



NEWSLETTER

Trail Busting 2019 Class Capstone Project



Beginning of the Trail Day 3

Class of 2019 Capstone Project
by Peg Strickland
Photos by Sue, Betsy, Rob

What activity involves trekking up and down snow and mud covered Missouri ravines, battling underbrush, getting to know some cheerful and very determined people and eating Scotch eggs? The answer is the 2019 Loess Bluffs Master Naturalist Class Capstone Project!

Our class initially had some difficulties in choosing a project, partly due to spring rains and flooding which made scheduling difficult. There were other roadblocks until board member Kim Lafolette offered a trail project at Smithville Lake.

The task was to clear a 0.6 mile shore loop of trail at Lake Access Parking area 12. Our section is a loop off a new minimal impact or single track trail that is being created at the request of the Corps of Engineers and MU Extension. Many volunteers, including Kim and Sue Knight, have worked to create several miles of this new trail, which is available for hikers and also horseback riders in certain sections. Four Saturdays were chosen to complete the project.

First Saturday: Winter weather intervened, and the few hardy ones who showed up were only able to view the beginning of our section of trail.



First Saturday: Rob, Don, Ruth, Ray, Walt

Second Saturday: More weather issues. Don St. Cyr scoped out the trail for us and added ropes to help us up and down those ravines. Kim also helped with the rope installation.

Third Saturday: finally we can work together! A good group of interns was present, along with master naturalists lending their support and family members recruited for the day. We slid down and at times crawled back up the slick ravines to reach the trail site. Everyone used the hand tools they had brought to cut, chop and saw underbrush and branches to create a 4 foot width of trail. Jennifer Morris said, “It was a beautiful winter day and fun to hike and clear the trail”. Those who wished, adjourned to MaryJo’s home for a late lunch.



Crossing the big ditch with ropes



MaryJo passing out her homemade Scotch eggs

Fourth Saturday: Those present today were treated to more of MaryJo's hospitality in the form of Scotch eggs. They were reported to be delicious! It was a sunny and warm day compared to the previous icy and cold conditions. Ruth Hibarger reports, "We lopped and lugged, finding the best route for horse and hiker alike. After a few hours we had the trail connected to the existing trail so we celebrated with a picture".



End of the Trail Day 4

There were some who required one-on-one assistance to navigate the ravines and some who got separated from the group. But no names will be mentioned here.

The area is beautiful and will provide an opportunity for those who want to experience the ups and downs of Missouri terrain while enjoying this fairly remote timbered area. This new loop section of trail will provide access to a great spot to view migrating waterfowl, such as pelicans and wading birds, and to enjoy a beautiful view from the bluff. Kim reports seeing abundant wildlife in the trail area, including deer and small game, bobcat, coyote and fox. Other birds seen include eagles, pileated woodpeckers, red headed woodpeckers, red breasted woodpeckers and numerous other woodland songbirds.

This trail at this time is not permanently named but has been referred to as North Shore Trail. Once it is approved by the Corps and official signage is installed, the volunteers who installed it are responsible to maintain their section for 2 years. If it is used and maintained for that time, then the Corps will take over maintenance.

Rob Wunder summed up our experience by saying, “Here is a spot where we can share what we have learned with friends and family, completing the circle of knowledge in more ways than one and helping foster the appreciation for the natural world in all its glory and wonder”.



Don hangs a marker in a tree overlooking the lake

Smithville Eagle Days 2020

by Gerry Crawford

Paradise Point Golf Course Club House and the Spillway were again the locations for the 25th Annual Smithville Lake Eagle Days event on January 4th and 5th. Fair weather helped contribute to the outstanding public attendance with 2235 people counted between the live eagle shows and the viewing station at the spillway below the dam.

The program is a joint effort presented by the U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers, Clay County Parks, and the Missouri Dept. of Conservation. Several organizations provide programs and displays of interest such as: Operation Wildlife of Overland Park, KS, presenting the live Eagle show; Friends of Lakeside Nature Center showing live birds; Clay Co. Parks with mammal and reptile exhibits; Martha Lefite Nature Sanctuary; and Wings of Love.

The live eagle show this year was a bit different from the past with various raptors as substitutes for a live Eagle. Frank the Bald Eagle is the usual main attraction; but due to an

ailing foot he was unable to travel this time. Still the main topic of the presentations was information about Eagles; with bonus discussions about other raptors such as a Peregrine falcon and an American Kestrel. As always Bill Whinery on Saturday, and Gary Crain on Sunday each did their usual outstanding presentations, keeping the show entertaining and informative.



Volunteers promote our MMN Chapter



Janet and Dennis at the spillway viewing area

The expectation for the wild Eagle viewing portion of the event was a bit bleak earlier in the week. Due to the absence of ice on the lake to concentrate the Eagles at the spillway, few birds were being sighted. But what a great surprise when both days fair numbers of the majestic birds appeared for the spectators to see. From ten to fifteen Eagles were seen perching and flying to the delight of all who came to see them. The excitement for some was their first sighting and for others it was just a pleasure to see them again. Spotting scopes were provided for the public to enjoy a view of the birds and staff from USACE, MDC and members of our LHMMN chapter were there to interact with and assist the visitors viewing experience.

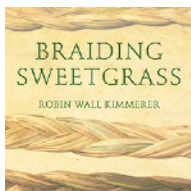
Our chapter had an outstanding presence overall, both at our display table and at the wild Eagle viewing with sixteen members participating. Names of fifteen potential new members were acquired, and two certain transfers from other MMN chapters to the LHMMN chapter. Thanks to all who helped support the event; and promote the MMN program, and in particular our LHMMN chapter. Well done!

Book Review by Suzanne Rush:

BRAIDING SWEETGRASS

Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

By Robin Wall Kimmerer



Kimmerer, a scientist, professor, member of the Potawatomi Nation, and writer shares in this book an ancient wisdom based on scientific knowledge about the desired relationship between humans and the natural world. The same word is repeated throughout...reciprocity. The necessity for man to see the need for a change of focus on our roll in this world is paramount. The earth and the things from the earth have been generous beyond measure to mankind. But in our greed we have lost sight of our responsibility to reciprocate by recognizing when we take, we must give in return. This balance is the only way that both man and "his" natural resources (soil, minerals, air, water, plants and animals) can live and continue to thrive. Kimmerer provides some beautiful examples of possibilities how this can work. Only by feeling gratitude for these gifts and a desire to give back, can we sustain each other. Poetically written, BRAIDING SWEETGRASS is the best book I've read in a long time. It is positive, intelligent, uplifting.

Sue Knight: I liked this book too! I found it comfortable, gentle and affirming. Also, as a result of reading it, I looked deeper into the history of the Potawatomi Nation.

Delicate Spring Bloom Photos
by Kim Lafolette March 30,2020



During my walk along the Smithville Lake Northshore trail this morning I saw several early bloomers of the forest floor. Get out and enjoy nature!

Left to Right
Eastern false Rue Anemone, Mayapple, Virginia Springbeauty
Dutchman's Britches, White Fawnlily