

# Bluestem



April 5, 2023

Friend,

It has been a season of rest and restoration at Bluestem these many months, now moving into a season of life-giving. In the grasslands we are accompanied by swiftly moving foragers and the call of the Eastern Meadowlark. In the woods, the wind blowing wildly through bare trees announces the arrival of early spring. People have come to be nourished over these winter months as well, walking the paths in memory of a loved one or arriving to say farewell with a green burial. We prepare the site and dig the grave. They craft the burial service entirely on their own with friends, ministers, poets, guitar players, songwriters, dogs, children, the birds in the trees, the

wind across the fields. Always with nature. This past week, the earth surrounding the grave held remnants of our controlled burn that took place a week ago. Bright poppies, anemones and ranunculus filled the grave before a loved one was lowered into it. After a song, the family and friends began the hard work of saying farewell with each handful and shovelful of red dirt, their bodies releasing into love and laughter, fully returning him home.

Welcome to Bluestem.



*Bluestem winter landscape*

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## GRATITUDES

The volunteers who give their time and energy to Bluestem are truly its beating heart. They provide sustenance to us and to each other -- caring for the land, building Bluebird boxes, leading tours, arranging hikes, [counting birds](#), making food, writing grants, writing poems, [tending to this sacred space](#), and our growth. We are grateful for their company and service. When volunteers aren't able to be onsite they donate to support Bluestem. We so appreciate your financial support! Your gifts brought us Eartha the Excavator, a crucial piece of equipment for our restoration work with erosion controls and building new trails. We also welcome volunteer groups. In March [students from NC School of Science and Math](#) helped us build a new entrance to the sanctuary trails. If you want to experience the beauty of Bluestem trails firsthand, join us on Friday mornings from 9am-12pm.



*Eartha (and Walter) sharing center stage*

## SERVING FAMILIES

We rely on partners to help individuals and families with end of life decision making. It is emotional work to [think through the questions](#) about who will take care of your body, your preference for a burial container, how you wish to be memorialized, and whether Bluestem is a right fit. We welcome the compassionate assistance of home funeral guides, death doulas, funeral directors, and hospice workers all experienced in providing support and guidance to folks working through those questions. Let us know if we can connect you with these dedicated professionals. Or, find some we are already working with on [our Service Providers page](#).



*UNC Hospice staff and volunteers field trip*

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## RESTORATION IN THE FIELDS

Have you noticed a different look in our fields? Last month, we began using prescribed fire as one of our management strategies for restoring the grasslands. Working with our friends at [Wildland Forestry and Environmental, Inc.](#), we selected portions of the fields to burn and left enough open grasslands untouched for the wildlife. The controlled burn will help return nutrients to the soils, reduce competition from invasives and enhance the biodiversity of our native plant species. Our partners at [Triangle Land Conservancy](#) provide a great description of one of [their controlled burns here](#). We can't wait to see the impact in the next few weeks as pockets of green push up in all the fields. More about [Bluestem's conservation strategies here](#).



*Controlled burn in the first field*

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## BIRDS AT BLUESTEM

A bounty of birds have kept us company all winter long! The beauty in their flight and song can take your breath away. Important stewards of this special place, they serve as pollinators, and seed dispersers, two roles critical to our ongoing prairie restoration. Help us learn more about these important ecosystem engineers, by sharing your sightings and photos on our [Birds at Bluestem](#) page. *Super thanks to our local birding friends for making Bluestem an [e-Bird hotspot!](#)*



*A Grasshopper Sparrow courtesy of Noah Rokoske*

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## ARRANGING FOR BURIAL

Interested in green burial at Bluestem? If so, be sure to complete a [Burial Preference Form](#) online to be added to our reservation list. We are currently preplanning with individuals who submitted forms late last year. We will open another round of sales in late April. A few important steps that you can take ahead of time are:

- Review the [Green Burial section](#) on the website
- Check out our [FAQ page](#)
- [Explore Bluestem](#) on your own
- Tune in to a [Bluestem Conversation](#)
- Sign up for a [Walking Tour](#)
- Join us for a [Friday Workday](#)

For **immediate need burial** (or close to immediate need) please contact [Jeff](#) or [Heidi](#) to make arrangements. At this time, a minimum 3 days' notice is needed before scheduling a burial. Note that weather conditions may also factor into our timing. Please don't hesitate to get in touch or [email us](#) with your questions.



*A recent burial in the first field*

*"I knew as soon as I saw Bluestem what I wanted to do if my wife predeceased me. All I had to do was fill in the blanks. As a conservation cemetery, and in the way you and your volunteers support the family, it gives us "permission" to be creative. Where else would my service have been possible? It would not have seemed "proper" if associated anywhere else but in nature." - WH*

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## COMING UP THIS SPRING

So many exciting happenings are coming up this year: new wildflower species in the fields, installing a well, enhancing information and signage onsite, advancing our trail work with the help of a conservation crew, and of course, offering the community this precious landscape for green burial. Every person entering Bluestem has a story to tell or a memory to hold. Honor the lives of those who have helped to protect this land, and [make a gift today](#). For the month of April when you sign up as a monthly sustainer, we'll send you a Bluestem tshirt to rock at your next outdoor picnic!

Donate to Land Stewardship

*Bluestem is a wonderful quiet place for a walk alone, or with a friend. Come out this spring and enjoy the emerging wildflowers and wide open sky. Be sure to stop by the cabin and say hello!*

Heidi + Jeff

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THANK YOU to these amazing volunteers and contributors who've helped carry us through the winter: *Carol, Laura, Sidney, Lara, D, Allen, Noah, Meredith, Claire, Lee P., Lee W., Ann, Kathleen, Ann R., Courtney, Erica, Emily, Jennifer, Seletha, Shenae, Beth, Franzi, Carl, Susan, Betty, Mel, Linda, Anna, Brenna, Hannah, Caitie, Emily-Kate, JC, Hannah, Liz, Sarah, Leo, Nancy, Amy, Dave, Geri, Tom, Andy, Jerry, Kelly, Bill, Joanne, Kristin, Al, Lynn, Angie, Ben, Chad, Katherine, Kari, Robin, Xaris, Rachel and Katie.*

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**Our Contact Information**

Bluestem Community NC  
1900 Hurdle Mills Road  
Cedar Grove, NC 27231  
(919) 451-9236

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