2013 Annual Report

Kerry Leigh: Be Inspired

Land Protection: Inspiring Your Vision

Land Stewardship: Nature Inspiring You

Volunteers: You Inspiring Others

Youth: Inspiring Your Future

Outreach: The Inspiration of Connection

Donors: You

2014 Wildflower Walkabouts

Be Inspired

Newsletter
Winter 2014 • No. 79
**A message from our executive director...**

**Be Inspired**

Inspiration can come to us in many guises and forms, yet at its foundation is a personal emotional connection. No matter how many intellectual or logical reasons we may have for turning our inspiration into action, it all starts with a deeply rooted connection within each of us. We often clearly see how another’s drive to engage in an organization or group is activated by their personal inspiration, yet discovering and understanding what inspires us may not always be so clear.

The activity and engagement that you each bring to protecting these special places around us is an inspiration to me. I am struck by the passions and simple every day commitment that you bring to this important work. NLI is not a name on a letterhead, an account in a bank or a building on a block, but each and every one of you. I see that you are the NLI. You are the dedicated volunteer, whether fighting the invasive species battle on the ground, or being on the board actively guiding policy and ensuring NLI is at the forefront of land protection. You are the donor and member who care deeply about your world and see how important each and every acre is. You are the staff and partners who have chosen to dedicate a life’s work to protecting these important places.

I see how NLI continues to be built by the passions and connections that inspired George B. Fell, and continue to inspire you. I spoke with Lois Winkel, a long-time volunteer at Howard D. Colman Dells Preserve whose story is highlighted in this issue. I wanted to discover what her inspirations are for the dedication to the work that she does. Her story is in one sense similar to what I’ve heard before, that of an enduring childhood connection to nature that was interrupted by a working life. That connection was the impetus propelling her to action later in life, yet there is more. That original connection needs to be continually motivated in each and every one of us. You’ll see how Lois’s connection was fuelled by a group camaraderie, by a shared vision, by learning new things, and by seeing the dramatic fruits of her labor return to her multiplied.

Together, we will continue to inspire and motivate each other as we each live the vision of protecting our precious resources. Nature is grateful to you.

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**Trustee spotlight...**

**Alan Nowicki** *(Term: June 2013 – June 2016)*

Alan Nowicki is an Associate Professor of Biology at Highland Community College. He comes to the board with previous experience raising funds for conservation projects in Stephenson County through the Jane Addams Land-Parks Foundation. He also recently started serving on the NLJ Science Advisory Committee. Alan chose to become a board member because he feels NLI’s mission to preserve Northern Illinois natural heritage is important and is in tune with his own devotion to working on land conservation issues for the past 25 years.

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**Natural Land Institute**

The mission of the Natural Land Institute is to create an enduring legacy of natural land in northern Illinois for people, plants and animals. A member supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving natural land for people, native plants and animals in northern Illinois. Since 1958, NLI has protected, managed and restored thousands of acres of prairies, forests, wetlands and river corridors throughout Illinois and southern Wisconsin.

Serving as a regional land trust, NLI preserves forests, prairies and wetlands for native plants and animals, restores habitat for wildlife, protects rivers and streams for fish and other aquatic species, educates people about their part in nature, and provides opportunities to enjoy natural areas. The Natural Land Institute is supported in part by tax-deductible contributions. To make a contribution or learn more about our activities, contact: Natural Land Institute, 320 South Third Street, Rockford, Illinois 61104; Phone: 815/964-6666; Fax: 815/964-6661; Email: info@NaturalLand.org; or visit our website at www.NaturalLand.org.

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On the cover: Three Sandhill Cranes, photo by Mark Blassage
Protecting and caring for land and water resources is your priority and your commitment fulfills Natural Land Institute’s mission to create an enduring legacy of natural land in northern Illinois for people, plants and animals.

In June of 2013 we officially added 35 acres of land to Burr Oak Valley Preserve in Roscoe through a donation from McCleary Industries, Inc. making the total acres for this preserve 115. Thank you to the McCleary family for their vision of protecting this area where residential development is quickly spreading into the oak woods and dolomite prairies.

