



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Calendar & Newsletter
July – September 2019 | Volume 40 No. 2



NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I recognize that we are only half way through 2019, but so far it has been a great year for Severson Dells. The launch of the 815 Outside initiative has been well received and we are hopeful it will continue to grow. We are so fortunate to have such amazing natural areas to explore and we are looking to get outside of 'the choir' to other Winnebago County residents that may not be aware of all of the options open to them. We hope the Severson Dells community will both utilize this amazing resource as well as share it with others.

The Severson Dells staff are looking forward to a busy fall full of school field trips, night hikes, citizen science monitoring sessions, and a new fall program: Spook the Dells. The other event we are looking forward to is the Breakfast for the Dells. This annual event is our largest fundraiser of the year and supports the wide range of free and low-cost nature education programs we provide

throughout the year. The breakfast is also a special kind of homecoming that brings together Severson supporters, the board of directors and staff in a way that doesn't happen at any other time during the year. As corny as it may sound, the feel of the room is absolute magic because the love, generosity, and gratitude is felt in an indescribable way.

We look forward to seeing you this summer and fall whether it is out enjoying the new bird feeders, hiking the trails or attending a program.

With gratitude,
Ann Wasser
Director



FEATURED EVENT

DANCE AT THE DELLS

SITE SPECIFIC DANCE WITH MEGHAN & CAITLYN BAYLOR
Saturday, September 14, 2019 | 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Join us for an unique event that celebrates performing art in nature! At 5:30 PM, we will embark on a journey through the Dells, interspersed with site-specific choreography by professional dancers and sisters, Meghan and Caitlyn Baylor. The hike will culminate at 7:00 PM with a performance at The Grove Nature Playscape. If you are unable to join us on the moderate hike, please join us for the performance in The Grove. Don't miss this premier event at the Dells!
Cost: Suggested donation \$10. Register by 9/12.



On the cover: *Summer in the Prairie* by Jessie Crow Mermel

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Find your place to
get outside in
Winnebago County!

815outside.com

Ideas for getting active
and having fun outside



815 Outside is an alliance of non-profit and public service organizations working together to promote opportunities to discover green spaces and experience nature for enhanced quality of life in Winnebago County, IL.



WINNEBAGO COUNTY
ILLINOIS

#815outside



Part of the coordinating team for 815 Outside. From left: Ann Wasser (Severson Dells), Jamie Johannsen (Forest Preserves of Winnebago County), Tiana McCall (Winnebago County), Therese Oldenburg (Nature at the Confluence), and Kimberly Johnsen (Natural Land Institute).

815 Outside is for everyone -- whether you are curious about getting outside more and don't know where to start or you already love getting outdoors and want to find new and exciting things to do in your area. The 815 Outside website and Facebook page is your one-stop shop to learn about the 20,000 acres of green space in Winnebago County, the outdoor activities available, and organizations and events that can help connect you to the nature around you.

It seems like every day a new study is coming out linking well-being and health to time spent in nature. Fortunately, there are many free ways to access these tremendous health benefits, get active and have fun while you are out there! Check out 815Outside.com and get started today!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Register for programs at seversondells.org/events or call 1-815-335-2915

Grandparents Camp

Wednesday, July 3, 2019 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Grandparents (any age) and their grandkids (ages 4-10 years) spend the morning enjoying some classic summer camp fun. You're never too old to catch a crawfish in the creek and make lasting memories with your grandkids. *Cost varies, call or see website. Please register by 7/1.*



Paint Night at Severson Dells

Thursday, August 1, 2019 | 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Join us for an artistic evening at the Dells! No experience necessary - guided instruction and all materials provided for this fun evening of hands-on creativity and celebration. Includes light snacks and drinks. *Cost: \$30. Please register by 7/25.*



Rockford City Market

Friday, July 5, 2019 | 3:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Join us at the ever-popular Rockford City Market on their busiest night of the year for nature activities and crafts for the family and stay for the fireworks!

Conservation Crew Restoration Days

Second Saturdays & Fourth Mondays

July 13, 22, Aug 10, 19, Sept 14, and 23

9:00 AM-12:00 PM

This summer we will be removing invasive plants to make space for our native plants and collecting seeds. Come lend a hand and help return Severson Dells to its natural state. *Please RSVP to andrea@seversondells.org or call.*

Readings from the Rookery

Friday, July 12, 2019 | 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Friday, July 26, 2019 | 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Severson Dells staff lead this fun and engaging program that introduces children and their parents to great nature books. After our story, everyone participates in outside activities that relate to the theme of the week. This program targets 5-to 9-year-olds and focuses on the importance of getting kids outside. *Free. Register early, as these programs fill up fast.*



