

THE BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats



Spring 2003 Vol. 6 No. 2

Bur Oak Award Highlights Annual Meeting

An enthusiastic crowd of about 30 gathered at the Mount Horeb Amcore Bank on the morning of March 8th for the Blue Mounds Area Project's Annual Meeting. First up, Frank Fetter, Director of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA), gave a presentation on the Sugar River watershed, which encompasses a triangular-shaped drainage area generally

extending from Verona to Mount Horeb that drains south to Lake Belle View in Belleville. Many of the streams feeding this system are rated as having outstanding or exceptional water quality, while a few are considered impaired or degraded according to DNR and EPA criteria. The USRWA's mission is to advocate for the protection and improvement of this resource, which is being threatened by increased urbanization.

While water quality is excellent in most of the watershed, poor land use practices in the past have left much of the system clogged with

sediment, limiting the deep, cool water needed to support a diverse fishery. The USRWA has been working to correct these problems by reconstructing miles of stream bank with LUNKER structures that narrow and deepen the stream and create a bank cavity where fish can hide. This model for stream improvement can be replicated in many other area streams, providing a potential future partnering opportunity for our organizations.

Following Frank, President Carroll Schaal gave a brief summary of the BMAP Annual Report (see newsletter insert for your copy of the Annual Report). He explained that during 2002 we focused our outreach efforts on water resources, much as we have emphasized savanna, forestry, and other issues in previous years. He noted that focusing on water resources was not a departure from our mission, but rather part of looking at the bigger ecological picture, stating that "healthy savannas and grasslands are correlated to healthy streams."

Bob Wernerehl, BMAP ecologist, captured the concept best by saying that when looking at the landscape from a watershed perspective, you're reminded of the basic lesson of ecology: that all things are connected. While we tend to focus on what is happening on our particular piece of property, our activities have downstream impacts.

Next, Merle Black was presented with the second annual Bur Oak Award for Outstanding Land Stewardship. Merel was chosen because her land stewardship efforts clearly exemplify the Award's criteria of "sensitivity to the environment" and "enhancement of the

> habitat of threatened, endangered or special concern species or rare plant communities."

To date, Merel has established 50 acres of prairie on her 100 acre Town of Perry property, gathering much of the seed herself from local sources. She's also been actively managing the prairie and savanna remnants on her property. Merel's efforts extend beyond her property's boundaries. She was instrumental in the development of the UW-Madison Herbarium website, she has monitored regal fritillary butterflies (Wisconsin endangered) and controlled invasive species on local Nature Conservancy prairies, and she regularly assists friends and neighbors with their land management activities. More recently,

Carroll Schaal, BMAP President, presents a tapestry, handprinted using actual bur oak leaves, to Merel Black, recipient of the 2002 Bur Oak Award. Photo by Diane Hermann.

Merel volunteered her time to create a unique and useful *Plants of* Wisconsin website for the UW-Stevens Point (see article page on 4).

The meeting marked the official departure of board member John Bird and the welcoming of two new members, Merel Black and Paul Kaarakka (see article on page 2 for full details).

Capping the meeting, and in keeping with the current water resources theme, each attendee was sent home with a copy of a newly released 18x27 inch color poster entitled "Coldwater Fishes of the Savannas." The poster features detailed photos of numerous species of fish and other aquatic life, with explanatory text, set against a full color background featuring a beautiful savanna stream setting.

The poster is a wonderful educational tool developed by BMAP in cooperation with seven other environmental organizations. We're anxious to share the poster with all of our members. Individual mailings aren't possible due to costs, but if you would like a copy, contact Bob Wernerehl (608-795-4244) or Carroll Schaal (608-437-6247) and we'll arrange a way to get it to vou. *

Message from the Board

Carroll Schaal, President

Spring greetings from the Blue Mounds Area Project! We are all looking forward to the planting and growing season, but spring is also when we reflect on what we have sown by sending out our Annual Report, which you'll find enclosed with this newsletter. We're closing in on almost a decade of existence as an organization advocating for native species biodiversity. There's been a lot of progress and much to look forward to, as well. Spring is also the season for hope and renewal. At the risk of getting too cute with metaphors, as you look through this edition of our newsletter and the Annual Report, I hope you will renew, reflect, and perhaps recommit your interest in your Project.

