



CITIZENS
FOR
CONSERVATION

CFC NEWS

Saving Living Space for Living Things

Vol. 27, No. 2, Spring 2008

Why conservationists like them

'Favorites' list presents a smorgasbord of local native plant species

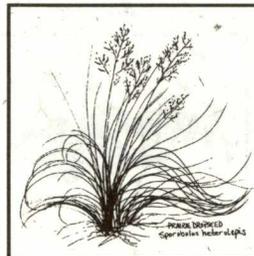
Editor's Note: Members and Friends, welcome to the Spring *CFCNews*. This issue will be somewhat different than usual. Rather than an extensive lead article, it will feature individual paragraphs written by volunteers and board members about their favorite native plants for home gardens. Perhaps their enthusiasm and distinctive styles will interest and motivate you to try some of these wonderful plants in your yards. You won't be disappointed. Many of these species will be available at our Twelfth Annual Plant Sale on May 3. Note that we provide Latin nomenclature for all species. Purchasing plants by Latin name ensures you receive the species you want instead of cultivars, clones, or aliens. MT

Sun-loving Plants

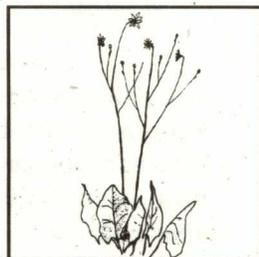
We're all familiar with **common milkweed**, *Asclepias syriaca*, the plant alongside the road with milky sap that produces warty green pods. The pods turn brown and split open in the fall to release silky white fluff with a flat brown 1/4" seed at the end. As a kid I used to remove the seeds and stuff boxes with the fluff to protect valuable treasures like baby teeth, shells and rocks. As an adult I use the stems and pods in dried arrangements or stuff vases with the seed, fluff and even the pods. However, most people don't know that milkweed is one of the most fragrant flowers on the prairie. Next time you're walking in a field or prairie in late June or July, take a moment to smell the beautiful, dusty rose flower clusters of the common milkweed. Then in the fall, if you're lucky



Common Milkweed



Prairie Dropseed



Prairie Dock



Purple Coneflower

enough to have some in your garden, get creative with the pods.

— Patsy Mortimer

Phlox bifida or **sand phlox** is a native not found in the Barrington area but south of Chicago in the sandy soils of Cook, Will, and Kankakee counties. However, in a sandy or gravelly spot, it grows beautifully in Barrington. The plant becomes a stunning mound of blue in late April. In stirring prose, Virginia Eifert describes the flowers as "crisp embroidery" or "delicate blue lace." Seeing this plant in my Dad's rock garden, I could not agree more. Give it

full sun, a sandy loam, and room to multiply, and it will become a signpost for spring.

— Tom Vanderpoel

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Always a fan of red flowers and missing this color in our wildflower gardens, I remember my excitement the first time I discovered the striking **royal catchfly**, *Silene regia*, at a Citizens for Conservation plant sale. Now, its stunning little bright red flower-stars add sprinkles of this uncommon color to our informal native plantings. Not the easiest plant to grow, we mix it in with yellow and pink coneflowers, prairie sunflowers, and grasses to help support its leggy stems, and we let the seeds roam to the sunny/partially shady spots that they like. The butterflies and hummingbirds find them wherever they are. And, my initial excitement returns every year when I rediscover the royal catchfly in bloom.

—Barbara Sugden

Prairie coreopsis is also known as stiff coreopsis or stiff tickseed because its seeds resemble ticks. This perennial plant grows from one to three feet in height and has a stiff stem that lets the flower heads sway in the breeze. It is found in areas from full sun to part shade and prefers light soils with good drainage. *Coreopsis palmata* is very tolerant of drought, heat, and humidity. Each stem has a flower head that is two to three inches across. These bright yellow flowers are long-lasting and very showy, typically blooming from July through August, but sometimes earlier. The blooms readily attract butterflies. If conditions are right, the plant will form colonies and can be very robust; however, one can cut them back hard in late summer if the plants look unkempt. Dividing them every two to three years can limit their sprawling; also, prompt deadheading of spent flower stalks will encourage additional blooms and will curtail unwanted self-seeding. The prairie coreopsis does well in borders and beds and requires little maintenance; the plant is also easily naturalized. The blooms are nice when arranged as cut flowers, and in the autumn the leaves and stems turn a showy red.

