

## **“Caring for The Land” 2022 Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Panel Discussion**

### **Webinars**

In this 50<sup>th</sup> birthday year for Woodsy Owl, the 2022 Midewin National Tallgrass panel discussion series acknowledges and celebrates one of the conservation hero’s greatest messages: “Care for The Land.” “Caring for The Land Webinars” are tailored to connect people of all ages and backgrounds with conservation experts to learn more about current concerns regarding natural habitat, what is being accomplished, and how each of us can get involved to make a difference.

### **Through Saturday, January 22**

Brushwood Center’s “At Ease” Nature Platoon Photography Display

Experience the Midewin prairie through the lens of a U.S. Military veterans and their family members. Through January 22, photos taken at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie by participants in Brushwood Center’s “At Ease” Nature Platoon will be displayed at Brushwood Center in Ryerson Woods. 21850 Riverwoods Rd, Riverwoods, IL 60015 Information about becoming involved in the 2022 “At Ease” Nature Platoon are on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie website or email: JKlinge@BrushwoodCenter.org.

### **Monday, January 10 “Save The Eagles Day,” 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*“Magnificent Raptors, But They Still Need Your Help”*

In 2002, a bald eagle nest was spotted in the Chicago area for the first time in 100 years. Today, there are already nearly 40 known nesting pairs in Northeastern Illinois. What has contributed to the increase in numbers, and how can that positive trend upwards continue? What are some of the programs and activities that are active to help increase numbers of bald eagles? What can you do – as an individual, family, or group – to help increase numbers of bald eagles and areas with natural habitat for them? Find out about the Illinois Raptor Center (501c3) and other resources where you can volunteer or help spread the word about

their services. What do you need to know about when and where to look for bald eagles? How do you identify gender, age and more?

### **Panelists**

- **Jo Fessett, Assistant to the Executive Director, Illinois Audubon Society,**
- **Richard Hickson, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer**
- **Mike Redmer, USDA FS Supervisory Natural Resources Manager, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**
- **Mags Rheude, Eagle Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service**

**Saturday, January 29 “National Seed Swap Day” 9 to 9:40 a.m.**

*“Plant A Patch of Prairie at Home: How You Can Help Put Prairie Back in The Prairie State”*

There was once so much prairie that Illinois became known as “The Prairie State.” Now, less than a fraction of one percent remains. What’s more, remaining prairie is scattered in different areas of the State. Why does prairie matter? Natural habitat creates more sustainability for butterflies and other pollinators, which are responsible for one in every three forkfuls of food that we eat. What’s more, the surprisingly long roots of prairie plants absorb carbon molecules. You can make a difference. By starting small and growing incrementally year over year, you can plant a patch of prairie at home. How do you assess to get started? Which plants are almost sure to take hold? A little effort in the first year can result in years of less lawn maintenance and more pollinators and plants to enjoy – right outside your door! On National Seed Swap Day, we will go over these important points before you place your 2022 seed and plant orders!

### **Panelists**

- **Janine Catchpole, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer**
- **Jennifer Durkin, USDA FS Horticulturist / Native Plant Specialist, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**
- **Michelle Pearion, USDA FS Botanist, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**
- **Ellen Starr, retired USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service area biologist**

**Wednesday, February 2 “World Wetlands Day” (also focusing on “Groundhog Day”) 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*“Plant A Patch of Prairie at Home: Wetlands”*

If you have wet areas in your yard that are challenging your designs for a backyard prairie, there are native Illinois prairie plants to consider. Which plants have the best chance? We will talk about resources that are available to home gardeners for making choices and taking steps to increase chances of success. From rain gardens to pond plants to those spots that just don't seem to get dry enough to plant, this program will help you think about alternatives that will work well in your yard.

**Panelists**

- **Anna Braum, Ecologist, The Wetlands Initiative**
- **Ellen Starr, retired USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service area biologist**

**Wednesday, March 23 “National Agriculture Day.” 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*“From Cows to Corn, How Agriculture Is Helping To Restore The Prairie”*

Agriculture is one of four key priorities identified in the Illinois Land Conservation Act, which is the legislation that established Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie 25 years ago. (1) Recreation; (2) Education and Research; and (3) Restoration are also priorities. How are crops of corn and soybean and cattle and bison grazing helping to restore the land where the Joliet Arsenal was instrumental? How is grazing an important component of the bison experiment? Find out from the USDA FS specialists who are directly involved in these projects.

