

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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All articles for the July 2017 newsletter, must be submitted to:

Constance@wildonesrrvc.org
by June 23, 2017.

Gardening with Nature

Thursday, June 15, 2017

Location: Rock Valley College
Physical Education Center PEC0110 (lower level)
3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, 61114

Time: 7:00 p.m.



Acclaimed author, educator, and naturalist Ray Wiggers relates how the vast array of wildflowers, grasses, and woody plants native to the Upper Midwest can successfully grace our gardens, as well as our prairies, wetlands, and woodlands. Included in this popular talk is an overview of how human beings have radically changed our living landscape in the past 200 years, and why it is crucial to recognize our state's three main soil types and use them as a guide in selecting the best indigenous plants for residential settings. Top native plant species for Illinois gardens will also be identified and discussed in this richly illustrated and fact-filled presentation.

This program is free and open to the public.
For more information, call (815) 332.3343.



Message from the President Constance McCarthy



Constance McCarthy
photo by Tim Lewis

Celebrating a Gem of a Man

Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find an announcement of festivities that commemorated the retirement of Lee Johnson from his position as Master Bander at Sand Bluff Bird Observatory at Colored Sands Forest Preserve. After 50 years in that role, Lee certainly deserves to be feted.

Hopefully, you have had a chance to meet Lee and his wife, Lynda, at one of our monthly Wild Ones meetings. Long-standing chapter members, they have been coming to meetings for many years. I can safely say that never has there been a time when I have seen Lee and Lynda, that I have not come away having learned at least one new thing (usually, a multitude of new things).

Lynda told me that Lee's interest in native plants goes back to the 1950s, when he used to go around to natural areas with George Fell (also the subject of an article in this newsletter). This was long before people began saving prairies and growing native plants in their home landscapes.

In the 1960s, when George Fell wrote the first legislation in the country regarding nature preserves, Lee went to Springfield to lobby in support of the bill. One of the legislators he lobbied was Senator Paul Simon. Years later, in the early 1990s, Lynda had invited Senator Simon to

speak about water at a League of Women Voters event. When they picked him up at O'Hare for the ride to Rockford, he remembered speaking with Lee all those years ago about the Nature Preserves bill. While I have not known Lee for 30 years (my loss!), I have already seen and experienced so many times how his incredibly deep knowledge, combined with his boundless passion for all aspects of the natural world, really make a lasting impression.

Lynda mentioned that whenever they travel, Lee gives a running commentary about the geology, vegetation, and wildlife of the area they are visiting - including birds, of course. When Lynda was first learning about birds and plants, Lee wouldn't just tell her the name of the bird or plant. He insisted that she use field guides and tell him what she thought they were viewing. Lynda also drew pictures of the birds to help her remember their names. Studying all these aspects helped her to truly learn (and remember!) many details about native plants and wildlife.

Lee is such an asset not just to our chapter, but to the community and the greater society. If ever someone understood that everything is connected, it is indeed Lee. We are so lucky to have him in our midst.

P.S. A tip of the hat to Mike Eickman, also a Wild Ones member, who is the new Master Bander. The banding station is in good hands. Here's to 50+ more years of success for an organization with which our chapter has been fortunate to partner numerous times in the past!

Chapter Mentor Program

Summer is ramping up! It may seem like fall is far off in the distance, but it will be here before you know it! And for the Rock River Valley Wild Ones Chapter, fall brings the tree and shrub sale. Get ready now by planning how and where to fit native trees and shrubs into your landscape. If you're not sure how to get started, a Chapter mentor can help you! Chapter mentors can also help their mentees incorporate other native plants into their landscape.

Of the many benefits of Wild Ones membership, the Mentor Program matches less experienced

members who request a mentor with more experienced members who are willing to share their knowledge about native plants.

Becoming a mentor is a wonderful opportunity to further the Wild Ones mission and assisting a less experienced member can be an invaluable experience! Members are needed now to help fill recent requests for mentors.

To request a mentor or offer to be a Chapter mentor, contact Melanie Costello, Mentor Program Coordinator, at melanie@wildonesrrvc.org or at 815-751-1583.

Lee Johnson Retires as Master Bander

Festivities were held on Sunday, May 21, 2017 to honor Lee Johnson upon his retirement as Master Bander in charge of Sand Bluff Bird Observatory for 50 years (1967-2017). The Observatory and banding station are located at Colored Sands Forest Preserve, 4 miles northwest of Shirland, Illinois. This is also the location of the annual Bird Fest, where our chapter has displayed our information booth and sold native plants for many years.

