



Friends of the Sangamon Valley

Spring 2026 Newsletter

Grants are coming in! But we need your help.

Your matching funds help grants grow

Friends of the Sangamon Valley continues to broaden its financial support network, qualifying for two new grants worth a total of \$45,000. But one of them comes with a catch — it requires the FOSV to come up with matching funds.

The largest grant, for \$25,000, is from a foundation that wants to remain anonymous, but we can say the donation was given in memory of Dick Poynter, the late FOSV board president. This grant is unrestricted, meaning it can be used for any need the organization might have.

(Continued on **Page 4.**)



Annual Meeting



You're invited to the Friends of the Sangamon Valley annual meeting on Saturday, March 21.

We'll discuss the year ahead, elect new board members, take your questions, and enjoy the music of Ben Bedford and Vanessa Lively!

Get all the details on **Page 4.**

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Not a member or need to renew?
Text **JOINFOSV to 44321**
or visit
FOSV.org/membership



Meet the FOSV

Friends of the Sangamon Valley is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed.

FOSV owns eight properties totaling over 358 acres in Mason, Menard, Christian, Cass and Sangamon Counties and manages an additional 13.8 acres at two sites through conservation easements.

Estate Planning

We hope you will consider FOSV in your estate planning. Memorial gifts and bequests are an important way to make a lasting contribution to the preservation, restoration, and acquisition of natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed. Our tax ID number is 37-1390670. Please contact Angela Funk at 217-494-3115.

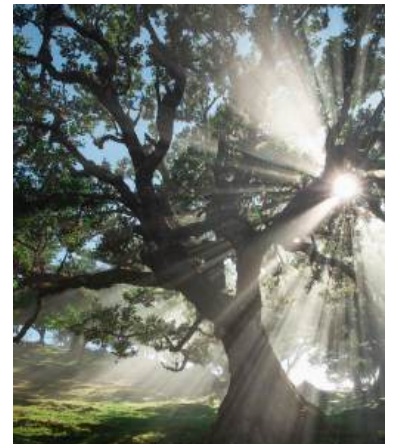


Keep in touch

- President Becky Croteau, becky.croteau@gmail.com
- fosv.org
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- 217-494-3115
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Enduring Oak Society

Please consider joining our Enduring Oak Society by committing to donate an annual recurring gift to the Friends of the Sangamon Valley of \$1000 or more. Contact our executive director, Angela Funk, to learn more.



