



Community Affairs & Environmental Education Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Affairs Director
Date: 5/14/2024
Re: April 2024 Report

Community Affairs

Press Releases:

We published the following press releases, last month:

- Join us for a Tree Planting Extravaganza on April 20!, April 1
- Embark on an Educational Exploration at Dragonfly Migration, April 4
- Forest Preserve District offers free wood chips, April 28, April 12
- Kane Forest Preserve Foundation Hosts Annual Native Plant Sale, April 27, April 15
- Join us for a Volunteer Clean-up at the Fabyan Windmill, April 17
- Fabyan Windmill Opens for Tours June through September, April 24

Press Coverage

The following items (not including election-related items) garnered press coverage, last month:

Earth Day Tree-Planting Event

- Kane Forest District to celebrate Earth Day by holding Tree Planting Extravaganza, Shaw Local, April 2
- Volunteers needed to plant trees in celebration of Earth Day, Chicago Tribune, April 6
- Join a tree planting extravaganza April 20 for Earth Day, Daily Herald, April 8
- Earth Day Celebrations in Kane County, Kane County Connects, April 17

Fabyan Forest Preserve / Environmental Education

- Kane County's Fabyan Windmill prepares for public debut with community cleanup, Shaw Local, April 22
- Fabyan Windmill to hold weekly public tours in summer and early fall, Shaw Local, April 29

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

- Kane Forest Preserve Foundation hosts native plant sale April 27, Daily Herald, April 18
- Kane Co. Forest Preserve Hosts Native Plant Sale, St. Charles Patch, April 18

Nature Programs

- Join an outdoor scavenger hunt at Tekakwitha Woods May 11, April 1
- Kane Co. Forest Preserve Hosts Dragonfly Migration Event, Patch, April 12

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Planning & Operations

- Get free wood chips from Kane County forest district, Shaw Local, April 15
- Kane forest preserve district offering free wood chips to the public Sunday, Chicago Tribune, April 25

TreeLine Newsletter:

Our current print subscribers total 4,267. Current email subscribers total 13,039 (+34), for a combined total of 17,306 subscribers (+34). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email.

If you haven't noticed, with the summer edition of *The TreeLine*, the online version is now interactive. Viewers can virtually "flip" through pages. Programs that require registration also have a link in the title that takes them directly to the program for easy registration. Check it out at <https://kaneforest.com/the-treeline-newsletter> by clicking on the newsletter image.



Environmental Education

April Spotlight



Springtime is school field trip time. Our Naturalist team welcomed 682 students to Field-based nature education programs, this month.

Naturalists taught students about the beauty, resiliency and diversity of our natural ecosystems. We use inquiry-based, hands-on educational techniques to inspire our future leaders to be caretakers of this planet; each child we reach plays an important role. Reaching nearly 700 students in a month makes a real impact.



Inquisitive 4th graders from Prairie View Elementary School (D301) search for aquatic life at the Fitchie Creek Forest Preserve.

Program Reach & Revenue Generation

Programs	Programs Completed (Monthly)	Attendance (Monthly)	Avg Attendance Per Program (Monthly)	Programs Completed (Total FY)	Attendance (Total FY)	Avg Attendance Per Program (Total FY)
Public	14	292	21	113	4,609	41
School	18	682	38	89	2,676	30
Scout	0	0	0	6	108	18
Community	5	59	12	37	688	19
Outreach	5	167	33	33	1,751	53
Learn from the Experts	4	158	40	23	700	30
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	10	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	0	0	0
Program Totals	47	1,358	30	311	10,532	35
Nature Center Visitors		892			8,552	
Total Attendance		2,250			19,084	
Revenues [^]	\$669					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees.

[^]Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.



“I wanted to tell you how great Josh [Naturalist Josh Libman] was tonight. We had 23 people and I think he made birders of them all. We saw a lot of birds, he had stories about most — which everyone enjoyed.”

“Bird Watching Walks” program participant

“Lisa [Naturalist Lisa O’Brien] did an incredible job leading and teaching. Her love of nature, Kane County, and the forest preserve’s mission is infectious. Thank you for a wonderful day!!”

“Nurtured by Nature” program participant

“I’ve recommended this program to my son, who is pursuing a career in environmental sciences. This program offered great insight into the day to day life of an ecological scientist.”

“Bobcats in Illinois” program participant

In-Person Programs

- **Public Programs** – The interpretive theme of the month was ephemeral wildflowers. These blooms are out in full force at our wooded preserves and our Naturalist team doesn’t miss an opportunity to showcase them.

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- In conjunction with the Batavia Environmental Commission, Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick led an *Ephemeral Wildflower Walk* at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve in Elburn. The 16 attendees located 29 species of wildflowers on the carpeted floor of the kame, enjoyed the ethnobotanical history of the flowers, as well as a description of the kame's geologic formation.



