CENTER LINE

A Publication of Waukesha County's Retzer Nature Center

Early Spring 2016

In this issue

The Last Prairie
Page 2-3

Arbor Day Fun
Page 4

Spring Intern
Page 5

Upcoming Events
Page 6

What's New at Retzer!
Page 7

Upcoming Events:

* Apple Harvest Festival
  September 17
* Bird Seed Sale
  October 1-30
* Friends of Retzer Nature Center Photo Contest
  Entry deadline October 28
* Howl-O-Ween
  October 14

Check out the EE Activity Guide for classes and events offered through the year!

EE Activity Guide

Log on to
www.waukeshacountyparks.gov

What's Down in the Pond this Spring?

Look what Senior Education Naturalist/ Supervisor, Larry Kascht uncovered during a Nature Storytime "Hip Hop N Frogs" program down at the entrance pond. What looked like a hub cap turned out to be one of two large snapping turtles feeling right at home in the pond. Kids were in awe of this turtle wrangler as he carefully extracted this one for them to get a better view. Kids don't try this- leave it to the professionals.

The program went off without a hitch as the resident frogs were well rehearsed and joined in right on cue. Staying just out of reach, but still close enough for a Kermit style photo op.

Desperate Times Call For Waspish Measures

Okay, so the emerald ash borer is a big deal. The little green insect is definitely here, and it is definitely good at killing Ash trees. For those of you unfamiliar with this new invasive species, just put the name into your favorite search engine, and behold the wealth of information. It suffices to say or write, that the adult is a small, iridescent green beetle. Telltale signs of the emerald ash borer (EAB) are declining trees and the D-shaped exit holes, but usually people notice when the woodpeckers go absolutely berserk on the all-you-can-eat larvae special. When patches of the bark are pecked away, it is usually too late for the tree, which is already heavily infested with EAB young. There are many, many Ash trees in our county, and we're doing as much as we reasonably and ecologically can. Even so, we are not above asking for help, or recruiting volunteers both human and other.

Every invasive species has one thing in common; a lack of natural and necessary oppression. Every part of a functioning natural community has at least a few checks, and a few balances. Whether they come in the form of competition, disease, predation, parasitism, or a combination of all; some form of regulator is necessary to 'keep a leash' on population numbers. Enter from stage left, two teeny tiny wasps whose life cycles revolve around EAB. I know what you're thinking (besides "Did he fire six shots or only five?"), you're thinking wasp = sting, and you're right—mostly. Usually, when folks think that, they envision themselves on the receiving end of an insect's backside. While even those within the fearsome insect order of Hymenoptera all have piercing **ovipositors** (an appendage usually used to prepare a location and place an egg, but can also be used to inject venom), not all of them have the desire or even the ability to harm you. These two small (the largest is 1/5 the length of an adult EAB) species are 'stingless' according to our very own Wisconsin DNR.

Tetrastichus planipennisi

Our two new recruits are, of course, native to the same range as EAB in China. Where the beetle goes, they go. They are parasites, and EAB is their host. The little one of the pair is *Oobius agrili*, and it is a full millimeter in length at least, so you might mistake them for a gnat or perhaps an amoeba. They lay their eggs inside an egg of EAB, where their young develop in place of the intended larva. The larger, more monstrous *Tetrastichus planipennisi* can reach 4 millimeters, and their ovipositor is about 2.5 millimeters long. This is about the size of a smaller mosquito, only it poses less danger to us. *Tetrastichus* lays its eggs into an EAB larva, where they eat it alive; it's gross, but it's nature. Hopefully, combined, these two wasps will help control EAB in the short term, and balance over the long term so Ash trees do not go the way of American Elm. For those of you who don't know, we still have plenty of American Elms, they just don't get much bigger than 6 inches in diameter before Dutch Elm Disease takes them.

