



# MINNESOTA NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

## Organization Highlight:

### Minnesota Master Naturalist Program

By Amy Rager



The Minnesota Master Naturalist Program promotes awareness, understanding, and stewardship of Minnesota's natural environment by developing a corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation education and service within their communities. The program is run by the University of Minnesota and the state program office is located at the West Central Research, Outreach & Extension Center in Morris. Our organization is unique because we train adults about Minnesota's natural and cultural history and then help them connect with volunteer opportunities across the state. We currently have over 2,500 active volunteer hours with our program. In 2018, the volunteers recorded over 103,854.5 hours of service for a cash value of \$2,864,307.77! That's comparable to 50 full-time equivalents.

Minnesota Master Naturalist is a unique program because we train instructors, who then train the volunteers who go out and volunteer for other organizations, while we (MNat) keep track of their hours, provide incentives, and advance training opportunities. Most Master Naturalist volunteers do their annual service with other groups.

As the program matures, we feel growing pains, as one would expect. There are so many great opportunities that we have to pass on, due to limited staff time. We do our best with our small work team to meet all the needs of the volunteers.

In 2019, we are looking forward to offering two BIG service opportunities: City Nature Challenge in April in the Metro/Duluth areas and National Public Lands Day in September. These events are a great way to get out and make a positive difference for natural resources in Minnesota and have fun doing it! Please plan to join us for these events.

