



Newsletter

October 2024



Since Last Time ...

I have to confess that I personally have not been busy with WOAAH since the previous newsletter; I, along with my wife Beth, have been busy welcoming our new granddaughter into this world. Although I haven't devoted much effort to Wild Ones in the past month, others have. There have been two tabling events, one in Erwin, TN and the other for the Wildlife Weekend at Steele Creek Park in Bristol, TN. Dick Olson and Melanie Smith represented us in Erwin. Gail Olson and Loyd and Paula Reynolds ran the table in Bristol. Many thanks to all of you!

Mark Merz
2024 WOAAH President



To the left, from left to right, are Gail, Paula, and Loyd at the Steele Creek Wildlife Weekend. Paula has agreed to be on the ballot for 2025 chapter president.

Calendar at-a-Glance

October 26: Members' Fall Plant & Seed Share and Potluck Dinner
at Steele Creek Park in Bristol

November 14: WOAAH Annual Meeting
at The Summit in Bristol

December 7: Winter Sowing Workshop
at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center



Connecting people and native plants
for a healthy planet

NEW MERCH WOAH HOODIES! WOAAH HATS!



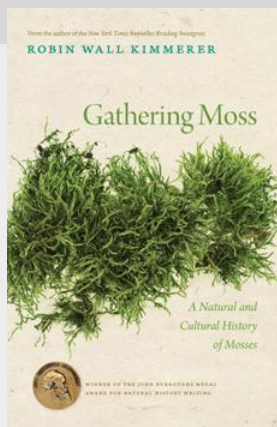
Just in time for falling temperatures and in plenty of time for holiday shopping, Anne Tucker has added hoodies to our inventory of fundraising merchandise! They are high quality, zippered sweatshirts that come in five great colors.



Anne added hats last month—ball caps and bucket hats in many colors and options. You can still buy shirts, with the chapter logo in the front and the “Get Wild” design on the back.

www.bonfire.com/get-wild-6/, or scan the QR code on the left with your phone's camera.





Bookshelf: Review by Beth Merz

Gathering Moss

By Robin Wall Kimmerer

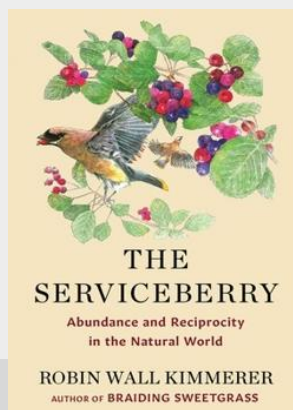
Many of us have read and loved Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, but perhaps are not as familiar with her earlier work, *Gathering Moss*. It isn't a large book, less than 200 pages, with 20 chapters and numerous beautiful botanical drawings. I read *Gathering Moss* a few years ago and needed to pick it up again to write this review. And...wow! The chapter called, "A Landscape of Change," could have been written about our own southern Appalachian forests following the forces of hurricane Helene two weeks ago. Kimmerer tells of hunkering down with her children in their cabin as a massive microburst smashed through the Adirondacks in 1996. That chapter is a mini-course in northern hardwood forest succession through gap dynamics—and then translates down to the scale of moss colonies!

There is plenty of scientific detail about the varieties of moss species (22,000 worldwide), their minute structural components, habitat requirements, reproductive strategies, competition, cooperation, and their roles in supplying the needs of thousands of other species. It takes some concentration to appreciate that. But interspersed with science are stories that bring home just how connected we are with this minute, all but ignored, layer of life.

These stories are built on a foundation of tiny plants that have no common names. "Mosses don't usually have common names, for no one has bothered with them." But also, "In indigenous ways of knowing, all beings are recognized as non-human persons, and all have their own names." Each chapter offers a story from Kimmerer's perspective as researcher, teacher, investigator, indigenous seeker of relationships with non-human and human persons, and as a mother raising children to know and respect wild and mossy environments.

