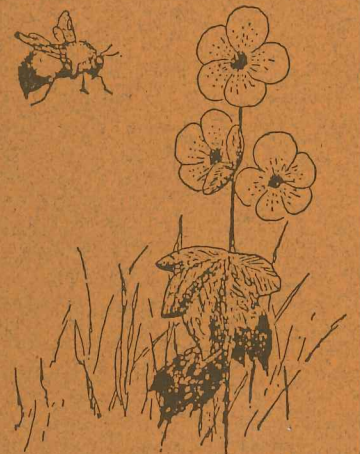
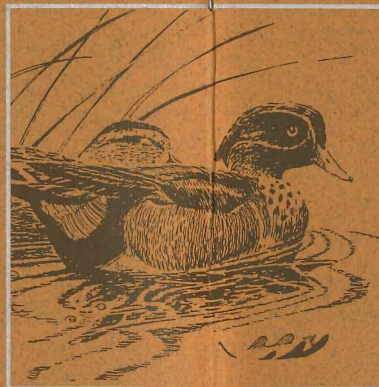
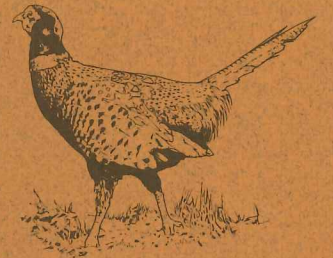


Phil Sander

RIPPLES from the WETLANDS

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS BY
AUTHOR AND NATURALIST

PHIL SANDER





These Things I Know

I have planted a garden, so I know what faith is.

I have seen oak trees in the breeze, so I know what grace is.

I have listened to birds singing, so I know what music is.

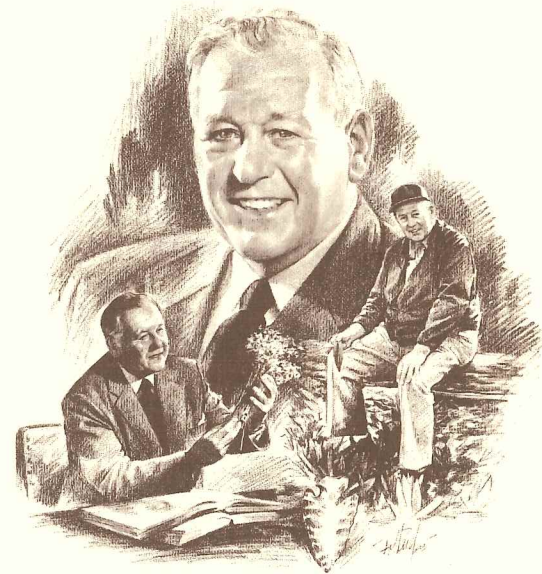
I have seen morning without clouds, after showers, so I know what beauty is.

I have seen the miracle of sunset, so I know what grandeur is.

And because I have perceived all these things, I know what wealth is.

RIPPLES from the **WETLANDS**

BY
PHIL SANDER



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FIRST PRINTING FALL 1997

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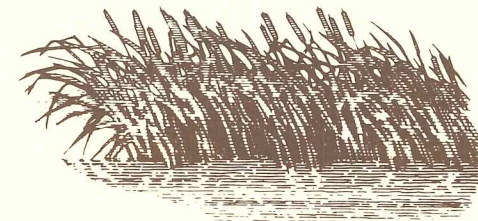
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The Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy also wishes to congratulate our good friend, Phil Sander, upon receiving his Honorary Doctorate of Public Service from Carthage College in 1995. Phil's lifelong passion to protect our environment will provide a tranquil retreat for future generations. Thank you Dr. Sander.

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Foreword

The following stories and nature notes were gathered at the Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy located in Pleasant Prairie Township, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Walking the woodland trails, fields and wetlands, during the ever changing seasons, presents interesting "bits and pieces" of nature's flora and fauna.

This booklet will share some of my "get acquainted" and observations of the many gifts of our outdoor environment.

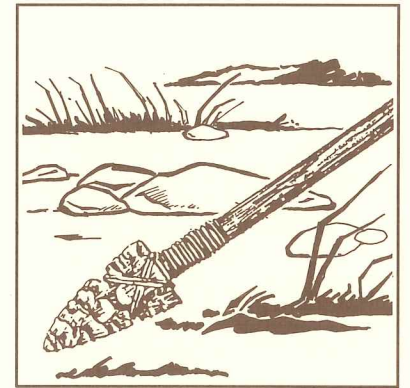
Here, in this special place, solitude reigns. Here, knowledge and appreciation of the "Good Earth" can be viewed and enjoyed. Here, seasonal changes can be encountered in the realm of our biological world.

Phil Sander
Fall 1997



First Hunters

Early American Indians were the first hunters on the grounds of the Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy area. Archaeological finds indicate the existence of an Indian campsite in the Oak Hickory Grove, south of the clubhouse and bordering the Des Plaines River. They called the settlement She-Shik-Ma-O.



Research and artifacts found in the plowed fields have uncovered some interesting information regarding these early hunters. French traders and trappers (about 1700) made regular trips along the Chicago River and portaged to the Des Plaines River, where they found Indian people camping and hunting along the river in Illinois and Wisconsin.

In 1833, by treaty, many Indians of the area were removed by the Government to reservations in Iowa. These people were known as the Potawatomi Tribe, of Algonquin lineage. It is estimated that the time period during which this late Woodland culture inhabited our area was about 1500 A.D.

Migrating from the south up the river and marshes, they came in search of game such as elk, deer, geese, ducks, beaver, muskrat, prairie chicken, quail, and other birds and fur-bearing animals. Yes, hunting the same grounds we now hunt.

Other food gathering efforts included harvesting fish, clams, frogs, turtles, hickory and hazelnuts, thorn apples, duck potatoes, cattail-roots, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, chokecherries, acorns, mushrooms, herbs and other edible ground plants.

Most of these plants and food sources still grow right here in the wooded lowlands and fields we hunt.

Hunting the open fields in the fall, a sharp eye may occasionally spot an Indian artifact. Several fields on the high land around the clubhouse have produced an arrowhead or other dynastic materials.

