



Back to Basics

MNA CONFERENCE 2018

November 9-11, 2018

Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

Lanesboro, Minnesota

MNA Annual Conference 2018

For the past five years I had the pleasure of serving as Conference Coordinator for this amazing organization and the people who make up its membership. In those five years I had the joy of experiencing the incredible range of talent that our membership community brings to our field of work and I have learned so much!

Over those years, we have tackled some pretty substantial and thought-provoking topics such as inclusivity, accessibility, the role food plays in our lives and in the environment, the place technology has in outdoor education, and climate change. But there is one topic we haven't really focused on for the last several years: the 'basics'. Author and entrepreneur Jim Rohn says, "Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying the basic fundamentals." And it's true; what use is it to discuss the ways in which we can educate our visitors about climate change if we are missing some of the key skills and/or techniques to be effective teachers in the first place?

This year, that is what our conference is about: getting back to the fundamentals of how to be an effective naturalist. It is about making sure we are up to date on the latest research, and that we are using teaching techniques that stimulate and nurture curiosity. It is about making sure we are finding and using those activities and lesson plans that really get to the heart of what we are teaching. This year, our conference is about reminding ourselves that even the simplest of things can have a huge impact if we have the 'basics' down. So, let's take a step back from the big picture, start digging down, and get Back To Basics!



Ashley Smith

MNA Conference Coordinator

**A huge thank you
to Eagle Bluff
Environmental
Learning Center
for hosting us!**



Conference Planning Committee

Mary Morris	Emily Meyer
Miriam Turnbull	Erica Northwick
Oakley Beizanz	Britney Stark
Patty Riley	Pam Welisevich
Tara Rogness	Ben Vogel

MNA Board of Directors

Lisa Gilliland	Katy Konrad
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Cody Rosetti	Mary Burch
Amber Taylor	

Conference Schedule

← Friday →

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm - Dinner

6:45 pm - 7:45 pm - Keynote

8:00 pm - 12:00 am - Social Time

← Saturday →

7:00 am - 8:00 am - Breakfast

8:15 am - 9:15 am - Concurrent Session A

9:30 am - 11:00 am - Discussion Session

11:15 am - 12:15 pm - Concurrent Session B

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm - Lunch

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm - Member Meeting

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm – Site Tours/Informal Networking/Break

3:45 pm - 4:45 pm – Concurrent Session C

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm – Concurrent Session D

6:00 pm - 7:00 pm – Dinner

7:00 pm - 12:00 am - Social Time

← Sunday →

7:00 am - 8:00 am - Breakfast

8:00 am - 8:30 am – Packing Time

8:45 am - 12:15 pm – Workshop Session

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm – Lunch

← Keynote Speaker →



Tim Lewis, PhD

Tim Lewis started his career of turtle research by studying white-tailed deer in northwestern Wisconsin. He received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Wildlife Ecology for that work. A life-long naturalist, his childhood included the requisite collecting of insects, following birds, and stockpiling rocks. As a camp counselor, he taught young children the joys of living with nature while learning from nature. For several decades, he guided trips ranging from the waters of northern Minnesota to limestone caves in Missouri and scuba diving in the Caribbean amongst coral reefs, sharks, and whales. He was a Professor of Biology at Wittenberg University in Ohio before coming to the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul a decade ago. Lewis has won several teaching awards. While Introductory Biology remains his favorite class to teach, the most fun class remains Mammalian Ecology. Or maybe Winter Ecology. Could be Evolution or General Ecology. The Natural History of Lewis and Clark Expedition was pretty good, too come to think of it... He also teaches a course on the biology of dogs and conducts teaching workshops on that across the country. A few years ago, he conducted a workshop on mammals to the Minnesota Naturalist annual meeting. He frequently speaks at Warner Nature Center, and before that at Glen Helen Ecology Institute in Ohio.

What *Do* Turtles Do in the Winter?

