



The Blue Mounds Area Project

Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats

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www.bluemounds.org

A Short History of BMAP Site Visits

Paul Kaarakka, BMAP Board Member

Site visits have been a core part of the Blue Mounds Area Project's mission since the organization's inception. In fact the notion of site visits envisioned and started by our first ecologist, Brian Pruksa, was the primary function of BMAP in its early days. Since Brian, four other ecologists have worked with BMAP, each making their own mark on the site visit process. As our current ecologist Cindy Ramseyer steps down after several very productive years of helping area landowners, it's a good time to review the goals of the service, look at how site visits have changed over the years, and ask what BMAP members and the board see as the future of this unique service.



Citizen Monitoring led by Cindy Ramseyer (far left)

The BMAP goals for site visits are:

- Provide landowners with site information and inspiration to start and continue stewardship activities on their land.
- Help landowners identify realistic goals and focus on tasks they can accomplish without getting overwhelmed by all the things that could or should be done.
- Provide information, tools, and ideas to landowners to help them achieve their goals.
- Identify sites of high value that should get additional attention while respecting the interests of the landowner.

Underlying these goals is the expectation that site visits will result in stewardship action on the ground and, in the long run, result in landscape changes that protect the diversity of animal and plant life in the area. To facilitate these goals, the BMAP ecologist must not only

have a good knowledge of our natural history, but also be a good ambassador for the ideals of land stewardship and BMAP.

In 1998, following Brian Pruksa, Bob Wernerehl was hired as a half-time ecologist and administrative help. Bob conducted over 100 site visits during his time with BMAP and refined the process to include written reports for landowners. Grants have always been an important part of funding the ecologist position, and Bob was very active in identifying and securing grants. Still, finding enough funding for a half-time staff person was difficult. Bob did a great job both as ecologist and ambassador, but left BMAP in 2004 to attend graduate school. By then the board had initiated a policy of charging \$100 for a site visit to recoup some of the costs of the process. The board also formalized other aspects of site visits to reduce costs. Although \$100 is a bargain when you consider driving

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Message From the Board

Carroll Schaal, BMAP President

We set out on our first summer field trip on June 30, visiting the Swamp Lovers Foundation's 500 acres in the Town of Berry. This amazing property—part of it protected by a conservation easement held by the Ice Age Trail Alliance which connects it to a Dane County segment of the trail—is the result of over 30 years of steady work. Two of the Foundation's partners, Lee Swanson and Jerry Goth, led the tour. The scale of the work is astounding. The two have spent a good portion of their lives investing in prairie, savanna, woodland, and wetland restoration and management.

Much of the discussion during the tour concerned Reed Canary Grass control since a large segment of the property is wetland and sedge meadow. They were getting good results using a combined fire and chemical treatment with the herbicides Habitat and Intensity, plus a methylated seed oil. Jerry described Intensity as a grass-specific herbicide whose mode of action is through disruption of growth regulation. It has to be applied for several years, and he stressed that it was very important that there be healthy competition from native species, in this case native sedges which are not affected by the herbicide. Jerry described Habitat as being "Roundup on steroids" and said that where they had used it on Reed Canary Grass nothing had grown back in three years. In upland areas, our hosts praised the use of fire in woods, saying it was cheap and effective, but that it was a long-term process that required years between burns to build up sufficient fuel. These are folks who are in this for the long haul. It was inspiring and fun to listen to these gentlemen who were so happy and enthusiastic about every aspect of their work on this project.

Getting around the huge area by a tractor and wagon with bench seats conveniently allowed some of us to take cold beverages along on what was a very warm summer evening. Riders had to look out for overhanging branches which threatened to sweep away the unobservant and braced themselves as the tractor climbed steep slopes. The treat of the tour was the spectacular view of Blue Mound from the high ridge overlooking a native goat prairie blooming with Pale Purple Coneflower. There we found relief from the heat and humidity and enjoyed a pot-lucked dinner

at the end of the tour. Watching the fading sun, Jerry told us how seeing the release of the coneflowers following the removal of Red Cedars was the initial inspiration to keep their work going.

We experienced a hot but fantastic visit to the West Dane Conservancy in the Town of Black Earth on July 28. Our host Doug Steege and his intern Kyle Burkwald presented an enthusiastic tour of the site's extensive restoration efforts, which are in many ways similar to the Swamp Lovers Foundation's property we visited at the end of June. Both have similarly oriented steep

Abbot of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area Project and Darcy Kind from Wisconsin DNR Landowner Incentives Program, this will be the biggest publication BMAP has undertaken.

