



The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Creating a Conservation Future for the Badger Lands



As the spring advances, so do the efforts of the Alliance to conserve the historic apple trees of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. Since 2014, Alliance volunteers have been working to locate and document the Badger apple trees. So far we have found more than 150 trees across the property.

We have taken the first steps toward propagating the trees, many of which are in a state of advanced decline. That process begins with grafting the old trees onto new rootstock. On March 26 the Alliance hosted a special workshop led by Dan Bussey of Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa. Dan, one of the country's leading heirloom apple experts, has taken a special interest in the Badger apples. He guided 26 Alliance volunteers in grafting 200 cuttings from thirty of the Badger trees. These young trees are being kept in cold storage until they can be planted into a nursery site at Badger later this month.

We are working with Dr. Alison Duff, ecologist with USDA Dairy Forage Research Center, on this project. Dairy Forage has generously offered a small plot of deer-proof fenced-in land on their portion of the Badger Lands. Over the next few years, we will offer additional "classes" for grafting trees. The ultimate goal of the project is to establish an orchard to memorialize the losses of the farm families who sacrificed their land for the construction of the Badger plant in 1942.

The Alliance thanks all the volunteers who came to the grafting workshop, the Ho-Chunk Nation, Wisconsin DNR, and particularly Alison Duff and the Dairy Forage Center and our friend Dan Bussey. If you are interested in learning more about the project and future volunteer opportunities, contact Charlie Luthin at info@SaukPrairieVision.org.

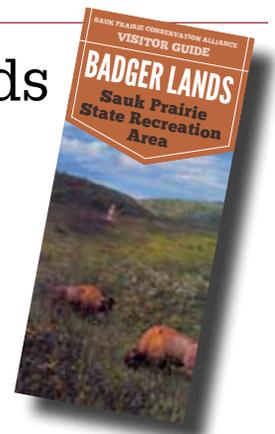
COMING SOON! Visitor Guide to Badger Lands

In 2016, the Alliance received a grant from our outdoor partner, REI, to support development of a visitor guide to Badger. Currently, there is no information and only a very limited map available to visitors at

Badger, and we wanted to change that. Our Visitor Guide provides a brief historical overview of the 7,400-acre site, a handful of undeveloped trails and interpretation of 22 cultural and natural "points of

interest" at Badger. The detailed map differentiates publicly accessible state-managed land from inaccessible land owned by the Ho-Chunk Nation and USDA Dairy Forage Research Center. Members of the Alliance

will receive a copy of the Visitor Guide in the mail sometime soon, and additional copies can be requested from the Alliance. The Guide will also be available at Badger and in various locations in Sauk County.



Volunteer Spotlight: Tom Pier



Six years ago I saw an ad in the Isthmus newspaper seeking volunteers for a conservation project at the former Badger plant. I responded to that ad and since then, from early spring to late fall, a couple of days a month, I find myself upon the terminal moraine at Badger helping maintain and improve a high quality prairie remnant and an adjacent oak savanna. Back then I didn't realize what a rich source of life prairies are and how difficult a job it is to restore a prairie!

A couple of years ago I asked my extended family to donate to the Alliance in lieu of Christmas and birthday presents. I was not expecting the overwhelming response to this request. Seven family members have become paying members, including my siblings, nephews and nieces. So, they are providing the funding and I'm doing the field work. My extended family is doing its part to support conservation work at Badger.

Initially, volunteering was a way for me to get outdoors, be active and get involved. Now being a member and volunteer leader of the Alliance is a significant portion of my retired life. Each volunteer event is part of my continuing education, spending time with intelligent and knowledgeable people. It is the satisfaction of gaining new knowledge and, of course, progress on the hillside prairie that keeps me committed. There are frequent setbacks in restoration, but with each workday we leave the hillside a bit better. Over the years, I have learned of the history of the Badger land, from the glaciers and the native residents, to the family farms, to the Army, and now the State Recreation Area. Along with the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, I feel I'm now a small part of that history, and it is an honor.

