

Mississippi Hills Master Naturalist Chapter

2021 Annual Report

The Mississippi Hills Master Naturalist Chapter has just completed its fourth year. The MHMN chapter members have been involved in many projects and have completed various advanced training opportunities. An initial training class was conducted this fall with 20 new members joining the chapter in 2021. We have had one transferee from the Great Rivers Chapter.

The chapter suffered the loss of John Bursewicz who passed away September 29, 2021, John a was retired from Culver-Stockton College after 38 ½ years of teaching biology, botany, zoology, conservation, human anatomy and physiology. John was a Mississippi Hills Master Naturalist, graduating with the class of 2019. In his memory the chapter is planning to have a tree planted in his memory at the Culver-Stockton College.

MHMN naturalists contributed 2,862 **hours of Volunteer Service** and 559 **hours of Advanced Training**. 28 naturalists received their certifications. The chapter ended the year with 46 active members.

Summary of 2021 projects:

The MHMN Chapter continued to work with the Environmental Trail and Prairie Restoration project located at The Frank Russell Recreational Area at Mark Twain Lake. Approval for a grant has been given to the Army Corp of Engineers and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to build a 4.2-mile trail for hikers and bicyclists. Many MHMN members have contributed to this effort from clearing land and planting native trees, milkweed, native grasses and wildflowers.

The MHMN chapter has met its first goal of establishing seven prairies per year for seven years in 2020. During 2021 the chapter exceeded that goal by establishing eight new prairies. These eight prairies are comprised of slightly over twenty acres on both public and private lands. Of the eight 2021 prairie projects as many as 30 people worked on projects from less than an acre to 10 acres.

MHMN naturalists participated in March and October to build fish habitat structures to be used to improve fish habitat on Mark Twain Lake. This project is the result of a five year grant the Corps of Engineers received to enhance fishing on the Mark Twain Lake. Eighty-four 4 ft x 4 ft fish habitat structures were constructed in March event with more built in the October event. All have been placed in the Mark Twain Lake.

Building a Bat Box event was held by Mississippi Hills Master Naturalist Chapter with Hannibal Parks & Recreation in March. Thirteen families attended and built a bat box to take home. Students were also taught about bats and bat biology.

MHMN naturalists provided support at the 4-H camp held at the Flower City Park in June. Naturalists demonstrated the hazards birds face when migrating and the classes played a migration game that reinforced the challenges birds have when migrating.

MHMN naturalists provided support to students from area schools at the Pike County Farm Safety days in August. Naturalists presented examples of how to keep safe in the outdoors. How to identify snakes and avoid them. Ways to avoid mosquitoes and poison ivy was also included

The MHMN chapter supported a booth at the Hannibal Farmers Market once a month throughout the summer. Education was provided on climate change, importance of native plants, and Earth Day. Free educational materials were also given out.

MHMN chapter Naturalists supported the Hannibal Parks and Recreation Wild & Wacky Art adventure.

In June MHMN naturalists participated with MDC and YESA (Youth Empowered Sports & Activities) in the MDC Discover Nature Fishing program held at Huckleberry Park, Hannibal, MO. Around 10 youth attended this event and fished for the first time.

In July MHMN naturalists supported the Swinkey days for kids event. 160 kids attended this event.

Each week from the end of August through the beginning of November, MHMN naturalist Quintin Heaton and his Hannibal High School students hiked to the mine entrances of the Sodalist trail in Hannibal, MO to monitor and count the bats that are using the hibernaculum. In the peak of the fall swarm, they counted over 2,000 bats in a ten-minute period of time. This citizen science project provides data that is used by researchers from the Missouri Department of Conservation, U. S. Forestry Service, U. S. Fish and Wildlife and other agencies as groundwork for further studies.

One MHMN naturalist volunteered to walk the trails at Deer Ridge Conservation Area. The project assessed the trails and noted areas that needed attention. A GPS Maps App was used to mark areas on the trail to document places needing improvements such as signage and trail markers.

The July MHMN chapter general meeting was held at the Steyermark Conservation Area. The advanced training was how to identify and measure a Missouri champion tree. Naturalists participated in measuring a potential pecan tree for submission as a Missouri champion tree.

The MHMN chapter stream team conducted several field trips to monitor the Penno creek at the Ranacker Conservation Area near Frankford, MO. In June MHMN members also attended the Salt River clean up Float trip with the Stream Team United group in June. The MHN chapter stream team voted to join the Salt River Stream Team Association.

On December 18, 2021, The MHMN chapter participated in the 122nd Audubon Christmas Bird Count. A total of 16 naturalists attended the CBC and contributed 38.5 hours and drove 363 miles counting birds. A total of 2,650 birds were counted. 44 different species of birds were observed.

CERTIFICATION AND ACTIVE MEMBERS

46 Active members
26 Annual re-certifications
2 Initial Certifications

SERVICE PROJECTS (rounded to nearest whole hour)

Volunteer Service Projects Total: 2862 hours
Program Support 8523 hours
Education/Interpretative 472 hours
Stewardship Projects 1249 hours
Citizen Science 289 hours

ADVANCED TRAINING

2021 Advanced Training Total Hours 559

CHAPTER PARTNERS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Mark Twain Lake (863 volunteer service hours donated)
Hannibal Parks & Recreation & Tree Board (235 volunteer service hours donated)
Mark Twain State Park (149 volunteer service hours donated)
MDC (158.5 volunteer service hours donated)
University MO Extension (30 volunteer service hours donated)
Stream Team (47 volunteer service hours donated)
Audubon (116 volunteer service hours donated)
Missouri State Parks (149 volunteer service hours donated)
White Tails Unlimited, Monroe City Chapter (11 volunteer service hours donated)
Turkey Federation, Hannibal Chapter (3 volunteer service hours donated)
USA National Phenology Network (5 volunteer service hours donated)
Xerces Society – Bumble Bee Atlas (6 volunteer service hours donated)

2021 CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

President – George Wisdom

Vice President – Vacant

Secretary – Bella Erakko & Brenda Weiss

Treasurer – Kristy Trevathan

Board Members at Large: Bob Kendrick, Keith Cline, Kristy Trevathan, Vanessa Laatsch, Matthew Harris, Gale Rublee

Committee Chairs:

Volunteer Service Projects – Gale Rublee

Advanced Training - George Wisdom

Hospitality - Vanessa Laatsch

Website & Time keeper – Anne Coleman

Chapter Advisors:

Kathi Moore - MDC

Daniel Mallory - MUE