



## Message from the project coordinator

This time of year, while most plants are dormant and a few oaks hang on to their dead, brown leaves, it is time for the evergreens to shine. They are pretty much the only thing that stays green this time of year (besides garlic mustard!), and nothing holds fresh snowfall like a conifer. Field work now is limited to cutting and burning trees and brush, but there are plenty of opportunities to help us with this work (see page 3). It's also a great time to learn and plan for warmer months. Two workshops in March can help you with that (pages 2 and 3). Also in this issue is information about State Natural Areas and treeline removal. Happy Winter!



*Sincerely, Katie Abbott*

### Contact information:

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**[www.swbadger.com/mrpha.html](http://www.swbadger.com/mrpha.html)**

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## Wisconsin's State Natural Areas

Wisconsin's natural communities have greatly declined in both quality and quantity since European settlement. The last remaining pockets of these communities are called natural areas. Since 1952, the DNR has had a program to help protect them, called the State Natural Areas program. Wisconsin now has 552 State Natural Areas (SNAs), which protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscape, natural communities, significant geological formations and archeological sites. There are fourteen in Dane County and seven in Iowa County, including one within the MRPHA. SNAs may be owned by the state, educational institutions, or private conservation organizations and are brought into the program by formal agreements between the DNR and the landowner. The SNA Program owes much of its success to agreements with partners like The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service, local Wisconsin land trusts, and county governments.

In this part of the state, our main natural communities were prairie and oak savanna. There are a few State Natural Areas nearby that can show you what a

prairie or savanna looks like, help you determine what type of plants and animals could be on your property, or simply provide a new recreation spot. These sites include Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, Pleasant Valley Conservancy, and Barneveld Prairie. The Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie in Dane County features a small but intact dry-mesic prairie with more than 80 native prairie species and many birds, including red-headed woodpeckers. The Pleasant Valley Conservancy in Dane County contains a nearly complete range of southern Wisconsin natural community types including oak woodland, oak savanna, dry and wet prairie, sedge meadow, and open marsh. The oak savannas contain numerous large, open-grown bur and white oaks, some of which are over 150 years old. The Barneveld Prairie in Iowa County lies within the MRPHA and features remnants of both prairie and oak savanna. There you will find many native plants and grassland birds, including rare species like woolly milkweed, Hill's thistle, and Bell's vireo.

For information about these and other State Natural Areas, including directions, visit the program's web page at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/index.htm>.

# Land Management Workshop

## for MRPHA landowners



Come learn from the experts and ask questions about several land management issues. We will begin in the morning with refreshments, a chance to look at displays, and an introduction to the MRPHA project. This will be followed by three concurrent sessions with two topics each for you to choose between. The workshop will end with a light lunch and a final presentation. Topics and speakers for the concurrent sessions include:

Beginning land management: Bob Wernerehl, botanist and ecologist

Grassland birds: Dave Sample, DNR

Invasive species: Mark Renz, UW-Extension

Prairie restoration: Rich Henderson, The Prairie Enthusiasts

Small woodlot management: Dan Bohlin, SW Badger RC&D

Surface water and conservation practices: Pat Sutter, Dane County LCD

**DATE:** Saturday March 1 2008

**TIME:** 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM

**LOCATION:** Folklore Village, 3210 County Highway BB, Dodgeville

**REGISTRATION:** \$10 per person includes workshop materials, refreshments, and a light lunch. Limited to 50 participants. Register by February 8, 2008.



*For more information contact Katie Abbott*

*Phone: 608-935-2791 x134 E-mail: katie.abbott@rcdnet.net*



### MRPHA LAND MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Return this form with a check for \$10 per person, payable to SW Badger. Mail to:  
Katie Abbott  
MRPHA  
138 S Iowa St Ste 3  
Dodgeville WI 53533

Number of participants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

Please list any dietary concerns or other comments:

Which topics are you most interested in? (Please choose three; you will not be obligated to attend these sessions)

- Beginning land management
- Grassland birds
- Invasive species
- Prairie restoration
- Small woodlot management
- Surface water and conservation practices

## Treeline removal

Many trees are being cut down in the project area this winter. While it may seem like trees are 'good' environmentally, that is not always true. In this part of the state the landscape before European settlement was largely tree-less. Much of the rare wildlife we have here is adapted to and dependent on large open areas.

A cost-effective way to immediately create more open area is to cut down treelines that divide two fields. Grassland birds avoid nesting near treelines because they harbor nest predators like raccoons and opossums. Once trees are gone, birds begin nesting nearby fairly quickly.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is helping many landowners cut down treelines on their properties. They cluster projects so that it is cost-effective to hire efficient tree-harvesting equipment. If you have a line of trees on your property that divides two open fields, we may be able to find money to get them cut down. Contact Katie if you are interested (935-2791 x134).

## Pecatonica River Watershed Summit

Conservation partners and friends of the Pecatonica Basin (which includes almost all of the MRPHA) would like to invite all landowners, stakeholders, and interested parties to a habitat and wildlife management workshop. It will be held on March 29th from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm at the Peppercorn Banquet and Catering Hall in Monroe, Wisconsin.

