



SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

# NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Calendar & Newsletter

May - August 2025 | Volume 46 No. 2

*Rockford, Illinois*







EST. 2008

**ARTALE & CO.**  
WINE - BEER - SPIRITS

**First Friday Wine Tasting**

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1ST  
5:30PM – 8:00PM

**Come sip to support!**

 SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

Cash, check, or card will be accepted at the door.

**EXPLORE THIS ISSUE**

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# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friends of Severson Dells,

I am proud to say the growth we've experienced this past year at Severson Dells Nature Center is due to the unwavering support of this community. Your dedication to our mission of connecting people to nature has made it possible for us to expand our programs and inspire thousands of visitors of all ages.

This year has been one of growth and transformation. From the acquisition and restoration planning for the former Elliot Golf Course to our deepening commitment towards environmental education and community engagement, we have embraced opportunities to strengthen our impact. Our partnerships with local schools through hosting thousands of students on field trips, to collaborative programs such as leading City Nature Challenge with community environmental organizations, and partnering with local businesses through Botany and Brews or Snackin' on Science have all allowed us to offer innovative programs and experiences that cultivate a lifelong love for the wonders of the natural world.

None of this would be possible without you—our supporters, volunteers, and advocates. Your generosity and enthusiasm fuel our work, and we are honored to share this journey with you. As we look ahead, we remain committed to our vision of a thriving, connected community that values and protects the natural world.

The board and staff at Severson Dells are looking forward to the continued growth of the organization as we begin the habitat restoration at the soon to be renamed Elliot Golf Course and expand upon the programs you've all grown to love. We look forward to having you be a part of developing this new community greenspace into a place for all of us to enjoy for generations to come.

Thank you for being a part of the Severson Dells family. We invite you to explore the pages of this annual report and celebrate with us the achievements you have helped make possible.

With gratitude,

*Chris Samuelson*

Board President  
Severson Dells Nature Center



Chris Samuelson at Golden Hour in the Grove





SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

# 2024

## BY THE NUMBERS

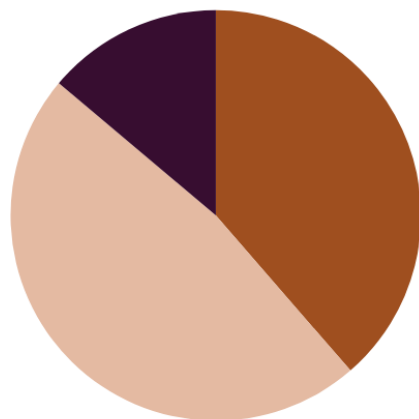
### INCOME:

- Fundraising
- Membership
- In-Kind
- Investments

### EXPENSES:

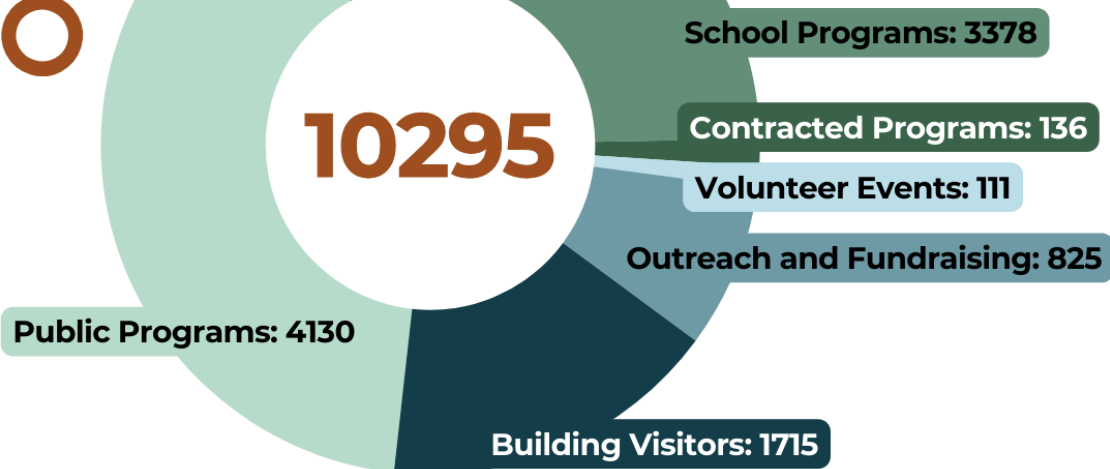
- Programs
- Operational Activities
- Fundraising

- Programs
- Misc.

