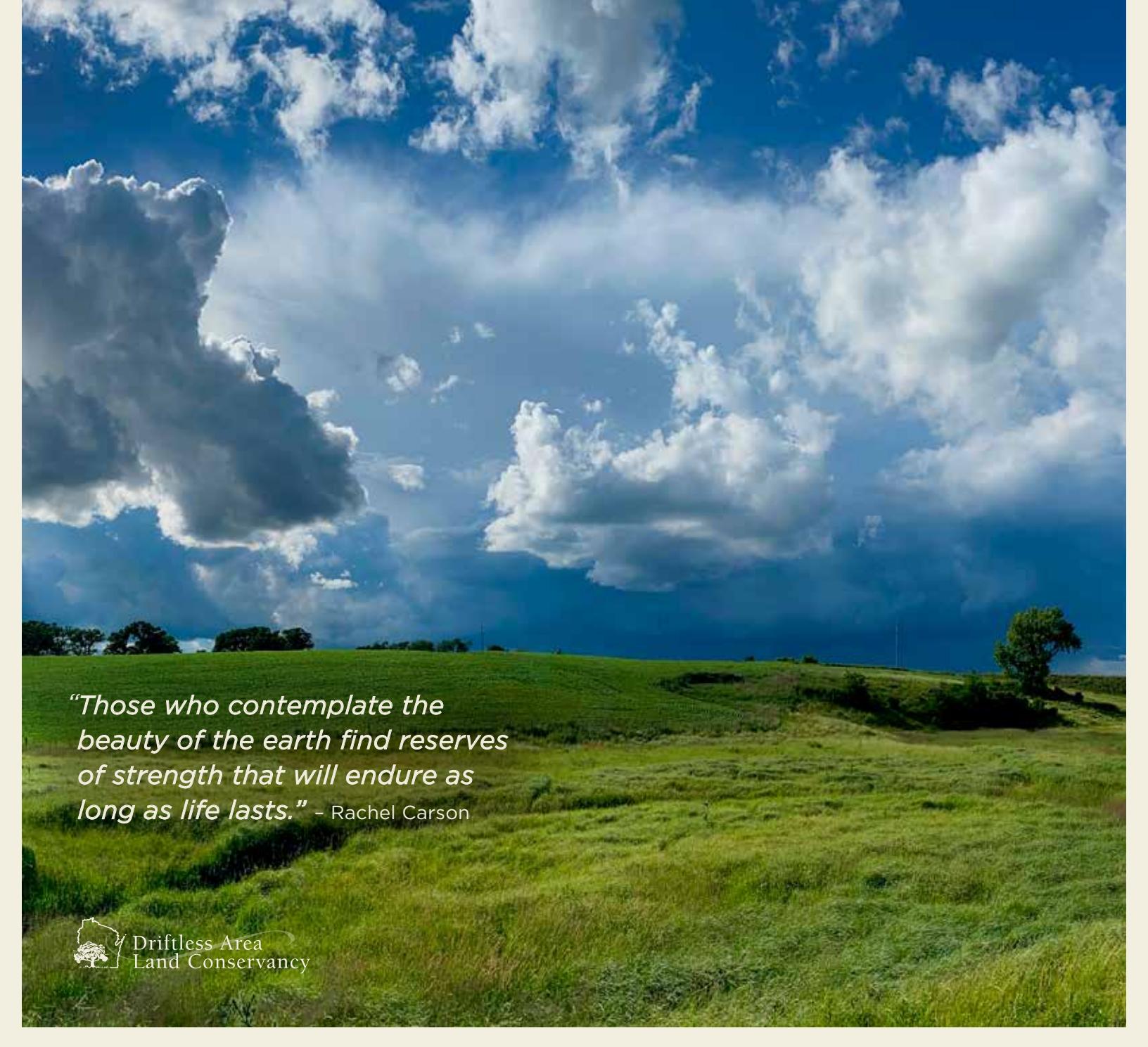




DRIFTLESS

A Newsletter from the Driftless Area Land Conservancy



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.” – Rachel Carson



COMING HOME TO THE LAND

Before I came to DALC I was working with conservation partners throughout the Midwest, and traveling too much. I usually drove home via Highway 151, heading northeast through Dubuque. Some of you might know this drive - you cross the Mighty Mississippi, climb out of the valley, wind through some rolling hills, then crest another

huge hill. This one is notable because the highway goes through a striking cut in

the bluff - your view narrows, then suddenly widens as you find yourself at the top of a ridge overlooking the floodplain of the Little Platte River (the locals call this the Dickeyville Bottoms). It's stunning, especially when there is mist in the valley. I always felt like that view was welcoming me home. I would day dream about what's up around the bend of particular ridges, and how hard of a climb is it really up Hill Climb Road, and can I get my kayak in to the Little Platte here? I wanted to get out on the land!