**Panelists**

*Row Crops*

- **Mike Redmer, USDA FS Supervisory Natural Resources Manager, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**

*Grazing*

- **Kelly Gutknecht, USDA FS Rangeland Management Specialist, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**
- **Liz Kovel-Fenoglio, USDA FS Range Technician, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**

**Thursday, April 21, “National Go Birding Day”- (4/24), 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*Program also celebrates Earth Day, April 20*

*“For The Birds? From Birdwatching to Bird-Scaping, You Can Make A Difference”*

From looking for grassland birds at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie to planting a prairie garden at home, this program will address ways to help increase natural habitat for important bird species. We hope that this program can be your “go-kit” for getting out into the great outdoors and birdwatching this coming weekend and throughout the year. When and where might you see birds at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie? How do you look for birds? How do you identify them? With new mobile applications, identifying a bird is just a screen-tap away on your smartphone. We will hear about some of the more popular applications and why birdwatchers like them.

**Panelists**

- **Cory Anderson, USDA FS Wildlife Biologist, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**
- **Greg DuBois, Will County Audubon Society Vice President and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer**
- **Rita Renwick, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer**

**Friday, April 29, Arbor Day, 10 a.m. – Bur Oak Tree Planting at Iron Bridge Trailhead, – Facebook Live**

Magnificent overseers of the prairies, some bur oak trees were reference points for 1820s land surveyors. A few still rise high above the prairie landscape at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Trees, especially native species, are stalwart contributors to the land. Tune in through Facebook live as we plant a new bur oak tree at the Iron Bridge Trailhead at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

**Monday, May 23, “World Turtle Day,” 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*“Happy Together: Understanding The Plight of Turtles and What We Can Do To Help Them”*

Declines in numbers of turtles can contribute to the breakdown of an ecosystem. Turtles are essential to the biomass of their environment. Like the prairie ecosystem that dwindled, numbers of many native species of turtles have significantly declined. Radio Telemetry Tracking and other technology is helping researchers track turtles to learn more about the natural habitat that they need to survive. We will hear about some of the organizations and resources in the area that are focused on learning more about what can be done to help increase numbers of turtles. How can you get involved and make a difference?

### **Panelists**

- **Cory Anderson, USDA FS Wildlife Biologist, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**
- **Rich King, professor and chair of the Department of Biological Sciences of Northern Illinois University**
- **Callie Klatt Golba, Student, Northern Illinois University**
- **Mike Redmer, USDA FS Supervisory Natural Resources Manager, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**

### **Birds of Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**

**Part 1: June 8, 7 to 7:40 p.m.**

**Part 2: June 22, 7 to 7:40 p.m.**

Learn why so many people consider Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie a haven for birdwatchers. Volunteers, partners and staff are working with over 275 species of native Illinois prairie plants to increase and expand natural habitat for grassland birds and other important pollinators. The restoration process seems to be working: Sightings of short-eared owls to bobolinks, Henslow's sparrows, dickcissels and more are why so many consider Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie a haven for birdwatchers. Illinois Audubon Society Vice President and Midewin NTP Volunteer **Greg DuBois** will provide information about the birds that you might see at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and the best times and places to look for them.

**National Pollinator Week Kick-off Program, June 20, 2022, 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*“Bee The Difference: You Can Help Increase Pollinator Habitat”*

One in every three bites of food that we eat depends on pollinators. Monarchs and other butterflies, moths, bees, grassland birds and more rely on natural habitat. At Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, volunteers, partners and staff are working with

over 275 different species of native Illinois prairie plants to try to increase habitats for pollinators.

The painstaking efforts appear to be making a difference. In recent years, millions of monarch butterflies have roosted in large groupings, mostly on the branches of oak trees, along the Henslow Trail in the first few weeks of September. The monarchs rest for a time at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie on the way to Mexico for the winter. What times and which places are the most optimal for experiencing the incredible roosting of migrating monarchs? Learn more during this information webinar.

**Annual Honey-Tasting:** Break out your new favorite local honey to participate in our annual National Pollinator Week honey tasting. We will spend a few moments at the beginning of this webinar sharing tasting notes.

