

**February 2016.** Maintenance and safety checks of buildings and grounds, seasonal mowing, firewood cutting splitting and stacking, storm clean-up, shelter house and toilet cleaning, litter pick-up and disposal, road grading, trail maintenance, equipment maintenance, scheduling shelter rentals and collecting shelter and camping fees, drinking water sampling . Shelter houses and Lodge are used every weekend by scouts, families and other groups. Natural Resource Center Educational Staff teaching school groups at Russell Woods and making classroom visits. PDRMA Risk Management and Loss Control review and preserve safety in progress for 2016 compliance.

Retired Sannauk preserve manager Steve Wade to this photo of an adult and immature bald eagle feeding in a field next to Sannauk Forest Preserve. The white head and tail feathers come in about the third year of the eagles life



## February 2016-Completed Project List-Josh Clark

### Central and southern forest preserves

1. Continued brush cutting with the front end mower (Brush Cat) in several locations. Prairie remnant along great western trail, Merritt Prairie and several more locations at Afton.
2. Worked with Al Roloff and stewards on several projects at Afton. Burned brush piles, built bird houses and constructed propagation boxes.
3. Repaired lights and breakaway brake controller on large yellow trailer.
4. I attended the Illinois Prescribed Fire Council Conference on February 10<sup>th</sup> in Champaign, Illinois at the Illinois Fire Science Institute. This was a great event with many fire related topics covered. The sessions that I attended covered topics relating to Oak woodlands and fire ecology, communicating about fire to the non-ecologist and the public, invasive species and the effects of fire on them and fire management and operations.

The first presentation of the day was on the Illinois Fire Needs Assessment. This assessment was compiled by staff at Nachusa Grasslands. This assessment is the first systematic report in Illinois documenting the number of acres being burned annually and identifying how many acres need to burn annually to maintain and restore ecosystem health. It was very interesting and showed how important fire is to the health and restoration of our native ecosystems.

5. Prepared fire equipment for fire season.
6. Built new information boards for Afton. These will be installed in the parking lots and give a more polished and consolidated look to our informational signage in the preserve.

## **Projects Feb-March 2016 – Bill Prain**

### **Northern Forest Preserves**

- Snow plowing/Road ice control**
- Sled hill safety maintenance**
- Chainsaw maintenance**
- Preparation for Maple Syrup Fest**
- Shelter and Resource Center repairs**
- Restore Miller Cabin Windows and Shutters-Complete**
- Equipment Fabrication**
- Administrative Priorities as called for**
- Safety investigation reporting and training**
- Shop cabinet construction**
- Firewood supply and deadfall removal**
- Vehicle and trailer safety lane testing and repairs**
- Road grading and shoulder protection**

Shutters were recently made and installed by forest preserve staff at the 1835 Miller - Ellwood cabin. Windows will be worked on next.



Spring forest, prairie and oak savannah burns begin in March. Photo shows oak savannah burn at Prairie Oaks



Cranes fly with their necks extended (unlike herons). They mate for life, reinforcing pair bonds with an elaborate courtship dance.



Whooping Crane (52")

Sandhill Crane (46")

The Golden-Crowned Kinglet is 4" long and weighs 6 grams.



The BLUE Eastern Bluebird



MARCH is when the first of the "Spring Migrants" move through Northern Illinois.

The omnivorous Common Grackles hold their heads skyward to attract a mate.

Red-bellied Woodpecker



Yellow-shafted Flicker



# The Birds of Northern Illinois MARCH

by Peter Olson



American Robin (Turdus migratorius)

The American Woodcock, or "Timber drake", performs its preposcular mating flights in March.



Great Blue Heron



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Sphyrapicus varius)

Hooded & Red-breasted Mergansers

Waterfowl begin to migrate as soon as there is open water on the lakes.



Northern Pintail

Lesser Scaup

Two duck-like birds that aren't really ducks: The Double-crested Cormorant and the American Coot.



The American Wigeon is a dabbling duck, feeding on vegetation.



Turkey Vultures return in March, soaring with their six-foot wingspan held up in a V-shaped dihedral.

"Cathartes aura"



Canvas-back

Redhead



Ring-necked Duck



Bufflehead

**From Peggy Doty**  
**Report of Education Activities only for the DeKalb County Forest Preserve Committee**  
**Requested by Terry Hannan**

For the calendar year 2015 **I taught 3,027 youth and adults** on various topics. Some of my numbers represent different lessons to field study attendees which are part of Connie's numbers, so you cannot total the two of us together exactly. The following is an education brief from each month for my time. This report does not include networking activities, professional development hours, or related organizational activities.

