



SPRING-SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER



BE SAFE IN THE CONSERVANCY

By Stefanie Brouwer, Board Member & Watershed Committee Chair

The Conservancy welcomes you as a place for exercise, respite and renewal during the current health crisis. As a global community, we are all affected and no one is immune to feeling fear, stress and uncertainty.

The natural world is a great source of solace, strength and hope in a time like this. As spring unfolds, the Conservancy is brimming with new life. The bugling call of the Sandhill Crane can be heard up to 3 miles away and the wetlands resound with the "conk-la-ree" song of the red-wing blackbird. Prairie plant

sprouts push up through the soil and chorus frogs sing at dusk.

However, for your safety and that of your family, please follow the



Park Safety Tips

- Go to the parks, or go for a walk or hike! Getting outside is good for mental and physical wellbeing.
- Playgrounds are closed and team or contact sports, like basketball, are not allowed per Wisconsin's "Safer at Home" emergency order.
- Just like everywhere, stay 6 feet away from others as much as possible. For example, move to the side to make space when on a walking path.
- Assume that bathrooms, benches, and other surfaces could have COVID-19. Bring your own wipes and hand sanitizer.

Public Health
MADISON & DANE COUNTY
3/25/20

guidelines issued by Public Health Madison & Dane County.

Conservancy visitors should work together to maintain proper social distancing by stepping aside to allow six feet of space while passing on the trail. This includes runners and bikers as well.

Due to staffing limitations, Dane County Parks is asking park visitors to carry out their trash and waste. All vault toilets are temporarily closed and portable toilets have been removed.

Dane County Park updates can be found online at www.danecountyparks.com/COVID19.

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

By John Daly, Board Vice-President & Accessibility & Use Committee Chair

Note: Due to COVID-19, a number of activities and events planned for the 25th Anniversary Celebration have been postponed. The following article details the plans for this celebration that may be expanded into the 2020-2021 seasons. Please

check www.pheasantbranch.org for frequent updates throughout the year.

An Invitation to the Community

What were you doing in 1995? Here in Middleton, a small group of concerned citizens were busy forming the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

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FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,

We hope you are safe and well despite the worldwide health crisis that is unfolding. As a global community, we are all affected and no one is immune to feeling fear, stress and uncertainty. The Conservancy is open and welcomes you as a place for exercise, respite, and renewal. The natural world is a source of solace, strength and hope at a time like this (see page 3.)

As spring unfolds, the Conservancy is brimming with new life. The bugling call of the Sandhill Crane can be heard up to three miles away and the wetlands resound with the “conk-la-ree” song of the red-wing blackbird. However, for your safety and that of your family, please follow the guidelines issued by Dane County Parks when you visit (see front page.) Also note that Dane County has temporarily closed the trail to the top of Frederick’s Hill to prevent erosion.

This is the Friends’ 25th anniversary year (1995-2020) and a variety of community activities and celebrations have been planned, from writing and poetry workshops to an evening at the Capital Brewery (see pages 8-9.) The annual Prairie Chase Run/Walk is scheduled for June 27, 2020 and registration is open (see page 9.) It is possible that some events may be postponed until a later date. Updated information will be posted on our website www.pheasantbranch.org and at www.prairiechase.com

In this issue we highlight a new wayfinding map developed for the Conservancy, efforts by students at the Clark Street School to protect birds, and the Friends’ involvement in the planning process for restoration of the creek corridor. This issue also contains the annual report for 2019.

Keep safe and stay well!

Lloyd L. Eagan Pam Shannon

Lloyd Eagan and Pam Shannon

OUR BOARD

Co-Presidents Vice President
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Holly Sledge Peter Witucki

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Illustrations/Photos

Cardno Inc., City of Middleton, Dane County, Susan Gruber, Dale Klubertanz, Annette Knapstein, Middleton High School, Madison Audubon Society, Michael Knapstein, Gary Sater

Newsletter Editors

Stefanie Brouwer, Joleen Stinson

CREEK CORRIDOR

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ongoing maintenance to protect the investment that is about to be made.

