

A Prairie Rendezvous

A joint publication of:



Late Winter 1999

Welcome! This is the first edition of "A Prairie Rendezvous," the new Prairie Grove Volunteers/Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois combined newsletter.

As you may recall, last fall GPF and PGV agreed to combine select resources in order to better achieve our common goals.

One of the biggest challenges in creating a newsletter is coining an appropriate title. A Prairie Rendezvous references the fact that the term 'prairie,' like the word 'rendezvous' is French in origin. It also signifies the meeting of two groups who have agreed to work together.

A Prairie Rendezvous will feature articles from a variety of sources including The Red Bison; a student run prairie restoration organization that manages a mile long remnant and restoration in the Village of Savoy.

Your comments/suggestions are always welcome. I encourage you to submit articles, poetry, musings, or anything you would like to share.

- Douglas Chien, Managing Editor and Vice-president GPF

The net that caught the prairie

by Dwain Berggren

As residents of Illinois we usually find ourselves following our noses down roads and streets that run north-south or east-west. Our landscape usually requires us to make 90-degree turns to the right or left if we want to stay on the road. Highways and byways with picturesque twists, meanders, and less than 90-degree bifurcations are rare. In brief, we find ourselves creatures living the rectangular consequences of a common heritage we may not have heard of: The Federal Land Ordinance of 1785.

Let me explain...

After the American Revolution, the Congress of the confederating states faced the problem of governing and distributing the western lands outside established colonial boundaries. These were surrendered by England and claims to them ceded to the new government by the states. This great domain, the Old Northwest Territory, included the present states of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. The 1785 Ordinance provided that these lands be surveyed preliminary to their public sale. The federal survey was to divide them into 36-mile² townships, each containing 36 one-mile² sections, the lines of division to run north-south and east-west.

Crazy Quilts And Checker Boards

Before the 1785 Ordinance, Europeans and colonial Americans ordinarily laid out large tracts of land by "metes and bounds" surveys that produced irregularly shaped parcels. This older system drew boundaries along natural features (such as ridge crests, streams, traditional roads) and along lines measured between natural and constructed landmarks (stream forks, old structures, survey monuments, etc.). Examining maps of the original 13 states or flying over them, one still sees the crazy quilt patterns of roads, woodlots, and fields created by the colonial surveys.

The Federal Survey In Illinois

The federal survey began in the eastern parts of the Northwest Territory and reached Illinois in 1805. It entered the state from Indiana and using magnetic compasses and 33- or 66-foot steel surveyor's chains, the pioneer surveyors drew our checker board of one-mile squares across a landscape crossed by a few primitive trails and inhabited by scattered Native American

(see *Net*, page 6)

Ever looking forward...

Dave Monk, the indefatigable guardian of east central Illinois natural areas, is alive and well and living in downtown Champaign. But, that's hardly news to those aware of the ongoing efforts of Monk's Heartland Pathways organization, including a fund-raising footrace last November at Meadowbrook Park, and followers of his weekly radio program on WEFT-FM. However, the maiden voyage of GPF/PGV's "A Prairie Rendezvous" seemed a good place and time to salute his ongoing work, and to briefly update those of our members who may not follow it regularly.

This work has increasingly turned to what Monk calls a "pathway-greenway-corridor-river-type-orientation" in recent years. Affiliated organizations now have two storefronts on North Market Street, central Illinois' Haight-Ashbury, complete with the urban prairie loop park that Monk designed and tends.

Volunteers associated with Heartland Pathways and with its parent organization, Educational Resources in Environmental Science, "burn sometimes up to nine miles a year of what amounts to a 33-mile railroad bed in one direction, and work on other areas as well," he explains.

(see Monk, page 7)

A Prairie Rendezvous

PO Box 36 • Urbana, IL 61803-0036
www.prairienet.org/gpf./homepage.html

Managing Editor/Layout: Douglas Chien
Editor: Alf Siewers

A Prairie Rendezvous is a joint publication of the Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois (GPF) and the Prairie Grove Volunteers (PGV) for the restoration community of east-central Illinois.

A Prairie Rendezvous is published approximately on a bimonthly basis. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at d-chien@uiuc.edu

GPF is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to prairie preservation, restoration, and education in east central Illinois. Inquiries and tax-deductible donations should be sent to: Grand Prairie Friends, PO Box 36, Urbana, IL 61801.

