

FALL 2022

SANCTUARY

A NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGES



EDUCATION • RESEARCH • PRESERVATION



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DEAR FRIENDS,

Greetings from The Ridges Sanctuary! I hope you were able to visit The Ridges this summer, but if you weren't, I can assure you that beauty abounds in all seasons.

The past 12 months have been momentous for our organization – from purchasing the Ridges Inn & Suites property to beginning a 20-year comprehensive planning process. The Ridges is at a pivotal moment, one that will help define the future of our organization.

As we embark on the planning process, know that this isn't the first time The Ridges has grappled with its purpose. In 1941, just four years after the formation of the organization, Jens Jensen wrote to approximately 200 members, "The Ridges Sanctuary is passing through its first crisis, that of making its true purpose understood." In many ways we are exploring that very same question – what is the purpose of The Ridges? How do we effectively deliver on our mission? What can we do to inspire the next generation of leaders?

To develop a successful, mission-driven vision for our future, we must look back to those before us. The foundation of our planning process is grounded in the history that makes The Ridges such a special place. The story of how The Ridges Sanctuary was established is one of the best conservation stories in Wisconsin and likely the catalyst for many preservation efforts across our state.

The purpose early on was clear – to protect the Sanctuary. Through time, over 1,600 acres have been protected, and the organization has grown to over 2,600 members with impactful programs of education and research. An amazing resource has been preserved for us and we'd be shortsighted not to look to our past to guide our future.

In 1957, Ridges Sanctuary Vice President Alex Sladky wrote in a newsletter to members, "We and those who follow us owe a debt of gratitude to the farsighted group whose vision conceived and promoted the Ridges Sanctuary..." Truer words could not have been written.

The Ridges is strong because of our robust history, our dedicated members and volunteers, and the passion that sometimes overtakes those who visit. Please continue to hold us to a high standard and provide feedback that ensures we deliver on the vision our founders intended. We are proud to be a member-based organization because we're only as strong as the community that supports The Ridges.

Jensen went on to finish his letter by writing, "We are at the crossroads, there is no turning back, and "onward" sounds the voice of tomorrow. The Ridges Sanctuary points the way towards a more profound life, towards tolerance and love for that beauty that is America, our home."

Onward,

Andy Gill
Executive Director

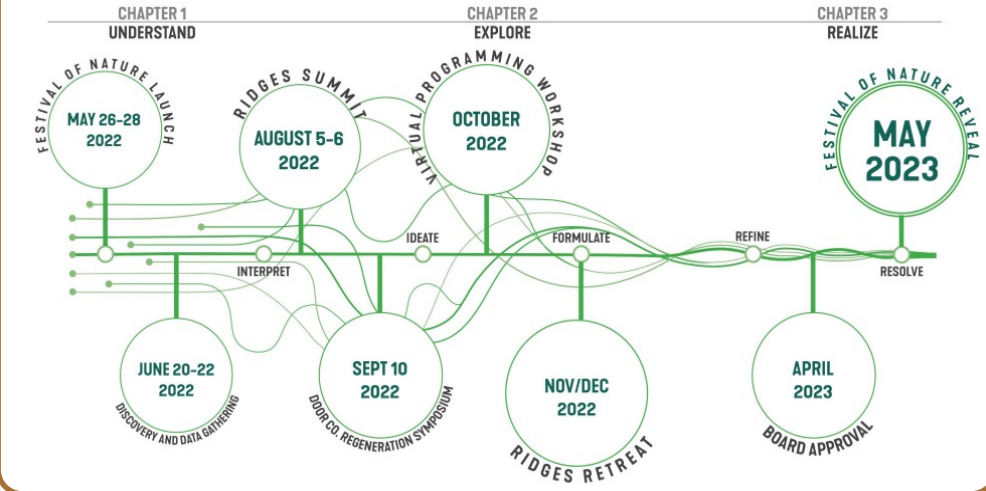
On the cover: water action volunteers on Stream Monitoring Training Day.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Keep up to date with current happenings and upcoming engagement activities!

