



THE TRAIL BLAZER

The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of Take-A-Hike

July/August

2008

Somme Woods A Hidden Treasure

by Jerry Rudnick

The skyrocketing price of fuel hit Take-A-Hike this month. To cut back on fuel expenses for our volunteer drivers we changed our June outing from the far reaches of Lake County to our own Cook County Forest Preserves.

The rain gods were good to us. We encountered rain on the drive up but when we arrived at Somme Woods in Northbrook the sun was shining. Just to play it safe we took our raincoats and umbrellas on the hike but we didn't have to use them.

We were dazzled by the beauty of Somme Woods. If it wasn't for the hum of nearby traffic we would have never known we were anywhere near the city. We wandered through the 90



acre preserve on what appeared to be a little used trail. We encountered no other people. The restored prairie had flowers blooming everywhere. We saw wild roses, milkweed, daisies, asters and spiderworts and many more other yet unidentified beauties.

Near the end of our walk, Dolores, Roger and I were hanging

back about 50 yards from the main group. As usual I was taking numerous pictures of flowers. We heard rustling in the foliage not more than a few feet from the trail. All of sudden a fawn leaped up and bolted across the trail. His mother was no where in sight and we wondered why he was on his own. Unfortunately, he was gone before I could get a picture but the image is still in my mind.

We finished off a great outing by heading over to Skokie Lagoons and having our 1st picnic of the year. Dining by the water's edge we watched the ducks, geese and boaters float by. We even caught a glimpse of a heron flying overhead.

The rain held off until we were all packed and ready to go. What perfect timing!

Nature Restored at Independence Grove

by Gregory Skogg

You hear a lot these days about going green and preserving the earth's natural resources, but how often do you see nature recreated by man? That's what Take-A-Hike got to do in May at Independence Grove in Libertyville.

You see, the Independence Grove nature preserve wasn't always so beautiful. Not long ago it was a large rock quarry – a hole in the ground – where illegal dumping of solvents occurred. Over the last two decades the Lake County Forest Preserve took over and used the royalties from mining the remaining resources to create acres of land and an expansive 120-acre lake



teeming with fish. The vast preserve includes a swimming beach, a fishing pier, a marine for canoes and kayaks, and nearly seven miles of trails.

On this pleasant Sunday morning the group hiked around the lake and marveled at the gorgeous

prairies and woodlands. The work done here is remarkable – thousands of trees, shrubs and wildflowers were planted across the native prairie. Wildlife, such as beaver, mink, deer and muskrats, can be seen throughout the complex.

Preserving our natural surroundings is an honorable and necessary goal, but an even more inspiring accomplishment is to turn the destruction back into life, such as you see at Independence Grove.

Registration is open
for the campout.
Information on page two.



Reservations for Campout Open

We are now accepting reservations for the September 12-14 campout. To secure your spot, please send a \$10 non refundable deposit to TAH. For this year's campout we will be returning to Kettle Moraine State Forest Southern Unit's Pinewood Campground near Eagle, Wisconsin. This area has 15,000 acres of lakes, forests, trails and glacial formations.



Take-A-Hike is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for persons living with HIV/AIDS by providing free year round nature activities.

Take-A-Hike activities are drug and alcohol free.

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July and August Schedule

Family and Friends Picnic Edgebrook Woods July 13, 2008

The family and friends picnic this year will be held at Edgebrook Woods forest preserves located on Central Ave. just south of Devon Ave. in Chicago. This site is easily accessible by car, bike and public transportation. The main entrance to the forest is located on the east side of Central Ave. about ¼ mile south of Devon.

The picnic is always one of the highlights of the year. It gives members and their guests the opportunity to just hang out, relax and visit. Food for the picnic is a potluck. TAH will provide fried chicken as a main course, some side dishes, beverages and condiments. Members and guests are asked to bring (optional) items such as appetizers, salads, deserts, fruits, vegetables, dips and bread.

Transportation to this event can **only** be provided for TAH members. Reservations must be made by Sunday, July 6. TAH members should call Iris Rudnick at 773.275.1029 (before 9:00 p.m) to let her know what food items you will be bringing.

Please remember that you must call the TAH voice mail line to make a reservation for this event. Call Iris only to let her know what food you're bringing.



Blackwell Forest Preserves Ed and Bob's Garden Tour August 17, 2008

Our August trip takes us to Blackwell Forest Preserve in DuPage County. We will be hiking on land that was shaped 12,000 to 15,000 years ago by the retreating Wisconsin Glacier. After the glacier's retreat, savannas (widely-spaced oak woodlands) formed on the higher ground while the lower-lying ground became home to many species of marsh and prairie plants.

After the morning hike we'll travel to Ed and Bob's house in West Chicago for lunch and a tour of their beautiful garden.

Make sure to wear a comfortable pair of hiking shoes and a hat is also recommended. August is mosquito season and insect repellent might help keep those pests away. Please make sure to bring a water container. We will supply the water.

Make your reservations no later than Wednesday, August 13.

