

August 2020 News Update

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Nature Watch within the Conservancy

By the time you are reading this, we'll be well into August with autumn changes on the horizon. What's happening nature-wise at the Conservancy in these waning dog days of summer? Prairie enthusiast and FOPFC member Curt Caslavka shared his observations from early August so that you can be on the lookout too.

For the birders in the crowd, you'll see several different bird species out and about with their friends. These include sedge wrens in the Blackhawk Prairie; Eastern kingbirds, clay-colored sparrows, song sparrows, and American goldfinches located in the Wheatfield Prairie. Over in the Hillside Prairie and Oak Savanna are field sparrows and common yellowthroats. Families of bluebirds can be seen in several locations in the conservancy with a total of 59 bluebirds fledged from the boxes this year on the property. Flocks of red-winged blackbirds were spotted feeding on insects in the North and South Prairies.



In late August thru September look for migrating warblers and lots of other species at Pope Farm. The best viewing locations include the Ravine and the Oak Savanna. You will probably want a pair of binoculars and a birding field guide. There is a free bird identification app you can install on your phone from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology called Merlin. It's easy to download and offers excellent photos and bird vocalizations. It's a great resource if you're a beginning or becoming a more seasoned intermediate bird watcher.

Plant-wise, the remaining prairie plants that will soon be flowering include the goldenrods, native sunflowers, and species of asters. All attract pollinating insects that are collecting nectar.

From the insect world, the most noticeable species this time of year are monarch butterflies and large predatory dragonflies. Both of these insects are migratory, and the prairies provide a source of food for them as they head south. Closer to the end of August, look for monarchs clustering in the trees of the Oak Savanna.



The other most noticeable insects are the swarming hordes of mosquitoes. With abundant rainfall we've had, you won't have to search hard to find them...and probably won't want to!

Thanks again to Curt Caslavka for sharing this Nature Watch with the Friends. Photos by Bryan Palchik (goldfinch), Janie Starzewski (prairie), and Paul Ludden (monarchs).

Upcoming Events

Although it feels like 2020 has gotten completely hijacked, the FOPFC Events Team didn't throw in the towel. Instead, they figured out a 'Plan B'. Committee members reached out to all remaining event presenters to discuss the feasibility of holding the scheduled events this year. Understandably, some of the presenters decided to cancel their events and reschedule for 2021 but two events will be available as Zoom presentations. And one new event has been added...details below. Here's what's on the docket for the rest of 2020, so do mark those calendars!

Forward Garden Talk and Tour ** NEW EVENT ****** **August 19 (rain date August 26), 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

Come and visit Forward Garden, Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens' (MAFPG) newest and largest location. The 12-acre site is located at the Pope Farm Homestead in the Town of Middleton, adjacent to the Pope Farm Conservancy. Matt Lechmaier, the Farm Manager and MAFPG's first employee, will talk about the mission and goals of Madison Area Food Pantry Gardens and take us on a tour of Forward Garden.



All attendees must [register online](#) in advance. Masks and social distancing are required. The maximum number of attendees at this event is 25. We will offer a second group tour to accommodate additional attendees if needed.

Register Here: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/events/forward-garden-tour/>

Monarch Butterfly Habitat and Migration Talk **September 14, 6:30pm, Online Presentation via Zoom**

We are excited to welcome Karen Oberhauser, Director of UW-Madison Arboretum and monarch butterfly expert, for a virtual talk about the life cycle and migratory habits of the monarch butterfly. This presentation will take place online, and participants can watch live via Zoom. Participants must register in advance (see link below). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Zoom meeting. Karen will also be able to answer any questions via the Zoom chat room.



Register for the Monarch Talk: <https://shorturl.at/gBCEQ>

Native American Spirituality and Care for the Earth **October 4, 1:00pm, Zoom Presentation**

Katherine Heskin from Edgewood College will show us how to see the land through the eyes of the area's earliest inhabitants and share the spiritual wisdom they offer in this time of environmental challenges. More event details and registration details to come!



