

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Good News in Tough Times



Despite the fact that I wanted to break up with 2020 at least a thousand times over the last several months, so many good things happened at Pope Farm Conservancy that I'd like to share them. Early on in 2020, the pandemic forced us to cancel many of our plans. It would have been understandable to want to throw in the towel and shout, 'Wake us up when it's over!" But that's not how we roll, so we didn't. In fact, we made the most of months filled with curveballs. We learned to take advantage of our new relationship to time where we could and got innovative when we needed to. All our activities and accomplishments have left me feeling so proud of the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy.

Once the initial shock of spring subsided, the 2020 summer season at Pope Farm proved itself to be guite remarkable. Thousands of people walked the land alone, with their families and friends as a welcome respite into the natural world despite the limitations created by COVID. Although there was increased foot traffic, Conservancy visitors were courteous and respectful. During the summer season, the Friends were able to work with the Town of Middleton to facilitate the repair of the historical stone fence erosion including helping to pay for fixing the trail that runs alongside it. In early July, we saw the completion of the new elementary school. By early fall, after some uncertainty, the MCPASD went to on-line learning. Yet, at this same time, the Conservancy was being transformed into a classroom by the school's new Science Specialist. Who would have thought something like this could happen just a year ago? You can read more on this in the pages ahead.

The Friends group's Education Committee has been working on the Stories of the Land. Pre-COVID, the Committee worked on one story at a time. But, as we learned, in a pandemic, one's orientation to time completely changes. This meant the Committee was able to work on three of these stories simultaneously. Over the past few months, stories have been researched and will soon be put on our website so that they can be disseminated to the public. One of the most exciting features of this initiative is that visitors will be able to use their phones to access the stories about various topics and locations via video clips as they walk throughout the Conservancy. Visitors can make a selection as they approach a particular feature. When they scan a bar code label, a menu will appear on their phone. These two and a half to three and a half minute videos are quite engaging and feature visual images, voice overs, and in some cases, music. They are a very fun and interesting way to learn more about the stories of the land. Topics include the Civilian Conservation Corp and Soil Conservation Service, and Geology and Land Formation at the Conservancy. The anticipated completion of

these videos is spring 2021.

Also, the History of the Land story has been written. It features a compilation of facts and stories about the activities and people who lived on the three farms that were once here on the land that is now called Pope Farm Conservancy. It took hundreds of hours with the help of many families who are descendants of those who owned and farmed this land. It's a 235-page document that will likely be on our website by the time you read this. The Education Committee will be identifying several stories from the content suitable for creating videos for educational consumption. Kudos to the Education Committee.

The Friends group also has a Committee responsible for the adult education programs at the Conservancy. In the past, this group identified and coordinated a calendar of on-site public talks on a variety of topics held during the spring, summer and fall months for Conservancy visitors. Because of COVID, the calendar had to be scrapped. Undeterred, the Committee began experimenting with Zoom presentations. They were remarkably successful. In fact, in one situation, so many people signed up to attend that we didn't have the capacity on our Zoom account to handle them all. As one of the Committee members observed, "We didn't get rained out either!" The Committee has three Zoom presentations set for early in 2021 and will be planning more. Again, this was something that we would not have thought possible just a year ago. A huge thanks to the Events Committee for their efforts and 'we got this!' spirit.

As for the Prairie Committee, although we had to cancel public participation for seed collecting, and Monarch Butterfly tagging, this group managed to complete some basics on their own; they tagged over 100 Monarchs, cleaned the blue bird houses, and took care of the rain garden. Another high five for the folks on the Prairie Committee.

And I can't forget to highlight the behind the scenes operational work that keeps the Friends of Pope Farm going. These Friends write the news updates, take photos, send thank you cards, enter data into our membership database, monitor and update our website and Facebook page, manage the bookkeeping and taxes, take minutes, and we have an incredible team that creates this news magazine. All of these tasks are critical and makes us who we are.

