



President's Thoughts:

We had a VERY good year with the Confluence Chapter naturalist doing quite well. We increased the number of voluntary hours by 33%. The opportunities for Advanced training is shown in the 808 AT hrs accumulated this year by the Chapter naturalists. Hoorah!

We also had 4 interns receive their initial Certification and are active in their endeavors to learn more and to volunteer to meet the opportunities for helping and promoting nature!

At the beginning of my term as Chapter president, I encouraged each of us naturalists to mingle and get to know each other better. Throughout the year, I witnessed a greater commingling at meetings and

encouragement with each other at volunteer activities. I saw the revival of the spirit of the Chapter that was present when I first joined. I thank all of you for working together to make this Chapter strong and vibrant.

I pay attention to most of what the Confluence Chapter members have done for nature and the public and am awestruck with the amount and quality obtained. Read the Chapter Annual report with this consisting of only a fraction of what was accomplished.

I applaud the AT team for providing many AT training opportunities outside of those presentations at our meetings. As I encourage the new trainees on their first day of class to learn as much about nature this training is so that each can grow and get to know nature and then share that knowledge with the public (and each other, of course) This also applies to the rest of us.

There are a lot of behind the scenes activities to help Chapter members to succeed and to change challenges to opportunities. I am not going to start naming names because I know that I'd miss someone who well deserves special recognition. I will

only say that without them, the Chapter couldn't function properly. With them and all of you, I stand up and cheer and boast how we are a team to be reckoned with and as far as I am concerned, the top of all the chapters in the State of Missouri !!!

With this said, I say: Go forth and grow in your knowledge, grow in capitalizing on opportunities and most important, have FUN. doing it.
Steve B



Awards and Recognitions

New Initial Certification: Christine Evans & Kieran Lindsey in November 2023, and Aina Ferris in January 2024

Recertification: 2023: Laurie Mecham, Jane Porter, Kathleen Benckendorf, Tom Holt, Karin Foster and Christine Evans in November
Nicole Snyder, Alison Robbins, and Mary Meinhardt in December

Recertification in 2024: Bob Siemer and Aina Ferris in January

Lifetime Awards:

Pam Walsh —Gold 1000 hours on December 23, 2023

Mark Zupec —Pewter 500 hours on January 31, 2024

Joanne Keay—Bronze 250 hours December 14, 2023

**Congratulations
to All !!!**



Kieran Lindsey left St. Louis at 21 to travel and live across the U.S. and abroad. She returned in 2018 and currently lives in Chesterfield. A lifelong interest in all creatures great and small led her to study wildlife biology at Texas A&M. While in Texas she met a colleague who was one of the original founders of the Master Naturalist program, and promised herself if she managed to stay in one place long enough she would add “Master Naturalist” to her resume.



Who knew? Our newest member Emily Brower is a professional naturalist. With a BS in Environmental Science and her focus on Fish & Wildlife, Emily's goal in our chapter is to become a better conservationist and find the best people & places to achieve that. Her favorite activity is hiking...especially wherever apex predators live. We have a brave Confluence member looking for Black Bear or Cougar. What about Bison? If anyone is interested in trip planning, grab Emily at the next meeting and get talking! King snakes & Prairie Chickens are also on her list. Locally, she might consider the weevils at the Extension Native Habitat Garden.



Our new chapter Vice President, Karin Foster has a long history of gardening, outdoor education, teaching, and community service. Far & wide in the St. Louis Region...from Iowa to Peoria to Wildwood & Weldon Spring to Midtown, Downtown & her own composting worm farm, Karen has earned her degrees with a wealth of badges, name tags & longtime accolades. Karin started as a child-in-the-woods, a family-camper and fisherman, a St. Louis Master Gardener, Forest Relief volunteer, Babler State Park native garden volunteer, and stints with the Butterfly House, Missouri Botanical Garden and long walks with pina colodas. Most recently she has learned Bluebird Monitoring. Are we done yet? NO! Karen, Alberta & Nancy Newcomer are learning Deer Resistant Gardening at Babler from Shaw Coach Scott Woodbury. AND...She's awaiting her Eagle Scout - Scouts of Merit Badge for community service.





