

LEXINGTON CHAPTER — April, 2016

<http://lexington.wildones.org>

Wild Ones Board of Directors

Officers

President	Beate Popkin
Treasurer	Tee Bergman
Secretary	Caroline Johnson

Members

Susan Cohn
Beverly James
Lee Meyer
Josie Miller
Nic Patton
Mary Turner

Committee Chairs

Finance	Tee Bergman
Membership	Linda Porter
Community Outreach	Linda Porter
Programs	Beverly James and Mary Carol Cooper

The Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones* meets the first Thursday of every month and at other times for special programs. Visitors welcome! Check our website www.lexington.wildones.org for details.

This newsletter is a publication of the Lexington chapter of *Wild Ones*. It is published nine times a year—March through November—as an electronic newsletter.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or information for future editions, contact Judy Johnson, newsletter editor, at judylex@twc.com.

President's Message...

Recently, when traveling in Germany, I visited the *Isle of Bislich*, a nature preserve on the lower Rhine River near the Dutch border. Until 200 years ago the Rhine, like any natural river, meandered through its flood plain and changed its course often. But since then it has become a major waterway serving several highly industrialized European countries. Its waters now move at high speed in a much narrower channel. The barge traffic requiring a straightened stream bed is immense and the dikes built to prevent flooding are ubiquitous.

As elsewhere along streams and rivers, awareness is growing that these engineering marvels have had a devastating effect on nature and efforts are afoot to rethink some of the “achievements” of the past. The sanctuary at the *Isle of Bislich*, started about 30 years ago, is among those efforts to renaturalize a portion of the Rhine’s banks. I learned that over 10 species of geese find habitat there. Some stay throughout the year, others migrate there from the north for their winter residence and others live there only during the summer, escaping the heat farther south. Many regionally extinct or rare birds have made a comeback, among them - to the delight of Germans - the iconic stork.

As I walked in the preserve on a well-constructed path cut through swampy woods and open water where ducks, geese and even a few swans lingered, I wondered how much management was needed to maintain this area as a bird sanctuary. Were there any invasive plants to be battled here? I took my question to the staff person at the welcome desk of the nature center near the preserve. Yes, she said, they do fight plants that would choke out desirables and reduce biodiversity. Among them is the *Traubenkirsche*, or “grape cherry” in translation, from North America. It grows into a large tree if you let it and birds spread its seeds everywhere. If you keep cutting it back, it grows into a dense thicket.

Hmm...the grape cherry from North America. I probably know that plant. What could that be? I had a suspicion and asked her to google for the scientific name. Sure enough, there it was: *Prunus serotina*, the very plant that Douglas Tallamy praises as one of our most ecologically productive trees. It is “a common member of both early successional habitats and mature woodlands. Its importance as a source of food for wildlife makes it a must in all but the most formal landscapes within its range.” (*Bringing Nature Home*, 2007, p.134).

In northern Europe, on the other hand, *Prunus serotina* is a thug, similar to our ornamental pear trees! Rarely have I become aware of a more convincing argument that plants should stay where they belong. Taking them out of their native environment, where they fulfill useful ecological functions, easily creates havoc in parts of the world where they may assert an unforeseen competitive advantage and go on a destructive rampage.

Beate Popkin



April 3 *Wild Ones* Property Tour and Picnic

By Beverly James

In December we marked the passing of *Wild Ones* member John Elling. Over the years John worked hard to exemplify the *Wild Ones* mission on his ten acre property in southern Fayette County. He created a native plant oasis that today includes a meadow of grasses and wildflowers, groves of various oaks and maples, a tree nursery and terraced landscaping and garden beds around his home. Our chapter has been invited to have a picnic and tour his property on Sunday, April 3 (details below).

John was very humble about his efforts in native plant landscaping. We hope you will join us to appreciate his contribution in creating native plant habitats and find some inspiration and ideas for our own landscapes. Bring your own sack lunch or snack and a drink.

When: Sunday, April 3, 1:30 p.m.

Where: 4601 Shelby Lane in southern Fayette County

(Google map: <https://goo.gl/maps/T7YALBpfyTJ2>)



Mark Your Calendar Now for the...

3rd Annual Bluegrass Birding Festival & Craft Fair



Saturday & Sunday, May 14-15
At McConnell Springs
416 Rebmann Lane, Lexington, KY 40504
www.bluegrassbirdingfestival.com

This event, cosponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited and Lexington Parks and Recreation, grows each year. Please note the new location at McConnell Springs.

