



SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

# NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Calendar & Newsletter

September - December 2025 | Volume 46 No. 3

*Rockford, Illinois*





# GOLF PLAYDAY FORE THE PRAIRIE

JANUARY 31, 2026 10AM - 1PM  
 THE FORMER ELLIOT GOLF COURSE  
 888 SOUTH LYFORD RD, ROCKFORD



SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

Want one last opportunity to hit golf balls again at Elliot Golf Course? Join us at Fore the Prairie and hit prairie seed “golf balls” from the former driving range. We’ll have fun for the whole family with s’mores, hot cocoa, and hands-on activities learning about the restoration project.

Free Admission with the opportunity to purchase snacks and beverages.

All proceeds support the restoration of the former Elliot Golf Course to a premier nature preserve featuring prairie, savanna, and wetland habitats.

A PLAYDAY FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY!

CONTACT LINDA SANDQUIST FOR MORE INFORMATION AT 815-335-2915 OR [LINDA@SEVERSONDELLS.ORG](mailto:LINDA@SEVERSONDELLS.ORG)

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE!

LOOKING TO EXPLORE, AND WANT THE BEST TOOLS?

CHECK OUT A FREE NATURE EXPLORATION BACKPACK AT SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER!

ADVENTURE PACKS

Bug Watch

Nature's Palette

ROCK ON

PLANT PURSUERS

Beaks & Binoculars



generously funded by:




## EXPLORE THIS ISSUE

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Happy Fall to All,

Earlier this year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Fannie Severson donating her 369 acre property to the then named Winnebago County Forest Preserve District. I think frequently about Fannie and what her vision might have been for this property and her family's home that has been the nature center since the founding of the nonprofit Severson Dells Education Foundation organization. Based on her donation documents, we know that she wanted this place utilized for nature education and celebrated by, for, and with the community, but what did she hope it would become 10, 20 or 50 years later? We can only hope that all of the hikes, field trips, camps, lectures, Science Saturdays and a wide range of other programs over the years were what she had in mind.

While Severson Dells Nature Center exists because of Fannie and her family's generosity, it also exists and thrives because of the tens (dare I say, hundreds) of thousands of community members who have volunteered, donated and attended programs over the years. You have built the community resource that is the nature center. In the process, you have also built a thriving community that loves nature and wants to encourage and provide opportunities for all in the community to love and connect with nature as you have.

Over the coming year, we will be commemorating the 50th anniversary in a multitude of ways. We hope that you will celebrate with us and continue to bring friends and family into the nature center community.

This season we will have many of the fall and winter favorites you have come to love and anticipate- Fall Colors Hikes, Spook the Dells and Luminaria, but we will also have our Snackin' on Science series and the return of our Botany and Brews series highlighting the plants and science behind many of our favorite beverages.



Lastly, mark your calendars for January 31, 2026 for the most unlikely of events- a winter golf play day! To kick off the prairie restoration at the old Elliot Golf Course, we will be hosting Fore the Prairie, a golf play day, but instead of hitting golf balls, attendees will be hitting golf ball seed bombs that are full of native plant seeds into the future prairie. There will be a wide range of activities for all ages to participate and celebrate the beginning of restoration.

Thank you for being a part of the Severson community! Whether it has been 5 months, 5 years, or 50 years, your involvement has made an impact. We look forward to continuing to grow this community and look forward to what this organization can be for our region for the next 50 years and beyond. As always, if you have thoughts you would like to share or questions you'd like answered, please feel free to reach out to me at [ann@seversondells.org](mailto:ann@seversondells.org) or 815-335-2915.

- Ann Wasser, Executive Director

**Meet Linda Sandquist (she, her): our new Director of Development!**  
As a lifelong Rockfordian, Linda's passion is helping make Rockford a thriving place to live.



"My first exposure to nature education happened when I was a chaperone for my daughter's 2nd grade winter field trip. I remember how great the staff was, how much the kids enjoyed their visit, and how invigorating it was to be out in nature on a winter's day. Fast forward 23 years and my granddaughters, Joanna & Ruby, were exposed to Severson Dells when their other set of grandparents brought them to Pollinator Palooza. They loved it! Their delight served as the impetus for me to apply for the development position here. I am blessed to be part of the dedicated team who works to bring nature education and activities to over 10,000 people each year. Most importantly, I am dedicated to ensuring that all families have the opportunity to take advantage of the wonders of Severson Dells and I look to the future when we will be able to offer nature education on the east side of Rockford. I look forward to building this magic together with you."

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Register for programs at [seversondells.org/events](https://seversondells.org/events) or call 815-335-2915

For the most up-to-date information on programs please visit our website at [www.seversondells.org](https://www.seversondells.org). Registration is required for all programs.

