

## **November/December 2024 Naturalist Report**

Brad Garrity – Naturalist

Terri Vosters – Director

### **Community Enrichment Department Report**

- The Community Enrichment and Recreation program guide was live in early December.
- Successful Christmas Tours at Grignon Mansion in early December.

### **1000 Islands Report**

#### Admin/Finance

- Kat began her new full-time assistant naturalist position on January 2, 2025. Terri attended the Committee of the Whole meeting on 1/6/25 to discuss the grant awarded by the Community Foundation and the assignment for the full-time role.
- Terri began a review of the Committee By-laws and resolutions and will continue research and discussion with Brad and other parties on this topic. This will include researching other City committees and seeking recommendations/feedback from this committee.
- End of year purchases included replacement water testing equipment, a DeWalt tool kit, apparel and merchandise for the gift shop, animal care and enrichment supplies, etc.
- Brad, Cassie, and Terri met with Rec Trac representatives to begin the initial registration system setup. After careful consideration, it has been decided that we will not continue with the project at this time given the lower volume of programs and the intricacies of scheduling field trips and programs, as well as some previously unknown complications with separating data from the rec side. We have done a good job of moving from paper registration and recordkeeping to a system using Outlook, which serves our needs at this time.

#### School Programs

- As expected, end of year school programming slowed down. We continue to receive many requests for 2025 Spring/Summer dates and are rapidly filling up what few dates we still have available.
- Park Community Charter School 3<sup>rd</sup> graders came to the center for a program on Fossils and Geology.
- Kat presented a unit on Sun, Moon, and Stars to two 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms in an off-site visit to Park School.
- Brad and Kat facilitated 3 sessions with Riverview 6<sup>th</sup> graders on Weather and Climate.
- Brad and Kat continue to learn and revamp the school programming. We have been enhancing existing programs with our own spin on interpretation and teaching of the lessons and beginning to make updates and changes to the overall lesson plans where needed. The goal is to review programs to be sure they align with state standards and needs of the classroom teachers, to update outdated or missing materials, and repackage lesson plans and materials in a way that allows new staff and volunteers to easily teach the lessons out of the box.

#### Public Programs

- Public Programming attendance continues to grow. We have been consistent and creative with our offerings and will continue to expand with innovative ideas and more offerings of popular programs.
- We offered a Bee Wax Lip Balm Make and Take program in November with Megan XX and Paula Jacobs. It continues to be an immensely popular program and filled fast. A second date was offered in December based on the response for the first session, and this session was also full.
- We hosted a Survival Series (Knot Tying) program in collaboration with the KPL and Scouts.
- We continue to hold monthly Storybook Walks in collaboration with KPL. We have decided to reduce the number of craft kits available in winter due to decreased attendance in the cold months.
- Our first annual Silent Night Hike was a resounding success! While we didn't have snow on the ground, we had a great weather night and the trail from the center to the overlook looked magical, lit by approximately 350 luminaries. We had over 300 people who came out for the self-guided hike, bonfire, holiday music, hot chocolate, and popcorn. Shout out to our Community Service worker for prepping our bags, staff for setting them all out and prepping other aspects of the event, to Terri for making popcorn and hot chocolate, and Brad for staffing the event.
- Boy Scout Troop 104/31 stepped in to prepare bird house kits for our program in January. They cut, prepped, and delivered 51 kits with the wood supplied by 1000 Islands. Eric made another 50 kits as well. We thank past volunteers including Ray Schmoeker for their work in making these kits over the years.
- Kat led 1000 Little Wonders programs on Deer and Hibernation, both of which were well attended.

#### Building and Grounds

- Work continued on Phase 1 of the boardwalk project, and it is ahead of schedule thanks to good weather and additional crew members from Radtke Construction. Eric has been cutting trees (mostly ash) which are dead and/or pose a threat to damage the new boardwalk.
- Eric/Terri started attending the new City Safety Committee meetings which allow departments to share and collaborate on safety related projects. As a result, our bridge near the kayak launch was moved up in priority and temporarily, with plans for permanent reconstruction upcoming.
- We had two Scouts bring groups of friends and family to complete their Conservation hours working in the Conservancy Zone. Work included invasives removal and repairing split rail fencing around the property.
- New sinks/counters and faucets were installed in both bathrooms. Two of the new fixtures were leaky but were replaced under warranty.
- Siding update – We will be getting a roofing assessment to determine the life expectancy of the current shingles as requested by DPW prior to the siding installation. The Street Department will update our materials list based on additional needs for the siding installation, and then we will have Drexel re-run the numbers. At that time, we will place our order and coordinate with Street Dept on installation.
- We had some accumulating snow in December, and the snow blower continues to work great!

#### Community/Other

- JET Student Bella Lundt completed her volunteer service. She was a tremendous help, and we appreciate our continued partnership with Kaukauna High School and their Special Education team on this program.
- Brad presented in November about being a Naturalist and working at a Nature Center for Fox Valley Technical College Co-op classes.
- We had a handful of Community Service workers come through the center in November and December, continuing our commitment to the City and Outagamie County to support their rehabilitation programs. Workers helped with a variety of projects on property and in the building.
- We participated in the Kaukauna Christmas Parade in December, entering Truck 19 as a float with lights, our tree, and festive holiday goat inflatables. Special thanks to our volunteers who helped decorate, shuttle, drive truck, and march with us to throw candy, spread good cheer and connect with our community! It was a fun day for all.
- We celebrated our wonderful volunteers with our annual Volunteer Tree Trimming Party in December! It was a fun event with food, decorating, camaraderie, and a raucous game of holiday bingo for prizes!
- Brad completed his Natural Resources program at Fox Valley Tech and graduated on December 13<sup>th</sup>!!! Special thanks to Diane, Penni, Kathy, and Julie for bringing in a delicious cookie cake, sparkling juice served in fancy champagne flutes, and a card to celebrate.
- Staff enjoyed some much-deserved time off for the holidays. Happy New Year!