



NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF  
**POPE FARM**  
**CONSERVANCY**

Volume 2, Issue 3

PRESERVING THE LAND AND ITS STORIES



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

## 2016—An Incredible Year of Involvement!

BY MEL POPE

Although, the FOPFC membership increased 7 percent in 2016, the real news was how the FOPFC and its members became involved to improve the conservancy. It is hard to believe we started the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy 4 short years ago. Our 513 members logged an incredible 4,840 hours of time to enhance Pope Farm Conservancy and truly made a difference.

The Education Team became involved helping the Wisconsin Historical Society with the MCPASD field trips that occur every spring and fall. It is important to our mission that we enhance PFC as an educational conservancy. The team also has begun its 2-3-year journey of presenting the land and its stories to the public through bar code technology from the Conservancy to your hand-held device.

The Prairie restoration team became the manager of 4 of the 7 prairies for the Town of Middleton. This involvement will improve the quality of these prairies and preserve the species-specific look for each of those prairies that we all enjoy today. The Prairie team was assisted by 5 interns from the Prairie Partner program that teaches college students, while eradicating invasive plants at the same time. Our membership sponsored an Adopt-a-Plant program that added many new and unusual species to our new Oak Savanna Prairie at the Conservancy.

111 Volunteers made Sunflower Days possible for 84,000 visitors in 2017. The FOPFC took over the Sunflower Day event in order to preserve it. Through the involvement of the Events team, the Logistics team, and all those volunteers, we were able to continue this wonderful family event for thousands of people. The Events team also coordinated the free tour/lectures last summer designed to involve the public in learning about our environment and the historical stories within the Conservancy.

The PR—Web team had great success in promoting our events to the press and social media. This year the team upgraded FOPFC to a new member-management software system called Little Green Light. This new system is more simple and will give us more capability to manage the information flow to and from the Friends.

The 15 acres adjacent to the Conservancy includes the barn and the Pope Homestead. The Pope Homestead team has worked on increasing awareness to the public to help in long-term efforts to preserve the land and the barn. Tours were conducted throughout the summer and fall, and interest was generated with possible long term partners and supporters.

We have many volunteer opportunities available, and if you would like to become involved, we do enjoy ourselves. I want to thank each and every one of you! Your support has been absolutely critical and is very much appreciated. When you are out in the Conservancy, I hope you realize you are truly part of the Pope Farm Conservancy team.

Mel Pope, Chairman  
Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy



FRIENDS OF  
**POPE FARM  
CONSERVANCY** 

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### FOPFC Mission

Our mission is to contribute to the enrichment of Pope Farm Conservancy as a community and educational asset. We strive to protect and preserve the balance of the conservancy's unique natural, agricultural and historical features and volunteer as stewards to promote our passive conservancy.

### Contact Us

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## SOIL EROSION

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## ROTATING GARDEN

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## MONARCHS

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## OWLS

Right now is an excellent time to listen for owls just after sunset. If you live near a wooded area, you might even hear them calling from your backyard.

## Donate to Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy

I would like to make a tax-deductible donation at the level of:

- Sunflower ..... \$50
- Rock Wall .....\$100
- Oak Savannah .....\$250
- Capital View .....\$500
- Other

### Donor Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_



Please mail this form and your check (payable to FOPFC) to:  
FOPFC, 10333 Blackhawk Rd., Middleton, WI 53526

We also accept donations securely online at [www.popefarmconservancy.org/donate](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org/donate)



FEATURE

# SOIL EROSION

AN EXCITING EDUCATIONAL ADDITION  
AT POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY: DR. NICK J. BALSTER, DEPARTMENT OF SOIL SCIENCE, UW-MADISON

How can I stand on the ground  
every day and not feel its power?

How can I live my life stepping  
on this stuff and not wonder at it?

