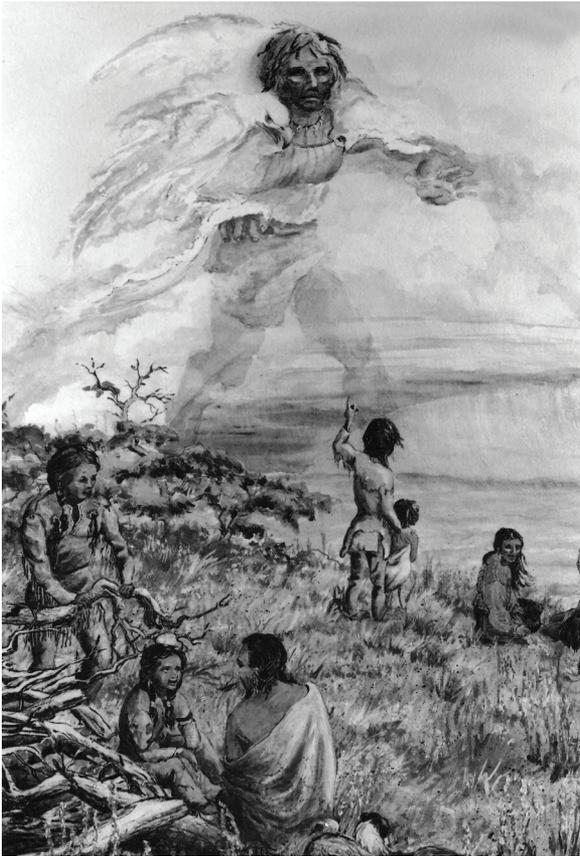


Kettle Moraine State Forest—Southern Unit

Bald Bluff

**Scenic Overlook and State Natural Area
Self-Guiding Nature Trail**



This painting depicts the south wind as it draws Prairie Potawatomi to Bald Bluff. This and other paintings by Helen Wehler are on display at the Visitor Center.

