



Wild Ones®

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

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*A voice for the natural landscaping movement.
Working toward the next four decades of growing native plants
and restoring natural landscapes.*

Famous last words from your outgoing president

Do you ever get a chance to just quietly sit in the backyard and think deep thoughts? I find it to be an excellent technique when trying to avoid tasks I don't want to do, like pulling that dratted weed, black medic (*Medicago lupulina*) out from among my precious native fescues. Just the other day, I found myself sitting quietly and mulling over the concept of "retirement." I decided that retirement is a fuzzy concept and likely not a good one for today's active people.

In my case, I retired from the paid work world 11 years ago and moved into a seven-day weekend. Then I began actively working for several non-profit organizations with missions that mesh with my beliefs. The main one is Wild Ones, as you know. Now, I'm retiring from the Wild Ones national president role, and moving into the "immediate past president" job. That means my main responsibility will be to support the new president, just as Tim Lewis did for me when he retired as our long-time Wild Ones president in 2016.

In my three years as president, Wild Ones

- Worked ourselves out of a financial crisis and emerged more stable than ever
- Developed a lean and superb staff
- Passed the magic 4,000 members target, and
- Created a strategic plan into 2021 under which we are making weekly progress

That all means that the organization is now well positioned for new programs, new regions and new challenges. I am so proud of Wild Ones and pleased that I could help along the way.

Since I was looking at my backyard while mulling over these grand retirement thoughts, my mulling turned to native plants. They start where they're planted, and then – on their own – evolve and move in the landscape to a place that best suits them. Hmmm, I thought ... just like my situation and maybe yours, too.

Plants evolving and moving are like when I was "planted" on the national Wild Ones board, then moved to the front in my role as national president, and there, grew in that role while being supported by other board members and Wild Ones members. (I can't thank you all enough for the help you've given me throughout the years! I really couldn't have done it without your collaboration.)

Now, I'm naturally and smoothly moving into a supportive role on the board, my own best place. A new president will smoothly and seamlessly move into the front and bloom – to take this theme further than necessary – when selected by the Board at its Aug. 26 meeting.

So, I'm going to propose a new concept to replace "retiring" – evolving. In my case, I've evolved from a corporate business-wear, full-time work lifestyle into a jeans-wear, full-time "contribute where I want" lifestyle. I made Wild Ones a priority, serving on the board since 2015 and being your national president for three years. I'm now going to be evolving from being Wild Ones national president to being an "immediate past president" and board member. I just hope that doesn't mean that I've gone to seed!

I know you will all provide support and encouragement to our new board president, in helping to keep Wild Ones at the forefront of the natural landscaping movement.

Janice



Promoting environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities

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Established in 1977, Wild Ones is a national not-for-profit organization of members who teach the benefits of growing native plants and work together to grow and restore natural landscapes.

Wild Ones' definition of a native plant:

A native plant is a species that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem and/or habitat and was present prior to European settlement.



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Annual Meeting webinar set for Oct. 12

The 2019 Wild Ones Annual Membership meeting will be held online at 10 a.m. CDT on Saturday, Oct. 12, 2019. Wild Ones members are welcome to call in to the meeting to join the Wild Ones Board that will be meeting in Chicago that weekend.

You will find the call-in information and the meeting agenda posted on the "Members Only" page of the [Wild Ones website](#) one week prior to the meeting.

Mark Your Calendar

SEPTEMBER

September 15

National Clean Up Day

September 29

National Public Lands Day

OCTOBER

October 12

Annual Meeting Webinar, 10 a.m. CST

October 28

National Make a Difference Day

NOVEMBER

November 15

National Take A Hike Day

Get out and enjoy your garden, or local park or nature preserve.

DECEMBER

December 3

National Day of Giving

(#GivingTuesday)

Please considering furthering Wild Ones' mission with a tax-deductible donation.

CHAPTER ANNIVERSARIES

Milwaukee North, Wisconsin	40 years
Columbus, Ohio	25 years
Rock River Valley, Illinois	25 years
Ann Arbor, Michigan	23 years
Gibson Woods, Indiana	19 years
Door Peninsula, Wisconsin	18 years
Habitat Gardening in Central New York	15 years
Mountain Laurel, Connecticut	13 years
Tennessee Valley, Tennessee	7 years
Blue Ridge, Virginia	6 years

NEW LIFETIME MEMBER

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IN MEMORIAM

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Sand phlox (*Phlox bifida*) in rock garden.

There are native plant enthusiasts and then there is Theo Witsell, who undoubtedly is one of the few who can sight identify nearly 600 species on Arkansas' rare native plants list.

"If you're trying to learn to identify plants in all stages of their growth and development, nothing beats growing them and seeing them every day," says Witsell, who since 2000 has worked as an ecologist and botanist with the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and surveys the state for rare plants. "I don't grow all of these species, of course, since many require very specific growing conditions, but I grow a lot of them."

Witsell says he first became interested in native plants in the mid-1990s when he was in college.

But that interest intensified when he accepted his current job, which requires an intimate knowledge of the state's flora.

More than half of his 0.4 acre lot is occupied by native plants, which he slowly planted with a little help from others.

"I started by studying the lot and identified various sites with different growing conditions," he says. "There were shaded areas on the north side of the house and in portions of the backyard. There were sunny areas along the south and west property lines. There were moist areas near the gutter downspouts and at the outlet of the air conditioner drainage pipe. And best of all, there was a big sandstone outcrop along the north side of the driveway. I grouped the

Member Garden

Theo Witsell

Central Arkansas Chapter

All photos courtesy Theo Witsell

Editor's Note: We'd like to feature native gardens, large or small, in upcoming issues. If you're interested in sharing your native garden, send four to six high-resolution photos, as well as a brief description, to barbara.a.benish@gmail.com or journal@wildones.org. Please include your contact information so we can get in touch with you.

plants I had by their natural habitat affinities (mesic forest, dry woodland, prairie, etc.) and put each where they were most likely to be happy."

Witsell says he also worked with the native elements that were present on the site when they moved in.

Member Garden

Theo Witsell
Central Arkansas Chapter



About the Yard

- Theo Witsell started his current native garden in 2010 when he purchased the house in Little Rock, in the southeastern part of the Ouachita Mountains near the northern boundary of the Gulf Coastal Plain.
- About 0.25 acres out of a 0.4 acre lot is dedicated to growing natives, including a 3,500 square foot occasionally mowed "lawn" area in the backyard that is dominated by poverty oats (*Danthonia spicata*) and Cherokee sedge (*Carex cherokeensis*).
- The yard is home to several hundred species native to Arkansas.
- A semi-natural south-facing sandstone outcrop along his driveway has been converted into a rock garden to grow glade and outcrop plants.
- Witsell says it's hard for him to name his favorite native plants, but he enjoys the rarer species, such as whorled sunflower (*Helianthus verticillatus*), which was believed extinct before it was rediscovered in western Tennessee in the 1990s; Stern's medlar (*Me-spilus canescens* or *Crataegus × canescens*), which is known in the wild from a single site in eastern Arkansas; and Ozark hedge-net-tle (*Stachys iltisii*), which is endemic to the mountains of Arkansas and Oklahoma. He also enjoys pinewoods lily (*Alophia drummondii*), which he says is perhaps Arkansas' most beautiful native wildflower.

Arkansas beardtongue (*Penstemon arkansanus*) plant was a remnant native on the property line and has been allowed to make seed and spread.

"Our neighborhood was installed in the mid-1960s into a hilly, oak-pine woodland and the developers left many of the original trees," he says. Their lot is on a dry shale and sandstone ridge and has 27 remnant trees: 15 post oaks (*Quercus stellata*), two blackjack oaks (*Quercus marilandica*), five shortleaf pines (*Pinus echinata*), three black cherries (*Prunus serotina*) and two redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*).

With 27 trees, Witsell says he has a massive amount of leaves to deal with. "I knew I wanted to do an undulating border garden around the entire backyard, so I left a portion

of the leaves each year for the first few years and raked them into the footprint that I envisioned for these beds so that they would smother out the grass," he says. "Then I started at one corner of the yard, lining the border beds with rocks and putting in plants. I jumped ahead and installed shrubs at regular intervals, but I am filling the border out with herbaceous plants as I can."

