



# *RESILIENT BY NATURE*

MNA Conference 2021

**NOVEMBER 12 - 14, 2021**

Dodge Nature Center  
West St. Paul, MN

**MNNATURALISTS.ORG**

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# MEET YOUR 2021 CONFERENCE COORDINATORS!



*hybrid conference 2021*

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Welcome to our first-ever hybrid MNA conference! Immediately following, of course, our first-ever virtual MNA conference. Which followed a year of first-ever...everything. A very heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed their time and energy to make this conference happen. When it was time to decide on a theme for this year, the planning committee's thoughts immediately went to the incredible resiliency of our profession. Persevering in the face of uncertainty is nothing new to naturalists who have spent years juggling part time jobs, limited funding, and a tendency to dismiss environmental concerns as an extra rather than a necessity. It's going to take more than a pandemic to bring us down. And who better to represent this spirit of resiliency than the oft-unappreciated trash panda? In that spirit, we hope you are able to come together this weekend, whether virtually or in-person, and find inspiration to carry you forward through whatever this next year brings our way.

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## **BECKY REM**

*MNA Conference Co-Coordinator*

Throughout the past few years, I have worked as a naturalist in some amazing positions and although since COVID-19 I have found myself in a corporate job, I still love exploring the outdoors, discovering new adventures, and continuing to support the naturalist community through my involvement with MNA. I'm so excited to bring you this year's conference - and feel free to reach out! I'd love to chat.



## **MARY BURCH**

*Westwood Hills Nature Center*

Over the last seven years I've had the opportunity to teach with several different twin cities nature centers. I believe work and play are both better outside, whether that's birding, fishing, canoeing, or (downhill) skiing. MNA has been an incredible resource for me from the get-go, and I'm so excited to help bring you our hybrid conference this year. If we haven't met, please introduce yourself!

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE



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## FRIDAY

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Field trip	1:00 - 4:00
Keynote (virtual via Zoom)	6:30 - 8:00
Jackbox Games (virtual via Zoom)	8:00 - 9:30

## SATURDAY

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Welcome	9:00 - 9:30
Concurrent Session A	9:45 - 10:45
Discussion Session	10:45 - 11:30
Lunch	11:30 - 1:00
Workshop Session	1:00 - 3:00
Site Tours / Break	3:00 - 4:00
Concurrent Session B	4:00 - 5:00
Bonfire and Social Time	5:00 - 10:00

## SUNDAY

**all events are virtual via Zoom**

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Member Meeting	8:30 - 9:00
Concurrent Session C	9:15 - 10:15
Concurrent Session D	10:30 - 11:30
Lunch	11:30 - 12:30
"Choose Your Own Adventure"	1:00 - you decide!

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**Note: Zoom links and additional information on how to attend the virtual sessions will be sent via email to registrants the week of the conference.**

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



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## 'Nazhike-awaasang' Bradley E. Harrington



### THE SPIRITUAL HISTORY OF THE ANISHINAABE

*The journey will describe how the Anishinaabe started a Physical Existence as a Spiritual Being, navigated tragedy and established themselves in the Natural History of America, most often as a footnote. The Manidoog's(Spirits) great compassion and love for the Anishinaabe plays a large part in History as well as Today.*

KNazhike-awaasang (Misizaaga'iganing Ojibwe), comes from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe located in Central Minnesota. Born and raised on the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation where he spent time learning from his grandparents about Ojibwe Life. He is a lifelong student of Ojibwe language & culture and has studied at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Central Lakes College, UMD, UofM Twin Cities, Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona Tucson and the Native Governance Center. He has received certification from the Native Nations Institute, the Blandin Foundation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and White Bison/Wellbriety. He has facilitated activities at the Tribal/State Relations Training relating to Ojibwe Language & Culture, Treaties and Federal Indian Law. In the summer of 2017, he was sworn in as the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and began rebranding the local Tribal DNR to incorporate cultural knowledge and language as a Natural Resource. He currently serves as the Tribal Liaison for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources where he coordinates the Tribal Consultation process. He is a parent of Ojibwe immersion students and works in the community as an advocate for immersion education. He performs Ojibwe Ceremonies in many communities in the region. When he is not working in the tribal government as an advocate for Anishinaabe rights to language, education, spirituality and harvest, he spends time with his family.

# SATURDAY OVERVIEW



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## **CONCURRENT SESSION A**

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### **MNA Seasonal Staff Survey: Sharing Results**

Julie Grecian, JEG Consulting

*Egret Room*

The presentation will share data and findings from MNA's seasonal staff survey, featuring topics such as: professional development; pay levels; performance evaluations; supervisor support; and relationships with co-workers. This presentation will provide an opportunity for seasonal and permanent naturalists, along with program coordinators and supervisors, to learn about struggles as well as opportunities for improvement for our state's seasonal naturalist employees. The end of this session will allow participants to identify important and current topics for the presenter to bring to the state-wide MN-Nature Center Network comprised of leadership at nature centers, ELCs and environmental organizations throughout the state for a meeting in 2022.