Designed as part primer to the natural history of the Driftless Area and part workbook, the intent is to create a handbook to help landowners interpret and understand the surrounding landscape's influence on their property. It could be used to think about and track management goals for a restoration project or just to gain a deeper appreciation of one's property. The content

Adding two new Directors this year, completing a major project, and changes in staff make it good time to do some planning and visit how we want to implement our mission next summer and into the future. If you are interested in participating in these discussions please attend one of the upcoming Board meetings December 13, January 10, or February 14.

prairie ridges and have multifaceted stream, wetland, woodland, savanna, and prairie components. Also, both are permanently protected in conservation easements. Together the properties comprise over a square mile of private conservation lands! It was quite gratifying to see acknowledgement of BMAP along with several other conservation organizations in the large interpretive sign at the entrance. Kyle is a UW-Stevens Point student who lived on site this summer, inventorying species and conducting management. We asked him if he would share a lesson or two from his experience and you can find it on page 7.

Our final trip was to Bruce and Lisa Wachholz's home in the Town of Springdale on September 1. Cindy Ramseyer provides a description of that trip on page 6.

BMAP Happenings

From an outreach standpoint, most of Cindy's time has gone into the *Reading the Driftless Landscape* book project. Supported by a grant from the Natural Resources Foundation and a donation from Whole Foods Inc., along with key partners Katie

is influenced by our recent monitoring projects and inspired by BMAP's rich history of experience. There are beautiful color photos and maps with ample references as well as places to sketch or record information. We plan to have limited copies available this winter for our Conservation Conversations and raise funds to print a larger quantity for wider distribution. Eventually it will also be available online at www.bluemound.org.

Reading the Driftless Landscape was the main focus of BMAP this summer as well as going into winter. With the completion of this project nearing, Cindy Ramseyer, BMAP Ecologist for the last four years, will take a break for other career pursuits. We can't thank Cindy enough for all the great work and leadership she has provided BMAP and wish her nothing but the best in the future. See page 5 for her top-10 list of things she learned as a Blue Mounds Area Project outreach ecologist.

We would like to thank BMAP member Doug Norgord for his offer to share his expertise in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and mapping with us. Initially he'll

cont. page 9, see MESSAGE

Summer Doldrums? Not if You're Part of This Community!

Cindy Ramseyer, BMAP Ecologist

Early July is the time of year when the Wild Parsnip is in full bloom along the roadsides, the Sweet Clovers and Spotted Knapweed are about to blossom, the Reed Canary Grass is waving in the breeze, and new populations of invasive plants like Nipplewort, Hill's Mustard, and Teasel are tall enough for me to see as I drive through the local three-county area. This, dear friends, is enough to make me just call it a summer and plant myself at the Grumpy Troll, drinking copious amounts of beer.

You laugh. Look around next year. The roadsides and meadows will be yellow with Parsnip, meaning that they are no longer welcoming, but instead dangerous. The woods will be choked with brambles and Gooseberry bushes that excite the hardiest of berry pickers, but the general public? The world outside, if one is not on a trail or in a boat, feels inhospitable.

Yet, I refuse to admit defeat. That is because I also see areas methodically cleared of Buckthorn and weed trees, with wood stacked on the side of the road and electric fences around goats tearing into an overgrown meadow. I see a lone person along the road, sweating bullets in their long-sleeve shirt and pants, either pulling or spraying Parsnip on their right-of-way. And, through my work at BMAP, I get involved in the lives of members who believe that "weeding the woods" matters.

I received an email from a member. No matter how many times the land around her changes hands, she remains passionately connected to the valley in which she lives. So much so that when the state-listed species Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias purpureascens*)



Purple Milkweed
(*Asclepias purpureascens*)

showed up on her neighbor's land, she offered to monitor it as part of our Plants of Concern Program. Throughout the summer last year, I'd receive periodic emails describing the state of the population. Some of the emails were about the numbers of plants, but most were requests for help, calls for action. I became acutely aware that while I could encourage members to monitor rare plants, that was the extent of the role that BMAP could play. We provide suggestions, but rarely can we materialize help or manpower when it is needed. This, for those who advocate for action, is an uncomfortable place to be.

In March of this year, I found out that this member took action into her own hands. After talking up the situation with her own neighbors, one neighbor offered to pay for a contractor to conduct a burn. Wait, let me say that again. An individual offered to foot the bill for a prescribed burn on someone else's property! Wow. The absentee landowner was contacted. BMAP got involved as the advocate, explaining the usefulness of prescribed burning and reiterating the safety measures that would be in place to protect the forested lands on the property ... and all surrounding properties, for that matter. After a few days of many people making phone calls and hikes around the property, the absentee landowner was appeased of his or her concerns, a local company agreed to conduct the prescribed burn, the gentleman offering to pay followed through with his offer, and the neighbor who got this ball rolling was tickled pink. On burn day even more neighbors from the valley came together for the event. And the plants? Well, they just might have another chance to multiply and spread to other areas across the landscape.