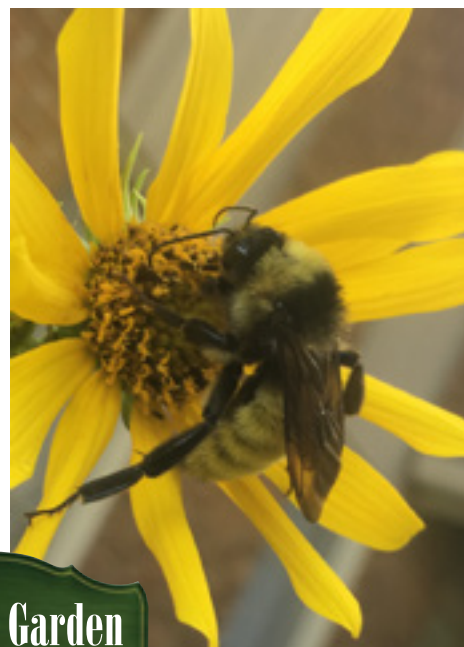
His front lawn was wall-to-wall nonnative zoysia grass when they moved in, but like many lawns in the neighborhood, it became infected with a fungal disease and developed dead spots. Rather than fighting the

fungi with chemicals, he converted the worst areas to native gardens.

"I've kept a small mowed area in the front yard to give the kids a place to play, reassure the neighbors and contrast with several semi-formal native beds and some wilder prairie-like areas," Witsell says.

The backyard was regularly mowed, but was largely unimproved with poor, rocky soil. Witsell started mowing the area infrequently, about two to four times a year, and was pleased to see a few remnant native forbs appear.

"By the second year, up popped violet wood sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*),



Member Garden

Theo Witsell
Central Arkansas Chapter



manyray aster (*Symphyotrichum anomalum*), gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*), pussytoes (*Antennaria parlinii*), small-flowered crowfoot (*Ranunculus micranthus*), lyre-leaved sage (*Salvia lyrata*) ... and later creeping bush-clover (*Lespedeza repens*), trailing bush-clover (*Lespedeza procumbens*), potato dandelion (*Krigia dandelion*), woodland sunflower (*Helianthus hirsutus*) and Arkansas beard-tongue (*Penstemon arkansanus*).

His next plans are to create a mesic forest garden on the north side of the house. "I have a number of species I've been growing in pots,

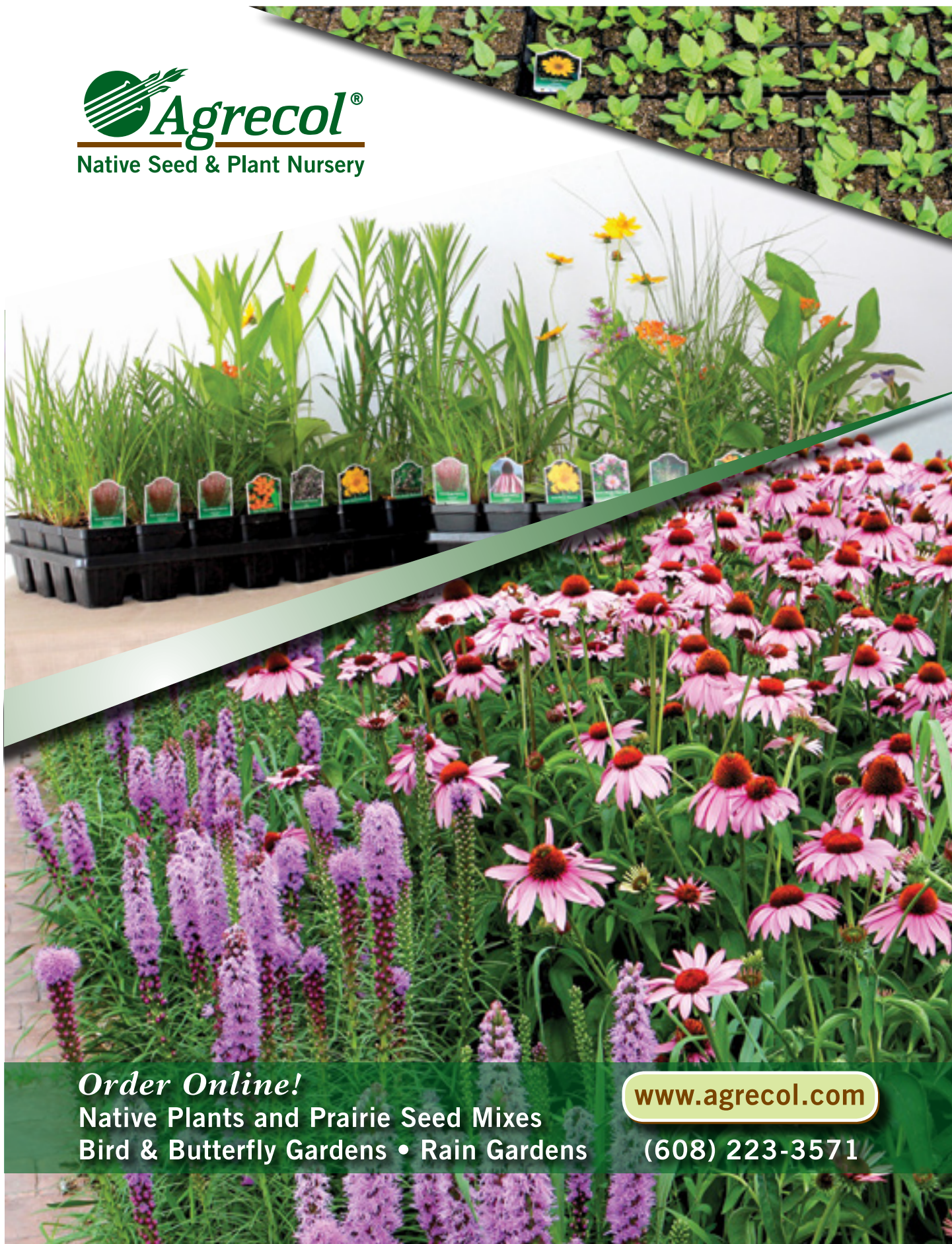
Clockwise from top left: A mix of 75 species of native forbs and grasses planted around an old remnant post oak evokes the original woodlands and savannas of the eastern Ouachita Mountains; American bumblebee (*Bombus pensylvanicus*) nectaring on a whorled sunflower (*Helianthus verticillatus*); A "mesic forest garden" in the most shaded areas of the backyard supports shade-loving spring wildflowers including woodland phlox (*Phlox divaricata* subsp. *laphamii*), wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*), and yellow trout lily (*Erythronium rostratum*); Three red buckeyes (*Aesculus pavia*) bring hummingbirds and other wildlife each spring.

some for years, waiting to go into this area," Witsell says.

His favorite native plants are rare ones, but he also has collections of certain genera that he has a strong interest in, including variously scented mountain mints (*Pycnanthemum*) and bee balms (*Monarda*), both which are pollinator draws.

Witsell says he is also fond of

two native plants that were there when he moved in: Arkansas beard-tongue and adder's tongue fern (*Ophioglossum nudicaule*). "I've always been for the underdog, and I love that these plants have managed to persist through 50 years of persecution by bulldozer, mower and herbicide sprayer," he says. "I want to give them their place."



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NEWS

ACROSS THE NATION

HAWAII

A new invasive caterpillar is threatening rare native plants on Maui. According to the [Star Advertiser](#), the Ramie caterpillar is black and sometimes yellow, with bright orange-red spots, and when trying to scare off predators, it raises and waves around its head and spits.

The caterpillar, which eventually becomes a moth, or *Arcte coerula*, is native to Southeast Asia, and is destructive to mamaki plants. A biologist looking for native snails found the Ramie caterpillars feeding on mamaki growing in Olowalu, Maui.

The Ramie moth is potentially destructive because it is laying its eggs on several native plants that are food sources for the Kamehameha caterpillar. Many of the 14 species in the mamaki family are endemic to Hawaii, meaning found only here, and some are already critically endangered.

MICHIGAN

Twelve rare juvenile Blanding's Turtles (*Emydidea blandingii*) hatched from incubated eggs were released back into a turtle-friendly habitat created for them near Saginaw by Consumers Energy employees.

The eggs, two adults and a juvenile Blanding's Turtle were rescued in 2018 from along the path of Consumers Energy's Saginaw Trail Pipeline. The adults were moved to a safe location, where they laid 12 eggs that were incubated, hatched and raised by the company's contract herpetologist over the winter, according to the [Star Tribune](#).

The Blanding's Turtle is listed as a Species of Special Concern and is protected by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. It is currently being considered for federal protection.

MINNESOTA

Minnesota has adopted legislation to develop a program to assist homeowners interested in making their yards into habitat for pollinators like the [Rusty Patched Bumblebee](#). The [Lawns to Legumes](#) grant program will be ready to implement in 2020.

Homeowners who wish to participate will need to develop pollinator-friendly yards. In exchange, they will receive up to 75 percent of their expense incurred. In areas identified crucial for the Rusty Patched Bumblebee, homeowners can receive up to 90 percent reimbursement.

