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Volume 11 , Issue 8

April 2016

CALENDAR

April

1-11	WWC Closed—April 1-11 Spring Break—Trails Open
15	Tiny Trekker Spring Series Registration Due!!
17	WWC Open 1-4 pm Guided Walk @ 2 pm
18	Tiny Trekker Spring Series Begins!
18	Wild Ones Program: Local Initiatives on the Grand River 6:30 pm
23	Celebrate Earth Day 10am—1pm @WWC
24	WWC Open 1-4 pm Guided Walk @ 2 pm

May

1	WWC Open 1-4 Guided Walk @ 2 pm
7	Fun on the Farm Day @ WWC Family Fun from 9am—12pm
8	WWC Closed—Trails Open Mother's Day
14	Stewardship Network Program: Identifying Wild Flowers 9:30 am
15	WWC Open 1-4 pm Guided Walk @ 2 pm
16	Wild Ones Program: Saul Lake Bog Preserve Tour 6:30 pm
20	Volunteer Applications for Summer Camps Due!
21	Volunteer Training for Summer Camps 1-2:30 pm @WWC
22	WWC Open 1-4 Guided Walk @ 2 pm *Volunteer Training for Summer Camps 1-2:30 pm @WWC
29	WWC Closed—Trails Open Memorial Day

JUNE

3	All Summer Camp Registrations Due!
5	WWC Open 1-4 Guided Walk @ 2 pm
10	Last Day of School!
12	WWC Open 1-4 Guided Walk @ 2 pm
13	Tiny Trekker Summer Camp Begins!
14	Junior Master Naturalists Summer Camp Begins! 9:30-3pm
16	Junior Master Gardener Camp Begins! 9:30-3pm



Celebrate Earth Day

April 23rd 10am—1pm

10:00 am—11:30 am Spring Nature Journaling & Phenology Observations Document the biodiversity of our nature preserve, practice sketching, make a phenology wheel and start recording your nature observations on Earth Day!

11:30 am—1 pm Invasive Species Removal & Garlic Mustard Pull The TEAM approach is encouraged for this event! Teams will be formed before we head out and can be Families, Scout Troops, or other interested community members. All materials and tools will be provided.

RSVP to ccheers@lowellschools.com!

Fun on the Farm Day!

Saturday, May 7th
9:00 am– 12:00 pm



Join us for a day of Fun on the Farm! Ever been eye to eye with a newborn calf? Want to pet a lamb? The Lowell High School FFA Chapter will provide you with these opportunities and more as you get a chance to get up close and personal with several of our barnyard friends. This FREE event is GREAT for families of all ages!

Summer Camp Info— page 4 & 5!

- ◆ Junior Master Gardener (grades 4th—8th)
- ◆ Junior Master Naturalist NEW! (grades 2nd—8th)
- ◆ Tiny Trekker Summer Series (parent/child class PreK—6)
- ◆ Teen & Adult Volunteer Opportunities!



Tiny Trekkers

Spring Nature Series

Mondays or Thursdays

April 18th–May 12th

Cost is \$20 per child for the 4-week series.
Spring Series Topics: Gobs of Galls, Get Growing, Magic Pond, Turtles at Home

2 spots Monday morning session - 10:00-11:30 am
10 spots Monday afternoon session - 1:00 - 2:30pm
2 spots Thursday morning session - 10:00-11:30 am
616-987-2565 or email rjohnson@lowellschools.com.

Registration deadline is April 15th!

CENTER HOURS

Mon – Fri 7:45-3:45pm
Saturday—Programs only
Sunday 1:00 – 4:00pm
(Some exceptions may apply)

Get Outside!

TRAILS ARE OPEN!

...dawn to dusk, 365 days a year



Trail Guidelines

For the preservation of our plants and animals and everyone's enjoyment: Please respect these rules.