Working to eliminate the financial deficit we carried over from last year has nearly drained our coffers. Although we're close to eliminating the deficit, we're still overextended and need additional financial support if we are to follow through on our existing commitments, not to mention initiate the new projects we have planned. We need your financial support and we need more people involved to accomplish our goals.

If you haven't renewed your membership, please do so. Consider making an additional tax-deductible donation if your membership is paid up. We've enclosed an envelope to make it easy for you. Tell your friends, family, and neighbors about us and help us expand our membership.

Finally, contact us about getting involved as a volunteer. We could use a hand with several small projects that won't require a major commitment:

- Processing bulk mailings at the Black Earth post office.
- Maintaining our library in Mount Horeb.
- Starting a scrapbook with photos, newspaper clippings, and other records of our activities.
- Recruiting new members.

Please help us reach the decade mark and then some. Thank you! *

Don't Forget the BMAP-List Peter Weil, BMAP Webmaster

We would like to remind you that BMAP maintains an interactive electronic (email) list that allows subscribers to ask questions and exchange information relating to native habitat restoration, management, and preservation, and to foster communication in general. The list is open to the public—you don't need to be a BMAP member to receive or post messages.

Although BMAP does not officially sponsor restoration activities, members are invited to use the list to post planned activities (burns, brush clearing, etc.), to arrange for mutual aid and assistance, to ask for help finding the answer to a question, or to help answer someone else's question.

To subscribe to the list, go to the BMAP web site at www.bluemounds.org and follow the "Mailing List" link at the top of the page. *

Board of Directors: Goodbye and Hello

In addition to being a time for reflection and planning, the Annual Meeting is also the time when changes are made to the BMAP Board of Directors. While we lost one talented member, John Bird, we feel fortunate because we gained two enthusiastic and talented members, Merel Black and Paul Kaarakka.

John Bird is leaving the Board after many years of service extraordinaire. Not only did John serve on the Board of Directors and as its Treasurer, he has volunteered to handle all of the accounting functions for the Blue Mounds Area Project.

John has been in the area since the late 70s and grew up on a dairy farm in Fond du Lac County. He has been deeply involved for over 20 years in the Town of Vermont and the Village of Black Earth in countless community organizations and in town government. John lives with his wife Barbara, an attorney for the State of Wisconsin, in the heart of the Town of Vermont, where he has planted a beautiful prairie and burns it with help from the local fire department. John has been instrumental in bringing a number of friends and neighbors to the BMAP. His service to our organization, his unflagging commitment to community involvement and his example of stewardship are most appreciated. John has volunteered to stay involved with the BMAP and for that, we are deeply grateful.

Merel Black and her husband Joel have lived on their Perry Township farm since 1968. Merel has always been a wildflower enthusiast, but knew nothing about Wisconsin prairies having grown up in the wooded North Carolina hills. Following DNR recommendations, she diligently planted trees and shrubs on her prairie and savanna. Since being set on the correct path by the Prairie Enthusiasts, she has been cutting them all down, restoring the savanna and prairie remnant.

Last year the last of the 50 tillable acres on her farm was planted into prairie thanks to the CREP program. Joel and Merel are both retired, but Merel volunteers for the UW-Stevens Point herbarium designing their new website (see article on page 4). Merel was on the original board for BMAP but was unable to continue serving because of other commitments. Now retired, she has rejoined the board and looks forward to the coming year.

Paul Kaarakka tends his yard in the village of Mount Horeb where he gets rid of as much lawn as he can. He has been interested in prairie habitats for most of his adult life, and received his first burn training in the mid-80s. He likes to think not so much in terms of restoration as in terms of stewardship, believing that recreation of pre-European conditions is unrealistic and that it makes more sense to tend urban and rural landscapes with an eye toward ecological function and current conditions.

Paul has been a BMAP member almost since its founding, and believes that the organization has done a great job of helping landowners nurture their holdings toward a richer southwestern Wisconsin landscape. Although trained as a zoologist, Paul makes his living with computers. He currently works for the UW-Madison Horticulture department, writing software to help farmers with pest and nutrient management.

Editor's note: thank-you board member Mary Michal for writing the tribute to John Bird. *

Wild Turkey Habitat and Oak Savanna Restoration Workshop Planned

Carroll Schaal

We are kicking off a new project this year: an extended workshop on creating oak openings for improving wild turkey habitat. If you would like to learn more about wild turkeys, savanna ecology and restoration, and receive professional assistance in conducting your own savanna restoration, mark May 31st on your calendar and then read on.

