

***SEEDLINGS, the Newsletter
of Kalamazoo Area WILD ONES,
Native Plants, Natural Landscapes***

January-February, 2013—Contents

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In January Prof. Binney Girdler Opens New Wild Ones Series on Threats to Biodiversity with Program on Causes & Consequences of Sixth Mass Extinction, Humanity’s Impact on Loss of Species

With the first program of 2013, Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones opens a new two-year series of programs on the theme of “Saving Native-Plant Diversity.” The first year will focus on “Understanding Threats to Biodiversity.”

For our first program in the series, Binney Girdler, Associate Professor of Biology at Kalamazoo College, will give an overview of the threat to biodiversity posed by human activities, in an illustrated talk entitled “Welcome to the Anthropocene: Humanity’s Lasting Impact on the World’s Biodiversity.”

Dr. Girdler will describe what scientists have begun to refer to as the Sixth Mass Extinction of Species, the unprecedented loss of biodiversity brought about by human activities. She’ll examine both causes and consequences of the loss of species, as well as solutions to help stem the tide of extinction.

The program will be at First United Methodist Church, 212 So. Park St., in downtown Kalamazoo, Wednesday, Jan. 23, at 7 p.m. Socializing and refreshments begin at 6:30; program begins promptly at 7 p.m.

The Kalamazoo chapter’s year-long series will continue in February and March with talks on “Invasive Plants and Their Impacts” and “How Climate Change Threatens Biodiversity.” Topics later in the year will include “The Impact of Habitat Fragmentation” (April), “Genetics of Native Plants” (October) and “The Future of Biodiversity” (November). All this, plus plant exchanges and some exciting field trips in spring, summer, and fall. For full information on the year’s schedule, go to www.kalamazoowildones.org.

The theme for the second year in the Biodiversity series will focus on how we can all contribute to saving native-plant diversity.

Binney Girdler is Associate Professor of Biology and Co-Director of Environmental Studies at Kalamazoo College. Her research involves studying the structure and dynamics of terrestrial plant communities. Specifically, she asks questions about the origin and maintenance of diversity in shoreline communities, grasslands, and forests. She also has an interest in applied conservation biology, and has developed relationships with area natural-resource agencies and non-profit conservation groups in order to match her expertise (and access to motivated students) with their research needs.

She teaches courses ranging from Environmental Science, to Plant Biology, to an upper-level course in Population & Community Ecology.

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Phyllis Higman Continues Wild Ones Series in February with Program on “Invasive Plants & Their Impacts on Biodiversity”

Our speaker for February, Phyllis Higman, will continue the chapter’s series on the threats to Michigan’s and the world’s essential biodiversity with a talk on “Invasive Plants and Their Impacts.”

Phyllis Higman is a Botanist and the Conservation Education Program Leader for Michigan Natural Features Inventory. She has 20 years of field-based experience studying Michigan’s native ecological communities and rare and declining species. She has studied invasive plants since 2005 and developed a long-term, statewide framework to assist the Michigan Department of Natural Resources—Wildlife Division with implementing a coordinated strategy to address them.

Phyllis is working to bring partners together across jurisdictional boundaries to build long-term capacity to meet the objectives of the framework. She has led the production of two Invasive Plant Field Guides. Most recently, she coordinated the development of standardized early detection mapping protocols that are integrated into the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN) and is currently working with partners to build a statewide Early Detection and Rapid Response Program for Invasive Aquatic Plants. For more information, see <http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/invasive-species/invasives.cfm#publications>

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Update on Wild Ones’ “Bring Back the Monarch Campaign”

WILD ONES CAMPAIGN TO SAVE MONARCH BUTTERFLIES IS WELL UNDER WAY—JOIN US!

by Ilse Gebhard

We’re Off to a Good Start! Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones project to join in a national campaign to restore the diminishing habitat for Monarch butterflies and save them from extinction has gotten under way with collection and processing of seeds for common, butterfly and swamp milkweeds and plans for germination and distribution of plants to local natural areas.

Most of the processed seeds have been distributed for germinating and growing

plants in three greenhouses, some already planted, some to be planted in the spring:

- Mike and Carol Klug will raise plants for a number of natural areas, like Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy preserves;
- Ann Fraser at Kalamazoo College will raise plants for the college's Lillian Anderson Arboretum;
- Chris Jackson and Steve Keto at WMU will raise plants for Asylum Lake, Kleinstuck Preserve, the Gibbs House, and various other locations on campus.

