

**Nature journaling** teaches you to *observe and notice details* and draws your attention to seasonal changes and patterns. It can be a *source of calm and peace* in a busy day. It helps you keep track of your experiences and memories. It *allows for creativity* yet can be easily integrated with math, science, reading, writing, and art.

Here are a few good resources to learn more about how you and your students can start Nature Journaling.

**Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You** by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth • **Smithsonian in Your Classroom, Introduction to the Nature Journal:** [http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson\\_plans/journals/smithsonian\\_siyc\\_fall06.pdf](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/journals/smithsonian_siyc_fall06.pdf) • **California Native Plant Society - Opening the World through Nature Journaling:** <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/education/curriculum/request/index.php> • **Nature Sketching video:** <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpcRk9AaBeWgsQNAdYBS37KL31e93vPjr>

For more information on how to incorporate interdisciplinary nature journaling with your students contact Laura Bonneau @ 952-361-4518 or [Laura\\_Bonneau@fws.gov](mailto:Laura_Bonneau@fws.gov).

#### Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**Bloomington Education and Visitor Center**  
3815 American Blvd. East  
Bloomington, MN 55425  
952-854-5900

**Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center**  
15865 Rapids Lake Road  
Carver, MN 55315  
952-361-4500

## The Blue Goose Bus Fund

Did you know that a fund has been established to help schools absorb the cost of busing their **Refuge Partner School** and **Refuge Partner Teacher** students to Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for educational field trips? This fund was established and is managed by **Refuge Friends Inc**, a 501 (C) 3 non-profit.

**To learn how you can be involved, please contact President Steven Sutter**  
**Refuge Friends, Inc.**  
**3815 American Blvd. East**  
**Bloomington, MN 55425**  
**952-858-0737**



#### FALL PHENOLOGY

- 8/6: Prairie is full of tall grasses like Big Bluestem and Side Oats Gramma, some grow over our heads!
- 8/8: Rain showers in the morning, 2 male wild turkeys spotted walking through the prairie.
- 8/9: A mink was seen running in front of the Visitor Center as three deer quietly watched at the top of the hill.
- 8/10: A young family of wild turkeys is sighted on the Rapids Lake trail.
- 8/13: A meteor shower rains down over the refuge.
- 8/14: Butterflies, dragonflies, frogs, and grasshoppers abound!
- 8/20: Barn Swallow chicks have fledged (this is clutch number 2!)
- 8/23: Migration has begun!

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# Refuge Partner Schools

MINNESOTA VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

SEPTEMBER 2013

## Students make Summer Discoveries!



By Mara Koenig

This past summer, Partner School students had the opportunity to fill some of their days with adventure and discovery at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge! FREE summer programming available to students included School's Out: Recreation Camp, Refuge Explorers Club, and Refuge Readers. While the Partner School Program is designed to complement classroom instruction using the outdoors, summer programming is a little less formal. This allowed students to use their curiosity and enthusiasm to experience what it's like to be a biologist at a national wildlife refuge or explore the outdoors through different recreational activities.

Summer programs were held at both the Bloomington and the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Centers. Highlights included learning archery, raising tadpoles, building wildlife shelters, fishing, wading into wetlands, and capturing animals on film.

## Curriculum Update: New for 2013-14

- \* This year teachers and chaperones can access **Chaperone Tips** for each curriculum activity directly from the refuge website. Go to [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Minnesota\\_Valley/for\\_educators/chaperones.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Minnesota_Valley/for_educators/chaperones.html).
- \* Not sure if you have the most current version of the field trip curriculum? Check the footer of the page for September 2013. Due to sequestration, we ask that you please print your own hard copies if you would like one. This reduces our administrative costs.
- \* **First Grade Students** will help refuge staff collect data on monarch butterflies this fall by participating in the new **MONARCH TALES** activity. Students will map and monitor current milkweed plants, the only food source for the monarch caterpillar, and record phenological data. This data will be entered into the Nature's Notebook national citizen science program.



- \* New kindergarten students will receive a **Refuge Folder Journal** at their first field trip. Other students should continue to add to the original folder they were given. If you have students new to grades 1-6 please let us know during your field trip scheduling. We'll be sure to have a folder for them when they come to the refuge.

**Fall field trips will not be rescheduled due to weather....and sprinkles will not**



**keep us indoors! Please remind your students and chaperones to come dressed for the weather. One classroom set of rain ponchos is available if needed. Alternative activities are available in the case of severe weather.**

**We Are in Social Media TOO!**  
 Visit Us on the Web:  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota\\_valley](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota_valley)  
 Join Us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/MNValleyNWR](http://www.facebook.com/MNValleyNWR)  
 Follow Us on Twitter:  
[twitter.com/usfwsminvalley#](https://twitter.com/usfwsminvalley#)

## The Role of Teachers in Successful Partnerships

To help us provide a quality learning experience for students participating in the Refuge Partner Schools Program, refuge staff ask that you:

### Help Us Get to Know Your Students

With name tags not only can we call your students by name, we can quickly and directly address student issues BEFORE they get out of hand. Please create reusable name tags for each student to wear during their refuge field trips AND classroom pre-field trip lessons .

