



The Naturalist

Explore. Contribute. Connect.



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WELCOME TO YOUR

Seasonal Newsletter



Coordinator Update



Welcome to the first issue of the 2025 Nebraska Master Naturalist Newsletter, *The Naturalist*.

YOUR newsletter will continue to evolve as the Newsletter Committee finds our flow and we gather your important feedback. On that note, an evaluation has been included, at the end to gather your ideas, feedback, and suggestions.

You can expect four seasonal issues in 2025.

Latest events, spring exploring inspiration, volunteer opportunities and more. Keep reading!

Nerd Trivia

Why are pasque flowers so fuzzy?

What month do swallows return to NE?

Bumble bee queens do what first, after winter dormancy?



Judy Bouma and Master Naturalist friends celebrate with a grand potluck.

Field and Feast

Honoring Nebraska's Master Naturalists Member Recognition

The Nebraska Master Naturalist member recognition event, Field & Feast, was held February 22nd, 2025, at Platte River State Park. This event was a day of honoring the passion and dedication of Nebraska's Master Naturalists towards conservation in our prairie state. Over 80 Master Naturalists celebrated, with a grand potluck, inspiring speakers, photo contest, door prize raffle and more.

In 2024, Nebraska's Master Naturalists documented 6781 hours, totaling \$225,000 in contributions to Nebraska's conservation needs.



Carolyn Smith and Myrna Brown share a moment at F&F.

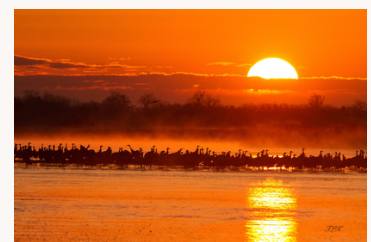


Jim Splitt receives First Place in the Field & Feast photo contest.

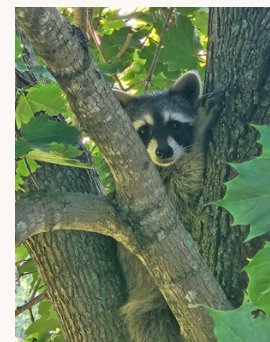
Field & Feast Photo Contest Winners



Winner: Jim Splitt



Second Place: Ted Kyser



Third Place: Carolyn Smith

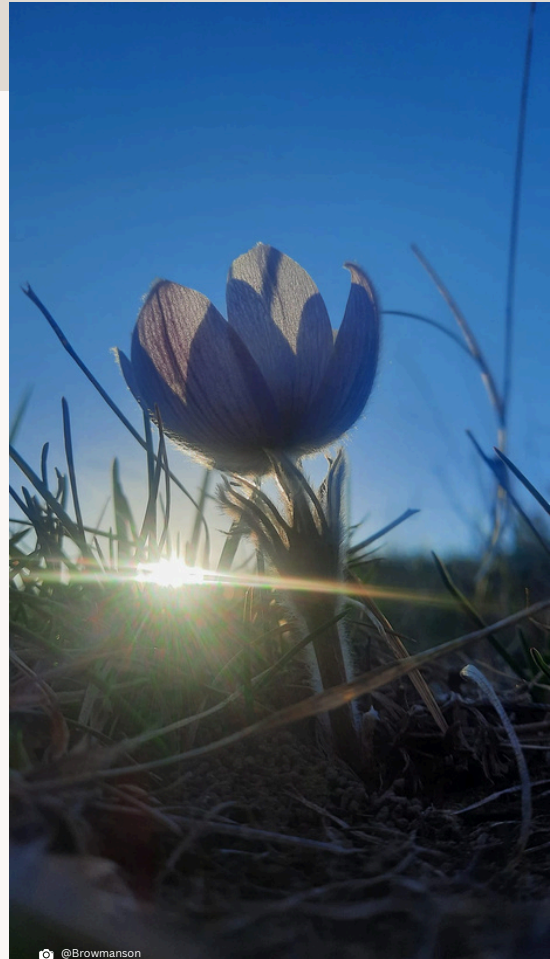
Harbingers of Spring

By Jamie Bachmann

“Early in the spring, when the snow has scarcely melted, the Northern Great Plains are covered with gray-blue flowers that look like smoke hovering over the prairie. These are the fuzzy pasque flowers – “very brave little flowers,” say the Cree Indians, “that arrive while it is still so cold that they must come wearing their fur coats.”

