

View from the Hill

A newsletter for friends and members of Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc. | Spring 2019

Experience the Wonder of Spring

Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant

"One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring."

—Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

You can't work in a career like mine for so long without having read Aldo Leopold. His seminal book, *A Sand County Almanac*, was published in 1949. In it, Leopold reflects on the monthly changes of the Wisconsin countryside.

For a man considered to be the father of wildlife ecology and who chaired the game management department at the University of Wisconsin (the first position of its kind in the US), you might think Leopold's writing would tend toward a textbook type of read. However, seventy years later, *A Sand County Almanac* is still considered to be some of the finest nature writing since Thoreau, and the forerunner of such important books as Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, and Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*.

That is why I love to pick up my dog-eared copy in spring and be inspired by Leopold's word-smithing, simultaneously poetic and scientifically accurate. The section simply entitled "March—The Geese Return" reminds me what I love about spring. It's not only about geese returning from their winter home but it's about that sense of wonder that Leopold's words evoke, the enthusiasm for something as mundane as geese landing in his marsh: "Once touching water, our newly arrived guests set up a honking and splashing

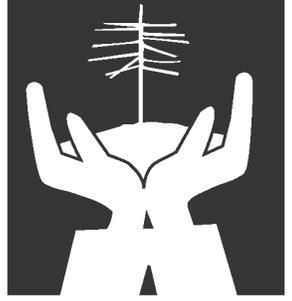
that shakes the last thought of winter out of the brittle cattails. Our geese are home again!"

I hope you can know that sense of wonder every time you witness the amazing happenings in spring. Ice booms as the Wolf River thaws. Bloodroot flowers risk late winter snows but persist to carpet the forest floor with their delicate blooms. Metamorphosis takes place as tadpoles change into frogs. Blackpoll warblers forage for insects in our lowland forest. Their perilous migration from the Andes to the boreal forests in Canada is even more remarkable when you realize the bird only weighs a few grams.

And when the first geese return this month, maybe you will see them as Leopold does, "...a wild poem dropped from the murky skies upon the muds of March."

It's all here waiting to be taken in like a deep breath of fresh air. This season, take time to rekindle your sense of wonder. Experience nature often, for nothing ever stays the same.

people in touch
with nature



FRIENDS
of
**MOSQUITO HILL
NATURE CENTER**

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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Living History on Display: Visit a Fur Trappers' Rendezvous in 1824

Step back to a simpler time when beaver hides were the unit of currency and waterways were highways. Come visit a fur trappers' rendezvous encampment, circa 1824 and see the new property acquired by the nature center on top of Mosquito Hill!

On May 17, 18 and 19, the Embarrass River Brigade, a fictitious fur-trapping company of the 1800s, will convene a rendezvous on top of Mosquito Hill.

Campers will demonstrate skills of the period dressed in clothing of that day. You may see fire starting with flint and steel, flint knapping to make arrow points, candle making, rope making, calligraphy and yarn spinning. Have a seat by the fire and hear the telling of tall tales. Learn about the difficult life of early American fur trappers and settlers.



Fur Trappers' Rendezvous

When: May 17, 18 & 19

Where: MHNC

What: Hands-on reenactment of 1824 fur trapping camp

Cost: Free!

Visit the trader's lodge and barter with Jingles for all your basic needs: flour, sugar, beans, whiskey, cloth, beads, iron pots

and more. Young boys may also be "recruited" by the Brigade to become a trapper, teamster or swamper and enter into an honest occupation.

Visitors are welcome Saturday from 9:00 AM till dusk, and Sunday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Teachers! Contact us at 920.779.6433 or email mary.swifka@outagamie.org if you're interested in having your students visit the encampment on Friday, May 17.

There is no charge to visit. Friends of Mosquito Hill may provide refreshments and a bite to eat during the weekend. Limited parking is available at the top. Shuttle service will be provided.

See you at the top!

Wish List

- Bird seed, especially black sunflower and Nyjer seed
- Paper shredder
- Gift cards, any denomination, to CHS Larsen Co-op (New London), Festival Foods, (New London), Fleet Farm, Kwik Trip, Menards, Petco, Michael's, Piggly-Wiggly (New London)
- Heavy-duty extension cords, 50 feet, 12 gauge (6)
- Heavy-duty extension cords, 100 feet, 12 gauge (2)
- LED lighted safety vests (to keep our volunteers and staff safe after dark)
- Rechargeable LED work lights
- Solar lights, to light trails after dark
- Surge protector power strips



"There's no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate dress." Hearty families bundled up to have fun in the snow at Winter Family Fun Day on January 26.