Visit: www.ridgessanctuary.org/masterplan/

PROJECT TIMELINE



We've been busy! In May, we teamed up with SmithGroup, a national design firm with a local office in Madison, and PROS Consulting, a management consulting and planning firm, to develop a 20-year Master Plan for The Ridges Sanctuary.

UNDERSTAND

Since then, we've collaborated with our team to explore The Ridges as it lives today and have listened to community input on what many of you, our members, value most about The Ridges. Here are some of the things we've heard so far:

- "Do not love The Ridges to death."
- "Take advantage of collaborations and partnerships to expand opportunities for research and use them to develop the best steps forward for the preservation of our sensitive ecosystems."
- "We must understand how climate change will impact the boreal forest, and develop management techniques that will ensure that this special place is protected and preserved for future generations to experience."
- "Engage our future leaders (youth), because nature will not exist without them."

Through this discovery phase, we've had the chance to understand what many of our members, volunteers, donors, board, and staff find most important to remain at the core of the Sanctuary. Preservation, Education, and Research resonate loudly and remain at the core of the organization.

EXPLORE

We've enjoyed listening to what you value most. But it doesn't end there. It is time to put ideas to paper and explore what molds into the future of The Ridges. This month, we will dive deeper into programming, education and the visitor experience, and establish the framework and structure of our portfolio of services and user experiences. We'll close our Exploration phase in December with a Ridges Retreat to formulate our vision before moving forward to refine our 20-year master plan.

REALIZE

In order to realize this plan and put it into action next spring, we will need your help. This plan and our vision for the next 20 years will be successful because of you. As this process moves along, we will share our ideas and will seek your feedback. Please join us in the conversation! To stay up to date with the development of this plan, visit our website at www.ridgessanctuary.org/master-plan, and double check that you are still receiving our emails. As we move into the "off season," we will rely on electronic communications to keep you up to date on the happenings of the Master Plan. If you believe you are not receiving our emails, please contact us at info@ridgessanctuary.org and provide us with your preferred email address for communications.

We can't wait to establish our vision for the next 20 years of The Ridges Sanctuary. We invite you to reach out if you have any questions or would like to share ideas to be provided to Smithgroup and PROS Consulting. Please connect with Andy or Katie if you'd like to discuss anything further.

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CITIZEN SCIENCE: AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR ORCHID RESTORATION

Historically, the relationship between The Ridges Sanctuary and terrestrial orchids is deeply rooted. Some would suggest that if Albert Fuller hadn't had a passion for native orchids, the Sanctuary would not exist as we know it. As a component of The Ridges tenet of preservation and protection, orchid population restoration plays a significant role. Of the 200+ species of orchids in North America, over half are listed as a Special Concern, Threatened, or Endangered. Environmentally, orchids are often referred to as the "canary in the coal mine," as an indicator organism for ecosystem health. Beginning in 2013, an endeavor spearheaded by citizen science volunteers is continuing procedures necessary for the process of orchid restoration. Starting with the hand pollination of orchids, collecting seed capsules, establishing research plots, and collecting annual data, our citizen science volunteers play an integral role in the development of restoration protocols.

Our citizen science involvement extends into the research lab as well as the field. An endeavor to germinate orchid seeds in the lab finds our volunteers also working as bench scientists. We are institutionalizing our research to include all aspects of the restoration process including finding the methods necessary to grow orchids from seed for translocation in the Hidden Brook area of The Ridges. Following the suggestions of our citizen science statistician, we are identifying potential areas in the Hidden Brook area for successful outplanting of the orchids. In addition to the development and monitoring of the 25 research plots, our Ridges volunteers established and maintain the shade houses, which are currently providing habitat for three of the target restoration orchid species, including Showy Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*), Yellow Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium parviflorum*), and Grass Pinks (*Calopogon tuberosus*). These shade houses

provide research opportunities in pollination, vernalization, and clonal recruitment, while allowing visitors the opportunity to observe these spectacular plants.