The PGV is part of The Nature Conservancy's Volunteer Stewardship Network. Its stewards help coordinate volunteer workdays at native prairie, savanna, wetland, and woodland remnants. Inquires and tax-deductible donations should be sent to: Prairie Grove Volunteers c/o The Nature Conservancy, 8 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 900, Chicago, IL 60603

Prairie chicken holds on

by Alf Siewers

The prairie chicken sounds like a good name for a new dance. Yet once the bird bearing that moniker was a common and colorful part of the grasslands of eastern Illinois.

Now a group of the birds at the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area in southern Illinois is making a comeback, thanks to dedicated work by conservationists and biologists, including the careful introduction of birds from outside the state in recent years.

It's a tale of the modest turnaround of one facet of an ecological holocaust.

In the first half of the 1800s, the booming call of the mating male prairie chicken was a familiar sound across prairies that covered 60 percent of Illinois - "a three-syllable 'boo loo wooz' sound that carries...as much as 3 miles away," says wildlife ecologist Ronald Westemeier of Effingham.

But intensive agriculture kept reducing open terrain where the birds could live, as prairies were reduced to .01 percent of the state's land area. An ever-dwindling gene pool also didn't help.

In 1966, when Westemeier took over the state prairie chicken survey, there were 179 flocks in 15 counties, mainly in south central Illinois. By the late 1980s all but two managed flocks in the sanctuaries had disappeared.

"They are so much a part of the Illinois wildlife heritage," says Westemeier of Effingham, a leading prairie chicken expert who recently retired from the Illinois Natural History Survey. "They were so important to the early settlers as a food source, and very much a part of the grasslands of the state."

(see Prairie Chicken, page 7)

Volunteer Workday Calendar



Special 'Fridge' Edition Insert - Spring 1999

The spring means prescribed burns season! To participate call: Rick Larimore (o: 244-6716, h: 337-7006) or Paul Tessene (o: 244-7984, h: 344-4303). Wear natural-fiber (cotton or wool) long pants and sleeves, boots, and gloves. No synthetic fabrics. A hat is recommended and tie long hair and bangs back.

Reminders:

- Please leave your pets at home. Pets are not allowed on Nature Preserves.
- Wear appropriate attire for working outdoors, (i.e. gloves, boots or comfortable shoes, long sleeves, long pants, durable clothing)
- Bring drinking water and a snack.
- If you have tools such as loppers, handsaws, and pruners please bring them.

SATURDAY, MARCH 20: BUSEY WOODS. Enjoy a woodlands right here in Urbana. Meet at Anita Purves Nature Center (APNC) at 9:00 am. Contact Kim Bauer (h: 328-0552) for more information.

SATURDAY, MARCH 27:

PAXTON RAILROAD PRAIRIE. Swing to the sounds of spring while doing some serious damage to non-native species. We will remove invasive species and apply herbicides to teasel rosettes at this small but high quality prairie. Meet at APNC* at 9:00 am to carpool, or on site at 10:00 am. Contact Connie Carroll (o: 244-7741, h: 352-4731) for more information.

MIDDLE FORK WOODS NATURE PRESERVE. Garlic mustard and bush honeysuckle have become established here and need to be eradicated! Come help us eliminate these invasive plants from this remnant of a once vast mesic upland forest. Bring plastic bags. Meet at APNC* at 9:00 am to carpool, or on site at 10:00 am. Contact Jim or Crystal Brewer (h: 354-2558) for more information.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10: LODA PRAIRIE. Volunteers are needed to help clear brush at this spectacular mesic prairie remnant. Meet at Loda Cemetery at 9:00 am, or contact Dwain Berggren (h: 367-5014) to make carpool arrangements.

SATURDAY, APRIL 17:

BUSEY WOODS. See March 20. Contact Kim Bauer (h: 328-0552).

PATTON WOODS. 9:45 to 11:15 am. All are welcome! Help preserve this diverse woodland. Activities will include trail maintenance, brush clearing, and some litter pickup. Meet at Parkland College at 9 am to carpool (at parking lot B-1, near the circle drive - look for the flag pole), or meet on site at 9:45 am. Contact Earl Creutzburg (o: 351-2371, h: 328-2375).

