



Midwest Environmental Education Conference

Story Wall

Please take some time to write down an experience you have had in nature that has helped make YOU who you are.

1. “Up North” at two cabins one in the deep woods; one on a lake picking blueberries with mom and dad, walking with grandma up the lane. The peacefulness, the silent stars overhead. A backwater marsh to think about life, to return when things weren’t right. Watching an eagle soar over the upper Wolf River calling in whip-poor-wills to exchange greetings over the campfire. Passing it on to a new generation, thanking god, thanking family, and thanking Wisconsin.
2. Ancient History: My grand parents bought land at “the edge of town” in Milwaukee. Time and events passed and my grandmother gave some of the land to my parents to build their 1950’s house, right near her 1930’s house. More time passed and I-94 cut through one side of the old neighborhood and a steel factory went up on the other. My escape was a remnant wood patch behind the steel factory at the end of my block (I-94 was at the other end). In that remnant was a huge log that provided the back drop for endless fantasy. The train tracks near it provided a lesson in physics when my cousin and I crashed into them with our sled. The area is now fenced with barbed wire, anyone could get hurt; but I am glad I had a chance to roam a bit in my urban neighborhood.
3. When I was ten I wrote a poem, “I want to be a Naturalist.” Many years and a geology degree later it happened! My mother taught me wildflowers my Aunt. Rock collecting ~N. Dott
4. Over 10,000 nature photos in my collection.
5. Fishing and Hiking with my dad in Wisconsin in the early years..... to natural-electric star-filled skies over campfires at a biological station in Western Colorado....back to Wisconsin to swim naked in the pond and at Leopold Reserve... and get to learn from all of you here ☺ by: Sarah Wright
6. Digging in the garden, jumping over the creek, running through the woods without any adults. Now, my son does the same
7. Laying on a bridge over the creek outside our back door.
8. Trips with my father into the woods. Learning to listen and learning to see.

9. Playing with bumblebees in the Monona marsh and picking elderberries. Camping and cooking in the rain at Scout Camp.
10. I like to watch the joggers, sure footed as can be. But they run right past and miss, alas, the color of autumn trees and fall's last fling of flowers, the roses still bloom. I like to walk and take my time, for winter comes too soon. Elois Buss (in her 87th autumn)
11. Camping in various settings both structured and unstructured has been in my life since I was 3 years old. Memorable experiences have brought me to this point- Most impressive was seeing a wolf in the Boundary Waters in 1970.
12. Playing, hiking, observing, learning, lazing, and just being in Nature (as a child) with my father.
13. Fishing when checking Fence or hunting for calves in the pastures until my father released the dog to find me... it was time to be home after a day of play.
14. A few lyrics to my first song (and only) ever written during the best summer of my life in BWCAW! A solo trip followed that changed my life☺
“Praise for the sun set in the west, Praise for the moon and stars, light our rest..... Praise for this place made me whole, healed my body, mind, spirit, and soul.”
15. Science World '89 '92 Drummond, WI
16. If I ever stop having nature experiences, I will cease to be who I am.
17. We use to pick wildberries and nuts. I did this as a child with my parents, and then as a parent with my own children. The days were beautiful, and the berries and nuts were delicious!
18. The crush of leaves on an autumn trail as my mare plods along, the smells of her coat in the summer sun the warmth of her coat on long winter rides bareback in the forest. The excitement of running hell bent for leather along poorly groomed trails and catching a buck thorn in the face and not caring. The musical sounds of her breathing mixing with the sounds around us, angry opossums, startled deer open fields. Freedom as only experienced when dancing with my beloved partner. Boon Companion fellow explorer my horse.
19. With six children, my mother had little time for one-on-one moments with each of us, but I fondly remember a few precious walks with her. She wasn't educated, so she didn't nature plants and teach any science, but she gave me an appreciation for the natural world. Her spiritual faith also instilled and awe and respect for God's creation.
20. My mom let me play in the mud even though I was a girl.

