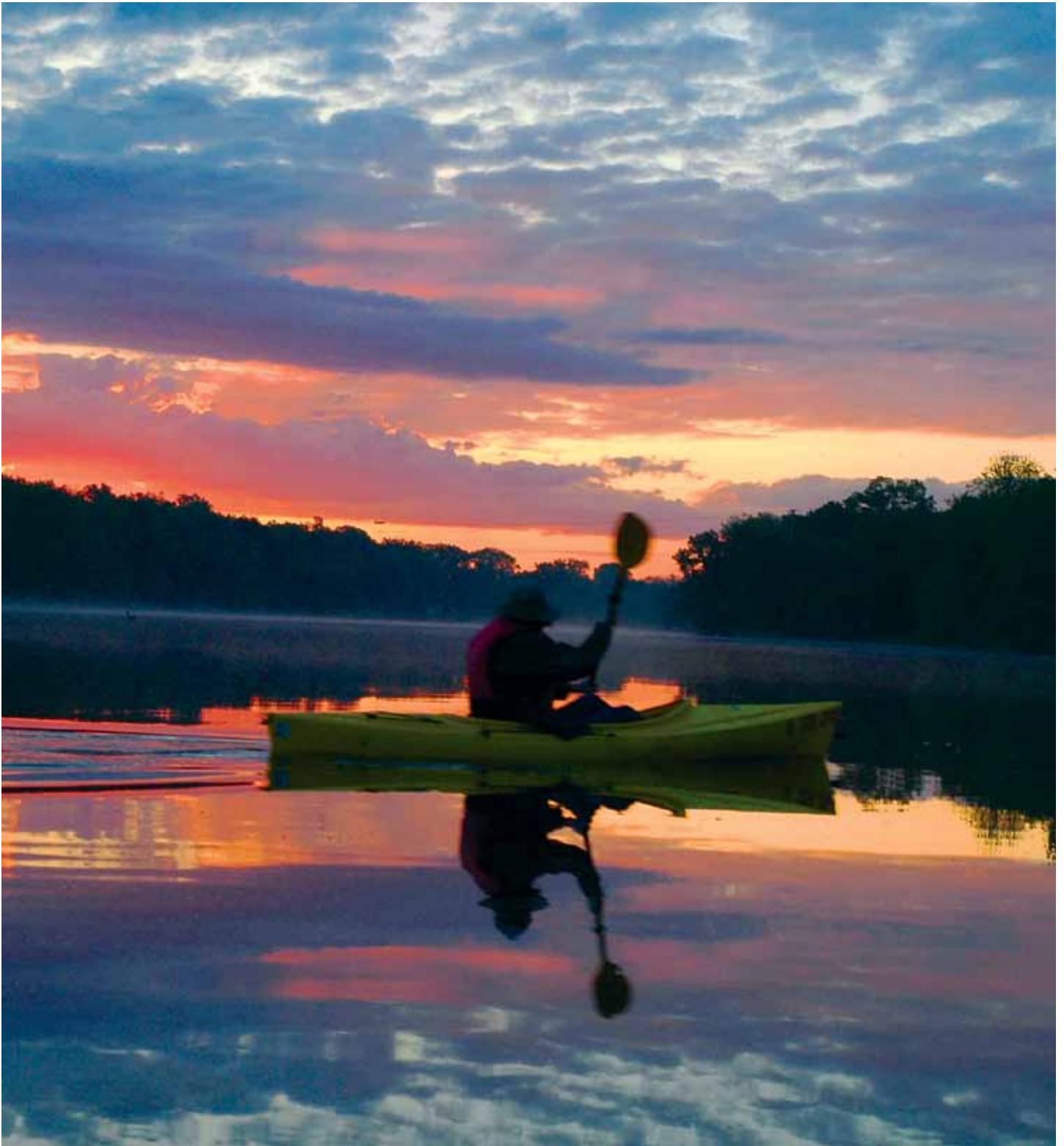


A Citizen's Guide to
Preserving the Fox River



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- ***Works*** in your community to help preserve your quality of life
- ***Balances*** the interests of people, businesses and government on land use issues

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Visit www.theconservationfoundation.org

Call Naperville (630) 428-4500 or Montgomery (630) 553-0687

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Photo: Lower Fox River Bluffs, LaSalle County

The Conservation Foundation and the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership



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of this publication:**



**Kane County
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**McHenry County
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The purpose of this Citizen's Guide is to encourage residents living within the Fox River watershed to become more aware and engaged in its protection. We hope this Guide provides inspiring examples of what you can do on your property, at your place of work and in your community to help the Fox River.

You'll also read about some special people who have dedicated their lives to the Fox River. Make sure you visit www.preservethefox.org for more detailed information on how you can implement some of these ideas.

A Citizen's Guide to

Preserving the Fox River

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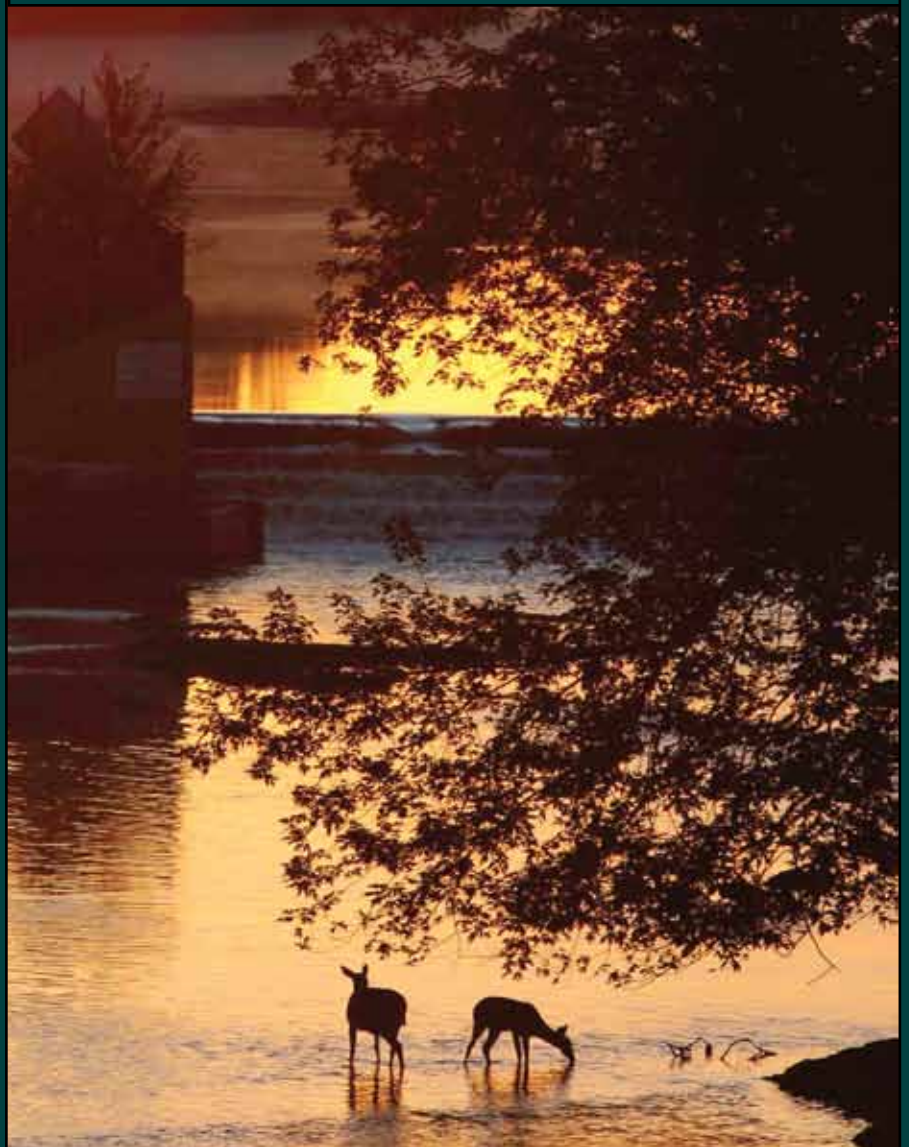
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The beautiful Fox River, the third largest tributary of the Illinois River, begins its journey in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, flowing 115 miles south, draining parts of McHenry, Lake, DeKalb, Kane, Cook, DuPage, Kendall, LaSalle, Lee and Will counties to join up with the Illinois River in Ottawa.

The Fox River basin that contains the river runs 130 miles long, but seldom exceeds 25 miles wide, yet it includes 1,720 square miles of widely diverse ecosystems and landscapes. Only swamps are missing. Everything else is here -- wetlands, urban sprawl and agricultural areas, parkways, glacially formed lakes in the northern Illinois section, and, in the southern section, bluffs. Overall, there are 406 lakes along the Fox River, with the Chain O'Lakes the largest.

In its northern reaches, the river is its most pristine with its wetlands and lakes. The middle Fox is an urban river, flowing past six cities with populations of up to 150,000; in its southern extremes, it flows through an agricultural area of rolling farm fields and meadows, giving way at last to picturesque, high bluffs.

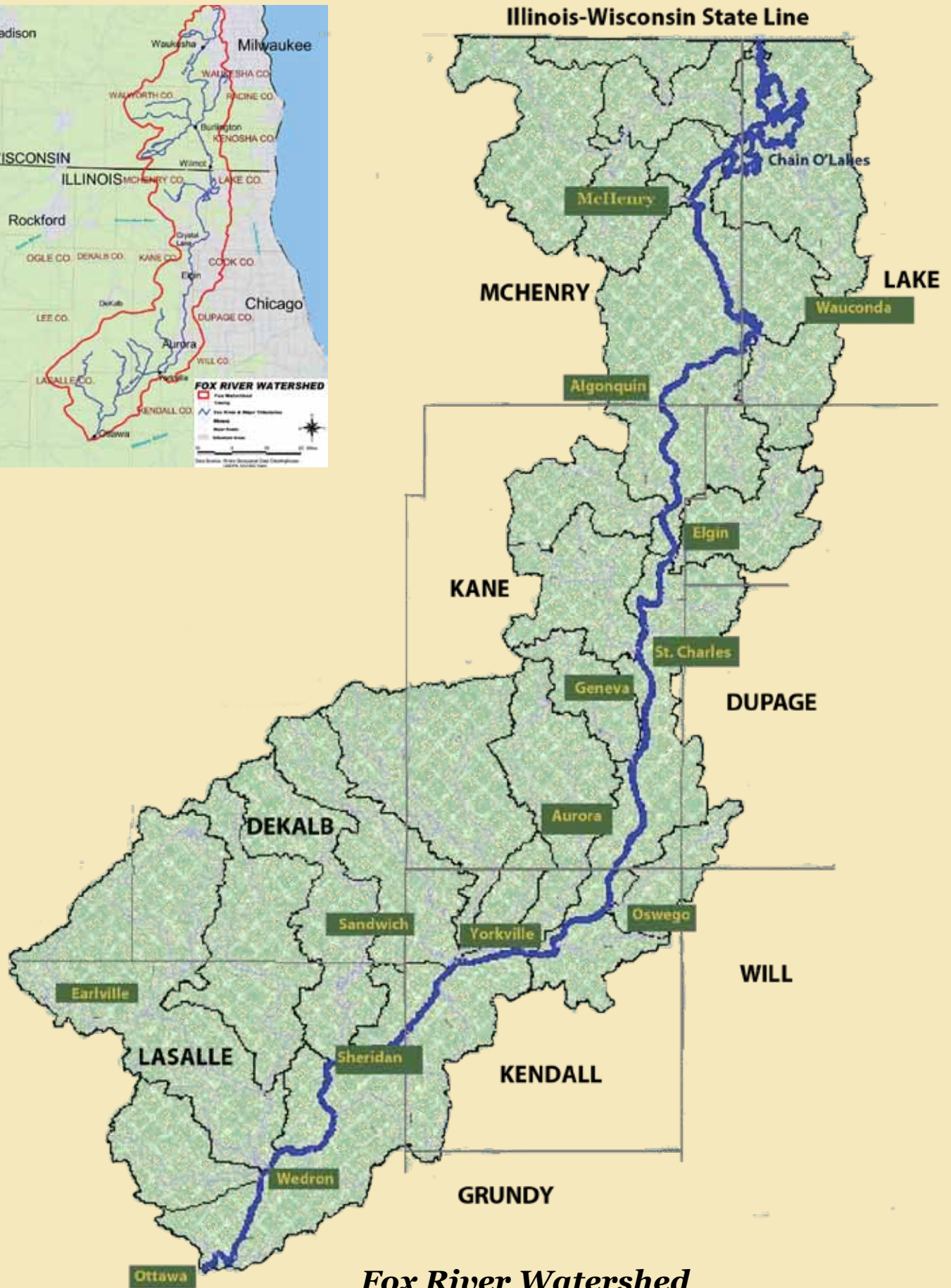
Geography, geology over a 115-mile journey

The Pleistocene glaciers 10,000 to 15,000 years ago moved southward from Wisconsin into Illinois and then retreated, in many cycles over thousands of years, shaping and reshaping the landscape by first scraping it bare, and then leaving behind deposits of sand and gravel. As the glaciers melted and retreated, in addition to the deposits, they gave rise to torrential meltwater channels that created river valleys. Today's Fox River is located in a remnant of one of these channels.

