



# Sauk-Calumet Group

February 2021 Newsletter Volume 40, Issue 1

## RAISING MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

*By Kathy Van Kampen*

Watching the metamorphosis of a Monarch Butterfly caterpillar from a tiny egg into a butterfly is fascinating for people of all ages, and it is relatively easy. You will need access to milkweed leaves and a container in which to keep the caterpillar while it morphs into a butterfly. Containers are commercially available.



Monarchs lay their tiny white eggs on the leaves of the milkweed plant; generally, on the underside of the leaf. It takes about a month to grow from the tiny egg to a mature caterpillar. During that time, it consumes the leaves of the milkweed at an increasingly accelerated pace. A tiny white egg, as well as a small caterpillar, are visible in the photo above.



The milkweed stems need to be kept in water or in a saturated paper towel to stay fresh or, placed in small tubes with plastic tops with a hole in the top where you can place the stem, so it does not dry out. Placing a paper towel at the bottom of the enclosure makes cleaning up ever-increasing excrement

from soiling the enclosure and becoming moldy. The caterpillar excretions must be frequently picked up and the paper towel changed.



Once it has reached maturity, (5 to 7 days) the caterpillar excretes a silk-like material, attaches itself to the underside of a leaf or stick or even the top of the enclosure, assumes a “J” shape and begins to form a cocoon. Over another 5 to 7 days the cocoon turns from a lime green color to nearly black with a golden ring at the top of the cocoon. Once it becomes black and translucent, emergence is imminent. Just before the butterfly emerges the wings are visible in the cocoon. Once the butterfly has emerged from the cocoon it takes about fifteen minutes for it to pump fluid into its wings to expand them. Shortly thereafter it is ready to fly.



I have been "raising" Monarch Butterflies in this fashion for years because I love to watch each step of the metamorphosis up close and because it is fun to share each stage with friends and family who have never seen this phenomenon before. It is always an opportunity to educate others about what they can do to help the Monarchs and other butterflies thrive by planting flowers from which the Monarchs can get nectar and milkweed upon which they can lay their eggs. Once the butterfly has dried off and fully expanded its wings, I try to gather nearby friends and family around to observe and celebrate its release. Cheering is always involved! –Kathy Van Kampen

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# Microbial Hotspots and Conservation

*by Patrick Coffey*

Sometimes an issue crops up that epitomizes how you feel about conservation. This article covers a group of ponds and wetlands in the Mexican desert called Cuatro Ciénegas. For some reason, these ponds have been isolated from other bodies of water for a very long time, i.e., millions of years, and provided other conditions that benefited a large collection of unique micro-organisms. These micro-organisms are so old that scientists think they can tell an important part of the story of life on Earth. Unfortunately, due to farms and ranches in the area siphoning off the water, these wetlands are under threat from man. You may have heard about a new technology called CRISPR. It is technology derived from a single rare micro-organism that allows DNA to be edited or changed at the level of a single gene. The technology is already being used experimentally in treating diseases such as Sickle Cell. A whole new medical industry is growing up around this technology with many consequences for those with genetic diseases, as well as for other more controversial uses. The CRISPR technology was discovered in a single microbe that lived in salt pools, not unlike the microbes living in microbial mats so common in these Mexican wetlands. What other technologies could yet be discovered in these microbial rich wetlands? We may never know. These wetlands are threatened and may not be protected in time for scientists to fully study them. The irony is that we may be thwarting our future by not protecting the rarest and unique organisms on Earth, even these microscopic one-celled organisms in the desert. You can read the article in Science Magazine below.

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/06/pools-mexican-desert-are-window-earth-s-early-life>

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## Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Ways of Giving

*By Dorelle Ackermann*

Your support of Sierra Club is critical and greatly appreciated. However, it can also be confusing. Sierra Club donations are not tax deductible which allows the club to take a stand on political issues. The Sierra Club Foundation donations are tax deductible because the donations are not political and, if you wish, you can designate a specific campaign such as “Ready for 100”, Environmental Law Program, Climate Parents and more. Donation opportunities exist at both the state and local levels.

**Sierra Club National:** <https://act.sierraclub.org/donate>

Contributions, donations, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible. They support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. The Sierra Club is a non-profit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(4) organization.

