



April 2019 News Update

Upcoming Events

Coyotes and Foxes in the Suburbs

WHEN: Tuesday, April 9th, 2018 (6:00-7:30pm)

WHERE: Town of Middleton – Town Hall,
7555 Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI 53593

WHO: Prof. David Drake, UW-Madison

COST: Free and open to the public



Join us for a fascinating presentation on coyotes and foxes in the greater Madison area, and how they seem to have found a way to coexist in urban areas. UW-Madison Professor in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and Extension Wildlife Specialist David Drake has a number of projects designed to study the behavior of these mammals, to monitor their ecology and movement. His research and extension programs primarily focus on wildlife and wildlife damage management in human-dominated landscapes.

As Drake has said, “The coyotes certainly aren’t going anywhere. They’re not going to get up and leave the city, and the humans are not going anywhere. So, we better figure out how to co-exist.”

Bluebirds at Pope Farm Conservancy

WHEN: Sunday, April 28th, 2019 (2:00 – 3:00 p.m.)

WHERE: Pope Farm Conservancy – lower parking lot

WHO: Patrick Ready, Director of the Bluebird Restoration Assoc. of WI

COST: Free and open to the public



Patrick Ready will meet with us and tell us how to attract bluebirds to our yards. His presentation will include nest box requirements, habitat types, and other tips that will help us attract bluebirds. After Patrick’s presentation, he will lead us on a tour of the bluebird nesting areas in the conservancy. We are likely to spot many bluebirds along the way, so be sure to bring your binoculars and cameras.

Patrick has been interested in birds most of his life, and he has been monitoring bluebird boxes since the late 90s. He is the Director of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin and manages several bluebird trails in Dane County.

Starting Your Own Prairie Garden

WHEN: Saturday, May 18, 9:30 -10:30 a.m.

WHERE: Pope Farm Conservancy

WHO: Sue Reindollar and Barb Glassel

COST: Free and open to the public

Join Sue Reindollar and Barb Glassel from the Madison Chapter of Wild Ones to learn how to start your own prairie garden. Wild Ones encourages and promotes the use of native plants in landscaping, gardening, naturoscaping and land restoration in Southern Wisconsin for purposes of preserving biodiversity and ecosystems and personal enjoyment.



Sue and Barb will provide information on planting a prairie garden including preparing the soil, choosing the plants and maintaining the garden. We will walk through the conservancy and observe the spring prairie plants emerging in the six different prairies. Bring your camera and prairie garden questions to this event.

And remember these words of wisdom from Wild Ones: It only takes one milkweed to be a home for a monarch caterpillar. Have you planted yours yet?

Prairie Burns have Begun



The Friends manage four prairies for the Town of Middleton, and will burn two of them this spring. On March 22, 2019, the first Prairie was successfully burned. The Blackhawk Prairie will be burned in late April.

There is a very short window to burn this year because of the late spring, and the thatch must be dry in order to burn it. We burn the prairies for two reasons. First, prairie plants thrive better after burning (burning promotes new growth). The second reason is to help control weeds. Burning tends to set back some unwanted woody tree and shrub species, and is less expensive than if the weeding is done by hand.

Photo: Adaptive Restoration

NEW SCHOOL NAMED POPE FARM ELEMENTARY



Yes, the new school going up on the adjacent property to the Conservancy will be called Pope Farm Elementary School. The School District asked the family to amend the height restriction on the MCPASD property to help accommodate the new school. This modification will save the District approximately 1 million dollars of construction costs, and will give the students, especially those with disabilities, easier access to the Conservancy. It was agreed that in exchange for those modifications, both schools would be named as follows: **Pope Farm Elementary** (under construction this spring), and **Pope Farm Middle School** (future). The modification of the height restriction will not impact the views to Lake Mendota and the Capitol from the Conservancy (top of the hill). We are very excited about this for two reasons: First, it honors the Art and Betty Pope family for making this location for the school possible. Second, the name will help solidify the properties around Pope Farm Elementary as educational outreach areas including Pope Farm Conservancy, Pope Farm Homestead, and the Blackhawk Ski Club. More to come in the FOPFC News magazine next month.

Upcoming FOPFC Meetings

There is no shortage of ways to get involved with the FOPFC. We welcome everyone to attend the following meetings to observe, offer your viewpoints, or to join our committees if you are interested.

Education Team Meeting

When: Thursday, April 4th, 2019 (6:30 – 8:00 p.m.)

Where: West Middleton Lutheran Church, 3763 Pioneer Rd, Verona, WI 53593

Discussion topics: The Education Team will work on the “History of the Land” interactive tour project and review initial drafts of those stories. We will also work on suggestions to improve the erosion story and ideas for promotion of our German Immigration video series.

Other News

Pope/Zoerb Family Expresses Concern about Monetizing the Conservancy

As many of you already know, the Town of Middleton (TOM) is moving forward with its planning for a 2019 Sunflowers Day event. As a part of its planning, the TOM has circulated a proposed conceptual plan.

The Pope/Zoerb Family, charged with enforcing the Restrictions controlling the usage of the Pope Farm Conservancy on behalf of Art and Betty Pope, are very concerned that the proposed conceptual plan is not in accord with those Restrictions and the Family has sent a letter to the TOM expressing their concerns. For your information, we have set forth that letter in its entirety in this edition of our News Update.

