

Issue date: April 2024

## Upcoming Workdays

Sunday, 4/21 PCP

Saturday, 4/27 SRG

Sunday, 5/5 SRG

Saturday, 5/11 PCP

Sunday, 5/19 SRG

Saturday, 5/25 PCP

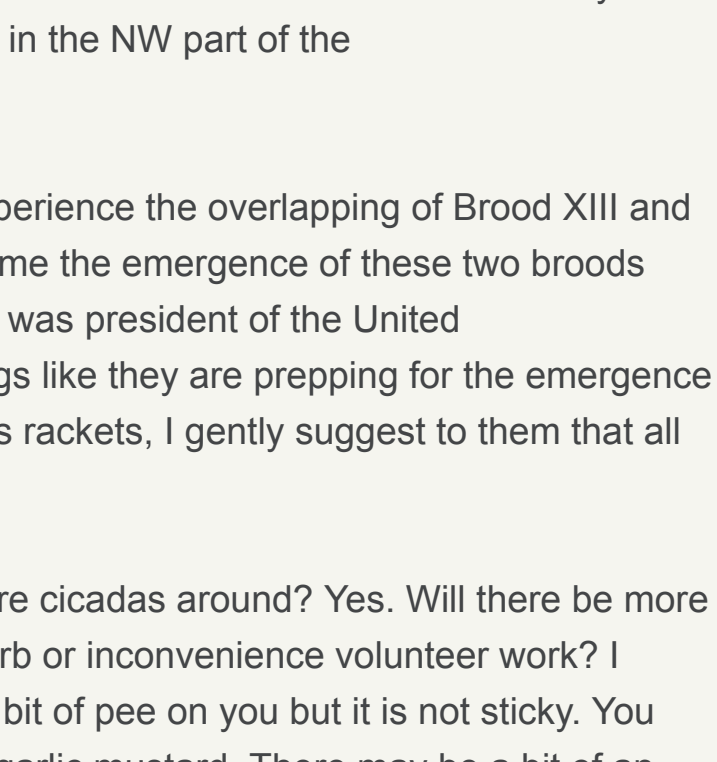
