



CFC News

Saving Living Room for Living Things

A conservation newsletter published by Citizens for Conservation, Inc.

Barrington, Illinois

Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1985

SATURDAY SESSION: Making Maple Syrup

by Amanda Paulson and Elizabeth Train, Age 10, Hough Street School.

On Saturday, March 9, we went to the Max McGraw Wildlife Area for a Maple Syrup class. First, the guide, E.T., showed us how to tell a maple tree from other trees.



E.T. shows how to drill a tree and put in the spile - the spout used to collect sap.



"Is it syrup yet?"

The maple is one of the few trees whose branches are opposite. Next, she took us to the area where they get the sap out of the trees. The buckets were very FULL! Before we took off the buckets and emptied them, however, E.T. showed us how to drill a tree and put the spile in to get out the sap. We then hung a bucket up to catch the sap. But it wasn't maple syrup yet; there were more steps to do.

We emptied all the full buckets into a large container. We pulled it on a wagon through muddy paths to a place where other sap was already cooking. We poured in all our sap. E.T. explained the sap was cooking to steam out all the water and only leave the sweet syrup. This is how maple syrup is made. We also got to try both finished maple syrup and uncooked sap.

For the last half-hour, we took a nature walk and found skunk cabbage, one of the first signs of spring. It is called skunk cabbage because if you break off a piece and scrunch it up, it smells like a skunk. We also found many tracks of deer, raccoons, and dogs. On the way back to the bus, just we two found a bouncy branch and played on it. Altogether, we had a really fun time.

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD by Wendy Paulson

Mr. Browning's oft-recited poem -- at least the few lines I could summon from memory -- kept leaping into thought as I prepared for a 10-day trip to England last month. "Oh to be in England/ Now that April's there...." It was April and I especially looked forward to finding whatever it was that inspired Browning to pine for the English countryside. I intended to explore, on foot, as much of the landscape as I could.

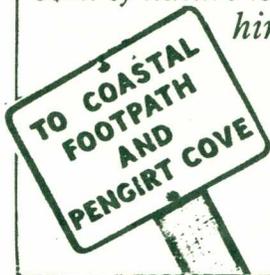
Although I had never crossed the Atlantic, I held clear impressions of the moors, the hedgerows, the skylarks singing overhead, the endless walking -- all nurtured by happy hours of submergence in the novels of Thomas Hardy and the poetry of the romantics Wordsworth and Keats. Each of those writers, and Browning, too, obviously spent a lot of time outdoors. Their writings are infused with an awareness of natural events and details that could only be cultivated by regular exposure to a world populated by chaffinches, primroses, daffodils, heather.

I met that world. I felt as though I had known it, in a way, forever. But experiencing it firsthand was special and made all that I had read more meaningful. It validated the magnetic attraction April's England held for Browning. The chaffinch sang "on the orchard bough" for me many times (in fact, I found that the fleeting forms and the always melodious songs of the British birds that I sought to identify belonged, 90% of the time, to a chaffinch!) and I listened to the "fine careless rapture" of the "wise thrush". How could one not long to be in England as April wakened such an ecstatic morning chorus and a countryside of verdure and blossom scarcely to be believed?

So I understood the impetus behind Browning's poem almost immediately. But what I hadn't anticipated and what has stuck with me long after returning home is the realization of how open the English countryside is to the British citizen and to the visitor alike. I had no idea how easy exploring the landscape would be, in terms of what's accessible.

The born natural-
ist is one of the
most lucky men in
the world. Winter or
summer, rain or
shine, at home or abroad, walk-
ing or riding, his pleasures are
always near at hand. The great
book of nature is open before
him and he has
only to turn
its leaves.

John Burroughs



My friend and companion on the trip, who had grown up in England and Scotland, had tried to convince me that we would be able to walk "just about anywhere." But accustomed as I was to no trespassing signs and private property claims, I wasn't convinced. Not until we had driven a mile or two from the airport and my friend had pointed out several "public footpath" signs -- unobtrusive but all alike and easily recognizable -- did I begin to believe her. By the end of our trip I would vouch that in Britain one can walk almost anywhere.

There exists a seemingly endless system of public footpaths that traverse the whole of the British landscape. We hiked through moor, forest, along the dramatic cliffs of the southwest coast, usually across private property but never once having to ask permission. Permission already is granted.



