



Blue Mounds Area Project

Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats

Winter 2019

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Everyone who has been a part of the Blue Mounds Area Project, whether back in the day or just recently, knows how much Carroll Schaal has meant to the success of the organization. As BMAP looks forward to a new strategic plan under the leadership of our new board president, Amy Alstad, it's time to pause and appreciate the historical, and continuing, support of Carroll, without whom there might not be a Blue Mounds Area Project. Carroll was there at the beginning of BMAP, and for every step along the way.

Tribute to Carroll Schaal

Denise Thornton

I lost touch for years and then found ourselves living near each other, and he was already involved in BMAP.”

Carroll was fairly new to Mount Horeb in 1994 when he heard that Brian Pruka, working with Community Conservation Consultants, was organizing an environmental outreach program.

“I'd worked in natural resources all my life,” says Carroll. “It's not just a vocation - it's what I do, so I went to a meeting to learn about it, and before you know it, I was on a steering committee.”

Early Days

Paul Ohlrogge, attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, with Carroll and remembers, “He and his pals were already tracking eagles, canoeing, and exploring different areas. He loved spending time outdoors and surrounding himself with others who shared that passion. He and

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Carroll Schaal sitting at a BMAP informational booth during a fund-raiser at Whole Foods.

President's Message

Amy Alstad, BMAP President

Greetings,

In the pages of this newsletter, you'll have a chance to learn about Carroll Schaal's outstanding leadership and long-standing commitment to the Blue Mounds Area Project. You'll be invited to revisit the long days and glorious green landscapes of summer time in Wisconsin as you read highlights from our 2019 private property tour series. And you'll get a first look at some of the exciting projects we are working on, including the outstanding speakers and topics lined up for our 2020 Conservation Conversations winter lecture series.

During this season of gratitude and giving, I hope you'll give generously to support our work.



Photo by Eric Udelhofen

Amy Alstad, President

Maybe you'll contribute to recognize and honor Carroll Schaal's commitment to BMAP. Maybe you'll give to support Micah Kloppenburg, our Outreach Ecologist, so that he can continue providing site visits

and face-to-face expertise to landowners working on restoration. Or perhaps you'll donate because you appreciate the space for building community and sharing knowledge we create at our events.

Regardless of your motivations for supporting our organization, your gift is essential. Financial contributions from members and donors make up the vast majority of our annual budget. Your gift ensures BMAP can continue our important work promoting conservation on private land.

I truly believe in the mission of this organization, and I ask that you join me in supporting our efforts with a generous gift this season. Thank you!

Ecologist Report

Micah Kloppenburg, BMAP Ecologist



Micah Kloppenburg

30 monarch management plans

With 2019 nearly past, BMAP members and I have together walked through a total of 15 properties and talked through restoration opportunities on nearly 1,400 acres. In addition, I have composed

for private property owners as part of a larger grant in partnership with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy. I'm also pleased with the rollout of our monthly BMAP eBulletin, as just about half of our subscribers regularly open each month's mailing. Hopefully this means that it has been a helpful and fun resource for you all! If you have suggestions or would like to help contribute to the eBulletin please get in touch with me at ecologist@bluemounds.org.

This summer's member conversations and site visits have also left me with a few winter reflections that I hope will improve my work with our BMAP membership as we enter into the next year.

- Review the common management recommendations written into site visit reports to improve the clarity and specificity of restoration actions (e.g., brush control and herbicide treatments).
- Improve species lists for seed mixes of new prairie installations, create a list of species to target for interseeding of existing planted prairies, and set example costs for mixes of varying diversity (low to high).

If you'd like to organize a site visit, have questions on weed management, or would like guidance in developing a restoration plan please contact me at ecologist@bluemounds.org.

This winter, the BMAP Board will work with a variety of stakeholders to complete its second formal strategic plan. The plan will provide programmatic goals and a proposed set of specific actions to achieve them over the next five years.

Gathering input from involved individuals and experts from within and also outside the BMAP community, the Board aims to update the existing strategic plan to ensure that our organization can confidently make decisions about actions that will achieve BMAP’s overall mission to “inspire, inform and empower private landowners in the Southwestern Wisconsin region to enjoy, protect and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.”

Thanks to dedicated members like yourself, BMAP has grown into a cornerstone organization for landowners in southwest Wisconsin seeking to protect and restore the region’s unique ecological communities. Growth of membership and associated contributions, recent turnover on the Board, and both the expansion and dissolution of some regional conservation partner organizations provide a timely opportunity for BMAP to reassess its goals, and to focus its energy and resources on achieving them.

Strategic planning is not new to BMAP. The first strategic plan was completed in 2001, about six years

after the organization’s inception. That plan resulted in formalizing BMAP’s name, its status as a 501(c)3, and set some goals that are still in place today, such as increasing membership to 1,000. In 2005, The Wisconsin River Alliance assisted in a series of benchmarking and capacity-building sessions for BMAP. This resulted in repealing a site-visit fee that had been in place for a few years, and setting a hiring strategy for summer ecologists.

In part, the current planning process began nearly three years ago when the Board acknowledged BMAP’s potential to grow, and the need for long-term guidance to direct that growth. Though the Board collectively has a deep knowledge of the region and the BMAP organization, it lacks current input from other stakeholders affected by BMAP’s actions.

