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## ***Bob's Bombinations: A No-Show is an Interpretive Opportunity? You Betcha!***

**By Bob Carter, Heartland Region Director**

As I start to write this column, the first week of school at my university is over. As the week was ending it felt and smelled of autumn. Now we're back in the middle of summer again. Aaaaah, life in the Heartland Region. One thing we do know: all four of our seasons eventually show up.

Years ago, I led spring wildflower walks in an oak woodland adjacent to a prairie restoration project with which I was involved. Our procedure was to set the dates and times of these events well in advance and publicize them locally. That often meant having a walk well before or well after the peak blooming time of many of the spring ephemerals I was trying to show to people. It got so bad one time that, beginning the hike, I told the group the first person to spot a wildflower in bloom would win a prize. Nobody collected it that day.

In order to deal with the ephemeral-ness of ephemerals (I like that phrase - I'm going to use it again someday), I took an Illinois DNR Spring Woodland Wildflower poster (a really neat poster), laminated it, and attached the ends to large dowel rods so that I could easily roll it up and carry it, but I also had handles and supports on it for when I unrolled it to display. There were a few times when those were the only wildflowers my visitors saw. Plan A of course, was actually seeing living spring ephemerals. The poster was part of a large and detailed Plan B that included the natural and cultural history of the ground over which we were walking as well as the story of the prairie and woodland reconstruction and restoration going on there.

I think that was when I really began to appreciate the importance of the stories surrounding a given resource. Call it backstory, side story, whatever you choose. I knew about context of course, and how it played into the interpretive picture, but until then I do not believe that knowledge had much of an impact on me. When I first began those spring wildflower walks, I worried that they might not show up. By the time I executed Plan B a few times, I began to worry that too many of them would show up and I would not have enough time for telling the whole story. Well, I wouldn't call it "worry." I tend not to waste energy on that sort of thing. But, it was a concern. Thanks to some no-shows, I had an entire new set of presentations better than just a drag-and-brag through the woods.

So, as you are waiting around for the weather in your neck of the Heartland Region to decide on exactly what season it is, you can rest assured that whichever is next, it won't be a no-show. Sooner or later, we get 'em all. Happy Interpretaterring of whatever comes your way. And yes, I misspelled that on purpose.



The National Association for Interpretation Heartland Region membership consists of interpreters from state parks, county agencies, museums, zoos, park districts, recreation facilities, and many other public and private organizations from Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Manitoba, and Nunavut.

Our mission is to inspire leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession.

### Quick Links

[National Association for Interpretation](#)

[NAI Heartland Region](#)

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## Buffalo Bull

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## Submit to Buffalo Bull!

All are welcome to submit to Buffalo Bull. Please read our [publishing policy](#) prior to submission.

### Submission Deadlines:

Winter Issue	December 1
Spring Issue	March
Summer Issue	June 1
Fall Issue	September 1

Email:

education@winneshiekwild.com

## Scholarships for National Conference Available! By Jenny Sazama, Scholarships Chair

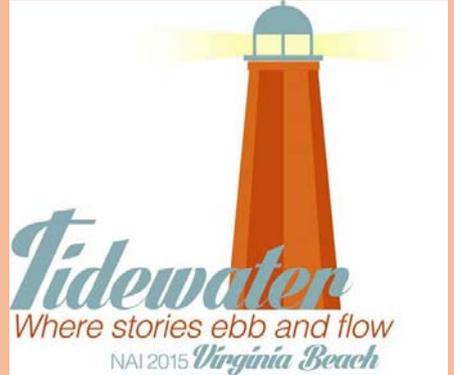
NAI National Conference  
Where Stories Ebb and Flow  
November 10-14, 2015  
Virginia Beach, VA

Get money to go to the beach!

**TWO \$800 scholarships** are available this year (one student, one professional)

To apply, please submit:

1. A completed application form
2. A letter of support from a professor, supervisor or colleague
3. A statement of financial need
4. Interpretation should be **RELEVANT** to the audience. Describe a moment when an exhibit, interpretive panel, or program was relevant to you. Responses are limited to 350 words and may be printed in the Heartland Region's quarterly newsletter, *Buffalo Bull*.



### All materials must be received by Sunday, Sept 27th, 2015

Recipient will be notified by mid-October and must follow through with the required steps to receive the award:

1. Provide the required documentation upon acceptance
2. Attend the entire conference
3. Volunteer or present at the conference
4. Within one month of attending, submit a brief article to the *Buffalo Bull* reflecting on their experience, including implementation to their resources or interpretive practice.

