

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

Inside this Issue:

President's Message	2
In My Yard	2
September Meeting Recap	3
Seed Library	4
Upcoming Events	4
Membership	5
Chapter Contact Information	6



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www.wildonesrrvc.org

All articles for the Nov 2023 newsletter, must be submitted to: serendipitree@gmail.com by Oct 23, 2023.

Celebrating 60 years of the Colorful History of the Boone County Conservation District

Thursday, October 19, 2023

6:30 p.m.

**Cherry Valley Library
755 East State Street,
Cherry Valley, IL**

Zoom: <http://wildonesrrvc.org/>

Pre-registration for Zoom now required. See website for details.



Josh Sage

The Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) was the first Conservation District to become established in the State of Illinois on November 4th, 1964. Approaching its 60th anniversary, Josh will be presenting the colorful history of the organization, as well as defining its established mission and purpose. The BCCD prioritizes protecting, managing, and creating high-quality habitat in concert with a strong education component. From the beginning, the BCCD has understood the importance of educating the public on the need to protect and enjoy our wild places. These values have not changed; they are stronger now more than ever!

Because Josh comes from a land management background, he will go into great detail regarding the current best management practices of natural areas management.

Josh Sage is the Executive Director of the Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) and has been with the organization since 2001. Before becoming the Executive Director, he was the Director of Natural Resources, responsible for managing the natural areas of the BCCD, as well as the prescribed burn program. He has extensive knowledge of the organization and appreciates the history and the people that have come before him.

This in-person program will be held at the Cherry Valley Public Library. Please join us at 6:00 p.m. for socializing and a chance to check out our Wild Ones chapter library, followed by the speaker's presentation at 6:30 p.m. To attend this meeting via Zoom, you must register first. Visit our website for more details.

Message from the President Jerry Paulson



Jerry Paulson

We're Helping to Re-Forest the Forest City!

The City of Rockford was founded in an oak grove on the east bluff of the Rock River in an area now known as Haight Village Historic District. As the city expanded, residents planted more trees

along the streets and in yards and the town got the moniker of being the "Forest City." Dutch Elm disease killed many of the trees that lined the streets, but other trees were planted to replace the ones that were lost.

Wild Ones members added 130 more native trees and shrubs that were purchased from our sale last month, adding beauty and ecological diversity to the local landscape. Thank you, Brian Hale who coordinated the sale again this year, and those members who helped him unload, and sort the orders.

Alan Branhagen, the new Executive Director of the Natural Land Institute has written an article about the legacy of trees in the Haight Village neighborhood where NLI's office is located: <https://bit.ly/3PslZOf>

This urban forest in the middle of the city creates a cooling shade buffer and provides habitat for many species of birds. "Haight Village's trees are just as historic as its homes: ancient white oaks that predate the homes still stand along with a nice list of other native trees from black and bur oak to American elm, sycamore, black cherry, eastern white pine and eastern redcedar," he writes. "Be inspired to plant a tree in your own neighborhood, community or yard - let's bring back the forest city!"

Alan will be our featured speaker at the program on January 18th as we start a new year of educational programs, tours and events. Copies of Allan's books can be preordered from Wild Ones. Details in next newsletter. Remember the best time to plant a tree is today.



Mark Luthin and Brian Hale at the Tree and Shrub Sale. Photo by Jerry Paulson

In My Yard Jane Evans

Several years ago the common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) in our garden all disappeared. It was the same year that my daughter and I rescued 70-some monarch eggs right before Park District mowers came and destroyed all the milkweed at a certain area. We scrambled that year to find good milkweed to feed those babies and to find people to help raise them. But knowing that you can't keep a good milkweed down, several years later our yard again has a



nice patch of common milkweed attracting monarchs to lay their eggs and smelling heavenly in bloom. The milkweed has gravitated toward the street where it

has granted itself permission to grow to about 3 ft. tall wherever it wants. Having to pick between monarchs and the landscaping industrial complex that would want no milkweed growing in a yard wasn't hard.



We chose the monarchs. Passers-by seem to love it, and we noticed it not only attracted monarchs in the day but were astounded that it seemed to have a night shift also. How wonderful is that?!

Photos by Jane Evans

September Meeting Recap: Jessie Crow Mermel

Stephanie Schmidt is the Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin. She helps raise awareness about endangered whooping cranes and sandhill cranes in our communities to inspire us to care for cranes and support greater protection for these birds. They are facing increasing threats of habitat loss, collisions, and poaching throughout their flyway. Each year in Illinois we will see over 40,000 sandhill cranes and 76 whooping cranes from November through March, including in our own community, and the International Crane Foundation aims to ensure these birds are protected on our landscapes for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.