— Ted Schweitzer

Prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*, is an elegant, refined plant. It grows in a dense arching fountain and is attractive at any time of the year. However, in the fall, it is really spectacular. The summer color is a bright medium green which changes to deep orange by October and then a light copper during the winter. The seed heads are spectacular too! Their delicate stalks appear in August or September and grow high above the rest of the foliage. As

an added bonus, they are scented. Their fragrance is something like burnt buttered popcorn. Plains Indians used the seed to make flour. Now I think it is mostly birds that use the prairie dropseed as food!— Barb Cragan

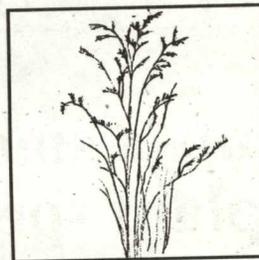
Butterfly milkweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, is a great plant for a sunny garden – native or otherwise. Its eye-catching, bright orange to yellow-orange blooms begin in mid-June and can continue through August. The plant grows in noninvasive clumps 1½ to two feet tall and wide, perfect for the front of a bed. It prefers mesic to dry well-drained soil but will grow in most sunny locations as long as it does not get too much moisture. Butterfly milkweed is slow to establish and usually doesn't produce flowers until the second year. You may lose one or two the first winter – make sure to plant them deep enough and mulch in the fall. They don't emerge until very late spring, so you might think they are dead when they're not. The flowers appear in umbels or clusters two to four inches across. The medium-green leaves are spiky, about three inches long and ½ inch wide, growing alternately along the thick stem. In late summer, the seedpods develop; they dry and burst open to release the dark brown seeds attached to silky white tufts which are dispersed by the wind. As the name suggests, these plants supposedly attract butterflies although that has rarely happened in my garden. Ruby-throated hummingbirds like the nectar, and

caterpillars of the monarch butterfly feed on the leaves. The plant is deer-resistant because of its somewhat toxic, bitter sap. The sap of some other milkweeds is much more toxic, but it is still wise not to touch your eyes or mouth after touching the sap of butterfly milkweed.

— Linda Novak

What makes **mountain mint**, *Pycnanthemum virginianum*, one of my favorite plants is the pungent, fragrant smell once the flower is past her bloom and ready for harvesting. This plant inspired me to grow my mustache back as there is nothing quite like a bit of mountain mint flower rubbed into the mustache for that ever-lingering natural eau de mint "mountain man" aroma! Pick a few leaves for a great prairie chew! It grows in grassland savanna in moderate to dry soil, becoming two to four feet tall with white blooms in summer and fall.

— Tom Crush



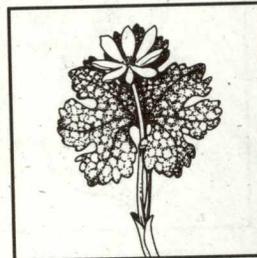
Little Bluestem



May Apple



Rue Anemone



Bloodroot

Prairie dock, *Silphium terebinthinaceum*, is a native so tall, six to nine feet, that it always catches my eye while I drive along Route 53 in Schaumburg in late summer; a robust display of color swaying in traffic fumes and surrounded by concrete. I'm impressed with its stubbornness, its ability to survive such habitat degradation. In my yard it's part of the shoreline buffer strip, upland from the lake where the soil has medium moisture. Its thick taproot, which can reach twelve feet long, makes it an effective stabilizer. Prairie Dock is dramatic, unusual, fun and impossible to miss. Kids think it's cool. While I've read the plant grows well in clay soil, in my yard the soil is quite sandy, and it doesn't mind that either. It has bold foliage; the leaves look like elephant ears. Long-lasting, yellow sunflower-like blooms on giant stalks never require staking. While you might think a six-foot plant would only fit in a large yard, I've seen it planted around a street lamp or with other tall silphiums like compass plant for vertical focus in small yards. I enjoy the plant most in the fall. Goldfinches eat its seed, and the dried leaves are very ornamental; in fact, they are sold at local nurseries for winter container decoration for more money per leaf than the cost of the plant at CFC's Plant Sale. One fall our grandson stepped on a leaf, and its very loud crackling noise stopped him in his tracks. He and his sisters then crushed the plant's leaves to the ground dancing the Prairie Dock Stomp. I also think you get bonus points for being able to spell and pronounce its Latin name!

