Chances are, you didn’t say “the Calumet,” even though our region was identified by the National Park Service (NPS) in 1998 as being suitable for designation as a National Heritage Area. Our claim to this title, according to NPS, is based on the spectacular growth of industry at the turn of the 19th century and the corresponding rise of the American labor movement – all this against a backdrop of marvelous natural lands, remnants of which have survived and still shelter endangered species and globally rare communities of plants and animals. NPS identified the boundaries of this region as a crescent around the southern end of Lake Michigan, reaching from the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore on the east to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor on the west.

But our sense of place tends to be limited to the town we live in, because most of our towns grew up around a particular industry. A person who worked in that industry could spend his entire life without ever leaving that one town. Small wonder that he would think of himself as belonging in a town, rather than a region.

But the NPS study threw a whole new light on the Calumet as a region with unique ecological features and distinct historical characteristics. It moved some of us residents of the region to form the Calumet Heritage Partnership to study the story of this region and to provide avenues for interpreting it to others.

We have presented four Annual Heritage Conferences, and are planning the fifth, scheduled for May 8, 2004 at Purdue University in Gary. We sponsor projects of member organizations that have a bi-state range. Early last year, we sent an invitation across the Calumet region to submit articles for a newsletter. This publication is the result. We will welcome your comments on its effectiveness in presenting some of the highlights of the Calumet as a heritage area. We will also welcome any articles you wish to submit for the next issue. We hope to publish twice a year. Please send comments/articles to Dr. Janet Halpin, Department of Geography, Chicago State University, King Drive at 95th Street, Chicago, IL 60628; or e-mail jhalpin@csu.edu.

Chicago/Calumet Underground Railroad Effort Steams Ahead

by Marion Kelliber

In 1850 legislation was passed that...
Effort Steams Ahead

--by Marion Kelliher, 
Vice President, C/CURE

The National Park Service study of 1998 made recommendations for the preservation of the environmental, historical and cultural attributes of the Calumet region. The study recommended that local groups come together across the Illinois-Indiana state line and work to recognize and protect the valuable heritage that is there. Out of this came the development of projects that highlight those important values we share.

The Chicago/Calumet Underground Railroad is one of those projects. In October 2000 the Calumet Heritage Partnership set up a committee, facilitated by the National Park Service, to do the research and development that would introduce the Calumet community to the history of the stations and safe houses that were located in the Calumet area.

C/CURE has been studying one particular site that was located on the Little Calumet River. Jan Ton, a Dutch immigrant, was the first European to settle on this land in the late 1840s. He joined with others in the Roseland area to set up a network that helped the escaping slaves to reach freedom in Canada.

In 1850 legislation was passed that made it illegal to harbor escaping slaves in the State of Illinois. Considering the harrowing experiences of the fugitives in trying to avoid being captured by agents sent up from the south, it is not hard to understand why these immigrants

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The Calumet Heritage Partnership presents our

Fifth Annual
Calumet Heritage Conference --
Landscapes ~Landmarks~ Linkages

Saturday, May 8, 2004
at Purdue University
Hammond, Indiana

For more information, or to register for the conference, call Marian Byrnes, (773) 374-8543, or e-mail marianbyrnes@sbcglobal.net.

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C/CURE Steams Ahead, from page 1

would want to help African slaves escape. They themselves had come to this country to be free from religious persecution.

It is C/CURE’s desire to establish a memorial on this spot to honor the bravery of the slaves and those who helped them. The group is working to persuade the Cook County Forest Preserve District to acquire the land. They are also continuing to do the research that must be done on the stations in our area. They held a research conference on January 31 which was attended by more than 50 people.

C/CURE has a graphic display which they have presented for a total of 1,500 people. They will go anywhere with this display on request. Persons with questions or comments, or who wish to be added to our mailing list, can contact Diane E. Banta, National Park Service, RTCA, 25 E. Washington, Suite 1650, Chicago, IL 60602, or phone (312) 427-3688, ext. 262. The fax number is (312) 377-2169. C/CURE holds its meetings at the Roseland YMCA, 11100 State Street in Chicago.