- ⇒ Stay on the trails
- ⇒ No bicycles or motorized vehicles
- ⇒ Respect all living things, Do not pick wildflowers and plants
- ⇒ Water is OK, but please refrain from picnicking, eating or littering
- ⇒ DOGS ARE WELCOME ONLY IF THEY ARE LEASHED AT ALL TIMES. Please clean up all animal waste and dispose at trash bin by the barn. Waste bags are available at trail head.
- ⇒ Horses are welcome, only on the Corncob Corner Trail (prairie loop). Horse traffic is not allowed on the preserve or wooded trails.

Remember

You are nature's guest!

Thank You!

STAFF

Courtney Cheers—Director

Shelley Winkels—Naturalist

Susan Stanek—Naturalist

Nancy McIntyre—Naturalist

Shannon Goodwin— Naturalist

Shelia DeVries—Naturalist

Rachel Johnson—Naturalist

ccheers@lowellschools.com

Find us on facebook!

Around the Center ...

Community Garden Plots For Rent!

Since its birth, the Wittenbach/Wege Center's Community Garden has been sowing friendships, growing community involvement and raising an appreciation for the land. It's become a place for those without sunny backyards or balconies to still enjoy the benefits of gardening. Network with other gardeners, relax from the day's stresses and get active all while enjoying the benefits of being in the out-of-doors.

Your Plot Is Waiting...



The WWC is pleased to be able to provide members of the Lowell Community the opportunity to rent a Community Garden plot.

Plots are available in two sizes. Half plots are 10 feet by 12 feet (120 square feet) and are available for \$20. Full plots are 10 feet by 25 feet (250 square feet) and are available for \$35.

Each plot will be tilled at the beginning of the year when weather permits and has access to water. Gardeners are encouraged to provide their own tools but tools will be available during open hours.

Plots are limited. For more information, or to reserve your plot, please contact Courtney Cheers, WWC Director and Community Garden Coordinator, at 616-987-5-2565 or ccheers@lowellschools.com.

Seed Swap - Continues

Bring out any seeds you have to swap (or donate!). Seeds can be up to four years old and please don't bring anything you know isn't viable. Make sure all packets are labeled with the type and variety name (original packets are appreciated but not necessary). Even if you don't have seeds to swap, come on out. The WWC will have heirloom and traditional varieties available for a small donation. We are looking for native landscaping seeds and heirloom vegetable seeds. What do you have to swap??



Thank you!

- ◆ Thank you to the all the volunteers, Lowell Area Historical Museum and staff members that helped make Maple Syrup Days a success! We could not have done it without you!

Student Guides: Sara Kloosterman, Matt Bloom, Kyle Liddle, Logan Smith, Landon Smith, Gracyn Slagel, Dalton Fuss, Alex Rozell, Haley Kenkel.

Pioneer Sugar Bush Camp: Lowell Area Historical Museum, Gary Blough & Family, Joylee Zaagman.

Native American Sugar Bush Camp: Shelley Winkels, Shannon Goodwin, Rachel Johnson, Nancy McIntyre.

Pancake Breakfast: Shanda Jacobi, Jim Foerch, Sandy Rowland, Amy Sherman & Kids, Renee Orr & Kids, Kevin Nugent, Gray Ross, Hope Rummelt, Lena Clark, Nate Clark, John Clark, Tim Bergy, Shelley Winkels, Sheila DeVries.

- ◆ Thank you Jeff Chadderdon and Family for photographing Maple Syrup Days.
- ◆ Thank you Barb Armbruster for donating nature calendars, maps, and posters.
- ◆ Thank you Don Hutchinson for the cool bird nests and eggs, they are on display in the front entry.
- ◆ Thank you Lee Schab for donating several wildlife books to our library along with a globe and calendars.

Nature News: Be In The Know

The Stewardship Network:
West Michigan Cluster
<https://www.stewardshipnetwork.org/>



The Stewardship Network—West Michigan Cluster was formed in 2006 and is a collaboration of environmental groups, educational institutions, governmental organizations, and private citizens working to conserve and enhance our natural communities through ecosystem restoration and public education.

