

Mississippi Valley
CONSERVANCY

Conservation Close to Home



2024 Annual Report



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FRONT COVER: A young bird lover enjoys a Linked to the Land hike with mom and dad. (Photo by Karen Solverson)

Top: A participant at a 2024 Linked to the Land event takes in the scenic views for which the Driftless Area is so well known. (Photo by Karen Solverson) Lower left: A solitary sandpiper searches for insects at the Plum Creek Conservation Area. (Photo by Connor Kotte) Lower right: Father and son enjoy some quality time on a hike through the woods in Vernon County on a property protected by Mississippi Valley Conservancy. (Photo by Karen Solverson)



Conservation close to home

After a long day at my desk – when my brain feels tired and my body is stiff – I grab my hiking boots, lace them up, and head out the door.

**A message from
Carol Abrahamzon,
Executive Director**

I'm fortunate to have trails right here on the farm as well as on neighboring public lands, all accessible without needing to drive anywhere. As I step into the woods, I take in a deep breath of fresh air, feeling my shoulders relax. I can feel the sun warming my cheeks, and my body awakens as I head down the trail.

My senses alert. What is that sweet scent in the air? Did I just hear the call of an eastern phoebe? These moments in nature make me feel truly alive, and I can't imagine not having access to them without traveling miles and miles.

Conservation close to home matters – not just to me, but to everyone. These personal connections to the land are also the foundation of conservation. People protect what they cherish.

At Mississippi Valley Conservancy, we are dedicated to protecting places close to home – places to spot a special bird, smell blooming wildflowers, or be mesmerized by the trickle of water flowing over rocks. Places where everyone can step outdoors and breathe in fresh air – clearing their mind and relaxing their body.

When I read the news of distant hurricanes and floods, of droughts and wildfires, I feel compelled to step up the pace of conservation right here – close to home.

If ever there was a time to come together and protect more of these special places, it's now – before they're scooped up and developed without paying attention to their value to our minds, bodies, communities, and climate.

In the coming year, with your support and partnership, we will work to protect more land for all who live in Wisconsin's Driftless Area. Together, we can bring conservation closer to home for everyone.

Thank you for making this vital work possible.

Together in conservation,

Carol Abrahamzon



Land conservator nurses Buffalo River watershed farmland back to health

Story by Kelly Sultzbach and Sarah Bratnober

The patience and hard work of healing are not new to Aimee Ebersold Schultz. In 2010, she began her stewardship of an old farmhouse and 114 acres near Alma, Wisconsin, where she learned about sustainable farming practices including managed rotational grazing, soil health, and writing and negotiating farm leases. Now, after a 24-year nursing career and the loss of a spouse, she is newly remarried and devoting her energy to caring for the land.

Aimee has developed relationships with the farmers who farm the fields while listening to and observing the needs of the

environment. Her conscientious care has continued through creating pollinator habitat, managing woodlands, preventing soil erosion, and, most recently, protecting the long-term health of the property with a conservation easement through Mississippi Valley Conservancy.

On a larger scale, she is also improving and protecting the ecological balance of the watershed as a whole. This includes the Buffalo River and the adjacent Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Dennis Reimers, a conservationist from the Natural Resources Conservation Service who has been advising Aimee on her



conservation planning, underscores the importance of the erosion control ponds that have been created on her farm. “This farm is located on the first terrace above the Buffalo River. This landscape position typically has some of most erosive soil types in the county.” Yet Aimee is turning that around; her ponds trap sediment and pollution from rain runoff that would otherwise leach to nearby streams and wetlands just 100 feet away. Her property also sutures the gap in wildlife byways with over 20 listed species categorized as special concern, threatened, or endangered adjacent to this site, including bobolinks nesting in the hayfields and little brown bats roosting in Aimee’s barn.

