat was formerly occupied by Bob Biggins who retired.



River Prairie Group members use Wartrenville's IBEW hall to spread the word: Pat Quinn and Alexi Giannoulias have great records on the environment! Left to right: Lonnie Morris, Connie Schmidt, Pete Potamionos

Photo by Linda Sullivan

Nybo commented, "I am honored to have received the Sierra Club's support. More and more it's becoming clear that clean and sustainable energy not only enhances our environment, but also promotes our state's economic and business climate. I look forward to working Sierra Club on making our state environmentally and economically stronger."

The Environment Committee of the League of Women Voters of Wheaton Sheds Light on Superfund Sites

Scheduled for Spring of 2011, The Environment Committee of the League of Women Voters of Wheaton will be hosting a program featuring the screening of a documentary, **TAR CREEK**. It is a film about one of America's biggest environmental disasters. After the screening, a forum of local leaders, policymakers and concerned citizens is planned.

TAR CREEK is the story of a community in northeastern Oklahoma at the epicenter of a vast toxic waste site, named in the early 80s as the biggest of the EPA's Superfund sites. Not only does the film reveal the health problems and contamination caused by decades of lead and zinc mining, it also shows how educated

and informed citizens can hold leaders accountable for the cleanup of environmental disasters.

One in four Americans live within three miles of a Superfund site, and DuPage County has five of the 1300+ Superfund sites inside its borders. The LWV of Wheaton hopes to raise awareness of these five sites and explore their past, present and future during the program.

Further details regarding date and site of program will be announced in future newsletters. Also, visit <http://wheatonlwv.org/> for program updates.

President Pierotti Comments on Election

“November 2, 2010 was a great day for me. The voters’ decision to re-elect me as President of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County was a proud and humbling occasion. I want to thank the Sierra Club for your support. Your endorsement and continued partnership strengthens my resolve to lead the Forest Preserve District’s conservation, education and recreation efforts into the future. I pledge to work to acquire significant acres of open spaces, restore critical habitats, add additional stretches of trail, preserve the county’s vibrant heritage and provide high quality recreational and educational experience for all DuPage residents to enjoy. The best is yet to come.”

- DuPage Forest Preserve President, Dewey Pierotti

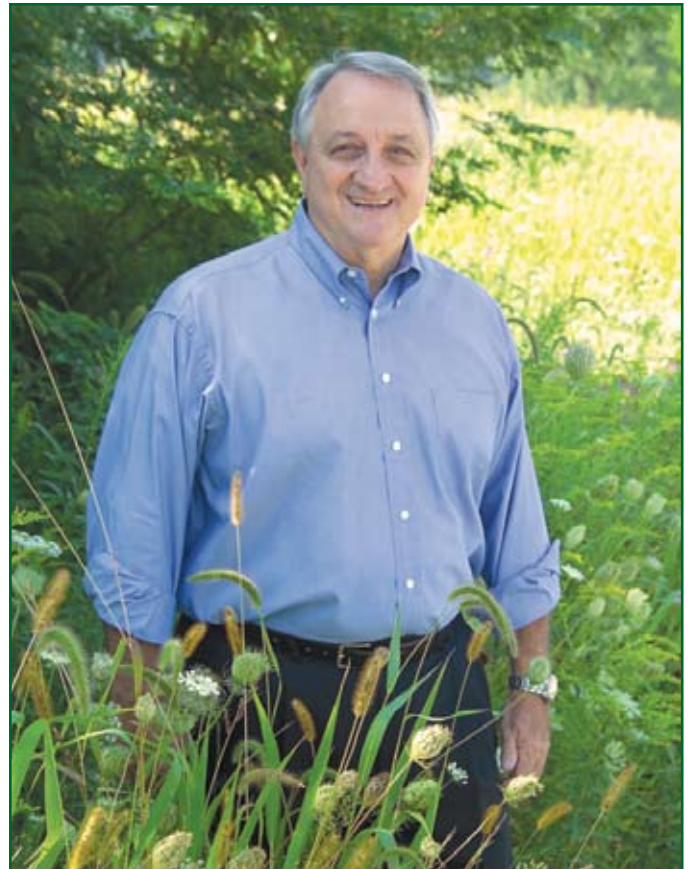


Photo by Linda Sullivan

Join the River Prairie Group Listserv!

We encourage everyone to sign up so you do not miss out on any of our news and activities. Stay up-to-date on the River Prairie Group’s latest activities by joining our listserv. The listserv is open to anyone interested in finding out more about our group. The purpose of this list is to announce the activities, meetings, news and special events of the the Sierra Club’s River Prairie Group, located in DuPage County, Illinois. The format of the list is for announcement and news distribution only, so members will receive but not be able to post messages.

