BMAP
BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

# October 2025: Blue Mounds Area Project eBulletin

*Conservation and Community. Together.*

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Author: BMAP Outreach Ecologist Sam Anderson, ecologist@bluemounds.org

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# Outreach Ecologist's Updates

*Sam Anderson*

Hello BMAP,

I hope you've enjoyed our balmy September. Once again, a growing season has ended all too soon! It was a great season for BMAP, with excellent tours of BMAP-member properties and dozens of site visits. I toured ~1000 acres of southern Wisconsin prairie, savanna and woodland, all being restored by hard-working BMAP members. The mild spring and early summer rain led to a verdant summer, with many of you sharing stories of prairies in full bloom and optimistic observations of Monarchs, Eastern Bluebirds, bats, and other creatures taking advantage of the abundance. All of this fecundity followed by a dry September has led to an excellent fall for seed collection, either on your own properties or volunteering with any one of our local conservation organizations!

Royal Catchfly (*Silene regia*) - Credit: Sam Anderson

I've officially ended the 2025 season for site visits, but you can always get on the schedule for 2026! Just fill out BMAP's Site Visit Questionnaire to let me know you're interested! Thank you to those BMAP members who invited me to your properties in 2025. From native shrubs to pine relicts, its great to see the range of habitats that you all are working so hard to manage and restore! *If you have appreciated any of our summer Site Visits, Property Tours, Winter Conversations, or Walks with a Naturalist, consider an additional donation to BMAP. so we can continue serving the SW Wisconsin region.*

Just because the growing season is done doesn't mean that restoration work ends. I am always happy to communicate via email or over the phone if you want to discuss winter

Remember that your support and the enrollment of new members allows BMAP to continue supporting private land restoration through consulting and building the restoration community in SW Wisconsin.

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

## BMAP on Facebook

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

Grey Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor* complex) - Credit: Sam Anderson

## BMAP Winter Conversations

While we take a hiatus from outdoor events, BMAP's Winter Conversation series starts up again in the new year!

**Thursday, February 12**
**Multifunctional Agriculture & Agroforestry Systems**
Jacob Grace - Savanna Institute

**Thursday February 26**
**Woody Shrubs of Southern Wisconsin**
Peter Marshall

**Thursday, March 12**
**The Driftless Trail**
Barb Barzen - Driftless Area Land Conservancy

**In case you missed our 2025 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.

**Garlic Mustard: Natural History and Management**
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

*Bottle Gentian (Gentiana andrewsii) - Photo Credit: Sam Anderson*

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

## Southern Driftless Grasslands Events

how agriculture and conservation intersect!

## 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.

## UW-Extension Forestry Events

UW-Extension Forestry (within the Natural Resources Institute) offers classes and events all year long. The Learn about your Land on-line courses are particularly focused on providing landowners resourcse and connections to agencies, non-profits, and community groups.

# Naturalist's Notebook

### Phenology in-situ and online

*Fall Phenology Favorite: flowering of Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana); Photo Credit: Sam Anderson*

Phenology, the study of the timing of natural phenomena like flowering or bird migrations, is a hallmark of any naturalist's land ethic. It connects us to our places, but it can also inform important management decisions like when to plant, harvest, burn, forage, and hunt.

Historically, phenology existed in the journals of hunters, farmers, and naturalists like Aldo Leopold. Other experts like Ruth Hine (first woman to earn a PhD in zoology from UW-Madison) built professional standards to collect statewide phenology datasets to better understand our most vulnerable fauna. Many land owners and naturalists still keep journals to record observations on their own property. These data can be valuable information for tracking how your property changes year to year and over longer timespans. In fact, these data have even been used as the basis for published scientific research.

give you a larger perspective on the species you are interested in by pooling information from thousands of naturalists across the state and across the world.

