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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](mailto:president@rivercitywildones.org)

### July 16th Program: Huff Park

Join us for the July meeting of River City Wild Ones at Huff Park in Grand Rapids. The 80-acres encompassing Huff Park features a 30-acre wetland boardwalk trail, which weaves through three distinct biospheres with paved pathways, boardwalks and interpretive signs. The natural habitat features a wide array of wild flowers and

wetland inhabitants in the middle of an urban area. We will be discussing wetland habitat and flora and meet at our normal start time of 7 pm. The park is located at 2286 Ball Ave NE in Grand Rapids. As always, please come prepared for inclement weather, mud and bugs! We will have some light refreshments following the program.

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### First Look & Learn Tour on Wednesday, June 27

Look & Learn Tours are back by popular demand! Our second year of Look & Learn will have two tours.

First tour:

Wednesday, June 27 – 6 to 8 p.m.

Rain date: Thursday June 28 – 6 to 8 p.m.

Home of Sue & Roland Bouchard

2072 Northridge Drive, NE, Grand Rapids, MI

Join us and bring a friend for a *Wild One's Look and Learn Tour* of Sue and Roland Bouchard's garden. Sue is our Look & Learn Chair and Roland is our Webmaster. Their woodland garden features oak, maple, redbud and serviceberry trees. The front garden beds are a lovely mix of color and texture, with native plants and traditional perennial plants and shrubs. In the somewhat sunnier backyard, there is

a small pond and stream designed and installed by Roland. Frogs and fish inhabit the

pond and is a favorite of young visitors. There is a dedicated native garden that was started 5 years ago when Sue became a member of RCWO. This is the garden that continues to expand in number and variety of MI natives. Their property is a Certified Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation, some of their wildlife visitors include deer, fox, wild turkey, woodpeckers and of course native plant loving bees, butterflies and numerous other pollinators.

[Click for directions](#)



## River City Wild Ones News & Notes

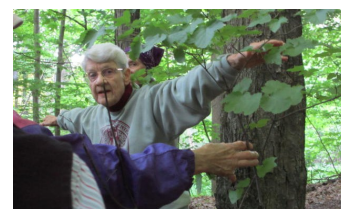
### May Program Recap

Our May Wild Ones outing, attended by more than 40 persons was a perfectly wonderful event. The first half was led by one of our favorite naturalists, Mary Jane Dockeray at one of our favorite places, Blandford Nature Center. This 143 acre site, founded in 1968 contains some of our most precious resources-the life-giving plants we love and nurture within our group, the Wild Ones. And Mary Jane was the perfect docent to lead our discovery through the woodlands there. Her antidotes about the wildflowers we encountered help us remember their names. Her stories about her past and the

history of Blandford inspire us to what we can do to love and protect our own wild areas. If we didn't know a certain ephemeral, we do now. All thanks to people like Mary Jane Dockeray who have devoted their lives to inspiring countless people, old and young alike to know and love these beautiful places.

After the trail walk, Wild Ones member exchanged native plants to help spread and grow our gardens and treats to grow our tummies!

By Barb Olson



### June Program Recap

Picture this; long sweeping views of the Grand River, deep, wooded ravines, huge beech, tulip and shagbark hickory trees plus a diverse array of other native plants. All these sites and more were encountered at our June program at Grand River Ravines – North - such a beautiful spot! Our excellent guide, Melanie Manion, Natural Resources Manager for Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission led us to this rather remote place. The land, over 150 acres, was recently purchased by the Commission as part of the Grand River Greenway project to protect unique lands along the Grand River from future development.

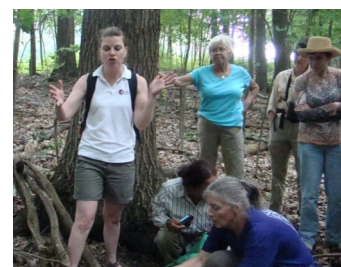
Melanie explained that this property, which is located south of the GVSU campus in Allendale, contains many plant species with a high Floristic Quality Index (FQI). Botanists give a value to plant species on a state-wide basis. Each native species is assigned a value from 0 to 10, which represents the probability that the plant species is likely to occur in landscapes relatively unaltered from those of pre-settlement times. Plant species with high values are relatively specialized in their requirements, and thus are found in more restricted habitats. For example, a widespread species such as Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), found in

numerous habitats from roadsides to remnant prairies, is assigned a value of 1 whereas prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), found almost exclusively on high-quality remnant prairies, has a value of 10. Several Ottawa County parks appear to be the most northern range for some of these high index species due to their temperate situation between two large bodies of water - Lake Michigan and the Grand River.

