



Co-Partners of the Volunteer Stewardship Network

Gatherings Online

*A monthly email newsletter of the Volunteer Stewardship Network
published by The Nature Conservancy*

*To unsubscribe to this newsletter or if you would like to contribute articles, stories, or announcements to be published in future newsletters, please send them to Karen Tharp at ktharp@tnc.org by the first day of each month. The December newsletter deadline is **Saturday, December 1st**.*

NOVEMBER 2007

"Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience and just plain loving one another." --- Erma Brombeck

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I. NEWS

TNC New Awareness Campaign - StartOne Conversation

The Nature Conservancy in Illinois is encouraging Chicagoans to talk about the global conservation issues that impact their daily lives through a new awareness campaign, StartOneConversation. The series of 50 one-word conversation starters include climate change, economic impact, and habitat preservation. The range of topics cover everything from changes in rainfall to the financial impact of the Asian longhorned beetle to the precipitous decline of the migratory bird population. The advertisements are currently displayed in the Chicago Metra train stations, airports, and in print and online media. Those inspired by one of the conversation starters can share their thoughts on the campaign website, www.startoneconversation.org, by participating in polls and offering their own ideas about critical conservation issues.

iSPACE Update

Partners for Parks and Wildlife is continuing its efforts to ensure that the final Illinois capital budget plan includes **Illinois Special Places Acquisition, Conservation, and Enhancement Program (iSPACE)** and would like to share this brief update with you:

- The House and Senate passed resolutions calling for new funding to protect open space as part of any state capital spending plan.
- Conservation, outdoor and sportsmen's groups and individual supporters called and emailed their legislators encouraging them to support iSPACE.
- iSPACE will invest in Illinois' future by protecting open spaces for future generations by providing \$150 million annually in a capital spending plan for conservation programs. These funds will be designated for:
 - A new statewide land acquisition program (similar to the Open Land Trust) to protect the State's most precious natural resources and provide recreational opportunities.
 - Partners in Conservation (formerly C2000) for habitat restoration and management grants.
 - Implementation of the Hunting Heritage Protection Act by increasing the amount of land acreage available for hunting opportunities.

If you are interested in joining Partners for Parks and Wildlife in support of iSPACE, consider contacting your state representative to ask them to ensure that iSPACE is part of any new capital spending plan; remind them that Illinois is dead last in the Midwest for protected open space, and supporting iSPACE is a critical step in protecting habitat that is threatened by development and quickly rising land prices.

To find your state legislator, click here:

<http://www.elections.il.gov/DistrictLocator/SelectSearchType.aspx?NavLink=1>

For more information on this issue, visit the Partners for Parks and Wildlife web site at www.partnersforparksandwildlife.org or contact:

- Jack Darin, Sierra Club: 312-251-1680x7
- Peter Murphy, Illinois Association of Park Districts: 217-725-7755
- Susan Donovan, The Nature Conservancy: 312-580-2160
- Beth White, The Trust for Public Land: 312-427-1979 x101
- John Gaudette, Illinois Environment Council: 312-685-0585

II. WORKSHOPS AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Herbicide Training and Testing Workshop – Saturday, January 19, 2008

Interested in becoming certified and licensed to use herbicides on public lands? If so, The Nature Conservancy will be hosting the next herbicide training and testing workshop for volunteers on Saturday, January 19, 2008 at The Brookfield Zoo from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. All volunteers are invited to attend this annual one-day weekend clinic that includes General Standards training (for Operators license) in the morning and (Operator's and Applicator's license) testing in the afternoon.

- To be certified as an Operator (a person who uses herbicides and who is "sponsored" by a licensed Applicator), volunteers must pass the General Standards test.
- To be certified as an Applicator (the person in an organization who has responsibility for all Operators licensed under him/her with regard to the use of herbicides), volunteers must pass both the General Standards test and one or more Category exam. Those category exams most appropriate to VSN work are listed here; choose the one you think is the most applicable to the herbicide application you will be doing:

Right-of-way pest control: chemical weed control on noncrop sites such as parking lots, along roads, in access rights-of-way, and in fence lines. [This is the license that most volunteers acquire.]