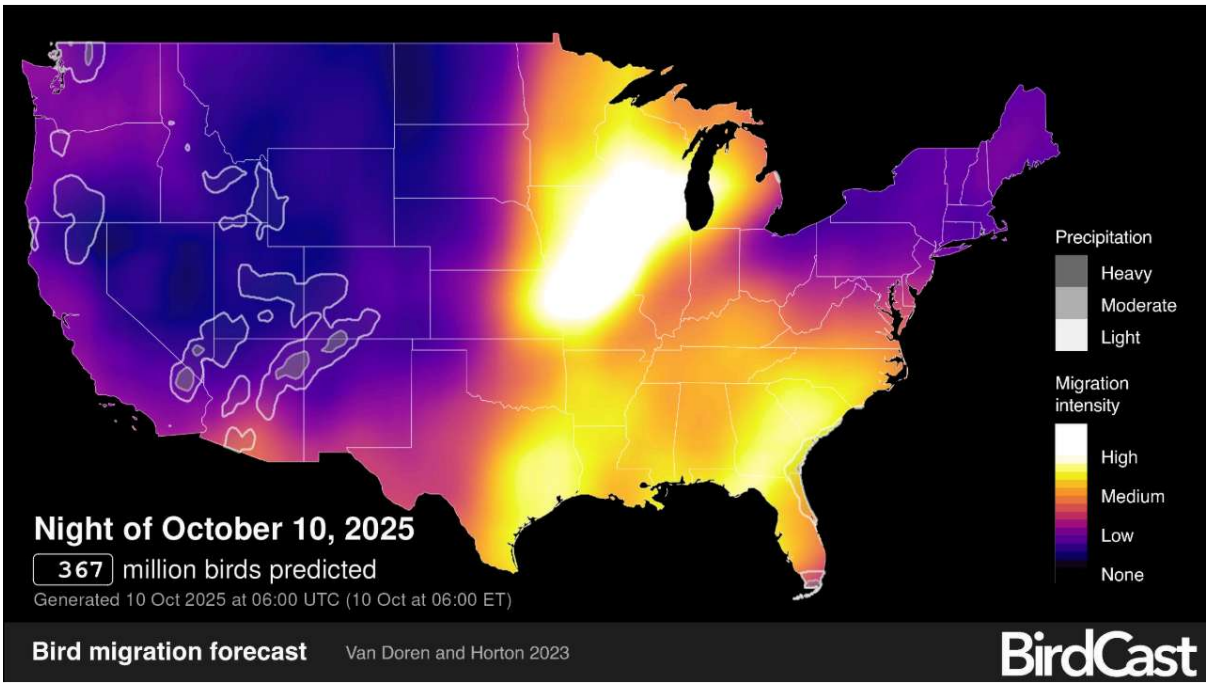
## BirdCast

Doppler radar has changed how we view weather, giving us hours and days to prepare for rain and snow. But did you know that radar can also pick up migrating birds? Originally viewed as nuisance noise, ecologists in the early 2000's realized that they could estimate the timing and intensity of bird migrations using doppler radar.

Enter BirdCast, a dashboard that allows you to observe large-scale patterns in bird migration on an hourly basis. Here are just a few tools BirdCast has created that can contextualize what you see on your own property.

### Migration Forecasting

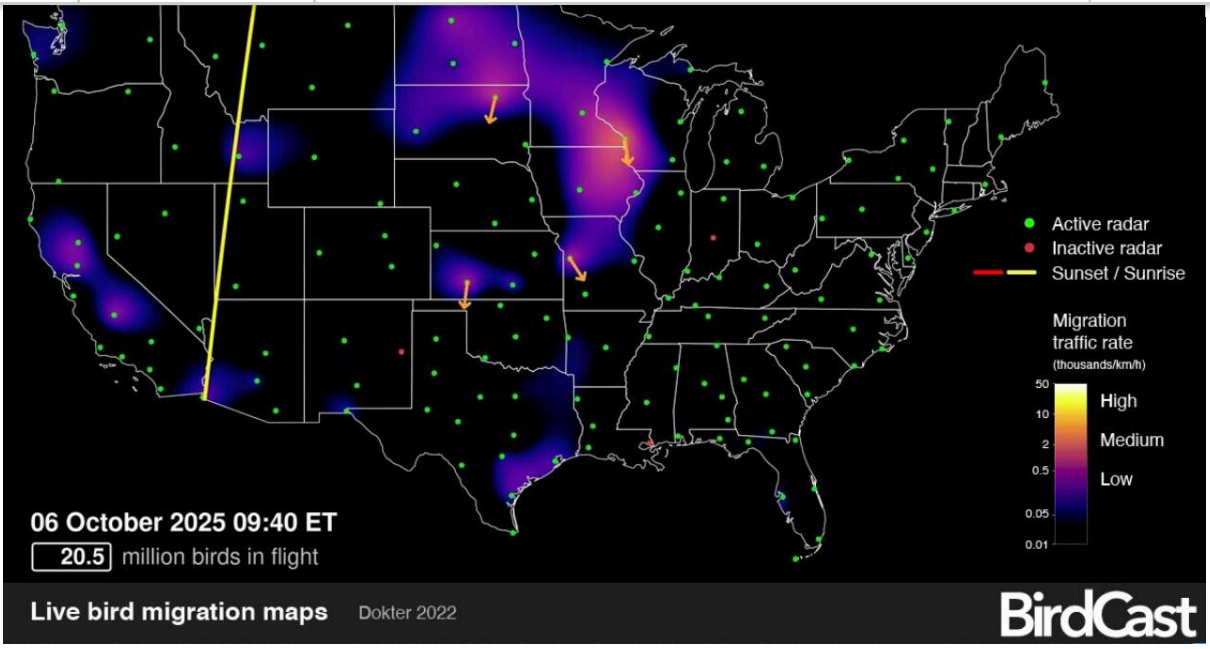
Each species migrates differently, but some weather conditions like consistent southerly winds can be used to predict when birds are migrating. BirdCast gives predictions 2-3 days in advance, allowing you to gauge when you might want to keep an eye out for passing birds.