Attendees were invited to arrive anytime after 8:00 a.m. to watch the birds being banded for the last day of spring banding and share their memories with Lee. Light refreshments were served. In the afternoon, there was a program of history and stories presented by Lynda Johnson and former volunteers Lisa Weckerly and Brian Russart.

This event joyfully celebrated the first 50 years of Sand Bluff Bird Observatory and looked forward to the next 50 years with new Master Bander, Mike Eickman, and a dedicated and skilled crew of volunteers. Also celebrated was the assistance from friends who have supported SBBO over the years with donations and passion for preserving birds and the natural world. The organizers of the event thanked the hard-working staff at the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County for their support, as well.

May Meeting Recap Cathy Johnson

Photo by Ginnie Watson

Ornamental Invasive Plants: Their Threat to Natural Areas and Native Communities

Chris Evans is currently an Extension Forestry and Research Specialist with the University of Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and vice president of the southern chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society, chair of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Illinois Forestry Association, and associate editor of the *Natural Areas Journal*. He has served as the chair of the Illinois Invasive Plant Species Council, vice president of the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, and vice chair of the National Association of Invasive Plant Councils. He has a B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Murray State University and an M.S. in Forestry from Iowa State University.

Chris opened his talk by mentioning that he is not a native of Illinois, and that when he made plans to move here, people would joke with him, saying that Illinois is nothing but cornfields. Being a forester, he was pleasantly surprised to learn about the diversity of the forests in Illinois. Although Illinois is known as the Prairie State, historically about 37% of the land area of the state was forest. Currently, that figure is down to about 12%, or about 4.5 million acres, which is actually up about 1.5 million acres from the low point of the late 1800's when it dropped to under 3 million acres. And although forests make up only about 12% of the state, they are critical to about 70% of the diversity, with about 180 species of native trees and shrubs. The forest ecology also supports a vast number and variety of other native plants.

One of the greatest threats to all of this diversity are the invasive species.

Chris defined an invasive as a species that is not native to the ecosystem in which it is found, and which has often escaped from one ecosystem and naturalized to another system, causing damage and posing a threat to the native ecology. As an example of this, Chris displayed a picture from a forested area which had become inhabited by invasive plants on three levels. The canopy had been taken over by Oriental bittersweet, the middle area was filled with Japanese honeysuckle, and the lower areas with Autumn olive, demonstrating how invasives often occur together to create an even bigger threat to the native ecology, as well as a greater obstacle to its elimination.

Invasives are now being universally recognized as a threat to conservation and our natural communities. The U.S. Forest System lists them as one of the major threats to forests and grasslands, along with climate change and habitat loss. In Illinois, there is a conservation plan known as the Wildlife Action Plan, designed to protect and save our wildlife. That plan, which can be found at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources website at <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/iwap/Pages/default.aspx>, lists invasives as one of the six primary challenges to conserving our wildlife species. Invasives can impact the land in a number of ways, including adversely affecting its health, potential, productivity, cost of management, value, and recreational use. Being a native of Georgia, Chris illustrated this with a reference to the effect of kudzu in that state. Kudzu will reduce the value of

May Meeting Recap (cont'd)



May speaker Chris Evans & Vice President Jerry Paulson

land significantly. A tongue-in-cheek response to the question of how to deal with kudzu has been, "It's easy to deal with kudzu - you move north." Unfortunately, kudzu is now found in Illinois at least as far up as Will County. At its peak, Illinois had a total of about 200 locations where kudzu had been identified. Through aggressively fighting this invasive, the problem in Illinois has been reduced significantly, and it is now down to under 100 locations comprising less than 100 acres.

Chris identified some of the invasive plants posing the greatest threats in Illinois.

Bush Honeysuckle (several varieties of *Lonicera*)

This plant is extremely aggressive and can quickly move in and dominate an area. It is considered, by some, to be the biggest threat to forests. As a 20-25' shrub, it competes so successfully for nutrients and water in the understory, that it can reduce the growth rate of neighboring native trees by 50%, and this includes trees that would typically grow to 60-80 feet in height. It creates so much shade that nothing can grow under it. The phenology of this plant gives it an edge over other plants: it emerges 2-3 weeks earlier and stays green 2-3 weeks later than other shrubs, with these additional weeks of photosynthesis allowing it to outcompete the natives. Not only does bush honeysuckle adversely affect native plants, it also has led to an unexpected impact on some animals. By leafing so early, it usurps some of the sunning areas that snakes and other reptiles use in the spring, and many of the reptiles that had used those areas are now abandoning sites where it has taken over.

