

SE MN Prairie Partners Chapter Newsletter

March 2025 Volume 14 issue 1



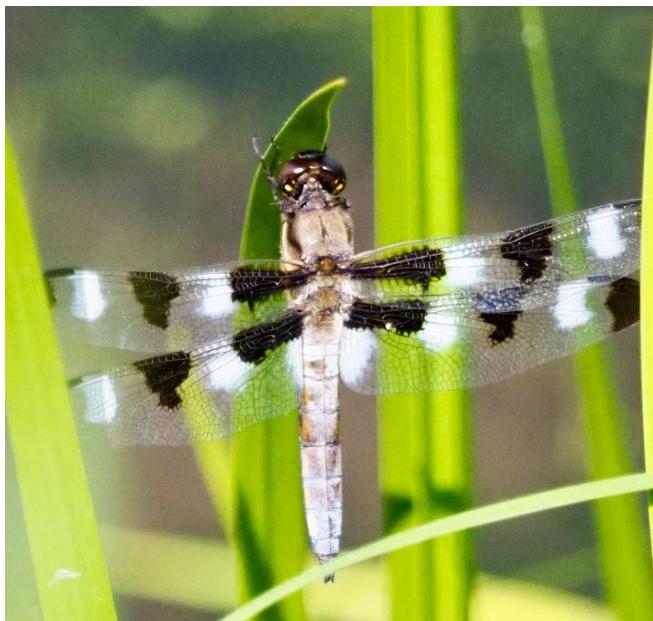
Spring ephemerals such as Virginia Bluebells will be showing up very soon! Hope you can join us at Rice Lake Park, Owatonna, this April to see what beautiful spring blooms we can find!



American Ginseng. Once very abundant in SE Minnesota, is now considered to be a species of special concern, primarily due to over harvesting and insufficient reseeding. The roots are harvested, killing the plant and, though the law requires it, often its seeds are not planted. The best time to search for *Panax quinquefolius* is when it is in fruit, from mid-June through early October. Concerned about at-risk native plants? The MN DNR and MN Landscape Arboretum have joined together to form PlantWatch to survey for plants at risk of being lost to Minnesota. They are looking for volunteers to help. [MN PlantWatch | Minnesota DNR](#) Photo from DNR



Common (or Black) Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*). These berries are edible, but it is critical to know for certain what you are eating when foraging. Ironwood Foraging, our foraging tour guides from last summer, offer classes in responsible foraging. <https://ironwoodforaging.com>



12-spotted Dragonfly. If you like dragonflies, consider volunteering with the Minnesota Dragonfly Society to help with surveys. <https://mndragonfly.org/html/involved.html> Photo by David Hendee.

2025 SE MN Prairie Partners officers

President – Barb Bolan
Vice President – Nancy Schumacher
Secretary – Polly Hendee
Treasurer – Jim Sipe
Membership Chair – LuAnn Raadt
Newsletter Chair – open
Webmaster & Social Media Lead- Matt Brueske
Grant Manager – Jim Sipe

Wild Ones Mission: Native Plants, Natural Landscaping promote environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through preservation, restoration, and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

Wild Ones National Address: 2285 Butte des Morts Beach Road, Neenah, WI 54956
www.wildones.org

Membership: Sign up/ renew online at <https://members.wildones.org/> or by mail: <https://members.wildones.org/renew-by-check/>. Cost is \$40 per year for a household (family) membership. Student and other membership types are also available.

SE MN Prairie Partners Mission Statement: To preserve, maintain and provide knowledge of native and restored plant communities in a way that fosters friendship.

SE MN Prairie Partners online:

<https://semnprairiepartners.wildones.org/>

[Wild Ones: SE MN Prairie Partners | Facebook](#)

Newsletter Committee: Nancy Schumacher, Gary Bullemer, Barb Bolan

Submitting articles for the newsletter –

We welcome stories about natural areas, a native garden you have visited or designed, a nature-based vacation, a special flower, bird, butterfly, etc.

