



Great
Rivers

Missouri Master
Naturalist

Great Rivers Gazette



TM

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*Monarch Way Station
Bayless Elementary School
Page 8*

*Milkweed for Monarchs
Page 13*

Great Rivers Gazette

Summer - Fall 2015

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Contents

The Presidents Corner	2
Wistfull About the Seasons	3
Update on McDonnell Pairie	4
Recognition of Work at Claire Gempp Davidson CA	5
A Case for Pussytoes	6
Member Michael Meridith	7
New Monarch Butterfly Garden Bayless Elem School	8
An Evening on the Prairie	10
Mushroom Walk at the Horton's	12
Milkweed for Monarchs	13

Front Cover See Bayless Monarch Waystatie
Back Cover Prairie at McDonnell County Park

The Missouri Master Naturalist™ program is a community-based natural resource education and volunteer service program for adults, sponsored by the **Missouri Department of Conservation** and the **University of Missouri Extension**.



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The President's Corner

Do you recall the 70 degree days we had back in February? Weren't they wonderful? Our Ozark witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) shot out its flowers in a bright yellow and red welcome mat. Sure enough. When I approached for a closer look, small flies were pollinating. Where did they come from? I wondered.

And, that's something of the way I feel about Missouri Master Naturalist activities this time of year. Where do they all come from? All through February, there's been plenty to kill out at Shaw Nature Reserve in Gray Summit. Multiflora rose, privet, bush honeysuckle. Several of us have been working to finish mending mist nets for the bird banders to reclaim and put in use in April. Carolyn, do you remember the net that had a hole too big for your table? Al and I strung it from one end of our home to the other, carefully draping it over pictures along the hall. I discovered it was a rip, a tear. It wasn't a hole after all. That was the good news. It was roughly twenty feet long!

We've been pulling up Wintercreeper in the Greenbrier common grounds off Big Bend. That soil has been blanketed with leaves year after year. You can shove your fingers into the dirt. It's that loamy! That's what organic soil should be! The Wintercreeper is happy to yield! I've already visited two private properties and written reports suggesting the introduction of native plants habitat by habitat for St. Louis Audubon Society's Bring Conservation Home program. Those are always slower to write after the winter's hiatus.

The chloride in the Grand Glaize Creek's site near HWY 100 and Sulphur Springs reached just over 2000 ppm a few weeks ago and has steadily declined. I'll have one more Sunday reading to take before I turn them all in.

We have so many wonderful projects! Remember these volunteer projects don't just manifest themselves on the calendar. Each one of them started with just a single idea from one of you. Let's keep that in mind and instill the creative juices in all of us. I always like to say our chapter's activities are a smorgasbord of adventure. Will you start the next expedition?

Cori Westcott, President Great Rivers Chapter

Chapter Officers

President	Coralynne Westcott	Board Member-at-Large	Cindy Lueder
Vice President	Shawn Thomason	Board Member-at-Large	William Hoss
Secretary	Diana Miller	Board Member-at-Large	Sherri Schmidt
Treasurer	Barbra Stephenson		

Wistful About the Seasons....again....

By Marcia Wilderman

I am wistful about the change of the seasons again. When I sit outside at night and listen to the cicadas knowing I have only a few weeks left of their song, I am reminded of how the geese will be calling above as they fly south. The last of the cucumbers have been picked and the days are getting shorter. Just a short time ago I was putting my sweaters away! Oh how the seasons have a grip on our state of mind. I am reminded of the transcendentalists' vision of nature and the soul as inextricably linked:

Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, Note from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough Definition, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity

reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, -- no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.

Excerpt from Nature
by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson always equated a sense of being alive with growing and learning; state of mind and receptiveness being far more important than age. I am of the same mind. I see now that it is true that time flies by quicker as we grow older. But as long as I am learning, each day and season is full of newness. I am grateful for what I learn through my fellow Master Naturalists, my participation in the training, the activities, and the vast information I have yet to learn. And I know that no matter how fast time goes by, there will always be honeysuckle to hack.