This spring, a DNR Forest Health Specialist will release both species at Muskego park. This is most successful when there is enough EAB presence, but not quite to the point of Ash tree devastation. There is risk in this strategy. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is part of the United States Department of Agriculture. They have studied these wasps for four years in laboratory conditions, testing them with different food options. They believe these Chinese insects pose no significant threat to native wood borers or the environment. Four years in the lab is just that; not a long time. Conversely, Cornell University handles a lot of the testing for biocontrol candidates, and they test for ten years at a minimum. Even ten years is a short period. It can take a while (read: decades, centuries, millennia) for an alien species to fully realize and adapt within its new environment, and vice versa. We agreed to this release for two reasons. One, there are releases in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin already. Eight Wisconsin counties, including Waukesha, already have the wasps. The second is that we need to do something. There are other ways to combat EAB. Insecticides are effective and we use them sparingly, but they are mostly non-selective; meaning that they kill native bugs also. This can also harm anything that feeds on the poisoned insects, including other invertebrates, birds, and mammals. If these wasps can help bring balance to our forests, we would be most grateful. If you can spare a moment, please cross your fingers for Ash trees and the future well-being of our ecology.

Mike

References:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/plant_health/2014/faq_eab_biocontrol.pdf

Arbor Day at Retzer

April 30, 2016

Picking out the perfect tree!

Tori Kelliher, Natural Land Management Intern assists visitors with picking out just the right tree.

Who needs a drink?

Janet Barthel, Education Naturalist, is on top of watering in the newly planted trees

The grey overcast day did not detour families from coming out to help plant a tree for

Arbor Day, Saturday, April 30, 2016.

White Oak, Shagbark Hickory and Bur Oak found new homes along the old entrance road and Old Field area. Pick a tree, dig a hole, carefully plant it, soak with water, repeat. 100 young trees are now set to grow in their new habitats here at the Retzer Nature Center.

Deer, Rabbits, & Chipmunks beware- No chewing these young trees.

Spring Intern Experience!

My internship has been nothing short of amazing! I have learned so much by shadowing Janet Barthel and working with all of the students that came to see us. Being a teaching naturalist had been a blast, especially when I get to show off all of the amazing animals. I've definitely become an expert at feeding and caring for our teaching animals. I think my favorite part of being here has been bonding with our two beautiful snakes. This internship will always be one of my favorite college experiences and I look forward to coming back and visiting with all of the amazing staff, who work here!

Thank you Retzer!

Nicole Scrima

Friends of Retzer Nature Center
Apple Harvest Festival

Saturday, September 17
9 am-5 pm
Entrance Fee: $5 per vehicle

Enjoy the day tasting Homemade Apple Pie, Caramel Apples, Fresh Apple Cider and delicious Apples from the Apple Market.

Head to the Children's area for games & crafts and the Horse drawn wagon rides.

Listen to fantastic music throughout the day.

Stroll among the Craft Exhibitors to purchase unique handmade items.

Place your bid on a silent auction item at the Friends of Retzer Nature Center booth.

Don't miss a minute of fun at this year's 30th Apple Harvest Festival!

Friends of Retzer Nature Center
Howl-O-Ween

Friday, October 14
6-9pm
Fee: $15.00 per carload

All activities, crafts, hikes and shows are include in the entrance fee.

Dress in a costume for added fun!

Upcoming Events

Summer & Fall

Cool World of Nature

Mondays
June 20, 27, July 11, 25, August 1, 8
Age: 6-10
Fee: $4 per class

Retzer Rangers

Ages 5-7
Fee: $4
Mondays,

June 13	" Flying Dragons"
July 11	" Beetlemania"
August 8	" Butterflies Flutter By"

Retzer Summer Games

Monday-Friday
July 18-22
Age: 6-10
Fee: $60

Wee Wonders

Ages 2-4
Fee: $4
Tuesdays

June 14	"Plant A Rainbow"
July 12	"Hop To It Adventure"
August 9	" Vista Visitors"