Anyone interested in subscribing to this list can join in either of two ways:

Go to: <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/IL-RPG-NEWS.html> and click on “Join or leave the list.”

or send an email to: Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org

Leave the subject line blank, in the message area type: **SUBSCRIBE IL-RPG-NEWS Firstname Lastname**
(substitute your first and last names)



Report from the Illinois Prairie Path 46th Annual Meeting Sunday Nov. 7, 2010

Photos by Connie Schmidt

By Connie Schmidt

It was a gorgeous sunny, unseasonably warm day in November and while many Sierrans were out exploring new paths in a favorite preserve here in DuPage County, I was headed to a meeting in a park district building with very few windows to even see the light from outside. There I saw some fellow members of the River Prairie Group waiting to hear reports from the Illinois Prairie Path Volunteer Board in their yearly membership meeting. This is an annual meeting with brief reports on treasury and membership, and two presentations from influential Trail Blazers.

For starters, let me give you some background on the Illinois Prairie Path (IPP). The IPP is governed by DuPage County, not the Forest Preserve. It was converted from an old railroad bed that ran from Aurora and Elgin to Chicago. In May 1963, an avid outdoor enthusiast, May Theilgaard Watts wrote a letter to the Tribune Newspaper suggesting the creation of the path where the abandoned railroad lay – who ever said one person can't make a difference?

The rest is our very good fortune as we now have 61 miles of trail that connect neighborhoods and forest preserves from Cook, DuPage and Kane Counties. Debra Fagen from DuPage County faithfully watches over the Prairie Path as a County employee and networks frequently with board members from the River Prairie Group and other trail advocacy groups.

continued on next page...

Prairie Path, continued

The IPP is also supported by a not-for-profit corporation named appropriately, “The Illinois Prairie Path”. This group has its own board of directors that coordinates volunteer projects and meets regularly. It was their annual membership meeting I was attending that sunny day in November.



First we heard from retiring Chairman of the DuPage County Board, Robert Schillerstrom. Since his days back in the 1980s working with the Naperville Park District, Mr. Schillerstrom has advocated for trail connections to help with recreation and to facilitate transportation for work, school, or pleasure. During his watch as Chairman of the DuPage County Board significant additions to the County Trail system have been added. We now have a Southern Trail through the Springbrook Prairie Area as well as significant portions of trails along the East Branch and West Branch of the DuPage River and the Salt Creek Greenway. Mr. Schillerstrom tipped his hat to the efforts of long time trail advocates Jean and Paul Mooring, Nancy and Dick Wilson as well as Debra Fagen.

Speaking of Debra, she is the Chief Planner of the trail system and was the other speaker for the afternoon. Debra has a firm working relationship with members of the RPG and networks with other trail advocacy groups. These relationships are essential to continue friendly relations between the many user groups of the trail system. Debra also announced the development of an interactive map on the County website to give users a chance to preview their routes. It will act as a sort of

“Trail Quest” for trip planning. (Upon checking for this feature it does not seem to be up and running quite yet.) Debra gave many details on trail projects as well as information on upgrading some signage and future projects pending funding.

The Illinois Prairie Path is a vital link for many of us to connect us from our homes to the many Forest Preserves we enjoy here in Illinois. It seems natural for members of the RPG to support this group as decision makers are planning for additions to the trail system. The membership fees for the Illinois Prairie Path are \$20 for a single and \$30 for a family. When joining, you will receive a great color map as well as an informative quarterly newsletter.

If you are interested, here are two web sites to share with you: The Illinois Prairie Path is www.ipp.org. Beware however, that it is in the process of being updated and is not too current at the moment; however you can get membership information easily. In addition, check out the very informative county website at www.dupageco.org/bikeways/.

Lombard Group Works to Legalize Backyard Chickens

By Emily Prasad

A group of Lombard residents is asking that their village consider lifting the ban on backyard chickens. Currently, Lombard prohibits the keeping of all animals classified as livestock, including chickens. Citizens of Lombard for Urban Chickens (CLUC) is asking that the village allow residents to keep a small number of hens for pets and eggs in residential areas.

CLUC met with the Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC) at their September meeting to introduce the issue. Local backyard chicken supporters attended the meeting, voicing their support of the issue. Supporters spoke about the benefits of backyard chickens, including access to safe, sustainable, local eggs. They also presented information from other communities showing that backyard chickens do not raise costs for municipalities or lead to code enforcement issues.

After a lively discussion at their November meeting, the Environmental Concerns Committee moved to recommend chickens be allowed in residential areas with some restrictions. The ECC recommended roosters be banned, a coop setback be required, limiting hens to a number to-be-determined, but not to exceed four, and required some type of coop license. These restrictions are similar to those in nearby municipalities that allow chickens. On December 2, Lombard's Village Board will discuss whether to send the issue to the Planning Commission for further study. If the issue passes the Planning Commission, it would then move back to the Village board for final review.

