



# Ice Age Drift

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[www.dane.iceagetrail.org](http://www.dane.iceagetrail.org)

## Sorting Out the Complex

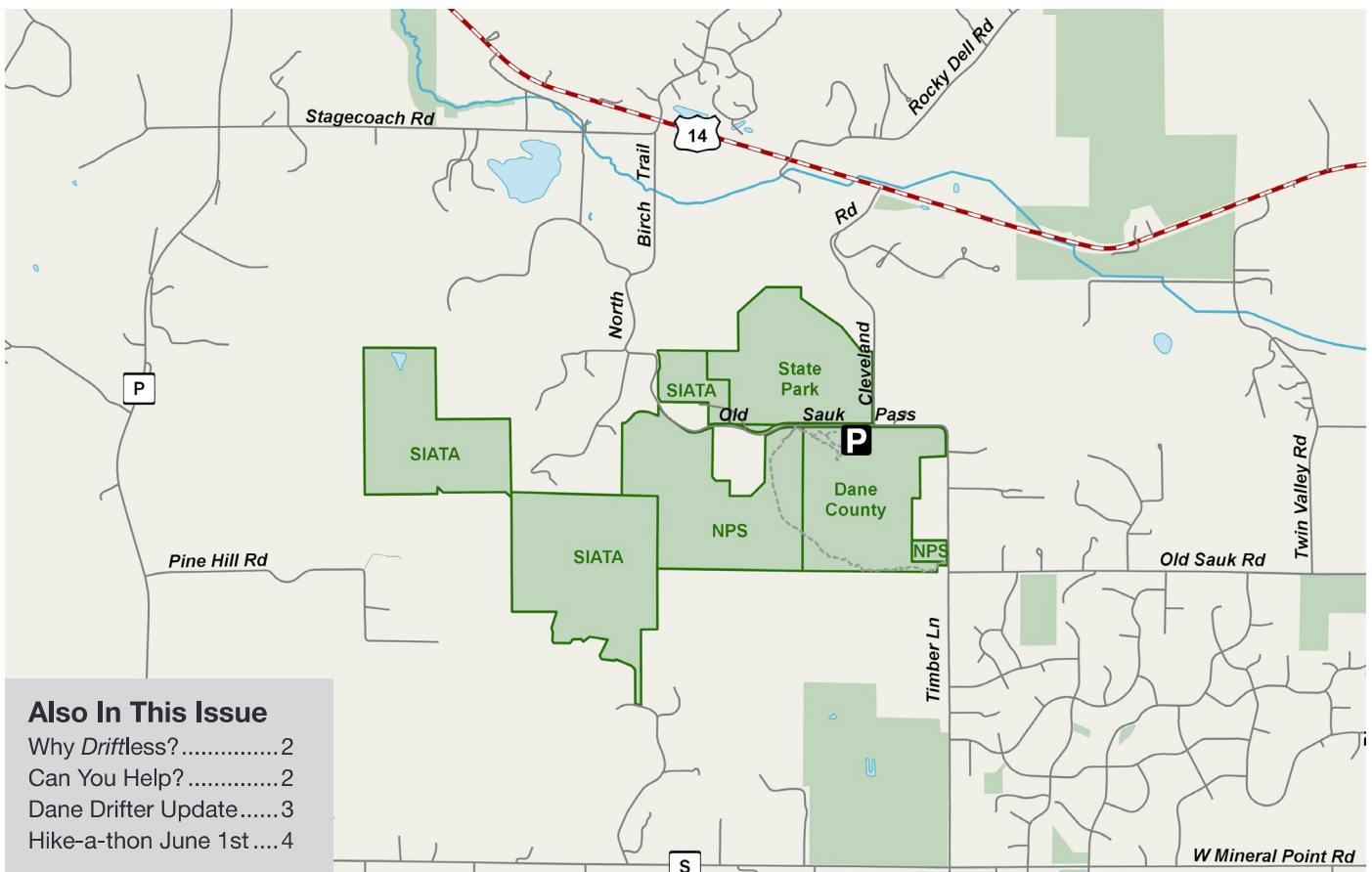
Article by Tom Gross

The Cross Plains Ice Age Trail Complex describes a large area between Cross Plains and Middleton, west of Timber Lane and on both sides of Old Sauk Pass Rd. Ownership is divided among the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Dane County. The area features: Shoveler's Sink, a large pond that continually disappears into a hole in the earth; wonderful views of Blue Mounds, the Baraboo Hills, and the Black Earth Creek Valley; a goat prairie where pasque flowers bloom in spring; bedrock outcrops and boulders dropped by the glacier; and an old farmhouse and barn. But the highlight is the Wilkie Gorge; a meandering, V-shaped valley that geologists tell us was carved by glacier meltwater over a very short time –like several weeks – after the water found a way around or under the tongue of ice that had been blocking its flow to the Black Earth Creek valley.

There has been lots of activity at the Complex lately and even more is planned for this year. The recent work has focused on creating a new trail around the upper section of the gorge,

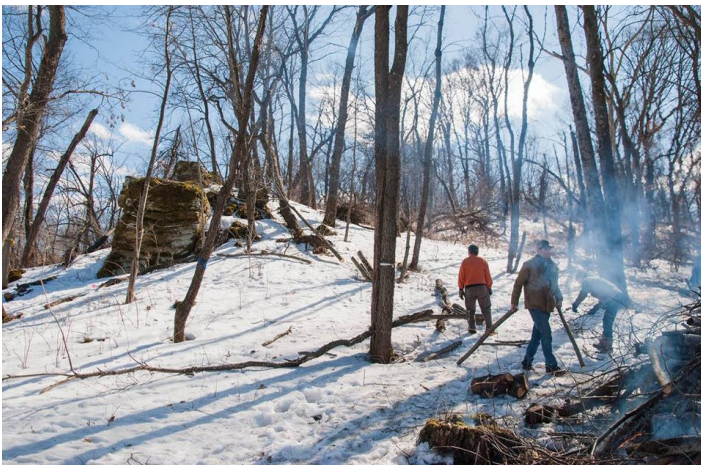
on county property on the south side of Old Sauk Pass Rd. A parking lot was added late last year, though the trail itself still needs some work to finish it. More recently, work has begun on clearing the route of a new section of the IAT which will run south from Old Sauk Pass near the eastern edge of the NPS property, and thence southeast and east through the woods to Timber Lane. A Mobile Skills Crew (MSC) project will build that new Trail June 19-23. Volunteers are needed for all aspects of hosting an MSC project, such as food preparation and greeting volunteers, in addition to building the trail tread. If you are interested in helping out, see the Ice Age Trail website: [iceagetrail.org/volunteer](http://iceagetrail.org/volunteer)

