

# THE BOG LOG

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF VOLO BOG AND VOLO BOG STATE NATURAL AREA

Volume 24, Number 4, Winter 2007-2008



## 50th Anniversary OF VOLO BOG'S PURCHASE *by The Nature Conservancy*

### Now and Then

The intriguing history of Volo Bog *(page 2)*

# The History of Volo Bog

by Stacy Iwanicki

"I remember it was the hawk that led me to the Bog so long ago (c. 1929).

A skinny kid on a racer bike scouring Fox Lake back-roads for some remnant of wilderness, I had watched the marsh hawk snatch a vole from a meadow and flap across the road ahead of me. He was already disappearing over a low hill as I thrust the racer off the gravel and up a rutted pasture road. Then I let it bound out from under me; I was halfway up the slope by the time it careened to a drunken stop in the clover. From the crest of the hill, all out of breath, I did not at once see what lay in the valley below, having eyes only for the hawk, which was gone. Then I stood stunned.

"There below, springing out of a flat, round sedge marsh, were the green spires of conifers. All at once I knew this must be a tamarack bog. I had stumbled on a secret place, a wilderness of rare birds and orchids. Only later would I learn what a perfect sample of a bog this is. I could not have imagined then that one day I would be fighting for its life in a court battle. I saw only the bog - wild and un-touched, still mist shrouded in the early-morning sunlight." These are the words of Dr. William Beecher as published in the November 15, 1970 issue of the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*. It is an elo-

quent and suspenseful story of late-night strategy sessions and courtroom posturing titled "The Battle to Save Volo." We will return to this chapter in Volo Bog's history in our Spring issue of *The Bog Log*.

## 1900 - 1940s: Scientific Descriptions & Local Residents

Volo Bog was first described in scientific literature in 1921 by W.G. Waterman (an appropriate name) who reports "The floor of the tamarack forest is still slightly quaking and the undergrowth is made up largely of sphagnum and cranberry with frequent pitcher plants and some blueberries...A small pond is reported in the center of the bog..." Waterman did not take the time to actually find and describe the open water until five years later. In his 1926 *Ecological Problems from the Sphagnum Bogs of Illinois*, he writes "The most interesting group of bogs is formed . . . northwest of the town of Volo." After describing the southern third of the Sayer (Volo) Bog basin -named by Waterman for owner/farmer George Sayer- as flat and open with its 100 yard x 50 yard rise of oaks on a "hillock," Waterman describes the north end where "Toward the center of the forest, the floor becomes more and more unstable, until the forest suddenly ends on a quaking mat which surrounds

a small pond. This pond is oval in shape and about 100 yards in length by fifty in width, and the mat surrounding it is from 50 to 100 yards in width. Old inhabitants say that the pond occupied the whole of the open area within the Tamarack forest when first visited about 50 years ago (-1876), and that the quaking mat has increased in width since that time, reducing the pond to its present size." Using these estimates, we can calculate the open water may



© Krantzen

A photo of a Volo Bog pitcher plant from 1957 *Chicago Tribune* article about the Bog.

The Bog Log is published by the Friends of Volo Bog in conjunction with Volo Bog State Natural Area. Editorial content is solely the responsibility of the Friends of Volo Bog. Publication of signed articles does not necessarily imply endorsement of opinions expressed therein by the publishers.

Reader submission is encouraged and may include editorial, photos or artwork. Please note that all written submissions may be edited for space, and style, while photos and artwork may be cropped or altered as the editorial staff sees fit.

Submissions are best sent to [FOVB@mydb3.com](mailto:FOVB@mydb3.com)

For more information, contact the editor by mail at:  
The Bog Log  
28478 W. Brandenburg Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041

Contributors to this issue: Stacy Iwanicki, Bill Ewert, Nancy Schietzelt, Richard Wend & Editor Amy Henschen  
Photos & Art: Amy Henschen, Chicago Tribune, Krantzen, Julius Ganter, Chicago Wilderness, Stacy Iwanicki

have been up to 300 yards long - significantly larger than today! Can we assume the mat to which he refers encompasses both the herb mat and the low shrub zone as we call them today? I believe so.