— Karen Hunter

In the late summer, you can see this tall, slender, hardy plant standing strong among the various prairie grasses on CFC's savanna. Its shape speaks its name, "coneflower." Petals, which now come on cultivars in a variety of colors (but only *purpurea* is native), showcase a strong, dark, domed, cone-shaped center. This hardy plant thrives in the Great Lakes region. It requires sun and once established not much watering except in dry spells. The coneflower invites beauty into your garden because it attracts butterflies and small birds. In the late summer, you can watch butterflies stopping on the coneflower before leaving on their migration. In the fall and winter, uncut dried cone-flowers invite small birds like goldfinches to rest and eat the seeds. In the fall when the petals have gone, you can crush the dome-shaped center and smell its wonderful scent. The roots of the **purple coneflower**, *Echinacea purpurea*, are famous for medical qualities. In its simplicity, the coneflower stands tall and gives back to living things in living spaces.

— Bonnie Gordon

I'd be proud to be a **little bluestem** – versatile, hardy, self-contained and useful! One can spot it along railroads, in

prairie restorations, and in gardens, especially in winter months when other grasses get matted; little bluestem's fluffy silver seed heads and orangey-red leaves still stand colorful sentinel at 24 to 36 inches tall. Because it can be reached more easily above the frozen ground, it also provides food and cover for wildlife when other sources are depleted. Songbirds love the seeds in winter, and certain types of caterpillars depend on the leaves for their development in warmer months. When summer comes, blazing little bluestem is resilient and tolerates drought as well as high humidity. It loves the sun and actually prefers prairies made up of clay, gravel and sand because it doesn't get crowded out as much by taller plants. Some may think that little bluestem is overshadowed by big bluestem (better known as turkey foot) which can grow up to ten feet high and gets attention as the Illinois state grass. However, little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* or *Andropogon scoparius*, is manageable, decorative, and functional and deserves a place in your sunny prairie of any size.

— Julie Zuidema

Shade-loving Plants

American hazelnut, *Corylus americana*, is an eight- to ten-foot shrub that once grew in the understory of pre-settlement woodlands and savannas, particularly in open woods of red, bur, and white oak. It grows beautifully in dappled sunlight or light shade. "Beautiful" is the appropriate word since this shrub has no bad season. In spring, watch the catkins lengthen (producing male pollen) and search nearby on the twig for tiny, dark red flowers, just larger than pin heads, that are the female flowers waiting to be fertilized. Try using a loupe to see the female flowers clearly. It's fascinating! In early summer the fertilized flowers produce clumps of round knobs, almost like small clusters of grapes, each knob covered by a leafy husk. These are the maturing filberts. A shrub planted in the proper habitat produces nuts prolifically, but unless one is vigilant, he may never see a ripe hazelnut since squirrels, chipmunks, and other wildlife abscond with them just before they mature. Perhaps the shrub's finest hour is in autumn. Because they are not clones like the non-native bushes sold at most nurseries and because they reproduce sexually, each shrub is a little different from others of its species, but together they make the area glow with a warm gold, orange, and reddish radiance. A group of hazelnuts will light up your yard. Please try this plant. It's easy to grow in medium garden soil and will need watering only while it is becoming established. Plant a few native wildflowers beneath it, *Geranium maculatum* for example, and that corner of your yard will be a source of interest and beauty throughout the year.

— Meredith Tucker

Elegantly shading the forest floors of the northern and eastern United States and southern Canada, the seemingly simple **May apple**, *Podophyllum peltatum*, has an interesting story. These plants reach 6-18 inches in height and grow in patches. In its first year, the plant only produces one leaf that pops up from the ground and resembles an umbrella. These first-year plants will not bloom. After it is established, the plant has a single stalk with two broad, divided leaves. The two-leaved plants normally produce a single, small white flower (usually in May, oddly enough). Pretty straight stuff. The plant goes by several different names: American mandrake, umbrella plant, Devil's apple, hog apple, Indian apple, wild lemon, May flower. According to lore, native Americans used this plant for its healing attributes. In the autumn, they gathered, dried, and ground the May apple roots to a powder. They would drink a brew of the powder as a laxative or to get rid of intestinal worms. The powder was and is still used as a poultice to treat warts and tumorous growths on the skin. According to lore, keeping the root in a high place in the home will draw prosperity to the home and protect it from bad luck. The magic may or may not be real, but the plant (and powder) is considered unsafe by the FDA because all of the plant, except the apple, is toxic. Take care when handling the plant. Wash your hands immediately, and do not touch your eyes.