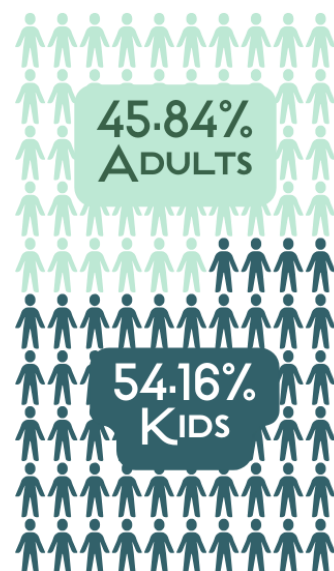


## OUR REACH:

10295



### WE SERVED



### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Cash	\$553,562
Grants Receivable	\$132,708
Inventory	\$20,170

**Total Current Assets \$710,440**

#### Non-Current Assets

Investments	\$2,278,988
Land	\$1,188,386
Furniture & Equipment	\$52,728
Accumulated Depreciation	(\$42,876)
Endowment Investments	\$85,695

**Total Non-Current Assets \$3,562,921**

**TOTAL ASSETS \$4,273,361**

### LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$0
Accrued wages & vacation	\$14,011
Deferred Revenue	\$6,118

**Total Current Liabilities \$20,129**

#### Net Assets

Without donor restrictions	\$3,722,935
With donor restrictions	\$530,297

**Total Net Assets \$4,253,232**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS \$4,273,361**

### Business Contributors



**MATERIAL  
HANDLING,  
HANDLED.**



Friends of Thomas McNamara

# THANK YOU!

### In Honor

Douglas Severson & Miriam Geraghty  
Richard & Mary Anne Toppe

### In Memory

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Fred Kalivoda  
Brian Leaf

Vicki Pasch  
Richard Toppe  
Edward Visel

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Bill Evans	Carolyn Manalli	Brian Rasmussen	Steve Vee
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Gibbons Electric, Inc.  
Gloyd Family Foundation  
Ike Nizam Foundation and Waldom Electronics  
Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation  
Imperien  
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Nicor Gas  
Pheasants Forever, Inc. Win. Co. Chapter #404  
Ralph J. Baudhuin Foundation  
Rock Valley Garden Center  
Savant Capital Management Inc.  
Seedling Garden Club  
Sjostrom & Sons Foundation, Inc.  
Specialty Screw Corp.  
The 5th Sister Charitable Fund  
The Ben Harding Family Foundation  
The Kjellstrom Family Foundation  
The Morrissey Family Businesses  
Unitarian Universalist Church Rockford IL  
United Way of Rock River Valley  
Wild Ones Rock River Valley  
WilliamsMcCarthy LLP  
Winnebago County





# HONORING RICH TOPPE'S LEGACY THROUGH NATURE EDUCATION



On December 31, 2024, we lost a cherished member of the Severson Dells family—Rich Toppe, a longtime volunteer with Severson Dells Nature Center. Rich was a fixture on canoe trips, known for his larger-than-life personality, teacher’s spirit, commitment to safety, and the blasting of “Take Me to the River” in the shuttle at the end of each trip.

Rich also brought joy to Little Pirates Camp as Captain Rustyclaw, ensuring smiles, laughter, and a love for nature in all who joined him. His dedication helped hundreds of people deepen their connection to nature.

To honor his passion for nature and education, Rich’s friends and family have established the Rich Toppe Nature Education Scholarship at Severson Dells. Starting in the fall of 2025, this scholarship will provide low-income schools with field trip funding and give under-resourced and foster youth the opportunity to attend winter, spring, and summer camps.

Join us in celebrating Rich’s legacy by making a gift today. Your donation will ensure that future generations can experience the wonder of nature—just as Rich would have wanted.

### Ways to Give:

Online: [SeversonDells.org/RichToppeScholarship](https://SeversonDells.org/RichToppeScholarship)

By Mail: Send a check to Severson Dells, 8786 Montague Road, Rockford, IL 61102 (note "Rich Toppe Scholarship" in the memo).

By Phone: Call 815-335-2915 to donate.

Thank you for helping keep Rich’s spirit alive in the next generation of explorers.



## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING SEVERSON DELLS EDUCATION FOUNDATION?

There are many ways to support Severson Dells Education Foundation. All are impactful and we are very grateful for all our supporters.

### DONATE

Tax-deductible donations allow us to continue providing high-quality nature education at a low cost to the community.

To donate, checks can be made out to Severson Dells Education Foundation, you can call 815-335-2915 to make a donation via credit or debit card, or you can visit [seversondells.org/donate](https://seversondells.org/donate) to donate online.

You can also become a monthly donor through the online portal.

Interested in including Severson Dells Education Foundation in your estate plans? Learn more about our Heron Heritage Society below or visit [seversondells.org/legacy-giving](https://seversondells.org/legacy-giving)

### BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Severson Dells offers several ways for businesses to get involved and support nature education. Businesses can sponsor events and participate in the business membership program.

For more information, call 815-335-2915. visit [seversondells.org/business-supporters](https://seversondells.org/business-supporters).

### MEMBERSHIP

Memberships are a way to support to Severson Dells Nature Center and receive benefits such as discounts on program and at the gift shop, and also attend exclusive Severson Dells events just for members.

More membership information can be found on page 21 or at [SeversonDells.org/become-a-member](https://SeversonDells.org/become-a-member)



## Heron Heritage Society

Severson Dells honors those **extraordinary** people who have included Severson Dells in their estate plans through our exclusive **Heron Heritage Society**.

Legacy gifts ensure that we are able to **serve the community for generations to come**.

Your gift will help us raise the next generation of Earth stewards.

