



Winter 2022 Newsletter

Jim Struve Donates \$25,000 to Seed the Need

By Lois Sater, Board Member and Development and Marketing Committee Chair

Jim Struve of Middleton has donated \$25,000.00 to the “Seed the Need” campaign. The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Dane County Parks and the Clean Lakes Alliance are incredibly grateful for this donation. It assures our ability to move forward with creating a diverse, high quality “Platinum Prairie” on the 160-acre addition to the Conservancy.



Jim Struve presents check to the Friends (Lois Sater, Jim Struve, Hans Hilbert, and Pam Shannon)

Jim is a retired IT infrastructure director for WEA Trust Insurance. This generous gift is coming from his investments as part of a charitable Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). Jim has also formed a foundation called the Jim and Vicki Struve Family Foundation

where the remainder of his RMD will go. Jim and Vicki formed this foundation to provide funds for charities that provide food, clothing, and shelter to those in need. Jim’s wife Vicki passed away in 2018. Lyman Wible, neighbor and former member of the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Board, who knew her well noted that “she had a profound affection for the landscapes around us.”

Jim is also Treasurer of the North Lake Neighborhood Association. He also serves on the board of the organization Solace, which works to provide safe shelter for the homeless during the last days of their lives.

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy hold Annual Meeting

By Lois Sater, Board Member and Development and Marketing Committee Chair

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy held their annual membership meeting on Saturday,

January 8, 2022. The board had originally planned an in-person breakfast meeting at Holy Wisdom Monastery, but shifted to a virtual meeting in the interest of safety and comfort. Over 80 people signed on to hear about the Friends’ activities and plans for the future.

Co-Presidents Hans Hilbert and Pam Shannon reported on a successful “Seed the Need”

- Co-Presidents Message.....2
- Newcomb/Seed the Need.....3
- Strategic Planning.....3
- Anita Matcha4
- New Board Members.....5
- John Daly Retiring.....6
- WI Master Naturalist.....6
- Education Coordinator7
- Watershed Advocacy8
- Restoration Report.....9
- Conservancy Days/FUN 10
- Naturalist Notebook 11
- Calendar of Events..... 12

Continued on page 10



Our Board

Co-Presidents Pam Shannon
Hans Hilbert
Vice President Peter Witucki

Treasurer Jim Moe
Secretary Chris Kubiak

Board Members
Kaya Freiman, Hans Hilbert,
Chris Kubiak, Jim Moe, Michael
Niebauer, Lisa Quam, Lois Sater,
Pam Shannon, Carl Sinderbrand,
LaVonne Theis, Mark Warshauer,
Deb Weitzel, Ken Wiesner,
Peter Witucki

Photos
Gary Sater, Anita Matcha,
LaVonne Theis, Ken Weisner,
Stefanie Brouwer, Deb Weitzel,
John Daly, Cayla Matte, Jim
Bachhuber, Michael Knapstein

Newsletter Editor
Stefanie Brouwer

Design/Layout
Chris Kubiak

From the Co-Presidents

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Winter 2022 Edition of the Friends' newsletter. We hope you are continuing to enjoy the seasonal recreational and restorative opportunities the Conservancy offers as we continue to struggle through the pandemic.

We are pleased to share the following "News of the Board". Please look for separate articles featuring a number of people mentioned here.

Two new board members—LaVonne Theis and Ken Wiesner—were elected at the January 8th Annual Membership Meeting. If you weren't able to attend the Annual Meeting webinar, a recording is available on our website: pheasantbranch.org.

Two veteran and highly valued board members have retired. Stefanie Brouwer served in several capacities, including Board Secretary, Watershed Committee Chair and editor of this newsletter, a post she will keep in retirement. Elsewhere, Stefanie describes her nine-year stint chairing the Watershed Committee, with its unique advocacy role (see page 8.)

John Daly was our Board Vice-President for a number of years and served on the Education and Development & Marketing Committees. Several years ago, he proposed that the Board establish an Accessibility and Use Committee to address the needs of underserved populations. He chaired the committee from its

inception and established important links to community groups and developed innovative programs. Pam details John's contributions in a separate article (see page 6.)

