Vermilion Conservationist

Fall 2019

Forest Glen | Kennekuk | Lake Vermilion | Heron

Old Barn Trail Bridge Dedication Day

Even the steady rain with the threat of thunderstorms couldn't keep people away from the Old Barn Trail Bridge Dedication Day on Saturday, August 17 at Forest Glen Preserve. A new 65-foot bridge over Willow Creek was constructed by Kenny Clarkston, a junior at Westville High School, for his Eagle Scout project. Approximately 50 people were in attendance as Kenny officially cut the ribbon and welcomed everyone to enjoy the new bridge.

Lisa Witsman, center, was Kenny Clarkston's, right, 3rd grade teacher at Judith Giacoma. She now teaches Outdoor School at the VCCD with Nick Jeurissen, left. Lisa proposed the idea for Kenny to meet with Nick about an Eagle Scout Project.

Before cutting the ribbon, Nick Jeurissen, VCCD staff liason for the project, shared with the crowd why this bridge was such an important project for the park. The previous bridge was unusable for trail hikers and school groups; people had to detour out onto a public road to bypass the old bridge. The new bridge, with two 65-foot steel bridge trusses donated by Thomas Excavating and Deomolition, will last for several decades thanks to Kenny's dedication and hard work. The bridge was constructed with enough height and length to withstand flooding during high rain events. Over the years, beavers have also built dams in the area causing it to flood more easily.

Kenny Clarkston expressed his appreciation to everyone who donated money, time, and materials. He raised over $4,000 for the new bridge project. Kenny also thanked Nick Jeurissen for giving him the opportunity and showing him construction skills and techniques.

Visitors at left enjoying the bridge after the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Vermilion Conservationist

This newsletter is a publication of the Vermilion County Conservation District. It covers news, programs, and natural history information of interest to residents of Vermilion County. It is free upon request from:

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Director's Dateline

Jamie Pasquale

After many years of planning, the first section of the Kickapoo Rail Trail in Vermilion County will be open this fall. The trail will span 1.8 miles from the western edge of Oakwood east to Gray's Siding road. Construction funding came from donations and an Illinois Enhancement Transportation Program (ITEP) Grant. The ITEP grant provided 80% of the construction cost. The remaining 20% cost share was completely funded by numerous private donations specified for the trail. No VCCD funds or local real estate tax dollars were used. Fundraising for the KRT is primarily conducted by the Champaign County Design and Conservation Foundation and the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation; as well as several other supporting groups and friends of the trail, including the Vermilion County Friends of KRT volunteer group.

Kickapoo Rail Trail Construction at Mission Field Road looking west towards Oakwood.

The next Vermilion County section will continue from Gray's Siding road to the Vermilion County Fairgrounds road. This section will include construction of a new bridge deck over the existing trestle bridge frame. Tentative start for construction is spring of 2020. This 1.5-mile section is owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The $3 million construction cost will be paid for by ITEP funding and IDNR.

Future Vermilion County sections of the KRT will be dependent on available grants and donations. No VCCD funds or local real estate tax funds are planned to be used for engineering or construction at this time. Our next KRT fundraising event will be Friday, November 15 at Sleepy Creek Vineyards. Full details about this event can be found on page 8. Hope you can attend and support the continued development of the Kickapoo Rail Trail!

For up-to-date information on programs, events, nature news, and more; be sure to visit www.vccd.org and like us on our Facebook page under "Vermilion County Conservation District."

You can contact us at:

Kennekuk County Park
22296 Henning Road, Danville IL, 61834
217-442-1691

Forest Glen Preserve
20301 E. 900 North Road, Westville, IL 61883
217-662-2142

Email us at vccd@vccd.org

Forest Glen County Preserve Presents

HISTORIC DISPLAYS

MILITARY DEMOS

VERMILION VALLEY ENCAMPMENT

REVOLUTIONARY WAR RE-ENACTMENT & PIONEER DAYS

SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2019

- Saturday: 10am-4pm
- Sunday: 10am-3:30pm
- Pioneer Craft Day, Sunday only
- FREE Event
- Located at the Historic Cabin Area

Join us to see...