Nobody expected 2020 to get derailed by a pandemic. However, I believe that we responded to it with grace and a determination to do the best we could. AND WE DID! We THANK YOU for your efforts during this most extraordinary time. We couldn't have done this without YOUR continued

MEL POPE



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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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FOPFC Purposes

In recognition that Pope Farm Conservancy is an educational and community asset, the Corporation shall have the following Purposes:

- Through volunteer participation and support, create, advance and facilitate the development and implementation of educational opportunities and programming in, on and around the Pope Farm Conservancy for students of all ages from public and private schools and the general public. Without limitation because of enumeration, this shall include but not be limited to assisting and working with the Pope Farm Elementary School and the Pope Farm Middle School (when constructed) from the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District, the Blackhawk Ski Club, the Aldo Leopold Nature Center and similar organizations.
- To assist in the preservation of the balance of wildlife habitat, and historic, geologic, agricultural, environmental and scenic features of the Pope Farm Conservancy
- To assist in the protection of natural landscapes and grass trails, wildlife and their habitat and the general public's tranquil enjoyment of the Pope Farm Conservancy as a passive conservancy free from commercial activity, motorized vehicles and bicycles, dogs and organized sports that require athletic fields or open space.
- To assist the Town of Middleton with the maintenance, improvement and general enrichment of the Pope Farm Conservancy as an educational and community
- . In accord with Article Four of these Bylaws, the Board of Directors shall have the specific authority and discretion to interpret, apply and implement these purposes, provided that at all times, it complies with rules and regulations of the IRS regarding the fulfillment and preservation of the requirements of the Corporation's 501(c)(3) status.





PLACES IN THE HEART

The Pope Farm Conservancy has been the site of many hard-working owners, settlers and farmers; people with their dreams, courage, perseverance and an abiding faith. A place with heart.



MEET ALEX, THE SCIENCE GUY

He's part teacher, part hobby farmer, and a bit of a renaissance man; meet Alex Schutz, the new science specialist at Pope Farm Elementary School.

POPE FARM CONSERVANCY **2021 SPRING EVENTS MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

The FOPFC Events Team has begun planning for early 2021. So far three online Zoom presentations are in the works for March and April. These headliners include:

Pope Farm Conservancy: A Learning Lab for **Elementary School Kids** Monday, March 29, 2021 @ 7:00 PM

Presenter: Alex Schutz, Science Specialist at Pope Farm Elementary School

Planting, Growing and Feeding: Forward Garden in 2021 Saturday, April 10, 2021 @ 2:00 pm

Presenter: Matt Lechmaier, Forward Garden Farm Manager

Attracting Eastern Bluebirds to Your Yard Tuesday, April 27, 2021 @ 7:00 pm

Presenter: Pat Ready, Director of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin

These virtual presentations are free and open to the public. Space is limited so please register in advance. Visit our website (www.popefarmconservancy.org/events) for detailed event info. Stay tuned for more events in 2021.



