

Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program – Outstanding Team

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With support from University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension's Natural Resources Institute

(Evaluation Unit) Samuel Pratsch, University of Wisconsin Extension

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Leadership that inspires exceptional achievements

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program is led through a **dynamic team** of three individuals with support through the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension. Becky Sapper is the Director with focus on overall program development, instructor and partner relationships. Astrid Newenhouse provides overall program support with an emphasis on evaluation, while Martha Martin also provides overall program support with an emphasis on volunteer management and engagement. The program was officially launched in 2013 and in five short years has shown a **significant interest and engagement** from host organizations, volunteers and partners across the state. The Wisconsin Master Naturalist “team” would not be complete without evaluation, communication and financial services **support from the Natural Resources Institute**.

Their combined **detail-oriented leadership blends inclusiveness, adaptability, and a customer service-type engagement** that lends itself well to friendly interactions with their target audience. This has led to a **great rapport** with both instructors and volunteers who, in turn, demonstrate their support of the staff and overall program by consistently **sharing their enthusiasm** for the leadership and program. During the current 2018 “season” the number of volunteer training courses has increased from 10 to 16. And the **annual registration has also increased** from 149 in 2017 to 218 enrolled as of August 2018, with two more courses to fill this fall. In addition, **nearly half of the courses exceeded enrollment** maximums and had waitlists approaching up to 10 additional people. In addition, evaluations show that the volunteers are excited to learn with **an average of three times the advanced training hours needed** to maintain certification. They also have contributed over 55,000 volunteer service hours in these first five years of the program.

Dedication/dependability: steadfast focus of effort toward accomplishment of goals

What makes this team outstanding is the **core support** they provide for the overall program success. The three main team members are able to provide **reliable and consistent programming** and cover each other’s responsibilities when needed without a break in service to volunteers, instructors or the public. In addition, having the **support of key services** within the Natural Resources Institute allows the staff to pull together a **respected and polished program** by leveraging the work of in-house expertise. This has given the program **professional branding** with great graphics and marketing materials. (see attached) A thorough evaluations plan is implemented by evaluators with national recognition that have provided **ongoing feedback since the program began in 2013**. And, the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program is able to **run smoothly** due to the support of financial service specialists. These financial service specialists keep the budgets on track and help with accountability. The program has a number of financial

transactions including registrations, refunds, host organization payments, outside scholarships, grants, and donations that would be easily confused without **specialized expertise** that is provided by the financial specialists. Not only do they keep the program in line, but they often look for additional funds to support the program.

Creativity: demonstrates innovation in pursuit of goals

The creativity part of this team is represented well within the communication/marketing staff at the Natural Resources Institute. These professionals provide input and guidance that give the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program a **slick and consistent look**. This includes brand marketing with the logo, website design, thank you postcards, service hour recognition notecards, promotional materials, tote bags, annual infographic flyers, table top banner, and more! Several of these items are attached to the end of this nomination packet.

In addition, Wisconsin Master Naturalist staff can be found promoting the program on **Wisconsin Public Radio, facebook, and podcasts**, as well as through standard print media. A **unique and creative video** was also produced highlighting the impacts of citizen science within the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program. Check it out: <https://youtu.be/XzaLHdyaLbI>

The team often looks to a variety of audiences and reaches out to those who may not be able to normally attend by **partnering with others**, such as a county sportsman's group who provides scholarship funds. And also finding unique partners like, Northwest Passage, who work with youth struggling with mental and behavioral issues, and use nature as a healing component to traditional methods of **addressing human well-being**.

Synergy: energizes the team to exceptional performance

The core staff are not all located in the same office location, but instead make time to meet weekly through conference calls. While this could be boring, that's not the case for the team of **Becky, Astrid, and Martha**, affectionately referred to as **the BAM team**. They keep each other hopping with ideas and are able to strengthen each other's roles through collaboration. They work to keep key partners like funders, instructors and volunteers active and involved in the program. For instance, they host a yearly **Instructor Retreat** to provide a networked community available to all instructors to learn and share from each other – which strengthens the local programming. Also, they **partner with** the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, a **reputable leader** in Wisconsin's outdoor efforts who reach a large audience and provide a **fundraising venue** for the program.

In 2018, the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program partnered with the Wisconsin Citizen-based Monitoring Network to host the **Wisconsin Summit for Natural Resources Volunteers**. This first statewide conference for the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program **attracted over 200 participants** and provided a venue for professionals to share information, participants to learn new skills, and provided an excellent opportunity for networking, including a volunteer fair. It was a great success as demonstrated by the one page flyer below.

Evaluation: documents impacts and outcomes

The evaluation done through the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program is **extremely thorough** and has existed since the program was first created in 2013. There is a pre-course evaluation that helps **instructors understand their participants'** demographics, level of education and interest and motivation to volunteer. Instructors are encouraged to do informal evaluation 'check ins' throughout their course.