- Daily Life & Military Demonstrations
- Children's Games & Activities
- Live Historic Music

For more information call / visit 217-662-2142 www.nwta.com

FALL AND WINTER PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES

September

7 Public Hayride at Forest Glen, 6p.m. Meet at L J K Visitor Center parking lot. $1/person Fee

7 River to Rail Bike Ride for the KRT, Preregistration & fee required, call 442-1691 for more information

13,14 Hunter Safety Course, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, Pre-registration Required
Register at http://sportsmansed.com/schedule--registration.html

14 Wool Dyeing Demonstration, Homestead Cabin, Forest Glen. 10a.m. - 3p.m. Free!

18 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30p.m. Public Invited

23 Outdoor School begins at Forest Glen & Kennekuk for 8 weeks for area 4th & 5th graders.

28-29 Revolutionary War Re-enactment, Homestead Cabin area, Forest Glen. Free!
Saturday 10a.m. - 5p.m., Sunday 10a.m. - 4p.m. See Ad on Page 3.

29 Pioneer Craft Day, 10a.m. - 4p.m. Homestead Cabin area, Forest Glen. Free! See Ad on Page 5.

October

4 Civil War School Days for area 6th grade students at Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk

5 Public Hayride at Forest Glen, 6p.m. Meet at L J K Visitor Center parking lot. $1/person Fee

11 VCCF Board Meeting, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 9a.m.

12 Fall Mushroom Program and Hike with Andrew Miller, Mycologist from Illinois Natural History Survey
Forest Glen Preserve, 10a.m. - 12p.m. Preregistration and Fee Required. See Ad on Page 11.

18,19 Hunter Safety Course, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, Pre-registration Required
Register at http://sportsmansed.com/schedule--registration.html

16 VCCD Board Meeting at Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 4:30p.m. Public Invited

November

3 Thanksgiving at the Cabin, 1 - 4p.m. Homestead Cabin area, Forest Glen. Free!

15 KRT at Sleepy Creek Fundraising Event, 7 - 10p.m. Tickets can be purchased at Kennekuk County Park. See Ad on Page 8 for more information.

20 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30p.m. Public Invited

December

1 Holiday Open House, 2 - 8p.m. Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk. Free!

1-31* Holiday Lights at the Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk,
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings only* from 5 - 8p.m. Free!

6 VCCF Board Meeting, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 9a.m.

18 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30p.m. Public Invited

Charlie Rhoden Retires After 46 Years of Service

The VCCD would like to congratulate longtime district employee Charles Rhoden who will retire at the end of September after 46 years of service. Charlie has been the park superintendent at Forest Glen since 1991. He has been instrumental in planning, development, and maintenance of our parks, especially Forest Glen. His knowledge, dedication, and work ethic will be greatly missed! We wish him the best in the next chapter of his life.

A brief look back over Charlie's past 46 years...

Photo from Rev War to be placed here

Nature Preserve Hikes to Resume this Fall

With the Illinois Native Plant Society and Middlefork Audubon Society

BIRDS BLOOMS AND BUTTERFLIES

Doris L. Westfall Prairie Illinois Nature Preserve
Hike at Forest Glen
Saturday, September 14, 10:00a.m. - Noon

With fall around the corner we are ready to turn in our sandals for our hiking boots once again to go visit more nature preserves in Vermilion County! Mary Ann Hoeffliger, prairie enthusiast, will be guiding us through the Doris Westfall Prairie, sharing stories about its history and taking us on a walk of discovery through the prairie. At this time of year we will be able to enjoy some of the later prairie flowers, look and listen for the grassland birds who enjoy this native habitat, and enjoy the butterflies as they float by. Come join us in this lovely place. Wear long pants, socks and closed-toed shoes for this easy hike.

Monarch Butterfly feeding on Blazing Star

Cheeseburgers and Fun Event Sponsors

August 10, 2019

Thank You to our wonderful sponsors and special friends of the District and Vermilion County Conservation Foundation. Without you, this event would not be possible!