Prairie Partners member local Services

(Please let us know if you have one to list)

Whitewater Gardens Farm: Lonny and Sandy Dietz [Whitewater Gardens Farm](#)

Blazing Star Gardens: Dustin Demmer [Blazing Star Gardens](#)

Minnesota Native Landscapes (MNL): Dwayne Vosejpka mnlcorp.com

Bluff Land Wildlife Products: Matthew Brueske sales@blufflandwildlifeproducts.com or [The Deer Cage](#)

Enabling Healthy Habitats: Dawn Littleton

Friends of Nerstrand State Park: Katy Gillispie [Friends of Nerstrand Big Woods](#)

Friends of Whitewater State Park: Joel Dunnette - [Friends of Whitewater](#)

Zumbro Valley Audubon: Joel Dunnette – Board member zumbrovalleyaudubon.org

River Bend Nature Center: Packy Mader, Board of Directors www.rbnc.org

Halfpint Hollow Miniature Donkeys: Rod and Sue White halfpinthollow.com

CRP – Clean River Partnership: Bill Jokela [Home](#) - [Clean River Partners](#)

2025 Chapter Events schedule –*Inside, in-person events will typically be held in the Emmaus Church at 712 Linden St. North.*

Thursday Jan 9th, 7pm - zoom - Deanna Leigh of MN DNR Plant Watch group – Title: *Rare ones in Wild Habitats*

Tuesday January 21st, 7pm - Lucas Rhoads– on Neonics, all state chapters

Thursday February 13th, 7pm – zoom - Barb Bolan on Monarchs and Milkweed

Thursday Feb 20th, 7pm – Zoom by Master naturalists, Nancy Braker – roadside project update

Thursday March 13th, 7pm, at Emmaus Church –Bonnie Harper-Lore on “*Lessons learned in Protecting and Restoring Biodiversity – Conservation in Action*” - a new book.

Thursday April 10th – 5pm Anniversary Dinner - Dennison

April – Rice Lake Park, Owatonna – ephemeral walk/tour

Sat and Sunday May 17-18th– Plant sale – Nancy and Jim’s, Hwy 56, Randolph

June – weekend afternoon- prairie remnant ditches – evaluation, workday

July 10th, 7pm – Byllesby tour stops - Mary D and Tim & Sue B places – lakeshore restoration and native plantings

Saturday July 26 afternoon – Northfield yard tours - Jean N and more

Friday August 1st, 7:30pm, Family twilight walk Look for and listen for frogs, fireflies, moths, owls and more with Master Naturalists

August 14th, 2pm – Winona – Prairie tour and Whitewater Gardens visit (including plants for sale)

Saturday September 20th - 10AM Seed harvest – location TBD.

Sept, date TBD - Koester prairie – help with seed harvest (Master Naturalists)

Sep 11th 5pm- Clean River partners – tour of a project – Anna Holmon anna@cleanriverpartners.org

October 9th, 7pm - Shelley Gorham, DNR – restorations/wildlife

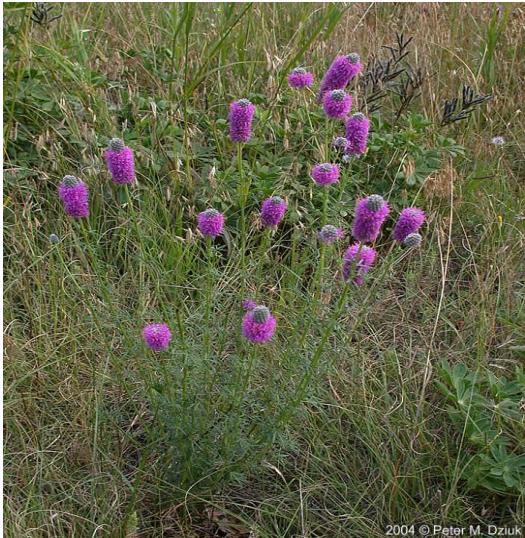
November 13th, 6pm start – Seed share, led by Scott R., seed germination demo by Nancy S, plus appetizers, socializing

December 11th, 11am - Luncheon



White Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum*) colony at Nerstrand State Park. Gary Bullemer

Purple Prairie Clover *Dalea purpurea* A good candidate for direct sowing by Nancy Schumacher



2004 © Peter M. Dziuk

In the past few years, I have fielded a lot of questions on direct sowing of native seeds (as opposed to putting in purchased plants). Direct sowing is great method for obtaining numerous plants at low cost, making it an attractive alternative for establishing or adding to large plantings. When successful, it is also hugely satisfying. I try to encourage folks to give it a try but add some caveats. For example, the seeds of some species are quite expensive or have complex germination requirements. Others, especially very small seeds, can be easily blown or washed away.

Among the natives that I often direct sow is Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpurea*). The seed is relatively inexpensive – Prairie Moon offers one pound (about 17,000 seeds) for \$18. Germination is uncomplicated and reliable.

