

Natural Resources Management Activities

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

October 2014

Primary activities for the month of October included:

1. Seed collection. As always, October is our prime month for gathering the seeds of native prairie, wetland and woodland plants. We do gather seed from June through September, but October brings in the bulk of the seed collection. Our stewards, regular volunteers-at-large and Professor Ken Gasser's Honors Program students from the biology department at NIU are the backbone of our volunteer seed collection army. This year we also had help from the Master Naturalists trainees in Peggy Doty's U of I extension program, and some of the students from Professor Holly Jones' Conservation Biology course at NIU (see below). We have well over 50 species of seeds and counting. These will be processed, divided in to "plant community" mixes and hand scattered or mechanically planted later this fall or winter. We will provide a list of species, amounts and value of the seed we collected after everything is processed.

2. Conservation Biology 406 Field Trips. Every fall and/or spring, we assist the NIU Biological Sciences Department by leading field trips for the Conservation Biology Classes. The students are upper level undergraduate or graduate students in the Biology or Environmental Studies Departments. We provide an overview of the components of natural resources management, as well as an up-close look at the plant community and animal habitats that are re-created or rehabilitated as the primary focus of our mission.

3. Late season plantings. Fall is a good time to plant trees and shrubs and, with the lack of early killing frosts, native Lilies and some sedges, too. Again this year, the group called Jeff's Trees (about 50 friends and family of the late Jeff Arnold) helped us with a late season planting of over 240 trees in one of the forested wetland components of the Afton Wetland Bank. Our stewards and other volunteers helped us plant still-green plugs of high quality, uncommon sedges and the bulbs and scales of the uncommon and beautiful Turk's Cap Lily.

4. Meeting and tour for USEPA staff. After the Wetland Mitigation Bank Review Team site visit in September, we received a request to discuss wetland bank performance standards with USEPA staff. In early October, Al Roloff met with a staff member from the Water Resources Division of the USEPA, and provided a tour of some of the other wetland sites that we have been re-creating or restoring. The USEPA and two other Federal agencies (Fish and Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineers) are considering revisions to their Interagency Coordination Agreement (2008) for the Chicago Region. They wanted our perspective on their current performance standards, based on the high quality of our current wetland bank. This year, the Forest Preserve District has received recognition from federal agencies for the quality of both our wetland bank and the South Branch Prairie.



Early October colors in the South Branch Prairie. A magnifying glass might help identify the Miller-Elwood cabin in the far distance.



This adolescent Turkey Vulture doesn't yet have the red tone to its feather-bare head.



Jeff's Trees friends collect pots and shovels after an afternoon of tree planting at Afton.



Steward Jan Grainger collects seeds of Blazing Star (foreground) on a Sunny Wednesday in October.