

Illinois Native Plant Society Northeast Chapter

EDITOR: LINDA M. MACKECHNIE

FEBRUARY 2016

A few words from the president

Hi Northeast Chapter!

I hope you're doing well and are excited for the upcoming growing season and its opportunities to experience our native plants. In my opinion, one of the coolest ways to experience native plants in the Chicago region is to volunteer with Plants of Concern (POC), the rare plant monitoring program run through the Chicago Botanic Garden. Volunteers get trained on rare plant monitoring protocol, and then get to visit a site where that rare plant has been found to search for and document those plants again.

It's a great way to get experience in plant identification while getting the privilege to visit sites that generally have uncommon plant communities- that's my more technical way of saying "really cool natural areas". The information gathered during those monitoring visits is used by researchers and land managers to identify trends in plant populations, and that can help inform us about how our land management actions are impacting those plants and the communities in which they are found.

While I was working at the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, I had the privilege to participate in the program, both as an individual monitor and as a field assistant to other volunteers. I can attest to the fun that I've had out in the field searching for those plants, learning other species that are nearby, and really just appreciating the great beauty of our region's uncommon plant species and the cool natural areas where they're found. At the Forest Preserve District, we used the information gained from POC monitoring on our preserves to keep tabs on how those rare plant populations were doing and to help us target restoration efforts toward those high quality sites.

I know I've written about POC before, but I'm doing it again now because registration for this year's training workshops opens tomorrow, February 1! Information about those training sessions, and the program in general, can be found at the POC website:

<http://plantsofconcern.org/>.

Another fun way that you can experience native plants is by joining in the Illinois Native Plant Society's

Illinois Botanists Big Year 2016! It's partly a friendly competition to see who correctly identifies the most plant species within Illinois in 2016, but primarily a nice way to see plants out in the field or photos of plants while at your computer. Folks can participate by taking photographs of plants they see in the field and uploading them to the web, or by checking out the photos taken by other folks to confirm their observations. To find out more information about where to upload photos and to check out the photos that have already been taken, please check out our website at: <http://www.ill-tnps.org/index.php/tnps-botanists-big-year-2016>.

I also wanted to remind you that the Northeast Chapter is in the process of kicking around ideas for field trip destinations and we're looking forward to finalizing details and inviting you to join us when we do, so stay tuned!

Happy February!

– Andy

Special Feature

By Linda Curtis

Sedges, what good are they?

Ask a pair of whooping cranes that found a new home along a restored wetland along an Illinois River. A flock of 60 whooping cranes that usually migrated through had found a new sedge habitat and some stayed and built nests of sedge leaves!



The farmers along 11 sites in Illinois were paid to take their flood prone croplands and restore them back to their original function of accepting spring floodwater.

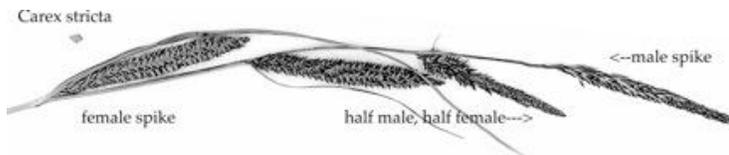
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The NRCS Recovery Act offered funding to the landowners through the Emergency Watershed Protection-Floodplain Easement Program (www.il.nrcs.usda.gov).

The results? Sedges and other wetland plants grew and waterfowl flew in and stayed. After that bird watchers came and tired out, they ate at local restaurants increasing the cash flow in small towns along the river.



Back in the flood plain, birds such as the marsh wren and sedge wrens fed upon the sedge seed heads. They perched on the culms to sing their territory songs that mean “This land is my land, this land’s not your land”. Domed nests were constructed, eggs were laid, and the next generation grew up in a dry nest with a roof made of sedge leaves.

What kind of sedges? The outer structure of the nest uses rough-leaved scabrous edged sedges, like *C. lacustris*, also known as “rip-gut” for its sharp skin-cutting edges. *C. pellita*, woolly sedge, was named for its fuzzy sacs around its tiny seed-like achenes. *C. buxbaumii*, purple-scaled sedge is one of the prettier sedges in sedge meadows, and has purple and green seed heads.



[Linda is author of two books on sedges (*Carex*). You can find out more at her [website](#)]

Supplemental Information

Ellen Starr, a Biologist with The Natural Resources Conservation Service generously offered information on Illinois habitat restoration efforts. She notes, “Sedge seeds persist in the seed bank for many decades since

they have a hard seed coat, so the endemic species will naturally regenerate on site. The species selection depends on what remnant species are found on site, what type of wetland is being restored and sometimes cost driven... Fox sedge is very common for many wetland types and the Tussock sedge is good for the wet meadow sites.”

Ellen also provided a list of wetland tolerant grasses and sedges used in habitat restoration: blue joint grass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), fowl mannagrass (*Glyceria striata*), prairie cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*), rice cutgrass (*Leersia oryzoides*), common rush (*Juncus effusus*), Torrey's rush (*Juncus torreyi*), Bebb's sedge (*Carex bebbii*), bottlebrush sedge (*Carex hystericina*), fox sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*), lake bank sedge (*Carex lacustris*), pointed broom sedge (*Carex scoparia*), tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*).

Carex stricta (tussock sedge) photos below by Andy Olnas.