As a result, the Board has decided to hire a professional facilitator to further guide the planning process. Having reviewed proposals from three local facilitators, we are now working with Effectability, LLC to complete a 5-year strategic plan by early 2020.

In December and January, input will be gathered from a variety of stakeholders, including a subset of current and former BMAP members, as well as local non-profit and corporate conservation partners, among others. In the coming months, here are some

ways you can contribute to the update process and the long-term development of BMAP:

- By January 4, 2020, share your thoughts with the Board. What do you think are BMAP’s strengths or weaknesses? Do you see new opportunities for improving our impact on ecosystem health? If you have a vision of how you’d like BMAP to grow, specific activities you’d like to see more or less of, or components of BMAP work you find particularly valuable, send your ideas to ecologist@bluemounds.org.

Updating BMAP’s Strategic Plan

Jennifer Thieme

- In late February, 2020 there will be a review and comment period on the draft strategic plan.
- Join the Board, or recommend that a friend do so. The Board is seeking new members with fundraising, development, technology, and legal experience, and any enthusiastic person for our Communications or Events Committees.

Stay tuned for updates on and outcomes from the planning process!

Did You Know ... that you can keep up with what is happening at BMAP on line?

We all know about BMAP’s regular web page. bluemounds.org

BMAP also has a Facebook page where you can learn about upcoming and past BMAP events, plus relevant environmental news. facebook.com/BMAPcommunity

Plus join BMAP’s group on Facebook where you can interact with other members, share photos, and comment about land restoration ideas and activities. facebook.com/groups/BMAPcommunity

And if you haven’t yet subscribed to BMAP’s new monthly eBulletin, it’s a great way to get announcements, habitat restoration tips, and other great BMAP-related information. bluemounds.org/ebulletin.html

“Winter is a great time to ID trees and shrubs”, says Cindy Becker, BMAP board member and Southwest Grasslands Coordinator with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy. “Don’t be intimidated. You may find that it is easy to identify trees in winter”.

Anna Healy, also a BMAP board member and the City of Fitchburg Urban Forester and Naturalist, teamed up with Cindy to present a November field course on Winter Tree and Shrub Identification to about fifteen attendees at Donald Park. An early winter cold snap broke just in time for an above-freezing afternoon of learning and sharing about how to identify trees and shrubs after leaf-off.



Photo by Doug Hansmann

Winter Tree and Shrub Identification Field Course

Doug Hansmann

In addition to sharing their expertise on identification, Anna and Cindy led an ongoing discussion of reasons why this is a great time of year to survey your native and invasive trees and shrubs. It turns out that winter is also an excellent time to be matching your management goals with working in the woods to control invasives and promote your favored habitat.

“It’s a great time to get rid of honeysuckle and buckthorn. Cut and treat as much as you can”, says Anna. They’re both hard on wildlife.

- Honeysuckle is a sturdy shrub with a shaggy bark on multiple shoots, and opposite leaves. In mid-November it will still hold on to some greenish leaves.
- Buckthorn is a tree “with stiff thorns ready to poke your eyes

out”, says Cindy. If you scrape off the outer bark, you’ll see yellow or orange coloration beneath. It tends to have a perpendicular branch structure.

“Winter is also a great time to take a look at trees on a landscape scale”, says Anna. “If you have any topography to your land and you look out in the winter, groupings of trees will stand out - conifers, oak trees hanging onto their leaves, clonal aspen. In the summer, it all just looks green.”



Photo by Doug Hansmann

Oaks:

- There are many species of oaks. Since they tend to hold on to their leaves in winter, this can be a relatively easy time of year to identify individual species.
- In particular, for young oak saplings that are just emerging out of tall grass, this can be the best time of year to make an ID because their leaves jump out against a backdrop of grass stems and leaves.
- “If you are encouraging young oaks, you’ll want to rake away the leaf litter around them so they don’t get fire scars during spring burning”, says Anna. “And while it might be premature to do that now, you could tie what you re-

ally like in winter so that you can easily find them later. Mark them when they’re still down in the grass in winter, care for them to release them when they are being disguised by all the next summer’s greenery, and soon you’ll have something great to talk about.”

- Red and black oaks have pointed-tipped leaf lobes. While black oaks have a more pronounced acorn cap than do reds, and fuzzier buds, these two species can be difficult to tell apart. Fortunately, they are often managed in similar ways.
- White and bur oaks have round-tipped leaf lobes. White oak leaves are deeply-lobed while

cont. page 5, see ID

Winter restoration work is a balance of the physical and the philosophical. Contrary to the hurried work of spring or summer weed control, winter work has a certain, patient pace that follows from the first cup of coffee or tea in the morning and the slow gathering of the sun's rays on the frozen ground.

The wearying cold and shortened day length serve as a gentle restraint; a reminder that the day's methodical work of cut, treat, stack, haul, and burn will not be hurried. My favorite part of these frozen work days are the intentional pauses, stopping to rest a moment to take in the absolute quiet that only a winter's day can bring. The draw of your breath and the crackle of the brush fire in the background sound clear in the cold blue of the day, yet (paradoxically) are muffled under the openness of the winter landscape.

Trees exist in another world in this wintery space, present yet dormant, and in my eyes, more receptive to study and contempla-

tion. In the spring and summer the woods are alive with action, a cacophony of movement, growth, pollination, and predation. The quiet of winter dormancy seems ever so appropriate to appreciate the delicate details of a tree's character: buds (terminal, lateral, vegetative, flower), bud scales, leaf scars, patterned bundle scars (from vascular strands), twig coloration and texture, lenticel shape, bark form, and a tree's unique branch structure.