Naturalist's Corner

More than Heat

Adam Brandt, Park Ranger

The chill of the winter's Arctic Vortex was enough to leave even those who love the winter longing for some relief. Maybe you were dreaming of a tropical destination or simply taking advantage of a warm fire. While fire adds comfort and relief from the chill of winter, it can take on a different purpose altogether in the spring; fire becomes a tool.

Yes, fire can be a benefit year-round. However, spring uniquely lends itself in a way that allows fire to become a management tool. Spring delivers the perfect conditions for a prescribed, or planned, burn on parcels of land. Fire provides many benefits to soil and the plants that grow there.

Prairie habitats require frequent fires to remain healthy. Prairies can become overrun by trees, woody shrubs and invasive plants. Eventually, the land could be completely converted to a different habitat type.

Fires help to slow or stop the spread of these trees and shrubs and ensure that the prairie will remain. Fires also work to make prairies healthier by removing dead vegetation and returning the trapped nutrients from that past growth back into the soils.

Eliminating invasive plants is often labor intensive. While effective, removing them by hand or using

pesticides can be back-breaking work or leave chemicals in the environment. A controlled burn can be a more efficient way to eradicate many invasive species. While it may seem counter-intuitive to burn plants to encourage their growth, the timing is such that only the previous years' dead growth is burned. Native prairie species enjoy the benefit of deep root systems, which are protected from the heat.

This spring you may notice some burns happening, or the aftermath of prescribed burns, here at Mosquito Hill. The plan is to try burning the prairie and old fields on the south and east side of the hill. There is a narrow

window of time when burns can be accomplished. The goal is to burn before too many animals are nesting. Smaller areas are burned at a time to allow wildlife opportunities to escape the blaze. Conditions need to be just right: some soil moisture, higher humidity and light winds provide an ideal environment for a burn.

If you visit later in spring and notice the scorched aftermath, it may seem sad and desolate for a while. But, return a few weeks later and you will see a different

landscape taking shape and the full benefits of the burn will start to be realized.



A prescribed burn is conducted every few years in the nature center's prairie planting, seen here with the observatory in the foreground.

Calendar of Events



www.mosquitohill.com



Saving the Osprey: A Success Story

Saturday, March 23
1:00 – 2:30 PM

When listed as an endangered species in 1972, Wisconsin had fewer than 90 osprey pairs. Learn how raptor rehabilitator, Pat Fisher, The Feather Raptor Rehabilitation Center, New London, has worked for 15 years to restore osprey populations in Northeast Wisconsin. She's working with local utility companies and communities in Waupaca and Outagamie counties to provide nesting platforms and monitor the birds in 30 locations. Pat will also discuss how, surprisingly, eagles are hindering the process.

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

be available to borrow if you don't have them.

\$110/person, \$100/students, seniors and FOMH members. Registration and payment are due March 15.



Weave a Bird House Basket

Sunday, March 31, 9:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Do you love birds? Then weave them a home with your love put into it. This finished piece follows the dimensions of a typical wooden bluebird box, but may attract a variety of backyard bird species if you hang it outdoors. Top it off with a barn-board roof. The class will be taught by Jeni Mursau, Woven Blessings Basketry.

\$45/person. Registration and payment are due March 23.



Build a Window Sash Cold Frame

Sunday, March 24, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Get a jump start on your spring planting with this cold frame, mini-greenhouse made out of cedar and a re-purposed window sash. Join naturalist Mike Hibbard as he guides you step-by-step to build this 24" x 30" (approximate size) cold frame for starting flowers or vegetables for your garden. All materials will be provided, pre-cut and ready to assemble. Some basic hand tools will be required, but extras will



Move More

Tuesdays, April 2, 9, 16 & 23
5:30 – 7:00 PM

Because of the time spent inactive, our bodies have adapted by becoming stiff, not allowing for full range of motion in our muscles and joints even when we are moving. This class with naturalist Jessica Miller will introduce

you to many simple forms of movement: basic stretching and alignment exercises, walking, crawling, hanging, jumping, balancing and more. This is not a "workout" class, rather a "restoration of movement" class geared toward people of any age and of any fitness/mobility level who would like to incorporate more movement, balance and strength into their life. Participants should be able to move to the floor and back to standing. Classes will take place indoors. Space is limited to 10 participants. \$40/4 classes, \$35/students, seniors, FOMH. Registration and payment are required by March 26.

