



River Bend

NATURE CENTER

Fall 2023, Volume 45, Issue 4
OCTOBER . NOVEMBER . DECEMBER

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

Upcoming Nature Programs



OCTOBER

Oct 7 - Bagels and Birds
Oct 7 - Nature Notebook
Oct 9 - Little Sprouts colors, shapes, & textures
Oct 9 - Homeschool: Birds from Beak to tailfeather
Oct 17 - Stewardship Day: Buckthorn
Oct 18 - Lunch & Learn: Butternut Canker
Oct 21 - Stewardship Day: Buckthorn
Oct 23 - Little Sprouts Colorful Leaves
Oct 28 - Bats, Bones and Bonfires

NOVEMBER

Nov 4 - Bagels and Birds
Nov 4 - Storytime with a Naturalist
Nov 13 - Little Sprouts Rocks, Rock!
Nov 13 - Homeschool: Orienteering
Nov 15 - Lunch & Learn: Squirrels
Nov 18 - Trash to Art
Nov 27 - Little Sprouts Clouds and Weather

DECEMBER

Dec 2 - Bagels and Birds
Dec 2 - Storytime with a Naturalist
Dec 4 - Little Sprouts Animals of Minnesota
Dec 11 - Homeschool Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
Dec 16 - Storytime with a Naturalist

SAVE THE DATE

JANUARY 25

Full Moon Luminary Snowshoe Hike

FEBRUARY 15

Full Moon Luminary Snowshoe Hike

MAY 4

Maple Syrup Fun Run & Pancake Breakfast



2024 PHOTO

CALENDAR CONTEST

Thank you to everyone that participated in our 2024 photo calendar contest. Winners have been selected and notified. Please join us at Bats, Bones and Bonfires, Saturday, October 28th from 2:00-5:00 pm for the announcement and release of the calendar. Calendars will be sold for \$20.00. Proceeds will go directly to River Bend Nature Center to fund our programs. All photo entries will be on display for public viewing. After the event, calendars will be sold in our gift shop.

River Bend Nature Center

1000 Rustad Rd - PO Box 186
Faribault, MN 55021

Trail Hours: 6am - 10pm

Building Hours: Fridays 10am - 4pm
1st and 3rd Saturdays 10am - 2pm

Board of Directors

Dustin Dienst, *President*

Patrick Mader, *Vice-President*

Karen Zeller, *Treasurer*

Tom DeMatteo, *Secretary*

Tom Spooner, *City Council Liaison*

Cindy DeSormeau, Sarah Hammer,

Erica Jakes, Nort Johnson, Abby Malmanger,

Patrick Schaefer, Greg Simons

Staff

Executive Director

Brad Bourn

Associate Directors

Brittany Smith, Environmental Stewardship

Molly Dulka, Programs & Engagement

Katy Anderegg, Administration

Program Coordinators

Erin Tone & Matt Johnson

Naturalists

Kate Ford, Leah Inman, Sydney Monge,
& Mary Lu Kavanagh-Beltman

Climate Impact Corps Members

Julia Gates, Dan Heinen, Caitlin Juvland,
Randall McMeekin, Dennis Wilcox

In This Issue

Upcoming Programs	1
Bats, Bones & Bonfires	2
Director's Desk	3
Conservation Corner	4-5
Story Spotlight	6
Blast from the Past	7
Naturalist Notebook	8
Business Members	10
Maple Syrup Fun Run, Depot Drink	12

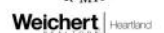
BATS, BONES & BONFIRES

Saturday, October 28
2:00-5:00 PM

Fun for the whole family!
Goody Bags, Games, Wagon Rides,
S'mores, Caramel Apple Bar & More!
\$10/ Member Family
\$15/ Non-member Family



Thank You Sponsors!



Director's Desk

Brad Bourn, Executive Director

Changing Seasons at River Bend

As we move into a changing season at River Bend we say goodbye to some things and hello to others.

I wanted to start this letter by giving a special thank you and goodbye to two important River Bend team members, Zach McCarthy and Erin Tone.