— Neil Timlin

In April and May, a dainty white flower sprinkles itself through the woods. **Rue anemone**, *Anemone thalictroides*, is fragile looking but tough. It pushes through the leaf debris to show off a small bright flower against the brown. It is an ephemeral, but lasts a delightful few weeks, with flowers turning pink as they age. With leaflets shaped like a mittened fist, rue anemone is distinguishable from others like the false rue anemone, *Enemion biternatum*, that grows taller and in larger clumps. Rue anemone has several flowers per plant, and the plants stay small, but when happy with their setting, they pop up liberally throughout dry woods or on a wooded hillside. After I cleared the buckthorn, invasive honeysuckle and poison ivy from my newly acquired yard, the rue anemone volunteered and have multiplied every year since, greeting me along with Virginia Bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*, in the spring.

— Peggy Simonsen

How could one not love a plant that provides such a wonderful display in the midsummer woodland! **Black cohosh**, *Cimicifuga racemosa*, is often known by the evocative name "fairy candles," referring to the white flowering spikes that rise above the mass of green foliage. A large stand of these herbaceous plants creates an almost magical appearance. The spikes will grow to about five

feet, and the plant is long-lived. Black cohosh was extensively used by American Indians and herbalists to treat a variety of conditions and is still being sold today as a natural remedy, especially for menopause and high blood pressure.

— Carol Rice

Of all the native wildflowers we've restored at our CFC preserves, my favorite is **bloodroot**, *Sanguinaria canadensis*. From the point of view of sheer aesthetics, it is surely one of the great plants. The snow-white rays with the bright yellow center – the unique shape of the protective leaves waiting for just the right moment (unfortunately, a very brief one) to unfurl. I also like its historical use as war paint. I have experienced the strong dye while picking its seeds and transplanting plugs. All that aside, what I like most about bloodroot is what its bloom time represents - finally, after a long, cold, gloomy Chicago winter, a beautiful spring day is here. Now we get to see seven more months of wildflowers. Bloodroot - one of the year's pioneers!

— Jim Vanderpoel

Shade- or Sun-loving Plants

The **shooting star** is aptly named with a tall stalk rising from the low leaves, holding a cluster of flowers above the rest of the spring vegetation. The light pink flowers look like stars falling to earth, each trailing its five petals behind. A surprisingly sturdy plant, it blooms from mid-



Shooting Star

April thru June in a variety of soils and environments. In the primrose family, the Latin name is *Dodecatheon meadia*, coming from the Greek Pliny's belief that it was protected by their twelve main gods. Barrington chose this native plant as its village flower.

— Rob Neff

One of my favorite prairie flowers is **Joe Pye weed**, *Eupatorium purpureum*. It grows very tall with beautiful purple flowers. The best

thing about it is the butterflies it attracts. I see numerous monarchs and swallowtails gathering nectar from its many flowers. My neighbor also planted some of these butterfly magnets. It was not uncommon to see monarchs and swallowtails flitting back and forth between our two yards. I'm always a little sad when the flowers fade and the butterflies disappear.

— Cathy Bayer

Appeal of rain gardens is a glorious mix of beauty, utility, wildlife habitat

by Katherine Grover

Spring arrived on February 23rd at Vehe Farm in Deer Park when fifty-five people attended CFC's Rain Garden Program. Mr. Roger Bannerman, our expert speaker from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, told the audience how they could begin spring planting by creating a rain garden at home. This new trend in gardening applies to both residential and commercial landscapes and is very environmentally friendly.

Mr. Bannerman explained that a rain garden is simply a shallow depression planted with native wildflowers and grasses. Once established, it provides many of these benefits:

- Natural hydrology is partially restored as rain water from roofs is diverted to the nearby garden to filter through the soil to the water table below.
- Rain water is diverted from large, distant detention areas, remaining close to where it fell.

- Runoff and pollutants are reduced, minimizing erosion in local streams and improving habitat for aquatic creatures.
- Rain gardens attract pollinators and birds to native wildflowers and grasses while mosquitoes fail to thrive because the water infiltrates into the soil.

Mr. Bannerman concluded his program with instructions for designing and constructing a simple rain garden. He also suggested websites that provide details for creating a rain garden, including:

www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/nps/rg/index.htm
<http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden/rgmanual.pdf>
www.appliedeco.com/raingardens.cfm

This program inspired many of the attendees to consider creating rain gardens, a habitat that nurtures the spirit and welcomes all living things to one's home.

