

December 2021

Issue #4

THE NEBRASKA NATURALIST



July 2021 Training Class, Cedar Point Biological Station. Photo: Bill Clemente

Welcome!

Matt Jones, State Program Coordinator

Greetings Nebraska Master Naturalists and partners! I hope all of you had many opportunities to get out and enjoy the wonderful fall weather and explore our local landscapes! I have been encouraged by the the hard work and dedication that our Naturalists have provided this year. This program truly would not be what it is without all of you! The challenges of the pandemic has shown myself and our program leadership the resiliency and committed nature of our membership. I am looking forward to an exciting 2022 and getting to share it with you all. I encourage all of you to take a look at the online events calendar to explore this opportunities to, Explore, Contribute, and Connect!

2021 Volunteering Snapshot

So far in 2021 Nebraska Master Naturalists volunteered a total of 4,668 hours. Connected with 2,074 people and impacted 27,550 acres through natural resource management projects. The total volunteering effort provided the state in \$133,224 in salary savings by using volunteers.



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Nebraska Master Naturalists in Action

Cathy Prettyman - Master Naturalist 2018

At Fort Atkinson SHP (in Fort Calhoun) I joined two Master Gardeners and two Friends of the Fort members to create a Native Plant Walk. The plan was to create an interpretive site within the park's existing prairie of selected native plants and show how they were used by native Americans and early settlers as medicine. We started with 13 plants. Twelve of which we grew by seed. Some plants included were Purple Prairie Clover, Monarda, Compass Plant and Prairie Sage.

Myself and two others took on the task of raising hundreds of plants. In early spring of 2020 we prepared the site that already had native grasses and a few forbes already established. When it warmed up enough we planted our seedlings in groups so as to be more visible to visitors. Keeping the tall grasses trimmed the first year was critical in letting the young plants get enough sunlight to get established. Some species really took off like the Monarda and Sage. Others, especially the Prairie Clover, took a hit from rodent destruction. While others were just slow to establish.

The following fall we planned to grow more plants from seed to replace species that seemed to struggle. In Spring of 2021 we were amazed that most of the destroyed plants came back! Shows you how hardy our native plants are! By summer we had a beautiful stand. Not all of the species are mature yet but we think it looks great so far. One member of the team researched the plants' medicinal uses. Others designed signs to follow the state park template. Late summer we finally got our signs delivered. We assembled them and got them into the ground in time for a couple of presentations by one of the members of our team.

Fort Atkinson holds Living History Weekends in Spring through Fall. The native plants and their medicinal uses signage gives patrons another aspect of what the encampment may have used in the 1820s.

Photos taken in Sept 2021. For information on Fort Atkinson State Historical Park visit <http://outdoornebraska.gov/fortatkinson/>





Cedar Point Biological Station 2021, Bill Clemente

Nebraska Master Naturalist Program History

2017-2020 A timeline of the history of the Master Naturalist Program was organized and written by fellow Naturalist Tim Olin

2017

The second annual Winter Gala was held at Platte River State Park. The NMN Executive Board approved two regional chapters; Salt Valley (Lincoln) and River City (Omaha). Total Volunteer hours 2010-2017 was 57,264.

NMN partnered with Cedar Point Biological Station, to develop and build platforms and a viewing deck to observe threatened prairie dog habitat on the field station property. NMN partnered with Prairie Pines Nature Preserve to develop natural resource interpretive signs to be placed along PPNP trails.

In September a dozen members attended Nebraska Game & Parks Nebraska Natural Legacy Conference in Broken Bow.

Doug Wells was hired on part-time to do various tasks among which are reviving Nebraska Game and Parks Naturalists in Parks program at Platte River State Park where he also works part-time.

2018

The November 16, 2018 Nebraska Master Naturalist Board Meeting laid out a Strategic Plan for 2018 to 2023. Bullet Points included: Add 350 new Certified members across the state and increase the number of Partner Members, Establish new chapters, achieve 100% of Partner Satisfaction, Impact 1,000,000 people in the next five years, work on 500 Resource Management Projects- (A move away from designation acres of habitat impacted by designating a specific management project such as “Muddy Creek Cleanup, Billy Bob’s Memorial Prairie Burn and so on. Contribute \$5,000,000.00 worth of volunteer hours and establish a sustainable NMN program.



September 2017 Training at the Crane Trust

2019

The Nebraska Master Naturalist Foundation was formally established. The new Nebraska Master Naturalist website was launched. Training opportunities for new members took place in Omaha, TNC Niobrara Valley Preserve, UNL's Cedar Point Biological Station, and the Crane Trust.

Members participated in some of the following activities: Lincoln Electric System's 2019 Sustainable Living Festival, NG&PC part in the State Fair, the Mammal Education Cabin and the Missouri River Expo at Ponca State Park.

In August NMNP partnered with UNL's department of Entomolgy and the Xerces society in presenting the Citizen Science Program Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas training.

The 3rd annual NMNP Conference was held in November at Fontenelle's Camp Brewster. The Xerces Society and North American Bat Monitoring Program were on hand to present as well as a dozen other naturalist members.

Several naturalist members attended Nebraska Game & Parks Natural Legacy Conference in Gering. And members attended the Prescribed Burn Conference in Kearney in December. Dozens of members participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count, all over the state.



*Photo: Liz Gunkelman,
Fungi at Fontenelle Forest September 2021*

2020

This year was full of challenges. Covid19 caused many cancelled opportunities for volunteering. Lots of online educational opportunities popped up and even a few volunteer events came to the table. Additionally, the transition regarding how to fund the program as well as deciding what role UNL will play or not play. The NMN Foundation came into being last year and will be the sole funding source for the Program. Foundation Board Members and Program Board Members have spent many hours on how the transition will work. With the Covid19 crisis funding for non-profits was very tight.

At least members were able to gather for the 2020 Winter Celebration at the Forest Room in Fontenelle Forest on February 8th.



Cedar Point Biological Station 2019,
Photo Zac Horstman

Matt Jones, Program Director, *gave members an update on July 14, 2020.* I hope you are being safe and healthy. I wanted to take a moment and update all of you with some exciting developments in the world of the Nebraska Master Naturalist Program. First off we want to give a HUGE thank you to all of you that have supported the NMN Foundation by donating to our fundraising campaign last month. You raised over \$4,000 that has gone to the foundation which is used to support the future operation of this program. The Common Butterfly Books are in the printing process, and will be out to all of you who made donations soon.

We also want to mention that the Master Naturalist Program was awarded by The Nebraska Environmental Trust our 2nd year intent on the "Expanding Conservation Capacity" Grant, that will bring our program funding to June 30th, 2021.

The Master Naturalist Foundation is also on track to meet their match on this grant. As we look forward to 2021 and beyond, the program and foundation executive board members are working on writing a future Nebraska Environmental Trust Grant, featuring the piloting the new Jr. Master Naturalist Program. This new Jr. Program is aimed at late elementary and middle school age children to help influence the future of conservation youth leaders. We are excited to add this element to our program!

The NMN was able to host the Fall Core Training. It will be held at the new classroom at Schramm Park October 2nd-3rd, 9th-10th.



Cedar Point 2021, Photo Bill Clemente



October 2020, Schramm Education Center

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2021 Cedar Point Biological Station, Photo Bill Clemente

Please consider supporting the future of the Nebraska Master Naturalist Program by donating today. Your commitment will go a long way to protect conservation and education in Nebraska!

Leaving a gift in your will or trust, or another form of planned gift can make positive impact in our fulfilling our mission.

Find out more at www.nemasternaturalist.org.

The Nebraska Master Naturalist Foundation a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 81-1014784