The first pollen analysis of the peat deposits of Volo Bog were conducted beginning in 1932 and published in 1936 by Russell C. Artist for his Master of Science degree at Northwestern University. He concluded that "Volo began filling up at a time when a conifer forest dominated the area, but which was soon replaced by a deciduous forest which has remained dominate up to the present time." Later pollen analysis concurred with Artist's early findings.

While the scientists were observing, analyzing and probing Volo Bog, the local residents were carving out a living from the surrounding land and enjoying the "slough's" fruits and fowl. The Sayer's dairy barn (which is now the Volo Bog Visitor Center) was probably built from Tamarack trees, easily accessible nearby - particularly in winter. An analysis of the unhewn posts upon which the barn was built suggests pine. Un-cut logs were typical through the late 1800s, after which cut lumber was employed in barn construction. I had personal correspondence with a gentleman who told stories of working as a teen for Sayer, keeping the cows out of the bog. On a good day, he had "use of a horse. On a really good day, a dog, too." There are long-standing rumors of horses and cows wandering off and never returning...

In 1907, just down the road from the Sayer farm, Dorothy Adams\* was born at a farm on Lincoln Road. She recalls many summer trips into the Bog to collect blueberries. Many folks came from the areas of Fox Lake, McHenry, Johnsburg, etc... Dorothy's blueberry excursions ended when, as a young woman, she encountered poison sumac and contaminated her baby

with the toxic sap. The infant broke into rash. Mrs. Adams recalled the many various owners of the Bog over the years - and the various neighbors as well. Her nephew Don Bauer told of being warned "Don't go near the tamarack slough" and shared memories of skating on the pond in the winter and being afraid when exploring in the summer as when you stepped here it would "move over there!"

#### 1948 - 1958: The Nature Conservancy, TNC in Illinois, and the Purchase of Volo Bog

George Fell and his wife Barbara from nearby Winnebago County enjoyed the many varied natural areas around their home and beyond - the prairies, marshes, woodlands. But these areas were as George told it, "being destroyed, one by one - nobody was doing much to preserve anything at that time so we became very much concerned and started out trying to get the state of Illinois to set up some sort of preserved areas. As a result, I became involved with the Illinois State Academy of Science and was appointed chairman of the conservation committee and used that as a springboard to make noise. (From there) I became involved in the Ecologist's Union. The EU was a young organization - just a few years old - an offshoot of the Ecological Society of America. I was elected Vice President of the EU.

"Barbara and I visited New York in the winter of 1949 and attended a meeting of the EU in conjunction with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. We then went to Washington DC and visited the various conservation organizations there

and got such a cordial reception that we stayed for eight years! The EU set up a DC office and in 1951 we converted the organization to what is now The Nature Conservancy.

"We moved back to Illinois in 1958, continuing work on preserving areas in Illinois through our newly forming Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Volo Bog was known for many years by the scientists & ecologists, particularly around the Chicago area. It would become a classical study area. When we were in Washington various people in Illinois were concerned that something should be done about Volo Bog. It was being used by the University of Illinois and others for field trips. Owner Claude Garland had allowed a boardwalk - a single plank to go out to the middle of the bog. I have a letter from Mr. Garland in which he proposes that he be willing to sell the 47 acres in the middle there to the University of Illinois.

"In March of 1957, I had come out from Washington ...and talked with Mr. Cyrus Mark, Dr. Julian Steyermark, Claude Garland, M.A. Whitaker of the

*story continued on page 4*



Nature Conservancy member on the single plank Volo boardwalk. (c. 1957)

© John Guanter



### *Volo History continued from Page 3*

State Conservation Department, Vern Thompson and his brother, owners of the Wing & Fin Club which included a portion of Volo Bog, four real-estate men in Fox Lake and various other local persons. I then proceeded with a six page dissertation all about Volo Bog and other bogs and how I thought there was a need to do a comprehensive study of bogs in Illinois, northern Indiana, and southern Wisconsin to make sure that purchasing this was the best bargain we could come up with looking at it from a national standpoint.... TNC at that time had just acquired maybe a half-a-dozen or so areas - this was one of the first areas it was ever involved with - the first land acquisitions of TNC were in 1954 - so we were just a few years into the process."

