



OPEN SPACES

WEST WISCONSIN
LAND TRUST

S U M M E R 2 0 0 9

V O L U M E 1 3 , N U M B E R 1

Explore Nature on your Summer Staycation

Your destination guide to
staying and playing in western
and northwestern Wisconsin

Keil Birch Creek Nature
Preserve in Menomonie

Come discover the road less traveled that leads to open natural spaces and water bodies that West Wisconsin Land Trust members have helped to permanently protect. Wisconsin's natural beauty provides the perfect setting for a "stay-cation." Whether it's because of rising fuel prices or jam-packed family schedules, more people than ever are enjoying shorter getaways in their own backyard with a vacation close to home. With our state's natural wealth and conservation legacy, you don't have to travel to an exotic location to experience lush forests, towering bluffs, clear streams, and abundant wildlife. Take this issue with you, and go explore your contribution to western Wisconsin's finest lakes, streams and natural areas.

Your Guide begins on page 6.



WEST WISCONSIN LAND TRUST

OPEN SPACES

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West Wisconsin Land Trust,
a private, nonprofit land trust
organization, dedicated to
preserving western Wisconsin's
natural character.

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West Wisconsin Land Trust Offices

500 East Main Street, Ste. 307
Menomonie, WI 54751
(715) 235-8850
Superior Office
(218) 343-8528

www.wwlt.org

Noteworthy

We're Going Green

You can help us go a little more green by moving toward electronic communications. This allows us to reduce our distribution costs, save more natural resources, and be better stewards of your financial gifts.

E-mail wwlt@wwlt.org to request that future communications be sent electronically. Thank you!

Member Survey (we promise: it's short!)

Go to our website and follow the link on the home page to take a brief survey. Your expectations and concerns matter to us! If you don't have access to the internet, please call our office at (715) 235-8850, and we'll mail one. Survey ends September 1, 2009.

BioBlitz!

Eau Claire, Sherman Creek Park September 11 and 12, 2009

How many different plants and animals can you find in 24 hours? A few dozen? A hundred? How about a thousand? Come spend an hour or a day with West Wisconsin Land Trust and a host of naturalists and scientists at our annual environmental education scavenger hunt!

For directions and more information, stay tuned to our website: www.wwlt.org.

Your membership matters!

Thanks for preserving 25,000 acres in western Wisconsin.

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Desiring to build on the strength of a vibrant membership, an enthusiastic staff, and land conservation achievements, the West Wisconsin Land Trust Board of Directors recently launched into the fifth strategic planning process in its 20-year history.

Dreaming about our future for two days, the Board and staff discussed the strengths of our past and envisioned what an ideal future might include. The following themes emerged, and a strategic plan is being created that will guide our organization for the next five years.

Best Staff provides to all of our employees the opportunity to exceed their goals and expectations in a respectful, high trust, supportive environment. Creating job satisfaction, strong loyalty and organizational pride that will bring astonishing new achievements in land protection and environmental education. Our staff is committed to continuous improvement in all of our programs and processes.

Celebrating Nature by providing the information, resources, facilities and opportunities for all adults and children to experience natural land and the diversity of life it supports. Whether it's leading a night hike or restoring an oak savanna, we hope to engage our members in fun, productive, thoughtful activities that will reconnect them with the environment.

Growth in Members by engaging people whose hearts reside in western Wisconsin in the events, opportunities and accomplishments of West Wisconsin Land Trust. We commit to strengthening our donor communications, delivering value, and growing our membership to 10 times its current level.

Vision Larger than Land will create synergies among our programs that ensure ecosystem and community health. Tying it all together—land conservation, outdoor education, working lands and organizational development—with our partners, members, and communities for sustainable advancement.

Growth in Endowment will bring strategies that enhance our plan to increase the easement stewardship fund for future stewardship and conservation defense. Ensuring that our restricted endowment is up to a level that will allow WWLT to carry out its legal obligations into perpetuity.

If you read this column, and would like to weigh in with a comment, suggestion, criticism or exhortation, please write me at rgauger@wwlt.org or give me a call at the office. I will be happy to pass on your comments to the Board of Directors. We literally cannot obtain these dreams without you, our faithful members. If you're pleased with what you read and the direction we're going, please consider putting West Wisconsin Land Trust in your will, and be part of our Bridge to the Future.



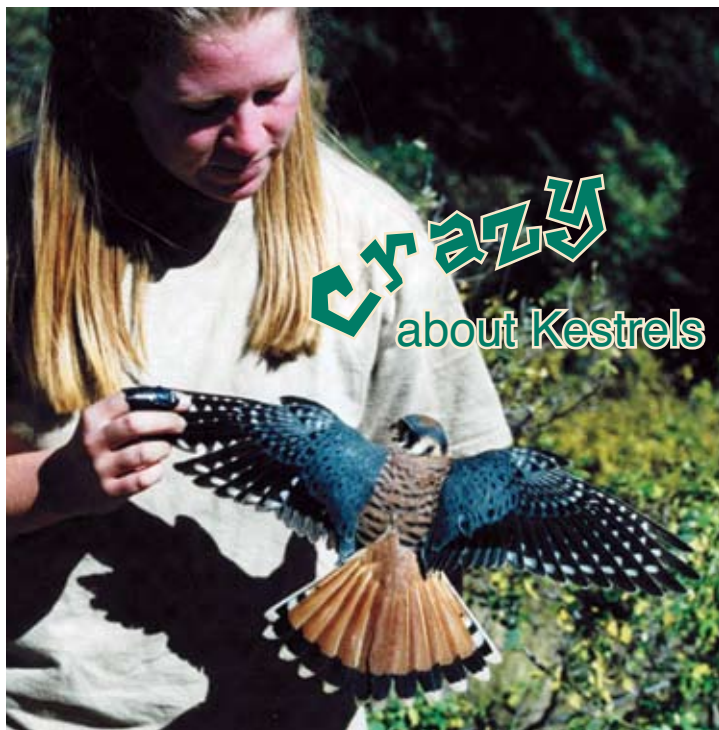
Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny

West Wisconsin
Land Trust Board of
Directors charts
organization's future

By Richard E.
Gauger
Executive Director



Board and staff discussion during Strategic Planning session



I didn't always love raptors. That all changed the day I met an American Kestrel. I was at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland, studying the Kestrel. My hand still tingles when I remember grabbing a hold of an adult male kestrel. The bird's reaction was to wrap his long toes around my palm, pierce his talons into my skin, and use his hooked beak to give me a manicure. This may not sound like the beginning of a great relationship, but it was. It wasn't the pain that brought me to my knees that day, but the respect and admiration I felt at the power and will of this little 4-ounce falcon. I was in love.