Aquatic pest control: herbicide use for weed control in standing or running water.

Please bring a photo ID and calculator for the testing session. The clinic is scheduled for Saturday, January 19, 2008, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sign-in registration starts at 8:00am, the training will run from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (lunch on your own); the testing will run from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. *For those interested in identifying and reporting new potential invasive species in northeastern Illinois, a training to participate in the New Invaders Watch Program will be offered during lunch.* The workshop is located at the Brookfield Zoo in the Discovery Center. **Please register with Karen Tharp, VSN Coordinator, by phone at 866-VSN-LINE (876-5463) or email at ktharp@tnc.org by Monday, January 7, 2008.** When registering, please relay the following information: your name and address, phone number, your landowner/sponsoring agency and/or volunteer site, your volunteer title (i.e. Steward, Co-Steward, volunteer, etc.), what test(s) you are taking (if just operator, who is your sponsoring applicator), and if you are planning on attending the morning training session or just the test in the afternoon.

NOTE: the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) will only offer weekend training and testing if we have at least 50 attendants at this workshop! So please avail yourself of this excellent opportunity and spread the word to other volunteers! Please note that this workshop is offered for volunteers of the VSN; this year it may be possible to open the workshop to agency staff, although volunteers will have first priority.

We recommend that you purchase and review the training materials BEFORE the workshop. Study materials are available by phone, fax, or mail order. Call 1-800-644-2123 for phone orders. Fax your order to 217-244-3469. To order by mail, write to the University of Illinois, PAT Program, 1201 S. Dorner Dr., Urbana, IL. 61801. Specify when ordering which study materials you would like (i.e., for the General Standards exam and/or for one of the Category tests). Allow 1-2 weeks for delivery.

Habitat Clinic - Spring Brook Creek Restoration Project

The Habitat Project and Volunteer Stewardship Network invite all restoration volunteers, monitors, interpreters, advocates, and interested members of the public to join us for this Habitat Clinic at Springbrook

Forest Preserve. In keeping with the Clinic's summer theme, best practices, this two and half- hour-long clinic will feature on the spot field presentations.

Springbrook Prairie, DUPAGE COUNTY, IL

Saturday, November, 17th. 9:30 a.m. to noon

As part of ongoing restoration and habitat improvement of Springbrook Prairie Forest Preserve, the District is in the process of building a new meandering stream channel on approximately 2 miles of Spring Brook Creek, a tributary of the DuPage River. The primary objective is to improve habitat, reduce bank erosion and improve water quality by reconnecting the stream to the historic floodplain. Stream channel design will incorporate improved fish, mollusk and macro invertebrate habitat.

Over 20 years of USGS gage station data combined with detailed cross-sectional and longitudinal profiles of the stream is the scientific basis for developing dimensions, patterns and profiles for the stream. The new stream bed is elevated to normal entrenchment conditions and features a pool and riffle pattern. The new channel is constructed with the use of natural materials and designed to re-saturate a riparian wetland/floodplain zone. Construction zones will be stabilized with native species consistent with preserve wide restoration plans.

Project Manager and Natural Resource Management Supervisor Leslie Berns, and Sites Stewards Joe Suchecki and Nancy Novak will discuss:

- The process of building the new stream channel
- Grassland bird usage and results from 10 years of point count surveys.
- Volunteer restoration progress
- Restoration plans over the long term

Participants are welcome to stay for lunch afterwards and lend a hand during the Nature Workday scheduled from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be served at noon Please register by mailing Shelley Ancheta at sancheta@audubon.org or by calling 847-965-9239.

Directions: From Chicago, take I290 West to I-88 West. Merge onto 355 Southbound towards Joliet. Exit on 75th street and travel west to Book Road. Turn left on Book Road (south) to the first stop light 83rd Street. Turn right (west) on 83rd. The main parking lot is located on the north side of 83rd Street one-half mile west of Book Rd.