Eagle Days at Chain of Rocks Bridge

Pam Wilcox

Every year the Great Rivers Chapter steps up to volunteer at MDC's Eagle Days at the Chain of Rocks bridge. This year was no exception. The volunteers pictured above assisted with St. Louis City and Illinois school groups during the three weekday event. Others from the chapter Kathleen Kapayou, Renee Benage, and Mary Mierkowski participated in the two day public portion. As usual we had every type of weather you can imagine, from near 70 to 10 degrees. As yearly volunteers we've seen it all, but we continue to sign up despite the crazy weather. Seeing the smiles on the children's faces when they see their first live Eagle makes it all worth it.

Above Left - Veteran Eagle Days favorite, Patriot, shows off her stuff

Left - The Great Rivers was well represented at the 2016 Eagle Days school program event. Pictured are members John Vandover, Vaughn Meister, Pam Wilcox, Michael Meredith, and Bob Virag.



Update on McDonnell Park Prairie. Project Shawn Thomason

In November of 2015 Great Rivers Master Naturalists sowed approximately 20lbs of seed containing 40 different species of native grasses and forbs. The plan for 2016 is to maintain the prairie at a much shorter level (approximately 1 foot in height) to allow the new seedlings adequate sunlight while they get established and ready to compete with the existing prairie forbs. While the prairie is kept short the chapter will remain diligent in its efforts to identify and remove invasive plants such as Crown Vetch and Sercia Lespedeza. The hope is that eventually the prairie will provide the chapter with a large diverse source of native seed in addition to providing habitat for pollinators and birds.

In March chapter members will also install Bluebird and Screech Owl houses in and around the prairie and these will be monitored by Great Rivers member, Brenda

2016 will also see additional seeding along the woodland edge with savanna species. The prairie was included as one of the projects in the MDC Community Stewardship grant submitted by Missourians for Monarchs and will receive equipment and additional seed in the Fall. There will be much work performed before then to remove honeysuckle and prepare these areas.



Left - Ohio Horsement blooming in the prairie. How many other plants can you identify?
Cindy Lueder photo

Bottom Right Park volunteer Tom Hull and Great Rivers member Eileen Hall planting are also engaged in planting.
Shawn Thomason photos

Top Right - Chapter member Mary Mierkowski planting Milkweed on the edge of the Prairie.

Recognition of Great Rivers Chapter Work at Claire Gempp Davidson CA

I would like to commend two members of the Great Rivers MMN chapter for the work they've done at the Claire Gempp Davidson Memorial Wildlife Area. Sherri Schmidt and Bill Hoss have done a tremendous job developing and improving habitat at that site. Gempp is a 13.5 acre area that is owned by MDC and leased to the City of Sunset Hills for conservation education. A variety of habitats have been created and manipulated there to educate the public and school groups that use it. There is a pond, several prairie communities, a butterfly garden, forest stand improvement work, and several student projects on the area. There is a trail that runs through the various habitats and a small gazebo for people to gather or rest.

Sherri and Bill approached Gerald Brown (City of Sunset Hills Director of Parks and Recreation) and myself to ask if they could work on habitat projects on the area. They created plant lists from an existing but degraded butterfly garden by consulting with Scott Woodbury from Shaw Nature Reserve. They then improved it by removing aggressive, undesired, and invasive plants and adding diversity with additional species.

