



Homewood Izaak Walton Preserve, Inc.

Dedicated to Service in Conservation

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Tax exempt non-profit 501 c 3 Organization

To our members and friends:

July 2020

COVID-19 PANDEMIC III

Over the past two months, we here in Illinois have moved from a “Stay at Home” order to the loosened restrictions of the “Phase 4 Revitalization” which thankfully is clearly progress. But we are far from normal with physical/social distancing recommended for those outside of your immediate household group and the now ubiquitous wearing of masks in all indoor spaces. We soldier on wondering when things will ever get back to normal. Thankfully our wonderful “Green Jewel” is as normal as ever with summer vegetation thriving and the fish, animals and insects completely oblivious to the pandemic. Our Preserve has become a sanctuary of sorts, a place to enjoy quality time in nature and to at least briefly remove the concerns of the pandemic from front of mind.

However, we, like nearly all other organizations, continue to cancel programs due to the pandemic restriction. We will not be offering a September or October nature themed program in our historic cabin this year. Our annual November Auction and Raffle is unlikely to be conducted as an event but we will still intend to conduct a fundraising campaign. (More on that in the next newsletter.) On a very positive note, our membership numbers are strong: highest in at least 10 years and likely highest ever. (We will include a detailed report on membership in our next newsletter) So we send a huge and heartfelt thanks to the entire community including members of long-standing as well as to those who have recently joined. Our Green Jewel sanctuary is as popular as ever !

WAR ON TEASEL

We have written about this topic in previous newsletters. We are now in our third year in this multiyear campaign to control and eventually eradicate common teasel (*dipsacus fullonum*), clearly the most threatening invasive plant in the Preserve. Our spring/summer campaign began in mid March and just recently concluded. Our goal was to apply herbicide in spring and then cut all surviving 2nd year plants before they could grow stalks and generate their seeds. Remember that these plants have a two year life cycle, growing a close-to-the-ground rosette the first year and growing a stalk for seeding before dying in the second year. The seeds can survive for 3-5 years before sprouting so we will be at war with this plant for many more years. We are very pleased to report a

99% + rate of success this year (much improved from previous years) thanks to the continuing efforts of our teal warriors: Greg Busler, Kevin Jennings, Todd Wittenberg, Jeff Maharry, Marc Biolchen, Dirk French, Dan Galen, Jim Helke, John Sandala and John Brinkman. We also acquired additional weaponry: a 15 gallon powered sprayer with a long hose that can be placed in the cargo bed of Pete's cart and has proven to be effective and efficient. We thank our volunteers for their consistent efforts to ultimately prevail in this multi-year effort.

YOGA AT THE PRESEVE

We were approached by Liz Smith, the owner of Serendipity Yoga, in May as Liz was looking for an outdoor space to conduct yoga classes givin the indoor restrctions of Illinois' phase 2 in effect at that time. The Board approved a partnership with her business and entered into a fee sharing arrangement similar to what we have done with Tinkergarten. Her clients have raved about the peaceful outdoor space in the east meadow by the cabin so yoga classes will continue there until the weather is no longer suitable later in the Fall. Current class schedule: Flow yoga on Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30pm and on Saturdays, 7:30-8:30am; Hatha yoga on Wednesdays, 8:00-9:00am and Thursdays 5:30-6:30pm. To learn more about yoga, how to reserve a spot and the pandemic precautions that Serendipity Yoga is taking to keep participants safe during classes, please visit their website: serendipityyogaandwellness.com

SECURITY PATROLS

Long time member and supporter of the Preserve, Neil Neilson, approached us in May wondering who does security patrols at the Preserve. Before the pandemic, our VP, Gerry Tienstra, was doing patrols about once a week on his own golf cart. Neil offered to assist, and within 30 minutes was trained and ventured out on Pete's cart looking around in general but mostly checking fishermen for memberships. Neil brings a friendly, non-threatening approach to his patrols and has encouraged many individuals to buy memberships in order to continue fishing. Undoubtedly, these patrols have boosted our membership rolls. We sincerely thank Neil for his enthusiastic work with his regular patrols around the Preserve.

SNAKES AT THE PRESERVE

We recently met David Zaber out on the trails and we quickly learned of his deep background and experience in environmental issues and nature in general. He informed us that we had a population of Dekay's brown snakes in the Preserve. He has also helped us with identifying invasive species previously unknown to us. So we invited David to write an article about snakes at the Preserve:

At 190 acres in size, the Izaak Walton Preserve protects important ecosystems including ancient dunes, old growth forests, unique prairie and wet-meadow remnants and of course, lakes and wetlands. These ecosystems, in turn, provide habitat for a range of interesting plant and animal species including a variety of reptiles and amphibians. And

while many who spend time in the Preserve see painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) basking in the sun or American toads (*Bufo americanus*) jumping across walking paths, most of us will not notice the more secretive snakes that call the preserve home.

Although the variety of habitats found in the preserve provide excellent habitat for several snake species, two that are known to occur are the common garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) and Dekay's brown snake (*Storeria dekayi*). Other species that are likely to call the Preserve home including Red-bellied snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*) and Northern water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*). All four species are in the Colubrid Family of snakes, which make up about three-fourths of the world's 2700 snake species. Like all snakes, these species eat their prey whole – from slugs, worms and insects in the case of Dekay's and Red-bellied snakes to small rodents and fish for Northern water and Garter snakes. Aside from water snakes, other snakes on the preserve live primarily on land and all are active throughout the day. All four species give birth to live young so you may see several different sizes throughout the active seasons.

Despite their critical and unique ecological roles, people often have a visceral reaction to snakes, either believing them to be dangerous or simply “creepy”. However, **there are no poisonous snakes in Izaak Walton Preserve or in our area as a whole.** In fact, the presence of snakes tells us that the ecology of the Preserve is healthy enough to support a range of important and beautiful species. As volunteers work tirelessly to restore healthy ecosystems throughout the Preserve, the presence of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians tells us that their efforts are working. So keep your eyes open for snakes and enjoy the natural wonders of Homewood's premier natural area.

TINKERGARTEN

As a reminder, we have been partnering with Tinkergarten for two years but like so many other activities, the pandemic had shut down their outdoor classes in the Preserve for small children (18 months to 8 years) so far this year. We announced the return of their classes beginning Monday August 10 in the printed edition of this newsletter. However, we learned, before we could stop the printing, that the organization decided to cancel all classes and activities for the remainder of this year. Like so many other things these days, this was another casualty of the pandemic. These classes are led by member Beth Kosiba; we sure hope Beth can start conducting classes early and often in 2021 !

As an alternative, Tinkergarten now offers on line content to promote its mission of age based learning in small groups available to children at home. There are DIY activities, free Camp Tinkergarten, and on-line Circle time. To sign up and learn more check out their website: tinkergarten.com/camp Pls direct any questions to Beth Kosiba via email: bethann.kosiba@tinkergarten.com

John Brinkman, President

HOMEWOOD IZAAK WALTON PRESERVE

All are welcome to hike or bike through the Preserve during the pandemic. Please maintain physical/social distancing if outside your family group and wear masks in the parking lots and on the trails if conditions warrant.