

Conserving Wisconsin's Natural Heritage

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*On the cover:
Bradley Creek State Natural Area
Thomas Meyer, WDNR*

Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Conservation Program

Dear Wisconsin Conservationist:

We are excited to share our 2013 Annual Report with you to celebrate all the great work your support has made possible, and to let you know of the wonderful opportunities available to join your fellow conservationists in preserving Wisconsin's natural heritage.

Our program has undergone significant changes over the past year. We have refocused our efforts, charted a new course and adopted a new name which better reflects the breadth of our work. While we may no longer be called the Endangered Resources Program, our mission remains the same; to work with citizens of our state to preserve the special places and species that make Wisconsin... *Wisconsin*.

In the coming year we will be adding to the ranks of our field ecologists, increasing services to private landowners and communities and will begin implementing a new strategy for managing our State Natural Areas.

We invite you to join our community of caretakers. You can make a difference by becoming a volunteer monitor, adopting a State Natural Area or by making a financial contribution. No matter how you participate, you'll be ensuring that future generations can experience the original, natural Wisconsin.

Sincerely,



Erin Crain
Natural Heritage Conservation Program Director



Natural Heritage Conservation program staff.

DNR FILE

FISCAL YEAR 2013

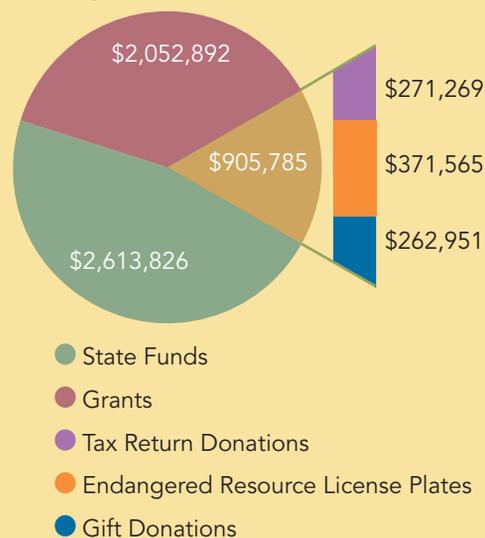
Category	Total	%
State Funds ¹	\$2,613,826	46.9
Grants	\$2,052,892	36.8
Tax Return Donations	\$271,269	4.9
Endangered Resource License Plates	\$371,565	6.7
Gift Donations	\$262,951	4.7
Total	\$5,572,503	100

DONOR FUNDS

Donation Type	Total	Donors
Tax Return Donations	\$271,269	14,512
Endangered Resource License Plate Sales	\$371,565	14,880
Gift Donations	\$262,951	–
Total	\$905,785	29,392

¹ Includes General Purpose Revenue (GPR), funds from other State agencies, and revenue generated through DNR services such as license and timber sales.

Natural Heritage Conservation Program Funding (FY 2013)



Funding for this 2013 Natural Heritage Conservation Program annual report was made possible by a private donation.

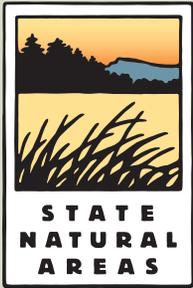
Taking care of your treasures

As few as 150 years ago, Wisconsin contained a mosaic of natural communities, from the rolling prairies and oak savannas in the south, to the verdant pine forests and boggy wetlands of the north. The Natural Heritage Conservation program works to protect these treasures, now and for future generations.



Protecting natural communities

State Natural Areas (SNAs) protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscapes, significant geological formations and archeological sites, and provide some of the last refuges for rare plant and animal species. Wisconsin's 600+ State Natural Areas are valuable for research and educational use, are open to public access and provide places for recreating, preserve genetic and biological diversity and provide benchmarks for determining the stressors on managed lands.



- In 2013, the SNA program acquired more than 3,400 acres of high-quality prairie, fen, floodplain forest, boreal wetlands and coastal plain marshes, including more than 1,600 acres of easement to protect and enhance habitat for the endangered Kirtland's warbler.
- In 2014, the SNA program will begin a new management strategy for State Natural Areas and will increase services to private landowners and communities by adding additional field ecologists around the state.



Kettle Moraine Oak Opening State Natural Area.