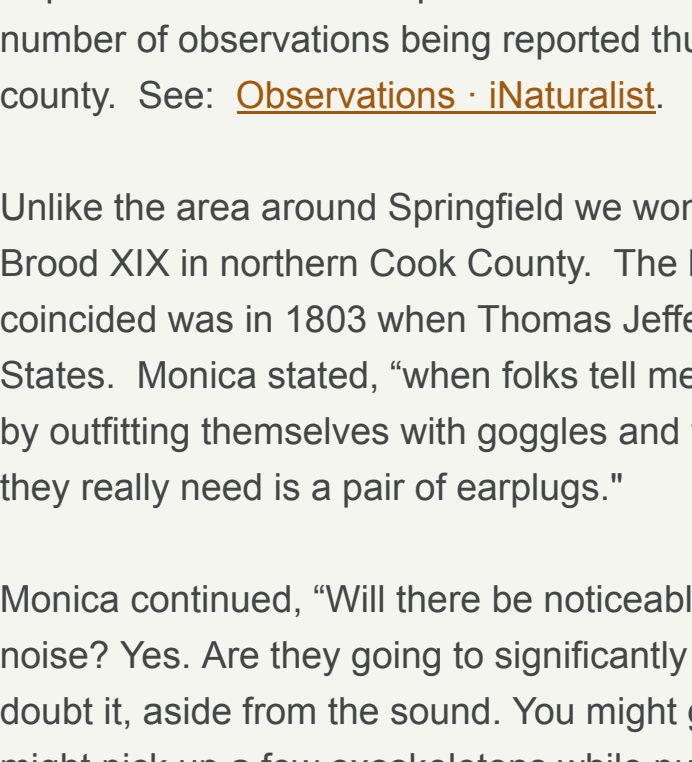
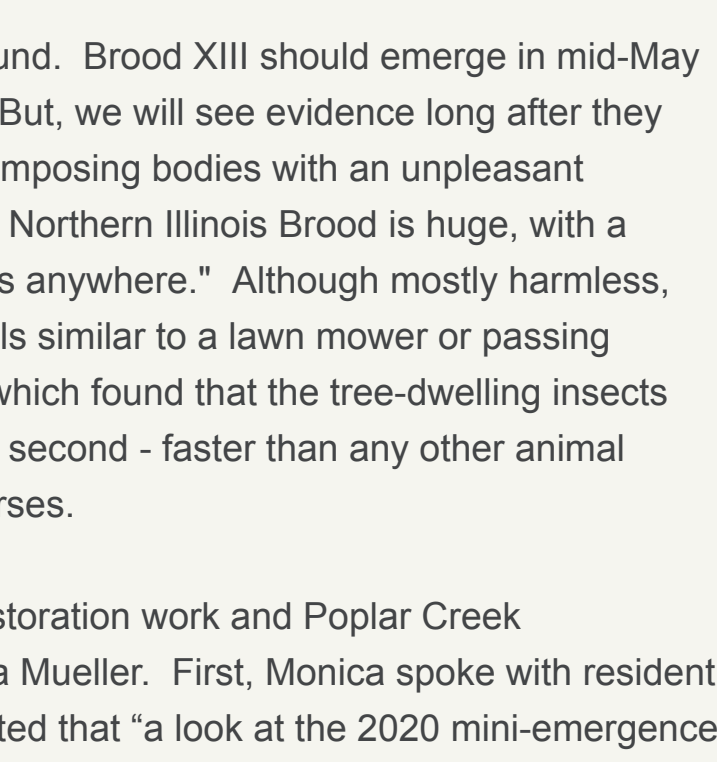
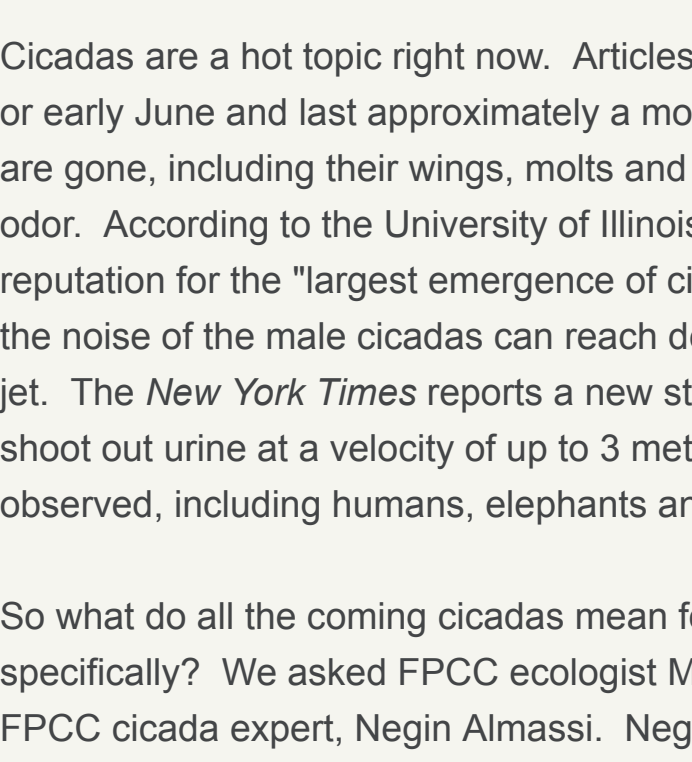
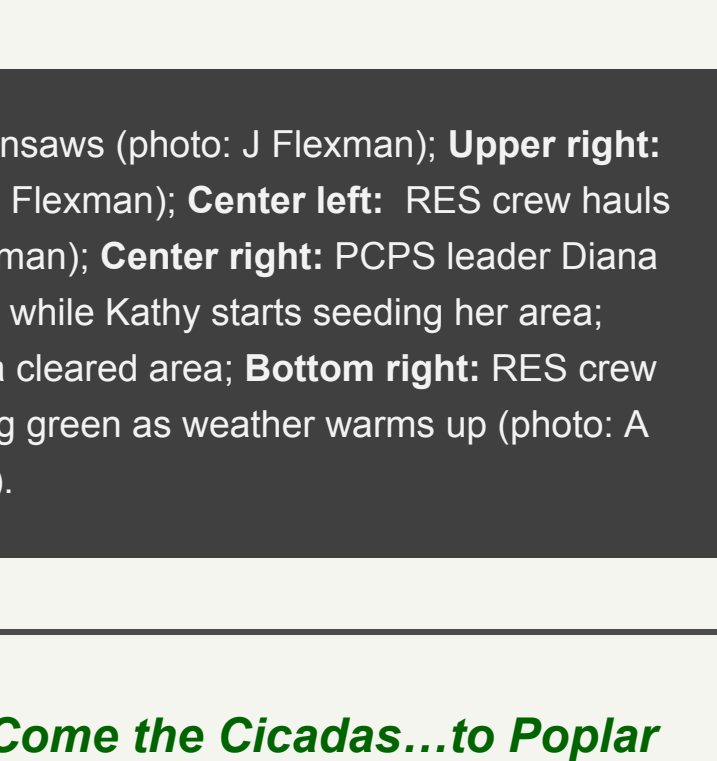
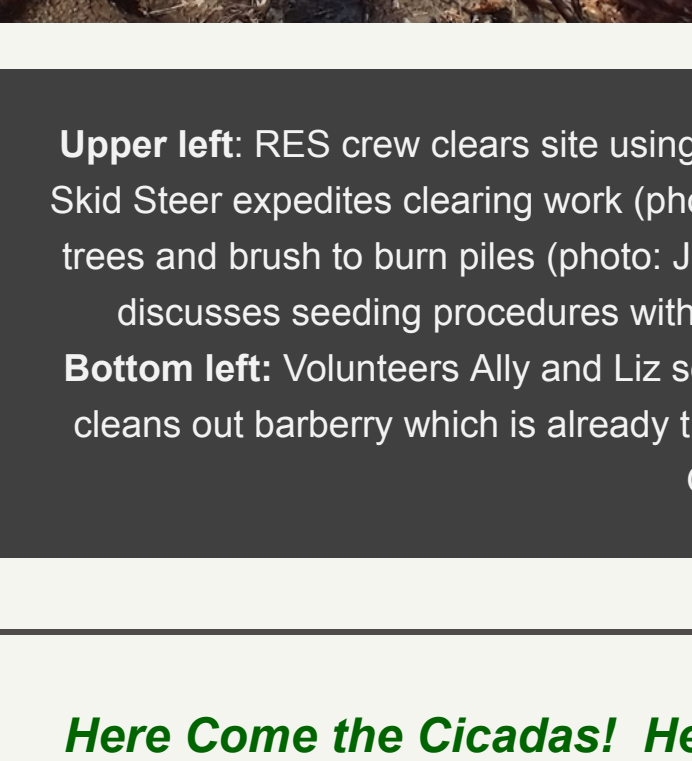
Sunday, 6/2 SRG

