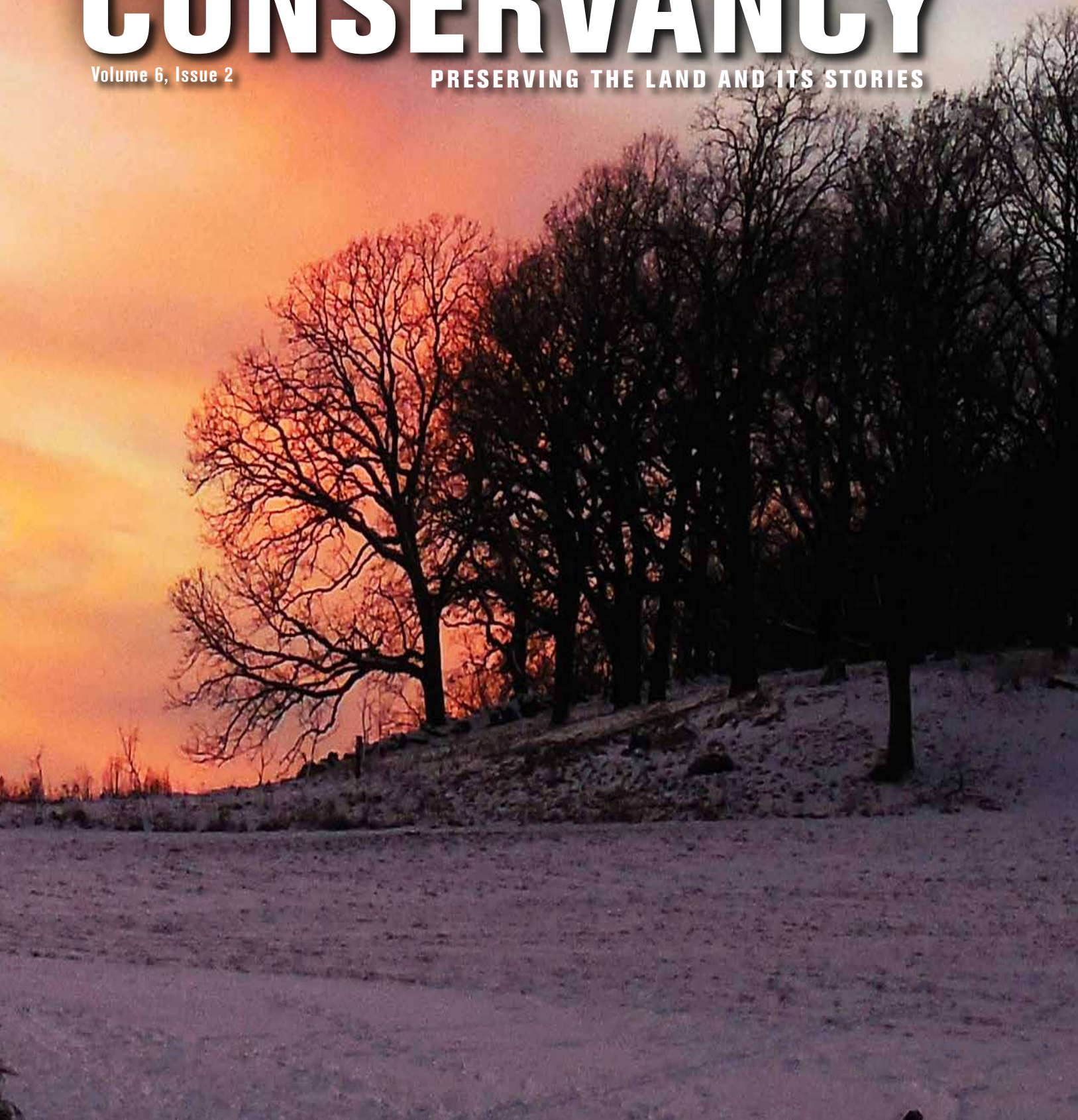


NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF
POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY

Volume 6, Issue 2

PRESERVING THE LAND AND ITS STORIES



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Raising Educational Excellence

BY MEL POPE



It has been an interesting year for the FOPFC. Some months were close to normal and others were not, as the recommended guidance for COVID kept changing. One thing for sure, it was great seeing each other face to face in the few months that we could safely do so. This year we were able to complete our outdoor programs, and especially enjoyed tagging monarch butterflies, and collecting seeds in the prairies.

