

Faville Grove Sanctuary

Volunteer News

Madison Audubon Society

August 11, 2008

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 1 of the Faville Grove Sanctuary Volunteer News. We hope you like this upgrade of the email messages you've been receiving. You'll undoubtedly see redundancy with articles that appear in the Madison Audubon Society Newsletter, but we hope to provide more information in a more timely fashion than is possible in a printed newsletter. The publication schedule will probably be erratic, and the format too, but what the heck. Please forward this to a friend. If you received this from a friend and would like to receive it directly, send a message to Sue Knaack (spech@gdinet.com) asking to be added to our mailing list. In any event, we have much news to report, so read on. We hope to see you in person soon!

Meet Faville Grove's new ecologist/land steward

Since its inception over ten years ago, Faville Grove Sanctuary has been managed entirely by volunteers. Madison Audubon has hired contractors from time to time to help with some of the heavy lifting, and our intern crews have been indispensable in keeping up with the frenetic summertime pace in the sanctuary, but all of the planning, coordination and daily oversight, as well as most of the physical work involved in developing a major wildlife sanctuary has been done by volunteers. With the sanctuary now encompassing 522 acres (and looking to grow) and with more than 800 acres in the area under management by Madison Audubon, we were overdue for some help.

We are proud to announce that Lars Higdon joined Madison Audubon in late May as restoration ecologist and land steward for Faville Grove Sanctuary. Well versed in botany and natural history, Lars received his B.S. in natural resource management from UW-Stevens Point in 2004 and his M.S. in landscape architecture with a concentration in restoration and management of native plant communities from UW-Madison this past spring. While enrolled at UW-Madison, Lars worked as lead steward for the UW Lakeshore Preserve. Before that he worked as restorationist with Midwest Prairies, LLC and Michler & Brown, LLC. He has volunteered extensively with The Nature Conservancy in the Mukwonago watershed, and with the Girl Scouts at Camp Juniper Knoll in East Troy, where he initiated and took primary responsibility for natural area management on camp property. Lars also is a member of the board of the Kettle Moraine Land Trust.

As Madison Audubon's first full-time employee, Lars spent the summer leading the crew of five interns from UW-Madison, helping to make the program fun and educational for the interns while significantly advancing the restoration effort in the sanctuary. Lars plans to move into the Madison Audubon house on Prairie Lane as soon as remodeling is complete (if you're up for some painting, email us!), where he can provide round-the-clock oversight of the east end of the sanctuary. In addition to his direct efforts toward sanctuary restoration, Lars will play a key role in implementing our Volunteer Days grant through National Audubon's TogetherGreen program, working to increase volunteer support in the sanctuary (see page 3). He plans to prepare and implement management plans for the sanctuary, prepare grant proposals and educational information, improve public access at the sanctuary, and generally help to realize the full potential of the sanctuary as prime habitat, as a first-rate educational resource, and as a place for the public to reconnect with our beautiful southeastern Wisconsin landscape. Please stop out and meet Lars when you get a chance.

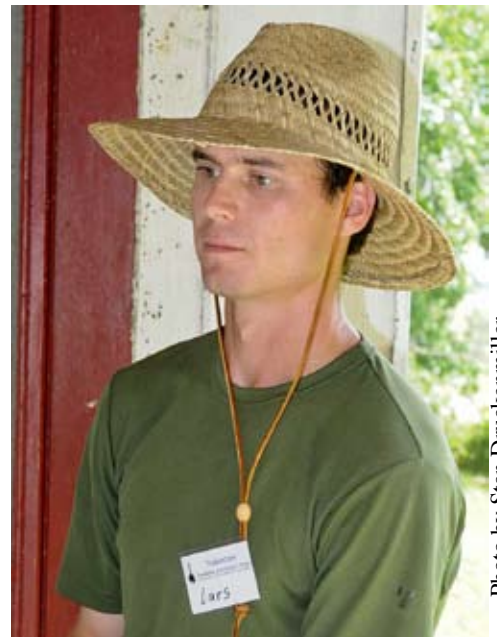


Photo by Stan Druckenmiller

Unnatural natural disaster hits the Crawfish Prairie

This summer's flooding along the Crawfish River that closed westbound I-94, forced the evacuation of the community of Hubbleton, and destroyed thousands of acres of agricultural crops, has also put the natural resilience of the floodplain prairies at Faville Grove to a severe and unprecedented test.