An easy favorite of mine, the sulfur-yellow buds of bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*) stand out from the many grays and browns. Another favorite is the nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*) with its long, slender, talon-like terminal bud and persistent fruits (they taste like overripe bananas with a hint of raisin).

Oaks can be tricky to identify with their fallen leaves (red oaks the exception) and acorns hidden from view by the snow. In addition to the dependable indicators of habitat, bark texture, and bark coloration,

oaks are differentiated in high winter by the length and pubescence (hairiness) of their terminal buds.

Familiarity and attention to bud characteristics are especially important for seedling and sapling identification, as their adolescent bark may not meet our field guide expectations. Speaking of field guides, I recommend Michigan Trees by B.V. Barnes and W.H. Wagner. Of course, there surely are other excellent go-to guides, and it's handy to have a few to refer to.



Winter Musings

Micah Kloppenburg, BMAP Ecologist

All in all, winter is the season to begin an apprenticeship to a tree: to learn of and wonder at the hidden energy manifest in the stillness of winter wood, dormant buds, and arching structure that is unique to each tree.

ID from page 4

bur oak leaves have shallow-lobed mitten-shaped leaves.

Aspen:

- Aspen trees are clonal. The bark is a whitish-gray with long, horizontal lenticels on the trunk and branches. If your goal is to remove aspen, you need to remove the entire clone.

Along with oaks, black cherry "is a caterpillar magnet," says Anna. "Black cherry is one of the most common trees on the landscape, and we tend to cut and treat them, but it's coming up everywhere, and you may be able to use it to your advantage. They are very attractive to birds with all of the caterpillars on them."

- The branches and young trunks of black cherry have short, white, horizontal lenticels (for gas exchange). On older trunks the bark has a rough, peeling look.

Black walnuts are filling the woods in some areas. While it makes for valuable lumber if a specimen has a stout and straight form, it is not ecologically desirable in our area.

- Black walnut has large leaf scars that look like a smile. The bark has a pronounced diamond-shaped look. Stems have a characteristic chambered pith.

If you are reading this article and wishing for more, here are some resources Anna suggests. And while a good reference can be invaluable, it's hard to beat the

hands-on knowledge that comes with attending a field course. "This is something we could do again next winter", says Anna.

UW Stevens Point College of Natural Resources on line Winter Tree Identification Key

<https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/leaf/Documents/LEAFWinterTreeIDKey.pdf>

Winter Tree Finder: A Manual for Identifying Deciduous Trees in Winter (Eastern US). by May Theilgaard Watts and Tom Watts.

Specifically for winter shrub identification The Shrub Identification Book: The Visual Method for the Practical Identification of Shrubs, Including Woody Vines and Ground Covers by George W. Symonds and A. W. Merwin.

Participants at the last of this summer's three property tours got to see the land restoration and apple orchard-in-progress that BMAP Board President Amy Alstad and her husband, Eric Udelhofen have been working on since they bought their 40 acres, which they share with Eric's parents, Barbara Spring and Don LeBois.

They fell in love with the gorgeous topography, surrounded on all four sides by non-cultivated land off Pikes Peak Road in Ridgeway Township. The one-acre apple orchard was proof that it would be a great place for them to grow organic apples.

Amy and Eric start with invasive species management, then plant back into it, get a fire plan and fire breaks in place, and start burning, adding one to three acres every year. For years, they would do one area and then the area next to it to create a big core of high quality habitat.

"Recently we broke our own rule," says Amy. "Our most recent restoration unit is about an acre on the opposite end of our square of 40 acres. It was an area we hadn't explored. While making a trail, we discovered a clearing with a couple scraggly stems of barely hanging-on prairie vegetation in the midst of invasives. We found little bluestem and hoary puccoon, which is actually pretty rare. That's an indicator species of a nice plant community."

"I think finding that remnant has already changed and will continue to change how we are prioritizing the order of areas that we are working on," Amy says.

the people who were there. Our first compass plant bloomed on our fifth wedding anniversary."

Amy credited their progress in finding help with funding from the DNR Land Owner Incentive Program (LIP) led by Darcy Kind, and also Mike Engle from Partners for Wildlife from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "The cost share accelerated our timeline because we have been able to hire some contractor help for some units," she said. "If we had been clearing all the brush by ourselves, it would have been a much slower process."

Standing at the bottom of their valley, two savannas are being restored on the opposing slopes. The two examples invited a lot of participation debating the merits of chemical-free preparation and using chemicals.

One slope was cleared by Eric and Amy without using herbicide on the buckthorn and honeysuckle because it was too close to their certified organic apple orchard and also close to the area where their child plays. In lieu of chemicals, they interseeded the area with Virginia Wild Rye to fuel regular fire, which they hope will control the resprouts from woody vegetation.

In contrast, across the valley there is a similar savanna project. Two years later, with the help of matching funds from LIP, they hired a contractor and used herbicide to clear that slope. "It has definitely jumped ahead," says Amy. "It's in much better shape today than the one with no herbicides. It's a trade-off and a learning process."

The tour passed through the apple orchard. Amy and Eric have added another three acres of apple trees, carefully choosing heirloom varieties that are known to be more resistant to the maladies that make apples too ugly to sell at farmers' markets.