The 'down time' this year gave us lots of opportunities to focus our effort on producing educational videos for the Conservancy. These videos are approximately 3-5 minutes long and are accessible on our FOPFC website, as well as on-site via barcode technology. Experts from different disciplines have helped with the content of these videos, and they are designed to be very interesting as well as educational. The videos are similar to a "Ken Burns" style documentary on a particular subject. The goal is to feature 8 stories of the land, with between 6-9 videos supporting each of those 8 stories. The stories are: German Immigration (9 videos), The Legacy of the CCC at Pope Farm (6 videos), Geology (6 videos), The History of the Pope Farm Conservancy Land (7 videos), Native Americans (6 videos), The Birds at Pope Farm (7 videos), The Mammals at Pope Farm (7 videos), and The Pollinators at Pope Farm (7 videos).

When people approach one of these 8 locations in the Conservancy, they can scan a barcode label with their cell phone, and a menu of corresponding videos will come up on the screen. They can then choose which video they would like to watch and what they would like to learn about.

We're focusing on videos to attract younger people. My grandchildren tell me that they really like to use their cell phones rather than read the signage! They seem to enjoy these short stories about the land.

In doing this, the Friends are raising educational excellence at the Conservancy to a very high level for both the public and students alike. When the project is complete visitors will be able to stroll through the Conservancy, and access more than 50 educational videos to choose from. This project is a creative way to fulfill the vision of the Town's Master Plan for Pope Farm as an Educational Conservancy.

As of today, we have completed following;

▪The German Immigration Story (9 videos) and the link is:

<https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/stories-of-the-land/german-immigration/>

▪ The Legacy of the CCC at Pope Farm (6 videos) and the link is:

<https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/stories-of-the-land/ccc-legacy/>

▪ The History of Pope Farm Conservancy Land (7 videos) and the link is:

<https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/stories-of-the-land/history-of-the-pope-farm-conservancy-land/>

I encourage you to view at least one of these videos. If you do, you will understand the impact these videos will have on the viewers over time.

Currently, we have completed work on the 'History of the Land of Pope Farm,' and we are working on Geology, Mammals, and Birds. These videos take a great deal of volunteer time and effort to research, develop scripts, and locate photos that tell these stories. Professional media production costs are very expensive. Sole support for this programming comes from donations and membership of the Friends. We truly do thank all of you for making this project possible!

We plan on finishing 3 more of these major stories in 2022.

MEL POPE

FRIENDS OF
POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY



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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

Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy
10333 Blackhawk Road

FOPFC Purposes

In recognition that Pope Farm Conservancy is an educational and community asset, the FOPFC 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.
- 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 asset.
- 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.



LIVING ON THE POPE FARM IN THE 1960s and 70s

Country living sounds wonderful, doesn't it? But the truth is, there was always work to do at the farm, and daily chores were part of it. From October to May, chores took about 1-2 hours every morning and every night, 7 days a week. Life at the Pope farm in the 1960s was certainly no different.



UPCOMING PROGRAMS - JAN/FEB 2022

The FOPFC Programs Committee is gearing up for some fun winter outings in 2022. We are also hosting a virtual presentation about the History of the CCC at Pope Farm.



PHENOLOGY: SEASONAL OBSERVATIONS

Do you love the color of the leaves in the fall? Can you finish the saying, "April showers bring..."? If so, then you have a basic understanding of the science known as Phenology. Phenology refers to the science that measures the timing of plant and animal life cycle events.



EROSION MITIGATION PROJECT

In mid-October, construction took place to mitigate damage caused by the severe rainstorm that occurred in August 2018. The Town of Middleton has temporarily closed the area to protect the disturbed ground and allow vegetation to reestablish. The closure is to remain through the winter.



CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS

You can guess what a clay-colored sparrow looks like just from its name. Its muted taupe coloring and subdued markings protect this petite creature from predators by helping it blend in with its preferred habitat of low shrubs and grasses. We are fortunate to have many of them nesting right here at Pope Farm Conservancy.