For more information: [PCPS website](#).

## Grant Project is Underway

Restoration work in the Eastern Woods at Schaumburg Road Grasslands is underway! This project is funded through a Community Stewardship Challenge Grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) which we received late last fall, and also through the donations of the volunteers of the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards and their friends and supporters. Using professional contractors an 11 acre site is being cleared and weed controlled – a project carried out much faster using contractors rather than through innumerable weekly volunteer workdays over several years.

And what changes have already taken place! See the pictures below. This season has not been ideal for large scale restoration work. A warm winter created softer than normal ground, while repeated periods of rain hampered large equipment use. However, starting from south to north, 3.5 acres have been totally cleared of invasives and PCPS volunteers followed up by seeding the area. Crews from RES, our contractor, have continued forward using brushcutters to clean out areas by several ephemeral ponds with focus on large barberry patches. Seeing such visible progress is exciting.



**Upper left:** RES crew clears site using chainsaws (photo: J Flexman); **Upper right:** Skid Steer expedites clearing work (photo: J Flexman); **Center left:** RES crew hauls trees and brush to burn piles (photo: J Flexman); **Center right:** PCPS leader Diana discusses seeding procedures with Tori, while Kathy starts seeding her area; **Bottom left:** Volunteers Ally and Liz seed a cleared area; **Bottom right:** RES crew cleans out barberry which is already turning green as weather warms up (photo: A Gard).

## Here Come the Cicadas! Here Come the Cicadas...to Poplar Creek?

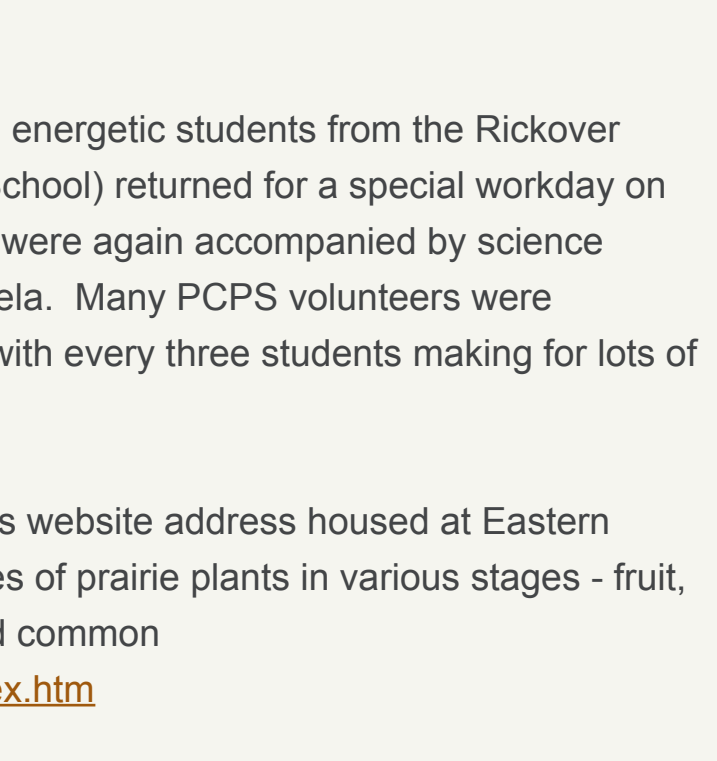
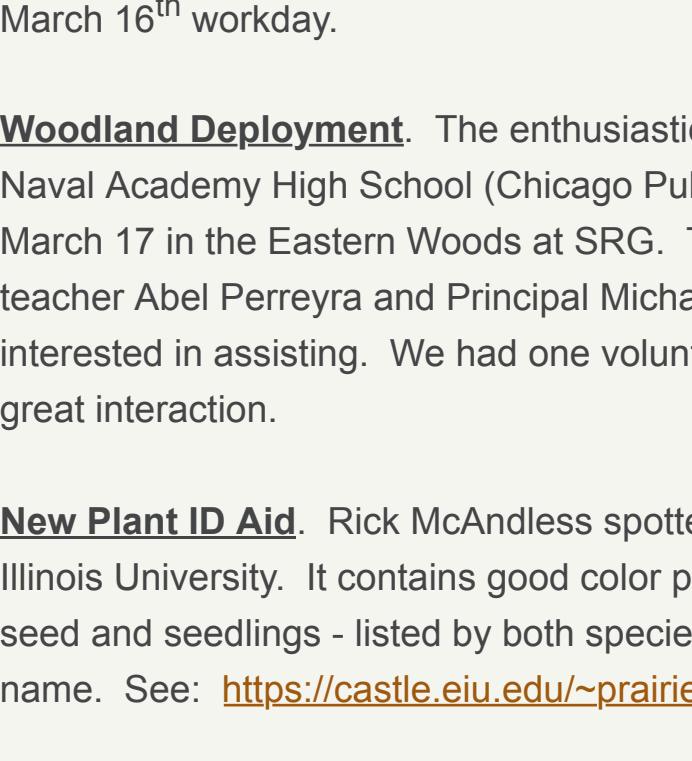
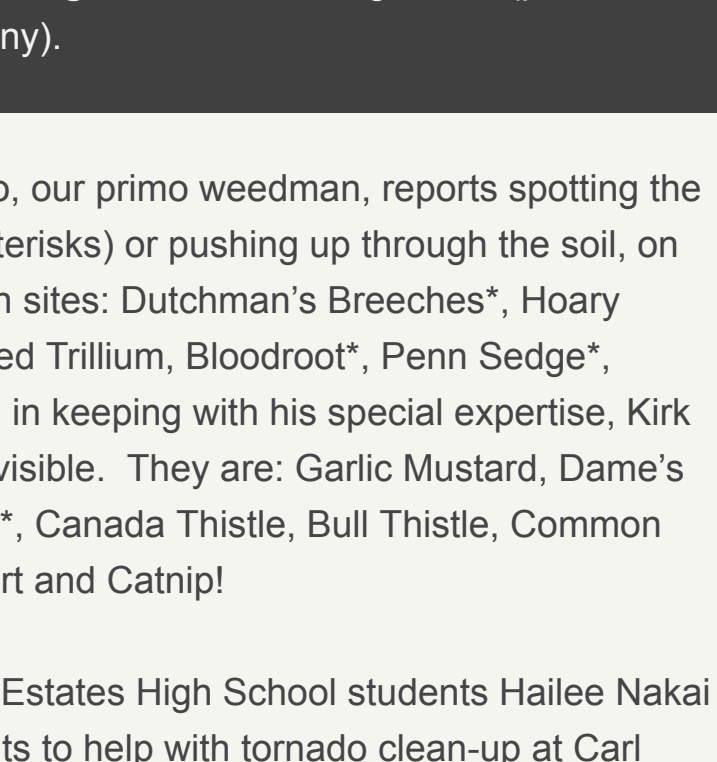
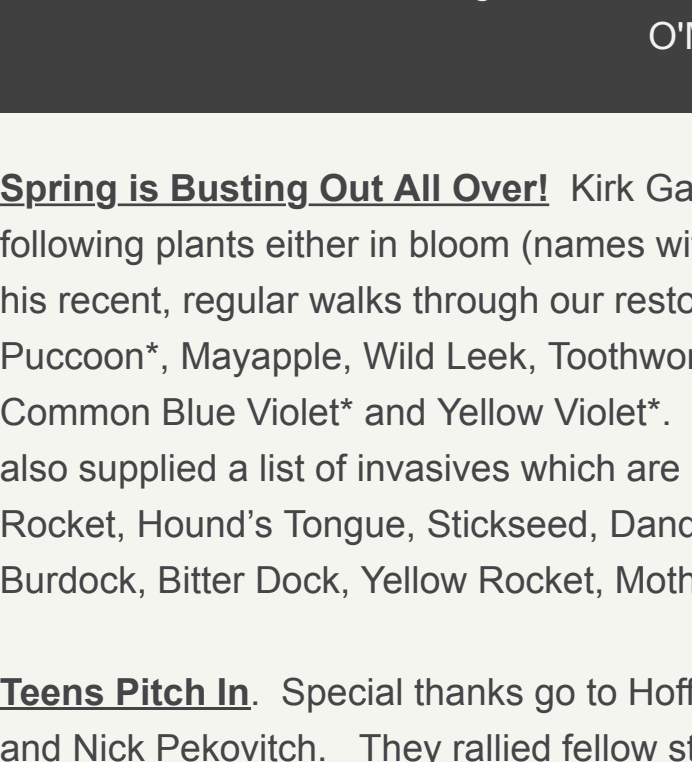
Cicadas are a hot topic right now. Articles abound. Brood XIII should emerge in mid-May or early June and last approximately a month. But, we will see evidence long after they are gone, including their wings, molts and decomposing bodies with an unpleasant odor. According to the University of Illinois, the Northern Illinois Brood is huge, with a reputation for the "largest emergence of cicadas anywhere." Although mostly harmless, the noise of the male cicadas can reach decibels similar to a lawn mower or passing jet. The *New York Times* reports a new study which found that the tree-dwelling insects shoot out urine at a velocity of up to 3 meters a second - faster than any other animal observed, including humans, elephants and horses.

