



SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER



25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

By John Daly, Vice-President and Chair of Accessibility and Use Committee and Lloyd Eagan, former Co-President and Board Member

Save the Date - Join the celebration on Sunday, August 1st.

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

Last spring, we invited our 500+ members and area residents of all ages to participate in a year-long celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Friends of Pheasant Branch

Conservancy. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the postponement of activities and events planned for this celebration.

But this summer we are ready to celebrate outdoors. Our theme is "Then and Now... and Now What" and plans are being finalized for a special event on Sunday, August 1, 2021 from 5:00 – 8:00 pm at the Capital Brewery in Middleton. It will be a gathering of members of the Friends, neighbors and those of all ages who enjoy the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. It will include music, displays and celebratory discussions about the past 25 +1 years of the Friends. Local musicians and the popular gypsy jazz

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PRAIRIE CHASE REGISTRATION OPEN

By Pete Witucki, FOPBC Board Secretary and Race Director

Registration for the 7th annual Prairie Chase 5K/8K is open now at www.prairiechase.com! Join us on June 26th to celebrate Pheasant Branch Conservancy and experience the prairie in full bloom! This year is pre-registration only, no race day registration, and participants are initially capped at 240.

Choose the 5K Run/Walk through the Conservancy on a flat-and-fast limestone path, or opt for the adventurous All-Terrain 8K to experience the best views of Pheasant Branch... and all the hills to get there! We are looking forward to an in-person event with start waves to keep group sizes small and all of

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FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Summer 2021 Edition of the Friends newsletter. We hope you and your families are well. We are heartened by the recreational opportunities and joy the Conservancy continues to provide us, even during a global pandemic.

The Board has met monthly via Zoom to work on initiatives such as updating our Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. Our committees have also been active, holding virtual meetings and conducting some limited-scope workdays and other activities in the Conservancy.

As we resume more in-person activities, we will continue to observe all public health orders and promote reasonable precautions. We look forward to the return of the Prairie Chase Run/Walk in the Conservancy on June 26, 2021.

Along with additional education and restoration events being scheduled throughout the summer, we will be celebrating the Friends' 25th Anniversary at an outdoor event at Capital Brewery on August 1, 2021. Please mark your calendars and watch for additional information.

Later this summer we will again produce our phenology calendar featuring Conservancy photos taken by Middleton High School students.

Plans are underway for an in-person Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, January 8, 2022, at Holy Wisdom Monastery, conditions permitting. More information will be forthcoming.

Our friends at Madison Audubon are keeping a close watch on the Conservancy eagle nest. We're pleased to report that eaglets hatched in early May. We remind everyone to keep a respectful distance when viewing or photographing the nest to avoid disturbing the new family.

Lina Weiss, a Middleton fourth grade student, organized a Conservancy trash cleanup event on May 1, which was carefully planned and well-attended. We salute Lina's initiative and remind others of the importance of being stewards of the land.

The City of Middleton continues to plan for a trailhead development as they partner with Dane County to replace the Century Avenue bridge over Pheasant Branch Creek near Branch Street. We have provided input on several design options and look forward to a bicycle and pedestrian underpass at this location.

Please contact us at any time with questions or concerns. We hope that soon we will be able to visit in person.

We wish you good health and a pleasant summer,

Pam Shannon and Hans Hilbert

SEED THE NEED: PLATINUM PRAIRIE SUCCESS

By Lois Sater, FOPBC Board and Development and Marketing Chair

On March 17th, 2021 a celebratory event was held to commemorate the successful first year of the Seed the Need fundraising campaign and to actually distribute prairie seed on the first of four 40-acre quadrants on the 160-acre former Acker property. In attendance were Dane County Executive Joe Parisi, Dane County Parks staff, members of The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, staff of The Clean Lakes Alliance, as well as several



Dane County Executive Joe Parisi spoke at the seeding event

generous donors and other interested stakeholders. The goal of all partners is to establish a high quality, diverse prairie (a "platinum prairie") on this former dairy farm in order to better manage stormwater and improve water quality in Pheasant Branch Creek and Lake Mendota.

