



Homewood Izaak Walton Preserve, Inc.

Dedicated to Service in Conservation

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To our members and friends:

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GENERAL MEETINGS---NATURE PROGRAMS

For many years we have put on nature oriented programs 5-6 times a year. We recruit speakers to make presentations about a variety of interesting topics and schedule them to speak at a “General Meeting.” This annual plan was of course, like many other things, disrupted by the COVID pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Last year we held 2 General Meetings, one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Attendance was light/disappointing perhaps caused by lingering effects of the pandemic. We hope to increase attendance to pre-pandemic levels for the planned four General Meetings in 2023. These presentations **always** prove to be more interesting and informative than you might have anticipated. So we encourage you to come out and prepare to be informed, impressed and perhaps amazed by what you will learn. **So next month we offer to you....**

APRIL GENERAL MEETING—THURSDAY APRIL 27 7 PM SENIOR HALL

Talk title: Angling for Creatures in the Black Lagoon

Michael Coates, Chair of the Department of Organismal Biology & Anatomy at the University of Chicago, will present a program on the deep history of vertebrate life--- the earliest fishes and amphibians (including the water-to-land transition). You will be astounded at what we have recently learned and the latest tools now used for research. Michael completed his research training at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne (UK), and subsequently held positions at the University of Cambridge and University College London before coming over to Chicago (and Homewood) in 2001. His talk will cover ongoing lab work, showing how new technologies are unlocking the sometimes quite extraordinary information found in preserved fossils, how fossil-based investigations integrate with research on the embryonic development of modern fishes, and how computer simulations allow 3D models of jaw function in ancient sharks. A drive to reconstruct the family tree of fishes – to map biodiversity through deep time – is threaded throughout these projects. Izaak Walton, the ‘Immortal Piscator’, had he survived through to the present, would have been flabbergasted by the array of North American fishes. This program will amaze you as you learn about the fascinating history of the evolution of these creatures. Mike will bring actual fossils to the program for you to handle and observe.

RECENT TRAIL SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

We are very proud of our 5 miles of trails which we are continuously maintaining and improving. Last Fall, our Secretary, Greg Busler, mostly on his own, further upgraded our trail system by raising up the trails where they are most likely to flood, just southwest of the Hoffman Way entrance and at the southeast corner of Prairie lakes. Greg employs a recently acquired utility vehicle called a Progator to accomplish this task. The Progator has a large payload capacity which allows the operator to efficiently spread trail building material using the hydraulic lift mechanism on the cargo box. Greg loads the material into the cargo box of the progator using our Kubota tractor with its front lift. Then he proceeds to a section of trail that needs work. That section is then “dressed” with screening material dropped from the cargo box gradually to form a smooth surface. In the past, volunteers working on trails needed to laboriously rake and shovel trail building material from our wagons and then spread the material smoothly on the trail. Clearly Greg’s efforts using our equipment are much more efficient. We often receive compliments on the quality of our trails; we extend a huge “thanks” to Greg Busler for his dedication to this on-going work.

ALL HAIL THE TRASH BRIGADE !

Two years ago we asked for volunteers to help pick up trash around the perimeter of the Preserve. We were quite pleased to have received an enthusiastic response with each volunteer person or couple taking responsibility for trash pick up for a specified section along the perimeter. So for the past two years we have noticed trash nearly completely absent around the perimeter of the Preserve. We recently asked them if they wanted to continue their work in 2023. All of them responded--Yes ! So a huge thanks to all of them for this unglamorous work: Joy Heine, Ken Stern, Peter Stapleton, Mitch and Jody Burks, Janet Hernandez, Harry and Lucy Kocal, Pearlle McRetnolds, Gigi Sappenfield, Carole Sharwarko, Shawn Badar, Karl and Sharon Wahlstrom, Don Harkins, Ann Mitchell and Ingrid Krizan.

