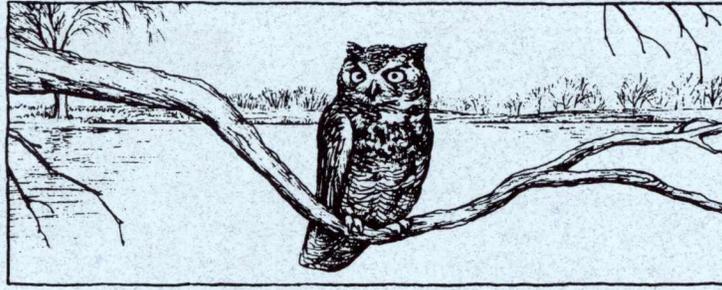


# STILLMAN NEWSLETTER



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## ROCKY and FLYING SQUIRRELS

-- Mark Spreyer

For those of us of a certain age, it's hard not to recall T.V.'s *Rocky and Bullwinkle* when thinking of flying squirrels. No, they don't all live in Frostbite Falls. In fact, southern flying squirrels can be seen right here in our corner of Northern Illinois.

I was reminded of this at the Jewel store when I ran into the mother of a high school classmate of mine. She described an unusual nocturnal visitor to her bird feeder. It only took a few questions to confirm that she has her own backyard Rocky.

I'm disinclined to use the word cute when describing wildlife but there is no way to avoid the word when it comes to flying squirrels. Next to the least chipmunk, the southern flying squirrel is the smallest squirrel in the Great Lakes region. They only weigh two ounces and measure nine to ten inches long, tail included. These big-eyed sprites have soft, velvety brownish fur with white underparts.

They are shy and gentle and, except during mating season, seem to enjoy the company of their fellows. As many as twenty squirrels have been seen huddled together in a single winter nest.

While bats can truly fly, flying squirrels glide downward from one tree to another. Their "wings" are actually folds of skin that run, on each side, from the squirrels' front to their back legs. Typically, they can "fly" 20 to 30 feet although they have been known to glide as far as 100 feet.

### Birds vs. Animals

The Cherokee have a wonderful story about how

flying squirrels and bats got their wings. It seems the Animals challenged the Birds to a great ball game and the Birds accepted. Bear, the Animal's leader, bragged about how strong he was and, of course, everyone knew how fast Deer was.

The Birds were led by Eagle and they had Hawk; both swift and strong fliers. After a pre-game dance, two little animals climbed up the tree where Eagle perched and asked if they could play ball. Eagle said, "Why don't you join the Animals? You belong there."

"They drive us away," the little ones answered, "because we are so small."

Eagle pitied them, "But you have no wings."

Then, Eagle and the other Birds held a council in the trees. "We will make wings for you," they told the tiny mammals.

The Birds used two strips of leather from their drum to fashion wings for the first little creature. Thus Tlameha, the Bat, came to be. After teaching him to fly, they turned to the other furry animal.

Unfortunately, they had no more leather. So, two large birds grabbed him from opposite sides and stretched his skin. Thus they made Tewa, the Flying Squirrel. As you might expect, Tlameha and Tewa, who had been laughed at by the Animals, helped win the ball game for the Birds.

### Homes and Habitat

Due to their nocturnal habits, flying squirrels often go unnoticed. If you hear something go bump in the night, you might want to shine a light on your bird feeder. Also, keep an eye on old birdhouses, particularly



# STILLMAN NATURE CENTER

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if you've put one up for screech owls or wood ducks. One of these might easily become a squirrel den. Woodpecker holes are possible squirrel haunts as well. A tree cavity with a two-inch diameter opening is just about right for these little guys.

Speaking of trees, southern flying squirrels love white oaks, red oaks, maples, and some hickories. Nothing these cute critters like better than to chew open an acorn or hickory nut.

A few shrubby thickets around the trees are also attractive. Flying squirrels like the brush for cover when they are on the ground. Predators they need cover from include owls, coyotes, weasels, and, unfortunately, domestic cats.

