



# THE BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

*Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats*

Fall 2001 Vol. 4 No. 4

## Fun In The Forest

### BMAP Sponsors Field Trip for Mt. Horeb 6th Grade

Bob Wernerehl, BMAP Community Ecologist

There are several definitions for my job title, "community ecologist." Usually professionals think of it as someone who works with and identifies different plant and animal communities. But I prefer to think of it as an ecologist who works with a community of *people* and is part of that community. The Blue Mounds Area Project (BMAP) provides the unique opportunity for a rural area to have its own ecologist. The field trip described in this article clearly illustrates the nature of working within the community of people.

Our grant from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board allowed us to help create an environmental education curriculum for the Mt. Horeb sixth grade. The idea started a couple of years ago when my youngest son was in sixth grade and I noticed their science unit on plants was excellent. I spoke with the science teachers the following year and they were very interested in participating in the grant with a field trip as a goal. At the same time we had a landowner and BMAP member, Ruth Kellesvig, who had taken environmental education courses and had been trying to get the school to use her back-forty woodlot as an outdoor education site.

These two ideas came together in September and October of this year when the entire sixth grade, all 150 of them, came to Ruth Kellesvig's farm in Perry Township (southwest Dane County). We split the sixth grade into two groups of three classes each and we set aside three days (one rain day) for the two days needed. Unfortunately, it rained two of those three days! But we found another date in early October that worked for all involved.

The three classes were split into six sections, each with 12 to 13 kids. They rotated through six different stations in the forest. John and Carol Nielsen, both professional foresters with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, led a forestry workshop where the children learned to identify many different trees and how to tell the age of a tree using an increment borer. Two UW graduate students, Pam English (Ruth Kellesvig's niece), and BMAP board member Wendell Burkholder led a workshop on entomology. Jack Borders, a semi-retired professional naturalist, who lives only a few miles from the Kellesvig farm, led a workshop on mammal skulls. The children

learned to identify many kinds of mammals based on the teeth. Cindy Jelenchick of the WDNR led a workshop using Project Wild with students playing games to simulate the predator-prey relationship. Mindy Habecker, Dane County Natural Resources Educator (and BMAP member), led a workshop on soils. The students had hands-on involvement testing for the amounts of sand, clay, and silt in the soil samples. They got very dirty, but we had plenty of water for them to wash up with afterwards. I taught students about plant ecology. We collected and compared quadrat data for understory species on north and south facing slopes.

Barb Hutchinson, the afternoon science teacher, said the day was "awesome."

The students were very attentive and learned quickly.

**"Dear Ms. Kellesvig. Thank you for letting the 6<sup>th</sup> grade use your forest. I thought everyone liked it. I know that because everyone was smiling and talking about what their favorite station was." Hannah Feverer**

**"My favorite part of the station was when we got to stick the tester tube in soil, and see the different horizons. I didn't know there was so much to soil. I thought it was just dirt." Zach Markin**

They were eager to show what they had learned to anyone who would listen. No one showed an aversion to handling soil or insects. In fact, the groups that arrived at my site after having been to

the entomology site stopped whatever they were doing to observe any unusual bugs.

I enjoyed a special moment at lunchtime when a large group of boys played football on a sloping hayfield that had been recently harvested, a scene that might have looked the same during recess at a one-room country schoolhouse sixty years ago!

The Blue Mounds Area Project extends a hearty "Thank You!" to all our volunteer site leaders, the staff of the Mt. Horeb Middle School and their excellent science teachers, and to the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board for making this event a big success. \*



**Sixth graders learning about the soil beneath their feet during the recent BMAP sponsored field trip.**

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## Message From The Board

Carroll Schaal, President

Welcome to our fall newsletter. I hope you'll find some useful information and ideas. As another field season comes to a close, I offer some musings on the closing year and the future.

Traditionally, the Project has been oriented to the prairie end of the savanna spectrum. Over the last year or two we've focused more on the forestry end of things, due in part to our funding sources. While I think this has strengthened the Project and improved the quality of services we can offer our members, the process (and our strategic planning) stimulated my thinking about our organization's functions.

Even though our savanna landscape is a mixture of woodlands and prairies there seems to be a dichotomy between the two. I've recognized a tendency of landowners, interest groups, and funding organizations to show a preference for one over the other. Certainly, each of these habitat components has distinct management needs which could be a focus for our programs and services.

