



Wisconsin Summit for Natural Resources Volunteers

October 1-3, 2026
St. Croix River Valley

***Threads of Service:
Woven Together in Nature***

Co-hosted by:
Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program
Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center



WISCONSIN
Master Naturalist



UW-MADISON EXTENSION



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Welcome Message

Welcome to the **Wisconsin Summit for Natural Resources Volunteers**, co-hosted by the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program and Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center!

Open to all adults, this year's theme—**Threads of Service – Woven Together in Nature**—celebrates the vital role of nature-based volunteers along with the meaningful connections between art and nature. We are excited to showcase the St. Croix Valley, a Master Naturalist training area since 2017, along with **Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center's** new Visitor Center at its Wisconsin Campus in Hudson.

Quick Glance:

- **Thursday:** Choice of field events, workshops, or volunteer service project, followed by an evening social.
- **Friday:** 20+ presentations and workshops, talking circles, volunteer fair, awards, tiny art auction, "Are you Thirsty" puppet show, and a keynote address by **Sandy Spieler**.
- **Saturday:** More field events, workshops, and volunteer opportunities.

Thank You for Making a Difference

This event is our way of celebrating you and all nature-based volunteers. Come learn, share, laugh, and reconnect with a community that shares your passion for conservation.

Warmly,

The **Summit Planning Team** and

Becky Sapper | *Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program, UW–Madison Extension*

Jennifer Vieth | *Executive Director & Master Naturalist Instructor, Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center*

Things to know –

- Events run rain or shine
- Online registration only and no walk-ins
- Registration is a la carte (attend one or many)
- Registration closes September 18
- Registrations are non-refundable after September 18
- You are responsible for your own transportation. Keep this in mind if you are carpooling – not all events are at the same location.
- Expect parking fees at Willow River State Park and UW–River Falls

For the **most up-to-date** information, see the Summit webpage.



<https://go.wisc.edu/upw739>

General Schedule

Throughout the St. Croix Valley		
Thursday, October 1 Afternoon	Friday, October 2	Saturday, October 3 Morning
	Field Events & Workshops Presentations Talking Circles Puppet Show	Field Events & Workshops Service Projects Puppet Show
Field Events & Workshops Service Projects Evening Social	Evening Keynote Dinner Tiny Art Auction Awards Volunteer Fair and Social	

GENERAL SCHEDULE AND REGISTRATION FEES*			
THURSDAY			
Afternoon	1-5pm	Field Events and Workshops	\$20
	2-4pm	Volunteer Service Project	Free
Evening Social	6-9pm	Social and Owl Banding Demo	Free
FRIDAY			
Morning	8:30-11:30am	Field Events and Workshops	\$20
	8:30-11:30am	Presentations	\$10
	10:45-11:30am	"Are you Thirsty?" Puppet Show	Free
Lunch	11:30am-1pm	ON YOUR OWN (suggestions provided)	
Afternoon	1-4pm	Presentations, Talking Circles	\$10
	1-4pm	Workshops	\$20
Keynote Dinner	4:30-6:30pm	Keynote Address and Dinner	\$40
Evening Social	6:30-8:30pm	Volunteer Fair, Awards, Tiny Art Auction	Free
SATURDAY			
Morning	8am-Noon	Field Events (2-3 hour)	\$20
	10am-Noon	Volunteer Service Project	Free
	11:30am-Noon	Puppet Show: Environmental Empowerment	Free

**Financial assistance is available, see next page.*

Registration Details

- **Deadline:** Pre-registration is required by **September 18**. Walk-ins will not be accepted.
- **How to Register:** Register online via the [Summit Webpage](#) or directly through the Portal. Registration is à la carte based on each day and time block, choose what you want to attend.
- **Capacity:** Spots are limited, first-come, first-served, and expected to fill quickly. There is **no waitlist or substitution**.
- **Preparation:** Review this Summit Program in advance to select your preferred events. Spots are not guaranteed until payment is complete.
- **Selecting Events:** Choose all events you plan to attend each day, including free ones.
- **Guests:** Spouses, partners, and invited guests are welcome to register for any part of the Summit, including the Keynote Dinner. Everyone must register individually.
- **Financial Hardship:** We believe finances should not be a barrier to learning. If your total registration fees exceed \$100, you will be given a 50% discount option if you indicate that this fee is a financial hardship.

Cancellation & Refund Policy

- **Deadline:** No refunds after September 18, 2026.
- **Fees:** If we cancel an event, affected fees will be refunded. Participant cancellations incur a **\$25 administrative fee**. Approved refunds take up to 10 business days. No substitutions can be made.
- **Weather & Changes:** Field events run rain or shine. Extreme weather-related cancellations are non-refundable.
- **Substitutions:** No attendee substitutions are allowed.

Plan Ahead!

Arrive 10 minutes early, transportation is not provided

Wear appropriate footwear, clothing, and name badge (if you are a Master Naturalist)

Weather: Be prepared for variable weather. Events will run rain or shine but will move indoors, under shelter, or will be cancelled if it becomes unsafe (i.e., lightning, extreme temperatures.)

Food: Bring your own snacks and water bottle. Morning refreshments will be available on Friday for events held at UW–River Falls. **Friday lunch is on your own.** There are many options available in Hudson or River Falls. UW–River Falls also has a cafeteria and other food options.



NEED HELP? Contact us at:

EMAIL: INFO@WIMASTERNATURALIST.ORG

PHONE: (608) 262-0020

General Event Descriptions

Keynote Dinner – Friday Evening

A buffet dinner, prepared by UW–River Falls Chartwells Catering, will follow the message shared by our keynote speaker, Sandy Spieler. The dinner and keynote address has a \$40 registration fee.



Featuring a Keynote Address from Sandy Spieler on “*For the Water*”

Keynote Speaker Sandy Spieler is an artist and activist focused on Water for over 40 years. Beginning with a deep reverence and gratitude for Water, she uses art, research, and common sense to inspire relationship with, and care for, the Water that connects us all.

Sandy will speak of her engrossing journey of art and activism that investigates and celebrates the foundational importance of Water as the inter-connecting lifeblood of our entire planet.

For more info, check out Sandy’s website: <https://sandyspieler.com/water-work/>

Presentations, Field Events, and Workshops

All three days have a variety of field events, workshops, and presentations occurring at multiple locations. Most workshops and field events will take up a full-time block (morning or afternoon), but some workshops and presentations will allow for multiple registrations per event block. Titles, descriptions, times and locations are listed further in this guide. Field Events and Workshops are \$20 and Presentations are \$10.

Volunteer Service Projects

We have arranged two opportunities to provide volunteer service during the Summit. These volunteer opportunities will also allow you an opportunity to interact with local partners and learn more about their efforts. Please bring your own work gloves, long pants, and sturdy shoes. Master Naturalists will automatically receive volunteer hours for participating in these service projects! There is no fee, but please still register to participate.



