

Promoting Native Plants for Natural Landscapes.

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All articles for the May 2023 newsletter, must be submitted to:
serendipitree@gmail.com
by April 21, 2023.

The Ecology of Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers with Chris Benda, the Illinois Botanizer

Thursday, April 20, 2023

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/WO-April-2023-Meeting>



Chris Benda

The onset of spring brings beautiful wildflowers to the woodlands of Illinois which is home to a rich variety of common and rare spring ephemeral wildflowers. They are called "ephemeral" because the flowers typically only occur for a couple of weeks in the spring before disappearing for the rest of the year. These plants deploy an amazing array of strategies to deal with the challenges of living on the forest floor. This talk will cure your winter blues by discussing the myriad of adaptations of these interesting plants.

Chris Benda is a botanist and past president of the Illinois Native Plant Society (2015-2016). Currently, he works as a Researcher at Southern Illinois University, where he coordinates the Plants of Concern Southern Illinois Program and teaches The Flora of Southern Illinois.

Besides working at SIU, he conducts botanical fieldwork around the world, teaches a variety of classes at The Morton Arboretum, and leads nature tours for Camp Ondessonk. He has research appointments with the University of Illinois and Argonne National Laboratory and is an accomplished photographer and author of several publications about natural areas in Illinois. He is also known as Illinois Botanizer and can be reached by email at botanizer@gmail.com.

This Zoom-only program is free and open to the public. This event can be streamed online through the Zoom link above. For more information, call (779) 537-8939. A recording of this program will be posted on our website shortly after the program.

NOTICE: May 18th Meeting to Start at 6:30 p.m. The May 18th meeting and program will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be both in-person and via Zoom. The meeting will be held at the Cherry Valley Public Library at 755 East State Street, Cherry Valley, IL 61016, located south of U.S. 20 By-pass on the east edge of Cherry Valley. For directions go to www.cherryvalleylib.org.

Message from the President Jerry Paulson



Jerry Paulson

At 6:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 9th a bulldozer started stripping off the topsoil of a swath of the ancient Bell Bowl Prairie located at the Greater Rockford Airport. A handful of dedicated defenders of the prairie held vigil all night to witness the death of this precious natural area.

<https://www.northernpublicradio.org/illinois/2023-03-09/the-rockford-airport-tears-through-the-bell-bowl-prairie>.



Photo by Jessie Crow Mermel

Our chapter of Wild Ones provided financial support for the lawsuit filed by the Natural Land Institute to stop the destruction of the prairie and the loss of important habitat for the federally endangered Rusty-Patched Bumblebee (*Bombus*

affinis). Efforts are now underway to protect the small remnant of the prairie still there and to recover sod and roots of the plants from the stripped topsoil to transplant to a nearby forest preserve. (<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=517190413925876&set=a.159681763010078>)

Wild Ones members can do your part to replace the pollinator habitat that was lost by planting native wildflowers, grasses, sedges, and shrubs in your own yard. Heather Holm, pollinator conservationist, award-winning author of books about pollinators, and an advocate for natural landscaping for insects, says that one of the most important things to do to help bees, wasps and other pollinators is to plant native, regionally appropriate bee host plants in your garden, and to keep your garden pesticide-free. (<https://storymaps.com/stories/077ba6d0a1744781b97b5a57acd5f19b>). These include early blooming shrubs like willows, New Jersey tea, and wild plum, early blooming wildflowers like Golden Alexander, black-eyed Susan, sunflowers, asters, and goldenrods that provide a source of pollen later in the growing season.

Most of these species of native plants and shrubs are available at our Native Plant Sale on May 11-13th. The sale brochure and pre-order form are available on our website at: http://www.wildonesrrvc.org/2023/3_March/2023Plant-Sale-Draft03-05-23_rev.pdf.

Do your part to protect the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee and plant native bee host plants.

In My Yard Jane Evans

I noticed it one day growing next to my woodland garden. It was strong looking with stout graceful leaves, not afraid of the world. I admired it and let it stay and by the end of the summer wished there were more. Since then I found out it is *Carex blanda*, Common wood sedge, and have bought more to put in various beds. It has a low mounded shape and mine has grown to about 12" high and seems to like morning sun and shade in the afternoon. Semi-dry to medium-moist soil seems to suit it just fine.

I never realized how beautiful and beneficial sedges are for hosting Skippers and how often they are overlooked. I expect to buy some of each kind of the 3 sedges offered in the plant sale this year.



Common Wood Sedge
Photo by Jane Evans

Plant Sale News **Ginnie Watson**

Our native plant sale is well underway, with orders coming in every day. Now is the time to expand your native plantings to entice a bit more biodiversity to your yard. Consider adding a shade garden under your front yard landscape trees. Add a little more dimension to the corner of your backyard with some interesting tall grasses such as Indian Grass as a backdrop to royal catchfly, golden Alexander, or



black-eyed Susan. Such an area can be the start of something grand! Get started on this year's gardening project now. The deadline to get your order in is April 28, but supplies are limited, and orders are filled as received. For the best selection, get your order in as soon as possible!

