



Blue Mounds Area Project

Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats

Summer 2019

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■ 1
Considering a Fall Burn?

■ 2
Welcome, Amy Alstad,
BMAP's new board president!

■ 2
Ecologist Report

■ 3
Chainsaw Training

■ 4
SNAPSHOT WISCONSIN

■ 5
Have you tried...

■ 6
Grassland, Pasture, and Prairie
Habitat Funding Opportunities

■ 8
Book Review

■ 9
Ants

■ 10
Events

Prescribed fire is a tool many landowners in the Blue Mounds Area Project use to meet their natural-area management objectives, such as reducing invasive plants, promoting native fire-adapted vegetation, and preparing sites for seeding. Matching the timing of your burn to those objectives is key to conducting a burn that advances your land management goals. If your overall management plan calls for the use of fire as a management tool, consider conducting a prescribed burn in the fall.

Considering a Fall Burn?

Anna Healy, Vice President

Typically fall burns are conducted after a hard frost and before snow cover. In the BMAP region, fall burn season often starts in October and can extend through December. Considering that the weather window for conducting spring burns can be quite constricted, conducting a burn in the fall may be a good option.



Photo by Julie Raasch

When used appropriately, the advantages of fall burns are many:

- Prairie firebreaks mowed in the late summer and early fall can be less thatchy and flammable, compared to firebreaks mowed in the spring.
- Burning in late fall can avoid harming reptiles and amphibians typically active in spring and summer when temperatures are above 55°F.
- Fall burns allow frost seeding by removing leaves and thatch prior to winter. Sowing seeds on land burned in the fall makes it easier for frost to work the seed into the soil.

After years of able leadership from Carroll Schaal, Amy Alstad is stepping it up to take on the position of board president. Her prairie ecology experience and her enthusiasm will help guide BMAP onward! Here's Amy's introduction to one and all:

Welcome, Amy Alstad, BMAP's new board president!

Greetings to everyone in the BMAP community,

My first involvement with the Blue Mounds Area Project came in 2012. My family had just purchased a new property in Ridgeway Township, and we became BMAP members to get a site visit and seek assistance thinking through opportunities for ecological restoration on the new property.

Since that first interaction, I've worn many hats with the organization. I was on staff as the BMAP Outreach Ecologist for three years.

I presented some of my graduate school research on prairie remnants at a winter lecture series. When I took a new position with Driftless Area Land Conservancy in 2017, I stepped out of my BMAP staff role and onto the board of directors.



Amy Alstad, President

Photo by Eric Udehnofen

And earlier this year, having transitioned from member to staffer to board member, I've assumed another new role: president of the board. I'd like to recognize Carroll Schaal, our outgoing president, for his outstanding leadership and dedication to this organization. Carroll has contributed thousands of hours to BMAP in numerous roles, ranging from chairing board meetings and overseeing fundrais-

ing, to grilling brats at potlucks. It is not a stretch to say that Carroll is largely responsible for BMAP being what it is today. I'm grateful for his commitment and perseverance – he has had a tremendous impact over the years. It is an honor to inherit this role from him!

With so much of our landscape in private ownership, supporting the efforts of landowners to improve the ecological health of their properties is essential. I truly appreciate the unique role that BMAP plays, working alongside a number of strong conservation partner organizations. The BMAP board is getting ready to enter a strategic planning process over the course of the next several months. We look forward to recommitting to our strengths and our core mission to inspire, inform, and empower private landowners to enjoy, protect, and restore native biodiversity and ecosystem health, while exploring ways to grow our impact and meet the changing needs of our members. Please feel free to reach out to me, or any other BMAP board members by email at info@bluemounds.org to share feedback or get involved with the strategic planning process.

