



# WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER & 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## FRIENDS RECEIVE RURAL PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD FROM CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE

*By Lois Sater, Development & Marketing Chair & Gary Sater, Restoration & Management Committee Chair*

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy were honored to receive the Clean Lakes Alliance (CLA) "Rural Project of the Year Award" in December 2020. The Friends raised over \$25,000 towards the purchase of seeds for a "platinum prairie" on the first of four 40-acre parcels to be planted in successive years on the recently acquired Acker property. The Friends launched the Seed the Need campaign in August and with the help of local Middleton media, Middleton Chamber of Commerce, email and Facebook messaging, and a video

production to explain the importance of a Platinum Prairie, were successful in raising the money by the end of 2020.



Thanks to Dane County for the purchase of this 160-acre farm adjacent to the northern border of the existing Conservancy and to Dane County and to CLA for their partnership with the Friends to restore this land to native prairie and wetland. The Acker property addition is the primary source for runoff and extremely high phosphorus concentrations in the seasonal stream (that we call the "Acker Stream") that originates on the property and flows south into the Conservancy. The Acker Stream becomes a perennial stream where it is fed by springs in the county portion of the Conservancy before it joins the

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## FRIENDS RECEIVE THE 2020 BUSINESS HONOR ROLL AWARD FROM WASB

*By Deb Weitzel, Education Committee Chair*

"Businesses help Wisconsin school districts in many ways, including: donating to scholarship programs, providing mentorship opportunities to students, delivering presentations to classes or schools, volunteering in schools, etc. These are just a few

examples of how businesses partner with schools." ~WASB.org

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) encourages school districts to nominate up to five businesses per year for their Business Honor Roll Awards. The Middleton-

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## FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,  
We are pleased to bring you the Annual Meeting Edition of the winter 2021 newsletter, which contains reports and other information normally presented at our annual meeting, had it been safe to meet.

We are happy to serve as co-presidents of the board for 2021. Hans replaces the retiring Lloyd Eagan, who is interviewed on page 5. We welcome our four new board members, introduced on page 4. They will be tremendous assets to the board with their breadth of professional experience and deep ties to the community and the Conservancy.

Like others, our board and committees transitioned to meet virtually to conduct a range of business over the past year. We'll continue to meet virtually until further notice, with a full agenda for 2021, including:

**Strategic Planning:** In order to address the needs and challenges over the next several years, we're updating our Strategic Plan and have identified three broad goals - collaborative management of the Conservancy; connection to members and users; and financial capacity - as well as strategies to meet the goals and metrics to measure our progress. Next we'll develop time-lines for rolling out tasks to implement the goals and strategies we've identified.

**Acker Parcel Restoration:** With help from our members and other donors, we recently raised over \$ 25,000 towards purchase of the high-quality seed mix needed to plant a "Platinum Prairie" on the first of four quadrants of the 160-acre former Acker farm that is now part of the Conservancy. We've also begun removing invasive species along the quadrant boundaries to help ensure a successful planting.

**Review of Middleton Draft Comprehensive Plan 2021:** The 2021 plan includes topics relevant to the Conservancy, such as protection, funding and maintenance of public lands; stormwater management and flood control; and accessibility and education for public lands. Board and committee members have reviewed and prepared comments that were submitted to the City of Middleton at the January 12th public hearing.

**Creek Corridor Restoration:** We continue to monitor the plans and timelines for stream and bank restoration and bridge and trail rebuilding.

**Graber Pond:** We are providing comments on a project being planned by the city to install flood elevation control for Graber Pond. We also continue to monitor potential developments within the closed basin watershed of the pond, due to potential negative impacts to the Pheasant Branch Watershed and our ongoing restoration work.

**Rescheduled 25th Anniversary Plans:** In 2020, nearly all of our plans for celebrating the 25th Anniversary were thwarted by COVID-19. With our revised Strategic Plan and new projects on the horizon, we are excited for the next 25 years of the Friends. When it's safe to do so, we will resurrect some of the postponed events and plan new ways to bring Friends together. Visit our website and Facebook page for future events.

Please don't hesitate to contact us throughout the year with your questions, concerns and ideas.

Stay safe and in good health,  
*Pam Shannon Hans Hilbert*  
Pam Shannon and Hans Hilbert

## THE CONSERVANCY BIRDS OF 2020

By Janet Kane, Restoration and Management Committee

Thank you dedicated birders! After piloting a bird monitoring program last summer, Deb Turski and Sherry Caves, graduates of the Friends' Master Naturalist class, recruited and trained more than a dozen volunteers for this year. From early May into September, monitors walked the western prairie and the hill 5 times each week and entered eBird checklists of their observations.

Monitors focused on 8 species reported to be in decline at the Conservancy since 2009: Clay-colored Sparrow, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Sedge Wren, Vesper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow and Willow Flycatcher. Their eBird checklists also entered every bird they identified each time they went out - more than 11,000 entries. What a treasure trove!

Starting in 2018, Dane County Parks modified management practices at Pheasant Branch Conservancy to improve grassland bird habitat. Monitors had some concerns about the availability of habitat for all of the 8 target species. A Bird Habitat Study Group studied this question through the year, and made several recommendations for improving grassland bird habitat at Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

### 2020's Good News

Eastern Meadowlark: Monitors reported a pair nesting in the



Above: Willow Flycatcher  
Below: Sedge Wren  
Both are among the 8 target species



Conservancy, followed by sightings of two fledglings. (In both 2018 and 2019 only 1 meadowlark was reported.)

Sedge Wren: Monitors' checklists averaged 2.45 Sedge Wrens, ranging from 1-8. This was higher than the last 4 years.

Willow Flycatcher: Observations averaged 3.98, considerably more than the previous high of 3.0 in 2015.

### The Other 5 Target Species

Clay-colored Sparrows, Dickcissels, Grasshopper Sparrows and Henslow's Sparrows were observed on only 1 or 2 days in the spring. It's good to know these species stop by during the spring migration. We hope some will stay to nest in future years. No Vesper Sparrows were reported during the 2020 monitoring, but 1 was seen in October.

