I grew up on a small farm in Minnesota when you could still find patches of prairie in a landscape given over to grazing and row crops. My two brothers and I spent days exploring the surrounding woodlands. A stream flowed onto our land and emptied into a small wetland on part of our pasture. Because water and the mud that accompanies it have a magnetic draw for children, we often succumbed to the pull, catching frogs, leeches, minnows, and snakes. Or we lounged in the grass listening to red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds. Those days formed an abiding link to the land that time and distance can’t break.

About a decade ago, I found myself transplanted to east-central Iowa. Not long after, I heard about a volunteer opportunity—a work day at a place called Belgum Grove. Property stewards Wayne Petersen and Dan Black had organized the day’s activities. Dan coordinated a native plant seeding project for a troop of Boy Scouts, while Wayne led a native shrub planting project. As we planted, Wayne answered all my questions about the property and the land trust with enthusiasm. By the end of the day, my boots were heavy with topsoil, but my spirits were lifted by our collective accomplishments.

That day at Belgum Grove and my childhood on the farm are linked by two common threads: a passion for natural places and the sublime sense of rightness that comes from stepping into them. Those hours with Dan and Wayne demonstrated their passion for restoring natural places. Our staff, board and committee members, and volunteers share that passion in all the work they do for the Bur Oak Land Trust. This passion for natural places is a renewable resource. Hike on one of our properties, or volunteer for a work day or a committee. The rewards are intangible but deeply satisfying.

My parents gave us a childhood surrounded by nature. I am grateful to them for providing those opportunities. I know they sacrificed because they loved us, but I also know it was more than that. The land allowed them to share their passion for nature—no lectures required. That intergenerational connection is renewed every time I hike with them. The Bur Oak Land Trust protects properties that offer those same opportunities to recharge our shared passion for natural places. Let’s continue that mission for our benefit and for the generations to come.

If you want to contribute, please visit our website or contact me at president@bur oaklandtrust.org. That first work day years ago was all it took to get me hooked. Today I am honored to serve this land trust as board president. I’ll look forward to hearing from you and seeing you out on the land.

To make a contribution, sign up for volunteer work, or find out more about us, contact

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5 Sturgis Corner Drive, Suite 1250,
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P.O. Box 2523, Iowa City IA 52244-2523
Phone: 319/338-7030
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

SPRING IS HERE, and it’s been a busy year so far. After Connie Mutel’s inspiring talk at Prairie Preview and an energizing annual meeting, we’re preparing for Family Days at Turkey Creek on May 22 and Belgum Grove on September 18 plus Music on the Prairie on July 9 as well as starting our capital campaign. Whew! But first, please welcome our new board members.

Dave Bright was born and raised in Iowa City and attended the University of Iowa. He is an attorney with Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman and an adjunct professor at the UI College of Law. Dave and his wife, Heather, have three children who attend Shimek Elementary, where they enjoy the benefits of our adjacent Shimek Ravine.

Rose Danaher is an environmental specialist for the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District. She manages the Price Creek Watershed Project, a locally led effort to improve water quality in Price Creek and the Iowa River. An Amana resident, she is an avid hunter and bird-dog enthusiast; other hobbies include horseback riding, paddling Iowa’s rivers, and raising local beef.

Ben Dillon is co-owner of the software company and digital marketing agency Geonetric and the real estate firm Agile Ventures and co-founder of the Iowa Startup Accelerator and the New Bohemia Innovation Collaborative. With degrees in business and computer engineering, he focuses on trends in healthcare and content management.

Ardent naturalist Jeffery Ford has been a board member for the Housing Fellowship (serving as president for three years), United Action for Youth, and Riverside Theatre and is currently on the advisory board of 50-50 in 2020. From 1995 to 2002 he was president and executive director of Habitat for Humanity in Champaign and Piatt Counties, Illinois.

Seth Zimmermann received his BS in fisheries and wildlife biology from Iowa State in 1996. He and his wife, Wendy, and their three children live on a small farm near Morse, where they raise food and nurture the environment. An environmental analyst at the State Hygienic Laboratory in the Air Quality section, he previously worked in the lab’s Limnology section.

This issue contains the names of our 2015 donors—more than a thousand of you! I cannot tell you how grateful I am for your support. As we move into our capital campaign, it is heartening to know that so many of you share our dedication to protecting Iowa’s natural places.