An interesting site is the hardwood grove, known as Krans Woods. This area appears as a high-sheltered island with a small bay at the west. In all probability it was used as a landing base by the Indian hunters as they paddled their dugout canoes up and down the river.

Just north of the Krans Woods is a large bayou in the river called the Goose Pond. In the early days this pond attracted many geese, ducks and shore birds, and was a prime location to shoot waterfowl. It has now silted in, and is fast disappearing.

In the fields to the east and south of Krans Woods, I have found three spears, seven arrowheads, three hammer-stones, five scrapers, many chips and blanks; all indicating a former Indian occupied site. From all evidence it appears that the arrowmakers gathered the chert stones at the river's edge and fashioned their hunting implements and tools on the high bank along the riverside.

Another area, east of the clubhouse, in fields around the small ponds, I have found several arrowheads, called birdpoints, probably from arrows shot at waterfowl in flight.

Be sure to watch for an arrowhead, stone axe or other artifact the next time you are out bird hunting.

Upper Des Plaines River and Adjacent Wetlands Review

At the western border of the Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy flows the Des Plaines River.

Early French explorers called it Aux Plaines, a name derived from a species of maple tree that lined its banks (assumed to be sugar maple) called Plaine. Its aboriginal name was She-Shik-Ma-O. Early Irish settlers called it the O'Plaine River.

The river lies in a drainage pattern that is truly parallel with the major water courses, all lying in a broad, poorly drained valley. It is oriented in a north-south direction, separated by low, wide, recessional moraines. It runs parallel with the shore of Lake Michigan and flows within six miles from its shore. Yet, it is a part of the Mississippi River basin, rather than the St. Lawrence River basin.

The Des Plaines River originates near the Racine-Kenosha County line, and drains 143 square miles within Wisconsin, primarily in Kenosha County. The flow and water levels fluctuate considerably from season to season. During exceedingly wet years, flood waters will extend almost one-half mile wide. At other times it may be only eight feet wide.

Intermittently inundated wetlands once provided optimum nesting areas for waterfowl and spawning grounds for northern

pike as they migrated upstream in early spring. Marsh drainage and stream changes now limits the habitat to accommodate mostly rough fish species. At times there is a minor seasonal spawning run of northern pike and pan fish. Water pollution has changed the chemistry of the river and many native aquatic plants are disappearing.

On the north line of Section 29, there existed a natural wetland, named Holt's slough. Here, many species of ducks and shore birds nested, and during the fall and spring migration, geese and swans stopped and rested in the area.

During the fall duck hunting season, in the twenties and the thirties, sportsmen found the slough and Des Plaines River wetlands a mecca for waterfowling. One of the sportsman's clubs that hunted the area in the 1930s was the Grey Dawn Gun Club. The 15 member group often took their limit of ducks.

The Riverine watershed, which includes Paris, Bristol, and Pleasant Prairie Townships, is fed from a number of surface springs as well as snow and rain runoff, creating the river volume.

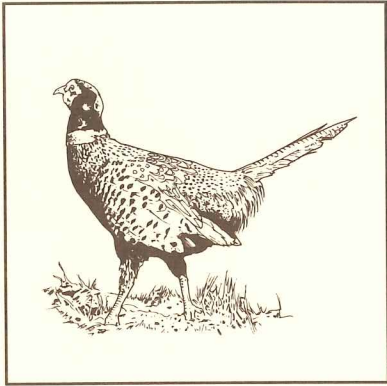
At one time, water from the Bristol Springs was bottled and sold for medicinal purposes. I knew an old spring, which was my favorite place to quench my thirst, during my hikes and duck hunting days. Nothing beats a cold spring water drink on a hot sunny day.

Lakes of the Des Plaines subsystem, which are located westerly and drain into the river are: George, Hooker, Paddock, Montgomery, League and Mud. As the river flows south, it passes a number of former Indian camp sites. Artifacts have been found on the adjacent lands. Early American people used the river for travel, hunting and gathering food. One of the known sites is located on the wooded grove known as the Krans Woods.

As the river flows into Illinois, it is bordered by a number of forest preserves, which help maintain the native landscape.

In Wisconsin, programs are now in progress that will affect the restoration of the river and wetlands. It is important that all citizens support local, state and federal efforts in restoring the Des Plaines River's natural areas.





Introduction of Pheasants

The ringneck pheasant is not a native game bird of the United States, but have been transported and transplanted since at least 400 B.C. when the Greeks moved many of these birds from the country of the Colchians in areas of the river Phasis. That's where pheasants got the "family name" Phasianidae.

Biologists refer to the ringneck in variations of Phasians Colchicus.

There are forty-two sub-species of pheasants in Asia and Asia Minor, including jungle fowl and 161 species and subspecies around the world.

The English pheasant was introduced by the Roman legions into the British Isles about the time of Julius Caesar.

Attempts to introduce pheasants into the United States began as early as 1730, but none were eminently successful until 1882, when Judge Owen Denny, Council General for the United States in Shanghai, shipped Chinese ringneck to the United States, and had them released in the farmlands of the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Those directly imported ringnecks thrived in Oregon. Propagation spread so rapidly that Oregon established this country's first "open season" on pheasants in 1891.

Ringnecks were successfully introduced into Wisconsin's countryside, in Waukesha County, in 1916 by a private individual — Colonel Gustav Pabst. By 1927, there were enough birds in that area to open the first Wisconsin pheasant hunting season.

Eventually, pheasants were stocked by the Department of Natural Resources in every state that had reasonably good habitat and climate. Open season pheasant populations peaked between 1940 and 1970. Since that time, wild ringneck populations have declined as a result of suitable habitat loss, increased use of pesticides and herbicides, and an increase in predators, both those that prey on nests and those that capture growing and adult birds. Clean farming and fall plowing also reduces nesting and habitat range.

In the late 1940s, Wisconsin established State Public Hunting Grounds and licensed game farms, which were a welcome opportunity for sportsmen to enjoy a day of quality hunting.

