

the riffle

FRIENDS OF THE FOX RIVER

December 2007

P.O. Box 1314, Crystal Lake, IL 60039

815.356.6605

www.friendsofthefoxriver.org

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Our Mission:

To preserve, restore and protect the Fox River Watershed's natural resources by connecting people with nature through education, research, restoration and advocacy.

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Dams on the Fox River: Where Are We Now? An Editorial

By: Tom Schrader

It's been over a year now since the tragic deaths that occurred at the Yorkville and Wilmington dams on the Fox and Kankakee Rivers brought intense media coverage of the dangers of these structures to people enjoying the rivers for recreational purposes. Now might be a good time to reflect on what has occurred in the last year in regard to the current and future status of these dangerous structures on the Fox River.

Despite the recommendations of a state-commissioned independent report and state biologists that removal of dams is the best solution to improving the biological health of the river, and, despite the admission of a Conservation Police Captain that "all dams are dangerous" to people using the river for recreational purposes, and, despite the fact that removal of the dam would be far cheaper to Illinois taxpayers than replacing an essentially useless structure, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Office of Water Resources continued their project to replace the Yorkville Dam on the Fox River rather than removing it.

The old, extremely dangerous dam has been replaced by a four-step dam that is designed to be less dangerous through the elimination of the submerged hydraulic jump or "roller" that killed at least 16 people over the last 40 years. Work is ongoing at the Yorkville Dam on the Denil fish ladder and the canoe chute features of the new dam, but the replacement of the old dam is essentially complete as of this writing.

The replacement of this dam, despite the ecological, public safety, and economic disadvantages posed by that option as opposed to removal, can be seen as evidence that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Office of Water Resources bowed to political expediency rather than taking their mission to protect and preserve the natural resources for the people of the state seriously in this case. It should serve as a clarion call to civic-minded organizations and individual citizens interested in preserving our natural environment and promoting public safety in the outdoors that the IDNR needs to be monitored closely to ensure that they do the "right thing" based on the best science and current best practices in the ecological/environmental field, rather than the "right thing" based on political consideration.

Some good initiatives emerged from the tragedies of the summer of one year ago. Lt. Governor Pat Quinn launched his Dam Safety Initiative and Rep. Tom Cross sponsored a bill that was signed into law by Governor Rod Blagojevich which codifies signage required to be displayed at dams warning the public of the dangers they pose and also gives local law enforcement officials jurisdiction to keep the public out of the water close to dangerous dams.

Marc Miller of Lt. Governor Quinn's office will be speaking about the Dam Safety Initiative at the Friends of the Fox River's Annual Meeting to be held on Monday, December 10, at 7 pm at the historic Kendall County Courthouse in Yorkville, Illinois.

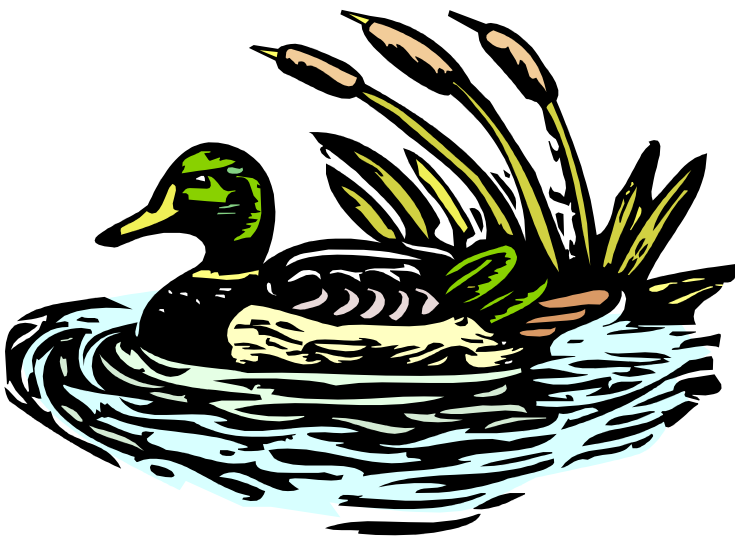
The Fox

As it winds down from Wisconsin, through the valley of its name, All the towns it passes through have given tribute to its fame. For its fishing, boating, island parks, its varied scenic walks, from its tranquil and its boisterous times, our own, the river Fox.

If the measure of the value could be placed upon a stream, In its winding route are nuggets you can see and feel and dream. Through the whisper of a ripple, from the music on the rocks, You will find serene contentment on the stream we call The Fox.

For if you wish, slow down, throw cares away, the river will respond, For the river Fox puts Time aside through nature and beyond. For whatever solace lies within your grasp The Fox can feel. As it wends its way to rainbows' ends with down-to-earth appeal.

