

Walk through the dunes with Professor Lunn's book

Wildflowers, captured in color photographs and described in non-technical language, are the stars of a new book, *Plants of the Illinois Dunesland*, recently published by the Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society.

The book's author and principal photographer, Elizabeth T. Lunn, knows her subject well: she is professor emerita and former chairperson of the Lake Forest College biology department, and she has led hundreds of nature walks through the dunes and prairies encompassed by Illinois Beach State Park.

Professor Lunn was honored by the Lake Forest College biology department at a tea and "book autographing" party April 19 in Johnson Science Center.

Copies of the book were available at the party, and they can also be ordered through the Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society, 2004 North Ash St., Waukegan, Ill. 60086. Cost is \$8.

Lunn's book holds unique appeal because it is so readable. "I designed it for ease of use in the field," she explains. "Scientifically, grouping would have been done by plant families. But that doesn't mean much to most of us, so I arranged the plants according to the color of their flowers."

She has been compiling the book for more than ten years. "Of course, I have been collecting and cataloging specimen forever," she says, "but in leading nature walks it occurred to me that it would be helpful for people to have a guide book. There is such a great variety of plant life in the dunesland—more than 650 verified species. People don't appreciate that at first; those coming from other areas of the country look for something more dramatic, like mountains or waterfalls. But once you start walking and looking you realize that in our area we have an amazing variety of flora."

Lunn recalls that she started exploring the dunes back in 1936, when no roads existed in the area. "Between Waukegan and Zion it was just open land," she recalls. "Then there came people who wanted it developed, with a golf course, home sites, and a marina. But through the formation and efforts of the Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society, the area was made a state park in 1948. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission secured the south 900 acres as the state's first nature preserve area in 1964, and it has recently been designated one of the state's 15 National Natural Landmarks by the U.S. Department of the Interior."

A past president of the Preservation Society, Lunn has been an active member since the organization's inception. Spring through fall, she leads monthly walks for the Society. She also conducts

workshops and field trips through the community education department of Lake Forest College.

"The walk is not really a hike, it's more of a ramble," she explains with a smile. "The path we often go down is dunes on one side and prairie on the other. But sometimes I get bored with that and try something different. Small children don't do awfully well looking for flowers. They like frogs, snakes and ants, so I try to find something for them."

Lunn notes that "there are, of course, changes in the area due to heavy use. There are a great many plants that are pretty delicate, and we are losing some. Orchids have almost disappeared. And we also find that people walking along the path bring in seeds on their shoes, or the wind will carry them to the downtrodden areas, and things spring up. Once I got busy with



Gordon Young '83

Biology professor Betsy Lunn autographs her book for English professor Ann Hentz.

JUNE 1983

the book I stopped actively collecting, but I have an idea that there are some new sedges. And just in the last year, I have found sundews, a quite small carnivorous plant which digests insects."

"Collecting" is no longer advisable, or even permitted, she observes. "Also, that kind of biology is out of favor. It was sort of a 19th century thinking, when people went to Africa and shot animals for their collections. Now the trend is experimental things, DNA, the makeup of genes. Playing around with genes, that's where the interest is now."

Lunn says she's "always liked plants and animals, starting out as a zoology major through college (Wellesley) and my master's (Northwestern). I took my Ph.D. (Northwestern) in ecology. As I saw and knew more of plants, I began to consider myself more of a botanist—although now it's taught as one science because life processes are all the same."

Lunn joined the LFC faculty in 1929 and retired in 1970. She's never left the classroom, however.

"One day shortly after I retired I was looking through a Lake Forest catalog and thinking, if I were a freshman, what would I take," she recalls. "I always liked French, so I started on those courses. Now I have more hours than a major. I've run out of courses, so I'm repeating, which you can do with literature because different things are read in different years. I have to take advantage of having a college right on my doorstep. I think lots of people don't realize how much fun it is to take courses."

Fortunately, many people have realized how much fun "Betsy's walks" are. "I hope even more people will join in our walks," she says. "If a group will get together I'll go most any time!"

—Cathy Stemen

Book on dunesland plants now available

The diversity of plant life that inhabits the dunesland along Illinois' Lake Michigan shoreline is the subject of a 118-page handbook available through the Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society.

Compiled at the request of the society by Elizabeth T. Lunn, professor emerita at Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, *Plants of the Illinois Dunesland* profiles more than 150 of the 660 plants known to occur on the dunesland. Each entry includes the plant's common and scientific names, range, size, uses, habitat, flowering time and other facts. Each plant is illustrated with a four-color photo.

The book also has a glossary of botanical terms, indices of common and scientific names, a bibliography of publications providing additional information about the dunesland and its vegetation, and an introduction that outlines the dunesland's history, geological background and physical features.

The 900-acre Illinois Dunesland extends along the Lake Michigan shore from about four miles north of Waukegan to the Wisconsin border. The property lies entirely within the Illinois Beach State Park's nature preserve. The Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society, a citizen's organization, has served as watchdog over the site since its first parcel was acquired by the Department of Conservation in 1948 as part of Illinois Beach State Park.