

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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www.wildonesrrvc.org



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All articles for the January 2021 newsletter, must be submitted to: Jerry Paulson at paulsonjerry@aol.com by December 15, 2021

Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition

Thursday, November 18, 2021

**Time: 7:00 p.m.
via Zoom**

Wild Ones members are invited to attend our second virtual annual meeting on November 18th. This is our last meeting of the year and will include a state-of-the-chapter wrap-up, and brief reports from board members and coordinators. We will end the meeting with a virtual tour of how our members are using native plants in their yards and other locations.



Photo by Kim Lowman Vollmer

Here is the Zoom link to the annual meeting.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87297876470?pwd=RStVaHBraG52VlE5SzVHYmRiejRjdz09>

You are invited to share photos of the wildflowers and native trees and shrubs that you've planted in your own yards. We will put them into a powerpoint presentation to show during the meeting. Send your photos (jpeg or pdf preferred) to Jerry Paulson at paulsonjerry@aol.com. Please put the names of the plants on your photo.

There is no program or newsletter in December as we take time to enjoy the holidays.

Information on how to connect to the Zoom presentation will be posted on the chapter website (www.wildonesrrvc.org) and Facebook page, and distributed via email to members prior to the meeting. The program is free and open to the public. For more information call (779) 537-8939.

Message from the President Jerry Paulson



Jerry Paulson

As I'm writing this message, the news is breaking that the fate of Bell Bowl Prairie, and the habitat of the federally endangered Rusty-patched bumblebee on the grounds of the Chicago-Rockford Airport is postponed until the FAA completes a new consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Natural Land Institute, with the support of many other conservation groups,

filed a lawsuit for an injunction to stop a new access road from going through the prairie as part of the expansion of the cargo area by the Greater Rockford Airport Authority. The road will destroy habitat for the bumblebee, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service put a temporary hold on the road construction that expires on November 1st, when the bee goes into winter hibernation.

The fate of the access road, and the bumblebee has now been postponed until the spring of 2022. In the meantime the GRAA will work with the FAA to redesign a stormwater detention basin to avoid destruction of the remaining part of the 8,000-year old prairie.

The battle between a tiny bumblebee and the fleets of airplanes that would use the new cargo areas captured the imagination of the media and thousands of concerned citizens who emailed, texted and called elected and appointed officials from the Governor on down urging them to intervene to stop the destruction. Barbara Williams, our own Wild Ones member and an expert on local bees and butterflies produced this video about the Rusty-patched bumblebee for a meeting about the threat to the prairie:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgMin6YfzFA>

Although Wild Ones generally does not get involved with political issues, this is an issue that directly threatens to destroy one of the last, rare remnants of native prairie in northern Illinois and at least two endangered species of native plants, the Prairie Dandelion and Large-flowered Beardtongue. Bell Bowl Prairie is the last place that the prairie dandelion is known in our county.

The battle to save the Rusty-patched bumblebee and Bell Bowl Prairie is not won, only postponed. Go to the website www.SaveBellBowlPrairie.org to find out the fate of the prairie and the Rusty-patched bumblebee and take whatever action you can to protect this rare prairie. For a good explanation about why it is important to save natural prairie remnants, see this recent article on WTTW: <https://bit.ly/3GOXvKv>

We are making plans for next spring's Native Plant Sale and looking for volunteers who are willing to help. We especially need someone to call Wild Ones members to help with the sale itself. If you have time next spring to call members, please email me or Janet Giesen.

We do not meet in December, so I wish you all happy holidays and a healthy New Year.



Photo by Jessie Crow Mermel

What's Fruiting? Lenae Weichel

Rhus glabra
(Anacardiaceae)

Cashew Family
Smooth Sumac

As frost arrives and autumn leaves brown and fall, the conical clusters of wine-red berries atop smooth sumac shrubs still stand through the winter until eaten by birds and small mammals. This shrub, which ranges from 3 to 10 feet in height (or, rarely, up to twice that) is found in all but the wettest soils and prefers full sun but tolerates partial shade. Slightly-flattened twigs and leafstalks are smooth with a reddish tinge and sport odd-numbered, pinnate, green, toothed leaflets with white undersides that turn striking firey colors in autumn.