During 1955, Ed Halter founded the Pheasant Valley Hunting Club as a licensed game farm, and also founded the Twin Willows Kennels. Later, in 1975, Ed Halter retired and sold the property. In his honor, the hunting club was renamed "Halter Wildlife, Inc."

Recently, a new Chinese pheasant without the ring, has been successfully stocked in Michigan and in Pennsylvania. These birds came from Szechwan, a province in China. The Szechwan strain of ringnecks has evolved to do well in brushy cover and roosts in trees. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has been introducing this strain of pheasants in several counties of southern Wisconsin that have good cover and habitat areas.



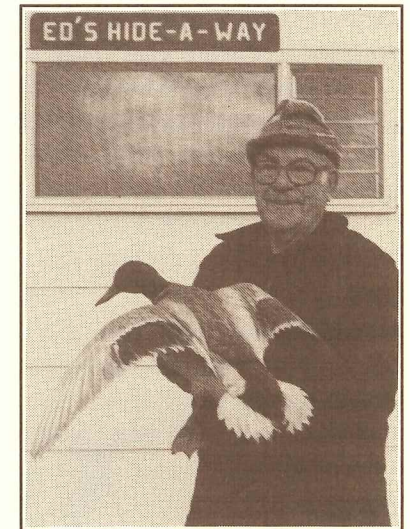
Edward A. Halter, Sr.

(1902-1980)

The Pheasant Valley Hunting Club and Twin Willows Kennels were founded by Edward A. Halter on July 8, 1955. He acquired 350 acres and leased additional acreage, such as the Goose Pond and several other parcels for a licensed game farm.

The Club lands are located in Pleasant Prairie Township T.1N - R.22E. Section 29, Kenosha, Wisconsin. Much of the land is in the Des Plaines River Watershed, with excellent habitat for upland game and waterfowl.

On the open lands, Halter stocked quail and chukar partridge, which made an additional incentive, besides the many English ringneck pheasants that were released for hunting.



Fishing is also available at the small spring fed lake called "Lydia Lake," named after Halter's wife who managed the fine food available at the clubhouse. Fishermen and their families enjoy year-round fishing for rainbow trout and other fish species.

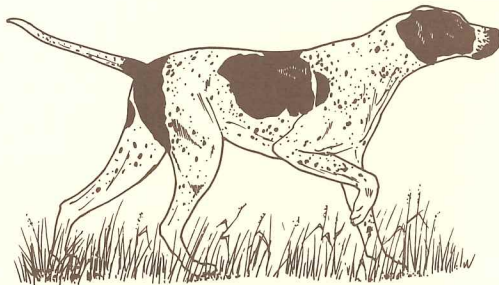
Halter also released mallard ducks, which were equal to wild shooting. He interbred six different species of ducks to attain a light colored mallard called "Halter's Golden Mallard." This bird proved to be an excellent flier and a real test for the gunner.

As an experienced kennel master, Halter operated under the American Kennel Club guide lines. Many competent dogs were produced at Twin Willows Kennels. He trained and supervised the handling of primarily English pointers. Later he handled Labradors as they were better adapted to the wet/dry habitat. Also, facilities for boarding dogs were made available for club members.

On July 15, 1975, Ed Halter sold Pheasant Valley to a Chicago interest. Ed and Lydia retired to enjoy their golden years - "just taking it easy." He built a beautiful home just east of Pheasant Valley on Highway H, where he enjoyed his garden, fishing and working his yellow Labrador, "Danny."

To keep his interest in hunting and dogs, he built a small club house that was attached to the garage. Here, with hunting friends, they enjoyed trap shooting, dog training and tall stories. The clubhouse was called "Ed's Hide-A-Way."

Ed Halter passed away from a heart attack on April 11, 1980. As a friend and sportsman, he will be long remembered.



By the Fireside

Through the years each hunting trip offers me a chance to "get lost" in the outdoors with interesting and surprising sights and sounds. Sometimes I will see a squirrel corkscrew up an oak tree, a deer flashing across an open field, a rabbit scampering for cover in a hedgerow, a red-tailed hawk soaring high in the clouds or a cardinal feeding in a multiflora scrub.

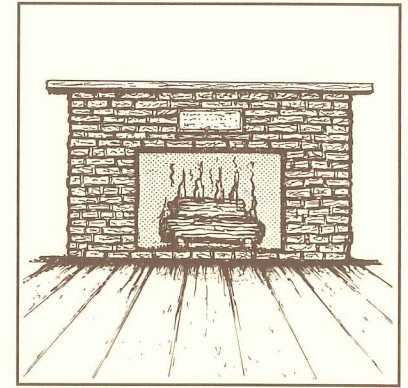
The sight of a flock of ducks or the sound of a skein of geese gives me that adrenal charge that only waterfowlers would understand. All these have a place in my day in the field.

I have learned the smell of fallen leaves and the odors of the marsh and aromatic prairie plants. I touch the drying seed pods of wild plants and grasses. I hear the sound of wind in the trees, the feel of rain on my face and I learn to hear the sounds around me. I touch and admire the height of the big hardwood trees, and I appreciate the gift of sight. I am grateful for it all.

But the most heart-pounding thrill is observing my dog that is wise to the ways of a crafty pheasant. I have watched and am amazed how he picks up the scent of a sitting or running bird. First, the slow stalk. Then the point or flush, a clean hit, and how proudly the dog makes the retrieve. Sometimes a search is necessary, but the magic power of a keen nose recovers the prize. Often I have watched and smiled as the happy dog, wagging his tail with joy, brings in the downed pheasant or chukar.

Outdoors with a fellow sportsman, dog and gun, gives me that privileged freedom that is an American heritage. Though I have hunted for six-plus decades, upland game hunting will always be my first choice and the nostalgic tradition of youth mingled with the present. Nature must be savored during the process of growing up to absorb the full flavor of its enchantment.

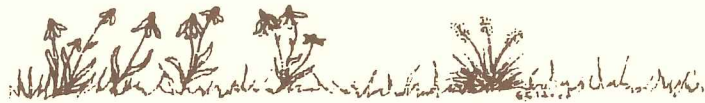
One thing for sure, hunting upland birds is not an easy game, but it is a challenging one. There have been times I will not even fire a shot, other times enjoying a satisfying hunt. There are a lot of things about nature and wildlife that aren't in books. You can study



game birds through each hunting season and think you understand their lifestyle and it seems they always do something different. I think it's called survival.

