



Minnesota Plant Press

The Minnesota Native Plant Society
Newsletter

Volume 19 Number 2

Winter 2000

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center, 3815 East 80th Street
Bloomington, MN 55425-1600
612-335-2323

6 - 6:30 p.m. — Board meeting, Room B
6:30 - 7 p.m. — Refreshments, information,
Room A
7 - 9 p.m. — Program, Society Business
9 - 9:30 p.m. — Socializing
9:30 p.m. — Doors locked

Programs

Feb. 3

**"Fire Management and the Native
Pine Forests of Itasca State Park,"**
Becky Marty, Itasca State Park
Plant-of-the-Month

March 2

**"The History of Hemlock in
Minnesota and the Upper Midwest,"**
Randy Calcote, University of
Minnesota
Plant-of-the-Month

April 6

"Debunking Common Tree Myths,"
Kent Honl, Rainbow Tree Care
Plant-of-the-Month

May 4

**"Seminary Fen: a Calcareous Jewel
in the Minnesota River Valley,"** Fred
Harris, Minnesota Department of
Natural Resources
Plant-of-the-Month

June 1

**"Notable Native Gardens of
Minnesota,"** Diane Hilscher, Douglas
Owens-Pike
Plant Sale

Big Woods to be first heritage forest in state

by Harriet Mason

The Big Woods Heritage Forest is proposed as a new kind of forest system involving the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and conservation partners.

What is the Big Woods?

French explorers named the unique forest in south-central Minnesota "Bois Grand" or Big Woods. This forest of oak, elm, maple, basswood, and other hardwoods once extended in a band 40 miles wide from St. Cloud to Mankato, covering over 3,000 square miles. Now, less than 7% of that native hardwood forest remains.

How is a Heritage Forest different from state forests?

It will be developed around an ecologically defined forest region, the Big Woods of south central Minnesota. It will consist primarily of private lands protected by term or perpetual conservation easements as well as private forest stewardship registry sites. Public lands may also be enrolled. Participation will be voluntary.

What types of land will be enrolled?

Existing forest, wooded pastures no longer grazed, old fields restored to native forest species, and other similar land of a forested character are likely candidates for enrollment. All lands must have Forest Stewardship Plans or similar management plans in place.

What does it mean if my land is within the boundary of the proposed Heritage Forest?

Absolutely nothing, unless you choose to participate. Voluntary donations of conservation easements will be solicited. Purchased

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March 18 symposium to focus on newest restoration issues

Mark the Society's annual spring symposium on your calendars today! The day-long symposium, "Rare plants and local ecotypes: Emerging Issues in Native Plant Restoration," will be held Saturday, March 18, 2000, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. Co-sponsors are USFWS, Great River Greening, University of Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Natural Resources.

The morning's keynote speaker is Dr. Kayri Havens, manager of endangered plant research at the Chicago Botanical Garden, followed

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MNPS Web Site

<http://www.stolaf.edu/depts/biology/mnps>

From the President

by Catherine C. Reed, President, MNPS

The energy was high among board members at our December meeting. Many valuable suggestions were made. I'll highlight some of them here. Those who are willing to work on any issue should contact any board member. (Please do! The more people involved, the more we can get done).

We are investigating getting an intern to identify and research conservation issues for the society, so that we can have solid information as a basis for making recommendations on issues as they arise. Plans for the spring symposium, "Keeping it Native," are underway. Long-time member and expert botanist Thor Kommedahl has written Plant Lore columns on 21 native species, and plans are to collect them into a short book to be published by the society.

Also, board member nominations will soon be needed. Consider serving on the board yourself (a three-year term): it is a worthwhile way to put conservation ideals into practice, a chance to meet other members, and an interesting and valuable experience in itself.

On Dec. 29 I travelled from Gunflint Lake in the Boundary Waters area south to the Twin Cities. The Gunflint was like another world: deep snow on the evergreens, birches, and red osier, with more snow falling heavily, everything white and silent. As I drove south, the snowfall ceased, the ground and trees became bare of snow, and the winter colors were revealed, with even a few hints of green grass beneath the brown. Oaks and other deciduous trees, some bare and some holding withered brown leaves, added interest to the agricultural and urban landscapes of central Minnesota. We are indeed fortunate to live in a state with such varied plant communities. Best wishes to all for the coming millennium, and thanks to everyone for your work on behalf of the Society.