The Board elected the following officers for 2022:

Hans Hilbert and Pam Shannon, Co-Presidents
Peter Witucki, Vice-President
Chris Kubiak, Secretary
Jim Moe, Treasurer

Our former Education Coordinator, Anne Boucher, has left that position but will continue to work on special projects, including the Wisconsin Master Naturalist program. Cayla Matte has been hired to replace Anne and is profiled by Deb Weitzel (see page 7.)

The Board will continue to hold its monthly meetings via Zoom for the foreseeable future. We will be working on implementing our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, as outlined by Hans. We eagerly await the seeding of quadrant two of the Platinum Prairie later this winter. Thanks to all who contributed generously to our Seed the Need Campaign for that purpose.

We wish you a safe and healthy winter and hope to see you out and about in the Conservancy.

Please feel free to contact us with questions or concerns at any time.

Pam Shannon and Hans Hilbert

Co-Presidents
copresidents@pheasantbranch.org



Newcomb's Business Donation Helps "Seed the Need"

By Lois Sater, Development and Marketing Committee Chair

On November 19, 2021 Bret Newcomb, President of Newcomb Construction Company, presented the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy with a \$5,000 check in response to our appeal for the "Seed the Need" campaign for 2021. This donation helped put the Friends over its 2021 goal of raising \$25,000 for the project. The Friends have been raising funds for a four-year phased seeding of the "Platinum Prairie," a high quality, diverse prairie that it can thrive and produce future seed for thousands of acres on other Dane County properties.

The presentation occurred on the bike trail along Pheasant Branch Creek in the Conservancy.



Newcombs present check to the Friends (left to right are Lois Sater, Bret Newcomb, Rachel Newcomb, and Hans Hilbert)

Newcomb wanted to stress how businesses in that area offer employees the benefits of the trails, scenery and solitude of the Conservancy. This donation joins countless others in matching the \$100,000 Challenge grant from Alliant Energy working with the Clean Lakes Alliance to support the seeding project. Hans Hilbert, Co-President of the Friends, and Lois Sater, Chair of the Development and Marketing Committee, accepted the donation from Bret and Rachel Newcomb. Newcomb Construction has contributed generously to the Friends since 2015.

Strategic Plan for 2021-2025

By Hans Hilbert, Co-President

In October 2019, heading into a year-long celebration of 25 years as an organization, board and committee members had already begun to plan for our future challenges and accomplishments by revising the Friends' strategic plan. Lead by Darin Harris, an organizational development consultant, the Friends came out of an October brainstorming session with plans to reconvene in May 2020 for a weekend charrette to narrow down our ideas into concise goals and objectives to continue the Friends' mission to restore, protect, and promote Pheasant Branch Conservancy and the watershed.

Our May workshop was put off in hopes that by the fall 2020 we could safely meet in person, but as 2020 neared an end we realized like so many other events, a virtual

Continued on page 4

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



Additional Giving Opportunities

- \$_____ Unrestricted – use where needed most
- \$_____ Glen & Joan Pulver Education Endowment
- \$_____ Restoration Endowment
- \$_____ Seed the Need

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

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

Member Anita Matcha Believes in Impactful Gifts

By Martha Frey, Membership Volunteer

In 2021 watercolor artist Anita Matcha decided to increase her annual gift to \$365, or \$1 a day. Here is her testimonial:

“My husband and I have lived near Pheasant Branch Conservancy for more than 30 years. We walked the creek path before the bridges were built and had to hop over the stones to get to the other side. I cannot count the miles we have walked here and the joy and serenity that we have received from having this wonderful Conservancy so accessible.”

These days, I bring my grandchildren to look for bugs and bunnies and deer and eagles. We walk to the springs and kayak up the creek.

I believe in impactful gifts. Rather than giving small amounts to many organizations, I prefer to give an amount that will be meaningful to the organizations that I support. I walk in the Conservancy every day. This is why we will be increasing our annual gift to support the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy to \$365 this year.

The Conservancy needs protecting so it can continue to benefit our whole community.”

We are grateful for Anita and Paul and their meaningful contributions to support local land conservation.