## Hikes, Walks, & Strolls!

### Birding Stroll

9/2/2025 | 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM

Join birding enthusiast Richard Benning as we stroll leisurely through the woods looking and listening for our feathered friends! All Ages, \$3/members, \$5/non-member

### Full Moon Hike

9/8/2025 | 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

10/6/2025 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

11/5/2025 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

12/4/2025 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Under the light of the full moon, join Severson Dells staff as we explore the woods and prairie in search of nocturnal mysteries! All Ages, \$3/members, \$5/non-member

### Birding Stroll

9/23/2025 | 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Join birding enthusiast Richard Benning as we stroll leisurely through the woods looking and listening for our feathered friends! All Ages, \$3/members, \$5/non-member

### Fall Colors

9/24/2025 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Join us for this pre-sunset golden walk through the forest and prairie as we check out the beauty of the fall!

\$3/members, \$5/non-member

### Rewilding the Fairways

10/12/2025 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Join us for a hike and lecture about the evolving landscape of the former Elliot Golf Course. We will explore how old fairways and manicured greens are being restored to native prairie, wetland, and woodland habitats. The hike will be on uneven terrain because there are no trails on the property yet. Please wear sturdy shoes. All Ages, Free



## Engage & Explore!

### Ode-onate to Joyce

9/9/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Grab a bite to eat (not included) at Lucha Cantina as we join Joyce Gibbons as she talks all things dragonfly and damselfly! She will talk about the species found in Winnebago County, how and where to find them, & how to document them on community science websites. All Ages, \$3/members, \$5/non-member



### Bites & Bison

10/14/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Join Graduate Student Sam Berk as she shares her research on the impacts of bison grazing at Nachusa Grasslands. Grab a bite to eat (not included) at Lucha Cantina, and enjoy this fun lecture! All Ages, \$3/members, \$5/non-member



### Backyard Wildlife

11/11/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Explore some of the problems humans may encounter when an animal shows up in our yards with Extension wildlife expert Peggy Anesi. Does feeding wildlife disrupt natural patterns? How can we stop deer from rubbing on our trees and eating our shrubs? Is it possible to feed the birds, but not the mice? All Ages, \$3/members, \$5/non-member

### Cindy Crosby at Maze Books

9/16/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Join renowned author Cindy Crosby as we learn to pay attention to the natural world around us. Cindy will share excerpts from 3 of her books, "The Tallgrass Prairie: An Introduction", "Chasing Dragonflies", and "Tallgrass Conversations" and lead us in a rousing discussion. As poet Mary Oliver states, "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it." All Ages, Free, donations encouraged.

### Fall Art Workshop: Printmaking

9/20/2025 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Join local artist Sarah Reed McNamara as she leads us through a simple block printing workshop. All materials and instruction will be provided. Take home a wonderful piece of art! All Ages, \$30/members, \$35/non-member

### Fall Art Workshop: Watercolors

10/25/2025 | 10:00am - 12:00pm

Join local artist Jenny Mathews as she guides you through the creation of a gorgeous piece of watercolor art! We will take in the golden hues of the prairie and see if we can transfer that magic to paper! All materials and instruction provided. All Ages, \$30/members, \$35/non-member

## Members Events

### Cookies & Crafts

12/13/2025 | 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Members-Only! Join Severson for cookies & crafts! Plus, stick around for early access to Luminaria! All Ages, Free

Interested in becoming a member?  
Visit [SeversonDells.org/become-a-member](https://SeversonDells.org/become-a-member)

## Homeschool Programs!

We believe nature education should be hands-on, exploratory, engaging, and memorable.  
Bring your student to come play and learn with us for a themed homeschool program!

Ages 5-8 from 10:00-11:30 am | Ages 9-12 from 1:00-2:30 pm

Members: \$10 for members, \$15 for general admission

### Spectacular Soils September 18

Spectacular Soils: There is a whole world under the ground! Let's explore this building block in the forest and prairie!

### The Case of the Disappearing Log October 16

A mystery is happening at Severson Dells and the log is disappearing before our very eyes! How and why is this happening? Let's find out!

### Knot Today November 20

Making cordage and tying knots is an essential skill for any outdoors person. Join us to learn some simple knots and how to make your own cords!

### Solstice Celebration December 18

What is a solstice? Why are they special? Let's learn about the shortest day of the year and celebrate the light!



Join us the first Saturday of each month for Science Saturday, a free, family friendly drop-in event!

Meet local experts, take home crafts, books, & science-themed giveaways, and expand your knowledge of nature's wonders!

Event made possible with funding from: COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNITED for LITERACY



### Survival Skills

September 6th  
10am - 2pm

Experience the outdoors safely! We'll teach you all about shelter-building, how to identify unsafe plants, fire-building, navigation techniques, wildlife tracking, and more!



### Nature's Underworld

November 1st  
10am - 2pm

Let's move this party underground! Enjoy hands-on science activities, nature crafts, and fun games as you discover underground habitats, roots, and creatures through all-day family-friendly adventures.



### Celebration of Indigenous People

October 4th  
10am - 2pm

This Science Saturday invites local Indigenous groups to utilize Severson Dells to teach community members about stewardship of nature and Indigenous culture & traditions.