Oak openings and oak savannas are the local native habitat of wild turkeys and many other species. Most oak savannas suffer from fire suppression, which results in a dense woody understory (buckthorn,

honeysuckle, prickly ash, gray dogwood, etc.) and invasive plants that shade-out the native herbaceous plants and impede or prevent oak regeneration. Overgrown savannas provide limited wild turkey habitat because the number of suitable roosting areas is reduced and the dense growth makes it difficult for turkeys to run, a favored method for escaping predators.

Since correcting these problems appeals to both turkey and savanna enthusiasts, the BMAP is launching an ambitious, multi-partner project, funded in part by the DNR Turkey Stamp Program, to increase private land restoration of native wild turkey habitat in western Dane and eastern Iowa Counties.

These efforts will kickoff with a daylong workshop that will begin with an indoor discussion of:

- the pre-settlement native ecosystems of southwestern Wisconsin and the changes that have occurred to these ecosystems since settlement
- the importance of preserving and restoring our area's unique oak savannas and open oak woodlands
- the natural history and habitat requirements of wild turkeys
- an overview of savanna and woodland restoration
- sources for financial assistance

After lunch, we'll visit degraded and restored savannas and oak woodlands where we'll:

- identify and discuss native and invasive species
- demonstrate specific aspects of savanna management and restoration
- demonstrate the proper and safe use of the tools and equipment useful for savanna restoration and the maintenance of this equipment

From there we will be looking for up to ten landowners

who are willing to commit to an oak savanna or oak woodland restoration project on their land and participate in a longer range monitoring and education effort. In return, the landowner will receive a professional site assessment and restoration plan for up to 5 acres.

The landowner will be responsible for the costs of their restoration, but BMAP will help by facilitating the development of a network of a volunteer labor, equipment and other resources. In addition, the BMAP Ecologist will be available for on-going consultation and coordination as the restoration

work progresses. We'll also host additional educational programs as the project evolves.

The kickoff workshop will be on May 31^{st} from 9 a.m. until

approximately 4:15 p.m. The indoor session will be in Black Earth, the outdoor session will be at a variety of nearby sites. BMAP members can attend for \$10. Space permitting, nonmembers can attend for \$35, which includes a one-year BMAP membership. Space is limited to 30 participants. For more details or to register, contact Carroll Schaal by email at schaal1@mhtc.net or by phone at (608-437-6247). Sign up now! *

Renew and Donate to BMAP...with your Web Browser

Peter Weil, Webmaster

Have you been procrastinating in renewing your BMAP membership? Turned off by the prospect of filling out the form, writing the check, addressing and stamping the envelope, etc.? Beginning this spring BMAP will be making it more convenient to join, renew, and donate to BMAP directly over the Internet. The revised membership and donation page on our web site will take you to a web form where you can make contributions with your credit card quickly, easily, and safely.

Payment services will be performed by PayPal (perhaps most familiar to those of you who have used eBay). PayPal uses SSL (Secure Socket Layer) and 128-bit encryption to keep your transactions and credit card data confidential and secure. Look for an announcement on the BMP-announce mailing list as soon as the system is in place. **

~ Board Meeting Schedule ~

The BMAP is launching an ambitious,

multi-partner project to increase private

land restoration of native wild turkey

habitat (oak savanna and oak woodland).

Your voice is important; this is your organization and we value your input. Please attend a board meeting.

June 3 July 1 August 5

Meetings begin at 6:30 PM and end at approximately 8:30 PM. They're held at the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 315 East Main Street in downtown Mt. Horeb, a few blocks east of the downtown stop light.

The front door is handicap accessible.

New Plants of Wisconsin Website

Merel Black, BMAP Board Member and Website Creator

The Freckmann Herbarium of the UW-Stevens Point is pleased to announce a new website devoted to the Plants of Wisconsin (http://wisplants.uwsp.edu). The site contains thousands of photographs, maps, and several new features not available elsewhere, including unique and easy to use "Identification Guides."