There will be guest speakers and many entertaining and educational activities for families. Follow *Bluegrass Birding Festival* on Facebook for developments.

Items for the Conservation Silent Auction are also being solicited. Contact *Wild Ones* member Nic Patton at nic_patton@yahoo.com for more details.

Remember the dates—**Sat. and Sun., May 14-15.**

Urban Forest Speakers Offered Information and Insight

By Karen Lanier

FEBRUARY—Return of the Natives

In February Margaret Carreiro from the Department of Biology at the University of Louisville talked about using native plants to restore ecological systems in cities. She began by framing the impact humans have on their environment as an abundant and successful species that is undermining the Earth's ability to sustain us. Living in the new epoch known as the Anthropocene, we are able to look at our actions and understand the enormous rate of extinction due to our actions.

Carreiro's response to this reality is a conservation mindset that reaches beyond setting aside reserves and restoring degraded land. Reconciliation, a form of peaceful coexistence, recognizes that we are not separate from the natural environment, that nature isn't a place we visit on vacation but that we are *in* the places we transform. Carreiro teaches that we can do better than just planting to attract certain species. Rather, when we garden, we ought to think big and provide habitat enough to support entire populations throughout all life cycles.

A shining beacon that exemplifies restorative urban green spaces are the Cherokee Park Woodlands in Louisville. A tornado in 1974 opened up the wooded area and exotic species sprang up from the seed bank, previously kept in check by the tree canopy's shade. A public-private partnership championed a campaign to remove invasives and today children can spend hours in the park exploring native habitat and the wildlife it attracts.

Carreiro provided more examples of urban architecture and landscaping bringing in species whose habitats have otherwise been degraded, such as peregrine falcons, bats and chimney swifts. All of these provide their fair share of ecosystem services as well, which supports the idea of win-win ecology (also the title of a book by Michael Rosenzweig that Carreiro recommended as the authority on reconciliation ecology). In closing she shared findings on what matters most in terms of gardening for wildlife: vertical structures (trees, shrubs, herbs); mix of conifers and deciduous plants; native perennials; blooms across seasons; no pesticides; no outdoor cats; no night lights; gaps in fences for wildlife (check out <http://www.hedgehogstreet.org/>); and collecting citizen science data on a neighborhood scale.

MARCH—See the Forest for the

Dr. Dave Nowak with the U.S. Forest Service in Syracuse, New York, discussed a wealth of research on trends in urban forestry. The patterns of urbanization, energy consumption, air pollution and more impervious surfaces all predict that future development of urban areas in our country will completely consume available land. Some cities, like Atlanta, are already maxed out while lack of resources limit population growth in areas such as the desert west.

This trend illustrates why the urban tree canopy is a highly valuable asset for any city. However, Dr. Nowak pointed out that perceptions of value are subjective, varying from person to person and agency to agency. If a community perceives an urban forest to be valuable, its citizens will be more willing to invest in it.

Dr. Nowak identified the obvious benefits of an urban forest, such as shade and aesthetics. He also listed many intangible benefits. Less energy use, many positive effects on human health, reduction in crime rates, to name a few. On the other hand, costs must be weighed. Maintenance can be pricey, pollen can be an irritant, roots can damage sidewalks and, depending on a tree's placement, it can even increase energy costs, for example, blocking the sun's rays in cooler months.

Dr. Nowak believes we do not have sufficient urban canopies because Americans like grass. People spend billions of dollars a year on lawn mowing, often as frequently as once a week for six months. On the other hand, many people complain more about raking fallen leaves of trees for a few weeks each year.

Statistics show that tree cover has declined by 20,000 acres or 4 million trees per year in the U.S. Dr. Nowak sees change coming, however, driven by smarter designs in development, major climate change events wiping out forests and shifting species populations, insects and disease and invasive species. With all of these moving parts, intentional design of landscapes is important. In his words: "assess the resource, understand it, plan how to place the right tree in the right location, implement the plan and monitor it."

NOTE—A recommended tool, a calculator that evaluates various trees' potential benefits can be found at: <http://www.itreetools.org/>.

Street Trees Are Important to Our Urban Canopy

By Suzanne Bhattis

The face of a city is enhanced by its street trees, those growing in the public median between street and sidewalk and most obvious to the public eye. Lexington boasts over 53,000 street trees that fall under the oversight of the Urban Forestry Program. The program's personnel include Tim Queary, urban forester; John Saylor, arborist senior; and Rob Ballard, arborist technician.