Establishing a diverse prairie will significantly reduce stormwater volume by increasing water infiltration into the ground and improve water quality by reducing sediment and phosphorus runoff within the Pheasant Branch Watershed. This is a phased planting

approach where one quadrant is planted to prairie each year, while the remaining quadrants are planted with cover crops. For more details about establishing a platinum prairie, see article page 5.

In the first year of the Seed the Need campaign, the Friends raised over \$25,000 towards the purchase of high-quality seed for planting the first 40-acre parcel. The Friends launched the second year of the campaign on March 25th, 2021 with a goal of raising another \$25,000 for seeding the second quadrant of the new prairie. Thanks to our generous Friends Bruce and Linda Christensen who donated \$5000 toward this goal.

Please join us and donate to the Seed the Need campaign www.pheasantbranch.org.

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Newsletter Editor
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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



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

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



NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

By Dale Klubertanz, Friends' member

A man is ambling along the trail that moves through the lower reaches of Bock Forest. It is downhill from the recovering savanna, where mostly old oaks live and the understory is now open and greening after the departure of the snow. The savanna understory was burned and blackened during the early months of spring. Now the flora and grasses underneath the oaks and hickories are beginning to emerge and the many ascendant trees create a greater sense of an historic oak opening, more with each passing year.

Throughout the woodland there is an airy roominess among the trees, following years of restoration guided by a sense of deep connection to finding the wilderness still held in the memory of the remnant native forest's 10,000-year-old communal DNA.

The late morning sun breaks into wooded spaces resting upon the warming trunks of stirring sap, and the dried leaves are moist and sweet-smelling where they meet the soil along the decomposing deadwood. It warms the gravel pathway where one can catch a glimpse of last summer's cattails if mindfully glancing in all directions. You must look around and past the trail, beyond a dense mid-story that hides Pheasant Branch Creek. The spring-fed waters host the sounds of the excited returning Canada geese and sandhill cranes. This is a happy but serious season for

the returning wildlife, as well as for those who have overwintered in the Conservancy and now must respond with a new seasonal urgency.

The man has shed his winter coat and warmer clothes, necessary just a few weeks ago in a cold, persistent northwesterly wind. A warm, sweeping breeze is moving under his collar and over his skin, feeling friendly, like a rush of freedom that

"I named this place Listening Point because only when one comes to listen, only when one is aware and still, can things be seen and heard. Everyone has a listening point somewhere. It does not have to be in the north or close to the wilderness, but someplace of quiet where the universe can be contemplated with awe."

~ Sigurd Olson

comes in the spring. It is reminiscent of his childhood summers, feelings hardly noticed then, but a part of the sweet, youthful sensations of being alive.

The dog he is with moves in a slow meandering pace, a leash between them, the pace set mostly by the dog. The small shepherd-lab has her nose to the ground where she finds a world that the man could hardly imagine. He is glad enough to smell the freshness of a new set of seasons, a hint of early spring blossoms moving over the moist earthiness of everything.

She lifts her snout into the wind, her nostrils flare to filter the boundless, windy air as if sorting through a rush of invisible sensuality. It is coming from the distant farms and travels through waking prairies and wetlands, having passed through the feathers and fur of flying and wandering creatures. The man notices all this, reminded

that there is much to know outside his human senses. He is drawn by her intimacy with the wilderness, things he senses are there, just beyond a lost, elusive reach and wild horizon.

The man and dog climb a small hilly part of the forest where there is a better view of the creek and wetlands. Other visitors pass below, shuffling the gravel in cadences which match their activity. He sits quietly, without a destination looking over the mix of fading and reawakening vegetation and the sweep of blending ecotones. There is a hawk flying over the tops of trees, seen only by some who look up.

The forest soil is home to blue and white violets and beds of blooming ground-layer plants that have arrived just in time to catch the sunlight. Soon the canopy will become full again, restoring the summery sun-filtered and shady ecosystem.

Now the man sits silently on the common, sacred ground near the edge of the woods and within earshot of the wind where he can notice and listen. It is a favorite listening point, his someplace here in Pheasant Branch Conservancy, where the universe becomes more clearly present. In this quiet moment, among the harmonic and peaceful voices of nature, he rests, opens and avails himself.

Do you have a favorite Listening Point at Pheasant Branch Conservancy? Email us at pbclistening.point@gmail.com and let us know.