As you read the letter, please understand that decisions and positions that the family takes are not necessarily the same as decisions and positions taken by the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy. The Family is legitimately concerned about compliance with the requirements of the Restrictions while the Friends are concerned with care and maintenance of the Conservancy and the ease of access by the public to the Conservancy, as well as the education of the public regarding the use and history of the Conservancy. At the same time that these are separate missions, the Friends neither support nor oppose a Sunflower Days event managed by the TOM, but we do share the concerns of the Family that Sunflower Days not become a commercialized event that restricts public access.

March 20, 2019

Dear Town Board Members:

Sunflower Days Should Continue to Be Free and Open to the Public.

As children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of Art and Betty Pope, we were very disappointed in the current activity and planning for the resumption of Sunflower Days at Pope Farm Conservancy.

When Art and Betty sold their property to the Town of Middleton, their vision was to create a unique outdoor and agricultural educational facility to preserve geological, environmental, historical, and agricultural resources available on that site for MCPSD, other area schools, and the general public. To address this vision, the Town created a master plan which included an agricultural activity where several different agricultural crops would be grown and rotated annually to illustrate how crop farming works. One of those crops was sunflowers.

When the first sunflower field came into full bloom amidst the rolling topography of the Conservancy, against the iconic backdrop of the Madison skyline and the two lakes, it became a “must see” destination. In fact, pictures of the sunflowers spread virally throughout the country, and were picked up by several of the national media outlets. By 2017, over 90,000 people visited the Conservancy during the 10-day window the flowers were in bloom. The event was free and open to the public, with donations used to enhance the Conservancy.

This unexpected, spontaneous flood of visitors certainly has created challenges to the Conservancy’s original mission, not to mention the health and safety of the visiting public. From our

prospective, it has also created a temptation and rationalization to commercialize and monetize this activity with the retention of an event marketing firm. Once the monetization of the Conservancy begins, this could be a prelude to more and more commercial activities, and change the ambiance and mission of the Conservancy itself.

To protect their vision, Art and Betty put in a specific restrictive covenant in the sale agreement to prevent these kinds of uses:

III. Restrictions Affecting Park Parcel. The Park Parcel shall be used for agricultural use and/or as a park. No housing, office, retail, or manufacturing or any other use shall be permitted on the Park Parcel.

1 (c) "Park" Shall mean a typical municipal park open to the public either free of charge or a reasonable usage charge and comprising only open space, picnic tables, recreational equipment or recreational improvements such as, for example only, a municipal swimming pool, which are in keeping with the character of a typical municipal park.

To us, this makes it very clear that any type of commercialization, including charging admission or selling goods and services violates these covenants.

In addition, the Town's Ordinances (Town Ordinance, Chapter 9, Parks and Recreation, 9.01 (c) definition of "Passive Recreation Areas") would indicate the event marketing/commercialization would not be allowed and is inappropriate for the Conservancy.

(c) Passive Park – "Passive Park" shall mean a park designated for passive uses. A basic level of passive use is viewing – views of nature, seasonal interests, and human activities that permit or encourage the unobtrusive engagement of viewing. In this context, passive recreation as defined for a passive park may include hiking, jogging, cross-country skiing, horseback riding in designated areas and other non-motorized outdoor recreation activities that do not materially alter the landscape, degrade environmental quality or disrupt established tranquility. A park that is designated as passive may accommodate activities that are engaged in by individuals or small groups that are not dependent on a delineated area designed for specific non-commercial activities, for example, educational field trips or Audubon groups. No organized sports that require athletic fields or open space such as soccer, baseball, or commercial uses, are permitted in passive parks. All Town of Middleton conservancy areas are passive parks. Passive Park category includes: nature areas and conservancies. All Town of Middleton conservancy areas are Passive Parks.

The Pope/Zoerb family would hope that the Town would review these proposals regarding the restrictive covenants as well as your own ordinances and definition of "Passive Recreation Areas" before committing to getting into the event marketing business at the Conservancy. We would support Sunflower Days if it continued to be free and open to the public, with the donations used to enhance the Conservancy. Our interest is to support Art and Betty's vision as expressed in the Restrictive Covenants.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

THE POPE/ZOERB FAMILY
(Dave Zoerb, Betty Pope's son and Representative)

Friend of the Month

Thank you, Lee Pray!

Lee is Vice Chair of the FOPFC and is virtually involved in every corner of the organization. Lee is responsible for the membership component of the Friends. She sends out thank you cards to donors, handles special correspondence to the membership, answers questions from the public on our information page. All of this takes a great deal of time and care. In addition, Lee, has volunteered for our efforts at past Sunflower Days, and helped sell Sunflower seeds at the end of the season. Lee has also led programs for the MCPASD field trips, worked on the Homestead Committee, and has participated in countless meetings to help guide the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy into the future.

Lee Pray is an invaluable part of the FOPFC, and we cannot thank her enough!

Photos of the Month

It won't be long until these prairies are lush and full of wildflowers again!



Connect with FOPFC online

Website: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfPopeFarmConservancy>

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fopfc-photos>

**Thank you for supporting the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy!
Our journey is ongoing, and YOU are part of it!**