Missouri Master Naturalist 2024 Certification Pin Barred Owl *Strix varia*

The Barred Owl is easily identified by its large eyes and rounded head without ear tufts. It has a dark barred pattern on the upper chest and dark streaking below. Both sexes have the same brown upper-parts with irregular white spots. In flight you may see the six or seven bands of lighter brown or grayish tan coloration on the wings. These owls have grayish white eyebrows highlighting their dark irises. Their range extends throughout the Eastern United States and also into the Pacific northwest region of Oregon, and Washington to SE Alaska.

Barred owls are highly opportunistic, and will eat small snakes, frogs, crayfish, salamanders, and fish. Much of their prey will be small mammals such as immature rabbits and voles, shrews, and mice. There are records of screech owls and northern flickers having been caught but owl pellets usually contain nothing larger than a medium sized woodpecker.

These owls are non-migratory and stay in the same area throughout the year with the female being most territorial. Ideal habitat consists of mature forests including dry upland woodlands to wooded swamps.

Barred owls have only one brood per season. They exhibit little skill in nest building and nesting cavities may contain only a few owl feathers. Two or three eggs are laid, often a day apart and eggs hatch in about 30-33 days. By the third week of life, natal down is

replaced with new down feathers and the start of wing feathers. If the nest is too small, owlets may fall in to the ground but can usually climb their nest tree if it has rough bark. The owlets will learn to fly at 12 to 15 weeks and will stay with their parents until about September when the parents start vocalizing and defending the late autumn territory once again.

The population of barred owls in Missouri appears to be stable. They survive well on 40 acres when wooded corridors allows for safe travel. Barred owls fulfill an important niche as one of the apex predators.

Information for this article was summarized from the following article.

<https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/MasterNaturalist/Docs/2024Pin-BarredOwl.pdf>

Advanced Training (AT) Calendar through June 2024

Check the AT calendar for dates and times. Field trip dates and times will be forthcoming on the AT calendar.

FEBRUARY: Meeting Speaker: Phenology

MARCH: Meeting Speaker: St. Louis County Parks Blueways Trails

APRIL: Meeting Speaker: Missouri Bats iive bats
Field trip: Tri-Chapter Missouri State Nursery – Licking MO (Thursday, March 20 at 12:30 p.m.)

MAY: Meeting Speaker: Rare Missouri Orchids

JUNE: Annual Picnic

Field trip: Larry Markley - prairie, Hannibal MO

The Invisible

by Jo Ann Shew

Breathe,
Air light, floating,
Our life line.
Often unnoticed as it does its work.
Let the airiness take us,
Let the air find you.

Heaviness of trees, mountains, oceans.....
All a part of our landscape.
But it is the air that gives us life.
Breathe here for all and those close by.
Let it find the heart, the target.
Air surrounds and inhabits the portals for life.

Nothing more to say nor do.
It is the air that says enough, pause, and breathe, no need for more.
Settle in, let air float around, in, above and below.
Let air raise us, inflate us as best it can.
It will sneak around the heaviness of life....

Maybe you will catch a breath when you see a smile
Or hold the little one that has a sixth sense and speaking to your heart.
Maybe it is the dirt in the finger nails that makes more space for flowers.
Maybe the air is between rain drops of today or the life we are in,
Or maybe the air from the flutter of the Monarch wings in Mexico that has
Come to touch your cheek.

Find the breath in the smile,
Whether the young or the elder
with their wrinkled, wise knowing smile,
Laughter is surely a breathe of fresh air.
The smile is the arrow
the target my heart.
Invisible Life all Around.



For the love of the outdoors is a seed
 That once sown never dies,
 But always grows and grows
 To an enduring and ever increasing
 source of contentment.