LIVING ON THE POPE FARM IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

BY MEL POPE

Country living sounds wonderful, doesn't it? But the truth is, there was always work to do at the farm, and daily chores were part of it.

From October to May, chores took about 1-2 hours every morning and every night, 7 days a week. Life at the Pope farm in the 1960s was certainly no different. The animals that

once lived here depended upon family members for their daily care.

In the summer months when the sheep and cattle were grazing out in the pasture, things were a bit easier. Each animal was checked every day to make sure it was healthy and accounted for.

Summer was the time to tackle the outdoor projects like fencing, haying, gardening, and, of course, getting the livestock ready to show at the fairs. This included filling the barn with hay and straw, which was a hot and sweaty but essential job.

Like many farms, the Pope farm had a large garden. In the summer months, dinner was fresh out of the garden with plates of corn on the cob, tomatoes, and cucumbers in vinegar. Corn was planted every three days so it would ripen consistently throughout the season. Food was canned to last through the winter months and was stored in the cool basement.

In the fall and winter months, the cattle remained out in the fields, so the Pope family members took hay out to them every day with a tractor and wagon. When the snow got too



Ewes waiting to be fed.



Hay wagon ready to be unloaded.



Garden at the Pope Farm.

deep, they got creative by using an old upside-down car hood loaded with hay and towed it out to the cattle by snowmobile.

This farm was especially known for being home to a flock of sheep. Sheep farming had its own unique set of demands that included a lambing season and shearing sessions.

The sheep mating season took place in the fall and lambs were born in the spring, around 5 months later. As lambing season was about to begin, the mother sheep, called ewes, were taken down to the lower part of the barn.

They were fed, watered, and bedded down with straw every day. They were carefully monitored day and night while waiting for the lambs to be born. Although there was no heat in the barn, the combination of the barn's thick walls and the body heat of the sheep created warmth.

Most ewes had twins, but there were singletons and even a few triplets. Once a lamb was born, iodine was put on its navel, and it was provided some colostrum, or first milk, from its mother. Colostrum contains antibodies that protect newborns against disease. The ewe and lamb were housed in a pen of their own for a few days.



Art Pope checking sheep flock. In the summer months when the sheep and cattle were grazing out in the pasture, things were a bit easier. Each animal was checked every day to make sure it was healthy and accounted for.

Photo by Jeff Martin

After the ewe had recovered, she and her lambs joined the other ewes and lambs in a makeshift maternity ward.

A highlight of springtime was opening the lower barn door to allow the lambs to graze outside for the first time. Imagine a lamb's sense of wonder having never been outside before. Some were timid, unsure about leaving the only home they had ever known. But once they ventured into the pasture, they would frolic and run around, jumping, and spinning. Their newfound joy had no bounds and was a delightful sight to see.



Lambs experiencing the outdoors for the first time.

Once the flock was outside, it was time to do some serious cleaning of the barn. After a long winter, it was not unusual to find two feet of manure. What a thankless job this was! Using a pitchfork, the manure was tossed onto the manure spreader. It was a real “eye burner” to be down in the barn as the manure was “pitched.”



Art Pope right, teaching us how to shear. If the shearing is done properly, the fleece should come off like one big blanket. When the shearing was completed, the wool was weighed and taken to Milwaukee to be sold.

The shearing process was like setting up a barber shop inside the barn each February or March. Shearing is the laborious process of cutting the wool off the sheep. It was done ideally right before the ewes gave birth, which then helped the lambs to nurse. Shearing was a family affair, and many in the family came home to help. It was hard physical work as the sheep were sometimes not very cooperative, and the shearer had to be very precise while bending over for hours.

If the shearing is done properly, the fleece should come off like one big blanket. When the shearing was completed, the wool was weighed and taken to Milwaukee to be sold.

Ah, life on a farm! It meant hard work for every family member, a continuous cycle of life and death, endless chores and responsibility. But, as anyone who has grown up on a farm will tell you, it's a lifestyle that creates a unique intimacy with nature and fosters a love of the land that lasts a lifetime. □

DID YOU ENJOY THIS ARTICLE?

Be sure to check out our 7-part video series on the History of the Land. Learn about farming practices on this land from the mid-19th century through modern era; discover how the stone fence was constructed; see photos of the Pope Family's sheep operation; and hear the story how the Pope Farm became a Conservancy.