How do you get to know the land? You get to know the locals! One of the reasons I wanted to join DALC was get to know my own conservation community, and make an impact locally.

This job, and you, my conservation community, did not disappoint! I've been able to visit 7 of our 48 easements so far, all of our ambassador properties, and 10 properties that are new to us - owned by people looking to protect their land. I learned about walking ferns and saw a shallow cave that served as a Native American shelter. I saw the biggest blue cohosh plants I've ever seen, majestic open-grown oaks reaching for sunlight, and watched bluebirds fledge from well-tended nest boxes. I was often alone, because of COVID, but always went with incredible gratitude.

And even with this pandemic, I've been able to meet with many landowners and supporters of DALC - by phone and occasionally for a socially distanced walk on the land. I've been inspired by the team that has been dedicated to helping us manage Erickson for many years, community members who want to help us at the Sardeson Preserve, and by the hundreds of rural voices united in opposition to the Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line. I'm motivated by the dedication and passion of our staff and board.

I'm humbled, overwhelmed, and absolutely thrilled to be at the helm of this incredible organization as we enter our third decade. These are challenging times to be sure, but I take heart in the strength of our conservation community and I hope you do too. Come with us on this journey as we marvel at what is up around the next bend in the years ahead.

Jennifer Filipiak
Executive Director
jennifer@driftlessconservancy.org



Driftless Area Land Conservancy

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Dodgeville, WI 53533
608.930.3252
driftlessconservancy.org

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Cover Photo: Fil Sanna

Is a conservation easement right for you? Give us a call at 608.930.3252 for a confidential discussion.

"How do you get to know the land? You get to know the locals!"



Photo courtesy of Aldo Leopold Foundation



Barb Barzen

SIT BACK AND TAKE MEASURE

As we prepare to break ground on the first segment of the Driftless Trail this fall we have been flooded with generous offers to volunteer to build benches in the simple yet resilient style of Aldo Leopold. According to biographer Curt Meine, Leopold "wanted to figure out how to make a bench using a single plank board," and he achieved a design that now sits along trails across the world. From her recent book, *Stories from the Leopold Shack*, Aldo's youngest daughter Estella, shares that the initial design was born of practicality first using an old cottonwood board attached to an elm tree.

Estella's account describes that after this first bench was built Aldo wanted something portable that would seat two. So he got to work.

"Once he had picked out the wood for the seat, he cut two long boards to go one way at the end of the seat and two shorter boards to go the other way, forming the legs of the bench. These were nailed in an X pattern

at each end of the beam that was to be the seat, using braces, of course. Now what was needed was a backrest. After

sawing the long boards forming two of the legs at a comfortable angle (calculating involved getting Mother

to sit on the bench seat leaning back a bit, and determining exactly what angle would be most comfortable for her), the backrest board could then be attached to the "legs".

As the world shifts around us this year, we have also been able to sit back and take measure in our own way. We have rested in the comfortable support of our generous community, our partners and team. We hope that our work can continue in Leopold's wake by taking simple actions each day that foster a deep devotion to the land and make lasting connections to one another.

We are grateful to the following volunteers who are building Leopold benches to be installed along the first segment of the Driftless Trail:

Dave Terpstra
Brad Hutnik
Jordy Jordahl
Cricket Brooks
Jen Everson
Ben Russell
Kevin Lord & Patty Lucas
Karen Aamotsbakken
Greg Jones



ENERGY DISTRICTS – FOSTERING LANDSCAPE & CLIMATE PROTECTION

Energy District may be an unfamiliar term to many of us in Wisconsin, but in northeast Iowa this notion has been successfully employed by a handful of counties for several years. Energy districts follow a model created by Soil and Water Conservation Districts that began in the 1930s. Their goals closely align with those of land conservancies like DALC, but the methods for achieving those goals are quite different. Energy districts work to grow the local economy and foster environmental stewardship by encouraging energy efficiency and promoting local, clean energy production.