*Caption: Notice the increase in predicted migration following a low pressure front and precipitation in the Midwest on Oct.7, 2025*

### Live Migration

While many of use are used to seeing migrating geese, cranes, or raptors during the day, lots of our smaller birds (warblers, ducks, orioles etc.) migrate at night. BirdCast's live migration maps can give you a feel for who might be migrating at any given time.

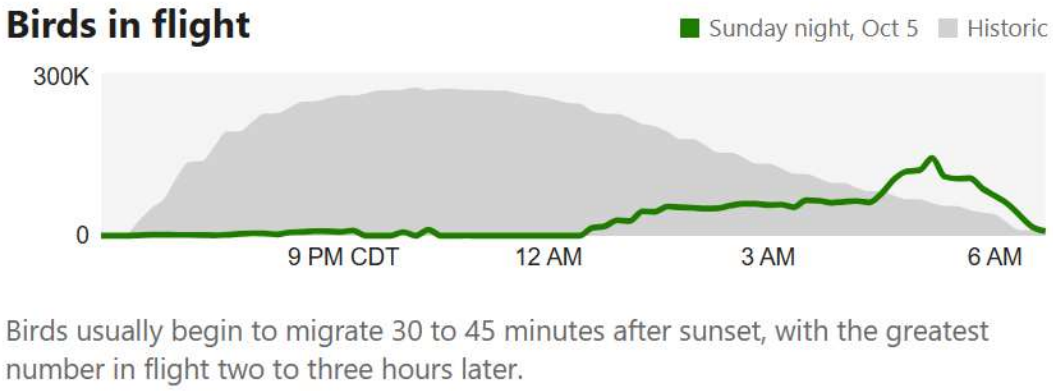



*Caption: Live migration data are available based on active radar data collection. Note the increased traffic over the Mississippi River after the rains of Oct. 5. The Mississippi river valley serves as a major migratory corridor, especially for migrations from the forests north of the Great Lakes.*

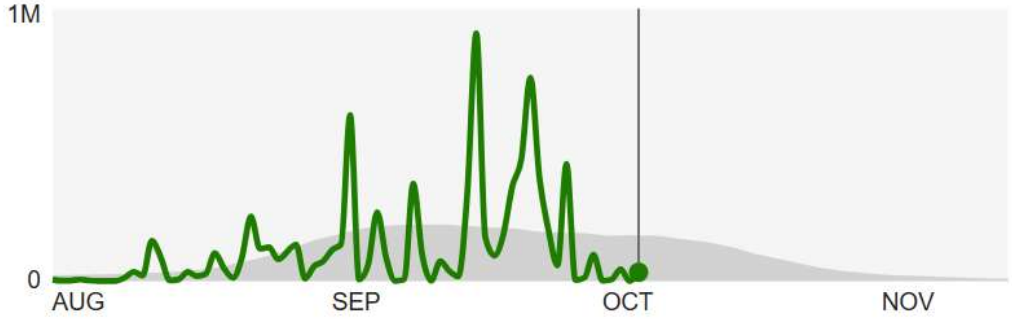
## Migration Dashboard

BirdCast can also provide county level data for bird migrations, allowing you to gauge your personal observations against local weather conditions and historical averages. If you want to make sure you don't miss a great migration window, you can also sign up for migration alerts for your area.

