

THE BULLETIN

Newsletter of The Prairie Club

Summer 2025



117th Annual Meeting Wrap-up

By Hope Little, *Annual Meeting Chair*

Despite unseasonably cool weather, the Prairie Club's 117th Annual Meeting took place at Camp Hazelhurst on May 31, 2025. The day began with the meet and greet of members old and new. It was then followed by the business portion of the meeting led by Club President, Mike Maloney, and Club Treasurer, Mark Sever. The meeting concluded with the Treasurer's report, where Mark Sever announced the Club is in excellent financial shape.

Couldn't make it to the Annual Meeting?

Visit the Annual Meeting page under Events on the website www.ThePrairieClub.org

Here you will find all the committee reports contained in this year's packet.

Next, we enjoyed a picnic lunch under the Pavilion. Member Rob Burton served as our grill chef. After lunch, a brief program about composting took place in the Red Barn. Barbara Hertel, Club member, gave a talk on the benefits of composting.

I thank all who helped make the 2025 Annual Meeting a success.

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Connecting to Nature: An Invitation to Come Home to the Earth

By Terri Hebert, *Prairie Club Conservation Chair*

Introduction

What does it really mean when you hear the phrase “connecting to nature”? For some, it means physically stepping into a natural environment and away from a man-made one. For others, it could mean looking at photographs or paintings of natural sites displayed at an art show or reading a book focused on a nature-based topic. Still others may blend the two as they search for a space in nature where they might be creative or contemplative.

Most of us understand, at least intuitively, that connecting with nature is essential to our well-being. In fact, our mental, emotional, and spiritual health often depends on it. When life feels overwhelming—when stress, isolation, or frustration begin to take hold—stepping outside can offer a kind of medicine that no prescription can match.

Ecopsychology: Health Benefits of Being in Nature

In a study of 20,000 people, a team led by Mathew White of the European Centre for Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter, found that people who spent two hours a week in nature were more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don't.

Some of the direct results of being in nature include a lowering of one's blood pressure and stress hormone levels, a reduction in the nervous system arousal, an enhancement of the immune system function, an increase in self-esteem, a reduction in anxiety, and an improvement in one's overall mood.

Furthermore, attention deficit disorder and aggression lessen in natural environments, which also helps speed the rate of healing.

The growing body of research, combined with an intuitive understanding that nature is vital and increased concerns about the use of smart phones and other forms of technology, has led to a tipping point at which health experts, researchers, and government officials are proposing widespread changes aimed at bringing nature into our everyday lives.

Tips on Connecting with Nature

In this light, nature becomes more than just a place to visit. It becomes a teacher, a refuge, and a mirror. While we may feel that being in nature isn't as easy as it sounds, there are simple ways to bring it into the everyday experience.

First, find nature wherever you are. It might be a small garden, a local park, a nearby beach, or open countryside. Even in cities where nature can be harder to find, there are places you can discover nature. Look out for the unexpected – an urban fox on your way out for coffee, changes in the weather or birdsong outside your office window. Try to notice nature wherever you are and in whatever way is meaningful for you.



Next, connect with nature using all your senses. Taking some quiet time to reflect in natural surroundings using all your senses can be a real boost to your mental health. Whether you are relaxing in a garden or on your way to work, listen for birdsong, look for bees and butterflies, or notice how the clouds

Connecting to Nature

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are moving in the sky. All of these can help you find a sense of calm and joy.

The most common way to bring nature into your everyday is to get out in it. Try spending some time in natural spaces, such as green spaces (i.e., parks, gardens, forests) or blue spaces (i.e., beach, rivers, wetlands). These places can help reduce your risk of mental health problems, lift your mood, and help you feel better about things. If you aren't comfortable being outside alone, consider bringing a friend or relative with you.



Sometimes it is hard to access natural places. If this is the case, why not try bringing nature into your home? Having plants in the house is a great way to have something natural to see, touch, and smell. If you have the space, consider starting a garden. Grow flowers, plants, or vegetables. Get a bird feeder. Take in the sights and sounds all around you. If planting isn't your cup of tea, consider connecting to nature through stories, art, or sound recordings. Watch films or television programs about nature and reflect on the information you receive.

Exercising in nature is a great way to get outside. Walking or running outdoors in nature may help to prevent or reduce feelings of anger, tiredness, or sadness. Next time, try leaving the headphones at home and listen to the sounds of nature instead.

If you remember a time when you were more in tune with nature than now, consider ways to reconnect and find your way back to the sense of belonging that is abundant in nature.

Turn your attention away from screens and concrete and toward the more-than-human world. Notice the design of a leaf, the shimmer of a dragonfly's wings, or the spiral of a snail shell. Step outside at night and consider the starlight that traveled thousands of years just to meet your eyes. Walk with wonder as you look for wildflowers, mushrooms, animal tracks, or the perfect skipping stone. Explore the world at either dawn or dusk. Look for the changing hues of sky – pinks, purples, and deep blues – and let yourself be held by the stillness. Go sit among the trees and let their presence speak something sacred to you. Watch how light filters through the leaves and feel your breath slow down.

How Do You Connect with Nature?

Do you have a favorite way to connect with nature? A favorite season or time of day? Do you have a particular practice that you do while in nature?

I have had the honor of leading adults into nature and facilitating their experiences while there. One of my personal favorites is to bring a nature-focused poem with me and read it aloud while we stand together in a circle. Spending time together quietly reflecting on the words that comprise the poem allows everyone an opportunity to consider their own understandings and connections.