Achieving a sustainable future for Aimee’s land will still take time, and she understands the recovery milestones ahead. Her plans include support from Farm Bill programs for further integrating pollinator plantings with farmland, removing farmland from production to create more balance for wildlife habitat, as well as starting conservation practices for woodland areas, according to her newly developed forest management plan. “Farming for the land, wildlife, supporting people who rely on a farming way of life and the communities that small family farms create. I view conservation as integrated work,” Aimee says.

She quotes a saying she finds useful: “Want to go fast, go alone; want to go farther, go together.” Aimee lives this idea through her membership with the Conservancy and other local conservation organizations and information sources. On a more personal level, she shares, “Spiritual teachers have guided me step by step along the path, friends are an important source of inspiration and support, and my husband, Tom,

has been instrumental in making all these conservation projects happen. His 37 years of working in land conservation for this county bring his life’s work to this farm, and in turn, have brought this farm to life.”

“Caring for the land is nursing on the largest scale,” Aimee says. “It is intergenerational work, and it is soul work. Life brings questions and uncertainties. Land allows you to hold that and express it, fostering creativity and imagination.” These non-linear, reciprocal ties of ecology and healing also extend to her own family history. Aimee is a lineal descendant of the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute Bands of Dakota. She is gratified that her ethic of caretaking stretches back to earlier generations of mixed Dakota, French, and Swiss-German ancestors, knowing that the land she now owns and conserves used to belong to the Dakota, and that one of her indigenous grandmothers witnessed the will that eventually transferred the property to Aimee.

Through the Conservancy’s easement, Aimee has ensured that her land and its inhabitants will be protected from future subdivision and development that could disrupt all she has done to restore its health. The conservation easement was signed on Aimee’s birthday, and she says, “A conservation easement will be a most meaningful birthday gift in honor of life—this interconnected web of life.”



Left: Aimee’s vision for the property was a key component of the planning process as the conservation easement was developed. Top right: One of many retention ponds found throughout the property designed to stop sediment from entering nearby waterways.

MORE LANDS PROTECTED

Each year, we receive many requests to preserve land in the Driftless Area. Each conservation project we take on requires careful analysis of the land's natural resources, its location relative to other protected land, and its potential to mitigate the effects of extreme weather. There is a lot of discussion to be sure we understand the landowner's needs and desires, and to ensure we can reach an agreement that meets the long-term needs of both parties. It is a time-consuming but incredibly important process that ensures that together we can agree on the terms for forever protecting the land – an act that is beneficial to all.



198
a c r e s

With the purchase of this floodplain forest, marsh, and meadow along the Wisconsin River in Grant County, the Conservancy has guaranteed public access and protection to a part of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway – a landmark project in the state's land conservation history. Designated by the Ramsar Convention as a "wetland of international importance," the Wisconsin Riverway, including the Woodman Floodplain State Natural Area in Grant County, provides exceptionally diverse wetlands and floodplain forest, southern sedge meadow, emergent marsh, and wild rice marsh. The purchase of this property was made possible by funding through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the National Wild Turkey Federation Hunting Heritage Super Fund, and an in-kind donation by the seller.

85 a c r e s

Hillsides bursting with Virginia bluebells and other spring ephemerals and 1,500 feet along Tainter Creek are now permanently protected thanks to the conservation easement signed by Tom Seals and Ruth Wene, Gear and Linda Kimmel, and John Jones and Joan Volkmann with Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Tainter Creek is a well-known class I trout stream with populations of brook and brown trout. With meandering oxbows along the creek, the property also supports a healthy population of frogs, turtles, beavers, and waterfowl. Ruth, an avid birder, has identified more than 80 species on the property including several rare species such as the American bittern, cerulean warbler, eastern meadowlark, red-headed woodpecker, and ruby-crowned kinglet. Far from the lights of town, the stars and fireflies create a magical backdrop for this quiet retreat which is now protected forever.