PRAIRIE CHASE

us safe. The public health situation will continue to evolve between now and race day and our format may change to comply with public health guidance in effect on June 26th. Please review our detailed safety plan on our website.

New this year, the Prairie Chase is joining the Savanna Series! The Savanna Series is a group of six grassroots events in the region that celebrate trails and are dedicated to conserving the natural history of Dane and Green counties.

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The Prairie Chase is an important fundraiser for the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy and supports our restoration, education, and advocacy work. Learn more and register at: www.prairiechase.com.

DANE COUNTY NEW PROPERTY RESTORATION UPDATE

By Shane Otto, Dane County Parks Land Restoration Specialist

In 2020 Dane County removed the structures on the former Acker farm and constructed sediment basins for storm water management in conjunction with wetland restoration. The agricultural fields are split into four quadrants, of approximately 40 acres each. One quadrant will be converted to native prairie each year over the next four years. The first quadrant was seeded in March by Dane County Parks staff and volunteers from the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy (see article page 3.)

Dane County Parks and its partners are emphasizing high quality and species diversity (a platinum prairie) for this new property. The goal is to have at least 100 plant species for each 40-acre restoration. We are happy to report that 174 total species were in the prairie seed mix for the first quadrant. Donated funds from the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy and the Clean Lakes Alliance were used to purchase 26



Dane County Parks prairie broadcast seeder pulled by a tracked Kubota

species that are difficult to obtain. Donated funds also increased seeding density from 80 to 100 seeds per square foot. This additional seeding density will help to ensure a vigorous and uniform cover of native species across the site.

In the first few growing seasons after planting, these prairie plants will concentrate their efforts on growing roots to establish a strong foundation for their future. The "prairie establishment" phase of the process can be frustrating at times, as we humans often seek instant gratification. Patience is truly a virtue

in this case. Some plant species take years to show off their colors in the prairie.

Over the next several years, Dane County Parks will mow these new prairies to combat bi-annual and annual weed seed production.

Thank you all for your time, patience, fundraising efforts, seed harvesting and overall support for the new prairie at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. And remember to be patient as the newly seeded prairie may not bloom fully for a few years, but when it does it will truly be worth the wait.

JOLEEN STINSON RECEIVES STATE AWARD

By Stefanie Brouwer, FOPBC board and Watershed Committee Chair

Congratulations to Joleen Stinson, former Friends' administrative assistant and board member, who was chosen as the 2020 Outstanding Park Professional of the year by the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association. The award recognizes park professionals who show outstanding leadership and dedication to their communities. In December 2020, Joleen accepted the job of Deputy Director for Dane County Parks, a position with a vast set of opportunities and challenges, for which is she eminently qualified. In this position she serves as the liaison between the Friends and Dane County. We look forward to working

with her on restoration of the new 160-acre parcel and all issues related to the Conservancy.



Joleen has a long history with the Friends. She became involved as a high school student studying environmental science with Deb Weitzel. She then attended UW-Stevens Point majoring in General Natural Resource Management and Environmental Education. After college, she joined the Friends' board and began editing the newsletter. Later she worked as the Friends' part-time administrative assistant while pursuing her career in park management with the City of Sun Prairie, Village of DeForest, Rock County Parks, Village of Waunakee, UW-Extension and Department of Natural Resources. She lives near Sun Prairie with her husband and 3 young sons. We hope to see her often at the Conservancy!

WONDER WALKS

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

In 2016, members of the Senior Advisory Council to the Friends were asked an important question... what would help to enhance their time in the Conservancy? The advice we received from these older adults was to support their visits with interesting and engaging materials about the Conservancy.

The Accessibility and Use and the Education committees have been working with several Master Naturalists for the past two years to develop these materials for older adults and for all age groups. This task was originally called the Back Pack Project, but it has grown and is retitled Wonder Walks.

There are six different Wonder Walks topics designed to enhance the experience you, your family or your small group have as you walk and learn about this very special urban oasis we call the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Starting this June these materials will be available on the Friend's website, posted in the Conservancy kiosks, and distributed at various events in the community.

The topics include:

1. Forest Bathing
2. Landforms
3. Prairies
4. Springs
5. Vista Views
6. Water

You will be able to download the Wonder Walks material from the Friend's website www.pheasantbranch.org.