Work is to begin this summer on converting the farmhouse into a contact station for visitors to the site and possibly offices for some of the NPS staff currently working in Madison. In preparation for this work, an archeological survey has been conducted to determine whether there were any sites of historical interest on the NPS property. The survey focused on the vicinity of the farmhouse and also on the south portion of the property which is the likely route for additional Trail someday. ...Continued on page 2



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Clearing corridor for new Trail in the Cross Plains Complex from NPS property to Timber Lane // Photo by Rachel Roberts

### Sorting Out the Complex...Continued from page 1

No evidence of pre-historic human activity was discovered so the planned work can proceed.

The Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management Team, led by Isaiah Messerly and based in northern Wisconsin, has been visiting the NPS property for 1-2 weeks each year since 2009. The Team works to control (remove) invasive plant species and encourage the propagation of native species. To that end, a one-acre section in the SE corner of the hay field on NPS property was treated with herbicide to clean out the invaders (and everything else) and then it was planted with prairie seeds last fall. According to Messerly, "(t)his one acre planting will assist in providing a demonstration/test planting for the rest of the open fields as well as pollinator habitat. It will also reduce the amount of yellow toadflax, leafy spurge, and wild parsnip found on the Interpretive Site".

Ultimately, the Exotic Plant Team would like to use fire as a tool to control invasive species, just as we do now on many properties in Dane County through which the Trail passes. The IAT is one of a dozen Midwest Parks and Trails whose fire management is governed by the fire management team at Indiana Dunes National Park. NPS staff and the Indiana Dunes team are nearing completion of a fire management plan for the NPS portion of the Complex.

