

View from the Hill

A newsletter for friends and members of Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc. | SUMMER 2016

Run For the Hill

New Endurance Run Supports Exhibit Renovation

Mike Hibbard, Director

No, there's not an emergency that requires us to seek higher ground. Rather, an endurance run/hike to benefit Mosquito Hill Nature Center will be held on Sunday, August 7 beginning at the yawn-inducing time of 6:30 AM. That's because some participants will be taking on the challenge of running 50 kilometers during this event. (That's 31 miles if you haven't converted the distance in your head yet.) Runners or hikers may also choose 25- or 10-kilometer courses beginning at 7:00 and 7:30 AM respectively.

The courses will feature loops around the nature center property, including routes up and down Mosquito Hill. After all, if you're not intimidated by the distance, running to the top of Mosquito Hill a few times should be a piece of cake.

The run is the brainchild of Cassie Kottke, owner of Stride Multisport, a personal training and coaching studio in Appleton (www.stridemultisport.com). Kottke, a marathon runner and Ironman triathlon participant, reached out to us last year with the idea of using the challenging topography of Mosquito Hill and existing trails for a local long-distance event. She and the planning committee are hoping to attract 300 runners, approximately 100 for each race.

When asked about the amount of time it takes to run such great distances, Kottke

told us, "The average person will run a 50K between five and six hours and a 25K in two to three hours, but this entirely depends on the conditions and the difficulty of the trail."

All proceeds from the event will support the display renovation project in the interpretive building. The project has moved into the schematic design phase. In March, nature center staff, Friends of Mosquito Hill board members and other volunteers met with a team of three exhibit designers from Split

Rock Studios, St. Paul, for a two-day planning session to clarify our goals for the project and turn concepts into concrete display plans. As of this writing, the Split Rock team

is working on drawings and descriptions of what each exhibit component will look like. The displays will feature hands-on interactive components, technology and interpretive text. The overall goal is to interpret the physical and natural features of the nature center property and to inspire visitors to go outside and discover firsthand what they learned inside.

Watch for future articles in *A View from the Hill* and on our website for updates. In the meantime you can support our efforts in a couple ways. Register for the endurance run at www.runrace.net. If long-distance running is not your style, you can still support the exhibit renovation project by making a donation. Visit www.mosquithill.com or contact us for giving opportunities.



Our Mission

The Friends of Mosquito Hill (FOMH) support, promote and enhance Mosquito Hill Nature Center. (MHNC) We realize this mission through volunteerism, fundraising and our shared passion for nature.

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www.mosquithill.org

Another Spring Fever Fundraiser in the Books

On April 19, 135 people attended the 19th Annual Spring Fever Fundraiser at MHNC. A buffet meal catered by Van Abels was topped off by Mary Sommer's delicious homemade tortes (worth the price of admission alone).

Of course, the most exciting part of the evening was checking out the prizes won by attendees and learning the names of the winners of the Spring Fever Raffle prizes. Ron Wege, New London, won the stand-up paddle board and FOMH member Karen Thorne walked off with a pair of kayaks. Cash prizes were won by Cindy Golie, Moya Mowbray and Elaine Buss.

We're indebted to the volunteers who worked year-round planning the event, soliciting raffle prizes and selling raffle tickets. We're grateful to the individuals and businesses that donated prizes and made cash contributions. And to the community who attended the banquet and who continue to give and to support our mission, we extend our thanks to you!



Bob Meyer, left, made this beautiful canoe paddle won by Pat Mahoney.



Nature center staff try to keep a straight face during the post-dinner presentation, but fail miserably.



Volunteer Tara Lawton assists Mike Hibbard with the raffle drawing.



Volunteer Barb Baumgartner selling raffle tickets.

Wish List

Summer 2016

If you would like to support MHNC in a small way, please consider a donation to purchase or offset the cost of the following items:

- Hearing loop (a device placed in our Great Room that allows those with a hearing loss to enjoy our programs) *See page 6 for details on a matching grant to fund this purchase.
- Foldable, hand pruning saws
- 2 10'x10' EZ-up tents with white canopies
- Apple grinder (for our apple press)
- Bird Seed
- Gift cards from various retailers (Fleet Farm, Target, Kwik Trip, etc.)



Jen & Sydney Stroschein's flair for decorating set the stage for the evening.



