

Volume 8, Issue 1

February - March 2015

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NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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

For more information, please contact:

Mike- 616-803-5353 or president@rivercitywildones.org

Gretchen - 616-240-2181 or membership@rivercitywildones.org

www.rivercitywildones.org / www.wildones.org (National Headquarters)



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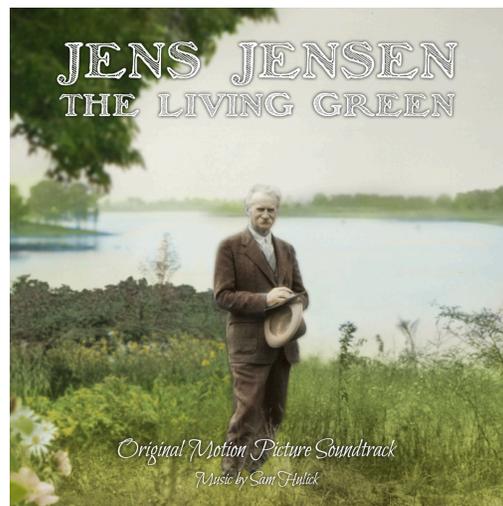
February Program: Annual Movie and Popcorn Night!
Monday, February 16, 2015 - 7:00 p.m.

Bunker Interpretive Center - Calvin College - 1750 East Beltline Ave.

After a two month winter break, we welcome back members and friends to the regular RCWO monthly educational programs! As we munch on popcorn (a February tradition!) and dream of spring - we will watch Jens Jensen, The Living Green.

This dramatic story explores the life of Danish-born Jens Jensen who arrived in America in 1884 and rose from street-sweeper to the Dean of American Landscape Architecture. Inspired by nature, Jensen's influence on the land helped pioneer the beginnings of the conservation movement and created what is now known as the "Prairie School" philosophy of design.

His long career produced over 600 landscape designs for such notable clients as Henry Ford and Frank Lloyd Wright. Many of these gardens exist today and can be viewed at the historic sites of Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. Other gardens around the country are now being restored due to the resurrection of his insightful plans. Jens Jensen was one of the most influential designers to popularize native gardens. He showed that not only could beautiful gardens have native species, but could have native species in their respective places as they would be without human integration or involvement.



Please join us for this fascinating history which will be sure to inspire your own garden efforts! We will also take some time to discuss this year's programs and projects and receive ideas/input from members!

March Program: The Web Beneath our Feet with Mike Klug, PhD

Retired Faculty Michigan State University Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics and Former Resident Director of the Kellogg Biological Station

Monday, March 16, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. (Note Early Start Time)

Bunker Interpretive Center - Calvin College - 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE

Billions of diverse organisms are found in communities beneath the surface of soil. They form complex food webs that provide sustained resources for above ground plant and animal organisms. Unfortunately the old adage "out of sight, out of mind" applies to these communities and we have lost concern for their viability.

Dr. Klug will focus on the nature of and the interactions within these communities and how they contribute to the structure and function of soils. He will also discuss how human activities in the past 100 years have impacted soil communities and ways that we can minimize these impacts in the future.

Mason Bee House Workshop

Bunker Interpretive Center at Calvin College

Saturday, April 11, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Fee: \$15.00 - You must register in advance for this program



This mini program will get you quickly buzzing with success in raising the amazing pollinator mason bees. Bees pollinate 1/3 of our food supply. Historically, we have relied primarily on the troubled honey bee for this job. As science works to help this stressed bee, we can increase the population of gentle-natured solitary bees like mason bees to provide pollination. This is not a beekeeping program and no prior knowledge of bees is required. Each participant will receive a mason bee house and tube inserts. **For questions or to sign up please contact Meribeth Bolt meribethbolt@aol.com and put "mason bees" in the subject line.**

Thank You Members For Your Support! By Amy Heilman - Education Chair

Our 2014 year-end appeal for support generated \$455 and these donations are so very much appreciated - thank you! Many of you may not know that our yearly membership fees go directly to National Headquarters in Wisconsin used towards funding the Seeds for Education Grants, promotional materials and the Journal publication which we all enjoy. Our chapter receives back on a quarterly basis just \$11.00 of the new and renewal dues generated from our own members.

