



# THE BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT

*Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats*

Winter 2004 Vol. 7 No. 1

## Conservation Easements 101

Carroll Schaal

In our recent membership survey numerous people indicated their interest in learning more about conservation easements as a tool for long-term land protection. Apparently that interest was quite strong as 40 people turned out on a cold Thursday night to hear Jim Welsh, Executive Director of the Natural Heritage Land Trust, speak on conservation easements.

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that places permanent restrictions on land use. Jim suggested thinking of landownership as a bundle of “sticks” with each stick representing a right. A landowner can sell or give away certain rights while retaining other rights. For example, granting the right to another landowner to place a driveway across your property. Property rights include hunting, farming, and harvesting timber, among others.

In a conservation easement, the right to develop or disturb a significant natural resource, such as a prairie, savanna, wetland, or farmland, is given or donated to a qualified organization. The conservation easement can be flexible to suit the landowner’s vision and to retain specified rights, such as farming, logging, or building a residence.

Sometimes financial compensation is provided, but conservation easements are often donated. However, the value of a donated easement can be used as an income tax deduction. Once a conservation easement is in place, a landowner is still liable to pay property taxes, although they are eligible for a reduction in assessed value and for tax credit programs like Managed Forest Law. There are costs for appraisals and you should plan on attorney and perhaps tax advisor fees, as well. For those reasons, Jim said the landowner needs to be more interested in conservation than financial gain.

Before considering an easement, the landowner needs to have a good understanding of their land’s natural resources and a clear definition of their long-term goals and which rights they want to retain. The BMAP is very good at helping the landowner understand their natural resources, Jim noted.

Conservation easements require that the landowner have a partner organization, such as a unit of government, or a conservation organization, such as a land trust. The organization owns the development rights and monitors and enforces the

terms of the easement. Usually a land trust will require a donation to help pay for long-term monitoring and management costs.

Since most organizations have priority areas where they are focused not every property will be attractive to every land trust. However, we’re fortunate because there are several organizations in the Blue Mounds area that accept conservation easements. Having several qualified organizations helps attract funding from federal, state, and county grant programs.

The Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) has been in existence

for over 20 years and holds numerous conservation easements in western Dane and Iowa counties. Current NHLT priorities include the Upper Sugar River and Black Earth Creek watersheds. The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area is a 40,000-acre priority area between Mt. Horeb and Ridgeway recognized by a coalition of several conservation organizations.

The Driftless Area Land Conservancy is active in Iowa County and recently completed an easement on a pine

relic stand northwest of Ridgeway. The Prairie Enthusiasts is interested in significant prairie remnants and recently purchased an easement in Pleasant Valley Conservancy in the Town of Vermont.

This has been a very short discussion of a complex subject. Conservation easements are a powerful tool and a logical extension of our mission. We encourage our members to consider this option for the long-term protection of their land.

Visit these websites for more information on easements and other conservation options: The Natural Heritage Land Trust: [www.nhlt.org](http://www.nhlt.org); The Driftless Area Land Conservancy: [www.driftlesslandtrust.org](http://www.driftlesslandtrust.org); Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area: [www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/wisconsin/preserves/art9039.html](http://www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/wisconsin/preserves/art9039.html); The Prairie Enthusiasts: [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org); and Gathering Waters: [www.gatheringwaters.org](http://www.gatheringwaters.org). \*



**Annual Meeting**  
**March 6, Saturday**  
See page 2 for the exciting details

## Message from the Board

Carroll Schaal, President

Greetings to all in the new year. I hope you are all keeping your resolutions. After seeing your responses to our survey and the last newsletter, I'm confident that many of those resolutions include a commitment to our environment. It amazes me that so many of you, most of whom I've never met, are so strongly supportive of the BMAP and its mission. From myself and the other Directors, **thank you for your responses, suggestions, and donations!**

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we initiated the survey to help us develop BMAP's future directions. In a nutshell, you told us we don't need to make any drastic changes, mostly just keep doing what we've been doing. Part of long range planning is evaluating strengths. **You are the strength of the BMAP** and we resolve to take your input and recommit to our core mission of education, advocacy, and landowner support. But there are challenges ahead!

**FIRST**, we need more of you! BMAP needs to expand its member base if it is to thrive. One approach is to do a better job of telling others what we have accomplished. That's why we're **making this year's Annual Meeting more of a celebration** than a meeting. We want to arouse the interest of more folks in the community who don't know us. So, rather than just give an annual report, more of the program will be about the BMAP, who we are, and what we have done.