in his own words

Meet the Board: Joan Fordham



My husband, David Fordham, was the Commander's Representative at Badger for more than 30 years. He encouraged and facilitated largescale prairie restoration on unused property at Badger

in the late 1990s when the ammunition plant was moved into "standby" status. When the plant was finally "excessed," David was part of the community group that helped determine the future of the property, the final result being the Badger Reuse Plan (2001). It was only logical that I become a part of the group whose mission it was to ensure that the Plan was followed. I also brought some skills that I think were valuable to the Alliance, as I have worked for several decades in administration of various non-profit organizations. My primary responsibilities have been financial management, helping develop policies, filing reports and generally taking care of the "machinery" required for a non-profit. Charlie Luthin and I work closely together to keep all our ducks (or should it be meadowlarks) in a row. With the work of many others – board members and volunteers – we can keep the dream for the future of Badger alive and growing.

in her own words

Charlie's Corner



By Charlie Luthin,
Executive Director

Twenty years! Can you believe it? The Alliance was founded in December 1997 when the Army declared that the Badger Army Ammunition Plant was to be decommissioned. A group of conservation leaders met in Baraboo that December to discuss a possible conservation future for the Badger property, and we have stayed faithful to that "green vision" ever since.

First formed as the "Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie," the group morphed into a full-fledged non-profit organization in 2002 following completion of the Badger Reuse Plan (2001). The Alliance is focused on preserving the core values of the Reuse Plan, and we exist to help all landowners achieve those important goals. The reason for our recent lawsuit against DNR is that the agency drifted from the tenets of the Reuse Plan which they signed along with 20 other stakeholders, thereby breaching the public's trust. We'll keep you informed as we plan and develop 20-year anniversary events over the course of the year.



Restoration Season Underway!

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have successfully conducted six volunteer stewardship days at the Hillside Prairie and Oak Savanna at Badger. Our volunteers have focused on eliminating the pervasive and fast-growing garlic mustard, dame's rocket and invasive shrubs. Thanks to a grant from Sauk County (ATC funding) and a C.D. Besadny Conservation grant (see grant article elsewhere), we have hired two seasonal restoration specialists this season. Bob Schwartz, a recent graduate of UW-Madison in Forestry, serves as our Volunteer Coordinator

overseeing the Saturday restoration work days at Badger. Grace Vosen, a 2016 graduate of Northland College and native of Sauk City, is our Prairie Restoration Specialist focused on developing a restoration plan for the Badger Hillside Prairie and coordinating the collection of native seeds for planting there and in a native plant nursery on-site. We welcome Bob and Grace to our team! Join us for our bi-monthly volunteer work days at Badger. See the schedule elsewhere in this newsletter and on our website: saukprairievision.org



Grace Vosen



Bob Schwartz

Losses: Two Giants of our Community

Over the past several months, we have lost two long and loyal allies of the Alliance: renowned wildlife art-

ist Victor Bahktin and global conservationist Rob Horwich. We feel their absence in our ongoing conservation efforts at Badger.

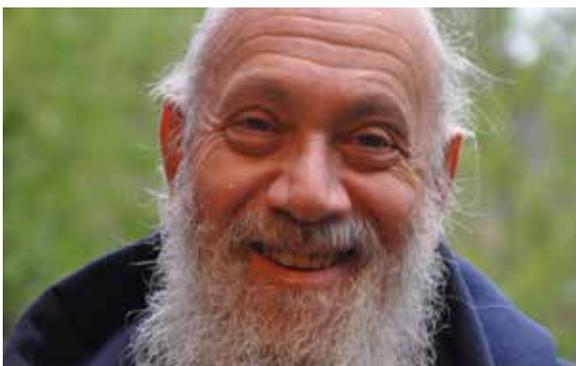
Victor Bahktin came to Baraboo in 1992 at the invitation of the International Crane Foundation, where he served as artist in residence for several years, painting exquisitely detailed murals illustrating the world's cranes and their habitats. Victor created an enormous portfolio of public and private paintings, including a set of detailed historic murals at the UW-Madison Arboretum. In 1998, Alliance founders Mary Yeakel and Virginia Metcalf commissioned

Victor to paint the now iconic image that we use as our "mascot," *Sauk Prairie Remembered: A Vision for the Future*. That painting, now hanging in the West Square Building in Baraboo, has been and continues to be the visual depiction of the Alliance's dream for the future of the Badger Lands. Victor died in late November 2016 at the age of 65.