Ecologist Report

Micah Kloppenburg, BMAP Ecologist



Micah Kloppenburg

As this newsletter goes to press, I have completed fourteen site visits this year on BMAP member properties across Dane, Lafayette, Iowa, and Green counties. BMAP's membership area extends

through this four-county region and spans two distinct ecological landscapes: the Western Coulees and Ridges, and the Southwest Savannas. This summer's site visits are a testament to the diversity of woodland, savanna, wetland, and prairie plant communities that comprise these two ecological landscapes: relict pines, with an understory of blueberry, shinleaf, and whorled loosestrife; restored oak savanna, thick with an early summer's bloom of wild geranium; planted wet prairie, interspersed with robust sedges and bulrushes sprouted from a nascent seed

bank; remnant dry prairie, flecked with the miniature, deep pink flowers of twin species of milkwort; and, a planted mesic prairie showing its health with blooms of wild quinine.

My work visiting BMAP member properties often leads me west along Hwy 14 or 151 and on to the back roads that weave serpentine-like along the ridges and through the valley bottomlands. This part of the drive always makes for great moments of reflection, and I often think about pre-settlement

cont. page 3, see ECOLOGIST

For those of us intent on managing natural lands, the ability to operate a chainsaw is a real plus. “The chainsaw is a powerful tool that can cut 100 years of growth in about five minutes,” says Luke Saunders, a Mount Horeb-based certified Safety and Woods Worker (SAWW) Trainer. But cutting down a tree triggers potential dangers “from gravitational forces perhaps 80 feet overhead”. Then there’s that chain, spinning around a bar at 88 feet per second, and prone to kicking back. It’s studded with metal teeth (the sharper the better), circling just a few feet away from your body.

Not surprisingly, chain saws are considered one of the most dangerous tools around. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 36,000 Americans are treated in hospital emergency departments annually for injuries from using chainsaws.

And while the state mandates training certification before we head out on the highway in our cars, there is no such requirement for handling a chainsaw. Fortunately, training in efficient and safe chainsaw operation technique is available. It’s highly recommended by those in the know, and public and private organizations often require completion of a training program before allowing volunteers or staff to use a chainsaw on site.

Training classes by SAWW-certified trainers are offered by both the Aldo Leopold Foundation northwest of Baraboo, and the Riveredge Nature Center north of Milwaukee. The basics for learning how to properly equip yourself, maintain your equipment and safely limb and fell a tree are typically offered in a two-session sequence of roughly 8-hour-long classes combining classroom and field work.

SAWW-certified trainers offer a sequence of programs that take participants through a series of proficiency levels. “The training tends to be dynamic. Even in Levels 1 and 2, perhaps 70% of the day is outside, with people running chainsaws. The focus is on techniques for safety and the recommended personal protective equipment, but also on using the tool to its fullest utility. Safety and efficiency go hand in hand,” says Saunders. A typical class size of 10-12 participants helps ensure that everyone gets hands-on experience.

Ideally, classes are held in the fall or spring. With enough interest in staging a training program closer to BMAP’s home range, SAWW-certified sessions could be arranged locally yet this year. A potential advantage of a class of BMAP members is that the program could provide a focus “not from a logging perspective, but more on removing invasives and the like,” says Saunders.

Chainsaw Training

By Doug Hansmann



Photo by Matt Smith

For more information, check out the SAWW website at www.sawwtraining.com.

If you are interested in participating in a SAWW-certified training class organized by BMAP, please contact BMAP at info@bluemounds.org with the subject line “Chainsaw Training” or call BMAP at 608-561-2627.

ECOLOGIST from page 2

times, and what an intact landscape the cropped valleys and forested hillsides would have presented - a mirage of savanna and wet prairie. With two summers as the BMAP Ecologist, and a number of site visits behind me, this daydream has evolved to contain a vision of the future. My drives now find me wondering how much of the landscape that blurs past my car is

being restored. How many times have I driven by a BMAP-member property without knowing it? How much of this fragmented landscape is actually knit together into a quilt of protected and restored habitat by the shared land ethic of our conservation community? With the work of our membership, the mirage of an intact pre-settlement landscape may also be a glimpse of our future; the seemingly disparate patches of pine relicts, sedge

meadows, and planted prairies are a lot closer to being united than we may think.

If you’d like to organize a site visit, would like an example Land Management Calendar, have questions on weed management, or would like guidance in developing a restoration plan, please contact me at ecologist@bluemounds.org.

Ever look out at your land and wonder what animals are out there, and how they are doing?