We also recommend that the plan include:

- The importance of public outreach during the planning and restoration process so that the public understands what the plan includes, what the costs will be, what the restored corridor will look like, and how access will be affected during construction
- Collaborating with the Friends during habitat restoration and other future phases of the project. We take seriously our responsibility as a Board and a Friends group to be actively involved throughout the entire restoration process, by lending expertise and contributing funds to the effort.



THE HEALING POWER OF NATURE

By Gary M. Sater, Ph.D., Friends member

Most likely we share a common experience of knowing how much better we feel during and following time spent in green and natural spaces. We may have experienced such as refreshing, spiritually nourishing, stress reducing or simply fun and enjoyable. Many wise individuals for literally thousands of years have suggested nature as a source for wisdom and healing. The forest for yogis, the desert for the Christian Brothers, the wilderness for the shamans and nature vision quests for Native Americans are all examples of such. Now, environmental psychology among other health disciplines has begun to scientifically inform us of physical and mental health benefits of time spent in nature. It is essentially a prescription for health with no copays or unwanted dose effects.

As a retired Clinical and Sport Psychologist, my early awareness of the empirical benefits of exposure to nature and use of such in my practice dates back to an article by Roger Walsh in the American Psychologist (October, 2011) entitled "Lifestyle and Mental Health." Time spent in nature was listed as one of nine empirically supported TLCs (Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes) that have proven beneficial effects for mental illness, individual and social well-being and enhancing and preserving cognitive functioning. And the evidence continues to

grow. We now have excellent books available detailing and expanding on this evidence. *Vitamin N* by Richard Louv, *The Nature Fix* by Florence Williams and *Blue Mind* by Wallace Nichols are only a few among many current resources. Recently, *The Nature Fix* was used as community read and reflective writing resource in a collaborative effort between The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy and the Middleton Public Library. John Daly of the FOPBC and his invitee, Troy Michael Hess, assisted in this effort with the library staff to engage our community in this topic. In the recent past I offered a community talk on this subject for the Friend's Conservancy Day program. It was well attended and the post-talk discussion was lively.

In a separate effort, I've created a number of posters using my nature photography, much of which is from the Conservancy, and bits and pieces of empirical evidence of the health benefits of time spent in nature. These posters are aimed at informing and encouraging others to use these free, valuable and available health resources. Some of these posters are now present in the kiosks around the Conservancy. Others may also be seen soon in other Dane County Parks.

Given the unique and trying times we are now in with COVID-19, our use of green and natural spaces has only increased in value. We can use these naturally healing places while

still engaging in the recommended precautionary behaviors (e.g., social distancing, etc.). With the increased anxiety and isolation many of us have been experiencing, the benefits of exposure to nature are self-evident. So, friends and Friends, I hope to see you out there in natural spaces soon and often. Be well and be in nature.



BECOME A FRIEND

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership Level:
memberships purchased after 9/1 apply to following calendar year

- \$10 Student
- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family

Additional Giving Opportunities:

- \$100 Friend
- \$250 Benefactor
- \$500 Steward
- \$1,000 Hero

Volunteer Opportunities:

- Restoration
- Education
- Watershed
- Development & Marketing
- Special Events (such as Prairie Chase Run/Walk)
- Board Member

Please send this membership form and payment to:

FOPBC
 P.O. Box 628242
 Middleton, WI 53562

NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

By Dale Klubertanz, Friends Member

Remembering in Spring

The passing overwintering of the Conservancy is filled with the white gold of grasses, dry and yielding in the warming wind. They share the landscape with the still rigid stems of prairie plants, blackened and topped with empty-nested seedpods, waving stiffly in the air, as if to offer a closing farewell. They stand straight and almost seemingly proud as symbols of a final fanfare when once a bountiful summer gave way to a full harvest in fall.

Underfoot is the muddy holy ground of a prairie to come, a forest ready to breathe, of wetlands eager to receive the thaw. It is alive and afoot with the magical stirrings of spring. It softens to new possibilities, opening to this and new generations to come. Again, the soil is anointed by baptismal rains falling during the reign of the equinox, when day and night meet halfway. It is brimming with generosity.

