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**Township Updates** 

Photos by Judy Robb except as noted.

The Rural Beauty of the Town

## AGRICULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • RECREATION

**BRING ON THE AUTUMNAL SEASON!** It's been a busy summer for all in the Town of Vermont. Each and every one of us has been making the most of the natural beauty that surrounds.

If you have a story to tell or photo to share in an upcoming publication, reach out to Judy Robb at judy@vandehoney.com or mmcdermott75@outlook.com. We hope you enjoy your Fall and this issue of Vermont's Voice.

**RURAL BEAUTY** Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> **READ MORE** 

**READ MORE** 

**FORAGING** A BIRD HAVEN Livin' on nuts and berries A welcomed oasis **READ MORE READ MORE** 

**TRAIL CAMS** Send us your finds

OUR ENVIRONMENT

THE RURAL BEAUTY OF THE TOWN OF VERMONT Reduces CO2 and Gives Hope By Michael McDermott and Matt Knerr The Town of Vermont is blessed with landscapes that please all and help make our world better. Our land, whether restored oak savanna, prairies, wetlands, grazing acres, forest, or farm, naturally pulls CO2 from the air and stores it in roots and tree trunks. We can take heart in knowing that our rural lands are an indispensable system for storing carbon and slowing greenhouse-gas-induced climate change. Both the trees we plant ourselves and those that grow independently contribute wonderfully to the beauty of our Driftless Region. Much of the town is wooded with a mix of hardwoods and pines. Hillsides are covered with mixed woods boasting lots of new growth. There are many grand oaks and black walnuts that have been commercialized for furniture and lumber.

Trees, as plants do, take in carbon dioxide and transform it into starches, glucose, and cellulose (all of which are carbohydrates) during photosynthesis. These carbs fuel growth, form the physical structure of the trunk and roots, and are stored therein. This above-ground carbon can only ever be re-released into the atmosphere through decay or burning. Trees are composed of roughly 50% carbon, so long-lived trees can store enormous amounts of carbon. Trees store

drastically more carbon as their trunk size increases: a 24-inch oak will store over 5.5 tons of CO2, while 16-inch oak stores less than two. This means an acre of forest stores more carbon as it ages; average storage in our region is around 88 tons per acre, but ancient forests have been measured to hold up to 303 tons per acre. Trees are being promoted by government and non-profit organizations We can take heart in knowing as an important element in programs to alter global climate change.

that our rural lands are an Planting trees is part of Green New Deal proposals. Some research shows that a mix of new and older trees stores more carbon in the short term, indispensable system for and given the urgency of climate change, this appears to be a promising storing carbon and slowing method for countering emissions.

carbon leakage while improving soil quality. Similarly, sustainable, carbon-neutral timber harvesting provides a method in

which carbon can be stored indefinitely, as the foundation of our homes. A log processed into timber sequesters more than

half of its initial weight in carbon dioxide indefinitely, so long as it isn't burned. For example, a 330-pound log stores nearly 190 pounds of carbon dioxide. Prairie grasses store carbon in the soil with their roots, which often grow deeper than 10 feet underground. A single acre of prairie may store five tons of carbon every year! There are important differences between carbon stored in the ground and that in wood or other above-ground structures. Carbon in soil stays stored for thousands of years —much longer than that in above-ground structures, so long as the soil is not disturbed. The Town of Vermont has several large prairies and many more scattered on properties. Developing high-quality prairies is an extremely valuable way to take CO2 out of the air and store it deep in the soil. A good rule of thumb is that carbon storage increases as the variety of prairie grasses and wildflowers increases.

When trees die, natural decay releases a small bit of carbon into the soil, and a significant amount into the atmosphere, slowly, as the trunk rots.

Think about all the fallen tree trunks we see on the hillsides. What to do

or even mulching them; mulching is a wonderful opportunity to limit

with fallen or harvested trees? New programs are exploring burying trees

Grassland for Grasslands: grazing or for harvest for feed Over-grazing, Soil respiration can also be an some returns carbon non-native atmosphere plants, and important element tilling cause through

illustration

represents some

of the activities

that encourage

carbon storage.

or take away from

that we have now.

