GLACIAL HERITAGE TOUR

Mark your calendars now -- November 14 and 16 -- for a unique opportunity to explore the geology of eastern McHenry and western Lake counties with a very special expert, Ron Riepe of the College of Lake County. Anyone who has attended a lecture of Ron Riepe's comes away talking of his infectious enthusiasm and his colorful way of interpreting his subject.

Ron will give a slide presentation at the meeting of the Barrington Natural History Society at 8 pm on November 14 (all welcome; downstairs in the Barrington United Methodist Church, corner of Lincoln and Hough Sts.). He will follow with a half-day bus and walking tour on Saturday, November 16.

For the Saturday bus tour, donuts and coffee will be served at the CFC office at 8 am and the bus will leave sharply at 8:30. It will return by 1 pm. Participants should dress for the weather -- there will be stops for walking -- and should feel free to bring a snack. There will be a charge of $4 for non-members and $2 for members for the bus trip.

Call Sam Oliver at 382-SAVE to reserve a bus seat before September 30. Registration will be limited.

SUMMER SESSIONS: June through August

The children's nature classes studied the birds on Baker's Lake, insects, animal homes, and lots more. Highlights included:

-- a tiny, tiny monarch caterpillar on a milkweed leaf
-- a swarm of tadpoles in Sulky Pond
-- a mink that sped across the pond to the opposite bank
-- many, many damselflies on the day of the insect safari
-- organ-pipe mud wasp nests on the side of the nature center
-- great blue heron babies being fed on the Baker's Lake island
-- pixie cup fungi growing on the wood chip path
CONSERVATION ARTICLE by Wayne Schennum

A Barrington Bog and Fen

It has been nearly 13,000 years since glaciers made their final retreat from the Barrington area. In their wake they left the scenic rolling hills which have made this region such an attractive place to live. However, it is the land and the water in the basins between these hills that have been of concern to Citizens for Conservation. For it is the wetlands in these basins -- specifically, the Barrington Bog and Wagner Fen -- which have been major targets of CFC's efforts to protect the region's precious natural heritage.

Barrington Bog lies in a deep basin, called a "kettle" by geologists, at the north-east corner of Route 59 and Miller Road, just north of North Barrington School. This kettle formed when a piece of the last glacier's massive ice sheet broke off and was buried by the surrounding rubble. When the glacier retreated northward and the climate warmed, the ice block slowly melted to form a shallow lake. The lake then filled with vegetation to form a bog.

A peculiar combination of geology and history have kept the Barrington Bog much the same as it was since the glacier left. The basin in which the Bog lies is virtually isolated from surrounding drainage systems. There is no way for water to enter or leave except through the air. So the Bog gets all its water from precipitation -- rain or snow -- which is acidic and poor in nutrients, making this bog and all bogs quite different from marshes and other wetlands. Cold air also tends to settle into the deep basin in which the bog lies. This combination of factors makes the area similar to wetlands in Canada and the extreme northern U.S. -- bog country. Remembering that the plants which originally invaded the shallow lake at Barrington Bog did so 12,000 years ago, when our climate and vegetation were still as they are up north today, we can see how and why the Barrington Bog became, and remains, a bog.

The names and characteristics of many of the plants that inhabit the Barrington Bog help us further understand this unique wetland. As in all bogs, a thick mat of mosses and grass-like plants called sedges forms the spongy base mat in which all else lives. The decaying remains of these plants have accumulated to form thick layers of water-logged peat that bounces and quakes like a water bed when you walk on it. The bog buckbean and bog willow are two low growing plants that live in this seemingly inhospitable place. Bog birch form thickets of shrubs up to seven feet high. All three of these plants have thick, waxy leaves that help them retain water. For, as ironic as it may seem, the acid, nutrient-poor peat of the Bog makes it difficult for plants to draw water.

Other plants typical of bogs and found in the Barrington Bog do not have thick leaves, but cope in other ways with the stresses of life here. Among them are the little smooth white violet and the royal fern. Many of the plants of the Bog are very rare in Illinois and found only in these wetland relics of another time. One of them, the large cranberry, is endangered in the state. A small colony of these cranberries still hangs on in the center of the Bog.
There are no animals in the Barrington Bog which we know are restricted to this habitat here. However, woodcocks have been sighted performing their elaborate aerial courtship displays over the areas. They probably nest beneath the birch and willow shrubs, while songbirds, such as yellow throats and yellow warblers, nest in the branches above. Swamp sparrows and long-billed marsh wrens can be seen darting into the beds of sedges and cattails where they make their homes.

