

Volume 7, Issue 2
April - May 2013

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Wild Ones

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Wild Ones promotes environmentally-sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities and is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

For more information, please contact:

Amy - 616-308-8176 or president@rivercitywildones.org

Officers

President - Amy Heilman
VP - Mike Bruggink
Membership - Gretchen Zuiderveen
Outreach - Carol Phelps
Treasurer - Harriet Bromberg
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Garden Chair - Sue Bouchard
Hospitality - Rhonda Reider & Barb Olson
Newsletter - Kim Davidson
Web - Roland Bouchard

Advisory Board

Melanie Manion - Natural Resources Manager Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission
Steve Mueller - Environmental Education Consultant and Award Winning Interpreter
Patricia Pennell - Environmental Consultant, Photographer, Botanist, Eco-friendly Landscaper

April Program - Michigan Frog I.D. with Ranger Steve Mueller

April 15, 2013 - 7:00 PM - Bunker Interpretive Center

Calvin College - 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE

Spring is in the air and so are songs of the frogs. Want to learn the difference between a Spring Peeper and a Chorus Frog? Our favorite Interpreter, Ranger Steve is back and will present an engaging visual program on the frogs of our area. With more of us creating ponds and other water features in our wildlife friendly gardens, this will be an opportunity to learn which frogs are making themselves at home! We will also be

taking a trek out to the adjacent pond at the Ecosystem Preserve for "name that frog tune."



<http://youtu.be/bFPEdJFEH-4>

Click on the link for a spring surprise!

Video Courtesy of Kim Davidson - Crochery Creek Natural Area, Ottawa County, Spring 2011

www.rivercitywildones.org

May Program - Get More Out of Your Digital Camera – Patricia Pennell

May 20, 2013 - 7:00 PM - Bunker Interpretive Center at Calvin College - 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE

As a professional Photographer, Botanist and Landscaper, Patricia uses her camera not only for creativity and income, but as a tool to help her identify plants without lugging numerous reference books into the field. Do you feel like you only use half of the capabilities of your camera? Want to capture the beauty of your garden or a particular landscape or flower? If so, join us for an evening of learning from an expert. If the weather is good, we can venture outside to the preserve after the talk to try what we have learned – so bring your camera!

Annual Native Plant Exchange to Follow This Program!!!

Plant Exchange Rules of Etiquette:

The purpose of the Plant Exchange is to foster natural landscaping with native plants. Please bring plants to share from your garden that you know to be true native species, please no invasive exotics!

Respect Plants – Plants may not get planted immediately, pot them up well so they can survive.

Please provide species labels for the transplants or seeds you bring to share.

Respect Yourself – Just starting out? Don't have plants to bring? Of course you may still take plants! In fact, that is one of the main purposes of the Plant Exchange. We all had to get started somehow, and when native plants start doing really well in your yard, bring some back to share. It is the "Plant It Forward" concept!

Respect Others – If there are only a few pots of a particular species, please take only one so that others may have a chance to get one too.



First Look and Learn Tour of the Year - Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary

Saturday, May 11, 2013 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM

Location: 7 miles north of White Cloud: Check www.rivercitywildones.org on the "Wild Events" page for directions

Due to great demand, we have finally scheduled a field trip to this lovely spot! Several docents will be available so we can split up into smaller groups to explore the trails, view the numerous wildflowers and learn the history of how this sanctuary came to be. This is a must see place!

www.rivercitywildones.org

February Program Recap

Our 2013 year got off to a great start even with a few "technical" issues. Due to unexpected dvd complications we were unable to watch The Flight of the Monarchs documentary, but with the quick thinking of our wonderful president we were treated to another educational dvd, Urban and Suburban Meadows: Bringing Meadows to Big and Small Spaces. It was a nice treat to see lovely meadows blooming with native plants and wildlife on a chilly February night!

March Program Recap

Carrie Rivette, P.E., Storm Water Manager for the City of Grand Rapids was our speaker in March. We learned about the steps that the city has been taking to better manage its storm water. Carrie informed us on the Adopt a Catch Basin Program that the city has implemented along with the 7 water quality islands that were recently installed on Plainfield Avenue in the Creston neighborhood (between Leonard and Ann St.). She also talked about the many businesses within the city that have green roofs, rain gardens, and/or have been landscaped with native plants. For more information on the city's storm water management system, environmental tips (1-6) and the "Basin Buddy" video visit www.grcity.us/esd

Environmental Protection TIP #1

Proper grease disposal

Water and oil do NOT mix!

We need your help! If cooking oil, kitchen grease or fat from poultry and meat is washed down the drain, it can collect in pipes and cause clogs, backups, and even flooding or sewage spills to the environment. Daily clean up work can help to the lower use rate in your bill.