Support for backyard chickens has been increasing in major urban and metropolitan areas and the practice is becoming more common. In fact, many communities in the Chicagoland area already allow residents to keep hens, including Naperville, Saint Charles, Warrenville, Downers Grove, Oak Park, Evanston, Mount Prospect, Westmont, and Chicago.

Obviously, as interest in the local food movement grows, the numbers of suburban and urban chickens has also grown. But backyard chickens benefit the environment in more ways than just reducing food miles. Other supporters mention food safety as a motivation for keeping hens, as well ensuring that their eggs come from animals which have been humanely raised.

In addition, chickens can be fed many kitchen scraps, including many that cannot be composted such as meat, dairy, and breads. Chickens can minimize food waste even in households that already compost. They also have the benefit of turning that food waste into healthy eggs and high quality garden fertilizer. For many chicken enthusiasts, this is a way of "closing the loop" in the home garden. Chickens also feed on garden weeds and pests, again allowing high quality food to be produced from "waste" materials. While these items are a supplement to purchased feeds, some urban chicken keepers are able to feed their flocks on a diet half comprised of food scraps, yard and garden weeds, and foraged insects and plants. All foods supplied in this way minimize the chicken-keeper's reliance on industrially produced grain crops that commonly make-up commercial chicken feed. Chicken manure is also a high quality, nitrogen rich garden fertilizer, after being properly composted.

Opponents of backyard chicken-keeping in Lombard have voiced concern about coops attracting predators, being noisy or smelly, and bringing down property values. While these concerns are often raised by concerned residents, these problems rarely occur. A study by Hugh Bartling of DePaul university found that, in municipalities that had recently allowed chickens, "most cities were satisfied with their ordinances, major complaints and infractions were rare, and the adoption of chicken ordinances have been looked upon positively."

More information about Citizens of Lombard for Urban Chickens can be found at their Facebook site (www.facebook.com/lombardchickens) or their web site (<http://lombardchickens.blogspot.com>). CLUC can also be contacted by e-mail (lombardchickens@gmail.com).

Editor's Note: At their December 2nd meeting, the Lombard village board voted 5-1 against changing an ordinance to allow residents to keep backyard chickens. Despite the setback, CLUC remains committed to legalizing small flocks of hens in Lombard.

Contemplation and Adventure on the Camino de Santiago Compostela

By Lonnie Morris

Rick McKay launched his retirement from teaching with a 300 mile walk along the Camino de Santiago Compostela. The two week adventure along the ancient European pilgrimage trail bridged a familiar past with the many possibilities lying ahead.

"I wanted to do something special as I was moving into a new phase of my life," McKay said. "You look backward and ahead as you walk the same as you do when reflecting on your life."

McKay will present a photographic narrative of his journey of transition and discovery at a Sierra Club program on January 10th at the Helen Plum Library in Lombard.

With deep roots as a pilgrimage for absolving grave sins, the Camino, also known as The Way of St. James, has become a popular modern day hike. Historically, there were multiple pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela where legend states that St. James' remains were carried by boat from Jerusalem and buried. Today, there are five main routes of varying length, difficulty and support infrastructure.

Pilgrims typically walk in the same direction and find themselves becoming part of a moving community with a shared purpose. Walkers often meet up each night at the same refugios and albergues, the inexpensive hostels available to walkers with pilgrim passports. The basic accommodations, dormitory beds and communal baths, are in keeping with the pilgrimage tradition. Modern conveniences and distractions such as cell phones are stripped away, honoring the singularity of purpose shared by the walkers, rising early and spending the day in walking contemplation.

"The simplicity of the days frees the mind to grapple with larger questions," said McKay.

Passports (credentials) are stamped at the refugios and albergues, certifying the pilgrim has taken an official route which is necessary for receiving the compostela, a



certificate of completion. Pilgrims must walk a minimum of 100 km or cycle 200 km and claim a religious purpose in order to receive a compostela. The Pilgrim Office of Santiago awards more than 100,000 compostelas a year to pilgrims from over 100 countries.

A well seasoned traveler, McKay has made an annual tradition since 1970 of traveling with Jack and Joe, two college friends. The three met at Northern Illinois University and their first adventure was a hitchhiking trip to Alaska. The pilgrimage deepened McKay's long standing friendships and eased the transition into retirement.

"I came home open to the opportunities that lie ahead and with a readiness to act on them when they appear."

