

# Blue Mounds Area Project

Promoting Ecological Restoration and Stewardship of Native Habitats

#### **Summer 2018**

Volume 21 Number 2

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Have you tried...

An herbarium is a repository for dried plant specimens that are catalogued and stored in a systematic fashion for use by professional scientists and amateurs (Fig. 1). There are currently about 20 herbaria in Wisconsin, the largest of which is the Wisconsin State Herbarium at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with more than 1.2 million specimens. These specimens include vascular plants, bryophytes, lichens, micro-fungi, and algae (although these last three categories are no longer considered to be plants).

# **Herbaria and Herbarium Specimens**

Mary Ann Feist, Herbarium Curator, Wisconsin State Herbarium Over 800,000 of these are vascular plants, 275,000 of which were collected in Wisconsin.

There are only 2,700 different species of vascular plants in Wisconsin, and yet we have over 275,000 specimens of Wisconsin plants in the herbarium! That's an average of over 100 specimens per species, and we are actively adding more. Some of the rarest species are only represented by a few

specimens while we have hundreds of specimens of some widespread species. You might wonder why we have so many specimens of the same species and why we would want more. There are actually many reasons why and below I discuss a few of the main ones.



Fig. 1 - Studying an herbarium sheet.

#### Vouchers

Many of our specimens are vouchers (Fig. 2) which were collected to support a particular activity (like a floristic inventory of a State Natural Area) or study

www.bluemounds.org

We hope this newsletter finds you enjoying the long summer evenings and the beauty of summer in the Driftless Area.

# Greetings from the Blue Mounds Area Project Board of Directors

As this issue goes to print, we have wrapped up our summer events and are looking forward to more yet to come. Thanks to long-time member Mary Trewartha for hosting a bobolink tour in May and to James MacDonald, Kris and Penny

Kubly for hosting property tours and potlucks in June and July respectively. Also thanks to Bob, Caroline and Scott Laeser and Chelsea Chandle who wrapped things up in August. We hope you can join us to see special properties and connect with fellow land stewards next summer. Watch our website, www.bluemounds.org for details.

We are very pleased to have Micah Kloppenburg as our new outreach ecologist. Micah hit the ground running in May supporting the good conservation work of BMAP members. Micah brings passion and energy to the position, as well as excellent new ideas to our organization. If you are interested in having a site visit with Micah, feel free to be in touch with him directly at ecologist@bluemounds.org.

In keeping with BMAP's mission to be "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" we have added a new column titled "Have you tried..." to the newsletter. The purpose of this new column is to give our members an opportunity to share restoration tools and strategies they have found successful. We hope this proves to be useful. If you have something you would like to contribute to this column, you can submit it to info@bluemounds.org.

Please feel free to be in touch if you have ideas for events, newsletter content or other thoughts for how BMAP can best serve our members. We always welcome thoughts and suggestions.

# **Ecologist Report**

Micah Kloppenburg, BMAP Ecologist



Micah Kloppenberg

"The wonder that each property holds," I thought as I hiked at high noon through alternating strips of bottomland CRP-planted prairie and head-high reed canary grass on a hot, humid day with the tempera-

tures in the upper 90s. To know the land by foot is to know the land and in this moment, my hard work was rewarded: in the far back corner of the property were indications of a remnant sedge meadow and prairie highlighted with a single surviving and robust bloom of wild quinine. As the new outreach ecologist I have had the

privilege of visiting the properties of and working with eight Blue Mounds Area Project (BMAP) members. Together, we've walked many acres of restored habitat and have discussed plans to establish many more.

The most challenging piece of the outreach ecologist position has been learning how to talk through the patience and persistence restoration requires. I find it so easy to envision the end oak savanna or prairie that now lies hidden under the mix of forage grass sod or honeysuckle cover. The difficulty lies in talking through ideas, information, and adaptation to develop a plan consistent with the resources, values, and end vision each land steward has. These plans are so important as they maintain the focus and break the seemingly huge task of landscape restoration into achievable goals, parcel-byparcel and year-by-year. The reward is thinking 10, 20, 50 years from now; the reality is the tasks at hand.