Retzer Art Classes

Explore The Natural with an Art Journal
Fridays, June 10 & 17, July 8 & 15 or Aug. 19 & 26
Time: 1-3 pm
Adults & Teens (16 +)
Fee: 30.00 (includes supplies)

Paint the Prairie Art Club
Thursday, May 19– Sept. 29
(no class on July 28 or Aug. 8)
Time: 1-4 pm
Adults & Teens (16+)
Fee: $54 (9 punch card) or $8 walk in

Wildly Creative Wednesdays
Wednesdays, June 15, 22*, 29, July 6*, 13, 20, & Aug. 10, 24
Time: 10-11:30 am & Teen: 1-2:30pm
Age: 5-12 and Teen (13+)
Fee: $8 (supplies provided)

*additional Teen class offered on selected dates

Family Adventure Hikes – Saturdays

Fee: $4.00

July 16	9-11am
July 30	9-11 am
August 6	9-11 am
August 13	10-11:30 am
August 27	9-11 am

Invasive Plants Workshop

Saturday, July 23
9-11 am
Adults
Fee: $8.00

For more information on any of the listed program, please visit the county website- Retzer Programs

What's New at Retzer?

The staff have been busy brainstorming new programs for the upcoming months.
Here is a sneak preview of what to expect.

Summer is all about Art & Nature!

Paint the Prairie Art Club
Join other artists as we sketch our way through the Retzer landscape. This club is open to all adults and teens 16 and older who appreciate and enjoy creating masterpieces outdoors.
They will meet on Thursdays from May through September from 1– 4 pm.

Explore the Natural World with an Art Journal
This two day course offers adults and older teens the opportunity to express themselves through art journaling. Open to all levels sketching skill, we will use different techniques to unleash your inner expressions as we work our way around the landscape. Course dates: June 10 & 17, July 8 & 15 or August 19 & 26 from 1-3 pm.

Wildly Creative Wednesdays – Summer Art Series
Wednesdays are a great day to get creative this summer. Get creative with Janet MacIver as you explore drawing, sketching and painting around the Retzer landscape. Classes for 5-12 year olds meet from 10-and 1:30 am and teens ,13 & up, meet from 1-2:30 pm. Art supplies are provide for each class. Young artists of all skills levels are welcome. Class schedule can be found on the Retzer website.

Invasive Plants Workshop
Are fed up with invasive plants moving into your yard and gardens? Dick Bautz will help you recognize and control these pesky invaders. Learn to identify and control some of out most problematic invasive species. Join in on a discussion, demonstration, and practice safe, practical and effective methods to control them, including hand methods, chemical applications, and controlled burns.

Fall brings new school programs !

The 2016-2017 school year has given the Environmental Education staff the opportunity to add a number of new programs for teachers to select from. We are no longer limited to the exploration based programming, but have included math, art and science into the field trip possibilities. Adding up the connections, "Go Figure! Math in Nature" links shapes, patterns, symmetry and sequences as students measure up the landscape. Students will no longer be limited to black and white, as they are introduced to color through "Art in Nature". We offer the challenge to unleash their inner artist through drawing, sketching and painting. "Science in Nature" tasks students to validate current issue questions, though scientific method, reasoning and data collection, facing the environment today. Answers will be found as they gather and analyze data collected during the program.

These a just a few of the new education offering educators will be selecting from for their next visit.

Retzer Nature Center

Waukesha County Parks & Land Use

S14W28167 Madison Street

Waukesha, WI 53188

Return Service Requested

Friends of Retzer Nature Center

The Friends of Retzer Nature Center is a registered, 501 (c)3, organization dedicated to encouraging, perpetuating, and promoting the work of conservation and natural resource education.

The organization seeks the involvement of the community in the form of financial and volunteer support to work toward the continued growth and improvement of Retzer Nature Center. If you would like to become a member or view some of our projects and activities, please visit our web site at http://FriendsOfRetzer.org.