33 a c r e s

When they purchased this property nearly 20 years ago, the wooded areas were dark and many of the trees were dead or dying. Landowners Christine Kelley and Jerry Schmidt set out on a mission to clean up the woods to let in more light and then planted more than 5,000 red and white pine, caring for them as if they were their children. Their hard work has nurtured a diverse habitat that is a haven for wildlife including pine warblers, Louisiana waterthrush, porcupine, black bear, and others. This property and its banks along a half-mile stretch of Halls Creek north of Black River Falls are now protected forever thanks to a conservation easement with Mississippi Valley Conservancy. In addition to providing a scenic experience for paddlers traveling through the property, their efforts to protect the complex wetlands along Halls Creek is an important climate strategy and will ensure the property will be more resilient to the effects of climate change.

(continued on page 15)

Conservancy helps care for cultural heritage in Grant County

By Chris Kirkpatrick, Conservation Manager



Every year, landowners of the properties protected by the Conservancy are invited to submit requests for the services of our intern crew. Their projects come in all sizes and shapes. A unique request was received in 2024 from one landowner. Nestled above the bluffs of the Mississippi River is a remnant dry prairie and oak savanna along with a group of conical burial mounds that are protected as part of the conservation easement. Even though their property is conserved, each of the easement landowners is responsible for the maintenance and habitat management of their property. In addition to conserving land, another important role the Conservancy plays is offering and providing land management advice and intern crew support to easement landowners to assist them with their endeavors.

Landowner Diane Greenley was seeking advice on restoring oak savanna and dry prairie along her ridgeline while also clearing brush from the burial mounds. Oak savanna is designated by the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory as globally critically imperiled because so few acres of restored functional oak savanna remain in the state of Wisconsin. Restoration efforts to remove invasive brush like honey-

suckle would encourage the proliferation of native plants and insects that require this unique environment.

Dianne had a proposal from Quercus Land Stewardship, an ecological restoration company to conduct the work, and the Conservancy was able to work with her to approve the work as a habitat restoration plan per her conservation easement. The Ho-Chunk Nation provided the Conservancy with mound preservation and maintenance guidelines, which were incorporated into the approval process. These guidelines outline the recommended maintenance that includes a phased approach to removing trees and shrubs on and around burial mounds and encouraging the use of prescribed fire to maintain the mounds as oak savanna.

In the spring, Conservation Manager Chris Kirkpatrick met with Dianne at her property as part of the annual easement monitoring visit. A hike out to the work area revealed a restored oak savanna and dry prairie, as well as a couple of burial mounds cleared of brush. Unfortunately, as the project was underway, conditions warmed up, and the ground thawed. The contractors weren't able to clear all the burial mounds without frozen conditions. Dianne had also been selected to have the services of the

Below: Burial mounds showing before (left) and after (right) removing brush and invasive plants from a burial mound on a protected property.





Top: A breathtaking view from the top of Dianne's protected property.

Conservancy's intern crew, and we agreed that getting a firebreak established would be the priority, with clearing the remaining burial mounds as secondary. This would enable the entire site to be managed with prescribed fire to control invasive brush, encourage the native fire-dependent species to thrive, and help to keep the brush and trees from growing on the burial mounds.

The Conservancy's intern crew arrived at Dianne's property and spent the morning cutting up dead trees, downed logs, invasive brush, and small trees to make an old trail drivable by UTV and create a perfect firebreak for future use. After months of drought, the conditions had dried up significantly, and the crew pivoted to clear the remaining burial mounds of brush and small trees. The intern crew was able to accomplish a great deal of work, and now the foundation has been laid for Dianne to manage her property and care for the burial mounds in the years to come.

Every property protected by the Conservancy is as unique as the landowner who cares for it. Each one is home to treasures of one kind or another, be they rare butterflies, nesting habitat for migrating birds, clean water, or burial mounds. One of our jobs at the Conservancy is to support the landowners in caring for those treasures for the health and well-being of the Driftless Area. This is one of the reasons we value meeting with landowners during our annual monitoring visits. The more we know about a landowner's vision for the property, the more we can help with advice and resources to achieve that vision. It was a tremendous honor to be able to help Dianne not only continue the process of restoring imperiled natural communities but also respectfully care for the ancestral grounds of those who first called this land their home.