If a legacy gift to Severson Dells is part of your estate plan, we would love to discuss this with you to ensure that your wishes are fulfilled. Please visit [seversondells.org/legacy-giving](https://seversondells.org/legacy-giving) for more information or contact our Community Engagement Manager Rebecca Rankins: [becca@seversondells.org](mailto:becca@seversondells.org) | (815) 335-2915

We highly recommend that you contact your attorney or financial advisor to discuss the best way to achieve your goals and for all legal advice. Severson Dells is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.





# 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

5/6/2025 | 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM

5/20/2025 | 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM

Local birding expert Richard Benning will lead a leisurely morning birding stroll through the forest and fields of Severson Dells. This is the perfect time of year to encounter Spring Migration arrivals and the perfect time of day to warm up with a walk. Bring your own binoculars or contact us if you'd like to borrow a pair! *All Ages. \$3/members, \$5/non members*

### Full Moon Hike

5/12/2025 | 7:45 PM - 9:15 PM

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

### Summer Solstice Stroll

6/20/2025 | 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Join us on the longest day of the year as we wander through the woods and prairie, with short stops to read select excerpts of poetry and books to celebrate the sun! Bring your own readings if you would like! *All Ages. \$3/members, \$5/non-members*

### Family Creek Walk

6/28/2025 7/3/2025 | 1:00 - 3:00 PM

Explore deep in the Dells where the rocks rise up high, and the air grows cooler. You WILL get wet on this adventure! Closed toed shoes that stay on (no Crocs) are required.

*Ages 6+. \$3/members, \$5/non-members*

### Poetry Walk

7/10/2025 | 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Let's go on a walk through the forest and fields with Rockford's Poet Laureate Lydia Kozlowski during this Poetry Walk! We will enjoy nature, share readings, and more! *All Ages. \$3/members, \$5/non-members*



## NEW! Accessible Birding!

### Family Friendly Accessible Bird Outing

5/24/2025 | 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Join us for an excursion through the woods to experience the wonder of our local birds! This accessible outing will focus on introducing birding to people of all ages and abilities. This outing is designed to be inclusive and accessible to people with any accessibility challenges resulting from a disability or health concern. Accessibility Information: The outing will be 0.7 miles entirely on a paved asphalt path. The path has an average positive slope of 3.4% and average negative slope of -3.0%. The maximum positive slope is 8.4% and the maximum negative slope is -7.9%, both of which are only in very short sections less than five feet. There are accessible bathrooms in the nature center that will be open. There are two ADA accessible parking spaces, one of which is an accessible van parking space. Please contact us if you need any further accommodations or information in order to participate! *All Ages Free*



### Accessible Bird Outing

7/19/2025 | 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Join us for an excursion through the woods to experience the wonder of our local birds! This outing is designed to be inclusive and accessible to beginner and advanced birders with any accessibility challenges resulting from a disability or health concern. Binoculars available to borrow upon request. Accessibility Information: The outing will be 0.7 miles entirely on a paved asphalt path. The path has an average positive slope of 3.4% and average negative slope of -3.0%. The maximum positive slope is 8.4% and the maximum negative slope is -7.9%, both of which are only in very short sections less than five feet. There will be benches available for resting at least every 0.15 miles. There are accessible bathrooms in the nature center that will be open. There are two ADA accessible parking spaces, one of which is an accessible van parking space. Please contact us if need any further accommodations or information in order to participate! *All Ages Free*

## Engage & Explore!

### Full Moon Yoga

5/12/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Experience a peaceful night yoga session with Cassie Piske before joining us on the trails for a full moon hike. *Ages 8+. \$10/members, \$15/non-members*

### City Nature Challenge Recap

5/14/2025 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

How did the Rock River Valley team stack up against the rest of the world this year for the City Nature Challenge? What interesting features did we see? Join us at the Elliot Golf Course Clubhouse for this engaging look into the Rock River Valley! *All Ages. \$3/members, \$5/non-members*

### Homeschool: Creek Walk

5/15/2025

**Ages 5-8: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

**Ages 9-12: 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM**

We love to wrap up each year with a creek adventure. This year, water levels and temperatures permitting, we are planning a creek walk through the dells. It's a great way to see a new part of Hall Creek, and we often find great fossils! *\$10/members, \$15/non-members*

### All Bugs Go To Kevin

5/17/2025 | 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Join expert Kevin of All Bugs Go To Kevin as we go on a search for insects, spiders, and more. Don't be scared of what is crawling around the woods...be fascinated! *All Ages. \$5/members, \$7/non-members*

### Readings from the Rookery

6/13/2025 6/20/2025

6/27/2025 7/11/2025

7/18/2025 7/25/2025

**9:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

Severson Dells staff lead this engaging program introducing children and their parents to great nature books. After our story, we'll participate in an outside activity that relate to the book's theme. *Ages 5-9. Free.*

### Butterfly Blitz

6/29/2025 | 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Join us at this community science event led by Daniel Pohl from the Illinois Natural History Survey to search for the Ottoe Skipper (*Hesperia ottoe*) last recorded here in 1991. Bring a phone or camera to take pictures of butterfly observations. Moderate hiking on uneven surfaces may be required. Please meet at Harlem Hills off of Flora Dr. in Loves Park. *Ages 14+. Free*