So what do all the coming cicadas mean for restoration work and Poplar Creek specifically? We asked FPCC ecologist Monica Mueller. First, Monica spoke with resident FPCC cicada expert, Negin Almassi. Negin noted that "a look at the 2020 mini-emergence plus 2023 early [observations] suggests that we wouldn't expect to see masses of them at Poplar Creek." She also provided this link to iNaturalist to demonstrate the relatively low number of observations being reported thus far in the NW part of the county. See: [Observations - iNaturalist](#).

Unlike the area around Springfield we won't experience the overlapping of Brood XIII and Brood XIX in northern Cook County. The last time the emergence of these two broods coincided was in 1803 when Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States. Monica stated, "when folks tell me things like they are prepping for the emergence by outfitting themselves with goggles and tennis rackets, I gently suggest to them that all they really need is a pair of earplugs."

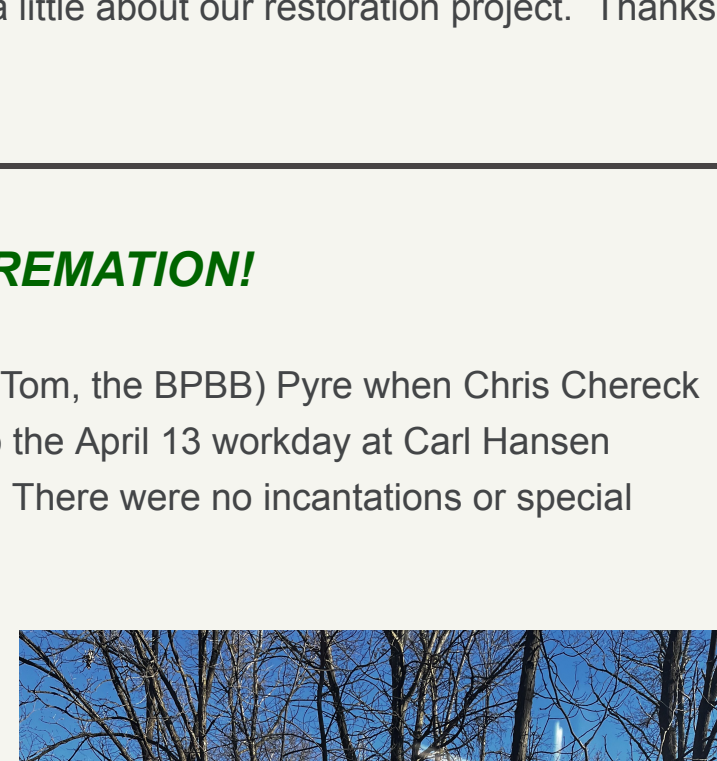
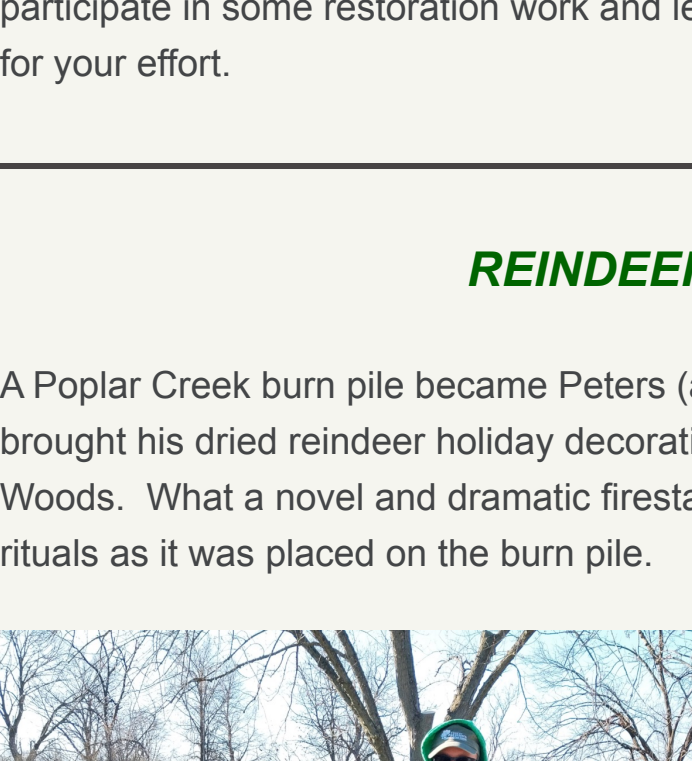
Monica continued, "Will there be noticeably more cicadas around? Yes. Will there be more noise? Yes. Are they going to significantly disturb or inconvenience volunteer work? I doubt it, aside from the sound. You might get a bit of pee on you but it is not sticky. You might pick up a few exoskeletons while pulling garlic mustard. There may be a bit of an odor, but you can comfort yourself by thinking of it as fertilizer for our natural systems."

FPCC plans to use the cicada event as a learning experience. Kris DaPra, Manager of Volunteer Resources, remarked that "we will be looking for volunteers to participate in the Magicicada Soundmap Project to understand the range, abundance, and daily sound patterns of periodical cicadas in FPCC sites where 17-year cicadas are present. Staff and community scientists will use a recording protocol to collect data at certain sites. The project will also examine the potential impacts of brush mowing, tree thinning, and/or prescribed fire on cicada abundance."



**Upper left:** Seeding in marked squares on the main prairie at Carl Hansen on March 24. **Upper right:** Alicia and Patrick check the reddish growth on a tree trunk. **Lower left:** The work in the Eastern Woods at SRG. They were again accompanied by science teacher Abel Perreyra and Principal Michael Biela. Many PCPS volunteers were interested in assisting. We had one volunteer with every three students making for lots of great interaction. **Lower right:** On April 13 tornado clean-up work continues behind the dam at Carl Hansen.

## Prairie Poop



**Left:** Hoffman Estates High School helpers. **Right:** Cornell College crew (photo: K O'Mahony).

**Spring is Busting Out All Over!** Kirk Garanfo, our primo weedman, reports spotting the following plants either in bloom (names with asterisks) or pushing up through the soil, on his recent, regular walks through our restoration sites: Dutchman's Breeches\*, Hoary Puccoon\*, Mayapple, Wild Leek, Toothwort\*, Red Trillium, Bloodroot\*, Penn Sedge\*, Common Blue Violet\* and Yellow Violet\*. And, in keeping with his special expertise, Kirk also supplied a list of invasives which are now visible. They are: Garlic Mustard, Dame's Rocket, Hound's Tongue, Stickseed, Dandelion\*, Canada Thistle, Bull Thistle, Common Burdock, Bitter Dock, Yellow Rocket, Motherwort and Catnip!

**Teens Pitch In.** Special thanks go to Hoffman Estates High School students Hailee Nakai and Nick Pechivitch. They rallied fellow students to help with tornado clean-up at Carl Hansen Woods. Lots of young muscle to haul logs and debris was very useful at the March 16<sup>th</sup> workday.

**Woodland Deployment.** The enthusiastic and energetic students from the Rickover Naval Academy High School (Chicago Public School) returned for a special workday on March 17 in the Eastern Woods at SRG. They were again accompanied by science teacher Abel Perreyra and Principal Michael Biela. Many PCPS volunteers were interested in assisting. We had one volunteer with every three students making for lots of great interaction.

**New Plant ID Aid.** Rick McAndless spotted this website address housed at Eastern Illinois University. It contains good color pictures of prairie plants in various stages - fruit, seed and seedlings - listed by both species and common name. See: <https://castle.eiu.edu/~prairie/index.htm>