Talking Circles

A talking circle is a group of individuals working together in an intentional way to address a topic or idea brought to the circle. Talking circles create a safe, non-judgmental place where individuals have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion of important issues. They can be used for dialog, problem-solving, and/or decision making. The traditional talking circle is a very old way of bringing Native people of all ages together in a quiet, respectful manner for the purposes of teaching, listening, learning, and sharing. We will use this model to generate small group discussions within the Summit participants. Group sizes will be kept to 10 people per talking circle. Talking Circles have a \$10 registration fee.

Two Free Puppet Shows!

In celebrating the connection of art and nature, we have two message-driven puppet shows that are free to attend. One will be on Friday before the lunch break and is directed by our keynote speaker, Sandy Spieler. The second puppet show is a performance by workshop participants and directed by Master Naturalist, Shannon Davis-Foust. See more detailed descriptions below. While both shows are free, we highly encourage registering for them!

Volunteer Fair and Social

Organizations seeking volunteers will be on hand to share information about their needs and recruit new volunteers! Come learn about new opportunities and network with other participants. There will be a cash bar and desserts served during this social! Organizations wanting a table should register and reserve their table through the Portal. (limited)

Nature's Canvas Tiny Art Show

Come enjoy the final gallery show for Nature's Canvas Tiny Art Show during Friday's social. The online auction will end during the social, so come bid high and walk away with your own souvenir of a tiny, but impactful artwork. All proceeds will benefit the Master Naturalist program to support efforts like this Summit.

Awards

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program will recognize Master Naturalists with three awards during the evening social: Outstanding Master Naturalist Volunteer, Outstanding Volunteer Project, and Outstanding Master Naturalist Instructor. We will also thank all the hard-working volunteers and instructors who continue to make this program a success.

Networking

We have intentionally included several opportunities to network and connect with fellow volunteers, Master Naturalists, event leaders, participants, presenters, and invited guests throughout the day on Friday with breaks, a long lunch time, and two evening socials.

Food

Dinner will be provided on Friday for those who register for the Keynote Dinner. Morning break refreshments will also be available at UW–River Falls on Friday morning. Dietary preferences and restrictions will be considered and should be identified during the registration process. Please provide your own water and nourishment on Thursday and Saturday and when attending off campus events on Friday. **Lunch is not provided, but a list of options will be available on the website.**

Schedules

The following pages list full details for each event, including times, locations, and presenters. You can sign up for multiple non-overlapping events on the same day at the same location. Because pricing is à la carte, you are free to attend as many or as few days as you like. Please make sure to register for every session you wish to join, even if it is free.

Thursday (Pick one event) (Registration required)

THURSDAY AFTERNOON EVENTS					
(see full descriptions below)					
	1:00 PM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM	Social 6-9pm CNC-MN
CNC-WI	Native Garden Design				
	Nature Photography and Mental Health				
Willow River	Water Connects Us All				
		Using Treasure Finders			
Swinging Gate	Wade Into Wisconsin Streams				
TPE-Alexander Oak Savanna			Effects of Prescribed Fire		
CNC-MN		Service Project: Harvesting Apples			

Locations: (Addresses will be included with registration confirmations and on the [Summit webpage](#))

- **CNC-WI** Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Wisconsin Campus (Hudson)
- **Willow River State Park** (Hudson)
- **CNC-MN** Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Minnesota Campus (Hastings)
- **Swinging Gate** Fish & Wildlife Area, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (River Falls)
- **The Prairie Enthusiasts** – Alexander Oak Savanna (River Falls)

Thursday Event Descriptions



Effects of Prescribed Fire on Savanna Plants

October 1, 2026, 3-5pm

Location: Alexander Oak Savanna

Leader: **Evanne Hunt**, Chair, St. Croix Valley chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts

This interpretive hike explores a savanna ecosystem that has been managed with prescribed fire. Along the trail, hikers can observe how controlled burns influence plant communities by reducing invasive species, recycling nutrients, and promoting the growth of native grasses and wildflowers. Interpretive stops highlight the role of fire in maintaining healthy savanna habitats and the adaptations that allow many plants to thrive after a burn.

Format: *Field Event*; **Length:** 2 hours; **Group Size:** 30; **Event Fee:** \$20

Native Garden Design Workshop

October 1, 2026, 1-4pm

Location: Carpenter Nature Center-WI Campus Classroom

Leader: **Wade Moder**, Natural Resources Educator, Dane County Extension

Take part in a hands-on workshop covering the essentials of native garden design and learn how to teach this program in your

community. We'll share simple design tips, best practices, and plenty of photo examples—highlighting what works and what to avoid. After a short presentation, you'll get to design your own garden using 3D plant tokens and leave with a customized garden plan ready for spring planting. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** 3 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Nature Photography and Mental Health

October 1, 2026, 1-4pm

Location: Carpenter Nature Center-WI Campus Social Room

Leader: **Ian Karl**, Experiential Program Director, Northwest Passage, Ltd.

Nature photography as a therapeutic lifestyle practice explores how photography can deepen connections to nature while supporting mental health and well-being. Participants will learn about original research examining the effects of nature photography on mindfulness, emotional regulation, and resilience. The session combines evidence-based content with hands-on experiential activities that allow participants to practice these concepts in real time. Whether using a camera or smartphone, attendees will leave with practical tools for enhancing both personal wellness and engagement with the natural world. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** 3 hours; **Group Size:** 8; **Event Fee:** \$20

Using Treasure Finders with All Ages

October 1, 2026, 2-4pm

Location: Willow River State Park Dam Shelter

Leader: **Emily Stone**, Naturalist/Education Director, Cable Natural History Museum

Treasure Finders are magical, inexpensive, and easy-to-carry teaching tools that work with any age group. They challenge students to find value in the most unexpected parts of nature.

Naturalist/Education Director Emily Stone will inspire you to incorporate Treasure Finders into your next field day or nature walk. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** *2 hours*; **Group Size:** *20*; **Event Fee:** *\$20*

Wade Into Wisconsin Streams

October 1, 2026, 1-4pm

Location: Swinging Gate Fish & Wildlife Area, River Falls

Leaders: **Katy Bradford**, Water Action Volunteers Program Manager, University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension; **Emily Heald**, Rivers Educator, University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension

Join us to learn about how to monitor Wisconsin's streams. Participants will learn how to monitor streams for 6 aspects of stream health. Participants are welcome, but not required, to enter the stream to assist with sample collection. Teaching and sample analysis will be done all on the shoreline. **Format:** *Field Event*; **Length:** *3 hours*; **Group Size:** *15*; **Event Fee:** *\$20*

Water Connects Us All: Honoring Water through Participatory Art

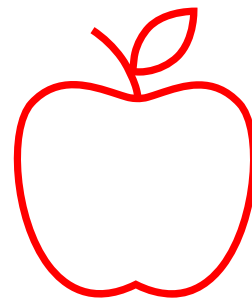
October 1, 2026, 1-5pm

Location: Willow River State Park Nature Center

Leader: **Sandy Spieler**, Artist/Educator/Lover of Water

We gather to honor Water with curiosity, reverence and thanks, and to experience the way all life literally shares one River.