Thank you to all who felt that one small population of Purple Milkweed was worth saving, and worked to make it happen. This is what the Blue Mounds Area Project was created for in 1998, what it is supposed to encourage and promote. This is the type of collaborative effort that gives me hope. This is the story of community conservation. Let's all get on with it. 🌿

The happiest man is he who
learns from nature the lesson
of worship.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

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time, on-site time, and report-writing time, BMAP went for several years without site visit requests. The ecologist position remained unfilled during that time.

In late 2005 the BMAP board conducted a listening session with members to help gather ideas of how to get site visits started again. One of the many ideas discussed was to find a student ecologist intern who would be paid on an hourly basis plus mileage for summer work only. This seemed like a BMAP could afford and so the board started planning along these lines. The board also decided to go back to offering free site visits.

Since Brian, four other ecologists have worked with BMAP, each making their own mark on the site visit process.

In the spring of 2007 BMAP was advertising for an intern and, by luck, happened to receive a resume from Chelsea Bagot, a qualified and enthusiastic candidate who didn't even know we were hiring! Chelsea did 18 site visits that summer and implemented some ideas to reduce the time required for writing reports. BMAP president Carroll Schaal had been interested in returning to some previously visited sites to assess what the result of the original site visit might have been for those landowners, and Chelsea did several of those. Revisiting sites is an important means of getting feedback and gauging how well BMAP and landowners' goals are being met. It is not a simple—or inexpensive—process though, and subsequent BMAP ecologists have worked to find ways to streamline such visits.

Although the site visits were again free, the board wanted to get recipients more involved in the process and, hopefully, more inclined to follow up with a plan and stewardship. We thought that one way to do this was to have recipients collect important background information on their property, which would then be used in the ecologist's report and subsequent planning. This is something the ecologist had been doing, so getting the landowner involved helped reduce the time required for site visit preparation and reporting, as well as motivating the landowner. In 2008 BMAP offered its first landowners' internet workshop to help participants find this information on the web. The workshop

led participants through a series of websites using classroom computers to find maps and aerial photos of their properties, collect historical and soil information, and to find tools and sources of help. The links used in these yearly workshops are available to all at www.bluemounds.org/landownerworkshop.html.

In 2008 Cindy Ramseyer was hired as BMAP ecologist and she immediately got to work by applying for a Citizen Based Monitoring grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This grant was awarded to BMAP and was later renewed for continuing the work in the 2009. Cindy envisioned a process of training BMAP members to find and monitor rare and threatened plant

species on their properties over multiple years with the help of other BMAP members. She also started discussions on changing the site visit process to better identify high quality sites and

find ways to help landowners reassess their properties over time themselves. The idea of making the site visit process more standardized, quantitative, and long-term was taking shape. That summer Cindy did 14 visits, including seven return inventories, in addition to the Citizen Monitoring work. Return visits yielded several rare plant finds.

While Cindy worked on the Citizen Monitoring project and her other interests in 2009, Michael Ulrich was hired to do site visits. Michael is a professional ecologist with years of experience surveying plants for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and working with Taliesin on habitat restoration, among other projects. In addition to site visits, Michael did an important survey of an emerging invasion of Japanese Hedge Parsley in the Mount Horeb area. That work was highlighted in the fall 2009 BMAP newsletter (www.bluemounds.org/newsletters/BMAP-News-V12N3-4.pdf). Michael had a particular interest in trying to incorporate Global Positioning System (GPS) mapping into the site visit reports and advocated collecting site visit information in ways that would lend itself to mapping. Cindy was also experimenting with data collection using GPS in the Citizen Monitoring project, and these experiments were generating almost as many questions as answers. There were technical problems, such as how to get the raw location data into software to generate a map. But there were also interesting—and frustrating

Member comments:

"Before our site visit, we weren't sure how best to steward our land. But [during the site visit] we learned what native species we had and received tips about how to proceed. That really motivated us to start our restoration project."

"... an enjoyable and informative visit... an excellent job of telling me what was already on my property and making suggestions for future improvements."

"... the catalyst that inspired the present restoration work on our 100 plus acres in western Dane County."

