

Central Chapter Member Guide



"The world of plants is endlessly fascinating"  
- Henry Eilers

## **Member Benefits**

As a state Society member, you will receive the quarterly newsletter, *The Harbinger* and the periodic peer-reviewed scientific journal, *Erigenia*.

An annual meeting also occurs and is hosted on a rotating basis between the chapters. The annual meeting features guest speakers, field trips to outstanding natural areas, and opportunity to network with native plant enthusiasts from all over the state.

INPS Central Chapter members receive an additional monthly newsletter available by mail or preferably via the email listserve. We encourage members to opt for the electronic newsletter to reduce the environmental footprint. The monthly newsletter is a marvelous way to share information and members may submit articles or photos to the Editor for publication. Please email newsletter items to the Editor with the subject line of "INPS Newsletter" by the 20th of each month.

Membership is renewed in January of each year and the renewal form is included in the monthly newsletter. A portion of your dues are sent back to the Chapter in support of our programs.



## **Chapter Activities**

We invite you to cultivate a personal relationship with the natural world by connecting with us at our monthly meeting, on a field trip or engaging in volunteer opportunities.

### **Monthly Meeting**

The Central Chapter hosts a monthly meeting on the second Thursday of each month, primarily at Illinois Audubon, 2315 Clear Lake Avenue Springfield, IL 62708 except for the month of April due to plant sale activities. In the event of a different venue, the meeting location is always listed in the newsletter. Monthly meetings provide a great way to learn about our local and regional flora and fauna. We normally begin with a 6:30pm business meeting, followed by refreshments, then the presentation. We also enjoy quarterly potlucks and a catered meal at our holiday December meeting. Refreshments are provided on a voluntary basis so please consider INPS in your plans.

### **Monthly Program Information**

#### **Guest Speaker Honorarium**

The honorarium is \$50 if traveling less than 50 miles, \$100 if more than 50 miles. If speaking is a part of their job, our policy is to offer to make a donation in the same amount for their charitable cause of choice. If an INPS member is a guest speaker, the honorarium is to make a donation to their charitable cause of choice.

The Central Chapter can make arrangements for use of equipment that a Guest Speaker may use for their presentation if they are not providing their own. We are using a Windows 7 platform and Office 2010 Powerpoint software. A Wi-Fi connection may be arranged with advance notice. Guest Speakers frequently bring their presentation on a flash/thumb drive, we advise they also bring a backup of their presentation on a CD-ROM as a best practice.

### **Program Chair(s)**

The Program Chair(s) schedules monthly Guest Speakers and communicates honorarium, meeting location, and equipment requirements to all appropriate parties. They also make arrangements to obtain a photo(s) and brief presentation description to be shared with the Newsletter Editor and the web team, typically no later than the 20th of each month.

Our members have a wealth of connections and the Program Chairs love when you provide them suggestions and contacts of community members that would share with us a nature related program. We offer an honorarium as stated above and scheduling flexibility. We normally arrange commitments several months in advance. Our Program Chairs are adept in gaining commitments by any means necessary including cajoling, teasing and outright flattery - Just Kidding or maybe not! Seriously, impassioned Guest Speakers radiate their experience and knowledge, and we appreciate it very much.

### **Field Trips**

There are many beautiful and interesting places to explore in Illinois because of our diverse natural divisions. We have an active membership and are fortunate to have a Field Trip Chair who assists us in getting outside or getting out of town and exploring or re-visiting our favorite places.

Our expeditions have included weekends at the Wicker House to visit natural areas in Southern Illinois, visiting the new INHS Robert A. Evers Laboratory in Champaign-Urbana which houses multiple herbarium collections (we're going back!) and closer to home, Nipper Sanctuary and Starhill Arboretum. Please contact our Field Trip Chair with your field trip suggestions.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

We are successful because members generously share their time, talents and treasures. We value your participation in our organization and have volunteer activities for every level of commitment. Opportunities include:

- Maintenance of Central Chapter landscape plantings at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Provide refreshments or Guest Speaker referrals for meetings.
- Participate in annual plant sale activities.
- Staff our information display at community events such as Springfield Earth Awareness Fair, or Lincoln Memorial Garden Indian Summer Fest.

### **Annual Plant Sale**

Our most popular volunteer activity is the annual Central Chapter plant sale. The Central Chapter plant sale generates revenue in support of our grant program that seeks to provide approved applicants opportunity to create special landscapes using native plants, as well as support organizations working to preserve native habitats in Central Illinois.

Volunteer activities for this event encompass everything from digging and potting plants and trees at member's homes in early spring, event promotion, plant sale set up to a variety of duties on sale day. This is a marvelous way to learn more about native plants and support our endeavors. Please let us know how you can contribute to the success of our annual event. For more information contact our Plant Sale Chair.

## **Grant Program**

The Central Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society offers grant funds of up to \$1000 to individuals or groups for support of projects that promote the conservation of Illinois native plants and natural communities. Adult and student groups, community organizations, prospective Eagle Scouts, Master Gardeners, environmental interns, and others are encouraged to apply. Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to, activities such as studies of native plants (including those that are threatened or endangered), site inventories and community ecology; projects to control exotic species; projects to establish or restore prairies or other native communities; and projects to enhance school or community education focused on native plants. Examples of past projects include demonstration prairies, tree reforestation, invasive plant removal, butterfly gardens, rain gardens, and educational events.

