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NEWS RELEASE - Embargoed until Thursday, August 8, 2024**NATURAL AREAS ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES AWARD RECIPIENTS**

Kelly Kindscher, Ph.D., and Linda Lehrbaum honored for their contributions to the protection of biodiversity and stewardship of natural areas

(PITTSBURGH, PA) August 8, 2024 - Natural Areas Association (NAA) is proud to announce the winners of its 2024 annual awards. NAA recognizes exceptional individuals every year who have demonstrated exemplary leadership and achievement in the natural areas profession. For the 2024 awards, the NAA's Awards Committee chose two deserving recipients.

[Kelly Kindscher, Ph.D., plant ecologist & ethnobotanist, Kansas Biological Survey & Center for Ecological Research is the recipient of the 2024 George B. Fell Lifetime Achievement Award.](#) This prestigious award is given to an individual who has shown exceptional qualities in the profession and has significantly advanced natural area identification, protection, stewardship, research, and NAA's mission. Kelly had devoted his entire career to the conservation of high-value natural areas in Kansas and advancing the study of ethnobotany and native plants in the region. As a passionate advocate for native plants, native landscapes, and wild places. Kelly's work includes research, writing, teaching, land management, and assisting with the formation of several nonprofits dedicated to the stewardship of natural areas. He was co-founder and 30-year board member of the Kansas Land Trust where his first action was leading the effort to pass legislation that enabled the use of conservation easements in the state of Kansas, a state where 99% of the land is private property. Kelly led collaborations with private landowners to secure easements and ensure the management of protected natural areas throughout Kansas. Kelly is a lifetime member of the Natural Areas Association, and continues to share his knowledge and experience with his peers and future generations across North America.

[Linda Lehrbaum, retired program manager of Kansas City Wildlands, a division of Bridging the Gap, is the recipient of the 2024 Carl N. Becker Stewardship Award.](#) This award recognizes individuals or groups who have demonstrated excellence in natural area stewardship, demonstrating excellence and achievement in managing the natural resources of reserves, parks, wilderness, and other protected areas. Through her work with Kansas City WildLands, Linda coordinated a large & diverse pool of volunteers & workdays for 20+ years. She also managed a coalition of partner organizations which included conservation NGOs; city, county & state agencies; and local universities. She lobbied partner organizations for funding & support, promoted the organization, and personally performed land-management activities including invasive species eradication & prescribed burning. Linda was the program manager for the first 20+ years of KC WildLands until her recent retirement. Her creativity yielded a lasting legacy of conservation through programs like an early native seed collection program and an eastern red cedar Christmas tree harvest program, both novel ideas 15+ years ago. Linda's persistence pushed the Johnson County Park and Recreation District and other county and city governments on both sides of the state line to take natural-resource management seriously and supported the development of a national award-winning conservation program.

About Natural Areas Association

Natural Areas Association (NAA) serves scientists and practitioners focused on the management of ecologically significant natural landscapes with the intent to protect biodiversity for current and future generations. Learn more at naturalareas.org.



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"NAA is thrilled to recognize Kelly and Linda for their exceptional contributions to the natural areas profession," said NAA Executive Director Lisa Smith. "Their leadership, dedication, and commitment to the protection and stewardship of natural areas are truly inspiring, and we are honored to celebrate their achievements."

Award recipients will be honored during the 2024 Natural Areas Conference: Where Science Meets Stewardship, October 7 - 10, 2024, in Manhattan, Kansas. The awards luncheon will be held on Thursday, October 10 at 11:00 am.

For more information about the annual conference or awards luncheon, please visit the link: [**NAA 2024 Awards Luncheon & Presentation Ceremony Information**](#)

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