Kettle Moraine State Forest—Southern Unit

S91 W39091 State Highway 59

Eagle, WI 53119

(262) 594-6200

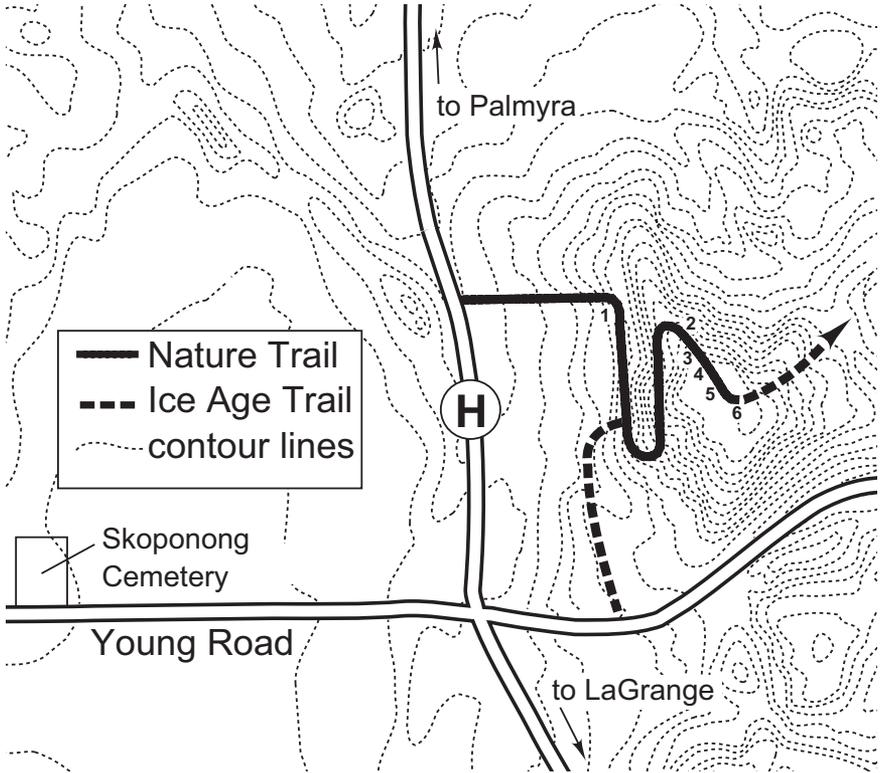


PUB-PR-231 2011



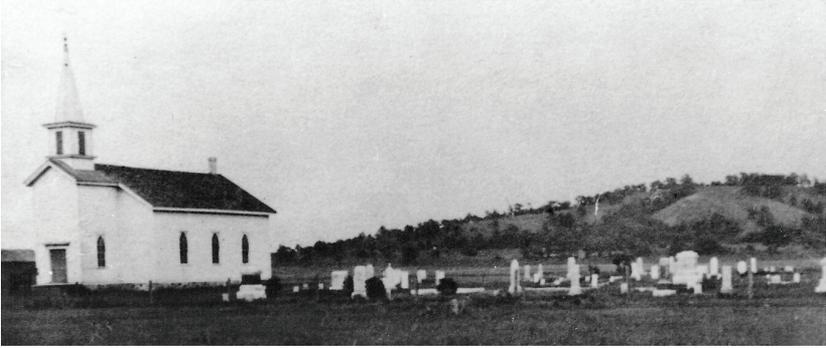
Welcome to Bald Bluff

This leaflet is keyed to numbered posts along this 1/2-mile trail. At 1,050 feet, Bald Bluff is one of the highest points in Jefferson County. Its prominence made it attractive to Native Americans, pioneers, and the U.S. military during the Black Hawk War. Hike this trail to discover the history of Bald Bluff.



1. Bald Bluff— An Early Name

Pioneers named this hill Bald Bluff because it lacked trees and was covered by prairie grasses and flowers. Though the bluff has grown over in recent years, a small portion of prairie has been preserved as a State Natural Area. It is burned periodically to keep brush and trees from shading out prairie plants. You will see this prairie at the top of the bluff.



Bald Bluff, circa 1904, with the Skoponong Cemetery and Church in the foreground. The cemetery still exists on Young Road (see map).

2. General Atkinson's July 7 Encampment

On July 7, 1832, at the height of the Black Hawk War, General Henry Atkinson and 3,500 cavalry and infantry troops camped on the prairie just northwest of this bluff. Every military brigade under Atkinson's command came together at this encampment, among whose members were the future presidents Abraham Lincoln and Zachary Taylor.



This painting by Helen Wehler depicts Atkinson's troops as they marched across the Kettle Moraine prairies in pursuit of Chief Black Hawk and his 1,000 followers.

3. General Atkinson's July 19 Encampment

On July 19, 1832, General Atkinson and a small number of troops returned to the Bald Bluff region based on a lead from the Winnebago Chief, White Crow. However, White Crow's lead proved false, and that evening, White Crow's followers confused Atkinson by stampeding his horses. The next morning, a messenger brought word that Black Hawk's trail had been located near Madison. Atkinson quickly moved out of the area. The Black Hawk War ended on August 2, 1832, at the Battle of the Bad Axe just north of Prairie du Chien. The Black Hawk War was the last major Indian war in Wisconsin. Rapid settlement of the Kettle Moraine region followed.



*General Henry Atkinson,
leader of the Black Hawk War*

4. Indian Signal Hill

“...It was the custom of the Indians, when the wind blew continually for several days from the south, to build large fires on the top of Bald Bluff that could be seen for miles around at night and all day a heavy black cloud of smoke could be seen for hundreds of miles rising from this bluff...”

—From the *Whitewater Register*, January 31, 1895

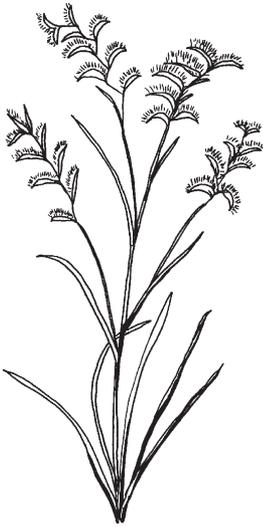


Painting by Helen Wehler depicts the south wind (shown as a giant Indian) drawing Prairie Potawatomi to Bald Bluff. The people in the foreground are preparing to build a fire.