HORSESHOE BOTTOM NATURE PRESERVE. Spring Wildflower Hike. See hill prairies, seeps, and breathtaking views of the Middlefork of the Vermilion!!! Be prepared for several miles of rough hiking. Wear good boots and bring water and a lunch. Contact Rick Larimore (h: 337-7006) or Jim Smith (h: 896-2079) for more information.

SUNDAY, APRIL 18: MIDDLE FORK WOODS NATURE PRESERVE. See March 27. Contact Jim or Crystal Brewer (h: 354-2558) for more information.

SUNDAY, APRIL 25: HOWARD THOMAS MEMORIAL GROVE NATURE PRESERVE. Natural History Tour. Learn about the natural history of Illinois! Steward Bob Reber will be leading six sessions on Sunday afternoons throughout the year that will visit several different biotic communities of the Grand Prairie Region. Contact Bob Reber (o: 244-2851, h: 379-2459) for more information.

SATURDAY, MAY 1:

NETTIE HART MEMORIAL WOODLAND. Help us remove one of the more insidious invasive plants - garlic mustard, as well as other non-natives. This woodland includes upland forest and floodplain forest along the Sangamon River. Meet at APNC* at 9:00 am to carpool. Contact Bryant Barnes (voice mail: 493-8686) for more information.

BONNIE'S PRAIRIE NATURE PRESERVE. Get down and dirty cutting brush and pulling weeds at this unique nature preserve! Bonnie's Prairie is a sand prairie and sand pond. Meet at APNC* at 8:30 am to carpool or 10:00 am at the site. Contact Joyce Hofmann for more information (o: 244-2366).

SATURDAY, MAY 8 (MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND): LODA CEMETERY PRAIRIE. Spring Flower Walk. Come enjoy the spring wildflowers of the prairie at Loda. Common spring wildflowers at this site include shooting star, downy phlox, and yellow star grass! Contact April DeAtley (h: 386-2202) for details.

SATURDAY, MAY 15:

BUSEY WOODS. See March 20. Contact Kim Bauer (h: 328-0552) for more information.

PELLVILLE CEMETERY PRAIRIE. Volunteers are needed to help clear brush from this high quality dry mesic prairie. Meet at APNC* at 9:00 am to carpool, or on site at 10:00 am. Contact Paul Tessene (o: 244-7984, h: 344-4303) or Peggy Walterhausen (h: 344-4303) for more information.

SATURDAY, MAY 22: MIDDLE FORK RIVER. Cleanup day!!! Help the Prairie Grove Volunteers and the Prairie Paddlers Canoe Club as we canoe down river and collect trash. Bring drinking water and a snack (and canoeing attire, of course!). The Middlefork is a National Scenic River, so be prepared for some fantastic scenery! Contact Jim or Crystal Brewer (h: 354-2558) for more information.

Directions:

APNC - ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER. Urbana Park District. 1505 North Broadway, Urbana. Busey Woods is located behind the APNC.

PAXTON RR PRAIRIE - One mile south of Paxton along US Rt. 45. Located on the west side of Rt. 45

MIDDLE FORK WOODS NATURE PRESERVE - Vermillion county. From C-U take I-74 to US Rt. 150. Go southwest 0.4 miles to blacktop road then turn right and go northwest 0.7 miles into Kickapoo State Park.

LODA CEMETERY PRAIRIE NATURE PRESERVE - Iroquois County. From C-U go north on US Rt. 45 to Loda. At north end of town turn left on to North Fifth Street (look for sign to Pine Ridge Cemetery). Follow signs to site, do not park in cemetery.

PATTON WOODS - From C-U head north on either I-57 or US 45 to US 136. Go east on 136 to Gifford then north on County Rd. 2300E about 6 miles to the T-intersection with 3600N (County Line Rd.) Head east on the County Line Rd about 2 miles to 2500E. Go south on 2500N about 1/4 mile to Patton Wood's entrance.

PELLVILLE CEMETERY PRAIRIE - Ford County. From Paxton take IL Route 9 east. Turn left (north) on the first road after the Ford and Vermillion County line (between 70E and 170E in Vermillion Co.) Site sits where road turns east; gate on north side.

