

INSIDE

2015 FISHING FORECAST • PREPARE FOR SAFE BOATING • PREVENTING WILDFIRES

# WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

wnrmag.com  
April 2015 \$3.50

## Catching the FIELD TRIP *Ferwar*

Connecting bison and butterflies

Pick a plum of an isle

A big day for birds



# Back in the day

## Early efforts to slow the wind helped conserve soil.

Kathryn A. Kahler

In the midst of the Dust Bowl of 1935, Congress passed legislation to fund the Shelterbelt Project. Drought, over-grazing and over-plowing had combined to expose the once-locked prairie soil of mid-America to the fury of the wind. Massive dust storms, plagues of locusts and jack-rabbits, even death from “dust pneumonia” afflicted residents of the southern plains states in the 1930s.

The shelterbelt plan called for planting strips of trees and shrubs — green ash, hackberry, cottonwood, American elm, Russian olive, locust, Osage orange and eastern red cedar — over as great an area as possible in a zone from North Dakota to Texas. Between 1935 and 1938 almost 35 million trees were planted on 107,000 acres along the 99th meridian.

Although Wisconsin wasn't part of the project area, similar drought relief and soil conservation efforts were put in place, especially in the central sands region. William H. Brener, the first manager of the Griffith State Nursery, wrote in



Schoolchildren taking part in windbreak planting on Trueman Potts' farm in Waupaca County on April 26, 1935.

1944 about the shelterbelt project in Wisconsin: “A well organized and enthusiastic demand arose in the central counties for an extensive tree planting program. Through the county agricultural agents' offices and other interested agencies in those counties, surveys determined tree requirements for shelterbelts. The Conservation Department was called upon to furnish over 14 million trees, mostly transplants, from 1934 to 1944. The Conservation Department entered into cooperative agreements with the county board agricultural committees of the counties concerned, and each farmer signed an agreement to plant the trees as instructed

and to give proper plantation care. Trees are planted in three-row shelterbelts, and a total of 5,492 miles has been completed through 1944.”

These rows of trees and shrubs were designed to slow the wind, capture snow and replenish soil moisture in the spring. The tree-planting effort — conducted for the most part by farmers but helped along by school programs as well — continued through the 1940s and 1950s and resulted in more than 50 million new trees in central Wisconsin by 1959.

Another catalyst for restoring Wisconsin's forests is the Arbor Day program. The Wisconsin Conservation Department photo shown above, taken on April 26, 1935 (Arbor Day), shows schoolchildren taking part in windbreak planting on the Trueman Potts' farm in Waupaca County. Arbor Day was founded by Julius Sterling Morton in Nebraska on April 10, 1872 when 1 million trees were planted. Arbor Day has been celebrated in Wisconsin since 1883 and is now officially the last Friday in April. 🌳

Kathryn A. Kahler is an editorial writer for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.

Left: Planting a windbreak at the Dean Pope farm in Arena, Iowa County, in 1932.



Right: A Marquette County agent demonstrating the proper tree planting method to fellow farmers in 1937.



EUGENE SANBORN



## WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

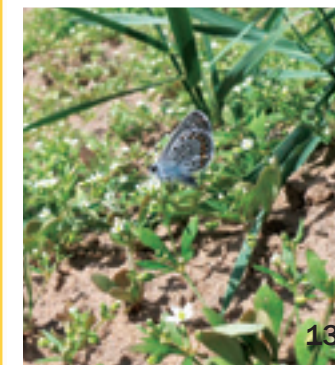
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FRONT COVER: Natural Resources Foundation field trips provide outdoor adventures from bird banding, as seen on the cover, to getting up close to freshwater mussels, frogs and more.  
D. Z. Johnson

BACK COVER: Limestone outcrop and the sweeping crest of the Hogback Prairie State Natural Area in Crawford County. INSET: Bird's-foot violet (*Viola pedata*). To order a guidebook to State Natural Areas for \$18.00 (postage paid), send a check or money order payable to “Endangered Resources Fund – Guidebook” to: DNR, Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. For more information about the SNA Program, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search “SNA.”

Back cover photos by Thomas A. Meyer.

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Banding birds is one of the more than 150 field trips offered this year.


# Get up close to wildlife and experience the wild life on a field trip

## THE NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION HAS FUN FOR ALL AGES ON TAP.

Christine Tanzer and Lindsay Renick Mayer

There’s no doubt about it: Wisconsin is a special place. From migrating monarchs to saw-whet owls, from lichens in the Northwoods to carnivorous plants in the uplands, Wisconsin has no shortage of unique wildlife and wilderness to nourish your soul. With more than 150 field trips planned throughout the state this year, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is your guide to getting outdoors to explore the places you most cherish and to interact with the species that call those places home.

Join us on a trip led by an expert to explore the state’s natural gems and learn more about the many facets of Wisconsin’s lands, waters and wildlife. The adventures run April through November and offer opportunities to hike, bike, become a citizen scientist, paddle a stream, band a bird, tag a butterfly and

discover species from bats to mussels to sturgeons. We have trips for all ages and interests. Visit [WisConservation.org](http://WisConservation.org) for field trip details and online registration.   
*Christine Tanzer is the field trips coordinator and Lindsay Renick Mayer is the communications director for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.*

## Register online: WisConservation.org

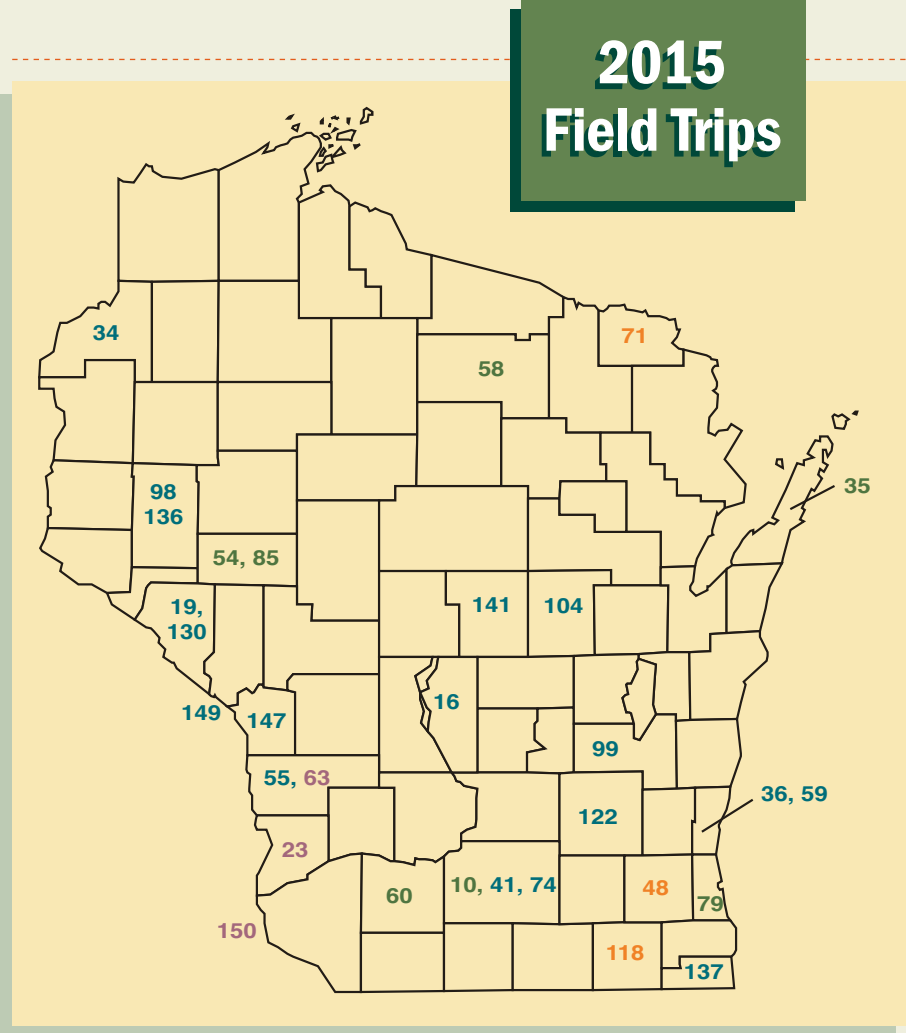
The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a nonprofit organization founded in 1986. It secures private funding for our state’s highest conservation priorities. The Foundation also manages the Wisconsin Conservation Endowment, through which individuals and groups can create permanent funding for the places, species or conservation issues of most concern to them. The Wisconsin Conservation Endowment currently comprises 68 funds with a value of \$4.12 million. The Foundation’s newest initiative, in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, is the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund, where individuals and businesses can give now so that our state fisheries, parks, wildlife areas and state natural areas can be cared for, forever. Learn more at [CherishWisconsin.org](http://CherishWisconsin.org). Offering field trips is central to the Foundation’s mission to connect generations to the wonders of Wisconsin’s lands, waters and wildlife through conservation, education, engagement and giving. And, of course, the trips are a whole lot of fun! Become a member or donate to the Foundation at [WisConservation.org](http://WisConservation.org) or call (866) 264-4096 for more information.

### EASY AS 1, 2, 3

- 1. PICK YOUR FIELD TRIPS**  
Trips are color-coded to provide information about physical demands, from easy to extreme. Each trip has a registration fee listed; some are fundraisers to support conservation or have an additional fee for rental equipment. Trips fill quickly, so check the Foundation’s website ([WisConservation.org](http://WisConservation.org)) for current availability.
- 2. BECOME A MEMBER OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION OF WISCONSIN**  
Field trips are only open to members of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin and their guests. You can become a member at a discounted rate of just \$15 per family as part of your online registration. Or become a member online anytime at [WisConservation.org](http://WisConservation.org). Your membership fee supports conservation projects across the state.
- 3. REGISTER FOR YOUR TRIPS AT WISCONSERVATION.ORG**  
Click on the “Register for Field Trips” link. Enter the passcode JoinNRF to receive your discounted membership. You may register for up to four trips and bring up to five guests. The online registration system is quick and secure. You will receive an instant email confirming your trip selection. The Foundation does not accept phone or email registrations.

Approximately two weeks before each of your trips, you will receive an email with details and driving directions. Then it’s time to get outdoors and get to know Wisconsin. Trips will fill fast, so sign up in April for best availability.


**Questions? Visit the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin’s website at [WisConservation.org](http://WisConservation.org), call toll-free (866) 264-4096 or email [FieldTrips@WisConservation.org](mailto:FieldTrips@WisConservation.org).**



For a complete list of trips, visit [WisConservation.org](http://WisConservation.org).

The color of the trip title indicates the physical demand level of the trip.

- 1 Accessible to people with walking disabilities
- 2 Easy, short hike on level terrain
- 3 Average hike with some hills
- 4 Steeper terrain, long hike or challenging hike
- 5 More extreme conditions, off trail and very steep or long hike

Child-friendly trips are identified with this symbol:  Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Questions? Call toll-free (866) 264-4096; or email: [FieldTrips@WisConservation.org](mailto:FieldTrips@WisConservation.org).



**10. WATER TRANSFORMATION AT NINE SPRINGS**  
Where does our tap water come from and where does it go? Follow water as it flows through the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant and is transformed from a pollutant to a helpful resource. Understand the impacts of water use and the role of wastewater treatment in the water cycle. Ages 5+

Choose one session date to attend:  
**10-A.** Thursday, April 30, 1 to 3 p.m.  
**10-B.** Thursday, Oct. 1, 1 to 3 p.m.  
Madison, Dane Co.  
Leader: Jim Post  
Limit: 25  
Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person

**16. KIRTLAND’S WARBLERS UP CLOSE**  
Explore the carefully protected pine

barrens habitat of the Kirtland’s warbler, one of Wisconsin’s rarest birds, and learn about its life history and ongoing management initiatives. Look for wildflowers, reptiles and other birds such as the clay-colored sparrow. With a bit of luck and expert guidance, see and hear the elusive and rare Kirtland’s warbler! This is a fundraiser to support Kirtland’s warbler conservation. Friday, May 15, 6:45 to 10 a.m. Rome, Adams Co.  
Leaders: Amy and Rich Staffen  
Limit: 36  
Cost: \$42 per person

**19. TRAIN RIDE AND BIRDS OF TIFFANY WILDLIFE AREA AND THE LOWER CHIPPEWA RIVER**  
All aboard! Take a ride on an antique open-air train into the most remote areas of the Tiffany Wildlife Area. Enjoy stops and short hikes into floodplain forests, wetlands, savannas and prairies. It’s a chance to spy at least 75 bird species during peak migration. This trip is a fundraiser supporting conservation efforts along the Lower Chippewa River. Saturday, May 16, 7 a.m. to noon Durand, Buffalo Co.  
Leaders: Dave Linderud, Steve Betchkal and Anne Geraghty  
Limit: 64  
Cost: \$35 per person



**23. MISSISSIPPI RIVER EAGLE NEST AND WARBLER BOAT CRUISE**  
Experience the Mighty Mississippi during peak spring migration. Spy warblers, Neotropical migrants, otters and other wildlife of the backwater byways. Visit four eagle nests to see, up close, eagle parents fishing and feeding their nestlings. Enjoy it all from the deck of a semi-enclosed pontoon cruiser. Ages 8+  
Saturday, May 16, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Prairie du Chien, Crawford Co.  
Leader: Captain Annie  
Limit: 55  
Cost: \$32 adult, \$26 child, per person

**34. SPRING BUTTERFLY TREK: CREX TO THE BARRENS**  
Spring brings wildflowers, migrating songbirds and a burst of early-season butterflies to the pine barrens and bogs of Burnett County. From Crex Meadows to the Namekagon Barrens, join a butterfly enthusiast for a guided



caravan tour of his favorite haunts. Venture among lupine, bearberry, blueberry, junberry and cherry shrubs bedazzled in bloom as you search for elfins, blues and dusky-wing skipper butterflies. Saturday, May 23, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Grantsburg, Burnett Co. Leader: Dean Hansen Limit: 18 Cost: \$12 per person

### 35. MOONLIGHT BAY SNA'S RARE PLANTS AND BIRDS

Spy shorebirds while exploring a bedrock beach and boreal forest. Search for uncommon plants such as arctic primrose and Indian paintbrush as you hike in the solitude of this Door County state natural area gem. Saturday, May 23, 9:30 a.m. to noon Baileys Harbor, Door Co. Leaders: Mark Martin and Susan Foote-Martin Limit: 25 Cost: \$15 per person