Contemplation and Adventure on the Camino de Santiago Compostela

Monday January 10, 2011

7:00 pm

Helen Plum Memorial Library
110 Maple, Lombard

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

Lonnie Morris 630.627.3982

Free, open to the public, registration not required

Calendar of Events *Revised*

Tuesday, January 10 –

A Walk on the Camino de Santiago in Spain

7:30 pm, Helen Plum Library Board Room,
110 West Maple Street, Lombard

Rick McKay, a retired 5th grade teacher from Bower School in Warrenville, will talk about his walking trip in Spain on the Camino de Santiago de Compostella, a trail best known as a Christian pilgrimage during the early Middle Ages.

Thursday, January 27 –

RPG Executive Committee Meeting

Open to all RPG members. For more information and the agenda, contact Lonnie Morris herbndove@comcast.net.

Thursday, February 24 –

RPG Executive Committee Meeting

Open to all RPG members. For more information and the agenda, contact Lonnie Morris herbndove@comcast.net.

Sunday, February 27 – Green Readin’

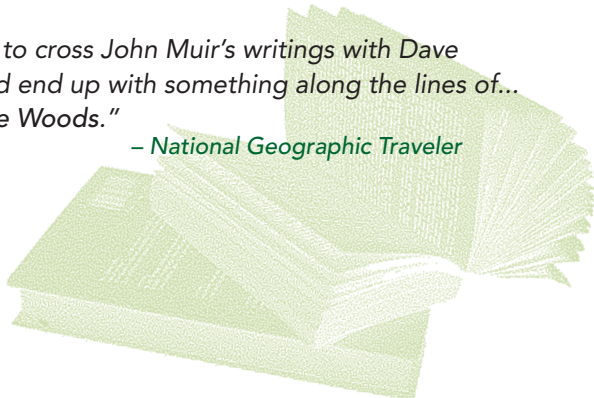
A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail by Bill Bryson

2:00 pm, Helen Plum Library,
110 West Maple Street, Lombard

The three month Green Readin’ series will begin by taking a look at the state of one of America’s remaining wildernesses through the eyes of Bill Bryson as he hikes the 2,100 mile Appalachian Trail, stretching from Georgia to Maine. Bryson’s laugh-out-loud writing tells of more than a hike. His acute eye is a wise witness to the trail’s majesty along with the threats to America’s wildernesses from resource extraction, land use pressures and changing climate.

“If you were to cross John Muir’s writings with Dave Barry’s, you’d end up with something along the lines of... A Walk in the Woods.”

– National Geographic Traveler



Sunday, March 27 – Green Readin’

In Defense of Food by Michael Pollan

2:00 pm, Helen Plum Library,
110 West Maple Street, Lombard

In month two, we leave the woods to explore the American diet where the major social issues of health, agricultural practices, food science and climate change intersect. In recent years, Michael Pollan has emerged as one of America’s most respected food writers, taking on topics from the meat industry to national food policy. As the follow up to *Omnivores Dilemma*, *In Defense of Food* offers simple advice: **Eat Food. Not Too Much. Mostly Plants.** At the heart of this book is the author’s concern for how food science in the service of the food industry has destroyed the American diet.

Sunday, April 17 – Green Readin’

Eaarth by Bill McKibben

2:00 pm, Helen Plum Library,
110 West Maple Street, Lombard

The final book in the series provides a careful examination of the evidence for global warming with the conclusion that it is presently well underway with effects evident from the arctic to the tropics. McKibben suggests renaming the planet Eaarth, as current conditions no longer resemble the peaceful, stable period mankind has enjoyed for the past ten thousand years. The book ends on an upbeat note as McKibben identifies the ways we can adapt to these new conditions by creating richer, more democratic and civil communities.

“Bill McKibben is the most effective environmental activist of our age. Anyone interested in making a difference to our world can learn from him.”

– Tim Flannery

***Indicates activities that are not sponsored nor administered by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision, or management of such activities. They are published only as a reader service because it may be of interest to the readers of this publication.*

River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings

Note: All local Group outings are offered at cost. Longer and more expensive outings require deposits (ask leader about refund policy). Including updates on those below, new RPG listings, and offerings from other local Groups, current listings are on the internet at: illinois.sierraclub.org/outings. Contact the Leader or Assistant indicated for more information and outing requirements.

For up-to-date information, visit: illinois.sierraclub.org/outings

Jan 15-16 Beginner Cross Country Ski Workshop, Delafield, WI

Do you want to learn to cross country ski? Do you know how but want to improve your skiing techniques? If so, join us in nearby Delafield, WI. Participants will learn basic skills in a controlled area and then improve their skills on the trails with instructors. The \$25 cost includes a donation to support cross country ski trails. Meals and lodging costs are not included. Limit 20 participants, intermediate skiers are welcome, but priority will be given to beginners. Trip leaders are **Teresa** and **Dave Barnard** and **Donna** and **Steve Turner**. To sign up, call Teresa and Dave at **(847) 255-9982** beginning December 15 to reserve your spot.