higher flood levels in the past. But there are a number of unnatural factors that came into play in this flood that exacerbated the disturbance:

- Global warming may well have led to more extreme rainfall and snowfall than was seen in the past and shifted the timing of the precipitation. While this



Photo by Joy and Paul Zedler

The Crawfish River crested at Milford, just downstream from Faville Grove, on June 16 at a level 2.54 feet above the previous record crest, which occurred on April 6, 1959. Both remnant prairies on the Crawfish, Faville and Snapper, as well as several of Madison Audubon's restorations were under several feet of water for nearly three weeks. It is true that floodplain prairies are adapted to flooding, and while historical records for the site go back only 77 years, the prairies have been here 10,000 years or more since the last glacier retreated, so they could well have experienced

flood occurred at the height of the growing season, the 1959 flood resulted from an ice jam before the growing season began. In fact, of the top ten floods on record on the Crawfish, all occurred in March or April, except one that occurred in October, at the tail end of the growing season, and it crested 4.8 feet lower than this year's growing-season flood.

- Poor land-use practices, including draining of wetlands for agriculture and urban development, have dramatically increased runoff rates, resulting in higher floods than occurred naturally.

- These same land-use practices also result in high sediment and nutrient loads in the floodwaters, which tends to encourage alien plants, especially reed canary grass, while the floodwater floats canary grass seed in to take advantage of the disturbance. Carp, another introduced species, are also notorious for stirring up sediment that encourages weeds. It was



quite discouraging to see carp spawning in our prairie restorations!

- The relatively small size and highly fragmented nature of remnant prairies in the area means that plants and animals that were drowned out are unable to re-colonize from surrounding lands that were not affected by the flood, as would have happened prehistorically. It seems likely, for instance, that all of the state-endangered Silphium Borer Moths that inhabited both Faville and Snapper Prairies were killed in the flood. If the population survives, it will only be because some moths found refuge in Madison Audubon's upland restorations nearby. The fate of the area's Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchids remains to be seen as well.

While the native plants and animals were severely set back by the flooding, so too were the invasive plants in the area. We are taking advantage of the situation to further set back the aspen invasion on Faville Prairie by girdling the surviving trees. We plan to herbicide reed canary grass as it resprouts in hopes of getting ahead of it. And, together with the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, we plan to carefully monitor the recovery of the prairie from this unprecedented event. We hope you will join us this fall to collect seed to backseed into some of our damaged restorations to

TogetherGreen at Faville Grove

Madison Audubon's Faville Grove Sanctuary was selected as one of 40 sites around the country to receive \$7000 grants from National Audubon Society through its new TogetherGreen Volunteer Days program. Funded by Toyota, the program seeks to expand hands-on opportunities to engage in conservation action.

With Lars Higdon, our new ecologist/land steward, working to coordinate volunteer events, we plan to hold volunteer events year-round, increasing the frequency, diversity, and average size of volunteer work parties. We plan to engage volunteers in the whole range of activities needed to manage the sanctuary, from collecting seed to conducting controlled burns to monitoring wildlife in the sanctuary and much more. With an expanded, year-round volunteer program, we hope to involve volunteers more fully in the entire process of habitat restoration, to incorporate more educational opportunities, and to encourage a stronger connection to the land, just as Aldo Leopold did at Faville Grove when he involved farmers in improving wildlife habitat on their lands.

We will have activities suitable for young and old, so plan to come on out and bring a friend, grandkid, nephew, niece, your friend's grandparents — whoever you can talk into it.



speed their recovery.

