

# MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEWS

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SPRING/SUMMER 2024



## From Paddles to Programs: A Summer of Adventure on the Mississippi River

Ellen Reed, Executive Director, Mississippi Park Connection  
Tucker Blythe, Superintendent, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

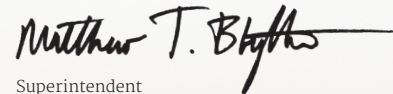
This summer we are building on the success of last summer's *Let's Go Fishing!* events with a new *Junior Ranger: Fins & Feathers* program. With support from the National Park Foundation and park partners Baztec Fishing and Urban Bird Collective, Mississippi Park Connection and the National Park Service will connect more kids and their families to the Mississippi River.

A great way to get outside and connect with the Mississippi River this summer is by kayak. There's nothing like getting in a kayak to explore the river – close to the water, a paddle breaking the plane of the water, wildlife looking on. Our Mississippi River Paddle Share and Paddle with a Ranger programs allow people of all experience levels to enjoy the Mississippi River from the water.

Another great way to get outside is by joining programming at the future Mississippi River Learning Center site at Crosby Farm Regional Park. *Park After Dark* events bring new meaning to loving the night life, and makes for an excellent date night while you explore sights and sounds of the evening river environment.

Of course, we'll be doing lots of other programs and activities in the river corridor that you have grown to enjoy and love, including *Discovery Tables* at the Mississippi River Visitor Center in the Science Museum of Minnesota and habitat restoration events at Mni Owe Sni/Coldwater Spring and other locations. For all the details on our summer events to help you get outside, check out the articles in this newsletter and the event calendar here and online.

Get outside and enjoy the Mississippi River and the only national park dedicated to it. We'll see you on the river!

  
Superintendent  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

  
Executive Director  
Mississippi Park Connection



## Monarch Monitoring Program

Erika Van Krevelen, Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area



The return of monarchs to Minnesota marks the start of the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) here at the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. This volunteer-supported project aims to better understand monarch population dynamics in North America by studying monarch and milkweed density. Without the collective effort

of thousands of volunteers across North America each year, the large-scale data collection needed simply wouldn't be feasible.

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area has participated in the MLMP since 2015 and continues to expand the program across the park's 72-mile stretch. In 2023, monitoring locations included sites at Mni Owe Sni / Coldwater Spring, Upper Landing Park, Mill Ruins, North Mississippi Regional Park, and a newly added site at the Science Museum. The data gathered across these sites not only contribute to scientific research that examines monarch population trends across time and space, but can also be used locally to inform management decisions, improve monarch habitat, and inspire monarch conservation in our communities.

Volunteers conduct weekly surveys of monarch and milkweed density throughout the summer, but the role can call for more than just data collection. Volunteers may serve as educators in the field, sharing their knowledge and observations with the curious passersby. They are champions for monarch conservation, making contributions to the scientific understanding of a species increasingly impacted by habitat loss. They pump energy and enthusiasm into the project, celebrating each tiny egg or caterpillar they find.

If you love the natural world and the excitement of discovery, or you want to be part of a continent-wide research project, consider joining us this year to observe the latest generations of monarchs as they begin again to grace the Mississippi River.



Contact [miss\\_volunteer@nps.gov](mailto:miss_volunteer@nps.gov) to learn more

MAY - SEPTEMBER 2024

## EVENT CALENDAR

### MAY

- 18 SNA: Spring 'Nto Action @ Grey Cloud Dunes Scenic and Natural Area
- 25 St. Anthony Falls Ranger-programming Opener
- 25 Mississippi River Paddle Share Season Opener @ multiple locations
- 25 Photography at Crosby Part 1: Magical Spring Picnic @ Crosby Farm Regional Park

### JUNE

- 1-15 River Days of Action @ 1Mississippi.org
- 8 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 9 Two Paddles Race @ Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park
- 12 Adaptive Paddle @ Pickerel Lake (Lilydale Regional Park)
- 15 Bike with a Ranger @ Levee Park (Hastings)
- 15 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 22 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 25 Photography at Crosby Part 2: A Play on Beach Day @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 29 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park