BONNIE'S PRAIRIE NATURE PRESERVE - Iroquois County. I-57 to US Rte. 24 east to Watseka. Turn left (north) on Route 1 and go about 3 miles to county road 2200N. Turn right go about 1/2 mile and park on right just before railroad tracks.

Alien insects invading Illinois

by Gina Childs, USDA Forest Service

As if isn't hard enough to battle invasive plants such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, and purple loosestrife, now we have alien invaders of the six-legged kind. Two pests, the Asian long-horned beetle and the gypsy moth, currently pose a threat to Illinois forests and trees, particularly in the Chicago area.

The Asian long-horned beetle is devastating because it kills trees, primarily infesting maple, box elder, willow, elm, green ash, black locust, mulberry, hose chestnut, and fruit trees. Because most of its lifecycle is spent deep inside the tree, the beetle is a difficult pest to eradicate. Currently, the most effective control measure is to destroy all infested trees.

The Asian long-horned beetle is a newcomer to the United States. It is believed to have entered the U.S. on packing material that accompanied shipments from

China. The only other known U.S. infestations are in New York, but beetles have been detected in solid wood packing material at 26 scattered warehouse and residential sites in 14 states across the country.

The beetle is a serious treat to our nation's forests. Approximately 29% of the trees in eastern forests are hardwoods susceptible to the beetle. The beetle threatens forest products, maple syrup, commercial fruit, and nursery and tourist industries, which are estimated at \$41 billion. To help slow the

entrance of the beetle, Secretary of Agriculture Daniel Glickman has implemented a ban on untreated solid-wood packing material originating in China.

Gypsy moths, on the other hand, are not newcomers to the United States - native to Europe, they were introduced in the U.S. in 1869. What makes them a serious threat to our forests? They strip leaves from oaks and willows but will feed on other trees and shrubs when oaks are unavailable or already stripped of leaves. Repeated defoliation weakens the trees and

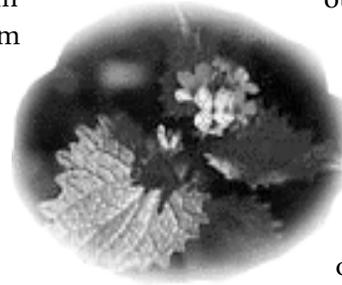
makes them vulnerable to disease, drought and other insects.

The number of gypsy moths in Illinois has reached an all time high. The USDA and Illinois Department of Agriculture have trapped nearly 52,000 gypsy moths in Illinois this year - a 48% increase over last year. The population increase is probably attributable to several factors including last year's mild winter and growing populations of gypsy moths in surrounding states. The high numbers being trapped indicate that the moth is starting to expand into northeastern Illinois. Caterpillars are still hard to find, and no noticeable defoliation has occurred, but these low level populations are likely to increase of the next 3 to 5 years and cause tree defoliation.

Even though scientists have a combination of cultural, biological, and chemical controls available to control the gypsy moth, its population continues to expand. It is found in 16 states and defoliates up to 3 million acres of woodlands per year.

During the first several years of an outbreak, tree mortality can range from 10% to 85%, depending on the health of the trees and the species mix. People unknowingly contribute to the spread of gypsy moths by transporting egg masses on campers, or by transporting nursery stock and even patio furniture on moving vans.

The Asian long-horned beetle and gypsy moth are just two examples of non-native pest that pose a threat to our ecosystems. One out of every three pests that cause economic losses in agriculture and forestry comes from outside the United States. Non-native insects and diseases have affected America's forest for 150 years, forever changing the diversity and richness of our forests. A couple of examples: Chestnut blight killed as many as a billion trees and now few stand of native Chestnut survive in the U.S.; Dutch elm disease killed 40 million trees, affecting native forests as well as city-street plantings.



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(*Net continued*)

and Euro-American farmsteads and settlements. Parts of Champaign County were surveyed in 1821-22.

Township Government

The American land surveys had immediate and belated effects. Townships—the larger, 6-mile-square divisions containing 36 one-mile-square sections—formed important units of local government that are still active. Elected township officers organized road work, drainage, and other improvements. They administered some elections, censuses, and tax assessments and collections. The few township halls still standing in rural areas commemorate one of the oldest forms of American government.