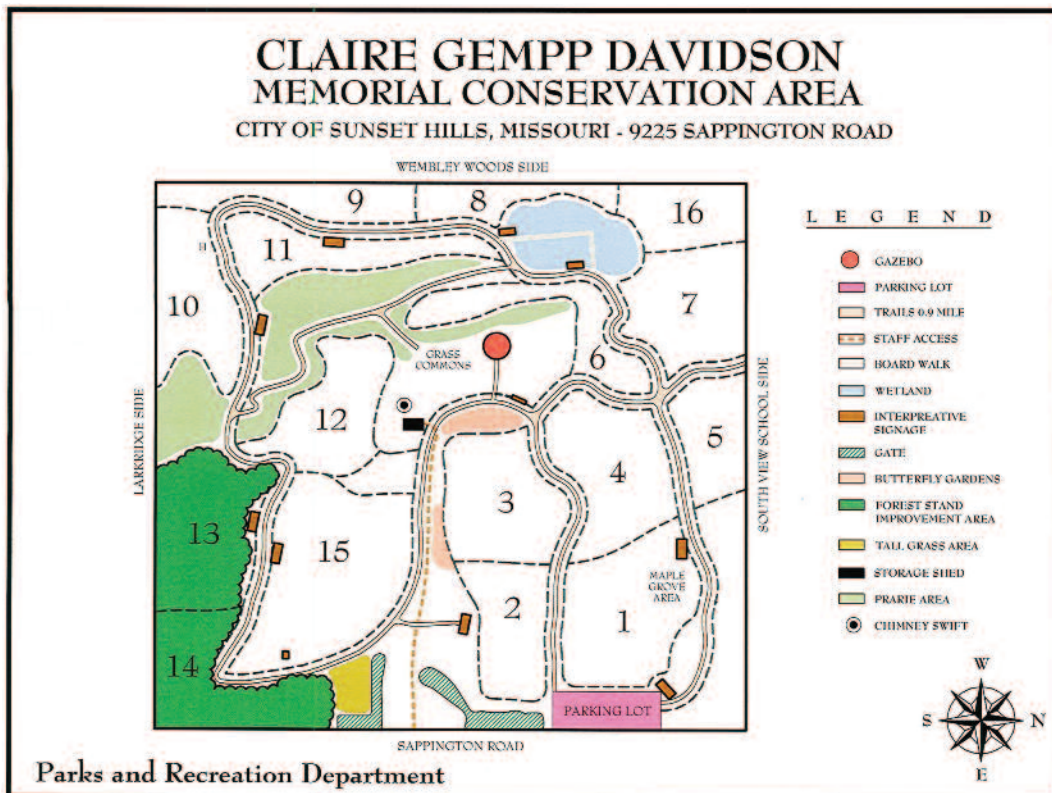
They came up with a planting plan for the front gate to add "curb appeal" using native species to benefit wildlife. They did research to make sure the plants they

were using were appropriate for the area, and worked with the parks department staff to prep the site before planting. Once some of the work was completed, they met with management staff on site to show us everything they'd done and take comments. They did fantastic work and we are excited to watch the garden grow.

Bill and Sherri also noticed some bluebells blooming in the woods and asked if they could do some clearing around them to help them prosper.

These two make a great team and are a pleasure to work with. I appreciate not only their willingness to help, but also to work through our management process. They submit their ideas in a proposal to MDC and Sunset Hills. Once approved, they work with staff to make sure their work stays within the scope of what was approved, and they educate themselves to provide the most benefit to the projects at hand. With the limited resources that are available for the management of the property, we are fortunate to have Sherri and Bill's initiative to develop and improve habitats there. I look forward to a continuing relationship with them.

Sincerely,
 Tamie M. Yegge
 Powder Valley Nature Center Manager



A Case for Pussytoes

By Dawn Weber

Pussytoes are native, low-growing, silvery green groundcover, with understated spring blooms that have a resemblance to the soft pads of a cat's paw. Field or prairie pussytoes (*antennarianeglecta*), are native to the north east and north central US as well as much of Canada. Just a few inches tall, they appreciate full sun to light shade, and dry to average soil.

Without a doubt, there are showier native plants. So why make room in your garden for this unassuming little plant? Because pussytoes are one of the host plants for the American Lady butterfly. Tiny just-hatched caterpillars cannot travel very far, so the female butterfly lays her eggs on a plant - the host plant - that the new caterpillars can use as food to grow. American lady butterflies need pussytoes.

One Saturday morning while I was standing in kitchen, I noticed a butterfly moving around my new sunny garden bed. Grabbing my always-ready camera from the kitchen counter, I went outside to see what it was. After observing for a few minutes and consulting my field guide, I discovered that it was an American Lady butterfly who found the pussytoes that I planted. For several minutes I watched her select a leaf, lay an egg on the top of the leaf, float away, come back, choose a new leaf, and lay another egg. I only had the opportunity to

witness this amazing event because I planted what she was looking for. It was totally worth the bug bites I got sitting in the grass watching her!