### Pastries and Perseids

8/13/2025 | 4:00 AM - 6:00 AM

The Perseid Meteor shower is one of the best of the year. New this year, join us in the early pre-dawn hours for some stargazing and wake up with hot cocoa, coffee, and pastries! *All Ages. \$5/members, \$7/non-members*

### Dance at the Dells

8/23/2025 | 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

Dance at the Dells is a collaborative project between Meghan & Caitlyn Baylor and Severson Dells. This outdoor performance merges dance with nature encouraging the idea of 'no barriers' between humans and nature, and also between performers and audience members. This project is supported by Rockford Area Arts Council. *All Ages. \$15/members, \$20/non-members*

## Members Events

### Member's Only Picnic

6/14/2025 | 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Gather at Severson Dells and join members for a picnic! We'll supply a sandwich, you bring the fun! Vegan and gluten-free options provided. Please RSVP by May 31st. *All Ages. Free to members*

### Member's Sunset & S'mores

8/22/2025 | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Members-Only! Join Severson for an evening of s'mores and a hike to the pond! *All ages. Free to members*

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

LOOKING TO EXPLORE, AND WANT THE BEST TOOLS?

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

Adventure Packs

ROCK ON

PLANT PURSUERS

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SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER

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# Wildflower Walkabouts




Join Severson Dells and the Natural Land Institute staff and volunteers on an exploration of many of the local wildflower hotspots. Wildflower Walks showcase what is currently in bloom at various woodland and prairie preserves around Winnebago, Boone, and Ogle Counties. All walks will begin at 6:00 p.m. No fee for the walks, but membership in Severson Dells and/or the Natural Land Institute is encouraged.

Registration for all of the walks will be required through EventBrite. Each walk has two leaders, and each group will allow reservations for 20 people. Please register for a maximum of five walks starting April 1 at [www.SeversonDells.org/wildflower-walkabouts](http://www.SeversonDells.org/wildflower-walkabouts) For more information, please call 815/335-2915 (SD) or 815/964-6666 (NLI).

**Wed, April 23 | Howard D. Colman Dells Nature Preserve**  
Alan Branhagen and Barbara Williams will lead this hike on property owned and managed by NLI. One of the attractive features of this preserve is a series of creek-side cliffs known as the dells.

**Tues, April 29 | Anna Page Park**  
Joni Denker and Daniel Pohl will lead this walk at Rockford Park District's Anna Page Park variety of plant communities, from creek bottoms to maple forest to view marsh marigolds, trillium, blue-eyed marys and numerous other spring flowers.

**Wed, May 7 | Deer Run Forest Preserve**  
Join us for an evening with Mike Groves and Sandra Vaughn-Pottorf from the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County. We will be on the lookout for Virginia bluebells, trout lilies, red trillium, spring beauties, rue anemones, wild ginger, May apples and more.

**Tues, May 13 | Piscasaw Fen Conservation Area**  
Join Aaron Minson from Boone County Conservation District and Brian Hale on a hunt for spring wildflowers in the fen and oak savanna habitats of Piscasaw Fen. Guests will also see the habitat restoration at this Boone County Conservation District site.

**Wed, May 21 | Pecatonica Wetlands Forest Preserve**  
Connie McIntosh and Kathy Martinez will take us on a tour of the Pecatonica Wetlands Forest Preserve, which includes river edge floodplain forest, oxbow pond marshes and upland forest along the Pecatonica River. The site has outstanding spring flora and birdlife.

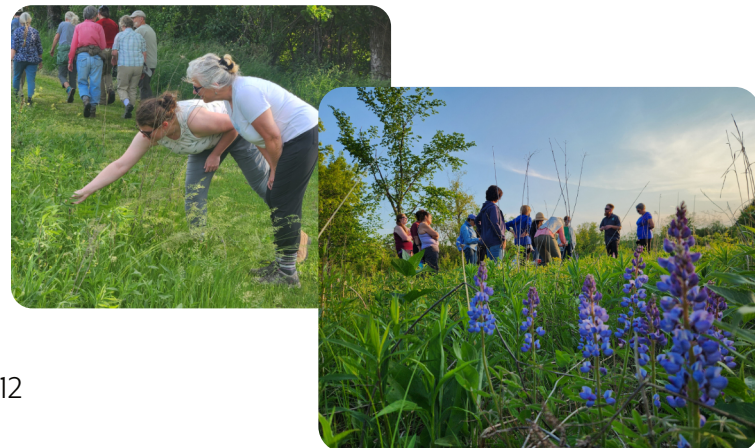
**Tue, May 27 | Beach Cemetery Nature Preserve**  
Zach Grycan and Kyle Hulbert of the Natural Land Institute will be our guides on this 4-acre dry hill prairie in Ogle County. We will see one of the best displays of flora in remnant prairies in northern Illinois, including prairie dropseed, leadplant, and shooting stars.

