



Ice Age Drift

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Get ready for the 6th annual Hike-a-thon!

Article by Dave Lonsdorf / Photo by Tom Gross

Could this be the year you'll finally decide to test your stamina and see if you can go all the way? You've hiked segments of the Ice Age Trail before, sometimes as much as 8-10 miles. You've even done two segments in a day, if they're short ones. But how about hiking THREE segments in one day? During the Dane County chapter Hike-a-thon, with the support services provided, you can hike the Brooklyn, Montrose, AND Verona segments all in one invigorating day!

On Saturday, June 3rd, you can join friends and fellow hikers and take part in the 2017 Hike-a-thon. There are actually two hikes – the 20 mile hike from Brooklyn State Wildlife Area to Verona, and the more casual Prairie-to-Prairie 6 mile "stroll" from Prairie Moraine County Park in Verona to Badger Prairie County Park.

The longer hikers will gather at the meeting place in Badger Prairie Park, shelter #1 at 8 am, and take a bus ride to Brooklyn Wildlife area, and then hike 20 miles back to the start. We'll have support services – water and snack stops, porta-poties, and a sag wagon if needed. At the end, you can join in a celebration with a more substantial repast and libations!

The shorter hikers will gather at 12:30 pm at shelter #1, and take the bus to Prairie Moraine County Park for their start. We're adding a loop tour of the park to see some outstanding views of the Sugar River valley from the terminal moraine, and an oak savanna restoration in progress, before the hikers head out along the IAT back to Badger Prairie where they'll take part in the same end of hike celebration.

Please note – the start and finish area is different this year than in past Hike-a-thons, due to construction on County PD in Madison.

The Hike-a-thon is the main fundraiser for the Dane County chapter, with some of the proceeds donated to the state-wide Ice Age Trail Alliance too. We hope to raise \$8000 to help promote and maintain the Ice Age Trail. You can join the Hike-a-thon for a donation of as little as \$30, but if you increase that to \$50, you can become a member of the Ice Age Trail Alliance, and get a free T-shirt donated by our generous sponsors, Fontana Sports.

This year we are also partnering with Verona Hometown Days (<http://veronahometowndays.com/>), Verona's annual 4 day celebration – so you can stay in Verona after the hike and enjoy the festivities!

To get more information, and to sign up for the 2017



Join us June 3rd and help support the Ice Age Trail.

Hike-a-thon go to our website: <http://www.iceagetrail.org/event/dane-county-chapter-hike-thon/>

Consider getting a group of friends, family, or co-workers together to test yourselves and see if you can go the distance!

Verona Ice Age Trail Community Event

Article by Dave Lonsdorf

On Saturday, May 6th Verona will become the 7th Ice Age Trail Community. A public celebration and ribbon cutting event will take place in Verona at Badger Prairie Park, Shelter #1. All Dane County Ice Age Trail members, especially those living in the Verona area, are invited and encouraged to attend.

The celebration will start with a "tyke hike" at 9 am. Smaller children will walk, with parents, about 1/2 mile from the shelter to the Verona Library, where they'll stop for a short break before returning to the shelter. At 10 am, there'll be speeches by Verona Town and City officials, and IATA representatives, followed by a ribbon cutting, cake and refreshments. Then at about 10:30 am there will be a guided hike for the adults. A bus will transport people to Prairie Moraine County Park in southeast Verona where they'll take a guided, 6-mile, 1 1/2 to 2-hour hike back to the shelter along the Verona Segment of the Trail.

Ice Age Trail Community status formalizes a relationship between the Alliance and the Verona Community. This will enhance awareness of the IANST in the Verona Area and promote the Verona Area to Ice Age Trail enthusiasts. The Verona community can expect to see at least two "community events" organized by the Dane County chapter per year, with many trail improvements, and the IANST can expect increased community support and participation in chapter events and use of the Trail.

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See the Spring calendar insert for more fun activities!

Meet a Member Emily Fuger

Article by Amy Lord

1. How long have you been volunteering with the Ice Age?

About a year and a half. This past January I became the Dane County Chapter Treasurer.

2. What first brought you to the organization?

I've always loved the outdoors and hiking and I wanted a way to get involved with a community of like-minded people in Dane County.

3. What inspires you to be involved or make the trail/organization better?

I've gotten to meet so many amazing people on the trail. These new friendships alone would be worth it. However, since I started working on sections of trail, I love the feeling of hiking a section of trail that I helped build.

4. Are there any special projects you are involved with? Or projects you are proud of and would like to share?

My first true trail-building experience was last year along County M by Whalen Rd in Verona. We had dozens of volunteers from Blackhawk Church and REI. This year we'll be finishing it off with some fine-tuning on June 10.