Mary Oliver's Birthday Celebration - Poetry Walk and Fireside Reading

Saturday, September 7 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

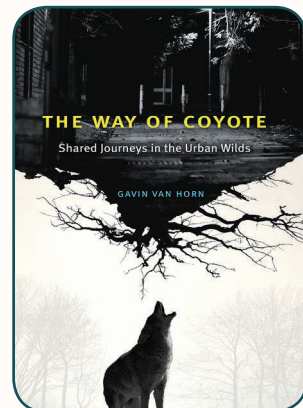
Mary Oliver, one of the most beloved nature poets, passed away earlier this spring. To honor her birthday on September 10, we will take a walk in nature and read her poetry along the route. Afterward, we will gather by the stone hearth and share some more poetry by the fire. Feel free to bring your favorite Mary Oliver poems to share. All ages are welcome, but this program is geared for adults. *Free. Please register by 9/8.*

The Way of Coyote: Shared Journeys in the Urban Wilds

Tuesday, September 17th | 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Join us for an evening with author, Gavin Van Horn, as he discusses two of his books, *The Way of Coyote: Shared Journeys in the Urban Wilds* and *Wildness*. Gavin will reveal the stupendous diversity of species that can flourish in urban landscapes like Chicago and the surprising attractiveness of cities to animals. He will also explore how people can become attuned to the wild community of life and contribute to the well-being of the wild places in which we live, work, and play. *Free. Please register by 9/15.*

About the speaker: Gavin Van Horn is the Director of Cultures of Conservation at the Center for Humans and Nature.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Register for programs at seversondells.org/events or call 1-815-335-2915

By the Light of the Silvery Moon

Full Moon Hikes

Tuesday, July 16, 2019 | 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Thursday, August 15, 2019 | 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Friday, September 13, 2019 | 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Taking a stroll outdoors with nothing to light your way except moonbeams is a beautiful experience, with no two walks the same. Sometimes we listen to the owls, sometimes we share the mysteries of the dark, and sometimes we gaze at the stars and wax philosophical. If getting out into the grasslands and woods at night is on your bucket list, then come join us for a magical evening. *Free. Please register two days prior to hikes.*



Pollinator Hike

Wednesday, July 31, 2019 | 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Pollinators are vital members of our natural community and important indicators of environmental health. Join Naturalist/Educator Andrea Wallace as we explore Kieselberg Forest Preserve and search for the pollinators that call it home. You will learn how citizen scientists are collecting data on local pollinators while getting a chance to practice data collection yourself! We will do some easy hiking through an array of habitats, including gravel prairie, wet prairie, and calcareous seep wetland.

Free. Please register by 7/8.

Fall Colors Hike at Hononegah Forest Preserve

Tuesday, September 24, 2019 | 6:00 PM-7:30 PM

Join us on an exploration of fall colors at Hononegah Forest Preserve. We will take a look at the changing leaves, fall wildflowers, and anything else that we might see. We will meet at the shelter house next to the soccer field.

Free. Please register by 9/26. Please register by 9/20.

NATURAL CONNECTIONS

Yoga at the Dells

**Tuesdays: July 2, August 6, and September 3
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

Come experience the beauty of nature through yoga at Severson Dells on the first Tuesday of the month. Join local certified yoga instructor Cassie Piske as she leads you through a Hatha yoga class that's open to all levels of practice. We will be holding poses and connecting with your breath to strengthen the body and calm the mind. Please bring a yoga mat and water. If the weather allows, we'll practice outside.

Register with Severson Dells.

Cost: Single Session: \$10 (members) \$15 (nonmembers)

Series of Three: \$25 (members) \$36 (nonmembers)

Instructor Bio: Cassie Piske is a Registered Yoga Teacher and Licensed Massage Therapist. She has practiced Yoga for nearly 20 years and has been sharing it with students since 2015. Staff Note: Cassie is a warm, welcoming presence and a wonderful yoga instructor. We are so happy to have her leading classes at Severson Dells Nature Center.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Register for programs at seversondells.org/events or call 1-815-335-2915



NATURE SPROUTS

NEW
Program!

We believe that nature is the best teacher and that when one develops a deeper understanding of nature, they develop as a person. Join Naturalist/Educator Andrea Wallace for a morning packed with exciting and intentional activities centered around a different environmental theme each month. We will read picture books that introduce ecological concepts, make nature-themed crafts that utilize fine-motor and creative thinking skills, observe and interact with our natural environment, and of course, have a lot of fun! We hope to explore the great outdoors as much as we can, so come dressed for the weather. This program is intended for children aged 3-6 years and a guardian to accompany them.

Cost: \$15/child w/ adult, \$3 for each additional child. \$10/child w/ adult, \$2 for each additional child for Severson Dells Members

Treeriffic Trees | September 10

Learn all about the trees around us! We will read from "Tree: A Peek-Through Picture Book," do sensory exploration with bark rubbings, and work on fine-motor skills by making tube necklaces from invasive tree species.