**Wed, June 4 | Harlem Hills Nature Preserve**  
Jessie Crow Mermel and Daniel Pohl will take you through the early summer landscape of Harlem Hills Nature Preserve. This can be a great time of year for spotting prairie smoke, shooting star, and early pale purple coneflowers. The always-beautiful sunset will be a bonus.

**Tue, June 10 | Nardi Equine Prairie Preserve**  
Russell Brunner will lead this hike at the Byron Forest Preserve District's sand prairie restorations and remnant dolomite hill prairies. There are acres of wild lupine that should be in bloom as well as Golden Alexanders, Ohio spiderwort, foxglove beardtongue, Indigo, and pale purple coneflower.

**Wed, June 18 | Pecatonica Ridge Prairie**  
NLI staff Alan Branhagen and Laura Helmich will lead a tour through this beautiful upland prairie, located west of Winnebago. Prairie smoke, leadplant, birdsfoot violet and New Jersey tea may be seen at this native prairie.

**Tues, June 24 | Searls Prairie**  
Joni Denker and Andrea Wallace Noble will lead this hike through mesic and wet-mesic prairie where prairie dropseed, Indian grass, and big bluestem grow. This site is one of the highest quality wet prairies in the state. We will explore the impacts of fire ecology on the landscape and enjoy a showcase of summer flowers.




## SCIENCE SATURDAY

SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER

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

FREE EVENTS!

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

### Pollinator Palooza

May 3rd 10am - 2pm

Celebrate our Pollinators! Learn about life cycles of bees, butterflies, birds, and more! Meet live butterflies, and even take home Milkweed!

### Beat the Heat

June 7th 10am - 2pm

Find out how to survive the summer from the coolest plants and animals around! Experience their adaptations and learn how to keep you and your family cool this summer!

### Nature's Blueprint

July 5th 10am - 2pm

How do bees build hives? How do animals build shelter? Learn how engineers mimic animal ingenuity. Learn about nature's building and energy in nature.

### Winged Wonders

August 2nd 10am - 2pm

Learn all about our flying creatures! Bugs vs. Birds: who has the better wings? Learn about science of flight, bat echolocation, and so much more!

**Severson Dells Nature Center**  
8786 Montague Rd, Rkfd, IL 61102  
For more information, visit [SeversonDells.org/Science-Saturdays](http://SeversonDells.org/Science-Saturdays)

EVENT MADE POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM





# NATURALIST NOTES: RESTORATION OVER THE YEARS

BY ROWAN MERMEL

If you are reading this, there is a good chance you have walked through or to the beautiful forest, prairie, creek, pond, and dell habitats at Severson Dells Forest Preserve. These landscapes have changed a lot over the past 150 years depending on who owned the land and what their land use priorities were. The high diversity of life that we enjoy today is the result of restoration efforts from multiple generations of stewards over the past 50 years.

Ecological restoration efforts at Severson Dells have looked a lot different over the years as our understanding of our ecosystems has progressed. Prior to the donation of the Severson Dells property to the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County in 1975, the land was mostly managed for agriculture, horse pasture, and recreation. During this time period the prairie and savanna ecosystems were especially degraded, as they were easier to convert to agriculture. Prairies were also seen as less ecologically important at that time by land managers who thought that grasslands were early successional ecosystems that would eventually turn into forest if disturbances such as fire were removed. We now know that our native prairie and savanna grassland ecosystems were in fact highly diverse old-growth ecosystems that take hundreds to thousands of years



Aerial photo of Severson Dells Forest Preserve pre-restoration

of succession to recreate, even with modern restoration efforts.

Land surveys and restoration plans for the Severson Dells property were drawn up shortly after it was donated to the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County. At that point, most of the property was degraded woodland, still in agriculture, or “old field.” Old field refers to the type of ecosystem that emerges in an abandoned agricultural field



Farming on the later Severson Dells Forest Preserve

or pasture. There were also small sections of degraded remnant prairie on the bluffs above the dells and sections of sedge meadow along Hall Creek. The invasion of these ecosystems by non-native bush honeysuckle was apparent to these early restorationists, and they prescribed removal of the honeysuckle in key areas. However without herbicide, their efforts had a limited impact on the honeysuckle population. The hilltop prairies were seemingly unable to be protected from encroachment as no evidence of the communities exists today.

By the early 2000s, the science of restoration had progressed quite a bit, and the Forest Preserve Natural Resources staff began converting agricultural land and old fields into restored prairies. These early prairie plantings had mixed results. At the time, there was limited access to native forb seeds and they had to plant mostly grasses. The density of grasses in these prairies makes it nearly impossible to introduce more native wildflowers, which is why these restorations have lower biodiversity than restorations conducted more recently.

In the 2010s, priorities shifted from prairie restoration to savanna restoration. Oak and hickory saplings were planted in restored grasslands, and land managers and volunteers put extra effort into removing invasive brush from woodlands. The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County has been forestry mowing, while the volunteer conservation crew has been hand cutting honeysuckle in more sensitive areas. Honeysuckle has been stump treated with herbicide after cutting to prevent resprouts.

