

Dept. of Natural Resources: Names Whitewater resident Ginny Coburn state natural areas steward of the year

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WHITEWATER, Wis. - The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced Whitewater resident Ginny Coburn as the 2021 State Natural Areas Volunteer Steward of the Year for her work within the Southern Kettle Moraine State Forest.

Driven by a passion for nature and ecology, Coburn started volunteering at Kettle Moraine State Forest in 2012. Coburn and fellow volunteers have provided thousands of hours of labor at Bluff Creek, Kettle Moraine Oak Opening, Whitewater Oak Opening and Clover Valley Fen State Natural Areas in the Kettle Moraine State Forest, including removing brush, controlling invasive plants and collecting and sowing native prairie seeds. Coburn also serves as a contact for monthly workdays and greets and signs in volunteers.

“Ginny has had an important role in protecting and restoring some truly amazing prairies, springs, oak openings and fens in the Kettle Moraine,” said Jared Urban, the DNR’s Volunteer Program Coordinator for State Natural Areas. “She was the first one to say yes to starting volunteer workdays to remove invasive plants in the Kettle Moraine and has been essential to keeping monthly workdays going.”

With nearly 10 years of volunteering at Kettle Moraine State Forest, Coburn possesses a wealth of knowledge, including safely wielding a chainsaw, collecting seeds and controlling invasive plants. Coburn is also instrumental in engaging others in this vital work, including her grandchildren who have volunteered

alongside her on various projects.

Coburn's deep community connections helped her recruit individuals and organizations for special projects, including a cooperative project to install a boot brush at Bluff Creek to prevent anglers from inadvertently spreading aquatic invasive species.

"Everyone likes Ginny," said Urban. "I most admire her energy to help make things happen. She is always ready to learn and is a let's-go-do-it kind of person."

In addition to seeing great progress at State Natural Areas in Kettle Moraine State Forest, one of Coburn's favorite parts of volunteering is the people she's met along the way.

"They are fun and knowledgeable and will come out and help or work in any weather," said Coburn. "We learn a lot from each other and have a very enjoyable time. We feel like we've done good work toward a really big goal."

Become A State Natural Area Volunteer

[State Natural Areas](#) are designated to conserve the best of Wisconsin prairies, forests, wetlands and other habitats. These unique places support 90% of rare plant species and 75% of rare wildlife species. Nearly all properties are open to the public to enjoy while bird watching, hiking, hunting and fishing.

The Wisconsin DNR is actively recruiting volunteers to help care for these unique places. No experience is necessary, and training and equipment are provided on-site.

[To get involved and sign up for notifications of workdays, visit the DNR's State Natural Areas Volunteer Program webpage.](#)