



Adam Birding Conservancy

A Prairie & Wetlands
Reserve in Cold Spring, WI

2025 Summer Update

Inside This Issue

Page 2 – Bees

The ABC has the most Golden Northern Bumble Bee of 16 sites surveyed by UW-Madison but it seems due to a high concentration of a non-native plant.

Page 3 – Birds

The swans reproduced again on the Blackbird blind and may have lost a cygnet the end of June.

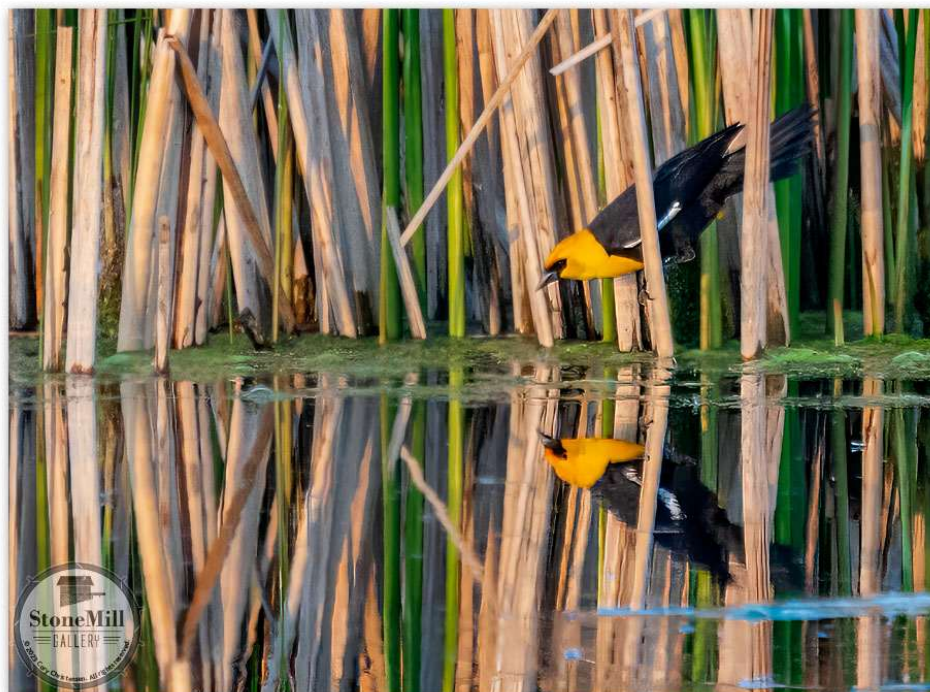
Page 4 – Plants

The 2024 burn of the woods continues to reveal previously unseen species.

Page 5 – Archaeology

More interesting points from the ABC and surroundings.

Page 6 – Mish Mash



Cory C took the pic this spring of the ABC's showcase bird, the male yellow-headed blackbird. More of his photos and those of Mary B and Kelly M (as noted) are included in this newsletter. All other pics are mine.

Highlights

UW Madison conducted a three-year intensive study that shows the good and bad for bee habitat at the ABC. While we have a high variety of bumble bees, the introduced red clover is the Golden Northern's favorite habitat. Seems like it isn't just humans who like junk food.

Our trumpeter swan pair has had 20 cygnets in the last three years and may have lost their first at the end of June. They are selective in their travels from the nest. If you don't see them from the Blackbird blind looking across to the back side of the pond, walk west/left on the dike path between the two small ponds where they often hang in the shallows.

The woods is revealing more native plants, some planted but most perking up like a Phoenix from the 2024 burn. Lastly, some interesting 'points', flakes and campfire residue are keeping the past present.

Enjoy in moderation!



Monarch on clover [Mary B]

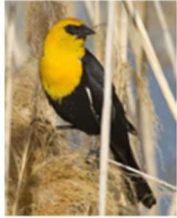


Four of the seven cygnets this year [Cory C]



Painted Turtle

Feedback or to be added/dropped from the mailing list: adambirdingconservancy@gmail.com



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UW-Madison's Bee Survey

Special thanks to Jade Kochanski, one of the four principal investigators from UW-Madison, who together completed a three-year study entitled "Assessment of Floral Resource Abundance, Pollinator Networks, and Implications for Bumble Bees in Restored Tallgrass Prairies." 16 sites with conservation easements within 100 miles of Madison that were 10-15 years old were surveyed with 7-8 visits done to each site. The full redacted paper is found on the www.adamconservancy.com website under the Latest News tab.