As part of that, we are **asking YOU**, our members, to bring photos, posters, displays, or other information to share that describes what you are doing on your property to promote native species and biodiversity. We'll advertise and promote the event to attract newcomers. We think it will be a great way to celebrate our success while inspiring others by showing them what can be accomplished. And hopefully, we'll recruit a few new members. Since we think there will be plenty of room in the Community Center, there's no need to make advance arrangements—**just show up!**

As for Annual Meeting program, we'll unveil a new **short slide show on the BMAP**, which we'll use to spread the BMAP word to local landowners, communities, and organizations.

However, the main attraction will be Kristin Westad's presentation on a new conservation partnership called the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area Project (MRPHA). This winter the BMAP signed on to a MPRHA Memorandum of Understanding with 10 other conservation organizations to work with landowners to protect and recover 40,000 acres of savanna and grassland habitat between Mt. Horeb and Ridgeway. You won't want to miss hearing firsthand the details of this exciting and ambitious project.

We'll use the Annual Meeting to kickoff the **creation of a BMAP directory**, an idea strongly supported by our survey. The directory will highlight what members are doing and the skills, tools, and experiences they have to share.

**SECOND**, there are leadership changes ahead. We have a current Board of eight with one vacancy created when **Merel**

**Black** stepped down in August to dedicate time to a new project. Thanks Merel and good luck! We'll miss your energy.

Also, Directors **Mary Michal and Mike Anderson** will step down after the Annual Meeting. Mary is our Secretary and was instrumental in getting our 501C(3) tax exempt status. Mike is Vice President and has been our outstanding newsletter editor and rock-steady sage for six years. We'll miss them both.

Earlier in the year, **John Bird** resigned as Treasurer, but agreed to be our accountant (as long as he doesn't have to go to meetings!). In the interim, I have been acting as Treasurer and President. While I'm willing to remain on the Board, I believe it's time to hand the reins over to someone else.

So where does that leave us? While I don't think our Director turnover is unusual for a small not for profit, obviously there are challenges for the future of the BMAP. It's time for the membership to come forward and help fill the void so that BMAP can continue moving forward. Please think about your time and availability and consider volunteering to be a Director. If you are interested, or would like more information, please call me at (608) 437-6247 or send an email to schaal1@mhtc.net.

**The fine print:** The BMAP is a not for profit corporation registered with the state and federal government and as such is required to have and operate with bylaws which govern the organization. The bylaws call for a board of directors of between 3 and 15 persons. Four officers, a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, are elected from among the directors. Directors must be a BMAP member. Terms are for two years and we meet monthly with as much volunteer time in between as you can muster. \*

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**While I don't think our Director turnover is unusual for a small not for profit, obviously there are challenges for the future of the BMAP.**

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## BMAP 2004 Annual Meeting

The BMAP Annual Meeting will be Saturday, March 6 from 10 a.m. until noon in Mt. Horeb. It'll be a more informal, open house atmosphere this year. As part of that, we want you to bring photos, a display, or other information you'd like to share that describes how you're managing your land to promote native species and biodiversity.

Kristin Westad will be our featured speaker. She'll introduce us to the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA), 40,000 acres in SW Dane and SE Iowa Counties rich in remnants of original prairie and breeding habitat for grassland birds. Kristin is the MRPHA project coordinator.

We'll share some 2003 highlights and give you a sneak preview of our new slide show. We'll have open discussion, we'll present the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bur Oak Award for Outstanding Land Stewardship, we'll nominate new board members, and we'll start creating the BMAP directory. And we'll save enough time at the end for you to view displays, talk with kindred landowners, meet board members, and enjoy refreshments.

Please join us March 6 from 10 a.m. until noon at the Mt. Horeb Community Center, 107 N. Grove Street, Mt. Horeb.

Directions: From the downtown stop light intersection of Main Street (also County Highway ID) and Second Street, go west on Main Street and take the first right onto N. Grove Street. Bring someone and help them become a member. \*

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**The Annual Meeting is your opportunity to learn more about what we've been up to, get answers to your questions, and provide us with direction.**

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## Introduction to a Familiar Prairie Beetle

Andrew H. Williams

*Chauliognathus pensylvanicus* (DeGeer), the Pennsylvania soldier beetle, is an animal most naturalists can easily recognize. These beetles are about half an inch long, narrow, and rather soft bodied, with yellow-orange coloration on their dorsal surface. Their elytra, or wing covers, each bear an oval of black toward their posterior end.