Provisions of the Great Land Ordinance set aside sections 16 and 36 in each township to finance public schools and thus founded public education in the new land and our belief in it as a right and responsibility of local citizens.

The Ordinance made certain words commonplace (if not always understood) in our language. Country people still measure fencerows in “rods,” and speak of property “lines” rather than boundaries, of “townships” and “quarter-sections.” Even though we are urged to “think metric,” the survey perpetuates the old English units of land measurement in feet, miles and acres (A rod is 16.5 feet long; 80 rods is a quarter mile. An acre is 160 square rods; a section 640 acres.).

The Net That Caught The Prairie

The Federal survey and the Americans who followed it here changed our landscape—a fact illustrated by any topographic contour map of our area. There are two dominant patterns on such maps: the kinked and winding topographic contours that outline natural landforms and the overlying network of right-angled, straight-ruled survey section lines.

Lakes, floodplains, hills, and plains outlined on a map by contours are figuratively cut to pieces by the regular survey lines. The landforms and the ecosystems they supported are cut to pieces by the human developments that have followed the lines.

The unbending, straight survey lines have reinforced the builder's impulse to build straight, regardless of what is divided or overrun. From the first, straight property lines provoked the farmer to plow straight, parallel to his fences, uphill and down, regardless of erosion.

The piecemeal division of original ecosystems—prairies, groves, marshes—has destroyed or degraded most of them and makes it difficult to restore and manage large natural divisions of land. The great Mississippi River flood of 1993 demonstrated on a continental scale the problems that are a consequence of cutting a floodplain into pieces with private property lines and political boundaries that maintain uncoordinated and conflicting views about the floodplain's uses.

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A Very Mixed Blessing

The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the land survey it founded set Euro-Americans to systematically settling and developing the new lands of the west. If the government land surveys and sales were instruments of brutal policies that finally disposed Native Americans of their home lands, they did provide for the new people a generally evenhanded and orderly occupation of the captured territory.

The realities illustrated by the overlaid contour lines and survey lines on a topographic map are critical issues for ourselves and succeeding generations. Our own American experience and the histories of other peoples warn that ignorant or willful abuse of land and nature inevitably has tragic consequences - disease, drought, flood, famine, poverty, social disintegration - whether on the scale of individuals or communities or nations.

The process of “catching the prairie” began when humankind entered the scene a few tens of thousands of years ago. The Euro-American version began about 200 years ago. What will our landscape be in another 200 years? The “lines” followed by our thoughts and actions—by our ordinary lives—are shaping that landscape even now.

Dwain Berggren is steward of Loda Cemetery Prairie; a former member of the Illinois Geological Survey; he is also a former high school teacher in east central Illinois and a writer and historian.

(Monk continued)

Monk, an Australian native who came to the area in 1961, envisions a network of greenways throughout eastern Illinois as a way to help people conceptualize ecological restoration of the region - as well as providing recreational corridors and refuges for native species.

His wishlist for the next century includes:

1. Creation of a trail/preservation corridor on the railroad right-of-way from Rantoul to Park Forest South, paralleling US Route 45.

2. Connecting three rail-trail links in the Monticello area and completing connections between Decatur and Champaign.

3. Creating a greenway/trail corridor from Urbana to Danville. "I'm looking for a trust to administer that line [along 150] that will involve a number of agencies," Monk says.

In order to garner attention and support for the effort, in the face of opposition from farm owners, "I want to have 200 bikes riding from Urbana to Danville," he adds.

Those who want to help out regular ERES and Heartland Pathways work, which includes restoration, growing plants, collecting and distributing seeds, as well as interpretation of rail trails and historic preservation, can get in touch by phoning 351-1911 or checking out the website at www.prairienet.org/rec/prairie.

(Prairie Chicken continued)

Now their call has become a bit more familiar again in Jasper and Marion counties, where the Nature Conservancy, the Prairie Chicken Foundation, various conservationists and the state of Illinois helped create sanctuaries for the birds beginning in the 1960s.

Today about 2,500 acres in the two counties are preserved as prairie chicken sanctuary lands, and collectively called the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area.