**Sierra Club Foundation (National):** [https://act.sierraclub.org/donate/rc\\_connect](https://act.sierraclub.org/donate/rc_connect)

We work with individual and institutional donors to maximize financial support for strategic campaigns, provide flexible funding for innovation, help build capacity in the environmental movement, and create partnerships with a broad spectrum of allied organizations that further our shared environmental goals.

**Sierra Club Illinois Chapter:** <https://sierra.secure.force.com/donate>

Your support is key in helping the Sierra Club's efforts to secure an environmental legacy that future generations will thank us for. Your generous donation is an investment in the future of our environment and the protection of our most special places! If you would prefer to mail in your donation, please make your check payable to Sierra Club and mail it to:

Sierra Club Illinois  
70 E. Lake Street Suite 1500  
Chicago, IL 60601

**Sierra Club Foundation of Illinois:** [https://sierra.secure.force.com/donate/rc\\_connect](https://sierra.secure.force.com/donate/rc_connect)

Make a Tax-deductible Donation to the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club. Please support Sierra Club's efforts in Illinois so together we can develop solutions to address the most pressing environmental issues in Illinois. Our priorities include preventing Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes, combating global climate change, reducing pollution in our air and waterways, and protecting open spaces here in Illinois. For fifty years, the Sierra Club Illinois Chapter has protected the Illinois environment for future generations. Please help us keep this legacy alive by making a tax-deductible gift today. 100% of your gift will stay here in Illinois to support our volunteers and staff that are tackling the environmental challenges we face as a state. Please give today!

**Sierra Club Illinois Political Action Committee:** <https://sierra.secure.force.com/donate/PAC>

Support Sierra Club Illinois PAC today! Right now, Illinois can afford nothing less than leaders who are 100% in to lead efforts to combat climate change, stand up for clean water, and protect our precious wild spaces. Your contribution will be used to elect pro-environment candidates that reflect Sierra Club's commitment to clean air, clean water, preserving our unique places, and fighting climate change.

**Workplace Giving:** <http://www.earthshare.org/earthshare-illinois/>

CONTACT

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megan@earthshare.org

EARTHSHARE ILLINOIS COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN NUMBER CFC# 82620

**Other giving opportunities:** There is at least another dozen categories of gifts you can consider here:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/ways-to-give>



The Sierra Club Foundation stewards charitable contributions and assets responsibly. We are proud to have earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator and an A from CharityWatch. Our high ratings from nonprofit watchdog organizations demonstrate our commitment to sound fiscal management, good governance, and commitment to accountability and transparency.

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## Pachamama CoHearts

*By Dorelle Ackermann*

Are you ready to reduce food waste, compost more, and take direct action in your home and community to combat climate change? The Sauk Calumet Sierra Club is proud to partner with a new, local community organization whose mission is to “work collaboratively to take local



action that supports national and global initiatives that create a sustainable world.” The Pachamama Alliance, Chicagoland CoHearts are part of an international organization ([pachamama.org](http://pachamama.org)) that embraces the indigenous philosophy of connection and respect for mother earth which is the meaning of Pachamama. The CoHearts first presented to our club in October 2020 where we were introduced to [drawdown.org](http://drawdown.org) which identifies and quantifies 80 solutions to climate change that, if brought to scale, will actually “drawdown” greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. As always, Sierrans were ready to step up and two of our members have already participated in two training workshops titled “Orientation to Drawdown” and “Beginnings to Drawdown” resulting in the formation of 3 solutions groups. These groups focusing on “Food Waste”, “Composting” and “All Things Plant” have begun brainstorming actions and would welcome your ideas as well.

Please consider joining us by attending the next “Orientation” session scheduled for March 2, 2021 and the follow up “Beginnings” on March 9, 2021. Email Dorelle Ackermann [dorelle.ackermann@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:dorelle.ackermann@illinois.sierraclub.org) to register.