Its mission fulfilled, charitable planned-giving group passes the torch

by Meredith Tucker

On March 12, an eight-year old Barrington Area "virtual" organization terminated its own existence. Begun in 2000 as Leave a Legacy, the renamed Legacy Alliance of the Barrington Area felt it had fulfilled its mission of acquainting residents with the benefits of including nonprofits in their future plans and had put nonprofit and professional partners in touch with each other. While educating people in the Barrington area about the benefits of charitable giving, it also promoted interest in including favorite nonprofit charitable organizations in wills and estate plans. CFC's Sam Oliver helped to form the organization, and Citizens for Conservation became a founding member and provided start-up funding.

Without office, staff, telephone, or other accoutrements of most organizations, the Legacy Alliance of the Barrington Area held twelve early morning breakfasts over the years, bringing together nonprofit boards with local attorneys, bankers, and financial planners and providing attendees with educational programs on fund raising through

planned giving. CFC has always been well represented at these networking gatherings, usually having three or four board members, especially members of the development committee, in attendance, and, of course, Sam Oliver. Each meeting featured opportunities for nonprofits and financial institutions to communicate and to create mutually beneficial contacts.

At its final meeting, speakers lauded some of the program's successes and passed the torch to the member non-profits and professional advisors, urging them to continue to expand the concept of charitable planned giving in the community. Sam Oliver indicated that CFC has three current members who have included CFC in their estate plans. In addition, over the years CFC has received \$168,000.00 in planned gifts. The most recent was a \$90,000.00 bequest in 2007.

If any of our CFC friends and members would like more information about "leaving a legacy," please feel free to contact Sam Oliver at 847-382-SAVE.

Restoration report

Floating islands pond to be *refugium* for native fish, water-based plants

by John Schweizer

Lots of prolonged snow cover and ice kept CFC restoration volunteers from doing critical detail work at most of our sites over the winter. This includes the painstaking follow-up herbiciding of freshly cleared buckthorn and other woody invasives that only committed volunteers do well.

At three of our most precious sites – Wagner Fen, Baker's Lake Savanna and Ela Marsh – work parties did heavy work in late fall, namely cutting, dragging and stacking invasive brush and inappropriate trees, but then the long stretch of harsh weather resulted in smaller turnouts and stymied herbicide teams.

So we went to Plan B, concentrating on additional heavy brush clearing at sites that were accessible, such as along Hillside Avenue at Baker's Lake and at our intensively worked gravel hill prairie in Spring Creek Forest Preserve. This latter site, on the north side of Dundee Road in Barrington Hills, is a small but potentially outstanding part of the 3,900-acre preserve. There has been great progress at this site over the past two years with major clearing by Cook County Forest Preserve District personnel and equipment and follow-up detail work by CFC volunteers.

By the time you read this, we'll have completed our very important controlled-burns schedule for the spring with, we hope, many burns accomplished. Relentless weed control and periodic controlled fires are the two essentials in tallgrass prairie and savanna habitat restoration.

When the burn season is behind us, restoration volunteers will focus on the twin spring objectives of weed control and plant rescues. We're always looking for rescue opportunities, construction sites where conservative grasses and forbs will be destroyed unless CFC volunteers can, with the owner's permission, transplant them to our own preserves. These opportunities have diminished in recent years.

CFC restoration director Tom Vanderpoel says he doesn't foresee any big outbreaks of troublesome white and yellow sweet clover or garlic mustard this year.

The big effort this spring will be toward eradication of rampant reed canary grass at Flint Creek Savanna. It is probably our most vexing invasive species, being extremely aggressive and persistent on both floodplains and drier soil and in sun and light shade. An outside contractor will herbicide broad stands of the grass growing above the Flint Creek floodplain, where it's only slightly less persistent than on the floodplain itself.

According to Vanderpoel, the reed canary problem is exacerbated by manmade changes in Flint Creek's watershed – creek channelization, fertilizer-enriched stormwater run-off, surges in run-off due to paving and development, introduction of streambed-roiling carp, and so forth. The resultant unnaturally heavy spring flooding and streambank erosion leave the floodplains with huge silt loads in which reed canary grass thrives to the detriment of most native vegetation.

Perhaps most exciting is the prospect of taking the large pond at Flint Creek Savanna (near CFC headquarters) to what Vanderpoel calls "the next level of restoration." Specifically, we're planning to make it a refugium for native submergent and emergent plants and for fish of concern. The pond is home to CFC's much publicized floating islands. To make them even more biologically productive, we're considering installing a mechanical aeration system in the pond.