Panicles of pale green flowers (up to 6 inches tall) appear in the uppermost branches in late spring and bloom for a few weeks. Smooth Sumac is dioecious; meaning each shrub has either all male (staminate) or all female (pistillate) flowers. Upon pollination, the pistillate flowers bear tall clusters of red, hairy drupes each containing one smooth seed. These fruits are eaten through the fall and winter months by many resident and migrating birds including grouse, doves, thrashers, bobwhite quail, phoebes, warblers, cardinals, and flickers. Skunk and other small mammals also feast on the fruit while white-tailed deer and cottontail rabbits browse the bark and sapling stems. Smooth sumac is a host plant for a wide variety of lepidoptera and other insects and the flowers are visited by a large number of bees, flies, and wasps in search of the nectar and pollen (male flowers only) while in bloom.

Smooth sumac is found in every county in Illinois and in all of the 48 contiguous states. It is visually



Photo by Lenae Weichel



Photo by Lenae Weichel

similar to staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina/hirta*) until closer inspection shows the velvety twigs and hairy leafstalks on the latter. These can also hybridize with offspring showing shared features (complicating identification). Another similar shrub is the winged sumac (*Rhus copallina*) which is distinguished by prominent mid-rib wings.

Smooth sumac fruits, bark, and leaves are edible and have been used by humans for centuries. Remains of smooth sumac leaves have been found in ancient pipe residue and alcohol extracts of the bark have antibacterial properties. Leaves can be used in teas and the sour, ripe berries can be soaked in cold water then discarded and the water sweetened to make a drink akin to pink lemonade that is full of vitamin C. The bark, berries, and leaves are high in tannins and were cooked down by European settlers to make black ink and Native Americans used various parts of the plants and extraction methods to create dye colors ranging from yellow to orange and red to black. Also native to Europe and Asia, sumac berries were frequently harvested, dried, and ground to a powder to add a tart flavor and bright color to all manner of foods.

Often initially planted by birds, sumac tends to form clonal clumps and spread quickly by rhizomes. Individual shrubs are not long-lived but they can spread aggressively and be difficult to eradicate where not wanted. However, if you have a place they can spread out a bit and fill in, you will be rewarded by their beauty throughout the seasons and the views of the varied wildlife that visit.

October Program Recap: Jerry Paulson

Conservation Planning in the Raccoon Creek Watershed

Raccoon Creek is one of a few cold-water streams in northern Illinois. It is a spring-fed stream with exceptional water quality that supports a diversity of fishes, including several rare and endangered species. The southern half of the watershed in Illinois includes many natural, high quality wetlands, and significant efforts have been made over the years to protect and restore these natural areas.

The protection of the wetlands in the Raccoon Creek watershed has been a priority for the Natural Land Institute (NLI) for more than 50 years. Kerry Leigh, Executive Director of NLI explained the effort to develop a Conservation Plan for the Raccoon Creek watershed at our virtual program on October 21st. The creek flows through NLI's Nygren Wetland Preserve.

Raccoon Creek consists of two forks that begin in the glaciated uplands south of Wisconsin State Route 213 northwest of the City of Beloit and converge just south of the Stateline in Illinois before flowing into the Pecatonica River near its confluence with the Rock River at Rockton, Illinois. In the Illinois portion of the watershed, the main stem of Raccoon Creek, which runs 8.39 miles, fully supports aquatic life but does not support primary contact due to elevated fecal coliform levels from unknown sources.

NLI began acquisition of land for what became Rockton Bog Nature Preserve in 1964. In 2016 staff of the Natural Land Institute rediscovered a rare natural wetland located along Raccoon Creek that had been lost since 1947 when Dr. Egbert W. Fell, the father of NLI's founder, George B. Fell, and author of the Flora of Winnebago County, first visited the site. After further study of the wetland the NLI staff discovered many rare species of plants, including some that were new to the county, and rediscovered two species that had not been seen for several decades. This botanically rich area is adjacent to a large complex of wetlands protected through the Federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) just north of the confluence of the West and East Branches of the Creek.

The acquisition of 38.34 acres of land along the creek in the area known as "Lost Flora Fen" was completed on February 15, 2018. The property encompasses 23 acres of wetlands, including 16 acres of rare natural community described as a "shallow bog" by Egbert W. Fell in the 1955 Flora of

Winnebago County. A similar natural community is preserved in the Rockton Bog State Natural Area, a dedicated nature preserve located east of the fen. Although not a true "bog" these rare wetlands are formed in muck soils in shallow depressions fed by groundwater in the sandy outwash deposits along the creek. The plants found growing in these wetlands are typical of sedge meadows found in the region, but also include many species that are found in the bogs and fens of northeastern Illinois.

