



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Calendar & Newsletter

September - December 2023 | Volume 44 No. 3

Rockford, Illinois



SPOOK THE DELLS

THERE IS NO REASON TO BE AFRAID OF THE WOODS!

This **Halloween**, come out to Severson Dells to learn more about **nocturnal animals** at this family-friendly event. Join us along our paved path for an **interactive theater** experience that highlights the amazing nocturnal animals that call Severson Dells **home**. Enjoy a **s'more** by the fire after your experience! **\$5 members; \$8 general admission.**

**SATURDAY
OCTOBER 21ST
6:00PM – 8:00PM**

SPONSORED BY:  MATERIAL HANDLING, HANDLED.

EXPLORE THIS ISSUE

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THANK YOU FOR A PHENOMENAL

the 3rd annual

GOLDEN HOUR

IN THE GROVE

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On the cover: Summer Camp by Andrea Wallace Noble

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Photo by Jessie Crow Mermel

Changes in Nature

The storm clouds roll,
Noisily across the dark skies.
The sun is shadowed,
By the inky dark skies.

There are always changes,
Some small and some large.
There are always changes in nature,
As rain changes to wind, snow, and sun.
It is the never-ending dance of creation,
Till the forces of nature are fought and won.

The tiny rivulet joins to a flowing stream,
No one notices these imperceptible,
Minor changes that happen in time,
As stones weather and trees grow in every clime.

The willingness to adapt,
The willingness to do new things,
The willingness to accept,
All that life offers and all it brings.
That is the power for man and woman.
It is the might of the majestic mountain range,
To adapt, to grow, to rise and flow,
That is the secret and the nature of change.

There are always changes,
Some small and some large.
There are always changes in nature,
As rain changes to wind, snow, and sun.
It is the never-ending dance of creation,
Till the forces of nature are fought and won.

-by Warren 'Storyteller' Brown

I read this poem and thought it analogous to all that has happened at Severson Dells over the last year. Our board and staff have weathered the storm, adapted to the new normal and are planning for the future of the small but mighty nature center. This poem seemed to offer a time to reflect on change- change in nature like the change in seasons and changes at an organization. While change may be a challenge, it is also a great opportunity to look at things from a different perspective. What can we do better? How can we better serve our community? How can we continue to work to have people more connected to nature in their daily lives? The opportunities are endless and I look forward to the road ahead.



Director Ann Wasser,
Photographed by Asia M. Peters

We are welcoming back many of our favorite fall and winter events- fall colors hikes, Spook the Dells, Luminaria and Winter Camp to name a few. We are also thrilled about some new and returning programs. First and maybe most exciting is the return of Science Saturday! This monthly event will provide all ages an opportunity to dig into a new topic each Science Saturday. Severson Dells is honored to host the Native American Awareness Committee for the October Science Saturday to share many of their traditions and to learn about a wide range of current and historical relationships with nature in honor of Indigenous People's Day. Come out and enjoy these unique hands-on opportunities!

Wishing you and yours a lovely beginning to fall and embracing all the changes that come with it!

Ann Wasser
Executive Director

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

WITH SEVERSON DELLS

Photo by Andrea Wallace Noble

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Nature Center Host Volunteers staff the front desk on Saturdays and Sundays in 4-hour shifts or for occasional weekdays, depending on the need. Duties include answering the telephone, greeting visitors, conducting gift shop sales, and assisting members in checking out library materials. Ability to use multi-line telephone and give directions to Severson Dells Forest Preserve from various locations in the area are a must. General awareness and appreciation of nature helpful. Warm and welcoming personality a definite plus. Apply online at www.seversondells.com/volunteer



Education Volunteers help lead programs for school groups at our onsite education programs. Group size ranges from 10 to 20 students, and are mostly preschool through 5th grade. **We currently have a great need for guides on our Discover Nature Hikes, which last about 90 minutes and focus on enthusiasm for nature! No background knowledge required.** We provide training and opportunities to shadow staff or other volunteers. School programs take place Tuesday through Friday from approximately 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and are concentrated in the spring and fall. If you would like more information about becoming an education volunteer, please contact Andrea: Andrea@seversondells.org

AMERICORPS POSITIONS

Environmental Education Members will help with school and public education programs at Severson Dells Nature Center and at some off-site locations in Winnebago County. Members will be provided training on local ecosystems, native flora and fauna as well as best practices in environmental education and group management. We have 900 hour and 450 hour positions available for 2023.



