



CONSERVOGRAM

 > The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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Grow the Future of Conservation with SWCS's Emerging Leaders Program

We have BIG things happening here at SWCS!

We have just launched a brand-new **Emerging Leaders Program**, an immersive, interdisciplinary leadership experience for early career professionals! Through this program, participants will learn their leadership style and host a local, in-person conservation event with virtual guidance from SWCS staff and industry leaders. The program is flexible and will be adapted to meet the interests of our participants and address their regional conservation needs.

We are looking for professionals in the first five years of their conservation careers who want to take their careers to the next level. In addition to event planning training, participants will network with peers and leaders in conservation. They also will receive one year of complimentary SWCS membership and free registration to the 79th SWCS Annual International Conference.

Conservation professionals who are not yet SWCS members are encouraged to apply, and we ask that current SWCS members share the program with their early career colleagues and mentees (contact renee.bouldin@swcs.org for promotional materials). Learn more at www.swcs.org/growconservation. Applications are due **August 16**.



78th SWCS International Annual Conference Updates

Des Moines, Iowa
August 6-9, 2023
www.swcs.org/23AC

The Countdown Is On!

The **June 26** early bird registration deadline for the 78th SWCS International Annual Conference is quickly approaching, and we don't want you to miss out on a \$100 discount on your full conference registration!

The agenda will feature the latest ideas, technologies, and practices, and foster a dialogue around their adoption. Through workshops, sessions, symposia, tours, exhibits, and demonstrations, cutting-edge research and practice developments in soil health, water quality, and resource management will be shared.

For complete conference details and to register, visit www.swcs.org/23AC. Once your registration is completed, be sure to make your hotel reservation before the discounted room block ends July 14.

Upcoming Webinar Series

SWCS hosts several educational webinar series, all of which are free or exclusive to members. Learn more at www.swcs.org/events/webinars.

This month's **Conservation Matters** webinar will be Thursday, June 22, at 12 p.m. CT. In this webinar, presented by the SWCS Science and Policy Committee, we will explore the multidimensional aspects of climate-smart agriculture. Experts in diverse fields will share their ideas on where climate-smart agriculture is going and how conservationists and researchers can integrate this perspective into their current work. [Register online](#) and share this opportunity with interested colleagues as well!

The next session of the **SWCS Members Only Book Club: A Year with Aldo Leopold** is June 30, at 12 p.m. CT. Participants will resume their discussions in June as they read the May and June segments of Aldo Leopold's classic work, *A Sand County Almanac*. [Registration details](#) will be emailed directly to active members.

Upcoming Chapter Events

[Nebraska Chapter Annual Tours and Meeting](#)
Nebraska City, Nebraska
June 28-30, 2023

Thank You to Our 78th SWCS International Annual Conference Sponsors

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Sponsor Spotlight: Syngenta

A Legacy We are Proud to Create

By Tony Burd, Senior Regulatory Stewardship Manager, Syngenta

What defines a legacy? Is it simply what is passed on, or is it more rooted in nature? Creating a legacy of conservation is complex. We must envision the world we want, work together to achieve the goal in our lifetime or the next, and help ensure its care and maintenance over time; it is what we leave behind. At Syngenta, we aim to ensure that healthy soil and clean water is maintained, and at the crux of this conservation work sits biodiversity. But we cannot do it alone. Collaboration and partnerships are essential to moving the needle forward to ensure biological diversity for the long-term.

Biodiversity plays a critical role in both the productivity of crop production and the preservation of natural resources to maintain and support a fertile ecosystem, allowing farmers to grow healthy crops that feed an ever-growing population.



Through Operation Pollinator, our research-based program, we work with stakeholders to create essential habitats for pollinators in agricultural settings using specially selected wildflowers to attract a variety of pollinators and other species, which leads to an increase in biodiversity. The program in collaboration with partners provides farmers and other land managers with information needed to successfully establish pollinator-attracting wildflowers as nesting and food resources for bees, beneficial insects, pollinators, small mammals, and farmland birds, while enhancing the visual appearance of marginal land. It also provides farmers with important

ecosystems services like pollination and pest control that can improve crop yields, establishing cohesion between sustainable farming and environmental balance—reminding farmers it does not have to be one or the other.

Partnerships are a great way to make a positive impact on local landscapes using conservation approaches that help restore habitat for threatened or endangered species. In collaboration with the Iowa Soybean Association, we are working to restore habitat for the Topeka shiner and rusty-patched bumble bee—both categorized as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Topeka shiner, a small freshwater minnow that needs slow-flowing water or pooled areas to live, once thrived in the prairie streams across the midwestern landscape, yet now inhabits less than 10% of its original geographic range. Over time, agricultural practices have straightened streams and built bridges that both deepened and quickened the water flow. Together, our partnership has restored nearly 150 oxbows on agricultural landowner property to provide a steadier habitat and better water quality for the Topeka shiner—in addition to more than 54 species of birds flocking to these oxbows—with little to no maintenance needed.

