

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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All articles for the October 2017 newsletter, must be submitted to:
Constance@wildonesrrvc.org
by September 23, 2017.

Oak Savannas: Ecology, History, and Restoration
Thursday, September 21, 2017

Location: Rock Valley College
Student Center Atrium (park in usual parking lot)
3301 North Mulford Road, Rockford, 61114

Times: 7:00 p.m.



Oak savannas were once the most common ecosystem in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. They almost vanished both from the landscape and from public and scientific consciousness. Unrivaled for their richness in beauty and diversity of wildflowers, birds, butterflies, and other biota, they are now re-emerging from back yards to restoration mega-sites. Rediscovering the richness of their flora and wildlife – and how to conserve and restore them – has been a life’s adventure for this month’s speaker, Stephen Packard.

Packard started his conservation career working for Rockford’s Natural Land Institute and later was Science and Stewardship Director for the Illinois Nature Conservancy where he helped launch the Volunteer Stewardship Network, Wild Things, Nachusa Grasslands, and many other conservation initiatives. He was a key figure in the re-emergence of the savanna.

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

A Gathering of Spirits and a Festival of Friends: A Concert by Carrie Newcomer

When: Saturday, September 30, 2017
Concert begins at 2:00 p.m.; doors open at 1:00 p.m.

Where: Highland Community College, 2998 W. Pearl City Rd., Student Conference Center, Room H201, Freeport, Illinois, 61032

Sponsor: Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

Carrie Newcomer is a songwriter, recording artist, performer, and educator. She has been described as a “soaring songstress” by Billboard and a “prairie mystic” by the Boston Globe. The Austin Statesman described her as having “a voice as rich as Godiva chocolate” and Rolling Stone once said, she “asks all the right questions.” She has toured with Alison Krauss in Europe and the United States. She was listed as one of the “50 most influential folk musicians of the past 50 years” by Chicago’s WFMT, and Boston’s WBEZ listed her as one of the most influential folk artists of the last 25 years.

The event is free and open to the public. General admission; no reserved seating.
Please register online via www.eventbrite.com (search for Carrie Newcomer) or by phone at (815) 871.8014.

Message from the President Constance McCarthy



Constance McCarthy
photo by Tim Lewis

Pride and Excitement

I recently attended the annual Wild Ones conference in Burlington, Wisconsin with two fellow board members, Cathy Johnson and Deb Rogers. While this year's event was smaller in scale than past national conferences, it was still a great experience to meet folks from other chapters, network, and share ideas. I sat on a panel about things that chapters

are doing well and how to grow membership. It was great to be able to tell of the successful keynote lecture and landscape tours that our chapter hosted in July.

Every year, I come away from the national conference feeling so proud of all that our chapter has accomplished - none of which would be possible without the very hardworking board, coordinators, and volunteers. As our chapter continues to grow, I can look forward with only optimism about the bigger and better things we will achieve in the future. As a group that is passionate about native plants and the

environment, we are a formidable force! Onward and upward!

I am also excited about the prospect of combining our woodland and prairie plant sales into a single sale. I have met with the sale coordinators already and there seem to be many potential upsides to combining the sales, including easing the workload for our volunteers (and volunteer coordinator). There is the potential for new suppliers of more vigorous plants, and potential to offer plants that have never been offered in any of our chapter's previous sales. I'll wait until things are more firmly nailed down before saying anything more.

Combining the two sales into one, is one of those ideas that makes perfect sense when it is suggested, while at the same time making me wonder why we never thought of this before. Sometimes it just takes a fresh set of eyes (and minds) to see new possibilities. I am grateful to our coordinators, Jane Evans (woodland), and Cynthia Chmell and Bobbie Lambiotte (prairie), who will all be working together on the combined sale. Their knowledge and passion about native plants is impressive, and their hard work on behalf of the chapter is truly appreciated. A tip of the hat to them! And watch this space for future developments...

Woodland Plant Sale Recap and Outlook Jane Evans

It was April 29, 2017: Woodland Plant Sale Day! Even though it was cold and drizzly, there was excitement in the air. A Register Star article the previous day brought many new people, all eager to help native birds, butterflies, and pollinators. And there were also the scores of people picking up their pre-orders.