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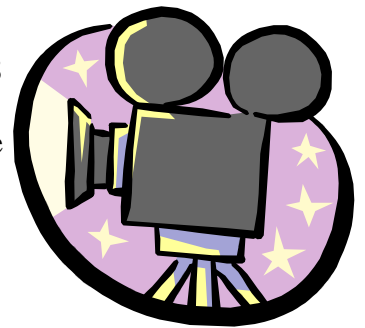
Hunting and Fishing Days

Friends of the Fox River participated in the annual Hunting and Fishing Days event on September 22nd and 23rd in Yorkville Illinois. The event was held at Silver Springs State Park. There were numerous booths and displays from hunting and fishing clubs, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and vendors' selling everything from dog treats to aquatic vehicles. Falconers brought hawks and there were many seminars from archery to deer processing.

Our own president Chuck Roberts did 2 one hour talks on paddling the Fox River which included information on access, safety, equipment and technique. The Friends of the Fox information booth manned by dedicated board members talked to well over a hundred people on a wide range of topics such as water quality, clean ups and wildlife.

Please join us - Film Fest

The largest environmental film festival in North America is coming to McHenry & Kane County. Join Friends of the Fox River when they host the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival Tour at McHenry County College on Thursday evening, January 31, 2008 from 6:00-9:00 pm and Elgin Community College on Saturday afternoon, February 2, 2008 from 2:00—5:00 pm.



Annual Meeting

Reminder!

Please join us for FOFR's annual meeting and photo contest reception on December 10th at 7:00 p.m. It will be held at the Kendall County Courthouse in Yorkville.

Photo Contest Winners

The 3rd Annual “Your Fox River Watershed” Photo Contest has ended. Thanks to everyone who participated. Here are the following winners:

PROFESSIONAL DIVISION

Wildlife Category -

- 1st Place—Tom Lowden, Crystal Lake
- 2nd Place—Jenn Wilson, North Aurora
- 3rd Place—Tom Lowden, Crystal Lake

Landscapes Category -

- 1st Place - Tom Lowden, Crystal Lake
- 2nd Place - Diane Keys, South Elgin
- 3rd Place - Tom Lowden, Crystal Lake
- Judge’s Choice Award - Tom Lowden, Crystal Lake

People Experiencing Nature Category -

- 1st & 2nd Place - Tom Lowden, Crystal Lake

AMATEUR DIVISION

Landscapes Category -

- 1st Place - Bill Meir, St. Charles
- 2nd Place - Bill Meir, St. Charles
& Bob Roehrig, Batavia
- 3rd Place—Vivian Christiano, Oswego

Wildlife Category -

- 1st Place - Paul McFadden, Algonquin
- 2nd Place - Fred Pigott, Wheaton
- 3rd Place - John Sather, Naperville
- (2) Judge’s Choice Awards -
Paul McFadden, Algonquin

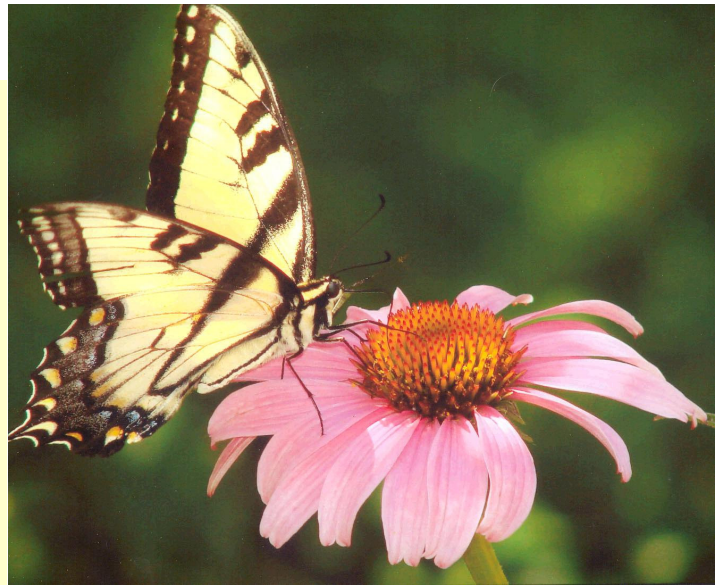
People Experiencing Nature Category -

- 1st & 2nd Place - Bill Meir,
- 3rd Place - Paul McFadden, Algonquin

River Rescue Category -

- 1st Place - John Sather, Naperville
- 2nd & Third Place - Diana Sinn, Elgin

Winners will be honored at the 2007 Friends of the Fox River Annual Meeting on December 10th, 7:00 p.m. at the Historic Kendall County Courthouse.