Kames, kettle holes, moraines, glacial lakes, and eskers are names geologists have given to deposits left behind by the glacial activity. The different names result from the method of the deposit's formations. For instance, a kame was created when sand and gravel built up in a depression in the glacial ice. Some of the regional kames can be found in Glacial Park in McHenry County, and Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve and Bald Mound in Kane County. Eskers are formed when a stream that once ran through a melting glacier dries up, leaving behind silt and gravel deposits. One example is the Kaneville Esker located in Kane County near the East-West Tollway. Kettles were created when large chunks of ice broke off from the glacier, creating ponds that eventually became marshes, fens or bogs, or sometimes glacial lakes.



Kames located near the Visitor Center at Glacial Park in McHenry County



Fox River Watershed

Wildflowers in the Fox River Basin bloom from late February to late October, beginning with skunk cabbage and including gentians, goldenrods, daisies, lilies, orchids, yellow lady's slipper, mayapples, Indian paintbrush, blazing star, coneflowers, and trillium.

Forty-four per cent of Illinois' native and naturalized plants, some 1,389 species, can be found here, including 77 listed as endangered and 25 as threatened. Two state endangered species -- the prairie white fringed orchid and the prairie bush clover, also are listed as federally threatened.

Bumblebee on coneflower



Compass plant



Wildflowers, mammals, birds, fish, mussels,



Some residents say they have spotted otter footprints, or have seen a few of these small mammals playing in the river, but the general consensus is that these once-abundant animals have disappeared from the Basin. But that doesn't mean that the Fox River Basin is short of mammal wildlife. Quite the contrary.

Along the Fox River and within its environs, one can find 74 percent of the State of Illinois' mammal species. Deer, coyotes, opossum, raccoons, woodchucks, rabbits, chipmunks, grey squirrels, fox, muskrats and beaver are some of the more visible mammal inhabitants of the Fox River basin. Recently, the pygmy shrew, one of the rarest in Illinois, was spotted. Small insectivores, these shrew can be found in forests.

Once the beaver also were on the decline. Hunted for their pelts, which were in high-demand to make hats and coats, the beaver all but disappeared from Illinois waterways. But now the beaver population is thriving. Once again these furry, industrious mammals are busy cutting down saplings, building their lodges, and damming up creeks.

Bird Watchers will find that the Fox River Basin offers them a bounty of sighting opportunities -- everything from the common herons, geese and waterfowl, to eagles and red-tailed hawks and ospreys, to the endangered sandhill cranes, yellow-headed blackbird, and least bittern.

Out of the 299 species that can be found in Illinois, at least 248 of them can be found in the Fox River Basin, and of these, 152 breed or formerly bred here. One of the reasons for this abundance of bird life is the Basin's many wetland habitats. Here one can find rare species, such as the pied-billed grebe, the double-crested cormorant, the great egret, yellow-crowned night heron, king rail, Virginia rail, and common moorhen. All are on the state's threatened list.

One of the greatest thrills for novice bird watchers is spotting the bald eagles soaring over the river, and then swooping down to catch fish in their talons. The once-endangered eagles and their offspring are becoming more and more at home on the Fox River.



Bald eagle



Sandhill cranes

amphibians & reptiles

Snakes may not be among everyone's favorite reptile, but they are important to the Fox River Basin's habitat, as are the other 21 reptile and 14 amphibian species found here. Although none of these species are currently on any endangered lists, their favorite habitats, wet prairies and wooded upland ponds, are becoming in short supply, which may lead to decimation of their species. The disappearance of the cricket frog during the last decade may be the first sign of trouble ahead.



Bull frog

Ninety-six species of fish, 32 species of mussels, and 14 species of large crustaceans



Northern muskie

call the Basin their home. Included among the fish, on the endangered list, are the blacknose shiners, greater redhorse and Iowa darter. Threatened fish include the blackchin shiner, river redhorse and the banded killifish. Several of these species are found only in the Basin's glacial lakes and nowhere else in Illinois.

One threatened species of mussel, the spike, and one endangered one, the slippershell, can still be found, but two endangered species, the sheepsnose and wavy-rayed lampmussel, have not been seen here in more than 50 years.



Freshwater mussel

On the following pages (8-21) you can read about things people have done to help preserve and protect the Fox River. Most of these are simple ideas, like using native landscaping in your yard, buiding a rain garden, collecting and re-using rainwater in a rain barrel, and preserving important land through private conservation efforts. Visit www.preservethefox.org to learn more about what you can do.



The United City of Yorkville built its first rain garden in 2008 at the City Hall with plants donated from JFNew, environmental consultants. The garden was initiated by the city's park planner, Laura Schraw, who used its construction as part of her master's thesis. The success of that project led to another garden being built at the City's REC Center with a \$500 grant from the Illinois Lt. Governor's rain garden initiative program.

"The garden at City Hall takes about 600 square feet of run-off from the roof and holds it on-site," Laura says. "The REC Center roof is huge and they were having drainage issues on one side, where the kids play. The garden there managed to attract a large portion of run-off, so the land they use for sports practices is drier."

Yorkville . . . Campton Hills . . .

Rob Linke is a civil engineer specializing in water resources engineering at the St. Charles firm of Trotter & Associates, Inc., so when he and his wife built their new home in 2003, they decided they should practice what Rob was preaching.

"In 2004, I constructed two rain gardens, a small one that is more formally planted with individual clusters of native vegetation off of our driveway, and a 40-by-13-foot one that I grew from seed in front of the house," Rob says.

He dug out both of the rain gardens with a small excavator that he rented. He removed the top 12 inches of soil, he says, so that his gardens would drain better because most undersoils in the western Chicago metropolitan area have a high mixture of clay. He replaced the soil he dug up with a topsoil-sand mix. But, for those who think such heavy digging is too much work, he says gardens can be created by using a rototiller and planting with plugs or from seeds. Some of the seeds he planted in his front garden included Indian Grass, Big Blue Stem, Little Blue Stem, Switch Grass, Yellow Coneflower, Purple Coneflower, Blackeyed Susan, Prairie Blazing Star, and Prairie Dropseed.



Rob manages his gardens by burning them off the last week of March or the first week of April each year, but says they don't have to be burned. "You can mow or weed whack," he adds. As for how they are performing, he says so far so good. "When you get into June, July, August and September, the whole front of our house drains into the one garden, and we can see the water fill up and drain down."



Richard Young

1925 - 2011

Fox River Heroes

For 50 years, he lived in a concrete block house in Oswego, south of Rt. 31 on his beloved Fox River. In the summer, he could be seen up on his roof, mowing, even in his latter years. His green roof was the first of its kind in the area, and he liked to take guests up to the rooftop and show them his grassy “shingles” and the specially selected shallow-root plantings that thrived there.

Why a green roof? “My home is cooler in summer and warmer in winter,” he’d explain.

Dick Young passed away in 2011, leaving behind a legacy of more than 60 years of studying, documenting and nurturing the native environments of both Kane and Kendall counties. A legend in the Fox River Valley, Dick knew the names of not only all the common native plantings, but the rarest ones, too. He enjoyed sharing his knowledge with anyone willing to ask; he especially enjoyed taking an interested novice on a hike through open prairies or woodlands and explaining what grew there and why.

A former member of the Kendall County Board, Dick also was director of the Environmental Protection Dept. of Kane County for 17 years, and authored the book, “Wild Plants and Natural Areas of Kane County,” published in 1986. He had two forest preserves named after him: the Dick Young Forest Preserve in Kane Co., and the Richard Young Forest Preserve in Kendall Co.



Montgomery

When Montgomery’s Village Board undertook planning for its new Village Hall in 2006, it realized it had an opportunity to showcase its recently adopted Naturalized Stormwater Management Facility Guidelines. The Guidelines incorporate and promote the benefits of using naturalized features for stormwater management as a Best Management Practice (BMP).

“A number of residential developers had already followed the Guidelines, but commercial developers were just getting started,” says Jane Tompkins, Montgomery’s Community Development director.

The Village hired Engineering Enterprises, Inc., and Schoppe Design to create the Village’s rain gardens.

“We were working with an urban setting; we didn’t want to use a traditional stormwater basin. It would have looked out of place in the downtown setting. By using BMPs, like the rain garden and permeable pavers, the Village helped educate and encourage its business community and its residents to take steps to improve our water quality.”

For more information on how to build rain gardens, visit: www.preservethefox.org



The Conservation Foundation Conservation@Home program encourages homeowners to invite nature into their yards by utilizing native plants and practicing water conservation.

If you've been working on such a garden, you may already qualify for certification. Call The Conservation Foundation at 630-553-0687, ext. 302 to learn more or visit:

www.preservethefox.org



Join these Batavia, Aurora, Oswego homeowners

Melissa Hyams grew up in New York City, surrounded by concrete. It wasn't until she moved to England in 1993 that this professor of geography discovered her passion -- gardening. She has been a gardener for almost 20 years.

"I moved to Batavia nine years ago this summer and my husband and I bought a house and I started to create a garden," she says. "I was interested in eliminating all the lawn that was here because I love flowering plants and shrubs and trees. I see no reason to have a lawn and that's a big key to being a conservationist."

Melissa says about five years ago, she attended a meeting where Jim Kleinwachter from The Conservation Foundation was speaking on the Conservation@Home program.

"I thought, okay, well, I've got one of those gardens," she says. "I told him and he made a date to come by and see and I got a little plaque."

She admits she doesn't have an entirely native garden. She says the Foundation doesn't expect certified gardens to be totally native, although she does have her fair share of native plants, as well as plenty of plants that originated from Japan. She also has two rain gardens in which she tries to trap as much of the rainwater runoff from her roofs as possible. She says she doesn't use any inorganic anything, and she has a compost pile in the back yard.

"Mostly, my garden is so thickly planted that there is no ground to mulch, no place for weeds to grow. You have to love gardening to have a garden like mine," she says. "Plants go through different stages and you have to cut them back and protect them, and not worry about who you might sell your house to in the future. I am extremely happy with my garden."

Jody Strohm of Oswego says she first started thinking about conservation issues after moving to an Oswego subdivision in 2002 and seeing how polluted the man-made stormwater creek was that flowed by her home.

“My neighbors like a lot of green lawns, which of course require a lot of herbicides and pesticides and they all run off into this creek,” she says. “The creek doesn’t have a natural outflow, and all the storm sewers flow in to it. I thought, ‘What a strange thing. We are going in the wrong way.’”

Jody decided to have her home’s yard certified as a Conservation@Home property in 2009 because she believes the program focuses attention on the need to create habitats not just for people, but for beneficial wildlife.

“We are so short on the natural habitat that we need for the critters out there,” says Jody, who is a volunteer coordinator for the Kendall County Forest Preserve District. “A lot of land in our area that used to be usable by the native plants, animals, and insects is now farmland. So what could be better than using your yard?”



in creating wildlife habitats: www.preservethefox.org

Aurora resident **Shauna Wiet** says she uses the plants in her garden to express her creativity.



“I’m painting with plants,” she says.

Because of her educational background -- she has a master’s degree in urban planning, with a specialization in preservation and neighborhood planning -- and her long-time commitment to advocating for The Conservation Foundation (“It’s the best organization I’ve ever been associated with”) she knows conservation efforts are important. When she and her husband moved to their Aurora home and she began working on their gardens, she knew she wanted her yard to become certified as a Conservation@Home property.