After years of hard work by restoration volunteers, Flint Creek Savanna and the other area preserves under CFC stewardship are attracting native wildlife, from high quality predators such as coyotes and mink to conservative butterflies such as the bronze copper, eyed brown and black dash skipper. They are evidence of a high order of habitat restoration.

In addition to native grasses, forbs and large trees, Vanderpoel sees native shrubs as a component of habitat restoration because they provide vital nesting and forage for birds. These species include hazelnut, witch hazel, prairie crabapple, wild plum, New Jersey tea, gray dogwood and sumac as well as viburnum and ironwood. Most of these are only somewhat susceptible to fire, thanks to their rhizomes, which enable them to resprout or resucker away from fire-prone sites.

CFC annual meeting highlights

Attention to local nature proportionate to local affluence, economist says

by Tom Crosh

Wealthier nations and communities tend to pay more attention to their natural environments than do less-affluent societies according to an environmental economist addressing CFC's recent annual meeting. Speaker Don Coursey, an economics professor at the University of Chicago, has researched the costs and benefits of open space to communities and, specifically, the role of economics in determining what gets saved.

Coursey also opined that young people today, while quite reflexive in their recycling habits, don't seem particularly curious or knowledgeable about recycling's role in the sustainability of natural resources.

He spoke to approximately 100 CFC members, public officials, and other guests at the February 7 gathering at Barrington Area Library.

CFC Treasurer David Kullander reported that the organization's finances are solid and that CFC is well-positioned for continued acquisition of undeveloped real estate for its mission of *Saving Living Space for Living Things*.

CFC's restoration successes garnered priceless regional and national attention in 2007, thanks to television coverage by cable TV's The Science Channel and Chicago Public Television (WTTW/Channel 11). Both segments were shown at the annual meeting.

The Village of Lake Barrington and its citizens received CFC's highest citation, the **William H. Miller Conservation Award** for outstanding contributions to conservation in the Barrington area. The town initiated and its citizens overwhelmingly approved a \$5.5 million bond issue to purchase and protect undeveloped land. Already the village has acquired the 26-acre Freier Farm on the east side of Kelsey Road. In addition to the award, CFC is offering Lake Barrington its restoration expertise along with thousands of dollars worth of native seed and the work of its dedicated volunteers to help restore native ecosystems in the village's new open space.



Jo Seagren

CFC presented its **Great Blue Heron Award** for outstanding contributions to conservation in CFC activities to long-time member, volunteer, and previous board member Jo Seagren. Awards chairman Peggy Simonsen presented CFC's highest award for work within the organization to Jo for her

dedication to restoration, childhood education, public outreach, and countless other services to CFC. She presently writes the book reviews for our newsletter.

Listed below are the other award recipients CFC honored at this annual meeting:

The Waid Vanderpoel Award for twenty years of volunteer service was presented to: Bob LeFevre, Patsy Mortimer, and John Schweizer.

Bob Vanderpoel and Marcia Share received the **Shooting Star Award** for ten years of service.

Mighty Oak Award was presented to non-board volunteers who had given CFC fifty or more hours of service this year, including: Joyce Allen, Donna Bolzman, Dorothy Crosh, Demmy Giannis, Katherine Grover, Helen Hawthorne, Carol Hogan, Jerry Masino, Julia Martinez, Jo Seagren, Judy Sloan, Gail Vanderpoel, Scott and Jeanne Vukovich, and Wes Wolf.

Melissa Washow received an award as an out-going board member.

CFC presented **Thank You Awards** for special projects to Donna Bolzman, Doe Crosh, Lucy Wyatt, and the Vanderpoel family.

Eagle Scouts Kris Ostvoll, Joshua Taub, and Prashant Jayaraman were given thank-you awards for their projects at CFC.

Citizens for Conservation NATIVE PLANT, TREE & SHRUB SALE SATURDAY, MAY 3, 9AM - 12 NOON

459 W. Highway 22
Lake Barrington

(CFC Headquarters - white farm house across Route 22 from Good Shepherd Hospital)

Healthy, robust native forbs (wildflowers) and grasses for
Rain Gardens • Butterfly Gardens
Woodland Restoration
Slope and Shoreline Stabilization
Prairie • Wetland

Helpful advice on plant selection and placement will be available

Coyotes now top dogs in our local ecosystem

by Jim Voris

On January 19, a very cold and blustery Saturday, more than 180 CFC members and guests were schooled about the natural history of the top predator in the urban/suburban Chicago area: the coyote. Chris Anchor, Senior Biologist of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, took the stage for more than two hours at Vehe Farm's new meeting facility, the renovated barn. The large crowd did not surprise Anchor or the sponsors, our own CFC adult education committee. People are simply fascinated by these most adaptable and resilient wild canine residents.