Outreach

It would be good to know what our members are doing to educate and inform friends, neighbors and children about native plants. If you have done any of this, please send a note to the newsletter so we can publish it. For example, I gave a presentation on acorns and oaks to the Minnesota Science Teachers Association meeting in October. If anyone would like to give a presentation on any aspect of native plants to this group next year (always on MEA weekend, of course) I can give you the contact information.

Minnesota Native Plant Society's purpose

(Abbreviated from the Bylaws)

This organization is exclusively organized and operated for educational and scientific purposes, including the following:

1. Conservation of all native plants.
2. Continuing education of all members in the plant sciences.
3. Education of the public regarding environmental protection of plant life.
4. Encouragement of research and publications on plants native to Minnesota.
5. Study of legislation on Minnesota flora, vegetation and ecosystems.
6. Preservation of special plants, plant communities and scientific and natural areas.
7. Cooperation in programs concerned with the ecology of natural resources and scenic features.
8. Fellowship with all persons interested in native plants through meetings, lectures, workshops and field trips.

The Minnesota Native Plant Society

Minnesota Plant Press

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The Minnesota Native Plant Society is a tax-exempt 501 (c)(3) organization as determined by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Contact the society by e-mail at: mnps@altavista.net. Dues for regular members are \$12 per year; for students and seniors, \$8; for families, \$15; for institutions, \$20; and for donors, \$25. All dues include a newsletter subscription. Four issues are published each year. Make checks out to: Minnesota Native Plant Society; mail them to: Minnesota Native Plant Society, 220 Biological Sciences Center, 1445 Gortner Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108.

MNPS Board of Directors

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Gerry Drewry, ex-officio; address above.

Heritage Forest

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easements may be a possibility if federal funds are available. Private forest stewardship registry will be encouraged.

How will a Big Woods Heritage Forest affect my property rights if I enroll?

It won't. You will still retain all your rights except the development rights if you have a conservation easement placed on your land title. You will be allowed to harvest timber, hunt, and recreate. Your land will not be open to public use.

Will conservation easements affect property taxes?

A landowner may request a lower tax status from their assessor. Individual counties can opt for an alternative, lower tax status for enrolled lands.

Who will administer the lands and the program?

The program will be administered by the DNR in cooperation with conservation partners. Individual landowners will continue to own and manage their lands.

What are the steps in establishing a Heritage Forest?

If sufficient township, county, and citizen support exists for this proposal, we will introduce a bill to establish a Big Woods Heritage Forest Program. Existing staff and program dollars along with federal programs and private grants will be used to implement the program on a voluntary basis in the Big Woods region.

What can counties, townships, organizations, and individuals do to support this program?

Adopt a resolution or write letters of support. Contact your legislator..

Who supports the creation of a Big Woods Heritage Forest?

Rice, Wright, and Le Sueur Counties (Scott, Carver-pending), The Big Woods Project, The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota, Great River Greening, Friends of the Minnesota Valley, Minnesota Center for Environmental

Advocacy, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Cannon River Watershed Partnership, Minnesota Land Trust-Cannon River Chapter, Rice County Forestry Committee, Minnesota Native Plant Society, Minnesota Audubon Council.

What happens if we do nothing to conserve the Big Woods?

Most likely, these lands will be developed into home sites over time, thus diminishing the ecological and scenic character of these undeveloped wildlands.

For additional information:

Contact Richard Peterson, DNR, 1810-30th St. NW, Faribault, MN 55021. Phone, 507-333-2012.

Naming the Plants

by Nancy Sather

This poem was first published in the Summer 1999 issue of Appalachian Heritage.

All the species of plants had names before the rise of man.

Deer and rabbit knew them:
coarse-one, green-in-spring,
stringy-leaf,
bitter-stem, fuzzy-feel, autumn-fare.

Wind knew them too:
supple-stem, shallow-rooted,
brittle-one.

Fire roared their names: susceptible,
resistant-one, dependent-seed.

Predators recognized them as they moved
from shrub to shrub: silent-one,
cracks-where-you-step, rustles-when-you-pass, rattles-as-we-walk.

Only we
thought to name them for ourselves:
Viburnum Rafinesquianum,
Crataegus Douglasii,
Linnaea borealis.

Nancy Sather's work has been published in a number of local literary venues, most recently in Sidewalks and Water-Stone, and in such out-of-state places as Orion, Black Bear Review and Appalachian Heritage.

Plant Lore

by Thor Kommedahl

What is false heather?