### Micro-Nature Magnific

December 6th  
10am - 2pm

Prepare to get closer to nature than you ever have before! Some of the most fascinating organisms are smaller than your fingernail! Join us to discover Micro-Nature!



# WINTER BREAK CAMP

DECEMBER 22<sup>TH</sup> 9:00AM - 3:00PM  
\$30/MEMBER ; \$35/NON-MEMBERS



**Chickadees (ages 5-7)**  
Chickadees continue to thrive in even the toughest of temperatures, just like a little cold weather won't stop us from exploring nature. Experience winter animal adaptations for yourself with hands on activities, exciting games, & outdoor adventures!

**Blue Jays (ages 8-12)**  
Being a winter detective can mean searching through snow packs, looking at ice cores, checking out snowflakes, or learning about search and rescue in the mountains. Join us as we explore each day to unlock the mysteries of the winter!



## Explore the Botany of Beverages with Severson Dells & Community Partners!

### Botany of Coffee: Rockford Roasting Company

Saturday, November 15th | 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM  
Let's wake up with learning about how our favorite morning brew makes its way from bean to cup! Rockford Roasting Company owner Benjamin Chauvin walks us through the process, and then we will enjoy a coffee tasting of various brews from around the world! Event takes place at Severson Dells. \$20 members / \$25 general admission

### Botany of Spirits: Barnstormers Distillery

Wednesday, December 17 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Join us for an evening of Grain-to-Glass as we talk about the unique way Barnstormer Distillery distills their alcohols to make superb spirits! Joining Barnstormer for the night will be Andie Hazzard of Hazzard Free Farms, who is Barnstormer's primary grain supplier! Event takes place at Barnstormers, 6969 S. Main St., Rfkd. \$20 members / \$25 general admission

### Botany of Kombucha: The Booch Witch

Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Katie, The Booch Witch, is back to teach us all about how to make kombucha! This delicious fermented beverage can be made however you like, with a little practice. Learn tips and tricks, be inspired to be adventurous in your kombucha making, and have an opportunity to purchase kombucha making supplies! Event takes place at Severson Dells. \$20 members / \$25 general admission



## BOTANY AND BREWS

SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER

### Botany of Beer: Prairie Street Brewing Company

Wednesday, February 18th | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Barley? Hops? Yeast? What does it all mean for beer? Join us at Prairie Street to find out! Learn about the uses and cultivation for the botanical ingredients in beer! Included in your ticket is sampling of a variety of beers and food pairings! 21+ with valid ID required for sampling. Event takes place at Prairie Street Brewing Company, 200 Prairie St., Rfkd. \$25 members / \$30 general admission

### Botany of Shrubs: The Norwegian

Wednesday, March 4th | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
New this year to the Botany and Brew line up is Shrubs with The Norwegian! A shrub is a type of fruit-infused drinking vinegar! The Norwegian makes many of their shrubs in-house for delicious cocktails and mocktails. Learn about the history of this beverage and its impacts around the world, and try some samples! Event takes place at The Norwegian, 1402 N. Main St., Rfkd. \$20 members / \$25 general admission



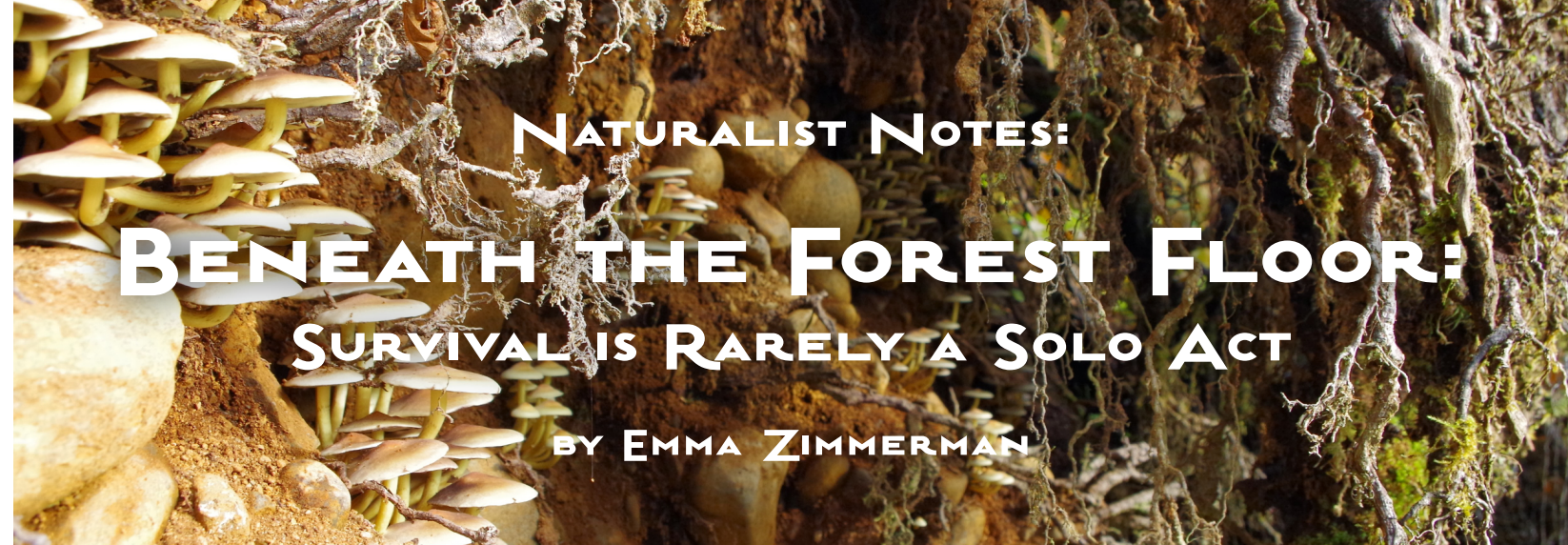
REGISTER AT [SEVERSONDELLS.ORG/BOTANYBREWS](https://seversondells.org/botanybrews)



