

INSIDE | THE WISCONSIN FISHING REPORT

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

Clean marina, clean water

Stower Seven Lakes State Trail

Celebrate Earth Day

wnrmag.com

April 2013 \$3.50

It's been a trip –
celebrate 20 years of
Natural Resources Foundation

FIELD TRIPS



A true “fisherman”

Witnessing a heron's great gulp!

Story and photos by Greg Konop

I consider myself a decent fisherman. I pound the weed edges, ledges, humps, points and flats choosing from the vastness of my tackle box: jigs, Rapalas™, buzzbaits, spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, soft plastics and spoons. Fish beware!

But, I'm humbled to have learned that my assortment of techniques and tackle pale in comparison to nature's fishers. This narrative shares an amazing experience where I was blessed to be in the right spot at the right time to see nature at work.

On an early morning in July I drifted back in from the water with the live well of my boat empty. I was surprised to find a great blue heron had settled in on the swim platform that floats in about 4 to 5 feet of water. This “fisherman” pounds the shoreline and flats with only what nature has given him: long legs, a whip-like neck, laser vision and a 5-inch sharp beak.

My encounter with the heron started as he moved repeatedly in and out of fierce strike positions. I noticed the sharp angles, spiked feathers and laser focused eyes scanning the water.

Suddenly the heron launched himself from the swim platform into the 5-foot deep water. He was gone momentarily and then from the far side of the platform he exploded back from the water onto the platform with the bluegill speared on his beak. The heron shook as a wet dog dries itself. Water was flying.


The fish remained. This was breathtaking. The heron's speed and sheer violent action was evidenced by the bluegill's still quivering dorsal fin.

It took some time to get the fish off the beak. The heron seemed to use

his tongue to flick and push at the fish, moving it slowly down towards the beak end. Suddenly he flipped his head back, ripping the beak up towards the sky. The fish flipped off the beak, then the heron caught it in mid-air about 6 inches from the platform. The precision of the flip and catch was amazing.

It slowly became apparent to me that this fish was going to be swallowed whole. After catching the fish in mid-air, the heron began to slowly rotate the fish as he quickly opened and closed his beak. Ultimately he positioned the fish with its head aligned to the center of his throat. Then he flipped his head backwards again and again and again. Each time the fish moved further down his throat until it was no longer visible.

The last sight of the fish was in the form of a bulge as it was slowly muscled down the heron's throat. The heron then paused, reached down to take a drink, paused again and then flew off. I wondered if he was still hungry or if he felt like I do after the Thanksgiving Day feast.

I am fortunate to spend a fair amount of time on the water. It is easy for me to focus in on the action of fishing and lose track of what surrounds me. My experience with the great blue heron occupied 15 minutes of time that I will never forget. Yet, it taught me that each minute that I spend on the water is a blessing: a chance to see nature, an opportunity to take in the sounds of the lake, another day to feel the cool calming touch of water. Each moment on the lake is an occasion to appreciate how small I am and how grand Mother Nature is. 



Shore lunch.



A great gulp!



Fierce, striking pose.

Greg Konop writes from Oregon, Wis. The photos were taken by Konop at a family lake home in Barron County. To reach him send an email to: greg.konop@gmail.com

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

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FRONT COVER: Get up close with wildlife like this kestrel chick on a Natural Resources Foundation field trip.

Christine Tanzer

BACK COVER: A twilight prescribed fire rejuvenates Morgan Coulee Prairie State Natural Area in Pierce County. **INSET:** Prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*), named for the plant's seed heads that resemble puffs of smoke. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas for \$15.00 (postage paid), contact the State Natural Areas Program, Bureau of Endangered Resources, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit dnr.wi.gov and search "SNA."

Thomas Meyer, WDNR



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Learn about stream ecology on Trip 43 and find more options online at WisConservation.org

Join the Natural Resources Foundation in its 20th year of Field Trips

Maria Sadowski and Christine Tanzer

Discover and support Wisconsin's natural places.

From our forests to prairies, marshes to bluffs, and rivers to ravines — and even a small slice of desert — Wisconsin is full of wonderful natural places to explore.

With experts from the Department of Natural Resources as guides, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin invites you to take a field trip and discover amazing places you never knew existed. Have a whole lot of fun and learn why we are all working together to take care of them.

Field trips run April through November and offer opportunities for all ages and abilities. You will experience the secrets of Wisconsin's State Parks and State Natural Areas, and often get an up-close look at some of the wildlife found there — our migrating birds, freshwater mussels, bats, butterflies, fish, insects and more.

The Foundation offers 122 field trips this year and only a few are listed in this article. Visit WisConservation.org to see them all. Come outdoors and discover Wisconsin with us!

Easy as 123

1 Pick your trips

Trips are color-coded to provide information about physical demands. Each trip has a registration fee listed; some trips are fundraisers to support conservation efforts or have a fee to cover rental equipment. Trips fill quickly, so check the Foundation's website (WisConservation.org) for current information and trip availability.

2 Visit **WisConservation.org** to become a member and register for field trips

Field trips are only open to Natural Resources Foundation members and their guests. But you can become a member — for a special price of just \$15 per family — as part of your easy online field trip registration!

To register, go to wisconservation.org and click on the link for field trips. Enter the passcode **Join NRF** 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.

3 Enjoy your field trips

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!



Tag migrating monarchs on Trip 103.

KEN AND BARB WARDLUS



Have a close encounter with Wisconsin's smallest owl, the saw-whet, on Trip 113 and find more options listed online at wisconservation.org

CHRISTINE TANZER



The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin

The Foundation is a nonprofit organization that helps secure funding for our state's highest conservation priorities. It also manages the Wisconsin Conservation Endowment, through which individuals and groups can create permanent funding for the places, species or programs of most concern to them.

This year, the Foundation celebrates the 20th anniversary of its Field Trip Program. Thanks to the Department of Natural Resources and other expert leaders, it has led more than 1,400 trips to every county in the state, and helped more than 30,000 people discover Wisconsin's beautiful natural resources. The trips are often the first step in learning to care for and contribute toward conservation of Wisconsin's public lands, waters and wildlife.

In 2012, the Foundation, its members, and other supporters provided more than \$400,000 to conservation in Wisconsin, including funding for State Natural Areas and public lands, rare and endangered species, conservation education and grassroots conservation efforts.

To learn more or to become a member, visit WisConservation.org or call toll-free (866) 264-4096.

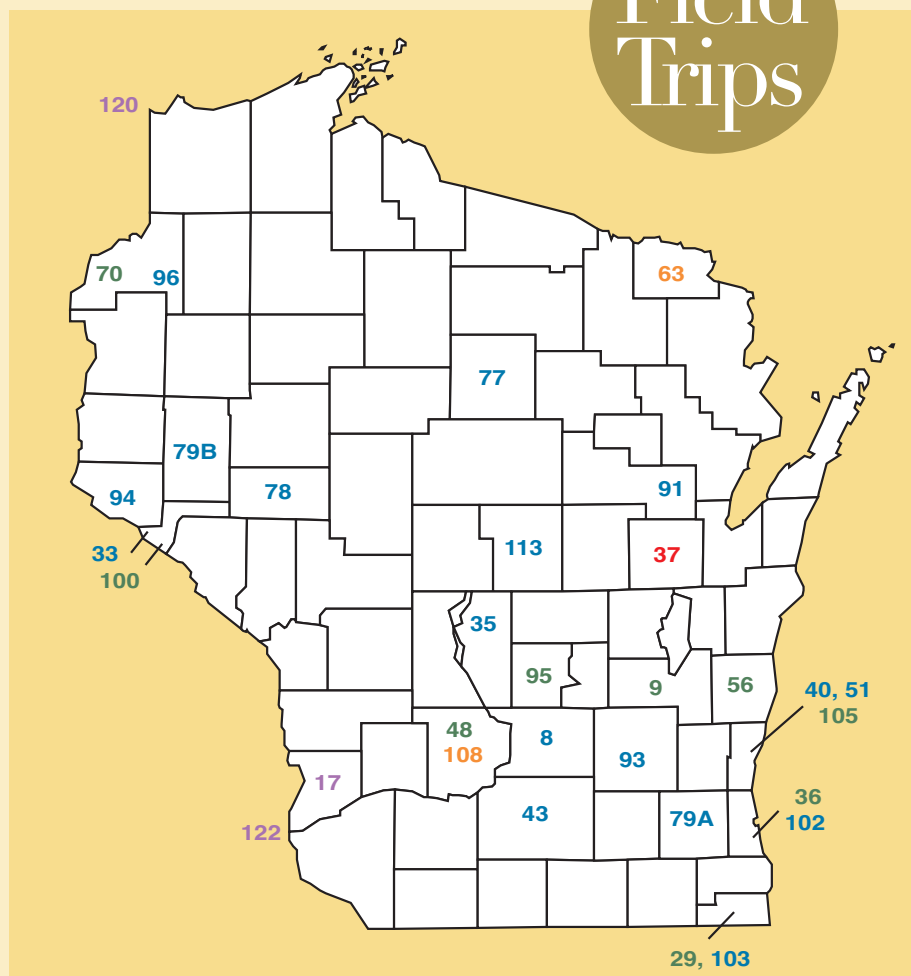
Sign up for trips at **WisConservation.org**

Enter the passcode: Join NRF. 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, call toll-free (866) 264-4096 or email fieldtrips@wisconservation.org

Field Trips



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 or christine.tanzer@wisconsin.gov

8. MACKENZIE CENTER:



GAME FARM AND WILDLIFE

Go behind the scenes at the State Game Farm to hold pheasant chicks and learn about their breeding and ecology. Then tour an exhibit of live native Wisconsin mammals and birds. Learn about animal adaptations, predator-prey relationships and more. Family fun!

Ages 5+

Saturday, May 4, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Poynette, Columbia Co.

Leaders: Derek Johnson and Bob Nack

Limit: 30

Cost: \$12 adult / \$6 child, per person

9. WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE A...?



Know a child interested in natural resources as a career? Then join us out in the field with a state forest superintendent, forester, wildlife biologist,

ecologist and fisheries biologist to learn about their professions. Hike in the forest with these specialists to experience first-hand the work they do, and learn about the skills and education needed for each job.

Ages 12+

Saturday, May 4, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Dundee, Fond du Lac Co.

Leaders: Tim Beyer, Dan Weidert, Travis Motl, Joe Henry and Jerry Leiterman

Limit: 20

Cost: \$12 adult / \$6 child, per person

17. MISSISSIPPI RIVER EAGLE NEST AND WARBLERS 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 on this exclusive tour.

Ages 8+

Saturday, May 11, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Prairie du Chien, Crawford Co.

Leaders: Captain Eric and Jon Stravers

Limit: 55

Cost: \$37 adult / \$32 child, per person

29. CHIWAUKEE PRAIRIE SNA

Tread among the shooting stars as we explore the richest prairie in Wisconsin, with over 400 native plant species identified! Learn about prairie ecology, property history, invasive species and restoration techniques. Chance to see prairie wildlife up-close!

Saturday, May 18, 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Pleasant Prairie, Kenosha Co.

Leaders: Marty Johnson, Doug Robinson and Pam Holy

Limit: 25

Cost: \$12 per person

33. TRAIN RIDE AND BIRDS OF TIFFANY BOTTOMS SNA

All aboard! Ride atop an antique open-air train with stops along the way for short hikes into blooming prairies, hardwood forests, wetlands and sloughs near the mouth of the Chippewa River. An exclusive opportunity to enjoy this remote mosaic of ecosystems with amazing birds to spot! This is a fundraiser to support conservation efforts along the lower Chippewa River.

Sunday, May 19, 7 a.m. to 12 p.m.
 Durand, Pepin Co.
 Leaders: Dave Lindrud, Steve Betchkal
 and Anne Geraghty
 Limit: 60
 Cost: \$35 per person

35. KIRTLAND'S WARBLERS UP CLOSE

Enjoy a rare opportunity to see one of Wisconsin's rarest birds! Venture out with biologists to see and hear nesting Kirtland's warblers. Learn about cowbird control efforts in the area, how forests are managed especially for this bird and all about warbler ecology. This trip is a tax-deductible fundraiser to support Kirtland's warbler conservation.
 Time: Both sessions 6:45 to 10 a.m.
 Choose one session to attend:
35-A. Friday, May 24
35-B. Saturday, May 25
 Rome, Adams Co.
 Leaders: Joel Trick and Kim Grveles
 Limit: 36
 Cost: \$42 per person

36. GREY AND GREEN, WORKING TOGETHER FOR CLEANER WATER

Hike Victory Creek to see a mix of woods, restored prairie and wetlands. Discover how these Greenseams help

reduce the risk of flooding. Then tour the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility — one of Wisconsin's largest wastewater treatment plants. See where Milorganite is made. Learn why it's important to care for our state's wastewater.
 Ages 10+
 Friday, May 24, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 Franklin, Milwaukee Co.
 Leader: Bill Graffin
 Limit: 35
 Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

37. FAWN SEARCH AND COLLARING

Venture into the field with DNR biologists to help find, capture, measure and radio collar fawns. Provide hands-on help with this vital study to monitor deer's first year of life. Be prepared to hike off-trail through all kinds of wet and dry terrain. Only hardy hikers need apply!
 Time: Both sessions 7:45 a.m. to 12 p.m.
 Choose one session to attend:
37-A. Saturday, May 25
37-B. Sunday, May 26
 Shiocton, Outagamie Co.
 Leader: Michael Watt
 Limit: 25
 Cost: \$12 per person

40. 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 to learn some casts and fish the ponds. Cost includes use of rods, reels, lines and flies. Give it a try — you'll get hooked!
 Saturday, May 25, 12:30 to 3 p.m.
 Newburg, Ozaukee Co.
 Leaders: Jerry Kiesow, Diane Kiesow
 and Chris Vollmer
 Limit: 12
 Cost: \$42 per person

43. 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: Black Earth Creek. Use sampling equipment to measure water quality and collect aquatic insects and fish. Great fun and learning for the whole family!
 Ages 7+
 Saturday, June 1, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 Black Earth, Dane Co.
 Leader: Mike Miller
 Limit: 20
 Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person



Help DNR biologists capture and collar fawns on Trip 37.