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Native Plant Excursions

Visit our FaceBook page for more info!

UPCOMING

Cook County

Many hikes are available. Check out the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's [web page](#) for more ideas.

DuPage County

There are a number of outdoor activities planned including Snowshoe Hikes and Forest Fitness Walks. Learn about the art of turning tree sap into syrup (\$10 fee) on Mar 13 in Fullersburg Woods. Check out the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County's [web page](#) for complete listings.

Kane County

Get a preview of spring wildflowers on Thursday March 3 (10 am–12 pm) in the Creek Bend Nature Center, and if the weather is good, head outside to see what's already up. Download the latest [Tree Line Newsletter](#) for more information.

Lake County

Winter Walk Wednesdays are happening at Lyons Woods this month, or you can Walk with a Naturalist in Van Patten & DPR Trail. You can also learn about maple syrup during hikes on most weekends in February. Check out the Lake County Forest Preserve's [web page](#) for complete details.

McHenry County

There are a number of day and night hikes. Visit the McHenry County Conservation District [web page](#) for details.

Other Regional Plant Events

UPCOMING

Cook County

Check out a Master Gardener workshop on perennials (Tue, Feb 9 at 7 pm). Learn about starting seeds at the Crabtree Nature Center (Sat Feb 20) or at the River Trail Nature Center (Sat Feb 27). With spring in the air, learn about sugaring (maple syrup making) at the River Trail Nature Center on Sat Feb 27 or Sun Feb 28. Visit the Forest Preserve web site for locations and schedule details.

Don't forget to check out the [lichen exhibit](#) at [The Field Museum](#).

Kane County

You can learn about the Illinois State Nature Preserve System in an indoor presentation on Thursday, Feb 4 (10 am–12 pm in the Barbara Belding Lodge, Brewster Creek Forest Preserve). The Nature Book Group starts up this month with *The Nature Principle* by Richard Louv on Feb 17! Join them for a chance to discuss ecology, conservation and more. A list of the current reading and meeting schedule is available in the [Tree Line Newsletter](#).

Lake County

Learn about our long history with fermentation in **Bring Us Good Ale! Historic Brewing**, a hands-on educational presentation by Chris Last and Scot Borlick at Lake County Discovery Museum on Feb 28 (adults only, registration required).

Further Afield

The Great Basin Fire Science Exchange (Reno, NV) is coordinating a **webinar series** based on the National Seed Strategy moniker to *put the right seed in the right place at the right time!* The series runs from January to May with 3-4 presentations per month. Although the series is run out of Reno, several of the themes are universal for land managers and may be of interest:

February – Selecting and Maintaining Genetic Diversity

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March – Pollinators and Insect Predators

April – Seed Production, Purchase, and Contracting

For more information, please visit the BGFSE [website](#).

Illinois Invasive Species Symposium

(more information in future newsletters)

Thursday May 26, 9:30 am–4 pm

Champaign, IL

You may also want to check out [The Outside Calendar](#).

Volunteer Opportunities

Check out the various Forest Preserve web pages below for a complete listing in each county.

Cook County

Forest Preserve District of Cook County [web page](#).

Options include: **Restoration Workdays** at the Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center (no registration required) or River Trail Nature Center (call 847-824-8360 to register).

DuPage County

Forest Preserve District of DuPage County [web page](#).

Options include: **Restoration Workdays** at various Prairies and Woods. Register at 630-933-7681 at least five business days prior.

Kane County

Restoration Workdays at Creek Bend Nature Center at the LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve on Sat Feb 13. Call 630-444-3190 or email programs@kaneforest.com to register.

Lake County

Lake County Forest Preserve [web page](#).

Options include: **Restoration Workdays** at the Native Seed Nursery or in a variety of communities. Contact the Restoration workday coordinator [Tom Smith](#) to participate. Desk: 847-968-3329, Cell: 847-276-5379.

[The Habitat Project](#) and [Habitat 2030](#) [ongoing]

Events At A Glance:

Ongoing

Most Weekends

Feb 4

Feb 9

Feb 20, 27

Feb 28

Lichens: The Coolest Things

Maple Syrup hikes

IL Nat. Preserve System

Master Gardening: Perennials

Starting Seeds

Good Ale!

Please check on our NE-INPS or Facebook pages for late additions to the calendar of events.

Got some great ideas for places to go or plants to see?
Want to hear talks on specific topics?

Send us an email message: northeast-inps@gmail.com or write me directly at lindamprince@gmail.com

REMINDER!

If you have not already done so,
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today.

And if you are able, make additional donations.
Any amount is appreciated!

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If you received this as a complimentary copy, you may wish to join the Illinois Native Plant Society. Send your name, address, and phone number with a check made out to INPS for

- \$15 Student
- \$25 Individual
- \$20 Institutional (nonvoting)
- \$35 Family
- \$50 Supporting
- \$100 Patron
- \$125 Business
- \$500 Life*

**Additional Life membership categories provide even greater support for our organization.*

*To join, visit www.ill-inps.org. Please indicate that your chapter is Northeast
OR*

*Mail to: Illinois Native Plant Society,
Membership, P.O. Box 271, Carbondale, IL,
62903-0271*

Like us on FaceBook in [English](#) or [Spanish](#)!

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