—William Bryant Logan

As long as humans have walked the earth, the quest for understanding the natural world has not slowed. An often overlooked ingredient in the beautifully complex workings of nature is the SOIL. We too often forget our fundamental dependence on soil, a truth so clear to our ancestors. Many people grasp that soils produce the food we eat, but perhaps less often realize

that soils produce the food we eat, but perhaps less of a realization that the constant 'evolution' and movement of soil carries great consequence to the health of the world and its inhabitants. Researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison have teamed up with the Pope Farm Conservancy to revitalize learning from the land in a state-of-the-art educational trail to be called,



“Soil Conservation: Soil on the Move” (coming Summer 2017).

Since its development, this ecstatic skin of the earth we call SOIL has been on the move. Across much of Wisconsin, this began thousands of years ago. Glacial ice churned and plowed the soil, meltwaters sorted its particles, and wind-blown silt, or loess (pronounced “luss”) covered the landscape. As these frozen bulldozers eventually retreated, plants, animals, and microbes moved in, accelerating soil development and paving the way for the next change agent - humans. In contrast to the scale of Native American style agriculture, European settlers tilled larger areas of the cauldron of life beneath their feet, transforming it into the great bread-basket of the world. However, in this lack of reverence and overuse of the soil, a severe drought of the 1930’s would soon reveal what would become known as The Great Dust Bowl. Soil was, undeniably, on the move at a catastrophic economic, social, and environmental cost.

We listened to the hard lessons of the “dirty 30’s” which ushered in a new age of soil conservation. This era would see the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps, which marshalled “soil soldiers” to stem the loss of precious topsoil – evidenced by the spillway on the North side of the Conservancy. Some 80 years later, as humans transform the land with expansion of corporate farms and unprecedented urban growth, the soil continues to be on the move and deserves our attention. This movement is called soil erosion or “soil out of place”. Soil has and will always erode, however if we don’t understand our role in this process we could lose this most precious of resources.

The Pope Farm Conservancy is an ideal place to showcase the complex factors that drive soil development and movement, the history of soil conservation in Wisconsin, and to raise awareness for the vital role that

soil conservation plays in our sustained future. The Soil on the Move trail will target three kinds of users: the casual user who would like to read a sign or two and learn a few interesting facts about soil erosion; the informed user who seeks to complete the entire quarter mile trail with its six stops and deepen their understanding via a smartphone link to web-based materials or an interactive activity found at each site; and finally the guided user that targets 3rd – 5th grade teachers who will receive a full curriculum to facilitate their teaching.

This type of trail and the versatility in its design will be the first of its kind in the U.S. and likely the world, but also will provide researchers much needed information on how people learn from educational trails and how their design affects interaction with nature. Lessons learned from research like this is not only scarce, but so urgent in a world that is becoming ever more disconnected from nature.

So if you thought soil was only “dirt”, were curious how soil develops and moves, or ever wondered how we are connected to this dynamic media we walk on every day, come take an educational journey into the past with a look forward to the future, among the idyllic setting of the Pope Farm Conservancy. We promise you will never walk on the soil again without feeling its power and wonder.

***Dr. Nick Balster discusses trail layout with Ed Boswell, Ph.D. candidate and Yi Ding, Visual Designer. Nick and Ed work at UW-Madison, while Yi recently graduated from the Landscape Architecture Department also at UW-Madison. The trail will be a culmination of an educational research study at PFC.***





FEATURE

# ROTATING GARDEN

A SEASON OF INDULGENCES AND CHALLENGES  
AT POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY DR. AMY L. ROSEBROUGH



*As the growing season drew to a close, the weather dried and warm temperatures gave hope to a few stragglers. Is this Echinacea flower the last of this year's season, or the first of next year's?*

*As the chamomile and strawberry blooms faded, the rest of the garden began to fill in. Healthy stands of barley, millet, potatoes, and amaranth brought color and variety to the garden.*



The 2016 growing season started with the promise of sun and plenty. This year's theme for the rotating garden was "indulgence", highlighting crops and herbs that have played a role in global brewing, dessert preparation, and beauty products. Floods, hail, deer, mice, and near-continuous rain soon put the garden to the test, reminding us all that indulgence has its dark side.