## NATURALIST NOTES:

# BENEATH THE FOREST FLOOR: SURVIVAL IS RARELY A SOLO ACT

BY EMMA ZIMMERMAN



When I step into the forest in early fall, something shifts. The air is cooler, but still carries traces of summer's warmth. The scent is richer, earthy, mushroomy, and edged with the tang of decay. Leaves crunch underfoot, and golden light filters through thinning canopies. It's times like these that I feel there is a pulse to the forest, almost as if the ground itself is humming. There's an energy that stirs here that I've never quite experienced in urban areas, it's ancient and alive.

Here, life surrounds you, but not the kind we're used to noticing. There are no coffee shops, no crosswalks, no rush-hour crowds. Instead, mushrooms rise through the forest floor. Maples quietly store sugar in their roots. This is a place ruled by older kingdoms, plants and fungi. They don't move or speak the way we do, which often causes us to overlook them. It's easy, maybe even instinctive, to see them as lesser: less complex, less sentient, perhaps even less alive. As humans, we're wired to recognize things that are similar to us, so we interpret the world through an anthropocentric lens. When we don't recognize ourselves in other life forms, we tend to misread that absence as evidence that these beings are less complex. However the problem is not that these beings are less complex or intelligent, it's that we're just beginning to learn how to understand a form of life so ancient and fundamentally different from our own.

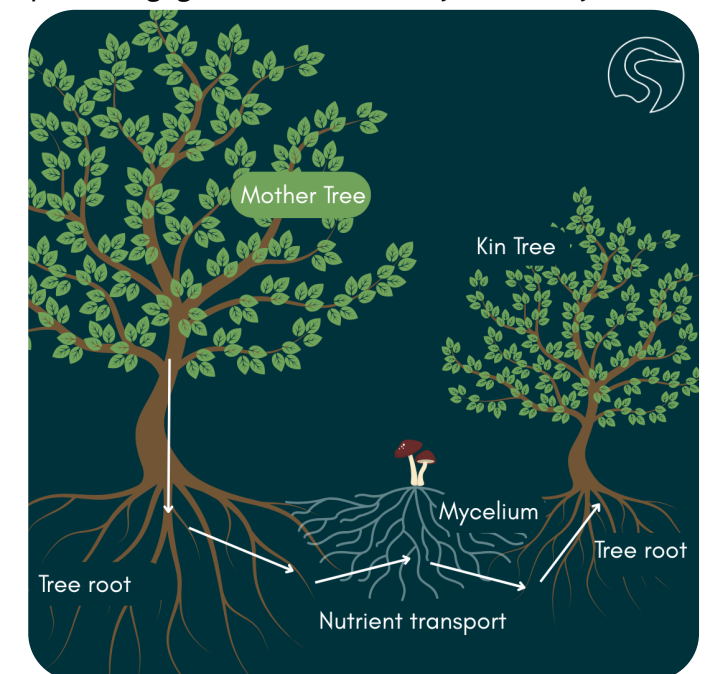
In recent decades, ecologists have uncovered something extraordinary beneath the forest floor: a hidden world where plants and fungi interact in deeply collaborative ways. Far from being isolated organisms, many plants are part of richly interconnected communities, linked together by vast underground fungal networks. These mycorrhizal systems facilitate the exchange of nutrients, information, and even chemical signals, challenging our traditional view of plants as passive or solitary. It turns out that plants are remarkably social. They can recognize kin, form alliances, and cooperate. What's emerging is a picture of the forest not as a collection of individuals, but rather a community where cooperation and communication are as foundational to forest survival as sunlight and soil.

Yet most of us weren't taught to see the forest this way. We learn to identify trees by their leaves, not their

relationships. We picture a tree as a lone organism, rooted and self-contained, but that couldn't be further from the truth. As science is beginning to show, and as fungi have always known, there's a secret life beneath our feet, a vast shared network that stitches the forest together. Once you know it's there, you may find yourself walking a little slower, looking a little closer, and listening for the quiet conversations happening in the soil.

