

EMBARRAS VOLUNTEER STEWARDS CONSERVATION DAYS FOR FALL 2019

SEE OUR FALL SCHEDULE BELOW

BILL MCKIBBEN ON HUMANS' DESTRUCTION OF NATURE

Bill McKibben, in his 1990 book, "The End of Nature," warned us that even then climate change was inevitable and unstoppable. We could, he said, slow it down with technological, social, economic, and political efforts; but such efforts on the scale necessary to do any good were unlikely because of the disinformation spread by fossil fuel interests and the successful efforts by governments to do nothing at all.

McKibben's new book, "Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?," (Henry Holt, 2019), encourages us again to challenge the entrenched power of interests who value financial profit over the prevention of natural disaster and human suffering. We have known the truth for many years: there are now half as many wild animals on earth as there were in 1970; insect populations are crashing; parts of the globe are experiencing unusually frequent rain and others unusual drought; air pollution kills more than nine million people a year; high carbon dioxide levels are causing grains to be less nutritious; an increase in crop pests is cutting yields; all coral reefs will be dead by 2050; 18 of the 19 warmest years on record have been between 2000

and 2018. The recent UN Global Assessment Report tells us that “nature,” (animals, plants, habitats, and the interconnections that make up life on earth), is being destroyed ten times faster than the average over the past ten million years.

There is no valid scientific argument against the fact that the cause of the ongoing disaster is human technological achievement. McKibben’s plea is for us to use the tools available to us for resisting the absence of the political will to combat climate change. Non-violent campaigns like that of Greta Thunberg can work for increased regulation of fossil fuels, conversion to solar and wind energy, and the protection of species. We can remind ourselves that all of us, including climate change deniers and fossil fuel interests, are in this together.

McKibben is right to warn that the human condition is changing rapidly and for the worse, but his plea for action, while uplifting, does not give enough attention to the immense difficulty of combating the profit motive. As he says, humans as a species are short-sighted and greedy. It’s all very well for him to remind us that the Koch brothers and their fellow Ayn Rand disciples have overwhelming influence over those who have the power to bring about change. What is needed is strong, enlightened leadership and grass-roots efforts to convince political power centers that we are already in a climate emergency. Absent that leadership, it appears evident that by the time those in power find reason to take action for stronger environmental regulation and enforcement it may be too late to preserve the natural world in its present form. We are already suffering the environmental costs of our dependence on fossil fuels. We can pay now or pay later. Later will be more difficult.

Larry Thorsen

Richard M. Ketchum, *The Secret Life of the Forest*. American Heritage, 2017

This is an introduction to the lives and species of North American trees, how they grow, live and reproduce, and their management. It's written as a non-technical description of the complex interdependence of forest trees, plants, birds, animals and soil-dwelling creatures. Ketchum presents a broad review of the aspects of a tree's development, the functions of seeds, roots, leaves, bark and water circulation, and a tree's response to its environment. The section on the decomposition of material in the forest floor is particularly interesting for an understanding of the numbers of creatures that perform it, and of the eventual replacement into the atmosphere of the carbon that trees and plants have absorbed.

FALL CONSERVATION DAYS

Our conservation workdays are on Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Everyone is welcome and no prior experience is necessary. We do not have formal membership or dues. Just come as often as you like and help us do our small part to maintain the health of woodlands, prairie restorations and prairie remnants. Visit this page from time to time to get updates. To receive email notifications of updates and cancellations send your email address to Larry at thorsenhutton@gmail.com with a request to be added to the list.

We advise sturdy footwear and gloves at workdays. Tools are provided but personal tools are welcome.

September 7 - EIU student volunteers will join us for bush honeysuckle removal at Lake Charleston. Meet at the shelter next to the dam.

September 14 - Lafferty Nature Center for bush honeysuckle removal. Park behind Carl Sandberg School on Reynolds Drive in Charleston.

September 21 - Woodyard Conservation Area for removal of various alien invasives, especially the winged wahoo. Woodyard is 1.8 miles south of Route 16 on Route 130.

September 28 - Another day at Lake Charleston for bush honeysuckle. This time meet at the parking next to the red barn at the entrance.

October 5 - Join Grand Prairie Friends for their first-Saturday-of-the-month workday at Warbler Ridges. Meet at the shack one mile off Route 130 on Daileyville Road (CR 1470N).

October 12 - Lakeview Park for removal of bush honeysuckle. Park at the end of McKinley Avenue in Charleston.

October 19 - Coneflower Hill Prairie. We are helping remove woody species at this IDNR site, one of our few remaining native hill prairies. Take the Bruce-Findlay Road about 5 miles west from Coles Station, turn right at the electric substation, go 2 miles to the "T," then turn left and go one mile to the parking area.

October 26 - Lafferty Nature Center once again.

November 2 - Another day at Lake Charleston. Meet at the shelter next to the dam.

November 9 - We will help Douglas-Hart Nature Center with their woods maintenance. Douglas-Hart is at the corner of DeWitt Avenue and Loxa Road in Mattoon.

November 16 - Fox Ridge State Park for work on autumn olive at Hanley Prairie. Take Route 130 to CR 300N, turn west and go about one mile to the hunter parking (through the pines) at the end of the road.

November 23 - An end-of-season workday at Woodyard Conservation Area.

December 2 - An end-of-season workday at Lakeview Park.