

TheBlaze

Fall / Winter 2014



from the director

PrairieView Golf Club has had a very successful season thus far. With the addition of Saro Costa and his expertise in the food and beverage area, a whole new dimension has been added to your dining experience at the Prairie Grass Pub. Remember PrairieView Golf Club when planning your next outing or event. Contact us for any occasion and we will make it memorable. Or, you can just come on out for a burger and a beer on the deck and watch the beautiful sunset!



The weather has made for a great summer with plush lawns, great rainfall for crops, and moderate temperatures for enjoyable play and relaxation. The conditions have made the golf maintenance crew shine. They work very hard and do a wonderful job maintaining PrairieView.

The other side to a wet and mild summer is that the Eurasian invasive plant species flourish on the prairie and give a never ending supply of weeding and mowing for the Restoration Department staff and volunteers. They also do a great job in this never ending thankless task of natural habitat restoration. My hat goes off to everyone who works and volunteers trying to make a difference in our precious natural communities. These are areas that, to the untrained eye, go unnoticed but take a lot of effort to change and maintain. As I head out to Yellowstone National Park with my kids to go camping, I am reminded just how valuable our parks and natural areas are, not only to us alone, but to the many plants and animals that need those habitats to live.

Successful grand openings of the Howard Colman Hall Creek Preserve and the He-Leo Two Rivers Preserve were held recently. The He-Leo Two Rivers Preserve is starting to have frequent visitors enjoying the shaded scenery along the Rock River. The preserve is a great place for boaters to get out and stretch their legs, have a picnic at the shelter, and play a game of sand volleyball. Others enjoy fishing at this site, so bring a couple camp chairs and poles and drop a line in the water!

As always, be kind to Mother Nature and she will reward you with her beauty and grandeur!



Todd Tucker
Executive Director

P.S. - *Simply Love*...it's in the air at the Forest Preserve! Be sure to check out this summer's edition of the Northwest Quarterly Magazine. Jon and Glenda Muranko share their story of their special wedding day that was held at the Forest Preserve. Their ceremony was held at one of our many outdoor locations and the reception took place on the main floor of the Jarrett Prairie Center. To schedule your wedding or any other event, call or email Raul, 815.234.8535 x200 or raul@byronforestpreserve.com.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

President

Trevor Hogan

Vice President

Sandy Brooks

Treasurer

Brad Auker

Secretary

Dave Breen

Commissioner

Jeff Ludwig

BOARD MEETINGS

Held on the third Monday of each month at 7pm at the Jarrett Prairie Center.



THE MISSION

*Preservation ~ Education
Recreation*

To provide for Preservation of openspace/natural resources, to provide Education concerning our natural environment/heritage, and to provide Recreation opportunities and enterprise operations that are consistent with our District goals.



THE BLAZE

Issue #34

Fall/Winter 2014

Please keep this issue thru December 2014.

Editor, Design, & Layout

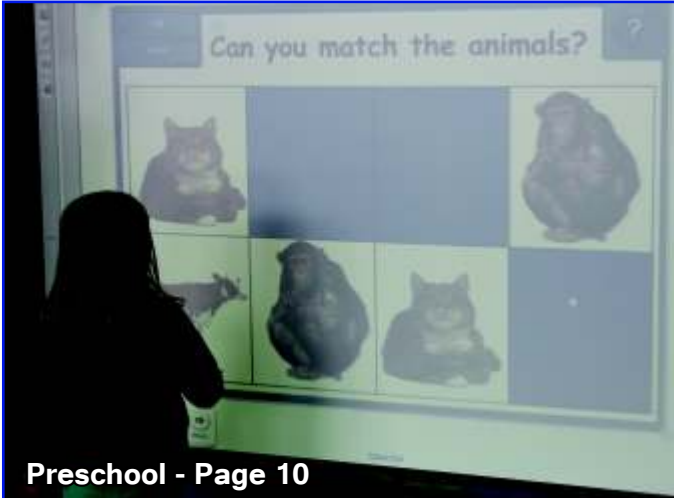
Michelle Gerke, CPRP

Cover Photo:

Brown-Headed Cowbird

*Photo by Gary Gullett, Photo Safari Network
Learn more about this bird on pages 16-17.*

contents



Preschool - Page 10



Canoeing the Rock - Page 6



Preserves Opening - Page 14

2	from the director
4-5	special events
6-9	programs & trips
10	preschool
11	homeschool programs
12-13	scout badges
14	prairie preserve notes
15	what do we do with land?
16-17	brown-headed cowbird
18	invasive species spotlight
19-20	prairieview golf club
21-22	good stuff / volunteers
23	directory

Byron Forest Preserve District

7993 North River Road, P O Box 1075, Byron IL 61010 ~ P-815-234-8535 ~ F-815-234-8635

Connect with us!



Register online at www.byronforestpreserve.com



halloween on the prairie

Relax and enjoy this returning favorite with some awesome changes!

Sunday, October 26 ~ Noon - 4 pm

Free admission ~ Fee for games

Co-sponsored by the Byron Park District.

Family Hayrides ~ Face Painting ~ Kids Crafts
Spooky Games ~ Costume Contest
Fun for kids of ALL ages!!

New This Year...

Customer Appreciation Lunch - Noon-1:30pm
FREE lunch to say 'thank you' to the community!

Owl Show - **Screech Owl at Midnight Hollow**

Featuring live Great Horned Owls, Screech Owls, Barred Owls, Common Barn Owls and more! Presented by Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education.





