

Hickory Hills Highlights
News from the Hickory Hills Chapter of Illinois Audubon Society
Stewards of Bremer Sanctuary

FALL 2012



**WHO COOKS FOR YOU? WHO COOKS FOR YOU
ALL?
COME FIND OUT AT BREMER SANCTUARY'S OWL
PROWL!**

Yes, it's that time of year. Join the Hickory Hills Chapter of the IAS and Friends of Bremer Sanctuary for the Sanctuary's annual Owl Prowl and wiener roast. Chapter members note that there will be a short 'annual meeting' prior to the Prowl to elect Chapter officers (Treasurer and Secretary) for the coming year.

Where: At the Bremer barn. The Sanctuary is located 1 mile north of the Courthouse square. Take N. Main Street (N. Road) north. Turn left onto Bremer Lane. The Sanctuary is located at the end of Bremer Lane.

When: SATURDAY (new day), November 3, 2012, 5 p.m.

Bring: Yourself (family & friends), wieners, a dish to share, lawn chair, warm clothes!

Sunset is just before 6 p.m. After dinner and clean up and everyone is settled and quiet, we will douse the barn lights and begin the Prowl.

HE MADE US LAUGH

By Jerry Prater

Bremer Sanctuary lost a good friend and loyal supporter a couple of months ago. Richard Slepicka remains in our thoughts today and will remain so for a long time.

Richard was responsible for the excellent newsletter he produced each quarter and for the Bremer website for which he took wonderful photos and did all the updates. He rarely came to the Sanctuary without his Canon camera in hand and could be seen walking around the grounds or, on occasion, ordering us fellow Stewards into a lineup for some special occasion. In fact, it might have been Richard who coined the phrase Stewards Of Bremer which we surely shortened to SOB's. It was always good for a laugh.

Three years ago it was Richard who helped option a grant to rent a bobcat to launch yet another attack on the Japanese Honeysuckle south of the silo. Richard also spent hours atop the bobcat to root out as much of the invasive shrub he could before the rental time expired. What the machine missed Richard grubbed out by hand, spending hours each work day for as long as he was able.

On the yearly controlled burns, either on the grasslands or in the woods, it seemed that Richard always carried the heavy and noisy backpack blower while others of us got the leaf rakes or drove the gator with the water tanks.

As time went on, Richard came less often but, as he always said, he came for the "wisdom" that fellow stewards shared around the coffee table. He shared his

thoughts as we solved all the local, regional and, sometimes, the world problems. And, he guided us back on-topic when we often strayed from the discussion at hand. When upcoming Bremer events were scheduled, Richard made sure we covered our bases—he even took notes—and then took responsibility for getting the news into the paper and on the radio.

And he made us laugh when our wisdom veered off the track with his own pungent comments. He wasn't above chiding us on our failures to maintain linear conversations.

Toward the end a seat near the furnace on wintry days was reserved for Richard when his visits became even less frequent. He arrived bundled in his heavy coat and carried his cushion for a bit of

comfort. But even then, he never complained or talked much of how he felt or not being able to do as much as he'd like to.

He seemed to keep his spirits up throughout and ours as well.

And he made us laugh.

The Stewards of Bremer are very grateful for recently received memorial funds. Funds were given in memory of Richard Slepicka and Lorene Sammons. The stewards will use the funds to improve overall natural habitat.



With severe drought conditions impacting the area this summer, the U.S. Department of Agriculture allowed a one-time exemption for CRP-enrolled ground to be cut and baled to feed livestock. With 70 acres in CRP, the Illinois Audubon Society (owner of Bremer Wildlife Sanctuary) and the Farm Service agreed to allow Tom Anderson and his sons to mow, bale, rake and remove prairie grasses from 25 acres of Sanctuary grounds. The Andersons made about 40 bales, each weighing approximately 1200 pounds. (Thank you to Mike Plunkett and the Journal-News for providing the details and Ken Schaal, Bremer Sanctuary Restoration Chairman for the use of his photos.)

