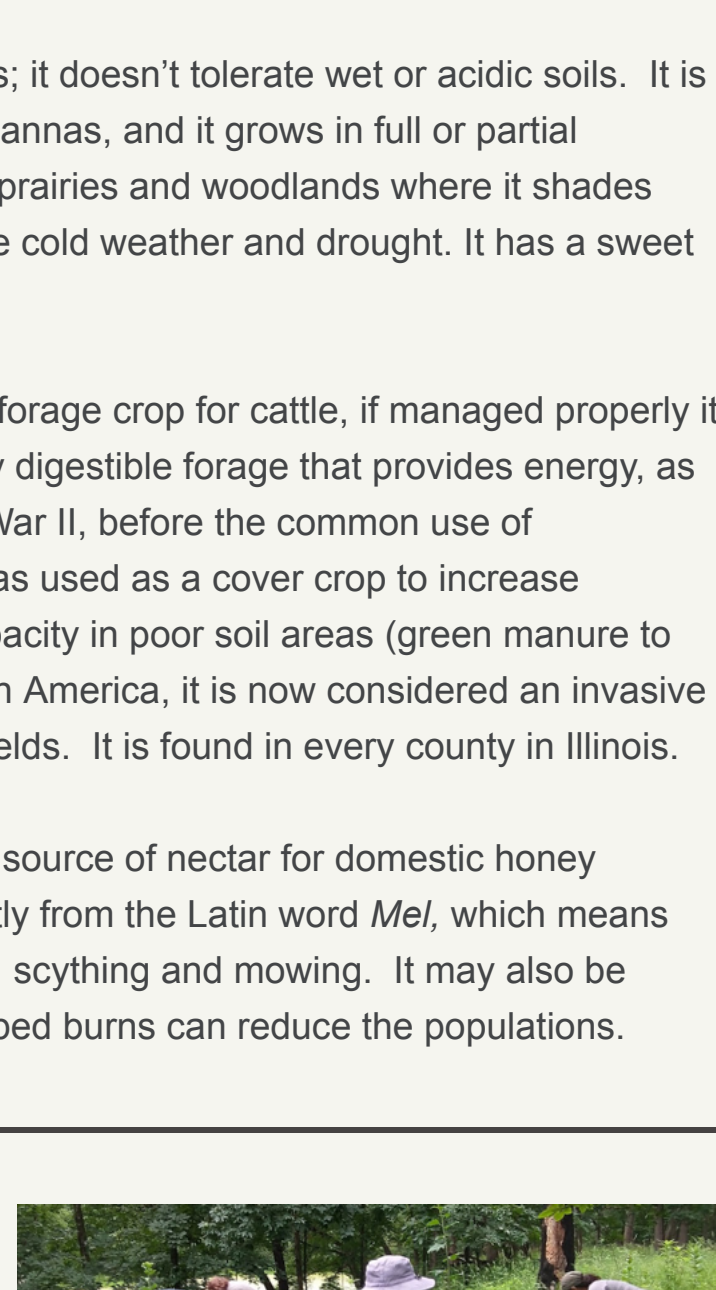
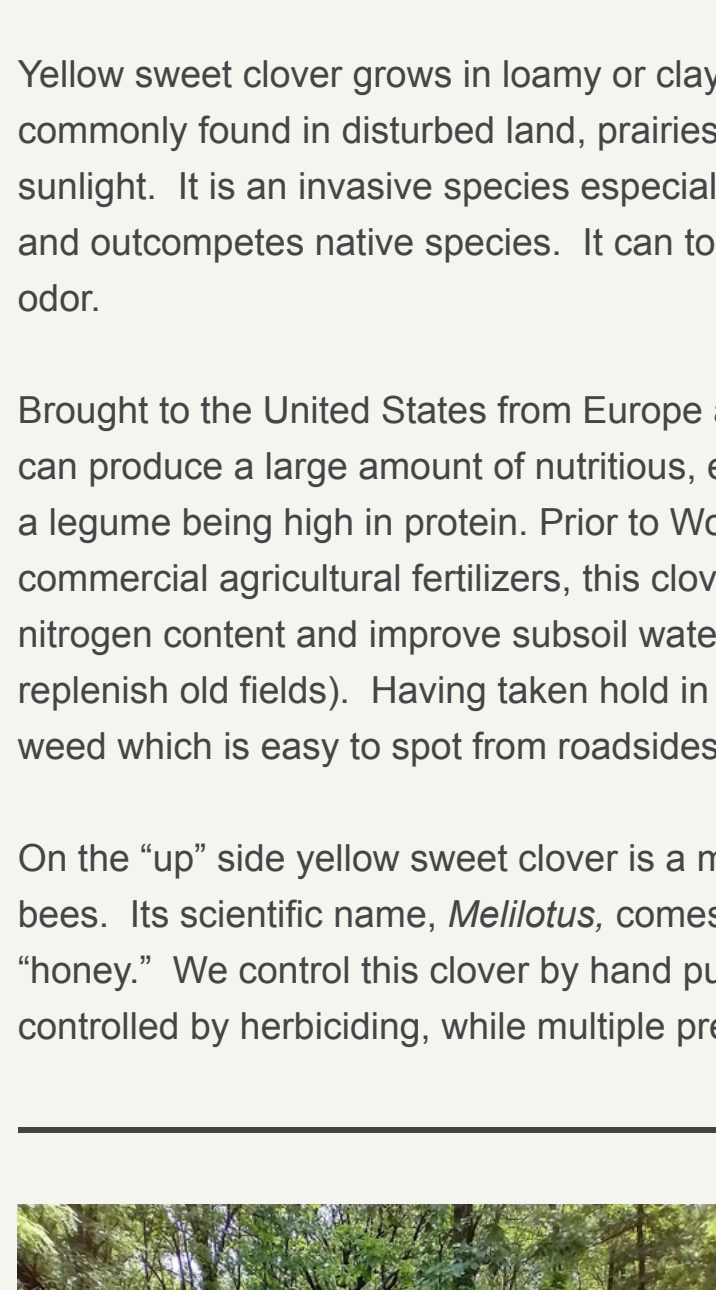
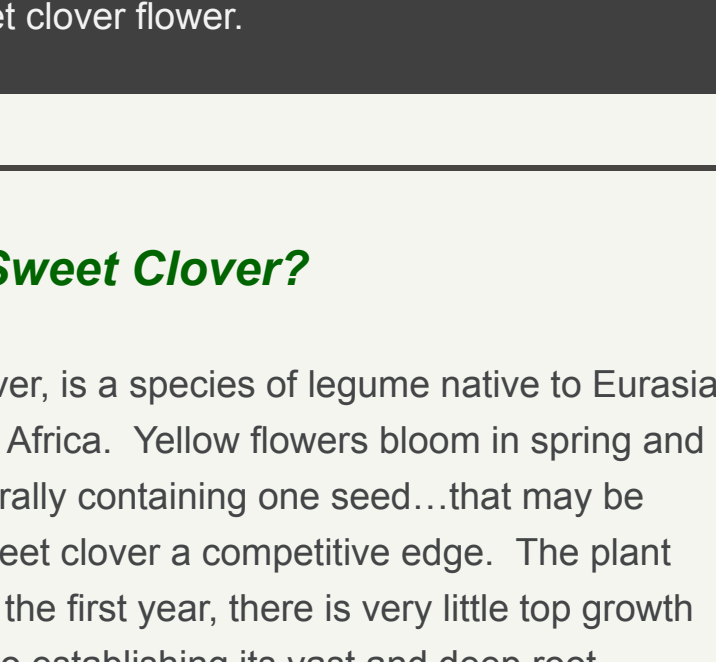
