



NEWSLETTER

Great Fun at Wings Over Weston Festival



Birdhouse building with Bruce Windsor!

Volunteering at Wings Over Weston

by Sue Knight

The morning began with a shuttle ride for volunteers from the Big Barn parking lot at Weston Bend State Park to the Bee Creek Shelter area where the event was held. Having just endured a cold and dreary April, the leaves were just emerging on the trees this May 5th morning promising a lovely day. I was looking forward to participating in the largest birding festival in Missouri! This event is made possible every year by the partnership of the Burroughs Audubon Society and the Missouri State Parks.

At Bee Creek, in advance of the public, I met fellow birdhouse builders Bruce Windsor, Gary House, Darrel Magee and Gerry Crawford. Missouri Western students Steph Malone and Faye Thammard also helped out. The cedar birdhouse and feeder kits were supplied by the Missouri State Parks Division of the DNR and we quickly assembled a few to make sure we understood the order of assembling the pieces and how to hinge the clean-out door.

When the kids arrived, the hammering began! I was amazed at how much the kids enjoyed swinging their hammers. Most of them seemed to know what they were doing and with little coaching created wren and bluebird houses to take home with them. Sharing was evident as some of the parents pitched in to help their kids with the building process.

In the course of the day, I was able to stroll around the grounds and snap some pictures of the booths at the event. Our MMN chapter was well represented with workers at most of the WoW booths. I saw Charles Bramlage, Anne Thorne and Ginger Turner helping with the Hummingbird feeder booth, Bill Blackledge teaching bird identification, Cliff Amos leading nature walks thru the woods, Suzanne and Dennis Rush instructing in the use of binoculars, Janet Mason hosting a



Nature Quiz giant board game, Bonnie Goldberg (as Mother Nature) helping the kids pose for selfies and a giant mural was in progress with the help of Rick and Chris Fulker.



Cliff Amos and Bonnie Goldberg



It was mentioned by some that attendance was lighter than in years past; nevertheless, after helping kids assemble dozens of birdhouses without a single smashed finger, the event seemed more than successful. As we boarded the bus at the end of the day, I was a little tired, a little sunburned and very happy that I'd been a part of Wings over Weston.

<https://www.facebook.com/Wings-Over-Weston-268707613208324/>

Discover Nature Field Days at James A. Reed Nature Park

by Gary House

Under the leadership of Wendy Parrett, the Discover Nature Field Days took place from June 25-28 at James A. Reed Nature Park. This is a special four day MODOC program, setup to get Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater KC to participate in a huge variety of nature related activities. These are organized for primary school kids and up to 8 to 12 year olds. Bill Graham who also participated, featured the Field Days in his MODOC web page article.

Attendance this year was half of what we normally get. It was a tough week because it seemed every day had a major weather related interruption, including a close miss by the tornado that hit a lake area some miles away. We scrambled quickly to get kids safely into the bus when faced with forceful winds followed by heavy rain. Otherwise daytime high temperatures were in the upper 90s.

Through it all, TJ Peacher spent a couple of days supervising cane pole fishing for the young ones and then the final day helping Adam Brandsgaard from Chillicothe who supervised the 8-12 year olds fishing with Zebco 33 type worm fishing reels. I assisted Adam for the entire week with the older kids. Instructing them in safe casting and baiting was a riot of fun, smiles and squeals of joy.

This was a challenge with the weather, but we caught a lot of fish and everyone had a good time. You have to see the glee in their faces when they catch that first fish and successive fishes.

Update on 10,000 Milkweeds in 10 Years Project

by David Laderoute

We planted 1,067 Milkweed in 3 days - June 4th thru the 6th 2018 at Loess Bluffs! This was the start of the first phase of our Loess Bluffs NWR 10,000 Milkweed in 10 Years Project, a joint project between Friends of Loess Bluffs NWR ("FOLB") and Missourians for Monarchs-Naturalists & Gardeners NW Missouri Region.



David Laderoute at Loess Bluffs Monarch tagging 2018

We had a great team of volunteers. Help included Youth Conservation Corps, Loess Bluffs Summer Interns, Loess Bluffs staff, FOLB and volunteers from two Audubon groups and Master naturalists from two chapters and others.

We planted 3 areas out in the refuge, replaced some milkweed in the Entrance garden and replanted two beds near the picnic area.

I started thinking about this in 2015 when members of the Loess Hills Master Naturalists planted approximately 1,000 stems of Swamp Milkweed at Loess Bluffs. My thoughts came together in 2017 when I oversaw the creation of the Refuge's Native Plant Entrance Demonstration Garden. I thought why not REALLY help and do something with a longer term goal. Thus was born 10,000 in 10. I view Loess Bluffs NWR as the crown jewel of my MO4M-N&G region.

This year we will graciously be provided a grant from Monarch Watch and for that we are immensely grateful. Loess Bluffs has been designated as Monarch Waystation #16116. There is already quite a bit of milkweed at Loess Bluffs – mostly Swamp & Common. We know that Monarchs like to frequent the Refuge. Last year we were grateful to have Sara Dykman stop by on her "Plight of the Monarchs" 10,000 mile bike journey. She and I helped youngsters find Monarch larva. She also helped plant some Milkweed in our Entrance Garden at the Refuge.

For those who have volunteered, if you would like to stay in contact regarding this project and possibly assisting, please email David Laderoute CDL@ponyexpress.net."

For David's Photos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/140720256@N02/albums/72157693347430742>

Learning Botany at the Maher Prairie

by Kim Lafalette



Like many retired people I often juggle my commitments at the last minute, deciding what to do based on how I feel in that moment. And it is often too easy to sign up for something free and then decide at the last moment not to participate.

I almost did just that on August 4th, the morning of the MMN Maher Prairie walk near King City with Dr John Ruskin but due to the beautiful weather and the fact I had never been to that remnant/restored prairie, I decided to go. It was an enjoyable experience and made me appreciate even more the opportunities that the Loess Hills MMN chapter has given me to experience and learn about nature.

Before we even walked onto the prairie Dr Rushin had identified several beautiful and common roadside flowers along the gravel road where our group of about 30 met. Participants included Loess Hills MMN, Midland Empire Audubon Society and Weston Garden Club. Doug Keevers, caretaker of the property, described a controlled burn on the property from the previous year. Along the lane from the road to the prairie we learned

additional trees and shrubs and discussed the "drop of blood" red center in Queen Anne's Lace. Once we arrived at the prairie I was stunned to see Prairie Dropseed grass clumps massing over an entire acre or more. Prairie Dropseed is a beautiful specimen grass but to see it in this density was something I didn't expect.

I learned to identify several new plants that day like Jerusalem Artichoke, and saw several prairie flowers I rarely got a chance to see such as Indian Paintbrush. It was a wonderful way to spend a few hours outside on a Saturday morning with a group of great like-minded people. The next time I'm about to beg off a MMN event at the last minute, I'm sure I'll think about this special Saturday morning and go. Thanks MMN for enriching my life.



Dr Rushin explains plant identification

Photos of Wings over Weston by Sue Knight

Photos of Monarch tagging and Prairie Walk by Brent Galliard

Please visit our excellent chapter website: <https://loesshills.missourimasternaturalist.org>