“Every bit of the yard doesn’t have to be natural to qualify,” she says. “I have all kinds of different microsoil environments. I do have a lot of things -- a bunch of berry-bearing plants -- and I collect tropical plants that attract hummingbirds and butterflies.”

One special eyesore, on the side of their garage, had been a dumping site for motor oil and brush. The soil there, Shauna says, “is terrible.” So she enhances the area with potted houseplants and a water

feature. “The fish fountain is a water trough and bird bath all summer. The hot pink flowers attract hummingbirds. The chipmunks are back, and of course we host bunnies and all manners of birds. A pair of ducks return each year, and there is an owl and a red-tailed hawk that hang around.”

Want Your Own Rain Barrel?

**Call
630-553-0687,
x 302**

**or visit:
www.preservethefox.org**



Rain Barrels

Jim Kleinwachter, Land Protection Specialist for The Conservation Foundation (TCF), says that the promotion of rain barrel use was a natural extension of the Foundation's Conservation@Home Program (see Page 10).

"We thought it was very important to reach every level -- county, municipal and residents. Rain barrels are a simple thing to get water conservation going."

Rain barrels, Jim says, give their users free water. "It's better water that doesn't have chlorine and it's naturally soft, without lime and calcium and other minerals."

TCF offers plastic barrels -- re-used food barrels that once held olives or pickles or maybe cherries shipped to the U.S. from around the world. Retrofitted with screens on top and a garden hose valve on the front, they are easy to transport and use. If you would like to purchase a rain barrel or if you would like to start a rain barrel program in your community, call TCF at 630-553-0687, x 302.

**Gary
Swick**



Fox River Heroes

"People say I was ahead of my time. I didn't know any better," Gary Swick says. "I was just really fortunate as a teacher. I think a lot of teachers teach how they learn."

The recently retired science teacher, who has received numerous awards, including Milken Educator, during his more than 30-year career explaining nature and the environment to his students at West Dundee High School, says his college training was in natural resource management.

"I only had eight weeks of teacher training. My training was in a non-conventional setting, at a progressive high school, and in a forest. I had all this field experience, the hands-on, kinesthetic learning, so when I first came to my school job, I focused on trees."

His students reaped the benefits, moving on from trees to the Fox River. "The water quality thing has been my biggest focus," Swick says. "Once a kid gets in a stream, they'll never see a stream the same way again. They find out it's alive and that it's threatened, and they really care."



City of Geneva's "Rain Barrels on Parade"

Jay Womack is the chairperson for Natural Resources Committee of Geneva, a volunteer group created under the umbrella of the City's Strategic Plan Alliance Committee. Part of the Committee's mission is to support groups that want to do something to improve general environmental awareness.

"We started *Rain Barrels on Parade* four years ago as a fundraiser and to get as many rain barrels out there as possible," he said. "It's like Cows on Parade for Chicago. That first year, we didn't really know if we would make any money. We met with various merchants in downtown area, and got a good response. All of them were very receptive."

Jay explained that his Committee members would prime a rain barrel and then it would be sold to a local business at cost.

"They would paint it, display it at their business during the summer, and then donate it back to us to be auctioned off at a live auction at the end of the season in September, during the City's Festival of the Vine. Most painted them based on some kind of theme for their store. State Street Jewelers did what looked like an overflowing treasure chest. Glued on a whole bunch of costume jewelry all over it. It looked like a treasure chest overflowing."



Although Jay's committee didn't know if anyone would bid on their barrels that first year, the group was well-rewarded for its efforts. A good crowd showed up at the auction, and some of the barrels went for \$400 or \$500 a piece. The Committee made close to \$5,000. Subsequent events raised around \$3,500 each. "People put their heart and souls into them that first year," Jay says.

Money from the event has been used to give two \$500 scholarships to graduating seniors from Geneva High School who are going into environmental studies. Although the event is taking a year off in 2011, Jay says his Committee is still selling rain barrels. The Natural Resources Committee meets at 7 p.m. the first Wednesday of every month at the Geneva City Hall. Volunteers are welcome.



Small Neighborhood Makes Big Impact . . .

by Ed Beaulieu, chief sustainability officer for Aquascape, Inc.

www.aquascapeinc.com



Ed Beaulieu

For more than 15 years, my work at Aquascape Designs in St. Charles has largely focused on developing, designing and installing water features that are environmentally sound and beneficial. My wife and I began to wonder if maybe my neighbors in the Lakes of Bliss Woods development in Sugar Grove could be inspired to participate in a green neighborhood makeover.

We began by inviting neighbors in our subdivision over to our house for a meeting on a Sunday afternoon in June 2009. We were pleased that, of the 130 homes in our development, 40 were represented at the meeting.

I briefly presented our ideas, explained that making them happen would involve area homeowners, businesses and community departments in installing a variety of rainwater-collection systems, permeable hardscapes and other water- and resource-management strategies – and declared our goal as moving toward becoming a so-called “sustainable neighborhood.”

Using systems and products we’ve been developing and using at Aquascape as a framework for what could be done immediately, we covered a number of possible scenarios:

- If you’re interested in wildlife, we could install an ecosystem-style pond or a rain garden.
- If you’re interested in the sights and sounds of moving water and like the idea of offsetting water usage, we could put in any of a number of variations on basic rainwater-capturing systems, from elaborate pond/stream systems that include rainwater storage cells to small water features or simple barrels that collect, store and allow for efficient use of rainwater.
- If your primary concern is managing rainwater runoff, we could install permeable hardscape areas and use them to feed rainwater reservoirs.

The list went on, and my goal was to present a number of options that required degrees of involvement ranging from slight to intensive. We had a chance of appealing to the widest possible range of participants while respecting their budgets and priorities. My desire was to demonstrate how we could collectively put a stake in the ground for the cause of resource management – and show how a small town of no more than 9,000 people could make a real difference.



It might seem surprising that all of this took place in the Chicago suburbs where we receive a robust average rainfall of 40 inches each year. Given that abundance, it wouldn't seem that capturing water would be as crucial as it might be in a more arid place. We went into the meeting thinking we'd have a hard time persuading people that wise water use was important everywhere, even where it's plentiful.

We even discussed the runoff issue on a larger scale, getting into a discussion of the value of reducing our runoff because it eventually flowed into the Fox River and then eventually into the Mississippi River.

Coming out of the meeting, I thought we'd be fortunate if a dozen or so homeowners participated (roughly 10 percent of the neighborhood). Within just a few days, however, a total of 30 homeowners agreed to participate!

For more information on how to create rain gardens, visit:

www.preservethefox.org



As might be expected, there was quite a range of projects within that group of 30, from expansive pond/stream compositions with planted wetlands to simple pondless water features or rain barrels. There were also a few who focused entirely on managing runoff and had no greater interest than in trying out the permeable patio concept.

We meant to install all of the systems in a single day in August 2009 with a network of Aquascape certified contractors from across the U.S. With that implausible goal in mind, we set to work right away, designing each installation and doing site-preparation work in anticipation of the big day.

When installation day finally arrived, it was something to behold. A massive, organized stampede of enthusiastic and capable pond/stream specialists energetically crawling over the neighborhood, spreading gravel, installing plants and placing rocks and interacting warmly with residents and treating the event like a massive and exhausting celebration of aquatic potential.

From the outset, the community's energy and acceptance defined the process. The homeowners and city officials made this project a success – so much so that some of the 30 homes have since been included in garden tours, other homeowners have signed up for systems of their own.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that since we installed all of the Sugar Grove systems, our neighborhood has seen a notable increase in its populations of birds, butterflies and other beneficial insects, and terrestrial creatures. It seems the human residents around here aren't the only ones who know a good thing when they see it!

Private land conservation is becoming a useful tool for landowners who wish to see their property preserved forever. Whether it's donating it to a local land conservancy, placing a conservation easement on the land, or just taking special care of it, this is one very important step landowners can take to preserve the Fox River.

Visit:
www.preservethefox.org
to learn how you can become involved in this program.



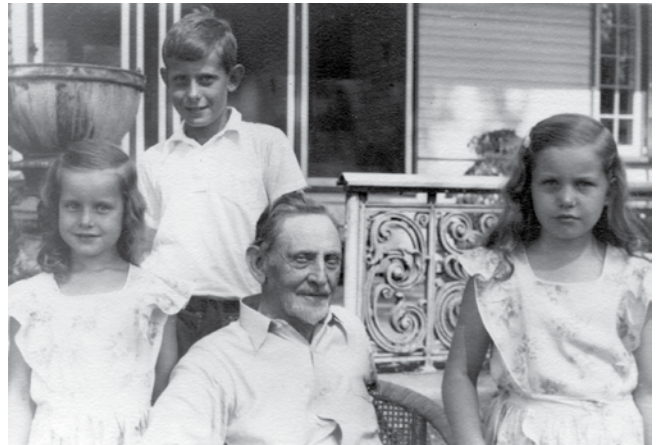
Preserving land in Kane and McHenry Counties

Stories by Sandy Kaczmariski

Judith Olson Uehling remembers summers on her grandfather's property on Pistakee Lake in McHenry County, part of the Chain O' Lakes region of the Fox River.

"We used to go to a suspension bridge over a lagoon in the early morning with a fishing rod and a piece of string and worms," she recalls. "We'd catch fish as big as your hand."

Judith and her sisters Elizabeth Geraghty and Lynn Gilchrist decided to donate three acres they inherited from their grandfather Henry Ericsson to the Land Conservancy of McHenry County. Ericsson immigrated to America in 1880. He was a bricklayer, and since the City of Big Shoulders was rebuilding after Mrs. O'Leary's cow made history, it was easy to find work and prosper. After staying at a resort in McHenry County, he fell in love with the property because the landscape reminded him of his homeland in southern Sweden.



"We get a lot of these types of properties up in the upper Fox, on the Chain, going back to the days when it was a vacation area," Lisa Haderlein, the Conservancy's executive director, said. Other family members own pieces of what was once at least 20 acres, she said. The Land Conservancy is in talks with them to encourage them to follow the three sisters' lead. Like many of the properties in that area, the land has been passed down a few generations and the parcels have been divided up among the heirs.

Corwith Hamill, 97, sits in his dining room in his home in the Village of Wayne in Kane County, sipping some soup as he talks about the nine-acre conservation easement he donated about 10 years ago to The Conservation Foundation. Norris Creek, a small, winding tributary that flows into the Fox River, can be seen from his window on the sloping hill dotted with daffodils.