Auditorium

Dr. Lewis' published research is mostly on turtles, the first of which covered the winter ecology of Spotted Turtles (*Clemmys guttata*) and the most recent just came out covering two decades of population ecology of Wood Turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*). Other research includes long-term studies of a Spotted Turtle population (21 years) and Painted Turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) in the Twin Cities metropolitan area (7 years). He just wrapped up a three-year LCCMR-funded multispecies turtle study of painted turtles, snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*), and spiny soft shell turtles (*Apalone spinifera*) at Medicine Lake, MN done in collaboration with Three Rivers Park District.

Lewis' keynote presentation this year will be a summary of the results from this lifetime of studying turtles, focused mainly on what he has found out about Midwestern turtles and their winter habits. He will present on five species, each with their own unique approach to winter survival. What *do* turtles do in the winter? That depends on the species, but it is most certainly not what the general public thinks.



← Evening Entertainment →

FRIDAY NIGHT ONLY

People Bingo —

8:00-8:30 Hall Outside Auditorium

Are you someone, or do you know someone, who has the best animal impression? What about someone who has been bitten by a program animal? Find out during People Bingo! Whoever gets black out bingo first will win a prize.

Casino Night —

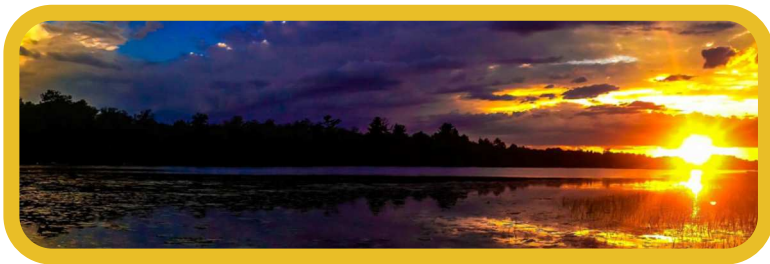
8:30-10:00 Auditorium

Will Luck be your lady tonight? Play Black Jack, Roulette and Craps with the Dodge Nature Center Crew. Win "Casino Bucks" and use them to buy raffle tickets for the big raffle on Sunday afternoon or put them in a mini raffle to win prizes on Friday night!

Climbing Wall —

8:30-9:30 Rock Wall Room

Try your hand at rock climbing at Eagle Bluff's indoor climbing wall. Do you think you can reach the top?



SATURDAY NIGHT ONLY

Maple Syrup Contest —

7:00-8:00 Hall Outside of Auditorium

Last year Wargo Nature Center won the Maple-Leaf trophy. Will you be the winner this year? Bring your maple syrup samples to compete. Everyone is welcome to taste the samples and vote for their favorites!

Puppet Show Challenge —

8:00-9:30 Auditorium

Sign yourself (or a group) up for our Puppet Show Challenge. A puppet stage will be provided, BYOP (Bring Your Own Puppets), and you will get a MAX of 5 minutes to include all pieces of *one* of the scenarios posted at the conference, or to do a show pre-written by you.

BOTH NIGHTS

Auditorium and Hall Outside Auditorium

Board Games —

Grab some friends, grab some people you've never met, and play some board games!

Photo Contest —

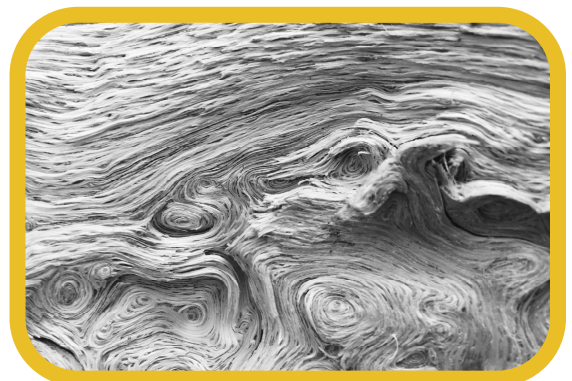
Check out the Photo Contest submissions and vote for your favorite in each category.

Silent Auction & Raffle —

Help support our scholarship and grants program by buying raffle tickets and bidding for items at the Silent Auction. Raffle tickets can be purchased at meal times. The drawing will be on Sunday at lunch. Silent Auction will close Saturday at 9 pm .