From the very inception of the Alliance—originally named the Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie—Rob Horwich and his non-profit organization, Community Conservation Consultants (later, Community Conservation,

Inc.), played a vital role in our organization's development and activities. Not only did Rob's group serve as our fiscal agent, accepting donations on behalf of our coalition, but he also helped formulate various "vision" documents as planning for the decommissioned Badger Plant unfolded. Rob attended countless meetings about the future of Badger, always offering his sage advice to our nascent coalition. Rob remained interested and involved in Badger until his death in February 2017.

We mark the passing of these dear friends with sadness and gratitude.



Animal Surveys on the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area: A Summary

By Ken Lange

PHOTO: Randy Poelma, Ho-Chunk Nation (trail cam)

In 2016, on 96 occasions I drove the 8½ mile route mapped by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area at the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. A survey of all animal sightings were run from approximately 9:00am to 10:30am, beginning on March 20 and ending on 17 November.

The only animal noted on all the surveys was the Song Sparrow, followed by American Robin (91), Mourning Dove (77), Blue Jay (75), Crow (73), Eastern Meadowlark (70), Flicker (70), Cardinal (65), Cowbird (62), and Starling (58). A total of 90 species of birds were recorded. Twelve mammal species included three species of tree squirrels, cottontail rabbit, coyote, and two species of shrews. The following amphibians were noted: chorus frog, spring peeper, wood frog, leopard frog and toad. Included among the twelve butterfly species observed were three species of swallowtails, viceroy, monarch and three species of sulphurs. One moth, the Virginia Ctenucha, was also found.

For further information, contact Ken at: kilange@charter.net

Grants and More Grants!

We must be doing something right these days; we have been successful at securing important grant and sponsorship funding from many sources. We are grateful for the recent support we have received: Sauk County ATC Fund (\$60,000 for ecological restoration at Badger along the

Great Sauk State Trail), Sauk County Arts, History and Humanities Grant Program (\$5,000 in support of "phase 2" of our Visitor Guide, an expanded digital version focused on the cultural history of Badger), Alliant Energy Foundation (\$3,000 in support of our ongoing presentation and tour

series, "We Are Sauk Prairie"), and a C.D. Besadny Conservation Grant from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (\$1,000 in support of our restoration volunteer coordinator). Support for our Visitor Guide to the Badger Lands has come from REI, McFarlane's in Sauk City



Bluebird Report

By Donna and Bill Stehling

Together we manage a 20-mile, 67-house Bluebird Trail on the Badger Lands. Most of the houses get occupied by Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens and even mice! Bluebirds prefer grassland/meadow for nesting, and we try to site the houses in open landscape, relatively free of shrub growth. That is getting harder at Badger, as shrubs are taking over!

It takes two to three hours to complete the entire nest count. Our first visit is in March, when we check the houses, evict the mice and clean the interiors. We also make repairs and sometimes relocate houses if the site has become too shrubby. New houses are added or we replace old houses. Early in the season male Bluebirds are often perched on houses. The males come early and select several houses which they show to their mates when they arrive in April.

The various species using Badger nest boxes may have two or even three clutches in a season. For that reason we check every week from April through September. Here are the results of our 2016 bluebird nest survey.

Bluebird	Tree Swallow	House Wren
173 hatchlings	74 hatchlings	153 Hatchlings
137 fledglings	35 fledglings	39 fledglings



and the Norma and Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. In addition, the Ho Chunk

Nation is providing partial support through the Alliance for a breeding-bird survey on their property at Badger .

LAWSUIT UPDATE



Where do things stand?

Brian Potts and Danielle Grant-Keane

As our members know, the Alliance filed a number of lawsuits in Sauk County against the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Board immediately following the Board's approval of the Final Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area in December 2016. We also filed a petition seeking a "stay" or temporary injunction against the high impact activities planned by DNR at Badger that we feel would do irreparable environmental damage if allowed to proceed immediately. Simultaneously, we filed a complaint in federal court against the National Park Service and the General Services Administration, as they were complicit in accepting the DNR's Final Plan in contravention of the underlying land transfer deeds and absent completion of a thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is a violation of federal law.

In late February, Sauk County Circuit Court Judge Guy Reynolds heard our case seeking a stay on high impact activities, and he made a final determination on March 15th. Unfortunately, the judge denied our request for a stay. However, our attorneys feel that the judge may have been unaware of an important interpretation of the law, and they have asked the judge to reconsider his decision. Furthermore, not counting on the judge to change his mind, we have filed an appeal of the stay decision in appellate court.

