Way of the WILDS

Celebrating our wilderness connections in the Chicago Region

Complimentary • SPRING 2011

Our Creeks & Streams

The Littlest Creatures

Paddling the Kishwaukee

River Otters

Rain Gardens

"[The Tree speaks]: Come to me, here beside the River.
Plant yourself beside the River."

—Maya Angelou

WAY OF THE WILDS

This free magazine educates and informs through articles written by local experts, offering ideas for experiencing and taking ownership and pride in the earth and its processes around them. We are dedicated to providing local photography and information of interest to those involved in local stewardship as well as pieces of interest for everyone interested in conservation, recreation and their families.

Publishers:
Debbie Mackall, Kerry Leigh

A portion of every issue of *Way of the Wilds* is donated to support our natural resources.

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Editorial
Please send your editorial suggestions or other correspondence to debbie@wayofthewilds.com.

As beautiful as the winter is, and with my love of the changing seasons, still there is a wonderful thrill as Spring arrives. The smell of freshness in the air, the returning birds and wildlife emerging, all feels magical to me.

In this issue we are highlighting streams and rivers in our region, and feature some great articles I'm sure you'll enjoy.

This is the third issue of Way of the Wilds, and I'm hoping we can continue publishing and distributing this important magazine. The biggest challenge has been funding, as I know so many are feeling these days. If you or anyone you know is interested in advertising, investing, or has ideas to share, email me at debbie@wayofthewilds.com— please don't hesitate to write. My intention has been to expand the awareness of the natural world in our area. I'd love (and need) to have additional support and involvement!

This issue introduces expanded articles on our website— you'll see the green www icon (at right) near these articles. Just go to the website, click on the issue and a larger version will open for you. You can download this pdf, or read it online.

Happy planting, and I hope to see you again with the summer issue!
—Debbie Mackall, Publisher

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Cover photo by Ray Mathis

STREAMS

The Magical Bond Between Earth & Water

By Frank Veraldi

A stream is a magical bond between two elements, earth and water– bound unto themselves, bound together, and pulled through the landscape by gravity. A stream is a ribbon of life etching a mosaic– barren and lush; scoured and piled; torrential and tranquil. This ribbon of life, when healthy, maintains a delicate balance between the water, the soil, the creatures and the plants.

When streams have room to move around in their active floodplains they create backwaters, oxbow lakes, wetland depressions and riparian grasslands. When streams are prevented from this dance of dynamic self creation, these diverse wetlands begin to vanish from the landscape as we have seen in our urban streams that have been restricted in their movement by channelization. By not allowing a stream to erode and move in the landscape, and by making the riparian zone all the same, the stream and its biology begins to die.

In the beginning…

A stream begins with a drop of water on a leaf, perhaps in an oak savanna on a hill of piled sands and gravels. The drop is pulled by gravity through root, soil and till. Deep below the hill, the drop joins with billions of others which collectively we call groundwater. Due to the cohesive nature of water, gravity is briefly over-powered setting a spring into motion, pushing up and through the earth. The spring boils into a seep, where the cohesive forces of the water have sliced a small escape wedge through the ground materials once deposited by great glaciers.

Falling down the rim of the valley, the velocity of the conjoined drops gather speed, and transfer energy back into the earth by tumbling gravel and carrying clay. This process is called sediment transport, and without it, a stream would not have a diverse array of stream bottoms or substrates, nor the ability to fertilize its floodplain. Several more seeps join each other as our first drop from the oak savanna leaf arrives at the bottom of the valley rim, now a full-fledged creek.

This newfound energy begins to push larger pieces of earth, but carves shrewdly as the bonded droplets are pulled by gravity the quick and easy way. The liquid ribbon begins to spin: first left then right, then left, then right again. This is called helical flow, and important creek fish such as hornyhead chub and common shiner rely on this process to bring them food. Large piles of stone begin to sort where elevation changes are greatest. The increased velocity from a quick drop in elevation slings the liquid ribbon that

is our creek to the opposite side of the channel spearing the bank and bed. The spinning ribbon, like a corkscrew, shaves off clay, sand and stone from the bank, and in one motion, drops them to the other side of the channel just downstream. This process is called cut and fill alluviation which produces that classical snakelike meandering pattern of a creek viewed from the sky looking down.

