

**Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.**

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All articles for the November 2020 newsletter, must be submitted to: [Constance@wildonesrrvc.org](mailto:Constance@wildonesrrvc.org) by October 23, 2020.

*Common Spiders of the Midwest*  
*Thursday, October 15, 2020*

Time: 7:00 p.m.  
via online Zoom program



PJ Liesch will present a program via Zoom about common spiders of the Midwest as the monthly educational program of Wild Ones: Rock River Valley Chapter on Thursday, October 15. Information on connecting to the Zoom presentation will be posted on the chapter website ([www.wildonesrrvc.org](http://www.wildonesrrvc.org)) beginning on October 15, and will also be distributed via Constant Contact.

Spiders are amazing creatures that receive little praise for the role they play in the ecosystem. Whether indoors or out, the overwhelming majority of spiders are harmless, beneficial predators that consume an astonishing mass of insects around the globe each year. In this presentation we will take a closer look at our eight-legged neighbors, with an emphasis on common myths, spider biology, and the diversity of the Midwest's spider fauna.

PJ Liesch is a University of Wisconsin Extension entomologist and has been the director of the University of Wisconsin Insect Diagnostic Lab since March 2014. PJ has been involved with insect-related research, outreach, and Extension since 2005. He is a regular speaker for the Master Gardener program, the Wisconsin First Detector Network, the Pesticide Applicator Training program, and UW Farm and Industry Short Course programs. PJ is an avid insect collector and has an inordinate fondness for beetles. He can be found Tweeting about life as an entomologist: @WiBugGuy..

The program is free and open to the public.  
For more information, call (779) 537.8939.

## Message from the President Constance McCarthy



**Constance McCarthy**

*photo by Tim Lewis*

I read an article online that really spoke to me and to the challenging times we are living through. Two 14-year old boys in Virginia devised and launched an initiative aimed at saving bees and pollinators. Of course we all know the concerning data on threats faced by bees and pollinators in recent years. The two boys planned to build a 13-mile stretch of pollinator habitat that they call the Bee Byway.

of a mile between the pollinator habitats. They reached out to privately-owned spaces such as churches and universities, as well as homeowners. The final result was a 13-mile long Bee Byway that includes 97 sites.

This project allowed cities and suburban areas – which are drivers of the destruction of bee habitat – to be part of the solution by building that habitat back up.

So many students have shifted to remote learning and have more time on their hands, yet fewer opportunities for social extracurricular activities. Even plenty of us “grown-ups” have more time because many of our options for socializing and volunteering have been curtailed by the pandemic. Maybe some of our young folks will use this time to come up with creative solutions to environmental challenges in their own communities. I can imagine many such projects being able to be undertaken outdoors with ample social distancing – perfect for our current circumstances.

Our chapter offers a mini-grant program that allows volunteer projects (such as school prairies, Master Naturalist projects, etc.) to purchase plants at wholesale cost from our chapter’s annual plant sale in the spring and annual tree/shrub sale in the fall. With colder months right around the corner, it’s the perfect time to start planning creative ways to improve the local ecosystem. (For more information on the program, contact Kim Lowman Vollmer, youth education and grants coordinator; contact information on the back on this newsletter.) Let the scheming commence!



In 2015, Michelle Obama and the National Wildlife Federation recognized the pollinator crisis and launched the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge. While that program’s goal was met in just three years, conservationists and researchers have recognized that pollinator habitats are best when they are connected to or near each other, in order to better sustain the insects that depend on them. While (non-native) honey bees can travel two to three miles from their nests, (native) bumblebees and solitary bees generally have a much shorter range in which they seek nectar, pollen, and nesting materials. The well-being and survival of these bees depends on having these essentials within flying distance.

With this knowledge in mind, the two boys devised the Bee Byway as their entry in the FIRST LEGO League, a STEM learning competition. Their first endeavor involved cedar boxes with both a nesting compartment and a compartment for growing native flowering plants. But these boxes proved to be expensive and not long-lasting, so they went back to the drawing board. A driving realization: the boxes needed to be not only in your own yard, but also in a neighbor’s garden, and the garden of yet another adjacent neighbor.

The boys abandoned their bee box approach and shifted to creating a string of pollinator-friendly spaces throughout their city of Newport News. They first identified public spaces that could be used as pollinator habitat and obtained permission from the relevant city officials to plant on public land (e.g., parks, schools). They became aware that there were still some gaps between the public sites, and aimed to have no more than one-third

## Recap of September Presentation Jerry Paulson

*"It seems to me that natural beauty is at the basis of our love of nature and our striving to preserve the natural world...nothing becomes valuable until it becomes rare. Rarity and beauty, that's a prairie."*

George B. Fell, founder of the Illinois Nature Preserves System.



Before European settlers came to Illinois there were vast prairies as far as one could see. Early naturalists were amazed by the uniqueness of the Illinois prairies. They saw many plants and animals that were common then, but are now rare, such as the eastern prairie fringed orchid.