KEN AND BARB WARDLUS



Get up close with a Kirtland's warbler on Trip 35.

JACK SWELSTAD

48. EXPLORING DEVIL'S LAKE: BIODIVERSITY UNDERFOOT



The devil's in the details! Enjoy a unique, engaging and enlightening exploration to understand Devil's Lake State Park as never before. Learn about trees, how invasive plants and earthworms affect forest soils and all the biodiversity swarming underfoot. Fun, interactive and great for kids!

Ages 6+

Saturday, June 1, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Baraboo, Sauk Co.

Leaders: Tom Boos and Bernie Williams

Limit: 25

Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

51. FISH PASSAGE ALONG THE MILWAUKEE RIVER



It's taken years of hard work, but well worth it! Over 100 miles of streams, rivers and habitat are now reconnected to the Milwaukee River watershed allowing native fish access to spawn in its waters. See this amazing transformation firsthand with the experts. Visit dam removals and a fish passage with an underwater camera. An important project on a historic river!

Ages 10+

Friday, June 7, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Thiensville, Ozaukee Co.

Leaders: Matt Aho, Andrew Struck and Luke Roffler

Limit: 20

Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

56. PADDLE THE SHEBOYGAN RIVER RESTORATION



Enjoy a canoe tour of the Sheboygan River as it winds from wild to urban. Paddle through the peaceful river valley in Kohler and venture into the urban wilds of the city of Sheboygan. Spy wildlife and learn about the major habitat restoration and PCB cleanup completed in recent years. Canoes provided.

Ages 10+

Saturday, June 8, 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sheboygan, Sheboygan Co.

Leaders: Debbie Beyer, Stacy Hron and Sarah Dezwardt

Limit: 30

Cost: \$20 adults / \$14 child, per person

63. BOG VS. SWAMP

Discover the difference! First, venture onto a quaking bog mat to search for orchids, carnivorous plants and other rarities at Grandma Lake Wetlands SNA.



Discover Baraboo Hills geology on Trip 108.

RON ROCKOW



Find frogs a 'croaking at Crex on Trip 70.

NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION

Then explore Van Zile Cedars, a primeval old-growth cedar swamp and marvel at the dark, quiet, moss-cloaked landscape of twisted trees.

Friday, June 14, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.


Long Lake, Florence Co.

Leader: Thomas Meyer

Limit: 20

Cost: \$12 adults

70. FROGGING AROUND ON CREX

 First enjoy an indoor presentation on the ecology and calls of frogs of Wisconsin. Then venture to a flowage in Crex Meadows Wildlife Area to catch frogs and see what species can be found a'croaking.

Ages 6+

Thursday, June 27, 9 to 11:45 a.m.

Grantsburg, Burnett Co.

Leader: Steve Hoffman

Limit: 25

Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

77. PONTOON LAKE MOHAWKSIN AND TOUR TOMAHAWK DAM POWER STATION

Climb aboard a pontoon to explore Lake Mohawksin. Enjoy the history and ecology of scenic shorelines of this large reservoir formed by the Tomahawk Hydroelectric Dam. Then enjoy an exclusive tour of the WPS hydroelectric power plant which creates clean renewable energy.

Tuesday, July 16, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.


Tomahawk, Lincoln Co.

Leaders: AJ Theiler and Greg Egtvedt

Limit: 18

Cost: \$37 per person

78. FLUTTER, FLY AND WADE INTO CITIZEN SCIENCE

 Explore Beaver Creek Reserve to band birds, wade for freshwater mussels, observe butterflies and net aquatic invertebrates. Take your new skills home and consider monitoring your own favorite ecosystem. Become a citizen scientist — where fun and science meet!

Ages 10+

Thursday, July 18, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.


Fall Creek, Eau Claire Co.

Leaders: Jeanette Kelly and Anna Mares

Limit: 20

Cost: \$20 adult / \$9 child, per person

79. TREASURES IN THE STREAM: NATIVE MUSSELS

 Wade in the cool waters of the Mukwonago (trip A) or Chippewa River



Explore the diversity underfoot at Devil's Lake on Trip 48.

LOUISE WEARE

(trip B) to search for some of our state's most diverse yet hidden treasures: freshwater mussels (clams). Learn about our 52 native species, their fascinating life cycle and amazing contributions to Wisconsin's history. Great fun for kids and adults! This is the same trip, offered in two locations.

Ages 5+

Time: Both sessions 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Choose one session to attend:

79-A. Saturday, July 20 – Mukwonago, Waukesha Co.


79-B. Saturday, July 27 – Meridian, Dunn Co.

Leader: Lisie Kitchel

Limit: 25

Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

91. CANOE WITH MUSSELS ON THE WOLF RIVER

 Adventure awaits! Paddle your way down the scenic Wolf River in a 10-passenger replica voyageur fur-trade canoe. Wade into cool waters to explore freshwater mussels (clams) and other hidden life teeming on the riverbed below.

Ages 10+

Saturday, August 17, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.


Navarino, Shawano Co.

Leaders: Scott Koehnke, James Robaidek and Kay Brockman-Mederas

Limit: 18

Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

93. NIGHT AT NEDA MINE: BATS SWARM AT THE STATE'S LARGEST HIBERNACULA

 This is likely the last year for this trip due to the tragic expansion of the fatal bat disease called white-nosed syndrome! Wander moon-lit trails to view thousands of bats in flight at Neda Mine SNA. Experience one of Wisconsin's largest bat hibernacula where over 100,000 bats hibernate in this maze of abandoned iron mine tunnels. Use ultrasound bat detectors, infrared video cameras and your own eyes to watch the annual ritual of bats swarming outside the mine exits. 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.

Ages 10+

Time: Both sessions 6:15 to 10 p.m.

Choose one session to attend:



Know a child who has a passion for natural resources? Sign them up for Trip 9.

KATHLEEN HAWKINS



Take a train ride through Tiffany Bottoms SNA to see birds and other wildlife on Trips 33 and 100.

NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION

93-A. Friday, August 23
93-B. Friday, September 20
 Horicon, Dodge Co.
 Leader: Jennifer Redell
 Limit: 40
 Cost: \$100 adult / \$35 child, per person

94. MAIDEN ROCK BAT NIGHT

Marvel in amazement as many hundreds of mating bats swarm the entrance to an active sand mine where over 80,000 bats hibernate each winter. Use high-tech equipment to learn about bat ecology and conservation at one of the state's largest and most important bat hibernacula. This trip is a tax-deductible fundraiser for the Wisconsin Bat Conservation Fund.
 Friday, August 23, 7:30 to 10 p.m.
 Maiden Rock, Pierce Co.
 Leaders: Paul White, Michele Maxson and Heather Kaarakka
 Limit: 35
 Cost: \$62 per person

95. JOHN MUIR'S BOYHOOD HAUNTS

2013 is the 175th anniversary of John Muir's birth and the 100th anniversary of his book *My Boyhood and Youth*. Celebrate by visiting several of his boyhood haunts including: the family homestead at Muir Park SNA, breathtaking vistas of Observatory Hill SNA, the Wee White Kirk where John's father preached and his family is buried, and more! This is a fundraiser for the Friends of John Muir.
 Saturday, August 24, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
 Montello, Marquette Co.
 Leaders: Mark Martin and Kathleen McGwin
 Limit: 25
 Cost: \$22 per person

96. WETLANDS OF NORTHWEST WISCONSIN



Explore the wetland wilds of Crex Meadows — one of Wisconsin's greatest wetland gems! Discover plants, birds and wildlife. Learn about various wetland types, their value, management techniques and programs available for restoration on private lands.
 Ages 10+
 Saturday, August 24, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Grantsburg, Burnett Co.
 Leaders: Jason Fleener, Brian Glenzinski and Bob Hanson
 Limit: 30
 Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person



NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION

100. TIFFANY BOTTOMS TRAIN RIDE, BIRDS AND BLUFF PRAIRIE HIKE

A full day of fun! Start the morning with a hike in Five-Mile Bluff SNA for amazing vistas of the Mississippi and Chippewa Rivers. Learn about goat-prairie ecology and see migrating birds. Then off to the tracks to ride atop an antique open-air train through famed Tiffany Bottoms SNA. Enjoy stops along the way for short hikes into blooming prairies, hardwood forests, wetlands and sloughs near the mouth of the Chippewa River. An exclusive opportunity to enjoy this remote mosaic of ecosystems that is home to amazing birds! This fundraiser supports conservation along the Lower Chippewa River. Sunday, September 8, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pepin, Pepin Co. Leaders: Dave Lindrud and Gary Wolf Limit: 60 Cost: \$45 per person

102. BIRD AND BAT MIGRATION IN MILWAUKEE



Learn about the importance of urban natural areas for bats, migratory birds and other wildlife species. Observe a bird banding station, mist nets and acoustic bat monitoring demos in Riverside Park. Enjoy a rare opportunity to see songbirds in the hand! Ages 10+ Saturday, September 14, 8 to 11 a.m. Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co. Leaders: Owen Boyle, Tim Vargo and Jennifer Callaghan Limit: 30 Cost: \$12 adult / \$6 child, per person

103. MIGRATING MONARCHS AT RICHARD BONG SRA



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 who will fly all the way to Mexico for the winter! Ages 7+ Saturday, September 14, 12:30 to 3 p.m. Kansasville, Kenosha Co. Leader: Beth Goeppinger Limit: 30 Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

105. LAKE STURGEON REINTRODUCTION



Lake sturgeon can live for 100 years and grow to 9 feet long! Once common in the Great Lakes, they were absent from the Milwaukee River for more than a century – until now! Learn about sturgeon biology, tour a rearing facility and get hands-on to explore the river from the standpoint of this ancient fish. This fundraiser supports sturgeon reintroduction. Ages 8+ Saturday, September 14 Choose one session time to attend: **105-A.** 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. **105-B.** 1 to 4 p.m. Newburg, Ozaukee Co. Leader: Mary Holleback Limit: 20 Cost: \$17 adult / \$11 child, per person

108. BARABOO HILLS: HISTORY WRITTEN IN THE ROCKS

The Baraboo Hills are among the oldest rock outcroppings in North America and a premier geologic marvel of the Midwest. Hike with an expert to learn how geologic forces, from mountain building to glaciers, have shaped this landscape. Enjoy stops to hike at Van Hise Rock, Abelman's Gorge, Parfrey's Glen and Devil's Lake. Note: Some challenging and steep hiking. Saturday, September 21, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Baraboo, Sauk Co. Leader: Phil Fauble Limit: 25 Cost: \$12 per person

113. 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 charming 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 to attend:

113-A. Friday, October 11

113-B. Saturday, October 12

113-C. Thursday, October 17

Stevens Point, Portage Co.

Leaders: Gene and Lorraine Jacobs

Limit: 35

Cost: \$25 adult / \$19 child, per person

120. AMAZING RAPTOR MIGRATION AT HAWK RIDGE OBSERVATORY



Enjoy peak large-raptor migration from a ridgetop perch with panoramic views of Lake Superior. The right winds can bring several hundred raptors! Learn about raptor ecology. ID and see raptors banded up-close. Expect northern goshawks, golden and bald eagles and rough-legged and red-tailed hawks.

Ages 8+

Choose one session to attend:

120-A. Saturday, Oct. 26, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

120-B. Saturday, Oct. 26, 1 to 4 p.m.

120-C. Sunday, Oct. 27, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

120-D. Sunday, Oct. 27, 1 to 4 p.m. Duluth, MN

Leaders: William Smith, Richard and Amy Staffen

Limit: 18

Cost: \$12 adults / \$6 child, per person

122. BOAT CRUISE: THE MISSISSIPPI MIGRATION



Revel in the miracle of migration as we view many 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 Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge. Chance to see otters, minks and other wildlife, too!

Ages 10+

Saturday, November 16, 1 to 4 p.m. Lansing, IA

Leader: Captain Eric

Limit: 55

Cost: \$50 adult / \$46 child, per person



Christine Tanzer is the field trip coordinator and Maria Sadowski is the director of communications at the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

Great Wisconsin Birdathon



This May, do your best to give back to birds.



Binoculars up!
Be a part of the
Great Wisconsin
Birdathon and help
raise money for our
state's feathered
friends.

D. JOHNSON

Maria Sadowski

Bird-a-thon: Helping Wisconsin's birds by spending any portion of a 24-hour period in May observing birds and soliciting pledges for the total number of species seen.

It's easy and fun, and all at WIBirdathon.org

If you love the bald eagles and egrets nesting along our waterways, take joy in finches, chickadees or woodpeckers visiting your backyard feeder, or long to hear greater prairie chickens and bobolinks in our prairies, it's time to do your part to help Wisconsin's birds — by participating in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon.

