

Inside this issue:

President's Message	2
Monarch Campaign	3
Natives to Know	4-5
Cures for Winter Blahs	6-7
2013 Program Schedule	8

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Newsletter - Kim Davidson
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Steve Mueller - Environmental Education Consultant and Award Winning Interpreter
Patricia Pennell - Environmental Consultant, Photographer, Botanist, Eco-friendly Landscaper



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

February Film and Popcorn Program: Flight of the Monarchs

Monday, February 18, 2013 - 7:00 PM - Bunker Interpretive Center

Calvin College - 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE

We will welcome back our monthly educational programs with a visually stunning documentary which follows the year long migration of the monarch butterfly from the volcanic forests of Mexico all the way to Canada – the longest known insect migration on Earth.

The film follows the monarchs' 2,500-mile journey, weaving a fascinating natural history documentary with a stirring detective story. The hero is [Fred Urquhart](#), a tenacious scientist who as a small boy had fantasized about where the butterflies went every winter. He devoted 40 years of his life to uncovering the mysteries surrounding their amazing journey and enlisted thousands of volunteers—his "citizen scientists"—to help tag and track the insects. Their efforts finally paid off in 1976, and now more than a dozen sites on five mountains in Michoacan and Mexico state have been identified as winter homes for monarchs.



Popcorn and beverages will be provided – bring a friend and let's celebrate a new year of learning!

President's Message

A Time to Reflect by Amy Heilman, President

Now that the holidays are behind us, and we are encountering another mild winter, my thoughts are already turning towards spring wildflowers, native buds opening on the woody shrubs and yes...the ever challenging garlic mustard rearing its ugly head through the snow!

I am also spending some time reflecting on where our chapter has traveled over the past six years and where the journey will take us this year. We have come a long way since Carol Phelps saw the need for a native plant based group in Grand Rapids and initiated River City Wild Ones Chapter. It began with only 10 members and today has grown to over 70. Our newsletter has evolved from a short typed page to a 5 plus photo-filled e-newsletter which reaches many people beyond our immediate membership. This publication, in addition to our website, is a conduit for those searching for information on native plants or a way to connect to our group, the larger plant/environmental community and other educational opportunities. Our site has even been used by school groups as they explore and learn about the natural world. We hear from them from time to time and it is very rewarding to know our site is a teaching tool.

Another bright spot is that as our chapter has become recognized; finding speakers for our programs and field trips is becoming easier. Speakers and organizations are asking to present for us and we are being approached to have information tables at environmental events or to speak to a group. This is where we can really have great one-on-one engagement with homeowners and students...discussions that often influence them to reconsider how they garden.

It has been quite encouraging to see more members offering to take a turn in a leadership role on the chapter board too. I know there is so much knowledge, experience and enthusiasm within our membership and it is important to get new ideas and perspectives so we continue to stay strong and vital as a chapter. The open positions this year include Vice President and Membership Chair. Now is your chance to help shape our activities for a two year term!

Finally, we have reached a point where we can help the community fulfill our aim to encourage biodiversity through the use of native plant landscaping – not only through education but also financially. Our plant sales have helped to bring in funds and our annual auction continues to be well attended and profitable. The 2012 auction netted us \$1,600 and we thank everyone who contributed to this fun event! At last our budget is such that we can provide “Plant It Forward Grants” to our schools and other community non-profit organizations so that they can develop what we all want to see – more native plants in public spaces. Information and application is on our website so please help us pass the word on about this to those you may know who are in need of some help.

I look forward to the year ahead of us – another set of interesting educational programs to learn from, community service projects to assist with, and new people to connect to. Let us go forth ...and grow... despite the snow!

Wild Ones Campaign to Save Monarch Butterflies

As you may have read in the *Wild Ones Journal* or from newsletters from National Headquarters, Wild Ones is partnering with Monarch Joint Venture (MJV). This is a partnership of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic programs that are working together to support and coordinate efforts to protect the monarch migration across the lower 48 United States. The MJV is committed to a science-based approach to monarch conservation work, guided by the 2008 [North American Monarch Conservation Plan](#).

This Joint Venture will work throughout the US to conserve and protect monarch populations and their migratory phenomena by implementing science-based habitat conservation and restoration measures. This goal will be achieved through a combination of habitat conservation, enhancement and restoration; education; research and monitoring.