Cyrus Mark, chairman of the fledgling Illinois chapter of The Nature Conservancy, along with the chapter's secretary, Dr. Margery Carlson had been heading up the fundraising to purchase the 47 acres of the bog. The Nature Conservancy campaign eventually raised \$40,000 - much of it from teachers and their students. This was enough to purchase Wauconda Bog (now a part of Lakewood Forest Preserve) as well as Volo Bog. According to George Fell, the actual purchase

price for Volo Bog was only \$10,000 - a deal negotiated to include hunting rights for Garland and his friends as long as they wished. In 1958 Volo Bog, the wetland, was turned over to the University of Illinois for safekeeping.

Meanwhile, our kid on the bicycle had grown up. After earning a bachelors' degree from the University of Chicago, William Beecher studied nesting birds and wetland vegetation in the Fox Lake area where his family had a summer home. He earned a Master's degree in 1949 for his efforts and his work earned him the praises of Aldo Leopold who used it in his classes on game management. He completed his PhD in 1954 - the same time George Fell and friends were working on the establishment of The Nature Conservancy. After jobs with the Field Museum of Natural History, then the Cook County Forest Preserve District as director of Little Red School House, William Beecher may have been paying attention to the process but only from the sidelines - he was managing his own affairs in his new job as Director of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. His role in protecting Volo Bog would come into full swing in beginning in 1969. We'll pick up our story again in the Spring 2008 issue of *The Bog Log*.

*\* Dorothy Adams' and George Fell's testimonies are from a transcript of a video produced at Volo Bog in 1991.*

*William Beecher and Don Bauer were also among the guests. I'd like to thank Joel Greenberg (personal correspondence/unpublished works) and recognize "In memoriam: William J. Beecher, 1914 - 2002" by Peter F. Lowther and Mary Hensen, as published in The Ash for additional info on Dr. Beecher.*

## DON'T MISS WINTERFEST!

Come out to the Bog on January 13, from noon to 4 p.m. for Winterfest, a yearly event that features live music, photo contest awards, and crafts indoors, as well as plenty of outdoor activities.

This year Winterfest will feature a performance of folk and maritime music by Lee Murdock. Murdock is a Chicago-based musician who has released twelve acclaimed CDs and tours internationally, year-round. He combines ragtime, Irish, blues and folk styles with his flair for storytelling in his music. Come hear Murdock play and get in touch with your inner sailing spirit.

The Friends of Volo Bog, who co-sponsor the event, will be selling snacks. They will also graciously accept donations to help support the wonderful live music of Lee Murdock.

## FROM THE SHUTTERBUGS OF VOLO BOG by Bill Ewert

Volo Bog's 21st annual Nature Photography Contest is up with 155 prints submitted from 21 photographers. They will be up for voting until Friday, January 11, at 3 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to vote for their favorite prints in each of the seven categories. The winners will be announce at Volo Bog's Winterfest on January 13, 2008. The contest is co-sponsored by the ShutterBugs, Friends of Volo Bog and Volo Bog State Natural Area.