Back at the clubhouse, I find a friendly social atmosphere with fellow sportsmen telling tall stories or excuses why they missed the bird and experiences of the hunt. It's part of my day sitting around the fireplace, with a tang of wood smoke from the glowing logs. And when the flames have died down and there remains a bed of red coals, I warm my hands and look back in my memory of my many hunting trips. Each season I look forward to getting outdoors with hunting partners and an anxious dog. I also recall some great guys who could savor the best of a day in the field.

The afterglow of the hunt was lunch time, shared with fellow sportsmen. It was a time for stories, a happy hour and the camaraderie with good friends. I always enjoyed the interesting conversations of outdoor experiences with other nimrods that gathered "by the fireside."



How's Your Wildlife Terminology?

Students of wildlife have made attempts to trace the multitude of nouns used in describing mammals, birds, fish and insects as to their single, double or group terminology.

It is of interest to note that in spite of the many names contributed by nature, few are known and infrequently used. Many of these names have been handed down through the centuries, especially from European languages or local expressions.



Through time, descriptive nouns relating to groups were lost or seldom encountered except in dictionaries, where they were accompanied by a notation — "archaic" or "obsolete."

For example, there is the origin of the name for a group of geese. If you said a "flock," you are in for a surprise. According to wildlife experts, a group of geese is a plump. If it's in flight, it's a skein, and if it's on the grounds, it's called a gaggle.

Researching "gaggle," which had currency since at least 1407, is of onomatopoeic origin, derived from the syllable "gag" often used to imitate the cry of a goose (cf. Danish gaggelen and gagelen, German gackeln and gackern, Middle High German gügen, English giggle and cackle. By definition it means a flock of geese or any noisy assemblage of animate things.

"Dule" — earlier forms were doll and dole — it is the proper term for a company of doves and dates back to at least 1486. Many nouns, in part, are derived from Latin or Greek words. In fact, scientific names for mammals, birds, and plants consist of two words, a noun and a modifying adjective.

When referring to words which serve as the nomenclature for groups of specific species of wildlife, we see nature's contribution in the English language's stock of nouns for multitudes. There are also singular nouns denoting a plurality which are frequently used in English. For example, a set of dishes, a herd of cattle, a wad of bills.

Some nouns of multitude are known and are still in daily use. For example: gang, band, bevy and host. However, they are seldom employed as nouns of multitude for wildlife species to which they properly pertain: a gang of elk, a bevy of quail, a host of locusts. At the other end of the spectrum are words which now have disappeared from use entirely, and are not even recognized by the average person or outdoorsman.

Even knowing the multitude nouns won't necessarily take you to the head of the class at your favorite hunting club. But to be impressive you should be able to drop the name of the male, female and young of each species.

Groups of mammals, birds and insects often have colorful descriptive names. But through time, most words have fallen into disuse as our English language heritage moved away from Britain and the world became citified.

We are not so intimate with group words anymore. But here are a few descriptive nouns that, archaic or not, still roll happily off the tongue:

Bevy of quail	Nest of mice
Bunch of teal	Nye of pheasants
Charm of finches	Party of ducks
Chattering of starlings	Plump of grouse
Chevron of geese	Puddling of mallards
Covert of coots	Raft of ducks
Covey of partridge	Rout of coyotes
Colony of ants	Siege of herons
Descent of woodpeckers	Sord of mallards
Exaltation of larks	Spring of teal (on water)
Fall of woodcock	Staring of owls
Flight of swallows	Sulk of fox
Gang of ducks	Unkindness of ravens
Herd of deer	Walk of snipe
Knot of widgeon	Wedge of swan (airborn)
Murder of crows	Watch of nightingales

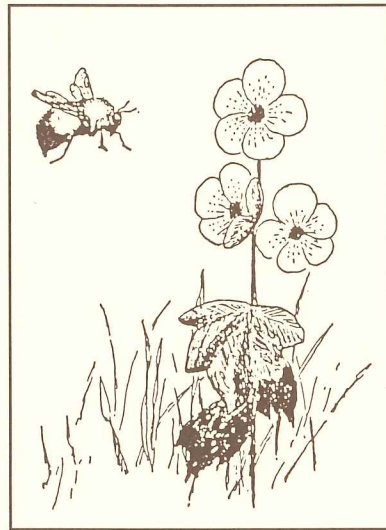
Bees and Honey

While watching a honey bee buzzing from one spring blossom to another, I take a moment to think of what our world would be like if these tiny creatures suddenly disappeared.

Approximately one-third of our total human diet depends on insect pollinated fruits, legumes and vegetables, and 80% of this pollination is done by honey bees. Even wild flowers benefit from a visit.

Their honey alone is worth well over \$100 million annually, but the value of their work as pollinators totals some \$9.7 billion.

Apples, pears, plums, peaches and cherries are among the fruit trees that benefit from approximately one million colonies in America. Bees faithfully do their job transferring pollen from the anther of one flower to the stigma of another, assisting a variety of prairie flowers and woodland flowers.



This seems like a simple act, but nature requires that to produce fruit, flowering plants must be fertilized by pollen. There are also some trees and grasses that are self-pollinating.

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.

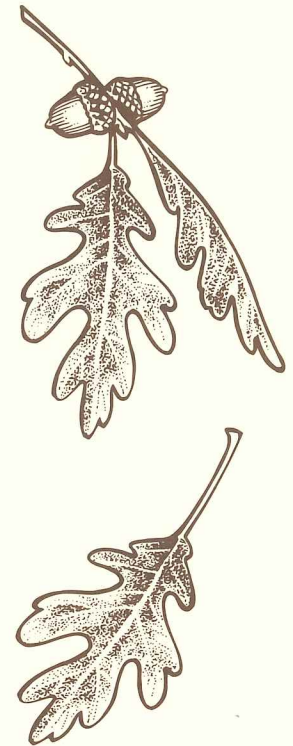
— Emily Dickinson

In my walks, I watch for a "Bee Tree." This is usually a hollow tree, with an entrance hole, wild bees will occupy the cavity and form a wax cone to store wild honey. Most trees are partially rotted and must be cut down and split open to obtain the honey load.

