



# Lake Bluff Open Lands Association

PRESERVATION, RESTORATION, AND EDUCATION SINCE 1981

[www.lbola.org](http://www.lbola.org)

Spring 2014

LBOLA Warmline 847-234-2860

## President's Letter — *Larry McCotter*

With LBOLA's recent sponsorship of a Chicago Wilderness Burn Training for our volunteers, it might be appropriate to discuss the importance of the controlled use of fire in LBOLA preserves. Historically, the tallgrass prairie region retained its open character due to the role played by wildfires. Trees and shrubs seek access to full sunlight as much as herbaceous prairie and savanna vegetation and, with a significant height advantage, woody plants quickly come to dominate a landscape. How is a prairie expected to survive and compete with taller woody competitors? Call in the reinforcements, of course!

The historical record includes many dramatic accounts of fire sweeping across the tallgrass prairie region that stretched from Nebraska to the shores of Lake Michigan. With summer drought conditions and westerly winds, fire would cross rivers and continue eastwards through woodlands as well as grasslands.



*The Grass Fire, 1908 Frederick Remington*

Though prairie fires often began with lightning strikes, Native Americans learned to utilize fire to maintain both the health of the grasslands and to better see the wildlife they depended on for survival.

Today, the controlled use of fire is still the prescription for healthy native plant communities. The open character of LBOLA's Skokie River Prairie Reserve and the Prairie Preserve on Belle Foret results from our periodic controlled burns. Woodland areas such as Muir Woods in front of Lake Bluff Elementary School, Moffett Woods or Rockland Wetlands at Hwy 176 and Green Bay Road, reveal how a healthy, open woodland can thrive in the absence of invasive woody species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. Fire is our most economical tool to maintain healthy natural areas, return nutrients to the soil, lengthen the growing season, and return the advantage to our native species.

*continued on page 2*

## Mark your calendar

*Please make a note of our Springtime events!*

### **Woodcock Walk at the Skokie River Prairie Reserve**

Saturday, April 19th, 7:15 PM

Join us for our annual observance and celebration of the woodcock mating ritual in the Skokie River Prairie. This year we will have a local youth leading our educational adventure. Prepare for some mud and spring chill!

### **Earth Day Celebration Planting at Rockland Wetlands**

Sunday, April 27th, 9 AM-12 PM

This year's Earth Day Celebration will again be at Rockland Wetlands on the NW corner of Green Bay and Highway 176/Rockland Road! Earth Day will include the planting of hundreds of new woodland and wetland transplants to further beautify and diversify this wonderful entrance to the Village. Park at Blair Park (near the pool). Bring your family and friends and plan to get dirty!



*LFHS volunteers plant at Rockland Wetlands during Earth Day 2012*

### **Annual Spring Bird Walk at Crab Tree Farm**

Saturday, May 17th, 7:00 AM

Cliff Miller will be leading us again on the ever-popular bird walk. Prepare for an early morning to enjoy the spring migration at Crab Tree Farm.

### **Summer Solstice at the Lake Shore to Benefit LBOLA**

Saturday, June 21st, 7 PM

The Summer Solstice really kicks off the entire season. Especially after the interminable winter we've just survived, come on down to the beach and join us for a celebration of the longest day of the year and the beginning of summer! We will meet at the Sunrise Beach South Shelter at 7PM for beverages, one of our infamous LBOLA pot-luck dinners, and lots of fun. There will be a cash bar.

Adults, \$25.00; Children 12 and under, \$10.00  
For additional info, contact us at [info@lbola.org](mailto:info@lbola.org)

## Ravine and Bluff Restoration

The restoration of our our ravines and bluffs poses a particular set of problems - not the least of which is recognizing that there is a problem. While our woods and prairies are invaded by recognized bad guys like buckthorn and honeysuckle, our steep slopes are being shaded out by trees that we love - maples!

In a case of “too much of a good thing”, our ravines are being choked by both Norway and Sugar Maple. While we love our fall colors, we also need to thin our forest canopy to bring more sunlight to our steep slopes. Few recognize that the really hard work of erosion control is done, not by tree roots, but by the fine, fibrous roots of the lowly herbaceous vegetation. Zig-zag goldenrod, Virginia wild rye, penn sedge, and bottle-brush grass are plants that hold soil with their roots while their leaves moderate the erosive effect of rain water pelting the soil of our steep slopes.