There are no animals in the Barrington Bog which we know are restricted to this habitat here. However, woodcocks have been sighted performing their elaborate aerial courtship displays over the areas. They probably nest beneath the birch and willow shrubs, while song birds, such as yellow throats and yellow warblers, nest in the branches above. Swamp sparrows and long-billed marsh wrens can be seen darting into the beds of sedges and cattails where they make their homes.

In contrast to Barrington Bog, Wagner Fen lies in a broad, shallow depression bordered by gently rolling gravel hills. It is located east of River Road, between Kelsey and Roberts Roads in Tower Lakes. Wagner Fen also differs from the Bog in that it is drained by a winding creek that flows out of Tower Lakes and through the Fen to the Fox River. The basin occupied by the Fen may once have been a shallow glacial lake, but the wetland that filled it is fed continuously by ground water from the bordering gravel hills. This ground water is the lifeblood of a fen. Rain and melted snow percolate into the sand and gravel of the hills, dissolve the minerals in the rock, and seep or ooze out into the basin. Thus, this water is rich in some nutrients and is limy or alkaline, in stark contrast to the water of a bog.

The vegetation which forms the Wagner Fen has a less ancient heritage than that of Barrington Bog. Though some of the plants are a hold over from the time when Barrington looked more like modern Canada, most of them are prairie and marsh types that crept into the basin about 7,000-8,000 years ago when a prairie climate first came to Illinois.

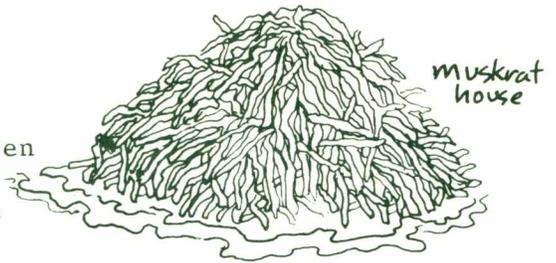
Wetland sedges and prairie grasses with names like Indian grass, big bluestem, and little bluestem dominate the Fen landscape. As in a bog, their remains accumulate and rot slowly to form quaking peat. But here the peat is infiltrated by that alkaline ground water, so the flowering plants that grow here are kinds that thrive in these peculiar chemical conditions. Some are showy, such as the deep blue fringed gentian, bright yellow Ohio goldenrod, and delicate pink gerardia. Others, like the twig rush and low nut rush, look like inconspicuous little reeds, but are no less significant, as they grow no where else but in fens. Many are threatened with extinction in Illinois because too many other fens have been destroyed.



Fens also provide the only suitable habitat for many of our wet prairie wildflowers and wildlife today, because nearly all wet prairies on non-peaty soils have been cultivated. At the Wagner Fen, the beautiful marsh blazing star, marsh blue violet, and creamy turtlehead are common, yet are seldom seen elsewhere in the area because their habitat has been destroyed. Two now very rare wetland butterflies, the Baltimore checkerspot and silver-bordered fritillary, depend on the turtlehead and marsh violets of the Fen, as these are the only major food plants of their caterpillars. Animals with such narrow diets require very special places to live.

Turtlehead

The extensive cattail and reed marshes at Wagner Fen are less unique, but they do provide a stronghold for animals that are running out of places to live in the area. Muskrat homes dotting the marsh are evidence that this industrious rodent is present.



Great blue and green herons frequently forage for frogs and small fish in the marsh, and the raucous, eerie call of the sora rail is evidence that this elusive insect eater is probably nesting here.



Barrington Bog and Wagner Fen are two truly unique areas. The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, conducted in the late 1970's, recognized their state-wide significance. Citizens for Conservation is working to protect and preserve these wetlands in order to save two precious local refuges for living things.

BOOK BROWSING



Some flower books to enrich your casual or serious interest in wildflowers:

Wildflowers & Weeds by Courtenay & Zimmerman

A field guide based on flower families, illustrated with color photographs. A pictorial key and charts in the front help the novice establish a flower's family. This book focuses on the Great Lakes region, so contains many species not covered in the Peterson field guide.



Suburban Wildflowers by Richard Headstrom
Published just last year, this book is not a field guide, as the Preface states, but "a series of word pictures - vignettes if you will - of the various flowers that grow wild near at hand. It is about their virtues and vices, about the legends and folk tales that are associated with them, and about the uses to which many of them have been put." The book treats wildflowers from the commonplace (e.g. dandelion) to the not-so-common (e.g. purple-fringed orchis) with details and affection not found in field guides.

