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BMAP
BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

April 2025: Blue Mounds Area Project eBulletin

Conservation and Community. Together.



IN THIS ISSUE

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- BMAP's Updates
- Workshops, Trainings, & Events

- Southern Driftless Grasslands - Landowner Prescribed Fire Workshops
- Naturalist's Note: Spring phenology in trees, herbs, and non-native plants

Outreach Ecologist's Updates

Sam Anderson

Hello BMAP,

As our weather gets warmer, I hope you are gearing up for another growing season. Burn season is well underway, with contractors, agencies, landowners, and neighbors working to promote biodiversity in our grasslands and woodlands one fire at a time! Some invasive plants are also already green and growing, giving us a preview of the work to come throughout April, May, and June. For this E-Bulletin, I wanted to highlight the excellent spring events happening in southern WI to inform, train, and connect landowners with resources. I also wanted to highlight the natural phenomena that tell us that spring is well on its way!



Skunk Cabbage - *Symplocarpus foetidus*
(WI State Herbarium - Aaron Carlson)

Throughout the growing season, BMAP has several excellent property tours, classes, and walks to introduce you to some excellent ecological restoration and other members of the BMAP community. I'm also still accepting [BMAP's Site Visit Questionnaires](#) for folks interested in a 2025 Site Visit. Depending on the level of interest, openings for site visits may be limited. If you are interested, expect to hear from me directly about planning a specific date/time within the week!

I am also always available to answer BMAP member questions as they arise. I am always happy to communicate via [email](#) or over the phone if you have restoration questions or would like insight into land stewardship specific to your property. [Your support and the enrollment of new members](#) allow BMAP to continue supporting private land restoration through consulting and building the restoration community in SW Wisconsin.

Conversations, or Walks with a Naturalist, consider an additional [donation to BMAP](#). so we can continue serving the SW Wisconsin region.

All the Best,
Sam Anderson
Outreach Ecologist
ecologist@bluemounds.org.

New BMAP Facebook Outreach

The [Blue Mounds Area Project](#) Facebook page is a good place to find information about upcoming events, but it's a one-way flow of information. Did you know we also have a Facebook group? Joining the [BMAP Facebook group](#) is a great way to connect with other BMAP members. To facilitate engagement, we'll soon begin posting regular conversation starters.

At any time you can also post:

- **Restoration-related questions**
- **Requests for help with burns**
- **Extra seeds or plants to share**
- **Photos of what's growing in your prairie or woodland**
- **Anything else that relates to ecological restoration in WI**

To join the group, [visit the group](#) and click Join Group. The group is open to all landowners and allies in the Driftless Area of WI or surrounding areas who are working to restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Upcoming BMAP Events



Pasqueflower (Anemone patens) - WI State Herbarium (Kristen K Michels)

BMAP 2024 Walk With a Naturalist

Take a chance to explore a new location or natural community here in southern WI with some members of the BMAP community!

Shea Wetland

Leader: Pat Trochlell

Jul 05, 2025, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Barneveld, 3095 Mounds View Rd, Barneveld, WI 53507, USA

IATA Swamp Lover's Section

Leader: Sam Anderson

Aug 09, 2025, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Dane County, Co Rd KP & Scheele Rd, Berry, WI 53528, USA

DALC Trail

Exact Location TBD

BMAP 2025 Property Tours

BMAP has three scheduled property tours to provide insight and inspiration for your own land management.

Paul Fuchs & Martha Fish

May 31, 2025, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM CDT

N9645 Primrose Center Rd, Belleville, WI 53508, USA

See the results of decades of restoration and land management in oak woodlands, wetlands, and dry prairies, and hear about experiences partnering with state, federal, nonprofit, and private contractors on various restoration projects

James MacDonald

Jun 28, 2025, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM CDT

8596 Sunnyside Rd, Blanchardville, WI 53516, USA

This property is a family effort, with MacD carrying on the stewardship and land ethic of his parents. Enjoy taking a look at recent oak woodland restorations on the property, including recently liberated ~200 year old oaks.

Prairie Spirit Wildlife Sanctuary

Aug 16, 2025, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM CDT

1811 Spring Rose Rd, Verona, WI 53593, USA

Owned by John Barnes and Kel Mattice, the sanctuary is a former dairy farm just south of Verona. Moving from dairy to beef, then to crops and pasture, this 200 acre restoration is an excellent example of adaptive land management

In case you missed our Winter Conversations:

Restoration at the former Badgerland Munitions Property

Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Hear from a representative of the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance about their efforts in the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, including management goals, progress, and highlights.

Coyotes in Our Grasslands

Carl Anderson

Learn about coyotes' behavior and impacts on grassland communities in southern Wisconsin. Gain a better perspective on the importance and complexity of Wisconsin's most abundant wild canine.

BMAP President Greg Jones & BMAP Outreach Ecologist Sam Anderson
Join our presentation on the natural history and science behind Garlic Mustard, and how
WI landowners manage the invasive species in their woodlands.

