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River Bend NATURE CENTER

Summer 2019, Volume 41, Issue 3

Helping people discover, enjoy, understand, and preserve the incredible natural world that surrounds us.

Director's Desk: A Cure for the Busy Life

By: Breanna Wheeler, Executive Director

Songs of birds, water, wind, bugs, frogs and toads, and the slither of a snake in the grass. Fresh fragrance of the breeze of open air, new growth, and spring flowers. All the colors of green, patterns in the trees, and the way the light of the morning, midday, and evening change the feel of the place. How tough and fragile the natural world can be all at once – lessons in the wonder of our ability to handle challenge: sometimes with boldness and resilience and other times by acceptance of our breaking points and shadows. And seeing that over time, somehow things even out. As a car approaches, a deer that I've been having a staring contest with on the edge of the trees jumps and is swallowed into the cover of woods. Taking all this in makes my to-do list and daily stresses vanish and gives my mind a rest that it needs to function and be at its best. RBNC is an important part of the community and region. People depend on it as a part of their lives and it is part of the fabric of the community. Generations of people have got their start in nature through the educational programs and experiences they have had here. River Bend Nature Center is a key place that:

Offers environmental connection – Experiencing RBNC and taking part in programs encourages environmental awareness, environmental literacy, and teaches sustainable actions we can all take to help the natural world. RBNC provides wildlife habitat and services for nature and ecosystems, a place for children to learn, and access to nature without having to travel far.

Offers leisure, health and wellness promotion – RBNC offers physical exercise, retreat, restoration, relaxation, and recreation outdoors and a place to enhance creativity, improve self-esteem, contemplate the wonder of the world, and escape from stress.

Promotes community resilience – RBNC is a positive driver of the local economy, a point of pride for the community, and a beautiful place to be. For area learners, leadership and critical thinking skills are built and being outdoors solidifies curriculum and lessons taught inside.

Promotes civic engagement – RBNC is a place for people to gather, experience nature, and learn across the lifespan. People from different races, ethnicities, ages and abilities, and ways of thinking can come together here. People are able to volunteer to give time and financial resources to meaningful and purposeful activities that enhance the mission of RBNC and change lives.

We hope to see you on the trails (or on our membership list www.rbnc.org/membership) as we wind down our yearlong 40th anniversary celebration.

This is an important time to strengthen River Bend Nature Center by broadening and deepening awareness and support of this valuable resource which we are so fortunate to have right in our backyards! It's nature nearby with incredible opportunities for education, conservation, and recreation. We all have a stake in River Bend's future and your help is needed to set the stage for generations to come. Thank you!

Program Highlights

- July**
- 1 Family Camp Day 1
 - 2 Family Camp Day 2
 - 6 Pond Insect Safari
 - 13 Bagels & Birds/Master Naturalist Capstones
 - 13 Stewardship Day: Parsnip
 - 14 Stewardship Day: Parsnip
 - 16-21 Rice County Fair
 - 17 Lunch & Learn: Raising Monarchs
 - 18 Family Float
 - 20 Raising Monarch Butterflies
 - 26 Homeschool Science Day
 - 27 Hike and Hygge
- August**
- 2 Visit us at the Faribault Library
 - 3 Bagels & Birds
 - 8 Adult Night Out: Float with Floats
 - 10 Nature Tech: Geocaching
 - 13-18 Steele County Fair
 - 16 Stewardship Day: Buckthorn
 - 17 Nature Tech: iNaturalist
 - 21 Lunch & Learn: RBNC Geologic History
 - 22 Family Float
 - 24 Stewardship Day: Buckthorn
 - 29 Music in the Park: Long Time Gone Band
 - 31 Hike and Hygge
- September**
- 5 Adult Night Out: Splatter Paint Archery
 - 7 Bagels & Birds
 - 13 Homeschool Science Day
 - 14 Girl Scout Day: Brownie Bug Badge
 - 18 Lunch & Learn: Topic TBD
 - 21 Girl Scout Day: Brownie EcoFriend and Brownie EcoAdventurer
 - 26 Mike Lynch Star Watch
 - 28 National Public Lands Day
 - 28 Girl Scout Day: Senior/ Ambassador EcoExplorer
- Save the Date:**
- OCT 5 Ramble
 - 26 Bats, Bones, Bonfires