Today's economic problems echo those of the 1930s, but unlike that era, an environmental challenge facing us today is climate disruption. It impacts every aspect of our work at

DALC. In response, we're helping lay the groundwork for an area energy district because of the important role it can play in addressing both economic and environmental challenges.

Energy districts strive to take some control over the energy dollars escaping the community. Improved efficiencies keep those dollars from being spent. Jobs are created by the expansion of distributed small-scale clean energy production -- as small as one's own rooftop! So, fewer dollars are spent and more are generated locally.

Additionally, when energy costs are reduced, we also reduce the pressure on landowners to over-tax the land's capacity to produce income. Healthy land management is fostered so soil structure can improve, water

run-off and erosion are reduced and we create more biodiversity. A virtuous cycle begins to take shape: well-managed cropland, woodlots and pastures draw excess carbon out of the atmosphere and infuse additional fertility into the soil making the land more productive. The cycle moves forward.

We're excited to lend our support in the creation of an area energy district. It just may be a key component of a brighter more environmentally stable and prosperous future for our treasured Driftless Area.

For more information on this work visit www.driftlessconservancy.org/our-energy-future or contact Community Organizer Chuck Tennessen charles@driftlessconservancy.org

TAKING IN THE LONG VIEW

"What a mess! It's so ugly now!" shouted my 6-year old as we pulled into our driveway. It's true, the pasture next to our house is ugly right now. Instead of matching the lush green pastures, prairies, and woodlands surrounding us, we have several brown fields with crinkly dead leaves and nothing that appears to be alive. We have recently begun prairie restoration work that required a blank slate. It was difficult to explain to my son why the "pretty green grasses" had to go in order to create a more diverse and sustainable landscape.

Like many landowners in the Driftless area, the beauty of this area stunned us. The steep topography, trout streams, pine relicts, prairies, and oak savannas of this area are not only scenic, but also critically important to hundreds of plants and animals that are rare, threatened, or endangered. We know that these important species need this area to survive now, but with the impacts of climate change being so unpredictable, restoration and land management are even more critical to protect these special places for the future.

Protecting land is a great start but is simply not enough. Places that have high diversity, or the potential for high diversity, of plants and animals need management to maintain the biodiversity—to create and protect a "safe haven" in the future. Overgrowth of non-native species, the gradual pressure of invasive species and even the natural forces of succession are all threats.

We bought our property with a vision of restoring the prairies and oak savanna and creating healthy ecological communities. A highly diverse landscape creates resiliency, and resiliency is critical to mitigating climate change. Restoration then, became essential in our quest to have a positive impact on climate change. But this is going to take some time and a lot of trust.

Restoration is a slow-going process, requiring landowners to take the long-view and be willing to learn something new, adapting as you go. Based on the goals and potential outcomes of any management or restoration project, a variety of methods may be used. Old agriculture fields and pastures may need to be sprayed

with herbicide or mowed for several years. Other areas may need to be cleared of trees and brush only to be followed by years of invasive seed banks in the soil coming up. Prescribed burning will likely be part of the process as well, and yet it will still take years to establish a healthy native ecosystem capable of supporting the pollinators and other native species that need protection.

Steve Thompson, who protected his land with a conservation easement with DALC in 2010, began restoration work in the last years while working as a dairy farmer on his 150 acre operation. He tried a few smaller conservation projects first and has been restoring the land in the 20 years since. "Seeing the life come back after each and every burn is very satisfying. There always seems to be a new native plant popping up from the ashes to add a new dimension to the restoration project... This is a process that was not on my radar before we began our work."

Every restoration project looks a little different depending on goals, resources, and baseline conditions, but everyone working tirelessly to restore land are working towards the same end goals: biodiversity, resilience, habitat restoration and opportunities to mitigate climate change. In the end, none of this happens quickly and that is where the trust comes in.

Thompson's perspective is encouraging, "Patience, patience, patience is the best lesson anyone can learn from environmental restoration. Every little project has a major long- range plan."

DALC can connect you with the land management and restoration professionals you need. We are continuing to build our network and resource library. Please reach out if you need assistance on your land, are a restoration or management contractor or simply need to learn more.