Never Say Never

Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant

It's no surprise that naturalists hear many stories from callers and visitors. Some are from folks who are simply excited to share a sighting in their yard. (I saw my first oriole of the year!) They may seem ordinary to us, but hey, what's wrong with being excited to see a brilliant orange and black bird that just spent the last three weeks flying up to 150 miles each night, drop into your back yard after being absent for eight months?

Other stories may seem, well, a little imaginative. Usually we chalk it up to callers misidentifying an animal. (Is it possible I saw an Andean condor flying over Lake Winnebago?)

I've been in this business a long time and the most important lesson I've learned is to never say never. No matter what the textbooks and field guides say, no matter how many children you tell that deer only eat plants and there are no badgers at Mosquito Hill, animals, and the internet, have proven me wrong.



Note to self: remember this photo before making sweeping generalizations about garter snakes hibernating in the winter. Photo by Louie Kolberg

Ah, the internet—simultaneously loved and hated by all. You must, of course beware of fakes and forgers, but there are some remarkable photos and videos shot by individuals that have to be seen to be believed. Case in

point: In 2009, *Bird Watcher's Digest* posted a picture of a praying mantis eating a hummingbird. We know that mantids are ferocious predators, but field guides will tell you they only eat insects. A quick internet search will prove they also have an appetite for hummingbirds.

I was also taken aback when a 2011 video made the rounds on Facebook showing a deer eating a live bird. So much for our school field trip lesson about deer being herbivores.

Closer to home, our staff have taken pleasure in ribbing a certain co-worker about a badger sighting on the nature center property a number of years ago. For the record, we believed the story but we still teased about it. You know—workplace humor and all. Fast-forward to 2014 when Post Crescent outdoor writer Rob Zimmer posted this photo to our Facebook page.



The elusive and normally camera-shy badger made a public appearance at MHNC in 2014. Photo by Rob Zimmer

Former UW Madison wildlife biology professor Scott Craven took a call on Wisconsin Public Radio a few years ago from a caller with lakeside property who watched a great blue heron stalk and eat chipmunks that were eating seed under his bird feeders. Yup, herons: fish and frog eaters. I guess it's time to update the field guide.

Oh, I could go on: moose “talking” on Isle Royale, earwigs in ears, etc. And I'm sure you have some equally interesting anecdotes and photos. Feel free to share them on our Facebook page. Whether you find them entertaining, educational or a curiosity, they will be an ever-present reminder of how big and complex a world we live in.

Calendar of Events



www.mosquitohill.com



G3 (Grandma, Grandpa, Grandchild)

Join us on Tuesday mornings for one or all of these programs for grandparents and their grandkids.

A different topic will be introduced and include outdoor exploration, a small item to make and resources to help continue the fun and learning at home. Programs are suitable for all ages and you may sign up for one or many.

\$3/adults, \$2/youth. Registration and payment due one week prior.



G3: What's Happening Inside a Beehive?

Tuesday, June 14, 10:00 – 11:00 AM
Honeybees are amazing insects with an interesting life cycle. We'll look in the indoor observation hive then visit a honey production hive on the property. New London beekeeper Michael Heideman will guide us through a season of an active beehive. Bee ready to believe!

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\$3/adults, \$2/youth.



Third Thursday Lecture Series: Birds of Wisconsin

June 16, 9:30 – 11:00 AM

Our speaker is Michael Gray, a 13-year old bird watching phenom from Manawa. He'll share his photographs of Wisconsin birds and talk about the great variety of species found around the state. Whether they're common or rare, Michael has amassed an incredible amount of knowledge.

\$6/person or \$4/students, seniors, FOMH. Registration and payment due June 10.



Leave No Family Inside: Going Batty!

Saturday, June 18, 8:00 – 9:30 PM

We love bats! Unfortunately, this beneficial insect-eater is being affected by a life threatening illness. Learn about Wisconsin's bat species in an indoor presentation, then take a walk as we use a hand-held bat detector that will record their echolocation signals and identify each species. \$6/person or \$10/household.

Registration and payment due June 12.

Public Bat Monitoring

Mondays, June 20, July 18 and August 22

One-half hour after sunset

To assist the DNR with bat research, we will monitor the nature center property for bat presence. We'll follow a pre-planned route around the property recording bat calls and location with an Anabat detector. Wear closed-toe shoes and long pants/sleeves. Insect repellent is prohibited as it can damage the equipment. Starting times, updates or cancellations will be posted each Monday on our Facebook page. No Charge.