Zach joined us at River Bend for a year of service through the Minnesota GreenCorps, an AmeriCorps program sponsored by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Zach's year of service included providing environmental and waste reduction education throughout Rice County. My fondest memory of Zach was being elbow deep with him in open chocolate milk containers and half eaten spaghetti meals as I had the opportunity to help him conduct a food waste audit in a nearby school. Zach contributed so much over his year of service to help people in the community make more environmentally friendly choices and he will be missed.

Erin Tone started at River Bend just a few weeks after I started as executive director. As a former public school teacher, Erin breathed life into so many of our school programs and always conveys a positive and infectious excitement for our work. My favorite memory of Erin was watching her lead a group of elementary students and seeing her help a child put on a plant costume to help him and his classmates understand the differences between plants and animals. While Erin was only with River Bend for a year, her impact will be felt much longer. We're excited for Erin's next venture as Outreach Programs Manager at the Lake Superior Zoo in Duluth.

While it's hard to say goodbye to such dedicated team members, I'm also so pleased to be welcoming new team members to River Bend. This year we were joined by six youth employees who spent the summer with us learning important conservation skills and thanks in part to grants from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and Union Pacific, we'll be able to continue providing advanced job training in conservation for some

of these same youth through the fall and beyond.

In addition to our youth employees, River Bend was also selected to be a host site for five full-time AmeriCorps members through Ampact's Forestry Corps for the 2023-24 service year. Caitlin Juvland, Dan Heinen, Randy McKeekin, Julia Gates, and Dennis Wilcox will all be serving at River Bend in full-time AmeriCorps positions and greatly expand our capacity to care for our forests and natural areas. I'm so excited to see the work they do over the next year!

River Bend has been growing rapidly over the past year or so in programming. We have expanded our traditional science standards based programming through 8th grade. We are starting to build a larger portfolio of science field trips to offer high schools. We've seen school groups travel further than ever before this year (from Blue Earth) and have larger groups visiting us. Beyond these traditional field trips, we have quite a few other programs/initiatives we are working on!

Thank you to all of the employees, AmeriCorps members, and volunteers who make River Bend's work possible. As you see one of our departing or new team members at the interpretive center or on the trails, be sure to thank them for their work. You can also help support their important work by remembering to include River Bend in your end of year giving plans. You can learn more about our staff's incredible work and how you can support it by visiting RBNC.org.



Conservation Corner

Brittany Smith, Associate Director of Environmental Stewardship

As summer comes to an end and the crisp colorful days of fall are upon us, there is a lot happening at River Bend.

On Friday, September 8, River Bend was a host site for Xcel Energy's Day of Service event. Fifteen Xcel Energy employees took time out of their day to remove buckthorn at River Bend. In a matter of a few hours they cleared about ¾ of an acre of dense buckthorn. Xcel Energy has been and continues to be a partner and supporter of River Bend's mission by providing volunteer opportunities to their employees as well as grant funding through the Xcel Energy Foundation community giving program. THANK YOU!



River Bend is thrilled to serve as a 2023/2024 host site for five AmeriCorps Members serving through Ampact Climate Impact Corps. These members will spend their service time helping to expand River Bend's capacity in education, outreach, and projects around climate change. Please join me in giving these members a warm River Bend Welcome as they serve the next year here!

Climate Impact Corps: Community Forestry Members

Julia Gates

I grew up in Memphis, TN, but have lived in Minnesota for about 10 years. Rocks, specifically Peach Moonstone & Red Jasper, are my favorite part of life and River Bend Nature Center. When I'm not digging for rocks, I'm making jewelry with them. I am the



artist/owner of CrystalsnJules where I make the signature crystal squiggle earrings and other crystal pieces. I chose to serve with AmeriCorps to mitigate climate change with a strong passion for tree conservation. With Ampact I feel incredibly motivated to fulfill the demands of our planet.