Each participant will build a figure to perform the gentle act of “Bending to the Water” as we simultaneously consider Water in everything we do. Participants will learn skills to share with their home communities to encourage deeper relationships with the Water and each other. This is fun and seriously soulful work. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** *4 hours*; **Group Size:** *15*; **Event Fee:** *\$20*



Thursday Service Project: Harvesting Apples at Carpenter Nature Center Learning Orchard

October 1, 2026, 2-4pm

Location: Carpenter Nature Center – MN Campus, Apple Orchard

Leader: **Sam Behrends**, Carpenter Nature Center, Orchardist and Sustainable Agriculture Instructor

It is apple picking time and we need all hands on deck! Carpenter Nature Center has a teaching orchard used to teach about integrated pest management, agriculture, and environmental topics. Proceeds from the apples help support CNC programming. **Format:** *Service Project*; **Length:** *2 hours*; **Group Size:** *20*; **Event Fee:** *FREE*

Thursday Evening Social - 6:00-9:00pm, FREE, Registration encouraged



**Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center –
Wisconsin Campus, 279 South Cove Road,
Hudson, WI 54016**

Social and Saw-Whet Owl Banding

Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center invites you to a free social gathering and live research experience at their Wisconsin Campus in Hudson! Connect with fellow nature enthusiasts over complimentary refreshments, network with nature volunteers, and step behind the scenes to observe saw-whet owl banding as these tiny raptors migrate through the St. Croix River Valley. It's a great, no-cost opportunity to explore the grounds, expand your community, and witness wildlife conservation in action.



Friday

This is a full day! You can choose from more than 30 events happening:

- Friday Morning (18 options)
- Puppet Show
- Lunch on your own
- Friday Afternoon (2 sessions/16 options)
- Keynote Dinner
- Volunteer Fair and Social - Tiny Art Auction closes at 8:00pm!

FRIDAY MORNING EVENTS (see full descriptions below)											
	8:30	9:15	9:45	10:00	10:15	10:30	10:45	11:00	11:15	11:30	
UW River Falls	Mysterious Mollusks	Growing Sustainability									Lunch on your own until 1:00 pm
	Biodiversity Depends on all of us	Bench by Bench	Keeping Safe Outside								
	Earth Colors: Making Watercolor Paints										
	Small Looms Weaving Workshop										
	Herding Cats: Tips on Leading Hikes						Puppet Show				
	8:30	9:15	9:45	10:00	10:15	10:30	10:45	11:00	11:15		
CNC- WI	Ecological Conjuring			Accessibility in the Outdoors							
	Wild Wisdom Game Nights				Cracking the Code						
	8:30	9:15	9:45	10:00	10:15	10:30	10:45	11:00	11:15		
Willow River State Park	Beyond Debate										
	Willow Falls Kayak Tour										
	Professor Hike										
	8:30	9:15	9:45	10:00	10:15	10:30	10:45	11:00	11:15		
KRLT	Hike the Headwaters										
	8:30	9:15	9:45	10:00	10:15	10:30	10:45	11:00	11:15		
CNC-MN	Citizen Science & Wild Bird Research										

Lunch on your own until 1:00 pm

Locations: (Addresses will be included with registration confirmations and on the [Summit webpage](#))

- **UW–River Falls** (River Falls)
- **CNC-WI** Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Wisconsin Campus (Hudson)
- **Willow River State Park** (Hudson)
- **KRLT: Kinnickinnic River Land Trust** (River Falls)
- **CNC-MN** Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Minnesota Campus (Hastings)

Friday Morning Event Descriptions

UW–River Falls

Mysterious Mollusks — Mussels of the St. Croix River

October 2, 2026, 8:30-9:15am

Location: UW–River Falls St. Croix River Room

Presenter: Elizabeth Nelson, Interpretive Naturalist, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, William O'Brien State Park

Did that rock just move? No, it's a mussel! The St. Croix River is home to 40 species of mussels, the largest diversity in the state. Come learn about their little known, wacky life cycle, and tips and tricks on how to identify these special creatures. See how they are the unsung heroes of their aquatic world. **Format:** *Presentation*; **Length:** 45 minutes; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Growing Sustainability Through Hands-On Learning

October 2, 2026, 9:15-9:45am

Location: UW–River Falls St. Croix River Room

Presenter: Mark Klapatch, Sustainability Coordinator, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

This presentation will showcase how University of Wisconsin-River Falls integrates sustainability into education, volunteerism, and community engagement through real-world experiences and applied learning opportunities. Participants will learn how the campus serves as a living laboratory where students, employees, and community members engage in restoration projects, citizen science, sustainability events, student organizations, and environmental stewardship initiatives. The presentation will highlight how hands-on experiences help cultivate leadership skills,

deepen environmental understanding, and strengthen connections between the university and broader community. Attendees will leave with examples and ideas for fostering sustainability engagement through experiential learning and collaborative action. **Format:** *Presentation*; **Length:** 30 minutes; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Biodiversity Depends on all of Us / Implementing Homegrown National Park through Community Partnerships

October 2, 2026, 8:30-9:15am

Location: UW–River Falls Willow River Room

Presenters: Kathleen Sweeney & Joerg Kessler, Owners and operators of Heritage Woods, Heritage Woods; Bees, Trees and More

The Home-Grown National Park idea was developed by Doug Tallamy in his 2019 book *Nature's Best Hope* as a primary method to increase biodiversity nationwide. As Wisconsin Master Naturalists, we are building local community partnerships to utilize the concepts of the Home-Grown National Park movement. We will share examples of activities underway in the Driftless Region where we live. **Format:** *Presentation*; **Length:** 45 minutes; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Bench by Bench: Art, Nature and Community in the St. Croix Valley

October 2, 2026, 9:15-9:45am

Location: UW–River Falls Willow River Room

Presenter: Lee Ann Pomplas, Arts Engagement Director, Phipps Center for the Arts

The Art Bench Trail is a community art initiative led by the Phipps Center for the Arts that connects a series of artist-designed benches throughout the St. Croix Valley, connecting communities on both sides of the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. Each bench tells the story of a community's deep connection to the federally designated "Wild and Scenic" St. Croix River. The shared creative process of developing these benches brought together youth, local artists, businesses, and community members to create unique works that reflect the area's natural environment, history, and culture. More than just a resting place, these benches continue to bring the community together and deepen environmental stewardship.

Format: *Presentation*; **Length:** 30 minutes;
Group Size: 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Keeping Safe Outside: Assessing Potential Hazards in the Outdoors

October 2, 2026, 9:45-10:30am

Location: UW–River Falls Willow River Room

Leader: Erika Gonzalez, Color in the Outdoors

It's important to keep everyone safe while participating in outdoor group activities. This workshop will give an overview of potential safety hazards when leading or participating in an outdoor experience. We will also discuss responses and mitigations. Time for questions and answers will follow, as well as potential scenarios to work through. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** 45 minutes; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$20

Earth Colors - Making Watercolor Paints from Natural Earth Pigments

October 2, 2026, 8:30-11am

Location: UW–River Falls Apple River Room

Leaders: Laura Baxley & Zan Tomko, Minnesota Master Naturalists

Join us in a workshop session and discover natural color pigments hidden in soil, minerals, and stone in your surroundings. Explore the shared WI & MN landscape and its clay resources. Learn the process of foraging, harvesting, and transforming soil and stones safely into watercolor paint. Create a sample of watercolor that celebrates the natural environment and shares in the joy of discovery and creating with nature. Make an origami box with a color card to store the watercolor half-pans of paint made at the workshop. All supplies included and the fun is yours.