### 36. GET HOOKED! FLY FISHING FOR BEGINNERS

Tackle your curiosity about fly fishing on this fun and inexpensive introduction to the sport. Experts will demystify the equipment and teach the basics. Then venture outside Riveredge Nature Center to learn some casts and fish the ponds. Cost includes use of rods, reels, lines and flies. Saturday, May 23, 12:30 to 3 p.m. Newburg, Ozaukee Co. Leaders: Jerry and Diane Kiesow, Chris Vollmer Limit: 12 Cost: \$42 per person



### 41. STREAM ECOLOGY AT BLACK EARTH CREEK

Be a stream ecologist for a day. Get hands-on to learn about stream ecology and explore the waters of a beloved trout stream. Use sampling equipment to measure water quality and collect aquatic insects and fish. Ages 7+ Saturday, May 30, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Black Earth, Dane Co. Leader: Mike Miller Limit: 20 Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person

### 48. BIG MUSKEGO LAKE: EVENING PADDLE AND BIRDS

An enchanting evening paddle while



CHRISTINE TANZER



### 54. TREE AND SHRUB ID: BEAVER CREEK

Can't tell an oak from an elm, or a birch from a beech? Here's a great chance to hone those identification skills. Hike Beaver Creek Reserve with an expert to learn many species of trees by their leaf, twig or bark — plus learn tricks to remember them. Learn some shrubs and vines too. Ages 12+ Saturday, June 6, 9:30 a.m. to noon Fall Creek, Eau Claire Co. Leader: James Schwiebert Limit: 18 Cost: \$20 adult, \$14 child, per person



### 55. ECO-LOGIC FLY FISHING WORKSHOP

Understanding trout stream ecology

makes for a richer angling experience and might even help you catch (and release) more fish. Learn about trout stream ecology, how to “read the water,” trout prey and the fly patterns that imitate them. This workshop is for beginning through advanced fly fishers. Loaner fly rods available for those without equipment. Ages 12+ Saturday, June 6, 10 a.m. to noon Avalanche, Vernon Co. Leader: Mike Miller Limit: 20 Cost: \$22 adult, \$16 child, per person

### 58. LICHENS OF THE NORTHWOODS

Explore the mysterious life of lichens. Hike the scenic trails at Kemp Station to learn about lichen ecology, tips for identification and conservation issues. Then venture out to a nearby locale in search of lichens in diverse habitats. There's a whole new world to discover in your hand lens. Friday, June 12, 9 a.m. to noon Woodruff, Oneida Co. Leaders: Jim Bennett and Mary Bartkowiak Limit: 12 Cost: \$20 per person



### 59. FISH PASSAGE ALONG THE MILWAUKEE RIVER

Years of hard work with many partners

have reconnected more than 130 miles of rivers, streams and habitat in the Milwaukee River watershed, giving native fish access to high-quality spawning habitat. See this amazing transformation firsthand. Visit dam removals, habitat restoration projects and a fish passage that includes an underwater camera. An important project on a historic river. Ages 10+ Friday, June 12, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thiensville, Ozaukee Co. Leaders: Matt Aho and Andrew Struck Limit: 20 Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person



### 60. BLUEBIRD TRAIL HIKE

Learn more about bluebird ecology as you hike an established bluebird nest-box trail. Peer into houses to see young hatchlings in various stages of development. Learn how you too can join the bluebird craze. Ages 6+ Friday, June 12, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Muscoda, Iowa Co. Leaders: Dale, Doris and Russell Moody Limit: 30 Cost: \$22 adult, \$16 child, per person



### 63. KICKAPOO VALLEY FROG BLITZ

Learn to identify all 12 frog and toad species in Wisconsin by sight and calls. Then take part in a frog blitz in an effort to catalogue the Anurans of the Kickapoo Valley, and hope to document the endangered Blanchard's cricket frog. See how fun and easy it is to become a citizen scientist for the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey. Ages 10+ Friday, June 12, 7:30 to 11 p.m. La Farge, Vernon Co. Leader: Andrew Badje Limit: 40 Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person

### 71. BOG OR SWAMP?

Discover the difference! First, venture onto a quaking bog mat to search for orchids, carnivorous plants and other rarities at Grandma Lake Wetlands. Then explore Van Zile Cedars, a primeval old-growth cedar swamp, and marvel at the dark, quiet, moss-cloaked landscape of twisted trees. Thursday, June 18, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Long Lake, Florence Co. Leader: Thomas Meyer Limit: 22 Cost: \$15 per person



### 74. WONDROUS WORMS, AMAZING ARTHROPODS, FASCINATING FLORA

How well-versed are you in the creepy and crawly of Wisconsin forests? Venture into the UW-Madison Arboretum and learn how diversity comes in all shapes and sizes. Search for interesting bugs, wiggly worms and problematic plants while learning how they impact our forests. Ages 4+ Saturday, June 20, 9:30 a.m. to noon Madison, Dane Co. Leaders: Michael Hillstrom and Bernie Williams Limit: 30 Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person

### 79. WHEELS AND WATER! BIKING MILWAUKEE'S SOUTHSIDE WATER RESOURCES

As Milwaukee works to become a leader in water resources, the Kinnickinnic River, Menomonee River and Harbor District are seeing remarkable changes that will last for generations. Enjoy a 5.5-mile bike ride through streets and trails to see firsthand the enhancements to neighborhoods and water.



### 85. MODERN LANDFILLS: CREATING RENEWABLE POWER AND COMPOST

Learn how a modern landfill is constructed and operated, and how the gas collected is turned into renewable power. This facility also leads the way in commercial food waste collection, turning it into rich compost. Ages 10+ Saturday, June 27, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co. Leader: Mark Vinall Limit: 15 Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person



### 98. TREASURES OF THE CHIPPEWA RIVER: NATIVE MUSSELS

Wade in the cool waters of the Chippewa River to search for one of the state's most diverse, yet hidden treasures: freshwater mussels (clams).



CHRISTINE TANZER





CHARLIE LUTHIN

Learn about native state species, their fascinating life cycle and amazing contributions to the history of Wisconsin. Ages 5+  
Saturday, July 18, 9 a.m. to noon  
Meridian, Dunn Co.  
Leader: Lisie Kitchel  
Limit: 25  
Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person

#### 99. SMALL PRAIRIE RESTORATION, THE EASY WAY!

Join a landowner to learn how you too can start and maintain a small prairie. Hike the 7-acre upland and lowland prairie to see 90 native plant species. Learn about attracting kestrels, monarch butterflies, mason bees, snakes and frogs to your property.  
Saturday, July 18, 10 a.m. to noon  
Waupun, Fond du Lac Co.  
Leaders: Darrel, Jerry and Ruthann Gunderson  
Limit: 30  
Cost: \$12 per person



#### 104. MUSSELING UP IN THE LITTLE WOLF RIVER

Explore the elusive underwater world of freshwater mussels (clams) in the Little Wolf River. With some of the highest diversity in the world, learn to identify mussel species and discover these fascinating, imperiled and important creatures that filter pollutants

from streams. Ages 8+  
Choose one session date to attend:  
**104-A.** Saturday, July 25, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
**104-B.** Saturday, Aug. 8, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
New London, Waupaca Co.  
Leader: Robert Welch  
Limit: 20  
Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person

#### 118. BLUFF CREEK STATE NATURAL AREA: RARE PLANTS AND FENS

Marvel at the rare plants and animals that inhabit fen and wet prairies in Bluff Creek State Natural Area. See a trout stream, spy springs and learn more about this rare ecological state natural area. Then enjoy the opportunity to get hands-on helping with removal of invasive phragmites grass.  
Saturday, Aug. 15, 8 a.m. to noon  
Whitewater, Walworth Co.  
Leaders: Jared Urban, Virginia Coburn and Zach Kastern  
Limit: 25  
Cost: \$15 per person



#### 122. NIGHT AT NEDA MINE: BATS SWARM AT WISCONSIN'S LARGEST HIBERNACULUM

Now that white-nose syndrome has been found in Wisconsin, this is likely the last year for this trip. Wander moonlit trails to view thousands of bats in flight at Neda Mine State Natural Area, Wisconsin's largest bat hibernaculum. Use

ultrasound bat detectors, infrared video cameras and your own eyes to watch the annual ritual of bats swarming outside the mine entrances. A rare opportunity to learn firsthand about bat biology and natural history from our state's leading experts. Limited space on this trip, which is a tax-deductible fundraiser for the Wisconsin Bat Conservation Fund. Light refreshments provided. Ages 10+  
Choose one session date to attend:  
**122-A.** Friday, Aug. 28, 7 to 10 p.m.  
**122-B.** Saturday, Aug. 29, 7 to 10 p.m.  
Horicon, Dodge Co.  
Leaders: Jennifer Redell, Paul White and Heather Kaarakka  
Limit: 35  
Cost: \$100 adult, \$40 child, per person

#### 130. TRAIN RIDE AND BLUFF PRAIRIE HIKE: TIFFANY WILDLIFE AREA

A full day of fun. Enjoy a morning walk in the Five-Mile Bluff Prairie State Natural Area for amazing views of the Chippewa and Mississippi rivers, and learn about glacial geology, goat prairie management and timber rattlesnakes. Then off to the tracks for an open-air train ride into the remote areas of the Tiffany Wildlife Area with several stops for short hikes into prairies, savannas and floodplain forests. Learn why this is one of the most ecologically and

historically unique areas of the state. This fundraiser supports conservation efforts along the Lower Chippewa River.  
Saturday, Sept. 12, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Durand, Buffalo Co.  
Leaders: Dave Linderud and Mark Rasmussen  
Limit: 64  
Cost: \$45 per person

#### 136. DUNNVILLE GRASSLANDS AND BIRDS

Discover Dunnville State Wildlife Area nestled in the confluence of the Red Cedar and Chippewa rivers. Learn about prairie and bur oak savanna ecology, explore restoration efforts and spy grassland birds such as meadowlarks, lark sparrows, dickcissels, sedge wrens and more.  
Saturday, Sept. 19, 10 a.m. to noon  
Downsville, Dunn Co.  
Leaders: Chad Mogen, Nick Schroeder and Jess Carstens  
Limit: 30  
Cost: \$12 per person



#### 137. MIGRATING MONARCHS AT RICHARD BONG STATE RECREATION AREA

Discover how tagging unlocked the secrets to monarch butterfly migration. Learn more about this familiar butterfly, then go into the field to catch and tag monarch migrants that will fly all the way to Mexico for the winter. Ages 7+  
Saturday, Sept. 19, 12:30 to 3 p.m.  
Kansasville, Kenosha Co.  
Leaders: Beth Goeppinger and Jennifer Lois  
Limit: 30  
Cost: \$12 adult, \$6 child, per person



#### 141. SAW-WHET AND LONG-EARED OWL BANDING

Have your own close encounter with Wisconsin's smallest owl! Experience how the experts mist-net and band these adorable birds at Linwood Springs Research Station, which bands up to 700 migrating owls annually. Chance to see long-eared owls, too!  
Ages 7+

Time: All sessions 7:30 to 10 p.m.  
Choose one session date to attend:  
**141-A.** Saturday, Oct. 3  
**141-B.** Friday, Oct. 9  
**141-C.** Saturday, Oct. 10  
**141-D.** Friday, Oct. 16  
**141-E.** Thursday, Oct. 22  
**141-F.** Friday, Oct. 23  
Stevens Point, Portage Co.  
Leaders: Gene and Lorraine Jacobs  
Limit: 40  
Cost: \$27 adult, \$21 child, per person



#### 147. WATERFOWL ID ON THE MISSISSIPPI

Get to know your ducks, geese and swans of the Mississippi River flyway. Learn tips and tricks for waterfowl identification in an indoor classroom, then venture to the field in Pools 8 and 9 to hone your skills during the peak of waterfowl migration. Ages 12+  
Saturday, Oct. 24, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
La Crosse, La Crosse Co.  
Leaders: Brenda and Scott Kelly  
Limit: 30  
Cost: \$17 adult, \$11 child, per person

#### 149. MIGRATION ON THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

A site to behold! Expect to see more than 250 bald eagles and 100,000 waterfowl as you join a caravan to birding hotspots along the scenic Mississippi River. See swans, pelicans, eagles, hawks and more at the peak of migration at this Globally Important Bird Area. This is a fundraiser for the Bird Protection Fund.  
Friday, Nov. 13, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Brownsville, Minn.  
Leaders: Andrew Paulios and Steve Houdek  
Limit: 50  
Cost: \$37 per person



#### 150. BOAT CRUISE THE MISSISSIPPI IN AUTUMN MIGRATION

Revel in the miracle of migration as we view hundreds of migrating tundra swans, geese, ducks, pelicans and bald eagles. Enjoy your perch on the deck of a heated pontoon cruiser on this exclusive tour of the famous Pool 9 in the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge. Chance to see otters, mink and other wildlife too. Ages 10+  
Choose one session time to attend:  
**150-A.** Saturday, Nov. 14, 9 a.m. to noon  
**150-B.** Saturday, Nov. 14, 1 to 4 p.m.  
Lansing, Iowa  
Leader: Captain Annie  
Limit: 55  
Cost: \$52 adult, \$46 child, per person



SUE LAST





Canada geese Sentinel and Hachi make Wisconsin home in the spring. Hachi's nesting hotspot is atop a carport.



## A springtime affair

THE RETURN OF TWO GEESE SIGNALS A NEW SEASON.

Story and photos by Michael D. Louis (with help from his granddaughters Sydney, Cassie, Savanna and Ansley)

It was a beautiful day for flying! Bright blue skies and calm winds made for a great flight. One could see every field and sparkling pond for miles. It was time for the flock, having flown from Goose Creek to central Wisconsin, to pick a pond and field. So the gaggle put down, settled in and gabbled until the sun dipped into darkness.

Sentinel, the designated sentry, kept watch for suspicious movement throughout the long night. Guard duty was essential so that every goose could get enough rest for the next leg of the trip to Canada. They were “Canada” geese intent on making it to the country that shared their name.

With the rising sun, every goose was rested and ready. Every goose was ready, that is, except for Sentinel. The long night did him in and he fell fast asleep in his sentry position, standing up.