Natural Resource Members at Severson Dells will have the opportunity to help with habitat restoration, seed collection, plant and wildlife monitoring. This member will also lead habitat restoration volunteer days. This position is great for people that want to learn more about habitat management, biological monitoring and working with primarily adult volunteers.

For more information on our AmeriCorps positions and to apply, please visit SeversonDells.org/AmeriCorps-Opportunities.

CONSERVATION CREW RESTORATION WORKDAYS

Saturday, September 9
Monday, September 25
Monday, October 23
Saturday, November 11
Monday, November 27
Saturday, December 9

9:00 am to noon



You are invited to participate in the restoration of our natural areas by joining our volunteer Conservation Crew! Our crew helps to restore and maintain balance in the ecosystem by removing invasive plants like Asian bush honeysuckle and garlic mustard and collecting native seeds for propagation. Working alongside fellow volunteers in the beauty of the outdoors is both gratifying and invigorating. No experience necessary; training and tools are supplied. Bring a water bottle to stay hydrated. Dress in layers and expect to get dirty! RSVP to Liz@seversondells.org.



Photo by Andrea Wallace Noble

NEW FACES:

MEET ALEX, JILLIAN, & BECCA



Alex Lunde: Environmental Education AmeriCorps

Alex was born and raised in Illinois, and he is here to stay! He graduated from Augustana College with a double major in Environmental Studies and Geography. Alex grew up in boy scouts, and reached the rank of Eagle Scout. Now, he enjoys hiking, camping, kayaking, and wandering into nature to relax. When he's not outside he loves spending time with family and friends, reading books, and playing a wide variety of games (like board games, D&D, and video games).



Jillian Neece: Natural Resources AmeriCorps

Born and raised in Winnebago County, Jillian is passionate about the local environment, science communication, accessible research, and environmental justice. Jillian holds a degree from the University of Minnesota in Plant & Microbial Biology, and minored in Entomology and Sustainability Studies. She recently worked on the Save Bell Bowl Prairie campaign. Out and about, you may find Jillian browsing local libraries and bookstores, exploring other natural areas, or baking!



Rebecca Rankins: Community Engagement Manager

Rebecca has lived her entire life in the stateline area from Beloit, to Winnebago, to Kenosha, and now back in Rockford. She holds a B.A. from Carthage College in Political Science & Criminal Justice, and has a special interest in nonprofits and the role they play in society. Since graduating, Rebecca has worked with area nonprofits in grant writing, development, and marketing. Off the clock, you might spot Becca attending concerts or musicals, coaching in the local Buddy Sports league, or crossing things off her bucket list.

NATURALIST NOTES:

UNVEILING NIGHT'S LOST STARS: CONFRONTING LIGHT POLLUTION

BY JILLIAN NEECE

Here at Severson Dells, we love the long summer days filled with awe and exploration. But as summer draws to a close and days become shorter, we also want to give some love to the night sky! Between stargazing and full moon hikes, the colder seasons are a great time to get familiar with nature at night. Unfortunately, many of us face a major hurdle when we try to spend time observing the stars: light pollution.

Living in the Anthropocene, we can all think of examples of pollution: fast food containers lining the highway, oil spilled into our waterways, smokestacks releasing chemicals into the air. Light pollution is similar to these in that a material (in this case, excess light) is being released into the environment and causing harm. Artificial light can trick birds into thinking the days are longer and cold weather is farther off, causing them to delay their migration. It also disrupts firefly breeding by making it harder for females to detect the flashing

patterns displayed by the males. Light pollution even directly impacts human health by disturbing our natural circadian rhythm and increasing our risk for sleep disorders, depression, and some cancers.

There are three main types of light pollution: skyglow, glare, and light trespass. If you've ever seen a city from a distance at night, you will be familiar with skyglow. This happens when lots of lights are directed upwards or reflect off surfaces to create a glowing



Severson Dells during Luminaria 2021



Light pollution in Rockford, Illinois. Photographed by Tyler Yomantas

appearance that obscures the sky. Glare occurs when lights are too bright, which can lead to vision problems and hazardous driving conditions. Finally, light trespass is artificial light that strays beyond where it is needed and negatively impacts the surrounding environment. Picture a house that goes a little overboard with the holiday lights, and imagine trying to get a good night's sleep from across the street. Your neighbor's lights shining in through your window would be an example of light trespass.

