



FRIENDS *of* Retzer

FRIENDS OF RETZER NATURE CENTER

FALL, 2021 NEWSLETTER

Recent Summer Activity

- Recent summer activities at Retzer have included formal scout merit badge programs and butterfly and moth identification workshops. A weeklong *Master Naturalist Training Course* was held in late July, featuring presentations on Wisconsin water and wetland habitats, remnant native plant communities, and human impacts on the regional landscape. Outdoor workshops included site surveys of butterflies, moths, pollinators, snakes and bats. The course attracted twenty participants from around the state.



Participants observed numerous presentations by expert naturalists, moderated by Retzer Supervisor Janet Barthel

- The *Green Alliance Sustainability Fair* was held outdoors at Retzer Nature Center on Saturday, August 28th. Organized by the Waukesha County Green Team, the event featured numerous eco-vendor displays and demonstrations, plus a guided hike, a scavenger hunt, and a visit to the planetarium. Powered by a bright sun and high temperatures, attendees were able to learn more about the clean energy revolution, explore sustainable practices for a healthier life, and consider one's imprint and impact on the planet.
- Progress on the Discovery Trail continues, with a late summer completion of Phase 1 right on schedule. Ultimately, the outdoor learning area will embrace the theme, "Connect-Explore-Engage". Meanwhile, boardwalk planks await personalized messages. For more information, check out the following link: <https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/landandparks/park-system/donate/>
- Our long postponed Friends-only *Night of Nostalgia* event, featuring a memorable celebration of past Central America and Alaska natural history tours plus a vintage oldies rock performance by the "Time Travelers – Just Arrived From 1969" team of Larry Kascht and Bill Kotlarek, was held on August 20th. The event drew a crowd of fifty, and included a snack supper, refreshments, a music trivia contest prepared by Larry Kascht, and a slide presentation of memorable wildlife, natural wonders, and cultural sites from past ventures to Costa Rica, Panama, Belize, Cuba and Alaska prepared by David Block.



"Night of Nostalgia" attendees were entertained by two hours of '60s oldies sung and strummed by Larry and Bill



Veterans of past Friends trips to Alaska (left)... and Belize (right) gathered for a group photo



Veterans of past natural history treks to Panama (left)... and Cuba (right) posed for their group shot



Costa Rica trip vets

Upcoming Programs at Retzer

- *Apple Harvest Festival* is a “go” for **Saturday, September 18, from 9am-4pm**. The popular event, sponsored by our Friends organization, will include a story hike, scarecrow lane, “Be An Eco-Friend” passport expedition, silent auction, children’s book sale, live music, Delafield Brewhaus beverages, self-guided family hikes, and of course, all sorts of apple products to purchase and sample.
- We’re hoping to schedule a Friends-only bird banding workshop in mid-October. Stay tuned...
- *Science Fest* is set for **Saturday, November 6, from 11am-2pm**. The event will include table displays, a citizen science lab, a *Mad Science Show* at the planetarium, and other activities centered around an “Under the Lens” theme. The event is sponsored by our Friends organization.

“A Look Back With an Eye to the Future”

As members of the *Friends of Retzer*, have you ever wondered how your support for the organization has made an impact on Retzer Nature Center through the years and how we hope to maintain our vital connection to this wonderful facility in the future? In recent months, this very question has generated discussion among Friends Board members, notably since a year of pandemic funk has motivated us to look back at past organizational achievements while reaffirming our vision for future initiatives and commitments.

To this end, Digital Media Coordinator, Andi Kornowski, has spearheaded a *Friends Story Project* whose goal is to provide a photo essay of key events and accomplishments in the past and present life of our organization. You can check out her project-in-progress as a film loop in the nature center lobby and on our Friends of Retzer Nature Center Facebook page.

Needless to say, the *Friends Story* highlights several project and program milestones in our past, some tied to one-time funding and others tied to ongoing support. In reasonably chronological order, we’ve compiled a retrospective list of notable achievements over the past 25 years. Whether you’re new to membership or a long-time member with a nostalgic bent, we hope you’ll enjoy our TOP 25 list!

1. Way back in 1995, \$6200 was donated by the Friends for construction of the handicapped-accessible Adventure Trail at the nature center.
2. In 2005, the Friends raised \$261,000 in donor support for construction of the building addition to the Retzer Environmental Learning Center. The Friends were major contributors to the total project cost.
3. In 2007, the Friends donated \$2000 for all supplies needed to construct the west patio pergola.
4. From 2010-12, \$36,400 was allocated for implementation of Retzer’s amazing *Prairie Underground* indoor exhibit, which features a wall mural commissioned by wildlife artist Scott Zoellick and interactive displays depicting underground animal habitats.
5. In 2011, \$35,000 was donated for restoration of the nature center’s *Teaching Pond*. A liner was added to the pond bottom to maintain water levels and make the pond usable year-round. Docks and tables were added for access and onsite investigation.
6. In 2012, the Friends procured \$28,900 for construction of the *Night Sky Observation Patio*. The project cost included installation of a telescope platform and a fire pit.

