



## **Wisconsin natural resources. Vol. 33, No. 2**

### **April 2009**

[Madison, Wisconsin]: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, April 2009

<https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WDI475V4RNI5J9D>

<http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0>

The libraries provide public access to a wide range of material, including online exhibits, digitized collections, archival finding aids, our catalog, online articles, and a growing range of materials in many media.

When possible, we provide rights information in catalog records, finding aids, and other metadata that accompanies collections or items. However, it is always the user's obligation to evaluate copyright and rights issues in light of their own use.



# WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

wnrmag.com  
April 2009 \$3.50

## HOT ideas to COOL fires

57 field trips

Conservation Congress turns 75

A warble from the barrens



# Construction season

Eastern phoebes are sizing up and plastering their nests right now.

Anita Carpenter

**N**ever mind the thermometer. The birds show us that spring is winging its way north. Wave after wave of avian migrants return predictably as the weeks slip by: horned larks in February; grackles, red-winged blackbirds, robins, killdeer and sandhill cranes in early March. From late March into early April, the earliest of the insect-eaters arrive with eastern phoebes, the hardiest member of the flycatcher family, leading the way.

Although the seven-inch eastern phoebes often perch in the open on outer twigs of trees and shrubs, they are not that easy to detect as they are dressed in the same modest colors as the tree branches. Their plumage? A darkish gray-brown with black tails and nearly black feathers covering the head and face. Their alert black eyes and a thick, flattened black bill fade into a black head. A white chin and pale, buffy white belly break up the uniform dark color. My overall impression when observing phoebes is their smoothness for they have no distinctive wing bars, no bright gaudy colors and no bold markings or face patterns.

*continued on page 29*



Eastern phoebes are the first of the flycatchers to migrate back to Wisconsin in spring. Their quiet nature, muted colors and soft, burry call hardly attract attention as they return to start feeding in advance of the breeding and nesting season.

MICHAEL DRUMMOND



# WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

April 2009  
Volume 33, Number 2



JAMES LACKORE

## 2 Construction season

Anita Carpenter

Meet the eastern phoebe that builds a life on the ledge.

## 4 When conflagration sparks innovation

Lori Compas

At DNR's LeMay Center, engineers, mechanics and foresters build hot ideas to douse wildfires better and safer.

## 10 Explore close to home

Christine Tanzer

Weekend day trips offer hikes, paddles and tours to see nature at its finest from spring through fall.

### CENTER SECTION

#### 2009 Wisconsin Fishing Report

Alisa Santiesteban, Lisa Gaumnitz and fisheries staff

An annual update of fishing improvements and the season forecast.

## 17 Seventy-five years of conservation through democracy

Kurt Thiede

For 75 years, Conservation Congress has set its sights and cast its lot toward better days outdoors.

## 22 A warble from the barrens

Kim M. Groves

Kirtland's warblers are slowly gaining a toehold in scrubby jack pine country.

## 27 Readers Write

## 30 Plant a pet-friendly garden

Kathryn A. Kehler

You and your pet can both enjoy digging in the soil as Creature Comforts suggests plants that are pet-friendly treats and plants to avoid along the paths your pets travel in your yard.

## 31 Name that tree

David L. Sperling

Traveler heads to where the woods have labels. Visit these arboretums as the branches bud up, leaf out and start the race to green up.



WES DOMINE



JOEL A. TRICK, USFWS

**FRONT COVER:** DNR firefighter Randy Sobralski plows a firebreak on the left flank of the 53-acre Drytown Fire near Hayward, April 29, 2007. The fire in a red pine plantation was extinguished and all 25 homes nearby were saved. DNR's Forest Protection Unit staff make and modify equipment like this tractor-plow unit to protect people, natural resources and property from wildfires.

CHRIS KLAHN, DNR Montello

**BACK COVER:** Early light at Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area in Kenosha County. (Inset) State-endangered smooth phlox (*Phlox glaberrima* ssp. *interior*), a species more common to our south. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas, contact the State Natural Areas Program, Bureau of Endangered Resources, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit [dnr.wi.gov/land/er/sna](http://dnr.wi.gov/land/er/sna).

© THOMAS A. MEYER, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Editor David L. Sperling  
Creative Products Manager Natasha Kassulke  
Circulation Manager Karen Ecklund  
Art Direction Thomas J. Senatori  
Printing Schumann Printers

Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine (USPS #34625000) is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 101 S. Webster St., Madison, WI 53702. The magazine is sustained through paid subscriptions. No tax money or license fees are used. Preferred Periodicals postage paid at Madison, WI. POSTMASTER and readers: subscription questions and address changes should be sent to Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine, P.O. Box 7191, Madison, WI 53707. Subscription rates are: \$8.97 for one year, \$15.97 for two years, \$21.97 for three years. Toll-free subscription inquiries will be answered at 1-800-678-9472.

© Copyright 2009, Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. [wnrmag.com](http://wnrmag.com)

Contributions are welcome, but the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to unsolicited manuscripts or illustrative material. Viewpoints of authors do not necessarily represent the opinion or policies of the State of Wisconsin, the Natural Resources Board or the Department of Natural Resources.

Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper using soy-based inks in the interest of our readers and our philosophy to foster stronger recycling markets in Wisconsin.

Governor Jim Doyle

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD  
Christine L. Thomas, Plover, Chair  
David Clausen, Amery  
Preston D. Cole, Milwaukee  
Jonathan P. Ela, Madison  
Gary E. Rohde, River Falls  
John W. Welter, Eau Claire  
Jane Wiley, Wausau

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
Matthew J. Frank, Secretary  
Patrick Henderson, Deputy Secretary  
Mary Ellen Vollbrecht, Executive Assistant



PUBL CE-012  
ISSN-0736-2277





# When conflagration

DNR and its partners respond to more than 1,500 wildfires each year on public lands. Their equipment, expertise and experience limit burning to about 5,000 acres annually.

Most forest fires occur between March and June following snowmelt before vegetation greens up. More than 90 percent of these fires are caused by people; about a third are debris fires.

Here, Forest Ranger Chris Klahn retreated as the 3,400-acre Cottonville fire crossed Bighorn Avenue in Adams County on May 5, 2005.

*Lori Compas*

**O**n a warm day in 1982, DNR Forest Fire Control Assistant Steve Michalko was called to a fire in Marinette County. A recreational vehicle had been stolen, stripped and set on fire near a pine plantation, and Michalko responded with a “Heavy Unit” — a fire engine with a dozer in tow. He was following standard procedure, plowing a firebreak with the dozer, when the situation suddenly turned from routine to extremely dangerous.

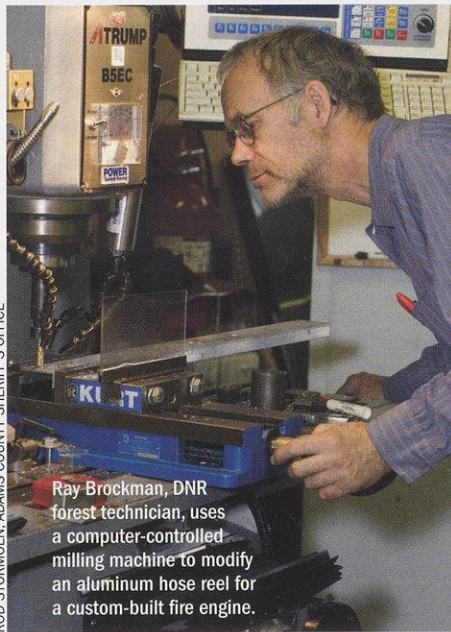




# sparks

**Firefighters,  
engineers and  
operators combine  
their talents and  
experience to modify  
equipment and  
safely extinguish  
wildfires.**

# innovation



Ray Brockman, DNR forest technician, uses a computer-controlled milling machine to modify an aluminum hose reel for a custom-built fire engine.

ROD STORMOEN, ADAMS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



DNR firefighting equipment is fabricated, repaired and maintained at the LeMay Forestry Center in Tomahawk. Here, Brockman welds a fire plow that will be powered by a tractor/dozer unit to cut firebreaks.

LORI COMPAS

LORI COMPAS

"The fire made a run uphill and it was coming pretty fast," Michalko said. "I pulled up the plow and tried to back up, but I couldn't outrun the fire." Fortunately for Michalko, his dozer was equipped with a new emergency shower system that had been custom-designed for his rig. The fire overtook the dozer and flames came through the roll-cage, but the shower system protected him and he emerged unharmed.

"I had no burns at all," Michalko said. "I did have some water damage, though: I chewed tobacco at the time and it got soaked. Someone had to replenish my supply before I could go on."

Wildfires threaten lives and property every year in Wisconsin, and fighting them is hot and dangerous work. In the early days of the last century, firefighters worked on foot and on horseback, but today's wildland firefighters

use some of the safest, most innovative gear found anywhere. Much of that gear — like the on-board shower system that protected Michalko — is designed specifically for Wisconsin's unique conditions and is fabricated at the Department of Natural Resources' LeMay Forestry Center in Tomahawk.

Since its founding in 1934, the LeMay Center's name has changed but its essential functions have remained



the same: to provide a workspace for the design, production, repair and modification of firefighting equipment and to serve as a centralized warehouse for firefighting tools and gear.

The warehouse serves not only the DNR but also volunteer fire departments around the state, said Wildland Fire Equipment Research and Development Section Chief Mike Lehman. "The State of Wisconsin provides grant money to fire departments," Lehman said. "The departments can use those funds to buy wildland fire supplies from the LeMay Center's warehouse at cost." Those grant monies ensure that fire departments have access to wildland firefighting protective gear and suppression equipment for those times when they are the first to a wildland fire, or when other wildland fires prevent DNR from responding.



"We try to keep innovations logical and consistent so the firefighters using that equipment can do their jobs safely and efficiently."

— Mike Lehman, chief, DNR Wildland Fire Equipment Research and Development

The DNR has mutual aid agreements with hundreds of fire departments around the state. While the fire departments focus on structural fires (houses, sheds and commercial buildings) and the DNR's emphasis is on wildland fires, there are powerful advantages to working together. Wildland fuels can ignite structural fires, and structural fires can ignite wildland fuels, so coordinated efforts mean the most effective fire suppression possible. DNR rangers maintain close relationships with fire departments in their geographic area of responsibility, conduct training exercises and share the technology to build communication



A tractor-pull unit cuts a six-foot-wide furrow of earth to stop an advancing fire line. Such furrows buy time to slow flames, separate fires from burnable fuels and give responders a chance to safely starve and snuff the fire.

COURTESY OF BRIAN M. LUEBKE

networks so mutual responses are as well coordinated as possible. This cooperative approach, including the benefits offered by the state's fire suppression grant programs, is critical to ensuring that all firefighters can work together effectively.

Wisconsin's coordinated commitment to fire suppression, along with its relatively flat topography, means that fires are usually extinguished while they're still relatively small. We're unlikely to experience wildfires on the vast scale that's often seen out West, but our state does face increasing pressure regarding fire suppression efforts.

One of the biggest challenges is the increasing amount of residential development in remote areas and near swamps and marshes.

"A while back there weren't many houses or structures around marshy land," said Phil Puestow, a forestry technician based in Rhineland. "If there was a small fire in a remote marsh, we'd just keep an eye on it and catch it if it came up onto the highland." Today, though, more and more houses are being built near marshy land that was once considered marginal. More homes are being built in remote forested areas, too, and these factors have led to more so-called

"wildland-urban interface" fires — fires in which structures are threatened and lives are at stake. "Just about every fire we see now, there's some sort of structure that we need to protect," Puestow said.

With more homes and other buildings to protect, wildland firefighters have a greater need for vehicles that can operate on wet, marshy soils. They need vehicles that can access remote or roadless areas. Most of all, they need rigs that are equipped with gear to keep them safe.

Overall, the state crews have an excellent safety record. In nearly 100 years of wildland firefighting, only one fatality has occurred: Donald L. Eisberner died fighting a fire in the Eau Claire County Forest in 1982. That tragedy led to new knowledge and further improvements in safety technology. Michalko surmised, for instance, that he was the first person to use the new shower system that was implemented after Eisberner's death. Twenty years later, staff developed roll-down fire curtains and installed them on dozers and marsh rigs to offer even more protection for operators.

The tragedy also led to an increased awareness of the importance of consistent control placement and labeling on all vehicles. Labels, knobs and switches



are consistent so in an emergency a trained operator can get his or her hands on the right control quickly and efficiently.

Lehman, who is a mechanical engineer, said procedures are in place to balance the desire for innovation with the need for consistency. "We encourage people to be innovative," he said, "but consistency is really important. We don't allow freelancing." If a staffer out in the field has an idea for an improvement, they're encouraged to share the idea with LeMay Center staff. Ideas also spring from the DNR Forestry's Equipment and Safety Team, which comprises technicians, rangers and specialists who bring recommendations from their field experiences. The team helps refine ideas and develop equipment specifications.

Once an idea has been approved and refined, there are several paths that the concept can take. If field staff has a good idea and is technologically proficient, he or she can contact Lehman for permission to create a prototype of the desired modification. If the person can't fabricate the modification, Lehman might mention the concept to someone on the shop floor at the LeMay Center and they can start working on it. Or the idea may be referred to a LeMay Center designer who can create a three-dimensional CAD (computer-assisted design) model of the project.