Street trees are part of the city right of way and typically are planted by the developers of a neighborhood. Unlike their counterparts in many other cities, homeowners in Lexington are responsible for maintaining and, when necessary, removing and replacing these trees. There are a number of regulations governing such activities, including spacing requirements, clearance over sidewalks and streets and distance from regulatory signs and fire hydrants. These guidelines, as well as many good tips on planting, mulching and properly pruning street trees, are summarized on the city's website at <http://www.lexingtonky.gov/index.aspx?page=2883>. The website also includes lists of approved and prohibited trees (those that are weak or brittle and can therefore be hazardous or those that are “messy”, such as female ginkgo trees). Permit applications, available on the website, must be submitted and approved before either removing or replacing street trees.

Ice storms, disease and poor soil conditions in medians have taken a toll on street trees over the years and, unfortunately, many have not been replaced, resulting in loss of canopy cover within the city. To assist homeowners with the cost of tree replacement, the city sponsors a 50-50 cost-sharing program. Neighborhood sustainability grants are also available for community tree planting projects. Additional information on both programs is available through the website or from your council member or neighborhood association.

When choosing and planting a street tree, it is important to choose the “right tree for the right place.” For example, overhead power lines are an important consideration in tree size. Both Saylor and Queary noted that developments approved since the 1970s present narrower median strips which are more suitable for small to medium size trees. Larger trees, however, provide greater benefits overall in terms of absorbing air pollution, reducing storm water run-off, providing shade to cool homes and lower energy bills, countering “heat island” effects from city centers and providing habitat for wildlife. Queary encourages homeowners to consider planting larger trees directly in their front yards rather than in the median.

Both Saylor and Queary emphasize the importance of diversity in selecting street trees. In the past, neighborhoods were planted with a single dominant species, such as pin oak or pear, making them vulnerable to the spread of invasive insects or disease that can result in widespread loss. For *Wild Ones* members, choosing trees native to our area (which are in bold print on the list of recommended trees) is also an important factor in attracting butterflies, moths and birds to our yards. Native oak, elm, maple, hawthorn and beech support large numbers of caterpillars and other insects that are vital food sources for birds, while the ginkgo, although a lovely tree, supports very few. Similarly, our native flowering dogwood supports 117 species of moths and butterflies while kousa dogwoods support none. Interestingly, research from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center finds that chickadees are more likely to nest in yards with a greater number of native trees.

Tim Queary aptly states that unlike other city infrastructure, street trees are the city's only asset that appreciates in value over time. When chosen with care and properly maintained, they will enhance the beauty of our homes and our community as a whole.

Garden Prep 101 and Beyond

By Vicki Reed



Remember when eggs were said to be bad for you? Then good for you? Coffee was bad, then coffee was good. Like dietary suggestions, gardening practices seem to be ever evolving. When I began gardening, admittedly many years ago, the practice was to turn over the sod and let it decompose a few weeks, then plant. The plants did well. All of them, the weeds too.

The next recommended practice was the famous and much hated “double dig.” Strip off the top layer of soil because that’s where the weeds are, not to mention all the good organic stuff, then dig way down, removing soil to a tarp and mixing in a load of compost and/or peat moss. I think that time-intensive method alone discouraged many potential gardeners.

The newest thing now appears to be the no-till method. The theory is that you don’t want to bring up all those dormant weed seeds and you don’t want to pulverize the soil with a tiller, destroying all the good stuff (including worms chopped to bits) nature has spent years processing. So at a workshop I attended a few years ago the advice was to place black plastic over the potential garden bed. Then to cut Xs for plant locations and dig in those spots. Maybe mix in some compost and just pop in the plants. The plastic was then covered with mulch—pine straw, leaves or chips. Or just wait until everything under the plastic was dead, then remove it and plant.

The plastic definitely kept down the weeds but, personally, I hated using non-biodegradable material. I also hated the standard landscape fabric. While it might keep plants from springing up underneath, the weeds growing on top of it seemed to thrive. So I began using newspaper and broken down cardboard from boxes. That material killed the weeds just as effectively and, as a bonus, it conveniently decomposed over time. Another benefit of paper products was that worms and beneficial insects could still wiggle their way up and work the soil. You can now find paper landscape fabric that comes in rolls like the plastic fabric. (Check out Easy Gardener 701 Weedblock Biodegradable Paper Mulch 3 foot by 25 foot for \$14.99 from Amazon). Besides being more earth friendly it is more budget friendly as well.