Kimmerer lets us know that there is knowledge waiting to be learned: "There is more living carbon in Sphagnum moss than in any other single genus on the planet." And who remembers, or knew, about boundary layers? Where air movement right at the ground's surface is stilled, where warmth from sunlight persists, where water vapor evaporating from logs and other surfaces is captured. And that decaying organic matter releases CO₂, the raw material of photosynthesis.

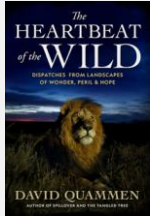
So the canopy gaps, whether at the height of mature forest trees or at the level of miniscule mosses, allow for change in species that occupy those spaces, and life goes on. In changed form perhaps, but life. An important piece of news for us, as we view our own blasted forest landscapes and altered river courses. It's good reading. Good science and good storytelling, as we expect from Robin Wall Kimmerer. And stay tuned for her next book coming out in November: *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. (I can hardly wait!)



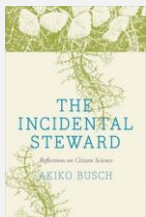
And More Books!

Many of you already know that WOAHA Vice President Melanie Smith is, in addition to everything else she does as a Virginia Master Naturalist, WOAHA board member, and FrogWatch USA, is a school librarian in Smyth County. She sends us a few recommendations on nature, the environment and sustainability by the American Library Association.

The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest nonprofit library association in the world and its book and audiobook reviews (“Booklist”) are widely respected.



The Heartbeat of the Wild: Dispatches from Landscapes of Wonder, Peril, and Hope by David Quammen, 2023, National Geographic. The author has been a reporter for National Geographic for more than 20 years. This is a collection of his writings about the importance of preserving the wild.



The Incidental Steward: Reflections on Citizen Science by Akiko Busch, 2013, Yale. Many WOAHA members are also part of the citizen science community and will be interested in this book. Busch issues an eloquent call for this practice, sharing her adventures counting herrings, glass eels, eagles and dislocated bats and helping assess damage wrought by non-native, invasive vines.



We Are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom, illustrated by Michaela Goade, 2020, Roaring Books. This Caldecott Award winning book (recommended for grades K-2) was written in response to the Dakota Access Pipeline, protested by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and others. In it, an Indigenous girl explains why water is sacred and includes a call to action: “We are stewards of the Earth.”

There Are Many Ways to Get Involved!

Volunteer

Wild Ones does not require formal training classes, volunteer work hours, or continuing education hours for membership. However, the Chapter has events that do require volunteer member help, there is a WOAHA Board that meets a little less than once per month, and our chapter also has various committees. Perhaps you'd like to serve in some capacity! Let us know with an email to wildonesappalachianhighlands@gmail.com.

Newsletter

Send in your own member profile. As you've seen over the last several months, your profile can take many forms. It can be as simple as telling a little about yourself and how you got involved with native plants, or you can include photos and go into more detail.

Write about your garden. What are you hoping to accomplish, what resources did you use, what strategies did you employ? Do you have before and after pictures that show what you've done?

Have you read a good nature book that you'd like to review?

Your fellow WOAHA members would love to hear from you! Send your text and photos to markmerz243@gmail.com.

Profile: Lorrie Otto

Founder of the Natural Landscaping Movement

If you're like me, you don't know much about where and how the Wild Ones organization began. Having looked into the matter, I've found that it largely begins with one impressive woman, Wisconsin native Lorrie Otto, whose lectures inspired Ginny Lindow and eight other women to found Wild Ones. She was born in 1919 and lived a life of environmental activism as a speaker and author until she died in 2010. Among her many accomplishments, she was a force in bringing about the U.S. ban on DDT, and she helped establish the Environmental Defense Fund.