The combination of soils, geology and topography provide a home for uncommon plants like Kittentail and animals like the Regal Fritillary Butterfly and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. When non-native plants start growing and spreading they change the habitat and create an imbalanced ecosystem which needs to be restored.

This past fall you helped us reach our goal to raise funds for this special preserve. Thank you for your gifts. We have started working with a contractor on phase one of restoration work in a section of prairie that is being overtaken by the bush honeysuckle and buckthorn shrubs. The rare plant communities in Burr Oak Valley Preserve will be restored and protected because of the McCleary family, McCleary Industries, Inc. and all of you, our donors and volunteers.

Robert and Vicki Stretton

New to the Family of Heritage Lands are Robert and Vicki Stretton, who chose Natural Land Institute to help protect their 35-acre homestead near Savanna, Illinois with a conservation easement last fall. Vicki inherited this portion of land from her father. The mixture of steep hills, cliffs, grasslands and wetlands provide a home to unique plants and animals. It was her deep love of this land that inspired her and her husband to exercise their Conservation Rights as landowners to protect it.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that provides a way for landowners to protect their land and restrict future usage and development on it. NLI’s founder George B. Fell helped Richard Babcock write the Illinois legislation, Real Property Conservation Rights Act, that was passed in 1977.

At the time, NLI was one of the only land trusts in Illinois that could hold a permanent conservation easement. Since then many have formed in Illinois.

This past year NLI assigned five conservation easements to other land trusts that are closer to the easement properties and have better resources to monitor and defend the them. The Great Mississippi River Ridge and Horseshoe Mound conservation easements were transferred to the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, two conservation easements on Spring Hollow Preserve were transferred to The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, and the Delores Hinds Wildlife Preserve easement was assigned to the Prairie Land Conservancy in western Illinois.
Day to day land management at NLI’s preserves is one of the biggest jobs for the Institute. It takes a team of people to help with activities like removing invasive bush honeysuckle or buckthorn and herbaceous weeds like garlic mustard. Other stewardship activities include planting native wildflower and grass seeds, collecting, sorting and cleaning seeds, mowing, conducting prescribed burns, and cleaning and repairing equipment.

In addition to assistance from many wonderful volunteers this past year, Director of Stewardship, Kevin Rohling was able to hire two part-time assistants and have two summer interns to help during the peak seasons from spring to fall. Ed Cope and Brian Heynen, Stewardship Assistants, brought years of experience working in related fields with other organizations to NLI. They worked with the summer interns, Becky Clow (Beloit College Sustainability Fellows) and Tori Kutz (UW Platteville), volunteers and the Eagle Scout project volunteers at Silver Creek and Burr Oak Valley Preserves.

Stewardship every Wednesday has been going on for many years at Nygren Wetland Preserve. The regular Wednesday Crew includes: Bill Fruin, Lute Wyttenbach, Robert Ramirez, Lee Bach, Robert Lindvall, Randy Bolen, Verne Johnson, Rhonda Johnson, Patrick Luetkenhaus, Loren Schafer, and Bill Walz.

New volunteers are invited to join this service day anytime.

The weekly Thursday stewardship day is led by long-time volunteer, Lois Winkel. They removed bush honeysuckle at Colman Dells this past fall and winter and will work to remove garlic mustard, oriental bittersweet and buckthorn this spring.

The Second Saturday Stewardship Team includes regular volunteers Brian Heynen, Guy Smith, Christopher Reisetter, Kathy Rohling and Lois Winkel. Other volunteers that have helped occasionally are Jim McFarlane, Chad Hoover, Dion Faith, Jim Akers, John Broglin, Kim Johnsen, Sheryl Almquist Hall, Maria Arellano, James Harder, a group of ten from UTC Aerospace Systems, and the Hall Creek Sportsmen’s Club.

This past January another monthly service day was added thanks to our partner, Roscoe Sportsmen’s Club, who will host a monthly Third Saturday Stewardship Day at Silver Creek Preserve with team leaders Dion Faith and Chad Hoover. While their own club members are committed to doing restoration there, they invite anyone who is interested in this type of activity to join them in their monthly efforts to take out the invasive species at this preserve.

