

THE BUZZ N' BLOOM QUARTERLY



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Nature in short

- Silphiums, and coneflowers blooming in the prairie
- Monarchs lay eggs

This year Arbor Day was held on May 1st, and it was a great success. We had a variety of activities going on that day, from tree plantings, a native plant sale, log painting, and dog agility to name just a few.

This was our first annual plant sale and we made some profit. Any plants that we had left over we then planted on Lake Katherine's grounds.

This was a win-win for us as the grounds always need native plants, and it was great to be able to add these to various areas.

Possibility Place Nursery donated a tree to Lake Katherine, a white oak. The members of the NRMC planted this tree and as you can see from the picture it has begun to thrive.

Every year we celebrate our Arbor Day and Earth Day as a gift to the community. This is a free event that ties directly into Lake Katherine's mission

ARBOR DAY/EARTH DAY



White Oak planted on Arbor Day

to educate about the outdoors and being active outside. Chicago Wilderness has a program "No Child Left Inside" promoting the importance of being in nature for children. We hope that in this day and age of cell phones, ipods and with obesity rising in the US, that Lake Katherine helps in getting children and

adults outside. It has been proven in studies that green space is vital to the mental and physical well being of children and adults. We also hope that children and adults will learn about the environment and the importance of conserving wild spaces.

THE YELLOW GARDEN SPIDER WRITTEN BY SUE PALKA

This summer, as you walk the path through the Buzz and Bloom Prairie at Lake Katherine, be on the lookout for one of my favorite spiders, the Yellow Garden Spider, *Argiope aurantia*. The encounter will be unforgettable!

This exotic-looking creature is the sort of spider you would expect to find in a steamy rainforest, instead of a sunny prairie. The female spider is large, 3/4 to 1 1/8 inch, and boldly colored with black and yellow warning stripes on her egg-shaped abdomen. Her eight legs are black and orange, arranged in outstretched pairs, as she sits head down, in the center of her web during the day. The male, in comparison, is a little brown dwarf, only 1/4 to 3/8 inch. It is hard to imagine that



the two are even related. So it is hardly surprising when the female eats the male after mating!

Her web is a classic orb design, up to two feet in diameter and two to eight feet off the ground. This spiral design with spokes radiating from the center is strong and flexible, and practically invisible. There is a unique dense zigzag pattern of white silk in the center of the web, called the stabilimenta. Its similarity to writing gives these spiders the common name of writing spiders.

Scientists once believed the stabilimenta was a warning device for birds to help avoid the web. Now, new research suggests that the ultraviolet light reflection actually attracts insects, the way a flower would use the signal to attract pollinators. Insects fly into the web thinking they are headed to a flower, instead of ending up on the dinner table of the spider! When caught in the web, the insect's struggles are felt by the spider, lying in wait in the web's center. She quickly moves to the trapped insect and restrains it by wrapping it in silk, then biting it to inject it with paralyzing venom. Then the packaged insect is moved to an out-of-the-way spot in the web

until it can be sucked dry at the spider's leisure.

Garden spiders are harmless to humans. They are actually a benefit in the garden, eating insects up to twice their size. The Yellow Garden Spider grows frail as the weather cools, and will perish with the first hard freeze. She will leave only a fuzzy egg cocoon filled with 400 to 1400 spiderlings that over winter in the sac and emerge the following spring.

Where ever you are, there is likely to be a spider within a few feet of us. It may be weaving a web, floating by on a silken thread, seducing its mate, sucking the juice from an anesthetized fly or simply resting under your chair.

DISCOVER LAKE KATHERINE

WRITTEN BY IRENE PANOZZO

Lake Katherine on a late spring evening has a magical air about it. Armed with his new camera, my husband and I set out to enjoy an evening walk around the lake and were unexpectedly surprised at what we saw. We spied a great blue heron, spear fishing with his bill by the waterfall oblivious to us or anyone else as he patiently gazed in the water awaiting his next meal. All three of us were rewarded as the heron got his fish and we got a snapshot of him and his dinner. It was family time on the foot path around the lake. A mother duck and her new ducklings were