As discouraging as this season's flooding has been, and as much as it has set back our efforts to restore the great Crawfish Prairie, the take-home lesson is clear: we, as a society, need to redouble our efforts, here and elsewhere, to reclaim and restore our valuable wetlands and surrounding uplands. We need to encourage our legislators to support and expand the federal Wetlands Reserve Program that pays farmers to retire farmed wetlands from production. As Madison Audubon has been doing for more than 10 years at Faville Grove, we need to fill more drainage ditches and plant more prairie and work to re-stitch the tattered patchwork of natural areas that remain.

Audubon Adventure Days: Prairies in Bloom

On August 20, the Madison Audubon Education Committee hosted Prairies in Bloom, our first ever Audubon Adventure Day at Faville Grove Sanctuary. Participants ranging in age from 2 to 93 years old were enthused and engaged by our diverse offerings. Our variety of events and opportunities included naturalist-led prairie walks, hands-on learning stations featuring monarch butterflies, salamanders and frogs, pioneering activities, and making homemade paper with prairie flowers and leaves, with local artist Leslie DeMuth.



Our guests were especially enthused with a presentation by sanctuary managers David Musolf and Roger Packard on the past history, present happenings, and future plans for Faville Grove Sanctuary.

Brad Wennen's Turtle Tails & Snake Scales presentation, which featured a full-fledged turtle race as the grand finale, was also a big hit.

We were delighted with the efforts of all the volunteers who made the event a success, including our summer interns, and Lars Higdon, Faville Grove ecologist. Thanks to everyone's energetic participation, we made some new friends and gained several new members in the Lake Mills area.

The pure delight in a 6 year old child's eyes, as she holds a wiggling lizard, ever so gently, and speaks to it, ever so softly serves as a reminder to us all of how essential it is to bring children up close and personal with the natural world every chance we get!

Please check out the Madison Audubon website (<http://www.madisonaudubon.org/audubon/>) for more information on our upcoming Adventure Days-*Birds! Birds! Birds!* at Lake Farms Park, Sunday, September



20, 1:00-5:00 pm, as well as *Miracles of Migration*, at Goose Pond in October.

Join us at our Fall Kick-off Education Committee meeting on Monday, September 15th, 7:00-9:00 pm!

For directions, and/or more information on our Education Committee, please email or call Nancy: nhyllbert@yogaforhealth.net, 271-0956.



Fall 2008 Seed Collecting—Join Us!

Support Madison Audubon Society's habitat restoration activities by volunteering to collect seed at Faville Grove. Many hands are needed throughout the fall to gather the variety and quantity of seed necessary to ensure successful plantings. Bask in the golden glow of the prairie in fall, and enjoy the prairie camaraderie while helping the environment. Long pants and insect repellent are recommended. Bring work gloves and clippers if you have them. Bring a friend too! Seed collecting is a great activity for young or old!

This fall, we plan to add seed to the large areas that were hit by this summer's unprecedented flooding in hopes of speeding the recovery of the prairie plantings. We will collect seed every Saturday in September and October, 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 and every Wednesday starting at 9:30 a.m. We may drive to other locations to collect, so please arrive on time (but feel free to bug out early if you wish). From Madison take I-94 east to the Lake Mills/Waterloo exit (Highway 89), go north approximately 1.75 miles and turn right onto County G. After approximately 1.5 miles, turn right onto Prairie Lane and meet at the sanctuary sign. Contact sanctuary manager David Musolf at musolf@bascom.wisc.edu or (608) 265-4562 with questions.

Many thanks
*to the hard-working,
good-spirited, and
all-around terrific
2008 summer crew
at Faville Grove
Sanctuary! From
left, staff ecologist
Lars Higdon and
UW-Madison student
interns Mike Seaman,
Nick Sievert,
Lindsay Spurrier,
Mitch Levenhagen and
Maggie Wagner.*



And More Thanks

Thanks to everyone who responded to our request for furniture and equipment for the ecologist's residence at Faville Grove Sanctuary:

Diane Berry—lawn mower;
Steve Bower and Leslie DeMuth—household furniture;
Silvia Brown—patio chairs;
David Musolf—household furniture;
Connie Salvesson—office desk.

Other items may still come in handy—additional furniture, energy-efficient household appliances, a rider-mower, etc., so if are looking to part with anything you think may be useful, please call the Madison Audubon office at 608-255-2473.