

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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



All articles for the March 2016 newsletter, must be submitted to:
Constance@wildonesrrvc.org
by February 23, 2016.

Native Orchids of Winnebago County
February 18, 2016

Location: Rock Valley College,
Woodward Technology Center (WTC)
3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, IL 61114

Time: 7:00 p.m.



Ed Cope, Restoration Ecologist for the Natural Land Institute, will give an overview of our twenty local native orchids. Many of these species are rare and elusive, and Ed's photos may be the best (if not only) way to behold them. This program will provide a fascinating look at the orchids that grow in our local woods and prairies. All twenty of our native species will be discussed in detail, with information provided on how and where they grow. Additionally, techniques for propagating your own orchids will be briefly covered.

Ed has extensive education and experience in restoring and managing northern Illinois native vegetation and ecosystems. He has volunteered for, and been employed by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, and currently, the Natural Land Institute. As a seasonal natural resource employee at FPWC, he produced two photo field guides, *Orchids of Winnebago County* and *Ferns of Winnebago County*.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree in wildlife and habitat management and land rehabilitation in 2013 from Montana State University. After graduation, he spent a year in Alaska working for a dog-sled team. Cope says he came back to Winnebago County because his calling is in the Midwest. "There's a lot of good work to be done here. I've spent time (out west), but their point of view (on the environment) is so different. There's still so much land left. There's not so much here."

This program is free and open to the public.
Call (815) 494.6977 for more information



Message from the Co-President

Looking back, looking ahead



Constance McCarthy

photo by Tim Lewis

You might have thought you'd seen the last of a column by me in this space back in November 2012. Yet, here I am again, back this time as a co-president. I'm very much looking forward to sharing the president's duties with Ginnie Watson. Four hands make for lighter work than two, especially when the other two hands belong to someone as dedicated to Wild Ones as Ginnie is.

It's really amazing how much the chapter has grown and developed since I was last on the board. The dream of hitting the 200-mark in chapter memberships is now in the rearview mirror, and things just keep getting better. When we used to meet at Burpee, it was a remarkable thing to have 60 people at one of our educational programs. But at our January meeting, over 80 people came to play a game and test their knowledge of native plants. Even though the weather was relatively cooperative, it was still the middle of January – not typically prime conditions for venturing out in the evening.

The changes in the chapter's board are also striking. I have heard that when the chapter started out, the board was on the small side, as is usually the case for new organizations. Fran Lowman rightfully thought that the board would benefit by having more folks involved, and thus began the gradual upward climb in board participation. Over time, as more coordinator positions were created, and there were more reports to be given, board meetings could last two hours, sometimes longer.

This year marks our first in a new, reconfigured governance structure. The number of voting board members was reduced, with voting members now overseeing three clusters (I like to call them pods – sounds more organic) of coordinators. This will not only make board meetings more manageable, but also hopefully help the coordinators to feel well supported in the work they are doing to make our chapter great. I'm expecting a learning curve for all involved, and maybe some bumps in the road along the way, but overall I am quite excited at the prospects this will bring for strengthening the

Constance McCarthy

chapter. Onward and upward!

Speaking of the board, we held our annual retreat in January. This brought together the entire board and coordinators. Such a fertile time for sharing ideas and supporting each other in our work. Sometimes it is easy to find oneself in the silo of one's own task, and this was a welcomed opportunity to be reminded of how we are all working towards the same goal: continuing to grow the chapter, educate folks about natives, and encourage the planting of as many natives as possible.

I'll share just a few highlights from the retreat, hopefully to plant a seed in your mind about ways you might be able to connect with the chapter and become more involved.

- A committee was formed to consider organizing another lecture and landscape tour in 2017, similar to the incredibly successful one organized by our chapter in the past.
- Another committee was formed to consider whether our chapter could give awards each year to recognize native landscapes and native landscapers in our region. This would serve the dual purpose of commending deserving folks for their efforts and also reminding the community about our chapter and the work we are supporting.
- A nominating/recruiting committee was formed to help fill several positions that will be vacant at year's end (both voting board members and coordinators). The board meets only every other month – definitely manageable. More information will follow during the year, but I urge you to consider serving the chapter in one of these capacities.

Looking back with pride, and forward with much anticipation. A perfect start to 2016!



