

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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



Articles for the March 2013 newsletter, must be submitted to the Newsletter Chair, at: Pambi@wildonesrrvc.org February 23, 2013.

Role of Fire in Northern Illinois
Thursday, February 21, 2013

Location: Burpee Museum of Natural History

737 N. Main St., Rockford IL

Time: 7:00 pm

FIRE!

This can be the terrified scream made to warn others of an impending disaster...or, the cautious exclamation of an expert conducting a beneficial prescribed burn.



photo by Chris Mann.

There is certainly

a proper time and place for a productive, well managed prairie or woodland fire and we have had a number of programs showing the correct technique. But, the question is, why is it a good thing? Why do we go out of our way to carefully burn to the ground plants we have nurtured and lovingly gazed at; weeded and fawned over; planned for and plotted out? Have we simply gone 'round the bend on a quiet calm March Saturday afternoon or is there, in fact, a good reason to be so seemingly destructive?

Luckily for us, Greg Keilback has the answer, and, as it turns out, it's a good one. Greg should know because he is the Biologist/Educator at Severson Dells Nature Center. Prior to his position at Severson Dells he was the Director of Land Stewardship at the Natural Land Institute. Greg holds a degree in natural resources conservation biology and ecology from the University of Idaho-Moscow and has experience in restoration ecology, animal and plant biology, stream and riparian ecology and environmental interpretation. Please join us for this rare opportunity to hear about the role of fire in northern Illinois.

We meet at Burpee Museum of Natural History , 737 N. Main Street in Rockford, IL. Come at 6:30 p.m. to socialize before the 7:00 meeting, browse the merchandise tables, and check out the library and Wild Ones information booths. This program is free and open to the public.

For more information please call Program Chair at 815 629-2781

Submitted by Virginia Watson, Co-President

Message from the Co-President **Bob Arevalo**



Bob Arevalo

photo by Jon McGinty

“Connecting with nature is a necessity, not a luxury.” says Susan McCoy, president of the Garden Media Group, based in Kennett Square, Pa. This article caught my eye in the garden section of the January 20, 2013 edition of the Chicago Tribune. She also said “We’ve gotten so stressed out with technology.”

I couldn’t agree more. In fact, I think Wild One’s mission of promoting “environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity

through the preservation, restorations and establishment of native plant communities” is an important mission connecting us with nature. When I think of this, I think of my own backyard. In our Co-President’s article last month, I mentioned I live on five acres with a restored prairie. I remember several years ago when Wild Ones did a bus tour of native plantings and came to my home, I told the group how many of my neighbors in our rural subdivision had large expanses of turf. When I walk the neighborhood, and I pass by my neighbors’ properties, I hear almost nothing. Relative silence. However, when I return to my property, I hear the many sounds of life: insects, birds, and small critters running in the prairie. Just walking my property is one way I connect with nature.

However beyond just connecting with nature, I would like to think I am doing my part to “coexist with nature rather than compete with her” as Doug Tallamy puts it. We are losing many species of flora and fauna in our world. We can create intentional native gardens and other areas that continue to support a great number of creatures that depend on each other for survival. Creating biodiverse environments does not mean sacrificing beauty. Native plantings can be very beautiful. At our monthly meetings we learn to create biodiverse and beautiful environments from experts. I hope to see you at our next meeting.



Compass plants at Bob Arevalo’s house

photo by Tim Lewis

Membership Update **Marilyn Heneghan, Membership Chair**

172 memberships on February 1, 2013

**Special Thanks to Recent
Rock River Valley Chapter Donators**

(any amount about the \$37 basic dues)

Karen Finch

Lowell & Betty Edwards

Cynthia Torrisi

Carla Womack

59 attended the January 2013 program.

Thank you to Judy Letourneau and Lisa Johnson for greeting members at the program.

Note: It is preferred that renewal donations be sent directly to the Chapter’s Membership Chair, Marilyn Heneghan, rather than to the national office. Processing goes quicker this way for the chapter. Your expiration date is on your newsletter and your Journal address label. Thank you.

“NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES”
Please notify Marilyn Heneghan at informationoptions@att.net if you change your email address.

Dues payments can be sent either directly to the National Office or to the Chapter Membership Chair, Marilyn Heneghan. Forty percent of the dues paid, regardless of the amount, are shared with Rock River Valley Chapter. Members wishing to make donations specifically for the local chapter, should make a separate payment or so note on their membership application under “Chapter Contribution” and mail to the Chapter Membership Chair. Dues payments, regardless of amount, are considered a donation and are tax deductible.

Native Woodland Plant Sale Begins Barbara Flores, Sale Coordinator

Included with this newsletter is the brochure for the 2013 Native Woodland Plant Sale. There are some familiar favorites and several new choices. As always the plants are native to Winnebago County and surrounding counties. The brochure has descriptions of each plant, general information about woodland plant culture and an order form with prices.

These lovely plants are so welcome in our yards. Some are very early and then go dormant; their fleeting beauty is all the more welcome. Others we will enjoy throughout the summer with their colorful berries, singular growth habits and fall flowers. Each species benefits bees and

other insects and birds and small mammals in its own way by providing nectar, pollen, larval food or cover for the most humble of insects to the lovely butterflies and amazing hummingbird.

All inquiries are most welcome. Please let the sale coordinator know if there is a plant that you would like which is not on the list. Also, there will be several other species available at pickup.

815-289-8602

bafwoodland@yahoo.com or through the RRVC website

Wild Ones Rock River Valley Has a New Address

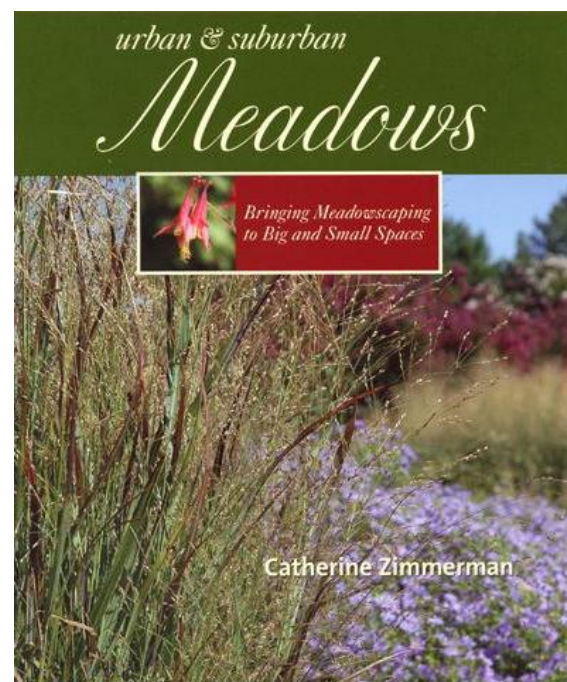
We have a private mailbox at:

**Wild Ones Rock River Valley
5411 E. State Street PMB340
Rockford, IL 61108**

Merchandise Must Haves...

Submitted by Shey Lowman,
Merchandise Coordinator
shey@wildonesrrvc.org

Our newest book selection is ***Urban & Suburban Meadows***, *Bringing Meadows to Big and Small Spaces* by **Catherine Zimmerman**. She is an Honorary Director of Wild Ones and has written this enticing introduction to meadowscaping. This is a guide that provides step-by-step instructions on organically creating and maintaining beautiful meadow gardens. Four experts in meadow establishment lend their knowledge for site preparation, design, native plants, planting and maintenance. The book provides plant lists and resource sections along with local sources to assist in bringing diversity back to urban and suburban landscapes. Meadows can be big or small, short or tall. Meadows sequester carbon, retain water, filter pollutants, eliminate the need for fertilizers or pesticides and provide habitat for wildlife. Improve your neighborhood, enjoy a meadow in your backyard! *(from Amazon.com review)* **\$25.00**



January 2013 Meeting Recap

Constance McCarthy

photos by Ginny Watson

Keith Blackmore speaking on the Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve



Mary and Keith Blackmore

This 43-acre parcel was established, and is owned and managed by the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society. The land was initially co-purchased by the Audubon Society and the Prairie Preservation Society of Ogle County. In 2010, the Audubon chapter bought out the interest of the PPSOC in the preserve. Many volunteers helped raise money to pay off the land.