Letter

from the Executive Director

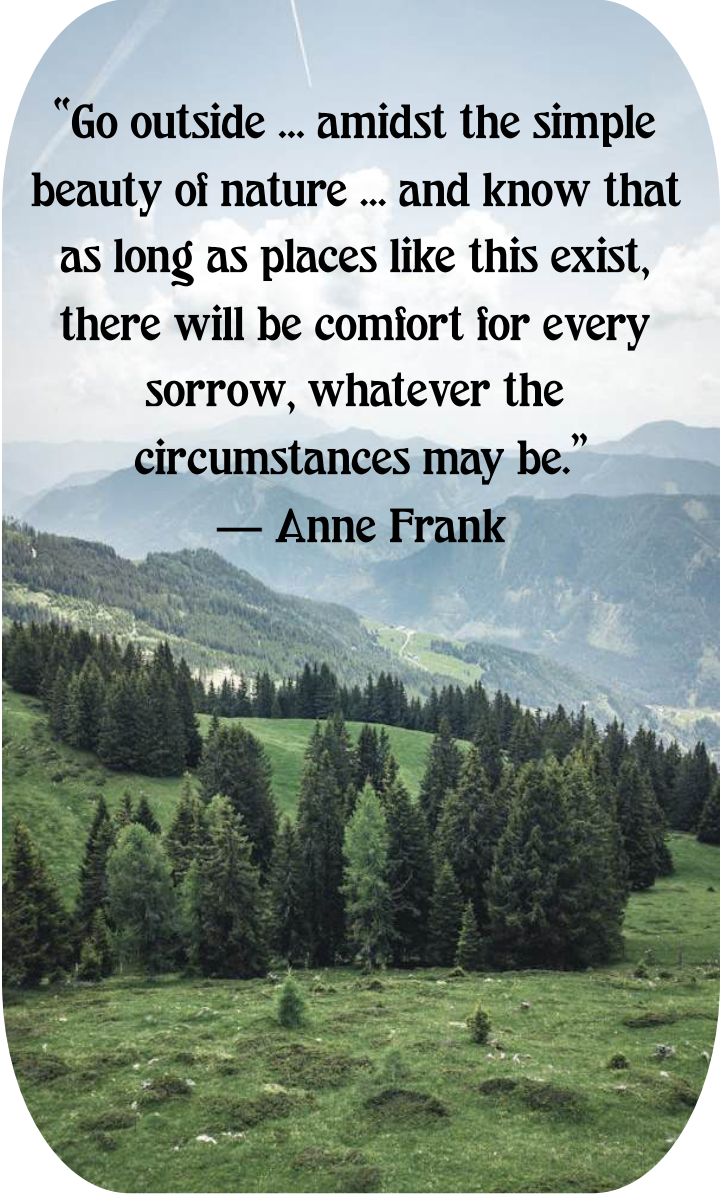
By Angela Funk

At our November board meeting I made sure to take a few minutes to congratulate, thank, and celebrate with board members the many things that we accomplished as an organization in 2005. In late 2024 we embarked on a strategic planning process that helped to define our long-term vision and create a roadmap for achieving important goals. Working toward sustained success and a vibrant future is paramount! Committees met, objectives were identified, and outcomes were achieved. Not all of it was fun, creating policies and important guiding documents rarely are, but they are so important.

We are moving into 2026 with positive momentum and another list of goals to accomplish.

Redesigning the Friends of the Sangamon Valley website is underway and moving forward. We are working with a membership management platform to engage better with our members and nurture a strong connection. Friends of the Sangamon Valley thrives because of its members! We appreciate your feedback and welcome your assistance in this process. Please feel free to reach out anytime by phone or email. And, remember, Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary is here for our members to enjoy. Just let me know if you would like to come by to learn about all of the great things that we are doing to preserve, protect, and restore natural areas in the Sangamon River Watershed.

If you are interested in getting more involved with our efforts, please consider volunteering! We have a small, dedicated family of volunteers that are so important to the vitality of Friends of the Sangamon Valley. Do you have experience in conservation and land resource management, non-profit governance and/or development and fundraising? Would you like to share your love of nature through education and community outreach? Is natural areas stewardship your passion? Do you enjoy photography? Are you a



“Go outside ... amidst the simple beauty of nature ... and know that as long as places like this exist, there will be comfort for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances may be.”

— Anne Frank

techy? Do you have a talent or passion that you would like to share? I would love to meet you! Please call or email me and we can set up a time to chat. We can meet at our headquarters, your home, a restaurant or coffee shop. Please email or call me! We would love to welcome you to the FOSV family!

In Nature,
Angela Funk
217-494-3115
fosvexecutivedirector@gmail.org

Grants coming in (cont.)

The other grant, for \$20,000, comes from a local private trust that also wants to remain anonymous. This money is dedicated to a comprehensive site plan for Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary.

This second grant comes with the challenge of raising matching funds — a dollar from the FOSV for every dollar from the grant. So far, we have raised about \$10,000. We hope you'll lend a hand.

"We are incredibly grateful for the donors who have stepped forward so far, but we need others to show that same generosity," said FOSV Executive Director Angela Funk. "Their support will enable us to fully preserve and protect an important natural area on the Sangamon River."

To help, contact Funk at 217-494-3115 or

fosvexecutivedirector@gmail.org.

These are just the latest examples of the FOSV successfully pursuing grants to support our mission of preserving, protecting and restoring natural areas. Among our other successes over the past year were:

- \$92,000 for conservation at the Walden West Nature Preserve.
- \$28,000 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation for stewardship at our 50-acre Boyle Woods property in Cass County.
- a \$4,500 Tracy Foundation Capacity Enhancement Grant.
- \$3,500 from Nature Conservancy programs.

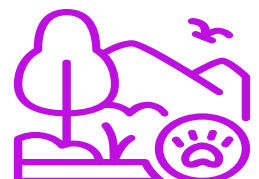


Eagle scout soars with habitat stack

Stanley Densmore with Abraham Lincoln Scout Council Troop 3 gave the FOSV a special gift by creating a habitat stack as his Eagle Scout project.

The stack will provide habitat for native bees and other insects, birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. It will also serve as an interpretive learning station.