Year round, volunteers are fighting through thickets and swales to locate and identify Ridges Sanctuary extant orchids. If we are going to preserve and protect our resources, we should have an idea about what we are preserving and protecting. With shouts of "Marco" and "Polo" for keeping track of each other, these hardy citizen scientists have recorded up to 13 distinct orchid species during outings. Currently, our group of "trekkers" has identified 29 species on Ridges Sanctuary property. This includes a species identified last year as a first for Door County. Along with all of the work for The Ridges Sanctuary, a team of citizen scientists have dedicated years of efforts in contributing to the

North American Orchid Conservation Center/ Smithsonian Environmental Research Center projects. Non-invasively collecting orchid leaf, root, and seed samples from indigenous plants and sending these samples for analysis and banking contributes to an international program for orchid conservation.

Through the work of our citizen science volunteers, we are working toward our goal of developing institutionalized processes and protocols for the preservation and protection of native plant species.

Tony Kiszonas
Director of Research



Plot Preparation



Smithsonian Partnership Work



Ram's Head Orchid, photo by: Doug Sherman



Orchid Plot Monitoring

THE VALUE OF CITIZEN SCIENCE AND THE RIDGES SANCTUARY



CITIZEN SCIENCE OPPORTUNITIES



Photo by: Madison Audubon

Citizen science benefits plants, animals, and the citizen scientist whose main focus is helping provide data on flora and fauna or providing structure that increases wildlife numbers. There are hundreds of plants and animals in Door County and only a handful of biologists, researchers, and graduate students

to conduct research. Involving volunteer citizen scientists to collaborate on a project can greatly expand the work done by a limited number of staff. Such projects might include establishing baseline data, monitoring habitat quality, studying species that may be in trouble, checking on the health of wildlife species, searching for and helping remove invasive species, or providing nesting structures or habitat to increase species numbers.

As time goes on, there may be more questions or the need for additional research related to climate change, habitat changes, and management needs. That is why volunteer citizen scientists are needed to help out. Biologists and researchers can come up with many projects that citizen scientists can be involved in. You do not have to be trained as a biologist to help with citizen science. All it takes is an interest in learning about the natural world, and a desire to help make this world a better place for the flora and fauna by volunteering with like-minded people.

Many organizations have citizen science projects. The Department of Natural Resources (Google WI DNR Citizen Science Monitoring) has many projects on their website that volunteers can assist with including the WI eBird Portal; WI Frog and Toad Survey; Wisconsin Turtle Conservation Program; Snapshot Wisconsin; WI Bat Monitoring Program; WI Odonata Survey (dragonflies and damselflies); WI Bumble Bee Brigade, WI Rare

Plant Monitoring Program; Citizen Lake Monitoring Network; Water Action Volunteers – Citizen Stream Monitoring; and Invasive Plant Surveys, Reporting, and Monitoring.

Citizen science projects are a great way to meet new friends with similar interests. Susan and I first met at a Madison Audubon meeting setting up one of the first sandhill crane counts in Wisconsin in the late 1970s. Since 1979 we have been the resident managers at Madison Audubon’s Goose Pond Sanctuary and have enjoyed working with hundreds of dedicated volunteers on many citizen science projects including two breeding bird atlas projects, the frog and toad survey, the sandhill crane count, snapshot Wisconsin, bat monitoring, Odonata surveys, the bumble bee brigade, the backyard bird count, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the North American Butterfly Count, monarch tagging, our American Kestrel Project (probably the largest project in North America with our 90 citizen science volunteers), purple martin banding, songbird (eastern bluebird and tree swallow monitoring), and the eBird monitoring project.