Theresa Morgan, Monitoring Coordinator
theresa@driftlessconservancy.org



Two recent DALC projects have shown the increasing importance of private lands as habitat. It is well known that private land that is well-managed makes space for migratory birds, many which nest here during the spring and summer months, and also for an array of important pollinators. Our participation in the Great Wisconsin Birdathon took birders to several private sites off the beaten path and confirmed the amazing resource that private land provides. Additionally, the Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network surveyed landowners to build a better understanding of what drives a conservation ethic in our region. Wildlife habitat was of the utmost concern for those surveyed. Read on and fly into the details of all that was found.

PRIVATE LANDS PROVIDE MORE THAN YOU'D THINK

This spring, for the first time, DALC fielded a team for the ninth annual Great Wisconsin Birdathon, a fundraiser coordinated by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. The team, called The Prairie DALCons, was made up of 17 birders from the area. Over a period of three days, they fanned out to 16 properties DALC protects or helps manage, plus other sites in the DALC service area, in order to observe as many bird species as possible. Team members were wowed and inspired by these properties and the landowners they visited with.

All told, they found 143 species and raised \$2,763 for bird conservation, to be split between our bird habitat work and statewide bird conservation initiatives.

The team found:

- State-threatened Bell's Vireos and Henslow's Sparrows
- Nesting Trumpeter Swans, a Ruddy Duck, state-endangered Black Tern and Forster's Tern, Semipalated Plover, and much more in the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway
- A Cardinal nest with five eggs on a platform made for Mourning Doves
- A Red-Tailed Hawk with a 2-3 foot snake dangling from its talons being mobbed by blackbirds

- A huge Bald Eagle nest along Mill Creek with one eaglet
- Eighteen species designated as Special Concern in Wisconsin (Trumpeter Swan, American White Pelican, American Woodcock, Common Nighthawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Red-headed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Swainson's Thrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark)

Many thanks to our Prairie DALCons team: Amy Alstad, Jeb & Barb Barzen, Cindy Becker, Doug Caves, Mike Dahlman, Jen Filipiak, Rebecca Gilman, Charles Harmon, Mike Hedemark, Dan Jergens, Arlyne Johnson, Chris Kirkpatrick, Jennie Lanzendorf, Patrick Michaels, Natasha Rank, and Karen Tennesen.

Most importantly, thanks to those who provide high quality habitat for breeding and migrating birds on their land! That includes our gracious birdathon hosts: Dick & Kim Cates, Nan Fey, Barbara Glass, Dale Moody, Jim Fields, Anne Connor, Steve & Mary Thompson, Mike Samuel & Nancy Thomas, Dave & Kristin Wisnfske, John & Darla Patterson, and Ed & Debbie Judge.



Jennie Lanzendorf

Rebecca Gilman

Rebecca Gilman



Brianna Hall

WILDLIFE PROTECTION RISES TO THE TOP

Driving around the Driftless Area, one views two cloaks on the landscape – the human construct and the landscape itself. Overlain on a landscape of broad upland hills, valleys with sinuous creeks and rivers, and a scattering of native sod remnant prairies, savannas, and forest is a mosaic of dairy farms, ranches, crop land, and dwellings interspersed with small and large city centers. All farms and lands are unique to their owners, in size and scale, ownership, and stewardship or management choices. Are the motivations for their actions different? What influences land management decisions on private land?

This past year, the SW Wisconsin Grasslands Network wanted to learn more. They interviewed local civic leaders and resource professionals, and surveyed landowners across the region. In total, they received responses from 115 members of our local community.

"A farmer doing the right thing for their own motivations is what we are looking to achieve"

Questions focused on farming practices, participation in conservation programs, and what drives those decisions. They also requested basic information about the audience to put these answers into perspective. It is really important to understand landowner motivations to the point those drive your strategy and approach. A farmer doing the right thing for their own motivations is what we are looking to achieve.

So, what did they find? Whether the interviewee was a rancher, a dairy farmer, or a residential landowner, providing habitat for non-game wildlife rises to the top when considering management practices on their land. This includes grassland birds, monarchs and other butterflies, and native and honey bees. Deer and turkey? Not so much. Additionally, improving soil health and reducing soil erosion, and protecting water were all reasons cited for enrolling in conservation programs such as CRP and CREP.

Clearly, the efforts by the Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network to provide general education, technical assistance, and secure financial support for landowners interested in improving habitat for grassland birds and pollinators are on target. We now realize that land management practices that keep soil in place and improve water quality are issues that need to be integrated into our programming.

