

## Natural Resources Management Report

### DeKalb County Forest Preserve District

June 2015

Primary activities for the month of June included:

- 1. Continued planting.** Most years, our spring planting stops in early June, but not this year. Last fall, we took inventory of the seed that we had collected locally, then ordered additional seed of rare species that we had not been able to collect. We took some of these rare species to a local native plant nursery for propagation, while others were grown by staff and stewards in flats and plug trays. Quite a few were ready for planting by early May, but others, the more difficult or slower growing plants, are still just becoming large enough to plant outdoors. Lucky for us, (at least in *this* circumstance) this year has been more moist and cooler than usual, which allows us to extend the planting season later in year. We are still completing this task, thanks to the moist soil. We plant these rare or uncommon species as plants, rather than from seed, so that we can be sure we have a particular species in a particular habitat.
- 2. Seed collection.** This activity begins each year in May or early June with the collection of Purple Spring Cress (a photo was in last month's report) and Marsh Marigold seed. The flowers of Marsh Marigold are sometimes in full bloom and covered in frost in April! June is also the time to collect many of our sedges in the *Carex* genus, critical members of many wetland plant communities. Many of these plants have seeds that fall off as soon as they ripen, so timing is critical for collecting some of them. The flooding earlier in June hampered the collection of some of these plants seeds. As with planting, our stewards are a tremendous help with seed collection activities.
- 3. The Blanding's Turtle.** Sadly, we are no longer able to monitor the Blanding's Turtle. His signal disappeared about a month ago, and in talking to the farm family in whose pond he resided for a month last year, they reported that another farmer had found a turtle about a month ago a mile and a half south of Afton. The good-intentioned gentleman removed what he thought was a piece of wire that was imbedded in the turtle's shell where an "abscess" had formed. After talking to this gentleman, he and I both believe now that he removed the antenna from the transmitter (which was covered with algae) on the turtle's shell. The good news: the turtle is still alive! The bad news: we don't know where. We can only hope that he either finds a female and a new home somewhere in his wanderings, or (a real long shot) he returns to Afton and we are lucky enough to spot him again.
- 4. Weed control season.** Does it seem to you like there are more thistles, and weeds in general, that in past years? It certainly seems like that to those of us who are trying to control them. Perhaps it is a function of the wet spring season. About the only good thing about that drought of 2012 was that it made the weeds a little easier to control. Our stewards have helped with this task, too, this month, by wicking and using the "glove of death" on cattails in some of our wetland areas. In the upland prairies we have been removing Canada Thistle and Sweet Clover. We never get it all, but try to keep it under control is our highest quality plant communities.
- 5. Pollinators Conference.** Al Roloff attended the QuadCities pollinators conference in early June in Rock Island. The dramatic decline in so many insect species that are critical for pollination of a myriad of

plant species, including a third of our food crops, has become a hot topic. Habitat loss and pesticides are two of the most impactful factors, but climate change and a few others were also identified. No long-term resolution seems to be on the horizon as yet. *Another* challenge.



A Bumble Bee gathers pollen from a flower of Red Clover in the Afton Prairie.