I have spent 15 years personally and professionally observing and studying raptors, and I'd like to help you understand them better.

"Raptors will kill my cat or my lamb!"

Raptors aren't very big, and they are mostly feathers. Aside from the bald eagle, which averages 10 pounds, the biggest raptor in Wisconsin is the great horned owl, weighing in at just 3 lbs. The great horned owl is the only raptor that can carry more than its own body weight, a maximum of 6-9 lbs. I can't say that a raptor has never taken a cat or a sick and injured newborn lamb, but it's very rare. An owl would much rather find the mice in your backyard.

"The hawks keep eating my cardinals!"

Let's look closer at what is really happening. Raptors are carnivores, and their diet includes birds. The woodland hawks have learned that bird feeders are a prime hunting ground. Animals don't have the luxury of visiting a fast food

drive-through, so they have to work for their dinner. Hawks are hungry, and so are their growing chicks. Raptor chicks have less than a 40% chance of surviving.

Are We So Different?

Raptors have some similarities to us. They have homes. They need to eat, and they want to raise strong and healthy offspring. I am not happy when I see a sharp-shinned hawk grab an American goldfinch from my bird feeder. But I do understand why it is hunting. I understand that the goldfinch is part of the bird food chain, and it was used to further the life of another living creature.

Take a Second Look at Raptors

If you aren't crazy about raptors, I encourage you to take a closer look. Start small. Begin with my favorite raptor, the American Kestrel. Search for the kestrel perched on a power line, maybe near an open field. Look for the bird with the big round ping-pong-ball head. Now check out the tail that flicks up and down. Notice all the colors: red, black, brown, white, grey, blue and yellow. If the bird you are looking at has blue-grey wings, then it is a male. If the wings are brown, it is a female. Watch how it bobs its head up and down, focusing on something below. Suddenly, the kestrel may swoop off the power line and hover in the sky. You may see it fold in its wings, dive down and grab a dragonfly right out of mid-air! From there, the kestrel flies back to feed its young, calling out a shrill *killy-killy-killy*.

I hope you will learn to like raptors as much as I do.

Jeanette Kelly joined West Wisconsin Land Trust in February 2009 while Gretchen Yonko was on maternity leave. Jeanette is a biologist and educator who enjoys being outside with her husband, Matt, and yellow lab, "Maple."

top: Jeanette with a kestrel; bottom: Jeanette teaching



It was a beautiful spring day when two busloads of Menomonie High School students joined West Wisconsin Land Trust staff and members and community volunteers at the Red Cedar Cut-off and the Keil Birch Creek Nature Preserve. They were there to celebrate Earth Day with a work service project.

Trees and Trails

One group spent the day planting white pine and red oak seedlings, pulling out stumps, and clearing the dead brush and branches on and along the trail. Hit hard by a major 2007 storm, the Red Cedar Cut-off was difficult to get to. By the end of the day, much of the trail had been cleared.

Students also planted trees, and cleaned up litter and debris at Birch Creek. This 28-acre nature preserve was newly acquired by West Wisconsin Land Trust, with strong support from the community.

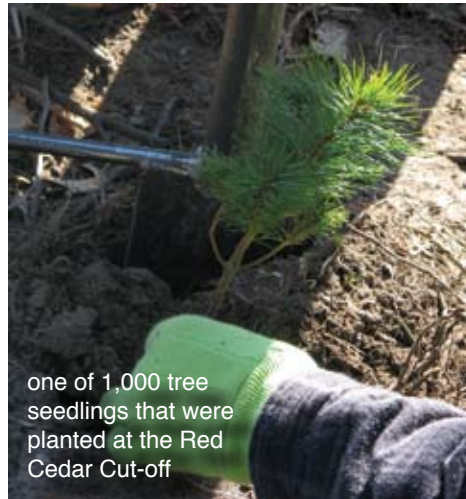
Building birdhouses

Another group of students joined volunteers from Xcel Energy and Cardinal Glass to build and hang birdhouses. These will provide habitat for wrens, chickadees, ducks and screech owls. Menomonie football coach Joe LaBuda and students traveled by john-boat to erect wood duck houses around the shoreline of the Cut-off.

Osprey Platform

A third group constructed large osprey platforms, hoping the raptors will eventually be attracted to these new nests near Lake Menomin.

Xcel Energy demonstrated their “responsible by nature” reputation by providing significant assistance in transporting the 70-foot pole to the landing site, drilling the hole and erecting the platform tower. Xcel Energy had both line crews and employee volunteers on site all day long. “Installing the osprey tower was a real challenge for our crew,



one of 1,000 tree seedlings that were planted at the Red Cedar Cut-off

Earth Day 2009

Get ‘em outside!

Menomonie High School Students Volunteer at West Wisconsin Land Trust Nature Preserves



MHS student completes final step before osprey platform is raised

“Hopefully, the osprey will soon be breeding in the nest we built.” -*Olivia, 17*

“This is so worth it, helping the environment.”
-*Jordan, 15*

“I didn’t mind pulling out stumps. I like hard work.”
-*Dylan, 15*

because the ten-foot deep hole was continuously filling with water. But at the end of the day, we succeeded,” said Dave Smiskey, an Xcel lineman.

Community partners

“We want to thank all our wonderful partners who made this event possible,” said Jeanette Kelly, interim outdoor education coordinator for West Wisconsin Land Trust. “Through the entire planning process, everyone was excited and willing to help. This is what Earth Day is all about: people coming together to respect and protect the earth.” (For a complete list of our partners, and more photos, please visit www.wwlt.org.)

Green Generation Gives Back

“We wanted to provide opportunity for Menomonie High School students to give back to the environment in ways that are meaningful, and will have long-lasting results,” said West Wisconsin Land Trust Executive Director Rick Gauger. “As your local land trust, we’re pleased to involve the community on properties protected by our Land Trust members. Menomonie High School students demonstrated good stewardship on Earth Day, and they should be very proud of their work.”