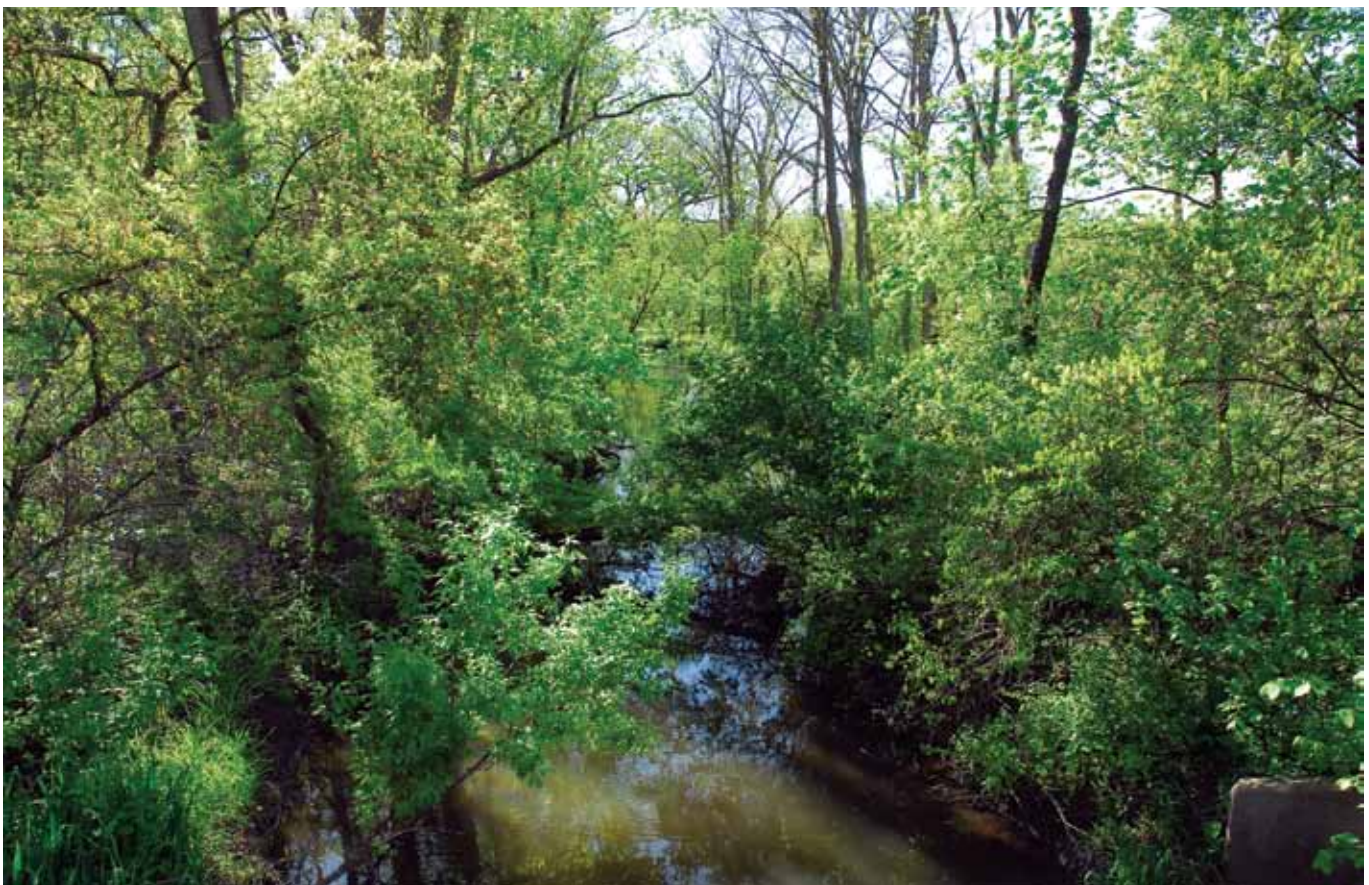
“When we bought the land, it was lined with oak trees,” he said. “There was only one house on this whole road at that time.”

Hamill said he bought a small lot that supposedly was four acres in 1941 for \$500 an acre. But, he said, it turned out “it was only 3.96 acres.” About 10 years later, he bought the property next to it which was a little more than five acres. The Dunham family previously owned the property, which was part of a country estate of several hundred acres.



Hamill said in the mid-1800s there was a sawmill on Route 25, not far from his home, and this area was known as the “little woods” by the early settlers, with the big woods up around Aurora. With the heavily wooded area on the east bank of the Fox River, it would help stop the prairie fires. But development has transformed the surrounding areas, and the trillium that was abundant is now sparse, having been overgrazed by deer.

Like many others who choose to donate land, Hamill said, “I just love the place and I’d like to keep it the way it is.”





Rare plants and wetlands in Kendall,

Stories by Sandy Kaczmariski

"It was the second best feeling of our lives; really the topping on the cake."

That's how **Keith and Norma Tucker**, residents of the Village of Newark in Kendall County, said they felt when they learned that four-and-a-half acres of their property along a small Fox River tributary qualified as an Illinois Nature Preserve. The land is now a conservation easement held by The Conservation Foundation and further protected by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

The best feeling, of course, was when they got married.

They've owned the parcel, along with another six acres, since 1974.

After years of exploring, they came to realize this beautiful fen with the small creek running through it was special. Keith says it's unique because of the hydrological system with springs on the hillside providing cold stream water flowing even in winter. It's the perfect habitat for rare plants. He describes it as a springy seep that is transformed into an area of uncommon plants with the sun. Always changing, depending on the time of year, the parcel has been described as one of the best natural areas in Northern Illinois.

The Tuckers take care of the property by removing invasive, non-native species such as garlic mustard and buckthorn to make room for the black ash, skunk cabbage, and gooseberries. They are particularly proud of the fact the wetland is completely natural, the way it's been for thousands of years.

Such pristine condition led to the sprouting of a rare little shrub that was found in six counties in the 1800s, but hasn't been seen anywhere else -- except here -- since the 1990s.

Keith says even though the property is tiny, "it's a gem."



Marsh marigold



Donavan Goodwick of Sandwich, LaSalle County, describes the 23 acres he donated to The Conservation Foundation along the Fox River near Sheridan as “about as wild as it comes.” He knew he didn’t want to sell it because he feared it would be developed.

He bought the property in 1977 and says the pristine nature of the land itself is an ideal habitat for wild turkey, deer, and coyotes, not to mention a virtual aviary with the bird species and wild plants that attract them.

Goodwick says the property abstract goes back as far as 1838. The cottage was built around 1900 along with several others that attracted city folk who came

out to what was then a resort on one of two daily trains from the big city of Chicago. They’d stay a week or two, and then catch another train back. Goodwick is very pleased with the decision to protect this land. “I didn’t want it disturbed.”

LaSalle and Lake Counties

When **Searle and Sue Wadley** of Antioch in Lake County bought 125 acres along the Fox River in 1987, the large wetland was viewed as a swamp, “something negative about the property.” Searle said he and his wife Sue were into birds and thought the diversity of the land would be a mecca for all kinds of wildlife with the prairie, wetland, and wooded areas. He was right.



Since donating a conservation easement on their 100 acres to the Liberty Prairie Conservancy, he and his wife “combat buckthorn,” but leave much of it to Mother Nature. They get help from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for advice on how to better manage the wildlife, and the valuable wetland attracts many threatened and endangered species. Least bitterns, common moorhen, sandhill cranes, black terns, and yellow-headed blackbirds are just some of the species the Wadleys have observed.

The noisy sounds of birds in the spring -- “the sandhill cranes can be quite loud” -- is something they welcome each year. “It’s music to our ears.”

Did You Know?

Both Kane County and the Kane County Forest Preserve District have used permeable pavers for their parking areas in front of the governmental center and as overflow parking for Cougar baseball games. Permeable pavers allow water to soak into the ground, recharging our aquifers, instead of allowing runoff that creates flooding and pollution. Permeable pavers also are used for streets, driveways and walkways.



Earth Day Fox River Clean Sweep

*Saturday, around Earth Day
each year, Aurora, Elgin and
other communities along the
Fox River need volunteers to help
clean trash and debris
from the Fox River.*

*For more information and exact
dates and times, visit
illinois.sierraclub.org/vof/
or call 312-251-1680*

Clean-up Days



Fran Caffee

Fox River Heroes

"I grew up in the mountains of West Virginia, and I was always interested in the outdoors," says Fran Caffee. I had a career, got married, had kids, and those things took priority. It wasn't until those things moved on and changed that I was able to become an activist. But it was always there."

Fran, who moved to the Fox Valley area in 1961, got involved with a group called Valley of the Fox in 1992 and it eventually became a chapter of the Sierra Club. She says it was The Fox, Jim Phillips, who got her group interested in the Fox River's water quality by providing them access to lab testing equipment. Gene McArdle, a retired professor, volunteered to do the analysis and interpret the results.

"We realized there was not much citizen involvement in monitoring water quality," she says. "The EPA was spread so thin, there was a limited amount they could do."

In 2000, the Sierra Club had grown to the point where its water monitoring program became a national initiative. In 2001, the Fox River Study Group, "the greatest thing that could have happened to the Fox River," was formed.

"Municipalities, water reclamation plants, the EPA - all of the people who have something to do with the river - are now working together. We are making progress, but it's slow. It's a beautiful river to look at, but it's still not a healthy river."



Dam removal restores Brewster Creek

by Sandy Kaczmarski

Brewster Creek is a tributary to the Fox River and flows from northwestern DuPage County to Elgin, where it enters the Fox. The Brewster Creek Dam removal project is a wonderful example of how multiple agencies work together to resolve a problem for the benefit of all involved and in the end, help improve the quality of the Fox River. The project involved a dam on camp property owned by the YWCA in Elgin that was identified by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as failing.

“It seemed to be a high-hazard dam, with the chance of damage to property, and also posed some safety risks,” Karen Kosky, who served as project manager, said. Kosky is the manager of resource conservation programs for Kane County.

A feasibility study was prepared to consider alternatives to completely removing the dam, such as rebuilding it in a different configuration, but the YWCA decided the best solution would be to have it removed because of safety considerations and also funding was available. Kosky said one of the biggest problems in just removing the dam was an interpretation of Illinois erosion control law.

“It says you can’t move sediment in any construction site,” she said. “This dam had been there for 75 years, collecting sediment.” The concern was they didn’t want to take out the dam and “send all the sediment downstream to settle somewhere else,” Kosky said.

It was decided to remove the dam “little by little,” allowing water to drain out and retain the sediment naturally. Once things stabilized, another section was removed. The project began in 1998 and restoration efforts for this tributary to the Fox River were completed in 2004. The heavily wooded 27-acre site is now owned and maintained by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. The restored habitat enhances opportunities for migrating fish to move freely up and downstream.

“It’s a free-flowing system right now and is considered stable,” Kosky said. “There’s no sediment movement outside of normal ranges. The dam removal was very successful and now it looks like a natural stream flowing through beds of native vegetation.”

Fox River Heroes **Nancy Williamson**



The upper Fox River was targeted in 1998 to be one of seven partners participating in an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Ecosystem Partnership. The goal of this Partnership program, which at its height included 43 members, including the Lower Fox River, is to encourage ecosystem management. Nancy is the IDNR's Ecosystem Administrator for these Partnerships.

In addition to all that she does through her job to promote and protect the Fox River's unique ecosystem, Nancy in the mid 1980s began volunteering her time and her graphic arts abilities to help the Nature Conservancy. At that time, the Conservancy was building its volunteer stewardship program.

An accomplished artist with an eye for detail, Nancy is known for her precise drawings of birds and plants. She credits her love of art, and in particular her fascination with a thrush, for getting her focused on the

The Fox River Ecosystem Partnership - FREP



The Fox River Ecosystem Partnership (FREP) was established in 1997 and is one of 41 ecosystem partnerships in the State under the auspices of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The Partnership's territory is the entire Fox River watershed, covering 1,720 square miles situated within portions of the counties of Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, LaSalle, Lee, McHenry and Will. FREP membership includes individuals, governments, organizations and businesses that meet regularly "to promote, preserve, protect and enhance the natural, cultural, economic and recreational resources of Illinois' Fox River and its watershed."

FREP's "vision for the Fox River Watershed is to balance all the uses and demands on our natural resources while preserving and enhancing a healthy environment." This statement comes from FREP's Integrated Management Plan for the Fox River Watershed Illinois, created in 1998 after more than 110 stakeholders in the watershed worked for over a year to study and develop the plan. The Integrated Management Plan identifies 16 critical factors and six areas of concern, along with providing 37 specific recommendations and 270 strategies, focusing on habitat, land use, water quality, stormwater management, recreation, and education and outreach.

FREP has a meeting or program each month, held at different locations throughout the watershed and featuring a variety of topics. FREP's website offers a wide range of information about the Fox River watershed and the activities of the organization. It can be found at: www.foxriverecosystem.org

natural world and the environment.

"I was planting tomatoes in my backyard and this little bird came very close. It looked like a robin with spots on its chest. That began my long process of becoming a birdwatcher."

She subsequently got involved with The Nature Conservancy, and became a Board member of Friends of the Fox, helping to create and administer the River Watch program. In 1998 she was named Volunteer of the Year by the State of Illinois.

She says she has particularly enjoyed working with local jurisdictions to help them put resource-sensitive development on the ground. "But I still like drawing."



Someone You Should Know . . .

For more than 20 years, **Steve Byers** (pictured above with his wife Nancy Williamson) has been a field representative for the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. His responsibilities include protection and stewardship of more than 100 Nature Preserves in northeastern Illinois, many along and near the Fox River. Working with the Commission, Steve has helped protect nearly 10,000 acres of high-quality natural areas.

Steve recently retired from the U.S. Army Reserve after 37 years of service. He retired as a Colonel and served in a variety of leadership positions, including Commander of the 334th Medical Group and Chief of Staff of the 330th Medical Brigade.

The Conservation Foundation



***We save land
We save rivers***

Our ancestors felt that towns and cities were healthier, more beautiful and desirable if they had natural areas and open space. Today, we have proof that open spaces also improve air and water quality, provide critical habitat for plant and animal species, reduce flooding and serve as the "ultimate tax cap" for area residents.