Alstad-Udelhofen Property Tour

Denise Thornton



Photo by Julie Raasch

"One thing I've learned the hard way as a landowner, even after seeing a lot of private properties in my professional capacity, is the challenge of pacing," says Amy. "You can't do it all at once. You have to riddle out where to start and how much to start with. You have to decide when that unit is far enough along that you can safely move on and bite off another project without backsliding on continuing projects."

"We planted the first patch of prairie on the property when Eric and I got married there in 2013," Amy remembers. "We had the wedding at the farm and instead of rice to toss, we gave everyone a packet of prairie seeds, lined up around a unit that we had prepped and sowed them. We call that the wedding prairie. It's six years old now, and it makes my heart happy every time I look at it to think of

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The story of Bob and Carolyn Laeser's 192-acre property began in the mid 60's, when Bob and his father hunted deer on various properties around Argyle. During that time, Bob developed a relationship with both the area's landowners and its local landscape.

Those relationships made the decision to move to the area from Kenosha to retire an easy one, and soon after Bob alerted the neighborhood that he was seeking to purchase acreage, he found himself the proud owner of a former dairy farm.

The purpose of Bob and Carolyn's 2002 purchase was clear: they intended to retire the entire farm, and place all acreage into conservation programs. By the time of this July's BMAP property tour and potluck, they had accomplished just that. However, successful program enrollment was merely the beginning: "I thought I'd be done by now," Bob stated with a grin, "but I learned I've barely started."

After handing out property maps that Bob had prepared for the tour, he outlined small changes to the proposed hike: the water was too high, so we could not safely cross the bridge made out of pallets. He figured we didn't want to swim, though given the temperature and humidity, some in the tour group might not have minded a dip.

The tour began in a field that was enrolled in CRP, and also tapped into a recent Driftless Area Land Conservancy project. Through the latter, Bob was provided with a monarch-friendly seed mix that he overseeded into the field after a fall burn.

The field was now in blossom with pale purple coneflower, bergamot, gray headed coneflower, false sunflower, and common milkweed. In a tale not unique to Bob, he told us how he used to aggressively remove common milkweed when he first purchased the property, viewing it as a nuisance. Now, he proudly waved his arm across a common milkweed

patch spreading up the hill, complete with adult monarchs in flight, to emphasize the patch's importance.

Another shift in management occurred when Bob took a cue from the plant community itself. At the property's highest point, where the group stopped to take in the imminent sunset, Bob pointed out a single, barely visible green stake. This was one of four stakes marking an exclusion from the CRP agreement so that the couple could build a gazebo to take in scenes like the one being enjoyed today.



Photo by Julie Raasch

The native plants, however, beat them to it. Although Bob had marked each corner by planting a compass plant, more came in by seed: wild quinine, prairie dropseed, butterfly weed, and others established, so now the couple has relinquished their gazebo plans in favor of letting this high-quality community flourish.

Bob also readily shared advice from years of management and a variety of starting points: be cautious of seed mixes with a high proportion of grasses to forbs, which can lead to big bluestem and Indian grass outcompeting the forbs. For Bob and Carolyn's dry prairie, a seed mix with majority forb seed, as well as some little bluestem and side oats grama, worked well. Don't be afraid to talk to your technical advisor about this concern so you can both reach a shared vision of the future prairie.

If converting from agriculture to prairie, Bob recommends planting soy as the final rotation; non-native weedy species persisted at noticeably lower levels in the fields where the Bob and Carolyn employed this approach. During the first two years of establishment, mow the prairie whenever it exceeds a foot or two in height. As the Laeser's son, Scott, who is managing similar habitats on his own property nearby noted, "you may feel bad, like you're mowing down what you're working toward."

Laeser Property Tour

Jennifer Thieme

But it's worth it. Combined with early season burns, which impair grasses before native forbs have had a chance to emerge, these management techniques resulted in a suite of highly diverse habitats across the Laeser property.

Another word of advice? Call the sheriff prior to each burn, because the one time you don't, as in Bob's case, the fire department may show up and start putting out your prescribed fire!

As the sun set and heat dissipated, attendees drove a short distance to the property of Scott and his spouse Chelsea to enjoy the potluck inside their beautifully renovated barn. There, Bob and Carolyn continued to share their lessons learned, and Scott closed out the evening with an impromptu hike to view the site's abundant lightning bugs.

We are grateful to the Laesers – of both generations! – for their commitment to restoring diverse, native plant communities to the landscape; expanding habitat for the region's rare and declining wildlife species; improving water quality; and sharing their space and experience with the BMAP membership.

SCHAAL from page 1

“Carroll formed an interim board that grew into an official board with bylaws for the Blue Mounds Project, as it was called then,” says Mike Anderson.



Carroll Schaal, Former BMAP President

Photo by Julie Raasch

Vice president initially, when the president moved to the east coast, Carroll stepped up and became president and held that office until the spring of 2015. Then his successor, Paul Ohlrogge, had to leave the president’s position because of family health issues, Carroll stepped up again. “Carroll was drafted into the presidency on two separate occasions,” Mike says, “He knew what to do and how to do it.”

Focus and Direction

“Carroll has done the heavy lifting to create a BMAP that works like a well-oiled machine,” says Amy, “I have a sense that I am filling a very big pair of shoes.”

“Though his professional specialty was lakes and waterways, he would go out in the field with people who knew a lot about prairie plants and savannas, and he was able to understand that and put it together in ways that kept the organization going,” says Bob Wernerehl, one of BMAP’s early ecologists.