## Why "Driftless?"

Article by Tom Gross

Unless you are very new to Dane County and the Ice Age Trail, you probably know that western Dane County is known far and wide as the "Driftless Area." The term actually applies to a sizable region of SW Wisconsin and neighboring portions of Minnesota, Iowa, and a small sliver of Illinois. But what is this "drift" that is missing from the Driftless Area? And why is it called "drift?"

European settlers in the northern part of the U.S. noticed that the land contained lots of rocks and these rocks were mostly different from the bedrock that one found when digging to depths that went below the layer of soil on top. We call these rocks "erratics", defined by Merriam-Webster as "transported from an original resting place especially by a glacier; an erratic boulder." Before glaciers were determined to be the means of

transporting these rocks, people "knew" from the Bible that the earth was once covered by a great flood; the one famously associated with Noah. The erratics were assumed to have "drifted" in on that flood.

People were not surprised to find erratics in eastern and northern Wisconsin, but they were surprised to NOT find such rocks on the surface in SW WI. Erratics are found all around the Driftless Area and well to the south in southern Indiana and Illinois as well as central Missouri. (Note that erratics can be found in the Driftless Area, but only in river valleys where they were carried along by glacial meltwater, not on upland surfaces.)

If you want to know more about the Driftless Area, I highly recommend a movie called *Decoding the Driftless*. The South Central Library System has two copies, but there are currently 58 holds so it could be a while before one is available. There have been a couple of public showings recently, in Spring Green and in Cross Plains, so you might want to watch for another such event. Meanwhile, you can also find info at the following website: [gatewaytothedriftless.com](http://gatewaytothedriftless.com). An excellent book on this area and the geology of the whole Ice Age Trail is *Geology of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail* by David Mickelson, Louis Maher, Jr., and Susan Simpson.

## Can You Help?

Article by Tom Gross

There are many opportunities to help build the Trail in Dane County. Do you have skills you would like to contribute?

To be sure, the Dane County chapter does a great deal of physical labor; using hand tools and power equipment to remove invasive species, build and burn brush piles, and, at least in recent years, clear the Trail corridor and construct sections of the Trail. But behind the scenes, there are other tasks that need to be done. For

a newsletter like the one in your hand, or on your screen, people are needed to write articles, take pictures, or perhaps do a photo essay about some Trail-related topic. In late Spring, once the garlic mustard has gone to seed, we will be pulling it by hand. This does not require any particular strength, skill or dexterity, just a desire and willingness to help out. The same goes for Trail monitoring: walking a section of the Trail fairly regularly to discover and report on its condition so that others can address any problems that arise such as downed trees, muddy areas, etc. Do you have a favorite section on which you could lead a hike? Could you talk to people about the Trail and share your enthusiasm at a booth? Are there things I haven't listed that you could do to help promote the Trail? Please contact me if you can help in any way: By phone at (608) 347-5154, or email to [tagr@umich.edu](mailto:tagr@umich.edu).



Hummingbird moth  
Photo by Tom Gross

## Dane Drifter Update

Article by Gary Wensing

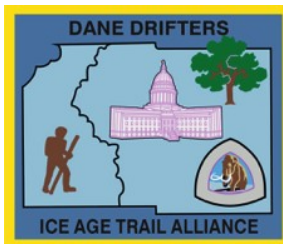
I imagine you're finally glad to see Spring come as you've been ready to get out on the trail. Nice to see the spring flowers starting up and chirping of the birds returning. Dane Drifters hit a couple big milestones recently by passing 300 registrants – we're currently at 310 --and our 150th hiker to complete the program. Thank you everyone for your participation and support of the trail in Dane County.

One item of feedback I get from our hikers is around the connecting route between Cross Plains and Table Bluff. People have been leery when they get to dirt road with a Private Property sign. This road is behind Plastic Ingenuity (PI) and Park Elementary School on the east side and Sherwood Forest Ln on the west. PI owns that land and has given trail users the ok to walk that road – so much nicer than having to use Highway 14. PI is a great partner with the IATA (owner is one of the Swamplovers of Table Bluff fame and has let IAT use their land for MSC project base camps). So don't be worried when hiking that section – it's all good!