"I can't thank you enough for the knowledge and appreciation of the land [the BMAP ecologist] brought along on the site visit."

—questions about how to do rapid surveying of plant inventories over time. There are difficulties with scale and plant density, plants may be absent or hard to see in some years, and plants may seem to move around in the landscape. What level of detail is necessary to characterize a site visit property adequately? This is a problem not just for the BMAP ecologist, but for others, including individual landowners, land trusts, and governmental units. Although ecological survey methods are available (www.bluemounds.org/MonitoringAndInventoryLinks.html), most of these are too cumbersome or technical for quick surveys, especially for people not trained as ecologists. For busy landowners, being able to do a

cont. page 10, see HISTORY

Top 10 Things I Learned as an Outreach Ecologist for Blue Mounds Area Project

Cindy Ramseyer, BMAP Ecologist

- 1 - Don't schedule site visits during mosquito season. No one will remember anything.
- 2 - Document, document, document. Or else you forget what you said.
- 3 - There is no "one" way to deal with exotic species.
- 4 - It is normal to desire psychiatric help in dealing with anger over the whole matter (the exotics, that is).
- 5 - There are five levels of emotion in dealing with exotic plants. Somehow you start with enthusiasm, dance around anger, and end up laughing.
- 6 - Garlic mustard does SO NOT make good pesto.
- 7 - Cows trampled or ate everything but prickly ash and people plowed prairies, cut down trees, and were scared of fire. Box elder survived. We can't change that.
- 8 - Conservation and stewardship is not about habitat, it is about people.



9 - The landowner rules. They have the power equipment and the herbicide.

10 - Velcro had to be created by someone who walked through burdock and found enlightenment.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this great organization.

Cindy Ramseyer, BMAP Ecologist, 2008-2011
Nature's Keeper Eco-logical Services
Blanchardville, WI
608-523-4213, naturekeep@tds.net

Patience

Carroll Schaal, BMAP President



I raised this Bur Oak from an acorn. I stratified it in sand in the back of my fridge, sprouted it in a milk carton planter, and transplanted it to our side yard 17 years ago. People talk about the difficulty of establishing Bur Oaks, but really it's about patience. The only thing you need to rush is transplanting your tree sooner rather than later to where you finally want it. Bur Oaks establish deep roots so quickly it makes transplanting later hazardous to survival. For the first several years my Bur Oak was only a few low-growing leaves. I had to protect it from rabbits with a dome of chicken wire or, when it reached a good foot tall, a loose wrap of chicken wire around the stem. At about 10 years, with the roots well established, it displayed a great growth spurt and today the tree is at least 15 feet tall and about 15 feet wide. 🌳

Volunteer Opportunities

As a volunteer organization we are always looking for help. The extent and success of our efforts relies on people like you. Below are some areas where your involvement, small or large, can make a difference. Use email — info@bluemounds.org — or the enclosed envelope to send us a note about your interests and how we may contact you.

Where we can use help and assistance:

- Writing newsletter articles and outreach materials
- Website maintenance and development
- Fundraising
- Membership retention and recruitment
- Data and records management
- Serving on the board for the next term or a future term
- Other skills or talents you can offer

Those who contemplate
the beauty of the earth
find reserves of strength
that will endure as long
as life lasts.

— Rachel Carson

It's Not Always About the Prairie: A Visit to Cedar Creek Tree Farm

Cindy Ramseyer, BMAP Ecologist



On an early September evening, Bruce and Lisa Wachholz graciously welcomed Blue Mounds Area Project members at the roadside edge of their property. We were all eager to tromp through the acres of prairie restoration that have become a major part of their life and landscape. What started out as an interest to put land into a cover crop other than corn and soybeans has become a lifetime of learning and a shared passion between Bruce and Lisa, their children and grandchildren, and the many people who have joined them in the maintenance of their prairies on burn days. I knew it would be a great walk. And it was.

Whenever I am in the company of Bruce and Lisa, I am one mesmerized listener. They speak with joy and animation about their different stages of learning, and their energy reflects a sincere and heartfelt interest in the health and condition of their land. The animation reflects the hardships and struggles that are easy to look back on in laughter and amusement, but also the memories grounded in exhilarating experiences. They truly danced through their descriptions of certain events, as if they had just happened yesterday.