The History of Pope Farm Conservancy Land

<https://www.popefarmconservancy.org/stories-of-the-land/history-of-the-pope-farm-conservancy-land/>

THE RAVINE EROSION MITIGATION PROJECT AT THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY JIM BOLITHO AND CURT CASLAVKA

State of the ravine near Blackhawk Road in 2012.

In 2022, visitors to Pope Farm Conservancy will see changed topography and a relocated trail on the east side of the ravine that receives rain and snow melt waters from the iconic CCC spillway. In mid-October, construction took place to mitigate damage caused by the severe rainstorm that occurred in August 2018. The Town of Middleton has temporarily closed the area to protect the disturbed ground and allow vegetation to reestablish. The closure is to remain through the winter.

August 2018 Storm

The 2018 storm was a historic event. It set a record for rainfall in Dane County and was the second greatest recorded rainfall event in the history of the state of Wisconsin. Due to the storm's slow movement, the heaviest rain fall was concentrated, and it occurred in western Dane County. There were reports of up to 15 inches of rain in a 24-hour period. Some Wisconsin climatologists have made the case that the storm was a 1000-year event.

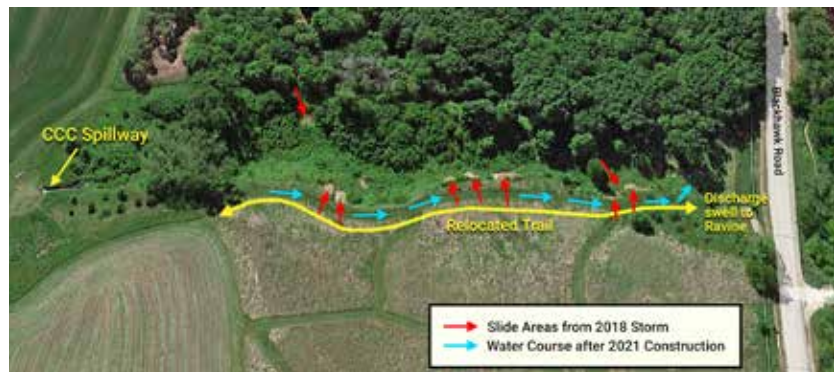
Fine-grained granular soils are predominant in the ravine. They are interspersed with pebbles, cobbles, and scattered boulders. The intensity and duration of the storm saturated the soil. After the soil was saturated, no absorption took place and subsequent rain ran off the ground surfaces. At nine locations, the shear strength of the soil was exceeded and resulted in erosion on the side slopes of the ravine. The intensity and duration of the rainfall also caused more upland water to flow into the ravine at some locations, resulting in even more extensive erosion.

Dane County Grant

The Town of Middleton recognized that remedial work would be needed to protect the ravine and joining lands from further damage. If left unattended, there was potential for continued erosion on the damaged slopes and for secondary erosion gullies to develop and cause further damage, particularly to the trail and the Blackhawk prairie east of



Siltation from eroded ravine slopes after the storm of 2018.



Ravine overview showing slide areas and relocated trail.

the ravine. Because of the severe storm damage that occurred in various areas, Dane County made funding available to local communities to mitigate the damage. The Town of Middleton applied for these funds and was awarded a grant of \$105,000.

Engineering/Construction

The Town of Middleton directed Vierbiecher Engineers, its engineering firm, to prepare plans and specifications, and bidding documents, and to provide construction management services for the repair work. The work took place in October 2021.

The badly eroded slopes on the east side of the ravine were recontoured to provide flatter slopes. A berm was also constructed to intercept water before it reached the slopes. The redirected water will now enter the ravine further north by means of an engineered swale that is protected with rock rip rap. The new slopes were seeded with a mixture of forbs and grasses, following a Wisconsin DOT specification that is suited to construction sites. Grasses were emphasized in the mix design. The mixture included prairie plants whose deep roots will help stabilize the slopes. A protective bio-degradable straw mat was placed over the disturbed ground surfaces to minimize seed migration from runoff, retain moisture and nurture establishment of the vegetative cover.



Eroded slope near bottom of ravine after the 2018 storm.