Established in 1972, The Conservation Foundation (TCF) is a private, not-for-profit land and watershed protection organization, located in Naperville on a 60-acre working, organic farm. The mission of The Conservation Foundation is:

We preserve and restore natural areas and open space, protect rivers and watersheds, and promote environmental stewardship.

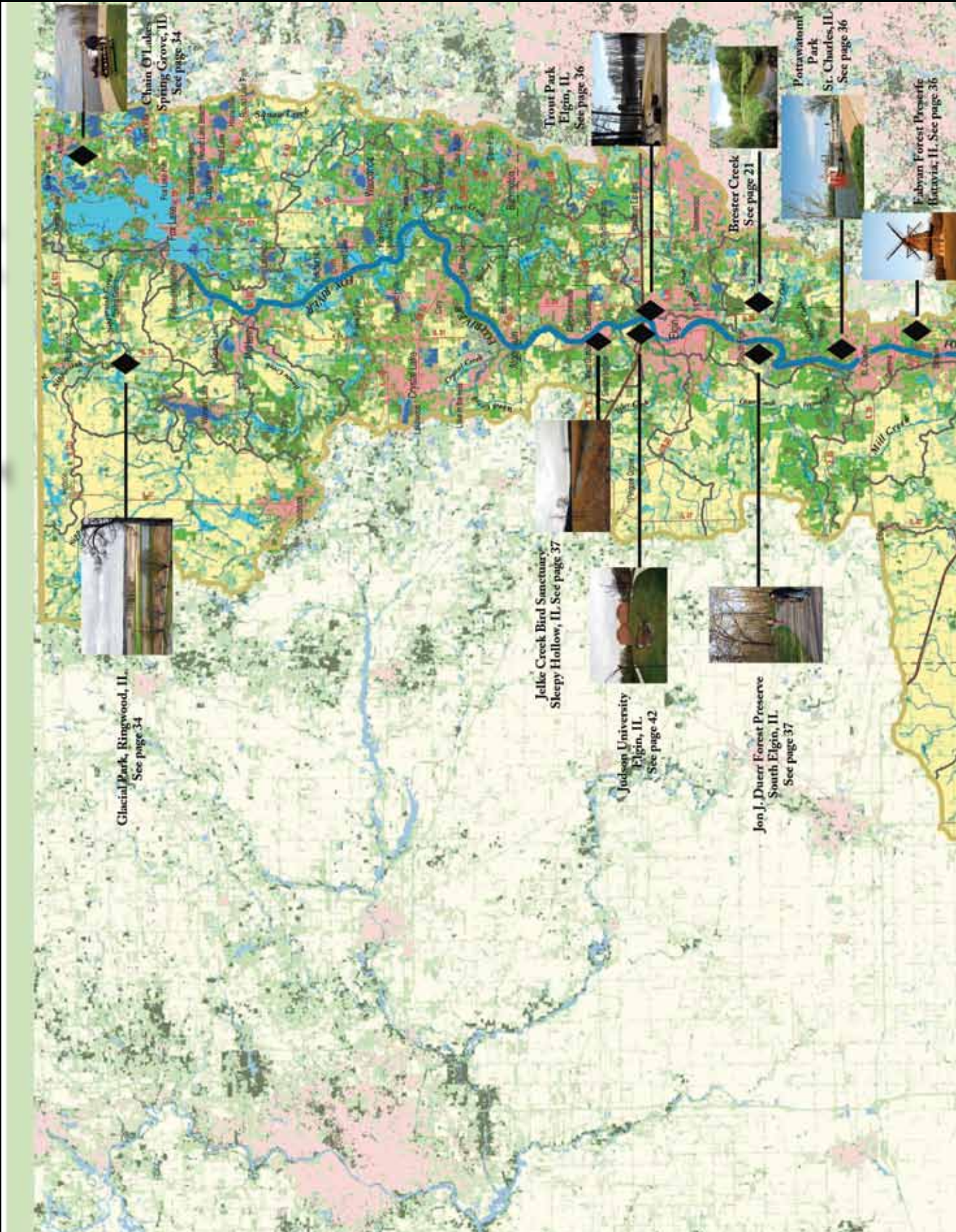
TCF maintains a membership of around 5,000 members and 500 volunteers in DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will counties, Illinois.

To help achieve this mission, TCF has established four major program areas: land preservation, river and watershed protection, education and advocacy, and promoting sustainable development.

If you would like to add your voice for the protection of our vanishing forests, farms and open spaces, and help keep our waterways clean and healthy for present and future generations, then you are invited to join The Conservation Foundation ranks as a member and/or volunteer.

For more information, call The Conservation Foundation at 630-428-4500 or visit www.theconservationfoundation.org.

Fox River Locator Map -- Enjoy the Fox!





Fox River Recreation



For paddlers, kayakers, rafters...



Mid-American Canoe & Kayak Race

Sponsored by the Fox Valley Park District, this long-lived "fun" race celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2011. The Mid-Am features two race lengths - a 10-miler from St. Charles and a 6-miler from Batavia. Both races finish at McCullough Park in Aurora with a post-race party and awards ceremony.
Official Race Hotline: 630-859-8606.





Thomas Linblade, president of the Illinois Paddling Council, predicts downtown Yorkville is going to be seeing a lot of cars with kayaks and canoes on their roofs now that the City's Marge Cline Whitewater Course has opened at the Glen Palmer Dam on East Hydraulic Street.

"It's almost the first one of its kind anywhere," Tom says. "There's one in South Bend, Indiana, and one in Wausaw, Wisconsin, but they are 250 miles away, and both are off active hydro dams and are only open periodically. This one is running 24/7, and that makes it pretty unique."

Tom, who was named Instructor of the Year in 2009 by the American Canoe Association, says Yorkville's 1,000-foot course will be ideal for all forms of instruction. "We can take people from flatwater instruction at the foot of the dam, and gradually move in from down below and teach them basic river skills and then move them up to the chute. There are a lot of high schools and community colleges that are offering kayak courses in pools that can now move into the whitewater course, he says.

"Eventually, I can see competitions and slalom races. All those things are possible down the road. There are a lot of paddlers in the Chicago area."

Yorkville's Marge Cline Whitewater course

Canoe, Kayak Tours, Sales, Equipment

Ayers Landing Wedron, IL 815-434-2233

The Canoe Shack, 10 S. River St., Elgin, IL
630-584-8017

C & M Canoe Rental,
3401 E. 2062nd Rd., Ottawa, IL 815-434-6690
Mail: P.O. Box 178, Wedron, IL 60557

Flatwater Canoe & Kayak Rental
8621 US Highway 12, Richmond, IL 815-353-7333

Freemans Sports, 129 E. Hydraulic St., Yorkville, IL
630-553-0515

Geneva Kayak Center, 301 E. Hydraulic St., Yorkville,
IL 630-232-0320

Paddle and Trail of Aurora, 107 Spruce St., Aurora, IL
630-506-5706

MountainTops St. Charles 630-513-7608

River Adventures at Skydive Chicago, Ottawa, IL
815-434-2142 or 481-2142

Tip-A-Canoe Canoe Rentals (Burlington, WI),
414-537-3227

2K Adventure Gear 10310 N. Main St., Richmond, IL
815-862-1400

Bike Rentals, and/or Service, Sales

Antioch Schwinn Cyclery, 890 Main St., Antioch, IL
847-395-6500

Bicycle Garage, 11 Jackson St., East Dundee, IL
847-428-2600

The Bike Rack, 2930 Campton Hills Rd.,
St. Charles, IL 800-711-2453

Geneva Cycle Shop, 12 E. State St., Geneva, IL
630-232-4883

Main Street Bicycles, 39 E. Main St.,
Carpentersville, IL 847-783-0362

Mill Race Cyclery 11 E. State St., Geneva, IL 60134
630-232-2833

Oswego Cycling & Running, 26 Main St., Oswego, IL
60543 630-551-2300

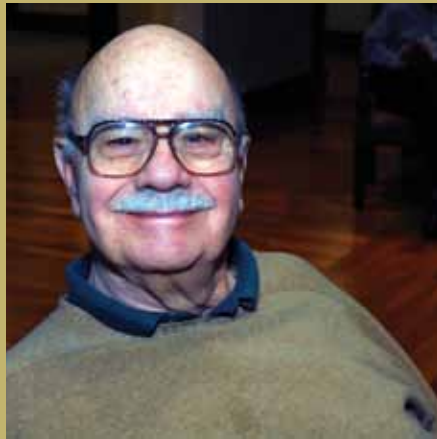
Mudslingers,
420 W. Rt. 34, Unit 1, Plano, IL 630-552-7433

Prairie Path Cycle & Fitness,
122 W. Wilson St., Batavia, IL 630-406-9749

Wonder Lake Bicycle, 4308 East Drive,
Wonder Lake, IL 815-653-9904

Phil

Elfstrom



Fox River Heroes

Phil Elfstrom now lives in the Homestead in Batavia, a few blocks west of the Fox River and close to the Cougars Stadium named for him and the bike trails he helped to get installed for the residents of Kane County.

Talk to him today of the extensive Kane County bike trail system, and the former Kane County Board Chairman (1971 to 1982) and President of the Kane County Forest Preserve (1982 to 1990) chooses to downplay the controversy he encountered when the bike trails were first discussed.

“Oh, there were a few protesters against it,” he admits. “There were not a lot of people asking for them at the time, but they use them now.”

Phil says the Forest Preserve District didn’t put the trail system that extends from Dundee to Aurora together in a hurry. It came over time, but it was just a natural thing for along the river, he adds.

While some people says Phil’s advocacy of bike trails led to his political demise, Phil is happy with what he accomplished.

“I think trails give you the chance to do something you like to do,” he said. “Walking trails are nice; they’re healthy. When I was younger, I liked to use trails. I think they are delightful.”



Fox Travelogue

The Fox River – it’s surely Kane County’s most scenic and important natural resource. It’s also our most popular recreational destination. Whether you’re enjoying it up close on the water, or on foot or bicycle from the adjacent Fox River Trail, be sure to take time to enjoy some of the Kane County Forest Preserve highlights along the way.

In northern Kane County, the Fox River and Fox River Trail begin at Buffalo Park Forest Preserve in Algonquin. This scenic spot is a popular site for beginning a canoe or kayak trip down the river, fishing, and more. During winter, Buffalo Park is also home to Raging Buffalo Snowboard Park. Raging Buffalo is known as the world’s first snowboard-exclusive park, though now you can ski the hill, as well.

To the immediate south is Brunner Family Forest Preserve in Dundee. Purchased in 2008, the 741-acre property was the largest property ever acquired from a single landowner.



With Buffalo Park Forest Preserve to the north and Fox River Shores Forest Preserve to the south, the acquisition created a 3.5-mile stretch of open space along the Fox River. Along with forest preserves on the east side of the river, it provides over 1,000 acres of contiguous open space.

Carpentersville Dam is next, and if you are canoeing or kayaking, you'll need to portage around to the other side. This is most easily done to the right, near the gazebo. On your way, check out some of the dam's history on the interpretive signage installed there.