Pure wild honey is a delicious supplement with breakfast pancakes.

The Old Bur Oak

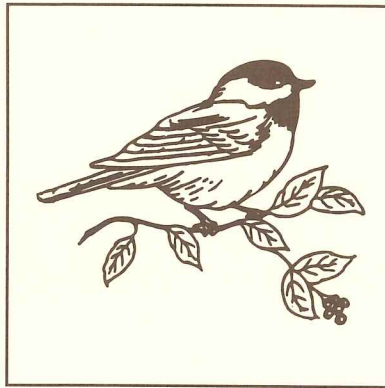
I didn't begin life as a weed
I really came from an acorn seed
My mom and pop were old proud folks
Alert for ages but then a sudden stroke
With axe, saw and a double team
They cut and hauled my proud folks' dream
Over the trail to build a home
And left me on the cold earth all alone
I had it rough those first long years
The fires burned hot but for the tears
That saved my hide and thus I grew
With partners the years they flew
I got quite big with my forest chums
As my leaves grasped energy from the sun
So now I tower above the ground
And enjoy the nesting squirrels in my crown
Birds roost at night from windy gusts



And deer paw my acorns under the snowy crust
 I share fallen limbs for a warm fire
 And shade Spring flowers until they expire
 More than two hundred years of Nature's call
 And each autumn my colors bring joy to all
 I like the spot I now call home
 And good rains have helped me some
 I am now a monarch* the oldest living tree
 And I wonder what will be my last decree

— Phil Sander

* The monarch of the Des Plaines Conservancy property is a giant Bur Oak, located north of the old picnic grounds fence line. Measuring four and one half feet from the base, the circumference is 10 feet 11 inches with a height of 42 feet and a limb spread of approximately 90 feet. Estimated age is some 300 years.



Nature's Bird Food

During the late fall and winter months, nature shares a bounty of wild fruits and berries with migrating and non-migrating birds, as well as other wildlife.

Berries, with their nourishing juice pods and seeds, produce fuel for the migrating birds' long flight to warmer climes.

Non-migrating birds and animals often depend on the berry-like fruits of thorn apple, mountain ash, wild crab apple, rosehips, and other fruits to supplement their winter diet. Raccoon, squirrel, fox, rabbits, deer, cardinals, thrushes, and other wildlife search out these natural foods.

It is during the rigors of winter that the birds' diet is supplemented by the seeds of berry-type plants which they depend on for body nourishment.

Sorghum seeds, corn, soybeans and grass seeds are also important winter foods. Grain, especially corn, consumed by game birds, supply body heat during subzero weather.

A recent survey at the Des Plaines Conservancy lands listed other important standby food plants: autumn olive, high bush cranberry, buckthorn, multiflora rose, wild grape and nightshade; all produce seeds that are winter food for pheasants, chukar, quail, cardinal, blue jay and a host of other song birds that stay over winter. Without the addition of fruit pulp and berry seeds that nature provides, many birds and animals could not survive.

Trees and shrubs also benefit by wildlife feeding on their fruits. Birds and animals help disperse plant seeds. Ultimately, new growth appears and a new cycle of plants continue their species' existence. I guess nature planned it that way.



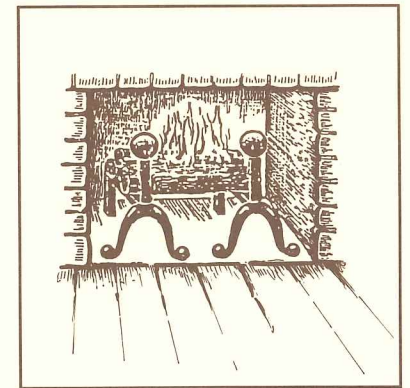
Fireside Reflections

After a successful hunt bagging a few crafty fast-flying pheasants in the snow-covered back forty, my thoughts are to head back to the warm clubhouse.

Here in a group of goodfellows, we enjoy a round of refreshments and review the hits and misses of the day's hunt and partake of a good lunch.

Most of all, I enjoy chatting with my hunting partner and watching the burning logs stacked on the andirons. As the colorful flames flicker, the tangy smell of wood permeates the room. There is something about an open fire that adds to a great day in the outdoors.

The embers seem to reflect a changing scene as I watch the burning oak logs finally reduce to white ash. Wood has a fast or slow burning combustion action. It all depends on the specie of tree.



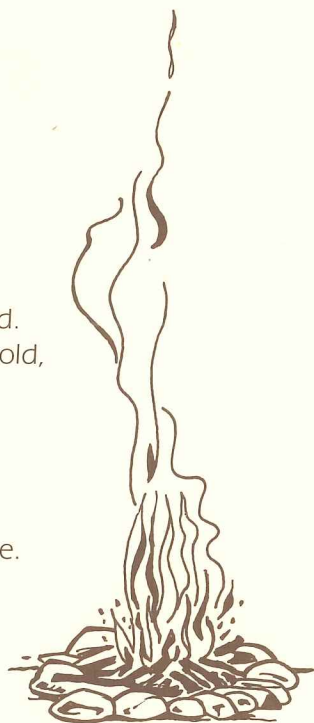
A good guide is quoted in the following verse:

Beechwood fires are bright and clear
If logs are kept a year.
Chestnut only good, they say,
If only for long 'tis laid away.
But ash new or ash old
Is fit for queen with crown of gold.

Birch and fir logs burn too fast,
Blaze up bright and do not last.
It is by the Irish said
Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread.
Elm wood burns like churchyard mold,
E'en the very flames are cold.
But ash green or ash brown
Is fit for queen with golden crown.

Poplar gives a bitter smoke,
Fills your eyes and makes you choke.
Apple wood will scent your room
With an incense like perfume.
Oaken logs, if dry and old,
Keep away the winter's cold.
But ash wet or dry
A king shall warm his slippers by.