To improve the health of our slopes and to reduce the shocking pace of erosion, we need to bring increased sunlight to the ground and grow those grasses and wildflowers!

As always, we appreciate your support and encourage you to use the enclosed envelope to support LBOLA’s efforts at restoring Lake Bluff’s open lands.



A very sunny Lake Bluff Ravine, 1908

## The “Morel” of the Story

By Janet Murphy Ryan, (LBOLA, Vice President)

When winter’s corn snow thaws and waters spring’s soil, the elusive succulent choice morel pops! For centuries this highly sought after mushroom is hunted around the world in temperate latitudes with a true spring. Hunting season is upon us in your own backyard and Lake Bluff Open Lands.

Take your children outside, make a “mushroom” hiking stick and go. After the May apples show their shy heads, walk gently, listen to the earth speak and keep a sharp eye out for blacks, whites, grays, yellows (golden nugget) and lastly the Big Yellow giant Crassipe. Each morel species growing season is about 2 fleeting weeks.

Helpful hunting hints:

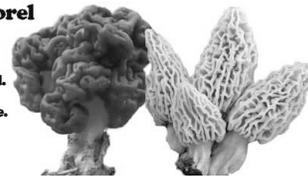
- Look on North side of tree
- Dead elms
- Burned sites
- Spot one, they’ll likely be two or more! (Spore line)
- Leave part of stem when picking and grinning

Use onion sack, basket, or paper, **No Plastic** to store while picking.

On a warm spring day after a sweet tasting rain one can smell morels popping as they form underground. When I was a wee lass my Dad took me mushroom hunting, my girls hunted when they could first walk. My heart quickens still at the thrill!

### False Morel

- Mottled.
- Orange, red.
- Solid inside.



### Morel

- Honey comb.
- White, brown.
- Hollow inside.

Mushroom Exam

**NOTE:** Be sure to cook properly before eating this delicacy. Know the difference Between a True Morel and the False Morel or hunt with someone who does. Happy hunting!

## Eagle Project Drags LBOLA Into The Future (Kicking and Screaming)

Eagle Scout candidate Jacob Andrews is working on a project that will make walking in LBOLA’s Skokie River Prairie Reserve quite a bit more educational and informative. Jacob will be responsible for the installation of signage throughout the preserve featuring those square black & white checked patterns known as QR, or Quick Response codes.

By using a smartphone with an appropriate QR-reading app, you’ll quickly learn about subjects including Reserve history, what’s blooming in a particular season, unique features and wildlife topics. The QR codes will connect you to our web site, LBOLA.ORG, and we’ll be able to change linked information to coordinate with bloom time, seasons, and special events. We’re excited about this new feature and can’t wait for it to get up and running.

To become an Eagle Scout, a candidate must take on numerous tasks including the project concept, fundraising, permits/permissions, and organizing a sizable work crew to assist in execution of the project. We look forward to supporting Jacob in this wonderful project!



Sample QR

LBOLA ended 2013 in a stronger financial position than at the end of 2012, thanks to a generous donation from the Robert Sierks Charitable Trust which offset declines in individual donations. In addition, expenditures in 2013 were significantly reduced as legal fees, summer intern, and equipment purchases declined. We also did not need to purchase a computer this year and newsletter costs were delayed until 2014 because it came out so late in the year.

Volunteers donated over 800 hours of work in our preserves and our Summer Interns added a further 1,100 hours of hard work. Through the early months of 2014, expenses were higher than last year including the newsletter expenses that rolled over from 2013 and donations continue at a slower pace than in previous years.

The students we hire in the summer to assist our volunteers' efforts continue to be our single largest expense. LBOLA's preserve restoration plans include more than enough work to keep our summer interns busy for the entire summer, so fundraising to support these internships remains a top priority. Please consider sponsoring an intern for the summer with a donation of \$2,500. If you have any ideas or suggestions for fundraising efforts or communications activities or, especially, would like to assist in these activities, please do not hesitate to contact me at [treasurer@lbola.org](mailto:treasurer@lbola.org).