23rd annual holiday gift sale

Saturday, November 1, 2014

9 am-4 pm

You'll find that great one-of-a-kind gift for that special person in your life at this year's Annual Holiday Gift Sale. With over 30 crafters and vendors, there's a wide variety of unique crafts such as quilts, clothing, jewelry, candles, flower arrangements, ceramics, decorations, baskets, birdhouses, furniture, and much more! Along with crafters, vendors will also offer items such as Tupperware, Gold Canyon Candles, Lia Sophia Jewelry, and many more!

Bring your children to have breakfast with Santa from 9-11 am. All believers can visit with him and tell him everything they want for Christmas. We'll provide donuts, juice, and milk. Bring your cameras to capture this awesome memory!

There is no admission fee for the event. We'll also be giving away door prizes donated by the vendors. The Jarrett Prairie Center is accessible to the physically challenged. An affordable concession stand will be open all day.

Parents can shop while the youngsters learn about their heritage in the natural history museum at the Jarrett Prairie Center located at 7993 North River Road in Byron. For more information, please call or email Michelle at 1-815-234-8535 x224 or michellegerke@byronforestpreserve.com.

**Vendors
& Crafters
Needed!**

Call
Michelle at
815-234-8535
x224

\$35
8'x10' booth
\$45
8'x12' booth



Connect with us!



Register online at www.byronforestpreserve.com

outdoor programs



Beehives

Beekeeping Workshops

Did you hear the buzz? These workshops are the place to bee!! You will learn techniques and tools of the trade. *Bring your bee suits!!

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
 When: Sundays
 Sept. 14*, Oct. 12
 Nov. 9, Dec. 14
 Time: 2 - 4 pm
 Cost: \$2 / person
 Ages: 3 and up
 Min./Max.: 5 / 25

No registration required.

What's Coming in 2015?

Winter Lecture Series: Cure your cabin fever this winter with a series of free natural and cultural history lectures and programs to be held on Sunday afternoons at the Jarrett Prairie Center from late January through early March. Watch for upcoming details in the winter edition of *The Blaze* online at www.byronforestpreserve.com or call 815-234-8535 x217 for more information.



Guided Fall Foliage Canoe Tours of the Rock River -- Oregon Dam to ^{NEW!} Castle Rock State Park

Take a scenic two-hour guided canoe tour down the Rock River from just below the dam in Oregon to Castle Rock State Park. View the area's many unique St. Peter sandstone rock formations and miles of hardwood forest along one of the most scenic stretches of the Rock River. Must have at least one adult per canoe and no more than three people per canoe. The September 27th trip will be held in conjunction with the Oregon Park District.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
 When: Saturday, September 27
 Saturday, October 18
 Time: 9 am - 12 Noon
 Cost: \$10 / person
 Ages: 12 and up
 Min./Max.: 3 / 10 canoes

Register by noon on 9/23 & 10/14.

"Behind the Scenes" Restoration Tours

Take a hike with one of our Restoration Department staff and see the areas of the preserve that they are currently working on, the latest wildflowers that are in bloom, and any other interesting seasonal wildlife activity that they have observed. These special tours will go off the trail to places not normally seen by the public. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, and dress for the weather.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
 When: Wednesdays
 Sept. 10 & Oct. 8
 Time: 5 - 6:30 pm
 Cost: FREE
 Ages: All
 Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by 3pm on Sept. 8 & Oct. 6.

Join our VIP Text Club

Text CC597 to 36000

to start getting great deals today!

outdoor programs



Wolf Spider



Walking Stick Bug



Pinching Beetle

Spider Hunt

You're never more than eight feet from a spider, no matter where you are! Learn to identify the species common to northern Illinois by going on a spider hunt! At this time of year, we're sure to see huge wolf spiders and glorious argiope, as well as some of the tiniest and best camouflaged that you probably never noticed before.

Bring a lunch and stay for the insect hunt!

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Saturday, September 20
Time: 10 - 11:30 am
Cost: FREE
Ages: 6 and up, parents welcome
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 17.

Insect Hunt

Insects abound in the prairie and woodland of late summer. Grasshoppers will even land on you as you walk through the tall grasses...but what else is out there? After a short introduction to the insect families, we'll take nets and go hunting! Each participant will take home a bug jar, but please leave the insects here! Make it a day of creepy crawlies and sign up for the spider hunt before this program.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Saturday, September 20
Time: Noon - 1:30
Cost: FREE
Ages: 6 and up, parents welcome
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 17.

Fall Night Hike

We'll head into the forest to listen for the sounds of the changing season and the last of the evening insects. We'll learn about night vision and learn some of the ways that our eyes can play tricks on us in the dark. Bring a sense of adventure (and a flashlight, if you must).

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Friday, November 7
Time: 7 - 8:30 pm
Cost: FREE
Ages: 6 and up, parents welcome
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on November 5.

Northern Illinois Raptor Education Show

Experience nearly a dozen live hawks, owls, falcons, harriers, and eagles. Learn about the many species of raptors that live in our area and the role that they play at the top of nature's food chain. This show utilizes live nonreleasable birds and many educational displays of other hands-on raptor related materials for all ages. Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education rescues, rehabilitates, and releases dozens of orphaned, sick, and injured birds of prey each year.

November 16 at 2 pm ~ Jarrett Prairie Center

FREE Show ~ No registration required.

Sponsored by Exelon.



Sawwhet Owl

programs & trips



Cedar Waxwing

Caring for Your Heirloom Quilts: Practical Museum Methods on a Budget

NEW!

