

Volunteers Needed for Nurdle Patrol at a River Near You

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EAST ALTON – Illinois Riverwatch and the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center are partnering with the Nurdle Patrol to recruit volunteers to clean up plastic waste in local waterways this October.

Nurdles are small plastic pellets that are produced during plastic manufacturing. Nurdles are the raw materials in plastic production that are melted down and used to make plastic products.

“These microplastics can enter the environment during the production and shipping of the nurdles – they can spill during loading and unloading at factories and can fall from railroad cars, trucks, and ships during transportation,” said Riverwatch Technician Hannah Griffis. “Once nurdles are in the environment, they can be dangerous to wildlife because they are mistaken for food, often looking like eggs to birds, fish, and crustaceans. After the nurdles are ingested, the animal can feel full, stopping them from eating real food.”

Volunteers are needed October 8-10 to collect data through a survey, to help the Nurdle Patrol, a citizen science program run by Mission-Aransas Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve) at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, compile consistent data on the presence of nurdles in area waterways.

Finding nurdles is fairly easy, the survey takes just half an hour, and anyone in the state can participate. No formal training is needed. Just find a group of family, friends, co-workers, classes, etc., to volunteer at any local waterway, take a few moments to watch a four-minute video from the Nurdle Patrol, and review methods at <http://www.ngrrec.org/riverwatch/plastic-monitoring>.

“We are hoping that this event will draw a large number of volunteers to participate in Nurdle Patrol surveys during this weekend and hopefully continue conducting surveys in the future,” Griffis said.

NGRREC will introduce the Riverbend community to the Nurdle Patrol at an upcoming Neighbor Nights event at 6 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 21 (TONIGHT) at the Jerry F. Costello Confluence Field Station, during which Director Jace Tunnell will be the featured speaker.

“We are thrilled to learn from Jace Tunnell, who is a leading expert in this research,” said RiverWatch Director and Stream Ecologist Danelle Haake. “We look forward to hearing more about how the people of Illinois can work together to protect the animals in our rivers and streams from plastic pollution.”

That event is free, but pre-registration is encouraged at <https://conta.cc/3ym64ae>. The link to attend the presentation will be emailed to registrants prior to the event.

Anyone interested in learning more about participating in the Nurdle Volunteer event can contact Griffis at hgriffis@lc.edu or (618) 468-2781.

Nurdle Patrol

The Nurdle Patrol is a citizen science program that is run by Mission-Aransas Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve) at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute.

Learn more at www.nurdlepatrol.org.

National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?)

Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them. The center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities.

To learn more about NGRREC, visit <http://www.ngrrec.org>.