

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Field Station 1964-2014

The Field Station is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2014! From our start in 1964, when the Nature Conservancy donated the original land, until today the Field Station has grown into an active, vibrant facility with many projects and programs. The Farmhouse on the original property is still used by visiting groups and classes. Our teaching lab and office building was constructed in 1967, and our Service building in 1975. Growth in research use led to the construction of a dedicated research lab in 2004. Our Research house, formerly the manager's residence and now used by visiting researchers, was added in 1979 with an additional 50 acres for experimental research. Growth of our facilities has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the University.

The natural areas managed by the Field Station have also grown over time. At its inception, the Field Station property included lands in the Cedarburg Bog and the Cedarburg Beech Woods. Both of these properties are outstanding natural areas that have received state and national recognition as State Natural Areas, and U.S. Department of the Interior National Natural Area Landmarks. Current Field Station management responsibilities have grown to include 6 additional properties with a diverse array of natural features and management challenges. Benedict Prairie is a virgin prairie in Kenosha County. The Neda Mine Bat Hibernaculum, an abandoned iron mine in Dodge County that is one of the largest sites for hibernating bats in the Midwest, and the Mayville Ledge Beech-Maple Woods were acquired in 1976. Sapa Spruce Bog, the southernmost spruce bog in the state, was purchased by the Nature Conservancy and donated to the Field Station in 1983. In total the Field Station manages 5 separate State Natural Areas. The Field Station is also responsible for Downer Woods, an 11-acre urban forest on the UWM campus, and The Monarch Conservancy at UWM's new Innovation Campus in Wauwatosa.

Research, teaching, and public programs have also grown steadily since the Station's founding. The Field Station supports 40 - 50 research projects each year; typically a dozen of these are graduate student Masters or Ph.D. projects. The Field Station also attracts outside researchers, with about a third of our projects conducted by researchers from outside of UWM. From its beginning in 1981, our Natural History Workshop program has grown from a handful of courses to 9 - 11 separate classes in each year, and over 25 course topics taught regularly as part of the program. The formation of the Friends of the Cedarburg Bog in 2005 allowed us to dramatically expand our outreach to the general public. The Friends of the Cedarburg Bog and Field Station now offer about 20 educational events for the general public every year. Overall class and group use at the Field Station averages over 10,000 hours each year.

The importance of the programs offered by the Field Station will only increase as processes such as climate change, habitat fragmentation, and invasion by exotic species continue to influence natural areas. UWM is an urban university, and the Field Station is its outdoor laboratory of managed natural areas. For the past 50 years, our properties, facilities, and programs have offered opportunities for researchers, students, and the general public to learn more about our natural areas, and our programs have collected priceless data that enables us to track changes over time. We look forward to the next 50 years.

Timeline

Land acquisition and construction.

- 1963** – Benedict Prairie purchased by the Nature Conservancy, donated to UWM for management.
- 1964** – Original Field Station lands in Saukville donated by the Nature Conservancy following the first major public fund drive by the Wisconsin Chapter.
- 1967** – The first lab and office building was constructed with funds from the National Science Foundation and the university.
- 1975** – Maintenance building constructed.
- 1976** – Neda Mine and the Mayville Ledge Beech-Maple Woods donated by US Steel.
- 1979** – Additional 50 acres of contiguous land and farm buildings acquired at the main Field Station in Saukville.
- 1983** – The Sapa Spruce Bog purchased by the Nature Conservancy.
- 1998** – The Field Station began managing the Downer Woods Natural Area on the UWM campus.
- 2004** – Construction of a Research Lab, with funds from the National Science Foundation and the university.
- 2005** – Remodeling of original lab/office building.
- 2010** – Field Station began management of the Habitat Protection Area at UWM's new Innovation Campus in Wauwatosa.

Research and Teaching Facilities.

- 1970** – Bog Boardwalk: original construction (completely reconstructed 1999 to 2008).
- 1981** – Greenhouse constructed.
- 1989** – Research garden facility constructed, and Weather station upgraded to digital datalogger, with funds from the National Science Foundation and UWM.

Recognition.

State Natural Areas managed by the Field Station:

Cedarburg Bog, Cedarburg Beech Woods, Sapa Spruce Bog, Mayville Ledge Beech-Maple Woods, and Neda Mine Bat Hibernaculum.

- 1975** – The Cedarburg Bog and the Cedarburg Beech Woods were designated as National Natural Area Landmarks by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

1981 – Cedarburg Bog included in the national system of Experimental Ecological Reserves (Institute of Ecology, supported by the National Science Foundation).

2006 – Cedarburg Bog and Beechwoods named an Important Bird Area by the WI Bird Conservation Initiative.

2009 – Cedarburg Bog named a Wetland Gem by the Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

Growth in programs.

329 scientific publications and 145 theses since 1970.

Over 10,000 hours of instruction and group use each year.

1981 – Workshop program begun with one workshop on Sedges, now a program of 10 courses annually on over 25 repeating topics.

2005 – The non-profit support group, Friends of Cedarburg Bog, formed.