



## EFROYMSON RESTORATION AT Kankakee Sands

WINTER 2022 - 2023

The Kankakee Sands bison herd brave the cold this winter. © Trevor Edmonson/TNC

### Bison Vet Day: Moving Bison Through the Chute

In October, working with the Indianapolis Zoo Veterinary Team and volunteers, we conducted our annual Bison Vet Day. For each bison, we noted weight, confirmed gender, checked ear tags and microchip data, pulled tail hairs for genetic testing, administered vaccinations, recorded injuries and treated any wounds. All this happens in the span of 90 seconds! Thanks to our partners and volunteers, we made those 90 seconds count to keep our 90-strong herd healthy and happy. Fun fact: We learned our heaviest bison weighs a whopping 1,640 lbs, and the lightest calf was a mere 164 lbs.

### Celebrating Our 25th Anniversary!

In September, we celebrated Kankakee Sands' 25th year! TNC trustees, staff, conservation partners and the local community came to celebrate all that we have done together: 8,000 acres planted to prairie with more than 600 species of native plants and in doing so, connecting Beaver Lake Nature Preserve, Conrad Station Savanna and Willow Slough FWA for 20,000 acres of contiguous protected habitat. On those acres now roam badgers, butterflies, birds and bison! Thank you to everyone who was able to come out and celebrate this day with us, including all the volunteers who helped make the weekend a success.



TNC trustees, staff and conservation partners celebrate 25 years of conservation at Kankakee Sands. © Alyssa Nyberg/TNC



Painting wooden bison, butterflies and turtles to take home as a memory from our 25th Anniversary Celebration. © Beth Warner/TNC



Discussing and admiring a bison paddy during the South Pasture Bison Tour. © Beth Warner/TNC

### Staff Update: Welcome, Ben Kusiak

Welcome to Ben Kusiak who has been hired as a Kankakee Sands Assistant Land Steward. Ben began in July 2022 and will be with us for two years. Ben has a B.S in Environmental Studies: Biodiversity and Environmental Restoration from Northern Illinois University. Before coming to TNC, Ben worked as a Restoration Ecologist intern at the Richardson Wildlife Foundation in West Brooklyn, Illinois.

Ben shares, "I am grateful to be able to work for the natural world and its inhabitants, to have the chance to be on the front line of conservation, and to help mend the disconnect between humans and nature. I look forward to continue developing my stewardship skillset with my team at Kankakee Sands and learning the ways of nature."

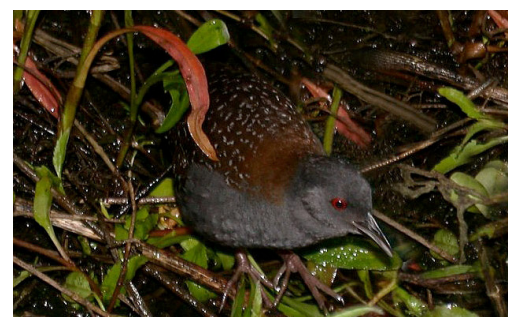


Ben Kusiak harvesting wild rice at Kankakee Sands. © Alyssa Nyberg/TNC

### Update on Black Rail Monitoring - Finding the Feathered Mouse

In our Summer 2022 Kankakee Sands newsletter we reported on Indiana Audubon Society's partnership with the Indiana DNR, TNC, and Audubon Great Lakes. Researcher Lila Friend placed microphones in wetland areas at Kankakee Sands to record from May through July, specifically listening for the distinctive "kik kik kik kerr" call of the most secretive of marsh birds—the black rail, and she found them! Lila logged five separate recordings from three different locations! The results of this study increased the total known sightings of black rails in Indiana by 15% and will help land managers learn about the habitat and conditions necessary for this critically rare species.

*Thanks go to Brad Bumgardner of the Indiana Audubon Society for providing content for this story. Funding for this project was provided by the Efroymsen Family Fund.*



This photo of a black rail at Kankakee Sands was taken by Jeff McCoy in 2002. That was the last time we saw a black rail here, until this year - 20 years later!