Once a common bumble bee found in the Midwest, the rusty-patched bumble bee is now only found in a handful of locations in Iowa. This bumble bee is a long-season bee species, requiring blooming plants from early spring to late fall to feed before hibernating. Iowa Soybean Association, Syngenta, and the local Fish and Wildlife Service in Iowa began working on habitat restoration on marginal land in 2017, seeding acres of nonworking ground and giving rusty-patched bumble bees and other pollinators a place to thrive. What began small with just a few acres planted each year has grown up to 100 acres through the connections and resources of our partnership. In just six years, rusty-patched bumble bee populations have quadrupled and other local wildlife has benefited.

The technical expertise and resources we, at Syngenta, can provide to help farmers—alongside commodity groups and conservation stakeholders—have been the key to unlocking habitat restoration success, allowing local endangered species populations to grow and thrive.

Lasting impact comes from intentional action day after day and year after year. We can all do our part to protect pollinators and other beneficial insects—and steward the land—by working together to promote sustainable agricultural practices. Learn more about our work toward pollinator protection and biodiversity by visiting www.Syngenta-US.com/Biodiversity.

Welcome SWCS Intern Sarah Wright



In May, Sarah Wright joined the SWCS staff as the Student Leader Project Intern. Her focus during the internship will be planning a student and early career professional networking session and assisting with operations and logistics of the 78th SWCS International Annual Conference, as well as

assisting the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees (ARCSE), the intern sponsor, on website and communication development. Sarah is studying environmental science at Iowa State University and will be graduating in the spring of 2024. Growing up in southwest Louisiana, she developed a passion for soil and water conservation as she witnessed floods, coastal erosion, and the effects of the hypoxic zone. We are excited to have Sarah as part of our team here at SWCS this summer and hope you get the opportunity to meet her at the conference in August!

Welcome, Sarah; we are so excited to have you!

How Did Aldo Leopold Take Care of His Lawn?

Courtesy of Joe Otto, SWCS Special Projects and Partnerships Director/Historian

With Father's Day approaching, the topic of lawn care has come into my mind. It is summertime, the grass is growing, and the dads in my neighborhood, myself included, are toiling away to make their small patches of property pleasing for themselves, their families, and the neighborhood. Some folks go full-on mobilized for a war on nature—zero turn mowers with a grass cuttings bag, irrigation systems, and routine product applications that ensure that grass, and only grass, can survive in that space. Others just let it be, mowing only when it becomes an eyesore, neglecting any product applications to prevent weeds or pests, and letting the green spaces of May and June turn brown as the summer heat ramps up in July.

I find myself somewhere in between, not negligent nor militant in my lawn care. I avoid control measures for pests and weeds if at all possible, although a community of moles has taken up residence against my foundation this season and I am contemplating offensive action. The dandelions don't concern me, nor does the mare's tail. I find open, green grass to be a waste of space. I'd rather look at pollinator plots and grow a small garden. This is what you will find in my backyard, which is where I put my lawn care energy—with a little bit of grass abutting various structures.

I'm also re-reading Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* this year as part of an SWCS members-only benefit—the SWCS Book Club: A Year with Aldo Leopold. We gather virtually on the last Friday of every month to discuss that month's reading from the Almanac. Through May we've learned a great deal about Aldo and family's efforts to rehabilitate a broken-down farmstead in central Wisconsin. Part of my preparation includes perusing Leopold's "Shack Journals," which are his day-to-day notes of the actions taken to improve the property that has since become something of legend among conservation professionals. With each passing month I am more convinced that SWCS should plan a pilgrimage event.

However, as I am reading about Aldo's meticulous plan for his Shack property, it got me thinking: did Aldo Leopold put this much effort into maintaining his personal residence in Madison, Wisconsin? His journals do not mention these efforts. Where would Leopold fall on the "dads' spectrum of lawn care" I lay out above? Did he let it all go to seed and annoy his neighbors, or did he have some kind of conservationist-driven management plan akin to his efforts at the Shack? And if he did have a plan, what did it look like and where might I find that information?

This is an open question to all of SWCS membership, and I invite anyone with additional information on the matter to contact me right away at joe.otto@swcs.org. I will certainly give you a shoutout at our upcoming June meeting, to be held virtually on June 30, from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. CT.

For more information about the SWCS Book Club, please contact joe.otto@swcs.org. It is free to all SWCS members and there is no obligation that you attend every month.



Joe's daughter, Lola, watering the herbs in her backyard garden plot.

New Members

Welcome members who joined in May!

International

Muhammad Bilal

Alabama

Ryan McCloud
Brian Turley

Georgia

Sam Seyfer

Iowa

Bryce Bearson
Dean Gronemeyer
Amy Knudsen

Indiana—Hoosier

Jon Eggen
Katie Starr
Maggie Sullivan

Kansas

Kiersten Block

Kansas—Kansas State University Student Chapter

Amber Pasket

Nebraska

Jose Guilherme Cesario Pereira Pinto

New Mexico

Terra Martinez

Ohio—All Ohio

Vinayak Shedekar
Matt Thomas

South Carolina

Laura Furfari

Corporate Partners

Please visit www.swcs.org/corporatepartner for more information on how to become a corporate partner.

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