Naturalist
2026

About The Ridges Sanctuary

As a leading voice for conservation action, the mission of The Ridges Sanctuary is to promote positive environmental behaviors through impactful educational experiences, land protection and management, and ecological research. The Ridges was established in 1937 after Albert Fuller, then Curator of Botany at the Milwaukee Public Museum, began spending a significant amount of time surveying the landscape. Fuller spearheaded a grassroots movement to protect this incredibly diverse property and establish Wisconsin's oldest member-based land trust. This grassroots movement still drives the organization today. The Ridges Sanctuary now protects 1,700+ acres of the Midwest's most biologically diverse ecosystems and serves as a leading voice for conservation action in the region. Our campus features 5 miles of rustic trails, rare wildflowers, historic Range Lights, indoor exhibits, and an accessible boardwalk, among more.

Joining our team means becoming part of an organization committed to creativity, teamwork, and excellence. Our goal is to foster a supportive and inclusive work culture where every team member can thrive and contribute to our ongoing success.

POSITION SUMMARY

This full-time, year-round position reports to the Program and Education Director and is at the heart of our interpretive work. You'll help bring our programming to life by leading and supporting guided hikes, creating informal learning experiences that spark wonder for visitors of every age and background, and connecting people to our work through our website and social media. Your enthusiasm for the natural world will shape how thousands of people experience this place, in every season.

You'll work side by side with our programming, education, and marketing colleagues, a collaborative team that supports the annual work plan and keeps our mission visible and welcoming. If you light up when someone spots their first orchid or learns why wetlands matter, and you love turning that moment into something others can share, we'd love to meet you.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Programming

- Develop and lead regular onsite interpretive programs that offer hands-on experiences and foster curiosity, environmental stewardship, and a love of nature.
- Create informal learning experiences that invite visitors of all ages to explore, wonder, and connect with The Ridges.
- Design and facilitate programming that is welcoming and accessible to visitors of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Help coordinate group tours and guided hikes.
- Welcome visitors and volunteers daily, answering questions about The Ridges, the Nature Center, and Door County, in person and by phone.

- Support the coordination and implementation of special events.
- Contribute ideas for new programs and help launch them.
- Care for the Nature Center's interpretive exhibits, front lawn, and family discovery trail activities.
- Support community engagement opportunities, such as school visits, partner organizations, and community events.
- Stay current on the Sanctuary's ecology, tracking seasonal changes, wildlife, and plant sightings, and bring that knowledge into programs and communications.
- Train and support volunteers who assist with programs and events.
- Promote visitor safety, Leave No Trace practices, and respect for sensitive habitats.

Marketing

- Help manage the Ridges Sanctuary website events calendar.
- Create warm, engaging messaging and content for Ridges programs, including website, social media, and newsletter features.
- Support the rollout of new marketing strategies related to program communication and engagement.
- Participate in copy editing for publications and other messaging.

Administrative

- Meet regularly with colleagues to share ideas and collaborate on programs and events in support of the annual work plan.
- Help manage program registration databases.
- Contribute to the annual programming operations budget.
- Prepare program reports as needed, including attendance and visitor feedback to help us keep improving.
- Other duties as assigned

Working Conditions and Expectations

- This position is year-round with some weekend, evening and seasonal hours as programming requires.
    - Required dates to be aware of, include but are not limited to
        - Festival of Nature – Memorial Day Weekend
        - Annual Meeting – first weekend in August
        - Wreath Making and Natural Christmas – first and second weekends in December
- Work takes place in both indoor and outdoor settings, in all seasons and weather, on uneven trails and natural terrain.

WHAT YOU BRING

Required

- Bachelor's degree in environmental education, natural resources, biology, ecology, or a related field, or equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Experience leading interpretive, educational, or outdoor programs for the public, with a knack for making nature approachable and fun.
- Working knowledge of Great Lakes ecology, or the willingness to learn it quickly, including local plants, birds, and wildlife.

- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including comfort speaking to groups and writing engaging copy for the web and social media.
- Warm, welcoming presence with visitors, volunteers, and colleagues of all ages and backgrounds.
- Organization and attention to detail, including comfort with databases, registration systems, and basic budgeting.
- Ability to work both independently and as part of a collaborative team.
- Availability for some weekend, evening, and seasonal hours.
- Ability to work outdoors in all seasons and weather, and to hike on uneven terrain. (Adjust to match your actual physical requirements, such as distance, lifting, or standing.)

Preferred

- Experience in a nature center, land trust, park, or other conservation setting.
- Experience with inclusive or accessible programming design.
- Experience working with volunteers.
- Familiarity with social media platforms, website content management, or basic graphic design tools.
- Wilderness First Aid, CPR, or similar certification (or willingness to obtain one after hire).
- Certification as an interpretive guide or naturalist, or similar training.
- Strong identification skills in one or more areas such as birds, plants, or pollinators.
- Experience with citizen science or ecological monitoring.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

This is a full-time, year-round position with a salary range of $40,000-$45,000 commensurate with experience and qualifications. Benefits include health reimbursement plan, paid time off, 6% retirement distribution after one year of employment, and professional development. Additional benefits and details will be discussed during the interview process.

TO APPLY

Submit a cover letter and resume electronically to Anna Foster, anna@ridgessanctuary.org with the subject line “Naturalist Application”. We will be accepting applications **until 5pm on Friday, December 18th, 2026**. Interviews will be scheduled for the following week and can be conducted in person or virtually.

The Ridges Sanctuary is an equal opportunity employer and considers applicants for all positions without regard to race, color, creed, gender, national origin, age, disability, marital or veteran status, sexual orientation, or any other legally-protected status.