Gertrude Jekyll



**Confluence Book Club
 Fourth Monday of the Month at 6:30 p.m.**

Weldon Spring Interpretive Center, Meeting Room 1

The AT committee is proud to introduce the Confluence Chapter Master Naturalist Book Club! We met for the first time on January 22 (via Zoom, due to freezing rain). Six members met to discuss Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Everyone enjoyed reading and discussing the ecology of mosses, the amazing ways they reproduce, and their interactions with animals such as waterbears. Different ways of seeing were also discussed, like indigenous ways that involve touch, and deep observational ways of seeing that we naturalists do. Much liked was Kimmerer's description of moss as a tiny forest, with all the aspects of a forest, but scaled WAY down.

We plan to meet in person (weather permitting!) in February to discuss *Fen, Bog, and Swamp*. We will meet on the third Monday in May due to Memorial Day. All meetings are at 6:30 p.m. If you have book suggestions, please send them to Michelle Davis, michelledavisart@yahoo.com. Happy reading!

Upcoming Meeting Dates & Book Selections:

February 26	<i>Fen, Bog, and Swamp: A Short History of Peatland Destruction and Its Role in the Climate Crisis</i> , by Annie Proulx
March 25	<i>Beaverland: How One Weird Rodent Made America</i> , by Leila Philip
April 22	<i>Why Birds Sing: A Journey Into the Mystery of Bird Song</i> , by David Rothenberg
May 20	<i>Forest Unseen: A Year's Watch in Nature</i> , by David George Haskell

There's a lot going on right now in the area of Communications.
 Here's a report from Amana Templer on behalf of a grant program recently obtained from the Neighborhood Leaders Academy:

Through Naturalist participation in the Extension and UMSL sponsored Neighborhood Leadership Academy, we were awarded a \$2500 grant for the project "Increasing Master Naturalist Membership Through Youth Mentorship". Those involved with the three aspects of this project (Youth Naturalists, Training Scholarships, Marketing) are moving forward quickly to implement projects, programs, and changes for the better.

A Youth Naturalist pilot program, based at Francis Howell North High School (FHN), is being developed by MMN Intern and FHN Language Arts teacher, Ashley Seiss as a pipeline to diversifying the Missouri Master Naturalists and engaging a broader range of youth in nature conservation. Ashley is currently fleshing out the framework of the 10-month program, based on Master Naturalist core-training and the FHN-approved kick-off title, "Seedfolks" by Gary Soto. We are expecting to implement the program in August for the 2024/2025 school year.

A portion of the grant has been set aside as need-based scholarships for TriChapter training, and will be split evenly between Confluence, Great Rivers, and Miramiguoia. The respective Presidents of our three Chapters, Extension Field Specialist of Horticulture Eli Isele, and Core-Training committee members, met to determine the best way to award these funds. At this time, one scholarship has been awarded for the spring training to a trainee choosing the Confluence Chapter.

The Communications Committee held a kick-off meeting via Zoom in January. Jerry Barnabee joined us to help everyone better understand his role with the website. Jerry has already updated the initial framework (or structure) of the Confluence Chapter website to ensure consistency across the statewide Chapters. Our Interns Jessica Eilerman, Kieran Lindsey, and Ashley Seiss are serving on the Communications Committee with Mary Meinhardt, our lovely Newsletter Lead, and our just as lovely Facebook Lead, Gail Gagnon, to provide updated content, be a website liaison, and ensure social media is working smarter for us. These Interns will utilize the volunteer hours for their Capstone Project. Additionally, Nicole Snyder and Kathleen Benckendorf will provide us with advice, ideas, and other observations from their perspectives leading Monarch Madness and Membership.



Plan Now for Spring Projects

Please consider helping us with some of the following Confluence Projects! Contact names and phone numbers are included.

QUAIL RIDGE PARK - PRAIRIE GARDEN & RAIN GARDEN

Wednesday mornings 8:30 - 11:30 AM Come whenever - Leave whenever

Starting early April depending on weather.