## Resources to the Pachamama Alliance Chicagoland Co-Hearts Presentation

### **Energy**

Citizens Utility Board: <https://www.citizensutilityboard.org> (for Community solar links, Energy Audits)

Plug In Illinois: [pluginillinois.org](http://pluginillinois.org). (Compares electric rates)

Clean Energy Foundation: <https://www.illinoiscleanenergy.org>

### **Fair Trade for Women-generated Goods Websites The Fair World Project**

<https://fairworldproject.org/choose-fair/mission-driven-brands/crafts-and-home-goods/>

**Global Crafts** <https://www.gocwow.org/global-crafts>

**World Crafts** <https://www.worldcrafts.org/countries>

**Reducing Plastics in your home:** (there are always competitors, though these are highly reviewed & personally tested)

[blueand.com](http://blueand.com) for hand soap alternatives, household cleaners, laundry and dish soaps

[ecoroots.us](http://ecoroots.us). for plastic-free supplies and cleaners

[tru.earth](http://tru.earth) for laundry detergent sheets

**Pachamama Alliance background initiative** Pachamama Drawdown Self Paced 90 min.

presentation: [landing.pachamama.org/climate-change-solutions-course](http://landing.pachamama.org/climate-change-solutions-course)

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## Support CEJA

*By Patrick Coffey*

In 2016, Illinois passed the Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) which started Illinois on its journey to a 100% clean energy economy. Today, we have the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) which picks up where FEJA left off. As Illinois grapples with the unprecedented job losses from the COVID-19 pandemic, CEJA would create jobs without raising taxes or electricity bills.

CEJA uses a multifaceted approach. It fixes structural problems which have for years delayed renewable energy investments in Illinois. It moves us away from a system that requires excess energy

capacity (at higher rates), and which makes energy more expensive while keeping fossil fuel plants in operation well past their usefulness. CEJA also creates workforce development hubs around the state, maximizing economic opportunities for environmental justice communities and fossil fuel communities (hurting from the loss of coal plants or coal mines). There is much more to this bill, that will put Illinois in the forefront of energy in the U.S. By moving ahead like this, Illinois will reap more benefits than if we just oppose change of any kind on the grounds that some of us would be inevitably damaged.

Sierra Club and others support what is called the "energy transition". The "energy transition" does not require turning the whole world upside down. We already have the technology and the tools to make significant progress on this transition right now. And we can do so in a just and equitable way that maximizes the benefits for everyone. CEJA is the next step on Illinois' 100% clean energy journey.

We call on Senator Michael Hastings (D-19), Chair of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, to do everything he can to make sure CEJA is heard in the next legislative session.

## If it is Thursday, it must be time to Call the Governor about CEJA

*By Portia Gallegos*

Dear Super Sauk-Cal Volunteers,

Time to call the Governor! Guess what? We have a new bill number! CEJA has been reintroduced as **HOUSE BILL 804**, it is also fine to say "the Clean Energy Jobs Act." Feel free to get family and friends involved. If you would like me to add them to the reminder list, I would be happy to do so. Some volunteers have had busy signals and haven't been able to get through. Hang in there – It is fine to call on Friday or Monday if you can't get through on Thursday.

### How To Call

**New Automatic Dialer.** <https://act.newmode.net/action/ceja-gov-offices>

If you encounter challenges with the dialer or would prefer to just dial some numbers, you can call these ways:

Call 855-980-5638. It's the Sierra Club toll-free number, and your call is tracked, which is helpful. A third option? Sure! Call the Governor's Constituent Service phone numbers, at 217-782-6830 or 217-782-6831 or 312-814-2121 or 312-814-2122.

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## A Dozen Wonderful Ways to Become an Active Sierra Club Member!

*By Lois Lauer*

1. Help package and distribute milkweed seeds as part of our new Monarch Team.
2. Help lobby Illinois legislators about environmental issues by joining the Lobby Team.
3. Join our growing list of folks who call Governor Pritzker every Thursday about CEJA.
4. Join our Political Team to campaign for endorsed candidates (stay tuned for probable announcements about local spring elections!)
5. Join the Water Team to become a water sampler of one of the rivers in our group's area.
6. Join a summer nature outing (watch for details this spring).
7. Join our partner group, Chicagoland Pachamama Co-Hearts to work on Drawdown solutions to Climate Change.
8. Volunteer for prairie restoration work on the Old Plank Road Trail, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, etc.
9. Join our 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday evening of the monthly meetings, 7:15 pm (online this spring)

10. Help at our Sierra Club table at a summer festival or farmer's market.
11. Take great photos of your summer outdoor activities to share next January at member's slide night.
12. Take photos this spring of interesting natural areas to share at our June 14 "Hidden Gems in the Sauk Calumet region" program.

Contact Lois Lauer at [lois.lauer@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:lois.lauer@illinois.sierraclub.org) or 708 923-1550 for details about any of the above.

## Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group Meetings Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 pm on the second Monday of every month with the exception of June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **the spring programs will be online using Zoom instead of meeting in the Frankfort library.** An email will be sent the week before each meeting, asking you to RSVP. A second email will be sent to those who plan to come, with the instructions and connection information for our Zoom conference, which you can access from a computer, tablet, or smartphone. We are meeting online through June 2021, looking forward to outdoor activities in July and August, and hope to return to the Frankfort library in the fall of 2021. The April 12, May 10, and June 14 meetings will also be virtual. We will send details by email about those programs when the programs are confirmed, and they will also be listed on the [Sauk Calumet Sierra Club website](#). We are hopeful to again begin meeting in person in September 2021. The Sauk Calumet Group of the Illinois Sierra Club Chapter has over 2700 members, residing in a broad area, from the Indiana border through Grundy County and from the southern limits of Chicago through southern Cook County and all of Will and Kankakee Counties.



### Learn all about Dragonflies at our March 8 meeting!



Photo copyright 2006 Illinois State Museum

Have you ever been transfixed by a dragonfly on a beautiful spring day? If you would like to learn more about dragonflies, do not miss our March 8 Zoom meeting, starting at 7 pm. Loyce Fandre is a local dragonfly expert and naturalist at Gibson Woods Environmental Awareness Center in Hammond, Indiana. She will teach us about dragonflies, their natural history, and life cycles. We will also learn how to identify the most common dragonflies in the Sauk Calumet region. As always, you are welcome to invite friends or family to the meeting.

### We need you - actually, your favorite outdoor places

I am always looking for a new place to explore, and I bet you are, too. For our June 14 Zoom meeting, we need your tips on the best **"Hidden Gems in the Sauk Calumet Region."** We are looking for natural areas in Will, Kendall, Kankakee, Grundy, and southern Cook counties that are open to the public and that you love to visit. If you have got a gem, please email me, Portia, at

[portia.gallegos@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:portia.gallegos@illinois.sierraclub.org) or call me at 815-593-8994 (after 5:30 pm). We would love to have you talk about your gem. If you prefer, you can tell me all about your favorite places and someone else will do a presentation at the meeting. Please let me know about your special places by April 30! Thank you in advance for your help.

## Old Plank Road Trail Volunteer Search

*By Patrick Coffey*



The newly formed [Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves](#) has come to the Old Plank Road Trail in Matteson, IL. Few are aware that the Trail and its remnant prairies are a State-designated Nature Preserve. The remnant prairies along the Trail consist of high quality, original black soil prairies, a rarity in Illinois, or anywhere else for that matter. The significance of the Friends group coming to these prairies and removing brush, trees, and invasive weeds cannot be overstated. These prairies can survive and even

thrive if they are protected from aggressive weeds taking over, and from trees and shrubs that can shade the prairie out.

So, every other Sunday for the last few months the Friends have been coming out and cutting (and burning) trees and brush. Winter is a good time for this work, better for the workers than the heat of summer, and better than in the growing season since trampling will not kill plants. Each Sunday there has been about 15 workers out on the site, which has meant a lot has been accomplished already. But there is still plenty more to do.

Most of the Friends group that have been coming are from the northern suburbs. They are committed to this work, but they would like to develop a group of local volunteers who can continue this work at Old Plank even as they move on to other sites also in need of restoration. If you are interested in learning how to care for a prairie - how to monitor plants, how to do brush removal, how to herbicide invasive species, how to participate in burns, and how to collect and distribute seed - we are looking for volunteers. You can volunteer for some or all of that, whatever you are comfortable with. To find out when the next workday is, email me at: [patrick.coffey@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:patrick.coffey@illinois.sierraclub.org). Or go to [Meetup.com](#) and look for the Old Plank Road Trail-Matteson group.

Letters to the Editor:  
Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at:  
[sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org)  
Please include your full name and address and reference the article on which you are commenting.

### **Sauk-Calumet Group People You Should Know**

\*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee

Lois Lauer\* Chair / Chapter Excom Rep  
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The Sierra Club from the national level down to the local groups does so many positive things to help protect our planet. So, let us get out there and enjoy our beautiful world. Click below for Sierra Club Illinois outings.



Remember to check our Sauk-Calumet Group website for current information and news updates on issues relevant to Illinois.

[Click here for our website.](#)

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<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubSaukCalumet/>

to find us on Facebook.