

the gem

KICKAPOO VALLEY RESERVE NEWSLETTER

SINCE 2000

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES CANVAS PROJECT

Theme: Interconnected as it pertains to nature.

Over 250 artists of all ages, created canvases for the 2026 Creative Community Canvas Project. Proceeds from the auction benefit a variety of student art & nature programs at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

[Check out the online auction.](#) Bid high and bid often!

Online auction closes Sunday, March 29, 2026, at 5pm CST.



26063



25015



26031



26208

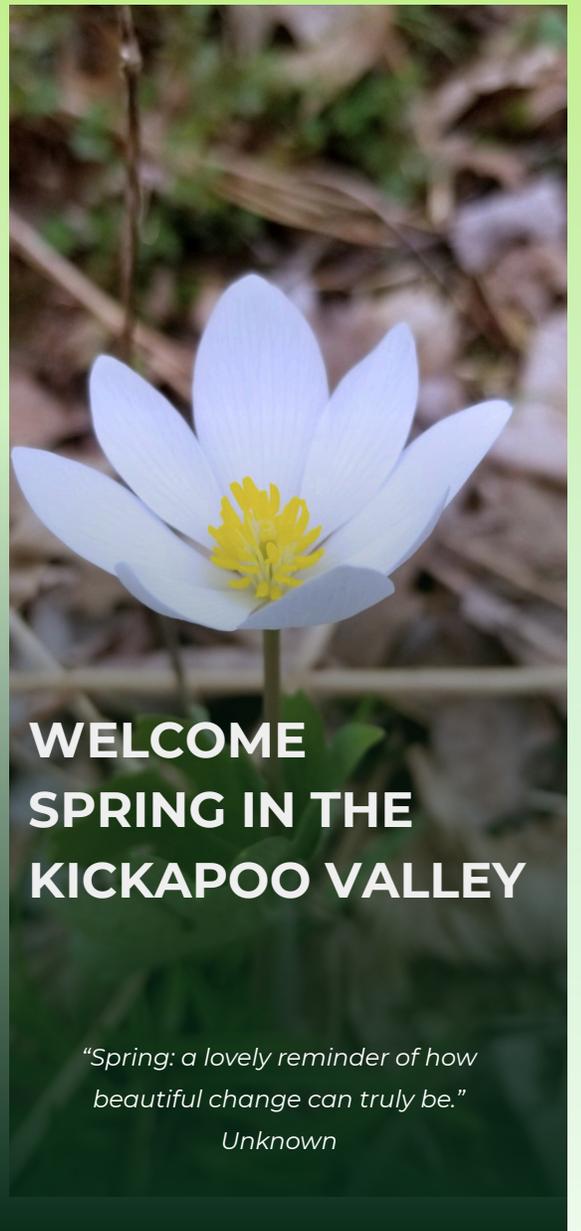


26264



26120

Featured canvases



WELCOME SPRING IN THE KICKAPOO VALLEY

"Spring: a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be."

Unknown

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Mar 23 | 6 pm, Ephemeral Art Series – Cake Decorating
- Mar 25 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- Mar 28 | 10 am, Walking with Friends Landing 12
- Mar 29 | 5pm, Online Canvas Auction Closes
- Mar 30 | 6 pm, Ephemeral Art Series – Wire Sculpture
- Apr 1 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- Apr 6 | 9 am, Finance Committee meeting
- Apr 8 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- Apr 9 | 5:30 pm, Education/Tourism Committee Mtg
- Apr 15 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- Apr 16 | 6 pm, KRMB Meeting
- Apr 18 – 25 | Celebrate Earth Day (all week)
- Apr 18 | Friends of KVR Roadside Cleanup
- Apr 22 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- Apr 25 | 1:30 pm Driftless Dialogue – Nature & Poetry
- Apr 25 | 2 pm, Youth Poetry Reading
- Apr 25 | Earth Day Celebration
- Apr 29 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- Apr 30 | WI Master Naturalist Training
- May 1 | WI Master Naturalist Training
- May 6 | 9 am, Nature Bound Spring Session
- May 12 | 5:30pm, Land Management Committee Mtg
- May 21 | 6 pm, KRMB Meeting
- May 24 | Visitor Center begins Summer Hours - Open Sundays and Holidays
- May 25 | Visitor Center open
- Jun 4 & 5 | WI Master Naturalist Training
- Jun 6 | National Trails Day
- Jun 8 | Summer camps begin
- Jun 18 | 6 pm, KRMB Meeting