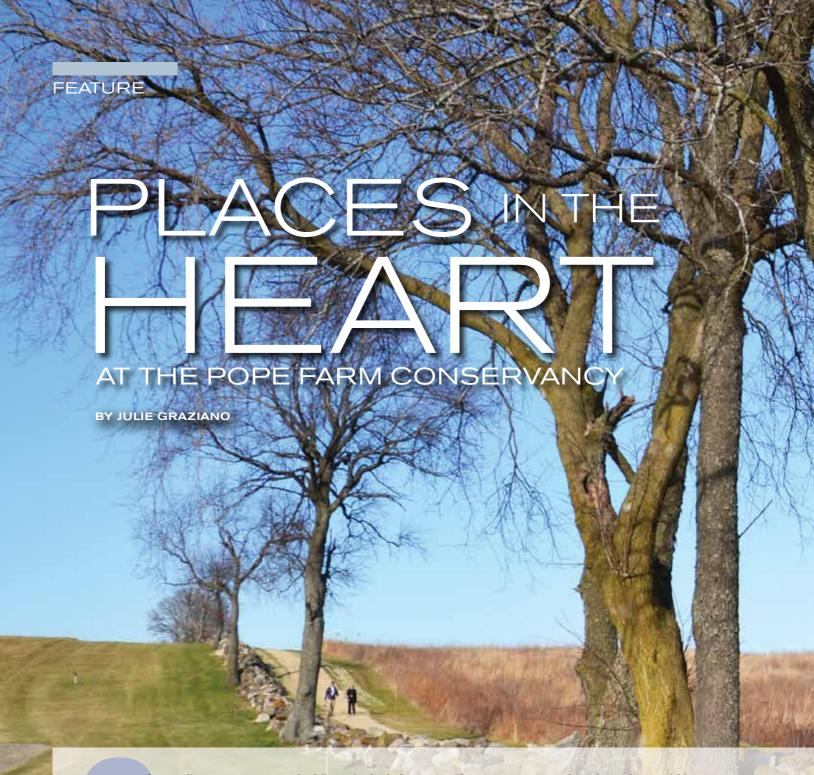
THE HORNED LARK

Horned Larks can be tricky to find until there's snow on the ground, and then they're easy to see feeding on dried wildflower seeds from the conservancy's many prairie plants.

AND JUST IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING...

If you're not familiar with this publication, please accept with our compliments the Winter edition of the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy news magazine. We publish the magazine twice a year (Spring and early Winter) for the members of the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy. We also have a monthly newsletter that provides updates and newsy tidbits on what is happening within the property. We wanted to introduce you to the Pope Farm Conservancy and let you know about our Friends Group.

We're excited about having the new school as our neighbor and look forward to building a strong partnership with it. As a result, we decided to expand our normal distribution to you, residents within the Pope Farm Elementary school boundary. We'll be sharing our efforts to help Pope Farm Elementary students learn about the natural world in Pope Farm Conservancy and hope you will consider joining us. To learn more about our organization, please visit our website at https://www.popefarmconservancy.org



One of my colleagues once remarked "people don't fear change, they resist loss." That sentiment pretty much sums up how I feel about 2020. It was a year punctuated with unexpected losses, sudden endings, inner strife and a whole lot of weird.

When we changed the clocks last March, it felt like we went from standard time to the twilight zone. My long-time doctor abruptly retired. My dentist disappeared. The best-ever newspaper carrier resigned and after a few fits and starts, our dog's groomer threw in her damp towels. Somehow while socially distancing, my wallet was stolen. (Familiar story, hard times, the police said.) And who could have imagined that going

to the grocery store to buy diet coke would become a matter of life or death? But we've learned to mask up and roll with it.

Despite it all, though, something quite unexpected happened late last summer. Seemingly out of the blue, I was contacted by an old friend from my 20s. Let's call her Nancy Drew. Way back when, Nancy and I had been plain clothes store detectives together at a local department store in Madison. We both worked at Gimbels part time while in college. While we weren't quite Cagney and Lacey, we just had a knack of ferreting out would-be thieves and enjoyed many a caper together. Over time though, we hit a fork in the road, the one that