A Wild Ones Monarch Committee was recently formed at the national level and is developing resources to help members and communities establish waystations using native plants. These tools include a *Wild for Monarchs* brochure, a chapter brochure insert, a Wild Ones Monarchs webpage and a regular feature article on Monarchs and other pollinators in the *Wild Ones Journal*.

We as chapter members can also help out with this mission in several ways; by planting more milkweeds on our own properties, or motivate non-members to plant milkweed, we can grow milkweed plants in plug flats to donate to school gardens or collect milkweed seeds to offer to others. Common milkweed is generally the preferred host plant of Monarchs, while swamp and butterfly weed are preferred nectar plants. We will be learning more about how we can contribute to the monarch campaign in the months to come but for now,

you can also check out the websites at www.monarchjointventure.org or www.monarchwatch.org to find information on way stations, seed collection and sowing methods and milkweed species. You can also plan to attend our Feb. 18th program featuring the film *Flight of the Monarchs* to learn more about these fascinating pollinators!



Monarch and milkweed beetles on common milkweed



MONARCH WAYSTATIONS

CREATE, CONSERVE, & PROTECT MONARCH HABITATS

www.MonarchWatch.org



Photo Courtesy of Leesonphoto.photoshelter.com

Natives to Know: Milkweed (*Asclepias* species)

Milkweed is the common name for a group of herbaceous perennials that belong to the *Asclepias* genus. Named for its milky juice, milkweeds have flowers in umbel-like clusters, opposite or whorled simple leaves, and tufted seeds in long pointed seedpods. When the pods ripen and split open, the seeds are dispersed by the wind.

Most milkweed species contain toxins in the sap of the leaves and stems. The amount of toxins varies by species. Some species contain almost none, while others contain so much that they are lethal even to monarch caterpillars. The sap of some species causes skin irritation in humans. Sensitivity to a toxin varies with a person's age, weight, physical condition and individual susceptibility. Children are most vulnerable because of their curiosity and small size. Toxicity can vary in a plant according to season, the plant's different parts and its stage of growth. They can also absorb toxic substances, such as herbicides, pesticides and pollutants from water, air and soil.

Milkweed flowers have a unique pollination mechanism. The pollen grains are packaged into sacs with slits that attach to the leg of foraging insects. Once removed from the flower, the sacs re-orient as they dry to become properly positioned to pollinate another flower. Milkweed flowers also have modified anthers enclosed within a whorl of five "horns." The horns of some species are long, while the horns of others can barely be seen.

Milkweeds are not just another native plant. They are critical to our natural food web, because they provide a major food source for so many insects. It is the sole food source for monarch butterfly larvae, and the nectar is a key food source for honey bees and other nectar seeking insects. Hummingbirds use the seed pod floss to line their nests.

Milkweed populations are declining across the country as a result of development and agricultural herbicides. The monarch butterfly population, in turn, is also dwindling. Conservation organizations, like Wild Ones

and Monarch Watch, are urging that milkweeds be planted in gardens, fields, and along roadsides to rebuild monarch habitat. Milkweed seeds should be sown outdoors in November, since many species require exposure to cold before germinating in spring.

There are about 110 native species of milkweed in North America, having an amazing diversity of foliage and flower colors. According to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 11 species are native to Michigan. Below is a list of the species found in Western Michigan:

Clasping Milkweed, *Asclepias amplexicaulis*. 1-4' tall; mostly opposite leaves; pinkish-white flowers like the Common milkweed, but cluster is less dense; blooms in spring. Habitat: dry fields and open woods, usually in sandy soil. Distinguishing feature is the wavy edges of the leaves. This species is uncommon and or protected in some states.

Common Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*. 2-6' tall; blooms in summer, pink to reddish purple flowers; opposite leaves up to 8" long; seedpods 3-4" long; tolerates a variety of soil types; distinguished by its prickly seedpods. Michigan's most common milkweed.

Green Comet Milkweed, *Asclepias viridiflora*. 2' stems are mostly solitary or in pairs and bear opposite leaves up to four inches long. Leaves are variable in shape with plants from dry sites having long narrow leaves and those from moist sites having round leaves. 20-80 pale green flowers occur in two inch clusters in upper leaf axils. The pods are about four inches long and pointed at both ends.

Poke Milkweed, *Asclepias exaltata*. 2-6' tall; opposite leaves up to 10" long, narrow with sharp tips. Flowers are relatively fewer, bi-colored: pale purple with white or pink hoods that weep down on long umbels; blooms in summer. Habitat: forest edges with dappled sunlight, rich or sandy loam with organic matter. Our only true forest understory species.