Sandy and George Wolf of Rockford located Wild Ones on the Internet and came to the January meeting to hear Tim Lewis.

photo by Rick Freiman

Call for Mentors & Folks Wanting Mentors **Melanie Costello**

I have just taken the chapter volunteer survey and noticed that there is a question specifically asking about the mentor program. I'd like to take a little space in our newsletter to talk about this important member benefit.

Starting something new can be difficult for all of us. Having a mentor can make a huge difference for someone who has a vision of a yard full of natives, but just isn't quite sure how to make it happen. It can also be a benefit for someone who has been growing natives for a while, but has that one section that just isn't working.

Being a mentor involves a little time - two or three yard visits over the growing season - but can also prove beneficial. All landscapes are a little bit different, so unless you know it all (and who does?), much can be learned from being a

mentor, as well. Experience is certainly helpful, but you don't have to be an expert! Sometimes it's helpful enough to know where to find requested information, or which other members might have expertise to share on a particular subject.

Knowing that you have helped a fellow native enthusiast get started or solve a problem, and helping to get a few more native, beneficial plants into our environment is very fulfilling, as well. If you could benefit from a mentor, or if you could give a little time to be a mentor, please contact our chapter's mentor program coordinator, Melanie Costello, at melanie@wildonesrrvc.org, or (815) 751.1583.



Scholarships: Don't Miss This Membership Benefit **Kim Lowman Vollmer, Youth Education & Grant Coordinator**

To help you learn more about native landscaping, the Rock River Valley Chapter of Wild Ones offers scholarships to attend a seminar, workshop, or conference. This benefit is available only to members. For details on this program, check out the chapter's website at <http://www.wildonesrrvc.org> (click on the Resources tab). There, you will also find the application form for conference scholarships.

The following educational events may be of interest:

February 18: fourth annual Illinois First Detector Invasive Pest Workshop, Freeport. The day-long session will cover invasive plants, pathogens, and insects. <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/registration/?RegistrationID=9217>

February 20: Design with Nature Conference, St. Paul, MN. <http://www.designwithnatureconference.org/>

February 27: 24th Annual Natural Landscaping Seminar, Crystal Lake. <http://www.thewppc.org/>

March 5: Citizen Science: Calling Frog Monitor Training, Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Headquarters, Rockford. <https://winnebagoforest.org/event/citizen-science-calling-frog-monitor-training/>

March 12: Bubble Bees and Other Native Pollinators, Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Headquarters, Rockford. <https://winnebagoforest.org/event/bumble-bees-and-other-native-pollinators-2/>

March 19: Citizen Science: Odonate Monitoring Training (Dragonflies/Damselflies), Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Headquarters, Rockford. <https://winnebagoforest.org/event/citizen-science-odonate-monitoring-training-dragonflies/>

April 1-June 13: University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Training, Oregon. <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/units/event.cfm?EventID=70987&UnitID=463>

April 2: Citizen Science: Bluebird Monitoring Training, Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Headquarters, Rockford. <https://winnebagoforest.org/event/citizen-science-bluebird-monitoring-training/>

April 30: Citizen Science: Butterfly Monitoring Training, Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Headquarters, Rockford. <https://winnebagoforest.org/event/citizen-science-butterfly-monitoring-training/>

July 17-20: North American Prairie Conference, Illinois State University, Normal. http://www.npcn.net/index.php/events/event-details/north_american_prairie_conference

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at kim@wildonesrrvc.org or (815) 397.6044

January Meeting Recap Pat Hollingsworth



Tim Lewis, past chapter president and current national Wild Ones president, reminded us how lovely indeed is the world of growing things – underneath all that ice and snow – as he tested our knowledge of native plants of the prairie, woodland, wetland, and savanna. As 96% of our birds require insects to feed their young, emphasis was placed on the insect life that each plant supports.

We were quizzed on our knowledge of the following woodland to savanna plants:

Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*). It grows in wet, mucky soil, as well as standing water, and is one of the first to bloom in spring. It has been observed in several locations in the Rockford area including Anna Page Park and Rockton Bog in Beloit. It attracts flies and bees. Waterfowl and small rodents eat the seeds.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). Tim discovered this plant growing all over his yard without having planted it there. How? Ants! These insects find a portion of the seed edible, carrying it to their nests where they then discard the seed. The flower pollen attracts various bees, flies, and beetles. Roots are rhizomatous and are indeed red.

Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*). Observed growing in masses at Deer Run – a jaw-dropping sight! Flowers transition from pink to purple to blue, attracting long-tongued bees, sphinx moths, and sometimes hummingbirds. Can be aggressive.

Maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*). Tim regards this fern as “formal”, with its delicate fronds, recommending that it be planted in groups of at least three to be best enjoyed. It is long lived when all growing conditions are met – rich, organic soil on the acidic side. It does not tolerate drought or competition.

White baneberry (doll’s eyes) (*Actaea pachypoda*). The fruit on this woodland denizen is distinctive and well named. Insects feed on the flower pollen and robins eat the berries.

Blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*). Most of Tim’s woodland plants have been garnered through Wild Ones rescues, including this lovely plant. Blue cohosh is admired for its foliage and deep blue

berries in the fall. Insects feed on the pollen and nectar. It attracts flies and other pollinators. Mice and birds eat the berries, carrying them off and depositing them elsewhere.

Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*). Growing in conditions ranging from full sun to deep shade, it will spread slowly by rhizomes to form a colony. Its colonizing habit is an advantage to the gardener, as it allows you to dig up clumps to spread around your yard or share. The seeds are “distributed” by a spring mechanism that shoots the seeds when conditions are just right. The amount of sunlight it receives will determine, to a large extent, its height. Indeed, Tim has seen it growing up to 4’ tall in full shade. In sun, it is more compact. It blooms over an extended period of time, and the foliage is persistent through summer.

Spikenard (*Aralia racemosa*). An imposing plant reaching up to 5’ in height, spikenard takes a couple of years to mature. Once established, it is long lived and does not like to be moved. Green blossoms in mid-summer; produces attractive reddish-purple berries.

Green dragon (*Arisaema dracontium*). A relative of Jack-in-the-pulpit, it grows from a corm that is easily transplanted. The corm is toxic. Fruit are clusters of smooth, shiny, green berries that ripen in late summer and fall, turning bright red before the plants go dormant. Tim likes to grow it with Virginia bluebells. Ginnie mentioned that green dragon will be included in our chapter’s woodland plant sale this spring.

Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*). Umbrella-like leaves shelter nodding blooms, which develop into “apples.” A discussion of when this apple might be edible (when ripe only) ensued. Anita Johnson reported the taste is “sickeningly sweet.” Yellow when ripe, the fruit is poisonous when unripe. Samplers, beware! A member asked for a recommendation for a companion, as the foliage of mayapple will decline by mid-summer. Guest Janie Grillo suggested *Sedum ternatum*, a delightful, low-growing woodland sedum, proving the value of sharing our experiences with one another.

Bellwort (merry bells) (*Uvularia grandiflora*). Tim finds bellwort easy to divide – an advantage for those of us who want to increase or share our plants. Ants will also carry off the seed, so don’t be surprised to find plants popping up around your yard. Best to start new plants from divisions. Attracts bees that collect pollen and nectar. Deer will graze on the foliage.

Smooth Solomon’s seal (*Polygonatum*)

January Meeting Recap (con'td)

commutatum). Flowers are followed by berries, which dangle under arching leaves. Also known as true Solomon's seal, Tim remembered an adage from his past: "A true mother protects her children under her leaves." Nectar and pollen attracts various bees. Sometimes, hummingbirds will drink the nectar. Berries turn dark blue-violet. Deer will eat the foliage.

False Solomon's seal (Solomon's plume) (*Smilacina racemosa*). Plumes at the tip of arching stems develop into bright red berries. Pollen attracts various bees, flies, and beetles. Berries turn bright red and are eaten by birds and mice.

Bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*) (formerly *Hystrix patula*). A cool-season grass, growing actively in the spring and fall, blooming in June-July. Lovely seeds persist until they shatter. Provides texture and interest to the woodland. Caterpillars of the northern pearly eye butterflies feed on the leaves, as well as some leaf-mining moths. Deer resistant.

Purple (sweet) Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*). An excellent plant for the edge of the woods, it prefers moist, well-drained garden soil in shade. Blooms July-August, attracting an amazing number of pollinators that feed on the nectar, including monarchs, swallowtails, and many other butterflies. Tim reports that it seeds vigorously enough that he now cuts off seed heads in order to control further spread. He also enjoys giving plants away regularly to unsuspecting neighbors and enemies.