Over the years we have developed several other ways to raise funds such as tool sales, auctions, book sales, applying for grants, etc. These activities require much planning, time and effort but result in the added dollars we require to fund our growing outreach. Primary expenditures we must budget for include speaker fees, building rental for the BIC, expansion and upkeep of our Native Plant and Pollinator Education Garden, website fees, printing and purchase of promotional/educational materials, and our Plant It Forward Grant which funds two organizations per year.

Our Treasurer, Harriet Bromberg, has done a tremendous job creating a budget that the Board operates from. As our chapter has grown, so has the need to carefully manage our funding so that we may continue to support the impressive amount of projects and education we are involved in within our community. This is River City's 8th year as a chapter. River City Wild Ones is now a recognized name for excellent resources due to the level of experience and the dedication of members like you!

So again, thank you for your continued support both financially and for your ideas, participation and enthusiasm. We can take pride in how far we have come and look forward to many continuing years of "helping the earth heal - one yard at a time."

RCWO Member Takes 1st Place in Wild Ones Photo Contest!

by Amy Heilman - Education Chair

Our chapter is very fortunate to have so many diversely talented members and one of them is Valerie Lindeman. Did you know Val loves photography? You can always spot her on our field trips with camera in hand. She often provides photos for our newsletter articles and last summer had a photo exhibit at Blandford Nature Center! Next time you see her, congratulate her on the first place ribbon she won last fall in the national Wild Ones Photo Contest. Her entry of this curious plant Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) entitled "Summer Woods" won best in the Flora category and the photo was printed in the Nov/Dec Journal magazine. Valerie also received a gift certificate to use in the Wild Store.... of course she used it to purchase a cool book on pollinators!

There were 137 photo entries this year so the judge, a professional photojournalist, had a difficult time determining who would place in the various categories. Winning images are used in the National Wild Ones promotional materials, the annual calendar and website. If you would like to see other winning photos go to <http://www.wildones.org/?s=photo+contest+winners>.

The camera is the perfect tool to aid in learning about the biodiversity around us. In the comfort of our own home, we can view the photos and use the internet or reference books to ID what we have seen. Remember when Patricia Pennell, our advisor and professional photographer, spoke about this in her photography program for us?



If you would like to get out on nature hikes to photograph what you observe in the GR area, please contact Valerie at natureval@iserv.net She is interested in forming a group to explore on occasional weekends. And if you want to view some of her lovely photos go to: <http://wildwalksphotographybyvallindeman.zenfolio.com>

Annual Stewardship Network Conference Overview

By Melanie Manion - Chapter Advisor

When I volunteered to write a synopsis of this year's Stewardship Network Conference (January 23-24 in East Lansing), I had forgotten how much they compact into two days. It is almost impossible to capture it all in a newsletter article. However, after much contemplation, I can explain how this conference helped me to solidify the important role the Stewardship Network plays in our work.

There are many times as a scientist I have felt awkward about the more human-side of the Stewardship Network Conference. Activities such as Black Ash Basket-Making Demonstration: The Emerald Ash Borer and its Effects on Basketmakers and the Talking Circles led by Native Americans are fascinating, but an emotional stretch for my scientific and professional training. On the opposite side of the spectrum were sessions on: monitoring; site assessment; practical and advanced management strategies for invasive species; and advance tools in natural land management such as GIS/remote sensing. Sprinkled amongst those more technical sessions were presentations on how to build, maintain and grow a volunteer program and how to work cooperatively to make natural lands and their management part of our communities.

The keynote speakers were inspirational, as always. Rosina Bierbaum from University of Michigan gave a great overview of the changes that are predicted to our environment with climate change. But, her take home message was that we play a critical role, as stewards of the natural world, to help our society adapt to the changes we face. This may be through sharing our observations, or helping combat some of the results of climate change, i.e. invasive species.

