

# Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

## Outdoor Classroom News

### Fall 2017



#### Contents:

1. News
2. Professional Development
3. Other Resources
4. Housekeeping



#### 1. News

##### **Fall on the Prairie**

Another long and lovely fall. Sure, we experienced some colder weather in October, but overall it's been an easy and beautiful season. Ice has been forming slowly, a little snow has come and gone, and deciduous trees and tamaracks are all bare now, making it easy to see their branching patterns. Green has drained from cattails and grasses, replaced with infinite shades of brown. Flowers are done blooming, their sleepy seeds ready for next year, some flying like snow through the air. What a great fall for finding red-bellied snakes and millipedes! A few other fun finds include the spotted cucumber beetle, northern cobweb weaver, and a muskrat swimming under clear ice! We continue to observe flocks of geese and ducks heading south along with bald eagles, rough-legged hawks, and northern harriers. How is the season moving towards dormancy in your school yard, backyard, refuge, or park?

##### **Staffing**

Thanks to generous funding from the Friends of the PWLC, our fall naturalist is back to support educational activities. Jo Fritz is assisting the Prairie Science Class and visiting school groups. So thankful to have you for a second autumn, Jo!

##### **Scheduling Your Class**

A brief reminder that when contacting the PWLC to book your dates here, please call **Terrie Eidal at 218-998-4481**. You can also email her at [terrie\\_eidal@fws.gov](mailto:terrie_eidal@fws.gov). Terrie handles our entire calendar, scheduling for all groups visiting the PWLC. Please do not reply to this email message. Thank you!

##### **Monarch Mania**

Here is some real, local monarch data you can graph with your class. The PWLC tagged 260 monarchs from August 15 through October 11: 154 males, 106 females; 24 of which were reared in captivity. 374 monarch taggers volunteered from 12 states mostly WI, MN, and ND with long-distance awards going to NY, TX, FL, and OR. Eleven school groups for a total of 392 students and 75 chaperones and teachers also tagged monarchs. A grand total of 841 volunteers tried to catch monarchs. **Thank you everyone for making a difference for this iconic and declining species!**

## **Yellow Bus Fund**

At the PWLC, students have the chance to explore a prairie, sample the life of a wetland, and discover the beauty of a vanishing landscape. The Friends of the PWLC feel all schools should be able to visit the PWLC regardless of funding. Thanks to a grant they secured, the Friends provide **up to 50% reimbursement for classes that cannot otherwise afford to visit**. The funds pay for transportation to and from the Center for both daytime and overnight visits. For more information, contact Terrie Eidal at the PWLC at 218-998-4481.

## **2. Professional Development**

### **June 25-28: Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom Workshop** (times vary)

*Open to all who teach children* including licensed teachers, teachers in training, home school educators, naturalists, non-formal educators, park rangers, volunteers, and Friends members! Working together as a team, we explore the many ways to use an outdoor classroom to enhance and strengthen a child's education. The workshop is held in conjunction with the Summer Explorers Biology Camp for students entering 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades in the fall. Workshop participants may teach any grade level and have the opportunity to apply their new skills each day with a small group of interested students. Participants receive 30 hours of clock hour instruction and workshop materials. Dormitory lodging is available for workshop attendees. Enrollment is limited to the first 15 educators who register. Instructors: ISD 544 Prairie Science Class teacher Mona Davis and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service educator Molly Stoddard. Registration opens this winter at [www.friendsofprairiewetlands.com](http://www.friendsofprairiewetlands.com) (exact registration date to be announced).

## **3. Other Resources**

### **Today's Teens and the Environment**

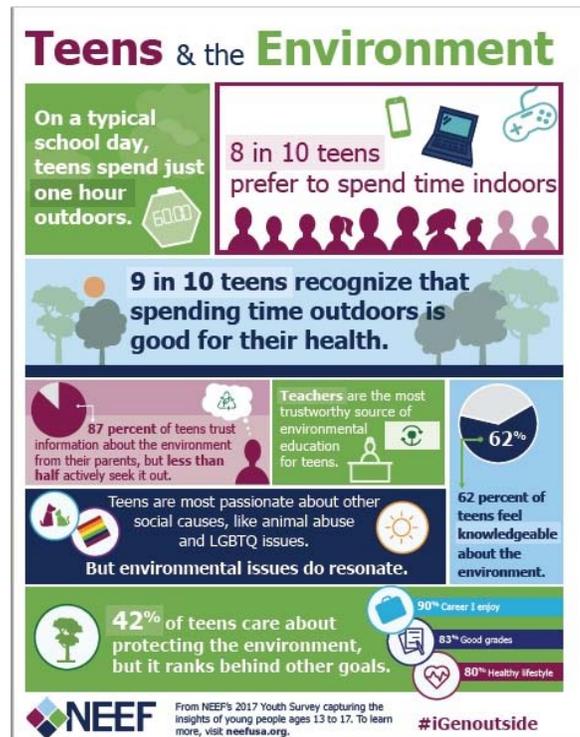
The National Environmental Education Foundation recently released highlights from its [2017 Youth Survey](#). Teachers, you have a major influence! See graphic, right, for highlights. →

### **Ready to Teach Outside?**

Using the outdoors as a classroom for formal and non-formal education can help students of all ages gain knowledge and skills while connecting with nature. Take a look at these [general tips for teaching outside](#) from Hennepin County.

### **The Compass to Nature Guide**

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center now offers a comprehensive publication which provides teachers, parents, and other educators a way to lead the hearts and minds of children and adults into nature. [The Compass to Nature: Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom](#) is free for all to use at any site, any time of year.



## **Fostering Outdoor Observation Skills in Students**

Developed for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' North American Conservation Education Strategy, this [guidebook](#) was designed for teachers to provide K-12 students real world experiences in fish and wildlife related science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies. Units include: Science Notebook, Use Your Senses, Read and Use Maps, and Use Data to Answer Questions.

## **4. Housekeeping**

### **Brought to You by...**

This seasonal environmental education (EE) e-mail is provided by the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If you know of other educators who may be interested in receiving this e-mail, we welcome you to forward this message to them or ask them to send an e-mail to [prairiewet@fws.gov](mailto:prairiewet@fws.gov) with their name, school district, grade level(s), subjects, and city/state. We also welcome your feedback at any time. If there is something particular that you would like us to share, please let us know.

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"If nature has generally been something you have been afraid of, don't worry: the best antidote to the unknown is to learn as much as you can."

-- Clare Walker Leslie, *The Curious Nature Guide*