21. Ecology Seminar-Sugar Island (U.P of Michigan) Sleeping with sixteen 8th graders on a screen-in porch of a 100 year old cabin. Waking to a wonderful sunrise and the “somebody” yelling “Wakee, wake, eggs and bakee☺.”
22. Rock climbing feeds my soul and strengthens my body.
23. I love the prairie. By Kaitie age 9
24. Playing outside with siblings and cousins in rural Michigan. Coming in with the wild earth smell, taking a bath with Ivory soap and crawling into bed, made up with line dried thick old fashioned cotton sheets. Or swimming all day in Casey Lake and getting sunburn blisters and applying vinegar, jumping into the lake naked looking up at the northern lights. “Once I resolved to keep my sense of freedom, if I must walk alone it is in the path the wild deer makes.”
25. Boy Scout Troop 294 here in Point got me out in nature often! The scouting experience led me to teaching and my love of all the outdoor sports and hobbies. I continue to share the gift I was given as a scout leader today!
26. I will meet you by the river at dusk on the hottest day of the summer. In the brace of the only cool breeze to dance with the willow boughs.....I will meet you by the river to stretch with the shadows and assemble the enclave of silence that pauses. To ponder the gathering sunset. I will meet you by the river the brook of your solstice the tributary that casts shade on your reflection of time.....
Oh I will meet you by the river to wade in the current of faith itself to cleanse my sins of doubt, and laugh at the compromise of dawn...I will meet you by the river to vanquish our unspoken phantoms and embark on a journey that only the light hearted may grasp. I will meet you by the river.....
27. Rutabaga Paddle sports helped define me as a student, paddler, environmentalist, teacher, and Human.
28. I was here☺
29. Canoeing in Horicon Marsh with my environmental science class in high school was awesome! One of my first huge learning experiences and confidence building experience in school (West Allis).
30. My experiences are many: Riding my horse through our woods and fields in S.E. Wisconsin. Just sitting and watching nature quietly meditating and observing. Volunteering at Riveredge- my second home and all the excellent experiences from my years of work there as a young adult. Working at Camp Glacier Hollow a real paid vacation! These experiences have influenced me and

I hope to pass along my love of the outdoors to my children, my students, and even my grand children some day!

31. My first E.E. conf. in 1972 at Poynette where W.A.E.E. began
32. I slept alone in a cave-like shack high a top Green Bay while spending a week at “The Clearing” near Ellison Bay in Door County. By Jeff Holcomb
33. Sleeping at Minister Lake with campers and no tents remember the stars!
34. Camping, hunting, and running in nature with my family.
35. My “wild” stuffed animals (I left some out in all weather) Kaitie age 9
36. My dad died when I was only 6. Thankfully I had the fields, creeks, and woods of my Iowa country side to fill that void. Those natural things still comfort me to this day.....
37. In the woods where I hunted as a young teen, I knew every Ravine, draw, bend in the creek, but one deep draw in the timber was hard Maple- in the fall (at this time) this draw radiates with bold yellow. Both hill sides and draw glow! As it is right now!
38. In my youth... hopping on bikes with pals, riding to nearby woods, playing for hours in backyards: No rules, no adults to “structure” our plans, just pure, free fun and discovery in the outdoors!
39. Beauty on the farm: Summers on my grandparents’ upstate NY farm, feeding cows, picking raspberries and discovering the joy of solitude in nature and journaling. Jan.D. Weelik.
40. Mr. Gilbert, a well known naturalist from MN came to our school as a child. I remember going to Lowary Nature Center with Three rivers park district and having Gilbert lead us on a bird hike. His passion and understanding of nature inspired my journey through life. I remember thinking, “Wow, I want to be just like that when I grow up.” And wow. Here I am dedicated Naturalist and who looks forward to making a difference in the next future generation to come. Together we can make a difference!
41. Planting sunflowers in my backyard.... Assembling shelters from timber in the woods, making igloos with my brothers after a blizzard.
42. Using old craggy apple tree as our rocket/space exploration ship-fueled by lichens and moss with my brother. Also, sliding down the old leaning snag and fire-poling from smaller saplings near to it. The Artesian well that filled a hole and my father dug us a huge pond and fishing for bass and blue gills, swimming everyday April thru October, and the smell; that wonderful smell of the cool wet, clay earth as it was dug and the little trees, turtles, and things I made from that sweet smelling earth. I still can feel the slip between my fingers... and now the rest of the story....WDot wants to

widen the road to make more room for cars and take out the artesian well (Hwy 15 Appleton to New London) this should not happen. Who's greater good?! Eminent domain? Ask the bass!
Kristen age 41. P.S. Grandma's farm 20 min from here hunting and driving deer in grandma's boots and grandpa's red and black wool coat. I still got there and share the 400 acres with my extended family of 65 +!