SO HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If we are going to make a real impact we all need to participate in at least one of the following ways:

- **Make a financial donation** which will support the purchase of plug trays, growing media, or plants. Contributions of any amount are welcome. Checks can be made out to Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones (KAWO) with a notation for Monarch Committee in the memo line;
- **Grow milkweed plants in plug flats** for events like the plant exchanges. There will be seeds and instructions available at the monthly meetings, or you can contact Ilse Gebhard at gebhard.ilse@gmail.com;
- **Join the Monarch Committee** we've set up for this project. If you'd like to be on the committee or would like to be contacted when we need help, please let Ilse Gebhard know. We'll need help with planting in the spring, and sometime this winter we'll need help with transplanting seedlings from seed flats to plug flats (this will be an excellent opportunity to see how native plants are grown in a greenhouse setting);
- **Plant milkweed in your yard** and register your yard as a Monarch Watch Way Station. Many of you have already done this, but if you haven't, this would be a great time to do so. Milkweed seeds and information on way stations will be available at meetings, or you can go to www.monarchwatch.org;
- **Motivate non-members to plant milkweed** on their properties, or share ideas with us on how to do that. Ilse Gebhard has a Monarch Power Point presentation that she has given to various groups. If you belong to a group or groups that are looking for programs, please let Ilse know.

This joint project of Monarch Watch and national Wild Ones is crucial to saving one of the America's favorite species. According to Chip Taylor of Monarch Watch, monarch numbers are down across the US, mostly because of habitat loss. The overuse of herbicides along roadsides and elsewhere is turning diverse areas that support monarchs, pollinators, and other wildlife into grass-filled landscapes that support few species.

Since milkweeds are the only plants on which monarch females will lay eggs and the larvae will feed, it's vitally necessary that we restore milkweeds and replace monarch habitats lost to development, roadside maintenance, and agriculture. And since adult monarchs need nectar to reproduce, this program also encourages the planting of nectar-producing native flowers.

The Bring Back the Monarch program's goals are to restore 20 milkweed species to

their native ranges throughout the United States. Wild Ones members and 50 local chapters will work at the "plants-roots" level to educate the public and to plant local varieties of milkweed.

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Hearty Thanks to All for Great Success of the First Annual Wild Ones Silent Auction & Potluck. We'll Do It Again in 2013!

By Judy Dircks

Thank you to everyone who made the November Pot Luck and Silent Auction both fun and successful. The food was delicious, the presentation interesting, and the silent auction profitable (**\$1,257**). How wonderful!

Members brought a very diverse selection of items to purchase. The items that brought the higher dollar amounts included a massage gift certificate, Hidden Savannah gift certificate, bee nesting box, bat box, basket of handcrafted soaps, bird houses, and several plant and gardening books. There were fine photographs and drawings, many framed prints, nature books for children, vases, holiday decorations, table runners, gardening tools, gardening gloves, gardening aprons, gardening slogger boots, an antique planter, window decals to prevent bird collisions, dragonfly sun catcher, suet feeder, native-bee nests, Audubon knapsack with books, padded-knee overalls, nature note cards, handmade-paper note cards, magnets, electric hot pot for instant tea or coffee, cosmetic bag with green-friendly travel pack, sustainable cookbook, handcrafted basket, handcrafted pottery bowl, and many other items.

It was a very attractive variety of nature-related items, and the resulting bids and donations did a lot to increase the chapter's treasury and our ability to spread our message and our support of native-plant restoration around the area. Our thanks to the donors, the buyers, and the many volunteers who helped; we needed and appreciate participation from all of you.

Maybe the listed items will provide good ideas for next year's **second annual** silent auction in November. Thanks again for making the evening so successful.

[**Editor's Note:** And heartfelt thanks to Judy Dircks for her enthusiasm and careful organization; that's what made it all possible, and successful.]

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A Few Statistics for Contemplation

The average American lawn: **1/3 acre (14,250 sq. ft.)**, using **522,720 gals** of water and **5-7 lbs** of pesticides annually.

17 million gallons: the amount of fuel, mostly gasoline, spilled each year while refueling lawn equipment. That's more than the oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez (or on the Kalamazoo River).

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A Message from the Chapter's Out-going Presidents

By Mike and Carol Klug

During the past summer and fall members of the Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones executive committee and committee chairs met several times to develop a vision for our chapter. From the discussions emerged a statement of the chapter's purpose and its mission: "To promote awareness and the practice of landscaping with native plants to restore and sustain biodiversity."

This vision will serve as a guide for future chapter programming, our partnerships with other organizations, and our community projects and programs.

We hope all of our members will reflect on how they can help our chapter carry out this vision. Making your friends and neighbors aware of the importance of landscaping with native plants at any scale would certainly be a good start. We can help you by providing resource material that you need, or you can direct your friends to our web site (www.kalamazoowildones.org). Perhaps the best way to introduce friends and neighbors to Wild Ones is by inviting them to attend one of our programs or field trips with you.

