



Newsletter

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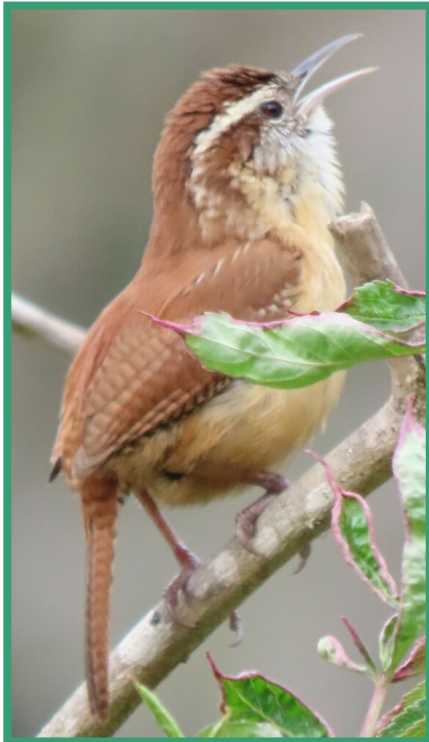
Wren's Wisdom, Our Responsibility

by Shannon Fulton
 ParkLands Foundation Board President

Wren R.E.M.

fleeting dreams
 pass on morning's first light
 mist lifting off a mental bridge to nowhere probable –
 but all points beyond possible
 reality is the wren that wakes to each sun's rising
 with only the moment before it
 no plans to skulk
 or explore the next darkest crevice or crack
 it sings heart-full to the limits of the bounds it knows–
 the rotting woodpile in the northeast corner
 the honeysuckle tangle westward
 satisfied in that half acre universe
 it sings to meet the day
 tucks its wings satisfied in some second of accomplishment
 it scolds a plan
 and flits away
 a wanderer in the present tense
 future perfect does not exist
 the past makes little sense
 that I should live as wisely as wrens
 is lesson one
 carpe diem ad infinitum

J. Drew Lanham
 Sparrow Envy, Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts



J. Drew Lanham's poem "Wren R.E.M." reminds us of the magic hidden in everyday moments. Lanham's wren embodies a beautiful connection to the present moment, a lesson especially poignant in the quiet of mid-winter, the landscape hushed - a study in subtle beauty.

The wren "scolds a plan," embracing a life of instinct. The ParkLands Foundation, however, must create and adhere to one. While the wren's wisdom lies in its ability to live fully in the present, our responsibility extends to the future. Even amidst the stillness of winter, the Staff, Board, and Volunteers are actively working to ensure the health and vitality of the Mackinaw River watershed for the coming seasons and

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beyond. ParkLands must proactively plan for the future, carefully considering what it will take to sustainably conserve, protect, and restore the lands entrusted to us, ensuring these critical ecosystems thrive and provide a haven for the wild things. Our strategic planning process is the bridge between the wren's "carpe diem" and our enduring commitment to this vital ecosystem. It acknowledges that while we can learn from the wren's present-focused wisdom, our role requires a different kind of foresight and action.

I recently enjoyed talking about ParkLands Foundation with residents of Westminster Village in Bloomington, many of whom shared fond memories of their time spent in various ParkLands preserves. Do you have a group or organization that would be interested in learning more about ParkLands? I'd love to speak with the people you care about and share the stories of these amazing preserves. Maybe you'd like to join me and talk about What ParkLands Means to YOU!

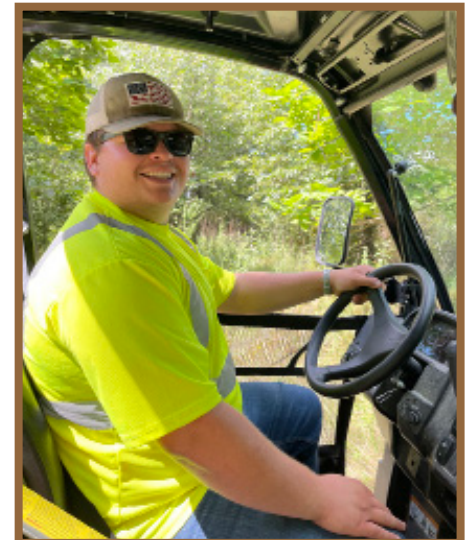
Please reach out to me at Shannon@StraightUpSolar.com or 309-830-5039. Be a champion for the Mackinaw River. Just as the wren sings with its whole heart, we ask you to give generously to protect the places you love.

With gratitude,
Shannon Fulton, Board President



2025 Summer Internships

ParkLands Foundation is currently accepting applications for summer internships. Interns will primarily focus on the restoration and management of native landscapes in McLean and Woodford Counties, Central Illinois. Other responsibilities include assisting with the Foundation's activities, such as public hikes and work days, outreach and special events. This internship will last 11 weeks for 40 hours per week. Some weekend work will be required. Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. on April 1, 2025, but the hiring process will begin as early as March 17.