Format: *Workshop*; **Length:** 2.5 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Herding Cats: Tips on Leading Hikes (With Hike to Follow)

October 2, 2026, 8:30-10:30am

Location: UW–River Falls Chippewa River Room

Leader: Jane Whitney, Volunteer, The Ridges Sanctuary

After leading more hikes than I can count, I have accumulated a few ideas and tips on how to lead a hike and capture your audience. We'll cover what works as well as what might not work, how to start and finish, what to do in the middle, how to manage the group (without their knowing you're managing them), how to handle mixed groups of kids and adults, and how to answer difficult questions. Then we'll head outside to take a walk on a nearby campus trail to demo some of the hike-leading tips and to answer any questions.

Format: *Workshop*; **Length:** 2 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Small Looms Weaving Workshop

October 2, 2026, 8:30-11:30am

Location: UW–River Falls Eau Galle River Room

Leader: Mary Burns, Artist, Manitowish River Studio

Have you ever wanted to try weaving but didn't know where to start? This workshop may be just for you! We will be working on tiny looms that you will take home with you and keep. We will cover the basic techniques from warping to weaving to finishing a colorful weaving all in a single morning. You'll be ready to weave more pieces on your little loom after you complete this workshop! **Format:** Workshop; **Length:** 3 hours; **Group Size:** 12; **Event Fee:** \$20

Carpenter Nature Center - Wisconsin Campus (Hudson)

Accessibility in the Outdoors

October 2, 2026, 10-11:30am

Location: Carpenter Nature Center-WI Campus Social Room

Leaders: Rachael Lewandowski Sarette, On-Site and Accessibility Coordinator, UW–Madison Division of Extension, Upham Woods **Heather Lipinski Stelljes**, Senior Access Consultant, UW–Madison Division of Extension

Explore the intersection of disability and outdoor education in this session designed specifically for Master Naturalists looking to broaden their impact and increase a sense of belonging for people with disabilities in the outdoors (no worries if this feels not right to you!) Led by two accessibility coordinators, we will explore success stories and inclusion initiatives from UW–Madison Extension, including Upham Woods, 4-H and the Master Naturalist Program, highlighting how you can apply these accessibility principles to your own

community outreach and stewardship.

Participants will learn to identify common barriers to outdoor engagement and leave with a toolkit of resources to ensure their outdoor work is truly inclusive. Throughout the presentation, we will be having discussions and thinking critically about the accessibility of the natural world.

Format: Workshop; **Length:** 1.5 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Cracking the Code: Using Interpretation to Craft Your Program with Impact!

October 2, 2026, 10:15-11:15am

Location: Carpenter Nature Center-WI Campus Classroom

Leader: Howard Aprill, Park Naturalist, Wehr Nature Center - Milwaukee County Parks

Whether you have two minutes or two hours with your audience, you want to make it count. Increase your program's impact with interpretation, NOT education. These techniques and approach will craft your program into an audience experience that is purposeful, organized, enjoyable, and relevant. By session end, participants will craft a theme they can use at their site. **Format:** Workshop; **Length:** 1 hour; **Group Size:** 25; **Event Fee:** \$20

Ecological Conjuring with mars; Create your own GrisGris

October 2, 2026, 8:30-10am

Location: Carpenter Nature Center-WI Campus Social Room

Leader: mars, Ecological Conjurer, marsEcoArts

Many cultures around the world utilize small pouches filled with healing tools. The Grisgris or GriGri brought to America by enslaved Dagomba people of West Africa during the early 17th Century used to hold

Healing tools in the form of seeds that have the potential to heal our lands by feeding people, and places-ecosystems; supportive plants that heal the body mentally and physically. Words and Special objects are placed inside to provide encouragement, guidance, connection to purpose, and set intentions along our journey. The word "Grisgris" is derived from a West African term "JuJu" current day English Translation: "sacred". Join ours in creating your own personal Grisgris. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** *1.5 hours*; **Group Size:** *20*; **Event Fee:** *\$20*

Wild Wisdom Game Nights: Incorporating an Interactive Trivia Game into Your Programming

October 2, 2026, 8:30-10am

Location: Carpenter Nature Center-WI Campus Classroom

Leaders: **Licia Johnson**, Education Director/Naturalist, North Lakeland Discovery Center; **Jenna Richardson**, Naturalist, North Lakeland Discovery Center

Join us for one of our popular "Wild Wisdom Game Night" sessions to discover how effortlessly this trivia-style program can be integrated into your educational activities. During the workshop, we'll play the game together, followed by a discussion and brainstorming session to explore ways to incorporate this interactive activity into your programs, as well as any other activity ideas the group might have.

Format: *Workshop*; **Length:** *1.5 hours*; **Group Size:** *25*; **Event Fee:** *\$20*

Willow River State Park (Hudson)

Beyond Debate: Navigating Divisive Issues in Outreach Conversations

October 2, 2026, 8:30-10:30am

Location: Willow River State Park Nature Center

Leader: **Andrea Lorek Strauss**, Extension Educator/Extension Professor, University of Minnesota Extension-Minnesota Master Naturalist Program

Ever felt the heat when discussing wildlife management or water quality?

Conversations about environmental topics can raise controversies that often make participants feel distressed and confused. But sidestepping these tough topics means missing a vital chance to foster informed public engagement. Join this dynamic workshop to discover how to prepare for and address divisive subjects across various outreach settings. We will discuss proactive strategies to prevent friction before it starts and practical techniques to defuse tension when it arises. Participants will gain fresh perspectives on controversial issues, reflect on personal biases, and come away with practical methods for navigating controversies with confidence.

Format: *Workshop*; **Length:** *2 hours*; **Group Size:** *25*; **Event Fee:** *\$20*

Willow Falls Kayaking Tour

October 2, 2026, 8:30-11am

Location: Willow River State Park Boat Landing

Leader: **Ashley Goldbeck**, Naturalist/Nature Center Coordinator, Friends of Willow River & Kinnickinnic State Parks

Join the naturalist on a scenic kayaking trip across Little Falls Lake and up to the beautiful Willow Falls, before peacefully floating back down the river. Bring a pair of binoculars, as this will be a great opportunity to see migratory birds and other wildlife! We'll stop and get out on an island beneath the Willow Falls and talk about the 450 million+ year old landform that makes Willow River State Park such a

popular place to visit! Please dress for the weather and bring waterproof shoes, drinking water and sunscreen. This kayaking tour takes roughly 2.5 hours to complete depending on the pace of the group.