In contrast to Barrington Bog, Wagner Fen lies in a broad, shallow depression bordered by gently rolling gravel hills. It is located east of River Road, between Kelsey and Roberts Roads in Tower Lakes. Wagner Fen also differs from the Bog in that it is drained by a winding creek that flows out of Tower Lakes and through the Fen to the Fox River. The basin occupied by the Fen may once have been a shallow glacial lake, but the wetland that filled it is fed continuously by ground water from the bordering gravel hills. This ground water is the lifeblood of a fen. Rain and melted snow percolate into the sand and gravel of the hills, dissolve the minerals in the rock, and seep or ooze out into the basin. Thus, this water is rich in some nutrients and is limy or alkaline, in stark contrast to the water of a bog.

The vegetation which forms the Wagner Fen has a less ancient heritage than that of Barrington Bog. Though some of the plants are a hold over from the time when Barrington looked more like modern Canada, most of them are prairie and marsh types that crept into the basin about 7,000-8,000 years ago when a prairie climate first came to Illinois.

Wetland sedges and prairie grasses with names like Indian grass, big bluestem, and little bluestem dominate the Fen landscape. As in a bog, their remains accumulate and rot slowly to form quaking peat. But here the peat is infiltrated by that alkaline ground water, so the flowering plants that grow here are kinds that thrive in these peculiar chemical conditions. Some are showy, such as the deep blue fringed gentian, bright yellow Ohio goldenrod, and delicate pink gerardia. Others, like the twig rush and low nut rush, look like inconspicuous little reeds, but are no less significant, as they grow nowhere else but in fens. Many are threatened with extinction in Illinois because too many other fens have been destroyed.

Fens also provide the only suitable habitat for many of our wet prairie wildflowers and wildlife today, because nearly all wet prairies on non-peaty soils have been cultivated. At the Wagner Fen, the beautiful marsh blazing star, marsh blue violet, and creamy turtlehead are common, yet are seldom seen elsewhere in the area because their habitat has been destroyed. Two now very rare wetland butterflies, the Baltimore checkerspot and silver-bordered fritillary, depend on the turtlehead and marsh violets of the Fen, as these are the only major food plants of their caterpillars. Animals with such narrow diets require very special places to live.
The extensive cattail and reed marshes at Wagner Fen are less unique, but they do provide a stronghold for animals that are running out of places to live in the area. Muskrat homes dotting the marsh are evidence that this industrious rodent is present.

Great blue and green herons frequently forage for frogs and small fish in the marsh, and the raucous, eerie call of the sora rail is evidence that this elusive insect eater is probably nesting here.

Barrington Bog and Wagner Fen are two truly unique areas. The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, conducted in the late 1970's, recognized their statewide significance. Citizens for Conservation is working to protect and preserve these wetlands in order to save two precious local refuges for living things.

BOOK BROWSING

Some flower books to enrich your casual or serious interest in wildflowers:

Wildflowers & Weeds by Courtenay & Zimmerman
A field guide based on flower families, illustrated with color photographs. A pictorial key and charts in the front help the novice establish a flower's family. This book focuses on the Great Lakes region, so contains many species not covered in the Peterson field guide.

Suburban Wildflowers by Richard Headstrom
Published just last year, this book is not a field guide, as the Preface states, but "a series of word pictures - vignettes if you will - of the various flowers that grow wild near at hand. It is about their virtues and vices, about the legends and folk tales that are associated with them, and about the uses to which many of them have been put." The book treats wildflowers from the commonplace (e.g. dandelion) to the not-so-common (e.g. purple-fringed orchis) with details and affection not found in field guides.

Field Guide to Orchids of North America by John G. & Andrew E. Williams
An exquisite little guide to these wonderfully exquisite flowers. The descriptive texts are technical, supported by a glossary in the back. The plates are in color and done in detail, including root stalks. Useful mostly to amateur botanists with field experience who aren't shaken by botanical terms, and who love orchids.

The Amazing Dandelion and Milkweed both by Millicent Selsam
This author has written many science books for children and these are among the best. Each is a superb photo essay of the life history of the flower. If the books are no longer in print, they are available at most public libraries and many school libraries.
FROM THE STAFF DIRECTOR

Be Among the First to Know (then spread the word)

Aluminum can recycling will soon be available at CFC's recycling center in Barrington. We plan to be ready for this new project by September 1st. Watch for the sign at the recycling center (east end of Lake Street behind the new bank building) and notices in local papers. A special bin for aluminum cans will be added in the area where recyclers now deposit glass and paper. Please bring ALUMINUM cans -- no tin -- and deposit them loose, not bagged.