I have also included a tally of students taught by Connie Handel for 2015 after my report. Between the two of us we reached approximately **5,100 youth and adults**. If you count each lesson taught to each child and adult we would be somewhere in the vicinity of 10,000 individual children and adult lessons taught.

**January 2015**

I taught an **adaption activity at Lincoln Elementary**, for the HUB project in Rochelle, as an after school program. I had two volunteers help out, one was a Master Naturalist and one was a Master Gardener. This was very helpful. There were 5 teachers and 23 students.

DeKalb County Home Educators came for a scheduled activity on the 23rd. The parents and their children engage together in the program. They approached me last fall about scheduling some dates and times for activities. We discussed what has and hasn't worked in the past. Most importantly I requested that parents learn alongside their child so they could continue the engaged learning after the program. I had 12 total for this cold day program.

I led two family hikes at Winterfest. The focus was on the adaptations of plants and animals in winter. We also discussed animal tracks and signs and how to view the environment through animal interactions. I had 46 people on the first hike and 17 on the afternoon one.

**February 2015**

Dr. Carter, NIU, returned again this semester with 2 classrooms of elementary education students for their **presentation and experiential learning opportunity** at NREC. Though the number of students was down to a total of 42 students, over two days, it was easier to do more educational activities allowing them to experience the program as their students will in the future. It also gave us more time to debrief the activities as well as engage in group conversation.

I presented a lesson on maple syruping and how trees function year round to **the DeKalb County Homeschool Educators** group on the 17th. It was a small group of 8, moms and students.

I presented *If You Plant it They Will Come - Gardening for the Birds* at the **Joys of Gardening** and had great attendance. 18 people from the group evaluated the presentation with 17 fives and 1 four which are the highest choices.

I also presented *A Year with Monarchs* -at the **Gardener's Pathway** and had a full room of 42 attendees. This was one of my most enjoyable presentations as it was the story of all the things I learned raising and releasing 99 monarchs in my own yard. I left the group with butterfly house building plans and monarch handouts.

We had a program for our Master Naturalists and it was an absolute blizzard on the 25th but we still had 10 naturalists show up and enjoy the guest speaker. He spent time as a muskox farmer in Alaska. Muskox are a very specialized animal that will be the first to show symptoms of climate change. The group enjoyed the evening minus the weather and every one made it home safely.

We offered the *Soil Management Workshop* and had a nice turnout of 10 participants in DeKalb County. We had good speakers this year and the group seemed more engaged than in years past. They definitely asked more questions than ever before.

### **March 2015**

March 4th I had a professional peer from St. Charles Park District present the *Calling Frog Monitoring program*. It is a citizen science program housed at Peggy Notebaert museum in Chicago. We had a mixed group of 26 Master Naturalists and extras who took the training. Some wanted to take it for educational purposes and some to become annual monitors. We did it on very short notice when someone asked if we could offer it so I was pleased with the large turnout. It is a bit overwhelming to learn all the calls so a few were going to try out the monitoring and others want to practice. I will offer a refresher course myself each winter from now on as long as we have interest. I also hope to expand it to Boone and Ogle in the spring. The focus will be for Master Naturalists but all volunteers will be welcome.

I partnered with Andy Larson on a *maple syrup presentation and tour of a local, Ogle County, maple syrup business*. We had a nice turnout of 24 people. We each did part of the presentation and the business owners presented their portion on the tour site.

The *Annual Maple Syrup Fest* was the 15th this year. We had no sap water to boil down. Luckily we don't aim for a product but to simply show the process for making it at home. People don't seem to mind and they get to taste test syrups from the store in the morning anyway. We had a large number of attendees again, like last year, so it was very successful. We had 125 people sign the guest book and that is fairly accurate because we have MN volunteers at the door making sure all guest sign in.

DeKalb County *Home School Educators* returned this month for a lesson on food chains and returns of migratory species verses awakenings of hibernators. Small group of 10 but some of the best learners I get to teach.

I presented my *Magic of Hummingbirds* program for **Ready, Set, Grow** this year on March 14th for 57 attendees.

I assisted with an *I Think Green* Birds training. I put together the informational and background part of the program for the volunteers to gain the foundational knowledge about birds and then Lisa Hepker and Candice Miller went through how to do the activities the volunteers will be using. We had about 12 people attend.