Water is another likely critical habitat component. Captive flying squirrels that have been deprived of water overnight, will drink intensively the following day.

So, if possible, leave a dead tree or two in your yard. The right-sized tree cavity might just become a flying squirrel nest. Finally, please keep your pets inside at night because, unlike Rocky, our flying squirrels don't have a talking moose to protect them.

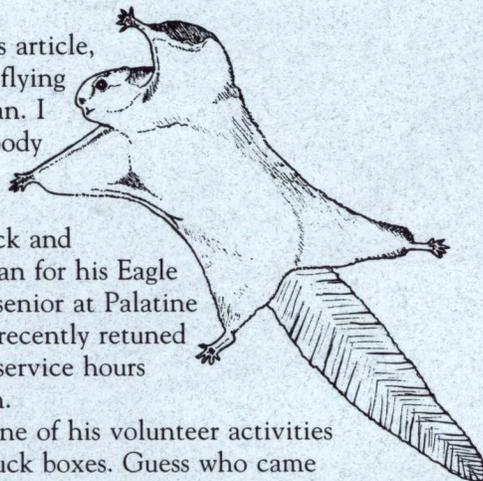
### Flying Squirrels at Stillman!

After finishing this article, I kept hoping to see a flying squirrel here at Stillman. I still haven't but somebody else has.

Last year, **Charlie Kilby** put up wood duck and kestrel boxes at Stillman for his Eagle Scout project. Now a senior at Palatine High School, Charlie recently returned to put in some senior service hours required for graduation.

Not surprisingly, one of his volunteer activities was to check on his duck boxes. Guess who came "flying" out of one as he approached it.

That's right, a flying squirrel. So, if you join us for our owl walk (see below), rest assured that I'm going to have my eyes peeled for Rocky and his friends!



**Renewal Reminder.** If you see a 4 after your name, this will be your last newsletter until you renew. If you didn't receive our annual membership letter, just use the form on the back of this newsletter. Please remember, in order to keep Stillman a viable and diverse natural area, *we need your support.* Thank you.

## PROGRAMS

**Program Basics:** PLEASE CALL OR FAX US AT 428-OWLS(6957), OR EMAIL STILLMAN AT: stillnc@flash.net TO MAKE RESERVATIONS for programs. Remember to include your name, phone number, and the number of people that will be attending.

If less than 5 - 10 people (varying with the activity) have called two days prior to a program, the program could well be cancelled. So, don't forget to call the nature center in advance. If you discover that you are unable to attend, please call to cancel your reservations. This courtesy will be greatly appreciated.

### SNOWSHOE SUNDAYS

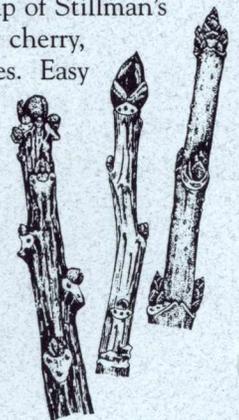
Fresh snow can add a peaceful hush to the landscape and a surface that glitters in the bright winter sun. In order to help you sample the winter scenery in a novel way, we have 20 pairs of snowshoes. So, bring your own snowshoes or use ours and join us on a winter walk. Please, don't forget to **call (847)428-OWLS to make reservations.** If there isn't a thick layer of snow, the activity will be cancelled.

Date: Sundays, Jan. 9, 30 & Feb. 13  
Time: 2:00PM  
Fee: None

### NAME THAT TREE or THIS BUD'S FOR YOU!

Unlike groundhogs, trees don't need a special day to check for their shadows. With the help of Stillman's naturalist, you'll learn how to identify cherry, maple, ash and other midwestern trees. Easy to remember tips and simple hand-outs will keep you from barking up the wrong tree! Come prepared for the weather and bring your questions.

Date: Sunday, Jan. 16  
Time: 2:00PM  
Age: 10 years and up  
Fee: None



## MAKING TRACKS

Join Susan Allman as she shows you how to recognize the different types of tracks made by winter's active animals. After an indoor introduction, explore Stillman's trails for signs of rabbit, squirrel, deer and fox. If there is no snow on the 23rd, we'll try again on Feb. 6th. Snowshoes are also an option on these days. Remember to call (847) 428-OWLS to make reservations.