Fire, which plays a role in managing some of

Managed grazing can build soil carbon by stimulating losses to oxidation as a root in taking CO2 out of vegetation result of erosion growth above and and loss of the air and storing below ground. plant cover it in the ground. The Grasslands: Carbon Sequestration

Soil compaction

prevents

plant regeneration

leaving bare soil that

will soon be eroded

See the full report: <u>Carbon Sequestration in Grasslands</u>

Carbon Sequestration: Carbon Storage in Plant Biomass and Soil Organic Carbon Vegetation fixes Carbon returns Fire releases atmospheric to the carbon carbon through atmosphere but also photosynthesis. through stimulates Deep rooted respiration and plant plants decomposition growth distribute above and carbon to soil below organisms ground Above ground carbon foliage Soil organic carbon: litter,

greenhouse-gas-induced

roots,

bacteria

soil macro-organisms

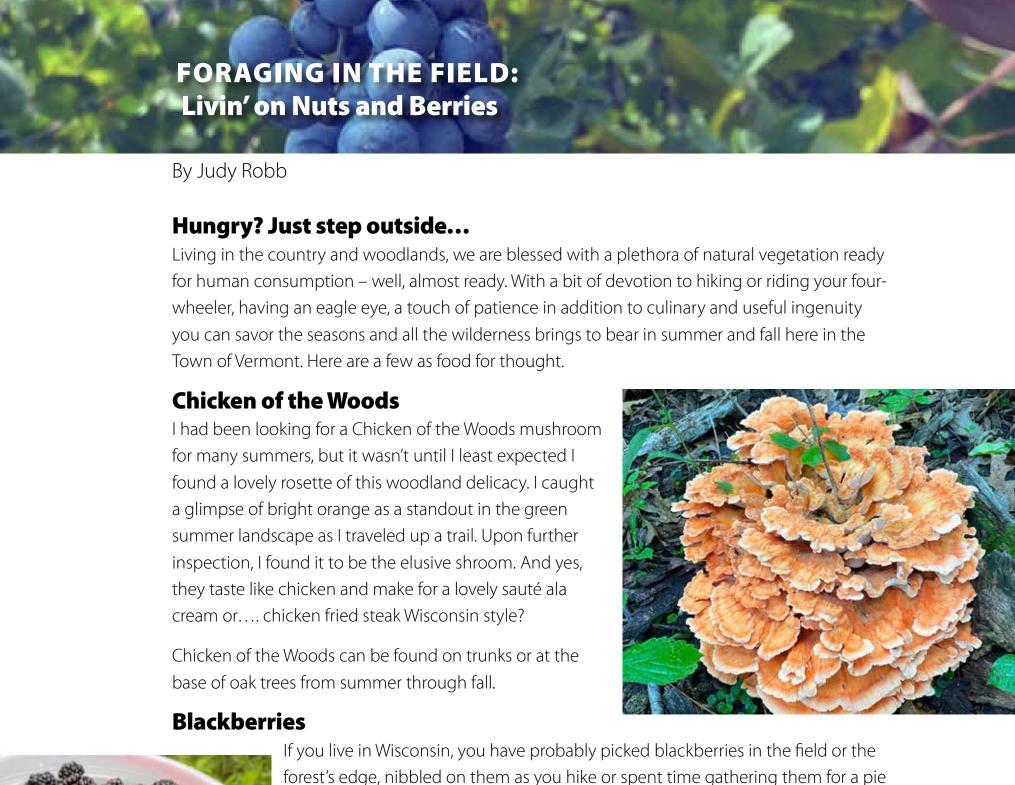
climate change.

govern controlled burns is imperative to maximize growth benefits and carbon storage without damaging or killing trees and releasing CO2 from trunks. Agriculture, as here for corn and soybeans, is more complicated. Reports from a variety of sources call for specific farming techniques such as shallow or no-till and cover crops. Other reports show benefits from traditional forms of farming. The Town of Vermont's rural nature is essential for this important activity to continue but we should always ask if we can do more. Planting more trees and supporting and restoring prairies come immediately to mind. There is support for planting both fast and slow-growing trees. Fast-growing trees such as pine store more early on and slower growing hardwoods become more important as they gain size. An unresolved issue is the release of CO2 from rotting trees. Burying trunks underground and thus having the soil retain the carbon or mulching the wood for soil improvement have both been done on a small scale. Wood used for lumber stores C02 and at least burning for firewood is intentional and yields anthropocentric benefits.

There are likely to be many plans and proposals about what is most important or what we ought to change, as the climate crisis is severe. Some of these may guide changes in the future but most important is to preserve, realize, and appreciate all

our grasslands, can encourage storage by stimulating new growth. Following regulations and advice from the bodies that

To learn more about Carbon Sequestration in Forests: http://bwsr.state.mn.us/carbon-sequestration-forests or Carbon Sequestration in Grasslands http://bwsr.state.mn.us/carbon-sequestration-grasslands Co-author Matt Knerr is a junior student at Ole Miss and was a summer intern with the Black Earth Institute. He worked on a tree farm near the University of Mississippi and became interested in this topic. He is now president and director of the student run tree farm. Matt helped with research and writing. PASTIMES O U R



or tart, jam, jelly or juice. Who hasn't been tangled up in the bramble and picked

True foodies may like the seedier side of these berries, but a food mill can ease

the pain for those not so inclined by facilitating "seed reduction"

Of course, blackberry winemaking is also an option. It may take

Fermentation to bottling can be one year or more, with bottle-

Black walnuts are considered a delicacy by many bakers and

chefs, with artists relishing ink made from them as well. Black

trees may hinder growth of specific plants. Artists cook down

These aren't your grocery store or photogenic apples by any

walnut trees and nuts might be the spurge of gardeners as the

the entire nut (husk and all) to make a wonderful brown-black medium for

some time for this beverage to age, but well worth the wait.