~Melvin R. Gilmore, *Prairie Smoke* 1929

I know of a place that holds a secret. It’s a small patch of prairie soil. Once, in early spring, during my first years out of a college, a mentor and friend drove me out to a southeast quarter section in the hills of the Elkhorn River Valley. There, it was first shared what came to be for me the magic of pasque flowers. A handful of years later, I ended up living on a small acreage just across the road from that very section. Since then, the transition from prairie winter has been marked by the hunt for the first blooms of spring.



The end of winter is always hard on me. I want sun, warmth in my bones and to sleep with my windows open. To me, stumbling upon a southeast facing slope eyes trained on the ground, pasque flowers represent the stretching into the light, reaching out from under the symbolic death of winter, in pale lavender vulnerability. Or as Glimore wrote it,

“... pasque flowers again bring their cheering promise of coming spring.” With snow on the ground and all else still dead or dormant, these slight lavender blooms stand out against the gray browns. Fragile but with a sense of duty to herald the life that is coming back to the prairie, pasque flowers are, again Gilmore, the, “...first gladsome harbingers of the lovely hosts to follow.”



Ethnobotanist Melvin R. Gilmore, among other accomplishments, recorded indigenous uses, stories and lore of the great plains plants, including the pasque flower. He writes,

“They [Native Americans] have songs and stories about many of the species of plants and animals with which they are acquainted such a song being the expression of the life or soul of the species to which it pertains.

The song of the pasque flower, translated out of the Dakota language into English runs something like this:

I wish to encourage the
children of other flower nations
Which are now appearing over
all the land;
So, while they waken from
sleep and rise from the bosom
Of Mother Earth, I stand here,
old and gray headed.”

Check out more on pasque flowers at Chris Helzer’s blog, The Prairie Ecologist, at the link [HERE](#).

Partner Update

THE NEBRASKA BUMBLE BEE ATLAS NEEDS YOU!

The Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas is a community science project focused on tracking and conserving Nebraska's native bumble bees. Thanks to the hard work of volunteers, the Nebraska Atlas has already made enormous strides in understanding the distributions and habitat needs of these important pollinators. However, we still have a lot to learn about bumble bees and could use your help!

To learn more about native bumble bees, and what you can do to help them, sign up for the Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas spring webinar series (details below). You can also visit www.BumbleBeeAtlas.org to learn more about the project, register for upcoming events, or sign up for the Atlas newsletter.

The Nebraska Bumble Bee Atlas is a collaboration between the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Xerces Society.

SPRING WEBINAR SERIES:



Ecology and Conservation of Bumble Bees
(April 19, 2025, 2 pm - 3:30 pm CST)

REGISTRATION



Bumble Bee Atlas Protocols for Missouri and
Nebraska (May 17, 2025, 10 am - 12 pm CST)

REGISTRATION

Events



NEBRASKA'S BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT

Nebraska's Big Butterfly Count is a community science project that is designed to collect statewide data in order to better understand butterfly diversity across Nebraska.

Click the button below for more details and to register for a trainings.

[DETAILS AND REGISTRATION](#)



Biodiversity in State Parks

April 7th, 2025
12:30pm-1:20pm CST

[DETAILS & REGISTRATION](#)



Nebraska Fungi & Their Ecology

May 5th, 2025
12:30pm-1:20pm CST

[DETAILS & REGISTRATION](#)

[MNM YOUTUBE PLAYLIST](#)

Events



NATURE NERD TRIVIA: POLLINATOR EDITION

MAY 10TH, 2025 | 1:30PM-4:00PM
JUKES ALE WORKS, ELKHORN

Join, Pollinator Alliance of The Heartland and Nebraska Master Naturalist, as we present a special Pollinator Edition of Nature Nerd Trivia.

FIND OUT MORE



Ponca State Park Bioblitz

Save the Date
Saturday, June 21st, 2025

Ponca, Ne

FIND OUT MORE



2025 NMN Annual Conference

Save the Date
November 15th, 2025

Henry Doorly Zoo
Aquarium Conference Center
Omaha, Ne

FIND OUT MORE

Member Spotlight

JOANNE LANGABEE

After having spent several years collecting butterfly data at Lauritzen Gardens, Fontenelle Forest, and other program partner properties, Jo wanted to take her protocol state-wide. Partnering with Nebraska Game and Parks and Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, her vision was launched. The 2025 field season marks the second year of collecting important butterfly data with the community science project, Nebraska's Big Butterfly Count! Thank you Jo!



Contribute to The Naturalist

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE?
YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT.

Click the button below to add your ideas, comments and feedback on YOUR NMN newsletter, The Naturalist.

[NEWSLETTER EVALUATION](#)

Nerd trivia answers

1. Dense fuzzy hairs are one adaptation for 'warmth'.
2. Mid-April
3. Feed on nectar and pollen to build strength.

