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Comments

I recently read Wisconsin's new policy on the use of biological controls in Natural Areas and find it amazing how different perspectives lead to different conclusions about the value and importance of this tool in the fight to conserve nature. In Wisconsin where lots of wildland remains and most weeds are apparently limited to disturbed sites, biocontrol is viewed as much as a threat as a potential aid. In Illinois, with much less wildland, alien weeds are invading and destroying many of our remaining forests, prairies and wetlands. Their rate of spread is frightening. Like Wisconsin, we are striving to maintain a system of high quality natural areas through intensive management to control alien species within them, but I feel we should not surrender our other wildlands to the weeds. A system of pristine preserves in a region that is otherwise a weed patch is not nature conservation by any stretch of the imagination. Conversion of natural communities to weeds seems to be the fate of large parts of Illinois (Florida and Hawaii too) without the development of some biological controls. We owe it to the Earth's evolutionary processes as well as our nation's natural heritage to unite aggressive alien invaders of wildlands with their co-evolved enemies. John Drea, recently retired Director of Biocontrol at USDA, reminds us that no properly conducted biocontrol has ever led to introduction of a pest. The catch is that properly conducted biocontrol costs about \$1,000,000 per species. Everyone concerned with nature will have to support biocontrol to get Congress to fund the needed research and development.

John Schwegman

New Head for CPC

Brian Meilleur will be replacing Don Falk as President of The Center for Plant Conservation this summer. Brian comes to St. Louis from Hawaii. Don will stay on at the Center's Missouri Botanical Garden Headquarters this summer during the transition.

Betz Retires

Dr. Robert Betz retires from Northeastern Illinois University this August. Bob will be staying in the Chicago area where he retains an emeritus position at the University and has research ties with the Field Museum and Fermilab. He will doubtless continue his support for prairie preservation as well.

Fish and Wildlife Service Staff Changes

Craig Johnson, Leader of the Region 3 Endangered Species program, has taken a leave of absence to work on reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act in Washington DC. Mr. T. J. Miller now heads up the program out of the Minneapolis office. Amelia Orton-Palmer has joined the staff of the Northeastern Illinois Wetlands office as Endangered Species specialist for Northeastern Illinois.

Shawnee Forest Staff

Dr. Philip Robertson and graduate students Jody Shimp and Tony Grahame have been contracted by the Shawnee to establish permanent vegetation plots this summer in 6 of the 10 research natural areas on the Forest. Alicia Biagi and Mark Baysinger are temporary employees of the Botany Program this summer doing endangered and threatened plant surveys.

Harty works on Macrosites

Fran Harty, DOCs Regional Administrator for Heritage programs in East-central and Northeastern Illinois, has taken a years temporary assignment with DOCs Planning Division to assess the potential of preserving large ecosystem areas (macrosites) in Illinois.

Brouillard Resigns

Dan Brouillard, Head of the conservation program at the Lake County Forest Preserve District, resigned his position in January. His assistant Dennis Laurie left a few weeks later. The District decided not to fill their positions and abolished the conservation program as a distinct unit, assigning remaining staff to other programs. Issues relating to plant conservation should be addressed to the District Superintendent.

Bonfert Resigns

Gretchen Bonfert, Assistant Director of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, resigned her position this spring. She has founded "Green Strategies", an environmental consulting firm headquartered in Springfield.

Willard Klimstra Dies

Dr. Willard Klimstra, retired Director of Southern Illinois University's Cooperative Wildlife Research Laboratory, died this past March. Bill chaired the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission during its formative years in the late 1960s and early 1970s and also served on the Endangered Species Protection Board. He contributed much to native plant conservation in Illinois.

Karl Bartel Dies

Karl Bartel of Blue Island passed away on March 13. Karl was an ornithologist, but his years of dedication to Markham Prairie and his support of all aspects of nature conservation extended his influence and activities into plant conservation as well.