In Elgin, the Fox River Trail takes us through Voyageurs Landing Forest Preserve. There, you'll find plenty of scenic spots for a picnic, and places to fish and enjoy views of the river, throughout the length of the preserve. The nearby Tyler Creek Trail connects to the Fox River Trail, and runs under the I-90 bridge to the east side of the river.

by Laurie Metanchuk

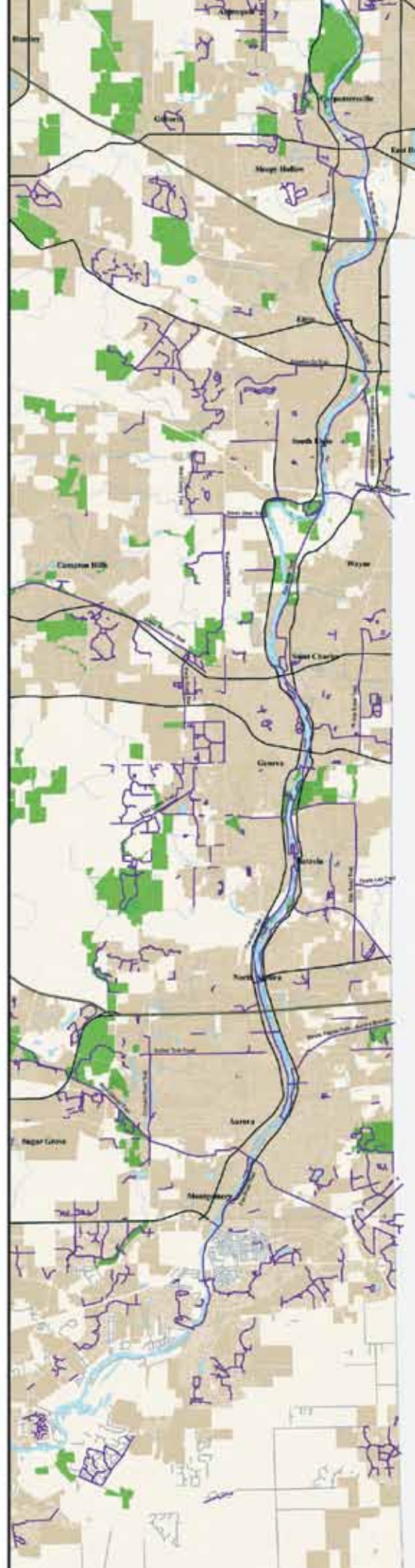
Kane County Forest Preserve District

Making our way further south is Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve in South Elgin. This interesting forest preserve complex, located at a crook in the river, is a beautiful stretch of river and valley. This preserve is connected to Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve in Saint Charles by a bike bridge over the Fox River, part of the Fox River Trail. Just past the bridge to the east, you'll find the hub of the District's environmental education – Tekakwitha Woods Nature Center.

Traveling south, we reach Fabyan Forest Preserve in Geneva, and probably the most culturally significant forest preserve property along both sides of the Fox River. On the east side of the river at Fabyan Forest Preserve is one of the most-visited sites in the District, the Fabyan Windmill.

Moving on from Fabyan, the river takes us south to two Batavia forest preserves and the end of our travelogue: Glenwood Park Forest Preserve and Les Arends Forest Preserve. Both of these preserves have a special focus on the river and the trail. They are situated just below an old broken dam, which creates a series of rapids and riffles. They are great spots for fishing and bird watching. On both sides of the river are outcroppings of the Niagaran dolomite bedrock, which adds a special, picturesque charm to the landscape. In winter, snowmobiling is permitted along the Batavia branch of the Illinois Prairie Path, from Glenwood Park Forest Preserve. For more information on any of the Kane County forest preserves, amenities or trail maps, visit kaneforest.com. Kane County forest preserves are open 365 days, sunrise to sunset.

Bike trail map provided by Kane County Division of Transportation



There is something special about going horseback riding on the banks of the Fox River.

Ryan Kerner and **Robbie Eddy** of Millbrook have been breaking in the trail horses for a new stable, Millbrook Trail Rides, that offers leisurely rides through local forest preserves and along the Fox River. They both agree: riding along the river makes everything more enjoyable.

"It's very pretty scenery out there," Ryan says.

"We found this trail this past spring that crosses Hollenbeck Creek several times. There's a lot of wildlife." Robbie says they've seen deer, geese, ducks, beavers, and even pelicans, but no otters so far. "It's relaxing, peaceful," he says.

Several forest preserves and state parks in Kendall and McHenry counties offer riding trails along the Fox River.



Fishing secrets . . . Horseback riding . . .

"I love wading the Fox River," said **Ken Gortowski**. "You're more in touch with the river because you're immersed in it—literally. For me it has a calming effect . . . it's better than valium."

Gortowski, who publishes a blog and also runs Watercrawler Fox River Guide Service, spends as much time as possible fishing for smallmouth bass. Although he has caught 19 different species of fish in the river, the smallmouth is his prime quarry.



"I'm a 'finesse fisherman,'" he said. "I use light spinning gear to fish for small fish. The average smallmouth I catch is 12 inches long, although I've caught two or three that were over 20 inches long. However, I did land a 36-inch flathead catfish on six-pound line."

Gortowski considers the Fox River one of the most accessible rivers in Illinois with lots of public land on its banks, and its wide shallow bottom with scattered deep holes make it ideal for fishing in a pair of waders. Gortowski likes to wade the river a short stretch at a time, and only occasionally will do a "death march" of a mile or more. He said fishing in waders is not about covering ground; it's about studying the small details of the river and the fish and other aquatic life within it. It's kept him entertained for nearly 20 years.

Waterdogjournal.com

Keep up to date on Fox River fishing, outdoor opportunities and related Fox Valley conservation issues through this website and blog by Fox River enthusiast Ken Gortowski.

WATERDOG
Journal

Jon Duerr and wife Joy,
participating in the annual
Audubon Society's bird count.



Birdwatching

Ecologist and avid birdwatcher **Jon J. Duerr** considers the bald eagle to be one of the most remarkable stories of the Fox River Valley.

"This is a bird that was on the Endangered Species list in the 1970s, and now it can be seen throughout the Fox Valley," he said. "There is even a nesting pair on the Mooseheart property in plain view of Randall Road."

Duerr, for whom the Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve in South Elgin is named, is out birdwatching "five or six times a week." He also directs the Audubon Society's annual bird count in Kane County, as well as serving on the board of the Illinois Ornithological Society.

Duerr had been an active birdwatcher "in the 1960s," and became active again in the 1980s, when he was hired by the Kane County Forest Preserve. His first job was supervising the building of bike trails, and in doing so, he realized that the river was an excellent place to watch birds. He eventually served as executive director of the Kane County Forest Preserve District, and continued his passion for birds after his retirement.

Duerr enjoys observing a range of birds throughout the year, and on an average day will see 50 or 60 birds. On a recent outing, his wife Joy "scared up" a yellow rail, and later counted a Smith's Longspur. He said the range of birds available at any one time varies dramatically with the time of year, and that is particularly evident in the annual bird count.

"The bird count is an attempt to count every bird in every county in Illinois on one day," he explained. "It's held every year on a Saturday between the 4th and 11th of May. We've found that the variety of birds counted varies greatly depending on whether it's held earlier or later in May. Different birds will be passing through the area on their migrations at different times, and it provides an interesting picture of where the birds are."

Duerr said interest in birds in the area has increased greatly in recent years, as has the participation in the annual bird count.





Located along the banks of the Fox River near Plano, the **Farnsworth House** is one of the most significant of Mies van der Rohe's works. Its significance is two-fold. First, as one of a long series of house projects, the Farnsworth House embodies a certain aesthetic culmination in Mies van der Rohe's experiment with this building type. Second, the house is perhaps the fullest expression of modernist ideals that had begun in Europe, but which were consummated on this site along the river.

To learn more, visit www.farnsworthhouse.org.

The Lower Fox - Parks . . Farnsworth House



Hoover Forest Preserve

Fox Road., just west of Yorkville, IL
Kendall Co. Forest Preserve Dist. 630-553-4025

Hoover Forest Preserve is the gem of the Kendall County Forest Preserve District. At more than 400 acres, it overlooks one mile of the Fox River with its massive bluffs and meandering trails. Native Americans used this site extensively for its strategic bluffs and access to the river, which was a major transportation thoroughfare. As a former Boy Scout camp, there remain several renovated bunkhouses for rent and camping areas for families and youth groups. There are picnic areas available as well as an education center, "Indian Village," and more than five miles of trails.

www.co.kendall.il.us.



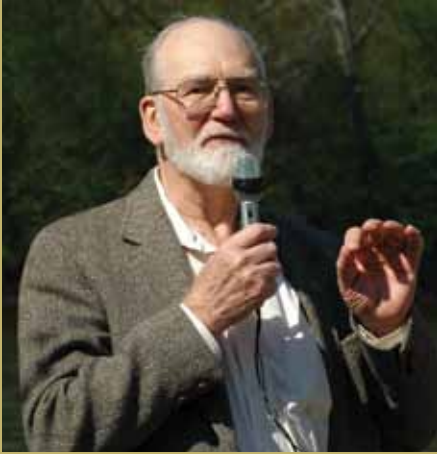
Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area

13608 Fox Rd., Yorkville, IL 630-553-6297

A multi-use site stretching along the Fox River between Yorkville and Plano, this 1,350-acre site is both "state park" and hunting and fishing area.

Clear bubbling water sparkles as it seeps out of the hillsides along the Fox River and gives this park its name. There are numerous picnic areas and shelters, youth and family campgrounds, lots of multi-use trails, including equestrian areas, fishing access to spring-fed lakes and the Fox River, boat/canoe launch, designated hunting areas, and seasonal food and boat concessions. <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r2/silverspr.htm>.

www.huntingandfishingdays.org



Ralph
Frese

Fox River Heroes

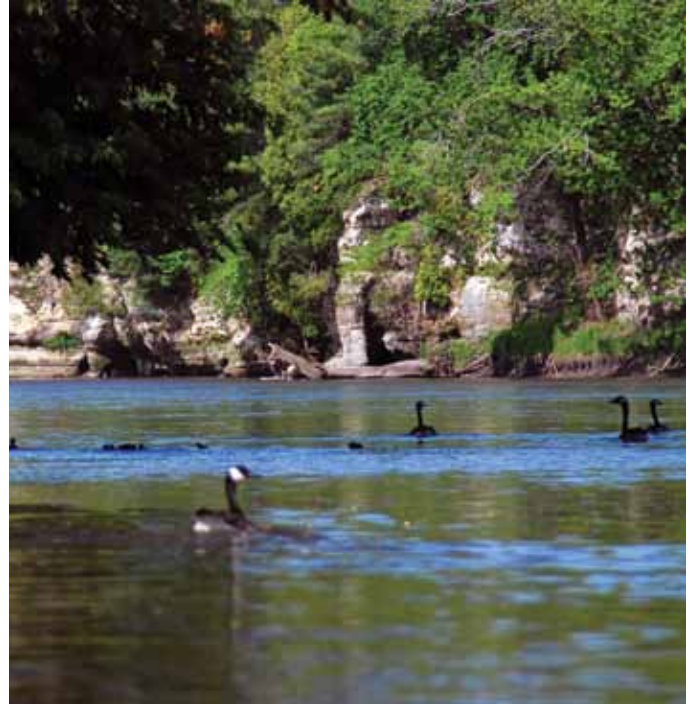
“The canoe is the only trail through nature that leaves no trace of your passing,” says long-time canoeist, river-advocate and environmentalist Ralph Frese. “For years, I’ve been preaching the use of the canoe to explore the landscape.”

Growing up on Chicago’s northwest side, Ralph is a fourth generation blacksmith who also builds reproduction canoes and is the owner of Chicagoland Canoe Base, located at 4019 Narragansett in the same building where his father’s blacksmith shop once was located. He says his advocacy of Illinois’ rivers began 54 years ago, when he became involved with Scouting.

“I wanted to take the kids out exploring,” he says. That led to him beginning the Des Plaines River Canoe Race, and to becoming a vigilant advocate of improving the Chicago-area rivers. For his efforts, in 1994 he was named the first recipient of the American Canoe Association’s Legends of Paddling award, and he also has received awards from the Cook County Board of Commissioners, the EPA, and the Bureau of the Interior.

One of his favorite stretches of river is the Lower Fox, from Yorkville to Wedron. He’s worked to have it designated the Historic Fox Valley Canoe Trail, and for years gave lectures on all its special features.

“It’s one of the most beautiful stretches of river in Illinois,” says Ralph.



Beautiful Bluffs

From Sheridan to Wedron . . .

Many people say this is the most scenic part of the Fox River because of its high sandstone bluffs and abundant wildlife. Start at Yorkville’s boat launch, or at Silver Springs State Park a little further down the river, and stop and explore the many islands along the way. You can camp at Silver Springs State Park or Mallard Bend Campground (www.mallardbend.com), which is about 3-4 hours by canoe from Yorkville, and then finish your trip the next day. Ayres Landing in Wedron is another campground, and a good spot to take out. If you choose to go past Wedron and on to Ottawa and the Illinois River, be aware that there is a very large dam on the Fox River near Dayton (40-foot drop). There are no dams between Yorkville and Wedron.