Awesome Autumn | October 8

Celebrate one of the best times of the year with us! We will learn more about this season by reading from "A is for Autumn," explore by collecting leaves, practice science skills by learning how to press leaves, and use our creativity to make leaf animals.

Spectacular Squirrels | November 12

Go nuts for squirrels with us! We will look into the lives of our furry friends by reading "The Busy Little Squirrel," practice observation and counting skills by going on a Squirrel Hike, and make a squirrel puppet to take home!

Wonderful Winter Animals | December 10

Lots of animals stay here in the winter! We will read about winter animals and habitats in "Over and Under the Snow," go on a walk to look for their tracks in the snow, and use gross motor skills to make a bird-feeder garland for our feathered winter friends.

All programs run from 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Register for programs at seversondells.org/events or call 1-815-335-2915



*Participate in feats
of intrigue and
daring!*

**Get Off the Beaten Path to Discover
the Wild, Weird, and Wonderful
Secrets of the Forest Preserves of
Winnebago County**

**Saturday,
September 28, 2019**

**Teams: 2 – 6 people
Entry Fee: \$25 per team**

Registration: www.seversondells.org/scavenger-hunt



Grab a group of friends, family or co-workers and test your Severson Dells and Forest Preserve knowledge! If you're up for the challenge, you'll be hiking, talking to Forest Preserve staff, looking for clues and working as a team to answer a series of questions related to Severson Dells and the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County. The team with the most points wins a fabulous grand prize! Second and third place prizes will also be awarded.

The hunt will take you to several Forest Preserve locations throughout the county, some spots you'll be able to reach by car, others will require venturing down a trail. Some questions may require a little research to answer. As it is illegal to remove items from the preserves, one digital camera with a flash memory card will be required per team. Questions are awarded point values based on level of difficulty. The team with the most points will get prizes, but everybody wins!

You may assemble your team with anywhere from two to six members. There will be two categories to compete in - Adults Only and Mixed Age. The Forest Quest Scavenger Hunt will take place over an 8-hour period with teams receiving their hunt questions via e-mail by 8:00 AM on Saturday, September 28th and are due back at Severson Dells Nature Center no later than 4:00 PM with their answers and photos. Enjoy food, live music and games while scoring takes place. Celebrate Your team's success at the after concert!

All proceeds from the Forest Quest Scavenger Hunt benefit nature education programs at Severson Dells Nature Center and volunteer education programs to enhance habitat restoration throughout all 43 Forest Preserves of Winnebago County.

CANOE CONVOYS

Monday Evenings at 5:00 PM

July 1, 8, 15, 29

Enjoy a Monday evening paddling with Severson Dells staff and volunteers. Most paddles are on the Kishwaukee River, but the location will be confirmed the Friday before the paddle based on current water conditions. Due to high demand for this program, please only register for two evenings.

Free, with a \$10 refundable deposit per person. We decided to institute this because of the high rate of no-shows in previous years. If you attend the paddle or cancel by the Friday before the paddle, your deposit will be fully refunded.

Please register at <http://bit.ly/canoeconvoy>. If you are interested in attending more than two, please call us at 815-335-2915 to be put on the waitlist.



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

JR. BIOLOGIST CAMP

July 29 - August 2, 2019

9 AM to 3 PM

Perfect for the young nature enthusiast and scientist in your family! Each day we explore a different “-ology” (dendrology, ornithology, entomology, etc.) and have fun playing camp games! Ages 11-14



SUPPORT SEVERSON DELLS *with* **ARTALE FIRST FRIDAY WINE NIGHT**

September 6, 2019

5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Tickets: \$15



Artale & Co. are graciously hosting Severson Dells as part of their First Friday Wine Tasting series at their tasting room at 6876 Spring Creek Road. They will have 32 wines from around the world available for tasting and light snacks to nibble on. Admission is \$15 at the door and proceeds support Severson Dells education programs. Enjoy an evening out while supporting Severson Dells!

Check out the Artale & Co. website for more information and to see what they have to offer the local wine, beer, and spirits aficionados, and those who would like to learn more.