“This is the best educational event that I’ve ever been a part of,” said Bob Heise, of the Birch Creek Neighborhood Association.

Fifteen-year-old Kanyon summed up the feelings of many of the students: “This was a great adventure! I can’t wait for next year!”

We want to hear from you! April 22, 2010 is the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. What service activities should we be planning? How would you like to be involved? Please call the Land Trust office at 715-235-8850 or email us at wwlt@wwlt.org.



Explore Nature on your Summer Staycation

Your destination guide to staying and playing in western and northwestern Wisconsin

Birchwood Lakes – northern Wisconsin

North of the small town of Birchwood, Wisconsin, an expansive land of lakes straddles the border between Washburn and Sawyer Counties. Unbroken oak-maple forests are pockmarked with clusters of tamarack bogs and glacial pothole lakes, making this an ideal place to toss a backpack into a canoe, paddle from lake to lake, and get away for a while.

West Wisconsin Land Trust members have worked hard to protect nearly 650 acres in this area, including properties adjacent to the Loyhead Lake and Sawmill Lake Primitive Canoe Routes, both located within Washburn County Forest. From these routes, you can portage and paddle your way to more than 15 quiet lakes. This is a local backcountry experience that will satisfy anyone who also enjoys canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (Minnesota). The Birchwood Lakes area continues to be a conservation priority for West Wisconsin Land Trust.

How to get there: From the village of Birchwood, go north on County Highways D and T to the Birchwood Fire Lane; continue going north on the fire lane. Access the Sawmill Lake Primitive Canoe Route at Sawmill Lake Campground, located on Sawmill Landing Road. Access the Loyhead Lake Primitive Canoe Route at the boat landing on Loyhead Lake located on the Birchwood Fire Lane.

Chippewa Glacial Lakes

Stretching across the northwest corner of Chippewa County, near the town of New Auburn, Wisconsin, a dense cluster of lakes lay packed together among the surrounding forests, farms, bogs and wetlands. West Wisconsin Land Trust members have protected over 2,000 acres in this ecologically important area. Now, you have the opportunity to explore and enjoy some of the best lakes in Wisconsin. Your membership support has helped to protect glacial lake hotspots such as Long and Herde Lakes, the Cedar Creek Wetlands and Axhandle Lake.

Long and Herde Lakes

These two impressive lakes have a lot to offer: clear waters, white pines, big bays, and lots of fish. Fishermen can try their luck for muskie, walleye and bass. Kayakers can explore the quiet bays within Herde Lake or near the south end of Long Lake. After a day on the water, visitors can get a bite to eat at one of several nearby restaurants. To date, West Wisconsin Land Trust members have helped to protect nine properties on these two beautiful lakes, totaling nearly 640 acres.

How to get there: The Morris-Erickson County Park public boat launch can be reached via State Highway 40 north of the Village of Bloomer. Travel north on Highway 40 for approximately 13 miles to the park and landing.

Cedar Creek Wetlands

Located between Chain Lake and Long Lake lays a massive swath of marshland, dissected by a branching network of creek channels known as the Cedar Creek Wetlands. Approximately 720 acres in size, the Cedar Creek Wetlands offer visitors a chance to disappear into a large-scale natural area. The area is best visited by boat. If you go, expect to see an abundance of waterfowl, muskrat, and songbirds. West Wisconsin Land Trust permanently protected this property in January of 2009 with a host of local public partners.

How to get there: From the village of Bloomer, travel north on State Highway 40 for approximately 15 miles to 136th Street, veering left after several miles onto 122nd Street. Access Chain Lake via the Chain Lake public boat landing.