Carroll saw connections between his DNR work and BMAP. He has

brought a multi-disciplinary approach to BMAP, focused on good partnerships at the landscape level of conservation. “In my work at the WDNR,” says Carroll, “we work with landowners with properties along lakes and streams to partner with them - to be on tap rather than on top. A lot of the land is in private hands, and we work to support those people. Career-wise, BMAP has been right up my alley.”

Bob remembers how Carroll was always interested not only in caring for rare species but in helping the public to focus on what was being done in the local area and why.

Focus on Education

“Early on, when we were still bouncing around as an organization, we put down roots to be education focused,” says Paul Ohlrogge. “Carroll wanted us to provide really good education to land owners who want to learn, and give them resources to manage their properties. For Carroll, that has been a constant.”

Out of that grew the book, Reading the Driftless Landscape, which was

co-written by Cindy Becker and Carroll and designed by Julie Raasch.

“Almost from the very beginning,” says Carroll, I was thinking, wouldn’t it be great to have a manual we could hand to people. We talked about it for a long time, and Cindy was the one who said, let’s put pen to paper and do it. There were a lot of revisions. That book was the capstone after 10 or 15 years of BMAP - to have something like that.”

“It was a joint effort of me quickly writing out creative prose and Carroll smoothing it out and tightening it up into an effective a handbook,” says Cindy. “That took skill, patience, and a lot of time and energy on his part. As BMAP outreach educator, I was getting paid for my time but Carroll gave that and beyond as a volunteer.”

Paul Ohlrogge says, “In my eyes and in my UW-Extension experience, it is an award-winning publication. Carroll was a driver behind that, to make it be excellent. We kept working on it to make sure

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Carroll over seeing the BMAP newsletter mailing prep.

In the photo: Carroll standing; Seated around the table, left to right, Andrea Gargas, Doug Norgord, Cindy Becker, Paul Kaarakka, Steve and Aimée Gauger

Photo by Julie Raasch

it was on target, but Carroll kept reminding us that the book should also be great. We were telling people to go out and record things as if they were Aldo Leopold.”

The book, the site visits, the land tours, the winter lectures - represent a lot of volunteer effort that has been motivated and led by Carroll in a quiet but focused way.

Quiet and Competent

Cindy started working at BMAP in 2008, and has been there on and off since then. “Carroll has always been the grounding force holding it together,” she says. “Always at events and interested in coming up with grant funds. Able to negotiate differences of opinions at the board meetings and also keep it light and happy.”

“You don’t see him get excited,” says Mike. “You don’t see him jumping up and down. But in his head, the gears are going at high speed. He is always thinking about things and planning things and working on things.”

Bob remembers, “Carroll was amazingly consistent day after day keeping the board meetings focussed, keeping the minutes going and keeping everything moving forward in his own unique way, all the while slowly building up the strength and the durability of BMAP. He deserves the credit for steering it in the right directions and maintaining the ongoing operations month after month and year after year. Carroll is one of the longest-serving members of any nonprofit in the state.”

Carroll is an incredible listener and always able to find consensus in a variety of viewpoints. He has also found the way to keep BMAP going through times when the organization’s future was in question.



Carroll during the 2014 BMAP Annual Meeting.

Photo by Julie Raasch

Through Lean Times to Vibrancy

“At one time, the board was basically Carroll and Paul Kaarakka,” remembers Julie. “It was a low point in volunteers.”

“That was a difficult time,” says Paul. “There was real discussion about whether we would survive. Carroll got us through that. After that low period we started to get more people on the board again.

“There were some lean years,” Carroll acknowledges, “when we were wondering if we were going to keep going. Then I would go up to the mail box, and open the

mail, and there would be a check for \$500 from someone I didn’t even know, and I realized that people really wanted this, so we had to find a way to keep going.

“That has been my inspiration - the support BMAP has attracted, and the way it resonates with people. We found a good niche.”

“TPE are focused on remnants and native landscapes. But there are a lot of people with disturbed woodlands and grasslands that TPE are not interested in. BMAP does not draw such sharp lines. We are

cont. page 13, see SCHAAL



Carroll and Wife Pam at a BMAP Event

Photo by Julie Raasch



Paul Kaarakka and Carroll

Photo by Julie Raasch

When Doug Steege and Kris Euclid were living in Madison in the 1970s, they became interested in the back-to-the-land movement and wanted to see what they could do with a rural property. They asked friends living in western Dane County to be on the lookout for land.



Photo by Julie Raasch

when our kids went to college, we started concentrating on more active management, and established a conservation easement on the property through The Prairie Enthusiasts.

Doug and Kris agreed on a management plan, which The Prairie Enthusiasts monitors. “In return, we hire a property manager about one day each week, and during the summer we share a group of interns that The Prairie Enthusiasts hire to work on a number of properties.”

They started on the ridge tops, which had been heavily invaded by buckthorn, honey suckle and cedar. From those ridges, you can see their work in the wooded areas as well as the more open slopes and valleys, which were plowed for many years.

“The wooded areas were originally just a few oaks, and we are working to return them to that condition,” says Doug. “Besides clearing, stacking, burning brush piles, and treating the woody invasives with herbicides, we have been conducting prescribed burns annually since 2005.”