PROPERTY STEWARD’S REPORT

AS PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL predicted, it was an early spring. After Connie Mutel’s excellent talk at Prairie Preview, I am not surprised that mosquitoes and ticks are already biting. With the Zika virus spreading, it is critical that we identify mosquito-breeding ground on our properties. When multiple inches of rain fall in short order, the stormwater outfalls churn with destructive force. At the base of these outfalls, water’s high pressure creates depressions that provide perfect mosquito habitat. Ask your city leaders how they plan to eliminate this habitat.

Spring brings a new opportunity to burn, which has been shown to affect the tick population to our benefit. My middle child, Bob, had a deer tick on his head in March with a bull’s-eye pattern around it. A quick trip to the doctor and a prescription for antibiotics should fend off Lyme disease. Going on walks with this little outdoorsman gives me new perspective: he follows the path of least resistance, which to me is often the path of most resistance. How big the world must look to him! As Connie Mutel said, our warming climate is leading to larger populations of ticks and mosquitoes. We need our children to explore the outdoors, and if we can keep them safe without being helicopter parents, we might just groom the next generation of conservationists.

We have a new online sign-up form for volunteer events. Check out our website and sign up for a work day. We don’t need only young people with strong backs. There are many ways you can help us preserve our properties for future generations. Give me a call or send me a message to learn more. If you or your organization would like to volunteer on a day other than the dates we have posted, contact me to set up a new work day. I look forward to a productive 2016. Best wishes to all of you in the upcoming growing season.

CONGRATULATIONS to former Bur Oak Land Trust board member Judy Nauseef upon the publication of her book, Gardening with Native Plants in the Upper Midwest: Bringing the Tallgrass Prairie Home. Aiming for gardens that are both beautiful and biodiverse, satisfying and sustainable, Nauseef shows us how to restore habitat and diversity to our piece of the planet by making native plants part of well-designed, thoughtfully planned gardens.
A Sand Mound Prairie Attracts Butterflies . . . and Admirers by Dave Williams

Imagine something so interesting in your yard that complete strangers are compelled to stop and check it out, then do something similar in their own yards.

I first saw a sand mound prairie in the early 1990s in Mason City. A co-worker at the Cerro Gordo County Conservation Board purchased a truckload of sand, dumped it in his front yard, and seeded it with prairie species. His project attracted both supporters and scoffers until it bloomed—then folks marveled at what a good idea it was.

My next encounter wasn’t until 2007 at the Tallgrass Prairie Center in Cedar Falls. My colleague Greg Houseal arranged for six truckloads of river sand to be deposited in the front yard of the TPC. He and a former UNI graduate student planted hundreds of native prairie plants into the sand, including many unusual species that prairie enthusiasts seldom experience. The TPC sand mound project has developed into a beautiful dry prairie plant community that gives visitors a unique flora and fauna display of what is possible in a pile of sand.

A sand mound prairie of any size has many advantages over traditional landscape gardening. There are virtually no weed seeds in sand, and any weeds that do appear can be easily pulled. Prairie plants that are adapted to dry, sandy soils don’t grow as high as wetter species; thus a sand mound prairie reaches an aesthetically manageable waist-high height that is perfect for residential yards. In addition, these drought-tolerant, long-lived perennials are excellent pollinator sources for native insects, including the monarch butterfly.

A sand mound prairie is easy to install. (1) Choose a full-sun spot in your yard. (2) Purchase sand from your local quarry. Leave the turfgrass sod in place—three or more feet of sand piled on top will kill it. (3) Pile the sand as high as you can when unloading. Then use a garden rake to sculpt the pile. Consider dry-laying landscaping pavers around the base of the pile to keep the sand from sloughing off. (4) Use live plants with a diverse mix of species. Live prairie plants can be purchased from a number of Iowa vendors, including Prairie Moon Nursery and Ion Exchange. At least a third of the plants should be grasses. (5) Space the plants about a foot apart; then lightly cover the sand with grass clippings. Grass clippings will hold the sand in place until the plants become established. The base of the sand pile will remain wet for many days after a rainfall, so if you use swamp milkweed, plant it at the base of the pile. (6) Water every three to four days in the first growing season if rainfall is infrequent. After the first year, no watering is needed. Don’t fertilize; these plants are adapted to nutrient-poor soils, and roots will quickly find their way into the rich soil beneath.

By the end of the second growing season, you will not be able to see the sand because the mound will be completely covered with prairie plants and bloom throughout the summer.