If you like your wild grapes, you most likely have your favorite go-to foraging

spots. But you better get there before the birds do if you want to relish in grape splendor. Wild grapes are generally smaller than the domesticated grape, and

they make for earthy-flavored preserves or wine. Be ready to stretch a bit to get these guys – grapevines generally swirl among the trees and climb to the sun.

thorns out of flesh wounds as a result?

prior to concocting a berry delight.

aging to follow.

sketching and painting.

**Wild Apples** 

It was a pretty good year for Town of Vermont gardens. Sure, it was

a shaky start with that late May frost that had many searching for

every bed sheet, blanket and tarp in the house to cover tender

Cucumbers, zucchini and beets have been pickled. Peas and

beans vacuum-sealed and in the freezer. Berries have been made

into jam and tinctures. Pumpkins are near ready for jack-o-lanterns

and tasty treats. Shiitake mushrooms are getting ready to pop for

## means....ugly, misshapen, bruised and battered – wild apples make for a yummy late summer pie with their tart yet sweet baking apple flavor.

HARVEST TIME

By Judy Robb

their autumn spurt.

Town of Vermont.

**Wild Grapes** 

**Black Walnuts** 

O U R P A S T I M E S **Preparing for winter** 

plants. Heck, it was almost June! But we made it. Now, what to do with all those tomatoes? Farmers had a rough go of it as well. An early summer drought left many wondering if their corn, soybean, alfalfa and other crops would make it. Unlike the home gardener, for farmers hand watering or irrigation is often not an option. Rain eventually arrived. The corn began to snap back and grow. Whew. It is now mid-September. The last of the paste tomatoes are lingering on the vines and many folks have been making sauce, salsa, ketchup and anything else they can concoct with tomatoes.

Here's to another successful year of agriculture in the

in perfect view from our kitchen window. We've kept it filled to the brim with fresh water. It is a destination for many. In the spring, the early arrivals wade in for a bath or to quench thirst: Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks, Northern and Orchard Orioles, Bluebirds, Brown Thrashers, and Catbirds. Occasionally a vivid Indigo Bunting or a bright Scarlet Tanager, the many speckled Flicker, a Meadowlark or even a Red-Headed Woodpecker linger to splash about.

bevy of Cedar Waxwings descend to spend time.

good view all around to watch for a predator.

about on an early, joyful outing.

bunnies share.

area here.

place on our planet.

O U R P A S T I M E S

Some years ago a large truck with big fat tires backed into our drive and left a significant

indentation behind. Annoyed at first, we have come to greatly appreciate this gouge, which is

The many usuals – American Robins, House Sparrows, Common Grackles, Mourning Doves, Brown-

patrons daily. The Barn Swallows swoop down to scoop a mouthful of water or stop to converse or

gather up mud for their nests in our barn. A House Wren builds a nest in the small house nearby. A

headed Cowbirds, Red-Winged Blackbirds, American Goldfinches and Northern Cardinal – are

Later in the year, the young-ones stop in – the best in show: five young Bluebirds all splashing

Our home is on one of Vermont Township's backbone ridges, distant from any consistent water

fountain nearby in the shade, but it is not visited nearly as much as the puddle – wide open with a

source found in the valleys. The puddle in our driveway is a welcomed oasis. We have a tiny

Sharon and I have been bird appreciators for many years, but by no means experts; however,

were rarer birds in our fields – nesting Bobolinks, a Dickcissel or we could identify the call of an

occasional Henslow Sparrow. The Woodcock is now less frequent in the spring. The night call of the

These rarities are not visiting anymore. Many of them are troubled from a range of pressures in their

wintering territories, and there are smaller and smaller ranges for them in their summer breeding

have kept track through the nearly four decades we have tended this parcel. Early on there

Whippoorwill is rarer than in the past and often heard in the distance.

OUR ARTISTS AND ARTISANS

The species all mix. They don't care who is in the puddle with them. Even squirrels and

THE PUDDLE:

a Bird Haven

By Warren Gaskill

ENVIRONMENT

**NANCY COX** These are a from a series of paintings done on location at Blue Mound State Park. The series depicts various locations in the park through the seasons resulting in 24 paintings that give a unique perspective on this beautiful and familiar park. The season changes the light and forms so dramatically that each time it is a new experience. View the complete series on Nancy's website www.nancycoxartwork.com.

