



## Exciting Prospects for the New Year

By Laura Wyatt, Preserve Interim Director



As I walk along the lakeside trail at Raymer's Cove, I am immersed in the beauty of the Preserve cloaked in snow with sunlight shimmering through the trees. Stopping at a bench momentarily, I gaze across the lake and contemplate those who came before, drawn by the same beauty I see today.

Documentation tells us these areas have been inhabited for more than 12,000 years. These are the early ancestors of the Ho-Chunk people who call this area Teejop. Fortunately, this space is available for all, not parceled into private lakeside ownership.

2024 will be a pinnacle year for the Preserve. A refreshed and updated Master Plan was completed in 2023, follow-

ing a Strategic Plan in 2020. Both documents will guide us in planning and caring for the 300-acre Preserve efficiently. The Master Plan is more than 90 pages in length, and safety and restoration priorities will help direct our future work plans.

The most exciting prospect is the possibility of an Outreach Center to greet visitors, facilitate student and community environmental learning, and provide respite for all. I am nearly speechless as I try to articulate the synergism a facility or building will bring to this culturally rich land.

With the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, we better understand the importance of providing natural areas for respite and access for all. After participating in a panel discussion, "Access to the Environment," organized by the student-led Social Sustainability Coalition, and with the encouragement of stakeholders, the Preserve will facilitate an initiative to provide mobility devices to facilitate greater access to the Preserve. While we are in the initial planning stages, we hope to provide access through an all-terrain wheelchair, scooter, and a multi-passenger cart for narrative tours to Picnic Point, Biocore Prairie, and beyond. Look for additional announcements as we work with our partners.

The Preserve is substantially supported by gift funds from people like you. Thank you in advance for supporting efforts to share this special place with others, including those who would benefit from mobility devices to explore the Preserve.

### Winter is a great time to experience the Preserve!

Need a little inspiration to get outside?  
Join a guided nature walk or a volunteer work party.

**Winter Birds - Sunday February 25, 1:30-3:00 p.m.**

Even with ice and snow, there are beautiful, bright noisy birds to encounter in the Preserve! Meet at Picnic Point entrance kiosk (2000 University Bay Dr).

#### Drop-in volunteer work events:

- Saturday February 10, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- Sunday February 25, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- Saturday March 9, 9:00-11:30 a.m.

To learn more visit our [Volunteer webpage](#).



# Student Engagement Grant Proposals Due March 1

By Bryn Scriver Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Each year, the Lakeshore Nature Preserve Committee awards small grants of up to \$1,000 through a competitive process. Funding is based in part on the degree of student engagement and scientific, educational, or applied value. Funds can be used for student stipends and/or purchasing equipment and supplies. Proposals are due March 1.

The grants are made possible through the Academic Endowment Fund of the Preserve at the Wisconsin Foundation, which was established by former faculty members Robert M. Goodman and Henry Hart.

## Past Student Engagement Grant awards...



Cole Koffron tested stormwater samples entering Lake Mendota through the Preserve for pollutants.



Ali Thompson tracked patterns of domestic dog, red fox, and coyote activity in the Preserve.



Rachel Schneider isolated and described the seasonal variation in yeasts within the Lakeshore Nature Preserve's habitats.



Audubon Society, UW-Madison used grant funds to purchase 15 pairs of binoculars for guided bird hikes.

## Scout Rebuilds Picnic Point Firewood Racks

By Bryn Scriver, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Visiting around a fire, roasting smores, or cooking a campfire meal on Picnic Point is a beloved Badger tradition. Besides the fantastic views, part of the attraction is that the firewood is provided for free at three racks along the Point. However, time and weather had taken a toll on the racks—bottom boards were rotted, and sides were missing. Thinking rebuilding the racks could be a good youth project, Preserve staff reached out to local scouts, and Landon Koch of Boy Scout Troop 628 stepped forward. Landon had spent time in the Lakeshore Nature Preserve and was looking for an Eagle Scout project. He saw this as the perfect opportunity to give back to a place that was special to him and his family.

Landon worked closely with UW Landscape Architect Ronda James to research and develop a design and create a materials list and budget. With a starting gift of \$500 from the Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, Landon raised an additional \$1000 to purchase the necessary supplies.

Because Picnic Point contains sensitive archeological sites, it was necessary to avoid disturbing the soil. Preserve staff and interns prepped the three sites by removing the old racks and carefully cutting off any parts anchored in the ground. The new design features ground supports to stabilize the racks to avoid digging new holes.

Landon recruited volunteers to help him build the racks onsite. Then, on December 3rd, Landon's dad drove the racks to the Preserve on a trailer, and Landon and his volunteers placed them one by one on the Point. It took lots of hands and strong backs. The group took a break to celebrate their accomplishment with hot chocolate and a warming fire before Landon and his family made the last adjustments and reloaded the racks with firewood.

The new racks, featuring a roof to keep the wood drier, are built to last, and we couldn't be happier with the results!



Landon had many volunteers, friends, and family on hand to unload, move, and place the wood racks.



Landon Koch (blue jacket at right) and volunteers pose with one of the newly placed wood racks.



Landon makes some last minute adjustments to a wood rack.



