

New Members

Welcome to our newest members who have joined our Chapter:

- Terri Rucinsky, Oshkosh
- Chuck Stangel, Little Chute
- Annie Howard, Oshkosh
- Nikki Selenka, Oshkosh
- Shirley Strange, Appleton
- Andy Gilsdorf, Appleton
- Sherry Pearce, Oshkosh
- Space Fox, Menasha
- Alice Toepe, Oshkosh
- Amy Harbach, Sheboygan
- Thomas and Toni Young, Waupaca
- Cynthia Moorcroft, Neenah
- Ryan Walter, Neenah
- Brenda Arts, Appleton
- Madi Potratz, Omro
- Lynda Collins, Neenah

WILD Center

Wild Ones National Headquarters
2285 Butte des Morts Beach Rd.
Neenah, WI 54956

920-730-3986
support@wildones.org

Directions: From Hwy 41, take Exit 136, drive east on BB (Prospect Ave) to right on Northern Rd, then left onto Stroebe Rd. From Stroebe, turn right onto Butte des Morts Beach Rd.

Grounds Accessible & Always Open

Founding Member Carol Niendorf Fondly Remembered

By Donna VanBuecken

It is with heartfelt sorrow that I share with you, that Carol Niendorf passed. Carol Niendorf, long time member of the Fox Valley Area Chapter of Wild Ones, passed away on December 26, 2025, after a long battle with cancer. She was comfortable and pain free and surrounded by her favorite things -- her family and music.

Carol and her husband Bob were founding members of the Fox Valley Area Chapter of Wild Ones. I met them at the first meeting at my home to organize a chapter in the Fox Valley. **She was a friend at first sight!** I was the first leader of the chapter when we chartered in November 1994, and I called upon her to do any number of projects, which she did willingly and with enthusiasm.

She served on the chapter board in many capacities through the years, including president. For a number of years, she and Bob served as co-chairs of the membership committee, recruiting new members and

making sure everyone had a bright yellow name tag to wear at chapter events. She chaired the writing of the chapter's constitution and bylaws. She was the coordinator of the first *Toward Harmony with Nature* Conference and subsequently was the program chair. She was the first plant-sale coordinator. Along with Bob, she co-chaired the development of the finance guidelines for the chapter. Carol and Bob retired on January 2023. Throughout the years, she and Bob were volunteers for many tasks.

When I was the Wild Ones executive director, I called upon her to do a multitude of projects, which she gladly accepted. Carol was the first coordinator of the Wild Ones Annual Meeting, which we held for all National Wild Ones members. She was always there to volunteer for the committees I had set up. I could not have

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A memorial service has been scheduled by Bob and her family on **Saturday, June 13** at First Congregational Church in Oshkosh when the family will be back in Wisconsin.

Donations may be made to the Robert and Carol Niendorf fund at the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, the Evergreen Retirement Community Foundation and to the First Congregational Church of Oshkosh Niendorf Memorial Fund.

Bob and Carol doing what they did so often.



Photo courtesy of Donna VanBuecken

Upcoming Events

See insert for a full list of 2026 WOFVA Programs and insert for Native Plant Sale order form.



Photo courtesy of Catherine McKenzie



Invisible Teachers

by Shannon Davis-Foust

Whether or not I am considered a “real” professional - I am a teacher - and I’m deeply grateful for this path I have chosen in life. Growing up, I was among the shyest of children and dealt with a great deal of personal insecurity about my own intelligence and how other people perceived me. Yet I always liked challenges, so I took that challenge to become a teacher. It has been such a rewarding journey that it has brought me to say, **“even if your professional title isn’t “teacher”, still be a teacher.”**

We are at a time when we need teachers more than ever, especially regarding the most basic and important aspect of our human lives - our relationship with the natural world. So, we need you to become an invisible teacher, and it’s not hard to do. Anyone who guides others to stop and notice and to ask questions is a teacher.

Anyone who models caring and curiosity for the natural world is a teacher. You don’t need a license to be an invisible teacher, and your salary is limitless!

Many of my best teachers were invisible teachers. They shaped how I think and who I am today. Here are some of them:

Aldo Leopold passed away in 1948 and is widely regarded as the father of wildlife management as he forged a new way of thinking. His writings have helped me know that growth includes the willingness to change your mind. Leopold was my teacher.

Einstein, who passed away in 1955, once said, “We shall require a substantially new way of thinking if mankind is to survive.” I use this iconic quote in all my environmental studies classes. Einstein was my teacher.

E.O. Wilson, who passed in 2021, taught me to appreciate biophilia, which is the innate human affinity for nature and

living systems. He also taught me ways to think about biodiversity that I have continued to share with my students for many years. Wilson was my teacher.

Jane Goodall, who just recently left us, has long been a teacher of mine as well. Her endearing message of hope has always resonated with me. We need hope to have energy to fight for the future. Goodall was my teacher.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, gave a wonderful presentation for Wild Ones in 2024. She has taught me how scientific ecological knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge can benefit each other through “two-eyed seeing.” Her work reminds us that sustainability depends on reciprocity and respect. Kimmerer is my teacher.

Carol Niendorf, who was a matriarch of our Wild Ones chapter, passed in December. She taught me to be stoic in our work in land restoration. She also taught me that a prairie is not just a flower garden to admire but something to run and play in. Niendorf was my teacher.