hugging the shore ready for the night. A rustle of feathers, honking of horns and a geese procession headed across the lake in the hopes of getting some goodies from a young couple on the dock. The furry young geese, protected between their elders, soon broke rank at the dock. The couple was as charmed by this avian attention, but having no food to share, the geese went on their way. Farther along the path we encountered my favorite Lake Katherine denizen - the swans. Swans have captured most

peoples' hearts with their grace and stature. We watched as they rested on the island, one swan as sentry near the water, the other swan farther back. But you can be sure that the cygnets were nestled safely between them. They stretched; they picked up feathers and put them into a pile. They silently gathered the cygnets and headed out on the water. They glided across the water almost as if they were on display. Crossing right in front of us you

could imagine them saying "Look at our lovely family."

As darkness fell we headed back to our car thankful that we took the time to explore the wonders at the lake.



Mute swans

SEASONAL RESTORATION



Trinity after



Trinity before

On April 17th volunteers in the Palos region came out to help with the city of Palos Heights Green Initiative driven Community Day .

Starting work at Trinity College volunteers removed invasive species such as buckthorn working on an area that is an oak savanna.

Then the volunteers moved on to Nabel woods and begun to clear invasive species here as well. Nabel required a little more precision cutting, as the understory comprised some

decent plants .

The clearing of buckthorn helps native spring ephemerals get established and increase biodiversity. Non native plants will often crowd out the understory creating a monoculture of just one species. This is not good for our native plants or for creating habitat for a variety of wildlife. This involvement in ecological restoration is a great start to smart stewardship of these areas in Palos Heights.



Nabel woods

DRAGONFLIES AND YOU

Lake Katherine is home to a number of these denizens of the air. Their acrobatical antics are clearly visible to all who stop at the waters edge and watch. At Lake Katherine you may expect to see up to 10 species of dragonfly on any one day, and this would not be an exhaustive list of the species you can find here. Some of the more common species are the skimmers, the mostly visible ones are called white tails, 12 spots and blue dashers. One of the largest species you might see is called the green darner. It has

a wingspan of up to 3 inches, and can be seen around water, but also flying back and forth across the prairie or open fields.

The males of this group tend to be the most colorful, their colors (as can be seen in birds) are used to attract mates. The males set up territories along the waters edge, which they patrol back and forth fending off any other males that may come in to their territory. One species, the eastern pondhawk, also commonly seen here at Lake Katherine, has been known to eat other dragonflies and will

cannibalize their own kind if they catch them.

What is also fascinating about dragonflies is that they lay eggs on or near aquatic vegetation. The egg hatches and the young live underwater shedding their skin as they get larger. The last time they shed their skin they crawl out of the water on to some vegetation. At this point they suck in air and pump up their bodies to crack open their final skin layer. The adult emerges from this and spends some time expanding its wings and then hardens in the sun.

It can then fly off and will never shed its skin again.



Blue Dasher

Next time you are around Lake Katherine, check out our dragonflies and see how really fascinating these creatures can be.

FIELD NOTES MISSISSIPPI PALISADES STATE PARK

This last April my wife and I headed out to Savanna Illinois, right on the banks of the mighty Mississippi. Ever since moving to the US the Mississippi River has always held an attraction. The sweeping bluffs, which house bald eagles, the pelicans that migrate along this corridor and all the cultural elements from blues to Huckleberry Finn that make up the aura that is "Old Man River".

On this trip we were just looking for a weekend getaway. The state park in Savanna, called Mississippi Palisades State Park, houses a registered nature preserve, and is also a popular place with rock climbers. At this time of year many of the spring wild flowers were in bloom. Plants like Dutchman's breeches and recurved trillium were

amongst the tree roots. Many of the trees had not leafed out yet providing the required light to allow the spring ephemerals a chance to grow. The park has dramatic views down the river and on this occasion even though we were not looking for eagles we spotted one as we were driving by.

As I mentioned this area is also good for rock climbing. I had come here half expecting to be able to do some bouldering (low level non roped climbing). This one spot called the "Twin Sisters" had a couple of low walls in a kind of grotto type area. What was really great is that a father and son were top roping and they asked if I wanted to climb with them, which obviously I accepted. I had a great time scaling a couple of routes, knowing that I was being safely belayed from below.

