



2015 Third Quarter Report

Nebraska Master Naturalist Program, July 1 -September 30, 2015

Current Metrics:

There are **277 members**, as before, since no new Core (basic) trainings were held this quarter. Recent 2015 **Master-Naturalists-in-Training** continue to seek Core plus workshops in order to reach the 60 hours of instruction required to certify. Certified Master Naturalists also attended some of these workshops to maintain their Continuing Education requirements of 8 hours of instruction per year.

Total Volunteer Hours & Activity: 3rd Quarter, 2015: July 1 - September 30			
TOTAL Volunteer Hours	Total <u>Value</u> of Volunteer Time*	Contacts	Acres Impacted
2,057	\$47,455*	9,620	961
Total Program Life Volunteer Hours & Activity: <i>2010 through September 30, 2015</i>			
28,682 hours	\$661,694*	402,792 Nebraskans	17,049 acres

*[Estimated value of volunteer time for 2013 (& currently) is \$23.07 per hour, from https://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time]

Overview:

With fellow Calendar Project Team members, Bruce Mellberg, Coordinator, invested considerable attention as editor with helping to develop the Naturalist Calendar project into a presentable vehicle for increasing the awareness of and appreciation for biodiversity in Nebraska, as well as introducing the Master Naturalist program to new contacts. The calendar also serves to express gratitude for the efforts of its members, partners, instructors, supporters and associates.

Trainings Assistant, Matt Jones and Bruce made further progress with planning and implementing the Core + curriculum, while website and tracking system features for volunteer reporting will undergo minor revisions, to better accommodate reporting categories.

The Principal Investigator also offered ways & means to advance the aims of the Master Naturalist program and agenda. Vital program support may be further sustained from requested testimonials declaring that the Nebraska Master Naturalist experience (training in the curriculum and volunteer collaborations with our partners) does have a significant effect on changing attitudes and behavior, with the conservation and stewardship of Nebraska's biodiversity.



Events Schedule:

- **Master Naturalist Retreat/Reunion :**
 - Jul. 31 – Aug. 2 Nature Conservancy Niobrara Valley Preserve (Core+ sessions: Dutch Oven Cooking; Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife project)
- **Third Quarter 2015 Master Naturalist Training Schedule:**
 - July 17 – 19: Core + Training @ Cedar Point Biological Station (Ogallala, Lake McConaughy): Nebraska Invasive Species; Roadside Geology; Basic Entomology; Birding
- **Upcoming Fourth Quarter 2015 Master Naturalist Training Schedule:**
 - October 2 - 3 Core Basic pt. 1 (Pioneers Park Nature Center, Lincoln, NE)
 - October 9 - 10 Core Basic, pt. 2 (Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, Lincoln, NE)
 - November 6-7; 13-14 Core Basic, pt. 1 & 2 (Fontenelle Forest, Bellevue, NE)
- **NMNP Executive Board meetings :**
 - Aug. 7, 9 am (UNL-SNR, 207 Hardin Hall, Lincoln)
 - Nov. 13, 9 am (Schramm Park SRA, Louisville)

Master Naturalist Community & Highlighted Projects:

Naturalist Calendar Project : Collaborative progress continued as planned on the 2016 *Naturalist Calendar project* to completion, a week before the NGPC's *Natural Legacy Conference* in Kearney on Sept. 29-30, in order that each attending registrant receive a free copy, per our goal. We are giving away this first *Naturalist Calendar*, to increase the awareness and stewardship of Nebraska's diverse natural legacy by engaging its users with the discovery of its beauty and presence wherever found, around us. The calendar team includes Paula Hoppe (MN), Rebecca Osborn-Reagan (MN), Nancy Hawekotte, (Graphic Designer and MN), Kristal Stoner and Bruce Mellberg and was made possible through donations from multiple photographers.