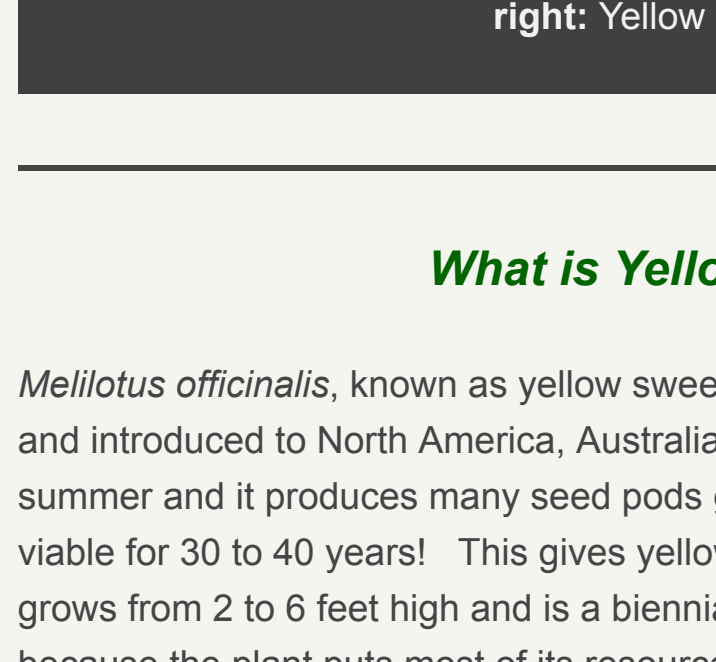
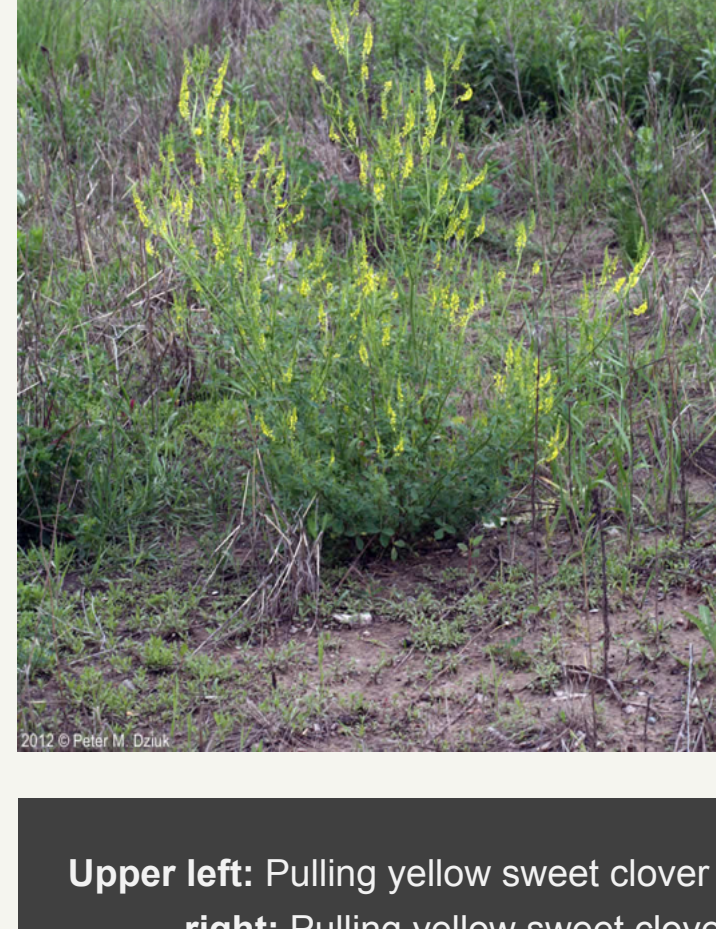