A summer thunderstorm swells the creek so that it overtops its banks and begins to flow faster with much momentum. The liquid ribbon is no longer a delightful cork screw, but a raging deluge of suspended rock and stone. This is called a channel forming event in which the water reworks both the channel and the floodplain into new configurations. A weakened clay bank gives way to this natural sandblaster– its plants, soil, and till melt away into the flow.

A week after the storm the shrunken deluge has returned to the clear liquid ribbon from ground fed droplets. The aftermath is revealed; the stream now flows left where it once flowed right, and in its place is left a weakly connected backwater that will slowly fade into the surrounding woodland– a masked footprint of what once was.

At the first terrace of the valley, the changes in elevation are slight, and gravity gently loosens its grip and creates a hemi-marsh, a mix of vegetation and open water that is bowl shaped with a wet prairie rim. Here the liquid ribbon loses much of its energy and the corkscrew stops spinning. The stream splits into braided paths, and in some areas, just a mass jumbling of reeds and open water. At the edge of this terrace, a narrow outlet releases the liquid ribbon back into a helical knife– this sediment free ribbon is now an extra fine blade. As the ribbon of water falls down the side of the ancient river valley terrace, it gobbles up clay, sand and gravel, creating a large ravine, the floor of which is now occupied by a very large creek.

And Now From Creek to River….

The wet prairie has long turned into dark forest. The vast floodplain of the Illinois River has now silted in with upland clays to create prime conditions for huge trees. The once oak savanna spring now transfers its mass of water to the greater river, becoming one with the helical energy that drives stream life, the magical bond between earth and water.

The same forces that drive life on earth also govern the universe we know. Without these forces there can be no life. Stream life requires the constant pressure of an applied force of flowing water called hydraulics. The word hydraulic comes from the Greeks, "hydr"– water and "aulos"– musical instrument. These forces, as intended by nature, are impeccably musical. Streams can be beautiful melodies that erode and deposit, and resonate through and over the land.

Frank Veraldi is a biologist with the US Army Corps of Engineers at the Chicago District.

Turtle photo by Brian Tang, stream photo by Hank Erdmann

Community Involvement

The exciting discovery of a young Slippershell mussel, an Illinois State Threatened Species, by a volunteer in the meanders last August was an early encouraging sign that the restoration may offer high quality habitat to support diverse species.

StreamLeaders

By Laura Barghusen

Making a Difference on our Waterways

We started the *StreamLeaders* volunteer program at *OpenLands* with partners such as the *Illinois Department of Natural Resources* and *Shedd Aquarium* in 1995 to encourage volunteerism and facilitate partnerships between volunteers and professionals to undertake projects that would improve stream habitat.

The volunteers come from many different backgrounds: engineers who want to better understand the waters for which they design systems; a lawyer and his family looking for something fun to do together; students seeking experience in the field; teachers who want to bring lessons back to their classrooms; artists who seek inspiration in nature; and volunteer site stewards who want to get more involved. What they have in common is their love of being out in the water, in prairies and woodlands, people who want to connect with life in the creek and learn how to evaluate the health of creeks and rivers to make a difference in preserving and protecting the places they love.

StreamLeaders volunteers put on waders and step off the banks and into the water. Working quickly, they scoop up fish that have been momentarily stunned by a fisheries biologist using a backpack electroshocker. Later, they kneel in the water and push their hands into the streambed feeling for native mussels embedded in the sand, silt or cobbles. Finally they do the "riffle dance" moving their feet quickly to dislodge macroinvertebrates from riffle rocks and drive them into a net. Back on land, the sorting, separating, and identifying begins. Volunteers learn to tell stonefly larva from sowbugs, and know the differences between a White and a Creek Heelsplitter mussel. The goal is to see how healthy the stream and it's biological community is. Of course there must be number crunching, and counts have to be put into equations such as the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) for fish, the Mussel Classification Index (MCI), and the Macroinvertebrate Biotic Index (MBI), before we can say how diverse or healthy the stream is.

For the past two years, *StreamLeaders* have been monitoring a project, for the *Forest Preserve District of Will County*, to re-meander a straightened section of Spring Creek in New Lenox, returning it to a more natural condition. Water moves very quickly through straightened channels, resulting in erosion and loss of high quality habitat. The meanders were recreated using a historic photograph as reference, the ditched section was filled in, and the creek waters redirected through the meanders.