### Habitat Considerations

The study group learned that one larger, continuous area attracts more birds and more species of birds than an equivalent area of smaller, fragmented parcels. Some grassland species avoid high traffic areas with many hikers, runners, and bikers; others don't mind this traffic as long as they can nest some distance from the trail. The current prairie area at the Conservancy is relatively small, putting constraints on habitat

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## MEMBERSHIP/ DONATION FORM

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

### Volunteer Opportunities:

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

Send this membership form and payment to:  
Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Inc  
P.O. Box 628242  
Middleton, WI 53562



### Additional Giving Opportunities:

- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Unrestricted - use where needed most
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Glen C Pulver Education Endowment
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Restoration Endowment
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Seed the Need

For charitable IRA donations or legacy giving, please use our legal name, PO Box address and Tax ID# 39-1838491



*A reflective excerpt for these uncertain times from Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac"  
Part 1, December, Pines above the Snow*

**"It is in midwinter that I sometimes glean from my pines something more important than woodlot politics, and the news of the wind and weather. This is especially likely to happen on some gloomy evening when the snow has buried all irrelevant detail, and the hush of elemental sadness lies heavy upon every living thing. Nevertheless, my pines, each with its burden of snow, are standing ramrod-straight, rank upon rank, and in the dusk beyond I sense the presence of hundreds more. At such times I feel a curious transfusion of courage."**

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

*By Lyman Wible, Governance Committee Member*

The 2021 Board of Directors was elected by an email ballot necessitated by the pandemic. Thanks to all who voted. Get to know the new board members:

### Kaya Freiman

Kaya has met a number of board and committee members over the years while collaborating on Conservancy projects with the support of her former employer, American Transmission Co. As a Middleton resident and frequent visitor to the Conservancy, she was excited and proud to work on a project with the Friends and the City of Middleton to install the remote, solar-powered Conservancy Camera. Beyond that, she was grateful to work with the Friends on a project very near and dear to her as a parent - the co-branded 100 Birds of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Field Guide.

In addition to her communications, marketing and public relations background, she has a love for science and nature. She has had the privilege to work with and learn from a number of environmental experts and foresters in her career. She is passionate about pollinator plants, habitat preservation and sustainability.

In these times, the Conservancy for her is a place of solace and an inviting destination to watch butterflies and birds, or just go for a run. She'd love to be part of highlighting its benefits, working to ensure important projects are completed and helping the organization achieve its short- and long-term goals.

### Chris Kubiak

Chris is originally from Green Bay and has been a Middleton resident since 2002 after graduating from UW Madison. He has operated a small animation and illustration business since 2013.

An avid runner, Chris started participating in FOPBC workdays in 2016 after seeing a volunteer sign in the Conservancy. He caught the bug and has continued to learn via the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program in 2018 and by joining the R&M committee in 2019.

Contrary to popular belief, he does not sleep in his rubber boots.

### Lisa Quam

Lisa has been a Wisconsin resident for 35 years, but moved 7 times and lived in 6 other states as a child. One thing that was always constant no matter where she lived was spending time outside, and that continues today. Currently a resident of Cross Plains, Lisa enjoys hiking the many trails in the area and re-discovered her love of biking this past summer.

Lisa has worked in a wide variety

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**Kaya Freiman**



**Chris Kubiak**



**Lisa Quam**

## LLOYD EAGAN REFLECTS ON HER YEARS WITH THE FRIENDS

*By Stefanie Brouwer, Watershed Committee Chair and Pam Shannon, Co-President*

Lloyd Eagan has stepped down after 7 years of service to the Friends. She began in 2013 shortly after retirement by joining the Watershed Committee. In 2014 she joined the board and in 2016 she became president. She had planned to step down at the end of 2018, but then the great flood occurred damaging the Conservancy. Lloyd had spent her career as a leader in water quality and water resources management and she decided to remain on for another term to help the Friends and the city deal with the aftermath of the flood. Pam Shannon agreed to serve as co-president with Lloyd in 2019 and they shared the workload. We sat down with her recently to talk about her time with the Friends.

### **What are your proudest accomplishments as board president?**

In my first term, I recognized the need for an administrative assistant to handle day-to-day operations, data bases, finances and social media. In

the past we had wonderful volunteers like Barb Crozier and Susan Gruber who did all of this for free, but I knew we couldn't rely on that indefinitely. When I proposed hiring someone, there was resistance by some board members. However, the board did approve the motion and we hired Joleen Stinson. One year later, when it was time to evaluate her, the board was unanimous in renewing her contract and giving her a raise.

Also, in my first term we dealt with the issue of off leash dogs in the Conservancy and declining numbers of ground nesting birds. We worked with Dane County Parks to hold public meetings and several effective solutions emerged, like closing firebreak trails and installing signage to educate the public about nesting habitat.

In my second term, two goals were improving relationships with the city and creating a five-year strategic plan. Several Watershed Committee members are well versed in stormwater management issues and were able to assist the city in reviewing RFP's and plans for restoration of the creek

corridor. I saw the strategic plan as a way to bring committees together to work on shared goals. We hired a skilled facilitator and I'm pleased that despite Covid restrictions, we've made great progress.

I'm delighted that the purchase of the Acker property occurred during my time as co-president and that the Friends have been successful in raising \$25,000 toward the Seed the Need project.

### **How would you describe the Friends board?**

It has been such an honor and privilege to lead this board. Our board members are smart, dedicated and hard-working and I'm amazed at how much we get done with limited resources. This bodes well for the future because when you have a strong and qualified board, it is easier to recruit new board members.

### **What changes have you seen in the board during your tenure?**

When I started, I thought there could be more coordination and collegiality between committees. All in all, board

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## WI ASSN OF SCHOOL BOARDS AWARD

*continued from page 1*

Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD) has a long history of community partnerships that have strengthened the learning experience for its students. In 2020, MCPASD nominated the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy along with KEVA Sports Center, SPARK, BTC Institute, and Eppstein Uhen Architects for the WASB award. The Friends were notified in September that they were selected to receive the Business Honor Roll Award along with the other nominees. They join the group of 2020 honorees from fourteen other school districts.

