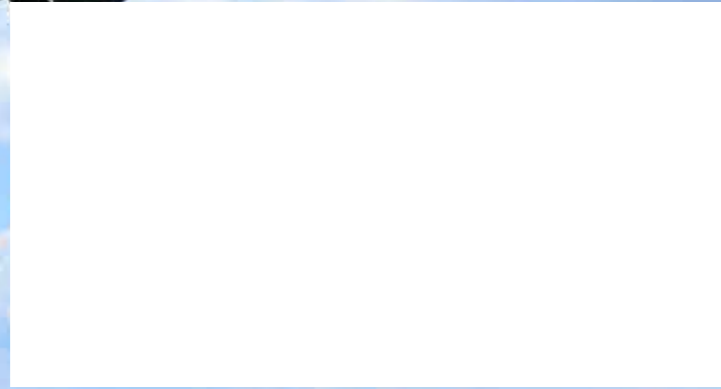


FRIENDS OF  
**POPE FARM  
CONSERVANCY**  
Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy  
10333 Blackhawk Road  
Middleton, WI 53562



NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF  
**POPE FARM  
CONSERVANCY**  
Volume 3, Issue 1  
PRESERVING THE LAND AND ITS STORIES

Visit Our Website: [www.popefarmconservancy.org](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org)  
Like Us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/friendsofpopefarmconservancy](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofpopefarmconservancy)

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

## Pope Farm Conservancy

BY MEL POPE



The Town of Middleton plan for Pope Farm Conservancy describes it as an educational conservancy targeted to grade school students. Designed to be tranquil in nature, the Conservancy supports many different lesson plans including Geology, Native American history, German immigration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and Erosion. In addition, there are over 20 different vegetative plots including 7 different prairie restoration projects and 7 different agricultural crops. Our goal is to create a haven for wildlife and a quiet respite for the Conservancy visitor.

Essentially this is what has been created at Pope Farm Conservancy. Everything the FOPFC does revolves around this concept, and the Friends have made a huge contribution toward this end. For 356 days during the year, visitors enjoy this quiet atmosphere for reflection and learning.

However, the Conservancy is far from quiet for the remaining 9 days of the year. That is when thousands of people come to the location they know as the place where the sunflowers are grown. Most do not realize what the Conservancy is or what it is intended to be. Last year an estimated 84,000 people viewed the sunflowers, making Sunflower Days one of the largest events in Dane County. Few people realized that the sunflowers are part of a crop display for educational purposes and that the sunflowers were not initially intended to attract people by the thousands. The sunflower field went viral.

During Sunflower Days, the Conservancy is certainly not tranquil, as thousands of families enjoy the beautiful phenomenon created by the sunflowers. The Friends look at Sunflower Days as a huge opportunity to enhance the mission of Pope Farm Conservancy.

First, we are increasing awareness of the Conservancy itself. The overall traffic during non-Sunflower Days has increased over the years. Many Sunflower Day visitors come back to enjoy the views and serenity of the Conservancy. It is important to grow the number of people who can walk the Conservancy and learn the stories of the land.

Secondly, we are using Sunflower Days to raise funds for the Friends. These monies go back into the Conservancy to help with improving the quality of prairies we manage for the Town, to help fund educational programs, and in some cases, the FOPFC helps with capital improvements of the Conservancy itself.

Ironically, the ability for the Friends to help preserve the tranquility and educational aspects of Pope Farm Conservancy are related to that 9-day aberration called Sunflower Days. We are thankful for that opportunity.

Mel Pope, Chairman  
Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy



SPRING-2017  
Volume 3 - Issue 1

### Newsletter Team

Janie Starzewski  
Graphic Design by:  
Roger and Linda Napiwocki,  
Purple Moon Design

### Photo Credits

Mike McDowell, Susan Carpenter,  
Mike Anderson, Curt Caslavka,  
Janie Starzewski (cover)

### Board Members

Mel Pope—Chair  
Lee Pray—Vice Chair &  
Membership Team  
Ann Kale—Secretary  
Karen Prochaska—Treasurer  
Curt Caslavka—Prairie Restoration Team  
Debbie Whitney—Events Team  
Janie Starzewski—Public Relations  
Moirra Harrington—Liaison to the  
Town of Middleton  
Bob Wink—Corporate Fundraising  
Bethany Brander—Education Team

### Administrative Team

Michelle Bartman—Administration Advisor  
Jerry McAdow—Counsel Advisor

### 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

# CONTENTS



SPRING-2017  
Volume 3 - Issue 1



# 4

## ANCIENT OAKS

Among the stories told by the Pope Farm Conservancy landscape are those of ancient burr oaks that sprouted from acorns during early years of European settlement.