Secret Item Game —

There are secret items out there, completely visible, on someone's person. If you can figure out what they, and covertly get your hands on one, you may just win a prize. More details will be given at Dinner Friday Night.



Fri. & Sat. 8:00 - 12:00

← Overview of Tracks

Tracks	Concurrent Session A 8:15-9:15am	Discussion Session 9:30-11:00am	Concurrent Session B 11:15-12:15pm
Administration	Formative Assessment for Outdoor Learning Shannon Walz Room 19	Recruiting and Retaining Seasonal Staff Mike Maher & Tara Rogness Room 19	Strategies for Enhancing Experiences for Diverse Learners Noelle Roden Room 19
Practicing Pedagogy	Climate Changing the World Through Engineering Amandina Cyrus & Benjamin Vogel Room 21/23	Empathetic Language in Environmental Education Emily Meyer Room 21/23	Teaching Tracking Amy Manning Room 21/23
Other Duties As Assigned	Budget Friendly Exhibit Strategies Cindy Blobaum Room 25/27	Like! Follow! Share! Tweet! Snap! #! Kelly Amoth Room 25/27	Programing in Children's Gardens Pauline Bold & Liz Sheppard Room 25/27
Natural History	Meet the Insects Using Your Bee Hotel Britt Forsberg Room 15/17	Animal Tracks and Signs Curriculum Erin Waldorf Room 15/17	Inyan sa, Glacial Erratics, and Cultural Heritage Interpretation Zack Mohlis Room 15/17
Miscellaneous	Understanding Aquaponics Don Oberdorfer Room 29	Animal Care Jenna Moon & Becca Jacobson Room 29	Adapted Outdoor Recreation Tracy Tabaka & Nick Sacco Room 29

and Presentations



Saturday Afternoon 1:30-3:30pm	Concurrent Session C 3:45-4:45pm	Concurrent Session D 5:00-6:00pm	Workshop Session 8:45-12:15pm
Member Meeting 1:30-2:30pm Dining Hall 	Seasonal Survival 101 Ashley Smith & Monica Rauchwarter Room 19	Supervising for Success Teresa Root Room 19	Landing Land Colleen Foehrenbacher, Sara Sturgis & Joe Deden Room 19
	Nature Drawing and Journaling Ashley Hansen Room 21/23	Creating a Learning Environment with Positive Behavior Edric Lysne Room 21/23	BEETLES Introduction Patty Maher & Allison Holzer Room 21/23
Site Tours 2:30-3:30pm Auditorium	Homeschool Roundtable Brandon Baker Room 25/27	Care & Enrichment for Reptiles & Amphibians Anna Toenjes Room 25/27	Recruiting Volunteers and Engaging Diverse Communities Lisa Joyslin Room 25/27
	Beyond Mystery Cave Bob Storlie Room 15/17	Lies My Naturalist Told Me Kirk Mona Room 15/17	Learn 40,000 Plants! Freeman Wicklund Room 15/17
Informal Networking 2:30-3:30pm Anywhere!	Autism Basics and Mindfulness Heather Cronin & Heather Benson Room 29	Super Simple A-HA Activities Cindy Blobaum Room 29	Making the Most of a High Ropes Challenge Brent Anderson Room 29
	Break 2:30-3:30pm Anywhere!		

← Concurrent Session A →

Saturday 8:15 - 9:15

Formative Assessment for Outdoor Learning

Shannon Walz, Education Director, Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

Room 19

Assessment isn't a dirty word. While assessment makes some people think about program evaluation or test-taking, in this session we will focus on the practice of making learning visible. It is a powerful tool for both teachers and learners. Experience and practice formative assessment techniques suited to the outdoor learning environment. Wolf Ridge recently took a critical look at how we use assessment in our curriculum. This workshop will include a short presentation on the Wolf Ridge process followed by hands on practice of using a variety of techniques for assessing students in the outdoors.

Budget Friendly Exhibit Strategies

Cindy Blobaum, Naturalist, Dallas County Conservation Bd.