Now, they burn about 100 acres a year, where they had only burned three times in the 26 prior years. “We had some pretty good remnants to begin with, but fire has helped to knock back the invasives. You still have to go in and cut and treat, but it’s a lot easier when you have sent fire through the area.”

Over the past 20 years, Doug and Kris are contending with the usual suspects: garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, wild parsnip and white clover.

“Originally, we had no garlic mustard, but it has come in. We have found that if we can run fire through the woods where the garlic mustard is for two years in a row, that pretty much wipes it out,” Doug says. “We still have some, but we are working on thinning out the over story and woody shrubs in order to get enough sunlight to the

ground so there is enough vegetative growth to run fire.”

One of their ridges started to have a very high population of spotted knapweed, but there were so many good native plants that they didn’t want to use herbicide.

“We have it under control now through hand work,” says Doug. “When it’s wet enough, the easiest way is to pull it out. Otherwise we use the parsnip predator tool. We pay attention to them early in the season and try not to let them go to seed.”

Doug and Kris have added a creek and wetland along their border to their restoration agenda. “Our property line runs along the Iowa-Dane County line, but it was hard to maintain fire breaks along that artificial line,” says Doug. “We purchased our neighbor’s property on our side of the creek. They didn’t have access across the creek anyway, and now Blue Mounds Creek is a natural firebreak.”

Doug and Kris have restored the natural areas on their land using only seeds that they collect on the property. Kris concentrates on seed collection, and they plant most of what she gathers into the areas that don’t have a good population of native plants yet.

“The wetlands we purchased from our neighbor had been pastured,” says Doug. “They were degraded to meadows, but there are a few prairie plants. We’ve found some native species that survived in there and have been really working to get those areas going again. When we see a population like yellow loosestrife that is native and does well in wet prairies, we spread that species around.”

Thanks so much, Doug and Kris, for sharing your land and experiences with BMAP for the first of the land tours on June 20. Hiking from creek side to ridge top was an informative and inspiring experience.

Steege-Euclid Property Tour

Denise Thornton

They already knew some things about prairie, and had been adding native plants to their city lot. Kris had been instrumental in getting the city of Madison to pass a natural landscaping ordinance so that they and other like-minded Madisonians could legally have non-mowed, native lawns.

“One of our friends gave us a call,” remembers Doug. “The first weekend in March, 1978, we walked the property including up onto one of the ridges, and the pasque flowers were blossoming.”

Before long, they had graduated from lawn prairies to managing 134 acres. “There were lots of invasives coming in, and the character of the ridges changed,” says Doug. “But

Dressed for chilly weather, 19 of us formed a circle on a blustery fall day to introduce ourselves to each other. We had come to visit Calico and Dan Schmidt's 28 acres near Blanchardville, which includes remnant prairie and mixed oak savanna. Between the personal and professional plant management practices of the people in our gathering, we had decades of invasive plant issues to discuss.

We walked on the mowed trail through the woods noting thickets of honeysuckle and walnut trees that inspired discussions on their removal and the best way to accomplish it, then headed on up to the exposed hilltops of remnant prairie where little bluestem and Indian grass whiplashed in the gusty wind.

We stopped to discuss the surprisingly aggressive behavior of Indian grass where it had spread rapidly from a neighboring field, and we saw their ongoing battle with the re-growth of bush honeysuckle on the hilltop where it had been cut and poisoned at the stump. A sickened burr oak in the middle of the honeysuckle re-growth prompted the question of whether neighboring tree roots are affected by the stump poison too?

John Barnes, a BMAP member and co-owner, with his wife Kelly Mattice, of the 200-acre Prairie Spirit Wildlife Sanctuary, had solid advice on how to tackle the honeysuckle problem. He would use a brush saw with a rotary steel blade to cut the stems in their active growing season. A loppers works too for those of us with smaller areas and more time to spare. The stumps must then be treated with a mixture of 1 quart of Garlon plus 4 ounces of Stalker with about 3 quarts of crop oil added at the end.

John mixes the first two chemicals into a gallon glass bottle and then adds enough crop oil to fill the bottle to the hip line. The mixture is then applied with the use of a 4-ounce

squeeze bottle. You must be sure to let it flow down the bark of the remaining stem besides the top cut. Unfortunately, if we don't chemically treat the plants we cut, they just come back bigger and stronger.

We stood under one of the beautiful burr oaks that dotted the hillside, while dark clouds roiled above us, and the sun broke through in bursts of light. In the spirit of her veterinarian profession, Calico told us her tale of the baby bird that she found on the ground under the oak and how Dan had climbed up into the tree to search for its nest. They finally found an Oriole nest hanging within arms' reach of the ground with two similar fluffy chicks inside. They returned the now-named Oriole chick to the nest, and eventually it fledged along with its two nest mates.

On the way back through the woods, we stopped to try the tree girdling tool that Cindy Becker, fellow board member and Coordinator for the Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network, had brought along. A walnut tree was our target, and Cindy showed us how to cut a ring of bark off of the trunk with the small hand tool.

Dan and I each took a turn to scrape a ring around the trunk. It's not always easy for me to use a tool for the first time with people watching, but this was a friendly group that offered support and interest in the process, unlike my embarrassment when I was first figuring out how to split wood in Alaska with an unexpected audience of laughing fishermen.

Our gracious hosts welcomed us to eat indoors but, warmed by our walk, we all sat outside at the picnic tables for our meal and further conversation. As we were packing up to leave, the wind raced down through the trees at us but it was too late to scatter much of our picnic. We all drove away between raindrops smiling at our good timing and the fun we had on a brisk fall day.