FIGHTING PHRAGMITES

We have been working to control and eliminate this non native perennial reed grass *phragmites australis* for at least 15 years. We have learned that the only effective measure to be taken to control it is to spray the reeds extensively with a glyphosate mix in late summer or early fall. The herbicide is absorbed by the reeds and transferred to the roots where it can retard the plant. We post “herbicide applied recently” signs for 24-48 hours after we spray in those areas. This has resulted in the “phrags” having been reduced in their infestation. We need to keep at it annually to ultimately succeed. Last Fall, we can report that we accomplished the most extensive spraying of the phrags ever. Some obscure patches of them along our northern border and north of North Race Track pond were sprayed for the very first time. Kevin Jennings, our Environmental Concerns officer, has been leading these efforts for years. Last Fall, Greg Busler and John Brinkman also assisted in this effort. We thank them for their continuing efforts at “fighting phragmites.”

WAR ON TEASEL

Yes, the war on teasel continues. We’re now in our 6th year battling this pesky invasive species. We have learned that there are two distinct species: common teasel (*dipsacus fullonum*) and cut

leaf teasel (*dipsacus iacinatus*) We knew from the start that a multiyear campaign would be required to control and eventually eradicate them; they are clearly the most threatening invasive plants in the Preserve. We apply herbicide in the spring to kill the plants before they can form seed pods. We do this again in the fall to prevent their return the following year. In between, during the growing season, we must continue the work by removing all seed pods from the plants about every two weeks so the work commitment is continuous. Remember that these plants have a two year life cycle, growing a close-to-the-ground rosette the first year and growing a stalk for seeding before dying after the second year. The seeds can survive for 3-5 years dormant before sprouting so we will be at war with this plant for many more years. We're very pleased to again report a 98% + rate of success at preventing the release of seeds from the seed pods. We are winning ! There are roughly 16 areas of concentration. We believe that in at least 9 of these areas, the concentration of teasel is much reduced, by at least 50% or more. This is much improved from previous years and we have our *teasel warriors* to thank for this: Greg Busler, Todd Wittenberg, Jeff Maharry, Dan Galen, Jim Helke, John Sandala, Warren Becker, Doug and Eila Kolton, Yan Deng, Gordon Pierce, and John Brinkman. We thank our volunteers for their consistent efforts to ultimately prevail in this multi-year effort.

WINTER TRAIL MIX CONCERT==BIG SUCCESS !

SAVE THE DATE---SPRING TRAIL MIX CONCERT--FRIDAY MAY 12

The winter Trail Mix concert was held on Friday night March 10 featuring 4 local bands. The event was very well attended and the music was wonderful. Steve Ploum, event manager, said that our cabin might be the finest venue for listening to music in Homewood !

So, be sure to save **May 12th** as there will be another amazing indoor concert featuring **Nora O'Conner** and **Casey Donough** of **The Flat Five**, a hugely talented and popular act that has played and recorded with the likes of Mavis Staples, The Decemberists, Neko Case, NRBQ and Andrew Bird, to name a few. Watch for details in our April Newsletter.

WELL, WELL, THE SANDPIT LAKES ARE FULL AT LONG LAST !

Ok we promise this will be the last article on the broken well issue that dates back to last June. See previous newsletters for more detail. As predicted in our February newsletter, once the pump started working, sure enough, the lakes were full by late February so we turned the pump off on February 28. We calculate that the lakes were about 30" below full. Going forward you will notice the pump running on the first of every month for 24 hours. This is part of regular maintenance for the pump "exercising" it monthly. When necessary. We will operate the pump more frequently to maintain adequate water levels. Our thanks to Tony Talarico for his oversight of our lakes.

Your President,

John Brinkman

APRIL GENERAL MEETING

ANGLING FOR CREATURES IN THE BLACK LAGOON

Thursday April 27, 7 PM, Senior Hall

Michael Coates, chairman of the Department of Organismal Biology and Anatomy at UChicago will present a program on the deep history of vertebrate life (the earliest fishes and amphibians)

You are sure to be amazed ! Real fossils will be brought for handling and to observe. See article in this newsletter for more details.