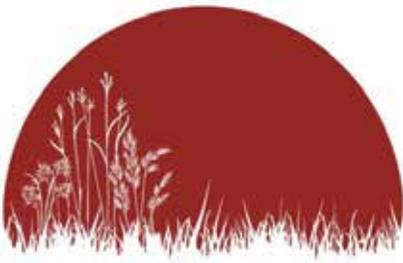
If a state agency is in violation of state law, a complainant can request what is called a "contested case hearing" through a state administrative judge. Although we had requested a contested case hearing on the DNR's Master Plan, DNR

denied us that opportunity. Feeling that DNR's decision was arbitrary, we have also asked the circuit court judge to overrule DNR and grant us a contested case hearing.

We expect decisions on our reconsideration motion and appeal of the original stay decision within the next month or two.

Confused? It is easy to be! Here is a synopsis:

- 1) Request for Stay of high impact activities in final plan (Denied, but we have asked for reconsideration of that decision and have appealed in a different court). Decisions are expected in the next month or two.
- 2) Request for Contested Case Hearing (Denied by DNR, but requested for judge to reverse this DNR decision and thereby allow us to receive a contested case hearing). Decision expected sometime in the next six months.
- 3) Lawsuit against WDNR and NRB: This is currently proceeding through the Sauk County Circuit Court. The court will first decide whether DNR should have granted us a contested case hearing (see #2 above) before getting to the merits of our lawsuit. This whole legal challenge may take one or more years to finalize.
- 4) Federal lawsuit against the National Park Service and GSA: This is proceeding through federal court. No motions have yet been filed. This process may take one or more years to finalize.



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Spring 2017

Spring Programs: We Are Sauk Prairie Series Continues

Badger cultural history. Fire ecology. Large-scale prairie restoration. Frogs and salamanders. These are among the topics recently presented during our "We Are Sauk Prairie" monthly program series; the very successful series is continuing through

2017. The Alliance has hosted monthly programs since September 2016, sponsored by Alliant Energy Foundation. Alliant support has been renewed for the program series through the remainder of 2017.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Thursday, May 18 "If you Plant it, Will it Grow? A 25-year synopsis of prairie restoration at the International Crane Foundation"

Jeb Barzen, ecologist, Private Lands Conservation LLC

Thursday, June 8 "A Prairie Bonanza! A Photographic Journey through Wisconsin's Best Prairie Landscapes from Spring Thaw to Winter Freeze"

Scott Weber and Muffy Barrett, co-owners, Bluestem Farm, Baraboo

The evening programs begin at 6:30pm in Tripp Heritage Museum, 565 Water Street, Prairie du Sac. The programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments are provided.

Alliance members will receive a complete program schedule for the remainder of the year. Please check our website for further details and updates: SaukPrairieVision.org

Membership expiring?
Not a member yet,
but like what you see?

Alliance Calendar

For all events at Badger, meet at the main gate (across highway from Citgo Station) 15 minutes before start time.

Thursday, May 18 6:30pm Tripp Museum, Prairie du Sac. *If you Plant it, Will it Grow? A 25-year synopsis of prairie restoration at the International Crane Foundation.* (Jeb Barzen)

Saturday, May 20 9am to 12 noon, Badger. Volunteer Restoration Day

Sunday, May 21 2 tours, 1-3pm & 3:30-5:30pm Bluebirds of Badger!

Thursday, June 8 6:30pm Tripp Museum, Prairie du Sac. *A Prairie Bonanza! A Photographic Journey through Wisconsin's Best Prairie Landscapes from Spring Thaw to Winter Freeze.* (Scott Weber and Muffy Barrett)

Saturday, June 10 9am to 12 noon Badger. Volunteer Restoration Day

Sunday, June 11 2 tours, 1-3pm & 3:30-5:30pm Bluebirds of Badger!

Sunday, June 18 2 tours, 1-3pm & 3:30-5:30pm Bluebirds of Badger!

Saturday, June 24 9am to 12 noon, Badger. Volunteer Restoration Day

Make a donation or
JOIN the ALLIANCE online at
saukprairievision.org

