



## *When was the last time you visited Churchill Park?*

Churchill Park is the Park District's largest natural area and a great spot to unwind and see a variety of plants and animals. The main entrance is located on St. Charles Road, just east of Bloomingdale Road. This great parcel has a lot to offer. Staff is actively exploring ways to improve its ecological health, and tap into the potential for educational programming.

Over the last year, the Glen Ellyn Park District has started providing more nature and environmental programs. Toddlers, youth, adults and families have begun attending these offerings, which are primarily held at Churchill Park. The topics are various, but during the events, participants walk through the different habitats and learn about the importance of a healthy ecosystem.

Great potential exists to offer curriculum-based educational programs for local school students, badge-related activities for boy and girl scouts, and guided walks and activities for local preschools, daycares and home-school groups. Staff is also exploring partnerships with local school clubs that encourage community service projects. A few churches and businesses have also expressed interest in scheduling volunteer and educational programs. In addition to these exciting activities, we would love to hear your nature and environmental ideas and suggestions for Churchill Park.

The park district has also begun holding monthly ecological workdays. All ages are welcome, and the work can be modified to reach all levels of participants. Thus far, we have had several scout groups attend, the Glen Ellyn Rugby Team (Go, Ducks!), and members of our community. Thanks to all who have helped.

Most of the current restoration work is focused in the wooded sections. Staff, along with volunteers, is removing European buckthorn (the dominant mid-sized shrub/tree throughout this area), pulling out garlic mustard, fighting back the reed canary grass, and introducing many suitable native trees, shrubs, plants and seeds to these areas. These invasive plant species are typically non-native and aggressive. They steal the sun, water and nutrients from native plants, thus changing the composition of the local ecosystem. This has wide-ranging negative effects including the disappearance of native plant populations and corresponding declines in insects, birds, and other animal populations that rely on native plants for survival.

In addition, over the last few years, more water has been moving through the site due to impervious surfaces in surrounding neighborhoods. Unfortunately, some portions of the trail are unusable. We hope to improve these conditions and restore an intact trail system for all to use in the near future.

If you haven't visited the park in a while, we encourage you to walk along the ponds (check out the turtles on the logs!), pass the prairie and wetland plants, through the wooded area we've been actively restoring, and back to the bridge over the stream. Many hours have been put into restoring sections of this great property. However, there is much more work that needs to be done. We hope to inspire and encourage our community to work together to return this natural area to a healthy system and provide exceptional learning opportunities in the process. Please join us for one of the upcoming workdays or programs and see for yourself!

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