7. In 2014, \$50,000 was donated for the professional design and installation of new *interpretive trail signage* throughout the nature center's trail network.
8. In 2015, \$4500 was allocated for purchase of tools and supplies used by *Kohls Cares* volunteers at scheduled events at Retzer and other county park sites.
9. In 2016, \$6000 was invested in the total upgrade and redevelopment of the Friends of Retzer website.
10. In 2017, \$2600 was allocated for purchase of a *Digital Observation Technology Skills field study kit* for outdoor educational programming. The kit contains a microscope that displays real-time on an I-pad, a laser thermometer, and other outdoor diagnostic tools
11. In 2017, \$1700 was allocated for a new *Teaching TV* in the learning center and for purchase of *Badgerland Birding videos* featuring Retzer Nature Center.
12. In 2017, \$11,000 was donated for the *Horwitz-DeRemer Planetarium's major audiovisual upgrade* to its programming system. The new Digistar digital projection system is a state-of-the-art marvel!
13. In 2019, \$27,500 was awarded to Waukesha County Conservation Biology staff for purchase of *Citizen Science Equipment* in support of their major natural resource monitoring and management program. The equipment and supply list included bat echo meters, bird song meters, trail cameras, binoculars, hip waders, chest waders, head lamps, aquatic funnel traps, dip nets, insect nets, turtle hoop net traps, snake cover boards, and more!
14. In 2019, \$6000 was allocated for much-needed reconstruction of *animal enclosures* in the learning center lobby. Snakes now have flatter, longer spaces to move about instead of vertical enclosures.
15. In 2019, \$650 was invested in a new water filling station in the learning center's front lobby.
16. In 2019, the Friends of Retzer received the Waukesha Education Foundation's Community Award, given in honor of our organization's support of local school ventures at Retzer and technology upgrades at the planetarium.
17. In 2020, \$5500 was allocated for purchase of *citizen science supplies* (e.g. bird and bat monitoring devices) for a collaborative workshop involving Retzer naturalists and colleagues in Central America and the Caribbean. Funding includes a formal presentation in Cuba by Waukesha County's Conservation Biologist.
18. In 2020, \$45,000 was donated to Retzer for completion of the new *Discovery Trail* project.
19. In 2020, \$10,000 was donated for construction of a *planetarium lobby renovation exhibit* featuring an International Space Station view of our planet.

In addition to these one-time resource investments, we've offered ongoing support for the following:

20. \$11,000 has been budgeted annually for *sponsorship of Retzer Nature Center events*, such as Apple Harvest Festival, Wild Winter Night, Howl-O-Ween, Earth Week at Retzer, and Science Fest.

21. \$1000 has been budgeted annually in partnership with the Programme for Belize for support of an overnight *tropical ecology educational outreach program* for school kids at La Milpa Field Station.
22. \$500 has been budgeted annually in support of *naturalist guided “add-on” programs* for Waukesha Public School District classes attending scheduled planetarium presentations. Additional funds have been granted each year to teachers requesting support for field trip transportation to Retzer.
23. What’s more, for two decades the Friends sponsored and provided awards for an annual photo contest featuring the best of Retzer’s flora and fauna.
24. In addition, the Friends have offered honoraria to guest speakers at annual membership meetings and periodic special events.
25. And finally, since 2012, members of the Friends Board have planned, prepared and led participants on thirteen *natural history tours* to Costa Rica, Belize, Panama, Cuba and Alaska.

So there you have it. Twenty-five reasons to celebrate 25 years of active support for projects and programs at Retzer. We truly appreciate your member partnership with us as we continue to support future improvements and innovations at our beloved nature center!

FRIENDS BOARD UPDATE: CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

Class of 2022:

Larry Kascht, President
 Elaine Haberichter, RTN, President emeritus
 Kathy Arts, Secretary
 Andrea Kornowski, Digital Media Coordinator
 Cathy Ward, RTN

Class of 2023:

Lyle Drier, Treasurer
 Beverly Dunk, Correspondence Secretary
 Gerald Strom, RTN, President emeritus
 Kathy Strazishar, RTN

Class of 2024:

David Block, Vice President, newsletter editor
 Steve Martin, Legal Adviser
 Mary Kay Kelly, Co-Treasurer, RTN
 Dave Zemanovic, RTN
 Almuth Soffee, RTN



(left to right: David Block, Cathy Ward, Steve Martin, Andrea Kornowski, Larry Kascht, Almuth Soffee, Lyle Drier, Elaine Haberichter, Mary Kay Kelly, Gerald Strom, Kathy Strazishar, Beverly Dunk, Dave Zemanovic (not pictured, Kathy Arts)

Membership Renewal Reminder

As always, if you need to renew your Friends of Retzer membership, you can do so as follows: a) mail your check to Retzer Nature Center; b) stop at the center's front desk; or c) pay online via our website: www.FriendsofRetzer.org. Your membership truly helps support vital projects and programs at the Nature Center, and provides discount benefits for everyone on the list. Thanks!

Membership Levels:	\$ 30.00 "Individual"	\$ 40.00 "Family"	\$ 50.00 "Contributor"
	\$ 75.00 "Supporter"	\$100.00 "Sustainer"	\$250.00 "Benefactor"

RETZER IN JULY: *A monarch lights on a butterfly weed; a thirteen-striped ground squirrel gleans beneath the bird feeder; a doe surveys the hillside prairie as her fawn sneaks a peek.*



newsletter prepared by: David Block, Vice President David@FriendsofRetzer.org