



Student Stewards are Learning How to Restore Natural Areas

Only small fragments survive of the natural communities that once covered most of the Fox River Valley. And these natural areas need help to keep them from being overtaken by invasive non-native species. It is hard work to cut and remove invasive species like common buckthorn. Both professional and volunteer labor is needed. Trained volunteers are essential if these natural areas are to survive into the next century.

In order to assure that there will be stewards of the land for the future, each spring Fox Valley Land Foundation sponsors the *Student Stewardship Program*, an environmental education program targeting late elementary and middle school students. Land conservation is taught as a form of citizenship. Through participation in classroom and outdoor instructional activities, students gain an understanding of the active role that people must play to protect and restore our natural heritage.

Coordinator Sue Bennett works with both the schools and the owners of the natural areas where the students will work. Since spring 2001, over 2,000 students from public and private schools have restored woodlands and wetlands on publicly held land in Carpentersville, Elgin, and St. Charles.

This spring over 200 students from Channing, Lowrie and Sheridan elementary schools in U-46, as well as students from Summit Academy, will be working at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve in St. Charles. Fifty students from Westfield Community School in D300 will use their energy to restore Dixie Fromm Briggs Open Space in Dundee Township.



Photo by Sue Bennett

Student stewards from Algonquin Middle School used loppers and saws to remove buckthorn at Wencek Open Space.

Feedback from the teachers in the program has been quite positive. 6th grade teacher Diana Cornelissen from Channing Elementary school stated: "The project was a great experience for everyone. We had students going back on their own time to check their work. It instilled a sense of accomplishment and a connection to the community that these kids needed."

"This was a well balanced environmental experience," she said. "It certainly connected us to diversity, to the Fox River, to conservation, to restoration, to the community, and to each other."

The students enjoy the hands-on service-learning experience, knowing that what they do really helps. Leticia Villagomez, a 6th grade student from Lowrie Elementary School in Elgin, said: "I can remember everything we did. My group pulled garlic mustards out of the ground. Then we planted aster flowers. Then finally we used bow saws and loppers. It was amazing. I never thought helping could be so much fun."

Fox Valley Land Foundation Board Members Honored

Fox Valley Land Foundation is proud to have Jack Shouba and June Keibler on its board. Recently other organizations have given them awards for their years of dedication to conservation. We would like to tell you about them, and also thank them for all the time and talent they have given to our organization.

At its annual dinner on February 24th, Kane-DuPage Soil & Water Conservation District gave FVLFF Secretary Jack Shouba an award: "For excellence in the area of promotion, preservation and restoration of natural resources."



JACK SHOUBA

Currently Jack is *Open Space Development Coordinator* for the Campton Township Open Space Program. He also is working actively to restore the wetlands in the Deer Run East subdivision where he lives. But many know him from the numerous classes he teaches at The Morton Arboretum. Since taking early retirement from his position as a high school biology and chemistry teacher, he has worked part-time and volunteered many hours as a botanist, nature photographer and science educator. He has received the *Outstanding Biology Teacher Award for Illinois*, was a founder of *Save the Prairie Society*, is treasurer of the Northeastern Chapter of the *Illinois Native Plant Society* and is active in the *Nature Study and Camera Club* of The Morton Arboretum.



JUNE KEIBLER

Chicago Wilderness gave its *2004 Excellence in Conservation Award to June Keibler* at the 2004 Chicago Wilderness Congress on November 18th. She was honored for her volunteer work. June led the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid Project for nearly a decade. She trained volunteers

to pollinate the orchids, using toothpicks to transfer the pollen between the flowers! Prior to that, June directed the volunteer stewards who did habitat restoration work in the Kane County Forest Preserves.

Both June and her husband Steve were featured in the "Meet Your Neighbors" section of the Fall 2004 *Chicago Wilderness* magazine: "Steve works from a very different perspective—frequently from 500 feet overhead. A commercial airline pilot, Steve had always supported June's endeavors, including helping restore the couple's yard to prairie. But in 1992, he bought a 1946 Piper Cub with nature in mind. Steve and his small plane quickly became an important tool for conservationists across Chicago Wilderness."



STEVE KEIBLER

with his 1946 Piper Cub

Photo by Jack Shouba

On February 8th The Conservation Foundation awarded *The Paul Butler Award for 2005* to both June and Steve. This award is presented to public-minded individuals and volunteers who support the cause of open space protection, enhancement of the environment and the education of the public.

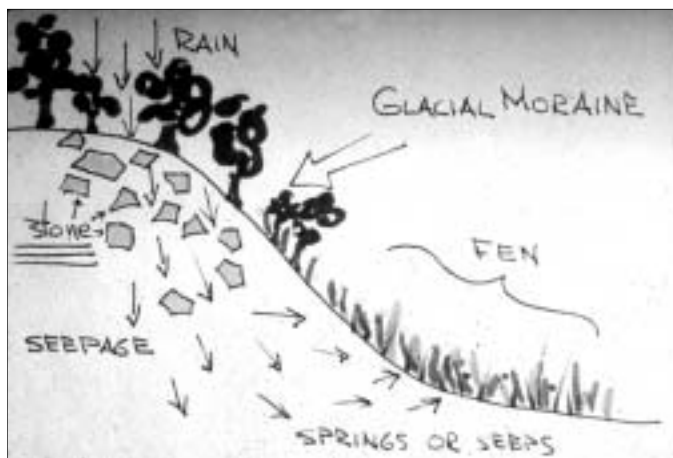
June was one of the founding members of the Fox Valley Land Foundation in 1992, and currently serves as Vice President. She helped to create an open space program for Dundee Township, and is a partner in Witness Tree Native Landscapes, Inc.