Purple Prairie Clover is in the Fabaceae family (also known as legumes). They have the ability to “fix” atmospheric nitrogen in the soil thus improving the nutritional profile for itself as

well as surrounding plants. This clover has a wide native range, occurring in most of the country east of the Rockies and hardy from zones 3 to 8. It is clump forming with a height of 2 to 3 feet. Though its preference is full sun, it will tolerate light shade or partial sun. Due to its deep taproot, it is quite drought tolerant and does best in medium to dry soils including those that are sandy and rocky. It is also salt tolerant making it a good choice for roadside and boulevard plantings. The purple flowers occur for a relatively long period during the summer months. The blossoms are an excellent nectar source for bees, butterflies and other pollinators. The seeds, which tend to be tightly held on the stems well into late fall, provide food for numerous birds.

One of the few challenges of Purple Prairie Clover is that rabbits (and I suspect other critters) absolutely love this plant. Providing protection such as cages can help in smaller areas. In larger areas perhaps the best approach is to plant plenty in hopes that a good amount will make it.

Purple Prairie Clover can be direct seeded either in late fall after day-time temperatures are consistently below 40 to 50 degrees or in the spring after snow melts. If sowing onto bare ground, lightly raking or loosening the soil first followed by firming the surface and perhaps sprinkling a fine layer of mulch will reduce seed loss from washing or blowing away with the wind. Sowing into existing vegetation, as I often do in my “prairies in progress” can also be done in either late fall or after snow melt in the spring. The existing vegetation will provide protection from washing and blowing.

Germination will not occur until the soil has warmed to about 70 degrees, or somewhere

around Memorial Day. The seedlings, with their finely divided pinnate foliage are fairly easy to identify – yet another plus when direct sowing.



Purple Prairie Clover seedlings



Leaves of Purple Prairie Clover plant

Rice County Roadside Prairie Project

Roadsides sometimes provide the only surviving stretches of natural prairies in an area. In addition to offering roadside beauty, they sustain a high diversity of plants and animals – butterflies, bees, birds and more.

A Public land survey 1847 to 1907 identified where different species could be found and where colonists could find their preferred land

type – wooded, prairies, wetland... Less than 1% of the original prairie remains in MN.

In 2000, the DNR created an “Integrated Roadside Committee and funded a project to survey 820 miles of Rice County ditches, seeking out good quality remnant prairies. They identified the best 56 sites and 7.6 miles were selected with good numbers of native species.

In 2023 the Master Naturalists, led by Nancy Braker, initiated a capstone project that started looking at the sites again to see what management was needed to save sites, and determine which were still valuable as remnant prairies. Some have been mowed; others are overrun with invasives, but some are still good. We plan to help with this project this year to hopefully save some of these valuable sites.

Link to Zoom presentation - Nancy Braker and the Master Naturalists: [Video Conferencing, Web Conferencing, Webinars, Screen Sharing - Zoom](#)



Prairie Phlox (*Phlox pilosa*). One of the beauties in some remnant roadside prairies. Please note there are 5 petals on the native phlox. The invasive Dame's Rocket has 4 petals.

Member Profile – Valinda Wondrasch



One of Valinda's home gardens

Hi, I'm VaLinda Wondrasch. I just joined Wild Ones after registering for a recent Zoom presentation. I grew up in Byron, Minnesota, where my parents were big gardeners, growing mostly vegetables, strawberries, and raspberries. My grandmother always had beautiful flowers. I lived in Rochester, Minnesota, until my son graduated from high school, then moved to Madison, Wisconsin, to return to college for a Master's degree in Clinical Social Work. After graduating, I stayed in Wisconsin and worked for 25 years in the Mental Health Programs of a couple of counties. I continued to have a vegetable garden bed, strawberries, and raspberries along with other plants wherever I lived.

While living in Hillsboro, Wisconsin, I took a Community Education Class through the University of Wisconsin called, "Gardens of The World". We had a couple of in-house classes about different types of gardens, such as the Japanese. The highlight of the class was a bus trip to see different public gardens in Wisconsin.

Our last stop was at Prairie Nursery in Westby, Wisconsin. Prairie Nursery also has a mail order business selling native plants. After the tour, I bought a few native plants and took a plant catalogue with me.

I retired early in 2011 and moved back to Rochester, Minnesota. I have 2 granddaughters living in the Twin Cities and wanted to be more of a part of their lives growing up. I moved many of my plants, including strawberries, and raspberries by car to my new rental home in Rochester with my landlord's blessings. They were also gardeners.