A fun group of old timers really need support! (WE TAKE yack-it-up BREAKS!) Identifying native plant leaves & flowers and non-natives in a LARGE public garden. This public garden has been a chapter project since 2007. It is along a 2,000 ft. stretch of a STCC Park walking/hiking/biking trail. The community loves us & thanks us as they exercise (with dogs). We have fun. AND...We are old gals! Who need help! maintaining this public space. A good essential learning opportunity for naturalists.... We identify plants, birds and bugs as we pull weeds and water plants . An essential place to learn for new ecology/environmental students. Dogs & kids invited. More info: Call Leslie 636-856-3041c / 636-398-8809h (heeeeeelp)

Nature Explore Classroom at Towne Park : Would you enjoy spending a morning in nature, helping young children to admire and observe the many impressive aspects of the natural world? Our Confluence chapter built a Nature Explore Classroom at Towne Park , a St. Charles County Park. Field trips are organized for the children by their school or group to which they belong. The St. Charles County Park system schedules the trips and then sends out the dates to the MMN. There is always at least one or two St. Charles County Park Rangers or other employees present.

The groups of children rotate through stations in and around the classroom. Examples of stations are observing turtles, observing what lives in the lake, and observing insects, rocks, and birds. It is fun to see the children's excitement and enthusiasm during the morning.

These field trips usually occur in April and May; so for two months, the Nature Explore Classroom is buzzing with activity. We don't find out the dates until late March, but we hope you will leave some mornings available in your calendar to come and help. If you are unsure what to do, you can certainly observe the first day you come without needing to participate much. The children are usually aged 5 – 9. You could help a child to begin a lifelong fondness for the great outdoors. Come and give it a try! If you have any questions or want to be added to the list of possible volunteers, give Connie Campbell a call at 636 875 4092 or send an email to conniencampbell@gmail.com. We will see you there!

Babler State Park

The Confluence Chapter manages 2 gardens at Babler.State Park. Alberta, Nancy & Karin are working hard to refurbish the shade native garden along side the visitor center. Around the "Mr. Babler Monument," closer to the entrance is another garden that needs periodic weeding. Contact Alberta if you can help 636-399-6567.

The Main Street Garden located at 524 S. Main Street in St Charles, is a 4,000 sq ft. lot that was transformed into a native garden in 2018. It is now a partnership with St. Charles County Master Gardeners, who maintain the garden together with Confluence members. We meet weekly on Thursday mornings from Mid April through September. At the end of the gardening season, we create "Mother Nature" from grasses, spent blooms and various additional treasures we find. She has become a masterpiece that visitors enjoy. In 2022, the garden was awarded a "Nature Garden of Excellence" through the Missouri Prairie Foundations's Grow Native Program. This a fun opportunity to volunteer with the Master Gardeners. Please contact Martha Hessler if you are interested in helping maintain this garden. (marthaannhessler@gmail.com) She will put you on the weekly email notice.



Progress South Elementary School (A One Day Project)

Kids at this school have established a native garden. With a once a year Spring Clean Up, we cut down the dried plants after Winter subsides & larvae have emerged....April or May.... just one morning....9:00 -12 in O'Fallon near Hwy K. Please let us know you are interested in helping during this one-day project. Contact: Leslie Limberg 636-398-8809.



BLUEBIRD MONITORING

The Confluence Chapter has been monitoring bird boxes in the parks since 2007. We are now experts in building & installing bluebird boxes, monitoring weekly and keeping track of data for 4 STCC Park trails. Trails are in St. Charles, Wentzville, Defiance & Troy. If you would like to tag along to see baby birds in all growing stages and learn the science of Bluebird Monitoring, call Amanda @ 636-233-1485. We have a not-for-the-faint-of-heart March - October training program for those who have a once a week regular weekday morning free. This is a serious long term commitment. Birds are fragile and at risk. We will monitor these boxes forever.

STREAM TEAM #3612

Sat. March 16, 9:00 -1:00 (Stay tuned for weather changes)

Lost Valley Trailhead on Hwy 94 (a few miles past Weldon Spring Interpretive Center)

A playful day in 2 locations on the Femme Osage Creek!