RAMBLE
38TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019
A Ramble through Time
TICKETS AT WWW.RBNC.ORG/RAMBLE

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER
SUMMER CAMP 2019
WHOLE AND HALF DAY CAMPS FOR CHILDREN
GRADES PRE-K TO 8TH GRADE
Members receive discounts on registration!
rbnc.org 507-332-7151
1000 Rustad Road
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River Bend Nature Center

1000 Rustad Rd—PO Box 186
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Molly Olson, Naturalist/Program Coordinator

Kelly Peterson, Naturalist/Program Coordinator

Brittany Smith, Naturalist/Program Coordinator

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Meet the New Naturalist

Katy grew up in Madelia, MN, a small town southwest of Mankato. She has an Associate's degree in Commercial and Technical Art from South Central College and a Bachelor's degree in Zoology from Minnesota State University, Mankato. Katy was a volunteer at the MN Zoo for five years and had an internship working on the MN and Tropics trails. She especially loved working with the sloths and porcupines. Her favorite part of being a naturalist is teaching others about nature and fostering an appreciation for the outdoors. In her spare time she enjoys being with her husband, taking her dog on hikes, and working in her garden. Stop in and say hi!



Meet the Interns

River Bend is fortunate to have three Natural Resource/Environmental Education Intern volunteers this summer. They will be working on invasive species, trail maintenance, and helping with summer camps. If you see them out on the trails, make sure to say hi!

Sydney: I grew up around RBNC, so I am excited to further my knowledge in environmental science at such a wonderful place. I hope to gain great experience and have a greater understanding of my major in Environmental Science while I am here!

Hannah: As a Wildlife Biology major and a Minnesota native, I am overjoyed to have this experience as an intern at RBNC. Hands-on field work is my dream, and this is a perfect place to make that happen.

Matt: As someone who grew up exploring River Bend Nature Center and benefitting from all that it has to offer, I know firsthand how important this place is to both wildlife and the local community. I hope that during my time here, I can help to preserve and promote RBNC so that future generations can enjoy it as well.



(Pictured Left to right: Sydney Schultz, Hannah Detterweich, Matthew Johnson)

Girl Scout Badge Days

By: Molly Olson, Naturalist/Program Coordinator

River Bend is partnering with Girl Scouts River Valleys to offer Girl Scout Badge Days at River Bend. Each badge day, two badges will be offered, usually to the same age level. We invite scouts to stay and eat lunch between programs. Please register through the Girl Scouts of the River Valleys website, www.girlscoutsrv.org. One girl, or a whole troop can register! Don't see the badge you want to complete? Call us to schedule your troop for a badge program of your choice. Find our badge offerings online at rbnc.org/scouts. Boy scouts and other scouts are also welcome!

Upcoming Badge Programs:

- September 14— Bugs Badge for Brownies (2 sessions)
- September 21— EcoFriend and Outdoor Adventurer for Brownies
- September 28— Eco-Explorer for Seniors & Ambassadors (optional service project afterwards)
- October 12— Hiker and Outdoor Art Creator for Brownies
- October 19— Archery for Cadettes
- November 16— Animal Habitats and Outdoor Art Explorer for Juniors

Calling Volunteers!

By: Molly Olson, Naturalist/Program Coordinator

We have many dedicated volunteers that help at River Bend in a variety of ways. Together, we are able to grow and improve River Bend Nature Center.

Volunteer Naturalists— Do you love telling people about cool things in nature? Then become a Volunteer Naturalist! VolNats help out with school groups, outreach events, and waste education. No previous teaching experience necessary, volunteers will be trained. Help educate young minds!

Trail and Natural Resource Volunteers— We are seeking volunteers to help out with various trail and natural resource projects. See our scheduled stewardship days.

