



Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends Currents

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Dear Friends:

Fall is my favorite time of the year. It is a pleasure to the senses, from warm and cozy sweaters to the bright blue sky and changing colors of leaves. I love the sounds of the crisp crunch of leaves underfoot, the crack of the bat during post-season baseball, and the ref's whistle at a football game.

Fall is a busy time at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Not only will you witness birders gazing overhead at migratory waterfowl on the wing, but also you will find leaf peepers enjoying a stroll among the trails, photographing and admiring the fall foliage.

You also experience a sort of giddiness in the air as children return to the Refuge on field trips to learn about the wonders of wildlife. In addition to the 10,000 children you helped to transport to and from our Refuge with the Blue Goose Bus Fund this last school year through your membership dues and donations, you are also helping to

support Refuge Staff with the addition of four members to the Education Team, whom you can learn more about further down in this newsletter. We hope you will consider renewing and continuing your support of this great work when you see the annual renewal notice either in email or in your mail.

And if you are looking for new ways to feast on what fall has to offer, there are opportunities galore at the Refuge that are also listed in this newsletter. A reminder that the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and the Rapids Lake Visitor Education & Visitor Center is open 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Tuesdays-Fridays.

Whatever the season brings, have a healthy and enjoyable fall.

See you soon back at the Refuge!

Sara N. Blood
Interim Executive Director
MN Valley Refuge Friends

Meet this year's new Refuge teaching team

This year's environmental education team will be receiving an immersive teaching experience. They will be trained in leading groups through experiential learning exercises and managing students in the classroom and outdoors while using the Refuge lessons. They will also have many professional development opportunities to learn about careers in environmental education, connecting people to the outdoors and working with various cultures in the Twin Cities. If you are interested in learning more about how your donations toward Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends can support this effort, please contact Sara Blood at sarablood.mnvrf@gmail.com.



Jazmyn Bernard

Jazmyn Bernard is a passionate anime lover, traveling enthusiast, and a strategic planner/organizer. Jazmyn graduated from Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources Ecology and Management. Despite four years of heavy course loads, Jazmyn led a research project on Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) and Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*). In addition to the owl research she helped plant trees to protect marshes and combat LSU's carbon footprint and worked to gather data on the endangered

Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*). Along with balancing her rigorous education and research schedule, Jazmyn managed to watch over 4,380 hours of anime, travel to Africa for a study abroad program, and buy an unnecessary amount of colored highlighters and planners. When she is not watching anime or participating in school activities, you can find her searching Google to find new recipes to cook or to find new adventures hidden wherever she may be. Jazmyn's goal in life is to use her knowledge and passions to connect the young and old to nature. To accomplish this goal, she hopes to become a "bridge" between science and the public, thus giving the public the knowledge and the tools they need to become warriors of sustainability.



Eliza Foli

Since her first field season in the prairies of Southwest Michigan, Eliza has greatly enjoyed spending as much time as she can working outdoors learning about wildlife and sharing her love of nature with others. She is excited to develop upon her teaching experience at the Minnesota Valley Refuge and bring the community closer to the natural beauty around them. In her free time, she enjoys hiking and looking for cool lichens and fungi, playing guitar and writing.



Laura Gould

Originally from Milwaukee, Laura Gould has called the Twin Cities home for the past five years. She attended Macalester College in St. Paul where she majored in Geography and Environmental Studies as well as minoring in Biology, which is her favorite of the three. After graduating, she spent a year serving at Tree Trust as a Minnesota GreenCorps member where her interest in environmental education grew while planting trees with elementary schoolers. Laura is a proficient Spanish speaker and enjoys riding her bike, winning watermelon eating contests, trail running, and trying out recipes for new baked treats. She is excited to be working at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and eager to play her part in connecting urban youth with the world around them.