What can YOU do to help?

1. Cool down cooking oil, grease and fat. Literally pour it into a safe, heat-resistant
2. Collect in a jug, oil can, still-beverage bottle or old oil can for reuse.
3. When full, put it in a sealable container, tie the package with the regular household waste.
4. Seal a paper towel to the top and place the seal and plastic in the trash along with the package.
5. Scrape grease and food scraps from plates and put them in the garbage.

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Environmental Protection TIP #2

Proper medicine disposal

Don't rush to flush!

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs (OTC) include examples of drugs that can harm our water and wildlife. These can pass through water treatment plants and end up in streams and fish habitat, fish and wildlife. Disposing of medicines properly helps to protect the environment.



What can YOU do to help?

1. Do not flush down the toilet.
2. Do not pour down the drain.
3. Do not put down the sink or into the trash can.
4. Do not mix with other household chemicals.
5. Do not mix with other household chemicals.
6. Do not mix with other household chemicals.

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Environmental Protection TIP #3

Disposable not Flushable

No Wipes in the Pipes!

Disposable baby wipes, cleaning and dry-cleaning wipes, toilet bowl cleaners and even paper towels might be labeled as "flushable" but they can clog pipes. They can break down in the sewer system, causing plugs in sewer pipes and pipes, resulting in sewage backups, clogs, odors and other environmental consequences that can be a health hazard.



What can YOU do to help?

1. Do not flush disposable baby wipes, dry-cleaning wipes, toilet bowl cleaners, paper towels, or other household disposable products.
2. Dispose of these items in your household trash.
3. When these items are full, put them in a sealable container and dispose of them in the trash.
4. Collect these items in a sealable container and dispose of them in the trash.

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What Will YOU Do??? *by Amy Heilman, RCWO President*

Wild Ones members – the information in the article below contains important details on the current status of our monarch population. Our chapter will be working on some community projects towards this end but I ask you to consider what YOU can do to help bring native milkweed species back to our community? There are many ways for you to get involved; plant milkweeds in your garden or community garden, encourage neighbors and friends to do the same and take time to explain why, collect native seeds and give them away or create a monarch waystation. You can find out which species are best to use here in Michigan, where to get them, how to propagate and collect seed, etc. at <http://www.wildones.org/land/monarch/> - this is the webpage the Wild Ones Monarchs Committee has put together. You will find everything you need to know there...they have done a great job!

Monarch Migration Plunges to Lowest Level in Decades

By MICHAEL WINES *Taken from New York Times, March 13, 2013*

The number of monarch butterflies that completed an annual migration to their winter home in a Mexican forest sank this year to its lowest level in at least two decades, due mostly to extreme weather and changed farming practices in North America, the Mexican government and a conservation alliance reported on Wednesday.

The area of forest occupied by the butterflies, once as at 50 acres, dwindled to 2.94 acres in the annual conducted in December, Mexico's National Commission of Natural Protected Areas disclosed at a news conference in Zitácuaro, Mexico.

That was a 59 percent decline from the 7.14 acres of butterflies measured in December 2011.

Because the insects cannot be counted, the combined size of the butterfly colonies is used as a proxy in the census, which is conducted by the commission and a partnership between the World Wildlife Fund and the Mexican cellphone company Telcel.

"We are seeing now a trend which more or less started in the last seven to eight years," Omar Vidal, the head of the wildlife group's Mexico operations, said in an

interview. Although insect populations can fluctuate greatly even in normal conditions, the steady downward drift in the butterfly's numbers is worrisome, he said.

The latest decline was hastened by drought and record-breaking heat in North America when the monarchs arrived last spring to reproduce. Warmer than usual conditions led the insects to arrive early and to nest farther north than is typical, Chip Taylor, director of the conservation group [Monarch Watch](#) at the University of Kansas, said in an interview. The early arrival disrupted the monarchs' breeding cycle, he said, and the hot weather dried insect eggs and lowered the nectar content of the milkweed on which they feed.

That in turn weakened the butterflies and lowered the number of eggs laid.

But an equally alarming source of the decline, both Mr. Taylor and Mr. Vidal said, is the explosive increase in American farmland planted in soybean and corn genetically modified to tolerate herbicides.

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The American Midwest's corn belt is a critical feeding ground for monarchs, which once found a ready source of milkweed growing between the rows of millions of acres of soybean and corn. But the ubiquitous use of herbicide-tolerant crops has enabled farmers to wipe out the milkweed, and with it much of the butterflies' food supply.

"That habitat is virtually gone. We've lost well over 120 million acres, and probably closer to 150 million acres," Mr. Taylor said.

A rapid expansion of farmland — more than 25 million new acres in the United States since 2007 — has eaten away grasslands and conservation reserves that supplied the monarchs with milkweed, he said.

