



NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

RIVER CITY CHAPTER - GRAND RAPIDS, MI

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*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:**

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## May 17th Program: Field Trip at Lamberton Lake Fen

One of our favorite local naturalists, Melanie Manion (Good) will lead us on a tour of Lamberton Lake Fen, one of the many nature preserves managed by the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. This hidden jewel, which is a unique ecosystem and occurs rarely in our state, has been threatened by invasive buckthorn. Melanie will discuss the characteristics that comprise a fen, point out some of the unique native plants that live there and the wildlife that utilize them. She will also outline the management techniques that are being used to help stabilize and restore the land. We hope to see native orchids blooming and hear a variety of bird songs as well. Bring along your camera and notebook!

Be sure to dress for the field and possible inclement weather. It is advisable to wear footwear that can get wet. Snacks will be

provided but please bring your own water or sport drink. A bit of bug repellent might be a good idea as well!

**Location:** The program will be held at 7 PM at Lamberton Lake in Northeast Grand Rapids. Click + Ctrl on the link below to find driving directions from your location:

[Lamberton Lake Directions](#)

We will park at the end of Plaza Dr. NE along the road. Plaza Dr. makes a U turn so go through that turn and continue on to the end of the drive. There is parking for about 10 cars so please carpool as much as possible.

**Remember to come prepared at these meetings for hiking, possible inclement weather and bring your water or sport drink. As always, some tempting goodies will be provided.**

### Officers

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**Julie Francke**—Director of  
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Frederik Meijer Gardens &  
Sculpture Park  
**Steve Mueller**—  
Environmental Education  
Consultant  
**Patricia Pennell** —Director  
of Rain Garden Program, West  
Michigan Environmental Ac-  
tion Council

## River City Wild Ones Plant Exchange Following May Program

The purpose of the Plant Exchange is to foster natural landscaping with native plants. We favor native plants, but others are accepted - please no invasive exotics!

### Plant Exchange Rules of Etiquette:

**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 shared.

**Respect Yourself** – Just starting out? Don't

have plants to bring? Of course you may take plants! In fact, that is one of the main purposes of the Plant Exchange. We all have to get started somehow, and when native plants start doing really well in your yard, bring some back to share.

**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 receive one, too.

## Volunteer/Learning Opportunities



Monarch Butterfly on Milkweed

### Butterfly Garden Trail

**Dates:** Sat., June 12th **Time:** 9 a — 12 p

**Locations:** Townsend Park

The monarch butterfly population has been declining in recent years, largely due to habitat loss. Volunteers will rake, spread seeds, plant milkweed and more to help create an "International Waystation" for monarch butterflies!

PLEASE RSVP to [park.volunteers@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:park.volunteers@kentcountymi.gov) as **space is limited for this event!!!**

-Andrea Dunne-Sosa, Volunteer Services Coordinator of Kent County Parks Department

## Community Events

### Kent Conservation District Spring Native Plant Sale and Workshop

**Date:** Tues. May 25th **Time:** 6—8 p **Location:** 3260 Eagle Park, Grand Rapids

The Kent Conservation District hosts two native plant sales each year, one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Native plants play an important role in the life cycle of many different species of wildlife including many butterflies, insects, song birds and mammals. Gardeners can help provide food, shelter and the sense of place that our unique Michigan soils and climate have made. Please consider using Michigan Natives for your next planting.

The spring sale will be held on May 25th, 2010, from 6-8pm. The grower, Vern Stephens, will hold a Native Landscaping workshop from 3:30-5:30pm prior to the sale for a cost of \$5. Pre-registration is requested by phone or email please.

The native plant order form is available at the following website and **orders are due by May 17:** [www.kentconservation.org](http://www.kentconservation.org). Click on "Tree Sale" to see the native plant order form. Please call (616-942-4111 ext. 100) or email the office if you have difficulty downloading and please note that this is also a two page form. Print and mail both pages please. At this sale there are over 50 varieties of wildflowers, 10 types of grasses and 4 types of themed garden flats.

### DISCOVER! Pickerel Lake

**Date:** Sat., May 15th **Time:** 10 a—3 p **Location:** Pickerel Lake

Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 15th for a free and fun discovery program at Pickerel Lake/Fred Meijer Nature Preserve! Just pull on your comfortable shoes, gather the family and make your way to one of Kent County Park's hidden gems, Pickerel Lake.