Underground Railroad in Northwest Indiana, from p. 1

The stories of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties do not tell of such great numbers. In fact, probably because the routes east and west of these counties became so frequently trafficked – and thus more and more patrolled by bounty hunters – the paths through Northwest Indiana began to be used. The Underground Railroad stories of Northwest Indiana remain precious vignettes of heroic passengers who risked everything to seek freedom, and of the heroic conductors who came to their assistance, especially in the face of horrific Indiana laws severely punishing such activity.

In Lake County, the historian Woodruff recounts one of the trails, “The usual method of operation was to receive the “human chattels”...from Wilmington or Joliet, and then...convey them to Crown Point.” Mrs. Ella Porter wrote of her uncle Samuel Cushing, “On the Sauk Trail...were the stations between Joliet and Dyer...where Deacon Cushing of Dyer would have a station....Deacon Cushing had a brother, Samuel, who...received passengers from Crown Point and other stations...thence to Deacon
Special Places in the Calumet Region

by Herb Schroeder, USDA Forest Service, North Central Research Station

The feelings that many people have toward special places in natural environments are an important part of their lives, contributing to quality of life and well-being. This is true whether we are looking at the Wisconsin Northwoods or the Chicago metropolitan area. Therefore, it is important for resource managers and planners to recognize the importance of special places and to consider how they are affected by land management and development policies.

To better understand what kinds of places in the Calumet region are special to people and why, we asked people to describe places that are important or memorable to them and to explain what these places mean to them. Twenty-four people participated in the study, including residents, visitors, recreationists, environmentalists, and others interested in the Calumet area:

"I know of no other location in Illinois that has this variety of birds in one place."

Some places were special because they gave people a sense of remoteness or isolation, and provided a refuge where they could find solitude and escape from stress. "Peaceful haven in the center of a busy shopping area."

Social ties and interactions with other people also played an important role in many people’s experiences and memories of Calumet special places:

"I have fished and hunted here with friends and family."

By learning about special places and what they mean to people, resource managers and planners can enhance quality of life for Calumet residents, and ensure that special places will continue to exist.

For more information about this study or to request a copy of the report, contact Herb Schroeder, 847-866-9311 x15, hschroeder@fs.fed.us, or Lynne Westphal, 8347-866-9311, x11; lwestphal@fs.fed.us

Crown Point and other stations...thence to Deacon Johnson’s in Chicago or Deacon Temple’s. They then would be passed on to lake steamers en route east.” Another route was described by Brennan as moving from Cornelius Kuypers in Roseland, then to Jan Ton in Riverdale, whence "Mr. Ton...departed to a station near Hammond, or Hohman’s Bridge, where he delivered his load with instructions to pass it along to the next station in the Dunes.” Kuypers probably faced less danger, being himself a sheriff. However, Samuel Cushing and another major abolitionist, Peter Stewart, were both arrested “for aiding and harboring slaves, contrary to the form of the statute in such case, made and provided for, and against the peace and dignity of the people of the State of Illinois.”

Porter County had a route coming from the south, from Lafayette, across Baum’s Bridge to Valparaiso, from there to Chesterton or Crisman. A local historian told of town ladies meeting the train at Crisman station, near the corner of Highways 20 and 249, with baskets of food for the "passengers" on their way to Detroit. In LaPorte County there were routes from the southeast, from Plymouth to Walkerton, Stillwell, Salem Heights, LaPorte and then to Michigan City;

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Expansion of I&M Canal Corridor on the Way to Lake Michigan

Congressman Jerry Weller is preparing to introduce legislation to expand the boundaries of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor through the Calumet waterways to the western shore of Lake Michigan. The new boundaries will include the Cal Sag Channel, Little Calumet River, Calumet River and Lake Calumet; also the Sanitary & Ship Canal to the Chicago River, and the river to Lake Michigan.

Interpretation of Chicago’s part of the I&M has already begun, with the Chicago Park District’s work to develop Canal Origins Park, the place in Chicago where the Canal began. High school students have made 100 concrete tiles interpreting the Canal’s history, which will be displayed at the park.