Building Host — We are seeking volunteers to greet visitors in the Interpretive Center, answer questions and phone calls during the week between 8-4:30 PM and on Saturdays from 9-4. If you have availability to help, please contact us!

Cleaner— can include vacuuming, dusting, and cleaning bathrooms.

Photographer— to document special events and programs.

Bird Feeder—fill our bird feeders weekly, includes climbing a ladder to reach the top feeders.

Interpretive Display Volunteer- change out our interpretive displays in the building once a month.

Check out more volunteer opportunities at www.rbnc.org/volunteer. Contact Molly Olson at programs@rbnc.org for more information.

Homeschool Science Days Summer 2019

River Bend Nature Center invites homeschool families and co-ops the opportunity to experience all of the seasons at the nature center. Each seasonal homeschool science day, age-specific educational programs are offered in the morning and one or two age-specific recreational programs are offered in the afternoon. Sign up for one or sign up for them both! We invite you to bring a lunch and enjoy it in the Interpretive Center between programs. Students may be dropped off or parents may attend.

Animal Migrations (ages 3-7), Fri, July 26, 9:30-11am, \$8/student
Animals have made their way back to Minnesota for the summer. Learn about some extreme voyages that animals make, such as the 3,000 mile monarch butterfly migration.

Voyageurs & the Fur Trade (ages 8-14), Fri, July 26, 9:30-11am, \$8/student
Voyageurs come in all shapes and sizes. Experience the thrill of the Fur Trade and the lives of the dedicated voyageurs through games and crafts. Pack your bags and get ready to travel!

Canoeing and Yard Games (ages 6-14), Fri, July 26, 12-2pm, \$15/student
Enjoy a beautiful afternoon canoeing on the Cannon and playing yard games at North Alexander Park. There will be space in River Bend's van (courtesy of Harry Brown's) for up to 13 people, otherwise attendees can meet the staff at North Alexander Park for the program. Pre-registration is required.

Our first Homeschool Science Day of the 2019-2020 school year will be Friday, September 13th.

BUSINESS MEMBERS

For more information on becoming a business member, contact us at rbncinfo@rbnc.org or at 507-332-7151

STAR



FOUNDER



PATRON



ADVOCATE

A&W Restaurant	Anderka Construction	Bauer Restoration, Inc.
Boldt Funeral Home	Cannon River Watershed Partnership	Champion Sport
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Faribault Public Schools	HomeTown Federal Credit Union	Humphrey Manlift Co.
Krause Feeds & Supplies	MN Orienteering Club	Tom's Lock & Key
Tony Langerud Insurance Agency		

Team Building Programs

Looking for a fun way to build team chemistry and productivity in your organization or company? Then book a team building program at River Bend Nature Center. These fun, hands-on programs help teams build stronger relationships, effective communication, and develop problem solving strategies. These skills all lead to better results, job satisfaction, and happy employees. River Bend staff construct a custom program based on your organizational goals. Contact us for more information.

Ground to Air, Animals are Everywhere

By: Brittany Smith, Naturalist/ Program Coordinator

From white-tailed deer to beautiful birds, River Bend Nature Center is home to a wide variety of animals. During the spring and summer months you will notice a wide variety of colorful birds flying about. Some are large birds such as Sandhill cranes and Canada geese, while others are smaller such as bluebirds and finches. If you listen closely, you will also hear the sounds of woodpeckers and maybe even the call of the barred owl. If you have ever visited the "Windows on the Wild" in the Interpretive Center, then you know of all the bird feeders that are present. When full, these feeders attract many colorful birds for visitors to enjoy. A way you can help is by donating a bag of bird seed to help keep the feeders full. This supplements monthly seed donations from Paddington's. You can also volunteer to help keep the bird feeders full.

