

DNR eDigest

Editor: [Diane Brinson](#), (608) 266-5215

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The Bureau of Education and Information's goal is to publish "The E-Digest" bi-weekly on paydays. The bureau will publish additional issues, as needed. Contact "E-Digest" editor Diane.Brinson@wisconsin.gov or at 608/266-5215 to submit stories, story ideas and photos that communicate internally the department's work, policies and issues that matter to DNR employees.

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Natural Areas Program honored with 2008 Scenic Beauty Award

Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin (CSW), a statewide organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the scenic character of Wisconsin's communities and countryside, presented the DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources (BER) State Natural Areas Program with a 2008 Scenic Beauty Award. The award recognizes the people and organizations who preserve and protect the special scenic places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and visit.



Secretary Matt Frank proudly displayed the 2008 Scenic Beauty Award. Charley Weeth and Christine Thomas, chair of the Natural Resources Board, joined Frank at the presentation.

From prairies and oak savannas in the south, to pine forests and boggy wetlands in the north, the State Natural Areas Program protects nearly 600 sites harboring outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscapes. The DNR and its partners establish these places for:

- research and educational use,
- the preservation of biological diversity,
- and for providing ecological benchmarks.

State Natural Areas also protect some of the most stunning scenic vistas found anywhere in the world, including the Dells of the Wisconsin River, Rush Creek Bluffs along the Mississippi River, and Moose Lake in Iron County.

BER director **Signe Holtz** accepted the award from CSW's executive director Charley Weeth at the December Natural Resources Board meeting. She was joined by State Natural Areas Program staff members **Rebecca Schroeder**, Ecosystem and Diversity Conservation Section chief; and conservation biologists **Randy Hoffman, Mark Martin, Thomas Meyer** and **Dawn Hinebaugh**.

"We are most grateful for this recognition from Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin" said Holtz. "The protection of biological diversity and scenic beauty often go hand-in-hand. What could be lovelier than a native Wisconsin prairie in bloom on a sunny summer's day?"



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Turn to Employee Assistance Program before stress overwhelms

Today's dire economic straights have touched virtually everyone from Wall Street to "Main Street." Employee Assistance Program (EAP) director **Jeff Carroll** and associate director **Patrick DuCharme** have begun to see the impacts of our nation's economic downturn manifesting themselves in DNR employees as personal relationship and financial problems at home and increased workload stresses on the job.

Viewing the DNR "community" as a microcosm of society at large, Carroll and DuCharme want to make employees aware of the resources available at the first signs of stress, before the employee or their family member "hits bottom." This is the premise of the health maintenance organizations (HMOs) that many turn to at the first sign of physical ailment.

"We all have personal/family problems at some time, and they may affect our work," said Carroll. "No one is exempt. The EAP is a free resource all DNR employees may need at some point in their careers."

Both Carroll and DuCharme emphasize that being proactive is essential, especially these days when economic uncertainty places a lot of strain on employees. This may be due to family stresses and/or workload from unfilled vacancies because of the hiring freeze.

Carroll, who has 20 years in at the DNR, is a registered nurse and had considerable experience with alcohol and drug abuse counseling before joining the department. DuCharme, with 19 years at the department, is a social worker with experience in developmental disabilities and mental health care. Both are certified EAP professionals.

What the EAP is

The "[DNR Employee Assistance Program](#)" Intranet home page describes EAP as a resource open to all DNR employees and their families who are undergoing personal or work-related stress that could impact their lives at home or on the job. Confidentiality is the foundation of the program.

"Establishing trust is essential to the success of any EAP. Because of its confidential nature, however, it's a 'quiet program,'" explained Carroll. Long-term DNR employees tend to be more familiar with the EAP, but younger employees are learning about it during new employee orientation.

The EAP provides consultation, problemsolving, information and referral services to community resources regarding a wide variety of personal or family issues. It's not designed to be diagnostic or provide therapy.

In addition to Carroll and DuCharme in the central office, trained [EAP volunteers](#) are available in all the regions.

Among the issues EAP is contacted about each year are elder care, parenting, marital, mental or physical health, as well as alcohol and other drug abuse. In addition, "we can coach a person on how to work effectively with medical and social service professionals," said DuCharme. "We can advise them on the terminology to use and their rights as patients."

