

1000 Islands Environmental Center

March 2026 Naturalist Report

Brad Garrity – Naturalist, 1000 Islands

Admin/Finance

- Our KHS co-op student, Lilah, is joining us again for the third trimester. She comes in daily from 11:10-12:10 to volunteer her time and has been very helpful in doing program prep, working on some plant id, and assisting with animal care.
- Brad held phone interviews with 12 candidates for the Naturalist Intern position for this summer. We had 40 applicants for the position. A highlight this year is the fact that Council raised the intern pay from \$12.50 to \$17.00 per hour. The job description was updated a bit to make the internship more well-rounded to include more conservation work/study and the opportunity to experience the operations and administration of the Nature Center and Conservancy Zone in addition to the traditional environmental education duties. In-person interviews will commence in April and the position should be filled by mid-month.
- Brad completed and submitted the City's application to the Bird City USA organization. The application is under review and it is expected that we will maintain "High Flyer Status" that we have held since 2021. Kaukauna has been a Bird City since 2015.
- Jenny Rumbuck resigned for the 1000 Islands committee.
- Cassie took vacation time to travel to Peru!

Education / Programming

- Brad was invited to present with Sarah W. and Kim C. at Hoot Con, the regional library meeting held at Kimberly Public Library. The presentation was about the collaboration between the library and the environmental center to establish and maintain the Three Sisters Garden on the Conservancy Zone property.
- J&R Aquatics held an exotic pet surrender event at the Center. 188 (!!) animals were surrendered in just three hours, and are now getting care and/or being rehomed.
- 22 people attended the KPL/Scouts/Environmental Center collaborative Survival Series program. The topic was new for this series and was all about camp food and participants were able to make and taste MRE's and other easy to make foods.

- Due to inclement weather, we postponed our Last Light Hike from Friday evening to the following Monday. The weather on the rescheduled date was much nicer which brought over 150 people out (despite it being a Monday night) for a hike and campfire with S'mores and Popcorn.
- The Goat Team held their kickoff meeting. We will be having the goats on site again in early June and late September. A new t-shirt design will be selected. Discussion was held about adding more programming for seniors as well special needs groups since the Spring visit is focused on outreach and education. Penni Pautz shared good news that her long time efforts may have payed off and the Goat Program is under consideration to be featured on the PBS program *Wisconsin Life*.
- Brad was a presenter for the Kindergarten classes at Sunrise Elementary School's career day, talking about what it takes to be a Naturalist and run a Nature Center.
- Friends of 1000 Island and staff collaborated to put on another successful Pancake and Porkie Breakfast and Maple Syrup Saturday. We had robust help from our core committee and Friends volunteers, as well as students from both KHS National Honor Society and also Fox Valley Technical College Environmental Education class. One of our Junior Naturalists, Emma, also participated as an interpreter at the Sugar Shack. Overall numbers were down this year, but it was still a robust crowd. Leftover food was brought and donated to the Kaukauna Fire Department. A special thanks to our sponsors/donors -Thrivent, Modern Dairy, St Paul Elder Care, and Kwik Trip.

Building and Grounds

- River Valley Outdoorsmen held their annual banquet and meeting in the Nature Center.
- Ron Vandervelden held his book signing event at the Nature Center. He sold out all of his stock of books and the line of people in the hundreds was very long almost from the beginning at 4pm and well past 8pm. We donated the use of the building in honor of his long-time service to Kaukauna High School, 1000 Islands, and the community
- The Maple Syrup Season was a major success this year after a string of off years. Trees gave us plenty of sap to make a good amount of maple syrup. Brad and Eric G did most of the collecting this year and were busy pretty much daily for over 3 weeks with peak days collecting over 350 gallons of sap (Brad even collected in the middle of the thundersnow during Snowstorm Elsa!) Friends volunteer Kurt worked tirelessly to cook the sap and help Brad and Kat us explain the process to field trip groups, and Eric H. spent time filtering and bottling the finished product. Sales were heavily anticipated and

have been robust. Pints are available for \$7.50 and quarts for \$15.00. Special thanks to St. Mary's Cemetery and the local property owners who allowed us to tap their trees.

- We have partnered with a local citizen, Danah Stumpf, to offer a non-rechargeable battery recycling bin at the center. Danah donated the bin and will check it quarterly to bring the batteries to the recycling center. We will be providing the space, signage, and social media posts to alert the community of this service.
- Special thanks to Jennie Eggleston and her husband for their generous donation of a trailer for the Center. It will be very useful for bringing supplies where needed on the property and will also assist with our maple syrup sap collection.