

BMAP NEWS



BMAP
BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

Conservation and Community. Together.

Fall 2025 • Volume 28 Number 3

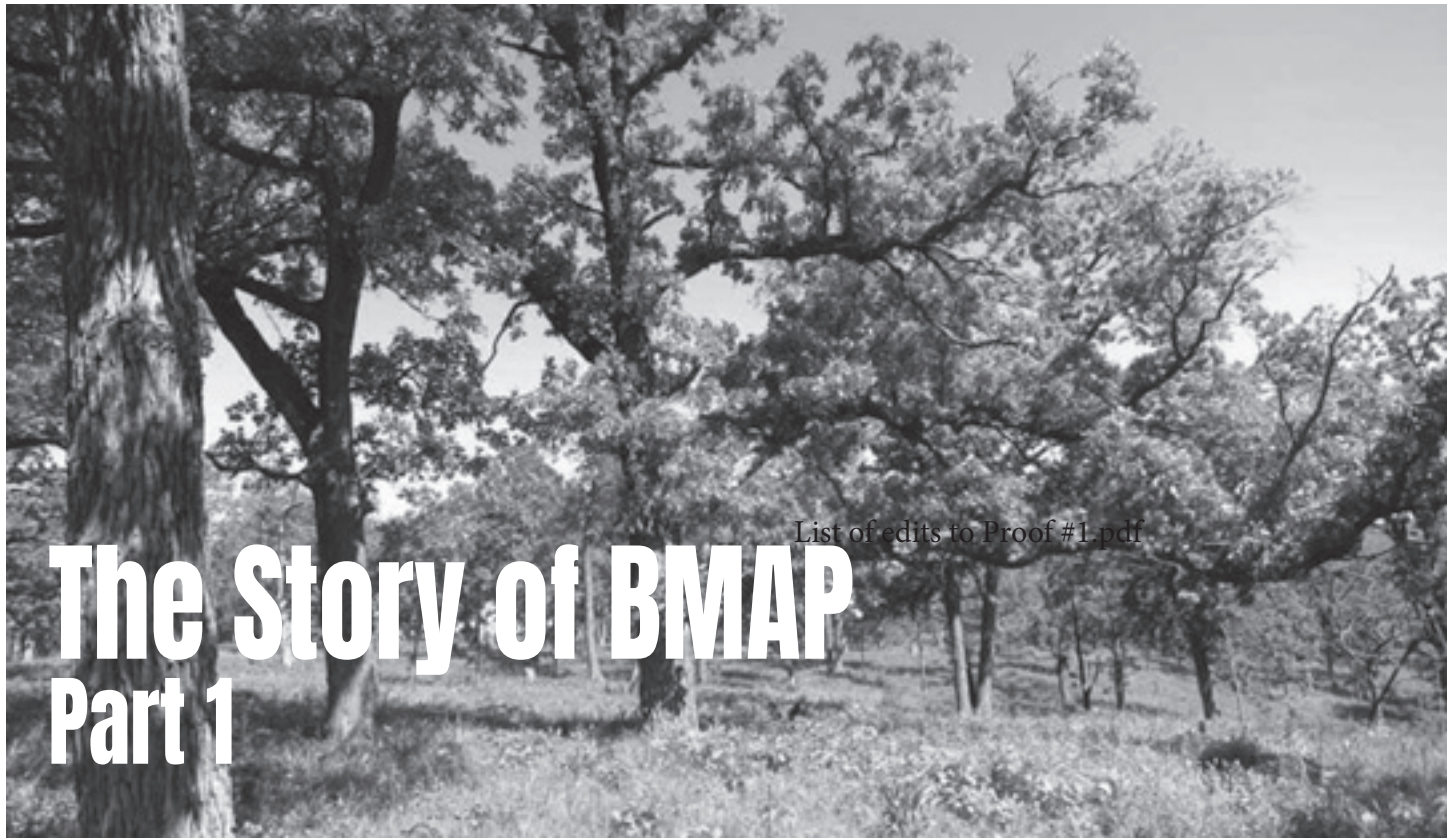


Photo by Sam Anderson

By Carroll Schaal

BMAP is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. This “look back” was written in 2017 by Past President Carroll Schaal and has been resurrected by the BMAP Board. Part II will be featured in an upcoming newsletter.

The Blue Mounds Area Project had its origins around March of 1995, with my involvement beginning in early 1996. I was new in town and responded to an article in the Mount Horeb Mail about a community conservation project that was looking for local input. I attended a meeting. Little did I know how many meetings I would eventually attend.

I learned that the project was a proposal for an “ecological extension program” building off of local interest in UW-Madison graduate student Brian Pruka’s oak savanna research north of Blue Mounds. There he had catalogued over 400 plant species, providing an index of potential savanna diversity for our portion of the Driftless Area. Neighboring

landowners had heard about his studies and hosted Brian on some of their properties, which they found very enlightening. Out of their strong interest, the Blue Mounds Area Project was born!

Brian had written a prospectus with input from local conservationists. He partnered with Dr. Rob Horwich of Community Conservation Consultants, Inc. in Gays Mills to have CCC sponsor grant applications on the Project’s behalf. An Advisory Board was formed in March of 1996

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greg Jones

I love this time of the year, when I walk through our prairie areas and see all the changes that have happened. Our prairies consist of two areas, both a little over two acres each. I think a true prairie should be much larger to support all the birds, animals and insects. Our small 2.5-acre plots are more like prairie gardens.