43. Running into the woods naked when I was 3 years old.
44. I climbed the tallest white pine on the cliff overlooking our "Turtle Creek" and Family Farm.
Life-Love-Laughter!
45. Our family cottage on the Wisconsin River. Having a campfire, singing songs, or swinging on the swing hung between the trees. My favorite memories.
46. Collecting rocks since I have been 5 and now I am 55!
47. Ranger Rock Magazines I got my first one in the mail at the age of 6.
48. I recall when David Engleson was young.
49. Learning to "walk quietly" while hunting with my dad.
50. My backyard was a wilderness when I was a child.... Even if it was in suburban Baltimore. Many hours exploring and wondering.....
51. I remember recording the cricket and frog sounds in the field behind my house when I was 8 with a tape recorder since I knew in a few years it would be turned into condos.
52. My mom took me to this conference.
53. Watching my boys catching snakes and releasing them.
54. Living with nature in our back yard over the past 34 years.....Lycoming Creek 2 miles from the Susquehanna River...Camping as a family outdoor activities running, canoeing, biking.
55. My family traveled by car each year out West. We had to "research" about what in Geology, flora and fauna we might see. It kept us occupied and instilled an appreciation of the land.
56. Playing in Grandpa's creek with the cousins.
57. Using skunk cabbage as toilet paper in the swamp.
58. The smooth, cool, and chalky feel of birch bark along the trail.
59. Camping at Indian Lake in the U.P. of Michigan. My daughters and I were sleeping out on a tarp. In the middle of the night, Stacey my oldest, woke me up and pointed to the sky and said, "what is that?" I said just clouds, go back to sleep, she said, "Dad it is rippling." And I took another look. First "Northern Lights," for the both of us.

60. Would wonder down to the creek by the railroad tracks. Once I climbed over the tracks and down the hill, I had my own world to explore, to sit alone, etc. It was a wonderful place to be even as a teenager who needed a quiet place to get away.
61. Spending hours in tops of pine trees moving with wind.
62. Running through the woods with my older sister pretending we were deer and accidentally kneeling on mushrooms and getting all messy!
63. Girl Scout 10 backpack trip, camping with my family, Nature centers.
64. Using horsetail as natural legos.
65. I tracked the wolf for a day. Walked in its foot steps, smelled what she smelled, looked where she looked, sat where she sat, and ate what she ate. For a short time I was wolf.
66. Seeing Elk in the Pigeon River State Forest (MI) for the first time.
67. Spending hours at Lake Michigan Beach with friends.
68. We lived in the city, but every Sunday we went for a ride in the country. Visited many great state parks.
69. My dad knew every tree, flower, weed by name, which were edible, medicines or un-touchable. He knew and could imitate every bird song. When we watched movies he would identify trees and exclaim where the movie was filmed, (not in the west)! But...fishing, gardening, and walks with my dad, cooking on a camp stove with my mom, and now I have tried to pass on to my sons, now my little granddaughter I learning mushrooms with her Nana. Full circle and then some!
70. Playing outside, being able to explore, parents who encourage me.
71. In the canoe, always in the canoe, the song of the redwing was part of it, the Freshness, the Freedom, the fish, the smell of swamp water at sunrise, a few bug bites. No problem. From age 3 or 4, the canoe was a second home. I shot my first deer with an arrow while canoeing a river. My first job was leading canoe trips. Anywhere there is water is good, and if you have a canoe it's even better.
72. When I was little my Dad always brought us on "adventures" through the woods. Teaching us many things, "Stay away from the poison ivy," "look out for that porcupine!" So many great memories. I was learning and I didn't even know it!
73. I was always my dad's "little fishin' buddy." I remember one time on the Wisconsin River, I had a big fish on and it pulled the rod right out of my hand. My dad was upset for a minute...but then realized it was a great story. I still think about what happened to that pole.

