

INSIDE | 2014 FRIENDS OF WISCONSIN STATE PARKS CALENDAR

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

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December 2013 \$3.50

A portrait of our **PARKS**

Trekking Devil's Lake

Wisconsin's illuminating winter nights

Opening the outdoors

Using skewers is just one way to cook over a campfire.



More than s'mores

KATHRYN A. KAHLER

Kick up your camping fare with "Easy Campfire Cooking."

Kathryn A. Kahler

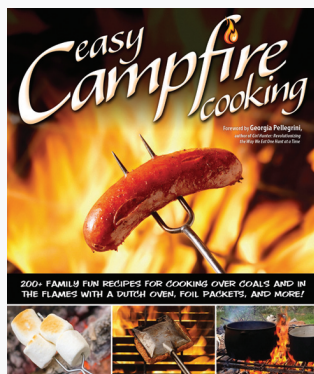
There's no need to put up with the same old stand-by recipes when planning your camping trips. Get yourself a copy of Georgia Pellegrini's cookbook, "Easy Campfire Cooking" (Fox Chapel Publishing, 2012), and you'll be eating gourmet foods by lantern rather than candlelight.

If you're like me, you might hesitate to buy yet another cookbook to gather dust on your bookshelf. But this one is so versatile, you might want to buy two — one for the camper and one to keep in the kitchen. Pellegrini embraces our differences and has delicious recipes for the hot-dog-on-a-stick aficionados as well as the Dutch oven experts among us.

Over 200 recipes are divided by method into chapters for cooking with a stick, skewers and kebabs, foil packets for hobo-style, pie iron, skillet, Dutch oven, or on


a grate. You'll find breakfasts, soups and stews, main dishes, sides and desserts that range from simple to challenging.

If your utensil of choice is a stick, you might try "Sausage and Toast on a Stick" for breakfast. Just spear a brown-and-serve sausage link and wrap it with a refrigerated breadstick, seal the ends and brown over hot embers. If pie iron cookery is your forte, check out "Sweet Peach Pocket," for a scrumptious dessert. Butter the out-sides of two slices of bread, tuck a peach half and marshmallow



inside, place in the pie iron and hold in the flames. Don't forget to bring the powdered sugar to dust on top. For Dutch oven die-hards, there's "Ham & Cabbage Stew," "One-Pot Lasagna" or "Big Pond Soup," to name a few.

The thing I love about the book is that you can use many of the recipes at home — in the oven, stovetop or on the grill. The "Beer Brat Sticks" and "Potato Wedges" make a great summer meal on the patio.

With the holiday season fast approaching, consider this idea for your camper friends or family members. Go to the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks website (FWSP.org) and click on "FWSP Store." You can choose to buy the book for \$12.95 or as part of several gift packages that may include a 2014 state park sticker, a gift subscription to *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine and other options. Bon appetit! 

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

Easy "Fireside Pizza"

No need to forego the Saturday night pizza when you're spending it under the stars. Just remember to pack the tri-pod and foil and you can whip up a pizza over the flames.



ANDREW RITCHIE

FIRESIDE PIZZA

Makes 4 to 6 servings

- 1 (13 or 14 oz.) tube prepared pizza crust
- 1 (14 ½ oz.) can pizza sauce
- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. shredded cheese — any kind
- Pizza toppings, such as pepperoni slices, tomatoes, mushrooms, green peppers, etc.

Cover the grilling grate with aluminum foil. Place grate over campfire. Place prepared pizza crust on aluminum foil on grill. Top crust with pizza sauce, shredded cheese and pizza toppings of choice. Cook pizza until cheese is melted.

Recipe printed with permission from Fox Chapel Publishing.



WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

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DNR FILE



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FRONT COVER: A view from Sven's Bluff at Peninsula State Park - one of more than 340 entries for the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks (FWSP) photo contest. The contest winners were selected to be in the 2014 FWSP calendar available in this issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine.

© Dan Thoftne

BACK COVER: Red and white pines cling to the steep, rocky slopes at Castle Mound Pine Forest State Natural Area in Jackson County. **INSET:** Red-breasted nuthatch. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas for \$18 (postage paid), contact the State Natural Areas Program, Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit dnr.wi.gov and search "SNA."

Thomas Meyer, DNR (Story and photo)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Inset photo)



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A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a tan hat and an orange life vest, is smiling while sitting in a red kayak on a calm lake. The background features a dense green forest on a hillside, with a small white lighthouse visible on the crest. The water is dark green with some white ripples.

64 parks in 365 days

Childhood
memories
inspire
an adult
challenge.

Jonathan Ringdahl

Last year, I set out to do something that would make the year memorable and asked myself, “What can I do that would be interesting to me that would stand out?”

I came to realize that visiting all 64 Wisconsin state parks would make for one amazing adventure. I have many fond memories from Perrot and Wyalusing state parks as a kid. I grew up on the shores of the Mississippi River in La Crosse. I wanted to expand my childhood horizons even further and create more memories in the state parks. I didn’t know it at the time, but this journey would change me in so many ways.

First and foremost, I will jump into the adventures. There were so many! It is impossible to go into a state park looking for adventure and leave disappointed. I loved



The author, Jonathan Ringdahl, at Rock Island State Park.

MICHELLE SHEFFER

the only one on the trails that early in the morning. Stephen's Falls in Governor Dodge State Park is located in one of the most beautiful settings where you could put a waterfall. All of these waterfalls are treasures.

Any park along Lake Michigan captivated me as well. All of these parks provided amazing visits. I took pictures of the Rawley Point Lighthouse at Point Beach State Forest on a cold and rainy October night by holding my raincoat over my camera. I returned to the beach in the morning for the sunrise.

The next night in Kohler-Andrae State Park my dad and I watched two deer run across the sand dunes, a scene accentuated by Lake Michigan at sunset. That night my dad and I camped at Harrington Beach State Park and the temperature plummeted to 28 degrees. In the morning, our hike was truly special as we were able to watch a doe with two fawns feeding on vegetation.

The best trip on Lake Michigan and maybe of the entire year was out to Rock

Island State Park. By the time Rock Island's number came up for a visit, it was quite late in the season and the Karfi ferry would likely only run for a few more days.

On Friday night my parents and I rode the car ferry over to Washington Island. Saturday morning we prepped for our crossing to Rock Island. We went to the ferry dock to see Lake Michigan roaring. We were told the ferry was not crossing as conditions were not set to improve. Making a quick decision, I said we should go to the Door County parks we planned to visit on Sunday and come back tomorrow. That meant that Sunday was the make-or-break moment for my quest for 64. We rode the car ferry back to the mainland and hit 6- to 8-foot waves. It was the craziest ferry ride I have ever been on. It was only my mom's second ferry ride of her life — the first being the day before. We rose before the sun the next day to catch the ferry back to Washington Island. All was calm and the Karfi was running to Rock

watching the seasons change.

The fall colors of the different Kettle Moraine State Forest units blew me away as did those at Rib Mountain State Park. Pictured Rock Cave in Wyalusing State Park went from a free-flowing waterfall in the summer to a 30-foot-tall popsicle in the winter. I remember standing so close to Willow River Falls that I became disoriented because there was only fast moving water in front of my eyes. Big Manitou and Little Manitou Falls in Pattison State Park are just so beautiful that visitors should make it a point to see both.