Steve has donated more than 250 hours and 110 flights piloting hydrologists looking for signs of presettlement stream channels, ecologists documenting soil types in order to direct restorations, and biologists trying to chart purple loosestrife populations. June and Steve are credited with finding the first prairie buttercup in Kane County.

Protecting the Waters of Bluff Spring Fen Nature Preserve

Bluff Spring Fen's origin dates back to the advance and retreat of a glacier nearly 12,000 years ago! The rolling topography of north-eastern Illinois is a testament to that glacier. An examination of the soil strata frequently reveals layers of sand and gravel deposited along rivers and streams by the torrential melt waters of those retreating glaciers.

How do those layers of sand and gravel affect Bluff Spring Fen? The fen is dependent upon an uninterrupted and unaltered flow of groundwater that begins as rain. Rain percolating into the ground and flowing along those layers of sand and gravel - paths of least resistance - emerges where those layers intersect the surface. Throw in thousands of years of uninterrupted and unaltered flows of groundwater and enough sand and gravel, and there may be a fen.



At Bluff Spring Fen, groundwater emerges at 28 locations. The upwelling of mineralized groundwater keeps the peat saturated and maintains an unique array of fen plants and animals. Because of them, Bluff Spring Fen was included on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory and subsequently protected by dedication as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

In 1980, the threats to Bluff Spring Fen were obvious: "4-wheelers" were carving up the prairies and fen wetlands. Ultimately the threats posed by illegal access were solved, and

volunteer stewards began the work of pushing back phalanxes of invasive brush. Brush cutting, seed collecting, herbiciding, and an occasional controlled burn are standard workday fare for Friends of the Fen. The reward: small lady slipper orchids dependent upon the groundwater, and responding to increased sunlight from brush clearing, have blossomed!!

In 2005, threats to the long-term viability of Bluff Spring Fen remain, although they are no longer as obvious. Natural resource managers and scientists are finding fens, including this one, are increasingly threatened by land use changes outside the boundary of the preserve that affect infiltration rates, that divert the amount of water from flowing along ancient sand and gravel water courses, or that allow contaminated surface water to mix with the groundwater. In order to better understand the magnitude of these threats and establish cause and effect relationships, groundwater monitoring wells have been installed at Bluff Spring Fen.

There have been land uses changes next to Bluff Spring Fen, and the fen has endured. Increasingly, however, elected officials in Elgin are now being asked to consider major land use changes that will put at risk the groundwater resource -its source and flow paths - upon which Bluff Spring Fen Nature Preserve is dependent.

Learn more about preserving Bluff Spring Fen during *Historic Preservation Week* (see schedule on Page 4). Hear Steve Byers explain what a fen wetland is and how its unique plant communities depend on water flowing through the gravel left by the glaciers. And experience the fen for yourself by taking a tour of it.

"In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy."

JOHN SAWHILL, The Nature Conservancy

Preserving Nature in Elgin

As part of *Elgin Preservation Week 2005*, Fox Valley Land Foundation partners with Elgin's Parks & Recreation Department to present programs that focus on preserving nature in Elgin. These events are free, and are open to the public.

- ◆ **Sunday, May 1, 2-4 p.m.** *Tour of Bluff Spring Fen Nature Preserve*, one of the highest quality natural areas in Illinois. Meet at entrance to the fen within Bluff City Cemetery, 945 Bluff City Blvd.
- ◆ **Wednesday, May 4, 7 p.m.** *The Waters of Bluff Spring Fen*. Steve Byers will explain what a fen wetland is and how its unique plant communities depend on water flowing through the gravel left by the glaciers. West Conference Room in The Centre 101 Symphony Way
- ◆ **Thursday, May 5, 7 p.m.** *History of Elgin Parks* by historian Mike Alft. His new book on the stories behind the parks will be available that night. Lord's Park Pavilion, 100 Oakwood Ave.
- ◆ **Saturday, May 7, 2-3:30 p.m.**, *Trout Park Nature Preserve Wildflower Walk*. Take a walk through this unique forested fen and see the spring wildflowers. Meet at the upper parking lot by the ballfield, Corner of Trout Park Blvd. and Sherwood Ave.

Fox Valley Land Foundation is a sponsor member of



**Vote YES for OPEN SPACE
on April 5th !**

Passing the Kane County Open Space referendum will allow the Forest Preserve District to purchase another 4,000—5,000 acres.

Most of the land purchases will be along streams to create greenways and to connect forest preserves and other open spaces together. Greenways are important for recreation, flood control, water quality improvement and wildlife habitat.

Our Mission

To protect,
restore,
and preserve
significant
natural lands
and open spaces
through
public and
private
partnerships.



Printed on recycled paper.

FOX VALLEY LAND FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Tom Armstrong

Vice President: June Keibler

Secretary: Jack Shouba

Treasurer: Susan Bohne

Past President: Steve Byers

Board Members:

Mary Gaston

Patrick Maher

John Winkates

*Executive Director:
Marianne Nelson*

*Land Protection Specialist:
Liz Aicher*

*Student Stewardship
Coordinator:
Sue Bennett*

Did You Know?

- ◆ 1-1.5 million gallons of floodwater can be one acre of wetland.
- ◆ Up to 50 percent of North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands.
- ◆ 221 million acres of wetlands existed in the lower 48 states in the 1600s; today over half our original wetlands have been drained and converted to other uses.
- ◆ 58,500 acres of wetland are lost each year.
- ◆ 400,000 acres is the average annual loss of wetlands due to agriculture between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s.
- ◆ 15 percent of wetlands on non-Federally owned land occur on lands with crops and pasture, while most wetlands occur on forest land.

Source: USEPA wetlands fact sheets