Underground Railroad in Northwest Indiana, from p. 2

and some passengers came by way of the Monon Railroad. The most interesting activity of all, perhaps, took place near Clear Lake, on the border between Porter and LaPorte Counties, near the town of Westville, small cemetery, in spring filled with native flowers, lies still. There Charles Osborn rests with the Barnards and others who fought so bravely for their principles. Stop by some time and pay respect to those.

Calumet River Steel Plant Structures Designated Most Endangered

The Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois on March 24, 2004 announced that it has placed three historic steel plant structures along the Calumet River in Chicago on its list of Illinois’ 10 Most Endangered Sites. The designated structures are the Acme Coke Plant, 11236 South Torrence; the Acme Blast Furnace, 107th and Burley; and the two Huletta Ore Unloaders on the LTV Steel site at 108th and Burley.

The Coke Plant and Blast Furnace are believed to be the only two intact historic steel-making structures in northeast Illinois. The Hulett Ore Unloaders are the only two in working condition remaining in the world.

Marian Byrnes, president of the Calumet Heritage Partnership, stated, “The preservation of these structures assumes additional importance in the context of Congressman Weller’s legislation to extend the I&M Canal Corridor through the Calumet waterways. The view of these huge structures along the Calumet River enriches people’s concept of the history of this waterway as a very busy working river.”

Coffee Creek Attracts 20,000 Visitors a Year

167-Acre Nature Preserve Offers 500 Species of Plants, 5 Miles of Trails
border between Porter and LaPorte Counties, near the town of Westville. In 1840, a number of the members of Michigan City’s Congregational Church broke from their church and formed the Union Church in the Clear Lake area, adopting the resolution, “Resolved that we believe the laws of the State by their unrighteousness in the highest degree ought to be immediately abolished... We believe... slavery a sin against God and the greatest wrong inflicted upon man...” Across the line in Porter County, a number of prominent Quakers moved in, who had been recently disenfranchised from their Michigan Quaker community for strongly acting on their abolitionist belief. Members of these two religious groups practiced ecumenism long before later ages would talk about it, working together in moving fugitives through the area to abolitionists in Michigan.

On SR 6, about a half mile from the Porter-LaPorte County Line road, was a home where, in 1850, his heart broken because of the newly passed laws, Charles Osborn died. Osborn was an eminent preacher and the first to have established a newspaper advocating unconditional emancipation. Nearby, on the south side of Highway 6, in the midst of our busy scurrying-around days, a

Memorial to Calumet Area Steelworkers
--by Tom Shepherd

A consortium of interested parties have been planning a fitting display to honor the memory of the steelworkers who died in the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937 at Republic Steel in Chicago. Participating groups are Steelworkers Local 1033 Retirees, U.S.W.A. International, Southeast Historical Society, Illinois Labor History Society, and the Calumet Heritage Partnership. Tom Shepherd, of the Heritage Partnership, is acting as facilitator. Designs have been drawn up and an archive search is being developed. Recently a community theater-based play presenting the story of the massacre was performed on the location -- Steelworkers Memorial Hall, 11731 South Avenue O, Chicago. Three performances were attended by more than 500 people.

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Offers 300 Species of Plants, 5 Miles of Trails
--by Katie Rizer, Executive Director Coffee Creek Watershed Conservancy

The Coffee Creek Watershed Conservancy in 2003 completed a watershed management plan, made possible through IDEM’s 319 Grant program, which identified 8 areas of concern within the Coffee Creek watershed. Obtaining additional grant monies will enable the group to address these issues and improve the ecology of the region.

The Coffee Creek Watershed Conservancy, Inc. (CCWC) is an Indiana 501©3 organization dedicated to identifying, maintaining and enhancing the ecological health of the 16-mile Coffee Creek watershed in northern Porter County. The watershed begins near County 500 N and continues north to its confluence with the Little Calumet near St. Patrick’s Catholic Church. The purpose of the CCWC is two-fold. In 2000, Lake Erie Land Company, developer of the traditionally designed 640-acre Coffee Creek Center neighborhood, donated the 167-acre nature preserve to the CCWC. The donation, valued at $13.9 million, included over 3,000 feet of restored creek banks, creation

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Steelworkers Memorial, from page 3

The story of the massacre is a landmark in the history of the American labor movement. It has been told many times, and is told again here – lest we forget.