### Example: Sauk County, WI on Oct. 5, 2025

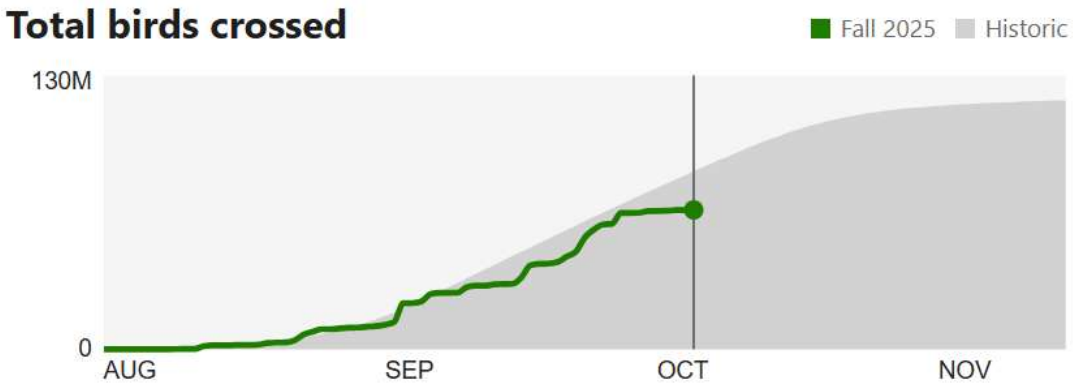



*Caption: Note that some rain and southerly winds moved through Sauk County around 5-6am on Oct. 5, 2025*




During fall migration, most birds pass through the contiguous U.S. from early September through October.

*Caption: You can see the peak nights for migration in Sauk County this year, with a few major nights occurring in late September.*




This is the estimated total number of birds that have fully crossed this region. The curve rises quickly during peak migration and levels off at the end of the season.

*Caption: While much of the migration has already passed, ~40% of the historic migration volume has yet to pass through Sauk County.*

## eBird - Phenology

BirdCast provides us with a broad overview of migration, but what about individual species or regions that we might be interested in?

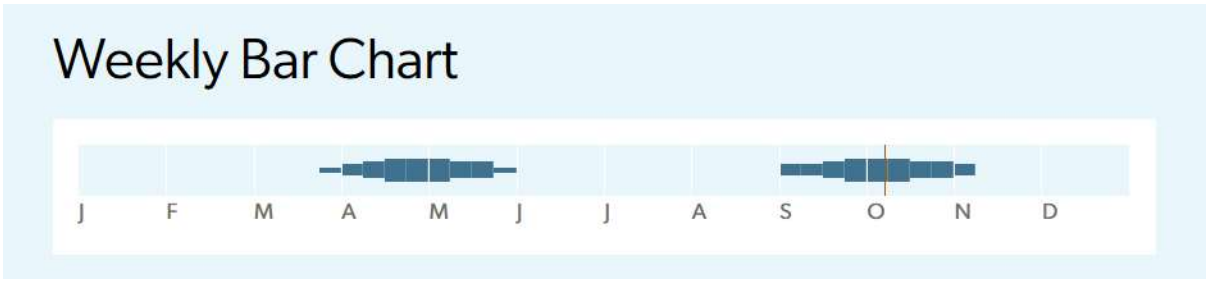
eBird is a testament to the work of digitally savvy birders recording their observations and contributing to larger community science projects. These observations often include photos, songs, dates, and locations. From these data, eBird can provide local data on when people are most likely to see any particular species. This can be helpful for gauging when to start/stop looking, but it can also provide context for any unusual observations. Birds

help us identify factors that may alter the migration habits of particular species.

You can use eBird to focus on specific locations, giving you a good overview of what birds are likely to be in your area. You can also explore individual species, either across their entire range or in your neck of the woods.

### Example: Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Corthylio calendula*) in Columbia County, WI

The Ruby-crowned Kinglet summers throughout much of Canada, winters in the southern US, and only briefly passes through Wisconsin and the rest of the Midwest. As a naturalist or birder, your best bet at seeing this little passerine in WI is to catch it at the right time!