The other factor that is relevant is that the “prairie” areas are only about ten years old. Even during this time, they have changed every year. Some new species have shown up. Large groups of one species have thinned out some, while other species have become more prevalent.

I’m sure that, as a BMAP member, you are taking walks in your favorite

prairie sites, be it on your own property or on public land. I encourage you to take careful note of what you’re seeing. When you walk it again next year, see what changes have occurred.

You will see many of the same plants in the same place, as they are for the most part perennials—like the *Silphiums*, which keep on coming once they have been established. You may see some disappear, while new ones appear. You may also notice the population dynamics changing, with certain species becoming dominant. For me, this is a very fun aspect of visiting prairies.

Our property is experiencing an explosion of Culver’s root. I do inter-seed it, but this year there is so much more than years past. There is almost three times as much. I will not include it in the inter-seed mix this fall, or probably ever again. Incidentally, it all came from a patch of Culver’s root we found on the property. No wonder it’s doing well.

Yellow coneflowers have started to dominate in one area. *Baptisia alba* is slowly spreading. We saw pale-spike

lobelia for the first time. Nodding onion is also starting to show up. The Canada goldenrod is abating in places where there was way too much of it in the past.

Some things have stayed the same. Leadplants are in the same numbers in the same locations, no additions. The same goes for the wild quinine plants. Steady as she goes.

When plants have spread a lot from the previous year, folks say they are having a good year. I suspect that it speaks more to how well things went *last* year. The conditions must have been such that they made a lot of viable seed. Seed dispersal went well for the plant, and the seeds were not eaten before germinating. Finally, the weather had to have been conducive for them to germinate and grow.

I said earlier that our prairie areas are only about 10 years old. I suspect that this is the period when we might see the most changes. I’ll get back to you on that ten years from now. In the meantime, keep taking those walks through the prairies, botanizing as you go.

The Story of BMAP-Part 1

Continued from page 1

to guide the Project. This Board consisted of myself, Rob Horwich and Ursula Peterson, a specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (where Brian also worked). We held meetings in the old Mount Horeb Library.

In April, we were awarded our first grant: \$17,250 from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board to fund Brian’s ecological site visits with private landowners and community outreach in native biodiversity management. Our focus would be on the oak savanna ecosystem. Members donated an additional \$2,265. Additional funding came from the Mount Horeb Community Foundation.

Brian began a newsletter called *The Land Doctor* and wrote a column for the local papers called “Your Wild Neighbors.” The Species Inventory Program, or site visits, was initiated. Much enthusiasm ensued. By August of 1997, we had recorded our 50th landowner site visit and welcomed our 80th member.

Brian was an energetic leader and always had new ideas for outreach and building the organization. For example, we held historical aerial photo workshops in the winter of 1997 so landowners could see what their property looked like in the 1930s. Brian devoted a tremendous amount of time to the establishment of what was then known as just the Blue Mounds Project.

However, in late 1997, finances and the Advisory Board weren’t keeping pace with Brian and he resigned in frustration. It looked like the Project might end. In the ensuing limbo, CCC received word that additional grants Brian had submitted to the Laid Norton Foundation and the Madison Community Foundation had been awarded. In 1998, the Advisory Board reconvened along with some new members to try to keep the Project moving forward.

An Interim Board of Directors formed that included Dean Lesser, President; Carroll Schaal, Vice

President; Nancy Pfothenauer, Secretary; Jim Zerwick, Treasurer and Marie Wilhelm, Meeting Organizer. Rob Horwich was listed as Senior Advisor. Other early Directors included Mike Anderson, Wendell Burkholder, Mary Fritz, Jon Lyons, Ursula Peterson, Bob Wernerehl and Mary Skupniewitz. Bob was hired as our Ecologist and we began doing site visits and outreach again. Mike Anderson agreed to edit and publish the newsletter.

As Ecologist, Bob put his stamp on the organization, establishing many of the activities that still make up our core work today. This includes summer tours, Winter Conversations and the Bur Oak Award for landowners. Thanks to Bob’s grant writing, we had stable part-time funding for several years. In 1998, he reported 37 site visits representing a total of 4,310 acres. More than a third of the sites visited had prairie remnants, and almost half had oak savanna remnants.

In 1999, the owners of three of these sites were awarded over \$16,000 through the USDA’s Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. The site visits were spurring real change.

In closing on the first part of our history, it’s worthy to note that Brian did his thesis work at Parrish Savanna on Moyer Road, which is now a State Natural Area managed by The Prairie Enthusiasts. Parrish is adjacent to several hundred additional protected acres on private land. While the range of the Blue Mounds Area Project has expanded considerably since these early days, the beautiful Town of Vermont is where it all started. At the time of this writing, Vermont still has the most BMAP members and site visits by far of any township in the Blue Mounds Area.

1999 and 2000 were dedicated to more formally organizing the Project. Dean resigned as President and I moved into the slot. Nancy left and was replaced by Mary Fritz as Secretary. The “interim” designation was lifted. In 2000 and 2001, we met in the Evangelical Lutheran Church basement. Tom and Kathie Brock of Pleasant Valley Conservancy received the first Bur Oak Award at the 2001

annual meeting.