*Spring brought blooms to the herbal section of the garden, as the lavender, hyssop, and some stray mustard plants showed their colors.*



***Another newcomer to the garden was this year's barley plot. A few days after this photo was taken a four-inch rain knocked the plants flat in a phenomenon called "lodging". While an inconvenience to us, a lodged grain field would have meant disaster to Wisconsin's early settlers. The sorghum plants in the background weathered the storm fine, growing to an eventual height of nearly 10 feet!***



***On sunny days, the Hopi amaranth plants were a big hit with visitors, who commented on how brightly colored and unusual they were. The many fine seeds of these plants, knocked to the ground by wind, rain, and floods, are now scattered across the garden, lying dormant and ready to turn the entire garden red next spring.***

***The 2016 planting season brought a new plant to the rotating garden—hops! Though our setup was small as hops trellises go, the newly-established plants didn't seem to mind and quickly began to reach for the sky.***





A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a stem of bright yellow flowers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow and blue.

## FEATURE

Earlier this fall, a beautiful phenomenon occurred at Pope Farm Conservancy. Hundreds of south bound monarchs were seen nectaring in the prairies and across the Oak Savanna. We got the word out to our Facebook followers, and within hours, we had received several stunning photos of these orange and black spotted beauties attached to the bright yellow goldenrod plumes. It was indeed an extraordinary sight!

We know that there has been a drastic decline in the monarch population across North America since the mid-1990s, from upwards of a billion to now only about 33 million, according to the Endangered Species Coalition. Various threats, including climate change, pesticide use and habitat loss are having a devastating impact on their populations and the migration phenomenon, says the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The FOPFC is making an effort to conserve the monarch populations by providing additional habitat and food source for these beautiful creatures.

Earlier this year, the FOPFC Prairie Team planted over 200 wildflower plants that will provide valuable nectar for the migrating monarchs. With the donations received for our “Adopt-a-Plant”

A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a stem of bright yellow flowers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow and blue.

# MONARCHS

## AT POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

*Photo by: Cassius J. Callender*





Project, we purchase several wildflower species, such as Meadow Blazing Star, that are known to attract native butterflies. These plants were added to the Oak Savanna in June 2016.

The Friends are also working to provide additional habitat for the monarchs. Female monarchs lay their eggs on the leaves of the milkweed plant, and since milkweed is the one and only food source for monarch caterpillars, the FOPFC Prairie Team planted six different varieties of milkweed in the Oak Savanna earlier this year. The species of milkweed planted include World Milkweed, Purple Milkweed, Poke Milkweed (grows well in savannas), Blunt-leaved Milkweed, Sullivant's Milkweed, and Tall Green Milkweed. This new supply of milkweed will no doubt benefit the monarch metamorphosis and migration population.

Why were there so many monarchs at Pope Farm Conservancy this fall compared to other years?

To help answer this question, I reached out to Mark Martin and Sue Foote-Martin, resident managers of Goose Pond Sanctuary in Arlington, WI. Over the past 4 years, they've led the Madison Audubon's Monarch Tagging Project, which involves gently capturing monarch butterflies, applying small sticker „tags” to their wing, and releasing them back into the wild. When a tagged monarch is found, people can then report the number on the tag to *MonarchWatch.org*. This is all part of a nationwide effort to better understand these incredible butterflies and perhaps give us clues as to why the populations are in decline. Since 2012, Mark and his team of volunteers have tagged over 2000 monarchs! Interestingly enough, a similar project was conducted at Pheasant Branch Conservancy this fall, and one of their tagged monarchs was reported at Pope Farm Conservancy just a few days later.