These reflections on strategy and plan design bring me to a few key points I believe are important pieces of 'slow' restoration. Take the time to sit and draft handdrawn maps of your land, labeling end goals and priority tasks across the different management units; outline a Land Management Calendar for your property to prioritize specific management tasks and to maximize your efficiency and energy; and, lastly, visit other properties nearby – your neighbors', other BMAP members', or other natural areas – for inspiration and to share or learn what works.

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



Our classroom in the beautiful Schurch-Thomson barn.

I was drawn to the idea of taking the Master Naturalist course because I loved taking the short but intense field trips, lectures and workshops that are sponsored by BMAP, TPE and other natural resource organizations in Wisconsin. I learn new things every time I walk with the trip leaders and groups on those excursions. The idea of a class with an extended field trip agenda among other interested people sounded like fun. I was first exposed to environmental studies by Professor Jim Zimmerman at UW-Madison in the early 1970s. He had a passion for the environment and took his students on unconventional camping trips around the state to introduce us to ecosystems such as bogs and pine relicts. It was totally eye opening for me as a young student and I've been interested in learning more about ecology ever since.

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program (WIMN) is part of the UW-Extension Environmental Resources Center based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The mission of WIMN is: "To promote awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the state's natural resources by developing a corps of well-informed volunteers dedicated to education and service within their Wisconsin communities." The focus of our WIMN class this spring was the Driftless Area with emphasis on prairies and savannas.

Pat Trochlell and Rachel Potter were our inspirational and diligent instructors. Pat is a professional wetlands expert recently retired from DNR. Rachel is a retired teacher with field biology training. Both took the instructor training course for WIMN and decided the Mounds View Grassland and the Schurch-Thomson barn would be an ideal site for the class. The course was nine sessions for a total of 40 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. On our first day we received a hefty 3-inch wide binder provided by the WIMN program, which is used statewide. It's divided into eight topics: Landscapes (Geology and

# The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Class, Spring 2018

Linda Millunzi-Jones

Climate), Ecology, Plant Life, Wildlife, Interpretation, Water, Water Life, Humans, and then the Capstone Project.

Our class was composed of nine people. Most of us were in the field of education as teachers or students. A couple classmates were busy raising families; another was a young professional in the work force. A few of us were retired from our professions. Some of us were already practicing prairie, woodland and stream restoration techniques. We also had some serious birders onboard. It was a nice variety and everyone was enthusiastic and intent on learning as much as we could.

We had short lectures indoors and field trips just outside the barn door for hands-on learning. We also toured other nearby ecosystems.

cont. page 5, see NATURALIST



Gathering in the shade after a hot day at class.

Photo by Linda Millu

Getting to Jim "MacD" and Betty MacDonald's property near Blanchardville for BMAP's first tour and potluck of 2018 was easy for me - a 40 minute drive in my car. Getting to the same place in the 1850s was much more challenging for the Haugen family, the property's first European settlers. Their journey from Norway lasted one and a half years and included walking from Milwaukee, their port of entry, to the New Glarus area where they overwintered, before finally arriving the following spring to claim their homestead farmland.

# It's Not About Individual Species

Michael Anderson, BMAP Board Member



Jim "MacD" MacDonald

One hundred and thirty eight years later, Betty and James MacDonald, MacD's parents, bought the marginal farm from a Haugen descendant. By then, no one was living on the farm and it was used only for pasture. For the MacDonald family, the farm was a place to be outside observing and enjoying nature. A few years after purchasing the farm, MacD offered his father a 30'x30' prairie planting for a Christmas present saying "Just tell me where." After pondering



About 35 acres have been converted to prairie.

the offer for nearly a year James decided he'd "like a little bigger prairie." And so the 900 square feet became 10 acres with another 10 acres added shortly thereafter.

All 20 acres were planted with just three grasses - big bluestem, Indian and side oats and 4 shortlived forbs, a common practice in the early 1990s. A tall, dense, stand of grass developed quickly, hardly an accurate replication of a prairie. That's where MacD enters the picture. While many people seek to recreate native prairie, MacD's vision is much more specific. He seeks to return (recreate) the richness and diversity of York Prairie to his land, which is embedded in historic York Prairie, using only seeds sourced from the bits and pieces of the remaining York Prairie. As MacD noted, "It's not about individual species, it's about an ecosystem."