Raccoon Creek is classified as a Class B-Highly Valued Stream by the IDNR, and is one of the few cold-water streams in northern Illinois. It contains a good diversity of fish species, including four that are on the list of Threatened Species in Illinois: Iowa darter, Starhead topminnow, Brook lamprey, and, Brassy minnow. A larval Mudpuppy salamander, another Threatened Species in Illinois, was found in the creek downstream from the confluence of the West and East Forks, and the only population of Redside dace known in Illinois was found in Raccoon Creek in the same area.

Leigh explained that a watershed includes all of the land that drains into a specific stream, creek or river. The water quality of the waterbody reflects the land use and land management practices in the watershed. The discovery of Lost Flora Fen and other natural areas along the creek sparked the effort to make a plan to protect the entire creek corridor.

The primary goals of the plan are to: 1) create an interconnected corridor of protected and restored land along the creek that is resilient to changes in climate, 2) protect important wetlands and riparian habitat along the streams, 3) create ecological buffers along the streams to protect the high water quality, 4) expand the area of protected land around natural areas like Lost Flora Fen, and 5) identify potential sources of bacterial contamination of the creek and develop recommendations to reduce them.

Based upon the recommendations of the watershed plan, NLI recently acquired 357 acres of land that adjoins Lost Flora Fen that includes 1.5 miles of the creek and remnant sedge meadow along the creek fed by a number of springs and seeps. Like the adjacent Lost Flora Fen, several of the plants on the new property are rare, threatened or endangered. The property was identified as

a priority for acquisition in the Raccoon Creek Watershed Plan. A multiyear ecosystem restoration project is being undertaken on the property.

Although the watershed plan was completed in 2019, Kerry said that outreach and educational efforts had to be postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The conservation group will be reaching out next year to landowners to encourage them

to participate in the Illinois Working Lands, Water and Wildlife Conservation Partnership which provides funding to protect private wetlands and woodlands.

A recording of the program is available on the WORRV website at: https://www.wildonesrrvc.org/Monthly_Meetings.html

Conference GreenTown Rockford- Friday, November 12, 2021

Sustain Rockford and Seven Generations Ahead are producing an all-day conference at Embassy Suites Downtown Rockford to address how climate solutions and equity go hand-in-hand to create a healthy, sustainable region for all. Partners for the conference include the Boone County Conservation District, Forest Preserves of

Winnebago County, City of Rockford, Rockford Park District, Severson Dells Nature Center, NAACP, Ellis Heights Neighborhood, Transform Rockford, and the Region I Planning Council. To learn more about the conference and to register go to: www.greentownconference.com.

Membership Updates 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!

197 memberships as of October 23, 2021

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

Kirby & Dan Doyle, Rockford
Bryan & Peggy Redington, Rockford
Paul & Carol Soderholm, Mount Morris
Dianne & Dennis Stenerson, Rockford
Barbara & Daniel Williams, Rockford

Anniversaries:

10 Years:

Joe Hemlock, Rockford
Audrey Johnson, Rockford
Barbara Kober, Rockford

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. 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

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 weeks prior to your expiration date.

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: 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!



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

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 11/1/2021, 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:

WILD ONES

ATTN: MEMBERSHIP
2285 BUTTE DES MORTS BEACH RD
NEENAH, WI 54912-1274

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

Due to COVID 19 restrictions on gatherings of more than 50 people we are not holding our regular meetings on the third Thursday of the month at Rock Valley College. Instead, we are meeting over ZOOM or posting videos on YouTube of the program. 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

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Vice President: [open position]
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Board member at-large:
Kim Lowman Vollmer (815) 397.6044
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Board member at-large: Linda Tabb Ricker
(217) 649.3966 greencreations.lejoi@gmail.com

APPOINTED COORDINATORS

Booth coordinator: [open position]
Facebook coordinator: Sallie Krebs (815) 540.4730 membershipworrvc@gmail.com
Library coordinator: Ginnie Watson
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Membership coordinator: Sallie Krebs
(as to the above)
Mentor coordinator: [open position]
Merchandise coordinator: Cynthia Chmell
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Native plant sale: Janet Giesen (as to the left)
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Newsletter: production coordinator: Jessie Crow Mermel (815) 955.0653 serendipitree@gmail.com

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Show Me/Help Me coordinator:
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Volunteer coordinator: [open position]
Website coordinator: Janet Giesen (as to the left)
Youth education & grants coordinator: Kim Lowman Vollmer (as to the left)