# 6

## EVENTS CALENDAR 2017

All FOPFC tours are free and open to the public. No registration is necessary. More info: [www.popefarmconservancy.org](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org) Contact: [info@popefarmconservancy.org](mailto:info@popefarmconservancy.org)



# 8

## RUSTY-PATCHED BUMBLEBEE

Southern Wisconsin is still home to the rusty-patched bumble bee, and the species has been found at Pope Farm Conservancy, foraging in the forbs prairie.



# 10

## WOOD WARBLERS

While Pope Farm Conservancy hosts a variety of interesting grassland songbirds, there is a" spritely little wood warbler that spends part of spring and all of summer at the prairie.



FEATURE

# ANCIENT OAKS

## AT THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY NANCY MCGILL

Among the stories told by the Pope Farm Conservancy landscape are those of ancient bur oaks that sprouted from acorns during early years of European settlement.

Back in the 1830's southern Wisconsin featured open oak savannas flourishing amid wide-spread prairies. When our oaks were young, farming and its consequences began to take over more and more land. As our trees grew to maturity in the early 1900's, the oak savanna ecosystem became fragmented due to agriculture, plus competition from other trees no longer suppressed by Native American landscape fires. By the late 20th century old bur oaks had fewer and fewer acres on which to grow. That is why our oak trees, which are approximately 185 years old, are very special. They have held their ground to now grace approximately 4 acres.

To find our historic oaks, look for the group of big trees with spreading bran-

ches in the heart of the Conservancy. The Friends are in the fourth year of creating an understory in this oak savanna, filled with native plants that are adapted to growing in this community. We want to tell the story of an ecosystem that comprises less than .01% of its original 5.5 million acres and that today is one of the most threatened plant communities in the Midwest.

Because we have ancient oaks, we have "open-grown" trees that can allow a lot of sunlight to reach the ground. This affects the types of plants that will grow. Some sun-loving prairie plants can be found. Examples are spiderwort, pale purple coneflower, rough blazing star, and rattlesnake master. More shade tolerant plants, like poke milkweed and yellowimpernel, can grow under tree branches. Savannas also provide unique habitat for some animals, including

nesting sites for birds and acorns as wildlife food. Birders should look for bluebirds, indigo buntings, wild turkey, and great crested flycatchers.

Friends volunteers and student interns have contributed hundreds and hundreds of hours toward restoring this rare historic landscape. Countless invasive plants have been removed, primarily by hand-pulling and digging. We probably have one more year of hard work to reduce unwanted plant species. Friends members have also sown seeds and planted seedlings. In the future burning will be used on occasion. Savannas are dependent on fires to maintain the oak openings and suppress competing trees. As shown in the photos, savanna species now have improved conditions to survive and become established.



BEFORE



AFTER

Left, before restoration and on the right the Oak Savanna after restoration.

# 2017 EVENTS POPE FARM CONSERVANCY CALENDAR

## MAY



### Pope Farm Conservancy Geology Tour Wednesday, May 10 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Host: Eric Carson, Geologist and Assistant Professor, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey

Pope Farm Conservancy has many geological features. Learn how the glacier made this Conservancy the way it is. View the terminal moraine, walk three recessional moraines and stand where three different watersheds come together (overlooking the city of Madison). And find out where the rocks came that were used to build the iconic stone fence! This tour will be a fascinating look back in time.



### Pope Farm Conservancy Archaeology Tour Thursday, May 18th 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Host: Dr. Amy Rosebrough, State Historical Society

Dr. Rosebrough will take us on an archaeological walking tour of sites in Pope Farm Conservancy and discuss American Indian life in and near Pope Farm. She will show us how they made tools out of stones and provide a fascinating overview of how land usage has changed. All FOPFC tours are free and open to the public. No registration is necessary.

## JUNE

### Birds of the Conservancy Saturday, June 17th 7:00 – 8:30 am

Host: Mike McDowell, Photographer and Birding Expert

Join Mike McDowell on this exciting birding excursion to view the bird population at Pope Farm Conservancy. Bring binoculars if you have them, wear comfortable walking shoes, and dress for the weather. If you are in need of binoculars, please contact Mike at (800) 289-1132 or mmcdowell@eagleoptics.com.