There are also actual backpacks that will be available for checkout at area senior centers, senior living residences, and the Waunakee Public Library. These backpacks will have the Wonder Walk materials and other items to enhance the user's experience in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

SAVE THE DATE

Fall Equinox
Senior (55+) Coffee
September 21, 2021
2 – 3:30 PM

Want to help plan the event?
Call Janet Kane 203-8456
or Martha Frey 824-0866

DARREN MARSH TO RETIRE AS COUNTY PARKS DIRECTOR

By Stefanie Brouwer, FOPBC Board Member and Watershed Committee Chair

Darren Marsh is retiring as Director of Dane County Parks on June 30, 2021. Over the past 28 years he has led the diverse county park system to new heights. During his tenure, the system has added over 10,000 acres of land, expanding its parks, forests, natural resource areas and trails. Darren has been a huge supporter of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and the Friends and has worked diligently with the Friends and the City of Middleton to make the Conservancy the outstanding resource that it is through land acquisitions, development projects and policy initiatives.

Darren has been dedicated to the development of the county's volunteer program, which he calls "the heart and soul" of the park system. Currently there are 19 park friends groups that provide over



70,000 hours of service each year. He has also forged partnerships with local governments, non-profits and the business community to expand services, increase access, and protect the precious natural resources of Dane County. As many know, Darren is the first to arrive at a task and the last to leave. Darren's work has brought us together to shape the best park system in the state.

A celebration of Darren's dedicated service to Dane County Parks will be held on September 9th at the William G Lunney Lake Farm Park, Shelter 2, from 4 – 7 PM. Darren has requested that all proceeds from the event go to the Foundation for Dane County Parks, which he helped develop. For further information go to www.foundationfordanecountyparks.org

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

group, Harmonious Wail, will provide entertainment.

Please visit the Friends' website for updated information about this event

over the next few months.

There are also celebration activities in the community and the area:

- A display about the Friends organization at the Middleton

continued from page 1

- Public Library
- Conservancy Day Programs – 3rd Thursday each month
- Nature Writing sessions at the Middleton Senior Center and the Waunakee Public Library

CREEK CORRIDOR UPDATE

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

The design and engineering phase for bridge and bank restoration was discussed and approved at the April 21 Stormwater Utility Board meeting. Hopefully the Common Council will approve this plan in May so that bids can go out in June and construction can start in July for stream channel and bank stabilization. This timeline is dependent upon FEMA approval, which we have not been given to date. Our hope is to complete the stream channel and bank stabilization work this year.

Cardno has conducted ground penetrating radar to define the boundaries of the old dump site near the football field at the high school and this information was relayed to the WI Department of Natural Resources (WDNR.) The WDNR is requesting additional groundwater testing, soil borings, and open sample pits. Extensive pits will be dug to expose the debris and then



back filled. Should a major problem be discovered at the dump site, the city will continue working on other sections of the corridor.

The trail and bridge work will lag behind the stream channel and bank stabilization construction and will not start until the end of summer. As with the stream and bank work, this is dependent upon FEMA approval as well. We anticipate that bridges and footings will be done first (in 2021) and the trail pavement will be completed in spring 2022. We will keep the existing bridges in place but will elevate them and construct

concrete abutments to allow for better stability. The bridge on the South Fork Trail is an example of this bridge reconstruction. MSA Professional Services is recommending a bridge height requirement of 1 ft freeboard above the 100-year-flood level, as well as accommodations for bypass flow around bridges (above trail surface) to avoid creating a dam effect. The WDNR has assured us that they will not require wetland delineation within the creek corridor, which will save significant planning and permitting time.

WHY PRESCRIBED BURNS ARE IMPORTANT IN LAND MANAGEMENT OF PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY

By Rob Schubert, Conservancy Land Manager

Fire was once a common occurrence across southern Wisconsin. Mostly set by indigenous peoples, fire shaped the landscape and created the 'shifting mosaic' or 'kaleidoscope' of natural communities formerly common to the region. A once diverse ecological landscape existed with prairie, sedge meadow, oak savanna, oak openings, oak woodland, and mesic forest. This open and shifting landscape supported both native peoples and a diversity of plant and animal species for at least several thousand years following glacial retreat.