On the *bright* side (sorry for the pun), light pollution is immediately reversible! If we decided tomorrow to turn off all artificial lights for one night, everyone with access to the sky would be able to see thousands of stars making up the Milky Way galaxy, even in the most densely populated cities. Even though it isn't practical to turn off all artificial lights, there are some easy steps we can take to limit the amount of excess light that can escape into the environment. First, we can make sure that we are using light only if, when, and where it is needed. Motion sensors, timers, and shields that direct light in certain directions can be helpful for ensuring that you aren't lighting spaces when you do need to. Even closing window blinds at night can help keep some light from spilling into the environment when it doesn't need to. The type of light matters, too. Using lower wattage, warm tinted bulbs has less of an impact on wildlife, and energy efficient lights can help you save some money while decreasing your environmental impact.

Access to the unimpeded night sky doesn't need to be a luxury available only to those who are able to vacation to National Parks out west. With thoughtful city planning, deliberate home lighting choices, and reasonable standards for light output from businesses and industry, we can take meaningful steps towards once again having truly dark skies.



The constellation Orion, with and without light pollution. "Light pollution, It's not pretty" by Jeremy Stanley is licensed under CC BY 2.0*

Information sourced from Globe at Night managed by Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), and from National Park Service.

Jillian Neece is an AmeriCorps Natural Resources. Born and raised in Winnebago County, Jillian is passionate about the local environment, science communication, accessible research, and environmental justice. Jillian holds a degree in Plant & Microbial Biology, and minored in Entomology and Sustainability Studies. She recently worked on the Save Bell Bowl Prairie campaign. Read more about Jillian on page 5.



Severson Dells is a proud member of **1% FOR THE PLANET**

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— MEMBER —

"1% FOR THE PLANET represents a global network of businesses, individuals and nonprofit organizations tackling our planet's most pressing environmental issues.

1% FOR THE PLANET approved nonprofit partners are carefully vetted environmental organizations that are eligible to receive funding from our members."

*Image sourced from Flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/79297308@N00/3180280752/>; Licensed through: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Register for programs at 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.
Registration is required for all programs.

New Moon Mindfulness Walk

Thursday, September 14th | 6:00pm to 7:30pm

Slow down, quiet your mind, & connect with the golden prairie, flowing water, sun-dappled forest, & your inner nature. This walk led by Jessie Crow Mermel is slow & serene, with many points to stop, be present, & connect with the Earth with all of our senses. This relaxing walk is best suited to folks ages 12+ \$3/members \$5/general admission.

Fall Colors Hike

Tuesday, September 26th | 5:30pm to 7:00pm

September is a perfect time to take in the bright gold & purple colors of the prairie. Join Naturalist Liz Weiner for a guided hike through Severson's grasslands & soak in the fall colors! This hike falls a few days after Autumn Equinox and a few days before the Harvest Full Moon; the perfect way to usher in fall. \$3/members \$5/general admission

Fall Colors Hike

Wednesday, October 11th | 5:30pm to 7:00pm

Autumn colors are beginning to show! Join Naturalist Liz Weiner for a guided hike through Severson's beautiful woodlands. Learn about how trees prepare for the winter, too. The October Fall Colors hike should be filled with more oranges and reds, complementing the sunset as we hike the trails! \$3/members \$5/general admission

Braiding Sweetgrass Earth Wisdom Walk & Fireside Reading

Wednesday, October 18th | 5:30pm to 7:00pm

Robin Wall Kimmerer's book Braiding Sweetgrass is a source of inspiration and wisdom to many. Her vision for Earth stewardship is guided by her scientific and Indigenous ecological knowledge. Join us for this short, sunset eco-gratitude walk seasoned with short readings from the book. Back at the warmth of the fireside, we'll enjoy tea, selected readings and a discussion of Braiding Sweetgrass. Feel free to bring your favorite passages to share. \$5/members \$8/general admission

Estate Planning Session

Wednesday, October 25 | 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Join us for an insightful Estate Planning Session on October 25th. Jake Loescher of Savant Wealth Management & Dan Huntley of WilliamsMcCarthy come to us with a wealth of knowledge this National Estate Planning Month. Members-only event. Interested in becoming a member? See more info in the back of this newsletter.

Turkey Twist Yoga

Friday, November 24th | 9:00am to 10:30am

Get away from the hustle and bustle of Black Friday with a yoga class full of twists and some tea, to help digest all of that delicious Thanksgiving food! \$12/members, \$15/general admission

Opt Outside Hike

Friday, November 24 | 10:30am - 12:00 pm

Join us for a morning wander in the woods & celebrate the 8th anniversary of Opt Outside, an alternative to the shopping frenzy of Black Friday. Free, but registration is required.

Full Moon Hikes



Watching a full moon rise is magical. Join us for an evening of nocturnal natural history as we walk the trails in anticipation of moonrise.