The district knows the value of the

enrichment gained through working together with the community. The Friends have a 25-year history of collaboration in environmental education with the district. This collaboration also helped MCPASD along with Kromrey, Middleton High School, Park School and West Middleton win another award - the National Green Ribbon Award in the past decade.

Here is a sampling of that partnership.

Middleton High School:

- 1995-2013: Environmental Studies (ES) students worked on Saturday

mornings in fall and spring each year on restoration work in the Conservancy. This partnership between the ES program and the Friends education program jointly won the Environmental Excellence Award for \$10,000 from Sea World, Fuji Film, and Busch Gardens in 2007. The prize money was shared.

- 2003-05: The Ecology Club hosted three Organic Dinners which earned \$10,000 to help purchase the Bock Forest property on Highland Way.

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# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

By John Daly, Vice-President and Accessibility and Use Committee Chair

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee had to postpone all the scheduled activities and special events that had been planned to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy.



There has been one exception - The Nature Writing Project. The project idea originated as a collaboration between the Friends' Education Committee and the 25th Anniversary Celebration Committee. It was their collective goal to provide individuals and families with positive outdoor experiences designed to actively involve all age groups in the community.

Online classes started in Spring 2020 and will continue during Winter 2021. Individual and family members have been invited to the Conservancy as part of the classes that are facilitated by a naturalist and a writing teacher. Writing prompts, prose and poetry strategies engage participants and encourage them to share their outdoor experiences. We invite everyone to join us for the 25 (plus 1) celebration in 2021. Please watch the Friends website and local media for more information.

## ACCESSIBILITY & USE COMMITTEE

By John Daly, Vice-President and Accessibility and Use

"As a citizenship, we are increasingly aware of the many benefits of spending time in nature – but we also have a responsibility for preserving and protecting these areas. This is our collective challenge!"

The Accessibility and Use Committee was established in 2018 to address the needs and concerns of the diverse users and stakeholders of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. The Accessibility and Use Committee is focused on programming for underserved populations and infrastructure enhancements and modifications. The Accessibility and Use Committee is also tasked with summarizing the issue for the board when the priorities of different user groups might be in conflict.

## Make a Memory Day Programs

This committee has offered programs for underserved adult populations to actively engage older adults, individuals with physical disabilities, and those with cognitive challenges in outdoor experiences that appeal to the senses. The pandemic halted these well-attended programs in 2020 but plans are being made for 2021 and beyond.

## Collaboration on Infrastructure

"All I need for the Pheasant Branch Conservancy to be a frequent destination is a simple map; one that tells me the distance along the trails between various resting stops and areas of interest."

This statement, from a senior resident of Middleton Glen Retirement Community, and perspectives from other members of the Senior Advisory Council, have informed planning discussions with the city and the county as we collectively consider the infrastructure needs and the resources available to the general public.

After years of collaborating with the city and the county on infrastructure possibilities, members of this committee are working to modify and enhance the signage and wayfinding materials throughout the Conservancy, including the production of a new Conservancy map in 2020. The pandemic has delayed the installation of the maps at trailheads in the Conservancy, but the resource is available digitally on the Friends' website. We look forward to updating maps and wayfinding resources as restoration progresses on the new Acker parcel.

Initiatives for 2021 include a complete refresh of materials in trailhead kiosks, a deep-dive into the hydrology and cultural history of the Pheasant Branch Springs, and developing an interactive walking tour.

## Commitment

In addition to providing critical wildlife habitat and ecosystem functions, Pheasant Branch Conservancy has been a refuge for our human community seeking solace in natural landscapes. Over the last year, we all have become particularly cognizant of the physical, emotional, and cognitive health benefits of spending time in nature. The Accessibility and Use Committee remains committed to balancing the needs of wildlife conservation with respectful human use of the Conservancy, and we seek to expand access to nature to historically marginalized and excluded communities. The committee welcomes the participation of the general membership and community members interested in advancing these goals.

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

By Deb Weitzel, Education Committee Chair

As 2020 came to a close, we reflected on the unbelievable changes to our everyday lives. Schools went virtual and field trips were forbidden. This is the bread and butter of the Friends' education work, but we managed to post alternative activities on our website from a myriad of sources that teachers and families could do outside with children. While walking in the Conservancy, I have seen many community members using the great outdoors to escape from life indoors. And of course, exploring nature is a safe, enriching activity that is good for both the mind and soul. A break in our field trips gave the committee time to work with teachers and environmental educators to update our field trip curriculum

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy works through 7 standing committees consisting of board and non-board members: Accessibility & Use, Education, Restoration & Management, Watershed, Development & Marketing, Governance and Finance. We also have one active project committee: 25th Anniversary Celebration. Here is a brief report on the committee work of 2020.

for elementary students. When the district resumes field trips, we will be ready!

Our committee meetings went to Zoom after we realized the pandemic would be hanging on for the long term. We took our Conservancy Days (CD) talks live via streaming to our Facebook page. We will be continuing this practice into 2021 on the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 starting with January's CD – "The Dane County Climate Action Plan." While face-to-face talks are much preferred, a benefit of virtual talks is that many more people are tuning in. The talks are recorded and can be watched any time after streaming on our Facebook page or on our brand new YouTube channel. Use the link or go to YouTube and search for Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Look for our logo to make sure you are on our page.

Virtual school gave students in Middleton High School photography classes a chance to get outside more often to get that perfect Conservancy shot. Our photo contest produced stunning images of the Conservancy and some of these were published in our 2021 calendar. First place went to Natalie Cook, second to August Nelson and third to Trenton Schultz.

We embarked on a new collaboration with Troy Hess,



Instructor Troy Hess

innovative director of On the Yahara Writing Center. Hess planned a year of writing activities inspired by time in the Conservancy to celebrate the Friends' 25th anniversary. Our face-to-face meetings quickly had to change to virtual offerings and Troy led them very effectively. These included a book discussion of *The Nature Fix* and classes on Mary Oliver and the *Art of Observation in Nature*. A children's

writing class, *A Watershed of Words* resulted in some pieces being published in the locally produced *Quarantine Times*.