The management goal at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy is to replicate

historic landscape heterogeneity through use of prescribed fire and other management techniques. Prescribed fires are conducted at different times of year in order to achieve specific management goals, promote floristic diversity, and provide for the different habitat requirements of many animal species. Burning at different times of year promotes different effects and prevents continuously selecting for the same set of species. Fall burning provides a patchiness that retains cover for small animals, eliminates the potential impact to early emerging plant species, and facilitates the dispersal of reptiles and amphibians to upland breeding and nesting habitats without the risk of impact associated with a spring

burn. Conditions for spring burning are generally more reliable and certain areas of the Conservancy lack the vegetative conditions that would allow for burning during other times of the year.

The timing and frequency of prescribed fire are important management considerations especially when considering species that are fire-dependent as a population, though individuals may be susceptible to harm during prescribed fire events. Precautions are taken to minimize harm to individuals of sensitive populations. For example, Blanding's turtles inhabit wetland areas of the

Continued on page 9...

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Thank you for your donations! It's through your generous contributions that our restoration, education and advocacy work are possible.



Hero

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Shell Goar
Wayne & Sue Golz
Lee Gottschalk & Tony Sellers
Leslie & Wynn Grendahl
Lois Haag
Lora Hagen
Scott & Natalie Hagen
Hall Lumber
John Hall
Tracy & Victoria Hames
Jack & Jo Handley
Ruth Hanson
Hatheway Hasler
Rob & Alison Haworth
Susan Heighway & Andy Bachhuber
Ed & Natalie Hellmer
James Henderson & Jenny Faust
Herb & Susan Heneman
David & Jill Hilbert
Jon & Jane Hisgen
Rodney Huebner & Michele Rose

Margaret & Paul Irwin
Jacqueline Jackson
Marie & Ralph Jackson
Lisa & Ed Janairo
Elma & Nizar Jarjour
Daniel & Paula Jarzemycki
Orv & Karen Jordahl
Jean Kalscheur
John Kalsion
Sally Kefer, Chris & Colin Porttle
Kevin Kennedy & Kit Albrecht
Tim Kessenich
Fred & Wendy Klanck
Christine Klotz & Charles Henderson
Karyn Knaak
Lois & Hirochika Komai
Betsy Korbinyr
Katherine & Allan Koritzinsky
Sid & Nancy Korn
Julie Kotschevar & Ken Hunzicker
Larry LaMar & Mary Struckmeyer
Richard Lathrop & Kathleen Nieber-Lathrop
Robert & Karen Lay
Ginny & Bob Lee
Sandra & Allan Levin
Dan & Kathy Levin
Andrew & Pamela Lewis
Duane & Judith Lewison
Sally & Tom Lister
Barbara & Roland Littlewood
Jason & Elizabeth Loughrin
Mary & Doug Loving
Sheryn & Rex Lowe
Bill Lunney & Judie Pfeifer
Bob & Peg Lyons
Judith Lyons
Fay & D.C. Maki
Linda & Mark Malkin
Marshall Boats
Donald Mash
Anita & Paul Matcha
Meghan McCombs
Tom & LaVonne McCrill
Nancy McGill
Kevin McKown & Nancy Fuller
David & Julie Mead
Reinhold & Rita Meihnsner
Dianne Meyer
Susan & Robert Miller

Donna & John Montgomery
Lauri Morris & James Cole
Frank & Helen Myers
Bill & Ginny Nelson
Nicole & Peter Newcomer
James Newton
Rup & Biss Nitschke
Katherine & Larry Nix
Ken & Jean Nordlund
Dan & Judy Nystrom
Konrad & Kay Opitz
William & Patricia Paul
Mary Pertzborn & David Jenkins
Donna Peterson
John Edward Phillips, Sr
John & Katherine Pinkerton
Evan & Jane Pizer
Christopher & Mary Priebe
Aimee Reed
Ed Reid
Joanne Reis
Michael & Francoise Remington
Joan & Bill Richner
Diane Rivard & John Markson
John Rogan
Pam Rolfs & Tim Burns
Andrea Rolich
Brigitte Rosemeyer
Bruce Rosen & Diane Seder
Nancy & Mike Rosenberger
Nancy Sandy
John & Romilia Schlueter
Bob Schneider
Carol & Dean Schroeder
Barb Schuster & Jerry Marra
Maureen & Ron Schwarz
Dan & Gail Shea
John Shillinglaw
Holly & Jeff Sledge
Pat & Jay Smith
Ann Sowaske
Andy & Janet Speth
Amy Stella Gabert & Chad Gabert
Thomas Stevens
Jill & Paul Stiegler
Sharyn & Carl Stumpf
Bill & Nancy Tans
Ann Thering & David Eide
Richard & Margaret Thomas
Tom & Kim Thoresen
Joan Tillett
Robin & Paul Trolinger
Karen Tusack & Don McCoy
Brett Van Ess & Moldir Oskanbay