## Land Management Notes

By Adam Gundlach, Field Projects Coordinator

Last Autumn, as vegetation began to senesce and leaves collected on the ground, eyes turned toward the forecast, seeking windows of dry weather to return prescribed fire to the land. In mid-November, we conducted prescribed burns to control brush, stimulate herbaceous flowering in the coming season, and open opportunities for supplemental seeding over the winter.

A shoreline unit in Frautschi Point provided a good training opportunity to walk through prescribed fire operations with Preserve Natural Area Assistants Soleil and Parker. It was their first live fire experience and a beautiful afternoon to kindle a little fire. The [Second Oak unit](#) at the south end of the Frautschi Point received its second prescribed burn since the area became a management focal point in 2019. Preserve staff worked with a

Good Oak Ecological Services crew to conduct the Second Oak burn and a burn unit in the heart of Bill's Woods, where brush removal, seeding, and weed control have been ongoing for the past couple of years.

Taking advantage of the mild fall and slow transition to winter weather, the Preserve's Natural Area Assistants also completed brush removal at the head of Picnic Point, weeding out buckthorn and other invasive woody species that were creeping back into areas where dense thickets had been cleared years ago. These areas were then seeded with a mix of woodland and savanna species. Come spring 2024, clear views of the spring ephemeral flower display will await visitors, and new floral attractions should continue to sprout throughout the growing season.



Parker keeps an eye on the fire line while Adam instructs Soleil. Parker and Soleil are student Natural Area Assistants.



Before and after Natural Area Assistants Parker and Soleil cleared invasive brush on the tip of Picnic Point. Now views of the lake and the Frautschi Point shoreline are much more visible.



Left: A visiting Danish student in the Scan Design Fellowship Program collects milkweed seed using the new seed bags.



Right: School of Education staff members Zoe and Rebecca demonstrate their multitasking skills by collecting seeds from many plant species simultaneously!

## Volunteer Sews Bags for Future Sowing

By Bryn Scriver, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Preserve volunteer Monica Sentoff put her sewing skills to work creating 25 bags for collecting native seeds in the Preserve. The bags, made of bright yellow ripstop nylon fabric, can be slung crosswise over the body, leaving two hands for stripping or snipping seeds from plants. The top is held open by 14 gauge wire, and binder clips secure the rope to the bag. The design came from Monica's time volunteering with her husband, Stephen, at the West Chicago Prairie before moving to Madison. Ready just in time for fall seed collecting, Preserve volunteers and interns thoroughly tested the bags and declared them a significant improvement over the doubled-up paper grocery bags we used previously.

## Reaching New Heights

By Jeff Kirchman, UWPD University Natural Areas Liaison Officer

Eagle Heights, that is. Because that's where you can now find me.

On January 1, 2024, I moved from UWPD's Day-Shift Patrol into a new role as the University Apartments Community Police Officer. Most days, I'll be working out of my office in the University Apartments Community Center at 611 Eagle Heights Drive. Now that my office is literally in the neighborhood, I should be even more accessible and can also quickly respond to Preserve incidents when I'm there.

Moving into my new role was largely a result of the work I've done for years as a liaison officer with the Preserve and others. In fact, I often describe the function of a liaison police officer as being a part-time community officer. Both roles are based in the theory of Community-Oriented Policing, and rely on an officer to focus efforts on a particular community to better understand how its members can best be served.

I'm looking forward to my new duties up here in 'The Heights'. Please feel free to continue reaching out to me about any law enforcement-related issues or questions you may have regarding the Preserve, any of the University Apartments properties (Eagle Heights, University Houses, and Harvey Street Apartments), or UW-Madison at-large. Visit me at room 131 in the Community Center, or contact me at [jkirchman@wisc.edu](mailto:jkirchman@wisc.edu) or 608-264-2677.

## 2023 Summary of Birding Activity

By David S. Liebl

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve comprises woodland, old-field, wetland and aquatic habitats, and is a popular destination for birders. Many of these use the Cornell Lab of Ornithology [eBird](#) data tool to record both species and numbers observed during their visits. These ebird "checklists" are sorted by general observation location (hotspot) and made available online. During 2023, 339 birders submitted 2,397 birding checklists for eBird hotspots in the Preserve, comprising 211 avian species. [View a list of avian species observed in the Preserve during 2023.](#)

Lakeshore Nature Preserve - eBird hotspots (# checklists):

- General (504)
- Bill's Woods (74)
- Biocore Prairie (74)
- Class of 1918 Marsh (85)
- Eagle Heights Community Gardens (174)
- Frautschi Point (111)
- Lakeshore Path (42)
- Muir Woods (130)
- Picnic Point (473)
- University Bay (175)
- Willow Creek Woods and Beach (555)

# eBird

### GET INVOLVED!

To learn more about ecological restoration volunteer opportunities and free guided nature walks, visit: [lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/events-calendar/](https://lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/events-calendar/)

### GIVE A GIFT!

Donations support restoration of native plant communities and maintenance of trails and fire circles for use by the public. Visit: [supportuw.org/giveto/lakeshore](https://supportuw.org/giveto/lakeshore)



## Lakeshore Nature Preserve Staff

Laura Wyatt, Interim Director

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Student Natural Area Assistants:

- Soleil Bieniek
- Parker Gimbel

The Office of Sustainability, under the direction of Dr. Missy Nergard, serves as the administrative home for the Lakeshore Nature Preserve.

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