Room 25/27

See some examples of the creative repurposing of common collection items, ordinary supplies and "found" treasures used to create temporary and somewhat more permanent indoor and outdoor exhibits. Then harness the brainstorming power of the group to walk away with ideas for your place.

Understanding Aquaponics

Don Oberdorfer, Farm Director, Dodge Nature Center

Room 29

Aquaponics is an engineered ecosystem combining plants and fish in an ecological model that can be used for food production and habitat experimentation. We will talk about the concepts of aquaponics, the state standards it meets, and its usefulness in the classroom and in a nature center. To finish we will operate a small model system together.

Climate Changing the World Through Engineering

Amandina Cyrus & Benjamin Vogel, Naturalist Farmer & Naturalist, ArborEthos & Campfire Minnesota

Room 21/23

Teaching students about climate change provides an amazing opportunity to connect various issues with other subjects like never before. We have created an activity for upper middle school aged kids that is an engineering-based learning experience on the subject of climate change. After our activity and debrief, you'll get the chance to create your own city! The presentation will close with a short discussion on approaches, and your critiques on this difficult subject.

Meet the Insects Using Your Bee Hotel

Britt Forsberg, Program Coordinator, University of Minnesota

Room 15/17

Bee hotels, bee boxes, insect condos; No matter what you call them, providing man-made habitat for native bees has become popular among gardeners and conservationists. Pinterest is full of plans for DIY bee homes of all different sizes and materials. You also may have seen them used for research projects like the Minnesota Bee Atlas. But do you know which critters may call your nest "home"? In this session, we will learn about several different species of bees and wasps that are commonly found in artificial nests. By learning about the size, seasonality, and appearance of nests, participants will be prepared to identify the bees and wasps using and visiting bee hotels.

← Discussion Session →

Recruiting and Retaining Seasonal Staff

Mike Maher & Tara Rogness, Director & Interpretive Program Supervisor, Springbrook Nature Center

Room 19

It seems like it's always hiring season in this field. How can you make your seasonal openings attractive to up and coming naturalists? Once you find a great naturalist, how can you keep them happy and productive at your site? Bring your ideas and best practices to this discussion on how to find and retain seasonal staff.

Like! Follow! Share! Tweet! Snap! #!

Kelly Amoth, Naturalist, Lee & Rose Warner Nature Center

Room 25/27

Navigating the world of social media can be tricky. Using social media at nature centers is a great way to connect (and stay connected) to visitors. In this round-table session, we will discuss how and when we use social media to reach our audience and visitors. Come ready to share how your site uses social media and the platforms you use. What are your most successful and engaging posts? Have you found that your audience is drawn to a certain type of post? Has your site had any struggles with social media and how have you overcome them?

Animal Care

Jenna Moon & Becca Jacobson, Raptor & Reptile Care Coordinator, Eagle Bluff ELC

Room 29

Many nature centers and environmental learning centers use animals as a part of their curriculum. Sometimes being an animal care coordinator can feel very isolating and we can get stuck in our day to day routines. This session will be an opportunity to talk about challenges, compare practices, and brainstorm ways to improve the lives of the animals we work with.

Empathetic Language in Environmental Education

Emily Meyer, Seasonal Naturalist, Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park

Room 21/23

We've all been told something different regarding how we should talk about the world around us. Should a turtle "feel unhappy" when reminding students to be gentle with it? Should we compare tree bodies and communities to our own when discussing ecology? In this session we will discuss what role empathetic language and anthropomorphism should play in environmental education.

Animal Tracks and Signs Curriculum Discussion

Erin Waldorf, Wildlife and Group Program Director, Wolf Ridge ELC

Room 15/17

This is a chance to share how each of us teaches animal signs/tracking curriculum. It will be an informal discussion with a potential for active or outdoor participation if someone would like to give an example of an activity that works well for them. Come with ideas, questions and an open mind to new ways to teach this popular outdoor activity.