Here are some great ways YOU can help:

- **Are you a novice birder who would like to do a Birdathon with an expert guide?** Join a guided Big Day Field Trip with the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. We hope you will raise at least \$100 in pledges. Don't worry. We make it easy for you! You can create a personalized webpage and ask your friends to support your birding efforts — all through the Birdathon website.
- **Are you a seasoned birder who knows your grouse from your grebes?** Register to do the Great Wisconsin Birdathon on your own or start a team. Create a personalized webpage and easily send emails or tweets, post videos and photos, or whatever it takes to bring in pledges. Then get birding!
- **Want to support the entire Great Wisconsin Birdathon?** Pledge to the Great Wisconsin Birdathon Team and your pledge will be calculated using the total number of species seen by all the teams combined!

- **No time to bird but want to donate?** Pledge to a regional Celebrity Team, and they will bird on your behalf. You can check each team's webpage to keep up-to-date on their happenings.

Birdathon Celebrity Teams

- Eagle Optics Team – Bird So Hard: Mike McDowell, Ben Lizdas, David LaPuma, Jessica Gorzo and Max Henschell
- Hawkeye and the Ancient Murrelets (southeast Wisconsin): Noel Cutright, Carl Schwartz, Tom Uttech and Seth Cutright
- Lake Superior Team: Ryan Brady, Nick Anich, Dick Verch and Steve Hoecker
- Lower Chippewa River Team: Bill Hogseth and Steve Betchkal
- Madison Green Team: Sumner Matteson and Tod Highsmith
- Northern Highlands Team: Scott Craven, Jamie Nack and David Drake
- Raven Loonatics (Southwest Team): Craig Thompson, Armund Bartz and Eric Epstein

All donations and pledges are tax-deductible and are handled simply and securely online. You can pledge or start a team at any time. But all birding must be done during a single 24-hour period in May. With your help, the Great Wisconsin Birdathon hopes to raise at least \$40,000 for our state's birds.

Fly on over to WIBirdathon.org to get started. Our birds — and all the people who appreciate them — thank you!



Maria Sadowski is the director of communications at the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.



The Bohemian waxwing is sleek and known for a call that is a pleasant ringing sound, similar to that of the cedar waxwing but lower-pitched.

RYAN BRADY



The bobolink prefers breeding habitats that are open grassy fields, especially hay fields.

RYAN BRADY



The common redpoll is an active forager that travels in busy flocks.

RYAN BRADY



Dunlins are familiar shorebirds in Wisconsin and around the world.

RYAN BRADY

Partners in protecting birds



Our birds know no boundaries — they certainly don't pause at county lines, let alone at state or country boundaries. Wisconsin's birds need our help, whether in our state, on migration, or where they winter.

That's where the Bird Protection Fund comes in. Created in 2007, this partnership of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI), and the Department of Natural Resources raises money each year for bird conservation.

The Bird Protection Fund has provided nearly \$107,000 to statewide bird conservation projects, thanks to foundations, organizations and people like you.

Proceeds from the Great Wisconsin Birdathon will go directly to the Bird Protection Fund — and make a big difference for our state's birds.

You can help birds by taking part in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon, or making a one-time or an annual gift to the Bird Protection Fund. Find out more at WIBirdathon.org

Sponsored by Eagle Optics, Derse Foundation, John J. Frautschi Family Foundation and



How our birds will benefit

With your help, the Great Wisconsin Birdathon will assist several projects across the state that take care of our birds. Among them are:

- **Bird City Wisconsin**
Encouraging urban bird conservation to make our communities healthy for birds and people.

birdcitywisconsin.org

- **Citizen Science for Birds**
Coordinating and training volunteers to collect important information that guides conservation efforts for birds.

wiatri.net/projects/birdroutes/index.htm

- **Important Bird Areas (IBAs)**
Assisting Wisconsin's part of a global initiative to protect and manage public and private lands for birds of conservation concern; there are currently 88 IBAs in our state.

wisconsinbirds.org/iba/

- **Wisconsin Stopover Initiative**
Helping a partnership of government agencies, private organizations and individuals protect and conserve habitats used by birds for resting and refueling during their migration.

wisconsinbirds.org/migratory/

- **Wintering Areas for Wisconsin's Birds**
Working with partners to protect and reforest important habitats in Latin America — especially in critical locations on Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula — where Wisconsin's orioles, warblers, thrushes and other Neotropical migrants winter each year (see story on page 14).

osaconservation.org

Rain forest birding

Experiences Wisconsinites “crow” about!

Connie and Peter Roop

“**A**ndean gull!” Eric cries as he exits the Cusco airport. Amazon Conservation Association’s (ACA) Birdathon has taken flight.

A mixed flock of Wisconsin birders, from fledgling to expert, arrived in Peru for a 10-day birding adventure, traveling from the dramatic Peruvian 11,000-foot highlands to the lush Amazon lowlands.

“Never go anywhere without your binoculars,” warns group leader Craig Thompson.

At dawn, sleepy-eyed birders don their binoculars to peer into the brush for a glimpse of an elusive rufous-tailed antwren.

“Is that colorful, long-tailed hummingbird a long-tailed sylph?” asks a “binocularized” birder at breakfast.

Cameras clicked as a sleek and swift tayra, a South American weasel, jumped to the same feeder to grab mouthfuls of a red-capped cardinal’s bananas.

“Look at that soaring black-and-white hawk-eagle!” cries a trip member as others drop their sandwiches to grab binoculars at lunch.

Even after the sun sets, these dedicated travelers have birds on their brains and are out trying to spot owls.

Rewards are handsome for both participants and the Amazon Conservation Association. Each day birders could count on seeing a rainbow of colorful birds, butterflies and flowers. Each eve-

ning at science research stations, they share local food and learn from scientists conducting projects in these biologically rich and diverse habitats.

During this trip, these avid Wisconsin birders spotted 400 birds and heard 22 more with the assistance of Peruvian expert guides, Alex and Percy. These efforts raised \$34,000 for ACA, an organization actively protecting rain forest land.

Thompson’s two trips have a mission: to create flocks of birders devoted to protecting biological “hot spots” in Peru’s Amazon Basin and in Costa Rica’s pristine Osa Peninsula. Since 1992, Thompson has used his vacation time to gather friends of feathers together to personally experience tropical rain forests.

Each “Thompson traveler” donates \$500 to the Amazon Conservation Association (Peru) or Osa Conservation (Costa Rica). The cost of the trip is low. In the past six years, Thompson’s groups have donated over \$100,000 to conservation efforts.

“Protection of Wisconsin birds’ breeding habitats is only half the conservation story,” explains Thompson, whose day job is at Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



A Peruvian guide helps the group spot another bird.



Red-capped cardinals feast on bananas.

CONNIE ROOP



CONNIE ROOP



Craig Thompson, trip leader

CONNIE ROOP

"The other half is in Latin American countries like Costa Rica. Without protection of migratory bird winter habitat in Latin America, our Wisconsin woodlands and backyards will become increasingly silent in the spring and summer," Thompson warns.

Tropical forests on Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula are the winter home to 55 species that breed in Wisconsin. These include peregrine falcons and worm-eating warblers — both of which are state endangered — as well as state threatened Acadian flycatchers, Kentucky warblers and hooded warblers.

Taking a trip to the Osa Peninsula or to Peru, Panama, Ecuador or Costa Rica links Wisconsin citizens and our avian denizens to our southern neighbors. Projects supported include monitoring overwintering survival of Wisconsin birds in tropical forests, purchasing property to enable construction of a field station and eco-lodge, and cloud forest and dry forest protection and restoration. Investing in these projects has brought incalculable returns to "our" Wisconsin birds that migrate to Latin America each winter and return to us to breed in Wisconsin each summer.

"Turkey vulture!" points out Peter as the newly-made friends say good-bye at the Cusco airport.

Bird by bird, birder by birder, Wisconsin citizens have two amazing rain forest trips to crow about. Each provides a unique opportunity to experience the rain forest, to make new "best" birding buddies, and to support conservation critical to Wisconsin and rain forest species.

If you would like to learn more about Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative International Programs or find out more about Thompson's trips visit Amazon Conservation Association at amazonconservation.org.



The Roops said they had the privilege of joining Craig Thompson on a Birdathon trip to Peru. The Wisconsin group (primarily) established a baseline bird population for Amazon conservation. "It was truly amazing with 400 birds sighted and 22 more heard, raising \$34,000 for Amazon conservation!"



Tiger swallowtail



Great-spangled fritillary



Sulphur butterflies in the process of puddling.

Unsavor puddlers Or maybe barnyard beauties?

Story and photos by Hans Schabel

While every year may be memorable in one way or another, some are more so than others. For me, 2012 will stand out as the “Year of Butterflies.”

The prematurely warm March coaxed some of the habitual hibernators — red admirals, mourning cloaks, question marks and commas — early out of their winter quarters. Towards the end of April, things started to heat up with the same species appearing in unusually large numbers, complemented by a first wave of skippers. By mid-May numerous tiger swallowtails joined, as did checker spots and blues, while migrants such as painted ladies and monarchs, carried by strong southwesterlies, arrived

in Wisconsin. By the end of May, black swallowtails, tortoise shells, fritillaries, red-spotted purples, white admirals and hybrids of the latter two made a strong showing. Satyrs, sulphurs and whites brought up the rear in mid-June.

Being retired and living in the country, I decided to take advantage of the butterfly bonanza, by stalking and hunting them with my camera. No license necessary, no bag limits, trophies galore, in short, a hunter’s dream. Like other game, butterflies are, however, wary

and elusive. Having no sense of a camera hunter’s friendly disposition, they trust their instincts for survival with fast getaways.

Their small size only adds to the thrill of the chase. To gain the edge, butterfly hunters, like other hunters, need to pattern their prey. For example, butterflies can be more successfully approached when they are still torpid from the cool of night and bask with their wings spread facing the early morning sun. On hot summer days, once they have warmed, it becomes progressively more difficult to catch up with them, unless they are in the mood for love, drink or food. Then is the time to target their bars and restaurants.

Some of these, like showy, nectar-bearing flowers, are definitely upscale and in line with a butterfly’s clean, sunny and colorful image, while others are more on the seedy side. They include tree sap or overripe fruit bubbling with fermenting yeast, as well as sugary honeydew, the intestinal product of certain sap-sucking insects which coats foliage in sticky layers. Most unsavory, however, are mineral licks associated with carrion, urine and dung, where at times masses of butterflies “puddle.” It is indeed the barnyard, where connecting with certain species of butterflies may be very productive.

On closer examination it becomes evident that only male butterflies — most of them newly hatched, perfect specimens — are puddlers. They may spend hours on a favorite lick. During this time, they imbibe prodigious amounts of liquid, possibly more than hundreds of times their body mass. While retaining the minerals, they simultaneously void excess water like a leaking faucet which is sometimes propelled in jets for a foot or more. The primary function of puddling is to acquire sodium and other minerals, which increases fertility. Female butterflies replenish their sodium from sperm obtained during mating.

For the nature lover, butterflies are energetic, flirtatious creatures of the sun, seemingly happy to have escaped the cold grip of winter or the ungainly and stationary world of herbivorous caterpillars and rigid chrysalis. If only for a few short weeks of spring and summer glory, they give us cheer, even the beauties with unsavory barnyard habits. ❧

*Hans Schabel Ph.D. writes from Custer, Wis.
Photos were taken in Portage County.*

Wisconsin recreational boating

Big business & growing green.

*Victoria Harris
and Jon Kukuk*

Wisconsin boasts some of the best boating waters in the country. With more than 800 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 15,000 lakes and 13,500 miles of navigable rivers and streams, the state is a boater's paradise. But enjoying that paradise depends on clean water, as essential for a quality boating experience as it is for other human and aquatic life uses. Wisconsin's marinas and the Wisconsin Marine Association (WMA) recognize that environmental protection is in their best interest.

With support from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the WMA and the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute are helping marinas and boatyards stay shipshape while keeping Wisconsin's boating waters clean and healthy. Together with a host of partners, they launched the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program in 2010. Marina and boatyard managers who adopt practices that minimize water pollution and protect fish and wildlife habitat can be certified as "clean marinas," receiving recognition for their good stewardship.

Whether cruising, sailing, trolling, paddling or rowing, Wisconsinites love to boat. Approximately one in 10 Wisconsin residents owns a boat. Of the 12.7 million boats registered in the United States in 2009, Wisconsin had more than 626,000, or 5 percent of the total. Wisconsin ranks fifth in total boat registrations in the United States behind Florida, California, Minnesota and Michigan.

The WMA has identified more than 250 boating facilities in Wisconsin in-

cluding public and private marinas, yacht clubs, parks and dockominiums. Marinas and boatyards are valuable parts of waterfront communities. They provide essential marine services, offer public access to the water, act as harbors of refuge for vessels in distress and generate substantial economic benefits for their communities.

According to a 2003 report by the Great Lakes Commission, money spent by Wisconsin boaters on Great Lakes trip expenses such as fuel, food and refreshments surpassed \$1.5 billion in 1999. Average boater trip spending ranged from \$75 to \$275 per day. Boaters spent an additional \$963 million on boat repairs, upgrades and insurance. These expenditures supported 36,000 jobs in the state, creating \$825 million in personal income. These numbers don't even include the additional jobs and economic benefits generated from boating on inland lakes or rivers.

While marinas contribute many millions of dollars to Wisconsin's econo-



PORT WASHINGTON MARINA



A "bioswale" at Egg Harbor Marina provides vegetation and engineered soil to filter pollutants from parking lot runoff.