To accomplish his goal, MacD eliminates the dense grass and sows seeds of prairie species onto the exposed soil. More specifically, he sprays the grass with a grass-specific herbicide in midsummer before it starts flowering. The sprayed area is burned in the fall, usually as part of a larger unit. He seeds the treated and burned area in early winter using local

ecotype seeds he's collected from nearby bits and pieces of remnant York Prairie. The seed mix is very diverse, typically 120-140 species of forbs, sedges, short prairie grasses and prairie shrubs, such as leadplant. Seeding is done by hand.

During the second or third growing season he spot sprays the tall grasses where they are becoming dense with a grass-specific herbicide. The grass-specific herbicide doesn't harm the forb, sedge and shrub species he's planted. He converts about three to four acres each year while maintaining the previously converted areas. It takes three to four years for the area to fill-in with the seeded species. Thus far he has converted about 35 acres.

The results of MacD's efforts are obvious and dramatic. Walking through the prairie we saw waist high grass with nary a forb on one side of a narrow path. On the other side was an abundance of colors, heights, textures and motion - the reborn York Prairie. Pale purple coneflower, spiderwort, northern bedstraw, foxglove beardtongue, yarrow, oxeye (early) sunflower, quinine, leadplant, hoary vervain, dogbane, butterfly

cont. page 9, see SPECIES

#### NATURALIST from page 3

Rich Henderson retired DNR research scientist, TPE board member and site steward for Mounds View Grassland was a regular resource in class and provided insight from his vast field of natural resource experience. Neil Molstad, soil scientist with DNR took us to Shea Prairie and we got our hands dirty with soil samples that we squeezed into ribbons to identify the type.

We visited the Long Lake Slough along the Wisconsin River with Dave Marshall, fish and slough ecologist with DNR (aka The Slough Pirate) to ID the creatures in the water. We learned how they tested the ground water in monitoring wells with Ken Wade, retired hydrologist, who also taught our geology lessons.

Dave Sample, the intrepid birdman and ecologist of the Natural Heritage Conservation Program with DNR took us on a bird walk through the Schurch-Thomson Prairie and shared his singular research of badgers in the state. We rounded out our guests with presentations from Steve Glass, Mounds View seed nursery manager and Jan Ketelle, Mounds View year-round restoration volunteer. Also, Rich gave us a breakdown of which invasive plants to attack and which ones to ignore. We were fortunate to have such a vibrant team of experts who were so willing to address all of our questions while the prairie spring unfolded for our classroom.

The capstone project was our choice of a short-term project that needed to be something new to each of us. We researched our topic, did the field work and presented our project to the class on our final day. The project was meant as a transition from training to volunteer service. With our capstone project completed

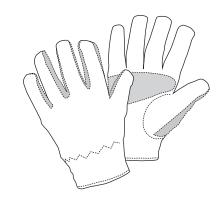
cont. page 8, see NATURALIST

### ...Leaving large dead trees for habitat?

While it's easy to get lost in the dedication of opening canopy up for your prairie, savanna, or woodland and creating a clean, park-like aesthetic, consider leaving one (or a few) large, dead trees as habitat for birds and other critters. You can take further action by carefully 'topping' the dead elm, cherry, ash, or oak midway up its upper branches to better mimic the physical form most attractive to redheaded woodpeckers. In addition to providing a home for cavity-dwelling birds and mammals, dead trees attract a host of invertebrates, which in turn attract birds that feed on them. I recommend working with a professional arborist or forester for consultation on which trees may best provide such habitat. There may be trees already on their way out from disease or pest infestation that could easily serve as snag habitat. More importantly for safety's sake, a forester or arborist should be the one to do the work of topping a dead tree. Leaving dead, standing snags provide important habitat and a pleasing heterogeneity for your prairie, savanna, or woodland.