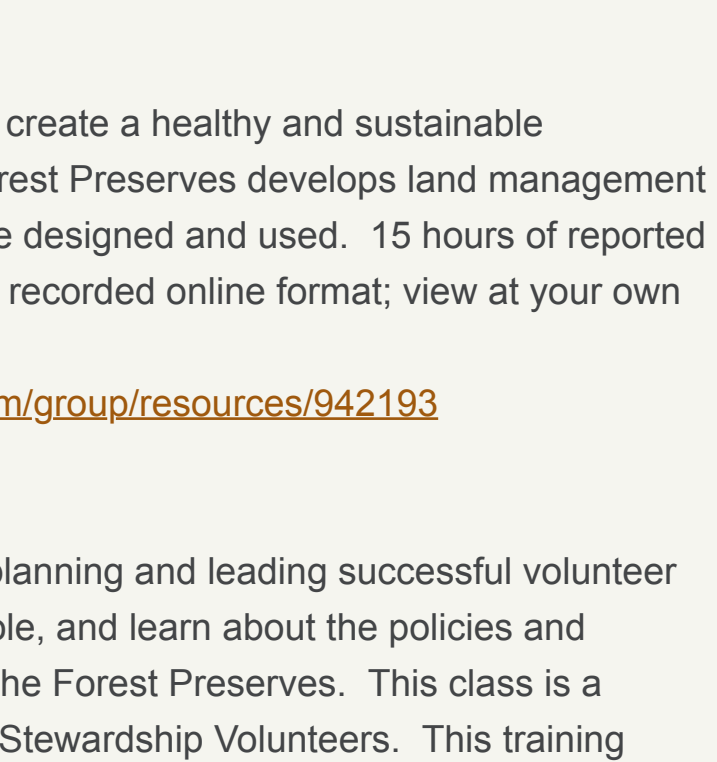
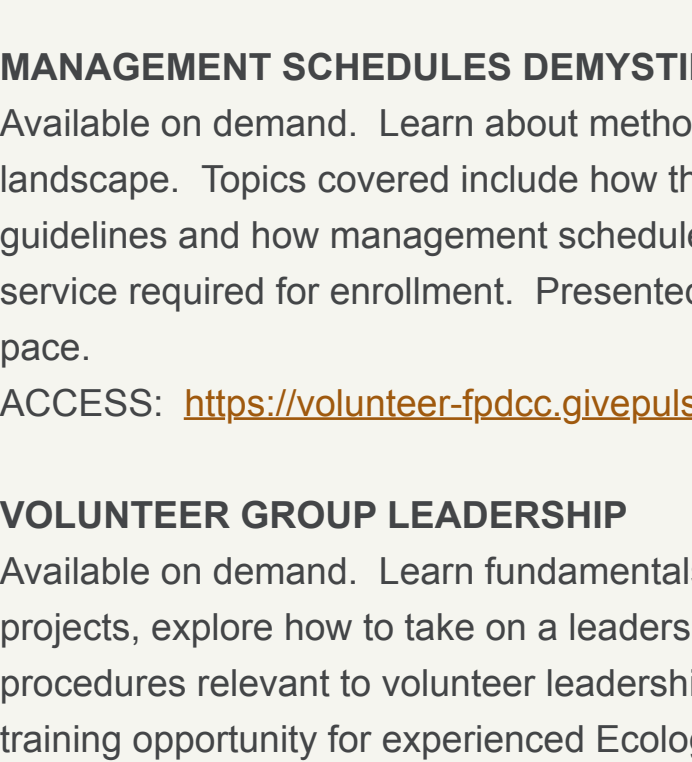
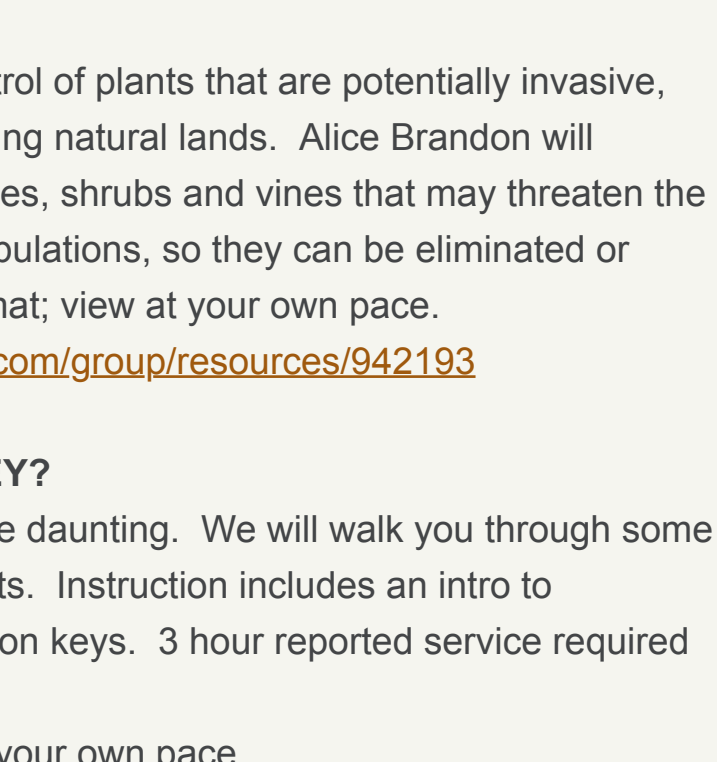
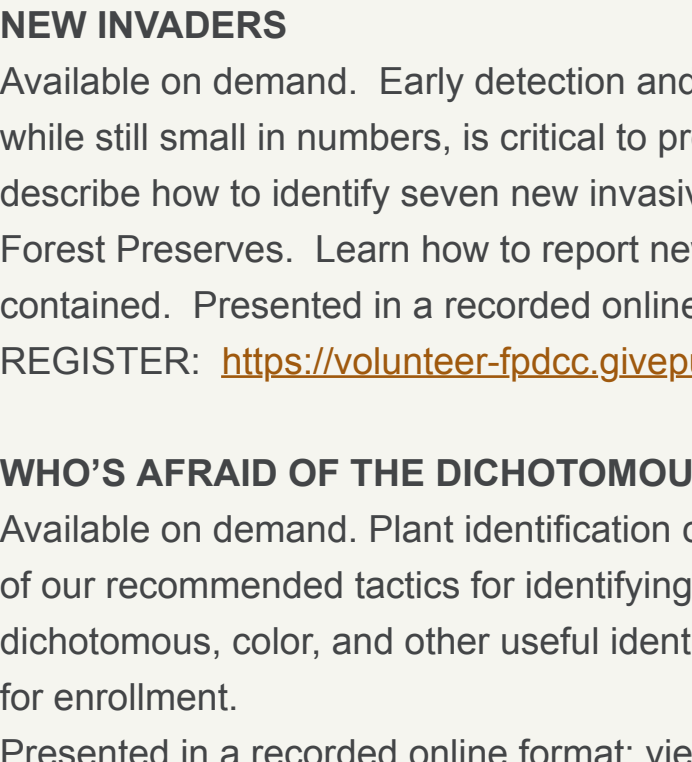
**In the "Band of Totality."** A very non-inclusive list of Poplar Creek Prairie Steward volunteers who saw the eclipse totality on April 8 includes: Dave Webb camped at Red Hills State Park, Sumner, Illinois; Dick Jamison and his wife Jennifer parked at a church lot in a small town near Terre Haute, Indiana; Alicia Legowski and Aneta Tyminski were in Fredericktown, Missouri, after camping and rock climbing in Jasper, Arkansas; Jenny Flexman and Jeff Maddux were in Southeast Illinois instead of Texas as originally planned; and, and, Alan Gardner planned to be in Olney, Missouri on April 8.