Orders due: April 28

Member's only pickup: May 11, 3:00-7:00 pm

Order pickup & public sale: May 12, 3:00-7:00 pm

Order pickup & public sale: May 13, 9:00 am-2:00 pm

Pickup location: Paulson Farm, 4601 Paulson Road, Caledonia, IL 61011

Questions? Contact our plant sale coordinators:

Jane Evans: 815-494-7731 and **Janet Giesen:** janetgiesen@gmail.com or 815-762-5912

"Toward Harmony with Nature" Conference Recap **Dawn Skupien**

I had the pleasure of attending the Toward Harmony with Nature Conference hosted by the Fox Valley Area Chapter. Despite the snow, the turnout was great.

The event kickoff was a keynote address by Dr. Stanley Temple, from UW Madison's Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology. He linked his predecessor Aldo Leopold's concept of "land health" to the conference's mission of "harmony with nature." Leopold described land health as the capacity for self-renewal in the components of "the land." Dr. Temple also stressed the importance of childhood mentors to develop the Land Ethic. Dr Temple's own childhood mentor was Rachel Carson, biologist and conservationist most famous for her book, *Silent Spring*. If you have not read this or Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, I encourage you to start there for environmental ethics education.

Jennifer Wilhoit spoke next, introducing "ecotones," a transition area between two adjacent biological communities. Ecotones are species-rich due to species overlap from neighboring biomes, thus are valuable and beautiful. I thought of my oak woodland descending into riparian area where I observe migrating warblers resting in the trees and also feeding on creek insects.

Next Neil Diboll, owner of Prairie Nursery, covered invasive species control. His style is highly entertaining and educational. We gained tips to

handle invasives using phenology, controlled burn, mowing, and herbicide.

David Stevens from the UW Madison Arboretum shared landscaping methods that emulate natural habitats. For example, leave open surface around plants for nesting insects instead of heavy wood mulch. He highlighted serviceberry, buttonbush, eastern redcedar, river birch and swamp white oak that have four-season aesthetics plus food for wildlife.

Biologist Randy Powers shared his experiences converting properties from traditional to native landscaping. He shared challenges and triumphs with objecting municipalities. He has identified over 750 moth species at his home, a testament to the rewards of native landscaping.

Ryan Wallin, wildlife biologist with the Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium (SEWISC) shared work to bring together organizations and governments to combat aquatic and land-based invasive species.

I also enjoyed connecting with other attendees. I met Peter Dargatz, teacher and author of "Teaching Off Trail." Peter is passionate about engaging children by bringing them out of the classroom. Visit <https://www.peterdargatz.com/> for educator resources. Overall, the conference was very informative, and I encourage you to attend next year!

Wild and Wonderful Early Bloomers Lisa Johnson

March Program Recap

For full article, visit www.wildonesrrvc.org/Monthly_Meetings.html

On Thursday, March 16th, 2023, Cindy Crosby gave us a glimpse of the coming spring with her program via Zoom. Cindy's enthusiasm, energy, and love for native plants were felt through the screen. She is a Master Gardener, a steward for the Schulenberg Prairie at The Morton Arboretum, and a dragonfly steward at Nachusa Grasslands. She also writes a blog called "Tuesdays in the Tallgrass."

Cindy discussed the historical relevance of several early bloomers and how they were used by the Indigenous people. She explained the science of how the different native plants reproduce and also regaled us of clever ways she has collected seeds as a steward. There were many interesting facts she shared about the following selection of early spring wildflowers.

Violets are often maligned because they are vigorous self-seeders and spread quickly, but they are also iconic local wildflowers. There are over 600 species.

Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria Canadensis*, is one of the earliest bloomers. The genus name *Sanguinaria*, means to bleed and refers to the reddish sap in the stems and rhizomes.

Sharp leaved hepatica, *Hepatica nobilis acuta*, blooms in early April, possibly even late March, in shades of pink, white, lavender and purple. Stems and flowers emerge with a furry coat, to protect from the early spring chill. The plant may also be called liverleaf, due to the shape of the leaves, resembling a human liver.

Bellwort's scientific name, *Uvularia grandiflora*, refers to the way the flowers droop, like the Uvula that hangs in the back of the throat.

White trout lily, *Erythronium albidum*, also called adders tongue and dog-tooth violet, has mottled leaves. It often forms large colonies. The yellow trout lily, *Erythronium americanum*, is rarely found in our area. It's more common in southern Illinois and further east.

Great white trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum*, blooms in mid to late spring. It is a favorite food for deer. Prairie Trillium, *Trillium recurvatum*, is smaller and shorter than the great white trillium. It is sometimes called bloody noses due to the reddish color of the flowers.

Jack-in-the-pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*, is a member of the arum family and is pollinated by flies. The plant has a distinctive and unusual shape.