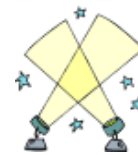


We'll have lunch on Ed's patio.

TAH has survived on a shoestring budget for over 12 years with funds provided mostly by individual donors. We encourage members and friends to help out with donations of any size. TAH's future depends on you!

Spotlight on Nature

Skokie Lagoons



The Skokie Lagoons and their surroundings comprise a remarkable development of which we in the Forest Preserve District are extremely proud. They lie in the valley west of three north shore suburbs — Wilmette, Winnetka and Glencoe — between Willow Road and Dundee Road. They fulfill a dream of many people for many years: the transformation of a great marsh, ruined by drainage ditches, into an area as notable for its scenic beauty as for the recreation it provides.

The Skokie valley lies between two broad ridges of glacial drift. Originally, the southern portion was an elongated shallow bay of ancient Lake Chicago when that ancestor of Lake Michigan was at its highest level. As the lake level dropped the bay became a marsh. Into and out of it flowed a stream, now called the Skokie River or East Fork, that drained a watershed extending northward beyond Waukegan. Emerging, its course was deflected westward by a long sand bar until, joined by the Middle Fork, they could turn southward and, joined by the West Fork, form the North Branch of the Chicago River.

Chewab Skokie, meaning “big wet prairie”, was the Potawatomi name for that marsh. Until this century it had a distinction and beauty all its own.



Somme Woods Trailhead



Mysterious and fascinating in all seasons, impenetrable in places with tall grasses and wildflowers, teeming with waterfowl, wading birds, songbirds, muskrats, mink, turtles and fish — the Skokie marsh was a resource for unlimited exploration and enjoyment. In flood times it became a shimmering lake from ridge to ridge.

The topsoil was mostly peat and muck from one to four feet deep, underlaid by glacial clays including an impenetrable rubbery layer. By 1900 a group of Hollanders were raising choice “Glencoe horse-radish” in rich loamy soils along the eastern border; and 20 years later the marsh had been almost completely drained by speculators who sought, unsuccessfully, to convert it into truck farms.

Because the outlet was inadequate, during spring floods it became a lake that inundated adjacent property and all roads in the valley. In dry autumns the peat beds, ignited by



On the trail at Somme Woods

fires in the rank vegetation, burned for months and shrouded the countryside with dense acrid smoke. Mosquitoes were also a serious nuisance.

By 1933 the Forest Preserve District had acquired most of the Skokie marsh and lands on both banks of its outlet. As recommended in 1929 by the Advisory Committee to the Board of Commissioners, plans for its conversion into a series of lagoons — and a clay model — had been completed. So, when the Civilian Conservation Corps was created in 1933, ten companies were allocated to this huge project. Using heavy equipment, and aided by several thousand CWA workers, construction proceeded continuously until 1942. Four million cubic yards of earth were excavated.

Now there are seven lagoons with a total normal water area of 190 acres and a flood plain of 434 acres. They are held within undulating dikes of the excavated material by a main control dam at Willow Road. Three low dams maintain three water levels close to the surface of several marshy islands. The lagoons provide fishing, boating, waterfowl refuges and, along their shores, many attractive picnic areas. A ruined marsh has become a beautiful recreational area.

This article originally appeared as a Cook County Forest Preserve Nature Bulletin.

**ALL TAKE-A-HIKE
EVENTS ARE
DRUG AND
ALCOHOL FREE**



Calendar of Events

July 13, 2008

Family and Friends Picnic
Edgebrook Woods
Cook County Forest Preserves

October 12, 2008

Illinois Beach State Park
Zion, Illinois

August 17, 2008

Blackwell Forest Preserves
and Bob and Ed's House for
Lunch and Garden Walk

November 16, 2008

Sand Ridge Nature Center
Cook County Forest Preserves

September 12-14, 2008

Camping Trip
Kettle Moraine Southern Unit
Eagle, Wisconsin

December 14, 2008

Holiday Party
(Location to be announced later)



To keep up to date on TAH news, it is important for members and volunteers to periodically check TAH voice mail for updates on events, meetings and current group news. Information about TAH is also available on our website.

<http://www.take-a-hike.org>

If you would like to receive periodic TAH updates via email please send your email address to: <take_a_hike1999@yahoo.com>



312-409-9094

Thank You Volunteers



We want to thank the following volunteers:

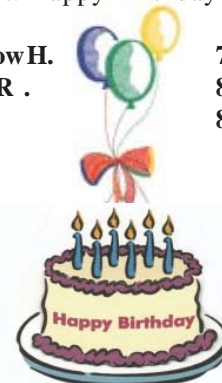
Independence Grove Forest Preserve
Greg, Jim, Steve, Bill

Somme Woods Forest Preserves
Greg, Jerry, Jim, Keith

Birthday Corner

The following people are celebrating their birthday during July and August. Happy Birthday to:

Winslow H.	7/11
Jerry R .	8/12
Bill D.	8/25



Please let us know if we missed your birthday.