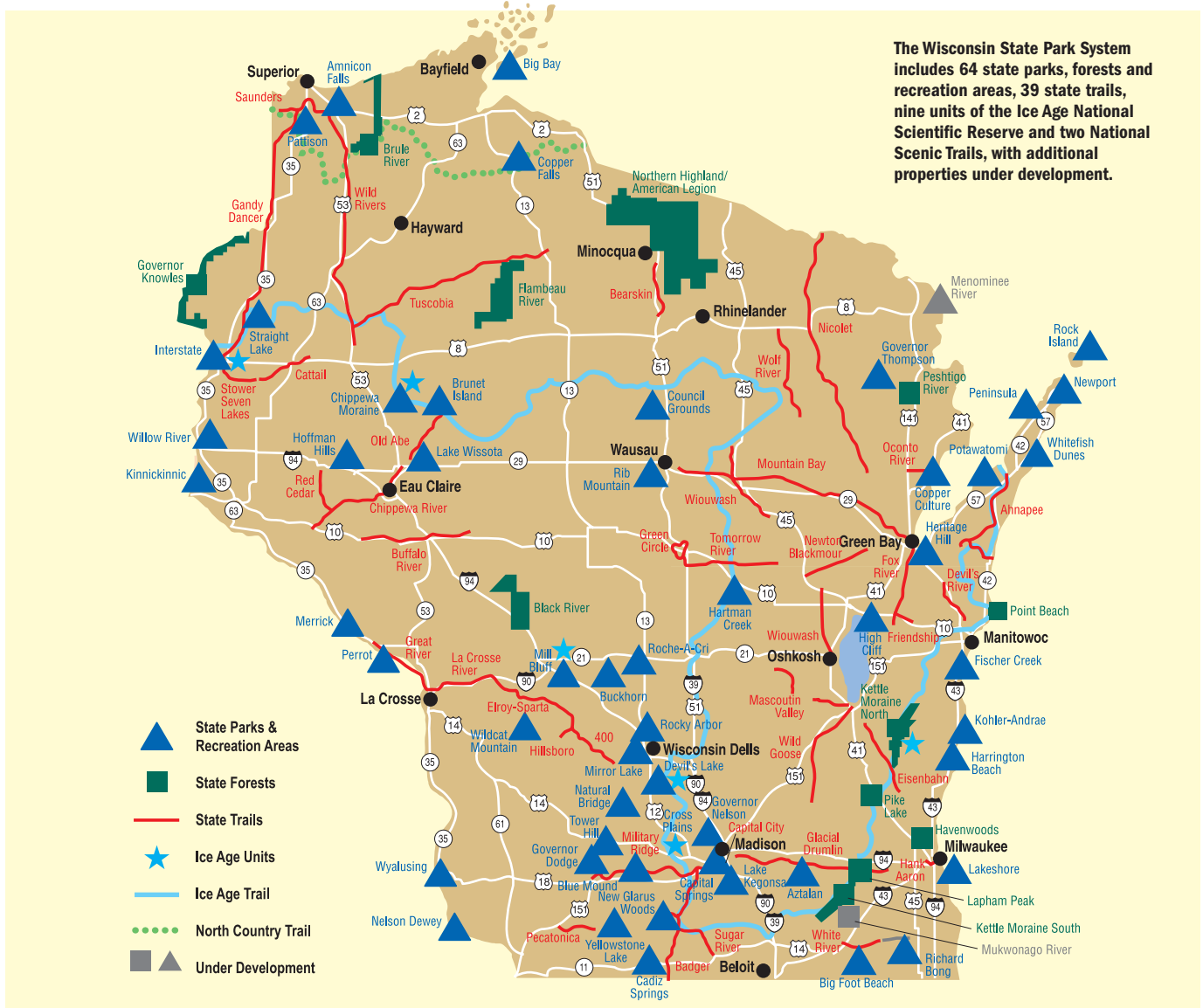
My favorite waterfall picture, of Brownstone Falls, came not long after sunrise in Copper Falls State Park. I was



In winter, Pictured Rock Cave at Wyalusing State Park takes on the appearance of a giant popsicle.

JONATHAN RINGDAHL

Wisconsin State Park System



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Island. The dream was still alive!

Rock Island was amazing with the trees donning their colored fall jackets. I returned again this year for another amazing trip, this time kayaking to the island with my friend Michelle. Rock Island never disappoints and will always hold a special place in my heart.

My dad and I still talk about seeing double rainbows in the field at New Glarus Woods State Park. The rocks of Interstate Park rising out of the majestic St. Croix River is as beautiful a setting as my dad and I have seen anywhere.

Speaking of rocks, there is a big one at Natural Bridge State Park. The sandstone arch there is 1.6 billion years old. It is the biggest arch in Wisconsin. The

other parks in the area also have some amazing rock formations. Parfrey's Glen next to Devil's Lake State Park is an amazing gorge. It is well worth the visit to see how beautiful it is inside this natural area. Fern Dell Gorge in Mirror Lake State Park is another fine example of the amazing formations in the area. It is on my snowshoe list every winter from now on!

While in Wisconsin Dells, I decided to drive up to Roche-a-Cri State Park for some photography near sunrise to capitalize on the great light. It was a fantastic morning for pictures. I took three pictures that ended up winning in the park's photography contest. What a beautiful park!

There were a few surprises along the way. Aztalan State Park was one of them. A Native American civilization in North America building a walled city was a new concept to me, and so interesting to learn about. My friend Mike and I also watched an impressive buck come down to the river for a morning drink.


My dad and I had a surprise guest greet us at a park. A walking stick was waiting on the office door at Nelson Dewey State Park. It was fun watching it crawl all over us. There were big savannah oaks at Lake Kegonsa State Park that I absolutely loved. My dad was a little anxious with me driving our car on a crazy dirt road in the Peshtigo River State Forest to see an overlook. I had a

blast, my dad survived, the muffler is still attached and we have a good story.

During my visits, I also appreciated learning the history of our parks. Each park has so much history. I could write several articles on each one. I'll mention two examples. Heritage Hill is a great park, but unfortunately, a storm cut our visit short. I was literally chased from the park by a lightning storm with torrential rain. I had to protect my camera and made it back into my car just before the worst of the storm hit. I cannot wait to go back, though. The other is Mill Bluff State Park. Mill Bluff and the surrounding bluffs were islands in glacial Lake Wisconsin during the last Ice Age. I loved using my imagination when on top and at the bottom of the bluffs — to imagine being on an island or at the bottom of the lake.

I learned so much over the course of visiting all of Wisconsin's State Parks. The most important and surprising piece of knowledge I gained was how diverse our park system is. There is such an array of habitats, geological features and history enveloped within our state parks. This uniqueness and specialty of our state park system is why we owe previous generations who have preserved it a debt of gratitude. I am so proud to say these parks are "our" parks because of their work. Wisconsin should take pride in such an amazing system.

Visiting all 64 state parks has changed my life. I learned about some of Wisconsin's great outdoor enthusiasts and foremost writers on the natural world, such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about Gaylord Nelson's contributions to Wisconsin as well. Only a special place like Wisconsin could have this effect on people.

Most important of all is that it was a family accomplishment. My dad joined me more than anyone else on expeditions. My mom occasionally tagged along with us too. I dragged my only and older brother along without too much of a struggle. His love for the parks was rekindled too. This goal would not have been possible without their support and help. I love them dearly and this dream would have only been a dream without them. I feel the essence of the parks is that they are a place to strengthen bonds with family and friends while making memories that can be talked about for years to come. 