But, true to form, Bruce had his trusty notes with him—which demonstrates that he “wizeden” up early on to the need for note

keeping—to “prove” that truly twenty-odd years had gone by since the first planting had been done. The first warm season grass planting done on their property was direct seeded into a crop field, a collaborative effort with Pheasants Forever, the US Department of Agriculture, and the Wachholzs. It was, at that time, as basic as basic could be ... a foundation of warm season grasses. Switchgrass, Big Bluestem, and Indian Grass was planted, thick. Today you would not notice this, for the planting has been supplemented annually with wildflower seeds collected along roadsides, from other plantings, and well, anywhere possible given pockets or paper bags handy! Out into the field Bruce and Lisa would head, with a hard rake, a bucket of seeds, and good boots for tamping down soil. Bare spots scraped, seeds sprinkled, and a bit of ground stomping, and they knew that in a few years time some more color and diversity would present itself for them and wildlife to enjoy. For a number of years Bruce grew flats of plants—just a few each year—as much for the joy as for the future. These were directly put into the ground in late spring. A few hours work, yes, but with a long-term reward that parallels no other.

A meandering stream that graces the center of their property proves that the old

adage “build it and they will come” does bear some truth. First, out came the drainage tiles. From this act, four acres of wetland prairie were instantly created. With the removal of the tiles, small artesian springs surfaced where there were none before. Bruce pointed out the pockets of willow across the valley that speak of standing water near the surface. Indeed, the water had chosen its own course once free of constraints. With this success, Bruce and Lisa then got busy engineering four shallow ponds across the valley. With these ponds in place, former wetland inhabitants, such as Herons, Kingfishers, various species of ducks, frogs, toads, and dragonflies, returned almost immediately. And the sounds in the spring? Stunningly deafening!

What stirred me the most is the ways in which this stewardship has seemed to strengthen each of them individually and provided avenues for gaining understanding about each other. Bruce explained to us that they have learned that mutual respect and a willingness to be interested in each other’s passions serves as the foundation for their marriage. He recounted just how many times Lisa has nodded her head, smiled, and said, “Bruce, what beautiful seeds!” when he’d arrive home with buckets of seed from collecting. And, on

Summer at West Dane Conservancy

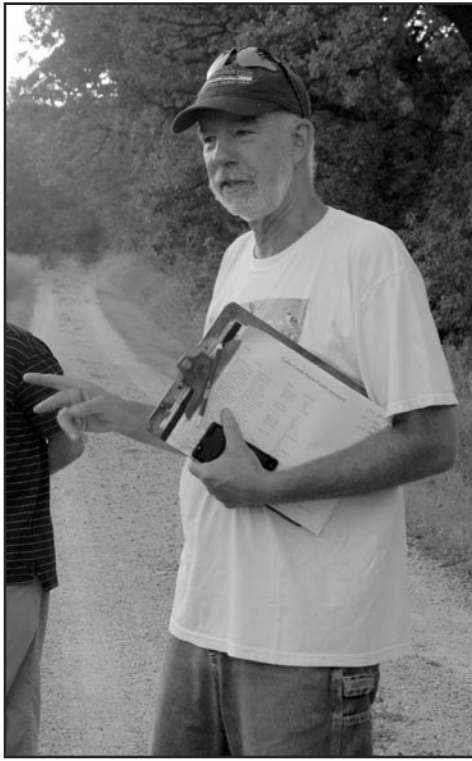
Kyle Burkwald, Conservancy Intern

Late February, I submitted my application and resume to Doug Steege with hopes he would select me to manage his 140-acre plot, commonly known as the West Dane Conservancy, in Black Earth. Four weeks later I got an email from Doug inviting me to be his student intern. I was set to move into what I lovingly referred to as ... “the shock” ... on May 28 and my first day in the field would be May 29. Having only completed my freshman year of the forest management curriculum at

UW-Stevens Point, I had no idea what to expect from this job, or if anything I had learned would be at all relevant. Luckily, with the help of local prairie restoration expert Larry Schaefer, Doug patiently walked me through the basics of prairie restoration.

Being a hockey player, cross country runner, and Eagle Scout, I am no stranger to hard work, but my first days here were exhausting! Between being bent over pulling incomprehensible amounts of White Sweet Clover, felling trees along a fire break, and piling hundreds of pounds of dead trees into burn piles, I could barely keep up! But there was nothing quite like seeing my first burn piles literally go up in flames. Atop what I came to call Blue Stem Ridge, I saw nature’s most destructive agent in its most primal state, consuming and eliminating hundreds of invasive plants.

