

View from the Hill

A newsletter for friends and members of Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc. | Spring 2024

Mosquito Hill Nature Center to Celebrate 50th Anniversary in 2024

The History of Mosquito Hill Nature Center – Part 2

The Early Years written by Mike Hibbard, Director

After the interpretive building at Mosquito Hill Nature Center (MHNC) was completed in the fall of 1974, the first professional naturalist was hired to oversee the programs and projects. In October of 1974, Jim Anderson was hired by Outagamie Nature Studies as the first naturalist at MHNC.

Jim was fresh out of graduate school, receiving his MS degree in biology with an anthropology minor. Jim worked hand-in-hand with Jane Williams, Alice Zeiss and their cadre of volunteer trail guides to lead school field trips for more than 1,400 4th grade students from the Appleton and New London area school districts that first fall.

The trail guides were an integral part of the programs at the Hill and were as much of a social organization as a group of educators. They took educational field trips, planned and taught programs and socialized together at Outagamie Nature Studies, meetings and gatherings. The title of trail guide changed to volunteer naturalist in the early 1980s.

Many “firsts” followed that initial fall. In July of 1975, Jim Anderson became an employee of Outagamie County as the first county naturalist, challenged with the daunting task of maintaining and improving the newly established 392-acre nature center, one of the first in Northeast Wisconsin. The first trails

were established, the first edition of *A View From The Hill* newsletter was published and the first section of prairie was planted that fall. In 1976, snowshoes were purchased and trails were established to introduce year-round programming at the nature center.



Naturalist Jim Anderson cooking up a batch of sulphur shelf fungus. MHNC photo archives.

In 1977, a garage/workshop was constructed and doubled as the snowshoe rental center in winter. The first oxbow pond platform was constructed in 1978 for use with the 4th grade school field trips and other programs. In addition to school programming, many weekend programs were being offered to the general public. Eventually, the school field trip program expanded to include all grade levels.

The 1980s brought about a series of changes and additions to the nature center. Wet Meadow Trail was established



Our Mission

The Friends of Mosquito Hill (FOMH) support, promote and enhance Mosquito Hill Nature Center. (MHNC) We realize this mission through volunteerism, fundraising and our shared passion for nature.

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Mosquito Hill Nature Center to Celebrate 50th Anniversary in 2024 *(continued)*

in 1980. The newly established prairie was burned for the first time in 1981. The first snowshoe building workshop began in 1981. In 1983, Outagamie Nature Studies changed its name to Friends of Mosquito Hill, and the interpretive building was insulated and remodeled to include a front vestibule and office space for the staff. Shortly after, in 1984, the Wolf River Room was added to the building, expanding program and storage capacity as well as much needed workspace.

In 1987, an observatory was donated by Bob and Nan Douglas with astronomy programming provided by the Northeast Wisconsin Stargazers. In the lowland forest, Waterthrush Walkway was constructed during the summer of 1987, and a second oxbow pond platform was constructed in 1989. Stay tuned for the next issue of A View From the Hill for the another chapter in MHNC's history...

Summer Ecology 2024 at Mosquito Hill Nature Center



Photo by MHNC staff.

Mosquito Hill Nature Center hosts Summer Ecology classes for children each summer during the months of June and July. Each session is four days long, Tuesday through Friday, and scheduled by three age groups. The Summer Ecology Program provides fun and educational experiences in the outdoors. Through exploration, art, games and interpretive nature hikes, children gain knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and a greater sense of self confidence.

We look forward to seeing new and returning kiddos this summer! All Summer Ecology registrations will be submitted through our new online registration system. Program fees and descriptions, as well as details on registration, will be announced in early March on both our website (www.mosquithill.com) and our Facebook page (@MosquitoHillNatureCenter).

Knee-High Naturalists

4 & 5 year olds
(2 sessions)

June 18-21 & July 16-19
9:00 to 10:30 AM

Nature Rangers

K, 1st & 2nd grades
(2 sessions)

June 25-28 & July 23-26
9:00 to 12:00 PM

Eco-Explorers

3rd, 4th & 5th grades
(2 sessions)

July 9-12 & July 30-Aug 2
9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Welcome Ally Noll to the Mosquito Hill Staff

Mike Hibbard, Director

In October of 2023, the search began for a new assistant naturalist. The assistant naturalist is responsible for planning and conducting educational programs, working with teachers and other group leaders to plan field trips, leading school field trips and hikes, conducting research, assisting with the care and maintenance of Mosquito Hill Nature Center buildings and grounds and many other duties.

Nearly 60 people applied for the position, which was a surprise, considering the current market. There were many very qualified candidates, which made the decision difficult. Two rounds of interviews were held and the position was offered to Ally Noll of Waupaca. Ally started on January 29. Opposite is a self-introduction. Please stop in to introduce yourself to Ally. We welcome her to our team.



Ally Noll holds a female mallard at the Mead Wildlife Area during summer duck banding.

Naturalist's Corner

Crazy for Cranes

Adam Brandt, Park Ranger

With their graceful dancing and prehistoric calls, cranes have long captivated people all over the world. In Wisconsin, we are fortunate to have sandhill and whooping cranes that we are able to observe. This wasn't always the case, however. During a sad chapter in our history, these incredible creatures almost disappeared from the landscape. Thankfully, both sandhill and whooping cranes stand as phenomenal conservation success stories.

Crane populations were able to rebound thanks to protections placed on them along with vigilant monitoring efforts. The International Crane Foundation started a widespread count and monitoring effort in the mid-1970s. Today, the Annual Midwest Crane Count takes place each year in mid-April. More than 1,800 volunteers travel to their local wetlands and favorite birding locations to participate in the crane count. This annual survey of sandhill and whooping cranes spans more than 150 counties in seven states of the upper Midwest, including Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Minnesota.

Locally, in Outagamie County, we are lucky to observe and report some of the highest crane numbers of any area in the Midwest each year. If you are interested in helping count cranes this spring, please contact Outagamie County's Count Coordinator, Adam Brandt at Adam.Brandt@outagamie.org or 920-779-6433. This year's count will take place Saturday, April 13 from 5:30-7:30 am. There are opportunities for all ages and abilities to get involved.



Sandhill cranes. Image by Robbi Drake from Pixabay.com.

Meet Ally Noll

Ally Noll, Assistant Naturalist

Hello! My name is Ally Noll, and I am so excited to join the team here at Mosquito Hill as the assistant naturalist. I was raised in Minnesota and growing up, I spent as much time outside as I could. From the weeks spent on my grandparents' farm to family camping trips to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, I knew from a young age that I wanted to do something that would allow me to stay and "play" outside.

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point in 2022 with a Bachelor of Science degree in forestry recreation and started my career in natural

resources with the Wisconsin DNR. I worked at both the Mead Wildlife Area and Rib Mountain State Park as an environmental educator. Through my schooling and positions with the DNR, I absolutely fell in love with outdoor education.

In my free time, you can find me wandering in the woods, nose deep in a good book, starting yet another art project or spending time with my partner, Andrew, and our cat, Meelo. I am excited to continue my journey at Mosquito Hill and I am looking forward to working, learning and making connections with my peers and visitors alike.

Calendar of Events



www.mosquitohill.com

Please note: Advance registration and payment are required for all programs. To register and pay online, please visit: <https://friends-of-mosquito-hill.square.site/program-registration>. You may also register over the phone and pay by credit card or mail your check payable to MHNC. To check the status of a program, visit www.mosquitohill.com or our Facebook page (@MosquitoHillNatureCenter). Please contact us with questions at 920.779.6433 or mosquitohill@outagamie.org

NEW: Register and Pay for Programs Online!

Through a collaboration with University of Wisconsin MBA students, staff worked to implement a new self-service program registration and payment format. This improvement will save time for participants who prefer to register and pay for classes, events and workshops online. <https://friends-of-mosquito-hill.square.site/program-registration>



Yoga "Flow"

Saturdays March 16, April 13,
May 18, June 15 and July 13
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Join us for a 60-minute slow flow yoga class great for participants of all ages and fitness levels. Certified yoga instructor and strength coach Cassie Kottke will lead participants through a series of poses to stretch and strengthen all of the muscles of the body. Cassie will also guide you through proper breathing techniques along with a short meditation at the end of class. Please bring your own yoga mat.

Cost: \$12/person/session. Registration and payment are due by the Thursday before each class.



Photo by Adam Brandt

Spring Emerges: Naturalist-led Hike

Saturday, April 13 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

April brings new life after the long winter. Amphibians and reptiles are on the move, plants are growing and the woods are bursting with places to explore. A naturalist-led hike will explore the nature center property as it comes alive in early spring. Come dressed for the weather as April weather can be unpredictable.

Cost: \$8/person, \$6/student/senior/FOMH. Registration and payment are due by April 8.



Recycled Bottle Hanging Planter Workshop

Saturday, March 23
10:00 AM - Noon

Looking for a way to freshen and brighten up part of your house? Are you running out of room for all your indoor plants? A hanging planter might be just the thing you need! Park Ranger Adam Brandt will guide you through the process of recycling an old plastic bottle into a beautiful, rustic hanging planter. All tools and supplies will be provided.

Cost: \$15. Registration deadline: March 22.



Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 20
10:00 AM

Join us for an open house event.

The morning will be filled with family activities that celebrate birds, recycling and our amazing planet. Events for the day include:

- Crafts using recyclable items
- Kite Flying - bring your own or borrow one (weather permitting)
- Native plant sale
- Informational booths - World Migratory Bird Day, Bird City WI, Recycling
- Brat fry and concessions for sale
- Other educational programs TBA

Anyone can participate in just one of these activities or stick around for the whole morning.

No charge. Donations are always appreciated.



Build a Bug Box

Saturday, April 27
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Join Naturalist Mike Hibbard to build a bug box to temporarily hold butterflies and other insects for study. The box measures 5 1/2" wide x 7" high x 8" long. All instructions and materials are provided. Some basic hand tools will be needed, but extras will be available if you don't have them. A tool list will be provided upon registration. After the boxes are completed, participants will have a chance to try them out as we go on a "catch and release" bug safari to see which insects are out and about. The workshop is recommended for children ages 10+. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Cost: \$20/box, which includes materials. Registration and payment are due by April 12.



Spring Bird Hikes

Saturdays May 5, 11, 18, and 25 | 7:00 AM

Spring is one of the most exciting seasons for birding! Come along for a casual, guided hike with a naturalist during the peak of the spring migration. Whether you are a beginner or expert level birder, all are welcome to attend one or any number of the offered hikes. Come dressed for the weather and wear good hiking shoes. Bring your own binoculars or borrow a pair from the nature center.

No charge.



Spring Mini Photography Session

Saturday, May 11
8:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Register in advance and support Mosquito Hill Nature Center (MHNC) with your purchase of a mini-portrait session with Greg Prellwitz, Gregory T Photography, Weyauwega. Your 20-minute session will be set in a scenic area near the interpretive building with easy access from the parking lot. The fee includes five high-resolution edited images. A portion of the proceeds supports MHNC.

Cost: \$70. Registration and payment are due by May 4.



Mother's Day Wildflower Hike

Sunday, May 12
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Treat your mom or grandmother to a morning of fresh air and beautiful wildflowers. Join Naturalist Mike Hibbard on a hike of the nature center property in search of spring ephemerals. These early spring wildflowers are an important part of the ecosystem, providing early nourishment for emerging pollinators. On this hike, participants will learn some plant identification skills and the stories behind early blooming plants. Moms and grandmothers are free.

Cost: \$8/person/\$6 student/senior/FOMH. No charge for moms and grandmothers. Registration and payment are due by May 6.



Photo credit: Gregory T Photography

Embarrass River Brigade Rendezvous

Saturday, May 18: 9:00 AM - dusk
Sunday, May 19: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Step back to a simpler time when beaver hides were the unit of currency and waterways were highways. Come visit a fur trapper's rendezvous encampment, circa 1824, on top of Mosquito Hill. Campers will demonstrate skills of the period while dressed in clothing of that day. You may see fire starting with flint and steel, flint knapping to make arrow points, candle making, rope making, calligraphy and yarn spinning. Have a seat by the fire and hear the telling of tall tales. Learn about the difficult life of early American fur trappers and settlers. No charge for admission and pre-registration is not required. Breakfast, lunch and other concessions will be available for purchase.



Lowland Birding Paddle

Saturday, June 1
8:00 AM

Park Ranger Adam Brandt will guide you on a casual paddle down a portion of the Mosquito Hill lowland forest. Who knows what exciting spring migrant birds we can find hiding deep in the flooded forest? Bring your own canoe/kayak and paddling gear. Beginner or expert level paddlers and birders are welcome to join us. Binoculars are available to borrow from the nature center or bring your own.

Cost: \$8. Registration deadline: May 14.



Family Nature Hike

Sunday, June 9
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Join us for a naturalist-led, fun hike for families with elementary school-age children and younger to explore the natural world. Children must be accompanied by at least one adult. Wear sturdy closed-toe shoes and come prepared for the weather and insects.

Cost: \$8/adult, \$6/student/senior/FOMH. Registration and payment are due by June 3.



Please join us for the 3rd Annual Friends of Mosquito Hill BBQ Fundraiser!

Mosquito Hill Nature Center BBQ dinner with all the fixins. Raffles for gift baskets and other prizes. Live entertainment by TNT. Not a member? Join today.

View From The Hill

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www.mosquitohill.org

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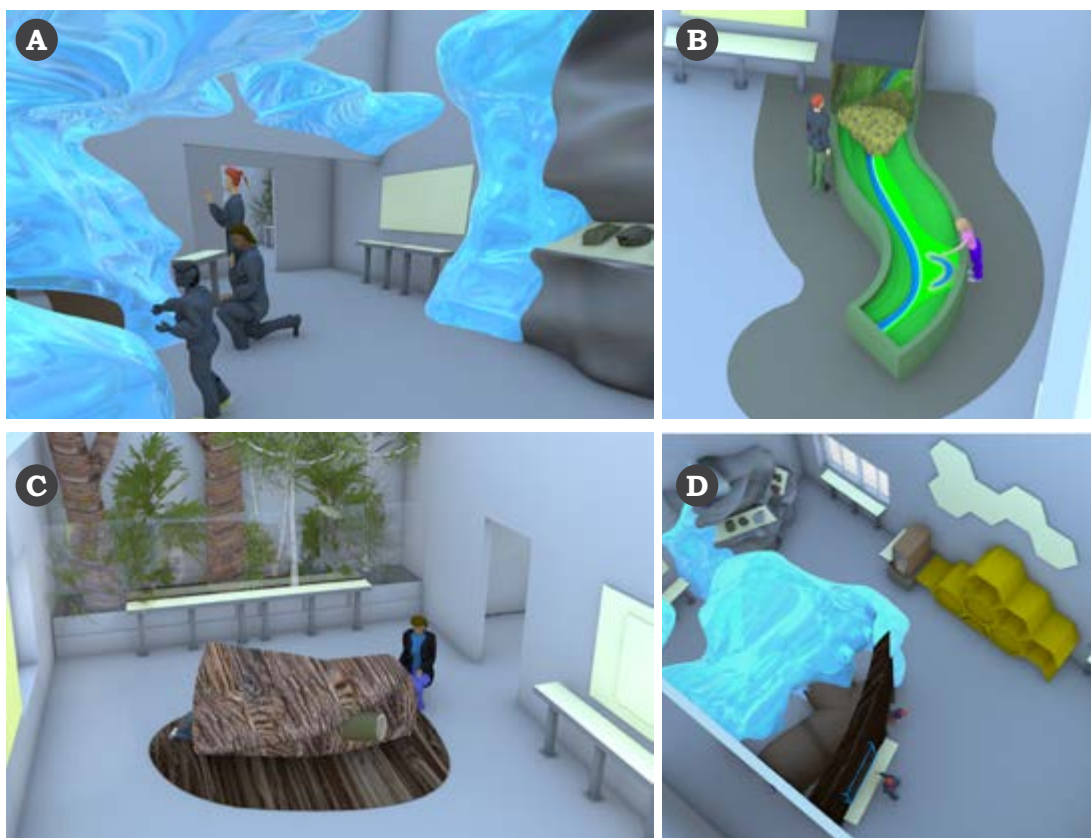
Display Project Update

The remodeling of the original wing of the interpretive building was completed in early February of 2024. The wing is temporarily reopened to the public to tour and get a “sneak peek” at the design plans and artist renderings of some of the displays. In July, the wing will close again so the new displays can be installed in the freshly remodeled space.

As of writing this update, the staff and Friends of Mosquito Hill Board of Directors are working with Riggs Ward Design to complete the final design phase and bid documents for the construction of the new displays.

The timeline to get bids out for display construction and installation is mid-March, with bids due back in early April. The construction phase of the exhibit build is scheduled to take place from April to July, with a projected completion date by the end of October.

As with all construction projects, unforeseen delays can occur, so please check for updates on the project in future issues of the newsletter and on our Facebook page. Thank you for your support of this project and your patience throughout the entire process.



Artist renderings of some of the new educational exhibits in the display wing of the interpretive building:

- A** Walk-through glacier will explain how the hill was formed during the last glacial period.
- B** River water table will demonstrate how rivers change course over time and how oxbow ponds are formed.
- C** Crawl-through decomposing log model will let visitors explore how decomposition happens, with a forest diorama in the background.
- D** Pollinator display will explain the importance of pollinators in the environment, including a working observatory honeybee hive.

Volunteer Voice

*"A flower blossoms for its own joy."
~ Oscar Wilde"*

Volunteer Spotlight

Amy Cutter, Volunteer Coordinator



"The hill looked hard at first, but I got over it!"

We are thrilled to dedicate the Volunteer Spotlight to L. Dean Sauers. Dean is a retired teacher, so there is a great deal of factual information shared along with some humorous folklore.

MHNC: How long have you volunteered at Mosquito Hill Nature Center (MHNC) and what inspired you to connect with the Hill?

Dean: I've been volunteering at MHNC for more than 44 years, making snowshoes when Jim Anderson was boss.

MHNC: You have contributed and supported MHNC so much by volunteering with school groups, special events, coordinating events like Rendezvous and concerts with Green Apple Folk Music Society. Why do you find volunteering important?

Dean: I believe in the Mission Statement of Mosquito Hill as

a place to educate the public in a variety of ways. Nature hikes with kids, teaching edible wild classes, building snowshoes, cross country skiing, survival classes, tree identification, plant identification, turkey calling and just the joys of having a place like Mosquito Hill to come out to and enjoy the wonders of the outdoors.

One summer I worked with a federal program to help at-risk high school kids learn how to work, cooperate and socialize. I knew one of the participants from school. Other kids in school would avoid her at all costs thinking they were afraid of her. She joined the group and right away I explained to her that she was part of the crew and was going to do everything the others did, learn, and maybe to get along with others. She was waist deep in Oxbow Pond repairing a dock like the rest of us. That next September when she got back to school, her teacher contacted me and asked "what did you do to her over the summer?" The teacher said she was a completely different person, got along with the other students and did her work. How rewarding! I cannot tell ya! (This was more than 20 years ago.)

MHNC: We all have fond volunteer memories shared with you and your tall tales, jokes, musical talents and endless knowledge in

countless subjects. What is your favorite volunteer memory?

Dean: The Embarrass River Brigade Rendezvous (fur trade reenactment) atop the Hill is special. There we teach history by living it. Numerous olde time skills are demonstrated and the public is welcome to step in. Saturday night we'll have a Green Apple Folk Music Society jam outdoors around a campfire until it gets dark. We have a knife and hawk throw, Atlatl demonstrations, bow and arrow shoot and a Woods Walk. Campers are happy to chat with you about their skill. We cook over wood fires and sleep in canvas lodges. Other events happen and ya never know when something is going to happen! One winter camp we were atop the hill with a tepee set up along with other lodges. I cooked dinner for the entire crew with large Dutch ovens and we slept in the tepee. I fed 25 people a wild game stew and cobbles. Have enjoyed all the fundraisers the Hill has done and happy to be of assistance. As the now home of Green Apple Folk Music Society, we find the Hill to be a welcoming place and are happy to have folks experience the music but also what the Hill has to offer. The staff of the Hill has always been cooperative, friendly and willing to assist with the needs of Green Apple, and we appreciate that very much!

Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc.

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