74. My Dad worked for the YMCA his entire career...so day camp, family camp, resident, camp counselor. Met my husband where? At a camp of course!
75. *5 summers at Campojikets Learning Leaf ID, collectin' firewood, eating cooked milkweed pods and drinking Sumac-Ade.
*Playing in the woods near my house-it seemed like a thousand miles from civilization.
*Going to the cabin with my folks and learning to ID Great Blue Herons on my own.
76. Drawing pictures of wild animals. You can do it too!
77. Watching the sun set in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Need I say more?
78. My parents, mostly my mom, are outdoor biologists, so I have a lot of "out-in-the-field" experiences.
79. My mom would take me, my brother, and my sister out of school a couple times a year and pack lunches and take us to the nearby nature preserve. We'd collect bugs and leaves and sticks, we'd wander and play and get dirty. She believed those days were equally important as the days spent inside the classroom. I agree.
80. Playing in the muck at P.W.L.C.
81. Down at a humble "house by the side of the road" surrounded by suburbs west of Chicago, I discovered a magical woman on a 100 acre farm. She took my hand and led me into a world of nature. Now 30 years later, I've held many hands through that trek.
82. The people I love, the things we share and love. Thanks to my parents, I'm not having a lunch date with the TV, and we probably wouldn't be writing on this very wall, because we would be at home.
83. On the way out to the pond, we always stopped to rest under "Trusty" tree-a sugar maple tree that gave shade over the road. At the pond, we collect tadpoles and bring them home, turn them into frogs and let them go. One summer out tadpoles grew gill things and kept their tails! They ate everything including other tadpoles! They were blue-spotted salamanders and they are now over 10 years old and living in terrariums at my parent's house.
84. Being "run over" by an otter while in my sleeping bag-no tent-in the Otterslides in Algonquin Park-Ontario 1958. Also seeing Sputnik join the constellations on the same trip.
85. When I was about 10, my best friend and I were free to explore a 5-mile radius outdoors. One afternoon, we spent hours fishing for leaves in a swamp. We'd see who could catch the biggest one, the prettiest one, the tiniest one...It was a Blast!

86. Reading “Little House” books.
87. Coloring on the wall!
88. My Mom not minding that I had a lizard, rat, rocks, water striders, and a pollywog in my room (all at the same time!) and probably more—she would just smile and shake her head and say that I was the dirtiest girl she ever saw.
89. Riding my bike into the ponds, off a dock, on a hot summer day! And then trying to pull it out!
90. Rainy day outing with Daddy.
91. I love the prairie and it loves me back!
92. “Go outside and play!” shouted Mom. (an awful lot!) And we did with bugs and fresh air and running around each other. Unstructured + unsupervised + safe.
93. Having a bird loving brother, but is drove me crazy.
94. Exploring all areas around N. Harper Lake with my big brother. Lots and lots of “free play” in the woods and water.
95. Everything.
96. I don’t drag my feet.
97. Exploring the woods with my Dad re some of the best memories I have. I still get to do that and enjoy every bit.
98. I am never going to plant a pumpkin again. I’ve tried for 2 years and I’ve never succeeded. In the first year, the vine kept on flowering, but I never got a pumpkin. In my second year (this year) I’ve sort of succeeded. The vine keeps on flowering, I have many pumpkins, though no bigger than a pea. I just have one that is almost average size, but it is still green! My advice to you: Plant seed after testing soil, feed it decomposed compost, put something under it, plant it somewhere where bees can get to it.
99. My parents took my hand and taught me to look at the stars, to paddle on the waters, to cook on the fire. Girl Scouts taught me to be a leader and share my love of nature with other girls. My mother encouraged me to follow my dreams. Thank you.
100. Lifetime of natural experiences.
101. In the rainforest of Northern Australia, I took a moonlight hike and was inspired to ask my group of peers who were with me to stop for 3 minutes, shut off our flashlights, and stand in silence in that space. I smelled new scents, and glowing red ants captured our attention as we watched them marching among our feet, sharing the trail. I am remembered by many for the

request I made and now I stop to enjoy spaces like this regularly. Thanks to ALL who have supported my love and honor of my environment.