Middle: Pennsylvania sedge, located on Dianne's property, is a nice oak savanna indicator grass. (photo by Melinda Knutson)



Right: Dianne stands near the sacred burial grounds on her property. (photo by Melinda Knutson)



What's your link to the land?

Join us to learn from local experts who will share their knowledge and love for the land.



Want to get outdoors and surround yourself with nature? *Linked to the Land* was created so that everyone can discover more about the beauty that surrounds us. You'll get to know more about the nature preserves you've protected and the many native habitats and wildlife species that make our part of Wisconsin unique. Once you get to know the nature preserves, we think you'll enjoy them more and feel confident about going back on your own and introducing them to friends.

The hikes and workshops are all free for anyone to join, and most of them require only average physical agility and no special gear.

Each activity is hosted by Conservancy staff and guided by natural science experts from our area. We typically have several guides on each hike, so all participants have a chance to ask questions and learn more.

This year's *Linked to the Land* activities are sponsored by Olson Solar Energy. We're grateful for their support and excited about the rapidly expanding use of renewable energy that helps protect our land, water, and wildlife. Thanks also go to our media partner for this program, WXOW/News 19.

MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS



REMINDER: Hiking on muddy trails causes real damage to water and wildlife. If you can see your tracks, turn back.

HAPPY HIKING!

The 2025 Challenge starts on April 27!

Challenge yourself and enjoy the beauty of the trails at our most accessible nature preserves.

Details at: www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/ttc

Hike with family and friends or go solo in the 2025 Trail Trek Challenge. It's the free hiking program you can participate in throughout the year when the timing works for you. A downloadable trail guide and maps are free, too. And there's a nature hunt for every trail to help keep young people engaged.

It all starts at Earth Fair in La Crosse on April 27, 2025

We'll celebrate those who completed last year's challenge (continuing through 4/16/2025), and we'll warm up for a new year of hiking with a guided walk around the La Crosse River Marsh. Make a resolution to make even more great memories in the next year by getting outside to hike with your family and friends!



2025 SCHEDULE OF WALKS AND WORKSHOPS

Details and registration are updated throughout the year on our website. Advance registration is required for all events. Follow us on Facebook or the website for reminders about upcoming activities: MississippiValleyConservancy.org/events.

Feb 20	CREATE HABITAT FOR NATIVE BEES	La Crosse Public Library
Mar 24	MAKE A PLAN TO TACKLE INVASIVES	Historic Hotel Fortney, Viroqua
May 10	WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY HIKE	Sugar Creek Bluff
June 14	BIOBLITZ EVENT	Holland Sand Prairie
July 12	BAT CAVE ECOLOGY TOURS	Kickapoo Caverns
Aug 9	PRAIRIE WALK & TALK	New Amsterdam Grasslands
Sept 6	SCOUTING FOR DEER & INVASIVES	Boscobel Bluffs
Oct 11	PRAIRIE STARGAZING WALK	Tunnelville Cliffs
Nov 6	BIRDS OF SW WISCONSIN	Zoom Presentation



SPACE IS LIMITED. BE SURE TO REGISTER EARLY FOR EVENTS!

MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN OUTDOORS • MORE FUN

Become a citizen scientist!

The Driftless Area BioBlitz is a free, annual, one-of-a-kind opportunity for families, students, and all nature lovers to search for and learn about plants and wildlife in the Driftless Area. Join us with our community conservation partners to discover and catalog the species that live here!



Details at: <https://natureplacelacrosse.org/what-we-do/community-science>

The Driftless Area BioBlitz is a collaboration of The Nature Place, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, UW-La Crosse Biology Department, Viterbo University Biology Department, and the City of La Crosse Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.