Native Plant Society

The annual meeting of the Illinois Native Plant Society was held May 21-23 at Camp Ondessonk, Ozark, IL. William Hammel of Springfield assumed duties as President for the coming year and George Johnson of Harvard was elected President Elect. The Society passed a resolution in support of the prescribed burning and other aspects of the natural landscape management program on the Shawnee National Forest.

Hill Prairies Disappearing

As part of a "Critical Trends" in Illinois program by the Illinois Natural History Survey, Dr. Mark Schwartz and colleagues at the Survey have studied the fate of many Illinois hill prairies through analysis of old and recent aerial photography. Their conclusion is that hill prairies are declining significantly in area, even on some natural areas that are being managed with fire. A planned paper on the study will deal with the losses as well as their causes and consequences.

Deer Impacts on Prairie

Dr. Roger Anderson of Illinois State University is studying the effect that deer feeding has on prairie at Goose Lake Prairie Nature Preserve. Preliminary results indicate that deer do not eat grass or sedges but do feed readily on forbs. While a wide variety of forbs are eaten, legumes are impacted most severely. The work is supported by Pittman-Robertson wildlife funds.

Conservation Biology Masters

The Board of Regents of Illinois State University have approved a new Conservation Biology sequence in the MS in Biology program at ISU. They will begin accepting students into the program this fall, but it will not appear in the Catalog until the fall of 1994.

Survey to Get Compactors

The Illinois Natural History Survey Herbarium plans to replace their old herbarium cases with modern space-saving compactors this year.

DOT Plantings

The Illinois Department of Transportation is spending nearly 2 million dollars on wildflower plantings along Illinois interstate

highways this summer. The federal funds for the plantings come from a new program called ISTEA, the intermodal surface transportation efficiency act.

DOC Stewardship Projects

A portion of the Natural Area Acquisition Funds generated by the Illinois Real Estate Transfer Act are set aside for stewardship of natural areas. In the fiscal year ended June 30, 1993 the DOC used these funds to contract for a variety of stewardship needs from exotic species and brush control to community restoration and management planning. The 19 projects ranged from \$2,00 to \$9,000 each.

Exotics Study

Congress' Office of Technology Assessment has still not released its study "Non-indigenous Species in the United States" that documents the impact of exotic species and possible actions to prevent and mitigate such impacts. According to Phyllis Wendell of the OTA it will be released in late September.

Dame's Rocket

Dame's Rocket (Hesperis matronalis) seems to be rapidly spreading in Illinois and may become a serious invader of wildlands and natural areas here as it is in the east. It is often included in "wildflower" seed mixes but should be avoided. Readers who have observed it in wildlands in Illinois are asked to report their sightings to Illinoensis.

Garlic Mustard

The garlic mustard plague hit hard this past spring in northeastern Illinois. With the continued spread and increase in abundance of this woodland weed, it takes little stretch of the imagination to envision the day when forests in this region will have their native herbaceous flora completely replaced by this weed.

Exotics Letter to Gore

A group of 25 conservation leaders from around the country sent a letter to Vice President Al Gore on March 20 urging him to support development and implementation of an effective national program to prevent the importation of harmful alien species and eradicate or control existing infestations of alien species. Copies of that letter are available upon request to Illinoensis.

Biocontrol Policy

Wisconsin's Bureau of Endangered Resources and Scientific Areas Preservation Council have developed guidelines for use of

biological controls in Wisconsin natural areas. For a copy write the Bureau at Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.

Hill Prairie Poster Available

The Department of Conservation now has a full color poster titled "Hill Prairies of Illinois" available. It includes a key for identification of the 51 plants and animals depicted. Copies of the poster and a guide to interpreting it are available for \$3.00 to cover postage and handling. Send requests to Dept. of Conservation, Division of Natural Heritage, 524 South 2nd St., Springfield, IL 62701. Income tax checkoff donations made this poster possible.