Snapshot Wisconsin can give you a new view of your land while helping the DNR understand what is happening with wildlife statewide so it can best direct its wildlife management efforts.

SNAPSHOT WISCONSIN

Knowledge is power -
it can also be a lot of fun.

Denise Thornton

The UW-Madison Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology has partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the Snapshot Wisconsin initiative to put trail cams into the hands of qualifying landowners to gather new info on critter populations statewide.

The state has been divided into 6,273 blocks (about four per township) -each block about three miles by three miles in size. So far, 1,706 volunteers are maintaining 2,108 trail cameras across the state, collecting over a million photos each month using equipment provided free of charge by the program.

“We are always looking for more volunteers in all of the counties across the state,” says Jamie Bugel of Snapshot Wisconsin. “Our general rule is one camera per block. Iowa County was one of the very first counties in the program, and because of that we have a lot of folks already signed up there.”

Even so, Iowa and Dane County residents should not hesitate to check out the program. There are still blocks available in the BMAP area, and Bugel urges those interested to sign up and get on the

waiting list if their block is already taken. “Also, there is a second program in the area using trail cams - The Southwest Wisconsin CWD Deer and Predator Study,” she notes, “and sometimes we will accommodate more than one camera in those survey blocks.”

Snapshot Wisconsin data is helping to create more accurate population estimates around the state, such as a better fawn-to-doe ratio that can help determine whether the deer population is shrinking or growing.

These citizen science-monitored cameras are increasing coverage and cutting costs by reducing the

The photos on the camera card are encrypted, so that you can't view them until you have downloaded them to the DNR, where they are de-encrypted and returned to you, usually within a day of sending.

Free training and equipment are provided to accepted applicants. The requirements include access to at least ten contiguous acres of land, basic computer skills, and the ability to check the camera every 90 days for at least one year.

Here is a direct link to the Snapshot Wisconsin signup application. snapshotwisignup.org



Photo Snapshot Wisconsin

need for aerial surveys. And Snapshot Wisconsin data is safer for both wildlife and technicians than bait-and-trap alternatives.

The camera is motion activated and takes 3 photos in quick succession. Having three views can really make it easier to ID in some cases. And at 10:40am every day, the cameras take a time-lapse photo that goes to the University of Wisconsin for season monitoring. A flash is activated after dark for capturing images of nocturnal animals.

**“An understanding of the
Natural World and what’s
in it is a source of not
only a great curiosity
but great fulfillment.”**

— *Sir David Attenborough*

...Fall Herbicide Control of Garlic Mustard?

Extension resources from state agencies, experiences from land management groups and practitioners, and reports from BMAP members demonstrate that a fall herbicide application is an excellent way to get an early start on next year's garlic mustard infestation.

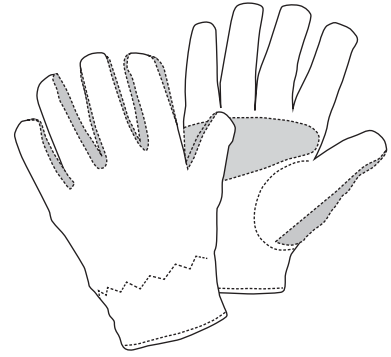
After a killing frost in the fall, most of our native flora have headed off to dormancy, and their above-ground greenery has died back to root-rest for the coming winter. So careful application of a choice herbicide to the leafy-green basal rosettes of the new generation of garlic mustard seedlings, dames rocket, or Japanese hedge parsley should minimally (if at all) affect our desired native woodland species.

Subsequent years of book-ending (spring and fall) seasonal garlic mustard control combined with hand pulling any missed individual plants can rapidly control those pesky garlic mustard patches that

never seem to quit. Of course, with any of our weed control work, make sure you plan to seed in the treated spaces with your choice woodland seed mix (geranium, tick seed, lop seed, and sweet cicely seem especially resilient).