TODD BREIBY, WISCONSIN COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Hull pressure wash water should be collected and "treated" before releasing to a river or lake.

LINDA CAMPBELL, UW SEA GRANT



Place a spill bottle under the fuel vent to collect drips and accidental overflow.

GENE CLARK, UW SEA GRANT



Prevent the spread of invasives by removing plants, sediments and animals at the boat launch.

DNR FILE



Jon and Sue Kukuk, owners of Nestegg Marine in Marinette proudly display their Wisconsin Clean Marina flag.

NESTEGG MARINE

my, they can also be sources of water contamination. Chemicals carried by stormwater runoff from boat storage and repair areas, toxic metals from antifouling paints, petroleum drips and spills from fuel docks, solvents, detergents, antifreeze, sewage, fish waste and litter can all be released into the water. Even small releases from the growing number of marinas and boats can add up to serious pollution potential. Marina construction and maintenance dredging can destroy aquatic habitat. In addition, boaters may advance the spread of aquatic invasive species and diseases by transporting aquatic hitchhikers from one lake to another via boat trailers, live wells or bait buckets.

The Wisconsin Clean Marina Program encourages marine businesses and recreational boaters to protect water quality by engaging in environmentally sound operating and maintenance practices. The WMA administers the program. UW Sea Grant provides educational materials and training on "best management practices" that reduce pollution. A Technical Team of marina managers, UW-Extension specialists, marine consulting engineers and resource agency staff advise the program.

This partnership began in 2008 with funding from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. UW Sea Grant

brought the partners together to develop criteria for Clean Marina certification and produce a Wisconsin Clean Marina Best Management Practices Guidebook and Clean Boater Tip Sheets. The guidebook outlines practices required by law as well as practices recommended for siting and designing new or expanding marinas, stormwater management, vessel maintenance, petroleum control, sewage handling, waste disposal, marina management and boater education. The guidebook was updated in 2012 and is available on the program's website, wisconsincleanmarina.org


To enter the Wisconsin Clean Marina program, marinas and boatyards sign a pledge and participate in training sessions. Facility managers conduct self-assessments using the guidebook and a checklist of required and recommended best management practices. Not only must marinas and boatyards comply with all applicable regulations, they also must document that they have gone above and beyond by adopting all the Clean Marina program "required" practices and at least 50 percent of the "recommended" practices. UW Sea Grant and Technical Team advisors provide guidance along the way. Once all the necessary improvements are made, the facility requests an onsite inspection from members of the Technical Team. Facilities that meet the required criteria and pass inspection may become certified as a Wisconsin "Clean Marina."

In the three years since the Wisconsin program began, 173 marina personnel

have attended Clean Marina training sessions. Nineteen marinas have become certified, adopting more than 440 new practices. Eleven more have signed pledges and are taking steps toward certification.

Wisconsin waters have benefitted from the hundreds of actions taken by marinas and boatyards to reduce pollution and protect aquatic habitats. A national survey of certified clean marinas shows that the participating businesses are benefitting, too. Marinas can improve their bottom line by reducing hazardous and solid waste generation and disposal, recycling shrink wrap and antifreeze, minimizing spill cleanup costs, and receiving discounts on insurance premiums. They've also discovered that boaters are willing to pay a little more to dock their boats at a "clean marina."

The Wisconsin Marine Association hopes to grow the Clean Marina Program and promote the recreational boating industry in Wisconsin. WMA is the voice of its members in working with government agencies and national and local organizations on issues affecting recreational boating. The association has grown significantly, bringing in new members from other industry sectors such as manufacturers, boat dealers and accessory suppliers. In just three years the WMA has gained national recognition. Several of its members serve on the boards of national boating trade groups.

The commitment of the WMA and marine businesses to Wisconsin's waterways shows great promise for improving our water resources, sustaining the recreational boating industry, and helping Wisconsin's economic recovery. You can lend your support by patronizing marinas flying the Clean Marina flag and by adopting clean boater practices. 

REFERENCES:

- NMMA 2009 U.S. Recreational Boat Registration Statistics
- Great Lakes Recreational Boating's Economic Punch, GLC, 2003
- For additional information:
Wisconsin Clean Marina Program
wisconsincleanmarina.org
Wisconsin Marine Association
wisconsinmarinas.org
UW Sea Grant Institute
seagrant.wis.edu

Victoria Harris is a water quality specialist at the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute. Jon Kukuk is Wisconsin Marine Association, Chairman and Nestegg Marine owner.

CLEAN BOATING TIPS

Much of the pollution generated at marinas, boatyards and launch sites comes from individual boater activities and “do it yourself” boater maintenance. Here are some “best management practices” you can use to protect water quality and aquatic resources. Check out the series of Clean Boater Tip Sheets on the wisconsin-clean-marina.org website and do your part to keep Wisconsin waters clean and healthy.

WINTERIZING YOUR BOAT

- Always use “marine” propylene glycol anti-freeze (pink or blue) rather than the more toxic, green ethylene glycol. Although propylene glycol is safer, it still can be harmful to fish and other aquatic life.
- It is illegal to “blow out” antifreeze into the water. Flush and collect anti-freeze from the engine and holding tanks prior to launch each season and recycle or dispose properly.

ENGINE MAINTENANCE

- Ask if your facility has a collection area for boat maintenance waste (used oil filters, waste oil, anti-freeze, lead-acid batteries, etc.). If not, take them to a household hazardous waste facility or used oil recycling center.
- Pre-clean engine parts with a wire brush to eliminate the need for solvents. Use volatile organic compound-free (VOC-free) solvents.
- Parts cleaning should be done in a container or parts washer where the dirty fluids can be collected and recycled, not in the bilge or over open ground or water.
- To catch the oil spilled during filter changes, slip a plastic bag over the filter and then remove it. Drain filters for at least 24 hours, and take to an oil recycling or hazardous waste center.
- Keep an oil absorption pad in the bilge or below the engine.

HULL MAINTENANCE

- Most antifouling paints contain toxic metals designed to inhibit biological growth. Avoid cleaning your hull when it is in the water.
- Switch to longer lasting, harder or nontoxic antifouling paint.
- Perform repairs and maintenance in designated work areas, away from water. Work indoors or under cover whenever wind or rain could carry dust and paint into the environment.
- Use dustless vacuum sanders and place a drop cloth under the hull to collect paint chips, dust and drips.

FUELING

- Have a trained attendant supervise or fuel your vessel.
- Never leave the fuel hose unattended.
- Fill tanks to no more than 90 percent capacity — fuel from cool storage tanks will expand as it warms. Don't top off your tank. It will cause a spill.
- Slow down at the beginning and end of fueling. To prevent overfilling, be aware of your tank's volume and listen to the filler pipe. You can feel and hear air escaping from the vent as the tank approaches full.
- Remove portable tanks from your boat and fill them at the pump in a collection pan, where spills are less likely to occur and easier to clean up.
- Use an absorbent pad or place a spill collection bottle under the fuel vent to collect accidental overflow.

IN CASE OF A SPILL

- If you see or experience a spill, stop the spill at the source and contact the marina staff immediately.

- All marinas should have spill kits. Clean up drips and spills with an oil absorbent pad, boom or pillow.
- Immediately notify the marina and the Coast Guard if you cause a spill — it's the law. Call the National Response Center at (800) 424-8802.
- Do not use emulsifiers or dispersants (soap) to treat or disperse a spill; this is prohibited by federal law and may result in a significant fine.

CLEAN CAREFULLY

- Clean as much of your boat as you can before launching it for the season. Wash on land where the water can be collected and treated or soak into the ground. Don't wash your boat on a paved surface that drains into a storm sewer or lake.
- A good coat of wax prevents surface dirt from becoming ingrained.
- While on the water, wash your boat above the waterline by hand with a sponge and plain water. Do not use cleaning solvents on your boat when it is in the water.
- Use natural cleaners, such as lime juice, borax and baking soda. See the Boater Tip Sheet titled “Nontoxic Cleaning Alternatives.” Or choose cleaning products that are environmentally friendly (e.g., nontoxic, biodegradable and phosphate-free).
- Avoid detergents that contain phosphates, ammonia, sodium hypochlorite (bleach), chlorinated solvents, petroleum distillates or lye.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

- Prevent the spread of invasive species and fish diseases by not transferring water, fish, fish eggs or other aquatic organisms between waterways.
- At the boat launch, inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and remove any plants, sediment and animals.
- On land, drain all water from the motor, live well, bilge and transom well.
- Empty your bait bucket into the trash, not the water.
- After leaving the launch wash your boat, tackle, trailer and other equipment with hot (104°) tap water or a high-pressure sprayer. Or, allow your boat and other equipment to dry thoroughly in the sun for at least five days before moving to another body of water — some invasive species may not be visible to the naked eye and can survive for long periods of time out of water.
- If you have used your watercraft where a fish disease called viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) has spread (check with your local DNR), disinfect your boat before moving to an uninfected lake.

STASH YOUR TRASH

- If trash blows overboard, retrieve it. Consider it “crew overboard” practice.
- Never toss fishing line or cigarette butts overboard. They are made of plastic.
- Choose reusable tarps or recycle your boat storage shrink wrap.
- Clean your fish at a fish-cleaning station — not at the dock.

From wisconsin-clean-marina.org

Bruce Brennan

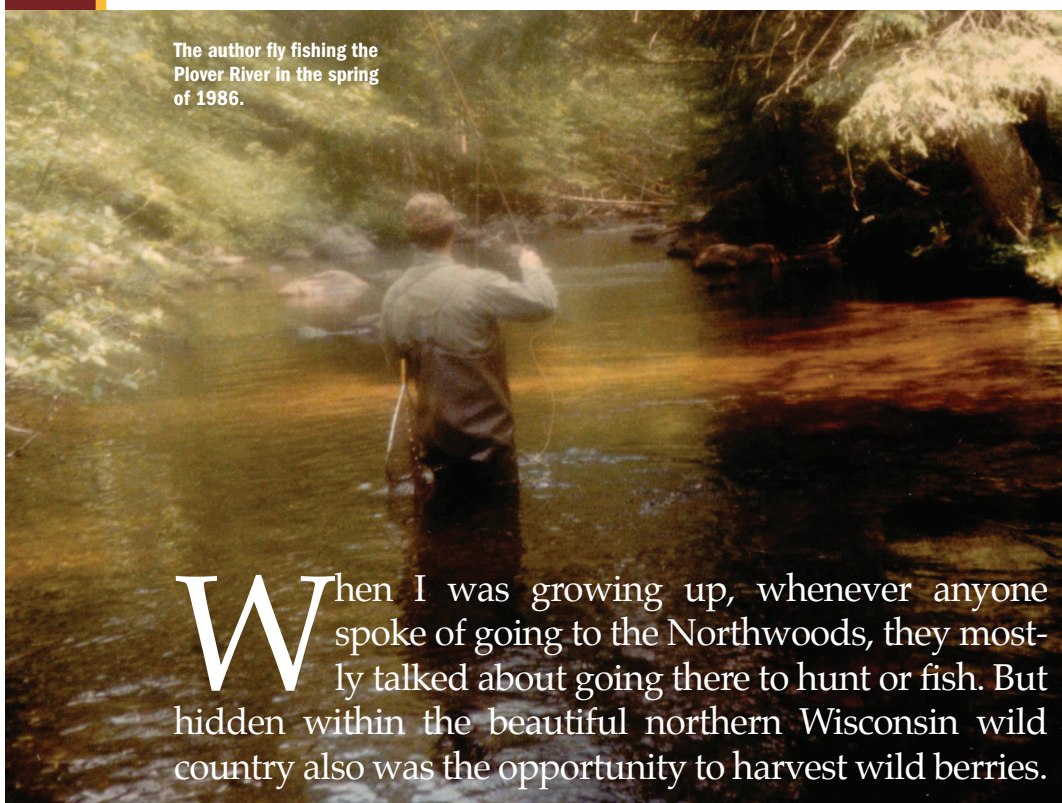
Blackberry winter

When blossoms make us stop and savor the moment.



BORN1945/FLOK R

The author fly fishing the Plover River in the spring of 1986.



DALE VERTEL

When I was growing up, whenever anyone spoke of going to the Northwoods, they mostly talked about going there to hunt or fish. But hidden within the beautiful northern Wisconsin wild country also was the opportunity to harvest wild berries.

Strawberries, raspberries, blueberries (or the very similar huckleberries) were hard to find. When we ran across them, we usually just picked and ate them on the spot.

Blackberries were different. We had a special taste for the prized berries and they were not hard to find, at least not for us. We hunted rabbits in the winter and rabbits hang out in briar patches, mostly blackberry brambles. So, because we followed the rabbits, we knew where to find the blackberries in the summer and sought out the remote patches to pick undisturbed.

In the spring, bright white blossoms also give away the blackberry bush.

I first noted the blossoms on blackberry

briars one unusually cold early June morning while cutting through the woods to get to a brook trout "crick" with my Pa. The white blossoms were fragrant and resembled Ma's rose bush blooms. Pa told me to remember the spot because come late summer, there was going to be a load of blackberries for the pickin'.

From that time on, I tried to keep note of berry patches for hunting cottontails in October and picking plump blackberries in mid-September.

One year, we met one of Pa's friends at a bend of the crick. He was standing next to a huge patch of blooming blackberries. The white blossoms made him stick out like a lone tree on a snow-covered hillside.

