



## Fire on the Prairie



Nate Dallesasso

A portions of the prairie at Maywood during the controlled burn that took place in May.

The prairie is a plant community dominated by perennials, sedges, and forbs that are specially adapted to gather water from the soil and to withstand wildfires. Controlled burning of prairies mimics the effects of lightning strikes setting fire to the flammable dried grasses, and keeps prairies healthy and flourishing. Fires set back succession and prevent the prairie from converting into forest, while also controlling non-native species. Burning also removes the duff layer of old plant matter, opening space for new, desirable plants and returning nutrients to the soil.

After a burn, the blackened soil absorbs sunlight, warming and stimulating the growth of warm season grasses. Green shoots can be seen rising through the charred area, along with vigorous bird activity as insects become abundant.

Maywood's 21-acre prairie was hand-seeded by many volunteers in 1984 and is well established. This mesic prairie contains over 50 different plant species and is maintained with controlled burns approximately every three years, alternating between the east and west halves.

This spring, Stantec managed a prescribed burn on the west half of the prairie, with plans to burn the east half in spring of 2026. These management activities are supported by funding from the Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund as part of the Maywood Forest and Prairie Restoration Project.

Prairies are one of the rarest and most biodiverse ecosystems in the world. Here in Wisconsin, less than 12,000 scattered acres of prairie remain. Before European settlers converted the treeless, fertile prairies into crop fields and controlled the sweep of wildfires, prairies once covered over two million acres across the state.

According to the Lussier Family Heritage Center, more insect species use prairies than any other ecosystem. About 2,000 species of insects in our area are exclusively dependent on prairies. These include pollinators, like butterflies and bumblebees, as well as moths, leafhoppers, dragonflies, and many others. More

than 400 species of native vascular plants exist in Wisconsin prairies, many of which cannot be found in any other habitat type and some that are quite rare.

Development of Maywood's rich prairie habitat has resulted in a significant increase in bird sightings and other wildlife over the years. Some of the animals that can be spotted in Maywood's prairie habitat include: Bluebird: rabbit, kestrel, red-tailed hawk, sparrow, eastern meadowlark, indigo bunting, monarch butterfly, woodchuck, 13-lined ground squirrel, and coyote.

Prairie plants are natural builders of nutrient-rich soil, and their dense mats of roots help prevent erosion and improve water quality by keeping soil, nutrients, and sediment in place. The root systems and soil structure of prairies assist in storm-water infiltration and prevent floods. One acre of established prairie can absorb up to nine inches of rainfall per hour before runoff occurs, and will intercept as much as 53 tons of water during a one-inch-per-hour rain event.

Learn more and celebrate Maywood's prairie habitat in full bloom with guest presenters, entertainment, activities, prairie tours, and more at the Prairie Walk on Saturday, July 26!

Kendra Kelling



Nate Dallesasso

Stantec employees conduct a controlled burn at Maywood.



## Partners in Preservation of Bur Oak

The Garton Bur Oak Preserve is a remarkable 35-acre parcel of land located in Sheboygan, Wisconsin along the Pigeon River. In 2005, the Garton family donated this land to the City of Sheboygan to be managed by The Environmental Park Trust of Sheboygan County as a nature conservancy in a similar manner as Ellwood H. May Environmental Park.

At that time, the property was also protected as a Conservation Easement with Glacial Lakes Conservancy (GLC). GLC conducted an extensive report that documented many of the property's natural features and determined that this space possesses natural, scenic, and open space values of significance to the people of Sheboygan County and the State of Wisconsin.

Reflecting on the wise decision the Garton Family made 20 years ago, GLC Executive Director Jennifer Rutten expressed gratitude, saying, "GLC is so grateful to Pam and Rob Garton for entrusting us to put this critical Pigeon River watershed property into a conservation easement to protect it from development."

Rutten continued, "Many species are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation. However, there is hope. As urban areas expand and roads are built, animal populations are divided, and ecosystems are disrupted. Protected areas like Garton Bur Oak are a beacon of hope, ensuring contiguous habitats where species can flourish. The spring wildflower abundance and May warbler migration are breathtaking."

A primitive one-mile trail traverses the perimeter of the property. Diverse plant communities including a southern mesic forest, southern lowland forest, southern weed community, and pine plantation support a range of wildlife habitat. Vernal ponds and a permanent man-made pond provide water sources and critical amphibian habitat. The spectacular namesake of the property a Bur Oak tree over 5 feet in diameter estimated to be over 300 years old is located just off the path in the floodplain of the Pigeon River.

The Garton Bur Oak Preserve Trail Development and Habitat Improvement Project is currently underway, thanks to support from the Garton Family Foundation and the Norma & Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Fund through the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. This project will improve habitat and enhance the hiking trail by removing dead ash trees and controlling invasive honeysuckle and buckthorn. Construction and installation of puncheon bridges will improve access and allow visitors to cross wet spots along the path.