The preserve is located at the intersection of West Grove Road and Freeport Road, southwest of the town of Forreston.

The parcel is divided into 14 sections, with various people in charge of stewarding the sections. North of the preserve, across West Grove Road, is a continuation of prairie area. The group has been managing it for 30 years, and they are still trying to acquire that land.

Previously, most of the Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve was agricultural land. The topography is quite rolling, and it probably never should have been farmed in the first place. Alas, it was farmed from the late 1800's until the soil was totally depleted, after which the farmer was open to selling the land for a reasonable price.

The year before the purchase of the land, corn fields could be found there. It is believed that there was an old quarry on part of the land at some point. Vegetation on land at the time of purchase included multiflora rose, field thistle (don't call it Canada thistle!), black cherry, and some natural vegetation (including little bluestem). They have identified 414 different plant and animal species on the property; 86% of the species are native species. At least 113 species of birds, 28 species of insects, and 177 species of plants have been identified.

As its name suggests, the Preserve contains a significant diversity of geologic and hydrologic features, along with the corresponding plant communities. The Preserve sits atop a series of geologic faults, and has outcroppings of both sandstone and dolomite. This results in the presence of both acid and alkaline wetlands on the land. Other wetland aspects include sedge meadows (which include Tussock sedge, *Carex stricta*), and, of course, Elkhorn Creek and its small tributary.

Willow flycatcher nests can be found in the willow area near the creek. The creek is relatively good sized, around 15 feet across and 1-2 feet deep in areas. It is hard to cross because there is no bridge, and this makes one of the sections of the Preserve nearly unreachable. When the creek floods, it is around 200 feet across and would wipe out a bridge if one were ever to be built. The natural area there is being used by critters and it can be accessed only by going through the neighbor's property.

Reed canary grass problems have arisen from flooding in the lowland area of the preserve. This has become a huge problem, and no one seems to know how to control it. They are basically trying to learn to live with it. However, hairy-fruited sedge (*Carex trichocarpa*) does compete relatively well with the reed canary grass. They are trying to get it to spread further, but it is not a heavy seed setter.

There are several remnant hillside prairies at the Preserve, and little bluestem is the dominant grass in these areas. To restore the preserve, only seed from the 43 acres and adjacent areas is used. No seed from outside sources is used. As the land is restored, new species crop up on their own. For example, virgin's bower just appeared for the first time in 2012.

This small prairie across the road contains some cream wild indigo and bird-foot violet. The group is using both of them as seed sources for restoration on the Preserve, and there are now around 25 of the cream wild indigo plants there. An important lesson is to know when to stop seeding certain plants. The goal is to have a restored area, rather than a flower garden.

In the woodland parts of the Preserve, you can find oak savanna areas and some floodplain forest.

The group employs low-impact management techniques, which involve working with nature, not against it. The key is knowing when to do certain things. For example, it is best to do girdling of trees in the spring. To do this, it is necessary to cut through the cambium layer all the way around the trunk. Some trees need to be girdled several times (e.g., black cherry). Their policy is to girdle trees, rather than to use any herbicides. When the trees die, they are either cut down or left as snags for woodpeckers, screech owls, and other birds.

January 2013 Meeting Recap (cont'd)



Lynda and Lee Johnson

Another example of low-impact management was seen when the famed Ray Schulenberg visited the Preserve when there was a fundraising open house. On a hike led by Mr. Blackmore, Mr. Schulenberg noticed logs in the stream, and asked what the group planned to do about them. He was happy to hear that the plan was to leave them where they were, as this is a natural area. The group plans to interfere as little as possible with the flow of the creek.