<http://artaleandco.com/>

EST. 2008
ARTALE & CO.
WINE - BEER - SPIRITS



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

Breakfast For The Dells

Thursday,
September 26th, 2019
at 7:30 AM-8:30 AM

Optional guided hikes
following breakfast



This benefit supports nature
education at
Severson Dells Nature Center



Deepening Roots, Expanding Minds

The Pavilion

at Orchard Ridge Farms
6786 Yale Bridge Rd. Rockton, IL 61072

If you would like to attend this
fundraising event or host a table for the
event, please contact us at 815-335-2915



Learn about the positive impacts
of the programs and people that
support our mission



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER



APOSTLE ISLANDS KAYAKING TRIP

August 8 - 11, 2019

Join us on a kayak tour of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Experience a series of sea kayaking and hiking day trips from the Little Sand Bay Base Camp, including beautiful Sand Island, the Mawikwe Sea Caves, Bark Bay Slough, or the shipwrecks of Red Cliff Bay. So many options await you on the Apostle Islands just north of Bayfield, Wisconsin. Experience breathtaking sunsets over Lake Superior and listen to waves crash along the shore. The Apostle Islands National Lake Shore is great for beginning sea kayakers and seasoned paddlers alike.

For more info:

www.seversondells.com/apostletrip2019

or call 815.335.2915

**Spots are
going fast!
Register
soon.**

SAVE THE DATE

Stay up-to-date on our events by checking our website, Facebook, or signing up for e-Notes

OF BOG AND BLUFF, A TRIP WITH KETTLE MORAINES LAND TRUST Saturday, October 5, 2019 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM



WITH

GREG RAJSKY

Beulah Bog and Beulah Bluff are two natural areas in nearby Walworth County, Wisconsin, situated between the Mukwonago River Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest and the northwestern shores of picturesque Lake Beulah. Former Severson Dells Naturalist Greg Rajskey, now Executive Director of Kettle Moraine Land Trust (KMLT), will be our guide for this early autumn excursion.

Our visit begins at Beulah Bog State Natural Area, a 78-acre site that features upland oak savannas overlooking deep kettle bogs, thus supporting a variety of native vegetation. KMLT is the designated steward of this state-owned site. The timing of our visit should allow beautiful views of tamarack trees (*Larix laricina*)—our only native deciduous pines—in their golden autumn splendor. From the bog, we'll travel a short distance to the bluff. The Beulah Bluff Preserve is an 8-acre parcel that features a 70-foot range of elevation and offers extensive views of the lake below. The property was acquired by KMLT in 2012 and had benefited from ecological management for some years prior to that time. Habitats include kettle lowlands, red oak woodland, and hill prairie.

Vans will meet at the Farm & Fleet on East Riverside Blvd at 11 AM.

Please bring a lunch and we will enjoy a picnic before meeting up with Greg.

Cost: \$15 Severson Dells Members/ \$20 Non-Members

SPOOK THE DELLS

October 19

The night is nothing to be afraid of!
Learn about the mysterious and elusive animals that rule the night and get a chance to explore Severson after the sun goes down. This family-friendly event is free for all and a great way to celebrate the season in a welcoming, educational environment.

LUMINARIA

December 13-14

Celebrate this festive time of year at Severson Dells! Outside, stroll through our winter wonderland on lantern-lit trails and trot through the prairies on a horse-drawn wagon. Inside, wrap your hands around a cup of steaming hot cocoa, savor our tasty treats, and enjoy live music in our classroom. This classic event is free and fun for all!
Be sure not to miss it.

ANN WASSER, RECEIVES 2019 OUTSTANDING NEW DIRECTOR AWARD

Severson Dells is pleased to announce Director, Ann Wasser will receive the 2019 Outstanding New Director Award from the Association of Nature Center Administrators at the annual conference in August.

"We are proud that the Association of Nature Center Administrators has acknowledged what we, locally, already know," said Severson Dells Board President Daniel Huntley. "Ann has proven a very capable steward and new visionary for Harry and Fanny Severson's legacy to nature preservation, conservation and education in the Northern Illinois region. To say that Severson Dells Nature Center is well positioned for success with Ann simply does not show the level of appreciation she deserves for her efforts in such a short period of time."

"The ANCA Outstanding New Leader Award was created to recognize top level administrators who, within the first five years of their tenure, are demonstrating strong leadership skills at their centers. Ann was nominated by her board and was selected from a very impressive and competitive pool of nominations. The ANCA Leadership

Awards Selection Committee was most impressed with the fact that Ann succeeded a long-serving executive director, 'who left big shoes to fill,' with professionalism and the admiration of her community. That is not an easy transition! Ann is deserving of this award, and I am thrilled she is our 2019 Outstanding New Leader," says Jen Levy, Executive Director of the Association of Nature Center Administrators.

Congratulations to...

Ann Wasser

Executive Director of the Severson Dells Nature Center in Rockford, Illinois

**Recipient of the ANCA
2019 Outstanding New
Leader Award!**



ILLINOIS CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION UPDATE

Thank you to all that have helped with habitat restoration at Severson Dells. On Earth Day, we reached our goal of 400 volunteer habitat restoration hours, which equals \$4,000 additional in funding from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation to go toward habitat restoration at Severson Dells.

