

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

What more substantial service to conservation
than to practice it on one's own land?

--Aldo Leopold

**Supplement
September, 2017—Contents**

• **CHANGE OF PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER:**
Sue Hodapp, Wild Ones member, will tell us about
her work to preserve and enhance natural areas
on the Kal-Haven Trail

- Lad Hanka Talks with Wild Ones on “Artists, Bees, and Natural Communities” for October Program
 - November Annual Meeting and Program Features Panel Discussion on Integrating Native Plants into Church Landscapes
 - “An Unusual Pollinator: Grass-Carrying Wasp,” by Ilse Gebhard
 - River City Wild Ones celebrates tenth anniversary Sept. 18 with Heather Holm
 - Quotations for Contemplation
 - Events Cancellation Policy
-



Cultural and Natural History

***Sue Hodapp Presents Wild Ones September 27
Program on Communities of the Kal-Haven Trail***

Wild Ones' scheduled speaker for September, Gretchen Hooker, is leaving the Kalamazoo area to return to Montana for her work with the Biomimicry Institute. Long-time Wild Ones member Sue Hodapp will take her place with a program on the Kal-Haven Trail, “The Cultural and Natural History of a Most Unnatural Nature Trail.”

Since 2011, Sue has led a group of Master Gardeners and Conservation Stewards in efforts to preserve and restore native plants on one of the most natural, unnatural sections of the Kal-Haven Trail. The project focuses on the area between F and G Avenues, where there are remnants of over 150 species

of plants, including many spring ephemerals such as trillium, wild blue phlox, and false rue anemone, with some red elder and alternate-leaved dogwood. Sue is also interested in the area from 48 ½ St. to about a half mile west on the trail, with wetlands that include skunk cabbage and a wide variety of ferns.

Sue’s study of the cultural history of the area helps her to understand the plant communities along the way—the peculiar mix of natural and unnatural. An old railroad line, the trail corridor was heavily disturbed by construction of the railroad, then largely left alone after that, to recover as best it could.

As she walks or bicycles the path, she can now read an unfolding story along the way. In her presentation for Wild Ones, she’ll share some of the trail’s stories—both natural and unnatural. She’ll also share what she and her crew of volunteers have done to protect and restore some of the species remnants on the trail.

One of her success stories is the long struggle to remove garlic mustard and the consequent return of native species from the seed bank. One of her frustrations is with the trail “maintenance” crews who mow down or uproot species she’s been working to restore.

If you use the Kal-Haven Trail, Sue will help you to experience more fully what’s along the way. She’s currently working with the DNR to designate the Kal-Haven Trail as a Michigan Heritage Trail, with informative signage about the towns along this 34-mile linear park, as well as its history and its natural features.

Sue Hodapp has been a member of Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones for ten years. She’s been a Master Gardener since 2005 and a Conservation Steward since 2011. She has a passion for history, natural history, and railroads.

We will meet **Wednesday, September 27**, at First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park St., downtown Kalamazoo. Socializing at 6:30; **program promptly at 7.**

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Artist & Beekeeper Lad Hanka Speaks to Wild Ones Oct. 25 on “Artists, Bees, and Natural Communities”

Lad Hanka, well-known artist, naturalist, printmaker, craftsman, beekeeper, and maker of books will speak to Wild Ones October 25 on “Artists, Bees, and

Natural Communities.” His program will feature a powerpoint presentation of his art and its relation to natural history, especially some of the work in which he collaborates with bees.

In his collaborations, Lad glues his etchings to wooden frames for beekeeping and places them into the hive. “Living bees,” he says, “sniff around and they start moving honeycomb around, and eventually they either chew up the artwork and spit it out or cover it with honey. I make a decision of when to pull it. There's a collaboration that happens. Bees have a brain the size of a pinhead, but there is something about the collective intelligence of the hive. I've seen a response that goes past an accident. But maybe it's not. Either way, I love beekeeping, like I love art. It's one of the ways I've enriched my life.”