We decided to have the Woodland Plant Sale Day at a relative's home with a covered porch for convenient plant browsing and also with the hope that people from the neighborhood would come to buy plants - a hope that was indeed realized. With the help of many volunteers we had a really excellent plant sale. And as we took more plants around to sell at other venues and events, our sales grew, providing even more folks with the means to help our precious wild friends.

Next year we will try to combine the woodland and prairie sales to make them more convenient for people to order and pick up their plants.

Several positive changes to the unified sale will also be coming for 2018. Watch for more details in coming issues of this newsletter. There is much to be excited about!

Thank you so much to all of you who bought plants, and to all the volunteers who helped with the sales: Bobbie Lambiotte, Tim Lewis, Ginnie Watson, Paula Evans, Khrista Miskell, Amy Wolf, Cynthia Nelson, Don & Marilyn Heneghan, Ed Kletecka, Mark Luthin, Anita Johnson, Cathy Johnson, Karen Matz, Marcia DeClerk, Cynthia Chmell, Jerry Paulson, Loann Collier, Peg Lockman, Paul Soderholm, Audrey Johnson, Cheryl Henry, Kirby Doyle, Mary Anne Mathwich, John Peterson, Francie Barnes, and Sallie Krebs You all made it such a wonderful success, for the chapter and for the environment!



New Postage Stamps Celebrate Pollinators



On August, 3, 2017, the US Postal Service issued a new set of postage stamps celebrating the beauty of pollinators. These are Forever stamps, i.e., they will always be equal in value to the First-Class Mail one-ounce price (currently \$0.49).

The stamps pay tribute to the beauty and importance of pollinators by depicting two of the continent’s most iconic, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and the western honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), each shown industriously pollinating a variety of plants native to North

America (although not necessarily the Midwest).

The stamps feature a monarch and a coneflower; a monarch and a zinnia; a monarch and a goldenrod; a western honeybee and a golden ragwort; and a western honeybee and a New England aster. The selva photograph features a monarch and a goldenrod — a different view of the same two species depicted on one of the stamps.

These beauties can be obtained at your local post office or from www.usps.com.

Images used with permission of USPS

Grants for Plants Kim Lowman Vollmer

Are you looking for a grant to help you get started on a native planting project to help educate others? Do you want to do something to help the environment? Don't know how to get started? Go to www.wildones.org and click on SFE Grants, where you will find all the information you need. Grant application are due to the Wild Ones National Office by October 15, so start thinking about what you can do next spring and hop to it. Plant something and they will come: songbirds, butterflies, children, lovers of nature, and more. This can be done at a school, church, or other non-profit area.

Between 1997 and 2017, the Seeds for Education Grant Program received 719 applications and gave 239 grants totaling \$72,010 to schools and other not-for-profit organizations. You could be part of this fabulous group.

If you need any assistance or have questions, please contact me, Kim Lowman Vollmer, Youth Education and Grants coordinator, at Kim@wildonesrrvc.org or (815) 397.6044.



Event of Interest: Transforming Your Yard With Wildflowers, October 8, 2017, 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

This presentation, by our chapter’s own Mary Anne Mathwich, will follow the process of turning a yard that is a plain “pollinator desert” into a place where butterflies, moths, bees, birds, and other critters move the sun’s energy up the food chain. Mary Anne has been a Wild Ones member and natural landscaper for 23 years, and is still learning and being fascinated by the native plants in the landscape and how they invite nature into her yard.

Register at <http://www.cherryvalleylib.org>

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 August 10, 2017 meeting, include the following.

- The July Lecture and Yard and Landscape Tours were very successful. The weather was perfect and all the yards were beautiful, with unique features at each one. Several new members joined at the events and hundreds of native plants were sold at one of the sites.
- The 2017 Wild Ones native tree and shrub sale is currently underway.
- Programs are being scheduled for the 2018 monthly meetings. As of now, there are still a few openings and members are encouraged to suggest topics and speakers for these meetings.

Annual Social and Yard Tour Recap Constance McCarthy



I was so happy to see such a great crowd at this annual social and yard tour, hosted by chapter vice president, Jerry Paulson, at his farm in Caledonia. Even though the weather had been rainy and there were not perfect conditions for a picnic, we Wild Ones are a hardy bunch, not to be deterred by the prospects of more rain on the horizon.