Trends reported in annual report

Each year, the EAP office prepares its "Employee Assistance Program Annual Report" "[FY08 Employee Assistance Program Annual Report.](#)" The report ranks the top five issues presented to the EAP, which can vary from year to year, indicating which had increased or decreased over the previous year. They generally fall in the following categories:

- Conflict at Work
- Job Performance
- Alcohol and/or Drug Abuse
- Grief
- Threat to Self/Other
- Mental Health
- Work Stress

These issues are ranked in order of occurrence for FY08. While conflict at work remained the number one problem presented, there was a 25 percent decrease in this issue from FY07.

According to Carroll, job performance and alcohol and/or drug abuse, were numbers two and three in FY08, with a 58 and 59 percent increase respectively from FY07

DuCharme described the trend they've seen of people waiting until there's a crisis before seeking assistance. "Because people are so busy these days, few are proactive in contacting EAP. We encourage folks to consult with us as early as possible."

As caretakers, DNR employees take on more

Carroll describes DNR employees as "caretakers of the environment," who care about the department and its mission. As such, employees may see a need unfulfilled and either voluntarily or as assigned take on more responsibility.

If too much is taken on the resulting stress can affect the employee's health and relationships, both at work and at home. Consulting with the EAP often can help them find a better balance and manage the stress more effectively.

How to get started

There's a wealth of information and handouts available on a variety of personal problems and how to address them at the ["DNR Employee Assistance Program"](#) web page.

DNR employees and immediate family can consult with either DuCharme or Carroll in the EAP office, or with an EAP volunteer. To arrange an in-person or phone consultation, email [Jeff Carroll](#) or [Patrick DuCharme](#), or call their office at 608/266-2133. Or, you can contact an [EAP volunteer](#).


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Logan aims to drop forest's energy costs to next to nothing

By: *Jim Bishop, Northern Region*

Two down, eight to go. **Dick Logan** is on a green mission. As the facilities maintenance specialist at the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, his goal is to reduce energy costs within the forest to as close to zero as possible.

Completed last May, the new ranger station at the Clear Lake Campground between Woodruff and Lake Tomahawk sports a geothermal unit that cools the building in the summer and heats it in the winter. During the cold weather heating season alone, the unit reduced the station's fuel consumption by about 25percent.

One visitor who gave his backing to the Clear Lake energy project was Secretary **Matt Frank** who, with Northern Region director **John Gozdziwski**, toured the Clear Lake facility last year.



Facilities maintenance specialist Dick Logan (left) and forester/ranger Shawn Jones, stationed in Woodruff, look over pipes and duct work that make up the new geothermal unit. The unit provides warmth in the winter and cooling in the summer
WDNR Photo

“Gov. Doyle has set important energy efficiency goals including having 25 percent of Wisconsin’s power come from renewable resources by 2025,” said Frank. “Additionally, the Governor’s Global Warming Task Force has recommended reducing the state’s greenhouse gas emissions by 75 to 80 percent by 2050.”

“As we ask citizens to examine their energy use with an eye towards greater efficiency, state government must do the same. Dick Logan’s creativity and leadership on this project is a great example of how the DNR can do its part and uphold Wisconsin’s reputation as an energy leader.”

The system consists of pipes buried near the building below the frost line, a heat exchanger, and ductwork coming into the building. In winter, heat from the relatively warmer ground goes through the heat exchanger into the station. In summer, hot air from the building is pulled through the heat exchanger into the relatively cooler ground.

Heavily used shower building next to become solar powered

The Clear Lake station provides offices for three permanent and two seasonal employees who do law enforcement and register campers. The busy campground's 98 camping sites usually are full during the summer.

Logan's project also will use the sun to heat water at the campground's shower facility. An anti-freeze-type liquid, the same found in the geothermal unit, will be pumped across a large south-facing plate that will heat fresh water inside the building.

Work on the shower building will begin in January. "We will have the system in place by the time the first campers arrive in May," said Logan.

"A building like this," he said, "would go through 800 gallons of fuel a year and we can reduce that to less than 300 gallons with the solar hot water system." He added that "not only are we reducing our carbon footprint by six tons per year, but this system will pay for itself in six to eight years at current fuel prices."

The only maintenance required is the monitoring of the water and anti-freeze solution. "These simple systems can last more than 30 years," Logan explained.