Lad will also talk about one of his best-known recent etchings, “Kalamazoo River Songline,” a large work that incorporates images of plants and other creatures inhabiting the Kalamazoo River, the meandering course of which is central to the etching.

The etching “encapsulates much of what I've done over the last three decades I've been an artist,” Lad says. “It really is like the Australian tradition of the songline where you walk the landscape, and you sing to yourself where you've been and what it looks like and it somehow becomes your story. We all have a story of some kind. I tell my story through pictures, through drawing.”



“Destroying Angel,” a collaboration by Ladislav Hanka and bees

For Lad, environmentalist writers and artists are part of a lineage that serves the politics of the day because they transcend it and “the eternal war we seem to be fighting somewhere for some reason.”

“My subject matter,” Lad concludes, “will tell you where I find evidence of the divine. I love to fish and gather mushrooms. I cannot get enough of ancient trees and the way their asymmetries and gravity bring me back to a place of

profound stillness. The very idea that trees alive today were seeded at the birth of the old kingdom of Egypt and are thus as old as the written word itself, sets me free. I kneel at their roots and feel blessed.”

For more details about Lad’s presentation, see the October-December issue of SEEDLINGS.

We will meet **Wednesday, October 25**, at First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park St., downtown Kalamazoo. Socializing at 6:30; **program promptly at 7.**

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Annual Member Meeting November 15

Final Wild Ones Program of the Year Focuses on Integrating Natural Landscaping into the Mission and Practice of Area Faith Communities

The final program of the year for Kalamazoo Wild Ones, on November 15, will feature a panel discussion, “Having Faith in Native Gardens,” a follow-up to the June 17th field trip to five native-garden projects on the grounds of area churches. The five panelists will relate their experience of working with faith congregations to integrate the practice of natural landscaping into their sense of mission and service to the community.

At the November 15 meeting, panelists will talk about both the challenges and the benefits of this transition, both for the church congregations and for the panelists who championed the plantings. Our five panelists will tell you how they got started, what they learned, and how these gardens have changed the congregations and engaged the surrounding community. The panelists include

- Ann Klobucar Schoolcraft United Methodist
- Ruth Caputo Portage Chapel Hill United Methodist
- Tom Small Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Trish Joseph Skyridge Church of the Brethren
- Catherine Niessink People’s Church

Skyridge Church of the Brethren has adopted the following mission statement regarding their rain garden:

To care for creation cooperatively with mother nature in such a way as to increase biodiversity, reduce unsustainable lawn area, and educate ourselves and our community in the beauty and ecology of native Michigan

plants and wildlife. To provide an outdoor oasis – somewhere to retreat to for relaxation and quiet contemplation amidst our busy lives.

While all the churches visited by KAWO this past June have different perspectives, they share a common dedication to serve as stewards of nature.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) presents a somewhat different case in that Tom Small works with an organization, Community Organized Regenerative Earthcare (CORE), which has an agreement with the church pastor and congregation to transform the 5-acre church campus and the structure itself into a community center, developed according to natural-landscaping and permaculture principles. The focus is on providing healthy food, recreation, educational programs, wildlife habitat, and open space for the entire community. Dedication to serving the broader community is also something shared by all the churches the panelists work with.

The October-December issue of SEEDLINGS will provide more details about the projects and the panelists.

We will meet **Wednesday, November 15**, at First United Methodist Church, 212 S. Park St., downtown Kalamazoo. Socializing at 6:30; **program promptly at 7**. After the program, there will be a brief member meeting, with election of officers.

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Noticing An Unusual Pollinator: A Grass-Carrying Wasp

By Ilse Gebhard

The tops of the screens of our screened-in-porch are held in place from the outside by 2x4s. For years I noticed wasps were boring holes in the underside of these 2x4s. Having heard of wood-boring wasps, I never gave it another thought.