Directors Discourse

BY JASON LEIS - KVR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As winter loosens its grip on our area and warmer temperatures are thankfully creeping in, it is a fragile time for the land. The frost is making its way out of the ground which makes most areas very soft and susceptible to damage. Please keep this in mind when recreating. I know everyone wants to get out and enjoy the great weather, but be mindful if it is soft, stay to more solid trails such as our paved Old 131 Trail. Also, make sure to keep your vehicles on hard surfaces to prevent damage and the possibility of getting stuck.



Trillium on the KVR - KVR Photo

Spring is a great time for witnessing migration and experiencing all kinds of ephemerals and animals emerging. The ponds are alive with returning residents and those just passing through.

Our trails don't open for bikes and horses until May 1st, including the Old 131 Trail, so until then enjoy the KVR on foot. Get out there and enjoy the springtime! Before you know it, you will be swatting mosquitos again.

Jason



Kickapoo Valley Reserve Mission

The land in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve shall be protected, preserved, and enhanced so that its unique environmental, scenic, and cultural features provide opportunities for the use and enjoyment of visitors to the Reserve. The Reserve will be promoted as a unique example of the Driftless Area Ecoregion and as a destination for low-impact tourism and education.



Virginia Bluebells and Baltimore Oriole on the KVR
Photo by KVR

Renew Your Kickapoo Valley Reserve Pass!

DIANE GLOEDE - GUEST SERVICES ASSOCIATE

Now is the time to renew your annual individual or family pass and be ready to enjoy the year ahead exploring and relaxing at the Reserve. The fee for an individual pass is \$25 and \$40 for a family pass. If you wish to support the KVR as a “Friend” of the Reserve, it is an additional \$15 for either. Friends of KVR support helps connect people of all ages with educational and recreational opportunities at the Reserve. Passes can be purchased and renewed online or at the Visitor Center. We encourage you to continue to explore the beauty and natural riches these 8,600 acres offer – they are true jewels of the Kickapoo Valley. Many thanks for your continued support!

Visitor Center hours: Monday-Saturday 8:00am – 4:30pm
Reserve hours: 24/7 year-round!



Hemlock on the KVR

KVR Annual Pass vs Friends Annual Membership: What’s the Difference?

JANA MUEHLENKAMP - GUEST SERVICES ASSOCIATE

What’s the difference between a KVR Pass and a Friends of KVR Membership? You receive an annual pass for the KVR with both of them. A Friends of KVR Membership adds additional financial support to programs and projects on the KVR. There are links to purchase passes on the KVR website and on Friends of KVR website.

Here are some ways becoming a KVR Friend provides additional support:

- Helps to provide access for all to nature education programming.
- Provides additional financial support for trails and recreation on the KVR.
- Provides matching grant money for conservation and restoration projects.
- Provides support to KVR events and initiatives.

What you get with a Friends of KVR Membership:

- Friends of KVR Gift Shop member only sales.
- Subscription to Friends of KVR Newsletter

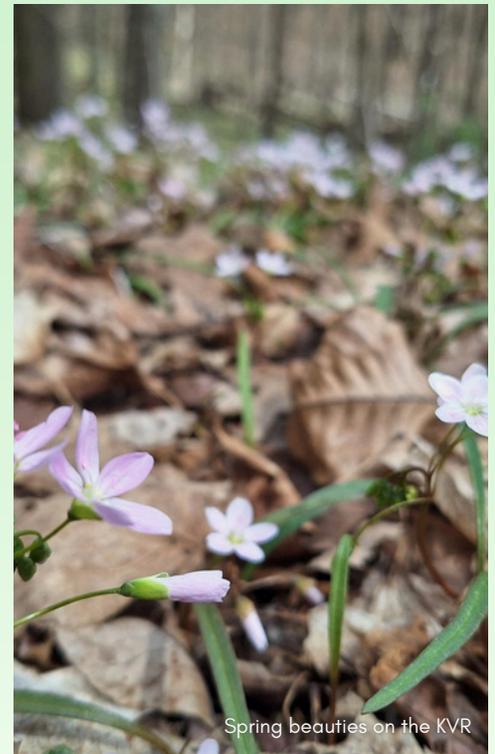
Please consider becoming a Friend of Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Seasonal Field Notes



Click me, I'm a link.