We completed our first strategic plan around this time, resulting in a mission statement, bylaws and some operating committees. The new plan was ambitious and gave us good direction for several years. Among other goals, the plan charted a path for BMAP to grow to 1,000 members, fundraise for a permanent Ecologist, get our own office and become independent of CCC’s sponsorship. Some of these goals were met, and some remain.

It also recommended becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable corporation, which was a major decision and milestone for BMAP. The designation would allow us to qualify for more grants and provide a tax deduction for donations, but it required a new level of responsibility and accountability. Fortunately, we had good help. Secretary Mary Michal arranged pro bono assistance from Jon Becker at Reinhart Law. Jon walked us through creating bylaws and drawing up incorporation papers. John Bird became Treasurer and also donated accounting and payroll services. Our confirmation letter from the IRS arrived in 2002.

We contemplated a name change. After many, many discussions in our meetings and with members, we decided that our name was well established in people’s minds. Adding the simple word “Area” would give us a less parochial feel while setting us apart from the Village of Blue Mounds and Blue Mounds State Park.

Deciding to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization marks a significant turning point in our organization’s history, making a nice place to break off this story. I will pick it back up again in a future newsletter.

BMAP was modeled on the principles of Community Conservation Consultants. We owe much to Brian Pruksa, Rob Horwich and CCC for their early and ongoing support. Many other people whom I have failed to mention also played key roles in establishing BMAP.

CCC has become Community Conservation, Inc. and is still actively promoting conservation around the globe. It is headquartered in Viroqua, although their Executive Director lives in the greater Blue Mounds Area. Visit communityconservation.org to learn more.



ECOLOGIST'S REPORT



Sam Anderson

Hello BMAP, I trust you’re all enjoying the summertime! Many of you have been busy mowing, cutting, pulling and spraying stubborn invasive species in your grasslands and woodlands.

Others may already be collecting seed as our early summer species mature or even senesce.

Our BMAP events have been well attended this summer, inviting guests to explore the savannas, dry prairies and wetlands of the Blue Mounds Area. With groups like The Prairie Enthusiasts, Southern Driftless Grasslands, the Ice Age Trail Alliance, UW-Madison Extension and others, every week of the growing season offers ample opportunity to get out and learn about

land management in our region. There’s always something new to see in southern Wisconsin!

This season’s site visits with BMAP members have been excellent, especially given the wet summer. I’m still accepting BMAP Site Visit Questionnaires from a few folks who may be interested in a late-season site visit. We also have one more community event this year (see page 8). Let’s hike together and enjoy the summer!

As our growing season begins to wane, don’t hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or observations. I’m always happy to communicate via email or over the phone if you want to discuss



Michigan lily (*Lilium michiganense*) found on a BMAP member’s property.

plant ID, restoration techniques or other land stewardship questions.

Remember that your support and the enrollment of new members allows BMAP to continue supporting private land restoration through consulting and to build the restoration community in southwestern Wisconsin. If you have appreciated any of our 2025 site visits, Property Tours, Winter Conversations or Walks with a Naturalist, consider an additional donation to BMAP so we can continue serving the greater Blue Mounds Area.

All the best,

Sam Anderson
Outreach Ecologist
ecologist@bluemounds.org

Photo by Sam Anderson

WHERE ARE THE MAYFLIES?

Topf Wells fly fishes for trout on Camp Creek, Vernon County, Wis.



Photo by John Lyons

By John Lyons

John Lyons is fish curator at the University of Wisconsin Zoological Museum.

This copyrighted story was used with permission from the author and *Big River Magazine*. It appeared under the title “Neonics – Where are the Mayflies?” in the January-February issue of *Big River* (BigRiverMagazine.com, 1-800-303-8201).

Many anglers, myself included, love fly fishing for trout in Driftless Area streams. One of the highlights of our sport used to be the large emergences or “hatches” of mayflies that attract trout to the surface to feed on the floating insects. We’d wait expectantly for the mayflies to appear and for the trout to follow and suck them up. At that point, we’d cast artificial “dry flies”, hand-crafted bits of feathers, furs and synthetics tied to a small hook and designed to look like mayflies floating on the surface. Then we watched for a trout to rise to our imitation.

Hundreds of fly patterns were developed over the years to mimic the many mayfly species in their various

life stages. Selecting the right fly for a particular time and place, “matching the hatch” was key to success. For most fly anglers, prime mayfly time (April through June) was the best fishing of the year. Whether or not you’re interested in fly fishing, if you live near the Mississippi River you probably know about the huge mayfly hatches there in the summer. A single species, *Hexagenia limbata*, would emerge in incredible numbers. Swarms of these mayflies could be seen on weather radar. They covered trees, streetlights, bridges, roads and buildings near the river.

In truly big hatches, they might pile several feet high to block roads and bridges. However, over the last 15 years mayflies have mostly disappeared from Driftless Area streams. Major hatches have completely vanished or dwindled to a faint shadow of their former levels. The trout are still there, but they don’t rise to the surface nearly as often, and dry fly fishing is much less effective. Mississippi River mayfly hatches still occur, but their frequency and magnitude have fallen sharply over the last 20 years, as much as 45 percent by one estimate—a decline of many billions of mayflies. What could have caused such a drop?