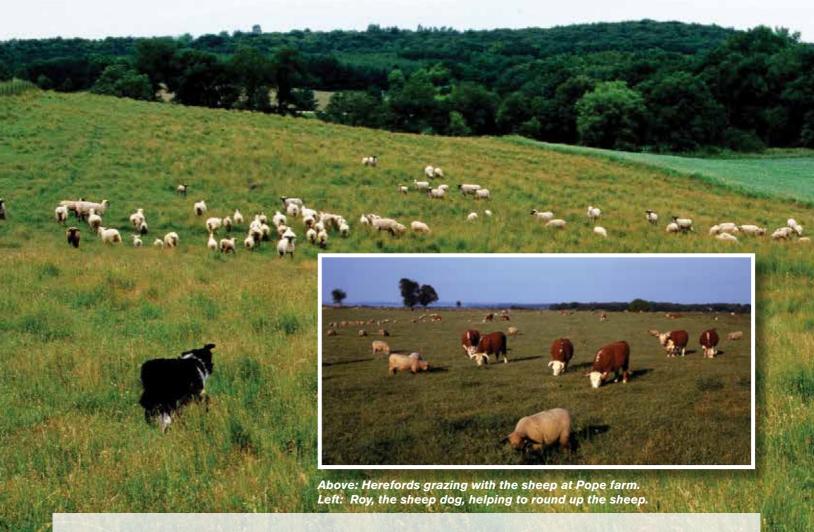


many friendships encounter once marriage, grad school and kids come into the picture. We took our respective roads, lost touch and life went on.

Fast forward to over thirty-five years later, perhaps with strange thanks to an endless pandemic, Nancy and I began to renew our friendship. To jumpstart our reacquaintance, I suggested we meet at Pope Farm Conservancy for a walk. Despite being a Madison native, Nancy had never been to the Conservancy before. Not surprising, nature proved to be the perfect living room, an able conduit for us to reflect upon our pasts and lament the surreal present. Within minutes of meeting up along the iconic stone fence on that warm summer day, it felt as though we had never been parted.

As a first timer, Nancy took in the beauty of the Conservancy readily and proved to be an enthusiastic student, eager to learn more about this magical place literally minutes from her home yet somehow fixed in an era gone by. Here I was in the role of novice tour guide. Thanks to the Friends of Pope Farm Education Committee's work on History of the Land initiative and having had wonderful tour of the property by Mel Pope last April, I quickly realized that I had a few fun facts to share about the Conservancy in my back pocket.

As we walked the land past the now busy Forward Garden at the Pope Farm homestead, I explained that this farm was actually one of the three different farms



(the Eastern, the Central and the Western) that now comprise the Conservancy. Long before the migration of German settlers, the Ho Chunk Nation had lived here, another rich story in and of itself. Each farm has its own unique history, cast of characters, and physicality. In fact, the geology of the Conservancy made the livelihood of farming particularly challenging for its European settlers because of rocks left by glaciers (many now part of the Stone Fence), its many rolling hills and, in places, untillable soil. All of these we'd soon see and experience on our walk.

As she guessed, the Conservancy's namesake, Pope Farm is the Central farm with its handsome white farmhouse built around 1910. It functions as a hub of sorts and is the most familiar of the three farms. If this homestead could talk, it would regale its visitors with remembrances of the Brumm and Pope families as well as tales of the many animals that lived here; Arthur Pope's beloved Hampshire sheep, a hard-working border collie named Roy and the lost little calf that wandered down into the spillway all those years ago.

Hiking towards the oak savannas, the subject moved to family losses. We talked about our fathers, both having passed in the fall season many years ago. The topic

seemed especially fitting since burr oaks are often planted as memory trees at the Conservancy, honoring those who have passed. We enjoyed this majestic area that is simultaneously commanding yet peaceful and serene. It beckoned and didn't disappoint.

Huffing and puffing as we traversed the hills, we found ourselves silent, needing a few moments to catch our breath and take a reprieve from our hot masks. We laughed as we realized that our days of chasing shop-lifters through the mall were long gone and we weren't quite the spring chickens we used to be! We took a break at the sign honoring the work of the Civil Conservation Corp (CCC) that had been at that site during the 1930's. Having parents born during the Depression, we marveled at what hard times these had to have been. We surmised that building the spillway to protect the hillside was not only a herculean effort but also an act of deep faith. Young men toiled on this spot back in 1938 as the soil pioneers from the UW sought to find sustainable erosion remedies. Their work is still holding up today.