### How the Mycorrhizal Network Works

Beneath the forest floor lies one of the most complex and vital infrastructures in terrestrial ecosystems, the mycorrhizal network. This underground web is formed by mycelium, which is the expansive, underground body of fungi (see figure). Mycelium is composed of microscopic, thread-like filaments called hyphae, which infiltrate the soil and establish intimate relationships with plant roots, forming structures collectively known as mycorrhizae. This mutually beneficial relationship is referred to as the mycorrhizal network. Approximately 90% of land plant species engage in some form of mycorrhizal symbiosis.



What the mycelium network looks like (not to scale)

There are two major types of mycorrhizae: ectomycorrhizae, which form sheaths around roots and are common in temperate trees like pines and oaks, and arbuscular mycorrhizae, which penetrate root cells and are more common in grasses and tropical forests. Both are integral to plant health and ecosystem dynamics. In both cases, this is a mutualistic symbiotic relationship where both the plant and fungi benefit from the exchange. The fungi receives a steady supply of carbohydrates delivered directly to its hyphae from the host's root cells. In return, the plant gains dramatically improved access to mineral nutrients like phosphate ( $\text{PO}_4^{3-}$ ) and ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ), which fungi are especially adept at extracting from the soil. The hyphae also vastly increase the absorptive surface area of the plant's root system, sometimes by over 100-fold! This is not a passive coexistence. It's an ancient partnership, over 400 million years old, honed by evolution into a biological alliance so successful that most terrestrial plants would struggle, or even fail, to survive without it.

These mycorrhizal associations are involved in more than just nutrient exchange. They assist plants with water acquisition, improve plant pathogen resistance, and enhance soil structure. Perhaps the most remarkable function of mycorrhizal networks, however, is their role in interplant communication. Through shared fungal connections, plants can transfer allelochemicals, signaling compounds, and even stress cues. Isotopic tracing studies using carbon ( $^{13}\text{C}$ ) and nitrogen ( $^{15}\text{N}$ ) have demonstrated resource transfer between mature trees and seedlings, especially from larger, well-established individuals to smaller, shaded, or nutrient-stressed neighbors.

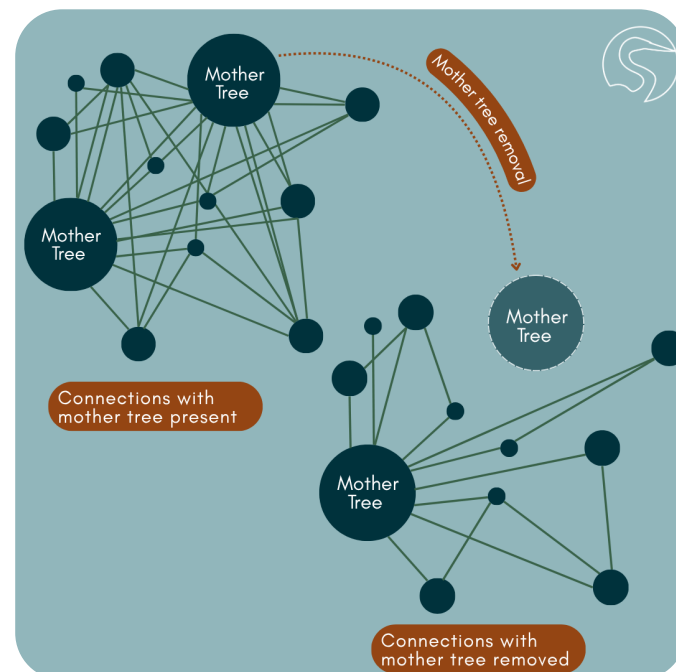
### The Science of Tree Communication

In the 1990's, Dr. Suzanne Simard's research radically reshaped forest ecology. Working in the forests of British Columbia, she traced the movement of carbon isotopes between trees and found that birches and Douglas-firs were sharing resources through underground mycorrhizal networks. Even more surprising, she found that the transfer wasn't always competitive, it was cooperative. She found that shaded Douglas-firs received carbon from sunlit birches, and the flow reversed in winter when the birches lost their leaves. Trees, it turns out, don't just hoard resources for themselves, they share them. Through fungal connections, they can send nutrients toward stressed or young saplings, allocate resources based on need, and even warn neighbors of insect attacks. When a tree is wounded by herbivores, it can release chemical signals that travel through the network, prompting nearby trees to boost their defenses.

For Western science, these findings challenged the long-standing view of trees as solitary competitors. For many Indigenous communities, however, this was a

truth long known. Generations of observation and cultural practice have long recognized the forest as a deeply relational space, where plants, fungi, animals, and people exist in mutual relationships. Simard's research affirmed what Indigenous knowledge systems had always understood. The forest is not a collection of individuals, but a living, communicating community.