By the 1930s, steel making was king in the Calumet region, and the industry had become by far the area’s largest employer. But conditions at the plants were grim, with unsafe conditions and low wages.

In 1937, U.S. Steel set the industry standard by agreeing to the first contract between the company and the fledgling union. That contract raised wages by 10%, established the 8-hour work day, and designated seniority rights.

Girdler laid plans for a stand-off by importing legions of “goons” – and later Chicago policemen – to protect the plant and the replacement workers. They brought in guns and ammunition, tear gas, special riot clubs, and enough cots and food to hunker down to battle picketers and crush the strike.

Steelworkers were mobilizing locally, and battle lines were being drawn in the taverns and meeting halls throughout the community. Picket lines and marches were being organized, and rulings favoring the workers’ job actions were handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court and reaffirmed by decrees from Chicago Mayor Edward Kelly and the Illinois governor. Workers’ spirits were high, as debate on unionism and strike strategies ensued.

In the aftermath, it was learned that four people were fatally shot. Six more died of injuries later. Another thirty were wounded by gunfire, including a 15-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy. All gunshot wounds were in the side or back, indicating that they were retreating at the time of the incident. In addition, scores more were hospitalized with serious injuries due to trampling and clubbing.

The Memorial Day Massacre made news headlines around the world and brought attention to the workers’ cause. The union didn’t receive recognition and its first contract until 1942, but the massacre has been memorialized by the steelworkers and the community in the years since then.

Republic Steel went the way of many other steel manufacturers in the region, folding in the 1980s and eventually becoming LTV Steel, before they closed for good in 2003. The proud union Local 1033 went out of business the same year.
Despite the agreement with U.S. Steel, which was followed by settlements with the other industry giants, "Little Steel" companies like Republic Steel on Chicago's southeast side refused to recognize the standard, and would not negotiate a similar contract with their employees. They held firm, led by Republic's president Tom Girdler. Youngstown, Bethlehem, Weirton and Inland Steel all united with Republic in their opposition to the union.

After months of wrangling with company officials, a strike of Republic steelworkers began on May 26, 1937. They were joined by others, idling 75,000 workers nationwide. While many companies shut down during the strike, Republic chose to challenge the organizers by replacing strikers with "scabs", or non-union workers. This

Five days after the strike began, a march was planned, to be followed by a picnic in an open field next to the Republic Steel plant gates. It was a festive occasion – Memorial Day, May 31st.

After a rally at Sam's Place, a tavern that unofficially served as union headquarters, about 1500 workers and sympathizers began a march to the gates of the plant, where they hoped to form a picket line. Confronted by more than 200 uniformed police, the marchers were stopped from nearing the mill. March leaders protested the police actions, arguing that they had legal permission to peacefully gather and picket.

Soon after being stopped at the mill gate, the marchers decided to turn back -- some to disperse, others to picnic with friends and family.

Memorial Hall, home to Local 1033, was dedicated in 1969, along with a plaque commemorating the brave men who sacrificed their lives. Once the mill closed down forever, the hall was no longer needed and was sold to the Southeast Methodist Youth Ministries for use as a community center, with the understanding to forever stand as a monument to the dead and to the efforts of the labor movement on the Southeast Side.

Hulett Ore Unloaders at former LTV Site, 108th and Burley. Only two of these giant machines remain in working order in the world.

The memorial planning group hopes to have a 2004 unveiling, and vows to establish a honorable and fitting memorial to the Massacre victims, as well as to steelworkers and the story of steelmaking in Southeast Chicago.
Historic Landmarks Foundation Works with City of Gary
To Preserve Union Station

The Calumet Region Office of Historic Landmarks, directed by Erica Taylor, is working closely with the City of Gary to save one of the region’s most prominent landmarks, the 1910 Gary Union Station. The Neoclassical station has been vacant since the 1950s and currently claims distinction as one of Indiana’s 10 Most Endangered historic sites.