Going all green and selling to the grid envisioned

A later addition to the shower project may be "grid tied" photovoltaic cells that will produce electricity to run the building. When the building is closed during the off season, the department can sell the electricity produced back to the power company. The company then compensates the department with energy credits, which reduce electricity charges and supply the grid with clean renewable electricity.

"Modeling alternative and efficient energy projects is the right thing to do for the department as a natural resources agency," said forest superintendent **Steve Petersen**. The green-alternative energy industry has come a long way in making their systems more planet friendly and reliable." He added that educational materials on the Clear Lake project will be available to visitors.

There are a total of 10 buildings on the state forest, including shower units, ranger stations, seasonal employee dorms, shops and other offices. Logan and Petersen are looking at those buildings and "seeing green."

Footnote: *Jim Bishop is the Northern Region's public affairs manager.*


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Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail complete, with final trail guide

By: Susan Foote-Martin, Bureau of Endangered Resources

The Endangered Resources Program is happy to announce the completion of the Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail, with the release of the fifth and final trail guide. The 57-page “Southern Savanna Birding and Nature Trail” guide takes the traveler through thirteen counties in the south central part of the state and includes 71 waypoints.

Featuring state parks, state wildlife areas, private sanctuaries, land trust properties, a natural history museum and state natural areas, this highway-based trail has something for everyone.



The five "Birding and Nature Trail" guides.
WDNR Photo

The first four “Birding and Nature Trail” guides in the set were “Lake Superior/Northwoods” (2004), “Mississippi/Chippewa Rivers” (2005), “Lake Michigan” (2006) and “Central Sands Prairies” (2007). All guides are still available in limited numbers. Endangered Resources staff is working on a CD containing all of the guides, which will be available to purchase in 2009.

The past five years of work on the guides were interesting, impressive and a truly authentic experience, with nature lovers from throughout the state sending us their nominations for their favorite places to see native species in native habitats. People also nominated destinations like the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau for their international “Birds in Art” show; Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center in Coon Valley; and the Hoard Historical Museum in Fort Atkinson, which houses the largest permanent collection of mounted bird specimens done by naturalist Thure Kumlien.

The years prior to the publication of the guides hold some special memories of travels to every corner of the state to meet with citizens and find out if the project was a “good fit” for DNR to undertake. We had multiple daily meetings with citizens, small business owners, agency staff and local officials. Everyone was supportive and excited about this new eco-tourism project.

Credit for success goes to our partners and the many others who supported the project, including those in the department and with the Department of Tourism. Without these

people serving as a sounding board for our ideas, the project might not have happened.

Complimentary copies are available by contacting [Heisley Lewison](#), Endangered Resources program assistant, or by calling the Wisconsin Department of Tourism at 1-800-432-TRIP. You can download complete copies at the "[Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail](#)" Internet page.

We hope you enjoy using the "Southern Savanna" guide, and we'll see you along the Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail.

Footnote: *Susan Foote-Martin is a conservation biologist and managed the development of the trail and corresponding guides.*


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Aerial observers count fewer bald eagles this winter

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

Department of Natural Resources biologists conducting their annual mid-winter aerial survey observed a lower than average number of bald eagles along the Lower Wisconsin River corridor during the first week of January.

Agency biologists observed 32 adults and 36 immatures on January 8, along the 180-mile survey route running from the Petenwell Dam spanning the Wisconsin River in Adams and Juneau counties to the river's confluence with the Mississippi River in Crawford County.

This year's number of eagles observed is a good deal less than the 282 birds counted on the same survey route in 2008, but isn't alarmingly lower than the long-term average of about 130 eagles observed, noted **Dan Goltz**, DNR wildlife biologist based at Boscobel.

There were a record 614 birds observed in the 2004 survey, while a low of 11 eagles were counted in 1997. DNR has conducted a mid-winter aerial survey along the Lower Wisconsin River each year since 1992.



Bald eagle, similar to those observed along the Lower Wisconsin Riverway in mid January.
WDNR Photo

“Even though eagle numbers along the river are lower than during the past few winters, eagle watching enthusiasts should still have good viewing opportunities during the 2009 Eagle Watching Days, as we observed several eagles perched and feeding in the stretch of river immediately downstream of the Prairie du Sac Dam to Ferry Bluff,” said Goltz.