This experiential family event for kids of ALL ages runs from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. It includes a scavenger hunt where kids get a trail guide to be stamped and entered into a drawing for a free "Discover! Pickerel Lake" t-shirt—along with "discovery" trail walk to learn about a truly interesting ecosystem and things like:

- The birds and beavers that make their home Pickerel Lake
- The variety of native and non-native trees and plants around the lake
- The tamarack swamp and the turtle dock and local reptiles and amphibians
- The history of the area and the stories of Indian Joe

Go to [www.stuckongardening.com](http://www.stuckongardening.com) to get more information on this event and the MSU Extension **Master Naturalist** program.

This event qualifies as a WildCard choice in the *Connecting Families with Nature Passport* program which you can learn more about at <http://kentconservation.org/families/> and find out where you and your family can enjoy more outdoor adventures.

Check out this  
web resource:

U.S.

Environmental  
Protection Agency  
Green Landscaping:  
Greenacres

[http://  
www.epa.gov/  
glnpo/greenacres/  
weedlaws/  
JMLR.html](http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/greenacres/weedlaws/JMLR.html)

Information on  
Weed Ordinance

## Michigan Butterfly Association Field Trip

**Date:** Sat., June 19th    **Time:** extended    **Location:** Upper Peninsula

Ranger Steve Mueller, well-known Environmental Educator and Wild Ones Advisory Board Member, sends along this invitation to those interested in the following field trip with the Michigan Butterfly Association :

“Travel on June 19 in the Upper Peninsula to the only known colony of Northern Blue Butterflies near Shingleton to see the Dwarf Billberry plant. Both were new state record discoveries for their species in Michigan when we found them in 1983. We were doing rare plant surveys when we found them. The Northern Blue Butterfly caterpillar feeds on Dwarf Billberry. It was a wonder discovery. Since then more locations for the plant have been found. More of the butterflies have been found in other areas, but breeding colonies have not been documented yet.

We will also go to other interesting butterfly areas and will do the wildlife loop drive at Seney National Wildlife Refuge on the 19th in the morning If we get adequate pre-registrations. There are good and fairly inexpensive motels in Seney and Germfask for people to stay at Friday 18 June.



Northern Blue Butterfly on Dwarf Bilberry plant

## RCWO News and Notes

### Bear Creek Watershed Festival

Despite the chill and dampness, a good number of parents and children showed up to enjoy the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Bear Creek Watershed Festival in Cannonsburg on Sat. April 24<sup>th</sup>. The public was invited to take part in a morning of food, educational fun and activities. Several area environmental organizations were on hand for the four hour festival that featured acoustic music from the group Hawks and Owls (RCWO VP, Rebecca Shilt, plays in this lively band). Carol Phelps and Amy Heilman staffed an informational table on native plants and discussed their role in backyard habitats. They gave away 50 white spruce transplants and many coloring sheets of native plants to the kids.

### Plant Purchasing Field Trip to Kent/Ottawa Nursery

Back by popular demand, a trip to Ottawa/Kent Perennial Gardens, Inc., a wholesale nursery in Marne, has been scheduled again for a third year. The date will be Tuesday, June 8 at 4:30 pm. A variety of native (and non-native) perennials will be available for purchase at our discounted group rate. If you have not been to this family owned business, it is something to see! Plan to take some time to stroll the extensive grounds in order to view the wide variety of plants they grow and sell, then tour the beautiful ornamental garden at the DeVries family home. For those who cannot get there until later, the DeVries family has kindly offered to stay open later to accommodate you.

Please plan to purchase with check or cash. Click + Ctrl on the link below to find directions.

