

# PRAIRIE FLYER

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Prairie Group • East-Central Illinois • Jul/Aug/Sep 2001

## ONE EARTH, ONE CHANCE®

### Prairie Group Outings

#### Let's go to "The Potholes" in Indiana!

Saturday, July 21

Loren Kirkwood and Jack Kuehn will lead a trip to Falls Creek Gorge, also known as "The Potholes." The drive from C-U takes about one hour; we'll plan on leaving around 11 AM.

Please contact Loren in advance (so he will know who's planning to go): 217-351-5159 or kirkwood@shout.net

The area is a small Nature Conservancy park where Falls Creek has cut a deep, smoothly sculpted gorge through sandstone, forming rounded pools in the creek bed that look like jacuzzis of various shapes and sizes. A short distance up the creek is a nice little waterfall with a bigger pool. The creek has clear water, providing for lots of splashing around. There is also a short hiking trail through the woods on top of the bluff above the creek. Because of the shape of the gorge walls, walking all the way through the potholes requires going through water about hip deep. A great place for hot weather recreation — bring swimsuit, water sandals, enjoy.

Directions to Falls Creek Gorge: I-74 east to Indiana Route 63, north. After about 18 miles on route 63, turn right on route 41 toward Attica (41 south). After a short distance turn east (left) on county road 100N. After about two miles turn left on road marked "Potholes Road" (might be 025E, but I didn't see a numbered sign). Go another mile or two and a small parking lot with a Nature Conservancy sign will be on your left.

If there is interest, and depending on the weather, we may also visit the Babe Woodyard Forest Preserve, located near Georgetown, IL.

#### Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

"...the most biologically diverse area in the National Park system."

September 29-30

Jack Kuehn will lead this weekend trip, leaving early Saturday, and returning on Sunday. Hikers should bring drinks, snacks, lunches and, of course, their own camping equipment. \$5 fee to cover Saturday dinner and Sunday breakfast. To sign-up, contact Jack Kuehn j-kuehn@shout.net or 217-356-7206.

For details on the park, see: [http://backpacker.com/article/0,2646,689\\_P,00.html](http://backpacker.com/article/0,2646,689_P,00.html)

The following are not sponsored by the Sierra Club Prairie Group but are listed as a service to our members.

#### Biodiversity Blitz at Allerton Park

How diverse is Allerton Park? Illinois Natural History Survey scientists will be finding out during the Midwest's first Biodiversity Blitz. Scientists will be identifying as many species (birds, mammals, plants, fungi, lichens, insects, other invertebrates, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and microbes) as possible from 2 pm Friday, June 29 to 2 pm, Saturday, June 30. Come see how biologists gather biodiversity data — from fish and bat surveying to black-lighting for insects. There are varying degrees of participation. Visit the Biodiversity Blitz website for more information, to sign up for specific observation activities, to offer expertise or to contact Dr. Michael Jeffords at [jeffords@inhs.uiuc.edu](mailto:jeffords@inhs.uiuc.edu) or 217-333-5986. <http://www.conted.uiuc.edu/rapcc/bioblitz>

#### Champaign-Urbana Critical Mass

Champaign-Urbana Critical Mass celebrates bicycling and clean transportation. A ride meets every last Friday of the month at 5 p.m. at Green and Wright (by the Alma Mater statue in Urbana) <http://lists.groogroo.com/cgi-bin/listinfo/critical-mass>

### Ecological and Sustainable Landscaping on Campus

by Kate Higgs

The U of I campus' grid of roads and sidewalks, non-native trees, concrete parking lots, and well-trimmed hedges demonstrate the popular myth that humans are able to control nature. Our current landscape reinforces this myth every day as students, staff, faculty, and visitors walk to the library, down Green Street, and through the various quads. The campus has seen several "rebirths" of uniform vegetation as disease, harsh winters, or the biology of a widely planted tree causes wide-spread death of a species. Instead of a natural death and regrowth process that can occur in a relatively biodiverse area, we witness an almost continuous human-dependent cycle of tree planting and tree death. As one species dies, another is planted in its stead without any more forethought than the last—without considering the plant's ecological needs, without considering soil types, without considering biodiversity.

Why not reinforce in students the belief that humans can live with other organisms in a sustainable way? An increase in the species diversity, age diversity, and the use of native plants will allow natural processes to work with our plan instead of against it.

Why not reduce the cost of landscaping (labor, pesticides, herbicides, trees, and annual plants) and demonstrate to students a respect of nature by landscaping with nature's laws in mind?

Currently, a group of University professors organized by Bruce Hannon and Clark Bullard, is asking these questions and trying to foster biodiversity and sustainability on campus. As the Boneyard is being reconstructed through the engineering campus, their input will allow for a more natural looking area with the possibility of trees and wildflowers near the artificial banks. They are looking for ways to educate students through the design and through the design process. Sites are also on the Research Park being built south of campus.

As campus expands, as landscapes are changed, we — campus and community members — need to voice our opinions on how we believe campus should be landscaped.

**Jack Dempsey, head of Operations and Maintenance, is interested in creating a more sustainable landscaping method at the University. He will be speaking at the Prairie Group General Meeting, September 12th, 7:30 p.m. at the Illinois Disciples Foundation.**

For more information on ecological landscaping on campuses, download "in loco naturae" (in place of nature) by Bruce Hannon at: <http://www.staff.uiuc.edu/~j-domier/people/loco.pdf>

If you are interested in helping with the Prairie Group's efforts, contact Kate Higgs at [katehiggs@yahoo.com](mailto:katehiggs@yahoo.com) or 344-0300.

