

February program



photo © M. Ritscher

The Return of Chicago's Peregrine Falcon

Mary Hennen, Field Museum
Wednesday, February 15 6:45 pm
Vernon Area Library

At our February 15th meeting, we'll hear how Chicago has figured in one of the great endangered species success stories, the resurrection of the peregrine falcon, the world's fastest bird. In 1985, peregrine falcons had been absent for 20 years east of the Mississippi River and those west of the River had dropped to only 39 breeding pairs. The main culprit was DDT, but banning this pesticide and designating the bird "endangered" couldn't alone bring it back from such small numbers.

So groups were formed, some private and some governmental, to restore this beautiful animal. Birds were bred in captivity and techniques found to introduce them back into the wild. And an interesting fact was discovered: these normally cliff dwelling predators enjoyed the city life! Nests on the edge of a skyscraper or bridge, with untold numbers of pigeons nearby, could make a happy peregrine home.

Through many trials and difficulties, a devoted group of Chicagoland bird lovers established the falcons all along the Lakefront, releasing 46 birds during the first 5 years. Mary Hennen, Field Museum scientist and director of the Museum Peregrine program, has been working with these Chicago birds since 1989 and will tell us the inside story of the falcons' rise from the ashes.

Directions:

From the East: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west just past Milwaukee Ave (Route 21) to the first stop light (Olde Half Day Rd). Turn right, then quickly left into the library parking lot.

From the North: Take Route 21 (Milwaukee Ave.) south, turn right at the light for Olde Half Day Rd (between 45 and 22). Turn right into the library parking lot. ♣

March program

A Journey Through Natural Kenya and Tanzania

Photographer Laurence Stern
Thursday, March 23 6:45 pm
Vernon Area Library

Through the lens of award winning photographer Laurence Stern, we will travel through game parks and land reserves. We'll see animals in their natural habitats, from the elephant to the spider, plus flowers, trees, tribesman—and more!

A must see for all nature lovers. An enthusiastic, lively speaker, Laurence will share his memorable trip with us.

Directions:

From the East: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west just past Milwaukee Ave (Route 21) to the first stop light (Olde Half Day Rd). Turn right, then quickly left into the library parking lot.

From the West: Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) east. Just before you hit Milwaukee Ave (Route 21), turn left at the stop light for Olde Half Day Rd. Turn quickly left into the library parking lot. ♣



Update on the fight for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

By Larry Marvet, Conservation Chair

In November, after a furious battle to convince Congress to protect the Arctic Refuge, a small but critical group of Republicans stood together against their Congressional leadership. They refused to go along with the budget bill which included Arctic drilling. The AP called it, "...a stunning setback for those who have tried for years to open a coastal strip of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil development, and a victory for environmentalists who have lobbied hard against the drilling provision."

And if you think we're too far from Washington or Alaska to make a difference, then consider that our own Congressional delegates, Melissa Bean and Mark Kirk, were key votes for this victory. In fact, Republican Kirk defied his leadership and is one of the famous "moderate Republicans" group that forced drilling off the bill. The fact that he stood his ground in this fight is both a testament to his environmental bent and to the voices he heard from us over the days and weeks preceding the vote.

Please come to Woods & Wetlands' Winter Potluck Party



RSVP today— You won't want to miss this! Come shake the winter blues with your Sierra Club friends. Join us for some winter cheer and lively conversation at a member's home.

Please come... we want to see YOU there!

Sunday, January 22 3:00–7:00 pm

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RSVP to ww-blues@illinois.sierraclub.org or call Group Chair Evan Craig at 847-680-6437

Conservation news

Looking back over 2005, we've had some tremendous achievements: Costco was blocked from building in Lake Forest on natural lands adjacent to the Middlefork Savanna Forest Preserve; and Mark Kirk was convinced to oppose oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, thereby effectively ending the latest federal assault on natural Alaska. In both cases, a key factor was our alliance with other like-minded people and groups to bring additional power to our efforts.

The Costco issue brought us together with homeowners, a number of county, state and federal governmental agencies, local businesses, other environmental groups, and even the (first place) Chicago Bears! Also, as we fight (and continue to fight) for the Arctic, we are joined by hard workers at the Alaska Coalition, PIRG (Public Interest Research Group) and REP (Republicans for Environmental Protection).

Both of these accomplishments show that success means opening our arms wider and getting more involvement, both within Sierra Club and outside it. If you like the pro-environmental trend gaining momentum in Lake County, think about how you can get involved, whether writing the occasional letter to a Congressman, attending our monthly General Meetings or joining our Conservation Committee (meeting on the 4th Wednesday of each month). Feel free to call or write me for more information. ♣

Happy New Year!