102. Playing 'Tarzan' (I was Jane) in the woods behind our house. Catching frogs, snakes, turtles, and whatever we could (and then letting them go) in the swamp and river next to our property. Going camping, backpacking, canoeing with my family. Great days!
103. Growing up next to a forest-was my playground. But I think the river is in my blood. Thanks Dad.
104. Going on trips then talking about the nature things such as birds and bears when we got home.
105. Seasonal trips as a kid to Minnesota's Iron Range, Side Lake, MN. Blueberry pickin'. Watchin' bears investigate my aunt's raspberries. Getting up on waterskis for the first time. Morning trail runs with my dad. Swimming all day in the lake. Seeing how far we could jump off the end of the dock. In the winter: morning and afternoon X-C skiing in a birch forest. Warming up by a warm fire and sipping hot cocoa. Thanks Mom and Dad.
106. I was lucky to move to the country when I was five. I had a wonderful 27 acre "playground"...the woods and stream, hills and valleys...Every child should be that "lucky." Guess my parents didn't realize how smart they were!
107. Collecting Stag beetles in a coffee can, bringing them into the house...then kicking the can over in the kitchen. My mom never got angry...even when we found Stag beetles all over the house months later. Thanks mom!!
108. "Unplugging" the sewer in the street in front of my house (removing all the leaves and sticks that had damned up the water and created a "lake")
109. Digging for worms with my sister and dad to go fishing with. Then we caught some fish and ate them!
110. When I was 8, I latched on to birds and read every book I could get my hand on. I knew a lot. Then I was lucky enough to go on a bird hike. The leader as an old man, we hardly walked around at all, but began pointing out bird calls. Orchard orioles...and more, and they were all around me and I did not know it until then. What an eye-opening experience. To this day I push getting kids outdoors to experience nature directly. But of course I still love books! Only as a supplement, rather than a substitute for direct experience.

111. Walking out my back door in northern Michigan, through a field, through the woods and up a hill to an open pasture and a huge sky...all with my son in a pack. Not much sweeter in life than an opportunity as that!
112. Growing up on a farm. Chasing rabbits at haying. Playing in the woods-building a tipi there and sleeping in it. Reading the Jungle Books. Playing Narnia in the woods. Looking for fairies in the hassock of the swamp. Chasing fireflies on the 4th of July. Having a teacher who loved birds and other wildlife and cried when he read us Ernest Seter. Phony son's story of "Lobo" the wolf. "Adopting" a tree on the school grounds. It was a dogwood. But mostly it was the quiet, still moments standing in the woods alone, watching the sunset reflected in the stream.
113. It's hot as hell in here. Good to see all these bodies and brains in motion.
114. My grandmother! At her farm; making a wish at the wishing rock, which you had to hike to.
115. My parents (both naturalists) let me wander. Those hours spent alone and quiet exploring the outdoors shaped my love of nature. I would collect things to bring home to them so they could tell me what everything was. I think those were some of the best years of my life. Today I have a degree in Wildlife Ecology and am continuing on to Wildlife Education.
116. Playing in the log cabin with no electricity that my dad and I made.
117. G.S. Camp Tatonja. Turin Lake, MI
118. Catching grasshoppers/sewing minnows for fish bait for my father.
119. I learned to love the environment through hunting, fishing and belly picking. My favorite memories are pheasant hunting and squirrel hunting on a nice crisp fall day. Berry picking with my grandmother is also one of my favorite memories.
120. Camping with my family. Walkin' in creeks looking for rocks and crawdad and anything else cool!
121. Slip sliding along a creek in Boston, New York....there were spots, depressions we slid into; we called them "bathtubs"...frogs everywhere. City kids, on a day trip.
122. Sitting in a prairie next to the pioneer cemetery picking wild strawberries with my baby daughter asleep on a blanket in the grass.
123. Six summers of Girl Scout Camp! Family vacations to National Parks. (Mesa Verde inspired me!) Playing Swiss Family Robinson in the woods behind my house.
124. Growing up on a farm "playing" in the dirt and land stewardship Sunday.

125. Lying in a field napping, waking to all the life that is going on around me. Birds, bees, ladybugs, grasshoppers...They're all over me!
126. A tree, a pair of binoculars, going to the Everglades in 6th grade. I became a Park Ranger.
127. Mushroom hunting with my dad. He showed me "his" pansy field. My grandpa taught me to keep lists. My mom taught me how to teach. I taught my kids.
128. I remember summer vacations with my family tracking down all the waterfalls in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I'm still a Girl Scout at heart too, with fond memories of camping.
129. When I was 4+, I climbed through the pasture fence and went down in the marsh (always was disobedient) and I have never gone back through that fence in my heart or hand, hands as much as possible.
130. When I was 3, I was already telling my dad not to pollute and waste energy idling his car, pointing out every plant and rock in the woods to my parents, able to sit still for one whole hour just to get a chipmunk to eat from my hand. And I remember it all! Thanks Mom and Dad for taking me outside!!