Sentinel stayed behind as the departing flock took flight. In addition to Sentinel, another goose, who we came to call Hachi, stayed behind. Being born in the

Florida panhandle, her name was derived from the Seminole word meaning “stream.”

Sentinel and Hachi settled in and became familiar and welcomed guests in our community. Hachi decided to nest on a church carport.

The great thing about the carport is that Hachi could see all around her from the height. Sentinel had a good view from the field across the road. It was at a nice quiet little church. What more could a mother goose want?

The lazy traffic on the road slowed to stop at the little church, while the carport provided a sleepy little spot for Hachi to care for her eggs, with four expected

little hatchlings. Wind caught in the tree branches covering her nest provided a soothing lullaby and shade for peaceful rest. So, lazy and sleepy it was.

But on the first weekend after laying her eggs, Hachi got a surprise when her sleepy little spot lit up — literally. The normally quiet parishioners came to life barbecuing. Grills were ignited right under the carport roof.

Hachi peeked over the side of the carport roof to discover the parishioners flipping something “fowl” on the grills. She then tiptoed quietly back to her nest on the center of the roof.

Tiptoeing quietly was hard to do with huge webbed feet. Rising heat made it uncomfortable and Hachi’s tiptoeing turned into a hot-footin’ and stompin’ dance across the roof. It was impossible to be surreptitious!

Sentinel gawked from his position across the street. We imagined he might be wondering how Hachi could seemingly have such a good time with grilling, laughing, dancing and singing right under her feet? She even appeared to be dancing to the beat of the music!

Then, when the weekend party wound down, Hachi again settled down to her original purpose of caring for and protecting the eggs.

Except for an occasional flyby of some hawks running reconnaissance on the eggs, the next four weeks were uneventful and there were no more grilling parties. Hachi nested and Sentinel stood his ground across the street “protecting” her and the nest at a safe distance.

The big event finally arrived with a mix of excitement and sadness in the community. Sentinel and Hachi became proud parents of four little goslings and carefully instructed the youngsters on how to glide from the top of the carport to the ground. It took patience and coaxing.

The little procession of proud parents and goslings occurred properly at the crosswalk at the intersection. And it wasn’t too much longer before Sentinel and Hachi, now joined by four Canada goose goslings, resumed their flight as planned.

As has happened for the past three springs, Sentinel and Hachi are expected to return again and make ready to welcome another generation to the flock. 🦢

*Michael D. Louis is a former resident of Stevens Point, who says he has Wisconsin running through his veins. He currently resides in Atlanta, Ga.*



# A TREE-MENDOUS transformation

YOUNG FOREST PARTNERSHIP FULFILLS AN ERSTWHILE WISH.

Story and photos by Todd and Veronica Berg

Shortly after purchasing our small parcel of heaven in northern Wisconsin during early 2008, we discovered through a written document and a subsequent conversation with our legal counsel, that a previous owner nearly 40 years ago made it clear that he hoped that the land would be “used.”

He wanted to see the acreage actively managed, enjoyed and fostered for the future. We never forgot that wish. Our goal was simple at the time: shoot a big deer or two and have some grouse and woodcock opportunities for our sporting dog while we made some great lifelong friends.

Little did we know what the land — and along the way some great people who had their own visions and initiatives — had in store for us.

It’s a funny thing about land. You start by being overwhelmed that a couple hundred acres is imposingly large. You get lost on it. Your sense of direction is skewed and time often slips away as you explore different spots and slowly become familiar with each of them.

Like breaking in a good pair of boots, it’s just not quite “right” for a while un-

til you really get comfortable. When you reach that comfort level, though, you get familiar and friendly with the land. Individual trees become landmarks. Valleys and vistas greet you as if awaiting your arrival. The land returns your excitement just by being there.

Small goals led to bigger goals for us. Food plots, a working MFL (Managed Forest Law) plan, turkey forage and habitat, tree planting with youngsters on Arbor Day, firewood cutting and rock picking new clearings with friends made us believe that there’s not a square foot on the entire place that isn’t made completely out of glacial debris.

We found that the days, weeks and years fly by. You catch your breath once in a while and you think that it’s nearly where you’d wanted it to be.

“The gentleman from four decades

Edging and feathering are an important part of the mulching process to create safe areas for birds and other wildlife. The American Bird Conservancy and partners recently secured USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program funds to help private landowners with similar habitat management projects on 11,800 acres by 2020.

ago would be proud,” you quietly assure yourself.

Then one day you receive a letter that catches your eye: official stationery with signatures and state logos in a nice cover. You read over some of the statistics, some discussion of “the right lands” and about some bird and mammal populations in distress. Suddenly, you realize the arbitrary goal line you established in your mind has been moved yet again. You’re not there yet. There’s more work to be done and you’re the right people, with the right land, for the task at hand.

Through the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill and with the help of the Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a consortium of conservation organizations like the Ruffed Grouse Society, private landowners and county foresters like our own Richard Windmoeller, there was a new opportunity. The Young Forest Partnership (YFP) was born. An effort to improve the plight of woodcock, Kirtland’s warbler and several other species was underway.

The stated goal of the YFP is to create young forest tracts within large stands of unproductive highland tag alder and small thin popple (aspen) stands. Cutting, shearing and/or mulching to create forest openings and encourage young growth are the order of the day.





Property owner Veronica Berg and operator Mike Riggle take a break to admire a job well-done during two days of cutting.



The older growth methodically gets sheared to make way for sunlight and new growth.

Doing so encourages woodcock propagation, warbler production and helps all sorts of other species unable to use the thick, unproductive jungle of overgrown brush.

We compared notes, made a few calls to the biologists, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) representative, our forester and several others. After consultations and some soul searching of our own, we signed an application, hosted a site survey and met with USDA officer Bob Plawski from Medford and DNR biologist Jeremy Holtz from Rhinelander.

Impressed with the dedication, passion and skills of all the staff members, we waited and hoped. Soon after, we received great news. The parcel had been accepted into the new YFP program and young clearings were going to happen.

We were assigned a farm number and signed off on the documents that would provide us a contractual stipend to undertake the cutting. Let the work begin!

In mid-December 2014, on the cusp of Christmas, we met yet another wonderful person in the YFP process. Through the advice and recommendation given to us by Gary Zimmer from the Ruffed Grouse Society and a Wisconsin Natural



A fox visited the new cut within a couple of days to see what opportunities it offered.

Resources Board member, we were introduced to Mike Riggle.

Riggle is a semi-retired veterinarian known for an easy smile, a big heart, a penchant for heavy equipment and a love of the land. A bird hunter and conservation-minded guy who “just wanted to give something back,” Riggle showed up on a foggy, mucky day, with a really big skid steer and a mulching attachment the size of a Zamboni.

Having previously seen the site, Riggle went to work with the machine. To say it was “easy” would be a stretch. We lovingly refer to our land as “The Classic Hole” and when things go wrong (more often than we’d care to admit), we always joke that “nothing comes easy at The Classic Hole.”

The skid steer got stuck once, breaking through the frost line into the mud below. But an hour of chainsaw work, ratchet straps, some heavy chains and a can-do spirit (along with a bunch of

mud covering all of us) got it out. Over two outings, Riggle created a 5-acre young forest right before our eyes. It had contoured edges along a river bank with big trees left for cover, irregular borders and wide openings.

To the untrained eye, you’d think a hurricane went through. But to the initiated, it was indeed a beautiful, chaotic young forest in its infancy — a deep breath being inhaled by an area long choked off to the light of the sun and the feel of the wind. We’re told that the woodcock will use it right away this spring. They’ll be heard “peenting” in the warm April nights and we can’t wait to watch and listen.

The warblers, hares, fox, fisher, grouse, deer, turkeys and others will greatly benefit. In fact, we witnessed deer, grouse, rabbit and fox tracks in the new cut within 48 hours of completion and saw a fisher firsthand working the edge of the river on one of the days we worked with Riggle — a first glimpse for us in the wild.

In three to four years, the woodcock will nest and live there seasonally. This project will help them prosper and just maybe help reverse their long-term population decline.

The land will indeed be “used” and that is exactly what previous stewards of this land had hoped for. We’re honored to help fulfill the wishes of previous owners and visionaries and even more so, to be a part of the inaugural Young Forest Partnership. Most of all, we hope to do even more. There’s more work to be done in the years ahead and we relish that opportunity.

We encourage other Wisconsin landowners to investigate their land and the potential for YFP involvement. We heartily urge you to do so; you’ll be helping the birds and animals and we downright guarantee that you’ll feel better about yourself and your own legacy.

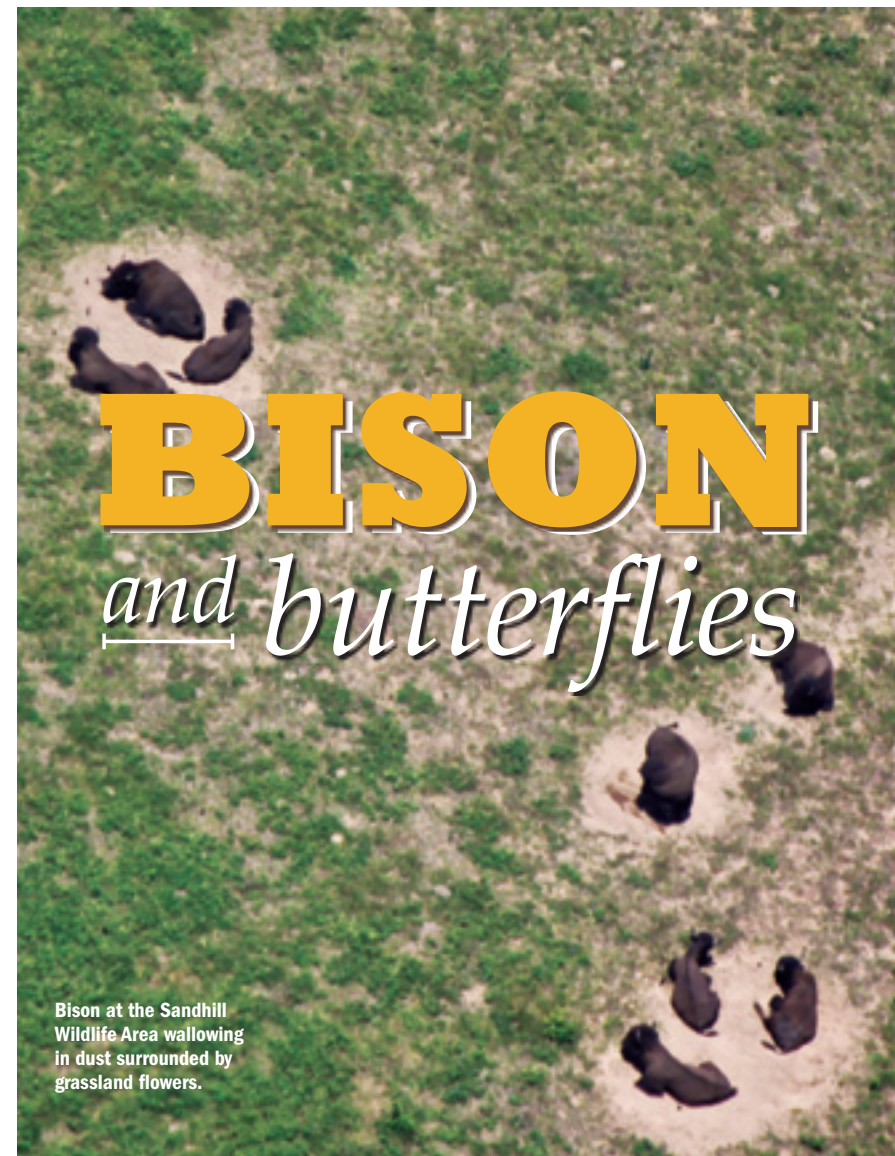
During a quiet moment, when all the equipment is gone and the cacophony has died down, the land and its inhabitants will quietly thank you on a gentle whiff of wind, excited that you’re together once again.



Todd and Veronica Berg write from Minocqua, Wis.

>>> TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAMS MENTIONED IN THIS STORY, VISIT:

[dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/youngforest.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/youngforest.html)



Bison at the Sandhill Wildlife Area wallowing in dust surrounded by grassland flowers.

STEVE MEURETT (ON-THE-EDGE.BLOGSPOT.COM/)

## A “BEAUTY AND THE BEAST” TALE.

Anna Hess, Bob Hess, Joy Hess, Bev Paulan and Julie Hess

The Sandhill Wildlife Area is a small 9,150-acre wildlife area and research facility in central Wisconsin located five miles south of Pittsville. Dotted by a mix of marshes and sandy uplands, the facility is completely enclosed by a fence to prohibit the movement of large animals, enabling wildlife biologists to make observations on animal populations like deer and wolves.

The Sandhill Wildlife Area is especially well set up for those seeking a day excursion to watch marsh and grassland wildlife. A system of roadways and hiking trails intertwine the oak and pine forests and the extensive network of marshes and dikes. Old drainage ditches, left over from early-1900s attempts to drain the central Wisconsin marshes for

farming, crisscross the landscape. These ditches are now filled with water and provide habitat for waterfowl, muskrats, beavers and other marsh dwellers. Several lookout towers are located along the trails, including one at the edge of the bison pasture, where visitors may see bison, as well as some of the dozens of butterflies and moths that profit from the

ANNA HESS



Monarchs, fritillaries and Karner blue butterflies enjoying a meal of bison chip and coyote scat.

presence of this native herbivore.

A unique feature of this wildlife area is the small herd of bison that help to maintain the native oak savanna ecosystem, one of the few controlled areas of this kind in the world.

The bison pasture — 200 acres of savanna habitat — is a remnant of the savannas that used to dominate central and southern Wisconsin. Oak savannas were historically maintained through low intensity disturbance. This included infrequent fires; the activities of bison, elk and deer; and droughts. The sandy soils, left behind by Glacial Lake Wisconsin, create low-nutrient soil quality and make these areas what are essentially the deserts of the Midwest. Many of the plants that adapted to the savanna ecosystem are exceptionally drought-resistant and often require scarification or fire to properly reproduce.

This area provides a significant opportunity to study how the bison interact with other important grassland creatures, such as butterflies. For the last three years, a small team of researchers has observed the butterflies and moths in this pasture and their connections to the bison herd.