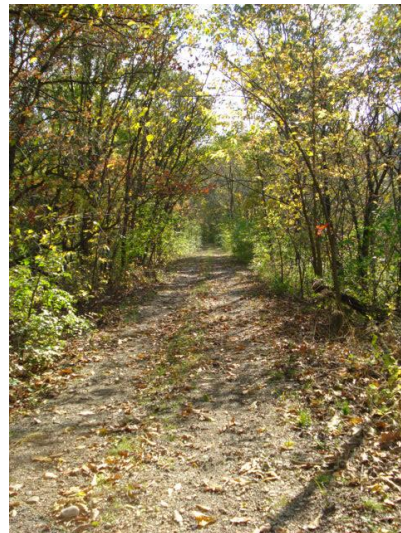
Possible Bobcat spotted on Sanctuary grounds! Susan Greenwalt reports that, during a hike on the morning of September 29, she observed (and photographed) a large cat coming down a tree on the right bank of the downstream side of the Cress Creek crossing (at the end of Pipeline Trail). We are all on the lookout for this cat and hope to be able to indeed confirm its presence on the Sanctuary.

Arches Rail Trail

Illinois Audubon Society, owners of Bremer Sanctuary, along with the Bremer Crew are cooperating with the Montgomery County Natural Area Guardians to provide access to the NAGs Arches Rail Trail. The trail is a part of the abandoned Terre Haute and Alton Railroad line that ran through Hillsboro. It was completed in 1856 and later abandoned with the last railroad tie removed in 1977. Owned by Montgomery County and managed by the Montgomery County Natural Area Guardians, Arches Rail Trail is presently a 3 mile hiking trail that starts near the Montgomery County fairgrounds in Butler and runs

southeast towards Hillsboro. The trail stops a few hundred feet east of the Bremer Sanctuary. Since the railroad line adjacent to the North Road is in private ownership, IAS and NAGs have partnered to allow access to the trail from the northeast corner of the Bremer Sanctuary.

Illinois Audubon Society's partnership with NAGs is a perfect match. Both organizations are involved with preservation of natural landscapes. NAGs is interested in saving what little is left of the county's natural heritage. Rules governing the trail were made in conjunction with the bylaws of Bremer Sanctuary. (Article by Ken Schaal, photos by Anne Foster.)



Arches Rail Trail & Bremer Sanctuary Rules

- Hours are from dawn till dusk daily.
- Parking on Bremer Sanctuary is available at the barn parking lot.
- Access the trail from the west end (Butler) with parking near the fairgrounds entrance and not blocking any lanes.
- No horses or ATV's.
- Emergency vehicles only.

- All plants and animals are protected.
- Pack out your trash.
- All pets must be leashed.
- Picnics are allowed only in designated areas.
- No hunting.
- Please respect private property adjoining Arches Rail Trail and Bremer Sanctuary. Do not enter without permission.
- Bremer Sanctuary is located within the Hillsboro city limits. All city ordinances apply at the sanctuary.

In addition, unauthorized fires including the use of the firepit at Bremer Sanctuary are prohibited.

Fall Seed Collecting: Watch for e-news updates on the date and time for seed collecting. This will occur at Ken Schaal's property later this fall.

A Tough Year for Nesting Birds

With reports of Bluebirds nesting in March, the Bluebird committee began monitoring Bremer Sanctuary's nestbox trail at the end of March – 2 weeks earlier than usual. On March 29, 7 Bluebird eggs were counted with that number jumping to 37 a week later! Although Tree Swallows returned to the sanctuary in March and began claiming nest boxes, they waited until their usual later time to get down to business.

What started as a seemingly prosperous year for the birds, quickly deteriorated as drought took over and too many days of high temperatures took a toll on the birds' success. Insects were scarce. Since all our cavity-nesting birds (as well as many open-cup nesters) are insect eaters, there was insufficient food available to feed both young and adults. For the first time, we noticed Bluebird parents feeding tiny fruits to their nestlings and, once these young fledged, their abandoned nest was full of seeds. Heat may have affected the birds' physiology as well, as it is possible that high temperatures reduced the male parent's fertility and many eggs never hatched. Additionally, eggs that were fertile took longer to hatch and the nestlings were in the nest days longer than in the past. Even House Wrens, normally so prolific, had a very difficult time.

