



# HOMEWOOD IZAAK WALTON PRESERVE

Dedicated to Service in Conservation

To our members and friends:

February 2021 Newsletter

## WATER MAIN CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATE

Noticeable project work began in late January. Homer Tree Service has cleared the vegetation along the pipeline route—a swath of cleared land about 35-40' wide. A temporary “bridge” was constructed just south of the lift station which will allow the equipment easy access to the pipeline route. The area north and west of the lift station will serve as a staging area so we expect very little construction equipment in the area around our grounds and cabin. Between now and late March, further construction activity is expected near the western entrance as large pits will be excavated that will be used for the “jackboring” of the pipeline under the Homewood Prairie. The contractor has put up trail closure barricades as necessary and has then removed them when no longer needed. We will continue to provide updates in this newsletter as the project continues.

## THINK SPRING: NATIVE PLANT SALE AT HIWP DEADLINE APPROACHING

This spring, HIWP will once again co-sponsor a native plant sale with Thorn Creek Audubon Society (TCAS). This year, thirty-five different plants will be offered at the sale, including trees, shrubs, flowers, and ornamental grasses. Plants are chosen to represent different colors, textures, sun exposures and bloom times. Exciting this year is the introduction of plant “packages” consisting of a mix of plants chosen for plot sizes in 3' x 4' increments for specific growing conditions (soil and sunlight). This greatly simplifies the plant selection decision for new native plant gardeners.

All plants offered are native to this area of Illinois. Judy Johnson, a board member of both organizations and plant sale organizer, stresses that native plants are beneficial to wildlife and the environment. Local wildlife, including pollinators, depend on native plants for food and shelter. Also, native plants thrive without pesticides or fertilizers and, once established, do not require watering. The very deep root systems also help prevent erosion and flooding. In order to better ensure that you obtain the plants you desire, **we strongly encourage pre-ordering** as the supply of plants not preordered will be limited. The order form can be accessed on our website; just print it out and follow directions. Order forms are also available in the office which is staffed on Saturday mornings 10-noon during the winter. **Deadline to pre-order is March 1. Plant pick up and open sale is Saturday, May 22 from 9-noon at HIWP.** All profits will be split between HIWP and TCAS. More information on **plant packages** and native plants including links for specific plant descriptions and pictures can be found at: [www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.com](http://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.com). Questions/order form requests can be directed to Judy at: [TCASPlants@gmail.com](mailto:TCASPlants@gmail.com). Think Spring !



## **THE DREADED PHRAGMITES**

We have been attacking this invasive non-native plant for many, many years. Our efforts have been led by Kevin Jennings, our Director of Environmental Concerns and a member of our Executive Committee. Phragmites can be controlled effectively by spraying with glyphosate in the late summer or early fall. We place signs indicating this herbicide spraying in those areas for 24 hours after applications. Kevin has been at this for at least 10 years, mostly working alone with a powered sprayer pulled by a tractor. Last year, though, we acquired a 15 gallon capacity tank that fits in the cargo rack behind what we call “Pete’s cart.” We figured out how much more efficient this work can be done if one volunteer is driving while the other is spraying using Pete’s cart. Utilizing this method, Greg Busler assisted Kevin last fall on multiple forays out to spray the dreaded phragmites. With generally dry conditions, they were able to spray 95% of the phragmites stands scattered throughout the Preserve, clearly our best effort in several years. With continuing annual spraying, we can expect this invasive to slowly diminish. Many thanks to Kevin and Greg for their great efforts !

## **MORE ON THE EURASIAN BLACK ALDER**

We first reported on this invasive tree species: Black (European) alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) in our November/December 2020 newsletter. We reported success in cutting down an outbreak of them near the lift station. This species of alder has become a serious threat to natural areas across the region. Unfortunately, black alder could spread to all of the ecosystems in the Preserve, damaging soils and crowding out native plants and animals, if not contained and removed.

In early fall, nearly a half-acre of mature alder was cut just north of the Sand Lakes. Cut stems are now piled on the site for burning and disposal this winter and spring and stumps were treated carefully with herbicide to prevent regrowth. About 100 yards of fencing along the north channel has also been removed to facilitate restoration and provide ecological connectivity. Over time, this area will be restored to native vegetation providing food and habitat for a variety of critters.