Photo by Julie Raasch

Cindy Becker shows how to girdle a tree with a small hand tool.

October Potluck and Walk at Dan & Calico Schmidt's Property

Linda Millunzi-Jones

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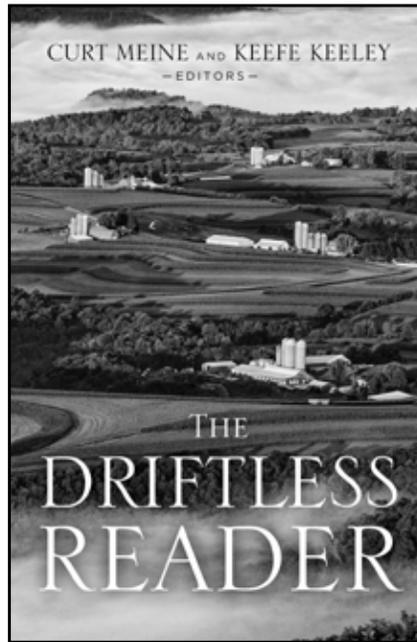
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Tom Buresh

In her 2013 book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer tells us, “Our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear its stories.” Quoting the ecologist and Franciscan Brother Gary Nabhan, she writes, “We can’t meaningfully proceed with healing, with restoration, without ‘re-story-ation’.”

The Driftless Reader is just such a collection of informative and inspirational stories, offering a rich view of the unique and varied character of the Driftless Area and those who have lived and visited here. Editors Curt Meine and Keefe Keeley acknowledge Kimmerer and Nabhan among others for their writing on bioregional awareness, and Kimmerer authors one of the more than eighty stories included in this volume.



referring to the extensive list of sources and further readings.

The book has an arc that transcends that of any one of the fine works of the included authors. Topics are grouped into twelve sections ranging from geological and ecological descriptions, cultural histories, and the accounts of Native Americans, voyagers, settlers, and farmers. Each of the sections is introduced by Meine and Keeley, beginning with the geologic origins of the Driftless Area, where they recount the age-old and widely-noted surprise experienced by observers new to the region.

When area geologists first surmised the ancient, unglaciated nature of the rugged ridges and valleys of the region in the 1870s, it catapulted the Driftless Area into a globally important standing. In an excerpt from a paper published in 1885, authors T. C. Chamberlin and Rollin D. Salisbury write, “To find that the crest of an eminence towered above the great mer de glace [sea of ice] would not be remarkable; ... but to find a broad tract, lying in the very valley of the great river of the region, overlooked by higher land on different sides, and

yet untouched by the glaciation that prevailed all around, very naturally awakens marvel.”

In a selection from John Curtis’s 1959 classic and influential book *Vegetation of Wisconsin*, the author reinforces the enormous importance of our region, noting the strong ecological evidence supporting “the hypothesis that the Driftless Area was at least partially covered with vegetation at all times and that it formed the source for the bulk of the plant cover which later spread out over the remaining parts of the state as these were deglaciated.”

While a graduate student in botany and plant ecology at UW-Madison early in her career, Robin Wall Kimmerer, professor and Director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment at the State University of New York, researched the ecology of mosses on the cliff faces along the Kickapoo River in the heart of Wisconsin’s Driftless Area. In an excerpt from her book *Gathering Moss* that appears in *The Driftless Reader*, she writes about forces that help maximize diversity in ecosystems. “Mosses, mussels, forests and prairies all seem to be governed by the same principles. ... disturbance is in fact an act of renewal, provided the balance is right.”

It is a common refrain among those of us involved in land restoration that we need to seek and share guidance. But perhaps first, we need to seek and share the inspiration that motivates anyone to care for the land at all. Reading *The Driftless Reader* is sure to enlighten and rouse you with tales that the land and its inhabitants have to tell. Fortifying ourselves with these stories makes it easier to reconnect with our unique home here in the Driftless and lays the foundation for a greater appreciation and dedication to land restoration.

Book Review

The Driftless Reader

Doug Hansmann

Published in 2017 by the University of Wisconsin Press, *The Driftless Reader* is a collection of bite-sized essays, condensed versions of the writings of authors who describe the ecology, and the natural and cultural histories that have shaped the character of our region, from the time of the great continental glaciers up to the present. Along with dozens of illustrations, Meine and Keeley shine a light on the distinctive, diverse and multilayered nature of the Driftless Area.

The Driftless Reader collects voices ranging from renowned authors like Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Aldo Leopold, to more local, moving, and highly-personal accounts of past and present inhabitants of the Driftless Area. Throughout, readers are encouraged to explore individual topics more deeply by

looking at restoration or helping people manage things that are not too far out of the bounds of the native landscape. Land trusts are very focused, and only looking for certain properties, and they don't have a lot of time to help with that kind of basic education."

"Then there are the resource agencies like DNR and Fish and Wildlife, and they have very prescriptive programs, so I think BMAP fills that gap quite nicely," Carroll continues. "I hope we are complementing those agencies, and I feel that we do."

"It's peer to peer learning," says Carroll. "That's what I've found with property owners, they listen to other farmers and prairie enthusiasts. Out there on those BMAP-sponsored walks, there is a lot of education going on between land owners, and we are the mechanism for getting those people together."

