

Minnesota Valley
National Wildlife Refuge

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

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

www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota_valley

Check in with Service social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Flickr, USFWS Midwest Region](#)

[YouTube, USFWS Channel](#)

The Blue Goose Bus Fund Update



Many thanks to those classrooms who have been sharing buses this school year. It has been an opportunity for team teaching and for upper and lower elementary grade levels to work together. Not to mention it stretches our Blue Goose budget!

If you haven't tried it yet, we encourage your class to share a bus!

If you know of an organization that might be interested in supporting the Blue Goose Bus Fund, please contact:

President Steven Sutter, Refuge Friends Inc.
3815 American Blvd. East
Bloomington, MN 55425
952-858-0737

EE Cohort: Teachers Sharing Ideas About Nature's Notebook
the Outdoor Classroom



9:30 - noon at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center

Join us for one Saturday or for the entire series! Come prepared to spend a bit of time outdoors at each session, and be sure to bring your Jeffers journal each time!

Note: Those who attend at least 3 sessions are eligible to receive a classroom set of Jeffers Journals for your students.

Saturday, April 4, 2015

Science House of the Science Museum of Minnesota

Saturday, May 2, 2015

Mentorship: Students Teaching Students

Register at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EECohort2014-15>.

Call Suzanne Trapp at (952) 361-4502 or [Facebook](#) for more information.

Teachers of I.S.D 112 are eligible to attend for pay through their school district. CEU credits are available to all participants upon request.

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You can also choose to join a site that is already set up in the *Nature's Notebook* system. This might be a local nature center, a regional park, or a national wildlife refuge. You can even register your schoolyard habitat as a *Nature's Notebook* site!

Once you have picked an observation site, your next step is to decide which plants and animals to observe. If you join an existing site the species lists will already be selected. How to observe each species (the protocol) is clearly explained on the website. Data sheets to record your observations are available to download. A specific Educators tab gives easy examples for incorporating *Nature's Notebook* into classroom curriculum.

Refuge Staff can schedule an In Service *Nature's Notebook* training for your school or your school district upon request. Please call Suzanne Trapp @ 952-361-4502 for more information.

Spring 2015

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Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge



Butterflies, Birds, and Bats...Oh Pollinators!

These hard-working animals help pollinate over 75% of our flowering plants, and nearly 75% of our crops. Hummingbirds, bats, bees, beetles, butterflies, and flies that carry pollen from one plant to another as they collect nectar, often go unnoticed by people. Yet without them, wildlife would have fewer nutritious berries and seeds, and we would miss many fruits, vegetables, and nuts, like blueberries, squash, and almonds . . . not to mention chocolate and coffee...all of which depend on pollinators.

Your small actions can encourage pollinator diversity and abundance.

- 1) [Plant a Pollinator Garden](#)
- 2) [Build a Bee Block](#)
- 3) [Avoid or Limit Pesticide Use](#)
- 4) [Report information](#) on pollinators in your yard, park, school or with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge using the National Citizen Science database *Nature's Notebook*.

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Return and Renew

Spring is the season to welcome back the migrators and hibernators of winter. It's also a time to watch plants emerge and turn green, white and yellow.

Bloomington Education and Visitor Center Summer Hours start April 1st
9 am - 5 pm
Tuesday - Sunday.



Seasons of the Refuge:
2015 Partner School Art Show

Opens May 21 through June 30, 2015. An artist reception will be held on Saturday, June 5 from 10:00 am -11:00 am. We hope to see you and your students and their families there!

Spring Field Trip Reminders

Please remind chaperones and students to dress for the weather, it can still be chilly, even in May. To reduce confusion and increase the time we can spend outdoors, please pass out student name tags, divide your students into 5 teams, and assign teams to a chaperone leader before you arrive at the Refuge.

All wetland themed programs will be conducted at the Bass Ponds Trailhead located 1 block from the Mall of America, 2501 86th Street East, Bloomington, 55425.

Bass Ponds Trailhead: If your field trip is scheduled for the Bass Ponds Trailhead, your bus is **required** to stay on site the entire time. If severe weather occurs, a visitor center classroom will be available. A handicapped portable restroom will be on site.

All Spring Field Trip Invoices are due by June 15

Nature's Notebook *flies* in with our Bluebirds!