Laura is the Associate Greenways Director at Openlands. To learn more or to volunteer go to www.openlands.org.

The Littlest Creatures

By Jim Bland

On a recent trip to Alaska my wife and I were introduced to grizzly bears, sea lions, humpbacked whales, and bald eagles. These reasonably can be called charismatic megafauna. They are easy to see and easily capture people's imagination. Whales feed on krill, a microcrustacean; bears, eagles, and sea lions feed on fish, which in turn feed on tiny invertebrates in the water. To my mind the littlest creatures of the natural world don't get enough exposure. These littlest creatures are called "macroinvertebrates". The name is meant to convey that they are large enough to be seen by the naked eye, roughly 1 mm all the way up to 450 mm. Macroinvertebrates are critical creatures for the health of our stream fish. They are what are called the 'first producers' as they break up organic matter in the stream and in turn become food for the larger creatures.

One example of a macroinvertebrate group is stoneflies *(Plecoptera)*. They are typically found in fast flowing, highly oxygenated healthy streams. Some biologists regard stoneflies as one of the most endangered of the aquatic faunas. They are among the most sensitive organisms in response to stream degradation and habitat modification. It is thought that Illinois has lost about a third of its stonefly species.

We do not usually associate insects with winter months but there are two stonefly families which are dubbed "winter" stoneflies. In watersheds that get significant groundwater inputs, summer water temperatures can be cooler and winter temperatures warmer than in streams fed exclusively by surface run-off. Winter stoneflies have dark coloration and they have an anti-freeze substance in their bodies to resist winter low temperatures. Many families of stoneflies are active predators on other stream invertebrates; others are shredders, shredding leaf materials into edible fractions.

The Illinois RiverWatch Network is one of a variety of similar programs around the country designed to monitor the biological health of regional streams. This statewide program educates and trains volunteers to collect high quality data on the biological health of our regional streams. After training and outfitting with appropriate collection equipment, volunteers collect stream invertebrates, identify them, calculate various stream metrics based on their collection, and report their data to *RiverWatch*.

"Over 1700 individuals have received RiverWatch certification in stream monitoring and have collected an unprecedented amount of information for evaluating Illinois streams since the program was established in 1995. Data collected by volunteers over multiple years allows us to gauge the health and integrity of our streams and helps professionals make informed decisions about water resources." Vera Bojic, RiverWatch program manager for the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center.

For additional information about 'RiverWatch' or to request the power point presentation, contact Vera Bojic,at 618-468-2881 or email vbojic@lc.edu.

Jim Bland is the author of "Aquatic Macroinvertebrates of Illinois: A Supplement for the Illinois RiverWatch Program"which will be available through 'RiverWatch' in Spring of 2011.

Wild Spots

Flint Creek Watershed, Lake County

by Tom Vanderpoel

Flint Creek Preserves

Watershed Features

- 3-1/2 miles of limestone hiking trails traveling through large oaks
- Winds through 106 acre private preserve
- Beatuiful view of natural hill (Kame) which rises dramatically above the Fox River
- Winds through 3/4 mile with restord oak woods, prairies and wetlands.
- Nesting spots for spotted sandpipers, sedge and marsh wrens, swamp sparrows and sora rails as well as many others.

Flint Creek winds its way north through the Barrington area eventually finding the Fox River as it has done for millennia. In the late 1980s it was still surrounded by farm fields, rolling oak groves, and had intermittent riffles in the water that sparkled in the sunlight.

Tom is a biologist with Citizens for Conservation.

Turtles and duck on log, by Susan Clark, Marsh Wren photo by Brian Tang.

Citizens for Conservation, a nonprofit group in the Barrington area, could see a large wave of development coming in the 1990s, so it went to work on a plan that called for a greenbelt along the creek and surrounding areas. This unremarkable little creek led to a plan that has seen a twenty year quest to save some of this open space and restore its ecosystems. To date the creation of a 680 acre Lake County forest preserve called Grassy Lake, two Citizens for Conservation preserves totaling 150 acres, and two Village of Lake Barrington preserves totaling 50 acres all line up along the creek.