I met my husband Pat, while taking Ballroom dance classes here in Rochester. We have been married for 9 wonderful years now. He had a house with a yard that he said was mine to do whatever I wanted to do with it. He is not exactly a gardener, but a great gardener-helper. We make a great team. He has an educational background in both Biology and Chemistry along with a strong interest in nature. He wanted plants that would attract butterflies, bees, and birds, but was not sure where to start. We now have had a hummingbird family here for the last 5-6 years. We live in the Country Club Manor edition which is fairly hilly with primarily high clay content soil. We have a hill across the back yard that is steep and difficult to mow. Our next-door neighbor has to mow her back yard wearing golf shoes. After removing all the grass in the backyard, I moved the majority of my plants once again to their new home, starting with the hill. I've added native plants to the flower beds. I again have vegetable, strawberry, and raspberry beds. Pat had a raised bed put in before I moved in for his tomato plants.

We had a patio with a pergola and firepit built. We also have a steep hill on the side of the garage that slopes downward toward our neighbor's driveway, as her lot is much lower than ours. This was another difficult area to mow. We used a tarp to smother existing grasses and weeds. This garden now has entirely native plants. My current garden project is replacing mulch with native plants as ground cover such as pussy toes, wild strawberries, wild petunias, and wild geraniums. When I lived in Wisconsin, I completed the training to become a Master Gardener and transferred that credential when I moved back to Olmsted County, Minnesota. I have been a Master Gardener for almost 20 years now. As a part of the Master Gardener program, I volunteer at the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge gardens in downtown Rochester. There are different garden areas around the building including 4 shade gardens. Three of these shade gardens have tables and chairs for the residents to be able to go outside and enjoy the flowers. The rest of the 12 gardens are full sun. The people staying at Hope Lodge are from all over the country. During the growing season, 10,000 people stay there undergoing cancer treatment, including family and friends to provide support. This is the most rewarding place that I have ever volunteered. The residents are always thanking us for the gardens and have plenty of questions regarding the plants, which are all labeled. There is a group of 4 ladies and of course my husband that come weekly to be sure that the gardens are well maintained. Since it is located downtown, it is surrounded by blacktop streets, parking lots, and cement sidewalks. This creates a heat island. With the last 3 years having little rain, we have spent quite a lot of time watering to keep plants alive. The "soil" is very poor with a thick

weed-block under the mulch (wooden pallets fed into a wood chipper) and compacted clay under this. We have tried to remove the weed-block with new plantings and amend the soil. The majority of the new plantings have been native plants as they are more than capable of handling the difficult conditions.

Residents have spotted a hummingbird visiting the Cardinal flowers a number of times. The residents were so surprised and pleased to see a hummingbird in busy downtown Rochester. One of the residents was missing her gardens



[American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge Garden](#)

back home and was very happy to see the gardens at Hope Lodge. It was like she was greeting an old friend, which for many of us this is how we feel about our gardens in that they are very much healing gardens at Hope Lodge. She said it best when she said, "I just love a garden, don't you? They are so therapeutic." I couldn't agree more. I have enjoyed gardening most of my life and I plan to continue for as long as possible.

Nerstrand Big Woods State Park by Gary Bullemer

The idea of creating a state park near Nerstrand, Minnesota began in the early 1930s, and after various failed attempts,



Nerstrand Woods State Park was formed by law in 1945. By that time there was just a fraction of the original “big woods” that once covered about 3000 square miles of SE Minnesota. The park began with 460 acres (today the size is 2882 acres). Proponents of the park creation recognized the value of the area flanking Prairie Creek, with its towering trees and abundance of flowering plants. Now 80 years since it became a park, the emphasis is still to preserve the rare botanical community, while also providing somewhat limited recreational opportunities. The main attractions for visitors are hiking trails, picnic grounds, and several camping areas. Favorite activities for visitors are hiking, bird watching, overnight camping in RVs and tents, and attending naturalist programs. The park is open year-round, and winter activities include skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling on the trails. A very popular winter program is an annual candle lit hiking program.



Icy candles light up the winter trails at Nerstrand Big Woods

The most visited attraction at Nerstrand Big Woods must certainly be Hidden Falls, a remarkable and often photographed waterfall on Prairie Creek. Beautiful any time of year, this is a people magnet that is hard to enjoy by yourself. There is usually a crowd of folks in and around the falls enjoying the beauty and soothing sound of falling water. Each time I have visited this spot, the falls give a different look. And it's hard to pick a season which brings out the most beauty!