Long before the first leaf has unfolded and green pointy sprouts have made their way upward to meet the sunlight, one can imagine bustling bacteria and a labyrinth of fungi busy in the soil nurturing the awakening of new life. One can feel the faith, hope and wanderlust of roots and seeds roused by the warming, wet humus that binds the basis for life, a precious

mix of loam, sand and clay below the surface of the earth. All has enkindled the memory held fast in the earth, which is recalled each year in spring.

It was hardly March when a mild winter season had invited the Sandhill Cranes back early to the waters within Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Their calls could be heard across the lands as if arriving back from both a recent and distant memory. Soon the song of birds, the sights, sounds and scents that call and bond us to the wilderness will be everywhere. It is to incite and inspire all creatures in spring, to remember the vast, inseparable and reciprocal relationships of nature. As suggested by writer David G. Haskell, only inattention is a barrier. The following is a poem by Joy Harjo:

Remember

Remember the sky that you were born under, know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the strongest point of time. Remember sundown and the giving away to night.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled to give you form and breath. You are evidence of her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are: red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them, listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people are you.

Remember you are this universe and this universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.

Remember.

Joy Harjo is a poet and musician, and a member of the Mvskoke Nation. The poem was published by Emergence Magazine: <https://emergencemagazine.org/story/remember/>

LEASH YOUR DOG FOR BREEDING BIRDS

We have received several complaints recently about dogs off-leash. LEASHED dogs are welcome in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. It is always important, but spring is breeding season for birds, so it is especially important that you leash your dog now.

Important considerations include:

- Local birding experts report declines in grassland bird populations in the Conservancy since 2013.

- The prairie provides important habitat for ground-nesting birds.
- This habitat is threatened from off-trail walking and off-leash dogs.
- The presence of dogs in the tall grass impacts successful bird breeding.
- Leashing your dog is courteous to your neighbors.
- Leashing prevents dogs from chasing animals, people or bikes.
- Seniors, children and people with



- cognitive and/or physical limitations use the trails.
- Dogs on leash are much SAFER for EVERYONE!

CREEK CORRIDOR PLANNING UPDATE

By Stefanie Brouwer, Board Member & Watershed Committee Chair

The first phase of the planning process for restoration of the creek corridor is nearing completion and the Friends have been involved in every step of it. Last spring five members of the Friends with professional water management backgrounds assisted the City of Middleton in reviewing the proposals submitted by consulting firms for master planning work in the corridor. They were unanimous in their recommendation that the Cardno, Inc. proposal be accepted. The Board also approved contributing \$18,200 to support this work. The second phase of the planning will involve design and engineering plans for stream relocation, bridge and trail design and vegetation restoration. The Friends requested the opportunity to comment on the both the RFP for this work and the design and engineering draft plans when they are available and before final decisions are made.

In January 2020 the city released the first draft of the Cardno master plan.



Watershed Committee members and former board members Herb Garn and Lyman Wible reviewed and submitted comments. Some were incorporated and some were not. On February 29, 2020 the Conservancy Lands Committee (CLC) formally accepted the draft plan. Later that evening the city held a public information open house during which Aaron Steber of Cardno presented the second draft along with subcontractors Lynda Fink of KL Engineering (bridge and trail design) and Jens Jenson of Jenson Ecology (vegetation.) This draft was then sent to city committees and the Friends for final review and comments.

The Watershed Committee prepared comments and recommendations which the board approved on March 16 and sent to the mayor and city staff. In the letter we state our general support for approval and implementation of the plan - minimizing the number of bridges, altering the channel to accommodate more moderate flood plain slopes, and using multiple habitat goals

in restoring the vegetation etc. We make a number of important recommendations - technical (hydrologic issues, engineering of the channel and bridges, vegetation choices and placement) as well as general and conceptual. In particular, we recommend that the plan take a more comprehensive, watershed view of the corridor by:

- Establishing as a goal to “improve the stability of the creek and floodplain to be better able to handle upstream flood flows through the corridor”
- Recognizing that management of flood, ecological, and recreational conditions in the corridor cannot be fully achieved without significant management measures upstream in the watershed. The city must seriously consider acquiring regional stormwater detention, infiltration, and pollution control measures upstream from the corridor in the north branch of the creek
- Stressing that while identified management measures are critical for bank stabilization, public use, and ecological restoration in the corridor, **they are not permanent and will require continued, annual maintenance.** The city must be prepared to fully fund

Continued on page 2...