And then there is water, perhaps the most critical component of the ecosystem. Our planning suggested we should be more involved in stream and wetland management. For an ecologist, it's not surprising that most (but not all) of the interest in our forestry activity is located north of the military ridge. There, the predominately north facing slopes create a wetter more shaded climate favorable to denser forest cover. As a water resource planner, I've always viewed the military ridge as a watershed boundary. I started to look at it as a divide that defined each of these components, and thus two management areas.

Through the forestry project, we are working with a cluster of landowners north of the ridge and have developed an understanding of the technical aspects of forestry management and the issues facing woodland owners. This knowledge base can be expanded to other properties where woodland management concerns predominate, such as balancing stand improvements, protecting species unique to woodlands, and dealing with turkey and deer. These elements relate to funding opportunities from entities whose interest lies in the woodland component of the savanna ecosystem

On the drier open grassland area south of the ridge, we are involved with an emerging partnership of organizations and landowners whose interests revolve more around balancing traditional agriculture with the protection and improvement of prairie habitats (see the summer newsletter). Non-game grassland birds are a priority for conservationists while sporting

interests lean toward game species such as ring-neck pheasant. Here, farm programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) are a major source of funding and provide incentives for landowner participation (see the *CREP Agreement Signed* article below for more news about CREP).

Protection of wetlands and streams (particularly cold water systems) is a management concern on both sides of the ridge. How land is managed directly impacts their health. There are potential partner groups and funding sources whose concern is specifically on these aquatic ecosystems.

In my view, BMAP's challenge and opportunity lies in effectively blending its activities across these three components: woodlands, prairies and water. In doing so, we will have something to offer every landowner thus maximizing participation in the Project. To be this diverse in our offerings will require, but also provide the greatest opportunity for, partnering and fund raising.

Of course, there are woodlands south of the ridge and grasslands north. In the future, I can see how we may develop programs that relate more to one ecosystem component or the other. While for practical purposes we may have to compartmentalize our activities, in the end we will be managing savannas and all their diversity. \*

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## CREP Agreement Signed!

In our last newsletter, we reported about exciting opportunities under the new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) that included two dates for upcoming informational meetings. Due to delays in coordinating the signing of this historic federal and state initiative, these meetings were not held.

Now, CREP has been signed making 240 million dollars available to qualifying Wisconsin landowners for conservation easements and practices similar to CRP. A portion of the Blue Mounds region has been designated a special grassland conservation area with added incentives and expanded cost-sharing opportunities. Sign ups will begin very soon!

To find out more about CREP, you can contact your county NRCS office or attend one of the upcoming informational meetings supported by BMAP:

- ◆ Tuesday, Nov. 27 at 1:00 p.m. Folklore Village, County Rd. BB, Dodgeville
- ◆ Thursday, Nov. 29 at 6:30 p.m. Perry Lutheran Church, Hwy 78, Daleyville \*

### ~ Board Meeting Schedule ~

Dec. 12, Tuesday, 6:30 PM, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mt. Horeb

Jan. 8, Tuesday, 6:30 PM, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mt. Horeb

Feb. 12, Tuesday, 6:30 PM, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mt. Horeb.

The church is located at 315 E. Main Street in downtown Mt. Horeb. The front door is handicap accessible.

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## Historical Background of the Blue Mounds Region: Part Two

Bob Wernerehl

This is the second of a two-part article on the historical background of the landscape and ecology of the Blue Mounds region. The first part (in the previous newsletter) described the region in the 18th and early 19th centuries. We pick up again with gentleman traveler William Rudolph Smith describing the Blue Mounds region in 1837: “. . . there is a want of timber . . . generally speaking, in the rich prairies the groves of timber are small and scattered, not affording sufficient wood for more than one or two large farms, for many miles in extent.” Later he wrote “. . . as for fire wood, a sufficiency may always be readily obtained within a short distance of any farm; and if the annual fires on the prairies are prevented or subdued by the care and exertions of the settlers, the timber of the country is of the most rapid growth.” (Pg. 6)