Please come and enjoy lunch on us while learning about important habitat stewardship practices you can take home and implement. Expert speakers from Illinois and Wisconsin will be on hand to give presentations and answer your questions. Topics are varied and include reed canary grass control, biofuels, prairie restoration, fire, timber management, and program availability. For more information or to register contact Kraig McPeek, Fish and Wildlife Service at (309) 757-5800 x210, [kraig\\_mcpeek@fws.gov](mailto:kraig_mcpeek@fws.gov) or Kelly Forman, DNR at (608) 275-3304 or [kelly.forman@wisconsin.gov](mailto:kelly.forman@wisconsin.gov).

## Other upcoming events

See [www.swbadger.com/mrpha.html](http://www.swbadger.com/mrpha.html) for more!

- **The Nature Conservancy work parties: January 19, February 16, and March 22** Activities include cutting and removing woody invasives like buckthorn. Contact Jim Lesniak at (609) 238-5187 with any questions. Dress appropriately for outdoor, grubby work, including sturdy footwear and work gloves. Bring drinking water and at least a snack. Meet at the County Highway K parking lot, which is nearly one mile south of the junction of Langberry Road and County K. The lot is on the west side of the road, just north of Prairie Grove Road.
- **The Prairie Enthusiasts work days** Help is needed this winter with burning brush piles and cutting trees and brush. This is an excellent opportunity to see sites that the organization manages, some of which are not open to the public. Be sure to wear appropriate clothing for the weather. Sturdy footwear and work gloves are required. Do not wear synthetic fabrics or clothes that you mind getting small burn holes in. Bring drinking water. Herbicides will be used on all brush cutting work. Work is weather dependent, so be sure to call the leader ahead of time to confirm.
  - January 19 and 20, February 2, 3, 16, and 24 9 am-12 pm at Mounds View Grassland. Contact Rich Henderson (608) 845-7065
  - January 27, February 3 and 24 1-4 pm at Mounds View Grassland. Contact Rich Henderson (608) 84-7065
  - February 9 and March 2 1-4 pm at Erbe Grassland near Blue Mounds. Contact Erik Goplin (608) 437-4879
  - February 10 1-4 pm at Meyer Prairie near Barneveld. Contact Amy Staffen (608) 238-0450.
  - February 23 1-4 pm at Schuelke Prairie near Barneveld. Contact Amy Staffen (609) 238-0450
  - March 1 12-3 pm at Bigler Prairie near Blue Mounds. Contact Amy Staffen (608) 238-0450
- **Fire Behavior: January 26, 9am- 5pm** This course will discuss the effects of fuels, weather and topography on fire behavior. It will also give the student tools to utilize in determining what type of fire weather and fire behavior to look for so that they can meet their prescribed burn objectives. *This is an advanced workshop for people with some prescribed burning experience.* Cost: \$40 for landowners Location: Aldo Leopold Legacy Center, Baraboo. For more information or to register visit [www.aldoleopold.org/woodlandschool/courses.htm](http://www.aldoleopold.org/woodlandschool/courses.htm).
- **Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference: March 8** This conference is designed for landowners from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. Anyone interested in woodlands and natural resources are welcome. Concurrent sessions will provide participants with the knowledge and skills to manage woodlands using good stewardship principles. Location: Sinsinawa Mound Center, 585 County Road Z Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. Cost: \$40 before February 8, \$50 after. See <http://basineducation.uwex.edu/woodland/conference/index.htm> for more information or to register.
- **Introduction to Prescribed Fire as a Grassland Management Tool: March 27 and 28, 9 am -5pm** The two-day course will cover the ecology of fire, fire behavior principles, and elements of fire management planning, focused on prairie and savanna ecosystems. Participants will operate basic fire management tools, view the layout and preparation of a fire unit, and, weather permitting, conduct several real burns. This course will not prepare students to serve as a burn boss or conduct burns on their own but will enhance understanding of fire for landowners and resource managers. Location: Aldo Leopold Legacy Center, Baraboo. Cost: \$75 private landowners, \$100 resource professionals (\$65 ALF or ALNC members). See [www.aldoleopold.org/woodlandschool/courses.htm](http://www.aldoleopold.org/woodlandschool/courses.htm) for more information.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Newsletter for owners of land within the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area is a cooperative project of the Blue Mounds Area Project, Driftless Area Land Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Dane & Iowa County Land Conservation Divisions, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, The Prairie Enthusiasts, Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development, USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service, and WI Department of Natural Resources. Goals of the partnership include: 1. Provide and maintain viable prairie, savanna, grassland, and aquatic habitat, for the many plants and animals that depend on these habitats for their survival 2. Maintain an economically viable rural and agricultural landscape 3. Provide and encourage traditional recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation goals 4. Integrate best applied science through the use of continued monitoring and adaptive management.

Project Coordinator Katie Abbott helps landowners within the project area (see below) get help from these organizations to manage and protect their land. She strives to educate and empower landowners to be stewards of the natural resources in their community. Absolutely all work involving landowners and the MRPHA partnership is completely **voluntary**.

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