Quilt expert, Donna Langford will share low budget methods to provide optimum environments for treasured quilts and other textiles. Discussion includes temperature, humidity, light, pests, storage boxes, and location. A trunk show of examples of historic quilts will also be part of the program. The public is also encouraged to bring in their own family quilts to establish when they were made and other specific questions regarding their care. Donna Langford has been quilting for over two decades and enjoys helping others preserve their family memories. She is the Curator for the Dekalb Area Agricultural Heritage Association and has been a museum curator at local museums for twenty years specializing in collections management and preservation. She has a Master of Arts Degree in Textile History/Quilt Studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. No advance registration is required.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
When: Sunday, December 7
Time: 2 pm
Cost: FREE
Ages: 12 and up

Garfield Farm Museum & Heirloom Garden Show

We'll head to LaFox, Illinois to experience the Garfield Museum's 25th Annual Heirloom Garden Show and view plant varieties that are seldom seen today. Interact with dozens of Midwestern growers showing their favorite heirloom flowers, herbs, fruits, and vegetables. The show highlights the importance of preserving genetic diversity of plants that were popular in American culture from at least 50 to 100+ years ago. Many garden seeds, plants, and products will be for sale. The 1840s Garfield Farm and Tavern, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and its 374 acres of historic gardens, barns, restored prairie and savanna will also be open for tours during this special event. The trip cost includes transportation and admission to the museum. Food and refreshments will be available on site for an additional fee.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Sunday, August 24
Time: 8:30 am - 4 pm
Cost: \$20 / person
Ages: All
Min./Max.: 5 / 24

Register by noon on August 21.

Colored Sands Forest Preserve & Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Trip

We'll visit one of the largest small bird banding operations in the country during the fall bird migration. The Sand Bluff Bird Observatory has been in operation since 1960 and is operated entirely by volunteers. Between 4,000-6,000 birds are banded each year. This is your chance to help and see a wide variety of birds up close during their migration through the Midwest. This trip is being run in conjunction with the Oregon Park District.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Saturday, October 11
Time: 7 am - 9:30 am
Cost: \$3 / person
Ages: All
Min./Max.: 5 / 24

Register by noon on October 7.

programs



Tea Party Birthday

Telescope Dedication at the Weiskopf Observatory

Come check out our two newly refurbished 17-inch and 13-inch Dobsonian telescopes, thanks to the restoration efforts of local astronomer, Walter Trentadue. Along with the 11-inch Celestron telescope, we now have three telescopes to use for all future celestial observations when we have clear skies.

Where: Weiskopf Observatory
When: Sun., September 14
Time: 6:30 pm
Cost: FREE
Ages: All
No pre-registration required.

National Astronomy Day Night Viewing

Let's view the night skies with our three telescopes. You can also bring your own telescopes and learn how to use them from the experts.

Where: Weiskopf Observatory
When: Saturday, October 4
Time: 6 pm
Cost: FREE
Ages: All
No pre-registration required.

Total Lunar Eclipse Viewing

We will watch the Moon move into the Earth's shadow. Stop by for a quick look or stick around for awhile.

Where: Weiskopf Observatory
When: Wed., October 8
Time: 3 - 6 am
Cost: FREE
Ages: All
No pre-registration required.

Partial Solar Eclipse Viewing

Let's watch the Moon pass between the Sun and Earth.

Where: Weiskopf Observatory
When: Thurs., October 23
Time: 4 - 5:45 pm
Cost: FREE
Ages: All
No pre-registration required.



Hunter Education

This 3-day class covers ethics, firearms, and archery and is required by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Please note that this class fills up quickly!

Where: Jarrett Center
When: MWF, Nov. 10, 12, 14
Time: MW-6-9pm, F-6-10pm
Cost: FREE
Ages: All

(Must be able to pass written test)

Min./Max.: 5 / 60

Register by noon on 11/1.

Ideas??

Do you have a great idea for a program or a trip destination that you would like for us to offer? Or, do you need a specific badge offered for your scout group? Please let us know by calling Mark at 815-234-8535 x217 or Janet at x232. You could also go to our website, www.byronforestpreserve.com to email us or find us on Facebook. We look forward to getting suggestions from you!

preschool



Mrs. Joni



Mrs. Crystal



Mrs. Tara



Get your kids ready for kindergarten by enrolling them in our structured preschool classes. We are proud to offer one of the best preschool education programs and facility in the area. The program is housed in the Keller Education Center, a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum Certified building located adjacent to the Jarrett Prairie Center at 7993 North River Road in Byron. The Keller Education Center's Platinum Certification is the highest rating given by the United States Green Building Council and recognizes the building's many energy-efficient and green-design features. Some of these include the following: the use of renewable energy solar panels and a wind turbine; geothermal ground source heat pump; recycled floor tiles, countertops and restroom partitions; use of natural light and interior lighting control systems; use of certified sustainable wood products; improved indoor air quality through the use of low volatile organic paints; reflective metal roofing; low flow water closets and faucets, and many other features. The Keller Education Center is one of only three Platinum LEED Certified education buildings in Illinois and the first and only platinum certified building in Ogle County.

The Tuesday/Thursday preschool classes are geared toward 3-year-olds and younger 4-year-olds. The Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes are geared toward older 4-year-olds and younger 5-year-olds. Children must be at least 4 years old to attend the three-day class. They must be at least 3 years old to attend the two-day class. Children must be potty trained. Immunization records are required. You may register your child at anytime throughout the year if your child's birthday is later in the year. Please call 815-234-8535 ext. 200 for more information.

Where: Keller Education Center
Ages: 3-5 years
When: Mon/Wed/Fri or Tues/Thurs
Time: 8:30-11 am or 12:30-3 pm
Min/Max: 6/25-M/W/F morning & afternoon
6/18-TU/TH morning & afternoon
Cost: \$110/month-M/W/F
\$90/month-TU/TH
Registration is ongoing throughout the year.