## JULY

### Pope Farm Conservancy Prairie and Savanna Walk Saturday, July 8th 9:00 – 10:30 am

Host: Mike Anderson

Join us on this beautiful scenic tour of Pope Farm Conservancy's six different prairies, including an Oak Savanna. Hear the story of how crop fields and bare ground were restored to one of the world's most rare and biologically diverse ecosystems.



Photo: Robert Stebler

## AUGUST

### Sunflower Days Saturday, July 29 - Sunday, August 6th Sunrise to Sunset

(Actual dates may vary depending on peak sunflower bloom)

Nine acres of sunflowers; see over 500,000 sunflowers in bloom. Yes, that was half a million flowers, each with possibly 1000 to 2000 seeds per head. You shouldn't miss this visual phenomenon. It is a magical experience. Come. Bring your family. Bring a friend. Bring your camera. Just come.



### Pope Farm Conservancy Annual Tour Wednesday, August 9th 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Host: Mel Pope, FOPFC Chair

This free walking tour of Pope Farm Conservancy, led by Mel Pope, will explore the history and features of the conservancy, including seven different prairie restoration projects and a field of Sunflowers. Come and enjoy a 360 degree panoramic view of Lake Mendota, the Capitol, Black Earth Creek valley and the terminal moraine. This is a tour that you won't want to miss!!

## SEPTEMBER

### Pope Farm Conservancy Tour Soil Erosion

Saturday, September 16th  
10:00 - 11:30 am

Host: Dr. Nick Balster, UW-Madison Soil Science Department

Join Dr. Nick Balster from the UW-Madison Soil Science Department on this fascinating tour of Pope Farm Conservancy and its connection to SOIL! Come along on this educational adventure at Pope Farm Conservancy and discover:

- What is soil?
- Why is soil critical in our lives?
- Why is erosion a natural process, but one we should control?
- How is the history of soil conservation at Pope Farm Conservancy still evident on the landscape today and a lesson for the future?
- How were the Soil Conservation Service and CCC integral to the management of soil at PFC?



Photo: Alyssa Maier

### Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy Picnic

Sunday, September 10  
1:00 - 3:00 pm

The FOPFC spring picnic will feature the "Surly Surveyor" who will reenact a look at the pre-settlement landscape of the Town of Middleton and the Pope Farm area through the eyes of John Mullett, Deputy Surveyor for the U.S. General Land Office, 1833. This program is highly acclaimed, entertaining, and it will be a special treat for the FOPFC membership. Bring your family and friends and join us for a picnic on top of the hill at Pope Farm Conservancy. Please bring a dish to pass. We will provide the beverages, plates & utensils. This is an exciting event NOT to be missed. No registration necessary.



All tours take place at  
Pope Farm Conservancy  
7440 Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593

All FOPFC tours are free and open to the public. No registration is necessary.

More info:  
[www.popefarmconservancy.org](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org)  
Contact: [info@popefarmconservancy.org](mailto:info@popefarmconservancy.org)



### 2017 PRAIRIE SEED COLLECTION DATES

Dates and times of seed collection will be determined later this summer. Those who are interested can fill out our volunteer interest form at <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/volunteer/>

## Donate to Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy

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

- Sunflower
- Rock Wall
- Oak Savannah
- Capital View
- 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)

# THE RUSTY-PATCHED BUMBLEBEE

AT THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY SUSAN CARPENTER

## FEATURE

On March 21, 2017, the rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) became the first bumble bee to be listed for protection as an Endangered Species at the federal level. This formerly common bee species has been lost over about 90% of its original range, and is now found only in small numbers in areas of the upper Midwest. Southern Wisconsin is still home to the rusty-patched bumble bee, and the species has been found at Pope Farm Conservancy, foraging in the forbs prairie.

While there is no single cause for the species decline, these factors and stressors play a role: habitat loss and fragmentation, disease and pathogens, pesticides (especially systemic insecticides), changing climate, and extreme weather events. These stressors may interact and combine, where one causes vulnerability that makes another stressor more serious. For example, bees that have to fly longer distances to forage may be more susceptible to other stressors.