I had the follow up **pond management program** on the 17th. Duane Friend and Dave Shiley traveled to DeKalb County and spoke on weed and fish management to a group of 21 people

### April 2015

April 6th -I was asked by the **Center for Southeast Asia Studies** to spend a morning with the Southeast Asian Youth Leadership Program participants. They asked me to ***focus on Civic Engagement using Environmental Education***. I often volunteer to host two students from this group but was unable to this year due to my work schedule so it was with great joy that I accepted the request and spent the morning with 20 Southeast Asian high school students. The students were from multiple Southeast Asian countries including but not limited to Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar and Taiwan. This program is supported by the U.S. State Department. The goal is for the students to gain ecological knowledge and leadership skills through a variety of activities and learning environments.

-April 7th I assisted our Ag in the Classroom coordinator with a continuation of the **Ag Awareness education** by presenting ***Soils*** to 125 students and 6 teachers in Monroe Center Elementary.

-April 15th - I worked with Lisa Hepker and Candice Miller to deliver the ***I Think Green*** to 15 volunteers. We utilized the Natural Resources Education Center and we all agreed the environment lent itself well to the level of interest in following through as well as the actually learning on behalf of the volunteers. Many left with ideas of where they would like to deliver the information.

- **Field studies** started with 6 classrooms with a total of 139 students and their leaders and chaperones. These included 2nd graders and kindergarten students. These field studies focus on plant and animal units as well as earth day lessons such as recycling.

-I assisted with the **Rochelle HUB afterschool program** on 4 different Tuesdays this month. I reached a total and diverse audience of 112 students and 6 leaders. We made the Rochelle News Leader with pictures of the kids ***making recycled paper*** after their paper history lesson.

### May 2015

**Field studies** to **NREC** seemed stronger than last. We had first, second, third, and fourth graders this month for a total of 499 students plus leaders.

In addition I taught the **home school group** a scientific lesson on ***the parts of flowers***, followed by an investigative lab and a hike to look at the wildflowers. We tried to find as many parts we learned on each flower as well as how different each flower is and why.

I organized a **Mother's Day Flower walk** for the Saturday, May 9th. I invited to local hobby botanists to lead the walks and we had around 50 attendees by the end of the event. This is very good considering we stopped doing them years ago because people were not showing up.

## June 2015

**Severson Dells, Winnebago Forest Preserve District**, requested my *large predator program* for June 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was in the evening and 28 people attended. My presentation was followed by a district "walk-about". I stayed and went on the walk which was very enjoyable and nice to continue the conversations instigated by the topic of my program. The director of the facility, Don Miller, was very pleased because the program brought in 25 new people to his facility.

I presented my *If You Plant It They Will Come - Gardening for the Birds* for the DeKalb Area Garden Club on the evening of June 11<sup>th</sup> at the NREC. We had 18 participants/club members.

I *started the Master Gardener Advanced Ecology class* in Boone County at the Boone County Conservation District on the 12<sup>th</sup>. We have 6 MG's that want the training which is a perfect size group for learning and discussion. Only 3 were at this initial class because of previous conflicts. We meet for two hours once a month, except August because of the fair I am told, and we resume again in September. They are very enthusiastic learners.

The **DeKalb Public Library** asked me to present *A Year with Monarchs* on the evening of June 16<sup>th</sup>. I was expecting an adult audience but it actually became a family presentation as I had 10 adults and 12 children in attendance. Luckily I work with children often and it was not difficult to change the way I presented the same program.

Lisa Hepker, educator, had a speaker become unavailable the afternoon before a program on the 18<sup>th</sup> for the **Oregon Park District**. I offered to help her create a last minute new program so we put together a two hour program for the next day. I was the guest speaker on *butterflies* and she did all the activities with the help of two or three Master Gardeners. We had 17 children and 6 park district staff.

I assisted Lisa Hepker with a follow up *I Think Green Birds* activity at NREC on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. We had 9 Master Gardener or Master Naturalists for this program. We had a great time and quickly worked through a 3 hour evening. I assisted Lisa again, as well as Candice Miller, for the same program but we offered in in Ogle on the 24<sup>th</sup>. We had 11 volunteers for this training.

Lisa, Candice, and I presented a *bird program* for the **Oregon Park District camp** program on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>. We had a wonderful time and I got some wonderful photos of the children playing bird bingo as they traveled across a very long boardwalk to their gardens. We had 17 children and 6 staff.

## July 2015

Summer camp month.