Issue date: July 2026

Upcoming Workdays

Sunday, 7/26	Saturday, 8/1	Sunday, 8/9
Saturday, 8/15	Sunday, 8/23	Saturday, 8/29
Sunday, 9/6		

For more information: [PCPS website](#).



Upper left: Pulling yellow sweet clover outside of the Nature Preserve fence. **Upper right:** Pulling yellow sweet clover inside the Nature Preserve along the fence. **Center left:** Working in a field of coneflowers. **Center right:** Break time and rest from pulling yellow sweet clover – Tom P, Janet, Tom W, Ernie, John, Diana, Dick and Alan (photo: S Kenny). **Lower left:** Yellow sweet clover patch. **Lower right:** Yellow sweet clover flower.

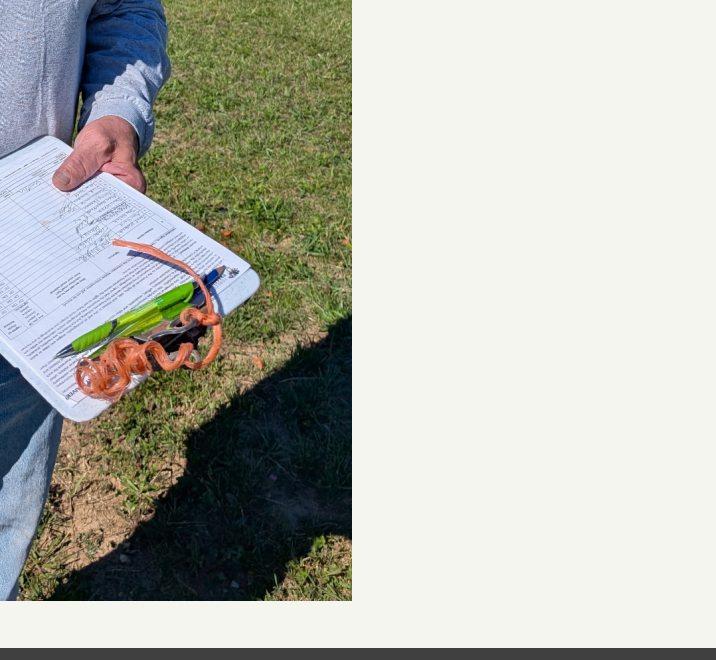
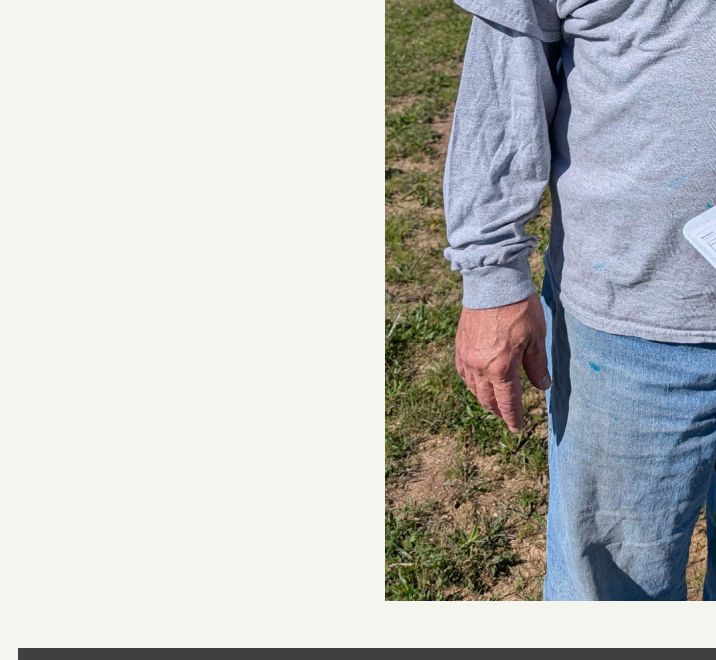
What is Yellow Sweet Clover?

