

January 2012

The Little Meander

Newsletter of the Friends of the Kankakee

2011 Was a Good Year: Progress Report on Land Acquisition

From Marianne Hahn, President, FOK



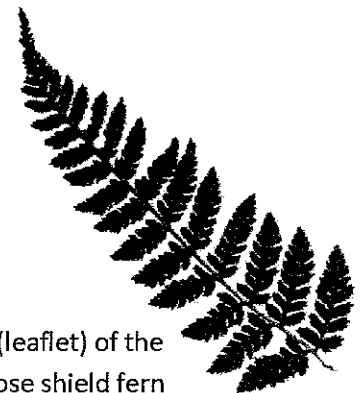
Yellow Wild Indigo

On June 11, 2011, we closed on the last three of a group of 39 vacant lots in the Willow Estates Subdivision in northeast Iroquois County plus one 4.5 acre lot nearby in Kankakee County, for which we had received a grant of nearly \$80,000. The deadline for that grant was October, 2012, so we were well ahead of schedule. In the meantime, 22 more lots came on the market. Two of those were priced well beyond the appraised value, so we crossed them off our list. We submitted a proposal for another grant to cover 70% of the cost of the remaining lots; the Friends have to provide 30% matching funds. To insure that the Board of the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the granting agency, was aware that we had completed the acquisitions covered in the existing grant, we gathered the necessary paperwork and wrote a final report for the completion of the 40 purchases covered by the 2010 grant.

Our report was accepted, and on October 25, 2011 we were notified that we were awarded over \$31,000 to use for the 20 new lots. We did not waste any time. We closed on 18 of the 20 by mid-December, and have a signed contract for another, leaving but one to negotiate. The latest completed acquisitions bring our total acreage to 225+.

But more exciting than the numbers are the following facts: the state-threatened ornate box turtles we found on our Anderson Savanna can walk in an almost straight line across our holdings to Willow Slough in Indiana to look for a mate. Nearly all of the new purchases are contiguous with land we own or with each other, connecting land into larger blocks, in effect defragmenting the landscape. One of the new purchases is host to the state-endangered yellow wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*), and another has a population of an additional state-listed species, old plainsman (*Hymenopappus scabiosaeus*). A few of the new lots are oak savanna or sand flatwoods with pin oaks and associated vegetation, such as the spinulose shield fern (*Dryopteris spinulosa*). The others are fallow farm fields that are succeeding to wet prairie or flatwoods.

We can hardly wait to see what grows on our next purchases! Thanks to all the generous donors who helped us with our required matching funds.



Pinna (leaflet) of the spinulose shield fern

2012 Annual Luncheon

Mark your calendars. Our 2012 Annual Luncheon will be on March 31st at 164 North Restaurant in Kankakee. With such good food and service at last year's luncheon, it was an easy decision to return again this year. We promise an excellent speaker, lots of good items in the silent auction, and great fellowship. Look for our invitation at the end of February.

September Workday

Our September 25th workday cleared another problem area at Kolar Savanna. Our picnic tables sit under a large, lovely black oak tree with an open meadow area, from which a great amount of metal and wooden fencing has been removed by our volunteers during prior workdays. Several piles of trash, chain link fencing, and building materials still remained to be cleaned.



We split into two work groups, one tackling the junk piles and the other the fencing and vinyl siding. There was some mild cursing as we worked to free the materials from entangling brush and dug carpet and lots of broken glass from covering grasses and plants. It was a successful day.

Our thanks to Chris Salberg, Ron Baker, Darin Clatterbuck, Alex Jordon, and Dennis Clatterbuck (behind the camera.)



Items of Interest

The Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance's 2012 Lecture Series will include the February 2, 2012 presentation, "Trek Across the Chicago Wilderness", by Mr. Jack MacRae, naturalist with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. Mr. MacRae completed a 15 day, 240 mile tour of 50 natural areas in the Chicago region. He will share his experiences and talk about the wildlife encountered during the walk. The lecture is at the Midewin Supervisor's Office. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the lecture begins at 7:00 p.m. Advance registration is preferred, either by calling 815-423-6370 or via e-mail to Midewin_RSVP@fs.fed.us.

Board member Jeff Manes has teamed up with three others: Pat Wisniewski, Brian Kallies, and Tom Desch to develop a documentary on the Kankakee River, entitled, "Everglades of the North, The Story of the Kankakee Marsh." The film will "explore the diverse ecology, unveil the astonishing history, and illustrate the controversial saga of the GKM." A clip of the film can be found at http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/evergladesofthenorth/everglades-of-the-north-the-story-of-the-kankakee?ref=NewsDec1511&utm_campaign=Dec15&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter. You can also reach the site by googling: Kickstarter Everglades of the North. Although this project is independent from the Friends of the Kankakee, we hope its focus on the Kankakee watershed will support our push for the Refuge.