Kayaking on Pheasant Branch Creek by Anita Matcha

Strategic Plan

Continued from page 3

meeting would need to suffice. Lead again by Harris, we focused our efforts to develop three goals areas: collaborative management of the Conservancy, connection to members and users, and financial capacity. For each area we developed a specific goal of where we wanted to see ourselves in 5 years. From there we developed specific strategies for how to accomplish those goals.

By November 2020 the board had finalized the goals and strategies, and our work continued to develop metrics for evaluating success. The next step was to hone down further the specific actions that we will

take and determine priorities in an action plan.

After completing the action plan, we took a step back to revisit our organizational vision and value statements that help us better understand our mission. We determined our vision for the next 5 years: To foster and enhance recognition by the community of our sustained stewardship of the Conservancy, and our expertise in restoring, protecting and promoting the Conservancy and its watershed. We feel that with this foresight, we will best be able to achieve the goals of the strategic plan. We also strengthened our value statements by stating that the Friends are the only voice speaking on behalf of the Conservancy, that our organization must be open to

all members of the community, and that we must be respectful of those that have known this land before us, as well as after we are gone.

In May 2021 the board of directors adopted the revised strategic plan, and while implementation has already begun, we chose to officially introduce the plan during our 2022 annual meeting and will use 2022 as a kickoff for many of the strategies in the plan. A full copy of the plan is available for viewing on our website at: pheasantbranch.org/strategic-plan.

New Board Member Bio: LaVonne Theis

My name is LaVonne Theis. I was born and raised in Roxbury. My parent were James and Doris Frederick and my grandparents were George and Katie Frederick. George and Katie owned a 106-acre farm on Pheasant Branch Road that is now part of the Conservancy. This includes the Springs and Frederick's Hill. The original driveway remains as it was before the sale. My four siblings and I spent many summers at the farm. We have great memories of going up the hill and seeing the cave and enjoying time by the Springs. My grandmother always said that there was quick sand in the Springs and warned us not to go into it.

My grandmother's family name was Vosen and she was born and raised on that farm. My grandfather was a helping hand and eventually the two of them married and bought the farm. They lived there most of their lives. Then in the 90's my dad and his two siblings decided to sell the property to Dane County rather than develop it. My uncle Vern Frederick was a realtor so he handled the exchange. All of the buildings including the house were eventually torn down.

I have lived in Middleton most of my life. Our son Nathan and daughter Vanessa went to school in Middleton and now live and work in California and Chicago, respectively. My husband Marv and I currently live in Middleton Hills. The back of our home faces the Conservancy so we enjoy the view everyday.



LaVonne Theis

I worked for Cuna Mutual Insurance Company for almost 40 years, mainly managing teams. Several years ago, I retired and I am enjoying the free time. I look forward to working with everyone on the board to keep the Conservancy a place for all to enjoy.

New Board Member Bio: Ken Wiesner

My name is Ken Wiesner and I am pleased to join the Friends' board. My wife and I recently moved close to the Conservancy where we are enjoying the natural landscape and peaceful setting.

I've always been captivated by water and loved being on the UW campus while getting my degree in Chemical Engineering. The Lakeshore Path, the hills and woods, were my favorite places. I discovered Indian mounds and became interested in native culture connections to lakes, streams, wetlands and springs.



Ken Wiesner

Upon graduation I became an Environmental Engineer working on industrial wastewater pollution prevention at the Department of Natural Resources. We worked closely with the newly created U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to pursue the "Fishable and Swimmable" goals of the Clean

Water Act for lakes and streams. In Wisconsin, unlike many other states, we also had authority to work on groundwater protection. Working to improve water quality was a very rewarding career.

After retiring from DNR after 30 years, I have been an active member, volunteer, or board member for water and watershed nonprofit conservation groups including: Wisconsin Association of Lakes, Rock River Coalition, and WI Lake Leaders Institute. I am particularly proud to be a founding board member of the lake association in Vilas County where my wife and I have a summer cabin. I continue to be on the association board as chair of the Lake Science Committee and contributor to our newsletter on water ecology topics.

Education and Accessibility Champion Retires from Board

By Pam Shannon, Co-President

John Daly is a retired teacher, principal, and education researcher, with a career spanning 43 years. The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy benefited greatly when John brought his passion and energy to the Board in 2014. As he departs after eight years, including several terms as Vice-President, his colleagues salute him for his steadfast dedication to the many tasks he undertook and his cheerful disposition as he carried out his various responsibilities.