Field Guide to Orchids of North America by John G. & Andrew E. Williams

An exquisite little guide to these wonderfully exquisite flowers. The descriptive texts are technical, supported by a glossary in the back. The plates are in color and done in detail, including root stalks. Useful mostly to amateur botanists with field experience who aren't shaken by botanical terms, and who love orchids.

The Amazing Dandelion and Milkweed both by Millicent Selsam

This author has written many science books for children and these are among the best. Each is a superb photo essay of the life history of the flower. If the books are no longer in print, they are available at most public libraries and many school libraries.



CFC
News

Citizens for Conservation, Inc.

FROM THE STAFF DIRECTOR

Be Among the First to Know (then spread the word)

Aluminum can recycling will soon be available at CFC's recycling center in Barrington. We plan to be ready for this new project by September 1st. Watch for the sign at the recycling center (east end of Lake Street behind the new bank building) and notices in local papers. A special bin for aluminum cans will be added in the area where recyclers now deposit glass and paper. Please bring ALUMINUM cans -- no tin -- and deposit them loose, not bagged.

Two More Recycling Notes

From time to time, children play around the glass bins, looking for certain bottles, actually breaking glass, etc. They find this fun and seem oblivious to any possible danger. Please warn them away when you see this happening -- you will be helping them and Citizens for Conservation.

For those who have magazines to recycle: Lake County Scrap Metal at Rte. 22 and Main, Prairie View, accepts them. Hours are 8:30-5:00 weekdays and 8:00-3:00 Saturdays. Phone first: 634-4747. They may say they aren't accepting magazines, but will when you explain you don't expect to be paid for them.

Thank You!

Sincere thanks are definitely in order to a number of people, proving that the spirit of voluntarism is alive and well at Citizens for Conservation:

*To Becky Luehring and Alita Young, who helped prepare the Spring Newsletter for mailing.

*To the enthusiastic group that provided our first-ever entry in Barrington's 4th of July parade. Our theme was RECYCLE, which is exactly what we did with our entry when the parade ended. Driving directly to the recycling center, we deposited all glass and papers which had been our props. Thanks to all who helped. As one resident said, "I didn't know there was such an organization until I saw you in the parade."



CFC URGES 4TH OF JULY
PARADE CROWD
TO
"RECYCLE WITH US"

Young recyclers: Jessica Allard, Melinda Hartz, Emily Malcolm, Amanda Paulson, Heather Popp, Elizabeth Train. Older recyclers: Sam Oliver, Wendy Paulson, Vicky Allard. Not pictured; Driver, Derek Oliver (who also served as photographer.)

*To those who manned another "first" -- our Sidewalk Days booth -- August 1st, 2nd and 3rd: Bill Miller, Paul Hoffman, Bill McMullen, Walt Dalitsch, Bunny Horne, Waid Vanderpoel and Dave Kullander. Again, many area residents learned of Citizens for the first time through the event and everyone's involvement was much appreciated. Winner of the drawing for the Audubon Bird Call was Jennifer Gruenert of Crooked Creek Trail in Barrington.

Dr. Schennum Reports: Impact of Brush Removal and Controlled Burning on Wagner Fen

Dr. Wayne Schennum, author of this issue's conservation article, has prepared a report for the Stewardship Committee of CFC. It describes the impacts of management techniques recommended for this site in his 1981 "Ecological Assessment of Citizens for Conservation Properties". His conclusion: "After 3 years of intensive management, it is apparent that the Wagner Fen is well on the 'road to recovery' because of the judicious and cautious use of controlled burning and brush removal management schemes. The Fen is rapidly approaching an approximation of its pre-settlement condition. In the absence of this management, the Fen would be cascading rapidly "downhill" toward a buckthorn jungle unable to support any of the plants and animals native to this unique natural area." Copies of the complete report are available by calling CFC's office: 382-SAVE.

Position Available

Although this issue of CFC News abounds with articles offering opportunities for involvement, we wish to feature one group, our Stewardship Committee (mentioned above), chaired by George Luehring. If you are lured by the out-of-doors, like to be where the action is, have an innate curiosity and a love for the earth, you are a prime candidate for a position on this extremely important committee. No previous experience is necessary; however, enthusiasm is a pre-requisite. Call Sam at 382-SAVE to say you have found your niche.