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation grant we received last year also has a match component. This means that for every \$1 we are able to raise the ICECF will award us \$3 up to \$21,000. If you are interested in contributing to this matching grant, please give Ann at call at 815-335-2915 or email ann@seversondells.org.

Thank you so much for all of the support with habitat restoration!

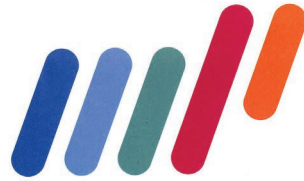


Earth Day volunteers helped with ecological restoration efforts.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS FOR DRINKS FOR THE DELLS

Thank you so much to all who came out for the Drinks for the Dells event at Carlyle Brewing Company. A big thanks also to all of the companies that donated food and auction items to help raise much-needed funds for nature education. The Severson Dells staff and board are so grateful for the community that helps support our mission of connecting people to nature through education and research.



Manpower®





Indigo Bunting



A Baltimore oriole visiting the new bird feeders at Severson Dells.

"Birds are everywhere, they sing, they soar and provide us with one of the most exciting ways to connect with nature. They inspire us with their beauty, have intriguing behavior to be entertained by and are prime indicators of how well we are taking care of our planet. Birds enlighten the lives of people who feed, observe, photograph and study them," explains Severson Dells board member Patty Oliveri.

Severson Dells Nature Center is a magnet for bird-lovers. Our nature preserve provides habitat for a variety of species of birds. Migrating and resident birds find habitat in our high-quality nature preserve. A diversity of birds are attracted to our world-class bird feeders that cater to a variety of different species.

Patty Oliveri's enthusiasm for birds is hard to match. She organized efforts to install the new bird feeding system at Severson Dells. Local bird authority Barbara Williams designed the feeding station (she and her husband Dan also generously donate seed). A local supporter and bird-lover fabricated the steel posts and purchased bird feeders and large baffles to protect the feeders from raccoons and squirrels.



Ellen Rathbone educates visitors about birds at the feeders.

Rock Valley Garden Center, Inc. has thoughtfully provided the bird feeders at half-cost and has provided us with bags of black oil sunflower seeds, Elite Mix, thistle, white safflower, suet, and peanuts to feed the birds at the Dells.

"For the birds, these feeding stations provide nutrition, especially when resources are scarce in the winter and during migration. For our guests, they provide enjoyment, relaxation, and education, promote environmental stewardship, and serve as a citizen science tool for observation, data collection, and research," explains Patty Oliveri. Feeding the birds and watching them glide to the feeders also provides something more difficult to name, but inspires and uplifts the human spirit.

Visitors are encouraged to spend time at Severson Dells Nature Center watching the birds. Our library offers over-stuffed armchairs, binoculars, and field guides to birds. Our exhibit space provides a viewing bench with visual guides for birding and a bird board showing all of the species seen at Severson throughout the year. Benches and a picnic table offer outdoor observation. All of this is provided for free for our guests. Whether you are an expert birder or are just bird-curious, come out to the nature center and you'll fall in love with the birds.

Did you know that you can learn more about the birds of Winnebago County on our website?

www.seversondells.com/birdingatseverson

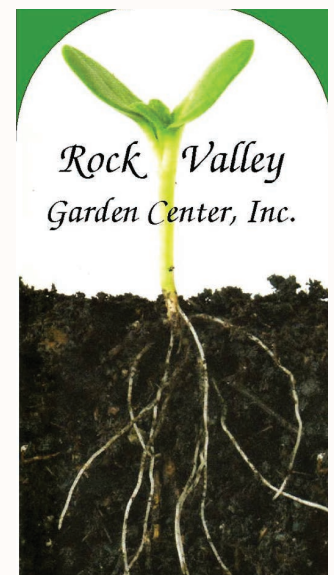
Other helpful resources for birding:

www.ibird.com/

www.allaboutbirds.org/

Check out Rock Valley Garden Center's amazing selection of birdseed, houses, and feeders. They are located at 785 N. Bell School Rd. Rockford, IL.

We are so grateful to them for all their support.



Book Nook

Natural History Books Worth A Read

The Elemental Prairie

At a silent auction, I purchased *The Elemental Prairie—Sixty Tallgrass Plants*, Watercolors by George Olson (2003) with an Essay, “The Running Country” by John Madson (the essay is from Audubon magazine 1972).

I bought it for the beautiful full-page paintings of sixty of the most well-known prairie plants. Each painting is an absolutely beautiful work of art. I only wish the book were coffee table size, the bigger the better, the paintings are just wonderful.

Most people drive or walk by a prairie restoration or a prairie remnant and all they see are weeds. George Olson sees the beauty in each individual plant. Each one is unique.