False heather, also called beach heather or woolly *Hudsonia*, is *Hudsonia tomentosa*. It is one of the needle-bearing, non-cone-bearing evergreen shrubs, and a member of the rockrose family, the Cistaceae.

Is this family temperate?

No, it is generally regarded as tropical and subtropical except for a few species of *Hudsonia* and *Lechea* (eastern USA), *Cistus* (California and the south), and *Helianthemum* or rockrose (east, middle west and west).

How did the plant get its name?

It was named after the English botanist and pharmacist William Hudson, who wrote "Flora Anglica" in 1762. *Tomentosa* refers to its downy appearance.

What does the plant look like?

It is a low, tufted, matted heath-like shrub with awl-shaped or scale-like leaves. Plants are evergreen but not coniferous, and are only six to eight inches tall. It has bright yellow flowers that are a fourth of an inch wide and appear in May to July. Flowers open only in sunlight and last one day.

Where does it grow?

It is a native Minnesota plant and grows in sandy areas along the Mississippi River and on the old sandy shore line of glacial Lake Agassiz. It is found on sand dunes and poor soil openings, and in outcroppings of St. Peter sandstone.

Can it be grown in gardens?

False heather is rarely cultivated because plants are difficult to grow and are short lived. According to "Hortus Third," plants can be propagated by seeds and probably by cuttings. *Hudsonia ericoides* has been cultivated as an ornamental.

Field trip ideas needed

Contact Deb Anderson at 507-867-4692, if you have an idea for a field trip or if you would like to lead one.

Tallgrass aspen parkland is distinctive ecosystem

By Robert Dana, Minnesota DNR

The aspen parkland ecosystem is the northernmost expression of the transition zone between prairie and forest ecosystems. Most generally described, it is a mosaic of prairie and aspen woodland where drought and fire are frequent enough to prevent succession to forest but not so frequent as to eliminate trees altogether. Aspen parkland extends in a band from northwestern Minnesota across southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. This can be subdivided on the basis of the associated grassland type: fescue grassland at the western end, mixed grass prairie across most of the middle part, and from about Winnipeg southwards, including northwest Minnesota, tallgrass prairie.

The tallgrass aspen parkland occupies a very low-relief landscape of smooth ground moraine further subdued during inundation by Glacial Lake Agassiz. Beach ridges formed along longer-lived shorelines of Lake Agassiz are the most prominent topographic features. As a legacy of the period of submergence soils are a complex mosaic of water-modified till (often very stony), sands, silts, and clays. Localized sand blankets were formed by outwash or streams draining into the lake and winds have modified some of these into dune formations. Shallow veneers of sedge peat are common in more poorly drained areas.

As the name implies, herbaceous species typical of northern tallgrass prairie dominate the open grassland component, and an abbreviated list of woodland and forest species is associated with the more wooded parts. Trembling aspen and balsam poplar are the dominant tree species, and bur oak is usually present, dominating in dry sites. Bur oak barrens occupy the driest sites. Woodland patches tend to be small, composed mostly of juvenile trees because of the frequency of fire. A striking feature is the abundance of shrubs; in the case of the prairie, this results in a distinctive community type, brush-prairie, in which shrubs may form up to 70 per

cent of the cover. Rich fen, dominated by fine-leaved sedges, is a common wetland type in the parkland, occurring on moderately decomposed peat. High local concentrations of mineral salts in these peats support an unusual assemblage of plant species.

A number of rare or uncommon plants are part of the parkland ecosystem. The hoary fruited willow, *Salix maccalliana*, is common in the Minnesota parkland but quite rare elsewhere in the state. A major population of the western white-fringed orchid, *Platanthera praeclara*, occurs in Manitoba with a smaller satellite population a few miles south in Minnesota. The sedge *Carex garberi*, known from only a single record in Minnesota outside the parkland, occurs in some abundance in rich fens here.

The tallgrass aspen parkland is exemplary breeding habitat for sandhill cranes and sharptail grouse. The meadows and especially the fens are prime habitat for the state-listed yellow rail and sharptail sparrow. Moose are common, and the timber wolf has made a tentative reentry. There is even a small number of elk that maintain a somewhat secretive presence here.

The parkland ecosystem is expressed only on a fairly large scale — in continuous blocks of hundreds, or better, of thousands of acres. Further, the delicate balance between aspen woodland and prairie here requires large areas for natural ecosystem management with fire. Finally, sandhill cranes, moose, and wolves need large areas to support viable populations. Fortunately, there are several large

blocks remaining in Minnesota, 12 of these in eastern Kittson County, comprising more than 115,000 acres.