As a member of the Education Committee, John partnered with the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District to bring intergenerational arts projects focused on the environment to elementary school children and residents in senior living facilities. Recently, he collaborated on the Big Red Read event, which brought children to the Conservancy for nature activities and a library book giveaway.

Education Committee chair Deb Weitzel notes that John's focus has always been on accessibility, calling him "the heart and soul of getting seniors out into nature." Among many other activities, he coordinated annual Make a Memory Day programs and established a Senior Adult Advisory Council.



John Daly

Several years ago, John recommended that the Board create an Accessibility and Use Committee to take a closer look at the needs of underserved populations for tailored programming and materials and infrastructure modification and improvement. His goal was to make the Conservancy more accessible to individuals with cognitive challenges or limited mobility, as well as to independent senior adults. He chaired the committee from its inception, forging partnerships with numerous community organizations and UW-Madison's School of Nursing and the Waisman Center.

John also found time to coordinate the 20th and 25th Anniversary events celebrating the Friends and worked with Friends member and videographer Dale Klubertanz to document the origin and accomplishments of the Friends.

WI Master Naturalist 2022

By Deb Weitzel

We are pleased to announce our Wisconsin Master Naturalist Training for 2022. Training is based out of Kromery Middle School, with outings in prairies and forests, through river valleys and in urban parks! There is something for everyone. Please share with those who may be interested.

WISCONSIN
Master Naturalist



Registration will open Monday, January 10 at 9:00 am! Registration is first come, first serve. There will be a waiting list once a training fills, but it's best to register as soon as possible to guarantee a spot. Please check out WIMN website wimasternaturalist.org to see the full description and times.

Middleton, June 9-July 9; Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy



Farewell to Anne Boucher, Friends' Education Coordinator

By Deb Weitzel, Education Committee Chair

Anne Boucher has served as our Education Coordinator since 2017 and has done an amazing job. Prior to being contracted for coordinator duties, she volunteered with the Education Committee and was a naturalist for our field trips. Anne has been the face of the Friends' outdoor education program and has also administered grants for all our senior programs. Under her leadership, the programs have



Anne Boucher

expanded and all ages (pre-kindergarten to senior adults) have a program(s) to suit their needs. Nature is the great healer. The mental and physical benefits of being in nature are well

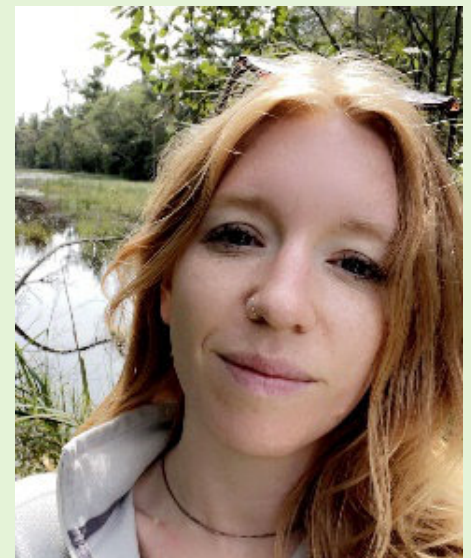
documented. Anne made sure there were programs, events and opportunities available to all, even during the restrictions brought on by the pandemic. We are excited to report Anne will still be available to lead field trips as a naturalist. We thank Anne for her service and wish her well as she joins her husband in their family dental business.

Welcome to Cayla Matte, Friends' New Education Coordinator

By Deb Weitzel, Education Committee Chair

Hello, my name is Cayla Matte and I'm your eager and excited new Education Coordinator. Anne Boucher has stepped down from the position to pursue other opportunities (see above.) I originally hail from the rural township of Two Rivers where I grew up with acres of forest in my backyard. My love of nature started there and eventually I attended UW-Madison where I received my Bachelor's degree in Zoology and Environmental Studies. After various internships at the Dane

County Humane Society's Wildlife Center, the MacKenzie Center for Environmental Education, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Training section, I entered graduate school at UW-Madison to pursue an accelerated Master's degree in Environmental Conservation. For my final research project, I partnered with advisors from the WI DNR's Breeding Bird Atlas II to survey the presence of breeding King and Yellow Rails in the state. All of these experiences have led me to the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. I look forward to meeting our valued volunteers, members, and field trip group affiliates in this new year. Cheers to an exciting and promising 2022 for the Friends!