Sadly, the cause in both cases appears to be a relatively new class of widely used insecticides: neonicotinoids, often shortened to “neonics.” Now over 60 years after Rachel Carson’s classic book *Silent Spring* first revealed the terrible side effects of pesticides, most notably DDT, it appears that we are still grappling with serious pesticide damage to our natural environment.

The Neonics

Neonicotinoid compounds—named because their chemical structure is similar to the nicotine in tobacco—are particularly good at killing insects, much better than DDT. There are many kinds of neonics, but the three most widely used are imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. Compared to other pesticides, such

as organophosphates, carbamates or pyrethroids, these neonics are both more lethal for insects and less harmful to humans and their animals, which has made them very popular.

Since these chemicals first became widely available in the United States in the early 2000s, huge quantities of neonics have been added to corn, soybean and vegetable fields; lawns, playing fields and golf courses; home gardens; treated lumber and even the anti-flea medicines we give to our dogs and cats. Agricultural applications are by far the largest use of neonics, and more than 80 percent of the neonics in the natural environment come from cropland.

Neonics dissolve in water and move easily through air, water, soil and living organisms. They do not break down quickly. Because of all this, it’s not surprising that they are now almost everywhere, including all our local streams, rivers and lakes. And because they are powerful insecticides, they appear to have had a major effect on aquatic insects as well as the animals that depend on them for food. Neonics have also reduced populations of terrestrial insects, including beneficial and beloved species such as fireflies, butterflies, bees and other pollinators.

While neonics are generally toxic to all insects, different species have different sensitivities. Among aquatic insects, mayflies (*Ephemeroptera*) and true flies (*Diptera*) appear to be most susceptible, although there is variation within each group and many species have not yet been tested. Caddisflies (*Trichoptera*) seem to be a bit more tolerant, and they persist in Driftless Area trout streams. This is likely why trout populations remained robust as mayflies disappeared.

The sensitivity to neonics of other major groups of aquatic insects, such as beetles (*Coleoptera*), dragonflies and damselflies (*Odonata*) and stoneflies (*Plecoptera*), is largely unstudied. And although neonics are designed specifically to kill insects, they may also be toxic to other aquatic invertebrates. For example, lab tests showed that eight of 27 crustacean zooplankton species are susceptible to the neonic imidacloprid and suffered high mortality at concentrations like those seen in Driftless Areas streams and rivers.



This is a dry fly the author tied to imitate a mayfly, many years ago.

Photo by John Lyons



Photo by John Lyons

Many flea treatments for dogs contain the neonicotinoid imidacloprid as the main active ingredient. Flea treatments are likely a minor source of neonic contamination to local waters, and their benefits probably outweigh environmental concerns.

Up the Food Chain

The good news is that vertebrates—including people, farm animals and pets—are affected much less by the direct toxic effects of neonics, especially compared to older insecticides. The lack of direct effects does not mean that neonics have not impacted vertebrates. Because neonics kill insects and other invertebrates, organisms generally low on the food chain, they reduce the food for organisms higher up on the food chain, including most vertebrates. This

indirect effect can be quite strong. For example, runoff of imidacloprid from rice fields into a Japanese lake devastated the zooplankton population, which served as the primary food for two species of fish that supported a major commercial fishery. As zooplankton populations plummeted, so too did the fish populations that ate them, and the fishery collapsed.

Closer to home, fewer emerging mayflies means less food for many insect-eating songbirds and may play a role in the dramatic drop in bird numbers in North America over the last 50 years. Even birds like goldfinches and hummingbirds need insects to develop eggs and feed their young.

The loss of billions of mayflies in the Mississippi River also means less food for fish and could reduce fish growth and survival. Because fishing and bird watching are major activities in the Upper Midwest, these fish and bird declines could translate into losses of income and jobs, as well as losses to our quality of life.

Balancing Act

How might we balance neonics’ harm to the environment with the benefits to farmers? Maybe the negatives are more than offset by the positives, particularly increased crop yields. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case.

Nowadays, nearly all agricultural neonics are applied “just in case”, before there is any evidence of insect pests becoming a problem. This sounds like a good idea—better safe than sorry—but prophylactic applications actually provide almost no benefit to farmers and lead to excessive amounts of insecticides in the environment.

Preventative treatments of seeds with neonics are the norm in the Upper Midwest. For example, in Wisconsin (excluding organic seeds, which are untreated), about 100 percent of corn, 60 percent of soybeans, 92 percent of potatoes, 90 percent of snap beans, 40 percent of onions and 35 percent of pea seeds are covered with neonic solutions before planting. Neonics are taken up and incorporated into the growing plant tissue, providing

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Caddis larva.



Mayflies (*Hexagenia limbata*) cover a wall during a mayfly hatch along the Mississippi River at Potosi, WI.

potential resistance to pests. But only about five percent of the insecticide makes it into the plant, while the remaining 95 percent remains in or on the soil where it can be carried by wind and rain to the wild plants and trees nearby; incorporated into the groundwater or transported by precipitation runoff into streams, rivers and lakes.