After an item is designed and a prototype made, the modification is tested and refined. If there's general consensus that the concept is good and the design sound, the innovation is implemented across the fleet and all staff are trained in its use.

"Training and design are closely linked," Lehman said. "We try to keep everything logical and consistent. For instance, on a tractor-plow, pushing the lever forward and down gives you water. Always."

The end result is that Wisconsin's wildland firefighters use highly specialized equipment — much of it designed and manufactured by LeMay Center employees — that allows them to do their job more safely and more efficiently than ever before.

## HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OF THE SPECIALIZED GEAR



CHRIS KLAHN

### ■ Type 4 (three-ton pumper/tanker engine)

This truck has two jobs. First, it hauls and provides support for a tractor-plow, a key piece of fire-fighting equipment (see details below). It also serves as a fire engine and is used to protect homes and other structures, to suppress large fires and to suppress smaller fires in remote areas.

The Type 4 carries 850 gallons of water and is equipped with a pump to draw additional water from lakes, rivers or other water sources. The truck can also spray Class A foam, a biodegradable substance that allows water to cling to surfaces without running off.

The Type 4's semi-custom cab and chassis were purchased from the manufacturer. The boxes on the back have evolved over the years, and the highly customized boxes on the newest trucks have been designed and built from scratch by LeMay Center staff. The boxes, which are constructed of aluminum, contain the water tank, pumps and plumbing, as well as storage space for hand tools, fuel and the operator's personal gear.



CHRIS KLAHN

### ■ Tractor-plow unit (also called a dozer)

Tractor-plow units are equipped to pack two punches in the battle against a wild-fire: they have a blade in the front and a wide plow in the back. The front-mounted blade can bury burning debris, build roads and establish firebreaks. The back-mounted plow turns up the soil to create a six-foot-wide furrow. This combination is well-suited to Wisconsin's soils and topography.

Wisconsin is one of only a few states that equips its dozers with an on-board water supply for operator protection. The dozers are also outfitted with drop-down fire curtains that shield the operator from radiant heat.



### ■ Muskeg low-ground unit

Many of Wisconsin's wildfires occur in swampy areas, where trucks and dozers would sink in the muck. Marsh rigs allow firefighters to access these low-lying areas and move across their wet soils.

Wisconsin's original marsh rig was a government surplus civil defense vehicle that was designed to transport troops in the Arctic. When removed from its intended environment, its motor was underpowered and it tended to overheat, but overall it worked well in wetland areas and proved that this type of vehicle could be adapted for use in Wisconsin's fire suppression efforts.

The DNR's modern muskegs still have tank-type tracks to support the vehicle on wet ground and allow it to maneuver through underbrush. LeMay Center staff outfit the rigs with a 200-400 gallon water tank, pump, hose and a winch. The rigs can spray Class A foam to suppress fires and protect structures, and they can rescue other vehicles.

CHRIS KLAHN



### ■ 4x4 initial attack engines

These four-wheel-drive trucks transport staff on patrol and are often the first fire-suppression vehicles to arrive at a fire. They can pump water from the on-board tank or draft water from nearby sources. They are equipped with modern communications gear and their customized boxes provide storage for hand tools, fuel and personal firefighting gear.

The DNR has two types of initial attack engines: the 6x and the 7x. The newer Type 6x trucks are currently being constructed at the LeMay Center. They are similar to the older Type 7x trucks, but they have more water capacity, dual rear wheels, and more storage for tools and personal gear.



Mopping up the 20-acre Mitten Fire in Vilas County, May 5, 2007.





LORI COMPAS

### ■ Drop-down fire curtains

These fireproof curtains are purchased from a vendor and custom-fit to the interiors of the DNR's dozers and marsh rigs. They're designed to roll down with the flip of a wrist and completely enclose the cab, protecting the operator from radiant heat.



DNR DIVISION OF FORESTRY

### ■ Shower system

Just as dozers and muskies are equipped with pressure hoses and nozzles to smother fires, like the one demonstrated here, the tops and inside edges of the equipment have a custom-designed shower-sprinkler system as a last defense to protect the operator from flames and heat if fire gets too close.



LORI COMPAS

### ■ Clear labeling and consistent controls

Clear labeling and consistent controls are essential because any technician or any piece of machinery could be transferred anywhere in the state in the event of an emergency. It's important that every dozer, for instance, has controls that are identical to every other dozer in the fleet to avoid confusion and potentially life-threatening situations. While innovation is encouraged, no one is allowed to modify vehicles or gear without prior permission.

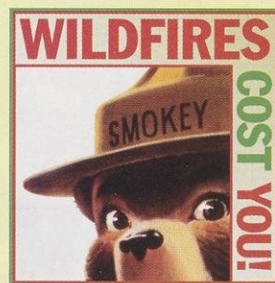


*Writer and photographer Lori Compas is also a website designer and editor for DNR's Division of Forestry.*

## WILDFIRE PREVENTION WEEK IS APRIL 19-25, 2009

While wildfires can happen any time the ground is free of snow, the risk in Wisconsin is greatest in the spring, when the snow has melted and the vegetation has not greened up. Warming temperatures and increased sunshine often cause leaves, sticks and other materials to dry out. The abundance of such fuel on the ground, combined with the low relative humidity and strong winds that often occur in the springtime, result in ideal conditions for fire.

Since the vast majority of Wisconsin's wildfires are started by people (usually the result of burning yard waste or other debris), Smokey Bear's message of "Only YOU can prevent wildfires" is as important today as when this famous icon first appeared on a poster in 1944, pouring a bucket of water on a campfire. The Wisconsin DNR monitors weather conditions to determine fire danger, and current fire conditions are updated daily on the DNR website. Most counties in Wisconsin are under DNR protection, and if you want to burn vegetation in these counties you must have a written and signed annual burning permit with you while burning. You must follow all restrictions listed on both sides of the permit. Go to [dnr.wi.gov/forestry/fire](http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/fire) to find links to current fire conditions, information about burning permits, and more. You can also call 888-WIS-BURN (947-2876).



GREAT LAKES FIRE COMPACT



# Explore close to

Christine Tanzer

**I**n Wisconsin, home isn't just where the heart is, it's also a place to find adventure. From Great Lakes to river bluffs, Wisconsin is a wild wonderland full of natural treasures. Join us as we explore these riches guided by expert naturalists and DNR professionals on field trips sponsored by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Trips run April through October and include an exciting mix of outdoor experiences close to home no matter where you live in the state.

Check out the hands-on field trips that leave a lasting impression, like #68 where you can visit the Streamside Rearing Facility at Riveredge Nature Center to see how lake sturgeon are raised for stocking in the Milwaukee River. See how conservation and clean habitat can help these fish live a century.



KATE REDMOND

These day trips offer an up-close look and a hands-on experience with Wisconsin's wildlife, waters and landscapes. You can explore hidden wilderness areas and work side-by-side in the field with the scientists who study and protect these treasures. Discover something new about your home state or rediscover a favorite place. If you're curious about nature, we can offer field experiences that you'll remember for years to come.

The 57 trips on these pages are arranged chronologically from April through October. An additional 20 trips are available online, which explains gaps in the numbered listing that follows. Find the complete roster of field trips on the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin's website, [www.wisconservation.org](http://www.wisconservation.org), where you can check availability and register for trips online in a secure environment. Online registration is faster, gives you up-to-the-minute information if space is still available, and provides instant confirmation of your registration. If you prefer to send in a check, there is also a mail-in registration form you can print from their website. Register promptly, as space is limited and trips fill quickly on a first-come, first-served basis.

An annual field trip registration fee of \$37 allows individuals and families to register for *multiple* trips. The fee also includes an introductory membership to the nonprofit Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin that for more than 20 years has worked with citizens, businesses, nonprofits and government to promote, protect and enjoy Wisconsin's public lands, waters and wildlife.

Note that some trips carry additional *per person* costs.

These fees help offset special trip transportation costs, boat rentals, or are fundraisers to support conservation work related to the trip. Also note the abbreviation SNA used throughout the listings indicates trips to State Natural Areas.

Unless noted in the description, all trips fall on Saturdays. Trip numbers are color-coded to provide information about the physical demands of each outing: **Orange** titles indicate trips accessible to people with walking disabilities; **Green** trips offer easy, short hikes on level terrain; **Blue** hikes are a bit more strenuous over land with a few hills; **Red** trips are longer, more vigorous treks on steeper terrain or indicate longer paddles for experienced canoeists and kayakers.

Registration for some trips is limited where natural areas can't handle much foot traffic, transportation can only handle small groups or wildlife might get spooked by larger groups. Trips that can accommodate fewer than 20 people are listed with the space limits. Canoe and kayak trips are especially popular, so please only request one such trip per family or group.

Registrants will receive additional details and driving directions approximately two weeks before each field trip.

If you don't have home computer access, and would like to receive a field trip registration booklet by mail, please e-mail the address below or call toll-free (866) 264-4096 for a registration form.

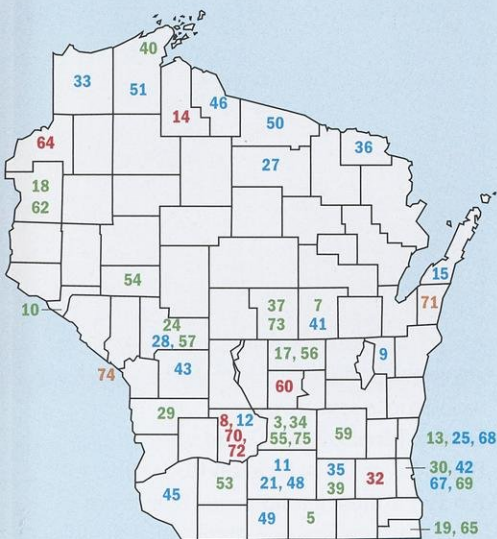
Further questions? Check the Foundation's website, [www.wisconservation.org](http://www.wisconservation.org), call me on Wednesdays at (608) 264-8548 or e-mail: [christine.tanzer@wisconsin.gov](mailto:christine.tanzer@wisconsin.gov).

*Christine Tanzer is the Field Trip Coordinator for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.*



# home

## You don't have to go far for an outdoor adventure!



-  Accessible to people with walking disabilities
-  Easy, short travel on level terrain
-  An average hike with a few hills
-  Steeper terrain, a longer hike or canoe trip with a few small rapids

TRIP LOCATOR MAP

### 3 Fire and treasure – survival skills ancient & new

Join us at the MacKenzie Center for some basic survival skills like several ways to start a fire without a match using flint and steel, a bow drill, a magnifying lens and more. While a dessert is baking on your fire, learn how to use a GPS unit to locate caches hidden outdoors. Materials provided. May 2, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Poynette, Columbia Co. Ruth Ann Lee & Alex Britzius, leaders  
Cost: \$5

### 5 Birding at Fair Meadows SNA

Birds abound as we hike this cornucopia of sedge meadow, ash swamp, oak savanna, woods, prairie and fen. Catch a glimpse of hooded mergansers, marsh wrens and sandpipers as we aim to see 50 species or more on a morning hike. May 9, 7:30-10:30 a.m. Milton, Rock Co. Penny & Gary Shackelford, leaders

### 7 Bird banding neotropical migrants

Learn about neotropical songbird migration and provide hands-on help banding songbirds at the Waupaca Field Station. Then explore the adjacent Emmons Creek Barrens SNA. Choose one session to attend:  
7-A. May 16, 9 a.m.-noon  
7-B. May 16, 1:30-4:30 p.m. Dayton, Waupaca Co. Bob Welch, Debra Martin & Mark Martin, leaders  
Cost: \$5 per person

### 8 Lichens of Devil's Lake

Traverse the many habitats of Devil's Lake State Park to learn about lichen ecology, tips for identification and conservation management. May 16, 9:30 a.m.-noon Devil's Lake, Sauk Co. Jim Bennett, leader

### 9 Warblers at High Cliff State Park

Glimpse rare migrating warblers as we hike atop limestone cliffs overlooking the shores of Lake Winnebago. Or explore the grasslands to see bobolinks and dickcissels. May 16, 6-8 a.m. Sherwood, Calumet Co. Carol & Tom Sykes, leaders

### 10 Train ride and birds of Tiffany Bottoms SNA

All Aboard! Ride atop an antique open-air train with stops for short hikes into blooming prairies, hardwood forests, wetlands and sloughs near the mouth of the Chippewa River. This fundraiser supports conservation on the Lower Chippewa River.  
10-A. May 16, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
10-B. September 26, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Durand, Pepin Co. Kris Johansen, leader  
Cost: \$20

### 11 Birds and habitat at Mazomanie State Wildlife Area

Explore the floodplain forest and sand barrens along the Lower Wisconsin River that provide critical habitat for migrating birds and wildlife. Learn how scientists manage the plant communities and study the effects on wildlife like the ornate box turtle and rare birds. Thursday, May 21, 7-10 a.m. Mazomanie, Dane Co. Mike Mossman, Brad Hutnik & Matt Zine, leaders

All aboard the open-air train whose tracks wend past prairies, wetlands, hardwoods and sloughs on the Lower Chippewa River. Trip #10 to Tiffany Bottoms SNA.