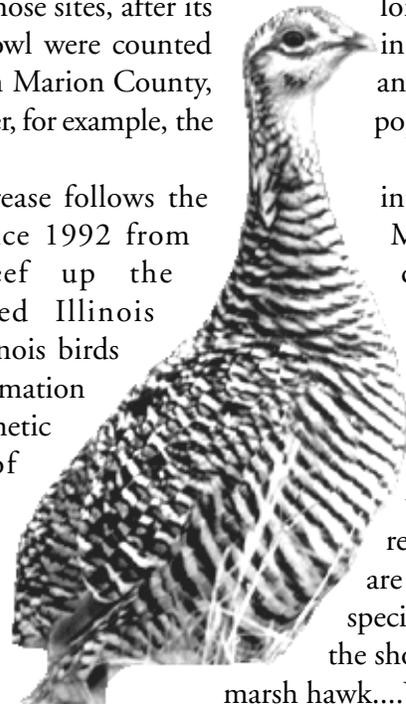
And since 1994 the population of prairie chickens has been increasing again at those sites, after its About 275 of the fowl were counted Jasper County, 40 in Marion County, nearby areas. In Jasper, for example, the up from 50 in 1994.

The recent increase follows the than 500 birds since 1992 from Nebraska to beef up the of the fragmented Illinois collected on the Illinois birds helped provide information state population's genetic

Acquisition of around sanctuaries says. "Efforts to prairie chickens variety of other endangered, such as northern harrier or ourselves into an ecosystem approach to management down there [at the sanctuary lands]."

He notes that as the population hopefully continues to increase or at least is stabilized, perhaps with continuing imports from out of state, the discontinued visitation program for viewing birds at the sanctuary sites may someday be resumed.

In the meantime, Westemeier suggests that those interested in information about the sanctuary lands - and restoration work on them - should phone their manager, Scott Simpson of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Division, at 618-783-2685.

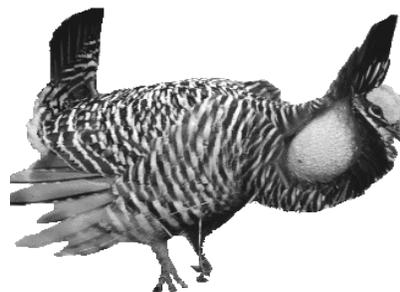


long decline statewide. in Illinois, 84 of them in and the rest scattered in population last year was

introduction of more Minnesota, Kansas, and diminished gene pool population. Data since the 1960s on the condition.

additional land will help, Westemeier restore grasslands for are benefiting a wide species, many threatened or the short eared owl and he

marsh hawk....We're working ecosystem approach to management down



Above: Female Prairie Chicken
Left: A male Prairie Chicken "booming"

Upcoming Events

11th Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop March 27th, 1999

Rock Valley College, 3301 North Mulford Road,
Rockford, IL 61114-5699. ph: 815-654-4250
Fax: 815-654-4254 www.rvc.cc.il.us

This year the workshop will honor the lifelong contribution of Ray Schulenberg for his work as a teacher and guiding spirit of the prairie movement. Peter Raven of the Missouri Botanic Garden will deliver the keynote address.

Topics for this workshop include:
Prairie Ecology, Preservation/Acquisition/
Stewardship, Plant/Animal Studies, Management
and Monitoring, Restoration and Restructing,
Landscaping and Gardening with Prairie, Education,
Art and Literature, Cultural Heritage, Endangered
Species, Soils and Hydrology, Inventory/Assessment

For more information contact Community
Services at 815-654-4290 or Jay Friberg, Rock Valley
College, at 815-654-4447

5th Central Illinois Prairie Conference September 18th - 19th, 1999

Parkland Community College, Champaign, IL
The theme of this conference will be "People
and Prairie: Caring for Where We Live"

It is currently being cosponsored by Grand
Prairie Friends of Illinois and the Champaign
County Forest Preserve District.

Mark you calendars today!

The Field Musuem will be hosting a symposium to
commemorate the 100-year anniversary of Henry
Chandler Cowles' classic doctoral dissertation on
ecological sucesion. Entitled "Ecology and Chicago
Region: from Cowles to Chicago Wilderness" it will
be held April 9-10 at the Field Museum with a field
trip to the Indiana Dunes.

Contact Tina Bentz at cbentz@fmnh.org or 312-
922-9410 x550 to register. Discounts available.

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Premier Issue!

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- Dave Monk
- Alien insects
- Prairie chicken