THOMAS MEYER, WDNR

Protecting bats from extinction

With white-nose syndrome sweeping across the country, the Wisconsin Bat Program (WBP) is preparing for the arrival of this devastating disease by monitoring bat hibernacula, helping landowners protect cave bat species and participating in research to find a cure for the disease. The program's goal is to prevent extinction, monitor bat health and implement adaptive management actions to sustain or recover one of Wisconsin's greatest natural species for the benefit of future generations.

- In 2013, nearly 1,000 volunteers assisted WBP in two acoustic and bat roost monitoring projects. These projects helped to vastly increase our knowledge of all bat

species in the state, helped confirm the current absence of white-nose syndrome in Wisconsin bats and educated thousands of citizens through the Wisconsin Bat Festival and other outreach programs.

- In 2014 we will continue to use these citizen-based monitoring and research efforts to help fight white-nose syndrome in Wisconsin.



HEATHER KAARAKKA, WDNR

DNR Ecologist Armund Bartz from La Crosse holds a gray ratsnake.

Meet your district ecologists

Scattered across the state are local ecologists who provide expertise to partners and public land organizations. The ecologists also help both private and public land managers with the conservation and restoration of natural communities and rare species.



J. PAUL WHITE, WDNR

Cluster of little brown bats in a hibernaculum.

Partnering with others

No single entity can manage all the rare plants and animals of the state on its own. Gathering information, developing management plans and preserving habitat are all crucial aspects of the Natural Heritage Conservation program's rare species work, but partnering is truly essential to preserving Wisconsin's special places and species.



Getting citizens involved

The Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) program's citizen-based monitoring network is designed to expand public involvement in terrestrial and aquatic natural resources. NHC works with community and school groups, conservation organizations and other agencies to gather critical, statewide information.



- In 2013, the network launched its Facebook page to serve network members as a clearinghouse for updates, project information and training announcements. The network also helped fund 21 citizen-based monitoring projects throughout the state.

Knowledge is power

The Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) provides land managers with information on natural communities and rare and declining species. The NHC program maintains the Natural Heritage Inventory — the state's only comprehensive database on rare species observations. Through training and access to this data, NHC works with developers and landowners at early stages of their projects to help save time and money by avoiding potential problems while at the same time guiding conservation for the properties.

- In 2013, NHC supported sustainable forestry efforts by monitoring goshawks, breeding birds and ephemeral ponds on managed state forests and helped protect nearly 1,000 new natural communities and rare species populations by incorporating and implementing new information into the NHI database.



SUSAN CARPENTER

Citizen-based bumble bee monitoring at the UW-Madison Arboretum.

- In 2014, NHI projects will include updating the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan, monitoring in the Brule River State Forest and assisting with research on a new fungal disease affecting snakes.

Everyone helps

The vast majority of Wisconsin land is not publicly owned. Private landowners play a key role in helping conserve Wisconsin's natural heritage. The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) helps private landowners create and manage habitat, provides assistance with management plans and offers cost-share funding to individuals and organizations.



- In 2013, LIP provided \$80,000 in cost-share funds to 14 landowners, helped restore over 800 acres of private land and provided landowners with one-on-one professional and technical assistance.

Helping to lower project impacts

The Endangered Resources Review Program (ERRP) helps customers and partners comply with Wisconsin's endangered species laws and helps conserve the rare plants, animals and ecosystems found in Wisconsin. ERRP works with land-



DNR FILE

The American Players Theater prairie near Spring Green is a participant in the Landowner Incentive Program.

owners, businesses, communities and other customers and partners to consider the potential impacts to rare and sensitive species and habitats early in the project planning process. ERRP's goal is a cooperative, partnership-based approach to land use and management in Wisconsin that proactively and effectively conserves Wisconsin's natural resources.

- In 2013, ERRP created a new online system to assist businesses and communities to protect rare species.
- In 2014, ERRP will develop a program that helps private landowners create and protect native habitat.



KEVIN DOYLE, WDNR

Citizen scientists monitor rare plants at Mueller Prairie in southwest Wisconsin.

In 2013, hundreds of volunteers donated an estimated 100,000 hours of their time to monitor and inventory Wisconsin's rare species.