Sandstone bluffs rise out of a sea of color at Mill Bluff State Park.

JONATHAN RINGDAHL



Copper Falls State Park is home to several waterfalls, including beautiful Brownstone Falls.

JONATHAN RINGDAHL

Jonathan Ringdahl lives in La Crosse. He is a senior therapist at Reaching Your Potential, working with kids on the autism spectrum. Jonathan is also a kayak trip leader and photographer. He enjoys biking, fishing, kayak camping, backpacking, s'mores, swimming, snorkeling, bird watching, caving and just about anything else you can do in a Wisconsin state park involving eating s'mores and being with his dog Aries.

Now it's your turn...

"I'd like to congratulate Jonathan on a terrific accomplishment," says Wisconsin State Parks Director Dan Schuller, "and would encourage everyone to visit all the properties in the State Park System, whatever your timeline is. It's a goal I'm sure you'll enjoy pursuing. All our properties are unique and you may even find a new favorite place. I'd even suggest starting your challenge with a park you've never been to before."



State parks open the outdoors with accessible opportunities.

The accessible cabin at Mirror Lake State Park was the first one built in the Wisconsin State Park System.

DNR FILE

Available to all

Karely Mendez

Sherry Gudgeon from Viroqua is a nature enthusiast who does not let her need of accessible options get in the way of family fun in the outdoors.

Just like other campers, she enjoys “the charcoal grill to make hamburgers for supper” and toasting marshmallows for s’mores in the state parks. As Gudgeon puts it, “Life changes sometimes and you can either accept and adapt, or feel sorry for yourself and drown in self-pity. I choose the first choice.”

Wisconsin’s state parks offer activities and recreation for all kinds of interests, and are trying to make those same activities available to people of all abilities.

“We work hard to ensure that newly developed buildings and recreation facilities at state parks are accessible,” explains Missy VanLanduyt, capital development specialist with the Wisconsin State Park System. “Everything from beach redevelopment to trails and fishing

piers, shower buildings, vault toilets and nature centers. It’s more than just building something to construction codes — it’s about helping to create a positive recreation experience for all people.”

In 1989, even before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed, the Department of Natural Resources audited the state parks, looking at everything from entrance stations and visitor offices, to campsites and drinking fountains. The department then put a budget together and “began breaking down those barriers for persons with disabilities,” explains Anthonette Gilpatrick, the



Gudgeon's family joins her at Mirror Lake State Park where they like to fish. Gudgeon says she wouldn't be able to camp if it weren't for the accessible cabins.

CARL GUDGEON

accessibility coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources.

State parks currently offer everything from accessible cabins, fishing piers, adaptive kayaks, trails, beach wheelchairs, hunting blinds and more.

Cabins

The Department of Natural Resources and the Telephone Pioneers of America, with the helpful advice from many people with disabilities, built the first accessible cabin in the Wisconsin State Park System at Mirror Lake State Park. To this day, Gilpatrick expresses great pride in Wisconsin being one of the leaders of accessible cabins.

Wisconsin state parks currently offer nine accessible cabins, seven larger cabins with more amenities and two smaller, rustic cabins. The larger cabins are located at Mirror Lake, Buckhorn, High Cliff, Kohler-Andrae, and Potawatami state parks, the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest and Richard Bong State Recreation Area. The two rustic cabins are at Copper Falls and Blue Mound state parks.

These cabins offer great camping experiences for people like Gudgeon and her family, who every year enjoy the accessible cabin at Mirror Lake. "I would have to say that the cabin is the best thing about the park for our family," says Gudgeon.

"I like the accessibility to motor around with my power chair and to pull up close to wash the dishes in the kitchen area, or pull up to the vanity in the bathroom area to wash and brush my teeth. And the shower chair is equally fabulous," says Gudgeon.

"The Hoyer lift (a hydraulic device that assists in moving a person from a chair to a bed or other resting place) adds to the conveniences of home. I would not be able to camp or visit a state park if it weren't for the accessible cabins and other accessible options," says Gudgeon. "I wish there were more cabins in southwest Wisconsin to choose from."

These accessible cabins ensure that anyone can have a wonderful camping experience and connect to nature despite physical limitations, and best of all "the cabins are full all of the time," says Gilpatrick.

Fishing

"Cabins are very popular," says Gilpatrick, "but so is fishing. Since ADA, every



Accessible fishing piers offer lower railings and rod holders and enough room for wheelchairs to maneuver.

DNR FILE



Sit skis include a chair to provide better control and balance for skiers.



An accessible trail with a hard-packed limestone surface.

DNR FILE

fishing pier the Department of Natural Resources builds is accessible to people with disabilities. We've also heard from anglers who want to shore fish."

The accessible fishing piers are designed to accommodate wheelchairs, are wider to offer enough room for turning around, and have lower railings and rod holders so that anglers can cast out and fish.

Wisconsin state parks offer accessible fishing piers across the state, giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy this favorite American pastime.

Trails

Wisconsin has over 650 miles of accessible trails. Accessible trails are one of Gudgeon's favorite things to enjoy while camping. "I enjoy going on strolls around Mirror Lake State Park and taking in the beautiful scenery of the lake," she says. Gudgeon happily exclaims that sometimes she was lucky enough to see a deer, squirrel or rabbit in their natural habitat just out and about on the trails.

The accessible trails also provide people with disabilities access to picnic areas and day-use areas and to other ac-



Accessible kayaks have adjustable outriggers to provide stability on the water and a seat with a raised back and side supports.

DNR FILE

cessible facilities.

"I am able to motor around the whole park on the paved trails and ramps. That really does empower me to believe, 'Yes, I can!'" exclaims Gudgeon.

With these enjoyable trails accessible to everyone, individuals and families can explore the parks regardless of their ability.

Kayaking

Making kayaking more accessible for people with disabilities is another area the Department of Natural Resources has been working on for the state parks.

"With all the advances in technology since ADA, we are able to offer people better equipment so they can experience all the different recreation activities that may not have been available to them before," says Gilpatrick.

Buckhorn, Council Grounds, Devil's Lake, Mirror Lake and Perrot state parks all have kayaks available that are equipped with adaptive devices for people with disabilities.

One of the adaptations to the kayak is the adjustable outriggers near the back of the kayak that provide greater stability on the water. The kayaks also have a raised back with side supports to offer more comfortable and secure seating. The raised back is adjustable to accommodate individuals with greater upper body mobility. The kayaks can be rented from the parks for use for the day.

Beaches

Five state parks also offer beach wheelchairs. The beach wheelchairs have large inflatable tires that make rolling

on sand easier and allow for better entry into the water. Some of the parks also offer accessible beach trails that provide a solid surface for wheelchairs or for those who have difficulty walking.

"Our trails and other accessible features are constructed with the idea of 'Universal Design' so that they are accessible and usable not only to people with disabilities, but to everyone at the parks," explains Gilpatrick. "The beach trails, for example, are popular among parents with strollers, who prefer not to have to walk on the sand."

Big Bay, Buckhorn and Harrington Beach state parks offer a beach wheelchair. Kohler-Andrae State Park has two beach wheelchairs (one for general use and the other available at the accessible cabin) and a beach trail. Whitefish Dunes State Park has a beach trail and a beach wheelchair.

Cross-country skiing

State park visitors enjoy the outdoors year-round, and cross-country skiing is a favorite among fervent winter recreationists.

"Wisconsin state parks offer opportunities for everyone," explains Gilpatrick. The State Park System wanted to have skiing opportunities for people with disabilities and this was made accessible through sit skis.