Recommended Species for a Sand Mound Yard Prairie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grasses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side-oats grama</td>
<td><em>Bouteloua curtipendula</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairy grama</td>
<td><em>Bouteloua hirsuta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June grass</td>
<td><em>Koeleria macrantha</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little bluestem</td>
<td><em>Schizachyrium scoparium</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough dropseed</td>
<td><em>Sporobolus asper</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairie dropseed</td>
<td><em>Sporobolus heterolepis</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Forbs**                |                                  |
| Prairie onion            | *Allium stellatum*               |
| Thimbleweed              | *Anemone cylindrica*             |
| Swamp milkweed           | *Asclepias incarnata*            |
| Butterfly milkweed       | *Asclepias tuberosa*             |
| Whorled milkweed         | *Asclepias verticillata*         |
| Prairie coreopsis        | *Coreopsis palmata*              |
| Purple prairie clover    | *Dalesia purpurea*               |
| Pale purple coneflower   | *Echinacea pallida*              |
| Dotted blazing star      | *Liatris punctata*               |
| Hoary puccoon            | *Lithospermum canescens*         |
| Spotted bee balm         | *Monarda punctata*               |
| Toothed evening primrose | *Oenothera serrulata*            |
| Marbleseed               | *Onosmodium molle*               |
| Large-flowered beardtongue| *Penstemon grandiflorus*       |
| Old field goldenrod      | *Solidago nemoralis*             |
| Aromatic aster           | *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*   |
| Silky aster              | *Symphyotrichum sericeum*        |
| Prairie spiderwort       | *Tradescantia bracteata*         |
| Heartleaf alexanders     | *Zizia aptera*                   |
Stephen Hendrix is professor emeritus at UI's Department of Biology, where his work in the field of conservation biology has focused on how animals and plants interact, particularly in fragmented landscapes. For the past two decades, Steve and his colleagues have examined the relative abundance and diversity of wild bees in many different settings, from large tallgrass prairies to small remnant prairies, farms, community gardens, and now neighborhoods in Iowa City. In a recent conversation with Cheryl Miller, Steve shared insights about the habitat needs of healthy bee communities and how they can be recreated in Iowa.

Floral resources are the most important thing. All evidence points to fragmentation of the landscape as the biggest factor affecting survivability of pollinators because of the loss of floral diversity and abundance. That's the bad news for Iowa, because 99.9 percent of our prairies have been converted to agriculture. The good news is that if you increase the variety and abundance of plant species, you will get more bee species. Our studies provide four major take-home messages about the process of rebuilding floral resources and helping wild bee communities survive.

One, restorations don't have to be on a grand scale. A small site well stocked with prairie plants will serve bees well. A 10-by-50-foot strip with a good variety of plants will have as many bees as the same size strip on a prairie. The surrounding landscape, half a mile in any direction, is also an important predictor of what bees are found at any given site.

Two, it is important to have a succession of flowering plants across the seasons, giving bees a steady source of nectar and pollen from April to September.

Three, virtually all prairie plants contribute to the overall health of a bee community. Native plants are better for a variety of reasons, but bees can use introduced plant species. In fact, one of our studies found that small produce farms attract as many bees as large prairies. In Iowa City, a community garden used by many foreign students had thirty-five different crops, meaning it was as diverse as a prairie!

Four, that being said, there are four plants—we call them bee plants—that bees find especially attractive. Using a large dataset, and after zeroing out confounding factors, we identified four plants that attract higher than expected numbers and diversity of bees: leadplant, *Amorpha canescens*; purple prairie clover, *Dalea purpurea*; gray-headed coneflower, *Ratibida pinnata*; and golden alexanders, *Zizia aurea*. These are among the most abundant plants on Iowa prairies and are most successful in attracting diverse species, including the rarest species of bees, because they produce large amounts of pollen. Adding these plants to seed mixes in east-central Iowa would significantly improve the ecological success of prairie restoration projects.

My colleagues and I are now examining bee communities in Iowa City. We spent the summer of 2015 sampling plots around town, and although we don't know yet about diversity, we can tell that solitary—wild—bee abundance is similar to what you would find on a prairie. The number of bees at the East Side Recycling Center, for instance, is off the charts, twice what we found anywhere else.

Steve has offered to lead a tour of one of the land trust’s properties this summer to educate people about pollinators and their habitats. Stay tuned for an announcement later this spring!