Beth & Jeremy Van Maanen
Jim and Sharon Vandenberg
Thomas & Sandi Vandervest
Barbara Vater & Dale Slusser
Lori Veerman
Kurt Vogel & Tanya Langdon
Sharon Wachholz
Steve & Sonya Waldorf
Kim & Tom Walz
Curt & Jackie Wealti
Diana & Thompson Webb
Forrest & Claire Weesner
Robyn Weis
Mary Wells
Thelma Wells
Kathleen Wendorff
Jae Wernli
Dean Whitley & Lisa Jansen
Alev Wilk
Paul & Coe Williams
John Winter
Peter Witucki & Brittany Allen
Jian Zhou
Carole & Loren Ziglin

KIOSKS IN THE CONSERVANCY

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

Foot traffic on the Conservancy trails has increased greatly during the pandemic and so have inquiries about the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and the Friends as an organization. New and long-time users of the Conservancy visit the five kiosks along the trails of the city and county property. They also witness firsthand the outdated materials and the aging structures.

Representatives of several Friends

committees are partnering with the City of Middleton and Dane County Parks to refurbish the kiosks and update materials on a seasonal basis. This is another example of the ongoing collaboration between the city, county and the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

Volunteers from the Friends are working with city and county staff to clean, paint and replace the aging display panels of the kiosks. New materials will include announcements, historical information, public service



information, special events, volunteer opportunities and membership in the Friends. In addition, the county has recently announced plans to install a kiosk at the new 160-acre property later this year.

PRESCRIBED BURNS

Conservancy, though they nest in adjacent upland areas. Blanding's turtles must be able to disperse to upland areas in order to successfully nest and produce the next generation of turtles. Similarly, young hatchlings must be able to return to the wetland from upland nest sites. Fire is the most important management tool for maintaining both the open upland and wetland habitats that Blanding's turtles depend on. In order to mitigate impact to these and other herpetofauna, spring fires are conducted when temperatures are low and herpetofauna are not

active. Specific ignition tactics are conducted in order to minimize harm. For example, "dot ignition" spaced along stream banks creates slow moving fire and allows frogs, turtles, and other animals to escape into the water. Additionally, unburned refugia is maintained in order to provide areas of cover and escape.

Whether to burn is an important management decision. Different plant and animal species respond differently to fire and other management techniques. While some birds will not nest in recently-burned areas, other species will only nest in recently-

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burned areas. Some bird species nest in areas of dense shrub cover while some ground nesting species will not nest if shrubs are present. This creates an inherent problem for the land manager when various species with conflicting needs are present and it is impossible to escape criticism for not managing for some specific species. What is lost in this perhaps sophisticated view is the acknowledgement of how much time and effort is given to making informed and non-arbitrary management decisions.

Continued on page 11...

FUN AT THE FRIENDS OF URBAN NATURE (FUN) EVENT

By Deb Weitzel, FOPBC Board and Education Committee Chair

It was a beautiful sunny Sunday at Warner Park in Madison. Scopes were trained on an active bald eagle nest. Stream critters were captured to show visitors the diversity living in a local creek. Live raptors delighted families, while naturalists provided information about these amazing birds. In midafternoon everyone was drawn to the release of live turtles into the waters of Warner Park, while sandhill cranes swooped low overhead. What was going on to



provide all this excitement?