Mrs. Joni works with a student on the SmartBoard.

homeschool programs



The Ground Beneath Us

What's underneath us? Dirt, yes, but also rocks, fossils, water, worms, insects, and so much more! We'll get a close look at some of these things and also find some fossils at our quarry. Bring a sack lunch. Snack and drink provided.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Friday, September 19
Time: 10 am - 2 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: 6 and up
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 16.

The Sky Above Us

What's above us? Air and water, of course, but lots of other things too. It might surprise you! Bring a sack lunch. Snack and drink provided.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Friday, October 17
Time: 10 am - 2 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: 6 and up
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on October 14.



Now You See Me...

How do animals hide, stalk, and hunt? Many of them rely on camouflage to find prey or stay safe. We'll try some "hands on" camouflage tests and learn about how our eyes and other senses work. Bring a sack lunch. Snack and drink provided.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Friday, November 14
Time: 10 am - 2 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: 6 and up
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on November 11.

Kitchen Chemistry

How does a cake rise? Why are cookies sometimes flat? We'll learn some of the science behind baking in the kitchen, and test a few recipes, too. All participants will take home lots of holiday cookies and baked goods. Bring a sack lunch. Snack and drink provided.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Friday, December 12
Time: 10 am - 2 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: 6 and up
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on December 9.



Register Early!

PLEASE remember to register early for our programs. So many programs are cancelled due to the lack of participation and then we receive phone calls from disappointed individuals because they "were gonna sign up but forgot."

So, get online or call us now to sign up for that hike, or that great trip, or to get that scout badge.

SIGN UP NOW!!
SIGN UP NOW!!
SIGN UP NOW!!

scout badges, etc.



Boy Scout: Geocaching

Learn how to use a GPS unit to mark waypoints and find caches; see how a map and compass can be used for the sport; learn about the history and the how-tos of geocaching; head out to find some of the caches hidden at the preserve; and hide a cache of your own! This workshop fulfills all requirements of the badge except for leading an event for your peers....but you'll be well prepared by the end of the session.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
When: Sat., September 27
Time: 12 Noon - 4 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: Boy Scouts
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 23.

Webelos: Naturalist

Learn about our native ecosystem, including dangerous plants and animals and local flyaways for birds. We'll also go outside to look for signs of the soil cycle and play a game to learn about the food chain.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
When: Thursday, October 16
Time: 5:30 - 8 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: Boy Scouts
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on October 14.

Jr. Girl Scout: Jeweler

There are lots of fun projects to complete for this badge, like making some macrame survival bracelets, sculpting our own beads, and stringing a design for a necklace. You'll complete at least three pieces to take home.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
When: Saturday, November 8
Time: 1 - 4:30 pm
Cost: \$5 / person
Ages: Jr. Girl Scouts
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on November 5.

Fossil Hunt

We will search the Forest Preserve's quarry for fossils. Arrive and depart any time during the program. We'll provide identification, hammers, and guidance. Bring a bucket or bag to take home your finds. You'll have no problem filling it up with fossils of snails, clams, cephalopods, corals, and maybe even a trilobite or two!

Where: The quarry near Land Management Center located at
6845 German Church Road, Byron
When: Sunday, September 28
Time: 10 am - 2 pm
Cost: \$2 / person
Ages: All (Under 10 must be with an adult)
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 26.

scout badges, etc.



Jr. Girl Scout: Flowers

The prairie will be covered in the last of the season's blooms, but they are the showiest! We'll walk among giant sunflowers and pretty blue asters, as well as collect seeds to grow some prairie plants at home.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Friday, September 26
Time: 5 - 7 pm
Cost: \$5 / scout (inc. patch)
Ages: Jr. Girl Scouts
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 17.

Jr. Girl Scout: Drawing

Beautiful fall colors will compliment this drawing class and give us a wonderful subject and backdrop. Bring your creativity and we'll provide the rest!

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Saturday, October 18
Time: 12 Noon - 3 pm
Cost: \$5 / scout (inc. patch)
Ages: Jr. Girl Scouts
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on October 15.

Cadette Girl Scout: Trees

Tree fun, science, crafts, connections, and helping trees thrive; you'll have your choices of activities to complete the steps for this badge. Dress for the weather and bring your sense of fun and adventure!

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
When: Sunday, September 21
Time: 3 - 6 pm
Cost: \$5 / person (inc. patch)
Ages: Cadette Girl Scouts
Min./Max.: 8 / 20

Register by noon on September 18.

Brownies: Bugs

We'll head out with nets to see what we can catch! This badge promises to be a lot of fun, and if you don't like "bugs" now, maybe you will by the end!

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center
When: Saturday, September 20
Time: 2 - 4 pm
Cost: \$5 / scout (inc. patch)
Ages: Brownies
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

Register by noon on September 18.

ATTENTION TEACHERS! Free Field Trips Offered!

In order to increase accessibility to outdoor education for all students, the Forest Preserve is offering field trips to area schools for free! Sessions include prairie ecology, forest ecology, nature center tour, observatory tour, Heritage Farm Museum tour, bird study, Native Americans, insects study, earthwalk, and Earthkeepers.

Field trips are focused on hands-on learning. We guide the students through the various topics indoors and outdoors using first rate facilities. Trips can be organized for an all-day experience or just for an hour. Lunch rooms are available. Souvenirs are available for purchase.

To schedule your next field trip, call Mark Herman, Superintendent of Education, at 815-234-8535 x217 so your class can experience outdoor learning at its best this spring. These options are also offered in your classroom for free as well. In addition, we can tailor a session to meet your needs on just about any nature related topic. Give us a call to supplement your students' classroom learning experience. Please visit us online at www.byronforestpreserve.com.