LAURA ENGLAND



Trip #33 offers a hardy paddle through six miles of wooded shores and wetlands on the picturesque St. Louis River estuary off Lake Superior.



## 12 Leopold's land ethic in action

Bird hike on the Leopold Reserve and Pine Island. Learn how Aldo Leopold's ethic of responsible land stewardship through conservation and management provides a basis for critical bird habitat on this Important Bird Area. Then visit the famous Leopold Shack, a National Historic Landmark that inspired his writings.

Friday, May 22, 8 a.m.-noon  
Baraboo, Sauk Co.

Mike Mossman, Steve Swenson & Yoyi Steele, leaders

## 13 Fly-fishing for beginners

Meet us at Riveredge Nature Center for an introduction to fly-fishing. Demystify the equipment and learn the basics in an indoor presentation. Then venture outside to cast and fish the ponds yourself! Use of rods, reels, lines and flies included. May 23, 12:30-3:30 p.m.

Newburg, Ozaukee County  
Jerry & Diane Kiesow, leaders

Limit: 12

Cost: \$30

## 14 Search for elk calves

Venture into the field with elk biologists to radio-track adult elk cows in the Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest, then hike through the back country to search for elk calves to weigh and collar. Note: You must be physically fit for a long day of hiking on uneven terrain. Please choose one single-day session to attend:

14-A. Saturday, May 23, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

14-B. Sunday, May 24, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

14-C. Monday, May 25, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Clam Lake, Ashland Co.

Laine Stowell & Matt McKay, leaders  
Limit: 10

## 15 Explore Door County's North Bay SNA

Travel in one of the last remaining undeveloped stretches of Lake Michigan shore on the Door Peninsula to explore numerous plant communities on the exposed Lake Michigan lake bottom. See rare plants, orchids and Hine's emerald dragonflies.

May 23, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Sister Bay, Door Co.

Mark Martin, leader

## 17 Got the blues? Bluebirds and Karner blues

Join us along a bluebird trail to peer into nesting boxes. Learn about bluebird ecology, nest box placement, management and how to start your own bluebird trail. Bring a lunch and tour a nearby natural area to see wild lupine in flower — a food plant for the rare Karner blue butterfly.

May 30, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Wild Rose, Waushara Co.

Kent Hall & Mark Martin, leaders

## 18 Frog night hike

Learn to identify frogs and toads by their chirps and chortles. Hear many species of frogs during an indoor presentation. Then drive to local wetland areas to hone your new frog ID skills.

May 30, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

St. Croix Falls, Polk Co.

Randy Korb, leader

Cost: \$5

## 19 Chiwaukee Prairie SNA

Tread among blooming shooting stars as we explore the richest prairie in Wisconsin, with over 400 plant species. Learn about prairie ecology, history, management techniques and get up-close to small mammals.

May 30, 9-11:30 a.m.

Pleasant Prairie, Kenosha Co.

Marty Johnson & Doug Robinson, leaders

## 21 Bluebirds & other cavity nesting birds

Get a true bird's-eye view of nesting bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees and wrens as we monitor the nesting boxes at Governor Nelson State Park. Learn to attract these birds to nest in your yard.

May 30, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Waunakee, Dane Co.

Marianne Jensen & James Stich, leaders

## 24 Where are all the whip-poor-wills?

Venture into the nighttime world of Black River State Forest to discover whoo is up tonight. An evening filled with the sounds of owls, whip-poor-wills, nighthawks,

woodcocks and frogs.

Friday, June 5, 7-10:30 p.m.

Black River Falls, Jackson Co.

Andy Paulios, leader

## 25 Restore, explore, discover – Mequon Nature Preserve

Escape the city in minutes and enjoy spring wildflowers. Travel the trails from forest to wetland atop boardwalks to a lofty observation tower. So much to behold tucked away from the surrounding urban landscape.

Friday, June 5, 9-11 a.m.

Mequon, Ozaukee Co.

Kristin Gies, leader

## 27 Golden-winged warblers of the Northwoods

Start the day with a bird hike through prime warbler habitat to search for nearly 70 species of birds. Then enjoy an exclusive look at birds in the hand as we set mist nets to band rare golden-winged warblers. This trip is a fundraiser for the Golden-winged Warbler Campaign for Neotropical Migrants.

June 6, 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

Lake Tomahawk, Oneida County

Amber Roth, leader

Limit: 15

Cost \$20

## 28 Towering trees and northern birds of Ketchum Creek Pines SNA

Hike a mossy carpet through a sea of ferns and under majestic towering





FRANK KOSHERE

### 33 Kayak through a Lake Superior estuary

Enjoy a six-mile paddle past picturesque wooded shores, through unique wetlands and along meandering backwater bays within the remote wilderness of the St. Louis River Streambank Protection Area. Instruction provided, beginning kayakers welcome!

June 13, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Superior, Douglas Co.

Frank Koshere, leader

Limit: 18

Cost: \$65 includes kayak rental or \$25 if you bring your own kayak and gear

### 34 Bats at Audubon Goose Pond SNA

Intrigued by bats? Join us to learn more about these mysterious creatures of the night. See bats emerge at dusk, and watch a bat detector in action that uses sonograms and acoustics to identify and count bats. Find out which bat houses to use and where to place them. This trip is a fundraiser for bat conservation projects in Wisconsin.

June 13, 7:30-10 p.m.

Arlington, Columbia Co.

David Redell & Mark Martin, leaders

Cost: \$10

### 35 Bird watching at Rose Lake SNA

Discover this pristine prairie pothole lake where we are likely to see white pelicans, black terns, yellow-headed blackbirds, common moorhens, and other marsh and prairie bird species.

Sunday, June 14, 9 a.m.-noon

Fort Atkinson, Jefferson Co.

Nolan Kollath

### 36 Bog or swamp in the Chequamegon-Nicolet?

Discover the difference! Venture onto a quaking bog mat to search for orchids, carnivorous plants and other rarities at Grandma Lake Wetlands SNA. Then explore Van Zile Cedars — a primeval old-growth cedar swamp in a dark, quiet, moss-cloaked landscape of twisted trees.

Friday, June 19, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Long Lake, Florence Co.

Thomas Meyer, leader

### 37 Banding kestrels on the Buena Vista

Join researchers to visit several kestrel nesting boxes and get hands-on with banding kestrel chicks. Learn about kestrel biology and techniques in raptor research while enjoying the beauty of Buena Vista Grasslands. This is a fundraiser for kestrel research.

Choose one session to attend:

37-A. June 20, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

37-B. June 27, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Plover, Portage Co.

Janet & Amber Eschenbauch

Cost \$15

### 39 Aztalan SNA- ancient archaeology

Learn about Native American tribes who inhabited Wisconsin's prehistoric frontier as we join noted archaeologists to explore numerous investigations conducted at this famed National Historic Landmark site in Aztalan State Park.

June 20, 10 a.m.-noon

Lake Mills, Jefferson Co.

Mark Dudzik & Bob Birmingham, leaders

### 40 Apostle Islands – All aboard!

Board the *L.L. Smith* research ship on an island tour of scientific discovery. Learn about local history, water resource issues and help sample water quality.

Sunday, June 21, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Bayfield, Bayfield Co.

Frank Koshere & Dan Rau, leaders

Cost: \$25

### 41 Skunk and Foster Lakes SNA

Hike a portion of the Ice Age Trail to explore two kettle lakes where dams were recently removed, now connecting them to a coldwater fishery stream. Learn about the ecological benefits of dam removal and deep lake ecology.

Friday, June 26, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Scandinavia, Waupaca Co.

Scott Koehnke, Steve Hoffman,

Al Niebur & Ted Johnson, leaders

### 42 Canoeing Milwaukee's concrete jungle

Explore the urban wilderness by paddling under a canopy of skyscrapers,

pinetrees to spy rare birds. Don't miss this opportunity to see an overlooked jewel of central Wisconsin.

June 6, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Black River State Forest, Jackson Co.

Armund Bartz & Peter Bakken, leaders

### 29 Electroshock fish of Bohemian Valley

Come to Wisconsin's Coulee region to see experts electroshock a stream. Marvel as trout and other fish rise to the surface, are tallied, then swim away unharmed.

June 6, 10 a.m.-noon

Coon Valley, Vernon Co.

David Vetrano, leader

### 30 Birdwatching at Havenwoods

Enjoy a bird song serenade as we blaze a trail in Havenwoods State Forest in search of bluebirds, warblers, snipes, soras and other spring migrants.

June 6, 8-11 a.m.

Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co.

Sue Johansen & Dale Snider, leaders

### 32 Canoe and bird Big Muskego Lake

View eagle, osprey, pelicans, shorebirds, Forster's and black terns as we paddle through the backwater cattails of Big Muskego Lake. Some canoes available or bring your own canoe or kayak.

Friday, June 12, 7 a.m.-1 p.m.

Muskego, Waukesha Co.

Tom Zagar & Brian Glenzinski, leaders



Trip # 60 is a journey through time to walk along the lake, wetlands, prairies and savannas that were the childhood stomping ground of John Muir in central Wisconsin.



CHRISTINE TANZER

museums, public art and shopping malls along the Milwaukee River. Explore how natural and human histories have shaped urban stretches of Wisconsin's many rivers. Learn about efforts to restore the river's ecological health. Cost includes canoe use and shuttle.

June 27, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co.  
Tim Vargo, leader  
Limit: 14  
Cost: \$30

#### **43 Inside the fence at Fort McCoy Barrens SNA**

Enjoy a rare opportunity to go inside the Fort McCoy Army Base and explore the natural communities it harbors. Learn about oak savanna restoration, ecology and biological controls used on this unique site.  
June 27, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
Fort McCoy, Monroe Co.  
Kim Mello, leader

#### **45 Desert and oasis along the Lower Wisconsin River**

Explore opposites and extremes along the Lower Wisconsin River. First, visit a remnant of Wisconsin's desert where cacti and other arid-loving plants thrive in the Blue River Sand Barrens SNA. Then venture into Avoca Prairie SNA's lush wet prairies — the largest prairie east of the Mississippi River.  
Friday, July 10, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Blue River, Grant Co.  
Thomas Meyer, leader

#### **46 Osprey banding on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage**

Visit several osprey nests to help hold and band nestlings — a unique opportunity to see these majestic birds in hand. Learn about osprey and eagle from noted ecologists in the area. This trip is a fundraiser for the osprey monitoring program.  
Choose one session:  
46-A. July 11, 8:30 a.m.-noon  
46-B. July 11, 1:30-5 p.m.  
Mercer, Iron Co.  
Bruce Bacon, leader  
Limit: 15  
Cost: \$35

#### **48 Prairies at their peak**

Behold the beauty of prairie at peak bloom! Marvel at plants and birds harbored among savannas, prairies, oak woods and wetlands at Pleasant Valley Conservancy SNA.  
Sunday, July 12, 1-4 p.m.  
Black Earth, Dane Co.  
Tom & Kathie Brock, leaders

#### **49 Muralt Bluff and Oliver Prairie SNAs**

Enjoy the vista while hiking through waves of prairie grasses and flowering plants at Muralt Bluff Prairie SNA. Then travel to Oliver Prairie, which boasts more than 70 species of native

prairie plants.  
Friday, July 17, 9 a.m.-noon  
Albany, Green Co.  
Dawn Hinebaugh & Christina Isenring, leaders

#### **50 Canoe the playful-spirit river – Manitowish River Wilderness Area**

Paddle through a diverse mosaic of natural communities along a five-mile stretch of the lower Manitowish River, named by the Ojibwe for its playful spirit. Marvel at stands of old-growth forest and hear the history of this old fur trade route. Cost includes canoe use and shuttle.  
July 18, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Manitowish Waters, Vilas Co.  
Zach Wilson & Licia Johnson, leaders  
Limit: 12  
Cost \$40

#### **51 Wolf howl**

Join the pack as we enjoy an evening bus ride through wolf territory with stops along forest back roads to listen for wolves. Experience the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in a unique way! Cost includes dinner at Lakewoods Resort and a donation to wolf tracking efforts.  
July 18, 3 p.m.-midnight  
Cable, Bayfield Co.  
Adrian Wydeven & Sarah Boles, leaders  
Cost: \$40

#### **53 Wild edible and medicinal plants**

Walk the woods to identify and harvest edible and medicinal plants. Then it's off to the kitchen to prepare your foraged lunch and enjoy the bounty of your booty!  
July 25, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Barneveld, Iowa Co.  
Kelly Kearns & Kate Cooper, leaders  
Limit: 15  
Cost: \$5

#### **54 The "power" in landfills**

Seven Mile Creek Landfill powers 3,500 local homes with electricity made from methane gas produced by decomposing garbage. Learn how methane recovery helps slow climate change and how a modern landfill is built to protect



drinking water and other resources.  
July 25, 10 a.m.-noon  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co.  
Mark Vinall, leader

**55 Prairie bloom at Audubon  
Goose Pond SNA**

Enjoy a sea of over 400 acres of prairie in full bloom. Learn about prairie restoration, management and the wildlife prairies harbor.  
August 1, 9:30 a.m.-noon  
Arlington, Columbia Co.  
Sue Foote-Martin & Mark Martin, leaders