### **Elephants Eat Kangaroos**

Teresa Root, Dodge Nature Center

*Lower West*

Presenting programs, especially to school-aged groups, can be challenging when misinformation and wrong answers are given. In this session, you'll learn about approaches to use to clarify and correct wrong answers without discouraging or embarrassing participants.

### **Tips and Tricks: Part 1**

### **Strategies to distract, redirect, and re-engage challenging school-aged program participants**

Christopher Johnson, Ney Nature Center

*Lower East*

A brief review of example situations of how school-aged students can disrupt the learning environment paired with short intervention style strategies to assist the program staff with minimizing the disruptive impact these behaviors can cause. Option to stay for discussion session for attendees to ask questions and discuss with the presenter more specific situations, concerns, and struggles. Participants are also welcome to attend only Part 1.

# SATURDAY OVERVIEW



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## DISCUSSION SESSION

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### **Challenges of Caring for Captive Animals**

Pam Welisevich, Animal Care Coordinator, Dodge Nature Center

*Lower West*

Join us for a round table discussion to share tips and discuss the challenges of caring for captive animals in an educational setting

### **MNA Seasonal Staff Survey: Moving Forward**

Julie Grecian, JEG Consulting

*Egret Room*

This discussion is only for seasonal employees and new naturalists to the field. We will review key takeaways from the MNA Seasonal Staff Survey and topics identified in the MNA conference concurrent session with all interested MNA Conference participants. Participants will discuss key topics in a small group setting with a commitment to productive and respectful conversations. Our goal will be to identify specific action items that can be shared with leadership at nature centers, ELCs and environmental organizations throughout the state. The goal of this session is to review opportunities, best practices, and barriers associated with the seasonal naturalist role, followed by identifying concrete ideas on how to move forward with respect to employees, organizational budgets, and collaborative staffing structures.

### **Tips and Tricks: Part 2**

Christopher Johnson, Ney Nature Center

*Lower East*

What are some specific incidences where you felt you didn't have the tools to handle disruptive behavior? Come prepared to problem-solve situations specific to your site and experiences. This discussion session is intended to follow the concurrent session, participants should plan to attend Tips and Tricks: Part 1 prior to this discussion.

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## WORKSHOP

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### **The Joy of Nature Journaling: Recipes to Connect, Inspire Curiosity, and Calm The Mind**

Mary Morris and Emma Chapman, Baker Outdoor Learning Center

*Egret Room*

Looking for a way to slow down and sink deeply into nature? Want to help your students and program participants zero in on the nature right around them? In this session, we will share some of the ways we have incorporated nature journaling activities into our personal and professional lives, in-person and virtually, and with both children and adults. After a brief introduction, we will head outside to “learn by doing” and share in a nature journaling session!

Pencil, paper, and clipboard will be provided, feel free to bring your own journal and journaling tools.

### **Introduction to Spinning Yarn**

Gael Zembal, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District

“Drop” in for a bit of fun! In this workshop you’ll learn the basics of spinning yarn on a drop spindle. You’ll start by making your own drop spindle to take home (if you can, please provide a wooden pencil with intact original eraser and/or junky CD you don’t want anymore). After that, you’ll learn about working with wool, drafting, adding twist, and plying. Fiber will be provided for practice and taking home. Perhaps it will help you put a new “spin” on your living history programs!

### **Around the Fire: Cooking at a Nature Preschool**

April Greibrok, Dodge Nature Preschool

*Lower West*

Experiencing a campfire with young children is a wonderful way to connect and build community. It is a time to talk, sing songs, share stories, read books, and maybe even share food that you’ve prepared on the fire. A campfire can connect you to your student’s family traditions. It can also be an opportunity to talk about how native peoples throughout history, on all continents, used fire.

# SATURDAY OVERVIEW



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## **SITE TOURS**

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Meet at the Aerie

## **CONCURRENT SESSION B**

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### **Customer Service for Everyone**

Jeff Boland, Dodge Nature Center

*Egret Room*

We know about plants and animals at a Nature Center, but what about customer service?

With visitors returning to our sites let's brush up on our interaction skills. Through both lecture and discussion participants will learn about how to prepare for and give all visitors a positive experience at their site. There will be strategies for handling upset visitors and participants will also practice different visitor interaction scenarios.