What's New at Forward Garden, Plus a "Wish List"

Lots of activity continues on the Pope Farm Homestead, now home to the Forward Garden. Construction began on a new walk-in cooler which was ready to store vegetables before distribution by the end of July. The Garden hosted its first volunteer group from a local business with four staff from Exact Sciences and several others have followed suit including a middle-school group from the Lussier Community Education Center. They've been there three times so far as well as members of the local community who've been recipients of some of the Garden's produce.

Since May, the Forward Garden has harvested and donated 3,915 pounds of produce to 5 different pantries in the Madison area! This includes 173 pounds of cabbage, red onions, white onions, jalapeños, tomatoes and cilantro. Are you hungry for salsa yet? Some of this bounty was used to make salsa for camp at Lussier. The Garden has also wrapped up its harvest of spring succession broccoli for a total of 1,057 pounds distributed to four different pantries in July. The end of broccoli harvest is coinciding with the start of onions, pole beans, tomatoes and peppers.



Photo courtesy of Forward Gardens

This means that tending and harvesting will continue to keep folks working at the Garden busy. Many of you have invited friends, family members, neighbors and classmates out to help. Thank you! We encourage you to keep it up so that the Forward Garden first year is a fun, productive, safe, community-based success.

The Forward Garden volunteer work schedule is Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and Wednesday mornings from 9-11 a.m. All are welcome to participate - no registration necessary. Visit MAFPG's website, Facebook Page, and Instagram to stay up on what's happening with the gardens. Or contact the Forward Garden's Farm Manager, Matt at Matt@foodpantrygardens.org or 530-650-5301.

The Forward Garden's "Wish List"

Forward Garden at Pope Farm Homestead is in need of the following items (below). If you have any of these things and want to move them along to good use, please consider donating them. Contact Forward Garden's Farm Manager, Matt at Matt@foodpantrygardens.org or 530-650-5301 to arrange a drop-off time. These items are in no particular order.

- Gardening gloves
- Rubber boots - assorted sizes for youth groups to use during field trips (Some of the younger volunteers are concerned about getting their shoes dirty!)
- Folding table(s)
- Angle grinder for sharpening hoes and other tools
- Tarp(s)
- Pop up tent or other shade structure
- Digging shovels
- Shelves
- White board + markers or chalk board + chalk
- Chicken wire or hog fencing for trellising vegetables
- Metal fence posts (5-8 ft long)
- Orange cones and/or flags

School Days: An Update on the Pope Farm Elementary School

It's hard to believe that the groundbreaking for the new Pope Farms Elementary School was just over a year ago and now the MCPAS District staff have taken over occupancy! The final touches are being completed by its builder, J.H. Findorff staff and its subcontractors. Amazingly, the project managed to stay on time or ahead of schedule throughout with the final price tag for the school coming in at just over \$30 million.



Photo Courtesy: MCPASD

Pope Farm will serve as the District's largest elementary school, with capacity for 525 students. As with other schools constructed in the last decade, there are more collaboration spaces than found in older schools. And, of course, this one has incredible views of Pope Farm Conservancy. Check out the photos, and you'll quickly see elementary school design has come a long way! Some of the new features include a viewing area for the new geothermal system and a social stairway, which serves as a gathering place for students and staff.

Elementary level staffing will increase now that the District has seven schools at that level. That's partly due to increased enrollment in the District across all levels over the past decade, but also because the District is now offering services in seven buildings as opposed to six previously. With the pandemic it's not clear when schools, including Pope Farm Elementary, will be in full swing but it's certain that Pope Farm students will be awed and proud of their beautiful new school for years to come.