**56 Wild Rose Fish Hatchery**

Tour the new Wild Rose Hatchery and get a behind-the-scenes look at modern technologies used in trout and salmon aquaculture. Wild Rose recently underwent a \$14 million renovation. Come take a look!  
August 8, 9 a.m.-noon  
Wild Rose, Waushara Co.  
Steve Fajfer, leader

**57 Undiscovered “prairies” of the  
Black River State Forest**

See thousands of blooming acres of “prairie” that ecologists call pine barrens. Learn about ecology of this unique area that harbors many rare species.  
August 15, 9:30 a.m.-noon  
Black River Falls, Jackson Co.  
Armund Bartz & Peter Bakken, leaders

**59 Bats at Neda Mine SNA**

See an amazing display of bats that thrive at Neda Mine! Using ultrasound bat detectors, infrared video cameras and your own eyes, watch bats swarm outside the mine exits. Enjoy a rare opportunity to learn first-hand about bat biology and natural history in one of Wisconsin’s largest bat hibernacula, where more than 140,000 bats hibernate in this maze of abandoned iron mine tunnels. This is a fundraiser for the Wisconsin Bat Monitoring Program. Choose one session:  
59-A. August 15, 6-10 p.m.  
59-B. Friday, August 21, 6-10 p.m.  
Horicon, Dodge Co.  
Dave Redell, leader  
Cost: \$25

**60 John Muir’s boyhood haunts**

Walk in the footsteps of John Muir as we traverse the lake, wetlands, prairie and savanna of his childhood home now regaled as Muir Park SNA. Behold amazing vistas as we lunch atop a cedar glade at Observatory Hill SNA.  
August 22, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
Montello, Marquette Co.  
Mark Martin, leader

**62 Migrating monarchs of the  
St. Croix River**

Learn the amazing story of the monarch’s life cycle and its relationship to plants and migration. Take a field tour to capture, examine and tag some of these beautiful migrants yourself as they pass by the scenic St. Croix River. All ages welcome.  
August 29, 1-3 p.m.  
St. Croix Falls, Polk Co.  
Randy Korb, leader  
Cost: \$5

**64 Trumpeter swan cygnet  
round-up and banding**

Help a team of DNR scientists capture and band trumpeter swan cygnets in Crex Meadows. Paddle through the marsh in your kayak or canoe while overhead aircraft give directions on

the swans’ location as we surround and capture the birds. Help band, collar and check the health of these cygnets. Bring your own kayak or canoe and expect a long day of paddling. For experienced, physically fit paddlers only!  
August 29, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Grantsburg, Burnett Co.  
Pat Manthey, leader  
Cost: \$25

**65 Migrating monarchs at  
Richard Bong**

Discover how tagged monarch butterflies unlock the secrets of their life cycle and migration. Hike the grasslands of Richard Bong Recreation Area to net and tag monarch butterflies yourself. Learn how you can plan your own monarch way station. Ages 8 & older.  
September 12, 12:30-3 p.m.  
Burlington, Kenosha Co.  
Donna Mosca & Beth Goeppinger, leaders

**67 Bike through the  
Menomonee River Valley**

Pedal along the Hank Aaron State Trail and hear the rich history the Menomonee River Valley has experienced — from pre-settlement marsh-

By land, water and air, join the other swan rustlers on Trip # 64 rounding-up cygnet trumpeters at Crex Meadows. Spend the day in northwest Wisconsin capturing and banding swans before their fall migration.



BARB BARZEN



On NRF field trips, two old-timers celebrate a zest for clean living and a taste for the outdoors. You can share that feeling too!



STEVE SCHRAM

land, to vibrant industrial center, then abandoned wasteland. Learn about the current ecological and economic resurgence leading to a brighter future. This leisurely bike ride is peppered with stops and stories of history and river lore. Some loaner bikes available or bring your own. Friday, September 18, 1-4 p.m. Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co. Judy Krause & Nancy Aten, leaders  
Cost: \$10

#### **68 Return of the sturgeon**

Sturgeon are the largest and longest lived fish native to the Great Lakes, absent from the Milwaukee River for over 120 years — until now. See results from reintroducing sturgeon to the Milwaukee River through a Streamside Rearing Facility located at Riveredge Nature Center. Learn about fish biology as we explore the river from the standpoint of this ancient fish. This is a fundraiser for sturgeon reintroduction efforts. Please choose one session to attend:  
**68-A.** September 19, 9 a.m.-noon  
**68-B.** September 19, 1-4 p.m.  
Newburg, Ozaukee Co.  
Marc White & Mary Holleback, leaders  
Cost: \$10

#### **69 Urban migratory birds**

Join avian researchers in urban Riverside Park who are studying the importance of urban natural areas for neotropical migratory songbirds. Observe their mist net capture and bird-banding station. Take this rare opportunity to see songbirds in hand. September 19, 8:30-11 a.m. Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co. Owen Boyle, Bill Mueller & Tim Vargo, leaders

#### **70 Baraboo Hills geologic gems**

Examine how geologic forces shaped the landscape of the Baraboo Hills Region — a geologic gem of the Midwest. Enjoy stops at the famous Van Hise Rock in Rock Springs and spectacular vistas in Devil's Lake State Park. September 26, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Devil's Lake, Sauk Co. Phil Fauble, leader

#### **71 Chinook salmon**

Watch Chinook salmon on their last journey to return to their spawning grounds. Learn about Great Lakes history, salmon life cycles and egg collection at the Besadny Fisheries Facility. October 3, 9:30-11 a.m. Kewaunee, Kewaunee Co. Kathy Dax, leader

#### **72 Outdoor photography at Devil's Lake**

Bring your camera and hone your outdoor photography skills with hands-on instruction from an expert. Learn some basics of digital photography and composing images. For beginners to intermediates who have or are interested in stepping up to SLR digital cameras. October 10, 8 a.m.-noon Devil's Lake, Sauk Co. Dave Edwards, leader

#### **73 Northern saw-whet owl banding**

Enjoy a unique opportunity to have your own up-close in-hand encounter with Wisconsin's smallest owls! Experience mist netting and banding these charming birds at Linwood Springs Research Station, where up to 700 migrating owls are banded annually. Choose one session to attend:  
**73-A.** Friday, October 16, 7:30-10 p.m.  
**73-B.** Saturday, October 17, 7:30-10 p.m.  
**73-C.** Friday, October 23, 7:30-10 p.m.  
**73-D.** Saturday, October 24, 7:30-10 p.m.  
**73-E.** Friday, October 30, 7:30-10 p.m.  
Stevens Point, Portage Co. Gene Jacobs, leader  
Cost: \$10

#### **74 Migration on the mighty Mississippi**

Expect to see up to 250 bald eagles and more than 100,000 waterfowl as we scan Pools 8 and 9 of the Mississippi River. Spot waterfowl, pelicans, eagles and hawks at peak migration at this Globally Important Bird Area. Friday, October 23, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Brownsville, Minn. Andy Paulios & Mark Andersen, leaders

#### **75 Crane congregations**

Watch more than 1,000 cranes fly in to roost for the night on the Wisconsin River! Keep your eyes on the sky as we learn about sandhill cranes and the bird conservation work of the Aldo Leopold Foundation in partnership with private and public lands in the area. Friday, October 30, 5:30 p.m.-sunset Portage, Columbia Co. Steve Swenson, leader



# Seventy-five years of conservation through democracy



At its diamond anniversary, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress encourages those who enjoy the outdoors to advocate for the breadth of the outdoor landscape.

*Kurt Thiede*

**O**n Friday, May 8 in La Crosse, dozens of conversations, stories and laughter will be hushed by the sound of a gavel in a rite of spring as eagerly anticipated as the repeated pop of a baseball off an ash bat. Swinging the gavel, the chairman will call to order the annual Wisconsin Conservation Congress Statewide Convention.

A time-honored tradition follows; a roll call every conservation-minded citizen should heed with a source of pride. One by one, the secretary of the congress will hail and recognize the

lead delegate from each of the state's 72 counties.

"Adams."

"Here!"

"Ashland."

"Present!"

Accompanying each answer, the delegate will raise an old wooden paddle adorned with the county name and inscribed with the names of those who have represented that county during the past 75 years.



The annual roll call of counties continues the Conservation Congress' 75-year commitment to forward, review and champion causes that enhance outdoor enjoyment.

## A venerated, unique history

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress is an advisory body to the Natural Resources Board created by state statute to offer opinions on all matters concerning natural resources. For three-quarters of a century, Wisconsin has offered this direct conduit where citizens can introduce their ideas and forward proposals to enhance outdoor recreation policy and enjoyment. No other state in the nation provides such a direct line or such a unique opportunity.

An early report of the Wisconsin

KARL LEEZIMMERMANN

WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS ARCHIVES



Conservation Commission noted, *"In the final analysis, no matter what the commission or department believes to be in the best interests of the state, if the citizenry are not in accord, any program set up would eventually be doomed to failure. The birds, animals and fish belong to the people of the state."* This early realization of the importance of citizen involvement was the premise for forming the Conservation Congress.

In 1934, Ralph Immell, directing Conservation Commissioner, appointed a committee to forward recommendations for increasing public involvement in resource management decisions. Committee members included the forefathers of game management in Wisconsin – UW Professor Aldo Leopold, Chief Warden Harley MacKenzie and Superintendent of Game William Grimmer. They proposed a system of elected county committees to work with conservation wardens on game surveys and recommend seasons. Using this plan, the Conservation Department organized two meetings in each Wisconsin county to elect county committees and to evaluate game rules. The gavel fell on the first statewide meeting of the Conservation Congress that same year.

In 1938, elections for these delegates and public hearings on fish and game regulations were held at the same meeting. The modern Spring Fish and Wildlife Hearing process was born. The same format is still used in evening meetings statewide held on the second Monday each April. Sportsmen and women gather to hear and debate proposed changes to natural resource law, and to gather opinions to consider for future policies or rules.

Throughout the 1930s, '40s and '50s, deer topics topped the discussions. Significant opposition to antlerless deer harvest spawned the "deer wars era" when the congress and DNR game managers found themselves on opposite sides of the issue. According to former DNR Secretary Buzz Besadny, in 1984, "That is to be expected. It's a healthy sign that the system works."

Despite differing opinions over the years, the congress has remained an important partner and advocate for both



KURT THIEDE

Congress delegate Lee Fahrney from Iowa County staffs a booth they call the Wall of Fame at community celebrations like the annual Youth Outdoor Education Expo to stimulate kids' interests and curiosity about animals, outdoor skills, outdoor enjoyment and habitat protection.

conservation and agency support. Congress members have helped dissuade attempts to diminish the DNR's jurisdiction on outdoor protection, supported much needed fee increases, and lobbied to support conservation programs with sporting groups and legislative committees.

"During my years of service on the congress, I came to realize what a valuable forum it could be for people with varied outdoor interests to come up with creative ideas and suggestions for addressing resource problems," shared John Welter, former congress delegate from Chippewa County and current Natural Resources Board (NRB) member. "Major initiatives like Deer 2000 and the Early Trout Season Task Force improved those ideas and resulted in useful policy suggestions for the NRB and the DNR. At its best, the congress encourages varied viewpoints, doesn't shy from spirited discussions and moves issues forward. As a member of the NRB the last four years, I've valued the best of those suggestions from the congress. Board members can't be familiar with all outdoor activities and the regulations related to them, and

the congress can serve a valuable educational purpose in bringing issues to the board for discussion."

### Some proposals were lightning rods

Mention the Conservation Congress in a conversation today and people may remember some of the more rancorous recent debates. In 2004, a sportsman attending the Spring Hearing in La Crosse County introduced a resolution to help control an overabundance of free-roaming feral cats preying on songbirds and ground nesting birds.

The following April, when the resolution was included on the questionnaire, the 2005 Spring Hearings touched off a heated, emotional public debate. More than 15,000 people attended statewide. The only other issue that generated higher turnout was a proposal in 2000 in advance of Wisconsin's first mourning dove hunt. Last year's spirited hearings discussed potential timber wolf harvests once the endangered species was delisted from federal protection.

"One of the best examples of the value of a grassroots citizen proposal relates to turkey permits," states Ed





Harvey, Jr., the current congress chairman. "In 2003, a citizen in Marathon County introduced his idea of selling leftover spring turkey permits over the counter, first-come first-served once initial permits were drawn and delivered. Two years later, this proposal became a DNR budget initiative and over the past three years it has generated approximately \$700,000 annually in revenue for the fish and wildlife account. That's a heck of a nice return for an idea that came in on an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper!"

"I can't think of many areas of state [natural resource] rules or statutes that haven't been vetted through the congress and the Spring Hearings," said Dick Koerner, Winnebago County delegate, Executive Councilor and 43-year congress veteran. "We've asked for public opinions on everything from open-water duck hunting to requiring fixed tabs on aluminum cans that stay attached to prevent littering. If an issue pertains to the wise use, improvement or preservation of state natural resources, the congress has likely had a hand in it."

Some current policies that appeared as Conservation Congress advisory questions in the past include: requiring a stamp for trout and salmon fishing on the Great Lakes (1981); mandatory use of nontoxic shot for waterfowl

hunting statewide (1986) and considering the first muzzleloader only firearm deer season (1986). The congress also rallied support for initiatives like reauthorizing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund in 1999 and 2007.