This is an historic testing site as part of the state-wide program. Look for important water critters that live among rocks. Aquatic macroinvertebrates are gathered in a net & identified. Water is tested and stream ecology studied. These bugs are fascinating. All data is collected and sent to MDC Stream Team database. Bring your curious kids & spouses. Special training for those interested in fish & wildlife available. Our own Gary Wester is a longtime pro at this. Contact Gary (636-294-2089) for more details. All invited.

To register and find more information about all these events, visit: partnersfornativeplanting.org

PARTNERS FOR NATIVE LANDSCAPING 2024 SPRING SERIES

PART I	PART II	PART III
SPRING WEBINAR SERIES FEB 20 - Mar 20 10am-12pm St. Louis County Health Center Free with Registration	IN-PERSON WORKSHOP & PLANT SALE Mar 23, 8am-2pm Missouri Botanical Garden 4645 Shaw Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63112 \$10 with Registration	NATIVE PLANT FAIR APR 28, 10am-2pm Missouri Botanical Garden 4645 Shaw Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63112 Free with Registration

Plant America Garden Expo 2024
 JOIN US FOR FAMILY FUN FOCUSING ON GARDENING
 NATURE, WATER CONSERVATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY!

KIDS ACTIVITIES
 SPEAKERS
 DEMONSTRATIONS
 NATURE TOURS
 FOOD TRUCKS

VENDORS
 CRAFTS
 FLOWERS
 VEGETABLES
 PLANTS FOR SALE
 FUN FOR ALL

Saturday, May 18, 2024 10 am - 3 pm
 Weldon Spring Site Interpretive Center - 7295 S. Highway 94, St. Charles, MO
 Hosted by Weldon Spring Site Interpretive Center, O'Fallon Garden Club, Boone Country Garden Club, Jardin du Lac Garden Club and MOGreenFuture
 PlantAmericaGardenExpo@aol.com 314-750-1373

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Missouri Master Naturalist Program on June 7 & 8, 2024 in Columbia, Missouri

Be Sure to Mark Your Calendars



The World Hasn't Seen Cicadas Like This Since 1803

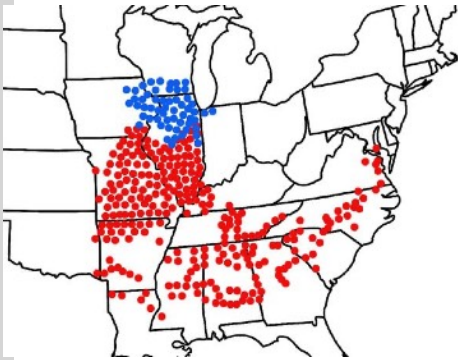
Brood XIX and Brood XIII will both emerge this spring. The last time these bugs showed up at the same time in the United States, Thomas Jefferson was president.

If you're in the Midwest or the Southeast, they will be more plentiful than ever. Or at least since the Louisiana Purchase. This will be in addition to the emergence of our annual cicadas. After this spring, it'll be another 221 years before the broods, which are geographically adjacent, appear together again.

More than one trillion cicadas will appear in forested areas, including urban green spaces, and will have higher numbers than agricultural regions. One trillion cicadas, each just over an inch long, would cover 15,782,828 miles if they were laid end-to-end. Or to the moon and back 33 times.

In most cases, said Floyd W. Shockley, an entomologist and collections manager at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, the cicadas will live about a month, and die not far from where they emerged. But since they're "not great flyers and even worse landers," cicadas often end up on sidewalks and city streets, where they can be squished by people or cars and "could conceivably make things slick."

"In urban areas, there will be sufficient numbers to necessitate removal of their bodies," he said. "But rather than throwing in the trash or cleaning up with street sweepers, people should consider them basically free fertilizer for the plants in their gardens and natural areas."



Brood XIII is shown by blue dots, and Brood XIX is shown with red dots.