Baby Animal Family Fun Event

Saturday, April 13, 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Nothing says spring quite like baby animals. Join us as we partner with the WI DNR during their annual *Keeping Wildlife Wild* week. The morning will start with baby animal story time followed by a one-hour educational program at 10:30. Learn about baby animals and what to do if you find them this spring. There will also be a DNR informational booth, snacks for sale, and fun baby animal crafts to take home. FREE!!!



Newstar Astronomy Night

Friday, April 26
8:00 – 10:00 PM

Join MHNC staff and members of Newstar, the Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers group, for an indoor presentation and outdoor stargazing. For night sky observers, spring is a great time to observe and photograph some of the most distant objects known in our universe. This evening's presentation: *Springtime - A Season for Galaxies*, by Newstar member Tom Eby, will illustrate

Unless otherwise noted, advance registration and payment are required. Call 920.779.6433 or email mary.swifka@outagamie.org.

some of the many forms and varieties of galaxies ranging from our own Milky Way to those lying at vast cosmological distances, as imaged through amateur telescopes and cameras.

\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH.
Advance registration appreciated.

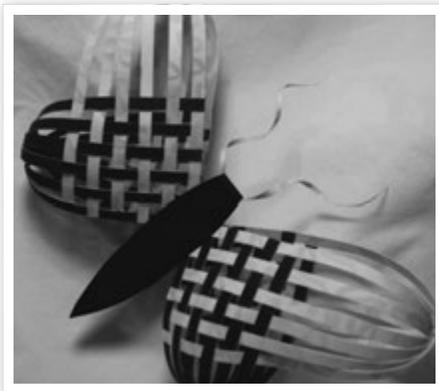


Saturday Morning Bird Walks

April 27, May 4, 11, 18
7:00 – 10:00 AM

Join us for any or all of these Saturday morning walks. All skill levels are welcome. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars (or borrow a pair of ours), field guides and waterproof boots.

No charge.



Make a Woven Butterfly

Sat. April 27, 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Spring is in the air, so why not weave a beautiful butterfly for your home décor. Instruction and materials will be provided by Jeni Mursau, Woven Blessings Basketry. Numerous color choices of reed will be available. No prior weaving experience is necessary.

\$35/person. Registration and payment due April 17.



Build a Raised Garden Bed

Sunday, May 5, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
Build a cedar elevated garden

bed to save your back and your vegetables from rabbits, voles and other animals. Join naturalist Mike Hibbard as he guides you step-by-step to build this 4' wide x 8' long x 32" high raised garden bed. All materials will be provided, pre-cut and ready to assemble. Some basic hand tools will be

required, but extras will be available to borrow if you don't have them.

\$140/person, \$125/students, seniors, FOMH.
Registration and payment due April 23.



Move More II

Tuesdays, May 7, 14, 21, & 28
5:30 – 7:00 PM

This class will introduce you to many simple forms of movement: basic stretching and alignment exercises, walking, crawling, hanging, jumping, balancing and is a continuation of information and movements from Move More in April. This is not a "workout" class, rather a "restoration of movement" class geared towards people of any age and of any fitness/mobility level who would like to incorporate more movement, balance and strength into their life. Participants should be able to move to the floor and back to standing as well as walk distances of up to 1 mile. Classes will take place indoors and outdoors. Space is limited to 10 participants.

\$40/4 classes, \$35/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment required by April 30.



Spring Open House

Saturday, May 11, all day

Check out the variety of programs offered this day.

Arrive when you want and stay as long as you like.

- Naturalist-led bird ID walk, 7:00 AM, free (binoculars available to check out)
- Climate change presentation by Graham Sazama, Lawrence University, including a showing of the film "Paris to Pittsburgh"
- Native plant sale
- Meditation hike

- Informational booths on World Migratory Bird Day, WI DNR, and helping birds
- Food and beverages-available for purchase

Watch our Facebook page and website for program updates and additional information.



Embarrass River Brigade Rendezvous

Friday – Sunday, May 17 – 19
See details on page 2.



Weeds Please!

Saturday, May 18
12:30 – 2:30 PM

To forage, by definition, means to search for food or provisions. While many discredit the culinary and medicinal benefits of common plants such as dandelions, stinging nettle and chickweed, herbalists widely seek out these species. Learn the basics of herbalism and the dos and don'ts of foraging plants with naturalist Jessica Miller, then head outdoors for a seasonal "weed walk" around the property. We'll even harvest a few to sample their flavors in teas and culinary treats.