TRAIL CAMERA FINDS AROUND TOWN: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words by Judy Robb The beautiful possibility of trail camera captures is a joy experienced by many nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts. If you're fond of the trail camera experience, you know the anticipation of looking through one hundred images to find a one gem – oh so worth it. What more can be said? Share your trail cam pics with Vermont's Voice! We'll publish them in our next issue.

We appreciate these visitors, and the puddle that draws them here. They help us keep track as the days, weeks, months and years move by, and provide a view into the great changes rapidly taking Indigo Bunting *Watercolor on paper 10" x 7"* from the Blue Mound State Park Series

Eastern Bluebird

Northern Cardinal

Baltimore Oriole

interest in short-term rentals – for homeowners looking to make extra cash and those wishing to rent a getaway for a weekend. The concept of the short-term rental is that a property owner rents a room or an entire home for 29 days or less. There are differing requirements depending on whether or not the home being rented serves as the property owner's primary residence. If short-term rentals are something that you as a homeowner have considered or are already doing, please review the Quick Reference Guide for Room Rental to understand how and if you are in compliance with Dane County Zoning regulations. A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) will be required if you are renting / leasing a property that falls within Transient / Tourist Lodging or Commercial lodging parameters set forth by the Town and Dane County zoning. Additionally, each and every short-term rental property requires Dane County Public Health approval. The residential rental application is listed in the resources below. With the increased interest in short-term rentals within the township, the aim of the Town Board of Supervisors is to ensure that

https://www.danecountyplanning.com/Permits-Applications/Residential-Rental

https://plandev.countyofdane.com/Zoning/Zoning-District-Fact-Sheets

https://countyofdane.com/documents/pdf/ordinances/ch010-01-31-20.pdf

TOWN OF VERMONT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT - MUNICIPAL FUNDS

https://www.danecountyplanning.com/documents/pdf/Zoning-District-Fact-Sheets/Room-Rental.pdf

https://www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental-health/licensing-permits/places-to-stay/short-term-rentals

Every seven years, the Town of Vermont updates its portion of the Dane County Emergency Management

since then that likely influence updates to the Town's portion of the emergency management plan. Please email <a href="mailto:chair@townofvermont.com">chair@townofvermont.com</a> if you're willing to share how any recent weather events impacted you

There has been a significant amount of news coverage regarding the American Rescue Plan Act. The act included funding

for each state that was to be distributed to each municipality. The Town of Vermont has been allocated \$92,000, having already received \$46,000 this year. Another \$46,000 will be received in 2022. The direction of the Town of Vermont Board

Plan. The update process is facilitated and guided by Dane County Emergency Management based on requirements from FEMA. The Town's last update was in 2015 and there have been a number of events

years. For many groups or families, they provide a convenient and enjoyable lodging option when traveling. For property owners, they can also be a fun

The Town of Vermont does not have a Town ordinance that addresses room

or home rental. The Town has however adopted the Dane County Zoning

Long-term rentals / leasing agreements have been commonplace in Dane

County for many years. In a long-term rental situation, a property owner

the process for short-term rentals is consistent and transparent.

Ordinance which provides comprehensive definitions and regulations

and flexible way to earn money from a property.

regarding room and home rental.

residence.

**Resources:** 

and/or your property.

Whether opossum, kitty, doggie or bobcat –

encounter? We would like to hear from you.

Contact Micheal McDermott or Judy Robb at

Have a story to tell about an animal

send us your "pet "pics!

the email addresses below.

VERMONT TOWNSHIP BOARD

of Supervisors is to put the funds toward items that have been accrued for already to minimize risk of having to raise the property tax levy. Additionally, a small amount of the funds will be used to reimburse District 1 EMS for PPE that they donated to us for our use during the 2020 election cycle. OUR NEWSLETTER

COUNT OR RENT. rents a secondary residence to someone to live in for greater than 29 days. The property being leased is NOT the owner's primary With the advent of online platforms such as AirBNB, VRBO, Craigslist, Facebook, NextDoor and others, there has been an increased

**CONTACT VERMONT'S VOICE** 



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VERMONT TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION 

The Rural Beauty of the Town WHAT'S INSIDE: Foraging in the Field Harvest Time A Bird Haven

Trail Camera Finds Renting your Home

**Township Updates** 

GOVERNMENT RENTING YOUR HOME FOR THE WEEKEND OR THINKING ABOUT IT? By Karen Carlock Short-term vacation rentals have been on the rise over the past several

**Got Critters?** 

HOME