

*Promoting Native  
Plants for Natural  
Landscapes.*

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Scan with your  
Smartphone for more  
information about  
Rock River Valley  
Wild Ones

[www.wildonesrrvc.org](http://www.wildonesrrvc.org)

All articles for the  
May 2024 newsletter, must be  
submitted to:

[wildonesrockrivervalley@  
gmail.com](mailto:wildonesrockrivervalley@gmail.com)

by April 20, 2024.

## WILD FERNS OF ILLINOIS WITH CHRISTOPHER DAVID BENDA

Thursday, April 18, 2024

6:00 pm - Social Time | 6:30 pm - Program

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

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

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



**Christopher David Benda  
with Goldie's fern**

Over 100 native fern species can be found in Illinois. This Zoom presentation will introduce basic fern terminology with photos and identification tips to identify them in the wild.



**Nettle Chain Fern (*Woodwardia  
aerolata*). Photo by Chris Benda**

Christopher David Benda is a botanist living in southern Illinois. He coordinates the Plants of Concern Southern Illinois Program for the Chicago Botanic Garden, conducts rare plant surveys for the Shawnee National Forest, and teaches The Flora of Southern Illinois at Southern Illinois University. An accomplished photographer under the moniker Illinois Botanizer, Chris shares his extensive collection of plant photos on his website, [illinoisbotanizer.com](http://illinoisbotanizer.com). He can be reached by email at [botanizer@gmail.com](mailto:botanizer@gmail.com). Follow him at @illinoisbotanizer on Instagram.

*This program is free and open to the public. Participants can attend in person at the Cherry Valley Public Library or attend via Zoom with prior registration found on our website at <http://wildonesrrvc.org/>.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT **Jerry Paulson**



**Jerry Paulson**

"I'm reminded of this every April when the pasque flowers bloom on every gravelly ridge. Pasques do not say much, but I infer that their preference harks back to the glacier that put the gravel there. Only gravel ridges are poor enough to offer

pasques full elbow-room in April sun. They endure snows, sleet, and bitter winds for the privilege of blooming alone."

- Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

I usually look for pasque flowers, *Pulsatilla patens*, around Easter in northern Illinois. The name "pasque" comes from the Old French word, "paschal" which translates to "Easter" and the Hebrew word for Passover, "pasakh". Easter comes early this year on March 31st, but pasque flowers started blooming on gravel ridges in our area on St. Patrick's Day, March 17th! In a Facebook post, Alan Branhagen, executive director of the Natural Land Institute called this "the earliest Spring ever...it's a month earlier than whatever normal was".

But I don't worry about the pasque flowers surviving the warm days and freezing nights of March. The plant is adapted to store precious heat with a thick growth of hairs covering the stem. The flower is shaped like a saucer and acts like a tiny

solar collector. A botanist at Luther College found that the temperature inside the flower was up to 18 degrees warmer than the outside air temperature on sunny days. This attracts bees and flies looking for a warm spot to land and collect the pollen. "Most native wildflowers should weather this weather just fine," Branhagen said. But will the pollinators be about this early to do their job?

A work crew from Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves had planned a pasque flower walk and workday at Harlem Hills Nature Preserve mid-April to celebrate the arrival of the flowers, but this early spring weather forced them to move the event to March 24th. "We don't want the flowers to miss their own party," said Jessie Crow-Mermel, coordinator of the work crew. If you want to help with the restoration of Harlem Hills Prairie contact Jessie at [jessie@friendsilnature.org](mailto:jessie@friendsilnature.org). They meet on the fourth Sunday of the month from 1 to 4 p.m. The bumble bees may not be there yet, but these busy bees will.

You can purchase pasque flower plants from our Native Plant Sale. Order forms are now online at [www.wildonesrrvc.org](http://www.wildonesrrvc.org).



**Pasque flower photos by Jessie Crow Mermel**

## IN MY YARD **Jane Evans**



**Photo by Jane Evans**

no-mow May came along, the yard fit right in with the purple, white, and yellow violets blooming and looking beautiful. We never realized just how beneficial these plants really are.

For many years we worked to eliminate the use of chemicals in our yard. Enlarging plant beds, putting in groupings of shrubs, and a prairie garden were all part of the plan. When

Violets grow to a height of about 6 inches. Unlike grass, they rarely need mowing or wattering -- a real benefit to our stressed-out planet. But there are more benefits to come! Most of us know that violets are a host plant for about 30 types of Greater and Lesser Fritillary butterflies. There is also a specialist mining bee (*Andrena viola*) which only uses violets. And these plants are also visited by sweat bees and mason bees looking for food in early spring. As if these benefits weren't enough, the leaves, roots and seeds are eaten by songbirds, grouse, wild turkeys, bobwhite, doves and mice. Pictured are wild turkeys foraging through our backyard among blooming violets. Try some this year!