5. Most favorite trail section... or maybe top 3.

I love Table Bluff. It includes a short challenging hill climb, gorgeous vistas, scenic farmland, wetlands, prairie, a great bridge, and a traditional forest hike all in 2.5 miles... not to mention an unexpected trail critter who seems to be a bit far north for her kind.

6. What advice/recommendation would you give to a new member on how to get involved and how to better enjoy the trail?

Go to the calendar and pick a day to show up and help. There's no shame in just working for a few hours then heading off to enjoy the rest of your Saturday (though I do recommend showing up at the beginning of the day). Whether you like the building and stewardship activities or not, these events are full of hiking experts who know all the coolest things about the Ice Age Trail and lots of other famous and not-so-famous trails, and they love to share this information.



Emily Fuger

The Woods

Article by Mason Carey

Mason, a 10th grade student in Madison, wrote this essay for an English class about a hike last fall on the Skunk and Foster Lakes and Waupaca River segments in Portage and Waupaca Counties. He and his parents plan to segment hike the entire IAT.

1,105.7 miles, that's how long. 350 some miles, that's how far we've hiked. It hasn't been easy, and it's taken about a year's worth of weekend trips and overnight extended holidays way up north. Our trek on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail together as a family excites the need to get out and explore. To watch the nature go by as you hike, stop along the way and examine some sort of leaf or bug is so satisfying to the human curiosity.

On this particular trip, we hiked the trail near the Stevens Point area on a long weekend. I read the trail guidebook to see what the terrain was going to be like. "What's it going to be this time?" my dad interrupted my reading, "giant hills, or a flat cruise through the woods?"

"Looks like a mix of just about everything," I answered. The book said the trail started by wandering through the woods, then went in and out of several prairies and wildlife reservations. Once we ended the hike at the north end of the trail, my mom planned to ride her bike back to the car at the south end. After reaching the car, she would come pick us up and go to our campsite. We intended to camp in our tents that night, but a storm was predicted to bring a couple inches of cold rain, so we ended up sleeping in a cheap roadside motel.

The air on the morning of the hike almost caused my eyelids to freeze shut. "Is it supposed to be like this for the whole hike?" my mom half complained.

"No. The weather app said it was supposed to warm up by noon," my dad announced.

"How do you know that, Mr. Weatherman, we didn't even have service at the hotel."

"Well, that's what it said yesterday," my dad now realized this wasn't the best answer.

It hadn't even passed eight thirty in the morning, yet we all still felt a bit grumpy. The trail started out easy; it stayed flat and winded smoothly through the trees. I looked up, light barely came through the canopy. I could feel the slightest amount of sunlight on my face. A steady breeze wisped about the area. The light wind floated the scent of decaying leaves on the ground and leaves still growing on the trees into my nose. No sounds but my own feet smushing leaves and twigs. Chipmunks, squirrels, birds, all made quiet muffled squeaks and chirps. A hawk, maybe 70 feet away, free fell from its perch, only for a second, before catching the wind in its huge wings and gliding away to another tree.

All was untouched by man. Nothing here but a simple trail.

After a while of my own silent contemplation, I stopped walking. The rest of my family slowly walked behind me. Not tired at this point, I didn't even sit down to wait for them to catch up. My eyes scanned the area for something to look at. A puffball mushroom, just 20 feet off the trail. It must have grown to a whole foot across; it looked about ready to blow! I weaved through the low hanging branches. When I neared it, the puffball looked like a giant glob of mashed potatoes, plopped right on the ground. Kneeling now, I poked it with my finger. It felt soft and silky. Moist and fibrous. Cool to the touch as it sucked in my finger. I could even smell the scent of fungus surrounding it. I stood, taking in the moment of myself standing next to the most bizarre mushroom in the middle of the woods with no one around.

"Hey, you found a puffball," my dad sounded excited. Almost no one around. We continued to hike for a couple more hours, then stopped for lunch. *Continued on page 3...*



Mason Carey

Photo by Merriann Carey

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Dane Drifter Update

Article by Gary Wensing

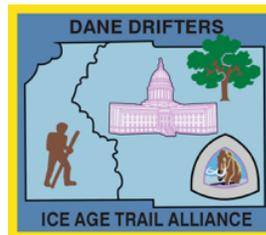
As we start the new year, fifteen people joined the Dane Drifter hiking award program as well as our first four-legged participant. Tuna and her owner are working on doing the entire trail and completed their final segments in Dane County on New Year's Day. So if you happen to see Tuna out on the trail, you could congratulate her (I'm guessing dog treats are best!) They are the only ones to complete to program so far in 2017, but now that the weather is getting nice out, it's a great time to finish up if you joined sometime the last three years, but haven't quite finished yet.