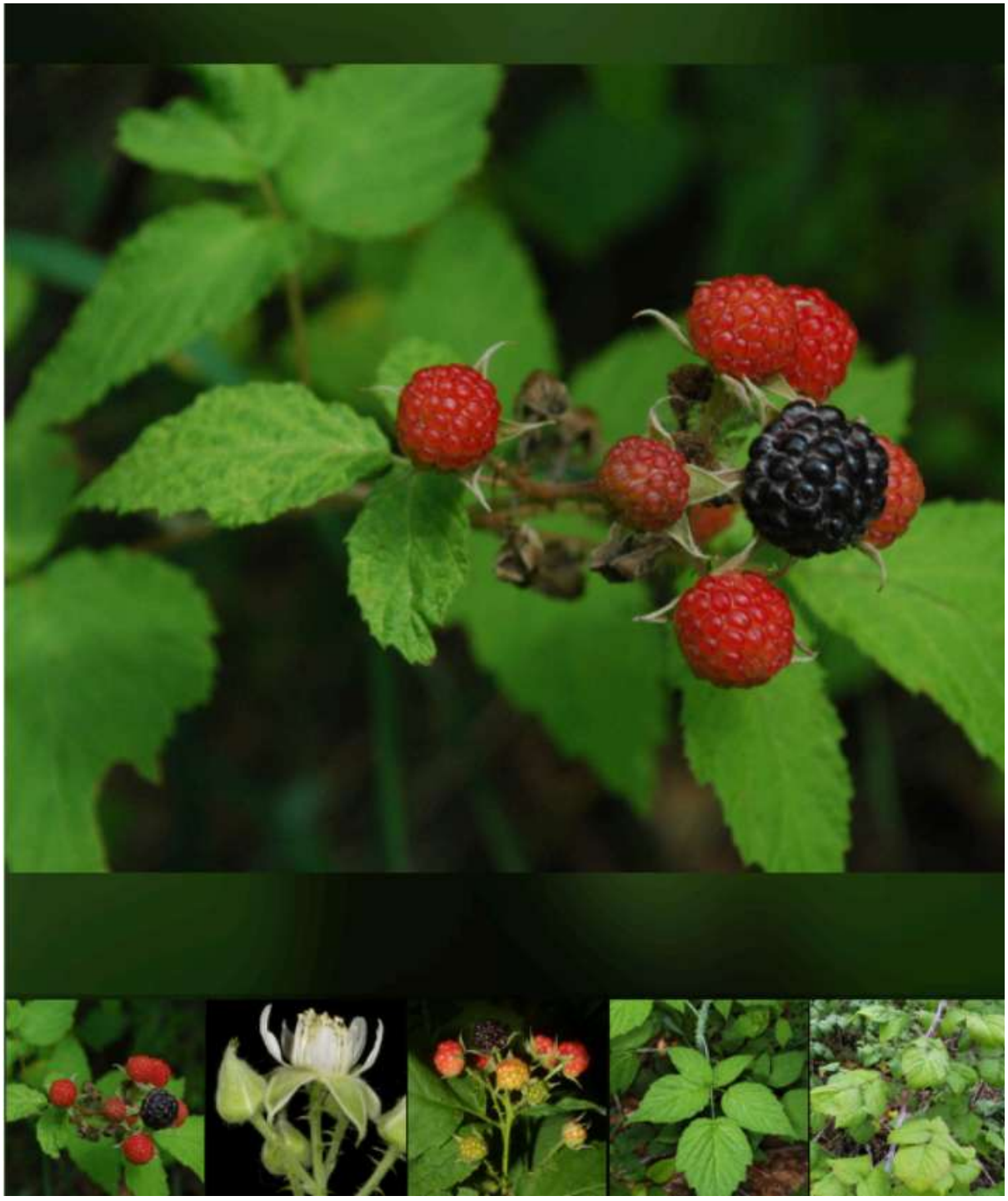




*Caption: You can see the migratory timing of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Columbia County, WI from this seasonal histogram of observations. It looks like early October is the perfect time for birding for migratory passerines in Columbia County, but a few*