Glacial Park Conservation Area

6316 Harts Rd., Ringwood, IL 815-678-2219

Glacial Park is owned and managed by the McHenry County Conservation District and includes more than 3,200 acres of restored and scenic natural areas. The park features a diverse array of prairie, wetlands, savannas and glacial kames. The park houses the Wiedrich Education Center, the Powers-Walker House (historic), the Lost Valley Visitor Center and the Research Field Station. There are several miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. You can also canoe/kayak and fish in the Nippersink Creek, and picnic in several locations.

www.MCCDistrict.org



Glacial kames, hiking, fishing, boating . . .



Chain O' Lakes State Park,

8916 Wilmot Rd., Spring Grove, IL 847-587-5512

Located in the heart of Illinois' largest concentration of natural lakes, Chain O'Lakes State Park is a water-oriented recreation area with opportunities for boaters, anglers and skiers. There are several picnic areas and shelters, several miles of hiking trails and additional equestrian trails with horse rental, overnight camping and cabin rental, and many natural areas to explore and learn about nature. The park borders three natural lakes and the Fox River that connects seven additional lakes to make up the "chain."

<http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r2/chaino.htm>

The Proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

by Sandy Kaczmariski

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has recently initiated a study to evaluate the possibility of establishing a Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, which would protect valuable natural resources in the northern Fox watershed, as well as southern Wisconsin.

The review process is expected to be completed in 2011. The proposal was initiated by the Friends of Hackmatack, a group of local citizens who are working with the USFWS and other resource agencies to identify critical biological assets and to build community support for the refuge.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is a national network of public lands set aside specifically to protect wild animals and plants. Found in all 50 states and five U.S. territories and encompassing 95 million acres, 560 refuges currently exist. National Wildlife Refuges are special places with significant natural resources where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquires land and/or conservation easements.

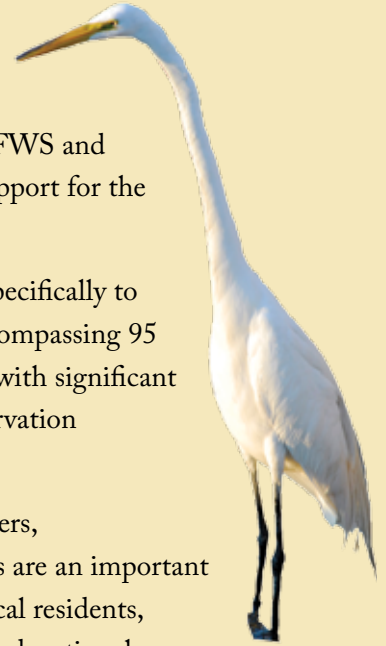
Wildlife Refuges in the United States are visited 34 million times a year, by birdwatchers, photographers, educators and researchers, hunters, fishermen, and hikers. These visitors are an important source of revenue for the local economy. Refuges also enhance the quality of life for local residents, both preserving the region's aesthetic beauty and affording numerous recreational and educational opportunities.

The Regional Benefits of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge:

- Link existing protected natural areas to form a large preserve of natural lands in Southeastern Wisconsin and Northeastern Illinois.
- Establish a mega-preserve encompassing thousands of acres of wetland habitat in the flyway of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. In recent years, other migratory waterfowl and shorebirds have flocked to nearby wetlands restored on McHenry County Conservation District lands, in northeast Illinois and along the flyway in southeast Wisconsin.
- Further protect the watershed of Nippersink Creek, a beautiful stream in both Illinois and Wisconsin that is home to rare fish, mussels and the river otter.
- Expand recreational opportunities in an area known for its canoeing and biking with trail connections north into Wisconsin and the White River Trail, south through the Fox River Valley and the Grand Illinois Trail and west towards Rockford and Beloit.
- Provide birding opportunities for the large Metro Chicago area birdwatching market, recently estimated to generate \$356 million per year in economic activity.
- Provide the Gateway Communities of Richmond, Genoa City, Pell Lake and Lake Geneva, with their rich history, antique stores and unique shops, the opportunity for further development as a hub for nature tourism and the cultural history of the region.

Friends of Hackmatack has a website where you can learn more about the process to create this national wildlife refuge in our own watershed, as well as sign an online petition in support.

Visit the website at: hackmatacknwr.org





Trout Park Nature Preserve

576 Trout Park Blvd., Elgin, IL 847-931-6100

The 26-acre Trout Park Nature Preserve is about as good as it comes to experiencing high quality Fox River spring and seep areas, which are scattered up and down the river valley.

The undisturbed woodlands extend from drier cliff tops to moist depressions located on the lower slope. The diverse topography, coupled by the calcareous nature of the water, combines to provide rich and unique habitats for uncommon plants and animals. A short walking path helps you explore this unique site. There is no other place like it in Illinois.

<http://dnr.state.il.us/inpc/directory/sitefiles/area2/troka.htm>

Geological sites, windmills, riverboats . . .



Pottawatomie Park

8 North Ave., St. Charles, IL 630-513-6200

Pottawatomie Park is 92 acres of family fun located along the east bank of the Fox River. Owned and managed by the St. Charles Park District, the park contains a 9-hole golf course, community center, swimming pools, mini-golf course, picnic and pavilion areas, paddlewheel boat and canoe rental, concessions, athletic fields and a host of other recreational amenities. The native plant demonstration garden is located behind the community center and displays many native wildflowers found in our local woodlands and natural areas.

www.stcparks.org/Parks/Pottawatomie-Park.asp



Fabyan Forest Preserve

1925 Batavia Ave., Batavia, IL 630-232-5980

The 235-acre Fabyan Forest Preserve is a very popular preserve, owing to its location on the Fox River and its numerous natural and historic features. Thousands of visitors spend hours fishing along its river shores and thousands more jog and bike along the trails and across the river bridge. Others explore the historic elements remaining in the preserve, especially the Fabyan Villa Museum, the Japanese Garden and the Fabyan Windmill. Additional facilities include a boat/canoe launch, picnic areas and shelters and winter sports activities.

www.kaneforest.com



Jelke Creek Bird Sanctuary

between Rt. 31 and Sleepy Hollow Road., Sleepy Hollow, IL 847-428-8092

Owned and managed by Dundee Township, this former gravel pit site of 244 acres is known for its outstanding birding and restored prairie, wetlands, ponds and other natural areas. There are several miles of trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding, and a pavilion for picnicking. Jelke Creek is a tributary to the Fox River, and you can also visit nearby Dixie Fromm Briggs Park, Sleepy Hollow Ravine, and the Brunner Family Forest Preserve, all within a few minutes drive from each other. They all provide a unique Fox River experience.

www.dundee-township.org

trails, Blackhawk War site

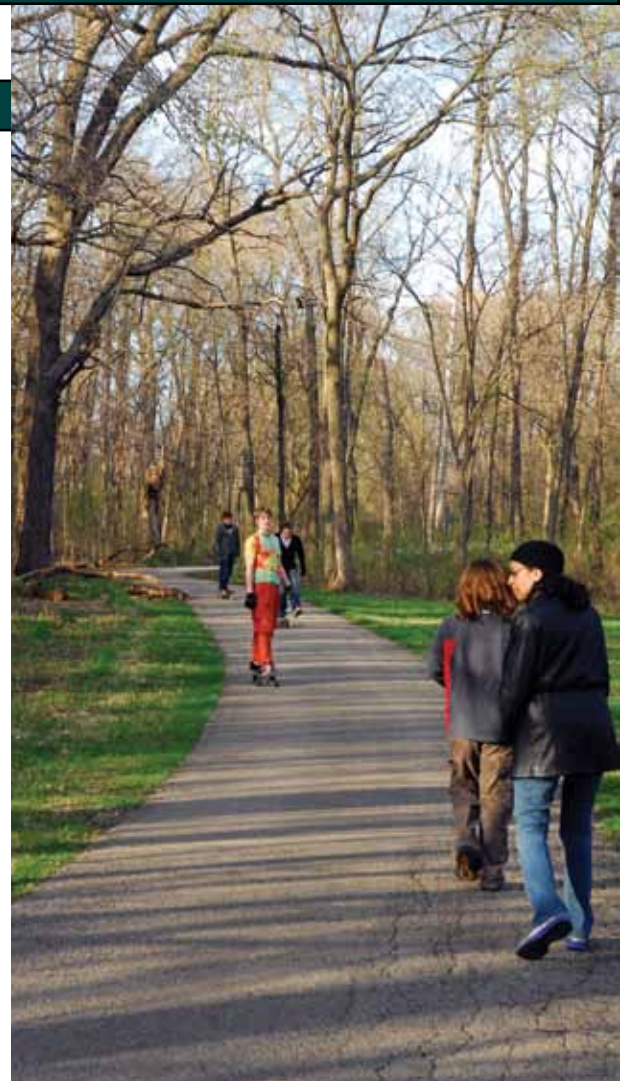
Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve

35W003 Rt. 31, South Elgin, IL 630-232-5980

Owned and managed by the Kane County Forest Preserve District, this large natural area is located at a “crook” along the west bank of the Fox River and is a historic burial site of unknown soldiers of General Scott’s Army. A large wood-carved statue of Chief Blackhawk is situated at the preserve’s entrance, indicative of the Fox Valley’s rich Native American history.

There are several hiking and biking trails that lead through woodlands and prairies, and along the Fox River where you can fish and launch a boat or canoe. There are picnic facilities and plenty of places for birdwatching.

www.kaneforest.com





Fox River Heroes

James Phillips aka "The Fox"

1930-2001

A middle school science teacher for 10 years and a field inspector for the Kane County Environmental Dept., Jim became internationally known as a Robin Hood-type folk hero operating under the pseudonym "The Fox." His 30-year clandestine campaign to raise awareness of the pollution of the environment by corporations began in March 1969, and included targeting local companies for their pollution of lakes, creeks, streams and stormwater run-off through sabotage like plugging up drain pipes and leaving dead fish at corporate headquarters.

Nature Center, new Forest Preserve



**Red Oak Nature Center,
2343 S. River St. (Rt. 25)**

North Aurora, IL 630-897-1808

Owned by the Fox Valley Park District, this family and youth oriented nature center is located deep in a 40-acre woods along the east bank of the Fox River. You'll learn about nature's secrets along the wooded paths and from the nature center's exhibits, and enjoy the seasonal beauty of the forest ecosystem. An observation deck provides

a wonderful view of the Fox River and a short trail will take you to the legendary Devil's Cave, a popular attraction. The center's exhibits are hands-on and children will love to interact and learn about nature.

www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org



**Grassy Lake Forest Preserve,
*Lake Barrington***

At nearly 700 acres and owned by the Lake County Forest Preserve District, this beautiful property overlooks the Fox River and preserves more than 4,000 linear feet of river shoreline. Trails and public access sites are being planned and built, and the land will go under a significant restoration program. Volunteers are needed.

www.lcfpd.org

Fox River advocate Ralph Frese remembers his friend, The Fox, and one of their adventures:

“There was a property where a landowner had a silica mine, just upstream from Wedron,” Ralph recalled.

“They were filling in a canyon to make a washing dam. It was near this rare red pine, and we were complaining about the desecration of plant life on the bluffs. I wrote to state forestry asking them to come down and look at what they were doing. The night before they came, the Fox and I went down the river and he tacked up a four-foot sign on a dead tree - *What God giveth, Owens Illinois Taketh Away*. We did a number of things like that. It was fun over the years.”

At the end, when Jim was in the hospital, he called Ralph. “He had diabetes and he was about to lose his leg. He said to me, ‘Ralph, what was the most important thing I’ve done? Was it working with kids?’

“I think the most important thing was the unique way he alerted the community that there was a problem with the river. He left his little message with a logo and he got the media to expand his message, all over the world. The Bangkok newspapers reported ‘The Kendall County Fox strikes again.’

“He made the point that it is possible for one person to make a difference in this world.”

Aurora's RiverEdge Park www.riveredgeparkaurora.org

by Sandy Kaczmarek

By 2013, yet another addition will be added to the ever-changing landscape of Aurora's downtown: the 30-acre RiverEdge Park on the Fox River will be ready for open air events, picnickers, and hikers and bikers enjoying a new view.

The ambitious project is described as part urban, part natural that will be designed with green technology. RiverEdge Park will provide a place for community events and recreational opportunities as well as restore some natural areas along the river.