The mature woodlands in this area are pretty unique especially as they grow on the limestone bluffs. The conditions create a great habitat that even contain such species as pileated woodpecker, a fairly common bird, but certainly not abundant.

What my wife and I really liked is that this area is only 2-3 hours from our house and was a complete getaway. The river has a certain magic that any time you are near it, your pulse slows and your senses quicken and you get lulled by the timeless of the landscape carved by steady movement of the great river.



Mississippi Palisades State Park



Climbing



Dutchman's Breeches

NATURE HAPPENINGS

Written by: Frank Hensley

It's milkweed season. Common Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*, is blooming in Chicagoland now and will be for the next few weeks. This plant is famous as the major host of Monarch butterflies, and I've had the pleasure over the last couple of weeks of watching two Monarch caterpillars in the milkweed patch next to my driveway. One completed metamorphosis yesterday and I enjoyed getting photos of the butterfly as its wings dried in preparation for its first flight. Other species of milkweed are also coming into bloom, including the gorgeous Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) that can be spotted along the shores of Lake Katherine showing off its orange blooms.



Monarch

But the life cycle of the Monarch is not the only drama to see on Common Milkweed. The flowers of milkweeds are only mildly fragrant to humans, but draw a wide diversity of insects to feed on nectar and pollen. We've had some very interesting wasps and moths visit our milkweeds over the last couple of years, including day-flying moths of the Sphinx Moth family (Sphingidae) that mimic hummingbirds. We've also been visited by a wasp-mimic moth of the genus *Synanthedon*.

In addition to pollination, another drama that plays out on Common Milkweed is predation. As you walk around Lake Katherine and other wild places, look closely at the flowers of milkweeds, and also between the very top leaves. You'll see elongated black and brown insects called earwigs. These are somewhat scary looking because of their long cerci (pincers) on the tip of the abdomen. The myth that gives them the name "earwig" is that they like to burrow into people's ears to lay eggs, but have no worries because they are actually harmless to humans. You're only in danger if you're a small fly or moth visiting a milkweed for a taste of nectar. Most species of earwigs are scavengers but some are predatory.



Earwig

These earwigs lie in wait on milkweed and grab the unsuspecting pollinators. Last year I was puzzled to see an ever-growing accumulation of small moth wings on the leaves of milkweed plants by my house. Then I discovered that several earwigs were in residence. Eventually I also spotted earwig parts strewn about! It seems that these voracious little predators have no qualms about turning on their own kind.



The next time you're out for a summer nature hike, take a few minutes to enjoy the blooming milkweeds, but don't just stop and smell the flowers. Spend a few minutes watching the drama of insect life that is unfolding.



Milkweed



Hummingbird moth



Wasp mimic moth

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The natural resources management committee mission is to promote, improve and fundraise in regards to all matters pertaining to Lake Katherine's Natural Resources.

The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity . . . and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself.
William Blake



Written by: Jim Reichel

-What's the deal with restoration?

Restoration has many ever-changing facets. Currently worldwide terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems support humanity. It is necessary to protect and restore these habitats in order to minimize global climate change and its effects. It has been said that ecological restoration offers hope in two key areas:

by reconnecting fragmented ecosystems, which allows animals and plants to migrate in response to such change; and by capturing carbon through the restoration of forests, peat-forming wetlands, and other ecosystems that act as carbon sinks. Humanity depends upon the services provided by these ecosystems. In order to continue to obtain ecosystem services, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems need to be protected and, where possible, restored.

Locally, restoration teaches us first hand what practices are successful and what practices are not. This knowledge is invaluable in protecting what we do have, even though protection alone is no longer sufficient. While restoration may always be needed, it is hopeful that some day it will not have the urgency it does today.

UPCOMING EVENTS GET INVOLVED!

Monarch Festival

September 19th
11am to 4pm

Women's Club Pig Roast

Fundraiser for the Anniversary
Garden at Lake Katherine
July 24th

Stargazing

Lake Katherine Nature Center
17th July
14th August
8pm to 10pm



Orland Grassland

Volunteer
2nd and 4th Saturday of each
month 9 am to 12pm
Call Pat at 708-460-8270

Lake Katherine

Buzz n' Bloom Prairie

Teasel Removal
9am to 12pm
3rd Wednesday of the month