Friends of Urban Nature (FUN) held their Bird and Nature Festival on the afternoon of April 25, 2021. FOPBC Education Committee members Mary Bachhuber, Ron Biendseil, and Deb Weitzel represented the Friends. They engaged children with activities about butterflies. At the same time, they encouraged their parents to visit the Conservancy and to check out the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

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This list includes businesses and individuals, in-kind donors and Seed the Need donations. It excludes event registrations and merchandise sales.

Donation dates 9/1/2019-1/2/2021 because memberships purchased after 9/1 apply to following year.

CONSERVANCY DAYS

The 3rd Thursday of every month
January - November
6:30 - 7:30 PM

June 17
Exploring Nature With a Camera
with John Kalson

July 22
Wonder Outside the Lines
– Mindfulness Assisted by Nature
with Colleen Robinson from
Nature’s Good Company

August 19
Fun with Fungi with Andrea Gargas

September 16
Working Together for a Cleaner
Energy Future with Leah Samson
from MG&E

OUTINGS AND ACTIVITIES

June 16, 23, 30
Summer Experience Series
*A program for children Pre-K to
grade 5 and their adults.*

July date TBD
Active Life Long Learners in Nature
(ALL-IN) Outing
*An outing for active seniors on
the significance of the Pheasant
Branch watershed.*

August 19
Make A Memory Day – dementia
friendly

August 24
Make A Memory Day – limited
mobility

July or August date TBD
Summer Walkabout for Families

WI MASTER NATURALIST

August 6-7, 13-14, and 27-28
8:00 - 5:00 each day
Registration open July 6-27, 2021
wimasternaturalist.org

EDUCATION CORNER

By Anne Boucher, Education
Coordinator

The Education Program is growing by leaps and bounds this year, a silver lining of the pandemic. Perhaps the isolation created by Covid plus the long winter have encouraged people to reach out to their community. Four new naturalists have joined us since the beginning of the year. They bring energy and fresh ideas to our efforts. They are eager to learn our K-4 elementary curriculum for school field trips. In addition, they are working with our wonderful returning naturalists to develop new programs.

We have added experiential programming for the first time. A seasonal Walkabout series of outings is the first. These outings are geared toward families with younger children. Four times a year, naturalists will lead groups into the Conservancy to observe the changes brought about with each season.

Two wonder and wander-type series are in development for this summer. One is for children and the other is for active seniors. The children’s program will occur on three consecutive Wednesdays in June and is designed to bring kids closer to nature through exploration and play. The program for seniors is called ALL-IN which stands for Active Lifelong Learners in Nature. A program is planned for them in mid-July on the importance

FUN EVENT

After a year of wearing masks over noses and mouths to prevent Covid, most kids decided NOT to make a butterfly mask to see through. Many children chose to learn about the life cycle of butterflies by creating models such as twisted and coiled pipe cleaners to represent caterpillars. The finished product was proudly carried home to be displayed in bedrooms across the communities of participants. A good day of fun was had by all.

of the Conservancy to the Pheasant Branch watershed.

We formed a new partnership with Friends of Urban Nature in Madison (FUN). They will hold Bird and Nature Adventures in the Conservancy on the fourth Saturday of each month. See article on page 9.

The Madison Reading Project reached out to us to hold a joint event on a Saturday in October focused around forests. We wrote a grant application with them to bring their Big Red School Bus to the Bock Forest. Children will choose books related to trees and forests and an activity to bring home. Our naturalists will hold a mini-lesson and lead walks into the forest. Cross your fingers that the grant is accepted.

Tunes on Tuesday is not happening this year due to the pandemic. However, musicians who play for Tunes are staying connected with us by providing entertainment for our 25th anniversary celebration and for our dementia-related Make A Memory programs in August. See article page 6. We appreciate their participation.

We are excited about the opportunities being created. Our programs are expanding and flourishing so please join us. Keep an eye on our website for announcements and more information of all the terrific things we have happening.

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Pheasant Branch Conservancy is now part of the monthly FUN Bird and Nature Adventures. To explore different aspects of nature, join a naturalist on the 4th Saturday of every month at 1:30pm! Prairies will be explored at the Conservancy on June 26. See you at 1:30 in the parking lot at 4864 Pheasant Branch Rd. Middleton. See <http://tinyurl.com/MadisonFUNAdventures> for a monthly schedule of events and activities.