Grassy Lake Preserve

The Grassy Lake preserve has 3-1/2 miles of limestone hiking trails that travel through large oaks along the creek. Part of this trail allows tantalizing views of the Fox River which will be greatly enhanced when the 90 acre newest addition is opened. This section boasts a natural hill or 'kame' that rises dramatically above the Fox River and is full of history. When the trail veers away from the creek it takes you on a journey through even larger oak groves that rise above Grassy Lake and its large marsh.

Wagner Fen Nature Preserve

Wagner Fen is the northern terminus of the trail and is a 100 acre wetland that is co-owned by Citizens for Conservation and the Lake County Forest Preserve District. This fen is home to eight endangered species and is being managed intensely to keep the community from degrading and disappearing from an altered ground water regime. The section of Flint Creek that flows through the forest preserve has a B rating quality which is high for Lake County.

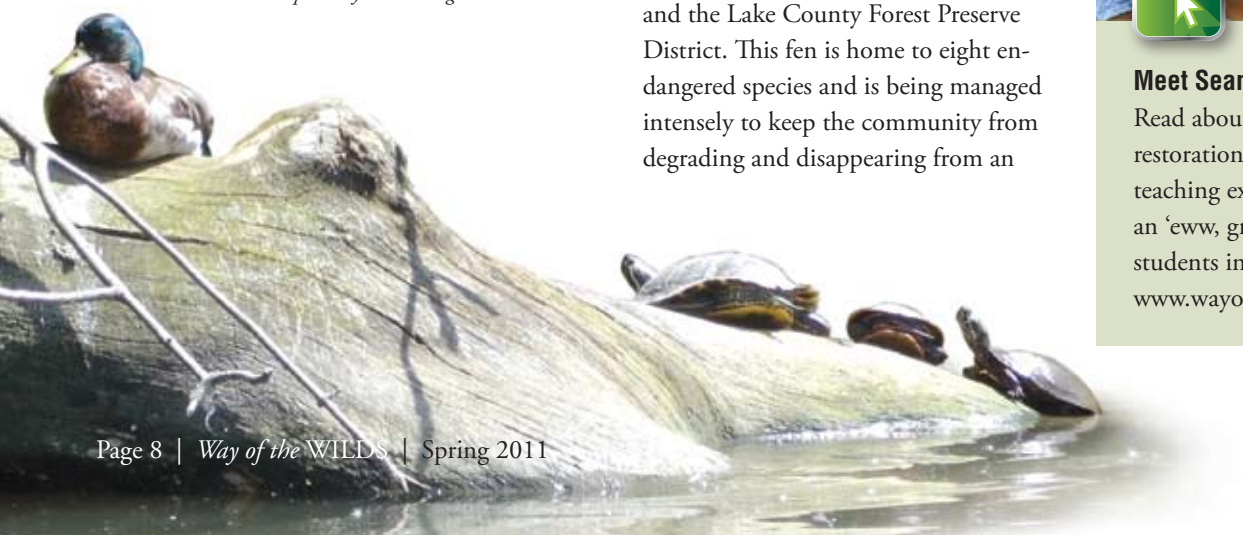
Parking for Grassy Lake and Wagner Fen Forest Preserves is at the Lake Barrington Village Hall located at Old Barrington Road just west of Miller Road.

Flint Creek Savanna

This savanna lies just south of Grassy Lake. The quality of the wetlands has encouraged a pair of sandhill cranes to nest for 14 consecutive years. Spotted sandpipers, sedge and marsh wrens, swamp sparrows and occasionally sora rails have found breeding homes in the wetland vegetation. Four species of frogs, toads, painted and snapping turtles live in what were once tiled and abandoned soybean fields. Habitat restrictive butterflies such as eyed-brown, black-dash skippers, and bronze coppers float above the sedges. You'll love it.

Parking is located off of Route 22 south of Good Shepherd Hospital. 847-382-7283. Permission is needed to access.

Meet Sean Schaffer.
Read about Sean's hands-on restoration work and memorable teaching experiences including an 'eww, gross' reaction from his students in the expanded issue at www.wayofthewilds.com.



Places to Play *by Steve Voss*

Paddling the Kishwaukee River

The arrival of spring marks the end of the long anticipation and the beginning of the paddling season for many enthusiasts. The Kishwaukee River is one of Chicagoland's paddling jewels and is one of the most paddled of the Illinois Water Trails.

