



# FCNA News

Volume 1, Number 1 Fall 2001

## Friends of the Campus Natural Areas

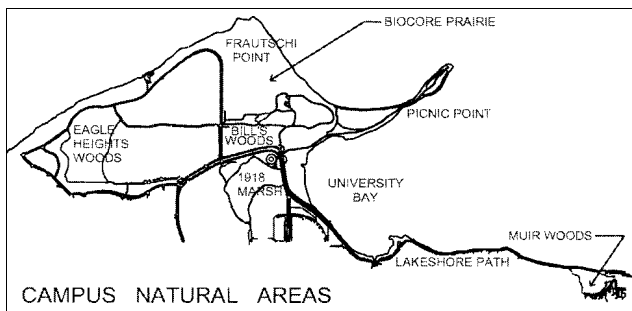
*Dedicated to the Preservation and Stewardship of our Woodlands, Wetlands, Prairies and Shorelines*

## The Friends of the Campus Natural Areas

by Jean Meanwell and Harriet Riley

### What are the Campus Natural Areas (CNA)?

They are the woodlands, wetlands, prairies and shorelines within the UW-Madison Campus. These include Muir Woods, Picnic Point, Frautschi Point, the Class of 1918 Marsh, Eagle Heights Woods and the surrounding areas. See map below:



### Why are the CNA important?

They provide biologically significant ecosystems for teaching, research, outreach, and environmentally sensitive recreation. The CNA contain important natural plant and animal communities as well as historical and archeological resources. They are available for individuals to enjoy and also contribute a strong sense of place to the campus area.

### Who are the Friends of the Campus Natural Areas (FCNA)?

Anyone who has ever heard an oriole on Picnic Point, enjoyed the bloodroot in the Eagle Heights Woods, or walked the North Shoreline Footpath in the fall would probably be interested in becoming a member of the FCNA.

The Friends of the Campus Natural Areas is a non-profit organization that serves as an advocate for the active stewardship of the CNA. It aims to preserve, protect and nurture these special places as a learning environment through the vicissitudes of time.

### What do the FCNA members do?

The Friends of the Campus Natural Areas

- lead and participate in CNA work parties.
- encourage and recruit members and volunteers.
- publish a Friends newsletter including trail information, bird and plant lists, maps, and current CNA news.
- sponsor events and educational activities that encourage broad community interest and stewardship of the CNA.
- seek gifts and grants to supplement University funds supporting the CNA.

### What are the advantages of joining?

As a member you will receive

- notification of projects occurring in the CNA as well as information on any potential threats to the area.
- information about restoration project volunteer opportunities.
- invitations to special FCNA events.

**Please support the Campus Natural Areas by telling your friends about this organization.**

**Friends of the  
Campus Natural Areas**  
P.O. Box 55056  
Madison, WI 53705

e-mail: [rlenehan@chorus.net](mailto:rlenehan@chorus.net)

[www.uwalumni.com/fcna](http://www.uwalumni.com/fcna)

### **Officers**

#### **President:**

Jane Camerini 608-233-1802  
[jrcameri@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:jrcameri@facstaff.wisc.edu)

#### **Vice President:**

William Muehl 608-238-7611  
[muehl@mailbag.com](mailto:muehl@mailbag.com)

#### **Treasurer:**

Tad Pinkerton 608-233-1623  
[tad@doit.wisc.edu](mailto:tad@doit.wisc.edu)

#### **Secretary:**

Roma Lenehan 608-238-5406  
[rlenehan@chorus.net](mailto:rlenehan@chorus.net)

### **Committee Chairs and Contacts**

#### **Funding Committee**

Tad Pinkerton 608-233-1623  
[tad@doit.wisc.edu](mailto:tad@doit.wisc.edu)

#### **Outreach & Newsletter Comm.**

Roma Lenehan 608-238-5406  
[rlenehan@chorus.net](mailto:rlenehan@chorus.net)

#### **Volunteer Committee Contact**

Glenda Denniston 608-231-1530  
[cdennist@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:cdennist@facstaff.wisc.edu)

#### **Additional Directors:**

Glenda Denniston Blair Mathews  
Dan Doeppers Richard McCoy  
Henry Hart Harriet Riley  
Tom Helgeson Susan Slapnick  
William Mann Mary Trewartha

## **Bird Studies in the Campus Natural Areas**

by Roma Lenehan

Although best known for the spring warbler migration on Picnic Point, the Campus Natural Areas (CNA) have a diverse bird population throughout the year. Roma Lenehan and Glenda Denniston combined 25 years of past bird data with two years of field observations to create a month by month Bird List and a seasonal Bird Checklist for the CNA. In addition, we have completed two years of a three year CNA Breeding Bird Study. To obtain these reports, please see the box below.