Favorite Animal: Deer

Favorite Book: The Lunar Chronicles

Dan Heinen

Dan grew up in Saint Cloud, Minnesota, where he spent a lot of time outdoors on his grandparents' farm. He attended Minnesota State University, Mankato, and graduated with a degree in aviation and history. He has worked for his local historical society and flies occasionally, but conservation with Climate Impact Corps is relatively new to him! He hopes to combine his interests in aviation and conservation into a unique career path, and he intends to learn more about conservation and forestry while serving at River Bend Nature Center.

Favorite Animal: Capybara

Favorite Book: All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque



Randy McMeekin

Randy is serving his second Community Forestry Corps term at River Bend. Randy describes himself as an "art nerd and nature fan".

Favorite Animal: Red Panda

Favorite Books: The "Discworld" series



Conservation Corner

Climate Impact Corps: Community Stewardship Facilitators

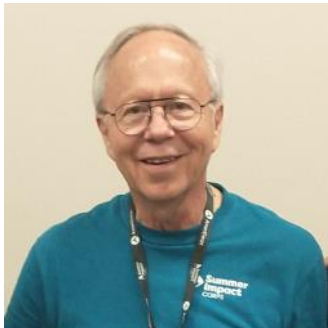
Caitlin Juvland

Caitlin attended the camps at River Bend when she was a kid and loves to spend her free time walking the trails. She has a background in creative writing, filmmaking, and has worked as a reading and writing tutor. She is most excited to learn more about environmental education during her Ampact service. Favorite Animal: Raccoon Favorite Book: Women's Bodies Women's Wisdom by Christiane Northrup M.D.



Dennis Wilcox

Dennis is an environmental scientist and a professional writer, filmmaker, and teacher. He applies his background and experience to successfully participate in and complete environmental initiatives and projects. Most recently he became a Minnesota Master Naturalist which includes training as a naturalist instructor. Dennis volunteers at River Bend and this year completed training as a Northfield Recycling and Composting Ambassador, a joint program of River Bend, the City of Northfield, and Carleton College. This is his second AmeriCorp position in climate and environmental action work on assignment with Ampact, having completed the other this summer with the Community Action Center of Northfield and Faribault. As a Community Stewardship Facilitator his goal is to continue his education and service in climate resilience and environmental citizen action to strengthen community awareness of these issues and contribute to putting into action the concept of Think



Globally, Act Locally.

Favorite Animal: Bear

Favorite Book: The Plague by Albert Camus.

Archery Only Deer Management Hunt

River Bend is hosting an archery only deer management hunt starting **Thursday, November 9 through Sunday, November 12**. During this time all parts of **River Bend will be CLOSED, this includes all parking lots, trails, and buildings; only selected hunters will be allowed**. This is for the safety of all. River Bend conducts these management hunts typically every other year to maintain a healthy deer population. Without this hunt the deer population would become too large for the area and there would not be enough resources to sustain the herd. Healthy deer populations also reduce the spread of diseases, like Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) which has been found in surrounding areas of Faribault.



Cross Country Skiing and Trail Grooming

As we pass through fall and round the corner into winter, ski season will be in full swing. River Bend has seven miles of groomed cross country ski trails that are made possible through the hard work and dedication of volunteers. If you are interested in becoming part of the ski grooming team please reach out. Volunteers must be willing and able to help with the fall prep work (clearing trails, cutting back brush, equipment maintenance), grooming after snowfalls and as needed, as well as end of season clean up and equipment maintenance.

River Bend's cross country ski trails are also part of the Grant-in-Aid program through the MN Department of Natural Resources, which means a MN Ski Pass is **REQUIRED** to ski the trails. Passes can be purchased through the MN DNR website or and participating gas stations and bait shops where hunting and fishing licenses are sold. **River Bend Does Not Sell Ski Passes.**

There are many things happening at River Bend and just as busy as summer was, the fall and winter are just as busy. Thank you for your continued support of River Bend Nature Center!