EDUCATION CORNER

charismatic songbirds.

Once data is collected and analyzed, the next step is to report out. The CSCS students will be presenting with Marsicek on March 20 at the 9th WI Citizen-based Monitoring Conference in Manitowoc. FOPBC also plan to have Marsicek and hopefully, some CSCS students to present during a Conservancy Day talk.

Once the data from Kromrey was received, it occurred to me that Pope Farm School is being built on bird habitat. What had the architects planned to prevent bird strikes there? The answer was “Not

sure”. So a meeting is in the works to have the students and architects collaborate on ways to make the new school more bird friendly.

The City of Middleton is forming a task force to provide recommendations to the Plan Commission and city for an ordinance for bird friendly windows in new building development, and guidelines for homeowners. After all, Middleton has earned Bird City Wisconsin recognition and this is one huge step forward for bird conservation. Deb Weitzel will represent the FOPBC and the city’s Sustainability Committee on the Task Force.

In conclusion, the BCC study represents the best education strategy for exciting students to not only learn but make a difference. From data collection and reporting results to effecting change in school district buildings and future construction in Middleton, the CSCS students will remember this work far after high school. Thank you, CSCS, for taking up the challenge. Now what about those cats??

For ideas to make your windows bird-friendly go to <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

2019 HIGHLIGHTS

- Creek Corridor - Middleton tapped our help to:
 - Draft RFP to hire a firm to develop a master plan
 - Review proposals and select the firm
 - Contribute towards costs of the master plan
- Acker acquisition:
 - County purchase
 - Ongoing planning
- Truck for restoration purchased
- Financial support from a broad spectrum of donors

ACCESSIBILITY & USE COMMITTEE

- Chaired by John Daly, board VP
- Infrastructure enhancements in creek corridor
- redesign
- Wayfinding materials and signage
- Development and distribution of informational materials
- Make a Memory events

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- Chaired by Deb Weitzel
- Education Assistant Anne Boucher
- Field trips served 400 elementary students from 3 schools
- 900 HS students participated in seed collecting and rain gardens
- Connected Madison Audubon and Clark St. Community School on
- bird-window collisions
- 4K curriculum development
- WI Master Naturalist course with 19 graduates
- Hosted Tunes on Tuesdays in June
- Hosted 11 Conservancy Day programs

RESTORATION & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

- Chaired by Jim Loving
- Dane County Parks LTE Rob Schubert
- 3000+ volunteer hours and 25 workdays
- Plant propagation nursery established
- Utilize pick-up truck for restoration and trail work
- Multiple seed collection events
- Continue to support Bock Forest
- Field work by Prairie Partner interns and Operation Fresh Start

WATERSHED COMMITTEE

- Chaired by Jim Bachhuber
- Involvement in city projects for:
 - Flood damage assessment
 - Master planning for creek corridor restoration
 - Donna Drive stormwater pond repair
 - Park St. bank repair
- Carp barrier feasibility study
- Long-term phosphorous monitoring on Acker property

DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING COMMITTEE

- Chaired by Lyman Wible and Lois Sater
- Administrative Assistant Joleen Stinson
- Website upgrade
- Prairie Chase Run/Walk
- Fundraising events:
 - Banff Film Festival
 - Prairie Café
 - Capital Brewery
 - Bikes, Birds and Brews
- Membership up 10%

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- Chaired by Lois Sater
- Nominates new board members and provides training and orientation
- Maintains and updates board governing documents like the bylaws

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Chaired by Holly Sledge, board treasurer
- Year end financial summary to right
- Draft annual budget
- Monitor budget throughout year to ensure fiscal responsibility
- Pay the bills
- Maintain reserve account
- Manage segregated account for flood restoration

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy works through 7 active committees consisting of board and non-board members: Education, Watershed, Restoration & Management, Accessibility & Use, Finance, Development & Marketing, and Governance. We depend on the generosity of our members, for which we are very grateful. Here is a brief report on the committee work of 2019.