Visit [www.glaciallakes.org](http://www.glaciallakes.org) to learn more about the Garton Bur Oak Preserve and the other properties under the protection of Glacial Lakes Conservancy. Check Maywood's event calendar for upcoming work days and hikes!

Kendra Kelling



Kendra Kelling

A section of the property at Bur Oak during a visit this May.



## Maywood Summer Calendar

For more detailed program descriptions, visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) or the front desk in the Ecology Center, or call (920) 459-3906. To register for any Maywood program, call (920) 459-3906 or email [maywood@sheboyganwi.gov](mailto:maywood@sheboyganwi.gov). The Ecology Center is closed July 4-7, and August 30-September 1. The park and trails are open 4 am-10 pm daily.

**OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier Scholars)** is on summer hiatus, and will resume in the fall.

**Maywood's Nature-based Book Club** is on summer hiatus, and will resume Saturday, September 6.

**Yoga at Maywood with instructor Barbara Holt.** Registration is required. This year's Summer Practices sessions are focused on exploration of the park, and connection to self, community, and nature. Participants should bring a yoga mat and blanket, and may want to consider bringing insect repellent and sunscreen. Visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) for program descriptions and registration deadlines.

**Summer Practices: Yoga in the Woods**, Wednesdays, June 11 and 18, 5:45-6:46 pm. \$20 for the series.

**Yoga for Campers and Hikers**, Wednesday, June 25, 5:30-7:30 pm, \$30. This unique class includes an outdoor hike with yoga, and a campfire with vegetarian and dessert pudgie pies. Participants should be able to hike across varied terrain and up and down hills.

**Summer Practices: Yoga at the Ponds**, Wednesdays, July 16 and 23, 5:45-6:46 pm. \$20 for the series.

**Summer Practices: Yoga in the Prairie**, Wednesdays, August 13 and 20, 5:45-6:46 pm. \$20 for the series.

### June 2025

**6 Sheboygan County Hazardous Waste Clean Sweep Collection**, 1-4:30 pm. Help protect the environment by properly disposing of hazardous waste and recycling electronic items! For fee information, instructions, and guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable items, please call (920) 459-3060 or visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org)

**12 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic**, 5 pm reception, 5:30 pm meal. Maywood volunteers, watch for your invitation to celebrate and recognize all the good work we've accomplished together in the past year. Join us for socializing, a meal, and a few surprises along the way. RSVP/registration instructions to come.

**28 Walk on the Wild Side**, 9 am-noon. \$20/adult, \$10 ages 4-17, free for 3 and under. This year's walk to support Maywood's programs and park projects will feature the amphibians and reptiles in the park. Along our 3-mile walking route, you'll learn about frogs, snakes, crayfish, and other creatures that call the park home. There will be an alternate 1-mile prairie loop for those looking for a flat walking route. Can't join us that day? Take part in the virtual month-long event! Visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) for tickets and more information.

**28 Scoping the Skies**, 9-11 pm. Free, drop-in program. Join members of the Sheboygan Astronomical Society in viewing the summer night sky. Bring your own binoculars and telescopes or use scopes provided by the club. Program meets in the Maywood parking lot and parking lot lights will be turned off for optimal viewing. The Ecology Center is not open during this program. Port-a-potty is available. Cloudy skies will cancel this event. Meet in the Maywood parking lot.

### July 2025

**26 Maywood Prairie Walk**, 9 am-3 pm. Free, registration and donations appreciated. Celebrate Maywood's prairie habitat in full bloom with guest presenters, entertainment, activities, prairie tours, and more! Optional offsite tours provide exclusive viewing of private prairie gardens, large and small, at featured sites around the Sheboygan area. You'll be enchanted by the beauty and power of native plants and inspired to restore biodiversity in your own backyard! Visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) for more information.

### August 2025

**2, 30 Scoping the Skies**, 9-11 pm. Free, drop-in program. Join members of the Sheboygan Astronomical Society in viewing the summer night sky. Bring your own binoculars and telescopes or use scopes provided by the club. Program meets in the Maywood parking lot and parking lot lights will be turned off for optimal viewing. The Ecology Center is not open during this program. Port-a-potty is available. Cloudy skies will cancel this event. Meet in the Maywood parking lot.

# The Leading Edge

One of the privileges I have as Maywood Association/Trust President is presenting the President's Award at our Annual Association Meeting. Marge Mattern and Millipore Sigma were recipients of this year's awards.

Marge has been involved in Maywood since 1977. Her service began as the Board of Education representative on the Board of Park and Forestry Commissioners. During this time Marge noted that many groups would use Maywood for outdoor education, helping to propel Maywood to become a nature park. Her involvement continued when she returned as an ex-officio Advisory Board Member for the Board of Marina, Parks, and Forestry. She continued in this role through 2024, as an advocate and liaison for the park to the city.