If you have outdoor tools or equipment that you no longer use but our volunteers might be able to use to attack buckthorn and maintain our preserves, please consider donating them to LBOLA. So, when you clean out your barn or garage this spring, before throwing out tools or powered equipment, leave us a message at (847) 234-2860 or shoot an email to [info@lbola.org](mailto:info@lbola.org) describing what you have and we'll let you know if we can use it. And remember, any such donations to LBOLA would be tax deductible.

Al Trefts



*Controlled Burn on East-West Bike Path*

### LBOLA Sponsors Controlled Burn Training

*By Al Trefts*

So, what did you do last weekend?

Six LBOLA volunteers have a rather unique answer to that question as they gave up their weekend to take Controlled Burn Crew Member Training. This two day session, put on by Chicago Wilderness with instructors from the Lake County Forest Preserves, provides the training necessary for volunteers to safely participate on the crew of a controlled burn as recognized by most Chicago Wilderness member organizations. The training covers the basics of topics like burn preparations, fire behavior, fire containment and suppression methods, controlled burn techniques, smoke management controlled burn planning, how best to conduct controlled burns, and what to evaluate during and after a controlled burn. Successful completion of a written test at the end of the session was required to receive the Certificate of Achievement certifying the training undertaken. A total of 36 volunteers participated in the 2 day training. Participants also came from Lake Forest Open Lands, Lake County Forest Preserves, Will County Forest Preserve, Conserve Lake County, Libertyville Township, and a number of private local companies. All six LBOLA volunteers received their certification and are looking forward to a better and safer burn season this year! The training was sponsored by LBOLA and the Lake Bluff Park District. To learn more about controlled burning or to participate in a LBOLA controlled burn contact us at [info@lbola.org](mailto:info@lbola.org).

### Take a Hike With LBOLA

There is a growing belief that one of the best things you can do for mental and physical health is a morning walk in a natural setting. LBOLA couldn't agree more and will be offering 3 narrated walks in the Skokie River Prairie Reserve this year. Learn its history, the ongoing restoration process, and an explanation of its ever changing natural beauty. We encourage involving the whole family. These one-hour walks will begin in the Reserve parking lot and start at 9:00 AM on Saturdays, May 10, July 12 and September 13. See you there!

## Lake Bluff Forest Preserve Update

*By Dave Szaflarski, Volunteer Steward - Lake Bluff Forest Preserve & LBOLA Volunteer*

Over the past two winters the Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) has been performing restoration activities at the Lake Bluff Forest Preserve, recently renamed Oriole Grove by the LCFPD, located directly south of the Skokie River Prairie Reserve and west of the Stonebridge development. The 80 acre Preserve is the middle link of the three local preserves that make up the Skokie River corridor.

During the winter of 2012 approximately six acres of invasive woody species were restored by hand clearing with brush and chain saws. The work area was located in the southern portion of the preserve and along the west bank of the Skokie River. The clearing activities helped restore and highlight the wonderful oak woodland that was slowly deteriorating from a dense buckthorn thicket.

This past winter, the LCFPD completed restoration work in three separate areas in the preserve. Efforts focused on the north section of the preserve, but extended to other areas including the remnant we call Birch Prairie. Future restoration plans include continued clearing of buckthorn plus efforts to seed in native plants.

Lake Forest High School volunteers have made noteworthy efforts at monthly volunteer restoration workdays. Using no more than hand tools, students have made significant contributions in the preserve. Recent clearing work has made important and impressive strides in the Skokie River preserve corridor that complements ongoing restoration efforts by both LBOLA and LFOLA in the Skokie Valley green corridor. Why not plan to take a walk and come out and see for yourself?

## Underground Sewage Overflow Storage Tank Being Considered At Sunrise Beach

*By George Russell*

In January 1901, at a total cost of \$30,000, construction of Lake Bluff's first sanitary sewer system consisting of 3.5 miles of new sanitary sewer pipes was completed. Wastewater in the pipes flowed east and connected to a large brick sewer located under E. Prospect Avenue. From there, the wastewater flowed through a pipe buried down the face of the bluff, across the beach and out into Lake Michigan a distance of 275 feet. At that point, without any treatment or purification, the raw sewage was discharged directly into the Lake. Up through the early 1900s it was standard practice along the North Shore to simply pipe all raw sewage directly into the Lake, assuming that the "solution to pollution was dilution".