Eroded slope near top of ravine after the 2018 storm.



Black siltation fence is shown in the photo above on the left.



Repaired slope and relocated trail with biodegradable matting.

The flatter side slopes resulting from the construction necessitated relocation of a paralleling trail on the east side of the ravine. The relocated trail was also seeded and covered with biodegradable matting material.

An eroded slope on the west side, near the top of the ravine, was not included in the project. The proximity of this slope to a trail and property boundary does not provide sufficient room to allow a desirable flatter slope. It is anticipated that the town will monitor this site and take appropriate remedial action if necessary.

A Nurturing Habitat for Birds and Other Wildlife

The ravine provides a nurturing habitat for a variety of birds and other wildlife. In the spring and fall, migrating birds such as warblers, vireos, and thrushes inhabit the ravine, gleaning insects and eating fruits from the vegetation growing there. The thicket areas provide a level of protection from predators. Some bird species, including catbirds, cardinals, song sparrows and orioles are summer residents and use the area to nest and raise their young. The diverse mixture of prairie, savanna, shrub, and woodland vegetation of the ravine attracts a variety of wildlife not found in other parts of the conservancy. □

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Join us on **Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, at 7pm** for a virtual presentation (via Zoom) about the History of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) at Pope Farm with historian Bob Moore and Jim Bolitho. Bob will explain how and why the spillway was constructed at Pope Farm, then he'll tell us more about the "soil soldiers" who built it. Jim Bolitho will also be available to answer questions about the recent Erosion Mitigation Project at the Ravine in 2021. You can register for this Zoom presentation on our website. Or scan the barcode on your mobile device for a link to the registration website.



UPCOMING PROGRAMS JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022



The FOPFC Programs Committee is busy planning a series of education talks and tours for the 2022 season. More information about these programs will be published in the Spring edition of our News Magazine. In the meantime, we invite you to participate in a few activities planned over the winter months. More information on our website: www.popefarmconservancy.org/events



Winter Outings at Pope Farm Conservancy

- Monday, January 17, 2022 (1-2pm)
- Sunday, February 13, 2022 (1-2pm)

Bring your snowshoes, cross-country skis, or hiking boots and join us for a one-hour adventure through the conservancy's winter wonderland. Free and open to the public. We'll meet in the lower parking lot off Old Sauk Road. Hope to see you there!

Virtual Presentation: The History of the Civilian Conservation Corp at Pope Farm

Join us on Zoom on **Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, at 7pm** for a virtual presentation about past and present infrastructure projects at Pope Farm Conservancy. Historian Bob Moore will be talking about the spillway built by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) at Pope Farm in the 1930s. Learn how and why it was constructed and who built it. Jim Bolitho will be available to answer questions about the recent Erosion Mitigation Project at the Ravine in 2021. This talk is free and open to the public. Please register in advance at <https://bit.ly/3GHbjWN>



AND JUST IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING...

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

organization working to enhance the educational opportunities and programming in, on and around the conservancy for students of all ages from public and private schools and for the public. Through our publications, on-site and virtual programming, and most recently, our video series, we are helping folks of all ages learn about the natural world at Pope Farm Conservancy. We hope you will consider joining us! To learn more about our organization, please visit our website. www.popefarmconservancy.org

PHENOLOGY: SEASONAL OBSERVATIONS

AT THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY JANIE STARZEWSKI

Do you love the color of the leaves in the fall? Can you finish the saying, “April showers bring...”? If so, then you have a basic understanding of the science known as Phenology.

Phenology refers to the science that measures of timing of plant and animal life cycle events, such as leafing and flowering, emergence of insects, maturation of agricultural crops, and migration of birds. Phenology is an important subject for conservationists to study because it helps us understand the patterns of specific species and overall ecosystem health as it responds to weather and climate changes.

Even slight fluctuations in wildlife life cycles serve as important signal flags of environmental trends and

variability, providing valuable information for a wide variety of industries such as health care, agriculture, natural resources, emergency services, ecotourism, and more. We'll share ways you can help as a citizen scientist, contributing valuable observational data.

Pope Farm Conservancy is a great place to try your hand at phenological observation.



American Robin

In **January** when the fresh cold air settles in, look up in the trees for black-capped chickadees fluffing up to keep warm. Then, look down in the snow for tiny tunnels where the meadow voles and mice scurry between their homes and food stashes.

