

A Brief History of Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter

The First 2 ½ Years

By Fran Lowman

March 1994 through December 1996

1994

On March 5, 1994 a symposium titled "Going Wild" was held in the Jarrett Prairie Center at the Byron Forest Preserve. It was put on by the Preserve's naturalist, Josh Skolnick. Several Wild Ones' members from out of the area were presenters. Lisa Johnson and Fran Lowman attended, as well as about fifteen other participants.

On June 30, 1994 Josh mailed out an attractive and informative four-page -- "Newsletter of the Rock River Valley Wild Ones, Volume One, Number One, June-August 1994" titled ECHINACEA. The newsletter stated there were twenty-one paid members. He scheduled the first meeting of the Rock River Chapter for July 7th.

On July 7, 1994 the first meeting of the RRV Chapter was held. The Minutes from this initial meeting included -- "16 members attending this meeting; 22 total members as of 7/7/94." The following officers were chosen, to expire in July 1995.

President: Josh Skolnick
Vice President: Joe Jonakin
Secretary: Nancy Blank
Treasurer: Fran Lowman

Josh didn't often delegate; he assumed duties of other offices as well as his own! "Significant Dates In Wild Ones History" from National in Milwaukee notes RRV was recognized as a chapter in July 1994 (the sixth chapter to be formed).

The August 18, 1994 Meeting Minutes reported the membership at twenty-seven. The roster showed that Lisa Johnson, Fran Lowman and Anne Meyer joined in May 1994 -- charter members. Cecilia Coles and Joe Jonakin joined in July, and Cloe Sterner joined in August of 1994.

The December 1994 Meeting Minutes reported that five of the thirty-one members attended. Activities during the first eighteen months included a Show-Me-Day, seed collection days and propagation, as well as indoor and outdoor programs. The first chapter yard tour was on August 18, 1995; two member's homes were visited in the Byron area.

1995

The October 21, 1995 Meeting Minutes listed the following as officers:

President: Josh Skolnick
Vice President: Joe Jonakin
Secretary: Mary Anne Mathwich
Treasurer: Fran Lowman

The minutes stated that Josh had moved out of the area; three members attended -- Lisa Johnson, Nancy Blank, and Mary Anne Mathwich; and the membership had dropped below the minimum requirement to be a chapter (20). These three members made plans to rejuvenate the chapter.

The November 16, 1995 Meeting Minutes stated "twelve people attended, seven of who were members of the Rock River Chapter." The following were elected to take office January 1, 1996.

President: Mary Anne Mathwich (conduct meetings, community liaison)
Vice President: Cloe Sturner (programs including publicity)
Secretary: Lisa Johnson (minutes, correspondence)
Treasurer: Fran Lowman (financial accounts, budget)

The above officers met on November 27, 1995 to plan for the next year. Lisa became our hostess at the regular meeting place in the Jarrett Nature Center, including doing the reserving and arranging of our meeting rooms (and she is still going!).

In 1995 RRV donated \$50 to the Lorrie Otto Seeds For Education Fund.
The checkbook balance on December 31, 1995 was \$675.54.

1996

1996 was a busy and productive year. Under Mary Anne Mathwich's leadership membership increased and the chapter strengthened. Lisa created colorful flyers with sketches to promote upcoming activities. Mary Anne made a list of 23 of "Our Natural Areas" including comments on each place. In May the meeting was held for the first time at Enders Greenhouse in the Village of Cherry Valley. In July we did a yard tour car-pooling to Mary Anne's and then on to Fran's. In August we parted from our usual meeting place at Byron Forest Preserve to held our meeting at the Winnebago County Forest Preserve Headquarters. In November RRV voted to become stewards of a 3 acre prairie on Perryville in Rockford.

The minutes in 1996 do not list the total number of members until the October meeting which gave it as forty-five members.

The Illinois Department of Revenue refused to grant RRV tax exempt status even though the WO organization is under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and the State of Wisconsin grants tax exempt status to Wisconsin chapters.

At the November 21, 1996 meeting, when no one else was willing to hold office, the following agreed to serve again and were elected to take office January 1996:

President: Mary Anne Mathwich
Secretary: Lisa Johnson
Treasurer: Fran Lowman

The checkbook balance on December 31, 1996 was \$766.33; household memberships around fifty.