Date: Sundays Jan. 23 & Feb. 6  
Time: 2:00PM  
Fee: None

## OWL MOON WALK

Native Americans called January's full moon the "owl moon." In honor of the owl moon, Mark Spreyer will present an indoor presentation on owls. Afterwards, with the help of the almost full moon, we will walk the trails in search of Stillman's Great Horned Owls. Space is limited so call (847) 428-OWLS to make reservations.



Date: Friday, Jan. 28  
Time: 6:00PM  
Age: 10 years and up  
Member's Fee: Free  
Non-member's Fee: \$2.00

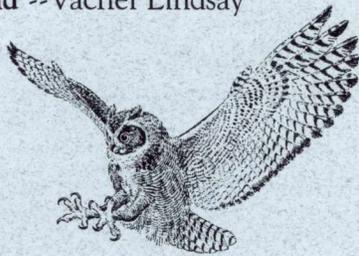
## What Grandpa Mouse Said --Vachel Lindsay

The moon's a holy owl-queen,  
She keeps them in a jar  
Under her arm till evening,  
Then sallies forth to war.

She pours the owls upon us,  
They hoot with horrid noise  
And eat the naughty mouse-girls  
And wicked mouse-boys.

So climb the moonvine every night  
And to the owl-queen pray:  
Leave good green cheese by moonlit trees  
For her to take away.

And never squeak, my children,  
Nor gnaw the smoke-house door:  
The owl-queen then will love us  
And send her birds no more.



From The Collected Poems of Vachel Lindsay (New York: MacMillan, 1925).

## SEASONAL SCIENCE - WINTER

A Class for Educators  
1 Hour Graduate Credit

### Course Description

This course will provide participants with the opportunity to experience a variety of science activities which explore winter. Topics include: tree identification, animal tracking, snowshoeing, owls, bird feeders, and seasonal environmental changes. These activities will be appropriate to a variety of grade levels and will emphasize content background, concept development, and process skills.

Friday evening activities will be conducted in both the classroom and on the grounds at the District 54 Nature Center in Schaumburg. Much of Saturday will be spent in the field at the Stillman Nature Center and will take place rain or shine.

Days	Dates	Times
Friday	1/21	4:00 - 9:30 PM
Saturday	1/22	8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

**Instructors:** Susan Allman, 4th grade teacher, Fox School; Mark Spreyer, Director, Stillman Nature Center

**Fees:** \$35.00 materials fee which includes meals (dinner, breakfast, lunch). \$75.00, 1 hr. graduate credit from Aurora University.

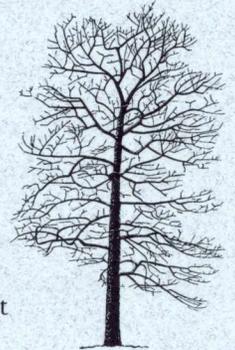
**Materials:** To be provided. Outdoor dress required.

**Min/Max:** 6 Minimum/20 Maximum

## THE TRIBUTE TREES

Tribute trees are planted to honor or celebrate persons or events that have touched our lives. Call or email us for the list of tribute trees currently available. Tree prices (which includes purchase, delivery, and planting) range from \$500 - \$700.

In addition to the tree, most of which will be 2" in diameter at breast height, the honoree's name will appear on a small plaque which will be located on the white brick wall that parallels the entrance drive.



- The latest tribute tree, a beautiful black gum, was planted in memory of **Meredyth Colberg**.

STILLMAN  
NATURE CENTER  
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Open Sundays 11-4

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*If you aren't already a member, please consider joining us.*

Yes, I'd like to become a member of the Stillman Nature Center. I enclose my tax deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

I'd like to help as a volunteer with programs or land management at the Stillman Nature Center, please call me.

Please send a gift membership from \_\_\_\_\_ to the name and address listed below.

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