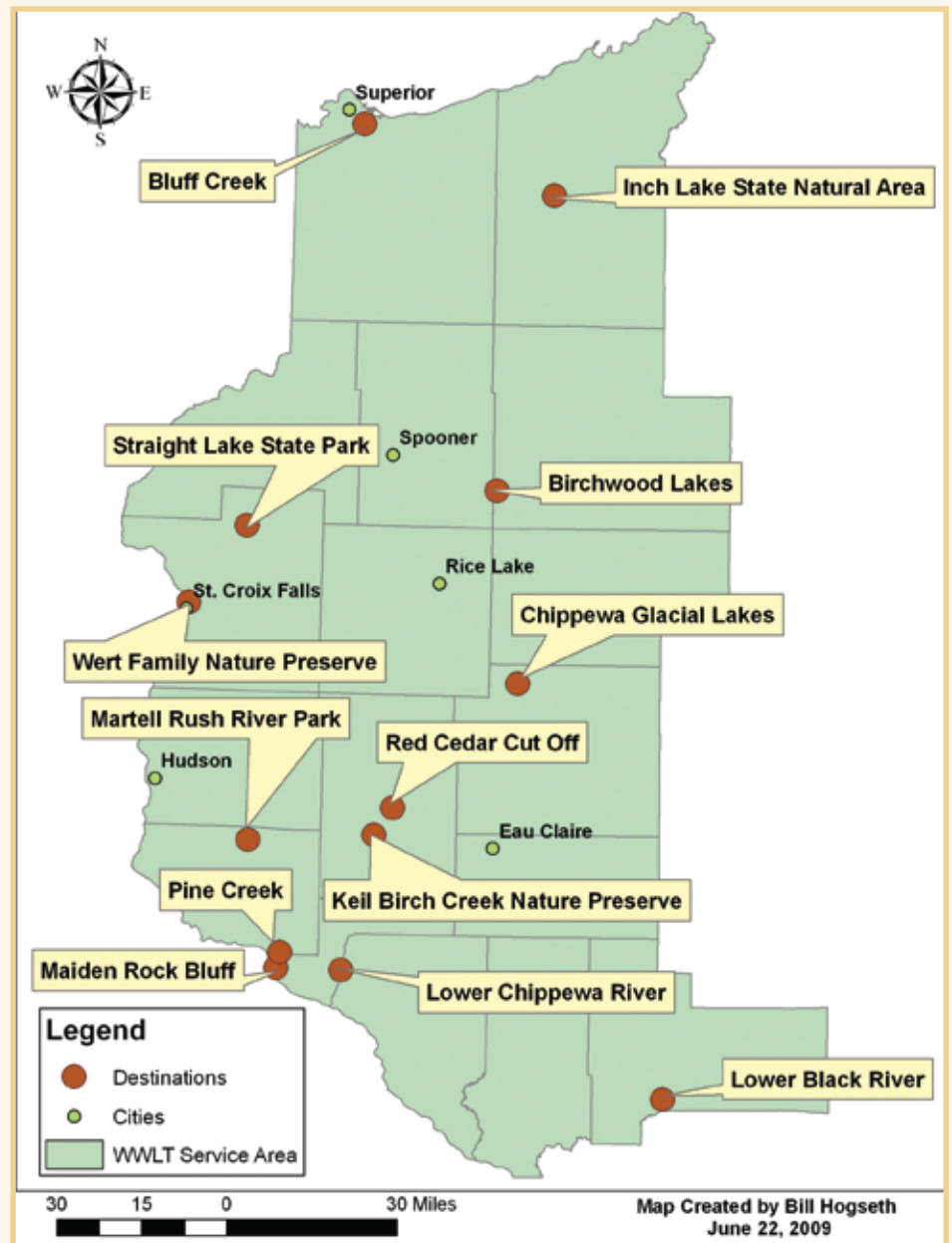
Axhandle Lake

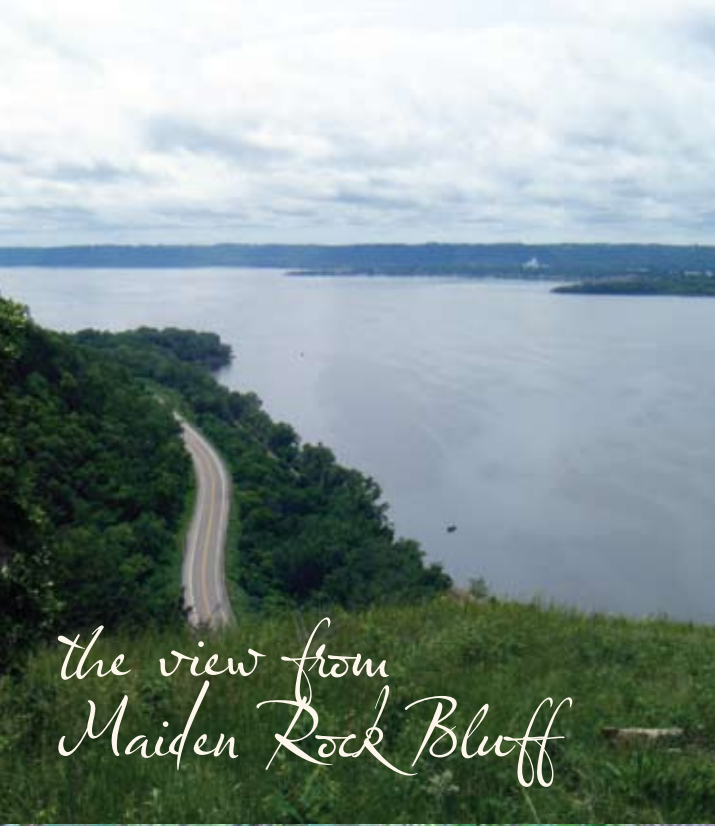
Axhandle Lake is a gem! Its deep waters, nesting loons, secluded bays, and islands offer any visitor a quintessential northwoods experience. Fishermen are attracted by the 75-foot water depths that contain pike, walleye, and bass. In terms of ecological quality, Axhandle Lake is considered one of the most outstanding lakes in the state. Along the shoreline, aquatic plant communities contain sensitive species found only in undisturbed areas. Such excellent habitat offers a likely chance to see otter, mink, beaver and turtles. In 2008, West Wisconsin Land Trust members protected nearly a mile of shoreline on Axhandle Lake, ensuring the viability of this high quality aquatic resource.

How to get there: Visitors can access the lake via the public boat launch north of the Village of Bloomer. Follow State Highway 40 for approximately 10 miles, turn west (left) on County Highway M and follow for 1.5 miles, turn north (right) on 100th Street and follow this for approximately 4 miles to the public boat launch.

Crystal Creeks and Rippling Waters

From Lake Superior to the banks of the Mississippi, northwest Wisconsin is blessed with moving water. Trout streams





*the view from
Maiden Rock Bluff*



Birch Creek



*Red Cedar
Cut-Off*

to entice the angler, boreal rivers to float or enhance your Northwoods experience, and springs and seeps increasing the diversity that drives the wheel of life. A few of our favorites are highlighted here.

Pine Creek Nature Preserve

Pine Creek lies in a steep-sided valley of floodplain forest, wet meadows and bubbling springs. Since 2001, West Wisconsin Land Trust staff, volunteers and partners have worked to conserve and restore Pine Creek. There are now 233 acres open to the public for low-impact recreation.

The close proximity of forest, savanna, stream and prairie allow for diverse species representation. Birders can enjoy viewing a plethora of species from ducks and sandpipers to grassland sparrows, warblers and woodpeckers. Nature enthusiasts can enjoy a relaxing hike through beautiful wooded areas with perfect picnicking spots. Anglers will appreciate the opportunity to fly fish for native brook trout on 2 miles of restored Class I trout stream. The Pine Creek Nature Preserve is owned and managed by West Wisconsin Land Trust.

How to get there: The Pine Creek Nature Preserve is located on County Highway AA. Follow State Highway 35 south of Maiden rock and turn east onto County Highway AA. Follow AA for approximately 3/4 mile to the parking area or bridge. For an added bonus, hike, bike or drive up the State Rustic Road (20th Avenue).

Martell Village Park on the Rush River

The pocket-sized two-acre Martell Village Park holds substantial ecological and aesthetic value. The acquisition of Martell Village Park in 2005 prevented this Rush River property from becoming a residential subdivision. The park provides highly desirable access to this well-known and special river.

The Rush is a designated Class II trout stream, drawing fly fishermen from throughout Wisconsin and the upper Midwest. The park has approximately 600 feet of stream frontage, and is centrally located along the 35-mile trout stream, with 15 miles of river upstream and 20 miles of river downstream. The Rush River is enjoyed by many on hot summer days for swimming and canoeing. The property contains picnic tables and fire rings, making this site ideal for day recreation.