Simard also identified "mother trees" which are large, older individuals with extensive root and fungal connections. Standing taller than the rest of the forest, they have the most access to sunlight and through photosynthesis often produce more sugar than they need. These trees act as central nodes in the network and play a particularly vital role in the forest, connecting to and supporting sometimes hundreds of other trees through the mycorrhizal network. The fungi don't consume all the excess sugar from the mother trees, and pass it forward in the mycorrhizal network to younger trees that may not have the same access to sunlight. Mother trees, however, can distinguish between their own offspring and relatives (kin trees) and routinely direct more of their excess sugars to them. Younger tree survival increases 3-4 times when connected to an older mother tree. It's forest nepotism at its finest. (see figure)



*Unequal Connections: Mother trees are more connected in the mycorrhizal network than younger trees. Removing these trees breaks more network links than if another tree was removed at random. In some cases, the removal of a mother tree can lead to 47% fewer connections overall.*

Remove a mother tree and the entire network's integrity declines. These networks enhance the resilience of entire ecosystems. In droughts, nutrients can be rerouted to the most vulnerable trees. After disturbances, fungal networks can aid in regeneration.

Because many tree species share fungal partners, the network bridges not just individuals, but entire communities. While not every scientist agrees on the extent of these behaviors (terms like "communication" and "mothering" can stretch metaphorical boundaries), the data support a view of forests as highly integrated systems. In many ways, trees behave less like isolated entities and more like parts of a complex, interdependent organism.

### A Lesson in Connection?

Let's return to that autumn forest floor. Every oak and hickory around me is a part of an ancient, fungal web. What looked like individuality was, in fact, collaboration. This illusion of the lone tree has long mirrored how we see ourselves. Western culture tends to celebrate independence, self-reliance, the myth of the self-made individual, but the mycorrhizal network reminds us that **survival is rarely a solo act**. The health of a forest depends on cooperation, and so does the health of our community.

When we think of ourselves as individuals disconnected from each other, from our neighbors, our environment, even our food systems, we risk making decisions that harm the very networks we depend on. But if we start to see ourselves as nodes in a living web—connected, communicating, and contributing—we might just make choices that support collective flourishing.

It's easy to look up at the canopy or down at your phone, but the next time you're walking in the woods, take a

moment to really look down at the ground, beneath the forest floor. Somewhere under there, millions of hyphae are stringing together a system more ancient and intricate than anything humans have built. There's something humbling in that. Something hopeful, too. The forest survives not through competition, but through connection. Maybe we can, too.

#### Sources:

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Emma Zimmerman grew up in the stateline area, and is happy to be back home and in the place she loves most - the forest! Emma graduated from Beloit College with a degree in Environmental Biology. Emma recently moved back to Illinois after working in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington State conducting plant surveys and removing invasive species.



## VOLUNTEER WITH US

### RESTORATION / CONSERVATION CREW

Volunteers join us on restoration projects on the 2nd Saturday of each month (excluding December). Most projects include removing invasive species. No background knowledge is required. Tools are provided. Contact Liz at [Liz@seversondells.org](mailto:Liz@seversondells.org) for more information. Upcoming Restoration Work Days take place from 9am-12pm on the following dates:

September 13<sup>th</sup>, October 11<sup>th</sup>, and November 8<sup>th</sup>



### NATURE CENTER HOST

Volunteers staff the front desk in 4-hour shifts. Duties include answering the telephone, greeting visitors, conducting gift shop sales, and assisting members in checking out library materials. Apply online at [seversondells.org/volunteer](https://seversondells.org/volunteer)

### SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Volunteers help lead field trips at Severson Dells. We currently have a great need for guides on our Discover Nature Hikes, which focus on enthusiasm for nature! We provide all training necessary. School programs take place during the week from approximately 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For more information, please contact Andrea: [Andrea@seversondells.org](mailto:Andrea@seversondells.org)



### PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Volunteers host stations for Science Saturdays and assist with other events community events. If you enjoy crafts, demonstrations, sharing nature knowledge, and helping guests feel welcome, you would be a great fit! Shifts and dates vary, but you get to pick your hours. Contact Liz at [Liz@seversondells.org](mailto:Liz@seversondells.org) for more information.

# SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER

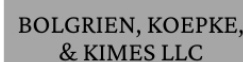
## the 5<sup>th</sup> annual **GOLDEN HOUR** IN THE GROVE SEPTEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2025 5-7:30 PM

Bask in the beauty of the golden hour at our annual down-to-earth fundraising soiree.

Explore The Grove, our unique nature playscape, on this summer evening just for adults, featuring: heavy hors d'oeuvres by The Norwegian, a gourmet s'more station by the fire, cocktails and mocktails, and live music!

