Final Report

Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant #07-004
Interpretive Educational Signs on the Trails of the Douglas-Hart Nature Center

Douglas-Hart Nature Center
2204 DeWitt Ave East
Mattoon, IL 61938
Attn: Kimberly Ross
(217) 235-4644
douglashartnc@consolidated.net

Project Objectives include:

1. Prepare information and digital photographs that signs will be designed with.
2. Correspond with sign manufacturer on final sing layout and design.
3. Choose final design locations and mark for post to be set in the area.
4. Purchase lumber for frames and post, prepare and set posts at sign location.
5. Build sing frames and install complete signs on posts.
6. Advertise with local media on special news of state funded signs.
7. Utilize signs into programming such as nature hikes and field trips.
8. Include survey on our program evaluation to find out how people respond to interpretive signs.
9. Maintain quality of sings as needed.

Project Description

The purpose of this project was to enhance the educational experience for visitor and students by placing 3 interpretive signs on the trails of the Douglas-Hart Nature Center. There is a sign for the forest, pond and prairie; each with a narrative description of the habitat and its importance, as well as key species dependant on it. Signs are 3' X 5'; cedar framed high pressure laminate material called "Enviroreaders," able to withstand UV light, graffiti and breakage. Each sign is fixed to a treated 4x4 post set in gravel. Local media was notified and a story was run in the regional newspaper. The signs will be

used as a learning tool for visitors and students to learn more about habitats native to Illinois, and what species can be identified.
Timeline for this grant was from July 1, 2006 to August 31, 2007.

The prairie ecosystem contains a dynamic and complex food web. The plants and animals dependent on the prairie have adapted to the dry, windy conditions. Many prairie grasses and flowers have narrow, vertical leaves to prevent sun and wind damage, hairy leaf surfaces to deflect wind and sunlight or waxy surfaces to reduce water loss. Some prairie animals, such as ground squirrels and pocket gophers, dig tunnels; coyotes and badgers prefer burrows. Many prairie animals hibernate or migrate to escape the harsh winter weather. Common animals spotted in this prairie include coyotes, garter snakes, eastern cottontails, and numerous bird and insect species.
American Kestral
Red-tailed Hawk
Monarch Butterfly
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
Tiger Swallowtail

Trees provide food in the form of leaves, seeds, fruits, roots, and bark, and they serve as shelter for many different animals. Dead trees provide food and shelter for insects and other invertebrates. Birds, especially woodpeckers, feed on insects in dying trees, creating holes that are used as nests. Branches dropped by dying trees provide shelter for rabbits, skunks, lizards, snakes, and invertebrates. Eventually, the dead tree falls and decays, returning the tree's nutrients to the soil. This process gives a young sapling a spot in the sunlight and rich nutrients to help it grow into a new mature tree.
American Redstart
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red Bellied Woodpecker
Flickers
Spicebush Swallowtail
Red-Spotted Purple

The pond is a small, enclosed body of fresh water that supports a wide variety of plant and animal life. Sunlight often reaches the bottom of ponds, as they are smaller and shallower than lakes. Pond habitats provide breeding grounds for reptiles, amphibians, birds, and insects. Muskrats depend on pond plants for food, and predators such as raccoons and mink will hunt crayfish and frogs that live at the pond.

Green Heron

Bullfrog

Mallard Duck

Painted Turtle

Raccoon

Muskrat

Mink