**Carrying His Love of Natural Areas Forward.** Former PCPS volunteer Pat Racana received a 2023 Volunteer of the Year award from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The IDNR press release stated that "Illinois volunteers in the Granite City [State Park] visitor center every Saturday, the busiest day of the week for the park. He is always enthusiastic about tourism, the travel and the outdoors, and he's quick to share his enthusiasm with visitors. During the 2017 eclipse, he volunteered for a job that most other volunteers would not want - trash and bathrooms. He was also one of the first people to sign up to volunteer for the 2024 eclipse." In addition to trail building excursions during their vacations, Pat and his wife Barb regularly volunteered at Poplar Creek while living in Schaumburg. They bought property in southern Illinois and moved to Makanda permanently after retirement. You can see a picture of the Racanas collecting seed on our website!

**Urban Trip with a Serving Nature Touch.** Members of the Environmental Club at Cornell College (Mount Vernon, Iowa) sought some activity in nature while visiting Chicago. They learned of our workday on April 13 through a listing with Friends of the Forest Preserves and contacted Diana Granitto to sign-up. Not realizing where our site was in relationship to Chicago they showed up after 10am. Fortunately John Navin spotted the group roaming about and connected them to Diana's seeding group. They got their chance to participate in some restoration work and learn a little about our restoration project. Thanks for your effort.

## REINDEER CREMATION!

A Poplar Creek burn pile became Peters (as in Tom, the BPBB) Pyre when Chris Chereck brought his dried reindeer holiday decoration to the April 13 workday at Carl Hansen Woods. What a novel and dramatic firestarter! There were no incantations or special rituals as it was placed on the burn pile.



Photos by: S Kenny and A Legowski.

## Educational Resources

To view and register for FPCC classes please make sure you are logged into your volunteer account and have JOINED the Trainings page by clicking on the JOIN button to the right in the banner image.

To access the FPCC library of on-demand classes, click on the RESOURCES (<https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>) menu tab, select the class, then click on the blue ACCESS button. You must meet the minimum requirements in order to view and register for a training.

### MANAGING INVASIVES

Learn how to identify and assess the threat of invasive plants commonly found in the Forest Preserves. You'll learn how to use best management practices for efficiently and an in-person field training. Volunteers must attend both the online and field training sessions and complete two field observations to successfully complete the class. Volunteers completing the training will receive the Invasive Plant monitor certification. This training fulfills one of the three class requirements to become a Stewardship Workday Leader. 15 hours of reported stewardship volunteer service required for enrollment.

PART 1: Available on demand; recorded online format; view at own pace. ACCESS HERE: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

PART 2: Invasive Plant ID

June 1, Volunteer Resources Center, Chicago; June 9, Busse Woods, Elk Grove Village; June 22, Palos Resource Management, Willow Springs; June 29, Sand Ridge Nature Center, South Holland

REGISTER: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/942193-trainings>

### SEDGE WORKSHOP

Discover the secrets of sedges. Our instructors will help you gain a better understanding and appreciation of sedges, a family of plants that play an important role in our local ecological communities. We will practice identifying sedges with a focus on the overall appearance and visible vegetative characters. This class is recommended for volunteers with an intermediate level of plant identification skills. 15 hours of reported stewardship service are required for enrollment.

Woodland Sedges: May 18, Thatcher Woods, River Forest

Prairie & Wetland Sedges: June 8, Eggers Woods, Chicago

REGISTER: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/942193-trainings>

### PRAIRIE ECOLOGY WORKSHOP

Join Alice Brandon, plant ecologist, for a prairie ecology workshop. We will review the basic ecology of this critical and beautiful ecosystem including information on plants, insects and birds during a one hour presentation indoors, followed by a tour of Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve. Class requires 15+ hours of reported volunteering for enrollment. June 1, 9-11:30am

Classroom Portion: Salt Creek Resource Management, Western Springs

Field Workshop: Wolf Road Prairie, Westchester

REGISTER: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/942193-trainings>

### NEW MENTORING STEWARDSHIP LEADERS

Available on demand. Establishing sustainable stewardship is critical to the continuing success of the volunteer ecological stewardship program. The accumulated wisdom of our experienced volunteers, specific to a particular site, cannot be found in a book or on the internet. It's shared and learned outside – by seeing, by doing, by knowing a place intimately through the seasons of the year. This is what makes mentoring so valuable to our stewardship program. It's irreplaceable! Our presentation and workbook will help to provide tools and guidance to mentors and mentees. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

ACCESS: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### PHANTOM MENACE-POACHING IN THE PRESERVES

Available on demand. In this class you will learn the dangers of poaching to the ecosystems in the Preserves and how to help protect natural resources, including plants, fungi, wildlife and cultural artifacts. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

ACCESS: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### NEW INVADERS

Available on demand. Early detection and control of plants that are potentially invasive, while still small in numbers, is critical to protecting natural lands. Alice Brandon will describe how to identify seven new invasive trees, shrubs and vines that may threaten the Forest Preserves. Learn how to report new populations, so they can be eliminated or contained. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

REGISTER: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### WHO'S AFRAID OF THE DICHOTOMOUS KEY?

