

Loess Hills MN Chapter Who We Are

By Mary Jo Ostenberg

Friends often ask me what the members of my naturalist chapter are like. I usually answer in an offhand way about the diversity of the group and our shared passion for nature. But a few nights ago I sat down and really gave this question some thought. I'd like to share those thoughts with you.

Some of us are teachers.

One of us sent tomato seeds into space and helped her students plant those same seeds and together they watched those seeds grow into beautiful plants loaded with tasty tomatoes (that didn't glow in the dark).

One of us helped his patients

to breathe a little easier.

Another helped his patients see a little clearer.

One of us climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. That's right, Kilimanjaro!

One of us has the gift of song.

Another has the gift of poetry and prose.

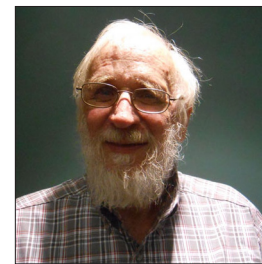
Some of us are artists with color and form, paint and paper.

One is an artist with a camera. His photographs so brilliantly capture the beauty of a tiny bird, you can feel the wings flutter in flight and hear the joy in their song.

One of us, a quiet hero, a former wounded warrior, fights a new battle, facing illness with a brave heart and a braver soul.

One of us has stepped back from death's doorstep to live every day

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**Message
From the
President**

It's been a little over two and one-half years since I found out about the Master Naturalist training class. I was fortunate to have been in the first class. Since then, our small group has grown with a total of three classes. One thing that has

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of his new life moving forward, full of faith in his Maker and the joy of his creations.

Some of us love to fish, other to hunt. Some of us like to bike, some to hike.

Some of us love the forests. Some of us love the wide open grasslands. Some of us love the rivers, the creeks, the lakes, the wetlands.

Some of us love it all!

One of us has a heart so big there will always be room for another four-legged creature that needs her help, her nurturing.

One of us plants tiny seeds each fall, tends the plants patiently all winter and gladly gives them all away in the spring.

Some of us are leaders while some of us are followers.

We are a marvelous mix of talents, desires, passions, personalities and backgrounds. Together we study nature in all its natural habitat and

work to pass our passion and knowledge on to our communities and future generations.

Together we've attacked invasives, cleared trails, planted rain gardens, trees and restored native forbes and grasses. We've built birdhouses, painted storm drains, surveyed song birds, prairie orchids and snake populations. We've helped children learn to fish and handed out trees. We've collected sedges and prairie seeds.

We've studied ants, snakes, mosses, liverworts, grasses, sedges, rushes, wildflowers, trees, fossils, finding our way with a map and compass, cast iron cooking, soils, streams and amphibian life, land management, animal diseases, bee keeping, keeping a nature journal, wild edibles and many more.

This is who we are and so much more.

I hope you're all in this with me for the long haul.

Officers of Loess Hills Chapter 2013

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Charles Bramlage

Vice President

Shannon Holcomb

Secretary

MaryJo Ostenberg

Treasurer

John Wood

Newsletter Design

Ann Thorne

Logo (on front)

Laurel Defreece

Picnic for Loess Hill Master Naturalists

By Ann Thorne

Loess Hill Master Naturalists held a picnic at Mark Youngdahl Conservation area July 21. There were more than 30 people

there, many of them with their families. The dinner was a potluck, with food ranging from chicken and casseroles to pie

and ice cream. It was an enjoyable get-together for everyone there.



photo by Shannon Holcomb



photo by Shannon Holcomb

The Loess Hills Chapter of the Missouri Master Naturalists enjoyed the variety of food at the picnic.

Missouri Prairie Foundation Offers Tour of Loess Hills Prairies

by Ann Thorne



photo by Ann Thorne

Steve Bruckbeck shows one of the many prairie flowers that is in bloom on the Loess Hills prairie above the Squaw Creek Visitor Center.