The Conservation Congress currently has committees that deal with environmental and habitat issues like the Air, Waste and Water Committee; the Habitat Study Committee; the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee; and the Great Lakes and Mississippi River study committees that review matters as diverse as invasive species management, mercury emissions and state forest management.

"I have made a ground rule in my committee that deer cannot be mentioned until after the meeting," laughs Mike Witkiewicz, delegate from Racine and chair of the congress' Air, Waste and Water Study Committee.

"One reason I volunteered to stand for election to the congress was the need to broaden the focus of public discussion on outdoor policy and regulations. Too often we focus on emotional issues, conflicts between consumptive resource users (hunters, anglers and trappers) and non-consumptive users (birders, campers, bikers and hikers). The greater dangers to both communities are issues related to air quality,

clean water and habitat destruction. For lovers of the Wisconsin landscape, be it hunting, bird watching or hiking in the woods, there are too many common issues that get overlooked in our squabbles on the few differences between us.

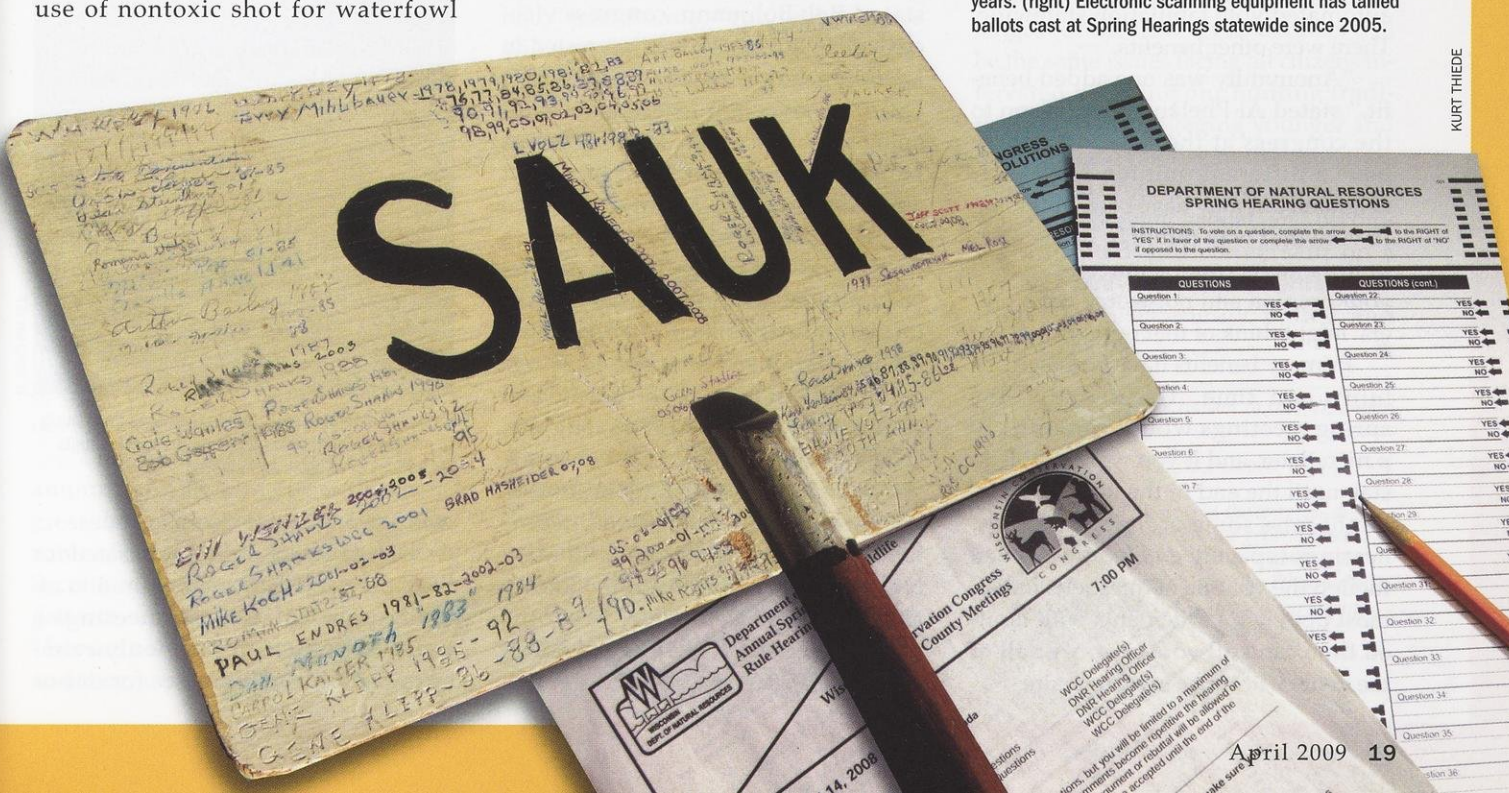
"The Natural Resources Board is responsible for enacting policies that protect forests, air and water, as well as wildlife," adds Witkiewicz. "To adequately fulfill our role as an advisory body, the congress has a responsibility to study a range of issues critical to all species, the environment that is critical to their success, and our overall quality of life."

## Modernization

While the "town meeting" concept of the Spring Fish and Wildlife Hearings has changed very little over the past 75 years, the method by which one "stands to be counted" has changed. The days of counting hands of those for or against a given proposal are gone. Now votes are recorded on paper ballots and tallied electronically. Voting machines and ballots were recommended by a committee of legislators, the League of Women Voters,

Something old, something new. (left) County paddles mark the names of volunteers who represented sporting clubs and outdoor users on the Conservation Congress over the years. (right) Electronic scanning equipment has tallied ballots cast at Spring Hearings statewide since 2005.

KURT THIEDE







COURTESY OF WES DOMINE

Wes Domine, congress delegate from Buffalo County, teaches archery and hunter safety courses. Conservation Congress members are prominent volunteers instructing both youth and adults in outdoor skills and safety courses offered statewide on afternoons, evenings and weekends.

DNR and congress representatives that examined the Spring Hearing process after the dove hunting hearings in 2000. By 2005, the congress adopted automated vote tabulation statewide. There were other benefits.

"Anonymity was one added benefit," stated Al Phelan, DNR liaison to the congress at the time. "You may have a different opinion from your neighbor, but may have been unwilling to vote that way publicly in the past. Ballots gave you a chance to record your opinion and not worry what others might think of that opinion."

Primary benefits have been accessibility and time. Traditionally, the spring meetings would run until 10 p.m. or later, and if you were unable to stay until the end of the hearings, you might miss some of the votes. Now, hearings typically end before 10 even though the volume of questions has almost doubled. Participants with limited time can still vote on any or all of the items within the questionnaire.

"In 2006, at the Spring Hearing in Racine County, I watched a father enter the hearing room with two kids, one in a stroller and the other in his arms," stated Rob Bohmann, congress vice-chair. "He obviously was interested in attending, but being a father of young children myself, I knew he wasn't going to be able to stay for three hours. He took the time to fill out his ballot and left about a half hour later when his children grew impatient."

Some really enjoy the annual discussion of these outdoor issues and say it is an unfortunate consequence that many attendees leave the hearings early, without hearing the debate and rationale of fellow hunters, anglers, campers or boaters.

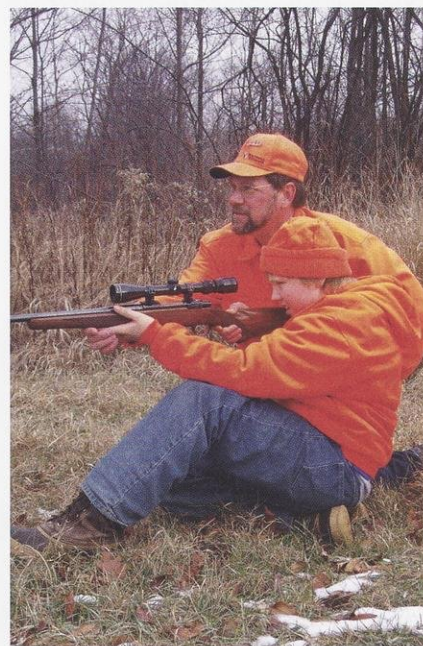
"People aren't sticking around to hear what other concerned citizens know or add to the debate," said Mark Noll, delegate from Buffalo County and executive councilor. "Yes, the meetings are faster, but I don't know if that is necessarily a good thing. I've

been on the congress for over 20 years, and I often saw sentiments and votes change due to testimony from a DNR staffer or citizens offering different points of view. I know that ballot voting is here to stay and people like convenience, but it has reduced the amount of discussion."

### Delegates show leadership in many ways

If you belong to a rod and gun club, read outdoor magazines, shop at a local sporting good store, have taken a DNR safety course, or are involved in county conservation initiatives, then you have likely met a congress delegate. There are 360 delegates across the state: five representatives for each of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

Delegates must be at least 18-year-old residents of the county they wish to represent. And they need to convince others that they can devote the time and energy necessary to represent local county



R. KIRCHMEYER

Congress members also donate their time generously to mentor young hunters and support special hunts for novices of all ages and abilities.

interests on natural resource issues.

Delegates are not compensated for their time and they are required to attend approximately six meetings a year. They are typically only reimbursed for travel expenses for one or





two of those meetings.

"It's a labor of love; it is my duty," states Rich Kirchmeyer, current congress secretary and delegate from Price County. "I probably log about 10 to 15 hours a week each year representing the congress." Kirchmeyer has represented Price County for 28 years.

While delegates are naturally involved in fish and game activities within their communities, their commitment to preserve resources and protect our environment transcends hook-and-bullet issues. Delegates are known and respected in their communities and are recruited to provide leadership on a wide array of local issues.

For instance, in 2001 a group in Dodge County petitioned for the gradual drawdown of Beaver Dam Lake.

"Any time you mention water levels there are going to be varying opinions," states Dale Maas, delegate from Dodge County and executive councilor. "A counter petition to the proposed drawdown was filed, and a stakeholder group comprised of townships around the lake, the City of Beaver Dam, and 17 user groups was pulled together to try and find some compromise to the two petitions."

Maas was asked to facilitate the meetings and chair the group. In February 2002, after numerous debates and long meetings, a draft Dam Level Order was presented for public hearing and the order was later adopted by the Department of Natural Resources.

"This was, and continues to be, a very difficult issue in the Beaver Dam area," concludes Maas. "Compromise was the only way we were going to get anywhere. Some folks think that too much was compromised and others think not enough was gained, but, that's the nature of compromise. In my opinion nothing of value comes without sweat and sacrifice."

"I am continually impressed at the amount of time and effort that congress delegates give unselfishly in the name of conservation," comments DNR Secretary Matt Frank. "Congress delegates sit on countless DNR committees. They are partners in local habitat efforts and they are pivotal in passing on the

traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping to our children. On their 75th anniversary I am honored, on behalf of the professionals within the Department of Natural Resources, to thank the congress members past and present for their dedication and interest in our natural resources."

### **Instill outdoor appreciation at a young age**

Conservation in Wisconsin was fed by the words and essays of Aldo Leopold and thrived under committed leaders like former Governor and U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson. For that rich ethic to survive, it needs to be upheld by our children.

"It all comes down to instilling a sense of appreciation for nature at a young age," states Larry Bonde, delegate from Manitowoc County. "What better ways to teach our children about sound conservation practices and nature than to actively participate in outdoor pursuits."

Many people still enjoy hunting, angling, trapping and gathering and they savor wild foods in their diets. However, even given our rich hunting and fishing traditions, the number of participants in these outdoor pursuits is declining.

"If you make a connection with nature, like my brothers, sisters and I had," said Bonde, "you will be more willing to protect the resources into the future. There's no better time to forge that appreciation than when you are young."

The Conservation Congress has an Outdoor Heritage and Education Committee that addresses outreach, recruitment and retention of future resource stewards. In addition, through the dedication of individuals like Bonde and donations, they have developed the "Wall of Fame."

"The entire wall is really geared towards kids," said Bonde. "The skulls, antlers, taxidermy mounts and furs are things that really capture their attention and they ask tons of great questions, sparking their interest."

The congress is also an active supporter of the annual Youth Outdoor Education Expo in Beaver Dam, and has

worked to get the National Archery in Schools program active in more schools.

### **Looking forward**

"Anniversaries are opportunities to review and celebrate the past, and to look forward to the future," reflects Congress Chairman Ed Harvey. "Our first 75 years have been filled with accomplishment. Our future is filled with promise. Today, the Conservation Congress is not only a great ideal, it is a great institution."

"It's not the same institution that first convened in 1934. The issues are far more diverse and the delegation that will assemble in La Crosse this May has a more diverse background and a better understanding of the interrelationship of each environmental issue to the next. It is up to the congress to bring even those with the narrowest interests together to learn, and understand the breadth of the landscape here in Wisconsin," Harvey says.

