


# Newsletter

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## Message from our Board President

### In This Issue:

Message from our President ..	1
8th Annual Bike Ride.....	2
Bluebells Circle.....	3
Upcoming Programs .....	4
Bluebird Monitoring.....	5
Recent Programs & Events .....	6

Every breath of fresh air, every moment of peace in nature, is an invitation to a profound exchange. At ParkLands Foundation, we champion Energetic Reciprocity—a powerful, mutual, active relationship with the Mackinaw River basin ecosystem. We reciprocate its gifts by protecting it, planting for the future, and caring for its precious spaces.

Native scholar Greg Cajete, highlighted by Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, teaches that in indigenous ways of knowing, one truly understands something only when grasped with all four aspects of our being: mind, body, emotion, and spirit. Living along the Mackinaw River basin for over 25 years, I've come to know many of its plants and trees by name. Yet, it's through applying this deeper, four-fold way of understanding that I aspire to 'braid' my scientific knowledge with personal experience, to truly learn their 'songs.' ParkLands preserves offer a unique invitation to this journey. Go, get proximate, and discover these other ways of knowing.

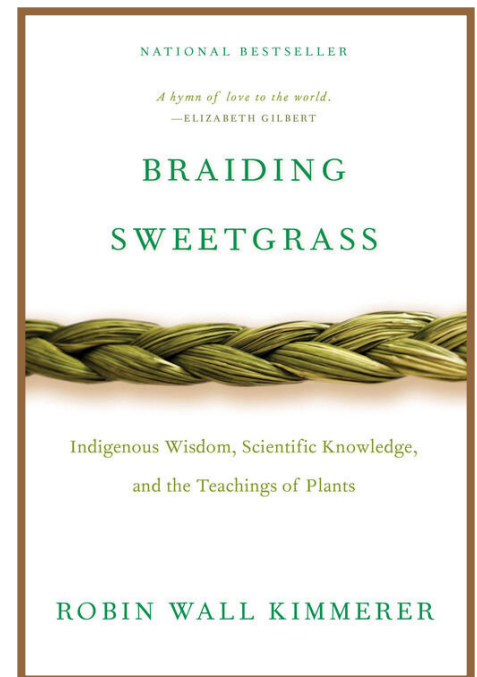
In essence, Kimmerer's reciprocity is a call to align human laws and actions with natural laws, fostering a relationship with the Earth based on profound respect, gratitude, and a continuous cycle of giving and receiving. As you experience the profound gifts of the ParkLands preserves, the clean air, vibrant wildlife, and restorative peace—consider how your care can complete the circle of reciprocity. Practice energetic reciprocity by making a donation today. Your financial support

is a vital gift back to the land, ensuring these precious spaces thrive for generations to come.

And if you haven't yet discovered *Braiding Sweetgrass*, a profound and inspiring experience is waiting for you!

With Gratitude,  
Shannon Fulton, Board President

➡ ➡ ➡ Turn the page for Bike Ride info.



# ParkLands Foundation 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Bike Ride

Experience the landscape  
of Central Illinois while  
viewing the ParkLands  
Preserves you are  
helping protect.

Fee: \$50

To register go to:  
[parklandsfoundation.org/bikeride](http://parklandsfoundation.org/bikeride)  
or scan the QR code below.



## July 12, 2025

20 Mile ride begins at 8:00 a.m. • 50 Mile & 100 km rides begin at 7:00 a.m.  
Ride begins & ends at Keller Park Pavilion, 699 North Elm St, Lexington, IL

### Thank You to our 2025 Sponsors!

#### **Oak (\$2,000)**

Zimmerman & Armstrong

#### **Hickory (\$1,000)**

Daniel G. Deneen, Attorney at Law  
Deer's Mill Farm • Lewis, Yockey & Brown, Inc.  
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#### **Birch (\$500)**

Barker Chevrolet, Lexington • Brown's Vintage Tools  
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David Osnowitz, CFP, MERRILL, A Bank of America Company  
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### Raffle! \$5/Ticket to Win!

1<sup>st</sup> Prize:

**New Piston® Pro Hitch Bike Rack!**  
Donated by David Osnowitz, a  
\$1098 Value.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize:

**\$250 Gift Card  
to Bloomington Cycle & Fitness**

Raffle tickets are available at registration  
and the day of the ride.



### All Proceeds Support ParkLands Foundation

Our mission is to preserve, protect, and ecologically restore historic natural lands  
in the middle and upper Mackinaw River Watershed.

# The Bluebells Circle Celebrates Spring

In May, Bluebells Circle Members gathered to enjoy delicious food, great company, and, most importantly, to show their support for ParkLands Foundation. The Bluebells Circle recognizes a special community of conservation enthusiasts who have generously committed to making annual unrestricted donations of \$1,000 and above.