The Foundation’s efforts to establish a strong historic preservation group in the area are taking shape as the newly formed Preservation Association of Gary begins to tackle preservation issues in the city.

In nearby Crown Point, the Foundation is participating in the rehabilitation of the old Nurses Memorial Hospital.

Rather than try to save every endangered historic building in Indiana single-handedly, Historic Landmarks early on recognized the value of partnering with local people interested in saving their communities’ landmarks. To better serve such groups and individuals, Historic Landmarks operates nine offices around the state. Their grant and loan programs provide nonprofit groups with funds for everything from feasibility and engineering studies to community education activities. Through their regional office and library staffs, Historic Landmarks also offers advice to anyone considering a preservation project, large or small.

For information about other Historic Landmarks projects in the Calumet Region, call 219-938-2200, or email calumet@historiclandmarks.org. To learn more about Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, visit www.historiclandmarks.org.

Coffee Creek, from page 3

of 104 acres of new native landscape, a 6,000 square foot pavilion and over 5 miles of hiking trails. The CCWC, which is directed by a board comprised of Northwest Indiana’s leading environmental

"The gift we received from Lake Erie Land Company is unprecedented. We are proud to serve as stewards for the beautifully restored preserve. Over 20,000 people visit our trails, amphitheater and pavilion each year. The entire preserve is a place where people come to enjoy the outdoors, including picnicking, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and nature walks. The preserve is a great place for kids to play, or an adult to relax and unwind, in a green oasis surrounded by the busy world of urban sprawl. While the preserve is a source of pride and joy to the residents of Northwest Indiana, it is also a place that needs ongoing support and dedication to maintain its beauty and offer enjoyment to everyone.
The broader scope of the CCWC mission is to serve as leaders in the protection and enhancement of the 16-mile watershed through education, partnerships and leading by example.

Katie Rizer, executive director of the non-profit organization, commented, "The opportunities for both recreational adventures and educational outings."
Northern Indiana’s 90-Mile Museum Gains Momentum

For the past 20 years, interest has been growing in a cultural institution built around the history of the South Shore Railroad. For more than two years the National Park Service has hosted a regional task force to research the feasibility of developing such an institution. The South Shore Line is the last surviving interurban electric railroad in the nation. It is a living icon of American history, a model of environmentally sustainable mass transit, and a key to the quality of life for area residents, bringing considerable economic gain to the region through cultural tourism, and garnering national recognition.

With the continued decline in the region’s industrial strength, tourism is gaining as an important business sector for northern Indiana. Standard heritage tourism multipliers suggest that the museum could have a cumulative annual local economic effect of $3 to $4 million.

The museum is a preservation organization. The group will retain Line Car 1100 as a cultural asset held in trust for the people of Indiana. They will restore, preserve, display and interpret the car at the National New York Central Railroad Museum in Elkhart, Indiana. It will be moved to the 90 Mile Museum once facilities are complete.

Line Car 1100 was the last operating piece of vintage South Shore Line rolling stock. Built in 1926 as an electric interurban coach for another Indiana railroad, the car had been in service on the South Shore Line as a work car for 56 years. It served as a mobile work platform and shop, permitting South Shore Line workers access to the complex “catenary” system of wires that power the trains. The car joins the other 23 retired South Shore Line cars already owned by the Line Car Preservation Group’s partners. It will be used to tell the many stories of the region — stories of work, of immigration, of technology and innovation, and of human struggle.

The Historical Community of Northwest Indiana (HCNWI) presented a check for $200 to the Hammond Historical Society during the Society’s annual Cemetery Walk on October 5, 2002. The check was given in honor of Suzanne G. Long and will be used as seed money for the Suzanne G. Long Cemetery Walk Fund. Suzanne ran the Calumet Room (now called the Suzanne G. Long Local History Room) at the Hammond Public Library and was a valued colleague of all the region’s historians – amateur as well as professional. Her death in the fall of 2002 came as a shock, and the members of the HHS and HCNWI thought it fitting that the money collected in her name be used to ensure the future of the cemetery walk, which was one of her pet historical projects.