Stephanie Schmidt

Stephanie began by orienting us to the 15 different species of cranes living around the world, except in South America and Antarctica. All species of cranes are dependent on wetlands. 10 of the 15 species are threatened or endangered. Sandhills are one of the most prominent cranes, while whooping cranes are endangered; and they are both found in Illinois.

The sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) is a conservation success story. It has made a comeback after their populations were nearly decimated. They are adaptable to a human dominated landscape and live in wetlands and agricultural fields. The red on the cranes head is exposed skin, not feathers. When they feel threatened, they can push blood into that area. Cranes can live to their 30s in the wild, much longer in captivity. They are slow to reproduce and have small clutches. Cranes nest for 30 days and care for fledglings for 80 days. Chicks fly with fall migration, return with parents in spring migration, and then head off on their own. Cranes can fly over 200 miles each day during migration. They are threatened by continued development, as they are still dependent on wetlands to roost at night and nest. To help sandhill cranes, don't feed them and cover reflective surfaces like cars so that the cranes don't get territorial.

The whooping crane (*Grus americana*) have a 7-8' wingspan with prominent black wingtips. The dark feathers are stronger than their white feathers, making them less likely to break during migration.

Their historic range was from the arctic to central Mexico. It is predicted that there were 10,000 cranes in wetlands and prairies of North American pre-colonization. The numbers were never as large as sandhill cranes. By the 1940s, there were less than 20. Unregulated hunting, millinery trade, habitat loss and egg collecting have decreased populations. Cranes have been helped by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918), The Duck Stamp (1934), The Refuge System (1966), The Clean Water Act (1972), and The Endangered Species Act (1973).

The Eastern migratory population of whooping cranes is not yet self-sustaining. They are still dependent on assistance from the ICF. They receive assistance with breeding, rearing (through adult birds and costuming), and releasing into the wild. All the released birds are tagged and monitored.

Citizen scientists can help by reporting a banded whooping crane by following these steps: 1. Confirm it is a whooping crane. 2. Check for local sightings on www.whoopermap.savingcranes.org, 3. Report your sighting: www.bandedcranes.org. Don't publicly report specific sightings, more than the county that they were located. The birds are very sensitive to disturbances.

Whooping cranes are adapting and shortening their migration routes from what the ICF trained them with their ultralight aircraft that led them from Wisconsin to Florida. There are 836 whooping cranes in the wild. Habitat loss, powerline collisions, poaching are still threatening whooping cranes. ICF is working on community outreach to build awareness of cranes to prevent poaching, which is decreasing through their efforts. They plan to spend more time in Illinois finding advocates to help with the whooping cranes.

What you can do:

- Report banded cranes to www.bandedcranes.org
- Talk to your friends and legislators about cranes and wetlands in your state
- Protect your local wetlands
- Visit www.savingcranes.org and sign the pledge.

Visit our website for a recording of this program at www.wildonesrrvc.org.

The Seed of an Idea: Starting a Seed Library at the Rockford Public Library **Rebecca Beneditz**

Seeds come in all shapes and sizes - and sometimes, they come in the form of ideas that sprout and grow into something new and beautiful.

Back in 2022, I found out that the Beloit Public Library had a free seed library available for its patrons. I reached out and ended up meeting with Cathy Fernan at the Beloit Public Library to chat about their seed library. Feeling inspired by this conversation, I decided to contact the Rockford Public Library to see if there was enthusiasm for starting a similar offering at one of the RPL branches. Though I received an encouraging response, this seed of an idea needed some time before it would sprout and grow into a full fledged project.

I had mostly forgotten about the seed library project and had moved on to other things when I heard from RPL in February of 2023 - they had a librarian assistant in Youth Services, Kathryn Gorzek, who was excited about the project. I met with Katie and her colleague, Lara Griffin, to share what I had learned about setting up a seed library. They took the idea and ran with it! I was, and remain, so grateful for their generous enthusiasm for the project.

The Rockford Public Library Hart Branch opened its free Seed Library in May of this year. They have been able to share vegetable and flower seeds all summer - and it has been so popular that they are running low on seeds. This is where you come in!

The library is looking to further expand its offerings to include more native seeds. As you prepare to gather seeds this fall, please consider setting some aside for the RPL Seed Library. Easy to grow natives are particularly desired - good options could include milkweed varieties, Joe-Pye weed, echinacea, and wild bergamot. As a newer member of Wild Ones and a less experienced native planter and seed collector, I expect to learn from a lot of you all this year about which seeds are easiest to collect and grow from seed - so don't be limited by my short list!