In **February**, keep an eye out for snow fleas gathering at the base of trees on sunny days. These harmless creatures look like little pepper flakes on the snow. Later in the month, you'll begin to see sandhill cranes and turkey vultures return to the area, as well as Canada geese.

By **March**, you'll know that spring is here with the first song of the American robin. Other songbirds like the eastern phoebe, eastern meadowlark, red-

winged blackbird, and the bluebird also make their way up from the South. Some hibernating mammals will start to emerge, as well. In years when the weather is unusually warm, there may even be early reports of ticks. On rare occurrences, a sudden spike in air temperature can cause melting snow waters to rush down the CCC spillway.

Of course, **April** brings rain showers but also a slew of migratory birds like tree swallows, house wrens, yellow-rumped warblers, wood thrushes, and scarlet tanagers. The trees and shrubs will begin to leaf out, and the prairies will come to life with blooms of prairie smoke, columbine, and wild geranium. April also marks the beginning of the bluebird breeding season and the time of year when minks and coyotes begin birthing pups. Meanwhile, you may notice the farmers planting small grains like oats and winter wheat in the crop fields.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly

In **May**, the gardens are planted, the fields and walking paths green up, and wildflowers explode in abundance. You'll find the charming shootingstars in the North Prairie with their delicate nodding blooms, and wild lupines in the Oak Savanna with showy spikes of bluish-purple and ivory-white flowers. Some of the more colorful songbirds like the indigo bunting and orchard oriole arrive on the scene, as do the monarch butterflies. One year, a pair of coyote pups were even spotted playing in the Oak Savanna. And like it or not, the

mosquito season officially begins.

Aldo Leopold once wrote: "In **June** as many as a dozen species may burst their buds on a single day." What better place to witness this phenomenon than at Pope Farm Conservancy! The prairies are bursting with blooms of milkweed, spiderwort, wild bergamot, black-eyed Susan, penstemon, and more. In June, the summer solstice affords us more time to enjoy the Conservancy's prairies, crop fields, and restored oak savanna that provide habitat for countless bird species. Don't forget your binoculars for a memorable bird watching experience.

July is perhaps the best time of year to see the forbes prairies in full bloom, with wildflowers blooming in every color of the rainbow. Look for the scarlet red cardinal flower, orange butterfly weed, yellow compass plant, greenish-blue rattlesnake master, great blue lobelia, and pale purple coneflowers. By mid-July, the hot and



dry weather has turned the wheat fields into amber waves of grain, and suddenly it's harvest time.

The **August** heat can be unbearable during the day but perfect for stargazing and listening to the crickets singing in the evening air. Many who visit the conservancy this month enjoy looking for butterflies like monarchs, viceroys, eastern tiger and black swallowtails,



Clouded Sulphur Butterfly.
Photo by Jim Stewart

pearl crescents, red admirals, clouded sulphurs, and more. At the top of the hill, the mighty oaks will start to drop acorns, reminding us that autumn is just around the corner. The orchard orioles decide it's time to begin their journey south.

In early **September**, thousands of migrating monarch butterflies can be seen nectaring on the goldenrods and asters in the prairies and occasionally congregating in roosts in the burr oak trees. Like clockwork, the Canada geese flock to the alfalfa fields at dawn and dusk, the warblers begin flying south, and the thirteen-lined ground squirrels prepare to hibernate.

In **October**, the fall foliage is quite stunning along the Ravine as well as in the sugar maple stand. Visitors to the conservancy can also enjoy the incredible beauty of the maturing grasses

in the Blackhawk Prairie. While more birds are gathering for migration, the American tree sparrows are just now arriving from the northernmost regions of Canada. The landscape changes once again as the fields of oats and soybeans are harvested.

November is a quiet time at the conservancy. The gardens at Pope Farm are slowly being put to bed for the year. The corn is now dry enough to harvest. White-throated sparrows begin to leave, but the red-tailed hawks stay put and can be seen resting on a fence, soaring overhead, or diving for prey.