Get ready for summer trail season.
Get your KVR Annual Pass online!



Spring beauties on the KVR



Education Corner

SUMMER ADVENTURE CAMPS

Registration is open!

Adventure Camps
Ages 2-17

LEARN MORE ABOUT
SUMMER ADVENTURE CAMPS



Time to register for Summer Camp!

Summer Adventure Camps will be here before you know it. Our instructors are already planning the fun activities. This year, we have 19 camp options for ages ranging from 2 years to 17 years old.

Our youngest campers can participate in Forest Friends, which is held in early June on either Mondays/Wednesdays or Tuesdays/Thursdays. Children ages 4 to 5 years old have the option to attend Kinder Camp in June or July.

The 6- and 7-year-olds have multiple camp choices. Wonder Wanderers is a constant, offered multiple years now, yet our instructor comes up with new things to teach each time. Trail Trekkers is a great option for active children. New this year is Plant Curiosities, which will take a fun approach to the uniqueness of the plant world.

No age group has more choices than the 8- to 10-year-olds with four options: Art Sprouts, Nature Nuts, Four Elements, and Where the Wild Things Are. Each one offers unique perspectives on and activities in nature.

Camp Inspire, Wilderness Adventure Camp, and the Wild World of Plants are geared toward 11- to 14-year-olds, and they couldn't be more different! Camp Inspire focuses on writing that will deepen their love for the natural world. In the Wilderness Adventure Camp, campers will develop wilderness living skills and participate in high adventure activities. Finally, the Wild World of Plants teaches an appreciation for the plants around us.

We can't forget the camps designed for the oldest campers. Leadership Trail Camp is offered as a level up from Wilderness Adventure Camp. Campers will spend four days and three nights on the Reserve. Black Ghost Fly Fishing will teach you everything you need to know about fly-fishing. Waterways Camp is a four-day, three-night canoe-based exploration within the Reserve.

All camps focus on building a relationship with nature. Campers can expect to be outside most of the time, and they will likely come home with dirt under their nails. They will come away with new friends, new experiences, and a new (or improved) appreciation for the world around them.



Four Elements



Fly Fishing Camp



Kindercamp



Winter Nature Bound Highlights

BY JANA MUEHLENKAMP - NATURE BOUND HELPER

The winter session of Nature Bound education program came and went so quickly. Nature Bound students spent a large amount of time outside in nature learning about winter in the natural world. We experienced activities to enjoy in winter and tried out cross country skiing too!

Nature Buds (8-12 yrs) designed 3D models of self-contained ecosystems, observed and recorded phenological events, and learned to use dichotomous keys to identify plants and animals.



Nature Sprigs (5-7 yrs) learned animal tracking, about hibernation, signs of animals in the area by their tracks, scats and nibbles on twigs and seeds, and looked for Springtails with our magnifiers. We made track booklets with prints and patterns. We also learned how snowflakes are formed.

Nature Sprouts (3-4 yrs) did animal tracking, learned songs, read books and did nature journaling.

Nature Seeds (18 mo-2yrs) experienced the natural world in a guided outdoor environment with sensory activities, play, storytelling and movement.

All our groups had a chance to try cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. Our Spring semester begins Wednesday, March 18th and continues until May 6th. You can register on our website under the education tab.



Winter Nature Bound

Winter Nature Bound

Education Corner

SPRING NATURE BOUND



Spring Nature Bound is a great program for youth aged 18 mo. to 12 years old to experience first-hand the awakening of the natural world from winter.

Session 1: March 18, 25, April 1, 8, 2026

Session 2: April 15, 22, 29, May 6, 2026

Nature Bound programs are focused on literacy and nature. Seasonal nature stories and learning are incorporated into lessons as we explore phenology and immerse ourselves in the natural world around us. Each student gets to go home from Nature Bound with a book about nature. Books are donated by folks like you! If you have gently used children's nature books or would like to donate books to the program, please reach out to us. kickapoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us



Bridge 18 in Winter Photo by KVR

On 8600 Acres

Adopt a Trail & Join a Stewardship Community

The KVR Adopt-A-Trail Program is looking for volunteers ready to step forward as stewards. Whether you hike, run, hunt, birdwatch, horseback ride, bike, or simply enjoy time outdoors, this is your opportunity to give back to the trails you value.

