

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

October 2016

Primary activities for the month of October included:

- 1. Seed collection.** October is our most productive month for seed collection. Seed collection starts in June, but most of the seed that we gather is ready in September and especially, October. While our collection and inventory for 2016 is not yet complete, we expect to have well over 100 pounds and over 100 species of native plant seeds by the time we finish. The majority of this seed is collected by the members of our weekly stewards group, but we also have help from other volunteers such as NIU organizations, Scout troops, and citizens-at-large.
- 2. Seed processing.** After our seed is gathered from the plants, we dry it (similar to what farmers do with corn and beans) to prevent mold or rot while it is stored, before being planted late in the fall or during the winter. We dry our seed in paper sacks or in racks, then process it by removing stems, capsules and other chaff; this is done through screens and winnowing, after which the seed is stored in a cool dry place until planting. Much of this work is done by hand, most of it by our stewards.
- 3. Late season planting.** The unusually warm temperatures in October allowed us to continue some of our planting that generally ends in September. Additional plugs of uncommon sedges and forbs were planted in the new Swanson Grove component of the Prairie Oaks preserve. The Jeff's Trees group, about 30 family and friends of the late Jeff Arnold, planted 80 trees by hand in the park-like component in the Sycamore Forest Preserve (former Evergreen Village Trailer Park). This group has planted trees for us every fall for the last 8 years.
- 4. Herbicide application for invasive species control.** Again, the unusually warm temperatures allowed for late season herbicide treatment of exotic and invasive species in a number of our preserves. Canada Thistle, Poison Parsnip, Giant Reed and thick patches of adventive Goldenrods were sprayed in the South Branch Prairie and the Prairie Oaks preserves.
- 5. Brush control.** October saw the initiation of our brush control efforts at Swanson Grove. Large thickets of exotic invaders such as Honeysuckle, Multiflora Rose and White Mulberry have combined with the adventive native species such as Wild Cherry, Box Elder and Elm to choke out the ground flora and kill the lower branches of the large old Oaks and Hickories. We have begun the removal process by cutting a 15 foot fire break/trail along the north, west and south property lines of the site.
- 6. Miscellaneous.** This month saw the installation of two culverts to improve access to the western savanna and eastern prairie remnant at Swanson Grove. Also this month we met with representatives from the Openlands Foundation, the Chicago Wilderness Organization and NIU to coordinate four different research and restoration projects for "species of concern" that will take place in our preserves next year. See the photo of one, the Smooth Green Snake, on the following page. We also met with Wendler Engineering staff to begin design of the repairs of two of the weirs in our wetland bank.



This is a *full grown* example of the rare and elusive Smooth Green Snake that was found at Potawatomie Woods Preserve by Professor Rich King of NIU.



Gravel bars emerge from the Kish River at Russell Woods in October. See the bridge in the distance?