Christopher Benda, aka Illinois Botanizer, from Makanda, Illinois, talked about the richness and beauty of the Illinois prairies that can be found as tiny remnants in pioneer cemeteries scattered throughout the state. His video presentation, posted on YouTube as Cemetery Prairies of Illinois at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSgqm0FeCL4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSgqm0FeCL4), described the prairie vegetation of Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve, located along U.S. 45 north of Paxton, and Beach Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve, located south of Rockford near Davis Junction.

The original prairie was very wet. Vast areas of central Illinois were too wet to farm and the prairie remained intact well after the first settlers arrived in the state in the early 1800s until the invention of the internal combustion engine and the mechanical plow fueled one of the largest conversion of land on earth. The prairie was almost entirely converted to productive farmland in less than a decade. "The prairie was so vast that few people could imagine that it could all disappear, and fewer bothered to care," Benda said.

He provided some numbers to illustrate just how rare native prairie has become in the Prairie State. Of the 36 million acres of land in Illinois it is estimated that approximately 22 million acres were covered with prairie vegetation of different types. An inventory of remaining natural areas done in the 1970s found only 2,200 acres of high-quality natural

## Recap of September Presentation (cont'd)

prairie left, or only 0.01% of the original acres! Put another way, of the 57,915 square miles of land in the state, only 1 square mile of prairie remains.

The Illinois Nature Areas Inventory specifically searched cemeteries that had been located in prairie regions in the 1800s before the land was converted to farmland for remnants of the original prairie vegetation. Aldo Leopold, writing in his book, *A Sand County Almanac*, said, "...puccons only conversed with the dead." He noticed that hoary puccoon, a conservative species that does not tolerate disturbance, grew only in pioneer cemeteries, prairie ground that had been set aside in the early 1800s as burial grounds for early settlers who died trying to make a living out on the prairie. "These small remnants are all that remain of the vast prairies that once covered much of Illinois," Benda said.

Loda Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve is one of the gems of native black soil prairie that are found in pioneer cemeteries. It is located within sight of I-57 along U.S. 45, north of Paxton in Champaign county. Black soil prairie is the rarest of the different types of prairie once found in the state, because the land is so valuable for growing crops. Illinois has examples of dolomite prairie, gravel hill prairie, loss hill prairie, sand prairie, and black soil prairie.

The cemetery was established in the mid 1800s. Burials were placed close to the highway, but land in back of the cemetery was not used for burials and still contained natural prairie. After it was discovered, efforts were undertaken to preserve the land. The board of the cemetery association did not want to give up the land for future burials, so farmland next to the cemetery was purchased and traded for the prairie ground, and it was dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve. Additional farmland around the preserve was acquired to buffer the native prairie and was planted to native species. The Grand Prairie Friends, a local group that helps to manage the preserve, put in a viewing platform.

Benda went through a long list of native prairie species that could be seen from the viewing platform, then got down on his knees and felt the rough large leaves of one of the iconic species of the black soil prairie, prairie dock, *Silphium terebinthinaceum*. Prairie dock is one of several *Silphium* species found in Illinois prairies. The leaves are not attached to the flowering stalk of the plant. They feel cool to the touch because as they transpire moisture, the long tap root draws cool

water from deep in the ground. The flower heads are held high in the air on long stalks. Each head contains both disc and ray flowers, a distinctive feature of composite species such as sunflowers and asters.

He then described two of the distinctive grass species of black soil prairie: Indian grass and big bluestem. These are warm season grasses that flourish and bloom during the long warm days of summer and are two of the most common grasses in the prairie. The presence of many conservative species of plants, such as rough white lettuce, *Nabalus aspera*, and prairie gentian, *Gentiana puberulenta*, indicate that the prairie in Loda Cemetery Prairie has never been plowed. Other indicator species of virgin prairie are prairie lily, *Lilium philadelphicum*, queen of the prairie, *Filipendula rubra*, and royal catchfly, *Silene regia*.

Benda described another iconic plant of the tallgrass prairie, rattlesnake master, *Eryngium yuccifolium*. Its yucca-like leaves are very fibrous, and the fibers were used by Native Americans to weave into textiles. The juice from the leaves was thought to be an antidote for rattlesnake bites, and the spherical seed heads rattle when dry. Although the plant looks like a yucca, it is actually a member of the carrot family! Another plant found in the black soil prairie of Loda Cemetery is northern dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*. The thin soft leaves grow in dense clumps and the flowering heads have a strong sweet fragrance that some people say smells like buttered popcorn.

Benda then moved to Beach Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve, located on Big Mound Road south of Davis Junction in Ogle County. The preserve is owned by the Natural Land Institute, Rockford. The first burials were made by the Beoni L. Beach family, who owned the surrounding farm. It is located on a small gravel hill surrounded by farmland and is a priceless remnant of the dry prairies of northern Illinois.

Beach Cemetery Prairie is one of 29 pioneer cemetery prairies known in Illinois. Benda hoped that Wild Ones members would be inspired to visit one of these tiny remnants of the Illinois prairie, to marvel at their beauty and wonder at their complexity, and perhaps even volunteer to help protect them.