This article is an abstract from a talk Robert Dana gave at a Minnesota Native Plant Society Meeting.

Nominate a director

Terms of three members of the MNPS board of directors expire this spring. The nominating committee is seeking candidates for these three-year terms. To nominate a member — or yourself — contact Nancy Sather, chair of the nominating committee, at one of the numbers listed on page 2.

The board meets at 6 p.m. before each regular meeting and also has quarterly meetings, usually on Saturdays.

MNPS listserve provides up-to-date information on native plants

by Charles Umbanhowar, Jr.

The Minnesota Native Plant Society listserve is available to anyone interested in Minnesota native plants. Currently there are about 90 subscribers to the list. This is a low-traffic list, meaning you will not be overwhelmed with messages or SPAMs (unrequested email from advertisers). Past messages have included announcements about upcoming field trips, questions about how to germinate acorns, and plant salvage.

To add yourself to the list or to drop from the list, simply send a message to:

mn-natpl-request@stolaf.edu including subscribe or unsubscribe — as appropriate — and your name in the body of the message. You will automatically be sent instructions on using the listserve. Past messages are archived and can be accessed through a WWW browser at:
<http://www.stolaf.edu/cgi-bin/mailarchivesearch.pl?listname=mn-natpl>

Proposed Amphitheater could harm Minnesota Valley Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is strongly objecting to the proposed construction and use of the Q-Prime Amphitheater about five miles south of Shakopee, in Scott County, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Manager Rick Schultz has announced.

The 19,250-seat indoor/outdoor facility would be located within a few hundreds yards of the Louisville Swamp Unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The amphitheater is designed to project amplified music and crowd noise over this important wildlife and natural resource area. It would be built by Q-Prime, Inc., of New York City,

According to Schultz, "We are not opposed to economic or industrial development of lands adjacent to Refuge lands, but we are opposed to those developments that will negatively impact the Refuge and its wildlife resources and the visitors that use these areas. We believe this amphitheater, as proposed, undermines the purposes for which Louisville Swamp was acquired and is managed as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System."

Upon preliminary review of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for this project, Schultz believes that this noise-generating facility will intrude upon the quiet and solitude that bald eagles, great blue herons, common egrets, and other wildlife species currently enjoy at this location. The proposal also has the potential to destroy rare native prairie located on site, an area that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to acquire as part of the Louisville Swamp Unit.

Refuge public-use activities such as bird watching, wildlife photography, and wildlife interpretation will be negatively affected by amplified music, noise spikes, crowd noise, and applause,

especially during late afternoon and evening hours when wildlife viewing is at its best, Schultz said.

The EAW is available for review at <http://www.co.scott.mn.us>. Schultz encourages individuals and organizations who have an interest in the refuge to review the EAW and submit their comments to Scott County by the Jan. 12 deadline.

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1976 out of citizen support for the conservation and management of the fish and wildlife resources of the Lower Minnesota River Valley. The refuge currently consists of 10,500 acres of fish, wildlife, and plant communities located in eight units along a 34-mile stretch of the Minnesota River between Bloomington and Jordan.

The refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and provides a variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Additional information about the Refuge may be obtained by calling (612) 854-5900 or stopping by the Refuge Visitor Center, 3815 East 80th St., Bloomington. Comments, concerns, or questions about the Q-Prime Amphitheater proposal may be directed to Rick Schultz, whose direct line is (612) 858-0701.

from the USFWS

Goblin fern comments sought

Comments and concerns are solicited regarding an investigation of the effects of timber management on the goblin fern (*Botrychium mormo*) in the Chippewa National Forest. For more information contact John Casson at 218-335-8606.

565-mile walk will showcase best prairies of Missouri

Missouri prairie lovers are planning a "Lek Trek," a 565-mile walk through the best of what is left of Missouri's tallgrass prairie. The walk will begin at the Iowa state line near Hatfield on July 21, 2000, and end at Prairie State Park near Lamar, MO on October 14, 2000.

The Lek Trek will travel through 16 communities and/or public prairies, and many special events related to prairie conservation and history will be held. Prairie lovers are invited to join the core group on certain days, with advance registration. For more information contact Sharon Gough, Missouri Department of Conservation, P O Box 106, El Dorado Springs MO 64744; phone 417-876-3388; e-mail <goughs@mail.conservations.state.mo.us>.

St. Paul consortium seeks native plant educators

The Saint Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium (NEC) is seeking to contract with individuals knowledgeable about native plants and with strong communication skills to work on several aspects of a new program that encourages the use of native plants in residential landscaping.