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Most gardeners are probably familiar with this plant. Almost no wildlife eats this plant, leading to

changes in foraging behavior among some animals. With less space and fewer natives, some animals now concentrate their foraging on native plants in smaller areas. As habitat has been lost to the invading garlic mustard, the population of native plants in an area with garlic mustard are further reduced by increased foraging of natives, creating a cycle that continues to adversely impact them.

Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Once established, this species is highly invasive. Similar to multiflora rose, autumn olive forms such dense thickets that they can't be walked through, making it very difficult to control. Burned, mowed or cut plants will resprout vigorously. Young seedlings and sprouts can be pulled by hand early in the spring, when the ground is still moist and soft enough to allow removal of the entire root system, which must be removed to prevent regrowth. For larger plants, cutting off the plant and applying a glyphosate herbicide, such as Roundup, to the stump can be effective in killing the root system.

Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatis*)

Chris reported having seen a great example of the impact of this plant recently in Jo Daviess County. An extremely aggressive vine, it gets high up in the tops of trees and wraps around them, weighting them down. What's being found in southern Illinois is that trees that have a lot of bittersweet in them are more subject to damage due to the added weight. This is what he had observed in Jo Daviess County, where a large tree that had come down was the only one around that was covered with bittersweet.

Illinois is home to quite a few invasive species. Referring to the Illinois Wildlife Plan he mentioned earlier, Chris displayed a chart created by data pulled from that plan. The chart indicates the number of species of Illinois animals within five groups - mussels, fishes, reptiles and amphibians, birds, and mammals -- in greatest need of conservation (SGNC). About 240 species within these groups are noted as rare and declining. Of those 240 species, 152 (63%) are threatened by other invasive species, including plants.

Chris showed a picture of a plant, which was identified by the audience as green trillium, a rare and endangered plant only found in Missouri, Kentucky, and Illinois. Surrounding the trillium were

May Meeting Recap (cont'd)

Japanese honeysuckle and Oriental bittersweet. When he first came across it and photographed it, this green trillium population had only about thirteen plants. Chris and co-workers began work at that site, and there are now more than thirty of these rare plants. This is basically due to removing the invasives and continuing to manage the site.

Introduction of Invasives

Invasive species are introduced to areas in a number of ways; some are accidental and some are not. Invasive species have arrived accidentally through seeds or plants as contaminants in other materials, in ballast water, and in packing materials. One of the most recent invasive species to have reached Illinois is the Emerald ash borer, which came to this country as a larval form on solid wood packing material, was able to complete its life cycle, emerge as an adult, and successfully adapt to its new environment. The majority of invasive species that were introduced intentionally include plant species for erosion control and ornamental landscaping. Many of these plants have moved around and become a problem as they have aggressively exploited their new ecosystems. One of the methods of controlling the spread of some of these has been the creation of sterile varieties. However, as Chris and others who advocate for the use of native plants would say, a better choice would be a suitable native plant rather than a sterile invasive.

Ornamental Invasive Plants

Good ornamentals and bad invasives share some traits that make it easy to understand how plants in the one category may eventually work their way into the other:

- Good ornamentals are hardy and easy to grow, bad invasives are habitat jumpers that seem to grow anywhere
- Good ornamentals are carefree, they don't require a lot of attention, bad invasives outcompete other plants and take care of themselves
- Good ornamentals are easy to propagate, bad invasives reproduce easily
- Good ornamentals have showy, abundant flowers, bad invasives usually have abundant seeds
- Good ornamentals attract birds, bad invasives have bird-dispersed seeds
- Good ornamentals are not affected by our pests and diseases, invasives are not affected by our native pests and diseases

So, in some ways, it appears that we're selecting for plants that could become invasive and it should come as no surprise to learn that 80% of the woody invasive plants started out as ornamentals.

