**The Badger Lands**

**Geology is All Around Us!**

The Badger Lands were created by both ancient and recent geologic events. The Baraboo Hills at the northern edge of the property are comprised of very hard Precambrian (1.6 billion years old) quartzite that has resisted erosion. Around 18,000 years ago, the last glacier bumped up against the Baraboo Hills, wrapping around the eastern edge, and flowed southward. The edge of that glacier ran through the middle of the Badger Lands. When the ice melted, a terminal moraine, a low ridge comprised of rocks, sand and soil, was left behind at the edge of the former glacier. Water from the melting glacier created the Fox outwash plain to the west of the moraine. The outwash plain represents the edge of what is now called the Driftless Area, the southwest portion of the state never covered by glaciers.

**First People**

Not long after the glacier began melting from our area some 14,000 years ago, humans began hunting caribou, muskies and woolly mammoths in the cold, barren Arctic-like landscape. These early humans likely established small temporary camps. The earliest record of human habitation in the area—around 12,000 years ago—is found at the Raddatz Rockshelter in Natural Bridge State Park only a few miles to the west. Starting around 1000 years ago, the people that comprised what is known as the Woodland Culture built earthen effigy mounds throughout southern Wisconsin; several mounds are preserved at Devil’s Lake. The mound builders were the ancestors of the people known today as the Ho-Chunk (formerly Winnebago). For several generations in the 1700s this landscape was home to the Sauk tribe, who were forced to move from their ancestral lands further to the east. The U.S. government acquired the land through the 1837 treaty with the Ho-Chunk Nation. In 2014 a portion of the Badger Lands returned to the Ho-Chunk Nation. Full circle!

**European Settlement**

The rich soils laid down under the Sauk Prairie were attractive to European settlers moving westward from the East in the mid-1800s, eager to establish farmsteads in the newly opened “Northwest,” a place called Wisconsin. East in the mid-1800s, eager to establish farmsteads in Wisconsin; several mounds are preserved at Devil’s Lake. The earliest record of human habitation in the area—around 12,000 years ago—is found at the Raddatz Rockshelter in Natural Bridge State Park only a few miles to the west. Starting around 1000 years ago, the people that comprised what is known as the Woodland Culture built earthen effigy mounds throughout southern Wisconsin; several mounds are preserved at Devil’s Lake. The mound builders were the ancestors of the people known today as the Ho-Chunk (formerly Winnebago). For several generations in the 1700s this landscape was home to the Sauk tribe, who were forced to move from their ancestral lands further to the east. The U.S. government acquired the land through the 1837 treaty with the Ho-Chunk Nation. In 2014 a portion of the Badger Lands returned to the Ho-Chunk Nation. Full circle!

**The Sauk Prairie**

Tundra-like conditions existed following the melting of the glacier 14,000 years ago. As the climate warmed, tundra was replaced by conifer forest. About 6,000 years ago, the area became much warmer and dryer, and an increase in fire on the land (often set by the native peoples) favored a grassland ecosystem—prairie. When Europeans first viewed this area in the 1700s, they encountered a vast nearly treeless landscape—the 14,000 acre Sauk Prairie—abloom with millions of wildflowers, thick with native grasses and hundreds of species of wildflowers. Their prairie gave way to oak openings (savanna) at the base of the Baraboo Hills and to the east.

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**Badger Army Ammunition Plant**

Although plans had already been made earlier to locate a munitions factory in Sauk County, the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December, 1941 brought the U.S. immediately into World War II. Thereafter, the construction of the Badger Ordnance Works (later Badger Army Ammunition Plant) on the Sauk Prairie proceeded at an accelerated pace. Within several months, 74 farm families had been forced to move off their farmsteads, the farm buildings, churches and schools were moved or destroyed, and construction of the largest propellant factory in the country began in earnest. The Plant eventually encompassed 7,400 acres and contained over 1,400 buildings and more than 120 miles of road and rail. The facility employed over 12,000 construction and production workers during its brief period of operation in WWII (1943-1945) and over 5,000 during the Korean War (1951-1957) and Vietnam War (1966-1975). The Plant was idled but kept in a state of readiness from 1975 to 1998.
Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area

This guide is for visitors to the 3,385-acre Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area, the state-owned portion of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant now open to the public. It serves as an interim recreation map while the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) prepares to improve infrastructure on and interpretive materials for the property.