The 2009 Eagle Watching Days will be held in the Sauk-Prairie area on January 16 and 17.

Watching for the regal bird still should be successful, because roost counts in December showed good numbers of eagles in the Sauk Prairie area. “They may not be feeding as heavily on the river as they have in recent years due to lack of fish prey and greater ice cover,” explained Goltz.

DNR fisheries biologists report that shad populations, a principle eagle prey species, are noticeably down on the Lower Wisconsin River from 2008, which could explain the lower number of eagles observed.

Also, cold temperatures have resulted in a much higher percentage of ice cover (80 percent) on the river, which reduces the amount of open water feeding areas for eagles, according to Goltz.

He added that DNR wildlife biologists in southwest Wisconsin report observing many more eagles than “normal” along small tributaries and farm fields, “which indicates that they are spending more time foraging away from the Wisconsin River channel this year.”

“Eagles go where there’s a food source. They are mobile and extremely adaptable predators and scavengers,” added Goltz.

Although the general population is doing well, DNR has had a monitoring plan in place since the mid-1990s which focuses on documenting eagle deaths in the river valley, reported **Sean Strom**, a DNR wildlife toxicologist based in Madison.

The monitoring plan, as Strom outlined it, includes what to do if live, sick eagles are found during the winter; transporting birds, if needed, to a wildlife rehabilitator or

veterinarian; arranging for dead eagles to be necropsied by National Wildlife Health Center in Madison; monitoring roost sites; investigating deaths; sharing information among DNR programs and other state and federal agencies; and getting the word out to the public about the situation.

Strom offered the following guidelines to follow if you find a sick or dead eagle:

- Don't attempt to catch a sick bald eagle. Their talons are extremely sharp. If the eagle is dead, use gloves or a shovel to pick-up the bird and place it in a heavy garbage bag.
- Call your local DNR conservation warden or wildlife biologist. Federal law prohibits the possession of live or sick bald eagles. They must be turned over to authorities within 48 hours.
- Inform authorities of when and where you found the bird, and if found alive, any signs of injury or illness.

Footnote: *Greg Matthews is public affairs manager for the South Central Region.*


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DNR and Foundation cooperation meets mutual missions

By: Jeffrey Potter, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin

Trapped in a college classroom or an office cubicle, people across the country dream of finding work under the canopy of nature. A dream job for many, restoring and protecting Wisconsin's public lands, waters and wildlife also are missions of the DNR and the Natural Resources Foundation.

Despite the great need to accomplish these missions, funds for hiring are limited; yet competition for open jobs is fierce.

This was the challenge the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin sought to meet by creating its professional AmeriCorps program, the Wisconservation Corps. The DNR is a beneficiary.

The foundation currently is recruiting to fill eleven positions with the corps, including six stewardship assistant positions at the DNR. **The application deadline is January 30, 2009.**

"The beauty of this program is that it addresses both problems," according to David Clutter, Natural Areas campaign director for the foundation. We can provide affordable conservation solutions on the ground while giving corps members an opportunity to

build their resume in the field.”



Six Wisconservation Corps members worked on invasive species management at Devil's Lake state park in May 2007.

Natural Resources Foundation photo

Each year, the foundation places up to seventeen Wisconservation Corps members at non-profit and state agency offices around Wisconsin, including with the DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources. Other partners have included the Nature Conservancy, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the Milwaukee County Parks Department.

“All of the people that I've worked with have been exceptional, and have done really great work,” said **Kelly Kearns**, Endangered Resource's plant conservation manager.

“For me, the foundation has been a partner that has allowed us to get the work done,” Kearns added. This is the second year that Kearns has used a Wisconservation Corps member in her program.

Corps members work full or part-time positions in land management, education and outreach, volunteer coordination and field research.

Each year, they also help manage over 100 State Natural Areas. They've organized work parties, recruited volunteers, coordinated field trips, educated K-12 students, conducted plant and animal surveys, and helped publicize the importance of our State Natural Areas.

“Wisconservation Corps members bring incredible energy, excitement and experience to the organizations for which they work; and, in turn, our program provides excellent professional experience,” noted Clutter.

Responsibilities listed in the position description range from participating in prescribed burns; controlling invasive species; coordinating outreach, education and volunteer efforts; assisting with research; and monitoring projects.