G3: Beautiful Birds

Tuesday, June 21, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

We'll bust out the binoculars and check out the colorful world of birds at Mosquito Hill. From tiny hummingbirds to great blue herons, from the brightly colored orioles to the subtle hues of the house wren, we have them all.

\$3/adults, \$2/youth.

Invasives – What's in Your Yard?

Saturday, June 25, 1:00 – 3:00

What's costing Americans \$35 billion annually to control and yet we still can't

stop it? It's the spread of invasive plants. You may be surprised at the number of invasive plants people unknowingly plant. This program will address aggressive and non-native species that wreak havoc in yards and in natural area and what to do about them.

\$6.00/adults, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH. Registration and payment due June 17.



G3: Nature's Recyclers

Tuesday, June 28, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Fungus, mold, creepy crawly things and vultures all get a bad rap but without them the world would be one gross place. Learn more about nature's recyclers and how they help you. Then go on a short walk to explore the seedier side of the natural world. \$3/adults, \$2/youth.



Leave No Family Inside: Monarch Butterflies

Saturday, July 2, 12:30-3:00 PM

Now more than ever, monarchs need your help. With migrating populations at severely low numbers, we can make a difference in a monarch's life by doing a few simple things: learn more about them, plant milkweed and nectar producing plants, and raise some monarch larvae. In this class, you learn about all three!

\$6/person or \$10/household. Registration and payment due June 24.

Let's Take a Walk: To the Ponds

Sunday, July 3, 1:30 – 2:30 PM

MHNC is home to a variety of habitats, all of which attract different animal and plant species. In this series, we will introduce you to those habitats, the plants and animals

Unless otherwise noted, advance registration and payment are required. Call 920-779-6433 or e-mail mary.swifka@outagamie.org.

that live there and what their significance is to this property. Ponds not only provide a home for fish, turtles, frogs, and ducks, they are necessary for certain types of insects and mammals. We'll explore the animals not always seen at the ponds and discover a new watery world. \$3/adult, \$2/youth.

Registration and payment due June 25.



G3: Dragonflies and Damselflies

Tuesday, July 5, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Dragonflies and damselflies are special insects in that they live both in the water and on land during their life cycle. These hungry predators are the lions and tigers of the insect world, eating lots of insect pests. We'll explore those habitats, find these amazing bugs and talk about their incredible life. \$3/adults, \$2/youth.

Food Plots: Attracting Wildlife to Your Property

Saturday, July 9, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Join us for an informational and hands-on seminar with author and wildlife expert Steve Jordan. Meet at MHNC for an indoor presentation, then carpool to Steve's property to help plant a fall food plot and tour established plots for deer, ducks, turkeys, bees, butterflies and more.

\$10/person, \$8/students, seniors, FOMH.

Registration and payment due July 1.



G3: Looking Under Logs

Tuesday, July 12, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Let's go exploring! It's amazing what we might find as we turn logs over to investigate the critters living underneath. This hands-on activity might make some people's skin crawl as we look, hold and study the life that lives under a log. Dress for the weather with sturdy shoes for some off-trail fun.

\$3/adults, \$2/youth.

A Look at Wisconsin's Mosquitoes

Saturday, July 16, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

In 2008, a mosquito inventory determined how many and what species of mosquitoes were found at MHNC. We learned a great deal about their life cycle, traits of individual species, and their impact

on humans and wildlife. An indoor presentation on these fascinating insects will be followed by a brief hike to mosquito habitat, which can be found in any backyard.

\$6/person or \$4/students, seniors, FOMH.

Registration and payment due July 8.

Let's Take a Walk: On the Hill

Sunday, July 17, 1:30 – 2:30

Mosquito Hill is a unique geological feature jutting some 200 feet in the air. This change in elevation and the rock that creates it makes the hill a special place to live for many plants and animals. We'll discuss the geologic properties and their effect on the flora and fauna in the area.

\$3/adult and \$2/youth. Registration and

payment due July 8.



