

## September 2024 Naturalist Report

(Reporting July 2024/August 2024)

### Admin/Finance

- Nathaniel Blood's last day as Naturalist was July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Brad Garrity officially started as Naturalist on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Common Council approved 1000 Islands remaining a part of Community Enrichment and Parks under Director Terri Vosters, removing the interim tag from her title for the Nature Center.
- Eric Gonnering started as Site Manager on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Kat Berge started as Assistant Naturalist on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- We celebrated Maddie West's last day as our summer intern on August 28<sup>th</sup> with a gyro lunch.
- Cassie Kohls continues to do impressive work to clean up budget lines, working with Terri and Megan Brouch to better align our categories with other City departments.
- The City has formed a communications team which meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month to discuss upcoming media, social media and other communications planned by each department. Cassie is representing 1000 Islands.
- Four of our CD's have closed, with the funds transferred to the Endowment Fund.
- Mayor Penterman approved our request to give Cassie access to the Community Foundation portal, where she can receive monthly and quarterly statements.
- Brad and Cassie will be meeting with Will and Megan in Finance on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to further understand budget and accounts.
- Terri, Brad and Cassie met to review the 2025 budget, which was submitted on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The updates are as follows:
  - Operational:
    - Increased Conservancy Zone funding to plan for execution of Invasive Management Plan which includes installation of native trees and plants, as well as to plan for future tree removal costs on affected private properties adjacent to the Conservancy Zone.
    - Increased program funding for planned increase in public and school programming in 2025.
    - Adding budget funds for mileage reimbursement for use of personal vehicles for off-site programs and other needs.
    - Right-sized 5312 Building Maintenance and 5325 Contractual Services lines to accurately budget for maintenance services that are under contract.

- CIP:
  - 2026 – Added \$10,000 for updated display/cases
  - 2027 – Added \$20,000 towards window upgrades
  - 2028 – Added \$300,000 for Educational Playscape
  - 2029 – Added \$100,000 for Main Entry Upgrade
- Penni Pautz has written a grant proposal through Friends of 1000 Islands requesting funds to make the Assistant Naturalist position full-time in 2025 and beyond. She is continuing to answer questions of the Community Foundation, and their meeting to decide is scheduled for November 2024. Terri will be requesting the FT position in the personnel budget regardless of the grant funding outcome.
- The David L. and Rita E. Nelson Family Fund within the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region has awarded 1000 Islands a grant of \$240,000 for use towards the boardwalk project. An additional \$2,237.40 was awarded from the Environmental Stewardship Fund. These funds, combined with other donations and the previously awarded city ARPA funds put us over the amount needed to complete the project in full.
- We received a donation of approximately 500 wading sticks made by “Carp” VandenBroek who recently passed away. He had made these to sell at 1000 Islands and his wife wanted us to be able to continue to sell them in his memory. The funds will be used for Jabber’s care. We will also offer some for free use on our walking trails for those who need.

## Education

- We had a successful summer of public programming and summer camps through daycares, park and rec departments and other nature centers. Highlights included our Basic Survival Camp, and Maddie and volunteer Nancy doing a fantastic job with our 1000 Little Wonders program.
- It was a challenging summer for our public Crayfish and Critter Hunts as we canceled multiple dates due to high/fast water in Konkapot Creek with all of the heavy rains we experienced. Additionally, due to a minor industrial leak into the creek, we had to adjust where we were able to conduct our crayfishing.
- The Goat Team held meetings and are prepared for the goats to arrive from Mulberry Farms on Monday September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. They will be onsite until October 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Brad and Kat attended the most recent NEWNA meeting at Heckrodt Wetland Reserve at the end of August. We were given a tour of their new Coneflower Pavilion and upgrades to their prairie, and participated in a roundtable discussion of current issues affecting nature centers.
- As a result of the NEWNA meeting, 1000 Islands will be participating in a revamped “Passport to Nature” program in 2025. Each center participating will develop unique activities to earn custom stickers which participants can apply to a water

bottle. Ledgeview Nature Center is spearheading the effort and securing grant funding. Brad has offered 1000 Islands assistance for any of the planning.

- We are entering our Fall school group season this week.
- We opened 2024-25 field trip requests on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and have received many requests for this school year; our Spring 2025 dates are filling rapidly.

#### Building and Grounds

- Eric has been working on many building projects, getting to repairs that had fallen through the cracks during our staff transition. Of note were the construction of a holder for the donated walking sticks, making surrounds for the bottom of the fish tanks to hide the filters, and coordinating the replacement of a window that was broken during the tornado earlier this summer.
- Work continues on the goat enclosures and browsing areas. We will have a corporate volunteer group from LAforce onsite on September 12, 2024 and they will assist in repairing the browsing area fencing.
- We have had numerous volunteers and Community Service workers helping us this summer on various projects. This has helped us greatly to maintain the building and grounds during the staff transition.
- The Street Department replaced fascia on the building that was damaged by the tornado earlier this summer at a cost of \$170.
- The Street Department also contracted out the removal of trees that fell onto neighboring properties along Forest Edge Run in August at cost of \$2200.
- The boardwalk project was awarded to Radtke Contractors of Winneconne, WI who came in with the lowest bid around \$380,000. The pre-construction meeting will be held next week to determine timeline and final details, but the plan is for the project to commence mid-October.