

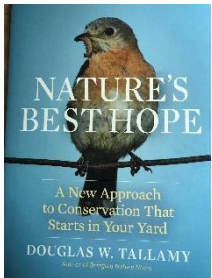
Friends of Nerstrand Big Woods State Park

Newsletter July 2020

AT THE PARK NOW

It's great to get outdoors, but be aware that our park is experiencing record crowds and social distancing may be difficult or impossible. The visitor center is closed and park staff are spending most of their time directing traffic. The parking lot holds 75 cars, and once full, additional visitors are being turned away in order to protect park resources. As if that isn't enough, recent heavy rains have again made trails muddy and the creek crossing may be closed. For the latest conditions, go to https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00241#homepage or call the office at 507 384-6141.

BOOK REVIEW by James Haefmeyer



Nature's Best Hope: A new approach to conservation that starts in your yard by Douglas W. Tallamy (Timber Press 2019)

Nerstrand Big Woods State Park provides critical habitat for many plants and creatures. It is one of the few areas with dwarf trout lily. In late August we watch monarchs flock to the prairie as they start their long journey to winter in Mexico.

Yet, as entomologist Douglas Tallamy argues in his latest book, places like our park are not enough. He writes "...we need to restore habitat to our home landscapes, to our corporate landscapes, to our municipal parks, and to as much of our infrastructure as we can, because our parks and preserves are not large enough to do the job alone." He cites studies showing that fragmented ecosystems may not sustain species, particularly in a bad year, such as with a drought.

He advocates a "Homegrown National Park." He shows that mowed grass lawns and nonnative landscaping plants do not sustain the insects necessary to feed birds. Many birds rely on caterpillars to feed their young. Many caterpillars require specific plants to feed. As we know, the monarch caterpillar thrives on milkweeds, which are not eaten by many other insects because the sticky sap can gum up their jaws. Monarch caterpillars can get around that problem by going down the leaf to make a nick in a vein to divert the sap, and then crawling back out the leaf to eat. This is one of many examples of very specific adaptation to native plants.

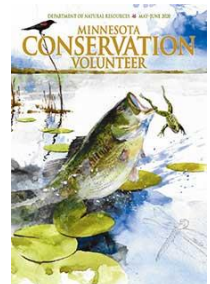
Tallamy is not expecting that we will eliminate our lawns. He wants us to use sections of our lots for native plants and trees, and to leave the ground below them with enough uncompacted soil and debris to allow larvae dropping from trees to survive. He cites particular keystone genera of native trees and plants to provide food spring through fall. These include native oaks, cherries, willows, birches, cottonwoods, and elms, as well as goldenrods, asters, and sunflowers.

You Tube has a lecture that Tallamy gave in Iowa (Hope for the Wild 2019) that summarizes his research well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om4gKdODCwg> This video is about an hour long, but extremely informative and well worth your time.

The National Wildlife Federation maintains a Native Plant Finder website for specific geographic areas, showing the butterflies and moths that they attract. Go to <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Plants>

IN THE NEWS! Our park was featured in the May-June issue of the Conservation Volunteer, in an article about climate change impacts on state parks. Follow this link to read it.

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/issues/2020/may-jun/forest-climate.html>



7/1/2020 See our website at <https://friendsnerstrandbigwoods.org/>

MEET THE NEW MANAGER

Laurel Quill took the reins at Nerstrand Big Woods State Park on October 16th last year, replacing long time manager Elaine Feikema, now retired.

Laurel has most recently served as the Customer Service Director for the Fort Snelling Visitor Center where she was responsible for retail management, visitor engagement and safety, and accessibility and as well as many other duties. Prior to working at Fort Snelling, Laurel was a Medical and Professional Relations Officer for the Department of Employment and Economic Development. Her first job at the DNR was as a NatCorps interpretive naturalist at Fort Snelling State Park in 2015.

Laurel holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Sustainable Forestry from Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina. She has published research experience with rare and threatened plants in North Carolina and has worked in a variety of natural resource/forestry positions in Minnesota, North Carolina and Alaska. Coupled with her forestry and customer service background, Laurel is well-suited for the remnant big woods ecosystem and the challenges and opportunities at and around Nerstrand. Laurel is recently married and enjoys gardening, camping and reading in her spare time.

DID YOU KNOW?

Monarch butterflies flying now are Generation 2, the grandchildren of the ones that overwintered in Mexico. Watch for eggs on your milkweed!



HELP WANTED

With the recent heavy use, the park's trails and structures that were in need of repair even before the pandemic are now further degraded, and park supplies have been depleted. The park has been a welcome and much needed diversion for many in these difficult times, but the near future is sure to bring deep budget cuts due to reduced state revenue and expenses related to the pandemic and social unrest.

Here are some ways that you can help.

1. Become a member of the Friends group, renew your membership or just make a donation. Your donation is tax-deductible and the Friends group will use the money to help the park acquire the things it needs. To donate online, go to <https://www.parksandtrails.org/friends-groups/meet-friends/nerstrand/donate/>
2. Make a donation to the park gift account. To do this, send a check directly to the park at 9700 170th Street East, Nerstrand, MN 55053. Be sure to include a note containing your first/last name, address and a statement that this is a gift to the park without conditions. Park staff can use this to buy things they need.
3. Donate your time. At some point, when park staff has a little more time to spare, we will be looking for volunteers to help fix things up. To volunteer with the Friends, please email woodstomp@northfieldwifi.com

2020 PLANNED EVENTS – status subject to change

July 18 – Art for Kids/Ice Cream social CANCELLED

Sat Aug 22 10:00 am- Monarch butterfly program

Sat Aug 29 1:00 pm- Monarch butterfly hike

Sunday Sept 20- Friends Annual Meeting and Community Supper

Watch our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/nerstrandbigwoodsfriends/> for updates on these events and park information.

7/1/2020 See our website at <https://friendsnerstrandbigwoods.org/>