Native Woodland and Prairie Workshops

The Land Conservancy of McHenry County is offering a series of workshops for landowners interested in improving the health of their oak woodlands, prairies and wetlands. Participants will be equipped with knowledge, resources and hands-on experience, enabling them to go home and work on their own land. The workshops started in mid-September. Listed below are the upcoming workshops:

Sat. Nov. 17th, 10 am – 4 pm. *Ecological Burn Training.* Classroom instruction and (weather permitting) controlled burn. Woodland & prairie burns will be addressed. Cost: \$60/\$45 members + \$7 lunch or bring your own. Location: TLC office, 4506 S. Dean St., Woodstock & Westwood Conservation Area, Woodstock.

To register for any of the above, phone The Land Conservancy at 815-337-9502, or email LBalek@conservemc.org. The Land Conservancy is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of open space and natural lands in McHenry County. The Land Conservancy works with private landowners, communities and developers. For more information, visit TLC's website at www.conservemc.org.

Outdoor Teacher-in-Training Courses for Adults

Improve your nature and outdoor recreation skills through these fun, educational hands-on workshops in: Botany, Ornithology (birding), Restoration, Outdoor cooking, Nature journaling (writing and sketching) and Teambuilding.

Outdoor Teachers who have completed our training courses, application, interview and background check can help with programs at Hawthorne Hill Nature Center (Elgin, IL) as their schedules allow. These courses are also great for scout leaders, teachers, and anyone else who is inquisitive. Current volunteers who intend to become Outdoor Teachers for City of Elgin natural areas will receive these courses for no charge as part of our commitment to volunteer enrichment, however advanced registration is required. Please contact Deb Barr (847) 531-7009 at least 2 weeks before each scheduled program to reserve your space. Fee: \$10/program, if not a current Hawthorne Hill volunteer. Restoration activities are FREE. Course started in September. Listed below are the upcoming workshops:

Teambuilding: Ice breakers, trust, processing and more

Saturday, November 17 1 - 3 pm Hawthorne Hill Nature Center

Learn cooperative games and activities you can use to build cohesiveness and communication skills within your group. Everyone will be encouraged to participate and process each activity in a way that is meaningful to them. Please wear comfortable clothes and leave jewelry at home. Some activities incorporating nature will take us outdoors, so please dress for the weather.

Ornithology: Birder's Corner

Saturday, December 8 8 - 10 am Burnidge Forest Preserve Winter birds

Join Kane County Audubon Society's Jane McMillan for a great morning of birding at two very different sites in the Elgin area. Please dress in warm layers for hiking outdoors and be sure to bring your binoculars.

Wanted: Citizen Scientists to Help Track Wild Bees in Illinois

Honey bee colonies are in decline in many states, but little is known about their wild cousins, the bumble bees, or, for that matter, honey bees living on their own in the wild without beekeepers. A new initiative from the University of Illinois seeks to build a better record of honey bee and bumble bee abundance and distribution in Illinois by recruiting citizen scientists to report on wild bees seen anywhere in the state.

Beginning October 4 the "BeeSpotter website" will connect bee enthusiasts to resources that will help them identify local bees, post photographs and enter geographic information about wild bees seen in backyards, parks or other Illinois locales. For more information on this opportunity to be a "BeeSpotter", visit

<http://www.news.uiuc.edu/news/07/1002beespotter.html>

<http://beespotter.mste.uiuc.edu/>. For information on the importance of pollinators check out:

<http://www.nappc.org/curriculum/> and <http://pollinators.nbio.gov/portal/server.pt>

National Wetlands Awards Program

The National Wetlands Awards program honors individual who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the conservation and restoration of our nation's wetlands. The awards are co-sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, EPA, FHA, NOAA Fisheries, FWS, Forest Service, NRCS and the Corps (courtesy of Regulatory). Awards are awarded in six categories; Education and Outreach; Science Research; Conservation and Restoration; Landowner Stewardship; State, Tribal, and local Program Development; and Wetland Community Leader. Nominations must be for individuals-not organizations or groups of individuals-whose programs or projects operate at the regional, state, or local level. Federal employees are not eligible. Projects not currently in compliance with the Clean Water Act or similar state or local statutes, as well as projects compelled by enforcement actions under those statutes, are not eligible. Nominations are due January 15, 2008 and winners will be honored in a ceremony on Capitol Hill in May 2008. For more information and nomination forms visit www.nationalwetlandsawards.org.