Details of note:

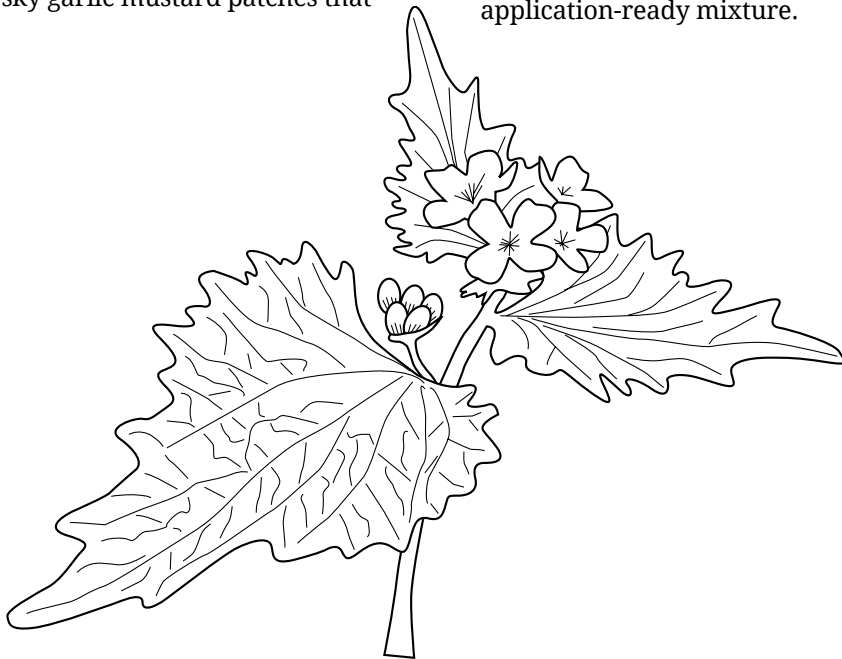
- Before spraying herbicide on garlic mustard, make sure the temperature is around 50 °F or warmer, and preferably sunny. This ensures that plants are biologically active and will take-up the herbicide.
- Because herbicides can be more cost-effectively purchased and conveniently stored as concentrates, they often require dilution before use. Be sure you understand how to correctly and safely dilute and safely apply your herbicide. Consult your product's label to determine the percent active ingredient and/or the active acid equivalent of the herbicide in order to correctly calculate the proper preparation of your application-ready mixture.



Have you tried...

From Micah Kloppenburg, BMAP Ecologist

- The non-selective herbicide glyphosate (sold as RoundUp, with 41% active ingredient). Glyphosate is an excellent garlic mustard treatment in locations where there are very few native plant species still green and actively growing. Prepare glyphosate for application by diluting 1.5-3.5 oz. of the 41% concentrate in one gallon of water. Once applied, glyphosate rapidly dissipates from the soil and becomes inert in the environment.
- The broadleaf-specific herbicide triclopyr (sold as Garlon 3A with 44% active ingredient). Triclopyr is a preferred garlic mustard treatment in locations where native grasses and sedges are still actively growing. Prepare triclopyr for application by diluting 2-3.5 oz. of the 44% concentrate in one gallon of water.
- Adding a nonionic surfactant (sold as Cide-Kick II, or using 1/4 oz. of Dawn dish soap or Pine-Sol, in 3 gallons of water) will enhance adherence of your herbicide to plant foliage.



Advertise in the Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter

Deadline for ads in the fall newsletter is November 1, 2019

1/6 page vertical (2 3/8" x 4 7/8") \$35.00
1/3 page squarish (5 1/8" x 4 7/8") \$55.00
1/2 page horizontal (7 7/8" x 4 7/8") \$75.00

For more details contact
Denise Thornton, thornton.denise@gmail.com

- Do you (or someone you know) own or manage land in the townships of Perry and Primrose in Dane County or the townships of Linden and Mineral Point in Iowa County? Do you have grassland, prairie, active or idle pasture on your property? Would you like to improve the quality of these lands through prescribed fire, brush management, and/or inter-seeding with pollinator plants? The Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network (www.driftless-grasslands.org), partnering with the USFWS Partners for Wildlife Program, has funding to offer technical and financial assistance to landowners, through support from the DNR Pheasant Stamp Funds. These project areas correspond with two important Grassland Bird Conservation Areas. For details of the program and to learn more about how to apply, please contact Cindy Becker at cindy@driftlessconservancy.org.