The Missouri Prairie Foundation sponsored a tour of the Loess Hills Prairies on September 14. Steve Bruckbeck, Natural History Biologist at the Missouri Conservation Department in St. Joseph, Missouri, and Dr. John Rushin, professor at Missouri Western State University, led the tour. There were more than 25 people there, including members of the Missouri Prairie Foundation, Audubon,

and Missouri Master Naturalists. The tour drew people from as far away as St. Louis and western Illinois.

The tour group walked up the stairs behind the Squaw Creek Refuge Visitor's Center to the Loess Hill Prairie. As the group walks across the prairie, Steve Bruckbeck introduced the tour and showed samples of the prairie flowers, some of them in bloom. He said that during the glacial period, winds deposited soil into mounds as deep as 200 feet. Because of erosion over many years, the hills became very steep.

Bruckbeck also talked about the effect of mowing versus burning, and when to burn. If a prairie is mowed, there is greater chance that native orchids and other prairie flowers will grow. He also discussed the differences are between a spring and fall burn. He said researchers studying prairies know much more about them now, but there is still a lot we do not know.

After the group came back down from the top of Loess Hills, two different groups were formed. Steve Bruckbeck took a group to see the prairie areas in Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge, and Dr. Rushin took a group to the McCormack Conservation Area. In both groups, the leaders identified plants of interest to the participants.

The view from the top of the Loess Hills showing Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge.



photo by Ann Thorne

2013 Capstone Project

by Ann Thorne, Lynn Tushaus, Lauren Altier

The 2013 Master Naturalist class decided to do a

valuable future citizen science endeavor.”



Photo by Karen Hayes

On the first day the class set up the lines. The sedges were collection from within 1 meter of the line. From L to R: Laura Kahl, Ann Thorne, Bill Blackledge, Lauren Alkier.

research project with Cory Kudrna, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for its Capstone project. According to MaryJo Ostenberg, ““The Cyperaceae (Sedge Family) collection undertaking contained many of the elements necessary for a great capstone project. The project had a well defined duration period and goals, and introduced members to a new wildlife species, in addition to providing advanced training opportunities.”

The project, suggested by T. J. Peacher, Chapter Advisor from the Missouri Department of Conservation, was especially attractive to the class because it involved citizen science. The class collected blooming sedges and rushes from the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Ostenberg commented, “We launched what could be a very

During the summer, there were two learning opportunities for those working with the sedges and rushes. Steve Brubeck, Natural History Biologist at the Missouri Conservation Department in St. Joseph, Mo., conducted a two-hour sedge and rush identification ses-

sion. More than fifteen people attended who were eager to learn how to identify the rushes and sedges for collection.

In addition, another training session was taught by Dr. John Rushin, a professor at Missouri Western State University. He taught students the fundamentals of drying and mounting sedges and rushes. Lauren Alkier also helped teach how to mount sedges and rushes. Bill Blackledge, one of the volunteers, said “A highlight for me was the opportunity to work with and learn from three really



Photo by Karen Hayes

Laura Kahl stands in the tall grasses, including Canary grass.

fine local biologists: Dr. John Rushin of MWSU, Steve Buback from the MDC, and Corey Kudrna of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.”

The class waded through water to get to the lines that had been set up during the first outing. “The sedge project at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge was a great overall experience,” said Blackledge. “Our master naturalist team of volunteers



Photo by Karen Hayes

Every time the volunteers collected rushes and sedges, a team of people went up and down the each line. L to R: Cory Kudrna, Crystal Daggett, Laura Kahl.

Sedges Have Edges

by Laura Kahl

A wondrous plant is the sedge.
“We’ll seek and we’ll find them,” we pledge.
We will walk thru’ grasses,
As tall as our asses,
And hope we won’t step off a ledge.

“Aha, we have found some.”
Well, we hope we’re not just dumb.
They’re hard to identify,
Much less to classify,
The blossoms are less than a crumb.

Now we’re using the press,
To squash our largesse,
Then mount the green pages,
To preserve them for ages,
And finish our own Capstone quest.