### **Drying Without Dying: Meet Some Resilient Mosses from Minnesota**

Theresa A. Clark, Postdoctoral Researcher UMN - Twin Cities

*Lower East*

Many moss lineages have survived through historical climate change. Some of today's moss species are primed for increasing climate stress due to their strong drought resilience known as desiccation tolerance. This adaptation for "drying without dying" may allow some species in the city and woods of Minnesota to continue "greening" our urban and rural ecosystems. Come learn the safe ways to "resurrect" dried mosses from Minnesota and view these beautifully intricate plants with a hand lens and microscope!

### **Geology Basics: Uncovering Mysteries of Earth's History**

Oakley Biesanz, Belwin Outdoor Science Center

*Lower West*

It is sedimentary, my dear Naturalist. I will link you up with my favorite geology presentations, and we will solve some rock layer mysteries using our sleuthing skills. Specific Minnesota examples of geological phenomena like volcanoes, oceans, and glaciers are covered and includes participant discussion/brainstorming.



# SUNDAY OVERVIEW



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## **MEMBER MEETING**

Check your email for the link!

Virtual via Zoom

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## **CONCURRENT SESSION C**

### **Paint By Nature: Creativity in Virtual Programs**

Mary Dybvig, Dodge Nature Center

Nature and art are two powerful forms of therapy, so when the pandemic struck, Dodge combined them into a series of five virtual nature painting programs. Using only a smartphone, simple video editing, and YouTube, we managed to broaden our audience in a time when on-site programming just wasn't an option. In this session, we'll go over how to create unique virtual programming that meets our mission of environmental education while attracting new audiences.

### **Understand Native Minnesota:**

#### **Improving the Native American narrative in Minnesota schools**

Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community  
Secretary/Treasurer

Understand Native Minnesota is a multifaceted strategic initiative and philanthropic campaign led by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community focused on Native American narrative change in Minnesota's schools. This campaign aims to improve public attitudes toward Native Americans by incorporating greater awareness and sensitive treatment of Native Americans, along with accurate information about their history, culture, and modern tribal governments into Minnesota's K-12 education system. Hear from Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Secretary/Treasurer and chair of the Understand Native Minnesota campaign, about the campaign's goals, programming and opportunities to get involved.

### **How To Be A Self-Employed Naturalist**

Elsa Litecky, Owner and Founder, EcoElsa LLC

Have you ever wondered what other job opportunities were out there for your naturalist skill set? Have you ever felt the entrepreneur bug to start your own business around what you love? I will outline for you the basics of getting started as a freelance naturalist and share with you examples from the last 3 years of starting and running my own environmental education business.

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## CONCURRENT SESSION D

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### **Assisting in Resiliency: Tools to Create Strength in Educators and Learners**

Livi Martin, Behavior Practitioner, Fraser

In the challenging year of learning virtual teaching and safe ways to reopen, both teachers and students are stressed. It can be particularly challenging for those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which is why techniques from applied behavior analysis (ABA) can be utilized for all learners. Learn the basics of ASD, and ABA to create resiliency in both students and teachers as we adapt to changing conditions.

### **Fostering Virtual Engagement, Even When You Don't Want To**

Britt Forsberg, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota

Like many organizations, the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program entered the world of online education kicking and screaming during the COVID-19 pandemic. While it seemed impossible to replace a community of learners and hands-on experience with nature with sitting in front of a computer, we tried some new things and some of them worked! In this session, we'll share some of our virtual engagement triumphs and failures and ask you to tell us what worked for you. We'll also discuss ways we can enter this new, brave world together and collaborate to bring Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers to your site.

### **Virtual Field Trips Post (?) - Covid**

Josh Leonard, Belwin Outdoor Science

After a year plus of doing 100% Virtual Field Trips, we are thrilled to see kids back in the woods and also to \*continue with online learning\* by applying our new tools in new ways. For 50 years Belwin has been a one-and-done field trip experience. Now we finally have the tools to integrate our field investigations into the classroom with authentic pre- and post-trip lessons that boost science learning while meeting social-emotional needs of urban learners preparing for a nature immersion experience. Learn about Belwin's plans for these new tools, and join in a discussion about how you and others plan to use virtual platforms going forward.

# THANK YOU!



**DODGE**  

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**NATURE CENTER**

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## **Conference Planning Committee**

Beth Beuch

Erica Northwick

## **MNA Board of Directors**

Tara Rogness - President

Becky Pollack - Vice President

Stephanie Rathsack - Secretary

Gael Zembal - Treasurer

Katy Jacobson - Communications Coordinator

Becky Rem - Conference Co-coordinator

Mary Burch - Conference co-coordinator

Rachel Giemza - Professional Workshop Coordinator

Savannah Maiers - Scholarship and Grants Coordinator

Emily Meyer - Member at Large

Erica Northwick - Member at Large



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