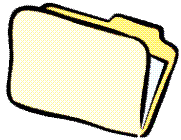


*2007 Photo Contest Winner
3rd Place - Amateur Wildlife - John Sather*



*2007 Photo Contest Winner
1st Place - Amateur People Experiencing Nature - Bill Meir*





FOX FILES

Fun facts on our river's coolest critters.

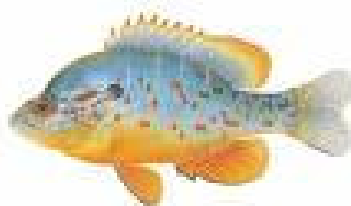
Fish of the Fox

By: Patrick Kirmse

Most people are familiar with the more common fish of the Fox River such as Channel Catfish, Smallmouth Bass, Bluegill and Carp. Few people know that there are over 40 species of fish in the Fox River. I would like to tell you about some the more unusual and interesting species that call the Fox River their home.

The Blackstripe Topminnow (*Fundulus notatus*) is found close to shore and as its name indicates stays at the surface of the water. It has a black stripe that runs from its mouth to the beginning of its tail. The most noticeable characteristic about the topminnow are the silver spot on its head. It would seem to make a perfect target for herons and kingfishers but these fish are quick enough to elude the predators. This beautiful little fish grows to 3 inches long.

Orange Spotted Sunfish (*Lepomis humilis*) are the most gorgeous fish in the Fox River. The males in breeding colors in May are stunning with bright orange spots on sky blue sides. His dorsal and anal fins are edged in orange and the pelvic fins are edged in black. They make an appearance at the river dams in late May and early June where they can be caught on worms. Since they average about 3 ½ inches in size they are too small to keep. These beautiful gems are best admired and then gently released to reproduce in the Fox River.



Orange Spotted Sunfish
(*Lepomis humilis*)

The Silversides is a group of fishes that are mostly marine with a worldwide distribution. One of the few

freshwater species occurs in North America and the Fox River. The Brook Silverside found in the Fox is a long and thin has large eyes and a long snout. They are pale green above with a bright silver stripe along it's side. What makes this fish unusual is it's ability to jump. It's like a little flying fish! The best way to find this 3 inch fish is to take a flashlight and shine it in the water along the shore line at night.

We called them beer can catfish when we were kids. We would find beer cans on the bottom of the river while looking for crawdads and every once in a while we would



pour out a 2 to 3 inch catfish. These cute little guys were Tadpole Madtoms (*Noturus gyrinus*). They are a pleasing coffee brown in color with a thin dark line along their sides. Members of this family of catfish have glands that produce venom. The venom is secreted by the spines in there fins. The sting is similar to a bee sting.

The most prehistoric fish in the Fox River is undoubtedly the Longnose Gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*). These fish can reach 6 feet in length and are long and thin. The gar has a long snout filled with long needle like teeth. The scales are diamond shaped, thick, hard and provide armor plating for the fish. The gars can live in water too low in oxygen to support most fish due to their ability to breathe air. They have a lung like gas bladder to assist their gills in breathing. The gars feed on fish and can be seen lingering near the surface of the water waiting for fish to approach. They grab them with a lightning fast dash.



The Longnose Gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*)



FOFR MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL APPLICATION To contact us—815.356.6605

ANNUAL DUES

- ___ \$15 Student
- ___ \$25 Individual
- ___ \$35 Family
- ___ \$100 Patron
- ___ \$250 Advocate
- ___ \$500 Sustainer
- ___ \$50 Non-Profit
- ___ \$150 Business
- ___ \$500 Corporate
- ___ \$1,000 Corporate
- ___ Other \$ _____

Hey!! Friends of the Fox River sounds GREAT! Sign me up!!

(Name)

(Mailing Address)

(City, State, Zip Code)

(Home Phone)

(Work Phone)

(Other Contacts Fax / Email)

Thank you for your support!

To allow our organization to best serve your needs, we need to know what you want and what you can offer. Please respond to the information below.

Areas of Interest

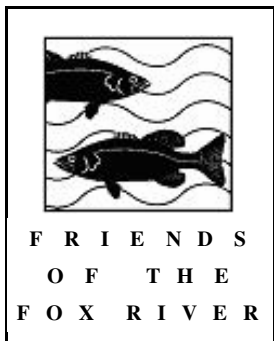
- Fox Rescue Clean-ups
- Fox River Watershed Monitoring Network
- Advocacy
- Volunteer Labor, Please call me.
- Just send me your newsletters and State of the River reports.

Make checks out to: Friends of the Fox River - PO Box 1314 - Crystal Lake, IL 60039-1314



Earth Share
OF ILLINOIS

Via *Earth Share of Illinois*, you can support **Friends of the Fox River** through your employer's workplace giving campaign. For more information, contact *Earth Share of Illinois* at www.earthshare-illinois.org, info@earthshare-illinois.org or by calling 312-795-3740.



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