### Trees Near Power Lines Are Imperiled by Illinois Power Tariff: Part 2

by Jim Beauchamp

In the last issue of the Flyer I discussed the problem with Illinois Power's Vegetation Management Tariff, which was submitted to the Illinois Commerce Commission during December, 2001. During a subsequent open comment period the ICC received so many letters of protest they decided to conduct a series of hearings to be concluded with a final hearing in June during at which all of the "interveners" would present their cases for or against the tariff. The first hearing was in Champaign on March 12th, and the public clamor at the meeting and shortly after was so great that IP decided to withdraw the Tariff from consideration. Therefore, all further hearings were cancelled. A lot of the credit should go to the grassroots group Illinois Customers United to Save Our Trees, which informed citizen opinion in both Champaign-Urbana and Bloomington-Normal. This group has a web site at <http://www.saveitrees.org> which gives the details of its campaign.

In the meantime, anticipating a revised Tariff from IP, the four cities, their lawyers and arborists, met periodically with several Illinois House Representatives and IP representatives in the Springfield office of Rep. Dan Rutherford to develop compro-

mise legislation that could help homeowners. Their House Bill 1776 on Utilities Tree Trimming was passed by the House on April 6th. It was designed to restore the rights of local municipalities to enact utility tree-trimming ordinances more restrictive (on trimming practice) than is required by current State law or by a future ICC-approved utility tariff. While the bill is far from perfect, it is a good step in the right direction. At this writing, the bill is now before the Senate, where it is running into strong opposition due to pressure from utility firms.

Although this issue is currently at a quiescent point, it will no doubt heat up again in the not-too-distant future. Whatever is ultimately agreed upon between the cities and the utilities which participate in these discussions will surely serve as a model for the entire state. So it behooves us all to keep up pressure on our representatives, senators, the Governor, and the ICC by informing them of our opinions about the situation. Because there is an inherent conflict between utility lines and trees, and because economic "progress" too frequently trumps aesthetics and concern for wildlife habitat, this problem will no doubt be with us for a long time.

See online photos of the Shawnee Backpacking Outing! Highlights include post-hike cooking, Lusk Creek Canyon caves, stream crossings and, of course, the backpackers. [www.illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie](http://www.illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie)

Prairie Group General Meetings

Wednesday, July 11, 6:00 p.m.
POTLUCK at Kate Higgs' house
Meet other Prairie Group Members and find out more about the Group's campaigns!

Wednesday, August 8, 6:00 p.m.
POTLUCK at Jim and Karen Beauchamp's house
1002 Eliot Drive, Urbana
(1002 Eliot is just east of Yankee Ridge Elementary School at Mumford and Anderson)

Wednesday, September 12, 7:30 p.m.
Jack Dempsey, head of Operations and Maintenance at the UofI, will be speaking about landscaping issues on the Urbana-Champaign campus.

Illinois Disciples Foundation, northwest corner of Wright and Springfield, Champaign, 2nd floor, Bondurant Room (enter south-west door facing Springfield and proceed upstairs).

Ongoing Activities

Help with Restoration Work Days
The Prairie Grove Volunteers coordinate restoration activities in several local natural areas. Contact them through their website:

The Prairie Greens
The Prairie Greens of East-Central Illinois meet at 7 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month. For more info about their several e-mail lists and other meetings:

Would you like to volunteer for the Prairie Group, or offer ideas for the Prairie Flyer?
E-mail prairie\_flyer@yahoo.com

Mega-dairy Update

As of mid-May, the Illinois Department of Agriculture has been waiting for months for more information from the developer of a 3000+ head dairy planned for Bellflower (northwest of Mahomet), to decide whether to issue a permit for construction to begin.

If built, there will be over twice as many animals at the Bellflower mega-dairy as the current largest

Illinois dairy in Elmwood — which this winter dumped over two million gallons of waste from an overloaded lagoon, and was sued by the Illinois Attorney General and by lenders.

For more information, 217-897-6171, Quad County Clean Air and Water Coalition, QuadCountyCoalition@yahoo.com; and Families Against Rural Messes, http://www.farmweb.org.

Stay in Touch With the Prairie Group Listserv

To receive legislative and local notices/alerts, subscribe to the Prairie Group listserv by sending a message to: LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG

Include this one-line command in the message body:

SUBSCRIBE IL-PRAIRIE-ALERTS YourFirstName YourLastName

Check the website for updates between newsletters: http://illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie/

Calendar

- June
29-30 Biodiversity Blitz at Allerton Park
July
11 Prairie Group Potluck at Kate Higgs's
21 Prairie Group Outing, Indiana Potholes
August
8 Prairie Group Potluck, Jim & Karen Beauchamp's
September
12 Prairie Group General Meeting, Illinois Disciples Foundation
29-30 Prairie Group Outing, Indiana Dunes

Executive Committee Members of the Prairie Group (ExComm)
http://illinois.sierraclub.org/prairie
Ted Tourlentes: Chair, Newsletter Co-Chair
Kate Higgs: Conservation Chair, Newsletter Co-Chair
Jim Beauchamp: Vice Chair, Membership Chair
Jack Kuehn: Outings Chair
Jeannine W isnieswski: Secretary, Publicity Chair
Dick Bishop: Newsletter Co-Chair, Political Chair
Karen Beauchamp: Treasurer
Kirstin Replogle: Member At Large

Member Survey

Please take a moment to send the Prairie Group your views on the following questions:

What local, regional, and/or global environmental issues are most important for you?

Would you consider volunteering with the Prairie Group to work on one or more of these issues?

Are there people or organizations you can recommend that the Prairie Group work with to pursue any of these issues?

Other comments/suggestions?

Name/Phone/E-mail:

Please return to: prairie\_flyer@yahoo.com, or Sierra Club Prairie Group, PO Box 131, Urbana, IL 61803.