Above: Jared takes a minute to capture an image at a recent burn conducted at his job with the WI DNR.

Jared Vander Loop, Forestry Technician, WI DNR
Mississippi Valley Conservancy Intern 2015 & 2016

"I participated in my first prescribed burn ever with MVC in spring of 2015 at Tunnelville Cliffs State Natural Area. Since that day I have been hooked on fire. This spring will mark ten years that I've had fire responsibilities in my job duties. I've fought fire in numerous states at this point and still boss burns for the DNR here. Having the land conservation background is also beneficial as I do my forestry work, because I can identify things on the landscape that are of importance to protect and preserve. I feel I owe it all to that original experience. My advice to others is to try everything you can and do things that are outside your comfort zone. You never know when you will have an experience that will become your passion."

Below: Ethan (on the right) takes a break from his intern duties by an ancient oak.



Inspiring the next generation

"Mississippi Valley Conservancy success of our former interns who a conservation. From restoring ha in environmental stewardship, th making a lasting impact. Their a portance of investing in hands-o prepare the next generation of c we're building a brighter future 1

Skylar Glynn, GIS Specialist in Olmsted County
Mississippi Valley Conservancy Intern 2016 & 2017

"During my internship at the Conservancy, my tasks involved d final reports. This is what got me into my current position and l counties. I was also able to do walk-throughs on several proper land that I can protect with an easement. My advice is to say 'ye

Ethan Graves, Voluntary Public Access Program (VPA-HIP) Coordinator, WI DNR
Mississippi Valley Conservancy Intern 2016

"Levi (Mississippi Valley Conservancy Land Manager) gave me my first taste of conservation field work. The small engine maintenance, daily prep for fieldwork, delegation of tasks, teamwork, safety, and management techniques I was exposed to with the Conservancy definitely lent themselves to pursuing habitat management going forward. The experience working on private lands and with landowners also helped shape me professionally and exposed me to the private lands side of conservation. I currently assist private landowners with developing and enacting habitat management plans on their properties, and I'm responsible for 40,000 acres of public access lands and 250 leased properties."

ion of conservation leaders

r is proud to celebrate the suc-
re now shaping the future of
bitats to engaging communities
hese passionate individuals are
achievements highlight the im-
on experiences that inspire and
onservation leaders. Together,
for conservation leadership.”

- Carol Abrahamzon, Executive Director

rawing the parcel boundaries and creating maps for the
led to learning more about cadastral mapping for Minnesota
rties, which inspired me to one day hopefully purchase some
es’ to any experiences the Conservancy has to offer!”

LeAnna Kavanaugh, Administrative Outreach Specialist for Pepin County Land Conservation

Mississippi Valley Conservancy Intern 2017

“It wasn’t until I was surrounded by passionate conservationists at Mississippi Valley Conservancy that I realized how important conservation was. I now facilitate our department’s participation in a water monitoring program geared toward reducing the contribution of nitrates, phosphates, and sedimentation into local streams as they travel out of Pepin County. As an intern, I learned plant identification and skills for creating maps, and I have used those skills a lot as I help manage an 80-acre park full of new trails, and as I help manage restoration projects. I wouldn’t be where I am today without taking that first step as an intern at Mississippi Valley Conservancy.”



Above: Cal (in the middle seat) joins two other interns to clear trails used by hikers.

Calvin Brown, Biological Technician, Fort McCoy

Mississippi Valley Conservancy Intern 2022 & 2023

“I learned a lot about how the knowledge I learned in school, relating to ecology, plant biology, etc., informs how management decisions are made and how they are applied in the field in order to provide the greatest benefit for the ecosystems that are being worked in. The position also opened my eyes to a lot of the behind-the-scenes operations of land stewardship such as funding for various management projects, relations with private landowners and government agencies, and some of the logistics of organizing management efforts. The majority of the work I’m currently involved with on Fort McCoy is related to experimenting with new techniques to most effectively control long-established and emerging invasive plant species in order to provide the greatest benefit to the ecosystems in our area.”

