



Spring 2014 Newsletter

Board Member Musings

As I write this I marvel at how even in the extreme cold of this record-breaking winter it is still easy to look out into our own front or backyards and find beauty. In these sunlit days the snow glistens and birds are happily at my feeder. We hope this newsletter is a window into our mission and shares our excitement at bringing nature's wonders into your lives.

Happy New Year to all of our BackYard Nature Center Subscribers!
Heidi

Upcoming Events

BackYard Birders

This winter we have been actively organizing one of our largest events to date! We hope you will join us March 6th for an exciting evening that includes the screening of a wonderful documentary on birding, *Birders: The Central Park Effect*, followed by a lively discussion on local birding opportunities lead by noted bird expert and author Sheryl DeVore.



The documentary touches on our core mission of connecting children, families and adults with the wonders of nature; in this case the beautiful world of birds and birding. To learn more about the event and reserve your seat, please go to:

<https://backyardbirders.eventbrite.com>

Local Park Districts Offer Nature Programs

We are thrilled that our partnership with the Winnetka Park District continues and that our own Gary Morrissey will be teaching a series of classes called *Outdoor Adventures* under the Winnetka Park District Outdoor Programs series. These classes for early elementary aged kids will be held outside and will explore the various habitats found in and around Crow Island Woods. Information and registration can be found at the [Winnetka Park District website](#).



We are also so happy to advertise that the Glencoe Park District will be providing a new summer Nature Exploration Camp based on the "no child left indoors" mission. The camp will have one and two-week sessions and include outdoor themed educational activities. Leading the Nature Exploration Camp is Kiim Dwan, a teacher at Central School in Glencoe, and also an active teacher in our Nature as Teacher Program at BYNC. [Learn more at the Glencoe Park District website](#).



BYNC's Nature as Teacher Program



This spring 440 eighth graders from Wilmette Jr. H.S. will take part in our Nature as Teacher Program (NaT). In preparation for the program, BYNC is working with naturalists and science teachers to design a laboratory experience in nature that complements the School's classroom curriculum. In May, the students will conduct hydrological and phenological studies at the Skokie Lagoons. 140 seventh graders from Glencoe's Central School will participate in a similar NaT Program. The Forest Preserves of Cook County's (FPCC) Education and Resource Management Departments have endorsed and assisted with the programs.

BYNC Stewardship and Service with Local Organizations

New Trier High School

We are in our sixth consecutive year working with NTHS sophomore advisery groups doing service work in the Skokie Lagoons and local park districts. The groups usually remove buckthorn or garlic mustard. We are always excited to see the enthusiasm of the high schoolers, both while doing these tasks and afterwards, while rewarding themselves with a hearty hot dog roast over the hot embers of a buckthorn fire. [Read more here.](#)



Little House of Glencoe and the Glencoe Friends of the Greenbay Trail



BYNC is actively involved with restoration projects taking place at the [Little House of Glencoe](#) and [Glencoe Friends of the Greenbay Trail](#). This past fall Daniel Kielson, BYNC Board President, led a stewardship afternoon at the Little House of Glencoe, complete with saws and loppers, and last spring Gary Morrissey and Katie DeVogelaere volunteered with Betsy Leibson and her Glencoe Friends of the Greenbay Trail group.

Also on hand were Ben Keller and Jon Chalos, regular BYNC volunteers, to remove buckthorn at the Greenbay Trail workday.

Discover Financial



Katie DeVogelaere and Gary Morrissey also represented BYNC at the Discover Financial Annual Day of Service on September 26th at the Lake County Fairgrounds. Non-profit Chicago Cares in conjunction with Discover Card hosted this event, where volunteers from Discover completed 20 projects benefiting 12 Chicago-area non-profits. Gary spoke to the volunteers during their lunch break about the work

BYNC is doing and invited them to join the Skokie Lagoons monthly habitat restoration activities along Tower Road. At the conclusion of the event, Chicago Cares graciously donated wildflower seed plugs, 25 paint gallons, 340 used paintbrushes, and dozens of craft kits and miscellaneous supplies to BYNC, some of which were later passed on to [Do Your P'Art](#), a Winnetka-based non-profit group.



BYNC Happenings

Gary Morrissey is now a Master Naturalist

Last newsletter we introduced Gary Morrissey as our newest board member. We are now pleased to announce that last fall he was certified as a Master Naturalist through a program administered by the University of Illinois Extension in partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Gary is also an Assistant Steward of the Skokie Lagoons.



Under Gary's expert guidance, BYNC recently purchased educational items to be used during our encounters in nature. A field-pack filled with measuring tools, microscopes, binoculars, field guides, sampling and collecting devices, and test kits will now be available when students (or adults) join any of our outings.

If you frequent our local natural areas, you are likely to see Gary as he leads groups tracking critters, bird watching, identifying wildlife, or just hiking in the woods. If you have a group that would like to explore Skokie Lagoons or any of the surrounding sites, Gary (gmorrissey@backyardnaturecenter.org) will be glad to make arrangements with you.

Fundraising

As always we want to acknowledge and thank all of our supporters and donors. This year marks the third year of our annual letter campaign and thanks to all of you we had our most successful year! We have now surpassed \$5000 in donations. Some of that money was used to purchase the outdoor nature educational kits described above. We are excited that this will bring an added dimension to the nature learning experience!



We're also pleased to report that BackYard Nature Center has reached the highest membership level offered through GuideStar. GuideStar is a 501(c)(3) public charity that collects, organizes, and presents information about operating non-profit organizations to users at no cost. We hope that by receiving gold membership this

will increase our transparency (showing donors where their donation dollars are being put to work), and increase our legitimacy as an honest and trustworthy non-profit organization.

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