This species has one generation each year. Adults are active in late summer and feed on flower nectar and perhaps also on pollen. The beetles are active fliers, moving from flower to flower gathering food, seeking mates and avoiding harassment of others of their own kind. They produce “antifeedant” glandular compounds that deter many predators from attack, and the beetles move about during the heat of the day with no apparent concern for other species. I suspect the adults spend each night hiding in the litter—I have not found adults at night up in the vegetation column. Adults often are quite covered with pollen of the various flowers they visit and no doubt effect pollination of many flowers with various degrees of efficacy.

In sharp contrast to the winged, herbivorous adults, the larvae lack wings (as, indeed, almost all immature insects lack wings) and have a voracious, carnivorous habit, feeding on many insect species, essentially anything smaller than themselves and soft bodied enough to be chewed. Larvae live independently in the litter. They are brown and orange with a handsome coat of fuzz. Larvae are dormant over the winter, and then feed again when the warmth of spring returns. They dig into the soil to pupate and the adults emerge here in southern Wisconsin beginning in mid-July.

The Pennsylvania soldier beetle ranges widely over eastern North America and can be very common in open, grassy, sunny places, like roadsides. The literature often lists goldenrod and related plants as where these beetles feed. This is true. You can most easily find these beetles by looking at your flowering goldenrods, asters, sunflowers, sneezeweed, and such in late July, August, and into September. But I have also found them feeding on flowers of scores of other plant species growing outside cultivation here in Wisconsin, plants in many different families.

Adults use flowers of every color, though they seem partial to yellow flowers. They use radially symmetrical flowers and bilaterally symmetrical flowers, some of which require the beetles to learn how to use them: some adults can use the constricted tubular flowers of monkey flower, *Mimulus ringens*, other adults cannot gain entry to these flowers despite repeated attempts. These beetles use flowers of common species and also those of plants that are very rare here. They use flowers of both native and alien species. They use large single flowers, into which a beetle will crawl and disappear from view, and tiny flowers that must barely accommodate a beetle’s mouthparts. They use flowers near the ground and others atop tall plants. They use plants that begin to flower in September, providing resources to supplant those that stop blooming in August. They use flowers of

woody plants, though in late summer locally there are few blooming woody plants available. They use some monocots and most available dicots.

Having a variety of floral resources available over the entire span of adult activity and having abundant thatch to provide cover for the larvae are the two crucial components of high quality habitat for this species, and these qualities are best developed in prairie vegetation, where this species can be abundant. Unlike many prairie specialist insects (those restricted to prairies) the Pennsylvania soldier beetle is an insect of early successional habitats that does best and becomes most numerous in tallgrass prairies. Grasses like big and little bluestem, Indian grass, prairie cord grass are all called prairie grasses for this same reason: though they occur all the way east to the Atlantic shore, they are most successful in prairie. In like fashion, the Pennsylvania soldier beetle is a quintessential prairie insect.

In your management of prairies, I urge you to use fire and other management tools in moderation, always leaving a significant part of your prairie where thatch can remain available to provide habitat for these interesting beetles, and for many other insects that we know less well.

*Editor’s note: Andrew is president of Prairie Biotic Research, Inc., a nonprofit providing small grants to foster biological research in U. S. prairies. He can be reached by email at*

*prairiebioticresearch@hotmail.com or at PO Box 5424, Madison, WI 53705. \**



Pennsylvania soldier beetle,  
about twice life size.

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## Calendar of Events

**Upper Sugar River Watershed Association Annual Meeting**  
**February 9, Monday, 7:30 p.m.**

**Montrose Town Hall, 1341 Diane Avenue, Paoli**

Public forum on “Conservation and Low Impact Development: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” displays, and refreshments. Phone (608) 437-7707 or email [usrwa@merr.com](mailto:usrwa@merr.com) for more information. \*

**Madison Area Woodland Owners Conference**

**February 28, Saturday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**Madison**

Timber sales methods, award presentation, forest land taxation and the managed forest law program, land and wildlife management partners, and exhibits. \$25 (before Feb. 16, \$30 at door) includes lunch, snacks, and handouts. Contact Mindy Habecker at (608) 224-3718 or [Habecker@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:Habecker@co.dane.wi.us).

**BMAP Annual Meeting**

**March 6, Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon**

**Mt. Horeb Community Center, 107 N. Grove Street**

See the announcement on page 2 for more information.