Chris Benda can be reached at [botanizer@gmail.com](mailto:botanizer@gmail.com). He has an informative website about everything botanical at [www.illinoisbotanizer.com](http://www.illinoisbotanizer.com).

# 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](http://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!!

## 194 memberships as of September 23, 2020

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

Donna Gable, DeKalb  
Paul & Carol Soderholm, Mount Morris

### Welcome to our new member(s)!

Andrew Williams & Rebecca Christoffel, Madison

A big thank you to our July program volunteers!

Meeting Recap: Jerry Paulson

Video Production: Jerry Paulson

### Anniversaries:

#### 20 Years:

Mike & Kathy Crandall, Winnebago

#### 5 Years:

Kathy Andersen, Rockford

### In Memoriam

In memory of our former Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter members  
Charles Prorok - Member 2014-2020

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 to the right:

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: [membershipworrvc@gmail.com](mailto:membershipworrvc@gmail.com) or call (815) 540-4730 if you have any questions about membership.

Wild Ones Annual Memberships:  
Household \$40, Limited Income/Full-Time Student \$25, Affiliate Non-Profit Organization \$90, Business \$250.

**Thank you for your continuing support!**



## 2020 Chapter Programs and Events

<b>October 15</b>	Common Spiders of the Midwest	<b>PJ Liesch</b>	<b>Zoom</b>
<b>November 11</b>	Potluck/seed exchange		<b>TBA</b>
<b>December 17</b>	No Meeting		

Unless noted, programs are free and open to the public. Programs are subject to change.  
For more information, contact Lisa Johnson at (779) 537.8939



NATIVE PLANTS. NATURAL LANDSCAPES

## ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

c/o Pambi Camacho  
1643 N. Alpine Rd., Suite 104  
PMB 233  
Rockford, IL 61107

### *Don't become extinct!*

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 10/1/2020, 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 [kublai Khan@mac.com](mailto:kublai Khan@mac.com)

*Vice president:* Jerry Paulson  
(815) 222.4414 [paulsonjerry@aol.com](mailto:paulsonjerry@aol.com)

*Secretary:* Cathy Johnson (815) 978.0865  
[catjohn\\_22@yahoo.com](mailto:catjohn_22@yahoo.com)

*Treasurer:* Janet Giesen (815) 762.5912  
[janetgiesen@gmail.com](mailto:janetgiesen@gmail.com)

*Board member at-large:*  
Kim Lowman Vollmer (815) 397.6044  
[kimlowvol@aol.com](mailto:kimlowvol@aol.com)

*Board member at-large:* Ken Kielsmeier  
(815) 289.2812 [jodikiels@gmail.com](mailto:jodikiels@gmail.com)

### **APPOINTED COORDINATORS**

*Merchandise coordinator:* Cynthia Chmell  
(815) 969.7435 [cynthiachmell@gmail.com](mailto:cynthiachmell@gmail.com)

*Native Plant Sale:* Constance McCarthy & Jerry Paulson (as above)

### *External plant sale event coordinators:*

Constance McCarthy (as to the left) & Jane Evans (815) 399.3787  
[jayevans.9985@comcast.net](mailto:jayevans.9985@comcast.net)

Tree & shrub sale coordinators: Brian Hale (815) 289.2384 [moyogi2@gmail.com](mailto:moyogi2@gmail.com) & Jerry Paulson (as to the left)

*Booth coordinator:* [open position]

*Membership coordinator:* Sallie Krebs (815) 540.4730 [membersheworrvvc@gmail.com](mailto:membersheworrvvc@gmail.com)

*Facebook coordinator:* Sallie Krebs (as above)

*Program committee:* Lisa Johnson (chair) (779) 537.8939

[lejohnson3804@outlook.com](mailto:lejohnson3804@outlook.com)  
Mark Luthin (815) 543.7412

[m.luthin@comcast.net](mailto:m.luthin@comcast.net)  
Jerry Paulson (as to the left)

*Publicity coordinator:* Dawn Skupien  
(815) 262.7864 [dawnskupien@gmail.com](mailto:dawnskupien@gmail.com)

*Youth education & grants coordinator:* Kim Lowman Vollmer (as to the left)

*Library coordinator:* Ginnie Watson  
(815) 398.0138 [vsatson47@aol.com](mailto:vsatson47@aol.com)

*Mentor coordinator:* [open position]

*Newsletter: editorial coordinator:* Constance McCarthy (as to the left)

*Newsletter: production coordinator:* Pambi Camacho (815) 332.7637 [dkcamps@aol.com](mailto:dkcamps@aol.com)

*Plant rescue/seeds coordinator:* Mary Anne Mathwich (815) 721.5187 [mprairedock@aol.com](mailto:mprairedock@aol.com)

*Volunteer coordinator:* Laura Sjoquist  
(815) 298.1387 [sjoquist.laura@gmail.com](mailto:sjoquist.laura@gmail.com)

*Show Me/Help Me coordinator:*  
Linda Ricker (217) 649.3966  
[greencreations.leioi@gmail.com](mailto:greencreations.leioi@gmail.com)