Noted that the only public restroom on the Badger lands is at the Badger History Group Museum at the entrance to the property on Highway 12, and the museum has limited hours (Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm). Note that the only public restroom on the Badger Lands is at the Badger History Group Museum.

Great Sauk State Trail, a biking and hiking trail, is currently under construction by Sauk County on the former rail line that crosses the Badger lands diagonally. This state trail will eventually connect the communities of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac with Devils Lake and Baraboo.

Currently, cars and motorcycles are limited to the highlighted official roads on the property, but a hiker can go anywhere on state land. Please refer to the DNR’s website or map available at the entrance to Badger for rules and regulations at the recreation area.

NO PUBLIC ACCESS AREAS. The 1.550-acre parcel at the entrance to the Badger lands is owned by the Ho-Chunk Nation and is closed to public access. Similarly, the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center owns 2,200 acres of active production lands to the south, and that land, too, is off limits to public access. PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL and SAFE, and do not trespass on Tribal, USDA or Bluffview Sanitary District lands.

Note that Points of Interest (POIs) are currently unmarked on the ground. The Alliance is developing a mobile app that will not only interpret these and many points of interest, but will also provide GPS locations for the POIs and trails. The "Badger App" is expected to be available to the public in early 2018.

Points of Interest

12 PRARIE GRASSLAND This area was planted to native prairie grasses after the Army production had ceased, to provide habitat for a diverse wildlife. It has been maintained by hand-cutting and regular prescribed fires. Look for small concrete fountains of former gunpowder tanks along the perimeter road.

13 LANDFILL This landfill was created between 2004 and 2002 with the vast amount of unusable waste from the decommissioning of more than 1,400 buildings of the former Badger Plant, many of which contained asbestos and other hazardous materials. Access is strictly prohibited.

14 DETERRENT BURNING GROUNDS Waste chemicals were dumped and burned here during the production years from 1942 to 1975. One of three Degenerative HIV/AIDS, but a hiker can go anywhere on state land. Please refer to the DNR’s website or map available at the entrance to Badger for rules and regulations at the recreation area.

15 SALT PLANT This region once housed a salt manufacturing facility, but is now closed to public production. All that remain are interesting concrete foundations, hidden among thick forest and brush. This pond is a natural feature, a remnant of the last glacial. In springtime you may see several species of frogs gathering here on this pond, and at another, which features open green coves, off the east side of the road.

18 KESTREL CONE (No Public Access) This pond is a natural feature, a remnant of the last glacial. In springtime you may see several species of frogs gathering here on this pond, and at another, which features open green coves, off the east side of the road.

19 TRIPUTAN FARMSHEA The original farmstead (background dark area) was on the east side of the road and the barn was to the north, where some foundation remains. This pond is a natural feature, a remnant of the last glacial. In springtime you may see several species of frogs gathering here on this pond, and at another, which features open green coves, off the east side of the road.

20 MAGNIFICENT FLOWERS This area also featured a hydroelectric dam, which provided electricity for the production of solid propellant. It was decommissioned in 1942, and since then it has been used as a hunting ground. It is now open to public access. This pond is a natural feature, a remnant of the last glacial. In springtime you may see several species of frogs gathering here on this pond, and at another, which features open green coves, off the east side of the road.

21 DEW DEPOT This is the only remnant of the original lake on this entire 7,400-acre Badger property, spared from the blow by its distance from the production facilities. The site has been managed by volunteers with the Sauk Prairie Conservancy. After the Army took over the land, the Ho-Chunk owned the land and sent the cemetery to the state land. The head of the Badger plant, North of Highway 12 on the east side of the road.

22 SETTLEMENT AND SMALL LAKE LAKE (No Public Access) This pond is a natural feature, a remnant of the last glacial. In springtime you may see several species of frogs gathering here on this pond, and at another, which features open green coves, off the east side of the road.

DISCLAIMER: This Guide is NOT a DNR publication.

PUBLICATION DATE/EDITION 1 August 2017