TNC Wisconsin - Land Management Position

The Nature Conservancy, the world's largest private conservation organization, seeks a dedicated individual to help us in our mission to preserve and protect habitats and species. We are looking for a creative, dynamic, results oriented person to be responsible for the leadership of land and fire management for the Wisconsin chapter's conservation program. Collaborate with other land owners, scientists and conservation partners to bring the best practices into Wisconsin's land management practices.

Requirements: BA/BS degree and 5 years experience in conservation land management or equivalent combination of education and experience. Must meet NWCG qualifications for Rx B2 (Burn Boss), including coursework and experience requirements and ability to achieve physical fitness standard. Experience in reviewing prescribed burn unit plans and site fire management plans. Experience in managing complex or

multiple projects, including supervision and staffing, workloads, and finances under deadlines. Experience in written and verbal communication with conservation partners. To apply, please send your resume and cover letter by November 19, 2007 to: The Nature Conservancy, attn: Maureen O'Brien at 633 West Main St., Madison, WI 53703 or mobrien@tnc.org. Visit us at www.nature.org/careers to view full job description. EOE

III. CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

Celebrate Award Winning Conservation and Native Landscaping Projects with your Chicago Wilderness Partners*

Thursday December 6, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. at Chicago Botanic Gardens

Join fellow Chicago Wilderness partners in celebrating the winners the 2007 Conservation and Native Landscaping Awards. The Conservation and Native Landscaping Awards, co-sponsored by Chicago Wilderness and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, recognize outstanding efforts by park districts, local governments and corporations to use native plants and implement conservation measures. Keep the cold of December at bay by viewing photos of the award winning sites, and hear the stories about successful land management techniques that you can use on your properties. Following the award ceremony, beverages and light snacks will be served. Please RSVP to Michelle Uting by November 26, 2007 at muting@chicagowilderness.org or 847-965-9253, ext. 13.

Save the Date: Stewardship Network Conference 2008: The Science, Practice & Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems

January 25 & 26, 2008, East Lansing, Michigan

This information –packed two-day conference links wildlife enthusiast, nature lovers, land managers, and researchers from throughout the Midwest to improve the science, practice, and art of caring for natural lands and waters. Stephen Packard, director of Audubon-Chicago Region, will give the keynote presentation. For more information visit www.stewardshipnetwork.org

Call for Program Proposals - Restore America's Estuaries Conference Deadline: January 31, 2008

The National Program Committee invites you to submit a proposal to present at the 4th National Conference which will be held Oct. 11-15, 2008 in Providence, RI. Themes and topics of the Conference include: Coastal Restoration in the Context of Climate Change, Human Dimensions of Restoration, Education and Outreach, Comprehensive Ecosystem Restoration and Management, Advances in Science and Technology, Best Practices On-the-Ground, Measuring and Communicating Results, and Policy and Funding. For more information visit www.estuaries.org/conference.

Save the Date: Weed Science Society of America Invasive Plant Symposium February 6, 2008, Chicago, IL

The symposium topic is "Invasive Plant Species and the New Bioeconomy" and will focus on the use of exotic plant species for biofuel production. For further information, contact Dr. Adam Davis at adam.davis@ars.usda.gov or visit <http://www.wssa.net/Meetings/WSSAAnnual/2008/BiofuelSymposium.pdf>

3rd Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference - May 20-22, 2008 (Carbondale, IL)

Conference Website: <http://www.dce.siu.edu/conferences/071001easternoak.htm>

This conference is to facilitate the transfer of scientific information and the knowledge from both scientists and successful fire managers to land managers in the central hardwoods region. Presentations will include:

Tuesday, May 20th:

9 am – 6:30 pm

Smoke Dispersion Modeling – Gary Achtemeier, USFS SRS

Fire and Oak Regeneration – Daniel Dey, USFS NRS

Fire and the Indiana Bat – Matthew Dickinson, USFS NRS

Climate Change and Fire in the East – Ronald Neilson, USFS PNWRS

Fire and LANDIS Modeling – Stephen Shifley, USFS NRS
Fire Ecology of Woodlands and Barrens – John Taft, IL National History Survey
Fire and Fire Surrogates Study – Daniel Yaussy, USFS NRS
Performance of BEHAVE Fuel Models – Robert Ziel, Michigan DNR