Mr. Anchor told us that myths and misperceptions about our local coyotes are rampant. That is partly because coyotes have only been around the area in numbers for the last twenty to thirty years; but it's also due to the fact that they are secretive, illusive, and have the ability to be invisible right before our eyes. "There was a female coyote living at Ikea near Woodfield for over a year, and no one knew she was there. Her total range was a couple of acres which she patrolled at night."

In his seven years of tracking, trapping, and studying Chicago-area coyotes, Anchor has developed a unique knowledge base that he is anxious to share with all who will listen. His underlying message is "They are here, they are not going away, and we need to learn to live with and appreciate them as part of the urban and suburban setting." In addition, he has variously found that:

- Coyotes help control local goose and deer populations by feeding on eggs and fawns;
- They also eat garden produce, pet food, fruits, road kills, rodents, and insects;
- Unattended cats are occasionally on their menu;
- They concentrate near cities because food is abundant, and they are not hunted there;
- They rarely live more than two years (vehicles and heartworm kill most local coyotes);
- A huge coyote weighs 45 pounds, but most run 25-35 (winter coats make them look larger);
- Most stay in a defined territory, but some travel hundreds of miles, even to other states;
- A coyote trapped in the city and released far away will always return home or die trying;
- They rarely form packs in this area; groups we see or hear are usually families;

- February is breeding season; step outside at night and howl as you may get a response;
- Large and small dogs may be attacked by coyotes, especially during the breeding season;
- Coyotes usually try to avoid us and our dogs (they want food or mates, not fights);
- About one person/year is bitten by a coyote in the U.S. while three million are bitten by dogs.

For over an hour the audience was spellbound, and the question/answer period continued for another hour. Always emphasizing coexistence, Mr. Anchor ended his presentation by asking us to watch our pets, avoid feeding coyotes, and learn to appreciate them for what they are, the top natural predators of the Chicago landscape



Photo courtesy of the National Park Service

Puppy's close encounter was the unnerving kind for CFC'er

Just a little local interest: Ginger Underwood, one of our own CFC members, had a close encounter of a coyote kind just last summer. One afternoon Ginger's ten puppies, six weeks old, were in an outdoor enclosure with a four-foot fence around it. They were left alone for fifteen minutes, and one of the pups disappeared. After an extensive search of her property by a posse of dog lovers, one of the group heard a faint whimper coming from a buckthorn thicket. A huge old wild cherry tree in the middle of the brush had a freshly dug coyote den at its base. A few "Here, puppy!" calls and out of the den crawled the tiny kidnappee! The pup was fine, just a little damp from being carried in something's mouth 150 yards, over three fences all of which were four-feet high and made of 2x4 woven wire. All of this happened in a span of twenty to thirty minutes. There is no way a six-week old pup could or would have traveled that distance, over those fences, and hidden itself in a coyote den! Little "Coyote" as the pup is now called, definitely had some fast and powerful help getting to that den. Hmmmmmm?

Staff director's report

CFC receives Academy Award

of Conservation

This Great News speaks for itself, and I will merely quote from the press release.

CHICAGO WILDERNESS, A Regional Nature Reserve:
THE CHICAGO WILDERNESS HABITAT PROJECT
2008 GRASSROOTS CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP
AWARDS

The Habitat Project is about effecting change. It is about building a culture of conservation that connects people to our natural heritage and brings neighbors together to protect, enjoy, and know it.

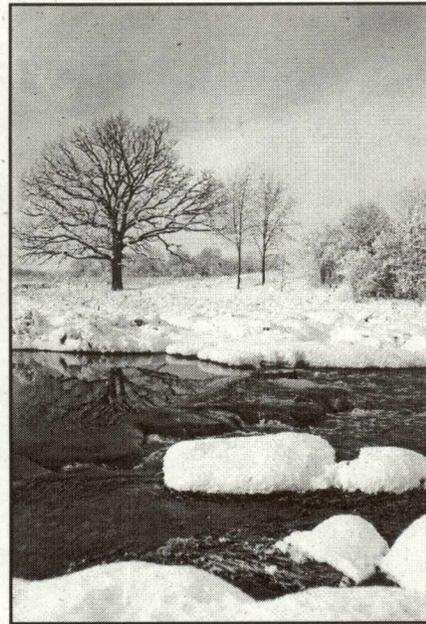
The awards are "the Academy Awards of conservation." All nominees are proposed by the region's leaders and volunteers and all decisions are made by a review committee of leaders and volunteers.