As we walked along the Eastern Trail, the beautiful new Pope Elementary School came into view. I shared that the Pope Farm Elementary School had just been completed in July of 2020. Having seen some of the photos of the

school's interior, I told Nancy this building is a far cry from the 1960s grade schools of our day with its state-of-the-art design and designated community spaces. Imagine going to a school with a nature Conservancy just steps away. It's a truly a dream come true since its first mention in the 2004 Town of Middleton Master Plan. It was along this stretch of our inaugural hike that I heard more about Nancy's adult children as she shared the joys of being a gramma to her first grandchild (with another by the year's end) as well as her son's pending move into his first home; a process she was helping him navigate. Besides her keen sleuthing ability, she always was an excellent problem solver!

The Pope Farm Conservancy has been the site of many hard-working owners, settlers and farmers; people with their dreams, courage, perseverance and an abiding faith. A place with heart. It also turned out to be the perfect container, a special place for my old friend and I to reconnect to those things that had brought us together in friendship all those years ago. Now Nancy and I have a weekly ritual of walking. Pope Farm Conservancy is one of our favorite spots for its beauty and many stories. As it turns out, the past only asks that we remember.



Betty Pope, Roy, the sheep dog, and Art Pope

If you are interested in learning more about the 200 year history of the land that is now Pope Farm Conservancy, visit the Friends of Pope Farm website at www.PopeFarmConservancy.org. The History of the Land narrative has been compiled by the Friends of Pope Farm with pictures, maps, photos, remembrances and much more. It's a fascinating look back at the owners, families, and settlers that called this place

Do you have story or remembrance you'd like to share about a visit or experience related to the Pope Farm Conservancy? Send your thoughts to info@popefarmconservancy.org for possible publication in a future issue.



BY JULIE GRAZIANO

He's part teacher, part hobby farmer, and a bit of a renaissance man; meet Alex Schutz, the new science specialist at Pope Farm Elementary School. Alex, who is now in his tenth year of teaching within the Middleton Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD), began his latest post in April 2020, just before the school was officially completed. The position is the only elementary science specialist role like it in the District. Does that make it a 'dream job?' After a conversation with Alex to learn more about his work and what makes him tick, you'd quickly realize as I did, this might just be a job made to order with a little serendipity on the side.

Despite the fact that he grew up in the city (around the Twin Cities), Alex has always loved the outdoors, nature and exploring how the world works. He's a hands-on kind of guy, whether it be plumbing, electrical work, or getting his hands dirty in the garden. It's being hands-on that fuels his attraction to science. a field he says is "like magic." He'll quickly tell you that he came to teaching later in life and set his sights on elementary education with an emphasis on science. He studied at Mankato

State in Minnesota and UW-River Falls where he met his wife who is a high school art teacher with the District as well. His initial plan, once he graduated in 2009, was to teach middle school Science. Instead, what was available was teaching at the elementary school level.

In his new position as a third-grade classroom teacher in Monroe, Wisconsin, it wasn't long before he began a science club for fifth graders. This was an after-school program where he tried to "squeeze as much science" into it as he could. Also, during his work here, he taught summer school for five years. He created an Aeronautical Engineering summer program in

which students from 2nd-12th grade explored aerodynamics through paper airplanes and rocketry! Students literally had a blast as they built and launched model rockets at the end of the three-week exploration. As it turns out, he was just getting started.

As a science teacher at West Middleton, one of Alex's several noteworthy projects was growing trout in the classroom in which he partnered with the Department of Natural Resources to make it happen. In true handson fashion, he took his



It's always a beautiful day in this neighborhood as Alex creates video lessons plans in the Pope Farm Conservancy. Dressed in his lab coat or "costume" as he calls it, he makes full use of everything the Conservancy has to offer; the prairies, the geology, the trees, the Native American garden, the old log cabin site.

students to Selmo Pond as well as the Nevin Fish Hatchery where he introduced them to concepts such as life cycles, watershed ecology, habitat, and the importance of human choices and their impact upon nature. Alex explained that by immersing his students into an experience with nature they can better understand their own relationship to the natural world. He works from inquiry-based science and environmentalism, that is, understanding one's

relationship with nature. By

approaching lesson plans in this way on the front-end, students can go back into classroom to learn the academic aspects, or "dry parts" as he calls, them much more readily.

