

## **January 2025 Naturalist Report**

Brad Garrity – Naturalist

Terri Vosters – Director

### **Community Enrichment Department Report**

- David and Ali continue to get up to speed and take on more of the duties of their positions.

### **1000 Islands Report**

#### Admin/Finance

- Brad met with Toni Anderson and her daughter regarding memorial funding for her husband, George Anderson who served on the 1000 Islands Committee and was a volunteer.
- Received a \$421.64 endowment distribution from the Community Foundation.

#### School Programs

- As is usual, January was a slower month for school programs but picked up a bit from the holiday season of December. There were 8 school aged programs for the month. Our “Where Do They Go in Winter?” program continues to be very popular at this time of year.
- Kat and Brad made a few visits to schools for off-site programs, one of which was a return to Crissy Roehrig’s 4k class for a lesson on polar animals and penguins, and our visit was included in the filming of a video for KASD.
- Brad and Kat continue to infuse their own knowledge and teaching styles on our existing programs, creating engaging and memorable experiences for the students. There have been many positive comments from teachers about how our programs are facilitated, such as “organized,” “engaging,” “just what we wanted this to be,” “the students had a great experience,” and more!

#### Public Programs

- 1000 Islands 11<sup>th</sup> annual (official) Eagle Days was a rousing success! The weather was not as balmy as in 2024 but was not bitterly cold. Attendance at the viewing stations was about the same as the prior year, and we had a lot of visitors throughout the day. The highlight every year is the presentation from the National Eagle Center, and attendance at all three sessions was impressive and in line with last year. We would not be able to fit any more people (legally nor spatially) in the center for the programs, and it seems that the event is back to the substantial but manageable size it was prior to Covid. This year we moved the library events to the Nature Center which helped boost the attendance for the craft, storybook walk, as well as Kim Cackowski’s program “Honoring the Eagle.” We appreciate the ongoing collaboration with KPL. We also appreciate our volunteers and the Key Club students from KHS for their volunteer service to help make the event run smoothly. We have some ideas to change a few of the minor activities and add a few new activities in the future.
- Brad, Kat and Eric participated in some live spots for WFRV 5 and BBrad gave a recorded interview for WLUK 11 to promote Eagle Days. Unfortunately, our planned Friday morning live

spots on WLUK were preempted by a supper club fire in Manitowoc County, and I do think that there may have been some effect on our attendance by not having the 4 live spots on the morning show. We got comments from visitors about where they received word of the event, and television has a clear impact. The Kaukauna Times Villager once again ran our press release prior to as well as some pictures following the event. WFRV channel 5 sent a reporter for an interview with Brad at the Eagle Days event.

- Brad and Kat facilitated our first meeting of our new Junior Naturalist after school pilot program. We have around 10-12 middle school students (grades 5-8) participating from a variety of different schools in the area as well as homeschools. The program engages the kids with field experiences to help them think about and experience nature as a naturalist/interpreter would, to explore the outdoors in a different way, and be able to apply the lessons to teach/guide their friends, families and others. Participants also create a portfolio of resources. The plan is to expand this as a twice per month after-school activity throughout the school year.
- We held a winter birdhouse building clinic on January 11<sup>th</sup>. and had around 50 participants. Interestingly, there seemed to be more groups of adults doing the clinic together, when this is typically a very family/kid heavy program. Usually our birdhouse/feeder clinics are in the summer/early fall, but we decided to try this winter clinic and found it to be as successful as in the warmer months. It was quite a noisy hour with busy hammers pounding nails, but ear plugs were provided! Thanks to the local Scout troop for cutting and preparing 50 kits, and Eric G for making another 50.

#### Building and Grounds

- Boardwalk: Phase 1 work wrapped up ahead of schedule, and the timing was perfect for Radtke with the onset of the bitter cold. Brad gave an interview on Fox 11 about the project when Phase 1 reopened. After a 2 week break, Phase 2 began immediately following our Eagle Days event. The entire section of Phase 2 is torn out, and Radtke made quick work of connecting the spur that leads to the Nelson Overlook, and our trail was only disconnected for about 5 days. Work continues from east to west, however the recent snow has slowed progress. One hiccup is that with some settling of the structure and the weight of the snow, some railings that were already installed have sagged slightly. Going forward, Radtke will install temporary railings, and the permanent ones will be installed after the Spring thaw. We are still on track and probably ahead of schedule to be completed by April. We will schedule a ribbon-cutting and celebration of the new boardwalk, likely in May.
- The siding project will hopefully begin soon. The recent snow has changed the timeline again, and we are working with John Neumeier and Street Department to solidify the timing to get this project completed yet this winter/early spring. Eric G and I met with John N., Pete Nelson, and Logan from Street Dept (who will be the install lead) and our materials supplier Drexel, who said that they stand ready to deliver within a week of our order.
- Brad talked with Pete Nelson about an idea from our Site Manager Eric to possibly have a small ice-skating rink onsite in the future. Should we decide to do this, Street Dept would save the liner from Horseshoe Park rink as they cannot reuse the liner year after year, but it could be trimmed and used for a smaller rink at 1000 Islands. We would possibly do a small cost-share with DPW for the liner.
- Eric met with Security Luebke roofing for an assessment of the current roof, as the request of John Neumeier in conjunction with the siding project. The structural integrity of the roof is sound despite the patchwork of layers and joints between the different additions; however the