How to get there: Martell Village Park is located off Highway 63, 12 miles north of Ellsworth in the Town of Martell.

Bluff Creek a tributary to Lake Superior

Are you ready for adventure? A short distance from the City of Superior and Lake Superior is West Wisconsin Land Trust's Bluff Creek Preserve, purchased in 2006. Bluff Creek bisects the property, and flows through a steep valley of clay banks and towering pine, spruce and balsam forests before it exits the property enroute to Allouez Bay on Lake Superior. The understory supports a diverse

assemblage of spring ephemeral plants including wild leek, Dutchman's breeches, jack-in-the-pulpit, hepatica, lady's slipper orchids and marsh marigold.

The tributary streams of Lake Superior's south shore are critical migratory bird corridors, and are deemed globally important for neo-tropical songbirds that need to "refuel" after an energy-depleting journey across Lake Superior. Upland sandpipers, bald eagles, flycatchers, ruffed grouse, woodpeckers and warblers galore can fill the life list of many birders. The Bluff Creek property is wild, with one trail leading to the creek. Carry a compass or GPS unit as you explore this natural area with friends and family.

How to get there: From the intersection of State Highway 53 and County Highway E east of the City of Superior, travel south on County Highway E for 3/4 miles before turning west (right) on City Limits Road. Follow City Limits Road for 2 miles, parking at the road's end. The preserve is on the south side of the road.

Keil Birch Creek Nature Preserve

A refuge along the bluffs of the Red Cedar River

This nature preserve on the outskirts of Menomonie, Wisconsin has many diverse features for visitors to explore, including a high terrace overlooking the Red Cedar River, hardwood forests, and several waterfalls. Birch Creek runs through a deep ravine located in the middle of the preserve. Hikers can explore the rich forests where many bird species can be found, including brown creeper, pileated woodpecker, and Baltimore oriole. Canoeists can land their boats along the shoreline of the Preserve to explore the waterfalls and seeping cliffs along Birch Creek.

In 2007, this 28-acre forested area was slated for residential development. Local residents formed a community coalition and approached West Wisconsin Land Trust to explore land protection options. With the aid of strong community support and our members, West Wisconsin Land Trust successfully acquired the property, ensuring that it will remain open for future generations to explore and enjoy.

How to get there: From downtown Menomonie; follow State Highway 25 south for approximately 1/2 mile, turn west (right) onto 21st Avenue. Follow 21st Avenue for approximately 1/4 mile to River Heights Road. Continue following River Heights Road to the cul-de-sac and trail-head, approximately 1.25 miles.

State Parks & Natural Areas

Northwest Wisconsin is blessed with numerous state parks and state natural areas covering the gamut of the region's landscapes and vegetation types. Parks typically contain developed facilities and visitor amenities, while natural areas offer solitude and a unique nature experience. West Wisconsin Land Trust's members and staff have partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) on several projects that ultimately became new state parks and natural areas. Several recent acquisitions are highlighted here.

Inch Lake State Natural Area

In 2007, Hildur Lake in northern Bayfield County was acquired with the assistance of West Wisconsin Land Trust members and the generosity of the Gene Harris family. Soon after, the property was conveyed to the WDNR and added to the Inch Lake State Natural Area. In total, this area protects 626 acres of lakeshore, wetlands and rolling upland forest. The area because it protects Inch and Hildur Lakes, both considered wild lakes, for the absence of shore-land development.

Those wishing to explore this area should be familiar with map and compass use, and backcountry navigation. No developed trails access the property, but for the adventurous spirit, the area offers a pristine northwoods experience. Hildur Lake can be accessed by boat or canoe, which is the best way to enjoy this aquatic jewel.

How to get there: From the Village of Iron River, follow County Highway H approximately seven miles south to an undeveloped boat landing on Hildur Lake, suitable for small watercraft. Hildur Lake can be accessed by boat or canoe, which is the best way to enjoy this aquatic jewel.

Straight Lake State Park

The involvement of West Wisconsin Land Trust was integral in the acquisition of one of Wisconsin's newest state parks in 2004. The 2,780-acre Polk County property is now managed by the Wisconsin DNR as a state park and state wildlife management area.

The wild, undeveloped Straight Lake is the focal point of the property. At 107 acres, the lake offers some of the finest canoeing in northwest Wisconsin. Nesting trumpeter swans grace the peaceful waters as well as bald eagle and osprey, which are commonly seen overhead. A diverse waterfowl population uses the lake and nearby wetlands of the wildlife management area.

Hikers and birdwatchers will look forward to a new segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, planned to traverse the property for several miles in the near future. The trail will eventually wind through old growth oak forest, along pothole wetlands, bogs and lakeshore, and through ice age geological landforms such as the Straight River. Binoculars and keen hearing may find the visitor viewing the cerulean warbler, and other state-threatened bird species.

How to get there: Straight Lake State Park is located approximately four miles from Luck, Wisconsin, and can be accessed from 270th Avenue. No developed facilities exist, so backcountry travel rules apply. Lake access can be gained via a short walk from the gate and parking area.

Maiden Rock Bluff State Natural Area

Where falcons and eagles soar!

Maiden Rock Bluff State Natural Area protects one of Wisconsin's premiere limestone cliff faces on a bluff high above Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River. Extending for almost one mile, the 400-foot high bluff is especially noteworthy for the pair of nesting peregrine falcons.

Growing on top of the cliffs are gnarly bur oaks and red cedars, aged at 250 years. Plant enthusiasts can find slender lip fern, leadplant, pasqueflower, wild ginger, sweet cicely, wild yam and silky aster. Many rare plant species such as cliff goldenrod, dragon wormwood and prairie sagebrush can also be spotted.

Located along the Mississippi River Flyway, Maiden Rock Bluff is an important area for migrating raptors and neotropical songbirds. Hikers can enjoy the 248-acre preserve by following a 1.5-mile trail that winds through restored prairie and forest to the cliff's edge. Visitors should pause and savor the spectacular views overlooking the Mississippi River. The trail is open to cross-country skiers and snowshoers during winter months. Dedicated as a state natural area in 2004, Maiden Rock Bluff is owned and managed by West Wisconsin Land Trust.