Researcher Spotlight: Jeanette Jaskula



Jeanette Jaskula began volunteering at Kankakee Sands nearly ten years ago. Over that time, Jeanette has assisted with many early morning bird surveys, summer day butterfly surveys and, most recently, nighttime moth surveys to catalogue moth diversity through photography and identification.



“Moths are understudied and underappreciated but play a vital role in supporting ecosystems as pollinators and as a food source for myriad birds, invertebrates and mammals. Their life stories are just as beautiful and captivating as the monarch butterfly.”



Jeanette uses a mercury vapor light to attract moths to a white sheet, from which she can then photograph and later identify all the species that are attracted to light. She also concocts moth bait—a gooey mixture of fermented bananas and beer—to attract the moth species that are not attracted to light, but can be brought in by scent.



Through her work, Jeanette has photographed more than 650 different moth species and has helped to expand the moth species list at Kankakee Sands to 1,100 species! Thank you, Jeanette, for all the late nights spent moth-ing! Watch for moth-ing events this spring and summer with Jeanette and Friends of the Sands.



Photos, clockwise from top left: Jeanette Jaskula wearing her favorite moth t-shirt © Jeanette Jaskula; Arge moth © Jeanette Jaskula; Scalloped sallow © Jeanette Jaskula; Pink-bordered yellow moth at Kankakee Sands © Jeanette Jaskula; Mothing at night at Kankakee Sands © Alyssa Nyberg/TNC

Connecting People & Nature

TNC strives to connect more people in Indiana to nature. At Kankakee Sands, we take that mission to heart. Whether it’s leading volunteer workdays, hosting school groups, or partnering with local organizations on outreach activities—we are all in!



In 2022, 400 area students visited Kankakee Sands for free field trips to experience the prairie and bison, like these south Newton 6th graders releasing milkweed seeds onto the prairie. © Brittany Diedam/South Newton School.

Capturing monarchs for tagging during the Monarch Watch program in partnership with Friends of the Sands © Alyssa Nyberg/TNC



We are so grateful for our volunteers who bring passion, experience and commitment to help with bird, butterfly, and moth monitoring, prescribed fire, tree removal, seed harvest, green-house work, newsletter mailings, trail clearing, garbage clean-up, data entry, land management, equipment and signage maintenance, photography, leading field trips and serving in the role of Bison Rangers. Thank you, volunteers! © Alyssa Nyberg/TNC

Attendees enjoy sunrise yoga on the prairie, one of the activities at Kankakee Sands' 25th anniversary celebration. © Melissa Moran/TNC



Please join us for these upcoming 2023 events with our partners Friends of the Sands, Newton County Park Board and Newton County Public Library!

- **Short-eared Owl Prowl** at Kankakee Sands on Saturday, January 21, 4 to 5:30 pm
  - **Conrad Moonlight Hike** at Conrad Station Savanna on Tuesday, March 7, 6 pm to 8 pm
  - **Greenhouse Workday** at the Kankakee Sands Nursery on Saturday, March 11, 10 am to noon
  - **Woodcock Walk** on Wednesday, April 12, 7 pm to 9 pm
- All times Central Time. For more information visit [nature.org/indianavolunteer](https://nature.org/indianavolunteer).**

Kankakee Sands Wish List

- Ziploc plastic bags, quart and gallon size for seed storage
- Six Midland Two-Way Radio, Long Range Walkie Talkie radios for use during outreach events - \$65 each
- Two DeWalt Stackable Toolboxes for organizing our brushcutter and chainsaw tools in vehicles - \$78 each
- Two pair of Neoprene Boot-Foot Waders for use in wetland seed harvest and seed spreading - \$160 each
- Two Polaris Ranger Hood Racks to transport saws, fuel, tools and pumps on prescribed burns - \$380 each
- One Electric chainsaw, Stihl MS 150 C-E chainsaw for small, quick projects - \$540

There is always so much to do and see at Kankakee Sands, and we’re so glad that visitors are coming to enjoy it all! Kankakee Sands is free and open to the public every day of the year for non-consumptive use. Come visit!