At age 100, we believe Marge is currently the oldest member of the Association. We are grateful to Marge for her 47 years of support.

The volunteers from Millipore Sigma have been helping in a variety of ways at Maywood since 2023. A group of about a dozen individuals volunteer two hours on the second Wednesday of the month from March through October. The employees have

developed familiarity with the many areas of the park through a variety of projects. Their reliability and consistent volunteer force has had a profound impact on the park and organization.

We are so appreciative to the volunteers at Millipore Sigma for their many hours of service to Maywood and look forward to their continued involvement at the park.

Three of our Advisory Board members recently retired from service to the Board: Eleanor "Tippy" Jung, Donna Wendlandt, and Ray Rodgers. Thank you for giving of your time and talent to support Maywood's mission.

We welcome Nick Kuntsman to our Advisory Board. Nick is an avid bird watcher, becoming hooked on this hobby after attending the Saturday morning bird walks at Maywood. Nick was born and raised in Sheboygan. He has a deep appreciation for our park and is looking forward to being an active member on the board.

One of my favorite summer activities is to watch the full moon rise over Lake Michigan on a warm evening. There is something special about anticipating the moment when you see the first glimpse of light, and then the orange moon fully illuminates the dark sky. Make a list of your favorite summer activities and check them off as you enjoy this special season, and make sure you include visits to Maywood on your list.

Marty



Nate Dallesasse

Maywood President Marty Steinbruecker (right) presenting the 2024 President's Award.

**Ellwood H. May Environmental Park Association of Sheboygan County, Inc.**  
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## GoMaywood.org

### Association/Trust

President: Marty Steinbruecker  
Park Director: Kendra Kelling  
Trust Administrator: Angie Doell  
Office Coordinator: Nate Dallesasse  
Custodian: Donna Pantel  
EcoEdges Editor: Nate Dallesasse

### Our Mission

To foster environmental stewardship through educational and outdoor experiences that connect our community with the natural world.

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Sheboygan, WI  
Permit No. 48



**3RD ANNUAL PRAIRIE WALK**  
SATURDAY, JULY 26  
9 AM - 3 PM  
PRAIRIE TOURS \* SPEAKER ENTERTAINMENT \* ACTIVITIES

Proceeds Benefit Maywood Programs

**Walk on the Wild Side**  
A 3-mile Trail Walk benefiting Maywood  
June 28, 2025  
9 am - noon  
Virtual Event Also Available

# ECOEDGES

*A Publication of the Ellwood H. May Environmental Park Association of Sheboygan County, Inc.*

## Dragonflies and Damselflies at Maywood

From late May to October, many of our beautiful, natural areas are full of color. Blooming flowers, twittering birds, and dancing butterflies provide us extra beauty on top of the trees, bushes, and grass. However, there is one more group that is often flying around at a high speed, sometimes so fast that you might not be able to see exactly what they may be.

If you go down to the two ponds at Maywood, or most aquatic areas, you will see two members of the order *Odonata*: dragonflies and damselflies. You might be more familiar with dragonflies as they are typically larger, have longer flight times, and spend more time around water sources. Damselflies occupy similar areas but spend their time around grasses. Odonates typically stay close to water because many of the species lay their eggs in water, or in water-adjacent plants. The eggs will stay safe until next spring, when

eggs will hatch into larvae and eventually become adults which will fly off and start the cycle over again. While damselflies spend most of their time on grass and other plants near to water, dragonflies may travel larger distances over land areas to feed, mate, and rest for the night, safely away from predators. You may see swarms of dragonflies at dusk later in summer, as they will follow groups of smaller insects that they prey on. Some dragonflies will not rest between dawn and dusk,



James Kabrhel

**Twelve-spotted skimmer.**

because they are constantly eating and looking for mates. If you see a few dragonflies or even a full swarm, be happy, because they are taking care of many of the



James Kabrhel

**Mating ebony jewelwings in mating "wheel".**

annoying smaller bugs! Identifying the exact species of dragonfly or damselfly can be a challenge. Many species are similar to each other, and only using a magnifying lens to see the differences in reproductive organs can tell you definitively the species or the insect. Entomologists and odonata enthusiasts who monitor species counts and movements will have nets and lenses to catch specimens and correctly identify them.

If you come to Maywood, what species might you see? For dragonflies, skimmers are the most common group, including twelve-spotted skimmers (see picture),

widow skimmers, dot-tailed whitefaces, saddlebags, and meadowhawks. You will also find common green darners. For damselflies, you will see many Eastern forktails, ebony jewelwings (see picture) and various bluets (look for blue and black striped abdomens).

Odonates are great bioindicators, meaning that if you see lots of dragonflies and damselflies, the local ecosystem is likely healthy. However, we must be watchful as the changing climate means odonates are moving and potentially losing their habitats.

James Kabrhel