



WINTER 2021

DRIFTLESS

A Newsletter from the Driftless Area Land Conservancy



"I realize, through it all, that in the midst of winter, I found within me an invincible summer. And that makes me happy, for it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, there's something strong, something better, pushing right back." - Albert Camus



WELCOME 2021!



This is the time of year when we all reflect on the previous year, and think about our goals for the next – and here at DALC, we've been reflecting on the last 20 years. 2020 was actually Driftless Area Land Conservancy's 20th anniversary, an event we didn't get to properly celebrate, because, well, 2020.

In this newsletter though, you'll see a timeline of DALC's history, and in 2021 we'll be working on more in-depth stories that describe the evolution of our organization. We became an organization on the simple premise that this was, in the words of long time board member Alice Godfrey, "an astonishingly beautiful land that needed to be protected forever". There wasn't a land trust that covered our area, and so a group of conservationists came together to form one.

Land protection through conservation easements became our driving force, and doing good land protection requires great collaborative relationships with landowners, government agencies, other land trusts and the community. Along with the rest of the conservation community, we learned that just protecting land from development was not enough. Land also needs to be protected from neglect. Humans have always been part of the history of this land, and the natural communities evolved with human disturbance, especially fire. We began to own our own preserves and strive to demonstrate beneficial land management and then connect landowners to resources that can help them do the same. Another force that has always been a part of our landscape is agriculture – most of our conservation easements protect agricultural land as well as natural areas – and we are beginning to work more with farmers on how to manage land holistically with beneficial farming practices.

“...doing good land protection requires great collaborative relationships”

These are complex issues, and are even more complex considering the effects of the climate crisis – both in terms of mitigation and adaptation to a new normal. But we look forward to the challenge. DALC will continue to rely on land protection, our community, collaboration, and stewardship to think through these challenges and continue to protect our Driftless home as we enter our third decade.

Best wishes to all as we enter 2021, and our 21st year at DALC!

Jennifer Filipiak
Executive Director
jennifer@driftlessconservancy.org

Driftless Area Land Conservancy

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Cover Photo: Mark Hirsch

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



THE LIVING LEGACY OF THAT TREE

Mark Hirsch shared these words after learning that That Tree was blown down in the storm that destroyed much of the Midwest in August 2020. The Bur Oak tree known as That Tree captured his heart in 2012. By sharing his photo-a-day project with the world through social media and his book, *That Tree*, Mark captured the heart of everyone who loves a majestic Oak tree and brought awareness to conservation in our corner of the world.

“I never imagined in my lifetime that I would lose my dear friend, but I have.”

This past fall, 30 people chose to honor the memory of That Tree by making a gift to Driftless Area Land Conservancy. Together they raised over \$2,000 which will be used to help restore and care for Oak trees in the Driftless region. Gifts made before October 2, 2020, were entered into a drawing for a sapling tree grown from an acorn of That Tree. The lucky winners, Bill & Marilyn Ross, were delighted to become caretakers to part of That Tree's Legacy which will become part of their new urban prairie in Monroe, WI.

That Tree's story traveled across the world. It highlighted the need to protect and care for these ancient trees whom play such a pivotal role in savanna and woodland landscapes. Oaks are uniquely fire resistant. The openness of an oak savanna can come from regular use of fire to manage other less fire-resistant tree species and invasive brush species. The Driftless area is home to many examples of this type of landscape. With proper management and restoration practices we can continue to be good stewards to the incredible habitat provided by Oaks. - Danni Lang

Mark Hirsch is a DALC Board Member. You can find his photography and the legacy of That Tree online at thattree.net or markhirschphoto.com



ALL TOGETHER NOW

As a staff, we've spent a lot of time looking back, reflecting on work that the organization has done, how goals have changed, and maybe even how we collaborate to have a bigger impact on conservation in the Driftless area, now and far into the future. One of DALC's best stories of collaboration is that of the Dry Dog Ranch.