To volunteer contact Kevin Rohling at 815-218-0210 or email him at krohling@naturalland.org.
What Kind of Turtles Live There?

Jason Ross from the Illinois Natural History Survey and University of Illinois assisted NLI staff and interns to see what kind of turtles live at Nygren Wetland Preserve. They discovered 11 common snapping turtles and 51 painted turtles in the spring of 2013. It is hoped with a different methodology and different weather/ flood conditions a greater diversity of turtle species will be documented in 2014.

Fire Management

Prescribed burns were conducted in the spring at Nygren Wetland and Silver Creek Preserves. In the fall, several units were burned at Nygren Wetland Preserve, as well as portions of Wilson Prairie Nature Preserve and Beach Cemetery Nature Preserve (Wilson and Beach burns were coordinated by John Nelson of INPC and Brad Semel of IDNR).

Milan Bottoms

BioBlitz May 30 – June 1, 2013


A BioBlitz is conducted during a 24-hour period by scientists, naturalists and volunteers. They conduct an intense survey to find and identify animals and plants in a specified area. Insects, birds, macroinvertebrates, mammals and plants were recorded and categorized. The public was invited to attend activities to learn about the preserve and what lives there.

BioBlitz At a Glance

The 733 species found included:

- 415 insects
- 166 plants
- 60 birds
- 30 spiders
- 29 aquatic invertebrates
- 20 fish
- 13 reptiles

Source: QConline.com (For more detailed stories about this event read the full story online. There is a link to it from the Milan Bottoms Facebook page.)

Ray Geroff holds an American Copper butterfly, the first of its kind found in Milan Bottoms.

Wild Bergamot at Nygren Wetland Preserve

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Prescribed burn at Nygren Wetland Preserve

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You Inspiring Others

Volunteers contribute many skills and talents to Natural Land Institute on the board, on committees, at events, through creative efforts and through land stewardship.

The 2013 Volunteers of the Year were recognized at the annual volunteer picnic in September. They are Lee Bach, Christopher Reisetter, Sheryl Almquist Hall and Tori Kutz. Together they have given well over a thousand hours of their time, expertise, and service to stewardship tasks, planning and working at events and serving on committees.

More than 4,500 volunteer service hours have been put into restoring and managing our preserves this past year. Thank you to these individuals and groups not previously mentioned: The Nature Conservancy and Nachusa Grasslands staff (Beach Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve), Bill Sarafin (Kyte River Bottomland Forest), Kurt Cleveland (KaNella Reshaw), Tim Keller and Whiteside County NAGS (Lyndon-Agnew Prairie Nature Preserve), Lois Winkel (Harlem Hills Prairie/Atwood Tract), Bob Nieman and Dan Marske (Pecatonica Woodlands Preserve), and Larry Holeton (Pecatonica Ridge Prairie), Illinois DNR and Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (Beach Cemetery and Wilson Prairie Nature Preserves).

Volunteer spotlight...

Lois Winkel

Lois Winkel grew up in a rural area where the kids were free to explore on their own. This is when she fell in love with the outdoors. Lois wasn’t able to be outside as much as she wanted as an adult, but knew someday she would get back to the nature that she loved so much. Now, she is able to give her time, energy and passion to protecting and nurturing the land she loves.

An ecology class in college made her aware of land preservation and conservation. Having a career spent mostly inside of a building working in quality assurance and process control, Lois had the opportunity to think about what she would do to give back to nature someday.

She discovered and bought a book written by Dr. Egbert Fell (the father of NLI’s founder, George B. Fell) about the flora of Winnebago County. She then became involved with NLI after Nygren Wetland Preserve was purchased in 2000 and joined the Wednesday crew doing stewardship. Lois was named Volunteer of the Year in 2005.

In time Lois started helping at Howard D. Colman Dells Nature Preserve, a place that she fell in love with not only because of its natural beauty, but also because of the home it provides for rare flora and fauna. Colman Dells has the winding spring-fed Hall Creek running through it with dramatic rock-faced dells and large tracts of bottomland and upland forests. This ecologically significant nature preserve provided the ideal opportunity for Lois.