Smith was observing the start of the rapid forest growth in Southwestern Wisconsin. Many others also noted this phenomenon of the woods growing quickly after fire suppression. John Muir in the 1850s in Marquette County wrote: “*Within 3-4 years almost every quarter section of government land was taken up . . . and in a very short time the new country began to look like an old one. . . . As soon as the oak openings in our neighborhood were settled, and the farmers prevented running grassfires, the grubs grew up into trees, and formed tall thickets so dense that it was difficult to walk through them and every trace of the sunny openings vanished.*”

The *Baraboo Republic* newspaper reported in 1859 that: “*In the timbered areas in the western end of the Baraboo valley, the pioneers are obliged to wear buckskin or other very strong material for pants since there is such a formidable undergrowth of plum, wild crabapple, prickly ash, briars and vines.*”

Despite this rapid growth, some savanna character to the land was maintained, in part through pasturing cattle and in part through farmers continuing the tradition of fire. Columbia County, just north of Dane County, was added to the fire control zone of the Wisconsin Conservation Department (now the WDNR) in 1956. For generations before, fires were allowed to burn uncontrolled. Game warden Jim Chizek reports when fire control first went into effect “*Citizens were incensed when rangers and wardens entered their lands uninvited to fight fires they deliberately set to ‘green up the landscape.’*” Senior farmers in Iowa County report that in the old days fires burned through the woods all night. Sometimes they were set to produce a better crop of huckleberries.

### 112 Years of Change in Southwestern Wisconsin: 1834 to 1946

Almost all of the woods in the Blue Mounds region are derived from fairly open oak savannas where fire was a common, often annual, occurrence. Oaks have thick, fire resistant bark, and resprout readily if burned. The shade-tolerant, thin-barked maple, basswood, black cherry, ash, and ironwood are fire-sensitive trees. The few places these trees survived were small areas located in fire-sheltered, steep, north-facing gorges generally on the north edge of the Military Ridge (now Highway 18-151). White pine relics occurred here as well along cliffs and rock outcrops. With those

exceptions in mind, 99 percent of the remaining current forests were once either oak savanna or prairie.

How do we know what the land was like in former times? In addition to the written historical descriptions, the major source of information about the type and condition of the vegetation in the 1830s comes from the Public Land Survey records that took place under the federal guidance of the General Land Office.

In Dane and Iowa counties these surveys took place from 1832-1835. Starting at the border with Illinois the surveyors measured square mile sections moving north. They set posts every half mile and mile, marked nearby “witness” trees for reference, and recorded the diameter and species and the distance and compass bearing to each tree. They also recorded every tree directly on their survey line.

This information gives us the ability to determine whether the land was forest or prairie, and provides other interesting details. The surveyors were to select two to four sturdy, long-lived trees closest to each post as a witness tree. The crew would search up to 1,000 feet away to find a tree if they had to. If no trees were present they had to raise a four foot mound of earth and set the post on top, and that was a lot of work. Knowing how distant these witness trees were from the section or half section corners, we can use a field-tested statistical method to tell how far apart the trees were in that general area.

These assumptions about forest density can be supported by the surveyors’ requirement to record a general description of the land. These included comments such as “land rolling, second rate, thinly timbered.” Any deviation from the usual was noted in the records. For example, it was noted when the survey crew entered or left a woods, marsh, or prairie. Sometimes they added notes regarding the presence of certain vegetation; such as rosinweed, lead plant, bracken fern, New Jersey tea (which they called red root), hazelnut, and rattlesnake master.

Each 36 square mile township contains 109 unique points of information. Using the information from these points, it is possible to map out in fair detail the general type of vegetation for each county. Bob Ellarson was one of the first to produce such a map, and he did it for Dane County in 1949. Bob was a keen student of Wisconsin flora and went on to become professor of wildlife ecology at UW-Madison. He was careful in his interpretation of the data choosing not to include two entire townships with questionable records. He also included other sources to round out his interpretation. The map he produced shows almost the entire western half of Dane County as either open prairie or oak opening, another term for oak savanna. Ellarson didn’t give a precise definition of savanna but included only areas dominated by bur, white, or black oak that were far enough apart to allow sufficient sunlight through so that prairie grasses and forbs could be found. This interpretation was followed by Cottam and Loucks in 1965 in a map of the Early Vegetation of Wisconsin. Their map shows all of Iowa County to be oak savanna and open prairie.