** Continued on next page*

Purple Milkweed, *Asclepias purpurascens*. 2-3' tall; opposite leaves up to 6" long with sharp tips, often curl upward; deep purplish-red flowers; blooms in late spring; seedpods up to 6" long. Habitat: sandy or rocky soils, edges near woodland, rather than in open prairie. An oak-hickory savannah indicator species.

Swamp Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnate*. 2-4' tall; mostly opposite narrow leaves up to 4" long; rosy red and white flowers; shallow root system; blooms in summer. Habitat: banks of rivers, wet prairies, swamps, flood plains. Our only milkweed of truly wet ground (but adaptable to garden soils.)

Whorled Milkweed, *Asclepias verticillata*: 6-15" tall; very narrow needle-like, whorled leaves, 1-2" long; shallow root system; white to greenish flowers. Habitat: nutrient poor, sandy, clay or rocky soils of prairies, roadsides, or open woods. A distinctive slender plant, one of the first to come back after a prairie fire.

by Joyce Tuharsky

More information and photos at:

<http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu>

<http://www.butterflyencounters.com/index.html>

<http://www.monarchwatch.org/milkweed/guide/index.htm>

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ascle>

<http://www.wildflower.org>

MONARCH WAYSTATION



This site provides milkweeds, nectar sources, and shelter needed to sustain monarch butterflies as they migrate through North America.

Certified and registered by Monarch Watch as an official Monarch Waystation.

CREATE, CONSERVE, & PROTECT MONARCH HABITATS



Monarch on Swamp Milkweed

Photo courtesy of en.wikipedia.org



Poke Milkweed

Photo courtesy of www.ourhabitatgarden.org

Cures for the Winter Blahs!

Michigan Mammals and their Feather Friends!

Date: Sat., February 23rd **Time:** 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. **Instructors:** Meggan Johnson and Melanie Manion
Location: Wittenbach/Wege Agriscience & Environmental Education Center, Lowell

Our planet is home to thousands of bird and mammal species. Do you know which of these furry and feathered animals call Michigan home? In this class we will learn simple identification techniques and tips on observing Michigan's mammals and birds. We'll also spend time outside exploring a variety of habitats in search of clues to help us identify birds and mammals living in the area in winter. Snowshoes will be available for participants free of charge. Bring binoculars if possible!

Cost: \$30.00 **Credit:** 4 Hours of Education Credit

Questions or to Register? Call Ginny Wanty, MSU Extension Environmental and Gardening Program at 616-336-3108 or wanty@anr.msu.edu

Blanford Nature Center - Invasive Species Cutting

Date: Sat., February 16th **Time:** 1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. **Location:** Trails at Nature Center

Even in the winter we can cut and treat invasive shrubs to make room for spring natives. Come learn to identify several trees and shrubs by bud and bark. After we will test our skills and remove the unwanted shrubs. Volunteer Event, No need to RSVP. Families and Students 13+ are welcome!

Questions? Call (616) 735-6240 **See our website for more programs that are going on at Blanford this winter