life of the shingles is waning. S-L estimates 1-3 years remaining and quoted approximately \$118,000 for a new roof. Eric will make some repairs where nails have lifted and with some caulking that should extend the life of the current roof, and we do not have any leaks or missing shingles at this time. We will continue to price out options to discuss and determine a timeline for replacement.

- Street Dept took advantage of the dry early winter to complete wood chipping of the Upper Woods trails, which has been on progress on and off for multiple years.
- Eric has been attending meetings of the new City safety committee, and it has already benefitted the center in multiple ways. DPW made a temporary fix to our bridge over the river/culvert leading to the kayak launch which has been in need of repair for a while. They are planning to construct a permanent replacement, and engineering will work with Radtke to procure materials left over from the boardwalk project. Also from the meetings, we are in the process of working with John N. and DPW on potentially putting in "Trail X-ing" signage at the stairs and Valley Trail crossings. This is a compromise from putting in actual crosswalks and/or crossing signals, but would address our safety concerns on Dodge St.
- Eric and Kat collaborated to make some improvements to our toddler enrichment area, altering some cabinetry and giving the area an updated look with a fresh coat of paint. Eric also built a stand for a fish tank that will go in that area.
- Our diorama bird display is completed! The display structure was built and donated by our past volunteer Lilly Roehrig and her grandfather Gary Roehrig. Despite multiple attempts to get started, and with the staff transition of 2024, the display work was not completed however our wonderful committee members Diane, Kathy, Penni, and Deb took up the mantle over the past month or so to work on dismantling our old display and thoughtfully crafting 12 individual bird dioramas, with Eric assisting with set up and some finishing touches.
- Outagamie Land Conservation approached us about reviving the projects that they started planning with Debbie prior to the Covid pandemic. Brad, Eric and John N. met with Wes and Jeremy from OC and we discussed 2 areas on the Hoersch property that were of previous concern, as well as the gully that runs through the Blacktop Trail area. One possibility to combat the gully erosion at both locations may be to install step pools, which would be the first of their kind in the state. Wes is working on an updated site plan proposal which we will share when it is completed. There is a cost share associated with the work which would be paid from CIP funds that were earmarked by DPW, with the bulk of the cost coming from grants which would be obtained by OCLC.

#### Community/Other

- Friends of 1000 Islands held their annual meeting on January 12 after a hiatus in 2024. Attendance was sparse, but the small group was very engaged with the business of the friends as well as with a sneak peek of the presentation that Kim Cackowski, Native American Outreach and Engagement Coordinator from Kaukauna Public Library would be presenting at Eagle Days. Brad gave the presentation that he and Penni made to the Community Vision Fund for the grant to fund the Full Time Asst Naturalist position. One of our long-time volunteers/Friends commented that she appreciated all the information that we provided, and said she didn't realize how much we actually do in and for the community, and that we should be telling that story to everyone.

- Brad has been very busy coordinating Bald Eagle Nest Watch for the Fox Valley Region along with Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance, by helping facilitate online training, scouting nests, vetting volunteers and getting them set up with nest assignments, and sending communications and resources, all in anticipation of the nest watch to commence on February 15<sup>th</sup>.
- We supported two community service workers in completing their service hours in January.
- Brad represented the City of Kaukauna at the Fox Cities Greenways annual meeting with a booth highlighting the trails in the city, as well as our boardwalk reconstruction project. Many of the people who have been a part of the grant funding we have received as well as members of the Community Foundation were on hand, and it was a great opportunity to network with those who are dedicated to connecting our community through a robust trail system while also raising awareness about the great trails in and around Kaukauna. In addition to the booth, municipalities were given the chance to address the meeting participants to highlight ongoing and upcoming projects, and I took the opportunity to once again thank our funding partners and supporters of our project.
- Paragon visited us and used the facility for lunch.