Every Friday morning for five years Lois would show up to help on the volunteer stewardship team that was led by Lowell Edwards. This core Colman group also included Merle Schandelmeier and Dave Johnson. Lois said that the camaraderie of a shared philosophy was important to her and that “Lowell had a sense of humor that kept people coming back.” Originally their efforts focused...
exclusively on removing bush honeysuckle. “The forest was so thick with honeysuckle you couldn’t walk through it.” Eventually the Friday morning group dissolved and a few years went by with no organized volunteer stewardship at the preserve.

However, invasive plants and seed banks don’t stand still. Director of Stewardship, Kevin Rohling, started the Second Saturday Stewardship Team at Colman Dells in early 2013 to revive the battle there. Lois was one of the first volunteers to commit. She also started and led a weekly stewardship day from spring to mid-summer. Even though they made progress, there is still much to do. In her opinion, “if you’re going to use nature you need to give back and the perfect place to do that is at Colman Dells.”

Parsnip, garlic mustard, oriental bittersweet, and buckthorn are intrusive, non-native plants at Colman Dells that Lois wants to focus on eradicating with the weekly Thursday stewardship team. She invites anyone interested to join the group on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. You can work the whole day or part of the day. Come when you can, as often as you can. Contact Lois Winkel at winkster2@hotmail.com for directions and more information, or call the NLI office at 815-964-6666.

Lois Winkel has learned to look at nature you need to give back and the perfect place to do that is at Colman Dells.”

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Lois Winkel has learned to look at nature through a different lens. She is always asking: what do we need to do to work with nature? She said, “We just can’t seem to see things from nature’s point of view. Many don’t even realize there is a point of view.”

Spring Planting and Fall Prairie Harvest Day

Individuals, families, Girl and Boy Scout troops and a new 4-H club learned about and helped with transplanting plugs in the spring, and pulling seed from wildflowers and grasses in the fall. These stewardship days at Nylegren Wetland Preserve teach children and adults first hand about how to care for life found in nature.

Scouts Service

Young men earned their Eagle Scout status by coordinating stewardship days at Burr Oak Valley Preserve (Kyle Bielski recruited and organized 20 friends and family members) and Silver Creek Preserve (Hewitt Walsh recruited and organized 15 friends and family members). An Eagle Scout ceremony was held in the fall for Jacob Cassaro, who built a fire circle and Aldo Leopold-style benches at Nylegren Wetland Preserve.

Studying Land and Water

Hononegah High School (Rockton) honors biology students took their classroom outside to Nylegren Wetland Preserve in September. During two days approximately 130 students took water samples from the pond and Raccoon Creek, looked for macroinvertebrates, tested the turbidity of the creek water, examined the environmental conditions of the area and recorded plants along a transect line. Three teachers worked with the young people along with several NLI volunteers: Rick Barton, Karen Blomgren, Dwight Alton, Laura Sjoquist and staff member Kim Johnsen.

Art in Nature Inspires Fifth-Graders

On April 30, 2013 Natural Land Institute presented the “Art in Nature” program to three fifth-grade classes from Julia Lathrop Elementary School at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Students drew, wrote and learned about trees. The presenters were: John Moors (Klehm Arboretum), Sherrie Dorr (art teacher at Lathrop School) and Cindy Karnitz (writer). The program was partially supported by a grant from the Rockford Area Arts Council, which receives support from the City of Rockford, the Illinois Arts Council and its members.

Special Nylegren Tour

The East High School Special Education Class took a tour of Nylegren Wetland Preserve in May. This was their first time in a natural area and they loved it. They were excited when they got to see swans fly overhead and land in the oxbow lake at the wetland.
Annual Dinner
The Natural Land Institute’s 2013 Annual Dinner was a tribute to Jerry Paulson. About 350 people attended the event in order to congratulate him on his retirement as Executive Director of NLI for the past 12 years. The Board of Trustees selected Jerry to be the recipient of the George and Barbara Fell Award, to recognize him for dedicating 42½ years to preserving and protecting natural land.