Surprisingly, the five percent of the neonic coating that ends up in the plant appears to provide little or no value to the farmer. Many of the insect pests that neonics are designed to suppress, such as corn root worm or wireworm, are found only sporadically on the landscape and are absent from many agricultural fields. In most situations, adding neonics to seeds before planting does nothing to improve yields but instead contaminates the environment with unnecessary insecticides.

A study in Quebec found that neonic-coated seeds increased corn

production in only five to eight percent of fields, with 92 to 95 percent seeing no benefit—mainly because the target pests were not there to begin with. Of those five to eight percent, the improvement in yield was small. The monetary return to the farmer of slightly more corn was about equal to the increased cost of coating the seeds, meaning that the farmers gained essentially nothing economically while the farmers who received no benefit only increased their costs. Other studies have had similar findings.

Results like these convinced Quebec, Ontario and New York state to place strong restrictions on neonic treatment of seeds. And neonics have been banned from agricultural use in the European Union, with just a very few exceptions for when a pest outbreak has been clearly demonstrated and alternative control strategies have proved ineffective.

So What?

So, what can we do about neonics in the Upper Midwest? First and foremost, the routine practice of coating seeds with neonics needs to stop. There are situations where neonic treatments may be helpful, but these are relatively uncommon and need to be justified with evidence of potential insect pest problems. At present, agricultural companies coat essentially all non-organic corn seeds with neonics, so grain farmers don't really have a choice. Indeed, about 30 percent of farmers surveyed didn't realize their corn seeds contained neonics. Some crop insurance policies even mandate neonic treatment.

Reducing neonic use will be challenging and will probably require a strong public outcry and legislative action. But the same was true with DDT in the 1960s, and we eventually solved that problem. And more benign and effective approaches to pest control such as "integrated pest management" are available to farmers, so this is not a case of economics versus environment.

In addition to reducing neonic contamination of aquatic ecosystems, we need more study of the impacts of neonics on streams, rivers and lakes and how we might address these effects. Until we have better data about which organisms and communities are most vulnerable and how their decline affects the ecology (and economy) of Upper Midwestern waters, it will be more difficult to advocate for reductions in neonic use. Much of the evidence for specific neonic effects in the Driftless Area and the Upper Mississippi River valley is still incomplete or circumstantial. We need a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of exactly what's going on in the region.

Finally, we need to figure out how to restore aquatic ecosystems damaged by neonics or at least how to mitigate the worst effects. Are there agricultural practices that can decrease neonic runoff or toxicity to our waters? Can existing neonic contamination be cleaned up or at least contained? Can sensitive organisms like mayflies be better protected? If neonic inputs are reduced or eliminated, can degraded biological communities be rebuilt? All of these are hard questions. But the sooner we address them, the better off we will be.

Photo by John Lyons

Photo by John Lyons

FROM THE EDITOR



Grace Vosen

“Healing Wounds” Reveals the Power of Prairie

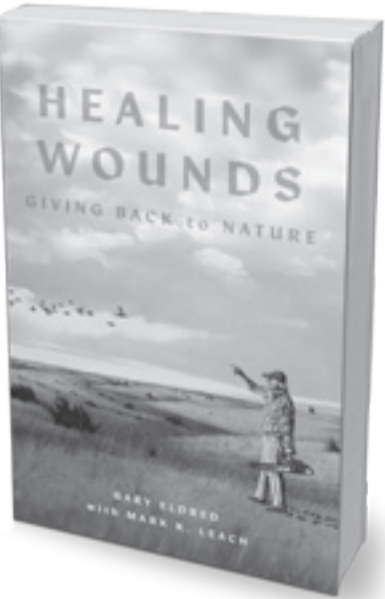
When I joined The Prairie Enthusiasts in 2015, I sensed that there were already decades of history (and countless hours of volunteer work) preceding my involvement. In the book of prairie enthusiasm, I had found an organization with many “chapters”, both chronological and geographical.

Indeed, this era of TPE doesn't show up until chapter 9 of *Healing Wounds: Giving Back to Nature*, the new autobiography of TPE founder Gary Eldred.

Healing Wounds, written by Eldred with Mark K. Leach, is a testament to the variety of people, places and projects that took root and established TPE as we know it today. But rather than being a collection of explanatory stories, it's a universal tale of how one person's life can be changed by finding a higher cause. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to help heal the natural world.

With a simple repeated chorus of “Wow!”, Eldred describes how he developed his keen sense of wonder. The early chapters of the book focus on the difficulties Eldred has faced throughout his life—the wounds referenced in the book's title. But as he gets to know the prairies of southern Wisconsin through a series of kind mentors, Eldred begins to see a path to healing these wounds. The way he chooses to accomplish this, in turn, is to heal the same ecosystems that inspired him.

Eldred is a true original. Another recurring theme in the book is his lack of a college education; Eldred has learned everything he knows about prairies outside of a classroom. He calls on readers to use their education for



good instead of stubbornly clinging to traditions and egos. “We can pretend business as usual will get us through any environmental crisis,” Eldred writes. “Or we can put our passion, energy, and brains into effectively healing our social and ecological wounds.”