### Set the Field Trip "Stage"

By incorporating *at least* one of the suggested *Literature Connection* books (provided by the refuge) into classroom activities prior to the refuge field trip, you are preparing your students for a more meaningful field trip experience. Please send the *Literature Connections* books back with the last field trip in your grade level.

### Support your Ranger

Remain with the class during the classroom pre-activity to provide assistance and potentially participate in the activity.

Please clarify behavior expectations with the students before each pre-activity and each field trip and then reinforce those behaviors. In addition to the school's behavior guidelines, remind students what it means to be a naturalist.

Recruit and bring the required number of chaperones to assist with field trip activities. *Use the Chaperone Tips and Chaperone letters found on the Refuge website to prepare them for the field trip.* Notify your principal and refuge staff in advance if you can't to recruit the minimum number of chaperones.

If possible, rotate among field trip groups to monitor behavior and student participation, leaving chaperones to lead each group of students through the field trip activities.

### Take Advantage of What We Have to Offer

Let your parents know of upcoming refuge events and summer opportunities suited to their children.

Attend one of the many FREE refuge workshops provided to you throughout the school year. As a teacher participating in our Partner School Program, all workshop materials and curriculum are provided through the Refuge Friends Inc. CEU credits are always available. Don't see a workshop that interests you? Suggest one.



## REFUGE RECYCLING

Classes that stay at the refuge for lunch are asked to recycle.

New posters above our trash and recycling containers show what can be recycled.

### Please remember

**EMPTY** any unconsumed liquids from plastic bottles.

**Rinse** out plastic containers before placing them in the recycling bin.

**THANKS** for your HELP!

## STAFF UPDATE

Congratulations to Katie Laughlin as she embarks on the final stage of her journey to become a classroom teacher!

Katie will be student teaching this fall at one of our very own Refuge Partner Schools: Vista View Elementary in Burnsville. She will be working with Mrs. Plascko's 2nd grade students.

We are very thankful to have had Katie with us at the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center for over two years as she worked on her graduate education towards teacher licensure. We benefited greatly from her insight, curiosity, and enthusiasm. We can't wait to have her return with her class!



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is happy to announce the arrival of our new Refuge Manager, Tim Bodeen!

A native to Wisconsin, Tim grew up along the south shore of Lake Superior, where he spent endless hours exploring backwater sloughs, rivers, and forests. After receiving his degree, he began his wildlife career with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at several refuges around the country. He was instrumental in the development of the Prairie Wetland Learning Center in Fergus Falls. He is very excited about the Partner School and Partner Teacher programs and looks forward to managing another refuge with a large Public Use program and Environmental Education focus.



## YOU CAN GET YOUR STUDENTS OUTSIDE — and Still Meet Your State Standards

### About the Author

Michelle Aldenderfer-Griffin is Environmental Education (EE) Coordinator for Preschool-8th grade at High Meadows School in Roswell, Georgia and was chosen as the city's Environmental Educator of the Year in 2013.

The research is clear: hands-on, experiential learning leads to higher test scores and lower behavior issues.

Common sense tells us that sitting still at a desk – no matter the subject – simply does not result in a child who is constructing knowledge or developing a love of learning.

Indeed, the lack of even the slightest connection to the natural world increases stress, decreases focus, and creates an unintended barrier to the spirit and souls of our children.

I know the challenges teachers face in providing our children a connection to the natural world. I also know the magnitude of academic, physical, intellectual and psychological benefits in providing our children (and ourselves) a connection to nature.

Imagine changing very little about your current situation, and realizing the benefits of providing that connection. I believe you can.

Seeing their campus through a new lens allowed teachers to think through the possibility of increasing student's achievement levels while decreasing behavior issues. Most importantly, they could do it immediately for little cost using the resources surrounding them.

So what can you do as a teacher to respond to the mounting evidence that environmental education can improve academic achievement across all subject areas, increase standardized test scores, while also decreasing behavior issues?

Take a moment to consider the following:

### Is There a Window in Your Classroom?

If the answer is yes, you have an opportunity to invite the rich world of birding into your student's lives. Once birds "find" the food source, you will

have an inspiring way to discuss the changing seasons, patterns of migration, habitat, and the list will grow as your students find ways to use this fascinating new science tool to explore and understand their world. What do you need?

- **Bird feeder.** Window-mounted bird feeders start at \$8.95 and can be found online.
- **Bird food.** Use your favorite search engine to learn native bird species in your area and what they eat. Pick up a bag at your local grocery. Prices start around \$10.
- **Bird identification poster and/or book:** Posters from state wildlife agencies are typically free. Your school library may have a bird identification book. If not, your local library certainly will.

To read more go to <http://blog.childrenandnature.org/2013/08/14/you-can-get-your-student-outside-and-still-meet-your-state-standards/>

## NOVEMBER 15: GIVE to the MAX DAY

Every year MN Non-profit organizations compete for ten tiers of prize grants based on the amount they raise during their Give to the Max campaign. **Refuge Friends Inc** will participate for the second year to raise dollars for the **Blue Goose Bus Fund**. Money raised may be matched 2:1 by the Minnesota Valley Trust and will be used to bring your students to the Refuge. Please help us get the word out!