This winter the volunteer conservation crew worked in the wet-mesic floodplain forest along Hall Creek. In the spring and summer we will collect native seeds from other areas on the property to spread in the areas where we have removed invasive brush. As we look back at the past 50 years of restoration at Severson Dells Forest Preserve, we can certainly learn from the past, but we also must be inspired by the tenacity and passion with which stewards have cared for this land and use best management practices as we look to the next 50 years.



Restoration Volunteers, January 2025

We’re taking current best practices in restoration and bringing that collective knowledge to the soon-to-be restored Elliot property. This time, we’re transforming a golf course to prairie and savanna, while also restoring wetland around Manning Creek by daylighting and re-meandering it. While this restoration will come with its own challenges, we are confident that our science-based approach, combined with the expertise of highly qualified contractors and the dedication of our volunteers, will transform the area into a thriving, diverse, and resilient ecosystem for future generations to come.

To keep up with what’s happening at the Elliot property, check out our website at [SeversonDells.org/](http://SeversonDells.org/) Growing and sign up for the email list for updates specific to this project.



Rowan Mermel is passionate about community science's ability to give insight in our ecosystem in a way that gets people out into nature and empowers them to protect their environment. Rowan holds a degree in Biology from Beloit College, and has previously worked with Natural Land Institute and Farmers Rising.

## 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: May 10<sup>th</sup>, June 14<sup>th</sup>, July 12<sup>th</sup>, August 9<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](http://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 27TH, 2025  
5-7 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!

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS:



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FAMILY BUSINESSES

# 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!

SPONSORED BY:







While there have not been major physical changes yet, the Severson Dells Education Foundation board and staff are continuing to move forward with plans for the future of the yet-to-be-renamed Elliot Golf Course. Below are a few updates on our progress:

Aerial Photos and Videos

Late this winter, we captured drone footage of the property with the help of 815 Aerial Solutions, which will help document changes in the landscape over time.

To see more drone photos and videos, visit the project webpage at SeversonDells.org/growing.



First Visitors

This winter we had our first students on the property- kids from the Flodin Boys and Girls Club, which is right across the street. The kids had a blast birding, exploring around the ponds, and talking about what the land might look like in the future, not to mention the amount of fun they had with the impromptu golf ball collecting!

We are looking forward to continuing to grow this partnership as restoration progresses on the property.



Carbon Sequestration

By the time this newsletter reaches you, we will likely have completed the initial data collection to measure the amount of carbon sequestered in the soil across the property. This baseline data will help us track changes in carbon in the soil throughout the restoration process and measure the positive climate impact of the restoration.

Our restoration of the property will include a diverse mix of prairie, woodland and wetland habitats, which are all important for carbon sequestration. As shown in the graphic (Image 1), temperate grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands can store significantly more carbon—both above and below ground—than conventional agriculture. They also far exceed turf grass, which holds an average of 1 ton of carbon per hectare above ground and 1.4 tons per hectare below ground at a depth of one meter.

In simpler terms:

- Temperate woodlands:
  - Store 26 times more carbon above ground and 20% more carbon in the soil than conventional agriculture

agriculture

- Store 57 times more carbon above ground and 68 times more carbon in the soil than turf grass

Temperate grasslands:

- Store 3.5 times more carbon above ground and almost 3 times as much carbon in the soil than conventional agriculture
- Store 7 times more carbon above ground and 168 times more carbon in the soil than turf grass

We look forward to seeing and sharing the baseline data and seeing that change over time.

Building Plans

The Severson Dells Education Foundation board and staff are moving forward with plans for a new building at the site. After evaluating the possibility of reusing and expanding the existing clubhouse, we found that it would cost over \$1 million more than constructing a new building from the ground up.

To minimize waste, we plan to partner with a sustainable deconstruction company to salvage as many usable materials as possible, ensuring they are repurposed rather than sent to a landfill.

We’re excited about the progress so far and eager for the steps ahead—both in building design and habitat restoration. While we may wish for faster visible progress, this project requires careful planning and thoughtful execution.

To use a nature analogy, this work is like the unseen effort plants invest underground before their growth becomes visible to us above the ground.

Restoring habitat and constructing a public building both take time. Whether we’re waiting for the right growing seasons, architectural plans, or permits, patience is essential. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wisely said, “Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.” And so, we shall.

Carbon Storage in Earth's Ecosystems

Achieving net-zero by 2050 depends on the Earth's natural carbon sinks.