Larry Marvet, Conservation Chair
847-537-2083 larry.marvet@illinois.sierraclub.org

Congress is in a strange state now, hopefully leading to better, more environmentally friendly legislation. Tom Delay, the most powerful House member, has been deflated due to his recent criminal indictment; G. W. Bush is at his lowest (but well deserved) popularity ever; and the deficit, hurricanes and Iraq

have roiled and splintered the Republican majority.

The Arctic vote may be the start of good times, but then again, it might not. Keep your eyes on the news and this newsletter—Arctic drilling won't be dead until March.



Visit Rustle the Leaf online at www.rustletheleaf.com.

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Clean Energy is Health Care: Part II

Continued from last issue

By Evan Craig, Group Chair

Other toxins cause damage to our DNA, upon which we rely to provide the chemical recipes for everything in our bodies. These toxins are called carcinogens, because when our DNA is damaged, our ability to live, heal and reproduce can be compromised. The new cells we produce, if replicated with haywire DNA, form what we call cancer. We have many names for cancer, depending on which organ is affected: prostate cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, melanoma (skin cancer), and especially in babies, leukemia (bone marrow cancer). When the DNA we pass on to our children is damaged it can cause birth defects if the segments of DNA that control a trait, called genes, are active in the living thing in which they reside. Inactive genes are called "recessive," and they can be passed on for generations until paired with the same recessive gene from a sexual partner before swinging into action. There are 3000 genetic diseases, and 2500 of them are recessive, so they can lay low for generations while accumulated damage, and pop up to cripple our great grandchildren.

So, you might be wondering what kind of toxins are carcinogens. Topping the list is dioxin, formed when Chlorine is incinerated in sludge, as the North Shore Sanitary District plans to do in Zion. The EPA has determined that there is no safe level for dioxin, tracks it but refuses to regulate it.

Also on the list is radioactive waste, which emits high-energy x-rays, and a variety of nuclear particles which wreak havoc with DNA. Dr. Caldicott, anti-nuclear luminary, visited our region last month to explain how radioactive waste is regularly released, and how it enters and affects our bodies.

If Illinois were a country, it would be the third most nuclear in the world. There are 14 nuclear reactors around Chicago, including the closed but still extremely dangerous Zion reactor. When Uranium nuclear fission occurs in a reactor it decays into a cornucopia of 200 new deadly radioactive elements,

some of which remain so for thousands of years. As a result, the "spent" fuel produces less heat, but 3 to 30 times more radioactivity. Thousands of tons of it is stored in cooling pools to keep it from overheating, escaping and contaminating our region; and the feeble buildings that cover them are extremely vulnerable. A direct release of high level waste could cause catastrophic death tolls, and leave the region uninhabitable.

But nuclear waste is routinely released into our environment by nuclear power plants at lower levels without such an attack or accident, in the form of chemically inert radioactive gases like ⁹⁰Krypton. When it fissions into radioactive ⁹⁰Strontium our bodies confuse it with Calcium and accumulate it in our bones and in mother's milk. There it causes leukemia. Another inert Uranium daughter, ¹³⁷Xenon, decays into radioactive ¹³⁷Cesium, an imposter for Potassium. It doesn't bioaccumulate like ⁹⁰Sr, but damage it causes to DNA while in the body does. NPRI, led by Dr. Caldecott, states that, "In a recent study published in the journal Archives of Environmental Health, researchers found that children living near 14 eastern U.S. nuclear power plants are 12.4% more likely to develop cancer than the U.S. average, and in some counties as much as 26% more."

So you might think that our elected officials are taking steps to eliminate the production of radioactive waste, and encourage the energy industry to find less dangerous ways to make electricity. Instead, the Bush administration has streamlined the permitting of new nuclear reactors to break the de facto moratorium since Three Mile Island disaster, and is considering extending the operating licenses of reactors with known safety issues. And our own US Rep Mark Kirk voted to reauthorize the Price Anderson Act granting government liability insurance for the nuclear power industry.

By now, if you're still reading, you're thinking, "everybody dies of something," and "this is too big for me to fix." Or



Photo by Weg Thomas

First 2006 Outing: Canoe the Nippersink

At our November program meeting, *To Restore the Nippersink*, the first planned outing for 2006 was announced. As we learned at the meeting, the Nippersink is one of the most cherished streams in the region. On Saturday, June 3, we will canoe two previously channelized sections that in 1999 and 2000 were restored to their pre-settlement meandering streambeds. We'll pause to climb up a kame to survey the valley home of the creek, and witness how the meanders have vastly reduced erosion. The quality of the creek's waters is important in maintaining the profusion of aquatic life, and we'll learn about the role of the creek's unprotected wetland headwaters. This outing requires paddlers to have the ability to accurately turn and position a canoe in moving water, and will begin with a review of stream paddling skills on shore. Trip cost includes canoe rental, reduced if you bring your own. Carpooling encouraged.