Grassland, Pasture, and Prairie Habitat Funding Opportunities

Improving open habitat for grassland birds and pollinators.

- Would you like guidelines for developing pollinator habitat on your land? BMAP can help. Work with an ecologist to develop a Pollinator Habitat Management Plan tailored to fit your needs and site conditions. For more information on this FREE service, contact the BMAP ecologist at info@bluemounds.org.
- The Continuous Cover Program (CCP), offered through the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department, allows agricultural

producers and landowners to convert land that is currently in an annual crop into a perennial cool-season grass mix, native prairie mix, or grazing mix. This program comes with a great cost-share payment, and allows for harvesting and grazing of the cover. For more information, contact the Land Conservation Division at 608-224-3730, landcon@countyofdane.com.

- The DNR Landowner Incentives Program is currently reviewing the applications that have been submitted in response to their 2019 spring call for proposals. They are not accepting new applications at this time; however, to stay connected to future opportunities and learn more about this important source of landowner assistance, visit www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources/LIP.html.



- The Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program (www.fws.gov/midwest/partners) works with private landowners to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their lands. A phone call or email can connect you with a local biologist who will listen to your goals and explain our priorities. After an initial site visit, they will work with you to develop a project plan. A landowner agreement between you and the biologist will specify

the work to be done, financial contributions, and restoration timeline. Any privately-owned land is potentially eligible for restoration, including working farms and recreation lands. Most participants are private landowners. For purposes of this program, “privately-owned” means land not owned by a State or the Federal Government. Partners may include individual landowners, tribes, organizations, municipalities, and corporations. Contact Mike Engel at 608-221-1206 ext. 6, mike_engel@fws.gov.

- Conservation Reserve Program general sign-up will be available sometime this late fall/early winter. For more information, your local county conservation office will be of assistance.

Do you have streams and/or wetlands on your property?

This is a great time to be thinking about enrollment in conservation programs.

- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a resource for landowners who till or graze land along water to help reduce runoff and meet conservation goals. CREP, a voluntary program, pays landowners to install filter strips along waterways, or return frequently flooded fields to wetlands. For more information, visit www.datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/CREP.aspx, call the CREP office at 608-224-4632, or contact your county conservation office.
- The current Conservation Reserve Program continuous sign-up period, open through August 23, 2019, was for specific practices that generally are designed to protect water quality and develop stream and wetland buffers. Other practices include grass waterways and contour grass strips.

cont. page 7, see FUNDING

FUNDING from page 6

www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/crp-continuous-enrollment/index.

- Emergency Watershed Protection Program Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE) is a new voluntary program through which eligible applicants agree to sell a permanent conservation easement to the United States through NRCS. Compensation is based on the value of the easement as determined by an appraisal or market analysis. These easements may occur on public or private agricultural land, or residential properties damaged by flooding and natural disasters. NRCS will work to restore the easement to its natural floodplain condition. This easement program offers an option that alleviates the stress of operating in a floodplain while still retaining ownership of the property. Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about the program. www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/?cid=nrcs143_008216.

This funding update was submitted by the Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network (SWG N). To learn more about the network, please visit www.dirftlessgrasslands.org and stay connected via the network's Facebook site, @SWGGrasslands. Or contact Cindy Becker, SWGN Coordinator, cindy@driftlessconservancy.org, 608-930-3252.

**"Conservation is a state
of harmony between
men and land."**

— Aldo Leopold

BURN from page 1

- DNR burn permits are not required June 1-December 31 (still a good idea to notify neighbors and county dispatch).
- Fall burns promote flowering and reproduction of early-blooming native plants.
- In woodlands, the fresh layer of fallen leaves is uncompacted by snow and may carry fire better than compacted, wetter leaf litter.
- Lower air temperatures and higher humidity and fuel moisture reduce the risk of your burn escaping control, and may allow for a patchy burn that's beneficial for overwintering animals.
- There's more time for establishing firebreaks, since the ground isn't covered by snow!