Nectar plants are important food for adult butterflies, but host plants are the key to supporting the species. When you choose plants for your garden, be sure to include host plants so that you support the entire life cycle of the butterfly.

MOBOT has a good fact sheet for local butterfly species and their host plants: <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Portals/0/Gardening/Gardening%20Help/Fact-sheets/Butterfly%20Gardening4.pdf>

*Dawn Weber is the proud recipient of St. Louis's **Wild Ones** 2013 Landscape Challenge. That same year, she received a visit and a report from St. Louis Audubon Society's Bring Conservation Home (BCH) Habitat Advisors. They encouraged her to join their efforts. BCH is privileged to have Dawn on their Habitat Advisor roster. Her home is now home to untold Missouri flora and fauna. Now, we all benefit from her passion for nature.*

Reprinted from Bring Conservation Home's Floral/Fauna Connections Corner



Great Rivers Member *Michael Meridith*

Hello... my name is Michael, and I'm a honeysuckle-holic.

Yes, I'm one of those demented souls that actually likes spending a Saturday morning cutting, pulling and spraying bush honeysuckle. I come by my distaste for honeysuckle honestly after 15 years of cursing the honeysuckle every time I approached it with the lawn mower. Finally I attacked the stuff; filling two large trucks with the remains to haul away. By the next year, I was astounded at the plant life that reemerged from the area previously occupied by the nasty stuff.

It was a couple years later, when I began my Missouri Master Naturalist experience, that I began to learn about the extent of the honeysuckle problem in our region. I come by my distaste for honeysuckle honestly, after 15 years of cursing the stuff in my backyard every time I approached it with the lawnmower.

We joke about honeysuckle hacking projects, but the truth is that I rather enjoy them. Each plant becomes a metaphor for every evil (in my eyes) political office holder or group that I disagree with. Cutting, pulling and spraying it does wonders for my temperament and probably enables me to mingle in polite society without erupting into an impassioned rant about something political. Even more so, when I'm out in the woods or fields, and when things are done, I can look back and

see that we've made a positive difference in the landscape.

My Missouri Master Naturalist experience far exceeds honeysuckle eradication. There have been planting projects, native garden building, trail building, wetlands restoration, trash removal, educational projects and even an elk calf roundup at Peck Ranch. But by far, my most favorite event remains the annual Eagle Days experience on the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge. Nothing can compare with watching a child or adult peering into a spotting scope and seeing their first close-up of an American Bald Eagle out in the open. It warms your heart in ways that you might not otherwise imagine.

I'm in my eighth year as a Missouri Master Naturalist and member of Great Rivers, and I can't imagine how my life would be without this fantastic outlet for service and learning. It might be an indication of my affection for the program that I can honestly recall the moment that I first became aware of it. I was on a plane, flying to Houston and browsing through a copy of Missouri Conservationist. There was a one page article about a group of MMNs participating in a cleanup along the Mississippi, and the photo just resonated with me. At my first opportunity, I fired off an email to Scott Kilpack requesting information on the next scheduled new member class. And from there an obsession started to build.

Death to honeysuckle!



Tree removal in wetlands at Little Creve Coeur Lake.

St. Louis Audubon

New Monarch Butterfly Garden at Bayless Elementary School

By Sherrie Schmidt

I volunteer as a reading tutor at Bayless Elementary School. During the January 2015 volunteer meeting, when a facilitator described a lesson plan featuring the Monarch Butterfly and its lifecycle, I suggest creating a Monarch Butterfly habitat at the school. Not only would the habitat benefit the butterflies, it would also provide Bayless school children better opportunities to observe Monarchs in all stages of their lives. The habitat would offer living examples of native host and nectar plants that people could plant in their gardens to help Monarchs.