Cayla Matte

Watershed Committee: Reflecting on Nine Years of Advocacy

By Stefanie Brouwer, former board member and committee chair

As I leave the board and the Watershed Committee, I want to reflect on the committee's strong history of advocacy. It was created in 2013 as a result of the Friends' first strategic planning effort when the board decided to renew its focus on the land and water resources of the Pheasant Branch Watershed. I was named chair because of my background in land protection. I had recently retired from the Department of Natural Resources where I had served as Stewardship grant manager for 15 years. I was well acquainted with the Conservancy and watershed and the parks and open spaces of the City of Middleton and the Town of Middleton having worked with the Friends, the city and the town to secure numerous grants for streambank restoration; land protection; trail, kiosk and shelter development.

While my background is not in water resources, individuals with expertise in hydrology, water quality, zoning and stormwater management soon joined the committee, notably Herb Garn, Jim Bachhuber and Lyman Wible. Later additions included Lloyd Egan, Rick Eilertson, Hans Hilbert and Michael Niebauer (now committee chair.) In 2013 the committee wrote the advocacy policy for the Friends. In 2014 the committee led the Friends' advocacy effort for approval of a stormwater utility

referendum for the City of Middleton. The city council provided minimal public information regarding the need for the referendum. The Watershed Committee undertook an extensive campaign to inform voters of the rationale for a dedicated funding mechanism to maintain the city's stormwater management system. The referendum was approved by a 65% - 35% margin making it the first approved stormwater utility referendum under the state's new Act 20 (2013) requirement.



Watershed Committee members measuring water depths in Pheasant Branch Creek

In 2016 the Watershed Committee partnered with the city and county to study ways to involve residents in removing leaves from the streets in the fall. Leaves left in city streets can contribute as much as 60% of annual phosphorus load to the lakes. We established two pilot areas and a control area in downtown Middleton and used multiple tools to encourage participation with the result that 40% of residents agreed to participate.

Other collaborative projects have included monthly nutrient monitoring at two sites in the

watershed with the Rock River Coalition; a carp barrier feasibility study for Pheasant Branch Creek funded by the Clean Lakes Alliance; and a SaltWise chloride reduction and education program funded by Dane County. All have involved active participation by committee members, from measuring water depths and taking nutrient samples to delivering leaflets door to door. Following the disastrous flood in August 2018, committee members provided technical expertise to the city for flood damage assessment, consultant evaluation and master planning for restoration of the creek corridor. The committee continues to monitor and assist with technical aspects of the restoration.

Recent committee efforts have focused on issues related to the Graber Pond Watershed. The committee has advocated successfully through written and verbal testimony for maintaining the water level of Graber Pond, the city's last natural kettle pond, at 904 feet in order to protect the Conservancy from increased stormwater volume, pollutants and invasive species. In addition, testimony has been submitted to the Water Resources Management Commission and the Plan Commission on stormwater and wetland protection issues related to the proposed Belle Farm mixed development bordering Graber Pond.

It has been a privilege to chair this committee. All the members are dedicated to the health of the land and water resources of the Pheasant Branch Watershed and Conservancy and I know their advocacy will continue in the years ahead.

Restoration and Management

By Gary Sater, Board Member and Restoration and Management Co-Chair

Restoration and Management Committee has several updates to report on. First, our winter workdays resumed on Saturday, 1/8/22, following the virtual annual meeting and will continue through February. These workdays will be used for removing, piling and burning (if conditions are favorable) of dense native and invasive brush. These areas have been barriers to effective prescribed burns in the past and removing them will enhance the effectiveness of our management strategies.



R & M committee members and county staff view the Springs access

Next, we are excited to see the second 40-acre section in the SW quadrant of the new addition planted by Dane County Parks with a “Platinum Prairie” seed mix. This will likely occur sometime in late

February or early March with desired snow cover to enhance the stratification of the seeds and the visual benefit of seeing the seed cover in the snow as it is spread. Thank you once again to all who’ve been contributing to our Seed the Need campaign. We are well on our way to a completed 160-acre Platinum Prairie in years to come!