Wildflower enthusiasts head into the woods at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve.

- Naturalist Erica Lemon led a *Search for Spring Wildflowers* at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve in St. Charles, with 27 folks in attendance.
- The 24 participants on Naturalist O'Brien's meditative *Nurtured by Nature* walk were treated to a heron rookery and wildflower show at Rutland Forest Preserve in Hampshire. She reviewed the history and geology of the area and led the group on a walk to see Great Blue Herons, wildflowers, a Great Horned Owl, a Red Headed Woodpecker, turtles, ducks and an overall beautiful day!

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick coordinated District departments to present a true festival-like Earth Day celebration at Elburn Forest Preserve. With live music, environmental educational exhibits, naturalist-guided hikes and games of chance – as well as the central theme of tree planting – the festival drew more than 300 attendees, with 65 stopping at the *Pollinator Pop-Up* table and 20 joining the naturalist-guided hike.

Naturalist Amber Ross planned and executed a *Night out with Nature* at Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls in Gilberts. She helped attendees use all of their senses to discover the wonder and beauty of the night. Naturalist Ross also delivered an *EcoLab: Color Changing Bacteria* class, teaching students about the wonders of bacteria and their important function in our natural world. Class members constructed a “color-changing bacterial zoo” to take home and see incredible color-changing bacteria at work.

Seasonal *Bird Watching Walks* with Naturalist Libman are gaining a larger following in the warmer months. In April, 30 intrepid birders joined him for a walk at Fabyan Forest Preserve in Geneva. The group observed and identified many species of birds along the way.

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For the younger crowd, during a *Fluffy as a Bunny- Little Saplings* program at Creek Bend Nature Center/LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve in St. Charles, Naturalist O'Brien shared rabbit characteristics, had kids move like a rabbit, created a rabbit-themed craft, then hiked among the bluebells. Naturalist O'Brien also led a *Frog and Toad Adventure* for a dozen patrons at the Rakow Library branch in Elgin. She guided a nature walk to look and listen for springtime amphibians. For the first *Storytime at Creek Bend Nature Center* held outdoors this year, 38 little ones and their caregivers gathered to hear stories and play interactive games with a St. Charles Public Library librarian. Families were welcome to stay and explore Creek Bend Nature Center, after the program.

During Naturalist Lemon's monthly *Yarn Art Social Circle*, seven participants brought their own knit, crochet or other yarn art project to work in a group of yarn enthusiasts in the cozy confines of the Creek Bend Nature Center.

April's *Senior Strollers* had a special treat at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve this month. Director Debra Corwin (Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley) helped us welcome 20 Strollers into the Sholes School on a cold and windy day, and helped teach them about the history and workings of one-room schoolhouses. The group then strolled back to Creek Bend Nature Center for refreshments and social time, among the exhibits.

- **Community & Outreach Programs** – Naturalist Ross took the *Nature Detectives Traveling Naturalist program* to the Town & Country Library in Elburn. Fifteen patrons were excited to learn about native wildlife and see real-life pelts, skulls and bones. Naturalist Lemon delivered *Traveling Naturalist* programs at two schools: *Wonderful World of Insects* at Howard B. Thomas Elementary School (Burlington, D301) for 55 students and *Nature's Superheroes* at Jerri Hoffman Children & Family Center (Carpentersville) for 70 students.



Howard B. Thomas students get up close and personal with the Lepidoptera family.

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Expanding our *Nurtured by Nature* programming into the higher education realm, Naturalist O'Brien led a nurturing walk for 20 Waubensee Community College students looking to escape the stress of final exams. The group strolled along the Virgil Gilman bike trail, and looked at wetland plants while they engaged in forest therapy practices. Working with local naturalist and Bliss Woods Steward Mary Ochsenschlager, Naturalist Libman presented an *Arbor Day Tree Chat* at the Sugar Grove Public Library.

Teaming up with Volunteer Coordinator Robb Cleave, Naturalist Ross welcomed nine members of the Ampersand Community to a day at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. She helped the group understand how they can be the "Pollution Solution" in nature, then interpreted pond life and native bees at the Creek Bend pond and bee hotel. For another special-needs group, the Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association (Carpentersville & Crystal Lake locations), Naturalist Ross led two *Life on the Regenerative Farm* programs at Brunner Family Forest Preserve in West Dundee. The groups loved seeing the cows, chickens, and pigs and were very interested in how the animals were cared for and how the milk and eggs were produced and sold. They ended their outing by hand-crafting butter from heavy cream.