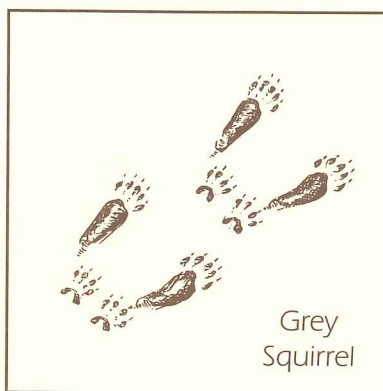
AUTHOR UNKNOWN



Tracks in the Snow

When you are out for a walk at the Conservancy, watch for bird and animal tracks in the snow. A fresh snowfall is ideal for observing tracks and can make your walk more interesting.

By observing wildlife tracks, you gain a certain knowledge of their habits and survival. As you follow the tracks, you will learn much



about an animal or bird, as it searches for food or cover. Sometimes snow tracks will even show an escape from a predator.

Around hedgerows, notice the rabbit and pheasant tracks. In the open fields or paths, watch for deer tracks. On occasions, near Horseshoe Lake, a mink track. The oak and hickory wooded areas are places to see squirrel tracks.

Identifying the animal or bird that made the tracks can be easy. Some tips: climbing animals, like squirrels, raccoon and opossum, tend to put their forefeet side-by-side, while ground animals, such as a rabbit, leaves staggered footprints. A cock pheasant, beside three toes, may leave a spur print. Watch for the big footprints of a turkey. Chukar partridges have a small foot and prints are close together in a staggered path. A fox leaves one pattern of tracks when on the run, another when searching for food or just trotting along.

At the edge of the north forty and along the Des Plaines River, beaver tracks may be seen. Their track is distinguished by the web in the hind feet, and an indentation of the four-inch-wide tail. Signs of beaver occupation are downed trees or girdled marks at the base of willow and other trees.

Next time you are out in the snow-covered ground, try reading tracks. You'll be able to piece together the daily routines of wildlife as they search for food and shelter, necessary to survive the elements of winter.

The Inscrutable Beaver

At the north perimeter of the Conservancy, along Section 29 or the land south of Highway 165, more than 100 acres of lowlands have been flooded as a result of Wisconsin's foremost dam builder, the American beaver (*Castor canadensis*).

In the 1930s, this floodplain area was once under water and called Holt's slough. In the 1940s, the Des Plaines River was diked, several deep channels were dug and the land drained for crops.

The beaver have since determined to return the area to its former levels. Although the flooding has eliminated excellent wild



pheasant hunting, it has created a large wetland pond for spring migrating geese, ducks and shore birds. It is a large refuge to rest and feed.

The first signs of beaver that I saw were willow tree cuttings along the Des Plaines River in 1971. It was puzzling as to where they migrated from.

The beaver formed a colony, built a lodge, and in 1975 moved just west of the river to a large marsh. Here, they plugged up the culverts and a flowage appeared. This was the grounds of the old Grey Dawn Gun Club of 1935.

Serious damage was inflicted to the planted willow trees, eight to ten inches in diameter. The beaver cut down these trees in spite of our defensive efforts of tarring and wiring the base of trees. All of the wood was cut in sections and carried to their underwater stock pile.

Bark and small twigs of willow and aspen are their principal food. Cuttings are made by the two top and bottom chisel sharp teeth, which have an orange tinge color. Logs and twigs are cut into pieces from one to two feet long and at a determined location are buried in the mud, underwater, for their winter food supply. The inner bark of the cambium layer will sustain the animals through all seasons. October and November are their peak working months. In 1977, the river was low and the beaver built a dam across the river, at the northwest corner of the back forty. The dam about eighteen feet long, impounded the water in the north to almost two feet above normal. About 1979, the animals had scattered over a larger area and were doing additional tree cutting damage. During the winter the older or bank beaver, those without a lodge status, were girdling the bark of 10-inch to 15-inch willow trees from the ice line to as high as they could reach. These trees died off at a later date.

Beaver mate for life, and the young remain with the parents for two years. During 1980 and '81, there appeared to be a beaver population explosion. They set up housekeeping on Horseshoe Lake, plugging up the outlet culvert with mud and branches. On numerous occasions these culverts had to be reopened, only to find in the next few days, all were plugged again. Because of the increased population, it became necessary to call in a professional trapper to reduce their number.

In the fall of 1981, Wisconsin's foremost dam builders felt they wanted a bigger and deeper flowage. They proceeded to build a dam approximately thirty-five feet long that impounded the marsh,

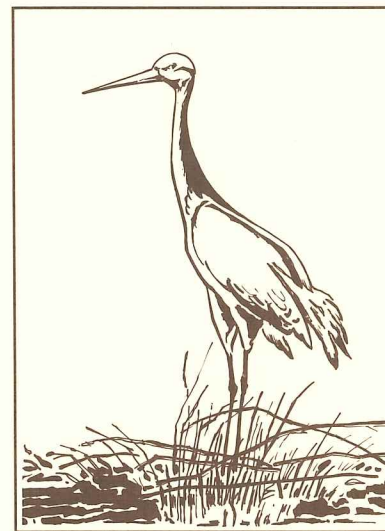
from the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad tracks to the river dike, running east and west. This formed a flowage of over 100 acres. A substantial dam can be built by a pair of beaver in three or four nights. The dam consisted of mud, roots, cattails and sticks on a zigzag or "W" shape.

More than 100 trees were cut down, all dropped toward the water. Their tops cut up — some parts for the dam, other limbs for underwater stockpiles as winter forage.

Beaver at one time hit a low population and Wisconsin closed the season for trapping the animals for 26 years, until 1934, when limited trapping was allowed in the northern counties. 1980 reached an all-time high for beaver pelts. Beaver ponds encouraged other animal species, such as muskrat, mink and raccoon to coexist with the beaver.

Beaver are now found at many streams and wetlands in Wisconsin. Low monetary value for hides has hindered trapping. Where beaver flowages have caused serious damage to trout streams or roads the animals have been eliminated.

The beaver appearance definitely has aesthetic, educational and recreational value and can be a beneficial part of the overall ecological community. Unfortunately, the population must be controlled at a manageable level.