## ...Collecting Seeds of the Little Guys

My tools of choice for collecting seeds of the little guys (violets, blue-eyed grass, yellow star grass, etc.) include disposable foot socks (light, stretchable nylon), twist ties and flagging tape. I keep a stash in my back pants' pocket so one is available when needed. Any time after the seed pod has formed, the foot sock can be installed. I invert the foot sock over my right hand, gently grasp the seed pod(s) with my sock-covered hand, pull the sock over the pods and stems with my free hand, and then install a twist tie encircling the sock opening and stems, careful not to crush or damage the plant. The last step is to install flagging tape nearby so I know where to look later in the season. Be sure to install the flagging tape well above the ground as plant vegetation will be much higher when it's time to collect your seed bounty.



# Have you tried...

From BMAP members

## ...Paint roller herbicide application

Everyone likes eating raspberries, blackberries, and black caps but sometimes they are growing in an inconvenient place. They may be thick in a planting or they may arch over a path. Here is a quick and easy way to remove them. This method uses herbicide but keeps it to a minimum. I use Garlon 4 mixed with cooking oil at the recommended strength. This sticks to the stem but glyphosate will work. As always, you should read and follow the label directions.

The main thing is to use a touch up paint roller for the application. I also use a quart plastic milk container with half the top removed as an easy no-spill way to carry the herbicide. Using the paint roller you just roll one or two inches along one side of the stem. It will be dead in ten days. This seems to be most effective in the spring but it will work at any time of year.

#### HERBARIA from page 1

(such as the molecular phylogentics of the genus Pyrola). In order to publish a scientific study, voucher specimens are often required. A voucher is a representative collection of an identified taxon which provides a permanent record of that particular taxon at a specific time and geographic location. Vouchers must be kept in a permanent storage facility so

they can be referenced by future researchers and can be verified if necessary. In this way, the results of scientific studies can be checked and even repeated.

#### Identification

When someone is trying to identify a plant they have collected, once they narrow it down to a few or a single species, they can compare it to herbarium specimens to confirm its identity. Because there can be quite a bit of variability within a species, herbaria have multiple collections of a species so this variability can be captured. A taxonomist who thinks they have discovered a new species, will compare it to specimens of known species in order to verify it is indeed different. A researcher who doubts the identity of a voucher specimen used in a previous study, can find that voucher in the herbarium in which it was deposited and check its identity.

### **Locality Data**

The locality data associated with herbarium specimens can be used for many purposes. Distribution maps (Fig. 3) for a species can be created from these localities. Whether a certain species occurs in a particular area or not can be confirmed. This is important for people writing local floras or monographs. Researchers can locate extant populations of species they are interested in and collect additional samples or conduct further studies. The examination of the spread of an invasive species into and throughout the state can be carried out. In addition, checklists of documented species for each Wisconsin county, State Natural Area, or smaller geographic areas – such as your local park can be generated. You can actually do this yourself by using the tools available on the Online Flora of Wisconsin website. See the address for this below.

#### **Genetic and Other Studies**

One of the most common uses of herbarium specimens these days is the extraction of DNA for phylogenetic studies. Phylogenetic studies reveal the evolutionary relationships among species and other taxa. Although DNA can be extracted from specimens over 50 years old the success rate and ease of extraction increases with the more



Fig. 2 - Herbarium Sheet for Rosa blanda.

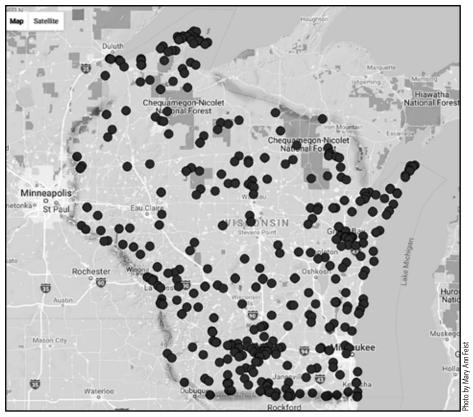


Fig. 3 - Distribution map.

recently collected specimens. Therefore, it is important to continue to add new specimens to the herbarium. Other types of scientific studies conducted using herbarium specimens include assessing the levels of genetic diversity in rare species, determining how temperature change due to global warming causes shifts in geographic distributions and phenology, and demonstrating how increases in CO<sub>2</sub> levels reduce stomatal density in leaves.