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Identifying Wildflowers Using **Newcomb's Wildflower Guide**

MAY 14, SATURDAY

9:30 am—12:30 pm

Hager Park, Jenison, MI

\$20 TSN Members, \$25 Non-members

- ◆ How To Design and Install A Rain Garden—A Hands-On Workshop

JUNE 18, SATURDAY

9:00 am—12:00 pm

Ken-O-Sha Park School

Grand Rapids, MI

\$10 TSN Members, \$15 Non-members



River city wild ones
Visit: www.rivercitywildones.org
for full program information

Upcoming Events

- ◆ April 18—Local initiatives on the Grand River 6:30 pm
- ◆ May 16—Saul Lake Bog Nature Preserve Tour 6:30 pm
- ◆ June 20—Michigan Wildflower Farm Tour 6:30 pm

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

Kent County
Conservation District
<http://kentconservation.org/>
Kent Conservation District Office
3260 Eagle Park Drive NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
Call 616-942-4111 x 100

Their mission is to protect and enhance the natural resources of Kent County. We accomplish this with voluntary programs available for private landowners in rural and urban areas, such as: habitat restoration assistance, Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assistance (MAEAP) verification, Farm Bill Programs, and technical assistance to all landowners.

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Spring Native Plant Sale
Native plant pre-orders due
5/6/2016

Along the Trail ...

Attention: Ecological Prescribed Burns at WWC

The Wittenbach/Wege Center and the Land Conservancy of West Michigan will be conducting ecological prescribed burns sometime between mid-April and mid-May. The WWC will be conducting a prairie burn and our target date is Saturday April 30. The Lowell Area Fire Department will be conducting the burn if weather conditions permit. This burn will be an important training opportunity for the fire department as well as an essential management technique for the prairie ecosystem. The Land Conservancy of West Michigan will also be conducting an ecological burn on the Wege Natural Area sometime between mid-April and mid-May. These may or may not take place on the same day.

Fire was a natural occurrence on the prairie landscape. Lightning strikes and fires set by Native Americans drove game, encouraged growth of nuts, berries and seeds for food, improved pasture for domestic and wild animals, protected villages and made travel easier for Native Americans and eventually, European settlers.

According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, it is estimated that when Michigan was first settled approximately 2.35 million acres were lightly timbered and contained large park-like openings called savannas, barrens or prairies. These were some of the first lands used for agriculture by European settlers because of the lack of trees and rich soil. With the invention of the steel plow came the disappearance of the prairie and fires that sustained them.

Nearly 15 years ago, a prairie was constructed at the WWC. In order to properly manage the plant community, fire is essential. Unburned prairies leave a mantle of dead and decaying vegetation which stifles growth and deprives the plants of space and light. Fires also help release nutrients in the dead vegetation so it can be used by the new growth. Additionally, burning will knock back invading shrubs and trees. After a burn, the blackened soil heats up fast by absorbing solar energy, thus stimulating speedy seed germination, sprouting and growth.

Typically prairies are burned every two to five years in the spring or fall. A few years ago, we did a burn to encourage wildflower production and control invasive species. We plan to burn the prairie again this spring, weather providing, in hopes of expanding the prairie and knocking back invasive species such as autumn olive, brome grass and spotted knapweed. Spring fires can be quite smoky due to the high amount of cool season grasses that have already greened up. We recommend leaving your windows and doors closed throughout the afternoon. The fire may also scare pets so you may want to keep them indoors as well.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you. We appreciate your understanding and continued support as we do our best to provide a suitable habitat for the plants and wildlife that call the WWC home. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to be notified the morning of the burn, please contact Courtney Cheers at 616-987-2565 or ccheers@lowellschools.com.

Find Out More... For more information regarding the prescribed burn on the Wege Natural Area, please read the attached letter from the Stewardship Coordinator and Land Conservancy. See the ways they help care for natural areas by visiting www.naturenearby.org. If you have questions, concerns, or would like to be notified the morning of the burn, contact Justin Heslinga (Justin@naturenearby.org / 616-451-9476).



GET OUTSIDE! Guided Sunday Walks— 2:00pm—FREE!

