

FRIENDS OF
ANDERSON PARK

WHAT TO
LOOK FOR IN
SPRING

- An early bird. the yellow-rumped warbler is a small, blue-gray bird with bright yellow patches on its head, sides and rump.
- Want to see spring wildflowers in bloom? Take a weekly walk on the Bur Oak Trail at the park.
- Watch for early shorebirds like yellowlegs, great blue herons and bitterns— all can be seen from the observation platform.

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Anderson Park eNews

FRIENDS OF ANDERSON
PARK

APRIL 2017

Upcoming Programs

Blue Bird Monitoring - Volunteers are needed for a bluebird trail monitoring project at the park. Learn how to recognize nests and eggs of bluebirds and their nest box competitors. Watch the birds nest, count their eggs and hatchlings. Kids and grandkids love these activities! Call Lee at 651/462-2015 to volunteer or for more information.

Annual Spring Bird Hike - Saturday May 13 7:30 - 9:30 AM

Expect to see 40-60 species, especially spring migrants. Grab your binoculars and meet our leader, Naturalist Tom Anderson, at the picnic shelter.

Plant Exchange - Saturday, June 10th 9:00 - 10:30 AM

Plants accepted from 9:00 -10:00 AM . Plant selections 10:00 - 10:30 AM

Annual Fall Festival - Saturday, September 16th 9:30 AM -1:00 PM

Family fun, treasure hunt, games, music and treats for everyone! The Raptor Center will bring at least 3 raptors (a hawk, owl and falcon) to help us learn about the raptors of Minnesota—up close and personal.

All programs are free.

Questions? Call 651/462-2015



Choosing plants at the
2016 Plant Exchange

Photos by Steve Kingsbury and Joe Sausen
Contributing Author - Tom Anderson



Christening A Raft

by Naturalist/Author Tom Anderson

In the last days of March, Nancy and I unloaded a small raft from our truck at Anderson park's canoe dock. This was no ordinary raft. It bore a title: The U.S.S. Gavia. A floating nesting platform intended to attract the attention of a pair of loons. "Gavia" is the genus for the common loon. The word "loon" is thought to be derived from an old Scandinavian word, lom, meaning a clumsy person. While loons are graceful swimmers and powerful and direct in flight, they are clumsy on land. Their legs are positioned well to the rear of the bird's body. This placement makes them superior divers but awkward shufflers on land.



The ice had been off for a week. Now, at water's edge, we busied ourselves in last minute touches such as tying anchor ropes to opposite corners of the four-foot by four-foot platform. We are hopeful that a pair of loons will find it homey. Horseleg Lake has mostly undisturbed shoreline, no outboard motor traffic, and most importantly, populations of minnows for loons to feed on.

We tied the floating platform to a rope fastened to the stern of our canoe. Slowly we towed the U.S.S. "Gavia" to its berth, some two hundred yards distant. We were barely underway when we heard the familiar yodel of a loon. It was the first loon call of the spring. We took the vocalization as a good omen.

Does the distant bird spy the fruits of our labor? Is it pleased? Does it feel a spike in breeding hormones when it spies the floating bedroom? Unlike many species of waterfowl that copulate on water, loons mate on land. It's early for the loons to come back but open water by the end of March just might be the new norm.

It took us ten minutes to tow the "Gavia" into position. We stopped offshore of the park observation tower where visitors will have a good view without being too close to disturb any nesting birds.

The pair of anchors sank into the clear water and through the swirling jungle of aquatic vegetation. We spread old shoreline vegetation and a chunk of hummock over the top of the raft to make it look like a wee island. Suddenly from the north came excited honking from a pair of Canada geese. For a moment they even set their wings into a glide. It looked as if they wanted to immediately claim the faux terra firma before any common loon could inspect it. The pair swung over us, landed a couple hundred yards away and continued their noisy honking. We quickly paddled away.



Attention loons, geese, loafing turtles and muskrats: The U.S.S. "Gavia" is open for



Purple coneflowers (above) and big blue-stem grasses (right) are two of many native plants growing in Anderson Park's prairies.

Park staff oversee a prescribed burn at Anderson Park.

Plants for Native Birds

Anderson Park is considered by some to be a world class birding destination. Birders come to the park, especially in the spring, to enjoy the sights and sounds of migrating and native birds.