Evidence of the quality of this site met us at each turn. We saw Paw Paw trees which are pollinated by carrion flies and whose fruit tastes like a banana/mango combination (see Joyce Tuharsky's article on this species in this issue), basswood trees with huge, soft leaves, a bald eagle perched on a branch in the river, Christmas ferns, sharp lobed hepatica, black oaks, ironwood trees and Indian hemp - whose fibers are so strong that they were used as cordage by native Americans.

A big "thank you" goes out to Ms. Manion for her enthusiastic and highly educational program. If you did not get a chance to visit this wonderful place with us, be sure to place it high on your list of "must see" public green spaces!

By Amy Heilman



New RCWO Shirts and  
Hats are In!



Show you care - with a flair  
Wear them proud - in a  
crowd!



## Honey Bee Swarm

Although I had never seen a honey bee swarm before, somehow when I looked at one of the birdhouses in my woodland garden, I knew the birdhouse hadn't grown a beard. It was covered with a honey bee swarm. My first reaction was to get my camera. After getting enough photos I went to the internet to learn more, and determine what to do next.

Swarming is part of the reproductive cycle in honey bees. Though honey bees reproduce individual bees through mating and egg-laying, swarming is how they create new colonies. A new queen is produced within a colony. When this queen emerges and is ready to take on the duties of a queen bee, the old queen, along with about one-half of the workers in that colony, will leave the hive as a large mass of bees. This mass of bees, called a swarm, will congregate on a tree limb, fence post or, in this case, a birdhouse. A swarm may contain from 1,500 to 30,000 bees including, workers, drones, and a queen.

While the bees are in this swarm, some workers (scouts) are sent out to search for a suitable place to start a new hive. An individual scout returning to the cluster promotes a location she found using a dance to indicate direction and distance to the other bees. The more excited she is about her findings the more excitedly she dances. If she can convince other scouts to check out the location she found, they may take off, check out the proposed site and promote the site further upon their return. . When all scouts agree on a location the whole cluster flies to it. Swarms may stay on a swarming site for as little as 15 minutes or for several days. It depends on the length of time it takes for the scouts to find a new hive.

If you notice a swarm in your yard you can leave it until it leaves on its own or you can have it removed by a beekeeper. After one full day, I decided to have a beekeeper remove the swarm from the birdhouse. Even though it clearly wouldn't have housed them all, I was somewhat concerned that the



bees might decide that was an ideal location for their new hive. Jonathan Engelsma, Hudsonville Honey, removed the swarm while I photographed the process. The following day he let me know that the bees were happily buzzing away in his apiary and setting up house in their new hive.

Jonathan included the photos in an article on his website, with photos from another swarm he relocated that same day, and a video of honey bees casting a swarm. Follow the link to

<http://www.hudsonvillehoney.com/2012/05/06/swarm-craziness/>

By Miriam Nelsen

## Upcoming Events

### Blandford Nature Center BioBlitz

**Date:** August 17th & 18th **Time:** starts at 5 pm on 8/17 **Location:** Blandford Nature Ctr  
**Calling Naturalists, Biologist & Nature Enthusiasts!**

Experts and knowledgeable hobbyists are needed to identify plants, animals, microbes, fungi, and other organisms during this new, 24 hour event. Teams will be divided by expertise—birding, botany, etc—and assigned to a section of the 143-acre property. Included are Blandford's wetlands, Brandywine Creek, riparian zones, meadow, ravine, Beech Maple forest and the Organic Farm. During the event, Nature Center property will be open to tent camping with access to indoor bathrooms. Snacks will be served and we are looking into having a food vendor on site.

RSVP by emailing [volunteer@blandfordnaturecenter.org](mailto:volunteer@blandfordnaturecenter.org) or calling (616)735-6240.



## *Steelcase Prairie Tour*

**Date:** Sat., August 25th

**Time:** 9 am—noon

**Location:** 6100 E Paris SE, Caledonia

**Join us for a private tour of the prairie at Steelcase's Corporate Development Center with the Site Manager, Steve Allen**

In 1989, Steelcase restored 125 acres of prairie at its Corporate Development Center back to its native state. The prairie at the pyramid building is one of the largest native prairie ecosystems in the Midwest. As you know native plants are well adapted to our local climate and soils and require little maintenance once established. Would you like to see first-hand how native plants have evolved together with other plants and animals to provide a rich environment for songbirds and butterflies? Would you like to learn about the landscape design and installation process at the pyramid's prairie?