Mr. Blackmore also spoke about other invasives and other issues on the property, and how they are being dealt with.

For wild parsnips, the group burns the area first, and then cuts the parsnips right after they green up. If this is done in mid-late April, there is not a mountain of vegetation to carry out.

Garlic mustard is pulled. The group also uses the trusty parsnip predator (available at our own chapter's merchandise "store" at monthly meetings) to cut below the crown of the plants. This means that it's not necessary to dig out the roots.

Multiflora rose is cut low to ground, piled with kerosene soaked woodchips, and set on fire. This scorches the crown. The kill rate from this technique has been as high as 90%, but as low as 25% – it just depends on the year. Their success rate is tied to timing, and they are still working to refine this.

To stop erosion, they seeded an area with annual rye. This was not the best choice, as it has a tendency to stop the growth of other plants. Lessons were learned from this experience.

There are Osage orange trees that were brought to the land by pioneers. These trees come from the Osage area in Oklahoma, and the wood was excellent for the bows



Bob Arevalo, our new Co-President

used by Native Americans. It was planted by the pioneers to create windbreaks, and the saying goes that the trees are horse-high, hog-tight and bull-strong – effectively a poor man's fence. Even though these trees are not native, they are being maintained because they are part of the pioneer heritage of the land.

They also inherited some apple trees that had been on the land. Survey records at the Ogle County courthouse indicate that there was a cabin on the west side of property. The apple trees are near where the cabin once was, and for now, they also remain as part of the heritage of the land.

After Mr. Blackmore heard a speaker on purple martins at a prairie conference, the group decided to put up a purple martin house. This past summer, they finally saw some for first time. These birds like to be near water, but the stream is the only water in the area.

Work days are held to help steward the land. In the summer of 2012, there were 23 work events, along with 11 leisure activities (potlucks, monthly campfires, birdwalks, and the annual butterfly festival). Campfires are preceded by an educational hike to see what is blooming. These leisure activities are important, and there are often readings from Leopold's works or nature poetry around the fire.

Thirty seven volunteers helped take care of the Preserve in 2012. These volunteers are working to restore and recreate the native communities. Volunteers help with tasks like seed collecting and planting, weed suppression, wood cutting, and prescribed burning. If you're interested in volunteering or attending the leisure events, visit the website of the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society at www.nwilaudubon.org. You can also visit the preserve on your own to take a walk on the paths.

(continued on page 6)

January 2013 Meeting Recap (cont'd)



Members enjoying the refreshments

The group works hard to involve as many aspects of the community as possible in the project. Young people have helped with research and restoration on the property, including Girl Scouts who helped to clear invasives, students from Highland Community College who sampled the creek and tributary waters, and students from Rock Valley College who helped to clean up the land. By involving a broad cross-section of the community, this increases the chance that the land will be protected in the future. People have also connected to the land by helping with a burn and then spreading seeds. And the group has hosted frog-listening events. There are four or five amphibian species on the land, with the western chorus frogs putting on an especially lovely display.



2013 Chapter Programs and Events

February 21 7:00-9:00 PM	The Role of Fire in our Local Ecosystems	Greg Keilback Naturalist with Severson Dells	Burpee Museum of Natural History
March 21 7:00-9:00 PM	Rooftop Gardens	Kevin Carroll City of Chicago's Rooftop Garden Initiative	Burpee Museum of Natural History
April 22 Pick up	Woodland Plant Sale Orders Due	Barbara Flores Woodland Plant Sale Coordinator 815-289-8602 bafwoodland@yahoo.com	
April 26 3:00 PM - 7:30 PM	Woodland Plant Sale Pickup	Barbara Flores Woodland Plant Sale Coord. 815-289-8602 bafwoodland@yahoo.com	Pickup Location 15813 Anderson Rd. Durand, IL 61024
April 27 9:00 AM - Noon 9:00 AM - Noon			

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change. Please contact Ginny Watson, at 815-398-0138 or VSWatson47@aol.com for more information.