How to get there: Maiden Rock Bluff State Natural Area's parking lot is located on Long Lane. From the intersection of State Highway 35 and County Highway J in Stockholm, follow J north 0.7 miles, then northwest on county E approximately 1 mile. Turn west on Long Lane.

Big Rivers

The big, warm-water river systems in the Driftless Area offer unparalleled opportunities for fishing and float trips scarcely found elsewhere in Wisconsin, while the diverse uplands appeal to the terrestrial-minded outdoor enthusiast. Thank you for making the protection and enjoyment of these river systems a priority!

Lower Black River

Draining the landscape from Medford to La Crosse, the Black River is a priority area for resource protection in western Wisconsin. In 2006, West Wisconsin Land Trust worked with the Friends of the Black River, to formalize the David Hansen Memorial Landing at Irving, a river access point in the community of Irving (Jackson County). The Irving landing was a popular take-out point for canoeists paddling downstream from Black River Falls.

The Black River is a biological treasure, meandering through northern forests and farmland, and ultimately entering the coulee country near its confluence with the Mississippi River. The Black offers scenic wilderness-like canoeing found in only a handful of Wisconsin rivers.

Along the extensive backwaters of the river below Black River Falls, the casual paddler can observe sandstone bluffs, floodplain forest and sandbars.

Wildlife abounds, including deer, wild turkey, shorebirds and a diverse warm water fishery. The Black is suitable for the novice canoeist, but the landscape will keep the experienced paddlers coming back year after year.

How to get there: Several trips of varying length can be found along the Black to accommodate all skill levels. One popular half-day trip begins at Mason's Landing 2 miles south of Black River Falls off State Highway 54 / Old Highway 54 and ends at the David Hansen Memorial Landing at Irving (Highway 54/County Highway X).

Lower Chippewa River

The Lower Chippewa River has something for everyone. The river boasts outstanding natural areas renowned for the diversity of bird, fish and plant life. West Wisconsin Land Trust made the Lower Chippewa River a priority in 2001. Since then, two one-million dollar federal grants have helped the Lower Chippewa River Protection Partnership protect thousands of acres throughout the watershed.

With waters that stretch nearly fifty miles from the Dells Dam in Eau Claire to its confluence downstream with the Mississippi River, the Lower Chippewa River can be explored by bicycle, boat, or by foot.

Bicyclists can pedal the 26-mile Chippewa River State Trail from Eau Claire to Durand. The riverine trail showcases quiet forests, open prairies, farms and fields. Along the way, there are opportunities to swim, picnic, or simply rest and observe the natural world.

Hikers can head for the Dunnville and Tiffany Wildlife Areas, where many miles of trails lead through savannas, forests, bluffs, and prairies. Be sure to bring your binoculars! The Lower Chippewa contains 30 species of warblers, and at least six state-threatened birds, including red-shouldered hawk, cerulean warbler, and yellow-crowned night heron.

Paddlers can spend several hours or days on the river, choosing from a variety of put-in and take-out points.

Overnight trips are available on the river's many islands and sandbars.

How to get there: Several trips of varying lengths can be found along the Chippewa River. Bicyclists can pick up the trail in Eau Claire, Caryville, Meridean, or Durand. One popular paddling day-trip begins at the Caryville boat landing on County Highway H west of Eau Claire and ends in the city of Durand. Hikers can explore the Tiffany Wildlife Area from the parking lot immediately east of the Highway 35 bridge over the Chippewa River near its confluence with the Mississippi. The trail goes north from the parking lot.

Red Cedar Cut-off

Explore by boat or by foot

Surrounded by water on all sides, the 150-acre Red Cedar Cut-off Nature Preserve contains an intricate mosaic of bays, sloughs, backwater channels, forests, islands, and wetlands. Located along the Red Cedar River between Lakes Menomin and Tainter in Dunn County, the Preserve offers visitors access to the water and land.

Starting from the parking lot, visitors can follow the trail as it weaves through different forest types, offering views of shoreline areas and backwater channels that may contain wood ducks, green herons, or even migrating pelicans. The forests include pockets of oak, groves of pine, and isolated stands of northern white cedar. A walk-in access trail allows visitors to slide a canoe into the water to explore the Preserve's outer islands or, in the winter, to access the ice with a fishing pole and an auger.

Recently, the Wisconsin DNR designated the Red Cedar Cut-off as a Critical Habitat Area in recognition of its outstanding ecological value, contribution to water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and aquatic plant communities. The property is open to hunting, fishing, hiking, and birding. West Wisconsin Land Trust has been the owner and manager of the Red Cedar Cut-off since 2007.

How to get there: From downtown Menomonie, follow State Highway 25 north approximately 3 miles to Cedar Falls Road. Turn right onto Cedar Falls Road and continue for approximately 4 miles to 670th Street near the Twin Springs Resort Campground. The parking area, trailhead and carry-in access is located at the end of 670th Street.

Wert Family Nature Preserve

Bluffland Hiking along the St. Croix River

Located north of the city of St. Croix Falls in Polk County, along bluffs that stretch out and upward from the St. Croix River, the 450-acre Wert Family Nature Preserve is a perfect destination for the adventure-seeking family. In 2007, WWLT permanently protected the Wert Family Nature Preserve and in 2008, donated the property to the City of St. Croix Falls.

The Wert Preserve is a hiker's paradise, containing a portion of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail as well as miles of additional trails. In terms of landscape diversity, the Preserve will excite any nature enthusiast. Beginning at the trail entrance, you can travel through lowland forests, over babbling streams, under mature shady oak woodlands, across forested bluffs, and above seeping springs. Ambitious hikers might discover the bedrock glade, a globally threatened ecological community hidden in the southeast corner of the Preserve. While you are there, watch and listen for scarlet tanagers, blue-winged warblers, solitary sandpipers or even Acadian flycatchers. Take a peek under a log to see if you can find a spotted salamander.

How to get there: From St. Croix Falls, travel north along Highway 87 to the edge of town. Parking is available at Lion's Park on the St. Croix River. The trail entrance to the Wert Nature Preserve is on the east side of Hwy. 87.



*Send us your favorite
Staycation photos!*

Where did you go on your summer staycation? If you traveled to natural areas in western Wisconsin, we'd love to hear about it. Share your story and pictures with us, and we'll post them on our website!