"As the Conservation Congress celebrates its diamond jubilee, it can be proud of the rich traditional role it has played in shaping fish and wildlife policy for more than seven decades," says Professor Christine Thomas, NRB chair and dean of the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. "Its challenges for the next seven decades will be the same issues facing all citizens interested in taking our hunting traditions forward: engaging younger and more diverse publics in the conversation, ensuring access to lands and waters, preserving habitat, and becoming educated and conversant on a broader array of environmental challenges such as energy policy and climate change."



*Kurt Thiede is DNR's liaison to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.*

*If you would like to join the congress at their annual convention, the general session is open to the public. For an agenda and information on the event, visit the DNR website, [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), and click on the Conservation Congress link in the left margin.*



Kirtland's warblers are slowly gaining a toehold in scrubby jack pine country.

# A warble from the barrens

Kim M. Groves

**O**n a windless June morning in a dewy pine barren, a tiny, colorful bird adds its song to the typical chorus of Wisconsin's shrubland birds. Amid the melodious notes of vesper sparrows and bouncing calls of field sparrows, a distinctive *chip chip che-way-o* announces the presence of a rare, elusive species — the Kirtland's warbler. The male's song is followed by chipping calls from the female. She alights on a pine branch and is photographed, marking the first time a female of this species has been seen in Wisconsin. Careful scrutiny leads to another first discovery on this fine morning. Concealed among grasses under a pine branch is a Kirtland's warbler nest containing five eggs!

In recent years, many Wisconsin birders aspired to be the first to observe Kirtland's warblers breeding in the state. But it was New York environmental consultant Dean DiTomaso who was in the right place at the right time. His discovery, though historic, was not completely unexpected. Decades of conservation and management made conditions ripe for this rare warbler to expand its range from

Michigan into neighboring areas in the upper Great Lakes.

## Rarely seen in few places

Affectionately known as the "jack pine warbler," the Kirtland's warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) was first discovered in 1850 on a farm in Ohio during spring migration. A male bird was collected and sent to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. for study and

comparison to other specimens. Smithsonian bird curator, Spencer F. Baird, described the species the following year, declaring it distinct from previously known warbler species. It was later named after the property owner of the farm, Jared T. Kirtland, who was a naturalist and the first to develop a checklist of Ohio birds.

Over the next 50 years, Kirtland's warblers were observed on only a few occasions in states east of the Mississippi, and only during spring or fall migration. During that same time period, over 70 specimens were collected



JOEL A. TRICK, USFWS





This rarely seen male Kirtland's warbler was spotted in 2008 at an Adams County pine barren. A recovery plan aims to encourage these woodland warblers to expand their range from Michigan into sandy jack pine habitat in Wisconsin. The plan helps other bird species as well.

during winter from the Bahamas and nearby islands leading scientists to conclude that this bird has a small wintering range confined to the islands of Bahamas, Turks, Caicos and Hispaniola.

The Kirtland's warblers' breeding range remained a mystery until 1903 when a nest was found by Norman A. Woods in jack pine habitat near Oscoda, Mich. along the Lake Huron coast about midway between Saginaw and Alpena. By 1950, ornithologists believed the birds' entire breeding range was limited to a small area within 60 miles of the spot where that first nest



Documented nest sites in the last few years show how breeding pairs of Kirtland's warblers are slowly extending their range from the Lower Peninsula of Michigan into open Northwoods tracts and into jack pine stands in central and northern Wisconsin.



was found. However, one other birder had observed adult Kirtland's warblers feeding immature birds in southern Ontario in 1940. Given that one record and reports of sightings during migrations, it's possible this species had nested in jack pine forests of Wisconsin and elsewhere in the Great Lakes region, though they had never been accounted for outside of their small breeding territory in Michigan.

### **Their breeding cycle habits**

Kirtland's is a wood warbler in the family Parulidae. The Kirtland's measures just 5 ½ inches long and weighs just under a half ounce. The male has a bluish-gray back with strong black streaks that also flank the sides of its bright yellow breast. Black eye lines and a black patch between the eyes and bill form a thin horizontal mask on the face dividing prominent white eye-rings. Females are duller overall, sometimes appearing brownish rather than bluish, with faint streaking on the sides of a pale yellow breast. The black mask is absent on the female, but broken white eye-rings are visible.

On a calm day, the male Kirtland's warbler's loud and lively song carries about a quarter-mile and has been described as a combination of low, sharp notes followed by slurred whistles. Singing peaks in morning, wanes in afternoon and may pick up again in evening, but can cease altogether in hot weather or on cold, blustery days.

Male Kirtland's warblers arrive on the northern breeding grounds in mid-May and immediately begin territorial displays. Females arrive one to two days later and form pair bonds with males about a week later. Pairs are usually monogamous through the nesting season. Occasionally a male will mate with a second female after the first nest cycle.

Nesting begins as early as May 16 but more often occurs around the first of June. A nest of grasses, sedges, pine needles and leaf parts line a small depression in the ground. These tiny, open-cup structures are typically hidden among grasses in understory plants or are protected by a low-hang-



Members of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology flocked to Adams County on a June field trip last year to see these extremely rare birds. DNR and partners closely monitor the breeding grounds during the late May to early July breeding season. They also trap cowbirds that parasitize Kirtland's warbler nests.

ing branch of a young jack pine. Egg laying takes five to six days, usually during the first week in June. Only the female incubates, beginning the day before the last egg is laid and continuing for up to 14 days.

Crooked pine trunks with closely packed branches and short, green needles in groups of two define young jack pine forests that these warblers prefer. Jack pines are adapted to growing on these sandy outwash soils called pine barrens that depend on wildfires to regenerate. Heat from the fires opens their cones, releasing seeds to sprout on the fertile detritus. Suppression of wildfires in the last century took a toll on jack pine stands. In the absence of fire, cones don't sprout and as the trees age their lower branches self-prune opening up the protective cover under which Kirtland's warblers nest. By the 1960s, most of the jack pine stands in the upper Great Lakes aged beyond their usefulness for the

bird's nesting, and new stands were not regenerating. To bolster the declining Kirtland's warbler population, humans needed to assist them.

### **A two-pronged approach to recovery**

A census of singing male Kirtland's warblers on their Michigan territories was repeated in 1961 and 1971 to estimate the population size. The 432 males counted in 1951 had declined to 167 birds by 1971. Since then, counts have been performed annually by volunteers coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The tally provides a means of gauging the effectiveness of conservation and management activities during the last 48 years.

The Kirtland's warbler was listed as a federally endangered species shortly after such protection was signed into law in 1973. Three years





THOMAS SCHULTZ



KIM M. GRVELES

Traps like this one caught more than 300 cowbirds from the Adams County nesting area during the short spring migration and warbler nesting season.



THOMAS SCHULTZ

Cowbirds lay their eggs in other birds' nests, including warblers. The cowbird chicks grow more quickly and are more aggressive than other nestlings. Young cowbirds out compete their nest mates for food. Few or none of the warblers may survive.

later a recovery team formed and its plan still serves as the blueprint for Kirtland's warbler conservation, management practices and restoration more than 30 years after its inception.

Two factors remain key in this species' decline: habitat loss due to suppressing wildfires in jack pines and parasitism of warbler nests by brown-headed cowbirds. Over the course of 30 years, a public and private partnership now manages 134,000 acres of jack pine on a 50-year rotation. This long-term rotation sustains at least 38,000 acres of young jack pines at appropriate stages for Kirtland's warbler nesting while still retaining the commercial value of older jack pines.

According to Christie Deloria, USFWS wildlife biologist and recovery team member, "Strides toward recovery of the Kirtland's warbler is testament to the decades of hard work and dedication of federal, state and private partners. Coordinated habitat man-

agement, cowbird control and research have been critical to increasing the species population and its subsequent dispersal into Wisconsin and Canada."

### Brown-headed cowbirds

Once known as the "buffalo bird," the brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) followed buffalo herds on the Great Plains to forage insects kicked up by the buffalos' hooves. This nomadic lifestyle precluded spending time on a nest, so the cowbirds laid their eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving parental care to the host species.

Extensive logging in the late 1800s through early 1900s opened up the forested landscape east of the Mississippi River, and cowbirds migrated eastward taking advantage of new habitat. Unlike birds of the Great Plains, the eastern forest songbirds had not evolved with cowbirds and did not develop behaviors to recognize and remove the cowbird eggs from their nests.

Kirtland's warblers are especially vulnerable to cowbird parasitism. Their open-cup nests are easy targets for the sharp-eyed cowbird. Unable to recognize a cowbird egg or chick as foreign, the warbler incubates, feeds and protects the parasite as if it were its own offspring. Not only does the cowbird hatch a few days earlier than the warbler nestlings, it is larger in size, more aggressive and out competes them for food, significantly lowering survival rates of the warblers.

We believe cowbird parasitism was one of the major factors contributing to the Kirtland's warbler population declines of the 1960s and '70s. Uncontrolled, cowbirds reduced Kirtland's warbler nesting success an average of 69 percent between 1966 and 1971.

Since cowbird trapping was instituted in 1972, parasitism rates have dropped to about five percent of nests while Kirtland's warbler singing male counts have increased dramatically due to higher clutch sizes and better survival rates.

### Kirtland's warblers in Wisconsin

As Kirtland's warbler territories reached capacity in the jack pines of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, it seemed reasonable that the birds might spread their range into nearby habitat in the Great Lakes. Though reports of singing males were infrequent in Wisconsin, a formal search through jack pine country began in the late 1980s in hope of finding nesting pairs. A few males were sighted, but no females or juveniles were recorded.

Hope renewed in 2006 when singing males appeared to be defending territory in the Black River Falls State Forest for a second consecutive year. No luck.

The following spring, Dean DiTomaso was birdwatching before heading to his work on a pipeline project in Adams County. He went to some private land during spring migration to photograph songbirds en route to northern breeding grounds. On the morning of May 19, his trained ear detected an unfamiliar song. The sound trail led to a male Kirtland's warbler, which he photographed. By the end of



the morning, DiTomasso had identified three distinct singing males. He immediately reported his sightings to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

On the morning of June 2, he observed a male Kirtland's warbler in flight carrying nesting material. He



JOEL A. TRICK, USFWS

Kirtland's warblers are measured and their plumage is inspected to gauge each bird's age.



JENNIFER GOYETTE

In 2008, researchers documented that 10 Kirtland's warblers fledged in Wisconsin.

followed the bird and came upon two other males in a territorial dispute. As he watched the sparring males, a third bird flew in and landed in a pine tree. It was a female and DiTomasso snapped a photograph to document this first occurrence in Wisconsin. His search for a nest in the immediate vicinity was fruitless, so he returned to where he had seen the male carrying grass. There he found and photographed a nest — five eggs with no signs of cowbird parasitism.

Four days later, he photographed a second female. Later that morning, DiTomasso determined that at least eight distinct males were defending

territories at the site.

One of these males wore leg bands and tracing the color combination determined that warbler had been caught and banded on Eleuthera Island, Bahamas in November, 2003. The life expectancy of Kirtland's warblers is typically two years, but they can live much longer as evidenced by this four-year-old.

By June 19, 2007, a third female and a third nest were discovered. Each nest was observed and photographed once. The images revealed that nest #2 contained at least two cowbird eggs and nest #3 had at least one cowbird nestling in the brood. Jon Robaidek, a DNR wildlife biologist, joined DiTomasso for daily nest monitoring. Over the next several weeks, they were unable to determine an outcome of nest #1, the un-parasitized nest. Considering the likelihood of parasitism, successful fledging of Kirtland's warbler young was doubtful.

### Wisconsin's conservation strategy

The 2007 nesting season raised many questions. How many singing males would we find? If breeding occurred at one site, could there be additional nesting pairs in Wisconsin? Would birds nest again at the Adams County site in 2008? What methods would limit cowbird parasitism and promote productivity?

To get answers, the Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources set a three-year strategy to determine what conservation steps should be taken to foster Kirtland's warblers. Strategies included:

- Taking an inventory of jack pine habitat on public lands statewide
- Monitoring nests near the breeding site
- Installing cowbird traps at the breeding site
- Banding male warblers to aid monitoring
- Identifying potential stakeholders with future management opportunities
- Considering guided tours of the breeding site to engage citizen support

Under the guidance of the Kirt-

land's Warbler Recovery Team, the strategies started in July 2007 after the breeding season. Skilled birders were recruited and trained to conduct a warbler census in June 2008. Observations at 89 sites in 11 counties resulted in nine confirmed singing males during the June 6 – 15 census period. Two males were found in Marinette County at two different sites. The remaining seven were located at the Adams County breeding site. In Marinette, Vilas and Jackson counties, bird songs were recorded in eight locations, but sightings were unconfirmed.

All nine confirmed males were captured and banded by Ron Refsnider, a retired Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, who had worked on Kirtland's warbler conservation in Michigan in the 1990s. He donated the equipment, his time and expertise to mark the birds for study. He was assisted by Joel Trick and by UW-Green Bay grad student Jennifer Goyette, who was hired as nest monitor at the Adams County site.

Confirmed sightings of three unbanded singing male warblers were reported at different locations during late June and early July, but all three sightings might have been the same bird. Therefore, the total 2008 count for Wisconsin was recorded as at least 10 singing males.