Bumble bees foraged more frequently on flowering forb species that are specialists (with high Coefficient of Conservatism scores), which are often species that are difficult to establish in Tallgrass Prairie restorations. These habitats, including the ABC, lack sufficient early spring bloomers (Golden Alexander being an exception).

Two different non-lethal surveys were employed at each visit (transect and meander). For the transect surveys, an observer alternated walking and stationary observations along the diagonal of a 55 x 55 meter bumble bee plot using a standardized slow pace, for a total transect length of 77.8 meters in 10 minutes. For meander surveys, an observer haphazardly walked throughout the entire plot for a 30-minute survey. Bumble bees were hand netted using an aerial insect net and put on ice for accurate identification. Behavior, species, caste/sex, and flower used for foraging (when applicable) were recorded for each bee. All bees were released after processing.

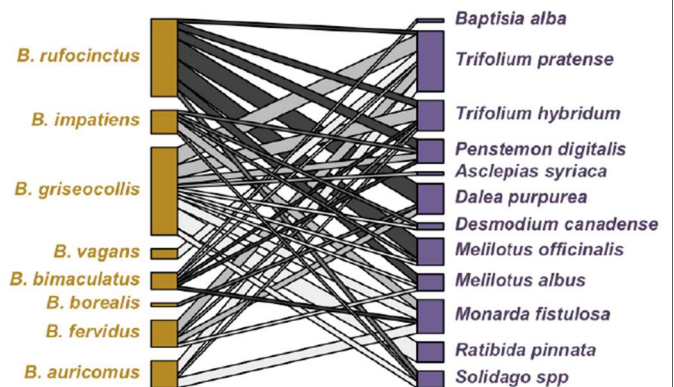
The ABC relative to the other sites had...

- The most flowering stems, more than twice the average (good).
- The third lowest Coefficient of Conservatism score, meaning the site surveyed lacked sufficient variety of high-quality plants (not good).
- Had the highest number of a bee species of Special Concern - Golden Northern Bumble Bees (*B. fervidus*) of any site surveyed. This bee was often found on the non-native red clover (*Trifolium pratense*)! See my July 2nd pic of a Golden Northern on a Wild White Indigo plant.
- Had among the highest number of red-belted, black and gold and two-spotted bumble bees of sites surveyed. These were in smaller numbers than the Brown-Belted (*B. griseocollis*) or the common eastern bumble bee (*B. impatiens*). See pics at the bottom of this page.

The chart at right shows the eight species of bumble bees UW-Madison researchers found at the ABC at left in orange with the plants they foraged on at right in purple -->

Takeaways

1. The lack of diversity in the prairie will be hard to overcome given fifteen years of grass establishment (when the ABC was seeded, the mix was 7lb grasses to 1lb forbs. I'm told today it would be closer to 1 to 1.) I've tried adding wood betony before without success but should try again to open the canopy for things like Prairie Smoke, Blue Flag Iris and Dutchman's Breeches.
2. May need to be more forgiving of the red & alsike clovers though I still disdain yellow and white sweet clover.



Red-belted bumble bee (*B. rufocinctus*)
[Image Wikipedia]



Black and gold bumblebee (*B. auricomus*)
[Image UW-Madison]



Two-spotted bumble bee (*B. bimaculatus*) [Image UW-Madison]



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Birds in Words & Pics



Bobolinks love spinning on the weathervane by the parking lot
[Mary B]

Two more new birds were ID so far this year - Greater Scaup and Wood Thrush – bringing the eBird total to 217 species to date, 4th highest in Jefferson County.

My brother and I got to see the trumpeter swans mating ritual in spring and I witnessed the first few trumpeters hatch on June 7th. Seven cygnets were born. As of this newsletter in early July, only six have been seen recently. Their nest is across the blind on the Blackbird blind pond.