They have found through several separate studies, and one recently published in the *Journal of Insect Conservation*, that the bison produce superior habitat conditions for butterflies and moths, in comparison to the surrounding areas where the bison are not allowed to





Robert Hess counting bison chips in the midst of a large system of bison wallows.

ANNA HESS

roam. These studies have observed all areas of the bison pasture and many adjacent fields, including the grassier flowered areas, the wallowing areas where bison dust themselves and the areas of heavy shrubs and trees where the bison do not frequently pass through. To be certain that bison were recently present, the team counted bison chips, which would normally deteriorate within a few weeks, making the presence of bison chips tell-tale signs of the recent presence of bison.

These observations found that areas where the bison normally assemble receive regular ground disruption from the bison hooves, grazing and horning (rubbing horns on small shrubs and trees). These activities open the canopy, and reduce and prohibit the growth of woody vegetation that may shade out grassland flowers that butterflies and moths require for food sources.

The more highly disturbed areas of the pasture, including along fence lines and bison trails, are more heavily populated with eastern tailed-blues and their endangered blue cousins, Karner blue butterflies.

The less frequented grassland areas, where bison graze, are frequented by American coppers, great spangled fritillaries, Acadian hairstreaks, clouded sul-

furs and little wood satyrs.

The grasslands of the bison pasture are covered in sunflowers, flowering spurge (not to be confused with the invasive leafy spurge) and goldenrods. Small white moths of the *Ennominae* family can often be seen darting in the undergrowth. You can often see these moving through in low shrubs, looking like nondescript little white moths.

Among these butterflies, the fritillaries alone are most likely to be found in heavy shrubs and trees, feeding on the bergamot that can grow among the oak shrubs. With this exception, other butterflies are not to be found in the areas that are not kept open and grassy by the bison.

Bison wallowing is especially helpful to butterfly and moth populations, breaking up the tough grassland sod and allowing the hardened grassland seeds to sift down through the thick grasses into the prairie soil.

Wild blue lupine is among these plants which require rubbing and scraping to break up their tough, thick, drought-resistant seed pods. Lupine plants are often seen growing around

the edges of new wallows, and are certain to be found growing around abandoned wallows. This produces a constant turnover of habitat for the Karner blue butterfly and frosted elfin, which require wild blue lupine as a food source.

In comparison, the data collected over recent years shows that Karner blue females in particular are found more often around wallows than any other areas of the bison pasture, most likely because these areas have a high abundance of lupine plants for laying eggs and caterpillar growth. The Karner blue males were most likely to be located in areas with high amounts of bison chips.

Butterflies in general are known to mineralize, or seek out dead or decaying organic material to feed on salts and other minerals. The Karner blue males may be using the abundance of bison chips to acquire much needed nutrients. Whatever the case, it is apparent that the bison, and the Karner blues in particular, are especially linked.

The summer of 2014 was an especially good year for the bison pasture. In the fall of 2013 the wildlife area staff conducted maintenance that opened up the oak shrubs in the thicker parts of the pasture. This effort, combined with the heavy rains in the spring, produced a massive amount of flowering grassland plants. Butterfly populations exploded from the previous year, adding several species to the list of frequently observed butterflies and moths, and quadrupling the Karner blue butterfly population. The butterflies and moths at Sandhill can be observed every year, and are most abundant around the observation tower in the bison pasture. You can't miss it — it's by the sign with the big bison.

Anna Hess is a natural resource manager for the Minnesota DNR, managing the Lake Superior North Shore area. Julie Hess is a senior paper process engineer, moonlighting as a naturalist during the warm seasons. Joy Hess is a lifelong naturalist, gardener, rug weaver and knitter, doing research studies in the sandy plains of Wisconsin. Robert Hess has more than 45 years of experience in natural resource management and is currently the coordinator of the Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Program for the Department of Natural Resources. Bev Paulan is a DNR aircraft pilot, botanist and assistant to the Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Program.

>>> TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SANDHILL WILDLIFE AREA, VISIT:

[dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "Sandhill"

EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22.

Sigurd Olson was one of America's most beloved nature writers and most influential conservationists of the 20th century. He played an important role in preserving several national parks, seashores and wilderness areas.

## Celebrating Earth Day heroes every day

FINDING INSPIRATION IN THOSE WHO LOVED THE LAND.

Doug Scott

Walk out into Wisconsin's prairies, fields and woods, so richly diverse and beautiful. You will find wild magic!

Amid such beauty, we stand transfixed.

Nature does that to us; I'd argue that we are born with love for the natural world and its creatures hard-wired. Watch a young child respond to a butterfly, a deer crossing a rural Wisconsin road or the blue chards of a robin's egg.

Sadly, for too many grownups, other things distract. Two income families work so hard that there is no time to play outdoors. Schoolchildren are toiling to pass tests and there is little time or funding left for field trips. Worst, with all our gadgets, we walk snouts down, absorbed and oblivious to the world around us.

Nonetheless, nature has a way of sneaking up on us.

A Wisconsin kid, John Muir, knew this in his bones. Abused by a hard father on a farm in Marquette County, he fled to

Madison to study and to invent. Then he was off on his *Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, rendered vividly in the book. He caught a boat to take him "around the horn" to a wharf in San Francisco, stopping only to be pointed the way to Yosemite, a walk across the wild valley and up into the yellow pines.

"Between any two pine trees," he wrote, "there is a door opening to a better life."

For the next five decades he explored every nook of the High Sierra Trail, climbed every crag, crawled out perilously to the very lip of Yosemite Falls — then on until he got wet and could look down at the rainbow spray.

And then he climbed on to immortality — the most famous Californian. Not Mickey but Muir on postage stamps and the California state quarter. His books have never been out of print; I must put them on hold at my library.

"Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer," he instructed us in *Our National Parks*. "Camp out among the grass and gentians of glacier meadows, in craggy garden nooks full of Nature's darlings. Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves."

You don't have to go to Yosemite to get into the wild

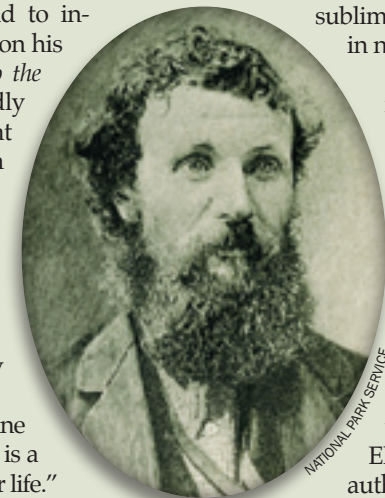
Follow Muir and climb. Just about any hill in Wisconsin will do, from the hills in Arbor Hills Park to Garner Hill Park. Get their good tidings. Head north to summit Timm's Hill in Price County. Go on to Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan.

Geologist and ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft traveled in the far north of what is now Wisconsin in 1820 when he explored the sources of the Mississippi River. He was meeting and studying the lives of the Native American tribes. He came to the colorful cliffs along the south shore of Lake Superior and enthused over, "some of the most sublime and commanding views in nature."

The area features cliffs rising straight up from the lake, stained in hues of red, orange and yellow. Take the National Park Service boat tour where these colorful "pictures" come alive in the rosy light of dawn and sunset.

A leading champion of the wild canoe country was Sigurd Olson, an Ely, Minn. canoe guide and author of *The Singing Wilderness*. He served as president of the National Parks Association in the 1950s and was pivotal in securing protection of northern lakes from floatplanes

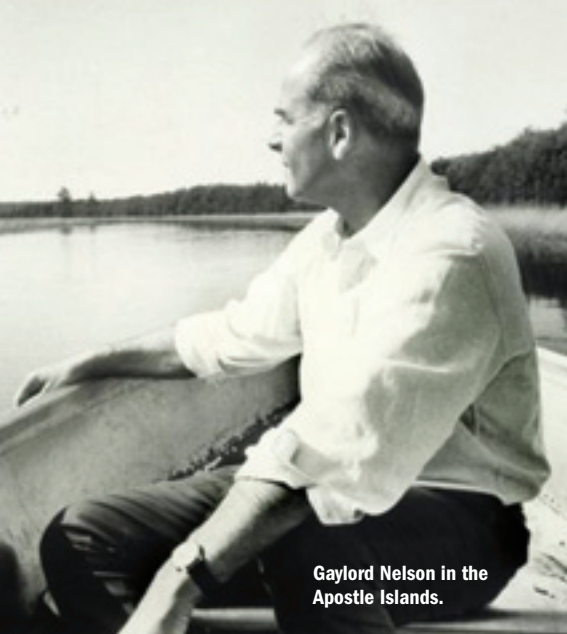
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OLSON FAMILY



John Muir

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE





Gaylord Nelson in the Apostle Islands.

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

bringing wealthy sportsmen to a growing number of remote luxury lodges in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

Olson was a gifted nature writer, and of the romance of the canoe, he wrote, “There is balance in the handling of a canoe, the feeling of its being a part of the bodily swing. No matter how big the waves or how the currents swirl, you are riding them as you would ride a horse, at one with its every movement. When the point is reached where the rhythm of each stroke is as poised as the movement of the canoe itself, weariness is forgotten and there is time to watch the sky and the shores without thought of distance or effort. At such a time the canoe glides along obedient to the slightest wish and paddling becomes as unconscious and automatic an effort as breathing. Should you be lucky enough to be moving across a calm surface with mirrored clouds, you may have the sensation of suspension between heaven and earth, of paddling not on the water but through the skies themselves.”

Can’t get up north? Rent a canoe and paddle out into Lake Mendota in Wisconsin’s state capital. And for goodness sake, take the family and some of your kid’s friends. Youngsters will open your eyes, for theirs are not yet dulled to the wonders in the nearest park, for them a wilderness is pulsing with life.

Kids love to hear stories about great adventures and to read *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Leatherstocking Tales* and *Kidnapped*. Muir knew wild adventures will change young lives. Nature does that he

wrote, “ere we are aware.”

### A sage in the sand counties

A young man from Iowa knew it, too. He went west to be a forest ranger, suggested the world’s first wilderness area, moved to Madison to be a wildlife scientist, bought an old shack up in the Sand County ... and he, too, walked into immortality. Aldo Leopold, forester, fervent hunter, wilderness expert and author of the nature classic, *A Sand County Almanac*. Get it. Absorb it. Keep it in your backpack.

Leopold also taught us “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

His land ethic did not come from a book, but was distilled from the goose music he heard every autumn and spring at his Wisconsin shack where he worked to restore the prairies of Sauk County.

Leopold wanted us all to know the land and to learn its wisdom.

“When we hear [the crane’s] call,” he observed, “we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untamable past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men.”

Thus, we need not approach a nature adventure without good guides. Muir to inspire. Leopold to instruct. Sig Olson, too. With my anthology, *Wild Thoughts: An Anthology of Selections from Great Writing About Nature and Wilderness and the People Who Protect Them*, I hope to contribute a chapter.

### On the wild side

These men, gifted with such foresight, continue to alert us to the vital need to protect the land. Muir was the greatest champion of the national parks and Leopold a founder of The Wilderness Society in 1935. From that perch, he was involved in the conception and campaign for enactment of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Applying this law, Congress has protected

more than 110 million acres of federal lands across America. That amounts to 5 percent of all the land in our country — four times as much as all the land tied up in our vast interstate highway system.

Wisconsin has seven federal wilderness areas amounting to 80,000 acres. You might like to visit the Headwaters Wilderness in the headwaters of the Pine River and the Giant Pine Grove, where some of the largest and oldest trees of the Nicolet National Forest grow. The quiet waters of Shelp Lake, shadowed by towering pines on the southwest boundary, are worth a peek. Deer hunting, bass fishing, hiking and simple solitude lure people to this sublime area. And you have many wild and scenic rivers from which to choose. Twenty-four miles of the Wolf River were protected under the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

In these wild national treasures — and in large areas of state parks, wildlife refuges and shorelines along the Great Lakes — you will find sanctuary from the noise and confusion of our everyday world, the clank of machinery and the growl of motors.

I was fortunate to spend my career working to persuade Congress to protect wilderness areas. And, while still in grad school, I served on the board of the group that initiated the first Earth Day in 1970, working with Wisconsin’s great conservation senator, Gaylord Nelson.

Of course, we didn’t really organize Earth Day; we just dropped the seed in a pool ready to get serious about reversing air and water pollution, and protecting national trails and endangered species.

So, on Earth Day, pick up a good book, put it in your backpack and take it along on a walk or on a paddle on Wisconsin’s wild side. Remember the work and wisdom of those who came before us.



*Doug Scott spent more than 40 years working to persuade Congress to protect national parks, wildlife refuges, rivers and wilderness areas across America. He is the author of The Enduring Wilderness: Preserving Our Natural Environment Through the Wilderness Act and Wild Thoughts: An Anthology of Selections from Great Writing About Nature and Wilderness and the People Who Protect Them. He served with Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson on the national steering committee for the first Earth Day in 1970. Today, Scott serves on the boards of several national wilderness nonprofits and is the principal of Doug Scott Wilderness Consulting. He lives in Seattle, Wash.*

# 2015 Wisconsin Hunting and Trapping Seasons

## GET YOUR REGULATIONS FASTER!

Visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) to view and print regulations up to one month before they are available in hard copy.

Some seasons may be subject to change. Consult the hunting regulation pamphlet(s) or [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) before going hunting.



PUB WM-153-2015

## Deer\*

Archery & Crossbow	Sept. 12 - Jan. 3, 2016
Youth Deer Hunt	Oct. 10 & 11
Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities <sup>▲</sup>	Oct. 3 - 11
Gun	Nov. 21 - 29
Muzzleloader	Nov. 30 - Dec. 9
Central Forest and Central Farmland Antlerless Hunt	Dec. 10 - 13
Southern Farmland	
Holiday Hunt	Dec. 24 - Jan. 1, 2016

\* All dates are subject to change through a rule making or a legislative process. Please check the *2015 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations* for a complete set of dates and unit designations.

<sup>▲</sup> More information is available at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword: “disabled deer hunt.”

## Game Birds

### Pheasant

Statewide	Oct. 17 (noon) - Dec. 31
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### Bobwhite Quail

Statewide	Oct. 17 (noon) - Dec. 9
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### Ruffed Grouse

Zone A	Sept. 12 - Jan. 31, 2016
Zone B	Oct. 17 - Dec. 8

### Sharp-tailed Grouse

Season is under review. Visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) for updates.

