



FRIENDS *of* Retzer

FRIENDS OF RETZER NATURE CENTER

SUMMER-FALL, 2019 NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Fall Events

Apple Harvest Festival – Mark your calendar for **Saturday, September 21st** (9am until 4pm) and join us for a fun day at the nature center. Activities will include the popular Passport Expedition, craft beer garden, vendor booths, live music by Apple Jam, and of course, lots of apples and apple products. Once again, the Friends will be organizing hayrides, a used book sale, a children's Reading Corner, and a silent auction. Your membership card gets your car in for free (and saves you \$10).

Retzer History Night – A photo essay presentation on the history of Retzer Nature Center will be held on **Monday, October 14th**, from 6:30-8:30pm. The nostalgic event will include personal insights on Florence and John Retzer by Larry Kascht, David Steingraber and Bill Jordan. Admission and refreshments are free.

Howl-O-Ween – Back by popular demand, Retzer Nature Center's Howl-O-Ween event is slated for **Friday, October 18th**, from 6:00-8:30pm. Come in a costume if you'd like, and enjoy an evening of family friendly activities: guided night hikes, crafts and games for kids, planetarium shows, DJ music, munchies and beverages, and a warm campfire. Admission is \$15 per carload.

Science Fest – This educational event is set for **Saturday, November 2nd**, from 1:00-4:00pm. Several hands-on, "citizen science" activities are planned, plus a planetarium show. Admission is \$4 per person or \$15 per family, but free for Friends of Retzer members.

Recent Activities

Spring Annual Meeting -- This year's guest speaker was Waukesha County Parks and Land Use Conservation Biologist, Julia Robson. Julia came to love the natural world through her upbringing in Florida. She completed her graduate degree at UW-Milwaukee plus seven years of professional work in southeastern Wisconsin before beginning her current career assignment a year ago. She has management oversight of numerous ecological restoration activities in the undeveloped areas of Waukesha County's 9000 acre park system, and has worked tirelessly on organizing and implementing a county-wide citizen science program, which she launched late last fall with a series of "Wild in Waukesha" training sessions.

Julia’s presentation highlighted historic citizen science activity in the U.S. (e.g. Christmas bird counts during the late 1800s and butterfly counts in the 1970s) which has expanded to critical contemporary programs (e.g. the North American Breeding Bird Survey and monarch butterfly migration watch). She underscored the idea that “real people collecting real data can make a real impact,” as valid natural resource management decisions depend on accurate long-term monitoring records. In Wisconsin, the statewide citizen science program was established in 2004 and currently embraces nearly 200 ecological projects. Here in Waukesha County, prairie burns, invasive species removal, and reforestation are among the hands-on ecological restoration activities planned by her team of volunteers. Among the data gathering projects, a six-month wetland monitoring project is currently underway involving forty monitoring locations and six dozen registered volunteers.



Annual speaker Julia Robson

As a prelude to Julia Robson’s presentation, Waukesha County Landscape Architect Jason Wilke offered a photo summary of Retzer’s Adventure Trail Rejuvenation Project, which will include new opportunities for active learning, natural art, and habitat play. He thanked the Friends of Retzer organization for our major contribution to this three year project.



Kohl's Cares Volunteer Events – Beginning this past May, several summer volunteer service activities were organized by Kohl's management leaders in collaboration with conservation biologist Julia Robson and her staff. The corporation's past and current commitment to improving the quality of Waukesha County's parks and supporting major Friends' projects at Retzer Nature Center is deeply appreciated!

Shown below are a hearty volunteer group of tree planters and garlic mustard eradicators in Menomonee Park.



Indoor Animal Enclosure Improvements –

Finally! The new animal enclosures are now completed in the nature center lobby, thanks to MK Kelly's tireless oversight of the project. Peaches (the snake) can now enjoy a more natural horizontal home, and visitors can marvel at the impressive display cases housing the fauna.



Maintaining Central America Connections

Cuba Natural History Tour – Board member David Block recently teamed up with Costa Rican naturalist and guide, Carlos Chavarria, on a first-time natural history tour of Cuba. The 11-day April trip included tours of the tobacco growing and “mogote” cave region of Vinales, the vast wetlands and Bay of Pigs shoreline of Cienaga de Zapata National Park, the montane forests of Topes de Collantes National Park, and the coastal shores of Cayo Santa Maria. The historic Spanish cities of Trinidad and Havana were also toured. Pending U.S. government approval of future travel to the island, an encore venture to Cuba is under consideration for spring of 2020.

Row 1: Carlos Chavarria flanked by Cuban tour leaders Tania and Mariana; enthusiastic hikers and bird watchers
Row 2: Several endemic birds were sighted, including the Cuban pygmy owl and world smallest bee hummingbird
Row 3: Beautiful natural scenos of Vinales limestone mogotes, Topes de Collantes montane forests, and Bay of Pigs
Row 4: Visiting an organic farm and tobacco operation; touring Cienega de Zapata National Park on horseback
Row 5: The group toured several historic cultural sites, and took on Old Havana by foot and vintage taxi.





Costa Rica Summer Adventure – Co-led by Larry Kascht, The Friends also partnered with Milwaukee’s Urban Ecology Center on a 12-day jaunt to Costa Rica in early August. It was our first scheduled summer trip to that country, with hotter weather purposefully traded for the opportunity to view nesting sea turtles on the Caribbean coast and breeding humpback whales along the Pacific coast.

What’s on tap for 2020? – An exploration meeting regarding possible natural history trips in 2020 is scheduled for **Monday, September 30th, at 6:30pm**. Among the destinations being considered for a return visit are Cuba, Belize, and Alaska/Yukon. We will also explore some new possible tour targets, e.g. the Galapagos Islands. Come and learn more about each opportunity.

Membership Renewal Reminder

If you need to renew your Friends of Retzer membership, you can do so either by mailing a check to the Nature Center, stopping by at the front desk, or paying via our website at: www.FriendsofRetzer.org. Membership helps us support vital projects and programs at the Nature Center, and provides discount benefits to those on the membership list. Many thanks!

Membership Levels:

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| \$ 20.00 Hummingbird (Individual) | \$ 75.00 Owl (Donor) |
| \$ 25.00 Robin (Family) | \$ 100+ Eagle (Donor) |
| \$ 50.00 Cardinal (Donor) | |

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