Old John already had some chubby

flame-red native brookies. He had them stacked in layers of wet grass, which he had gathered from along the crick to keep the trout moist. He caught them on some lively night crawlers that he had picked the night before and he asked if we wanted some. Pa told him "No, but thanks anyway." We had some smaller angle-worms that worked just as good for us in luring brook trout.

Old John asked which way we came in and Pa told him we had cut through the woods instead of taking the old grown-over logging road that crossed the stream. Old John had taken the same route. We had passed a positively massive patch of blackberry brambles in full bloom.

I asked Old John if he had seen any other blackberry brambles in bloom on his way in. He pointed his rod, indicating he came across one good patch along an intersecting fire lane and had stopped to look it over while taking in the sweet-smelling blooms. Seeing those beautiful blooms on such a contrasting cold day was breathtaking.

Old John pointed out that most people are oblivious of such a natural event. It is impossible to enjoy such a rare sight if you're sitting in the house.

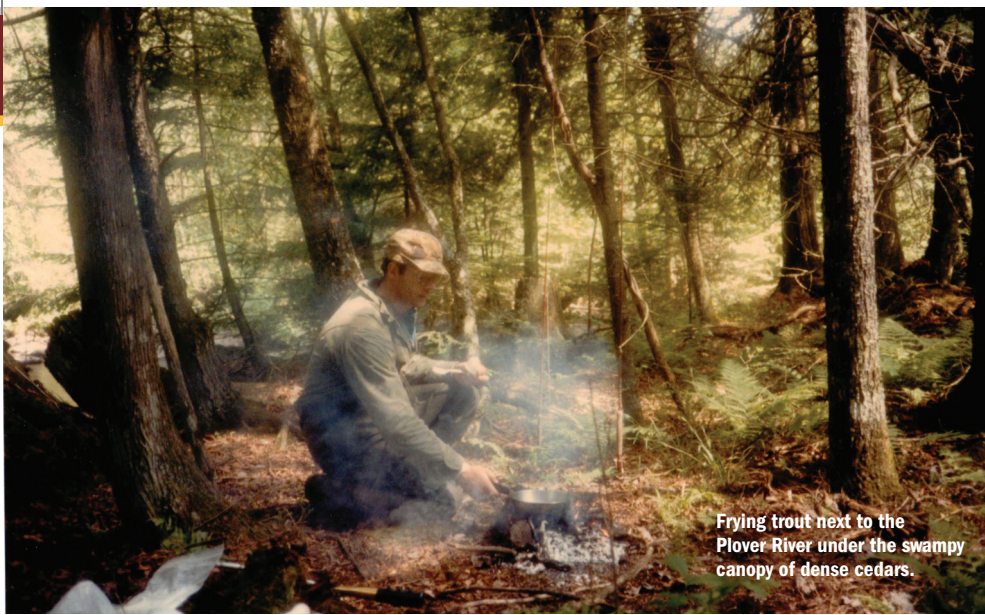
I guess Pa and John were such good friends and got along because they looked at nature in the same way and would rather be outdoors most of their waking hours.

It was still very chilly. You could see your breath. The "sap" was running from all of our noses and we swathed them from time to time with a long swipe of our coat sleeves. Old John told me that the odd cold weather when the blackberries are still blooming is called a "Blackberry Winter."

I had never heard the phrase before. Old John said his grandparents passed along the name from even older folklore. Old John's explanation for the phrase origin, "Blackberry Winter," was based on the unseasonably cold weather and the masses of pure white flowers, which resembled clinging snow on the vine.

He thought the cold weather helped keep the blooms fresh so people like us could enjoy them longer and hopefully pass on the experience to others. I could sense that he was delighted to have passed along such a remarkable legend to a young'un like me.

After that enlightening encounter with Old John, it was a long time before I experienced a "Blackberry Winter"



Frying trout next to the Plover River under the swampy canopy of dense cedars.

DALE VIERTEL

again. Old John and my Pa passed away. As time lapsed, I too unfortunately forgot about the unusual occurrence until I went trout fishing with a friend for the last time in Wisconsin before taking a new job in Florida.

Dale and I planned a final fishing trip along our favorite river. It would develop into a bittersweet fishing trip because Dale was planning to leave the state too for a more lucrative job in California. Dale and I had fished for trout all over the county since we met in high school. Over the years, we enjoyed one particular stretch of the Plover River the most.

Dale and I had planned to arrive at the stream before the sun came up. At daybreak, I would fish upstream and he would fish downstream. We would meet at a beautiful deep crystal clear pool that always held some fat brookies that were just long enough to fit in my cast iron skillet.

It was a crisp morning. Trout season had only been open for a few weeks. I donned my chest waders and stepped into the gurgling stream. It was barely dawn as I carefully worked my Mickey Finn streamer. Since it was so cold, I figured dry flies would not work as well until later on in the day when and if it warmed up.

A big brown trout shot out in a blur from under a huge submerged log and took my fly. He darted back for his safe haven as he bent my light fly rod into an arch. I finally had to give him some line to prevent the 2-pound test leader from breaking. He chugged on the line disappearing deeper and deeper underneath the log when the line suddenly became stationary. Despite his desperate escape tactics, the rod had finally stopped twitching. I still had tension and was hooked up but not on that big red and yellow spotted brown trout. I pointed my pole tip under the log and pulled the

line tight hoping to get the fly back.

Unfortunately, the trout wrapped my line around some sticks under the log, and then broke off! I slowly withdrew my line from the tangles. Even though big trout had done this to me countless times before, it always gave me a momentary helpless feeling of great loss and defeat.

Fighting the trout had taken my total attention. But dawn had now fully broken and I could see a magical wonderland of snowy-covered berry brush all the way to the next crick bend. Losing a big trout always gets my blood up. But this time I just stood there with my flyless line swaying limply back and forth in the fast water behind me.

A pleasant memory from almost 30 years before came over me. I recalled a wise old man telling me a story. Once again I was standing in the middle of a "Blackberry Winter."

I tied on another fly and slowly fished each hole while taking in the dense white blooms with sweet scent that followed me upstream. It looked like the stream was the road ahead with high white snowbanks on each side. At the final bend before our meeting place the flora crowding the stream abruptly returned to total lush green. I took a final look back, but it was over.

I met Dale around 9:30 and we sat on a big rock in the middle of the stream to clean our brook trout for breakfast. We made a small fire and brewed some coffee, fried some eggs then a few bacon strips. I rolled the trout in a mixture of flour, salt and black pepper then carefully placed them into the black skillet with the sizzling bacon oil. Some of the brookies barely fit in the pan. The melding aromas of the steaming coffee and fish frying in bacon grease was beckoning for two ravenous appetites.

We found a scenic spot near the creek

to sit and enjoy our breakfast, laughing and joking as usual. We recalled some of our most memorable trout fishing excursions. Taking pictures of my outings is something I rarely do. But I am glad Dale took some. We broke camp and left everything the way we found it. Dale and I fished around the deep pool catching and releasing everything we caught. We were quiet. It was hard to tell he was there except for an occasional splashing fish at the end of his line.

When it was time to leave, we cut directly through the woods along an old deep deer trail that led to the logging road my car was parked on. As we walked along the trail, I felt sad that this might be the last time we fished trout together in Wisconsin. I noticed that Dale walked with his head down.


I stopped under a big white oak tree to look closer for some blackberry brush blossoms. I had not seen any since just before the meeting place along the stream. I asked Dale if he had seen any blackberry brambles in bloom. He gave me an odd look and said he did not see anything blooming. I pointed to a jack-in-the-pulpit nearby and said there still are some plants blooming wild in the woods.

That day was the last time in 27 years that I saw blackberry blossoms in full bloom. My first experience as a child trout fishing surely amazed me, caught my curiosity and left a strong imprint. The second encounter many years later re-established that memory that had been forgotten and overlooked but not lost. Maybe these special "winters" are only meant for certain people who need that extra little nudge to fully awaken them to truly appreciate and be thankful for our natural woodlands.

Days before the opening of trout season in Wisconsin, I always vividly recall myself trout fishing on those two separate wondrous bygone cold days in spring. By owning these memories like templates, it is easy for me to recreate and enjoy another new "Blackberry Winter" wherever I am.



Bruce Brennan writes about his Wisconsin outdoors memories from Satellite Beach, Fla., where he lives with his wife, Sandy, and their two Lakeland Terriers. Brennan retired a year ago from the Department of Defense at Patrick Air Force Base with almost 33 years of total government service. He was born in Wausau and graduated from Wausau High School before it became Wausau East in 1969. He says, "Ever since my youth, I've been an avid hunter, fly fisherman and skier. Wisconsin will always be my true home."



Add up the numbers on the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail

Seven lakes, 12 points of interest,
nine rest stops and 14 miles to explore.

Joan Fogelberg and Bill Zager

There's a trail gem in western Wisconsin that is nearing its third anniversary. Located on an abandoned railroad bed, the 14-mile packed limestone surface on the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail extends from the Soo Line Park in Amery to the Lotus Lake County Park in Osceola. From there it's a short hop to the Gandy Dancer Trail, Interstate Park with camping, and the Polk County Visitor Center where a variety of information and maps are available for the area.

To get the numbers to add up, the Friends of Stower Seven Lakes State Trail (dedicated to its vision of "Creating, promoting and preserving the best-loved non-motorized state trail in Wisconsin") have worked tirelessly to improve the trail, developing nine rest stops, 12 points of interest with signage and benches with a view.

Trail scenery on the Stower is magnificent! Variety is evident from one mile post to the next as one passes seven lakes, a variety of woodlands, prairie, wetlands and an assortment of wildlife and flowers, some rare.

In fall the colors are blazing, winning the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks' Gold Seal Award in 2011 for *Best Fall Colors*. The call of an eagle soaring above or the sudden splash of a turtle are not uncommon sounds and migrating birds abound.

In the winter months when the mornings are covered in frost, a lone walker and dog can take in the first light before the start of another day. Nature lovers

and photographers also visit the trail for its unique birds, wildlife and vegetation recognizing that each season has its own beauty.

Four seasons of invitation bring folks for a variety of activities. The trail is open for walking, biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing and is welcoming to people of all ages and abilities, particularly for its level terrain and easy on/off access. During the spring and summer months and well into fall, biking is the most popular activity. And, it's not unusual to see a parent pushing a stroller or pulling a burley. In the heat of day, a welcome shaded bench is a great place to quench the thirst and have a snack or even lunch.

Once it snows the trail beckons skiers and snowshoers. And often into the night a headlamp lights the way for the extra hardy. With the exception of walking, these winter activities require snow and during the most recent winter months there has been adequate snow for grooming trails in two directions.

The center of the trail is reserved for snowshoeing and walking. This is the time of year to take in the quiet pristine beauty.

Mileposts mark the way for the 14-mile stretch. Beginning in Amery to milepost 3, depending on the season, leatherback turtles, columbine and rose pogonia orchid may be seen.

Sandhill cranes, coyotes and Blanding's turtles have been spotted between mileposts 3 and 7 and from mileposts 7 to 11 there is butterfly weed, railroad information, wild berries and a floating bog.

Near the Lotus Lake trailhead beginning at milepost 13 there are eagles, snapping turtles, warblers, a tamarack swamp and the lotus flower (*Nelumbo lutea*) found in only a few lakes in Wisconsin.

The area between mileposts 3 and 4 is some of the richest native prairie in Polk County. The Friends undertook a prairie restoration project and planted 7,000 plugs of 33 species of native flowers and grasses in the Deronda area, which was previously cleared of rocks, invasive plants and debris.

Friends' sponsored events throughout the year draw folks who enjoy competitions and good old time gatherings. In June, the Bike Ride and Nature Walk event is held during Amery Trail Days drawing local folks and some from out of state.

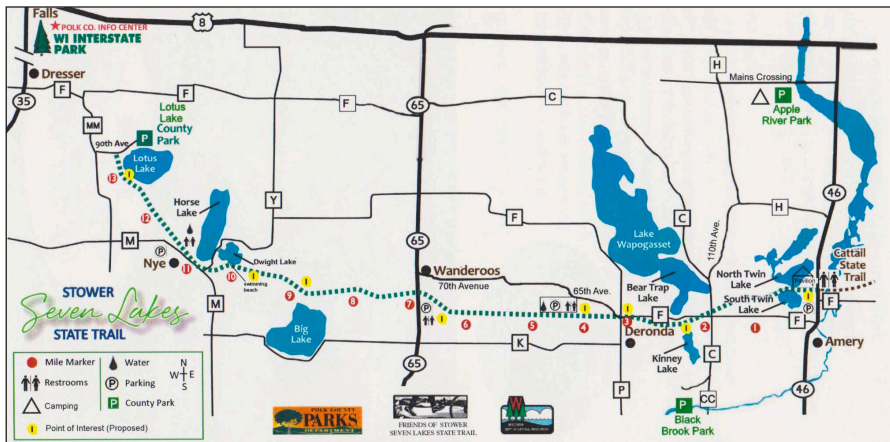
During the previous event a couple came from Coon Rapids, Minn. He has biked thousands of miles on various trails and she follows by van meeting him in a nearby town.

The Seven Lakes Triathlon event also

JOAN FOGELBERG

North Twin Lake

STOWER SEVEN LAKES STATE TRAIL



GARY OSBORN



JOAN FOGELBERG

occurs in June and consists of three segments: a 16-mile bike ride, a 3.5-mile canoe/kayak paddle and a 3.1-mile run on the trail.

Come October, the Changing Colors Ride ties in with Oktoberfest held in Wandoos.