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology eBird project has the most data of any citizen science projects in the state with 1,500,000 checklists submitted by over 28,000 bird watchers, for 456 bird species, at 3,689 “hotspots” in 72 counties including Door County with 322 species, 38,400 checklists, 1,789 birders and The Ridges Sanctuary, #3 hotspot, with 200 species of birds (122 species recorded in 2022 by September 8).

We really enjoy the wide variety of citizen science projects and working with the dedicated volunteers and hope you will join The Ridges Sanctuary and other citizen science projects in Door County.

Mark Martin
The Ridges Sanctuary
Board of Directors

Susan Foote–Martin
Goose Pond Sanctuary,
Arlington WI

There are many opportunities for volunteers of all ages and abilities to get involved at The Ridges Sanctuary, one of them being citizen science. Citizen science is the collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists. The Ridges currently hosts or facilitates several citizen science programs that utilize volunteers to collect important data for a variety of uses.

As the field of citizen science and public data collection networks grow, it’s important that The Ridges continues its existing programs while looking to expand into further opportunities. Current citizen science projects that utilize Ridges volunteers include:

WATER ACTION VOLUNTEERS STREAM MONITORING:

A WDNR program where teams of two volunteers are assigned to local streams to measure several variables that monitor stream health. Monitoring occurs once a month from May through October.

CHRISTMAS BIRD AND CRANE COUNTS:

Partnering with the National Audubon Society, volunteers take one day in December to document bird species. Every spring, volunteers are assigned a site to observe and record crane numbers and behaviors for the International Crane Foundation.

RESTORATION:

Orchid research activities include trekking, plot monitoring, tending to the shade house, and orchid restoration activities.

PLANT INVENTORY:

A collaboration effort including UWGB staff and a volunteer cohort to develop and implement a comprehensive plant inventory of The Ridges Sanctuary properties.

MONARCH WATCH:

An international monarch tagging event that The Ridges celebrates by hosting a local tagging event every August where citizens can sponsor a tag and track individual monarch butterflies.

SUCKER MONITORING:

A collaborative effort through the Shedd Aquarium where volunteers monitor Great Lakes sucker migration into streams during the spring.

Volunteers can choose a project of their interest to get involved in at The Ridges, or they can participate in multiple programs based on availability. The more interest that is garnered from the citizens of the area, the more opportunities that conservation organizations like The Ridges can provide.

Here we also want to highlight some potential opportunities that are upcoming. These are programs that The Ridges isn’t currently participating in but is looking to revive or implement in the near future. Possible projects The Ridges is considering for next year include the Bald Eagle Nest Watch, Project Budburst, and the Bumble Bee Brigade. Watch for updates on new citizen science programs on The Ridges website, www.ridgessanctuary.org.

If you have any interest in participating in current or future citizen science programs, or want to learn more, contact Tony Kiszonas at tony@ridgessanctuary.org.



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DONATE

The Ridges Sanctuary relies on the generosity of our supporters to protect our lands, advance research initiatives, expand adult and youth education, and to build capacity to support the growth of the organization. Ways to donate include: **Undesignated** contributions to offset operational expenses; **Designated** contributions for specific initiatives; and **Endowment** funds to ensure contributions are available in perpetuity. In addition, **Planned Giving** can be one of the best ways for an individual or family to leave their legacy. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift today.

JOIN

Join over 2,600 individual, family and business members and enjoy the best of everything The Ridges has to offer. Membership includes free, year-round admission to all Ridges trails, program guides and newsletters, discounts on Nature Store items, and member rates for our programs and events.

VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are the backbone of The Ridges and the core of many of our important programs. Over 200 dedicated individuals share their time and talents in a variety of ways. From trail maintenance, assisting in The Nature Store, and leading/assisting with hikes, to serving as a lighthouse docent, helping with citizen science programs and carpentry projects -- there are numerous opportunities to contribute. No prior experience is needed in any category. Visit our website or call to find out how you can be a part of the team.

FOR MORE INFO:

www.RidgesSanctuary.org
or call: (920) 839-2802