## Local Natural History References, Part 1

Bob Wernerehl, BMAP ecologist

*Editor's note: This is the first of a multi-part article. Future articles will cover wildflowers, trees, and shrubs.*

I am often asked by the landowners I work with, what the best books and references are for identifying local plants and birds. The following are my suggestions. There are plenty of choices out there, and this is somewhat a matter of taste, but I think my suggestions offer a time-tested, efficient, and cost effective method for basic identification. When purchasing, please remember the small local bookstores that make up an important part of small town life. Our long-time partner is Prairie Bookshop in Mount Horeb, where owner John Stowe provides space for a BMAP display table.

***A Field Guide to Birds***, 1980, Roger Tory Peterson, published by Houghton Mifflin Company. The subtitle of the fourth edition is "A Completely New Guide to All the Birds of Eastern and Central North America." The spine of the book shows the title "Eastern Birds." This is an excellent field guide. Some may prefer the Audubon guide which has photos for every species, but I find drawings much more useful.

As with other Peterson guides, this one uses small arrows to indicate which parts of the species in question are most readily used for identification. The book includes range maps for each species and some short notes about each bird.

There has been a revolution in bird song recordings due to the wide spread use of the Compact Disk or CD. With each disk allowing 99 tracks, that makes locating the right bird song not nearly so difficult as with cassette tape or vinyl. The newer recordings are much higher quality than those of thirty years ago.

***Birding by Ear: Eastern and Central North America***, Peterson Field Guides, Richard Walton and Robert Lawson, published by Houghton Mifflin. The approach of this recording is to group various fairly common birds by similar song. A narrator tells the listener what to listen for in each song. Some songs would be quite difficult at first to tell apart without the clues given by the narrator. Often, a mnemonic device is suggested to help you remember each song. *Birding by Ear* doesn't cover all of Wisconsin's species, but is a great way to learn the important concepts.

***Bird Song Ear Training Guide: Who Cooks for Old Sam Peabody?***, 2003, John Feith, self published. This is a CD of songs recorded entirely in Wisconsin. Older recordings of most birds took place in or near New York. It turns out many species sing a little differently 800 to 1,000 miles west. Each of the 189 recordings begin with the song, followed by a narrator announcing the species, as well as giving a short descriptor of the song with a suggested mnemonic device for memory, followed by a short repeat of the song. Angela Richardson, the narrator, is a very good bird imitator and has an

entertaining style. Since the song comes first, setting your CD player to random or shuffle makes it possible to create a self quiz. You hear the song, during which you can guess the species, and then the species is announced.

The recording is quite new but is available at the UW Arboretum bookstore and in the bird supply stores in Madison, such a Chickadee Depot and Wild Birds Unlimited. The cover states that all profits go to benefit the Nature Conservancy and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

***Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs—Eastern Region***, 1997, Lang Elliot and Donald and Lillian Stokes, published by Time Warner AudioBooks. This three CD set is affordable and covers all of eastern North America, 372 species of birds. I recommend it over the single CD that is meant to accompany the Peterson series "Field Guide To Birds." Birds such as the Blue Jay and Chickadee give almost a dozen different vocalizations. Woodpeckers give vocalizations and distinctive drumming patterns. These extra songs and noises are not well covered by shorter recordings but are mostly included here. The Stokes recording allows more space between calls, making it more like what you would hear in the field. Frequency of a bird singing can sometimes be as diagnostic as the song itself. Other recordings artificially speed up the number of calls to get several within a 10 second interval.

Remember, it is fairly easy to misidentify species based on books and recordings. After all, experts will sometimes argue over a bird species even while it is in their hands for banding! Patience and some help from others are often required, but these references will really help. \*

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### Editor's (final) Note

I was drawn to the BMAP in the fall of 1997 when I heard rumors of its demise. The demise instead turned into the rebirth of a bigger, stronger, and more active organization. After six years, 24 newsletters, countless typos, and, I have to admit, an occasional curse or two, it's time for me to bow out as newsletter editor.

I'll miss creating the newsletter, especially finding and sharing the back page quote, but I'm looking forward to having more time for other projects and nonprofits. Who knows, I may even be able to write one of the articles for this newsletter that I've been thinking about writing for a long time.

Thanks to everyone who contributed articles over the years—there wouldn't be a newsletter without you. Carroll Schall deserves special thanks for his regular contributions that always came on top of his other BMAP activities.

Mike Anderson

### ~ Board Meeting Schedule ~

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

April 6, May 4, June 1

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.

# BMAP Winter Lecture Series Continues

More than 40 attentive people attended Jim Welsh's talk on conservation easements, the first talk of our winter lecture series. We're sure you'll find the upcoming invasive species talk by Kelly Kearns equally helpful and interesting. After all, according to the recent membership questionnaire, 96% of the BMAP members who've attended our talks rated them useful or very useful. The talk is free and the public is encouraged to attend—bring a friend. Directions are below.