Today, Friday March 12 a classic "Sign of Spring", the Eastern Bluebird returned to the Rapids Lake unit of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Equally exciting is the announcement: **This spring, teachers and students will join the biological team here at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.** How? It's really very simple. By recording their plant and animal observations into the national phenology citizen-science database *Nature's Notebook*.



Here are just a few specific examples:

First grade students and their parent chaperones already look for and count Common Milkweed, a critical food source of the monarch caterpillar, as part of their field trip **Monarch Tales**. When refuge staff enters these student observations into *Nature's Notebook*, our biologists can better answer critical questions that influence management of Monarch Butterfly habitat. For example "How much milkweed is currently available to monarch butterflies in the restored prairies around the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center?" The answer to such a simple question might result in milkweed seed collection and redistribution in areas of the refuge where very little Common Milkweed grows now.

Students that participate in the second grade **Pond Insects** field trip already identify and list the macro-invertebrates they find in the Bass Ponds Trailhead of the Long Meadow Lake Unit in Bloomington. When refuge staff enters this data, refuge biologists can track changes in water quality. This alerts biologists to changes in the urban areas surrounding Minnesota Valley before critical damage is done to refuge habitat.



Refuges are not the only areas using Nature's Notebook. Anyone can register a site. A site might be your backyard, a favorite fishing pond, or a park you visit weekly.

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School's Out: Refuge Biology Camp

June 16-18, 2015
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

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This **FREE** camp is open to refuge partner school and partner teacher students who have completed grades 3, 4, 5 and 6.



Explore new areas of the refuge and take part in field-based science activities just like a refuge biologist. Conservation, stewardship and outdoor recreation activities will be part of each day's theme.

Transportation from your school to the refuge may be available. Space is limited, register today!

Register by June 1

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BiologyCamp2015>

Registration is facilitated by Refuge Friends, Inc.

Questions?

Contact Suzanne Trapp, Suzanne_Trapp@fws.gov or 952-361-4502

Staff Updates: Comings and Goings

Please join us in welcoming our new Visitor Services Manager, Todd Smith, to our team! In his previous position, Todd worked at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. He has brought a tremendous amount of skill to the refuge and is already doing great things since starting in February. Todd is very excited to be here to help make our Environmental Education, Interpretation, and Outreach programs even stronger. His goals are to attract new visitors from diverse communities in and around the Twin Cities and beyond and to develop new partnerships with communities and organizations throughout the region.



Practicum Intern Winter Highlights



Favorite Field Trip:

“Wildlife Walkers: I absolutely love seeing kids trying to figure out how to walk the way animals do, especially the hopper! They have such a fun time doing it and they’re so much better at it than I could ever do.” *Lizzy*

“Due to the extreme cold temps I have become a pro at "rain day" alternatives. They have provided me with an opportunity to brainstorm and collaborate with teachers, exercise my classroom management and teach in a new (indoor) environment.” *Brittany*

Favorite Experience:

“Visiting two local nature centers. We were able to see how different centers use their visitor center space, manage their trails and run their environmental education programs.” *Alaina*

“Everything over all this winter has been a wonderful learning experience for me. Observing the different teaching methods from Suzanne, Mara to Alaina has given me a wide variety of teaching styles that I hope to adapt in the near future. I can’t wait for Spring!” *Lizzy*

Favorite Opportunity:

“I had the opportunity to network and learn while tabling at the Minnesota Science Teachers Association (MnSTA) Conference in Mankato.” *Brittany*

“We have had the chance to attend a lot of trainings this season and I really enjoyed participating in the Project Learning Tree workshop. The curriculum is top notch and provided me with a variety of engaging lessons that would be perfect to introduce elementary aged students to trees and the forest..” *Alaina*

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Bloomington Education & Visitor Center

Explorers Club

For children ages 8-12



Summer 2015







Investigate, discover and learn from nature alongside Refuge staff. Explorers Club meets weekly on Wednesdays, July 1—August 5 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Bloomington Education & Visitor Center.

Registration is \$25 and will be refunded if youth attends at least four meetings. On-line registration opens March 1st. Visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015Explorers> to register an Explorer Today!

Questions? Contact Mara Koenig at mara_koenig@fws.gov or 952/858-0710.

Registration is managed by Refuge Friends, Inc.