Friday, September 29 | 7 to 8:30 pm

Saturday, October 28 | 6:30 to 8 pm

Monday, November 27 | 6 to 7:30 pm



A mystery has happened at Severson Dells and we need YOU to solve it. Get a team of detectives together, and come out for an afternoon of investigation and nature fun!



\$20/team up to 5 people



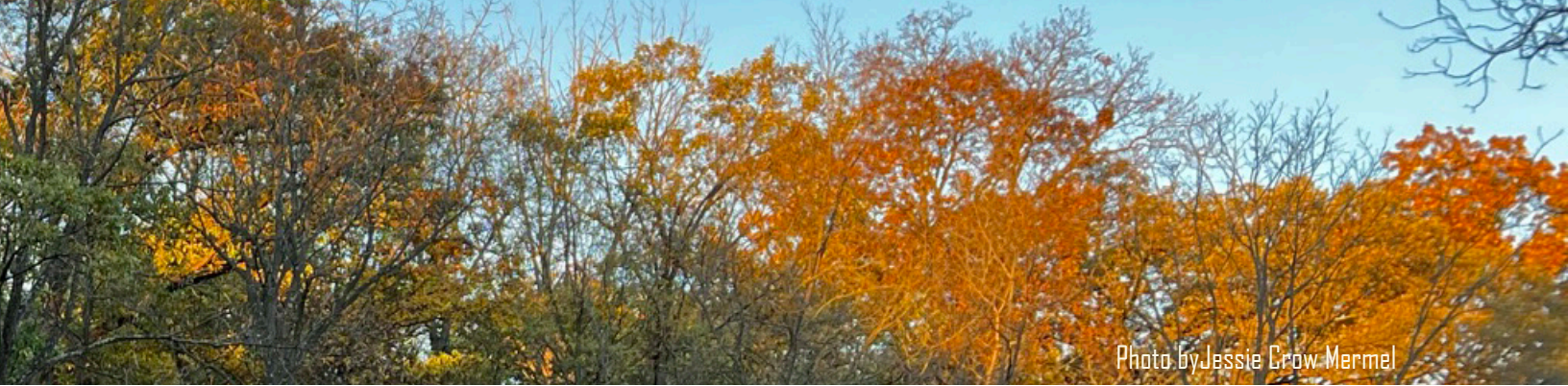


Photo by Jessie Crow Mermel

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! We recommend that parents/guardians drop off their student at the program so they can experience independent learning, but parents/guardians are welcome to walk our trails or wait in the building.

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

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

Splendid Spiders Thursday, September 21

Spiders usually get the short end of the stick when it comes to appreciation, but they are fascinating, beneficial, and beautiful animals. We'll learn about some of the most common species in our area, how webs are formed, and what other strategies spiders use to capture prey.

Spectacular Seeds Thursday, October 19

October is a great time to study seeds! We'll look at the purpose and structure of seeds, and discover the many ways seeds are transported. We'll also go out and collect some seeds, learning about this important aspect of land stewardship and conservation.

Navigating in Nature Thursday, November 16

Animals use nature to navigate as they migrate hundreds of miles this time of year! We will learn how animals navigate as well as test our own skills with a map and compass. Your student will leave with their own map made up of natural and man-made landmarks

Contemplating Clouds Thursday, December 21

Clouds can tell us so much about the weather! We'll study cloud forms and learn what they mean. We will also use a Cloud App to help NOAA collect important information about clouds to compare with the satellite data they are collecting.



WINTER BREAK CAMP THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28 9:00AM - 3:00PM

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, and 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!

\$30/MEMBER ; \$35/NON-MEMBERS

SCIENCE SATURDAYS

Photo by Ashlyn Rogers

Science Saturdays are BACK! We're excited to bring you engaging Nature Education the first Saturday of each month. From exclusive exhibits, community partners, crafts, take-aways, and much more; there is something for everyone! Science Saturdays are designed for all ages and all levels of science knowledge. You won't want to miss these FREE events!



Monarch Madness

September 2nd 10am-2pm

Step into a world buzzing with excitement! Join us for Monarch Madness as we delve into the captivating realm of monarchs and their pollinator companions. We'll indulge in thrilling activities centered around these magnificent creatures and the vibrant tapestry of fall wildflowers.

Celebration of Indigenous People October 7th 10am-4pm

Join the Native American Awareness Committee for an exciting day of Native American drumming, dancing, singing, crafts, storytelling, and much more!

*Note the special time length for even more activities!