But, it was Saturday's keynote that led to my epiphany. Robin Wall Kimmerer from State University in New York presented on how the scientific community can work with Native American communities symbiotically. As I discussed this presentation with other scientists (thoughtful discussion with colleagues is the most beneficial part of the conference for me) I realized the vital role of the Stewardship Network. We (scientists) were uncomfortable listening to the "hippie" parts of the conference, probably as uncomfortable as the non-professionals in the audience felt when we use five syllable words to describe hair. But if we are going to solve crisis like climate change, we need to stretch our comfort zone and go into those conversations that make us cringe.

I hope you get a chance to attend a conference (if you haven't already). They are always informative and inspirational. But, when you do attend, leave your fears, preconceptions, and judgments at home. Come with an open mind and willingness to stretch yourself, because the Stewardship Network is the only place I know where the mind (conservation scientists) meets the heart (the volunteers and landowners).



[Developing Effective Natural Areas Management Plans](#)

Thursday, February 26, 2015 - 12:30pm to 4:30pm Wittenbach/Wege AgriScience and Environmental Center; 11715 Vergennes St SE, Lowell, MI 49331;

Geared towards professional natural areas managers, university-level natural resource management students, and interested members of the public, this interactive workshop will provide a comprehensive overview of the management planning process. The workshop will begin with a review of elements that should be considered prior to plan development, but emphasis will be on understanding the key components of a successful management plan. Budgeting, plan implementation, and evaluation of outcomes will also be discussed. During the workshop, participants will be able to practice developing management objectives and strategies based on real-world scenarios.

Cost: \$15 TSN Members, \$20 Non-Members

Please pre-register by calling or emailing Justin Heslinga justin@naturenearby.org, 616-451-9476

Ranger Steve's Nature Niche - Cedars of Cedar Springs

By Ranger Steve (Mueller) - Chapter Advisor

Two cedars are common in West Michigan but neither is actually considered a "true cedar" (*Cedrus sp.*). The true cedars do not grow naturally in North America. Perhaps the best-known true cedar is the over harvested Cedar of Lebanon whose removal caused flooding and other environmental problems.

Locally two cedars grow in different habitats filling different nature niches.

The **White Cedar** also known as Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) is a wetland species for which the town of Cedar Springs gains its name. In our area it is most common in cold swamps or along streams where moving water prevents acidic stagnant conditions. Cedars require neutral to basic nutrient rich soil conditions of with a pH of 7 or greater. This is more important than keeping their feet (roots) wet.

When crossing Mackinac Bridge northward, we are greeted in the Upper Peninsula with White Cedars along I-75 growing on high ground composed of high pH soil covering dolomitic limestone. The cedars give me the feeling that I am entering the North Country. The Grand Rapids area of West Michigan eastward across Michigan is nearing the southern limit of the tree's abundance. White Cedars are found farther south but large native stands primarily end their southward range here. They also hug the cooler climate along Lake Michigan and have found growing conditions suitable to southern Michigan.

In good habitat the trees grow densely. Roots are shallow and spreading allowing them to receive oxygen easily. If deprived of oxygen they will not thrive. Moving water in swamps brings a fresh supply of nutrients annually during spring snowmelts and high water.

The shallow roots result in trees being toppled easily by strong winds. I have been in Cedar Swamps with fallen trees piled ten feet thick. Many times White Cedars grow in thick pure stands following fire. Deer feed heavily on cedars and depend on mature trees where they yard together for survival in harsh dangerous winter conditions.

Cedars dense growth and evergreen flattened branches hold snow preventing it from falling to the ground. Shallow snow depth on the ground allows easier deer movement. Predators find it more difficult to capture and kill deer in such conditions. When deer leave the safety of cedar swamps into deep snow, they become vulnerable and even without the

presence of predators deep snow requires increased energy expenditure.

Finding food buried in snow is difficult. Along Cedar and Little Cedar Creeks, cedar trees are no longer abundant. When humans settled here, the native habitats were greatly altered. It is interesting to note that many roads and towns are named for species once abundant but were removed by human development. Now the plant and animal names dominate communities more than the species themselves.

One can gage deer abundance by how heavily cedars are browsed. When deer populations are excessively high, cedars are browsed as high as deer can reach when standing on their hind legs. Where deer populations have not exceeded the carrying capacity of food, water, shelter, cedar branches can be found growing closer to the ground. Lower green branches have become rare in much of Michigan.