Join the community

The majority of the Natural Heritage Conservation program is supported through donations and grants. You can join the natural heritage community in several ways, including volunteering as a citizen scientist or by making a financial contribution to a specific project.



Become a citizen scientist

By volunteering your time and expertise as a citizen scientist, you can help gather long-term data about everything from rare plants and animals to water quality and climate adaptation. To learn more about citizen-based monitoring or to choose a subject area, please visit: wiatri.net/cbm/ or [facebook.com/Wisconsin-CitizenBasedMonitoringNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/Wisconsin-CitizenBasedMonitoringNetwork).

Adopt a State Natural Area or an eagle nest

You can adopt an individual State Natural Area by providing financial or volunteer support for the property's upkeep. You can also adopt an eagle nest! Your financial support for bald eagles helps with their continued protection and management and you will receive a certificate of adoption for your eagle. To find out more, visit: wisconsin.gov or dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources.

Buy the badger

You can show your support for Wisconsin's natural heritage by renewing your license plate with an NHC badger license plate. The badger plate and the traditional wolf plate are both offered when you renew your license plate. For each plate purchased, \$25 goes directly to efforts to conserve Wisconsin's natural heritage.

The badger license plate and income tax check off are two ways to support the NHC program.



RYAN BRADY, WDNR

Volunteer bird watchers help gather data as part of Wisconsin's citizen-based monitoring network.

Tax check off

From bats to bullsnakes, orchids to ovenbirds and native prairies to natural areas, staff from the NHC program work to conserve the Wisconsin you love. Financial contributions, like donating through the Wisconsin income tax check off, provide up to 40 percent of all funds we use to protect Wisconsin's rare wildlife and natural areas. Your gift is matched dollar for dollar by state funds — doubling the impact of your donation!



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Donations and financial contributions to the NHC program are used to help protect Wisconsin's rare species such as the American marten.

Direct donation

You can also support NHC by making a direct donation to the program. You can donate to the general NHC program or to specific projects like the Trumpeter Swan Fund or the Wisconsin Bat Program. Donations are matched dollar for dollar up to \$500,000. To learn more or to donate, please visit: dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources.

R & D for conservation

Maintaining Wisconsin's rare plants and animals is a challenging task. With many native plants and animals becoming less common, gathering the most accurate and up-to-date scientific information through research and development (R and D) is a critical component to their conservation.

Assessing listed and proposed species

How will a changing habitat affect the species? Are common conservation and protection practices working? The Natural Heritage Conservation (NHC) program seeks to answer these and many other important questions using tools such as the Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Inventory, Natural Heritage Inventory database, statewide inventory and monitoring programs and extensive rare species research.

Fighting the good fight

The Terrestrial Invasive Plant Team is a joint effort to address policy, rules, prevention, early detection and control of invasive plant species in Wisconsin. Invasive plants affect the health of our forests, prairies, parks, urban landscapes and more. When these places are invaded and unhealthy, the native species that use them suffer.

- In 2013, the Terrestrial Invasive Plant Team worked with the Department of Transportation and local units of government to improve management of highway right-of-ways to minimize the spread of invasive plants, completed roadside weed inventories and formed new cooperative weed management areas.

Researching rare species

The NHC program manages and researches several groups of species including:

Rare birds – Part of NHC's mission is the conservation of rare, endangered and threatened non-game bird species in Wisconsin and the habitats in the state that they rely upon.

- In 2013, the NHC Bird Team completed nest surveys and in-



JOEL TRICK

Nest monitors Daryl Christensen and Valarie Michel prepare to release a Kirtland's warbler after it was captured and banded with an identifying leg band.

ventoried and monitored state properties which allow for habitat management of rare species.

- In 2014, the Bird Team will expand their stop-over program which establishes habitat for migrating birds.

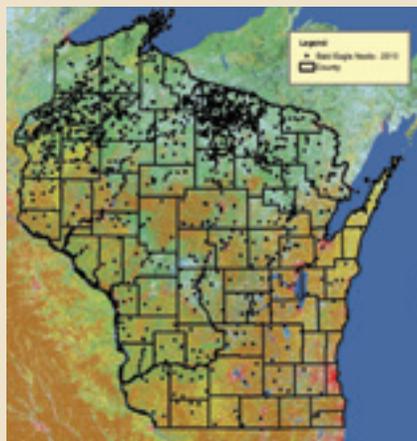
Karner blue butterfly recovery –

The Karner Recovery Project monitors populations of this rare, small blue insect whose caterpillars feed only on the leaves and flower buds of wild lupine. Recovery efforts include monitoring population levels,



GREGOR SCHUURMAN, WDNR

Karner blue butterfly.