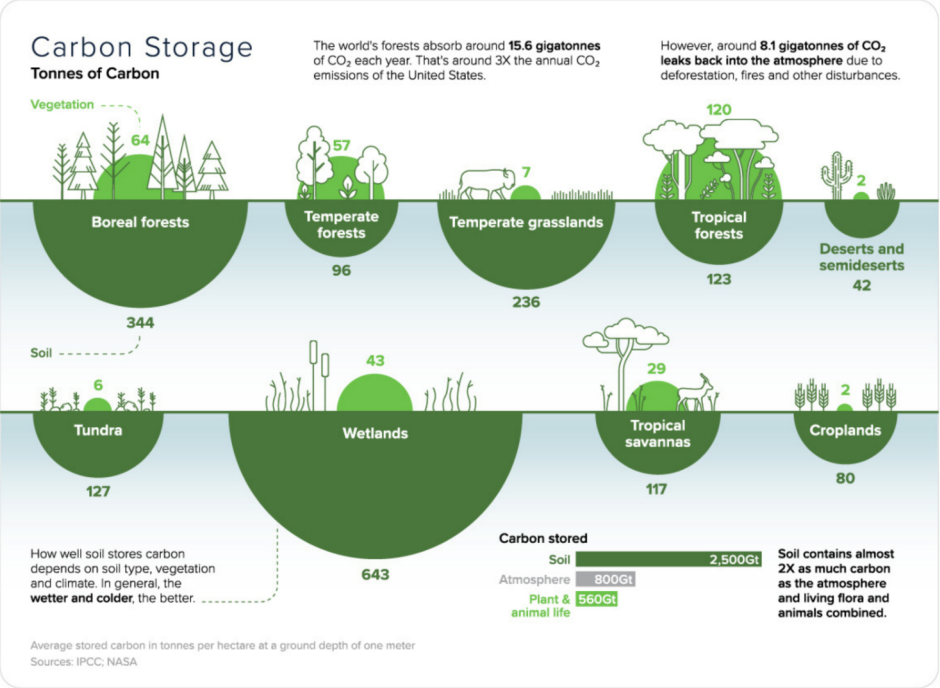
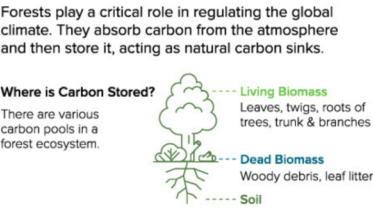


Image 1: Courtesy of Visual Capitalist and the Carbon Streaming Corporation





IMPACT SPOTLIGHT:  
**ROXIE  
BAKER-CROWELL**

Severson Dells Nature Center has a way of bringing people closer to nature, fostering curiosity, and creating lasting memories. For Melissa Crowell and her daughter Roxie (10), their journey with Severson Dells has been one of growth, discovery, and connection.

Melissa first learned about Severson Dells when searching for a place where Roxie could socialize and learn in a safe and welcoming environment. After trying other camps that didn't quite fit, they found Severson Dells, where Roxie immediately felt comfortable. The individualized experience made all the difference, and camp quickly became a consistent highlight in Roxie's life.



Roxie & Melissa

While Melissa & Roxie primarily visit Severson for camps, the impact of those experiences lasts year-round. Roxie's favorite memories include creek walks, competing for "muddiest camper," water fights, catching crayfish, and even making earrings from her finds! She looks forward to seeing her friends Olympia & Lauren each camp, and seeing what Miss Liz has up her sleeve each day. These hands-on adventures have deepened her appreciation for nature in a way that no classroom could.

Beyond the fun, Roxie has developed a strong sense of environmental responsibility. Roxie is passionate about maintaining an eco-friendly lunch, and holds her family accountable for

minimizing waste and avoiding disposable wrappers. The family is also mindful of water use, a lesson reinforced when the Severson Dells team visited Roxie's class in school as part of the watershed education program. Melissa notes that Severson Dells has helped Roxie connect these ideas to real-life actions, turning her into a young sustainability advocate. Roxie fully embodies the mission and vision of Severson Dells.

For Melissa, supporting Severson is an easy choice. Severson is a place where her daughter, Roxie, feels safe, engaged, and excited to learn, which gives Melissa peace of mind. The role of environmental education has been pivotal in Roxie's life. That role is one Melissa is eager to support, always making sure to sign Roxie up for camp as soon as possible. Severson Dells has become a second home for Roxie, giving her experiences that she wouldn't get otherwise.

Looking ahead, Roxie and Melissa hope to see more opportunities for older kids, so that young enthusiasts like Roxie can continue their engagement as they grow. It is Severson's hope that the expansion into operating at both Severson Dells Nature Center and the future, still to be named Elliot property will provide more space for a program helping teens and pre-teens deepen their connections to nature.

For families seeking a place where children can thrive in nature, Severson Dells can be a home, just as it has been for Roxie. Supporting Severson Dells Education Foundation—whether by participating, donating, or volunteering—ensures that more kids like Roxie can continue to explore, learn, and grow within the natural world.



Roxie, 2021



Roxie & Lauren, 2022



Roxie & friends, 2023



Roxie & Miss Liz, 2024



Roxie, 2025

# SUMMER CAMP

SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER

## WILD THINGS

Ages 4-6

**Little Scientists** June 9th-13th ~ 9am-12pm

**WAITLIST Little Creators** June 23rd-27th ~ 9am-12pm

**WAITLIST Little Pirates** July 28th-August 1st ~ 9am-12pm

**Little Critters** August 11th - 15th ~ 9am-12pm

## JR. NATURALISTS

Ages 7-11

**WAITLIST Peek in the Creek** June 16th-20th ~ 9am-3pm

**WAITLIST Nature's Engineers** July 7th-11th ~ 9am-3pm

**WAITLIST Peek in the Creek** August 4th-8th ~ 9am-3pm

## TEEN ADVENTURES

**Ages 12-16**

**Blazing Paddles** July 14th-19th ~ 9am-3pm

**WAITLIST Adventure Squad** July 21st-25th ~ 9am-3pm

## GRANDPARENTS CAMP

**Aquatic Habitats** July 1st  
9am-12pm  
1pm-4:00pm

**Terrestrial Habitats** July 2nd  
9am-12pm  
1pm-4:00pm

All camp registration at:  
**SeversonDells.org/SummerCamp**

*Waitlist is accurate as of newsletter printing*

### 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
- ☐ Free admission to participating Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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!