### JULY

- 9 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 10 Adaptive Paddle @ Pickerel Lake (Lilydale Regional Park)
- 11 Photography at Crosby Part 3: Texas Hold 'Em @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 11 Big River Teacher Award @ Fort Snelling State Park
- 12 Mystery on the Mississippi River @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 13 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 13 Junior Ranger: Fins and Feathers @ Boom Island Park
- 18 History Cruise @ Watergate Marina
- 20 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 26 Park After Dark @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 27 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 30 Party in the Park @ Levee Park (Hastings)

### AUGUST

- 2 Biking with Baddies @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 3 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 10 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 10 Junior Ranger: Fins and Feathers @ Boom Island Park
- 15 History Cruise @ Watergate Marina
- 16 Mystery on the Mississippi River @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 17 Paddlefest @ River Park to Harriet Island Regional Park
- 17 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 23 Park After Dark @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 24 Yoga, Peace in Practice @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 29 Picnic for the Park Annual Fundraiser @ Harriet Island Regional Park

### SEPTEMBER

- 5 History Cruise @ Watergate Marina
- 7 Bike with a Ranger @ Levee Park (Hastings)
- 14 Junior Ranger: Fins and Feathers @ Boom Island Park
- 20 Park After Dark @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 21 B.A.R.K. Ranger @ Mni Owe Sni / Coldwater Spring
- 27 Mystery on the Mississippi River @ Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 28 National Public Lands Day: Prairie Plant Planting @ Spring Lake Park Reserve

Paddle with a Ranger occurs weekly at multiple sites throughout the park. Events, routes, and registration can be found on [parkconnection.org/events](https://parkconnection.org/events).

All events are subject to change. Current information and registration is available at [parkconnection.org/events](https://parkconnection.org/events). We hope to see you out on the river!

## Vermillion River Bottoms

Erin Steinhibel, Park Ranger, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Most people are familiar with the Mississippi River, though not everyone knows about the recreational paddling opportunities that this river and its tributaries provide. One exceptional spot is the Vermillion River Bottoms. This little-known gem has ample parking spots and a public access ramp leading into a quiet little river, ripe for exploration!

In ways, it is like a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' book. Once you put your watercraft in, you can choose to head upstream and follow a gentle winding river that is full of birdlife and interesting plants. You might see a pair of eagles watching from a nearby cottonwood tree. Scan the riverbank for signs of otter or the elusive green heron. If you're really lucky, you might catch sight of a northern water snake sunning itself on a partly submerged tree.

If that adventure doesn't suit you, you can head downstream toward the train bridge. If your timing is right, you'll catch a train thundering right in front of you! Paddle closer after the train has passed to observe the mud nests of the swallows nestled beneath the corners of the bridge.

Now swing your watercraft to the left—if water levels are high enough, you can venture through the narrow inlet to get to Mudhen Lake. You will pass arrowheads and reedy grasses. Watch for otter slides and piles of mussel shells on the floodplain-forest banks.

Once in the lake, look to your 9-10 o'clock, and you just might see the impressive dark bulk of a bald eagle nest—look about 1/3 down the largest cottonwood you can see. Chances are, you've already seen its residents watching you from the trees near the mouth of the inlet. Mudhen Lake is a great place to watch for great blue herons and pelicans. The mighty Mississippi runs by, just across the lake...but you'd never know it!

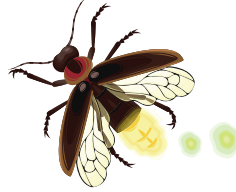
After spending some time relaxing in the sun, make your way back to the boat ramp or explore further. This is a place that changes dramatically with the seasons and rainfall—make sure to visit at different times of the year, and be prepared for new creature sightings each time! Prothonotary warbler, anyone?

Register for a Paddle with a Ranger program at Vermillion River Bottoms at [parkconnection.org/events](https://parkconnection.org/events) to experience this adventure with a trained river guide. All equipment will be provided.



## Exploring the Mighty Mississippi: An Entomologist's Journey

Jessica Miller, Entomologist, Mississippi Park Connection



Jessica Miller, an entomologist whose family is from Iowa and Minnesota, was raised in South Minneapolis and proudly considers herself a Southsider. Her favorite body of water is the Mississippi River. As an environmental entomologist and artist who thrives on engaging with people, she reflects on her work with Mississippi Park Connection and the National Park Service.