Ellarson’s map clearly shows that fire was the determining factor in the presettlement landscape. The only areas of maple-basswood forest noted by the surveyors occurred on the northeastern shores of the large lakes Mendota, Monona, and Kegonsa. These areas were sheltered on the leeward side of the lakes when hot, dry southwesterly winds carried fire across the

landscape. Treeless prairie occurred mostly on level, deep soil terrain where growth was lush and the dry prairie grasses produced very hot fires that moved unchecked by landscape features. Thinner soils in hilly areas produced less fuel, and also had cool, humid, north-facing slopes. Savanna landscapes occurred most often on the hilly terrain where the resulting cooler fires allowed some oak trees to survive.

At the same time, another able student of Wisconsin flora was conducting research in a woods in western Dane County known by many as the Madison School Forest, just a few miles southwest of Verona. The researcher was Grant Cottam, who went on to become a professor of plant ecology at UW-Madison. His study compared the oak openings of the 1830s to the type of oak woods he found in 1946.

To obtain an accurate numerical description of the 1830s, Cottam used the surveyors' records from 269 points in similar rolling, timbered upland around the school forest. He excluded points in open prairie, so he was only measuring the typical oak savanna of western Dane County. He used a mapping technique to determine the distance between witness trees the surveyors recorded at each point and averaged these distances. But because some distances were large, over 200 feet, Cottam felt this tended to exaggerate the degree to which the trees were scattered, so he used the median distance, the point at which half the distances were greater, and half were less. This gave a more forest-like estimate of the distance between the trees. Cottam used the numbers to calculate trees per acre.

For comparison, Cottam sampled the woods in the summer of 1946, counting and measuring trees in one hundred 10 by 10 meter quadrats within the 320 acre, relatively undisturbed School Forest. These data were compared directly to the information from the surveyors' records. The results are startling, and show a drastic change (see table below).

**Madison School Forest in 1834 and 1946.**

<b>YEAR OF SAMPLE</b>	<b>1834</b>	<b>1946</b>
Trees per Acre	14.3	143.0
Ave. Tree Diameter, inches	12.9	12.3

In 112 years, trees per acre increased TEN FOLD! And, these trees were only very slightly smaller in diameter than the trees from 1834. Fourteen evenly spaced trees per acre (1834) are 55 feet apart whereas 143 trees per acre are 17 feet apart. This makes an enormous difference in the amount of light that reaches the forest floor.

The Madison School Forest, in 112 years, changed from a sunny savanna with frequent fire to a shady woods with hardly any fire. Cottam's study can be extrapolated to our entire region. This change has led to the disappearance of once common oak savanna plants such as shooting star, lupine, butterfly weed, New Jersey tea, prairie willow, Canada hawkweed, ox eye sunflower, Carolina vetch, and many others. We get a clear picture of this by looking at an inventory of Dane County flora from 1892, when these plants were nearly all noted as common throughout the region (Cheney & True). What it shows is that our woodlands today are very different than they were just 110 years ago.

Since 1946 we have seen yet another change as shade tolerant red and sugar maple, basswood, box elder, ironwood, and white ash have begun a steady invasion, preventing even more sunlight from reaching the forest floor of the already shady oak woodlands. This is occurring all over southwestern Wisconsin and is causing the loss of oak woodland plants not able to tolerate the dense shade cast by these newer canopy members of the oak forest. Even the oak trees are no longer able to reproduce in this denser shade. Without the extra sunlight, oak trees, so characteristic of our wooded lands today and so important to a wide array of wildlife, could be mostly a thing of the past within a hundred years or so.

**Summary:** Southwestern Wisconsin was once an area of open prairie and savanna with occasional oak woodland north of the Military Ridge. The land was most likely more open in the 17th and 18th centuries and became more wooded in the early 19th century, probably as a result of European diseases reducing the presence of Native Americans and thereby reducing fire frequency on the land. After Euro-American settlement began in the 1830s, fire was much less frequent and most uncultivated areas grew quickly into dense oak forest-the situation we have today. Only active management can prevent these oak forests from eventually giving way to more shade tolerant maples, basswood, ash, and other hardwoods.

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## Wolf Spiders

Wendell Burkholder

Prairie areas support large numbers of wolf spiders (*Lycosidae spp.*). These large spiders, also known as hunting or ground spiders, are usually found in areas of shrubs and tall grass where a plentiful insect supply is available. Most do not build webs but instead actively hunt for their prey. Forty species of wolf spiders have been reported in Wisconsin and it has been estimated that in late summer there can be as many as 40,000 spiders per acre of prairie. They may play an important role in moderating insect populations.