Before we tucked into the amazing spread of food (something you can always count on at a Wild Ones potluck!), Mary Anne Mathwich spoke to thank all the site hosts from the landscape tour. They did many months of work to prepare their landscapes for the tour, which obviously could not have taken place without the site hosts' generosity. Site hosts were given a book or a Wild Ones sign as a token of our gratitude.

After the meal, with rain already falling to the north and looking like it was going to be moving into our area soon, Jerry gave us some background on his farm. The farmhouse is 160 years old. His father was born in the farmhouse in 1920, and Jerry grew up on this farm. In three years, it will be a centennial family farm. Currently, Jerry and his brothers have around 120 acres. College and life took Jerry away from the farm, but he returned in 2001. Looking at the lush landscape around the house, it is hard to believe that in 2001, only a blue spruce, a Norway maple, an old bridal wreath bush, and a 150-year old lilac were all that was growing here.

Soon after returning home, Jerry joined Wild Ones. He had studied Jens Jensen and other proponents of natural landscaping, and was especially interested in Wilhelm Miller's "The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening." Miller authored this circular for the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station. It

was published in 1915 by the University of Illinois College of Agriculture and was intended to be a guide for rural landowners who wanted to beautify their farms. Miller encouraged the use of native plants in home and farm landscapes.

Jerry got his first native plants from Anne Meyer's nursery and from Wild Ones plant and tree sales. The landscape we see today is the product of 20 years of Jerry's natural landscaping efforts on the property. As rain was beginning to fall, Jerry took us on a tour of, first, the yard surrounding the farmhouse, and then the larger prairie restoration. He shared his thoughts about what has worked well, and what he would recommend avoiding.

As a result of his landscaping efforts, Jerry now sees many birds and much wildlife that never used to be around on the farm. Although the chipmunks are cute, the farmhouse has a limestone basement and the chipmunks managed to get in there, and beyond, much to Jerry's chagrin.

The bur oak in his yard is one of the first things that Jerry planted. Nearby are quaking aspens and native bittersweet vine. The vine can be aggressive, and so Jerry cuts it back to prevent it from choking the bur oak. Grey dogwood also grows near the bur oak; it attracts wildlife, but spreads out and needs space. An oak-leaf hydrangea (native to the southeastern United States) and wahoo are also planted on this side of the house. Jerry noted that the wahoo does well in part shade and has beautiful fruit. Virgin's bower, a woody vine is lovely, but is another one that Jerry has to cut back to keep it from getting out of control.

The staghorn sumacs, purchased from a Wild Ones tree and shrub sale, have formed a little jungle. They provide food for wildlife and are spreading out along the fence line.

Near the road (Paulson Road, of course!), a hackberry helps to provide some screening. This is one of Jerry's favorite trees, even though some people view the berries as messy. The tree supports many beneficial insects and even bats. As development continues to expand to the west of Jerry's farm, he has continued to plant things that will shield the farmhouse from view. Other plants on this side of the house include black chokeberry, dogwood, coralberry, sweet black-eyed Susan, brown-eyed Susan, wild plum, blue beech, arrow-wood viburnum, ninebark, pasture rose, prairie

Annual Social and Yard Tour Recap (cont'd)

rose, New Jersey tea, goldenrod, native thistles, hazelnut, and wafer ash.

The farm used to be called Elmside Farm because of the presence of many old elm trees. Unfortunately, those trees were wiped out by Dutch elm disease. Jerry has since replanted three American Liberty elms (*Ulmus americana* 'American Liberty') that are resistant to Dutch elm disease, although they are not resistant to other diseases that killed one of the trees.



Prairie grasses are planted along the very edge of the property. Jerry perpetually struggles with the city to keep them from acting on their urge to mow it down.

When Jerry first moved back, he had visions of starting a prairie seed nursery on his farm. He planted 10,000 seedlings in delineated plots, separated by aisles. Then he got his job as head of the Natural Land Institute, which obviously cut into the time he would have devoted to the nursery. He ultimately let the area grow into a prairie, overseeding with other native plants and introducing grasses to make the area look more prairie-like.