Then a post course evaluation is conducted that helps to determine success of the course, knowledge gained, volunteer motivation, and feedback. The pre-course and post course evaluations are completed on-line through Qualtrics software and both have a **completion rate consistently over 90%** for each course with overwhelming positive feedback. Such as the 2017 post course survey that indicated that **98% of respondents say their knowledge about Wisconsin's natural resources increased after taking the course.**

Additional evaluation has occurred with a key leadership change, after the Volunteer Summit, and at the 5 year anniversary (to both instructors and volunteers). The feedback from the evaluation has been used to address issues, make improvements, and helps provide sound data for **demonstrating program impacts and success.**

Performance of duties above and beyond normal requirements

The core team is known to **hand deliver** course binders to “neighbor” locations to save on postage and shipping logistics. They **respond quickly** – usually within 24 hours – to email requests and provide thorough service to instructors, volunteers and the public. They also have an **open door policy** to instructors and volunteers, providing personalized training and coaching to those who need it.

Any other factors which contribute to making the nominee an outstanding volunteer or team, such as consistent reliability and productivity

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist volunteers and instructors recognize key qualities within the Wisconsin Master Naturalist leadership and statewide program that encourages success. These qualities are **professionalism, courtesy, adaptability, empathy, knowledge and specialized abilities.** The core leadership team and supporting Natural Resources Institute support services are deserving of this recognition.

Attached Supporting Documents, in order:

- **2017 Annual Summary**
- **Volunteer Summit evaluation flyer**
- **Brochure**
- **Banner**
- **Promotional Seed Card**
- **Totebag**
- **Table Display**

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2013-2017 IN REVIEW

Volunteer Hours Reported

14,830 stewardship

12,945 citizen science

+ 27,118 education

54,893 Total volunteer hours

for value* of **\$1.2 million**

8 Instructor trainings

115 Instructors

51 Partner organizations

44 Volunteer training courses completed

163,998 People reached through volunteer-led programs

663 Master Naturalist volunteers residing in

63 of Wisconsin's 72 counties

12,677 hours of advanced training for Master Naturalist Volunteers

*The dollar value of service hours is calculated by using figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics data, indexed by the Independent Sector.

Annual Summary 2017

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program is a growing network of well-informed citizens dedicated to natural resources education and service within their communities. Volunteers perform at least 40 hours of volunteer service each year and receive 8 additional hours of training annually to maintain certification. The volunteer training course provides coursework in natural history, interpretation and conservation stewardship in both the classroom and field settings delivered by partner organizations throughout the state.

"This course covered so much information on Wisconsin ecology. I think it's the best thing I've done in years."

- 2017 Master Naturalist Volunteer

"The course was exceptionally well organized, the instructors were experts in their field and each topic was engaging on its own along with painting a complete picture of an ecosystem."

- 2017 Master Naturalist Volunteer



IN 2017

MASTER NATURALIST VOLUNTEERS RECORDED:

20,345 hours of volunteer service

\$443,114 of value to the state of Wisconsin

60% of those reporting service hours gave more than the required **40 hours** per year

22% reported more than **100 hours** of service in 2017

149 new volunteers

OF 2017 COURSE PARTICIPANTS (140 RESPONSES):

93% say the course provided a **broad overview** of the state's **natural resources** and the **processes** that affect them

The percentage of people who feel they have the knowledge to **volunteer** related to natural resources **increased from 54% to 91%** after taking the course

98% say their knowledge about Wisconsin's **natural resources increased** after taking the course

54,240 people reached through volunteer-led programs

19 scholarships

10 volunteer trainings



wimasternaturalist.org
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Inspiring. Energizing. Enjoyable.



Wisconsin Summit for Natural Resources Volunteers

a volunteer fair. In addition, the Wisconsin Citizen-based Monitoring Network and Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program were able to recognize key individuals and groups for their volunteer efforts.

The Wisconsin Summit for Natural Resources Volunteers, held over three days in March 2018, attracted over 200 people from 47 counties. Participants were very pleased with the event. In fact, 95% said the Summit covered the type of topics they wanted to hear about, and 98% said it was a valuable use of their time.

The Summit provided opportunities to learn and share information through 18 workshops, 50 presentations, and

Participant feedback:

"It was a great experience to be with people who are so enthusiastic about research about and conservation of natural resources!"

"It was so wonderful to get to meet so many others who are passionate about the natural world, and to make connections that will be mutually beneficial with other organizations."

Sponsorships provided contributions that allowed participants to receive a high quality experience with affordable registration fees. Thank you to the Summit sponsors:

Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin; Snapshot Wisconsin; Madison Gas and Electric; Xcel Energy; Ben Meadows; Gempler's.

Additionally, more than 40 businesses, individuals, and organizations donated items to the Silent Auction to support the Summit, the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program, and the Wisconsin Citizen-based Monitoring Network. The donations were well received and helped to make the event a success.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



The **Wisconsin Master Naturalist** program is a network of well-informed citizen volunteers dedicated to conservation education and service within Wisconsin communities. Volunteers come from many walks of life, but share a commitment for Wisconsin's beautiful and diverse landscapes and wildlife.

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Volunteer training course provides **40 hours of coursework** in geology, ecology, wildlife, plant communities, water, aquatic life, human influences and volunteerism.