Below: LeAnna handles a loon that was trapped in a pond near Durand.



A Measurable Impact

Thank you to the many talented volunteers of all kinds who help us throughout the year with habitat restoration, photography, guiding hikes, mailings, board and committee duties, data entry, events, videography, graphic design, writing, proofreading, easement monitoring, auctioneering, cooking, and more. Together, we all make a difference close to home.

In 2024, volunteers, interns and staff helped us accomplish the following habitat restoration work:



2024 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

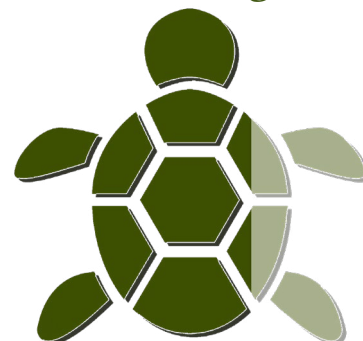
Every protected property requires an investment of scientific, legal, and administrative resources to assess, document, monitor, protect and support the health of the land. Fundraising and education efforts require time and resources to create awareness among landowners, members, school groups, and engage communities with our mission.

Your support makes it all possible.

Mississippi Valley Conservancy is committed to strong fiscal health. The financial summary at right is based on the complete financial audit that was conducted by Hawkins Ash CPAs. Their full report is available on our website or by contacting us at 608-784-3606 ext. 1.

Expense Allocation

75% Programs



*25%
Core
Mission
Support*

MORE LANDS PROTECTED (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

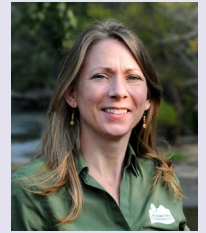
80
acres

A lifelong conservationist has now protected this private property within the Conservancy's Kickapoo River through a conservation easement. The landowner, who asked to remain anonymous, described this land as follows: "If you were looking at a view from space, this (land) is just a little speck of dust. But to the wildlife that lives here, to the tree frog, this is their whole world. Protecting it is the best thing I can do." The property has enjoyed decades of land stewardship, with thousands of trees planted, fostering the return of a diverse abundance of native flora and fauna species. These species range from the micro-organisms in the soil, which is once again teeming with life, to eastern meadowlarks, which feed upon the many insects that have returned the land, and eastern bluebirds, which can be found nestled away with their young in bluebird nesting boxes, and to the species of special concern Adam-and-Eve Orchid, which is found in abundance throughout the healthy woodlands on the property.

(Below: This newly protected private property is teeming with wildlife.)

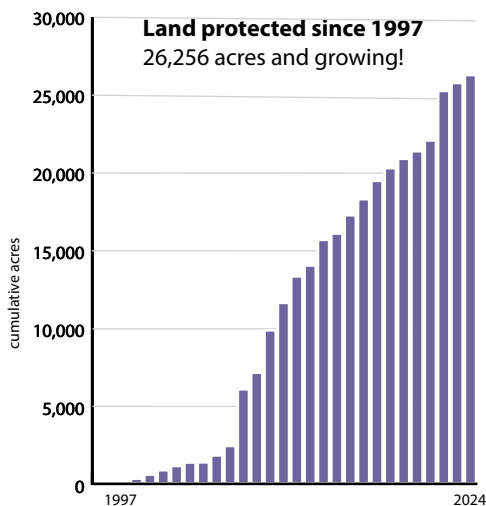


*A message from
Abbie Church,
Conservation
Director*



Throughout the year, we receive an abundance of interest from landowners interested protecting land. With each inquiry added to our waiting list, our team evaluates each property in the context of our (and our partners) priority areas, as well as the proximity to other protected lands.