Melilotus officinalis, known as yellow sweet clover, is a species of legume native to Eurasia and introduced to North America, Australia and Africa. Yellow flowers bloom in spring and summer and it produces many seed pods generally containing one seed...that may be viable for 30 to 40 years! This gives yellow sweet clover a competitive edge. The plant grows from 2 to 6 feet high and is a biennial. In the first year, there is very little top growth because the plant puts most of its resources into establishing its vast and deep root system. Most people likely do not notice it in the prairie or pasture because it is only a few inches tall. In the second year, the sweet clover puts its resources into above ground growth. Two consecutive years of good weather create a climate for it to flourish.

Yellow sweet clover grows in loamy or clay soils; it doesn't tolerate wet or acidic soils. It is commonly found in disturbed land, prairies, savannas, and it grows in full or partial sunlight. It is an invasive species especially in prairies and woodlands where it shades and outcompetes native species. It can tolerate cold weather and drought. It has a sweet odor.

Brought to the United States from Europe as a forage crop for cattle, if managed properly it can produce a large amount of nutritious, easily digestible forage that provides energy, as a legume being high in protein. Prior to World War II, before the common use of commercial agricultural fertilizers, this clover was used as a cover crop to increase nitrogen content and improve subsoil water capacity in poor soil areas (green manure to replenish old fields). Having taken hold in North America, it is now considered an invasive weed which is easy to spot from roadsides to fields. It is found in every county in Illinois.

On the "up" side yellow sweet clover is a major source of nectar for domestic honey bees. Its scientific name, *Melilotus*, comes partly from the Latin word *Mel*, which means "honey." We control this clover by hand pulling, scything and mowing. It may also be controlled by herbiciding, while multiple prescribed burns can reduce the populations.



Left: Pulling Japanese hedge parsley in Carl Hansen Woods: Diana, Lana, Sara and Claudia. **Right:** Crew collecting broad-leaved panic grass seed in Carl Hansen Woods...well, actually removing the bonnets placed around the seed heads at an earlier workday.

The Many Habitats of the Chicago Region

The Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) generally focuses on habitat for humans. However a current exhibit at their headquarters in Chicago (1 Illinois Center) instead focuses on habitat for flora and fauna. Chicago's Living Habitat, presented by Openlands in partnership with the CAC and Studio Gang, invites visitors to experience the landscapes that sustain life across the Chicago region.

The exhibit points out that our Chicago region has especially contributed to modern ecology with scientists able to study a broad variety of glacially shaped soils locally. "Here prairies, woodlands, wetlands and dunes meet in a combination found almost nowhere else forming a living web that predates cities and grids." Some of North America's greatest landscapes meet in the Chicago region. Eastern deciduous forest, northern coniferous forests and western grasslands come together under the influence of Lake Michigan.

This convergence creates a mix of habitats which support extraordinary biodiversity. And all these habitats are found in and around 10 million people! Most importantly these flora and fauna landscapes are conveniently available to the humans in the Chicago region. The exhibit, from June 11, 2026 to January 14, 2027, provides examples of these habitats along with pictures. Some of the places highlighted are described below. They are worth a visit (when not volunteering at Poplar Creek).

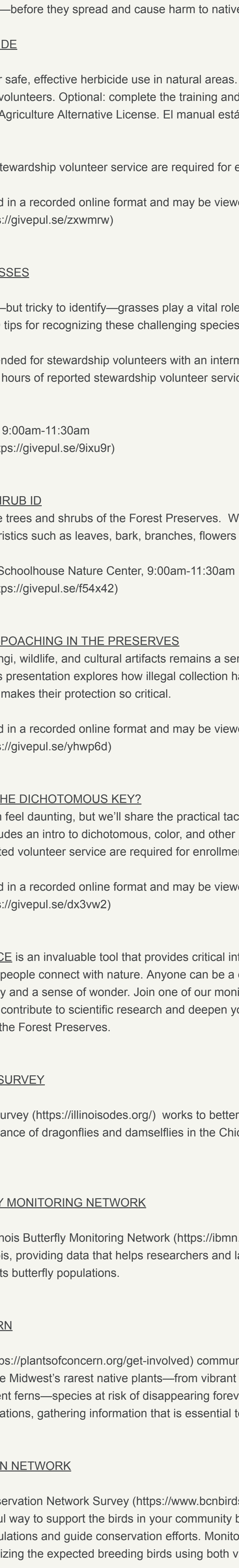
Midwin National Tall Grass Prairie (Will County, IL). The nation's first national tallgrass prairie, designated in 1996. It spans more than 20,000 acres with a herd of free-range bison returned to the area in 2015 after nearly two centuries. From arsenal to natural area – a prime example of healing.