Wolf spiders can be recognized by their generally stout body shape with the two body regions, cephalothorax and abdomen, of about equal size. The legs are stout and fairly even in length. The body (1/4 to 3/4 inch long) has combinations of brown, gray, white, and black hairs. Like most spiders, they have eight eyes, four small and four large. The small eyes are arranged in a row across the front of the head region of the cephalothorax. Behind them are the large eyes in two rows of two each. The last row gives the spiders vision above and behind them. Because of their excellent vision they can hunt day or night.



**Wolf spider (l) and detail of cephalothorax with eight eyes (r).**

In spite of their large numbers, we may not be aware of them because they are rarely found indoors and they do not have conspicuous webs. Instead, they often live in underground burrows or under stones and leaf litter. The entrance to their burrow may be the size of a pencil or several times larger. The burrows are lined with silk that allows the spider to quickly climb to the surface. In some instances, these spiders cover the burrow with a movable lid similar to that of the trap-door spiders, or they may build an elevated turret to serve as a lookout.

Wolf spider mothers carry their eggs in a large bag made of silk webbing. After two or three weeks, when the eggs hatch, the mother bites the bag to release the young spiderlings. They will then climb onto their mother's back and ride around until they are able to hunt on their own. The bodies of the spiderlings have enough food for them to mature to the next stage. Moisture is obtained from available dew. After a week they will drop off the mother and begin their individual lives.

Wolf spiders are not poisonous. However, as with all spiders, bites may cause reactions in certain individuals. These spiders may be observed over a period of time as pets if placed in containers with loose soil. Insects, for food, and water must

be provided with a limit of one spider per container due to their predacious nature.

Excellent spider natural history may be found in J. Henri Fabre's book, "The Life of a Spider," which was translated from French in 1912. Fabre has been referred to as "the insect's Homer." General information on spiders in and around homes, including pictures, is available from the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension via Bulletin A2135. It can be viewed on the web at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/housingandclothing/DK1033.html>. \*

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## Much Yet To Learn

Rich Henderson

About 8 years ago, I started to notice insect damage on the rosinweeds in the prairie plantings around my house. The feeding damage was distinctive, but the animals themselves were not evident. They seemed to feed exclusively on the newly emerging leaves at the top of the stem. They would start in mid May, and be mostly done by early July, leaving in their wake a section of stem with chewed up or absent leaves. At first, I did not pay much attention to the feeding, but the damage kept getting worse each year until four years ago when nearly all the rosinweed plants were affected, some to the point of being suppressed and having no flower production. This finally got my attention.

Upon closer inspection, I discovered that small moth larvae were doing the feeding. At the time, I was coordinating a survey of insects on prairie remnants as part of my job with DNR Research. The purpose of the project, in part, was to discover what prairie-restricted insects might still be lingering on our prairie remnants. Thus it dawned on me, belatedly of course, that maybe I should try to get a name put on my rosinweed pest. After all, I now had the contacts to get it identified, and it is feeding on a *Silphium*, which is a genus known for its sticky sap and other traits bothersome to most insects. Such traits, although they make a plant less desirable to generalist insects, increase the chances of a plant developing a following of specialist insects. So maybe, just maybe, my pest was some well-known prairie-specialist.

This was my hope, but I knew the odds were not good, for my site was a restoration that had no rosinweed (or any *Silphium*) present on it 20 years earlier, and the nearest natural populations of *Silphium* were over a mile away and very small. But I gave it a try anyway. I collected some late stage larvae, and managed to rear out two adults. This step is critical, for to identify moths to species, adult specimens are generally required. I gave the specimens to Les Ferge, our local moth specialist here in Madison. He prepared them and sent them off to Eric Metzler in Ohio. This was necessary because the specimens turned out to be micro-leps, a large group of several families of moths known for their small size and difficulty in identification, and Eric had experience with them. However, the little guys were beyond Eric's experience so he turned to an expert down in Texas.