When Alex began at Pope Farm Elementary this spring, his idea was to get the students out into the Conservancy early in the school year while the weather was still good, using the

outdoors as a classroom. He figured they could do lab work in the winter. His curriculum focus is on the physical, life science, earth science, and farming. The big question at that point seemed to be where to start? With a pandemic cramping everyone's style, it was time to get creative. Knowing that students sitting in a classroom have short attention spans, we're talking ten to fifteen minutes or so, Alex not only got creative, he got entrepreneurial. Move over Bill Nye, here's another Science Guy!

It's always a beautiful day in this neighborhood as Alex creates video lessons plans in the Pope Farm Conservancy. Dressed in his lab coat or "costume" as he calls it, he makes full use of everything the Conservancy has to offer; the prairies, the geology, the trees, the Native American garden, the old log cabin site. Some days creatures, be it a few turkeys or the red tail hawk that makes her residence at Conservancy, might show up to get in on the act. From what Alex describes.



When Alex began at Pope Farm Elementary this spring, his idea was to get the students out into the Conservancy early in the school year while the weather was still good, using the outdoors as a classroom. Here he is giving a soil lesson.

the video creation process he uses is much like producing his own television show. He videos, edits, prepares a script and gets his several hours of work down to a ten-minute lesson that's put on a platform called Seesaw. Now the big question from the students is "what are we going to do today?" After just four weeks into the school year, the videos have been so successful that they've been shared with the other six elementary schools

within the District.

In mid-October, Alex with Mel Pope and Education Committee Lead, Doug Piper, provided a brief tour of Pope Farm Elementary to about twenty teachers as an introduction with background on its resources. Later that same month, Alex designed a scavenger hunt at the Conservancy for the students over the Halloween weekend. As part of the hunt, there was a riddle that asked, "How do you fix a cracked pumpkin?" The students used riddles to search for letters pinned to the informational signs. The letters spelled the answer; with a "pumpkin patch." (Groan!) Over 150 students and their families participated and visited the conservancy that weekend to solve the riddle.

How else has Alex used the Conservancy as a classroom so far? With kindergarten students he used the Conservancy to teach them about trees. First graders learned about grains like corn, oats, wheat so they



Sampson and Cordella Schutz, dressed in their father Alex's lab coat, stand in front of Van Hise Rock, a world famous metamorphic rock outcrop of quartzite, in Rock Springs, Wisconsin.



were exposed to the fields at the Conservancy as part of a food agriculture unit. Second graders learned about insect and plant life cycles. Alex located wild brassicas in the wheat field and was able to grow the seed to follow the whole life cycle of the plant (it's a fast grower.) He led an insect safari that followed a monarch butterfly's life cycle from caterpillar to butterfly. (He found caterpillars in his sheep pasture on his farm-more on the farm in a moment.) Third graders learned about how water travels through the watershed by using the CCC spillway. Finally, the fourth graders focused on soil, rocks and minerals by exploring different rocks on the stone fence to learn about the rock cycle. These activities are only the beginning, and Alex sees many other opportunities to "mainstream" Pope Farm Conservancy into every grade level as time goes on.

Alex also hopes (and maybe this is one of the serendipity parts of the story) to get his students volunteering at the Forward Garden next year. The Forward Garden manager, Matt Lechmaier, was once an environmental education coordinator in his previous work life. Alex is looking forward to creating a strong connection with Matt and to the Garden as he grows his unique teaching role at the school over the next year. You couldn't plan a better match!

When Alex isn't at school or in the Conservancy, he can be found on his hobby farm, (aptly named the Lucky Dog Farm for his dog Copper), in New Glarus where he lives with his wife and two children, Sampson (who's 8) and Cordelia (who's 6), thirteen sheep, fifty chickens, and assorted turkeys. Yes, he's a "sheep guy." Another bit of serendipity! Arthur Pope raised his beloved Hampshire sheep at the Conservancy years ago. Alex raises them for their fiber. He has a passion for restoration agriculture, no till pastures, and has connections to Farm-to-Table organic farming. Since he's currently at the farm due to MCPASD's COVID-19 restrictions, he's working on a farm tour video lesson that highlights the interconnected cycle of composting, gardening, hayfields and sheep.