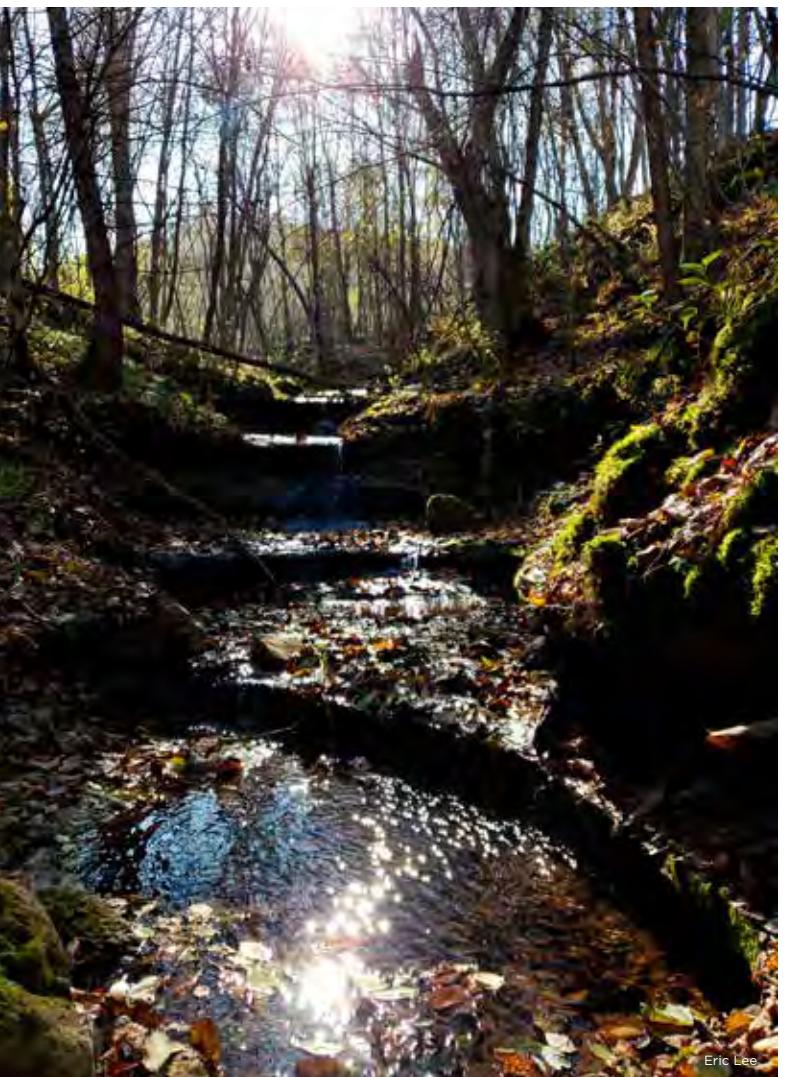
These survey results make us proud to live and work in rural SW WI. Together we can all have an impact. Perhaps our silly internal motivational mantra is correct after all – *it's time to save the world, one landowner at a time*. To learn more, visit www.driftlessgrasslands.org and www.driftlesslandconservancy.org/southwest-wisconsin-grasslands.

This project was funded in part by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the local Food Faith and Farming Network.