Complete information can be found at parklandsfoundation.org/internship.



A Landmark Achievement: Introducing the Bluebells Circle

One of ParkLands' most exciting accomplishments in 2024 was the launch of the Bluebells Circle—a dedicated community of supporters committed to protecting and restoring our natural landscapes for generations to come.

In its inaugural year, 63 members joined as Founding Members, each pledging a minimum of \$1,000 annually in unrestricted funds. Their generosity fuels our mission, ensuring we can continue safeguarding and restoring our natural lands well into the future.



To celebrate this incredible commitment, we hosted a garden party in honor of our Founding Members, expressing our gratitude and fostering connections among like-minded conservation advocates. Would you like to be part of this inspiring group? Join the Bluebells Circle today by visiting our donation page via the QR code or reaching out to Erin Herbez at erin@parklandsfoundation.org

With deep appreciation, we recognize our Bluebells Circle Founding Members who have chosen to be acknowledged:

- Sandy & Mary Jo Adams
- Joe & Nancy Armstrong
- Thomas & Ann Baughan
- Alan Bedell & Deanna Frautschi
- Barry & Teresa Brenneman
- David Brown & Shannon Fulton
- Barry & Lynne Conder
- Dan & Paula Deneen
- John Deneen & Mario Bufo
- Bob & Julie Dobski
- Dennis Fox
- Dr. Matthew Fraker
- Guy & Ruth Ann Fraker
- John & Kathi Franklin
- James & Cathy Franks
- Tim Garvey & Paula Aschim
- Dean & Nancy Hansen
- Given & Jean Harper
- Margie Hohenshell
- Phil Houser & Marcia Rossi
- Jeff & Terrie Howard
- Jim & Judi Jacobs
- Paul & Carolyn Jarvis
- Lois Jazo
- Clarence & Carol Josefson
- Dennis Killian
- Scott King
- Dennis & Jean Lawyer
- Karen McConnell
- Michael & Shannon McKinley
- Frank & Gigi Miles
- Jack & Pam Muirhead
- Tom & Karen Niebur
- Doug & Kay Oehler
- Paul & Kathy Packard
- Robert & Jennifer Parent
- Chris & Susan Prendergast
- Nan Rutledge
- Scott Sakaluk & Anne Eggert
- Don & Carol Schmidt
- Tracy Shepard & Sue Baller-Shepard
- Paul & Debbie Van Ness
- Greg & Cathy Vogel
- Billy & Dawn Wetzel
- RJ & Kathy Whitworth
- Herb & Janet Wiser

Upcoming programs

To register for all programs, visit parklandsfoundation.org/events/.

Hike with a Naturalist: Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve

Date & Time: Sunday, March 23; 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5/family or group

Location: Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve, 1917 County Rd 500 N, Secor, IL

An experienced naturalist will be your guide through Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve. Catch the first signs of spring and the remains of winter. Wear clothes suitable for the weather and sturdy shoes. All ages are invited. Please do not bring your pets, as they are not allowed in any of ParkLands Foundation Preserves.

Blooms on the Trails: Lexington Preserve

Hosted in collaboration with University of Illinois Extension McLean County Master Naturalists

Date & Time: Saturday, April 12; 10:00 am.-12:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5/family or group

Location: Lexington Preserve, 6 Timber Ridge Dr, Lexington, IL

Featuring the first of the spring wildflowers, this event will include the native plant identification, a scavenger hunt, and the opportunity to engage sensory awareness to connect nature at the Preserve. All ages are encouraged to come.

Wildflower Hike

Date & Time: Saturday, May 3; 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5/family or group

Location: Merwin Preserve, North Gate, County Hwy 6, Lexington, IL

While all spring wildflowers are beautiful, bluebells put on an extraordinary show! Come out to see everything in bloom at this much-anticipated annual event.

The Great Garlic Mustard Challenge

Public Stewardship Workday

Date & Time: Sunday, April 6; 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Cost: Free, but please register so we know how many to expect: parklandsfoundation.org/events/.

Locations: Lexington Preserve, Hayes Preserve, Chinquapin Preserves, both North and South

Grab your gardening gloves and pick a ParkLands Preserves for a friendly competition to see which preserve can get rid of the most garlic mustard! Garlic mustard is an invasive plant from Europe that crowds out and takes over native spring wildflowers, including our gorgeous bluebells. The best way to get rid of it is by hand, pulling it from the ground. All ages can take part and we'll give you all the training you need to eradicate this species!