RESTORATION & MANAGEMENT

By Gary Sater, Restoration and
Management Committee Co-Chair

The past few months have been unusually busy for the Restoration and Management Committee. On April 25 a youth group from Temple Beth Israel came out for a restoration work day. COVID safety restrictions had prevented the visit last year. Led by their youth director Deborah Hoffman and the Friends’ Gary Sater, they cleared the fence line along the new addition and piled brush along Pheasant Branch Road. Involving youth in our work is a priority for the Friends. They are future stewards of the land!

Additionally, work group volunteers removed over 300 metal fence posts and attached barbed and welded steel wire fencing along Pheasant Branch



Fence removal workday

and Balzer roads on the previous two Saturdays (4/10 and 4/24). Gary Sater and Hans Hilbert (committee co-chairs) also returned on two follow-up Friday mornings with an ATV and towing strap to pull buried hog fence wire out of the ground. Dane County staff then came out with a grappler

PRESCRIBED BURNS

In the relatively short period of Euro-American dominance of the region, the landscape of southern Wisconsin has become more simplified and a corresponding loss of biodiversity has occurred. Lack of fire is not the only

and removed several metal fence posts grown into the white mulberry shrubs, as well as cleaned up all of the brush, fence posts and wire from the ditch and parking lot. All that remains with this project is a small amount of chain sawing and herbicide treatment. Susan Gruber continues to work with Operation Fresh Start teams on the clearing of brush along the eastern edge of the addition, as well as clearing of invasive plants and shrubs within the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

Prescribed burn activity has also been frequent. Quercus as directed by Rob Schubert carried out burn work on 3/26, 4/2, 4/15 and 4/26. These burns included the north savanna, a roadside strip along Pheasant Branch Road and the southeast sedge meadow. Rob has written an article on the importance of prescribed burns. See page 7.

Gary Sater, Michael Niebauer and Chris Kubiak recently installed a new work trailer awning gifted to us through Giving Tuesday. The awning will provide much needed shelter

for our volunteers during wet and hot days of the year. Giving Tuesday also provided camp stools for rest periods.

Committee members are working to refurbish the kiosks within the Conservancy, a project being led by John Daly in partnership with

reason for the loss of biodiversity, although fire-dependent natural communities (and the declining species that depend on those communities for habitat) will not long survive without prescribed fire

RESTORATION WORKDAYS

September 4 & 18
October 2 & 16
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

We are planning to return to our regularly scheduled workdays in the fall. Work will consist of pulling invasives, cutting brush, or gathering seed. Specific work will be announced by email before the work date.

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

Bock Forest Workdays will also be announced soon. Watch the website or request to be added to the email announcement list by emailing restoration@pheasantbranch.org.

Dane County Parks and the City of Middleton. See article page 9. Gary Sater is assembling teams to clean up and repaint all of the kiosks, replace plywood backing and plexiglass windows where needed. Keyed bolts are now replaced with stainless hex-headed bolts for easier access. Information within the kiosks, as well, will be updated regularly from now on.

Volunteers have also stepped up recently to assist with the Propagation Garden and Frog and Toad Census projects. Thanks again to all who purchased new plant plugs through the Dane County Project Plant Dane. So much good and interesting work is occurring through the Friends. We are active and vital in restoring the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Lastly, our Prairie Partners interns will begin their summer work with Rob soon.

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management. As management of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy continues to expand, prescribed fire will continue to be the most important and necessary management tool available.



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

*To sign up for a paperless newsletter,
please email office@pheasantbranch.org*



**/FriendsOfPheasant
BranchConservancy**

pheasantbranch.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



JUNE

17 - Conservancy Day: Exploring Nature with a Camera
June 16, 23 & 30 - Summer Experience Series

JULY

22 - Conservancy Day: Wonder Outside the Lines

AUGUST

1 - 25th Anniversary Celebration
19 - Conservancy Day: Fun with Fungi
19 & 24 - Make A Memory Day
August 6-7, 13-14, & 27-28 - WI Master Naturalist (WIMN)

SEPTEMBER

4 & 18 - Restoration Work Day
16 - Conservancy Day: Working Together for a Cleaner Energy Future
21 - Fall Equinox Senior (55+) Coffee