It has been nearly 30 years since a group of five friends purchased 781 acres of oak woods, savanna, prairie, springs, streams, rock outcrops, working lands and wildlife habitat. Initially, they purchased the property with the intent of securing outstanding hunting and recreational land. Before long, however, they were planting oak trees, managing the agricultural lands, and opening areas that were historically oak savanna and prairie. They met regularly, hunted, managed their land, socialized, and had plenty of good laughs. Now, almost 10 years after the group cemented their commitment to conservation with an easement, the love for hunting is still a driving force, but the importance of land management made its way to

the forefront, becoming a true labor of lasting love for the land.

There is a strong common ground between managing land for hunting and overall conservation value, including restoring native ecological communities, soil health, and wildlife habitat. The impact of collaboration is clear when you look at what partnership has accomplished on the 781 acres of Dry Dog Ranch over the last 30 years. With an eye toward restoring these natural communities and wildlife habitat areas, the owners documented natural features, recorded changes, and focused their efforts on different improvements and conservation programs and options. Dale Moody recalls that his first contact was with a forester and "tree planting was a major focus. Now I enjoy the work with the native forbs and grasses and the oak savanna ecosystems. I see our land with a broader view with the entire ecosystem in mind rather than just hunting".

Collaboration at this property doesn't just end with the purchase and management of the land just for them-

selves though. The landowners are active in a learn-to-hunt mentoring program, the Great Wisconsin Birdathon and bluebird conservation programs, forestry aging projects, and restoration demonstration projects for regional conservation efforts.

At the heart of this partnership is a deep love and appreciation for all that the land offers. When you multiply that connection by five landowners and all of the people they connect to the land, the impact skyrockets. Habitat improves. Soil health feeds into healthier ecosystems. Wildlife flourish and human connections to the land solidify.

Gary Johannsen, a landowner who recently bought into the Ranch, has seen firsthand the impact of collaboration and finding common ground—"one needs to go out and bond with the Land. You do not need to own land to do that. Just go out and look at all the work that is being done on public and private lands by volunteers. Your whole mindset will change. Mine has."

- Theresa Morgan

PROVIDING RESOURCES AND CONNECTIONS

The Southern Driftless Grasslands Partnership made it a priority this year to produce the Conservation Partners and Programs Guide: A Reference Directory for Farmers and Landowners in Southwest Wisconsin. The guide covers a lot of ground that comes up in conversation when meeting with landowners to walk their property -- one of the most rewarding parts of my job. During one-on-one interactions, I learn about dreams and goals, experiences,

"Here in SW WI we have so many valuable resources and cost-sharing programs..."

lessons learned and lessons still to be experienced. I do what I can to provide input and guidance,

and also, to steer people toward other sources of information and expertise. Here in SW WI we have so many valuable resources and cost-sharing programs to be accessed online, in print, but also through personal connections within the broad network of technical land management and conservation professionals. The Guide includes all this and more.

The Guide's first section features native habitats and wildlife, and suggestions for informational websites and partner groups to contact for more information. The second section provides contact information for programs that provide technical and financial assistance for conservation practices on agricultural working land and

recreational land. This publication focuses on the landscape west of Madison and south of Hwy 151, but there are resources here that are applicable throughout the Driftless Area.

A copy of the guide is available for download on the Southern Driftless Grasslands website, www.driftless-grasslands.org. To request a free paper copy, please contact Cindy Becker at cindy@driftlessconservancy.org or 608-930-3252. Driftless Area Land Conservancy is proud to be a part of a partnership that is here for you, to provide you the resources and information you need to make ecologically wise decisions for your land.



CLEA-NING THE AIR AND SAVING ENERGY COSTS

The climate crisis affects every aspect of DALC's mission. Together with area activists and volunteers we're addressing this issue head-on through our recently created affiliate, Iowa County Clean Local Energy Alliance - Now (CLEA-N).