GOLD:

Beltone Hearing Aid Service, Danville
Meijer, Danville

SILVER:

Byerly Garage Doors, Danville
First Midwest Bank, Danville
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Alderman Rick Strebing, Danville
Terminix, Danville
Danville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Danville

Special Thanks to:

City of Danville for donating the use of the stage
Robbie Black and Knights of Columbus for donating the use of two cookers
VCCF and VCCD Volunteers

Three Forks Wild Turkey Chapter Needs Your Help!

The National Wild Turkey Federation is seeking individuals interested in helping or joining the Three Forks Wild Turkey Chapter Committee. This is our local chapter here in Danville. Interested individuals can contact Cindy Spillman, NWTF Regional Director, at cspillman@nwtf.net or (618)586-5191. You may also contact Cole Craft at Forest Glen Preserve with questions, (217)662-2142.

The NWTF is dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage. The mission of the National Wild Turkey Federation is no less urgent today than when it was founded in 1973 through contributions of a dynamic volunteer base.

KRT at Sleepy Creek

Dragonfly Event Center
Friday, November 15
7:00pm - 10:00pm

All proceeds go toward construction of the trail!

Silent Auction will end at 9:00pm
The Live Jukebox Show with David Howie

Tickets: $50; couples $100
includes 1 drink ticket and hors d'oeuvres
Sponsor a table of 10 for $450

Call for event tickets: 217-586-3360 or 217-442-1691
www.onekrt.org

Kickapoo Rail Trail

Wine. Music. Auction.

From the Garden

by Susan Biggs Warner

Bunker Hill Historic Area Herb Garden

The Bunker Hill Historic Area Herb Garden is looking wonderful, as is the vegetable and flower gardens around the Atwood Home. Everything is lush and growing in spite of the long dry spell we've been experiencing. The beautiful gardens are due to the dedicated Master Gardener volunteers who work each week at those areas.

At Forest Glen, the butterfly garden is coming along with quite a few caterpillars munching happily on our milkweed plants. I always find it amusing that we spend so much time trying to keep the insects from eating our plants and then are thrilled to see the first Monarch caterpillars on the milkweed that we planted especially for them. Hopefully the plants will grow faster than the "worms", we wouldn't want the little guys to go hungry before their big transformation.

The memorial garden on the south side of the visitor center, dedicated to Lorna Konsis, former VCCD employee, is beautiful this year thanks to our great summer employees weeding and edging. The drought resistance lantana flowers are popular with numerous butterfly species in the center of the garden. Deer do not like to eat lantana so this is one we will definitely plant again.

The recipe this time is for those of you who grow basil. Lemon pesto is easy to make, last several days in the fridge, and is really good on grilled bread, chicken breasts, pizza and just about anything else you can think of, except ice cream.

Lemon Pesto

1 clove garlic
1/4 cup almonds
2 cups fresh basil
1/4 cup lemon verbena
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon lemon zest
2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 to 1/2 cup olive oil
Salt to taste

In a food processor or blender, combine garlic and almonds. Process for 20 seconds or till chopper. Add basil, lemon verbena, cheese, and lemon zest. Process for 30 or 40 seconds. With motor running, add lemon juice and olive oil until desired consistency is reached. Taste and add salt as desired, process 3 seconds to blend. Store tightly covered for up to one week in fridge or freeze for up to three months.

Heron County Park receives Illinois Union Sportsmen's Alliance Grant

Partnering with the Danville Building and Construction Trades Council, the Vermilion County Conservation District was awarded a $10,000 grant from the Illinois Union Sportsman's Alliance to repair and upgrade the Wetland Boardwalk at Heron County Park. During high rain events, the North Fork River floods, raising the level of the floating boardwalk allowing logs to move in underneath. Repairs will include removing large logs under the boardwalk, construction improvements to prevent future logs moving under the boardwalk, and replacing damaged boards. During repairs, the boardwalk may be closed to the public for safety. We will announce any closing of the boardwalk for repairs on our Facebook page. Look for improvements to begin this fall!