If you have seeds you'd like to share with the RPL Seed Library, you can fill a coin envelope with 10-20 seeds (one variety per envelope, please). Label the

envelope with the common name, scientific name, and any other pertinent information (plant height, sun requirements, etc.). Seeds can be dropped off at the Hart Interim Library at the front desk or they can be brought to the Wild Ones monthly meetings. There will also be coin envelopes available at the monthly meetings for this purpose.

I'm sure you can all close your eyes and imagine how excited you feel each season when you see your seeds start to sprout and grow, getting bigger and stronger every day. It's this same feeling that I felt seeing a question from me, a single library patron, turn into a full-fledged project that benefits a whole community. Thank you for your generous support of this project!



**Seed Library at Walter E. Olson
Library in Eagle River, WI.
Photo by Jessie Crow Mermel**

Upcoming Events



October 19 | 6:30 p.m. | Boone County Conservation District 60th Anniversary History
November 11 | Annual Meeting - Details TBD

Membership Update Sallie Krebs, Membership Coordinator

A membership e-form and our membership brochure describing the benefits of membership are both available on the chapter website (www.wildonesrrvc.org). Click on Join/Renew under the Membership tab. You can renew (or join) with any major credit card through PayPal (no PayPal account required) by using our website. We appreciate your support!

186 memberships as of September 21, 2023

Special thanks to our members who made contributions above the basic \$40 dues!

Christopher & Sandy Wrate, Rockford

Welcome to our new member(s)!

Brenda Fermanich, Rockford

Blythe Sargent, Rockford

Nancy Shevel, Marengo

Catie Vernon, Rockford

Brooke & Walter Watson, DeKalb

It is preferred that renewal memberships be submitted through the Member Center online rather than by check for quicker processing and to avoid delays in receiving your chapter newsletter. To renew your Wild Ones membership Log in or contact support@wildones.org for more information. Your expiration date is on your chapter newsletter above your name on the label. You will receive several emails from the Wild Ones national organization prior to your expiration date. If you want to join Wild Ones as a new member go to the Member Center. Remember that your

dues include membership in both National Wild Ones and our chapter. If you need to mail a check, please use the address below:

WILD ONES

ATTN: MEMBERSHIP

2285 BUTTE DES MORTS BEACH RD

NEENAH, WI 54912-1274

A portion of all dues paid is returned to the chapter by National Wild Ones to support our chapter activities. National Wild Ones provides liability insurance for our meetings and events. All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

Please send address, phone and email address changes to the Membership Coordinator: Sallie Krebs Email: membershipworrvc@gmail.com or call (815) 540-4730 if you have any questions about membership.

Wild Ones Annual Memberships: Household \$40,
Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$25,
Affiliate Non-Profit Organization \$90,
Business \$250.

Thank you for your continuing support!

Get more involved with your Wild Ones Chapter!

We are looking for people to offer their talents and time with the following positions:

President (in 2024)
Treasurer
Booth Coordinator



Mentor Coordinator
Board Member-at-Large
Volunteers

Contact Jerry Paulson to learn more and get involved: (815) 222.4414, paulsonjerry@aol.com



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Sallie Krebs

1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104

PMB 233

Rockford, IL 61107

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 10/01/2023, this is your last chapter newsletter and you have received your last Wild Ones Journal until you renew your membership. National Wild Ones drops expired memberships the first week of the expiration month, so please don't be late! See the Membership Update for renewal information.



Wild Ones Mission

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

Rock River Valley Chapter Meetings

Our regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month. We are live streaming the programs over ZOOM and posting recordings on YouTube. Links to the meetings and programs are posted on our website and our Facebook page, and sent to members via email the week of the meeting. If you want to receive the link send an email to: janetgiesen@gmail.com.

Rock River Valley Chapter Board and Coordinators

BOARD

President: Jerry Paulson

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Board members:

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membershipworrvc@gmail.com

Mentor coordinator: [open position]

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Ginnie Watson (as above)

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Linda Tabb Ricker (as to the left)

Publicity coordinator: Dawn Skupien (as to the left)

Show Me/Help Me coordinator:

Linda Tabb Ricker (as to the left)

Tree & shrub sale coordinator: Brian Hale

(815) 289.2384 treeandshrubsale@gmail.com

Volunteer coordinator: Cynthia Nelson (as to the left)

Website coordinator: Janet Giesen (as to the left)

Youth education & grants coordinator: Kim

Lowman Vollmer (as to the left)