After the first two weeks, I became accustomed to the long hours of labor that this profession required and met some amazing people along the way. People like Cindy Ramseyer, Larry Schaefer, and Diane Smith were all gracious enough to pass on some of their knowledge. Above all, I learned something that no university professor could ever have taught me: God and Mother Nature were here first and they will be here last. 🌿



Bruce Wacholz

our way home, we experienced just one of these moments. As Bruce, my husband Charles, and I walked through the prairie towards our car, the only sounds around us were the rustling of grasses that leaned gracefully into the path. Total darkness enveloping us, we stopped to shine the flashlight on a population of Pale Indian Plantain. The leaves shone white in the glare of the flashlight—a beacon of light in a dark landscape. We heard Lisa laugh pleasantly, and say, “Out to see the Indian plantain, yes?” Obviously, this was an activity shared many times. And that, in my opinion, is what it’s all about.

Bruce and Lisa also run a Christmas tree farm, for which they received a Tree Farmer of the Year Award for Dane County and Southern Wisconsin in 1998. You can visit their website, www.cedarcreektreefarm.com, for more information, hours, and directions. 🌿



Kyle Burkwald



Interesting websites...

invasivore.org

Invasivore.org wants to be your one-stop guide for devouring invasive species, those organisms which have been moved around the world, damaging their new surroundings.

“From prehistoric times, humans have had an amazing track-record of severely reducing the populations of species we eat. Indeed, it seems that much of the time we can't stop ourselves. Can we tap that hunger to reduce the impacts of harmful invasive species? We think the answer is Yes!”

This blog explores the possibilities and presents well-organized information about harvesting, preparing, and consuming invasive species, including species profiles, cultural significance, and recipes. I'm not ready to eat deep-fried earthworms, but honeysuckle flower syrup might be interesting. Along with this, the authors of the blog provide numerous links to other relevant websites. Their ultimate goal is to encourage informed management policies, prevent new introductions, reduce the spread of invasive species, and simply increase public awareness of this serious problem.

mywisconsinwoods.org

My Wisconsin Woods is a partnership of public and non-profit organizations working together to help woodland owners in southwest Wisconsin. The program is designed to help new or experienced landowners alike. The network of national, state, and local organizations working together means better service, expertise and resources for you and your woodland.

My Wisconsin Woods will help provide answers to questions like:

What trees and plants are growing on my land?

Can I get a break on my property taxes?

What kind of wildlife can I attract to my woods?

How do I help my children or grandchildren learn how to take care of my woods?

What professional and financial resources are available for the projects I would like to do?

Announcements

State's First Badger Ecology Study Begins in Southwest Wisconsin

This summer, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Bureau of Science Services teamed with professor Tim Van Deelen of UW-Madison Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology to start the first-ever study of American Badger ecology in the Badger State. This study is a companion to a WDNR-UW Milwaukee state-wide investigation into Badger genetics. The ecology study will focus on southwestern Wisconsin, specifically parts of southern Iowa, southwestern Dane, northwestern Green, and northern Lafayette counties in the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area. This area includes the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.

2011 was the pilot season of what will be a 3-year study looking into the habitat use, movements, home range, diet, population structure, and reproduction of Badgers. Current results show that Badgers appear to prefer sites with sandy or light soils for their burrows and den sites, even if quite rocky. One rock excavated by a Badger weighed 19 pounds. They also seem to prefer burrowing into slopes.

Researchers have been placing traps at burrow openings and have successfully caught two male Badgers so far. Both were trapped in Iowa County, on land owned by the non-profit organization The Prairie Enthusiasts. Researchers developed a technique to surgically implant radio transmitters in the backs of Badgers to track their movements throughout the year. Currently researchers have a transmitter in one adult male Badger and have been tracking his movements several times a week. He has moved about 5.5 miles from the location where he was trapped, and is now residing south of Ridgeway. We are actively attempting to put radio transmitters in more Badgers.

Jimmy Doyle is the lead WDNR field researcher on the project. If you know of any active Badger burrows on your land, and you are in the portions of the counties mentioned above, please contact Jimmy Doyle or David Sample (WDNR) at 608-221-6351.

Funding For Individuals Engaged In Prairie Research

Prairie Biotic Research (PBR) is an all-volunteer Wisconsin nonprofit established in 2000 to foster basic biotic research in prairies and savannas. One way we do this is through our competitive Small Grants Program that funds grants up to \$1000 to individuals for the study of any grassland taxon anywhere in the USA. We support both natural history and experimental science. PBR is especially eager to support independent researchers—those lacking institutional support—but anyone who has a US social security number can apply. Since 2002, we've awarded 117 grants worth \$111,426 to people in 26 states to study insects, plants, mammals, reptiles, slime molds, mycorrhizal fungi, spiders, snails, amphibians, birds, invasive species, and effects of management. Many of these grants supported graduate student research.