Wildflower Walkabout Series
The Natural Land Institute partners with Severson Dells Nature Center every spring to present the Wildflower Walkabout series. Once a week for 11 weeks from late April to the end of June, a free guided tour was given at an area preserve. More than 200 people attended the walkabouts last year.

Taking Nature to Retirees
Kerry Leigh and Kim Johnsen gave a presentation about NLI to 37 residents of Wesley Willows retirement community in May. In September about 10 residents took a walking tour at Harlem Hills Prairie Nature Preserve led by Jerry Paulson and Kerry.

Retirees Tour Nygren Wetland
A class of 30 retirees from Rock Valley College’s Center for Learning in Retirement took a tour of Nygren Wetland Preserve in September. They were treated to a wagon ride tour along with commentary from Kerry Leigh, Kevin Rohling and Jerry Paulson.

Earth Day Clean Up at Aldeen Park
Former NLI Trustee, Charlie Sturm, coordinated a clean-up day at Aldeen Park. The NLI Marketing & Membership Committee helped with planning and hosted it on Sunday, April 21. A total of 48 people of all ages showed up to help pick up trash and pull debris from the banks of Keith Creek.

Rockford City Market
The NLI Marketing & Membership Committee planned and hosted four...
monthly kids activities at Rockford City Market from June to September in an effort to reach young families and talk about caring for plants and animals.

**Wander Events**

The free “Wander” events are designed to provide opportunities for people to learn about natural areas owned by NLI and give them the experience of discovering the joy of nature. **Wander at the Wetland** in January showed off the winter prairie and wetland under the full moon at Nygren Wetland Preserve. **Wander at Pecatonica Woodlands Preserve** showcased the spring woodland blooms and **Wander through the Wildflowers** highlighted the summer wildflowers in the Anne Meyer Prairie Garden at Nygren Wetland.

**Full Moon Bonfire**

Major Donors and volunteers were invited to attend a **Full Moon Bonfire at Pecatonica Ridge Prairie** on a Saturday evening in September. Guests took a wagon ride from the home of Lois and Larry Holten who are neighbors and who hosted the event, to the prairie where Kevin Rohling and Kerry Leigh led a walking tour. After the tour, guests roasted hot dogs and s’mores over an open fire. Thanks to Lois and Larry for their hospitality.

**Land Legacy Circle Luncheon**

In October a luncheon to thank major donors to the **Nygren Wetland Preserve Endowment** and those who have named the Natural Land Institute in their will was hosted at the Log Lodge of the Torstenson family Youth Conservation Education Center (TfYCEC is owned by the Illinois Conservation Foundation). Thirty-three **Land Legacy Circle** members were treated to lunch by **Toni’s of Winnebago** and a wagon tour of NLI’s **Pecatonica Woodlands Preserve** adjacent to the Torstenson Center. Thank you to TfYCEC for supporting this event.

**Party on the Prairie went Provencial in 2013**

Last summer, the every-other-year fundraiser, **Party on the Prairie**, had a French Provence theme. The decorations, food, music and the colorful prairie backdrop of this outdoor event transported 200 guests to a natural setting in another part of the world for the evening. Thank you to the event and silent auction coordinator, **Judy Barnard** for all of her time and work! Proceeds benefited **Nygren Wetland Preserve** where the event was located. Thank you to the SPONSORS: BMO Harris Bank, Campbell Science, Savant, WilliamsMcCarthy LLP, NorthPointe Health & Wellness Campus, Bill and Sally Hoff, WIPFLi, Gary W. Anderson Architects, Hinshaw & Culbertson, Members Alliance Credit Union and Sjostrom & Sons, Inc.