Format: *Field Event*; **Length:** 2.5 hours; **Group Size:** 12; **Event Fee:** \$20

Professor Hike

October 2, 2026, 8:30-11:30am

Location: Willow River State Park Dam Shelter

Leader: **Emily Stone**, Naturalist/Education Director, Cable Natural History Museum

On a short walk, a Naturalist will train each participant to be a “professor” of a unique topic. Each person will teach and learn from everyone in the group. You'll hone your own teaching skills, learn from others, and add a fun activity to your back pocket! This activity has been wildly popular with both adults and kids when included in Master Naturalist trainings and fifth grade science camps. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** 3 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

KRLT: Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (River Falls)

Hike the Headwaters Preserve with Kinnickinnic River Land Trust

October 2, 2026, 8:30-10:30am

Location: Kinnickinnic River Land Trust Headwaters Preserve

Leaders: **Tia Foster**, Natural Resource and Watershed Technician, KRLT; **Lexi Dubiel**, Natural Resource and Watershed Technician, KRLT

This hike will introduce the Headwaters Preserve of the Kinnickinnic River. The hike will emphasize the restoration and surveying being done on the property. Such surveys include grassland bird and prairie plant monitoring, which are carried out from May to September annually.

Participants will learn about monitoring protocols and management plans that ensure the health of the Kinnickinnic River Watershed. **Format:** *Field Event*; **Length:** 2 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

CNC-MN Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Minnesota Campus (Hastings)

Citizen Science and Wild Bird Research Banding

October 2, 2026, 8-11am

Location: Carpenter Nature Center – MN Campus Administration Building

Leaders: **Jennifer Vieth**, Director CNC; **Randy Newton**, Wisconsin Master Naturalist

Every Friday for forty-five years, Carpenter Nature Center's Wild Bird Research Team has been monitoring birds. Observe the bird banding team of staff and volunteers as they band and release songbirds at Carpenter Nature Center's Minnesota Campus. Banding is weather-dependent, but rain or shine; we will still gather to learn all about the banding process and the vital data it provides. **Format:** *Field Event*; **Length:** 3 hours; **Group Size:** 30; **Event Fee:** \$2



Are You Thirsty? Puppet Show

10:45-11:30 am at UWRF – Kinnickinnic River Theater

“Thirsty” just wants a drink of Water! But first they must explore a myriad of questions contained in that one precious sip. This dynamic performance ignites us to see ourselves as relatives of Water, bringing many current Water issues vibrantly to life, and encouraging our important and joyful participation in taking care of Water.

Originally created by In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre,
“*Are You Thirsty?*” is now held by Puppet Nest/ Theatre of the Everyday Miracle

Performers: Lora Pedersen and Spencer Polk

Director: Sandy Spieler

FRIDAY AFTERNOON <u>SESSION 1</u> EVENTS						
(see full descriptions below)						
	ROOM	1:00 PM	1:45 PM	2 PM	2:15 PM	2:30 PM
UW River Falls	Kinnickinnic River Theater	Artists as Ecologists				15 MIN BREAK
	Chippewa River	Talking Circle: Bodies in Places				
	St. Croix River	Interpretation & Education (State Parks)	Toxins & Infectious Diseases			
	Eau Galle River	Portraits for Change				
	Apple River	Earth Colors: Making Watercolor Paints				
	Willow River	Master Naturalist Program				

Friday Afternoon Event Descriptions

Session 1 (1-2:30pm)

Artists as Ecologists: Exploring the Intersection of Art and Nature in the Saint Croix Valley

October 2, 2026, 1-2:30pm

Location: UW–River Falls Kinnickinnic River Theater

Panelists: **Aaron Dysart**, Artist; **Greg Seitz**, St. Croix 360, Writer; **Sarah Nassif**, AWE, Artist + Botanist; **Paul Creager**, Square Lake Productions; **Alex Petersen**, Interdisciplinary Artist, Designer & Educator; **Amy Mester**, Artist & Naturalist; **Jessica Turtle**, Treehaus Studio, Naturalist, Public Artist & Arts Educator; **Amber White**, moderator

Join us for a dynamic panel discussion exploring the intersection of art and ecology in the St. Croix Valley. This conversation brings together program directors, organizational leaders, and public artists to examine how creative practices and environmental stewardship are shaping the region's cultural and ecological landscape. Discover innovative collaborations, inspiring projects, and the

vital role of the arts in fostering a deeper connection to the natural world.

Format: Panel; **Length:** 1.5 hours; **Group Size:** 125; **Event Fee:** \$10

Bodies in Places - The Right to Loiter without Harm

October 2, 2026, 1-2:00pm

Location: UW–River Falls Chippewa River Room

Leader: **mars**, Master Naturalist Instructor, marsEcoArts

Loitering is defined as the act of lingering aimlessly, moving slowly and idly, or wasting time. It can be illegal if it causes harm or obstructs a space. What does it mean/look like for a body to occupy space? (Human bodies, water bodies, wildlife, or vegetation, for example). How can we adequately connect to our Lands and Waters if do not take the time to reflect on what we are a part of? What does stillness look like in these bodies? **Format:** Talking Circle; **Length:** 1 hour; **Group Size:** 10; **Event Fee:** \$10

Earth Colors - Making Watercolor Paints from Natural Earth Pigments

October 2, 2026, 1-2:30pm

Location: UW–River Falls Apple River Room

Leaders: Laura Baxley & Zan Tomko, MN Master Naturalists

Join us in a workshop session and discover natural color pigments hidden in the soil, minerals, and stone in your surroundings. Explore the shared WI & MN landscape and its clay resources. Learn the process of foraging, harvesting, and transforming soil and stones safely into watercolor paint. Create a sample of watercolor that celebrates the natural environment and shares in the joy of discovery and creating with nature. Make an origami box with a color card to store the watercolor half-pans of paint made at the workshop. All supplies included and the fun is yours.

Format: Workshop; **Length:** 1.5 hours; **Group Size:** 12; **Event Fee:** \$20

Interpretation & Education - WI State Park System Collaboration

October 2, 2026, 1-1:45pm

Location: UW–River Falls St. Croix River Room

Presenter: Scott Johnson, Statewide Natural Resource Educator, Wisconsin State Park System

Over the last three years the Wisconsin State Park System has developed statewide Interpretation and Education resources and tools for staff. Learn about "universal interpretive signs for the property you volunteer at, how you can help build a statewide lesson plan catalog, volunteer opportunities for future citizen science projects and information on our Invasive Species Awareness Weekend (ISAW) initiative each June, which highlights education programs and

eradication/control events statewide to help you recruit more volunteers.

Format: Presentation; **Length:** 45 minutes;

Group Size: 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Master Naturalist Program – YOU Are the Highlight

October 2, 2026, 1-2:15pm

Location: UW–River Falls Willow River Room

Presenters: Maggie Handfelt, Master Naturalist, Graduate Research Assistant, UW Stevens Point; Mary Eckmeier, Master Naturalist; Becky Sapper, Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program Director, UW–Madison Division of Extension

Discover three statewide initiatives driven by Master Naturalists:

- **Volunteer Motivations:** Master Naturalist and UW–Stevens Point graduate student Maggie Handfelt analyzes 2023–2025 survey data to reveal what drives volunteers, offering key insights to transform recruitment, retention, and satisfaction.
- **Backpacker Sustained Giving Community:** Sustained support keeps conservation and education moving forward. Program Director Becky Sapper introduces this recurring donor network, showing how reliable funding sustains our work while unlocking exclusive events and field experiences.
- **Wild Paths Wisconsin:** Created by Master Naturalist Mary Eckmeier, this dynamic platform connects nature enthusiasts to volunteer and learning opportunities statewide via interactive maps, calendars, and custom filters.