January brings the candlelight cross-country ski event. Winter is the perfect time of year to gather with family, friends and neighbors to venture out after dark and experience the lights. Luminaries light the way for two miles on the trail from Soo Line Park pavilion in Amery to County Road C. Visitors bring supper or snacks and sit at tables under the pavilion while enjoying a hot chocolate or cider served up by the Friends near a warming fire.

No matter what time of year, the trail invites and it never disappoints.

In addition to the trailheads at Soo Line Park and Lotus Lake County Park, parking and rest areas are in Deronda, Wandoos and Nye with restrooms generally open from May to October.

No need to pack a lunch either, as ad-

acent to the trail, there is a restaurant in Wandoos, formerly a school from 1909 to 1967. Or, purchase food and beverages at a convenience store in Nye. The towns of Amery, Osceola, Dresser and St. Croix Falls also offer many eateries.

Trail operation is unique. A tri-party agreement with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Polk County Parks and Recreation and the Friends provides guidelines for trail maintenance and improvements. The Friends of Stower Seven Lakes State Trail participate on a volunteer basis and provide additional support through donations, grants and limited reimbursements from state trail passes.

Membership consists of a board of directors, trail volunteers who help maintain the trail and make improvements, and members who contribute by paying dues and promoting trail use.

In return, members take great joy in seeing young children riding their bicycles, walkers with their dogs, bird watchers with their binoculars and those on the trail who enjoy winter ac-

tivities such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

To visit the trail is to take in beauty and solitude and reflect on the area's history.

Imagine the days when Wisconsin was covered with glaciers leaving a legacy of lakes and valleys. The area became settled and the Chippewa appreciated the beauty and natural abundance as they settled along the lakes, built their villages and raised their children.

History later records the coming of eastern settlers and the changes they made as the modern march of civilization made its way westward. Soon, the first railroads plied their way from St. Paul and subsequently the line ran between Dresser and Amery and to Sault Ste. Marie.

The railroads began to lose favor when highways and trucks took over most of the burden of hauling goods. Railroad tracks that had been so vital earlier were then removed leaving a perfect place to connect people in new ways. After many years of study, meetings and conversation, the abandoned railroad had a new identity.

And, as you reflect on the past history of the trail, think about the future of the trail. One day, it will be connected to the Gandy Dancer trail. How many ideas and dreams will come to those who are able to get away from the hustle and bustle of modern life and meander down one of the best-loved trails in Wisconsin?

Bill Zager is president of Friends of Stower Seven Lakes State Trail. Joan Fogelberg is a member/volunteer of the Friends group.

Vision: Creating, promoting and preserving the best-loved non-motorized state trail in Wisconsin.

Mission: Our volunteer organization serves the public by:

- Connecting communities and the environment in new ways.
- Inviting people of all ages and abilities to recreate and explore.
- Inspiring and challenging new and existing members to excellence in pursuit of our vision.
- Collaborating with our trail partners as defined in written agreements.

Trail Map: To obtain a trail map go to:
dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/stower7lakes/pdfs/map.pdf

Celebrate Earth Day



Tree planting is a great way to get kids outdoors and interested in the future of a healthy environment.

PATRICIA D. MURPHY

And look beyond it with its founder, Gaylord Nelson.

Ellen Corso

There is no shortage of actions you can take, choices you can make, or events you can attend to honor Earth Day (April 22). Personal awareness and behavior change in our lives can add up to a significant benefit in our communities. Wisconsin has events and opportunities in abundance to inspire and inform on this 43rd annual Earth Day. Here are a few.

Plant a tree

As the date also coincides with Arbor Day (April 26 this year), over time Earth Day has taken on the role of tree-planting. Planting trees helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cleans pollution, secures soil to prevent erosion and provides homes for biodiversity. Be sure to pick a tree that you know can survive in your climate. If you're unsure about what that might be, ask at your local garden shop or consider a Gift of Green.

The Gift of Green is a packet of 300 tree seedlings for conservation purposes from DNR's tree nursery program and helps contribute to a greener, healthier environment. Call the Griffith State Nursery at (715) 424-3700 to order; after the nursery receives your payment, it will send you a gift certificate to present. Visit dnr.wi.gov/topic/

[treeplanting/](#)for more information.

Get the beat

Walk harmoniously with nature in Wisconsin Rapids from April 12 to 14. Join in the "Central Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Festival: A Celebration of Grasslands" with greater prairie chicken viewing, birding tours, children's crafts, wildlife talks and demonstrations, local vendors, nature art and literature,

book sales and more. Observe the prairie chicken's unique courtship dance and hear its resonant boom. Be ready to get up early and make your reservations to view birding blinds. Call (715) 343-6215 or visit: prairiechickenfestival.org/

Capture nature

Join the Janesville Rotary Botanical Gardens Earth Day Extravaganza, a botanical showcase providing education and appreciation of horticulture for all people. In honor of Earth Day the gardens will be open to the public at no charge April 19 to 20 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The celebration will include displays, activities for children of all ages, as well as self-guided walks, presentations and entertainment for families.

Stop at the Cottage Garden Gallery shop featuring works of art from local Wisconsin artists. For additional information call (608)



Wisconsin's state nursery program grows high quality, native tree seedlings and wildlife shrubs at reasonable prices to plant on private and public lands for conservation purposes.

PATRICIA D. MURPHY

752-3885 or visit: rotarybotanicalgardens.org/ The Rotary Botanical Gardens is located at 1455 Palmer Drive in Janesville.

Clear out the clutter

Why not organize a community garage sale or donation drive of household items? Sometimes we take up a lot of space with stuff we don't really need, want or use and there are people who are in need of basic necessities. Plus, a lot of your unwanted clutter can be used by local charities to sell for much-needed cash.

Network and take action

The 7th Annual Nelson Institute Earth Day Conference is April 15 at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison. This year's conference will raise awareness of the many frontiers of environmental action, including, but also beyond, traditional wilderness areas: in neighborhoods and communities, in forward-thinking business models and in sustainable urban areas. This one-day event features appearances from renowned primatologist Jane Goodall, marine conservation advocate and filmmaker Céline Cousteau and Nelson Institute director Paul Robbins.

For more information visit the Nelson Institute website: nelson.wisc.edu/events/earth_day/2013/location.php

Family fun

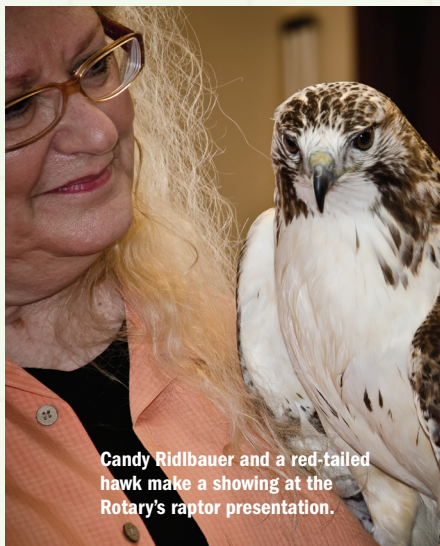
Mark the calendar for April 28 — a day of family fun and exploring nature's secrets, join Friends of Sandhill Open House from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The property features low, sandy uplands

of oak, aspen and jack pine forests, large

marshes and many flowages. A small herd of American bison, white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, Canada geese, ducks, loons, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, shorebirds, songbirds, hawks, owls and furbearers find a great home at Sandhill. You will find the land is a remote, quiet wildlife oasis amidst a bustling world dominated by people. Sandhill Wildlife Area is located in southwestern Wood County. The headquarters and visitors entrance is at 1715 County Highway X, Babcock. For more information call (715) 884-2437.

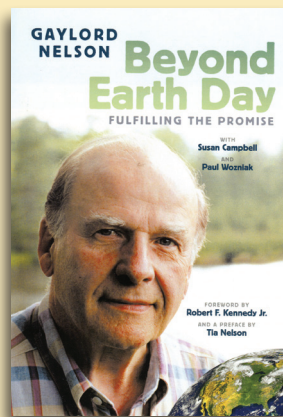
Find Froggy Hike Night on May 2 at Hemlock Curve Nature Trail. Learn about the interesting lives of native frogs in the Peshtigo Harbor Wildlife area. The hike is about 2.5 miles and insect/tick repellent is recommended. The program is free. For more information call (715) 732-7784 or visit: therealnorth.com/

Ellen Corso is the circulation manager for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.



Candy Ridlbauer and a red-tailed hawk make a showing at the Rotary's raptor presentation.

KRIS KOCH



Look beyond Earth Day

Amanda Laurenzi

Gaylord Nelson, author of *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise* and governor of Wisconsin from 1959 to 1963, founded what we have come to recognize as Earth Day beginning April 22, 1970. Nelson died in 2005 but his message of global environmental stewardship lives on in his writings and in the public awareness campaigns of those who continue to teach his work.

In *Beyond Earth Day* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012) Nelson explores what the major threats to our environment are and how humans can help push back the effects these problems have on us and our planet.

"This new edition of *Beyond Earth Day* will introduce the wisdom of Gaylord Nelson to new generations. His words are as meaningful and perhaps even more important now as they were four decades ago. He understood the value of reaching children through the schools: hopefully they will be encouraged to work together around the world for the future of planet Earth." — Jane Goodall

The book also contains a foreword by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and a preface by Tia Nelson.

Amanda Laurenzi writes for Wisconsin Natural Resources when she isn't studying at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

Leopold's legacy

Carolyn Rumery Betz

On Earth Day, consider visiting "The Shack" and nearby Leopold Center. Maybe it will be your first time. Or maybe it's time to visit again.

Among the many legacies that Aldo Leopold left Wisconsin are the meticulous phenological records that he kept, tracking plants and wildlife around his shack in Sauk County, a tradition still followed by the family and staff of the Aldo Leopold Foundation.

"Phenology was a daily pleasure of my mother's," says Trish Stevenson, daughter of Nina Leopold Bradley and granddaughter of Aldo Leopold.

Stevenson has a particular passion for tracking birds, and she documents their spring arrival dates on the wall calendar in her Black Earth home in the tradition of the family.

Ongoing phenological records are maintained by the Aldo Leopold Foundation with help from Teresa Mayer, who worked closely with Bradley before her death in 2011. The cumulative records cover about 300 seasonal events. These data are managed by Stan Temple, emeritus professor at UW-Madison and a member of the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts' (WICCI) wildlife and outreach groups.

Temple gives dozens of lectures each year on phenology and climate change. Temple and his colleagues recently used Leopold's records, as well as those of Henry David Thoreau, to document that native plants in the eastern United States are flowering as much as a month earlier in response to a warming climate.

For information on visiting Leopold's shack and farm go to aldoleopold.org/visit/tours.shtml

Carolyn Rumery Betz is an outreach specialist at the University of Wisconsin Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies.



Trish Stevenson

CAROLYN RUMERY BETZ

In a droughty year, restored prairie was cut and baled for hay, taking advantage of a USDA compatible use authorization.

Making prairie hay Better than a snowbank.

JACK BROUGHTON, APPLIED ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

Elizabeth R. Tiller

“Conservation Practices can help producers weather historic drought,” proclaimed the August 2012 headline on the home webpage of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

This was welcome news for many drought-strapped farmers in southern Wisconsin who could then take advantage of an expedited Compatible Use Authorization (CUA) allowing haying or grazing on conservation easements administered by the NRCS, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

One such beneficiary was third-generation dairy farmer Stewart Badertscher of Brodhead.

“My grandfather pastured his cows on marsh hay by the Sugar River,” Badertscher recollected. “In fact, he used to hunt prairie chickens down there in the floodplain around 1905 or 1910.”

Badertscher described how his father then drained the low-lying land and farmed soybeans and corn on it for about 30 years. A few years ago, though, Badertscher took advantage of the NRCS Wetland Reserve Program (originated in the 1990s) and restored a prairie to 80 acres of floodplain, protecting it under a permanent easement. Under a cost-share agreement, the NRCS helped seed it with native species such as switchgrass, Indian grass and big bluestem.

In August 2012, these same acres of restored prairie provided an emergency source of hay in a drought-plagued year.

“We usually get four cuttings of hay on my other 100 hay acres,” he offered. “The first one this year was the usual high quality hay that I like for the milk cows. But due to the drought, I was short on the later cuttings that provide the lower quality hay I need for my heifers and dry cows. It isn’t the highest quality hay but it is ‘better than a snowbank,’ as we say around here!”

There is a benefit to society at large as well. The ability to put more hay on the market from conservation lands in spite of the drought helps keep the supply up and prices down. Everyone benefits.

There are some restrictions on exercising compatible uses. Foremost is a critical period designated by each state to protect nesting birds. Haying can only commence after most young birds have fledged. In Wisconsin, this translates to the month of August.

NRCS conservationists can also require that an equivalent part of an easement is left unmowed, to provide ongoing wildlife habitat, as was done on Badertscher’s acreage. Occasionally, concerns about endangered or threatened species prohibit the implementation of a compatible use, but usually there are solutions to agency concerns and permission is granted.



Equivalent strips of prairie vegetation are often left uncut in the conservation easement to provide wildlife habitat.

JACK BROUGHTON, APPLIED ECOLOGICAL SERVICES



Upland sandpipers return to Midwest restored prairie lands when they come “back from Argentine” as Aldo Leopold wrote.