NEW ENGLAND

A recent study published in the journal [Rhodora](#) found that about one quarter of native New England wildflower species have been lost in the last 150 years. This means that purple-fringed orchids (*Platanthera psycodes*) and pink lady slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*) — once abundant in the region — are disappearing from some areas, often replaced by nonnative species.

Biologist Caitlin McDonough MacKenzie, lead author on the study, said the losses didn't follow an obvious pattern, according to [WBUR](#). "There are a lot of stressors and threats to our native plants."

OKLAHOMA

A single complaint put an end to the application of herbicides on country roads across a swath of Tulsa County.

Sand Springs resident Anita Harp saw a road crew spraying ditches in her neighborhood in June and stopped them to ask questions. When they told her they were spraying an herbicide that was "basically Round-Up," she immediately complained, and she found a kindred spirit in District 2 Commissioner Karen Keith, [The Tulsa World](#) reported.

"I absolutely hate herbicides," Keith said. "We will not be doing that anymore anywhere in my district."

Cornerstone was the brand in use, but the active ingredient is glyphosate, as it is in most herbicides marketed since 1974, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.


WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Trump administration finalized major rule changes that weaken core provisions of the Endangered Species Act, making it easier for economic considerations to shape decisions about whether species receive protection under the law.

On Aug. 12, the U.S. Department of Interior announced revisions to the law, credited with bringing back the bald eagle, grizzly bears and whooping cranes, at a time when up to 1 million species are at risk of extinction, according to a [recent U.N. report](#). The revisions will also weaken the initial protections given to species deemed to be threatened, one step shy of being endangered, [National Public Radio](#) reported.


Proponents of the Act say it has prevented the extinction of 99 percent of listed species, [Audubon](#) reported. Since it took effect in 1973, the law has required that decisions about whether to list species be made based only on the best available science and "without reference to possible economic or other impacts of such determination." The new changes remove that language.

More than 800,000 public comments were submitted opposing the changes, according to the [National Parks Conservation Association](#). Last fall, 105 members of Congress and 34 U.S. senators sent letters to the Department of the Interior to protest the rollbacks. Ten states and the District of Columbia, as well as 30+ tribal nations, also oppose the changes.




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KAREN OBERHAUSER
Honorary Director

Q: What's the most interesting thing about you that we wouldn't learn from your resume alone? In other words, what is one thing that people would be surprised to learn about you?

A: Actually, my resume does a pretty good job of covering the things I'm passionate about. I'm lucky that I love the work I've done through most of my career. I've been able to do research that makes a difference; be involved in development of citizen science as a research, conservation and educational tool; and play a role in training the next generation of conservationists by teaching and mentoring dozens of incredible students. So, while it may seem corny, I feel lucky that my resume tells a lot of the story; there aren't a lot of surprises because I get to do what I love both on and off the job.

Q: What would you do if you just found out you won \$10 million in the lottery?

A: I'd buy a big chunk of land and study the best ways to restore it. It would be fun to buy degraded land and see what could be done with lots of resources to spend on it. I'd love to use the millions to help figure out how to make the land whole again.

Q: What's a funny thing that has happened to you in your career?

A: During my first summer of research as a graduate student, I was in a field of alfalfa catching butterflies, when a little boy came by on a bicycle. He stopped, walked over to me, and asked me what I was doing. After a few minutes, he looked carefully at me and asked, "Are you a scientist?" I told him yes. Then he pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket, and asked me if he could have my autograph. That's the only time anyone has asked me for my autograph, but it made me think about the fact that being a scientist is pretty cool, and that it should involve reaching out to people of all ages.

Q: What's your superpower?

A: I think that I'm pretty good at making people excited about nature. I convey my excitement about science in a way people can understand, as well as the power of science to make the world a better place. I'm truly excited about the things I talk about and do, and I think that comes across to audiences from a lot of backgrounds.

Q: If your personality was encapsulated into a plant, what might it be?

A: I'm not sure that my personality is perfectly encapsulated by a purple prairie clover, but if I could be a plant, that's what I'd like to be. It isn't really showy, but it is beautiful when you look closely at it. Its blooms last a long time, and I'd like to think that I am pretty good at sticking with things until the job is done. I like the way that open purple prairie clover blossoms move down the inflorescence, with a few individual flowers opening at a time in a predictable way. While I sometimes get too many tasks going at once, I aspire to being better at focusing on a few things, getting them done well, and then moving on to the next tasks—sort of like a purple prairie clover inflorescence.

Q: What advice would you give other Wild Ones members on how they can make a difference in 2019?

A: Members of Wild Ones need to keep doing what they are already doing—increasing the number of native plants in the landscape and talking to people about the importance of native plants. They shouldn't give up the battle. Our work to promote more native plants creates habitat for the species that depend on those plants, from the tiniest postage stamp-sized garden to big acreage. Ultimately, the presence of these habitats and species will benefit us, in ways both measurable and immeasurable.



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Pollinators need your 'garden garbage'

By Justin Wheeler

It should be welcome news for weary gardeners. You've weeded, tilled and toiled under the hot sun all summer long, and now it's time to stop. For many, however, the temptation to pick, pluck and prune the landscape to make it neat and tidy for the winter is too hard to ignore. This impulse to "clean up our gardens for fall" has serious impacts on a whole host of pollinators and beneficial insects. All it takes is a weekend and some garden tools to wipe out whole populations of insects that have been working hard in your yard all summer too – provisioning their nests and making well-stocked winter homes for the next generation.

To every season...

Insect pollinators spend the winter in a variety of life stages (egg, larva, pupa, or adult) depending on the species. For example, native bees will have spent their lives in your garden drinking nectar, collecting pollen and building their nests among your fruits and flowers. After hatching, the "new" generation of bees will spend the winter in their nest cells as pupae, emerging as adults the following spring or summer.

This is why timing is critical. The habitat needs to be protected year-round.

Too soon in the spring, it's game over for your pollinator pals if you cut down the stalks and stems that

were used for overwintering, or used by bees for nesting. If you apply too thick a layer of mulch over the top of ground nesting bees (70% of native bees are ground nesting), you've wiped out your best allies including native bees that emerge early in the spring to pollinate fruit blossoms and squash bees that live just beneath the soil surface that pollinate pumpkins with aplomb!

Leave leaves bee

Unlike other native bees, bumblebees do not overwinter in their former nests. Instead, new bumblebee queens emerge in the fall and search for overwintering sites, burrowing into leaf litter, under logs and loose soil.

Leaf litter, with its mix of fallen leaves, bacteria, fungi and invertebrates, is an ecosystem unto itself. It not only provides habitat for beneficial insects but it serves as the top soil layer where organic matter is decomposed into “garden gold,” returning nutrients back to the soil. What we call “leaf litter” provides a wealth of overwintering habitat for invertebrates including slugs and snails, worms, millipedes, centipedes, spiders, beetles and much more! If you have children, this can be a great opportunity to engage them in a little [Citizen Science](#) – a great way you can enjoy the fall leaves together!



“...new bumblebee queens emerge in the fall and search for overwintering sites, burrowing into leaf litter, under logs and loose soil.”

Hidden in plain sight: butterflies and moths

For butterflies and moths, overwintering is even more complex. Lepidoptera overwinter in all manner of life stages depending on the species. After mating in the mid-summer, fritillary butterflies spend the late days of summer “sniffing out” violets, using their antennae. The females lay eggs on or near violets, the larval host plants. The emerging larvae feed on violets in the fall, then hide out in leaf litter, waiting for the plants to emerge the following spring.

The eastern black swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) spends the winter as a pupa, hidden to all but the most scrupulous of observers camouflaged as a dried leaf or a broken off twig. It would be quite easy to miss when clearing canes and dried plant material from your garden.



Photo by Candace Fallon

Above: Though dressed for winter, woolly bear caterpillars burrow beneath fallen leaves for extra protection. Don't blow away their cover! Below: Luna moths disguise their cocoons and chrysalis as dried leaves, blending in with the “real” leaves.



Photo: Flickr

We all know that monarchs migrate, spending their winter days as adults in Mexico and along the California coast, but did you know the resilient mourning cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) stays home, toughing out the winter as an adult between bark, in piles of dead wood, or in your garden shed?

We hope you'll see, far from a dead and desiccated landscape, the fall and winter garden is teeming with life.

Fall cleanup do's and don'ts:

Put your feet up, the pruners down and grab a pumpkin spice latte. Don't cut canes, stalks or other standing plant material that may house nesting bees or be providing anchors for overwintering pupae.

Where possible, leave leaves alone. If you must clear them from lawns and other areas, do not bag them and send them to the landfill – try to find ways to put them to work! Also, do not till soil where there might be ground nesting insects.