I was asked to teach the **Young Explorers** one more time in Oregon. This group of children is amazing and it has been very fun to teach at the park district and garden. I offered a wildlife program and taught them about the *process of elimination and carrying capacity of a habitat*. They were focused and did a great job. I had the park staff assign the groups so each one had a child who could read and write therefore they were the recorder for the station activity. When we finished the carrying capacity activity and created the line graph that correlated with the numbers they produced in the activity, it was a non-reader who first explained what the graph told us about the habitat.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> I met with the **Boone County Master Gardeners** (not Master Naturalists) for their *advanced ecology class*. I had five participants who are great students and seem to be happy with the amount of science they are getting. One of them shared how she had applied what she learned in our first session and how well it worked out.

### August 2015

I covered at our **Naturalist camp** for nine to eleven year olds in place of Connie who was out for the week on a trip. Not a lot gets done besides camp when you have campers from 8:30 to 3:45 each day. It was nice to be back in the mix for just one week. Summer camps ended strong with a total of 135 spots filled of our possible 150. Considering I use to only take, and prefer, 120 spots this is a perfect number of attendees.

I also did *an instructional presentation on birds* at the **Byron Library** on the 14<sup>th</sup>. I covered *simple identification, behaviors, and bird calls*. I had fourteen adults attend.

### September 2015

**I did my first webinar** along with other speakers on behalf of our **Volunteer Water Monitoring five state grant group**. It was hosted by NCRWN (North Central Region Water Network) on the 16<sup>th</sup> and I really enjoyed it. It was very well received by the director of NCRWN. After the webinar the director actual told me she wished I was on her team.

I met with my usual five **Boone County Master Gardener advanced ecology class** on the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month at Boone County Conservation District. They are some of the most appreciative adult students I have and I enjoy teaching as much as they seem to enjoy gaining the knowledge shared.

I offered *vermi-composting* in all three counties, based on a request out of Boone County, and only had a total of 5 participants between **Ogle and DeKalb**. Boone was actually cancelled. The other two may have been but key Master Gardeners wanted the class so I went forward with the classes.

I taught at the **Ogle County Ag Awareness day** on the 11<sup>th</sup> and had many classrooms to share *my love of water quality and watersheds*. I had 141 students from seven area classrooms.

My monthly **home school class** started this month with a *lesson on monarch butterflies and an update on pollinator issues*. They were wonderful and the parents were completely hands-on, which was one of my requirements to the group who asked me to start offering these nature related classes.

I offered an afterschool version of my *monarch* material to **HUB in Rochelle**. I went to both Central and Lincoln. *I focused on habitat restoration* because they know the life cycle and all about metamorphosis.

After much planning, the **National Bank and Trust**, DeKalb county, brought their traveling program group, 23 in all, to the **Hoppe Heritage Farm Forest Preserve, South Branch Prairie, and the NREC**. They toured our 1835 cabin and recreated prairie then came back to NREC for a program on Russell Woods and the Natural Resource Education Center. They had lunch catered in NREC. I had the **DeKalb County Land Manager, Al Roloff, meet us at the**

**South Branch Prairie to explain how he and volunteers had recreated this natural history gem.** The group seemed to love the day and had lots of historical additions.

I traveled to **Morgan County** this month to spend the evening with **Master Naturalist trainees**. I did two presentations for the 23 people participating. *The first program was Mammalogy and the follow up was on the topic of large predators and what we can expect in the future based on research and behaviors.*

I came home the next morning from teaching in Morgan County and went straight to the **DeKalb office and taught 26 HEA members** about our *large predator patterns*. They wanted this program and I was surprised so many came to hear it and they were very engaged with lots of questions.

I went to the **Mt. Morris Library** on the 27<sup>th</sup> and had my usual fourteen in attendance. I spoke on *monarchs and pollinators*.

**Dr. Carter, NIU, brought two classrooms of pre-service teachers** to NREC for the seminar I do each semester *regarding community resources for classroom field studies and helpful hints on having a successful field trip with a classroom of students*. Between the two classes there were forty four students.

I spent time designing my next 3 county program. The focus of this presentation is the woodpeckers you will find in Illinois.

## **October 2015**

14 different teachers and classrooms came to the NREC for an environmental education **field study this month**. There were 6 fifth grade, 2 fourth grade, 2 first grade, and 4 private school classrooms for a total of 278 students and 44 leaders.

**In partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts** I spent two days at Lowell Park *teaching soil science in the form of decomposers and vermi-composting* to 13 3rd grade classrooms in an outdoor setting for Conservation Days. On the first day I was given two classrooms together at the end of the day because they miscalculated the schedule. The staff in charge of organizing the day told me they needed the extra classroom to have one more session but all were full so they gave them to me because, "We all figured Peggy could handle two classes at a time." I took it as a compliment and it all went fine. Best of all it was two of our own Oregon 3rd grade classrooms. I had them in 1st grade two years ago at NREC for their first grade field study.