The site's information in grouped into four categories:

- 1. Natural Communities: Detailed descriptions and photographs of Wisconsin's "Natural Communities."
- 2. Ethnobotany: A listing of Wisconsin plants and their preparation for human use, based largely on the oral teachings of the Great Lakes Ojibwe. Search by use or by plant.
- 3. Bryophytes: Lists all the mosses and liverworts of Wisconsin with some distribution maps. Expect more information in the future, including photos.
- 4. Vascular Plants: There are three subsections:
 - a. A listing of all Wisconsin plants by category (trees, wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, etc.). Also available under these categories are simple check-off identification guides. These guides yield a list of the families within each category with traits matching those selected. Clicking on the family gives a list of the genera within the family. Each genus has a thumbnail photo and, in most families, a brief discussion to help you distinguish among the genera within the family. To obtain a listing of all species within a genus, plus many photographs, click on the genus name. Clicking on one of the listed species produces (when available) a photograph, a county distribution map, a brief description of the plant, and an ethnobotanical link. There are also links for detailed distribution maps, more photographs, natural community descriptions, herbarium specimen information, and a built-in Google search for images or information. Many of the grasses have the line drawings from Fassett's Grasses of Wisconsin book, in addition to photographs.
 - b. Browsing the family list by Latin or common name gives the same genus list as above. The genus and common name browse gives the species lists with photographs.
 - c. You can also search the site by Latin or common name and search and download Freckmann Herbarium specimen records by several criteria.

The site will be actively updated as new information, photographs, maps, and other information becomes available. As trait information is added the Identification Guides will become more precise, as will the genera trait discussions. Many new Natural Community photos are being scanned to add to the site. Now that the growing season has arrived, you can expect many new plant photographs.

Visit us often to see the additions. We hope you will use the site and send your comments to mblack@wisc.edu so that we can keep improving this resource. *

Still Time to Schedule Your Site Visit

There is still time to arrange a site visit by the BMAP ecologist for this growing season. The visit lasts up to three hours, including the time required to create a written report. You're encouraged to walk your land with the ecologist and to ask questions. The report includes a description of the site and its native plant communities, including presettlement conditions, a brief inventory of the native and invasive species observed during the visit, management suggestions, and a list of helpful resources.

Under the revised site visit policy adopted by the Board last fall, there is a \$100 fee per site visit. Members living outside of a 30-mile radius from Blue Mounds may be charged an extra fee to cover travel time.

If you requested a site visit prior to the implementation of the site visit fee, you will still receive a site visit with verbal information and management suggestions at no charge. At your discretion, you may upgrade to the three-hour visit with written report by paying the \$100 fee.

If you're planning to manage or restore native biodiversity to your land, or if you just want to know more about your land, the BMAP site visit remains an excellent perk of BMAP membership. If you are a BMAP member and would like to schedule a visit for this year, please contact BMAP ecologist Bob Wernerehl as soon as possible at 608-795-4244 or by email at rww@tds.net. *

New and Renewing Members and Donors Changes Since the Winter 2003 Newsletter

New Members - Welcome

* indicates an additional donation

Deirdre Birmingham & John Biondi Stephen and Carol Fabos-Gruba Kari and Steven Fenske* Mitchell and Heidi Kiesler*

Renewing Members - Thank you

* indicates an additional donation

Robert C. Becker Caroline Beckett & Frank Sandner Steven Cowan Eric and Nicole Espe Sharon and Warren Gaskill Seth Goodman* Wayne Hakes

Maggie Jones* Randy Kohl

Diane Lorenz

Jack Saltes*

Nancy Thomas & Mike Samuel

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.

BMAP Board of Directors	Board Members		Staff Ecologist
President – Carroll Schaal	Donn D'Alessio	Paul Kaarakka	Bob Wernerehl
Vice Pres. – Michael Anderson	Merel Black	John Raasch	
Secretary – Mary Michal	Andrea Hoerr	Peter Weil	
Treasurer – Vacant			

The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published quarterly.

We welcome your comments, submissions, and advertisements. Send them to the Editor:

Michael Anderson, Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572 or by email to biologic@chorus.net.



608-356-0179

Your Advertisement Here

BMP is now accepting advertisements for inclusion in our newsletter. The revenue generated helps defray publishing costs, which allows 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 Area Project c/o Michael Anderson 2505 Richardson Street Fitchburg, WI 53711-5474 or call (608) 277-9960 or email biologic@chorus.net.



"The illusion of knowledge is the greatest impediment of discovery."

Author unknown



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HAVE YOU EXPIRED??

Please check the address label for your membership expiration date. If you're receiving a complimentary copy, please consider joining.