Subsequent chapters describe the conservationists and landowners Eldred has worked with, the places he has helped protect, the formation and early years of TPE and the various creative outlets he has enjoyed. I had the pleasure of covering Eldred's art opening at Holy Wisdom Monastery and sneaking a peek at the originals of his pen-and-ink drawings. I hope you get to see them too!

As Eldred shares the ups and downs of his life with readers, I am struck by how mindful he is of his actions. He understands why he does and says things a certain way, and he acknowledges the times when he could have done things differently. He also makes sure to give the same compassionate consideration to others. It's a reminder that

Aldo Leopold's land ethic comprises how people relate to one another as well as to the natural world.

The book also offers hope for people dealing with their own wounds and struggles. Eldred has achieved the protection and restoration of numerous prairies, but he admits he had no idea which of these initiatives would succeed. He advocates for efforts that involve everyone. “There needs to be grassroots organizations that fight for what's necessary to assure what's wild is not destroyed. We cannot sit on our thumbs waiting for governments or the big non-profits to save the wild... We need nothing less than a new paradigm for our relationship with nature.”

Anyone could end up starting the next successful conservation group—and find themselves healed in the process.

At the time of this writing, *Healing Wounds* is available for purchase through Leaky Canoe Books, leakycanoebooks.com.



DRIFTLESS AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

Nurturing Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural heritage through permanent land protection and restoration that connects people to the land and to each other.

In 2025, we're celebrating 25 years of conservation, care, and connection! Join us out in the Driftless for hikes, workshops, volunteer opportunities, and much more.

www.driftlessconservancy.org

NEW BMAP MEMBERS

Please welcome these fine folks who have joined BMAP since our last newsletter came out!

- Mary Penninga & Gerrit DeWitt
- Victoria Troxler & Russell Bryan

UPCOMING BMAP EVENTS

Join us for our last
Walk with a Naturalist
of the season:

Driftless Trail
Saturday, September 6
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
6596 County Hwy T, Spring Green
(Unity Chapel and cemetery)

RSVPs encouraged at bluemounds.org/events

Join us for a dynamic walk on the newly developed south end of the Welsh Hills Trail. Barb Barzen of the Driftless Area Land Conservancy will guide us through a prairie restoration in progress and uphill to a ridgetop with a view of Taliesin and the Lowery Creek watershed. Barb will point out future DALC trail segments that can be observed from the overlook.

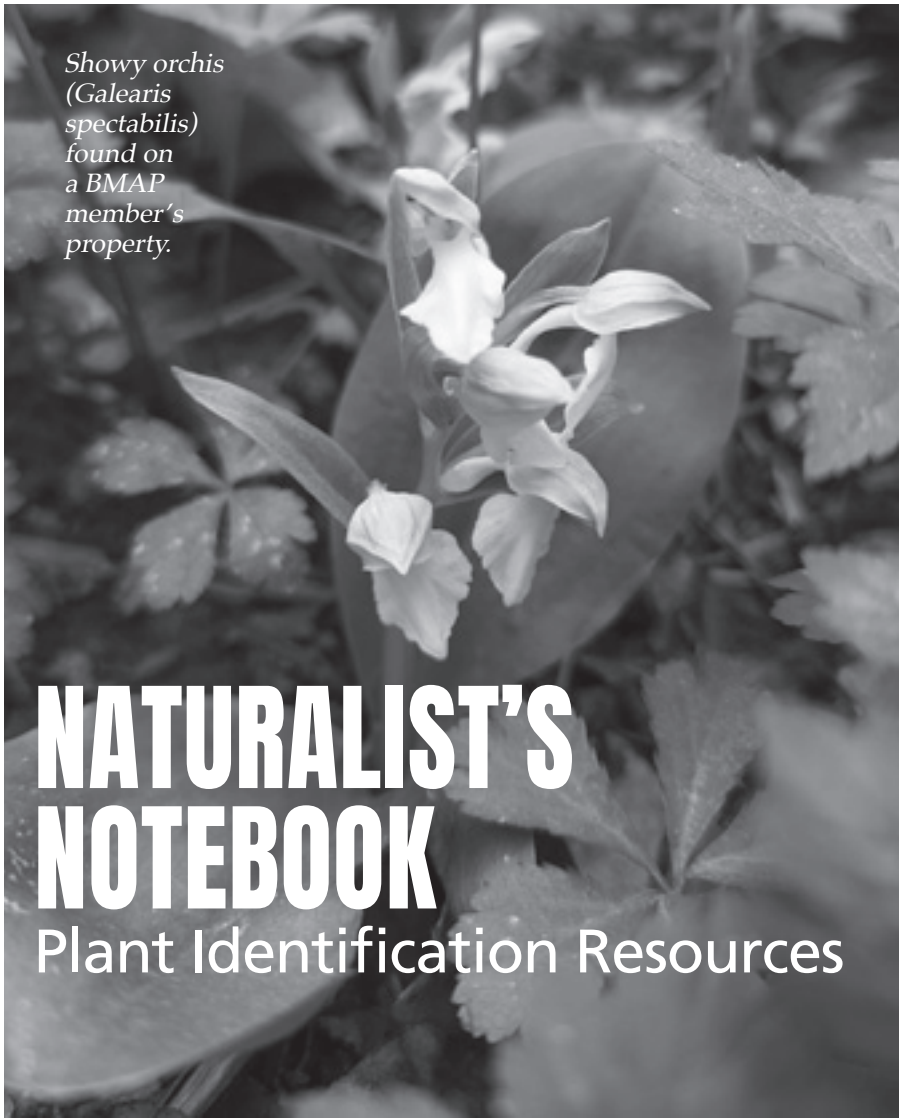
The trail will be mowed, but long pants are recommended to avoid brushes with poison ivy. Walking sticks would be helpful for those who usually use them. Snacks and water will be provided at the end of our walk.