Wetlands Classic

South of the clubhouse is an extensive marsh that comes alive with sights and sounds of wildlife on an early morning. Soon after sunrise begins to unveil, I am standing at the water's edge, with binoculars in hand, shivering in the dampness of a chilling air.

Suddenly the quiet is broken by the sound of a flight of low-flying teal directly over my head. But the northern migrants disappear as quickly as they arrive. In their place several great blue heron silhouette

the open water of the Goose Pond. Then the chatter of sandhill cranes in a distant corn field sets the day in motion.

As the sun peers higher over the horizon, a mist rises as the warm air settles over the vast marsh. Within this calming serenity comes constant and varied chattering of the redwing black birds, the crowing of a cock pheasant, and the burping of frogs. Now and then I hear a splashing of water in the marsh, caused by northern pike that have left the Des Plaines River to spawn among the cattails.

The wetlands and the river have a personality all their own. Climate, geography and wildlife differ, but a calmness and order run through each one.

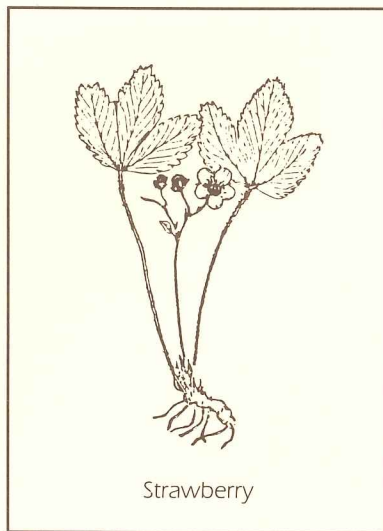
The marshlands probably once were a large bayou of the river, but have been disrupted by environmental changes. Though the balance of nature is delicate, the forces are strong, creative and determined, and through changes, it survives.

Some people think this place is ugly and smelly. I guess it depends on your point of view. I take time to see and hear the variety of wildlife and examine the new growth of plants and foliage. All around me I can find the vibrant phases of nature. Be it spring, fall or winter, there is always something new to experience at the Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy.

Wild Berries

Roaming the fringe areas of the north woodlot and nearby hedgerows, especially along the railroad fence line, are places to find wild raspberries which I enjoy tasting. Maybe it's the memory of picking wild berries in my kid days that are still special to my taste buds. Also, it's a good place to spend time when the world has pushed too much.

At the Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy lands, there are places to browse and discover a berry



Strawberry

patch and taste the bounty of the land. A warning: Do not eat berries or wild fruit you do not recognize!

I like searching for wild strawberries. Although small, they are tasty and found close to the ground. Get there before the birds and chipmunks find them. Blackberries and raspberries are found on shrubs, both are unique, and when ripe have a tasty flavor that no domestic fruit can match.

Some people wonder why anyone would waste their time getting scratched, sunburned and eaten by mosquitoes to pick wild berries. I'll admit that I may not have all my nuts and bolts tightened properly, but I enjoy searching and berry pickin'.

It's fun, once you've had a chance to compare wild berries to the store-bought variety, you will admit wild fruit is superior. There is just no comparison, even if it's only a small handful.

Another gift of nature, during the fall, is hickory nuts. I manage to harvest a small pail full, then at Christmas time, I sit by my fireplace, crack the nuts and pick out the tasty nutmeat.

In early October, after a day of rain, I look for the puffball and cauliflower mushrooms. They are delicious when dipped in egg batter and cooked like a pancake in the old frying pan.

Berry picking is a good relaxing experience. Try it sometime and you will enjoy new sights, sounds and tastes of nature.

Tribute to a Dog

The one absolutely unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him, the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous, is his dog.

A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and poverty, in health and sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that come in an encounter with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wing and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



**Discover...
This Unique
Outdoor
Experience
at the
Des Plaines
Wetlands
Conservancy
Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin**

Conservation

There can be no doubt that the DES PLAINES WETLANDS CONSERVANCY does make a difference, especially in the CONSERVATION of plants and wildlife.

This area of low-rolling hills, wooded ridges, sedge-grass and cattail ponds, cornfields, wild sorghum patches and broad marshes is home to countless numbers of wild deer, fox, turkey, mink, beaver, pheasant, quail, hawks, woodcock, partridge, raccoon and the many other species indigenous to our Midwestern area. The winding Des Plaines River, bordering the property, provides lush pond and marsh areas with a year-round population of ducks, augmented in the Spring and Fall by great migrating flocks of geese and ducks of all kinds who use it as a resting place.

While the area supports considerable natural reproduction, the Conservancy adds to Illinois and Wisconsin game stocks by releasing large numbers of turkeys, pheasants and partridge, and by building habitat and nesting facilities for wood duck and other water and land birds and animals. Trout, bass and panfish are released and grown in several of the area ponds. The ponds and the Des Plaines River holds 32 species of fish. Property management techniques ensure the flourishing of both common and rare trees, plants and flowers of the area.

... planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect

Webster's Dictionary

Ecology

...the CONSERVANCY does make a difference in the ECOLOGY and the preservation of this natural area...

This area has been relatively untouched since the time it was formed, and represents a unique ecosystem in its natural state.

The maintenance of this area guarantees that it will remain an untouched part of Illinois and Wisconsin's heritage, and be available to its residents and visitors in its natural beauty and function.

The CONSERVANCY is a magnificent area encompassing over seven hundred acres of unspoiled lands, two miles of scenic river, ponds, marshes and more than 20 miles of nature trails.

This land was home to the Potawatomi Indians long before the first French trappers came to the area in the 1700's. Migrating from the South, up the river and marshes, the Indians came searching for deer, elk, ducks, geese, beaver, muskrat and quail. The *She-Shik-Ma-O* was the center of their life long before the French called the river *aux Plaines*.

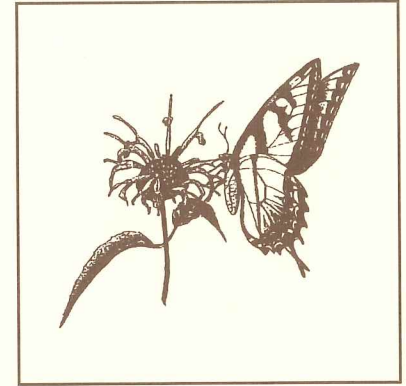
The remains of these early settlements are still in evidence on our land...as well as the beauty and bountiful wildlife that have drawn people to this area for untold centuries.