Dickcissel



Blue winged teal couple [Cory C]



Eastern meadowlark



American coot in the cattails



Trumpeters on the morning of June 7th with three of seven cygnets hatched with more eggs in the nest



Great Blue Heron [Cory C]



American Goldfinch



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Plantiful New Sightings this Year

57 previously unrecorded species were documented in the first half of 2025 (258 for all of the ABC). Many of the new finds were in the woods that was burned in the spring of 2024. Higher on the coefficient of conservatism ratings include clustered sanicle, false mermaid, hairy sweet cicely, narrowleaf wild leak, orange-fruited horse gentian, perfoliate tinker's-weed and marsh calla. I aim to get better at my sedges and rushes by fall! Apologies if I've mis-ID anything.



The only white Ohio Spiderwort at the ABC



Tall Blue Indigo

We've applied for permits and have a contractor lined up to drone spray our cattails and some of the sandbar willows and cottonwoods obstructing views from the blinds, taking over the wetlands and encroaching on the prairies. Fingers crossed this gets done in the late summer with results that would show next spring.



Purple-stemmed Angelica



Wild Asparagus



Heart-leaved Skullcap

Of the 258 species, 201 are native and 57 are invasive with an overall mean coefficient of conservatism score of 3.12 with the non-natives or 4.30 with only natives. Getting better in the woods but it is hard in the established prairie.



Fringed Loosestrife



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Ancient Ancestors

The nice thing about plants and archaeology is that the pursued stays put, which works great for a slow-witted observer like me. Even better for archaeology...the deer don't eat the artifacts.



A Reigh or Raddatz Point, ~ 3,500-5,200 years old



A Utilized Flake as a hide scraper. According to one source, three of these in the right hands could skin an elk or deer.



An old, reworked point, perhaps a Hickory Ridge side-notch. ~ 5,000-7,000 years old.



Possible projectile point tip

Work continues in uncovering more history behind the ABC and its neighbors. More heat-treated rocks were uncovered in somewhat concentric layouts. This may be evidence of fires and could explain the ~500 colorful chert flakes on the hills in the area, some of which were large enough to be refashioned as temporary tools.

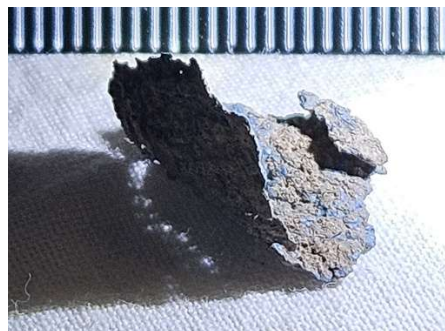
A few interesting points rounded out the spring excavation and searching season.



This soccer ball size 4 mound of what appears to be Hematite, a magnetic iron oxide material.



China ware made in Brussels in the 1890s



UW Madison investigated the indigo blue cloth piece found last fall. The pic shows light shining through the cloth to the shadow at left, revealing the stitch pattern.



A utilized flake improvised as a drill



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Mish Mash



Rock found in the context of other Native American flakes. Chocolate cream Ho Ho within almond cake?



A Northern Crescent butterfly in early June.



Thanks to Rich & Donnie for assembling and installing the third blind – called the Bufflehead Blind – in the northeast corner. Way too hot to occupy in summer, it is meant for spring waterfowl watching and will hopefully be aided by elimination of the cattails. A pair of Virginia Rails were calling from this area for almost a month in spring.



It looks a little like an owl but is really just a Shagbark hickory scar in the shape of two beady eyes. Found to the left (or north) of Big Food Rock in the woods.



A few nice reflective pics from Cory C of wood ducks... babies on top and the parents below.



I de-cattailed the ponds by the blinds in early March but by July the views are getting obscured again. Hopefully chemicals will set them back several years.



Turtle nest.



Baby sandhill crane [Kelly M]. Saw the parents hovering around for a week after this was taken, then no more.



Buffleheads in early April. The ABC has impressive migratory waterfowl watching in March and April.