Predator Prey Party

November 4th 10am-2pm

Get ready for a wild adventure like no other! You're invited to the Predator Prey Party! Prepare to unleash your inner scientist as we explore the skulls and furs left behind by nature's creatures; look for signs of why some are predators and others become prey. Test your strength against the mighty owl and see if you can match its prowess!

Bird Bonanza

December 2nd 10am-2pm

Prepare to spread your wings of knowledge and soar into a feathered frenzy at Bird Bonanza! Feast your eyes on our mesmerizing feeders, where a symphony of tweets and a collage of bright & colorful feathers await! Uncover extraordinary bird adaptations that have made birds true masters of the sky. You'll even create a personalized bird feeder to take home!



Fall Science Saturdays are made possible by generous grants from Nicor Gas & Collins Aerospace.

DELLSPEAK: SPEAKER SERIES

Photo by Andrea Wallace Noble



Herpetology with Nathan Kutok

Thursday, October 5 | 6:30 - 7:30 pm \$5 general admission / \$3 members

Learn all about amphibians and reptiles both here in Illinois and in Mexico as Nathan Kutok shares his research with us! Nathan is a herpetologist studying geographic distribution.



Environmental Journalism with Kevin Haas

Thursday, October 24 | 6:30 - 7:30 pm \$5 general admission / \$3 members

Kevin Haas, editor of the Rock River Current, will join us to talk about environmental journalism and his experience capturing the beauty of nature through words. He'll also speak on what it is like to seek out news stories and how to think critically about what you read and write. Kevin is prepared to answer any question about local journalism, so come ready to inquire on all things Rockford news!



Art & Writing with Aneka Williams

Thursday, November 9 | 4:30 - 7:30 pm \$5 general admission / \$3 members

For workshop & presentation: \$15 general admission / \$13 members

Workshop (4:30-6pm) : Join nationally recognized speaker, artist, adventurer, and climate scientist Aneka Williams for an immersive experience that will put you at the intersection of science and art.

Presentation (6:30-7:30pm) : Aneka Williams is a writer, adventurer, and climate scientist who loves to exist at the intersection of science and art. Her presentation will focus on her work around the world highlighting some of her climate research, storytelling, and outdoor adventures. You're sure to leave you inspired to get out and write!



Global Food Waste with Emma Cahil

Wednesday, November 29 | 6:30 - 7:30 pm \$5 general admission / \$3 members

Join Emma Cahill, Global Marketing Director for Food Protection and Preservation at Kerry, as we talk about global food waste, sharing insights from the food industry as well as discussing practical steps we can all take in our homes and at the grocery store to make food go further and reduce waste and its impact. One third of all food produced currently goes to waste. Learn how small changes in how we handle our food can make a big difference to both people and the planet.



Adventures with Megan "Belay" Taylor

Tuesday, December 5 | 6:30 - 7:30 pm \$5 general admission / \$3 members

Join Megan "Belay" Taylor as she speaks about living life outside, simple, and in pursuit on her quest to betterment and happiness! Belay identifies as a long-distance adventurer, an extreme minimalist, and founder and CEO of international guiding company BELAY EXPEDITIONS. "Be Outside, Simple and in Pursuit."



DRINKS FOR THE DELLS
A SEVERSON DELLS FUNDRAISER

October 14th | 12pm-4pm

Join us for Trails & Ales at Severson Dells!
Music by: Van Dwellers
Food available from: Big Jon's Food Truck

+50/50 Raffle

Brewers Include::



Tickets

\$40 online, or \$50 day-of
\$10 Designated Driver Tickets

seversondells.com/drinks-for-the-dells

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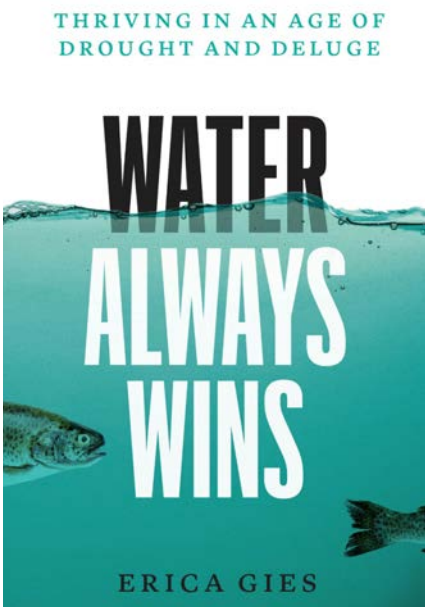
Book Nook:

WATER ALWAYS WINS THRIVING IN AN AGE OF DROUGHT AND DELUGE BY ERICA GIES UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS



A hopeful journey around the world and across time, illuminating better ways to live with water.