**Location:** [2089 Hayes St., Marne, MI 49435](http://www.kentottawannursery.com), Phone: 616-677-3361

**“I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.”**

**– John Muir**

### Marge Byington's Almond Bars (from RCWO Member, Linda Dodge)

- 1 cup butter or margarine (Marge, who only uses real butter says, “You might as well really sin!”)
  - 1 ¼ to 1 ½ cups almond paste
  - 1 ¾ cup sugar
  - 2 eggs
  - ½ tsp. salt, optional
  - 2 cups flour
  - ½ cup nuts, chopped, (Marge uses toasted, slivered almonds, but untoasted works fine and toasts while baking)
- Cream together butter and almond paste; beat in sugar and eggs. Add flour and, if you wish, salt. Pour into a greased 9 by 13 inch pan, sprinkle with nuts and bake in an oven preheated to 300 degrees for 40 minutes. When cool, cut into bars.
- These freeze extremely well and are delicious for snacks, lunches, or breakfast. They can be glazed, while they are still warm, with almond-flavored confectioners' sugar frosting.
- Linda's note stated that she does not frost—but sometimes a dab in the middle is festive. Sometimes she bakes for 5-10 minutes longer.

## Ranger Steve Receives Distinguished Award

Posted on 08 April 2010. Cedar Springs Post

By *Judy Reed*

The National Association of Interpretation awarded naturalist Steven Joel Mueller, of Cedar Springs, (better known as Ranger Steve to readers), the 2010 Distinguished Professional Interpreter award, at the Region Four conference in Midland, Michigan on March 30.

It is the highest award they bestow.

“I felt like Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer when they attended their own funeral,” commented Mueller. “The wonderful commentary by my colleagues was truly heart-warming and energizing. When one’s peers recognize another it carries great meaning because we have all walked similar paths and know the exhilaration of successes and sorrow of failures along the way.”

Ranger Steve has always been in love with nature. He got started with butterflies at age 8. “I was interested in frogs, scouting, camping, canoeing, and exploring. Nobody does that (exploring) anymore,” he told the Post in 2008.

Mueller grew up in Saginaw, and held several different jobs related to the nature field over the years. He was a high school science teacher in Alpena, Michigan, Dry Ridge, Kentucky, and Kenosha, Wisconsin; an urban forester for Dow Chemical in Midland; a state park ranger in Traverse City; a ranger/naturalist at Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah; and a teacher at Jordan College in Cedar Springs. Many know him best as the director of Howard Christensen Nature Center for over 20 years. When that temporarily closed in 2005, Lowell Schools hired him to direct the program at the Wittenbach/Wege Agri-Science Environmental Center. He retired from there in 2008 due to bone cancer. Besides those programs, Mueller is or has been President of the Grand Rapids Audubon Club, President for the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education, West Michigan Butterfly Association, and Grand Rapids Camera Club. He also has won several other awards.

Dianne Valen, Naturalist Services Director for the Geauga Park District in Chardon, Ohio, noted that Mueller inspired her through his leadership and teaching. “Ranger Steve is also well-known to Auduboners, having led trips, conducted bird counts and served as a longtime coordinator of Michigan Audubon Camp-outs. I have especially fond memories of those camp-outs at Cedar Campus in Michigan’s Upper Pen-

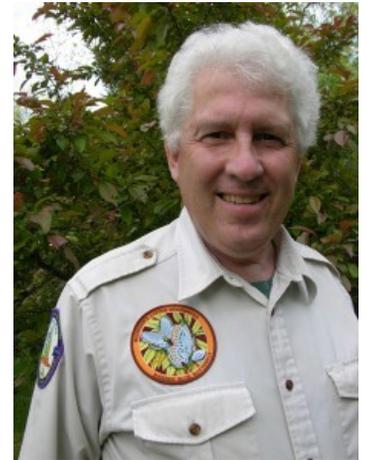
insula. It was there that Ranger Steve first introduced me to kayaking, a number of unusual butterflies/moths and the unique Alvar environment. In so doing, he ignited a spark that eventually resulted in him recruiting me to lead groups to experience this unusual habitat at subsequent Campouts,” she wrote in a support letter for his nomination of the Interpreter award.

Dorothy McLeer, Program Coordinator/ Interpretive Naturalist for the University of Michigan-Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center, also recalls learning from Ranger Steve. “I had the good fortune of sharing interpretive duties with Steve on a Michigan Audubon Society (MAS) weekend expedition along the beautiful northern shores of Lake Huron on the east coast of the UP,” she wrote in her support letter. “MAS had contracted Steve’s talents for several years on these events, and for good reason, as I discovered. My eyes were opened to aspects of northern forest and Great Lakes ecology I had never known. Steve’s content was backed up by his own research as well as recent natural history and ecological publications, providing the most current and up-to-date factual information for his audience. That does not happen by accident—that is professional pride and devotion to one’s craft. I learned more about Great Lakes ecology that weekend, as well as what it takes to deliver the goods as a professional interpreter. I never forgot how Steve held our attention and provoked curiosity while imparting interesting facts while weaving them into a conceptual framework to understand the bigger picture. It is a model to which I aspire as a field instructor for the University of Michigan-Dearborn or when conducting field trips for the thousands of schoolchildren we greet each year at the University’s Environmental Interpretive Center.”