Habitat stacks can be made in many shapes and sizes. Some are basically piles of brush that offer shelter to animals. Others, like Densmore's design, are more structured, with a planned assortment of components to offer more habitat variety. Some folks have even made stacks that double as garden sculptures and decorations.



Pete's gift keeps on giving

Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary is named in honor of Pete Gudmundson, a longtime supporter of the Friends of the Sangamon Valley who left us the property in his will. It was an extraordinarily generous act that continues to support our conservation efforts. As you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter, we hold events at GWS, build walking trails, study the diversity of wildlife found there, and use it for educational purposes.

Stewardship workdays take place at Gudmundson (pronounced good-mund-son) most Tuesdays throughout the year. We typically meet from 9-11 a.m. No experience is necessary. Independent and group projects are available. And two hours is not mandatory. If you can only help for a portion of the time, we welcome your assistance.

Workdays may be cancelled due to inclement or extreme weather conditions, so keep an eye on our Facebook page and website for updates. To get group text reminders, text "steward" to 217-494-3115. Or call Angela to learn more.

Upcoming Tuesday Morning Workdays at GWS

- March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
- April 7, 14, 21, 28
- May 5, 12, 19, 26

We have two upcoming **Volunteer Interest Events** coming up this spring. Come by GWS on Tuesday, March 17, at 1 p.m. or on Saturday, April 11, at 11 a.m. to learn how you can become a part of the FOSV volunteer family.



Friends Spotlight

Thank you to Jim Struebing!

We're sorry to say that Jim Struebing, a stalwart of the FOSV for years, is stepping down from the group's board. Before he goes, we want to tell you a little more about this man who has worked so hard to protect and preserve nature.

Struebing lives in New Holland with his wife of 54 years, Anne. He has three grown daughters and eight grandchildren that all live out of state, but holiday gatherings, Facetime and vacations together keep their relationships close.

After studying botany and zoology at Eastern Illinois University, Jim taught junior high school science for twelve years in Elgin and coached basketball. During this time, he earned his master's degree in Educational Administration from Northern Illinois University.

Eventually Jim moved back to New Holland to replace his father as part owner of the family John Deere dealership, where he worked for the next 31 years. Besides raising a family, Jim continued his role as a volunteer by becoming mayor of New Holland, township board member, and church treasurer. His primary recreation was motorcycling across the USA as a member of the Springfield Milers BMW Motorcycle Club, BMW-MOA, Motorcycle Sport Touring Association, and the Iron Butt Association (traveled 1600 miles in 23 hours and 1 minute).

Immediately after retirement in 2011, Jim became a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener & Master Naturalist. He joined almost every nature-related organization in the Springfield area including Friends of the Sangamon Valley where he became a board member in 2014. Destroying bush honeysuckle has been his passion for over a decade and being a FOSV volunteer and board member has given him many opportunities to learn about invasive species control, prescribed fires, and restoring prairies, while leading others to do the same.

Jim says, "There is always more to learn by being around Friends of the Sangamon Valley volunteers and board members who have the same interests as me. I encourage others to step forward to be FOSV board members to help in the preservation of prairies, woods, and wetlands before they are gone."



Sangamon Summer Evening



We had a marvelous time late last summer at Hand of Fate brewery in Petersburg. Great food, great beer and even better company! We also got a behind-the-scenes tour of the brewing process. Keep your eyes open for another summer evening event this year and for an update on Hand of Fate brewing another batch of Old Wolf Oak IPA.



News

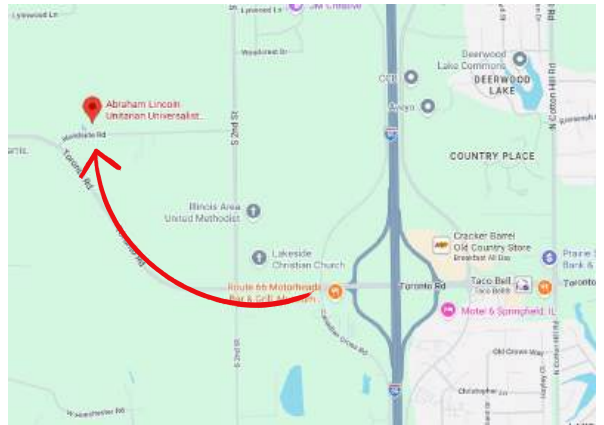
Join us for the annual meeting

We'll gather at the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Church (745 Woodside Rd, Springfield) on March 21 for our annual meeting at 3:30.