Late horse gentian (*Triosteum perfoliatum*). This one stumped most of the audience, as it has a very curious appearance with flowers tucked into leaf axils. It prefers light shade in loamy soil with decaying organic matter. Flowers not very showy, but interesting. Blooms late May, producing beautiful fall orange fruit. Attracts long-tongued bees, including bumblebees that suck the nectar from the flowers. Moth caterpillars eat the leaves.

Next, we were quizzed on our knowledge of the following prairie plants (some of which tolerate savanna conditions):

White wild indigo (*Baptisia leucantha*). One of Tim's favorites, it prefers full sun in a moist to slightly dry soil. Durable and easy to grow, but can take

a few years from seed before it blooms. Seed can lay dormant in the soil for several years before germination. Umbrella-like leaves and flower stalks reach up above companion plants, making it quite visible. Flowers turn into dark-gray "pea-like" pods which persist into late fall. Tim enjoys watching bumblebees struggle to enter the pea-like flowers in order to reach the pollen.

Shooting star (*Dodecatheon meadia*). The plant that photographers love, with a flower color that varies from purple to white. Over time, it will produce more flowers from the same plant. Although it dies back in summer, seed heads stand upright. Pollen is collected by bumblebees which vibrate the flower in order to shake the pollen onto their pollen pouch. Extremely difficult to propagate from seed.

Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). When in bloom, the flower clusters are quite fragrant. Flower color is variable. A favorite of monarch butterflies for nectar, and caterpillars for food. Attracts many other insects, including long-tongued bees, wasps, flies, skippers, and butterflies. Can be very aggressive, so careful siting is needed.

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). The only orange-colored milkweed in Illinois. Requires very well drained soil, thriving in gravel. Tim used to grow it successfully in pots with nothing more than gravel and sand.

Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*). A woody plant tolerant of fire. Lovely in combination with butterfly weed. Attracts long-tongued bees and wasps, and various other insects. Sometimes rabbits will eat the young plants, so it's best if they are protected with chicken wire when newly planted.

Red (rose, swamp) milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*). Another favorite of monarch butterflies and other pollinators, including bees. Some insects are destructive, including caterpillars, leaf beetles, milkweed bug, and aphids. It is a nectar host to monarchs and leaf host to the caterpillars. Although it will grow in mucky, wet soil it will not tolerate extended flooding. Tim reports that his have not been persistent, lasting perhaps only 3 years.

Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*). Prefers soil that contains black loam, sand or rocky material, but



Tim Lewis talks with Teri Hoffman

January Meeting Recap (con'td)

performs better when moisture is present. Plant can easily be divided every few years. Nectar and pollen attracts mainly bees. You can always tell when they have been feeding on them because they have onion on their breath, says Tim. Flowers nod and then the seed heads stand upright with black, shiny seeds.

Prairie coreopsis (*Coreopsis palmata*). Very showy in bloom. Forms colonies via rhizomes, but Tim finds it very easy to keep in control by chopping off outer edges of the clumps. Blooms earlier in the summer before grasses hide it when they increase in height. Many insects feed on the nectar and pollen, including various bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, skippers, moths, and beetles.

Porcupine sedge (*Carex hystericina*). This one baffled the audience. Tim grows it ornamentally for the seed heads and for its utility as a wetland plant. The foliage, however, can be rather floppy. A variety of insects feed on wetland sedges. The seeds are food to waterfowl and some songbirds.

Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*). Does not like to dry out and is often short-lived, sometimes only a single season. Flowers attract the ruby-throated hummingbird and various swallowtail butterflies. Difficult to grow from seed. If rosettes at the base of the plant are visible in the fall, you should have a viable plant for the following year. Rosettes can also be lifted and divided in fall, potted up, and replanted or shared in spring.

Common ironweed (*Vernonia fasciculata*). Tim loves the rich purple color of this tall, late bloomer which prefers a wetter soil, tolerating seasonal flooding. Its extensive root systems helps with erosion control - practical when utilized in a drainage ditch. Attracts long-tongued bees, butterflies, and skippers.

Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*). This dominant grass of the tallgrass prairie has a distinctive "turkey foot" seed head. A warm season grass, it will grow rapidly in the heat of the summer, producing a wonderful fall display. Can be an aggressive seeder along with its usual companion, Indian grass.