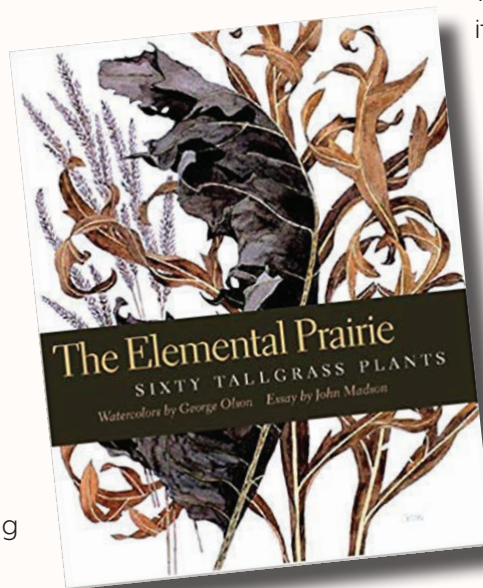
In the intro he briefly (too briefly) describes his work. He gathers one or two species, takes them to his studio, “poses them,” does a preliminary drawing or two, perhaps does a small sketch and then experiments with paint. Working against time, he sketches his plant one more time and then creates “a finished work of art.”

He was a professor of art at the College of Wooster in Ohio for thirty-seven years. When he studied native plants he not only studied light and color, the elements of an artist, but he also learned from the “cumulative library of botanical associations, stories, literary references, practical uses, symbolism, and folklore.”

One of his favorite flowering plants is the purple coneflower. And one of his favorite images of the coneflower is a hand-colored engraving from the first volume of William Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, published in London in 1787. And like a good teacher, he can tell us all of this without sounding too esoteric. Then he presents his paintings. Every night for the last week or so I have been looking at, studying, admiring and falling in love with each and every plant.

The essay, “The Running Country,” is by John Madson. I'm embarrassed to say I had never heard of him. The University of Iowa Press calls him “the father of the modern prairie restoration movement” His landmark book, *Where the Sky Began*, originally published in 1982, they claim is a “classic tome and will serve as inspiration to those just learning about the heartland's native landscape and rekindle the passion of long-time prairie enthusiasts.”

I asked a friend about his book and she quickly answered, “A book I read about 30 years ago. I loved it.....I do recommend it to others.”



After reading this short essay; I'm going to get a copy of Madson's book. One of the most interesting parts of the essay is his discussion of the role of fire in the life cycle of a prairie. Madson believed that “fire was an effect of prairie rather than a cause.” He wrote that prairies are the result of low rainfall, evaporation from strong constant winds, low relative humidity and high temperatures. This is a much more complex and interesting scenario than simply fire.

Madson advocated that prairie remnants are important but that the remaining large pieces of prairie are essential. A true prairie needs to have the horizon and the prairie meet. He reminded his readers that human history is part of the prairie's history. He describes a cemetery that had been abandoned over a hundred years ago and the prairie has come back. His poignant description is breathtaking.

The two parts of the book fit together nicely. Madson gives us the overview, the history of the plants and the people who have interacted with them over the years. Olson focuses on the beauty of the individual plants. The book will give newbies a great introduction to the world of prairies and experienced enthusiasts a sense of renewal and added inspiration.

Review by Chuck Wemstrom

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

MARY ANNE AND RICH TOPPE

Lifetime residents of Rockford, Rich and Mary Anne Toppe began coming to Severson Dells not long after it was donated by the Seversons and opened as a forest preserve in 1976. They developed a deeper connection when Mary Anne began taking her second-grade students on field trips and later chaperoned her own daughter Mollie on field trips. Since then, they have become integral and beloved members of the Severson Dells family. Director Ann Wasser says of the pair, "Rich and Mary Anne have been and continue to be so generous in so many ways to Severson Dells and the Rockford community." In fact, when invited to Severson for this interview, Rich and Mary Anne brought pizza and ice cream for the whole staff and we enjoyed a lunch filled with laughter and memories.



Rich and Mary Anne chopping wood at their daughter's farm in West Virginia.

Rich and Mary Anne expressed, "Severson Dells has had a big impact on our family." Both their daughter, Mollie, and son, Sam, were involved with programming throughout their childhood. Through their experiences, they both developed a greater respect and love for nature. Sam and Mollie were in camps, went on canoe trips, and were part of the Coyote Clan, an adventure group for youth facilitated by the legendary Don Miller. Sam and Mollie had a deep admiration for the staff



Rich entertaining teens at Blazing Saddles Canoe Camp by crossing the floatilla.

and made life-long memories. Sam recalls, "My strongest memory of Severson Dells is going to the luminaries every winter, drinking hot chocolate and walking through the woods surrounded by little white lights. I remember going to summer camps every summer, learning to canoe, build fires, use a compass, or just sloshing through the creek. I remember lots of musical performances and nature presentations in the big room. And I remember the passionate people who worked there, especially Richard, Kathy, and Don." Time spent at Severson Dells helped Mollie define her path in life. Mary Anne and Rich explained, "Mollie went on in college to study environmental sciences and education. We see the impactful value that Severson Dells brings to our region. They are crucial in helping facilitate the connections between people and nature. We are privileged

to have a wonderful forest preserve and park system. The Severson staff and programs focus attention on those valuable parks and preserves."