Join us to celebrate volunteer impact and see how these projects shape Wisconsin's conservation future! **Format:** Presentation; **Length:** 1.25 hours; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Portraits for Change: Inspiring Activism through Art

October 2, 2026, 1-1:45pm

Location: UW–River Falls Eau Galle River Room

Presenter: Mary Burns, Artist, Manitowish River Studio

This presentation features an overview of my woven exhibits - "Ancestral Women: Wisconsin's 12 Tribes", and "Women and Water: Woven Portraits from Around the World". I will share stories and images of some of these amazing women and their inspiring cultural and environmental work. I will also bring woven portraits and samples to display and share. **Format:** Presentation; **Length:** 45 minutes; **Group Size:** 30; **Event Fee:** \$10

Toxins and Infectious Diseases Affecting Wild Raptors Admitted to The Raptor Center

October 2, 2026, 1:45-2:30pm

Location: UW–River Falls St. Croix River Room

Presenter: Annette Ahlmann-Garcia, DVM, MS, CWR, Associate Veterinarian, The Raptor Center

Wildlife rehabilitation facilities provide excellent opportunities to collect disease epidemiology data from wild birds. At The

Raptor Center (TRC) at the University of Minnesota, we admit more than 1,000 wild raptors for rehabilitation each year. This presentation will provide an overview on some of the infectious diseases and toxins we see affecting raptors admitted to TRC, including highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), West Nile virus (WNV), lead, rodenticides, and barbiturates.

Format: Presentation; **Length:** 45 minutes;

Group Size: 40; **Event Fee:** \$10



FRIDAY AFTERNOON <u>SESSION 2</u> EVENTS					
(see full descriptions below)					
	ROOM	2:45 PM	3:30 PM	3:45 PM	4:00 PM
UW River Falls	Kinnickinnic River Theater	Wisconsin State Climatology Office	Wisconsin Bat Conservation Network		30 MIN BREAK
	Chippewa River	Talking Circle: Personal Strength through the Spirits of Nature			
	St. Croix River	Chasing Dragons		Float Friendly	
	Eau Galle River	Lights Out Wisconsin			
	Apple River	Illuminating the Web			
	Willow River	Naming Nature	Wisconsin Frog & Toad Survey		

Session 2 (2:45-4pm)

Chasing Dragons, All About Odes

October 2, 2026, 2:45-3:45pm

Location: UW-River Falls St. Croix River Room

Presenter: Jeff Fischer, Wisconsin Master Naturalist, Wisconsin Dragonfly Society

Embark on a fascinating journey into the world of dragonflies with Wisconsin Dragonfly Society Past President, Jeff Fischer! Join us for an engaging presentation to uncover the captivating lives of these remarkable insects. We will delve into their diverse habitats, intricate behaviors, and pivotal role in Wisconsin's ecosystems. Gain a deeper understanding of these aerial acrobats and their importance in maintaining the ecological balance of our natural landscapes.

Format: Presentation; **Length:** 1 hour; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Float Friendly: Water Etiquette for Wisconsin Waterways

October 2, 2026, 3:45-4pm

Location: UW-River Falls St. Croix River Room

Presenter: Catie Geib, Lake Superior Collaborative Program Coordinator, UW–Madison Division of Extension | Natural Resources Institute

“Float Friendly: Water Etiquette for Wisconsin Waterways” explores the often-overlooked etiquette of sharing Wisconsin’s lakes and rivers responsibly. While many outdoor enthusiasts are familiar with trail etiquette, this session asks: what does good etiquette look like on the water?

Participants will learn about boating and paddling courtesy, wake awareness, respecting anglers and wildlife, noise considerations, and how small actions can improve safety and enjoyment for everyone. **Format:** Presentation; **Length:** 15 minutes; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Illuminating the Web

October 2, 2026, 2:45-3:45pm

Location: UW-River Falls Apple River Room

Presenter: **Emily Stone**, Naturalist, Cable Natural History Museum

A shimmering web of relationships connects everything. Through stories of scientists studying hungry plants, wandering warblers, and ghost pipe's surprising value, you'll discover new ways to see the world.

Format: *Presentation*; **Length:** 1 hour; **Group Size:** 30; **Event Fee:** \$10

Introducing: The Wisconsin Bat Conservation Network

October 2, 2026, 3:30-4pm

Location: UW-River Falls Kinnickinnic River Theater

Presenters: **Christa Trushinsky**, Wisconsin Bat Conservation Network President; **Licia Kuckkahn Johnson**, WBCN Vice President, **Carrie Frantz**, WBCN Treasurer, **Rebecka Hellweg**, WBCN Secretary, **Jennifer Redell**, Bat biologist/Cave & mine specialist, WI Department of Natural Resources

Introducing the Wisconsin Bat Conservation Network! The newly formed WBCN works alongside the Wisconsin DNR and UW-Madison Extension's Master Naturalist program to provide bat conservation stewardship, education, and outreach support statewide. Learn more about Wisconsin's bat species and how you can get involved in bat conservation opportunities throughout the state. Bat Ambassadors wanting to connect with other Ambassadors and join organized group efforts that support Wisconsin bats are encouraged to attend.

Format: *Presentation*; **Length:** 30 minutes; **Group Size:** 125; **Event Fee:** \$10

Lights Out Wisconsin - Practical Steps to Save Birds, Fireflies, & Stargazing in Wisconsin

October 2, 2026, 2:45-3:45pm

Location: UW-River Falls Eau Galle River Room

Presenter: **Kelsey Bell**, Strategy & Outreach Specialist, Lights Out Wisconsin

Session sponsor: Jennifer Studebaker

Light pollution increases each year in Wisconsin and beyond, while natural wonders like songbird migration (which happens at night), firefly mating blinks, and northern lights rely on darkness. This presentation will explain why light pollution is a problem and the importance of taking steps to reverse it. Get Lights Out Wisconsin materials to share with your communities!

Format: *Presentation*; **Length:** 1 hour; **Group Size:** 30; **Event Fee:** \$10

Naming Nature: Deepening Connection to Amplify Health Outcomes

October 2, 2026, 2:45-3:30pm

Location: UW-River Falls Willow River Room

Presenter: **Courtney Schultz**, PhD, Executive Director, Health & Technology Partners

Time in nature is widely recognized for its health benefits, but the depth of those benefits often depends on how people engage with the natural world. This session explores how the ability to notice, name, and understand specific elements of nature, rather than experiencing it as generic "green space", can strengthen connection and enhance well-being. Participants will learn how familiarity and intentionality contribute to improved mental, physical, and social health outcomes. The session will also highlight practical strategies for Master Naturalists to help communities build meaningful relationships with nature

through observation, interpretation, and storytelling. Attendees will leave with tools to transform everyday outdoor experiences into deeper, more impactful connections.