CLEA-N's central goal is to retain energy dollars in area communities by fostering environmental stewardship. One strategy to achieve this goal is to advance local, small-scale, clean energy generation. A second tactic is to provide opportunities for households to reduce their energy costs. Increasing efficiencies is an ideal place to lower those costs while also reducing harmful emissions. CLEA-N's LED light bulb exchange does just that. Area participants traded inefficient incandescent light bulbs for a free set of six high-efficiency LED bulbs. This past fall, in Phase 1 of the program, over 400 households have received LED sets. These families are already enjoying the benefits of reduced energy use and costs. Phase 2 of the project will focus on more direct outreach to households that will benefit the most through reductions in their energy expenditures.

DALC is pleased to be playing an important role in addressing climate change while helping keep your energy dollars at home. Find our projects online or be in touch with our Community Organizer Chuck Tennesen (charles@driftlessconservancy.org)



DRIFTLESS AREA LAND CONSERVANCY, 20 YEARS OF PROTECTION, RESTORATION, AND CONNECTION

2000	DALC idea born through first meeting at Jordahl Farm	DALC Established, Founding Members: Tim Freeman, President, Doug Booth, Brenda Gasch, Brad Glass, Harald "Jordy" Jordahl, David Kopitzke, Dave Lowe, and Mark Mittelstadt	DALC moves from volunteer-group to professionally-staffed organization, Doug Cieslak, first Executive Director	November: first conservation easement, Arny-Valley Ridge Farm (Richland County)	December: second conservation easement, Stack (pine relict forest, Iowa County)	Thomas Farm conservation easement and first collaboration with The Prairie Enthusiasts and DNR	Schuelke conservation easement largest contiguous protected parcel, initiated effort to link properties in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area	Dry Dog easement (see story, pg. 4)	March: David Clutter becomes Executive Director	Zimmer conservation easement soil-health focused landowner and author, Iowa County near Taliesin	DALC houses coordinator for Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area - now Southern Driftless Grasslands	Deetz conservation easement first easement to preserve working land using sustainable agricultural practices	Acquired Morrison Prairie and Forest Preserve via bargain sale and collaboration with DNR high quality conservation values
		7 EASEMENTS - 752.1 ACRES PROTECTED		6 EASEMENTS - 1478.6 ACRES PROTECTED					20 EASEMENTS - 1 FEE TITLE - 3282.8 ACRES PROTECTED			13 EASEMENTS - 3 FEE TITLE - 2301.2 ACRES PROTECTED	

DALC holds 46 conservation easements (7,253 acres) and owns four preserves (561 acres). We have protected over 7800 acres in the Driftless Area.

Glass Land Legacy
When asked to reflect on their decision to permanently protect their land, Brad remembered first walking the property with his wife on a cold and gray day in November of 1983, and noted "We could see hills and trees extending for miles to the horizon. It was not difficult to decide this was the land we wanted to own." Their property is typical of the Driftless Area with prairie and savanna remnants and oak woodland. Brad is grateful for Barbara's hard work toward restoring these native landscapes on their property which include extensive areas of forest interspersed with savanna remnants and a restored prairie. Barbara enjoys "perfect" east west views from their Frank Lloyd Wright style home. Brad's leadership in the Conservancy and the selfless act of preserving their lands is rooted in his strong belief in the concept of voluntary land preservation by private property owners. He says, "Without it, I fear that much of the scenic beauty of our area will be lost to development."
Excerpt from Spring 2008 DALC Newsletter.



Glass conservation easement
Prairie Legacy:
The Thomas Family, their Farm and Stone Barn by Ann Bachner, published

Erickson Conservation Area: In 2013 Alex and Mary Erickson sold their magnificent property in Argyle to DALC at half price. Their generosity and this bargain sale launched the first of DALC's "Ambassador Properties". These special properties are owned and managed by DALC, are open to the public, and meant to protect, showcase and share the awe-inspiring diversity of land in the Driftless. As of 2020, DALC also owns and manages the Morrison Prairie and Forest Preserve near Muscoda and Sardeson Preserve in Mineral Point.