The DES PLAINES WETLANDS CONSERVANCY was founded in the 1984 by a group of Conservation-minded citizens to protect and maintain this area of wetlands and adjacent uplands in perpetuity for the use of present and future generations.

The CONSERVANCY is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and ecology of its area and the education of the people living around it.

... the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment

Webster's Dictionary



Education

...and the CONSERVANCY certainly makes a difference by offering the opportunity to EDUCATE OURSELVES in the ways of Nature.

The Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy area is open to the public, by reservation, every day of the year except major holidays and the Sundays from April 1st to October 15.

More than 20 miles of nature trails have been laid out through the woods and fields adjacent to the Des Plaines River, with items and areas of special interest labeled.

Observation areas and multi-use areas for youth, students, senior citizens and other special interest groups are available and being expanded.

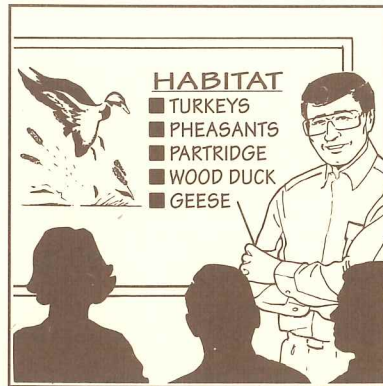
Seminars on wildlife conservation, habitat management, and area ecology are given periodically, as are workshops on wildlife habitat construction, sport hunting, conservation and land management. Group guided tours of the area are provided by reservation.

The DES PLAINES WETLANDS CONSERVANCY exists for you. A most unique experience awaits you. You are encouraged and invited to make use of this fantastic world that exists within our community.

The CONSERVANCY AND YOU can continue making a difference...

The CONSERVANCY needs your interest—and help—to continue and expand its efforts to preserve this fast-disappearing part of Midwestern natural life.

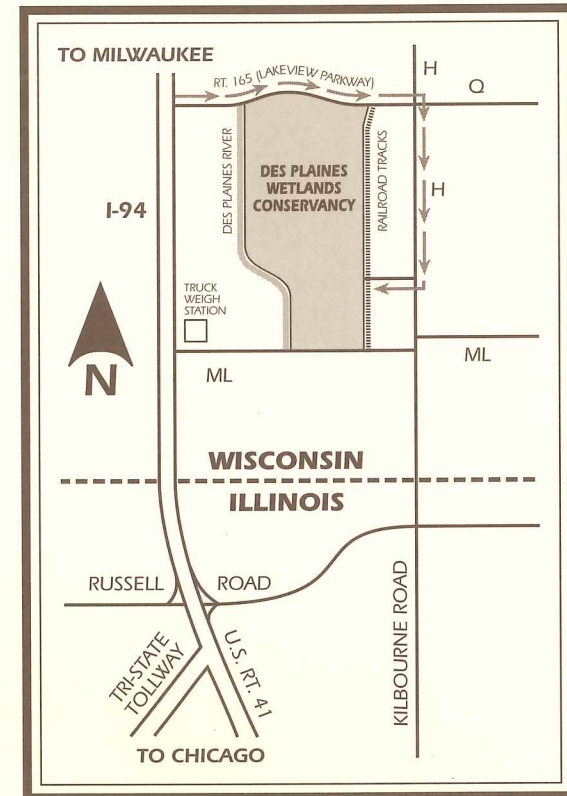
Join the Conservancy and help by volunteering your services... in anything from building wood duck nests to guiding tours. Come and see the DES PLAINES WETLANDS CONSERVANCY.



Location

The CONSERVANCY is conveniently located just east of I-94 and north of the Illinois/Wisconsin state line, 30 miles south of Milwaukee, 55 miles from Chicago's Loop and 6 miles from Kenosha County Airport.

Take Route 165 (Lakeview Parkway) exit to County H Road (88th Avenue). Go south one mile to the CONSERVANCY. Entrance is identified with a large pheasant sign on County H Road.



For More Information Write or Call

DES PLAINES WETLANDS CONSERVANCY
INCORPORATED

P.O. Box 253

Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin 53158

414-694-9858

Notes

A checklist to the birds of Des Plaines Wetlands Conservancy



Birds of the Fields and Marshes

Chimney Swift
Ruby-Throated
Hummingbird
Eastern Kingbird
Eastern Phoebe
Horned Lark
Eastern Meadowlark
Barn Swallow
Tree Swallow
Purple Martin
Eastern Bluebird
Starling
Bronzed Grackle
Red-Wing Blackbird
Common Crow
Cowbird
Common Goldfinch
Yellowthroat
House Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Mourning Dove
Marsh Hawk
Kestrel

Birds of the Woods, Woods Margins and Brush Patches

Red-Tailed Hawk
Screech Owl
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Night Hawk
Yellow Shafted Flicker
Red-Headed
Woodpecker

Great Crested
Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Wood Pewee
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo
Black-Billed Cuckoo
Blue Jay
Black-Capped
Chickadee
White-Breasted
Nuthatch
Red-Breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Winter Wren
Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Cedar Waxwing
Robin
Wood Thrush
Veery
Red-Eyed Vireo
Yellow-Bellied
Sapsucker
Pheasant
Woodcock
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Chukar Partridge
Quail
Warbling Vireo
Black-and-White
Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Black-Throated Green
Warbler

Chestnut-Sided Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Ovenbird
American Redstart
Baltimore Oriole
Scarlet Tanager
Cardinal
Indigo Bunting
Rose-Breasted
Grosbeak
Purple Finch
Rufous-Sided Towhee
Pine Siskin
Song Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow

Birds of the Water and Water's Edge

Great Blue Heron
American Bittern
Mallard
Night Heron
Red-Breasted
Merganser
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Belted Kingfisher
Bank Swallow
Rough-Winged Swallow
Wood Duck
Canada Goose