

lic mustard all around me.”

Garlic mustard, a non-native plant, chokes native plants and reduces the diversity of the understory, making it more difficult for birds to successfully nest there.

But that was only the beginning of the story. When Charlotte Newfeld of the Lakeview Citizens Council began to contact birders about a problem with the water source for the two Sanctuary ponds, Schilling jumped aboard.

“At first, I was just another volunteer,” he said. The water source was repaired, but the citizens council group realized that base-line data was essential. Schilling, who had done a fair amount of habitat restoration work by this time, was asked to write a report about the general health of the Sanctuary and to make recommendations for improvements. A 10-year plan was created, along with one of the first community stewardship projects in a park on Chicago’s north side.

Schilling’s involvement from that time really blossomed. His 1998 report struck a cord with other volunteers and with the Chicago Park District, the Sanctuary’s owner. The modest proposal to remove buckthorn and other invasive plants, “things we could do with little to no money,” Schilling said, soon was expanded. The park district paid for many of the larger ticket projects recommended in the management plan, freeing up a grant from State Representative Sarah Feigenholtz to buy \$14,000 to purchase new plants. The fence around the Sanctuary was extended to include a small swale on the south that was forever muddy and a maintenance nightmare. A second grant of \$7,000 from the Park District and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will pay for more plantings that will be extended beyond the fence, blurring the line between Park and Sanctuary creating a buffer.

Volunteers staff the work days, planting, clearing brush, monitoring insects and birds, and anxiously watching the burgeoning project.

“What was interesting to me was the idea of doing something that would be a habitat enhancement specifically for birds,” said Schilling. The challenge, he said, is to know what habitat enhancements will work, because so much is still unknown in this field. “I knew what to do about a restoration, but this wasn’t that kind of project. I was presented with management issues of land that should be natural, but because of history or use, could not be restored. What do you do with land that has been so changed that it can’t be restored to its original condition?” he said. For example, the Sanctuary, now resting on a land-fill historically was probably a sandy beach, he said.

Schilling is a purist when it comes to native plant restoration. He can trade Latin names and swap cultivation methods with the best, but in this case, “I was working with something that looked natural, but wasn’t really a functioning system. The goal is to make it more self-sustaining and to do things that would be good for birds. Or at least not bad.”

Because many flowering bulbs are popular with neighbors, they will remain part of the Sanctuary’s new mix of plants. Ditto: Trees not native to the Chicago

region. Schilling has compromised on a strict native plant model for the Sanctuary for political reasons, but the compromise won’t be bad for birds, since many avian species utilize the structure of some of the plants. “My basic philosophy is that if you have a healthy habitat, it will meet the needs of neotropical migrants,” Schilling said. “A woodland habitat benefits such birds, but you can’t ever really tell if it will attract more migrants. It’s a very small space, statistically insignificant, in terms of migrant bird habitat. All we can know is that it will offer food and shelter to the migrants that are in the area,” he said.

Hawk Watching: The Disease

Vic Berardi recognizes the classic symptoms of hawk watch fatigue. When few birds are in the air, the average birder starts talking, then starts fidgeting, then walks away for a while, and finally, drives off in her car. And just as she is leaving, raptors typically start flying, something Berardi has noted more than once.

Hawk watching takes patience above all else. And dedication.

“There’s a neat camaraderie at our hawk watch. Sure, people talk and joke around, but someone always has their eye on the sky. And at Illinois Beach, there is often a lot of idle time, waiting for hawks to start flying,” Berardi said. “I’m happy if I see one bird every five minutes.”

In the year 2000 alone, Berardi logged 90 hours of hawk watching at Concordia College, north of Milwaukee, and 150 hours at Illinois Beach State Park.

He got hooked on hawks after a fall trip to Hawk Ridge in Duluth, Minn. He loved Hawk Ridge so much that he went straight to Concordia College the next weekend and then on to Lake Erie Metro Park near Detroit and Whitefish Point in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan that first fall season of hawk watching. He scouted out Illinois Beach State Park and Concordia for a couple of years, watching the weather, noting how and when hawks rode the wind before he posted a message on IBET in 2000 and asked for hawk watch volunteers at IBSP.

“I got tons of responses, but it really came down to about four regular hawk counters. Most of the hawk watches in the U.S. — 75% — are staffed by just two or three volunteers,” he said. That said, Janice and Paul Sweet, Berardi and Bill Wengelewski were often joined at the park by other hawk watchers to help when flights were heavy.

“People seem intimidated by hawk counting, like they’re afraid they’ll get identification wrong. But I just ask them to tell me when they see a bird and I’ll get on it,” Berardi said. “Everyone can make a contribution to the count.”

In 2000 at Illinois Beach State Park, hawks were counted on 67 days, for 309 hours and totaled 2,831 raptors. At Concordia in 2000, observers counted on 43 days for 202 hours for a total of 7,238 raptors. In 2001, volunteers counted 3,967 hawks at Illinois Beach State Park on 62 days for 319 hours. At Concordia, 3,017 birds were counted on 41 days during 177 hours in 2001. The Concordia count is staffed principally by Bill Coward, although