Keep spreading the word about our program as we'd love to have more join us. The Program is only \$10 for IATA members, \$12 for non-members and \$6 for a companion to a registered hiker and you earn a patch, a certificate of completion for hiking all of the segments of IAT in Dane County, and you support the Dane Co Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

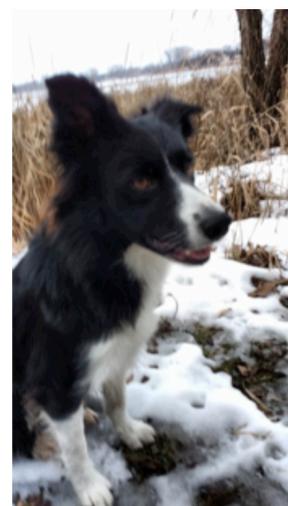
If you want to join the Dane Drifters or learn more info, contact Gary Wensing of Cross Plains at kensinginn@tds.net or see the Dane Co page on the IATA website (<http://dane.iceagetrail.org/home>).

Whether you're working on the program or not, everyone is welcome to join us on group hikes on our trail segments. Watch the IATA events calendar for future hikes and check the Ice Age Trail Alliance Rock and Dane County Chapters meet up group (www.meetup.com – search 50 miles from Madison.)

Check the enclosed calendar to see what we have planned for the coming months.



Join the Dane Drifters and then hike all the beautiful IAT segments in Dane County. You'll earn this cool patch and a certificate of completion.



Tuna enjoying one of Dane County's many public areas.

The Woods (continued)

After eating dozens of stale crackers with warm cheese and sausage, we followed the trail as it broke out of the woods and proceeded to roll over lazy hills covered in meadow. That day, the sun still shimmered, but clouds blocked its heat. The sun might have shone on my face more now without the shelter of the trees, but the breeze turned into gusts of fall wind. Chilled, I moved faster.

The trail seemed to dart in and out of the meadows and forest. I stopped abruptly. I didn't want to miss any of the nature that passed by me. This time as I waited patiently for my family to catch up, I stretched out on the stiff grass. It prickled at my arms and calves. The clouds had moved on, and the sun eventually warmed everything just a little. Some crumbs of trail mix lingered in my mouth from a few minutes ago. Thirsty from the saltiness, I sipped some cold water. When my mom and dad both strolled over to my spot, they slouched down to the grass, and we all took a long break.

"What do we do now?" my dad said, not wanting to think about starting back up again.

"We could stay here and live off of squirrel meat and tree bark," I joked.

"Well we have to start again sometime. Might as well do it now," my mom proposed.

"Ok, fine," my dad reluctantly agreed. Once we finally wobbled upright again, we started down the trail refreshed and energized. At the bottom of the big hill and around a bend from our resting spot, the trail went straight ahead into the distance of a pine plantation. The air, heavy with the scent of the white pines, the ground completely covered with needles, I couldn't see a speck of dirt. Not intent on speed, we all took a long lasting gaze at the scene before us. The breeze, completely still, all totally silent as the three of us strolled through.

It's really a special place to be in, the woods. Most of the time nobody but yourself and the people with you experience, explore, examine and enjoy the nature that surrounds you. That's why my family loves hiking on the trail.

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Dane County Chapter
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Save the Date: July 14-15 **Cross Plains Trail Community Event**

Article and Photo by Tom Gross

This event is one of two events based in Cross Plains that are to be held as part of the agreement between the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) and the Village that designated the Village as a Trail Community. This event includes one day of service and one day exploration.

Friday, July 14 – Day of Service

- 8am – 4pm: Volunteers will work with IATA to improve the Trail through Cross Plains. We plan to work on the new Trail south of Bourbon Rd in a Cross Plains Conservancy. Tasks will likely include corridor clearing and tread construction. Work may also take place on the Trail near Lewis St. Lunch will be provided.
- 4pm – 6pm: Socialize; enjoy CP. Possible boat regalia or other youth focused opportunity.
- 6pm – 7:30pm: Community Dinner
- 8pm: Silent Movie with music accompaniment. Popcorn too

Saturday, July 15th – Day of Touring

- 5am – 7am: Early-Bird Bird Walk (Hickory Hill gate)
- 7am – 8am: Breakfast – Scout sponsored. Details TBA
- 8:30am – 12pm: Rotating Sessions and Tables (Concurrent with Tyke Hike). Topics to be covered include: Tips for Hiking with Kids, Backpacking the IAT, Thousand Miler panel, Geology of the Area, and Fly Fishing.
- Youth may attend a guided hike through the Cross Plains Segment. This will start at 8:30. After the hike, youth may go to the library for an activity until lunch.
- 12pm – 1:30pm: Visit a local establishment for lunch.
- 1:30 -3:00: Swamplovers Tour and Table Bluff Hike