



**SIERRA CLUB**  
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# Woods & Wetlands News

Serving Lake and Northeastern Cook Counties

## Green Cars?

By Larry Marvet

Hybrid, electric, diesel, fuel cell; Toyota Prius, Honda Insight, Ford Escape; ethanol, biofuel, E80—how can you keep track? If you could, you'd need a rocket scientist to make sense of it all, especially from an environmentally sensitive viewpoint.

Not exactly a rocket scientist, Dr. Ciatti works at Argonne National Lab exactly on these transportation technologies and will help us to cull fact from fiction. And the facts will surprise you! 🐾

## Wildlife in Tanzania

By Larry Marvet

Growing up in Tanganyika, Todd Gustafson has returned many times to document the beautiful and endangered wildlife and lands. He's now a world-class photographer, with a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian, 3 images in the 2006 National Geographic calendar, and numerous photographic awards.

A Des Plaines resident, Todd is also a professional trumpeter and leads photo safaris to Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika). 🐾



## Meeting Calendar

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

7:00 p.m.

**Thursday, March 22, 2007**

Byron Colby Barn, Grayslake.

***Green Cars, Green Fuels, Green Future—How To Decide?***

Presented by Dr. Stephen Ciatti, Argonne National Laboratory.  
See description on this page.

**Wednesday, April 18, 2007**

Vernon Area Library, Lincolnshire.

***Wildlife at Home in Tanzania***

Presented by Todd Gustafson, Freelance Wildlife Photographer  
See description on this page.

### CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

6:00 p.m.

Immediately preceding the General Membership Meetings. Topics include Global Warming, Clean Water, Transportation, and member interests.

### EARTH DAY FAIR

**Sunday, April 22, 2007, noon - 3:00**

Vernon Area Library, Lincolnshire

***Cosponsored with the Vernon Area Library***

Over 20 exhibitors with fun and learning for kids and adults.

Tree Planting Ceremony: 1:30 - Donate \$1 to Plant-A-Tree Fund.

E-mail [ww-earthday@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:ww-earthday@illinois.sierraclub.org), to help.

Earth week programs at the Library, April 5 to April 25.

See [www.vapld.org](http://www.vapld.org).

#### Directions

General meetings, and the Earth Day Fair are held at Vernon Area Library, 300 Olde Half Day Road in Lincolnshire. Olde Half Day Road is between Half Day and Rt. 22. Take it west from Milwaukee Ave (Rt 21) and turn right into the Library parking lot.



The Byron Colby Barn is on Jones Point Road in Grayslake. Turn W onto Jones Point from Rt. 45 at the light a between Casey and Rt. 120 / Belvidere. The Barn and its parking area are on the left.

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

## Practicing the long lost art of slowing down

by Keith Cerk

**I used to know an old man who could walk by any cornfield and hear the corn singing.**

**“Teach me.” I’d say when we’d passed on by (I never said a word while he was listening.) “Just tell me how you learned to hear that corn.”**

**And he’d say “It takes a lot of practice. You can’t be in a hurry.”**

**And I’d say, “I have the time.”**

So begins Byrd Baylor and Peter Parrall’s wonderful little children’s book titled *The Other Way to Listen*. Somehow, I think it is we adults who may need to hear such words more than our children. Maybe you will relate to this as I do.

When I was a child I spent much of my time in the little woods behind my house. My friends and I would play all sorts of imaginative games as we explored our small patch of wilderness. I was unique (weird?) in that I loved to wile away the hours just sitting in a tree I had climbed, or laying on my back to watch cloud formations, or kneeling to ponder every minute detail of a fresh set of opossum tracks. I loved to immerse myself in the natural world, just listening, just being. My friends would bore quickly. They wanted to “do something”, so would leave me to go play baseball. But I knew in my soul that if I became quiet enough, sat still enough, listened long enough, why ... I might even learn to “hear that corn.”

While I must admit that I never heard anything like corn actually singing, the days spent in my woods were filled with something magical which was mostly lost on my playmates. They were there to have fun, but for me the natural world was always more than a mere playground. I went to experience something deeper, something ineffable, which I can only describe as sacred. Perhaps I was predisposed with this hunger due to a difficult home life; or maybe it was the visceral reaction I had

## Approaching Outings

- May 19** Picnic and Paddle from Lake Catharine to Marie
- June 16** Paddle the Upper Fox, Chain O’ Lakes State Park
- July 7** Canoe Oak Spring to Independence Grove and back
- July 21** Lake Bluff Powwow Fundraising Cookout

**Sign up for these and more at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/w&w/Outings>**

to being tethered to a school desk nine months of the year. One thing is for sure, I knew harmony and wholeness, dare I say holy-ness, for the first time thanks to the outdoors. In some strange way she had become my family, my teacher, my companion, my therapist, my church. No wonder that I am so passionate about our Sierra Club motto: To Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet. How could I not be? But I digress.

Fast-forward a few years and I have become a grown up. I have responsibilities. Let’s see now...College degree? Check. Starting a career? Check. Grad school? Check. Married... with children? Check. Bills to pay... meetings to attend ... kids to cart around? Check.



