



Sara Blood <hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org>

July Currents - News from MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge

1 message

MN Valley Refuge Friends <hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org>

Fri, Jul 16, 2021 at 11:10 AM

Reply-To: hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org

To: Sara Blood <hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org>



Wildflowers abound during an overcast day at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center. Submit your photos and videos taken at the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge for possible publication to hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org. Photo / Sara N. Blood, MVRF



Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Currents

Issue 12, Volume 2 | July 16, 2021



Doris Ikier

Executive Director's Note: *This month's letter is written by Doris Ikier, a volunteer at the refuge who is taking on the additional role of the Blufftop Nature Store's newest manager. Doris, thank you for all you do for the refuge!*

Dear Friends,

When I was four, my family started taking yearly trips across the country to visit national parks. We started camping when I was six because Holiday Inns were too expensive at \$6 per night for a family of five. By the time I was 13, we had visited 49 states and most of the Canadian provinces.

My dream career growing up was to become a national park ranger. I became a clinical laboratory scientist instead. I spent the last 20

years of my career in the Allina Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory at Abbott Hospital. In 1978, I spent five months working in a missionary hospital laboratory in Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia (Borneo).

When I came to the Bloomington Visitor Center to purchase my Lifetime Senior Pass in 2013, I met Judy Geck, a NWR visitor services ranger. She convinced me that MN Valley NWR was a great place to volunteer. Since my parents between them had volunteered 50,000 hours at a Mankato hospital, volunteering came naturally to me. Volunteering at the front desk and interacting with visitors was enjoyable, except during the changeover to \$80 Senior Passes.

Initially, the retail part of the Nature Store did not interest me. However, that has changed since I am succeeding Richard Sanford as the store manager of the Blufftop Nature Store. At MN Valley NWR, I have also volunteered with Nature's Notebook, EE classes, and been a trail ranger.

My favorite thing to do at the refuge is being Puddles, the NWR blue goose mascot. Since I am a MN Master Naturalist, in the past year I have also volunteered at Dakota County Parks (cross-country ski patrol and Wetland Health Evaluation Program) and Wild River State Park (campground host, native prairie seed collection, and bull snake research). *Maybe I am a park ranger after all.*

Since January, Refuge Friends board members and volunteers Barb Corriveau, Pat Graham, and I have been learning about the retail side of the Blufftop Nature Store. We have spent countless hours transferring inventory to ShopKeep, our new point of sale system, and learning how the system works. It should be much easier for volunteers to use. Some of the positive points of ShopKeep are:

- No need to count money at the beginning or end of the day
- Minimal interaction with customers during payments
- Barcodes on almost 100% of items
- Easy payments for MN Valley Refuge Friends memberships
- Beaver Bucks and other donations can be easily recorded

By using ShopKeep, we will have the ability to make Nature Store sales at events outside the refuge. With the advent of apps on phones and other devices, the future of sales is changing rapidly. The Blufftop Nature Store will be expanding its inventory to include MN Valley NWR stickers, acrylic magnets, and Rite in Rain notebooks.

A big Thank You to Richard Sanford from the MN Valley Refuge Friends and myself for all the untold hours that you have put into the Blufftop Nature Store! Your commitment to the store has shown your dedication and love for the refuge and our natural world. Thanks, Richard.

Doris Ikier
Store Manager
Blufftop Nature Store
Bloomington Education & Visitor Center

Volunteer alerts

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is looking for volunteers on Thursday, July 29, or Friday, July 30. Volunteers will run environmental education stations for Bloomington area fourth and fifth graders during field trips to the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge. During their time at the refuge, students will learn more about water conservation and stewardship. Volunteers will sign up for a four-hour shift from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on July 29 or 30. Volunteers will be given a brief training by a licensed educator who will be leading this program. Roughly 65 students will be attending each day. Teachers and chaperones will accompany the students. Please visit our [registration page](#) to learn more and to register. Contact us at hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org for any questions or special requests. Thank you!

Volunteers needed for visitor centers

Do you have a passion for the refuge and enjoy working with people and providing excellent customer service? Refuge staff would love to hear from you! There are opportunities for volunteers to assist in the Bloomington and Rapids Lake visitor centers to put those passions to use.

With the Minnesota Valley NWR visitor centers operating in careful consideration of COVID-19 safety and mitigation, the staff is seeking support at the information desks at both visitor centers and the Blufftop Nature Store at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center.

Current visitor center hours and days are limited and will continue to expand.