Below is a table showing numbers of birds fledged from the Bremer Sanctuary nestboxes since 2000. No Titmice used the nestboxes this year.

Thank you to all who helped with the nestbox monitoring this year including: Willy and Hunter, Nancy Redman, Shirley Sussenbach, and the Bremer Sanctuary volunteers.

ALL BIRDS FLEDGED TOTALS						
YEAR	BLUEBIRDS	TREE SWALLOWS	HOUSE WRENS	CHICKADEES	TITMOUSE	TOTAL
2000	76		63	11		150
2001	126		137	6		269
2002	112	4	133			249
2003	117	5	196			318
2004	134	27	156	5		322
2005	133	48	169			350
2006	103	42	122			267
2007	59	81	148			288
2008	57	61	96			214
2009	64	73	157	3		297
2010	79	60	133			272
2011	55	49	88		4	196
2012	58	53	35	8		154
TOTALS	1173	503	1633	25	4	3346

HICKORY HILLS CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

Where: Hillsboro Moose Club

When: Friday December 14th, 6:30 p.m.

Reservations: must be made to Carl Savage, <carl_wildlife@yahoo.com> or by phone at 217-313-0135 or 217-532-5835 by December 7th.

Hickory Hills Chapter of the IAS is governed by a Board of Directors:

- Jim Hefley - Bluebird Trl, Building
- Henry Eilers - Restoration
- Vicki Hedrick - IAS Chap. Rep, Bluebird Trail, Newsletter
- Gale Johnson - Building
- Geri Kinneman - Education chairman
- Don Krefft - Treasurer & Restoration
- Sonya Lockett - Bulletin Board
- Bob Mullins - Restoration
- Jerry Prater - Secretary & Building
- Dick Rompasky - Building
- Geri Kinneman - Education chairman
- Don Krefft - Treasurer & Restoration
- Sonya Lockett - Bulletin Board
- Bob Mullins - Restoration
- Jerry Prater - Secretary & Building
- Dick Rompasky - Building
- Carl Savage – Membership chairman
- Ken Schaal - Restoration chairman



**Who's in charge?
A few of the SOB's
hard at it!**

****Please help us reduce costs and save trees. Sign up to receive the Newsletter by email. Send your email address to Vicki Hedrick at <vikij5@yahoo.com>.**

Join us at Hickory Hills Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society! We are the stewards of IAS' H and B Bremer Wildlife Sanctuary.

IAS/HICKORY HILLS MEMBERSHIP: Your membership provides the Hickory Hills newsletter, chapter email updates, voting privileges, the opportunity to head a committee or hold an office, Cardinal News, Illinois Audubon Magazine, admission to IAS sanctuaries, and the opportunity to attend chapter and state-wide events.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ St. _____ Zip _____

Email: _____

Membership Category Dues: \$ _____

Hickory Hills Chapter Dues: \$ 10.00

Total Society-Chapter Dues: \$ _____

IAS Membership Categories:

FRIEND	\$25.00	FRIEND PLUS:	\$30.00
STEWARD	\$50-\$99	GUARDIAN:	\$100-\$499
ADVOCATE	\$500-\$999	BENEFACTOR:	\$1000+
LEGACY	\$5000+		

Clip & Mail To:

**Illinois Audubon Society
PO Box 2547
Springfield, IL 62708**

OR

You may join Friends of Bremer Sanctuary: yearly membership is \$10 payable directly to membership chair Carl Savage or mailed to Hickory Hills Chapter, PO Box 395 Hillsboro, IL 62049. Membership is due each January 1. A Friend receives the chapter newsletter, email updates (if email address is provided), has sanctuary privileges, is invited to all chapter activities and events and may volunteer for the Sanctuary. A Friend does not have voting rights in chapter business nor can a Friend hold office or chair a committee.