In 1914, due to increasing water pollution and associated public health concerns, the North Shore Sanitary District (NSSD) was created to eliminate direct discharges of untreated sewage into the Lake. In 1923, the NSSD built and placed into operation our wastewater treatment plant. All sewage in Lake Bluff was diverted into the plant for treatment and then discharged into the Lake at the same location as the original discharge pipe. This wastewater treatment plant remained in operation until the early 1970s when it was completely removed and replaced with the sewage pumping station that remains in operation today. The NSSD pump station collects all sewage from the east side of Lake Bluff and pumps it back westerly through the Village to large pipes that convey all of Lake Bluff's sewage to a regional treatment plant in Highland Park. While this pumping system has greatly reduced the discharge of raw sewage directly into the Lake from Lake Bluff there have been 8 occasions since 1994 where operational problems have resulted in a short term discharge of sewage into the Lake at Sunrise Beach. With the increasing age of the pumping system and worries regarding the possibility of station outages or breaks in the pipe which carries the pumped sewage back through Lake Bluff, the NSSD is proposing to construct a 1 million gallon storage tank under the beach in the approximate location where the Lake Bluff Yacht Club sailboat storage yard is located. This underground storage facility would allow for the raw sewage to be temporarily diverted into the tank should a short term problem occur at the station or if a pipe break would occur. Several years ago the NSSD constructed a large storage tank at the south end of the Lake Forest Beach to serve the same purpose.

The NSSD first contacted the Village and the Lake Bluff Park District several years ago about the proposed project. Discussions on the project were placed on hold. With the completion of the Park District's long range plan, it is likely that discussions on the storage tank project will restart with the North Shore Sanitary District. This is a significant construction project, estimated to cost approximately \$7.5 million and most likely would result in the closure of the south beach for an entire season. When the NSSD last appeared before the Park District they indicated that they will not proceed with the project without the support of the Village and the Park District. If the project does occur it is very likely that aesthetic improvements will be made to the existing pumping station facilities. LBOLA plans to monitor the proposed project to ensure, that if it does occur, that disturbance to the bluff and beach will be minimized to the greatest practical extent.

## Thanks to our recent contributors!

Over 90% of donated funds go directly to our mission of restoring Lake Bluff's Natural areas!

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*Your name could be here too! Please consider a donation to LBOLA and help us keep your village vibrant, healthy and beautiful – Thank You*



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## Gray's Sedge Profile

Keep your eyes peeled for this perennial sedge. Gray's Sedge (*Carex Grayi*) can appear in both wetlands and woodlands. Specifically, it can be found in our ever-evolving Red Hat Zone in the Skokie River Prairie Reserve. The notable spikelet on this sedge can start blooming as early as late-spring. A sedge may look like a grass, but remember that grasses have joints, sedges have edges. Be sure to check out this impressive sedge!



## Sponsor an Intern Program

We hope to hire more local environmental enthusiasts than ever this summer! If you or a local business are interested in sponsoring an intern, write [info@lbola.org](mailto:info@lbola.org).



*2012 Interns Martha Dee and Kristy Minichiello*



## LBOLA Spring / Summer Workday Schedule

Volunteer workdays are Saturdays or Sundays from 9:00 AM - 12:00 noon. Skokie Reserve & Lake Bluff Forest Preserve (LCFPD) dates begin at our parking lot on Hwy. 176, west of the water plant and east of Mariani. For details, call the LBOLA warmline 847-234-2860 or visit [LBOLA.org](http://LBOLA.org) for preserve locations.

4/13	<b>Workday - Skokie Prairie Reserve</b>	<b>Park at Skokie Reserve Lot</b>	<b>9 - Noon</b>
4/27	<b>Earth Day - Rockland Wetlands</b>	<b>Park at Blair Park Lot</b>	<b>9 - Noon</b>
5/11	<b>Workday - Skokie Prairie Reserve</b>	<b>Park at Skokie Reserve Lot</b>	<b>9 - Noon</b>
6/8	<b>Workday - Skokie Prairie Reserve</b>	<b>Park at Skokie Reserve Lot</b>	<b>9 - Noon</b>
7/13	<b>Workday - Skokie Prairie Reserve</b>	<b>Park at Skokie Reserve Lot</b>	<b>9 - Noon</b>
8/10	<b>Workday - Skokie Prairie Reserve</b>	<b>Park at Skokie Reserve Lot</b>	<b>9 - Noon</b>