Interested? Here's a sampling of what volunteering at the information desks includes:

- Greet and interact with the public, and provide high-quality customer service to visitors
- Orientate visitors to trails, lands, and experiences across the refuge's 14,000 acres and 46+ miles of trails.
- Promote upcoming refuge events and activities
- Interact with groups that may be visiting or using facilities
- Answer telephone, route calls to staff
- Check out backpacks, binoculars, and other lending items to the public
- May include assorted light tasks while on duty
- Assist refuge staff with the sale of America the Beautiful federal recreation passes.

Volunteers may have the opportunity to work with Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends to support the Blufftop Nature Store operations at the Bloomington Visitor Center.

Training will be provided.

Interested? Contact refuge staff. Email MinnesotaValley@fws.gov or call 952-854-5900.

Refuge happenings

Listed events take place at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center, [3815 American Blvd. E, Bloomington, MN 55425](#). Exceptions will include location details.

Visitor centers update

Information tables will continue to be staffed in July Fridays-Sundays at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center, and Fridays and Saturdays at Rapid Lake Education and Visitor Center, from 12 to 4 p.m. We ask that you Recreate Responsibly while visiting. Consistent with CDC recommendations, people who are not fully vaccinated must continue to wear masks in crowded outdoor spaces. Please visit the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife [website](#) for the latest updates, including trail conditions.

Paddle with a Purpose

Date: Aug. 7

Time: 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Location: Como Lake (Lakeside Pavilion) - [1360 Lexington Pkwy N, St Paul, MN 55103](#)

Registration Link: [here](#)

Join Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge staff for a FREE paddling event on Saturday, Aug. 7, from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on the south side of the Como Park Lakeside Pavilion in St. Paul. Participants will learn the basics of paddling while exploring our local waterways. After returning to shore, help give back to our parks by picking up trash and contributing to the Mississippi River Plastic Pollution Initiative community science efforts to reduce litter that travels from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Social distancing practices will be in place. Please do what you can to keep yourself and others safe. All paddling and trash clean-up equipment will be provided. All ages and ability levels are welcome. This event will be held entirely outdoors. Dress for the weather. Restrooms are available. Registered participants will be notified if the event is canceled due to inclement weather. For more information, contact Christopher Dunham at christopher_dunham@fws.gov or (952) 858-0705.



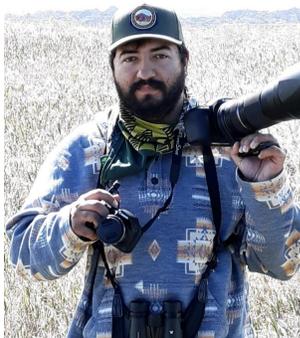
**Art by Mary Lingen
featuring Long
Meadow Lake in
Bloomington**

Confluence gallery features 'Nature Walk' by artist Mary Lingen July 12 - Sept. 3

"Nature Walk," an exhibition by artist Mary Lingen is the latest artist to be featured in the Confluence Gallery at the Bloomington Visitor Center. Her work is now available for viewing online at artistrymn.org/confluence-gallery. Mary's art is inspired by her daily walks in nature where she notices the changes in light, growth, and decline as the seasons change. She loves that the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge allows people to take time in nature surrounded by quiet, and the ability to breathe in the beauty and life of the natural world.

Mary will hold a live, virtual artist talk on Thursday, Aug. 5, at 6:30 p.m. Learn about Mary's creative process and the artwork featured in the online exhibition. Participants will be able to write in questions for the artist throughout the event. Link to the Aug. 5 artist talk [here](#).

Michael Kurtz joins MN Valley Refuge Friends board of directors



Michael Kurtz

Michael Kurtz, a longtime volunteer of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, has joined the board of Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, the mostly volunteer citizen group that supports the refuge. Kurtz is a self-taught photographer, wildlife tracker and serves as a cultural interpreter at [Hočokata Ti](#) (ho-cho-kah-tah-tee), the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's cultural center and gathering space for the Community's tribe members. Kurtz is an enrolled member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. Welcome, Michael, to the board! Thanks for all you do for the refuge!



Monarchs gather on blazing star, a purple perennial plant at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center. **Photo / Harris Mallory**

Wildlife watch: Marvelous monarchs

by Blake Matti
2021 Park Ranger Trainee

July is the first month that we can see a whole new generation of monarch butterflies! Did you know that the monarch butterfly is our state butterfly here in Minnesota? Let's celebrate their long journey north to visit us during the summer.

Monarchs go through a very specific life cycle that involves four stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Monarchs start to migrate in May from their winter home in Mexico's oyamel fir forest. In mid-summer, they arrive here and lay eggs on milkweed plants. The 100-300 eggs laid by the mother monarch will hatch after three to four days.

