

THE BOGHAUNTER

Volume 21, Number 4 FALL 2026

CATERPILLARS DEFOLIATING GLOSSY BUCKTHORN IN THE BOG

Jim Reinartz, FOCB President

I led a walk on the UWM Field Station boardwalk in the Bog on July 24th this summer. In the conifer-hardwood swamp just 100 ft. from the beginning of the boardwalk we noticed a large area where the glossy buckthorn had been almost completely defoliated by a large population of caterpillars.



Orbed Narrow-wing caterpillar in the Bog.

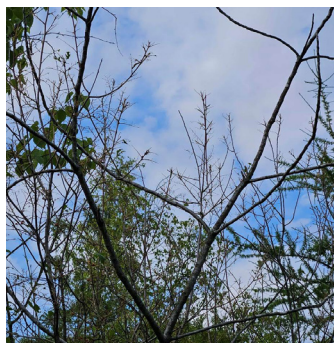


Orbed Narrow-wing caterpillar in the Bog.

Only the petiole and midrib of the leaves remained attached to the stems, the leaf blade had been completely consumed by the ravenous caterpillars. I estimated that at least a half acre of buckthorn had been defoliated in this area, and do not know if there were similar outbreaks in other parts of the Bog.

After 35 years of working on projects to control buckthorn on 600 acres of the Bog, I was extremely excited to find an insect doing this work for us and wanted to identify our co-worker. We took photos of the caterpillars, and I collected one to rear to an adult. With photographs of the

caterpillars taken by me and members of the Native Niche Inc. team, the very hungry caterpillars were identified as Orbed, or Variable, Narrow-wing moth (*Magusa divaricate*).

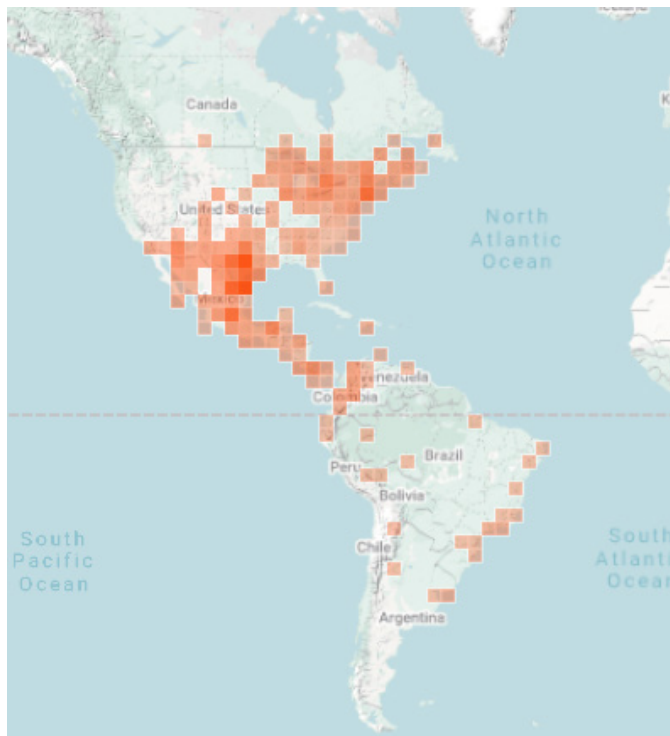


Defoliated glossy buckthorn in the Bog



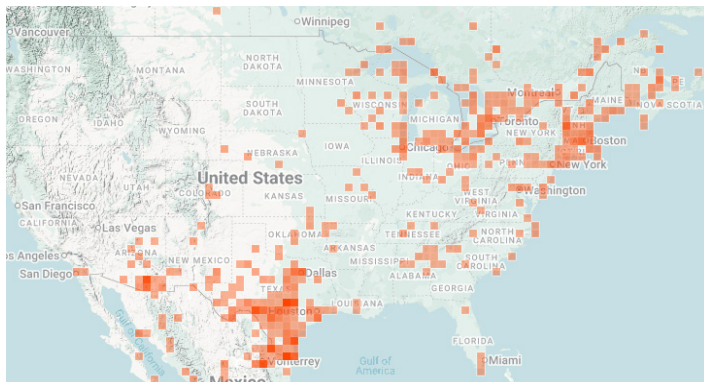
Orbed Narrow-wing moth adult. (Minnesota Seasons (https://www.minnesotaseasons.com/Insects/orbed_narrow-wing.html))

Orbed Narrow-wing is an uncommon, migratory, moth. It is found from central South America to southern Canada.