G3: Name That Tree

Tuesday, July 19, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Have you ever wondered what kind of trees are in your backyard or in your neighborhood? Come join us on a guided tree identification walk. Discover important uses of each and how to identify trees by looking at their leaf shape, bark, twigs and fruit. Materials will be provided to make your own leaf rubbings.

\$3/adults, \$2/youth.



G3: Into the Woods

Tuesday, July 26, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

What better place to be in the middle of summer than in the cool, green forest. We'll take a walk on Mosquito Hill and see what's happening in the woods. We'll look for birds in the trees, deer in the shrubs and all sorts of little things in the soil. The forest is a busy place!

\$3/adults, \$2/youth

Let's Take a Walk: Through the Prairie

Sunday, July 31, 1:30 – 2:30 PM

Prairies originally covered much of the Great Plains of the United States, including a portion of western Wisconsin. The nature center is home to a 12-acre planted prairie which boasts dozens of unique plants species as well as animal species that could be found in the original prairies. We'll explore the mid-summer plants, their adaptations and benefits to wildlife. \$3/adult and \$2/youth.



G3: Little Birds of Prey

Tuesday, Aug. 2, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

When we think of birds of prey, many times our images include bald eagles and great horned owls. While both are fantastic predators and majestic birds, our small raptors are equally as impressive. They are fast fliers and incredible hunters. We'll introduce you to few live little birds of prey and discuss their importance in our natural world.

\$3/adults, \$2/youth.



Third Thursday Lecture Series: The Science of Climate Change

August 18, 9:30 – 11:00 AM

Although the techniques used by scientists to measure and predict the effects of climate change are complex, the processes that cause these changes are quite understandable.

David Poister, Professor of Chemistry and Environmental Science at St. Norbert College, will explain these processes to give those without a scientific background a basic understanding of climate change science.

\$6/person or \$4/students, seniors, FOMH.

Registration and payment due August 12.

Nature Center Gets Muddy

Saturday, August 20

We're sorry. Our trails will be closed and Rogers Road will be closed to traffic on August 20 as 2000 runners get "muddy for a mission."

www.warriorprincessmudrun.org



Leave No Family Inside: Monarch Tagging for Beginners

Saturday, Aug. 27, 12:30–3:00 PM

Every fall, millions of monarchs make their way to central Mexico for the winter. Every fall, hundreds of thousands of tags are placed on monarchs to help scientists answer questions about their migratory behavior. Learn the basics of one of the coolest phenomena on Earth: monarch migration. Participants will assist with tagging, testing and releasing monarchs collected from the wild and those raised in our butterfly lab.

\$6/person or \$10/household.

Registration and payment due August 19.

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Address Correspondence To:
Friends of Mosquito Hill
N3880 Rogers Road
New London WI 54961
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Interpretive Building Hours:
Tuesday-Friday:
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday:
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Staff:

Loren Dieck, Director,
Outagamie County Parks
Mike Hibbard, Director/
Naturalist
Steve Petznick, Assistant
Naturalist
Jessica Miller, Assistant
Naturalist
Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant
Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer
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Newsletter:

Editors - Pat Brown, Ginny
Buschke, Susan Hankin, Mary
Swifka
Layout & Design - Jayne
Thielen Frazier
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Feather Fest: a Community Effort

MHNC and the New London Park & Recreation department hosted Feather Fest on May 1, but it was a cooperative effort by many groups that resulted in a successful event. Educational sessions on wood ducks and invasive species were presented by natural resources students from Fox Valley Technical College. Nature center volunteers led bird hikes. Vendors shared information on binoculars, native plants and feeders. New London High School students facilitated games and crafts for kids and horse-drawn wagon rides were provided by local volunteers.

MHNC also supports this *Bird City Wisconsin* initiative by conducting bird counts and surveys, monitoring nesting boxes, leading bird hikes and providing educational programs all to benefit the city of New London. We extend our thanks to Feather Fest sponsors: CHS Larsen Coop, Ducks Unlimited—Green Wings chapter, and Wildbird and Backyard, Appleton.