Jan 22 (Sat.) Winter Hike at Starved Rock State Park, Utica, IL

Enjoy the winter beauty of canyons and frozen waterfalls. Discover how they were formed by glacial melt water and stream erosion. They slice dramatically through tree-covered sandstone bluffs meandering for four miles through Starved Rock State Park. We will be hiking about 8 miles along the nature trails of this extraordinary park viewing the many spectacular views from overlooks along the Illinois River. Limit 15. Cost: \$3. Leader is **Paul Saindon**. Assistant leader is **Leigh Wilson**. To sign up, email Paul at paul@pauls.us.

Jan 29-30 Cross Country Ski Trip, Stevens Point, WI

Dust off those skis and join us for cross country skiing at its best. We will stay in Stevens Point (about 4 hours drive from Chicago) and ski Saturday and Sunday on groomed trails in the area. The trails are suitable for skiers of all abilities, however true beginners should attend the **Beginner Cross Country Ski Clinic** Jan. 15 and 16 which will get you ready for this trip. The \$135 cost is for lodging (double occupancy) and trail passes, but does not include food or transportation. If conditions in Wisconsin are not good this trip may be moved to the Cadillac, MI area. To register, call the leaders **Donna** and **Steve Turner** at **(630) 782-5865** or email sdturner@gmail.com.

Feb 11-14 Cross-Country Ski Outing in Michigan's UP, Northern Wisconsin-Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Enjoy a 3-day cross-country ski trip in the great snow country of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Stay in fully-equipped deluxe cabins on the shore of a (frozen) lake near the town of Watersmeet in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Three excellent areas with groomed trails will be skied (classical skiing). Trip fee of approximately \$150 includes three nights lodging, two home-cooked dinners, and Sierra Club fees. (S.C. members get \$5 discount.) \$75 deposit due Jan 7th. Limit 18. Leader is **Mike Davis**. Calls taken beginning December 13 by Mike at **(815) 331-3042**.

Mar 5-6 Indiana Dunes Deer Hike and Maple Festival, Chesterton, IN

Please join me for a very special weekend at Indiana Dunes. It's my birthday celebration. We will hike, pick up trash on the beach of Lake Michigan, see deer and learn how the Indians made maple syrup in the 1800's. And of course, there will be birthday cake and ice cream in addition to an indoor pool and other amenities at the hotel. Our overnight stay will be at Spring House Inn, which is very close to the Maple Festival grounds. Cost is \$55 for non-Sierra members – \$5 discount for members. Costs cover fees, overnight and continental breakfast at the hotel. Dinner costs are not included. Please contact Leader **Jan Bradford**, **(847) 455-2947**, or e-mail at jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net for sign up. Limit 10. **Mark Ginger** co-leader.

Apr 3 (Sun.) Cap Sauer Holdings Day Hike, Palos Hills, IL

Hike through Cap Sauer Holdings in Palos, a glacial area right here in northern Illinois. If our timing is right, we'll catch the spring flow-ers. There are meadows and woods throughout the Holdings where we'll be hiking. Cost: \$3. Limit: 15. Leader **Joe Pratola**. To sign up, call assistant leader **Marlena Bertolozzi**, **(773) 761-5771**.

Apr 9 (Sat.) Day Hike at Starved Rock State Park, Utica, IL

View the earliest varieties of wildflowers in this breaking-of-spring hike through the park's scenic sandstone canyons and forests, with grand views of the Illinois River valley. Waterfalls and streams are usually most active this time of year. Hiking about eight miles over moderately hilly terrain, we will do some cleanup along the trails. Wildflowers will be identified and discussed. Limit 25 per hiking group. Cost: \$3. Leader is **Fred Weber**. *Assistant leaders needed*. Call Fred at **(630) 469-6826**.

Apr 9 (Sat.) Wind Farm and Earth Home, Stewart and Rochelle area, IL

Come join me as we travel to the first wind farm in Illinois. We will meet the farmers and learn about a valuable renewable energy source of the future. There has to be a reason why we see more wind farms, right? Then it is off to see an earth home and to learn about the construction of it. (how much concrete/wires are in it and how much does it weigh?) We will also learn how it conserves energy as a possible alternative new construction of the future. Limit 20. Cost: \$6. Please contact leader Jan Bradford **(847) 455-2947** after 7pm or e-mail jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net. Assistant Leader **Karen Willden**.