Winter beauty of Hidden Falls

Besides the amazing feeling of walking through the towering forest, spotting one of the rarest plants in all of Minnesota is my most treasured experience at this park. The dwarf trout lily (*erythronium propullans*) is a federally endangered species, and is only known to grow in Rice, Goodhue, and Steele Counties of Minnesota. The big sister to this rare flower is the very common, and also lovely white trout lily (*erythronium albidum*), and it is especially numerous at Nerstrand Big Woods!



Dwarf trout lily (*erythronium propullans*)

An added bonus for the Nerstrand Big Woods is the adjoining property called Prairie Creek Woods, another public property managed by the state, as a Scientific and Natural Area. It is 93 acres primarily devoted to protecting dwarf trout lily habitat and is also a part of the remaining big woods. The Two Step Falls is another hidden treasure that is also a rare treat. One of the best visitor services at Nerstrand Big Woods is the Interpretive Program, and the park has a full-time naturalist, Andy Wendt. He provides regular programs for our benefit, on a wide range of topics related to the resources and history of the area. In talking to Andy recently, he explained that climate change is perhaps the biggest challenge facing resource management at the park. The overall wetter and warmer climate here is harming the big woods and the overall plant community. Studies of the dwarf trout lily are ongoing and seem to indicate a decline in overall health within the park. There is a new project to find new tree species that can withstand the change in climate patterns, but it will take many years to know the best tree types to plant. Invasive species have been a problem for park staff to try and control or remove, with buckthorn, honeysuckle, and garlic mustard being the most troublesome targets.

Wild bird populations seem to be stable at the park but are surely suffering the same fate as bird numbers that are declining all over the world. Over 150 species have been documented here, and one notable species that is closely monitored is the red-headed woodpecker. A recent survey detected 20 individuals within the park at one time. There are seven different woodpecker species that visit Nerstrand Big Woods, and Naturalist Andy

gives occasional programs describing these and other notable birds at the park.

I believe we are very fortunate to have such an incredible, beautiful, special park in our part of Minnesota, with a devoted, hardworking staff striving to protect and preserve it and provide all of us access to its wonders!



[Hidden Falls in autumn, requires a short but steep hike into the creek valley.](#)

Deanna Leigh of MN DNR Plant Watch group –Title: Rare ones in Wild Habitats-

The Minnesota DNR Plant Watch, a joint venture with the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, is described as “*Volunteers conserving Minnesota’s rare plants through community science*”. The citizen volunteers search for rare plant communities in our state, and carefully document the location, number of plants, and the health of the colony. If enough seed is present, they will harvest some for the Native Seed Bank and for use in research or propagation work. Minnesota is home to about 1700 vascular plant species and over 300 are endangered, threatened or of special concern and need to be protected.

They are always looking for volunteers. To read more or apply to volunteer: [MN PlantWatch | Minnesota DNR](#) The MN Landscape Arboretum Plant Watch site: [MN PlantWatch | Minnesota Landscape Arboretum](#)

Secrets of Monarchs and Milkweeds by Barb Bolan

Key take aways for creating habitat for monarchs:

1. Late season monarchs need short days, cool temperatures and senescent milkweed to become successful migrating adults that remain in reproductive diapause.
2. Minnesota has 12 to 14 (depending on the source) species of milkweeds, with options for sun/shade, bloom time and cardenolide levels. Select ones that fit your site and offer options to monarchs.
3. Milkweeds are self-incompatible so at least 2 plants are needed for seed set.
4. Some milkweeds form clones that are all 1 plant.
5. Many milkweed species, other than the common and swamp, don't transplant readily. Direct seeding is a good option.
6. Monarchs need shelter from rain and heat, large plants, shrubs, trees or structures provide safe havens.
7. Monarchs are hosts for a deadly protozoan parasite, Oe, that reproduces inside the caterpillars. Crowding and stress makes it spread faster. Infected monarchs seldom survive migration.

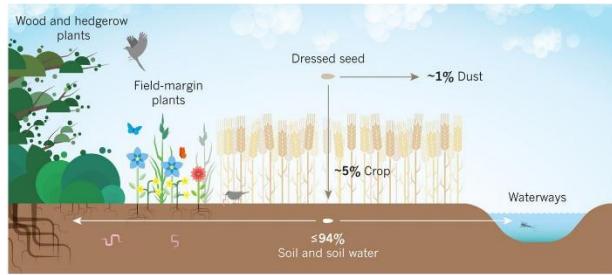


Swamp Milkweed
(*Asclepias incarnata*)

8. NO Tropical milkweed as it lives longer and is typically heavily contaminated by protozoan Oe spores that kill monarchs.
9. Monarchs prefer milkweed plants scattered within plantings of pollinator plants.
10. In an optimal landscape for monarchs, there will be no more than one monarch egg per milkweed plant.