Back in 2004, sixteen years ago, the Town of Middleton



Alex with his kids Sampson and Cordella.

was creating the master plan for the Conservancy, a plan that envisioned the Conservancy would become an educational hub for school children. Fast forward, an elementary school has been built adjacent to the Conservancy as well as a middle school to be built next-door in the near future. What had been a vision on a page is now becoming a reality that even a global pandemic can't seem to stop. Alex sees his teaching role as building a strong community of people, students and adults alike, who connect with nature, developing a deep, abiding respect and appreciation for it and how it affects us. He says that everything that has happened in his life to this point has set him up for this time at Pope Farm Elementary and this unique opportunity. We couldn't agree more Alex, we couldn't agree more!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET ALEX?

The Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy Events Committee will be hosting a Zoom presentation about his role and the use of the conservancy as a classroom on Monday, March 29, 2021 at 7:00 PM. Watch the monthly newsletter and check the FOPFC website for more details.



A skilled Wisconsin birder can readily identify around 300 avian species, but non-birders may be surprised just how many species they actually know. When I have inquired in the past, non-birding friends have told me perhaps twenty or thirty species but it's actually quite a bit more. I would surmise you're familiar with robins, bluebirds, cardinals, chickadees, nuthatches, blue jays, crows, eagles, various woodpeckers, doves, hawks, grouse, turkey, herons, etc. So, what you may initially think is a meager list of species quickly adds up to fifty or more different kinds. The fact is, most people enjoy looking at birds.

In this article I am going to introduce you to a bird that can be found yearround at Pope Farm Conservancy that you're probably not as familiar with: the Horned Lark, scientifically named Eremophila alpestris eremos (desert) phileo (love) and alpestris (of high mountains). So, we have a desertloving mountain songbird. Their common name was given for their skylark behavior and tiny feathered black hornedtufts atop their heads. If you grew up on a farm, you've probably seen or heard

them. In Wisconsin, Horned Larks are attracted to large open prairies and agricultural fields, but they are found throughout the United States in a wide variety of habitats. True to their Latin name, there are Alpine populations in the western states.

Though they can be found throughout the year in Wisconsin, their numbers increase dramatically during late fall and winter as summering Horned Larks from Canada head south into the US. Thus, it may be the case that the ones found at Pope Farm Conservancy during winter are not necessarily the same individuals here during spring and summer. Mostly brown and white in appearance, Horned Larks can be tricky to find until there's snow on the ground, and then they're easy to see feeding on dried wildflower seeds from the conservancy's many prairie plants.

Primarily seed and insect foragers, Horned Larks build basket-woven nests of fine grasses on the ground. Their clutch size is usually between 2 to 5 eggs and can have up to 3 broods per nesting season. They make quick work of it with an incubation period of 10 to 12 days,

and an 8 to 10 day nestling period. Their songs are a rather diminutive series of high-pitched tinkles and squeaks. If you search on YouTube you can find several examples of their calls and songs.

During spring courtship when mate pairing occurs, male Horned Larks will fly several hundred feet skyward over their territory, and then hover and circle for several minutes while singing. When his song is finished, he makes a dramatic drop steeply back down to the ground, and then gracefully lands. I have witnessed this remarkable flight a mere handful of times and it's one of the more amazing songbird behaviors one can observe in Wisconsin.

Winter may be the best time to get good views of them in nomadic flocks where there is exposed vegetation, they're definitely more vocal during early spring at Pope Farm Conservancy. Familiarize yourself with their vocalizations and I'm sure you'll hear them singing and calling over the conservancy's prairies come March and April. If you're lucky, you'll get to observe a male doing his skylark display flight.