Provide safe havens by setting aside undisturbed patches of habitat allowing leaf litter, standing dead twigs/stems or other ground cover to remain. "Wild," unmanicured locations will provide the protected nooks and crannies that pollinators and other animals need for survival.

If you must clean up your yard to comply with Homeowners Association rules or other local ordinances, consider sharing this story, starting a conversation and putting up a pollinator friendly yard sign to advertise to the world that your "messy" garden is intentional habitat.

Reprinted with permission from the Xerces Society.

Justin Wheeler is the web manager and communications administrator for the Xerces Society. In addition to his work with Xerces, he is a Penn State Extension Master Gardener where he is active in providing outreach and education on pollinator-friendly and sustainable gardening practices.

What plant stems make good bee nests?

By Donna VanBuecken

One of the things I learned from Heather Holm's recent participation in the Fox Cities Book Festival was to leave the flower stems from my prairie plants standing for use by the solitary bees for their nests. Heather, a Wild Ones honorary director, suggests cutting the stems of prairie plants at about 12 to 15 inches above the ground, anywhere from late May to early June — well after the overwintering insects had left their beds.

Cutting the stem

Leaving 15 inches of stem sounds like an OK thing to do until you realize the highest most mowers cut is 6 inches. Hmm. Now what? Heather uses a hand-held cutting implement, perhaps like a really sharp hedge shears or a grass shears to cut the stems of her plants.

That would, however, be a humongous feat with a prairie my size or larger. I do already break off the stems of the taller plants, but I typically leave the shorter plants just as they are unless I'm able to burn a quarter of my prairie in the spring. Looks like I'll need to be a little extra diligent about breaking over stem tops of all heights.

What plants?

As I've researched this more closely, I've learned not all plants work as well for bee nests as some others. The plants that work best have long, linear, strong flower stalks and can be of varying diameters:

- Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*)
- Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)
- Yellow Coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*)
- Pale Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)
- Tall Coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*)
- Asters (*Symphyotrichum* spp)
- Angelica (*Angelica atropurpurea*)
- Cupplant, Rosinweed, Compass Plant, Prairie Dock (*Silphium* spp)
- Sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp)
- Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium* spp)
- Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)
- Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)
- Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)
- Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
- Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)
- Raspberry (*Rubus* spp)
- Hydrangea (*Hydrangea* spp)

Woody plants

Bees also use the pithy stems of woody plants such as:

- Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*)
- Elderberry (*Sambucus* spp)
- Sumac (*Rhus* spp)
- Walnut (*Juglans nigra*)

So, don't be so quick to prune dead branches from trees and shrubs, and leave some piles of twigs and branches in your garden.

Donna VanBuecken was the first executive director of Wild Ones, and in her retirement writes a blog on native plants and natural landscaping at www.accentnatural.com. She is a member of the Wild Ones Fox Valley Area Chapter and also an honorary director for Wild Ones.

WILD Center Update

The rain has stopped, the flowers are blooming and the pollinators are happy. There's been a lot of activity at the Center, and there is more to come!

Thanks to all of our members and chapters who so generously donated to our "Tech for Tomorrow" fund. The contract to create our new system has been signed and the first steps are taking place. The new Members-Only site will be a great benefit for members, with a user-friendly interface and access to a lot of information and resources. In addition, the entire site will be searchable, so if you type in "weed ordinance," for instance, you'll get *Journal* articles on the topic, sample weed ordinances and other weed ordinance references.

Once the water finally receded, Eagle Scout candidate Ethan Stahl and his crew planted almost all of the 300 swamp white oak trees donated through the Living Lands and Waters "Million Trees Project." Why is this important? You may recall that our forest is 95% ash trees and it isn't a question if the trees will become infected by the emerald ash borer. EAB kills trees in about three years, so the trees need to come down now, while they are still healthy, and we need to reforest. The oaks are just some of the replacement native species planned for the site, with willow also currently being planted.

Ron Jones, Fox Valley Area Chapter member, has volunteered his time and expertise to broker a contract with a logger to remove the ash trees before they die and start falling down. Although it's heartbreaking to lose these beautiful trees, this is not an optional project. If we harvest the trees, there is no hazard to people on the property. In addition, the logger will pay us for the trees, which will be recycled into other products by local mills. You can read more about EAB in our upcoming Winter issue of the *Wild Ones Journal*.



Another Eagle candidate, Emilio Guevara, has begun work on a handrail for the two sets of steps that lead from the prairie area to the lower level. This rail will be a perfect complement to the two sets of stairs created last summer by a Venture Award candidate.

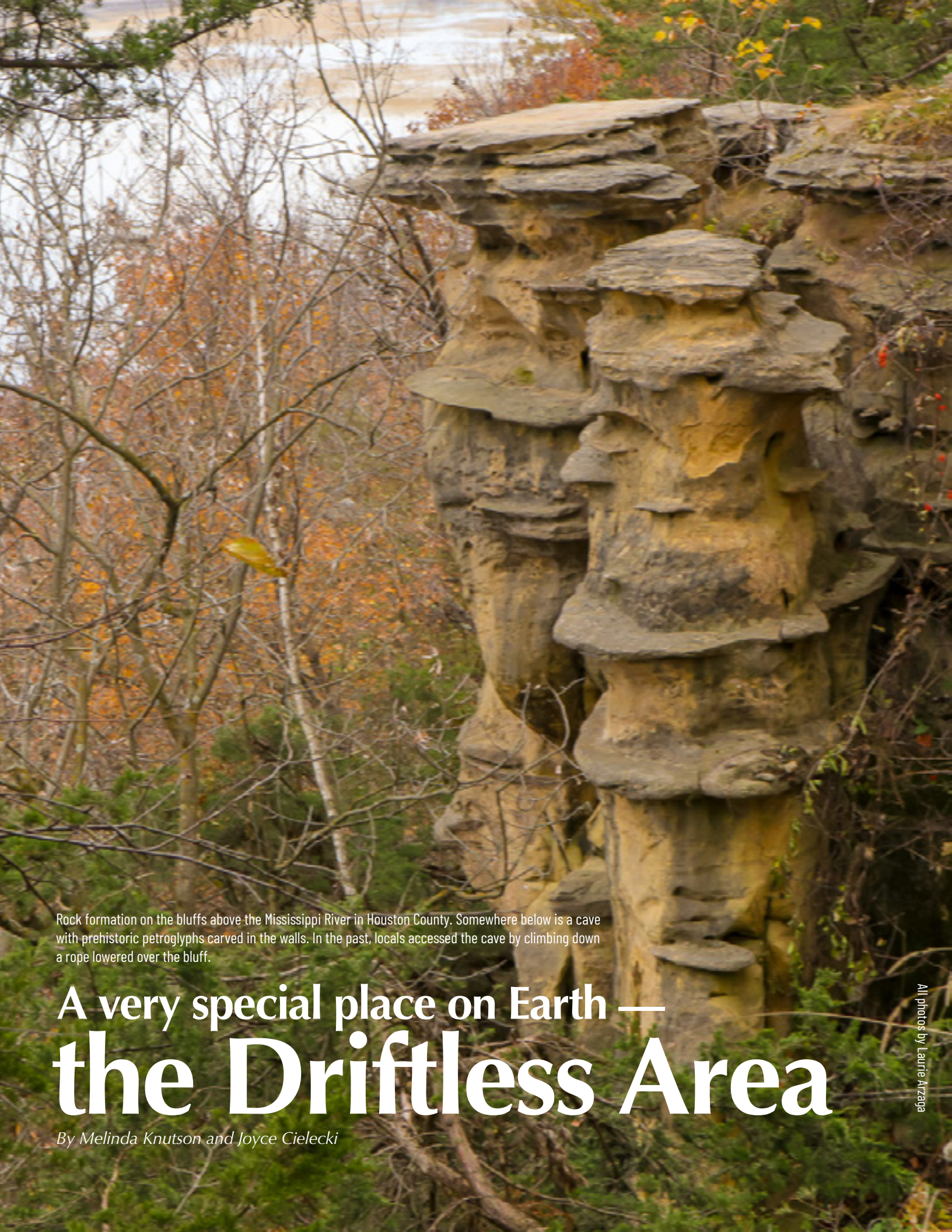
Over 200 volunteers from Pathfinders Camporee battled buckthorn, washed windows, spread mulch and more on the WILD Center grounds in August.

In August, more than 200 volunteers from the Pathfinders Camporee spent four days at the Center. They battled buckthorn, washed windows, cleaned the deck and picnic tables, finished edges around the rain garden, and spread mulch around the observation tower and under the pine trees. Staff is grateful to this enthusiastic group of kids and their chaperones who shared their time (and now-aching muscles!) to keep the Center grounds in tip-top shape.