**Cost:** \$20.00     **Credit:** 3 Hours of Recertification for Master Gardener's Program

**Questions or to Register?** Call Ginny Wanty, MSU Extension Environmental and Gardening Education Program at 616-336-3108 or [wanty@anr.msu.edu](mailto:wanty@anr.msu.edu)

## *RCWO Second Look & Learn Tour*

**Date:** Sat., Sept 15th

**Time:** 10 am—2 pm

**Location:** Moose Tree Property, Howard City

Mike Bruggink, Chair of the ICCF native plant demo garden and Establishing Steward of Prairie Wolf Park restoration is providing RCWO with a unique opportunity to visit his family property in Howard City. Since this is such a large and unique property and is a further drive so Mike has graciously agreed to longer hours. Plan on packing a picnic lunch and spending some quality time in this special setting. Golf cart tours and several activities are being planned for the day!

The Moose Tree property is located just west of Howard City Michigan and has over 500 acres of mixed woodlands and Oak Savannah. Nearly a mile of the Little Muskegon River flows through the property and it is partially bounded by both State and Federal lands. Stewardship of the property includes light forestry techniques and the establishment of a Native Oak Savannah Ecosystem. The property has a diverse network of native plant material including both Upland and Floodplain Woodlands including a few Pink Lady Slippers. Some of the native field plants include Wild Lupine and Little Blue Stem. He has even found some Prairie Smoke on some of the adjacent lands! Directions will be posted at a later date.

## *A Note From Our Friends at Calvin College:*

We wanted to express our gratitude to each of you for volunteering your time and sharing your talents with us to make the native plant sale a success. The sale is truly a community event. As we wrap up the native plant, we thought we would share some fun facts about this year's sale with you:

- 83 species on native plants were available for sale this year. 12 species of grasses, 60 species of herbaceous forbs, and 11 species of shrubs
- We had almost 3,000 pots of plants for sale. That is a lot of pots and tags!
- We sold 74% of our inventory the day of the sale and a lot since the sale
- Over \$3,000 was raised from the sale. The majority of the profits are used to pay the salary of one of the summer camp leaders enabling us to keep camp fees reasonable for parents to pay. This year Alyssa Gorter, a senior Special Education major will gain valuable on the job teaching experience writing science inquiry lesson plans and teaching campers from the ages of 4 to 12 years old during the 12 week position.
- Over 10 volunteers helped with transplanting, organizing, writing out plant tags, watering, greeting visitors, and selling plants.
- 4 Calvin faculty and staff members and 7 + Calvin students helped collect the seed, grow the plants, organize the sale etc.
- A special thank you Amy, Sue and Rhonda who helped on Friday afternoon. It was wonderful to have so many hands, sort and organizing the plants.
- The plant we sold out of the fastest this year was Jack in the Pulpit

With Gratitude,

Dave Warners, Randy Van Dragt and Jeanette Henderson



## *Thanks for the Plants!*



Wild Ones members came through again with many plant donations from their own gardens for two projects in May. With just one week's notice, we were able to donate 13 flats of plants to the newly formed Hudsonville city rain garden at the Sunrise Park located at the north end of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. A sign will be installed thanking all organizations who provided plants. Look for our name if you visit the site!

We also were able to donate quite a few native species for three Ada Park sites. Mark Fitzpatrick, Ada Parks Director, is working hard with volunteers to help rid the various parks of invasive species and bring more native plants to its backyard habitat demonstration gardens. In the works is a new observation deck to a wetland area at Roselle Park. Many native herbaceous and woody species will be planted around this structure.

## **Garlic Mustard Fling a Success at Prairie Wolf Park**



A dozen RCWO members were on hand for our first annual Garlic Mustard Fling in May. Our location this year was Prairie Wolf Park in Gaines Township. The gang filled 21 large garbage bags of the green menace – great job everyone! In addition to this specific pull, members have been busy pulling on their own properties and other parks and adding these counts to the challenge goal.

The Garlic Mustard Challenge, sponsored by the Stewardship Network, set a pulling goal this year of 200,000 pounds and the various

clusters (or chapters) involved in this organization exceeded that in only 8 weeks! Our local cluster, the West Michigan Cluster, with whom RCWO partners with, is in the overall lead of all groups with a whopping 63,000+ pounds pulled so far!! It is looking like we might retain the Garlic Mustard cup once again – ya hoo! Several natural areas in the state have now been declared “garlic mustard free” due to this yearly effort from so many dedicated environmentalists.