The list of invasive plants in Illinois that started out as ornamentals is long, but Chris showed pictures of a few of these, including mimosa, knotweed, buckthorn, Dame's rocket, Japanese barberry, Russian and autumn olive, Chinese yam, Callery pear, and burning bush. Chris shared a pastime he enjoys, which is looking online for invasive plants. On a recent online hunt, he found a tree called Paulownia (if you're interested in reading about this tree, visit the Fast-Growing-Trees website at www.fast-growing-trees.com/Cold-Hardy-Empress-Tree.htm). He says this tree, tagged in the ad as "the fastest growing tree in the world," is a big issue in the southern third of Illinois. More recently he found a website selling Japanese knotweed online. The good news is that Illinois is listed on that website, along with other states, to which Japanese knotweed cannot be sold. The bad news is that the ad also displayed a disclaimer that said: "Do not believe the anti-intellectual eco-Nazis. This is not an invasive."

Around this time year, the flowering white Bradford pear, or Callery pear trees, can be seen all over Illinois. Chris refers to this as Callery pear because Callery is the parent plant; Bradford is just one variety. The Callery has also spread vastly in Ohio, and research was conducted there to find out where it was coming from and what was contributing to this invasion. Genetic work revealed that every one of the varieties of these Callery pears, which had originally been planted as an ornamental, was rapidly moving into the natural areas.

Best Management Practices

In sharing some ideas for choices that we can make to help reduce the impact of invasive plants, the first, most obvious, and most important, is to reduce the use of invasive plant species in landscaping. Chris emphasized that we should stop planting these invasive plants! Three of the most popular ornamentals that are beginning to move into our natural areas are Japanese barberry, burning bush, and Callery pear. The Bradford pear started out being reported as totally sterile, that it didn't have fertile fruit, and it would not spread. While this was true for a several years, things changed when new varieties of the tree were developed in an attempt to fortify the species.

May Meeting Recap (cont'd)

The original Bradford pear had a weakness that tended to result in the tree breaking easily. As new varieties were developed, they were genetically different enough to lead to an ability to outcross. One of the interesting facts is that when they do outcross now, they tend to revert back to the original tree, which was much less attractive, being shorter and scrubby, with thorns. Last year, data began to be collected which shows that there has been a very rapid invasion of these trees, and they are now in every county in Illinois.

Most people are familiar with burning bush and aware of how prolific it is. In the 5,000 acre southern Illinois forest in which Chris works, this is probably the number one invasive species problem

there for invading higher quality forests and being very difficult to control.

Recent data have revealed that Japanese barberry, the third of the big three invasive species problems in Illinois, is also becoming much more invasive to the higher quality forests than had been previously believed. Again, the best deterrent is to avoid its use and choose a native alternative.

The good news, amid the discouraging reports of invasion by the plants mentioned here, is that Chris has been told, on a number of occasions over the past couple of years, that native plants are the fastest growing sector in the green industry, and that the sale of invasive ornamentals is dropping off.

Resources and Suggestions

- Chris recommends the Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN) as a source for information and tools in identifying and dealing with invasives: <https://www.mipn.org>. They have a new brochure and mobile app for use in identifying landscaping alternatives to invasives which can be found on the Products and Publications tab at their website <https://www.mipn.org/publications/>.
- Management of corridors, odd spaces, old fields, edges and other low maintenance areas, even if they're not high quality sites. Unmanaged areas like this tend to become refuge areas for invasives.
- Educate landowners and the public. Chris provided the names of some resources he has worked with in the past to inform and educate the public about invasive species. A collection of archived information is accessible at the *Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month News Blog* (<http://illinoisisam.blogspot.com>). Illinois Invasive Species Awareness Month (ISAM) can also be found on Facebook at www.facebook.com/illinoisisam. These sites provide a wide variety of information that can be used for reference and educational purposes. Here are two posts to the ISAM blog related to invasive plant species: *Illinois Stop the Spread=Planting Success* <http://illinoisisam.blogspot.com/2014/05/illinois-stop-spread-planting-success.html> and *What You Can Do*: <https://www.invasive.org/illinois/WhatYouCanDo.html>.
- Provide input on local and statewide ordinances on invasive species. Have your voice be heard and say that you're concerned about them. The Illinois Exotic Weed Act, 525 ILCS 10 defines and regulates invasive plant species. It is updated from time to time and initially identified only three species, multiflora rose, honeysuckle and purple loosestrife, with kudzu and buckthorn added in the 1990's, but in 2015 several more species were added.