Lastly, the WILD Center is still in need of new 6-volt deep cycle, lead-acid batteries for the golf cart that is used frequently for hauling plants, tools, watering buckets and more. We are looking for six batteries to replace the old ones that no longer work. If you are interested in donating batteries or money toward their purchase, please call 920-730-3986 or email elaine@wildones.org.



Photos by Elaine Krizesnsky



Rock formation on the bluffs above the Mississippi River in Houston County. Somewhere below is a cave with prehistoric petroglyphs carved in the walls. In the past, locals accessed the cave by climbing down a rope lowered over the bluff.

A very special place on Earth — the Driftless Area

By Melinda Knutson and Joyce Cielecki



If you have ever visited the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa and northwestern Illinois, you probably had a feeling that this place was special. You are correct. The area's deeply cut river valleys, steep forested slopes, cold water streams and rocky outcrops are quite different from other areas of the upper Midwest, and these landscape features create an area that is both stunningly beautiful and rich in biodiversity.

Geology

The exposed bedrock of the Driftless Area consists of horizontal layers of sandstones, shales, limestones and dolomites formed 425-500 million years ago from marine sediments that accumulated in shallow tropical seas. One of the uppermost rock formations, the Prairie du Chien group, fractured in many places, allowing rainwater to infiltrate and dissolve the rock, and creating karst topography features such as caves, sinkholes and springs. The most prominent outcrops in the Driftless Area are those of the Prairie du Chien group.

Large continental glaciers have covered parts of the earth throughout history. During the past few million years, glaciers have advanced and retreated into the upper Midwest several times. Unlike other areas of the upper Midwest that were impacted by continental glaciation, the 24,000 square miles of the Driftless Area have remained untouched by glaciers and the area lacks glacial deposits known as "drift;" hence the name Driftless Area. Although the area escaped the direct impact of glaciers, large amounts of glacial meltwater influenced the topog-

raphy by scouring out what is the present-day Mississippi River valley, creating the steep slopes and rocky outcrops. The dendritic pattern of the river valleys can be seen most clearly from the air — a highly dissected landscape of bluffs, ravines, river valleys and flat-topped ridges.

Plant and animal communities

The geology and ecology of the Driftless Area are closely entwined; topographic diversity supports high biological diversity. The rugged topography of the Driftless Area has spared some of the native plant communities (especially forests) from row crop agriculture and provides a complex setting that allows different habitat types to coexist. For example, there are forested slopes that are hot and dry (west and south-facing) or cool and moist (east and north-facing); distinctly different plant communities thrive under these diverse conditions.



Sunflowers bloom on the bluff prairie overlooking the Mississippi River in Crawford County, Wisconsin. The view is beautiful in any season, but in the spring this is an amazing place to view the spring migration of birds up the Mississippi River flyway. Below: A view of the hills and valleys of Houston County from Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area. This SNA is home to the Minnesota endangered narrow-leaved milkweed, known only to occur at this site.



Rain and wind have also done their erosive work for millennia, leaving rocky outcroppings and thin, dry soils on steep slopes, and dissolving rock to create sinkholes, disappearing streams and caves. In the aftermath of the last glacier, cold-loving biota thrived, and some of these species remain today in unusual habitats fostered by the unique geology.

Algific talus slopes

Algific talus slopes are found within the karst geology of the Driftless Area, but virtually nowhere else. In the summer, air is drawn down through sinkholes, flows over frozen groundwater and is released through vents on the slopes. This air flow provides natural air conditioning; summer temperatures near the vents

can be just above freezing. In winter, the air is drawn into the vents, and the groundwater freezes again. These unusually chilly conditions support plants and animals usually found in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota, including Canadian yew (*Taxus canadensis*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), showy lady's slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*) and golden saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium americanum*). Some rare plants and animals also find a home here. These include the federally threatened northern monkshood (*Aconitum noveboracense*) and several rare snail species. One of these, the federally endangered Iowa Pleistocene snail (*Discus macclintocki*), was believed extinct until it was rediscovered in 1955.

Caves

Caves are unique habitats in the Driftless Area, created by flowing water that dissolved the limestone, dolomite or gypsum rocks. Bats, raccoons, salamanders and many invertebrates inhabit these systems. Biota that have specialized adaptations to a cave environment (lack of pigment, blindness) and cannot survive outside the cave are called troglobites. Area caves support at least 16 troglobite invertebrate species, including flatworms, amphipods, spiders, mites and springtails. Troglobites evolved in isolation, meaning individuals cannot disperse to other caves because they cannot survive outside the cave environment. Therefore, each cave may contain a unique set of species specially adapted to that specific cave. The troglobite residents today are very likely descendants of their Pleistocene ancestors, which were sheltering in these caves when the region was surrounded by ice.

Several bat species overwinter in Driftless Area caves, including the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and eastern pipistrelle or tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). Cave bat popula-

Places to visit in the Driftless Area

The following attractions in the Driftless Area inspire and educate the public about the ecological and cultural history of the area. This is just a sampling of what's available; there are many more places to visit, including dozens of state parks, wildlife areas, land trust properties and city and county museums.

National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, Dubuque, Iowa — Part aquarium, part science center and part museum, which features historical exhibits and live animals

Effigy Mounds National Monument, Harper's Ferry, Iowa — Native American effigy mounds, history, hiking, scenic views of the Mississippi River

Yellow River State Forest, Harper's Ferry, Iowa — Extensive hiking trails through upland hardwood forests typical of the Driftless Area, camping, scenic views

Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center, Lansing, Iowa — Interpretive displays of the geologic and cultural history of the Driftless Area, with an emphasis on Mississippi River fishing and the mussel button industry

Pike's Peak State Park, McGregor, Iowa — Stunning views of the confluence of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, hiking, camping

Galena and U.S. Grant History Museum, Galena, Illinois — History of lead mining in the Driftless Area, history of a prosperous 19th century Midwestern town

Mississippi Palisades State Park, Savanna, Illinois — Hiking trails, unique rock formations, rock climbing, camping, scenic views of the Mississippi River

Beaver Creek Valley State Park, Caledonia, Minnesota — Hiking trails through upland and riparian forests, cold-water stream with trout fishing, camping and bird watching

Niagara Cave, Harmony, Minnesota — Large cave with guided tours

Mound Prairie State Natural Area, Hokah, Minnesota — Large complex of dry alkaline (goat) prairies with views of surrounding farmland and the Root River

Root River State Bike Trail, Lanesboro, Minnesota — Rail to trail paved bike path through floodplain forests along the Root River. Other attractions in the area include tubing, boating, art galleries and theater

National Eagle Center, Wabasha, Minnesota — Interpretive center focused on ecology and conservation of bald and golden eagles, with live birds and outdoor observation deck

Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Winona, Minnesota — 240,000 acres of protected land along 261 miles of the Mississippi River flowing through the heart of the Driftless Area. With four districts in four states, it is a popular venue for fishing, boating, bird watching and hunting. An interpretive visitor center is located at the La Crosse District office near Onalaska, Wisconsin.

Wyalusing State Park, Bagley, Wisconsin — Stunning views of the confluence of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, hiking, camping, fishing, boating, Native American burial mounds

Rush Creek State Natural Area, Ferryville, Wisconsin — A series of dry, alkaline (goat) prairies situated on the steep bluffs of the Mississippi River, visible from Great River Road (Highway 35)

Kickapoo Valley Reserve, La Farge, Wisconsin — 8,600 acres of floodplain and upland forest adjacent to the Kickapoo River. Popular for canoeing, hiking, bird watching and trout fishing

tions in Wisconsin have plummeted since 2014 due to a fungal disease that causes winter mortality. The disease, known as white-nose syndrome, has affected many species of cave-hibernating bats in the U.S. and Canada, causing devastating population declines; in some caves winter mortality can approach 100%. Populations of species that were once common, like the little brown bat, have been decimated.

Streams

The cold-water streams of the Driftless Area support world-class trout fishing; Trout Unlimited reports that recreational angling in the Driftless Area generates approximately \$1.1 billion annually. Cold water streams are also a legacy of the karst geology; cold water flows from springs throughout the Driftless Area, feeding area streams. Brook trout are native to the area, but brown trout and

rainbow trout have been stocked in streams for many years. During the Dust-bowl years of the 1930s, the area experienced major logging and unrestricted agricultural tillage, which caused the highly erodible soils to wash off the hillsides; up to 12 feet of silt buried some streams. Conservation practices like contour plowing, no-till and set-asides in the Conservation Reserve Program have reduced erosion and allowed trout fishing to

flourish once again. But, the legacy of past erosion remains, with many streams having steep and unstable muddy banks. Reintroductions of wild brook trout to the smaller, colder streams and government programs to restore stream habitat for cold-water species have allowed the brook trout to regain a foothold and co-exist with their brown trout cousins.