The Great Backyard Bird Count: February 15 - 18

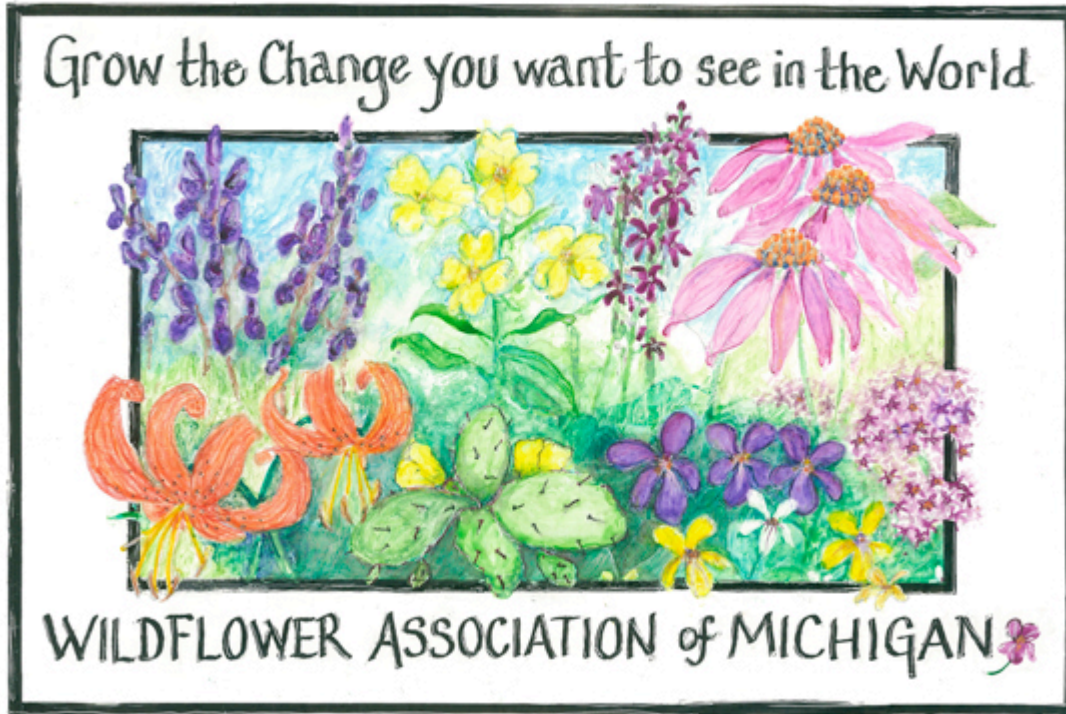
http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/great_backyard_bird_count_be_a_citizen_scientist

The [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) will take place February 15-18 around the globe. The Great Backyard Bird Count provides a great opportunity for young and old to connect with nature by discovering birds and serve as "citizen scientists" by participating in a huge world-wide science project. Participating is easy. Simply watch birds for at least 15 minutes at the location of your choice on one or more of the count days. Estimate the number of birds you see for each species you can identify and report your data online at [The Great Backyard Bird Count website](#)

**For more educational opportunities check out the "Community Events" Tab on our website
http://www.rivercitywildones.org/Community_Events.html

The 26th Annual Wildflower Association of Michigan Conference

March 3rd & 4th, East Lansing, Michigan



Douglas Tallamy and Laurel Ross plus much more...

The 26th annual Wildflower Association of Michigan conference will take place on Sunday, March 3rd, and Monday, March 4th, at the Kellogg Center on the Michigan State University campus. The keynotes, Douglas Tallamy and Laurel Ross, will be presenting on both Sunday and Monday. In addition to our excellent slate of presentations, this year's conference will include two hands-on workshops: Seed Starting and Edible Mushroom Cultivation. Please visit the [WAM Conference Page](#) for a full list of speakers and topics for this year's conference. The discounted early-bird registration deadline is February 8th and the regular registration deadline is February 25th. [Click here for the registration form.](#) We hope to see you there!

2013 River City Wild Ones Calendar

All programs (unless otherwise specified) will begin at 7:00 p.m. on the 3rd Monday of each month, February - November. Non-members are always welcome! Find more information for each event under “Wild Events” on our website.

Date	Speaker / Topic	Location
Feb 18	“Flight of the Monarch” Documentary & Discussion of this years upcoming projects / programs	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
March 18	Carrie Rivette - Stormwater Manager for City of G.R. / Update on Green Grand Rapids Master Plan	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
April 15	Ranger Steve Mueller / Michigan Frogs & Annual Native Plant Exchange	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
May 11 (Saturday - early p.m.)	First Look and Learn Tour of the Summer - Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary	Huron-Manistee National Forest / 6.8 Miles North of White Cloud http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/regions/eastern/LodaLake/index.shtml
May 20	Patricia Pennell / Getting the Most from Your Digital Camera for Landscape Photos	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
June 17	Brian Majka / Cardno JFNew - Exploration of shoreline native plants growing 10 miles inland!!	Muskegon Area Location - TBA
July 15	Steve Allen - Owner, Guem Service Ecological & Native Plant Consulting / Tour of Amway’s Private Green Space	Amway Spaulding Plaza 5101 Spaulding Ave., Ada
Aug 19	TBA	TBA
Sept 16	Nick Gressick - GVSU Professor & Botanist / Coastal Plain Marsh Ecosystem	Five Lakes Muskegon Nature Sanctuary - Located near Fruitport
Oct 21	7th Annual “Not So Silent” Auction	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
Nov 18	TBA	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids



“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”

- John Muir

www.rivercitywildones.org