Nearly every human endeavor on the planet was conceived and constructed with a relatively stable climate in mind. But as new climate-related disasters remind us every day, our world is not stable—and it is changing in ways that expose the deep dysfunction of our relationship with water. Increasingly severe and frequent floods and droughts inevitably spur calls for higher levees, bigger drains, and longer aqueducts. But as we grapple with extreme weather, a hard truth is emerging: our development, including concrete infrastructure designed to control water, is actually exacerbating our problems. Because sooner or later, water always wins.



In this quietly radical book, science journalist Erica Gies introduces us to innovators in what she calls the Slow Water movement who start by asking a revolutionary question: What does water want? Using close observation, historical research, and cutting-edge science, these experts

in hydrology, restoration ecology, engineering, and urban planning are already transforming our relationship with water.

Modern civilizations tend to speed water away, erasing its slow phases on the land. Gies reminds us that water's true nature is to flex with the rhythms of the earth: the slow phases absorb floods, store water for droughts, and feed natural systems. Figuring out what water wants—and accommodating its desires within our human landscapes—is now a crucial survival strategy. By putting these new approaches to the test, innovators in the Slow Water movement are reshaping the future.

Looking for new places to enjoy nature, a reason to be outside, or a little guidance trying bike paths?

Join 815 Outside on hikes around the greater Rockford area. Explore nature, get active, and meet new people.

Find your place to get outside today!

815Outside.com

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

ALEX MARSHALL

Photo by Severson Dells Staff



Alex Marshall

When the trails of Severson Dells echo with the laughter of children discovering the wonders of nature, a transformation is unfolding. These future guardians of nature are carving precious memories that will shape their lifelong dedication to preserve, protect, and support the natural world. Among them, we find one of Severson's youngest, but most engaged supporters: Alex Marshall. From his early days as a camper to coming full circle as a camp counselor, donor, and impassioned restoration volunteer, Alex's unwavering passion for the natural world is a glowing example of the impact of nature education.

Alex's journey with Severson began as a wide-eyed camper in Peek-in-the-Creek as a child. He also visited with his family as his father is a past board member of Severson Dells Education Foundation. As Alex grew older and moved into Blazing Paddles canoe camp he had one of his most formative memories: "I remember the first year I did canoe camp—I was around 12—and we stopped at a place on the Kishwaukee River, and got out. There was this entrance to woods and all of the sudden there was this giant gorge. Water was going down it—it was just so beautiful, something I would never have learned about if I was not a part of Severson Dells."

Severson Dells became Alex's refuge away from the bustling suburbia that he grew up in. He speaks fondly of the pristine trails and the captivating experiences offered by the summer camps, but it is the people of Severson who have left a mark on Alex. He marvels at their warm and welcoming nature, making visitors feel like

cherished friends. The dedicated staff of Severson strive to foster a bond between humanity and nature, and Alex is an embodiment of that dedication.

What draws Alex to nature is the peacefulness. He says that humans are "preconditioned to be at peace in nature. The world is a very complicated place, but going into nature (seems to) simplify it all—it takes you away from less pleasant things." The tranquility of nature inspires Alex to become a fierce supporter of Severson.

Alex has grown up in Severson Dells, and his commitment to nature is something invaluable to the mission. His unique perspective, stemming from his own transformative experiences as a camper, enriches the planning of summer camp activities, especially for those children unacquainted with the natural world. This summer, a young camper from Chicago visiting their grandparents, unaccustomed to spending time in nature, joined the Severson experience. "It was really cool to watch (them) experience nature for the first time," Alex says. Each time a young camper develops a deeper appreciation for nature, Alex sees a reflection of his own transformative journey.

The elements of his work Alex deems most important is fostering the connection between the young campers and nature. "Every generation of kids gets further removed from nature...I grew up in the suburbs, which don't have a lot of natural places. I think it's very important that we have organizations like Severson that are bringing people back into the natural world, especially young people...If you're familiar with what you're trying to protect,



Alex reading to Wild Things: Little Creators 2023



Alex Marshall at Blazing Paddles 2021

you'll have a better idea on what to do.”

Alex definitely knows what to do when it comes to protecting nature and Severson Dells. He has spoken in support of Severson Dells at Forest Preserves of Winnebago County board meetings after the board terminated the operating agreement between FPWC and Severson Dells. He has

been a fierce advocate for keeping nature education in our community. Recently, Alex became a first time donor to Severson becoming one of our youngest supporters. This was a significant milestone in Alex's journey in environmental advocacy and nature education in which he is so impassioned. With his donation, Alex hopes for Severson Dells to be able to continue the same level of programming as it becomes more independent. Each dollar contributes to each one of the connections built between people and nature. When asked about which program he's most excited about contributing to at Severson, he stated he's eagerly anticipating the return of Luminaria—his favorite Severson event—to capture the magic of winter.