"Tom Vanderpoel, Jim Voris and the other dedicated members of Citizens for Conservation had the foresight to find native seed populations and the smarts to grow them, so that they now have hundreds of thousands of conservative plants thriving on nearly 100 acres of high quality restoration at Grigsby Prairie and other sites in the Barrington area. Management at these sites has been so successful that Grigsby now produces enough seed each year to support restoration beyond their ownership. They are important partners who provide technical assistance and substantial amounts of prairie and woodland seed to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County for restoration of 3,910 acres at the Spring Creek Preserves." Congratulations, CFC volunteers!!

On another regional note, I recently attended the Midwest Land Trust Alliance Conference and enjoyed its useful workshops and seminars. A limerick contest had been announced, and since the first prize was to be a registration for next year's conference, I decided to enter. To my great surprise, I won. Because I think the limerick also applies locally, every time we come together to carry out CFC's mission, I'll share it here.

So why do we all here now gather
To work ourselves up in a lather?
It's 'cause we love saving
Our lands from all paving--
There's no place we'd really be rather!

— Sam Oliver



Reflections Afresh

Flint Creek Savanna winter scene photo published by regional nature magazine

CFC congratulates long-time member Donna Lee Ducay for having her photograph "Reflections Afresh" published in the tenth anniversary issue of Chicago Wilderness. It is a fine accomplishment! The picture shows Flint Creek passing through our Savanna on a snowy winter day. Thank you, Donna, for allowing us to share it with our readers.

CFC appeal yields \$112,000, mainly for buying open space

CFC's board of directors sincerely thanks everyone who donated to our annual solicitation. As of mid-March, CFC has received \$78,000 designated for our land acquisition fund as outlined in the appeal and \$35,000 in undesignated year-end contributions for a total of more than \$112,000. As our real estate committee carefully surveys and analyzes property worthy of permanent protection, we cannot overstate the importance of our land acquisition fund. Thank you to everyone who contributed so generously. Because of our donors' financial support, CFC is able to successfully continue *Saving Living Space for Living Things*.

A good read

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

by Barbara Kingsolver

I first heard about this book on a National Public Radio interview of the entire Kingsolver family. They were speaking about how their "family was changed by one year of deliberately eating food produced in the same place where we worked, loved our neighbors, drank the water and breathed the air." In the book, they elaborate, "It's not at all necessary to live on a food-producing farm to participate in this culture. But it is necessary to know such farms exist, understand something about what they do, and consider oneself basically in their court.... At its heart, a genuine food culture is an affinity between people and the land that feeds them." "The main barrier standing between ourselves and a local-food culture is not price, but attitude. The most difficult requirements are patience and a pinch of restraint - virtues that are hardly the property of the wealthy."

The final question of the interview was a telling one. The Kingsolvers were asked to describe the first thing they ate after the year-long experiment in eating locally was over. They were perplexed. They explained that the year was not one of deprivation, but of heightened pleasure from the anticipation

of long-awaited seasonal items, vibrant flavors, and diverse recipes. The experiment was not "over," because they didn't want to go back. They had discovered a far better way to live. A line in the book states: "Food is the rare moral arena in which the ethical choice is generally the one more likely to make you groan with pleasure. Why resist that?"

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle is written in Kingsolver's characteristic poetic style, and her humorous voice accents each chapter. Beloved for her novels including *The Poisonwood Bible*, *The Bean Trees*, and *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver is equally appealing and compelling in this new work of non-fiction. Sprinkled throughout the book are informative asides written by Steven Hopp, an environmental studies professor, that give readers specific tools if they have an interest in pursuing the ideas and issues further. Descriptions of dripping cornucopias of locally grown and flavorful vegetables will make every reader salivate. Additional short sections written by Kingsolver's nineteen year old daughter Camille contain simple yet creative recipes that will make readers' stomachs rumble with anticipation.

Warning: Do not read this book while hungry! But expect to make a bee-line to the nearest farmer's market so that you, too, can begin to live a life more conscious, sustainable, healthful and ultimately far more fulfilling.

— Jo Seagren



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