**Wine at the Wetland/Brew at the Slough**

The casual outdoor wine and beer tasting event, **Wine at the Wetland/Brew at the Slough**, drew 165 people to **Nygren Wetland Preserve** to enjoy an end-of-summer afternoon overlooking the prairie. Live music and an historic display of land surveying equipment, complete with a retired land surveyor, Don Sonneson and his wife Linda, provided an interesting variety of entertainment. Guests also took guided and self-guided walks around the preserve to see the prairies and wetlands. Our sincere appreciation to event coordinator **Charlie Sturm** for all of his time and work. Thank you to the SPONSORS: Sjostrom & Sons, Inc., UTC Aerospace Systems, PNC Bank, Hinshaw & Culbertson, Lindstrom Travel, Hey and Associates, and sponsor of the historic land surveyor, **Arc Design Resources, Inc.** Our sincere appreciation to in-kind sponsors Bugler Design Inc. and Music Academy. Event proceeds benefited **Nygren Wetland Preserve. 🍷**
Thank you to our 2013 NLI members

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Thanks to This Issue’s Contributing Photographers

Judy Barnard
Mark Blasacco
Chantalle Edmunds
Jacyln Hickey
John Longheny
Gail Moreland
Chris Reisseter
Laura Sjogquist
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Leadership Changes

Jerry Paulson retired as Executive Director of NLI on March 31, 2013 after 12½ years in this role. His conservation career spanned 42½ years including the first 10 years of his career working for George B. Fell in the 1970s. He was honored at the 2013 Annual Dinner and presented with the George and Barbara Fell Award for his outstanding leadership and commitment to land conservation.

New Executive Director Kerry Leigh

Kerry Leigh started on April 1, 2013 as the new Executive Director for NLI. She began her life here in the Midwest as a young child, but has lived in several countries around the world (India, Bangladesh, France, England and Algeria). Kerry has a BA in Humanities, a degree in Horticulture and an MA in Landscape Architecture. Throughout most of her career she has worked in ecological restoration and brings a unique perspective.

Thank You to Our In-Kind Donors

Judy Barnard provided food and decorations for events and silent auction coordination
Lou Cambier mowed at Pecatonica Woodlands
Dion Faith provided equipment for restoration work at Silver Creek Woods
Dennis and Terrie Hall donated 3 filing cabinets
Larry Holeton mowed at Pecatonica Ridge Prairie
David Holman produces GIS-based maps for NLI preserves
Chad Hoover provided equipment for restoration work at Silver Creek Woods
Theodore and Melissa Johnson donated a filing cabinet
Kerry Leigh gave a drip torch, backpack sprayer and two gallons of herbicide
Gordon Neese used his machinery to remove honeysuckle from Silver Creek Woods
Pheasants Forever allows the use of equipment for management at NLI preserves
Guy Smith donated fans and utility cords
S specialty Corp. gave a filing cabinet
Edwin and Elizabeth Stirling donated a chain sharpener
Charlie Sturm provided event supplies
Tyler’s Landscaping Service, Inc. plowed NLI’s office driveway and parking area all winter and provided plants at events
John and Susan Walt donated a printer and stand
Sara Winter donated a chainsaw
Lute Wytenbach donated hand tools

Gifts Were Made in Honor or in Memory of:

Ann Armstrong
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2013 Corporate Council Members:

$5,000+
Voss Metals Co.

$1,500+
Spring Creek Development Group

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Androck Hardware

$1,000+
Campbell Supply Company

$250+
Arc Design Resources, Inc.

2013 Corporate Council:

The Corporate Council of the Natural Land Institute brings together like-minded business leaders to share ideas and support the land conservation work of our organization. Luncheon programs are presented several times a year that promote best practices in land conservation and environmentally sustainable initiatives related to the business community.

Three luncheon programs were presented in 2013. Speakers included Steve Ernst from Rockford Metropolitan Agency on Planning (RMAP), Dennis Dreher (Geosyntec Consultants) on behalf of the Kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership (KREP), and Heather Loebner, Sustainability and Philanthropy Consultant from Chicago.

Any business interested in supporting the mission of NLI may join the Corporate Council. For more information and to join please contact Kim Johnsen, Director of Marketing & Membership, by phone at 815-964-6666 or email kjohnsen@naturalland.org or go online at www.NaturalLand.org.
Tuesday, April 15
Wilson Prairie Nature Preserve
Keith Blackmore of Northwest Illinois Audubon Society will lead a tour of this privately-owned 20-acre dry prairie which provides habitat for at least nine species of grasses and over 75 species of native flowers. As we finish up our walk and the full moon is rising, Keith will read one of his poems.