Alex also involves himself in volunteering at Severson. You can catch Alex with the Conservation Crew working to restore and conserve local habitats. Alex's commitment to restoration extends beyond Severson Dells to his own backyard. He emphasizes that most Americans have lawns made of grass, which do not have many benefits “from an ecosystem perspective; having a giant lawn is just really wasteful.” Instead, Alex favors replacing small sections of lawn with native plants in order to provide habitat. “Feeding the caterpillars and bees (is) very important in trying to establish habitat.” Restoring small pieces at a time eventually adds up to making a big impact. “It's okay to not get it all in one go. I've been doing this for a couple years now, and there's still a lot of space to work with. Every little bit helps.” His incremental efforts, one patch at a time, illustrate the impact of collective action; progress is achieved through dedication, regardless of the scale, one step at a time.

Beyond habitat restoration, Alex also contributes to bird-banding with Rockford University each fall; an activity

Alex does with his Dad who introduced Alex to all Severson and the natural world have to offer.

This summer, Alex's presence at Severson has been a blessing. His unique perspective is a testament to the legacy the summer camp experience can create. Alex's unwavering passion for the natural world reminds us all of the invaluable role of nature education in shaping childhood and fostering lifelong support of nature protection and preservation.

Moving forward, Alex plans to continue his local restoration work. He looks forward to studying restoration ecology or even marine biology as he moves on to college. Although Alex is more involved in habitat restoration than the average 16-year-old, when asked about his future, he states that he wants to get even more involved in restoration at Severson. He emphasizes the importance of keeping our area in its natural state. “We can't keep losing these wild areas to airport developments, for example.

Finding abandoned woodlots and fields and making them back to what they're supposed to be is very important to me, so I hope that I can do something like that with Severson.”



Wild Things: Little Heros 2023

Alex has had a profound impact on Severson Dells Nature Center through his unwavering support and influence as a summer camp staff member. Supporters like Alex are invaluable in protecting and nurturing our natural world. Severson is incredibly fortunate to have Alex by our side, bringing our mission to life. It has been a joy watching Alex come full circle from a shy kid attending camp for the first time to watching Alex teach our youngest campers about the nature around them, and inspiring another generation of nature advocates.

Thank you, Alex, and to the countless others for embodying what it means to foster respect, enjoyment, and preservation for the natural world, both now and in the future. Your unwavering commitment nurtures hope and ensures that the legacy of Severson Dells continues on.



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

LUMINARIA

DECEMBER 15 & 16

6:00PM - 9:00PM

CANDLELIT TRAILS

S'MORES

WINTER NATURE ACTIVITIES

LIVE MUSICAL PERFORMANCES BY:

CANTO ZENZERO - DECEMBER 15

SWINGBILLY RFD - DECEMBER 16

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KATHLEEN HELGE IN MEMORY
OF BARBARA WHITSITT



MATERIAL
HANDLING,
HANDLED.





OUR IMPACT

"This is one of my favorite field trips!! The guides are patient with the kids. They do extra things to let them get out energy. The kids get to learn new things in a hands on way!!" - School Field Trip Teacher

"Glad we had a tour guide with, couldn't do it without your staff and volunteers. Keep up the great work and great adventure offerings!" - Family Creek Walk attendee

"(My child) gained more social skills, expanded their willingness to try new things (I was honestly not expecting them to love the creek as much as they did), and definitely increased their desire to be out exploring. (My child) loves learning new facts- when you gave them the camp shirts, they immediately told me how it was made. (My child) was so impressed." - Summer Camp Parent

"(My child) was challenged with adapting things that were out of their control, but I was so proud of them for sticking with it even when they had a rough day or two. (My child) stayed open to the camp experience; I think it helped their self-esteem to accomplish things like climbing a tree, catching fish, meeting new friends, & hiking in a creek. It seems (my child) has a deeper appreciation for new outdoor adventures." - Summer Camp Parent



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

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 for more information or contact our Community Engagement Manager Rebecca Rankins: 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.

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 \$40
- Family \$65
- Sponsor \$125
- Benefactor \$300
- Sustaining \$600
- Patron \$1000

Become a member online at
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!

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

Become an advocate for
nature education in your community.