A group of 18 Green Friends Montessori School (Elburn) students welcomed Naturalist Lemon for a *Discovery Hike* at their school and enjoyed discovering ephemeral wildflowers and aquatic creatures, including a water snake and many frogs.

- **School Programs** – Much of the Naturalist team time this month was devoted to the important work of educating public, private and homeschool students in the field about environmental and conservation concepts. District Naturalists led traditional school field trips for 422 students, all at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve, focused on the themes of *Animal Adaptations*, *Wonderful World of Insects*, *Rivers & Streams* and *Ephemeral Wildflowers*. Participating schools were Lakewood Elementary (D300), Prairie View Elementary (D301), Bell Graham Elementary (D303) and Alice Gustafson Elementary (D101.)

The remaining school programs this month were for 260 homeschoolers. Naturalists Libman, Ross and Lemon welcomed students from 11 homeschool networks to guided walks centered on *Amphibians*, *Ephemeral Wildflowers*, *Macroinvertebrates* and *Birds of Prey Walks* at Arlene Shoemaker (Aurora), Rutland, LeRoy Oakes, Burnidge (Elgin), Tekakwitha Woods, Jon J. Duerr (South Elgin) and Oakhurst (Aurora) Forest Preserves.



Prairie View Elementary School Pre-K students look at the world through insect eyes!

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- **Learn from the Experts (LFE)/KCCN Programs** – It was a busy month for LFEs, with four presented by District staff and another (*Hickory Knolls – Inside & Out*) led by partner Naturalist Pam Otto (St. Charles Park District.) Wildlife Technician Sadie Dainko led two sessions of the *Spring Water Birds LFE* at hottest new birding spot in Kane County — Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve in Hampshire. The 28 birders searched out and identified waterfowl, shorebirds and grassland bird species that were moving through the preserve on their spring-migration journey.



A little rain can't keep a birder down. Wildlife Technician Dainko used spotting scopes to point out wetland birds.

Safety Coordinator Chuck Misner teamed up with Fabyan Windmill docents to share two *Fabyan Windmill: A Historical Engineering Treasure LFEs* with 37 patrons. Staring at Creek Bend Nature Center, he took participants on a journey beyond the history to delve into the design, preservation and engineering of the restored 19th Century windmill. The groups then caravanned to Fabyan Forest Preserve for behind-the-scenes tours of the inner workings of this mechanical wind machine.



The LFE group was allowed to tour the entire Fabyan Windmill – including the cap.

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Naturalist O'Brien hosted a virtual *Bobcats of Illinois* program for 93 participants. Katie Buckman of Southern Illinois University led a fascinating exploration of bobcats in north-central Illinois, including the history of bobcats in our state, recent bobcat recolonization of northern Illinois, and bobcat ecology. The recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBtun9T7PPg>.

During the Ephemeral Flowers LFE at Bliss Woods Forest Preserve in Elburn, 19 patrons were treated to an explosion of spring wildflowers. Naturalist Ross taught the group about flower anatomy and identification techniques, plus shared interesting ethnobotanical history of the species seen on the walk.

Nature, Virtually Everywhere! Online Programs

In April, we released: ***Summer Camp In the Preserves*** - Curious about Forest Preserve District summer camps? Here's a sneak peek into all the fun that our "Week in the Woods" has to offer!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHaQDXt03Mc&list=PLzZ5U3f-FxWDr-jojJhD1VsJKVNXD8f3s>



Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge

In April, the lodge hosted four meetings and one celebration of life, totaling \$1,100. Anticipated revenue for reservations to date totals \$10,925. We will likely not meet our budgeted revenue goal of \$30,000, this fiscal year, likely the result of a monthly church group rental ceasing operations at the site.

Creek Bend Nature Center

In April, Creek Bend hosted a Mounted Rangers Meeting and the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation's Native Plant Sale. Anticipated revenue for reservations to date totals \$21,000. We have two months remaining to meet our budgeted goal of \$26,000.

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

Kane Native Plant Sale

The Foundation hosted its annual Kane Native Plant Sale on Saturday, April 27. Proceeds are still being tallied, but more than \$50,000 in native plants were sold. Additionally, the Foundation doubled sales at the in-person event, over last year. Despite the big in-person sales, we were left with quite a bit of inventory. Staff quickly developed a Bonus Online Sale, and were able to move two-thirds of the remaining inventory. Remaining items will be planted in the forest preserves.

Thank you to this year's sponsors and donors:

- Platinum Sponsor: Natural Garden Natives
- Gold Sponsor: Law Office of Irv Ochenschlager
- Silver Sponsors: Becky Gillam, The Haberthur Family
- Bronze Sponsors: Abbott Party Rental, The Petschke Family, Christopher W. Kious & Leslie Juby
- Donors: Mavis Bates & Anita Lewis