The monarchs' migration is seen as a natural marvel and, for Mexico, a huge tourist attraction. But naturalists regard the butterflies as a forward indicator of the health of the food chain. Fewer butterflies probably means there are fewer other insects that are food for birds, and fewer birds for larger predators.

Mr. Vidal and Mr. Taylor said December's record-low census does not necessarily constitute a knockout blow against the butterfly. The Mexican government has halted what was once extensive logging in the monarchs' winter home, and there remains the prospect that conservationists and state and local governments will replenish some of the milkweed lost to development and changed farming habits.

Mr. Vidal said that American and Canadian officials should move quickly. "Mexico is doing its part," he said. "Mexico has invested resources, and it's eliminated this massive illegal logging in the reserve. But on the other hand, I think the United States has to do much more."

Mr. Taylor said a further decline could cross a tipping point at which the insects will be unusually vulnerable to outside events like a Mexican cold snap or more extreme heat that could put them in peril.

"Normally, there's a surplus of butterflies and even if they take a big hit, they recover," he said. But if their current 2.94-acre wintering ground drops below 2.5 acres, bouncing back could be difficult. "This is one of the world's great migrations," he said. "It would be a shame to lose it."



Travis Morisse/ The Hutchinson News via Associated Press

The monarch population has declined with extreme weather and changes in farming that have diminished its source of food.



Sparta Biology Students Take Action!

By Sparta High School Biology Students: Pauline Hansen, Erica Humphreys, Jessica Noorman, Kolton Shaw, Adam Sousa, Chase Ungrey, & Brooklyn Ward

Many students at Sparta High School remember when they were younger and the learning experiences they had in elementary school, like when the zoo brought in endangered species to teach students about protecting the environment. As these students grew up, they began learning about some of the animals in danger in *our* environment. Some members of the community decided to take action about protecting these endangered species near the high school. This semester, we, the 10th grade biology students at Sparta High School are participating in service learning projects to become stewards of the environment with a focus on invasive species and restoration of the prairie at SHS. We've all had the teachers that made us sit down and read about invasive plant species and how they were a threat to native plants and animals, but this semester Mrs. McKinley and Ms. Spaans are showing us what *we* can do as students to restore native ecosystems to Sparta.

Like any ecosystem, Sparta has a variety of plants. However, invasive plant species are threatening the presence of many native plants and animals here in Sparta, MI. Some of these invasive plants can be found in our backyards and all around our village. Invasive plants like Garlic Mustard, Japanese Knotweed, and Phragmites pose a threat to our ecosystem because they inhibit the growth of native plants by taking up room and water that could be used by plants that are native to the area. Japanese Knotweed is so invasive that it can grow through cement! Native plants are an important source of food for animals in the area and also provide a habitat for native wildlife, like the Grasshopper Sparrow for example. The Grasshopper Sparrow is a common grassland bird that needs wide-open grass with a few shrubs for its habitat. They particularly like open fields in the winter during their migration times.

Unfortunately, the destruction of native prairie ecosystems like what happened during the building of SHS has put this bird on the list of threatened species in Michigan. ****Continued on page 7**



*Sparta students work to remove invasive species
Photos courtesy of Robby McKinney*

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But, no worries, it's not too late to do something! We, the biology classes, have already made plans to get rid of invasive species on the prairie outside Sparta High School. We are working to cut down unwanted brush, remove remaining invasive species, and plant native wildflowers on the prairie. Mr. Paul Rogers, a DNR forest fire officer who helped plan the prescribed burn of the prairie, came to talk to our class about what was done and what needs to be done. After Sparta High School was built, the prairie became overgrown with nonnative and invasive plants like Garlic Mustard and Phragmites. Many community members wanted to get rid of these unwanted plants that had destroyed the native ecosystem, and after much planning, the Sparta Fire Department burned the prairie on April 7th, 2012. Burning the prairie helped to get rid of invasive species, and also provided an outdoor laboratory classroom for us! We won't be alone on this project though: Mrs. Blackall's 3rd graders from Appleview Elementary have already come once to help us seed native grasses! Our hopes are that the native grasses and flowers that we

plant will bloom in summer and be a home for native wildlife like the Grasshopper Sparrow, as well as make the school look great! We can work together to remove invasive species from Sparta. Please do your part and avoid planting nonnative plants on your property! Be on the lookout for us in the next few weeks! We will be armed with wildflower seeds, herbicide, and saws... working to restore native ecosystems in Sparta one step at a time.

**Groundswell, a division of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, provided grant money for the planting of wildflowers. The prescribed burn was donated by the Sparta and Kent City Fire Departments.*



Sparta Students work to distribute native plant seeds in the prairie outside of Sparta High School

Photos courtesy of Robby McKinney



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Sparta Students work to distribute native plant seeds in the prairie outside of Sparta High School

Photos courtesy of Robby McKinney



Natives to Know!

Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*)

By Joyce Tuharsky

The Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is an impressive rare orchid native to eastern North America. At one time, it was far more common: hundreds of its flowers could be seen blooming in prairie habitats. It has now declined by more than 70 percent from original county records.

Growing up to 4 feet high, this orchid has an upright leafy stem and light green leaves which sheath the stem. The leaves are alternate, 2-8 inches long, elliptical to lance-shaped, with smooth edges and texture, and faint parallel veins.

When in bloom, large showy clusters of 5-40 creamy-white fringed flowers extend above the leaves. Each flower (1 - 1 ½ inches across) has a 3-part fringed "lip" that serves as a landing platform for pollinating insects. The flowers also have very deep "nectar spurs" (1-2 inches long) that contain lots of nectar; but which only large insects, such as Hawkmoths with long probosci (mouthparts), can reach. The flowers open gradually, starting from the bottom of a stalk upward, lasting anywhere from ten days to three weeks. Pollinated at night, the orchid attracts flying insects with its fragrance.

The orchid's seeds are almost dust-like and are easily carried aloft by the wind, traveling considerable distances. While the seeds are produced in huge numbers, germination and seedling growth depend critically on the presence of special fungi in the soil.

This orchid is a long-lived perennial that does not begin to reproduce until it is 3-7 years old. Its tuber root stalk helps it survive grass fires. In fact, fires and rain stimulate the plant to grow and flower. The plant emerges in May and begins flowering by late June. However, this orchid may not flower every year. It can lie dormant for several years between flowerings.

Formerly widespread in wetlands, fens, swamps and tallgrass prairies east of the Mississippi River, the

Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is now listed as a federally threatened species. The decline is the result of habitat destruction, over-collection, competition from non-native species, and fire suppression. Also, the increasing use of pesticides may be impacting both its pollinators and the soil fungi needed for seed germination.

The Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is now known to persist in about 60 populations in 6 states. Most of these populations are located in Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio.



dnr.state.il.us

plants.usda.gov

More information and photos at:

http://www.centerforplantconservation.org/collection/cpc_viewprofile.asp?CPCNum=3520

http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/pwf_orchidx.htm

http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/rareplants/profiles/lep/platanthera_leucophea/index.shtml

Bill in State House Diminishes Biological Diversity

Taken from March 2013 WMEAC Blog

The Michigan Senate passed the “Anti-Biodiversity” Senate Bill (SB) 78 with a 37 to 26 vote. The bill is currently being considered by the Michigan House Natural Resources Committee and, if passed, will discourage the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from promoting or maintaining biodiversity on state lands.

Basic scientific principles of conservation, land management, and ecological health emphasize the importance of biodiversity. Best practices for natural resource management and public testimony from leading Michigan ecological scientists were disregarded when the Senate passed this bill; it undermines the Michigan Endangered Species Act and the designation of Biodiversity Stewardship Areas under the Living Legacies Program. The bill removes provisions regarding restoration, distribution, and the continued existence of native species and communities from the definition of conservation in law.

To get involved, write your state legislator.

Community Events for April

April 18, 6-8 PM at Rogue River Park – take part in the River City Wild Ones 2nd Annual Garlic Mustard Fling! Located at 6300 Belshire Ave., Belmont, MI 49306. Bring gloves and sturdy footwear. Bags and refreshments will be provided.

Directions to Rogue River Park. Take the East Beltline north to Rogue River Rd (also know as 7 Mile)

Turn left at Rogue River Rd, continue on it until Packer dead ends into it on your right. Turn right on Packer, continue for 1/2 mile or so, cross the Rogue River, then slow down; there's a small dirt parking area on your left a little way past the river. The Wild Ones sign will be there to help you!

If you're coming north on 131: Get off at the Post Drive exit, and turn right. Continue on Post Drive until coming to Rogue River Rd. Turn left here, continue to Packer Drive, which dead-ends into Rogue River Rd. Turn left on Packer, continue on it, across the river, then slow down to find small dirt parking lot which will be on your left. A wild Ones sign will be there...

April 29, 7:30 PM Grand Rapids Audubon Club features “Gardening for Birds and Butterflies” by Kay Charter, Founder and Executive Director of “Saving Birds Thru Habitat” at the Auditorium of the Grand Rapids Theological Seminary at 1001 East Beltline Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525. Kay's topic will interest anyone who has a heart for the natural world that surrounds us. Kay is an author and a committed conservationist whose articles have appeared in numerous publications. Audubon meetings are open to the general public and free to attend. <http://www.glsqa.org/grac.htm>