Landscape architects, landscape designers and educators with experience in native plants are encouraged to contact the NEC for more information on specific contract opportunities. Call Shelley Shreffler at (651) 221-4462 for more information.

Gibbs Farm Museum expands its restorations

The Gibbs Farm Museum in Falcon Heights has established traditional Dakota and pioneer gardens, a tallgrass prairie restoration and a heritage orchard on their property. An oak savanna restoration and a Native American medicine garden are planned for spring. For more information call 651-646-8629.

Moonwort Madness

by Cindy Johnson-Groh and Donald Farrar

Have you noticed the recent craze of "Moonwort Madness?" Perhaps you've found yourself caught up in this madness, or perhaps like more "sane" individuals, you have wondered why moonworts have captured the imagination of young, old, professional, and amateur alike. Or perhaps you've simply wondered ...

Just what the heck is a moonwort anyway? Is it...

- a. A fern found once in a blue moon.
- b. A fern which comes and goes with the phases of the moon.
- c. A mushroom that transforms into a fern when exposed to moonlight.
- d. A pale fern which never sees the light of day.
- e. A plant with moon-shaped leaves.

Okay, so these are all nonsense ... or are they? Let's examine the options.

- a. A fern found once in a blue moon.

Indeed, some moonworts are very rare, which no doubt contributes to their mystique. Much of the rareness can be attributed to their size. Moonworts are tiny ferns in the genus *Botrychium* subgenus *Botrychium*. Each year the plants have the ability to produce one above-ground leaf which has 2 portions, a spore-bearing portion and a photosynthetic portion. All plants in this subgenus are small (< 20 cm) and relatively difficult to find. Fortunately, however, once the search image is learned it is possible to find many of these small ferns. Not all species are abundant, and some are very rare and perhaps can only be found once in a blue moon.

- b. A fern which comes and goes with the phases of the moon.

Not only are some species of moonworts rare, but their behavior is downright fickle. Some years they are abundant; in others, they

are not. Moonworts, like many orchids, have the ability to skip a year and not emerge to produce a leaf. Their disappearance in some years compounds the issue of rareness. It is common for individuals to skip years and subsequently re-emerge healthy and robust. No one has observed them "coming and going with the phases of the moon," but they have baffled biologists with their ability to annually skip years, then reappear.

- c. A mushroom that transforms into a fern when exposed to moonlight.

How ridiculous, you mutter to yourself. Ah, but not so! *Botrychium* have underground gametophytes which are not photosynthetic. They live longer than most fern gametophytes and contain mycorrhizal fungi. These mycorrhizae appear to be extremely important to *Botrychium* sporophytes too. Indeed, the authors are convinced that the mycorrhizae are the primary source not only for water and minerals, but of sugars as well. This may account for many aspects of their bizarre behavior. So yeah, it doesn't take moonlight to transform these plants, but functionally these tiny ferns may be more mushroom than fern!

- d. A pale fern which never sees the light of day.

One of the hardest things about finding moonworts is learning to look for them underneath the leaf litter. Only a small portion of the population actually emerges above the litter. Many more can be found by parting the litter and looking underneath. Some of those found underneath the litter may be extremely pale or even totally white. Albino moonworts? Yes! They are fairly common in some species. So if these ferns receive carbohydrates from the mycorrhizae and are buried in the leaf litter, is it no wonder that they aren't always green and photosynthesizing?

- e. A plant with moon-shaped leaves.

Botrychium lunaria was named by Carl Linnaeus himself for the pinnae which have a lunar-crescent shape. The common name, moonwort, comes from this species. However, not all moonworts have crescent-shaped pinnae. The shapes of the pinnae are extremely variable and often make identification of species very difficult. This difficulty of identification and the ever-present possibility of a new species discovery is without doubt one factor which drives Moonwort Madness.

So now that we know what moonworts are, we can proceed with the question at hand. What is it about these peculiar plants that causes Moonwort Madness? It all began, so it appears, through the infectious energy and enthusiasm of Herb and Florence Wagner, Michigan. They have succeeded in converting self-respecting professional and amateur pteridologists into crazed individuals who crawl across prairies, mountain meadows and woodlands in search of these elusive plants.