Format: *Presentation*; **Length:** 45 minutes;

Group Size: 40; **Event Fee:** \$10

Sharing Guide - Gaining Personal Strength through the Spirits of Nature

October 2, 2026, 2:45-3:45pm

Location: UW–River Falls Chippewa River Room

Leader: Naacgepii, Wisconsin Master Naturalist Instructor, Ho-Chunk Nation

Taking time to engage with nature through our senses of sight, sound, smell and touch. The spiritual rewards may be profound and life changing. In what ways have you seen this in your life or the lives of those around you? How has nature provided strength for you and those around you.

Format: *Talking Circle*; **Length:** 1 hour; **Group Size:** 10; **Event Fee:** \$10

What's New in the Wisconsin State Climatology Office?

October 2, 2026, 2:45-3:30pm

Location: UW–River Falls Kinnickinnic River Theater

Presenters: Steve Vavrus, Director & State Climatologist, State Climatology Office; Amanda Latham, Climate Outreach Specialist, State Climatology Office; Josh Bendorf, Climate Outreach Specialist, State Climatology Office

The Wisconsin State Climatology Office (SCO) has been quite busy over the past year with many memorable weather events and three new staff members. Our team stands in a prime position to educate and inform Wisconsinites about the ins and outs of our climate and how it affects our daily lives. The SCO offers many products and tools that are freely available to you to

increase your understanding of Wisconsin's climate, which we will cover in this presentation. **Format:** *Presentation*; **Length:** 45 minutes; **Group Size:** 125; **Event Fee:** \$10

Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey, Insights and Observations

October 2, 2026, 3:30-4pm

Location: UW–River Falls Willow River Room

Presenter: Jeff Craig, Volunteer, DNR Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey

Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey (WFTS) monitors the 12 anuran species that are found in WI. Our combined efforts have amassed more than 40 years of data that informs the State and the public regarding the health and stability of an order that is easily affected by human activities. Through a series of personal photos and videos, I will share what it is like to be a volunteer in the WFTS, along with the personal joys and fascinations of my 10 years of experience.

Format: *Presentation*; **Length:** 30 minutes; **Group Size:** 40; **Event Fee:** \$10



Friday Keynote Dinner **(Registration required)**

FRIDAY EVENING	Approx. Time	Registration Fee
Welcome	4:30 p.m.	\$40
Keynote Address – Sandy Spieler	4:45 p.m.	
Buffet Dinner	5:30 p.m.	

Join us for an inspiring message from our keynote speaker, **Sandy Spieler**, an artist and activist focused on Water for over 40 years. She will speak of her engrossing journey of art and activism that investigates and celebrates the foundational importance of Water as the inter-connecting lifeblood of our entire planet. Please see the previous keynote section for more details. Following our Keynote, enjoy a buffet dinner prepared by UW-River Falls Chartwells Catering.



Sandy Spieler on “For the Water”

Friday Evening Social **(FREE, but registration required)**

Volunteer Fair, Social, and Tiny Art Silent Auction

Join us for a Volunteer Fair and Social (with cash bar) after the Keynote Dinner on Friday. Network and find new opportunities to volunteer, have some dessert while you get to know other participants, and help support the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program by bidding on some Tiny Art.

Friday Evening Social		
Volunteer Fair	Visit with more than 20 organizations looking for you!	6:30-8:00pm
Social	Cash bar and desserts	6:30-8:30pm
Award Presentations	Outstanding: • Master Naturalist Volunteer • Volunteer Project • Master Naturalist Instructor	6:45pm 7:00pm 7:30pm
Nature’s Canvas Tiny Art Show	Online Auction ends	8:00pm
Art Pickup	Need not be present to win, but if you are you can take it home with you!	8:30pm

Saturday (Pick one event) **(Registration required)**

SATURDAY MORNING EVENTS					
(see full descriptions below)					
	8 AM	8:30 AM	10 AM	11:30 AM	NOON
CNC-WI		Prairie Burn Workshop			SAFE TRAVELS HOME
	Theater of Environmental Empowerment				
Willow River	Fun with Patterns in Nature				
Bay City Mine	Bay City Mine Bat Hibernaculum		Bay City Mine Bat Hibernaculum		
CNC-MN		Early Morning Bird Hike			
Star Prairie Seed Farm			Service Project: Prairie seed collection with Scouts		
CNC-WI				PUPPET SHOW	
CNC-WI		Tiny Art Pick up			

Locations: (Addresses will be included with registration confirmations and on the [Summit webpage](#))

- **CNC-WI** Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Wisconsin Campus (Hudson)
- **Willow River State Park** (Hudson)
- **Bay City Mine** (Bay City)
- **Star Prairie Seed Farm Wildlife Area** (New Richmond)
- **CNC-MN** Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center – Minnesota Campus (Hastings)

Saturday Event Descriptions

Carpenter Nature Center Prairie Burn Workshop

October 3, 2026, 8:30-11:30am

Location: Carpenter Nature Center – WI Campus Classroom

Leader: **Abbey Holden**, Carpenter Nature Center Naturalist

Join the Carpenter Nature Center team and learn what it takes to manage a prescribed burn from start to finish. We will start in the classroom, learning what goes into making a burn plan, what site preparation is required before the torches come out, and what goes into making a “go” or “no-go” decision. Afterward, we will head out to the prairie, where you will see a drip torch, a flapper, water wagons, and all the tools required for a burn. If the weather cooperates and we have a “go” day, we will also light a demonstration fire.

Format: *Workshop*; **Length:** 3 hours; **Group Size:** 15; **Event Fee:** \$20

Theater of Environmental Empowerment

October 3, 2026, 8am-Noon

Location: Carpenter Nature Center – WI Campus Social Room

Leader: **Shannon Davis-Foust**, Lecturer, UW Oshkosh

This interactive 3-hour workshop uses puppetry and empowerment-based theater techniques inspired by Jonathan Shailor’s “Theatre of Empowerment” to inspire environmental awareness and action. Participants will create and engage in collaborative performances to give voice to those affected by environmental change including habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, overexploitation, and climate change. Puppets will be made from recycled

and natural materials. Through storytelling and reflection, this workshop encourages empathy, creativity, and dialogue for environmental issues. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** 4 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Early Morning Bird Hike

October 3, 2026, 8:30am-Noon

Location: Carpenter Nature Center – MN Campus

Leader: **Ben Douglas**, Volunteer, Carpenter Nature Center

Join Carpenter Nature Center's staff and volunteers to enjoy a guided hike in peak fall bird migration. In early October passerines, raptors and many other species can be seen migrating southwards along the great Mississippi River flyway. Bring your own binoculars or borrow a pair.