Prairie Preserve Notes

By Russell Brunner, Superintendent of Land Management

Photo: Lead Plant and Purple Prairie Clover at the Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve

Howard Colman Hall Creek Preserve

This preserve officially opened to the public on June 27th. The preserve is still under development at this time, but there are over five miles of hiking trails open for public use. Restoration is ongoing to remove invasive species from the preserve, restore the oak woodlands, and install fencing and signage. The first prairie planting was completed last fall and is in its first growing season on the east side of the preserve adjacent to the existing prairies. Prescribed fire is used in all of the District's natural areas to help control exotic species and to rejuvenate our native wildflowers. Enter this preserve at 12749 North Weldon Road, Rockford.



Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve

2014 was another busy year for our staff working hard to control invasive species throughout the Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve and the adjacent prairie plantings. For several months, staff and volunteers have worked primarily to control White Sweet Clover and Yellow Sweet Clover, as well as Birdsfoot Trefoil (see article on page 16 for more information) and Spotted Knapweed from the District's properties. These weeds crowd out and steal resources from our native plants. Management was done with spot herbicide applications, hand pulling, spading, and mowing.

The Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve improves in quality every year as we have fewer invasive weeds and more native plants. The native plants provide higher quality habitat for our native birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. We have also been busy collecting seed from our native prairies and woodlands for use in our restoration areas and to oversee degraded prairie and woodland areas. Several hundred pounds of seed from around 100 native species were collected again this year.

He-Leo Two Rivers Preserve

The grand opening of this preserve was on July 19th. The preserve is open to the public daily from dawn to dusk. This preserve is accessible by vehicle from Route 2, about 3 miles south of Byron, and by boat on the Rock River across from Rockvale. The preserve includes a picnic shelter with tables, sand volleyball, restrooms, and boat docks. There is no motorized boat launch; the docks are open to daytime use by boaters on the river only. Canoe and kayak users may launch at the preserve. Dogs are allowed on leash in the park area but please no pets in the shelter. Visitors are welcome to come and enjoy the river park area, oak hickory woods, and adjacent wetland as well.



What does the Forest Preserve do with the land that it buys?

By Katie Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent of Restoration/Maintenance



In the last 10 years, the Byron Forest Preserve has purchased around 1,000 new acres of land. The Forest Preserve now owns a total of 1,955 acres. Some of the land purchased was woodlands and some of the land purchased was agricultural fields. In the woodlands, the weedy tree species are thinned by the Restoration Crew and work to clear around the oaks is done to increase the amount of sunlight that reaches the forest floor. We then manage the understory with prescribed fire and add native seed. The agricultural fields we eventually plant back into native prairies.

Prairies were once the dominate ecosystem in the Northern Illinois landscape. To date, we have turned 600 acres of farm fields back into diverse prairie plantings. The best way to create a healthy prairie from open land – either farmed or unfarmed is to grow roundup ready corn and soybeans for several years. We lease out tracts of land to local farmers who do this part for us.

The reason we prefer to farm the open ground for at least 3-5 yrs before planting our prairie seed mixes is to help eliminate some of the weed seeds that are lying

dormant in the soils seed bank. A seed bank is a natural storage method for seeds that is found in the soil. These seeds are waiting for the chance to germinate. When we farm the land first, the farmers do the weeding for us. Over the years, the farming practices employed help to drastically reduce the amount of weeds that will be able to compete with our prairie seeds and their seedlings when we are ready to plant.

Once the ground has been farmed for several years and we are ready to plant the native prairie seed, we must first determine what prairie species will grow best in this particular field's soil. The type of soil present directly reflects the type of soil moisture. Dry, mesic, and wet are the three main classifications we use when talking about seed mixes and soil moisture. Mesic is just a fancy word for not really dry and not really wet. Once the soil moisture content is determined, we then create our list of best suited prairie species for that planting.

Our seed mixes are comprised of hand collected seed that our staff collects throughout the growing season and purchased seed from local nurseries. The seed that we purchase for our mixes is from native seed nurseries whose seed stock is found within a 250 mile radius of Byron. We do this to help ensure that the seed we plant is as closely related to the plants that were originally here. We are trying to recreate the prairies of the past as closely as we can. Our prairie mixes usually include seeds from around 100 different species of flowers and grasses at a rate of about 10-12 lbs. of seed per acre. This is considered to be a very good seeding rate and a high species diversity count.

We plant the seed in the late fall and early winter seasons. This is necessary because all of the forb seeds (flowering plants) require a period of stratification (cold temperatures) to occur before they will germinate. The actual planting of the seed is a very low tech process. We use old seeders that we tow behind pick-up

trucks and tractors where we then drive transects back and forth until the field has been covered in seed. It usually takes a couple of days to get all of the seed spread.

There are a few species that are more conservative and rare that we take the time to hand plant into specific areas. This helps us to be able to monitor the germination and growth of these species.

Once the field has been planted, we let nature take over. In the first spring and summer, we mainly monitor the young planting for any major invasive weed outbreaks and if they occur we attack the weeds early. After the first year, we add the new prairie planting into our prescribed fire rotation and then continue to monitor for weeds. After about 3 years the prairie plantings are usually considered to be mature.

If you want to see some of our most successful prairie plantings, drive down River Road and walk the front prairies located in Nardi Equine Prairie Preserve.

If you would like more information about prairie plantings or would like to volunteer with the Restoration Department, please give Russell Brunner a call at 815-234-8535 x219.