After creating a proposal describing the project and its benefits, the head of the tutoring program and I met with the principal and assistant principal in late winter, and the project was approved. Due to construction at the school, there were few undisturbed areas suitable for the Monarch habitat. So, we agreed to convert a small existing flower garden at the front of the school, and plant the following Monarch host and nectar plants:

- Butterfly Weed (host plant) - 3 plants
- Swamp Milkweed (host plant) - 2 plants
- Aromatic Aster (nectar plant) - 1 plant
- Bee Balm (nectar plant) - 2 plants
- Blazing Star (nectar plant) - 2 plants
- New England Aster (nectar plant) - 1 plant

The Monarch host and nectar plants were installed the second weekend in May. One of the teachers had planted other flowers, but the wildflowers fit in among the existing plants. The mix of plants offered another educational aspect - when the plants were blooming, the native plants had many insect visitors, while the non-natives had few or none. Over the summer the Bee Balms, Blazing Stars, Butterfly Weeds and Swamp Milkweeds bloomed and attracted Honey Bees and Bumble Bees. However, of the 5 milkweeds planted in the garden, only 3 survived. I hoped the children would be able to observe at least one Monarch caterpillar when they returned for the fall school session. However, right before Labor Day, I discovered 8 Monarch caterpillars on the surviving Swamp Milkweed! Several of the caterpillars appeared to be 5th instars. Over the next few days I was able to observe two of the caterpillars in the 'J' shape and then found the resulting chrysalises. I didn't witness the butterflies emerging, but did see an





adult Monarch Butterfly in the habitat next time it was checked. I sent photos and descriptions of the caterpillars, chrysalis and butterfly to the head of the tutoring program and she shared the photos and information with the school. Kids, teachers, staff and parents would look for caterpillars and butterflies whenever they passed the Monarch habitat. The head of the tutoring program asked me to show the Monarch habitat to my fellow tutors, and share information on creating Monarch habitats. With my help, the school registered the habitat as a Monarch Waystation with Monarch Watch, and created a sign with photos and descriptions of the Monarch host and nectar plants in the garden.



Just when it appeared the habitat was finished hosting Monarch larvae, I was pleasantly surprised to discover 4 more Monarch caterpillars in mid September and two more Monarch caterpillars at the end of September. The surviving Swamp Milkweed had supported a total of 14 Monarch caterpillars! Many people were encouraged that such a small habitat could make a difference.

If anyone is interested in creating a Monarch Habitat, I would be happy to share any information and lessons learned from this project.



Top - Male Monarch on the Swamp Milkweed at Bayless (08-29-15)

Above Left - Close up of a Monarch caterpillar on Swamp Milkweed at Bayless Monarch habitat (08-26-15)

Left - Monarch caterpillar in the 'J' shape preparing to form a chrysalis (08-29-15)

Bottom Left - Monarch Chrysalis 8-30-15

Bottom Right - Empty Monarch chrysalis attached to the Swamp Milkweed found 09-07-15.

All photos Sherri Schmidt



AN EVENING ON THE PRAIRIE

By Ann Butts

Reprinted from the Chert Glades Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists



It is impossible to walk a prairie and not use some time for reflection. Sometimes rolling hills of grass, other times colors blazing, and still others mother nature's fury on the plains. You can experience all of this on a prairie walk. Comfort in the tall swishing grass. Wonder at the color available in the wildflowers. Contrast between the wet boggy areas and dry mima mounds. The rich heritage of Missouri's prairies includes the Osage Indians' love and respect for this land. In the book by Robert Liebert, *Osage Life and Legends*, he discusses their love of the prairies that helped sustain life for them.

“The home of the Osage was a lush and nurturing land, which they loved with an almost patriotic fervor, and praised it often in their songs, stories and prayers.”



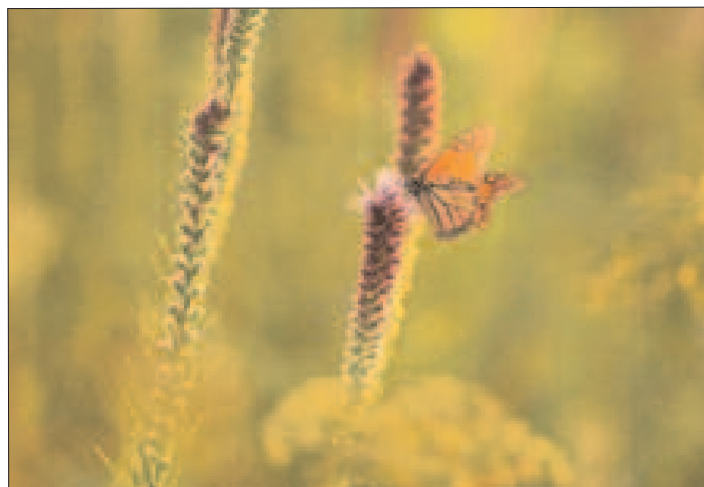
Members of the Chert Glades Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists bonded with our Osage forefathers on a recent evening walk at Coyne and Welsch prairies in southwest Missouri. Prairie walks among naturalists are full of discussion, discovery, and decompression.