Finally, in **December**, your experiences at the conservancy can vary widely based on the weather. A decent snowfall will provide opportunities for winter activities, such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and sledding. On rare occasions, a very



Spiderwort blooming in the Hillside Prairie.
Photo by Mike Anderson



Hoar frost on a bluebird house.





Straw-baling season.
Photo by Dan Thoftne

beautiful and unusual weather phenomenon called hoar frost will cover the plants in tiny frozen spikes, making it look like they have a white beard. December is also a good time to listen and look for barred owls and great horned owls.

Making observations in nature is a fun and fulfilling outdoor activity for all ages, and Pope Farm Conservancy provides an excellent setting to get a feel for phenology. Keeping records of plant and animal life cycle events allows us to connect more deeply with the natural world, and it helps us to better understand the ecosystems we are a part of. □



Canada geese congregate in the alfalfa field in late August.



Birding tours take place during peak migration.

RESOURCES

As you begin your phenological journey, we encourage you to participate in some of the citizen-science projects listed below. Your observations can make a difference!

- Journey North - <https://journeynorth.org>
- Nature's Notebook - https://usanpn.org/natures_notebook
- eBird - <https://ebird.org>
- NestWatch - <https://nestwatch.org>
- Project Budburst - <https://budburst.org>

Additional Resources

<https://www.aldoleopold.org/teach-learn/phenology/>



FEATURE

CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS

IN THE POPE FARM CONSERVANCY

BY RONA NERI



During a spring stroll, as you walk on the trail between the Wheatfield Prairie and Oak Savannah on the south side of the Conservancy, you might notice a persistent, repeated buzzing sound. What is it exactly? Perhaps a bee or a grasshopper? Actually, it may not be an insect at all. You are probably hearing the unusual song of a clay-colored sparrow. Although these little sparrows are uncommon and hard to spot, we are fortunate to have many of them nesting right here at Pope Farm.

You can guess what a clay-colored sparrow looks like just from its name. Its muted taupe coloring and subdued markings protect this petite creature from predators by helping it blend in with its preferred habitat of low shrubs and grasses. They tend to nest deep inside of dense shrubs or sometimes in tussocks of grass where they are well-camouflaged. The female does most of the nest building, but the male helps by collecting grass and twigs for her. She spends 2-4 days constructing her cup-like home, carefully lining it with soft grasses and animal hair.

Meanwhile the male defends the nesting site by singing his buzzy song to establish his territory. The mother lays 3 to 5 eggs and incubates them for two weeks until they finally emerge from their shells. The hatchlings leave the nest about a week later, but they don't get very far. Instead, they manage to hop on the ground nearby. It takes another week or more of growth and gaining strength before the nestlings are able to fly. Both parents feed their young, but unlike most songbirds, they usually forage away from the nest, bringing back protein-filled insects for their hungry chicks.

Because of their breeding habits, spring is the best time of year to see a clay-colored sparrow. Listen for that tell-tale buzzing on the prairies near the oak trees. Then wait quietly and patiently to see if a little beige bird with a pinkish beak and long tail will make

an appearance. They often choose to perch on some tall grass or the top of a shrub to let all the other sparrows know which nesting site is theirs! It helps to watch for movement in the grass and use binoculars once some motion has caught your eye. These little guys do a great job of blending into their environment.

When breeding season is over, clay-colored sparrows prefer to forage in flocks, sometimes with Chipping and Brewer's Sparrows. As adults, their favorite foods are weed and grass seeds, but they supplement their diets with leaf buds, berries and insects. In the fall, they begin to form flocks and make their way south back to their winter homes of deserts and upland plains in places like Texas, California, and Mexico.

Fortunately, the population of clay-colored sparrows is fairly stable at the moment, but their numbers have recently declined. Agricultural spraying and conversion of their natural habitat to farm fields impacts their ability to breed. This is especially true in Canada which is at the northern edge of their range. Here at the Conservancy, these sprightly sparrows are provided with plenty of safe cover and abundant food, just what they need for protection. You can help too, just by staying on the trails! Your respect and caring ensures that the chicks of the clay-colored sparrow and other ground nesting birds at Pope Farm Conservancy are able to grow, thrive, and return to raise new broods so we can enjoy their raspy song for years to come. □



FRIENDS OF
POPE FARM
CONSERVANCY



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



Visit Our Website: www.popefarmconservancy.org
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