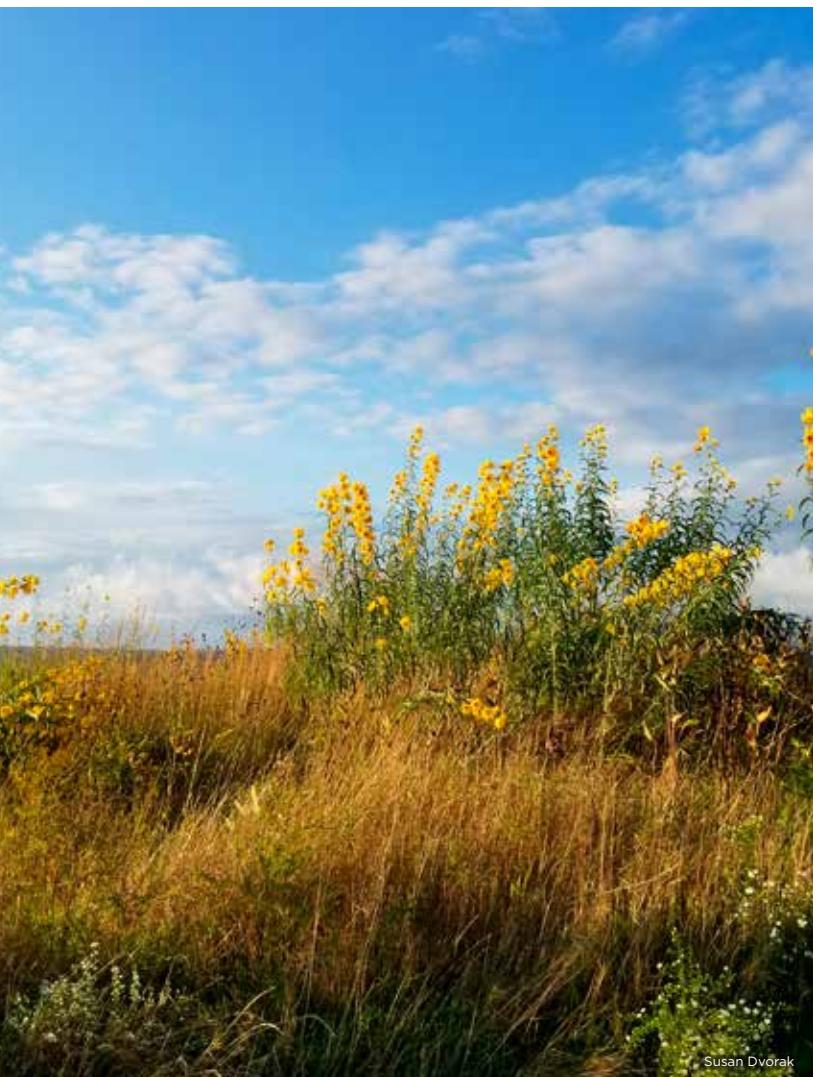
THE DRIFTLESS THROUGH YOUR LENS

Thank you to those who shared photos for our ongoing "Driftless Through Your Lens" feature. It is amazing what we see all across this region and sharing your vantage point brings a truly fresh perspective to our work. We are gathering photos from amateur and professional photographers alike all this year in preparations for celebrating our 20th Anniversary and we welcome your contributions.

If you would like to share your photo(s), please email emily@driftlessconservancy.org along with a brief description. If your submission includes people, be sure to get consent before sharing.



