

THE CONSERVANCY TIMES

News from Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy

Winter 2013-2014



Volume 1, Edition 1

Newsletter Team

Janie Starzewski, Susan Hughes

Photo Credits

Chris Conohan, Barbara Esser, Mike McDowell, Stephanie Williams, Janie Starzewski (cover)

Board Members

Mel Pope, Chair
Barbara Esser, Vice Chair & Membership Committee Chair
Beth Rahko, Secretary
Karen Prochaska, Treasurer
Curt Caslavka, Restoration Committee Chair
Doug Normington, Events Committee Chair
Stephanie Williams, Education Committee Chair

Administrative Team

Lucille Pope, Administration Advisor
Jerry McA Dow, Counsel Advisor
Michelle Bartman, Membership, Data Entry
Janie Starzewski, PR Committee, Website Manager

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

Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy
10333 Blackhawk Road
Middleton, WI 53562
info@popefarmconservancy.org
(608) 620-3306

In This Edition

Message from the Chair2
2014 Events3
Membership News.....4
Birds of PFC5
Restoration Report6
Education Report8
Day of the Cranes9
Outdoor Classrooms10

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Protect and Preserve the Conservancy

by Mel Pope



It is with great pride that we introduce you to our first newsletter. It seems like yesterday that we started our membership drive. We've conducted a variety of tours, prairie restoration projects, and support activities in the Conservancy this past year and we have some very dynamic and exciting plans for 2014.

When a small group of us started FOPFC, we were interested in both enriching and protecting Pope Farm Conservancy. As you look through this newsletter you will find a number of important projects that we are working on to enrich PFC. But another reason FOPFC was formed is not discussed very often, yet it's equally important. Advocating for the protection and preservation of the Conservancy is the subject of this message.

Pope Farm Conservancy came into existence in 2000, with the vision of a pristine place that promoted education, conservation, tranquility and the historical record of the land. In 2005 the infrastructure, trail system, and interpretive signs as you know them today were put into place. Since that time there have been many proposals that challenged that vision. Some of these were requests to change the activities allowed in the Conservancy, others were business proposals. Some were debated in public and one played a role in a recent political campaign in the Town of Middleton.

Here are some of the challenges we've already faced:

Business Uses:

- Remove the top of the hill along Twin Valley Road and use for fill on local road construction.
- For-profit organizations to use the Conservancy as an athletic facility.
- 345 kV power lines across the Conservancy: These are the type of power lines that run around the Beltline. In 2005, ATC proposed two preliminary transmission lines that would run through PFC from South to North to the Substation below the Blackhawk Ski Jump. One was over the stone fence from Old Sauk to Blackhawk and the other was between the German cabin and Twin Valley Road.
- A wind turbine located at the top of the hill in the picnic area.

Continued on next page...

Message from the Chair continued...

Recreation Activities:

- Mountain biking: In 2008 and 2009, Chicago was vying for the 2016 Olympics (they ultimately were unsuccessful). The first choice for the mountain bike venue was the ravine that lies on both the Blackhawk Ski Club and Conservancy property. They also proposed turning the prairies into parking lots for the event. This idea was floated by the U.S. Olympic committee, Cities of Chicago, Madison, Middleton, and the State of Wisconsin.
- Turn the Conservancy into a dog park.
- Fireworks display in the picnic area.
- Paved bike trails throughout the Conservancy.

It is obvious that none of these proposals came to fruition. The Town of Middleton has done a very good job in not only maintaining the Conservancy, but in prohibiting use that would degrade the type of Conservancy we have tried so hard to build. At times this has not been easy because of the political pressure to change the current use provisions that protect this land.

Unfortunately, some of these proposals will reappear and new threats will be pushed forward in the future. Protecting and preserving PFC is one of the major reasons we began FOPFC, and one of the reasons why your membership is critical! We need a robust membership if we're going to be successful in advocating the preservation and protection of Pope Farm Conservancy in the future. Thank you for all your support!

Mel Pope
FOPFC Chair



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

2014 Events

Exact dates and times are to be determined. Visit our website for up-to-date event information.