The Rest of the Year at a Glance

Saturday, June 21

Birding and Eagle Viewing
for New Members
10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Letcher Basin

Saturday, July 12

ParkLands 8th Annual
Bike Ride
7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Keller Park Pavilion
Lexington, IL

Saturday, August 9

Mussels in the Mackinaw
10:00-12:00 p.m.
Letcher Basin

Sunday, September 14

Hike/Annual
Members Meeting
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Merwin Preserve South Gate

Saturday, October 4

Family Night in Nature
*Hosted with University
of Illinois Extension Woodford
County Master Naturalists*
6:30-9:00 p.m.
Chinquapin South Preserve

Sunday, November 9

Hike with a Naturalist
1:00-3:00 pm
Sweeney Preserve

In Memory of George Farnsworth 1943-2024

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of George Farnsworth. While he was well known throughout the community, at ParkLands, we will remember him as a dedicated friend of the environment with unbounding generosity. George volunteered as a steward and served on ParkLands Foundation's Board of Directors. Quick with a kind word and sharp sense of humor, he was endlessly curious about the natural world and enjoyed spending time outdoors, no matter the reason.

Douglas Kaufman-Dickson shares, "George was a regular member of our Letcher Basin crew for several years joining us for workdays whenever his health allowed. George always presented himself as the least of us, asking only to work wherever he was needed. He eagerly sought to learn new things in the prairie every time we worked together, gently challenging us to pay closer attention to everything around us.

"As a board member, George consistently pushed us to think deeply about how we approached our mission. I had the opportunity for many long talks about ParkLands as we spent hours together cutting and treating honeysuckle in Letcher Basin. Always in a kind and self effacing way, George shared his leadership expertise as he pushed me to be a better steward and board member.

"All of us who work regularly at Letcher think of him often, as we can't help but remember the joy he shared with us as we worked in such a special place."

From all of us at ParkLands Foundation, thank you, George. You will be missed.



Board Member & Volunteer Spotlights

Terrie & Jeff Howard

For this issue, we decided to check in with a couple that volunteers for ParkLands Foundation! While they perform stewardship duties together, each follows their own interests, serving on the Board and in Committees. If you are looking for volunteer opportunities that can be shared with a partner - be it significant other, best friend, or even roommate - email jill@parklandsfoundation.org.

After graduating from the 2019 University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalists class, Terrie and Jeff Howard were looking for volunteer opportunities. Work Days at Sweeney Woods cutting silver maples and at Chinquapin Bluffs cutting honeysuckle provided the perfect opportunities to check out ParkLands. Ever since this initial introduction, they have found land stewardship with ParkLands to be very rewarding. They believe in its mission to protect the Mackinaw River Watershed.

In 2021, the Howards were asked by Land Steward, Jason Shoemaker, and Volunteer Coordinator, Craig Lutes, to be the Lead Volunteer Stewards at ParkLands Lexington Preserve. They have enjoyed working there as a couple for the last 4 years. This year they will be moving to the Merwin Preserve as Lead Stewards.

In addition to stewardship duties, Jeff is now serving on the Parklands Foundation Board of Directors and is a member of the Finance Committee. He chose to serve on the Board in order to learn more about ParkLands and to hopefully be able to make an impact on its future.

Terrie recently joined the Outreach Committee. She is also the Master Naturalist liaison with the ParkLands Foundation. She hopes to encourage the Master Naturalist group to become more active in volunteering as stewards with ParkLands and in attending events. She is helping coordinate two co-sponsored Master Naturalist/ParkLands events. One in April (Blooms on the Trails at Lexington Preserve) and another in October (Family Night in Nature at Chinquapin South Preserve).

Prior to ParkLands, Jeff spent 32 years as a CPA and an Accounting Manager at Country Financial. Terrie was a Property and Casualty Actuary at State Farm Insurance for 35 years. They are now retired.

In their spare time both enjoy reading and spending time in nature. They are Master Naturalists and members of Wild Ones, an organization that promotes planting with native plants. Both volunteer at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts. They are also members of the AmeriCorps Seniors through the YWCA RSVP.



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Terrie sews weekly with the Fibers of Love sewing group and is a member of the Hands All Around Quilt Guild. Jeff enjoys learning to play the guitar and Spanish.

Besides watching their grandkids during breaks, they volunteer at the school: reading in the classroom, leading nature crafts on field trips, and taking care of the Corpus Christi School Rain Garden.

They love to travel. In addition to visiting their son in Washington state, they are working on going to the National Parks in the southwest, as well as the east coast states they have not visited yet.

Some of their favorite memories of ParkLands include taking their kids hiking at Merwin and walking over the suspension bridge 30 years ago and doing the Prairie Quest in 2022, which entailed taking their grandkids to several of the ParkLands Preserves looking for letterboxes. They have enjoyed teaching their grandkids about native plants, looking for insects, and just last spring, seeing all the bluebells covering the trails along the river at the Lexington Preserve.



Call for Dedicated Individuals

ParkLands is Looking for Board Members and Committee Members

ParkLands is actively seeking passionate and committed individuals to serve on our Board of Directors or various committees, enabling our mission of restoring natural lands in the Mackinaw River watershed.

We are looking for individuals with expertise in fundraising, land protection, land restoration, website management, graphic design, event planning, and much more! We have several committees that meet monthly with differing areas of focus that range from fundraising to land restoration.



To express your interest, follow the QR code or contact Erin Herbez at erin@parklandsfoundation.org.





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