There are some constraints to consider:

- Fall burns will release a flush of seedlings in the spring, including weeds! Be ready for them.
- Day length is short during the fall burn season, compared to spring. By the time the plant growth is frost-free, you may only have a few hours of suitable burn weather.
- Trees and brush have fewer resources above ground compared to spring and may not be as impacted by a fall fire compared to a late spring or growing season burn.
- Fall burning can reduce food, cover and shelter for overwintering birds, insects, and other wildlife. So it may be best to leave some areas unburned (refugia) if there's not much similar habitat around your burn unit.

Pro tips:

- Be ready to burn! Weather windows for fall burns are short, so make sure your firebreaks are completed, equipment is ready, and burn crew organized well before burn day.
- Establish measurable objectives for your burn, and conduct a test fire to determine you'll meet those objectives. Examples: "Reduce fine fuels by 90% to facilitate overseeding". "Top-kill 50% of invasive brush in burn area".
- Check the DNR website for protocols for conducting burns if threatened or endangered species are on your land: www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/ERReview/ItGrasslands.html
- Is this your first burn? Consider hiring a contractor to learn how the burn should be planned and conducted. This also reduces the stress and effort required to compete your burn.
- Have more crew, equipment, and experience than you think you'll need. Better to be over-prepared than under-prepared - you have a better chance meeting your burn objectives with a larger crew.
- Consider impacts of smoke on nearby neighbors and roads and plan your burn accordingly.

If you are curious how fall burns have worked for other landowners, don't be shy to ask someone at the next BMAP function. If you have an experience with fall burning that you would like to share with a larger audience, write about it in the BMAP newsletter or Facebook Page. Your experience may inspire others.

A list of contractors who do controlled burns can be found at the Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council webpage: www.prescribedfire.org/burn/contractors.

Douglas Tallamy, Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology of the University of Delaware presents an open and shut case for not only planting native plants, but going the extra mile to eradicate the alien plants in your yard or on your land. After you read this book you'll find yourself compelled to spread the word, not simply for aesthetic or practical reasons, but to save all life on Earth. Seriously, that's how I felt after reading just a few pages.

Book Review

J. A. Raasch, Former BMAP Newsletter Editor



Tallamy's flash of insight arrived when he and his wife moved to a ten-acre farm in Pennsylvania. As an entomologist, he was startled by the lack of insect damage—and insect life—on the exotic plants that were aggressively replacing the native vegetation. His investigation of exactly who eats what—and why exotic plants are truly dangerous—is presented in this book.

Here's the first important fact. Herbivorous insects convert plants

into food for numerous amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. For example, fully 96 percent—yes, 96 percent!—of terrestrial North American birds rely on insects and other arthropods, usually the spiders that eat insects, to feed their young.

Here's the second important fact. Exotic plants, often valued because they are not touched by insects, support a relatively small number of insect species. What does this mean? Less insect biomass. For example, the author's research in Pennsylvania showed that native woody plants support 35 times more caterpillar biomass, the preferred source of protein for bird nestlings, than alien woody plants provide. It is an understatement to point out that this can make the difference between a successful breeding season and severe decline of a local population.

After explaining why insects can't eat alien plants, providing a brief overview of the true cost of exotic ornamentals, and letting us know why our gardens are better off if we actually feed the local insects, the author launches into a 40-page whirlwind tour of North American woody plants that sustain insects and, indirectly, other organisms. Why woody plants? Folks are already interested in providing nectar and pollen for adult butterflies and moths, but there's not so much interest in feeding the caterpillars and you can't have one without the other. This section of the book is enjoyable for the natural history alone. The reader learns that oaks (which are preferred by 105 insect species) can "churn out caterpillars from May to October", bats eat the adult stage of the tent caterpillars that thrive on cherry and plum trees, and forest birds benefit immensely during outbreaks of spruce budworm (an important food for nestlings).

Douglas Tallamy continues with a 60-page chapter entitled "What Does Bird Food Look Like?" Again,

it is worth reading for the natural history alone. But the numerous anecdotes and references to research—fully documented if one wishes to read the original journal articles—drive home the point that much of the life we see flying and crawling around us is quite dependent upon an army of insect and other arthropod species consuming plants and one another. The reader gets to meet some familiar and not so familiar herbivores and predators and learn about their roles in ecological communities. There are exceptional close-up colored photographs accompanying the descriptions and I found my self saying over and over, "So that's what I saw when I walking around last summer!" I now I want to learn even more about these critters.