Prairie, savanna and oak woodlands

Much of the Driftless Area was dominated by prairies and oak savannas at the time of European settlement, a legacy of past climate and land management by native people. Prior to European settlement, native people living in the Driftless Area grew some crops and used fire to promote open, grassland habitat. Deer, elk and bison thrived on the grasslands and savannas that were maintained by fire.

Native prairies, or grasslands with native prairie species and few trees, once dominated the land-

scape. Today, small prairie remnants are all that remain of the once vast Midwestern grasslands. Grasslands in the Driftless Area require a combination of fire, very dry soils, a west- or north-facing slope or periodic drought. Land managers employ fire to sustain both native and reconstructed prairies. Native prairie remnants are rare in the Driftless Area, as they are elsewhere; almost all have been converted to agriculture, transportation corridors or urban and suburban development. But, planting native prairie grasses and forbs on marginal cropland (prairie reconstruction) helps reduce erosion and supports native grassland birds and pollinators. These prairie plantings are now a common practice, supported in part by federal funding via the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In places where fires were less frequent and the soils have more moisture, a few oak savanna remnants still persist. An oak savanna is

a prairie with a few oak trees (< 50% tree canopy coverage and > one tree per acre). Oak trees are resistant to fire and were able to survive in grasslands with frequent fires. Bur, white and black oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*, *Q. alba* and *Q. velutina*) are dominant in remnant stands, typically as large, open-grown trees with thick, wide-spreading branches close to the ground. Shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) is sometimes present; American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) is a common understory shrub. There are some plants (e.g., kitten-tails, *Besseyia bullii*) and animals (e.g., red-headed woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*, orchard oriole, *Icterus spurius*, and eastern bluebird, *Sialia sialis*) that thrive in a savanna.

Oak woodlands have greater tree canopy closure (50-95%) than a savanna and intermediate understory. Oak woodlands were most common on sites that experienced frequent,

Small sandstone caves in the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, Driftless region in Houston County near Reno, Minnesota.





Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), lance-leaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) and pale purple coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) bloom in one of the native gardens at Myrick Park Center, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

low-intensity ground fires. Dominant trees included white oak, bur oak and black oak, sometimes mixed with red oak (*Quercus rubra*) and shagbark hickory. Lacking fire, most prairies and savannas will eventually become closed canopy woodlands and that is mainly what you see now across the Driftless Area.

Hill prairies

Dry limestone prairies are the best preserved of the native prairie types in the Driftless Area. Hill prairies have many different names including bluff prairies, dry prairies and goat prairies, so named because they are so steep that only a goat could navigate them easily. They occupy the highest and steepest south- or west-facing slopes on the bluffs. While hill prairies can be as small as an acre in size, they are perhaps the most ecologically diverse natural habitats in the Driftless Area and are home to a number of endangered and threatened species, including four lizard species and the federally listed timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus*

horridus). Restored hill prairies are easily seen from roadways as bare slopes at the top of wooded hills. In the absence of fire, many goat prairies have been invaded by eastern red cedar trees (*Juniperus virginiana*), which are also easily visible as dark brown patches on hillsides.

Southern hardwood forest

In the absence of fire, the dry slopes or thin soils of the Driftless Area facing west or south support oak-dominated woodlands, including white oak, red oak, black oak, bur oak, with black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) and shagbark hickory. In the well-developed shrub layer, brambles (*Rubus* spp.), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*) and American hazelnut are common. Flowering plants include wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), false Solomon's-seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*), hog-peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*) and rough-leaved sunflower (*Helianthus strumosus*).

In more mesic sites (east and north-facing slopes) with rich loamy

soils, the dominant forest species is sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), and tree species diversity is high, including American basswood (*Tilia americana*), walnut (*Juglans nigra*), ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*). The understory can be open or brushy and supports spring ephemeral flowers such as spring-beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), trout-lilies (*Erythronium* spp.), trilliums (*Trillium* spp.), violets (*Viola* spp.), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), may-apple (*Podophyllum peltatum*) and Virginia waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*).

Many species make their homes in these woodlands, including more than 300 plants and 150 bird species. A rich diversity of amphibians, reptiles, fish, mammals, native bees, butterflies, dragonflies and other invertebrates too numerous to mention make their home in the Driftless Region's forests, meadows and streams.



Brady's Bluff offers beautiful views of the Mississippi River in Perrot State Park, Trempealeau, Wisconsin.

Mississippi Flyway

The Mississippi River flows through the heart of the Driftless Area and is a major bird highway that supports large numbers of migrating birds, including geese, ducks, shorebirds, gulls, sparrows, blackbirds, thrushes and warblers. Indeed, nearly half of the bird species and about 40% of the waterfowl of North America use the Mississippi Flyway to migrate between summer and winter habitats. Bird watching along the river is a popular activity, especially in the fall when tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*), canvasbacks (*Aythya valisineria*), white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) and many other waterbirds stop over to feed in the rich waters. It is also a multi-use river supporting recreational and economically important activities like boating, fishing and commercial barge traffic.

Cultural history, agriculture, tourism

The Driftless Area has a long history of human occupation, extending back to the end of the last ice age. Thousands of Native American mound formations can be found throughout the region, but most have been lost to agriculture and other development. Many caves contain ancient archeological records. The Ho-Chunk Nation traces its ancestry to a territory that includes the Driftless Area. Their oral history has helped to

interpret artifacts and cave art in the region. The Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has conducted numerous scientific investigations, uncovering artifacts and illuminating the life ways of early people living in the Driftless Area.

Today, the rugged topography of the Driftless Area supports a diversity of agricultural livelihoods, including organic farming, apple and grape orchards, winemaking and beekeeping. The farmers themselves have diverse cultural roots, many descending from German, Norwegian, Irish and Swiss immigrants, as well as Amish families. While corn and soybeans still dominate the landscape, and dairy farming remains a popular livelihood for many farming families in the region. Organic agriculture resides side-by-side with conventional farming.

The Driftless Area is unique geologically, ecologically and culturally. It is a cultural melting pot attracting artists, back-to-the land enthusiasts, retirees and many people who are simply seeking a beautiful place to live in the Midwest with abundant outdoor recreational opportunities. No matter where your visits take you, the Driftless Area has much to offer visitors and residents in terms of interesting natural areas to explore, tasty farm-to-table restaurants, art galleries and diverse ways to make a living from the land.

Driftless Area Chapter of Wild Ones

If you do get the chance to visit the Driftless Area, make sure to visit the native plant educational gardens at the Myrick Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The gardens, which include pollinator gardens and rain gardens, not only provide education about native plants and the role they play in preserving ecosystems, but also provide a beautiful landscape for visitors to the Myrick Center and the La Crosse River Marsh trails to enjoy.

The gardens were initially developed and planted by the Bluff Country Master Gardener Volunteers, and now the Driftless Area Chapter of Wild Ones is assisting with the maintenance and upkeep of the gardens.

Melinda Knutson is a passionate advocate for restoring native ecosystems to benefit wildlife through her business, Trillium Consulting, LLC. She speaks to community groups, leads natural history hikes, and works with private landowners in the Driftless Area to find conservation opportunities compatible with their desires. Building upon her former experience as a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, she also works with conservation agencies doing technical writing and meeting facilitation.

Joyce Cielecki, vice president of the Wild Ones Driftless Area Chapter, also contributed to the story.

Photographer Laurie Arzaga is the Driftless Area Wild Ones president and a long-time volunteer at the Myrick Park Center Native Gardens. She loves exploring, photographing and learning about the all rare and beautiful ecosystems in the Driftless region.

Carolyn's Finzer's Mona the Monarch character helps to educate people about the official Illinois state insect and its shrinking habitat.

Finzer: 'My goal ...is to do things in an impacting and memorable way'

*Wild Ones member
educates, entertains
through nearly
20 characters*



All photos courtesy of Carolyn Finzer

By Barbara A. Schmitz

Carolyn Finzer has been called the Mad Hatter of Storytelling, and that description couldn't be more accurate.

Finzer, a fourth generation Naperville, Illinois native, creates characters to educate and inform others. Although she has created nearly 20 characters in more than 50 years, Mona the Monarch has been a mainstay in her collection. Why?

"The monarch is the official Illinois state insect and it has suffered greatly because of its shrinking habitat," she says. "I felt I needed to go to schools, clubs and other organizations and teach people about the importance of common milkweed, the monarch's host plant."

Finzer doesn't just educate; she entertains as an artist and storyteller. With Naperville and Pátzcuaro, Mexico, where monarchs overwin-



ter, as Sister Cities, she combines fact and folklore into her presentations, all done with colorful costumes and props.