The soil in the garden site may influence your choice of garden preparation. I had a spot down a fence row under some trees where, as the trees matured, the grass underneath was pretty much shaded out, although the ground was workable. One fall I raked all the leaves in the yard into the area under those trees. I even went around the neighborhood swiping bags of leaves left on the curb and dumping those under the trees, too. By the following spring all grass was gone and the soil was ready for popping in woodland wildflower plants. The plants flourished. Please note—if the soil is hard compacted clay, it will require more amendments, regardless of the selected method of ground preparation.

As a final word of wisdom I suggest resisting the urge to plant on a warm sunny day. No matter how much water is added after planting, sun can stress new plantings. A shady day right before rain is predicted is ideal. Or at the least plant very late in the day when the plants will have the cool dark hours of night to help them recover.



More News about Natives

By Caroline Johnson



The Arboretum Founders Lecture Series continued March 23 with a presentation by Winston Dunwell, UK Professor of Horticulture at the UK-REC (Research and Education Center), Princeton, KY. The Agricultural Experiment Station there was established in 1885 as the research arm of the College of Agriculture of the University of Kentucky, Kentucky's land grant institution.

Dr. Dunwell discussed his favorite native plants for Kentucky landscapes. His handout included 23 wildflowers and 24 "woodies" that he loves to photograph and grow on his own property. Some have been saved from a terrible fate when roads were widened or areas mowed down. He shared some lovely photographs of plants in full bloom or fall color that would make any plant lover covet them. He particularly emphasized propagation techniques for the plants he discussed. For listeners familiar with difficulties encountered in seed collection and preparation—his experiments with plants clarified what a battle it can be to get viable seeds in the first place, then store them correctly and achieve acceptable germination once planted.

Dr. Dunwell recommended the use of natives, that is, the cultivars of native plants. He also discussed native alternatives for exotic invasives such as amur honeysuckle, recommending use of viburnum or ilex, for example. Dr. Dunwell specifically mentioned the late Dr. Tom Barnes' blog for some great images and information: <http://www.kentuckynativeplantandwildlife.blogspot.com>

The presentation was enjoyable and reinforced understanding of the power of beautiful plants native to our state. Some in the audience may have never seen these plants in a home landscape or considered natives that might be available at nurseries. Dr. Dunwell offered new inspiration for gardeners beginning to think about the coming growing season.

Native Plants for All Seasons

On Thursday, April 7 at 6:30 p.m. *Wild Ones* members will gather to greet Alicia Bosela of Ironweed Nursery in Columbia, KY. She will offer a range of options for creating year round color and interest in the home garden with native plants. An overview will include uses of both specific plants and combinations for arriving at harmonious compositions. Handouts will be provided.

The meeting will be held at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 2025 Bellefonte Dr. Refreshments are ready at 6:30 p.m. and the presentation will begin at 7:00.



Bernheim Arboretum

Sat., April 16 from 10:00 a.m. to noon—Wildflower Stroll: Wildflowers of Rock Run—one of a series of walks to follow progression from bud to blossom. Engaging stories of adaptation, ecology, folklore and history. Members \$10; non-members \$12. Registration and payment required by 4 p.m. the day before event by calling **502-955-8512**.

Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Preregistration required for these hikes. Email info@floracliff.org. Suggested donation for each hike is \$5.

Sat., April 2, 11:00 a.m.—Wildflower Hike (Moderate Level)—Laura Baird will discuss natural history, folklore and other information about our early spring ephemerals.

Wed., April 6, 11:00 a.m.—Wildflower Hike (Moderate Level)—Floracliff naturalists will lead this hike.

Sat., April 23, 11:00 a.m.—Wildflower Hike (Moderate Level)—Todd Rounsaville of the UK Arboretum will discuss ecology, identification and cultivation of native wildflowers.

McConnell Springs

Sat., April 23, 10 a.m.—Weekend Workout—Opportunity to help clean up the park and maintain its trails. Call **859-225-4073** for details.

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary

Sat., April 16 and 24 at 1:00 p.m.—Spring Wildflowers—Come see the wonderful display of native wildflowers. Please call the park to register at **859-272-6105**.

UK Arboretum

Sat., April 30, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.—ARBOR DAY—Celebrating the Past and Planting the Future!