Becoming involved in one of our committees, or volunteering in other capacities, would also be a big help. We recognize that you all have busy schedules and most likely are involved in other community organizations. If your time commitments do not allow you to become more physically involved in our chapter's activities, you might consider providing additional financial support. Only \$11 of your \$37 annual dues are returned to our local chapter, and each year our expenses increase.

The two of us have thoroughly enjoyed our service as your co-presidents over the past two years. We will remain involved in the chapter in varying roles and hope to get to know more of you in the coming years.

We wish you a Happy New Year and hope to see you at next year's KAWO events.

[A Note from the Chapter's Executive Committee: Under the leadership of Mike and Carol, the Kalamazoo chapter has grown at a rate not equaled since the first two years of the chapter's life, and we're now the second largest chapter in the nation. We've undertaken several new projects, and we've accomplished a great deal toward reorganizing our committees and preparing for yet more challenges and tasks ahead of us. We're all very grateful to Carol and Mike for generous sharing of their expertise, energies, and ideas, and for their quiet, effective leadership.]

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A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

The Sky's the Limit

The Demanding Gifts of 2012

By Rebecca Solnit

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Rebecca Solnit is one of my favorite environmental writers; I'm particularly fond of her books *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape Wars of the American West*; *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*; and *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*.

The following is the introductory paragraph and the conclusion to her annual New Year's essay for TomDispatch, an "alternative to the mainstream media." For her full essay and more, see http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175632/tomgram: rebecca_solnit, 2013 as year zero for us -- and our planet/#more]

As this wild year comes to an end, we return to the season of gifts. Here's the gift you're not going to get soon: any conventional version of Paradise. You know, the place where nothing much happens and nothing is demanded of you. The gifts you've already been given in 2012 include a struggle over the fate of the Earth. This is probably not exactly what you asked for, and I wish it were otherwise -- but to do good work, to be necessary, to have something to give: these are the true gifts. And at least there's still a struggle ahead of us, not just doom and despair.

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As you gear up for 2013, don't forget that 2012 has been an extraordinary year. Who ever thought we'd see Aung San Suu Kyi elected to office in her native Burma and free to travel after so many years of house arrest? Who expected that the United Nations would suddenly vote to give Palestine observer state status? Who foresaw that the silly misinterpretations of Mayan prophesy would be overtaken by the Mayan Zapatistas, who rose once again last Friday? (Meanwhile, Canada's Native people started a dynamic movement around indigenous rights and the environment that has led to everything from flash-mob dances in an Edmonton Mall to demonstrations in Ottawa.)

Who thought that Occupy Wall Street, roundly dismissed by the mainstream on its one-year anniversary, would spawn two superhero projects, Occupy Sandy and Strike Debt? (Who among the police officers clubbing and tear-gassing the young Occupiers in 2011 thought that a year later these would be the people with the power and the generosity to come to their aid when a climate-fed storm wrecked their homes?) Keep it in mind: the future is not predictable. Sometimes, the world changes suddenly and in profound ways. Sometimes we make it do so.

Steven Spielberg's new film *Lincoln* is a reminder about what it means to fight for what matters most. Permanently freeing five million slaves and abolishing slavery forever meant renouncing a cheap power source in use for more than 200 years. Doing so was initially inconceivable and then a matter of indifference except to the slaves themselves and small groups of abolitionists. Next, it was daringly radical, then partisan, with the whole nation taking sides, the fuel for a terrible war. Finally, it was the law of the land. Today, we need to give up on, or at least radically reduce our reliance on, another set of power sources: oil, coal, and natural gas.

This is, among other things, a war of the imagination: the carbon profiteers and their politicians are hoping you don't connect the dots, or imagine the various futures we could make or they could destroy, or grasp the remarkably beautiful and complex ways the natural world has worked to our benefit and is now being sabotaged, or discover your conscience and voice, or ever picture how different it could all be, how different it will need to be.

They are already at war against the wellbeing of our Earth. Their greed has no limits, their imagination nothing but limits. Fight back. You have the power. It's one of your gifts.

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Quotation for Contemplation

We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own – indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder.

--Wangari Matthai, first African woman and the first environmentalist
to win the Nobel Peace Prize

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SEEDLINGS is edited by Tom Small and appears five times a year, with a few additional brief supplements. The next regular issue, **for March-April, 2013**, will come early in March. **Deadline for submission is Thursday, Feb. 27, 2013.** Please send submissions, comments, and suggestions to Tom at yard2prairy@gmail.com.