Applications are limited to projects intended for Central Illinois. For purposes of this grant program, Central Illinois includes the following counties: Brown, Cass, Christian, DeWitt, Fulton, Greene, Jersey, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Mason, McLean, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, and Tazewell. Proposals are accepted on an ongoing basis. Applicants will be notified whether the application is approved within sixty days of its receipt. Projects must be completed within one calendar year from the approval date unless an extension is approved by the Chapter. Funding is intended for new, one-time projects. Multi-year projects or requests for continuation of previously funded projects will not be considered.

There is no deadline for applying and each eligible application is reviewed within 30 days of receipt. For more information or to request a grant application, please contact the Grant Chair.



## **And now, for the rest of the story.....**

### **Plant Profiles: Frost Flowers by Henry Eilers for the February 2013 Newsletter**

We all love flowers, especially those that bloom a long time or are repeat bloomers. What if they provide an additional show in the winter time? Does that sound a bit far fetched? We do indeed have three species of native plants in Illinois that do put on this additional and unexpected show. Not many experience this miracle of the natural world. On a fall day when one of the first hard frosts is expected you have to get up early, bundle up and head for the woods or prairie where you know that these wildflowers are. Since I have a bit of a love-hate relationship with winter and also prefer to not getting up with the chickens any more, I had to have a reason for such an outing. I needed photos of these frost flowers for another 'plant profile' that was coming up soon. It's not that I do not have numerous images already. But they can be difficult to locate. That will not come as a great surprise to those that have suffered through my organizing skills (or the lack thereof).

Ok, so what do these frost flowers look like? First of all, as you may already suspect, they are not flowers in the botanical sense. In this case they are delicate ice ribbons or fluted bands that emanate from the base of the dormant plants. Some of them curl in on themselves, others are small and straight; some are snow white, others glassy and transparent. Like snowflakes, no two are truly alike. On previous trips I have even seen them breaking up the early morning light into a rainbow of colors. On the above mentioned visit, late in December to the Shoal Creek Barrens I was fortunate to see the very first hillside strewn with flecks of white, just what I was looking for. I was quite fortunate on this outing as the best and most reliable show is usually had a month or more earlier.

This particular plant was Stone Mint, Wild Oregano or Dittany (*Cunila organoides*). It is common in our open woodlands, at the northern edge of its large range to the south and east. The diminutive and delicate looking plant is less than 1' tall. In late summer there is a display of tiny but abundant mint-like flowers, followed in the fall by a display of pink to purple leaves. The plant is not quite a 'belly flower', but it pays to bend down and admire its ephemeral charms through the seasons. The literature about this plant states that you can use it for flavoring and 'as a delicate, hot tea on cold winter nights'. I have picked its tiny leaves on many a walk and enjoyed their fragrance. It is amazing that such sizable ice masses can extrude from such delicate thread-like stems. The plant is easily grown, but not readily available in the plant trade.

Hoary Sun Rose (*Helianthemum bicknellii*) is the second species on this list. Frostflower is actually one of its better known common names. This small, delicate species produces pretty 1" yellow flowers, appearing on 6-12" plants in early summer. The individual flowers do not last long, nor does the flowering season. Most of the abundant seed production is from cleistogamous flowers that develop later. While I believe it is the one at our Barrens it could also be the other species, *H. canadensis* which is very similar. Our herbarium is now at the Illinois Natural History Survey. Perhaps I can have a quick look at our specimen on our fieldtrip there in February to verify our identification.

It occurs at the Barrens on the lip of a 12' high, rapidly eroding lakeside cliff. I checked it out the other day by way of the lake shore, as the lake is being drawn down for the first time in years. Normal access is a difficult hike with numerous steep-sided ravines that can be quite slippery in the winter time. To my chagrin I found that the population was down to just a few stems. They may well be down in the lake by spring. It is the last of 3 previously known populations in Montgomery County. Regrettably I have never observed it in the frost flower stage. Life is full of missed opportunities. My attempts to grow it from transplants or seed were unsuccessful, which I found through recent reading to be due to its association with numerous ectomycorrhizal fungi. It was an 'aha' moment, explaining my failures. There was material here for a column all its own!

The third species is White Crown-beard (*Verbesina virginica*). It barely enters Illinois in a few south eastern counties. I have a vigorous population in one of my shrub borders, where it grows from 3-5' tall. At first frost it exudes massive amounts of ice from the lower stem portion. There is nothing particularly delicate about the plant or most of its frost flowers, but it is nevertheless unique. We have had it at our plant sales. It deserves to be grown more, as it reputedly is favored by native bees and butterflies. Why do these totally unrelated species and none of their relatives make such unique frost features? The process of ice formation itself is most fascinating. Some good research has been done on that. Not only is it most fascinating, it also leaves many questions about the bio-physical processes involved still unanswered. Here too, is another intriguing column. The world of plants is endlessly fascinating. With that thought I will conclude this plant profile.

Editor's Note: Due to space limitations in the newsletter, you can see more of Henry's frost flower photos on the INPS Facebook page.