Not long ago hunting for *Botrychium* was lonely and perhaps considered eccentric despite the Wagners' interest, along with that of their disciples. In recent years, however, Moonwort Madness seems to have swept across the country. Herds of volunteers now routinely can be seen grazing across the landscape on hands and knees in search of these mysterious ferns. Everyone from forest service personnel to rare plant enthusiasts search endlessly for these tiny gems.

Still, we can't help but wonder if there is something we haven't thought of about moonworts that captures the attention of so many people. Are moonworts different from any other rare plants? We've heard a few reasons, the desire to find something rare, the ability to contribute when so little is known

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Moonwort Madness

Continued from page 6

and even the choice company of other moonwort hunters. So what is the cause of this recent epidemic of Moonwort Madness? Why do you hunt for moonworts?

Cindy Johnson-Groh is an assistant professor at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter and has investigated the ecology, underground structure and population demographics of several midwestern and western Botrychium. Donald Farrar is a professor at Iowa State University in Ames and has investigated the evolutionary and systematic relationships between Botrychium species.

Symposium

Continued from page 1

by a panel discussion of the legal framework for rare plant protection and seed certification in Minnesota. Afternoon sessions include an overview of Minnesota landscape ecoregions, development of ecoregionally appropriate species lists, a presentation on the Iowa Ecotype Project, and a discussion examining several case examples of Minnesota restorations.

Nancy Sather, chair of the symposium committee, urges members to register in advance because the refuge can accommodate only 125 people. New or renewing members may join at the time of registration.

Costs for the symposium, including a box lunch, are as follows.

Advance registration

MNPS Members - \$15

Non-members - \$20

Registration at the door

MNPS Members - \$20

Non-members - \$25

Society volunteers are needed to assist with refreshments and registration. For information on the symposium call (651) 772-7574 after Jan. 28. To volunteer, call (612) 721-4803 and leave a message on the answering machine, or sign up at a MNPS meeting.

Something Wild is Coming to Your Neighborhood

by Meredith Cornett

If you're like a lot of Minnesotans, feeling close to nature is a big part of what you look for in a place to call home. Our lakes and streams, forests and meadows, the sights and sounds of wildlife around us — these features make our communities healthy and attractive places to live.

In the seven-county Twin Cities metro region, though, much of the habitat that forms the basis for our outdoors heritage has been lost to urban growth. In many places, fragmented patches that support fewer species are all that is left of these treasured natural areas. If we want to continue enjoying nature's many benefits, we need a fresh approach.

Neighborhood Wilds, a new program offered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, provides just such an opportunity. Operating at the grassroots level, neighbors can work with neighbors to restore and improve habitat. Through that process, they can forge stronger communities and a healthier environment for plants, animals, and humans alike.

Just as the houses on your block make up a neighborhood, your yard and those of your neighbors together are part of a neighborhood habitat or ecosystem. The health of that ecosystem depends on the actions of you and your neighbors.

Our natural heritage can continue to reward us in the future if homeowners are willing to work together at improving the health of neighborhood ecosystems. By planting more native grasses, wildflowers, trees, and shrubs, yard work can be reduced while creating a neighborhood environment that is friendly to wildlife and beautiful to look at. By thinking neighborhood-wide and working across property lines, you can provide larger areas

of native habitat and corridors for movement of native plants and animals.

Neighborhood Wilds will provide your neighborhood with help and advice you need to accomplish these worthy goals. The program provides assistance at a variety of levels.

Many neighborhoods start by arranging a site visit with Neighborhood Wilds staff to look around the neighborhood and begin discussing local natural resource concerns. At a follow-up evening meeting, all neighbors are invited to learn more about the program, get to know each other better, and talk about the local ecosystem. Each homeowner receives a packet of information, including an aerial photo of the neighborhood, general plans for native landscaping, an overview of current and historical habitats of the area, and a menu of suggested neighborhood activities.

Many neighborhoods then decide to take on a project. Neighborhood Wilds staff help them with the planning and implementation, including identifying cost-share grant programs. Examples of past and current projects include:

- Enhancing native plant diversity around a neighborhood pond in Lake Elmo
- Developing a sound management plan for a neighborhood forest in Shakopee
- Restoration of native oak savanna habitat in a Woodbury neighborhood

If you and your neighbors are interested in participating in the program, you can get started by calling the number below. At this time, Neighborhood Wilds is only available to neighborhoods in the seven county metro area (Anoka, Ramsey, Washington, Dakota, Scott, Carver, and Hennepin Counties).

For more information about Neighborhood Wilds, call Meredith Cornett, Community Forest Ecologist, at 651-772-7574.

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Winter 2000 issue