Two More Recycling Notes

From time to time, children play around the glass bins, looking for certain bottles, actually breaking glass, etc. They find this fun and seem oblivious to any possible danger. Please warn them away when you see this happening -- you will be helping them and Citizens for Conservation.

For those who have magazines to recycle: Lake County Scrap Metal at Rte. 22 and Nain, Prairie View, accepts them. Hours are 8:30-5:00 weekdays and 8:00-3:00 Saturdays. Phone first: 634-4747. They may say they aren't accepting magazines, but will when you explain you don't expect to be paid for them.

Thank You!

Sincere thanks are definitely in order to a number of people, proving that the spirit of voluntarism is alive and well at Citizens for Conservation:

*To Becky Luehring and Alita Young, who helped prepare the Spring Newsletter for mailing.

*To the enthusiastic group that provided our first-ever entry in Barrington's 4th of July parade. Our theme was RECYCLE, which is exactly what we did with our entry when the parade ended. Driving directly to the recycling center, we deposited all glass and papers which had been our props. Thanks to all who helped. As one resident said, "I didn't know there was such an organization until I saw you in the parade."

CFC URGES 4TH OF JULY PARADE CROWD TO "RECYCLE WITH US"

Young recyclers: Jessica Allard, Melinda Hartz, Emily Malcolm, Amanda Paulson, Heather Poppins, Elizabeth Train. Older recyclers: Sam Oliver, Wendy Paulson, Vicky Allard. Not pictured: Driver, Derek Oliver (who also served as photographer.)
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SATURDAY SESSIONS 1985-86

During the school year, CFC will offer a variety of Saturday morning classes for children. As always, parents are invited, too (registration fees apply only to children, however). All classes, unless otherwise indicated, will take place in the building at Crabtree Nature Center from 9:30 to 11:30 am. Registration will be limited. (Questions? Call 382-SAVE.)

SEPTEMBER 28 REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS. Herpetologist Ron Humbert will share slides, live specimens, and a lifelong love for turtles, frogs, salamanders, toads. Grades 2-8.

OCTOBER 26 FALL BIRD MIGRATION. Find out if pintails, green-winged teal, ruddy ducks, and redstarts fly through Barrington on their way to winter homes. Bring binoculars and a field guide, if you have them, for this class; dress for the weather. Grades 3-6.

NOVEMBER 23 HOLIDAY CRAFTS FROM NATURE. A variety of natural materials will be available for making and inventing holiday decorations. Grades 2-6.

JANUARY 25 ANIMAL TRACKS. Naturalist Maggie Jung will share her slides and expertise at reading signs in the snow left by animals, birds, and other natural phenomena. Part of the class will take place outside, so dress for the weather. Grades 3-6.

FEBRUARY 22 WHO'S WHO? To some, owls are a symbol of wisdom; to others, harbingers of doom. In this session, naturalist Mark Spreyer will reveal facts about many of our North American owls with slides and special feathered guests. Grades 1-7.

MARCH 8 MAKING MAPLE SYRUP. A bus will take you from the CFC office at 132 W. Station Street to the Max McGraw maple grove in West Dundee where the naturalist there, E.T., will lead the way from sap to syrup. Bus departs 9:10 and returns at 11:50. Dress for the weather. Grades 1-6.

Saturday Session Director: Wendy Paulson

Cost per session: $2 members; $4 non-members.

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SUMMER SESSION REGISTRATION

Name __________________________________________ Class _______

Address ____________________________________________

Phone ____________________________

Class(es) __________________________________________

Mail with check to: Citizens for Conservation, Inc., Box 435, Barrington, IL 60010
CFC NEWS ALAMANAC

Sept. 9-14  Nature Education Workshop at Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary, Schaumburg (for details write to sanctuary at 1111 E. Schaumburg Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60194).

Sept. 12  "Edible Wild Plants" by Alice Holenstein, program at Barrington Natural History Society, downstairs in Barrington United Methodist Church, corner of Lincoln an Hough Sts., 8 pm.

SATURDAY SESSIONS  See Inside

Nov. 14 and 16  Glacial Heritage program and tour; for details, see inside.