Prairie (northern) dropseed (*Sporobolus*

heterolepis). Tim likes to use it at the front of his border to provide a more orderly or formal appearance for his extensive plantings. Flowers have a nutty fragrance that is noticeable from a distance. It takes on golden hues in fall and into winter, and is slow to mature but long-lived.

Gray-headed (Yellow) coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*). This species can get pushed out by more aggressive companions. Tim takes measures to propagate it in order to increase its presence. Attracts many insects such as butterflies, wasps, flies, beetles, and bees. Goldfinches eat the seeds in the fall and into the winter.

Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*). Tim loves to watch the goldfinches struggle to remove the seed even before it is completely ripe. It has an extensive root system, reaching to 15' deep, (reportedly as much as 20-25'). Leaves do indeed align themselves in a north-south position in case your GPS fails. Many insects depend on this plant.

Bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*). This slow growing, long-lived plant needs little care once established. Prefers full sun in moist, rich soil. Does not tolerate drought. Blooms in late summer to early fall, and lasts about a month. Because it is difficult to propagate, it is often difficult to obtain. Pollinated by bumblebees that have to force their way into the closed blossoms.

When asked for his favorites, Tim admitted being partial to prairie dropseed, ironweed, and gray-headed coneflower.

Tim continued with a few woody plants, including smooth serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*), and ironwood (*Carpinus virginiana*), concluding with the signature bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) at the corner of North Alpine and Spring Creek Roads. Oaks provide food for 517 Lepidoptera species.

We never did learn which side of the room won the ID contest, but Tim made sure to make us laugh along the way.

Board of Directors in Action Cathy Johnson, Secretary

Highlights of activities of the Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter Board of Directors, as discussed at the December 10, 2015 meeting, include the following:

- November was highlighted by a member potluck and seed exchange, which included a video overview of highlights of the year's activities and events, and a recognition of volunteers.
- The new policy board structure was presented and explained, and incoming board members were introduced.
- A location for the annual board retreat and a permanent spot for board meetings are being researched.

Membership Update **Shey Lowman, 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!

213 memberships as of January 23, 2016

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

Karen Matz, DeKalb, IL
 Steve & Sue Symes, Belvidere, IL
 Cindy Torrisi, Belvidere, IL

Welcome our new members!

Bruce & Celeste Jelinek, Rockford, IL

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!

83 attended the January meeting, including 22 guests.

A big thank you to our January meeting volunteers!

Greeters: Janaan Lewis, Janet Giesen
Refreshments: Anita Johnson, Cynthia Nelson
AV/sound equipment: Bob Arevalo
Meeting recap for the newsletter: Pat Hollingsworth
Photographer: Pat Hollingsworth
Library assistants: Glenda & Craig Shaver

Anniversaries

Congratulations to this month's loyal member!

5 Years

Rick Cook, Rockford, IL



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

Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter
 1643 N Alpine Rd Ste 104
 PMB 233
 Rockford, IL 61107-1464

Your expiration date is on your chapter newsletter and your national *Journal* address labels. 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.

Twenty-five percent of all dues paid (about \$9.25 per membership) 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 at membership@wildonesrrvc.org. Email or call (815) 627.0343 if you have any questions about membership.

Wild Ones Annual Memberships: Household \$37, Associate (limited income/student) \$20, Affiliate Non-Profit Organization or Educator \$90, Business \$250.

Thank you for your continuing support!

2016 Chapter Programs and Events

February 18 7:00 p.m.	Native Orchids of Winnebago County	Ed Cope Restoration Ecologist at Natural Land Institute	Rock Valley College Woodward Technology Center
March-April	Native Woodland Plant Sale Orders taken until April 18	Marty & Jodell Gabriel woodland@wildonesrrvc.org www.wildonesrrvc.org/Plant_Sales.html 815-963-2137	
March 18 7:00 p.m.	Bumble Bees and Other Native Pollinators	Barbara Williams	Rock Valley College Woodward Technology Center

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.
 For more information please contact Lisa Johnson at (815) 881-1014



NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES

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 **2/1/2016**, 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:

Wild Ones Rock River Valley
1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104
PMB 233
Rockford, IL 61107

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, Woodward Technology Center (WTC), 3301 N. Mulford Rd., Rockford, IL.

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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