Mary Anne shared her time and talent as a board member for Severson Dells in the early 2000's. Rich helped when a parent chaperone was needed and began a friendship with the staff at that time, Don, Kathy, and Richard. Rich especially enjoyed the canoe activities when Don began the current canoe program (Monday night Canoe Convoys and Blazing Saddles Canoe Camp). After taking ACA (American Canoe Association) training, Rich became a regular volunteer canoe instructor and rarely misses an opportunity to get out on the water and teach some effective paddle strokes and throw out some of the best - and hilariously worst - jokes.

Rich and Mary Anne are both natural teachers. Mary Anne taught for ten years at Keith School and moved onto being a fitness instructor at the YMCA. Rich worked as a social worker at Rosecrance and then taught for 34 years in the Rockford Public Schools.



Rich having a "Muir moment" by the bird feeders.

Since retirement in 2011, Rich and Mary Anne are enjoying engaging in the outdoor activities they have always loved: cycling, hiking, canoeing, and x-country skiing. These activities get them out often into the local parks and preserves. As a canoe volunteer, Rich feels privileged to help novices learn about local rivers. Rich said, "On our Monday night floats, many guests are surprised to discover the beauty of the land along our rivers. They always express wonder that these wilderness-like forests, prairies, and waters are just a few miles from home." Our Naturalist/Educator Andrea Wallace has experienced many hours on the rivers with Rich as a camper and intern. She said of Rich, "He captures and embodies the magic we should all find in the outdoors!"

Rich and Mary Anne enjoy traveling as well; as Rich explained, "It's fun to travel occasionally, but returning home is often the best part of the trip!" Rich and Mary Anne clearly have developed a deep sense of place at Severson Dells. Their son-in-law, John, chose a spot at Severson Dells with twin oaks to propose to their daughter because he knew how important it was to Mollie. Now it is an important place to Rich and Mary Anne. They also love sitting at the windows when the birds are active at the feeders. "It is a Muir moment! How can anyone watch the variety of birds and not feel connected to the natural world?!" Rich exclaimed. In fact, it was John Muir who once wrote, "Into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul." It will make sense, then, to anyone who knows Rich that he has spent a great deal of time in the forests at Severson Dells!

Rich and Mary Anne are rare gems. All of us at Severson Dells feel blessed that they share their spirit of giving and

adventure with us. Join us for the Monday night Canoe Convoys to get patient and entertaining canoe instruction from Rich. You'll also spot Rich and Mary Anne supporting one of our many events - from Wildflower Walkabouts to travelogues to our fundraisers. Strike up a conversation with them and get rewarded with warmth, humor and incredible stories!

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

The earth pours forth generosity to us every day. If you have been looking for a way to give back and make a difference, look no further!

We have many valuable volunteers who help with the educational school programs, family events, tend to our butterfly garden, host and hostess on weekends, remove invasive species in the forest, collect native plant seeds, monitor species as citizen scientists, keep our fish and birds happy and so much more!

Volunteers are involved in many different activities, limited only by enthusiasm, interest and available time. Volunteers' ages range from youth to senior citizens, and they provide thousands of hours of service per year.

Visit www.seversondells.org/volunteer to learn more!

**TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS:
THANK YOU! WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!**



Volunteers Rick Cook and Dave Johnson check blue bird boxes.

MEMORIALS

ARVILLA J. ALLEN
JILL A. CROW
ELSIE R. ESTABROOK
FLORENCE G. SWINSON



Dodecatheon meadia (Prairie Shooting Star)

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

A planned gift is a wonderful legacy that lives on in the community. Severson Dells honors those extraordinary people who have included the Nature Center in their estate plans to ensure that we are able to serve the community for generations to come. As a small non-profit, your gift will help us raise the next generation of earth stewards.

We highly recommend that you contact your attorney or financial adviser to discuss the best way to achieve your goals and for all legal advice. Severson Dells is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

If a planned gift to Severson Dells is part of your estate plan, then we would love to discuss this with you to ensure that your wishes are fulfilled.

Contact Ann Wasser at ann@seversondells.org or call 815-335-2915.