OPERATING SUMMARY

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | Prelim. 2019 | Proj. 2020 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Membership Income | \$ 18,177 | \$ 20,855 | \$ 16,322 | \$ 20,740 | \$ 23,385 | \$ 24,000 |
| Contributions | 68,118 | 82,037 | 67,558 | 199,901 | 91,138 | 80,000 |
| Grants Received | 41,040 | 29,422 | 60,237 | 28,714 | 27,243 | 25,000 |
| Other Income | 14,847 | 16,567 | 23,004 | 19,508 | 23,731 | 20,000 |
| Total Income | \$ 142,182 | \$ 148,881 | \$ 167,121 | \$ 268,863 | \$ 165,497 | \$ 149,000 |
| Total Expenses | \$ 104,795 | \$ 122,504 | \$ 95,134 | \$ 116,457 | \$ 149,966 | \$ 130,000 |
| | | | | | | |
| # of Memberships (Oct 1 to Sept 30) | 532 | 478 | 505 | 520 | 572 | 600 |

BUDGET SUMMARY

(Budgetted Net Expenses by Committee)

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Accessibility and Use | \$ - | \$ 1,500 | \$ 1,500 |
| Admin/General Expense | 16,271 | 17,560 | 22,250 |
| Development & Marketing | 8,771 | 11,501 | 20,500 |
| Education | 24,966 | 24,896 | 25,425 |
| Governance | 650 | 3,600 | 500 |
| Restoration & Management | 30,540 | 42,830 | 44,129 |
| Strategic Planning | - | - | 5,200 * |
| Watershed | 365 | 400 | 400 |
| Total | \$ 81,563 | \$ 102,287 | \$ 119,904 |

*Strategic Planning occurs approximately every three years.

RESERVE SUMMARY

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Cash Position as of Dec. 31, 2019 | \$ 322,334 |
| Receivable for Grant Expenditures | 33,357 |
| Less: | |
| 2020 Budgets (& 2019 Residuals) | \$ 142,904 |
| Committed Grant Expenditures | 15,000 |
| Dedicated funds | 96,000 |
| Donated Funds for Endowments | 2,360 |
| Subtotal | \$ 256,264 |
| | |
| Excess Position | \$ 99,427 |

ENDOWMENTS

(Administered by Madison Community Foundation)

Investment Position as of Dec. 31, 2019

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Pulver Education Fund | \$ 81,520 |
| Restoration Fund | \$ 73,119 |

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

continued from page 1

These individuals, your neighbors, had the foresight to organize and become advocates for this unique natural area. Their meaningful work and legacy are represented in the Friends' mission statement - To restore, protect and promote the

Pheasant Branch Conservancy and watershed for today and tomorrow.

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy would like to invite community members of all ages to participate in the year-long celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy (1995-2020).

"Then and Now... and Now What" is the theme for the 25th anniversary celebration. In collaboration with our community partners, the Friends have planned a series of unique activities and experiences. These partners include the Middleton Public Library, Middleton-Cross Plains School District, Middleton Senior Center, Waunakee Senior Center and Public Library.

Seasonal Events

Spring

Organic Dinner at Middleton High School

Postponed: This event will now be in Fall 2020.

In partnership with the students of the Middleton High School "Green Team," the Friends are co-hosting the annual Organic Dinner and Program. Please consider attending!

Continued on page 9...



WAYFINDING MAP TO BE INSTALLED

By Peter Witucki, Board Member

Over the last several months the City of Middleton, in collaboration with Dane County Parks and the Friends, have developed a new wayfinding map for Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Wayfinding includes all the means by which we orient ourselves within a physical space and navigate from point to point. A wayfinding map emphasizes landmarks, trailheads, trail routes and distances. It avoids clutter with too many points-of-interest or amenities that do not facilitate navigation. Our objective is to include geographic information relevant to Conservancy visitors while maintaining clarity and usability for wayfinding.