Sit skis include a chair on top of the skis which provides more control and

balance for skiers with mobility impairments. The sit skis are available for free at Buckhorn, Governor Nelson, Harrington Beach and Mirror Lake state parks, at the Lapham Peak Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest and at Richard Bong State Recreation Area. All of the properties where the sit skis are available also offer easier, groomed trails.

Hunting

Wisconsin state parks also provide hunting opportunities for people with disabilities. Several parks offer accessible wildlife blinds. These blinds are not only popular for hunting, but also for bird and wildlife watching.

The blinds, like the fishing piers, are offered in more than just state parks. Wildlife areas, fisheries and other DNR properties have these accessible features available as well. Buckhorn State Park and Wildlife Area is a good example.

"I recently received an email from a visitor who was brought to tears with excitement that he could take his son with disabilities camping, hunting, fishing and hiking at Buckhorn because we offered amenities that would work for his son who uses a wheelchair," says VanLanduyt. "It is so rewarding to know that people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the outdoors."

Opening the outdoors

"We still need to continue to do outreach so that people with disabilities are aware of everything that is available to them," says Gilpatrick. "We also need to talk to people to learn about what other opportunities they would like to see. Wisconsin has been a leader in accessibility options and we will continue to do that. Today people with disabilities have higher expectations for recreating in the outdoors. Just when you think something may be too difficult, some new equipment comes along making it possible. We can't even imagine all the possibilities moving forward."

Karely Mendez is a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an editorial intern with Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.



Beach wheelchairs make rolling on the sand easier.

DNR FILE

More information about all the accessible features in the Wisconsin State Park System and for all state properties is available on the DNR website. Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "Open the Outdoors."

Horseplay allowed

Trail riding and camping with
your horse go hand in hoof.

The Wisconsin State Park System has
more than 700 miles of trails and over
175 campsites for equestrians.

CYNTHIA EISENMAN



Trail riding with friends.

© GLENN SANDERSON

Amanda Laurenzi

Just like old Western movies where cowboys went on long rides and hitched up their horses at the end of the day, you can enjoy the fun in riding your horse through picturesque terrain while camping overnight with your equine friend.

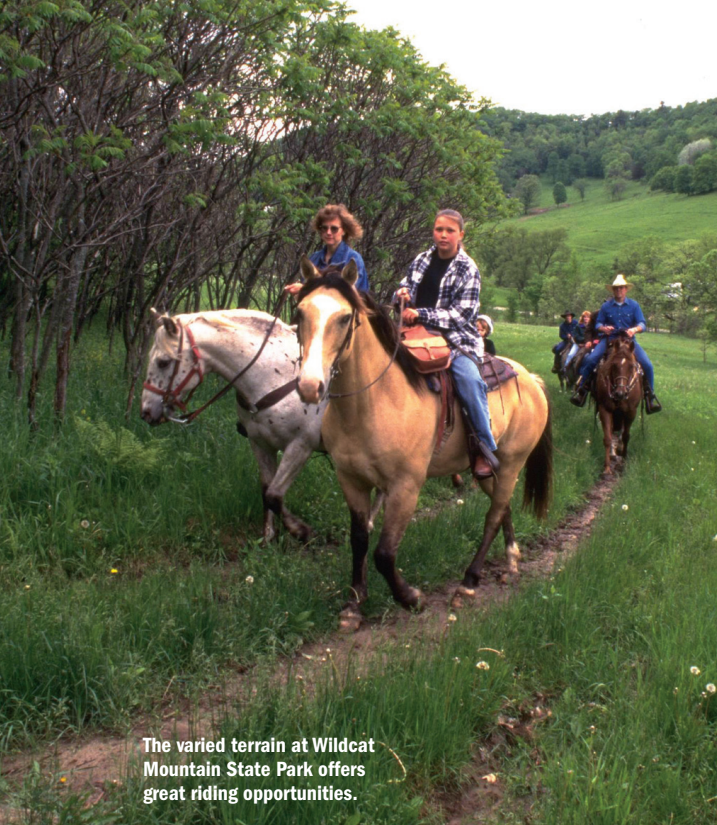
If you have never been trail riding before, Wisconsin's state parks and forests have some awesome, scenic routes and camping opportunities for novice and expert horseback riders alike. Giddy up to these prime Wisconsin locations for a day — or two or three — of relaxing trail riding and horse bonding with your family and friends.

Wildcat Mountain State Park

If you love horseback riding, you will absolutely enjoy this state park. Wildcat

Mountain offers a variety of trails for all different riding levels. The trails are open from May 1 through Nov. 14. The park also has 24 campsites for equestrians. The campground includes picnic tables, fire rings, drinking water, vault toilets, a corral, hitching posts, parking pads, loading ramps and a large parking lot.

When asked what attracts riders to Wildcat Mountain, Cindy Gagan, a visitor services associate and horse camp host at the park, explains, "We have rugged terrain. Horse riders come here be-



The varied terrain at Wildcat Mountain State Park offers great riding opportunities.

WI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM



Horse campsites are typically connected to the trail system at the property.

DNR FILE

with a large water crossing. "First-time riders can cross the bridge if they're uncomfortable going through water, but there is also the actual water crossing. Depending on weather, the water usually only comes up to the horses' knees. The bottom is also nice, not rocky," says Gagan.

Governor Knowles State Forest

Thanks to the Equestrian Friends of Governor Knowles State Forest, the horse trails and campgrounds have seen vast improvement over the last several years. The Trade River Horse Campground is open to both equestrian campers and general campers. April 1 through June 15 and Aug. 15 through Oct. 15 are solely for horse campers — the rest of the year the campground is open for all campers. The campground has 40 campsites, each with a fire ring, picnic table and horse tie post available. Governor Knowles offers five trails that range in length between two and 21 miles. Each trail offers a unique experience for riders.

Brown Trail, Barrens Loop

The Barrens Loop is the main trail in the forest, and also the longest at 21 miles. The first two miles south of the campground allow riders to venture through pinewood plantations and beautiful hardwood forests, at which point the trail crosses the Trade River.

After crossing the Trade River, the trail then parallels the St. Croix River for another three miles. The trail then loops back to the campground. Riders have some remarkable wildlife watching opportunities along this trail.

Green Trail, Sunrise Shortcut – If you're feeling a little less adventurous and only want to ride half the distance of the Brown Trail, take a trip down the Green Trail. On this shortcut, you will pass through scrub oaks and pine and hardwood forest habitat.

River Trail – This trail is perfect for

more experienced riders. While this 3-mile trail is considered the most scenic route in the park, it is also the most challenging. First you must travel up a steep, sandy embankment that can be eroded depending on recent weather. Once you reach the ridge, take a little time to enjoy the view of the Trade River before tackling the steep, sandy decline towards the river bottom. From there you can choose either the Brown Trail or the Red Trail for another adventure.

Red Trail, Wolf Creek Loop – This trail has both wooded and clear sections to ride through. The southern section follows the St. Croix River. At the halfway point of this loop you can cool off with your horse in the Wolf Creek before heading back to camp or trying another trail.

Yellow Trail – While you're on the Brown Trail, you have the option of taking this newest trail in the forest on a route through oaks and jack and white pine trees. This 2-mile spur trail takes you back to the Brown Trail.

Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit

The Northern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest has 22 family campsites and three group campsites for equestrians typically available between May and October. The New Prospect Horse Riders Campground offers picnic tables, fire rings, picket posts or metal pipe corrals, drinking water, a picnic shelter, vault toilets, covered stables with box stalls and manure pits. Electrical pedestals were also recently installed, thanks to the Northern Kettle Moraine Horse Trail Association.

There are 41 miles of trails to ride. The main trail is 33 miles long and winds the length of the forest. The two loop trails that provide riders an opportunity to go a less linear route are the Crooked Lake and Forest Lake trails.

Forest superintendent Jason Quast says, "Horses will get a workout. There are lots of hills and various habitats throughout the different trails."

Habitats surrounding the trails include pine plantations, open prairie and hardwood forests.

Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit

The Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest offers 87 miles of trails for equestrians. There are also 56 campsites in the Horseriders' Campground avail-



Shadows cast long silhouettes over the prairie grass. Riders may need an annual or daily state trail pass when riding the trails in the Wisconsin State Park System. The trail pass fee helps to maintain the trails.

LISA BERGMAN

able between April and November. There are both electric and non-electric sites available. Amenities in the campground include a picnic shelter, horse shower, manure deposit stations, drinking water, vault toilets, running water and wheelbarrows. Riders will see fantastic views of wet kettles, oak savanna prairies and area lakes while out on the trails.

Ottawa Trails – This series of trails has a lot to offer riders. In addition to the main trail, there are various, marked loop trails. The trails can be a little rocky, but for the most part have soft ground.

Eagle Trails – Riders like this set of trails for their scenic beauty. These loop trails, near the city of Eagle, vary in length and are sandy with few rocks.

Palmyra Trails – This series of looped trails begins just east of the city of Palmyra and the Horseriders' Campground, making these trails very popular among riders.

Governor Dodge State Park

One of the best known state parks in Wisconsin, Governor Dodge is a fantastic location for trail riding. The park also has 11 non-electric, horse campsites and two group horse campsites. The trails at Governor Dodge have a variety of habitats and beautiful views.

Interior Horse Trail System – This trail system totals 6.7 miles and gives riders a chance to make shorter loops around

the camp and day use areas. The two more popular trails that lead from this system are the Woodland Trail and Old Orchard Pass. The Woodland Trail is 1.5 miles and offers riders a chance to wind through wooded areas and some of the hills. Old Orchard Pass is 1.25 miles and connects the Interior Trail System to the Outer Trail System. Both trails provide fantastic views of Twin Valley Lake.

Outer Horse Trail – Being the longest trail in the park, at 15.3 miles, this trail takes riders through amazing, diverse terrain as it weaves through the more remote areas of the park. This is a one-way trail that moves in a clockwise direction.

Uplands Trail – This is another great trail for variety. It offers 2.5 miles of hills, prairies, wooded areas and an agriculture field.

Plan ahead

The availability of horse trails and the opening of campgrounds can vary depending on the weather. Equestrians are encouraged to contact the property before going riding. For more information about all horseback riding and camping opportunities in the State Park System, or to reserve your campsite for the upcoming riding season, please visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Parks."

Amanda Laurenzi is a student at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. She also contributes to Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.

Tips for trail riding

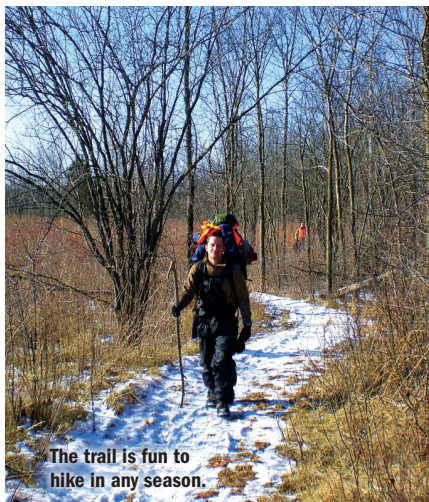
Consideration and polite behavior are essential to ensure the enjoyment and safety of all trail users and for the protection of our natural resources.

- Be courteous to other riders. Slower riders should stay to the right so others may pass safely. Announce your intention to pass before passing others.
- Take extra precaution of other trail users such as those biking, hiking or walking pets. Let other trail users know when it is safe to pass your horse.
- Be sure you understand all signs on the trail. Obey posted speed/gait limits. Avoid cantering or galloping on busy trails.
- Purchase a state trail pass before riding and keep it with you while on the trails.
- Make sure your horse has the temperament and training for riding on congested trails, and advise other trail users of your horse's temperament, e.g., a horse with a tendency to kick should be last in a group of riders.
- Know your horse's capability. If you choose to ride a more difficult trail, it is important to know your horse can handle a challenging terrain.
- Get a map and have your route planned out before heading out on the trails.
- Keep hydration in mind for both you and your horse. Make sure you know where water can be found while you are riding, or bring enough for the trip.

A devil of a hike

Stone steps leading up the bluffs were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's.

DAVE GALLERIE



The trail is fun to hike in any season.

J.R. SCHMIDT

From bluff top to lake edge, through forest and prairie, the Ice Age Trail at Devil's Lake has it all.

Brooke McGee

Spanning over 1,000 miles, Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail takes you along a tour of our state's fascinating geological history. Bordering along ridges and craters, the trail is a tour through ancient formations carved into the landscape millennia ago. One of the most marvelous stretches of the trail encompasses Devil's Lake State Park.

A mere blink in earth's history, the last North American Ice Age period, also known as the Wisconsin Glaciation, reached our state roughly 26,000 years ago, according to the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey. The majority of the northern and middle parts of Wisconsin were left to nature's mercy as powerful, creeping ice sheets flattened and pushed the land, dramatically modifying much of what we see today. The end moraine, the boundary where ice finally submitted to earth, is the magnificent, proud route that the Ice Age National Scenic Trail beckons you along.

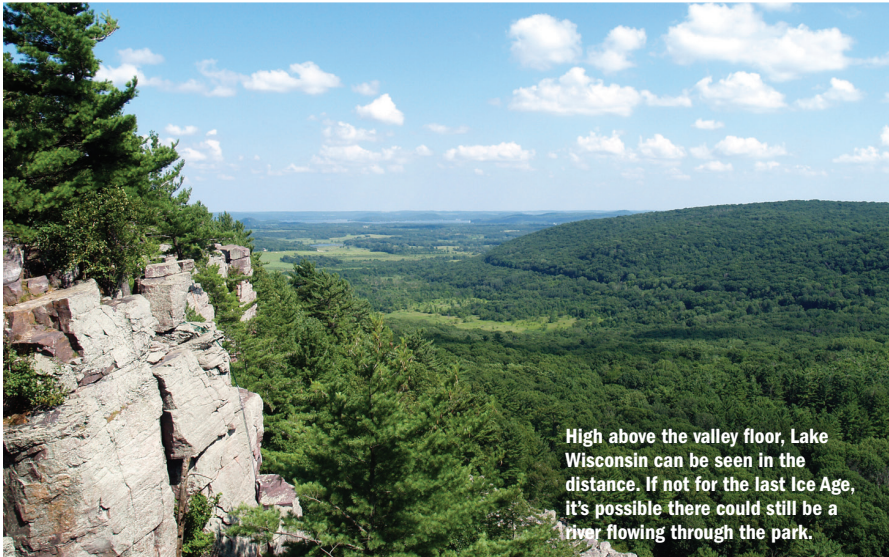
One particular segment highlights these compelling forces in a condensed, intriguing display of variety. The Devil's Lake segment of the Ice Age Trail meanders through shaded forest trails, skirts around meadows of wildflowers and wild grasses, and includes the impressive Eastern and Western bluffs with their steep stone staircases, guiding you twice up and down staggering 500-foot quartzite cliffs.