Executive Director Angela Funk will describe the group's accomplishments over the past year and explain what lies ahead for 2026.

We'll also elect new board members and say "thank you" to Jim Struebing, who is stepping down from the board after years of service. Interested in joining the board? We invite you to talk to Angela about what the job entails.

There will also be snacks and some wonderful music as described below!



Live music at March 21 meeting

Ben Bedford and Vanessa Lively will bring their nature-influenced music to the FOSV annual meeting March 21. The duo deliver dark-tinged music, both songs and instrumental compositions, heavily influenced by the natural world.

From Bedford's magical prairie meanderings to Lively's ethereal sun-seared poetry, the two combine to create something truly original. Vocally harmonizing in English and Spanish, their guitars (and sometimes banjo) harmonize in the universal language. Both are also visual artists (Bedford in ink/watercolor and Lively in oil/acrylic), and they take the listener on a stark and vibrant journey of the senses.

A donation of \$20 per person (or whatever your means will allow) will help greatly to support Friends of the Sangamon Valley's efforts to preserve, protect, and restore natural areas. FOSV members are free, donations are always appreciated.



This event is brought to you in partnership with Music To Life, an organization founded by Noel Paul Stookey (of Peter, Paul, and Mary) and Liz Stookey Sunde. Music to Life partners with artists/activists working to make the world a better place through music.



News

Earth Day spotlight on Emiquon



Photos by Randy Smith

Restoration of the Emiquon Preserve near Lewistown has been an immense success, one of national importance. But not enough people in central Illinois know about this jewel of nature. We're going to change that on April 24 as local environmental groups gather once again to celebrate Earth Day.

Randy Smith, Illinois River director for the Nature Conservancy, will be the featured speaker at the event, which runs 5:30-8:30. Smith will tell the ongoing story of the 6,700-acre wetland restoration along the Illinois River. More than 25 years after the initial vision, Emiquon is one of the Midwest's most remarkable ecological success stories, providing a haven for wildlife and guiding restoration efforts around the world.

This Earth Day event, the fourth organized by our coalition of local groups, takes place at Springfield's Hoogland Center for the Arts. Free theater access is being donated once again by the Sangamon Watercolor Society, which will be providing an accompanying nature-themed art exhibit as it has the past two years.

Free class on woody plant control April 11

Join us at Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary from 1-2:30 p.m. for a class on herbicide application techniques for control of woody plants (trees and shrubs) with an emphasis on invasive species. We'll spend the afternoon in the field discussing and demonstrating various woody plant control methods and techniques using herbicides including cut stump, basal bark, hack and squirt, girdling, injection, and foliar.



Bush honeysuckle

Dress for the weather. All tools and materials will be provided. In the event of rain, we will reschedule. Please register for this program by emailing fosvexecutivedirector@gmail.com or calling 217-494-3115. Free.