## iNaturalist - Phenology Data

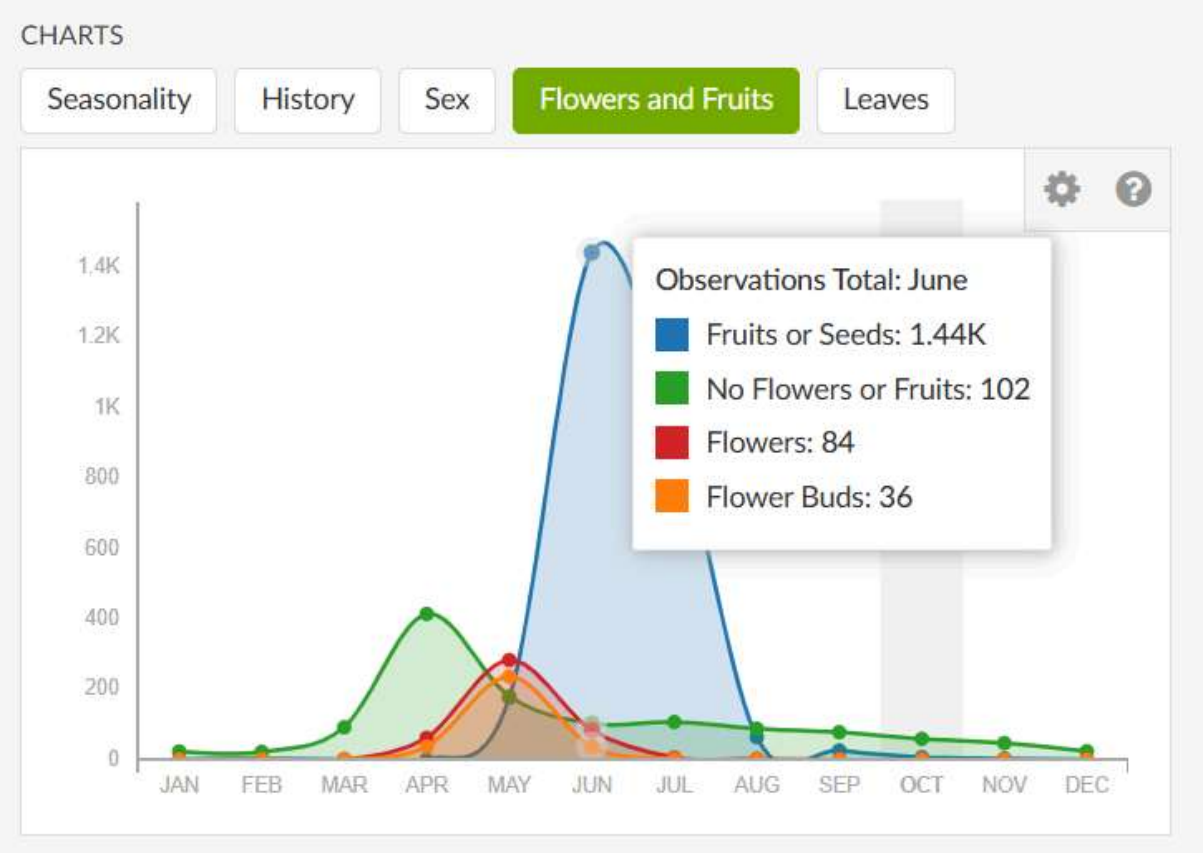
iNaturalist is great for learning and recording species, and it contributes a huge volume of biodiversity data to the public, conservation practitioners, and researchers. When you record an observation, you can also record various phenological stages of the plant's lifecycle, like flowering, fruiting, or seed-set. With all of these data, you can better predict when to go looking for a particular species in flower, when to forage or gather, or when to collect seed from your property.

**Blackcap Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)**



you out!

In the *Explore* option on iNaturalist's homepage, you can search for any species you are interested in. By navigating to the species page on iNaturalist, you can find a summary of how many observations there are, where the observations came from, and the seasonality of the observations. Some species are better represented than others, so rare species may not have a very large dataset to draw from.




*Caption: These seasonal charts of observations for Blackcaps show that they leaf out around April, flower in May, and reach peak fruiting in June-July.*

## Conclusion

Phenology is a great habit for a naturalist or land owner to practice, especially for understanding your own property or plants! But nothing exists in a vacuum, and your property exists as part of a much larger ecological landscape. By contributing to and using community science resources, you can greatly improve your ability to track changes on your property and get to know our region in a new way!

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!

Follow us on Facebook

Find more resources on our website

Questions? Send us an email

Renew your membership

Blue Mounds Area Project
PO Box 332
Mt. Horeb, WI 53572