In 2012, we expect to fund at least 12 grants of up to \$1000 each with the donations we've received, including some restricted by donors to support research in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and in Missouri, where research on Missouri Prairie Foundation properties is of special interest.

Please visit our website—prairiebioticresearch.org—to learn more or apply for a grant. The Small Grants section of the website includes a history of the program, a list of funded proposals, and reports submitted by past recipients. You can also download our proposal form, instructions, and a sample researcher agreement form that winners of this competition must sign.

We must receive your proposal through the mail before January 6, 2012. Those who won funding in 2011 are ineligible for funding in 2012, but those who won funding longer ago are welcome to submit proposals to further the same work or support a new project.

“We Foster Curiosity”

Events

Winter 2012 Conservation Conversations

Carroll Schaal, BMAP President

Here's the preliminary line up for the 2012 Winter Lecture Series. Last winter's talks were a huge success and we're looking forward to building upon it. These events are free and open to the general public. If you lose your newsletter before January—or want the latest details—don't worry; we'll send postcards to BMAP members, post an announcement on our website (www.bluemounds.org), and send reminders to our email list.

January 26th, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

A Geologic Romp through the Driftless Area of Wisconsin

Richard Slaughter, UW Geology Museum Director

This talk will explore the geology of southwestern Wisconsin and what makes it so special. While this region is known for having been spared from glaciers during ice ages, there is so much more to its geologic history. This is your chance to learn more about the rock layers, caves, fossils, and mines of the Driftless Area. *This Event will be held at the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History's Research Collections and Education Center, located at 211 S. Blue Mounds St. in Mt. Horeb where we held an event in 2010 on springs and groundwater. Heading south on Blue Mounds St. from West Main Street it's the first building past the Military Ridge State Bike Trail heading down the hill.*

Feb 23rd, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

From Weeds to Wildflowers on Gobbler Ridge

Outdoor writer and free-lance photographer

Tim Eisele will show how he and his wife Linda restored prairie to their 100 acres in Crawford County. His presentation will use unique color photographs to show what the land was like when they began the project in 1990, how management shifted the vegetation and what's required for upkeep as well as close-up photos of plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife that now use it. *This event will be held at the Mount Horeb branch of the State Bank of Cross Plains, located at 1740 Business Hwy 18-151 E. (Main Street) in Mount Horeb (next to Culvers Restaurant).*

March 3rd, 8:30 am - Noon

Landowner Workshop

Co-sponsored with the partners of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area and the SW Grassland & Streams Conservation Area there will be a little bit for everyone with concurrent one hour sessions suitable for people ranging from the newbie to the advanced. Topics will center on restoration and management of the native landscape. *This event will be held at the Iowa County Health and Human Services Building, 303 W. Chapel St., Dodgeville.*

March 8th, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Blue Mounds Area Project Annual Meeting

Mingle with other BMAP members, get an update, and provide some input to your Project. Program by Steve Swenson, Ecologist with the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Similar to BMAP, the Aldo Leopold Foundation has done landowner visits for 13 years, primarily with an interest in prairie and savanna management. Steve will talk about their current project to connect willing landowners with Woodland Advocates (other landowners with experience) and ultimately professionals (in this case, foresters). *This event will be held at the Mount Horeb branch of the State Bank of Cross Plains, located at 1740 Business Hwy 18-151 E. (Main Street) in Mount Horeb (next to Culvers Restaurant).*

MESSAGE from page 2

be working with us on creating a general map of the BMAP area and site visits, starting with those conducted by Bob Wernehel. As we continue to organize information from past site visits and work on getting that data into a database, we hope to have other mapping projects for him as well.

We'd like to welcome Paul Olhrogge to the BMAP Board of Directors. Paul is a Town of Vermont resident and long-time BMAP member who brings lots of good experience and knowledge to our Board. Some of you may know Paul as the Community Development Extension Agent for Iowa County or from a summer field trip to his place in 2009. Welcome Paul!

Adding two new Directors this year, completing a major project, and changes in staff make it good time to do some planning and visit how we want to implement our mission next summer and into the future. If you are interested in participating in these discussions please attend one of the upcoming Board meetings December 13, January 10, or February 14. We meet from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in our downstairs office at 205 East Main Street (the Dahle Building) in Mount Horeb. Please send an email to info@bluemounds.org if you plan to attend or want to pass along your thoughts.