(dirt, unimproved, seasonal,) and boardwalk to provide basic accessibility information; supplemental maps with details on the location of and distance between benches will be available online at the advice of the Senior Advisory Council. Additional supplemental maps can be produced for other users and applications if warranted.

The map will be printed on 18" x 24" signs and installed at 9 locations in the Conservancy. It portrays the Conservancy as a contiguous unit with a subtle distinction between city/county jurisdictions. Trailheads, parking lots (with number of spaces,) and major landmarks are depicted. Trails are denoted as hard surface (paved or limestone,) natural surface

Updating our maps of Pheasant Branch Conservancy has been a long-term objective of the Friends Accessibility and Use Committee. We are thrilled to see the final product installed later this spring!



PRAIRIE CHASE RUN/WALK JUNE 27, 2020

By Peter Witucki, Board Member & Prairie Chase Planning Committee Chair

Registration for the 2020 Prairie Chase is now open! Join us on Saturday, June 27th for a family-friendly exploration of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Participants will again run or walk the 5K crushed limestone loop, or tackle the hills and trails of the All-Terrain 10K. Stick around after for refreshments, music by Bluegrass TeA & Company, and the Kids Fun



prairie chase
pheasant branch conservancy

Run! 100% of the proceeds goes to the Friends of Pheasant Branch

Conservancy. Register at: www.prairiechase.com

To acknowledge the elephant in the prairie, COVID-19 presents some uncertainty for large gatherings into the summer. We will continue to monitor the situation and we are exploring options for a virtual race, rescheduling the event, and other ways to enjoy and support the Conservancy in the time of coronavirus. Thanks for your continued support of Prairie Chase and the Friends.

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

continued from page 8

Summer

Sunday, July 12th
Capital Brewery – Music of Nature
1:30 – 3:30 PM

Fall

Wednesday, October 14th
Holy Wisdom – Partnerships
5:00 – 7:00 PM

Community Activities and Promotions

Display at the Middleton Library

During the months of April and May the Friends are scheduled to be profiled in the entry area display case. The theme of the celebration - "Then and Now and ...Now What" - will engage the community in considering the past, present and the future for this unique urban wilderness.

Articles in Middleton Times Tribune and the Middleton Review

These local printed media sources will be publishing articles about the Friends and the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. They will also announce dates related to the 25th Anniversary Celebration.

Make a Memory Days

"Huge is the landscape, it makes my troubles small."

~Poetry writing from a participant with dementia in a 2019 Make a Memory Day

Thanks to the support from various grants from ATC, Bader Philanthropies

and the Foundation for Dane County Parks, these summer programs will continue for the fourth consecutive year. The theme for the 25th Anniversary Celebration - "Then and Now... and Now What" will be woven into the following program events in 2020. The specific dates will be announced soon through our partners' newsletters and social media. You can also check our website for information on the following topics:

- Independent Seniors
- Limited Mobility
- Memory Cafes and Memory Care
- Visually Impairment (tentative)

The Underground Springs

This special place has multiple meanings to many frequent users of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. It is a place to reflect, wonder and find solace. It is a place with a rich history. A small group is starting to collect information (historical data and anecdotal) about the underground springs and they could use your help. Do you have anything to share? Please contact Liz Lusk (lizlusk51@gmail.com) or John Daly (jhdaly@charter.net)

Nature Writing Project Series

Consultant Troy Hess will lead community members in a series of community engagement activities that focus on the collection of reflective writings about nature from various age groups in school district classes and community sessions and workshops.

A number of these are being planned with our partners at the Middleton Public Library and the Waunakee Public Library.