We typically fan out into small groups each with a different objective. This is not planned, it occurs naturally. Some will discuss and photograph the sighting of certain plants, some will search for an endangered species, and others will simply walk with thoughtful gracefulness and observation. It is a site to behold, with the love of prairies so obvious in each person's fervor.



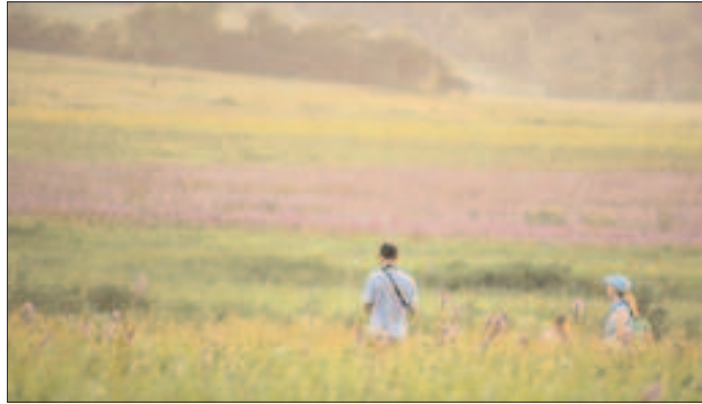
Jeff Cantreell (MDC) offered this summary of the evening's events: "Our first evening was a lengthy walk (for I was short on time to scout), hindered by some standing water while we raced the twilight. But now that I (we) know of some highway pull-offs the "valley of the blazing star" is very easy to reach. However all of the site produces wonderful discoveries every time we go out.

Some of our discoveries include lots of Wild Petunia (Ruellia), Rattlesnake Master, various forms of Rudbeckia, and sunflower species ready to take control of the grassland. My favorite was the seedbox clinging to the eroded banks.



A handful of endangered regal fritillary butterflies, monarchs, pearl crescents, red-spotted purple, wood nymph, golden byssus (a skipper species), sooty wing skipper, silver spotted skipper, cloudless sulphurs, clouded sulphur, giant swallowtail, black swallowtail, tiger swallowtail, silvery checkerspots, variegated fritillary, and several other Lepidopterans were along the walk."

Blazing star was the hit of the evening. Many naturalists could not believe the “sea of purple” they saw, and some could not wait to get to another prairie location to see if the purple was evident there.



It is this unique character of prairies, ever changing – ever the same, that draws us to them. You never know what you will find, each location seeming to have its own agenda on when certain plants will bloom.

The Osage Indians attempted to reflect the natural order of the earth in every part of their lives, with total respect for the natural world. Today’s master naturalists must have inherited that conviction from them. Our view is to respect the peace, harmony and order of nature while continually learning how to preserve and protect it. There is no better way to accomplish this than to get out there and “be present” on prairies and other natural areas to observe firsthand the amazing glory that surrounds us.

Upcoming Event - Mushroom Walk At the Hortins

The Hortons will again host a mushroom walk at their cabin in April. Below are the particulars.

April 25, Monday, 10 a.m.- 3 p.m.; mushroom i.d. walk and workshop. Location: Hortons camp cabin, private property about 75 mi. west of St. Louis

The day consists of a walking tour of a wooded area adjacent to the upper Meramec River. Maxine Stone, experienced mycologist, will lead the walk. A noon break provides opportunity to learn about culinary uses for harvested wild mushrooms along with information about identifying and collecting for specimens.

Post-lunch activities may include another look at the woods, or random rambling for i.d. purposes. Most people like to leave around 3, but anyone may stay as long as they wish.