JUNE

- **Bird & Savanna Tour**
Hosted by Mike McDowell
- **Spring Members Event**
Topic: Seeds - In Dreams and In Nature

JULY

- **Prairie & Savanna Walk**
Hosted by Mike Healy
Adaptive Restoration, LLC
- **Native Americans**
Host: Dr. Amy Rosebrough,
State Historical Society
- **Prairie Seed Collection**

AUGUST

- **Sunflower Days**
- **Annual Pope Farm Conservancy Tour**
Hosted by Mel Pope
- **Prairie Seed Collection**

SEPTEMBER

- **Saving Our Soil**
Dr. Nick Balster,
UW-Madison Soil Science
- **Heritage Days**
- **Prairie Seed Collection**

OCTOBER

- **German Immigration**
Host: Antje Petty
Max Kade Institute
- **Members Picnic**
- **Prairie Seed Collection**

Membership News

by Barbara Esser

We have had a fantastic first season! Our membership base has grown to 127 households (216 members) since our first charter member joined on June 10, 2013. Our initial project, the Prairie Restoration Project, was a huge success and involved over 50 members and volunteers collecting and cleaning seeds from 33 species of prairie plants. The seeds were planted in the Wheat Field Prairie by our restoration volunteers in December 2013.

We celebrated our first 100 members during a Members Appreciation Party on October 15, 2013. Despite the rainy weather that day, friends came out to meet the Board Members and enjoy some homemade treats, inspired by the crops grown at Pope Farm Conservancy.



We are already planning for 2014, and our goal is to increase member participation

and camaraderie. There is so much we can accomplish together! Without each and every one of you, our group would not be what it is today.

Thank you to all our members who make Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy possible! ■



Volunteers Needed for Sunflower Days

In 2013, more than 10,000 people came out to view the sunflowers at Pope Farm Conservancy. During these visits by the public it became apparent that many people were visiting for the first time, and many walked away not realizing that Pope Farm Conservancy has much more to offer than just the sunflowers.

This year, the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy are planning to have "Sunflower Days" that corresponds to the peak sunflower bloom, typically the first week in August. We would like to have a picnic table with volunteers from the "friends"

to accomplish the following tasks:

- Hand out information and answer questions about the sunflowers, i.e., do they harvest them, what happens to the seed, how they harvest them, etc.
- Hand out information about Pope Farm Conservancy, including trail maps and historical information.
- Answer questions about the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy, explaining why becoming a "friend" is enjoyable and necessary to enhance and protect this incredible piece of property.

We will train you so that you feel comfortable answering questions. If you are interested in volunteering for a couple of hours at the FOPFC table, please email us at info@popefarmconservancy.org.

We do need your help, and look forward to hearing from you. What a great way to spend a little time with thousands of "smiley faces" looking on.



Birds of Pope Farm Conservancy

by Mike McDowell, Author of The Digiscoper Blog

This will be the first of many bird profiles I'll be writing for the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy newsletter. Pope Farm Conservancy's prairies provide great habitat for many grassland songbirds, some of which have experienced precipitous population declines over the past several decades. Fortunately, prairie restorations like our conservancy help tip the balance in the other direction, but there's still much work to be done.

As Pope Farm and other prairie restorations have successfully demonstrated, if you build it, the birds will return.

The Dickcissel is a sparrow-sized mostly gray songbird with a yellow chest, yellow eyebrow, chestnut shoulder patch, and blueish-gray conical shaped bill. The males have a black "V" on their chest, giving them the coloration of a small meadowlark. Dickcissels are a migratory species that returns to southern Wisconsin from northern parts of South America (Venezuela) the first or second week of June, but sometimes in late May.

The Dickcissel is the only member of the genus *Spiza* and belongs to the taxonomic family Cardinalidae, which also includes Northern Car-

dinal, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Its scientific name, *Spiza Americana*, simply means "American Finch."

Dickcissels earned their common name after their song. It isn't a fluty or melodious song like a meadowlark, but more buzzy and insect-like. It begins with a couple of "dick, dick" or "chick, chick" notes, followed by "ciss, ciss" or "sizzle, sizzle." Males sing for mate attraction and to defend their territory from other males. They decrease their song output late July or early August once they have nestlings.