The spring and summer months are also a great time to see those critters that are at ground level and may be basking in the sun. Yes, I am talking about snakes. Snakes may seem scary to some, but they are an important part of a healthy ecosystem and are simply misunderstood. Don't be surprised to see the common garter snake zooming across the trails or hear them rustle amongst the leaf litter. You might see a little brown fellow slithering through the leaf litter; he's a friend and goes by Dekay's brown snake. If you are lucky, you may spot a redbelly snake making its way through the woodland understory, with its bright red belly as a distinguishing feature. One of the larger snakes you may discover is the western fox snake. They will make their tail vibrate, which makes a rattling noise, mimicking a rattlesnake. Western fox snakes are not venomous and simply use the mimicry as a defense mechanism. *Please respect all nature while visiting River Bend Nature Center, stay on the designated trails, do not harm any plants or animals, and enjoy the sounds of nature.*

Photo credit: MNDNR



Whether you're a parent, child, adult who loves nature, or any combination of these, we invite you to celebrate your birthday at River Bend Nature Center.

A River Bend birthday party includes:

- One hour of naturalist-led activity
 - One hour of building use for a family-led party
- River Bend birthday parties for children include accommodations for up to 15 children with at least one adult. Adult parties can include up to 15 people. Please contact us for prices if you will have more than 15 party guests.

Birthday Party Themes

- **"Wet and Wild" *Late Spring/Summer Theme**
Bring your party guests to play and learn all about water! Meet a water animal and play some water games outside.
- **"Prairie Party" *Spring, Summer, Fall Theme**
Come party in the prairie as we search for prairie animals. You will explore the nature center catching bugs, looking at flowers, and meeting our resident prairie animal, a bull snake.
- **"BIG FOOT" *Winter Theme**
Bring your party guests and learn to snowshoe. You and your friends will snowshoe around River Bend leaving your "BIG FOOT" prints in the snow. (snow dependent)
- **"Who Done It?" *Winter Theme**
Bring your fellow detectives and help the naturalists at River Bend figure out "Who done it?" You will explore the nature center looking at tracks, trails, and other winter animal signs and try to figure out what animal made it.
- **"Scaly Tails" *Year-round Theme**
Bring your friends and meet River Bend's Animal Ambassadors. Meet Fanny the bull snake and Orwin the painted turtle. You will get to learn about them and get a hands on experience with them. After the meet and greet there will be a themed craft.

- **Archery *Spring, Summer, Fall Theme (ages 10+)**
Come learn the fun sport of archery! Practice your skills and play archery games.
- **Geocaching *Spring, Summer, Fall Theme (ages 8+)**
Geocaching is a world-wide treasure hunt! Learn all about this fun game and hunt for the caches hidden at River Bend.

Don't see your interest listed above? Contact us and we'll work with you to create the perfect party!

Please plan to book your party at least two weeks in advance.

News & Notes

Donating your IRA distributions to River Bend Nature Center

Another way to help support the mission of River Bend Nature Center to connect people with nature is to consider a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your traditional or Roth IRA. This can help satisfy required minimum distributions for IRA holders who are age 70 ½ and older without having the distribution included in taxable income. Please contact your financial professional to learn more!

Deep Roots & Strong Wings Prairie Party

On an unseasonably warm June 6 evening, a crowd of about 70 people came together on the lawn outside the Interpretive Center for a dinner and to hear from guest speakers (Aiden Knowles, Michael Hudson Shelton, Natalie Spencer, and John Blackmer) who shared how RBNC has impacted their lives and the community as part of a 40th Anniversary Fundraising Party. Thank you to all who attended and made this a successful fundraiser and to sponsors: Al Brodie, Shattuck-St. Mary's School, and The Appreciative Wolfpack – James, Amy, Laurin & Nelson Wolf.

Key Community Partners Board

Check out the new display just inside the door of the Interpretive Center to learn more about our Key Community Partners. These are individuals, families, and businesses who are some of the largest financial supporters of River Bend Nature Center which allows us to help more people discover, enjoy, understand, and preserve the natural world. Their investments along with the thousands of other smaller scale supporters and volunteers make what we do possible. Thank you all for your support!