It is a camp, there is no electricity or running water. We have a camp stove for making coffee or tea, or heating up soups, etc. Participants are asked to bring a lunch or a dish to share. We have ice in a cooler for cold drinks.

There is an eco-san outhouse--that means you do it, then toss in a bit of potting soil or mulch for a no-stink environment. The outhouse is adorned with some original art and appropriate hygienic items--tp, biowipes and hand sanitizer.

That's about it. Hope you join us. It's a wonderful field trip.

Contact Emily Horton at riverfever51@hotmail.com to confirm your visit

Milkweeds for Monarchs

Barbra Stephenson

On July 9th, 2015, the Missouri Department of Conservation(MDC) held a training session at Prairie Fork Conservation Area, a few miles south of Williamsburg. **Milkweeds for Monarchs (M4M)** is a project that involves identifying milkweed plants, collecting seeds and sending them to the state nursery to propagate. The milkweed would then be available to plant on public land to benefit monarchs as well as other pollinators.



On July 9th, we met at the seed shed and were briefly given an overview of the area. We learned how to identify the four species of milkweed that MDC is focusing on at this time:

Butterfly weed, <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Common milkweed, <i>Asclepias syriaca</i>
Sullivant's milkweed, <i>Asclepias sullivanti</i>	Swamp milkweed, <i>Asclepias incarnata</i> .

We were shown how seed was collected and cleaned for storage and the proper way to store seeds. Then we hiked through the restored tall grass prairie to find examples of milkweeds. We finished up with lunch at their education center a mile or so down the road. We couldn't have asked for a better day. It was sunny and warm with the rain finally having moved off.

There were 10 fellow Great Rivers members who attended to learn what 'Milkweed for Monarch's' was all about. There were several of us who thought that M4M was linked to Missourians for Monarchs (MO4M), the initiative organized by Bob Lee of the Confluence Chapter. The goals of restoring monarch populations and habitat are the same for both projects, but they differ in approach. For M4M, volunteers identify milkweed species, monitor for seed

pods, then collect, clean and store the seed. Seeds will be delivered to George O. White Nursery later in the fall. The nursery will raise them and any seedlings that come up will be planted on public land, maybe at your favorite volunteer site! The MO4M initiative is asking ALL interested Missourians to collect milkweed seeds, and grow them. They can be planted on either public or private property.

We found out that a few days after our training project, there was a preliminary meeting to lay the groundwork for statewide collaboration. About 50 federal and state agencies, land trust, private landowners and other key organizations met to develop a statewide strategy to restore and expand habitat for monarchs and other pollinators. Bob Lee of the Confluence chapter was invited to that meeting. Details of the meeting can be found on his blog: [Missourians For Monarchs](#). If you're planning to collect seeds for either initiative, here are some guidelines (Cori also mentioned these tips at our last meeting). First and foremost, ask permission to collect seeds on property that is not your own. On the envelope or bag should be:

- The name of the species (keep species separate)
- Location collected, GPS coordinates would be great
- Dated collected
- Notes on anything significant about the area.

MDC's Milkweeds for Monarchs, would prefer you keep seeds in a brown paper bag, cloth or nylon bag, so that air can move around them. Moisture can be trapped in plastic bags and can cause seeds to mold or encourage them to break dormancy. Bags should be placed in a cool/dark place with low moisture, yet allow air movement. You all have favorite volunteer sites or projects where there could be milkweed. Follow the guidelines mentioned for collecting seeds and bring to a chapter meeting. I am the point person for our chapter, so I'll make sure they make it to the MDC nursery. You can also email me if we need to make other arrangements.

One last note, a fellow monarch enthusiast just sent me a link to a 13-minute documentary on monarchs called [Saving the Migration](#) from newsy.com. It features some names and faces you might recognize: [Saving-the-Migration](#)

Chapter members that participated in the training session on July 9th were: Ann Earley, Beth Skelton, Carol Carr, Carolyn DeVaney, Claire Beaudoin, Donna Scott, Mary Pat Ehlmann, Rachel Becknell and Vaughn Meister and myself.



McDonnell Prairie
Cindy Lueder Photo