The Nature Fix Nature Writing Series (tentative):

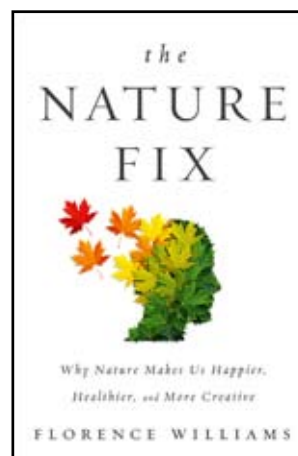
Sun. April 26th, 2:00 PM
Urban Nature Appreciation
Postponed

Sun. May 17th, 2:00 PM
Mary Oliver and Art of Observation in Nature

Sun. Sept. 27th, 2:00 PM
Kids Create: A Watershed of Words Postcard Poem

Sun. Oct. 18, 2:00 PM
Nature Memories

Summer and fall writing classes at Kromrey Middle School, Senior Centers and Senior Living Communities





TUNES ON TUESDAYS

Tuesdays in June: 9, 16, 23 & 30
6:00 - 8:00 PM

Music can be heard at Orchid Heights Park, the Springs, and the Homestead Site.

No RSVP needed, but please check Facebook for cancellation notification if the weather looks iffy.

Calling acoustic musicians!
Musician sign-up is still open:
www.signupgenius.com/go/8050d45adad2fa5f49-tunes

Calling volunteers!
Help with hosting or event coordinator duties:
www.signupgenius.com/go/8050d45adad2fa5f49-hosting

CONSERVANCY DAYS

The 3rd Thursday of every month
January - November
6:30 - 7:30 PM
Held at Kromrey Middle School Room 510 or in the Conservancy

May 16
Kestrel Boxes – The Difference They Make
Patrick Ready

June 18
Nature Writing Workshop
Troy Hess

July 16
TBA

August 20
TBA

EDUCATION CORNER

By *Deb Weitzel, Board Member & Education Committee Chair*

Clark St. Community School Students Team Up to Protect Birds

Back in the 1990's a study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison conducted by Dr. Stan Temple, now emeritus professor of forest and wildlife ecology, estimated that feral cats kill at least 7.8 million birds each year in rural Wisconsin alone. The news was a shocker and caused Temple to receive many death threats from cat lovers. But that data extrapolated over the entire US amounts to 2.4 billion bird deaths per year!



Bird specimens collected by volunteers in the Bird Collision Corps give a snapshot of the diversity and magnitude of the bird-window collision problem at a local scale.

And what is the second highest cause of bird mortality directly resulting from human activity? Wind turbines? No! Collisions with cars? No! Actually, it is from crashing into windows in the numerous homes and businesses across our cities and countryside. It is estimated that between 300 million and 1 billion birds per year are killed in the US by colliding with windows.

Enter the Bird Collision Corps (BCC)... a citizen-based, scientific study formed by a partnership between UW-Madison and Madison Audubon Society (MAS). During fall and spring migrations, a team of over 30 volunteers scours the bases of buildings on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus in search of dead birds. The study began in the spring of 2018 and has been documenting the number and species of window collision victims.

When an email reached me during

fall of 2018 asking for volunteers, I quickly sent an inquiry asking Brenna Marsicek of Madison Audubon if BCC might want to expand operations to Middleton. We met and surveyed potential hot spots for collisions namely Kromrey Middle School's large bank of windows facing Pheasant Branch Creek corridor and Middleton High School's PAC with its all glass front entrance. Science teachers from Clark St. Community School, Kromrey MS, and Middleton HS were all queried about involving their students in the study.

High school students at Clark Street Community School (CSCS), part of the Middleton-Cross Plains Area Green Ribbon School District, accepted the challenge and chose to study bird window collisions at Kromrey. This US Green Ribbon school abuts Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Middleton's premier urban natural area. CSCS teacher Heather Messer shares that "the students are excited about the opportunity to engage in real science. They are organizing the groups and calendars, collecting the data, and documenting it. Great learning is happening here!" And with learning comes action! Anne Boucher, FOPBC education coordinator has been collaborating with Messer and the CSCS students to continue the study now that a full migratory season was completed in 2019.

Results are in: KMS was monitored at a low level (2-3x per week) by CSCS students in spring (6 weeks) and fall (8 weeks) of 2019. Twelve documented window strikes, almost entirely songbirds plus a kingfisher, were found all along the south side of the building where the creek corridor is adjacent to a large bank of windows.