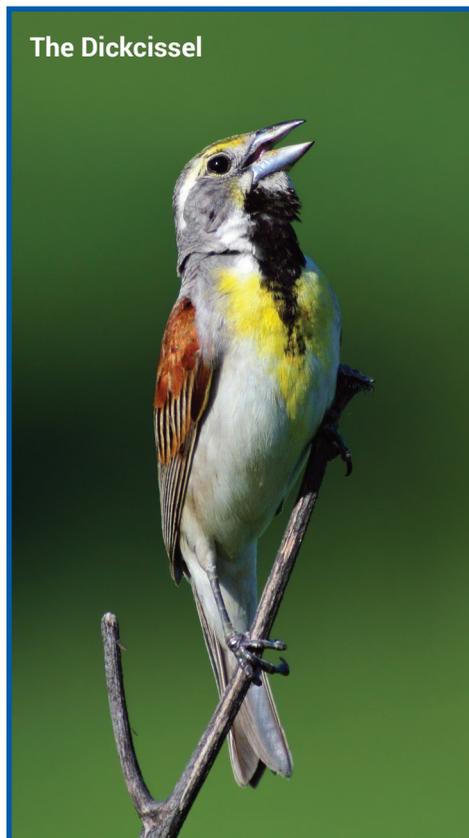


The best time to see (and hear) a Dickcissel at Pope Farm Conservancy is during the month of June. It's around this time that males are on territory and sing in earnest, which is the easiest way to detect them.

Because the females don't sing, they're a lot harder to find. You'll often observe a singing Dickcissel conspicuously perched atop a tall strong-stemmed forb plant, fence post, telephone pole, or tree. They'll sing throughout the day, but typically are more vocal early in the morning.

If you would like to see Dickcissels and other grassland or savanna birds at Pope Farm Conservancy, you're welcome to attend the Madison Audubon field trip I'll be leading on June 21st at 7:00 a.m. In addition to Dickcissels, we'll look for Clay-colored Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Eastern Bluebirds, Orchard Orioles, Eastern Kingbirds, and many other interesting birds! ■

The Dickcissel





We are very pleased to report that this was a successful first year, with over 50 volunteers participating in seed collecting, seed cleaning and planting of the Wheat Field Prairie. From late August through early November, volunteers were able to collect about \$4000 worth of seed from 33 different native prairie species. Examples of these are butterfly milkweed, prairie dock, cream gentian, bush clover and golden Alexanders.



Seed Collection

Most of the seed collection was done at Pope Farm Conservancy, but we also had the opportunity to gather seed at Swamp Lovers Conservancy along the Ice Age Trail near Cross Plains. We thank Jerry Goth for this opportunity to get species

from his sanctuary that were not available at PFC. From the conversations I've had with our volunteers, they really seemed to enjoy themselves, and for most of them, this was a new experience.



Seed Cleaning

Once the seed has been collected and dried, the real work begins. Seed cleaning is a time-consuming process that usually involves breaking apart the seed heads to release the seeds and then separating those seeds from the bulk plant material.

We began by using a hammer mill, owned by Goose Pond Sanctuary (Madison Audubon), to break up the seed heads. Framed screens, consisting of several different sizes of hardware cloth, were then used to separate the seeds from the other plant parts. Finally, the partially cleaned seed is run through a fanning mill which uses forced air to blow away unwanted lighter weight material. The reason for doing this extensive process may not be obvious,

but preservationists usually want to control the amounts of each species they put onto a restoration site so that they don't apply too much of an aggressive species. Clean seed is the best way to prevent this.

Some species are easiest cleaned by hand. Volunteers had this opportunity one rainy day last fall when it was too wet to collect in the field. Instead, we kept our group busy while gathered around a bucket of butterfly milkweed pods hand stripping out the seeds. Lots of fun and good conversation!



Continued on next page...

Restoration Report continued...

Planting Seeds

Then on December 14, a group of ten volunteers braved the cold weather and hand broadcast a seed mix of 36 prairie species into the Wheat Field Prairie. It was snowing lightly and there was a cold, stiff wind out of the North. The group marched back and forth through the snow-covered prairie, casting seed to the wind. After 45 minutes, we were done. Nice job volunteers!

the 100 different species over the next two years. The majority of the savanna species we need do not exist at Pope Conservancy and we have had very generous offers by Tom and Kathie Brock (Pleasant Valley Conservancy) and Jerry Goth (Swamp Lovers Conservancy) to gather seed at their conservancies. This is a great opportunity for us to improve the natural areas of Pope Farm Conservancy.



This prairie had been originally planted in 2010, but due to the severe drought in 2012, a lot of the seedlings were killed that hadn't yet established deep enough root systems. The solution to this problem was to overseed the prairie with seed from as many selected species as our volunteers could collect. In 2014 we intend to monitor this prairie and record those plants that have germinated and also those that have become established in this prairie.