Next, the young monarchs enter the larva or caterpillar stage for 10-14 days. Throughout this time, the caterpillar will go through five different instars or phases between molting. The caterpillars molt or shed their skin to become bigger in their next life phase. The third phase is the pupa phase, where the monarch will form a chrysalis for 10-14 days. Though much more immobile in this stage, the monarch must undergo its metamorphosis to change from a crawling caterpillar to a winged adult.

Once emerged from the chrysalis, adult monarchs have one goal: to reproduce. These monarchs live only two to six weeks except for the last generation of the summer tasked with the migration back to Mexico to survive the winter. These monarchs will live up to eight or nine months!

Monarchs are significant here in Minnesota to our heritage and the survival of precious native wildflowers. As pollinators, monarchs visit various wildflowers to feed on nectar, carrying pollen from plant to plant as they feed.

There are many ways you can help these pollinators, starting with planting native milkweed plants. Monarch larvae only consume milkweed. If there isn't milkweed available, then we will not have monarchs. It's that simple! Consider planting milkweed, a low-maintenance native plant in your backyard, garden, or during volunteer planting opportunities. Second, avoid

pesticide use. Although many homeowners don't intend to harm monarchs, the chemicals impact the survival of all insects in the garden, including monarchs, bees, and other vital pollinators.

Finally, get involved! Here at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, we provide opportunities for individuals and communities to help create habitat for monarch butterflies. To learn more about community events or volunteer opportunities, visit [this link](#).

MN Valley Trust secures LCCMR grant

The Minnesota Valley Trust has been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) for "Mentoring the Next Generation of Conservation Professionals" on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The grant was appropriated by the 2021 Minnesota Legislature, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.

With the grant, the Trust and Refuge will build an extensive program of summer internships and full-time apprenticeship opportunities to work side-by-side with and learn from USFWS professionals on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District. They hope to attract students with diverse backgrounds, introduce them to the conservation field, and provide mentorship and job skills to these future resource professionals.

Participants will be provided paid positions with benefits, which is critical to making it possible for young people from lower-income communities to afford such an opportunity. They will design and deliver environmental education programs, plan and co-lead wildlife interpretive and nature-based activities, do community outreach, assist USFWS personnel with habitat restoration and enhancement projects, conduct biological surveys, develop and maintain visitor use amenities, and explore conservation-related career options. Some participants will experience outdoor activities like fishing, paddling, orienteering, birding, and hunting for the first time.

The ENRTF grant will fund seven full-time positions, three two-year apprenticeships (Refuge Biology, Community Outreach, and Visitor Services), and four one-year Teaching Internships (eight over two years). FWS and MVT will fund a two-year apprenticeship in District Operations, 12 high school internships on the Refuge's two-year SEAK Green Team, five summer internships in Biology, Maintenance, and Visitor Services, and a full-time Intern Coordinator.

A special thank you to our Refuge Friends members who responded to our May Action Alert by calling or emailing your state legislators to ask them to pass environment and natural resource finance bills.



Refuge welcomes new wildlife officer Jesse Travis

Jesse Travis joins Federal Wildlife Officer Scott Pariseau in serving Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District, nearby Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge and St. Croix Wetland Management District. Jesse served 11 years of active service with the Air Force as Security Forces (Military Police), doing tours in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. His last duty station was Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, where he worked as a Conservation

Jesse Travis

Law Enforcement Officer and helped maintain the only active Military Working Horse program for all military branches.

Travis then moved to Beale Air Force Base in California to serve as Federal Wildlife Officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He grew up in Texas and moved to Minnesota when he was 17. He is excited to return to Minnesota to continue his work as a wildlife officer at a national wildlife refuge. Jesse, his wife Megan, daughter Hazel, and son Forrest love to travel and go on as many adventures as they can. They are currently on a mission to visit all the national parks and are excited to visit Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends supported the refuge in its request to secure additional law enforcement for the refuge. In 2020, Refuge Friends President Randy Petzel testified at a hearing before a subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations for the House of Representatives.

Welcome, Jesse, to the refuge!

MN Valley Refuge Friends 'Meets Standards' of the Charities Review Council



Last week, Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends was notified that we have met the standards of the Charities Review Council. The council's Accountability Standards are a way for potential donors or funders to assess the internal strength of a nonprofit organization. This process helped us evaluate our strengths and work together to strengthen our organization in other areas, including governance, compliance, efficacy, ethics, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We are currently the only Refuge Friends organization affiliated with a national wildlife refuge that meets the standards. We are in good company with Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, Friends of the Mississippi, which also met the standards. The effort is part of a board goal to help establish Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends as a premier friends' organization.

Donate to MN Valley Refuge Friends



Our Contact Information

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Engaging People with Nature.

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

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