DNR FILE

Statewide bald eagle nest locations.

conducting research on the barrens, savanna and dry sandy prairies where they live and working with property managers to maintain, enhance or create new habitat.

- In 2013, the Karner Recovery Project developed remote sensing tools to identify the locations of potential Karner habitat, and assisted property owners in restoring more than 700 acres of habitat.



GREGOR SCHURMAN, WDNR

The Wisconsin Turtle Conservation Program helps promote effective management of species such as the Blandings turtle.

Wisconsin Odonata Survey – The Wisconsin Odonata Survey (WOS) engages citizen volunteers to document populations of dragonflies and damselflies. Knowing where Wisconsin’s 164 species of these insects live allows managers to make informed decisions about protecting their important habitats. For more information, please visit: wiatri.net/inventory/odonata/.

- In 2013, citizen scientists reported 3,740 observations of dragonfly and damselfly species, including 151 new county records. WOS instructors trained 275 people (including over 80 children) on the ecology and identification of odonates during various field trips and presentations.

Herptiles – There are 36 species of reptiles and 19 species of amphibians in Wisconsin. Over half of these herptiles are endangered, threatened or of special concern. Amphibians and reptiles across the country are in decline due to various causes, but monitoring and researching these rare species can help determine the causes of decline and prevent future species loss. NHC coordinates several herptile programs such as the 29-year-old Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey.

- In 2013, the NHC program completed comprehensive northern cricket frog surveys in southwest Wisconsin and launched the Wisconsin Turtle Conservation Program which helps promote effective management and conservation for Wisconsin’s turtle species.

The endangered American marten

– Once lost from Wisconsin, NHC has worked to successfully restore the American marten to Wisconsin’s boreal forests. Continued monitoring and habitat research is critical to maintaining and growing marten populations in the state.



DNR FILE

A female marten on a den box shortly after being released by biologists.

- In 2013, NHC staff conducted annual snow tracking surveys to monitor marten populations in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, and verified marten sightings which will help NHC maintain accurate records of the American marten’s range in northern Wisconsin.

Rare invertebrates – NHC’s Invertebrate Team is responsible for collecting data, monitoring, and conserving rare terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, including insects, snails, mussels, crustaceans and other rare species in Wisconsin.

- In 2013, the Invertebrate Team conducted inventories and monitoring of rare invertebrates such as the Poweshiek skipperling butterfly and snuffbox mussel.



DNR FILE

Volunteers document dragonflies during a field trip.

“Thank you so much for doing the dragonfly seminar! It was so fun! I learned so much and now I really would like to learn more about them! It was so much fun that me and Grandpa are going to start doing this more! Thanks again.”

– Andy G, age 12.

From a letter received following a dragonfly lecture and outing.



The painting “Endangered Wisconsin” by Thomas Ferrella depicts 17 endangered plants and animals native to Wisconsin. Explains the artist, “After several unsuccessful attempts at sighting the Hine’s emerald dragonfly at Kangaroo Lake State Natural Area, I decided to do a painting. As a result of my research through the Natural Heritage Inventory, I not only discovered the shocking number of endangered species in Wisconsin, but also their intrinsic beauty.

“My hope is to use art as an educational tool to highlight these species and to help us unite to make a difference in Wisconsin’s ecosystem.”

Prints of “Endangered Wisconsin” are available with a donation to the NHC program. To learn more, please visit dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources.



Thomas Ferrella is a working artist in Madison and is an avid canoeist and fan of the State Natural Area program. To see more of his work go to ferrella.com.



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This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call the Department of Natural Resources Accessibility Coordinator at 608-267-7490 for more information.



Conservation of our natural heritage requires longterm vision and support. **The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin** was created specifically to serve Wisconsin’s diverse conservation needs. We are here to advise you and to discuss how establishing a fund can provide critical support for the lands and species you cherish. Contact us at info@wisconservation.org or call (866) 264-4096.