We believe that as the park's native prairie plants mature, we will see even more native birds. Why? According to the National Audubon Society, native birds rely on native insects

hosted by native plants.

Entomologist Doug Tallamy, author of *"Bringing Nature Home,"* says that an amazing number, "96 percent of land birds rely on insects to feed their young."

Tallamy also reports that native oak trees support more than 500 species of butterflies and moths, while non-native ginkgo trees support only five.

This new information may require a change in the way we think about, appreciate and value the insects in our yard, gardens and landscapes.

In addition to better bird-watching opportunities, the park's native prairie fields are guaranteed to be a sanctuary for pollinators whose habitat continues to decline steadily.



Prescribed Burning to Start Soon



One third of Anderson Park's prairie fields are burned every three years to clear invasive plants and restore diversity and nutrients. If weather conditions permit, 2017 burning could begin this week.

How to Help Pollinators

According to the Xerces Society, one of the best ways to help bees and butterflies thrive is to create a patch of habitat that attracts them.

Parks, roadside ditches, gardens and yards can all be excellent native habitat.

Even a patch of yard 3 feet by 3 feet or a native plant container garden on a patio or balcony will make a difference.

The secret to success lies in choosing locally native plants, which are full of nutritious insects, berries, nectar, and seeds that provide both food and refuge. Check out the Xerces Society guide (see website below) for a plant list for our area. It also has great information on how to plant for success and additional resources.

http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/GreatLakesPlantList_web.pdf

The Xerces Society says another important way to help is by not using pesticides (especially insecticides), as they are harmful to pollinators. Also, herbicides remove flowers from the landscape, thus reducing an important food source.

Finally, be sure to buy only pesticide-free seeds and plants. Ask your nursery before purchasing any plants or buy organic.

Even a small patch of yard, or pots on a deck, can be planted with native plants to provide much needed habitat for bees and butterflies.



Common Milkweed

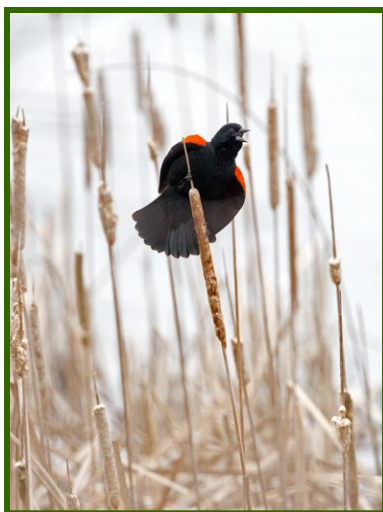
Please consider planting milkweed and several other native wildflowers and grasses today!



Native wildflowers and grasses provide nectar, pollen and seeds bees and butterflies (and birds) need to eat.

Spring Birds at the Park

Many spring migrants and native birds are active now. These two photos were taken at the park on Easter. On the left is a male red-winged blackbird singing and displaying. On the right is a male yellow-rumped warbler who will soon be on his way north.





Volunteers clean up one of the trails on new park property.

Coming Soon!

Three new park benches have been donated for the park's newest trail.

One bench will be placed on the east side of Horseleg Lake and two along the north side of Horse-shoe Lake.

Each one has a beautiful view overlooking the lake.

Feeling Down? Take a Hike!

Stanford researchers have been trying to understand the relationship between exposure to nature and mental health.

Their latest study asked two questions:

1. Can nature be a buffer for depression?
2. Is there a difference if you walk in nature versus an urban area?

When comparing people who walked in these different locations, researchers found little differences in physiological conditions, but marked changes in the brain. Repetitive thought focused on negative emotions (called "rumination") decreased in nature walkers.

This evidence supports earlier research findings that spending time in nature has a positive

effect on mood and memory and a dampening effect on anxiety.

Go get your hiking shoes and take a walk in the park!

For more information see: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204615000286>

The Mission of the Friends of Anderson Park is to preserve the natural beauty and primitive nature of Anderson Park and to assist Isanti County with its planning, development and maintenance of facilities.



As stewards of Anderson Park

We work to:

PRESERVE The ecological integrity of the park.

RESTORE Its native habitats.

CONNECT People with the natural world through innovative outdoor experiences.