Chris closed his talk with a story of how ticks and tick-borne diseases have been impacted by changes in invasive plants. Tick populations need higher humidity sites, well developed shrub layers, and access to small birds and mammals. Invasive shrubs typically have a much higher density, higher humidity, support higher populations of small rodents, and thus, higher tick populations. Recent studies have shown that ticks seem to prefer areas of invasive plant concentration, especially areas of Japanese barberry, honeysuckle, and Oriental bittersweet, and occur in much higher numbers where these invasive plants are concentrated. You can learn more about these studies by visiting these websites: Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies at <http://www.caryinstitute.org/newsroom/beware-impact-invasive-plants> and National Geographic at <http://phenomena.nationalgeographic.com/2010/10/11/invasive-shrub-increases-risk-of-human-disease-via-ticks-deer-and-bacteria/>.

Additional Resources:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IWAP/Pages/InvasiveSpecies.aspx>

USDA Invasive Species: State Resources – Illinois <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/unitedstates/il.shtml>



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!!

214 memberships as of May 23, 2017

Special thanks to our members who made contributions above the basic \$37 dues!

Perry & Debbie Gay, Rockford
 Karen Retzke, Belvidere
 Virginia Rous, Rockton
 Kim Lowman Vollmer, South Beloit

Welcome to our new members!

Karen Bieschke, Rockford
 Eric Epps, Rock Falls
 Perry & Debbie Gay, Rockford
 Linda Graf, Rockford
 Robert Hess, Rockford
 Ken Kielsmeier, Oregon
 Lora McClelland & Michael Simmons, Rockford

Welcome back to our returning members!

Alyson Conn, Pecatonica
 Mindy Thompson, Rockford

New members are identified with a green ribbon on their meeting name badges. Please introduce yourself to them and help us welcome all new members to our great chapter!

50 attended the May Meeting Including 7 guests

A big thank you to our April meeting volunteers!

Greeters: Celeste Jelinek & Janaan Lewis

Refreshments: Khrista Miskell & Anita Johnson

AV/Sound Equipment: Bob Arevalo

Meeting Recap: Cathy Johnson

Photographer: Ginnie Watson

Library Assistants: Karen Matz & Cathy Johnson

Anniversaries:

15 Years:

Dan Kane, Belvidere

It is preferred that membership renewals be sent directly to the chapter for quicker processing and to avoid delays in receiving your chapter newsletter. Remember that your dues include membership in both National Wild Ones and our chapter. Please use the address below:

Sallie Krebs
 Wild Ones Rock River Valley
 7492 Renfro Rd.
 Cherry Valley, IL 61016

Your expiration date is on your chapter newsletter above your name on the label. You will be mailed a renewal reminder from the chapter two months prior to your expiration date with a completed membership form and return envelope for your convenience.

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 and email address changes to the **Membership Coordinator:** Sallie Krebs Email: membership@wildonesrrvc.org or call (815) 540-4730 if you have any questions about membership.

Wild Ones Annual Memberships:

Household is now \$40.00, Limited Income/Full-time Student" is now \$25.00 [formerly Associate (student, senior, disabled)]

Affiliate Non-Profit Organization or Educator \$90, Business \$250.

Thank you for your continuing support!

2017 Chapter Programs and Events

June 15
7:00 p.m.

Gardening with Nature

Ray Wiggers
Author and science educator

Rock Valley College
PE Center, PEC 0110
(lower level)

July 13
7:00 p.m.

The Pollination of Native Plants

Heather Holm
Author of books and lecturer
on insect pollinators
Northern Illinois University

Rock Valley College
PE Center, PEC 0110
(lower level)

July 15 & 16

Yard Tours and Lecture

Locations to be
announced

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.
 For more information, contact Bob Arevalo at (815) 332.3343



ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Pambi Camacho
1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104
PMB 233
Rockford, IL 61107

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is **6/1/2017**, 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.

Mail your renewal to:

Sallie Krebs
Wild Ones Rock River Valley
7492 Renfro Rd.
Cherry Valley, IL 61016

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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

Regular meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Rock Valley College, Physical Education Center PEC0110 (lower level), 3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, 61114.

Special meetings, outings, and events are scheduled periodically and sometimes replace the regular meeting. Contact any officer to confirm information about our next meeting.

Rock River Valley Chapter Board and Coordinators

Board

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Plant Rescues & Seed Collection:
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