January Tuesday Jan 21st, 7pm - Lucas Rhoads- on Neonics, all state chapters

Lucas shared a lot of good information about the hazards of Neonicotinoid neurotoxin insecticides. Neonics leach into our waterways and are now found nearly everywhere in the US.



Neonics spread, persist, and concentrate in soil and water, where they threaten insects and organisms and are taken up by wild plants, turning them toxic (reprinted by permission from Springer Nature: Dave Goulson, "Pesticides Linked to Bird Declines," *Nature* 511, no. 7500 (July 2014): 206-208, <https://doi.org/10.1038/511206a>).

The presentation is available at the link below.

- The Wild One's National presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kIJ9kisAr8>
- NRDC's Neonic Fact Sheet: <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/neonics-toxic-truth-fs.pdf>
- NRDC's New Report on Water Contamination in MN: <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/lucas-rhoads/report-harmful-pesticide-contamination-rampant-minnesota-waters>
- Sign-up Sheet for Updates from the Coalition: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdY3Cwgr73AHwDse SHFfXwKhRDd8IKvV-JzBD4FG9jkpTUZA/viewform?usp=sf_link

Native Garden Grants

We, the SE MN Prairie Partners Chapter of Wild Ones, are once again offering grants to help fund the planting of native gardens in 2025. Any Chapter member may sponsor a garden, either on private property or in a public area. The grant offers reimbursement of up to \$300 for the purchase of native plants to be used in the garden. We plan to award up to five grants for gardens on private property and up to five grants for gardens in public spaces.

Members interested in a 2025 Native Garden Planting Grant should submit an application no later than April 15, 2025. Applications should be submitted to Jim Sipe at jim@thevagary.com or 26050 Emery Avenue, Randolph, MN 55065.

A Book Review by Sue White: *The Comfort of Crows, A Backyard Year, by Margaret Renkl*

According to the author, Margaret Renkl, birding tradition dictates that the first bird one sees on New Year's Day sets the tone for the rest of one's year. She delighted in the fact that the year she wrote this book, it was the crow she first saw, known for its problem solving and sense of community.

Margaret Renkl poetically transports us through the joys and grief throughout the seasons. She laments how her neighbors still use poisons on their well-manicured lawns and gardens, killing not only insects, but the birds that eat them. They have not yet learned the

value of leaving fallen leaves or hollow stems of last year's flowers in which insects can hide, providing a feast for springtime's nestlings. Or the value of creating a safe environment for female bumblebees overwintering in preparation of building a new colony.

Spring brings not only ephemeral woodland flowers, but ephemeral pools as well, where salamanders come to life. Serviceberries are a harbinger of spring as are the courting songbirds building nests. The pollen and nectar of native wildflowers are "gifts" for the bees and butterflies, allowing them to survive, to produce honey, or to migrate.

This book is delightfully written, the author's descriptions allow one to visualize the little "fuzzy bumblebutts" of bumble bees sticking out of balsam flowers as they sleep at night and how golden sugar maples glow against gray skies in the fall. Each chapter is beautifully illustrated by her brother, Billy Renkl.

She reminds us that even though the wildlife seems to repeat itself each season, all is not right in the natural world. Climate change has disrupted nature. We all must compensate the best we can for our "wild neighbors."



Return Address:
 Barb Bolan
 9700 Baldwin Ave
 Ave Northfield, MN 55057

Address Label

Species: Ram's Head Orchid (*Cypripedium arietinum*)

With some imagination, you may see the head of a charging ram in the flower of this unique orchid. *C. arietinum* is typically found in the forests, cedar swamps, and fens of northern MN. Its declining populations are largely due to habitat loss and changes in land use, which has led to its status as state threatened in MN. We surveyed four populations of *C. arietinum* this year and found plants at all four sites!



Ram's Head Orchid, found in surveys by the MN Native PlantWatch group. Photo and text from Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Plant Watch group



Winter, non-breeding male. Note the darker beak compared to summer beak color. Photo by Andrea Bolan



Purple Prairie Clover. Photo by Judith Bechtum



Candlelight hikers at Nerstrand State Park