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Marengo Riffles

A newsletter for the Marengo River Watershed Partnership

Spring 2014

A project of the Bad River Watershed Association

Looking for Signs of Spring

While it seems impossible to fathom right now as snow still covers the ground, you'll soon be seeing signs of spring across the Marengo Watershed and northern Wisconsin.

We encourage you to get outside in celebration of Earth Day on April 22nd to both appreciate the natural beauty of the watershed and to also think more deeply about its challenges. There may be things you can do on your own property to Reduce Runoff, Improve Water Quality, and Provide quality Fish and Wildlife Habitat.

- Here's what to look for this spring -

Runoff & Sedimentation

With all of the snow we've had this winter, we will most likely see large peaks in stream flow as the snow melts. You may notice flooding in certain areas and silty/cloudy streams as a result of sediment moving across the landscape. The Marengo River Watershed is the largest contributor of sediment to the Bad River, which is the largest contributor of sediment to Lake Superior along the U.S. shoreline. A 1997 USGS study concluded that the vast majority of the sediment loading was due to episodic transport events, such as those associated with spring snowmelt and runoff. While the Marengo River Watershed's soils and steep topography make the watershed more susceptible to increased sedimentation, the large amount of open space (particularly in the middle of the watershed) is increasing the movement of water and sediment. This excess sediment and sand affects water quality and is harmful to native fish and other aquatic life. Suspended sediment in the water affects breathing and vision, and sediment on the streambed affects living space and egg development by covering up gravels, small rocks, etc. Excess sediment also fills in stream channels, reducing the flow-carrying capacity in the stream channel.



This spring, walk your property as the snow melts and take note of areas that don't have plant cover or areas where the soil is unstable and could easily get picked up by flowing water. Note runoff from fields and/or through barnyards and where the water goes before reaching a stream or waterway. Even though the runoff is watered down, it still contains biological or chemical contaminants. →



HIKE THE LINCOLN COMMUNITY FOREST!

Friday, April 18, 2014

9:00 am – 11 am

Join community members, Bayfield Regional Conservancy members, and Friends of the Lincoln Community Forest board members to enjoy an enchanting hike in the Lincoln Community Forest, the first Community Forest in Wisconsin! We'll explore the current trails, see the Marengo River up close and from above along the rim of the gorge, and hopefully spot some wildlife. We'll also learn how this project came about and future planned activities for the site.

Meet us at the trailhead at 9:00 am for a warm beverage and a tasty treat!

Trail conditions: Be prepared for the weather – you may need boots or snowshoes!

DIRECTIONS: From the community of Sanborn, take County E 3 miles south and west to Four Corners Store Road. Travel south and west on Four Corners Store Rd for 5 miles. At the Town Hall, travel west on Altamont Rd for 1/2 mile to Marengo River Rd. Travel 1/4 mile on Marengo River Rd to the trailhead.

Also, pay attention to the outlets of drain networks you may have across your fields - how much sediment is moving and where is it going?

And if you see a problem, take action! There are several things you can do to 'slow the flow' including installing a debris basin, planting vegetation buffers, creating wetland swales, diverting water around a barnyard, and protecting stream buffers that help filter sediment before it reaches a stream.



Golden-winged Warbler
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Birds, Birds, Birds

Spring is a great time to bird watch! Did you know that over 260 bird species breed in Wisconsin and many more migrate through or winter here? According to the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, this high diversity is due in part to the ecological tension zone that transverses WI and divides it into two distinct floristic provinces: the prairie-forest province in the south and the northern hardwoods province in the north.



American Woodcock
National Audubon Society

Additionally, the state's stewardship and land management efforts have helped sustain diverse populations. A bird's success depends on the availability of habitat and food they need to meet their full lifecycle needs for migrating, breeding, and wintering.

Unfortunately, today, some species are on the decline in Northern Wisconsin due to loss of forest habitat and habitat fragmentation. Some of these include the Golden-winged Warbler, Ruffed Grouse,

Red-shouldered Hawk, American Woodcock, and Veery. However, organizations are working together with local landowners to identify and implement detailed conservation and management prescriptions. You can learn more about a particular specie and its habitat needs at www.wisconsinbirds.org/plan.

Want to learn more about birds??? Here are two events:

Great Wisconsin Birdathon 2014

Spend a portion of a 24-hr period observing birds and soliciting pledges for the total number of species seen! Money raised is used to support bird conservation projects!

All May 2014

Learn more about the event and where to bird at <http://www.wibirdathon.org/nrfw/about.asp>



Rose-breasted Grosbeak
allaboutbirds.org

Grosbeaks Galore! Birds on Your Landscape Workshop

Saturday, May 31, 2014

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, Ashland

\$20 which includes lunch, presentations & field tours!

To register: Go to <http://grosbeaksgalore.wix.com/grosbeaksgalore#>
or call 608-264-8594

Invasive Plant Species

Late spring and into summer is also a great time to be on the watch for invasive plant species!

According to the Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area, invasive non-native plants can have devastating effects on fish and wildlife habitat, timber and agricultural yields, native plant communities, and local economies. In 2013 alone, more than \$11 million state and federal funds were used to address invasive species in Wisconsin. Fortunately, state and federal agencies, local governments, community organizations, and individuals are working together to combat invasives in northern Wisconsin. But we need your help to **Prevent** the arrival of new invasives, **Detect** new infestations, **Respond** to invasions, and **Control** already existing populations!

In northern Wisconsin, there are multiple well established invasive plants that are forming monocultures and leading to a loss of plant diversity, habitat, and food sources. These include purple loosestrife, reed canary grass, spotted knapweed, Eurasian water milfoil, and common buckthorn. While it may look like a bird is enjoying those buckthorn berries, they provide little nourishment and act as a laxative! Other species to watch for include Canada thistle, Eurasian honeysuckle, and Japanese barberry. Garlic mustard, found only in Mellen and Hurley (help us control it!), has already devastated forests in southern Wisconsin as it retards the growth of neighboring plants.

Want to learn more about invasive plant Identification & Control?

Invasive Plant ID and Herbicide Use Training

Tuesday, June 3, 2014

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and the Ashland National Park Service Office

More information: info@northwoodscwma.org or 715-373-6167



Garlic mustard
UW Extension