Eric Lee



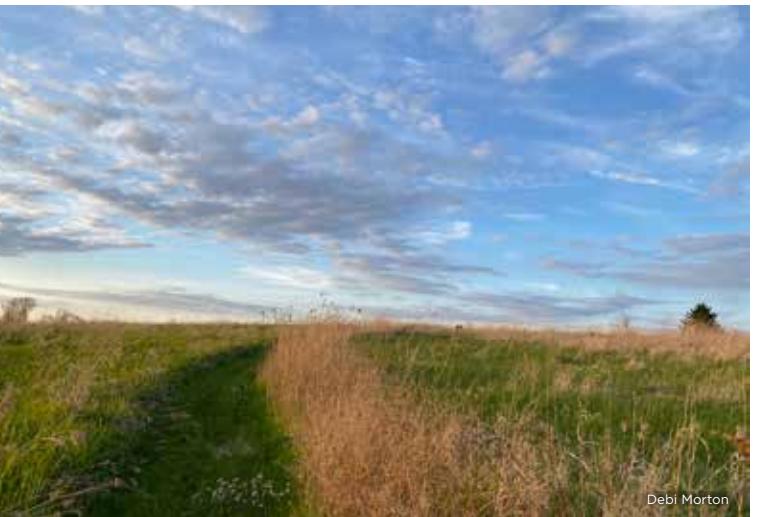
Susan Dvorak



Jeanne Black



Don Greenwood



Debi Morton



Amy Chamberlin



Barb Barzen



David Wisnfske



Patty Lucas



Leslie Damase

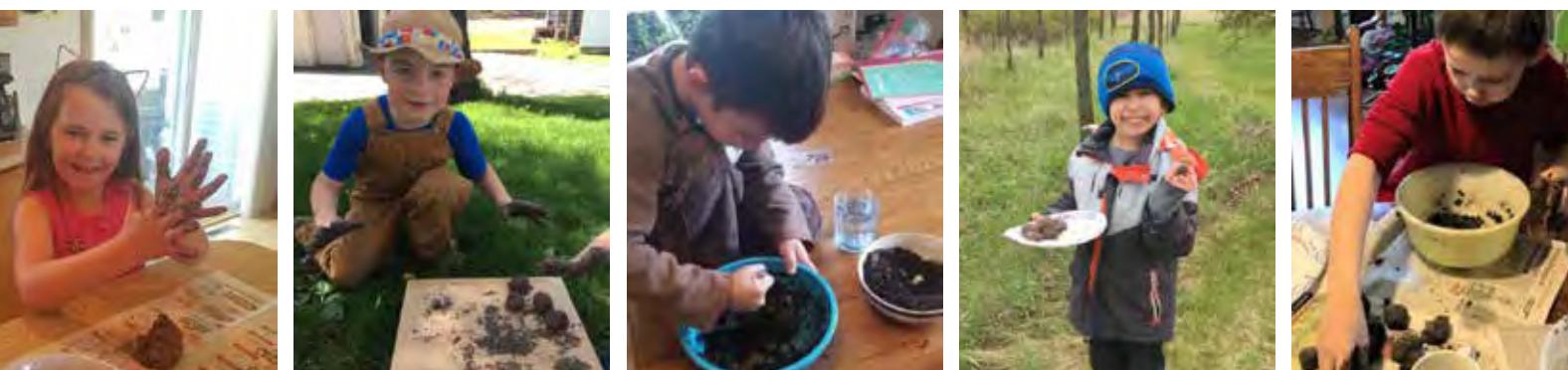
SMALL BUT CAPABLE HANDS

With the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, students across the region found themselves at home, learning in new ways and spending copious amounts of time online. Our Educational Programs Coordinator, Emily Benz, made a quick shift to get seeds into the capable hands of our youngest learners and encourage a bit of time outside by offering milkweed seed bomb kits to teachers and families. Materials for six hundred student kits were distributed from New Glarus to Sauk Prairie via school district deliveries and through an ongoing partnership with Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program's (SWCAP) Head Start Program. Clay was generously donated by Wilson Creek Pottery and Windy Ridge Pottery to literally make it all come together.

Seed bombs are a seed dispersal method that simply encases the seeds in a mixture of clay, compost and soil

to maximize the rates of germination and plant success. These materials are rolled like dough into a set of small balls and then these "bombs" are scattered in viable locations. Milkweed is an easy seed to use and plays a critical role in assuring survival of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

JoAnnah Sorg and Terri Anderson, teachers at Sauk Prairie's Tower Rock Elementary School, said the kits were well-received. Her students "were excited to do our part to help the Monarchs!" Thanks to the generous seed collection efforts of our many volunteers and to the creative teachers who quickly pivoted to include this project at the end of an unprecedented school year.



THE DRIFTLESS LEGACY SOCIETY

There are few places in the world as unique as the Driftless Area of Southwest Wisconsin. That is why protecting its critical habitat and beautiful spaces is vitally important. We gratefully thank our Driftless Legacy Society members for their commitment to this distinctive landscape. By including DALC in your estate plan, you too can protect and care for the land you love for generations to come.

If you have an interest in joining our Legacy Society please let us know by contacting us at (608) 930-3252 or email danni@driftlessconservancy.org. We value such a profound commitment to our mission and would appreciate the opportunity to thank you in your lifetime.

Thanks to you, and to those who treasure these lands, the future looks brighter.

DRIFTLESS LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

Anne Bachner
Helen Boley
David Kopitzke & Paul Klawiter
Lisa Luedtke
Ted Ross
Roland Sardeson
Ellyn Satter
Mary Trewartha
Susan Trudell
Marta Voytovich & Laurie Gauper

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



First, a big thank-you to all who have, in recent months, continued to support and show interest in the preservation of the timeless landscape of the Driftless Area. During that time our human environment has been profoundly and fundamentally disrupted by a tiny virus, one that we cannot see, can barely fight, and can only do our best to avoid. In contrast the Driftless Landscape is lovely to view; it is to be embraced, not fought; and it is definitely not to be avoided, but to be treasured and enjoyed.

As we reflect on 2019, we are happy to report the following among our many accomplishments:

- Completed a three-year, \$241,000 grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for Coordinating Monarch Habitat Restoration in Agricultural and Grassland Landscapes
- Expanded our Field Trip offering to 10 sessions that included around 170 participants and connected with over 500 students through a film showing, field days and educational activities

Our Board is proud of what we have done. As we move into mid-2020 and uncharted territory, we encourage you to boost your psychological and physiological health by getting outside. Just do it. From the great river valleys of the northern and western parts of the Driftless, to the prairies and savannahs of the east and south, let the Driftless environment be an out of doors place for you to sustain yourselves and your families. And thank you again for all you continue to do to preserve the area for the future.