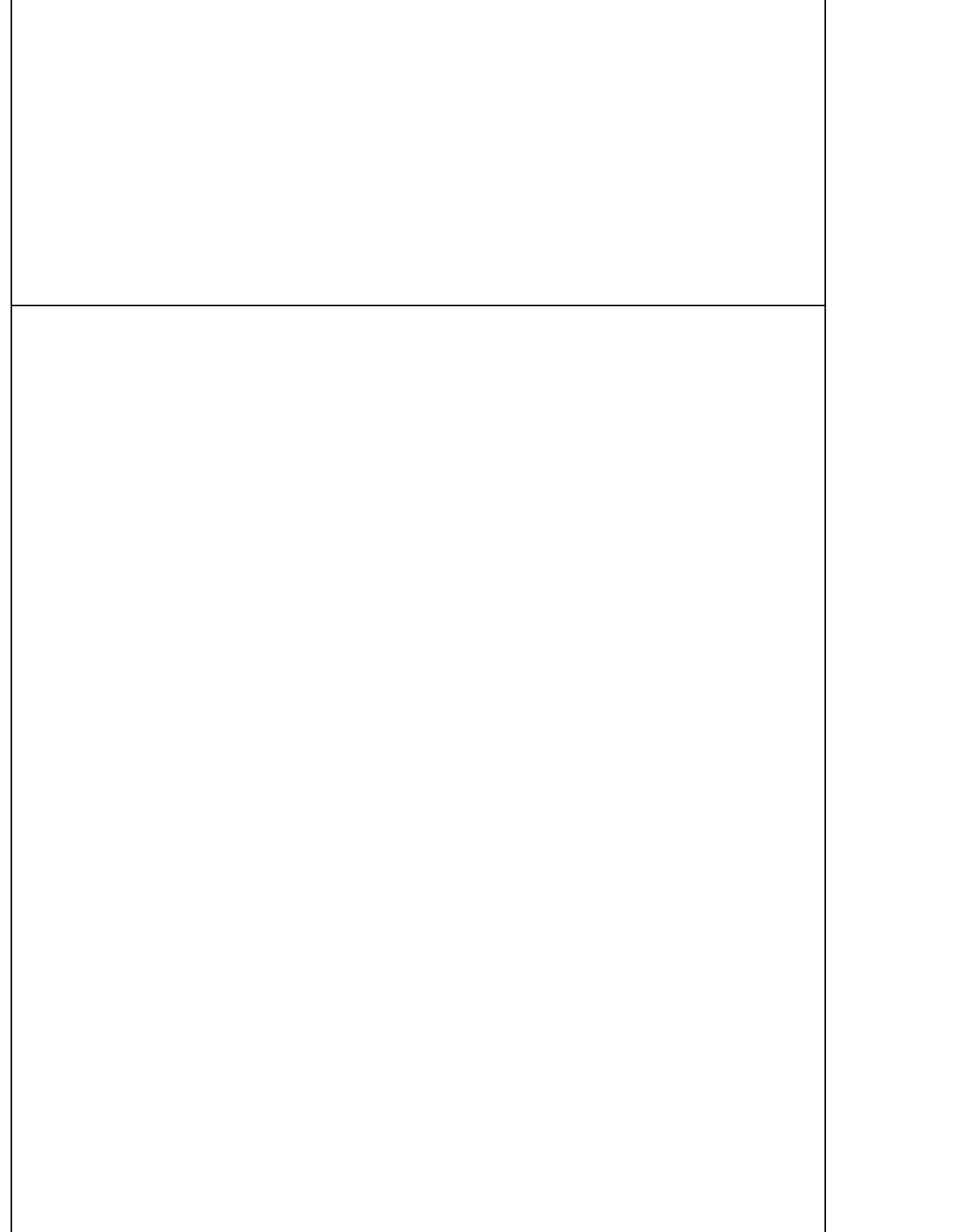
We had our second competition on

November 21. A total of 28 class A and class B prints were entered. Awards were won by Raymond Kirsteins for "Summer Lotus" and "Flower Explosion." Robert Popelka's award for "Bridal Veil Falls" was also Print-of-the-Month.

In the slide contest, 16 slides were entered with Robert Popelka getting an award for "Green Falls" and Conrad Cutraj's award for "Shaggymane Mushroom" was also Slide-of-the-Month.

President Gwen Selby is planning to schedule more photographic outings this year. There are many areas in Lake and McHenry counties that offer great photographic possibilities. Be sure to join Gwen on an outing.

In January, Jerry Hug will present his program on digital photography. As more members shoot digital, their pictures get better and better.



# THE BOG LOG

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF VOLO BOG AND VOLO BOG STATE NATURAL AREA

Volume 25, Number 1, Spring 2008



Photo © David L. Green

## Photo Contest Wows

Plus, the history of Volo Bog continues *(page 2)*

# Fifty Years Ago

by Stacy Iwanicki

Volo Bog was purchased in 1958 by the brand new Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC). We took a look at the story that led up to this purchase in our last issue of *The Bog Log*. As is typical, Illinois TNC turned it over to another entity for management - in this case, to the University of Illinois (U of I). This was an era when botany class assignments included collecting and those at U of I were no exception. In the ensuing years, botany students by the busload (from U of I and elsewhere) collected most of the rare orchids and many other unique bog plants for their assignments.