### Panelists

- **Eleanor Schumacher, Illinois NRCS Pollinator Liaison & Project Wingspan State Coordinator, Pollinator Partnership**
  - "The Importance of Native Plants and Pollinators"
- **Veronica Hinke, USDA Forest Service Public Affairs Officer, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**

**Thursday, July 7, 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

*“On The Trail of Eliza Steele”*

Who was Eliza Steele, and how does her journal inform what we know of the historic prairies today? On July 7, 1840, a prosperous New York writer was traveling through the area where Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (NTP) is located now. She wrote about her first experience in a prairie:

*“I started with surprise and delight. I was in the midst of a prairie! A world of grass and flowers stretched around me, rising and falling in gentle undulations, as if an enchanter had struck the ocean swell, and it was at rest forever. Acres of wildflowers of every hue glowed around me, and the sun arising from the earth where it touched the horizon, was kissing with golden face the meadows green. What a new and wondrous world of beauty! What a magnificent sight! Those glorious ranks of flowers! On that you could have one glance at their array! How shall I convey to you an idea of a prairie.”*

Expressive, illuminating, and insightful, Eliza’s words are about all that we know about what the prairies might have looked like in a world long before cameras. Her

words were published the next year in a book titled “A Summer Journey in The West.”

This program will celebrate Eliza’s journey with readings, interpretive information provided by Midewin NTP **Archaeologist Joe Wheeler** about her journal writings and the latest updates about how you can walk in the footsteps of Eliza Steele at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

### **Midewin Prairie 101**

**Part 1: July 20, 7 to 7:40 p.m.**

**Part 2: August 10, 7 to 7:40 p.m.**

What exactly is Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie? Learn about the origins and geography of this very special place. We will view restored wetlands and prairie and observe wildlife. Find out why ecological restoration is so important and experience some of the best examples of restored prairie. Learn how Midewin NTP will change and what that will mean for wildlife and recreation. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteers Lynn Dempsey, Greg Dubois, Ron Kapala and Christina Sammet will present this two-part mini-series.

**Saturday, September 24, National Public Lands Day, 9 to 9:40 a.m.**

Celebrate National Public Lands Day seeing all of the wonderful photos that were submitted in the 2022 “Caring for The Land” Photography Challenge. We will hear from the photographers who took the photographs. Category finalists and overall winning photo of the challenge will be announced! The photos that you see in this schedule guide are from the 2021 photography challenge; photos submitted for the 2022 challenge will be featured in the schedule guide in 2023!

**Saturday, November 5, 11 a.m.**

### **NATIONAL BISON DAY – VIRTUAL BISON EXPEDITION**

Celebrate America’s National Mammal – the bison – on National Bison Day. Look for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie bison herd live with us along the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. Go live with us to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site in Canada. Then travel to Montana to the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center and to the First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park. Park Manager Clark Carlson-Thompson said the jump was critical to human survival for hundreds or years. “A buffalo jump is a site that was used by native peoples to harvest large numbers of buffalo, usually entire herds,” he explained. “This spot has forever been known as a place of peace and gathering. Thousands of

pounds of meat, hides, bones for tools, and more were harvested. It looks just like a hill, and as we get closer and closer to the cliff, it just appears out of nowhere.”

### **Commemorating The Rouse Simmons Schooner: How Vegetation Management Helps The Environment, 6 to 6:40 p.m.**

Loaded down heavily with trees harvested from the Manistique area in Upper Michigan, Chicago’s beloved “Christmas Tree Ship” – the Rouse Simmons schooner – sunk off the shore of Lake Michigan near Two Rivers, Wisconsin, on November 22, 1912. She was headed for the Clark Street Bridge on the Chicago River in The Loop. For years, Captain Herman E. Schuenemann and his crew docked the Rouse Simmons on the south end of the bridge and sold Christmas trees from the ship to Chicagoans. Schuenemann became widely known for his generosity in giving many of the trees away to Chicago families that could not afford a Christmas tree. On the first weekend in December each year, the U.S. Coast Guard honors Captain Schuenemann and his crew by coordinating the distribution of Christmas trees to families in need from Navy Pier. This virtual program is in support of our Federal partners, USCG. USDA Forest Service specialists will provide information to the public about the importance of vegetation management for the environment. Find out why Christmas trees are as essential to forest health as they are to spreading joy and hope during this magical time of year. A panel discussion will celebrate the legacy of the historic Christmas Tree Ship, focusing on renewable resources and sustainable forestry and the importance of vegetation management.

## **Midwin for Kids Summer 2022 Schedule**

**Zoom Programs, 11-11:30am.**

**June 15, Wednesday                      Fun with Fossils**

Discover the plants and critters that left their impression in rocks. How did they get there? See how much you know about fossils and where you can find them. Unearth the amazing fossil!

**June 23, Thursday                      Crayfish**

Come learn about these little crustaceans. Are they just cousins to a lobster or more? Can they be found in Illinois and even on a prairie? Come find out!