# SEVERSON DELLS ACTIVITIES

Please register at least two days in advance by phone 815-335-2915 or on our website: [seversondells.org](http://seversondells.org)

## MAY

Science Saturday: Polinator Palooza  
Saturday, May 3rd | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Birding Stroll  
Tuesday, May 6th | 7:00 AM – 8:30 AM

Wildflower Walk: Deer Run  
Wednesday, May 7th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Restoration Workday  
Saturday, May 10th | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Full Moon Yoga  
Monday, May 12th | 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Full Moon Hike  
Monday, May 12th | 7:45 PM – 9:15 PM

Wildflower Walk: Piscasaw Fen  
Tuesday, May 13th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

City Nature Challenge Recap  
Wednesday, May 14th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Homeschool: Creek Walk  
Thursday, May 15th | 10:00 AM OR 1:00 PM

All Bugs Go To Kevin  
Saturday, May 17th | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Birding Stroll  
Tuesday, May 20th | 7:00 AM – 8:30 AM

Wildflower Walk: Pecatonica Wetlands  
Wednesday, May 21st | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Family Friendly Accessible Bird Outing  
Saturday, May 24th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Wildflower Walk: Beach Cemetary  
Thursday, May 27th | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

## JUNE

Wildflower Walk: Harlem Hills  
Wednesday, June 4th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Science Saturday: Beat the Heat  
Saturday, June 7th | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Wild Things: Little Scientists  
Monday, June 9th - Friday, June 13th

Wildflower Walk: Nardi Equine Prairie  
Tuesday, June 10th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Readings from the Rookery  
Friday, June 13th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Restoration Workday  
Saturday, June 14th | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

MEMBERS: Picnic  
Saturday, June 14th | 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Jr. Naturalist: Peek in the Creek  
Monday, June 16th - Friday, June 20th

Wildflower Walk: Pecatonica Ridge Prairie  
Tuesday, June 18th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Readings from the Rookery  
Friday, June 20th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Summer Solstice Stroll  
Friday, June 20th | 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Wildflower Walk: Searls Paririe  
Tuesday, June 24th | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Readings from the Rookery  
Friday, June 27th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Family Creek Walk  
Saturday, June 28th | 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Butterfly Blitz  
Sunday, June 29th | 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM

## JULY

Grandparent's Camp: Aquatic  
Tuesday, July 1st | 9:00 AM OR 1:00 PM

Grandparent's Camp: Terrestrial  
Tuesday, July 2nd | 9:00 AM OR 1:00 PM

Family Creek Walk  
Thursday, July 3rd | 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Science Saturday: Nature's Blueprint  
Saturday, July 5th | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Jr. Naturalists: Nature's Engineers  
Monday, July 7th - Friday, July 11th

Poetry Walk  
Thursday, July 10th | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Readings from the Rookery  
Friday, July 11th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Restoration Workday  
Saturday, July 12th | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Blazing Paddles  
Monday, July 14th - Friday, July 18th

Readings from the Rookery  
Friday, July 18th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Accessible Bird Outing  
Saturday, July 19th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Adventure Squad  
Monday, July 21st - Friday, July 25th

Readings from the Rookery  
Friday, July 25th | 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Wild Things: Little Pirates  
Monday, July 28th - Friday, August 1st

## AUGUST

Science Saturday: Winged Wonders  
Saturday, August 2nd | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Jr. Naturalists: Peek in the Creek  
Monday, August 4th - Friday, August 8th

Full Moon Hike  
Friday, August 8th | 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Restoration Workday  
Saturday, August 9th | 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Wild Things: Little Critters  
Monday, August 11th - Friday, August 15th

Pastries & Perseids  
Wednesday, August 13th | 4:00 AM – 6:00 AM

MEMBERS: Sunset & S'mores  
Friday, August 22nd | 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Dance at the Dells  
Saturday, August 23rd | 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

# CONNECT



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# NOTES FROM THE DELLS

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

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SEVERSON DELLS  
NATURE CENTER

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

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

## CONTACT Us!

**Telephone: 1-815-335-2915**

**web: [www.seversondells.org](http://www.seversondells.org)**

**e-mail: [info@seversondells.org](mailto:info@seversondells.org)**

**Open Monday - Saturday:  
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

### 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

### AMERICORPS MEMBERS:

**Rowan Mermel** - Community Science  
**Shannon Osadjan** - Education  
**Sydney Sherbitsky** - Education  
**Emma Zimmerman** - Education

### BOARD MEMBERS:

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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.)