Meanwhile, the old barn up the hill was home to a private hunt club owned by David "Captain Davy" Jones. Jones and his friends enjoyed fishing, hunting and trap-shooting. Anecdotal stories from "both sides" tell of skeeters entertaining themselves at the expense of the botany students - hitting their clay targets over the heads of the students on their way to the bog. They all laugh looking back, but the humor wasn't so apparent at the time. However, the hunting and fishing had less impact upon the bog than the botany students...

But the 1960s were also becoming a time of environmental enlightenment. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was pub-

lished in 1962. In 1963, George Fell of the Illinois chapter of TNC (who we met in the last issue) continued his work in preservation; "(We) managed to get legislation enacted in 1963 to establish an Illinois system of Nature Preserves, and an Illinois Nature Preserves Commission..." 1964 saw the establishment of the Wilderness Preservation Act. The decade came to a close with the passage of the Endangered Species Protection Act in 1969.

In September 1969, developer Robert Krilich, who owned land south and east of Volo Bog, along with Mr. Jones, submitted a request to the Lake County Zoning Board of Appeals to change the zoning of 655 acres of land near Volo Bog to allow for a \$94 million development. In December, the request was denied by one vote, however early the next year the Lake County Board of Supervisors approved the development. In April, Illinois Attorney General William Scott filed a suit "asking that Krilich prove construction of the development will not harm the bog." Krilich then proceeded to drain 4 feet of water from nearby Sullivan Lake (to which Volo Bog is connected)! Lake County Building and Zoning ordered a stop to the project but a circuit court judge later that month gave permission for

the development to continue as long as construction did not affect the water levels of the bog.

In June 1970, with the political and public battles waging over Volo Bog, the University of Illinois turned the wetland over to the Illinois Department of Conservation (now Illinois Department of Natural Resources), providing for better protection. Volo Bog was quickly dedicated as an Illinois



Map of the Volo property and the proposed Krilich development.

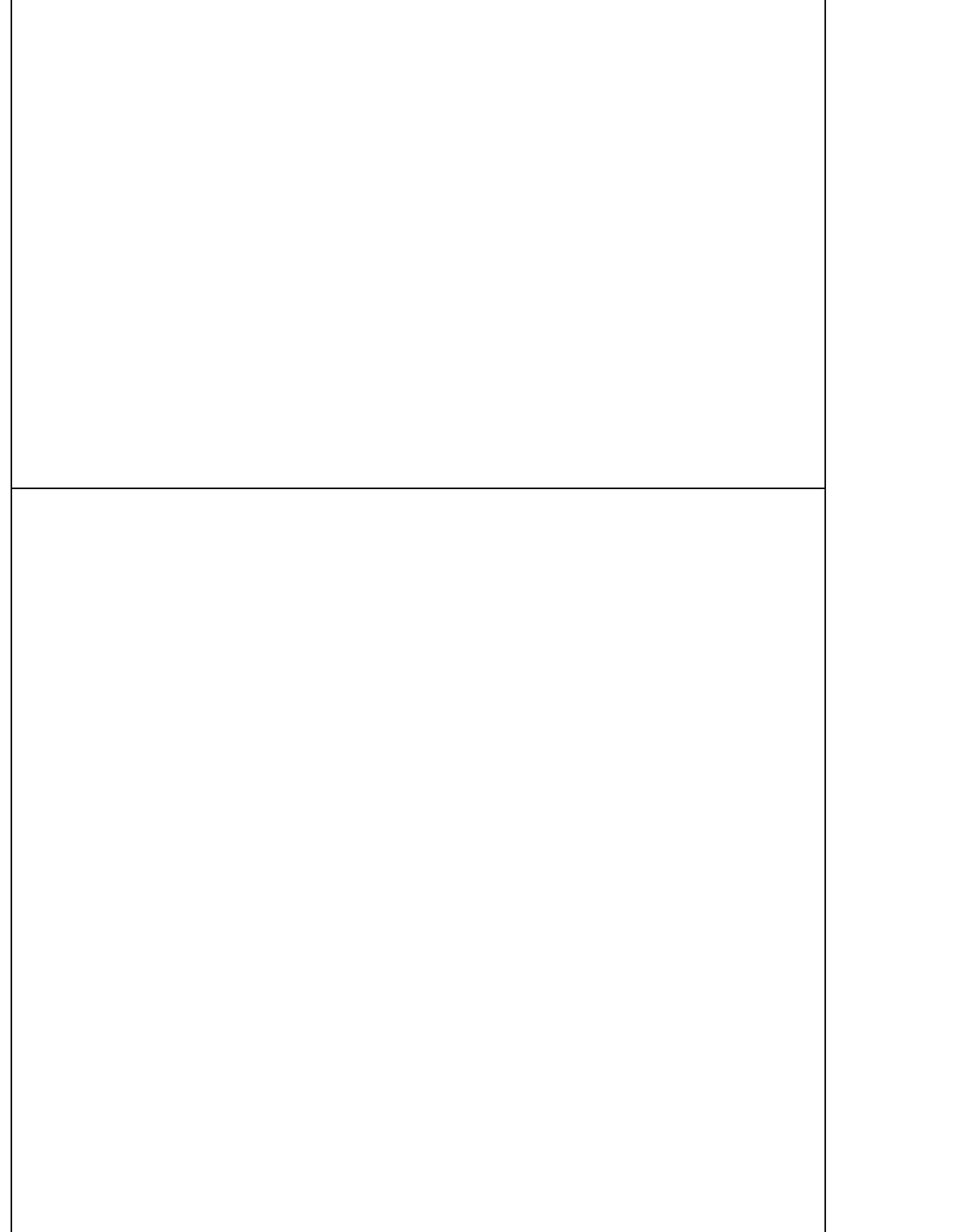
The Bog Log is published by the Friends of Volo Bog in conjunction with Volo Bog State Natural Area. Editorial content is solely the responsibility of the Friends of Volo Bog. Publication of signed articles does not necessarily imply endorsement of opinions expressed therein by the publishers.