To sign up, visit the Outings page on our website and submit a questionnaire, or contact the leaders, Evan Craig or Geno Spain. ♻

maybe, "I eat organic food and exercise, so I'll be ok," or "we need nuclear power to avoid global warming," which couldn't be further from the truth. So instead of calling your elected official, you'll hope that you're not the one out of every 200 people that will get cancer this year, and go focus on something more fun. But wait, there are things you can do – after calling your federal representatives – that will make an immediate difference. Start saving energy and money by reducing your energy usage and upgrading your electric appliances to more efficient models: think caulk, insulation, furnace, air conditioner, house fan, washer, drier, fridge, lights. Every kilowatt hour of electricity saved

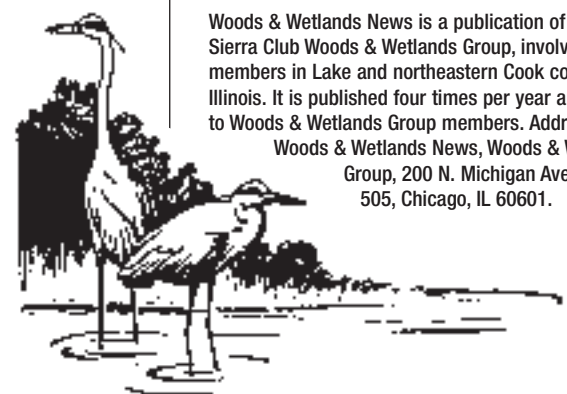
reduces mercury and radioactive emissions. Then think about turning off stuff you're not using: lights, PCs, heat. These are things that every Sierra Club member can feel proud about doing, so why not be proud as a whole country? It's time for our government to stop subsidizing dirty power, and start switching to cleaner energy sources. ♻

Sierra Club Woods & Wetlands Group

illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w

Group Chair,	Evan Craig	847-680-6437
Outings Chair	ww-chair@illinois.sierraclub.org	
Vice Chair,	George Etu	847-432-3787
Chapter Rep.	ww-vicechair@illinois.sierraclub.org	
Conservation	Larry Marvet,	847-537-2083
	ww-cons@illinois.sierraclub.org	
Membership	YOUR name here!	Contact Group Chair to volunteer
Fundraising	Jim Bland	847-223-2593
	ww-fund@illinois.sierraclub.org	
Governance	George Etu	847-432-3787
	george.etu@illinois.sierraclub.org	
Treasurer,	Dennis Murphy	847-223-4262
Political Chair	ww-polichair@illinois.sierraclub.org	
Secretary	We need you!	Contact Group Chair to volunteer
Newsletter	Jill Koch	847-223-1825
	jill@kochcreative.com	

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Woods & Wetlands Calendar of Events

- Sunday, Jan. 22** **Winter Potluck 3-7 pm** *Come shake the Winter Blues* with your Sierra Club friends. Join us for some winter cheer and lively conversation at a member's home. RSVP to ww-blues@illinois.sierraclub.org or call Group Chair Evan Craig at 847-680-6437
- Wednesday, Feb. 15** **Program Meeting, 6:45 pm—The Return of Chicago's Peregrine Falcon** with Mary Hennen. scientist and director of the Museum Peregrine program, has been working with these Chicago birds since 1989 and will tell us the inside story of the falcons' rise from the ashes.
- Thursday, March 23** **Program Meeting, 6:45 pm—A Journey through Natural Kenya and Tanzania** with prize-winning photographer Laurence Stern. Travel through game parks and land reserves to see animals in natural habitats, from the elephant to the spider, plus flowers, trees, tribesman—and more!

General meetings are held at Vernon Area Library, 300 Olde Half Day Road in Lincolnshire. Take Route 22 (Half Day Rd) west from Milwaukee Ave (Rt 21), turn north (right) at the first stop light, then quickly left into the Library parking lot.

WOODS & WETLANDS CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

January 25, February 22 and March 22 7 pm*

Conservation Committee Meetings are held at College of Lake County South Lake Campus Room TBA 1120 South Milwaukee (Brown brick building on west side of Milwaukee Ave., 0.2 miles north of US 45 and about 2 miles south of Town Line Rd; park and enter in back.) Call Larry Marvet, 847-537-2083 for details.

For maps and details, please visit <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/meet/index.html>