Credit: Gene Kritsky, Mount St. Joseph University

The first wave of periodical cicadas will show up in Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Southern Missouri, southern Illinois and western Kentucky will follow. Finally, the cicadas will appear throughout central and northern Missouri and Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Iowa.

All told, these areas will be buzzing for about six weeks as the insects fly around looking to mate and deposit their eggs into slits they cut into tree branches. Then they'll die, bringing with them an unforgettable smell, described by Dr. Shockley as like rotting nuts, as their bodies decay.

The insects are clumsy fliers, making them easy prey for predators like birds. They don't bite, sting or carry any diseases, and they serve as natural tree gardeners.

The holes they leave behind help aerate the soil and allow rainwater to get underground and nourish tree roots in hot summer months. The slits they make in trees can cause some branches to break, and the leaves then turn brown in a process known as "flagging." But it's like a natural pruning, and when the tree grows the branch again, the fruit will be larger. The cicadas' rotting bodies provide nutrients that trees need.

"They're very important to the ecosystem in the eastern deciduous forest," Professor Kritsky said, referring to the [forest ecosystem](#) in the eastern half of the country.

John R. Cooley, a biology professor at the University of Connecticut, said his best advice for people living in the regions of dual emergence is to let the bugs be.

"The forest is where they live," he said. "They are a part of the forest. Don't try to kill them. Don't try to spray insecticide, all that kind of thing. That's just going to end badly because there are more than you could possibly kill with insecticide, you'd end up killing everything."

If you have delicate plants you want to protect, Professor Cooley said, use special netting created for that purpose.

While the prospect of the trillion cicadas that the dual emergence is expected to bring might sound horrifying to some, Dr. Shockley emphasized the awe of this rare natural event.

Also Note :

- The two broods (XIII and XIX) are actually composed of seven different species.
- These periodic broods emerge in April and May (when soil reaches 64 degrees) , while our annual cicadas emerge in late summer.
- Central Illinois (Springfield, IL) will be the only narrow overlap area blessed with both broods at approximately the same time.
- Consider doing a few internet searches to learn more facts and to be part of the citizen science studying these noisy critters.
- As the map shows, we in Missouri will experience Brood XIX.



Milkweed Pod Madness

My journey to free the seed from the floss

by Phil Rahn

Imagine this; going out on a crisp, late summer morning, finding a growth of tall common milkweed plants, seeing they are all loaded with big green seed pods just waiting to be picked. Collecting them is so gratifying, and they fill up your bucket so quickly; job well done. Now what do you do? Besides the mess with the white, sticky sap, and the mass of crawling milkweed beetles, you need to begin the journey to free the seed. This was my situation several years ago when I began to get serious about collecting wildflower seeds. Those big green pods turned out to be fluff bombs. Of course, the correct term for the fluff is milkweed floss, and it goes everywhere.

The importance of the milkweed plant and the interest in preserving and propagating the specie is that the Monarch butterfly depend on it to complete its life cycle. I encourage the reader to search out and read the many resources about this fascinating butterfly, and its yearly journey.



There are several types of milkweed (*Asclepias*) in our area, and I like to find and collect pods from three of them. Common milkweed (*A. syriaca*), Swamp (*A. incarnata*), and Butterfly Weed (*A. tuberosa*) are my favorite. They all have a seed pod that splits open in the fall and releases the tufted seeds into the wind. The floss acts like a little parachute attached to each seed, it catches the wind and is carried far and wide. This is all well and good for seed dispersal, but when one wishes to harvest the seed without all the fuss, I mean fluff, special methods are required.