Erin Tone, Programs and Engagement Coordinator

Sharing the knowledge of nature, being a Volunteer Naturalist

River Bend Nature Center is very fortunate to have a number of highly dedicated volunteers and one of the special groups is our Volunteer Naturalists, affectionately called the VolNats. River Bend contracts with Faribault Public Schools to provide field trips to Faribault students Pre-K through 6th grade, running over 100 school field trips and seeing more than 1500 learners each school year. Through snow, rain, and hot days in the prairie, our VolNats share their time, enthusiasm, knowledge, and passion to help each and every learner who joins us to have a meaningful experience in nature. Our current Volnats are Sue Coleman, Holly Fischer, Diana Hering, Jan Mitchell, and Larry Vorwerk.

Sue Coleman, on why she chose to be a Volnat:

"...While I love all of Minnesota's nature areas, I feel River Bend Nature Center is unique. The local community supports RBNC in a way I have not seen elsewhere. They see it as their nature center... When students come to learn about nature directly in nature, they almost always share things they remember learning or experiencing from other school trips or with their families. This summer, while I was volunteering at the front desk, different groups came in with a former student now in their 20's or 30's. I heard statements like 'I had to show my boyfriend where I learned about nature going to school' or 'I came here every year I was in school.' They said it with such pride. Understanding how we are a part of nature, not separate from it, will help make all of us better stewards of the earth. I hope I can be a part of developing nature lovers of the next generation with my work as a volunteer naturalist."

Diana Hering on being a Volnat:

"I've enjoyed learning about and experiencing nature throughout my life, so becoming a River Bend volunteer naturalist appealed to me. It's especially enjoyable to introduce young children to the natural world and be able to experience their excitement and enthusiasm for

discoveries! It's important to teach children how to slow down and learn to observe their surroundings by using their five senses (see, hear, touch, smell, and taste); it's very rewarding to see their observation skills improve with each River Bend visit."

Larry Vorwerk, on the importance of nature education and his memories of being a Volnat:

"My favorite thing to teach is the interconnection of all of nature. I love trees and plants, animals and wildlife. What always endears me is how all of nature is interactive and connected to each other. I try to get that idea across to kids. I enjoy that while teaching, there may be a specific theme that you're teaching, but in nature, things pop up, so you can ad-lib and share knowledge. I enjoy being around little kids and like their enthusiasm and energy. I have a number of memories from being a Volnat, but I'll share one cute one. A while back I was teaching a group of kindergarteners or preschoolers. We were walking along and I was pointing out different things and one little girl kept really close to me, holding my hand. Finally, after a little while, she looked up and said 'I'm going to stick close to you because you are smart!' You never know when you are going to impress some little kid and how that might change their life."