Rare habitats or species, archaeological features, source waters, geology, soils, and climate resiliency are all evaluated, as are the benefits to the local community. Our highest priority is to stitch together those important pieces to permanently protect large, contiguous corridors of habitat, as they are proven to offer the greatest benefit to area wildlife. For all projects, it is the generous support of our members that enables us to have the skilled team we need to advance our land protection efforts.

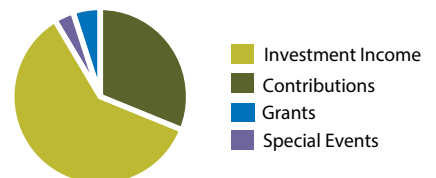


FY 2023-24 Expense Allocation
Total Expenses \$1,222,639



Land Management	\$ 387,948
Land Protection	344,396
Education & Outreach	316,499
Core Mission Support	173,796
Total Expenses	\$ 1,222,639

FY 2023-24 Fundraising Revenue
Total Revenue \$2,401,026



Investment Income	\$ 1,441,771
Contributions	752,985
Grants	119,200
Special Events	87,070
Total Revenue	\$ 2,401,026

Echoes of hope: Acoustic monitoring tools help scientists with bat conservation efforts

By Michael Reitz, Restoration Ecologist

This past summer, Conservancy staff borrowed an acoustic from the DNR and deployed for two weeks at two Crawford County nature preserves, Kickapoo Caverns and Plum Creek Conservation Area. The equipment started recording from sundown to sunrise to capture the sound of bats echolocating. These sounds can be used to identify the bat species present through a special software program.



Over those time periods, the device captured over 300 bat call recordings at Kickapoo Caverns and 3,200 bat call recordings at Plum Creek. Although acoustic recordings are not perfect identifications, the data suggested 4 or more species were likely recorded between the properties, including the big brown (state-threatened), eastern red, little brown (state threatened), and tricolored bat (state threatened). The Conservancy recently received a grant to purchase our own monitoring equipment to continue collecting data on the bats inhabiting our properties.

Each year, the DNR will continue to monitor these properties for hibernating bats. Along with acoustic monitoring, these results are signs of good news for bats, which have been threatened by white nose syndrome in Wisconsin since 2014. This year's survey showed an increase in population at these locations.

Your support makes it possible for us to continue to work with scientists and provide a safe and undisturbed sanctuary for bats. As we continue our work, we are reminded that every action we take today is an investment in the future—one that will ensure the bats, insects, and wildlife of the Driftless Area have a place to thrive for generations to come.



Top right: Jennifer Redell, Conservation Biologist with the DNR, collects data on the bats using Crawford County properties over the winter. Middle: Audio monitoring equipment at Kickapoo caverns, which is attached to a microphone at the top of the pole. Lower right: A banded tricolor bat overwintering at Kickapoo Caverns.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

A passion for protection: Two volunteers are making a big impact locally

By Payton Lott, Restoration Coordinator

Over the past few years, Vanessa and Randy have donated hundreds of hours of their time to assist with important conservation projects at Conservancy volunteer events, including removing invasive species, collecting native seeds, planting trees, and participating in prescribed burns.

Their efforts helping with prescribed fires have promoted growth of native plants and created more habitat for native species. By carefully collecting seeds from bluff prairies, they ensure that future generations of native prairie plants will continue to flourish on Mississippi Valley Conservancy preserves.

Randy and Vanessa have also removed invasive plants at twelve Conservancy preserves. It is inspiring to see the next generation of conservation leaders out in the field, determined to make an impact, and they are just two of the many volunteers giving back to protect the land close to home.

Without the support of volunteers, native restoration would not be possible, and this duo is encouraging others to join this mission. Volunteering to support environmental conservation is a perfect way to give back to our landscape, build community, and learn new skills. Every time someone volunteers, they help restore and preserve native habitats, giving native plants and animals a chance to thrive. This important work helps maintain the ecological balance of the beautiful Driftless Area and protect its unique biodiversity. Learn how you can make a difference at MississippiValleyConservancy.org/volunteer.