\$12/person, \$10/students, seniors, FOMH.
Registration and payment due May 10.



Coming in June

Kids Day

Visit us at Plamann Park on
Saturday, June 8.

...

Summer Solstice

Watch for updates on an evening
event on June 21.

...

Summer Ecology Program for Children

Registration is now open! See page
6 for details.

...

Electronics Recycling Day

June 29

View From The Hill is published four times per year by Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc. New London, WI www.mosquitohill.org

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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
Jessica Miller, Assistant Naturalist
Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant
Adam Brandt, Park Ranger
Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator

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Celebrating National Volunteer Month

April is National Volunteer Month. Thank you volunteers for your gift of time to Mosquito Hill Nature Center.



Volunteers Mary Close and Kim Jordan (both seated left) helped 100 children make gifts for family and friends during Holiday Make & Take on December 8.



Volunteer Becky McClone wears many hats: FOMH board member, concessions coordinator and behind-the-scenes event planner.



Volunteers Carolyn Habeck, left and Cathy Yurk fired up our ancient pin-making machine at Winter Family Fun Day on January 26.



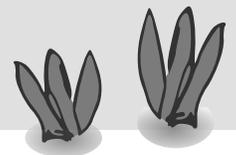
Summer Ecology Program for Children

Registration is now open! All programs are held Tuesday-Friday with light snacks and juice provided. Sessions are scheduled for each of three age groups:

- **Knee-High Naturalists** (4 and 5 year olds), June 25-29, 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon
- **Nature Rangers** (1st & 2nd grades), July 9-12 and July 16-19, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM (must bring a bag lunch)
- **Eco-Explorers** (3rd, 4th & 5th grades), July 23-26 and July 30-August 2, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM (must bring a bag lunch)

The Summer Ecology Program provides fun and educational experiences in the outdoors. Through explorations, crafts, games, and interpretive nature walks, children gain knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a greater sense of self confidence.

Contact Mary (mary.swifka@outagamie.org) or visit mosquitohill.com for a registration form.



New Members

We extend our **welcome** to the following who recently joined Friends of Mosquito Hill. New Members: Faye & Joe Diedrich, and Adam & Marissa Brandt. Thank you all for your support!

Volunteer Voice

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

by Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator (volparks@outagamie.org)

A huge shout-out to our volunteers of the past few months! Volunteers helped 100+ children make gifts for families and friends at our annual holiday event in December. A few hearty souls made our visitors feel warm and welcome at the sub-zero Winter Family Fun Day. Volunteer naturalists provided a fun learning environment for student field trips while others tromped through knee-deep snow to clean out wood duck boxes with high school students.

This winter we had to cancel our snowshoe races and reschedule a few school field trips. Above-freezing temperatures and rain melted our

Shortly after the new year started, we had a number of inquiries about volunteering. It has been heartwarming to know these individuals were drawn here because of what they read or heard about Mosquito Hill Nature Center. What about you? How is that New Year's resolution to give of your time to others coming along? We are waiting for your e-mail or phone call.

We could not do what we do without volunteers. They serve on the Friends of Mosquito Hill board. This newsletter is edited by volunteers. All our public programs are successful because of the countless hours put in by volunteers, not only during the event itself, but also for planning, set-up and clean-up. The staff at Mosquito Hill Nature Center is grateful for the diverse and skillful group of people who help us every day. Thank you!

snow. More fell, along with freezing drizzle and accompanied by below-zero temperatures. Throughout the crazy winter, our volunteers have been there for us.

I'm excited to report our fundraising committee is meeting regularly. It's wonderful to have an energetic group sharing ideas for new events. We are looking for ways to draw new visitors to the Hill, especially younger people and families who enjoy the outdoors. Simultaneously, we want to keep our regular supporters coming, while raising monies to support and enhance the nature center property. What can you do to help? Join us at one of our monthly

meetings. Share ideas with us. What events do you think would be fun? What programs are of interest to you? Any and all ideas are welcome.

Before long, the school buses will be pulling into our parking lot. Excited students are ready to experience all we have to offer. Staff has been working hard to update our field trip programs to align with state academic standards. That means we need to keep our volunteer naturalist team numbers up. We will support and train you. Just offer a love of nature and working with kids. Come out and join our team.



Hello!

Office coverage is needed when staff is out with field trips or working on projects. If you like to answer phones, greet visitors and maybe complete a few clerical jobs, we have a spot for you.

Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc.

Mosquito Hill Nature Center
N3880 Rogers Rd. • New London, WI 54961
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