These stressors are clues for ways that gardeners, homeowners, farmers, and community members can foster bumble bee populations. To create bumble bee

habitat, plant native plants that provide nectar and pollen resources throughout the season, from mid-April through September. A diverse planting should have overlapping bloom times so that there are no gaps in available food sources. Bumble bees have relatively small colonies, meaning that they do not have extensive stores of food within the colony.

Bumble bees nest in underground burrows, rock walls, crevices in building foundations, compost, under bunch grasses, and hollow logs, so do not clean up or eliminate these features from your landscaping. Each colony lasts for only one year, and bumble bees are rarely aggressive.

When managing land or your garden, avoid insecticides. Systemic insecticides are a serious problem because they remain in the plant for a long time, and enter the tissues of the plant that bees are using for nutrition (nectar) and to feed their young (pollen). When you purchase seeds or nursery plants, make sure they have not been pre-treated with insecticides.

It is important to look for and document the rusty-patched bumble bee at Pope Farm Conservancy, in your own

garden or farm, and in other places where bees are visiting wildflowers, weeds, or other plants. Without handling or disturbing bees, photograph them visiting flowers. Take multiple photos of each bee to capture the color pattern in top and side views of the bee, as well as the bee's face and head. Use the [BumbleBeeWatch.org](http://BumbleBeeWatch.org) web portal to enter data about your sighting and upload up to 3 photos of each bee that illustrate its features best. Use the bee ID tool to identify bees shown in your photos, and the BumbleBeeWatch experts will confirm the IDs. On the site, you can explore map data for sightings in an area or for particular species. As more observations are added to the website, patterns emerge about the range of the species. Let's put Pope Farm Conservancy on the map!

*Susan Carpenter is the native plant gardener at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum. She also leads a bumble bee conservation project which monitors bumble bees, including the endangered rusty-patched bumble bee. For more information about participating in citizen-based monitoring for this species and others, contact her at [susan.carpenter@wisc.edu](mailto:susan.carpenter@wisc.edu)*



Photos by Susan Carpenter



# WOOD WARBLERS

AT THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY MIKE MCDOWELL

While Pope Farm Conservancy hosts a variety of interesting grassland songbirds, there is a” spritely little wood-warbler that spends part of spring and all of summer at the prairie. You may have heard its witchitie witchitie witchitie song without knowing the voice belongs to a small yellow bird with a broad black mask. As one of the few warbler species that nests at the conservancy, Common Yellowthroats return in late April and early May, having spent the entire winter in the southern United States, Mexico, or the Caribbean.

As the name suggests, most

woodwarblers nest in forested regions, but the Common Yellowthroat is more of a habitat generalist, nesting in marshes, grasslands, and open pine forests. They are also one of the most common of all warblers, with an estimated North America population at almost 90 million individuals. That’s pretty amazing when considering the Golden-winged Warbler’s population just over 400,000 and the Kirtland’s Warbler (federally endangered) is under 4,000.

Testament to its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and habitats, the yellowthroat is one of

the few warbler species that recognizes the presence of Brown-headed Cowbird eggs laid in their nests. Thus, they don’t generally fall for this brood parasite’s trick and will desert the nest or even build a new nest on top of the old one upon discovery of a cowbird egg.

The Common Yellowthroat is also a deft bug hunter. You’ll have to spend a great deal of time around them if you want to actually observe them catching something to eat. And just what do they eat? Pretty much everything! Spiders, crickets, grasshoppers, moths, butterflies, dragonflies, bees, beetles, ants,

Fearless feathered sprite of the marsh,  
I would fancy Bandit Warbler in a name.  
These are my folly attempts, but as such,  
I think it suits your character all the same.

Your agitated call alerts me when you’re near,  
chits and chatters when I’ve stepped too close.  
But a master songster rivaling others in  
your class, yet sometimes stealthily silent  
at your post.

Early morning greetings and evening farewells,  
how busy you have been this month of May.  
I find very little that’s common about you,  
and enjoy your company of every birding day.

caterpillars and other larvae. They’ll also eat grit which assists digestion and possibly helps add minerals to their diet.

The weather is warming up and soon the Common Yellowthroat’s song will be added to the morning chorus at Pope Farm Conservancy. Follow the song and find the bird. The males are gregarious singers and unwavering nest defenders. They’ll even feign injury on the ground a few feet away from you should you approach too closely to a nest with eggs or young. Should you happen to encounter this behavior, simply take several steps back and all will be right in the yellowthroat’s world!



Female Common Yellowthroat



Male Common Yellowthroat defends his territory by singing.