Check. Check. Life has somehow gotten very, very busy. I have morphed from a human being into a “human doing.” The part of me which always hated being stuck indoors at a school desk is really unhappy these days. In fact, everything within me is screaming: “Stop this merry-go-round, right now!! I want to get off!!” Remembering how my stressed-out father died young of a heart attack, I take heed. Message re-

ceived. So I head for what I know; the healing balm of the outdoors. I haven’t spent much time there in my adult years, but just like riding a bike, I know it will all come back to me. To my horror, I am wrong. It isn’t that simple. Sure, I can jump off the merry-go-round I call my life. But when I do, I am still spinning inside. My mind still races, my over-stressed system is still in hyperdrive. Somehow I have lost the ability I once had to be quiet, to sit still, to listen deeply. That ineffable sense of the sacred I grew to rely upon as a child, to delight in, now eludes me. Try as I might, even my Peterson Field Guide cannot help me find it again.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? It’s a tragic story I see played out over and over again in most of the people I meet. We are literally killing ourselves with our lifestyles. Should we be surprised when so many who share our species don’t mind killing off the natural world as well in the name of that same lifestyle? The good news is that nature never hurries. The natural pace for wildlife is our human birthright as well. The bad news (really not so bad at all) is that we will have to work to re-learn from nature the art of slowing down, taking time, listening, if we want to be whole again.

My salvation...our salvation, if you are still resonating with me... has been to seek to live life intentionally at a “savoring pace” over the past few decades. Each day I try to practice attentiveness to what life brings my way, listening at ever deeper levels of my being. Only in this way have I had any hope of rediscovering some of that childlike sense of awe, of wonder, of sheer delight in just being alive which I once knew. This for me is really the realm of spirituality, of the sacred “in Whom we live and move and have our being”. I find great inspiration

*(Continued on page W4)*

## Sequoit Under Siege

By John Massman, *Sentinel*

The Sequoit Creek watershed once again faces more threats from development, including the expansion of the Antioch sewage treatment plant.

Residential and big box development on Antioch's east side already sent polluted stormwater through private land and into Little Silver Lake, one of Lake County's most pristine lakes. Antioch was fined \$85,000 by the IEPA during construction of the Wal-Mart for not properly controlling sediment loaded stormwater runoff from the construction site.

Now a Menards is under construction next door and there is evidence that perhaps the stormwater controls again are not sufficient to handle runoff.

More big box stores are also on the agenda for the Rt. 173 corridor further west of the Wal-Mart & Menards. The Antioch Zoning and Planning Board will be reviewing a plan for the new stores at a public meeting May 10th.

The Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources has already commented that commercial development on this parcel is likely to adversely modify the Little Silver Lake area and negatively affect the fauna. Runoff from this new development is destined for a degraded wetland further west near the Antioch industrial park.

A couple years ago when the flood plain maps were updated many area residents and small business owners in this area were very concerned about the extra costs they faced for flood insurance. What will an influx of stormwater runoff do to the wetlands and Sequoit Creek, which not only runs next to and through the industrial area, but through downtown Antioch as well?

Which brings us to the Sewage Treatment Plant. Because of the growth in Antioch and the aged condition of the STP, the IEPA has demanded that Antioch upgrade and expand their STP to handle it's present and future demands for sewage treatment. The outfall of the plant is Sequoit Creek whose terminus is Lake Marie, part of Lake County's Chain 'O Lakes. As we explained in our last issue, Lake Marie is on the 2006 Illinois 303(d) list of impaired waters already

and now the STP is going to be expanded and there will be more stormwater runoff further upstream.

The IDNR WIRT system indicates that threatened or endangered species of aquatic life, such as Blackchin Shiner, Iowa Darter, Pugnose Shiner, Banded Killifish, and Starhead Top Minnow, may be present.

The stream will experience an increase in loading due to the increased effluent discharge from the plant along with increased flow rates from the new development further upstream. All in all it's not looking good not only for Sequoit Creek but Lake Marie and other lakes in the Chain.



Sequoit Sentinels Connie and John testing water at the industrial park.

## IEPA Hearing Expected: Antioch vs. Lake Marie

By Evan Craig, *Chair*

Despite our best efforts, Antioch has ignored our advice, and plans to go ahead with their unmitigated plans to pollute Lake Marie. Little to our surprise, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has announced that they intend to let them. We have requested a public hearing, and if they hold one, it will be up to concerned citizens to help us save Lake Marie.

As we described earlier in Sewervivors in issue #43, and as John describes in the preceding article, there are many measures Antioch could include, and at limited expense, to reduce the impacts to Lake Marie. But we have not left it to their imagination. With the help of Sierra Club Illinois Clean Water Advocate, Cindy Skrukud, we met with Antioch in August 2005, and then sent them a letter

the following April detailing several ways. The law requires that they not degrade Sequoit Creek, and specifically that they not further degrade the already impaired waters of Lake Marie with more phosphorous and suspended solids. We also shared our concerns with IEPA directly, and when we discovered that they plan a TMDL study for Lake Marie, urged that they complete it before issuing this permit. Last September we met again with Antioch to encourage them to perform preliminary evaluations of Lake Marie before proceeding.