Goyette tracked the banded males throughout the breeding season and discovered that five had mates and were actively nesting. An early May nest fledged at least one cowbird chick, but nests built in June were not parasitized. From these later nests, a total of 10 Kirtland's warbler nestlings successfully fledged. The lack of parasitism and fledging success were attributed to aggressive cowbird control. At this one Adams County site, more than 300 cowbirds had been trapped and removed during the spring migration and breeding seasons.

Reduced cowbird numbers may have also fostered better fledging of other species using this pine stand whose populations have declined significantly in recent years including the brown thrasher, vesper sparrow and field sparrow.

*Continued on page 29 →*



## COMMENT ON A STORY?

Send your letters to: Readers Write, WNR magazine, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or e-mail letters to david.sperling@wisconsin.gov. All letters must contain the writer's name and address. Only your name and community will be printed. Letters must address issues raised in the magazine and may be edited for length.

## THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Roger Drayna's article "The gatherer" (December 2008) touched me! Drayna's poignant recollections of his youth as recounted in his former article "Behind the Pattison" (August 2007) also brought back memories of my youth in the late 1940s in Superior. We must both be of similar age. I played midget league baseball behind the Martin Pattison Elementary School for several years with some of the finest athletes ever to come out of Superior — Dave Tucker, Ron Schultz, Jack Evans, just to name a few. Some of us would hunt partridge and pheasants in the brushy woods behind the Pattison and then walk to the railroad bridge spanning the Nemadji River and dive into it from about 50 feet high. We would also hunt rabbits, partridge and pheasants on Barker's Island and swim off the pristine beaches when there were no inhabitants there at all! Those were the days! Roger Drayna is a fine storyteller and I thank him for bringing back to life my youth in Superior.

Roger G. Lowney  
San Diego, Calif.

I really enjoyed Roger Drayna's article in the December issue. My little lakeside cabin off US Highway 2 in the Upper Penin-

sula will never look the same to me again, thanks to his observations.

Richard Lazarski  
LaGrange, Ill.

## EXPAND GREAT LAKES TIMELINE

I enjoyed your December feature article on restoring the Great Lakes, but I believe you neglected one aspect of the lakes. You frequently wrote about the ecosystem, but you did not adequately describe the ecosystem or its members. It might help if I add a few items to your Great Lakes timeline:

1818 – Captain Abram Edwards of Detroit, while sailing along the west shore of Lake Michigan, observed that the shores were lined with Native Americans spearing fish. We can assume they had been doing this for thousands of years without depleting the resource.

1829 – The Welland Canal was opened to allow ocean-going vessels to bypass Niagara Falls.

1840s – Commercial fishing of whitefish, lake herring, lake trout and sturgeon began on Lake Michigan.

1871 – In response to reduced catches, the U.S. Fish Commission was established. Three years later the Wisconsin Fisheries Commission came into being, which ultimately

evolved into the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

1887 – The first hatchery-raised whitefish and lake trout were released into Lake Michigan. Catches continued to decline.

1900-1910 – Regulations, size limits and seasons were imposed. After World War I, catches started to rise. For several decades the well-regulated fishery thrived.

1921 – The sea lamprey arrived in Lake Erie by way of the Welland Canal.

1945-1950 – Populations of whitefish, lake herring, lake trout and chubs collapsed.

1949 – The alewife arrived in Lake Michigan by way of the Mackinac Straits, filling the void left after the sea lamprey destroyed the other populations.

1958 – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed a selective lampricide to kill the sea lamprey.

1965 – Lake trout were reintroduced to the lake but the fish did not have the instinct to find spawning reefs.

1966 – The first salmon were released into Lake Michigan to feed on the invasive alewife.

Is this an ecosystem?

Richard LeClair  
Wausau

Our aim in this piece was to

celebrate collaboration among communities to restore some of the Great Lakes finer qualities. Similarly, our timeline intended to mention a few highlights in Great Lakes protection. No one would deny that human intervention has changed Great Lakes ecosystems. Certainly people have enjoyed the benefits of creating the Welland Canal, opening the way for transcontinental shipping, lakeshore development, commercial fishing and sports fishing, and all of these have had consequences for the Great Lakes.

## PHEASANT STOCKING

I live in St. Croix County and love to hunt pheasants. The nearest area where State Game Farm pheasants are stocked for us is the Dunnville Wildlife Area in Dunn County, more than a 50-mile drive; the next nearest place is at the Tom Lawin Wildlife Area in Chippewa County, more than a 60-mile drive. Why doesn't DNR stock Poynette pheasants in St. Croix County? It's becoming more and more attractive to hunt on game farms due to close availability and you don't have to purchase a pheasant license or stamp. I hope you look into changing stocking locations to include public lands in St. Croix County.

Jerry Larson  
Hudson





Continued from page 27

Area Wildlife Manager Harvey Halvorsen and Game Farm Director Bob Nack respond:

*The locations where Poynette-raised birds are released sound correct and put-and-take pheasant hunting is available at two locations in St. Croix County where fine hunting cover in a controlled environment with stocked birds produces a certain hunt. A couple of nearby conservation clubs DO participate in programs with the game farm. Star Prairie's Game and Fish Club will be buying a few hundred pheasants for release this fall. And in Pierce County, south of Hudson, the Ellsworth Conservation Club takes part in the day-old chick program with the DNR and stocks 1,500 birds each fall. Lists of local clubs that participate in the program are available on the game farm website, as we mentioned in our story, "Raising ringnecks and outdoor opportunities," February 2009.*

*We understand Mr. Larson's concern about stocking pheasants on public lands. Recall that one of the austerity measures instituted in 2006 was that legislators redirected 60 percent of the pheasant stamp funds that had been largely used for habitat work and bird management, to support operation costs at the game farm in Poynette. That said, we're happy to report that in 2008 the pheasant hunting season in St. Croix County was one of the best in the last 20 years on both private and public lands and that was accomplished with NO stocking of birds. We have emphasized habitat improvements in our pheasant management program in the county and it is paying off. We've found great opportunities to hunt wild pheasants in the county and encourage all pheasant hunters to seek wild birds and support the habitat they need.*

## BAITING DEBATE

Jason Fleener hit the nail on the head in his recent article on baiting and feeding of deer, "The great de-bait," February 2009. It is my hope that the right people who make the important decisions on rules and regulations for deer hunting read it. I have behind me 57 seasons and I can agree with him 100 percent that baiting deer has brought nothing but problems. We see our neighbors pouring out corn in piles that won't fit in a 55-gallon drum. This makes for hard feelings as the deer, as Jason states, go into a pattern, stay close to the food source and don't browse as is normal. I have hunted my own property all my life and have never baited. We always figured the hay, soybeans, and corn fields were bait enough. If CWD is found in a county that never has had it, the DNR will immediately stop the baiting and feeding in that county. Let's get a jump on that and stop baiting and feeding of deer in all counties, then we might prevent the CWD from starting there.

We have gone from seeing four to six deer per day during the season to my record last fall of only seeing two the entire season. I could go on about my dislike of Earn-A-Buck, but that's another story. As for now, Jason Fleener has done an excellent job showing exactly what baiting has done and I take my hat off to him.

Phil Lunde  
Galesville

In response to the article "The great de-bait," I definitely agree that some hunters abuse the baiting policies. But there are some benefits, such as:

- Hunting over bait is a safe and effective means of harvesting a deer. The hunter is not taking jump shots in all directions, not really knowing what's behind the deer he or she may be shooting at. It is a

very controlled hunt especially on private land. It is also very effective when the only spot available to the hunter is not the most desirable for deer to occupy. People say go out and scout, but unlike the olden days, many areas are saturated with hunters, and you then do the best you can with that spot. Baiting also makes hunting easier for the handicapped and the elderly, as it is a means of bringing the deer to them instead of the harder task of traveling to the deer.

- If populations rise faster due to baiting and feeding and the size of the deer herd was overestimated in 2008, then the practice of feeding and baiting should be promoted, in my mind.
- As to the idea that baiting puts the economy at risk, where do we start? Deer-vehicle collisions and insurance companies are the main drivers for reducing the deer herd. Lots of farmers and feed mill operators count on feed sales as part of making a living. If times get tough they can't raise license fees to compensate, and these are hard times!
- I don't see the difference from deer contacts in a food plot where several deer chew off of the same plant. And several times, I've seen one deer chew on a juicy apple and another deer licks the juice running off of its chin. Two gallons of bait or feed spread in a 10-foot diameter circle seems no different to me.
- There is no guarantee that eliminating baiting and feeding will put an end to CWD. There is not enough known about CWD. It's been out West over 30 years and they still have deer and elk. The issue of baiting and feeding does raise concerns where it is abused, I agree. We need to coexist with other hunters, landowners, and special

interest groups upfront, in an honorable manner, to maintain and share our wildlife and resources.

Bernard Gauthier, Jr.  
Wausaukee

## BUILT A ROOST BOX

We read your February piece "Give me shelter" and my son built a roost box from the Cornell site instructions. It looks nice. If we cut the opening a bit bigger, it would allow a flock of geese to roost, it is so big! It doesn't seem right to me as it could hold hundreds of chickadees.

Dave Lang  
South Milwaukee

*Thanks for taking on this project. Roost boxes can be sized to fit the available space and though it's nice to leave some room for birds to maneuver inside, they don't have to be too big as the photo we showed indicated. Let us know if your box gets tenants.*

## UPDATE



## RAPTOR CHAMPIONS HONORED

Wildlife rehabilitator Dianne Moller and others who were the subject of a recent article ("Burned while getting dinner," February 2009) were honored by DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources. Moller, Doug Fendry (DNR wildlife biologist), Len Polczynski, James Zellmer and Dave Hildreth from DNR's waste management program in Green Bay were recognized for working with landfill operators to rehabilitate and prevent further instances of hawk injuries from methane burners at landfills. Waste Management is taking steps with landfills statewide to retrofit methane burners and engineer new remedies to protect raptors that perch on the burners while hunting.

COURTESY OF DIANNE MOLLER



Continued from page 26

## A warble from the barrens

"The habitat needed for the Kirtland's warbler is also needed by a variety of other songbirds, plants and wildlife," said Signe Holtz, director of DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources. "Our work to save this species is multiplied many times, making wildlife habitat for a host of species possible."

### A future for Kirtland's warblers in Wisconsin

Census work will continue this June as more than 40 trained volunteers will survey jack pine stands in nine Wisconsin counties: Burnett, Douglas, Washburn, Bayfield, Vilas, Oneida, Marinette, Jackson and Adams, searching for singing male Kirtland's warblers. Their findings will help us hone in on possible new breeding sites where timely conservation measures can better protect these rare birds. Nest monitoring, banding and cowbird control will resume at the Adams County breeding site. After the breeding season ends, volunteers from the Wildlife Federation will analyze vegetation to learn what makes this area especially attractive to these warblers.

To breed successfully, Kirtland's warblers dispersing from the Adams County site will need to find other nearby stands of 5- to 20-year-old jack pine within a larger forest mix. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are working with many partners to maintain and expand such a mix of trees and barrens to provide quality habitat for many species, like Kirtland's warblers, that rely on young jack pine forests. ■

Kim M. Groves coordinates the Kirtland's warbler project for DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources.

## Construction season

If drab colors don't draw your attention, neither will their behavior. Eastern phoebes are gentle, non-aggressive birds that perch quietly and watch the world pass by until an appetizing insect flies into view. Then the bird lifts into motion and pursues the insect as only an agile flycatcher will, plucking the flying morsel from the air. Then it's back to the perch to wait. As the bird sits quietly, a few clues help in identification. The plumpish bird appears flat-headed. Its perching posture is very erect, no slouching or forward-lean for this bird! Although it sits motionless, every few moments the phoebe slowly pumps its tail, a characteristic behavior for this flycatcher.

When the bird vocalizes, it calls out its name in a low buzzing tone; a burry sound as if it has something caught in its throat, calling *phoe-bee* with the accent on the first syllable. Don't confuse it with the clear-toned, whistled *phoe-bee* call of the black-capped chickadee.

Traditionally, eastern phoebes, *Sayornis phoebe*, nested in recesses of cliffs and rock ledges along streams. Some still do that, but they are equally at home in manmade recesses and ledges, although nearby water may still be a factor in nest site selection. Any flat surface under an overhang is acceptable. Porch beams, rafters, porch lights, bridge girders and piers are all fair game to nesting phoebes who adjust their nest size to the available space. On a larger flat area, they build a 4 1/2-inch diameter cup-shaped nest. In a narrower space, the mud is plastered to a wall and becomes semi-circular. It's a wonder that the pair can build a sound, secure nest on a shelf that looks precarious. In fact, if the nest site proves to be a good one, the eastern phoebes may build a new nest right on top of the old one in subsequent years.

The bird pair gets very busy in April making many trips to collect building materials of grass and mud. Once it is solid, the nest is lined with finer grasses and feathers. On average, the female lays five white eggs and incubates them for about 16 days. The young are fed insects and

fledge about 15-16 days after hatching.

Nesting around homes, garages, barns, cottages and hunting shacks increases the chance of encounters between people and phoebes. The birds, at least, take these in stride. If disturbed, a phoebe will slip off the nest and wait nearby, perhaps moving from perch to perch remaining vigilant and flicking its tail. Once the "intruder" leaves, the bird quickly returns, but it is not fiercely protective or aggressive. Phoebes are so accommodating and patient that I some-



Even a small ledge above a porch light makes a warm nest site for a phoebe family.