Saturday 9:30 - 11:00

← Concurrent Session B →

Saturday 11:15 - 12:15

Strategies for Enhancing Experiences for Diverse Learners

Noelle Roden, Naturalist, Warner Nature Center

Room 19

Learn how to: 1) Enhance communication and build relationships with paraprofessionals, 2) Provide support for the needs of students before and during their visit to the site and 3) Facilitate a positive environment for both the learner and their support person. We will discuss training for volunteers and staff to improve experiences for each learner, and discuss strategies to support students with disabilities of all ages.

Programming in Children's Gardens

Pauline Bold & Liz Sheppard, Interpretive Naturalist & Naturalist, Staring Lake Nature Center

Room 25/27

We will discuss planting sensory gardens, including Native American gardening practices, big body play garden games, as well as incorporating art and literature into your education garden as a way to engage children ages 3-10 in educational gardens. Learn about new ways to teach complicated ideas like pollination through the use of games and costumes, try garden related crafts, and brainstorming to trade ideas with your fellow naturalists.

Adapted Outdoor Recreation

Tracy Tabaka & Nick Sacco, Outdoor Recreation Educator & Recreation Program Coordinator, Outdoor Recreation School

Room 29

Learn about how the Outdoor Recreation School of Three Rivers Park District has made programming more accessible for people with physical and cognitive disabilities. Learn about the progression of that programming and then head outside to check out a wide variety of their adapted equipment. Finish the hour by discussing how you can adapt your own interpretive programs to be more accessible for participants with varying needs.

Teaching Tracking

Amy Manning, Interpretive Naturalist, Wargo Nature Center

Room 21/23

Tracking programs are a great way to connect people to nature. However, teaching tracking programs can be challenging for naturalists who have to work around things like poor substrate, unfavorable weather, or large group sizes. In this workshop we'll discuss some approaches for working around these challenges as we go through a series of activities and exercises designed for teaching tracking. We'll expand our idea of what "tracking" means and talk about how movement, art, and literacy can all be included in tracking programs.

Inyan sa, Glacial Erratics and Cultural Heritage Interpretation

Zack Mohlis, Cultural Heritage Interpreter, The Landing

Room 15/17

Near the Mississippi River sits a large granite boulder, dropped there long ago by the receding glaciers. This glacial erratic, named Inyan sa (Red Rock) was revered as wakan or sacred by Dakota people, who believed the spiritual stone could travel as if blown by the wind. Dakota people visited Inyan sa to paint the stone red and leave ceremonial offerings. In the 19th century, white explorers studied the red rock to learn about Minnesota geology and glaciation, as well as the values and traditions of the Dakota people who worshipped there. Learn the complex history (and future) of Inyan sa, discover the many stories of this boulder's journeys, and explore the ways our environment and cultural history are deeply interconnected.

← Saturday Afternoon →



MNA's mission is to advance natural and cultural resource interpretation for the purpose of fostering wise stewardship of all resources

Annual Member Meeting

1:30 - 2:30 pm

Dining Hall

Join Lisa Gilliland, MNA President, for the annual member meeting. Lisa will present an overview of this year's organizational accomplishments and introduce the current, outgoing, and new members of the MNA Board of Directors.. Afterwards, stay to give suggestions for MNA's 2019 conference, professional development opportunities, and field trips.

Saturday 12:30 - 3:30

2:30 - 3:30 pm

Site Tours

Go on a site tour of Eagle Bluff ELC. There will be several tours each with a different focus. These focuses will be related to the property and curriculum of Eagle Bluff. Learn more about these topics Saturday Lunch.

All tours will leave from the Auditorium

Informal Networking

If you need a little mental health break, or you want to continue some of the conversations started during the discussion sessions, or if one of your sessions gave you a really good idea and you want to talk it out with someone, this is your time. Take a walk, see the campus, process all that new information—Enjoy some unstructured time!