Antioch and IEPA have chosen not to take any of our recommendations. They have also ignored recommendations of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission to restrict pollution with phosphorus, suspended solids, oxygen depletion and ammonia to current levels.

So this January, after IEPA issued their draft permit allowing this insult to our waters, we wrote to them to object, and to request a hearing. We objected specifically because this permit:

1. contributes to a violation of water quality standards of Lake Marie, listed as impaired for both phosphorus and total suspended solids, both increased by this permit;
2. ignores the legal phosphorous limit of 0.05 mg/l for lakes and tributary streams;
3. lacks any limits on oxygen depleting pollutants;
4. fails to stipulate the biological system proposed by the engineers to reduce nitrogen pollution levels.

These technical concerns will determine whether Sequoit Creek and Lake Marie can become enjoyable public waters, or whether their health will decline and risk the health of people who explore them. Will kids find clams and frogs and other critters in the wetlands and the creek, or will they risk getting sick by splashing around looking for them? Will Lake Marie continue to suffer from blooms of poisonous blue-green algae, or will it become safe throughout the summer for fishing and swimming?

Whether or not IEPA holds this hearing or corrects their permit, we can all take action to protect our waters from phosphorous pollution. Remember the big list

*(Continued on page A4)*

*(slowing down Continued from page W2)*

in open spirits such as Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk who lived in the woods of rural Kentucky, who described his contemplative spiritual practice this way: "What I do is live. How I pray is breathe." Slowing down and listening, especially to the subtleties of nature, forms a key component of my adult spirituality. Nature is unique in its ability to awaken a lively sense of the sacred in us. We will need to practice slowing down and listening to pick up such subtleties though.

This past summer I spent an entire month on an expedition in the Logan Mountains of Canada's Yukon Territory. This is a pristine wilderness area. Absolutely breathtaking. Also challenging, both mentally and physically. My companions and I felt totally immersed in the experience of nature, and to some extent we were. But without our knowing it, we had actually brought our busy, driven lives along for the ride. Each day was filled with activity. Set up camp. Break camp. New ground to cover. New sights to see. New peaks to ascend. New wildlife to identify. We were so used to such a fast-paced life back home, that we fooled ourselves into thinking we had actually slowed down significantly in the wild. We didn't realize just how much of the experience of that glorious place we were missing because we passed by it so quickly, minds elsewhere.

It wasn't until the second half of our trip when we were canoeing down the Hyland River that we woke up and smelled the coffee. One day someone made the novel

suggestion that we do a silent paddle. Absolutely no talking! Trying to maintain such a tough discipline, and failing miserably, made us realize just how unquiet our minds actually were!! But after a few hours something magical began to happen. Because we started to listen, we found ourselves beginning to notice things we hadn't before; subtle things, beautiful things. Nature literally came alive for us in ways she hadn't the two weeks previous. It was as if the corn had started to sing.

Since that time I am careful to suggest to friends on every outing we take together that at least some of our time be spent in silence, just listening to the natural rhythms, open to whatever comes into our awareness. Put down the field guides, forget about how many more miles to go, set aside the camp chores. Slow it down, sit still under a tree and just "be" for a moment. I am always delighted to hear how such a simple practice has opened eyes, changed lives, and created passionate advocates for nature.

**The beauty of the trees, the softness of the air, the fragrance of the grass, speaks to me.**

**The summit of the mountain, the thunder of the sky, the rhythm of the sea, speaks to me.**

**...And my heart soars.**

-Chief Dan Seattle 🐾

*(Antioch vs. Lake Marie Continued from page W3)*

of proven impaired waters we published last issue? The fact is that anyone with a dishwasher or property bordering water or a street with storm drains, can help eliminate phosphorous pollution. If you have a lawn and like to fertilize it, ask your garden center for fertilizer with zero P (phosphorous) - and then keep it off the sidewalk and street. Or have a service apply zero-P liquid fertilizer. Liquids are absorbed immediately and run off less. Phosphorous simply isn't needed for established lawns, and many soils already contain plenty - get a soil test first. Put in generous native plant beds bordering your yard at the street and the water. Every act makes a difference. 🐾

### Group Executive Committee

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## Density and Open Space

*By Evan Craig, Chair*

Cramming more people into our territory usually leads to congested traffic, and higher taxes. So it's not surprising that dense development draws public opposition. But unless we keep more people out, we need to use dense development to our advantage.

I've often pointed out that putting fewer than seven homes on an acre causes traffic, and that leaving less than seven acres around a home makes poor recreation and wildlife habitat. A small yard out the back door isn't terribly private or

secure, and comes at a heavy price: isolation from our community in car-cocoons.

Instead of blocking us in with huge subdivisions, we should ask our elected leaders for easy access to open space. When developers ask them for lucrative higher density, they should request open space within walking distance in return. Higher density near mass transit and civic and commercial centers could also give residents the option of efficient, car-free lifestyles. With Global Warming looming large, we can live better by re-thinking the way we live. 🐾