The author concludes with a FAQ section that helps us understand why insect or bird activity around a given alien plant is not a sign that all is well and offers some advice for winning over the neighbors who might object to your wild and insect-infested gardens.

This is not exactly a how-to book, but a motivational and inspirational book. Douglas Tallamy lives in Pennsylvania, is primarily interested in forests, and writes from his own experience. Not all the plants and insects listed in the appendix are found in the Midwest, but it certainly serves as an excellent starting point for your own investigation.

I encourage folks to read this book for several reasons. You'll know why alien plants are a threat. You'll know why you should always plant native species instead of alien species. You'll be able to explain why to other people. And you might be motivated to look into what's happening in your own region of the country and share the information with others before it is too late. I hope someone will write a similar book for the Midwest.

cont. page 9, see BOOK

Recent complaints about ant mounds causing bumpy rides for people while mowing prairies have prompted me to provide the following information about prairie ant colonies. What are the benefits of the amazing mound-building ants?

John T. Curtis (*The Vegetation of Wisconsin*, 1959) wrote that in some Wisconsin prairies there are 40 to 50 ant mounds per acre. The mounds were about 12 inches tall and 24 to 36 inches in diameter. He suggested that ants, along with earthworms and rodents, turn over the upper 24 inches of soil in a prairie once during a century.

F. Paul Baxter and Francis D. Hole (University of Wisconsin Soil Science Department, 1967) noted the importance of biotic factors, including ants, in the development of the prairie soil. The excavated soil of ant mounds may occupy up to 1.7% of the surface area of a prairie. The mounds have an average volume of 0.71 cubic feet, of which 12% consists of channels and chambers. The channels reach at least 5 feet below the soil surface. There is an unusually high content of available potassium and phosphorus, both essential plant nutrients, in the mound, probably a result of the concentration of organic materials by the ants. For example, the plant sap the ants collect from plant-feeding aphids and other honeydew-

producing insects. The ants also promote mineralization of organic matter and mix lower soil levels with the upper soil layer.

Baxter and Hole suggested that the upward movement of soil material by ants appears to be an important factor for maintaining relatively high amounts of clay in the upper level of the soil profile. Ant activity also results in an increased thickness of the upper level of the soil profile, which is important because this is the portion of soil where most plant roots grow.

J.T. Medler and R.O. Wagner (University of Wisconsin Entomology/Botany Department, 1960) studied the ant mounds of the prairie ant (*Formica montana*) on the Ipswich Prairie near Platteville in Grant County, in southwestern Wisconsin. They found 620 ant mounds per acre, with 75% of the mounds occupied by active colonies. It takes about 6 years to build a new colony which at its maximum may number as many as 6,000 ants. A colony dies out in about 12 years and the inactive mound gradually shrinks from about 12 inches tall to about 3 inches. An abandoned ant mound gradually loses the colony odor, after which the site will again be acceptable for a new ant colony.

Medler and Wagner concluded that with a 12-year occupancy for each mound combined with a continu-

ous establishment of new mounds, every point on the Ipswich prairie may support a mound within 600 years. The soil profile could be 3,500 years old. In this period the biota of this prairie, particularly the prairie ant, could have formed a prairie soil from a previous forest soil that had developed over about 5,000 years.

Ants

Their Role as Soil Builders

Wendell Burkholder, Entomologist

It may take many years for ant mounds to develop in new prairies unless ant mounds from remnant prairie sources are nearby. These may include old rail and road beds, old fields, hedge rows, or fence lines. Some females have wings, but appear to be poor flyers and usually disperse along the ground to new locations (G. Henderson, University of Wisconsin Entomology, 1989).

The benefits of mound-building ants are clear. The constant mixing of plant and animal remains with the excavated soil improves both the fertility and texture of the soil.

This article originally appear in the Fall 1999 BMAP Newsletter.

BOOK from page 8

Most important, given the extent of fragmentation of habitat and numerous other threats to plant and animal species, the reader will walk away realizing that every garden, every plot of land, every container on your patio is essential for preserving the biodiversity around us.