Finally, this past winter, two and a half years after I reared the moths, Eric sent me an e-mail that simply stated “The moth you reared is a Choreutidae. John Heppner, examined the moth and said it is one of the least commonly collected—only a dozen or so specimens known. The name is *Tebenna silphiella* (Grote, 1881). John was very excited to see it. The life history is undescribed, . . . According to John, you are the first person, since its description in 1881, to see larvae of this animal.” I was stunned, and I accused Eric of pulling my leg, but he assured me that he wasn’t.

Eric, Les, and I are now collaborating on a paper on the ecology of the “rosinweed” moth. We have found it to be widespread on rosinweed in southern Wisconsin, and a fast and strong flier that looks and behaves more like a fly than a moth. People have been simply over-looking it for a hundred years.

I have long had a strong curiosity about what insects might still be found in our little prairie remnants, but this experience makes me wonder even more what may be lurking out there among the prairie plants. Prairie on even the smallest of patches, including backyard restorations, should not be ignored. \*

*This article originally appeared in the Fall 2001 Prairie Enthusiasts’ newsletter and is reprinted with their and Rich’s kind permission.*

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## ***Tubakia dryina*: Bur Oak Nemesis?**

Rex Ramsay

*Tubakia dryina*. What is that, a character from a child’s video game? Actually, it is a potential nemesis of bur oak (and other oak species) that has found its way (or re-appeared after an unknown hiatus) to the driftless area of southwestern Wisconsin, especially Iowa, northeastern Lafayette, western Dane and Green counties. More specifically, *Tubakia dryina*, also known as actinopelte leaf spot, is a wilt disorder that affects the *Quercus* (oak) family. It is more common in the Deep South of the United States, and also occurs in India, Japan, and parts of Europe.

What does it look like? You may have noticed, in late May or early June, bur oak leaves with browning at the base of the main leaf stem and gradually progressing outward to the leaf margins with browning and wilting of the leaf surface. Then it progresses back towards the leaf stem. There is browning, *but not any yellowing*. Affected leaves begin to drop during mid-July. To the inexperienced, this may look like oak wilt. The UW Plant Pathology Lab tested four separate samples for oak wilt with negative results. With some insistence, the WDNR helped identify it. Unfortunately, because bur oak savannas are not considered to produce marketable timber, the DNR Division of Forestry has no management guidelines for them or much information about *Tubakia*.

In my research I found the scientific literature stated that while the disorder can reach “epidemic proportions, it is not considered fatal” because the leaves drop after they have hardened, so food production still occurs. However, these comments are based on observations in other regions with

different field parameters than Wisconsin. I am seeing affected bur oaks continue to decline over the last five years. It is not known if mortality will occur, but given the gradual decline and the presence of dead bur oaks in other locations, my concern is that this may indeed be a fatal disorder in southern Wisconsin.

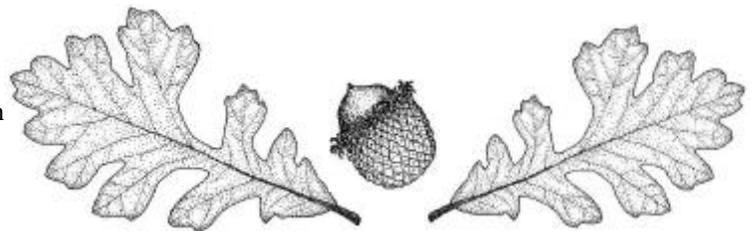
There is hope, however. *Tubakia* spreads by an air-borne fungus that survives in leaf litter and twigs, especially under damp conditions. Thus, it is favored by a wet, cool spring, which has been the case in our area during the last four years. There is some speculation that it can re-appear after being absent or dormant for years. Because no records seem to exist about *Tubakia* in Wisconsin we are left to speculate that the field parameters of the south also apply here.

Based on my observations and research to date, it appears that the control of *Tubakia* lies in the history of oak evolution in the prairie ecotype. Burning, I suspect, has always kept this disorder in check. This makes sense in that fire removes the over-wintering leaf litter that harbors the fungus. Certainly, this brings even more importance to the management techniques of oak woodlands favored by the local ecologists: opening up the canopy and shrub layer, planting native grasses and forbs and reintroducing fire. On my property, I’m placing emphasis on establishing the appropriate native grasses to support the fire regime at the short-term expense of forbs. This supports the best known method for controlling *Tubakia*.