When you adopt a trail, you commit to checking on a specific section three times a year.

Responsibilities are simple but meaningful: clear small branches, trim light brush, remove litter, monitor trail conditions, and report issues. KVR staff provide guidance, training, and support—you don't need prior experience. Even a few hours each season makes a real difference.

Trail sections can be shared by individuals, families, youth groups, or community organizations. It's a great way to:

- Spend intentional time outdoors
- Teach stewardship and responsibility to youth
- Strengthen community connections
- Take pride in caring for this amazing place

Trail maintenance is about more than keeping paths open. It protects wildlife habitat, preserves cultural and natural resources, and ensures safe, positive experiences for every visitor. When you adopt a trail, you become part of the team that keeps the Reserve sustainable and accessible year-round.

Kickapoo Valley Reserve
ADOPT A TRAIL

By adopting a trail on the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, you can support efforts to preserve and protect this truly unique and amazing place.

Learn More - Get Involved
kvr.state.wi.us

Ready to adopt a trail or would like more information? Contact the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Choose your trail. Commit a few hours. Make a lasting impact.

Reflections on the Winter Season

BY JESSE HANEY - KVR POLICE OFFICER/PROPERTY MANAGER

Winter in Wisconsin is always a season of unpredictability, and this year proved no exception. In my role as Property Manager and Police Officer, the winter months consist of land stewardship, public service, community relations, self-development through training, maintenance responsibilities, and field patrol. Each season brings its own challenges and rewards, and this winter offered a little of both.

Early in the season, conditions suggested we might be in for a snowy winter. However, shortly after Christmas, much of that snow disappeared.

Determined to make the most of what remained, staff worked to salvage and relocate snow to create play areas for children during the Winter Festival. Despite the limited snow cover, the festival was met with pleasant weather and a strong turnout. It was great to see families and community members from near and far come together to enjoy winter at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Inconsistent winter weather created less-than-desirable conditions for cross-country ski trails. I appreciated the opportunity to groom the trails. There is something uniquely rewarding about working on the fresh fallen snow, observing the winter landscape while preparing trails for others to enjoy. Even in a light snow year, the beauty of the Kickapoo Valley in winter remains unmistakable.

January's stretch of extreme cold brought its own silver lining. The sustained low temperatures produced the ice formations along rock faces and waterways throughout the Reserve. Visitors traveled from across the Midwest to experience these natural displays, as well as to participate in winter hunting seasons such as rabbit and coyote. Conversations in the field always highlight the diversity of what draws people to the Reserve.

As we transition toward spring, winter leaves behind the memories of the unique winter experiences that the driftless area of Wisconsin offers and what draw people to enjoy the outdoors in any weather conditions. Each season at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve brings change, but our shared commitment to caring for this landscape remains constant.

Nonnative Ornamentals on the KVR

Every once in a while, when you venture out on the KVR you might stumble across a plant that seems out of place in the native landscape.

Non-native ornamentals are dotted here and there on the KVR, and many times give us a glimpse of times gone by. Lilacs bushes are a sure sign of a former homestead location. Daffodils, Snowdrops and more tell a story of welcoming spring for generations. As you venture out this spring, take in the history these plants share.