Coming in 2014

We have an ambitious agenda for our volunteers in 2014. Within PFC, there is about 1 acre we would like to transform into oak savanna. Savannas are very special plant communities which often contain uncommon or rare species. The scattered burr oaks are already in place; we just need to get rid of existing ground cover and add seed from about 100 plus savanna species.

We will need your help in the collection of seed from

Also on the agenda for next year is a project that will improve the looks of the Ravine area. We will be asking volunteers to help remove bramble from the depths of the ravine. A final project for those who like to work during the summer warmth is working in our prairies removing invasive weeds, including the two sweet clovers and also Queen Anne's Lace in August.

As you can see, there is lots to do to make this Conservancy a great place to observe nature! Be sure to check our website and Facebook page for volunteer opportunities as they arise. ■

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who helped with the Wheat Field prairie restoration project this past year. Your hard work will allow us to increase the diversity of prairie plant species at Pope Farm Conservancy and improve the overall quality of our prairies.

Update from the Education Committee

by Stephanie Williams

Pope Farm Conservancy (PFC) was planned by the Town of Middleton as a place to learn about our local agriculture, archeology, geology, history and wildlife among other topics. Take a walk along any trails and read the signage which provides additional information to link us to this land.

For the past six years, the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD) has supported the outdoor educational experience at Pope Farm Conservancy. In 2005, the MCPASD recruited a team of teachers, naturalists and academic professionals to learn more about



the PFC and develop field trip curriculum. The fourth grade classes study Wisconsin history throughout the year, and PFC provides a location to learn about the land and its people.

Currently, there are two fourth grade field trips, the first being the Fall Harvest Program. This program is coordinated through the MCPASD, Park staff of the Town of Middleton, Archaeology staff from the Wisconsin Historical Society, and naturalists and teachers from the Dane County area. During the Fall Harvest Program, students participate in two activities, both of which focus on Native people in the Wisconsin area before European settlement.

In the first activity, students rotate among four stations to learn about harvest and preservation of foods, tools required for survival (technology), and how we learn about the past.



The second activity, called “Native American Seasonal Round,” builds upon this knowledge. Playing the role of bands of hunters and gatherers, students explore the park to locate sources of food, shelter, and other survival needs. They must make choices along the way, build consensus within their own bands and interact with other bands.

The spring field trip includes stations where students learn more about Wisconsin archeology and geology. Students have the chance to plant seeds common in native gardens and learn more about artifacts and additional wild foods. They also will learn about the effect of the glacier on the land and the local landforms, the rocks that were removed from the fields to form the rock fence, and ice age mammals. This field trip is also coordinated by the MCPASD, Town of Middleton, Archeology Staff from the Wisconsin Historical Society, Geology Staff from the UW Geology Museum, and Naturalists from the Dane County Area.

Continued on next page...



Education Report continued...

Thousands of students from the MCPASD have participated on these field trips over the years, and we look forward to this continuing in the future. In addition to MCPASD, we have had schools from Waunakee, Sauk Prairie - and Madison plan field trips to enhance student learning.

The job of the Education Committee is just beginning! Our goals for 2014 (and beyond) are to promote adult and family education, and to expand and improve the educational opportunities offered at Pope Farm Conservancy. In 2014, we



will increase the number of public tours and also add some new topics. The process of updating school standards, especially science, gives us a fresh opportunity to become familiar with the new standards. This enables us to advise educators how a visit to PFC supports those new standards, enhances student learning, and provides a valuable experience.

If you would like to join the Educational Movement at PFC, send a message to stephanie@popefarmconservancy.org.

The Day of the Cranes

by Stephanie Williams



You never know what might happen on a field trip! The day Elm Lawn Elementary School came to Pope Farm Conservancy, the weather was unseasonably cold. It was a day for winter coats, hats and gloves, and steaming hot chocolate. When the yellow school bus arrived, we greeted the classes and immediately broke into four groups to begin learning about the migratory native people. Little did we know what was in store for the group.

After a short time, someone called out, "Look up, there is an ultralight!" We looked to the north and then west to see a low-flying ultralight pass over the crest of the recessional moraine and then turn back to the north. "This is the first day of the Whooping crane migration" stated Deb Weitzel, one of the naturalists conducting the wild foods station. The Whooping crane migration, called Operation Migration, was scheduled to start that day. This is the program where the new brood of Whooping cranes would be led south by an ultralight to their new

winter homes. We didn't know exactly where and why the ultralight landed.