JACK BARTHOLOMA

times apologize for entering their space during their brief nesting time and I quickly leave so they may return.

Once the first brood is raised and gone, the pair nests a second time laying eggs for the second brood in June. The youngsters fledge in early to mid-July. Once nesting is over, the phoebes start to stock up for the impending flight south. Their exodus begins in August as insect numbers start to decline. Phoebes leave quietly and are mostly gone by mid-September although a few hardy individuals may linger into October. They spend the winter in the warm, insect-rich southern United States and Mexico before nature urges them north once again in spring. ■

Anita Carpenter marks the comings and goings of birds, bugs and plants year-round from her home in Oshkosh.



# Comforts

Kathryn A. Kahler

## Plant a pet-friendly garden

Days are finally growing longer and seed catalogs have made their way to the top of the reading pile. Before completing this season's seed and plant order, take some time to plan for a garden that you and your pets can enjoy.



MARI S. WILBUR

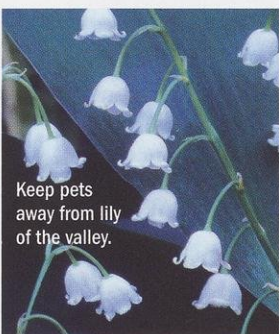
### Room to roam

If it's dogs who share your home and yard, take time to observe their traffic patterns before laying out garden beds. Some dogs will wear a path along fence-lines so it's best to avoid planting in those areas. Using mulch on pathways and in flower beds helps discourage digging, and rock borders can help keep pets out. Never use cocoa bean mulch because like other chocolate products it contains theobromine and can be lethal if ingested.

Employ creative techniques to protect prized blooms. Consider hanging baskets, raised beds and trellises. If your dog is a digger, give him his own digging space by loosening the soil or mixing it with sand. Train him to use it by hiding treats or toys in the sand.

Take care when choosing lawn and garden chemicals to reduce toxic exposure to your pet. Try alternatives like compost for flower

beds, special gardening soaps, or a mild solution of dish soap and water to remove insects from garden plants. If you must use chemicals, be sure to read the label and follow the instructions for mixing and application. Keep your pets inside while applying chemicals and be sure to check how long they persist — your lawn may be off-limits for several days.



Keep pets away from lily of the valley.

SCOTT NIELSEN

### Toxic plants

Some vegetables and flowers can be toxic to your pets, so either fence them off to avoid exposure or avoid planting them altogether. Vegetables that may make your pet sick or even cause death include onions, chives, garlic, potatoes, tomatoes and rhubarb.

Flowers and shrubs to avoid where pets have access include lilies, autumn crocus, rhododendron, foxglove, hyacinth, tulips, narcissus, hydrangea, lupine, morning glory, yew, elephant's ear, nightshade, chrysanthemum,

English ivy and lily of the valley. Symptoms of ingestion can include rapid breathing, irregular pulse, seizures, cold extremities, vomiting and lethargy. If you suspect your pet has eaten a toxic plant, call your veterinarian. If you need to make a trip to the vet's office, try to take along a sample of the plant.

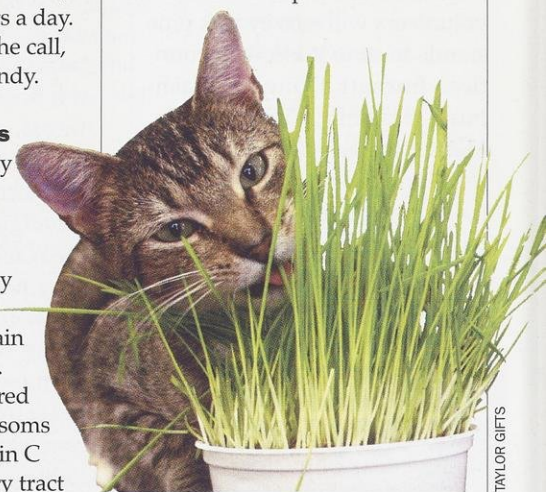
Keep handy the number of the National Animal Poison Control Center, (800-548-2423), which is staffed 24 hours a day. There may be a fee for the call, so have a credit card handy.

### Plant pet-healthy treats

Lots of plants are actually good for your pets. Consider planting a patch of wheat or oat grass which adds dietary fiber, improves bad breath and helps maintain healthy teeth and gums. Rose hips — the round red fruit left when rose blossoms fade — are full of vitamin C and help prevent urinary tract

infections. Fleabane, pyrethrum and chamomile make excellent flea repellents. Scatter them in Rover's doghouse, spread where he likes to lie in the sun, or make a sachet and hang around his neck.

Bring the outdoors in for the winter by planting pet grasses in shallow pots or saucers. Because these grasses often cause regurgitation, you may want to put them on the back porch and limit access to family living quarters for a while after pets nibble them.



TAYLOR GIFTS

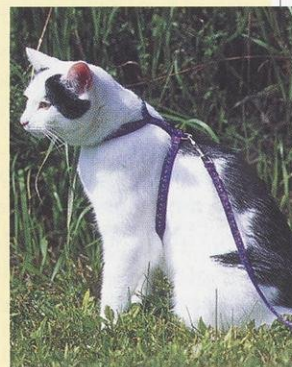
## THE CAT'S PAJAMAS

Take heart, cat lovers! While reasons abound for keeping kitty inside, there are ways to allow your cat to enjoy the fresh air and even some freedom outdoors.

She may be skittish at first, but Fluffy can become accustomed to a harness and leash. Have patience and you both can enjoy a regular walk around the backyard. Just don't leave her alone where she can become entangled or choke.

Carrying your cat outside is another option, either in your arms or in a pet carrier, but an even better alternative is to build an outdoor enclosure. Do an online search of "cat enclosures" to see an endless array of possibilities, from purchased kits and plans to ideas from people who have made them from scratch. Some are simple square, wire mesh pens that can be set up on decks or yards. Others are intricate networks of tunnels, catwalks and multiple rooms that allow their occupants the ultimate in independence.

Oh, and don't forget kitty when planning your garden. His feline funhouse won't be complete without some wheat or oat grass to nibble on — to aid digestion and control hairballs — and some catnip to roll in. Your cat will be eternally grateful.

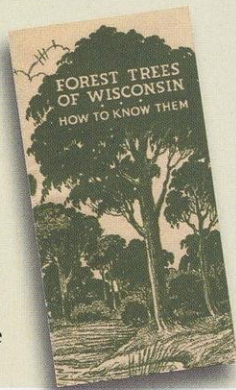


REIGNING CATS & DOGS



## The race to green up

Hope in this season starts running when the sap is tapped and the sweetness flows back into the weather. Those first warm breezes are the perfect time to watch the quick transition as bare branches bud, then flower, then take on leafy greenness; each tree in its own time. What better place to watch the popples go through their paces than an arboretum as each species warms up. Do your own comparisons to see how birches, beeches, hickory and hackberry get ready for the spring show. Traveler asked around and received these recommendations for school forests and nature centers that offer trails where visitors can get tree identification guides and walk the grounds. Start a new tradition and visit one of these sites every year on Arbor Day, the last Friday in April (the 24th this year).



■ **Tri-County School Forest, Plainfield** – W12409 on County Road O in Waushara County. Native tree species on the property are identified in a guide that includes a map, picture of each tree type and some basic information about each species. Trail information is posted on signs at the entrance. To arrange a group visit, contact Joe Raboin, rabojoe@tricity.k12.wi.us

■ **Ledge View Nature Center** – W2348 Short Road, Chilton. The center sells a trail guide for \$2 that provides commentary for numbered markers along the graveled trails. About two-thirds of the entries identify trees and discuss woodland issues. The center is open dawn to dusk each day, except major holidays. The buildings are staffed starting at 8 a.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. on weekends closing at 4:30 p.m. each day. E-mail ledgeview@co.calumet.wi.us. Reservations for trips by

phone only, (920) 849-7094.

■ **Wausau School Forest** – 2336 Highway KK, Mosinee. Many of the stations in the trail guidebook are marked and comment on individual tree species. A map to the forest is posted at [www.wausau.k12.us/forest](http://www.wausau.k12.us/forest) or contact Jerry Maney, jmaney@wausau.k12.wi.us



Tree labels at arboreta show species and cultivars. They can help you select trees for your landscaping.

DAVID L. SPERLING

■ **MacKenzie Environmental Education Center** – W7303 County Road CS & Q, Poynette. Originally, more than 700 species of trees and shrubs were planted on the grounds adjoining the state pheasant/game farm. Some of the exotic species couldn't handle the soil and climate, but about 120 species remain

and are highlighted in a self-guided Arboretum

Tree and Shrub Guide to the grounds. They are also noted by GPS waypoint for the tech-savvy visitors. Call (608) 635-8105 or contact educator Ruth Lee at [ruth.lee@wisconsin.gov](mailto:ruth.lee@wisconsin.gov)

■ **Mosquito Hill Nature Center** – N3880 Rogers Road, New London. A map and small posted signs provide brief descriptions of 43 tree species identified along the trail system. Contact Mary Swifka, (920) 779-6433, [swifkamk@co.outagamie.wi.us](mailto:swifkamk@co.outagamie.wi.us)

■ **Trees for Tomorrow** – 519 Sheridan Street, Eagle River. The tree identification course/trail is available all year to visitors. To arrange a visit, call Maggie Bishop, (715) 479-6456 or e-mail [learning@treesfortomorrow.com](mailto:learning@treesfortomorrow.com)

■ **Ice Age Visitor Center** – Kettle Moraine State Forest Northern Unit, N1765 Highway G, Campbellsport. On the Moraine Trail near the visitor center, 10 tree species and their human uses are identified on signs. Call the center at (920) 533-8322 or contact Joan Neis for visitor services, [joan.neis@wi.gov](mailto:joan.neis@wi.gov)

■ **West Salem School Forest** – The Outdoor Education Center offers a tree identification guide to the trails at the 130-acre site. To arrange a tour or visit, call or contact Barb Thompson, (715) 786-1662, [bthompson@wsalem.k12.wi.us](mailto:bthompson@wsalem.k12.wi.us)

■ **Cable Natural History Museum** – 13470 County Highway M, Cable. The 1.5-mile Forest Lodge Nature Trail is a self-guided loop. An interpretive booklet for visitors highlights trees and the natural ecosystems through



DAVID L. SPERLING

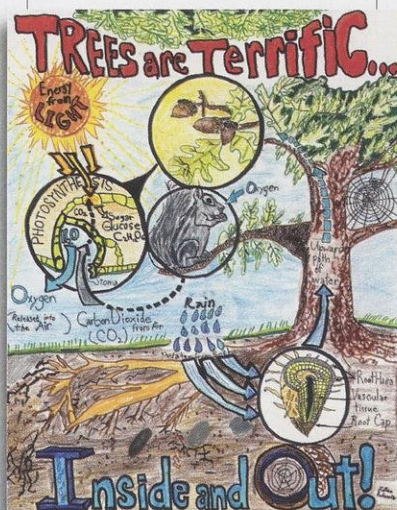
which the trail passes. Contact Cully

Shelton, (715) 798-3890, [www.cablemuseum.org](http://www.cablemuseum.org)

■ **Boerner Botanical Gardens** – 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners. A walking guide to the grounds (\$1) identifies 24 tree species mixed in with the beautiful gardens. Contact Judy Faja, (414) 525-5602.

■ **University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum** – 1207 Seminole Highway, Madison. Start your walk in the 1,260-acre arboretum on the south edge of Lake Wingra at the visitor center (7 a.m.- 10 p.m.) or join one of the scheduled public walks. The Longenecker Gardens adjoining the center has a path that winds past trees and shrubs labeled with common and Latin names. (608) 263-7888.

■ Let the artist in you bloom. Winners of the **Arbor Day Art Contest** were announced in mid-March. Here's one of last year's winning entries.



DNR DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Nathan Schwartz of West Bend won last year's state Arbor Day art contest showing why Trees are Terrific.





## *Wisconsin, naturally*

### CHIWAUKEE PRAIRIE STATE NATURAL AREA

**Notable:** An exceptionally diverse low-land prairie complex of sedge meadow, calcareous fen, oak opening and wet prairie along Lake Michigan hosts more than 400 vascular plant species. The variety of habitats, coupled with their location in the extreme south-eastern corner of the state, allows several rare and geographically restricted plants, amphibians, reptiles, birds, invertebrates, and mammals to thrive here, including 10 plant species listed as endangered or threatened. The shooting star display in the spring is especially stunning, but the prairie offers color and motion in all seasons.



**How to get there:** The natural area consists of two parts, separated by 116th Street. The south portion (managed by The Nature Conservancy) is a large, contiguous prairie area; the northern part (managed by the DNR) is fragmented by roads and homes. Southern access: from the junction of State Highways 165 and 32 south of Kenosha, go south on 32 one mile, then east on 116th Street 0.3 mile. The SNA lies east of the railroad tracks and south of 116th. The northern portion is reached via the network of roads between 116th Street and 85th Street. See [dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/sna54.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/sna54.htm) for a map and more information.

