

Happy Dancing Turtle

Annual Report



www.happydancingturtle.org
218.587.2303

2022

Happy Dancing Turtle is a nonprofit organization based in Pine River, MN with a hub in the Driftless Region of MN & WI.

We are dedicated to growing good stewards of the planet by providing education, programs, and experiences for youth and adults that inspire wonder and empower change.

We answer the call to grow good stewards by being responsive to requests, needs, and opportunities. As an organization engaged in community, we are connected, aware, and working on topics of concern and always open to opportunities. The community we connect to might be physical and place-based, affinity- or issue-based, and/or virtual. Depending on the topic, we may educate, support, collaborate, partner or lead.

In 2022 we relished the opportunity to return to some in-person programming. Engaging hearts and minds, empowering change, and inspiring wonder seem more possible when we are in shared space.

HDT staff continue to be passionate, committed and invested in making a difference in the pieces of the world that we touch.



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Youth

Tiny Turtles - Pine River - Twenty-nine 4 & 5 year-olds met outdoors two Mondays per month to explore nature. The outdoor classroom (and the path to it) is a rich area for learning about animals, insects, and plants. Art and garden projects round out their experience.

Eco Camp in Pine River - Forty-seven 1st-6th graders took part in the outdoor classroom, kayaking and swimming and visits from WonderTrek Children's Museum. Activities included STEAM (Science Technology Engineering, Art, Math) challenges, geocaching, and water activities during the week-long programs.

Turtle Treks - Pine River - Six 5th-8th grade girls spent 2 nights at Itasca State Park. Activities included archery, swimming, and hiking as well as learning how to set up camp, start a fire and cook over it, and Leave No Trace principles. Thirteen 2nd-4th grade girls spent the night at Sand Lake swimming, star gazing, and forging new friendships.

Nature Club in Pine River - Offered in conjunction with Community Education, this after-school outdoor program engaged eighteen 1st-4th graders in outdoor play & learning.

Environmental Education classroom visits were presented in both Pine River and the Driftless region for Pre K - 6th graders. Topics included rocks & soil, bears, butterflies, plants & pollinators and more!



1,288

Total student contacts

"The kids love this camp and look forward to it every year!"



25

Kids were brand new to Eco Camp in Pine River in 2022

Families, Adults

In each season, the outdoor **Bingo Scavenger Hunt** deepens knowledge of nature and encourages exploration while providing seasonal challenges. Participants submit photos for prizes.

Another popular family activity, offered as in-person with HDT staff or self-guided, was **Family Nature Walks**. Available in the Driftless Region, 78 people took part in guided monthly nature walks from May - December. Participants came from coast to coast, with tourists visiting from California and North Carolina.

Staff **guest lectured** at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse in front of ~70 first-year students in an Intro to Environmental Science seminar about Phenology and Climate Change.



780+ Bingo
Scavenger
Hunt
Participants
in 2022



"This has been amazing. Thank you so much. The family tour was a great idea."

"..thank you so much for offering such a fun and inspiring program! We made so many great memories out there searching for photos."

- Evi H. & Family



"My kids love this. You have wonderful programs."

- Rose K.



Families, Adults

Adult library programs - Driftless Region included classes on Monarchs and Milkweed as well as Phenology and Climate Change in Winona. In addition, we participated in a **Storytime for Adults** program in Trempealeau. In total, we engaged 48 adults in library community outreach programs.

We hosted our first **Lunch and Learn webinar** on Reducing Plastics in Your Life. Information, ideas to put into action and resources were shared with nearly 20 participants.

Media

Nature Storytime - 27 new videos with at-home activities and resources were shared on social media and are available at happydancingturtle.org and YouTube channel. In addition, Nature Storytime was featured in person at the 2022 Back to Basics Spring Fair.



Driftless Library Partnerships:
9 Programs,
257 people



"I almost didn't come...but I am going home with a lot of new knowledge and really enjoyed the program."

-Participant at Monarchs & Milkweed



@NeatureNora reels sharing educational facts about flora and fauna

40+

New blogs on sustainable or resilient living topics



Back to Basics

The event was hybrid in 2022, featuring an online keynote and workshops; a select number of in-person workshops held through Pine River-Backus Community Education; and a Spring Outdoor Vendor Fair with free workshops.

Virtual

25 virtual workshops including 5 new

Virtual keynote Diane Wilson, author of *The Seed Keeper* and Indigenous food advocate

"While I really miss the lunches and hanging out with everyone at the PR school am very thankful that you have made the arrangements to do this virtual way of still having B2B."

In-Person

13 in-person workshops

"Loved the hands on/involved learning approach. Super helpful and engaging."

"Total lifestyle changes! Will definitely be making some changes and doing more learning. Loved this workshop! Helpful info delivered in a great, understandable way!"

Spring Fair

42 vendors/exhibitors

"I think the entire thing was glorious... The location was wonderful! Everyone from HDT were great! Turnout was okay and out of your control! I think you should do it again. We need more events like this in our community!"



77% of returning participants report they have used information they learned at B2B to make sustainable changes

Grown, Eaten, Shared

Growing, preserving and making use of healthy food is a year-round operation! The growing season is greatly extended through use of the hoop houses and Atrium. In 2022 Gardener Dave was joined by garden assistant Anna.

Twelve different types of seeds were saved from plants grown on campus. Those seeds were both donated to the Pine River Seed Library and used in future growing seasons on campus.

25,000
Seeds planted!



3,809

Pounds of produce
grown

1,114

Pounds of
produce donated
to area Food Shelf



Producers

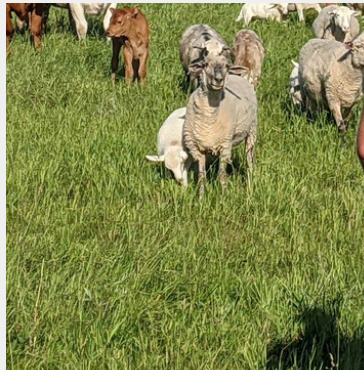
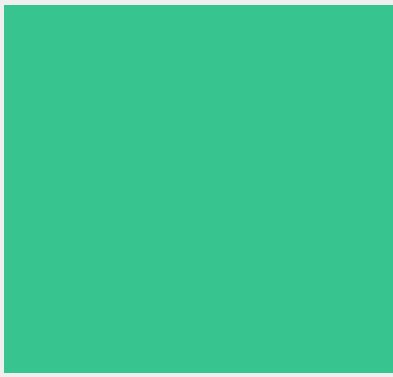
In 2022 the **Grassland 2.0 Pine River Learning Hub** was created, bringing together lake property owners, producers and other stakeholders to guide future work.

Field days included time at the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge and area pasture walks covering soil health and grazing management, while **consulting work** resulted in two grazing plans and four cover crop plans.

Local meat processing - This long-range project continues to evolve. In partnership with the MN Farmers Union and Central Lake College, funding for workforce development and local processing facilities was secured. With HDT support, Cooperative Development Services completed a prefeasibility study for the Cows for Clean Water model which may result in a cooperatively owned branded retail ground beef product.



1,000+
Number of hours
focused on producer
outreach & support



Help us grow good stewards by donating at
www.HappyDancingTurtle.org