Tickets available at [SeversonDells.org/GoldenHour](https://SeversonDells.org/GoldenHour)

### THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS:



### SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

## LINDA NIEMIEC

For Linda Niemiec, a journey into retirement didn't include slowing down. Instead, it meant finding new ways to connect with community and the natural world that surrounds it. After retiring as the Vice President of Development at Crusader Community Health Foundation, Linda made it her mission to continue staying active and engaged.



Linda sat down with fellow retirees to share ideas about how they spend their newfound free time. One of the common interests was hiking. As a result, Linda formed the Friday Hiking Club

that started off as a small group getting together for a nice stroll. Today, the group has over 120 people who gather to enjoy our local trails, preserves, and sometimes historical sites. Now, the group enjoys more than just a hike and usually includes a group outing afterwards. For many, the Friday Hiking Club became a lifeline during the COVID-19 crisis. This time plagued by loneliness provided an outlet and has continued to help our community form connections. The hiking club offers not only exercise, but also camaraderie and the mental health benefits that time in nature amplifies.

One of Linda's favorite places to wander is Severson Dells. She loves participating in Full Moon Hikes, birdwatching, and has joined us for Popcorn & Perseids & Golden Hour in the Grove. She notes, "I

could sit here all day." Linda credits George Fell for helping preserve so much of Winnebago County's natural beauty, and she also credits Severson Dells for continuing that legacy: "I really admire Ann and her leadership, especially during challenging times."

For Linda, the connection to nature is more than just recreation. She believes deeply in the mission of Severson Dells and the role it plays in young people's appreciation for the environment. "We need to nurture our young people because we need them to be supportive of nature in the future. I fear that is going away."

This is what inspires Linda to give to Severson Dells. Linda has also generously shared her development expertise and helped lead board trainings on fundraising and has participated in feasibility studies for past projects. She is also a strong advocate for diverse giving, and encourages others to consider making charitable gifts through their IRA's: "Using required minimum distributions is easy, there are benefits, and more people should do it. I'm planning on doing it, too, next year when I turn 73," she says. (73 is the age at which an individual must take the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from their retirement account.)



Linda's hope for Severson Dells is that the mission continues to reach even more people, and knows the expansion at the former Elliot golf course should help bring the benefits of nature to more people. Through Severson Dells and her growing relationship with nature, Linda has found lasting friendships and a sense of purpose in helping protect something truly special for future generations.

For Linda, supporting Severson Dells is about preserving a space where people can find connection, calm, and a place where we can all take a hike together.





## Are You Interested in Supporting Severson Dells Education Foundation?

### Join our Hertiage Society!

Including Severson Dells Nature Center in your will or estate plan is a powerful way to ensure your commitment to nature and education lives on for generations to come. Your legacy gift helps secure the future of the high-quality nature education programs you know and love, inspiring tomorrow's Earth stewards.

When you make this meaningful decision, you're invited to join the Heritage Society—a special group of individuals who share your dedication to protecting and celebrating the natural world for future generations.

If you've already included Severson Dells in your estate plans, please let us know. We would be honored to recognize your generosity and ensure your wishes are fulfilled exactly as you intend.

To learn more about the Heritage Society, please visit [www.SeversonDells.org/legacy-giving](http://www.SeversonDells.org/legacy-giving) or contact Linda Sandquist, Director of Development, at [linda@seversondells.org](mailto:linda@seversondells.org) or 815-335-2915.

We encourage you to consult your attorney or financial advisor to determine the best way to achieve your long-term charitable and financial goals.

Severson Dells Nature Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and all contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Our EIN # is 36-2985870.

### Other ways to donate:

- Consider a recurring gift
- Donate through Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)
- Gifts from your IRA / Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)
- Talk to your employer about a matched gift
- Honor a loved one through a Memorial or Tribute Gift
- Sponsor a program or event
- Become a member

There are many more ways to make an impact with Severson Dells. If you're ready to make an impact or if you'd like more information, contact Linda Sandquist at 815-335-2915 or [linda@seversondells.org](mailto:linda@seversondells.org) or visit us at [www.SeversonDells.org/donate](http://www.SeversonDells.org/donate)



## BECOME A MEMBER OF "FRIENDS OF SEVERSON DELLS" OR GIVE AN ADDITIONAL GIFT

### MEMBERS RECEIVE:

- ☐ Discount at Severson Dells' Gift Shop
- ☐ Reduced admission to Severson Dells' programs
- ☐ Members-only programs at Severson Dells
- ☐ Early Summer Camp registration
- ☐ Check-out privileges at Severson Dells' Library
- ☐ "Notes From the Dells" newsletter, with calendar of programs and special events mailed directly to your home
- ☐ Reciprocal benefits to over 140 participating Association of Nature Center Administrators member nature centers around the country

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:

- \_\_\_ Individual \$45
- \_\_\_ Family \$75
- \_\_\_ Sponsor \$125
- \_\_\_ Benefactor \$300
- \_\_\_ Sustaining \$600
- \_\_\_ Patron \$1000

Become a member online at  
[www.seversondells.org/become-a-member/](http://www.seversondells.org/become-a-member/)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support the mission of SDNC  
with a gift of \_\_\_\_\_ at this time.