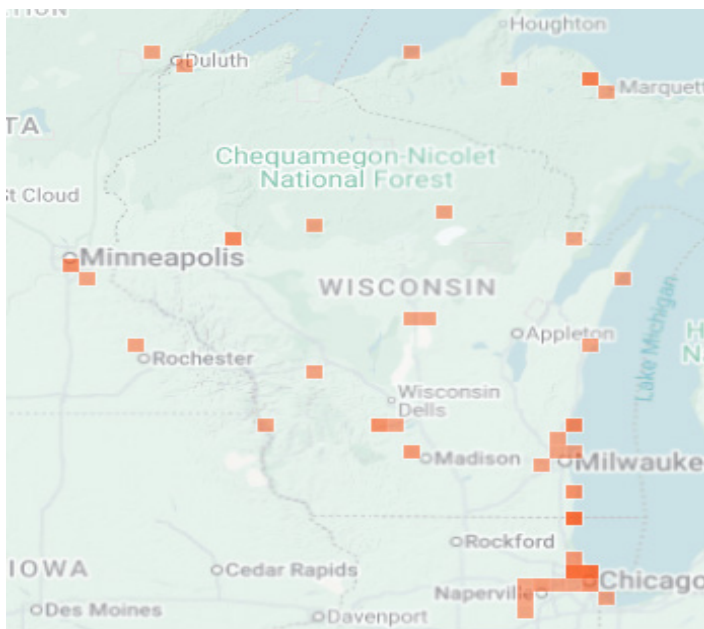
Orbed Narrow-wing range (iNaturalist)

Orbed narrow-wing adults occur year-round as far north as Texas. They migrate northward every year, bypassing the middle latitudes of North America and arriving in Wisconsin and Minnesota usually in late-July to September (Minnesota Seasons: https://www.minnesotaseasons.com/Insects/orbed_narrow-wing.html).



Orbed Narrow-wing in the United States (iNaturalist)

Orbed Narrow-wing adults do not migrate south again in the fall, and I was disappointed to learn that they are not known to survive our northern winters. Their long-distance migration results in two distinct, widely separated ranges in the U.S. In the northeast they occur from Maine to New Jersey, west to Minnesota and northern Illinois. In the southwest they occur from Texas to eastern Arizona. Between these ranges there is a sprinkling of widely scattered records.



Orbed Narrow-wing observations in Wisconsin (iNaturalist)

Orbed narrow-wing caterpillars feed on Carolina buckthorn, glossy buckthorn, and possibly other plants in the Rhamnaceae (buckthorn) family, and their preferred northern host is glossy buckthorn. Their northern range appears to be expanding, possibly due to the expanding range of glossy buckthorn (Minnesota Seasons). In our area, the adults are active where there is an abundance of buckthorn from July to October.

It is curious that this migratory behavior would evolve in a species that cannot survive to reproduce in the north where it appears those migrants reach an evolutionary dead-end. There is one observation in southeastern Kenosha County

recorded in iNaturalist that notes “It appears that these caterpillars were in a small area [in 2013], but the population has exploded [in 2014]”. So perhaps there is some hope that we will see more of them in the Bog in 2027; they are certainly welcome any time they want to come dine on our buckthorn.

SPRING & SUMMER BIRDING IN THE BOG

Alex Mann

As summer comes to an end, it’s a good time to reflect on some of the great birds the Cedarburg Bog supported so far this year.

A Common Raven wandered the Bog area from mid-February to the end of April. This bird was typically observed flying just above the tree tops and croaking - probably looking for a mate. This will be a bird to watch for in the future as this species expands its breeding range south into more heavily human-altered landscapes.

The Friends of the Cedarburg Bog hosted six birding events this spring and summer. Event attendees found over 90 species during those trips! Spring highlights were singing Hooded Warblers, Black-billed Cuckoos feasting on tent caterpillars around the Field Station, a Least Bittern chuckling near the boardwalk bridge, many singing Scarlet Tanagers and Acadian Flycatchers, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird building a nest one spiderweb at a time, and multiple Brown Creeper nests.

The Field Station’s upland woods had two pairs of Brown Creepers nesting along a trail in May. Brown Creepers nest in this part of WI in very small numbers and seem to benefit from dead Ash trees. Their nests are typically under loose bark and are incredibly difficult to find. We were thrilled to discover and share these with some of our bird walk patrons.



Pair of Brown Creepers leaving their nest under the bark of a dead Ash tree near the Field Station. Photo by Alex Mann.



Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding nestlings in the bog. Photo by Alex Mann

FORKED ASTER BLOOMING IN THE BOG

Danielle Bell

When you think of the vegetation of the Cedarburg Bog, you may first think of wetland or bog species such as pitcher plants, lake sedge, tamaracks, or skunk cabbage. These are some of the more dominant species found in the center of the Bog where the water level is at the peat surface. But there are microclimates throughout the Bog that boost the floral diversity due to the topographical variations. The upland forest that surrounds the Bog, along with the islands located within the wetland boundaries, contain a mosaic of woodland plants with wet-mesic and mesic forest species located along the edges and dry forest species growing on the top. This variation in topography allows the Cedarburg Bog to be home to over 400 of the Field Station's 720 vascular plant species.

Recently a new population of a State-Threatened species was found growing at the northern edge of the Bog where the wetland meets the upland. Alex Mann was doing bird surveys one late July day when he noticed an aster in bloom that looked unique. Upon keying out the species, he discovered that it was Forked Aster (*Eurybia furcata*), a state threatened species with a coefficient of conservatism value of 8. Southeastern Wisconsin and Northeastern Illinois include its historical range, and this species is known to be found in a few of our natural areas remaining in southeastern Wisconsin. However, the Cedarburg Bog was not listed as a known population.



Forked Aster inflorescence

The aster family is one of the trickier plant families to tease apart when it comes to identifying a plant to species. Many species have similar flowers, and a casual look can trick even some well-seasoned botanists. The composite floral displays of Forked Aster are composed of 9-18 ray flowers that can vary from 8-15mm long. Their leaves are rough on the surface and densely hairy on the underside. Asters and Goldenrods are the signal that fall has arrived with their glorious floral displays lighting up the prairies and woodlands in late August and September for one final bang before winter arrives. However, Forked Asters bloom as early as July.



Forked Aster leaf



Forked Aster underside of leaf

In the late 1980s, Lawrence Leitner, Jim Reinartz, and Donald Les conducted a study to learn more about the site requirements of this species, (Distribution and Habitats of Forked Aster (*Aster furcatus*), A Threatened Wisconsin Plant, UWM Field Station Bulletin, 1991). During this research, plants were inventoried at 14 known populations throughout Southeastern Wisconsin and specimens were grown at the Field Station to experiment on its mating system and pollination compatibility.

Forked Aster is a woodland plant that prefers moist soil conditions associated with calcareous soils. Plants are rhizomatic and tend to form colonies in habitats that they find favorable. They are usually found along rivers or lakes in conjunction with Red Oaks, White Oaks, Basswood, and American Beech. All these conditions are found at the margins of the Cedarburg Bog. Unlike most aster species that are known to be prolific propagators via seed, this species produces very few viable seeds. It is a wonder if this is a population that has occurred historically in the Cedarburg Bog and missed during surveys or if it is one of the few viable offspring from the plants that were grown for research back in the 1980s that found the perfect location to take root.

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE BIOCONTROL BEETLES IN MUD LAKE

For a second consecutive year, Friends of the Cedarburg Bog volunteers raised and released biocontrol beetles (*Galerucella spp.*) to help control the population of purple loosestrife in Mud Lake. When the beetles are well established, they can eat and damage purple loosestrife to the extent where flowering and seed production is eliminated.



Area of shoreline and islands in Mud lake where purple loosestrife is abundant and where beetles were released on August 14, 2026.

In 2006 we raised eight “pots” of “Cella” beetles at the Field Station and released thousands of beetles into the loosestrife on the lake; in 2007 we raised and released another six “pots” of beetles. By 2010 the *Galerucella* beetle population in Mud Lake had increased in abundance to the point where flowering of loosestrife was entirely prevented. Purple loosestrife plants survived in the marshes but were so weakened by the beetles feeding on their leaves and shoots that no flowers were produced. Our biological control of

purple loosestrife on the lake was wonderfully effective from 2010 to 2018; the Cella beetles were doing their job. In fact, from various releases, the beetles had spread and were thriving throughout our area, and it was hard to find a flowering plant of purple loosestrife. Even along the Milwaukee River, where loosestrife had been abundant, it took a keen eye to spot the weakened and beetle-ridden plants even late in the season.

Then came the crash. Something happened to the beetles between the end of 2018 and the start of the 2019 growing seasons. By August of 2019 it seemed that purple loosestrife was booming everywhere in our area, in roadside ditches, wetlands, the Milwaukee River, and Mud Lake. In 2021, we were still able to find a few plants in the Mud Lake marshes with Cella beetle damage, but flowering purple loosestrife was abundant, especially on those islands in the northern part of the lake where we first found loosestrife 30 years ago. The Cella beetle's population had not recovered to an adequate abundance on their own.