ELIZABETH R. TILLER, APPLIED ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

Our legacy

Many of our richest Wisconsin agricultural lands were once veritable seas of tall grass prairie. Originating at the close of the last glacial period some 9,000 to 10,000 years ago, the diverse mixture of grasses and forbs called tall-grass prairie covered nearly all of Iowa, the northern two-thirds of Illinois, and stretched north to Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan and south to Arkansas and Missouri.

The deep and spreading root systems of prairie plants thwarted initial attempts at cultivation until the invention of the commercial steel moldboard plow in the 1860s. With cultivation came settlement, and conversion of rich prairie soils to crops of corn, wheat, soybeans and more.

Eventually, only remnants of the original vast prairie remained. Once estimated to cover 2.1 million acres in Wisconsin, today only about 10,000 acres of prairie remain. The story is similar wherever prairie existed as the dominant original vegetation on the Midwestern landscape.

In low areas that are difficult to cultivate, patches of wet prairie persisted into the 20th century. These areas of “wild hay” or “marsh hay” were commonly used as pasture land by farmers (as was done by Badertscher’s grandfather). They were also often cut for hay or bedding late in the summer when soils were dry enough to allow access by horses and wagons.

One such area, the focus of a seminal Wisconsin study, “A biological and statistical analysis of the vegetation of a typical wild hay meadow,” was published in 1914 in the *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*. For his study site, botanist Arlow Burdette Stout needed to go no further than a wild hay meadow owned by the Dane County Fair Association near Madison. There, using labor-intensive transects, Stout recorded a noteworthy total of 110 plant species!

Gradually, however, even these few remaining patches of wet prairie were drained and cropped, or degraded by hydrological changes on the larger landscape. “Marsh hay” was but a memory passed down to today’s landowners along with recollections of prairie chickens or other prairie wildlife. People began to miss some of their other ecological functions as well — water

quality protection, aquifer recharge, and erosion and flood control.

There also were people who remembered the plaintive song of the eastern meadowlark, the exuberant song of a bobolink in flight, or the riotous blooms of butterfly milkweed and blazing star. They missed the aesthetics of the prairie. Some of these people also began to think about ways to restore prairie.

Diversity matters

With the establishment of the Conservation Reserve Program in 1985 (vegetating marginal, erosion-prone farmlands), and the Wetland Reserve Program in 1990 (restoring and enhancing formerly drained wetlands), new opportunities arose for re-establishing prairie on the landscape. Both of these Farm Bill programs operate with voluntary participation by private landowners.

In these efforts, diversity matters — both species diversity on each particular field as well as the distribution and types of restored prairie patches. The Department of Natural Resources addresses the latter by linking restored private prairie lands to State Natural Areas wherever possible, forming larger contiguous blocks of varied habitats. They also look for opportunities to purchase private easements to expand public access.

The value of plant species diversity is acknowledged, but implementation is often constrained by cost and personnel. In an effort to improve both outcomes and efficiency, the NRCS in neighboring eastern Iowa began using a third-party vendor, Applied Ecological Services (AES) of Brodhead. The two worked closely to establish protocols that ensure locally buildable projects and measurable outcomes.

With this partnership, Iowa NRCS became a leader in diversity prescriptions, advising mixtures composed of 30 to 50 species rather than the usual five to 10. AES is assisting in fine-tuning mixtures to each site’s moisture and soil type, and in recommending local seed sources, further ensuring successful outcomes.


A diverse restored prairie is a rich tapestry; its many layers, shapes, textures, and colors are interwoven in an intricate design. This design includes species of butterflies, birds, and mammals, many of which have declining populations throughout their ranges.

In a successful restored prairie ecosystem, the regal fritillary butterfly caterpillar can find the violet species it needs as a host plant and its favored milkweed nectar sources. A northern harrier benefits from a robust base of prey — rodents and other small vertebrates — allowing it to nest and raise young. Upland

plover, bobolink, grasshopper sparrow and Henslow’s sparrow are among the species that find the requisite area, vegetative structure, and abundant insects crucial to successful nesting and raising of young.

At the same time, the complex root mass of prairie plants facilitates groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, and soil development. As an added bonus, with most of their biomass underground, prairie species are adapted to withstand drought, and require only modest maintenance effort such as periodic prescribed burning or mowing.

In myriad ways, patches of restored prairie act as natural savings accounts, much as that marsh hayfield in the days of our ancestors. The human landowner is afforded the security of dipping into compatible uses of grazing and haying while still leaving the principal intact.

It is that principal — diverse, vibrant and complex restored prairie communities — that will help stitch our landscapes together again. So, how about that soggy field where the corn crop floods out most springs? Or that droughty patch of sandy soil that is the first to scorch in the summer? What about the old field in your local land trust? Might there be a prairie in your future? 



The savannah sparrow is one of the grass-land songbirds whose successful nesting is protected by the established “critical period” during which haying is prohibited on restored prairie.

ELIZABETH R. TILLER, APPLIED ECOLOGICAL SERVICES

Elizabeth R. Tiller, Ph.D. is an ecologist and ornithologist who works as a communications associate for the ecological restoration firm, Applied Ecological Services of Brodhead. She traces her passion for prairies to growing up in the “prairie peninsula” of Michigan, near Kalamazoo — often searching for prairie remnants along railroads and old cemeteries.



MAGAZINE-WORTHY

I am sending you this photo of a young Cooper's hawk that I took just outside of my apartment complex. The bird makes a habit of sitting on a power line while hunting a grassy field that is located under the line. I really think this is an excellent example of how these birds take advantage of a manmade object. I hope you find it worthy of your magazine.

Jay Gollhardt
Sheboygan



NO PHOTO STUNT

If I perceive the cover photo of the December 2012 issue correctly, I see one of the most foolish stunts ever! Is that photographer really perched on an ice pack and being kept from sliding off into the icy water by a rather frail shelf of marginally strong ice?

I hope no reader assumes this is a safe way to take a photo no matter how picturesque the subject!

Phillip B. Mayer
Salem, S.C

We asked the photographer, Melody Walsh of Washington Island, to explain how the photo was taken. Here's what she had to say: Ice shoves are created when huge chunks of ice are broken up and winds strong enough from the right direction "shove" them

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.

onto the shore. Although it appears in the photo that we are in the middle of the lake floating on ice, we were on ice pushed up on the shore. Rocky shoreline is beneath us, not water. Many ice formations were safely available to us to photograph.

Living on an island surrounded by Lake Michigan requires the utmost attention to ice conditions. I confess to being one of the biggest "scaredy cats" when it comes to ice and water. You can be assured any photo I take contains limited risk factors. Frostbite was more a factor than falling into freezing water! As for the details of this photo, the person on the ice was attempting to get the sun lined up with a point of ice. He could have stood on the ice below his feet or he could position himself prone and be closer to get the right angle. He chose the second option. If you look closely you will see the ice beneath his legs, not water.

HUNTING IS MORE THAN SHOOTING ANIMALS

Firstly, I would like to applaud the response to Ms. Siewert's letter in the December 2012 issue where she indicated she was disappointed with the emphasis on hunting in a previous issue. It is a fact, the Wisconsin DNR mandate covers not just environmental concerns but also wildlife management. Also, there are articles at other times of the year that disappoint hunters as well. The letter writer needs to really understand the circle that involves not just hunters but those interested in preserving and enjoying the outdoors. As a hunter education instructor, I explain to future young hunters that there are many stages that a hunter will go through. At the very top, is the sportsmen stage, where the hunter is enjoying his/her day out in the outdoors and not upset because they didn't fill their game bag. I have been in this stage for a long time, wondering at our small place in the world while sitting on a deer stand or stump while bird hunting. A

lot of hunters are also hikers, cross-country skiers and enjoy articles about those venues too. But come the fall, hunting adds a new dimension to being in the outdoors. Articles concerning hunting places, techniques and quarry excite the hunter for the fine fall days in the woods or fields. A hunter in the sportsmen stage will notice lots of things, because of less leaf cover and density, that earlier in the year hikers may miss. Oh, by the way, hunters share concerns about invasive species, wildfires and forestry management too. I guess what I am saying in all of this is that the letter writer is condemning hunting without really knowing the whole story. The magazine is multi-dimensional, covering all things in season. I would not want it any other way.

Jane George
Hudson

HUNTERS SHOULD BE THANKED, NOT CRITICIZED

I'm writing in response to Carol Siewert's letter in the December 2012 issue about being disappointed with the amount of emphasis put on hunting. I may be wrong but she needs to realize that a lot of the public land was and is purchased and maintained by money from hunting licenses and tax on hunting equipment. I've been hunting since the 1960's. Back then about the only people I ran into on public lands were hunters and berry pickers (For the record I am a berry picker too). Most of my hunting takes place in marsh areas with dikes and in the last 15 years or so I've seen an influx of hikers, dog walkers, bicyclists, birders and nature lovers, which is great. But do these people support these areas financially? I would think that people who enjoy the natural world would be thanking the hunters, trappers and fishermen, not criticizing them. If not for them it is possible that very little land would be available for all outdoor enthusiasts.

Anthony Wenzel
Mosinee

You are right when you say that public land is maintained by money from hunting license and excise taxes on hunting equipment. In

fact, in 2011-12, \$10.5 million from the Fish and Wildlife Fund (from hunting and fishing license sales) went to managing and maintaining DNR lands for hunting and fishing. Wisconsin received almost \$12 million in federal Pittman-Robertson funding (from taxes on firearms and ammunition) that same year. In addition, much of the land DNR purchases is funded by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program which is funded by the sale of bonds to investors. The cost to pay back this debt is spread out over 20 years and comes from tax revenues, so all taxpayers contribute to the fund and benefit from its investments. To learn more about the Stewardship Fund and how it works, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "stewardship."

INVASIVE EARTHWORMS - WHAT NEXT?

Seems we are always reading about a new invasive in Wisconsin. Now it's worms ("Little worms, big consequences," December 2012). How many millions of dollars will we spend on this? We are invasive species, humans, some of the most destructive there are. What is the answer to that?

Lee Duchateau
Krakow

NOT AMERICAN-MADE

The idea for the next American Girl doll might be born around a conference table ("Branching out," October 2012) but the doll will be made in China. The American Girl headquarters may be in Middleton but its workers are not in this country. Perhaps it should be renamed "China Doll." The oak tree is beautiful. The doll, not so much.

June Van Alstine-Kons
Stevens Point

BEAR FACTS

Three pages of the bear permit point system ("More than just the luck of the draw," December 2012) was interesting but couldn't you have added two columns for bear harvest and estimated population in your table? You missed the "bear" facts.

Scott Otterson
Kiel

We carried a story in our June 2009 issue ("Bear in mind") about the black bear population in Wisconsin, how it has spread south

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.

in recent years and what we can do to keep human/bear contacts to a minimum. To learn more about our ursine neighbors, check out DNR's website at dnr.wi.gov and search "bear."

WILL BOYCOTT PARKS

I previously wrote to Governor Walker in regards to my opposition to the bill he signed for Act 168 allowing hunting and trapping in our state recreational areas for seven months of the year. However, your department has partially made a change as what I read in the *Daily Tribune*, dated December 12, 2012. Nevertheless it will still put a hazard on those that make use of those parks affected. It is apparent that the idea of such a bill was given very little thought, therefore I will no longer use our parks for camping, as I am an avid camper. I had set my tepee on 23 of your parks and some several times. Further, as a subscriber to your *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine for the past decade, I will not renew it when it expires, or those that I gifted to as gifts. In the future I will camp in the National Forest and the UP of Michigan, and that is unfortunate, for I so enjoyed the friendly atmosphere of the Wisconsin State Park System.

Franz Gruber
Nekoosa

Editor responds: Thanks for taking the time to write. We are certainly disappointed to lose you as a subscriber to the magazine and hope that you will reconsider. We have stories slated for each upcoming issue this year to highlight state trails and parks with various recreational opportunities. Act 168 — known as the Sporting Heritage Bill — has generated a lively discussion and the DNR parks staff has the challenging job of trying to implement a law that was passed by the Wisconsin Legislature. Parks staff recommended that parks not be open to hunting and trapping during the busiest times of the year. They painstakingly reviewed each park map and identified — under the criteria established in the law — what areas would be open and closed to hunting and trapping activities. The Natural Resources Board conducted five listening sessions for the public to comment on the department's proposal to carry out the law, and the state parks program accepted written and email comments on the draft proposal. After reviewing more than 2,000 comments, state park staff modified the draft implementation plan and now propose closing an additional 2,800 acres to hunting and trapping and moving back the opening day

for hunting and trapping to Nov. 15 on portions of seven state park properties. To learn more visit dnr.wi.gov and search "hunting and trapping in state parks" or visit dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/hunt. DNR has strived to reach a balance of providing additional opportunities to draw people into hunting, trapping and outdoor skills programs, while continuing to provide the wide range of outdoor activities that people have long enjoyed at Wisconsin State Park System properties. The Wisconsin State Parks program has a long history of managing hunting and trapping on state park properties. Deer and turkey hunts have been held for years at many parks, and are a necessary part of managing wildlife and habitat. The parks program also administers the southern State Forests, such as the Kettle Moraine and Point Beach state forests, which have always been open to hunting and trapping.

MAPLE SAP A SQUIRREL DELICACY

This past spring when pruning the orchard at our family cottage on the Menominee River in late March, I noticed a black squirrel (our local color variation of gray) that was moving upside down on a maple tree branch immediately in front of me, and just biting all the small branches he came across. He then ascended the tree, large branch by large branch, biting as he went. The reason was puzzling to me until the next morning, when those bite areas all had maple sap icicles. The squirrel spent half the morning, eating the icicles and licking the site until it stopped, then going to the next one. I then noticed that all the squirrels in the area were on maple trees and taking advantage of this first fresh spring forage, and had never really noticed it in 60+ years of watching squirrels.

