

WISCONSIN Master Naturalist



NEWS

FALL 2012

Education, training, and service for volunteers and communities

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Based on successful Master Naturalist programs found in more than 25 states, the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program (WIMN) will offer education, training, and service opportunities for adult volunteers interested in natural resources.

WIMN certified volunteers will provide service in three areas: Education/ interpretation, stewardship, and citizen science. To become a certified Master Naturalist Volunteer, participants must first take a 40-hour training course. Then 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of advanced training a year must be completed to maintain certification.

The WI Master Naturalist Program is on track to launch in the spring of 2013. The draft curriculum is being piloted, reviewed, and revised. Pilot training courses in Madison and Ashland are described in this newsletter.

Please contact Kate Reilly, WI State Director, if you would like to be notified when training opportunities are available near you:

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PILOT VOLUNTEER TRAINING COURSES

◆Madison, summer 2012

By all measures the WI Master Naturalist Volunteer Training Course piloted in Madison this summer was a great success. The University of WI Arboretum (Paul Borowsky – lead instructor) and the Aldo Leopold Nature Center (Betsy Parker – lead instructor) hosted the course. Classes were held on Monday evenings and covered the following topic areas: geology, ecology, plant communities, wildlife, interpretation, water, aquatic life, and human influences.



WIMN volunteer trainees exploring plant communities

Guest speakers included:

- Richard Slaughter, Director, UW-Madison Geology Museum
- Marian Farrior & Molly Murray, UW Arboretum Outreach & Education

The WI Master Naturalist Program is a program of the University of WI Extension with support from the WI Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Foundation of WI.

- Scott Craven & Jamie Nack, UW Extension Wildlife Specialists
- Brenda Lackey, Assoc. Prof., Natural Resource Interpretation & Communication, UW Stevens Point
- Marian Farrow & Molly Murray, UW Arboretum Outreach & Education
- Christal Campbell, WDNR Aquatic Invasives Specialist & Laura Herman, WDNR Citizen Lake Monitoring Specialist
- William Gartner, Lecturer, UW Madison, Geography/Population Growth

Two Saturday field trips were designed to reinforce classroom learning. The first was in the Baraboo area with tours of the International Crane Foundation and the Aldo Leopold Legacy Center/ Shack, and a geology walk at Devil's Lake State Park. John Magnuson, UW Professor Emeritus in Zoology and Limnology, led the second trip, an exploration of the waters and water life in the Lake Wingra watershed.

A major component of the course is a required service-learning activity called a capstone project. Volunteers work in groups to develop and complete a service project. Results of these projects are presented on the last day of class. These capstone projects are a bridge to volunteering, introducing participants to informal science education sites that need volunteers; allowing them to undertake useful and challenging projects; providing an opportunity to develop new skills; and ensuring that they use their newly acquired knowledge and skills with mentorship from instructors.

Course Evaluation

A post-course assessment was completed by participants. This is what we learned:

- 76% of participants were female
- 68% between 50-69 years of age
- 37% were retired; 21% were teachers; 21% worked as natural resource professionals
- 53% had advanced degrees (Bachelors +)
- 79% had had some type of formal training in some or all of the course topics

- 95% had done volunteer work in the past.
- When asked to rank the main reasons why they took the training course, they responded (in order of importance):
 1. to increase their knowledge about natural resources;
 2. to find new resources;
 3. to meet people with shared interests.



WIMN course participants complete a macroinvertebrate survey, Summer 2012.

This is what we learned about participants' course experiences:

- All thought the course "covered" or "sort of" covered what they expected.
- All agreed or strongly agreed that the course met our objective of providing a broad overview of the state's natural resources and processes that affect them.
- Most (56%) thought the curriculum covered the essential information for new volunteer naturalists to know. Good suggestions for additions or changes were offered.
- 84% thought their awareness of available sources of information about Wisconsin natural resources increased moderately to substantially.
- After taking the course, 52% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident in choosing a volunteer opportunity related to natural resources, and 84% said they were more confident about doing a volunteer project related to natural resources.

◆Ashland, Fall 2012

The second pilot training course began in Ashland on Wednesday, October 3rd and will run through December 12th. It is being hosted by the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (Lead Instructor – Becky Sapper), Northland College (Lead Instructor – Clayton Russell), and the Cable Museum of Natural History (Lead Instructor – Emily Stone).

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION!

Two of our recent training course graduates have already turned their Capstone Projects into public programs. Karen Freitag presented a talk, *Living with Wildlife*, for the Hausmann Nature Center in Lapham Peak State Park. It was the first program presented at this new facility. The program objective was to raise awareness about the rapid population growth of Waukesha County and resulting impacts on surrounding habitat and wildlife. In addition, attendees learned how to live harmoniously with wildlife and how to get involved with citizen science projects.

On November 8 and 15, Marian Farris (with assistance from Master Naturalist Volunteer, Amy Jo Dusick) will hold workshops on *Patterns in Nature* at the UW Arboretum. The workshops will cover the function of pattern and how they occur in nature. Indoor and outdoor activities for both children and adults will include science, math, and art components.

GET INVOLVED!

There are many ways to get involved with the WI Master Naturalist Program:

- Take a volunteer training course and provide education/interpretation, stewardship, or citizen science service in your community.
- Become an instructor to teach the WI Master Naturalist training courses at your host organization.
- Provide training opportunities at your host organizations, such as a nature center, museum, or state park.
- Make a donation! Send a check to: Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, P.O. Box 2317, Madison, WI 53701 or donate online at <http://www.wisconservation.org/>. Look for the “Support WIMN”, under the “Donate Now” tab to make a dedicated gift.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

The new WI Master Naturalist website is taking shape. It will be a multi-purpose site, designed to:

- Help volunteers find courses, post service hours, find resources, and find volunteer opportunities;
- Help instructors manage their courses, such as online course postings, registration, and payments;
- Help host organizations find volunteers for their project needs; and
- Provide resources to support volunteer learning, engagement, and retention.

The site will be piloted in January and launched in March 2013.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Program support is provided by a large group of organizations and agencies from across the state dedicated to natural resources education.

The Natural Resources Foundation has embraced the WIMN program and has provided a grant and gift to support it. The NRF is actively pursuing additional funds for the program. The WI Department of Natural Resources has provided staff support for project development, curriculum content, and topic expertise for training.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Kate Reilly, klreilly@wisc.edu