The Middleton-Cross Plains Area School district nominated the Friends for the WI School Board's Business Honor Roll. Recently we received news that we won! The Friends have had a twenty-year collaboration with the school district helping to teach kids outside. See article on page 1.

The year 2020 gave us time to reflect on and assess our activities, build bridges with new collaborators, and plan for new types of programming in 2021. We look forward to having you enjoy time in the Conservancy, learn more about this wonderful place, and experience the beauty, joy and peace of the outdoors.

## RESTORATION & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

By Gary Sater, Restoration & Management Committee Co-Chair

### Interns

Despite a pandemic we had a successful intern program in 2020. Along with the other Prairie Partners, Madison Audubon Society will continue to administer the program in 2021 with a revised job description and increase in pay. The Friends will continue to utilize the interns on Wednesdays for a 12-week period in 2021.



Prairie Partner Interns

### Restoration

Seed the Need fundraising has raised well over \$25,000. Additionally, the Friends have been awarded the Rural Project of the Year Award by the Clean Lakes Alliance (see article page 1.) Thanks to all who helped with this fundraising event and to all who contributed to this most impressive amount. Three more years for the remaining 120 acres and we will have a platinum prairie mix of seeds throughout the new 160-acre Acker parcel. Susan Gruber also orchestrated the construction of our new plant propagation box in the propagation garden. If you've noticed, it is a beautifully constructed cedar, plexiglass and wire mesh box designed and made by Jeff Wild and John Rowe. Gary Sater has written thank you letters to Jeff and John and included a 2021 PBC Phenology Calendar as a gift from the Friends. The new propagation box is already holding plugs for safekeeping until spring planting begins anew.

### Management

R & M committee members continued work in the Conservancy on 11/14, 12/5 and 12/19 with 5 to 10 participants. This work entailed cleaning up the northern border between the existing Conservancy and the new Acker parcel addition. Invasive shrubs and trees were removed and treated with herbicides and fenceposts, livestock gates, partially buried barrels and barbed wire were unearthed and removed. This was rugged but rewarding work as the border is beginning to be removed. Additionally, Susan Gruber has been coordinating with Operation Fresh Start, Rob and Dane County with crews working 3-4 days per week, 6-8 hours per day cutting and treating shrubs and trees along the eastern power line border of the new parcel. Having recently toured this area with a Saturday R & M work crew we have a new appreciation for how hard this work has been. This is a very messy old

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy works through 7 standing committees consisting of board and non-board members: Accessibility & Use, Education, Restoration & Management, Watershed, Development & Marketing, Governance and Finance. We also have one active project committee: 25th Anniversary Celebration. Here is a brief report on the committee work of 2020.

farming border filled with rocks and fenceposts, along with considerable invasive growth. In areas already cleaned it looks amazingly better. Thanks to Susan and OFS for the bulk of this work. Small group workdays will continue in January and February with the cleaning up of brush and deadfall, along with the burning of brush piles. Due to continuing COVID-19 restrictions, these workgroups will remain at 10 volunteers and under with safety first guidelines.

## Volunteer Hours

Janet Kane reported that we had amassed 4,043 volunteer hours as of early December for R & M activities, both in the field and those in support of the Friends organization as a whole. Some Friends members have also been volunteering at the Dane County Seed Processing facility and on sawyer (chainsaw tree and brush removal) events around the county. This is a very impressive number even with COVID-19 restrictions and safety guidelines in effect. Again, thank you to all who've contributed. Just think what we can accomplish post pandemic in the future. Rhea Stangel-Maier is retiring in January. She has been instrumental in developing and supporting volunteer training and volunteer activities for Dane County for many years. She will be sadly missed. Letters to congratulate and thank her were sent from both the Friends Board and R & M Committee.

## Giving Tuesday

\$2,161 was received from gifts on Giving Tuesday. This was a very successful ask and receive! Thank you to all. These monies will go a long way in helping us accomplish our future R and M goals.

## Wetlands

Tom Bernthal reported that the DNR has given approval for the bidding process for the final AIS Grant monies (ending in June 2021) for invasive shrub removal in the wetlands. Permits have now been applied for by Good Oak Ecological Services and Good Oak Land Stewardship Services to complete this grant-funded work. As many have noticed the Sandhill Cranes are already appreciating the work that was done earlier in the wetlands. Hundreds of cranes were utilizing the new open areas southeast of the homestead site and R & M work trailer.

## Bock and Bird Study Updates

Janet Kane has written an article about the Bird Monitoring project for the Friends' newsletter. See article page 3. It is a good and hopeful read, so seek that out. The city is planning to convert the Bock hayfield into prairie beginning next year. The Bock Foundation approved using grant monies to match the city's expenditure for seeds. Lastly, the city is moving from restoration to management of the Bock Forest property and what role R and M/Friends has is TBD. We have partnered with the city and Adaptive Restoration LLC to seed the understory of the mature woodlands to promote plant diversity. We hope to continue our partnership with the city as we have with the county. We are pleased to report that this teamwork is growing nicely.

## WATERSHED COMMITTEE

*By Stefanie Brouwer, Watershed Committee Chair*

The Watershed Committee is fortunate to have members who are highly qualified water resource professionals with current and past careers in stormwater management, hydrology, and water quality. They have worked at all levels of government - federal, state, local - and in private practice. These individuals have assisted the city and county on a number of vital projects in the past year. They also follow the activities of city commissions, like Planning, Water Resources Management and Conservancy Lands, whose decisions affect water-related issues in the watershed.

### Pheasant Branch Creek Corridor Restoration

Reviewing and submitting comments on 1) the draft master plan for creek corridor restoration and 2) requests for proposals (RFPs) for design and engineering plans for stream and bank restoration work and bridge and trail reconstruction. See article on page 11.

### Acker Property Plan and onsite monitoring

Reviewing and submitting comments on the property plan for controlling stormwater through a series of restoration pools and berms. Working with the county and a team of volunteers to measure water volumes before and after establishment of the prairie and wetland. See article on page 15.