Many Post readers are familiar with Ranger Steve through his column Nature Niche, or through his work at the Howard Christensen Nature Center. Either way, his love for nature shines through. And it won’t dull anytime soon.

“In my acceptance I encouraged others to continue the charge as long as they breathe because it is a way of life more than a profession,” he explained. “Some people go to work for a profession but I have gone to work because it is a passion.”

*Note from Rachel Ford: The River City Wild Ones June meeting will take place at Ranger Steve’s property in Cedar Springs.*



Ranger Steve Mueller

**...to find the universal elements enough...to find the air and the water exhilarating; to be refreshed by a morning walk or an evening saunter... to be thrilled by the stars at night; to be elated over a bird’s nest or a wild flower in spring – these are some of the rewards of the simple life.**

**– John Burroughs**

## Natives to Know: Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)



Do you have partially or deeply shaded areas on your property that are difficult to cultivate? Consider the Canada Mayflower...

A native perennial, the Canada Mayflower is an unusual member of the Liliaceae or Lily Family in that it has only 2 petals, 2 sepal, and 4 stamens instead of the usual 3-3-6 pattern. It is a low plant, only 3-6 inches tall that blankets woodlands with its short often zigzag stems and two shiny, oval leaves. The leaves, up to 3 x 2" in size, are smooth with parallel leaf venation. The plant spreads by rhizomes; a single clone can be up to 19 feet in diameter.

The Latin name, *Maianthemum*, means May

blossom...an appropriate name since the plant flowers in May. The blooms consist of dense clusters of tiny, white, star-shaped flowers that are held upright on delicate stems 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. During the summer, the flowers are replaced by small (1/8 inch) green-dotted berries that ripen to a deep red. These fruits persist throughout winter providing food during the spring for Ruffed Grouse, White-Footed Mouse, and Eastern Chipmunk. It is one of the most common understory plants found near great owl nest sites.

The distribution of the Canada Mayflower extends from northern British Columbia south to Montana and Wyoming and east to the Atlantic Coast. It is common to the Great Lakes region and can be found on Isle Royal. Habitats include sandy woodlands, north-facing wooded slopes, shaded bogs, and sandstone ledges along ravines in wooded areas. Other common names for the Canada Mayflower are False Lily-of-the-Valley or Wild Lily-of-the-Valley.

-Joyce Tuharsky

### More Canada Mayflower

Photos and more information available at

- [http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=maca4](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=maca4)
- <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=MACA4>
- <http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=MAICAN>



Grand Rapids Chapter  
River City Wild Ones

[rivercitywildones.org](http://rivercitywildones.org)

[www.for-wild.org](http://www.for-wild.org)  
(National Headquarters)

## 2010 River City Wild Ones Calendar

All programs (unless otherwise specified) will begin at 7 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month, March – November. Non-members are always welcome! Find more information for each event on our website.

Date	Speaker/Topic	Location
May 17th	Melanie Good/Ecosystem Tour and Native Orchids	Lamberton Lake Preserve Near I-96/Plainfield exit Carpooling Suggested!
Jun 21	Ranger Steve Mueller/Property Tour and Insect Collection	13010 Northland Dr. Cedar Springs, MI 49319
Jul 19* (6:30 start)	Cheryl Tolley/Native Ferns	Sandhill Farm 11250 10 Mile Road, Rockford, MI 49341
Aug 16	Ruth Oldenburg /Native Meadow and Rain Garden Tour	7485 Cloudberry Lane NE Belmont, MI 49306
Sep 20	Rebecca Shilt/Rain Gardens	TBD Carpooling Suggested!
Oct 18	Nancy Hoover/Plant Rescue	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids
Nov 15	River City Wild Ones Fourth Annual Auction	Bunker Interpretive Center 1750 East Beltline Ave. SE Calvin College, Grand Rapids