

1000 Islands Environmental Center

April 2026 Naturalist Report

Brad Garrity – Naturalist, 1000 Islands

Admin/Finance

- 1000 Islands once again participated in the Job Exploration and Training (JET) program through Kaukauna High School. Our student worker for this semester was Tyler Baeten, who assisted in numerous tasks in and around the Nature Center. 1000 Islands was recognized with a certificate recognizing our participation.
- Payton Chevalier has been hired as the Naturalist Intern for Summer 2026. She is a Junior at UW-Oshkosh and will be earning credits for her internship. She will start on May 26th and work full-time through mid-August.

Education / Programming

- Our annual Earth Day wellness event was a success, celebrating Earth Day and promoting wellness activities in nature. It was a mostly self-guided program with a drawing for walking our trails with added entries for tracking steps and each mile (approx. 2500 steps) logged on a pedometer or health app. We provided some crafts and themed books to read, free fruit salad for visitors, and a themed photo backdrop. Becky McMorro was on hand to offer an all-ages version of her Grounded and Resilient moving meditation class and offered some fun with drums and other instruments while also handing out free native plants to participants.
- 45 Girl Scouts participated in Outdoor Activities Day at the Center. Organized by the local GS office in partnership with our Naturalist, the scouts had a wonderful time navigating an orienteering compass course, taking a guided nature hike with binoculars, learning the seven principles of Leave No Trace, and enjoying some fellowship while having S'mores and popcorn. The GS office has a membership booth with a fun seed planting activity.
- We had many field trips during the month, with highlights including:
 - Mrs. Turgrean's 6th grade Riverview classes learning about reducing their environmental impact and helping to decorate our runoff display with posters to educate visitors. A few of the posters will be selected to become permanent signage for the display.
 - Park Kindergarteners coming for their annual papermaking program. Special thanks to our volunteers from Fox Valley Technical College, as well as Kathy Breitzman, Julie Carlson and Diane White for their help with running the program.

- Brad visited Park School to present a program on Weather for the Kindergarten classes.
- Kat led our monthly preschool program 1000 Little Wonders in a fun lesson on Frogs and Toads, with story, hike and craft project. Thanks to volunteer Nancy Hayes for her continued assistance with the program.
- Riverview 6th graders from Mr. Krautkramer and Ms. Theil's classes came for their Earth Day ecology program, a culmination of the learning that they did with the Center throughout the summer. Students conducted water testing, a biotic macroinvertebrate index, and participated in a self-guided photo scavenger hunt on the trails.
- Our annual visit from West DePere Intermediate School saw 275 students on various days visiting the Center for Fox River Ecology programming.

Building and Grounds

- Seedling sale pickup was on April 24th and 25th. Special thanks to volunteers from VF Corporation and FVTC Co-op student Logan Hanaway for bundling the seedlings and assembling the orders. Special thanks to Cassie Kohls for spearheading the sale and organizing the bundling and pick up details. Thanks to Kaukauna Utilities for their continued support in donating the \$4957.00 to purchase the seedlings. Sales totaled \$6,024.59 (funds totaled through 4/30) which goes directly into the Center donations.
- VF Corporation and Logan Hanaway also worked on spreading gravel on the trails from the end of the boardwalk to the lower Nelson overlook. This is part of an ongoing project to reduce the muddiness of that trail in Spring. With regular application of gravel, the substrate is stabilizing and becoming less of a hazard after the thaw.
- Flooding affected the grounds on the lawn and into the woods due to the late season snowstorm and subsequent storms that tracked through the area. We had water past and into the Sugar Shack with minimal issues, but the river was high for nearly a month and a half with water rushing over the sidewalk and through the boardwalk area. The goat browsing fencing was torn out by debris and force of the water and will be repaired in time for the upcoming invasive species goat project. Gladly, in this first major test of the new boardwalk, there were very minimal issues – with the old boardwalk, the trails would have been closed long term due to water, but the new elevated boardwalk only incurred minor flooding for less than a day and only in one 3 foot section. Logs and debris pushed into the boardwalk caused no damage.

- 50 red maple, 100 spruce and 40 larch (tamarack) seedling plugs have been received and are being planted from the boardwalk trailhead to the east. We are attempting to establish a sugar bush behind the Sugar Shack.
- Our water service line sprung a leak underneath the entrance by the flagpole, and we had water coming in from the floor and wall by the steps. The City DPW and Kaukauna Utilities located the area of the leak and under an emergency work order, Scott Lamers Construction was hired to replace the water line, which they did without needing to close the Center. Staff turned the water on and off daily at the water main to reduce further water damage in the building. The wall in that area will be assessed for minor restoration work.