### Graber Pond

Reviewing and submitting comments on a proposal by the city to install flood elevation control for Graber Pond. We also continue to monitor potential developments within the closed basin watershed of the pond due to potential negative impacts to the Pheasant Branch Watershed and the Friends' ongoing restoration work.

### Draft 2021 City Comprehensive Plan

Reviewed and submitted comments on the draft plan on behalf of the Friends and attended the public meeting on January 12.

### Stream Monitoring

Working with the Rock River Coalition to do monthly sampling of Pheasant Branch Creek to record nutrient levels especially phosphorus.

### Leaf free Streets Campaign

Worked with Dane County to educate the residents of the city about the importance of removing leaves from streets before rain storms.



## Salt Wise Campaign

Working with the Dane County and Madison Municipal Sewerage District to promote the Wisconsin Salt Wise Campaign in the City of Middleton.

## Lighting for Wildlife

Submitting comments to the city on the appropriate use of commercial lighting in areas adjacent to the Conservancy to protect nocturnal wildlife.

## DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING COMMITTEE

*By Lois Sater, Development and Marketing Chair*

At the beginning of 2020 our plans were to hold several events to celebrate the 25 years of the Friends fulfilling our mission to "Restore, Protect and Promote the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and Watershed for today and tomorrow." We soon realized that our planned activities would need to be cancelled or postponed in order to comply with the guidance related to the COVID pandemic.

In the spring, we conducted the 25th anniversary membership survey. A total of 214 members completed the 10-question survey for an impressive response rate of 30%. The key findings were:

1. The top reason, by far, that people join is to support land protection and restoration.
2. In order to grow its base of support, the Friends should hold a big membership drive supported by trail ambassadors, kiosks in the Conservancy, and neighborhood captains.
3. In order to engage a larger percentage of members, the Friends should expand volunteer opportunities.

It was heartwarming to learn that the word that members most often used to describe their feelings about the Conservancy is "love".

There was extraordinary usage and enjoyment of the Conservancy trails during the shutdown of normal activities. We decided to focus on helping users enjoy the emotional and spiritual benefits that contribute to physical and mental health. To do that we decided to:

- Develop a new pocket-sized brochure with a topographical map and information about all that the Friends are involved in.
- Focus on attracting new members as well as member retention, which resulted in an additional 75 members over the summer.
- Offer a new Sustained Giving option for membership to encourage long-term commitments from our members.
- Design an attractive end-of-year membership renewal and contribution campaign.

We found that despite our inability to sponsor fund-raising events, our support in the community has been impressive. This summer the Friends were challenged to join forces with Dane County and the Clean Lakes Alliance to raise funds for a "Platinum Prairie" in the newly acquired 160-acre Acker parcel

of the Conservancy. With the help of local Middleton media, Middleton Chamber of Commerce, email and Facebook messaging, and a video production to explain the importance of a Platinum Prairie, we launched the campaign in August.

The goal was for us to raise \$25,000 per year for the next four years to seed the prairie with high quality "Platinum" seeds. Thanks to an outpouring of support, the Friends were successful in raising OVER \$25,000 by the end of 2020. As a result, the Friends have been awarded the Clean Lakes Alliance "Rural Project of the Year Award" at this year's community awards in January. See article page 1.



In addition, the Giving Tuesday Campaign in December raised over \$2000 for equipment replacement and restoration activities in December. There were also two very generous donations to our two endowment funds. Most recently we have launched Legacy and Beneficiary giving information and we're offering a 2021 Friends calendar for sale on our website. Please visit our newly updated website.

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

*By Lois Sater, Governance Committee Chair*

The Governance Committee successfully recruited four candidates to fill 2021 board positions. Carl Sinderbrand, Chris Kubiak, Kaya Freeman and Lisa Quam agreed to join the board for two-year terms starting January 1, 2021. Carl joined the board in September to fulfill Jim Loving's term when he resigned early.

The Governance Committee including new member Carl Sinderbrand has created a final draft of the Document Management Policy which includes the Process for Document Retention, Disposal, Destruction and Archiving for consideration at the January 2021 Board meeting. It includes parameters for what documents need to be archived, where and for how long.

The revised External Group Liaison List has been simplified and roles have been filled. The responsibility is to monitor city and county actions and decisions that could impact on the Conservancy.

The board self-evaluation form was distributed to board members in November and a summary was reviewed at the December meeting. Board members felt that having virtual meetings most of the year was effective in accomplishing the business of the board and we also successfully accomplished a Strategic Planning process virtually. Collaboration with the city and county continues to improve. Areas of improvement include working on more visibility of the Friends in the Middleton community and to improve diversity on the board.

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## CREEK CORRIDOR UPDATE

By Mark Wegner, City of Middleton  
Assistant Director of Public Lands –  
Forestry & Conservancy Lands



After a lengthy process, the restoration of the creek corridor is moving forward. Requests for design and engineering work were sent out in May and 5 submissions were reviewed for the stream and bank restoration work, and 3 submissions were reviewed for the trail and bridge work. The decision was made to split the work into two different projects to appeal to firms who specialized in this. After review, the stream and bank design and engineering project was awarded to Cardno, and the bridge and trail design and engineering project was awarded to MSA. Both projects were started in the latter half of July 2020.

The original timeline called for completion by the end of December 2020. For a variety of reasons (COVID being one, unfortunately) this has not happened. As of this writing 60% of the drawings for the stream and bank project are scheduled to be presented to the Water Resources Management Commission on January 21st. The design work for the trail and bridges

will follow closely behind as this work is dependent upon the success of the stream and bank work. The city is hopeful that the original intent of soliciting for construction of the final design plans will still occur in March with construction to follow in the summer and fall of 2021. The wildcard in all of this of course is FEMA, their requirements and response time. Unfortunately, such setbacks have been experienced with other projects in the city, namely the restoration/stabilization of the South Fork of the Pheasant Branch.