All applicants must be current NAI and Heartland region members and live or work within Heartland states and provinces. Students should be enrolled at least part time in a college or university. Professionals should be working in the field of interpretation. Members of the Scholarship Committee, their employees, and immediate family are not eligible.

Scholarships are issued as a reimbursement. Recipients receive a check after requirements are fulfilled. You may still apply even if you have already registered for the conference.

Submit Materials and Questions to:

Jenny Sazama  
LCFPD-EE Services  
1899 W. Winchester Road  
Libertyville, IL 60048  
jsazama@lcpd.org  
847/968-3482

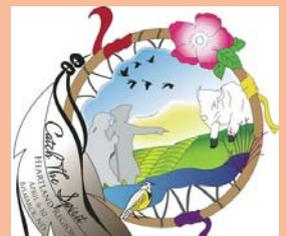
The application form can be accessed by [clicking here](#) or by visiting the [Heartland Region website](#).

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## 2016 Heartland Region Workshop

### Save the Date!

Catch the Spirit  
Heartland Region Workshop  
April 6-10, 2016  
Bismark, North Dakota



More details to come soon! Visit the [Heartland Region website](#) for up-to-date information.



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## Calling All Minnesotans!

### By Mara Lundeen, Minnesota State Coordinator

Calling all Minnesotans!

Do you want experience in coordinating a conference? Looking to expand your event coordination skills?

Volunteer to participate with developing the 2017 NAI Heartland Region Workshop in Minnesota. Our regional board has requested to start forming a workshop committee.

Below are the list of duties, many can be shared & have subcommittees. It's a first come, first serve basis for volunteering. **Please send me your top 2 choices by Friday, September 4.**

Furthermore, if you know another MN NAI member that would like to volunteer, please have them send me their choices too!

- Workshop Chair
- Program Chair
- Finance Chair
- Logistics Chair
- Entertainment Chair
- Registration Chair
- Fundraising Chair

Mara Koenig has a new position within the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as a public affairs specialist at the Midwest Regional Office, Bloomington, MN. Mara can still be reached at [mara\\_koenig@fws.gov](mailto:mara_koenig@fws.gov).

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## An Urban Naturalist?

### By Alex Palmer

I am a resident of the City of Chicago, America's third largest city and known for its vibrant neighborhoods, deep-dish pizza, countless summer street festivals, and a downtown named for its twisty-turny mass transit system.

I live and work in the city and in the surrounding suburbs. Yet when I arrive to the office I do not park my car in a 10-story parking garage nor do I check in with a receptionist each morning at the bottom floor of a 50-story office tower. Rather, I am an interpretive naturalist in a forest preserve, and I am greeted by giant bur oak trees on my way into the "office."

For most people, the Chicago area is the last place you would think a naturalist would want to live and work in; nor would they imagine that there is a large forest preserve system nearby! While the Forest Preserves of Cook County are no match to natural areas like the almighty Grand Canyon or the glamour of roaring of waterfalls along the Columbia River Gorge in Oregon, the Forest Preserves of Cook County offer peaceful respite from the rush of traffic and congestion in the Chicago metropolitan area.

People often ask if I would have much rather worked in more remote and pristine locations such as Bryce Canyon National Park or the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. Wouldn't it make more sense for a naturalist to live and work in places like those?

The truth is, I much prefer to work where most people live. Most people don't live in the middle of the Grand Canyon. They live in cities. And it's people in cities that need environmental education the most.

I love the contrast between nature and urbanization. For example, I can watch a Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) stalk fish in a shallow pond or observe giant sunflowers growing in a small prairie or roadside ditch...and then go out for coffee or do some shopping downtown. My friends are puzzled nonetheless. Wouldn't I rather be out somewhere that has dazzling scenery or large herds of wildlife like elk or moose? Wouldn't it be more fun to raft down some giant rapids out in a Western Wilderness rather than spending time in a dense urban area like Chicago?

I believe many Chicagoans have a perspective of nature that could easily be summarized in one of many paintings from the Hudson River School of artists: a romanticized impression of nature. Many people I have spoken to around the city are surprised to learn that the southern part of Chicago is more biologically diverse (more species of plants, animals, and fungi) than anywhere else in Illinois-and one of the most ecologically diverse regions in the country! No, the Chicago area no longer has giant bison running around nor does it have large mountains and canyons (although it once had a lot more large sand dunes), but it does have a more subtle beauty whose remnants can be observed in the nearby forest preserve system.

I believe the romanticized impression of nature that some Chicagoans apparently share is based on the assumption that industrialized cities like Chicago just "don't have much nature," whereas scenic wilderness areas do. Not only is this far from the truth, but it is an unfortunate mindset because natural landscapes within urban areas are proving to be critical to the health and sustainability of ecosystems, including human ecosystems like the Windy City! Indeed, urban natural areas are grossly unappreciated.

Most people are living in cities now, and this is a trend that is expected to continue. Already, more than half of the world's human population is in cities, and the United Nations predicts that by 2050, 66% of all people will live, work, and play in urban areas. The 2010 U.S. Census reported that over 80% of Americans are living in urban and suburban areas, and this trend is expected to continue as well as our population grows and spreads out.

Because most people are already living in cities, it has become even more critical to protect natural resources within urban areas. Urban ecology is the study of the interactions of nature within urbanized landscapes. For example, ongoing research is examining the ecological ramifications of increased coyote populations within the municipal boundaries of Chicago. In the Chesapeake Bay area on the East Coast, cities are trying to reduce urban storm-water runoff by protecting green spaces along rivers and by incorporating native landscaping in parking lots and along busy streets.

Stewarding natural resources in urban areas is in some respects more complicated than managing wilderness areas. Habitat fragmentation is often much more intense, and only a handful of plant and wildlife species can tolerate an urbanized landscape. In spite of that, many urban nature preserves hold globally rare species of plants and animals. For example, a system of urban nature preserves in nearby Northwest Indiana that have remnant sand savannas and dune and swale habitats are homes for the federally endangered Karner Blue Butterfly (*Lycaedies melissa samuelis*) as well as over a dozen species of native orchids.

As urban natural areas are increasingly under the limelight, cities themselves are looking for ways to become greener and cleaner for wildlife as well as people. Urban planning is concerned with increasing the quality of life for people living in cities. Urban planning is a multidisciplinary field that includes the ecological sciences, social sciences, and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), as well as community organizing, civil engineering, communications, and natural history knowledge. Urban planners work with multiple stakeholders, including civic groups, politicians, engineers, businesses, ecologists, and others to ensure that cities are maintained and managed indefinitely in a manner that includes multimodal transportation, cleaner air, and protection of waterways and wetlands. Good urban planning often emphasizes new construction that utilizes previously developed areas, instead of expanding development outward onto forests or fertile farmland.

Indeed, nature and cities must coexist as most people (including myself)

would not or cannot live in the middle of the wilderness. I am a naturalist living in the nation's third largest city. I am an urban naturalist, and my mission as an urban interpretive naturalist will involve keeping myself and others moving forward with a greener and happier way of living by facilitating a connection between our natural heritage and city life.

--

Alex Palmer is a Naturalist at Sand Ridge Nature Center in the Forest Preserve of Cook County.

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## ***Around the Region:*** **Workshops, Resources, and Announcements**

### **NAI CERTIFICATION and CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **2015 NAI National Conference**

Virginia Beach, Virginia

November 10-14, 2015

More information and registration materials available at [www.interpnet.com](http://www.interpnet.com).

#### **Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) Training Workshops**

The Certified Interpretive Guide program is designed for anyone who delivers interpretive programs to the public. It combines both the theoretical foundations of the profession with practical skills in delivering quality interpretive programming to visitors.

##### **Anita Purves Nature Center/Museum of the Grand Prairie**

Urbana, IL and Mahomet, IL

February 12, 19, 26 & March 4, 2016

Co-Hosted by Urbana Park District and Champaign County Forest Preserve District.

Registration open now until January 18, 2016

For more information, visit the [Workshop Website](#) or contact Bob Carter ([bobcarter.13@gmail.com](mailto:bobcarter.13@gmail.com) or 815 289-7930) or Stacey Clementz ([sclementz@ccfpd.org](mailto:sclementz@ccfpd.org) or 217-896-2455).

#### **NAI Webinars**

Don't forget about NAI's webinars! [Check them out here!](#)

### **EXTERNAL WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES, and PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **C3 Fall 2015 Environmental Leadership Training**

Tuesdays, September 15 through October 13

6:00 - 9:30PM

Garfield Park Conservatory

The Chicago Conservation Corps is now recruiting for its Fall 2015 Environmental Leadership Training Series. During the training, you'll learn from community and environmental leaders about urban sustainability challenges and opportunities for change; then you'll lead a sustainability service project in your community with C3 support and resources.

To participate in the training course, you must be an adult Chicago resident and attend one of the orientations listed below. The course will be held at the Garfield Park Conservatory on Tuesdays, September 15 through October 13, 6:00 - 9:30 p.m. A \$125 fee covers course participation and project support. Financial assistance is available upon request.

Attend an orientation to learn more;  
visit [www.naturemuseum.org/c3](http://www.naturemuseum.org/c3) or  
call 773-755-5100 x5039 to reserve a space.

#### **Project Underground Workshop**

September 18-20, 2015

Jewel Cave National Monument

This workshop focuses on classroom activities and resource-based

learning experiences related to cave and karst environments. Participants will learn new curriculum and experience Jewel Cave with some lively hands-on activities. Registration fees cover workshop materials, two nights lodging on site, and several meals. Reservations are required and space is limited to 15 participants. For more information, contact Bradley Block, Chief of Interpretation, at (605) 673-8330 or [bradley\\_block@nps.gov](mailto:bradley_block@nps.gov).

### **Midwest Environmental Education Conference**

"Promoting Access to Environmental Education"

October 21-24, 2015

Madison, Wisconsin

Discounted registration for members of WAEE, ICEC, MAEE, and EEAI!

This amazing workshop will feature keynote speakers Timothy Egan (New York Times columnist), Joel Salatin (sustainable farming pioneer), and George Archibald (International Crane Foundation founder). For full details of this jam-packed conference, visit [www.MEEConference.org](http://www.MEEConference.org).

The **Environmental Education Association of Illinois** has a calendar of a wide range of training opportunities, including Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, and more. Visit [their website](#) for a detailed list.

**Illinois Department of Natural Resources' ENTICE** (Environment and Nature Training Institute for Conservation Education) educator workshops are scheduled for 2015! These workshops include hands-on activities, lessons, and supplemental resources. For more information, dates, and to register visit <https://www.enticeworkshops.com/>.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Environmental Education Association of Illinois Mini-grants**

Do you have a project that would educate your community about an environmental issue? Do you have a curriculum that will engage your participants in learning about an ecological concept? Can you provide an experience that will help students increase their understanding of the natural world? EEAI mini-grants are awarded each year for up to \$350 per proposal. Application deadline is **October 31**. For more information visit <http://www.eeai.net/mini-grants.html>.

The mission of the **University of Illinois Extension: Master Naturalist Program** is to provide science-based educational opportunities that connect people with nature and help them become engaged environmental stewards. The training will prepare volunteer Master Naturalists to more effectively participate in local environmental stewardship. Find more information at <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/mn/who.cfm>.

**Looking for a job or internship this summer?** Don't forget to check out these great resources from NAI and Region 5!

[NAI's Career Center](#) (National Office)

[NAI Region 5 Job Board](#)

[MN SEEK's jobs & internships](#) (Minnesota)

[MyCountyParks](#) (Iowa; seasonal and full-time)

### **Call for Articles: InterpNEWS**

If you are interested in submitted articles and/or research to this free, international heritage interpretation e-magazine, please contact John Veverka (CIT, CIP, NAI Fellow) at [jvainterp@aol.com](mailto:jvainterp@aol.com). [Click here for more information on InterpNEWS.](#)

Looking for discounted outdoor gear for use with work or personally? The website **Promotive** offers steep discounts to field professionals on a wide-range of outdoor equipment, clothing, and footwear. Visit the website [www.promotive.com](http://www.promotive.com) and use the code 9D53-1D98-7651-0D03 to join the "Environmental Researchers and Field Scientists" team. Code expires soon!

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Jewel Cave National Monument** recently started construction work at its

visitor center to expand visitor services. The project includes the construction of a new park store, which will support the sales of the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association. Another part of the project creates additional space for off-season school programs, teacher workshops, etc. The total project cost is approximately \$670,000; the project is scheduled for completion in February 2016 ... just in time for the NPS Centennial.

**Chicago Wilderness** announces a new regional strategy to protect, improve and expand natural resources: **one region. one vision. one voice.** Building on a strong, 20 year foundation, the alliance will organize around areas of expertise to achieve maximum impact for our region's nature and people.

In the fall of 2014, Chicago Wilderness launched a process to identify

these areas. With a focus on data-driven strategy and measurable results, more than 100 member organizations participated in developing the following six focus areas to be pursued over the next five years:

- Oak Ecosystems: ensuring a future for oaks and their ecosystems
- Priority Species: sustaining our region's critical species
- Water as a Resource: addressing regional water issues through conservation action
- Landowners: engaging landowners in conservation actions
- Public Engagement: building and sustaining a broad, representative, and active constituency
- Data & Member Tools: applying technology and data to accelerate collaboration

By aligning these cross-disciplinary efforts, Chicago Wilderness will drive conservation action that addresses regional challenges and inspires meaningful change. Learn more about Chicago Wilderness at <http://www.chicagowilderness.org>.

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## Contact NAI Heartland Region Leadership

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