Available on demand. Plant identification can be daunting. We will walk you through some of our recommended tactics for identifying plants. Instruction includes an intro to dichotomous, color, and other useful identification keys. 3 hour reported service required for enrollment. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

ACCESS: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### MANAGEMENT SCHEDULES DEMYSTIFIED

Available on demand. Learn about methods to create a healthy and sustainable landscape. Topics covered include how the Forest Preserves develops land management guidelines and how management schedules are designed and used. 15 hours of reported service required for enrollment. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

ACCESS: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### VOLUNTEER GROUP LEADERSHIP

Available on demand. Learn fundamentals of planning and leading successful volunteer projects, explore how to take on a leadership role, and learn about the policies and procedures relevant to volunteer leadership in the Forest Preserves. This class is a training opportunity for experienced Ecological Stewardship Volunteers. This training fulfills one of three class requirements to become a Stewardship Workday Leader. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

ACCESS: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### PRACTICAL HERBICIDE

Available on demand. You will learn how to manage invasive species through herbicide application. Class covers application in natural areas and aims to provide licensed herbicide Applicators and Operators with the practical knowledge to make good herbicide decisions. Whether you are a newly licensed or an experienced herbicide Applicator or Operator, this class is for you. You may also obtain an Alternative Herbicide License after successfully completing this class, which enables you to apply herbicide under the direction of your site's state licensed Applicator. 15 hours of reported service required for enrollment. Presented in a recorded online format; view at your own pace.

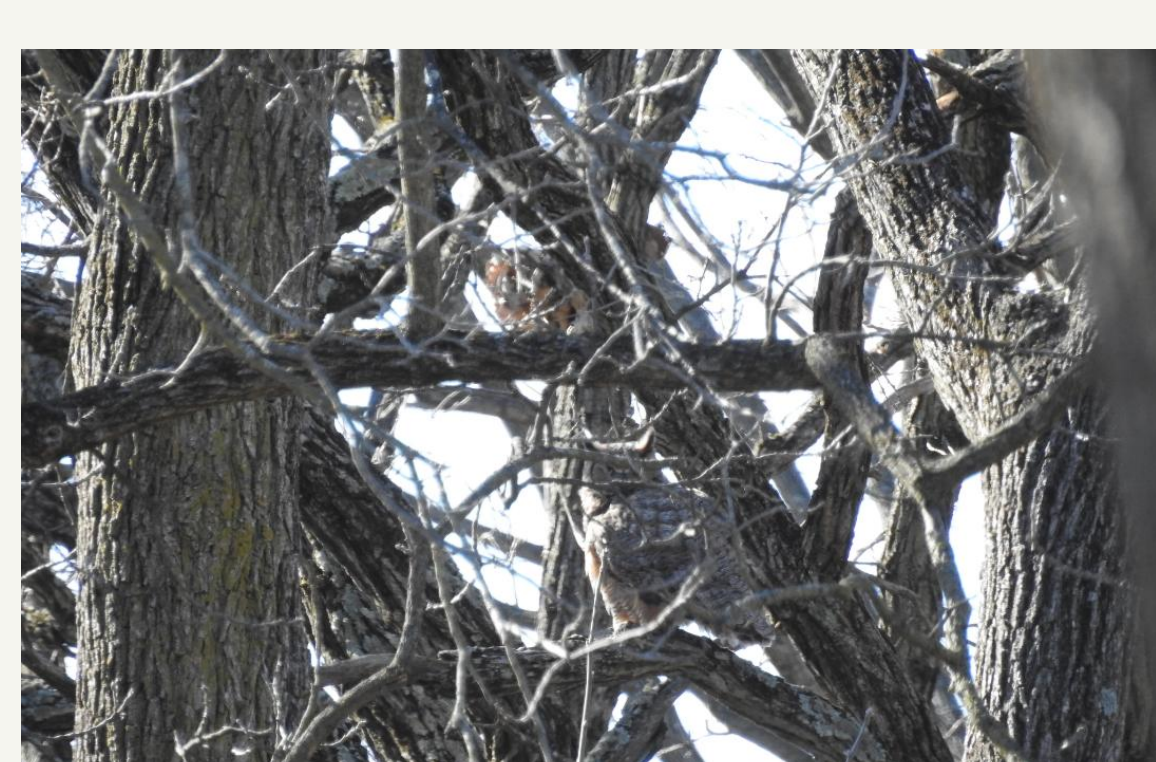
ACCESS: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/resources/942193>

### FIRST AID/CPR/AED

National Safety Council training class. Learn how to provide aid to Forest Preserve staff and volunteers. 15 hours of service required to enroll.

Scheduled classes: April 19, May 16, May 18. All classes run from 8am-2pm at FPCC Training Center in Western Springs. Please check FPCC website for current class availability. Additional classes will be added.

REGISTER: <https://volunteer-fpdcc.givepulse.com/group/942193-trainings>



A picture of a "wise" horned owl, recently spotted in a tree by shelter #2 appropriately follows our list of learning resources (photo: Sophie Kastner).