## MARCH MEETING RECAP: WILDLIFE IS NOT RANDOM Linda Ricker

The March 21, 2024 WORRVC presentation featured one of our favorite speakers, Peggy Anesi. Peggy gave a presentation about how we can learn to co-exist with the wildlife that shows up in our yards as a result of what we have planted. Regardless of whether we plant natives or cultivars of favorite ornamentals, it is a kind of “If you build it, they will come” experience. In creating our lovely gardens, we begin the process of providing for the lowest members of the food chain, the insects, including bees, butterflies, and beetles. This in turn, leads to the influx of higher and higher food chain members, hence the birds, squirrels, skunks, raccoons, and coyotes, to name a few.

Previous ways to deal with these extracurricular critters we didn’t anticipate having in our yards have not worked out as well as once thought. Activities such as hunting, annual burning of lands to keep unwanted species out, and keep brush under control, merely moved the unwanted critters elsewhere in search of more accommodating habitats, while creating other problems such as the near extinction or extirpation of certain species that used to be present.

In the 1800s, certain wildlife were already adapting to the activities of humans by moving out of the areas where human activity, whether from Native Americans or European Settlers, put a crimp on their lifestyles. Bears, mountain lions, elk, and porcupines left the area to seek more accommodating habitats that enabled them to survive, reproduce and thrive.

As humans adapted their lifestyles to new locations, animals reacted. For example, a single sod house on the prairie may have caused some creatures to reroute their daily search for food, water, and shelter. As humans began to expand into more urban areas and to create great monocultures of crops, the wildlife habitat was supplying less and less of the food, water, and shelter required. Some animals were on the verge of being eliminated. But again, animals adapted by moving into housing developments, around strip malls, or city parks.

As humans changed tactics for land management, practices such as Smokey Bear’s “You too can prevent forest fires” also prevented jack pine pinecones from dispersing their seed (which required fire to melt the resin and open the cones to allow the seed out) which in turn prevented new baby jack pines from growing. This turned out to be a near disaster for a certain warbler which lived only in

immature jack pine trees.

The problem with all these management tactics was that we were managing for only a part of the creatures on the land areas in question.

As Peggy so aptly put it, caring for the piece of the planet where we each dwell comes with a responsibility to understand the needs of all the inhabitants and learning to accommodate or alter the habitat we each manage to provide a satisfactory survival for all involved. Before we decide to eliminate a particular “nuisance” we need to understand the part they play and the situation we may have created that makes it favorable to the wildlife around us.

Peggy gave numerous examples of different habitats humans create that the wildlife find perfect for their survival. She also gave examples of how we can alter small things to discourage the wildlife we don’t necessarily want in our gardens. For example, running a radio with talk shows for a few weeks will discourage raccoons as they don’t appreciate the noise. Placing an ammonia soaked rag near an unwanted squirrel nest in your attic will cause the squirrels to vacate.

The basic concept Peggy put across to us was that with a bit of understanding of how the wildlife behaves and the habitats they are looking for just to survive can save us a lot of headaches and give us more ability to enjoy the wildlife that accompanies our gardening activities. There are numerous examples of wildlife from the smallest mice and voles to various types of birds like the garbage man vultures, as well as mammals like skunks, raccoons and whistle pigs (another name for woodchucks) that Peggy shared that can be seen by going to our website at [www.wildonesrrvc.org/Monthly\\_Meetings.html](http://www.wildonesrrvc.org/Monthly_Meetings.html)

Co-existing with the wildlife that shows up in the native gardens we have created is another part of the learning process that will help us sustain this great place we call Earth for many generations of humans, plants and animals, and provide us with unending hours of education and enjoyment as we learn more about how all of Earth’s creatures can co-exist. Many thanks are again due to Peggy Anesi for her great educational and entertaining presentation.



**Peggy Anesi**

## 2024 NATIVE PLANT SALE Janet Giesen



Photo by Janet Giesen

We are excited to announce that our annual native plant sale is now underway!

We have carefully selected over 70 native plant species for rain gardens, butterfly gardens, pollinator gardens, and to attract insects and birds. Both the online plant sale portal and the paper brochure include information that will help you select plants for your gardening needs. Knowledgeable volunteers will be available on pickup days to assist you with your purchases and if you have questions. We will be offering several additional plant species that will be available during the public sale dates only; these plants cannot be pre-ordered.

### Ordering Native Plants

Place your order using our 2024 Native Plant Sale Online Portal (<https://shop.wildonesrrvc.org/>) or Mail your order form (<https://wildonesrrvc.org/2024/PlantSales/Wild-Ones-RRVC-2024-Plant-Sale-Brochure.pdf>) to Ginnie Watson, 3703 Highcrest Rd, Rockford, IL 61107-2162.