Donation Requests

Can you help by providing:

- ◆ Heavy-duty children's winter gloves
- ◆ Children's snow pants
- ◆ Children's snow boots
- ◆ Toilet paper and paper towel tubes
- ◆ Bird seed
- ◆ Marshmallows
- ◆ Fudge striped cookies

Annual Meeting

We will hold our Annual Meeting on July 25, 2019 at 6 PM at **River Bend Nature Center**. The 2018 Annual Report will be released and members will elect new board members.

Board of Directors Seeking New Members – Apply by July 8

Are you passionate about River Bend Nature Center and our mission? Are you willing to bring your skills to help lead the organization and be an ambassador for RBNC in the community? We are seeking applications for members of our Board of Directors. There are one year and three year terms available.

Visit www.rbnc.org to read a complete job description and apply. Interested applicants may also call 507-332-7151 or stop by the Interpretive Center to pick up materials. Applications for the Board must be received by July 8, 2019. New Board members will be elected during RBNC's Annual Meeting on July 25 at 6:00 PM.

MN Master Naturalist Course at RBNC

RBNC has been hosting a Prairies & Potholes biome MN Master Naturalist Course on Saturdays June 1 – July 13 taught by instructors Breanna Wheeler, Carol Trosset, and other guest instructors. There are 13 participants who are learning about the natural and cultural history of prairies in Minnesota with classroom and field lessons on geology, plants, animals, ecology, human interactions/impacts, and water. One component of the class is a capstone project which teams will be presenting to the class and any interested visitors on the morning of July 13 at the Interpretive Center. If you'd like to learn more about the MN Master Naturalist program, please visit <http://www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org/>

Apply by July 19 to be an Environmental Education Intern for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020

Applicants are sought for environmental education internships for Fall 2019 (September – December) and/or Spring 2020 (February – May) and can be tailored to the needs of the applicant. Through the experience, interns will help plan and implement school programs, learn environmental education practices and techniques, work with varying age groups and students of diverse cultures to understand the natural world. In addition, interns will work with volunteers and receive a good introduction into the operation and needs of a nonprofit nature center. Please apply by July 19 at www.rbnc.org

Naturalist Notebook

By: Katy Anderegg, Naturalist/Program Coordinator

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

Sandhill cranes are among the largest birds in North America. You can recognize them from a distance as they are about five feet tall and stand erect. Their feathers are mostly gray with some brown; their face is white with a red crown. Flying gracefully through the air, their wing span is seven feet long. And just as unforgettable is their echoing song of kar-r-r-r-o-o-o. Sandhill cranes are migratory birds that fly south for the winter making parts of Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico and Mexico their home. Flying north in the spring, over a quarter million birds make their stop on the Platte River in Nebraska, making this a must see wildlife spectacle. They continue to fly north until they reach their breeding grounds in parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, and Canada. Populations from Florida, Mississippi and Cuba do not migrate.

Courtship consists of a male and female performing a "dance" together with each spreading its wings and leaping into the air while singing. Sandhill cranes build their nests on or near shallow water using the vegetation nearby. Eggs are usually laid in pairs, but will sometimes be one or even three. Baby Sandhill cranes are pale olive to buff with brown or gray markings. They are quick to leave the nest, usually a day after hatching, but will stay with their parents for the first ten months of life, migrating with them. Marshes are the most common habitat you'll find Sandhill cranes, but they will also live in prairies, fields and river valleys surrounded by forests. Being omnivores, they will eat insects, aquatic plants including berries and seeds, rodents, snails, frogs, lizards, and snakes depending on where they live and what time of year it is.

Sandhill cranes have very few predators that will take them on, however; a Great horned owl may try to catch a baby bird. With having very few predators, populations are doing well, but they are at risk for losing their habitats due to land development. The concern lies along their migratory routes and the stops they make along the way. Land is becoming more fragmented every year, making it harder for these majestic birds to fly the distance they need between their nesting and summer grounds.

A pair of Sandhill cranes was spotted at River Bend Nature Center at the end of May and early June. They were heard singing, viewed flying and walking on the hillside of the prairie.