Donors Step Up to Fund Hearing Loop

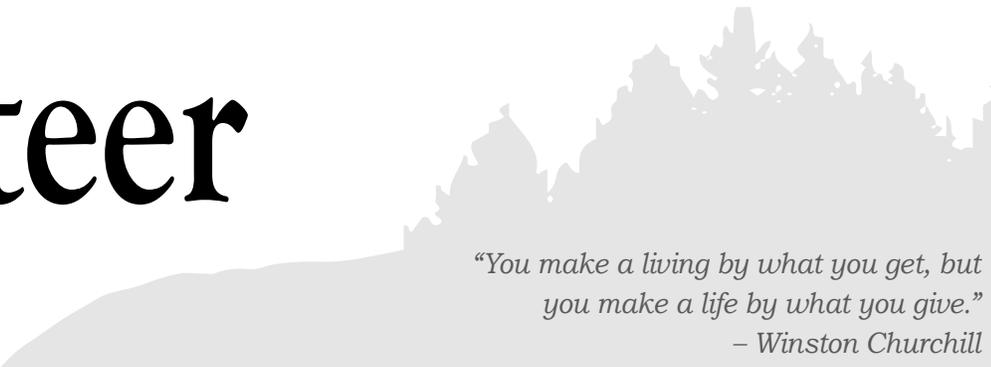
Two anonymous donors have stepped up with offers to match donations up to \$2,000 to fund installation of a hearing loop in the Great Room. A hearing loop allows most people with hearing loss to use their hearing aids and cochlear implants as customized, wireless loudspeakers. We're thankful for this kind offer for a project that is needed and overdue. This technology will allow us to be a more welcoming destination.

Please call us at 920-779-6433 or e-mail Mary at mary.swifka@outagamie.org if you would like to make a donation. Thank you!

Check out these Summer Volunteer Opportunities:

- **August 20, Warrior Princess Mud Run:** Assist with concessions or share some fun activities with kids.
- **Gardening:** The weeds grow here too, so we'd love to have you beautify our native gardens. Come when it's convenient for you.
- **Office/Gift Shop:** Welcome our guests in person and on the phone. Sales in the gift shop are great in the summer.
- **Field Trips:** Share your knowledge of Wisconsin animals, forests or insects with the hundreds of children who are scheduled to visit MHNC this summer.
- **Creative Projects:** Displays and brochures will benefit from new ideas.
- **Board and Committee Members:** This is not as ominous as it sounds. The FOMH board and sub-committees are looking for new, energetic and creative members to see us through the next year or two. Let them know what time you can offer.
- **And more:** if you have mechanical abilities, there is always something that needs repair or updating. Behind the scenes work in planning, mailing, cleaning and event preparation is waiting for you.

Volunteer Voice



*"You make a living by what you get, but
you make a life by what you give."
– Winston Churchill*

*Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator
e-mail: volparks@outagamie.org*

3,154.5 hours of volunteering for Mosquito Hill Nature Center (MHNC) in 2015! Thank you to our fantastic team! If we look at the 2014 statistics from Volunteering in America, 35.4% of Wisconsin residents volunteered at some point during the year, ranking us 3rd nationwide. Volunteeramerica.gov estimates the value of a volunteer hour at \$23.07. Based on those statistics, our volunteers provided us with \$72,774.32 worth of work!

Whatever the numbers say, we are so grateful for all we receive from our volunteers. Our team is a diverse group of people who share a wide range of talents, knowledge and energy. Not only that, but they usually have a good time too. There is always room for more, so consider joining us this summer or whenever you are ready for fun.

As you read this issue, I hope you get excited about what is ahead for MHNC. Dreams and hopes can be realized, but it means thinking outside the box. This is where you come in. How can you contribute in a new and different way? Do you know someone who works at a larger business whom you could talk to about

our plans? Could you share your interest in marketing or fundraising with us? Do you enjoy reaching out to people, sharing your love for MHNC and inspiring people to think about future generations exploring our building and trails? If you answered yes, or maybe, come on out and sit down for a chat.

New Endeavors on the Horizon

We are proud to sponsor a Memory Café the second Wednesday of each month. Participants love learning about nature and experiencing what we have to offer. On April 27, we opened our doors for a monthly Caregivers' Support Group and respite time sponsored by the Valley VNA and Affinity Visiting Nurses. Thank you for partnering with us and welcoming everyone in our communities.

A unique event, *Cash in Your Attic* will be coming up in early 2017. Save your vintage and unique items for Mosquito Hill instead of putting them on the rummage sale table. We'll have more details in the next issue.

Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc.

Mosquito Hill Nature Center
N3880 Rogers Rd. • New London, WI 54961
(920) 779-6433

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