## **Collecting Plant Specimens**

The uses of herbarium specimens discussed above rely on historical specimens, as well as recent collections and demonstrate why the continued collection of herbarium specimens is important. In order for an herbarium specimen to be most useful there are a few things the collectors needs to keep in mind. An herbarium specimen has at least two components – the plant itself and the label (Fig.4). Without a proper label, a plant specimen

cannot be considered a voucher and has little to no value. The label is an extremely important part of the herbarium specimen. At minimum, the label should include the following: scientific name and its taxonomic authority, precise locality (country, state, county, town or distance from nearest town or intersection, GPS coordinates [with datum and accuracy], and elevation), collector's name and collection team (if more than one collector), collection number (the primary collector's record number), collection date, habitat. and associate species. Other things that are useful to include are plant attributes such as habit, odor, sap or latex, height, diameter at breast height (DBH), and flower color (as it may change upon drying). It should also be noted if a plant is growing naturally in an area or if it is there as a result of human intervention. For example, did it escape from a garden or was it planted as part of a restoration or reintroduction. If the specimen is being collected as part of a certain

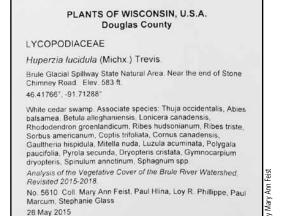


Fig. 4 - A complete voucher label.

Wisconsin State Herbarium (WIS), University of Wisconsin-Madison

project, such as a floristic inventory or phylogenetic study, this should also be mentioned on the label. A spreadsheet and instructions for making labels for the Wisconsin State Herbarium is available on our website: https://herbarium.wisc.edu/research/keys-tools.

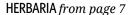
The plant material should be as complete as possible and ideally should have either fruits or flowers. Sterile plants can be very difficult to identify and provide less information about the species. Herbaceous plants should include the roots, bulbs, or other underground parts. These can be informative when it comes to identifying the plant and can provide researchers with information about the life history of the species. For trees and shrubs, a clipping or two should be taken from a twig or branch. A photo of the bark and a habit shot of the whole tree or shrub can also be useful.

The standard herbarium sheet is 11" x 17", so all collections should be folded (or cut in the case of woodies) at the time of collection to fit on a sheet of this size. If a plant is just too big to fit on one herbarium sheet, it can be put onto two or more sheets. As plants are collected, they should be pressed between sheets of newspaper and put into a field press (Fig. 5).

cont. page 8, see HERBARIA



Fig. 5 - Plants being prepared for presssing.



If a field press is not available, the plants should be put into plastic bags and transferred to a standard press as soon as possible (Fig. 6). The press should then be put in a well-ventilated dry place for several days, or taken to the herbarium and put into the press drier.

A general rule of thumb is to not collect a whole plant unless there are at least six other individuals of that species present in the general area. If a plant is rare (i.e. state or federally listed), it should not be collected. In this case, a voucher can be created from photos. Photos should include habitat shots as well as close-ups of diagnostic characters which will allow the plant to be readily identified.



Fig. 6 - A field press with specimens.

The Wisconsin State Herbarium also has a Virtual Online Flora of Wisconsin (http://wisflora. herbarium.wisc.edu/). Here you can access information including descriptions, photos, and distribution maps, for nearly all of the 2700 species of vascular plants that occur in Wisconsin. Specimen data for over 480,000 specimens held at 15 herbaria are also available.



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## NATURALIST from page 5

we became certified Master Naturalists. To maintain this certification forty hours of documented volunteer service is required yearly. Certified volunteers are welcomed into a network of volunteer and professional naturalists around the state and receive invitations to participate in related events and conferences.

Volunteer service is a key part of being a Wisconsin Master Naturalist. There are three categories for volunteer opportunities: education/interpretation, citizen science, and land stewardship. To be documented, our volunteer service must be sponsored by a host organization such as a school, nature center, refuge or state park and be related to Wisconsin's natural or environmental cultural history. The Wisconsin Master Naturalist website supports

volunteer efforts with advanced training opportunities and help to find volunteer opportunities.