Our 2022 Frog and Toad Survey will continue as part of our Citizen Science initiatives. Stay tuned for further details about this project. We are also considering other Citizen Science projects as opportunities to better understand the flora and fauna of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, as well as providing additional ways for our members to become actively involved.

Another very significant restoration project has been coordinated by Susan Gruber with Operation Fresh Start over the past few months. The site of this project has been the fence line along the eastern border and beneath the power line of the new addition. This work has been very difficult given the years of invasive shrubby growth and the accumulation of stones removed from the tillable farmland on either side of this border. Once several piles of removed woody growth had been established, Dane County Parks came in with heavy machinery and consolidated the piles. Thanks to all who contributed to this restoration work.

Lastly, we are making progress in our planning with Dane County Parks for the reconstruction of our Frederick’s Springs viewing and access structure. We’ve met twice on site and will be receiving a projected plan for review soon. We are hoping for a structure that

will make access both possible but also protective of this sacred and delicate ecosystem. Some damage has been done recently to the springs area with increased use and inadequate access options.

Restoration Workdays

Planning is underway for future workdays as we approach spring and summer. Please periodically check our website at pheasantbranch.org for information on upcoming restoration and management workday activities such as invasive species removal, seed collection, implementing trail improvements and more.



Conservancy Days

Conservancy Days will now be every other month, on odd-numbered months. After March 2022, these events will occur on the third Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 7:30 PM. See our website for registration and location.

“Pheasant Branch Creek — Where Does All this Water Come From?”

March 17, 2022

With Jim Bachhuber of the Friends in partnership with the Sustainability Committee’s “Sustainable U” series.

Site: TBD

May 19 – TBD

July 21 – TBD

FUN (Friends of Urban Nature)

FUN events for PBC occur on the 4th Saturday of the month from 1:30-3 PM. No need to register.

Eva Roos: Pheasant Branch Ecosystems

February 26, 2022

Site TBD

Eva Roos: First Flowers of Spring

March 26, 2022

Site TBD

Sylvia Marek: Spring Birds and Bluebirds

April 23, 2022

Site TBD

Annual Meeting

Continued from page 1

campaign that raised funds for creating a “Platinum Prairie” on the 160 acres at the north end of the Conservancy. They noted that Bruce and Linda Christensen provided \$5000 in “seed” money at the beginning of the year and that Bret and Rachel Newcomb of Newcomb Construction provided the final \$5000 to reach the goal of \$25,000 for 2021. They also mentioned that Jim Struve of Middleton who, after reading a newsletter story about the goals of Seed the Need campaign, provided \$25,000 through the Jim and Vicki Struve Family Foundation to fund the entire effort for 2022. (See article page 1.) The co-presidents expressed their gratitude to all the generous donors in 2021 that helped the organization remain financially sound and able to achieve its mission: To restore, protect and promote the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and watershed for today and tomorrow.

Aspects of the new 2021 - 2025 FOPBC Strategic Plan goals and strategies were shared:

Goal #1

Collaborative Management of Conservancy

Goal #2

Connection to Members and Users

Goal #3

Financial Capacity

These goals are driven by the Friends’ vision to foster and enhance recognition by the community of our sustained stewardship of the Conservancy and our expertise in restoring, protecting, and promoting the Conservancy and its watershed. The business meeting ended with election by the membership of the 2022-2023 Board.

A video called Seasonal Transitions of PBC-Site 5, created by board member and Restoration and Management Committee Co-Chair Gary Sater, was shown. Developed by Gary and Friends’ Land Manager Rob Schubert, it consisted of a series of photos taken almost weekly from October 2019 to October 2020 from the same 6 sites within the Conservancy. Guest speaker Dr. Amy Rosebrough, archaeologist with the State Historical Society, gave a stimulating and informative talk called “14,000 Years of History at Pheasant Branch” that highlighted the effigy mounds and other evidence of prehistoric peoples found within the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Her presentation and the Seasonal Transitions video can both be found on the Friend’s website – pheasantbranch.org.