BMAP is your organization and it has done some great work for quite some time. Please take a minute to read Paul Kaarakka's recent history and evolution of site visits on page 1 and get a feel for what I mean. The future of site visits and hiring another ecologist will depend on fundraising and success with any grants we choose to pursue. Whatever we do will require your continued support. Individual donations are the foundation of this organization. Please use the enclosed return envelope to renew your membership and make an end-of-the-year charitable donation so the Blue Mounds Area Project can continue to inspire and serve private land conservation in 2012! 🍷

HISTORY *from page 4*

quick periodic plant survey helps them to keep track of the changes happening on their property and focus their efforts to better achieve their stewardship goals.

Aside from the multi-year surveying problems, there is a problem with recording this information in a standardized form in order to provide long-term continuity for BMAP ecologists and landowners. Keeping a handwritten journal is a fun and satisfying way to record observations—and highly recommended!—but it is hard to search, and hard to use for summarizing and charting progress over time. In the case of BMAP site visits, the different styles and content of site visit reports over the years has made it difficult to bring all of our site visit information together in one spreadsheet. This became apparent when Cindy was trying to find landowners for the Citizen Monitoring project who might have the rare plants she was looking for. Both she and Michael worked to bring all of the site visit information into one format and that work continues. Michael proposed a strategy for, and Cindy and I have been working on, the design and construction of

a software program for ecologists and landowners that would make it easier to record and summarize land stewardship records. This is a work in progress and comments on the idea or its design are very welcome (www.sciencehousesoftware.com).

What I hope to convey in this article is that the ideals of the of BMAP site visits are alive and well, and the process is evolving in exciting and productive ways. BMAP's progress on assessment and record keeping problems has caught the attention of local land trusts and the Wisconsin DNR, who share many of the same issues. We hope to be able to keep up this progress with your help and support. Besides continuing the site visit service with the improvements described above, some of the projects we would like to work on include:

- Finding funding to support the BMAP outreach ecologist. Grant money is almost never available to support site visits directly, even though it is needed. But funding for doing some of the process development described above may be available.
- Creating a digital map showing the distribution of the over 150 site visits for

which we have records. We are happy to have GIS professional and BMAP member Doug Norgord volunteering to help us with this task.

- Finding ways to both assess how well BMAP site visit goals are being met and help landowners meet their own goals after the initial visit.
- Continue the work started in the Citizen Monitoring project to help landowners protect and improve sites harboring rare and threatened species.
- Offer a mapping workshop for landowners to help them map their own property with simple hardware and free software tools.

Progress on these projects is slow since it is labor intensive and mostly dependent on volunteer hours. Perhaps you have an interest in one of these topics and some time to help make them a reality. Don't hesitate to let us know by sending a message to info@bluemounds.org or contacting one of the board members listed on the last page of the BMAP newsletter. 🍷

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Our Mission:

The Blue Mounds Area Project is a community-based organization that seeks to inspire, inform and empower private landowners in the Southwestern Wisconsin region to enjoy, protect and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Our Objectives:

- 1) Promote understanding, appreciation and conservation of native woodlands, prairies, wetlands and savannas and their special species in an economically viable manner, through community outreach programs and private contacts.
- 2) Act as a clearing house for information from people and organizations involved in preserving native biodiversity including information about plant, animal and habitat identification, management, restoration, seed sources, native plant nurseries and invasive, nonnative species.
- 3) Encourage cooperative, volunteer restoration and management activities.
- 4) Identify public and private land use changes that may affect ecosystem health and promote community-based stewardship of the unique natural heritage of the Blue Mounds and the Southwestern region of Wisconsin.

The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published quarterly.
We welcome your comments, submissions, and advertisements.

Deadlines for submissions for 2012 newsletters: Spring Newsletter — March 5, 2012
Summer Newsletter — July 2, 2012
Fall Newsletter — October 29, 2012

Send submissions to: Editor, Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572 or jaraasch@tds.net

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of the BMAP Board please contact

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Volunteers Always Welcome!

Blue Mounds Area Project Membership Form

Name(s): _____

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Membership Status:

Renewal New Member Gift Membership for _____

Membership Level:

Student \$15 Basic \$30 Contributor \$50 Supporter \$100 Sponsor \$500 Patron \$1000
 Other contribution to further the BMAP mission _____

TOTAL _____

All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Yes, I would like to receive information about site visits.

Make check payable and return to: BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT, PO BOX 332, MT. HOREB, WI 53572



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Black Earth, WI 53515

The Blue Mounds Area Project

P.O.Box 332

Mt. Horeb, WI 53572

Nature teaches more than she preaches.
There are no sermons in stones.
It is easier to get a spark out of a stone than a moral.

– *John Burroughs*

HAVE YOU EXPIRED?? Please check the address label for your membership expiration date.
If you're receiving a complimentary or trial copy, please consider joining.