Spring River Safety

BY JESSE HANEY - KVR POLICE OFFICER/PROPERTY MANAGER

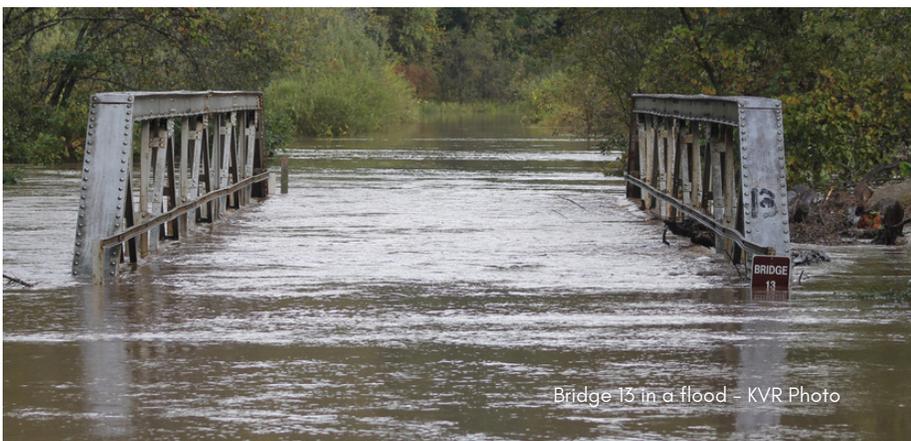
After the long cold Wisconsin winters folks are eager to get out on the Kickapoo River, but spring is one of the most unpredictable seasons for river conditions. As temperatures rise, snowmelt and spring showers work their way through the watershed. The river can change quickly sometimes within minutes. The Kickapoo River levels also fluctuate rapidly due to upstream rainfall. Checking current river conditions before launching and being prepared to adjust plans is part of responsible and safe recreation.

One of the primary hazards we encounter in early spring is moving ice. Ice shelves and floating chunks can break free and travel downstream with little warning. These ice flows can pin or damage watercraft and create dangerous entrapment hazards along shorelines and bends in the river. It is not recommended to travel the river when any ice is present.

Another important consideration is water temperature. Even when air temperatures feel warm and inviting, river conditions often remain dangerously cold. Cold water immersion can quickly lead to hypothermia, impairing strength, coordination, and judgment. Proper cold-weather gear, including life jackets and layered clothing, is essential for anyone planning early-season paddling or fishing activities.

Spring runoff can also carry downed trees and debris into the river channel. Fallen trees or branches making new river blockages pose a serious risk to paddlers. These obstructions can develop or shift after heavy spring rains and snowmelt, making familiar stretches of river look very different from previous seasons. Always scout ahead when visibility is limited and give debris a wide berth when possible.

Spring offers incredible scenery and opportunities along the Kickapoo, but safety should always be considered. Wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, paddling with a partner, and respecting changing conditions help ensure that everyone can enjoy the river safely throughout the season



Bridge 13 in a flood - KVR Photo

We sure don't wish for flooding in the Kickapoo Valley. As paddling season approaches, we must remember to respect the power of the river and recognize the potential for flash flooding. You can find real time river level information from Ontario and La Farge gaging stations on our website. kickapoovalley.wi.gov

On 8600 Acres



Trail Talk - Spring Conditions

BY JACKIE LEIS - KVR NATURAL RESOURCES & RECREATION SPECIALIST

Got mud? With the changing seasons, we should remember to be kind to the landscape. Venturing out on soft spring trails can have a lasting effect on the tread of a trail. Be mindful of what your use leaves behind. We know you don't litter, but what happens to the footprints left in the mud. Do they hold water, not allowing the trail to dry out as fast? Are shoes covered in sticky mud, potentially carrying unwanted seed further down the trail. Sometimes being a good steward, means staying clear of trails that are not quite ready for use. It is great to get out on trails in the spring. Here are some tips to have a great experience and protect the land. Visiting the ponds in spring is a sensory extravaganza. Calls from geese and Sand hill Cranes, emerging frogs, and owls fill the air. Catching a glimpse of a turtle basking on a log, feeling the cool breeze from over the pond mix with sun warmed air. These ephemeral experiences are worth the time and energy. Stick to trails on south facing slopes, they usually dry out faster and are ready to handle use faster than sheltered northern slopes. Enjoy Spring!

we ♥ dark skies

Dark skies at the Visitor Center

Conservation in Action

Spring Habitat Work

BY JESSE HANEY -
KVR POLICE OFFICER/PROPERTY MANAGER



Spring is a season to ramp up habitat management operations. As the landscape begins to green up, our work to preserve and improve the native communities that make the KVR unique, increases.

One of our primary focuses is invasive species control. Plants like garlic mustard and bush honeysuckle spread aggressively and compete with native vegetation for sunlight, nutrients, and space. Left unmanaged, these species can quickly alter forest structure and reduce biodiversity. It may feel like an uphill battle sometimes given the tenacity of some invasive species, but any work we do has lasting impact to prevent and control the spread.

We also plan to conduct prescribed burns. Fire is a natural and beneficial tool for maintaining native ecosystems. Fire helps suppress invasive species, recycle nutrients back into the soil, and promote the growth of native grasses and wildflowers, supporting pollinators, ground-nesting birds, and other wildlife that depend on open habitat.