The BCC has documented hundreds of window strikes in just the dozen or so Madison buildings monitored on campus and Kromrey. Sixty-six species of birds have been affected, including 9 Wisconsin-Designated Species of Greatest Conservation Need, and one state threatened species. Most are small, beautiful,

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RESTORATION & MANAGEMENT

By Jim Loving, Board Member & Restoration & Management Committee Chair

This year Dane County has again closed the trail that climbs to Fredrick's Hill. This will help preserve



The Operation Fresh Start restoration work crew spent five weeks working in the Conservancy since the first of the year. They worked in the wetland, on the backside of the hill, under the powerline and along Pheasant Branch Rd.



the erosion control work volunteers have completed over the last few years. We appreciate your patience while the weather improves and the trail dries out.

In addition, Dane County is changing the route of the grassy trail around the north perimeter of the Conservancy. Specifically, the new trail on the north side of the original property will hug the base of the grove of trees and continue around the hill, but not up to the hilltop. This will reduce erosion since it isn't as steep and allow for amazing views of the new Acker property.

Please check our website or sign up to volunteer for workdays. We have the same schedule as last year for "regular" workdays, i.e., two in May, September and October. These are supplemented by "special" workdays that also are publicized.

In addition, we have two groups of young people who each year are making a huge difference in the property. We have five college-age student interns who work full time each Wednesday for twelve weeks.

Also, Operation Fresh Start has accomplished amazing work especially in winter. It is wonderful that the next generation is making this significant contribution. They are ably led and assisted by both our Dane County Land Manager Rob Schubert and volunteer Susan Gruber.

WORKDAYS

May 2 & 16
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

We will also schedule special workdays throughout the summer.

Work will consist of pulling invasives, cutting brush, erosion control or gathering seed. Specific work will be announced by email before the work date.

Be sure to wear sturdy shoes, long pants, a hat, and be prepared for mosquitoes. No experience needed!

Volunteers should meet at the Pheasant Branch Dane County Parking lot, 4864 Pheasant Branch Road, unless instructed otherwise.

Workdays are weather dependent; let us know you are coming at restoration@pheasantbranch.org, we will let you know if we have to cancel.

Due to COVID-19, concern for volunteer health and safety and the State of Wisconsin Safer at Home Order, we canceled the regular workdays for April. May workdays are still on the calendar, but that may change as guidelines evolve. Be sure to check the website and Facebook for up to date info.

PROPAGATION GARDEN - HELP NEEDED!

By Rob Schubert, Dane County Pheasant Branch Conservancy Land Manager

Help is needed to maintain and expand the propagation nursery created last year. The establishment and success of the propagation garden last year was outstanding. Now we need help to continue that success. Regular weeding and watering will be required to enable the plugs planted last season to properly establish and grow. More plants are waiting to be installed and hopefully we will be expanding this year with additional plugs. If you are interested in helping out at the Conservancy and learning about native plants, we are recruiting a small group of volunteers who will meet regularly to weed, water, plant plugs, and eventually collect seed! We will work weekly or bi-weekly at a convenient time. With the addition of the Acker Farm - 160 new acres to restore - we need to greatly increase the quantity and diversity of prairie seed available for us. If interested in helping or just learning more about native plants please contact Land Manager Rob Schubert at Schubert.robert@countyofdane.com.



The Friends of
Pheasant Branch
Conservancy
**PO BOX 628242
MIDDLETON, WI
53562**



**/FriendsOfPheasant
BranchConservancy**

pheasantbranch.org



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Due to COVID-19, all April events have been postponed or canceled. Future events may change as guidelines evolve. Be sure to check the website and Facebook for up to date info.

MAY

- 2 & 16 - Restoration Work Day
- 17 - Mary Oliver and Art of Observation in Nature
- 21 - Conservancy Day: Kestrel Boxes – The Difference They Make

JUNE

- 9, 16, 23 & 30 - Tunes on Tuesdays
- 18 - Conservancy Day: Nature Writing Workshop
- 27 - Prairie Chase Run/Walk

JULY

- 16 - Conservancy Day
- 12 - Capital Brewery Anniversary Celebration - Music of Nature

AUGUST

- 20 - Conservancy Day