T-SHIRTS

Green T-shirts with a white CFC logo are now available at the office. They cost \$5 and come in adult sizes Medium, Large, and X-Large. Stop in or call Sam at 382-SAVE.

During Sidewalk Days, Citizens for Conservation distributed approximately 400 copies of Invite Birds to Your Home--Conservation Plantings for the Midwest. Copies are available to our readers. Call the office, 382-SAVE or stop in. We are on the second floor of the BACOG building, 132 West Station, across from the fire station.

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.



John Muir

Morning Office Hours

In our continuing quest to find office hours most convenient for the majority of CFC officers, board members and membership, we have concluded that most of you are morning people. Therefore, as of this newsletter, and as long as the schedule provides "the greatest good for the greatest number", expect me to be in the office on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings.

A bi-monthly exception will occur on third Tuesdays, September-May, when I attend the Council of Barrington Garden Clubs meeting, representing Citizens for Conservation.

WISH LIST --Filling the Niches

Could you fill one of the following niches? Call the office if you'd like to:

- put address labels on newsletter (week of August 19)
- help devise recycling projects/programs
- plan educational programs for children
- help conduct classes for children
- plan educational programs for adults
- organize brochures/leaflets/literature at CFC office
- work on CFC nature calendar
- attend recycling seminars
- sit for an hour or two at CFC sidewalk daystable
- help with July 4 parade entry for CFC
- work on CFC Christmas treescapes entry



BOOK BROWSING



Here are some books and records to help you advance your study of bird identification and behavior:

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY MASTER GUIDE TO BIRDING, ed. by John Farrand, Jr.

This "advanced field guide" comes in three volumes, each larger and heavier than most field guides and therefore more appropriate for study at home. Sixty-one bird specialists have contributed their research and expertise. Excellent photographs and detailed text make these volumes an important addition to any birder's library. (Each volume \$13.95, available at most bookstores.)

A GUIDE TO BIRD BEHAVIOR, VOL. I AND II, by Donald W. Stokes

Each book covers twenty-five common North American birds, describing in detail everything from the bird's "behavior calendar" (e.g. a flicker establishes and maintains territory from March-July but builds its nest only in April and May) to auditory displays to behavior at bird feeders. The books offer lots of information you don't find in field guides. Full-page black and white drawings. (Each volume \$14.95, available at most bookstores.)

A FIELD GUIDE TO BIRD SONGS OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL NORTH AMERICA (Second ed.)

Over 200 songs on records and tapes, arranged according to the most recent edition of R. T. Peterson's popular field guide. (2-record or 2-tape set, each \$19.95, available at some bookstores or from the Crow's Nest Bookshop, Laboratory of Ornithology, Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca, New York 14850.)

COMMON BIRD SONGS, by Donald J. Borror.

Sixty most commonly heard songs, with accompanying booklet (record, \$4.95, tape \$7.95, available from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, address above).

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS COLORING BOOK, by Roger Tory Peterson.

An excellent book for introducing young people (and adults, too) to birds and the distinctions between species. (\$3.95, at most bookstores.)



Office: 132 W. Station St.
2nd Floor, BACOG Building
Phone 382-SAVE

Wendy Paulson

EDITOR

Sam Oliver

STAFF DIRECTOR

Betsy Petersen, Secretary

David Kullander, Treasurer

Jack T. Schaefer, Vice President

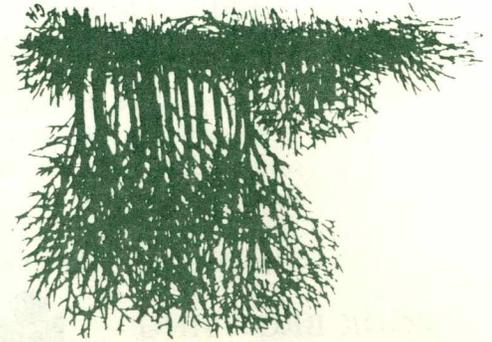
Wald Vanderpoel, President

OFFICERS

Barrington, Illinois 60010

Box 435

Citizens for Conservation, Inc.



Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Barrington, IL
60010
Permit No. 80

- * What birds nest on the island in Baker's Lake?
- * How big is a great blue heron?
- * What is a black-crowned night heron?



The black crowned night heron, an Illinois endangered species. Nests on the island in Baker's Lake, early April - late October.