*"It is rewarding to work for Mississippi Park Connection. I get so excited to work along our Urban stretch of the Mississippi River and investigate insects and their clues and share them with folks. I enjoy this community as we encourage the use and caretaking of the Mississippi River and have fun doing it together. I am especially fond of aquatic insects and get excited to view the River insects who arrive when we set up our bright lights for **Park After Dark**. We see so many diverse species and even some that are hard to find in the city environments because of their low tolerance to pollution.*



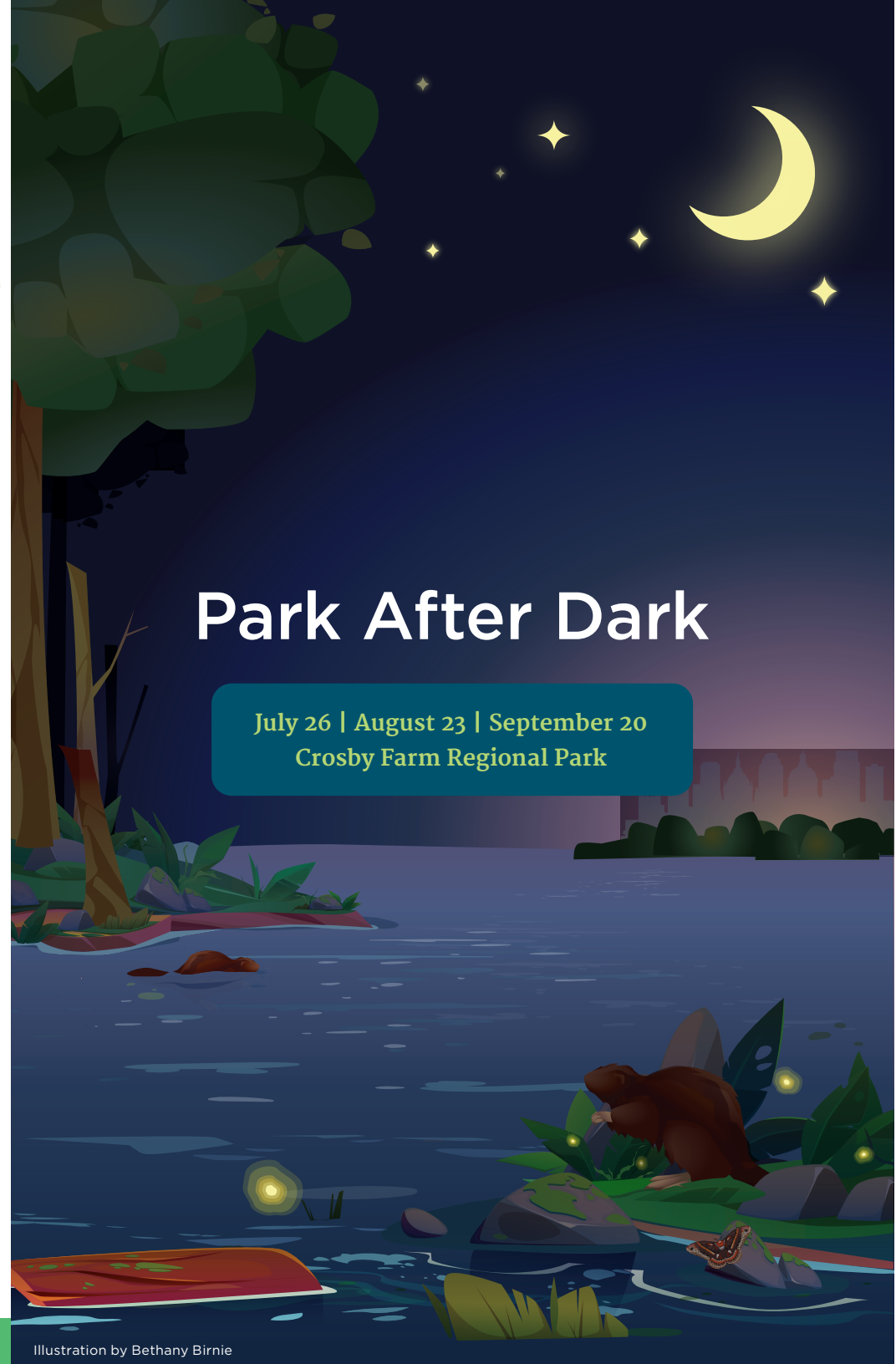
*I love pointing out the living animals who depend on the River to be healthy and clean. Working to enhance your senses and passions for insects is another goal of mine. MPC gives me great support to share what I know with folks who are connected to these topics. MPC is hard at work for strong reasons: cooperation and teamwork. MPC is thoughtful and active on diversity and inclusion. My identity as differently abled feels supported and heard. Once upon a time I found this community and I am excited to aim for happily ever after with you for our Mighty Mississippi River."*