The event was hosted by Nancy and Joe Armstrong in their stunning yard complete with native flowers and trees, melodic birds, and a pond filled with tadpoles!

After socializing, eating, and drinking, guests had the opportunity to hear from ParkLands Foundation Board Members as they spoke about timely topics, including Mary Jo Adam's presentation about the native flowers found at our most recent acquisition, the Devil's Backbone.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our Bluebells Circle Members for their extraordinary generosity and commitment. Together, we are making a difference. If becoming a Member of the Bluebells Circle sounds like a good fit with your charitable priorities and giving plans, visit <https://tinyurl.com/parklandsbluebells> or contact Erin Herbez at: [erin@parklandsfoundation.org](mailto:erin@parklandsfoundation.org).



Photo by Deanna Frautschi

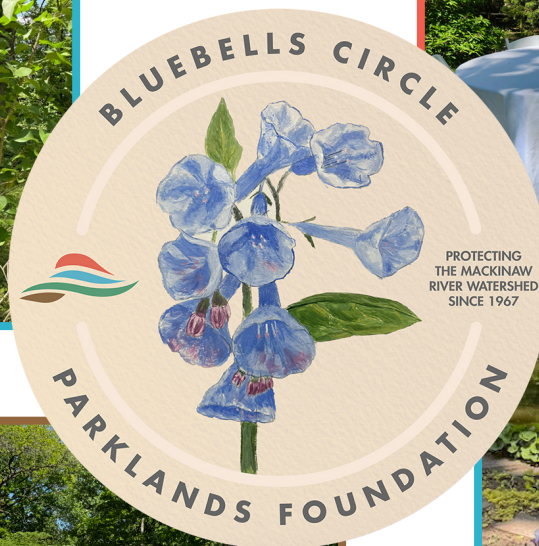


Photo by Shannon Fulton



Photo by Erin Herbez

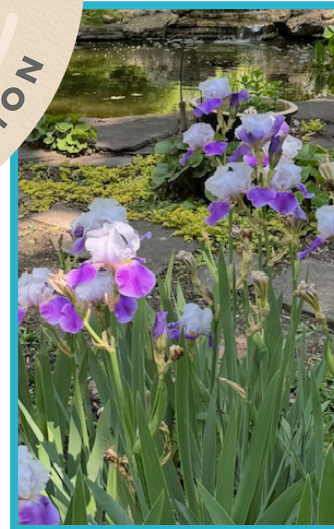


Photo by Deanna Frautschi



## Upcoming programs

**Registration is required for programs, visit [parklandsfoundation.org/events/](http://parklandsfoundation.org/events/).**

### **Stewardship Workdays at Moon Preserve**

*Dates: July 1 & 15*

*Time: 8:30-10:30 a.m.*

*Free, Registration required at [parklandsfoundation.org/events/](http://parklandsfoundation.org/events/).*

Stewardship projects include removing invasive autumn olive and honeysuckle using loppers. Other invasive plants such as sweet clover and Queen Anne's Lace will need pulled.

Notes: Bring water, eye protection and wear work clothes. Janet will have loppers and hand saws, but feel free to bring your own. For questions, contact: Janet Wisner at [jlpwiser@yahoo.com](mailto:jlpwiser@yahoo.com).

### **ParkLands Foundation 8th Annual Bike Ride**

*Date & Time: Saturday, July 12;*

*50 Mile and 100 km rides begin at 7:00 a.m.*

*20 Mile ride begins at 8:00 a.m.*

*Riders can begin later than the start time, but must finish by 2:00 p.m.*

*Cost: \$50/person*

*Location: Ride begins and ends at Keller Park Pavilion, 699 North Elm St, Lexington, IL.*

See details and registration information on page 3.

### **Musseling in the Mackinaw River**

*Date & Time: Saturday, August 9; 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.*

*Cost: \$5/member, \$10/non-member; register at [parklandsfoundation.org/events/](http://parklandsfoundation.org/events/).*

*Location: Private property near Letcher-Basin, Secor, IL. Directions to parking and the access point will be sent upon registration. All ages welcome!*

Step into the Mackinaw River for an unforgettable hands-on experience for all ages. Discover the animals that live beneath the waterline. With the help of experts, search for and learn about mussels, damselfly and dragonfly nymphs, crayfish, and so many other fascinating animals. This popular program will sell out! Don't be left on the waiting list. We will get wet, so please wear water shoes or old sneakers and clothes that can get wet and muddy. Bring a towel, change of clothes, water bottle, and sunblock.

## Save the Dates

### **ParkLands Foundation Annual Meeting of Members**

*Date: Sunday, September 14.*

### **Family Night in Nature**

*Date: Saturday, October 4.*

# Keeping Watch on the Bluebird Trail

Photos & article by Mick Hannah

So, if you're at all like me, you've been curious about all the small structures on posts in Merwin. They seem to come in several types and sizes. Probably birdhouses, I supposed, but why?