### **CNA Bird List**

The CNA Bird List reveals that most birds which regularly occur in southern Wisconsin occasionally visit the CNA. It includes 253 species of birds recorded over a 25-year period. In the past two years at least 220 bird species have been seen in the CNA according to field data contributed by birders by email or on the Bird Sighting Board (see below). The Bird List also reveals that Bald Eagles can be seen any month of the year and Common Loons may appear whenever the lake is not frozen, although both are most common in the spring and fall. Grassland birds generally are the rarest bird group, although they may become more common as the Biocore Prairie restoration continues (see article on page 3).

Shorebirds occur irregularly when conditions are favorable, either when the 1918 Marsh overflows, flooding the playing fields, or when the 1918 Marsh water level is low enough to expose mud flats. In 2001 water extremes provided spring and fall shorebird habitat. In fact, the August 2 heavy rains, which turned the 1918 Marsh into a pond, forced the shorebirds, who had previously been feeding on the exposed mud in the Marsh, to share the playing fields with athletes from the soccer camp. Fourteen shorebird species were found in 2001 including three previously unrecorded species, Ruddy Turnstone, White-rumped Sandpiper, and Woodcock.

*continued on page 5*

### **Free Bird Information**

To obtain any of the following:

- CNA Bird Checklist (seasonal abundance; 2 sides)
- CNA Bird List (monthly abundance; 6 sides)
- Habitat & Abundance of CNA Breeding Birds (3 sides)
- CNA Breeding Bird Report, Brief (3 sides)
- CNA Breeding Bird Report, Full (9 sides)
- Breeding Birds of the 1918 Marsh (5 sides)

**Send stamped, self-addressed envelope to:**

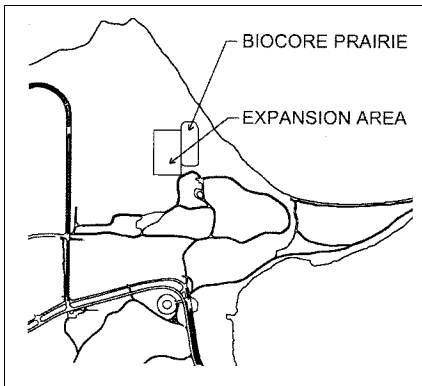
Roma Lenehan  
3317 Lake Mendota Drive  
Madison, WI 53705

# Biocore Prairie

by Kafryn Lieder

## What is the Biocore Prairie?

The Biocore Prairie, located in an area of abandoned fields between Picnic Point and Frautschi Point (see map), provides an opportunity



to introduce undergraduates in the Biology Core Curriculum (Biocore, a four-semester introductory honors biology sequence at the University) to prairie restoration and gives them practical field experience in environmental sciences. Specifically, the purpose of the project is to enable students to study different prairie restoration techniques. Eventually the Biocore Prairie will become a site for research on viable tall-grass prairies.

The Biocore staff chose the old fields in the CNA because the site seemed ideal for a multi-year restoration project and is readily accessible to laboratory classes. In 1996, the staff proposed to restore the Picnic Point Base Orchard Field, except for the Eagle Heights garden plots, to mesic prairie under the Kline/Bader plan. In the summer of 1997, the University approved Biocore's application to study and restore one acre. The permit has since expanded to include a total of five acres.

## Who is involved?

The process of combining an ongoing prairie restoration with teaching scientific methods for controlled experimentation to undergraduates requires collaboration among many groups at the University, including students and staff from Biocore and the Department of Landscape Architecture, CNA, Arboretum, Physical Plant, and CALS West Side Experimental Station.

Curt Caslavka, Biocore's laboratory manager and the co-chair of the laboratory course that focuses on the site, has prepared demonstration

plots. These plots contain some of the species that the team hopes will become established.

## What work has been done?

Students began field work in the fall of 1997 by performing baseline plant and insect surveys, collecting seeds at Curtis Prairie in the Arboretum, and deciding on research plans for the site, including experimenting with different site preparation and planting techniques. The students' initial survey revealed that the land supported mainly weeds.

During the next three years, students and staff experimented with three different methods for weed reduction. These were: (1) mulching; (2) mowing frequently and then treating the area with herbicide shortly before planting; (3) plowing in the spring and rototilling frequently during the summer and fall. The undergraduates sowed 61 species of prairie plants on the treated 0.6 acre in November of 1998, but weeds proved harder to remove than expected. Accordingly, Biocore students and staff decided to try the weed control methods on the adjacent 0.4 acre for two years before planting. That area was planted in November of 2000 and students will be assessing the results this fall.