Your donation will help support our ongoing nature
education programs and the continuous growth of
Severson Dells.



To learn more and begin your monthly
donation, contact us: (815) 335-2915
admin@seversondells.org



Scan the QR Code with your camera
phone to visit the Severson Dells
website, where you can find event
updates, membership details, and
our full field notes blog.

SEVERSON DELLS ACTIVITIES

Please register at least two days in advance by phone 815-335-2915
or on our website: seversondells.org.

SEPTEMBER

Science Saturdays: Monarch Madness
Saturday, September 2 | 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Conservation Crew Restoration Work Day
Saturday, September 9 | 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

New Moon Mindfulness Walk
Thursday, September 14 | 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Homeschool Program: Splendid Spiders
Thursday, September 21
Ages 5-8 10:00-11:30 AM
Ages 9-12 1:00-2:30 PM

Conservation Crew Restoration Work Day
Monday, September 25 | 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Fall Colors Hike
Tuesday, September 26 | 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Full Moon Hike
Friday, September 29 | 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

OCTOBER

Speaker Series: Nathan Kutok, Herpetology
Thursday, October 5 | 6:30-7:30 pm

Science Saturdays: Celebration of Indigenous People
Saturday, October 7 | 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Fall Colors Hike
Wednesday, October 11 | 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Drinks for the Dells
Saturday, October 14 | 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Braiding Sweetgrass Earth Wisdom Walk
& Fireside Reading
Wednesday, October 18 | 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Homeschool Program: Spectacular Seeds
Thursday, October 19
Ages 5-8 10:00-11:30 AM
Ages 9-12 1:00-2:30 PM

Spook the Dells
Saturday, October 20 | 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Conservation Crew Restoration Work Day
Monday, October 23 | 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Speaker Series: Kevin Haas, Environmental
Journalism
Tuesday, October 24 | 6:30-7:30 PM

Estate Planning Session
Wednesday, October 25 | 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Full Moon Hike
Saturday, October 28 | 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

NOVEMBER

Science Saturdays: Predator Prey Party
Saturday, November 4 | 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Art & Writing with Anneka Williams
Thursday, November 9 | 4:30-6 pm

Speaker Series: Anneka Williams, Artist Adventurer
Thursday, November 9 | 6:30-7:30 pm

Conservation Crew Restoration Work Day
Saturday, November 11 | 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Homeschool Program: Navigating in Nature
Thursday, November 16
Ages 5-8 10:00-11:30 AM
Ages 9-12 1:00-2:30 PM

Nature Clue
Saturday, November 18 | 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Turkey Twist Yoga
Friday, November 24 | 9:00 am - 10:30 am

Opt Outside Hike
Friday, November 24 | 10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Full Moon Hike
Monday, November 27 | 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Conservation Crew Restoration Work Day
Monday, November 27 | 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Speaker Series: Emma Cahil, Global Food Waste
Wednesday, November 29 | 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm

DECEMBER

Science Saturdays: Bird Bonanza
Saturday, December 2 | 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Speaker Series: Megan "Belay" Taylor
Tuesday, December 5 | 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Conservation Crew Restoration Work Day
Saturday, December 9 | 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Luminaria
Friday, December 15 | 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Saturday, December 16 | 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Homeschool Program: Contemplating Clouds
Thursday, December 21
Ages 5-8 10:00-11:30 AM
Ages 9-12 1:00-2:30 PM

NOTES FROM THE DELLS

Severson Dells Nature Center
8786 Montague Road
Rockford, IL 61102-9713

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Rockford, IL 61125
Permit No. 513**

CONTACT Us!

Telephone: 1-815-335-2915
web: www.seversondells.org
e-mail: info@seversondells.org

**Open Monday - Saturday:
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**
Open Sunday: 1 to 4:30 p.m.



SEVERSON DELLS
NATURE CENTER

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

SEVERSON DELLS NATURE CENTER STAFF:

Ann Wasser - Director
Andrea Wallace Noble - Youth Programs Coordinator
Liz Wiener - Public Programs Coordinator
Rebecca Rankins - Community Engagement Manager
Laura Sjoquist - Administrative Assistant

AMERICORPS MEMBERS:

Alex Lunde - Education
Jillian Neece - Natural Resources

BOARD MEMBERS:

Chris Samuelson - President
Catherine Povalitis - Vice President
Jessie Madl - Treasurer
Katie Eickman
Jake Loescher
Jarrod Hennis
Daniel Huntley
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Hans Rupert
Dan Kasten
Andrea Pederson



Photo by Severson Dells Staff