For the second part of the field trip, we followed the top slope of the recessional moraine, past the Oak savanna, and circled around the dried sunflower field. Imagine our surprise to discover the ultralight, surrounded by a half dozen cranes, parked below in the small valley. They were protected by a giant "human crane", the pilot dressed in white with a mask and gloves to make him look like one of the group. We walked over the crest of the hill in quiet wonder as the beautiful white and tan birds gleaned wheat from the newly harvested field. This was a moment of discovery that will remain with me and the students on that field trip for the rest of our lives. It could only have occurred by venturing outside.

For more information on Operation Migration, visit: www.operationmigration.org.

Outdoor Classrooms

The Amphitheatres

by Lucille Pope

The only permanent structures in the Conservancy are five limestone amphitheatres that are designed as small outdoor classrooms - each built to seat at least 30 students. Four of these amphitheatres are dedicated to (and donated by) the farming families that lived on this property. They are the only features of the Conservancy without interpretive signs, so let us briefly introduce you to these families.

The Goth Family (1867-1890)

Amphitheatre Location: In the far southwest corner of the Conservancy on Twin Valley Road.

View: The site offers a 360 view of the western side of the Conservancy including the Town of Middleton, the south side of Old Sauk Road and the land west of Twin Valley Road.

History: Goth families have lived in this immediate area since 1857. Recent descendants donated the Goth Conservancy to the Town of Middleton. One brother, Joachim, was the first immigrant known to live on the land that is now the Pope Farm Conservancy. This amphitheatre honors these immigrants.



Photo (left to right): Carl Goth with his wife Sophia (previously Stolte), his brother Joachim, and their mother Hanne Sophie Goth.

The Brumm Family (1914-1959)

Amphitheatre Location: At the top of the hill on the north side of the Oak Savanna - straight north of the house.

View: At the very highest point in the Conservancy, this amphitheatre offers an unexpected view to the Northeast.

History: Charles and Lena Brumm, then their sons Elmer and Clarence, farmed on the middle section of what is now the Conservancy (and the Blackhawk Ski Club land). The buildings that form the homestead date to 1914 when the Brumms started the farm. This amphitheatre, by the little woods behind the barn and the house, honors this farming family.



Photo: Charles and Lena Brumm Family

The Rotary Club of Madison West Towne-Middleton

Amphitheatre Location: The first seating area above the Old Sauk Road parking lots.

View: This special amphitheatre looks to the southeast and encourages you to imagine the pathways to and from the four lakes which were so critical to Native Americans in the area.

History: From the beginning, our local Rotary Club has been a strong supporter of PFC. Their donations built the white board fence along the Old Sauk entrance, the tool shed by the garden plots and this amphitheatre. Their members continue to generously donate their time to the FOPFC. We are honored by their friendship and contributions to the Conservancy.

THE BRUMM FAMILY AMPHITHEATRE



The Pope Family (1959-present)

Vivian Pope

Amphitheatre Location: Overlooking the parking lot on Blackhawk Road.

View: Arranged as stepping stones, this seating faces the Northwest and looks across the Black Earth Creek drainage toward Cross Plains.

History: Vivian lived on the farm from 1959 until her death in 1973 -- this spot was her favorite view. Born and raised in Montana, the amphitheatre is surrounded by a prairie that reminds one of the waving prairie grasses of her home state. As a science, physical education and special education teacher, her interests are reflected in activities at Pope Farm Conservancy.



Photo: Art & Vivian Pope with Mel Pope

Art & Betty Pope

Amphitheatre Location: At the far eastern end of the Conservancy in the heart of the picnic area.

View: Overlooking the City of Madison and, on a clear day, the lake and capitol.

History: The beauty of this vista and the history represented by the stone fence were driving forces for the Pope family's desire to preserve their farm property. This amphitheatre honors Art and Betty's time on this land and their determination to ensure it is permanently protected. Their interests in agriculture, science and education are central themes built into the Conservancy.



Photo: Art & Betty Pope

FRIENDS OF
**POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY**



Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy
10333 Blackhawk Road
Middleton, WI 53562

Visit Our Website: www.popefarmconservancy.org
Like Us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofpopefarmconservancy