



SUMMER 2022

NEWSLETTER

Our Mission: To foster a greater awareness of the interrelationships between humans and nature.

WE'RE HIRING!

Education Director

Job Duties

- Conduct and create educational programming, develop curriculum and activities that will provide an authentic connection to the Fertile Sand Hills.
- Engage youth, teachers, and the public in developing environmental awareness of the Fertile Sand Hills.
- Lead development, planning, scheduling and delivery of environmental education programs in the classroom and Fertile Sand Hills.
- Develop curriculum-based resources and provide support for other educators.
- Write resource material, including hard-copy, online, and multimedia publications.
- Deliver seminars and presentations to area schools, communities and businesses on a variety of environmental topics.
- Build and maintain relationships with community partners including; schools, business, and other organizations.
- Develop and implement communication plans and programs.
- Manage budgets and prepare grant proposals in coordination with the Board of Directors and Office Manager.
- Part-time position - fringe benefits are not included.



Minimum Qualifications:

Two-year Associate Degree preferably in education, environmental science, interpretation or related field of study. Equivalent work experience may be substituted for formal degree with Board approval. Should have prior educational experience with K-12 students.

Application Procedure:

Interested applicants need to submit a cover letter, resume, statement of teaching philosophy and official transcript(s). Position is open until filled. Applications may be submitted electronically to Stacy Erickson at fertile@gvtel.com.

For more info or a complete job description, contact the Fertile City Office at fertile@gvtel.com or 218-945-3136.

ABOUT

The AELC, also known locally as "The Nature Center" is located in the 640 acre wilderness area located just west of Fertile. It includes the Fertile Sandhills, a Visitor's Center with a meeting room, kitchen and restroom facilities including showers, in addition to a primitive campground.

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Our Story Strolls

An added adventure



Story Strolls

Have you been out on the trails in recent years and discovered a Story Stroll? Throughout the summer we highlight different trails with each new Stroll.



With the help of our partners, we've selected easy-to-read books. It encourages reading for enjoyment while using the trails by young families and allows hikers of all ages to read the book without having to interrupt their hiking or being swarmed by insects.

We've started including a guest book at the end of the story. This equally helps us get an estimate of how many people participated and get new ideas for future books. We can use the comments and the number of people to help obtain grant funds for other activities at the AELC. We've received great feedback last year including two out-of-state friends. One was from New York and the other was from

Las Vegas, NV.

If you've had a great experience with a Story Stroll, please share it with us or one of our partner organizations. The library staff shared this comment about last year's "The Legend of Rock, Paper, Scissors" Stroll, which started at the entrance near the sports complex,

"My son enjoyed it very much! He insisted on redoing it three times last weekend."

Through collaboration with our partners, the Fertile Public Library, Fertile - Beltrami Early Childhood Initiative, and Polk County Public Health, we've planned a different

Story Stroll from May through August this year and we're working on a September Story Stroll - **volunteers welcome!**

Our first Story Stroll, "The Hiking Viking," was a great fit for our area and a hit at our 30th Anniversary Summerfest Celebration. Our second Stroll, "Have You Ever Seen a Flower?" was purchased thanks to the library's #PlantWildflowers grant.

In July, our Story Stroll is "Hey, Water!" by Antoinette Portis. A non-fiction book where you can read about the many forms, location, and uses of water. In August, you can enjoy Mo Willems unique take on a classic tale, "Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs."

Be sure to check our social media for details of where and when to find our Story Strolls on the trails!



30th Anniversary BioBlitz

To celebrate our 30th anniversary,
we hosted a bioblitz June 1-30

What is a bioblitz you ask? A bioblitz is a communal citizen-science effort to record as many species within a designated location and time period as possible. We use *iNaturalist.org* to record our observations. They can consist of a single image, multiple images, a single item, or a sound. You can upload them in the field or wait until you arrive home to post them to *iNaturalist*.

We had over 388 observations posted to our bioblitz on *iNaturalist.org* in June. We saw over 200 species, including plants, animals, birds, insects, and fungi. Seventy-one people helped identify our observations. We hosted hikes during Summerfest and on June 25th. The Fertile Public Library's #PlantWildflower's grant paid for cookies and bottled water. Some of us didn't even have

to leave the building to make observations.

Observations and identifiers on *iNaturalist* are welcome all year round. Documenting species and sounds at the AELC enhances the experience, can help with our education programs, and scientists' research.

If you don't have a chance get out and make observations at the AELC, you can still participate by helping identify or confirm the identification of an observation.

To view our bioblitz, download the app or go to *iNaturalist.org* and search for AELC 30th Anniversary BioBlitz; our project ID number is 136304.



Record your flora and fauna observations while visiting the Sand Hill Recreation Area and the Agassiz Environmental Learning Center! We'll use your data to help build curricula for our environmental education programs and for engaging visitors in citizen science!

Visit:

www.inaturalist.org/projects/agassiz-environmental-learning-center-fertile-sand-hills-main

SUMMERFEST RECAP

If you weren't there, you sure missed a fun weekend and we missed YOU! There were some great hikes, fun conversations, Story Stroll(ing), plenty of food and keg root beer, Raptor Center presentations, flower observations, and axe throwing - because we all need to have a little fun and unwind outdoors!

We kicked off our summer of celebration with this big weekend of activity to acknowledge our 30 years of providing nature and environmental education to our region. We did quite a bit of reminiscing, and it was fun to hear about all the memories people have over the years in the sand hills.

Here's what they had to say!

- Walking the bridge
- Making new best friends
- Lovely place to surround in nature; love hiking, camping, skiing, and that it is so close by
- Evre thing (spelling of the author of those words)
- Looking for "Phantom Orchid" with Joe G.
- Walking along the river
- Cross country skiing with my grandma and family
- The hidden character Liefe (spelling of the author)
- Story Stroll
- Relaxing sound of the river
- Finding goose eggs
- Finding the "wheeping hillside", hiking with Wayne in the winter. Thanks Wayne!





RAPTOR:

1: a carnivorous medium- to large-sized bird (such as a kestrel, hawk, eagle, owl, or vulture) that has a hooked beak and large sharp talons and that feeds wholly or chiefly on meat taken by hunting or on carrion: bird of prey.

- Merriam Webster

During Summerfest, we learned about some of the common raptors of Minnesota, thanks to the Raptor Center from the University of Minnesota. Only about one third of raptors survive their first year of life. During the program, we observed an American kestrel, red tailed hawk, a falcon, a great horned owl, and a bald eagle. While the bald eagle, owl and hawk were absolutely fascinating... the falcon caught our eye.

Maybe because we live in Fertile and our mascot is the Falcon...but maybe it had something to do with their habitat! The American Kestrel is a member of the falcon family. They tend to live in the prairie and are a natural resident of the Sand Hills. They live on dragonflies, moths, butterflies and small mammals. Did you know they can fly up to 80 miles per hour?!? They can hover while flying, but most other raptors cannot. They have an extra eyelid that they use similar to goggles when diving for food. They also have a baffle to cover their nostrils. They are a migratory bird that nests in "cavities" such as holes in trees. They are similar in size to a mourning dove, slightly larger than a robin. They are commonly seen on high line poles and known for bobbing their tail.

As the presenter of the program shared, it is up to us to make a difference for these birds of prey. Poisoning and injuries due to vehicles are the two biggest threats to raptors. Keeping trash out of ditches and off the roads will prevent many of the injuries. Being careful to avoid lead ammunition and fishing tackle will help prevent lead poisoning. Many raptors are also opportunists who will scavenge carcasses that have been shot, and will ingest small amounts of lead that build up over time and eventually reach a lethal amount in their system. There is no natural way for them to recover from lead poisoning.



Article found from the Fertile Journal on January 14, 1959

Given to Wayne Goeken by Carol Osmondson

Minnesota's "Newest" Skiing Resort Attracts Skiers from Distances of 300 Miles

"It's fun to ski," has been proven, again, as anyone who has skied at Minnesota's NEWEST ski area, "Ski Devil Ski area," will enthusiastically tell you.

Fertile's ski resort has been open for only three weeks and already is drawing ski enthusiasts in great numbers from Fargo, Grand Forks, and surrounding communities. Some skiers have come from distances as great as 300 miles.

Last Saturday's free skiing for high school students and below from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. was very successful. A bystander remarked that the great numbers of skiers looked like a swarm of flies all over the hills. Adding to the crowd was a Greyhound Bus full of skiers from Fargo.

The basement of the chalet is now nearly complete and four tows are now in operation. The schedule of operation is as follows. Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday and Saturday nights 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

The resort's facilities are also available for special parties and groups by reservation. Call WH 5-5272 for details.

The Ski Devil Ski Area is managed by Mr. Verdi Pederson and he is capably assisted by Harmen Juelson, Nelford Borslien, Mrs. Verdi Pederson, Arlene Sannes, and Sharon Jacobson. On duty at all times that the area is open are members of the ski patrol who are devoting much time and effort to insure that the Ski Devil Ski Area is a safe place to ski.

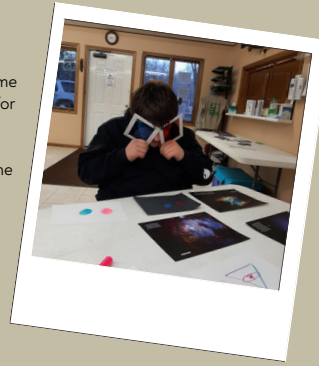
Partnerships Provide Opportunities

Enhancing our Programs

Star Party from the Bell Museum

In April, the AELC partnered with the Bell Museum to host a "Star Party" with the theme of "Shared Sky, Open Minds." The Bell Museum is the official natural history museum for the State of Minnesota and is based out of the metro area. It is also part of the University of Minnesota. They provided curriculum, crafts, activities, and hands-on resources in a big box for our staff and volunteers to learn more about the stars and the Indigenous names and stories of various constellations. Dr. Jeff Bell (no relation!) lent his expertise as an instructor from Northland Community & Technical College on a guided viewing of the night sky. He shared his favorite apps for smartphones and some helpful hints on finding some of the most commonly observed constellations.

To learn more about the Star Party, visit their website - www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/statewide-star-party-2022

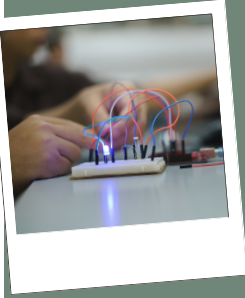


Upcoming Bell Museum Science & Nature Kit Partner

After the Star Party was over, there was a survey presented to our AELC team which asked if we would like to partner with the Bell Museum for other projects in the future. We wholeheartedly said "YES!" Their focus this year is outreach and connecting the far corners of Minnesota to more resources relating to science and discovery. In the coming weeks, we will be receiving 300 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) kits. These kits will be geared towards family use and will have several activities per kit with instructions on how to do those activities.

The last update that we received is they are creating short one-two minute videos for each activity to help guide students through the activities. We are excited to see what these kits bring to our community! We want to encourage fun learning opportunities to build future scientists and naturalists in our community and beyond. We expect to receive these kits in July or August.

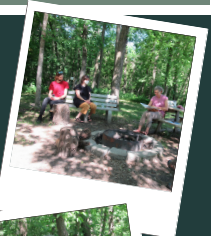
We will be keeping notes of who/what/how many so the Bell Museum can report back to their generous donors how their resources reached various community and age groups. Being part of a rural, under-served community, these details are more important than ever.



#PlantWildflowers Grant & Legacy Event through the Fertile Public Library

Earlier this year, the Fertile Public Library applied for and received a #PlantWildflowers grant through HHMI Tangled Bank Studio. The library, through this grant, provided formal and informal educational materials developed with the World Wildlife Fund, distribution of 2,000 packets of free, regionally-appropriate native wildflower seeds, and bee identifier cards -- available until they are gone in the AELC building, at our fair booth, and at the library -- along with a pollinator friendly flower basket we gave away at Summerfest.

On June 23, they hosted a viewing of *My Garden of a Thousand Bees* at the library followed by an audience discussion with treats. Earlier that morning, we hosted their two-part event featuring an author visit by *Plant a Pocket of Prairie* author Phyllis Root and a plantable paper-making activity with staff from the Paper Plains Art Cart. Thanks to funds from the Minnesota Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund. Additional activity stations that day were also fun to visit.



TICK, TICK, TICK

Ticks were out in full force during our June events. We had multiple tick removals during Summerfest and during the 30th anniversary Bioblitz two ticks were added to the observations in the building! If the building is open there is bug spray and sunscreen available for public use.

The following is some information about deer ticks from the MN DNR's website (www.dnr.state.mn.us/insects/deerticks/index.html), but it can be applied to any type of ticks. Please be aware that tick borne diseases are on the rise in Minnesota according to the MN Health Department.

Deer Tick Bites - Prevention

Check and re-check for ticks when you are in tick-infested areas.