Habitat work is ongoing and often behind the scenes, but it plays a critical role in preserving the ecological integrity of the Reserve. Through active management and long-term stewardship, we are working to ensure that the Kickapoo Valley Reserve remains healthy, resilient, and diverse for generations to come.

Dark Skies... For the Birds

BY MARLA LIND - KICKAPOO VALLEY DARK SKY INITIATIVE VP

Imagine that you are returning to Wisconsin after spending the winter in sunny Southern Florida.

Now imagine that you are making this trip with only your internal sense of direction, the sun, the stars and the moon to guide you. No maps. No GPS. 1500 miles. Finally, you are doing this under your own power - walking, running, hiking or biking. No airplane. No car. Does it sound difficult?

It is. Yet every spring millions of birds make this trip, returning to Wisconsin, or, in many cases, stopping briefly in Wisconsin before heading even farther north to their summer breeding grounds. It is a long and grueling flight and 80% of migrating birds in North America make this trip at night using their internal compass, instinct and the night sky to guide their path.

Since the advent of electricity humans have been lighting up the night and the increasing sky glow created by these artificial lights can confuse birds and pull them off course. In severe cases, light pollution can be so confusing that it becomes a light trap causing birds to continuously circle areas that are brightly lit until they become exhausted and fall to the ground like moths at a porch light. In less severe cases, it can pull them off course, but adding even 10 miles to a 1500 mile trip can be the difference between a successful migration and death.

Remember that moth mentioned above? Birds can't make a quick stop at McDonald's to refuel their bodies, they also have to find food during this journey. Many insects are also active at night and susceptible to light traps created by artificial light. You see this under streetlights, porchlights and even at your windows. Fewer insects means less food. No food = no fuel to power each wingbeat. So, if you celebrate spring when the first flock of Canadian Geese honk as they head north instead of south, the first robin appears on your lawn or the first hummingbird visits your feeder, take action. Do your part to reduce light pollution so birds can more successfully make their epic journey. Sign up for [Lights Out Wisconsin Alerts](#) to get messages reminding you to turn your outdoor lights off during peak migration. Better yet, turn off outdoor lights anytime you are not actively using them. All the insects, birds, and mammals will benefit from natural darkness and you will also be rewarded with a better night of sleep.



[Click here to learn more about local Dark Sky Conservation](#)



Stranded Common Loon - Barbra Duerksen

Naturalist Notes

GOOD TO KNOW

Recommended Birding Resources:

- Cornell Laboratory for Ornithology's Project Feeder Watch has advice on feeders, where to put them, keeping them clean, what to feed birds, and much more. "[Project Feeder Watch Feeding Birds](#)".
- allaboutbirds.org is a good site for identification help, i.e. distinguishing Purple Finches from House Finches.
- Avian Flu is an ongoing concern. See <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/avian-influenza-outbreak-should-you-take-down-your-bird-feeders/>



Hermit Thrush



A public and private partnership to increase awareness, improve habitat, and engage landowners in conservation practices for birds and other wildlife within the [Kickapoo-Wildcat Important Bird Area](#).

Spring Bird Migration

BY BARBARA DUERKSEN - MASTER NATURALIST & NATIVE BIRD EXPERT

For many people, spring migration means that birds are returning after spending the winter in warmer climates. But there are also birds that will be leaving to nest farther north after wintering in our area. For other species, southern Wisconsin is just a stopover on a longer migration flight.

Purple Finches are about to head north to the conifer forests of northern Wisconsin and Canada. A few came to our sunflower seed feeder all winter, with the largest number, 16, recorded on Feb. 20. Often in late winter, when the weather mitigates a bit, I can step out the door to hear a jumble of soft melodic warbly twittering from the treetops. The first time hearing this always catches me by surprise, and I look up to see them doing what? Singing and eating buds? Yes, these beautiful finches that head south in large numbers when the northern conifer crops are poor, also eat buds and fruits. It sounds like a treetop celebration complete with a tasty bud salad.