On a positive note, early indications are that the existing bridges will be reused, but placed at a much higher elevation to allow for higher water

volumes to pass beneath. This will reduce the overall costs needed for reconstruction while still permitting a higher level of resiliency for future events. Also, the majority of the trail will remain in its existing configuration. Additional width will be included where possible and smaller, secondary pedestrian-only paths will be constructed as well. This will address user conflict issues as well as allowing for a different user experience.

If you have further questions, please feel free to reach out to Mark Wegner, Assistant Director of Public Lands – Forestry & Conservancy Lands at [mwegner@ci.middleton.wi.us](mailto:mwegner@ci.middleton.wi.us)

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

By Holly Sledge, Finance Committee Chair

### OPERATING SUMMARY

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Prelim. 2020	Proj. 2021
Membership Income	\$ 20,855	\$ 16,322	\$ 20,740	\$ 23,000	\$ 23,344	\$ 24,000
Contributions	82,037	67,558	199,901	104,683	144,770	80,000
Grants Received	29,422	60,237	28,714	27,243	16,287	30,000
Other Income	16,567	23,004	19,508	23,692	8,943	20,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 148,881</b>	<b>\$ 167,121</b>	<b>\$ 268,863</b>	<b>\$ 178,618</b>	<b>\$ 193,344</b>	<b>\$ 154,000</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 122,504</b>	<b>\$ 95,134</b>	<b>\$ 116,457</b>	<b>\$ 163,715</b>	<b>\$ 122,052</b>	<b>\$ 125,000</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>\$ 26,377</b>	<b>\$ 71,987</b>	<b>\$ 152,406</b>	<b>\$ 14,903</b>	<b>\$ 71,292</b>	<b>\$ 29,000</b>
# of Memberships (Oct 1 to Sept 30)	478	505	520	580	523	590

### BUDGET SUMMARY

(Budgetted Net Expenses by Committee)

	2019	2020	2021
Accessibility and Use	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
Admin/General Expense	17,560	22,250	23,349
Development & Marketing	11,501	20,500	19,916
Education	24,896	25,425	26,910
Governance	3,600	500	500
Restoration & Management	42,830	44,129	48,444
Strategic Planning	-	5,200	- *
Watershed	400	400	400
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 102,287</b>	<b>\$ 119,904</b>	<b>\$ 121,019</b>

\*Strategic Planning occurs approximately every three years.

### RESERVE SUMMARY

Cash Position as of Dec. 31, 2020	\$ 351,600
Receivable for Grant Expenditures	44,710
Less:	
2021 Budgets (and 2020 Residuals)	\$ 124,019
Committed Grant Expenditures	17,265
Dedicated funds	124,929
Donated Funds for Endowments	-
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 266,213</b>
<b>Excess Position</b>	<b>\$ 130,097</b>

### ENDOWMENTS

(Administered by Madison Community Foundation)

Investment Position as of Dec. 31, 2020

Glen C Pulver Education Fund	\$ 100,070
Restoration Fund	\$ 100,229

## LLOYD EAGAN REFLECTIONS

and committee communication and cooperation have improved in the last few years. It helps that many board members serve on multiple committees and we have several projects like strategic planning and planning for the 25th anniversary celebrations that encouraged work across committees.

### How important are partnerships to the work of the Friends?

Partnerships have been and will continue to be extremely important to our work. We have gained so much from working with the city, county, Prairie Partners, Clean Lakes Alliance, Audubon Society, Middleton Cross Plains School District, Holy Wisdom Monastery, and Rock River Coalition.

### What would you say to our members and non-members?

This past year we've seen a big increase in usage of the Conservancy with people stuck at home due to Covid. The Conservancy provides solace and rejuvenation in these difficult times and the Friends work hard to protect, maintain and improve it. So, if you use and treasure a place, please consider supporting it in any way you can, whether financially or with your time.

### Will you stay involved with the Friends?

My husband Pat and I will remain members and we look forward to volunteering for 1-day events. I plan to continue on the Watershed

*continued from page 5*

Committee and do monthly water-quality stream monitoring of Pheasant Branch Creek.

### What are your hopes for the Friends in the future?

I hope that the Friends continue to focus on their mission of restoring, protecting and promoting the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and watershed for today and tomorrow. I hope they continue to nurture existing partnerships and develop new ones. The Conservancy is such an outstanding resource for the community and we need to continue to build our membership, programming and endowments.

## GLEN C PULVER EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FUND

By Martha Frey, Membership Volunteer

Did you know that Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy has an endowment to support environmental education? We do! It is thanks to Mrs. Joan Pulver who established this endowment in honor of her late husband Mr. Glen C. Pulver.

"The Glen Pulver Education Endowment Fund is a wonderful tool and source of funding for our education initiatives," said Deb Weitzel, board member and Education Committee Chair. "The endowment provides stability for our income stream to enable the Friends to continue to hire well-qualified environmental educators for our Conservancy-based field trips. The funds are also used to purchase consumable supplies and equipment for hands-on programming. Additionally, teachers and naturalists are hired to modify our field trip curriculum in order to stay current."

In October, I talked to Joan Pulver about her family's love of nature, education, and Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

**Why did you establish the endowment fund to support educational programs at Pheasant Branch Conservancy?**

I did this because my late husband Glen valued education and we both loved the Conservancy. When Glen and I were children, we had many opportunities to explore the natural world, growing up in western Wisconsin. I want the children of

Middleton and Madison to have similar opportunities. I love sandhill cranes and hope generations of young people will develop a similar appreciation. Children benefit from the peace and quiet found in nature. I am delighted to support the Friends in many ways, including through this education endowment.



Joan and Glen Pulver in Norway

**How did you husband Glen become interested in education?**

Glen was a farm boy, who grew up near Portage. He was a straight A student in high school, but never thought about going to college until he received a scholarship from Sears, Roebuck & Co. This helping hand changed the trajectory of Glen's life. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in agricultural education, followed by M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in agricultural economics, all at University of Wisconsin - Madison. Glen knew first hand that education changes lives.