Let's go over a few of the basics of where, when, and how to harvest pods. Spend some time driving or walking around your neighborhood, and parks, or ask around (County Agents are good) for information on where some milkweed stands can be found. Be sure to ask permission if you want to collect on private property. Wait until late summer when the leaves and pods turn light yellow, or the pods begin to split open. It is important to pick the pods before they open and spill their stuff, or fluff. I find that if you hear a "pop" when you press on the pod seam with your thumb, it is ready to pick. Lay the green pods out on a tarp or plastic sheet in your living room or garage and allow to dry (or wherever). Some pods will go ahead and crack open, but will not lose fluff if there is no wind, so turn the fan on low. Dried pods can be stored in a burlap bag until fully dry and held for several months. To remove the seed from the pods by hand they need to be worked on before fully dry and crisp. Using your hand, hold the pod with the split side up and use your thumb to push the brown seeds out of the pod and off the floss, which is still packed in the shell. This can be fun or not, and some floss is bound to be released into your nose, hair, and/or sweater. If this method fails, or you just have too many pods to deal with, you will need to make a machine that will do it with the touch of a button.

This is where I was several years ago when I found a great source of milkweed pods. I just knew there was a better way, so I searched the literature and the Xerces Society web site for information on harvesting and processing milkweed pods. Of great help was "Milkweeds, A Conservation Practitioner's Guide", The Xerces Society, Brianna Borders and Eric Lee-Mader. I got a few ideas and began to cobble together a few ideas involving wood, wire screen, spinning blades, and a shop vac. And so, with some shop skills, a fertile imagination, and a welding machine, I began to make a series of machines, dubbed the "R" series that would take the dried pods whole, remove the floss, and separate the seed from the trash. The early versions (R1 -R7), used either hand, or a power drill to turn blades or a rotor to crunch up the pods, and a shop vac to remove the floss. By the time I had the R8 in operation, Bob Lee came by and offered me the opportunity to receive around 20 large bags (40 gal trash bags) of dried common milkweed pods. "Sure", I said. What was I thinking; I had to come up with a machine that was all electric to process that many pods in a reasonable amount of time (my lifetime). And so, after three years of trial-and-error, the "R9" was born.



The "R9 Vacu-Rotary" milkweed pod processing machine consists of a power-driven vertical rotor over an expanded steel screen that crushes the pods and allows all material to be drawn into a cyclone seed/floss separator by a high-capacity air fan. The floss is collected in a mesh bag, and the seed falls through a screen in a conical seed collection area.

The pod trash collects on the screen and is removed from the cleaner with a shop vac. There is a little bit of work, some noise and dust, but it is high-throughput and can be operated by one person. I have used the R9 for several years now and have cleaned a lot of milkweed seed, besides a lot of other wildflower seed with lesser machines. This is fun to do, and I thank everyone who has helped collect seed, and those who helped plant seed. If you need seed for any reason, just let me know.

Once you have some milkweed seed or any other wildflower seed, you can establish a pollinator garden by a couple of methods. On a large-scale area, say a half-acre or more, the seed can be scattered over the surface of the area during the winter months before March. On a smaller scale, or even in a garden, the seed will need to be winterized before starting in pots indoors in January or February, and then transplanted into the area in April. Winterizing breaks the dormancy of the seed and can easily be done by adding a little damp sand or water to the seed in a plastic bag or jar and placing it in a refrigerator for about six weeks. Remove the seed and dry before planting in pots under some grow lights.

I hope you will get out and enjoy the great outdoors and while you are at it, find, identify, and collect a few of your favorite wildflowers. You don't need any fancy equipment to dry and clean the seed, just dry, smash, and plant it all. Grow them in your garden or give them as gifts and feel good that you are playing an important part in protecting the pollinators.



From Our Members



Can you tell the difference?
Native mantid egg case on the house
Non-native mantid egg case on a shrub.
from Scott Barnes

This is a slow time of year for nature activities. I don't have anything recent. I did watch several 'little brown birds' in my front garden, employing their hunt and peck techniques in search of food. I left leaves on the ground there and only cut back the tallest native plant stems. Some plants are still carrying seeds, and the birds appreciated that. My garden was providing value after the growing season.
Frank



I go to Nature to be soothed & healed.
And to have my senses put in order.
- John Burroughs



From Jerry & Jeanice Kaiser
"After three years at Town Park, we had success in 2023 with nesting pairs having 10 fledglings. The motto is "Build It, Persistence, Maintenance, and They Will Come"

The caterpillar was one of those rarities at the Monarch Madness Event in September 2024.