There are several local varieties of anemones, also called windflowers due to the way the flowers nod in the slightest breeze. Wood anemone, *Anemone*

quinequefolia, has one flower per plant with a whorl of leaves below. Rue anemone, *Anemonella thalictroides*, and false rue anemone, *Enemion biternatum*, closely resemble each other.

Harbinger of spring, *Erigenia bulbosa*, is a very small plant with tiny white flowers.

Virginia bluebells, *Mertensia virginica*, is a member of the borage family. It is pollinated by long-tongued bees and hummingbirds, also robber bees punch holes in the base of the flowers to get to the nectar. It can form large colonies, especially in floodplain areas.

The flowers of Dutchman's breeches, *Dicentra cucullaria*, resemble the breeches worn by Dutch boys, hence the name. The fern like leaves are as pretty as the flowers. This plant blooms and sets seed quickly, then the whole plant dies back into the ground, disappearing completely until the next spring.

Skunk cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, looks and smells like rotting meat, hence the name. It is pollinated by beetles and flies which are attracted by the smell. It blooms very early, before most bees emerge. The roots can survive for 200 years.

Marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*, may also be called cowslip or king's cup.

Wild ginger, *Asarum canadense reflexum*, makes a great ground cover. The reddish flowers lie at ground level, under the leaves and are pollinated by flies and beetles.

Wild geranium, *Geranium maculatum*, is very versatile and can grow in dense shade as well as sunny locations.

May apple, *Podophyllum peltatum*, is in the barberry family. Scientists are studying its use to treat various cancers. The fruits are often eaten by turtles, who then spread the seeds.

Wild blue phlox, *Phlox divaricata*, blooms around the end of April into early May and has a pleasing scent.

Cutleaf toothwort, *Dentaria laciniata*, has white, tubular flowers above 3 deeply toothed leaves.

Spring beauty, *Claytonia virginica*, another very early bloomer, is a favorite of many.

Cindy also provided a list of favorite websites and books, including illinoiswildflowers.info, wildflower.org, prairiemoon.com and plants.usda.gov. Books included *Secrets of Wildflowers* by Jack Sanders, *Wildflowers of Illinois* by Sylvan Runkel, *Native American Ethnobotany* by Daniel Moeman and *Floriography* by Jessica Roux.

Membership Update Sallie Krebs, Membership Coordinator

A membership e-form and our membership brochure describing the benefits of membership are both available on the chapter website (www.wildonesrrvc.org). Click on Join/Renew under the Membership tab. You can renew (or join) with any major credit card through PayPal (no PayPal account required) by using our website. We appreciate your support!

172 memberships as of March 26, 2023

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

Karen Brunner, Rockford

Cynthia Chmell, Rockford

Judy Letourneau, Rockford

Thomas & Nancy Mangan, Clare

Dennis McFall, Rockford

Wendy Mertes, Oregon

Terry & Joanne Miller, Belvidere

Welcome to our new members:

Rebecca Beneditz, Rockford

Joanne Kendall, Loves Park

Mackenzie Seymore, Loves Park

New members are identified with a green ribbon on their meeting name badges. Please introduce yourself to them and help us welcome all new members to our great chapter!

Welcome to our returning member(s)!

Tracey Kast, Rockford

Kerry Leigh, Rockford

Anniversaries:

25 Years:

Anita & David Johnson, Rockford

Ed & Charlotte Kletecka, South Beloit

Kathy Mielke & Jeff Stack, Roscoe

20 Years:

Don & Marilyn Heneghan, Roscoe

15 Years:

Mary Thiesing, Rockford

Thank you for your continuing support!

It is preferred that renewal memberships be submitted through the Member Center online

rather than by check for quicker processing and to avoid delays in receiving your chapter newsletter. To renew your Wild Ones membership Log in or contact support@wildones.org for more information. Your expiration date is on your chapter newsletter above your name on the label. You will receive several emails from the Wild Ones national organization prior to your expiration date. If you want to join Wild Ones as a new member go to the Member Center. Remember that your dues include membership in both National Wild Ones and our chapter. If you need to mail a check, please use the address below:

WILD ONES

ATTN: MEMBERSHIP

2285 BUTTE DES MORTS BEACH RD

NEENAH, WI 54912-1274

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 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.

**Get more involved with your
Wild Ones Chapter!**
We are looking for people to offer their talents
and time with the following positions:

**President (in 2024)
Treasurer
Booth Coordinator**

**Mentor Coordinator
Board Member-at-
Large**



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

ROCK RIVER VALLEY

ROCK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't become extinct!

If the expiration date on the mailing label is 04/1/2023, 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



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

Our regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month. We are live streaming the programs over ZOOM and posting recordings on YouTube. Links to the meetings and programs are posted on our website and our Facebook page, and sent to members via email the week of the meeting. If you want to receive the link send an email to: janetgiesen@gmail.com.

Rock River Valley Chapter Board and Coordinators

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