### Hungarian Partridge

Statewide*	Oct. 17 (noon) - Dec. 31
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\* Closed in Clark, Marathon and Taylor counties

### Crow

Statewide	Jan. 24 - Mar. 20 & Sept. 12 - Nov. 19
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## Migratory Birds

### Early Canada Goose

Statewide	Sept. 1 - 15
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### Early Teal Season

Statewide	Sept. 1 - 7
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### Regular Duck and Goose

Dates will be established in mid-August

### Woodcock

Statewide	Sept. 19 - Nov. 2
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### Mourning Dove

Statewide	Sept. 1 - Nov. 29
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## Turkey

Youth Turkey Hunt	Apr. 11 - 12
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### Open Zones

Spring	Period A	Apr. 15 - 21
	Period B	Apr. 22 - 28
	Period C	Apr. 29 - May 5
	Period D	May 6 - 12
	Period E	May 13 - 19
	Period F	May 20 - 26
Fall	Statewide	Sept. 12 - Nov. 19
	Zones 1-5	Nov. 30 - Dec. 31

## Bear

Zone C where dogs **are not** permitted:

- Sept. 9 - Oct. 13
- with aid of bait
- with all other legal methods **not** using dogs

All other zones where dogs **are** permitted:

- Sept. 9 - 15
- with aid of dogs only
- Sept. 16 - Oct. 6
- with aid of dogs
- with aid of bait
- with all other legal methods
- Oct. 7 - 13
- with aid of bait
- with all other legal methods not using dogs

## Small Game

### Cottontail Rabbit

Northern Zone	Sept. 12 - Feb. 29, 2016
Southern Zone	Oct. 17 (noon) - Feb. 29, 2016

### Squirrels (Gray and Fox)

Statewide	Sept. 12 - Jan. 31, 2016
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## Protected Species

Hunting protected species, such as badger, woodchuck, jackrabbit, moose and flying squirrel, is prohibited. See *2015 Small Game Regulations* for more details.



Furbearers

Coyote	
Hunting	Continuous open season
Trapping	Oct. 17 - Feb. 15, 2016
Beaver	
Trapping Only	
Zone A (Northwest)	Nov. 7 - Apr. 30, 2016
Zone B (Northeast)	Nov. 7 - Apr. 30, 2016
Zone C (South)	Nov. 7 - Mar. 31, 2016
Zone D (Mississippi River)	Day after duck season closes to Mar. 15, 2016

Mink and Muskrat

Trapping Only	
Statewide	Oct. 24 - Mar. 6, 2016
Mississippi River Zone	Nov. 9** - Mar. 6, 2016

\*\*Zone opens either the day after the duck season closes or Nov. 9, whichever occurs first.

Fox (Red and Gray)

Hunting and Trapping	Oct. 17 - Feb. 15, 2016
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Bobcat

Hunting and Trapping - Permits required	
Period 1	Oct. 17 - Dec. 25
Period 2	Dec. 26 - Jan. 31, 2016

Fisher

Trapping Only - Permits required	
Various zones	Oct. 17 - Dec. 31

Otter

Trapping Only - Permits required	
North Zone	Nov. 7 - Apr. 30, 2016
Central Zone	Nov. 7 - Mar. 31, 2016
South Zone	Nov. 7 - Mar. 31, 2016

Raccoon

Hunting and Trapping	
Resident	Oct. 17 - Feb. 15, 2016
Non-resident	Oct. 31 - Feb. 15, 2016

Opossum, Skunk, Weasel and Snowshoe Hare

No season limits, bag limits, size limits or possession limits, but a license is required.



Get in the game!

Mentored Hunting Licenses

Adults and youth age 10 or older who have not completed Hunter Education are eligible to hunt through the Mentored Hunting Program. Visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword: “mentored hunting” for more information.

Reduced License Fees

Youth ages 10 and 11, first-time hunters, and those who have not hunted in the preceding 10 years are eligible to purchase hunting licenses at a reduced fee. Resident hunters who recruit three first-time hunters, trappers or anglers are also eligible for reduced fees.

Permit Application Deadlines		
Fall Turkey		August 1
Bobcat		August 1
Otter		August 1
Fisher		August 1
Spring Turkey		December 10
Bear		December 10
Timing of Drawings		
Fall Turkey		Late August
Sharp-tailed Grouse		Mid-September
Bobcat		Mid-September
Otter		Mid-September
Fisher		Mid-September
Spring Turkey		Late January
Bear		Early February
To check your drawing status go to: <a href="http://dnr.wi.gov">dnr.wi.gov</a>		

Questions?

Contact the DNR Call Center toll-free
1-888-WDNR INFO (1-888-936-7463) • local 608-266-2621
TTY Access via relay - 711
Staff are available 7 days a week from 7:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m
Spanish and Hmong speaking representatives are available

dnr.wi.gov

Txhais lus Hmoob thoj hu tus xovtooj 1-888-936-7463. Muaj txhais lus Hmoob txhua hnuv, Monday txog Sunday, 7:00 sawv ntxov 10:00 tsaus ntuj.

El personal también está disponible para asistir a clientes de habla hispana en nuestro número gratuito. El personal que habla español está disponible 7 días a la semana a partir de la 7:00 de mañana hasta 10:00 p.m.

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The Department of Natural Resources is committed to serving people with disabilities. If you need this information in an alternative format, please call 608-266-8204.



Program student, Tyrone, cruises the shallows. Below, Jacob, a student in the program, masters camera use above and below the waves.



Story by Laura Proescholdt. Photos courtesy New Light Under the Surface

Stumbling over ungainly flippers, almost somersaulting face forward in a rush of frantic excitement, a wetsuit-clad teenager rushes to shore.

“Look what I got!” he shouts, a smile stretched wide across his goggled face. He shoves a dripping wet camera toward the teacher on shore, who looks at it and gets almost as excited as the boy. On the screen is a gleaming colony of freshwater sponges, stretching like glowing green tentacles toward the underwater lens.

This sponge is just one example of many mysterious underwater life forms of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, revealed anew by the young men of Northwest Passage, a residential mental health treatment center for youth ages 12 to 17 and located in northwestern Wisconsin.

The pioneers of Northwest Passage’s new program, New Light Under the Surface, face a range of mental, emotional and behavioral challenges. Many have spent time in juvenile detention and all confront problems that their home communities and families are not equipped to help them face. They’ve come to the St. Croix River Valley seeking — as all teens do — acceptance, encouragement and hope.

Spending extended periods in flippers peering through underwater lenses may seem like an unusual way to inspire hope in teens, but this project isn’t the first at Northwest Passage to use

art and positive experiences in nature to help youth find strength. New Light Under the Surface is a new dimension of a wildly successful therapeutic nature photography program, In a New Light, which was pioneered by professional photographer Ben Thwaits in 2010.

While working as a Northwest Passage classroom teacher, Thwaits saw an opportunity to use his expertise to help students see the world from new perspectives. As a wildlife photographer, Thwaits knew firsthand the profound capacity of nature to act as a vehicle for healing. The results of his fledgling photography program far exceeded his expectations, however.

Within weeks after students had curiously peered through a camera lens for the first time, they were producing high-quality photos of wildlife, plants and landscapes. It also became clear that assuming the role of photographer was highly therapeutic. As Thwaits explains it, photography is merely a portal to healing experiences.

“It’s really about putting a camera in the kids’ hands, giving them basic instruction, putting them in a startlingly beautiful environment, and letting nature do its work. In a New Light is a very hands-off program in that you let Mother Nature be a counselor, tapping

into the inherently therapeutic elements of nature,” he says.

During photography outings, participants were visibly calmer. Taking high-quality nature photos requires a keen eye and patience, and therefore calls photographers to calmly engage with their surroundings. Photography also provided participants with a constructive platform for self-expression. The encouragement the young artists received in response to their work was, for some, the first positive feedback they had ever received from their communities.

New Light Under the Surface began to take shape in early 2012 when the stunning results of the In a New Light program inspired research diver and Northland College ecologist Dr. Toben LaFrancois to email Thwaits and say, “Let’s go underwater.”

Together, with support from St. Croix National Scenic Riverway staff, they drafted a grant and received funding from the National Park Service’s Youth





Dr. LaFrancois leads a lesson on macroinvertebrate ecology.

Partnership Program in 2013. Thwaits and LaFrancois identified two goals: to reveal the astonishing underwater beauty of the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers and to reveal the inspiring potential of the young photographers behind the art.

In the summer of 2014, seven boys armed with high-tech underwater camera rigs were the first to dive under the surface to embark on a mission to share this hidden realm of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway with the world.

New Light Under the Surface grows out of principles firmly established by its terrestrial forerunner — it provides an immersive, engaging experience in nature. However, the uniqueness of the underwater world serves to amplify these qualities — all while adding a hint of danger.

Thwaits explains that this is part of what makes the program particularly effective for the Northwest Passage youth.

“Kids come into the program because they’re risk-takers, because they’re sensation-seekers and because they often don’t care what people think. They’re in this program because these traits have resulted in them getting into trouble. Yet, when we put them in a setting like underwater photography, being a little bit of a risk-taker and a sensation-seeker is a huge advantage. They’re translating their inherent characteristics into a very positive outlet,” he says.

Though the project appeals to those with a flair for risk, the safety and comfort of participants is the top priority for staff. Gradually, they’ve worked to build confidence and trust while diving. Participants work in teams, using the buddy



A photo of a mussel releasing glochidia taken by a student named Jaden.

system, and LaFrancois, Thwaits and the other staff keep a constant head count.

It takes bravery to don the wetsuit, flippers and snorkel and dive underwater, but it takes a whole other kind of grit to get high-quality photos.

Thwaits explains, “You have to be willing to let go and give yourself to that environment — you can’t fight the river, you can’t fight your environment, you can’t be thrashing, you can’t be constantly swimming against the flow because you’re just not going to get any pictures. The moment you stop kicking hard, let the current take you a little bit, and let yourself just be enveloped in that environment, instantly you’re going to start getting better pictures.”

Striking a balance between instinct, adrenaline and intent is no easy task. However, successful moments are deeply gratifying and definitely exciting.

The challenges inherent to underwater photography are what make this project notable. However, it is the young photographers’ ability to confront these challenges with grace and artistic vision that makes New Light Under the Surface truly inspiring.

A sunny day in August saw a group of these pioneering young photographers hiking the short path to Pacwawong Dam on the Namekagon River near Hayward. Thwaits chose this site as an underwater photography destination for its aesthetic beauty and historical significance. Tufts of vivid green reeds clustered in a calm pocket of the river hinted at its past importance as a ricing site for the Ojibwe. Underwater, the remains of an old logging dam loomed dark and mysterious, hiding a myriad of toothy fish, shy mussels, colorful freshwater sponges and the crayfish described by most of the boys as “freaky” or “creepy.” After a safety briefing about currents and underwater structures to look out for, the boys set out to explore.

The photographers who immersed themselves in the rhythms of the river environment were entranced. It was easy to see what sparks the therapeutic dimension of the project: it’s fun for all involved. LaFrancois says he has been surprised to see the way in which this project reveals a deep disconnect in our culture.

“Whatever brought the team members to us, is washed away by the river. They focus, work hard, work in teams, get results and come up with better questions than graduate students,” he adds.

Which leads LaFrancois to ask, “Why



Hello, Mr. Bluegill! Photo taken underwater by a student named Jacob.

aren’t communities set up for natural play for kids and adults? The reprieve from whatever problems have dominated their lives to this point is tangible. We all need this.”

In speaking with these young artist-adventurers, it was clear that the reprieve offered to them by underwater photography meant a lot. When asked whether he looked forward to Tuesdays, the designated day for underwater photography excursions, Tyrone said simply, “More than any other day.”

Damien, highly energetic and goose-bumped after emerging from the chilly water, told me why underwater photography was something to look forward to.

“It’s fun and it’s interesting. It makes me feel excited, and it makes me feel kind of patient, and it just relaxes my feelings.”

When I asked him if he was scared the first time he tried it, he explained with a toothy grin, “Not really. Nah. I’m not afraid of anything.”

As for whether the experience was anything like he expected, he said, “No. Not at all. Totally different. I thought it was going to be something kind of dangerous, something risky, but I don’t know, there’s actually something calming. Calm and relaxing. Some parts it’s actually kind of rough and exciting. But for the most part it’s actually calming.”

Although, he concedes, the spell cast by underwater photography is broken when “you swallow a whole bunch of water in through your snorkel.”

Many of the photographers spoke of this deep sense of calm. Jaden explained that he enjoys underwater photography because “everything else can be put aside

for the moment and you can just focus in on what’s under the water.”

For some, this sense of peace is almost spiritual. One photographer described it as feeling “untouchable,” saying that underwater, he felt “relaxed and spiritually with the world and [his] surroundings.”

Another said that he could feel “another power that is stronger than me. And that’s Mother Nature.”

Not only is underwater photography highly therapeutic for the participants, it is educational. The sort of education happening here, however, is completely distinct from the usual paradigm of classrooms and desks. The learning that takes place on photography expeditions flows naturally from a fascination with the environment.

“The ecology elements emerge organically,” explains Thwaits. “That’s always been one of the unique things with In a New Light, that it starts with the art. It starts just with awe and wonder as the way to open their minds to get them thinking in a different way and experiencing things they’ve never felt before. Then, when they’re in that place of wonder, when their curiosity is naturally engaged, and when they’re operating from that place of fascination, then, we capitalize on those opportunities as learning experiences.”

One young photographer, Jacob, boasted that he had discovered how to attract largemouth bass underwater. With slight skepticism, staff listened to him explain how he waved his hand slightly over the sand. The bass would notice this and fin excitedly toward his lens. It seemed a coincidence, but then the ecological connection was clear — bass use the same technique with their tails to make spawning beds.

When I asked LaFrancois about ecological implications of this project, he directed me to this 2006 Walter Mondale quote: “I’ve always recognized the [Wild and Scenic River] designation as a starting point for protection of the St. Croix. It bought us some time, perhaps. But sustaining the values of the St. Croix will require that each generation make a renewed commitment to the cause.”

A renewed commitment requires a deep sense of connection. The photographers are forging this connection personally as they encounter the magic of these freshwater ecosystems firsthand. However, their vivid photos will also spark fascination and connection in others. Be-


cause the photographers themselves are mysterious, misunderstood, and sometimes overlooked, it seems especially poignant that they are the ones to reveal to the public freshwater resources that are often treated in the same manner.