"In Mexico, they believe when a monarch appears to you, you are encountering the spirit of an ancestor," says Finzer, who taught art at a junior high school for six years before becoming a full-time mother of two daughters and a community volunteer.

Fun is key in her presentations. Take a park district-sponsored pollinator festival, for instance. "My job was to be there and lead an improvisational migration dance," she said. "We started on the ground as

eggs, and then went into the larval stage and spun around and made a chrysalis. At a given moment, we all emerged with our wings."

She adds, "My whole goal as a teacher and artist is to do things in an impacting and memorable way so the audience savors that experience when they were transformed into a monarch." To keep that message top of mind once her presentations are completed, she hands out small packages of milkweed seed and butterfly bookmarks.

Depending on her location, she sometime has to improvise, like when she was at a grocery store for a pre-

Clockwise from left: Carolyn Finzer as Bluebella, the Bluebird; Carolyn Finzer, dressed as Mona the Monarch, and a friend dressed as Grunyun the Gnome, entertain during a garden tour at Finzer's home for the DuPage chapter of Wild Ones; Carolyn Finzer started doing educational programming for Girl Scout troops more than 50 years ago. She has been a Girl Scout member herself for 53 years.

sentation. "I couldn't do a migration dance through the produce aisle," she says. So instead, she showed people how to create a butterfly puddling tray. (Find a shallow container, fill it with small rocks and gravel, as well as sand and water. It gives butterflies a place to sit, drink and extract minerals from the mixture.)

For the DuPage Wild Ones chapter of which she is a member, Finzer held a garden tour on her 1-acre property and told legends of spring ephemerals. "It was the same day as the Royal Wedding," she recalls, "so I said we must have ginger and lemon cookies and tea for everybody."

Finzer, dressed as Mona the Monarch, and Jack MacRae, dressed as Grunyun the Gnome, gave out lots of goodies, including butterfly gummies, as Mona "flitted around the yard giving the tour." Naturally, her yard is registered as an official Monarch Watch Monarch Waystation.

Her very first programs were to Girl Scouts more than 50 years ago and were all about Native Americans, their history and how they lived off the land. She actually went to Lac Du Flambeau to take Ojibwa arts and dance workshops. She tells a story how Chicago was named: The Potawatomi named it Eshche-caugau for its strong smells of wild onion and skunk cabbage in the Lake Michigan marshlands.

She has made costumes of a bluebird, an oak tree, a frog, a dragonfly, a violet, a grandmother spider, even Gourdella, the Guru of Gourdology.

Finzer says Gourdella was created in 1997 for a local gourd festival. But when the Long Island Coliseum in New York heard about it, they hired her to come in costume for a home and garden show.



Carolyn Finzer came up with the character Gourdelia, the Guru of Gourdology, for the Prairie Crossing Gourd Festival.

"I had to ride through New York's subways carrying gourds and wearing my gourd hat and dress," she recalls. She remembers getting a lot of curious looks. One man with dreadlocks came up to her and said, "Yo momma, I feel your spirit." She laughs and adds, "I think we connected."

Her most recent costume is Victoria, a flowering pink crab tree. She created that when the local Morton Arboretum advertised free admission on Arbor Day for anyone who came dressed as a tree.

Most of her costumes are made from "recycled finery" she has gathered at flea markets or garage sales over the years; she keeps all the supplies in bins in her basement.

To make costumes as real as possible, she does look to wildlife books for inspiration. "My costumes need to be correct in all dimensions because when I'm at an outside arena, people see all sides of me," she says. "Accessories add awe."

Sometimes, though, her costumes give her a few problems. "I went to one program at a restaurant as a white moth and my wings got caught in the revolving door," she recalls. "The bus boy freed me."

Finzer says doing these types of programs is in her blood. She's been married 50 years to her husband, Melvern, who describes her as a "bottomless bag of trivia." But Finzer describes herself as a spunky and gregarious lover of life, and says most people know her as one of her characters, rather than by her real name. Even when she's not educating others about a variety of topics, she is a character herself who likes to make people smile. She even created a "diva hat" for her 70th birthday, she said.

In her free time, Finzer takes care of five community gardens, goes to multicultural events and enjoys daily adventures. "A life of learning is what it's all about," she says.



Remembering Lorrie Otto on her 100th birthday

Sept. 9th would have been Lorrie Otto's 100th birthday.

Lorrie Otto — Queen of the Prairie.

Lorrie Otto — the inspiration for Wild Ones.

By Donna VanBuecken

Lorraine “Lorrie” Stoeber was born in 1919 near Madison, Wisconsin. She lived on a farm where she learned to love the soil and the biodiversity of the landscape. As a young woman who was tall and smart, she got involved in many things from modeling evening gowns for wholesale houses to preparing to be a pilot in the World War II Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program.

She graduated from the University of Wisconsin and married her 6-foot 4-inch boyfriend, Owen Otto, son of Max Otto, a pioneer of contemporary humanism. They moved to a north Milwaukee suburb near Lake Michigan and a 20-acre ravine called Prairie Chasm. In the 1950s when the Chasm was to be sold for development, Lorrie worked with The Nature Conservancy to save the ravine.

Then in the 1960s, she dropped off 28 dead robins at the municipal offices in Bayside, Wisconsin and asked when they were going to stop spraying DDT. When they didn't take her seriously, she took on DDT with the help of her Citizens for Natural Resources Association friends...and by now you know she was successful. (To read more about Lorrie's fight to ban DDT, go to Page 24 of the [Winter 2018 Wild Ones Journal](#).)

Over the years, Lorrie wrote many articles, gave many presentations and received many awards for her work toward healing

the Earth. Lorrie was inducted in the [Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame](#) in 1999. The quote on her plaque reads:

“If suburbia were landscaped with meadows, prairies, thickets or forests, or combinations of these, then the water would sparkle, fish would be good to eat again, birds would sing and human spirits would soar.” – Lorrie Otto

The Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame is located in the Schmeckle Reserve Visitor Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Lorrie died in 2010 at the age of 90.

Lorrie became the heart and soul of the natural landscaping movement and many of us remember her each year by donating to the [Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Program](#), a program created in 1996 by Wild Ones Natural Landscapers Ltd. to honor Otto. Such an honor was so fitting. Of all her efforts to save the natural landscape, her desire to save it for the children was the greatest.

As part of that education program, grants are offered each year to nonprofit organizations planning to develop an outdoor learning area. [Grant applications](#) for the 2020 program are due Oct. 15.

Donna VanBuecken retired in 2015 as Wild Ones' first Executive Director. She currently serves on the Board of the Wild Ones Fox Valley Area Chapter and as an Honorary Director of Wild Ones. You can read her blog at www.accentnatural.com



Celebrate Lorrie's birthday

Lorrie Otto often used the words of Chief Seattle when she spoke, “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, but rather borrow it from our descendants.” Celebrate Lorrie's birthday by honoring our earth and carrying on Lorrie's love of nature and everything that surrounds it.

Chapters, please incorporate a birthday party in your September activities. Whether having a cake and streamers, reading excerpts from books about Lorrie's work, or doing a presentation about the banning of DDT, please join us in remembering this remarkable woman who not only played a large role in forming Wild Ones, but also in helping the environment. Don't forget to take pictures at your event so we can share them in an upcoming *Journal* article! Email photos with cutline information to barbara.a.benish@gmail.com.

Sacred Grounds-Toledo:

Bringing native plant gardens to faith communities



Congregation members and other volunteers plant a native garden at Salem Lutheran Church.

By Hal Mann

In April 2016, the Wild Ones Oak Openings Region Chapter, in partnership with MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio and The Black Swamp Conservancy, brought Catherine Zimmerman to show her documentary, “Hometown Habitat: Stories of Bringing Nature Home” at the Maumee Indoor Theater. One of the segments told the story of the Sacred Grounds program in the Chesapeake Bay area.

Sacred Grounds is a free certification by the National Wildlife Fed-

eration for faith communities who use part of their properties to build wildlife habitat and actively connect their faith activities with environmental stewardship. This certification recognizes faith communities that are using their grounds for environmental and ecological good.

Several Oak Openings Region Chapter members were inspired and decided to start a Sacred Grounds program in our area of Northwest Ohio. The new group thought they would get quickly up to speed by tapping into an established program.

But in talking with a local NWF lobbyist and the NWF Great Lakes Regional Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan, they were surprised to find out that the Sacred Grounds program was a pilot project in the imperiled Chesapeake Bay watershed. Sacred Grounds hadn’t developed any further. Nonetheless, the local group saw great potential and was eager to implement the program here. After meeting with the NWF regional education manager, who had coordinated with the Virginia Sacred Grounds, Toledo was established as a second



Pastor Mike of People's Missionary Baptist Church explains their new Sacred Grounds garden to the tour group.

pilot project. We would use the work done in Maryland as a springboard to design our program.