Contributions are tax deductible  
as allowed by law.

Please consult your tax professional.  
Thank You For Your Support!

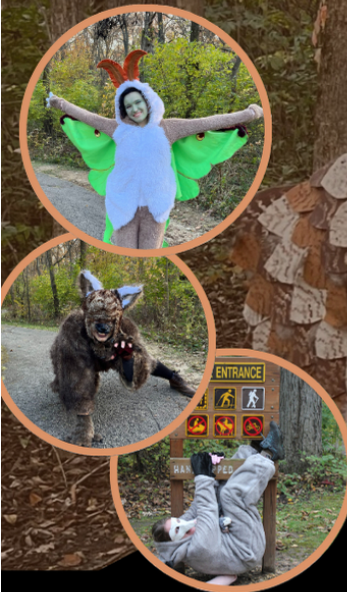
FREE ADMISSION!

# SPOOK THE DELLS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH  
6:00PM – 7:30PM

Meet nocturnal animal  
characters on the trails and  
enjoy a s'more by the fire in  
this family-friendly event!

Plus, meet  
LIVE animals!



SPONSORED BY:  MATERIAL HANDLING, HANDLED.  In honor of Dr. Carl Hartman

FREE ADMISSION

# LUMINARIA

AT SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER

DECEMBER 12 & 13  
5:00PM – 9:00PM

CANDLELIT TRAILS  
S'MORES & HOT COCOA  
WINTER NATURE ACTIVITIES  
LIVE MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

SPONSORED BY:

KATHLEEN HELGE IN MEMORY OF BARBARA WHITSITT  MATERIAL HANDLING, HANDLED.  BAIRD 

## SEVERSON DELLS ACTIVITIES

### SEPTEMBER

- Birding Stroll  
9/2/2025 | 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM
- Science Saturday: Survival Skills  
9/6/2025 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- Full Moon Hike  
9/8/2025 | 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
- Snacking on Science: Ode-onate to Joyce  
9/9/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
- Restoration Workday  
9/13/2025 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Cindy Crosby at Maze Books  
9/16/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
- Homeschool: Spectacular Soils  
9/18/2025 | times vary by age
- Fall Art Workshop: Printmaking  
9/20/2025 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

- Birding Stroll  
9/23/2025 | 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM
- Fall Colors  
9/24/2025 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
- Golden Hour in the Grove  
9/27/2025 | 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

### OCTOBER

- Science Saturday: Celebration of Indigenous Peoples  
10/4/2025 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- Full Moon Hike  
10/6/2025 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
- Restoration Workday  
10/11/2025 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Rewilding the Fairways: A Hike & Lecture  
10/12/2025 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM
- Snacking on Science: Bison & Bites  
10/14/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
- Homeschool: The Case of the Disappearing Log  
10/16/2025 | times vary by age

- Spook the Dells  
10/18/2025 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- Fall Art Workshop: Watercolors  
10/25/2025 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

### NOVEMBER

- Science Saturday: Nature's Underworld  
11/1/2025 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- Full Moon Hike  
11/5/2025 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
- Restoration Workday  
11/8/2025 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Snacking on Science: Backyard Wildlife  
11/11/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM
- Botany & Brews: Coffee  
11/15/2025 | 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
- Homeschool: Knot Today  
11/20/2025 | times vary by age

### DECEMBER

- Full Moon Hike  
12/4/2025 | 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
- Science Saturday: Micro-Nature Magnific  
12/6/2025 | 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- Luminaria  
12/12/2025 | 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM
- MEMBERS ONLY: Cookies & Crafts  
12/13/2025 | 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
- Luminaria  
12/13/2025 | 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM
- Botany & Brews: Spirits  
12/17/2025 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- Homeschool: Solstices  
12/18/2025 | times vary by age
- Winter Break Camp  
12/22/2025 | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

# NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Severson Dells Education Foundation  
8786 Montague Road  
Rockford, IL 61102-9713

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

Our mission is to link people to nature through education and research, in the northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin Area.

We promote awareness of the natural world, fostering respect, enjoyment, and preservation now and in the future.

Telephone: 1-815-335-2915  
Web: [www.SeversonDells.org](http://www.SeversonDells.org)  
E-mail: [info@seversondells.org](mailto:info@seversondells.org)

Monday-Saturday  
8:00 am - 4:30 pm



## NATURE CENTER STAFF

**Ann Wasser** - Executive Director  
**Andrea Wallace Noble** - Education Programs Manager  
**Elly Salazar** - School Programs Coordinator  
**Laura Sjoquist** - Administrative Assistant  
**Linda Sandquist** - Director of Development  
**Liz Wiener** - Public Programs Coordinator  
**Rebecca Rankins** - Community Engagement Coordinator

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Severson Dells Nature Center, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, will assist in providing accommodations and adaptations for individuals with disabilities. (Please notify us in advance of your needs that may require special staffing.)