Wednesday, April 23 • Anna Page Park
Barbara Williams from the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society will be our guide for the wildflowers and birds at this Rockford Park District property. We will travel through a variety of natural communities, from creek bottoms to maple forest, and view spring wildflowers.

Tuesday, April 29
Kinnikinnick Creek Nature Preserve
Join Boone County Conservation District Board member Brian Hale as we hunt for early spring wildflowers in the hardwood forest at Kinnikinnick Creek Conservation Area.

Wednesday, May 7
Rockton Bog Nature Preserve
Jerry Paulson, former director of the Natural Land Institute, will lead us through this area’s sedge meadow, prairie and open sand forest.

Tuesday, May 13
Laona Heights Nature Preserve
Mark Keister of Macktown Living History will lead this hike at Laona Heights Forest Preserve, a good example of dry-mesic upland forest dominated by white oak, white ash; and basswood, but sugar maple prevails in the damper ravine.

Wednesday, May 21
Howard D. Colman Dells Nature Preserve.
Greg Keilback of Severson Dells Nature Center will lead this hike through property owned and managed by NLI. One of the attractive features of this 55-acre preserve is a series of cliffs known as the dells. Many unique plants restricted to limestone and dolomite outcrops are found here, as well as some northern relict plants.

Tuesday, May 27
Harlem Hills Nature Preserve
Gary and Judy Anderson, two "relicts" of the Natural Land Institute’s “Prairie People,” will lead us on this state owned preserve. Harlem Hills is the state’s largest and finest remaining example of a gravel hill prairie.

Wednesday, June 4
Sears Prairie Nature Preserve
Jack Armstrong, Rockford Park District board president and Nathan Hill, Rockford Park District staff, will take us on this hike to Sears Prairie, owned by the Rockford Park District. The site is one of the highest quality wet prairies in the state.

Tuesday, June 10
Beach Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve
Kevin Rohling of the Natural Land Institute, will be our guide of this 4-acre dry hill prairie on Big Mound Road in Ogle County. We will see one of the best displays of flora in remnant prairies in northern Illinois. Ray Schuemberg and Bob Betz recorded the state endangered prairie dandelion here in 1971.

Explore North Central Illinois
Co-Sponsored by: Severson Dells Nature Center (SNDC) and Natural Land Institute (NLI)

Come experience the north central Illinois landscape. Walk where flowers carpet the forest floor and birds fill the air. All walks begin at 6:00 p.m.

No fee for the walks, but membership in SDNC and/or NLI is encouraged! SDNC and NLI are the organizing agencies of the event, with local groups providing leaders from their organizations.

For more information about the hiking level, parking and location directions visit www.naturalland.org or call the office, SDNC: 815-335-2915 • NLI: 815-964-6666
Laura Sjoquist is our Outreach Intern and we are thrilled she chose us to do her internship that is required for her graduate work in Environmental Studies at Northern Illinois University. Laura was already familiar with NLI when she started her internship in January. She has been a frequent visitor to Nygren Wetland Preserve near where she lives, has volunteered with educational programs and is on the Education Committee. Under the direction of Kim Johnsen, Director of Marketing & Membership, Laura will work on social media, writing projects, promotional efforts, and planning events. Since she is an artist, we asked her to create something special for the 2014 Annual Dinner and Fundraiser event invitation. We think she did an amazing job with that assignment.

Don McFall will retire on March 31 after working for 30 years with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Don started his career in conservation with the Natural Land Institute working on the Landowner Contact Program. He then worked for The Nature Conservancy before his 16 years with the Division of Natural Heritage, ten with the Nature Preserves Commission and four years with the Realty Division. Don has been an important part of the work to protect and restore Illinois natural areas and wildlife the last 30 years. We wish him well in his retirement.