HCNWI is an unofficial group of volunteers and professionals involved with local historical societies, museums, historic sites, archives, preservation groups, genealogical organizations, libraries, etc. Its bimonthly meetings are free and open to anyone with an interest in local history, whether affiliated with an organization or not. Although the main purpose is to share information and network with our colleagues from across the region, HCNWI also produced a brochure last year which highlights many of the historical museums and sites in the region.

The group grew out of a get-together held at the Cedar Lake Historical Association’s Lake of the Red Cedars Muesum in June of 1997. Since then, it has attracted attendees to meeting sites across the region from as far away as Benton Harbor, Michigan and Matteson, Illinois.

For more information about HCNWI, contact Cynthia Ogorek, sealuna@juno.com, or Peter Youngman, youngmanpe@juno.com.
Shirley Heinze Land Trust: Guardian of Natural Treasure
--by Ron Trigg, Board of Directors

Everyone is familiar with the 14,000 acres comprising Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and Indiana Dunes State Park. But there are many more national treasures in the biodiversity-rich Calumet Region, and the Shirley Heinze Land Trust has been working since 1981 to save them. This private non-profit organization has preserved some 900 acres during that time, most of which are owned by the Land Trust and are being restored and managed as nature preserves. Other properties are protected under conservation easements, and still others have been acquired and then transferred to the National Lakeshore or the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

We are extremely proud of the diversity of our properties,” says Maureen Swed, executive director of the land trust. “Among our holdings are examples of dune-and-swale, a globally rare landscape; the largest preserved black-soil tallgrass prairie in Indiana; remnants of the Great Marsh paralleling the Lake Michigan shoreline; and flatwoods in LaPorte County that represent one of Indiana’s rarest natural communities.” Three of the group’s properties have been dedicated to the people of Indiana as State Nature Preserves: Seidner Dune & Swale in Hammond, Cressmoor Prairie in Hobart, and John Merle Coulter Nature Preserve in Portage. These and other Heinze Land Trust preserves provide refuge for numerous rare and threatened species, including the federally endangered Karner Blue Butterfly.

“Our work doesn’t end when we acquire land,” notes Swed. “We are committed to protecting its natural integrity, managing it appropriately, and restoring environmentally damaged areas.” As such, the land trust devotes much of its resources to

The Lake Calumet Story: Private Use or Public Access?
--by Victor Crivello, Co-Chairman
Lake Calumet Vision Committee

Lake Calumet was shaped like a friendly potato by glaciers 10,000 to 13,000 years ago. Rushing melt water hit stony island, and the settling of fine sediment created the topography, which formed the Great Calumet Wetland (25,000 acres). In the 1950s a modern architect gave expected to grant a permit for IIPD to construct a 1,000 boat slip marina on the north end of Lake Calumet, with no public or environmental review. The Vision Committee insisted that the Army Corps must perform a full-scale environmental study, and met with numerous public
In the 1950s a modern architect gave Lake Calumet its current unnatural look. Maybe this is what a lake looks like when “form follows function”? No matter how it looks, Lake Calumet is 750 acres of open water, with miles of vegetated shoreline that is home to a diverse wildlife population. Water quality has improved in recent years and Lake Calumet has become a great sport fishery. Environmentalists want to preserve this natural resource and open it to public access.

The Illinois International Port District has filled much of the lake to create more land to lease for industrial development. They filed a plan in 1985 with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, which calls for the creation of a marina and other development that would fill more than 300 acres of Lake Calumet. There has been no public access since the Port District surrounded the lake with a barbed wire fence in 1994. The only public access to Lake Calumet is by water.

Environmental groups formed the Lake Calumet Vision Committee in March 2002 to develop a plan that would protect and enhance Lake Calumet’s natural resources and provide public access to its shores. In April it was learned that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were doing an environmental study, and met with numerous public officials to promote this position. At the end of the summer Mayor Daley informed IIPD that the marina was not consistent with the City’s plans for the Lake Calumet area, and they cancelled the project.