The expanded site includes nearly one acre located south and east of the original one-acre plot. A large dirt pile covered this land, but the University Physical Plant staff removed it and graded the soil for Biocore in the spring of 2000. To prevent erosion, staff first planted oats, then mowed the field frequently to control annual weeds. Prairie seeds were planted with a drill in the spring of 2001. This area does not have the same large seed bank of weeds as the one-acre field and already has more prairie species.

In 2001, the Biocore Prairie Project again expanded. Three acres above the Prairie were treated with herbicide to eliminate weeds. Future Biocore students will plant this area. In addition, as part of the long-term plan to study population dynamics, Mara McDonald will begin to band birds in the fall of 2001 in order to monitor any changes in migratory and nesting birds that occur as the prairie restoration continues.

## Where can I learn more?

For more information about the Biocore Prairie, see the website at <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/biocore/>

# Bills Woods Planting Project

by Glenda Denniston

## The Project

A planting project has begun in a much-abused portion of Bill's Woods (see map, page 1). We hope to make this plot a demonstration of how community volunteers can work together with students and the Campus Natural Areas Committee (CNAC) as active stewards of the natural areas of the University of Wisconsin Madison campus. Our goal is to establish, in one degraded plot, native groundcover vegetation which grades from open woodland to savanna/prairie.

The eastern third of Bill's Woods is one of the few parts of the CNA which was an established woodland before the 1930s. It is a mixed deciduous woodland, with a canopy of white and bur oak, hickory, and other deciduous trees. The understory is less diversified, having been replaced in some areas by non-native buckthorn. The rest of Bill's Woods has a checkered history, having been long used for agriculture and other purposes.

## The Problem

In recent years, the Grounds department used a portion of the original woods as a storage and dump area for compost, mulch and other materials. Grounds removed the piles in 1999 and did initial grading of the site in the spring of 2000. Soon afterward, volunteers dug up and stacked many large granite paving blocks. We also removed large amounts of garlic mustard and of trash.

This was just the beginning. New weeds quickly replaced the garlic mustard. The soil was still heavily compacted, much of the topsoil was gone, and large quantities of plastic, glass, metal, concrete and other trash were mixed with the soil that remained. Several large oaks had died, and no trees of any sort remained in the center of the site. So much gravel was pressed into a former roadway that it was almost impossible to dig into it. A severe erosion problem had developed in another section.

## The Beginning of the Planting Project

Roma Lenehan and I, with permission of the CNAC, began planting the more wooded portion of the degraded area with shade-tolerant understory forbs. Our plan was to reestablish native understory simultaneously with weed removal, in order to prevent yet another weed community from taking over. We planted wood violet, wild ginger, mayapple,

wood geranium, twinleaf, bloodroot, trillium, Dutchman's breeches, and lady and sensitive ferns in bare areas and where we removed weeds. Changes were incremental, so as not to unnecessarily disrupt the animal population.

## The Planting Project in 2001

Many of the understory plants introduced in the first season emerged and flowered in the spring of 2001. Throughout the planting season, I added more native woodland plants to the first plot and kept weeds under control.

In July, the adjacent treeless area was re-graded. Almost immediately, I planted gray-headed coneflower, black-eyed Susan, sweet-scented Joe-Pye weed, thimbleweed, stiff goldenrod and purple coneflower, among other plants, in a 40' by 40' plot. More are being added and the plot seeded with local prairie/savanna forbs and grasses.

## Future Plans

This fall, Friends volunteers will cover the remainder of the open area with seeds of prairie and savanna species, and take erosion control measures. We will gather and plant bur oak acorns in scattered spots on the site. Next season, working together with a group of graduate students under CNAC direction, we intend to add other appropriate plants and seeds and to keep aggressive weeds under control. To participate in this project, contact me at [cdennist@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:cdennist@facstaff.wisc.edu)

## Management Plan for the CNA

The CNAC, the joint governance committee charged with the task of overseeing the natural areas, is continuing its development of a CNA master plan. In the summer of 2001, a group of graduate students, directed by Evelyn Howell, Cathie Bruner and John Harrington, made initial inventories of plants in different units of the CNA. Subareas are being defined and mapped on the basis of differences in vegetation (canopy, subcanopy and ground layer). More intensive study of each subarea is proceeding, and other research will supplement this survey. An accurate database of the present vegetation, in combination with comparably detailed data about animal populations in the CNA, (see, for example, page 2), is necessary for thoughtful management decisions and as background for research projects.