“We don’t need more information,” LaFrancois explains. “We need more people to care and to have major shifts in attitude, understanding and behavior. That is why I am working on an art project. The critical thing will be for the team to show people this amazing underwater view because for most people every shot is going to represent a major discovery!”

One photographer, Anthony, understands he has a unique role as artist-adventurer.

“There’s more stuff to explore that hasn’t been explored before. It’s all been studied — they know what the species are — but they haven’t seen that one spot. No one else has. They haven’t seen that one spot and because it changes all the time, so even if someone thought they did, they still didn’t see the same thing I’ve just seen,” he says.

In this way, the impact of this project extends well beyond each individual photographer. Thwaits and his team, along with the National Park Service, are working to bring these discoveries to students through partnerships with area schools.

Distilled, the mission of this project is, according to Thwaits, to “reveal unseen potential and beauty.” This is true of the young photographers looking to find hope as they navigate the treacherous currents of the river and their lives, learning the difference between struggling against the powerful water and finding a calm strength within it. It is also true of the freshwater ecosystems that, like the youth themselves, are threatened. Under the surface is a mysterious, magical, beautiful world. Anyone who has the chance to delve underneath is lucky, indeed. 

>>>

VIEW PHOTOS/VIDEO

Photos from New Light Under the Surface and other In a New Light programs are permanently on display in the In a New Light Gallery in Webster, Wis. and on the In a New Light website at [inanewlight.org](http://inanewlight.org). Watch a video at [youtube.com/watch?v=wVTENjEdqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVTENjEdqQ).

Laura Proescholdt writes from Cumberland, Wis.



# Mississippi River monitoring

A STORY IN LONG-TERM TEAMWORK.



An airboat takes DNR staff to water quality sampling sites in winter on Pool 8 of the Mississippi River near La Crosse.

SARA STRASSMAN

Ruth Nissen

DNR water quality specialist Shawn Giblin peers intently through the snow-covered plastic window of the airboat as it bounces along the snow and ice-covered surface of Pool 8 of the Upper Mississippi River near La Crosse.

The temperature on this late January day is a “balmy” 22 degrees with a gusty northwest wind. He eases his foot off the accelerator and keeps his eye on the GPS unit as the airboat approaches the first sampling site. Timing is important. The crew onboard has to be within 15 feet of the coordinates for the study site.

At the last moment, Giblin spins the airboat around to pack down the snow. John Kalas, a DNR water quality technician, quickly gets out the ice auger and goes to work drilling the first hole. The dull, low-pitched roar of the auger cuts through the air as snow falls. He is careful not to stir the water column with the action of the auger.

Giblin chips out the last few inches of ice in the hole with a spud and then scoops out the loose ice. He inserts the probe of the Hydrolab Data Sonde into the hole. This equipment measures four components and the data is immediately transmitted to the field computer. Giblin measures the snow depth and moves over to the second hole where he works with Kalas to collect a water sample; measure ice thickness, water depth and river current velocity; and determine water clarity using a Secchi disk.

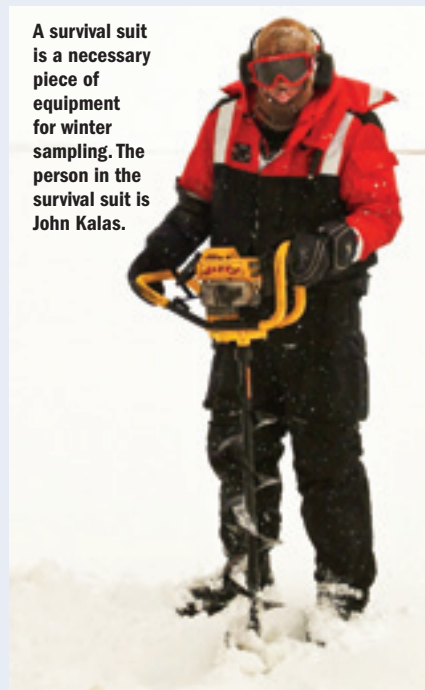
By the time they finish collecting this information the Data Sonde has fin-

ished its task. The Sonde is then safely stored in the airboat, the velocity meter is tucked into the pizza box warmer to keep it at a working temperature on this cold day, and they are off to the next site.

This routine will be repeated many times before the day is over. Giblin and Kalas work as a well-coordinated team with no wasted motion and little conversation. They have 150 sites to visit in two weeks.

Giblin and Kalas’ water quality work

A survival suit is a necessary piece of equipment for winter sampling. The person in the survival suit is John Kalas.



SARA STRASSMAN

is part of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Long-Term Resource Monitoring Program (LTRMP). Six study reaches are monitored annually by LTRMP. The Pool 8 reach near La Crosse is monitored by DNR staff from the Mississippi River Monitoring Field Station.

The team samples water quality, and monitors fish and aquatic vegetation using strict protocols. Data has been collected on Pool 8 and the other five study reaches since 1993 using standardized monitoring techniques which provide valuable information that is used by research scientists, resource managers and planners to understand and restore this globally significant large river.

“It’s a monitoring system that is unmatched both nationally and internationally,” explains Jim Fischer, DNR Mississippi River Team leader and field station supervisor. The program has attracted the attention of other countries. China, for example, is using the LTRMP as a model to develop a scientific monitoring system for the Yangtze River.

Twenty years ago when the standardized monitoring began, data was collected using individual instruments and the scientists recorded data on paper data sheets for manual data entry when they returned to the office.

Today, a Data Sonde measures dissolved oxygen, pH (acidity), temperature and conductivity simultaneously and transfers the data to a laptop in the field. The evolution of equipment over the last 20 years has been dramatic, but no less than the changes Giblin has observed on the Mississippi River.

Giblin has been the LTRMP water quality specialist for only seven years but knows the area very well having grown up on the banks of the river in Brice Prairie, a township just north of La Crosse.

“We have observed dramatic ecological shifts in the river during the LTRMP sampling,” Giblin says. “What we are learning about the river could not be achieved with a series of short-term studies. Water quality is measured by determining dissolved oxygen concentrations, total suspended solids, chlorophyll, phosphorus, nitrogen and water clarity.”

Each of these components has implications for plants, fish and wildlife. Dissolved oxygen is critical to sustain aquatic life, insects and fish. Excessive suspended solids (sediment or soil particles in the water) limit plant growth by blocking light and thus affecting aquatic insect behavior and fish by reducing feeding efficiency and smothering spawning habitat.

Chlorophyll is an indicator of algae in the water. Algae and duckweed can form thick green mats on the surface and cause problems for anglers, boaters, swimmers and other plants and fish by blocking light for plants and reducing dissolved oxygen as the plants decompose. Reduced dissolved oxygen can force fish out of the backwaters and into the main river channel. Phosphorus and nitrogen are the nutrients that fuel the excessive growth of algae.

On a positive note, water clarity in Pool 8 has increased dramatically over the past 20 years.

“Suspended solids are declining and have reached a healthy level,” says Giblin. “We have observed a shift from a turbid state to a clear state.”

Algae and duckweed fueled by excess phosphorus and nitrogen in the water column, though, continue to be a problem.

“The improvement in water clarity has resulted in an increase in aquatic vegetation, in particular wild celery and wild rice,” explains Heidi Langrehr, an aquatic plant specialist. “These two plants are important as a food source for migrating waterfowl.”

Aquatic plants provide food and shelter for other birds, fish and invertebrates including larval forms of insects, worms and snails. Aquatic plants are sampled by visiting 450 random sites scattered throughout Pool 8 during warmer months.

“Unusually high water levels during the growing seasons in 2011 through



ERIKA NORTEMANN/THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Heidi Langrehr, a DNR aquatic plant specialist, uses a special rake for vegetation monitoring. The rake on this site was full of wild celery.

2014 created more difficult growing conditions for some species,” Langrehr says. “Generally plants have increased, both in the number of species and in abundance, from 1998 to 2010.”

The increase in vegetation resulted in a cascade of effects that led to a dramatic improvement in the fish community.

To monitor the fish community, staff uses six sampling methods including electrofishing, a variety of nets and otter trawls, explains Andy Bartels, a DNR fish specialist.

Fish sampling is conducted from June 15 to Oct. 31. In 2012, 64 species were recorded in Pool 8.

“Overall, catch rates in 2012 were the highest observed since 2007 and ranked fourth highest over the 20 years of sampling,” says Bartels.

Some species appear stable over time including walleye, catfish and black crappie.

“Catch rates for backwater-oriented species like yellow perch, largemouth bass and bluegill have greatly increased over the last 20 years,” Bartels adds. “Whereas, catch rates for species such as carp, buffalo and white bass, which are more riverine fish, have decreased.”

The positive changes in the fisheries are reflected in the increasing popularity of the river for recreational fishing by bass anglers, family fishing and bass tournaments as well as ice fishing for panfish.

Data collected through the LTRMP efforts document the changes in the river that have resulted from changes in human practices in the watershed. The data has also shown that high flows in the river caused by precipitation events are the key variables that influence water quality and life in the river. Floods result in more sediment and nutrients carried by the river as they enter the river in runoff from the land.

There is more work to be done to im-



ANDY BARTELS

Shawn Giblin holds up a flathead catfish caught in a hoop net on Pool 8. Flathead catfish are the state’s largest piscivore (fish eating) and some flatheads may have historically exceeded 120 pounds. The Wisconsin record caught by hook-and-line was 74.5 pounds in 2001 from the Mississippi River. Giblin estimated this fish may have weighed 60 pounds. The long-term trend for flathead catfish appears stable.

prove water quality in the Mississippi River, but perhaps these intricate connections between the land, the people and the river are why Giblin’s favorite quote is one by John Muir, “When we try to pick out anything by itself we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

>>> The official results from 20 years of standardized water quality and fisheries monitoring, and 15 years of standardized aquatic vegetation monitoring in Pool 8 of the Upper Mississippi River were published in the “2012 Pool 8 State of the Ecosystem Report” available online at [dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/mississippi.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/mississippi.html).

>>> WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP OUR RIVERS AND LAKES?

- Test the soil. Before planting a garden or fertilizing your lawn, have your soil tested. That way you won’t add too much fertilizer.
- Fertilize in the fall. Fall is the best time to fertilize your lawn as it promotes healthy lawns with deep roots.
- Sweep up any extra fertilizer that lands on your sidewalk or driveway. You should also sweep up soil, grass clippings and leaves which also contain nitrogen and phosphorus. This will keep them from washing down the storm sewers into nearby waterways.

Ruth Nissen is stationed in La Crosse and works with the Mississippi River Team in the Department of Natural Resources.



# The Flambeau River State Forest

A DIAMOND IN  
THE ROUGH  
IN ANY SEASON.

Canoeing is popular on the Flambeau and different portions of the river offer varying degrees of difficulty. And don't forget your fishing pole.



Story and photo by Ron Weber

Your canoe glides through the dark-stained water on a peaceful June evening, the silence broken only by the sound of your oar slicing into the water and the trill of a belted kingfisher somewhere along the shore. The river has taken you in, and though you fully know what year it is, there is a feeling of timelessness which hangs over such a place. You imagine as though just around the next bend you may encounter a lumberjack guiding a raft of logs downstream. This is the Flambeau and right here, right now, anything seems possible.

Wisconsin has many famous lakes and rivers. Right near the top of that list would be the Flambeau River, long recognized for its scenic beauty and wildness. It is here, tucked in and around the north and south forks of the Flambeau River in Sawyer, Rusk and Price counties that you will find the 91,000-acre Flambeau River State Forest (FRSF). This gem of public property is located just far enough away from any major city that it is often overlooked and underutilized.

Solitude is one of its main attributes. In a day and age in which we are constantly online, tuned in or wired up, getting away can be difficult. With little to no cell phone service, visitors to the Flambeau need not worry about bothersome phone calls or the kids' constant texting. Here, they will need to find more natural ways of passing the day.

Canoeing and kayaking are two popular pastimes. The scenery is breathtaking and the river offers a range of experiences from peaceful paddling to hair-raising rapids. Landings are spaced to allow for

a trip length that fits any desire. Rustic river campsites accessible only by river travelers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Maps detailing the river with landings, campsite locations and descriptions of rapids are available from the forest headquarters or online at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov).

Fishing is another popular attraction. The river offers an excellent smallmouth bass, walleye and musky fishery. Bass Lake provides a wilderness setting with no motors allowed. Connors Lake and Lake of the Pines offer outstanding fishing in a scenic and peaceful setting. These are also the sites of the two established campgrounds in the FRSF. Each campground has 30 sites with pit toilets, but no electrical hookups. Except for 15 sites at Connors Lake campground which can be reserved by using Reserve America, no reservations are allowed. Connors Lake also has a picnic area with a volleyball court, children's play area, beautiful sand beach and swimming area.

Besides the spectacular colors and

views of fall, hunting is another draw to the area. Through active forest management, the forest is comprised of a good representation of all age classes of forests from young aspen stands to mature hemlock, white pine and yellow birch. Grouse and deer hunters will find plenty of each, especially in the areas of younger forest habitats. Bear hunting is popular and the turkey population is also very healthy. Forest roads provide vehicle access, but there are many gated trails, including designated hunter walking trails, which ensure ample opportunity to have an undisturbed backwoods experience.

Elk have found a home in the FRSF. A small herd from the Clam Lake area was released in the forest to assist in dispersing the larger Clam Lake herd. An opportunity to hear the piercing bugle of a bull elk on a misty, cool September morning is an exciting addition to the Flambeau experience.

ATV and snowmobile trails are also available. The roughly 40 miles of ATV trails are open from May 15 to Nov. 15 and connect with the Tuscobia State Trail and the Dead Horse Run Trail in the Chequamegon National Forest. Fifty-five miles of snowmobile trails link up with surrounding county trail systems and also the Tuscobia Trail.

Cross-country skiing can be an excellent way to take advantage of the winter scenery and solitude the forest has to offer. The entire forest is open to cross-country skiing, however, only the 15-mile Flambeau Hills Trail is groomed. Those wishing to snowshoe will find additional packed trails at Lake of the Pines and the Slough Gundy State Scenic Area.

The Flambeau Hills Trail is open to hiking and mountain bike riders in the summer and fall.