Join our Naturalists on Sunday afternoons for a themed hike. Participants should meet at the center shortly before 2:00pm **Registration is not required.**

**April—Spring Arrivals
May—Flowers and Prescribed Burns**

Wants and Needs...

The nature center would greatly appreciate donations of the following items, for use in environmental education programs or community activities at the WWC.

- **Barn boards or other building materials straight and in good condition
- **Wood chips or mulch for gardens and trails
- **Craft Supplies (paints, hot glue sticks, etc...)
- **Tree Cookies (2-3" diameter)
- **Donations to JMG and JMN Scholarship Fund— donations provide financial support for students to participate in summer camps.
- ** Teen & Adult Volunteers for summer camps, garden/trail maintenance & development, nature center projects

Please contact the center at 616-987-2565 or email Courtney at ccheers@lowellschools.com if you can help with any of the above wants and needs. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!



Summer happenings...

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER CAMP

Junior Master Gardener camp (JMG) is a youth gardening program in cooperation with extension. It engages students in "hands on" group and individual learning experiences that provide a love of gardening, develop an appreciation of the environment, and cultivate the mind!



All levels combine academic achievement, gardening, nutrient dense food experiences, physical activity, and stewardship engagement. All levels will meet on the same dates and participate in the same study trips and stewardship projects such as:

- Community involvement by growing fresh vegetables to donate to the F.R.O.M. Food Pantry.
- Building entrepreneurial skills by selling produce at the Lowell Farmers Market.
- Visiting local farms and businesses to better understand Michigan's rich agricultural contributions.
- Developing stewardship and leadership skills helping care for the WWC gardens.
- ◆ LEVEL 1— for campers entering grades 4, 5, 6 in the fall of 2016—Gardeners will explore the garden and nature while learning about plants and insects. Topics include: Plant Growth & Development, Soils & Water, Ecology, Insects & Disease, Landscape Horticulture, Fruits & Nuts, Vegies & Herbs, and Life Skills/Career Exploration in Agriculture and Natural Resources.
- ◆ LEVEL 2— for campers entering grades 5, 6, 7, 8 in the fall of 2016—Level Two activities are more in-depth focusing on plant growth and development with increased independent study and expanded experiments. **It's a great way for gardeners to build upon their plant knowledge and further develop their understanding of plant biology!**
- ◆ THURSDAYS, June 16—August 11, 9:30am—3:00pm (No JMG Camp July 5th)

JUNIOR MASTER NATURALISTS CAMP

Junior Master Naturalist Camp (JMN) is an 8-week nature discovery camp that will explore the plant and animal biodiversity of MI habitats. Each week campers will explore a different MI habitat and experience nature first hand!



Our camp leaders will guide students towards an awareness and appreciation of our natural world, using hands on activities, incorporating citizen science tools, developing team building and stewardship concepts, and encouraging individual growth in observation and outdoor skills. Acorns and Oaks will work together to create a field guide of the plant and animal communities of the WWC.

Each day will explore the following areas: Nature Journaling, Outdoor Skills, Stewardship Project, and Habitat Study.

- ◆ ACORNS—for campers entering grades 2,3, 4 in the fall of 2016—Acorns will explore nature while observing and learning about Michigan habitats.
- ◆ OAKS—for campers entering grades 5, 6, 7, 8 in the fall of 2016—Oaks will meet on the same dates and times as Acorns and will participate in all off campus study trips. Oaks activities are more in-depth focusing on habitat growth and development with increased independent observation and expanded experiments. **It's a great way for students to build upon their habitat knowledge and further develop their understanding of ecosystems!**
- ◆ TUESDAYS, June 14—August 9, 9:30am—3:00pm (No JMN Camp July 5th)