For me, land stewardship is hard and steady work on our 22 acres so it's challenging to find more stamina to volunteer on public lands. This class gave me courage and the realization that I've been paying attention and learning all of these years.

As I was pulling garlic mustard the other day, I considered my place in the rustle of the woodland around me. For me, the more I learn about the details of our environment, the co-existence, the survival tactics, the more I appreciate the total wonder of it all. Rachel Potter said, "When you go outside, be curious about things you pass every day. Go out with all your senses." I now feel confident in saying that I'm a Master Naturalist in training, for the rest of my life.

#### SPECIES from page 4

weed, common milkweed, compass plant and black eyed-Susan were but a few of the species in flower.

MacD attributes his success to the property's moderate agriculture use: limited soil tillage, low intensity grazing and, especially, little or no herbicide use because crop production ended before their use became common. This, he believes, allowed the soil microbes associated with York Prairie's flora to remain, thereby fostering the growth of the local ecotype seeds he plants. It also allowed numerous prairie species to persist, such as blue-eyed grass, tick trefoil and blazing star.

Leaving the colorful prairie we descended a hillside made slippery by the earlier rain. An abundance of pale spike lobelia made it difficult to keep my eyes on the trail. Reaching the base of the slope we found a narrow, clear, shallow stream fed by a barely visible, perennial spring. MacD recounted how only a few years ago we would have seen reed canary grass growing along the stream and not much else. In fact, he said "No one had seen the stream in 20 years."

MacD has been replacing the reed canary grass monoculture with native wetland species using a variation of the method he uses in the upland prairie. He sprays the reed canary grass with glyphosate in mid-summer. Although glyphosate is a nonselective herbicide there is little risk to any forbs that might be present since they are protected from the herbicide by the dense reed canary grass canopy. He burns the treated area in the fall, usually with some surrounding area as a matter of convenience. Thereafter, he spot sprays any remaining reed canary grass with a grass-specific herbicide.

As is often the case in wetlands, the native species are returning from seeds, roots and rhizomes in the soil, negating the need to seed the treated area. Again, MacD attributes the successful return of the wetland species to moderate agricultural use, especially the limited row cropping, which minimized the amount of sediment eroded from the hills and deposited in the wetlands. The results are dramatic with the treated and untreated areas a poster child for the benefits of reed canary grass control.

Now nearly within sight of the barn where we started our walk we

stopped to ponder the remains of the Haugen's farmhouse, reduced to a crumbling stone foundation surrounding a large hole. Gazing at the ruins and thinking about farm life on York Prairie in the mid-1800s I couldn't help but think how every once in a while something comes full circle - York Prairie in this case through the diligent effort and hard work of one man and one family.

Thank you MacD and Betty for sharing your story and land with BMAP.

## **Advertise in the Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter**

Deadline for ads in the fall newsletter is October 15, 2018

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

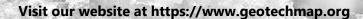
Contact editor Marci Hess, mhess5599@gmail.com, for more details.

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#### **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.

Fall Newsletter —October 1, 2018

Deadlines for submissions for 2019 newsletters:

Spring Newsletter — March 1, 2019

Summer Newsletter — July 1, 2019

Fall Newsletter —October 15, 2019

Send submissions to: newsletter@bluemounds.org

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#### **BMAP Board of Directors**

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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:			
O Renewal O New Member O Gift Membership for			
Membership Level:			
O Student \$15 O Basic \$30 O Contributor \$50 O St	apporter \$100	O Sponsor \$	500 O Patron \$1000
O Other contribution to further the BMAP mission			
TOTAL			
Make check payable and return to: Blue Mounds Area Project,	PO Box 332, Mou	nt Horeb, WI	53572
O Yes, I would like to receive information about site visits.			

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<sup>\*\*</sup>All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.\*\*



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# **Second Harvest**

It won't take long
to sow the seeds
we spent the day collecting.
But memories
on cold, cold nights
bring joy in recollecting.

— Andrew Williams



facebook.com/BMAPcommunity