1. When in deer tick habitat, walk in the center of the trail to avoid picking up ticks from grass and brush.
2. Wear light colored clothing so ticks will be more visible.
3. Long pants, socks or tick gaiters and appropriate footwear such as closed-toe shoes or boots are strongly encouraged.
4. Create a barrier to ticks by tucking pants into socks or boots and tuck long sleeved shirt into pants.
5. Use a repellent containing DEET or permethrin, and carefully follow the directions on the container.
6. After being outdoors in tick habitat, get out of your clothes immediately, do a complete body check, shower and vigorously towel dry. Wash your clothes immediately as to not spread any ticks around your living area.
7. Pets should also be checked for ticks.

Tick - Removal

The risk of getting a tick-borne disease is small if the tick is removed soon after it becomes attached. Deer ticks must remain attached one to two days to transmit Lyme disease, and about one day for the other diseases.

1. Take precautions when in tick habitat, but don't panic if you find a deer tick on you. Not all ticks are infected, and prompt tick removal can prevent illness
2. Use tweezers to grasp the tick close to its mouth.
3. Gently and S-L-O-W-L-Y pull the tick straight outward.
4. To avoid contact with the bacteria, if present, do not squeeze the ticks' body.
5. Wash the area and apply an antiseptic to the bite.
6. Watch for early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease.



Camping at the AELC?

Maybe you knew this, maybe you didn't... but we have camp sites at the Nature Center!

There are 5 primitive camp sites and 2 geared towards RVs with water and electricity available (located up by the shop).

Primitive sites - \$15 per night
RV sites - \$20 per night

The spots are self serve, first come, first serve basis usually. If there are large events, such as weddings or family reunions, it is always a good idea to call the City Office to reserve the space. This summer, the City maintenance crew installed new fire rings in the camp sites. We have learned that even local Fertile residents enjoy camping close to home so they can "get away" and enjoy the trails and the river deck.

Lyme disease signs, symptoms and treatment

Visit the Minnesota Department of Health website for more information

www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/lyme

Volunteers are the Heart of the AELC

LOOKING BACK:

During Summerfest, one of the best parts was the reminiscing with our guests. Alta and Ellsworth Sulerud visited with board member Stacy Erickson for quite some time. They sat together and flipped through the memory books and photo albums, sharing the stories and memories of each picture they knew. Ellsworth shared how he worked on the river deck as it was built and why things were done the way they did them. The rounded staples at the top of the posts were put there to help keep children off the tops and hopefully prevent any accidents. He recounted how he attached each and every "backer board" on the handrail. He told of the site clearing and all the help they had in those early years. He talked a bit about when the building was built and the shop was moved in to town. Alta helped identify many of the faces in pictures that many of the newcomers to the organization may not have known or recognized. As she and Ellsworth looked to each other to find names of some they hadn't seen in years, it was more and more apparent that many of those founders have long since retired from volunteering or passed away. So many are long gone. It was quite interesting to hear how things have changed and how many things have stayed the same. They were encouraged by the renewed activity at the AELC, but cautious as they acknowledged that "people don't volunteer like they used to." And so it goes.

LOOKING AHEAD:

This summer, we have quite a few projects on the never ending "to do" list. We need your skills and talents or moral support to get them done!

- The Pollinator Garden - It has been sprayed to kill off the quack grass so that the garden can be replanted and reclaimed. We need help with planting and maintaining it once planted.
- Signage - We have carsonite signs to mark some of our trails. We will need a few "strapping young fellows" or ladies who are up to the task. These signs are familiar to many. While ours are brown, you will often see yellow "sticks" along road ditches marking utilities or other hazards. We will also need some detail oriented folks who are willing to help apply the stickers to the signs to mark the trails as needed.
- Site Hosting is an ongoing need- Greet people who come out to the Nature Center, offer maps, memberships, resources or information. Don't worry, we have it all prepared for you, you don't have to be an expert!
- Site Management Tasks - such as identifying invasive species and helping remove them is always a need.
- Special Event Help - Maybe you can lead a hike or help direct traffic. Maybe you can be a greeter. Maybe you are the one who doesn't mind cleaning up after the event. There is a place for YOU in everything we do.

WISH LIST FOR TRAIL MAINTENANCE:

- Gardening tools, work gloves, "aggressive" hand saws, loppers and good, used, working chainsaws