Wednesday, May 21st

Field Tour: 8 am – 9 pm

Choose from one of three tours:

1. Natural history sites – functions in forestlands and grasslands
2. Cultural history sites
3. Experimental sites

Thursday, May 22nd:

8 am – 12 pm

Fire and Restoration: Interior Highlands – McRee Anderson, TNC Arkansas
Building a State Program in Ohio – Michael Bowden, ODNR Forestry
Fire and Oak-Grasslands, LBL, Western Kentucky – Jim McCoy, USFS, LBL
Fire in Eastern National Forests – Gregory Nowacki, USFS R9

Program Location: SIUC Student Center, Carbondale, IL

Registration Deadline: May 12, 2008; Fees: \$75

Register online (<http://www.dce.siu.edu/conferences/071001easternoak.htm>) for this course or call the Division of Continuing Education @ 618-536-7751

IV. GRANTS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Funding for Prairie Research - Prairie Biotic Research, Inc.

We are Prairie Biotic Research (PBR), Inc. is a Wisconsin nonprofit established in 2000 to foster biotic research in prairies. One way we do this is through a Small Grants Program that funds grants up to \$1,000 for the study of any grassland taxon in the USA. We are especially eager to support independent researchers (individuals lacking institutional support), but anyone may apply. Since 2002, we've awarded 46 grants worth \$42,172 to researchers in 17 states to study insects, plants, mammals, reptiles, slime molds, mycorrhizal fungi, spiders, and invasive species. Many of these grants supported graduate student research. In 2008, we expect to fund at least five grants of up to \$1000 each with the donations we have received, including some restricted by the donor to support research in Illinois, Iowa and, also, in Wisconsin. To Apply for a Grant To apply for a grant, contact Michael Anderson at Prairie Biotic Research, Inc., PO Box 5424, Madison, WI 53705, or by email at pbr-grants@tds.net for a 2008 Grant Application Form and instructions. Applications must be postmarked on or before January 3, 2008 to receive consideration. Researchers who received PBR funding in 2007 are not eligible for 2008 funding.

Wildlife Habitat Policy Research Program (WHPRP) Grant to Strengthen Wildlife Habitat Protection - Deadline: December 3, 2007

Application to the WHPRP is open to everyone and begins with composing Letters of Intent due to NCSE by December 3, 2007 (see website for instructions). Three applicants for each grant will be invited to submit full proposals to be reviewed by an independent panel of experts. Grants will cover a variety of research areas, including law, economics, social sciences, natural sciences, and public policy, with the general goal of improving the basis for implementation of the statutory State Wildlife Action Plans. For more information, please contact Cheryl Horton at chorton@ncseonline.org or call 202-207-0007.

Exotic Plant Control Grant - Deadline January 15, 2008

A grant is available for funds to be used to contract for the production of aquatic plant management plans. For organizations that already have (or will have) an approved plan in place, the same application form can be used to apply for actual aquatic plant control, based on the plan's recommendations.

Chicago Wilderness Small Grants Program*

Proposals for the Chicago Wilderness Small Grants program will be due by Friday, January 25. Projects must relate specifically to the needs and recommended actions as outlined in the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan. Requests should not exceed \$15,000. A formal RFP will be available soon in the Document Sharing section of the CW Members Web site at

<http://www.chicagowilderness.org/members/repository/folders/index.cfm?folderid=63>. For questions, please contact Chris Mulvaney at cmulvaney@chicagowilderness.org or 847-242-6424.

Traditional LARE Project Grants - Deadline January 31, 2008

Grants are available on a competitive basis for several actions that can address the ecology and management of public lakes and their watersheds. Funds are available for 1) a preliminary lake study, 2) a comprehensive lake diagnostic study, 3) an engineering feasibility study of possible pollutant control measures, 4) a design study for a specific pollutant control measure, 5) construction of a particular pollutant control measure, 6) a management plan for the lake, or 7) a performance appraisal of a constructed pollutant control measure. Applications for the above three IDNR grant opportunities can be found at

<http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/lare/manual.html> or contact IDNR LARE at 317-233-3871 or e-mail jray@dnr.IN.gov

New Trees Poster Available - IDNR

The DNR Division of Education has added another poster to the "Illinois Flora, Fauna and Culture Series" of posters. "Illinois Trees: Volume II" depicts the leaf and fruit of 20 tree species commonly found in the state. Species descriptions and other information are accessible on the back of the 24 inch by 36 inch poster. Order this item on-line at www.idnrteachkids.com. "Illinois Trees: Volume II" was made possible in part by a grant from the Illinois Conservation Foundation.