BECOME A MEMBER OF "FRIENDS OF SEVERSON DELLS"

OR GIVE AN ADDITIONAL GIFT

MEMBERS RECEIVE:

- Discount at Severson Dells' Gift Shop
- Reduced admissions to Severson Dells programs
- Members-only programs at Severson Dells
- Early Summer Camp registration
- Check-out privileges at Severson Dells Library
- "Notes From the Dells" quarterly newsletter with calendar of programs and special events
- Free admission to participating Association of Nature Center Administrators member nature centers around the country

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:

- Individual \$40
- Family \$65
- Sponsor \$125
- Benefactor \$300
- Sustaining \$600
- Patron \$1000

Become a member online at
www.seversondells.org/become-a-member/

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I would like to support the mission of SDNC
with a gift of _____ at this time.

*Contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.
Please consult your tax professional.*

Thank You For Your Support!

SEVERSON DELLS ACTIVITIES

www.seversondells.org/events or call 815-335-2915

CUT OUT AND POST WHERE YOU KEEP TRACK OF YOUR FAMILY'S ACTIVITIES!

JULY

01.....	Canoe Convoy.....	5 PM
02.....	Yoga at the Dells.....	6 PM - 7 PM
03.....	Grandparents Camp.....	9 AM-12 PM
05.....	Rockford City Market.....	3:30 PM-8:30 PM
08-12.....	Wild Things Camp.....	9 AM-12 PM
08.....	Canoe Convoy.....	5 PM
12.....	Readings from the Rookery.....	9:30 AM-11 AM
13.....	Conservation Crew Volunteer Workday.....	9 AM-12 PM
15-19.....	Peek-in-the-Creek Camp.....	9 AM-3 PM
15.....	Canoe Convoy.....	5 PM
16.....	By the Light of the Silvery Moon Full Moon Hike.....	8 PM-9PM
22-26.....	Blazing Paddles Canoe Camp.....	9 AM-3 PM
22.....	Conservation Crew Volunteer Workday.....	9 AM-12 PM
26.....	Readings from the Rookery.....	9:30 AM-11 AM
29-Aug 2.....	Jr. Biologist Camp.....	9 AM-3 PM
29.....	Canoe Convoy.....	5 PM
31.....	Pollinator Hike.....	6:30 PM-8 PM

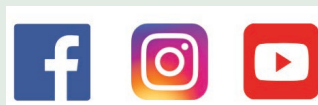
AUGUST

01.....	Paint Night at Severson Dells.....	6:30 PM-8:30 PM
06.....	Yoga at the Dells.....	6 PM - 7 PM
08-11.....	Apostle Islands Kayaking Trip	
10.....	Conservation Crew Volunteer Workday.....	9 AM-12 PM
15.....	By the Light of the Silvery Moon Full Moon Hike.....	8 PM-9 PM
19.....	Conservation Crew Volunteer Workday.....	9 AM-12 PM

SEPTEMBER

03.....	Yoga at the Dells.....	6 PM - 7 PM
06.....	Artale Wine Night.....	5 PM - 8 PM
07.....	Mary Oliver's Birthday Celebration- Poetry Walk and Fireside Reading.....	6 PM-8 PM
10.....	Nature Sprouts: Treerific Trees.....	9:30 AM- 11:30 AM
13.....	By the Light of the Silvery Moon Full Moon Hike.....	8 PM-9 PM
14.....	Conservation Crew Volunteer Workday.....	9 AM-12 PM
14.....	Dancing at the Dells.....	5:30 PM -7:30 PM
17.....	The Way of Coyote: Shared Journeys in the Urban Wilds.....	7 PM - 8 PM
23.....	Conservation Crew Volunteer Workday.....	9 AM-12 PM
24.....	Fall Colors Hike at Hononegah Forest Preserve.....	6 PM - 7:30 PM
26.....	Breakfast for the Dells Fundraiser.....	7:30 AM-8:30 AM
28.....	Forest Quest Scavenger Hunt.....	8 AM - 4 PM

CONNECT WITH US



NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Severson Dells Nature Center
8786 Montague Road
Rockford, IL 61102-9713

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Rockford, IL 61125
Permit No. 513**

CONTACT INFO

Telephone: 1-815-335-2915

FAX: 1-815-335-2471

www.seversondells.org

e-mail: info@seversondells.org

Hours:

Monday - Saturday: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Sunday: 1:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Severson Dells Nature Center is a cooperative effort between the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County.



Severson Dells Nature Center and the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, will assist in providing for those individuals with special needs. (Please notify us in advance of your needs that may require special staffing.)

SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER STAFF:

Ann Wasser -
Director

Nancy Bleile -
Administrative Assistant

Ellen Rathbone -
Nature Educator

Andrea Wallace -
Naturalist/Educator

Jessie Crow-Mermel -
Marketing & Development
Assistant

BOARD MEMBERS:

President - Daniel Huntley
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Chris Samuelson
Steve Vee
Lenae Weichel



**THE GROVE NATURE PLAYScape
AT SEVERSON DELLS**