

1000 Islands Environmental Center

August 2026 Naturalist Report

Brad Garrity – Naturalist, 1000 Islands

Admin/Finance

Site Manager Gonnering and Asst. Naturalist Benson had work anniversaries in August, and both have been with 1000 Islands for two years.

Naturalist Garrity and Community Enrichment Director Vosters worked on preparing the 2027 operating budget and realigning the CIP forecast and presented both to the Committee in anticipation of the September deadline.

Friends of 1000 Islands did not meet this month.

Naturalist Intern Chevalier's last day at 1000 Islands was August 22nd. Staff had a lunch celebration from Noodles and Co. as a send off in appreciation of her hard work this summer. Among her accomplishments were a redesign of the 1000 Islands brochure, creation of updated signage for the crayfishing program, creation of an information binder for our goat watchers, assisting the Goat Team with daily logistics for the goats, monitoring the day-to-day activities of the goat watchers, and working with the groups that visited from St. Paul Home. She also assisted and led field trips both on and off-site, worked with Asst. Naturalist Benson on animal care including feeding and cleaning/maintenance of the enclosures, helped maintain the gardens and children's play area, and added new decorations to the toddler space. Her final project of the summer was to design a new interactive insect and macroinvertebrate display which will be fabricated and installed by Eagle Graphics at a later date. She has been offered the position again for 2027 if she has not yet found her permanent employment upon graduation from UW-Oshkosh.

Education / Programming

Education staff was busy with field trip groups trying to get in for Crayfishing and other programming before the end of summer. Among the highlights was hosting the regional Boys and Girls Club's "Girls in STEM" field trip; Naturalist Garrity presented about notable women in STEM, and our own women – Asst. Naturalist Benson and Naturalist Intern Chevalier led the group on an interpretive nature hike highlighting environmental issues, and the entire Education team facilitated a water quality stream assessment and biotic index of macroinvertebrates in Konkapot creek.

Despite low water conditions we were able to hold our final two public Crayfishing programs for the summer and had around 70 people at each one participating.

Our end of summer Bird House building clinic was held outdoors on the lawn on Sat. August 22. It was attended by 30 participants who built and painted 25 birdhouses. Special thanks to Bill and Heddy Lettau for assisting Naturalist Garrity with the program.

The Kaukauna Public Library's Fairywalk event was held on the evening of Mon. August 24th and was well attended with estimates between 300-400 people. Naturalist Garrity had a craft table at the event where over 200 people made pinecone bird feeders. We had a good amount of very creative fairy houses that were built by kids/families in the community.

Asst. Naturalist Benson and Naturalist Intern Chevalier attended the late year NEWNA meeting at Mosquito Hill. Highlights included roundtable discussions with the participating nature centers and organizations, and a presentation and tour of the display upgrades at Mosquito Hill.

Administrative Assistant Kohls has been working extremely hard with scheduling 2026-27 school year field trips as registration for Spring 2027 opened at the beginning of August. We have had many requests coming in and all available slots for late April and all of May 2027 are almost filled.

Staff continue to field many inquiries from the public regarding abandoned/injured wildlife, as well as questions about the low river levels.

Building and Grounds

Berken Heating and Cooling was onsite and inspected and tuned up all of the furnace and air conditioning units.

Naturalist Garrity and Site Manager Gonnering met with Public Works Director Neumeier, Engineer Conger, and representatives from Zeise Construction and Amplitel for the preconstruction meeting for the entryway project. Work is scheduled to begin Mon. September 14th and run through the end of the month.

Our final Service Saturday drop-in volunteer event was held on Sat. August 8th.

Eagle Scout and Girl Scout Randee Mooney completed her Gold Award project in the Mooney Butterfly garden, installing an informational kiosk and signage about milkweed and pollinators, as well as new signage bearing the names of her great-grandparents, Wally and Marian Mooney. She held her farewell party prior to leaving for college in the gardens.

A pavilion rental hosted a wedding ceremony for a couple that was displaced by the recent tornado from their original location at Smith Park in Menasha.

Site Manager Gonnering worked on securing quotes from area communications companies for the Eagle Cam project and started work on obtaining quotes for the Nature Center security camera upgrades scheduled for 2027.

Sewage backed up into the bathrooms due to a clog in the lateral line. Speedy Clean flushed the line and advised that the low flow toilets are the likely cause due to less water flushing out waste and debris.

Notable Conservancy Zone equipment purchases included a new post hole auger and a second chainsaw with a longer bar for larger trees.