Last year, in the 2025 season, volunteers raised and released beetles to Mud Lake. Unfortunately, that release did not seem to establish a large population and left relatively undamaged purple loosestrife blooming in abundance on Mud Lake this season. In fact, loosestrife was again blooming in wetlands throughout Ozaukee and Washington Counties. FOCB volunteers raised and released beetles again this season; we have not given up on trying to control purple loosestrife in Mud Lake and are hopeful that continuing releases will regrow the *Galerucella* population to a level that will provide effective control.



Releasing beetles into purple loosestrife on an island in Mud Lake.



Volunteers collecting purple loosestrife on May 4, 2026 for rearing beetles at the Field Station.



Placing beetles on the loosestrife and netting the plants at the Field Station on June 10, 2026.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Jim Reinartz, FOCB President

Many, I hope all, of you will soon receive our annual appeal for 2027 membership in the Friends by letter or email. For 21 years, FOCB has provided stewardship, education, and public access to the Bog and the natural areas at the UWM Saukville Field Station. That work has been possible with the support of members. Membership is vitally important because it shows grantors and donors that we have community support for the work we do.

We are proud of that work. We present about 30 programs on a wide variety of topics each year. The Friends built, and continue to maintain, all public access to the Bog: Highway 33, Cedar Sauk Rd, and the Saukville Field Station's heavily used boardwalk.

The Friends have raised grant funding and are actively controlling invasive buckthorn over 600 acres of the Bog, including 227 acres of buckthorn treated over the past three winters. We have also prevented five aggressive invasive plants, including teasels and wild parsnip, from spreading along roadways in a 28 mi² area surrounding the Bog. We will continue to prevent that from happening in our Bog's backyard.

These are just a few of the reasons to become a member of FOCB. When you receive the Friends' appeal, please consider joining the Friends or renewing your membership in 2027. You can join online at <https://bogfriends.org/donate-become-a-friend/>



Photos By Brian Morrison

FRIENDS OF THE CEDARBURG BOG EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, walks meet at the UWM Saukville Field Station on Blue Goose Rd. Registration Required.

Please register at: www.bogfriends.org (click on Programs & Events). Walks are free and open to the public; a \$5 donation is appreciated.



Become a Member

WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED WITH THE FOCB



Like us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/TheFriendsOfTheCedarburgBog/>



Follow us on Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/friends_cedarburgbog/



Join our Email List

<https://bogfriends.org/mailling-list/>

FALL EVENTS

Quarterly Board Meeting

Thursday, October 8, 6:00 pm

All members are welcome to join the FOCB board meeting. The October meeting is being held in person and over Zoom. If interested in the agenda and to receive access to the meeting, please contact admin@bogfriends.org

Fall Color Walk (Full)

Sunday, October 25, 12:30pm - 3pm

Come and wander in the Beech-Maple forest with Jim Reinartz while the maples should be near the peak of their fall color. The tops of some of the maples will be their brilliant scarlet red, while the interior of the forest will be lit in golden yellow. We will explore and discuss hardwood forest ecology.

Photography Workshop

Saturday, November 7, 9:00am - Noon

Join board member and photographer Andy Holman for a morning photographing the Cedarburg Bog as it showcases the wonders of fall. The workshop will start with a short lecture on photo techniques that can be used in the bog followed by a photo hike into the bog itself.

Andy Holman has photographed and traveled to all seven continents during his quest for immersing in biodiverse environments. His photos have been exhibited at the Milwaukee Public Library, Betty Brinn Children's Museum and the Racine Art Museum. They have also been published in the Handbook of the Mammals of the World and in the FOCB Boghaunter newsletter.

Fee for this workshop is \$20 for Members and \$30 for non-members. You must have your own camera or cellphone to participate.

Observing the Prairie in Seed

Saturday, November 14, 9:30am - Noon

Despite not having any motor abilities, plants are able to travel long distances and inhabit new environments with ease. Come learn how plants disperse their seeds with naturalist Danielle Bell. We will walk through the prairies at the Field Station to look at the many seed forms of prairie plants. Seed will be collected to take a closer look in the lab under dissecting scopes. (If approved, attendees can take seed home or we will disperse them in areas where we could boost diversity in the prairies.)

Annual Fall Picnic & Potluck

Saturday, October 10, 2:30pm - 7:30pm

FRIENDS OF THE CEDARBURG BOG

ANNUAL Fall Picnic and Potluck

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
2:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Join the Friends as we celebrate another successful year of stewardship, events, and preservation in the Cedarburg Bog!

2:30-4:30 HIKE W/ JIM REINARTZ

4:30-6:30 POTLUCK DINNER

Bring a side dish or dessert to pass. The Friends will provide burgers, brats, and beverages.

Annual Meeting and Campfire to Follow

Volunteers are needed to assist with the event, email us at bogfriends@gmail.com if you can help.



Saukville Field Station

Register Today!



bogfriends.org