

Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Outdoor Classroom News

Late Winter 2018



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1. News

• **Winter on the Prairie**

We've had a somewhat cold, icy, frosty, snowy, winter, and spring is around the corner! We have been seeing/hearing horned larks, migrant greater-white fronted geese, trumpeter swans, common redpolls at the feeders, and an active mink! It won't be long now! How is winter winding down in your school yard, backyard, refuge, or park?

• **Scheduling Your Class to Visit**

A brief reminder that when contacting the PWLC to book your dates, please call **Terrie Eidal at 218-998-4481**. You can also [email](#) her. Terrie handles all of our calendar scheduling for all groups visiting the PWLC. Please do not reply to this email message for bookings. Thank you!

• **Burr! in the Burrow**

Over 1,385 people crawled through this year's log (burrow) in the barn and explored winter wildlife on the prairie (indoors and out). This year's theme was animals that live in or near logs and trunks and highlighted foxes, ants, spiders, owls, skunks, and other creatures. Thank you to all the teachers and students who braved the cold to come out the PWLC! Special thanks to the Jr. Friends of the PWLC for spending their free time at the PWLC to help create the burrow!

• **Yellow Bus Fund**

At the PWLC, students have the chance to explore a prairie, sample the life of a wetland, and discover the beauty of a vanishing landscape. The Friends of the PWLC feel all schools should be able to visit the PWLC regardless of funding. Thanks to a grant they secured, the Friends provide **up to 50% reimbursement for classes that cannot otherwise afford to visit**. The funds pay for transportation to and from the Center for both daytime and overnight visits. For more information, contact Terrie Eidal at the PWLC at 218-998-4481.

• **Staffing**

We warmly welcome three seasonal staff to the PWLC! Jo Fritz of Fergus Falls returns as our greenhouse staff and naturalist for the sixth year. Student Conservation Association interns

LaRyssa Nelson (Minnesota) and Kevin Heller (Ohio) join us for the remainder of the school year to assist the Prairie Science Class and conduct environmental education programs for day use and residential groups visiting the PWLC as well as staffing outreach events. We are so glad to have you all with us!

2. Professional Development

- **June 25-28: Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom Workshop (times vary)**

Open to all who teach children including pre-service teachers, licensed educators, school teachers, home school educators, non-formal educators, interns, fellows, volunteers, Friends members, naturalists, park rangers, etc.! Held in conjunction with the Summer Explorers Biology Camp for students entering 5th and 6th grades in the fall. Workshop participants may teach any grade level and have the opportunity to apply their new skills each day with a small group of interested students. Working together as a team, we explore the many ways to use an outdoor classroom to enhance and strengthen a child's education. Participants receive 30 hours of clock hour instruction and workshop materials. Free dormitory lodging is available for workshop attendees. Instructors: Molly Stoddard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service educator, and Mona Davis, Fergus Falls Public Schools Prairie Science Class teacher. Registration now open! Sign-up on-line at [the Friends of the PWLC web site](#).

- **June 15: Fireflies at Night (10 PM to 11 PM)**

During this leisurely walk we'll search for fireflies to catch and marvel over. What's all that blinking about, anyway? How can some tiny creature light up without heating up, too? We'll answer these questions and more. All educators who participate receive a certificate documenting continuing education/clock hours. Free! Instructor: Molly Stoddard, Instructional Systems Specialist. To register, call Molly at 998-4489 or [email her](#).

- **August 18: PWLC 20th Anniversary Celebration (11 AM to 3 PM)**

Save the date! Celebrating two decades of environmental education in western Minnesota! Join us for monarch tagging, guided tours, live music, root beer floats, and more! Free fun for everyone!

3. Other Resources

- **Be a Monarch Butterfly Friendly School**

Monarch butterflies still need our help! As part of the National Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife program, you can take a pledge to be a monarch hero, and you can help create new habitats for monarch butterflies. Your FREE Butterfly Garden Starter Kit includes regionally appropriate milkweed seeds, a Ranger Rick Nature Notebook, and directions to create or expand a butterfly garden! [Take the pledge](#) starting Tuesday, March 27th.



- **Why Not Teach Outside?**

This MN DNR [web site](#) shares sound reasons for using the outdoors as your classroom. It will help you work around concerns, excuses, and barriers to teaching outside your door. You can even access several Top 10 Tips -- lists to teaching outside by age groups.

- **Winter Ecology**

As spring begins to emerge in the Lower 48, winter is still going strong in the heart of Alaska. This Refuge System [photo essay](#) is full of examples of winter ecology, adaptations, phenology, biomes, and more concepts that you can share with your students.

- **Happy Birthday, Refuges!**

On March 14, 2018, America's National Wildlife Refuges celebrate 115 years of conservation. How well do you and your students know your Refuge System? Take this challenging [quiz](#) to see how you fare. You might learn something new, or get inspiration for your next road trip!

4. Housekeeping

+ Brought to You by...

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*“The earth is
what we all
have in
common.”*

*Wendell Berry,
Naturalist and author*