Prairies were once the dominate ecosystem in the Northern Illinois landscape.

Connect with us!



Register online at www.byronforestpreserve.com



Brown-Headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) a.k.a. Buffalo Bird

Photo by Gary Gullett, Photo Safari Network



By Mark Herman,
Supt. of Education

Early European explorers to Illinois first called them Buffalo Birds. These eight inch long members of the Blackbird Family were seen in large flocks walking behind the bison herds feeding on seeds and insects stirred up by the animal's hooves in the prairie grass. They were unique birds only found in the prairies of the Great Plains of middle North America. The males sport a glossy black-green body and a dark chocolate brown head (above left). The females are drab light gray-brown all over (above right).

When the great bison herds were wiped-out by over hunting, the birds began following domestic cattle and 'Brown-Headed Cowbird' became the species' official name. They were also regionally called Cow-Pen Birds, Cow Buntings and Lazy Birds.

The term "lazy" refers to the female cowbird's behavior of never building a nest of her own and always laying her eggs in the nests of other species of songbirds to have her offspring raised by foster parents.

It is speculated that after thousands of years of following the bison herds to get their food, the Cowbird's nomadic behavior kept them from having enough time to settle down in one area long enough to build nests and raise their young.

The Brown-Headed Cowbird is North America's most common "brood parasite" meaning the result of laying one of their eggs in another species of songbird's nest usually will result in the death of most or all of the other baby birds in the nest. The young cowbird does not push out the brood of nest mates from their nest; they typically out-compete their smaller nest mates for food from their parents causing them to starve. Cowbird eggs usually hatch a day earlier than most other bird species, their babies (fledglings) are often three to four times larger than their hosts and they are very aggressive in gaining the feeding attention of their new foster parents.

Beginning in late April and ending in late July, a female Brown-Headed Cowbird will put all of her energy into laying up to 40 eggs in the nests of other local songbirds. It has been documented that Cowbirds choose to lay their eggs in the nests of over 220 different songbird species that include finches, warblers, sparrows, towhees, vireos, blackbirds and bluebirds to act as their foster parents.



The female cowbird is constantly on the watch for nests of potential hosts that are under construction and will quickly sneak onto the nest when the host bird is away and lay an egg in as little 20 to 40 seconds (studies have shown that most songbirds must sit for 20 minutes to over an hour to lay an egg). If the female cowbird finds a nest with several eggs that have already been laid by the host parent then she will throw out and destroy one of the eggs and replace it with one of her own. Cowbird eggs are grayish-white in color with gray-brown spots or streaks and are usually much larger than the eggs of smaller songbirds (see above photo).

Some songbird species recognize the cowbird egg and will destroy it, throw it out, or abandon their nest and build another nest at a different location. Most species, however, do not seem to care that the egg is different from their own and incubate it and raise the cowbird fledgling as their own. Recent studies have shown that only 3% of all cowbird eggs produce birds that live to adulthood. This may seem like a small number, but with each female laying over three dozen eggs per summer, this has significantly increased the cowbird population in recent years.

The Brown-Headed Cowbird has expanded its former range from the Midwest and Great Plains in the mid 1800's

to now include the entire continental United States, northern Mexico and southern Canada thanks to the cutting down of dense forests and the development of open residential areas. They live in grasslands, woodland edges, thickets, prairies, pastures and orchards. In winter, they roost and migrate in huge flocks made up of several types of blackbirds and European Starlings and will visit backyard bird feeders for grain.

Cowbirds are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 despite of their impact on some threatened songbird species. Some states have recently begun trapping Brown-Headed Cowbirds to lessen their potential brood parasite impact on their local songbird populations with mixed results. We should not, however, blame this one bird for causing the decline of many songbird species. The activities of humans have caused far more problems for wild birds through habitat destruction, the use of pesticides, collisions with buildings, collisions with vehicles and hunting by millions of domestic outdoor cats.

The Brown-Headed Cowbird is a remarkable bird that was an original native of the North American Prairies. It has learned to successfully adapt to living close to people after the loss of the migrating bison herds that it depended upon for so many years.



The list of exotic invasive species that conservation managers (and many private landowners) are trying to control in our preserves, parks, and right-of-way areas is growing every year. New arrivals show up in various ways; through the garden and landscaping industry, by efforts to reduce soil erosion in public right-of-way areas, for agricultural purposes (usually cattle grazing), and some on accident. Birdsfoot trefoil is a species that was brought over for the main use in forage for cattle, but has also been used for other purposes. The species is now known to be extremely invasive, and it is proving to be one of the worst invasives to manage in the Midwest and in prairies.

Birdsfoot trefoil is a perennial (an individual plant lives for several to many years) and a prolific seed producer. These are two characteristics that make an exotic plant a top priority for land managers to deal with. One plant is able to produce thousands of seeds, and in just a few years, a small area of plants can become a mat of plants with a seed bank that can last decades. The plant grows up to about two feet tall, with numerous stems that sprawl out in a circular pattern from the center. The stems are mostly hairless and the plant has alternating trifoliate (groups of 3) small leaves. The plant produces numerous bright yellow pea-like flowers on umbels of 3-12 flower heads each. One plant can produce hundreds of flowers.

The plants bloom during the summer months, mid-June into August, with peak bloom in early July. This species has invaded our roadsides; a summer drive around Ogle County will reveal that this species is now lining our roadways. These perennials are also tough enough that they

are now becoming a lawn weed, surviving under weekly lawn mowings and setting seed at just a few inches tall.

Birdsfoot trefoil is a threat to our area's natural areas because of its ability to outcompete native species for light and resources. An infestation of this species can choke and shade out other native species. Prescribed burning also increases germination of the seeds which makes it a very troublesome prairie invader, as fire is an essential tool in maintaining prairies in our area.