The **Red Cedar** is actually a juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*) growing on high dry ground. It is a southern tree that found its way into mid Michigan. Prior to logging and European farmer settlement, the Red Cedar was uncommon here. Clearing of forests allowed this shade intolerant species to expand its range northward on well-drained calcareous soils. When driving south in winter, the Red Cedars seem to dominate highway shoulders where its evergreen branches are apparent during the cold season.

Its branches are very prickly to the touch unlike the softer feel of White Cedars. It is drought resistant, slow growing and might live a few hundred years if not harvested. Its wood is also decay resistant, used for fence posts, cedar chests, and closet linings like that of White Cedar for which the Cedar Springs was named. Wood from both repel insects, fungi, and provide a pleasant aroma.

Natural history questions or topic suggestions can be directed to Ranger Steve (Mueller) at the odybrook@chartermi.net Ody Brook, 13010 Northland Dr, Cedar Springs, MI 49319-8433. (616) 696-1753.

Natives to Know - American Senna (*Senna hebecarpa*) By Joyce Tuharsky

Happy 2015! It has been four years since I started my native plant garden, and I want to sincerely thank everyone at Wild Ones who generously gave me “starter” plants. Finally, this past season, I was able to “pay-it-forward,” giving away several American Senna seedlings and seeds. Folks asked questions about this plant, so...

American Senna is a sturdy, 4 to 6 foot, upright-growing member of the pea family (Fabaceae). It is native to North America, primarily east of the Mississippi from Ontario south to Georgia. It is considered endangered or threatened in some New England states.

The lacy pinnate leaves of this perennial are typical of the pea family. Borne on long, hairy stalks, the leaves are 6 to 8 inches long and consist of 12 to 20 opposite leaflets. Growing in large bushy clumps, the attractive leaves add beautiful texture to a garden. The root system consists of fibrous roots and rhizomes, from which vegetative colonies often form.

Senna flowers are NOT typical of a pea family. During July-September, spikes of numerous yellow flowers emerge on slender stems from the axils of the leaves at the top of the plant. Each flower has five unequal petals grouped into 3 above and 2 below, with conspicuous brown anthers, and stamens in groups of unequal length. Only the upper group of stamens are fertile.

Interestingly, American Senna have “extra-floral nectarines” at the base of each leafstalk. These upright ovoid glands produce additional nectar that attracts primarily ants and some beetles and flies. It is thought that some of these insects may protect the plant’s foliage from other insects.

In autumn, dark brown seedpods form which are 5 inches long, flat and somewhat curved. Each seedpod has 10-18 segments; and each segment contains a single flat, dark-brown seed only ¼ inch long. When dry, the seedpods split open explosively to release the seeds.

American Senna is found in moist thickets, open woods, and disturbed areas. The pollen is of special value to bumblebees, and also attracts halictid bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. The plant is a larval host for the cloudless sulphur --a lemon colored butterfly. The seedpods are favored by larger birds like quail and wild turkey. The leaves, however, contain a powerful purgative called *anthroquinone*, and thus avoided by deer and other mammals.

Wild Senna is a great choice for gardens, hedges and restoration projects. Long-lived and hardy, it prefers mesic conditions, but will tolerate dry sites once established. The seeds have a hard coat which must be “scarified” or chipped in order to absorb water and sprout. Seedlings initially send

their energy into their root system; slow growth of the plant above ground during the first two years is normal.

For more information and photos:

http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_sehe3.pdf

<http://www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org/pages/plants/wildsenna.html>

www.illinoiswildflowers.info/savanna/plants/wild_senna.htm



Photos courtesy of:
George H. Bruso -
www.plants.usda.gov &
G. D. Bedeau -
www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org



What's Buzzing - Chapter News

By Meribeth Bolt - Vice President



Native Plant Education Garden Update

This spring our ¼ acre Native Plant Education Garden (NPEG) will undergo a big growth spurt. A generous grant from the Wildflower Association of Michigan was awarded to River City Wild Ones for the purchase of many additional species of Michigan native plants including trees and shrubs. Thanks to the West Michigan Butterfly Association Grant, we will be installing new butterfly ID tags on host plants and creating a NPEG brochure. Watch your email and Facebook for various dates and times to come out to play in the dirt!