Right away several organizations jumped in to participate. Marilyn DuFour and Beatrice Miringu quickly enrolled their employer, the city of Toledo Division of Environmental Services, to help support the work. The MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio partnered to help with administrative and social media needs. Since native plants are the essence of the wildlife habitats, Wild Ones Oak Openings Region Chapter agreed to provide our expertise. With water quality being a major local concern, it was envisioned at least several of the Sacred Grounds' gardens would be rain gardens. Naturally, the Toledo-Lucas County Rain Garden Initiative wanted to be an involved partner. The Toledo-Lucas County Sustainability Commission also joined the team and Tom Schoen represented the Lucas County Soil and Water Conservation District and

provided his landscape design services without charge to participating houses of worship.

Patty Toneff, a longtime advocate for native landscaping, was an early team member. Cindy Carnicom of Poppin' Up Natives added her support to the local campaign. To aid any Sacred Grounds congregation that wanted in, the team offered to provide a mentor to help them in understanding gardening with native plants and connect them to any resources they might need.

To gauge community interest, Sacred Grounds – Toledo, conducted a workshop in July 2017 that explained why faith communities would want to engage their congregations in creating wildlife habitat. The standing-room-only turnout enabled a follow-up workshop in October. That program explained how to design and create gardens appropriate to their particular sites.

The enthusiastic community response was a catalyst for a grant from

the Toledo Community Foundation. This financial infusion enabled the new venture to support 10 faith communities with \$1,500 each toward establishing their native gardens. To keep things simple for participating houses of worship, the team developed a list of native plants and provided sample garden layouts suitable for rain and/or pollinator gardens.

Other community organizations jumped in to help. Teacher Laura Schetter Kubiak engaged her Toledo Public School high school students at the Natural Science Technology Center in growing several species of native plants for the participating faith communities. Todd Crail of the University of Toledo offered service learning credit for his environmental students when they tackled some major invasive removal at one of the sites. Metroparks Toledo donated some plants and sent a crew to help with one of the plantings. Toledo ZooTeens also helped with sod removal and plantings.



Participants in the second workshop at Islamic Center of Greater Toledo work on a garden design exercise.

The Sacred Grounds certification not only involves building wildlife habitat, but also requires completion of several other action areas:

- One, connecting faith and environmental stewardship, which can be as simple as a faith leader talking about protecting the earth to the full congregation.
- Two, engaging the congregation. This might involve a planting day or publishing an article in the congregation's newsletter.
- Three, reaching beyond the congregation, perhaps hosting a community workshop or a garden tour.

In June 2018, a church hosted a rain garden workshop for all interested in the Sacred Grounds program. After an indoor program explained the purpose, mechanics and construction methods, church members Beatrice Maugeri and Marilyn DuFour showed participants a 1,200-square-foot rain garden under construction on their church property.

In July 2018, team members organized a tour of various native gardens and Sacred Grounds sites. One of the faith communities provided a bus, making it easier for ongoing discussion as the group traveled from one garden to another.

In late 2018, Jessica Wilbarger, natural resources specialist with Lucas County Soil and Water Conservation District, took on the expanding promotional and social media needs

of Sacred Grounds-Toledo.

By the end of 2018, 11 faith communities had either installed or were working on wildlife gardens for their properties. It's often said that Toledo has one of the most diverse populations of religions in the country. The participating Sacred Grounds communities gave witness to this. Catholic, Islamic, Methodist, Unitarian, Baptist, Hindu and several other autonomous and non-denominational worship communities signed up. In 2019, an additional grant provided financial support for two additional worship communities.

In March 2019, two workshops were conducted for existing and interested communities and attendees. Each received a \$55 voucher for native plants.

Now that some of the gardens have been in for a year, the team decided to conduct another garden tour. On July 25, 40 people participated in

a tour of six sites. These proud congregations enthusiastically showed off their wildlife gardens and explained their journeys with Sacred Grounds.

Several Sacred Grounds communities are already experiencing encouraging results from their efforts. More than one congregation was thrilled to see monarch butterflies using its gardens to reproduce. Rain gardens at several sites are quickly proving their worth in minimizing or even in one case, eliminating flooding. The enthusiasm kept growing as the group moved from location to another. It was hard to get the participants to break away from examining the gardens and back on the bus.

The Wild Ones Oak Openings Region Chapter is a perfect partner in the Sacred Grounds – Toledo program, and most of the professionals working on the program and mentioned above are current Wild Ones members. Educating people about the benefits of native plants is a core part of our mission and essential in Sacred Grounds. I'm thrilled and encouraged to see how quickly and enthusiastically faith communities are embracing native landscaping. Now that Sacred Grounds – Toledo has helped to further develop this program, Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan, are starting their own initiatives.

We expect NWF to officially roll out Sacred Grounds nationally. Visit www.nwf.org/sacredgrounds to explore this for a faith community you are connected with.

Hal Mann is president of the Wild Ones Oak Openings Chapter.

Tell us what unique things your chapter is doing

The Wild Ones Journal wants to hear about all the unique things your chapter is doing. Whether it is a great fundraising idea, a method to grow membership or a fun idea for a chapter meeting, we want to know!

Send a short recap of your chapter's activity, as well as a few high-resolution photos that show your activity, to barbara.a.benish@gmail.com. Be sure to include the proper contact information.

Your ideas will be featured in future issues of the Wild Ones Journal.

Seeds for Education grants fund food, native plant gardens



Julian Elementary School in Julian, California established a native plant demonstration garden, thanks to a Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education grant.

Located on the back slope of the Julian Elementary school garden, site preparation work was done by adult parent volunteers, such as creating steps down the steepest part of the hill and building a trail connecting those steps to the junior high. But students in the after-school program in grades K-5 did most of the planting, mulching and watering of the California fuchsia, toyon shrub, white sage, Indian milkweed, *Muhlenbergia* deer grass, black elderberry, California buckwheat, scarlet bugler, grape lupine and other plants.

In the final report, Tricia Elisara, the garden and farm to school coordinator, wrote that students got very excited when taught about drought tolerant plants, and even the most “challenging” kids were engaged and excited about the work.

“(Now retired Garden Educator) Kat (Beck) encouraged kids to name their plants, which helped them personalize the project,” Elisara wrote. “One student, who often has a hard time paying attention, was given a fuchsia to plant. Kat encouraged him to build a good, strong basin with rocks scoured from the hillside. It was the one of the plants that has thrived the most, likely due to the great care with which he planted.”

Once finished, they installed signs of the plants’ common and Latin names. But the district is currently looking to hire a Native American liaison and the hope is to also add signs with their native American names.

For others contemplating similar projects, Elisara suggested they first reach out to people in their community who are already working with native plants. “You don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” she wrote.



Bella BeSerra, of Federal Way, Washington, created a Gold Garden as part of her Girl Scout Gold Award project that aims to help feed the immigrant and refugee community.

Girl Scout and church volunteers planted the vegetable garden in Spring 2018. Bella used the Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education grant money to purchase edible native plants, including wild blueberries, nodding wild onion, coastal strawberry and a serviceberry.

In her year-end report, she wrote, “The raised beds look really nice and have really improved the look of the grassy parking lot.”

They added more berries and vegetables to the garden this year, and continue their work to smother the weeds with compost and mulch.

In addition, staff from King Conservation District come out and gave a seminar on plants that are native to immigrants, including some of the more unusual and hard to find vegetables, like bitter long gourd, Akasanjaku beans, Molokai spinach and Armenian cucumbers. “These are vegetables familiar to the immigrants and refugees that utilize many of the gardens we help support across King County,” BeSerra wrote in her year-end report.

Thank you for your contributions

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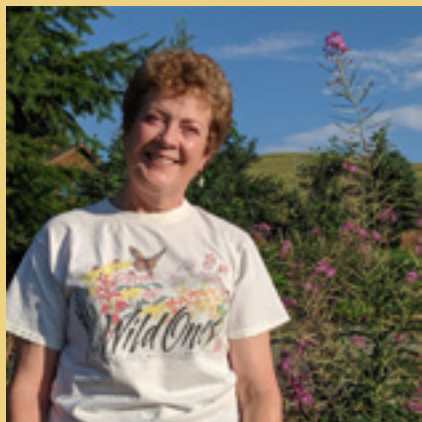
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I'm wild because I like being part of the solution to our environmental issues. Using native plants is key to fighting climate change, purifying our water, preventing erosion and maintaining our food supply.

I've always been a gardener and Wild Ones fits right into my hobby while doing what's right for the environment.

Janice Hand