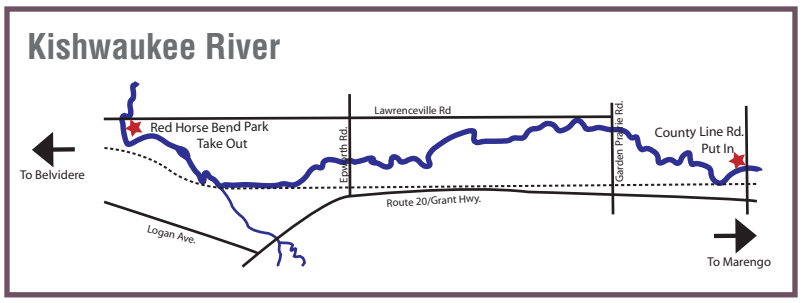
The Kishwaukee River system is made up of several branches and many tributaries totaling over 160 miles of canoeable waterways. Adopted in 1999, the Northeastern Illinois Water Trail System includes all of the Kishwaukee River as it flows through McHenry, Boone and Winnebago counties. Kishwaukee is the Potawatomi name for "sycamore tree.

The Kishwaukee is also one of the three highest water quality rivers in Illinois. The Illinois department of Natural Resources has classified the Kishwaukee as a "Class A" stream, meaning that it is amazingly clean and healthy.

The section of river for this paddle is County Line Road in Marengo to Red Horse Bend, just east of Belvidere. Along this three to four hour adventure, you'll encounter farm bridges and a few homes and farm buildings, but the character of this pristine small stream remains remarkably wild— wildlife is diverse and plentiful. As you silently paddle along, keep your senses sharp and tune into your surroundings. One can expect to see deer, mink, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, owls, vultures, great blue herons and various species of ducks. The river banks are mostly wooded and the spring forest floor will be in bloom.

Good boat handling skills will be needed to negotiate two very small runnable dams. Because of the many turns in the river and a possible downed tree, portaging is always a possibility. Breaks or lunch can be enjoyed on one of the sandbars or beaches you find along the way. They will also provide you with a wonderful opportunity for a swim.

Steve Voss is an avid paddler of well over 1500 miles a year. With over 40 years on the water, Steve is a member of the Prairie State Canoeists; Illinois Paddling Council's Paddler Patrol; Des Plaines River Water Trail Keeper and maintains the Nippersink Water Trail.



Put In Location: Route 20 west through Marengo to County Line Rd. Turn right on County Line Rd. past the "Bridge Out" signs to the end of the road. Unload and carry boats and gear to river. Many paddling clubs use this.

Take Out Location: From the Put In Location, drive south to Rt. 20 and turn right. Continue on Route 20 to Garden Prairie Rd. and turn right. Cross the bridge over the Kishwaukee River and turn left onto Lawrenceville Road to Red Horse Bend Park.

For more regional water trails information, check out the Northeastern Illinois Water Trails Map link: http://openlands.org/Northeastern-Illinois-Water-Trails/View-category.html

Don't Forget:

An approved PFD (personal flotation device),

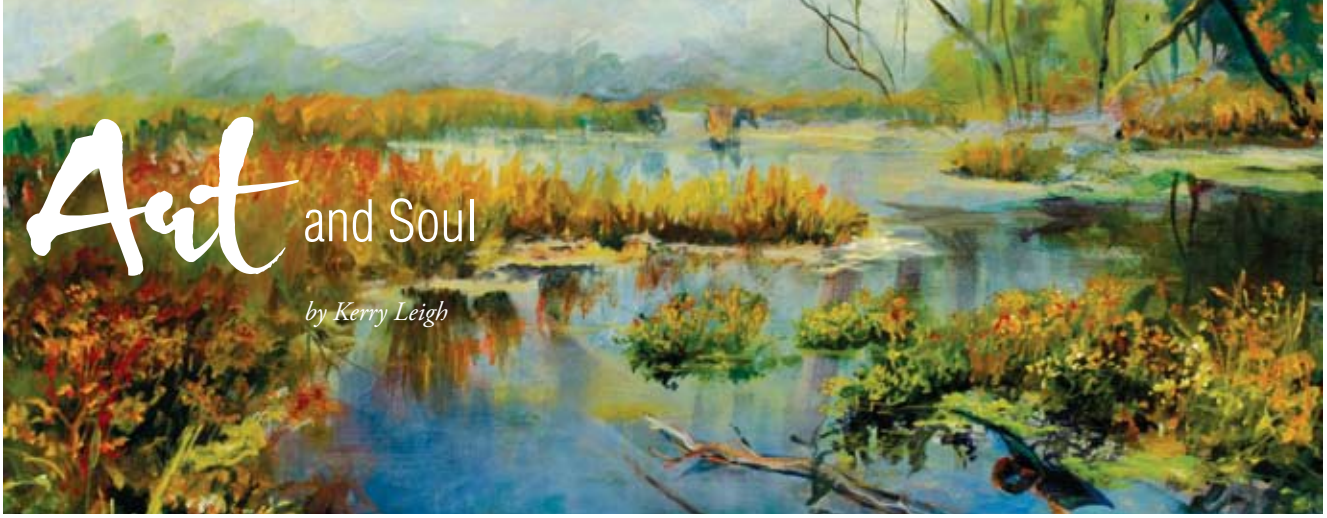
Whistle, extra paddle, bow/stern ropes,

Plenty of fluids, snacks/food, first aid kit,

Dry bag with rain gear and a change of clothes, Sunscreen, lip balm, hat and insect spray.

You are paddling on private lands so it is important to be respectful and carry out all of your trash.

Heron photo by Brian Tang



Art and Soul

by Kerry Leigh

Art today is caught on the horns of a dilemma as to its relevance. Photographers' skill and passions in capturing stunning images are escalating while at the same time 'schools' and 'movements' often declare nature art as irrelevant, passé, derivative. I believe that it is this, the meeting of souls between the artist, nature, and the viewer that make nature art, and art in general vital and very relevant.

— Melissa Pierson

Meet Melissa, a woman who loves water and mud.

She also loves butterflies and Rumi, and once spent entire days at the wrong time of year searching for skunk cabbage.

Her first memories were very visual, and she was always coloring, every surface around her.

Her tolerant parents were scientists and although her first degree was in biology, the visual kept tugging at her and she took classes in art.

> "Were I called on to define very briefly the term art, I should call it the reproduction of what the senses perceive in nature through the veil of the soul."
>
> —Edgar Allan Poe

When she was a butterfly monitor for *The Nature Conservancy* at Illinois Beach State Park, Melissa began to really understand the interactions of plants, insects and soil. This was her moment of crystallization, a moment where the richness, vibrancy and riotous colors of the natural world began to pour out of her in the medium of acrylics.

As I looked at her work, she spoke to me about what influenced her.

Melissa said, "I feel very fortunate to live in an area where people are informed and dedicated to maintaining their natural heritage. While the beauty of nature has a broad appeal to people everywhere, I believe that my paintings are particularly relevant to the people of Chicago. Much of what we know about habitat restoration was developed right here, and we have much to celebrate in that!"

Aldo Leopold, Monet and *Robert Bateman* were prime influences. Bateman in particular was an artist with a strong environmental ethic and a high standard of accuracy.

Melissa's paintings are bold, rich, full of depth, movement and life. They express a passionate understanding of the wholeness of life in a fragmented world, and intimately reflect the soul of the woman.

Melissa has also begun pen and ink botanical drawings, learning how to still the artists' hand. Her desire is not just for accuracy, but for these drawings to retain an "aliveness" that many botanical drawings strive for.

See Melissa's work at: melissabluefineartandgardendesign.com

Young Wild Explorers

River Otters

by Denise Collins

As winter slowly ends, all of nature eagerly awaits the coming of spring and animals of all kinds prepare for their young to be born. This time of year, the river otters in the waterways of Northern Illinois choose their mates. Last year, at Glacial Park in McHenry County, one pair of otters found a deserted muskrat den and made it their home.

River otters, like so many animals, are sensitive to water pollution and will disappear from areas with polluted water. Their new home in the wetlands of Glacial Park gave them plenty of space along the winding Nippersink Creek. Otters are carnivorous. This means they eat other animals to survive. Their diet is mostly fish but they'll eat just about anything they find including eggs and young birds, shellfish, and insects.

Besides hunting, otters spend most of the spring, summer, and fall playing. Otters play more than most wild animals do. They wrestle, play tag with each other, and slide on the river banks. They'll also toss clamshells and fetch them just like a dog fetches sticks!