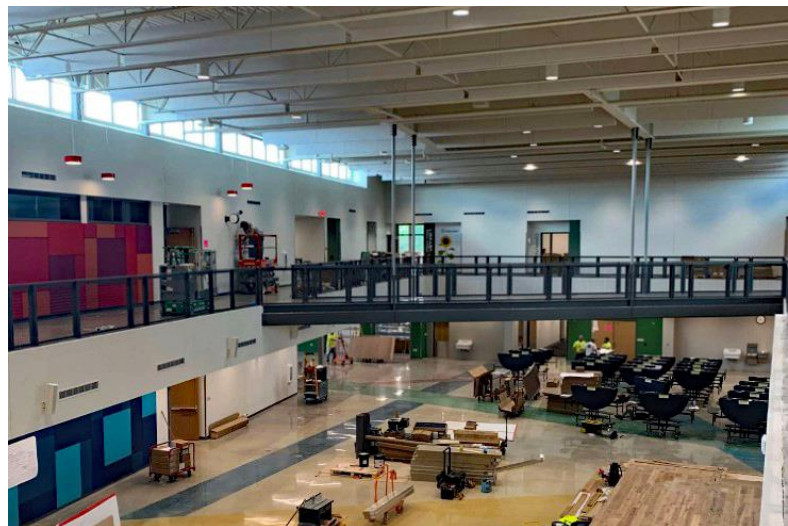


Photo Courtesy: MCPASD

This school is cool, indeed!

The History of the Land Project: Finding Fun Facts

The “History of the Land” project is continuing to uncover many interesting facts about the lands that today are called Pope Farm Conservancy. Recently, in interviews with some of the residents that lived on the land, it was discovered that the Western farm was called “the big stone farm” by many of the old timers. The Western farm was located on the corners of Old Sauk Roat and Twin Valley Road.

There was a big stone in the middle of the field pictured below. The stone was so big that the farmer could not remove it and had to plant around it. Over the years, trees grew in this small area surrounding the stone. Perhaps you recognize the spot on this photo on the right.



Pictured Right: The western field where “big stone” was located, near the tree. Photo by Jack Sherman

In 2005, when the Conservancy was being constructed, “big stone” was moved with the help of heavy equipment to its present location by the water fountain in the picnic area on top the hill. It serves as a bench for those resting or waiting for a drink of water.



Above: Big Stone at its current location, serving as a bench. The upper parking lot is in the background.

Update on the Pope Farm History Project

The Pope Farm history project continues to make steady progress. It's fair to say it's a project with many moving parts, and to do it justice, it uses a village to pull it all together. When you add a global pandemic in the mix, best laid plans go out the window and things tend to get a bit more complicated.

On the bright side, we're now working on the pieces concurrently rather than sequentially. When it's all done, there will be a set of materials that paint a clear picture of the history of the three land parcels that now comprise the Pope Farm Conservancy. The final products will be available to schools to use in their curriculum as well inform educational tools for Pope Farm visitors.

Here's a quick snapshot of the work to date.

History of the Land: This body of work includes the history of the three farms located on what is now the Conservancy. Some work still needs to be done to verify information based on tax rolls but the majority of the research has been completed and the draft is now being edited.

- *Pope Family* and how the Conservancy was created. This piece will focus on Art, Vivian and Betty Pope and their relationship to the land. More to come.
- *The History of Agriculture since 1880*. This is a narrative, put into the context of the Pope farms, that captures six different factors that greatly shaped agriculture as we know it today. This work will be shared with staff at the new school.
- *German Immigration and the Land*. This work is undergoing some minor tweaking regarding signage, photos, and video update.

Geology of the Land: We are now working with staff from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey who will be doing the research to put together the basic geology of the Conservancy. It will then likely need to be simplified and shortened for use in a video.

Civil Conservation Corps and Their Legacy on the Land: We have located a local expert on the CCC who may be able to produce a basic document on the CCC's specific story as it relates to the Conservancy. It will then likely need to be simplified and shortened for use in a video.

Prairie Restoration, Birds & Plants and the Land: One idea on the table is to partner with the Audubon Society to develop and/or source material on the prairie and plants specific to the Conservancy. More to come!

Upcoming FOPFC Meetings

Our Education and Events Teams are now hosting their monthly meetings online via Zoom. We welcome you to participate in these meetings from the comfort of your home.

Education Team Meeting – ONLINE

When: Tuesday, August 25, 2020 at 6:00 pm

Where: Online via Zoom - Email Doug Piper (dlpiper0413@gmail.com) to get the meeting link.

Discussion topics: Continuation on the history project and updates on plans with the school.

Photos of the Month: Double Rainbow!

Thanks to **Bo Mackinson** for sharing these stunning photos on our Facebook page.



Connect with FOPFC Online

Website: <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfPopeFarmConservancy>
Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fopfc-photos>

Renew Your Membership: <http://www.popefarmconservancy.org/membership>

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