Meet the Board



Kim Lowman Vollmer, Youth Education and Grants Chair

Wild Ones was given to me as a gift membership from my mother when I moved into my new home 16 years ago and it has been full speed ahead ever since. I now live in my second home where I have had the opportunity to establish native plantings and have woodland area, some wetland and prairie plantings. I have always loved nature, the outdoors and felt the need to take better care of the earth, which seemed to be a perfect fit with Wild Ones. The more I learned about native plants the more I understood how perfect they were for the environment and so I continued to learn about them and plant them. I have also incorporated that knowledge and philosophy into my profession, which is an elementary teacher. I established a prairie at

my school and helped others schools to do the same. I have volunteered and felt this has helped me learn more along with helping our chapter grow. I have been Secretary, Youth Education and Grant Chair, Seeds for Education Judge, offered my home for tours, been a mentor, written articles for our newsletter, and more.



Shey Lowman, Secretary Merchandise and Website Coordinator

I joined Wild Ones in the fall of 2004 so that I could attend a "members only" workshop on prescribed burns in Chana. I was inspired to get my own fire flapper and am embarrassed to say I have yet to participate in a prescribed burn, but it has been handy when I set the yard on fire using a torch to control weeds in the gravel driveway. The first person I met after joining Wild Ones was Fran Lowman and the first thing we did was figured out we weren't related, at least not genealogically. I have always enjoyed nature and natural landscapes, probably from growing up in a camping family. I thought I knew what a natural landscape was until I started attending Wild Ones meetings and discovered I didn't know much. It's so much more than the lush, overgrown green that I admired. I enjoyed the monthly meetings so much that I became a regular. A bit over three years ago I was "recruited" for the secretary position on the Board. Serving

on the Board has enhanced my membership way beyond any expectations I had. Prior to my Board experience I didn't have an appropriate appreciation for the massive amounts of extraordinary efforts that our members and Board extend on behalf of the Chapter. Our Chapter is truly unique in the programs that are offered each month and the impact we have on our region. It is wonderful to be involved with so many dedicated individuals, so many of whom are now friends. Through my passion for Wild Ones I have also become a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist.



NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES

ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Pambi Camacho
6680 Hartwig Drive
Cherry Valley, IL 61016

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is **2/1/2013**, this is your last chapter newsletter and you have received your last *Wild Ones Journal* until you activate your membership

You may receive a renewal notice from both the National organization and your chapter. Your membership information will be updated quicker if you renew through your chapter so you won't miss an issue of the chapter newsletter.

Mail your renewal to Marilyn Heneghan
Wild Ones Rock River Valley
5411 E. State Street PMB340
Rockford, IL 61108

Wild Ones - Rock River Valley Chapter

Board of Directors and Chairs

Co-Presidents: Bob Arevalo 815-332-3343

Bob@wildonesrrvc.org
Ginnie Watson 815-398-0138
Ginnie@wildonesrrvc.org

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815-282-0316 Constance@wildonesrrvc.org

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Mentor Coordinator: Barb Kuminowski
815-248-9263 Barb@wildonesrrvc.org

Merchandise/Website Coordinator:
Shey Lowman 815-757-4456
Shey@wildonesrrvc.org

Volunteer Coordinator: Cynthia Nelson 815-758-8978
Cynthia@wildonesrrvc.org

Regular meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Burpee Museum of Natural History, 737 North Main St., Rockford, IL

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

Wild ones Annual Membership: Family \$37, Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$20, Business \$250
Entire membership contribution is tax deductible. Contact Membership Chair for additional information or to join.

815-627-0344 • Visit our Web site at www.WildOnesRRVC.org

Wild Ones Mission

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