Controlling this species is almost entirely dependent on selective herbicide use. While some species can be hand pulled, cut and removed with a spade, or mowed for control, none of these methods are very effective with Birdsfoot trefoil. This species thrives under mowing, even repeated mowing, so that method may help reduce seed production but will not kill the plants. Hand pulling or spading is very difficult because these plants can grow a woody 3' deep taproot with sprawling side roots. The best and most effective method of control is spot spraying selective herbicides on this species. This can be done with a backpack or with a boom sprayer in large areas. Recommended herbicides are clopyralid (Transline) and triclopyr with 2,4-D (Crossbow). They should be applied from the spring into the early summer before the plant produces seeds. These herbicides will kill other broadleaf weeds so careful spraying in prairie areas is important. Repeated spot spraying is necessary for years, maybe decades, to eliminate this species which will continually come back from the seed bank in the soil.

If you have any questions, please call Russell in our Restoration Department at 815.234.8535 x219.

prairieview golf club



Turf Notes

from the Turf Care Center

Matt Henkel
Golf Course Superintendent

Emerald Ash Borer Update

Since its discovery twelve years ago in Detroit, Michigan, the emerald ash borer (pictured below) has been responsible for the deaths of over 25 million ash trees in the central United States. In September of 2013, EAB was confirmed locally, both in Byron and Stillman Valley. At the golf course, we have monitored the movements and reports of infestations over the last several years. Preventative insecticide applications made to the trunks of ash trees were made yearly in an effort to give our ash trees a defense against the invasive pest. Despite our best efforts, we are seeing further decline in the health of our ash tree population. While we have not had any trees officially confirmed to have been killed by the ash borer, all the tell tale symptoms are present and is the only confirmation we need. Trees across the course are showing extensive die back, thinning, and a few have already defoliated after leafing out this past spring. Efforts moving forward will include removal of the most severely infected trees first. Within the next few years, we will be focusing on planting new trees in areas of the course that have a high concentration of ash trees. Hopefully, we will continue to only see a gradual decline that will allow a period of a few more years to transition the ash trees out, while we replant a diverse selection of new trees.

I have a list available that was put together by the State of Illinois Emerald Ash Borer Reforestation Committee of trees to be considered when replanting. Please contact me at 815.234-8535 x211, email me at matt@prairieviewgolf.com or you can visit www.agr.state.il.us/eab/.



Gold Medal Classic Champions

Congratulations to both Robert Dofflemyer and Cynthia Bounletay for winning thier respective divisions in the 2014 Gold Medal Classic at PrairieView. Dofflemyer shot scores of 71-74 to win the men's division and Bounletay shot scores of 69-74 to win the ladies' division. Bounletay's 69 in the opening round set the women's course record at PrairieView. Other flight winners included Brian Silvers from Byron (1st flight), Chris Woods from Byron (2nd flight), and Rick Anderson from Sterling (senior flight). The 24th Annual Gold Medal Classic will be played in May 2015.

Season Pass Reminder

Passes will go on sale in November. Purchase your pass early and save 10%. Passes will be discounted until Christmas. After Christmas, passes will be sold at full price. A complete listing of pass fees, VIP fees, and green fees for 2015 will be published in the next edition of the Blaze.

Outings, Banquets, & Parties

It's not too early to start thinking about the holidays. PrairieView Golf Club is the perfect place to hold your holiday party or banquet. The Prairie Grass Pub holds up to 50 people while the banquet hall can seat up to 200. A wide variety of food and drink options are available. Also, start making plans for the 2015 golf season. Lots of outing dates are available. Contact Steve Murray at 815.234.4653 x4.

Join our VIP Text Club

Text CC597 to 36000
to start getting great golf deals today!

Connect with us!



Register online at www.byronforestpreserve.com

prairieview golf club



The Ladies League of PrairieView hosted their annual Rally for the Cure 9-hole Scramble on Tuesday, July 24, 2014. Over 80 players participated and had a great time. The evening consisted of nine holes of golf and a social gathering after golf.

The golf course was accented with pink flags, tees, balls, and the Rally Ribbon on holes #1 and #18 (pictured right l-r: Matt Henkel, Supt., Mike Johnson, Asst. Supt., and Greg Welker, Asst. Supt.).

Next year's event promises to be just as good. If you would like to participate in next year's event or want more information on the Ladies League at PrairieView, please contact the golf course at 815-234-4653 or go to www.prairieviewgolf.com.



Customer Appreciation Week

Come on out for FREE GOLF! October 13-17, 2014

Carts are only \$16 per person. Tee times go fast so call now! 815-234-4653

Birthday Parties

Choose the Forest Preserve to organize your child's next birthday party by calling Richie at 815-234-8535 ext. 217. Themes include: Tea Party, Native Americans, Sky's the Limit, Insects of Our World, and Where Do Butterflies Go When It Rains?

Deluxe Party ~ \$75 / Tea Party ~ \$100
12 children (additional \$30 for more than 12 children)
(cake, ice cream, tableware, birthday banner, program)

Standard Party ~ \$45 / Tea Party ~ \$60
12 children (\$5/additional child)
(program only)

~FREE~ Field Trips

to the Natural History Museum,

Weiskopf Observatory, & Heritage Farm Museum

Scouts, schools, and senior groups are welcome to the Forest Preserve for an educational and fun guided tour of our great museums. Staff welcome and give FREE tours. We offer many sessions to choose from such as prairie ecology, astronomy, and museum tour. Call 815-234-8535 ext. 217 to schedule your next outing with us.