Chicago Wilderness Burn Communication Tools*

Research-based burn communication tools and templates are available for members' use on the CW member web site at: <http://www.chicagowilderness.org/members/resources/burn/index.cfm>

The tool kit includes research reports, and sample fact sheets, press releases, and brochures. CW members can use these tools to communicate with their audiences about controlled burns and may tailor the materials to meet their individual needs. Members may also use language and ideas from these tools in their own communication materials. CW staff can also facilitate the sharing of tools member organizations have developed. If you have questions regarding burn communication issues, contact Lucy Hutcherson at 708-688-8253 or luhutche@chicagowilderness.org.

Chicago Wilderness Tabletop Displays & Materials*

Tabletop displays highlighting the work of the CW consortium are available to all CW members to use at events. The displays are accompanied by publications, issues of Chicago WILDERNESS magazine and takeaway literature. To borrow CW materials, please contact Michelle Mohney, CW communication coordinator, at mmohney@chicagowilderness.org or 708-688-8829.

V. JUST FOR FUN

November Moon

From: Essays on Nature by Virginia S. Eifert, 1967

Frost sparkles on the grass blades, on the fluffed-out seedheads of goldenrod, on the cattails along the water. There is no wind, no sound, no motion. It is November and the moon puts a dead-white brilliance upon hill and lake, makes the frost more tangible, makes the approach of winter more assured. Behind the black branches of bare trees the stars glitter, and the dry pods on a locust tree, for no reason at all, beat a sudden sharp tattoo that is loud in the silence. There can be great silence – seldom more deep than in November when the crickety noises of summer are gone and the world settles down for sleep – that is heightened by sound. Small voices in the vastness of the night silence in November are part of that stillness

and increase it, emphasize it. Now against the stars there is the sound of flying ducks. It is a thin whistling of wings, a momentary blotting out of stars, a brief procession across the moon. Flock after flock, invisible voiceless, their wings along announce their passing. South, south. A flock of geese, high in the upper darkness that is so bright under the moon, for a brief moment sends down wild calls that are part of the night and of November. The cold moon sees many things. It sees the small wings of birds passing south in its brilliance. There are only faint cheeps, small trills, indistinguishable calls that sound like nothing heard in daylight, but which are the migrant calls of familiar birds that are departing for the winter. They are lonely voices. They are scattered here and there, along in cold moonlight, alone in the terrible hugeness and emptiness of the November night, with winter pacing close upon their retreating wings.

Frost grows on the grass blades. The motionless surface of the lake is marked by a sudden splash as a small fish leaps out to escape a large fish, and the moving rings of ripples catch the gleams of moonlight until they break and are lost upon the shore. There is a snarling, a squawling, a thin, angry turmoil of yapping that ends as quickly as it began, as two raccoons on the dark shore argue over a fish. It is a sound that, like the sounds of night wings, is infinitely fitting to the wildness of the November moon. Still in the sky the ducks go over. Still there are the sounds of wings and the calls of passing birds. A cold, white, creeping fog, like smoke, pours soundlessly from the valleys, from the lake, envelops the upland, and the frost, under this gentle urging, glitters whiter and more wintry than before. It is November, and the cold moonlight is everywhere. (*November 1946*)

*Thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to this newsletter:
Julianne Beck, Jamie Ellis, Carolyn Brown-Hodge, Liz Haynes, Cindy Hedges, Claudia Emken, April Anderson, Michelle Uting (Chicago Wilderness Member Bulletin), Chris Mulvaney, Joy Marburger, AND Outdoor Illinois, November 2007 issue, and the Book "Essays on Nature" by Virginia S. Eifert.*