Corps members receive a small salary, a generous educational stipend, and on-the-job training. To learn more and watch a short, online video, go to ["The Wisconservation Corps"](#) web page.

Footnote: *Jeffrey Potter is director of communication for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.*

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Retiring town chair honors late regional director Ruthe Badger

A recent story published in the “Sauk Prairie Eagle” newspaper tells of the honor bestowed on the late South Central Region director Ruthe Badger, recognizing her help purchasing land for a public park on Lake Wisconsin. Badger died in 2006.

As town of Merrimac chair Dick Grant prepares to retire from the town board this spring, he recalls a handshake with Badger, referring to it as “one of his biggest accomplishments.”

As a result of that handshake early this decade, the town was able to purchase 12-acres of land for a park, rather than see it sold to a developer. That gesture was the culmination of conflicting applications to the federal government for Badger Army Ammunition Plant property.



Late South Central Region director Ruthe Badger.
WDNR Photo

Merrimac wanted the plant’s pumping house. DNR also wanted that property. Rather than “pull rank” over the town, Badger told Grant that if the town withdrew its application, “she would make it right.” The handshake sealed the deal.

Badger honored that handshake, said Grant, when in 2003 she contacted Grant about some land adjacent to the pump house property, then up for sale. She pledged to find money for the town to purchase half of the land, with the DNR taking the other half.

And, she kept her word. Badger was instrumental in Merrimac receiving a \$195,000 DNR lake protection grant for a park jointly owned by the two governments. The total

cost of the project is \$267,000, which Merrimac must raise.

Road named after Badger, for travel to park

As reported in the newspaper, Grant recently saw to it that the town passed a resolution naming a town road after Badger. Once the highway construction is done this summer, the Department of Transportation will turn "Ruthe Badger Lane" over to the town. The road will connect the town to the park.

"To use a term, Ruthe was a real gentleman," Grant told the "Sauk Prairie Eagle" reporter. "She was a person you can talk with, she understood what you were saying and she was the only one at the DNR who I could call and within 24 hours, I would get a call back.

"She was a true friend of mine, and she was a true friend of the town of Merrimac."

After seeing his efforts to put a park in place come to fruition, Grant said he will step down from the board due to his age.

Editor's Note: The following comment is from Libby Lee, Ruthe Badger's daughter:

"Wow! I thought as my Mother she did amazing things, but she was also busy touching other lives outside the home. This is such an honor and example for me and my family. I am truly overjoyed by this announcement and even happier that her legacy lives on in the work of others."


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Bobcats take up residence at the Mackenzie Education Center

By: Ruth Ann Lee, MacKenzie Environmental Education Center

Two new bobcats recently moved into the unique wildlife exhibit at the MacKenzie Environmental Education Center in Poynette. They're now neighbors of twenty-two different animals and birds native to Wisconsin that reside at the center.

Some of the animals and birds on exhibit were injured or orphaned. Others, like the two bobcats, were born in captivity and donated to the center.

Generally animals that are injured, orphaned or born in captivity can't be returned to the wild, so they're kept for educational purposes. The bobcats join mammals such as wolves, coyotes, mountain lions, otter, badger and more.



One of the two new bobcats that visitors can observe at the MacKenzie Center.
WDNR Photo

“We’re excited about the bobcats becoming a part of our wildlife exhibit,” said **Dan Mautz**, the wildlife technician on staff who cares for the animals. “Having them gives our visitors a chance to see them up close, observe them and learn about animals native to Wisconsin--an opportunity that most people don’t get even if they’re avid outdoors people.”

Bobcats are about twice the size of a common house cat and are probably the most common wild feline in North America. They prefer to live in heavily forested areas, but adapt to a variety of habitats. The bobcat and lynx are close relatives and often are confused during identification. Both share traits like tufted ears and spots; the bobcat is the smaller of the two felines.

The MacKenzie Center’s live wildlife exhibit is open and free to the public; however, donations are always appreciated. Visiting hours during the winter are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Beginning May 1st, the exhibit will be open all week, including Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information on the MacKenzie Center, call (608)635-8105 or visit the [“MacKenzie Environmental Education Center”](#) web page.

Footnote: *Ruth Ann Lee is lead educator at the MacKenzie Center*


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