According to Douglas Tallamy

“But now, for the first time in its history, gardening has taken on a role that transcends the need of the gardener. Like it or not, gardeners have become important players in the management of our nation’s wildlife. It is now within the power of individual gardeners to do something that we all dream of doing: to “make a difference.” In this case, the “difference” will be to the future of biodiversity, to the native plants and animals of North America and the ecosystems that sustain them.”

I’d like to thank the Mound Vue Garden Club for donating a copy of this book to the Mount Horeb Public Library. I found it by chance while perusing the “new book” shelf and thoroughly enjoyed learning about this subject. I’ll be purchasing a copy for my home library.

This article originally appeared in the Summer 2009 BMAP Newsletter.

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EVENTS

Women Caring for the Land

Friday, October 4

Time: 3 pm – 7 pm

Location: Placke Organic Acres, 9071 Fever Hill Road, Cuba City, WI 53807

Kelly Placke milks a grass-based, no grain herd of 40 cows at Placke Organic Acres, providing milk for Organic Valley grass-fed milk products. Organic practices on the farm include no antibiotics, chemical-free land management, and a crop rotation system of corn, wheat, and 2 years of hay. Learn about benefits of a rotational grazing system for the farm and environment, the organic grass-based dairy industry, developing a value added product line (milk soap), and making it all work with a 2-person operation. Kelly will also discuss farm succession planning.

This event is designed to provide women landowners and farmers a chance to network with peers and learn from resource professionals. The event will start with a learning circle for discussion and conversation, then a tour of the farm, followed by a potluck dinner. Men are welcome to join for the farm tour portion and potluck. The learning circle space is for women only. Register on-line at www.driftlessgrasslands.org/events, Facebook @driftlessgrasslands, or call Cindy Becker @ 608-930-3252. Sponsored by the Southwest WI Grasslands Network.

Potluck and Land Tour

Saturday, October 12

Time: 2 pm – 5 pm

Location: Calico and Dan Schmidt, N9478 York Center Road,
Blanchardville, WI 53516

This 28-acre property has 15 acres of remnant prairie plus mixed oak savanna to explore as the year deepens into fall. This will be a perfect opportunity to share fall management tips and begin planning your winter stewardship season. Heated indoor area available for potluck if necessary.

Winter Tree and Shrub Identification

Saturday, November 16

Time: 2pm – 5 pm

Location: Donald County Park (meet at the Hwy 92 entrance)

Join Anna Healy (Fitchburg Urban Forester/Naturalist) and Cindy Becker (Field Ecologist) for a short field course in identifying trees and shrubs after leaf-off. Winter is a great time to be enjoying and working in the woods, and we will share tips for identifying native trees and shrubs, and invasive shrubs in our area. We will tour savanna, woodland, and mesic forest habitats, allowing us to provide tips on many species of trees and shrubs. Potluck style snacks to follow; Drinks provided.

Our Mission:

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, nonnative 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.

The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published three times yearly. We welcome your comments, submissions, and advertisements.

Deadlines for submissions for 2019 newsletters:

Spring Newsletter — March 15, 2019

Summer Newsletter — September 1, 2019

Fall Newsletter — November 1, 2019

Send submissions to: newsletter@bluemounds.org

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If you are interested in assisting or volunteering for Blue Mounds Area Project, please contact us:

info@bluemounds.org
608-561-2627
(608-561-BMAP)

Blue Mounds Area Project Membership Form

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Membership Status:

Renewal New Member Gift Membership for

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Student \$15 Basic \$30 Contributor \$50 Supporter \$100 Sponsor \$500 Patron \$1000
 Other contribution to further the BMAP mission _____

TOTAL _____

Make check payable and return to: Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572

Yes, I would like to receive information about site visits.

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



Blue Mounds Area Project

P.O.Box 332

Mt. Horeb, WI 53572

“The wealth of the nation is its air, water, soil, forests, minerals, rivers, lakes, oceans, scenic beauty, wildlife habitats and biodiversity... that’s all there is. That’s the whole economy. That’s where all the economic activity and jobs come from. These biological systems are the sustaining wealth of the world.”

— *Gaylord Nelson*



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