Other SW Wisconsin Events & Resources



Prairie Smoke (Geum triflorum) - WI State Herbarium (Aaron Carlson)

Know of a local event that might be of interest to BMAP Members? Send the information to ecologist@bluemounds.org

Attention Southwest Wisconsin landowners! Are you interested in learning how to use prescribed fire on your land as a management tool? If so, join us for one of our introductory prescribed burning workshops this spring! The class will cover topics such as fire ecology, burning techniques, safety protocols, equipment usage and more. There will be 25 spots available for each class, so secure your spot today on the '[Skills Training and Events](#)' page at driftlessgrasslands.org.

Details

Date: Thursday, April 17th in Mount Horeb **or** Saturday, May 10th in Mineral Point (both workshops are the same, just in different locations on different days)

Time: 8:30am-4pm

Cost: \$25 per Participant
Live Fire Demo (weather permitting)
Lunch and Snacks Provided

Questions? contact Olivia Horton-Pacana at ohorton-pacana@pheasantsforever.org

Ice Age Trail Alliance Events & Workdays

If you are looking to get to know the natural communities of southern WI or are hoping to build skills in land management, the IATA has a weekly hikes and workdays in the Blue Mounds area throughout April and May.

Dane County Parks Events

Dane county parks has a whole host of educational events and restoration workdays for folks interested in enjoying and restoring grasslands and woodlands.

Friends of the Arboretum Native Plant Sale

May 17, 2025, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
1207 Seminole Highway
Madison, WI 53711-3726

In the large tents on the lawn near the Visitor Center, more than 200 species of native grasses, woodland, prairie, and savanna plants are available while supplies last

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK

Spring Phenology in Trees, Herbs, and Non-native Plants



Skunk Cabbage; Photo Credit: Olivia Kovacs

One of the best parts about spring is the first signs of plant growth we see as the weather gets warmer! Even if plants aren't native, they can still give us a bit of joy and help us track the progress of other species. Phenology is the study of events in natural history like the migration of birds, bud break of trees, and flowering of herbs. These types of observations help us gauge the progress of seasons, help scientists measure changes in ecosystems, help us plan our gardens, and provide a bit of joy as spring begins.

Tree Phenology

Budbreak in trees can be some of the first signs of spring in Wisconsin. groups like aspen, willows, and hazelnuts are often some of the first flowers we see, though you need to look

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can have significant effects on ecosystems and people. Budbreak in maples mark the end of the sugarbush for those of us who tap trees, and the increase in sapflow and sugars mean that squirrels are busy munching on twigs in the canopy. Maples aren't the only target. Squirrels chew on elms, ashes, and walnuts as buds start opening.



*Flower on American Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) - cr. Sam Anderson*



Budbreak on Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) - cr. Olivia Kovacs

Herb Phenology

We don't have to only look up for signs of spring. Some of our earliest flowering herbs are active as early as late-February. Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), found in rich substrates in wetlands throughout the state, produce their own heat (see above). The heat often melts the snow around their interestingly shaped floral structures (called a spadix), but it also attracts pollinators to the warm environment within the modified leaf (called a spathe) that surrounds the flowers. This adaptation allows Skunk Cabbage to take advantage of early pollination better than any other species in our flora, and the musty aroma it produces (to attract pollinators) gives rise to its common name.

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Spring Beauty (Claytonia virginica) - WI State Herbarium (Derek Anderson)

In April, naturalists in southern WI start looking for spring ephemerals. These are small herbs that take advantage of the brightly lit understory that exists before trees put out their leaves. Spring ephemerals' leaves are photosynthetic powerhouses that are only active for a few short days in the spring. Ephemerals often specialize in bumblebee pollination, and store their energy in bulbs. It is still a bit early for spring ephemerals, but check your mesic and rich woodlands (especially those with sugar maples or basswoods) within the next couple of weeks.

Non-Native Spring Flowers

Not all of the flowers we see in early spring are native. Narcissus, daffodils, crocuses, Lily-of-the-Valley, and Snowdrops (*Galanthus*) are common early spring flowers in our gardens. Lilaes and Forsythia are common flowering shrubs that most folks can identify in their gardens. Though pretty, these flowers shouldn't be considered part of our native



Lily of the Valley (Convallaria majalis) - WI State Herbarium (Merel L Black)

While these non-native flowers may not contribute to native ecosystems, their presence in our daily lives can be incredibly helpful. I take note of non-native flower phenology and use these common species to infer the timing of other phenological events that I'd like to observe that require a trip into the field. Once I see crocuses and snowdrops, I know to start looking for spring ephemerals in about 3-4 weeks. Daffodils typically bloom ~1-2 weeks before I get serious about looking for ephemerals and plan outings to some of my favorite spots. When lilacs bloom, I take my cue and start looking for morels (so long as the trout aren't biting).

Most Wisconsinites enjoy early signs of spring, but the more you pay attention to spring

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predictions for spring phenology, and most are willing to part with some of their clairvoyant gardening/fishing tips if you ask nicely. The spring journals of naturalists like Aldo Leopold have even become incredible scientific resources decades after his death, allowing researchers to document how spring phenology has changed in the past century. So as the weather gets warmer, take a stroll on a warm day and take the time to notice the first signs of spring!

Make a donation

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.

Thanks to all our members for your support!

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