On a recent mid-July afternoon I laid back in my lawn chair to watch the hummingbirds come to the feeder just outside the porch. Between bouts of activity at the feeder, I used the binoculars to see what insects might be visiting the Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) in bloom also just outside the porch. There were several roly-polly bumblebees, an unidentified skipper, 2 snowberry clearwing moths, a monarch and lots of other small, flying or crawling pollinators.

The break in hummer activity also gave me a chance to look at the wasps using the holes in the 2x4s. They seemed to have long “ovipositors”, which in certain insects is an organ at the end of the female’s abdomen by

which she deposits eggs. It made sense that females would be using the holes for nesting sites. It was only when a wasp arrived carrying a dead blade of grass about 3-4 inches long that I started to wonder about those long ovipositors.

A quick trip inside to the computer, searching for “wasps, nest, grass lining,” gave me the answer: a Grass-carrying wasp, *Isodontia mexicana*, most likely. Native to North America, the adult is about ¾ inch long, has a thread-waisted black body and visits flowers for nectar—a pollinator! These non-aggressive, solitary wasps build their nests in hollowed branches or other natural cavities, often reusing the nests of other species. They line the inside with grass or other plant fibers.

I. mexicana mainly preys on tree crickets, carrying them to her nest where she then lays one or more eggs. When the eggs hatch, the emerging larvae will feed on the living, but paralyzed prey. The wasp larvae spin cocoons and the late summer generation overwinters at the pupal stage, to emerge as adults in spring.

For information on providing nest sites for many of our native bees and wasps see:

www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/nests_for_native_bees_fact_sheet_xerces_society.pdf

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River City Wild Ones Celebrate 10th Anniversary Sept. 18 with Heather Holm as Keynote Speaker

The River City Wild Ones Chapter in Grand Rapids will celebrate their 10th anniversary Monday, Sept. 18, at 7 p.m., with Heather Holm speaking on “Attracting Bees and Beneficial Insects with Native Plants, Shrubs, and Trees.”

The meeting will be at Calvin College’s Covenant Fine Arts Center, 1795 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids. Parking is free in Lots 9, 10, or 11. Registration is encouraged at <https://rcwo-10th-anniversary.eventbrite.com>.

Heather Holm is the author of two popular books, *Pollinators of Native Plants* and her new book, *Bees: An Identification and Native Plant Forage Guide*. If you missed Heather when she was in Kalamazoo, this is your chance to hear her as well as to join in the celebration of our “sister” chapter, begun 10 years ago by members of the Kalamazoo Area Chapter who had been commuting from Grand Rapids until they were ready to start their own chapter.

Our congratulations on a very successful ten years and our best wishes to River City Wild Ones for the future.

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Quotations for Contemplation

By observing well enough to draw something, one learns to identify weight-bearing structures, begins to understand the lines of force, and discern the relationships among objects. For me, it begins with field studies; going out in the cold and heat, dealing with biting insects—sketchbook in hand, learning to draw the twists and turns characteristic of a cedar or the unique ways in which only a bur oak branches . . . As these structures and their visual clues become second nature, I take this growing work into the studio and begin to invent plausible creatures who fit into compositions with symbolic content.

--Ladislav Hanka

There is no such thing as an individual within biology. Instead, the fundamental unit of life is interconnection and relationship . . . Without interconnection life ends.

--David George Haskell, *The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors* (2017)

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Events Cancellation Policy

If the weather is questionable and you're wondering whether a Wild Ones indoor program is canceled, please watch WWMT Channel 3 for a cancellation announcement of our program. If time permits, an e-mail cancellation notice will also be sent to members. Field trips and plant exchanges are held rain or shine and canceled only in severe weather: i.e., raining cattails and dogwoods, mit donner und blitzten.

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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 **October-December**, will come early in October. **Deadline for submission is Saturday, September 30.** Please send submissions, comments, and suggestions to Tom at yard2prairie@gmail.com.

For more information and news, check us out at www.kalamazoowildones.org and www.facebook.com/KalamazooAreaWildOnes