Deer Grove Forest Preserve (Cook County, IL). Established in 1916, the first land protected by the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the nation's first and largest forest preserve system. Decades of efforts by Openlands and volunteers serve as a model for long-term ecological restoration and have created some of the highest quality natural areas in Illinois. Includes rolling woodlands, ravines, savannas, prairies and wetlands.

Indiana Dunes National Park (Northwest Indiana). One of the most biologically diverse national parks in the US; shaped by glaciers wind and waves. It contains beaches, dunes, oak savannas, bogs, wetlands and prairie side-by-side offering striking contrasts.

Wild Mile (Goose Island, Chicago). Along the north branch of the Chicago River, the world's first floating eco-park is part of a broader effort to restore the river, which was engineered to reverse its flow and now continues ecological recovery. The Wild Mile boardwalk brings visitors into a system of floating gardens. The habitat support fish, bird, turtles and other wildlife, while plant and freshwater mussels help filter the water.

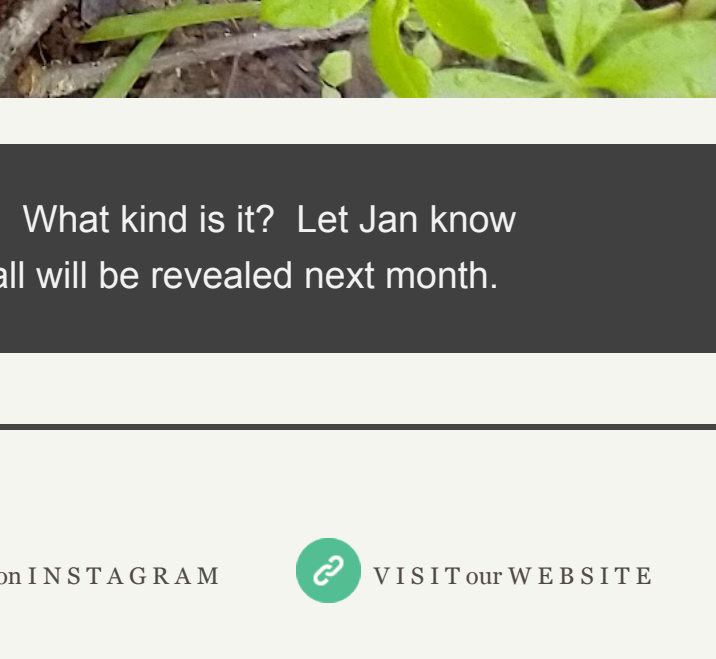
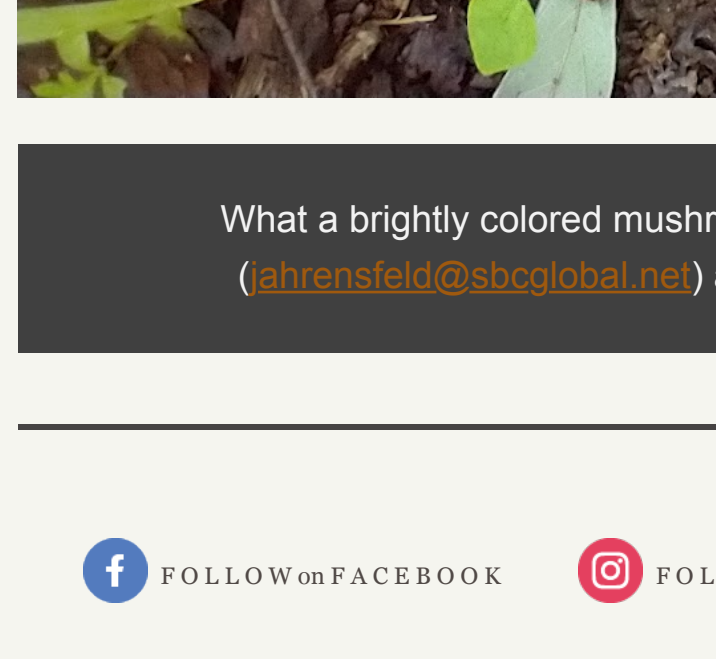
Additional recommended places with diverse habitat: Big Marsh Park (South Deering, Chicago), Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area (Grundy County, IL), Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge (McHenry Co, IL and Walworth County, WI), Henry Palmsano Park (Bridgeport, Chicago), Illinois Beach State Park (Lake County, IL), Liberty Prairie Reserve (Lake County, IL), Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve (Will County, IL), Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary (Uptown, Chicago), Palos Preserves (Cook County, IL), Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area (Grundy County, IL), Liberty Prairie Reserve (Lake County, IL), Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve (Will County, IL), and Volo Bog State Natural Area (Lake County, IL).