Naturalist Notebook

By Dale Klubertanz, Friends'
member

Wind Songs and Silences in the Conservancy

In the prairie, the wind whistles among the dry, tired-looking prairie plant stems that have given their seed to late summer. It rustles over frozen surfaces breaking the silence heard during a daily stroll through the Conservancy. Seed heads swing in the shifting air displaying a multitude of textures, shapes and sizes. The thin, pale golden leaves of Indiangrass wave wildly in the cold. The sound of migratory geese rise above the nearly hidden wetlands, so exuberant as sounding festive during a frigid respite stopover.

The silence fills the open spaces again in between the vibrant music and song of the wilderness. Beneath the snowy landscape the unseen prairie life-force is hidden in the deep soils of the earth until spring. Aptly, they are protected against the cold and drought.

An extended autumn reaching far past its usual domain and feeling sometimes too much like summer has made one more than wonder if something is awry. Finally, a snow cover, deserving of a timeless winter came in the final days of December over the sleepy, muted Conservancy.

The snow brought a reassuring relief with the briskness of the wind and broad sweep of white, stretching from horizon to horizon. The patchwork of prairie, woodland and wetland ecotones

along the rolling glacial topography seemed at once more unified. Even the neighboring human communities, with their clear-cut contrasting manicured lawns and geometric rooftops, seem a bit more at one with the Conservancy in the shared, common blanket of snow.

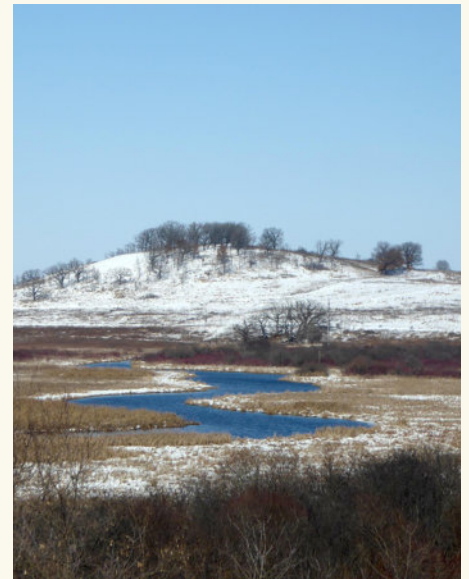
The familiarity of the season, with winter being winter-like and this sense of perceived inclusiveness coming over the land, feels akin to the notions of unity and belonging. For first nation peoples like the Anishinaabe, the land is known as the great unifier of all things, which naturally includes humans and animal-kind. All creatures by nature benefit in belonging and are inherently a member with a role to play.

*I listen to the wind,
to the wind of my soul.*

- Cat Stevens

When the Tallgrass Prairies evolved, along with the woodlands and other native communities, human communities belonged intimately to this evolution. These ecosystems provided for the wide range of wilderness creatures and plants in a complex set of relationships. Deeply rooted in the environment was an overreaching sense of living within the cycles and rhythms of nature and its inclusiveness.

When the nearly 13,000-year-old Tallgrass Prairie met the power of the plow and life ambitions of immigrants accustomed to notions



of control, independence and exclusiveness, the prairie was destroyed within the span of a human lifetime. Beginning in mid-century and by the end of the 1800s, the Tallgrass Prairies were gone. It had been once the largest native ecosystem on the North American continent. Now only less than 1% of these prairies exist and often due to restorations by human communities who have understood and nurtured notions of kinship with wild environments and creatures.

A walk through Conservancy Tallgrass Prairies, open and attentive to the wind songs and silences that invite us into these native communities, can offer opportunities for connection and inclusion in the natural world to which we belong and were once more familiar. The indomitable, untamed and immutable parts of nature and the wilderness, such as the wind, rainfall and even the silence, if heard, can bring us closer to the wild parts of our natures and in turn, the land.



The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy

PO Box 628242
Middleton, WI 53562

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



The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy

Follow us on
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pheasantbranch.org

Calendar of Events

February

26 Friends of Urban Nature (FUN) Adventure

March

17 Conservancy Day: Where Does All this Water Come From?

26 Friends of Urban Nature (FUN) Adventure

April

23 Friends of Urban Nature (FUN) Adventure

May

19 Conservancy Day: Subject TBD

July

21 Conservancy Day: Subject TBD