My **Master Gardener Advanced Ecology class met** again and I had my usual 5 adults in attendance. They are engaged learners and seem to enjoy the class each month.

I was asked to present the most updated **Large Predators Return program for the Northwest Audubon Society in Freeport** on the evening of the 6th. (After teaching the first day of 7 classrooms at Conservation Days) I enjoyed the group and had 54 people attend the program. I had only met three of these people before so it was basically a whole new audience for me.

I had my second **Home School class** on the 20th. We, 13 youth and 7 parents, did *a study of watersheds including point and non-point source pollution*. We created mini watersheds at the tables and then experienced the full EnviroScape watershed model. We ended with an experiential aquatic hike in the Kishwaukee River. I had asked everyone to bring waterproof boots but forgot my own so I was walking in a very frigid river with simply my water shoes on. The students loved it and it seemed to really concrete the objectives we were learning.

I created and offered a program on *Woodpeckers of Illinois*. This month I presented the program **in DeKalb and Ogle**. I will be presenting it next month at Boone County Conservation District. Together the programs drew 14 people.

I created a program on *Coyotes* and **offered it in DeKalb** on the 26th with a total of 29 people in attendance many new people to Extension came. Next month it will be offered in Boone and Ogle.

### November 2015

**Field study topics** in November included *water cycle, watershed model, natural resource connections, and food chains just to name a few*. 177 students and 10 leaders participated from public schools. For our younger students like Oregon *1st grade we focus on season changes, animal adaptation, indigenous animals including bats of Illinois and their critical necessary effects on our environment*.

I was requested to do *bat education* at **Leggee Elementary in Lake of the Hills**. I spoke to eight second grade classrooms with a total of 188 students and 9 leaders.

I taught my third, in a nine month series, **home school class** on the 17th. They come to the NREC once a month through May. This month we *studied worms and how to do vermi-composting at home*. It was a real hit and we had a new family from the southern part of DeKalb County.

This month I **presented two programs** in Ogle County for the general public. **Woodpeckers of Illinois and Coyotes** both had good attendance. Woodpeckers attracted many of our current volunteers for continuing education while the coyote program attracted new attendees to Extension. **I also offered Coyotes and Woodpeckers of Illinois in Boone County**. I presented the woodpecker program at the **Boone County Conservation District**. One couple came to the coyote program in Ogle, from Rockford, because they attended the *Woodpeckers of Illinois* program in Boone two days prior and enjoyed it so much they came to hear my program on *Coyotes* in Ogle. They were new to our Unit programming.

### December 2015

One **last field study** came out early in the month. This particular private school has four field studies with us, three in the fall and one in the spring. They have taken advantage of our new cultural and natural history field study we do with the Sycamore History Museum in the spring.

Andy Larson asked if I would present a session regarding wildlife for the **Putting Small Acres to Work** on the first Saturday of the month. I agreed and he then asked me to be **the closing session** at the end of the day. This was new for me and the majority of the attendees actually stayed so it was exciting to address this group. Andy would have the numbers for this session.

The **home school lesson** this month was on birds. We focused *on physiology, winter adaptations, and feeding.*

I was asked to do a breakfast meeting presentation for the **Golden Kiwanis in Rochelle** on the 17<sup>th</sup>. I presented my *Woodpeckers of Illinois* and I enjoyed the group very much and they were very gracious. There were 26 men and 1 woman.

### **Connie Handel**

**2015 field study and summer camp numbers** are below.

#### **Field Studies:**

Jan. – 14

Feb. – 0

Mar. – 25

Apr. – 201

May – 576

June – 51

Sept. – 34

Oct. – 624

Special requested event: Outdoor stewardship days in Lee County– 230

Nov. – 172

Dec. – 17

**Total 1,944**

#### **Summer Camp:**

Critter – 23

Pioneer – 24

Outdoor Adventure – 18

Rainforest – 25

River – 26

Naturalist – 19

**Total Campers: 135**

Recycling Program - monthly totals for 2015 calendar year

January-15	1284
February-15	1014
March-14	910
April-15	54
November-15	417
December-15	300
<b>1,326 students at 3 lesson visits each</b>	<b>Total: 3979</b>

Classrooms doing recycling as part of their fieldtrip at Russell Woods

Spring 2015 -	352
<b>Grand Total for recycling kid visits</b>	<b>4331</b>