Left: Steve Hendrix. Right: A wild bee in the genus *Svastra* on a gray-headed coneflower, photo by Steve Hendrix.

Upcoming Events

- **Family Day**  Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, Sunday, May 22
- **Music on the Prairie**  Belgum Grove, Saturday, July 9
- **Family Day, Belgum Grove**  Sunday, September 18
- **Tenth Annual “Under a Cider Moon . . . A Celebration of Autumn”**  Friday, October 21
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.”

One wonders whether Margaret Mead’s words were in the minds of the small group of Johnson County citizens who—in 1978—sought to find a way to preserve fragile natural areas throughout the region. It was a time of rapid expansion as developers, builders, and homeowners sought to fill the need for rural expansion in the booming housing market. The net result was that hundreds of acres of prairies and woodlands were being lost at a staggering pace. This group of citizens responded by building an organization that would secure, protect, and conserve some of the finest natural areas in the county.

Who would have thought that from those modest beginnings thirty-eight years ago, the Bur Oak Land Trust would today be a thriving organization that owns and protects nine properties and fourteen conservation easements throughout Johnson County?

In addition, the trust was instrumental in the protection of Ryerson’s Woods, south of the Johnson County Fairgrounds, and its transfer to the Iowa City Parks and Recreation Department. The organization’s past is an amazing success story. But the future holds even greater promise.

Today begins a new and exciting chapter for the Bur Oak Land Trust, a rare opportunity to acquire still another parcel of environmentally significant property: 40 acres adjacent to the already preserved Big Grove northeast of Iowa City. Once used as a timber resource for settlers, this land is important because it represents one of the last remaining examples of the upland timber forest that once covered much of the area along the Iowa River. Even though the property has been logged over the years, it fundamentally remains the same as it was when those settlers arrived.

With the help of our friends and loyal supporters, the Bur Oak Land Trust is now committed to a fundraising campaign designed to reach $700,000 over the next three years. $360,000 will go toward the purchase of the 40-acre Big Grove Addition. The remaining $340,000 will support continued stewardship and preservation of the Big Grove Addition and other Bur Oak Land Trust properties. Raising funds at a level never before attempted by the trust will be a challenging but energizing effort.

The success of this effort depends entirely upon your participation. Your gift is needed now more than ever. The success of this fundraising effort will reaffirm the founding principles of the land trust that was created thirty-eight years ago. Even more important, this property is an investment that will pay dividends for future generations. Your support of this campaign is a gift to the Bur Oak Land Trust, but it is also a gift to our children, their children, and the generations after them.

We have more information about this campaign effort and would be delighted to share it with you. Just let us know. We appreciate all that you have done over the years to support the Bur Oak Land Trust. When the time comes for you to step forward and help, we hope to count on you.

*Snow trilliums and showy orchis, photos by John Tiffany.*

*Big Grove Addition, photo by Mark Madsen.*
Bur Oak Land Trust Donors, 2015

WE ARE IMMENSELY GRATEFUL to the following individuals and organizations that gave to the Bur Oak Land Trust in 2015. Due to your generosity, we can continue to protect the land we love and share.

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Janet and Jeff Kohn
Christine and Terry Kolarik
Sandy Lacinia
Wayne and Betty Lacinia
Phillip and Mary Margaret Lainson
Ellen Lee-Andino
Andrew and Jama Lidal
Cynthia Lippold-Owen and Michael Owen
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David and Susan Manuel
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Margery McCordell
Phillip and Julia Mears
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Sherin Novak
Bill Pasgter and Colette Brodersen
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Daniel and Anne Reisen
Kathleen Renquist
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Justin Tolan
Chris Van Ausen and Deb Pullin–Van Ausen
Steven Warner
Barbara Weet-Caudill
Jeffrey Whittlesey and Leeanne Hoffman
Carmen Wolf
Sue Zaleski

In-Kind Contributions
Lain Adkins and Holly Carver
AirFX Trampoline Park and Play Station
Agnes and Mike Apicella
Applebee’s
Arrowhead Resort and Motel
Artifacts
Atlas
Auto Toyz
Backpocket Brewing
Kristin and Cary Beatty
Barbara Beaumont and Kurt Hamann
Becky’s Mindful Kitchen
Big Grove Brewery
Big Ten Rentals
Dan and Minette Black
Blank Park Zoo
Blue Heron Beadworks
Brown Deer Golf Club