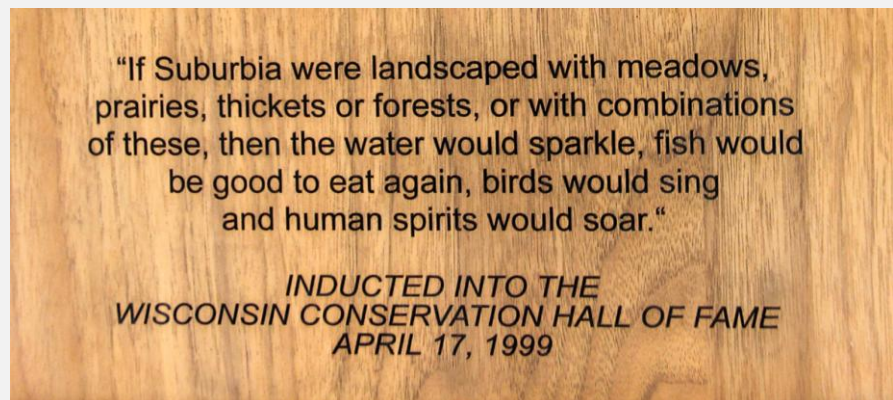
These are huge accomplishments, and they began from her direct experience in the 1960s with dead and dying birds on her own Milwaukee property. She became deeply concerned about the birds and the impact of pesticides, so she planned hearings on the use of pesticides in Wisconsin. She went on to focus on DDT and "organized scientists, attorneys and witnesses from the US, Canada and Sweden" in an effort that led to the banning of the pesticide in the United States.

I'm personally inspired by her example, which is one that affirms the value of an individual's response to crisis situations. She reacted to a situation she could not tolerate, and she committed herself to finding a solution. She dreamt big, strategized, planned, and implemented actions, and we inherit the legacy of her hard work. We live in a world that is richer because of her.

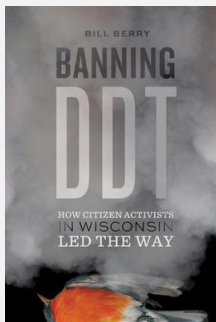
Thanks, Lorrie!

(And thanks to Wikipedia for the article on her! https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorrie_Otto)

The plaque below, which you see cropped into two pieces for inclusion here, comes from the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame website: <https://wchf.org/>



For Wisconsinite and WOA member Dick Olson, Lorrie Otto brings to mind a book on his personal bookshelf. It's titled: *Banning DDT, How Citizen Activists in Wisconsin Led the Way* and it's by Bill Berry.



"Berry's book is a must read for those engaged in such battles. It is, by turns, inspirational and entertaining. Perhaps more importantly, *Banning DDT* provides lessons in how to patiently carry on in the face of powerful, entrenched bureaucracies that, whether through inertia or corruption, turn a deaf ear to the ordinary person who finds a dead bird in their yard and wants to know *why*." From Ron Seely's review of the book for the *Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters, Summer 2014*

Officer Election at WOAH's Third Birthday Party!

Prepare to celebrate at WOAH's third birthday party on November 14! Food, birthday cake, party favors, door prizes, and a few surprises are what you can expect when WOAH members convene for our annual meeting. We'll be awarding our three complimentary memberships for 2024, too, as a way of recognizing individuals who have made or will make special contributions to our chapter.

We'll also have some business to conduct. One important item will be electing new WOAH Board officers for 2025. We have a slate of candidates who have agreed to serve, but other nominations will be welcome prior to voting. Currently, the candidates for next year include:

- President: Paula Reynolds
- Vice President: Melanie Smith
- Treasurer: Anne Tucker
- Recording Secretary: Jani Niner
- E-Corresponding Secretary: Josh Banks
- Events: Dick Olson
- Membership: Gail Olson



WOAH will be three years old! The chapter has always had its feet under it with solid leadership, but our toddler year has had its own special accomplishments. We'll take time to reflect on and celebrate those achievements, even as we look ahead to imagine what year four might bring!

Laura Young and the River Cane Restoration Project

You may have heard the NPR feature that reported on a native plant restoration project that is occurring in our region. If you missed it, there are many ways to find out more about what Laura Young, Southwest region steward in the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, is doing to bring native river cane back to the Powell River in Lee County's Cedars Natural Area Preserve. Here's a link to the WVTF piece that was carried by NPR: [Bringing back native rivercane to Virginia](#), or you can visit the Virginia Department of Conservation Resources webpage at [Restoring riverfronts with native canebrakes](#).

River cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) is a stream bank species of native bamboo that has been reduced to only 2% of its native range. By losing so much of it, we have lost an important habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Its loss has cleared the way for invasive plants and has resulted in much damaging erosion to stream and river banks. Laura has been working with partners, such as the Nature Conservancy in Virginia, the Friends of The Cedars volunteer group, Virginia State Parks and University of Virginia's College at Wise, as well as community volunteers.

She says this of the project, "At this point, we've shown that cane restoration is possible in our area with limited resources, and we are super excited that all our partners and several localities are interested in helping us scale up our efforts in 2024." Partly because her work so strongly intersects with the values and goals of Wild Ones, and also because of my own interest in restoration ecology, I contacted Laura. As a result, she will be our featured speaker for our February 2025 event, which will take place at Virginia Highlands Community College on February 27th at 7 pm. From her we'll learn about the project, about restoration ecology, and also how we can be involved in helping to bring river cane back to where it belongs, the banks of our region's creeks and rivers.



For information on river cane restoration volunteer opportunities, visit [The Nature Conservancy Eventbrite page](#), or email Laura Young at laura.young@dcv.virginia.gov or Nick Proctor at nick.proctor@tnc.org.

The October Plant Swap

Last year's fall plant and seed swap was my first Wild Ones event, and it was *THE BEST* introduction to WOAHI I can imagine. The food was great. I met people who have since become friends. All the plants that I rehomed have become important elements of my home landscape. I'll share a few pictures of them, mostly ones I took just a month ago for our previous newsletter. I have fellow WOAHI members to thank for each one of them!



Event Details

October 26

WOAH Members Plant/Seed Swap and Potluck Dinner

Fall is a great time to share both native plants and seeds from our gardens. Our annual event is one of the benefits of being an official Wild Ones member! This is an opportunity to thin out your flower beds of native plants and bring your labeled plants or seeds to swap and share.

Please start to gather your extra plants or seeds and identify them for the swap. If you don't have any extras, just come and take some home! An addition to this year's swap is that three of our local native plant nurseries have donated plants or seeds that will be awarded as door prizes.

The Swap will be followed by a potluck supper and social hour. Please bring your own beverage and a dish to share. This will be a great opportunity to learn about natives, get plants, and meet members. Please wear your name tag. If you don't have one, no worries; new tags with the new WOAHI chapter logo will be available at the swap.

You will be charged \$2 at the gate for parking.

Date: October 26, 2024,

Time: 3:30-6:00pm

Location: Steele Creek Park, 4 Little Ln, Bristol, TN, 37620 – Civitan Shelter

Event Details (continued)

November 14

WOAH Members Annual Meeting (3rd Birthday Party)

On November 14th we will celebrate our third anniversary as the Appalachian Highlands Chapter.

There will be a short business meeting with a social hour afterwards. We will hold the election of 2025 officers.

This is a great time as members to reflect on what we have accomplished and to discuss our future goals.

Water and coffee will be provided. Please bring your favorite light refreshment and your nametag.

The Summit building is set back from Volunteer Parkway with an access road between Eastman Credit Union and Bank of Tennessee. There is a cut-through on the Parkway divide for a left turn if you are coming from the downtown Bristol area.

Date: Thursday, November 14th, 2024

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm (Eastern Time)

Location: The Summit, Expedition Room, 1227 Volunteer Pkwy, Bristol, TN, 37620

December 7

Winter Sowing Workshop

This event is a collaborative effort between Washington County Master Gardeners and WOA. The Workshop is in-person, open to the public, free, and registration is required due to limited space.

Winter sowing is a method of starting seeds in winter. It involves sowing seeds in an enclosed container to be kept outside during winter, allowing them to germinate in spring.

In this Gail Olson will share insights on how and why this method works. She will guide participants in creating their own containers to take home.

All materials, including native seed will be provided.

Date: Saturday, December 7th, 2024

Time: 10:30 am (Eastern Time)

Location: Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, One Partnership Circle, Abingdon, VA, Rooms 103/104

Registration: Email gaildennie@ Hotmail.com by Dec. 1, 2024. Gail will confirm your registration by return email.