**June 29, Wednesday                      Pond Life**

Dip into the amazing world of creatures that live in ponds. Find out about life under water. Learn about insects, amphibians, mammals, and birds that call a pond home.

**July 7, Thursday                      Just Batty**

Learn about the flying mammal that eats mosquitoes! Become an expert and learn how to tell between myth and fact. These wonderfully shy creatures of the night help people in many ways.

**July 13, Wednesday                  Prairie Detective**

Be a prairie detective with us! Use your senses and clues critters leave behind to solve the mystery of what animal live at Midewin. Uncover the mystery of the plants and animals that live on a prairie. Take these new detective skills with you to see what animals live near you!

**July 21, Thursday                  Life of a Butterfly**

Observe the life cycle of butterflies. Learn what attracts these colorful winged beauties! What is a baby butterfly called? Do all butterflies migrate? These are some of the questions you may learn the answers to if you come fly with the butterflies!

**July 27, Wednesday                  Bird is the Word**

What makes a bird a bird? How do you identify a bird? Where do they live? Can you point them out to others in a tree? Find out the answers to this question and more in Bird is the Word!

**August 4, Thursday                  Dragonflies a.k.a. Mosquito Hawks**

This fierce insect hunter is our friend because they love to eat mosquitoes! Discover all the colors they come in, how fast they fly, all the ways they can move in the air, and why they hang out around water. Learn the things that make these insects amazing!

**August 10, Wednesday                  Coyote Call**

They live around us and we seldom see this illusive canine. Learn how to find signs they leave behind, what they like to eat, how they communicate, and what time of day they come out to call each other.

**Register for programs by phone at 815-423-6370 8am-4:30pm Mon-Fri or by email at SM.FS.Midewin\_RSVP@usda.gov**

Thank you to all presenters and partners who make these programs possible. Special thanks to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteers who provide time, expertise and knowledge in order for these programs to be presented. The award-winning Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer program is managed through at USDA Forest Service partnership agreement with The Nature Conservancy.

**Self-guided Interpretive Tours  
“StQry” Mobile Application**

A self-guided tour is a screen-tap away on your mobile device, and now there are more tour routes and narratives recorded by people with expertise in prairie topics. Walk in the footsteps of 19<sup>th</sup> Century adventure journalist Eliza Steele; through row upon row of native Illinois prairie plants in the River Road seedbeds; through bluebells and other spring ephemerals; and more.

<https://midewin.ocell.com/en/index.html>

## **Midewin NTP Farm History Displays in Joliet and Wilmington**

“The Roaring 20s” Farm History display features items that were essential to life every day to hundreds of families who farmed here over 100 years ago

### **Prairie Farm History: The Roaring 20s**

In the cities, the era known as “The Roaring 20s” ushered in a distinct wave of new and iconic trends. There were waist-length pearl necklaces for women, fedoras for men and a whole new style of party foods. But while urban socialites caroused in their splashy Duesenbergs and modern Millies kicked up their heels, plenty of rural Illinois families still painstakingly scoured the farmlands with horse-drawn fertilizer spreaders. Rudimentary tools that were introduced over 30 years earlier – the butter churn, the hog scraper, the milk stirrer and more – remained essential in everyday life. Many families were only just first experiencing the luxury of indoor plumbing. In the city, money was more freely spent on fleeting fashion trends like flapper-inspired dresses and lavish nights out, while rural residents continued their embrace of a necessary resourcefulness. One inventive approach was to re-purpose seed sack cloth to create fabric for dresses that savvy women sewed by hand. Never since has there been a greater contrast between rural and urban life in America. As people everywhere celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first year of the highly stylized 1920s in American cities, this Midewin display provides a glimpse of what life was like during that time – on the prairie.

- Joliet Area Historical Museum, 204 Ottawa St. Joliet, IL 60432
- Wilmington Island Park District Community Center, 315 N Water St. Wilmington, IL 60481

**TRAIL MAPS** Trail maps are available online in English and Spanish. Check out the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Visitor Guide! <https://tinyurl.com/46z7rzjf>.

### **SHARE YOUR PHOTOS with others!**

Share your photos with others around the world through the Midewin NTP library in the iNaturalist smartphone application! <https://bit.ly/2HAYFiK>. Enter the 2022 “Caring for The Land” Photo Challenge! Finalists will be announced during a special webinar on National Public Lands Day, Saturday, September 24, 9 a.m.