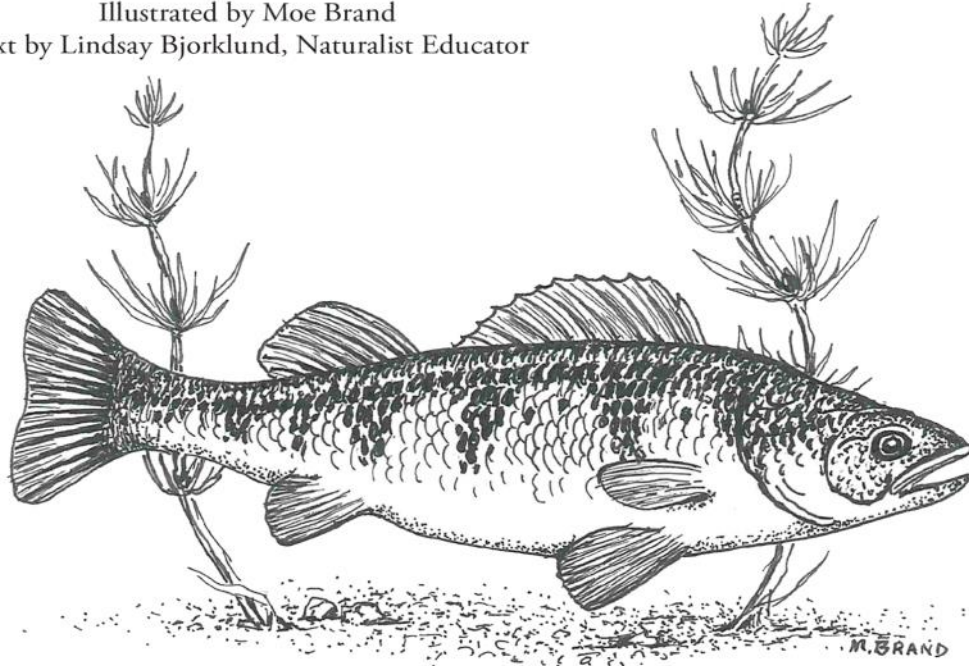


Volnats, Janet Mitchell (left) and Holly Fischer (right) teach learners about prairie seeds, adaptations and tree identification.

Naturalist Notebook

Illustrated by Moe Brand

Text by Lindsay Bjorklund, Naturalist Educator



Yellow Perch

Perca flavescens

The yellow perch is a very common fish species in Minnesota lakes and rivers. Its scientific name is *Perca flavescens*: “perca” is the Greek word for perch, and “flavescens” means “becoming gold” in Latin. Perch are yellow to gold colored with 5 to 9 olive green bars on each side of its body. Adults are typically 4 to 11 inches long and have an oval, oblong shape. Another distinguishing feature is a dorsal fin that is completely divided into a spiny portion and a soft-rayed portion.

Perch have a unique form of reproduction in that the females lay their eggs in a long, gelatinous strand. This egg strand either attaches itself to aquatic vegetation or settles on the bottom of the lake or river where up to five males will fertilize it. These egg strands can be up to six feet long!

The preferred habitat of perch is the littoral zone (the

shallow area close to the shore) of lakes, however they can be found in small rivers and streams. In rivers, they only frequent pools, slow moving shallow areas, or areas with moderate vegetative habitat. They usually eat insects, invertebrates such as crayfish, fish eggs, and other small fish. Perch are preyed upon by walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass, as well as other larger fish. Therefore, a healthy population of perch is crucial for the survival of these other popular angling fish.

Perch are a fairly desirable fish for anglers because they are both easy to catch and great to eat, tasting similar to their cousin, the walleye. However, perch are often too small to keep or eat. Large perch are called “jumbo perch” and are very popular with anglers. The largest yellow perch caught in Minnesota was three pounds four ounces!

Matt Johnson, Environmental Stewardship Coordinator

The Colors of Autumn

The beauty of fall is unmistakably tied to the wonderful displays of changing colors. What was once a sea of green, transforms into a collage of reds, yellows, oranges and everything in between. So why do plants go through this brief and dramatic change? Much of the answer can be explained at the cellular level, with many complex interactions happening this time of year. There are also several other factors that can alter what we see from year to year, such as drought or unseasonably warm or cool conditions.

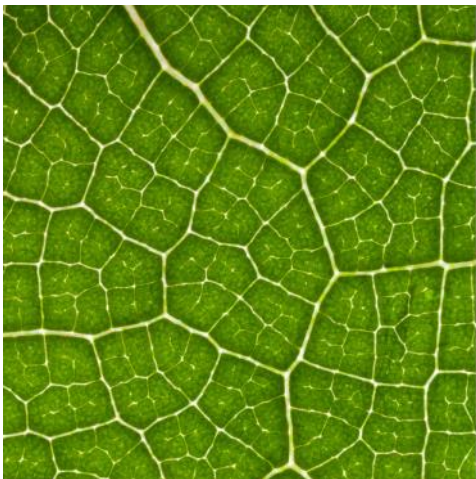
To understand why leaves turn color, we must first understand why they are green to begin with. The presence of chlorophyll, which appears as a green pigment to the human eye, is vital in the process of photosynthesis. This process allows for plants to capture sunlight and convert it to usable sugars that provide energy. During a plant's growing season, this process is constantly happening, which results in visibly green leaves. However, when daylight hours begin to shorten and deciduous plants prepare for dormancy, this process slows and eventually stops altogether. The absence of chlorophyll then reveals the hidden colors that we associate with fall.