This segment of the Ice Age Trail caresses the edge of ancient Devil's Lake, formed by prehistoric retreating seas and rerouted river channels created by nature's forces and melting glacial ice. Be-

Ice Age Trail at Devil's Lake State Park



DNR FILE



High above the valley floor, Lake Wisconsin can be seen in the distance. If not for the last Ice Age, it's possible there could still be a river flowing through the park.

MONICA STONE

fore the last Ice Age, a river ran through the Devil's Lake valley. As the glacier melted, it deposited dams of rocks and earth at the two open ends of the valley, leaving Devil's Lake between the two glacial "plugs." The Eastern and Western bluffs offer magnificent views of the powerful effect the glacier had on the area.

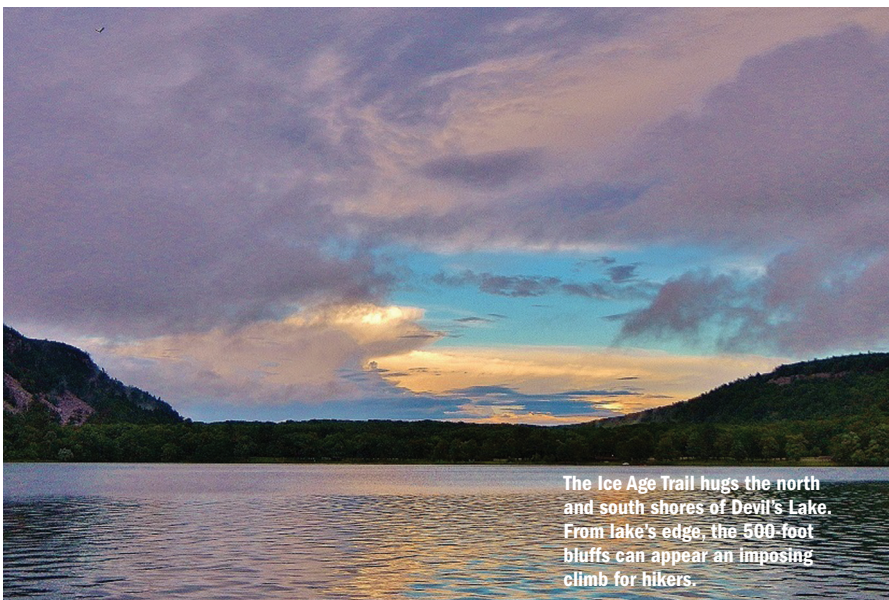
Devil's Lake State Park is the largest state park in Wisconsin and is adjacent to Parfrey's Glen, the state's first designated natural area. At over 10,000 acres, one can easily see the reason for the magnetic draw to the park. Open year-round, hiking and camping facilities are available to the adventurous public at any time.

Hike any time of year

Depending on the season, the Devil's Lake segment of the Ice Age Trail can be completed between sunrise and sunset. A half day would be adequate for the avid hiker, though much can come into play. Being amidst the amazing backdrop of Devil's Lake State Park, a full day of leisurely exploration and an early start is recommended.

Early-summer hikers are treated to an abundance of raspberries lining the paths, while late summer rewards you with a bountiful offering of blackberries. Chipmunks and finches, scattering from your presence, will undoubtedly be a part of your memory. Along the way you'll usher past maple, hickory and majestic oak trees as you take in views that must be seen to truly appreciate.

Touring the trail in the fall, you'll get to experience the seasonal display that Wisconsin is so well known for. Falling sub-



The Ice Age Trail hugs the north and south shores of Devil's Lake. From lake's edge, the 500-foot bluffs can appear an imposing climb for hikers.

J.R. SCHMIDT



The North Shore day use area (seen from the Western bluff) can be a respite for hikers, offering concessions in season, as well as restrooms and water.

BROOKE MCGEE

missively into the arms of the earth, nature's colors surround you as the wind gently urges them from their branches.

Months featuring snow and more inclement weather may present a challenge to those who choose to hike the trail. Winter's fury, left to its own design, can quickly create a hazard and much is left as nature lays it. Hikers need to take heed on areas that could be treacherous when adorned with snow or ice.

Along the trail

Despite the seemingly long distance of the Devil's Lake segment, many benefits accompany the hike. During the summer and fall, camp stores are open and offer groceries, camping items and other concessions — opportunities that do not typically accompany such a substantial Ice Age Trail segment. Intrusion into the park's more popular areas is brief, protecting you from the visiting majority. Public restrooms and fresh water are available while you skirt around the lake and main park area.

Though leisurely and gentle at times, the trail does not mock the experienced hiker. Steep inclines, daring plunges and meandering hills await those who wish to experience it. Well-packed earthen paths, exposed tree roots and quartzite steps, as well as bumbling, hilly dips and drops are a part of the treat.

Daily efforts to maintain the trail are

handled by park staff at Devil's Lake, along with the help of the Friends of Devil's Lake State Park and the Baraboo Hills Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

For larger projects, additional trail maintenance is provided by the Ice Age Trail Alliance and their Mobile Skills Crew. Mobile Skills Crew (MSC) members assist statewide through coordinated volunteer efforts that aid in the construction of new trail segments and preserve pristine trail conditions. In October 2012 the MSC rerouted a section of Ice Age Trail in Roznos Meadow that was prone to wet conditions, and in April 2012, an MSC project was held on land adjacent to Devil's Lake State Park in the Merrimac Preserve to reroute a trail section, and to add a couple clear span bridges, a retaining wall and a boardwalk.

Camping at the park

A great way to experience the trail is to also camp at the park. Devil's Lake is one of the most popular state parks in Wisconsin and camping reservations are strongly recommended. There are some campsites that are available on a first-come, first-served basis, but they typically fill up quickly, especially in the summer. Due to the park's popularity, all sites fill up regularly on weekends and hikers are encouraged to plan well ahead if needing a campsite — reserva-


tions may be made up to 11 months in advance of your trip.

The park is open daily from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. The visitor center and nature center hours vary by season. If the main office is closed, pay stations are available which allow for self-registration. Daily or annual vehicle admission stickers may be purchased and are accepted statewide at all other state parks, state natural areas and state forests. All areas and parking lots at Devil's Lake require a vehicle admission sticker. National Park passes are also valid for admission to Devil's Lake because the park is part of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve.

Follow the yellow blazes

The route of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin is marked by yellow blazes. The Ice Age Trail at Devil's Lake utilizes several of the park's trails, and because other trails connect to or crisscross the Ice Age Trail, these blazes help let hikers know they are still on the Ice Age Trail. The Roznos Meadow, East Bluff, Balanced Rock, West Bluff, Johnson Moraine, Upland and Sauk Point trails are all part of the Ice Age Trail.

The entire distance of the Ice Age Trail in Devil's Lake State Park is about 14 miles. There are several parking lots and places to access the trail in the park. Hikers can choose to hike the entire length or try a smaller section. If you would like to make a loop hike around the lake using the Ice Age Trail, you can use the connecting Upland Trail which makes for about nine miles of hiking.

Though it's only a small portion of Wisconsin's grandiose Ice Age National Scenic Trail, the Devil's Lake segment is one which can be marked off your map with pride, a segment truly worthy of the reputation that defines the trail. 