So this spring there was a request for individual(s) to help with a project monitoring and hopefully aiding the Eastern Bluebird with nesting sites. Dennis Killian and I volunteered, went through a brief training, and now we are periodically checking eight sites, with 25 total nest boxes. The boxes that we check are specifically meant for the bluebirds, although there is some competition from some swallows and sparrows. The nest boxes we check are mostly cylindrical, about 5 inches diameter and about 12 inches tall, painted to look like birch trees, mounted on poles about 5-6 feet high. We check these about once a week, keeping a notebook with our findings.

I'll share my results from my June 22 inspection, along with a few photos. In the photos you'll find one of the nest boxes (with a tree swallow perched atop), a clutch of bluebird eggs, and a nest full of very recent hatchlings! With Dennis conveniently off on vacation, it was my turn to do a solo inspection. It was a hot and humid day so I threw three bottles of water into my car and drove to the southeast-most and least-known entrance to Merwin, where we have five boxes. Two nests had eggs, but swallows, not bluebirds. One nest had 6 wrens who were ready to leave the nest.

On to site B with four boxes, two empty and two with trashy nests that I cleaned out. Next was site C, our most productive site, with six boxes. I found two nests with bluebird eggs, one nest with bluebird hatchlings, one nest with swallow eggs (and irritated parents), and one failed nest I had to clean out. In the next five sites combined I found two nests with four bluebird eggs each, one nest with four swallow eggs, and several boxes that needed cleaning.

In an hour and a half I'd drunk almost all of my water, and it was now past noon, and the brewery five miles away was open. My next move seemed obvious. Done for today, but I'll be back in about a week!



A tree swallow attempts to claim a bluebird nest box.



Bluebird eggs (above) and bluebird chicks (below).





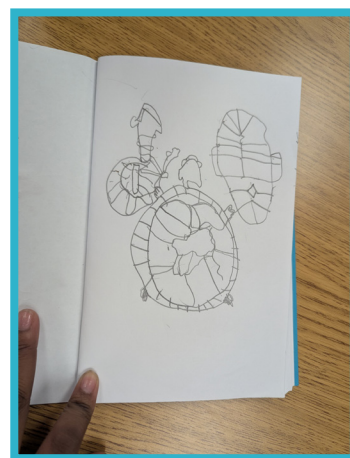
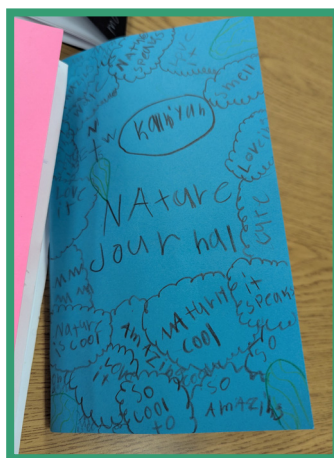
## Recent Programs & Events



In April, volunteers took part in a friendly challenge pulling garlic mustard, an exotic, invasive plant that crowds out our native woodland wildflowers. Teams were sent to Merwin North Gate, Merwin South Gate, and Hayes Preserves. Judging visually, it was too close to decide a winner, so a 3-way tie way was declared, with the resolution that next year a scale will determine the outcome.



We love spending time in the community sharing information about our preserves and the floral and fauna that inhabit them. During the last few months, we have been able to connect with people of all ages at events including Home, Lawn, and Garden Days by McLean County Master Naturalists, a homeschool Earth Day program put on by University of Illinois Extension, pre-k and kindergarten summer school programs at Fairview and Cedar Ridge Elementary Schools, and summer camp at the Unity Center.





ParkLands Foundation was able to host two springtime walks highlighting woodland wildflowers this year! In April, we collaborated with University of Illinois Extension McLean County Master Naturalists at our Lexington Preserve. We were excited to offer this program to a new audience at a “new” location. While many hikes have been held at Lexington, this was the first, but hopefully not the last, Blooms on the Trail Spring Wildflower Walk.



Our annual Wildflower Hike was held at Merwin Preserve. Bluebells tend to be the main draw to these hikes, but many other flowers were calling for attention this year. Visitors got to see wild blue phlox, bristly buttercups, shooting stars, and many more of these oftentimes lesser known flowers.



Over 20 guests attended Bird Watching & Eagle Viewing in June. While most birds hunkered in the shade protesting excessive heat and high winds, the Dickcissels were singing in full force, zipping above the prairie plants.

The eagles did not disappoint. The adults did a couple of flybys, which were short but impressive. The eaglets stayed stationary near the nest, allowing our spotting scopes to remain focused without constant shifting.



We appreciate every opportunity we have to connect with members of our community and learn from each other. Together, we can continue to promote the importance of protecting and stewarding these special natural areas for generations to come.





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