Native Plant Sale added to Annual Garden Tour July 20th

An added feature to our Second Annual Native Plant Garden Tour on Monday, July 20th is our first native plant sale. We will feature ten plant species that received the most “WOW” comments during our 2014 garden tour. Including the American Senna discussed in this issue. *Please volunteer for this fun event!*

Brewery Vivant Pub Presentation and Donation

On Tuesday, May 19 at 6pm RCWO will provide a presentation on MI native plants in the pub at Brewery Vivant (BV). Come on out to learn more about the natives you love and show your support for RCWO and our NPEG Good Neighbor BV.

Once again Brewery Vivant will donate \$1 for every beer enjoyed at BV anytime on the day of our July 20th garden tour. Before, during and after the garden tour please stroll across the street to visit the pub and lift a pint, cheers!

A Sign for our Native Plant Education Garden

Many community members use the combined parking lots for the Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF) & Green Well Gastropub in the bustling East Hills business district. After parking in the lot it's convenient to walk the paths through the NPEG to your destination. We're sure many people enjoy the shortcut through our lovely garden with its' four season interest. Do they know what they're witnessing? Slowly over the past three years the transition from a traditional European garden to a Michigan native plant oasis for people and pollinators is stunning!

To add the important missing education piece to our NPEG, we are fundraising for a large garden sign. RCWO members Meribeth Bolt and Patricia Pennell are the team writing the verbiage. Rockford artist Georgia Donovan will create the artwork for the illustration. RCWO member Ruth Oldenburg will provide graphic design to pull words and art together for the sign to tell the story of our garden. We hope to have an installation date prior to our July 20 garden tour. Please consider a donation to help fund the sign.

Collaboration with Kent/MSU Extension Master Gardeners

June 5th (5-8 PM) & 6th (9 AM - 1 PM) are the dates for the annual Kent/MSU Master Gardener Plant Sale. This public sale features a large selection of non-natives with a greatly expanded number of Michigan natives offered this year.

RCWO members will use our display board to provide education on native plants and pollinators during the sale. In addition, we will help customers choose the right native plant for the right place in their gardens. After the sale, any remaining native plants will be donated to RCWO for our community projects. The sale takes place in the beautiful Grand Ideas Garden located at the Kent/MSU Extension Office, 775 Ball NE, Grand Rapids. Thanks to Rebecca Finneran, MSU Extension Horticulture Educator for this collaboration. *We will need volunteers for this fun collaboration.*

Name for Newsletter? (Amy Heilman)

Can you come up with a catchy name for our chapter's newsletter? The Kalamazoo Chapter calls theirs “Seedlings.” If anyone has any suggestions for names please send them to Amy Heilman at amy.heilman@sbcglobal.net

CURES FOR CABIN FEVER!!

Want to Get into the West Michigan Home and Garden Show for Free??

In order to expand our organization's presence in the community; we will be exhibiting our award winning educational display at this year's WM Home and Garden Show at the DeVos Place! The dates are Thursday, March 5th – Sunday, March 8th. There is no charge for our exhibit space. Most shifts are only 2 hours so it's easy and will allow you free access to the rest of the show and your friend/family member can get in for a reduced rate. Parking is not included, BUT as a volunteer you can park in a free lot and ride the free shuttle. The lot is about 8 minutes around the corner from the show and convenient if you don't want to pay to park.

We want to have 2 people at the table per shift. If you are new to staffing our information table, this is an excellent opportunity to learn the ropes by pairing with an experienced member who is already signed up for a shift.

If you want to see the show and work a shift or two – please contact Education Chair Amy Heilman at amy.heilman@sbcglobal.net or 616-308-8176 OR Talk to her at the February meeting.

Take Part in The Great Backyard Bird Count! February 13 - 16, 2015

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.