Brooke McGee writes from her home in Portage. She is a freelance journalist who loves to spend summers outdoors with her husband and children exploring some of Wisconsin's best kept natural secrets.

The Department of Natural Resources works with the National Park Service and the Ice Age Trail Alliance to develop and maintain the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin. For more information about the Ice Age Trail, please see:

- **Wisconsin DNR:** dnr.wi.gov
- **Ice Age Trail Alliance:** iceagetrail.org
- **National Park Service:** nps.gov/iatr/

ST. LOUIS RIVER RESTORATION IS GRATIFYING

I read with interest the article regarding the St. Louis River in the August issue ("Healing our rivers and harbors," page 6). Having grown up in the area I can say that the St. Louis was a dead river for a long time but not because of the mining industry as the article seems to suggest. North of Cloquet, Minn., where the Taconite industry was operating, the river was clear and a good fishery, while the area down river from Cloquet to Lake Superior was foul smelling and filthy. This was due in large part to the industries in Cloquet which for years dumped raw industrial waste, including highly acidic waste liquor from Northwest Paper and pollutants from Conwed and Diamond Match. The waste liquor was also used as "road binder" to reduce dust on rural roads for many years. It is very gratifying to see the steps already taken to restore a marvelous resource. Where 50 years ago there was little living in the river, there is now a renewed sport fishing opportunity.

Tom Salo
Pittsville

FIREFLY LARVA AS INTERESTING AS ADULT

Insects have always intrigued me and when I recently read the article on the Flash Mob by Amanda Laurenzi (August 2013, "Blinking beetles") it reminded

me of an experience I had with the larva stage of this beetle. As a volunteer teacher naturalist at Riveredge Nature Center in Newburg, I was approached by fellow naturalist Lesley Ammonds two springs ago who had captured a strange looking insect. It turned out to be the larva stage of the firefly, the first firefly larva I had ever seen. I observed it walking with its six legs assisted by its abdomen. When I gently touched its head, amazingly it appeared to retract into its thorax for protection. I also learned that this carnivore preys on things like earthworms, slugs, snails, centipedes and millipedes. Its feeding adaptation, two hollow tubes in its mandibles, not only injects a numbing fluid to immobilize its prey, but the fluid also assists in digestion. Breathing at this stage of its life cycle is accomplished by gills on the underside of its abdomen. The firefly truly is more than meets the eye or should I say more than lights the sky! Here is a photo I took of the larva stage of a firefly.

Chuck Ritzenthaler
West Bend



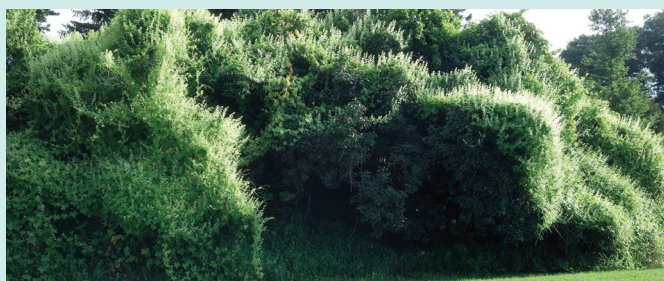
BACK PORCH DRAMA

We have a south-facing sun porch (four-season) and I like to sit and watch the birds at our feeder. The other day I witnessed something I've never seen before. I was the first park naturalist at High Cliff State Park and now volunteer at Mosquito Hill Nature Center (after 30 years teaching

environmental education and history in a public school) and I thought I knew a lot about birds. A blue jay came screaming across in front of the windows with a small bird in its beak. The small bird was fluttering like crazy. The jay was followed by three to four robins and they, in turn, followed by several other small birds. The jay lit on a branch of our Norway spruce and was buzzed by the robins. The jay dropped the small bird but immediately flew down to the ground and began to peck it. Robins continued to buzz the jay and the jay would just duck its head away. It was as

if the robins were trying to save the life of the small bird. The jay continued to eat this small bird. Only a small pile of feathers remained. I watched all this from less than 15 feet away, inside the porch. I knew blue jays would rob eggs from nests but did not think they'd take a live bird. I know that Coopers hawks will (and we have them here too), but was astonished when I witnessed this event. Thought your readers might find this interesting and make some comments about it.

Lowell Dean Sauters
New London



ALIEN INVASION?

Did space aliens spray every inch of east central Wisconsin with wild cucumber seed or is there something peculiar about this spring and summer's weather that accounts for the kudzu-like explosion of this weed along every roadside in this part (and for all I know, other parts) of the state?

David Seligman
Ripon

Kelly Kearns (invasive plant specialist with DNR's Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation) replies: Populations of annual plants like wild cucumber (*Echinocystis lobata*) tend to fluctuate greatly depending on site and weather conditions. The natural habitat for this native vine is along stream corridors, where it colonizes moist soil disturbed by flooding. In wet springs like 2013, roadsides provide a similar habitat, with a high degree of disturbance and sufficient light and moisture for the vine to thrive. Most people don't notice this prodigious vine until it produces its showy white upright flowers. Although it looks aggressive, this vine will die with the cold weather, leaving its large seeds to wait for another wet spring to germinate. By the way, we received an incredible number of calls and emails on this plant over the late summer months!

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.

CLARIFICATION

The photo of a pair of moths in October 2013 issue (Readers Write, "Rare Prairie Sight") was misidentified. The moths were *Promethea*, not *Polyphemus*.

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. Limit letters to 250 words and include your name and the community from which you are writing.

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Comforts

Get on track with winter.

Natasha Kassulke

Watch where you walk this winter. What you see could surprise you. The snow tells all. Other times of the year it may be possible for a rabbit or a deer to lead the way without leaving a trace. But in the snow it's another story. Like mud or sand, snow captures animal tracks. And much like fingerprints, each animal has a track particular to its kind.

Discover a paw print and you could be following a coyote or the neighborhood dog.

Step on a hoof print and you might be sharing a trail with a deer.

See a five-toe track and you could soon find yourself staring down a skunk.

Does the track look like it was left by a hopper? It could have been left by a squirrel or rabbit.

Mouse. Mole. They are all on the move in winter and leaving you clues to their direction. Keep in mind that animals rarely just wander about aimlessly. Following tracks can lead you to food, water or an animal's shelter.

You'll find tracks on trails, in fields and farmyards — even

in your backyard. But the best tracking environments are areas where two habitats intersect, such as forests and fields, or fields and streams. These are transition zones that often support a variety of wildlife species.

Following tracks also can lead to other evidence. Watch for scat, feathers and food scraps that can provide clues as to what you are stalking.

When tracking it is best to start early in the day or later as dusk comes. Shadows make it easier to spot tracks in the snow. Keep the track between you and the sun so that the light casts shadows in the print. A flashlight also works well in low light and for tracking at night.

It's helpful if you can get down on your hands and knees. Note the size of the track and whether it shows claw or other marks. Bring a short ruler so that you can measure the size of the print and the distance between the tracks. Make note of the stride — the distance from the heel of one print to the heel of the next.

Take note of patterns in the print. Paw prints with small triangular marks in front of it signal claw marks. Raccoons, skunks, coyotes, foxes and dogs will often leave claw marks. Cats, on the other hand, retract their claws when they walk or run. So, you won't usually find claw marks with bobcats or house cats.

Tracks tell stories. Are there many animals or a few? Are you looking for one culprit, a pair — even a pack? Which way is the animal heading?