## **School Rain Garden Gets Underway**



The Earth Keeper Magnet Teachers and their students at E. Rockford Middle School are an ambitious group. Last year they planted over 200 native species in a garden near the west entrance to the school with the help of River City Wild Ones. The garden looks wonderful this year but they did not stop there! In early June, Mike Bruggink and Amy Heilman were on hand again to help the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class plant over 150 species provided by Calvin College greenhouse. The students listened to a talk given earlier in the year by Amy and Mike about the benefits of native plants and the purpose of a rain garden. The students put this information into action with the help of a Groundswell Grant. Each succeeding 6<sup>th</sup> grade class will continue to add to the garden until a long drainage area off of the parking lot is filled



with a diverse population of plants to filter run-off and attract pollinators. This site, as well as the native habitat garden planted last year will become a source for seed collection and provide lessons for future outdoor lab studies.

## *Natives to Know: Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)*

The Pawpaw is a small, understory tree with large, drooping leaves, rich red-purple or maroon flowers, and the largest edible fruit indigenous to the eastern United States.

Seldom taller than 25 feet, Pawpaws spread locally primarily by root suckers. The dark green, deciduous leaves grow up to 12 inches long, 1-2 inches wide, and are simple, alternate and spirally arranged. These large leaves clustered at the ends of branches give the tree an interesting tropical appearance. In autumn, the leaves turn a rusty yellow.

Pawpaw flowers bloom in early spring about the same time that new leaves emerge. The flowers are 1-2 inches across with six petals and three sepals and borne singly on stout, hairy stems. The flowers develop into large, yellowish brown berries, 2-6 inches long and weighing up to 18 ounces. The larger fruits are plump, soft and thin skinned, similar to mangos. Inside, there are 10 to 14 brown seeds in two rows embedded in soft, edible pulp. When mature, the large fruit will bend the weak branches down.

Pawpaw fruits ripen in late August to mid-September and have long been a favorite treat, which is occasionally sold at local farmers' markets. The fruit has a fragrant aroma, custardy texture, and tastes somewhat between a banana and a cantaloupe. Compared to apples or peaches, Pawpaws are higher in food energy and minerals, and have double the vitamin C. They are also a good source of protein, fiber, carbohydrates, and antioxidants.

Nevertheless, Pawpaws have never been

cultivated on a large scale, because the fruits bruise easily and ripen to fermentation soon after picked. Only frozen fruit will store or ship well. However, where Pawpaws grow locally, the pulp is often used in baked desserts, ice cream, pancakes, juices and jams.

The earliest documented mention of Pawpaws is in a 1541 report of the Spanish de Soto expedition who found Native Americans cultivating them east of the Mississippi River. Chilled Pawpaw fruit was a favorite dessert of George Washington. Thomas Jefferson planted Pawpaws at Monticello, his home in Virginia.

In the wild, Pawpaw fruits are eaten by several mammals including raccoons, foxes, opossums, squirrels and black bears. The disagreeable-smelling leaves and twigs contain natural insecticides known as acetogenins and are avoided by deer. Nevertheless, the larvae of the Zebra Swallowtail feed exclusively on the leaves, and the acetogenins make this butterfly unpalatable to birds and other predators. The natural insecticides in Pawpaw leaves can be used to make organic pesticides.

The cultivation of Pawpaws is attracting renewed interest among organic growers as a native fruit that can be grown without pesticides. Pawpaws are also gaining in popularity among landscapers because of their distinctive growth habit, appeal of fresh fruit, and relatively low maintenance once established. Highly frost tolerant, the tree does best in deep, fertile soil that is moist, but well-drained and slightly acidic.

*By Joyce Tuharsky*



Pawpaw

### More Pawpaw

More information and photos on Ferns available at:

<http://www.pawpaw.kysu.edu/>  
<http://www.crfg.org/pubs/ff/pawpaw.html>  
<http://www.blossomnursery.com/pawpawPRODUCTS.html>

## *Thank You, Chris Baer*

A donation was made to RCWO in honor of Chris Baer for all the work she does behind the scenes for our chapter. Many of our members may not know Chris because she likes to go about her business quietly but she is a force of nature when it comes to volunteer work! Some of her many good deeds include: collecting native seeds, propagating and donating plants, building and maintaining blue bird boxes, invasive eradication, taxidermy, conducting educational workshops...the list goes on and on and she does all this not only for our chapter but several organizations that benefit and enhance our community. Chris - you are a true steward of the land and we appreciate the effort and knowledge you offer our group - thank you - thank you!!