Format: *Field Event*; **Length:** 3.5 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Fun with Patterns in Nature

October 3, 2026, 8am-Noon

Location: Willow River State Park Nature Center

Leaders: **Marian Farrior**, Permaculture and Environmental Educator, Madison Area Permaculture Guild and PermacultureWorks;

Amy Jo Dusick, Native Plant Propagator, Prairie Nursery and Moth to Meadow Nursery; **Beth Stetenfeld**, Author, *A Journey of Seasonal Wisdom*

In this experiential workshop, we will explore the form and function of six patterns in nature and why they occur. We'll also learn about patterns in time that occur with phenology and the seasons. And we'll create hand-made observation journals to capture our learning through hands-on activities, demonstrations, videos, and outdoor exercises. This is a great way to

access other methods of seeing, knowing, and appreciating nature that can be shared with others. **Format:** *Workshop*; **Length:** 4 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** \$20

Bay City Mine Bat Hibernaculum: Where Industry Meets Conservation

October 3, 2026, 8-10am (Tour 1); 10am-Noon (Tour 2)

Location: Bay City Mine

Leader: **Jennifer Redell**, Bat biologist/Cave & mine specialist, WI Department of Natural Resources

Visit one of the "big three" Wisconsin bat mines that each shelter tens of thousands of bats each winter and are normally closed to public access. Bay City is one of the largest little brown bat hibernacula in N. America. The property tour takes place on the surface and at the entrances to the decommissioned mine. Underground exploration is not permitted, but we will get to see inside the mine adits. Participants will observe critical fall mating areas for Wisconsin bats, sense the special environmental conditions bats require for hibernation, and examine bat-friendly mine gates. You'll learn about the white-nose syndrome research and population monitoring efforts taking place on the property for more than 15 years. Other topics include bat ecology, Wisconsin's underground landscape, and the industrial history of this unusual Wisconsin State Natural Area. **Format:** *Field Event*; **Length:** 2

hours; **Group Size:** 30; **Event Fee:** \$20 (offered twice)

Saturday Morning Service Project: Prairie Seed Collection with Scouts

October 3, 2026, 10am-Noon

Location: Star Prairie Seed Nursery

Leader: **Jean Gfall**, Assistant Volunteer Coordinator, Friends of St. Croix Wetland Management District

Join a Conservation Event collecting seed at the Star Prairie Seed Nursery. This annual event began several years ago to engage Scouts and has evolved to also include community members to assist in collecting prairie seed that is ready for harvest. You might be asked to assist a small group of other volunteers in finding and choosing the correct plants to gather seed from or to share some of your knowledge about prairie plants or specific ones (Alex, the seed farm manager would fill you in on those if needed) with other participants. It's meant to be a community event and so the participants cover an intergenerational group that will have different needs in accomplishing the goal for the day which is not only collecting seed but also educating the public about the value and importance of prairie plants. Volunteers will be required to complete a Fish & Wildlife Service volunteer form.

Format: *Service Project*; **Length:** 2 hours; **Group Size:** 20; **Event Fee:** *FREE*



Puppet Show - Theater of Environmental Empowerment

Carpenter Nature Center – WI Campus

11:30am-Noon, Saturday October 3

Event Locations

Most events will be held in the greater St. Croix Valley area within 15 miles of River Falls. Addresses for each location will be included with registration confirmations and on the [Summit webpage](#):

- Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center; Minnesota Campus (Hastings, MN)
- Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center; Wisconsin Campus (Hudson, WI)
- Kinnickinnic River Land Trust Headwaters Preserve (Roberts, WI)
- Swinging Gate Fish & Wildlife Area, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (River Falls, WI)
- The Prairie Enthusiasts – Alexander Oak Savanna (River Falls, WI)
- University of Wisconsin–River Falls, University Center (River Falls, WI)
- Willow River State Park (Hudson, WI)
- Star Prairie Seed Nursery (New Richmond, WI)
- Bay City Mine (Bay City, WI)



Parking & Transportation

Transportation and shuttles are not available. You are responsible for getting to field events, workshops and service projects **10 minutes prior to the start time**. State Park vehicle admission stickers are needed for those participating at Willow River State Park. Parking at UW-RF is a “pay by plate” system. Public parking is available in Pay 1 & Pay 2. <https://www.uwrf.edu/about/campus-map>



Lodging

Most events will be held in the greater St. Croix Valley area within 15 miles of River Falls. The [Summit website](#) includes links to hotels and camping options. Lodging does fill quickly during this time of the year, so book your rooms or camping sites soon.



A block of rooms is being held at The Commerce, Trademark Collection by Wyndam in River Falls, WI. Reserve your space by calling the hotel reservation desk **(715)425-9500** and **provide Reference Group Name: Master Naturalist Summit**. Rooms are available on a first come, first served basis. The rooms are \$120 for Oct 1 and \$190 for Oct 2, these are their going rates and there are no additional rooms available at this hotel after the block is full.

Our website has many more hotel and camping options listed.



Master Naturalist Merchandise

We've heard the requests for Master Naturalist merchandise. We will be opening an **online pop-up shop from September 1- 12**. Order your Master Naturalist t-shirts, sweatshirts, fleece vests, hats and a **Summit T-shirt**, and have them shipped straight to your house! Order during this time so that you can wear your branded apparel to the Summit. The link will be added to the announcements on your Portal home page.

(more colors available)



All Abilities are Welcome

Each day offers field events that are primarily outdoor learning experiences which may include extended periods of standing, hiking on both flat paths and off-trails with inclines, and a variety of weather conditions. Each day also offers seated presentations and workshops. If you have concerns about the activity level or would like to discuss ways that we can assist you in participating fully in the Summit, please contact the Master Naturalist program at info@wimasternaturalist.org or (606) 262-0020 prior to registering.

You may request an interpreter, materials in an alternative language and/or format, accommodations for hearing or visual impairment, accommodations for physical mobility considerations, and/or other services to make this event more accessible. Contact us at info@wimasternaturalist.org. Make your request at least 25 days before the event so there is enough time to make sure everything is ready for you. There is no added cost to you for these services.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Summit Hosts



Summit Planning Committee

- Aleisha Miller – Summit Coordinator, UW–Madison Extension, Master Naturalist Program
- Becky Sapper – Co-lead, UW–Madison Extension, Master Naturalist Program
- Jennifer Vieth – Co-lead, Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center
- Janet Barthel – Master Naturalist & Instructor, Retzer Nature Center
- Tina Brown – Master Naturalist & Instructor, Ho-Chunk Nation
- Ashley Goldbeck – Friends of Willow River & Kinnickinnic State Parks
- Erika Jensen – Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center
- Licia Johnson – Master Naturalist Instructor, North Lakeland Discovery Center
- Martha Martin – UW–Madison Extension, Master Naturalist Program
- Randy Newton – Master Naturalist
- Lennet Radke – Master Naturalist
- Sharon Schaver – Master Naturalist
- Jessica Schmidt – Master Naturalist
- Laurel Sukup – Master Naturalist

Summit Sponsors – THANK YOU

- St. Croix Valley Foundation – Diamond Level Sponsor
- Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin – Gold Level Sponsor
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources State Park System, Interpretation & Education – Bronze Level Sponsor
- Jennifer Studebaker, Master Naturalist – Session Sponsor

During the Summit

Learn — with a variety of field events, workshops, and presentations.

Serve — with volunteer opportunities.

Connect — with volunteers, natural resources professionals, land & water stewards, & educators.

Celebrate — with individuals earning Master Naturalist awards.

Support — the Master Naturalist program by bidding on tiny art!

Bonus: Master Naturalists can earn both volunteer and advanced training hours at the Summit. Since registration is through the Portal, **those hours are entered for you.**