North American Bluebird Society Recognition and Award Presented to Jim Smith

by Suzanne Smith

On August 22nd, Middlefork Audubon members gathered for their annual bluebird celebration at Kennekuk County Park to honor a very special member of their organization. Long-time member of Illinois Audubon, Jim Smith, was presented with a special commendation from the North American Bluebird Society for his 50+ years of dedication and passion to the Eastern Bluebird. NABS, the North American Bluebird Society, Inc, is a non-profit education, conservation, and research organization that promotes the recovery of bluebirds and other cavity-nesting bird species in North America. Kerry Allen, president of the East Central Illinois Bluebird Society, an affiliate of NABS, presented the award.

Kerry Allen, right, President of the East Central Illinois Bluebird Society, presenting Jim Smith, left, with the award.

Back in the late 1960's, members of Middlefork Audubon and others throughout the United States began to notice a drastic decline in the populations of bluebirds due to loss of habitat and a series of severe winters. Jim, along with members of Middlefork Audubon and others, began placing bluebird nest boxes around the Vermilion County Conservation District, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, at their homes, around golf courses, and on their farms. You may have noticed some of these boxes as you drive through the various conservation areas nearby. Over the years, these nest boxes have allowed the Eastern bluebird and other cavity nesters, including Tree Swallows, Carolina chickadees, and House Wrens among others, to recover in our area, and Jim has helped to establish many of these trails. At almost 93 years young, he continues to dedicate his time and energy establishing and maintaining boxes around Vermilion and Champaign counties. He continues to encourage others to connect to the joy of monitoring nest boxes and enjoy all of the beauty a bluebird nest box trail has to offer.

We congratulate him on his award, and thank him for his years of service to the beautiful bluebird! For more information on NABS, please visit www.nabluebirdsociety.org.

"Friends of the District"
Thank you!

Memorial Donations for Steve Hosch

Deedra Kim Davis, Fairbury, IL
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Mark & Cindy Dicken, Joe & Caitlin Dicken, Jennifer Dicken, Jessica & Levi Poulson, Danville, IL

Memorial Donations for Sharon Senn

Elizabeth & Danny Smith, Tuscola, IL
Kimberly Nelson-Galloway, Hoopeston, IL
John & Karen Laubscher, Cissna Park, IL
John & Joanna Swick, Mattoon, IL

Donation of a Wild Turkey Mount from Gary Davis

Various Memorials in memory of Bob Revello

Donation of $150 to Forest Glen Preserve from Sons of American Legion, Georgetown, IL

VERMILION COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MUSHROOM IDENTIFICATION 101

Saturday, October 12, 2019
10:00am - 12:00 pm
Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve

Dr. Andrew Miller, a mycologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey will describe basic life cycles and proper identification of mushrooms in Illinois. The morning will begin with a presentation in the classroom followed by a woodland mushroom hunt and exploration hike.
Pre-registration with a $5.00 fee/person is required.
Participation is limited.
Register by calling Forest Glen at 217-662-2142.

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HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2019
VERMILION COUNTY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION?

The Mission of the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation is to support the efforts of the Vermilion County Conservation District through the conservation of our natural resources, improvement of natural and scenic areas, scientific research, and support of conservation education to citizens of Vermilion County, IL, and maintenance and support of capital projects to promote historical and natural preservation.

Join the VCCF in making a difference in your community and commit to all natural and wildlife resource conservation activities. Currently, the Foundation is working with the VCCD on Beech Grove Trial and Site Improvement at Forest Glen Preserve and the Kickapoo Rail Trail construction.

Your VCCF membership at any level entitles you to a 10% discount on District rentals and user fees, and expires each December 31. Choose a membership today that is right for you!

- ☐ $25 Regular
- ☐ $50 Supporting
- ☐ $100 Patron
- ☐ $1,000 Life – payable in up to four installments, if preferred

Name _____

Address _____

City_____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone_____ E-mail_____

Enclose this form with your **tax-deductible check** payable to VCCF
and mail to: VCCF, c/o Forest Glen Preserve, 20301 E 900 North Road, Westville, IL 61883