The Erickson Conservation Area is well-loved by a cadre of local volunteers. It is open to the public year round and home to wetlands, prairies, an oak savanna and part of the Pecatonica River. DALC and our whole community continues to benefit from the generosity of conservation giants like the Erickson family.

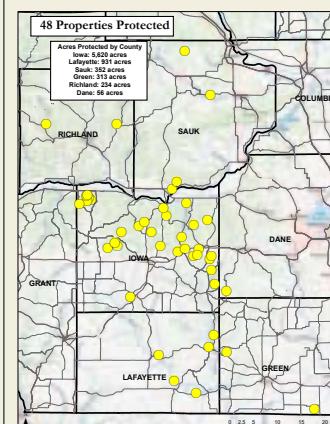


Erickson Conservation Area acquired via bargain sale and Knowles-Nelson funding
Driftless Explorers Club youth-focused education and outreach begins

DALC moved to current office, 206 S. Iowa St, Dodgeville
Bloomfield Prairie partnership established with Iowa County, DALC and Iowa County Recreation and Prairie Restoration
Ross/Cates conservation easement Cates Family Farm, Lowery Creek watershed, Iowa County
DALC and partners begin battling **Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission** line
Monarch Grant awarded to protect pollinator habitat, TPE, BMAP, (combines collaboration and stewardship of many properties across the region)

Earned Accreditation from **Land Trust Alliance**
Won **Land Trust of the Year**, Gathering Waters
Sardeson Preserve bequeathed to DALC

Driftless Trail breaks ground
Lowery Creek earns class 1 Trout stream designation
Iowa County CLEA-N Established
Southern Driftless Grasslands Conservation Guide published



*All conservation easements listed here are on privately owned property and are not open to the public. For publicly accessible properties, visit www.driftlessconservancy.org/ambassador-properties

DRIFTLESS TRAIL CELEBRATES AN EXCITING STEP INTO THE FUTURE

After five years of planning, public meetings, landowner conversations, and fundraising, a group gathered in a mowed hayfield on Pleasant Ridge on October 4 to celebrate what would be happening the next morning...

Six WisCorps crew members would dig their shovels, McLeods, and Pulaskis into Nan Fey's land to create the first three-quarter-mile stretch of the Driftless Trail.

The phenomenal view from the hayfield was a perfect testament to this project. Straight ahead, a line of blue hills ten miles in the distance, was the northern extent of the trail - the Lower Wisconsin River valley.

From this vantage point, ten o'clock was the valley the new trail now descends into, wrapping around the base of a pine relict ridge. Getting there takes you through Prairie du Chien dolomite to Cambrian sandstone, on display in outcrops under the towering pines. (Look up a lot when you hike there.)

At two o'clock, with great irony, was the property of the late UW-Madison landscape architect Phil Lewis, who pioneered the E-way concept - creating environmental corridors. The "E" represents educational, environmental, esthetic, and ecological resources that are linked through a shared corridor. How fitting that the Driftless Trail - a new kind of rural E-way - begins a stone's throw from his home at the head of Wyoming Valley.



At four o'clock, over our shoulder, we could see the eastern extent of the Trail, 13 miles away - Blue Mound State Park. And directly behind us in the valley south of Pleasant Ridge was Governor Dodge State Park, the trail's southwest anchor.

Trail hosts, DALC board and staff, and planning partners celebrated everything this 50-plus mile long footpath will represent. A chance for landowners to share the beauty of the area with the public and meet the intriguing variety of people who will visit their land. A vehicle for DALC to protect and manage a substantial corridor of ecologically valuable land, build a strong conservation community, and connect many people to this landscape. And a regional resource for recreation, environmental education, personal restoration, and much more.

The WisCorps crew nearly completed that first segment and leveled out the Welsh Hills Trail at the Taliesin estate. In the spring, they will return to polish both trails and we will follow that up with installing signage and other finishing touches.

On June 5, 2021 - National Trails Day - we will open the first segment of the Driftless Trail to the public! Another exciting step in this long, patient, and very rewarding journey.