Thank you, Carroll! Thank you for your consistency, your vision, your humor, your wisdom and above all, your generous and longstanding commitment of time and effort. Your contributions have been invaluable to land restoration and community building throughout Southwestern Wisconsin.

And in perhaps a very best way to thank Carroll, is for everyone in the BMAP community, to work together and continue to build on his legacy.

They have done some native vegetation restoration in the orchard rows in partnership with Xerces Society. They hope the diverse short grass prairie mix will invite an equally diverse insect community that will naturally suppress insect pests and attract pollinators. "We had a low-bearing fruit season this year," Amy says. "I think it was because it was wet and cold during the window for

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming conferences to get you through the winter months (other than our own BMAP Winter Lecture Series, of course!)

December 6 & 7, 2019 — 2019 Perennial Farm Gathering will be held at the Sinsinawa Mound Center near Dubuque, Iowa.

The Perennial Farm Gathering brings together farmers, researchers, specialists, and enthusiasts for two days of networking, knowledge-sharing, and festivities. If you are a landowner, farmer, researcher, educator, or anyone interested in tree crops, silvopasture, perennial agriculture, or natural resource conservation, you won't want to miss this gathering! <http://www.savannainstitute.org/2019-perennial-farm-gathering.html>

January 2020 — The Southwest Grassland Network will be hosting informal get-togethers in and around Primrose Township providing folks with a voice for their concerns locally. Gatherings (food will be provided), will focus on: 1. farms and farmland protection, 2. recreational property owner and property stewardship challenges, and 3. sport hunting and improving habitat management. Contact cindy@driftlessconservancy.org to sign up for announcements.

February 28, 2020 — HOLD THE DATE for the Prairie Enthusiasts annual conference. This year, the conference will be held in Platteville, hosted by TPE Southwest Chapter, so we'll all be within driving distance of this great opportunity to connect with others passionate about prairie and savanna protection and stewardship as we bring our two communities together. The TPE annual conference always has an emphasis on management techniques and lessons learned from the field, and it highlights some of the natural treasures that exist, thanks to TPE's efforts as an active partner in land acquisition and easements in the region. The conference also serves as a way for prairie and savanna lovers to connect and to create new friendships. To learn more, check in with the Prairie Enthusiasts website for updates and information. <https://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/southwest>

pollination." Other nearby orchards suffered a similar fate.

Amy also shared the results of a small research project she conducted on their land while she was a graduate student to test two preparation techniques. The treatments were preparing the planting sites with fire or not. She also picked seeds of different sizes for the 300 one meter by one meter experimental plots.

"We predicted fire would improve germination of all species, and it did," she says. "If you are inter-seeding into old pasture, it's good to burn before you plant. We also thought big seeds that could shift down through the thatch would be less benefited by fire than smaller seeds, but actually, all seeds benefited from fire prior to planting."

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EVENTS

2020 Conservation Conversations winter lecture series

All talks start at 7:00pm and are held at the State Bank of Cross Plains at 1740 Springdale St. in Mount Horeb.

Allelopathy and Its Role in Wisconsin Plant Communities

Dr. Ken Keefover-Ring
January 30, 2020

Learn about the chemistry behind allelopathy, the means by which one species of plant can chemically inhibit the growth of another plant. Then explore specific allelopathic interactions between certain invasive and native plants in Wisconsin.

Ken Keefover-Ring has been an Assistant Botany Professor studying chemical ecology and plant-animal interactions at UW Madison since 2015. He earned his PhD from University of Colorado in 2008, and has focused on the chemistry of aspens, and interactions between ponderosa pines and the cone moth, among other topics.

Historical Fire Regimes of Wisconsin

Dr. Jed Meunier
February 13, 2020

This talk will focus on using site-specific fire history such as tree-ring records and fire scars to sharpen our understanding of fire as a management tool in fire-dependent settings.

Jed Meunier is an ecologist and research scientist with WI DNR. He is experienced in fire ecology and using natural disturbances for guiding management and restoration. His Ph.D. research was on fire ecology, forest management and restoration in northern Mexico and the U.S. southwest.

Birds in the Driftless: History, Ecology, and Management

Caitlynn Nemec
February 27, 2020

Recent reports have documented large declines in bird populations, including a number of charismatic Wisconsin species such as the scarlet tanager, the red-headed woodpecker and the bobolink, which were recently labeled “climate sensitive.” This talk will focus on the biology and habitat needs of local bird species. Learn how to ensure your property is a haven for birds.

Caitlynn Nemec graduated with a B.S. in Biology with a field emphasis, and an environmental science minor from UW Platteville. She received her M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from UW Madison. She enjoys writing books and spending time outdoors teaching her daughters and others about nature and the world around them.

Our Mission:

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 three times yearly. We welcome your comments, submissions, and advertisements.

Deadlines for submissions for 2020 newsletters:

Spring Newsletter — March 15, 2020

Summer Newsletter — September 1, 2020

Fall Newsletter — November 1, 2020

Send submissions to: newsletter@bluemounds.org

Editor: Denise Thornton and Doug Hansmann, thornton.denise@gmail.com — Designer: Julie Raasch, jul@creative-zoo.com

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If you are interested in assisting or volunteering for Blue Mounds Area Project, please contact us:

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Blue Mounds Area Project Membership Form

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

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



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"The Driftless inspires and sustains us."

— Curt Meine and Keefe Keeley



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