It would be nice to think that there could be funding for research to answer these questions, but this is unlikely to happen until these oaks are considered a valuable resource. There are so many questions left unanswered. Which remnants are showing the disease? Why are some bur oaks affected and not others? Did pre-settlement oaks resist the disease because of burning or because of some other symbiotic reason? Did the pre-settlement fire regime prevent the oaks from developing a resistance to *Tubakia* by preventing the disorder from developing a foothold? Do the bur oaks of savannas differ genetically from bur oaks in other habitats?

Perhaps some of you reading this may have some understanding. At the least, I would like to find a geographic pattern, so if you’ve noticed this, let me know. Please send any ideas or comments to: Rex M. Ramsay, P.O. Box 293, Blanchardville, WI 53516, call 608-523-4707, or email quietlistener@lycos.com. \*

*The author has 20 years of experience coordinating natural resource programs, including shade tree disease control programs, and is actively managing an overgrown bur oak savanna in southeastern Iowa County.*



**Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) leaves and acorn.**

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## **BMAP Hosts Visitors From the Republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaidzhan**

Peter Weil

On Friday August 10, the Blue Mounds Area Project hosted a delegation from the republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaidzhan. The visit was one of several stops on a U.S. State Department-sponsored tour to explore environmental management issues, ecology education, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability. The Wisconsin segment of the tour was coordinated by the International Institute of Wisconsin (IIW), who contacted BMAP after viewing our web site.

The delegation, which included representatives from environmental organizations, government, and academia, was particularly interested in meeting BMAP because it is a locally-based non-governmental organization that works with private landowners.

Ideally, we wanted to show our guests a variety of sites around the driftless area, since the terrain here is probably quite different from anything they had seen before. But our time was limited, and we decided to accept the very gracious offers of two BMAP members to show their prairie and savanna restoration sites, both in Verona Township, a few miles west of Madison.

In a very short amount of time, Bob Wernerehl and Mike Anderson, along with savanna site host Rich Henderson, put together a wonderful tour and presentation of what prairie and savanna restoration in southwestern Wisconsin is all about. During the tour of Bonnie Munroe's prairie, our guests raised questions about what exactly constitutes a "true" restoration, taxes, and what forms of government assistance are available to landowners undertaking restoration. The tour of Rich's savanna provoked discussions about the history of land usage in the area, the effects of agriculture, and options for preserving restorations through such vehicles as easements. The entire morning was filled with the sounds of the names of bird and plant species being uttered in English, Russian, and Latin as hosts, guests, and interpreters sought and found ways to communicate.

The interpreters—native Russian speakers—were excellent. It was a marvel to watch them handle simultaneous translations while at the same time looking up the Russian terms for different plants and birds. (Okay, one of them mistranslated "coneflower" into Russian as "cornflower," but they really did a great job!) Fortunately, the botanists among us were also able to rely on Latin as a common language when it came to identifying species. Sometimes my own knowledge of Russian failed me, as when one guest asked me what kind of oak a certain tree was. "White oak," I confidently told him in Russian. He looked at me as though I were from Mars. I quickly found someone who knew the Latin name and all was well again.

One especially memorable moment among many: near the end of the oak savanna tour, one of our guests praised Rich Henderson for his efforts and desire to protect and preserve his restoration for the sake of his grandchildren. Although I can't recall his exact words, he noted what a fine thing this is to be doing. He added that he was tremendously impressed with the dedication of organizations such as BMAP, and hoped to apply some of what they learned here in their own countries, which were

environmentally (and otherwise) savaged by the 70 years of Soviet rule.

The time passed very quickly, and before we knew it, it was time for our guests to leave to catch an afternoon flight to their next destination. After sharing some cold drinks and homemade chocolate chip cookies, we all shook hands and said goodbye. I think that all participants would agree that it was a very enjoyable and memorable day, and that everyone benefited greatly from the sharing of our scientific and cultural experiences.

Many thanks go out to Bonnie Munroe and Rich Henderson for allowing us to view (and trample on) their restoration sites. Bonnie put together some nice printed materials to a supplement the tour of her impressive prairie site, and Rich gave us a personal tour of his fabulous oak savanna.

Kudos go to Community Ecologist Bob Wernerehl and BMAP board member Mike Anderson for putting together a presentation on very short notice.