Photo by Bob Spurgat

One of the many sedges volunteers collected while volunteering.

was able to venture out into the wet prairies of the refuge where few visitors are allowed to explore. There were safety and logistical challenges in conducting the surveys on foot out in the interior of these wet prairies, but I really enjoyed the experience and gained an appreciation for the staff, who manage the refuge throughout the year.”

The purpose of the project was to gather blooming sedges and rushes. Eventually, the research of the Capstone project will be incorporated into a paper that Kudrna hopes to publish in the future. He plans to

cite the 2013 Master Naturalist class as research partners. “Hopefully, the survey data we collected will help future land management efforts on the refuge and possibly support larger studies being conducted on the life-cycle of certain sedges and rushes,” said Bill Blackledge.

Whatever the research that follows, what was important for the volunteers was to get to know each other as they worked together. “It helped foster teamwork and camaraderie, and launched what could be a very valuable future citizen science endeavor, said Ostenberg. And it was great

fun, despite that wicked Canary Grass.” Grass.

Many of the volunteers took away skills of identifying sedges and rushes that they never had anticipated. “On a recent trip to my sister’s farm in Virginia, I was able to recognize a sedge in bloom amongst the prairie grasses,” said Bob Spurgat. “Prior to our Capstone Project, I didn’t know what a sedge was versus a rush versus a prairie grass. This small step excites me to bring this knowledge and appreciation of nature and the out-of-doors to children who may not otherwise have the opportunity.”

Upcoming Dates for Master Naturalists

Oct. 26, 1300 – 1700

Cast Iron Cooking advance training, Honey Creek CA.

Dec. 03

Meeting Kansas City Master Naturalist

Nov. 05, 1800

Group meeting, elections

May 30 - June 1

2014 State Missouri Master Naturalists Conference in Kansas City

Graduation for Class of 2013

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On April 29th there was a graduation party for the 2013 Master Naturalist. Over fifty Master Naturalists and their spouses attended. The meeting was held at the Remington Nature Center in St. Joseph, Mo.

volunteer for the Master Naturalist program and had a powerpoint presentation. She also talked about the different levels of achievement in the Master Naturalist program.

Lauren Alkier made a presentation about the Capstone Project for the 2013 class. She spoke about the gathering of rushes and sedges at Squaw Creek National Refuge. After she spoke, there was a presentation of current Master Naturalists badges for all those involved in the Master Naturalist program. Then



Photo by Shannon Holcomb

All the different classes joined together for the 2013 graduation.

The evening began with a potluck, followed by the speaker, Syd Hime, Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator, Missouri Conservation Commission. She spoke about the purpose of being a



Photo by Shannon Holcomb

Bob Spurgat receives his badge from Charles Bramlage, Master Naturalist president.



new class Master Naturalists received "volunteer" Master Naturalist badges.

Everyone enjoyed their food at the 2013 Graduation celebration.

Photo by Shannon Holcomb

stayed the same is the quality of people that have chosen to join. They make it easy to say, "You can't have too many friends."

Secondly, in addition to meeting new people, I had the opportunity to see many new places. Locally, I had never been to Rochester Falls, Happy Holler, Bluffwoods, River-breaks,

McCormack, Little Tarkio Prairie, Brickyard Hill and Pony Express Lake Conservation Areas. A little farther out, I made it to Dunn Ranch and Pershing State Park. Still farther out, I have been to some glades and a prairie around Joplin and Ha Ha State Park at Camdenton.

Thirdly, I have been able to help others see and appreciate nature, and the natural beauty around us. This has been through activities such as: Eagle Days, Wings Over Weston, Insect-O-Rama, Herp-O-Rama, Mammal Mania, and helping at the Squaw Creek Visitors Center.

Fourthly, I have been able to help the environment by activities such as: collecting seeds from prairie plants, transplanting prairie plants, helping eradicate invasive species, rejuvenating trails, and tagging Monarch butterflies.

In summary, through joining the Master Naturalist program, you gain and you give, and the more you give, the more you gain.