Courses **combine field experiences with classroom instruction** taught by professional natural resources educators and scientists.

Courses are offered with partner organizations across the state:

- ✓ Universities and colleges
- ✓ Environmental education centers
- ✓ Nature centers
- ✓ Parks
- ✓ Museums
- ✓ Nonprofits



Wisconsin Master Naturalist Volunteers participate in:

- ✓ Education and interpretation
- ✓ Citizen science
- ✓ Land and water stewardship



Did you know?

Wisconsin is home to **hundreds of pollinator species vital to the production of many crops. Several of those pollinators are endangered or threatened, including rusty-patched bumblebees, the Karner blue butterfly and Wisconsin's cave dwelling bats.**

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WISCONSIN MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

Promoting awareness, understanding and stewardship of the natural environment by developing a network of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation service within their communities.

For more information visit
www.wimasternaturalist.org

or contact
info@wimasternaturalist.org

You can also find us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/wimasternaturalist

Phone: 608-262-0020



UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA requirements.

Photography by Emily Stone, Becky Sapper, Jeffrey J. Strobel and Mary Trainor

Graphic design: UW Environmental Resources Center

Funding support provided by the
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.



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**Learn & Serve
in Nature**



**Enjoy learning
about the natural world.**

**Make a difference
with volunteer service.**

**Become a
Wisconsin Master Naturalist
Volunteer!**



www.wimasternaturalist.org

How does the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program work?

Anyone in Wisconsin who is 18 years or older is eligible to become a trained Wisconsin Master Naturalist Volunteer.

First, you'll take a 40-hour course taught by professional natural resources educators and scientists. The course schedule varies by location. It could be a full week, a couple times a week (evenings or days), or several weekends. You'll learn in the classroom and outdoors through hands-on experiences. Wisconsin is a large state, and no two courses are the same - you should expect to learn about

"We hiked through Devil's Lake State Park with a naturalist with 30 years of experience. We got to handle different soil types with an experienced soil biologist, and we were able to observe native brook trout in their habitat with a fisheries biologist."

natural features, plants and animals that are a part of the landscapes around your community.

After you complete the initial course, you'll need to volunteer 40 hours and take 8 hours of additional training annually to

maintain certification as a Wisconsin Master Naturalist Volunteer. You can volunteer for a wide variety of organizations whose work benefits Wisconsin's natural resources. This can range from a local nature center or arboretum to a state park or nonprofit.

"With the background provided by the high-quality program materials and the excellent classroom and field experience, we eagerly look forward to the next phase of our volunteer work."



- Registration fees for the 40-hour course are \$250.
- Scholarships are available.
- Find a course online at www.wimasternaturalist.org



Are you affiliated with an organization that wants to host Wisconsin Master Naturalist training?

Many nature centers, environmental education centers, parks and other organizations find that the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program fits with their educational mission and helps them train volunteers.

Did you know?

Wisconsin is home to **10 species of squirrels**. Two of these species, the northern and southern flying squirrels, are small nocturnal squirrels with skin flaps that allow them to glide from tree to tree.



Wisconsin has a rich history of **conservation leadership**, including John Muir, who helped found the Sierra Club and Yosemite National Park, renowned ecologist Aldo Leopold and politician Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day.

You can become an instructor too!

Sign up for a two-day instructor training where you'll learn how to organize, teach and administer the Volunteer Training Course. The instructor training costs \$75. Our instructors usually come from organizations that conduct science-based environmental programming. Visit our website for more details.

Many of Wisconsin's **natural features are the result of glacial activity** during the last Ice Age. Features left behind include many of our lakes and unique landscapes like Kettle Moraine in eastern Wisconsin.

Learn & Serve



WISCONSIN Master Naturalist



Developing a network of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation service within their communities.

www.wimasternaturalist.org

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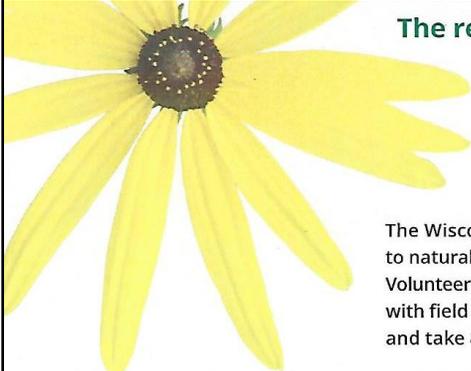


Promotional Seed Card



FRONT ↑

BACK ↓



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The removable paper leaf contains seeds of *Rudbeckia hirta*, a black-eyed Susan native to Wisconsin.

- Plant seed paper under 1/8-inch of soil in a sunny location.
- Water thoroughly.
- Keep moist during germination.

The Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program is a network of well-informed citizens dedicated to natural resources education and service within Wisconsin communities. Master Naturalist Volunteers receive 40 hours of natural history coursework that combines classroom instruction with field experiences. Once trained, Master Naturalist Volunteers provide 40 hours of service and take 8 hours of advanced training each year.

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Funding support provided by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Master Naturalist Tote bag



Wisconsin Master Naturalist Table runner