A walk through the prairie revealed a diversity of native plants that had spread from the original plots. Jerry pointed out some, like prairie cordgrass, that he transplanted from the roadside next to his farm and had formed large patches. Prairie cordgrass dominated the wet prairies that covered vast areas of Illinois, and spreads by rhizomes so it needs a lot of space. Jerry thinks it is an underused grass and has elegant seed spikes. Downy sunflower has a pretty yellow flower in late summer, but forms large clones, so it also needs a lot of space to grow. Fortunately, Jerry's farm provides the space needed for this plant.

He then led the group to a large patch of sweet grass, a pretty, low-growing grass with shiny leaves that smell like vanilla. Native Americans used braids of the grass leaves for sacred ceremonies and cleansing rituals. The grass forms

large patches where nothing else grows, which makes it a good ground cover. Jerry suggests that Wild Ones should sell this grass at our prairie plant sale.

As the rain began to fall, the hardy members who had planned ahead and brought umbrellas or rain coats moved onto the old horse pasture to hear about Jerry's plans to expand the prairie. Because the pasture already had many native plants that had seeded into the grass, he decided not to kill off the pasture grasses, clover, and weeds, and instead scattered the left-over seeds from last year's seed exchange over the field last winter. He will burn the area and mow to knock back the non-native species. Unfortunately, the wet spring did not allow him to burn this year, so the field was covered with Queen Anne's lace, a biennial that normally is controlled by burning. Ed Cope, ecologist for the Natural Land Institute and a manager at the Nygren Wetland Preserve, talked briefly about using grass-specific herbicides to control exotic grasses in restoration projects, but cautioned that these are expensive, and only stunt the growth of the grass; they do not kill it. Jerry has used herbicide to make open patches in the pasture to add prairie seeds, and to control Canada thistle. He hopes that these patches will grow and spread into the remaining pasture.

As everyone walked back to the yard to head home, the group thanked Jerry for sharing his "prairie spirit" for landscaping his farm.

photos by Sallie Krebs

Time to Step Up? Constance McCarthy

Are you interested in stepping up your involvement in the chapter? The chapter will have several openings for coordinator positions in 2018, including:

- **volunteer coordinator:** using the results of our annual membership survey, make phone calls to line up volunteers for monthly meetings, plant sales, and booth (tabling) events, for example;
- **show me/help me coordinator:** only one of these events was held in 2017 because the landscape tour was effectively one giant show me/help, and volunteer resources were all focused on the lecture and tour. However, the aim is to organize several of these show me/help me events in 2018. Site hosts are determined based on the results of our annual membership survey and suggestions from other members; and
- **plant rescue and seed collection coordinator:** these events are held as the need or opportunity arises, based on suggestions from chapter members or community members who become aware of appropriate locations.

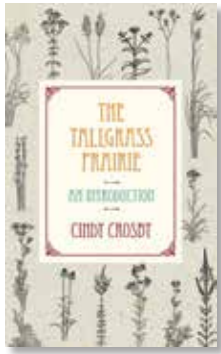
There are numerous chapter members with deep knowledge to share (such as identifying native plants), so you won't be expected to go it alone.

If I may be so bold as to say, we – your board and coordinators – are a pleasant and good natured bunch who support each other in our work on behalf of the chapter. Coordinators are welcome to attend our board meetings (held the second Thursday of even numbered months), but are not required to do so.

There are already roadmaps for the above positions (task lists, resources, etc.); no one is being asked to reinvent the wheel. And of course support will be provided from the outgoing or past persons in the above positions. We promise, you won't be thrown into the deep end on your own!

If you are interested, know of a chapter member who would be good for one of these positions, or just have questions, please contact me at constance@wildonesrrvc.org or (815) 282.0316.

Book Review



The Tallgrass Prairie: An Introduction

By Cindy Crosby

More than a region on a map, North America's vast grasslands are an enduring place in the American heart. Unfolding along and beyond the Mississippi River, the tallgrass prairie has entranced and inspired its natives and newcomers, as well as American

artists and writers from Willa Cather to Mark Twain. *The Tallgrass Prairie* is a new introduction to the astonishing beauty and biodiversity of these iconic American spaces.

Like a walking tour with a literate friend and expert, Cindy Crosby's *The Tallgrass Prairie* prepares travelers and armchair travelers for an adventure in the tallgrass. Crosby's engaging gateway assumes no prior knowledge of tallgrass landscapes, and she acquaints readers with the native plants they'll discover there. She demystifies botanic plant names and offers engaging mnemonic tips for mastering Latin names with verve and confidence. Visitors to the prairie will learn to identify native plants using the five senses to discover what makes each plant unique or memorable.