Explore Crosby Farm Regional Park's nocturnal side at **Park After Dark**, an event that engages the natural world through science, culture, and art.



## Park After Dark

July 26 | August 23 | September 20  
Crosby Farm Regional Park



## Cultural Preservation In Your Park

Jade Ryerson, Historian, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

It's an exciting time to join the staff at the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Over the past few years, park staff have prioritized rebuilding our relationships with Tribal Nations and Indigenous community members. On November 3, 2023, Mni Owe Sni / Coldwater Spring was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property, in recognition of its cultural significance to Dakota people. This designation ensures that everything that happens at the site will be driven by Dakota perspectives and priorities. My position adds staff capacity to strengthen our existing partnerships and forge new ones with Native-led organizations throughout the river corridor. For instance, through an agreement with Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, we're working to develop an interpretive plan to accurately and authentically represent Dakota history and culture in our ranger-led public programs, digital resources, and public displays.



In addition to working with Tribal Nations, part of my job is to help tell the underrepresented stories associated with the park. With over 12,000 years of human history represented by our resources, we have an immense responsibility to ensure that everyone can see themselves and the stories that matter to them reflected in the places around them. While I was drawn to the park's commitment to telling all Americans' stories, I'm even more excited by the opportunity to leverage institutional resources to center community voices. By understanding all of our shared heritage (especially the complicated, painful parts), we can begin to redress harm, learn from our mistakes, and find inspiration to tackle new challenges.



Join our History Cruise series. Information and registration at [parkconnection.org/events](https://parkconnection.org/events)

## Ways to Get Involved



### PARTICIPATE

Explore the history, culture, and ecology of the Mississippi River through recreational activities, art events, educational programs, PaddleShare.org, and visitor centers.

Sign up for our newsletters to stay informed!



### SUPPORT

Gifts support youth education, habitat restoration, and community programs in the national park while strengthening your commitment to preserve, protect, and enjoy the Mississippi River.

\$250  
River Connector

\$100  
Household

\$60  
Individual

\$35  
Young Adult



### ACTIVATE

Volunteers of all kinds are a crucial component in park operations, school programs, and habitat restoration. Volunteering is a fun and rewarding way to connect to your community while providing the public with a connection to the river.

[parkconnection.org/volunteer](https://parkconnection.org/volunteer)

## Discover the Magic of Nature at Junior Ranger: Fins and Feathers

Ze Thao Sengsoulichanh, Development and Communications Manager, Mississippi Park Connection

Embark on an adventure like no other as Mississippi Park Connection and the National Park Service unveil a new series in family-friendly outdoor exploration with 2024's Junior Ranger: Fins & Feathers events at Boom Island Park! Building upon the success of the Let's Go Fishing! series, this year's program features an exhilarating fusion of fishing, birding, and biking, taking families on an immersive journey through the vibrant ecosystems of the Mississippi River.

Get connected with local community resources at the Exploration Fair then stop by the fishing clinic for some practice before venturing out to the shore to do some fishing. Led by Baztec, the fishing clinic will guide participants through angling essentials. From mastering knots to perfecting your casting technique, you'll be equipped with all the skills needed to reel in the big catch. Looking for more things to do? Join Mississippi National River and Recreation Area park rangers and volunteers on an urban stroll/walk and try your hand at identifying birds in the area.