The Land Trust Alliance will present the 2014 Midwest Land Conservation Conference, April 8 – 10, 2014 in Holland, Michigan at the Haworth Conference Center. “Connecting Communities to Land and Water” — for more information, go to www.lta.org/mwconference.

Schnucks eScrip Customer Card

Thank you to everyone who has signed up for a Schnucks eScrip Customer (gas) card and designated Natural Land Institute as the charity. Your purchases add up to give you a discount at the gas pump while at the same time Schnucks will give us a percentage of the money you spend at their stores. You can sign up for a card at the store or see Kim in the NLI office to get a card. Just remember to hand the cashier your card every time you make a purchase.

NLI received $667.85 in 2013 from Schnucks because of you.

Earth Share

is a member of Earth Share, an association of the nation's most respected environmental and conservation organizations. Our thanks to those who support NLI through their workplace giving and payroll deduction campaigns. To learn how you and your workplace can support NLI, please call 815-964-6666.


Do you wish that you could protect that special place that you enjoyed as a child or that marked a significant event in your life? Most of us remember a place that changed or shaped our lives, but it is now gone, or owned by someone else.

You can help create an enduring legacy of natural land that your children or their children can learn to cherish by naming the Natural Land Institute as a beneficiary in your will or including us in your estate plans. You don’t own any wild land? You can leave real estate, cash or securities that can be turned into bur oaks, prairie grass and great blue herons, leaving a legacy of natural land for future generations.

Gifts can be made to an endowment for a specific purpose, or directed to a particular project or program. To find out more about making a legacy gift to the Natural Land Institute, call Kerry Leigh at 815-964-6666, email her at kleigh@naturalland.org, or mail this form. All inquiries are confidential.

☐ Please contact me about making a legacy gift to the Natural Land Institute.

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Mark your calendar for these 2014 Events

**Tuesday, March 25**

NLIs Annual Dinner and Fundraiser  
Cliffbreakers, 700 W. Riverside Blvd., Rockford, 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- Presentation of the *George and Barbara Fell Award* to Dave and Nancy Voss  
- Guest Speaker: Joel Greenberg, author of “A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon’s Flight to Extinction”  
- Book sales and signing after the program  
- Silent Auction  
- Tickets: $40 each, buy online: [www.naturalland.org](http://www.naturalland.org) or call: 815-964-6666

**April – June**  
**Wildflower Walkabout**  
See page 14

**Saturday, May 3**  
Garlic Mustard Pull: Invasive Species Affect Everyone  
Nygren Wetland Preserve, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Thursday, May 29**  
Spring Field Botany Day  
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Saturday, June 7**  
Wine at the Wetland/Brew at the Slough  
Nygren Wetland Preserve, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Cost: $30 advance, $40 at event

**Saturday & Sunday, July 12 & 13**  
Wildflower Weekend  
Nygren Wetland Preserve, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., FREE, family friendly

**Tuesday, August 19**  
Fall Field Botany Day  
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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**Dianne Nora Nature Trail**

**Technology Meets Nature**

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**NLI is Very Social**

NLI became one of the First Adopters in the Prairie State Hike application that is available to download for 99 cents on the Apple and Android mobile platforms. The Nygren Wetland – Nora Nature Trail is the featured tour for NLI on the app. There are other trail tours on the app from preserves around the state. Having the app provides a way to reach a new audience that might not otherwise know about land trusts. It is a convenient way for people to learn about our organization and the preserve. The hike app is sponsored by Prairie State Conservation Coalition (PSCC). The project director is Vern LaGesse, Vice President of PSCC. NLI’s participation fee was supported by a gift from the Smith Charitable Foundation.

**Connecting with People**  
*Like us, follow us, talk to us, share your photos with us*

Using one or two of these hashtags on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram will help us keep track of who is talking about us: #naturallandinstitute, #nilandtrust, #nygrenwetland, #nygrenwetlandpreserve, #comlandells, #burroakvp, #nlilovesnature.

- **Facebook pages:** Natural Land Institute, Nygren Wetland Preserve, Milan Bottoms – Natural Land Institute
- **Twitter.com:** Follow us @NLI1958
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