Reader submission is encouraged and may include editorial, photos or artwork. Please note that all written submissions may be edited for space, and style, while photos and artwork may be cropped or altered as the editorial staff sees fit.

Submissions are best sent to FOVB@myd3.com

For more information, contact the editor by mail at:  
The Bog Log  
28478 W. Brandenburg Road  
Ingleside, IL 60041

Contributors to this issue: Stacy Iwanicki, Gwen Selby, Bob Vetter, Nancy Schietzelt, Richard Wend & Editor Amy Henschen  
Photos & Art: Amy Henschen, Chicago Tribune,  
Photo contest winners.





Nature Preserve.

Last issue we met William Beecher, who had discovered Volo Bog in the 1920s as a kid on a racer bike. His early love of nature led him to earn a bachelors' degree from the University of Chicago. His study was of the nesting birds and wetland vegetation in the Fox Lake area where his family had a summer home. Beecher's 1949 Masters' work earned him the praises of Aldo Leopold who used it in his classes on game management at the University of Wisconsin. He completed his PhD in 1954 - the same time George Fell and friends were working on the establishment of The Nature Conservancy. After jobs with the Field Museum of Natural History, then the Cook County Forest Preserve District, Beecher took on the new job as Director of the Chicago Academy of Sciences where his role in protecting Volo Bog would come into full swing. As head of the Chicago Academy of Science and member of the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission he stated in "The battle to save Volo," "The blow fell (when)...The Lake County Zoning Board of Appeals was to hear the plea next day of a private developer who wanted 655 acres around the bog rezoned from agricultural use to high-density residential use. Cyrus Mark and Jeffrey R. Short Jr. of Open Lands Project came with me the next morning

to the hearing in Ingleside in the heart of the Chain of Lakes region. Crowded into a recreation room next to a bar, we spent the morning listening to... a slick Madison Avenue presentation. His posters showed a 94-million-dollar complex of homes and condominiums with a shopping center. He envisioned 10,000 people living there, and right in the middle, bordered by a golf course, was Volo Bog."