Fins & Feathers is a testament to the park's commitment to community engagement, environmental stewardship, and healing amidst the wonders of nature. Mississippi Park Connection and the National Park Service strive to create a welcoming space that celebrates diversity, and nurture activities tailored to reflect the Twin Cities' populations with multilingual support available for families in Spanish and Hmong.



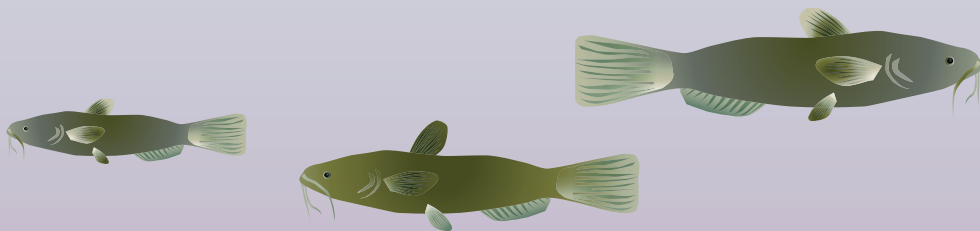
### Hmong

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### Spanish

Únase a Mississippi Park Connection y al Servicio de Parques Nacionales para divertirse y vivir aventuras en el Río Mississippi este verano en Junior Ranger: Fins & Feathers. Los jóvenes practicarán habilidades de pesca y al mismo tiempo descubrirán datos divertidos sobre las aves que viven a lo largo del río Mississippi. El evento es gratuito y abierto al público. Habrá personal que habla español para ayudar a las familias con necesidades lingüísticas.

Mark your calendars and join us for adventure, discovery, and fun at 2024's Junior Ranger: Fins & Feathers events! For more information go to: [parkconnection.org/events](https://parkconnection.org/events).



Thank you to partners Baztec, Bike Alliance of MN (BikeMN), COPAL, Fort Snelling State Park, Jessica Miller, Lisa Keitel, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Monarch Joint Venture, National Park Foundation, Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), and Urban Bird Collective for their support of the Fins & Feathers program.

DAYTON

RAMSEY



# MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL RIVER AND RECREATION AREA

## SITES ALONG THE RIVER

- 1 Mississippi West Regional Park
- 2 Mississippi Gateway Regional Park
- 3 Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park
- 4 River Park
- 5 Manomin County Park
- 6 North Mississippi Regional Park
- 7 Mississippi Watershed Management Org.
- 8 Boom Island Park
- 9 Upper St. Anthony Falls Visitor Center  
Hours may vary. Check NPS site for availability.
- 10 Stone Arch Bridge
- 11 Mill Ruins Park
- 12 Bohemian Flats Park
- 13 Minnehaha Regional Park
- 14 Mni Owe Sni / Coldwater Spring
- 15 Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park
- 16 Historic Fort Snelling
- 17 Fort Snelling State Park
- 18 Pickerel Lake / Lilydale Regional Park
- 19 Harriet Island Regional Park
- 20 Mississippi River Visitor Center  
Located at the Science Museum of Minnesota
- 21 Wakáj Tipi / Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary
- 22 Indian Mounds Regional Park
- 23 Pig's Eye Regional Park
- 24 Lions Levee Park
- 25 Riverside Park
- 26 Pine Bend Bluffs SNA
- 27 Grey Cloud Dunes SNA
- 28 Spring Lake Park Reserve
- 29 Levee Park (Hastings)
- 30 Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center (WI)

## ICONS

Mississippi River Paddle Share Stations  
Rent a kayak at [www.paddleshare.org](http://www.paddleshare.org)







## MISSISSIPPI PARK CONNECTION

*Discover your river*

Mississippi Park Connection is the official nonprofit partner to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. We seek to enrich the life of the river and the lives of all who experience the national park through youth education programs, environmental stewardship volunteerism, and outdoor community engagement events.



The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area is a 72-mile national park, binding together more than 85 state, regional and local parks from Coon Rapids to Hastings. The purpose of the 54,000-acre river park, established by Congress in 1988, is to preserve, protect and enhance the significant values of the waters and land of the Mississippi River corridor.

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