Key Migratory Bird Habitat at Stake on Superior's Streams

Shade-Grown, Fair Trade Coffee is not the Solution for Northwoods Habitat

You understand the value of the South American rainforests to neo-tropical migrating birds. You know that a healthy ecosystem in Trinidad is important to your favorite warblers. And of course, you drink bird-friendly, shade grown coffee! But are our actions to protect migratory birds on their southern wintering grounds also protecting their northern summer habitats? No.



The overall success of migration reproduction of species like this black-throated blue warbler relies on this Lake Superior shoreline habitat. photo ©USFWS

A Bird's Challenge

In spring, neo-tropical migrating birds have traveled thousands of miles by the time they reach northern Wisconsin, where they face the daunting challenge of crossing 160 miles of open water—Lake Superior. The black-throated blue warbler, weighing in at 0.4 ounces, needs massive reserves to take on this feat. This is what makes Lake Superior “stopover” habitat crucial for all migratory birds.

Stopover Habitat in Trouble

Right now along the shores of Lake Superior valuable stopover habitat is being lost at an alarming rate due to development, loss of riparian habitat, and forest management practices.

“The ability for migratory birds to locate a ‘full service’ stopover habitat to refuel and rest after the exhausting flight is crucial,” explained

Kim Grveles, Assistant Zoologist/Ornithologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

These watersheds also contain the federally listed piping plover and Kirtland's warbler. Both species require isolated habitats and specific management strategies to ensure long-term survival.

West Wisconsin Land Trust's Role

West Wisconsin Land Trust has begun work with the WDNR Bureau of Endangered Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to document habitat loss and habitat value along these coastal streams. These coastal landscapes, under development pressure as northern lakes become more congested, require permanent protection strategies that will maintain the integrity of these

habitats. Even small patches of habitat within a quarter mile of shore can provide respite for exhausted birds crossing the Lake.

West Wisconsin Land Trust participates in county and town comprehensive planning committees to advocate for the value of the wild experience, rural landscape vistas, private land rights, and even the economic impact of bird-watching in local plans.

Helping Migratory Birds

West Wisconsin Land Trust is expanding monitoring efforts for migratory birds, fish and water quality on the Bluff, Amnicon, Nemadji, and Bark Rivers. WWLT is actively conducting land protection projects on these corridors, protecting over 1,000 new acres. In addition, there is still high quality habitat to protect close to the shore.

We will also expand our outreach efforts to owners of this valuable habitat, giving them support to make good protection choices.

These narrow corridors of stopover habitat must have permanent protection. Intimate knowledge of how these streams function as migratory stopover sites will build a case for efficient land protection. Then, we can relax and drink our shade grown coffee in peace.

We need Land Trust members who are willing to volunteer to inventory the sites in the late spring and early summer for migratory and breeding birds.

If you would like to assist with our northern bird inventory, please contact the West Wisconsin Land Trust office at 715-235-8850 or email us at wwlt@wwlt.org.

Winter Blues Fly Away at Great Backyard Bird Count



The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual event held throughout the United States and Canada. This four-day event in February creates a real-time snapshot of late-winter birds across the continent. The Great Backyard Bird Count started 12 years ago by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Since then, thousands of people have counted millions of individual birds and provided scientists with valuable data.

WWLT Local Sponsor

West Wisconsin Land Trust was the local sponsor for the Great Backyard Bird Count in Menomonie on February 12-15, 2009. Area naturalists gave interactive presentations at the Menomonie Public Library on bird identification, and members enjoyed nature games and activities for children, made bird feeders to take home, and shared stories with other birders. On the final evening, total bird counts were submitted online to the GBBC website.

Why Scientists Ask for Help

No one scientist or team of scientists can collect the amount of data at one time across the continent that the tens of thousands of people acting as Citizen Scientists can provide. This year, 93,629 checklists were submitted, representing 619 species and millions of individual birds.

The more people that participate in this event, the better the data, the more scientists can learn, and the better birds can be monitored and protected. Problems are recognized

quickly and action can be taken to correct it. Your bird count ensures that the birds in your community are well represented.

Who-o-o Can Participate?

Anyone! You don't have to be a bird expert. Long-time birders and first-time birders can identify the difference between a snowy owl and a great horned owl. Grandmas, Grandpas, Moms, Dads, and kids can join in the fun. Observe birds in any location you choose: your backyard or schoolyard, a local park, or favorite wilderness area. By counting the birds in as little as 15 minutes on any or all of the four days, you'll be on your way to becoming part of the "big picture," and contribute to the index of birds in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

West Wisconsin Land Trust thanks everyone that participated in this valuable event. Locally, Menomonie residents spotted more than 800 birds, and reported 34 different species. Nationally, new records were broken!

Help with the next Bird Census

The event was so much fun that we'll do it again next year! Save the dates: February 12-15, 2010. Will you be our next Citizen Scientist? Remember, this is a national event, so no matter where you live, you can still participate. Watch our website for more information.

Check out the official Great Backyard Bird Count Website to learn more: www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.



Great Backyard Bird Count 2009

Total Checklists Submitted: 93,629

Total Bird Species Observed: 619

Total Individual Birds Counted: 11,550,200

left: A great horned owl, one of the many bird species counted by Great Backyard Bird Count participants in Wisconsin.

Your membership restores nationally recognized trout habitat!

Pine Creek selected as 2009 “Water to Watch”

Receives National Honor for Aquatic Conservation Efforts

Leading authorities on aquatic conservation recently unveiled the 2009 “10 Waters to Watch” list, a collection of rivers, streams and shores that will be better habitats for the fish, wild-life species and people who call them home. Pine Creek in Pierce County made the list!

“Many individuals and organizations have donated their time and resources to restore Pine Creek over the past 10 years,” said Richard Gauger, executive director of the West Wisconsin Land Trust. “National attention for Pine Creek honors that work and dedication.”

National model for strategic conservation

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is an initiative to reverse persistent declines in aquatic habitat. “Our approach—teaming federal, state and local partners—is helping to bring these waters back to life...in a faster, more strategic way,” said Kelly Hepler,

Chairman of the National Fish Habitat Board. By watching a strategic conservation effort such as Pine Creek, other restoration efforts throughout the U.S. can become more effective.

Pine Creek Restoration project history and partners

More than a century of agricultural and logging activities contributed significant sediment loads to Pine Creek, a Mississippi River tributary. When West Wisconsin Land Trust purchased the property in 2002, it was a muddy, slow-moving stream with ten-foot high eroding banks. Its population of native brook trout was doing poorly.

Initially, 3,600 feet of stream bank and nearby riparian terrain was repaired. This included structures to improve depth, water velocity, overhead cover and bottom substrate. These changes created significantly better water conditions for trout and their food species, including insects, crustaceans, and amphibians.

Despite strong volunteer turnout, the increasingly ambitious scale of the project created a need for more help.

“Fairmount Minerals employees made a huge contribution. We logged over 1500 volunteer hours in 2007 and 2008,” said Greg Dietl, project lead and Kiap-TU-Wish president. “We’re all working together to provide outstanding trout fishing for generations to come.”

Work on the stream continues this summer.

Funding for the three-year project came from: Trout Unlimited’s Embrace-a-Stream (EAS) flagship grant program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Wisconsin’s Trout Stamp funds, Trout Unlimited (Kiap-TU-Wish and Clear Waters chapters in western WI and Twin Cities chapter in MN), the McKnight Foundation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Wild Turkey Federation, and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program of the Wisconsin DNR.

Pine Creek Volunteer Work Day: Volunteers harvest bluff seed for Pine Creek



Over 100 volunteers came together on a cold, blustery morning last November, to hand pick native prairie grass seed from the top of Maiden Rock Bluff, and spread it along the banks of Pine Creek in the valley below. West Wisconsin Land Trust coordinated the effort with help from Wisconsin Industrial Sand Company (a division of Fairmount Minerals), and the Kiap-TU-Wish chapter of Trout Unlimited.

“One hundred acres of prairie seed to harvest. Two miles of trout stream riparian area to plant. And one day to get it

all done. That’s where committed volunteers come in. We could not have pulled this off without them,” concluded Richard Gauger, executive director of West Wisconsin Land Trust.

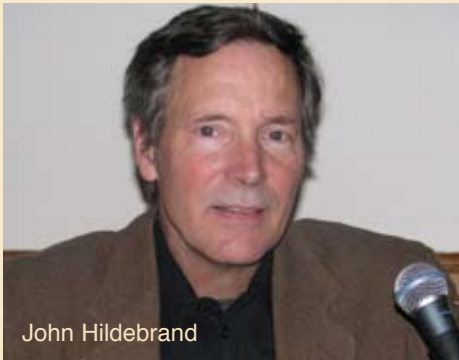
“I came today because I really wanted to help nature,” said Payge, an eleven-year-old Seedling member who brought her parents along. “I like seeing things grow!”

Maiden Rock Bluff and Pine Creek are important habitats for eagles, peregrine falcons, turkeys, migrating birds, and native brook trout.

Annual Member Meeting

West Wisconsin Land Trust held its annual member meeting on April 2nd at the Mabel Tainter Center for the Arts in Menomonie. About 75 Board, staff, and members attended. Ted and Lisa Ludwig, of Colfax, were recognized as Volunteers of the Year for their enthusiastic and faithful membership support. No matter what the weather brings, Ted and Lisa are involved in every member activity, from planting trees at Bass Lake to planting cordgrass at Pine Creek.

UW-Eau Claire English professor and Land Trust member John Hildebrand, author of *Mapping the Farm* and two other nonfiction books, was the evening's guest speaker.



John Hildebrand

Hildebrand captured the audience with his humorous anecdotes and thought-provoking prose. He contrasted a wildlife refuge in northern Alaska with a farm in south central Minnesota, describing both the cultivated and wild open land.

Hildebrand closed his remarks by saying, "I want to thank West Wisconsin Land Trust for inviting me to speak. I'm just a writer. I write about the land, but this organization is doing something about it. We are all indebted to you for making the effort and sacrifice to insure that there is open land for future generations, so that our children have the opportunity to experience landscapes open to their own interpretations."

Nature Walk/Run at Maiden Rock Bluff

The morning dawned gray, but the mood could not have been brighter at the Nature Walk/Run for Life on May 9, 2009. This annual event, which benefits The American Cancer Society, is hosted by Maiden Rock Apples, and co-sponsored by West Wisconsin Land Trust. Maiden Rock Apples, owned by Carol Weirisma and Herdie Baisden, is an orchard, cidery and winery located in the beautiful bluff country near Maiden Rock Bluff State Natural Area in Pierce County.

There were few dry eyes during the opening ceremony, which included inspirational stories from cancer survivors. Fifty spirit-filled people braved the chilly spring weather for the main event, a 5k walk/run. Runners and walkers were treated to apple brats, Wisconsin cheese and warm apple cider. The KGB Band, of Minneapolis, provided a great mix of blues and classic rock music. A silent auction wrapped up the day, with many unique items donated by local artists and businesses.

Many 5k participants stopped at the West Wisconsin Land Trust booth, located at the halfway point in the race, to share their memories of Maiden Rock Bluff. They expressed thanks that the property is permanently protected from development, and open to the public. Your membership support made this possible!

Allouez Bay Watershed Bike Tour

On a warm morning in late June, West Wisconsin Land Trust staff and a small group of enthusiastic members enjoyed a 24-mile bicycle tour that began in Superior, Wisconsin, to honor Conservation Observance Day. Jane Anklam, Northwoods Land Protection Coordinator, described key features of the Allouez Bay while pedaling through the Pokegama, Nemadji and Bluff Creek watersheds. The tour group viewed the hydrology of the region, and related it to the ongoing conservation efforts of West Wisconsin Land Trust, the City of Superior, and Douglas County as well as Murphy Oil Corporation's mitigation efforts. The riders refueled with refreshments donated by local businesses at interpretive stops along the way. Murphy Oil provided its own rest stop for riders, and took the opportunity to describe the only refinery in Wisconsin. We want to thank all those who rode with us, especially David and Jennifer Paddock, WWLT members from Colorado! West Wisconsin Land Trust plans to host another bicycle tour soon—your county may be next!

If you'd like more information or would like to help host a ride, please email us at wvlt@wvlt.org. West Wisconsin Land Trust respects your privacy, and we will not share your email address with anyone.





Become a Member of West Wisconsin Land Trust

Join today and help
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for generations to come!

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