As noted in recent newsletters, including this one, and Mammoth Tales, there's been a lot of activity around new trail in Dane County. New official trail was added in Cross Plains as well as a new loop trail on some Dane County land on Pine Road (the connector between Table Bluff and Indian Lake). That segment is still going through naming process. And while we will have more new trail in the Cross Plains Scientific Reserve after a MSC Project in June, I've gone ahead and made official updates to the Dane Drifters brochure and hiking log.

If you haven't finished the program yet, please use the new log. I'll be emailing that out to everyone soon. It'll also be added to our chapter website (<http://dane.iceagetrail.org/home>).

As a reminder, the Program is only \$10 for IATA members, \$12 for non-members and \$6 for a companion to a registered hiker and you can earn a patch, a certificate of completion for hiking all of the segments of IAT in Dane County, and you support the



*Join the Dane Drifters and then hike all the beautiful IAT segments in Dane County. You'll earn this cool patch and a certificate of completion.*

Dane Co Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. If you want to join the Dane Drifters or learn more info, contact Gary Wensing ([kensinginn@tds.net](mailto:kensinginn@tds.net)).

Whether you're working on the program or not, everyone is welcome to join us on group hikes on our trail segments. Check out the enclosed calendar for hikes (more details are on the IATA website) and check the Ice Age Trail Alliance Rock and Dane County Chapters meet up group (<https://www.meetup.com/Ice-Age-Trail-Alliance-Rock-Dane-County-Chapter/>.) The group hikes are a great way to work on the program.

### **Congratulations to the following Dane Drifters!**

*Kathleen Kelly-Shanovich* • Madison, WI • Trails+Connectors  
*Fred Stadler* • Oshkosh, WI • Trails+Connectors  
*Nancy Hach* • Madison, WI • Trails Segments  
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*Cope's Gray Tree Frog // Photo by Tom Gross*

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## Ice Age Trail Hike-a-thon Returns June 1!

*Article by Mark Graczykowski*

To celebrate National Trails Day and raise money for the continued expansion and maintenance of the Ice Age Trail, the Dane County Chapter will again be hosting a Hike-a-thon (HAT) on June 1. This year's HAT will put the total raised in recent years over \$40,000 for the Ice Age Trail Alliance since the event's inception 8 years ago. The funds raised by the HAT are split between the Dane County Chapter and the IAT Alliance HQ in Cross Plains.

The day's events begin and end at Badger Prairie County Park Shelter #1. There are two hiking options available allowing a range of exertion:

- *20-mile option:* Arrive at 8:00 AM. Leave Badger Prairie Shelter #1 by bus at 8:30 AM and arrive at south end of Brooklyn Wildlife Area around 9 AM. Hike north back to Badger Prairie Park in Verona.
- *5-mile option:* Arrive at 12:30 PM. Leave Badger Prairie Shelter #1 by bus at 1 PM and arrive at Prairie Moraine parking lot shortly after. Hike back to Badger Prairie Park and join in the festivities.

We provide a bus ride to the trailhead for all participants. For anyone completing the longer hike, volunteers staff three rest stops with food and water spaced about every 5 miles along the

route. After participants return from their adventures, there will be refreshments and food to enjoy at Shelter #1 donated by sponsors and chapter volunteers. In addition, we will hold a raffle giving away prizes from several area businesses.

Verona is an "Ice Age Trail Community" and we are happy to be a small part of their annual Hometown Days Celebration. If you have some energy left after your hike, stop by and support Dane County's fastest growing community.

If you have a friend or family member who has considered joining the Ice Age Trail Alliance, the HAT is a great time to join! The requested donation to participate is \$30, but for non-members, a donation of \$50 gets them a one year Ice Age Trail Membership along with their HAT participation.

For more information and to sign up, please visit the Alliance's site: <https://www.iceagetrail.org/event/dane-county-chapter-hike-a-thon/>

Lastly, if you have any more questions about the event, don't hesitate to contact me by email: [DanecountyIATHAT@gmail.com](mailto:DanecountyIATHAT@gmail.com). I'd be happy to answer your questions.

**See you on June 1!**

