

To our members and friends:
MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

February 2022 Newsletter

It's time to renew your membership in The Preserve for 2022. We very much appreciate your support for our all-volunteer organization. The cost is still \$25 for adults and \$5 for active military and youth (under 18). **Also, you can now join with your spouse or significant other for \$40**; that's a savings of \$10 and you will both receive membership cards.

You might find it convenient to buy your membership on-line. Here's how it's done:

- Go to: www.homewoodizaakwalton.com
- Click Membership, then Join Online, then fill in contact information and credit card details.
- Please consider an optional contribution. We are a 501(c)3 organization and contributions are tax-deductible.

We will then mail your membership card(s) to you.

HOMEWOOD PRAIRIE RESTORATION

We continue this project that started in Spring 2017. Efforts have been concentrated on the northern edge of the prairie, which had been invaded by woody species such as buckthorn, honeysuckle, gray dogwood and red dogwood. Dan Galen and John Brinkman have done 90% of the work over the years, but last fall they were assisted by Greg Busler. When we began the project, you could not view the prairie from the curvy bridges. The last stand of thick tall invasive bushes on the eastern side of the curvy bridges was cut down in November, affording wide-open views of the prairie. The invasive material was subsequently burned in December by the same group of volunteers that planted trees by the Public Works yard, as reported in the January Newsletter. We can now report that last Fall, we completed this restoration project on the northern edge thus taking advantage of the late season good weather. Please refer to the map below for a marking ("Invasives Clearing") of where we did this work.

CONTROLLED BURNS THIS FALL

Our mostly dry weather conditions this Fall were favorable for conducting controlled burns. The burn crew, led by Dave Zaber, was out multiple days in November. In conjunction with the controlled burns that were conducted last year, quite a bit has been accomplished. Key areas that were burned include all of the Homewood Prairie that we could burn and most of the island in the wetlands area. We conduct these burns to keep the invasive plant species from taking over and crowding out the native prairie plants. The burning process also puts nutrients back into the soil, especially as we have rain and snow over the



winter months. If we did not do these burns periodically, a thick mat of dead vegetation would accumulate, preventing much-needed precipitation and sunlight from reaching the new growth in the Spring. We typically conduct our Spring burns from late March through early May, before the vegetation begins growing again. The surviving native vegetation then fully benefits from the rain and sun of the Spring season. We thank all of the volunteers who helped with this effort: Dave Zaber, Kevin Jennings, Mark Becker, Greg Busler, Amy Eagle, Clayton Wassilak, Dan Galen and Jim Helke.

Following up on the above two articles, the map below highlights:

- Areas cleared of invasive species (parallel black lines).
- Prairie burns of spring 2021 (circled in orange).
- Prairie burns of fall 2021 (circled in red).



ALL HAIL THE TRASH BRIGADE

Last spring, we recruited volunteers to take responsibility for picking up trash in their assigned areas around the perimeter of the Preserve. We were gratified by your responses as we had 12 individuals or couples answer the request. No one can remember the perimeter of the Preserve being so free of garbage. We thank them very much for their efforts for this unglamorous work: Carl and Sharon Wahlstrom, Shawn Badar, Pearlie McReynolds, Carole Sharwarko, Liz Tavitas, Harry & Lucy Kokal, Janet Hernandez, Mitch & Jodi Burks, Gigi Sappenfield, Peter Stapleton, Ken Stern, and Joy Heine. Eleven out of the 12 have enthusiastically offered to volunteer for the same work in 2022. If anyone else is interested in joining the Trash Brigade, please call our office number (708/798-1850), leave a message, and we will respond within a few days.

MERCHANDISE, HONEY AND OFFICE HOURS

We have merchandise and honey for sale. The honey is courtesy of bees who live right here at The Preserve; the price is \$8 for a 12 oz. bottle. As for the merchandise, we have new, colorful hats, shirts, and sweatshirts available; all include The Preserve logo. Purchases can be made during winter Saturday hours of 10 AM to noon. We can also make other arrangements; please leave us a message at 708-798-1850.

THINK SPRING: NATIVE PLANT SALE AT HIWP

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. 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. If you'd like to see a greater variety of butterflies and birds in your yard, you should consider planting native species. 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.** As in the past few years, we will again be delivering many of the plant orders; this is scheduled for the afternoon of Friday, May 20. If plants are not delivered, **plant pick-up and open sale is Saturday, May 21 from 9-noon at HIWP.** All net proceeds will be split between HIWP and TCAS. More information on native plants including links for specific plant descriptions and pictures can be found at: www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org. Questions/order form requests can be directed to Judy at: TCASPlants@gmail.com. Think Spring!

AN HISTORICAL GEM FROM OUR FILES

During the winter we find time to go through some of our voluminous files to update and clean them out of information that is no longer needed or relevant. We came across a handwritten note written by our legendary ex-president Bob Ahlf in 1971. We thought it was worthy of sharing with our members: **On Sept 1, 1971, when I was elected president, and appointed (with Board approval) John Rigotti as Treasurer, after the hasty departure of the treasurer elected in June, the chapter membership was 153 persons, the chapter's only bank account was overdrawn, the lakes were full of trash, the woods were a dumping ground, the picnickers were harassed by motor bikes, local gangs marauded through the area, and the chapter was viewed by the town as an object of pity as its leadership viewed the mess while drinking on the back porch...."**

Wow! What a story that tells but thanks to Bob's concerted efforts over many years, the Preserve was resuscitated, greatly expanded in acreage, vastly increased in membership and supported by legions of volunteers. The Preserve has existed for over 75 years; Bob's note was written over 50 year ago. Look at what we are today. All of us should be very proud; we have come a long way.

Your President, John Brinkman



**NATIVE PLANT SALE MAY 21 BUT
PREORDERS DUE ON MARCH 1**

Details are in this newsletter