Melissa Schneider

Mel spent 10 years as a digital communications specialist before leaving the office world behind and moving to an off-grid homestead in the Superior National Forest. There she spent five months caring for 38 Alaskan huskies, co-leading women's kayak retreats, and learning all manner of skills needed to live in the woods. She has since vowed to live her "one wild and precious life" serving mother Earth as much as she can. She joined the Minnesota Valley practicum team in April 2019 and is grateful to be here sharing a love of nature with others and working with amazing people. She's excited for the new school year, the new practicum team, and all of the great things that will be accomplished. When she's not at the Refuge, she can be found in her garden growing veggies and creating wildlife habitat, volunteering for Safe Hands Animal Rescue, hiking, cooking, paddling, biking, hammocking, cross-country skiing, curled up with a good book, and attempting to visit every Minnesota State Park.

What's new at the Nature Store

"Jewels of the Plains," a classic hardcover book about prairie wildflowers is on sale at 50% of the regular price.

There is also a new selection of pendants that display some of our more interesting Minnesota wildlife.

If you are looking for a unique hiking staff, be sure to check out the new, beautifully designed artisan hiking staffs that should be in place by mid-September. Not only will you have the difficulty of selecting a favorite, but also peace of mind as these staffs are built to take lots of abuse.

Remember: MN Valley Refuge Friends receive a 10% discount on most purchases at The Nature Store, which is located at the Bloomington Visitor Center.

Be sure to check out the store, which is open the same hours as the visitor center.

Volunteer action alerts

Hands across the river Sept. 14

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa is partnering with Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends and local businesses, organizations and community members to host a Saint Paul neighborhood cleanup on Saturday, Sept. 14, from 8:30-11:30 a.m. Help us remove trash and debris from shoreline and neighborhoods of the Mississippi River watershed near downtown St. Paul. Bags, gloves and maps of suggested clean-up zones are provided. To register and to learn more, please visit <https://www.conservationcorps.org/hands-across-the-river>.

Wanted: Front desk volunteers

With the visitor center expanded hours, we're in desperate need for volunteers to serve at our front desk and Nature Store. This is an exciting opportunity to get to know your Refuge while ensuring visitors from all over the world have a positive experience both here and throughout the metro. For more information, please contact Joel Vos at joel_vos@fws.gov.

Environmental education assistants

Volunteers are needed year-round to assist with environmental education programs for K-5 students. This fall, volunteers are needed to help students with insect studies, hiking, seed collection and more. Please contact Hanna McBrearty at hanna_mcbrearty@fws.gov to learn more.

Wildlife watch

Visitors can expect to see an increase in migrating waterfowl and other water birds. We have been seeing groups of American white pelicans riding the warm air thermals and cormorants flying low over the Rapids Lake Visitor Center. Most birds migrate at night, while ruby-throated hummingbirds and swallows migrate by day. At night on a quiet street near the river, take a listen: you may hear swans and geese flying over. Sumac and wild plums are now ripe. Sumac, also known as the lemonade tree, makes a spicy seasoning or tart drink. Wild plums are a smaller version of what you might find in a store. They are ready to pick when the color turns pink or reddish. The skins are quite tart but the meat of the fruit is deliciously sweet. Cedar waxwings have been visiting our plum trees in Bloomington to get their fill of the fall fruits. Keep watching for monarch butterflies. We will be capturing and tagging monarchs through the end of September at both visitor centers. Our volunteers and staff will be happy to instruct you in how you can help in the tagging process at our visitor centers.

Public events

All events are free to the public but may be canceled due to inclement weather. Events are held at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center unless otherwise noted. For more information, call 952-854-5900.

Art gallery

Artwork by Regina Flanigan will be featured Sept. 3-30.

Puppet show series

Saturday, Sept. 14, 10:30-11:15 a.m. - Way of the Monarch

Saturday, Oct. 26, 10:30-11:15 a.m. & 2-2:30 p.m. - Little Brown Bat (English with Spanish subtitles)

Saturday, Nov. 2, 2 p.m. - Skeletons in the Closet (Spanish/English)

Upcoming festivals

Bloomington Culture Fest: Saturday, Oct. 12, 1-4 p.m.

Save the date! Bat Festival: Oct. 26



Support your refuge

Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Contributions are tax-deductible. Please consider supporting us with your mailed today. Thank you!

Our Contact Information

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Save a tree! Receive this newsletter electronically by signing up at

hello@mnvalleyrefugefriends.org.