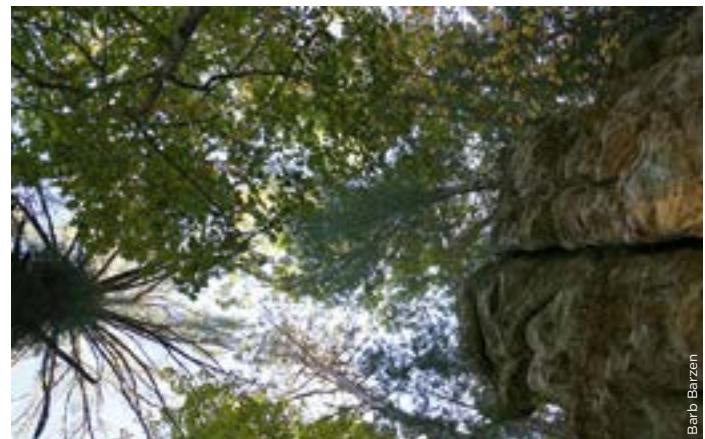
For more on the Driftless Trail project please contact Project Coordinator Barb Barzen at barb@driftlessconservancy.org



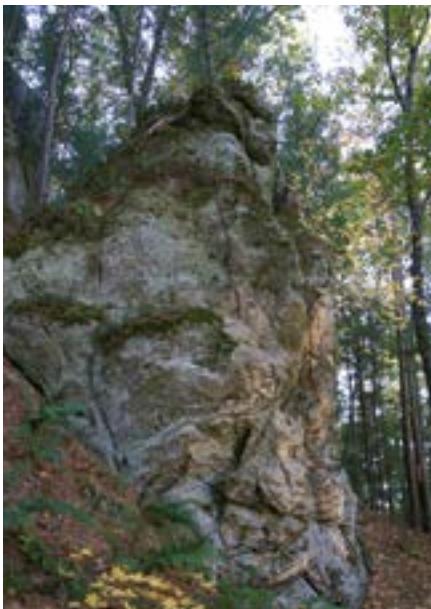
Randy Manning



Mark Hirsch



Barb Barzen



Barb Barzen

Scenes from the newly constructed trail.

Trail designer Bill Menke touches up the new trail, which will be completed in the spring and opened to the public in June.

Angie Torres manages the Wisconsin Field Office for the National Park Services' Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. She spent three years helping us develop the concept plan for the Driftless Trail and was very excited to take her first steps on it, and to hear about our progress.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Outdoors—think about it. It is a key refuge from the pandemic—where it is safe to meet friends, socialize, get exercise, share a meal or a cup of coffee. The Driftless Area offers first class space to be outdoors—along the rivers, in the parks, and on the trails. Moreover, beyond your chosen outdoor destination, your journey through the Driftless landscape provides continuous scenic beauty. Your commitment to conserving this landscape ensures that these outdoor opportunities will be here for future generations.

Despite the pandemic disruptions, your support of DALC has enabled critical additions to outdoor opportunities

in the Driftless. In 2020, we (1) broke ground on the Driftless Trail Project, (2) achieved the status of Lowery Creek as a Class 1 trout stream, protected by a Driftless easement (3) safely conducted 6 field trips and 2 land-owner workshops, (4) continued the fight against the Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line and (5) did all this with a steady team and eyes for the future. DALC staff and Board members made a major pivot in 2020 and successfully adapted to many variables to continue important conservation work. That's an accomplishment in itself. And you stayed with us, recommitted to conservation through your donations, and showed up as volunteers when you could. I hope you look forward, as I do, to ongoing protection efforts next year and to opportunities for us all to resume in-person activities as the pandemic subsides.

Doug Caves
President

NEW STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

The DALC staff and Board would like to welcome and introduce Grace Trenkamp, our new Student Board member. Grace will serve for a one-year term beginning in January 2021.