## Identifying and Controlling the Invasive Species of Southwest Wisconsin

Battling buckthorn? Need help identifying a weed? Want to learn the latest invasive species control techniques? Then plan to attend this talk! Kelly Kearns, a regional expert on invasives species, will discuss the primary invasive plants of southwestern Wisconsin and show how they are affecting our woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. She'll demonstrate identification techniques and acquaint us with aggressive nonnative plants that are commonly mistaken for benign wildflowers. Ms. Kearns will discuss how these plant invaders can be most effectively combated, the techniques that show the most promise, and which species to watch for as new plant pests enter our region from neighboring states and other countries.

Kelly Kearns is the Plant Conservation Program Manager for the Bureau of Endangered Resources of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. She is responsible for conservation efforts with rare plants throughout the state. In addition, she coordinates efforts on invasive plant education, policy, and control.

Please join us on **Thursday, February 19, 2004**, from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Mt. Horeb Community Center.

### Directions

The talk will be at the **Mt. Horeb Community Center**, 107 N. Grove Street, Mt. Horeb, in the former library building. From the downtown stop light intersection of Main Street (also County Highway 1D) and Second Street, go west on Main Street and take the first right onto N. Grove Street. We'll be in the upper level meeting room.

## Thank you New and Renewing Members and Donors Member Changes and Donations Since the Last Newsletter

\* indicates a donation was made in addition to membership dues

### New Members

Jeff & Jennie Kraemer  
Chris St. Clair  
Denise Thornton & Doug Hansmann  
Ann Windsor & David Mays \*

### Renewal

Mike Anderson  
Jim & Barbara Ballard  
Sandra Cannon \*  
Theodore S. Cochrane  
Guerdon Coombs  
Lyman & Margaret Crittenden  
James & Cynthia Dries  
Jim Elleson \*  
Lee Fahrney  
Brenda Gasch & Mark Mittelstadt  
Stephen & Aimee Gauger \*  
Julie Hayward & Donn D'Alessio \*  
Janet Huebner  
Bob & Donna Huntington \*

### Renewal, continued

Paul Kaarakka \*  
Ruth M. Kellesvig  
Richard & Judy Kelly \*  
Dean Lesser  
David Marshall & Wendy Weisensel \*  
Kevin & Laurie McCabe  
Paul & Cindy McIntosh  
Myrna & Dobbin McNatt  
Mary Michal & David Haskin \*  
Bill Olson  
Wayne R. Pauly  
Kathleen Piper  
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## Land Management Seminars

**Chain Saw Safety**  
*Saturday, March 13*  
 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

Learn how to use your chainsaw more safely and effectively. Taught by an experienced trainer from the Forest Industry Safety and Training Alliance.

Includes classroom instruction, demonstrations and hands-on practice.

*\$27 including lunch.*

**Introduction to Prescribed Burning**  
*Saturday, March 20*  
 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Learn the fundamentals of prescribed burning, to prepare you to assist in conducting burns under the direction of experienced crew leaders. Classroom instruction, hands-on experience, and, weather permitting, practice burns.

*\$40 including lunch.*

*For more information on these workshops, contact Jim Elleson at:*



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 Verona, WI 53593  
 608-845-7077

info@cedarcreekconsulting.com

**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	Donn D’Alessio	John Raasch	Bob Wernerehl
Vice Pres. – Michael Anderson	Andrea Hoerr	Peter Weil	
Secretary – Mary Michal	Paul Kaarakka		
Treasurer – John Bird			



The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published quarterly.  
 We welcome your comments, submissions, and advertisements.  
 Send them to: Editor, Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572.

## Blue Mounds Area Project Membership Form

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

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

**STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP STATUS:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal    \_\_\_\_\_ New member    \_\_\_\_\_ Gift Membership for \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:**

Student \$15 \_\_\_\_\_    Basic \$30 \_\_\_\_\_    Contributor \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
Supporter \$100 \_\_\_\_\_    Sponsor \$500 \_\_\_\_\_    Patron \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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...Smokey Bear is the second most recognized figure in America, behind Santa Clause.

Fire is part of a timeless cycle of sustenance and danger, death and resurrection, punishment and glory. It can warm the body, comfort the soul, cook food, and give light. It can be monumentally destructive and steal lives and fortunes, or it can be a tonic to forests, grasslands, and wildlife. Fire remains humankind's unpredictable partner.

John N. Maclean, *Fire and Ashes: On the Front Lines of American Wildfires*, 2003.



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