Carry a tracking guidebook for on-the-spot deciphering. Or make notes and sketches to take home and continue your detective work in warmth.

Keep a journal of your sketches and field notes. It might be fun to look back at this time next year and review your "track record."

Want to make a more permanent record of your discovery? Make a plaster cast of the track. To learn more about casting, visit DNR's Environmental Education for Kids website (EEK!) at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eeek/teacher/trackact.htm>.

dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eeek/teacher/trackact.htm.

So remember to watch where you walk. Tracks, after all, are so much more fun to step in than scat.

Bear



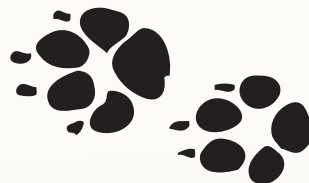
Coyote



Opossum



Red Fox



Deer



Otter



Timber Wolf



Mink



Badger



Natasha Kassulke is editor of Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.



The Wisconsin DNR is piloting a new sign featuring a QR code that allows smartphone users to download a mammal track brochure directly to their phone. This handy brochure will help you identify and compare tracks you may encounter while you're out enjoying Wisconsin's outdoors. The signs are currently posted at many state wildlife areas and some state parks in the southern and northeastern parts of the state. Look for them on a trail near you!



<http://dnr.wi.gov/u/?q=72>

GERIANN ALBERS

Traveler

Lighting up the winter night.

Joseph Warren

When winter comes to Wisconsin, so too do the shorter days and even longer nights. Thanks to daylight savings time, the sun — if it's out — can disappear around 5 p.m. in the southern part of the state, and even earlier up north. But winter enthusiasts don't have to head home once darkness sets in.



The Greenbush Area in the Northern Kettle Moraine and Lapham Peak near Delafield offer lighted cross-country ski trails.

The **Greenbush Area** of the **Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit** is referred to as “Nordic Heaven.” During winter the Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club (NKMNSC) grooms more than 15 miles of trail for both classic and skate skiing. There are also separate trails available for snowshoeing. Skiers do not have to leave at night, though. Thanks to the efforts of the ski club, local sponsors and businesses, 1.2 miles of lighted trail are open every evening from 4:30-9:30 p.m.

There is also a lighted, heated log shelter with a deck and a changing room at the Greenbush trailhead. NKMNSC hosts several events and the annual Greenbush Nordic Challenge ski races for kids and adults. The local youth ski team also holds their training at Greenbush. More information about the trails,

snow conditions and events and activities are available on the NKMNSC website: greenbushusa.com.

The **Lapham Peak Unit** of the Kettle Moraine State Forest in Delafield has over 17 miles of looped skiing trails, as well as trails for snowshoeing and hiking during the day. When there is snow, a 2.5-mile lighted skiing loop is available for classic and skate skiers. The Friends of Lapham Peak were instrumental in raising funds for the lights, as well as for a heated shelter and grooming and snowmaking equipment.

A ski league and races for elementary school, high school and adult participants are offered Wednesdays — under the lights — for six weeks in January and February at Lapham Peak, weather permitting. More information about the lighted trails, snow conditions and events

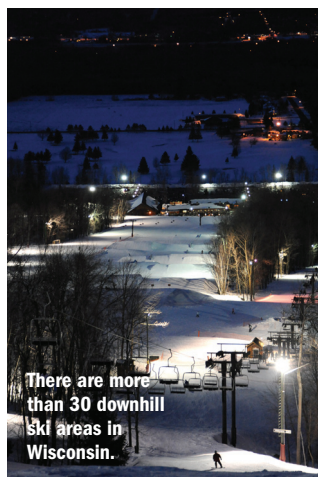


Candlelight events at state parks are held throughout winter.

and activities are available on the Friends website: laphampeakfriends.org.

After the first of the year, several **winter candlelight events** are held January through March for skiers, snowshoers and hikers at state park properties across Wisconsin. The weekends in mid-January and surrounding Valentine's Day see an especially large number of events. Park Friends groups sponsor most of the events and may offer beverages and refreshments for sale. Candlelight events are fun for all ages and usually have bonfires for warming up and heated shelters available. Stargazing, games and live music may even accompany an event or two.

The candlelight events vary by property, but if there is enough snow, there may be groomed trails for classic- or skate-style skiing, as well as



There are more than 30 downhill ski areas in Wisconsin.

parallel or separate trails for snowshoeing and hiking. The events can be weather-dependent, but if there is a lack of snow, many events are still held as a candlelight hike. All candlelight events in the state parks are posted on the DNR calendar of events webpage at dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/getoutdoors/events.html.

If going cross-country skiing in the state parks, though, remember that in addition to a vehicle admission sticker, a state trail pass is required for all people age 16 and older on the ski trails at certain properties. The fee is \$4 for a daily pass and \$20 for an annual one. The annual state trail pass is good the entire calendar year on all skiing, biking, horseback riding, in-line skating and off-highway motorcycle trails in the state park system. For more information and a list of the properties where a state trail pass is needed, please see: dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/trailpass.html.

Don't forget about the **downhill skiing, snowboarding and tubing hills** in Wisconsin. There are more than 30 scattered across the state from Milwaukee to Superior, and most offer lighted facilities and runs. Many hills make their own snow, so even if there isn't snow in your yard, more than likely there will be some waiting for you. For more information about the private downhill facilities, and to find those that have lighted runs, check out travelwisconsin.com and search for “downhill skiing.”

While on travelwisconsin.com you may want to check out the Snow Conditions Report, which lists snow conditions by county for downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and snowmobile trails. Night is no obstacle for snowmobilers whose machines are equipped with headlamps, but operators must remember that in Wisconsin, a 55 mph night-time speed limit applies to all areas statewide from half an hour after sunset to half an hour before sunrise. For more information, see dnr.wi.gov/topic/snowmobile/.

Several communities may also have lights for skiing trails in **local parks, sledding hills or outdoor skating rinks and ponds** for ice skating and pick-up hockey games. So don't just hibernate this winter, grab your jacket, hat, gloves and boots and head out into the outdoors for some exercise...any time of day (or night).

Joseph Warren is associate editor of Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.



Wisconsin, naturally

CASTLE MOUND PINE FOREST STATE NATURAL AREA

Thomas A. Meyer
DNR State Natural Areas
Program



Notable: Castle Mound is a long, narrow, weathering butte of 400-million-year-old Cambrian sandstone rising 180 feet above the surrounding sand plain. The variety of exposures and microclimates has resulted in contrasting forest communities on opposing sides of the east-west mound. Exposed and shaded cliffs up to 30-feet high occur along a central backbone ridge, while huge sandstone boulders litter the sloping forest floor. These rocks offer habitat for lichens, mosses and other microflora. The protected northeast slope is forested with a mixed pine forest of white and red pines including Hill's oak, white oak, paper birch, red maple and large-toothed aspen. Ground layer species typical of the northern forest grow here, including pipsissewa, large-leaved aster, partridge berry and wintergreen. The dry southwest face is wooded with jack pine and oak. Red-breasted nuthatch, solitary vireo, black-throated green warbler and pine warbler are among the northern bird species observed in this 118-acre natural area.

How to get there:

Within the Black River State Forest. From the intersection of Highways 27 and 12 on the south side of Black River Falls, go east on Highway 12 for about 0.7 miles to the entrance to Castle Mound campground, then west on the access road to the picnic area parking lot. A trail leads through the site to an observation tower near the center of the mound. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Castle Mound Pine Forest" for a map and more information.