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River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings, continued

**Apr 9-10 Beginners Backpacking
at Forest Glen Preserve, Westville, IL**

Discover backpacking! Easy beginner trip to Forest Glen Preserve, where we will hike along a beautiful wooded trail adjacent to the Vermillion River. Forest Glen is a 1,800 acre nature area of wooded ravines, grassy meadows and tall-grass prairies. Learn about the Vermillion County Prairie Restoration Project. We will hike about 7½ miles on Saturday, camp at a remote campground, and hike 3 ½ miles back to the parking area on Sunday. Cost is \$35; \$5 discount for SC members. Leader is **Joe Pratola**. Assistant leader is **Marlena Bertolozzi**. To participate, call Marlena at **(708) 267-4238**.

**Apr 16 (Sat.) Spring Wildflower Hike:
Black Partridge Preserve & Messenger Woods,
Southern Cook/Northern Will Counties, IL**

Join us for a spring wildflower hike at these two areas. Black Partridge Preserve, dedicated as the second nature preserve in Illinois, is an 80-acre site located in southern Cook County. The trail follows a stream and goes up and down ravines. Messenger Woods, one of Will County's oldest and most unusual sites, covers 946 acres and is known for its abundance of spring wildflowers that carpet the forest floor. Red and white trillium, hepatica, blue-eyed Mary and Virginia Bluebells are the stars of the show. Limit 15. Cost: \$3. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Assistant Leader is **Paul Silverman**. To sign up, contact Mark @ **(847) 699-0329**.

**Apr 22-25 Shawnee Natl Forest Spring Flower Hikes,
Harrisburg, IL**

Day hikes and learn spring flowers in spectacular wilderness areas in Shawnee National Forest southeast of Harrisburg, IL: Garden of the Gods, Burden Falls, Bell Smith Springs and Heron Pond along the Cache River. Double occupancy at a local motel. Cost is \$135 and includes lodging and three breakfasts. Not included: lunches, dinners, transportation. Limit 10. Two photo links:

- 1) www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/recreation/photo/east/
- 2) <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/cachervr.htm>

Leaders: **Paul Silverman (847) 392-3433** and **Joe Pokorny**.
Assistant Leader needed.

**Apr 23 (Sat.) Day Hike at Franklin Creek
State Natural Area, Franklin Grove, IL**

Join us for an April hike at this beautiful 664-acre park. We will hike about 7 miles. There are several stream crossings that can be up to two feet deep. Beautiful Franklin Creek flows throughout the 882 acre park. Low lying areas along the creek bed support a bottomland forest dominated by silver maple and hackberry. Ravines support mesic (intermediate between wet and dry) upland forest characterized by sugar maple and basswood. We will learn about the many spring wildflowers including Virginia Bluebells, Wild Columbine, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Wild Ginger, May Apple, and Prairie Trillium. Limit 16. Cost: \$3. Leader is **Paul Saindon**. Assistant Leader is **Joanne Reisner**. To sign up, email Paul at paul@pauls.us.



Sierra Club Sandhill Cranes Outing, Photo by Merle Cheney

**Apr 29-May 2 Missouri Ozarks (Taum Sauk Section)
Hawn State Park – Missouri Botanic Gardens,
Farmington Area and Saint Louis, MO**

Two days of hiking amid Spring flowers, waterfalls and streams on the hills of the Missouri Ozark Mountains. On Monday, visit the Missouri Botanic Gardens in St. Louis. Double occupancy at a local Farmington motel. Cost is \$175 in advance, which includes three nights lodging (double occupancy), three breakfasts, Sierra Club and administrative fees. Not included: transportation, lunches on the trail and Dinners at local restaurants. Limit 12. Three photo links:

- 1) www.MOstateparks.com/hawn.htm
- 2) www.MOstateparks.com/taumsauk.htm
- 3) www.mobot.org/about/default.htm

Leader: **Paul Silverman (847) 392-3433**. *Co-Leader and Assistant leaders needed.*

**Apr 30 (Sat.) Spring Wildflower Hike:
Heller Nature Center & Ryerson Conservation Area,
North Suburbs, IL**

Join us for a wildflower hike at two areas in the northern suburbs of Chicago. Heller Nature Center in Highland Park is a 97-acre preserve managed by the Highland Park Park District. Three miles of trail wind through an authentic natural landscape. Ryerson Conservation Area in Riverwoods is a 500 plus acre preserve managed by the Lake County Forest Preserve District. Five miles of trail wind through this wooded flatlands river plain offering the opportunity to view many rare and threatened flora and fauna including a spectacular spring wildflower display. Limit 20. Cost: \$3. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. To sign up, contact leader **Mark Ginger** after March 1st @ **(847) 699-0329**. *Assistant Leader needed.*

Apr 30-May 1 Mississippi Palisades Base Camp Hike/Bike, Savannah, IL

Spend one day hiking through the Mississippi Palisades, studying and identifying the spring wildflowers covering the slopes. Hike along ancient Indian trails overlooking the Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge. Spend one day either hiking or biking a section of the Illinois Great River Trail. Camp or stay at a local inn. Limit 20. Cost is \$40 (\$5 discount for Sierra Club members). \$25 deposit is due April 1. Leaders are **Donna** and **Steve Turner**. Assistant leader is **Marlena Bertolozzi**. Call Marlena at **(708) 267-4238** to sign up for this popular trip.