Brucemore
Brush and Barrel
Buffalo Wild Wings
Katherine Burford and Dick Schwab
Vicki and Gene Callender II
Kaylene and Patrick Carney
Casey’s
Cedar Rapids Kernels
Cedar Rapids RoughRiders
Cheddar’s
Chicago Cubs
Clayworks Studio/Gallery
Bryan and Virginia Clemons
Climb Iowa
Colonial Lanes
Coral Ridge Mall
Coralville Center for the Performing Arts
Costco Wholesale
Cost Cutters
Cottage Bakery and Deli
Crêpes de Luxe Café
Daydream Comics
Daylight Donuts
Dodge Street Tire
Jeff and Pami Dorale
Down to Earth Florist
Eastwood’s Sports Bar
Englert Theatre
Susan Enzle and Gene Savin
Es’ Florals
Every Bloomin’ Thing
Family Museum
Dale and Jef Farland
Field of Dreams Movie Site
Figgie Art Museum
FilmScene
Fireside Winery
1st Avenue Hy-Vee
Forever Green
Four Seasons Car Wash
Framed Encounters Custom Framing
The Frame Station
Goodwill Industries of the Heartland
Great Clips
Green Bay Packers
Hambug Inn No. 2
Nancy Hauserman
Herten and Stocker Jewelers
High Ground Cafe
Hills Bank and Trust
Josh Hoard
Richard and Janice Horak
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum
Hunters Specialties
Iowan Exchange
Iowa Artisans Gallery
Iowa Book and Supply
Iowa City/Coralville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
Iowa City Landscaping and Garden Center
Iowa Cubs
Iowa Energy
Iowa State Athletics
Iowa Wild Hockey
Johnson County Conservation Board
Jumer’s Casino
Daniel and Jill Kahn
Kansas City Royals
Jim and Kathy Kessler

Dick and Mary Lea Kruse
Don and Cathy Kruse
Rick and Donita Langholt
Laughlin Developments
Kendra and Michael Lawler
Ed and Ann Lorson
Kathy and Chia-Hsing Lu
Gary and Sharon Lust
Mark and Judy Madsen
Maggie’s Farm Pizza
Bob and Lyn Maske
Paul and Linzee Kull McClay
McDonald’s
Claudia McGehee Illustration
Glen and Kathy Meisner
ME Massage
Menards
Jerry and Carol Mennenga
Midas ASE
Millstream Brewing Company
Molly’s Cupcakes
Monica’s
Connie and Robert Muet
National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium
Nelson Meat Market
Jack and Fran Neuzil
New Pioneer Food Co-op
Noodles and Company
Martha and Russell Noyes
Oasis
Carlos O’Kelly’s
Old Creamery Theatre
Pagliai’s Pizza
Pancheros Mexican Grill
Paul’s Discount Store
Wayne and Linda Petersen
Pleasant Valley Nursery, Landscaping, and Irrigation
PlexiCraft
Carol Potter
Prairie Lights Books
Prairiewoods
El Ranchero
Raygun
Lorie Reins-Schweer and Keith Reins
Sharyn and John Reitz
Bonnie Rippon
Riverside Casino and Golf Resort
Riverside Theatre
Sara Sauers
Hutha Sayre
Sheels All Sports
Mel Schlachter
Russell and Cyndie Schmeiser
James Schoeck
George and Alliene Schrimper
Scott Crapcakery
Short’s Burgers Eastside
Spencer Tire Service
Starbucks Coffee
Sweets and Treats
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Wilson’s Orchard
World of Bikes
Tammy and Bruce Wright
Tony Zinn Furniture and Designs
Zio Johnno’s Spaghetti House
Z’majiks

Contributions in Honor of
Dan Black
Don Bolin
Kaylene Carney
James Fluck and Julie Scott

Contributions in Memory of
Harriet Blakesee Hall
Lewey Mottinger
Robert Sayre
Nancy Seiberling
Joan Weber

MANY THANKS to all of you from President Carter Johnson, Executive Director Tammy Wright, staff, and the board of directors!

Drawings of pied-billed grebe, common yellowthroat, killdeer, muskrat, buttonbush, nodding bur marigold, pickerel-weed, and white turtlehead by Mark Müller.
Protect, preserve, restore . . . it’s all about the trust.

Please share this copy of *Heritage* with your friends and family!