MNA is on Facebook and Twitter. Like the official MNA Page and join the MNA Discussion Group, and follow us on Twitter

← Concurrent Session C →

Saturday 3:45 - 4:45

Seasonal Survival 101

Ashley Smith & Monica Rauchwarter, Interpretive Naturalists, Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park & Richardson Nature Center

Room 19

Getting established as a naturalist can be quite the journey. Take on the challenge with tips and tricks from emerging professionals who have done the legwork. We'll focus on how to make the most of the journey, ways to gain experience in the field, and staying sane in the process. This session is for emerging professionals, as well as established professionals, interested in guiding others along their journey.

Homeschool Roundtable

Brandon Baker, Interpretive Naturalist, Eastman Nature Center

Room 25/27

Brandon was homeschooled as a child, so he has unique insight for working with homeschoolers. He will share some techniques that have been successful when working with homeschool families, as well as advice on how to have difficult conversations with them. The majority of the session will be a roundtable format where people can ask questions or look for advice, and others can provide tips based on their experiences.

Autism Basics and Mindfulness through a Nature-Based School Setting

Heather Cronin Ott, M. Ed. & Heather Benson, Nature Based Therapeutics from Karner Blue Education Center

Room 29

This presentation will be a basic review of autism, its definition, and strategies that help students be successful learners. Through the lens of mindfulness and nature based learning, we will give real life examples of student learning and strategies in a nature based special education school.

Nature Drawing and Journaling

Ashley Hansen, Naturalist, Wood Lake Nature Center

Room 21/23

Nature Journaling not only increases artistic technique but also creates a more attentive naturalist. In this session we will go over drawing techniques, and how to use nature journals both inside and outside of the classroom. This session will also provide the basics for nature journals, how to assess quality of work, as well as how to make it fun and engaging for students.

Beyond Mystery Cave: Interpreting the Whole Story at Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park

Bob Storlie, Mystery Cave Interpretive Supervisor, MN DNR

Room 15/17

At roughly 3,500 acres, Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park is nowhere near the largest State Park in Minnesota. It does, however, rival Itasca concerning resource diversity present within its boundaries. From glacial relics to numerous karst features, come learn why this park is so special.

← Concurrent Session D →

Supervising for Success

Teresa Root, Naturalist & Naturalist Fellow
Coordinator, Dodge Nature Center

Room 19

It's finally happened - you're responsible for overseeing your new staff of interns, fellows, or seasonal naturalists. They are looking forward to gaining experience during their time with your organization. So how do you, their supervisor, ensure they are both learning and getting quality experiences? In this session, I will share what Dodge has learned about training and evaluating staff who are starting out in the field.

Care & Enrichment for Reptiles & Amphibians

Anna Toenjjes, Naturalist, Lowry Nature Center

Room 25/27

Anna Toenjjes, Vice President of the Minnesota Herpetological Society, will present on enrichment items and activities for educational reptiles and amphibians. Additionally, we will explore simple items and activities for educational reptiles and amphibians. Additionally, we will explore simple quarantine setups and procedures for sick or new animals. Finally, alternative housing, options will be reviewed such as plastic totes or rack housing for multiple animals not on display.

Super Simple A-HA Activities

Cindy Blobaum, Naturalist, Dallas County Conservation Bd.

Room 29

How can you use oven racks in your snake presentation, condiment packages for geology, pennies on your night hike and masking tape in at least five different ways? Learn these simple and cheap tricks for creating greater participation and understanding in some common naturalist-led programs.

Creating a Learning Environment with Positive Behaviors

Edric Lysne, Educator, St. Paul Public Schools

Room 21/23

This presentation will focus on youth behaviors and group management, and how to structure a program to facilitate the best learning for all youth. The presenter will go over some tips and instruments for social and emotional learning measurements. The format will be transitional, with discussion and activities inter-mixed. Movement in the outdoors is likely. Attendees are encouraged to share their experiences and expertise. Participants who struggle with youth behavior management, as well as those who have mastered behavior management are encouraged to attend.

Lies My Naturalist Told Me

Kirk Mona, Interpretive Naturalist, Lowry Nature Center

Room 15/17

We've been teaching lies... come find out which ones! There are many concepts and "facts" taught that are incorrect either due to changing science or are long standing misconceptions about settled science. How often do we simply repeat facts someone once taught us? How careful were they to get the facts right to begin with? Come learn a few of the biggest whoppers we regularly drop into our programs. Can you tell which facts are facts and which facts are fiction?