As seems to be the case with removing any invasive, each time you think you’ve got them all, more are discovered! As the team moved east along the north channel, we noticed dozens of mature alder had also invaded the northernmost island. By taking advantage of January ice cover, a group of hardy volunteers (known as the ice crew) were able to access the island, cut those pesky trees and drag them to piles. Lucky for us, a Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) paid a visit to the work site. The large hawk watched us for a few minutes before swooping down after a nimble mink scurrying along the shoreline. A nice send off after a few hours of work! Special thanks to the Ice Crew: Gigi Sappenfield, Dan Galen, Greg Busler, Dave Zaber, Clayton Wassilich, and John Brinkman. Nobody can remember organized volunteer work taking place on the ice before.

As the year progresses, volunteers will be monitoring the area for regrowth and for new seedlings that will inevitably pop up. We will watch for alder resprouting while removing invasive buckthorn and other invaders and then replant areas with native trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs. For more information on black alder check this out:

<https://sewisc.org/invasives/invasive-plants/24-european-alde>

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

We are pleased to announce that Mark Becker has joined the membership team acting as Assistant Membership Secretary whose duties will include online renewals. Our membership year ends on 3-31-21 so we encourage all members to renew soon. Last year a larger volume of memberships were purchased online via our website ([www.homewoodizaakwalton.com](http://www.homewoodizaakwalton.com)), likely, to some extent, due to the pandemic (also causing record Preserve membership). We encourage you to renew online soon. Online renewals benefit the Preserve making solicitation letters unnecessary by reducing costs (stamps and paper) and volunteer work (envelope stuffing). So get going and send Mark some work ! Thanks for your cooperation and thanks to Mark.

## **WILL YOU MISS OUR OLD BATHROOMS ?**

Brand new bathrooms are coming to Senior Hall and first steps have been taken. Senior Hall had its beginnings in the 1930's when it was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps as a barracks for men working on depression-era public works projects. It was originally located in present day Sweet Woods Forest Preserve south of Thornton. During World War II, it housed German prisoners of war who worked on area farms. After the war it was declared surplus and that's when Arthur F. Senior, a chartering member of The Preserve and namesake of the hall, obtained it for The Preserve. In 1947, the barracks was cut into segments, hauled to its current location, and refurbished by Preserve volunteers. The current bathroom area was originally a porch but in 1982 it was converted into restrooms. Our long-time member Bruce Boersma recalls the 1982 construction. He reports that he did all the plumbing utilizing salvaged material from the old Washington Park race track. Bruce also reports that our legendary ex president Bob Ahlf did all of the brick work.

The bathrooms have served us well for 39 years but now it's time to rebuild. The new bathrooms will be placed on the footprint of the old ones, which are being totally dismantled. Toward that end, Mike McDonnell, a long-time member & volunteer, recently brought his considerable construction skills as well as jackhammers to the bathrooms. Mike's efforts are a work in progress, but all bathroom fixtures, the interior walls and much of the original plumbing has already been removed. Mike can confirm that the 1972 construction work was as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Complimenting Mike's work is a Boy Scout Eagle Project under the leadership of Adam Kramer of Boy Scout Troop 364 in Homewood. Adam and his crew of about a dozen workers, have removed the cinder block, concrete, and plumbing fixtures and placed them into large dumpsters. He estimates having thus-far disposed of more than 4 tons of material. We'll have more to report about both Mike's and Adam's project in the next newsletter.

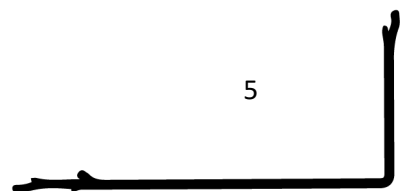
*Your President, John Brinkman*



**NATIVE PLANT SALE MAY 22 BUT  
PREORDERS DUE ON MARCH 1**

Details in the article in this newsletter

**THINK SPRING !  
WE WILL GET  
THROUGH THIS TOGETHER !**



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