So why do fall colors vary so much from tree to tree? The occurrence of certain types of pigments is responsible for this diversity. The first of these pigments are known as carotenoids. These pigments are responsible for the yellows and oranges that we often see in many trees such as aspen, basswood, ironwood,

and hickory. The other major group of pigments that influence fall colors are called anthocyanins. The brilliant reds and purples we see are a result of these late forming pigments that develop in the summer and into fall. Oaks, maples, and dogwoods are easily seen examples of plants that contain high levels of anthocyanins. Many trees will contain significant amounts of both of these pigments, which results in a blend of colors, often even on the same leaf.

If you've spent time seeking out fall foliage, you have likely noticed that no year is quite the same as those that have come before. Numerous factors affect both what we see and how much time we have to see it. The occurrence of drought is often responsible for less vivid colors and a shorter window to enjoy peak colors. Severe drought can even stress a tree to the point where it will begin to turn in late summer in an attempt to go dormant early. Along with moisture, extreme temperatures also play a significant role. A warm autumn will often push back peak colors later than usual, while a cold snap can make trees drop leaves earlier than expected.

As you get outside and enjoy the beauty of fall, remember that what you're seeing is influenced by a variety of factors. Stop and observe the variety of colors that seemingly change overnight. Compare what you are seeing this year to last year and consider what it might mean. By enjoying the colors of autumn, we can learn so much.



Business Members

Star Members

Faribault Rotary Youth Services, Inc.



Wellness Members



Patron Members

Erickson Furniture . Faribault Area Retired Educators

Mercury Minnesota . Schroder Concessions

Sertoma Club of Faribault

Founder Members

Faribault Flyers Bike & Ski Club



Advocate Members

Anderka Construction . Community Co-op . Comprehensive Wealth Solutions, LLC . Country School Financial

Donahue's Greenhouse . Faribault Animal Center . Faribault Rental Equipment, Inc.

Faribault Transportation Co. . Faribo Sno-Go Club . Frandsen Bank & Trust . Glenn's Service & Towing .

HomeTown Credit Union . Krause Feeds & Supplies . Mill Town Cycles . Quality Appliance . Tom's Lock & Key

Thank you business members for your support!

Enroll in River Bend's Business Wellness Membership

River Bend Nature Center's wellness program can be an essential part of helping your employees live a healthy life. When you join our wellness program today, your employees will receive membership perks and more! Contact Brad Bourn (bourn@rbnc.org) or Katy Anderegg (anderegg@rbnc.org) to discuss perks and enrollment.

	Bluebird	Heron	Owl
Small Employer (0-10 employees)	\$500	\$1000	\$2000
Medium Employer (11-49 employees)	\$1500	\$2500	\$3500
Large Employer (50-99 employees)	\$3000	\$4000	\$5000
Regional Employer (100+ employees or franchises, etc.)	Contact us to discuss pricing and benefits	Contact us to discuss pricing and benefits	Contact us to discuss pricing and benefits



River Bend NATURE CENTER

PO Box 186
1000 Rustad Rd
Faribault, MN
55021
507.332.7151
www.rbnc.org

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Faribault, MN
Permit #35

Return Service Requested



A unique collaboration between River Bend Nature Center (RBNC) and The Depot Bar and Grill has produced a special drink, perfect for the season. **“Love and Maple Syrup”** uses the award-winning maple syrup collected and made at RBNC each fall, The Depot’s own Rock Island Root Beer and a Little Rum too. A dollar from every drink sold will go back to RBNC. \$10.00 (While supplies last)

Registration is now open!



MAPLE SYRUP FUN RUN *Pancake Breakfast*

May 4, 2024 . Faribault, Minnesota
One Mile, 5K, 10K, 25K, 50K

Chip timing by Anderson Race Management!

Early Bird Registration Ends March 31st!

www.rbnc.org/fun-run