Natural Heritage Column

The Department of Conservation's Natural Heritage Division produces a biweekly column titled "Our Natural Heritage". All daily papers in Illinois receive it. If you have not seen it in your local paper tell editor you would be interested in reading it.

New Environmental Ed. Magazine

"Environmental Connections", an idea and source magazine for educators involved in environmental education, began publication last January. It is published bimonthly during the traditional school year (5 issues) by Earth Information Center, P. O. Box 387, Springfield, IL 62705-0387. Subscriptions are \$17.00 for individuals and \$22.00 for institutions.

Wetlands Conference Delayed

An Illinois Wetlands Conference originally planned by the Illinois Native Plant Society for fall 1993 has been delayed. The group is now planning to hold it sometime in 1994.

Savanna Conference Planned

A group chaired by Dr. Roger Anderson on Illinois State University is planning a "North American Savanna and Barrens Conference" for ISU in September 1994. Look for further details in the next *Illinoensis*.

Pine Hills Day

The annual Pine Hills Appreciation Day, usually held in the spring, is being held in the fall this year. The October 2nd event will enable participants to view this unique area in a different seasonal aspect. A special celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission is also planned. Contact the Shawnee National Forest at Jonesboro for more information.

Thismia Hunt III

The annual great Thismia hunt in the southern part of the Chicago Lake Plain is scheduled for July 31. Persons volunteering to participate in the search for this minute "lost" plant should meet at 9 AM at the Sand Ridge Nature Center on Paxton Avenue about half a mile north of 159th St. For more information contact George Johnson at 815/943-5256.

Habitat Book

The DOCs Division of Natural Heritage has published a new booklet for landowners and managers interested in managing their land for forest and grassland nesting birds. Things to consider in planning reforestations and prairie plantings are covered. This book is another benefit from your donations to the Nongame Wildlife income tax checkoff. Copies are available free from Illinoensis.

Illustrated Flora

Dr. Robert Mohlenbrock reports that the Carex volume of the Illustrated flora of Illinois will be going to the SIU press this October with publication scheduled for autumn 1994.

E & T List Update

The Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board is updating the list of endangered and threatened plants in Illinois. Their proposal would add 19 plants and one lichen to the list and remove 12 plants. Following evaluation of public comment, the Board is expected to take final action on the changes August 20.

Species News

Isotria medeoloides. No plants of this rare orchid were found in Illinois this past spring. As in one past year, it appeared that a plant may have been dug by a chipmunk or other small mammal a day or so before the plant monitors arrived.

Cynoscadium digitatum. Rick Phillipe of the Natural History Survey reports finding good stands of this rare plant in a Jackson County wet woods this summer. This is the first record of this plant since it was first discovered in Illinois in 1969.

Prenanthes crepidinea. Dr. Julian Campbell of The Nature Conservancy's Kentucky office points out that this species is listed as endangered in many states and wonders about its status in Illinois. It appears secure here, however anyone with information on the decline or disappearance of this species from formerly occupied habitat in Illinois is asked to advise Illinoensis.

Thismia americana. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is providing funding for the DOC to contract with Morton Arboretum for an intensive systematic search for this plant in Illinois and Indiana this summer. This is in addition to volunteer efforts.

Agalinis skinneriana. The Illinois Natural History Survey just completed a state status survey and report on this species through a DOC contract supported by the USFWS Endangered Species Program. They found and documented extant populations in 5 west-central counties and in Lake County.

Talinum rugospermum & Scirpus hallii. The Illinois Natural History Survey is presently conducting status surveys and will prepare status reports on these species in Illinois. These projects are funded by USFWS and are contracted by DOC.

Platanthera leucophaea. The USFWS has funded a three year recovery project for habitat rehabilitation for the Prairie White-fringed Orchid through the DOC and a project to establish new populations of the orchid through seeding being conducted by The Nature Conservancy.

Written July 19, 1993