

Quick facts about BRV

Environmental mission

Our primary environmental objective at Big Rock Valley (BRV) is to practice good stewardship — to promote and maintain the diverse native species with particular attention to listed species. Perhaps most important is to consider the consequences of our actions, knowing that anything we do (or don't do) will have a negative effect on something else.



Acreage breakdown

BRV began as a 160-acre parcel that Ed Lowe purchased in 1964. Today it encompasses 2,000 acres of diverse landscapes:



- **Woodlands (700)**
- **Wetlands (500)**
- **Croplands (440)**
- **Prairies/meadows (300)**
- **Roads/building sites (60)**

Species inventory

In 2001 the foundation began to develop a formal inventory of species at BRV, beginning with reptiles and amphibians and expanding it in recent years to include plants and birds.



- **700+ plant species**
- **115+ bird species**
- **30+ reptile and amphibian species**

Listed species

BRV is home to many species that are listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern, which include the following:

- **Cerulean warbler**
- **Spotted turtle**
- **Blanding's turtle**
- **Eastern box turtle**
- **Golden seal**
- **Ginseng**
- **Showy lady slipper orchid**
- **Eastern massasauga rattlesnake**
- **Black rat snake**
- **Cut-leaved water parsnip**

Best practices at BRV



— Woodland-management practices focus on diversity, long-term health and sustainability, including managing for old-growth forest.

Native tall grass prairies and savannas have been re-established. Prescribed burning stimulates growth of native plants and helps control natural succession..



— No-till cultivation practices, increase water in soil and decrease erosion. Hay management practices limit the time tenant farmers spend in fields to minimize impact on wildlife.

Vernal ponds provide a safe haven for many amphibians to reproduce in.



— Managing for overstocked and invasive species helps prevent imbalances in habitats.

Our facilities

BRV has many facilities including a fitness center for guests and staff, a lab for researchers and an information center.

The information center is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and houses historical exhibits of Ed Lowe's business ventures and entrepreneurship initiatives, along with displays about the foundation.

The Tower of Tomorrow provides nearly 11,000 square feet of meeting space. Opened in late 2010, this facility enables the foundation to host larger groups for its educational programs.

The Tower follows Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines, which encourage good environmental practices and energy conservation. For example, the building features a geothermal heating and air-conditioning system. Recycled materials have been used throughout the building, as well as stone and wood from the foundation's property.

Another new structure at BRV is a 13,000-square-foot headquarters building. This building mirrors some of the architectural design and materials used in the Tower of Tomorrow, such as stone and wood from the property. The facility also follows LEED guidelines, including a geothermal heating system and lots of natural light.

To accommodate overnight guests, the foundation has renovated five railroad boxcars. Each features two bedrooms, a large bathroom and a sitting area. The cars have their original floors while new tongue-and-groove paneled interiors have been built with wood from BRV.

Several renovated farmhouses provide additional housing, and some date back to the 1800s. Although equipped with modern conveniences, much of these buildings' original work has been preserved.