So, when I told Mark about the influx of monarchs at Pope Farm Conservancy, he wasn't surprised. He said it had been a very good year for the monarch migration throughout South Central Wisconsin. And despite the low numbers reported this spring, the monarchs in this area did very well over the summer months. Mark observed good

numbers nearly every day between mid-July and August. He says the warm summer likely attributed to a good hatch of monarch larvae, which in turn boosted the numbers reported locally between September and October.

Another theory, Mark suggested, is that the monarchs might be attracted to specific topographic features at Pope Farm Conservancy. The wildflowers that attract the butterflies are more visible open, hill-like areas of North and South Prairies and the higher grounds of the Oak Savanna. The bright yellow plumes of the Showy goldenrod and the royal purple-colored asters and Meadow Blazingstar no doubt look like a tasty snack. The adult monarchs are attracted to these plants because they provide nectar, an essential food source that these monarchs need to fly thousands of miles to the Central Mountains of Mexico where they overwinter.

The monarch migration is indeed a remarkable and fascinating phenomenon, and we were absolutely delighted to witness hundreds of monarchs descending upon the prairies at Pope Farm Conservancy this fall. The Friends will continue to enhance our conservation efforts by providing food and habitat for these beautiful butterflies.



**To learn more about the Monarch Tagging Project, visit [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org).  
For more information on monarch migration, reported sightings, and conservation efforts, please visit:  
[www.monarchjointventure.org](http://www.monarchjointventure.org), [www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/),  
<https://wisconsinbutterflies.org/butterfly/species/111-monarch>**





## The Old Owl

Docile in daylight

Fierce hunter during the night

All rodents beware!

Hunter's focus true

Winter flights above snow, ice

Talons leave a branch

Silent wings on air

Creates dancing moon shadows

On the forest floor

Old owl, I see you

Shining spirit of the night

Rest your wings today



# OWLS

## AT POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY MIKE MCDOWELL

A visit to Pope Farm Conservancy will yield an incredible variety of prairie and grassland birds during spring and summer, but what about late fall and winter? Well, one can still find songbirds like Northern Cardinals, Black-capped Chickadees, American Tree Sparrows, and Dark-eyed Juncos, but there are also feathered denizens roosting in nearby woods that only come out at night: Owls!

Now that trees have shed their leaves, if you're lucky you might catch a glimpse of one of these amazing nocturnal hunters at its roost. During the day they'll be restfully perched on a tree limb facing into the sun to lessen winter's chill. But look carefully, for they blend into their surroundings extremely well.

For any small mammal venturing into the clearing of the prairie at night, these fierce but elegant predators spell certain death. Stealth and silent, they'll swoop down from a tree to the ground and grab the meal with their sharp talons. The hunt continues throughout the night and by dawn the owls return to their roosts to slumber away the day.

Right now is an excellent time to listen for owls just after sunset. If you live near a wooded area, you might even hear them calling from your backyard. Great Horned Owls begin courting during late fall and early winter, so you may hear a male and female exchange soft hoots in a duet: "Hoo-h'hoo-hoo!" And then an answer from a diffe-

rent direction "Hoo-h'hoo-hoo!" If the call goes: "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all!" then it's a Barred Owl. Occasionally they may even call during the day.

In addition to Barred and Great Horned Owls, I think it's very likely there are Eastern Screech Owls at Pope Farm Conservancy. Though I have never found one there myself, check for a small feathery face peering out from a tree cavity on a sunny winter day. The conservancy's prairie might

also attract migratory owls like the Short-eared Owl and perhaps even a Snowy Owl, so don't let snow keep you from exploring!

Owls are among the most charismatic of all bird families and observing them can be a joyful experience. But these are creatures somewhat sensitive to disturbances and understanding their behavior can help make seeing them a much more meaningful experience. Don't overstay your welcome.

Limit visits and party size.

Here are a few pointers that can help reduce the disturbance of roosting owls:

- Allow adequate space, observe from a distance.
- Limit movement, and move slowly.
- Speak in a whisper, or not at all.
- Avoid prolonged eye contact.





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