**Advance orders are due Friday, April 26.** This year we will once again offer a members-only pickup on Thursday, May 9 from 3 to 7 p.m., followed by order pickups and public sales on Friday, May 10 from 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturday, May 11 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

We strongly encourage you to place orders early to improve your chances of getting the plants you want. Quantities are limited and some plants sell out quickly.

### Pick up Location

The pickup location is 4601 Paulson Rd. (same as Paladin Parkway), Caledonia IL, just off East Riverside Boulevard and I-90 on the east side of Rockford, IL. A map is available online or in the brochure.



© Alan Branhagen

*Get More Involved with Your Wild Ones Chapter!*

### Volunteers Needed at Nicholas Conservatory and Klehm Arboretum Spring Events!

We are looking for a few volunteers to help sell native plants at two local venues this spring:  
 Nicholas Conservatory Annual Butterfly Exhibit, Saturday, May 11 and Sunday, May 12  
 Klehm Arboretum Garden Fair Weekend, Saturday, June 1 and Sunday, June 2.

Volunteers will work with seasoned RRVC members at our information booth, handing out literature, answering questions, and helping sell plants. Shift times vary and are flexible. Follow the steps below to sign up online. If you have any questions or issues, contact Kim Lowman Vollmer at [kimlowvol@aol.com](mailto:kimlowvol@aol.com) or 815-397-6044 if you are interested in volunteering for either or both of these events.

#### Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

1. Click this link to go to our invitation page on SignUp: <https://signup.com/go/PfFjCWz>
2. Enter your email address: (You will NOT need to register an account on SignUp)
3. Sign up! Choose your spots - SignUp will send you an automated confirmation and reminders. **We would love to have you join us!**



# 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](http://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.

## 195 memberships as of March 21, 2024

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

- Cynthia Chmell, Rockford
- Larry Hughes, Rockford
- Hannah Kaytonah, Loves Park
- Mark & Laurie Luthin, Belvidere
- Thomas & Nancy Mangan, Clare
- Dennis McFall, Rockford
- Chad McKenna, Rockford
- Wendy Mertes, Oregon

### Welcome to our new member(s)!

- Pamela Berkenpas, Caledonia
- Rosemarie Hengels, Belvidere
- Larry Hughes, Rockford
- Hannah Kaytonah, Loves Park
- Ruth Kula, Rockford
- Adam Ludewig, Rockford
- Chad McKenna, Rockford
- Eugene McMahan, Polo
- Deanna Wolfe, Durand

### We appreciate your support!

## Anniversaries:

- 15 Years:
  - Cynthia Nelson, DeKalb
- 10 Years:
  - Mark & Laurie Luthin, Belvidere
- 5 Years:
  - Michelle DeGraw, Capron
  - Gloria Powell, Belvidere

It is preferred that renewal memberships be submitted through the Member Center online (<https://members.wildones.org/join/>) 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](mailto: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

*Become a member today:  
 New member get a Doug Tallamy book while supplies last!*

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

- President**
- Treasurer**
- Booth Coordinator**
- Plant Sale Volunteers**
- Show Me, Help Me Coordinator**
- Plant Rescue Coordinator**
- Publicity Coordinator**





ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Cathy Johnson

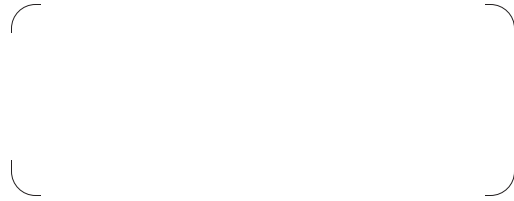
2205 S. Perryville Rd. PMB 191

Rockford, IL, 61108

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## DON'T BECOME EXTINCT!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 04/01/2024, 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](mailto:janetgiesen@gmail.com).

## ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER BOARD AND COORDINATORS

### BOARD

*President:* Jerry Paulson

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*Secretary:* Cathy Johnson (815) 978.0865

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*Treasurer:* Janet Giesen (815) 762.5912

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*Board members:*

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*Merchandise coordinator:* Cynthia Chmell

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Ginnie Watson (as above)

Cynthia Nelson [cnelson18@niu.edu](mailto:cnelson18@niu.edu)

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Linda Tabb Ricker (as to the left)

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*Show Me/Help Me coordinator:*

Linda Tabb Ricker (as to the left)

*Social media coordinator:* Jessie Crow Mermel

(as to the left)

*Tree & shrub sale coordinator:* Brian Hale

(815) 289.2384 [treeandshrubsale@gmail.com](mailto: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)

### APPOINTED COORDINATORS

*Booth coordinator:* [open position]

*Library coordinator:* Ginnie Watson

(815) 398.0138 [vsatson47@aol.com](mailto:vsatson47@aol.com)