The highlight of the park is a curved pedestrian bridge spanning the banks of the Fox by a single mast cable suspension system. The bridge crosses through Blue Island which will be restored with native plant species and serve as a mid-river nature sanctuary. A major element of the park is a music garden providing an outdoor performance venue seating up to 9,500 people, including a lawn and rooftop viewing area. A bit further north, a new wetland will be created at the mouth of Indian Creek, which flows into the Fox River. By restoring this natural filter and creating an urban wildlife habitat, the riverfront will become a classroom that can be studied at the new environmental center.



On the western riverbank, Wilder Park will offer beautiful views of the river on the site of the former police station. In its place will be a scenic area for community gatherings, a weekend marketplace and special events staging.

Throughout the Fox River Watershed, citizens are banding together and finding ways to clean up and protect their local streams. Whether it's the small tributary that flows through their subdivision, or the creek that drains adjacent agricultural areas, residents understand that what ends up in their local creeks ends up in the Fox River.

There are several ongoing organized efforts to protect local tributary streams to the Fox River.

If you would like to get involved in helping to protect your local creek or watershed, contact

The Conservation Foundation at 630-428-4500,

or visit

www.preservethefox.org

or

www.foxriverecosystem.org

Protecting the Fox River's tributaries

stories by Sandy Kaczmariski

Bill and Nancy Cox of St. Charles have a vested interest in the health of area watersheds -- Ferson Creek flows through their Wildrose Springs subdivision, right behind their house.

"We are very interested in restoring the health of the creeks," Nancy said. "That's our bottom line."

They first got involved a few years ago when they volunteered for the St. Charles Park District in monitoring Otter Creek at Silver Glen, which flows into Ferson Creek. They also became concerned after watching development to the north continue to dump stormwater runoff into the creeks, causing them to become channelized.

Since everyone lives in a watershed, which is an area of land that drains into a stream, lake, or wetland, the Coxes try to educate the homeowners along the creek to help them understand what's going into it and how that impacts them. She and Bill are the catalysts to getting their neighbors energized to get involved.



"Our volunteers go into the community and pass along the information," she said. "It's been an incredibly rewarding experience to get involved."



Mary Ochsenschlager has been involved in watershed planning for Blackberry Creek for more than 10 years. The creek runs through her property in Sugar Grove before entering the Fox River in Yorkville.

“We see what the problems are and what kinds of things can be done to solve them,” she said.

One of the main problems she sees is potentially unsafe levels of bacteria in the water caused by stormwater runoff and old septic systems, and “who knows what.”

“We’re exploring what kinds of things can be done to get the numbers down, making it safer and cleaner, not just for us, but for all of downstream,” she said. Downstream includes the Fox and Illinois Rivers, and other waterways flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.

Mary said the Environmental Protection Agency is charged with working on solutions under the Clean Water Act and needs input from stakeholders to solve problems they see in their areas.

“It’s interesting to bring these different people together with different points of view,” she said. “I’m an environmentalist, but there are farmers, engineers, and developers involved in the discussions. When people are open-minded, everyone comes to understand each other and we are able to find a consensus.”



A Model for 'Green' Architecture

Judson University is located near the Fox River in Elgin. The University's Harm A. Weber Academic Center's genuinely 'green' design begins and ends with energy consciousness.

Judson opened the copper-colored, 88,000-square-foot building, located at IL. Rt. 31 (State Street) and I-90, in 2007. The use of a building-integrated photovoltaic system and other thermal recovery features, like natural ventilation and natural day-lighting, makes the Harm A. Weber Academic Center one of the "greenest" buildings in the United States.



The facility's integrated thermal energy recovery system is designed to minimize life-cycle costs while providing a healthy environment for study and work. It cuts operational fossil fuel costs by at least 50% by optimizing solar gains in the spring and fall, allowing the building to run naturally, with little or no mechanical intervention, for six or more months of the year. The system also cuts environmental 'costs', as it allows the building to release considerably less or possibly even zero CFC's (chloro-fluoro carbons) into the community.

The facility is designed to meet the standards of the U.S. Department of Energy high-performance buildings and in 2009 earned a LEED Gold rating by the U.S. Green Building Council, the national organization that certifies and rates when a building has met green building and performance measures.

For more information, visit www.judsonu.edu.

Fox River Heroes

Cindy

Skrukrud



Cindy Skrukraud says she has always been interested in conservation issues. But it wasn't until she moved to Solon Mills in McHenry County in 1988 that she really became involved.

"I was working at the University of Illinois at Chicago as a biochemist at the time and I joined the McHenry County Defenders, a 40-year-old county-based environmental group that deals with all sorts of environmental issues, like protecting ground water," she says.

In 1990 Cindy became president of the Defenders, and then in 1993, when the group's executive director left, she resigned her job at the U of I to fill that position.

Cindy, who also is on the board of Friends of the Fox River, says one of her proudest achievements is the creation of that organization's Fox River Study Group, which she has chaired. It has brought a diverse group of interested public and private parties together to monitor the Fox River's water quality and to plan for the future.

"Every segment of the Fox River has some problems . . . You have to realize you just keep working on it and things improve and people see the value of what you are working on, and things improve a little more."

McHenry County



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Come nose-to-nose with a bullfrog...

Slide a canoe along the shores of the Fox River...

Cast a line and reel in a trout or largemouth bass...

Ride the trails and witness the changing seasons...

Listen for the calls of the Sandhill crane...

Leave a legacy in a replanted prairie or restored marsh...

Get up close and personal with ancient oaks and glacial remnants...

McHenry County Conservation District invites you to connect with nature at any one of our 29 sites where you can witness wildflowers in bloom and see wildlife scamper by as they wander through woodlands, wetlands and prairies. Hike and bike over 50 miles of trails, picnic in the cool grass, camp beneath the stars, fish at tranquil lakes and rivers, paddle by canoe or kayak along Nippersink Creek, run and jump and skip and play!

Conserve

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McHenry County

CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MCCDistrict.org 815.338.6223

*"This was our country.
We lived in it and loved it.
Take care of it as we did."*

Excerpt from
a speech
given by
Chief Blackhawk
in 1836
after he
had been exiled
to Iowa.

*Paid for by
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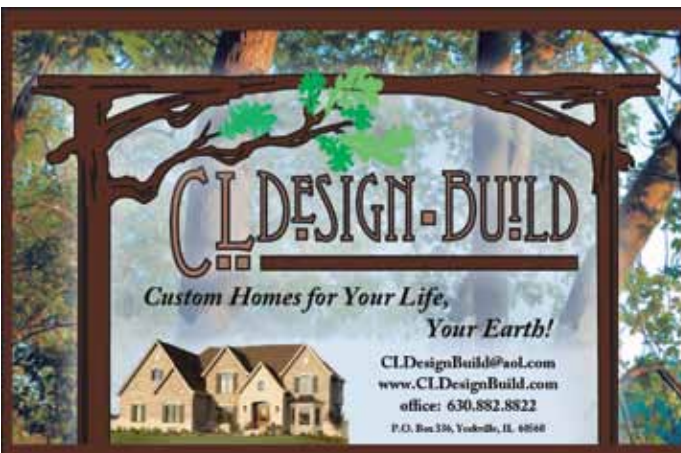
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St. Charles Park District Celebrates 100th Anniversary...

And it all started with some prime property along the Fox River - Pottawatomie Park!

Summer is a splendid time for family, friends and neighbors to enjoy leisurely activities. With its rolling hills and proximity to the Fox River, beautiful Pottawatomie Park always has been and will continue to offer picnicking and more for swimming, golfing, boating, people of all ages.



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- 18-Hole Miniature Golf
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- Softball Field
- Native Plant Demonstration Garden
- Biking - Paved Trail System
- Fishing (State Requirements Apply)
- Two Playgrounds
- Parking Lots
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**FIREWORKS
AND CONCERTS!**

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YOUR
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Pottawatomie Park is located along the east edge of the beautiful Fox River, within walking distance of downtown and located 4 blocks north of Rt. 64 and 3 blocks west of Rt. 25 (turn west on local North Avenue).

For more information, visit stcparks.org



Get Involved Today!

Grassy Lake Forest Preserve

We need your help to restore and improve this magnificent 689-acre preserve overlooking the scenic Fox River. Our revitalization plan includes:

Hiking Trails • Canoe Access
Interpretive Programs • Restored Wetlands
Scenic Overlook • Bridges & Boardwalks

To volunteer or make a charitable donation, call 847-968-3110 or contact donate@lcfpd.org.


Grassy Lake Forest Preserve is located off Kelsey Road, north of Route 22 in Barrington.



Preservation Foundation
of the Lake County Forest Preserves

Less than 3% of property taxes go to support the Lake County Forest Preserves. Charitable donations are essential.

1899 W. Winchester Road, Libertyville, IL 60048
www.lcfpd.org/donate




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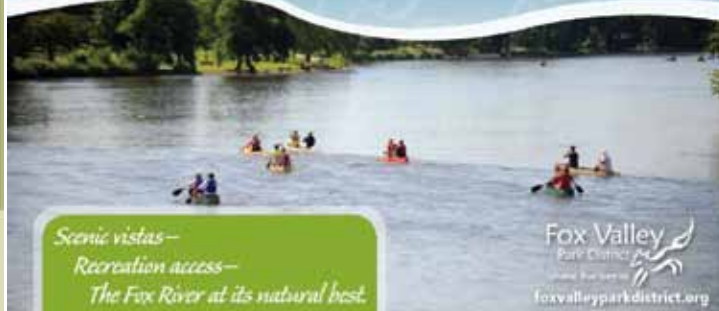
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Fox Valley Park District

Our Mission . . .

Enrich our community with fun, diverse and safe park and recreation experiences through environmentally and fiscally responsible actions.



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A nonprofit organization of stakeholders established to promote, preserve, protect and enhance the natural, cultural, economic, and recreational resources of the Fox River and its watershed



Chain-O-Lakes State Park, Spring Grove

Our vision for the Fox River watershed in Illinois is to balance all the uses and demands on our natural resources while preserving and enhancing a healthy environment.



Fox River Bluffs, Algonquin

FREP is your connection to valuable resources:

- Funding sources
- Programs featuring environmental projects throughout the watershed
- Subwatershed Plans & other watershed groups
- Networking with other stakeholders, professionals, organizations, governments and agencies within the Fox River watershed
- Website with helpful information & links

Website: foxriverecosystem.org

Email: info@foxriverecosystem.org



Moraine Hills State Park, McHenry

Photography courtesy of Ray Mathis



Protecting the Fox River...

starts in your own backyard.



What Is Conservation @ Home?

It is a program that recognizes home owners who...

- **Protect** and/or create yards that are environmentally friendly and conserve water
- **Utilize** native plantings that need little watering, no fertilizers, and have deep roots that help infiltrate rain where it falls, carrying the moisture deep into the ground to replenish our aquifers
- **Forward** the Foundation's mission of protecting open space and cleaning up our rivers, providing conservation education, and engaging other homeowners to "think globally and act locally."

For more information or to get your property certified as "environmentally-friendly":

Visit www.theconservationfoundation.org

Call Naperville (630) 428-4500 or Montgomery (630) 553-0687

or E-mail: info@theconservationfoundation.org



Celebrate the Fox River

with the Kane County Forest Preserves

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Preserves are open dawn to dusk, 365 days

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Brunner Family Forest Preserve, Dundee
Buffalo Park Forest Preserve, Algonquin
Elgin Shores Forest Preserve, Elgin
Fabyan Forest Preserve, Geneva
Fox River Bluff Forest Preserve, St. Charles
Fox River Bluff West Forest Preserve, St. Charles
Fox River Shores Forest Preserve, Carpentersville
Glenwood Park Forest Preserve, Batavia
Gunnar Anderson Forest Preserve, Geneva
Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve, South Elgin
Les Arends Forest Preserve, Batavia
Poplar Creek Forest Preserve, Elgin
Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve, St. Charles
Voyageurs Landing Forest Preserve, Elgin

Boat/Canoe Launches

Fishing permitted per IDNR regulations

Fabyan Forest Preserve, Geneva
Fox River Shores Forest Preserve, Carpentersville
Jon J. Duerr Forest Preserve, South Elgin
Voyageurs Landing Forest Preserve, Elgin

Fox River Trail

Walk, bicycle, jog or cross-country ski

One of the most-popular trail systems in the District, the Fox River Trail runs the length of Kane County, from Algonquin to Aurora. Use the Fox River Trail to connect to other major regional trails including the Great Western Trail and Illinois Prairie Path.



Web
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