Thanks also go out to Kim Roeber and her staff at the International Institute of Wisconsin, who coordinated the Wisconsin segment of the tour. It was IIW who found our web site and took an interest in BMAP, took care of all of the travel arrangements, and coordinated the visit with us.

The event was covered by a reporter from the Mt. Horeb Mail, which carried a front-page article on the event.

*Editor's note: Although Peter is much too modest to admit it, he deserves a lot of the credit for arranging and coordinating this very successful event. \**

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## **BMAP Featured Speakers on Video**

Two BMAP sponsored talks were videotaped and are now available via the South Central Library System (SCLS):

- ◆ *Grassland Birds of Wisconsin*, featuring Dave Sample discussing grassland bird ecology and management
- ◆ *The Deer Dilemma*, featuring Don Waller discussing the ecological and social impacts of overabundant deer

Check them out on LINK CAT, the SCLS's on-line catalog at <http://www.scls.lib.wi.us/>. Search using the titles provided above, have them sent to your nearest library, pop a big bowl of popcorn, sit back and enjoy. \*

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## **BMAP Brochure**

Thanks to the hard work of graphic artist and brochure designer Julie Raasch, BMAP is the proud owner of our very own brochure *AND* a brand new logo.

We still need to make a few minor changes to the brochure before it will be ready for printing and distribution, but this should happen soon. Look for the new logo to grace the cover of the next newsletter.

We hope you'll give a brochure to friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and anyone else you think would like to know about us and become a member. Send an email to [info@bluemounds.org](mailto:info@bluemounds.org) or call 608-795-4244 to request copies.

Thank you Julie! \*

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BMP is now accepting advertisements for inclusion in our newsletter. The revenue generated will help defray publishing costs which will allow our grant monies to be used for other purposes more directly beneficial to our members. If you would like to advertise in the newsletter, please contact The Blue Mounds Project, c/o Michael Anderson, 2505 Richardson Street, Fitchburg, WI 53711-5474, or call (608) 277-9960 or send an email to biologic@chorus.net.



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**Our Mission:**

The Blue Mounds Area Project is a community-based organization that seeks to inspire, inform and empower private landowners in the Southwestern Wisconsin region to enjoy, protect and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health.

**Our Objectives:**

- 1) Promote understanding, appreciation and conservation of native woodlands, prairies, wetlands and savannas and their special species in an economically viable manner, through community outreach programs and private contacts.
- 2) Act as a clearing house for information from people and organizations involved in preserving native biodiversity including information about plant, animal and habitat identification, management, restoration, seed sources, native plant nurseries and invasive, non-native species.
- 3) Encourage cooperative, volunteer restoration and management activities.
- 4) Identify public and private land use changes that may affect ecosystem health and promote community-based stewardship of the unique natural heritage of the Blue Mounds and the Southwestern region of Wisconsin.

<b>BMAP Board of Directors</b>	<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Staff Ecologist</b>
President–Carroll Schaal	Michael Anderson	Bob Wernerehl
Vice President–Vacant	Wendell Burkholder	
Secretary–Mary Fritz	Kent Mayfield	
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The Blue Mounds Area Project is sponsored by Community Conservation, Inc.

The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published quarterly. Send your comments, suggestions, submissions, and advertisements to the Editor: Michael Anderson, Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572 or by email to [biologic@chorus.net](mailto:biologic@chorus.net).

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## Blue Mounds Area Project Membership Form

**NAME(S):** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**MEMBERSHIP STATUS:**

Renewal.  New member.  I cannot join at this time, please keep me on your mailing list.

**MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:**

General (individual or family) \$25.00 / Year \_\_\_\_\_

Student/limited income (individual or family) \$15.00 / Year \_\_\_\_\_

**Other contribution to further the BMAP mission** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law\*\***

**SITE VISIT REQUEST:**

Check if you would like to receive a site visit from the BMAP ecologist (we will contact you for additional information and to arrange the visit).

**MAKE CHECK PAYABLE AND RETURN TO:**  
**BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT, PO BOX 332, MT. HOREB, WI 53572**

Excerpt from one of the thank you letters written by the 6th graders attending the field trip described on page one:

**"I learned a lot more about insects...I wish we could have done that all day. It makes me think of getting a job that has to do with insects. I found a lot of cool stuff."** Maxwell Engel

The Blue Mounds Area Project  
PO Box 332  
Mount Horeb, WI 53572

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