Since then, more than 100,000 people of all ages and walks of life have joined the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds - <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

The MSU Extension “Smart Gardening” Conference will be held in conjunction with the West Michigan Home and Garden Show on Saturday, March 7 from 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

Monroe Meeting Rooms of DeVos Place - 303 Monroe Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

The Keynote Speaker is Rick Darke, Nationally known horticulture expert, plantsman and author.

Click on the link to download a copy of the [Smart Gardening Conference Brochure](#)

The Wildflower Association of Michigan Presents: Landscape Design: Where Art and Nature Meet! 28th Annual Michigan Wildflower Conference March 8 & 9, 2015

The Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center at Michigan State University. This year's keynote speaker is renowned Landscape Architect Darrel Morrison.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the complete program line up and registration form

2015 River City Wild Ones Program Calendar

All programs start at 7:00 PM unless otherwise noted

Feb 16	“Inspired by Nature” a film about Danish born Jens Jensen. Jensen’s influence on the American landscape helped pioneer the beginnings of the conservation movement. He designed over 600 landscapes for notable clients such as Henry Ford and Frank Lloyd Wright.	Bunker Interpretive Center Calvin College 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Grand Rapids
Mar 16	“The Web Beneath our Feet” by Mike Klug, PhD Retired faculty of MSU Dept. of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics and former Resident Director of the Kellogg Biological Station.	Early Start Time - 6:30 PM Bunker Interpretive Center Calvin College 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE
April 11	Mason Bee House Workshop 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM Fee: \$15.00 - You must register in advance for this program, Please contact Meribeth Bolt meribethbolt@aol.com and put “mason bees” in the subject line.	Bunker Interpretive Center Calvin College 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Grand Rapids
April 20	“Current Threats to our Great Lakes and Wetlands with Some Solutions” by Alan Steinman PhD. Dr. Steinman is Director and Professor at the Annis Water Resources Institute at GVSU. He has published over 100 scientific articles with research interests in nutrient cycling in aquatic ecosystems and restoration and algal ecology.	Bunker Interpretive Center Calvin College 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Grand Rapids
May 18	“Annual Garlic Mustard Fling, Spring Wildflower Walk & Native Plant Exchange” View a diverse array of native wildflowers as we eradicate the menace garlic mustard! Native Plant Exchange to follow.	TBA (Check website for updates)
June 15	“Tour Asylum Lake WMU’s Largest Preserve” with Steve Keto, WMU Natural Areas and Preserves Manager. Steve holds degrees in Wildlife Management and Animal Science. Steve worked as a commercial propagator of N. American Native Plants for 20 years.	Directions to this Kalamazoo site TBA (Check website for updates)
July 20	“Second Annual Native Plant & Pollinator Education Garden Tour & First Annual Native Plant Sale” The garden was widely expanded for 2015. This free and fun community educational event offers door prizes, free milkweed plants, and a book sale.	Start time - 5 PM 920 Cherry St SE, Grand Rapids 49506 In front of the Historic Inner City Christian Federation Bldg.
Aug. 17	“Hike Through a Tall Grass Prairie” with Naturalist Craig Elston. We will walk through the six-acre Hudsonville Nature Center prairie to identify and talk about the flowers and grasses found there. We will discuss planting and maintaining prairies and the interesting facts and history of Michigan prairies.	Hudsonville Nature Center 2700 New Holland St. Hudsonville, MI 49426
Aug. 29	“Behind the Scenes at Wildtype Native Plant Nursery” with founder and owner Bill Schneider. Wildtype was established in 1996 and specializes in native plants from MI genotype.	900 N. Every Rd., Mason, MI. Time: 1 PM. Retail open 9 AM – 3 PM
Sept. 21	“A Mushroom Adventure” with Nicole Mathiasz. This fun and informational presentation will help you to correctly and safely identify mushrooms. We will begin with a PowerPoint then a walk through the nature preserve.	Early Start Time - 6:30 PM Bunker Interpretive Center Calvin College 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
Oct. 19	“Annual Fall Social and Potluck”	Early Start Time - 6:30 PM Bunker Interpretive Center Calvin College 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Grand Rapids
Nov. 16	TBA (Check website for updates)	TBA (Check website for updates)