Lake Calumet was radically reconfigured in he 1950s, and was designed with no public lake vistas. The northern part of the lake was never developed for shipping. Major economic changes, environmental regulations and land use changes saw Lake Calumet’s role change from a waterway to support industry to a waterway valued as a natural resource. In 2002, for the first time, Lake Calumet was called a “hidden gem” needing protection in a Chicago Tribune editorial supporting public access to the lake. The Lake Calumet Vision Committee is pursuing that goal vigorously. For information, call Marian Byrnes, (773) 374-8543.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust also has an educational component. It has published four books of local environmental interest, and it sponsors an annual program of naturalist-led hikes. The group also works cooperatively with local schools and universities and conducts scientific research and biological surveys on its properties.

For more information on Shirley Heinze Land Trust, contact its Michigan City office: 444 Barker Road, Michigan City, IN 46360, tel: 219-879-4725, e-mail: shef@heinzetrust.org. Or visit its website: www.heinzetrust.org.
Calumet Bioblitz Discovers 2,257 Species!
Excerpts from an article by Susan L. Post, research biologist with Illinois Natural History Survey

A Biodiversity Blitz (Bioblitz) is a 24-hour, rapid assessment of what is living in a particular area. Biologists come together at a given place for a 24-hour marathon of skill and endurance, where the goal is to find and identify as many species of plants and animals in that area before the clock stops. The public is also allowed to observe and participate. It isn’t often that lay people get a chance to see what scientists do, and perhaps even get to help!

The data collected were meant to provide a baseline for management, to spearhead conservation decisions, and to further research initiatives in the area. More than 130 scientists, from the Chicago area and Champaign, participated. In the scientists’ tent, volunteers were welcome to pin, sort, or act as runners. Besides the scientists’ work, environmental and community-based groups offered displays, educational programming,

The Chicago Department of Environment and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are moving forward with more inventories and detailed planning of ecological sites across the Calumet region. The Field Museum and many other organizations are supporting those efforts. Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley is working with his fellow commissioners to urge the Forest Preserve District to partner with the city and the IDNR in their efforts. The Chicago Park District has taken a renewed interest in the Calumet area.

We must remember that this is just 24 hours in the picture of the area. Day-to-day totals would vary as species come and go and are seasonally dependent. In reality, we have little idea how many species are really there. But events such as a BioBlitz are a beginning and a great way to engage the public.

Wolf Lake, on the edge of the city, straddles the border of Illinois and Indiana. Even though it has been dredged, diked, dumped, and cut through by a highway, it retains a surprising selection of native wetland plants and fish.
diked, dumped, and cut through by a highway, it retains a surprising selection of native wetland plants and fish.

© 2002 The Field Museum, Photo by John Weinstein

The Calumet Bioblitz headquarters, on August 23 and 24, 2002, was at the William W. Powers State Conservation Area, located at Wolf Lake on Chicago’s Southeast Side. The Bioblitz also included Eggers Woods Forest Preserve and Powderhorn Lake Forest Preserve.

Although the Calumet area is known for the environmental consequences of over a century of industrial activities, pockets of valuable habitat have survived. One of the largest populations of the state-threatened banded killifish lives in Powderhorn Lake. During the Bioblitz, scientists found seven species of pondweed in Wolf Lake, four of them on the state-threatened and endangered list.

and bus tours to show the public the industrial, cultural and ecological diversity of the Calumet area.

The mammal team found the only known colony of Franklin’s ground squirrel in Cook County, as well as the long-tailed weasel and the state-threatened river otter. The fungi team recorded several new species for the Chicago region, and one species that had not been seen since 1902. Entomologist Ed DeWalt found a couple of species of caddisflies that hadn’t been seen for more than 60 years. The beetle team found a specimen that belongs to an undescribed species—maybe even an undescribed genus or a genus known only from outside North America! The bird team saw 110 species.

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