Vanessa and Randy volunteering at Sugar Creek Bluff near Ferryville.

Support Conservation Close to Home by Giving Through Your IRA

Every day, your donations are making a difference close to home by providing funds for restoration efforts, land management activities, and the day-to-day operations of this local land trust, which makes it possible to protect the birds, bees, frogs, turtles, butterflies, and other wildlife that depend on native habitats to do their jobs in our shared ecosystems. Our next generation of people, plants and animals rely on us to protect the prairies, forests, wetlands, streams, and farmlands to nourish their bodies, lift their spirits, and thrive in the natural world.

For those 70¹/₂ years old+

You can give any amount (up to a maximum of \$100,000) per year from your IRA directly to a qualified charity such as Mississippi Valley Conservancy without having to pay income taxes on it. This popular gift option is commonly referred to as an IRA charitable rollover, also known as a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). The gift can satisfy required minimum distributions.

For those 59¹/₂ years old

If you are at least 59¹/₂ years old, you can take a distribution from your IRA and donate it to the Conservancy without penalty. If you itemize your deductions, you can take a charitable deduction for the amount of your gift.

At any age

No matter your age, you can designate Mississippi Valley Conservancy as the beneficiary of all or a part of your IRA and it will be gifted tax-free after your lifetime. It's simple – just contact your IRA administrator to request a change of beneficiary.

Thanks to YOU, amazing things are happening.

2024 MEMBERS

217 on Main
Alex Aaker
Philip and Kathy Aaker
Brian and Joyce Abernathy
Chris and
Deborah Abrahamson
Jennifer Abrahamson
Carol and Bill Abrahamson
Karen Acker
Marilyn Adam and Ralph Tauke
Amy Adams
John and Maureen Adams
William and Peg Agger
Therese Ahlers
Rhonda Akeson and
Duane Lom
Rick and Barb Albrechtson
Mark and Tracy Aleckson
Michael Aleckson
Greg and Molly Aleckson
Sheri and Andy Allen
ALM Charities
Altra Federal Credit Union
Ronald and Therese Amel
James and Debra Ames
Patricia Amsrud
Jan Amundson
Raymond and Jodi Andersen
Craid Anderson and Kile Martz
David and Janine Anders
Judy Anderson
Karen Arneson Miller
Joyce Arthur
Artsiders
Connie Arzigian
Associated Bank N.A.
Margaret Bade
James and Carolyn Bagniewski
Terry Baier
Valerie Bailey-Rihn and
David Rihn
Kevin and Betty Baird
Dr. Vance Baker
Adam Balin and Karin Mahony
David Bange
Jim and Marlene Bannen
Frank and Irene Barmore
Bruce and Kathy Bartel
Tom and Kathy Barth
Craig and Mary Bartos
Bill and Marsha Bateman
Robert Bauer
Bill Bauman
Dr. James and
Peggy Baumgaertner
Judy Bautch

Allan Beatty
Dennis and Joyce Beekman
Julia and Thomas Behrenbeck
Randall Bekkers
and Laurie Harmon
Erin and Colin Belby
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Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a regional, nonprofit land trust based in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Conservancy has permanently conserved 26,256 acres of blufflands, prairies, wetlands, streams, and farmlands in Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties since its founding in 1997. Over 7,000 acres are open to the public for hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, photography, and snowshoeing.

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2025 Annual Friends Gathering



SAVE *the* DATE:
March 29, 2025
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Join us for coffee and breakfast goodies as we celebrate the past year and welcome guest speaker Dan Jackson, renowned wildlife photographer and conservation advocate, as he tells the tale of “Damsels and Dragons of Wisconsin.”

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Photo of a Halloween Pennant by Dan Jackson