Visitors stopping at the new forest headquarters completed in 2014 will find friendly staff waiting to answer questions and provide information to make their trip a memorable and safe one. Showers are available at the forest headquarters for public use.

You won't find bright lights or glitz and glamour. But if you are looking for an opportunity to get away, to be immersed in nature, and maybe even take a step back in time for a day, weekend or week, the Flambeau River State Forest may be just the jewel you have been looking for.



Ron Weber writes from Weyerhaeuser, Wis.

The Plum Island boathouse with Washington Island in the distance. The kayak entry point to the island will be near the boathouse.

## Wisconsin's newest island destination

HISTORY AND NATURE COMBINE FOR A PLUM OF AN ISLE.

Joseph Warren

For visitors traveling up the Door County peninsula along State Highway 42, the end of the line comes at Death's Door. Crossed daily by ferry, the *Porte des Morts*, or "Death's Door" is the narrow strait in Lake Michigan between Washington Island and the Wisconsin mainland.

Just east of the ferry route, a large island with a light tower and some late 19th century buildings may pique the interest of ferry-goers. Up until this year, access to the island was mostly prohibited, leaving travelers to only wonder what might be waiting to be discovered.

Not anymore. Plum Island will be open to the public beginning Memorial Day weekend in 2015.

"People are naturally curious, and for most, this will be the first time they'll be able to get out to the island," notes Tim Sweet, president of the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands.

### Opening the island

Plum Island, along with Pilot Island, which is located farther east in Lake Michigan, were previously owned by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The lighthouses and range lights on the islands were essential for providing safe and efficient navigation on the most treacherous part of Lake Michigan.

Ships would line up with the front and rear range lights on Plum Island to give them the correct bearing to enter Death's Door. By cutting through this strait, ships could save time by not having to go farther north to circle around Rock and Washington islands.

The lights are still used for navigation and the Coast Guard will continue to maintain them, but the decision to transfer the land stems in part from the agency looking to expunge ownership of surplus real estate.

The Coast Guard transferred the islands to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 2007, and through a Comprehensive Conservation Plan, FWS determined that access could be allowed on Plum Island while still protecting the island's natural resources.

The FWS and Friends are working to conserve and protect the refuge's resources, preserve the lighthouses and historic buildings and provide recreation opportunities.

"Species protection is the priority, but we also want to offer public access to the island," explains Sadie O'Dell, wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "The Friends, Washington Island Ferry Line and local residents have been really helpful with transporting supplies and getting people to the island for work parties. The area has a history of community involvement and everyone has been pitching in."

Over the last several years, Friends members have been diligently fundraising and planning to address critical needs on Plum Island, performing much needed stabilization and restoration work to the historic buildings and dock, removing invasive species and preparing for public access by installing trail signs, clearing hiking trails, getting temporary bathroom facilities in place and building a welcome kiosk and other interpretive signage that will educate visitors about the unique wildlife resources and maritime history the island and refuge has to offer.

In 2014, two visitor access days were held on the island, but in 2015, the public will be able to visit the island throughout the summer.

### A wildlife refuge

Plum, Pilot and Hog islands make up the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge. At



Hiking near the lifesaving station. All the buildings on Plum Island are on the National Register of Historic Places.



TIM SWEET

325 acres, Plum Island is by far the largest of the three islands and will be the only one open to the public. Two other small islands in northern Door County — Spider and Gravel islands — make up the Gravel Island National Wildlife Refuge. Access to both these islands is also prohibited.

Waterbirds such as double-crested cormorants, herons, great egrets and gulls are common to the refuges. In 2013 it was estimated that over 5,700 nesting pairs of cormorants make the islands of the northern Door County peninsula home. The majority of the birds make their nests on Pilot, Spider and Gravel islands.

Plum Island has a rocky shoreline, but it also has an interior forest of aspen, sugar maple, basswood and eastern hemlock. White cedar trees line the shore.

While Plum Island may not have the large populations of waterbirds, the is-

land is home to deer, coyotes, several species of snakes, blue-spotted salamanders, spring peepers, frogs and other wildlife. In spring, there may be seasonal closures in certain areas on the island to protect nesting bald eagles.

Refuge officials ask that visitors stay on the island’s trails for the eagles, but also for the protection of other native species such as the federally-threatened dwarf lake iris.

“Even though it’s an island, we’re still not immune from invasive species, which is why we ask visitors to stay on the designated trails or to access the island at the designated access point,” says O’Dell.

**Pilot and Hog islands**

Both Pilot Island and Hog Island are less than four acres and serve primarily as sanctuaries for nesting waterbirds. Access to these two islands will be prohibited to protect the large bird populations.

“We ask boaters and kayakers to keep about a ¼-mile distance from the islands to protect the birds and their nests,” explains John Below, refuge officer. “The shallow water around these islands also makes it difficult to have safe public access.”

There are no buildings on Hog Island, but Pilot Island has a lighthouse, and like the buildings on Plum Island, it is in need of repair.

With the island’s location and the lack of vegetation,

the buildings on Pilot Island are more exposed to the elements of Lake Michigan. Restoring the roof of the Pilot Island lighthouse was the first project for the Friends.

“The roof of the fog signal house collapsed before we could repair it and we wanted to focus our efforts on the lighthouse before it was lost,” explains Sweet.

**An island of discovery**

What can visitors expect to find on Plum Island? For those who make the trip, wildlife watching opportunities abound.

The FWS and the Friends are dedicated to providing “Wildlife Dependent Recreation,” which includes deer hunting, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education and interpretation.

Hiking around the island offers panoramic views of Green Bay, the Door County peninsula, Lake Michigan and the other neighboring islands. The 2-mile trail around the island’s perimeter is called the “patrol road,” and is the same route that staff from the Coast Guard’s old lifesaving station used to take.

“Twice a day, every day during the commercial shipping season, no matter what the weather was, crew members from the station had to walk the circumference of the island. One would start out going one way, and the other would start walking the other way looking for ships in distress,” explains Matt Foss with the Friends, who has written extensively on the island’s history.

Plum Island also presents a unique opportunity for visitors to get a close-



Double-crested cormorants have a home here.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Archaeological digs were held over the summers of 2013 and 2014 and there are plans for more digs this summer.

TIM SWEET

up view of the Coast Guard’s operation on the island in the early 20th century. While still in need of repair, the range lights, the keeper’s house, boathouse, lifesaving station and fog house are all intact.

The remains of one of Wisconsin’s oldest lighthouses can be found on the south part of the island near the front range light. James Myster, regional historic preservation officer with the FWS, organized archaeological digs with Professor Brian Hoffman and students from Hamline University in Minnesota over the summers of 2013 and 2014. Buttons and old fish bones that may have been meals were uncovered. There are plans for more digs this summer near the collapsed lighthouse and in other areas to search for evidence of past human presence on the island.

Death’s Door also lives up to its name. Plum and Pilot islands are part of Wisconsin’s Maritime Trails, and numerous shipwrecks are scattered near the islands.

**Plans for the future**

The Friends and FWS envision the old boathouse becoming the visitor center to the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge where interpretive and educational displays on the island’s history and wildlife will greet travelers. More funding is needed for that to happen, but a kiosk with map and information will be available at the boathouse when the island is open this summer, and volunteers may be on the island at certain times to answer visitors’ questions.

The boathouse will get the most immediate attention, but all the island’s buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and in need of stabilization.

The Friends hired a preservation architect to develop a building stabilization plan which they are currently using to help address the most urgent needs, and are now looking to complete a Historical Structures Report to aid in restoration planning for the buildings.

“Like the state did with Rock Island, we’re looking to stabilize the outside of all the buildings and secure them so they don’t deteriorate any further, with the hope of fully restoring the insides when there is enough funding available,” says Sweet.

**Getting there**

Getting to Plum Island will still take some work. As part of Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan Water Trail, kayaking in for a day trip will be a popular way to reach the island. FWS is planning to have one designated kayak entry point

near the boathouse — on the northeast corner of the island — which will allow FWS to monitor visitors’ impact. Due to the fragile nature of the refuge’s natural communities, docking boats or entering the island at undesignated beach areas will not be permitted.

The breakwater dock has been deteriorating over the years and needs to be repaired before it is opened for public use. Private motorboats and sailboats, though, may moor offshore and use dinghies, etc. to access the island at the kayak entry point.

The Friends will continue to hold workdays and special events on the island where catching a ride might be possible.

“We’re also working with local charters and concessionaires to provide rides to the island for people without a boat, but how that will all work out still needs to be determined,” says Sweet.

For the 2015 season there will not be an admission fee to Plum Island. The plan is to have the island open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend during daylight hours only. Only foot travel will be permitted.

Trail maps, a kiosk for visitor information and port-a-potties will be available near the boathouse, but there will not be any drinking water or garbage cans, so visitors must practice carry in, carry out.

There is no overnight camping on Plum Island, but the nearby communities of Gills Rock, Ellison Bay and Washington Island offer accommodations and services and camping is available at Newport and Rock Island state parks.

For most, a day excursion to Plum Island will be the first time they set foot on a part of Wisconsin they could only once see from a distance.

“We’ve seen people fall in love with the place and want to come back year after year,” says Sweet. “And as more people come, we know they’ll feel the same way.”





WISCONSIN'S FORESTS BENEFIT FROM ACTIVE MANAGEMENT

I subscribed to the magazine a little over one year ago and I look forward to each new edition.

I read with interest the article titled “Wisconsin’s forests benefit from active management” from October 2014. I can certainly agree with the statement from the article “Forest management is a dynamic process and many people find timber cutting to be disconcerting.”

I have a vacation home on Plum Lake and have been regularly visiting the area for over 30 years. I couldn’t help but notice significant cutting along town and county roads in the last two years. I can’t say that this level of cutting hasn’t been going on in the area, but it certainly hasn’t been this obvious. Suddenly large areas of mature trees are gone. While the areas haven’t been clear cut, a large majority of the mature trees have been cut, and it is disconcerting.

While there are many good points in the article on the need to manage the forests and the value of economic benefits, does the Department of Natural Resources balance the aesthetic values with the others? Especially when cutting along roads in state owned forests? Can fewer trees be harvested in these areas? And is there a means for the public to add their input to the process going forward?

I agree there has to be a balance between all the users of the state forests. But in my opinion the balance has gone too far toward harvesting mature trees adjacent to the roads around Plum Lake.

Jeff Zahn  
Cedarburg

COMMENT ON A STORY?

Send your letters to: Readers Write, WNR magazine, P.O. Box 7191, Madison, WI 53707. Or email letters to [dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov). Limit letters to 250 words and include your name and the community from which you are writing.

NO ACCESS TO THE WEB?

Don't have access to a link we mention in a story? Let us know when you want to follow a link we list. We'll do what we can to get you a copy of the material if it is available free of charge and is relatively short in length.

BACK IN THE DAY

I can’t tell you enough how much I enjoy reading “Back in the day” each month in *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. As a child growing up in Wisconsin in the 1950s and 1960s, the stories and pictures you include in the articles bring back many memories and inform me of things I didn’t know. After being away from Wisconsin for many years, I moved back here last year and am enjoying getting reacquainted with the state, its customs and especially its natural resources. Thanks for preparing this wonderful section of the magazine and for a great magazine overall.

William L. Fisher  
Stevens Point

BLUE MOON IN 2015

As usual I enjoyed your very fine December issue of the magazine. The calendar in that issue was of particular interest. However if you look at the July page you will note that there are two full moons and I am surprised that you failed to point out that the full moon on July 31 is a blue moon.

John Lubbers  
Sheboygan

Great observation! Our readers may find it interesting that typically there are 12 full moons in a year, but due to the difference in the lengths of calendar months with the length of a lunar month, occasionally there will be an extra full moon. According to NASA Science, the lunar month (the time it takes the moon to travel around the earth) is 29.5 days, making a blue moon appear on average once every 2.7 years.

The full moon on July 31, 2015 is considered a calendar blue moon. This is the more common and modern definition of a blue moon, which is the second full moon in the same month. There are also seasonal blue moons which occur when one of the seasons (winter, spring, summer or autumn) have four full moons. The third full moon in a season with four is considered a blue moon.

But a blue moon doesn't mean the color will be blue. According to NASA Science, that only happens when there is a significant amount of dust or ash in

the atmosphere, such as from a volcanic eruption or forest fire — where those extra small particulates will act like a blue filter, scattering red light, while allowing blue light to pass through. And because blue moons do not

happen often, it is exactly where we get the expression “Once in a blue moon.” After this July, the next seasonal blue moon will be May 21, 2016 and the next calendar blue moon will not be until Jan. 31, 2018 (or in about 2.7 years).

SNOWY OWLS

I wanted to share these snowy owl photos I took in the Freedom and Collins Marsh State Wildlife Area.

*Editor's note: For a second consecutive winter, snowy owls returned to Wisconsin in large numbers in 2014-15. These periodic influxes into the state are known as irruptions. The owls should have begun their northward migration back to arctic Canada by now.*

Heather Landers  
Kaukauna



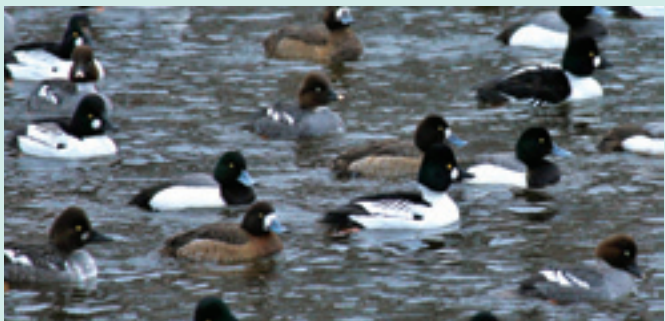
HEATHER LANDERS



HEATHER LANDERS



JAY GOLLHARDT



JAY GOLLHARDT

GOLDENEYES

I’m sending you these photos of common goldeneye ducks. There are quite a few hanging around the harbor area in Sheboygan. They are very interesting to observe, exhibiting some unusual behavior, tilting their heads back whenever there is a female present.