May 7 (Sat.) Spring Wildflower Hike: Love Creek County Park and Fernwood Nature Preserve, Berrien Springs, MI

Join us for a spring wildflower hike at two areas in southwest Michigan. Love Creek County Park is a 150-acre natural area with six miles of hiking trails that wind through a mature Beech-Maple forest. Fernwood Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve has a phenomenal collection of botanicals as well as woodlands that are carpeted with trilliums, anemones, violets, Solomon's seal and more. These two places provide for an ideal environment for viewing and getting educated about some spectacular spring wildflowers. Limit 20. Cost: \$3. Leader is **Mark Ginger**. Assistant Leader is **Paul Silverman**. To sign up, call Mark @ **(847) 699-0329** beginning April 1st.

May 26-29 3-Day Backpack in Hoosier National Forest, Story, IN

A moderately-paced spring adventure of backpacking, camping, and day-hiking in the forested hills of south-central Indiana. Learn how the Forest Service is gradually increasing the acreage in this National Forest. Covering about seven miles on each of three days (Fri-Sun), we'll backpack into the forest on Friday, camping by a stream. We will spend the middle day hiking and exploring this vast wilderness area, and backpack out on the third day. Suitable for beginners in good physical condition, with solid hiking experience, and for experienced backpackers as well. Trip fee of \$50 is due April 10th. Limit 14. Leaders are **Fred Weber** and **Paul Saindon**. *Assistant leader needed.* Call Fred at **(630) 469-6826**.

Jun 4 (Sat.) Cycling the Long Prairie Trail & Stone Bridge Trail, Boone County, IL

Join us for late-spring cycling along two relatively unknown trails in Boone County. This 40-mile ride will be on the paved Long Prairie Trail (14.2 mi) and the crushed limestone of the Stone Bridge Trail (5.8 mi). We will stop for lunch at the Roland Olson Forest Preserve and observe the conservation work performed at this preserve. Limit 15. Cost: \$3. Co-Leaders are **Mark Ginger** and **Mike Davis**. Assistant leader is **Pete Potamianos**. Sign up after April 15th by contacting Mark at **(847) 699-0329**.

Aug 27-Sep 4 Teton National Park – Jackson Hole/Signal Mountain, WY & Driggs, ID

Nine days (8 nights) in the spectacular Tetons; four nights in Signal Mountain Lodge Cabins, four nights in Driggs, ID. Hikes along Jackson Lake, Jenny Lake, Phelps Lake and three awesome canyons learning about abundant wild life. The scenery is beyond description. Cost: \$530, payable in advance, includes lodging, Sierra Club donation and Jenny Lake boat shuttle. Not included: meals, transportation and park admission. Limit 12. Leaders: **Paul Silverman (847) 392-3433** and **Joe Pokorny**. *Another Co-leader and Assistant Leader needed.*

Sep 4-10 Glacier National Park Day Hikes, East Glacier Park, MT

Seven days (6 nights) in beautiful Glacier National Park. Learn about the effect of global warming on glaciers. Cost \$360, payable in advance, include six nights lodging and Two Medicine Lake boat ride. Not included: meals, tips, park entry fee, transportation. Amtrak goes to East Glacier, MT. Limit 12. Photos at:

www.nps.gov/glac/photos.htm

Co-leaders: **Paul Silverman (847) 392-3433** and **Joe Pokorny**. *Assistant Leader needed.*

Sep 23-26 Porcupine Mtn Wilderness – Fall Color Hikes, Ironwood, MI

Three day hikes at the Porcupine Mountain Wilderness in Michigan's Upper Peninsula with hiking and views unlike any other in the Midwest. Towering virgin timber (pines, cedar, hemlock, oak, maple), secluded lakes, waterfalls and miles of wild rivers and streams make a visit to the "Porkies" a trip to remember. Cost: \$150 includes: three nights lodging, three breakfasts and Sierra fee. \$5 member discount. Full payment required in advance. Limit 12. Leaders: **Paul Silverman (847) 392-3433** and **Joe Pokorny**. *Assistant Leader needed.*

