

Off on his own

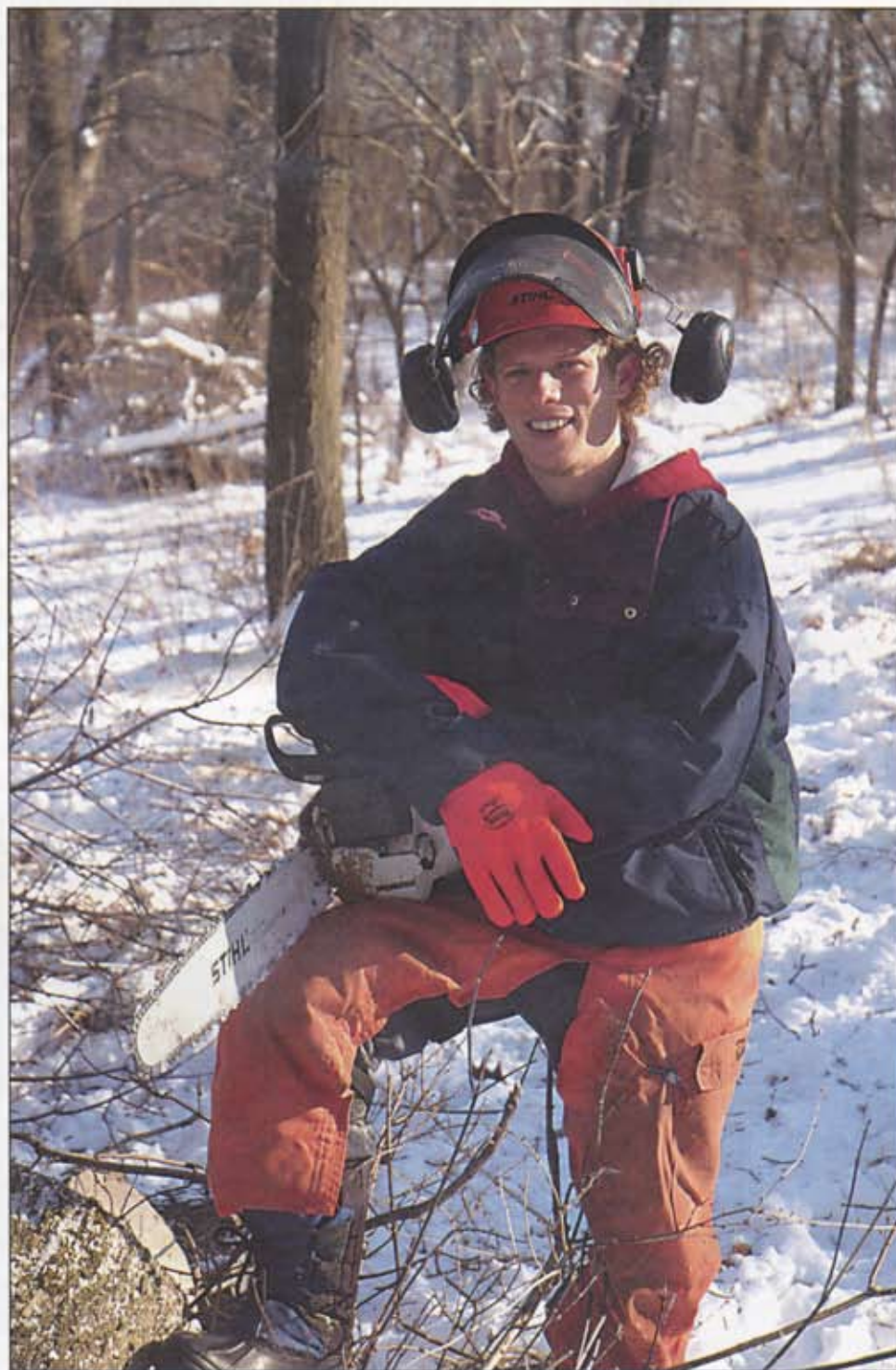
Bryan Huberty launched his own business to do what he believes in

Bryan Huberty was hoping to land a position with the DNR or a non-profit environmental group following graduation from the University of Wisconsin. He'd studied under some of the country's finest teachers in botany and ecology. He had many hours under his belt helping a land owner restore a prairie and oak savanna near Madison. He had prepared a field guide on the site for his senior thesis.

Then the hard truth hit him. Around Madison, there were more people with his credentials than there were jobs.

Wanting to stay in Madison, his birthplace and home, he picked up what part-time work he could. He dispatched honeysuckle, buckthorn, garlic mustard, and other invasives for area land owners. Mostly grunt work, but he was chalking up experience. Some of the jobs let him apply what he'd learned in college. He helped several land owners clear, burn, and re-seed oak savannas. He also did field work as a research associate for the International Crane Foundation.

Still no full-time jobs surfaced. So early last year, at age 26, Huberty launched his own business, armed with little more than a university degree, some work experience, about \$1,000 worth of equipment, a used Toyota pickup, and a driving ambition to nurse sick



His own boss: Bryan Huberty restores a woodland for a Wisconsin client.

landscapes back to health.

He established a limited liability corporation and registered the name Ecological Restoration Services (ERS). And he began beating the bushes for business.

Midwest Woodlands & Prairies caught up with Huberty this winter as he and a helper worked in near-zero temperatures clearing large box elders and other unwanted woody species from the understory of a 20-acre oak woodland 50 miles southwest of Madison. They were carrying out a comprehensive land management plan that Huberty had prepared for the client.

Like others in the business, Huberty juggles the need to charge a living wage against what land owners are willing to pay. When he can, he helps them secure financial assistance from the government or other sources.

But so far, he can't make it on these jobs alone. He fills in with a part-time job with the Rock River Coalition, coordinating a citizen's group that monitors the flora and fauna of a 1,700-acre wetland restoration near Lake Mills, Wis.

Huberty shares a rented house in Madison with a friend. He's paying off "a ton" of college loans. Though barely making ends meet, he radiates excitement about his foray into the ecological-restoration business.

"The work is physically demanding," he said as he paused with his chain saw. "But I love being outdoors and experiencing the change of seasons. I've also learned a lot about running a small business.

"And I enjoy working with land owners," Huberty went on. "You need to be a good communicator in this business. I prepare detailed reports for my clients and keep them up to date. It's great when you see their eyes light up.

"For instance, today we're sawing down box elder in order to release the oak, hickory, and black cherry. Then we'll run a burn through here to suppress woody invasives and stimulate native herbaceous plants. We'll follow up by re-seeding local-ecotype savanna plants. We're also going to create walking paths. We're boosting the land's value significantly. This woods is going to be beautiful!" ♦

For more information on Huberty's operation: <http://www.restorewisconsin.com/>

Man's best friend is his dogma. ~ Ima Bombeck

Manners are the practice of a virtue. The virtue is called civility, a word related--as a foundation is related to a house--to the word civilization. ~ George Will