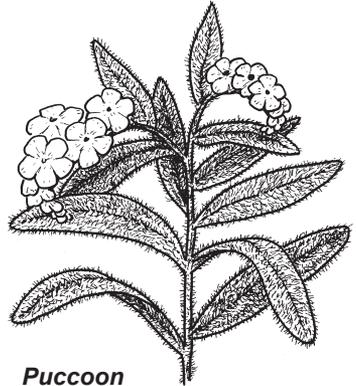
5. Dry Prairie

This is a fragile area. Protect rare plants by staying behind the fence.

The small dry prairie in front of this fence is one of 18 sites in the **Cliff Messinger Dry Prairie and Oak Savanna Preserve**—a state natural area within the Kettle Moraine State Forest. The preserve protects rare dry prairie plants such as little bluestem, puccoon, harebell and blazing star. Before European settlement, fire was common on prairies. Fire kept trees and brush from taking root and shading out prairie plants. Today, this site is burned periodically to maintain its prairie habitat.



Little bluestem
Grows in bunches
Turns purplish-blue in
late summer



Puccoon
Hairy stems
Orange flowers bloom in
spring



Blazing Star
Purple flowers
Blooms in late summer

6. Native American Ceremonial Dance Area

Bald Bluff's flat top and great view made it a likely place for Native American ceremonial and war dances. Indian dance rings were usually circular in shape and had a smooth, somewhat depressed surface where the dancing took place. The dance area was one of the most sacred locations in an Indian village.

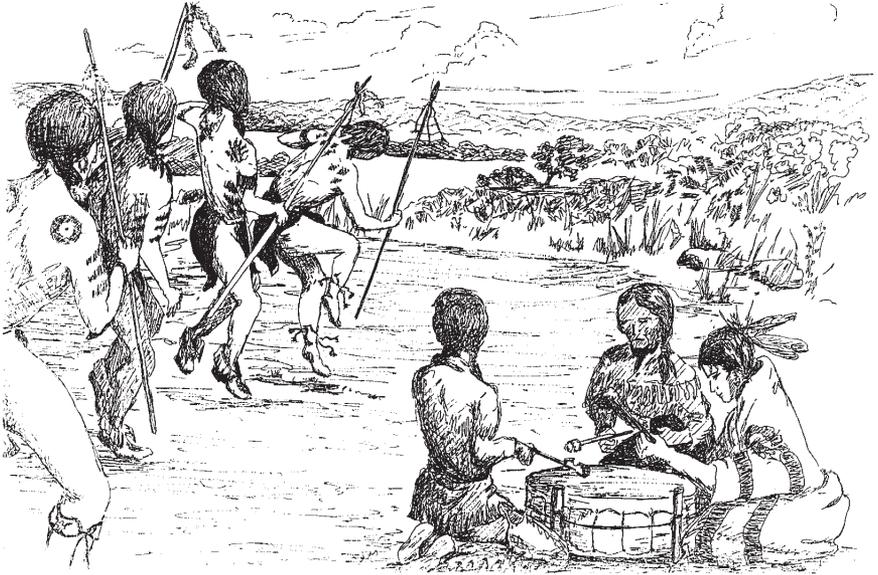


Illustration by Helen Wehler

On a quiet day, you can almost imagine these colorful dances taking place.

Thanks for Coming

This is the end of the self-guiding portion of the trail. Beyond this point is a one-way section of the Ice Age Trail that eventually leads to the Visitor Center, some 8 miles away.

We hope you enjoyed your hike up **Bald Bluff**. To learn more about the cultural and natural history of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, check out the exhibits at the **State Forest Visitor Center** on State Highway 59, 3 miles west of Eagle. The complete address and phone is:

Visitor Center
Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit
S91 W39091 Hwy 59
Eagle, WI 53119
Phone: (262) 594-6200

To experience the Kettle Moraine firsthand, hike another interpretive trail. Brochures are available at the trail head or at the Visitor Center.

- **Lone Tree Bluff:** Oak opening and glacial geology
Esterly Road, north of Whitewater Lake
- **Paradise Springs:** Cultural history (accessible trail)
County Highway N, northeast of Eagle
- **Rice Lake:** Wetland
Kettle Moraine Drive, southern edge of forest
- **Scuppernong Springs:** Cultural history
County Highway ZZ, southeast of Ottawa Lake
- **Stony Ridge:** Glacial geology
State Highway 59, State Forest Visitor Center
- **Stute Springs and Homestead:** Cultural history
County Highway Z, one mile south of State Highway 59.



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