A gifted raconteur, Crosby tells stories about how humankind has adopted the prairie as a grocery, an apothecary, and even as a shop for love charms. Rounding out this exceptional introduction are suggestions for experiencing the American prairie, including journaling techniques and sensory

experiences, tips for preparing for a hike in tallgrass landscapes, ways to integrate native prairie plants into home landscapes (without upsetting the neighbors), and a wealth of resources for further exploration.

An instant classic in the tradition of American naturalist writing, *The Tallgrass Prairie* will delight not only scholars and policy makers, but guests to tallgrass prairie preserves, outdoors enthusiasts and gardeners, and readers interested in American ecosystems and native plants.

Cindy Crosby is a steward supervisor for the Schulenberg Prairie at the Morton Arboretum and a steward at Nachusa Grasslands, a Nature Conservancy site. She is a writer, teacher, and lecturer on the tallgrass prairie and nature conservation.

"We desperately need ambassadors to help us reach those who haven't yet been introduced to prairies and the many remarkable organisms who live in them. Cindy Crosby is just such an ambassador, and her *The Tallgrass Prairie: An Introduction* should help grow the legion of dedicated land stewards and supporters of our native grasslands."—Chris Helzer, author of *The Prairie Ecologist* blog and director of science, Nebraska program, The Nature Conservancy

"Part field guide and part natural history, Cindy Crosby's new work is a remarkably engaging introduction to the tallgrass prairie. Her analysis of the prairie's ecology, and her reflections on its history, are deftly woven together by a delightfully personal narrative voice, which opens the book to a wide readership."—Tom Montgomery Fate, author of *Cabin Fever: A Suburban Father's Search for the Wild*

Merchandise Update

Did you miss out on buying one of the pollinator books at the July keynote lecture by Heather Holm? Fear not, both Heather Holm books will be available for sale at the merchandise table at the September meeting. The two books are:

- *Pollinators of Native Plants: Attract, Observe, and Identify Pollinators and Beneficial Insects with Native Plants*
- *Bees: An Identification and Native Plant Forage Guide.*

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!!

228 memberships as of August 23, 2017

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

John & Judi Peterson, Durand
Dennis & Sherry Scheider, Cherry Valley
Dianne Stenerson, Rockford
Jim & Karen Timble, Franklin Grove
Christopher & Sandy Wrate, Rockford

Welcome to our new members

David & Virginia De Swarte, Mt. Carroll
Angi & Nick Manalli, Cherry Valley

Welcome to our returning members!

Dora Mae Meredith, Rockford
Denise Rottmann, Belvidere

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!

34 members attended the August potluck
A big thank you to our August potluck host!
Jerry Paulson, Caledonia

Anniversaries:

5 Years:

John & Cathy Schafman, Rockton

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 \$40, Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$25, Affiliate Non-Profit Organization \$90, Business \$250.

Thank you for your continuing support!

2017 Chapter Programs and Events

September 21 Oak Savannas: Ecology, History, and Restoration
7:00 p.m.

Stephen Packard
Wild Ones Honorary Director,
ecologist, conservationist

Rock Valley College
Student Center Atrium
CHANGED LOCATION

October 19 Backyard Kids "Wild" About Nature
7:00 p.m.

Don Miller
Nature educator and grandpa

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

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 **9/1/2017**, 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

President: Constance McCarthy
(815) 282.0316 constance@wildonesrrvc.org

Vice President: Jerry Paulson
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At-Large: Kim Lowman Vollmer
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Immediate Past Co-President:
Ginnie Watson (815) 398.0138
ginnie@wildonesrrvc.org

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Prairie Plant Sale: Cynthia Chmell & Bobbie Lambiotte, (815) 969.7435 & (815) 398.6257

Tree & Shrub Sale: John Peterson
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maryanne@wildonesrrvc.org

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bob@wildonesrrvc.org

Landscape Tour & Lecture: Mary Anne Mathwich (as to the left)

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Kim Lowman Vollmer (as to the left)

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Library: Ginnie Watson (as to the left)

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Publicity: Doreen O'Brien (as to the left)