Oct 14-17 Shawnee National Forest Fall Color Hikes, Harrisburg, IL

Day hikes and fall colors in spectacular wilderness areas in Shawnee National Forest southeast of Harrisburg, IL: Garden of the Gods, Lusk Creek, Indian Kitchen and Heron Pond on the Cache River. For photos of the area:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/recreation/photo/east/>
<http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/cachervr.htm>

The mix of trees can provide an unequalled autumn spectrum of color. Maple, gum and dogwood produce brilliant reds, beech dress in yellow, oaks are scarlet, and pines sprinkle the palette with green. Learn "Why Leaves Turn Color". We'll be staying at a local motel. Cost is \$135 and includes lodging and three breakfasts. Limit 10. **Paul Silverman (847) 392-3433** and **Joe Pokorny**. *Assistant Leader needed.*

For up-to-date information visit: illinois.sierraclub.org/outings

Solar Tour 2010 Report: November 29, 2010

By Jeff Gahris

On October 2, a chilly and cloudy day, my wife Bonnie and I participated in the Illinois Solar Tour by visiting several homes in DuPage County. The tour, which was sponsored by the Illinois Solar Energy Association, included dozens of residential solar installations throughout the state. See <http://tour.illinoissolar.org/>

There are two important take-home messages from the Illinois Solar Tour. First, in our informal survey of several homes in Glen Ellyn, Lisle and Naperville, we learned that photovoltaic solar energy works as well in Northern Illinois as it does in Florida. We stopped at a Lisle home that had photovoltaic panels that were clearly generating electricity even on a cloudy day. We also saw effective thermal solar used to make both hot water and to supplement space heating.

Second, in all three communities, homeowners found that the municipal permitting process can go quite smoothly when the right information is submitted and the systems properly designed and installed. This suggests the need for qualified and experienced contractors.

Some homes we saw have thermal (hot water) solar only. A homeowner in Glen Ellyn uses solar energy to heat an outdoor pool. He pursued this after discovering that his conventionally heated pool had cost thousands of dollars per year to operate!

The Camasto home in Naperville (at right) uses both thermal and photoelectric panels. The Camastos have a "grid-tied" system that allows electrical energy on sunny days to be sold to the local utility. There are no storage batteries for the photovoltaic part of the system. Using an inverter, the electricity is either used in the home or sold as it is generated.

The homes we visited were not built to conserve energy, so it usually makes sense to take steps to conserve energy as much as possible before sizing a residential solar energy installation. Step one is to conserve energy by installing highly efficient and well designed lighting, appliances, air conditioning, and heating systems to the extent practicable. Adding insulation and reducing air infiltration will take it a step further. Good solar installers will encourage homeowners to reduce energy usage as much as they can in order to reduce the needed capacity of a solar system, thus saving the homeowner more money.



Photo taken by Jeff Gahris

I would recommend that one start with a home energy audit. Home Energy Ratings (HERS) provide a consistent system of comparison. A home with a HERS rated at a HERS index of 100 meets the 2003 energy code. Older homes typically have a HERS index above 100. Our 50-year old home was recently rated at 110, but can potentially be improved to about 90. Energy Star homes must be 85 or better.

There is one downside to solar that people frequently ask about. Yes, if the shingles need replacing, you would need to remove the panels and reinstall them again. For this reason, many residents replace an older roof first. Also, due to Chicago's winter weather, there are days when the panels are frozen solid with snow, which greatly reduces the effectiveness of the panels. Fortunately, there is enough sun to keep both thermal and photovoltaic panels warm and snow-free most of the time.

Finally, there is the issue of cost. Photovoltaic panels easily cost \$30,000 or more, and have long payback periods. Fortunately, Federal tax credits have helped make them more affordable, and have the credits been extended through 2016. There are some qualifying factors; the credits apply to principle residences, and the installation must meet electrical codes, among other things. Last I heard, Illinois has topped funding its rebate program due to budget owes. Still, we don't just do this for the money, right?

Join the Bluestem Network, *The Official Lobbying Network of the River Prairie Group!*

You'll receive a call whenever the Sierra Club Phone Tree Network is activated with an environmental action alert. Bluestem is generally activated on a monthly basis. Upon receiving the phone call notification, members can access the environmental action alert by two ways: receiving it at an email address or by checking the RPG Web page. The action alert instructs members how to place a call to elected representatives and the position that the Sierra Club has taken. A phone call to elected officials has proven to be the most effective way to have an impact on public policy. To join, clip and mail the application to Linda Sullivan, 302 W. Windsor Ave, Lombard, IL 60148.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

IL County _____

Sierra Club Member? Yes No

Home phone number _____
(required to join)

Answering machine? Yes No

Email address _____
if you wish to receive action alerts via email