Dave Webb signs in at the workday during Father's Day weekend. PCPS often holds workdays on holidays. 17 volunteers attended the Poplar Creek workday on the Fourth of July (photo: S Kenny).

SCENES FROM THE SUMMER PICNIC

This year our picnic was held at Sara Pletcher and Jorge Jaen's home just south of our restoration sites off of Route 59. Their wooded, hilly property was a delightful setting. There were multiple locations to gather: sitting on the deck along with the main food table, inside the screened-in porch/room, below on the lawn, or the patio by the grill where the desserts table was located. We were able to easily move about and chat with each other. As usual there was a fabulous array of food brought by volunteers: several bean salads, several pasta salads, beet salad, Asian salad, cucumber salad, tabbouleh salad, quinoa salad, fruit and fruit salads, guacamole and bean dips - the latter brought by Alan Magerkurth is a volunteer favorite and disappeared almost immediately. Dave and Mary Webb brought a whole pan of BBQ ribs – yum. Desserts included cupcakes, several pies and Jenny Flexman's vegan brownies. Ally's peanut butter shoo-fly pie melted in the sun, but still tasted great as we ate it with spoons. Sara gave a tour to interested volunteers of the property that she and Jorge have been working on (including major buckthorn removal) for the last five years. What an enjoyable setting and we gathered before to heat and bad air set in.



Upper left: Looking down on the "lawn group" from the deck. **Upper right:** Eating on the screened-in porch - Megan, Natalia, John, Jamie, Jorge and Diane. **Center left:** Katie and Janet sitting on the porch. **Center right:** Jenny thanking volunteers sitting on the lawn, note the pond at the bottom of the property in the background (photos: S Pletcher). **Lower left:** Kathryn at the food table. **Lower right:** what a relaxed setting, but no one tried the hammock.

PRAIRIE POOP

Unexpected Feline. At the July 4 workday, Diana's group at Carl Hansen Woods spotted an unusual animal for our restoration site while picking Japanese Hedge Presley. A cat was roaming the area, but ran away as our group arrived. To Diana's memory no one had ever seen a cat at CH previously. This one looked healthy and well fed. Hope it found its way home.

Sharing Event. Jenny Flexman went to the Grassland Restoration Network (GRN) workshop May 27 and 28, at Shaw Nature Reserve in Gray Summit, Missouri. The location includes old grass dominated restorations, native plant gardens, dynamic glades and diverse plantings. It is part of the Missouri Botanical Garden. The annual event is designed to learn, exchange ideas and connect with others. Afterwards Jenny commented to the organizers, "Great event: great restoration, great plants, great tour leaders, wonderful and intelligent discussions!" And, we thank you, Jenny, for attending the workshop and bringing new ideas back to our group.

Best Wishes are In Order. A big congratulations to Carl Hansen Woods Site Steward Alicia Legowski and Patrick Belski. They were married in June! To use the very old-fashioned phrase, "They are now at home in Schaumburg."

Birds That Support Our Mission. Jenny Flexman reports from Schaumburg Road Grasslands that she has spotted a decent number of Henslow's sparrows and Bobolinks this year. These are two of the important birds that the SRG restoration was initiated to nurture.

Creative Native Plant Website. To see some amazing native plant artwork that is not only beautiful but educational in its many details, check out the work of Ken Schaefer by cutting and pasting this link into your search bar: <https://ecologyandart.com/>. Ken Schaefer is Site Steward at Camp Pine, Izaak Walton, Linne Woods, and VRC. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with an emphasis on drawing and printmaking. He first got involved with this art project when working at Oakton Community College as a naturalist and volunteering with the Kloeempenk Prairie group there. While at Oakton, Ken was able to use the darkroom and began making photographs to document the diversity of native plants on the campus.

In Memoriam. 10 mature oaks and hickories, plus a cottonwood in the Eastern Woods at SRG were lost during the last round of storms. RIP with the moss, lichens, fungi, insects and nesting critters.

Let's Get Poplar Creek in Print! Heads up everyone with a camera. Starting July 31 the Forest Preserves will accept entries for their annual calendar photo contest. Photographers of all skill levels are invited to share their photos taken on any of the over 70,000 acres of FPCC property. We want photos taken at our Poplar Creek sites represented. Photo inclusion in the calendar is a great way to share our landscapes but also promote our group and its hard work. Photos selected often seem to be details of animals, insects or plants. But, Kris DaPra, Manager of Volunteer Resources, said that judges really also like landscape shots, however not as many are submitted. Winners will receive prize packages full of forest preserve experiences. Interested in submitting a photo? Google: Forest Preserves of Cook County 2026 photo contest for detailed information. For updates, please follow the Forest Preserves' [Facebook page](#). The submission period is from July 31, 2026 to August 16, 2026.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

To view and register for classes please make sure you are logged into your FPCC volunteer account and have *JOINED the Trainings* page by clicking on the JOIN button to the right in the banner image. Remember that you must meet the minimum requirements in order to view and register for a training.