general information for Both Camps

- ◆ Contact Courtney Cheers to register at ccheers@lowellschools.com or 616-987-2565
- ◆ Each camp runs 8 weeks, hours are 9:30 am—3:00 pm.
- ◆ Camp fee is \$160 and include materials, supplies, and transportation to and from study trips.
- ◆ Campers will be responsible for bringing a sack lunch each day camp meets.
- ◆ Camp size is a maximum of 15 students per session with a minimum of 5 students per session.
- ◆ 4 points possible to earn each week with 26 points required to earn a certificate of completion
- ◆ No camp July 5 or July 7 (Week of July 4th)
- ◆ Registration begins April 11—Ends June 3!
- ◆ Student and Adult Volunteers are wanted for Summer Camps!
- ◆ Your Child's Safety: We are serious about maintaining a safe learning environment for your child. All program instructors are either employees of Lowell Area Schools or volunteers and have participated in criminal background and driving record checks. Activities involve working on uneven surfaces, bending, twisting and walking outdoors. Persons with limited mobility and sensitivity to the sun and heat should consider these factors. If individualized attention is needed for campers with special needs, please contact Courtney Cheers to discuss options.
- ◆ Scholarships Available—Financial support is available to help offset the registration cost. For students in the Lowell Area Schools District, the Lowell Education Association offers scholarships for elementary and middle school students attending academic summer camps. Applications are available in your child's school office.
Home school students and students attending from other districts requesting financial support, please contact Courtney Cheers for information on scholarships made possible through the generosity of donors such as the Lowell Showboat Garden Club.
- ◆ If your group or business would like to donate to the Summer Camp Scholarship Fund, please contact Courtney for more information.



Summer happenings...



TINY TREKKERS—Summer Camp Series

June 13, 14, 15, 16 (Rain Date: June 17)

10—11:30am OR 1—2:30pm

Tiny Trekkers is a nature program for children 3-6 years old and their parent, grandparent or care-giver. Cost is \$20 per child for the 4-day series. Children under 3 and homeschool families are welcome to attend. There is a \$10 per child fee for additional siblings over 3.

Topics: Field Study Fun, Rocks to Soil, Circle of the Sun, Fantastic Fishing

12 spots available for the morning session - 10:00-11:30 am

12 spots available for the afternoon session - 1:00-2:30 pm

Please RSVP by calling Courtney or Rachel 616-987-2565

or email rjohnson@lowellschools.com



Registration deadline is June 3th!
Space is Limited... Register Early!



Summer Volunteer opportunities



WWC is seeking Teen and Adult Volunteers for the summer!

Volunteers play a key role in our summer camps and stewardship projects. Please consider joining our team for the Junior Master Gardeners (JMG) camp, the Junior Master Naturalists (JMN) camp or Tiny Trekkers Camp! Opportunities also exist for Garden & Trail Stewardship Projects.

- ◆ *Teen and Adult Positions: Tiny Trekkers runs 4 days June 13-16 from 9:00am to 3:00pm each day.*
- ◆ *Teen and Adult Positions: JMG and JMN are both 8 week programs from June 14 to August 11th, with the week of July 4th off. JMN is held every Tuesday from 9:00am to 4:00pm, and JMG is held every Thursday from 9:00am to 4:00pm. You can join us based on your availability. Preferred availability is for a minimum of 4 consecutive weeks but not required.*
- ◆ *Teen and Adult Positions: Garden/Trail Stewards, Nature Center Projects: project and steward days will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the summer.*
- ◆ *Volunteers should have a love of the outdoors and an ability to interact well with children who are excited to learn about gardening and nature! We also ask that volunteers be comfortable participating in camp activities that involve working on uneven surfaces, bending, twisting, and walking outdoors.*
- ◆ *All adult volunteers will need to have a Lowell Area Schools background check prior to volunteering.*
- ◆ *Summer volunteers will need to attend one of our mandatory training sessions, which will be held on Saturday, May 21 from 1:00pm-2:30pm or Sunday, May 22 from 1:00pm-2:30pm.*
- ◆ *Volunteer Applications are Due May 20!*
- ◆ *If we have not described a position that matches your talents and interests, give us a call! All contributions of time, talents, and energy are welcome!*
- ◆ *To request a volunteer application for our summer camps or stewardship projects, please contact Courtney Cheers no later than Friday, May 20.*
[616.987.2565](tel:616.987.2565) or by email, CCheers@lowellschools.com.



Thank You!

Your next newsletter will arrive in MaY