



The Season of Renewal

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BARRINGTON HILLS FARM is unique among the local farms in the Barrington Hills area. While many have decreased in size due to land development, Barrington Hills Farm has increased to its now 700 acres. The smaller farmsteads that have long been abandoned leaving behind remnants of old buildings and clusters of spring flowers have made way for wide-open spaces where nature and wildlife flourish.

Although the livestock are gone, along with the wire fences, traces of farm history can be seen in the remaining silos, both original and restored. The fence surrounding the farm's amassed acreage has been completely rebuilt. Daffodils provide a garden appearance at the end of a 1,000-foot-long stretch of fence that extends from the Farm's landmark 1895 silo all the way to Haegers Bend Road.

Wildflowers are abundant in the woods. Jack-in-the-Pulpits, which are mostly solitary, often accumulate into clusters. Colonies of Mayapples thrive. Mushroom and fungi exist everywhere. Crocus, like the daffodil, have survived unattended for years and provide valuable food for the honeybees.

Deer are the largest animals on the acreage. Most of the bucks will have lost their antlers before March. Yearling deer and does will still be in their "yarding" herds during the early spring days. Fawns will begin arriving in late May. The fawns, your tulips, and better browsing conditions will eventually break up the herds.


The raucous Sandhill Crane is probably the most noticeable of the birds or animals on the farm. Not only can one stand eye-to-eye with a full-grown deer, but it is probably the loudest creature in North America. What is that louder than life "song" all about? Is it, "come mon cheri or mein liebchen?" "Come here

my love" is what a Sandhill appears to vocalize.

Sunshine seems to call the turtles out from the ponds. Red-winged Blackbirds and the Sandhill Cranes have probably been on the land forever. Both species gather in cattails along pond and swamp shorelines. The blackbirds thrive on insects and seeds. The cranes feast on aquatic life, insects, mice, and snakes from the fields. They are also nest robbers and enjoy an occasional baby blackbird. Friendly acquaintances they are not.

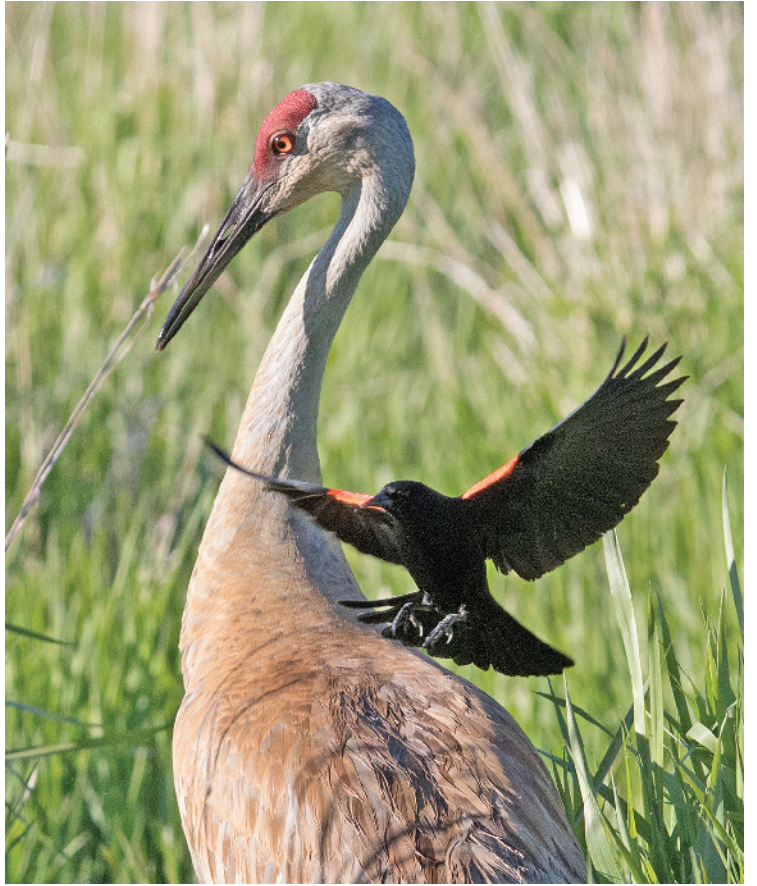
There does not appear to be a specific trigger that sets off a chorus in the evening from the farm's coyote pack, however, a police car siren has been known to get the party going. I have yet to see a groundhog on the farm, probably thanks to the coyotes.

While the Sandhills, blackbirds and coyotes are doing their thing, an agriculturist from a nearly 50-mile distant Sycamore is preparing to do his. He is readying farm equipment for transport to Barrington Hills Farm. The farmer will spend about 45 days preparing the ground and planting the crops for this certified organic farm once the necessary equipment is in place. Those crops will include soybeans, wheat, hay, and what is probably one of the largest sunflower plantings in Illinois. That would be the Farm's 50- to 75-acre "crop of sunshine" sunflower field, which to everyone's delight, will bloom in August.

While Barrington Hills Farm sleeps under a snowy blanket, the coming spring promises to deliver changes to delight the eyes and ears of any nature lover. 

Paul McFadden has lived in unincorporated Algonquin for nearly 50 years.

The Barrington Hills area offers opportunities for his camera work with nature. He may be reached at: Circa6936@gmail.com.



www.barringtonhillsfarm.org

Barrington Hills Farm is 700 acres of pristine, undeveloped land located at Haegers Bend and Spring Creek Roads in the northwestern most corner of Barrington Hills. The rarity of Barrington Hills lies in its open space, fresh air, clean water, and abundant wildlife. The land is precious and delicate and in constant need of stewardship to keep it that way.