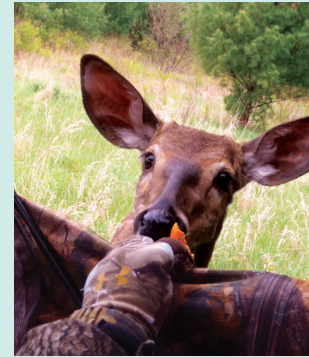
Bruce Solberg
Green Bay



LOW-FLYING CROW

This photo was taken on a back road near Milton. The crow was flying low over a harvested cornfield with the shadow on the snow forward of the bird's direction of flight. Some spread feather formation allows distinction from a blackbird, despite no set object in the photo to give it visual scale.

Annette Clark
Reeseville



VENISON A L'ORANGE

Last spring during the turkey season my hunting partner and I were unable to coax any Toms into range of our ground blind. We did however manage to call in this button buck who seemed to have an affinity for oranges.

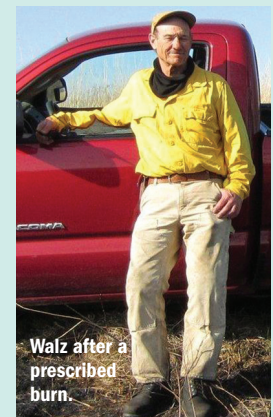
Vincent Thomalla
Marshfield

VOLUNTEER STEWARD OF THE YEAR

The State Natural Areas (SNA) program is proud to honor Bill Walz, of Milton, with the first ever 2012 Volunteer Steward of the year award. Walz's tireless efforts have benefitted Rock River SNA immensely. After a prescribed burn in fall 2010, Walz has cut, treated and removed brush patches dissecting the high quality dry prairie. The state endangered and federally threatened prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) and other sensitive plants were threatened to be shaded out by the brush. Removing it opened the landscape and increased the viewing range and habitat for grassland dependent species. He collected seeds on site to sow into areas where brush was killed and helped eliminate large areas of invasive spotted knapweed, sweet clover and parsnip.

Jared Urban, conservation biologist with the SNA program describes Walz as "Smart, honest and committed to restoration efforts at Rock River and elsewhere. He has an amazing work ethic and once used 30 gallons of herbicide — which normally lasts several months — in three days of hand-spraying."

Walz donated 570 hours in 2011 and 2012 and when not working on SNA properties, donates time to Prairie Enthusiast properties in southern Wisconsin and the Nygren Wetlands in Rockton, Ill.



Walz after a prescribed burn.

TOM MITCHELL

Choose a gift that delivers in all seasons

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Comforts

Custom Canines

Kathryn A. Kahler

If pressed to put a monetary value on them, their trainers might say they are worth \$25,000 or more. But most people who know service dogs — either from training them or living with them — consider them priceless.

Shannon Shea Becker, an IT specialist in the Department of Natural Resources, is able to look at them from both perspectives. In her spare time, she is the Director of Development for Custom Canines Service Dog Academy in Madison and volunteers five to 30 hours a week to the organization. She helps train and socialize puppies and conducts fundraisers for the 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Her house is also home to Susie, a golden retriever home companion to Becker's stepdaughter who has autism.

"Some people call them priceless," says Becker. "For a family who has an autistic child, there is no amount you can put on that security of knowing that your child isn't going to be able to bolt into the street, or bolt away from you in a crowded venue. Our daughter doesn't have that issue but Susie helps calm her so she can better focus on the task at hand."

Well-trained companions

Service dogs aren't just born that way, although that's part

Custom Canines customizes training to fit the needs of the dog's eventual owner.



GRIFFITH RANDAL PHOTOGRAPHY

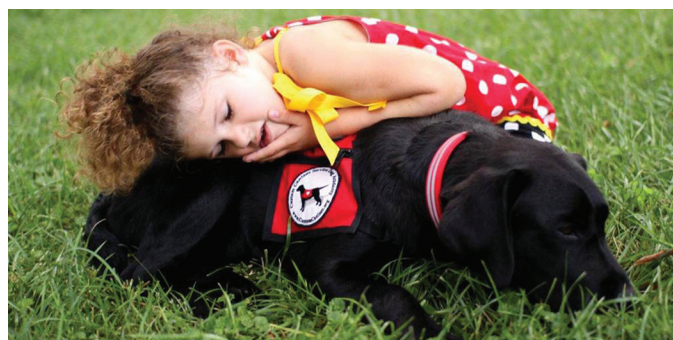
of it. At Custom Canines, the puppies are donated by breeding partners who have a proven track record of providing dogs with the health, lineage and temperament that make a good service dog. Puppies are evaluated by a veterinarian and academy staff to make sure there are no health problems, then placed with volunteer puppy-raisers who agree to provide food, shelter, basic training, and basic



ALEXIS FAM PHOTOGRAPHY

During a year or more with puppy-raisers, Custom Canines' dogs go through basic obedience and public access training.

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



CHARLOTTE BOLLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Autism Service Dogs bring comfort, safety, and tender compassion to the lives of their working (human) partners. This is working pair Claudia Bolle, and her Autism Service Dog, Grace.

veterinary care for the puppy for usually about one year.

"Donations by the puppy-raisers are tax deductible," says Becker. "But the larger payment for them is getting to take part in placing and training of a dog that could change someone's life."

During that year or more with puppy-raisers, dogs go through basic obedience and public access training. Then, Custom Canines, as its name implies, customizes the training to fit the needs of its eventual owner. Some will become guide dogs for the visually impaired, which requires the most extensive training in traffic obedience and navigation.

A physical needs service dog can take almost as long to train. These dogs help people with illnesses like multiple sclerosis, or with physical handicaps that require assistance with tasks like taking their shoes on or off, turning doorknobs, and opening or shutting drawers. A dog well-suited for these tasks takes direction well and has strong retrieving ability.

Autism service dogs — trained primarily to assist children — don't require as much training. They don't need to be as focused or driven as guide dogs, but need to have a very soft nature.

"They need to enjoy children and tolerate a child getting in their face and in their coat," says Becker. "They need to be mellow, yet able to react to situations they are trained to handle."

One of those situations is when a child bolts. Autistic children who display this behavior, can be tethered to their service dog which is trained to drop to the ground and brace himself at the parent's command.

Who can get a dog?

Custom Canine's mission is to provide dogs at no cost, to individuals and families with visual, physical or behavioral needs that will allow them to live an enhanced life. They work throughout the Midwest and have placed dogs as far away as Colorado.

The organization's website (customcanines.org) has an application. A small fee covers the cost for staff to travel for a home visit. Once approved, the staff works closely with the family or applicant to place the dog best fitted for their needs. They take clients and dogs on field trips, do test runs and make sure that clients know the dog's skill sets and how to command them.

Want to help?

Visit customcanines.org to find out how to donate time or dollars. Volunteers don't need to have experience or formal training.

There's another way Becker says people can help.

"Don't be afraid to approach someone who has a service dog," she advises. "Don't run up and just pet the dog without asking, but there's nothing wrong with asking questions."

Pedal 4 Paws

Two of Custom Canines' long-time puppy-raisers, Jeff and Lisa Arndt, are pedaling their tandem bicycle coast-to-coast, from San Diego, Cal., to St. Augustine, Fla. They started the trek on March 8 and plan to arrive in Florida April 29. Their goal is to raise money and public awareness for the services their canine friends provide. To learn more or to donate, visit customcanines.org and click on "Pedal 4 Paws."

Spring fling!

Kathryn A. Kahler

If reality TV reruns have you climbing the walls, take a day to experience some real reality. Get out of the house and take a road trip to events scattered across the state sure to interest the musicians, stargazers, horse lovers, naturalists and historians in our audience. As for the rest of you — c'mon along and try something new!

Experience bluegrass music at all levels all weekend long at the **River Falls Roots and Bluegrass Festival**, April 3-5 in the heart of downtown River Falls. The Main Stage is at Juniors Bar and Grill with six to seven other venues located within walking distance. Enjoy the free fiddle and banjo workshops, participate in a free jam session and have a delicious Bluegrass Brunch at a local eatery. Tickets for the



History is etched in stone at the Wisconsin Concrete Park on May 18 in Phillips.

MICHAEL MARTENS



Enjoy bluegrass at its finest April 3 to 5 in River Falls.

RIVER FALLS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

main stage performances are \$25; remaining venues are free. Visit riverfallsbluegrass.com for more information and to purchase tickets online.

Stars, constellations and a tour of the night sky are on order at **Astronomy Night at the Arboretum**, April 18, at the Harmony Arboretum in Peshtigo. Dress for the weather for this free public program. Hot beverages will

be provided. The event will be cancelled in case of inclement weather, so call ahead to (715) 732-7780.

This year's theme is "Horses & Heroes" at the **Midwest Horse Fair**, April 19-21, at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. Patriotism will be center stage at the three day event featuring nearly 700 horses of more than 40 breeds,

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



Head to Madison April 19 to 21 for the Midwest Horse Fair.

MIDWEST HORSE FAIR

competing, performing and on display throughout the weekend. Admission on Sunday is free to guests with a military ID. For ticket information, call the Midwest Horse Fair office at (920) 623-5515, email tickets@midwesthorsefair.com, or visit midwesthorsefair.com

Three events promise something for everyone at the Sandhill Outdoor Skills Center (1715 County Highway X, Babcock). **Friends of Sandhill Open House**, April 28, is a day for family fun exploring nature's secrets at the 9,150-acre wildlife area, smack dab in the center of the state. Return to the center at 7:30 p.m. on May 4 for **Exploring the**

Night Sky, and on May 11, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., for **Dutch Oven Cooking**.

Registration is required for the latter two events; a \$20 fee is charged for the cooking event which includes meal, refreshment and recipes. Call (715) 884-6335 for more information.

Reconnect with people, community and nature at the **Prairie Fling Festival**,

May 11, at the Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary in Sarona. Enjoy live music, art vendors, family nature programs and delicious treats. Cost is \$5 per person, free for members. Call (715) 635-6543 or visit hunthill.org for more information.

Tucked along State Highway 13, just a mile south of Phillips, you'll find a unique personal expression by grassroots artist Fred Smith. In 1950, this local lumberjack-tavern owner-farmer-dancehall musician added one more feather to his cap by creating over 200 figures in concrete at what is now the Wisconsin Concrete Park. The park will host **Heritage Days –**

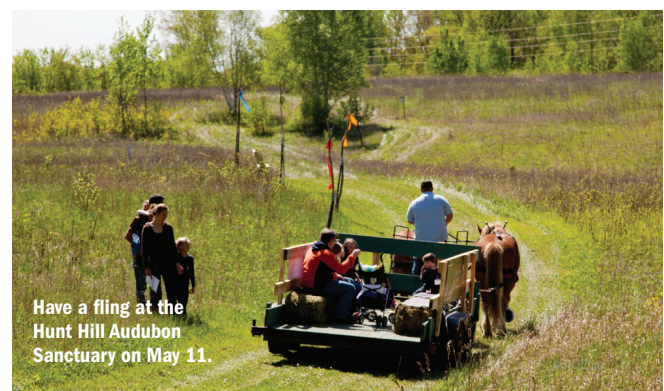
Get Hooked on History, May 18, featuring Price County history through re-enactments, interactive displays, engaging exhibits by local and

regional historians and book authors. Fun for all ages; no registration required. Call (715) 339-7282, toll free (800) 269-4504, or visit friendsoffredsmith.org for more information.



Learn Dutch oven cooking at Sandhill Outdoor Skills Center on May 11.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE



Have a fling at the Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary on May 11.

JAN KILLAN



Wisconsin, naturally

MORGAN COULEE PRAIRIE STATE NATURAL AREA

Notable:

Fire, whether naturally-occurring or intentionally set by Native Americans, acted with other forces to shape and sustain Wisconsin's original landscapes. Prairie, oak savanna, barrens, and other grass-dominated plant communities — and the species that live in them — evolved with and rely on periodic fire to remain ecologically healthy. With settlement of the state came fire suppression, resulting in the loss of these communities and their component plants and animals as they succeeded to dense forest. Today, natural area managers reintroduce prescribed fire into fire-dependent landscapes to restore and maintain Wisconsin's biological diversity. Such is the case at Morgan Coulee Prairie State Natural Area, situated on a steep, south-facing bluff overlooking a narrow coulee opening into the Rush River Valley. The expanse of dry prairie is interrupted by small islands of open-grown oaks and limestone outcrops encrusted with lichens. Big and little bluestem, side-oats grama, needle grass and prairie drop-seed dominate the grassland. Prairie flowers and animals such as eastern bluebird, prairie smoke, blazing-star, plains larkspur, Reakert's blue butterfly and the state-threatened prairie thistle bring color to the 54-acre natural area throughout the growing season. Fire is applied every few years in the early spring to keep unwanted woody vegetation at bay and to encourage plant flowering and seed set.



How to get there:

From the intersection of Highway 35 and 385th Street (East River Road) on the west end of Maiden Rock (Pierce Co.), go north on 385th St. 3.4 miles, then east on 200th Avenue (Morgan Road) 0.2 miles to the southwest corner of the site. Park along the road and walk north up the slope. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Morgan Coulee Prairie" for a map and more information.