Hello, my name is Grace Trenkamp. I am a third-year environmental science and conservation major at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. My emphasis is on physical and natural science. I also have minors in social and environmental justice, biology, and theatre, as well as a certificate in GIS (Geographic Information Systems). I have previously worked with DALC doing data entry for the Southwest Wisconsin Grasslands Network Landowner Survey in February 2020. Since middle school, I have been heavily involved in my local conservation departments in Iowa. I have missed the experiences, so applying to be the Student Board member was an easy decision for me. Growing up around the sculpted bluffs of Bellevue, the glorious caves of Maquoketa, and, of course, the glistening, muddy Mississippi, my connection to the earth started at a young age. This has influenced the pursuit of a career in activating for a healthier environment.

“Growing up around the sculpted bluffs of Bellevue, the glorious caves of Maquoketa, and, of course, the glistening, muddy Mississippi, my connection to the earth started at a young age.”

The focus of my pursuit, in my undergrad, has been on avian species and GIS. Since my first year at Platteville, I have been collaborating with both the Biology and Geography departments on campus, on a personal guided research project. My research involves taking paper-intake data from a raptor rehabilitation center in Iowa, digitizing it, then applying spatial data to the injured bird's found location, and running statistical analyses on the findings. My research was accepted into the 2020 Summer Undergraduate Scholar Program. I plan to attend the American Association of Geographers Conference in the spring with my research. Additionally, I am an active theatre student at UW-Platteville. In the spring of 2021, I will be stage managing and paint charging two COVID-19 friendly productions. My senior, deaf, rescue pup, Sophie, and I look forward to Zooming, or visiting in person, with the entire DALC community!

REMEMBERING DAVID KLUEVER



In June 2020, Driftless Area Land Conservancy received notice of the passing of David Kluever. His friends and family began making memorial gifts for David to DALC. Story after story from David's friends spoke to his generosity, his larger than life personality, and his love of nature.

David spent a lot of his childhood in the Driftless Area and continued to visit the area as an adult. Living in the suburbs of Chicago and owning his own company, he needed a place to recharge and get away for a while. The family farm was his refuge, but he didn't keep this refuge all to himself.

He passed his love of nature onto his children and his community of friends. Once a year he brought the Boy Scout troop his son was in out to their farm in the Driftless for a campout. The parents of the boys became close friends and also enjoyed their time spent on these excursions. Another campout tradition began just for friends. These were treasured adventures by all attendees made even better by David's enthusiasm and love of the outdoors.

David's wife, Lisa, appreciates all those who donated to DALC in David's memory, saying, "that place was so near and dear to David's heart. And I'm so grateful to those who chose to protect this area."

DALC is honored to remember the love David Kluever had for the outdoors and the Driftless Area with permanent land protection. Our hearts go out to the family and friends who are grieving the loss of such a vivacious and generous person.



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 info@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
Ted Ross
Roland Sardeson
Ellyn Satter
Mary Trewartha
Susan Trudell
Marta Voytovich & Laurie Gauper

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

www.driftlessconservancy.org



Stay up to date with us as we celebrate 20 years as a land trust!

Early this year DALC will be launching Driftless Through Your Lens Youth Outdoor Photography Workshops to bring young people together outside safely in small groups. Participants will learn basic outdoor photography skills, learn to use smartphone cameras with lens attachments, and spend time outside looking for new perspectives on the landscapes of the Driftless region. Thanks to the generous support of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin for supporting this program.



WANT TO BE IN THE LOOP ON THE LATEST DRIFTLESS NEWS AND EVENTS?

Additional winter and early spring programs are patiently being developed in compliance with COVID-19 recommendations for gathering. Be sure you are on our email list or keep up with us online so you don't miss any event details.

Sign up for our monthly eNews and get the latest on local conservation news, programs and volunteer opportunities. This free email will come just once a month along with any other special messages. Visit www.driftlessconservancy.org to sign up today. Also, find us on Facebook and Instagram for more beautiful photos and links to important work happening across the region.

EVENTS: DRIFTLESSCONSERVANCY.ORG/EVENTS

FACEBOOK: FACEBOOK.COM/DRIFTLESSCONSERVANCY

CALL: 608.930.3252



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