Wood Thrushes, who spend winter months in Central America, are one of the species that nest in SW Wisconsin. There are 3 other thrush species that pass through our area during migration. Hermit Thrushes are the first, appearing in early April, most having spent the winter in the southern states and into Mexico. Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes winter in South America and go far north for the breeding season. They all have similar plumage – warm brown above and spotted below. A Hermit Thrush is distinguished by its reddish-brown tail, which it slowly bobs up and down while perched. The thrushes are known for their beautiful songs. The song of the Hermit Thrush has been described as a "richly melodious, haunting, fluty warble" *, often heard in the north woods and higher altitudes of the western mountains, but seldom heard on migration. Years ago, hoping to hear one in spring, I found a suggestion to go out early, at dawn. I tried that, with minimal success. Then, on April 3, 2005, I was walking along the road, woods to north and south, when a Hermit Thrush began to sing, at 8 a.m. it sang for about 10 minutes, the song slowly getting fainter. Then again, that lovely song, off and on, for half an hour.

Perhaps my least expected spring migrant was a Common Loon that got stranded in our neighbors' pond during an April snowstorm in 2018. Loons are large heavy birds that need a runway to flap their wings, running across the water to gain enough speed to lift off, and the pond was too small. I contacted Marge Gibson of the Raptor Education Group** for advice. Linda and Kevin, the REGI Loon Rescue Team drove down from Antigo. With the help of John and others from Dane County Humane Society, they were able to capture the loon and take it to REGI for rehabilitation. After a week of rehab, the loon was released on Lake Wausau.

* Birds of the World, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

**Raptor Education Group, Inc., rehabilitation center, Antigo, Wisconsin, welcomes donations.



Sharp-lobed hepatica - Amy Dvorak

Spring Ephemerals

BY AMY DVORAK - KVR EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT - BOTANIST

Over the next month or two, the woods will come alive with our spring ephemerals. These plants indicate the beginning of spring and are often short-lived. Some of the best places to see our spring ephemerals is on the Wintergreen Bluff Trail and the Bailout Trail.

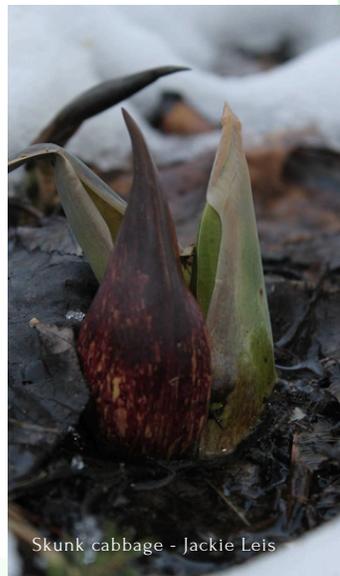
The first spring ephemeral we'll see is the skunk cabbage, or *Symplocarpus foetidus* as us plant geeks like to call it. The 3" to 6" flower appears before the leaves. It can heat itself to about 15 C through a chemical process, allowing it to heat its way through the snow cover. The leaves form in late spring and are quite large at 1' to 3' long. The skunk cabbage name comes from the distinct skunk-like odor produced when the leaves are crushed. Skunk cabbage is found in the shade with wet soil.

We have four species in the *Anemone* genus that fall under the spring ephemeral category. Sharp-lobed hepatica, or *Anemone acutiloba*, is only 2" to 6" tall. The flowers can be blue, pink, white, or purple. Round-lobed hepatica, or *Anemone americana*, is much less common on the Reserve and looks similar to the sharp-lobed hepatica, except the leaves are, you guessed it, rounded. The wood anemone, or *Anemone quinquefolia*, also looks somewhat like the round- and sharp-lobed hepaticas, but the leaves are much different. All three of these can be found in wooded areas.

But wait, didn't I say there were four *Anemone* species? The last one is the American pasqueflower, or *Anemone patens*. This species looks nothing like the other three. Similar to the skunk cabbage, the flowers appear before the leaves, and they often come up while there is still snow on the ground. The flower stalk and leaves are densely covered in long silky hairs. Look for it on south-facing slopes in dry to average sandy soil.

We can't talk about spring ephemerals without mentioning the Virginia spring beauty, or *Claytonia virginica*. The woods will be covered with these 3" to 6" tall plants starting in April.

Bloodroot, or *Sanguinaria canadensis*, is another common spring ephemeral on the Reserve. The bright white flowers open up in April and only live for a few days. The thick green leaves last well into the summer. The name bloodroot comes from the red juices from broken stems, leaves, and roots. Caution: This plant is hazardous if ingested.