## Bird Studies *(continued from page 2)*

The CNA is famous for its wood warbler and songbird migration. Due to the location of Frautschi and Picnic Points, points that jut into the southern edge of Lake Mendota, migrants periodically concentrate in the CNA during both migrations. These passerine “fall-out” events, which are weather dependent, can be magnificent. In early May of 2001 a sudden weather change (front with rain) forced hundreds of small migrant birds down onto Picnic Point. The resulting dramatic “fall-out” delighted Ornithology classes and Audubon groups alike. During a four day period, 114 species including 26 warblers were reported. However, numbers alone do not capture the excitement. The abundance of warblers and other migrants led one expert birder to say that he gave up trying to locate individual birds. Instead he simply left his binoculars focused on a single spot and watched the many birds that passed through that small area.

### Bird Sightings Board

Our new Bird Sightings Boards, sponsored by the bird group of the Friends of the CNA, enabled us to monitor bird sightings during the “fall-out.” These Boards are located by the truck entrance to Picnic Point on an exercise board and by the Eagle Heights Gardens entrance on a bulletin board. The Sightings Boards also allow people to find unusual birds. For instance, the Ornithology classes were able to locate a rare Hooded Warbler because a bird watcher recorded its location on the Board. Please take time to record at least a few of your bird sightings, even if you think they are common birds. Your entries help beginning bird watchers and allow us to monitor the birds of the CNA. Your records of migrant birds are especially important, since these birds change daily or even hourly.

### Breeding Bird Study

During the past two summers we confirmed the breeding (using the methodology of the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas) of 65 bird species in the CNA. From the Breeding Bird Study and information collected for the Checklist, we concluded that in the CNA 56 bird species breed most years, 21 species breed some years, and 14 additional species probably bred in the past. The regularly nesting birds included common colorful birds like Baltimore Oriole and Indigo Bunting.

The bird diversity of the Campus Natural Areas is due to the area's varied habitats that provide food and shelter. Despite their relatively small size, the CNA have a large woodland bird community, a marsh bird community, an edge and open land community, and a mostly migrant shore and water bird community.

Although the CNA are intensively studied, surprises and mysteries remain. A Sandhill Crane pair spent the spring defending a territory in the University Bay Marsh. We were unable to confirm nesting and do not know why they left the area after remaining two months. Another puzzle is the location of the nest tunnel of the Belted Kingfisher pair who fishes in the Bay every summer.

### Continuing Bird Projects

The Friends of the CNA welcome volunteers to participate in any of the bird projects. We monitor breeding birds and migrants and maintain the Bird Sightings Boards. The Friends hope to establish a handicapped birding area. We are looking for volunteers to work on a breeding bird habitat study. If you would like to help with these projects or have other ideas, contact Roma Lenehan via email at (rlenehan@chorus.net).

### Join the Friends of the Campus Natural Areas

Name _____	Student	\$10 ( )
Address _____	Individual	\$20 ( )
City, State _____ Zip Code _____	Household	\$35 ( )
Phone (optional) _____ Email (optional) _____	Steward	\$50 ( )
Please send me information about how to volunteer	Patron	\$100 ( )
(Please send us your email address or telephone number if you would like to volunteer.)	Other	_____ ( )

Please write your check to the UW Foundation and put Friends of the CNA in the memo line

Mail this form with your check to: FCNA P.O. Box 55056 Madison, WI 53705

## Volunteer Activities in the CNA

Volunteers are encouraged to join the ongoing volunteer projects in the CNA.

- **Planting projects** – In Bill’s Woods volunteers are planting native plants in a damaged area of Bill’s Woods (see page 4). In order to provide plants for the CNA restorations, volunteers will help create and maintain a nursery for woodland and prairie plants on the south edge of Eagle Heights Gardens.
- **Alien Species Removal** – In the spring volunteers pull garlic mustard in areas with native plants where herbicides cannot be used. In addition, volunteers will help eliminate a variety of other non-native, invasive species such as honeysuckle and buckthorn, usually in the fall and winter. The removal of these aggressive species allows native plants, such as spring wild flowers, to continue to grow in the CNA.
- **Trail maintenance** – Volunteers repair trails to minimize erosion and keep trails open. Past volunteers put up signs and maps to help visitors.
- **Clean up** – Volunteers participate in both general trash clean up and the removal of man-made objects. For example, the Bill’s Woods restoration has involved removing bricks, trash, and gravel piles.
- **Vegetation Mapping** - In order to create future plans, the plants in each area of the CNA have to be identified and carefully located on maps.
- **Bird projects** - For a summary of current bird projects, see page 2.
- **Animal inventories** – In a manner similar to the bird project, the mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and butterflies of the CNA could be identified. Inventories could be developed.

### Volunteer Opportunities

- Planting Projects
- Alien Species Removal
- Trail Maintenance
- Clean up
- Vegetation Mapping
- Bird Projects
- Animal Inventories
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Web Site
- Publicity
- Fund Raising
- Education

### FNCA

P.O. Box 55056  
Madison, WI 53705