Spring into learning! FPCC classes are blooming with information on plant ID, managing invasive species, monitoring butterfly populations, and so much more. Check out our training page (<https://volunteer-fpcc.givepulse.com/group/942193-trainings>) to find a class that inspires you! You must meet the minimum requirements in order to view and register for a training.

Invasive Plant Monitors Needed! Want to make an even bigger impact at your stewardship site? By completing the Managing Invasives training you can earn your Invasive Plant Monitor certification. It's a great way to sharpen your plant ID skills and help us spot invasive species early—before they spread and cause harm to native ecosystems.

PRACTICAL HERBICIDE

Gain practical skills for safe, effective herbicide use in natural areas. Open to new and experienced licensed volunteers. Optional: complete the training and review to earn the Illinois Department of Agriculture Alternative License. El manual está disponible en español.

15 hours of reported stewardship volunteer service are required for enrollment.

This class is presented in a recorded online format and may be viewed at your own pace. [ACCESS HERE \(https://givepul.se/zxwmrw\)](https://givepul.se/zxwmrw)

LANGUAGE OF GRASSES

Beautiful and diverse—but tricky to identify—grasses play a vital role in our ecosystems. Join us to learn key ID tips for recognizing these challenging species in woodlands and prairies.

This class is recommended for stewardship volunteers with an intermediate level of plant identification skills. 15 hours of reported stewardship volunteer service are required for enrollment.

August 8, Camp Pine, 9:00am-11:30am

[REGISTER HERE \(https://givepul.se/9ixu9r\)](https://givepul.se/9ixu9r)

SUMMER TREE & SHRUB ID

Learn to identify native trees and shrubs of the Forest Preserves. We'll look at summer identification characteristics such as leaves, bark, branches, flowers and fruit.

August 15, Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center, 9:00am-11:30am

[REGISTER HERE \(https://givepul.se/t54x42\)](https://givepul.se/t54x42)

PHANTOM MENACE-POACHING IN THE PRESERVES

Poaching of plants, fungi, wildlife, and cultural artifacts remains a serious threat to the Forest Preserves. This presentation explores how illegal collection harms fragile ecosystems and what makes their protection so critical.

This class is presented in a recorded online format and may be viewed at your own pace. [ACCESS HERE \(https://givepul.se/yhwp6d\)](https://givepul.se/yhwp6d)

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE DICHOTOMOUS KEY?

Plant identification can feel daunting, but we'll share the practical tactics we use to make it easier. Instruction includes an intro to dichotomous, color, and other useful identification keys. 3 hours of reported volunteer service are required for enrollment.

This class is presented in a recorded online format and may be viewed at your own pace. [ACCESS HERE \(https://givepul.se/dx3vw2\)](https://givepul.se/dx3vw2)

COMMUNITY SCIENCE is an invaluable tool that provides critical information for research projects while helping people connect with nature. Anyone can be a community scientist—all you need is curiosity and a sense of wonder. Join one of our monitoring programs to discover how you can contribute to scientific research and deepen your knowledge of the plants and animals of the Forest Preserves.

ILLINOIS ODONATE SURVEY

The Illinois Odonate Survey (<https://illinoisodons.org/>) works to better understand the distribution and abundance of dragonflies and damselflies in the Chicago Wilderness Region.

ILLINOIS BUTTERFLY MONITORING NETWORK

Volunteers with the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network (<https://ibmn.org/>) survey butterflies across Illinois, providing data that helps researchers and land managers track how restoration impacts butterfly populations.

PLANTS OF CONCERN

Plants of Concern (<https://plantsofconcern.org/get-involved>) community scientists keep watch over some of the Midwest's rarest native plants—from vibrant wildflowers and majestic trees to ancient ferns—species at risk of disappearing forever. Volunteers monitor vulnerable plant populations, gathering information that is essential to their protection.

BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK

Becoming a Bird Conservation Network Survey (<https://www.bcnbirds.org/monitoring/>) monitor is a meaningful way to support the birds in your community by identifying species to help track their populations and guide conservation efforts. Monitors should be experienced in recognizing the expected breeding birds using both visual and auditory cues.

BEE SPOTTER

BeeSpotter (<https://givepul.se/w6wnkm>) is a partnership between community scientists and professional researchers working together to educate the public about pollinators. Volunteers snap photos of honey bees and bumble bees and submit their sightings to a nationwide project that tracks the population status of these important insects. Family and teen friendly volunteer opportunity.

BUDBURST

Community scientists track the growth of plants and abundance of pollinators to understand how they are responding to climate change across Chicagoland. Through Budburst (<https://givepul.se/2Enqac>), volunteers submit local observations, helping build a clearer picture of local plant life and contributing valuable data for conservation planning. Family and teen friendly volunteer opportunity.