In The News:

- Jeff Briggler, MO State Herpetologist was featured for his work at St. Louis Zoo in efforts to restore the Hellbender: <https://archive.org/details/2024JanMOConservationist/page/4/mode/2up>
- Be Thankful for the Flies in the Garden: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IIsTyHD3LUQzOyFewhi4iIQRrQ8YHoxj/view>
- Small Mammals & Missouri's Prairies: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OMjJkq1AHE5JLT-ZubGL4Pr8i50w5cIf/view>
- Lots to learn, experience, and volunteer at Audubon Riverlands: <https://riverlands.audubon.org/visit>
- Rare birds are visiting Missouri (limpkins and boobies): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/372321769900919/>



Thank You!

- Thank you Steve Baldwin for your dedication and enthusiast leadership as our Chapter President
- Thank you Deborah Mouton and Frank Dvorak for engaging new leadership in the formation of our new Confluence Book Club. What a great addition to our chapter!
- Thank you to Michelle Davis and Shannon Worsham for taking on the leadership roles for the Book Club.
- Thank you to all who submitted stories, photos and poems to the Newsletter. We could not do it without you.



Our Leadership

- President—Stephen Baldwin
- Vice President—Karin Foster
- Secretary—Emily Brower
- Treasurer—Beth Zona
- Advanced Training—Deborah Moulton & Frank Dvorak
- Volunteer Coordinator—Alberta McGilligan & Jane Porter
- Membership Services—Kathleen Benckendorf
- Chapter Librarian—Amanda Templer
- Facebook Page—Gail Gagnon
- Newsletter—Mary Meinhardt, Leslie Limberg, Elaine Browning

Advisors:

Rebecca O'Hearn, MDC,
Rebecca.O'Hearn@mdc.mo.gov

Matt Herring,
University of Missouri Extension,
herringm@missouri.edu

Eli Isele

University of Missouri Extension,
elehuisele@missouri.edu

Project Leaders:

- Confluence Chapter Stream Team #3612—Gary Wester
- Babler State Park—Alberta McGilligan
- Quail Ridge Prairie Demo and Rain Garden—Leslie Limberg
- Bluebird Monitoring—Connie Campbell and Leslie Limberg
- Nature Explore Classroom Education—Connie Campbell
- O'Fallon Public Works Project—Frank Dvorak
- Monarchs & Pollinators Network—Bob Lee and Tom Holt
- Birding Club—Gail Gagnon
- Main Street Garden Martha Hessler and Tom Nagle
- Cuiivre River and Don Robinson State Park—Bob Coffing
- Outdoor Classroom, Frontier Middle School—Jeanice and Jerry Kaiser
- Amphibian Monitoring —Steve Teson

- Native Seed Collection & Distribution -Phil Rahn and Leslie Limberg
- Native Flower Potting & Distribution Alberta McGilligan
- Rockwoods Reservation Native Garden --Karin Foster and Nancy Newcomer
- Belleview Farms—Alberta McGilligan
- Progress South Middle School Gardens Clean Up —Leslie Limberg
- Native Habitat Garden at University Extension at St. Peters—Leslie Limberg

Past Presidents

- Connie McCormack
- Scott Barnes
- Jerry Linquest
- Cliff Parmer
- Leslie Limberg
- Alberta McGilligan
- Martha Hessler
- Alison Robbins

The Confluence Chapter was founded in 2005 as the fifth Master Naturalist chapter in Missouri.

The chapter was formed by twenty-four individuals from St. Charles County, St. Louis County, and St. Louis City after completing the Missouri Master Naturalist™ training program. We share a common interest in nature and in volunteering to help protect, preserve and restore Missouri's natural heritage. Most of our members live in the region west of the Missouri-Mississippi Confluence and from both north and south of the Missouri River.

We operate according to the bylaws and operating handbook of the Missouri Master Naturalist Program developed by the Missouri Department of Conservation and University of Missouri Extension. Visit us at <http://www.mmnconfluence.org>