We are all teachers and should be conscious of our potential influence on others that makes us invisible teachers. If you teach others to view the land as a community, in reciprocity you will be helping to make a healthier planet and a healthier you. Your invisible lessons will endure long into the future.

After twenty plus years, I could never have imagined teaching to be so rewarding. When I am teaching, I never stop learning. Learning means growth, and growth is life.

If you would like to better connect and learn fun ways to teach about the natural world, please check out my class “Nature Teaching Strategies for All Ages.”



Photo courtesy of Shannon Davis-Foust.

Photo courtesy of Catherine McKenzie.

Founding Member, Carol Niendorf, Fondly Remembered continued from page 1.

found a better person to work with and to support me in my new role. In later years, she filled a vital role in developing and setting up the WILD Center and the many volunteer work days.

Carol was a strong advocate for natural landscaping with native plants. She and Bob welcomed many visitors to the three-acre prairie restoration they created at their longtime home between Oshkosh and Omro, Wisconsin. They derived much joy from helping others learn to nurture our environment through landscaping with native plants and continued that work when they initiated a prairie planting on a berm at their retirement home at Evergreen Retirement Community in Oshkosh.

For me personally, I have lost a very dear friend and cherish my last visit with her when my husband, John, and I, along with my friend Kris, visited with Carol and Bob this past summer. On behalf of the Fox Valley Area Chapter, I send sincere condolences to Bob and all their family.



Bob and Carol doing what they did so often.

Photo courtesy of Donna VanBuecken

DON'T FORGET TO PLACE YOUR ORDER!

Native Plant, Tree & Shrub Sale

by Grace Elonen

Pre-Orders Due Mon | Mar 31 **Pick Up** 9 am-2 pm | Sat | May 16

Here's your chance to get top quality native plants from reputable local nurseries. Our annual native plant sale order form is included in this newsletter or you can download a copy of the form from our chapter website, www.foxvalleyarea.wildones.org.

QUESTIONS, contact Grace Elonen at (920) 817-0529 or elonengrace@gmail.com.

TO VOLUNTEER with the plant sale, contact David Langner at (920) 205-4602 or via email at lanikarask@yahoo.com.



Donna Van Buecken, Pat and Dick Filzen prefill orders.

Photo courtesy of Barb Carzani

The 29th Toward Harmony With Nature Conference Successful!

Many thanks to the volunteers: *(in no particular order)*

- Abbey Sena
- Cindy Carter
- Cooper Wakefield
- Corinne Weis
- Dan Barker
- Dana Hartel
- Dusty Krikau
- Kathleen Hallett
- Mel Mohr
- Merrie Schamberger
- Nancy Benkoske
- Raji Subarayan
- Ron and Nancy Jones
- Shannon Foust-Davis
- Stephanie Losse
- Sue Pichotta-Berard, Conference Chair
- Fox Valley Tech College Horticultural Program and Students



Photo courtesy of Catherine McKenzie.



Photo courtesy of Catherine McKenzie.

Their collective work made the conference go so smoothly. Of course, the knowledge of the speakers and the clarity of their presentations was outstanding. Neil Diboll, our keynote speaker, took an involved topic, "Genetic Diversity and Plant Preservation," and made it understandable as he always does. An inspiring perspective from indigenous speaker Anahkwet on "Rights of Nature in Indian Country" let us hear language used to appreciate and thank this land for centuries. The Silent Auction brought in \$1,700, thanks to you donors and buyers! The vendors' tables were varied, creative and educational. The Culver Family Center fit the needs of the visitors and participants well and the lunch was quite tasty. Folks seemed happy and keenly involved and all in sub-zero weather! See you next year (in San Diego?).



Fox Valley Area

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November 1, 1994:

Fox Valley Area became chartered as a Wild Ones chapter

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Conference

Susan Pichotta-Berard

Native Plant Sale

Grace Elonen

Newsletter Contributors

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Photo courtesy of Catherine McKenzie.



Fox Valley Area

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Appleton, WI 54912

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RENEW!

Don't Become Extinct!

Your mailing label is date coded with your membership renewal. **Member dues are \$40 per household per year.**

Please renew on-line at:
wildones.org/membership.

Thank you and we'll look forward to seeing you at the meetings!

— Dan Barker, Member Chair

WOFVA NATIVE PLANT CERTIFICATION COURSES

Identifying Native Trees and Shrubs in Winter

Instructor: Danielle Bell

Format: In person

Date/Time: Saturday, February 21, 2026, 9am-2:30pm
(half hour lunch on your own)

Location: Mequon Nature Preserve

Elective: 5 hours

Establishing & Managing Native Plant Communities

Instructor: Shannon Davis-Foust and Mel Mohr

Format: In person

Date/Time: Saturday, March 28, 9am-3:30pm

Location: UW Oshkosh Campus

Core Course: 6 hours



To register and for more information scan QR code or visit:

<https://foxvalleyarea.wildones.org/classes>



Photo courtesy of Deb Benada.

Become a Wild Ones Member

Join on-line at the Wild Ones national website, wildones.org/membership. Household membership is \$40 per year and is tax deductible. You may also mail new and renewal memberships to the WILD Center at the address on Page 1.

Business and student memberships are also available through the same national web site, wildones.org/membership.

wildones.org

Photo courtesy of Robert Benada.