On-Demand Class Library

Delve into our library of on-demand training and enrichment classes. Visit the "Resources" tab at the Training Page to access. Requirements vary by class. Current classes include:

- New Invaders
- Group Leadership
- Keeping the Wolves Away
- Management Schedules Demystified*
- Managing Invasives* #
- Mentoring Stewardship Leaders*
- Native Seed Training
- Practical Herbicide* #
- Soils & Restoration*
- IDOA Herbicide License Study Materials
- Who's Afraid of the Dichotomous Key?*

* a transcript of the presentation is included in the class material

el manual está disponible en español

[ACCESS ON-DEMAND CLASS LIBRARY HERE \(https://volunteer-fpcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193\)](https://volunteer-fpcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193)

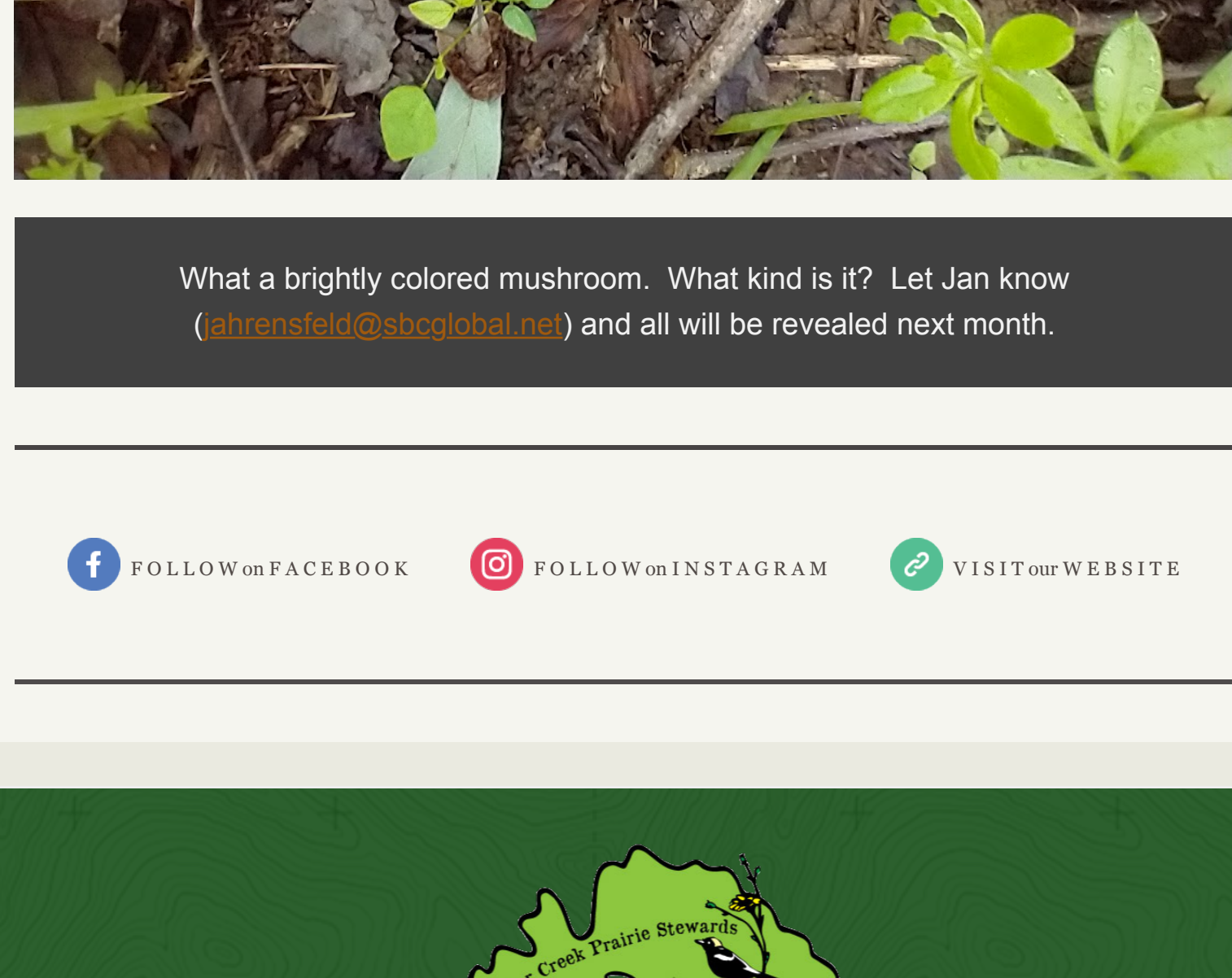
FPCC Volunteer Resources Team

773-631-1790

volunteer.fpd@cookcountyil.gov (mailto:volunteer.fpd@cookcountyil.gov)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ForestPreservesVolunteerEcosystem>

<http://fpdcc.com/volunteer>



What a brightly colored mushroom. What kind is it? Let Jan know (ahensen@sbccopabn.net) and all will be revealed next month.