The Driftless Trail, of which the Welsh Hills Trail is a part, is the result of tireless work by the Driftless Area Land Conservancy and its partners. Crossing and connecting various grasslands and woodlands, these new trails provide public access to Driftless habitats and landscapes.

Great Winter Conversations!

Mark your calendar for the 2026 Winter Conversations:

- Thursday, February 12
(this talk will be related to the Driftless Trail)
- Thursday, February 26
- Thursday, March 12



Showy orchis
(*Galearis spectabilis*)
found on
a BMAP
member's
property.

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK

Plant Identification Resources

Photo by Sam Anderson

By Sam Anderson, BMAP Ecologist

This article is from a recent BMAP eBulletin sent to our email subscribers. If you want to receive “Naturalist’s Notebook”, event reminders, and other helpful resources in your email inbox, visit bluemounds.org/connect to sign up. Please share this link with a friend!

As the growing season reaches its peak, we are once again enjoying the diversity of herbaceous plants that grow in Wisconsin. Identifying these plants correctly is a skill that we can practice in order to meet restoration goals of fostering biodiversity, promoting habitat or supporting populations of rare or uncommon species. Here are a few resources from our region that I prefer to use in the field when I come across plants that I can’t identify.

Some of these resources use illustrations or photographs of plants to help readers correctly identify species. These are often accompanied with written descriptions and summaries of their habitat that casual readers can use to get a correct ID. For casual botanists, these visual field guides can be a great introduction!

Other resources focus on using morphology and anatomy to move readers through a dichotomous key, a series of paired choices that helps readers identify plants to the species level. Dichotomous keys can be fairly complex; even experienced botanists sometimes get lost in the vocabulary! If you haven’t used a dichotomous key before, the Native Plants Trust has an excellent example that you can familiarize yourself with here: gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/dkey.

The Vegetation of Wisconsin

J.T. Curtis

While not a field guide, *The Vegetation of Wisconsin* is a go-to for understanding the types of plant communities we have in Wisconsin, the environmental factors that shape their structure and distribution and the important species they comprise. The written descriptions of these communities and summary species lists are particularly helpful if you’re thinking about improving biodiversity on your property. You can also get a good idea of which species are more broadly distributed, which species are diagnostic of their respective communities and which species have increased or decreased since the 1950s. Fun fact: box elder was considered uncommon in upland forests when this book was written!



Michigan Trees

B.V. Barnes &
W. H. Wagner Jr.

Though not Wisconsin-focused, the dichotomous key in *Michigan Trees* will get you to the correct ID for most tree species in Wisconsin during both summer and winter. This book also features particularly helpful illustrations and descriptions of tree and shrub morphology.

While the book is helpful with trees, quite a few of our shrub species are absent. Other resources might be more helpful with shrub identification.



Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region

M.R. Black & E. J. Judziewicz

This field guide is focused on our flowering plants. The photos and botanical descriptions are incredibly detailed and helpful for identifying species found in Wisconsin. Both native and non-native plants are included along with distribution maps, descriptions of their ecology and their conservation status. This is a great resource for folks making their first leap into field identification.



Wisconsin Flora

S.W. Chadde

I consider *Wisconsin Flora* to be a beefier analogue to *Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region*. Both are great resources, but *Wisconsin Flora* has more species (over 2000), includes non-flowering plants and has a host of illustrations that are incredibly helpful. This book isn’t as easy to carry in the field, but it’s an excellent addition to a naturalist’s library for more tricky identifications.



Field Guide to Wisconsin Grasses

E.J. Judziewicz, R.W. Freckmann, L.G. Clark, M.R. Black

Despite being a defining guild in our grassland ecosystems, grasses receive much less attention than other plant groups, especially in terms of biodiversity. If you’re interested in diversifying the structure of your restored prairies or would like a better understanding of the dynamics between native and non-native grasses, this field guide is a great launching point. Just make sure you have access to a hand lens!



Field Guide to Wisconsin Sedges

A.L. Hipp

The diversity of sedges in Wisconsin is truly remarkable, and sedges dominate and shape so many of our plant communities. Despite this, many folks—including professional botanists—shy away from “keying out” and identifying sedges to species. Andrew Hipp’s field guide is an excellent resource if you’re curious about this mysterious clade, though you may want to hone your plant ID skills by practicing on trees and forbs before jumping into *Carex*.



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Blue-eyed grass
(*Sisyrinchium
campestre*) found on
a BMAP member's
property.

Other Resources

iNaturalist

Technology can play a great role in supporting education and conservation. iNaturalist allows you to upload images of plants (or other organisms) you find, suggests identifications and allows other users to suggest or corroborate IDs. Not only does iNaturalist put you in contact with other amateur and professional botanists, it supports community science and research. I particularly like using iNaturalist to organize my photos, create collections for specific places and learn about new locations I would like to explore.

Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin

Recording herbarium vouchers from as far back as the 1800's, the Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin (the digital home of the UW-Madison Herbarium) is an excellent resource to see examples of specimens for most species found in Wisconsin. Not only is there an image library to compare plant morphology, but specimen occurrences are also mapped and available for download.
To get started, visit wisflora.herbarium.wisc.edu/index.php .

Community

Although all of these are excellent resources, the best way to get to know Wisconsin's plants is to get out and botanize with other people. Learning from more experienced people provides a wealth of knowledge, but having people with different experience levels in your group can also make identifying plants more fruitful and enjoyable.



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BMAP ONLINE

www.bluemounds.org

eBULLETIN

BMAP's monthly eBulletin for announcements, habitat restoration tips and more:
bluemounds.org/connect

FACEBOOK

- BMAP's Facebook page for events and environmental news:
facebook.com/BMAPcommunity
- BMAP's Facebook group for sharing photos, ideas and activities:
facebook.com/groups/BMAPcommunity

WANT TO CONNECT WITH OTHER LANDOWNERS?

Emily Buckingham, BMAP Facebook Volunteer

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 (facebook.com/groups/BMAPcommunity) 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 Wisconsin

To join the group, visit facebook.com/groups/BMAPcommunity and click "Join Group." The group is open to all landowners and conservationists in the Driftless Area or surrounding areas who are working to restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.

BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Membership Status:

☐ Renewal ☐ New Member ☐ Gift Membership for: _____

Membership Level:

☐ Basic \$40 ☐ Contributor \$70 ☐ Supporter \$100 ☐ Lifetime \$1000

All memberships, except lifetime, follow the calendar year.

☐ Additional donation beyond your annual membership: _____ TOTAL MEMBERSHIP / DONATION: _____

Make checks payable and return to: Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572
or you can contribute online at <https://www.bluemounds.org/donor-form>

☐ YES, I would like to receive information about site visits. ☐ I'm interested in volunteer opportunities with BMAP.

Thank you! Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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BMAPNEWS

BMAPNEWS

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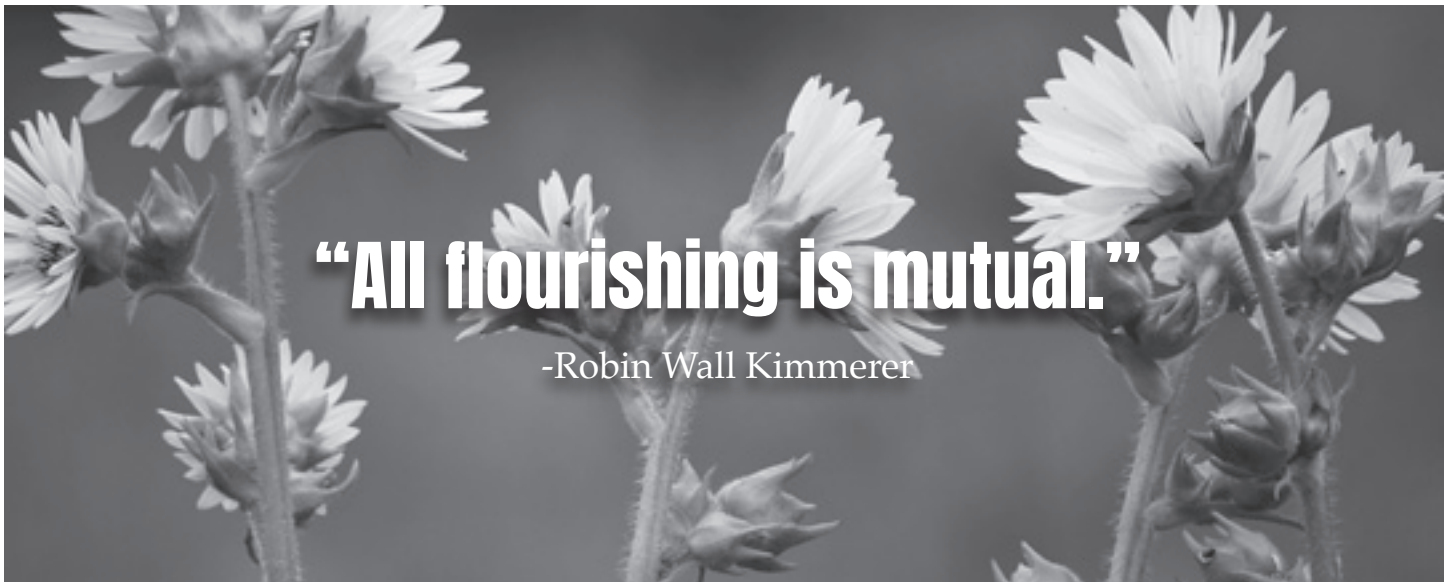


Photo by Peter Gorman

BMAPNEWS

The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published three times yearly.

We welcome your comments, submissions and advertisements.

Newsletter Editor: Grace Vosen (newsletter@bluemounds.org) Graphic Design: Tom Senatori

www.bluemounds.org

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP UP TO DATE?

BMAP maintains a calendar year membership cycle. If you are receiving a complimentary copy of the newsletter, please consider becoming a member.