Skunk cabbage - Jackie Leis

Naturalist Notes

What we are seeing....

March 3 - Sandhill Cranes over Old 131 Trail



March 7
Robin at the
Visitor Center



March 7
Red-winged
Blackbird at
VC pond



March 10
Bernice's
snow drops in the
Visitor Center Friends Garden



March 11 - Turkey Vultures over Star Valley



March 15
Garlic Mustard
near the dam



March 16 - Trumpeter Swans on the pond





Creative Communities CANVAS PROJECT

Online Canvas Auction closes
March 29, 2026 at 5pm CST
[Click here to view auction](#)



EARTH DAY (ALL WEEK)

All Week - April 18-25, 2026

“Freecycle” Drop Off - Give and get things for free
Garlic Mustard Gathering
Annual Roadside Clean-up

Saturday, April 18, 2026

- 10 am Adopt A Highway Clean-up - Friends of KVR
Everyone is welcome to help!

Saturday, April 25, 2026

Earth Day Celebration

- Youth Poetry Contest - 2pm
- Sign the Earth Day Tapestry
- Roadside Clean-up
- Kite Flying
- Garlic Mustard Gathering
- Trail Clean-up
- Guided Family Hike 3:30pm
- Nature Bound Saturday Program Sign Up



What's Happening



Driftless Dialogue Lecture Series

Poetry & Nature



Join student Poets of Merit and Wisconsin Poet Laureate for an afternoon of Nature and Poetry!

Presenter: Wisconsin Poet Laureate, Brenda Cárdenas & Local Student Poets of Merit

Date: Saturday, April 25, 2026

Time: 2pm

Location: KVR Visitor Center

Free program





Kickapoo Reserve Management Board Opposition Statement to 765 Transmission Line

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve Management Board formally opposes any proposed 765 kV transmission line routes that would cross, fragment, or otherwise impact lands within the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

The Reserve was established with a clear and enduring mission: to preserve and protect cultural and natural resources while providing opportunities for public use that are compatible with long-term stewardship. The Reserve is jointly managed by the State of Wisconsin and Ho-Chunk Nation with a mission that reflects decades of collaborative work, public investment, and careful planning to safeguard one of Wisconsin’s most ecologically, culturally, and historically significant landscapes.

A 765 kV transmission line would irreversibly alter the character of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Such infrastructure would fragment intact habitats, disrupt wildlife movement corridors, degrade scenic and recreational values, and cause irreversible harm to sensitive ecological systems and cultural resources that the Board is legally and ethically obligated to protect. These impacts are incompatible with the Reserve’s purpose and with the long-term conservation goals entrusted to the Management Board.

For more than thirty years, the Board and its partners have worked to balance shared public use with resource protection—ensuring that no single use is prioritized at the expense of the Reserve’s core conservation mandate. The introduction of large-scale transmission infrastructure represents a fundamentally different level of impact, one that cannot be mitigated without compromising the Reserve’s mission.

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is not merely open land; it is a protected public trust held for current and future generations. Allowing a 765 kV transmission line within Reserve boundaries would set a precedent that undermines the very purpose for which the Reserve was created.

For these reasons, the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Management Board strongly opposes any transmission line proposal that impacts Reserve lands and urges decision-makers to pursue alternative routes that avoid protected conservation areas and respect existing public commitments to preservation and protection.

Statement by Kickapoo Reserve Management Board March 19, 2026

Employment Opportunities

Join a dedicated team to help preserve and protect the cultural and natural resources of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve

- [Education Coordinator/Naturalist -FTE Position](#)
- [Field Crew - LTE 2 Positions](#)
- [Police Officer - LTE 2 Positions](#)
- [KVR Education Instructor/Naturalist](#)
- [Volunteer Opportunities](#)

Useful links

- **Realtime Kickapoo River Levels** - Gaging stations are located in Ontario and La Farge and provide continuous data and live feed video on gage height, discharge and precipitation.
[View Ontario Gaging Station Data here](#)
[View La Farge Gaging Station Data here](#)
- **Trail Status** - View trail status on the Kickapoo Valley Reserve [here](#)
- Get a [KVR Annual Pass](#) here
- Become a member of [Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve](#)
- [Donate and Support](#)

This shared field photo by Justin Yocum