Let Us Come To You For FREE!

We offer FREE educational programs for any group including retirement homes and nursing facilities. Using our nature staff and nature stuff, we can come to you and deliver exciting and educational programs. Call 815-234-8535 to schedule a program for your group. You can choose from the following topics: Birds of a Feather, Indian Life (with traditional dress), Animal Encounter (with live animals). Call today to book your next on-site program!

Recycling Station

The Byron Forest Preserve, in conjunction with the Ogle County Solid Waste Management Department, has established a recycling station at the Forest Preserve.

The station accepts glass, aluminum, plastic #1-#5, & #7, tin, steel, mixed paper, cardboard, and newspaper. The bin has been relocated to the Forest Preserve's Land Management Center located at 6845 German Church Road in Byron. The station is open during daylight hours seven days per week. Please recycle responsibly by leaving the area cleaner than when you arrived. **You no longer need to separate the items in each bin.**

We are also offering a USAgain recycling bin for clean, used clothing and shoes. The bin is located next to the other recycling bin mentioned above. This bin helps keep textiles out of the landfills.

The Electronics Recycling bin has been removed. Ogle County Solid Waste Management will host an electronics recycling day on the last Friday of each month at 909 West Pines Road in Oregon, from 9am-4pm. Please call or visit the Ogle County website at www.oglecounty.org for more information.

Canoe Rentals

We rent canoes! Please call at least one week in advance to schedule at date and time for your canoe trip. We'll haul you upstream on the Rock River and accompany you back to your vehicles at the River Park parking lot on River Road across from Heritage Farm.

Canoes are \$25 each with a 3-canoe minimum per rental. Paddles and life jackets are included. Call Mark at 815-234-8535 ext. 217 for this unique and fun outing.

good stuff

Volunteers

Tuesday Morning Group

Come join us for a time of visiting, refreshments, and fun indoor projects including sorting, collating, preparing preschool crafts and items for graduation, cutting, labeling, and many other projects. To volunteer, call 1-815-234-8535 x217.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center
When: First Tuesday of each month
(September thru April)
Time: 8:30-11am
Cost: Free

Organized Groups

The Byron Forest Preserve has service and volunteer opportunities. We can arrange times and specific service areas for you and your group. These areas can be related to awards, badges, or just for the benefit of learning to serve your community and others. For info, call 1-815-234-8535 ext. 217.

Wednesday Woodshop Group

Come join the area men for coffee, donuts, and the opportunity to use your skills in carpentry and woodworking. New woodshop volunteers check in at the Jarrett Prairie Center before going to the Woodshop. To volunteer, call 1-815-234-8535 x217.

Where: Expo Building Woodshop
Enter at Heritage Farm
When: Wednesdays
Time: 9-11 am
Cost: Free

Individual and Family

The Byron Forest Preserve has several volunteer opportunities for individuals and families interested in sharing their time for special events, programs of both educational and recreational orientation. These events and programs run throughout the year. For more information, call 1-815-234-8535 ext. 217.

Annual Rock River Sweep Cleanup Day

September 6, 2014
10 am - 12 Noon

Meet at the River Park parking lot across from Heritage Farm on North River Road.

Sponsored by:
Ogle County Solid Waste Management



directory



General Contacts

Jarrett Prairie Center

(Headquarters)

The headquarters office is open Monday through Friday, 8am-4:30pm. The office is closed Saturday, Sunday, and select holidays.

Street Address

7993 North River Road
Byron IL 61010

Mailing Address

P O Box 1075
Byron IL 61010

Website

byronforestpreserve.com

Email

raul@byronforestpreserve.com

Main Phone Number

815-234-8535 x200

Main Fax Number

815-234-8635



Golf Club

PrairieView Golf Club

6734 German Church Road
Byron IL 61010
815-234-4653 (GOLF)

Education Centers

Jarrett Prairie Center Museum

7993 North River Road
Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
The museum hours are:
Mon., Wed., Fri.-8am-4:30pm
Tues., Thurs.-8am-8pm
Saturday-9am-4pm & Sunday-1-4pm.
Closed select holidays.

Keller Education Center

7993 North River Road
Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
Beginning in May, the Byron Forest Preserve Preschool program will be using this building for classes.

Weiskopf Observatory

7993 North River Road
Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
Open for free public viewing every Saturday night from dark until three hours after dark.

Heritage Farm Museum

8059 North River Road
Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
Open daily April-October. Open upon request November-March. Self-guided tours are free.



Preserves

Jarrett Prairie Preserve

7993 North River Road, Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
Open from dawn to dusk for walking, jogging, and nature exploration. Trail system.

Nardi Equine Prairie Preserve

6651 North River Road, Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
Open for horseback riding, walking, jogging, and nature exploration. Trail system.

Howard Colman

Hall Creek Preserve

12749 North Weldon Road, Rockford IL
815-234-8535 x200
Open for walking, jogging, and nature exploration. Trail system.

Ripplinger/Gouker/Etnyre Preserve

1753 East Townline Road
Byron IL 61010
815-234-8535 x200
Open for walking, jogging, leashed dog walking, and nature exploration. Trail system.

He-Leo Two Rivers Preserve

North Illinois Route 2, Oregon IL 61061
815-234-8535 x200
Boater's rest area with docks, picnic shelter, sand volleyball, and restrooms. Trail system being developed. No motorized boat launch.

NOTE: Some of these addresses are new so they may not show correctly on GPS devices. Please call 815-234-8535 to confirm directions.

The Barrick Oaks Homestead Preserve is not yet open to the public but will be opening soon.

Byron Bank Ad
& Mailer