Nature Spotlight



Woodpecker Season

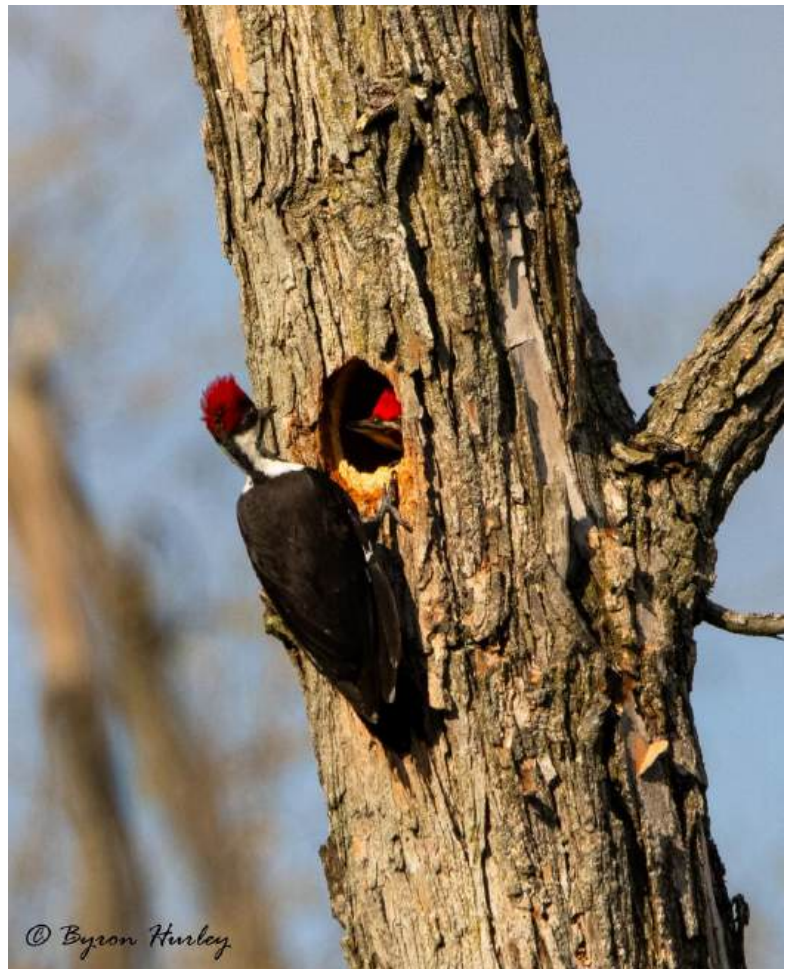
By Angela Funk

My favorite cartoon as a kid was Woody Woodpecker. This fictional character was modeled after the pileated woodpecker. It was more than a decade later that I saw my first pileated on a college botany trip to the Smoky Mountains. When working at Funks Grove I delighted in the occasional opportunity to see, but more often hear, them. And my parents in Wisconsin are treated to regular visits at their suet feeder.

Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary (GWS) provides the perfect habitat for pileated woodpeckers where they are observed frequently. GWS was included in the recent Christmas Bird Count and the woodpeckers did not disappoint. Six of the seven species that inhabit Illinois were recorded, only lacking the Northern Flicker. Downy, hairy, red-bellied, and red-headed woodpeckers were all observed along with one pileated. And, a special treat was a yellow-bellied sapsucker!

Pileated's (*Drycopus pileatus*) are the largest woodpecker species in Illinois, between 16" and 20" in length. There really isn't another species that they can be confused with. Their bright red crest, long black body and white patches under their wings are unmistakable. Males have a full red crest while females have a black forehead, and males sport a red mustache.

While they are not rare, they are often hard to spot. They have large territories, prefer mature forests, and often stay deep within woodlands and high in the canopy. Hearing them and observing signs of their presence are more likely. Listen for their loud whinnying calls and deep resonant drumming. It's at this time of the year that drumming increases as they establish their territory. They excavate unique large, rectangular nest cavities and leave behind piles of woodchips at the base of trees. They





are known to excavate a new cavity each year, with previous cavities providing valuable habitat for other cavity-nesting birds.

Both the male and female share incubation duties of 3-5 eggs. The young fledge in about four weeks, but stay near the parents for continued feeding and to learn foraging techniques. Pileated woodpeckers eat primarily insects, especially carpenter ants and wood-boring beetles. At our Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary headquarters they are frequently seen visiting a large silver maple tree that contains a healthy ant colony!

Thanks to Byron Hurley, a Friends of the Sangamon Valley volunteer, for sharing these photos of a pair of pileated woodpeckers at Lick Creek Wildlife Preserve, Lake Springfield.



Mighty Mussels

As part of our effort to understand the health and biodiversity of our Gudmundson Wildlife Sanctuary, we sampled the mussel population in the Illinois River there. FOSV member Kevin Veara led the project, assisted by Amy Denny and Davina Fouke.

They searched a section five feet wide by 25 feet long and found 18 species, including 15 live samples. The species include the white heelsplitter, pink papershell, three-horned wartyback, fragile papershell, and canary kingshell.

We plan to continue and expand mussel sampling in 2026!



White heelsplitter



Pink papershell

Friends of the Sangamon Valley
4506 Chinquipin Road
Springfield IL 62707

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A CROOK MAPSTERPIECE William Crook, a wonderful artist and founding member of the Friends, has created this lovely map of the Sangamon Valley watershed and the properties we manage. We're looking into making it available as a print or postcard. For now, we just wanted you to see his work. Thanks, Bill!