Connecting to Nature

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The poet Mary Oliver, who observed the natural world with deep reverence and wonder, is one of my favorites. Her poem, *“Morning Poem,”* offers a beautiful example of how nature can awaken our joy and creativity. Read her words out loud and consider allowing them to serve as your morning meditation:

*Every morning
the world
is created.
Under the orange*

*sticks of the sun
the heaped
ashes of the night
turn into leaves again*

*and fasten themselves to the high
branches –
and the ponds appear
like black cloth
on which are painted islands*

*of summer lilies.
If it is your nature
to be happy
you will swim away along the soft
trails*

*for hours, your imagination
alighting everywhere.
And if your spirit
carries within it*



*the thorn
that is heavier than lead –
if it's all you can do
to keep on trudging –*

*there is still
somewhere deep within you
a beast shouting that the earth
is exactly what it wanted –*

*each pond with its blazing lilies
is a prayer heard and answered
lavishly,
every morning,*

*whether or not
you have ever dared to be happy,
whether or not
you have ever dared to pray.*

Whatever form it takes for you—walking, stargazing, tree-sitting, or simply breathing in the air—may your time in nature be a returning. A remembering. A prayer. A gentle nudge back to what matters most.

Our Departed Members and Friends

We have received news of the passing of the following members since the last edition of our Bulletin. Please remember them and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

Mozelle vonMeding passed away on January 6, 2025

Robert Manis passed away on June 12, 2025

Donations

Thank you for the continued support of our Members.
Please remember that donations to the Prairie Club are not tax deductible.

Chessa & Randy Lutter generously donated to the Club in honor of Bill Hendren.

A thoughtful contribution was made by **Brian & Laurie Reed** to help beautify the entrance to Spring Grove along Rt. 12.

Along with their yearly memberships, the members below also made generous donations to the Club:

Denise Cahill O'Hale

Randal Sable

New Applicants for Membership

The following candidates have applied for membership since our last Bulletin was published. If you know of any reason why an applicant should not be admitted to the Club, please write to the Membership Committee, via the Club office address: 12 E. Willow St., Unit A, Lombard, IL 60148

Roberta Erickson & Gary Kirchoff

Oak Park, IL 60302

Sponsors: Jami Lee Duffy, Marty Swanson

Interviewed by: Barb Burton

Summer's not over yet! Spring Grove still has rental opportunities

Nestled on 24 scenic acres along the Nippersink Creek—Spring Grove is the ideal place for unwinding after a day of tubing.

The Lodge features seven bedrooms on the lower level, spacious common areas, and a fully equipped kitchen, making it suitable for both individual room rentals and exclusive use of

the entire lodge. Additionally, there are tent camping and RV sites with electrical hookups available. This charming location is perfect for summer gatherings, with opportunities for hiking, swimming in the pond, or kayaking on the creek.



Contact the office today to secure your rental.

HAZELHURST BOAT PROGRAM

- Club boats, available to Club Members and guests over 12 free of charge, may be used on condition that boaters
 - ⇒ have signed a waiver of liability
 - ⇒ always wear lifejackets
 - ⇒ can swim
 - ⇒ return all Club equipment to its proper location and
 - ⇒ can recognize and avoid hazards to boaters.
- Club Members interested in using Club boats at Hazelhurst are urged to visit the Hazelhurst website at <https://www.theprairieclub.org/hazelhurst/hazelhurst-boat-program/> (use QR code), for necessary information, including useful videos about how to paddle kayaks and paddleboards and how to sail, as well as waiver forms to complete.
- Club Members planning to use Club boats should contact the Beach Chair, Randy Lutter at 240-271-8430, for an initial briefing.



Please remember Prairie Club members who are not a siteholder, immediate family of a siteholder, siteholder's guest, season pass holder, renting a siteholder's cottage, or renting space in a Club-owned building may only use Hazelhurst grounds once a month in June, July, and August.





As you are enjoying the beauty of Hazelhurst and Spring Grove Camps this summer, keep in mind that much of the upkeep is done by volunteers. Our Camps would not be thriving without their hard work and dedication.

Both our Camps organize volunteer activities throughout the year. Most of these can be found on the events page of our website. If you are unable to attend one, contact one of our committee Chairs and ask, "How can I help?"

Hazelhurst Conservation Work Parties

10:00 am EDT until noon (rain date Sunday)

July 26

August 16

September 6

Spring Grove Playground Clean-up

August 2

**Join The Prairie Club on
hikes, kayaking, and other activities!
Be sure to follow the Prairie Club on [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)
Search for “Prairie Club of Chicagoland Activities Group”**

Prairie Club Officers 2025

President	Mike Maloney
1st Vice President	Sarah Craig Pratt
2nd Vice President	Carolyn Edison
Treasurer	Mark Sever
Recording Secretary	Wendy Lyford
Hazelhurst Camp Vice President	Dan Gapen
Spring Grove Camp Vice President	Erin Kiehm

Standing Committees 2025

Audit	Kevin Oravec
Elections	Terry Riban
Finance	Charles Manthey
Historical	OPEN
Membership	Jo Burda Smith
Nominating	Dan Gapen

Activity Committees 2025

Activities/Walkers	Terry Riban
Annual Meeting	Hope Little
Buena Vista	Linsey Crowninshield
Conservation	Terri Hebert
Family Cottage	Terri Breach, Barb White
Farm House	Deb McGrath, Barbara Wittersheim
Promotional	Barb Burton-Halfpenny
Publications	Natalie Brennan
Hazelhurst	Dan Gapen
Spring Grove	Erin Kiehm, Brian Reed
Spring Grove Lodge	Mickey Hanson
Website	Natalie Brennan

The Prairie Club

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