Doug Caves
President

- Grew community partnerships through the Lowery Creek Watershed Initiative, Driftless Trail and Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network
- Sustained a significant opposition effort to the Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line and provided expert testimony to the Public Service Commission regarding the negative environmental impacts of the proposed project.

THANK YOU

As partners, volunteers, and financial supporters, you make land protection and stewardship in Southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Area possible. Thank you for your 2019 gift(s) and for helping build a more hopeful and sustainable future.

Donors who have given \$1000 or more are members of our 100 Friends Group

*An asterisk indicates a donation made to our campaign against the proposed Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission line.

\$10,000+

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*Steve Bablitch & Elaine Kelch
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Douglas & Sherry Caves
Laurits & Beatrice Christensen
Comer Family Foundation
*Anne & Tim Connor
Barbara Glass
Richard & Alice Godfrey
*Chris & Carol Lind
Lori Neumann & Jim Sinclair
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*John & Darla Patterson
*Ted Ross & Kathleen Ayres

\$5,000-\$9,999
Alliant Energy Foundation
*Anne Bachner

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*Eric & Susan Anderson
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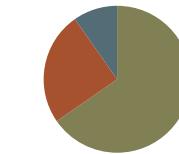
2019 FINANCIAL REPORT:

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization, Driftless Area Land Conservancy depends on the generosity of our members and supporters to enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Area and connect people to the land and to one another.



2019 OPERATING REVENUE

Individuals: \$382,775
Grants: \$152,385
Other: \$49,245
Total Operating Revenue: \$584,405



STEWARDSHIP AND ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Our stewardship and endowment funds are managed by the State Bank of Cross Plains and the Madison Community Foundation. If you'd like to make a tax-deductible contribution to these funds—or establish a named fund—please contact Jennifer Filipiak at 608-930-3252.

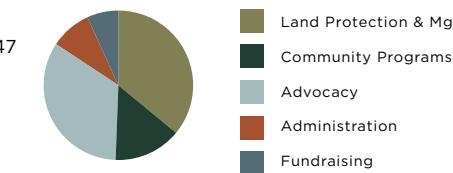
*DALC also purchases annual TerraFirma Insurance, which provides up to \$500,000 in additional legal defense support. To learn more visit: <http://www.terrafirma.org>.

BROKERAGE ACCOUNT

Monitoring & Legal Defense Contributions: \$10,000
Investment Income, Net of Fees: \$53,554

LAND ACQUISITION CONTRIBUTIONS & GRANTS

Landowner: \$47,750
Grants: \$47,750
Total Expenses: \$95,500



FINANCIALS AS OF 12/31/2019

Legal Defense Fund: \$90,000
Stewardship Monitoring Fund: \$223,113
Invested in Land Held for Conservation: \$555,098
Operations: \$308,518
Total Net Assets: \$1,176,729
Total Liabilities: \$53,089

\$100-\$499 CONT.
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 Cathryn Kaiser
 Claude Kazanski & Madelyn Leopold
 *Susan & Christopher Kealy
 Kenneth & Pamela Kirschbaum
 Dale Koehler
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We apologize for any errors
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danni@driftlessconservancy.org

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Our mission is to maintain and enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscape through permanent land protection and restoration, and improve people's lives by connecting them to the land and to each other.

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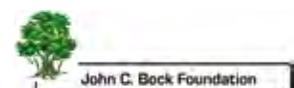
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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OAK SAVANNA ECOLOGY & MANAGEMENT

August 29 | Muscoda

FOREST MANAGEMENT: CREATING HEALTHY WOODLANDS

September 12 | Ridgeway

CHAINSAW SAFETY - LEVEL 1

September 19 | Erickson Conservation Area, Argyle

CHAINSAW SAFETY FOR WOMEN - LEVEL 1

October 10 | Sardeson Preserve, Mineral Point

SANDHILL CRANE VIEWING

November 6 & 7 | Spring Green

Updates, registration and more details online at driftlessconservancy.org/events

We will continue to follow state and county guidelines related to COVID-19. Each event will be evaluated at least one week prior to assess whether conditions warrant any adjustments. All registrants will be informed via email of any changes and updates will be posted on our website.

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