**What kind work did you and Glen do?**

Glen worked to improve the wellbeing of rural residents. He was a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at UW-Madison. Glen was also a dean of UW-extension for economic and environmental development, working with specialists in forestry, social science, wildlife ecology, and community development. While Glen was in graduate school, I helped support the family by working for Mutual Indemnity Insurance. One of my favorite things was planning and hosting dinners at our home with faculty, staff, graduate students, and visiting scholars. Glen and I were a good team.

We are grateful for the generosity of Joan Pulver and her two daughters.

The Glen C. Pulver Endowment Fund is held at Madison Community Foundation.

If you would like to make a gift to this endowment or to any FOPBC segregated account, please complete the membership/donation form on page 3 or go to our website and click on support.

To make FOPBC part of your legacy, please use the following legal name in your will or trust:

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Inc.  
P.O. Box 628242  
Middleton, WI 53562  
Tax ID# 39-1838491

## NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT LEXY DORZWEILER

By Pam Shannon, Co-President

In mid-December, we learned that our very capable administrative assistant, Joleen Stinson, had accepted the position of Dane County Parks Deputy Director in the Land and Water Resources Department. We were thrilled for Joleen that she would be working in her self-described dream job, but sorry to see her go. The good news is that she will continue to work with us as the county's liaison to Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

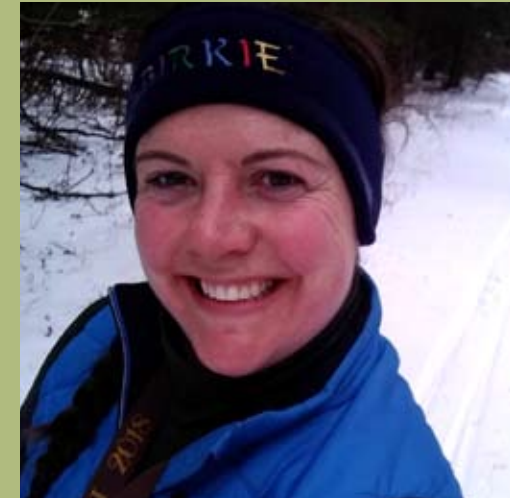
We are pleased to introduce Lexy Dorzweiler as our new administrative assistant. Lexy graduated from UW-Stevens Point in Natural Resource Management and interned with the AmeriCorps Community Garden Partnership in the Fox Valley. She brings over a decade of experience as a restaurant general manager, where

she handled day-to-day operations including training, communications, finances, payroll, social media, and

non-profit fundraising, skills that she will put to good use in her new position.



New administrative assistant Lexy Dorzweiler



Joleen Stinson, former administrative assistant and new Dane County Parks Deputy Director

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

of industries over the past almost 30 years, from healthcare to real estate, to executive administration. She joined the Middleton Chamber of Commerce as Membership Development Manager in 2019. She is responsible for expanding the membership base at the Middleton Chamber of Commerce by attracting new members to the organization and increasing member engagement to increase member retention.

She learned more about the Friends by doing a video spotlight for the Chamber about the 25th Anniversary of the FOPBC. She has volunteer experience as a Girl Scout Leader, on the Board of Elders at her church, and was a founding member/chair of a charitable giving committee at a former employer. Lisa has also been a United Way Campaign Manager for 4 years, raising over \$50,000 for United Way of Dane County (2014 - 2018).

Lisa has been married to Steve for 24 years, and their daughter (Emily) graduated from St. Olaf College in Minnesota this past spring. Their family also has two rescue dogs, Birdie and Frida.

**Carl Sinderbrand**

Carl grew up just outside of Atlantic City, NJ; went to Quaker schools through elementary and high school, graduated from Oberlin College and UW-Madison Law School.

After working as a judicial clerk, he worked for the Wisconsin Department of Justice for about eleven years, primarily in environmental protection representing DNR. In that capacity, most of his work was in the areas of water pollution, watershed management, and hazardous waste management. He was also involved in nuclear waste management and various interstate compact issues.

Since 1990, he has been in private practice, focusing in three areas: environmental and conservation (mostly representing municipalities and environmental groups); construction law; and governmental regulation. He is now semi-retired.

He has been on the boards of several non-profit organizations, including Clean Wisconsin (two stints as chair and still on the board), Wisconsin Wetlands Association (served as

*continued from page 4*

interim chair), Temple Beth El (served as chair and permanent board member), and Friends of the Arboretum (recently joined the board). He has also represented and advised various public and non-governmental organizations.

He is married and has three grown children and two granddaughters. He treasures the Conservancy as a haven of tranquility and joy that nurtures his soul.



Carl Sinderbrand

## RURAL PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD

main Pheasant Branch Creek in the center of the marsh, and then into Lake Mendota.

Recipients of this award in past years have included Dane County for the "Suck the Muck" project and Yahara Pride Farms, a farmer-



*continued from page 1*

led non-profit that strives to preserve agricultural heritage while simultaneously encouraging farmers to engage in proactive environmental stewardship practices. CLA also has other categories of awards to honor outstanding volunteers, businesses, individuals and partners who work to improve the health of the Yahara Lakes.

## CONSERVANCY DAYS

The 3rd Thursday of every month  
January - November  
6:30 - 7:30 PM  
Virtual on Facebook Live and recordings are archived on website

February 18  
Prairies  
Rob Schubert, Dane County Parks Restoration Coordinator for PBC

March 18  
Monitoring American Kestrel Boxes  
Patrick Ready, Madison Audubon Volunteer Kestrel Box Manager

April 15  
Ground Nesting Birds in PBC  
Deborah Turski and Sherry Caves, Master Naturalists and Project Managers

May 20  
The Phenology of PBC  
Randy Hoffman, Author of *When Things Happen: A Guide to Natural Events in Wisconsin*

## WI MASTER NATURALIST

Due to the pandemic and wanting to provide the safest WI Master Naturalist (WIMN) course offering we can, the 2021 dates will be later in the summer than originally planned.

Check the WIMN website after March 1 for registration information and safeguards put in place to keep everyone safe from COVID-19.  
wimasternaturalist.org

New Dates:  
August 6-7, 13-14, and 27-28  
8:00-5:00 daily  
Location in Middleton TBD.