Two or three babies are usually born to a litter in the early spring. The baby otters are called kits and are helpless at birth. But soon they'll be ready to learn everything their mother can teach them like how to swim and hunt. Mother otters have even been known to catch and release prey so their little ones can quickly improve their hunting skills. Otter dads rarely help.

Otter kits grow quickly. When they're about two months old they'll start exploring outside their den. Three months after that they'll be hunting for themselves. The young otters leave home when they're about twelve months old because by then, their mother has a new litter of kits to raise. The young otters at Glacial Park will spend the spring, summer, and fall playing their otter games. In two years, they too will settle down and raise their own families.

Denise is the author of several novels and children's books and is a keen observer of the natural world. She lives at Glacial Park with her husband Ed.

Did You Know?

- River otter ears and noses can open and close just like our eyelids do? This special feature is very useful for swimming underwater.
- They have extra long whiskers to help them feel their way through murky water?
- River otters, like skunks, are Mustelids? They both have stinky scent glands that they use to mark their territory.
- You can learn more about river ottersat:www.defenders.org/wildlife_and_habitat/wildlife/river_otter.php

Turtle photo by Robert Visconti

Field Guide

Find out who lives in and around our streams, including where baby turtles come from. Read this in the expanded edition on the web at www.wayofthewilds.com

Our Lakes and Ponds

by Keith Gray

In nature, water bodies accumulate sediment and nutrients over centuries before they become home to algae and heavy aquatic growth. In urban areas like the Chicago region, lakes and ponds often become nutrient rich and overgrown much more quickly. Managing these resources so that they are attractive, functional, and even more importantly, a safe habitat for desirable wildlife can be a challenge.

Continuing to treat symptoms instead of addressing the cause of nuisance (aquatic) growth might get short-term results, but long term it's costly because the problem never really goes away. Progressive, responsible companies should consider options aside from the traditional chemical applications. Aquatic resource managers are looking at the claims made by the sellers of enzymes and bacteria to improve water quality, but phosphorus is elemental, and no matter what you do, it will always be phosphorus. Further studies are needed to get a better idea of their potential for commercial use.

Since phosphorus is a leading cause of unsightly (and potentially toxic) algae blooms, controlling phosphorus is a logical step in a proactive management plan. Aluminum sulfate, or other clay based products with free radicals, tie up the phosphorus dissolved in the water, and make it unavailable for algal consumption. If native aquatic plants are introduced, their root systems stabilize the soil, produce oxygen, and create habitat for organisms that actually feed on algae.

Once the phosphorous is settled out of the water column it can re-dissolve into the water if there is not enough oxygen. Aerators (fountains and diffusers) do a great job of mixing, and therefore oxygenating a pond, which keeps the phosphorus in the sediment and unavailable for algae. In response to the greater need for non-chemical solutions, manufacturers have developed innovative equipment to assist in these tasks. Tools on these machines can be interchanged to harvest aquatic growth, remove sediment, or access places to do stabilization work that couldn't be accessed previously. For ponds and sections of water where access in a developed area is tough, these options go a long way to economically address water management proactively.

Keith is secretary for Mettawa Open Lands Assoc., a board member for National Ecological Contractors Assoc., and Liberty Prairie Conservancy. He is also the founder of an environmental laboratory and the president of Integrated Lakes Management.

Other ways to reduce phosphorus in the water include:

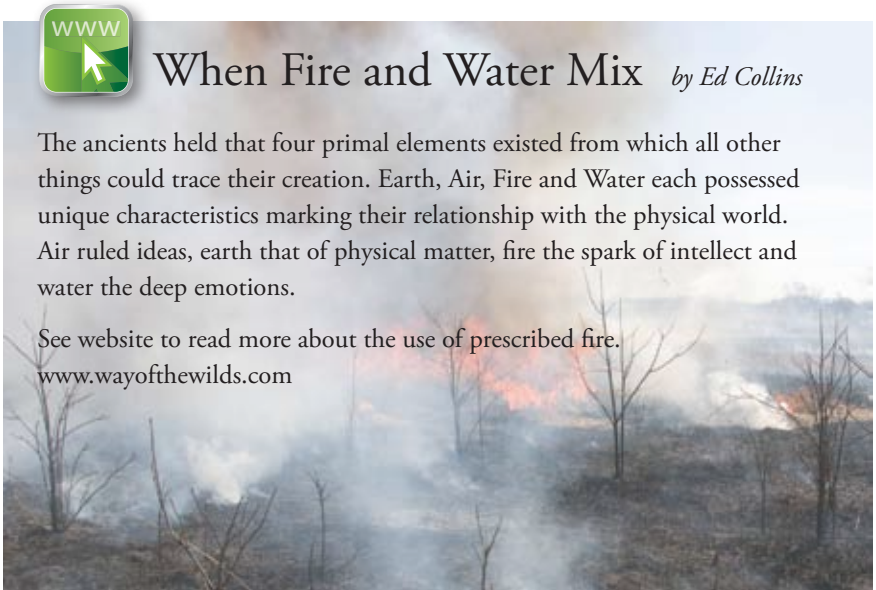
- discouraging geese, whose waste is very nutrient rich;
- eliminating phosphorus in lawn fertilizers (the middle number should be '0'on the label);
- reducing erosion in the watershed, specifically along the shoreline where nutrient rich soil accumulate in the lake and reduce water depth, leading to conditions (nutrients, sunlight, warmer water) that promote algae growth; and
- removing the sediment and/or aquatic growth from the water body.

When Fire and Water Mix

by Ed Collins

The ancients held that four primal elements existed from which all other things could trace their creation. Earth, Air, Fire and Water each possessed unique characteristics marking their relationship with the physical world. Air ruled ideas, earth that of physical matter, fire the spark of intellect and water the deep emotions.

See website to read more about the use of prescribed fire.
www.wayofthewilds.com



Wild Landscaping

by Bob Kirschner

Rain Gardens Aren't Only for Rain!

A beautiful garden oasis in your yard that helps the environment?

Consider a rain garden!

A rain garden is a shallow depression that's excavated into the landscape with a small raised berm or lip on the down slope side to temporarily trap rainwater runoff. Is there a good spot for a rain garden in your yard? If your home has roof gutters and downspouts, then the answer is probably "yes" since redirected downspout water is an easy way to "water" your rain garden.

Rain gardens allow rainwater to slowly soak into the ground, helping to recharge aquifers and reduce flooding by limiting the storm water runoff that drains into our sewers. As the rainwater travels through the garden soil, urban pollutants are filtered out and so our water is cleansed keeping pollution from our streams and lakes. They also provide bird, butterfly and dragonfly habitat.

In September 2009, the *Chicago Botanic Garden* opened its new *Plant Conservation Science Center* with a one-acre Rainwater Glen where you can see many species of native plants that are great candidates for use in rain gardens.

For more information download: *Rain Gardens: A How-To Manual for Homeowners* at http://dnr.wi.gov/runoff/rg.

Bob Kirschner is the Curator of Aquatic Plant & Urban Lake Studies at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Here are a few especially important raingarden *do's* and *don'ts*:

- DO choose an area of your yard that slopes away from the house, staying at least 10 feet away from your foundation (you don't want the water seeping back into your basement).
- DO level the top of the garden's encircling berm to maximize the amount of rainwater captured.
- DO emphasize using native plants recommended for rain gardens – they have deep roots that help break up tight clay soils and are well suited to wide fluctuations in soil moisture.
- DO consider height, color, texture, and bloom season when selecting your plants. Group species of plants together so their beauty is more recognizable. After all, it IS a garden!
- DON'T site your rain garden where water ponds after a rainfall. Those soils are already "plugged" and water infiltration rates will be low.
- DON'T use seed to plant your rain garden; use live plants or plant divisions instead. Seed will wash away.
- DON'T build a rain garden that's too small or too big; consult the publication cited to determine the best size. Many residential rain gardens are between 100 and 300 square feet.
- DON'T worry about mosquitoes breeding in your rain garden. A properly designed rain garden will drain most of its water within a few hours to a day (but mosquitoes need a week or more of standing water to lay and hatch their eggs).

Seasonal Musings

by John Rogner

Read the expanded version of Way of the Wilds on our website! Join John as he reminisces about his magical afternoons as a young boy mucking about in rivers. www.wayofthewilds.com

Photo courtesy of Integrated Lakes Management

Wild Mart

Green Fire Documentary

The Center for Humans and Nature will host the Chicago public premiere of *Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and the Land Ethic in the 21st Century.* Details coming soon. Visit the Center's website to learn more about the film and other Center projects.

www.humansandnature.com

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