Jay Gollhardt  
Sheboygan

*Editor's note: The ducks with the bluish bills are greater scaup, both males (white) and females (brown).*

ACCESS DNR'S HISTORIC IMAGES

*DNR's historic images are being digitized to make them more accessible and easier for the public to use. These images represent the changing face of Wisconsin's natural resource agencies, their employees and customers, and the resources they preserve and protect. The photos span more than a century and were taken by photographers and other staff of the Wisconsin Conservation Department (1930s to 1960s) and Department of Natural Resources (1960s to present).*

*Traditional conservation duties were the focus of the early Conservation Department and the prevalence of those kinds of images reflects that emphasis. The agency began in 1885 with three fish wardens, and gradually grew with the addition of four game wardens (1887), a forestry department (1903) and a state parks board (1907). Pollution control responsibilities were added in 1967 when Wisconsin's executive branch was reorganized and the Department of Natural Resources was created by combining the Conservation Department with the Department of Resource Development.*

*Among these images you will find photos of anglers, hunters, trappers, campers, hikers, boaters, picnickers and rock climbers. You'll find photos of wardens, fish managers, wildlife managers, foresters and more. This collection is but a small portion of the photos cherished and protected over the years. We are indebted to the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections for the opportunity to make them available to the public to whom they belong.*

*To find the images go to <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/WI/DNRPhotos/>.*

What’s cooking?

HUMMINGBIRD CAKE (FOR HUMANS)

CAKE:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 ½ cups raw sugar
- ½ cup golden brown sugar (do not pack)
- 1 cup toasted pecans, finely chopped
- ¾ cup canola oil
- 3 large eggs, room temperature (lightly beaten)
- 1 ½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup diced fresh pineapple, with juice
- 2 cups mashed ripe bananas



ELLEN CORSO

FROSTING:

- ¼ cup butter, room temperature
- 1 (8 oz.) cream cheese, room temperature
- 4 cups confectioners sugar (powdered sugar)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray two 9-by-2-inch cake pans with nonstick spray and line the bottoms with parchment paper. In a large bowl whisk together dry ingredients; flour, sugar, baking soda, sea salt, cinnamon, ginger and stir in the pecans. In a second large bowl mix together wet ingredients; beaten eggs, oil, vanilla, pineapple with juice and mashed bananas. Add the wet ingredients to the dry and stir by hand until completely combined. Pour batter evenly into the cake pans. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. The cake should spring back when pressed lightly in the center. Cool cake pans on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Run a small spatula around the outside of the cake to loosen, then carefully flip the cake out of the pan onto the wire rack. Cool cake completely before frosting.

To make the frosting, beat softened butter and cream cheese until well blended. Add powdered sugar and vanilla, beat until creamy. Place one cake layer on the serving platter. Spread about 1 cup of the frosting on the top of the cake. Gently place the other cake layer on top. Spread the remaining frosting over the top and sides of the layers. Sprinkle chopped pecans over the top and sides. If not serving immediately, refrigerate. Bring the cake to room temperature before serving.

Hummingbird cake is a sweet treat, so sweet it's rumored to attract hummingbirds. You will want to have a treat they can enjoy when they show up at your door.

NECTAR FOR HUMMINGBIRDS (FOR THE BIRDS)

- 1 part pure white cane sugar
- 4 parts water

Boil one to two minutes. Cool and store in refrigerator before placing in feeder.

- Never use honey, artificial sweeteners or red dye.
- Change the solution at least twice a week and disinfect feeders one to two times per month.

*Recipes by Ellen Corso, business manager for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.*



Traveler  
Long day's journey  
into flight.

Carl Schwartz

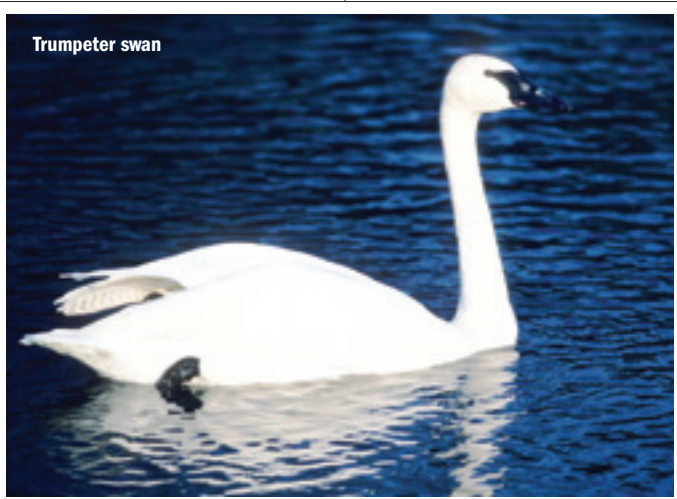
The Great Wisconsin Birdathon's Big Day trip may not be the right trip for everyone, but if a bunch of "Old Coots" and "Ancient Murrelets" are up for it three years running, you might want to try it out. And if you have any interest in the state's most fascinating natural areas and seeing a variety of birds and other wildlife, you'll enjoy this tale about one long day of birding in May.

For three years, wildscapes painter Tom Uttech and I have led a "Signature Team" on a Big Day trip as part of the Great Wisconsin Birdathon (GWB). The simple goal: "Have fun bird-watching to raise funds for bird protection." In even fewer words: "See a bird...save a bird." On a Big Day the aim is to tally as many bird species as possible in 24 hours, beginning at midnight. Big Day birders favor the middle of May to catch the peak of Neotropical migration.

In the GWB's inaugural year, 2012, and again in 2013, we were part of a team known as "Hawkeye and the Ancient Murrelets" that included beloved ornithologist Noel Cutright and his son Seth (Hawkeye). After we recorded 162 species and led all teams in species and fundraising in 2012, we tallied 156 species and raised \$4,100 in 2013.

With Noel's death after a four-year battle with cancer, and Seth pursuing a new academic degree and career, Uttech and I reconstituted our team in 2014 as "Cutright's Old Coots" in tribute to our friend, and diversified with two great birders, Joan Sommer and Marilyn Bontly. Our new team tallied 154 species and a record \$5,439.

To run a successful Big Day, good sets of ears and eyes are not enough — you also need great destinations. So we borrowed a page from history. On May 19, 2002, birders Al Shea and Randy Hoffman tallied 230



Trumpeter swan

HERBERT LANGE

species on a route through south central Wisconsin. The total remains one of the highest-ever for a Big Day in North America.

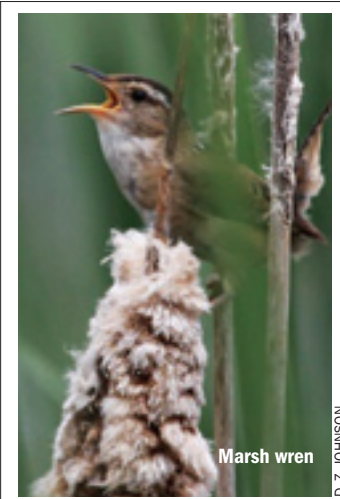
The Murrelets' and Coots' routes have varied, taking advantage of Shea and Hoffman's favorite stops and adding some of our own. We have covered 12 to 14 counties each year and traveled between 480 and 549 miles. Here are some highlights:

**White River Marsh State Wildlife Area, Green Lake County**  
This is where each of our trips starts: 12,000 acres of lowland forest, oak savanna, grasslands and sedge meadow through which the White and Fox rivers flow. It's also the site of efforts to reintroduce endangered whooping cranes

into the eastern United States. We come here for the night singers, although sometimes gray tree frogs and honking Canada geese drown them out. But in the right area, we've been able to hear swamp and Henslow's sparrows, marsh wren and sora in the first minute after midnight.

Virginia rail, American woodcock, sedge wren and American bittern usually join the chorus in the next half hour as we cruise down the marsh road. As we listen closely we pick up the faint "coo-coo-coo" of the least bittern and the more distant quack of a mallard. For Big Day-ers, it's the sublime and the ridiculous all at once.

**Comstock Bog State Natural Area, Marquette County**  
We generally reach Comstock, with its sedge meadows and



Marsh wren

D. Z. JOHNSON

tamarack swamps, around 2 a.m. Along the way in 2012, our mammal list grew faster than our bird list, with otter, rabbit, opossum, raccoon, a young red fox, coyotes howling and cattle bawling. But as we alighted we heard the first of at least four barred owls, followed by an eastern whip-poor-will, black-billed cuckoo and then a northern saw-whet owl. At 3:15 a.m., the first American robin of the day began to sing. We've also heard great horned owls here, and Comstock is one of the few places in the state where you can find the elusive yellow rail, whose song can be imitated by clicking together two quarters.

**Buena Vista Grasslands, Portage County**  
After Comstock, we've headed northwest, arriving at Buena



American bittern

RYAN BRADY

To participate in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon, visit [WIBirdathon.org/](http://WIBirdathon.org/).

Vista Grasslands by 4 a.m. to catch both night singers and the dawn chorus. Each year, this has proved to be our best and longest stop of the day, befitting its status as an Important Bird Area.

Along Lake Road, we have found horned larks, along with gray catbird and clay-colored savannah and grasshopper sparrows. By 4:45 a.m., red-winged blackbirds and killdeer are flying and calling, along with common yellowthroat, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, sandhill cranes and vesper sparrow. One year at 5 a.m., a half-hour before dawn, we saw our first short-eared owl flying in and out of patches of ground fog along with a northern harrier. Minutes later we heard greater prairie-chickens booming in the distance.

In 2012, as we continued west on Lake Road and then south on Town Line Road, we began to see birds more easily, quickly adding wild turkey, American goldfinch, Eastern phoebe, house wren, brown thrasher, tree swallow, cliff swallow and American kestrel — all those nest boxes paid off. Then, suddenly, we heard the whistle and shouted in unison "Bobwhite!" It was an unexpected treat. That year, Hawkeye spied a peregrine falcon cruising the grasslands and we consistently found uncommon grassland specialists such as western meadowlark, upland sandpiper and Brewer's blackbirds.

**Cranberry bogs, Wood County**  
Heading west out of Wisconsin Rapids on Seneca Road and into cranberry country, the woods have yielded hermit

thrush, pine warbler, black-capped chickadee, golden-winged warbler and broad-winged hawk, while the bogs have held common loon, pied-billed grebe, ring-necked duck, northern shoveler, blue-winged teal, wood duck and black tern. Where Hemlock Creek crosses Highway 54, we've seen yellow-throated vireo, scarlet tanager, blue-gray gnatcatcher and Tennessee warbler. Where Seneca Road crosses Highway 173 we've found red-bellied and pileated woodpecker, northern waterthrush, wood thrush and red-shouldered hawk. Outside the Babcock Café (stop in for the cran-raspberry pie), we have picked up a smorgasbord of species, including pine siskin, turkey vulture, Cooper's hawk, rough-winged swallow and blue-winged warbler.

**Sandhill Wildlife Area, Wood County**  
West on Ball Road, past the Sandhill Wildlife Area, has proved a good spot for veery (my favorite thrush); white-throated sparrow; and chestnut-sided, Nashville, magnolia, black-and-white and Wilson's warbler. Heading south on Cranberry Road (the Wood-Jackson County line), in 2012 we counted 13 trumpeter swans.

**Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, Juneau County**  
A quick run across 9th Street at the top of the refuge has yielded wild turkey; more trumpeter swans; and Swainson's, hermit and gray-cheeked thrush.

**Devil's Lake State Park and Baxter's Hollow, Sauk County**  
Our route then makes a dash to the south. Burma Road along Devil's Lake State Park's western edge is great for the forest-dwelling species the Baraboo Hills are known for, including hooded and cerulean warblers, Acadian flycatcher and tufted



Bobolink

RYAN BRADY

titmouse. Nearby Baxter's Hollow has yielded Louisiana waterthrush and Canada warblers.

**Lake Mariah, Green Lake County**  
In 2014, we made an unscheduled stop at Mariah, just off Highway 73. While the 563-acre, 6-foot-deep lake can appear empty, our optics picked up waterfowl along the distant shore. We also stumbled on our first warbler wave and added 21 species — eight of them warblers — to our Big Day list at 4 p.m. including American wigeon, lesser scaup, bufflehead, ruddy duck, double-crested cormorant and more.

**Lake Michigan shore, Sheboygan County**  
Each year we have concluded our day in Sheboygan with great results. We have identified herring,

ring-billed, Thayer's, Bonaparte's, great black-backed and lesser black-backed gulls, along with Caspian and common terns, red-breasted merganser, greater scaup and, at day's end, ruddy turnstone and sanderling, all in breeding plumage. ❧

Al Shea and Randy Hoffman have agreed to reprise their record Big Day as part of the 2015 Great Wisconsin Birdathon. Cutright's Old Coots will be striking out on a new route. You can follow the teams and pledge your support at [WIBirdathon.org/](http://WIBirdathon.org/). Carl Schwartz is past president of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and chairs the steering committee of Bird City Wisconsin.



Saw-whet owl

HERBERT LANGE





## Wisconsin, naturally

### HOGBACK PRAIRIE STATE NATURAL AREA

*Thomas A. Meyer*  
State Natural Areas Program



**Notable:** Geomorphologists (scientists who study the origin and structure of landforms) use the technical term “hogback” to describe a bedrock ridge with a narrow crest and steep slopes of equal gradient on both flanks. Typically, the crest line has undulations, resembling the knobby spine of a wild pig, thus giving rise to the landform’s name. The Driftless Area’s Hogback Prairie is one such geological marvel. The two-mile-long ridge rises 200 feet above the fertile agricultural lands of the Citron Valley, an ancient cut-off oxbow of the nearby Kickapoo River. In places, the limestone bedrock is exposed and weathered, providing habitat for rock-dwelling plants like smooth cliffbrake. The slopes support a diverse dry prairie community dominated by short grasses such as side-oats grama, little bluestem and needle-grass. Colorful displays of early spring-blooming plants, including yellow star-grass, bird’s-foot violet and pasque-flower are especially vibrant following prescribed fires employed by DNR ecologists to control invading woody plants. Also found here is the state-threatened Hill’s thistle, a spiny, short-statured member of the thistle group with large magenta flowers. This is a wonderful place to observe butterflies and grassland birds from spring to autumn. Much of the Hogback Prairie was donated to the Department of Natural Resources by The Nature Conservancy after having been purchased, in part, using funds provided by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

**How to get there:** From the intersection of State Highway 179 and Bridge Street in Steuben (Crawford County), go north on Bridge Street for 0.2 miles, then west and north on Hughes Road for 2.1 miles, then west on Citron Valley Road for 0.25 miles. Park along the road and walk west into the natural area. Be advised that the terrain is steep and chiggers may be abundant.