Saturday 5:00 - 6:00

← Workshop

Landing Land - Property Gift Challenges and Opportunities

Colleen Foehrenbacher, Sara Sturgis, & Joe Deden, Education Director, Development and Marketing Director, & Caretaker, Former and Founding Executive Director, Eagle Bluff ELC

Room 19

Many of our organizations have acquired or were gifted land at some point during our history. Eagle Bluff has recently purchased 151 acres adjacent to our current property and was gifted another 25 acres roughly 7 miles from us. During this session several of Eagle Bluff's staff will share the joys and challenges that arose during this process. We'll begin with a presentation about each of the properties, covering the process we went through to acquire them and the fundraising techniques we used. Then, we'll hike out to "The Point" (our adjacent piece of new land) to discuss land management strategies and educational use.



BEETLES Introduction - Teaching Observational Skills

Patty Maher & Allison Holzer, Outdoor Education Supervisor & Interpretive Naturalist, Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park

Room 21/23

Are you looking for new ways to lead programs that are inclusive, student-centered, or inquiry-based? Are you interested in strategies that support outdoor science education and are research-based? If so, then BEETLES would be a great resource for you! BEETLES (Better Environmental Education, Teaching, Learning & Expertise Sharing) is devoted to creating student activities for use in the field. This session will help participants directly engage students with the natural world through scientific observation. It provides participants with basic skills, behaviors and tools to use with students to help them become curious about nature. The goal is to empower students to engage with the natural world after their experience at your program. Allison Holzer and Patty Maher from Three Rivers Park District attended a week-long BEETLES training and would love to share some of what they learned with you!



Sunday 8:45 - 12:15

Session

Recruiting Volunteers and Engaging Diverse Communities

Lisa Joyslin, Inclusive Volunteerism Program Manager, Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration

Room 25/27

Many organizations struggle to engage volunteers who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the communities they serve. In response to this issue, the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) recently embarked on a research study which resulted in a set of eight strategies for creating a more inclusive volunteer program within nonprofit and government organizations. These strategies serve as a starting point for volunteer engagement leaders who are seeking concrete next steps for better engaging volunteers from diverse and immigrant communities. Join MAVA for an interactive session in which we'll first discuss general best practices for recruiting volunteers, then dive into the 8 strategies for creating a more inclusive volunteer program. You'll have an opportunity to learn from others, share your own experiences and create an action plan for your next steps in volunteer recruitment.



Learn 40,000 Plants! An Intro to Identifying Plants by Families

Freeman Wicklund, Mindfulness Teacher, Boundless Love Project

Room 15/17

By knowing some common plant family patterns and characteristics you will be able to identify by family literally thousands of plants, and have a good idea about how they may best be used. In this presentation you will learn about how plants are categorized into families that share similar patterns and characteristics. For example, plants in the Mint and Mustard families are edible, most members of the Pea family help fix nitrogen into the soil, and the most deadly plants in our region (as well as many of our common species) are in the parsley family. This hands-on workshop will get you started on knowing some of the common plant families here in Minnesota and major characteristics about them.



Making the Most of a High Ropes Challenge

Brent Anderson, Title, Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

Room 29

The vast majority of the 15,000 people who tackle Eagle Bluff's ropes courses each year are 5th-8th grade students visiting with their school and have been signed up to complete the challenge by their teachers. This method pretty much guarantees that during each session you have people expressing varying levels of nervousness and stress. The challenge for the instructor, then, is to create physically and emotionally safe spaces for participants to confront and ultimately overcome this anxiety. Join us for a morning on the high ropes course as we delve into the details of how we facilitate our high ropes course experience. First, we'll get geared up and tackle the course (so be sure to bring your camera and selfie stick) that overlooks the gorgeous Root River. Then we'll discuss risk management strategies, inclusivity, and debriefing techniques which are essential for making connections to real life. If time allows, this session will also spend time on these topics in relation to low ropes/team building challenges





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