Endangered Salt Creek Tiger Beetle Reintroduction Project: Hopeful Endangered Salt Creek Tiger Beetle project team members could not reintroduce more L3 larvae into the field as scheduled in July, due to yet more rainy deluges. New Master Naturalist recruits have helped feed & rear larvae at the Lincoln Children's Zoo and the UNL Entomology Lab, however. By September's end, Matt and Bruce joined SCTB interagency team leaders who re-convened to review successes and plan for fall reintroductions by early October.

Nebraska Master Naturalist Survey Project: To increase effectiveness and efficiency and to demonstrate success, there is a need for precise feedback from MN members and associates. A survey is being developed by Bruce and Lindsay Rogers, who is the evaluation committee chair, to map out categories and specific queries. This survey will evaluate how MN member attitudes about (and stewardship of) Nebraska's biodiversity may have changed as a consequence of their participation with the program.

The MN reunion in late July at TNC-Niobrara Valley Preserve brought in 18 MN's and two presenters. The Bison tour was a hit again, while thundershowers were less fun, one stormy night. All of those attending helped make it a memorable event. The purpose of this event was to bolster the Master Naturalist community and foster networking.

Executive Board Meeting: The August 7 meeting was held at the UNL School of Natural Resources in Lincoln. The next Board meeting will be on November 13, 9:00 am at Schramm Park SRA.



Master Naturalist Trainings:

While no new MN recruits were trained during this time, recent trainees contributed positive energy with various volunteer opportunities. Matt and Bruce planned and recruited instructors for July and August Core + training sessions at the UNL Cedar Point Biological Station (but too few signed up for the early August session there, so it was cancelled).

Meanwhile, plans and preparations continued for the eastern Nebraska Core-24 sessions this fall. Bruce helped Matt line up some instructors for each, while Matt handled the usual abundant details.

During and after, Matt and Bruce evaluated the effectiveness of each training session, to see where improvements could be made.

Websites, Digital resources, etc.:

Our program depends on the online time-tracking system for Master Naturalists to regularly report their volunteer effort and continuing education hours. It's at [Nebraska Master Naturalist](#), and is also found under the "Members" tab of the website. The Coordinator gratefully acknowledged members' selfless commitments as conservation volunteers in early September, but clearly reminded them that *lack of reporting amounts to lost effort*, and thus sincerely urged that all Master Naturalists submit their activity hours (volunteering and continuing education) by the end of the month. The resulting response assures us that this quarter's recorded hours are more representative, since our date-span query of the database for their time contributions of effort was more inclusive, by quarter's end. We were also able to assist a few members needing review and support with tracking input, and feel confident with more effective reporting.

Our part-time, undergrad temporary assistant, Cat Berrick, began to support the program for 10 flexible hours per week, from July 10 until the onset of the fall semester. She has helped in many ways since then, time allowing. Thus, Matt trained Cat to update volunteer opportunities on the MN Online Events Calendar on the "Members" webpage, and also showed her the steps for his occasional MN events program newsletter. Cat also posted incoming bios & selfies for several Executive Board Members, as directed.

A focus of this quarter's activities are to keep updating the website, while improvements continue, as both Matt and Bruce check for accuracy, content, function, or other troubleshooting needs.



Outreach and Media:

The Nebraska Master Naturalist training schedule and program were promoted through the local media and a newspaper notice, with in-person outreach presentations, informal face-time contacts, and through timely volunteer e-newsletters and the online calendar listings at the MN website. Specifically:

- Bruce was interviewed about the Master Naturalist program by host, Sam Truax, on the *City of Lincoln Channel 5 TV Community Access* program, “Live and Learn” on August 17, which was broadcast on the Mayor’s local TV Channel 5, all through September: and is also available with an “on-demand” segment under “Live and Learn” for 9-1-2015 on their website (<https://lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/vod/index.htm>). This was optimally scheduled in advance of the early October Lincoln MN training sessions. Bruce’s portion may also be found from minute-counter: 23:35 to 38:08, on the YouTube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4EO19otOOw&feature=youtu.be>
- Both Matt and Bruce staffed a Nebraska Master Naturalist outreach booth at Ponca State Park, during the 11th annual *Missouri River Expo* event there from Sept. 19-20, reaching hundreds of attendees and signed up some of them for the *Naturalist Network ListServ*.
- Bruce posted notices of the upcoming Lincoln area Nebraska Master Naturalist Trainings in the *Sunday Lincoln Journal* Outdoor Page Events Calendar, which ran on Sept. 27 & Oct. 4.
- Master Naturalists volunteered with activities and outreach at booths for two public events:
 - 9/26 – Spring Creek Prairie’s *Twilight on the Tallgrass* (250 attendees): Melodee Landis; Lily Blase
 - 9/29 – UNL School of Natural Resources’ *NaturePalooza* (1000 attendees): Stephanie Mack; Midge Dublinske; Tim Tharp.
- Bruce and Matt also posted continuing educational and volunteer opportunities, along with program-related links and public activity notices at several intervals on Nebraska Master Naturalist Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/masternaturalist>; and on the (MN website) Online Master Naturalist Events Calendar, with help from undergrad assistant, Cat Berrick.
- The new *Naturalist Calendar* was distributed to all registrants of the *Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s Natural Legacy Conference* on Sept. 29-30, as a vehicle for program outreach.
- Bruce and Matt also responded to several e-mail inquiries about the program and training.

Trainings Assistant Matt Jones’ Summary:

The 3rd quarter was very active for the program, once again. As stated above, we planned and executed only one Master Naturalist-sponsored Core+ training at the UNL *Cedar Point Biological Station*, with 16 participants receiving 18 hours of instruction over a 3-day period. Two new instructors were also recruited for the program.

Much time planning was spent for the fall Core trainings in Lincoln and Omaha during October and November, respectively. With a great deal of enthusiasm and interest from program partners and the newly recruited trainees, we will soon add more Master Naturalists to the 35 so far trained this year. We enlisted a new outdoor skills presenter and several previous instructors have agreed to help *shepherd* in the next classes of Nebraska Master Naturalists.



What's Ahead:

One of the last 2015 Core-24 trainings for new trainees has already occurred as of this writing, in Lincoln, with 12 new Naturalists-in-Training. We are gearing up for the Omaha/Bellevue Core Training in November, at *Fontenelle Forest*.

We continue our quest for willing Master Naturalist mentors to help new members develop their skills and navigate their way into rewarding volunteer opportunities of their choice. Knowing that such guides must voluntarily share their confidence, leadership and empathy to serve as helpful examples for the good of the cause, may be a rare combination of commitment and ability. We invite any and all veteran Master Naturalists to seriously consider forging new relationships in this way, to explore and discover themselves as co-leaders.

We also clearly appreciate our many partners and instructors who are willing to share their expertise and enthusiasm. They truly set the stage for solid interest among our trainees with applying their understanding where their interests lead, within the program. In turn, we salaried staff seek to accommodate member interests and solicit suggestions from the community at large with improving dimensions of the program toward greater conservation.

We thus aim to generate positive relationships where we can; and encourage our fellow MN's to also

- try something new
- record their hours,
- seek out others who share their interests, to see where that might lead, as they
- expand their awareness and further their understanding of why native resources matter to them, and
- discover ways to conserve and sustain habitats and biodiversity through their remarkable investments of effort, time, reflection, fun, and community.

This report was drafted and submitted by Bruce Mellberg, Nebraska Master Naturalist Program Coordinator. Our progress would not have been possible without the collaborative effort and enduring support of Executive Board members, program partners and our dedicated Master Naturalist volunteers. This report reflects the invaluable input of Matt Jones, Nebraska Master Naturalist Program Trainings Assistant and the indispensable guidance of UNL Professor Dennis Ferraro, Principal Investigator for the supporting grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust; with funding match from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission through its Wildlife Diversity Program, whose Director, Kristal Stoner is a true ally and friend of the program. New-hire, part-time, undergrad, temporary assistant, Catherine Berrick also helped measurably.

Bruce Mellberg, Coordinator

Nebraska Master Naturalist Program

October 23, 2015