## EDUCATION AWARD

*continued from page 5*



**Anne Boucher, Education Coordinator and Deb Weitzel, Education Committee Chair at award ceremony.**

- 2009-present: The Education Committee sponsors a contest with photography classes. Students learn about nature photography and take photos in the Conservancy. They are judged by professional photographers and first, second, third places and honorable mention are chosen. Prizes donated by local businesses are awarded at a reception. Select photos are published in the FOPBC Phenology Calendar.
- 2017-present: Music department staff proposed the idea of Tunes on Tuesday to the Education Committee in 2017. The committee invites the community, each June, to take a stroll through the Conservancy to experience acoustic music while in nature. Student and community musicians are invited to perform each year.
- 2018: Students in Bill Boehm's media class produced a video documentary of the history of the Friends and the unique natural features of the Conservancy. This was in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Friends.
- 2019-present: The education committee established a citizen science program run by Madison Audubon Society to monitor bird-window collisions during the spring and fall migrations with students at Clark Street Community School. Students

from Heather Messer's science classes joined the Bird Collision Corps to collect data on the bird collisions with the immense glass windows at Kromrey Middle School that face the creek corridor of the Conservancy. The data is reported to Madison Audubon Society and can be used by the school district to be considered in facility management and development decisions.

### Middle Schools

- 2017-present: The 6th grade science students are restoring the rain gardens at Kromrey through a partnership between teachers and the Friend's Education Committee. All 6th graders learn about rain garden science and restoration science while taking on the actual work of restoration. To date, 850 students have provided more than 1000 people-hours of work in the restoration of the gardens.
- 2020: The Friends sponsored the development of a nature writing project for 5th grade students at both Kromrey and Glacier Creek.

### MCPASD elementary schools and 4K:

- 2010-present: Outdoor lessons based on the MCPASD science curriculum are offered at no cost to all K-5 classrooms. The District maintains a bus fund to pay for transportation. The lessons were written by FOPBC education naturalists and district teachers.
- 2017 and 2019: Funds from the Glen C. Pulver Education Endowment and a grant from American Transmission Company were used to develop environmental units (on trees and cranes) that are now part of the MCPASD 4K curriculum.
- 2016 and 2019: Intergenerational art projects brought area seniors (from Middleton Glen and Attic Angels senior living communities) and 4th grade students (from Sauk Trail and Northside) together to create unique art based on field trips to the Conservancy and the memories and reflections of the seniors on time outdoors in their youth.

## ACKER PARCEL RESTORATION UPDATE

*By Sara Rigelman, Dane County Parks Property Planner*

The construction of the wetland restoration pools and berms was completed in December 2020. Everyone was very pleased with how smoothly the project went and the quality of work that done by Speedway Sand & Gravel. One minor fix will be made in 2021 to the east/west trail and access lane (former driveway) where the overflow is for the middle basin. A more solid base is needed through this low point. Water won't pool behind the berms until all of the fields are converted to prairie. The water control structures will be left open until that happens. The trail that runs east/west on the south end of the Acker property will be relocated in the future so that it goes on top of the berm and avoids steep areas.

OFS crews have been working with



**Surveying the future Acker Parcel prairie are left to right Lloyd Eagan, past Co-President, Hans Hilbert current Co-President, Pam Shannon, current Co-President, Lois Sater, D&M Committee Chair and Gary Sater, R&M Committee Chair.**

## BIRD SURVEY RESULTS

options – but the new Acker parcel to the north provides opportunities to expand. The study group sent recommendations to the Friends' board, and the board forwarded them on to Dane County. We hope that the new management plan for the Conservancy will include goals and practices related to quality habitat for declining species, specifically:

1. Maximize habitat size and minimize habitat fragmentation.
2. Increase habitat diversity by adding areas of short grass prairie,



**Dane Co Parks volunteer seed weighing. Some of these seeds will be spread in the southeast quadrant of the Acker Parcel in the next month or so.**

and will continue working with Susan Gruber and Rob Schubert removing the fence, cutting and treating honeysuckle and burning brush piles along the eastern border of the Acker acquisition. Our restoration staff weighed out collected seed that is designated to the southeast quadrant prairie planting and bid out seed for purchase. They will conduct the seeding as soon as all of our seed has been delivered and weather conditions

## RESTORATION WORKDAYS

We will have winter workdays with small groups and COVID-19 safety guidelines in place. Winter is an ideal time to work in the frozen wetlands and for burning piles of cleared brush and deadfall when there is snow cover. These work groups will be made up of R&M Committee members and a few experienced volunteers.

We hope that we can return to our regularly scheduled spring workdays. Volunteer safety is very important to us and we follow all Public Health Madison & Dane County guidelines. Please visit our website and Facebook page for up to date information as these dates approach.

April 3 & 17  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

May 1 & 15  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

are conducive to the seeding process. With that being said, seeding for the southeast quadrant will happen as soon as possible and we would like that to be prior to March 1.

More planning will be done over the winter to determine an action plan and schedule for officially opening the property to the public as it continues to be integrated into the whole Conservancy.

*continued from page 3*

particular site varies from year to year. The results from this first year of monitoring are encouraging. We're planning to continue the monitoring program for several more years, revising the procedures based on recommendations from experts and participants. The new Acker property to the north provides opportunities to expand and enrich habitat for these grassland birds. We're hopeful that more grassland birds will return to the Conservancy prairies in the next few years.

### The Future

Bird migration and nesting at a





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

*To sign up for a paperless newsletter,  
please email [office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org)*



**/FriendsOfPheasant  
BranchConservancy**

**[pheasantbranch.org](http://pheasantbranch.org)**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### **FEBRUARY**

18 - Conservancy Day: Prairies

### **MARCH**

18 - Conservancy Day: Monitoring American Kestrel Boxes

### **APRIL**

3 & 17 - Restoration Work Day  
15 - Conservancy Day: Ground Nesting Birds

### **MAY**

1 & 15 - Restoration Work Day  
20 - Conservancy Day: Phenology