The Battle to Save Volo Bog was picking up steam! Local residents got involved, forming a Save the Bog committee, complete with bumper stickers!

In January 1971, the state made its final offer to purchase the land and if Krilich and Jones refused, Governor Richard B. Ogilvie stated that "the Department of Conservation will begin proceedings to acquire the property through eminent domain..." The state did just that. The suit took two years but in 1973, the Illinois Department of Conservation spent just over \$339,000 to purchase 153 acres bordering Volo Bog, thus beginning the long process of acquiring land surrounding Volo Bog for a buffer. (Land acquisition continues to this day but as most of the watershed is now in public ownership, the urgency no longer exists - and transactions are only done with willing sellers.)

In the early 1970s, seasonal naturalists were hired. Throughout the decade, they operated out of a makeshift 4 by 8 foot plywood hut with a lawn chair in it!

In February 1973, Volo Bog Nature Preserve was designated a National Natural Landmark (NNL) by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. This distinction is earned as Volo Bog is the furthest south open-water quaking bog in North America displaying all stages of kettle hole bog succession (where an isolated lake slowly fills with accumulating peat and acidic soils). A plaque states "This site possesses exceptional value as an illustration of the Nation's natural heritage and contributes to a better understanding of...(our) environment."

In 1977, Tim Kielar was assigned to be its first Site Superintendent and three years later renovation of the old dairy barn/sportsman clubhouse was completed and opened as a Visitor Center. The site's first naturalist, Alexia Tryzna, was hired in 1980.

In 1979, legislation was submitted to the Illinois General Assembly proposing classification of DOC lands into ten categories including a new designation -

*story continued on page 8*



Floating mat at the edge of the Bog's central pool (left) and George Iannarone and Dr. Beecher in the tamaracks at Volo Bog (right). Photos c. 1970.

### *Volo History continued from Page 3*

State Natural Areas. It stated in part, "management of Natural Areas will be focused on preserving and perpetuating resources of exceptional scientific and educational value. Because of the scarcity and fragility of Natural Areas, it will be necessary to limit the number of visitors and the kinds of activities to be carried out." While it seems the legislation never passed, many of the designations were adopted by the department. Volo Bog State Natural Area is still managed with the ideal in mind. As

such, with visitor numbers small compared to those of high-use state parks, Volo Bog can be left vulnerable during times of budget juggling.

In 1983, a small group of volunteers, responding to an opportunity to receive a grant for exhibits, established the Friends of Volo Bog. Since then, the Friends have funded educational programs and events, supported the site through many state budgetary processes and even helped to fight a proposed highway that would have bisected VBSNA! Over the years, Friends mem-

bers have worked tirelessly for the good of Volo Bog. Today, the Friends of Volo Bog remain active celebrating our 25th anniversary along with the 50th anniversary of the purchase of Volo Bog by The Nature Conservancy.

The beneficiary of many generations of enlightened and forwarding thinking individuals from the both the public and private community, Volo Bog is truly a treasure owned by the people of Illinois. And its secrets remain to be rediscovered with each new generation.

# The Spring Skies

by Richard Wend

Mercury and Venus will be less than two degrees apart March 18 to March 28, low in the early dawn sky. This will make observing the pair difficult, but possible.

Mars is high in the south as night begins, fading in March from magnitude 0.2 to 0.8.

Jupiter is in the morning sky, low in the southeast.

Saturn is in Leo, high in the east at dusk, where it outshines Regulus by a

full magnitude. The planet will be best seen in a telescope around midnight, when it will be in the southern sky.

On March 18 Saturn will be about 3 degrees from Regulus, while on the other side of Regulus and at the same distance, the moon will shine.

Gemini is one of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, consisting mainly of two bright stars named Castor (1.6 magnitude) and Pollux (1.2 magnitude). Three-hundred fifty years ago Castor was brighter than Pollux.

Measuring techniques were more primitive back then; it is not known which star changed in brightness. Pollux is 35 light years away, a yellow star like the sun, while Castor is 45 light years distant, a much younger white star like Vega and Deneb. Castor is also a double star, consisting of two nearly equal stars orbiting around each other every 340 years. The two stars are so close together it takes a telescope to see the two components individually.

